

News & Views

A NEWSLETTER FOR BIA STAFF AND BOARDS | July 2011 | Vol. 2 No. 7



Visit the world while staying at home at Gerrard India Bazaar's TD Festival of South Asia, July 16 and 17

STICK AROUND FOR A STAYCATION

by John Kiru, Executive Director, TABIA

Staycations are on my mind! If you recall, staycation was a popular term a couple of years ago when gas prices were high and our Canadian dollar rock-bottom low. You couldn't escape the omnipresent stories encouraging everyone to take advantage of a holiday at home. Well, guess what folks? Gas prices have gotten even scarier, airports are no longer the fun places they used to be en route to somewhere else and our own back yard should be looking increasingly attractive.

Of course we all know about Toronto's cultural riches, the amazing cuisine, our non-stop festivals and those fascinating and diverse neighbourhoods, but what are we actually doing about it? Have you paid a visit yet to the

fabulous murals in Islington's BIA or enjoyed the Bollywood ambiance in Albion Islington or Gerrard India BIAs, to name just two examples?

I'm recommending we do a bit of introspection to find out what we have to offer in our own back yard and also encourage others to do the same. Besides our own personal trekking about, we should promote our BIAs and encourage Torontonians and their visiting friends and relatives to enjoy what we offer.

TABIA maps have arrived

This idea ties in well with TABIA's informative and exciting new neighbourhood maps which are now available. They will not only give a nod to the conventional attractions, they point the way to 71 exciting BIA neighbourhoods,

and that means more people get to discover the local scene.

Just to confirm that you really want lots of people to visit your BIA, consider the following. Tourists south of the border are not flocking here as much as they did when our dollar was lower. So maybe now is the time to encourage a "Discover Toronto" mentality. When money flows into a neighbourhood business, at least 68 per cent of it stays in the neighbourhood. When someone shops in a national chain, only 43 per cent of each dollar will find its way into the community. We all know that supporting the local shops makes great economic sense and it ensures the neighbourhood's vitality.

So, get out there and enjoy your back yard, folks. You won't regret it.

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KUDOS!

This regular column recognizes significant accomplishments taking place in our BIAs. This month we highlight the Village of Islington. Let us know what you've done so we can spread the good news!

The Village of Islington- Toronto's Village of Murals



"Riding the Radials" by John Kuna, 2007, with a train that resembles the trolley the BIA rented for its tours this year.

It's been only seven years, but the Village of Islington's dream—to turn Dundas St. West from Islington to Kipling into an outdoor gallery—has already been achieved. By early fall, more than 20 murals will line the streets. But they aren't just pretty walls; they define and explain the community and its roots.

"Little did we know that the community building pilot project begun in 2004 on plywood boards would become so popular with the residents," says Linda Pedersen, the BIA's Manager of Marketing & Public Relations. "Now, the area is known for having the highest quality murals in the GTA," she adds.

For the past five years, a mural-painting event has taken place on the first Saturday in June, evolving this year from a full-blown festival to a concert with community barbeque, crafts, entertainment and free trolley tours to see the unveiling of the next three murals to adorn the street.

The calibre of the work is very high. Toronto artist John Kuna has painted 14 of the 17 existing murals and has just been hired to paint three more this summer. He graduated from OCAD in 1997, and already his works grace significant public and private spaces in over 40 cities around the world. For example, in Montreal, one work is displayed at the

PROFILE: Parkdale Village BIA

The Parkdale BIA is a superb example of a BIA that understands its residents and appreciates its businesses and then takes extra steps to build on the unique aspects of its area. This attitude permeates the BIA from the Board to the staff to all that the BIA does. Heather Douglas, the Executive Director, says her BIA is unique. "Those who haven't been here in a couple of years will be surprised. We're definitely a proud people in our neighbourhood."

The BIA is located on Queen Street West with over 250 businesses running from Dufferin to Roncesvalles. It's sandwiched in between four other BIAs — Liberty Village to the south, Roncesvalles to the west, West Queen West to its east and Dundas St. West on its northern side. The BIAs along Queen W. occasionally get together and last year collaborated on Nuit Blanche installations, announcing their presence at a press conference.

Heather works with one part-time assistant and 11 Board members. Chair John Doherty is beginning his second term. "We're a pretty active Board with lots of people doing the work," he says. "There's a good mixture of members on the Board with some having been on the Board for over 10 years and others who are new."

The Board has two active committees — marketing and streetscape. No one can quite remember when the BIA first started but the best guess is in the '90s although there's been a business association since the '50s.

