

OCOBIA BELIEVES

Ottawa's mainstreets,
and the choice this election



Ottawa's 18 Business Improvement Areas represent thousands of businesses on mainstreets in every part of the city — urban, suburban and rural. The decisions of the next City Council will shape whether those mainstreets stay viable and thrive.

OCOBIA is non-partisan. We do not support or oppose any candidate. We share what our members believe, and we invite every candidate to tell us — and their voters — how they would respond.

1. A STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY

OCOBIA believes mainstreet businesses are economic engines, and that municipal policy should reduce barriers to opening, growing and staying open rather than adding to them.

Mainstreet businesses employ residents, generate commercial tax revenue and anchor the character of their neighbourhoods. When permits stall, costs climb and processes contradict each other across departments, it's small independent businesses that absorb it first.

We're asking candidates: *How would you help local businesses open, grow and remain viable — including reducing red tape and ensuring Council weighs the economic impact on businesses before decisions are made?*

2. SAFE, CLEAN AND WELCOMING DISTRICTS

OCOBIA believes safe and well-kept commercial districts are economic infrastructure, and that businesses shouldn't be left to manage complex social challenges on their own.

Visible neglect and unaddressed public safety concerns undermine investment, foot traffic and the confidence of residents and visitors. Business owners are increasingly the first responders to issues they aren't equipped or resourced to handle.

We're asking candidates: *How would you support safe, clean and welcoming mainstreets — including coordinated, compassionate responses to social challenges that balance public safety with support for vulnerable people?*

3. TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY

OCOBIA believes businesses thrive when people can reach them, and that reliable transit and safe active transportation are essential to mainstreet vitality across the whole city.

Gaps in transit connectivity limit who can get to a district — customers and staff alike — and inconsistent pedestrian and cycling infrastructure narrows that further. In a city as geographically large as Ottawa, connectivity is not evenly shared.

We're asking candidates: *How would you improve transit and active transportation connections to and within business districts, in urban, suburban and rural areas alike?*

4. PUBLIC SPACE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

OCOBIA believes well-designed, well-maintained public space is a shared investment in every mainstreet, and that BIAs should be at the table when infrastructure work affects their districts.

Roads, sidewalks, lighting, washrooms and streetscape all shape whether a district feels worth spending time in. Construction, done without coordination, can undo years of momentum on a mainstreet in a single season.

We're asking candidates: *How would you invest in mainstreet public space and infrastructure — and ensure BIAs are consulted early when projects affect their districts, including on construction mitigation?*

5. BIAS AS PARTNERS IN DECISION-MAKING

OCOBIA believes BIAs are local boards of Council with direct, on-the-ground knowledge, and that they should be meaningfully included in the municipal decisions that affect their districts.

BIAs are the eyes on the street. They see what's working and what's failing before it reaches a report. Including them early leads to better decisions — and avoids costly ones.

We're asking candidates: *How would you strengthen the working relationship between the City and its BIAs, and ensure BIAs are included in planning, policy and decisions that affect their districts?*

6. RECOGNIZING HOW BIAs ARE FUNDED

OCOBIA believes the value BIAs return to the city should be understood alongside how modestly they're resourced, and that this be recognized in how the City works with them.

BIAs are funded by a levy on commercial property owners — not from City operating dollars — yet they deliver placemaking, safety, promotion and business support on every mainstreet in Ottawa. The return to the city, in tax base, jobs and vitality, far exceeds what BIAs receive back.

We're asking candidates: *How would you recognize the role BIAs play, and support fair and predictable opportunities for them to keep delivering for Ottawa's mainstreets?*

Every candidate has been sent these priorities and invited to respond. Responses are published as received at ocobia.org. Absence of a response means none has been received.

