



BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA
67 Mowat Avenue, Suite 104, Toronto M6K 3E3
Tel: 416-516-1723 www.lvbias.com Fax: 416-516-9718

Councillor Kyle Rae, Chair
Economic Development Committee
City of Toronto, 100 Queen Street West, Suite A5
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

June 23, 2008

Dear Councillor Rae,

Re: Liberty Village - the future is here!

As the first non-retail BIA in Canada, the LVBIA represents more than 500 businesses and 7500 employees located in a campus-style employment area at King and Dufferin. Many of Toronto's leading creative thinkers and companies in the high tech, arts, design, entertainment and media businesses are located in Liberty Village.

Since 2001, the Liberty Village BIA has worked to champion and nurture this creative and vibrant community. A few of our successes include business support and connectivity through events like the annual Give Me Liberty Afterwork Party, the new ICAN Pitch event, regular LVBIA communications, and an active website; promotion of the creativity and vibrancy of the area through our unique BENCHmark art benches program, as a Zone for the 2008 Scotiabank Nuit Blanche, a weekly Greenbelt Farmers' Market, and pride in our area history and architecture which attracts interest from groups around the world; cost sharing with the City on capital improvements such as our Liberty Street Linear Park, area murals, and commercial facade improvements. The members of the Liberty Village BIA include property owners, management firms and the operators and employees of a variety of small and medium sized businesses. We enjoy their support in implementing improvement initiatives that ensure that Liberty Village remains competitive, attracts new investment, and supports the area as an important employment area for the City of Toronto.

However, as you know, there are limitations to the work that BIA's can do alone when working to bring about area improvements, especially when dealing with key infrastructure and municipal policy issues. We are writing to respectfully request Council to direct city staff and / or its affiliate organization TEDCO, to initiate action on the following three challenges:

1. Local Road Improvement: construct an east-west local road from Dufferin Street to Strachan Avenue at the southern boundary of Liberty Village

Discussions regarding constructing a new east-west local road along the south boundary of Liberty Village first took place when approvals were given for the east Liberty Village Master Plan in 2000. Liberty Street is the only east west road and it was agreed then that it alone could not accommodate the projected new residential Master Plan development. Toronto Transportation also acknowledges that traffic counts along Dufferin Street, and likely along connecting streets, will go up once the Dufferin Street jog is eliminated. And, at a recent meeting regarding the Strachan Avenue GO rail at-grade reconfiguration, Toronto Transportation reported that 17,000 cars travel daily on Strachan Avenue and that the majority of those are traveling to and from the west.

In 2005, City Planning's "Liberty Village Area Study" recommended a new east-west connector road to improve neighbourhood connections within the Liberty Village community (residential and commercial), to enhance employment development opportunities at the south edge of the area, to expand opportunities to animate existing dead end streets, and to improve traffic operations. Feasibility and engineering analysis of this local connector road were completed in 2002 as part of the ongoing Front Street Extension plans and assessments.

The LVBIA has always envisioned this to be a “local” road with direct connections to some of our north south streets, a wide promenade-style sidewalk for pedestrian flow and restaurant patio space, a bike lane and a public transit component, connecting Dufferin Street to Strachan Avenue and introducing economic development opportunities to our south edge. The bustling, pedestrian-friendly streets of Yorkville serve as inspiring examples. North south streets now end in dead ends, are sites of illegal garbage dumping and criminal activity. Economic development in the south portion has been slow relative to other parts of the community as there has been much uncertainty regarding the future of the FSE and Gardner Expressway.

We request Council’s support in arranging for the issuance of a tender to construct the local road, to ease congestion on Liberty Street and to provide incentive for new economic development along Liberty Village’s south portion.

2. Zoning Standards

The City Zoning By-law contains inconsistencies and limitations with respect to permitted uses and zoning standards for Liberty Village. Property owners are concerned that the area’s current Zoning Bylaw creates limitations, confusion and uncertainty for employment investment, attraction and retention, and does not reflect current economic trends or new economy uses.

We request Council’s support and assistance to remove any inconsistencies and confusion regarding the planning definitions, densities, performance standards and heights permitted in Liberty Village.

3. Economic development and city-building opportunities

The City of Toronto and TEDCO are major property owners in Liberty Village, of the Lamport Stadium lands at 1155 King Street West, Artscape at 60 Atlantic Avenue, Toronto Museums & Heritage Services at 98 Atlantic Avenue, and the Toronto Parking Authority Hanna Avenue lot. The LVBIA applauds the efforts of the City in implementing recent capital improvements at Lamport Stadium, and we support further redevelopment initiatives. We see opportunities here for capital improvements to other City owned lands. An example of positive redevelopment here, are the plans by TEDCO, as property owner, to re-develop Artscape’s 60 Atlantic Avenue property into a creative convergence centre, which includes more affordable artist studio space and a business incubator, all designed to be a centrepiece of the creative Liberty Village community and an example of city-building through the arts.

We request Council’s assistance in investigating and furthering commercial development and city-building opportunities that support Liberty Village as a successful area of employment and creative industry. The LVBIA and TEDCO have had conversations concerning economic development opportunities here. TEDCO has indicated to us an ability to show leadership in these areas that challenge us, and **the LVBIA is supportive of working with city staff and TEDCO on area improvements.**

As stated in Toronto’s 2008 *Agenda for Prosperity* “By taking action now, through renewed private and public sector investment, Toronto will be bold, energetic, connected and collaborative in the 21st century”, and that defines the future of Liberty Village!

We would appreciate the opportunity to make a presentation to the July 8th 2008 Economic Development Committee to formally request Council’s consideration on these key Liberty Village issues, and we look forward to your support.

Sincerely,

Hal Dremin,
Chair, Liberty Village Business Improvement Area

Attachments: Liberty Village InfoSheet; Liberty Village area map

- c. Deputy Mayor Pantalone, Ward 19 Trinity-Spadina, Toronto City Hall, Suite C47
- Councillor Perks, Ward 14 Parkdale-High Park, Toronto City Hall, Suite A14
- Gary Welsh, General Manager, Transportation Services, Toronto City Hall, 23rd Floor, East Tower
- Gary Wright, Chief Planner & Executive Director, Toronto City Hall, 12th Floor, East Tower
- Eva Pyatt, Director Economic Development City of Toronto, 77 Elizabeth Street, 2nd Floor
- Jeffrey Steiner, President & CEO, TEDCO, 55 John Street, 7th Floor, Toronto