

Designation of Community Improvement Project Areas to for the Business Improvement Area (BIA) Commercial Façade Program

Date:	January 15, 2007
To:	Planning & Growth Management Committee
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
Wards:	(All Wards)
Reference Number:	pg070002

SUMMARY

This report seeks authority to prepare by-laws to designate 6 newly created BIAs as Community Improvement Project Areas (CIPAs) and to include corresponding Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) for these areas. Authority is also sought to amend 5 existing CIPAs and CIPs in response to BIA boundary changes. These by-laws will allow the City to extend its Commercial Façade Improvement Program to property owners within these BIAs once the BIA becomes eligible under the program criteria and to property owners within expanded BIAs that are currently eligible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The City Solicitor, in consultation with the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division, and the General Manager of Economic Development, Culture, and Tourism be authorized to prepare the necessary by-laws to designate 6 new BIAs as Community Improvement Project Areas and to amend 5 existing Community Improvement Project Areas, as set out in Attachments 1 and 2.
2. The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division, in consultation with the General Manager of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism, and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, be authorized to prepare new Community Improvement

Plans and amendments to existing Community Improvement Plans for the areas indicated in Attachments 1 and 2.

3. In accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act, staff be authorized to hold a public meeting before the Planning & Growth Management Committee regarding the CIPA and CIP by-laws.
4. This report be forwarded to the Economic Development Committee for information.
5. The appropriate City officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary actions to give effect thereto.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications contained in this report.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of September 28, 29, and 30, 2005, Council adopted Clause 8, Economic Development Committee Report 7, approving program guidelines and an implementation schedule for a Commercial Façade Improvement Program for Toronto's Business Improvement Areas (BIAs).

At its meeting of January 31, February 1 and 2, 2006, City Council adopted the necessary by-laws to designate the 44 BIAs in existence at the time as Community Improvement Project Areas and to adopt the required Community Improvement Plans (Clause 1, Planning and Transportation Committee Report 1).

Since that time, 6 new BIAs have been created and 5 existing BIAs have altered their boundaries. This report recommends the City Solicitor bring forward by-laws that will allow the City to extend its Commercial Façade Improvement Program to property owners within new BIAs once these BIAs become eligible under the program criteria and to property owners within expanded BIAs that are currently eligible.

COMMENTS

Program Purpose and Benefits:

City Council has made improving the City's business climate and making Toronto a clean and beautiful city two of its top priorities. In both regards, BIAs are key contributors. There are 60 BIAs in the City of Toronto, most of which are located in older main street commercial areas. BIAs are an integral part of the economic and social well-being of the communities in which they are located. They provide shopping and other services within close walking distance, are

focal points for neighbourhood activity, and offer opportunities for local entrepreneurship and employment. BIAs contribute approximately \$350 million in tax revenue to the City each year and employ over 150,000 people.

Many BIAs are finding it an increasing challenge to compete and thrive because of competition from big-box and internet retailing and a general decline in building stock. These factors threaten the longer term economic vitality and viability of the City's main street retail areas. It is important from a planning and economic development point of view to ensure vital and viable retail strips in the City as they contribute to a healthy tax base, provide local entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, and ensure that portions of the population, which may not be as mobile, have access to near-by shopping and other services

A Commercial Façade Improvement Program is a proven, cost-effective way to improve local conditions as it stimulates private investment in improving the building stock and it compliments the significant private contributions toward neighbourhood improvement already made by BIAs. The Commercial Façade Improvement Program coupled with the City's Capital Cost Share Program, which provides matching funding for streetscape improvements in BIAs, will have a significant impact on the cleanliness and attractiveness of local shopping areas, a key factor in the economic vitality and viability of these areas. It is estimated that for every dollar the City contributes toward building improvements, an additional \$9.00 is spent by the owners.

Even in some of the more vibrant BIAs in the City, a Commercial Façade Improvement Program can be a useful tool to maintain the level of investment necessary to ensure continued success. Within these areas, the program can be a catalyst to attract new businesses and to improve the visual attractiveness and architectural quality of the area.

The program was officially launched on February 1st, 2006 and was made available to the 21 BIAs that were not previously eligible for façade improvement grants. The program had an overwhelming response and a total of 104 applications were received by the deadline date. Seventy six of these applications were approved and the remaining 28 were declined due to lack of program funds.

Program Details and Eligibility:

The Commercial Façade Improvement Program provides grants to commercial property owners and tenants within eligible BIAs to improve the appearance of their building façade. The City will provide grants to a maximum of 50% of eligible construction costs or \$10,000 (\$12,500 for corner properties). Funding for this program is included in the yearly EDCT Capital Budget.

The Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program is only offered to BIAs that:

- have been in existence for a minimum of five years;
- have in place, a Board of Management approved by the current City Council;
- have an operating budget, adopted at a general meeting of the BIA and approved by City Council, for the year in which the grant is requested;

- are in good standing with respect to the City's Municipal Code for BIAs, including with respect to the preparation and audit of the BIA annual financial statements etc.; and
- have a demonstrated record of successfully carrying out area improvements, including but not limited to capital streetscape improvements projects, hosting special events or undertaking marketing/advertising programs for the area.

