



# **2017 Annual Report**

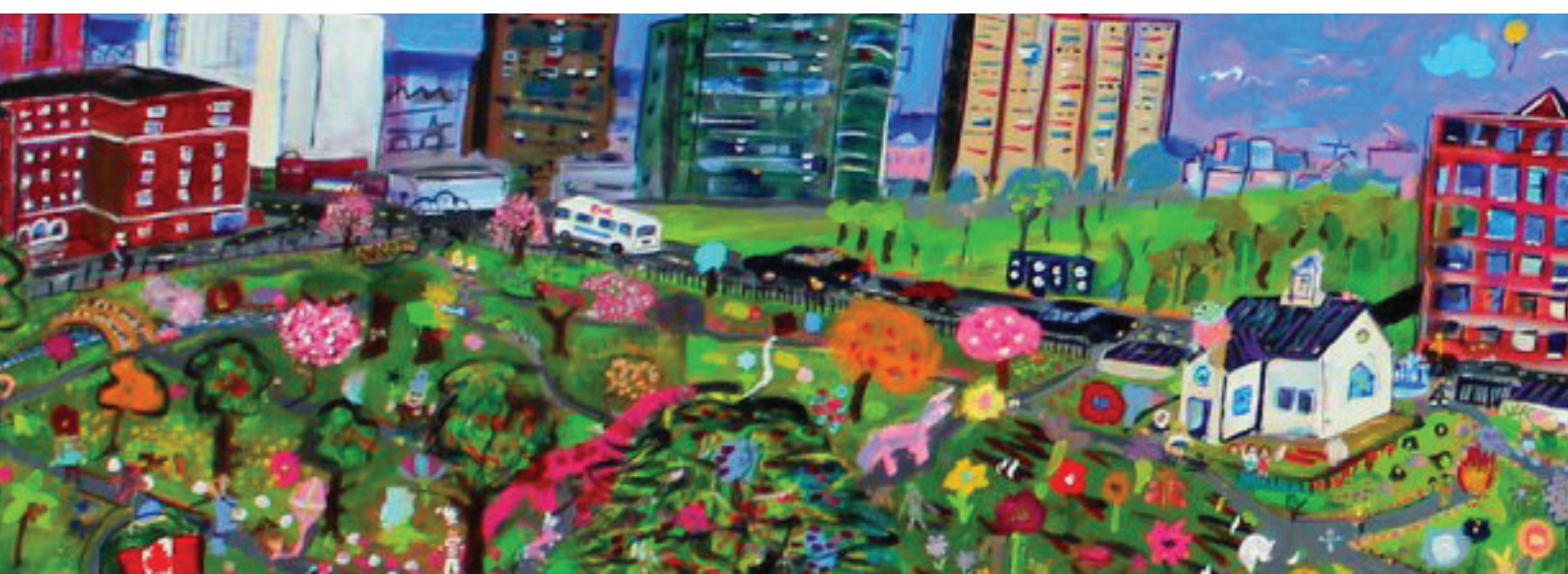
# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Another busy year has passed and with it another productive year for the Spring Garden Area Business Association. Our Executive Director, Juanita Spencer, along with her team, have built on last year's objectives to improve streetscaping, member engagement, and continue the advocacy efforts with the city and local institutions. The promotion of a vibrant and inviting Spring Garden Area is the main goal that Juanita has focused on and I am happy to report that our marketing initiatives were successfully carried out in 2017, creating greater awareness of what the Spring Garden Area has to offer. The diverse and local membership in our area has maintained a stronghold as a destination for shopping, dining, and pedestrian traffic, and we are looking forward to the implementation of a newly designed and recently approved streetscaping initiative headed by HRM to further improve the beauty and accessibility of our street. Juanita and her team have had a resonating voice throughout this process, and we are going to continue to collaborate and offer support to our members and city officials so as all parties' interests are represented. Our Lunch and Learns and Morning Mixers continue to be a great avenue for involvement of our members and where concerns and questions can be discussed regarding any issues which affect our members and their businesses. I wish to thank all the members who have taken the time to give us feedback and engage with us so we can improve and promote your interests for the Spring Garden Area.

