

News & Views

A NEWSLETTER FOR BIA STAFF AND BOARDS | April 2011 | Vol. 2 No. 4

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

TABIA: SUPPORTING OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD BIAS

You might assume TABIA markets the TABIA brand, but that's not our intent. Instead we support our BIAs in their goals of branding, marketing and beautification. We also look to each level of government for greater cooperation.

We have just embarked on the second phase of the "My Neighbour" advertising campaign. The first phase was wildly successful in creating a greater awareness about neighbourhood shopping. Slogans, including "My Neighbour Jerked My Chicken," were clever and captured world-wide attention, going "viral," as they say.

The message of this campaign is: Value our local businesses and the real connection we have with our residents. Our quality of service and personal connection is something you will never get from big box stores. In essence, think big, buy local.

When you take the TTC you're likely to see many of the 300 posters in the subway system and 160 posters in bus shelters across the city – all showcasing merchants and their respective jobs in our BIAs. The ad slogans were written by the public—contest winners who submitted their entries to TABIA. They are now beginning to see their original submissions as exciting advertisements. Initial sponsors include the City and Beck Taxi.



Richard Powers wows the crowd with a dynamic presentation

ORIENTATION DAY FOR NEW BOARDS A DAY OF LEARNING AND SHARING

by John Kiru, Executive Director, TABIA

Although the weather was blustery, more than 150 people attended the BIA Boards of Management Orientation at Toronto City Hall on March 23. Organized by the City's BIA Office, it was a chance for new Boards and staff to learn how BIAs operate, and for more seasoned staff, to learn about new ways of doing things.

Bravos to the staff who helped make this happen and to the numerous speakers and presenters, from our own BIA ranks and from outside, who made this day a rich learning experience.

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To see the dozen new ads, go to http://www.toronto-bia.com/images/stories/tabia/MyNeighbour/goodneighbour_finals.pdf

Each ad will be up for at least a month at a time.

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. This month we highlight the streetscape at the Bloor Street and Bloor Yorkville BIAs. Let us know what you've done so we can spread the good news!

A grandiose sidewalk project takes shape in Bloor Yorkville

As we all know, some projects take a long time from that first dream to fruition. In the case of the Bloor Street Transformation Project, it's been 13 years. Back in 1998, the City came to the BIA to say they would be replacing water lines. Due to inevitable disruptions, the BIA decided it would be a good idea to consider a streetscape project at the same time, rather than dig things up again a few years later.

The fundamental designs were completed by 2000 with many nods to a North Michigan Avenue model in Chicago which gave great prominence to greenery as part of a high-end streetscape. Despite a few modifications the original vision is still there.

What they got: wider pedestrian sidewalks finished with a granite surface, 134 new London Plane trees and 54 extensive flower beds, plus a narrowed roadway with 54 fewer parking spots. Explains Executive Director Briar de Lange, the BIA already has 7,000 parking spots nearby and the loss of a few spots is hardly noticeable since cars are not allowed on either side of the road during rush hour.

Without hesitation, Briar said that the hardest part of the project was convincing the City of the need for this transformation. Even though former Councillor Kyle Rae was onside, Transportation did not want to have maintenance problems after the fact or deal with unknowns. Detailed traffic studies finally convinced them that the street could accommodate a narrower base and fewer parking spots.

BIA businesses were largely supportive of the project but some thought it would make more sense to have businesses on Bloor St. pay a higher levy, as they would receive the direct project benefits. This resulted in the creation of a separate BIA called the Bloor Street BIA. This extensive project was beyond the scope of

PROFILE: Pape Village BIA

Big BIAs often get attention, and rightly so. They have staff and budget to make lots of amazing things happen. But small BIAs must do just as much on a smaller scale, often with no staff or just a few volunteers. They truly deserve a lot of credit. Pape Village BIA is one of those amazing BIAs.

Approximately a couple kilometres north of the Danforth on Pape Ave., the BIA consists of about 100 businesses in a six-block stretch from Mortimer Ave to Gamble in the former area known as Todmorden. It's part of a multi-cultural, community-minded neighbourhood. It's not a place that's apt to lure too many people from outside the area, but perhaps it should be with some excellent, long established bakeries, European delis, Pilipino food markets and small town ambiance. Many of the businesses have been there for a long time, fostering community loyalty to this 25-year-old BIA.

The current Chair, Reverend Jim Parker who's been involved for six years, sees his involvement as his contribution to the community. Even though the church is officially not a part of the BIA, it has truly become the hub of the community. "We hired Clorraine Dennie as our Coordinator, not just because she can do the job. She's emotionally invested in BIAs and gets them, for the betterment of our BIA and the community," Jim proudly states.