Per capita, Parkdale BIA is reputed to have more artists than any other neighbourhood. "This BIA is like visiting the world. We have all sorts of businesses... Asian, West Indian, burger joints, Tibetan stores..." says Heather. People who live in the area definitely shop locally and appreciate the large and eclectic business mix. As well, some of the newer businesses are bringing in a new clientele as are well-known businesses like Designer Fabrics that attract customers from across the city.

Parkdale BIA is crazy about events. The Fireside Culture Week which happens in late winter/early spring feeds a population that's hungry for events. Week-long live performances are held in traditional and non-traditional venues. For example, a belly dancer appeared in the optical store and treated sidewalk viewers to her craft. Comedy Night, as part of the week featured open mike and two great comedians.

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Parkdale BIA's light bulb bike rack

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Montreal Forum; in Toronto, aside from the Islington BIA, his work is in the Rogers Centre.

The murals would not have happened without generous contributions from the businesses, community members, local developers, grants from Toronto Economic Development and donations in-kind from paint and scaffolding suppliers.

To capitalize on their treasures, the BIA has designed camera walks and guided tours that also include meals at local eateries. Linda says, "These tours are bringing lots of new people to the village, generating heaps of community pride and giving the local economy a bit of a boost."

For more information, go to www.VillageofIslington.com or Linda Pedersen, at 416-767-7985 or Finda35@sympatico.ca. The Village of Islington — Village of Murals is on Dundas St West, (north of Bloor) between Kipling and Islington.

"These tours are bringing lots of new people to the village"

NEWS TO USE FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND MANAGERS

SCOOTING AWAY ILLEGAL VENDORS

This can make a BIA business owner quite angry – seeing an illegal vendor who has set up a cart on a BIA sidewalk, selling food, sunglasses, jewellery or some other item. After all, why should an “intruder” have the benefit of sales without paying rent or property taxes? Usually they don’t have a legal permit to vend there, even though they might flash you something that looks legit. If you want to be sure, call 311, the Toronto Access Number. If you have spotted a so-called legal license, let 311 know and they can verify for you. And they’ll send an official to deal with the offender. It’s helpful to inform all the members in your BIA about this so they can report illegal vendors quickly and directly.

A-FRAME CHANGES GET HIGH MARKS

You asked for changes, and they’ve arrived. As of Sept. 1, A-frame signage permits will be available to buildings less than 20 feet wide and to second-storey businesses, and they will cost less than in previous years for the original permit application as well as the renewal. Approvals for this type of signage and for individual applications still rest with each BIA since some do not wish to have their sidewalks cluttered with A-frames.

CITY WIDE CAMPAIGN STILL AVAILABLE

It’s not too late to find out more about the great media deals that TABIA has arranged on your behalf in your own local papers, radio, TV or the TTC. Just recently TABIA added the *Toronto Sun* and *24 Hours* to the media line-up. If you’re looking to promote an event or simply drive more business to your BIA and want to learn more, give Patricia a call or go to:

www.toronto-bia.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=150&Itemid=71

SET YOUR SIGHTS ON THESE SITES:

Sales website for commercial properties

A very comprehensive real estate site will open your eyes to current property sales or rentals in your neighbourhood. These are often the sales that are undetected. No signs out front. No one is saying a word. The trick is to define the area as well as possible. You might have to play around with it to find the most comprehensive search, but if you want to search an area that goes beyond your own BIA, it’s also possible.

www.icx.ca/index.aspx

Google Analytics

You can easily track how your website is doing month to month with this free and easy tool at www.google.com/analytics

HootSuite

Described as a “social media dashboard for business,” this tool lets you monitor and analyze social networks. The “basic” service is free and the more advanced service costs \$5.99 a month. <http://hootsuite.com>

Google Alerts

Have a topic of interest that you want monitored for free? Maybe it’s the name of your BIA or perhaps an event you sponsor. One tool you can use is Google Alerts. But you’ll need to set up a gmail account first. Once you have your account, which is easy to set up, just give the tool some key words and what you want the tool to monitor (i.e. media, blogs, networks, etc.). When those words pop up, you’ll be notified in your mail box. You can also limit how often you receive the alerts and other parameters. To set up your Google Alert, go to www.google.com/alerts

Let us know of others you have discovered so we can spread the word!

