



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Intention to Expand the Gerrard India Bazaar Business Improvement Area (BIA)

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| Date: | March 4, 2011 |
| To: | Economic Development Committee |
| From: | General Manager, Economic Development and Culture |
| Wards: | 30, 32 |
| Reference Number: | P:/2011/Cluster A/EDC/ECON DEV/ed1103-006 |

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to recommend the City Clerk conduct a poll to determine if there is sufficient support to expand the boundaries of the Gerrard India Bazaar Business Improvement Area (BIA) as per Attachment No. 1.

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. City Council state its intention to designate the area described by Attachment No. 1 as an expanded 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 expand the boundary of the Gerrard India Bazaar Business Improvement Area to include the areas as shown in Attachment No. 1, in accordance with Chapter 19 of the City of Toronto Municipal Code; and
3. The Executive Director of Technical Services be requested to prepare designating by-law maps of the area, as described in 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 expanded Gerrard India Bazaar BIA. These capital improvements are cost-shared equally by 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

The Gerrard India Bazaar BIA was established in 1981. It is a small BIA consisting of only three blocks of Gerrard Street East, between Woodfield Road and Craven Road, just west of Coxwell Avenue. In spite of its small size and limited budget, the BIA has resourcefully undertaken many initiatives to enhance and promote the area, including significant streetscape improvements achieved in partnership with the City, and, more recently, the BIA's Festival of South Asia. The BIA has advocated for more public parking in the area, improved property maintenance, undertaken a graffiti-removal program, and has successfully encouraged several local property owners to take part in the City's Commercial Façade Improvement Program.

The proposed expansion of the Gerrard India Bazaar BIA, eastward to Coxwell Avenue and westward to Glenside Avenue on the north side of Gerrard and Highfield Road on the south side, has been a topic of discussion within the BIA, and among potential BIA members within the expansion areas, for several years. In the fall of 2009, an expansion steering committee consisting of members of the existing BIA and stakeholders from the expansion area was established to conduct informal discussions and group meetings with local property owner and business stakeholders regarding BIA expansion.

The committee held three informal sessions in November and December, 2009. At its meeting on January 22, 2010, the committee decided to proceed with the expansion process by holding a formal public meeting. The public meeting was held on March 10, 2010. Meeting invitations were delivered to all businesses within the BIA and the expansion areas by the BIA's co-ordinator and the City mailed invitations to all commercial property owners. Approximately 20 owners and business tenants attended the meeting, along with the majority of BIA board members. Presentations were made by the BIA Board of Management, the City's BIA Office and the Toronto Association of BIAs (TABIA).

The proposed expansion was discussed at the BIA's annual general meeting held on November 19, 2010, and the attendees supported continuing the process. At its meeting on February 16, 2011, the BIA's newly appointed 2011-2014 Board of Management adopted a motion supporting the expansion.

At its meeting on March 2, 2011, the Steering Committee decided to continue the process and prepared a letter to all business and property owners within the existing BIA and expansion areas explaining the process, which has led to this point, and advising that a formal request has been made to the City to expand the BIA and conduct the notification process. This letter was distributed to business owners by the BIA and mailed to property owners by the City during the week of March 7, 2011.

The Steering Committee has submitted a letter to the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, dated March 2, 2011, requesting that Council enact a by-law to expand the BIA.

COMMENTS

For the most part, the proposed expansion areas share the same built form and land use characteristics as the existing BIA, namely, traditional 2 or 3 storey mixed-use buildings with retail at grade and residential uses above. The majority of businesses within the expansion area are South Asian in origin.

For many years now, the expansion areas have benefited from the improvement and promotional initiatives undertaken by the BIA, but without being subject to BIA levies. Given its small size and budgetary constraints, the existing BIA cannot hope to improve upon, or, in some cases maintain, its existing level of beautification and promotional activities without over burdening its existing membership by increasing levies further. Therefore, expansion of the BIA is critical to its future effectiveness and capacity to bring about positive change to the area.

Expansion of the BIA will provide the additional funding capacity necessary to allow the BIA to visually “tie-together” the entire retail strip and ensure the continuation of the BIA’s street festival and other promotional activities. The expansion will also give expansion-area property owners immediate access to the City’s Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program, subject to continued funding approvals by Council.

Although some objections to the proposed expansion were expressed at the public meeting, the majority of participants were in support of proceeding to the notification stage of the process.

CONCLUSION

The Gerrard India Bazaar BIA Board of Management and Steering Committee have effectively carried out the process for expanding a BIA as set out in Chapter 19 of the Municipal Code. Public consultation included informal consultations and a formal public meeting. The public meeting was appropriately advertised and attended by approximately 20 property owners and business tenants from the expansion areas, the majority of which supported proceeding to the formal polling stage of the expansion process. In order to keep the existing and potential BIA membership informed, the

Steering Committee forwarded a letter to all business and property owners within the existing BIA and expansion areas explaining the process which has led to this point and advising that a formal request has been made to the City to expand the BIA and conduct the notification process.

Therefore, it is recommended that the area described by Attachment No. 1 be designated as an expanded Business Improvement Area under Chapter 19 of the City of Toronto Municipal Code, and that the City Clerk be authorized and directed to send out a notice of Council's intention to pass a by-law expanding the Gerrard India Bazaar BIA in accordance with Chapter 19 of the Municipal Code. It is further recommended that the Executive Director of Technical Services be requested to prepare designating by-law maps of the area, as described in Attachment No. 1, and submit them to the City Solicitor.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Michael H. Williams, General Manager
Economic Development, and Culture

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No. 1: Proposed Gerrard India Bazaar BIA Expansion Map