Prospective grant applicants within eligible BIAs:

- must be the owner of a property used for commercial purposes at street level or have the written permission of such a property owner;
- must not owe outstanding taxes to the City;
- must not start the improvement project before the grant application is approved;
- must not have received the maximum façade improvement grant for the property in the previous 10 years; and
- must agree to the terms and conditions of the Program.

Priority will be given to those applications which:

- propose complete façade renovations or restorations (including storeys above ground level if applicable) as opposed to the replacement of singular or multiple façade components such as windows, signage, doors etc;
- propose the restoration of historic or unique façades; and
- represent the improvement or renovation of two or more adjoining facades, either under one or multiple ownerships.

It is mandatory that applications must represent at least three of the eligible façade improvements mentioned below:

- Brick cleaning façade treatments such as power washing;
- Exterior Painting;
- Replacement of doors & windows;
- Replacement and/or repair of cornice, parapets & other architectural features;
- Repair & replacement of awnings or canopies;
- Repair and/or re-pointing of façade masonry;
- Installation and improvement of signage;
- Installation of exterior decorative lighting and upgrading of existing fixtures on external façade;
- Redesign of storefront;
- Installation of wheelchair accessibility ramps;
- Other improvements agreed to by the General Manager of Economic; and Development, Culture and Tourism.

Applications are reviewed on a 'first come, first served' basis up to a predetermined deadline date. If at the deadline, there are more applications than funds remaining; priority will be given to applicants that best meet the program priorities approved by Council.

Planning Requirements:

Façade Improvement Grants are permitted under the Municipal Act only within areas designated as Community Improvement Project Areas and a Community Improvement Plan containing relevant policies has been adopted and approved, pursuant to Section 28 of the Planning Act. With the recent proclamation of the new City of Toronto Act, approval of Community Improvement Plans now rests with the City, however, consultation with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is required.

A Community Improvement Project Area is defined in the Planning Act as follows:

“means a municipality or an area within a municipality, the community improvement of which, in the opinion of the council, is desirable because of age, dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement, unsuitability of buildings or for any other environment, social or community economic development reason”

The Official Plan for the City of Toronto contains provisions related to Community Improvement Plans in order to utilize the provisions set out in Section 28 of the Planning Act.

Section 5.2.2 of the Official Plan states that “Community Improvement Project Areas will be designated by by-law and Community Improvement Plans will be prepared to promote the maintenance, rehabilitation, revitalization and/or conservation of selected lands, buildings, and communities facing challenges of transition, deficiency or deterioration or for any other environmental, social or community economic development reason.

The Official Plan also states that Community Improvement Plans will be prepared to provide direction regarding municipal investment to complement projects of a Business Improvement Area and economic growth.

The areas that coincide with the BIAs are considered appropriate to implement initiatives to enhance the visual attractiveness, architectural character and general business climate by encouraging redesign, renovation and restoration of commercial facades.

Implementation:

Over the years, former municipalities have designated many parts of the City under Section 28 of the Planning Act for a multitude of community improvement purposes including façade improvement grants. It has been necessary to research all existing designations to ensure compatibility with the proposed expansion of the Commercial Façade Improvement Program and its purpose. This research shows a range of situations in this regard.

Of the 60 existing BIAs, 54 have been designated and have Community Improvement Plans in place while the remaining 6 BIAs have never been previously designated as Community Improvement Areas. Some of the existing community improvement plans already include façade provisions, but, in most cases, are not the subject of active façade programs. The proposed program is not intended to have any impact outside existing BIAs. Commercial property owners

within those areas that are not BIAs and currently receive façade improvement grants under the Employment Revitalization Program will continue to receive funding to a maximum of 5 years. Similarly, where a BIA is currently eligible for the program, these amendments will ensure that eligibility is retained.

Conclusions:

In order to make all BIAs eligible for the Commercial Façade Improvement Program, they must be designated as Community Improvement Project Areas under Section 28 of the Planning Act and have a Community Improvement Plan in place.

This report recommends the City Solicitor bring forward by-laws to designate the 6 new BIAs as Community Improvement Project Areas and provide for the adoption of Community Improvement Plans so that these new BIAs can take advantage of the Commercial Façade Improvement Program when they become eligible after the Council approved 5-year waiting period. The report also recommends amendments to the Community Improvement Plan Areas reflecting boundary changes for 5 existing BIAs so that the expanded areas can take advantage of the program.

CONTACT

Patrick Lee
Manager, Community Policy
416-392-7863
plee4@toronto.ca

Ted Tyndorf
Chief Planner and Executive Director
City Planning Division

Mike Major,
Manager, Business Improvement Areas
416-392-0623
mmajor@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Ted Tyndorf
Chief Planner and Executive Director
City Planning Division

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – By laws and plans in these areas are new and cover locations which have not previously been designated as Community Improvement Project Areas

1. Danforth Village BIA
2. Sheppard East – Agincourt BIA
3. Chinatown BIA
4. Albion – Islington BIA
5. Dundas West BIA
6. Old Queen Street BIA

Attachment 2 – These By-laws amend existing designations by expanding / reducing the boundaries so as to include parts of a BIA not previously included

1. St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA
2. Bloor-Yorkville BIA
3. Little Italy BIA
4. Roncesvalles Village BIA
5. Rosedale – Summerhill BIA