

# News & Views

A NEWSLETTER FOR BIA STAFF AND BOARDS | March 2011 | Vol. 2 No. 3

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### THE NEW RETAIL MIX

Many Toronto neighbourhood BIAs are witnessing local change in the form of property consolidation and condo development and its resulting impact on the look and feel of the neighbourhood. Most often we see ground-floor, small-format retail, services and restaurants.

In the past architects and developers were criticized by neighbourhood business when larger format locations wanted to be on the street. Shoppers Drug Mart was one of the first and continues to create larger footprint shops in the neighbourhoods. While a category killer in several retail areas, the improved retail mix of having a large pharmacy nearby has held, and for some, increased the number of local shoppers.

What I don't condone are City Planners who allow large format construction to "turn their backs to Main Street" with storefront entry and windows that don't reinforce or accept the existing streetscape.

With a shift to ever larger format operations, general retail no longer has as much demand for small locations. We now see increased number of restaurants, services and professional offices taking over the former retail locations.

## THE BIAs HAVE SPOKEN: COMMUNICATION SURVEY RESULTS

By John Kiru, Executive Director, TABIA

Thanks to those who participated in our first communications survey which was undertaken to find out what you want to know, in what format and how often. More than half of TABIA's members responded to the survey, so we have pretty valid results.

In only 10 words, here's what you want: **lots of information on a variety of topics every month!** You'd prefer it in email, with some written versions available, and you'd prefer to access it in a Word Document so you can easily inform your own members while adapting the information for your own use.

To be more specific:

### Communicating with members is important to you!

1. 95% send info updates to members
2. 72% send updates by mail, 57% post updates on their websites, 35% send out printed letters, 65% deliver hard copy newsletters, 25% use Facebook or other social media. Other responses include: e-blasts through a service and even face-to-face visits and phone calls.
3. 15% communicate weekly, 22% several times a month, 18% several times a season and 22% several times a year. Others responses include: daily tweets or web postings and "as required."



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As part of TABIA's upcoming research program we will look at Retail Mix, defined as one of the overall strategic marketing components of retailing. The draw of customers to a successful retail mix applies to your selection of services or inventory and to the successful variety of shops in the neighbourhood.

The continued construction of additional small format spaces of a condo's commercial level should be reviewed to see if a larger format would provide a better retail mix for the area. Adding second floor commercial uses would be a valued addition to the neighbourhood by bringing in jobs.

Larger formats would require more careful City planning than we have seen in the past.

John Kiru has noted that if the mix includes larger format stores, they will then have to deal with the same aggressive ticketing, high taxes and pick-up and delivery problems that neighbourhood businesses have always faced. We should be proactive as we consider when, where and how they might be successfully integrated into a neighbourhood to improve a streetscape.

Michael Comstock

*TABIA President, Representing St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA*

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# KUDOS!

*This regular column recognizes significant accomplishments taking place in our BIAs. In this column, a Board receives the praise. Let us know what you've done so we can spread the good news!*

## Cabbagetown BIA's Board knows the value of recognition

We all like to be appreciated for our efforts. "We don't pause enough to say 'thank you' or 'well done,'" says Doug Fisher, Cabbagetown BIA Coordinator. Studies have shown that employees often say that recognition is more important to them than occasional bonuses or even raises. So, it's with great pride that we showcase the Chairman's Awards, a recognition program that the Cabbagetown BIA Board has been holding for more years than the current staff or Board can remember.

Doug says that the program starts afresh before spring each year with nominations from the Board in the following categories:

- **Property improvement** - Can be anything from a façade improvement to a new interior or lighting fixture
- **Business improvement** - Examples include good customer service or the launch of a new business
- **Good neighbourliness** - Highlights the work of someone or some organization outside the BIA

## Recognition awards and awards for being a new business

In late spring, the awards are ready to hand out. The event is held at a local restaurant. Each attendee pays \$10 which includes lots of hors d'oeuvres and a drink. At the last event, close to 125 people came out to schmooze, eat and enjoy, according to Doug. Current Chair Paul Dineen gives his "State of the Union" address, which is an informal review of the previous year. Local media generally cover the event and those who can't attend can read all about it on the Cabbagetown BIA's Website Blog.

