

News & Views

A NEWSLETTER FOR BIA STAFF AND BOARDS | March 2012 | Vol. 3 No. 3

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

MORE ON WAYFINDING

Working with the St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA for the past few years, I've known what it's like to cater to tourists without a visitor centre or wayfinding system. Without a system many merchants become de facto tour guides. Fast forward a few years and BIAs offered to help frame the first widely used wayfinding map, working with the City and Tourism Toronto.

The City's Public Realm Section of Transportation Services began a wayfinding strategy last year to help make Toronto into a more "legible and walkable city." The first phase of the project was begun in anticipation of the 2015 Pan Am Games and might be the first spin-off benefit. John Kiru and I who have represented TABIA on this initiative were impressed with consultants, Steer Davies Gleave and DIALOG. This phase is not about designing the signs, but deciding what information will be on each sign.

We are happy to report that the commercial sector won't be left out of the system. Work done to date includes a *hierarchy* in which there are four tiers. In each tier of Toronto's assets, retail is included! At the top, the Citywide Tier 1 includes Landmark Retail, Tier 2 - Principal Retail Clusters.

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HAPPY FAMILY DAY

*in three BIAs:
Waterfront (left), Beach (above)
and Kingsway (right)*
See p. 2 for Kudos on these Family Day Festivals



COUNCILLORS: OUR VERY IMPORTANT ALLIES

By John Kiru, Executive Director, TABIA

Just how important are councillors to the success of a BIA? In a word: *very*. Councillors sit on BIAs as a legislative requirement, placed there to protect and guide the municipality in case a BIA gets into "trouble." They offer reasoned opinion, a sounding board, a balancing figure. They also bring great knowledge about governance and municipal and provincial direction. They give of themselves to deal with issues and concerns that may not be easy for BIAs to handle on their own.

Get to know your Councillors outside of Board meetings. You may want to ask them what programs and initiatives they support and what they favour that will look after the best needs of the small businesses within your BIA. Don't be afraid to ask them to *support* an initiative or program that supports your businesses.

What they are *not* supposed to do is dictate policy. You shouldn't let a councillor overrule or overrun a BIA. Keep in mind that BIAs are supposed to be run by an elected Board and even if your Board has a few councillors and other city-appointed staff, they will not hold the majority vote on your Board. What you should agree on at the outset is agreeing to disagree!

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and The Kingsway BIA
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KUDOS!

*This regular column recognizes significant accomplishments taking place in our BIAs. This month we highlight the three BIAs that held a **Family Day Festival** this year – **The Beach BIA, Waterfront BIA and The Kingsway BIA.** Let us know if you've got a story to tell!*



Family Day became a new Ontario holiday just five years ago. Three BIAs have made it a fun and family-friendly signature event

THE BEACH BIA

This year marked the 5th annual Beach BIA Family Day Festival—an event that welcomes thousands of people from all over the city and proudly showcases some great local talent. For the first time ever, the weather wasn't the most significant planning consideration. Unusually warm weather made it much easier to plan activities out on the sidewalks and in the parks such as the well-loved petting zoo. Ever-popular crafts and performers could be found in local places of worship. The BIA conducted a survey this year which yielded interesting results. Although just over 50 per cent of attendees suggested that the BIA could be doing more with the event, 81 per cent plan to attend next year, 92 per cent believe the event enhances the quality of life for people living in the area and 98 per cent intend to tell others of the event. The festival has become one of the BIA's premier events. Survey results and feedback from members and neighbours will guide them to make improvements on this welcomed signature event in The Beach.

THE WATERFRONT BIA

The Toronto Waterfront BIA knew the key to a successful Family Day was to collaborate with various Waterfront BIA members such as those who owned or managed properties and hotels. The full day of fun family activities included Harry and his Bucket Full of Dinosaurs, the fun-loving clown band Pooky's Gang, a roving balloon artist and magician and a walking lollipop lady. Family skating at the Natrel® Rink at Harbourfront Centre was complemented by spectacular ice shows featuring Le Patin Libre, Rock, Swing & Skate, and RBC Play Hockey Activities, keeping the rink and indoor venues full to capacity. The Woofjocks Canine Performance Team demos at PawsWay, along with face painting and other dog demonstrations doubled the 2011 attendance to reach 8,000 patrons.

Said Executive Director, Carol Jolly, "It was a perfect day for families. The weather cooperated, all programming went on without a hitch and every venue was filled with people participating and enjoying the great variety of activities all along the waterfront." Family Day has definitely grown to become one of The Waterfront BIA's strongest signature events. In the future, they will add partners and programming as well as special offers from local businesses.

