

Intention to Expand the Waterfront Business Improvement Area (BIA)

Date: May 21, 2020

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: General Manager, Economic Development and Culture

Wards: Ward 10 – Spadina-Fort York

SUMMARY

This report recommends that the City Clerk conduct a poll to determine if there is sufficient support to expand the boundaries of the Waterfront Business Improvement Area (BIA) as shown in Attachment 1.

Upon completion of the poll, the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture will report on the results to City Council through the Economic and Community Development Committee. 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. City Council state its intention to designate the area described by Attachment 1 as the expanded Waterfront Business Improvement Area (BIA) under Chapter 19 of the City of Toronto Municipal Code.
2. City Council direct the City Clerk to send out a notice of City Council's intention to pass a by-law designating the area described by Attachment 1 as the expanded Waterfront Business Improvement Area (BIA), in accordance with Chapter 19 of the City of Toronto Municipal Code.
3. City Council direct the Chief Technology Officer to prepare designation by-law maps of the area as described by Attachment 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 The Waterfront BIA. Capital improvements are generally cost-shared equally between the BIA and the City.

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

DECISION HISTORY

Chapter 19 of the Toronto Municipal Code sets out the procedures to expand a business improvement area.

http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/municode/1184_019.pdf

COMMENTS

When the Waterfront BIA was founded in 2004, key stakeholders included local businesses and attractions largely focused on the busy summer season. Since that time, the area has undergone significant changes due to the ongoing Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Initiative, and the construction of large office and residential towers, which has boosted the area's population. The Waterfront is also a premier tourist destination attracting visitors from all over the world.

At its 2004 founding, the east side of Yonge Street was not included in the Waterfront BIA as it was very early in planning stages for large-scale developments. Since then, the area has attracted several new large-scale commercial and mixed-use developments. There are also a number of new parks either built or in development throughout the area.

In discussions with stakeholders in the current BIA, and the expansion area itself, it was determined that there would be significant interest in a well-coordinated and active business association. The expanded BIA could organise the community on policy and advocacy issues, provide area activation and promotion, and lead consistent streetscape improvements.

Between December 2018 and March 2019, initial meetings and presentations took place with ten large-scale developments on the east side of the Waterfront BIA, including introductions from Waterfront Toronto who had indicated preliminary support for an expanded BIA. At those meetings a majority of stakeholders expressed interest in a stronger, coordinated business community voice on key issues. In late February, 2019 an information package was distributed by the BIA to the initial ten large property owners and other major stakeholders in the expansion area requesting interest in forming a Steering Committee.

On March 20, 2019, a letter requesting the formation of an expansion Steering Committee was sent to the Waterfront BIA from five representatives in the expansion area.

On April 25, 2019, a motion to explore expansion was passed by the Waterfront BIA membership at a General Meeting. As per the requirements of Municipal Code Chapter 19, a Steering Committee was formed, comprised of one member of the Waterfront BIA's Board of Management, and five business and/or property owners from the proposed expansion area.

On July 17, 2019, the Steering Committee appointed a Chair and Vice Chair and approved the rationale, boundaries and communication strategy to expansion area members. Public consultations included the development and distribution of an information brochure to all expansion-area businesses, including face-to-face discussions regarding the expansion with business owners and managers, and meetings with key property and business owners. Generally, the proposed expansion will include the lands east of Yonge Street, to Cherry Street, and south of the Gardiner Expressway (Attachment No.1).

On October 16, 2019, the Steering Committee held an information session at 130 Queens Quay East, Daniels Waterfront City of the Arts Community, to meet new stakeholders of the recently developed property. Eleven attendees were supportive or considering support for the expansion. No one expressed opposition.

On December 20, 2019, the Steering Committee sent a letter to the BIA Office requesting the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture, to hold a formal public consultation meeting. Soon after, the City's BIA Office mailed a public meeting notice to commercial and industrial property owners, and Steering Committee members distributed the same notice to local business operators.

A public consultation meeting was held on February 26, 2020. BIA Office staff presented an overview of the BIA program and answered questions from potential BIA members from the expansion area. Waterfront BIA staff presented the BIA's annual program of special events, promotions and streetscape enhancement. The meeting was attended by property owners and business tenants, and a secret ballot was held to determine if there was sufficient support to proceed to a formal poll. A total of 31 ballots were cast, with 27 in favour of proceeding to the poll and 4 opposed. This result meets the minimum requirement of 50% plus one in order to proceed to a formal poll as set out by Chapter 19 of the Municipal Code.

The proposed expansion makes sense from a geographical standpoint in that it will add to the existing BIA east of Yonge Street, to Cherry Street, and south of the Gardiner Expressway. The expansion will enhance the BIA's capacity to represent local business interests and link businesses in the expansion area to the Waterfront BIA's program of area promotions, special events and physical enhancements.

Three main areas of focus for the expanded Waterfront BIA are expected:

1. A unified voice on policy, planning and advocacy. Connectivity issues like the Waterfront East LRT's development, the expansion of the PATH network and improvements to the north-south connections are relevant to both the existing BIA and the expansion areas. Even properties early in development can benefit from BIA initiatives when they are focused on promoting the area as a well-connected premier destination.

2. A coordinated waterfront marketing strategy for the business community. A consistent branding of the waterfront would be ideal for the existing BIA and expanded areas. This includes producing a signature BIA event and ongoing activation programs, and expanding the online presence to highlight more opportunities along the waterfront as the area continues to grow. The BIA will have additional partners to activate the waterfront including George Brown, Artscape, OCAD and Hub 27.

3. Maximize consistency and efficiency of public realm improvements. The BIA's clean streets team and public realm asset database currently being compiled will be scalable to represent an expanded BIA. In an area of the city with a wide range of stakeholders, the BIA will make efforts to identify the highest impact improvements that it can assist in implementing. This may include future street furniture enhancements or cleaning programs where other stakeholders are not able to operate.

The Waterfront BIA Board of Management and the Steering Committee have effectively carried out the process for expanding a BIA as set out in Chapter 19 of the Municipal Code. This includes determining the expanded boundary, the rationale for the expansion, the development and implementation of a strategy to communicate their interest in expanding the BIA to expansion-area business and commercial property owners, and obtaining the approval of the existing membership. Staff are confident that all property and business owners were appropriately consulted.

CONTACT

Ned Sabev, Economic Partnership Advisor, Business Improvement Area Office,
Economic Development and Culture, 416-392-1134, ned.sabev@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Mike Williams, General Manager
Economic Development and Culture

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – The Waterfront Business Improvement Area (BIA) Proposed Expansion Map

