



Town of Newmarket
395 Mulock Drive P.O. Box 328,
Newmarket, Ontario, L3Y 4X7

If you require this document in an alternative format email at clerks@newmarket.ca or call 905-895-5193.

Choose Local + Shop to Win at Summerfest 2025 and Ice Lounge on Main Street 2026

Information Report

Report Number: INFO-2026-13

Department(s): Community and Economic Innovation

Author(s): Christian Stipetic, Economic Development Coordinator

Distribution Date: May 12, 2026

In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any member of Council may make a request to the Town Clerk that this Report be placed on an upcoming Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information regarding the Choose Local program and the Choose Local + Shop to Win event activation delivered by the Community and Economic Innovation department and summarize direct economic impacts during the Ice Lounge and Summerfest events held in 2025 and 2026 within the Newmarket's downtown BIA (Business Improvement Area).

Background

The Choose Local program was originally conceptualized to support small businesses in Newmarket during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to boost economic activity during seasonal downturns, that disproportionately affect the retail industry. This program was eventually adapted by the Economic Development staff team to increase the economic impact of pedestrianized events on Main Street South, beginning with the inaugural Ice Lounge on Main Street event in February 2024.

The Choose Local + Shop to Win event activation is now enabled through the Town's investment into a popular Gift Card giveaway program, where participants are encouraged to spend a minimum of \$50 at participating retailers or service based shops, and receive a limited \$25 prepaid VISA incentive that can be used at any businesses within the BIA area including restaurants. In addition to the giveaway, a contest featuring

prizes donated from local businesses is also used to encourage participation, promote local shopping and boost engagement.

The Inaugural Summerfest event in August 2025, and the Town's third Ice Lounge on Main event in 2026 both had successful and further evolved implementation of the Choose Local + Shop to Win program, that leveraged the Special Events-led activations enabling concentrated pedestrian activity within the Town's Business Improvement Area (BIA).

Discussion

Events Overview

The inaugural Summerfest on Main event was held from August 21st to August 24th, 2025, within the BIA's event area defined by a multi-street closure that included a major section of Main Street South and parts of Timothy Street and Botsford Street in Newmarket. The event featured a range of programmed activities and on-street activation also supported by local businesses.

The Town of Newmarket's third Ice Lounge on Main Street event was held between February 20th through February 22nd, 2026, and followed a similar structure.

In advance of and during the events, Community and Economic Innovation staff along with Recreation & Culture worked closely with BIA businesses to align on-site activities with the Choose Local + Shop to Win initiative.

This coordination between staff and business owners encouraged prolonged business hours during event times, unique in store activations and extended operations onto Main Street, creating multiple points of interaction where visitors could engage with store owners, make purchases, and participate in the shopping incentive program. These activations increased the visibility of local businesses and strengthened the connection between event attendance and local spending.

The Choose Local + Shop to Win Program at Summerfest 2025

Through staff facilitation of the 'Choose Local' booth and onsite engagements, the Choose Local + Shop to Win activation at Summerfest capitalized on the pedestrian flow across the event footprint and supported visitor exposure to and from participating businesses.

Through coordination Recreation and Culture, onsite business engagements and meetings with Main Street business owners were conducted in advance of Summerfest to identify potential challenges and solutions including delivery considerations during the event.

In response to initial Ice Lounge feedback, staff reimagined the engagement process leading up to the event, including a delivery of 'Choose Local kits' that included simplified instructions, promotional material and parking maps that businesses could pass out to visitors.

The downtown business owners played a key role in the success of the Choose Local + Shop to Win activation using Town distributed promotional materials displayed in their storefronts and encouraging patrons to submit their receipts at the Choose Local booth to participate in the incentive during the event.

The Choose Local + Shop to Win activation facilitated direct interaction between retail businesses and new patrons. The increased exposure created opportunities for businesses to introduce their products and services to potential long-term customers, build brand awareness, and establish relationships that extend beyond the event, supporting repeat visitation and sustained local spending.

The Choose Local + Shop to Win Program at Ice Lounge

This campaign followed a similar pattern of engagement as the Summerfest event, building further upon creative marketing strategies to expand Newmarket's tourism outreach effort.

For this event, activation of the visitor economy via targeted promotion that included the four hotels located in Newmarket was a significant expansion of the program. Postcards were delivered to the hotels for the weekend, for use by overnight stays, driving visitation to Ice Lounge over the three days.

The postcard delivered to hotels contained a special promotion where overnight guests could visit the Choose Local Booth during the event, to receive a \$25 'Choose Local' Gift card to spend on Main Street and the guest would also be entitled to an entry into the grand prize draw. These efforts connected overnight stays in the community with direct spending on Main Street during their stay.

As part of event promotion efforts, the Town engaged a well-known York Region-based social media influencer, ExploreOntario, to support broader awareness and digital reach of the event and encourage overnight stays in the community throughout the event. Content shared through this channel generated approximately 172,000 views, indicating strong online exposure in advance of and immediately following the activation.