It has been a true pleasure to serve on this Board for the past 5 years, 2 of which have been in the role of Chair. Of course, all good things come to an end, and it is with a note of sadness that my term comes to an end and with it the need to step aside and allow fresh thoughts and ideas to lead the Board and staff to continue their excellent work and advocacy efforts. I will miss working with you all and am thankful to have been part of this business improvement district. I look forward to the coming year and all the great things in store for SGABA.

Thank you,

Marilisa Benigno



# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SGABA has had another very productive and engaging year. With the support and direction from our Board of Directors, staff focused on strengthening connections with our members and the Spring Garden community. We hosted Member Mixers, Lunch and Learns, and community engagement meetings. We invested heavily in marketing and promotion and ramped up our advocacy efforts with increased engagement on a broader range of issues.

Based on the findings of our 2017 Member Engagement Survey, clean and safe streets along with beautification projects was ranked of high importance.

The Association responded to this feedback by contracting Blooming Gardener for planting and maintenance of 20 planters during the summer and fall. An additional 10 planters were also purchased to be used in the 2018 summer/fall season. As in past years, SGABA employed two summer students who worked to keep our streets clean and looking their best and, recognizing that most cruise ships arrive in Halifax after our students return to school, SGABA hired an intern in September to continue sweeping the sidewalks and greeting visitors.

Beyond providing enhanced beautification, our summer and fall students were present on the waterfront handing out promotional material and maps directing visitors to the Spring Garden area.

With an emphasis on increasing the Spring Garden profile, SGABA worked with M5 Marketing to launch our “Simply Magic” campaign in September. We received well over 65,000 social media hits/views, the campaign garnered a lot of feedback and awareness of Spring Garden. We also engaged in more traditional marketing with advertising on transit buses. For the holiday season, SGABA teamed up for a second time with M5 in the creation of the “Simply Magic” holiday campaign. We ran a robust and coordinated social media campaign complimented by several holiday billboards around Halifax.

Recognizing our important role as advocates for the business community, the Association committed more resources in 2017/2018 to our advocacy work. Often identified as a key stakeholder, SGABA provided input and feedback on numerous projects as well as helped to shape policy in the city. Our issues ranged from commercial taxation, to streetscaping, transit, bike lanes, parking strategy, Cogswell Interchange redesign and much more. To assist with this work, SGABA added a Policy Advocate/Operations Manager to our staff to increase our capacity to engage and respond.

Events and community engagement continue to be a cornerstone of the work we do. Clean Sweep, the newly added Yoga in the Park, and the Children’s Festival brought out record numbers of attendance in 2017. In May of 2017, we also launched the first annual Spring Garden Hospitality Mixer. This event brought together our members with hotel and tourism staff as our way to say “thank you” for their hard work in helping promote the Spring Garden area to Halifax’s many tourists and convention goers.



The Navigator Street Outreach program remains an important program for SGABA, serving over 300 people in the Spring Garden and downtown area. Our Navigator, Sacha Anderson, continued to assist our street involved population by helping to secure housing, identification, arranging for medical, mental health and addictions treatments. She also assisted in finding employment and educational training.

Fiscal 2017/2018 was also a year for staff changeover. Two long time employees left to explore new opportunities and a third fairly new member of our team decided to move out of the region. I am pleased, however, to introduce three new members of our team, Lynn McCallum, our new Administrative Assistant, Emily Bent, Communications and Events Coordinator, and Chris Markides in the newly created Policy Advocate and Operations Manager role. Eric Jonsson is our current Navigator while Sacha Curran is on maternity leave. We also moved offices down the hall to a space with a larger boardroom to facilitate large meetings with committees, community groups and information sessions.

We've accomplished a great many things this past year, and none of it could have been done without the support and time of our Board and committee members, the engagement from our community, and participation from the businesses we represent.