KINGSWAY BIA

The Kingsway BIA started a family tradition with their first annual Family Day on the Kingsway. Visitors enjoyed ice carving demos, carnival activities, maple taffy pulling, food, music and more. The Kingsway BIA prides itself on hosting events that have a little something for everyone, and this year's event, was filled with many pleasant surprises for everyone. There were visits from a number of special guests, including The Redpath "Acts of Sweetness" Cookie Truck, with free cookies for all the visitors. The friendly merchants and neighbours of the Kingsway BIA were delighted by the interactive ice sculptures on display throughout the neighbourhood. The excitement was contagious on Bloor Street West between Prince Edward Drive and Montgomery Road. Family Day on the Kingsway was a great success and will be the first of many more!

As the Kingsway BIA summed it up:

Toronto's neighbourhoods have a lot to offer families looking for a fun day out.

COUNCILLORS (cont.)

Are you wrestling with parking problems, (see News to Use) patio requests, developers reluctant to offer concessions, streetscape visioning? These are a few of the issues that not only challenge councillors but are ones they want and need to tackle. A quick call from a councillor can definitely expedite a problem. And if you can work together on these issues, with your councillor taking the lead when necessary, you will present a strong front.

SHOWING APPRECIATION IS IMPORTANT

Politics should not come into play when you work with your councillor. It should be a non-partisan act of community and neighbourhood building. And when all is said and done, there are many ways to show your appreciation. Many of our councillors have helped BIAs expand, have forged important alliances with planners and

developers, have worked magic with permits and have brought valuable attention to their BIAs, as starters. Make sure you thank your councillor in any public events you have, in your publications or when you talk to the press. Give them the stage and engage them in your activities, whenever it seems to work. After all, it takes two to tango.

PROFILE: UPTOWN YONGE BIA

Although this BIA might not have the name recognition it wants or deserves, many people would recognize this familiar stretch of Yonge St. starting one block north of Eglinton and extending for nine blocks as far as Glengrove, ending at the famous Sheridan Nurseries on the east and Sign of the Skier on the west. Who hasn't made the trek up to Sporting Life at least once or run down Yonge St. in one of the famous 10 km runs?

This BIA which has 400 businesses started in 1995. It's blessed with many beautiful buildings such as the former Children's Bookstore at St. Clement's which now awaits a new tenant or the old Capitol Theatre at Castlefield which presents a stately grandeur for those booking events. One of two treasured parkettes sits directly in the middle of the BIA. This past year it showcased a beautiful 20-foot tree adorned with 6,000 twinkling lights and silver and teal ornaments.

Well-established mainstays include: The Good Bite, Circle Shoes, Little Party Shoppe, Suzanne Shoes, Sheridan Nurseries, Sporting Life, Grazier, North 44, Centro, and Penny at Stychin Tyme – to name just a few of the treasures in this BIA.

The BIA has been beset by non-stop utility work with one item being addressed each year starting with gas, water, sidewalks and road work. Last year was the first year they were finally free of construction and ready for visitors to truly enjoy their BIA. The area is easy to get to by every type of transit with a major subway station at Yonge Eglinton Centre to connect with all that's offered here.

STREETSCAPING AND MARKETING INITIATIVES

The BIA installed beautiful benches, bell-shaped luminaires and 26 double poles used solely for banners. Three in-ground planters filled with shrubs and seasonal flowers line the east side. The planters are maintained by Sheridan Nurseries.

Daly McCarten, the coordinator since 2005, works with a resourceful Board of 12 members and a small budget to bring about some wonderful and necessary touches. Daly turned to the Grade 12 Design Class at St. Clement's School for help and asked them to design a logo for the BIA. The talented girls produced the classic logo as well as the design used on the summer banners and the soon-to-be installed spring banner which features raindrops and tulips. Sporting Life's skillful marketing team assisted the BIA with their final decision.

Uptown Yonge launched its website last year and continues to update it daily. The directory continues to grow and new businesses are spotlighted every two weeks. Enjoying their presence on Facebook, Uptown Yonge should have a phone app for smart phones within the year.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Daly McCarten, Coordinator 416-783-2120
Ian McClelland, Board Chair daly@uptownyonge.com
Randy Freedman, Vice Chair www.uptownyonge.com

GREENTBIZ IS BACK!

Ontario is transitioning to a greener economy and opportunities exist for individuals, small businesses and communities groups to benefit by generating electricity and profits. To assist small businesses and BIA communities in taking advantage of this opportunity, TABIA's greenTbiz Program has launched a seminar series to educate BIAs, BIA members and local residents on how and why they should consider the development of solar PV projects in local BIA communities. With ample roof space, organizational expertise and marketing savvy, BIAs have extensive potential to actively participate in Ontario's new green economy.

GreenTbiz and its presentation partner Koenig & Consultants Inc. are looking to collaborate with BIAs to provide 16 free public seminars from February - July of this year. Attendees will learn how to plan, build and maintain rooftop solar PV projects for their homes, businesses and communities. In addition, they will hear stories from people who have successfully connected their solar PV projects to the electricity grid or are in the process of developing community projects. You can learn more here:

<http://greentbiz.org/programs/community-power/about/>

BIAs or City of Toronto councillors interested in hosting a TABIA Go Renewable session are invited to contact greenTbiz Program Manager Robert Wakulat at rwakulat@greentbiz.org or 416-697-9000 for more information. *This project has received funding support from the Ontario Power Authority through the Community Energy Partnerships Program. Such support does not indicate endorsement by the Ontario Power Authority or the Province of Ontario of the contents of this material.*

WAYFINDING (cont.)

