

St. Catharines brings ShopHERE program to Niagara

June 1, 2020 – To help support local small businesses, today the City of St. Catharines is joining the ShopHERE powered by Google program, with a goal of getting more businesses online this year.

ShopHERE, which started in the City of Toronto, helps independent businesses and artists build a digital presence and minimize the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In May, Google Canada announced a \$1-million investment to enable Digital Main Street to expand the program to municipalities across the country, offering more businesses and artists the opportunity to build their own online store.

The program is now available to small businesses in St. Catharines. Local businesses and artists can apply for the program at www.digitalmainstreet.ca/shophere to get their online store built at no-cost.

“Our City is committed to supporting local businesses during these challenging times and continues to lead in bringing opportunities to Niagara to help small businesses adapt to evolving economic conditions,” said Mayor Walter Sendzik. “Our small businesses will benefit from this program. Joining with other community and corporate partners, such as Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, Shopify and Google, this initiative supports the City’s strategic plan by building a more resilient economy through collaborative relationships aimed at attracting and retaining business in St. Catharines.”

Because the opportunities afforded by the digital economy are still limited if people don’t have the right skills, Google’s investment will also help more small businesses and artists receive the digital skills training needed to participate in the digital economy.

“The City of St. Catharines is proud to bring this program to Niagara to help our local businesses during a time when having an online presence has become even more important,” said Brian York, director of Economic Development and Government Relations. “COVID-19 is changing the way we shop and this program will help our local businesses keep pace and adapt to the changing economic reality with enhanced online presence and expanded digital skills.”

“Since Google began its business in Canada nearly twenty years ago, we’ve been focused on helping Canadian businesses of all sizes unlock the prosperity of the internet,” says Sabrina Geremia, vice president and country manager, Google Canada. “We remain optimistic and more determined than ever that technology is the toolkit for a world of opportunities. Our \$1-million investment will go towards expanding the

ShopHERE program nationally, so we can help small businesses across Canada navigate the challenges ahead.”

“Main street businesses are facing unprecedented times due to COVID-19,” said John Kiru, executive director, Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas. “They need to be able to sell online if they are going to survive and we are proud to expand the ShopHERE powered by Google program to help them achieve this. This program is critical in ensuring main streets can adapt and evolve during this crucial time.”

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About Google

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. As a global technology leader, Google's innovations in web search and advertising have made its website a top internet property and its brand one of the most recognized in the world. Google Canada has offices in Waterloo, Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa with over 1,500 Canadian Google employees working on teams across Engineering, AI Research, Sales and Marketing.

About Digital Main Street

Digital Main Street is a program that helps main street businesses achieve digital transformation. The program is built around an online learning platform, structured training programs, and our Digital Service Squad, a team of street-level team members who help main street businesses grow and manage their operations through technology.

Digital Main Street was created by the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas with direct support from the City of Toronto. DMS is also supported by a group of strategic business partners, including Google, MasterCard, Microsoft and Shopify.

About the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas

The Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas is a non-profit umbrella organization working with the 83 Business Improvement Areas within the City of Toronto, who in turn represent more than 40,000 business and property owners.

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