In addition to the awards, lots of people win door prizes donated by local businesses. A special plaque with the "Keys to Cabbagetown" are given to every new business. It welcomes them to the area and wishes them good luck.

Because the program has been around a while, the Board has learned what works and what doesn't. Here's what doesn't:

- Too many categories and too many awards. Boredom sinks in fairly fast.
- Avoid the "best of" category. This is a recognition program, not a competition.

*Note: This program has inspired TABIA. Watch for an upcoming TABIA recognition program that will recognize the achievements in our BIAs!!*

# PROFILE: The Dupont Strip BIA

With a unique location comes an unusual name. Approximately 80 businesses in the small, three-block area on Dupont, west of Avenue Rd. and Davenport weren't sure if they were uptown, downtown or somewhere in between. All they knew was they were the strip that was in between. They were also near lots of well known-areas: Forest Hill to the north, Bloor and the Annex to the south, Casa Loma Village nearby and the distinctive Dupont subway station. The neighbouring area is home to many families as well as students.

To all who knew the area, it definitely wasn't a village. "Strip" seemed most appropriate whenever the Board was describing the location. The Board eventually convinced residents to accept the name in the spring of 2010. The boundaries of the Dupont Strip BIA extend from Davenport to a bit west of Walmer.

At a time when new businesses were moving in and the vacancy rate was dropping, the older businesses in the area decided it was a good time to improve their image by starting a BIA. The traditional issues that most areas face, such as graffiti, panhandling or accommodating bike lines, also concerned them. In the summer of 2010, the area officially became a BIA

One of the BIA's niche markets is health and wellness. Wellness services, healthy restaurants and cafes, and even organic clothing stores line the street. The BIA has a mix of retail with specialty stores and restaurants, professional services, a drug store and an LCBO. The legendary Yellow Brick Road has been a destination wellness clinic for decades.

The seven Board members are in the midst of much planning. The BIA's image needs to be identifiable while representing a unique and diverse area, so they are working to develop a logo and corporate identity. Streetscaping plans are also in the works— for hanging baskets, an improved parkette that will be adorned with flowers and benches, a mural and more. Future plans for a festival or event to distinguish the area may eventually piggy-back with events at Casa Loma.

These determined businesses are already on their way to making The Dupont Strip an important stop.



*The distinctive Dupont subway station is one area landmark*

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Chair: Ben Mohamud  
416-926-1101  
yellowbrickroad258@yahoo.ca



*Cabbagetown BIA Chair, Paul Dineen, with an award recipient*

## Grease traps

Trapping grease sounds like it's a pursuit for hunters, but a third of Toronto's 6,000 restaurants haven't bothered to bite the bait. Joanne Di Caro, Manager of the City's Environmental and Monitoring Unit for the Protection of Sewers and Water Supply, is passionate about her job. She knows that the objectives of her work and its dedicated crew will reduce chemicals going into the water as well as protect public health and safety. The grease traps are designed to protect our sewers from grease and oil and ultimately our drinking water.

The inspection crew witnessed many appalling infringements, despite the Sewers Bylaw being around since 2000 and grease traps being part of the building code for the past 20 years. But the solution is simple.

Grease traps can cost as little as \$250 or as much as a few thousand dollars, depending upon the size and nature of the operation, and they should be installed by a qualified plumber. Joanne suggests getting a few quotes before arranging anything. As well, restaurants need to factor in monthly cleanouts by a handler licensed by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. Grease trap

owners should take every precaution to prevent grease from entering the sewer system — thereby complying with the Sewers Bylaw.

To find out more, give the Toronto Water Environmental Monitoring and Protection Unit a call at 416-392-2929. For more info on grease traps: <http://www.toronto.ca/water/sewers/greasetrap.htm>

## Purchasing quotes

We've had enquiries asking if there were changes to the purchasing procedure for BIAs. Henry Byres from the City's BIA office says that one quote for purchases under \$7,500 is fine although the City must now get three quotes for *all* purchases.