This digital engagement complemented on-site programming and traditional communications, contributing to overall event visibility among both local and regional audiences.

Economic Impact Methodology

The estimated economic impact associated with both events are based on spending data voluntarily submitted through the Choose Local Booth activations implemented

during the event. Only receipts provided by participants for the 'Shop to Win' program were included in the direct spending analysis.

Visitor participation is collected through ballot entries associated with the 'Shop to Win' program activation; however, this information reflects only those individuals who engaged with the specific shop-and-spend initiative and does not represent total event attendance.

Overall attendance estimates were derived using anonymized mobile device location data provided by the analytics provider. As with all modelled datasets, attendance figures are subject to standard margins of error and should be interpreted as indicative rather than exact.

The economic impact of both events was assessed using direct spending data collected through the "Shop and Win" promotional program. This initiative encouraged visitors to make purchases within the event area and submit receipts in exchange for entries into a prize draw.

Economic Impact and Visitor Profile at Summerfest on Main

As part of the program, gift cards were distributed to incentivize spending and support local businesses. During the inaugural Summerfest event, 500 gift cards valued at \$25 each were issued.

Attendance and visitor data collected via the Choose Local booth indicate that the event successfully attracted both residents and regional visitors while generating significant activity in the surrounding area. Newmarket residents accounted for approximately 56.42% of total visitors, demonstrating strong local and visitor participation.

Direct consumer spending associated with the Choose Local Booth was significant. Over the four-day event period, \$53,167.09 and \$12,500 in gift cards were issued resulting in over \$65,000 in spending directly surrounding the event. Historically, the gift card program continues to drive spending above and beyond the event via repeat visits to Main Street and spending above and beyond the \$25 gift card value.

Business feedback collected through post-event surveys indicates strong satisfaction with both event execution and promotional efforts. Twenty-one of approximately sixty (60) street-level businesses on Main Street South responded to the survey. Respondents reported higher sales compared to an average weekend during the same time of year, indicating a positive correlation between the program and increased business performance.

Spending activity captured through submitted receipts indicates that visitors made purchases across a range of business types, including retail, food and beverage, and personal services.

In addition to transaction-based data, anonymized mobile device analysis conducted by the analytics provider estimated overall visitor spending associated with the Summerfest event at approximately \$1.63 million. These modelled estimates reflect broader spending activity within the event area and is provided for contextual purposes only.

Economic Impact at Ice Lounge on Main

During Ice Lounge on Main Street 2026, 330 gift cards were distributed over three days, totalling an \$8,250 investment during the event.

The Choose Local + Shop to Win initiative generated measurable economic activity for Main Street businesses. A total of approximately 450 individual transactions were recorded at the staffed booth during the event weekend, with an average transaction value of \$80. This demonstrates \$36,000 in direct consumer spending at participating Main Street retailers

In addition to initial spending, the program successfully encouraged repeat local purchases through its reward component. To date, over \$3,300 in earned rewards have already been redeemed at Main Street businesses, further extending the economic benefit beyond the original transactions and reinforcing the program's objective of keeping consumer spending in the local economy.

The program also demonstrated strong business collaboration and community support, with a record number of donated prizes. A total of 14 prizes were contributed by Main Street area businesses, marking the highest level of prize participation to date and reflecting strong buy-in from the local business community.

Business engagement and feedback have been positive. Survey responses from participating businesses indicate overall satisfaction with both the event and the Choose Local program, with many businesses identifying increased awareness, customer traffic, and interest in future participation.

Measuring Main Street Data: Platform Partnership Opportunities

These major events highlighted the value of timely and accurate data to better understand visitation patterns, local spending behaviour, and the impact of promotional activations on main street businesses. Building on this experience, the Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) has recently launched Measuring Main Streets, a national data platform

designed to support evidence-based planning, performance measurement, and investment on Canada's main streets.

Overall, the platform will support the Town of Newmarket and the BIA's objectives by providing consistent, corridor-level data to better evaluate the impacts of initiatives such as Choose Local + Shop Win, inform future programming and investments, strengthen funding and grant applications, and support more strategic decision-making that benefits local businesses and the broader community.

Consultation

Recreation & Culture Department

Conclusion

Overall, the data suggests that there were meaningful increases in visitation, consumer spending, and business confidence, while reinforcing the role of the Choose Local program as an effective economic development and business support tool.

Staff will continue to refine program delivery and data collection methods to quantify and amplify economic impacts in future years.

Council Priority Association

This report aligns with the following Council Priority: Community and Economic Vibrancy

Human Resource Considerations

Not Applicable

Budget Impact

The cost of the program is part of the Community and Economic Innovation annual operating budget.

Attachments

None.

Approval for Distribution

Chris Emanuel, Economic Development Officer, Community Economic & Innovation

Elizabeth Hawkins, Director, Community Economic & Innovation

Ian McDougall, Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the CAO

Report Contact

For more information on this report, contact info@newmarket.ca