Fiscal 2018/2019 promises to be busier than ever. The city has turned their attention to Spring Garden and you can expect more member engagement as we plan for the future. As always, you are encouraged to reach out to me, or any member of my team, to share your comments and concerns.

Kind regards,  
Juanita Spencer



# BACKGROUND

The Spring Garden Area Business Association (SGABA) is the voice of business in the Spring Garden Area, representing member businesses to various levels of government and other key stakeholders in the community. The Business Improvement District provides a lead role in advocacy on important issues that affect the area in which it represents.

## THE VISION

Preserve and enhance the essence and experience of the Spring Garden area for members, residents and visitors by supporting business success through community partnerships and resources.

## THE MISSION

To create a vibrant and dynamic business district, the SGABA will:

1. Build effective partnerships with businesses, institutions and property owners to maintain a clean and safe community.
2. Attract, retain and promote quality businesses and retail segments to support local economy.
3. Promote Spring Garden Road as a renowned destination point with business, retail and commercial mix, offering unique products, services and events.
4. Coordinate events and programs designed to promote Spring Garden Areas. the preferred place to shop, work, learn and live.

## 2017/2018 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marilisa Benigno, Ventura Realty, Chair

Kari-Anne Pendlebury, CUA, Vice Chair

Lesa Griffin, Lord Nelson Hotel & Suites, Treasurer

Alessandra Pagnottella, Sterling Properties, Secretary

John Young, Boyne Clark, Community Representative

Darrel Pink Community Representative

Elizabeth Smith, Indochine Banh Mi

Martha Casey, Office of the President, Dalhousie University, Community Representative

Colin Blanchard, 31 Westgate



## **STAFF**

Juanita Spencer, BA, MPA – Executive Director

Chris Markides, BA, MPlan – Policy Advocate and Operations Manager

Emily Bent, BPR – Communications and Events Coordinator

Lynn McCallum – Administration Assistant

Sacha Curran, BSW, MSW–Program Coordinator, Navigator Street Outreach (Maternity Leave)

Eric Jonsson, BSW - Program Coordinator, Navigator Street Outreach (Contract)

Nic Takushi – Intern

## **MARKETING COMMITTEE**

Kari-Anne Pendlebury, Chair

Kurt Bulger

Emma Rappoldt

Debbie Starr

Liz Smith

Lisa Doucet

## **NOMINATION COMMITTEE**

Alessandra Pagnottella, Chair

Kari-Anne Pendlebury

## **HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Marilisa Benigno, Chair

Kari-Anne Pendlebury, Vice Chair

Lesa Griffin, Treasurer

Alessandra Pagnottella, Secretary



# ADVOCACY

For the first time in decades, downtown Halifax, including Spring Garden, is getting the attention from the city that it deserves. With that attention, however, comes an increased need for SGABA to stay informed of the issues/changes, get feedback and direction from the Board of Directors and our members, and engage as a stakeholder on behalf of our members. We anticipated this increased need for engagement and, over the last few years, we have been strengthening our relationships with the city, the community, and other stakeholders. We also increased our in-house capacity to meet the increasing demands for input and feedback by hiring a new Policy Advocate and Operations Manager.

Over the last year, SGABA has been actively engaged in many issues, some of which include: The City's Downtown Parking Strategy, commercial tax reform, bicycle lanes, transit, and streetscaping of Spring Garden Road. We helped bring forward "No Stopping" on the north side of Spring Garden Road and the relocation of some north side bus stop traffic to the west side of South Park Street. These projects are helping to reduce congestion on sidewalks and improve the flow of traffic.

The Association also continues to operate the Navigator Street Outreach program. Under this program, we have been strong advocates for change to both policy and programs at both the municipal and provincial levels of government. In 2017, we continued to work closely with other outreach organizations, community partners and the police to provide service to over 300 street involved people on Spring Garden and the downtown.