If your BIA continues to make purchases with an existing supplier for an amount less than \$7,500, there's no problem. If it's over \$7,500, the BIA should get three quotes. The BIA is not obliged to go with the low bid, because the relationship with the existing supplier may be so good in terms of quality and reliability, and the Board may think it's worth paying a bit more. Henry suggests that BIAs should adopt their own purchasing policies.

## Rethinking alcohol laws

The Province has begun taking steps to update alcohol laws. Changes will remove barriers and restrictions for special events and festivals. Among the proposed changes:

- Removing the need for beer tents, allowing people to walk around freely with their drinks
- Extending hours alcohol can be served at these events, up to 2 a.m.

These steps are at the consultation stage. We will let you know if changes are approved.

## Citizen's Arrest and Self-Defence Act

A proposed amendment to the Criminal Code would mean merchants could arrest suspected thieves and use force, if necessary, to defend themselves or their property. The first reading of this bill resulting from the action taken by a Chinatown merchant to defend his property in May 2009, took place on Feb. 17 in the House of Commons.

## COMMUNICATION SURVEY RESULTS (continued)

4. Topics people want to learn more about, in order of importance: city policies re graffiti, panhandling, postering and homelessness (72%); permits and regulations for A-frames, Right-of-Way, grant info (67%); utilities and services like Hydro and TTC (59%); TABIA discounts and member offers (46%), seminars or courses, upcoming events, greening and tax updates. Other mentions: BIA news, streetscaping and marketing updates.
5. Nearly half of respondents want information monthly, a third would like it four times a year and only 8% would like it twice a month.
6. 82% would like the information in a Word Document which could be easily adapted to your needs. A third of respondents want it in a print-ready document and almost one-fourth would like to access it on the TABIA website in a members' only section.
7. More than two-thirds indicated they'd like to send in suggestions on topics of interest.

### Information to the Board should include information about *other* Boards

8. 56% would like Board-related information each month; 18% quarterly and the rest, less often.
9. 7% of respondents would like Board-related news sent by email; 13% by other means — mostly via the TABIA website.
10. Board topics of greatest interest: all things City Hall, street furniture, grant applications, making deputations, government news that affects BIAs, connecting and communicating with other BIAs

11. 89% said they'd like to read profiles of other BIAS
12. 97% (the highest favourable response recorded) want to read about other Boards
13. 70% said they'd like to exchange information with other BIAS on the TABIA website
14. Other EXCELLENT suggestions: have the TABIA Executive Director and President participate in the Santa Claus Parade (this suggestion has us inspired as we deliberate a *presence* in parades. More to come on that one!), have a bank of information for BIAs to use, plan social events for BIA staff (wow- you guys really have great ideas!), interactive members-only section on web, tourism and traffic info and stats, professional development for staff (a good start is the upcoming conference) and comparison with what other Canadian BIAs are doing.

I am enthusiastic about your thoughtful responses. We've already begun to put many of the recommendations into action. Keep sending us your feedback and suggestions, survey time or not!

**WE'VE GOT A WINNER!** Congratulations to **David Wootton** from the **Church Wellesley Village BIA** who was randomly selected as the winner of the fabulous draw prize of dinner for two at either The Rivoli or the Queen Mother Café in the Queen St. West BIA. Thanks go to Laura Schaefer from the Queen St. West BIA for helping to arrange this, to the restaurants and to TABIA who will share in the costs.



# UPCOMING EVENTS AND DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

HERE'S THE INFO YOU NEED NOW,  
FOR YOU, YOUR BOARD,  
AND YOUR MEMBERS

**Third Tues. of each month- TABIA inter-departmental meetings** –City Hall, from 2-4 p.m. Room TBA each month. These are great sources of information on the latest news coming from City Hall or issues affecting BIAs. Questions? Contact Patricia at TABIA at 416-263-3229.