Reverend Jim Parker and Clorraine Dennie exude a love for their work

CONTACT INFORMATION

Chair: Reverend Jim Parker
Coordinator: Clorraine Dennie
647-456-2411
papevillage@yahoo.ca

Some of the BIA's latest accomplishments include a branding exercise which includes the new logo — a passport stamp that has been spun off to all manner of things like multi-lingual banners. The directory which was just completed is a stunning accomplishment that helps a community that doesn't have to worry about businesses coming and going in the blink of an eye. Branding continues to be an ongoing project with new street signs on order. The BIA is also working hard on keeping the street clean and getting new hanging baskets with lush flowers.

Events are also important. Residents can enter the Shop Local contest in February, get involved with the spring cleanup and enjoy both a Pape SummerFest and WinterFest .

"We are proud of the reputation we've created with the businesses and residents. Everyone around here knows Pape Village BIA," says Clorraine. "That's pretty awesome."



Pape Village BIA's multi-lingual banner

capital cost sharing but the City provided a loan and also contributed by managing the construction tender and subsequent road work.

Briar's words of advice to other BIAs, no matter the size of your project:

- Don't be in a hurry. Good work takes time and a lot of planning.
- Get the support of your councillor, since so many people need to be swayed.
- The City and the BIA need to define responsibilities. Put everything in writing.



The glorious sidewalks in Bloor Yorkville

The celebration

Naturally, there will be a big celebration to showcase the work. **Celebrate Bloor** happens Sunday, June 19 from 11 -5 along a red carpet on Bloor St. from Church St. to Avenue Rd. Featuring talented musicians like Royal Wood, Keshia Chante, Shawn Desman and Platinum Blonde, and displaying models from the Yorkville Exotic Cars, the BIA's own restaurants will set up food pavilions. "The rest is up to Mother Nature, and we hope she cooperates," adds Briar.

A+ for changes to A-frame signage

The most frustrating issue around A-frame signage was the rule that a business had to have a 20 foot frontage or be on the first floor to qualify for displaying a sign. Now, those two rules have changed, and the signage bylaw awaits further consultation and then approval by the appropriate city committee. If approved, each BIA would decide for itself whether to allow narrow frontages and signage for second storey businesses.

Trees, please

The Forestry division is trying to be much more proactive this year with BIA's concerns. If you have overgrown or dead trees, cracked tree pits, uneven pavers around trees, or want more trees, take a walk about your BIA and note what needs to be done and in what specific locations. Then, send that information to your BIA staff contact in Economic Development who will forward the request to Forestry.

Things to know:

- Some floral arrangements in tree containers don't have drainage holes. That means that the tree below is being denied an important and possibly only source of water. Make sure your floral supplier is aware of this.
- Sometimes sidewalks around tree pits are salted, but try to find out if they are using eco-friendly salts which will not have a detrimental effect on the trees.
- When pit pavers create tripping hazards around sidewalk-level trees, consider rubberized mats as a nice alternative. They are porous to permit drainage.

We've Been Expecting You

The City of Toronto, in partnership with Tourism Toronto and the provincial Ministry of Tourism, has developed a comprehensive program resulting from a 2006 hospitality study that demonstrated the importance of making visitors to Toronto feel welcome. Interestingly, nearly half of all visitors fall into a category called Visiting Friends and Relatives. Starting in May, 2011 the program organizers will be encouraging BIAs to send a delegate to the seven-hour Train the Trainer program to take back to BIA businesses the four customer service principles of the program: prepared, proactive, proud and positive. As well, individual business owners or managers from BIAs can sign up for training sessions. There are numerous tools to use and share: buttons, posters, bumper stickers, window decals, paper bags even a mobile unit that would be happy to attend your events. Training and materials (available in five languages) are free. More info from wbeey@toronto.ca or 416-392-9577.



Murals and facades

The mural grant application closed the end of March but there may still be money in the budget for facade grants. The City's BIA office says the money gets allocated quickly. For a quick update, phone 416-392-1820.

ORIENTATION DAY (continued)

Briefly, here are some observations that my colleagues and I made:

The ABC of BIAs

Mike Major, BIA Office Manager, walked everyone through what BIAs can or can't do followed by some great Qs and As from the audience. Of note: Mike mentioned that Board meetings are open to the public, and the date and location should be posted on your website. But it's up to the Board to decide how to address questions or comments from non-Board members during a meeting since you have time limits to your meeting and don't want it derailed with content that's not part of your agenda. Their questions might be addressed after the formal meeting or within a certain time limit, according to your Bylaws.

Effective meetings

One engaging presenter was Richard Powers, from the U of Toronto's Rotman School of Management who spoke about conducting effective meetings. He said that to save time at Board meetings, you can group routine matters into one consent motion so it's faster to approve items like the agenda, the past meeting's minutes or any conflicts of interest. Richard also noted

that at effective meetings, Blackberries and other similar devices are banned because it takes too much time for people to re-engage.