There are many things happening in Halifax and SGABA is monitoring all of them to see if they will impact the Spring Garden area and our members. Aside for those specific items mentioned above, we are also monitoring work on issues such as the Centre Plan, the Cogswell Interchange Redesign project, and new accessibility legislation to see how our members will be impacted and offer input when possible.



## EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

In May of 2017, SGABA took on a new event, the Concierge Mixer. Recognizing the important work hotel concierge and tourism staff have in guiding visitors in the city, we wanted to say thank you for recommending the Spring Garden Area. Members strongly supported us by offering food and drink samples, prizes and displays. The event was well received by both attendees and members. Follow-up surveys have helped us understand what we can do better next year, including changing the name to Hospitality Mixer. We anticipate making this an annual event.

Our 7th Annual Clean Sweep took place on June 7 in Victoria Park. This event has become a favourite within our community and provides our members with the opportunity to meet one another and to take pride in our area. In 2017 we had approximately 21 participants. Our Clean Sweep is supported by Clean Nova Scotia and the Great Nova Scotia Pick-Me-Up program as well as our graffiti removal partner, Atlantic Graffiti.

We are always looking for new opportunities to connect with members and the community. Throughout the summer and early fall, SGABA hosted several free yoga classes in Victoria Park. Thanks to the support of our member, Shanti Hot Yoga, who offered their expertise and led the classes. As many as 70 people per class took the opportunity to get in some lunchtime yoga stretches.

The 4th Annual Victoria Barks, Dogs in the Park scheduled for July 8th was unfortunately cancelled due to rain.

Each year we host the fun-filled Children's Festival in Victoria Park. 2017 was our 5th Annual Spring Garden Children's Festival with over 2500 attendees. This event included bouncy castles, train rides, face painting, live music, cotton candy, popcorn and more! As always, the event was free of charge but attendees were encouraged to donate to the IWK.

On September 24 we participated in Switch Halifax. For the first time in years, Spring Garden was closed to traffic and open to pedestrians. Members lined the streets showcasing their businesses, and organizers provided activities and food trucks enhancing an already fun-filled experience. SGABA was pleased to sponsor this event and plans on doing so in the future.

Shopping Under the Stars (SUTS) 2017 was another successful event for the Association. As in past years, the event included carolers, contests, a radio remote, and Santa to help make Spring Garden the most festive shopping street in Halifax. While Shopping Under the Stars takes place over two nights, the Association knows there is a lot more to the holiday season. This year we worked with marketing firm, M5 to create an extensive on-line marketing campaign. We also advertised on strategically placed billboards around Halifax

For the second year in the row, SGABA organized First Aid training for our members and their employees. By bringing the training to Spring Garden, we are helping members stay compliant with OH&S regulations. Participation was strong and we received positive feedback.





# COMMUNICATIONS

## MORNING MIXERS

SGABA continued to host Morning Mixers in 2017/18 in an effort to help our members connect with one another. Unfortunately, attendance was often low as owners and employees are busy running their businesses. During the latter part of the year, we moved to a quarterly schedule in an effort to get more people out. We also have asked host members to open the mixer to the public.

## PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION

In an effort to keep our members and the public informed of events, issues, and activities in our area, SGABA organized several public information sessions with engaging guest speakers. We hosted events with city staff to discuss streetscaping, bike lanes, transit, and parking. We also hosted an evening with the many developers that are investing in our area. These sessions were organized to give our members, and the community, an opportunity to ask questions and voice their concerns directly with the people leading the change

## MEDIA

In 2017/2018 we continued our radio partnership with 96.5 FM. With this partnership we had twice daily promotional hits during the weather update as well as 30 second advertisement space which we used to promote events and the area throughout the year. 96.5 FM also provided live remotes during Shopping Under the Stars. Other media partners included Metro Publishing Guide, Metro, The Coast and the Chronicle Herald for the promotion of specific events. New in 2017 the Association used bus advertising and billboards to improve our reach and visibility.

