Intention to Designate the Financial District Business Improvement Area (BIA)

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<td>To:</td>
<td>Economic Development Committee</td>
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<td>From:</td>
<td>General Manager, Economic Development and Culture</td>
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<td>Wards:</td>
<td>20, 28</td>
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**SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to recommend that the City Clerk conduct a poll to determine if there is sufficient support to designate the area, generally bounded by Queen Street to the north, Victoria Street to the east, F.G. Gardiner Expressway to the south, and Simcoe Street to the west, as the Financial District Business Improvement Area (BIA).

Upon the completion of the poll, the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture will report on the results to City Council. Subject to a positive poll result, staff shall prepare the necessary by-laws and bills to give effect thereto.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The General Manager, Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. The area described by Attachment No. 1, be designated as the Financial District Business Improvement Area (BIA), under Chapter 19 of the City of Toronto Municipal Code.

2. The City Clerk be authorized and directed to send out a notice of City Council’s intention to pass a by-law designating the area described by Attachment No. 1 as a Business Improvement Area (BIA), in accordance with Chapter 19 of the City of Toronto Municipal Code.

3. The Executive Director of Technical Services be requested to prepare designation by-law maps of the area as described by Attachment No. 1, and submit them to the City Solicitor.
Financial Impact

Capital budgets may be impacted in future years should streetscape or other capital improvements be undertaken by the new BIA. Capital improvements are cost-shared equally between the BIA and the City.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In January 2010, the BIA Office received a request from the St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA to expand westward to include Union Station, Brookfield Place, and the west side of Yonge Street, south of King Street. The Downtown Yonge BIA had also long discussed southward expansion to include the entire Yonge Street corridor. Before proceeding with any expansion requests south of Richmond Street and west of Victoria Street, City BIA Office staff undertook to consult with key stakeholders to determine if there was interest in forming a Financial District or Central Business District BIA.

In May 2010, City staff met with the downtown chapter of the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, which includes major property owners and property managers in the downtown core, to seek their input on the proposed expansions and the possibility of a separate Financial District BIA. The feedback received from this meeting was that the Financial District has its own unique interests and should be its own separate BIA.

Representatives of major property owners, property managers and law firms, including Bentall, Brookfield Properties, Cadillac Fairview, Fraser Milner Casgrain, GWL Realty Advisors, Oxford Properties, and Scotiabank formed a BIA Steering Committee in the summer of 2010 to discuss the potential boundaries, the public consultation strategy, and possible opportunities and priorities for the BIA.

Over the summer and fall of 2010, the Steering Committee met informally with property owners, property managers, and their tenants throughout the Financial District to discuss the proposed BIA.

The Steering Committee hosted a formal public meeting on December 6, 2010. The Steering Committee distributed invitations to the public meeting to business tenants through the property owners and property management offices. Invitations were mailed to all commercial and industrial property owners in the area by the City’s BIA Office. Approximately fifty commercial property owners, property managers, and tenants attended the meeting.

City staff and the BIA Steering Committee made presentations and answered questions; addressing such issues as how BIAs are formed, how they operate and how they are self-funded through a special BIA levy on member property tax bills.
The response amongst those in attendance was overwhelmingly in favour of establishing a Financial District BIA.

At the request of the Downtown Yonge BIA, a second formal public meeting was held on February 15, 2011, specifically to discuss whether the properties on Yonge Street between Richmond Street and King Street should be included in the Financial District or in an expanded Downtown Yonge BIA.

Notice was distributed to all business and property owners in the affected area by the BIA Steering Committee. The City BIA Office mailed notice to all affected property owners. The meeting was attended by twenty-five individuals, including fifteen property owners and tenants in the affected area.

A vote was conducted at the conclusion of the meeting and of the fifteen affected property owners and tenants in attendance, thirteen voted in favour of becoming part of the proposed Financial District BIA, one voted to join the Downtown Yonge BIA and one voted in favour of no BIA. Based on the response from this meeting, BIA Office staff has recommended that the area south of Richmond Street and west of Victoria Street be included in the proposed Financial District BIA.

The Financial District BIA Steering Committee has submitted a letter to the BIA Office confirming that they have undertaken the public consultation required by the City and formally requesting that City Council undertake a poll for the formation of a BIA.

**COMMENTS**

Toronto's Financial District is the business and financial capital of Canada, and ranks as the twelfth most influential financial centre in the world according to the Global Financial Centre Index.

The Financial District includes the headquarters of five major Canadian banks, the Toronto Stock Exchange, major insurance companies, investment firms, pension funds, law firms and accounting firms.

Iconic buildings in the District include the Ludwig Mies van der Rohe inspired Toronto Dominion Centre, Brookfield Place with its award winning galleria designed by Santiago Calatrava, and First Canadian Place, the tallest skyscraper in Canada. The boundaries of the proposed BIA take in Union Station, four subway stations, and substantial areas of the PATH underground walkway.

Less than one square kilometre in size, properties in the proposed BIA account for $11.7 billion in assessment and paid almost $420 million in property taxes in 2010, or nearly 8% of the total property taxes collected by the City.
A Financial District BIA would provide a financial and organizational framework to improve the financial core and enhance its competitiveness. A BIA could advocate on behalf of commercial property owners and business tenants; improve the appearance, cleanliness, and safety of streets and sidewalks; and market the area to attract new investment and tenants.

Although the BIA concept was pioneered in the City of Toronto, unlike many other North American cities, Toronto has never had a Central Business District BIA. The proposed Financial District would complete a seamless network of BIAs covering the downtown core from Spadina Avenue in the west to Parliament Street in the east, Queen Street to the north and Lake Shore Boulevard to the south.

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**SIGNATURE**

Michael H. Williams, General Manager
Economic Development and Culture

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment No. 1: Map of Proposed Financial District BIA
Financial District BIA

Intention to Designate the Financial District BIA