Richard suggested taking an inventory of your Board's skill sets so you can match it with your needs. Once you have your matrix, you can see where the gaps are (like marketing expertise or organizational development) and decide whom you'd like to recruit to your Board

Capital P for projects

Raj Kumar, Streetscape Designer and Capital Projects Coordinator, from the City's BIA Office spoke about Capital Projects. While it was reported in the last issue of *News & Views* that Boards didn't need to get three quotes for purchases under \$7,500, Raj confirmed that all purchases that you want the City to cost share must be handled through the City Purchasing division. Estimated costs under \$50,000 need to have three quotes. All purchases over \$50,000 need to go out for competitive bids through the City's tendering process. However, if you present an RFP with an evaluation process — for example, to choose an artist to paint a mural — you can choose based on talent and experience, not simply the lowest bid.



Council chambers - a fitting backdrop to Mike Major's presentation

Making events special

Having organized more than 200 special events, Faiza Ansari from GreekTown on the Danforth BIA and TABIA was the perfect speaker to address special events. She said that the most important aspect of creating a special event in your BIA is to find out what's distinctive or unique to your BIA and build upon that. If you copy an existing event in name, such as a Taste event, make sure it's similar because people will have certain expectations.

Notes from the sessions will be posted on the City's BIA Website at: <http://www.toronto.ca/bia/> by mid-April.

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.

Enterprise Toronto – programs and seminars for business people

Check the Enterprise Toronto website each month for the latest offerings to help business people at www.enterprisetoronto.com or contact them at enterprisetoronto@toronto.ca

Jane's Walk – May 7 and 8. Great neighbourhood walks. Does your area have one? Deadline to post a walk in your 'hood is April 22. More info at: <http://janeswalk.net/cities/landing/category/toronto/>

Doors Open – May 28 and 29. Anything happening in your BIA? Don't forget to let folks know about it! <http://www.toronto.ca/doorsopen/index.htm>

AT THE BIAS

Apr. 23 - Easter at Bloor West Village BIA. www.bloorwestvillage.ca

May 1 - Annual Road Hockey Tournament, Danforth BIA. www.thedanforth.ca

May 6, 7:00- 11:00 p.m. - Treasure Our Neighbourhood at Yonge Lawrence Village. www.yongelawrencevillage-bia.com

LET US KNOW ABOUT YOUR UPCOMING EVENTS.

Send details to Patricia at TABIA who will publicize it on the TABIA website and share the info with *News & Views*. info@toronto-bia.com

TAX TIP\$

By Lionel Miskin, TABIA Vice-President and Secretary of the Kennedy Road BIA

"I'm a tenant. Property tax is not my problem." That's the kind of response we heard at the Kennedy Road BIA when we scheduled a tax seminar to brief members on the then new tax regime of Current Value Assessment. "No way," say property owners, "a tax on the landlord is a tax on the tenant. Tenants pay property taxes in different ways, but they certainly pay."

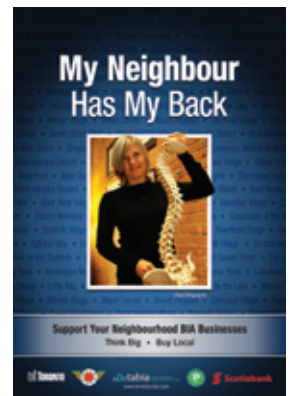
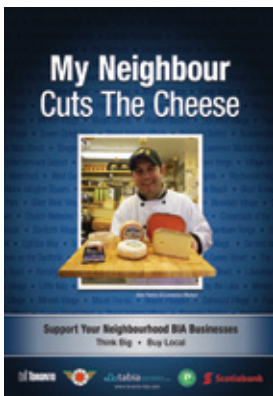
Look at your lease. If it's what realtors call a **net net lease**, then a proportionate share of the annual property tax bill is charged to you on top of your rent. If your lease calls for **gross rent** (all the expenses of owning and operating the premises are included in the rent), then the rental figure

includes enough to satisfy the landlord that he will have an acceptable return on his investment, regardless of the tax level. Some leases state that the tenant will reimburse the landlord for any increase in property tax above a certain level. Any way you turn it, the tax is a major factor in determining the rent you pay.

In many instances property tax is the single greatest expense the landlord regularly incurs. When it comes time to negotiate rent, either on a new lease or a renewal, you can bet that the landlord will have one eye on the tax bill and the other eye on the rent figure. And if the property fails to provide a regular adequate return, for whatever reason, and the landlord cannot get enough rent, you can be sure that the property will be converted to some other use.

Coming soon: What can tenants do?

continued



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

TABIA Board Executive

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This newsletter is also produced electronically and can be found at www.toronto-bia.com