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The Canal Greenway, running through Downtown Dartmouth, is an essential community asset which would be vastly improved by the partial daylighting of the Sawmill River.

The waterway, buried long ago below grade, has tremendous historical significance, essential to Mi'kmaq and to early Western settlers alike. Dartmouth's booming 19th and 20th century industry would have failed without the flowing water, including Starr Manufacturing, the pioneering skate factory pivotal in the development of hockey. And the Shubenacadie canal was an engineering feat before the rail age. The waterway has shaped Dartmouth and its development in untold ways, but today it mostly remains a green question mark across the south side of downtown.

Current plans for the greenway depend on interpretation, preservation and heritage re-creation along the site. The Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission (DDBC) supports that plan, but believes that physically revealing the waterway and complementing it with active recreation and transportation features would bring people to the place, to make the space both useful and vibrant.

Why now? We understand that Halifax Water will be daylighting small portions of the waterway as part of an upcoming infrastructure renewal. It is therefore an opportune time to design the new infrastructure as an attractive place: more than just an engineered functional requirement. The DDBC therefore supports the naturalization and/or enhancement of the Sawmill River where it is feasible to create appealing community space in our downtown. We also encourage the city to prioritize park and landscape, including trails, benches and playgrounds. It's time now to make full use of the Sawmill River to bring our community together.

Kind Regards,

Tim Rissesco, Executive Director
Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission



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