**Wed., March 23- Boards of Management Orientation.** (for Board members, BIA staff and City Councillors). Toronto City Hall Council Chambers. From 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Learn what it takes to have a successful BIA. More info: Angela Varone – [avarone@toronto.ca](mailto:avarone@toronto.ca)

**April 10- 12 - 2011 BIA National Conference** at the London, Ontario Convention Centre. Themed “The triple return on investment of your BIA: Measuring the investment, innovation and impact of your Business Improvement Area,” it’s a great way to learn best practices from experts and

other BIAs. For more info, visit the website: [www.bia2011.com](http://www.bia2011.com), email at [info@obiaa.com](mailto:info@obiaa.com) or call toll free at 1-866-807-2227.



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## AT THE BIAS

**Apr. 23: Easter** at Bloor West Village BIA. Look for the Easter Bunny with lots of chocolate for the children. More info at [www.bloorwestvillage.ca](http://www.bloorwestvillage.ca)

**May 1: Annual Road Hockey Tournament,** Danforth BIA. More info at [www.thedanforth.ca](http://www.thedanforth.ca)

**May 6, 7:00- 11:00 p.m. Treasure Our Neighbourhood** at Yonge Lawrence Village. Sample a wealth of epicurean delights at this fundraiser. More info at [www.yongelawrencevillage-bia.com](http://www.yongelawrencevillage-bia.com)

Our sincerest condolences go out to the family and friends of **Paul Oberman** who was killed in a plane crash on Monday March 7, 2011. Paul was very active in the Rosedale community and was responsible for the immaculate restoration of the Summerhill Railway Station as an LCBO store -- a project that generated national attention.

He was the newly elected chair of the Rosedale Main Street BIA. Our condolences also extend to the community, the Board and the Members of the BIA.

## THE BENEFIT OF BY-LAWS

What we hear: “Do we *really* need a constitution?” “Why don’t you just let us do our thing?”

Thankfully, a constitution or set of by-laws is like insurance. You don’t need it until you *really* need it. The BIA office tries not to impose rules and regulations on BIAs. After all, BIAs are composed of unique, smart, independent people – and that’s why they are in business for themselves. But even with all that ingenuity, they could see the downfall of their BIA if they haven’t approved some by-laws.

### Why is it needed?

Imagine the following scenarios:

- A group of people say they are entitled to proxy votes at your AGM. They want to take control from the governing group. By-laws can clearly state who is entitled to a proxy vote.
- At a very important meeting, only one third of the Board shows up, but a vote is necessary to get an important project underway. A by-law gives you the option to accept votes by email.

- A member wants the Board to vote on having weekly meetings. If your by-laws already state the frequency of meetings, you don’t have to worry.
- Your Board wants all agenda items submitted in advance. Can you consider a last minute motion?
- Area residents who aren’t BIA members want to attend Board meetings. By-laws can give you direction.

### How onerous is it to develop a set of by-laws?

It isn’t. All you have to do is fill in the blanks of an existing template. And if you wish to go further, you can develop your own set of rules. The BIA office has a number of existing templates for you to review. Have two or three Board members take on this task and then present it to the full Board for review, thereby limiting lots of hours of debate.

For more info, check out the by-law template or call your BIA office representative.

<http://www.toronto-bia.com/images/stories/CityofToronto/procedural%20by-law%20-%202009.pdf>

#### TABIA Staff

**Executive Director:** John Kiru **Office Manager:** Patricia McCartie  
**Membership Outreach and Development Consultant:** Faiza Ansari  
**Communications Advisor and Newsletter Editor:** Deborah Etsten



Contact TABIA at [info@toronto-bia.com](mailto:info@toronto-bia.com) or 416-263-3295.  
Website: <http://www.toronto-bia.com>

#### TABIA Board Executive

**President:** Michael Comstock, *St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA*  
**Past President:** John Wakulat, *Roncesvalles Village BIA*  
**Past-President:** Alex Ling, *Bloor West Village BIA*  
**Secretary:** Paul Dineen, *Cabbagetown BIA*  
**Treasurer:** Henny Varga, *The Kingsway BIA*  
**Vice-Presidents:** Amy Chow, *The Danforth BIA*  
and Lionel Miskin, *Kennedy Road BIA*

#### Board Directors (BIA Board Chairs or Members)

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