



VANCOUVER

B I A P A R T N E R S H I P

Business Improvement Associations 101

WHAT IS A BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION?

A business improvement area (BIA) is a specially funded business district, operated by a non-profit group of property owners and businesses, whose goal is to promote and improve their business district. There are 22 BIAs in Vancouver representing 1000's of commercial property owners and local businesses! The first BIAs in Vancouver formed in 1989 – Gastown and Mt. Pleasant.

In forming a BIA, businesses make a proposal to the municipal council to be designated as a “BIA”, whereby the business community would undertake activities to improve the area, with an annual budget contributed by its members. All commercial property owners and businesses within the proposed boundary would be consulted with and a special bylaw would be approved to form the BIA.

Throughout Canada, many BIAs have formed from merchant associations. It starts with a dedicated group of merchants, that volunteer their time to enhance the area. A BIA provides greater resources, as **all commercial property owners and businesses within the BIA boundary would be members of the BIA** – and contribute and benefit from the area's success.

HOW IS A BIA FUNDED?

The City collects a levy from commercial property owners (usually derived from tenants) within the BIA boundary, and provides it to the BIA. Members provide input to shape the budget, and vote on the budget annually at the AGM. Budgets vary in different areas – ranging from approximately \$100,000 to \$2 million. Each commercial property owner's contribution to the BIA is a fraction of their total tax contribution. The BIA levy is usually a nominal amount of the area's total commercial property taxes.

WHAT DOES THE BIA DO?

A BIA can make things better by enhancing and promoting the area - making the area safer, beautiful, vibrant, and connected - which will benefit businesses and the community. Valuable projects from various BIAs can include banners, street lighting, marketing (business directory brochure, website, social media), events, business updates and advocacy to support small businesses. BIAs consult with businesses for input to implement initiatives that will enhance the business area.

VALUE & REPRESENTATION:

The cost to be part of a BIA is nominal in relation to the many benefits businesses will receive. This is possible because businesses collectively contribute to an organization that represents the entire business area and is accountable to each business. A BIA is a valuable tool that will maximize resources and connect merchants, customers, community and government – working together to make things better.

ACCOUNTABILITY & INCLUSIVITY:

Businesses have a say in what the BIA does. A BIA is led by a volunteer Board of local business and commercial property owners, elected by local businesses. A BIA consults with members throughout the year: there are monthly meetings to plan and develop initiatives, and an annual general meeting to approve a draft budget and elect Board members. Participation and input is welcome!