## WEBSITE

In January, SGABA launched a new, cleaner, and easy to use website. The new site gives us better flexibility and is visually more appealing to visitors.

## LUNCH AND LEARNS

SGABA organized several Lunch and Learns in 2017/2018. Our most successful was a training session on creating holiday social media campaigns for business. We recognize it is difficult for members to step away from their businesses during the day but we continue to seek out topics that are of interest and value for our members.

## NEWSLETTERS

We continued to distribute the newsletter through the online platform, MailChimp. This resource has proven to be very helpful as it provides us with multiple analytics that we use to improve our reach and engagement. Along with distributing newsletters we often send reminder emails and information on both SGABA and community events. We also hand deliver our newsletters to the retail businesses.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS/SPONSORSHIPS

SGABA supported a variety of different events and initiatives throughout the year. This past year we were pleased to sponsor three movies in the Public Gardens, a joint initiative of the Public Gardens and Atlantic Film Festival in celebration of Canada's 150 and the Public Gardens' 150. This was the first time the Gardens were open in the evening and it was met with a very strong turnout. We also participated in the Pride Festival, sponsored SWITCH Halifax, and the Parade of Lights Victoria Park Concert. While we were unable to financially sponsor all event requests, we were able to promote them through social media, our monthly newsletter, and on our websites event calendar.

## MEMBER SURVEY

On October 30, 2017, SGABA launched its second annual Membership Survey. The survey was designed to collect information on our members' thoughts and preferences related to the work of the Association and their experience of doing business in the Spring Garden area. It was made available to members of SGABA electronically through email distribution, and hardcopies were distributed to retail members by SGABA staff. Responses were collected through online submission, in-person outreach, and anonymous submissions. The survey closed on November 13, 2017 and have helped us shape our strategies and initiatives going forward.



# BEAUTIFICATION & STREETSCAPING

## SUMMER STUDENTS

As in past years, SGABA employed two summer students from late May until the end of August to assist in keeping our streets clean and engage with visitors. Funding for one student was received through the Canada Summer Jobs program. New this year, our students worked with students from other Business Improvement Districts to staff a visitor information centre at the Halifax Ferry Terminal. Our students also handed out maps and member promotional material/coupons to visitors on the waterfront. Also new this year, SGABA employed a student intern in September to continue on with the work our summer students were doing. Our intern remained with SGABA until mid-March.

## FLOWER PLANTERS AND BEDS

In early June, the Association installed 19 temporary planters along Spring Garden and side streets as part of our beautification program. We contracted the Blooming Gardener to plant and maintain the planters. New plants were installed in the Fall to keep our area looking its best until early November. We received very positive feedback from members and the general public, many suggesting we should keep them on the street through the holiday season. Unfortunately, they must be removed so they do not impeded snow removal operations.

## GRAFFITI ABATEMENT

The Spring Garden Area Business Association was once again pleased to provide our members a cost share program for the removal of graffiti. We encouraged members to contact us if they had graffiti on their property so Association staff could arrange a quote and removal. Association staff also worked pro-actively by surveying the area with Atlantic Graffiti and reaching out to affected members to discuss the program.

## SAFETY

Ensuring the safety of the Spring Garden area is of utmost importance to the Association. Staff remain in frequent communication with Halifax Regional Police, in particular our Community Response Officer Constable Jennifer McPhee. In 2017, the Association decided not to renew our contract for private on-street security. After considerable discussion at the board level, it was decided the program was not delivering value for money and that strengthening our relationships with Halifax Police would better serve our members and visitors.

## MEMBER/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To better understand the needs of our members, the Association is increasing its membership engagement efforts. SGABA staff hope to learn more about the successes and challenges of doing business downtown by conducting more frequent member surveys, face to face meetings, networking events, and information sessions. The Association is also working hard to create and maintain alliances within the Spring Garden community. We recognize that working together on areas of common interest will give us a stronger voice to advocate for positive change. Local residents and community groups have increasingly become more engaged with us and we will make every effort to strengthen those relationships in the future.