Then Tier 3, along with schools and churches, lists Local Retail Clusters. At the detailed Tier 4 level, a list of local Shops, Restaurants and Venues is listed. BIAs will be pleased to know that they can support the local listings with up-to-date information.

Seeing the complexity of what must be considered in a proper wayfinding strategy, it was much appreciated that City Council halted the rollout of the Info-To-Go advertising and wayfinding pillars at their Feb. 7-8 meeting. The wayfinding system strategy will be unveiled to the public at an Open House, Tuesday, March 28, from 5 to 8 p.m. at Metro Hall. The presentation is at 5 p.m. but the interactive panels and Q & A will begin at 6:30 p.m. If you have an interest in tourism, please try to attend this phase one presentation.

Michael Comstock

TABIA President, Representing St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA

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. 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 – free programs and seminars for business people. **March and April**

- 1) **Various Dates and Toronto locations, 10 - 11:30 a.m. - Morning Business Seminars**
- 2) **March 26-29, 6:00- 7:30 p.m. Business Basics Bootcamp** at the Scarborough Civic Center
- 3) **April -Small Business ARTS Forum:** All day, North York Civic Center - for more event details & to register http://www.enterprisetoronto.com/index.cfm?linkid=99&linktype=mainlink&fromurl=boxes&content_id=2580

March 1- Commercial Facade Improvement Program – application goes online. Applicants approved on a first in/first approved basis. www.toronto.ca/bia/financial_incentive_programs.htm#3

Mar. 29 - Mural Grant Application deadline. More info at www.toronto.ca/bia/financial_incentive_programs.htm#3

Apr. 22-25 – 2012 National BIA Conference, Thunder Bay. www.obiaa.com

AT THE BIAS

March 12– 17 Fireside Culture Week IV: great music, art, comedy, and food along Queen W. between Dufferin and Roncesvalles. 416-536-6918 or festival@parkdalevillagebia.com

April 7- Easter at Bloor West Village
- Look for the Easter Bunny with chocolates for the children.

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

NEWS TO USE FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND MANAGERS

PARKING MATTERS

TABIA's Parking Committee is in the midst of creating a Parking Policy that's going to be submitted to the City. It's hoped this policy will influence the City's parking practices to the benefit of our members. To achieve this goal, we would like your assistance.

Let us know about the issues your BIA has experienced. Here are a few examples: hidden handicap parking spots, fake handicap stickers, members being ticketed while making deliveries to their own businesses and lack of parking spots. Send your information and any questions to TABIA at: info@TABIA.ca

ROLL OUT THE BIXIS

After nearly a year-and-a-half and 1,000 bikes, 80 stations, 1,500 docking points and 4,300 annual members, the Bixi Bike Share Program is looking to expand its network. They currently have stations as far north as Bloor, from Bathurst practically to Broadview. They not only would like to increase ridership but also attract more

sponsors for their docking stations and system-wide naming rights. Appealing to BIAs, they are also encouraging BIAs and businesses within the BIAs to give promotional offers to members that would make their memberships more valuable. For example, a business that offers massages and health services might offer riders a 10 per cent reduction. To see how this would benefit your BIA by being bike-friendly and in touch, contact iheber@publicbikesystem.com or 1-877-820-2453.

NOT FAR FROM THE TREE

"Hug and pick" could be a new motto for volunteer fruit pickers. Apparently Toronto has an abundance of fruit-bearing trees that go unharvested resulting in messy ground and unwanted pests, not to mention wasted food. According to Laura Reinsborough from the new and innovative organization Not Far from the Tree, we have over 1.5 million lbs of fruit ready to pick in Toronto. With her program, one third of the fruit goes to property owners, one-third to the volunteer pickers and the final third to various

food agencies in the immediate area. Let your BIA members know about this program, and if you've got fruit-bearing trees in your BIA that seem ripe for picking, get in touch with her at info@notfarfromthetree.org or 647-774-7425.

LET THE GAMES BEGIN

Toronto hosts some major sports competition this summer with the Ontario Summer Games, Aug. 16-19, for over 2,500 young athletes and thousands of spectators. The opportunity for TABIA members comes from an "all access pass" and the \$20 commemorative pins that will be sold. Pin holders will have a value-added incentive to receive discounts at local restaurants, shops and attractions for a two week period, starting in mid-August. More info to come.

HYDRO UPDATE

Clamp-on lights are now allowed by Hydro. But are you waiting to hear back about your banner applications? Don't feel alone if you haven't heard yet. The City is following up on the lack of follow-up.

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TABIA Board Executive

President: Michael Comstock, *St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA*

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