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. **Note: no meeting in August.** 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

Here are a few that might be of special interest:

- The Power of Email and Social Media – July 14 in North York
- How to Market Your Business in the Changing World of Media- Aug. 9 at City Hall
- Managing Your Cash Flow- Aug. 24 in North York

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

AT THE BIAS

July 16-17 – TD Festival of South Asia- along Gerrard Street East between Greenwood and Coxwell Avenue, from 12:00-11:00 p.m.
www.gerrardindiabazaar.com

July 23 – Danforth Experience 2nd Annual Thrill of the Grill
416-429-4479, www.thedanforth.ca

Aug. 5-7 – Pilaros Taste of the Danforth - the best of Hellenic food, culture and music. Phone: 416-469-5634 www.tasteofthedanforth.com

Aug. 14 - Church Street Village Fair - www.churchstreetfetishfair.com
Celebrating the community and the merchants of the BIA with live music, carnival games and a market place of all things naughty and nice!
416-393-6363

Now to Sept 1 – Waterfront BIA - My Waterfront Photo Contest.
Prizes for best photos. 416-561- 3683, cjolly@waterfrontbia.com
www.waterfrontbia.com

October 24 to October 31 – Halloweek , Church Wellesley Village - A week of wickedly weird. Join us for our annual Jack-O-Lantern Competition and more on October 31. 416-393-6363 www.churchwellesleyvillage.ca

ACCESSIBILITY, PLEASE!

THE ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2005 – YOUR COMPLIANCE NEEDED BY JANUARY 1, 2012!

There are laws that you have to obey and there's common sense. We think this Act combines both. After all, it makes perfect sense for businesses within your BIA to attract the greatest number of people while being open and accessible in every possible way.

Standards that have become law

Of five accessibility standards that have been set out, only the Customer Service Standard has so far become law, as of January 2008. Public sector organizations had to meet the requirements of this standard by January 1, 2010, and private sector and non-profit organizations must follow suit by January 1, 2012.

Requirements of the Customer Service Standard (for businesses with fewer than 20 employees)

In order to comply with the Customer Service Standard, all businesses or organizations that provide goods or services to the public or to other third parties in Ontario are legally required to:

1. Establish policies, practices and procedures on providing goods or services to people with disabilities.

2. Set a policy on allowing people to use their own personal assistive devices to access the organization's goods and use the organization's services.

3. Use reasonable efforts to ensure that the organization's policies, practices and procedures are consistent with the core principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.

4. Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.

5. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who interact with the public or other third parties on the organization's behalf on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.

6. Train staff, volunteers, contractors and any other people who are involved in developing the organization's policies, practices and procedures on the provision of goods or services on a number of topics as outlined in the customer service standard.

7. Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of the premises that

are open to the public, unless the animal is excluded by another law. If a service animal is excluded by law, use other measures to provide services to the person with a disability.

8. Permit people with disabilities who use a support person to bring that person with them while accessing goods or services in premises open to the public or third parties.

9. Where admission fees are charged, provide notice ahead of time on what admission, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.

10. Provide notice when facilities or services that people with disabilities rely on to access or use the organization's goods or services are temporarily disrupted.

11. Establish a process for people to provide feedback on how the organization provides goods or services to people with disabilities and how the organization will respond to any feedback and take action on any complaints. Make the information about the organization's feedback process readily available to the public.

More info at <http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/programs/accessibility/>

PROFILE: Parkdale Village BIA (continued)

The BIA also participated in the Contact Photography event. As a different take on it this year, the BIA partnered with Parkdale Collegiate, gave 10 photography workshops for kids and then gave them cameras and photo themes. The juried exhibit in eight venues produced exciting results and inspired the kids.

Another event is Parkdale Then and Now, which takes a sidewalk sale and elevates it. Vintage cars and a street sale complement the extensive archives of Parkdale past.

Streetscaping has been ongoing. Last year they installed 15 light standards and have another 15 planned by 2015. They will be outfitted for hanging

baskets which are presently attached to the buildings. New banners with the new logo adorn poles and planters filled with flowers sprout each June. Additional streetscaping will focus on lighting standards and clamp-ons which give light to the sidewalks. They are working with the TTC to remove the old poles.

The latest public space is an amphitheatre which complements the revamped underpass at Dufferin and Queen. Part of the capital design strategy specified more green space and the amphitheatre followed that model.

Hop on the Queen streetcar and go west to rediscover this area!

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Contact TABIA at info@toronto-bia.com or 416-263-3295.

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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*

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Lynn Clay, *Liberty Village BIA*; Keith Denning, *Roncesvalles BIA*; Grace Russo, *Little Italy BIA*; Laura Schaefer, *Queen St. West BIA*; Robert Sysak, *West Queen West BIA*

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