



## Intown Concord

### FY21 City of Concord Community Grant Report

2020-2021 required Intown Concord to make many adjustments to its traditional events and programming to ensure community health and safety. COVID-19 presented new and unique challenges for the organization, as well as the entire Concord community. Despite these challenges, Intown Concord was still able to organize several successful events and focus on promoting the downtown, supporting local businesses, and providing safe entertainment and activities to the Concord community.

**Façade Grant Program:** In 2020, Intown Concord relaunched its façade grant program. We awarded \$17,500 to downtown businesses to improve their storefronts and facades. This allowed local businesses and property owners to revitalize aging storefronts, repaint their facades, and purchase new awnings. These investments create a more vibrant and attractive downtown Concord.

**Market Month:** Intown Concord had to rethink its traditional Market Days festival due to COVID-19. Instead of Market Days, Intown Concord organized a monthlong Market Month festival in August 2020 that supported local businesses and downtown spending while spreading the impact and crowds over a longer period. The festival included weekly local musicians on the State House lawn for residents while also allowing for social distancing. Additionally, Market Month featured weekly themes. This included two weeks of sidewalk sales, a restaurant week, and an international arts week. Intown Concord worked with downtown business on promotions and increasing sales.

**The Great Pumpkin Hunt:** Intown Concord hosted its first ever Great Pumpkin Hunt in place of Halloween Howl in 2020. This initiative was promoted through Intown Concord's website and various social media channels. There was also a Facebook Live video that discussed the entry rules and was watched by 600 viewers. The Great Pumpkin Hunt was a scavenger hunt that engaged 17 different downtown merchant locations. Participants were encouraged to go to each shop, find a pumpkin in the shop (while shopping local), and then have the shop owner sign their entry form. Once they had 12 pumpkins signed off on, they could submit their Great Pumpkin Hunt form to Penumbra for a prize. Also, in the fall Intown Concord initiated a virtual costume contest and "Watch the Windows" social media campaign. "Watch the Windows" encouraged people to come downtown to look at the Halloween window displays and post a photo with their favorite display. All Halloween activities were safe, fun, and festive while amplifying and supporting downtown businesses.

**Downtown Holiday Shopping:** Intown Concord led several initiatives to increase spending at downtown businesses during the holidays. First, Intown sponsored weekly music that played throughout downtown to create a holiday shopping environment and encourage downtown shopping. Second, Intown Concord pushed Concord residents to shop online at local businesses. We created a new section on our website that highlighted local businesses with online shopping and linked directly to their sites. We promoted this site as well as business themselves on our social media, gathering thousands of engagements.



**Winter Fest:** Intown Concord organized its 3<sup>rd</sup> and most well-attended Winter Fest. This year, the event took place on the State House lawn to allow for more space and social distancing. This two-day event included an ice carving competition, music, and fires with s'mores. This year, Intown Concord worked with the State House to allow for the ice carvings to be on display for a full week following the event. This allowed for the community to enjoy the carvings throughout the week as they felt comfortable. The event had 915 individuals preregister and received high praise for the community. It balanced ensuring community health while also providing a much-needed outdoor event for the city.

Winter Fest received media coverage in WMUR, The Union Leader (twice), The Hippo, Binnie Media, The Concord Monitor, and Concord Community TV. People attended from all over the State despite bitter cold temperatures. Businesses reported that they saw an increase in business during the event and the week following the festival because people were coming to see the ice sculptures.

**Promotion and Marketing:** Due to COVID-19, Intown Concord made it a priority in 2020 to focus on downtown marketing and promotion. The shift to online shopping and away from in-person shopping and events presented challenges for downtown retailers and an opportunity for Intown Concord to leverage its significant online and social media followings. Intown Concord used its social media and website to promote local businesses and direct local shopping. This resulted in a 22% increase in the number of individuals engaging with Intown Concord's social media in January 2021 compared to the previous year. On an average day this past January, Intown Concord was reaching over 2,000 individuals each day and 165 people would engage with posts by visiting local business websites, online shopping, or social media accounts. Social media campaigns included shopping local during the holidays, restaurant week, and the current downtown Valentine's Day initiative #BeMyDowntownValentine.