

Intention to Expand the Riverside District Business Improvement Area

Date: September 2, 2025

To: Economic & Community Development Committee

From: General Manager, Economic Development and Culture

Wards: Ward 14 - Toronto - Danforth

SUMMARY

This report recommends that the City Clerk conduct a poll to determine if there is sufficient support to expand the boundaries of the Riverside District Improvement Area (BIA) as shown on 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 Riverside District Business Improvement Area 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 No. 1 as the expanded Riverside District Business Improvement Area, 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

Economic Development and Culture's 10-Year Capital Budget and Plan may be impacted in future years should streetscape or other capital improvements be undertaken by the expanded the Riverside BIA. Capital improvements are cost-shared between the BIA and Economic Development and Culture.

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

The Riverside District BIA was founded in 1980, as the Queen-Broadview BIA, and is home to some of Toronto's most celebrated destinations, including the Broadview Hotel, The Opera House, as well as a growing collection of iconic public art. It also encompasses a future Ontario Line transit station and is located near the rapidly evolving Broadview Avenue corridor, East Harbour, and Port Lands redevelopment. This unique positioning requires unified planning, advocacy, and programming to ensure a cohesive, thriving, and connected commercial district.

Over the last 10 years, the Riverside District BIA has received ongoing interest from commercial property owners and tenants just outside its current boundaries to join the BIA. Many of these businesses and property owners already identify strongly with the Riverside commercial district. These stakeholders expressed a desire to be more formally included in the BIA's activities and benefits.

In November 2024, a motion to explore expansion was passed by the Riverside District BIA membership at their Annual General Meeting. As per the requirements of Municipal Code Chapter 19, a Steering Committee was formed, comprised of four members of the Riverside District BIA's Board of Management, and two business owners from the proposed expansion area.

In January 2025, the Steering Committee met and approved rationale for expansion, the expanded boundaries and communication strategy to expansion area members. Public consultations would include the development and distribution of an outreach package 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. The proposed expansion includes several areas: North of Queen Street East, it extends along Davies Avenue and Carroll Street up to Dundas Street

East; South of Queen Street East, it extends along Broadview Avenue to 90 Broadview Avenue; McGee Street to 70 McGee Street; and includes all of Strange Street.

Between March 4-19, 2025, the Steering Committee identified all commercial properties and business tenants, and outreach was conducted using multiple communication methods, including email, mail, face-to-face discussions, phone calls and zoom meetings. Multiple follow ups were conducted with the expansion area members. The Steering Committee also surveyed the expansion area members, and 94% of those who completed the survey were in favour of the expansion.

On May 8, 2025, 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 property owners, and Steering Committee members distributed the same notice to local business operators.

A public consultation meeting was held on June 18, 2025. BIA Office staff presented an overview of the BIA program and answered questions from potential members in the proposed expansion area. Riverside District BIA staff highlighted the BIA's accomplishments and shared their vision for the future. In addition, a Steering Committee member, also a business owner in the expansion area, spoke about the reasons to support the expansion. The meeting was attended by 4 property owners and 6 business tenants, and a secret ballot was held to determine if there was sufficient support to proceed to a formal poll. A total of 10 ballots were cast, and all 10 were in favour of proceeding to the poll. 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 will allow the BIA to better represent area business interests and to link businesses in the expansion area to the BIA's program of area promotions, special events and physical enhancements. There are expected to be three main areas of focus for the expanded Riverside District BIA:

1. A Unified Voice on Policy, Planning and Advocacy: Together, businesses across the existing and expanded area can better address shared challenges and opportunities, such as the Ontario Line construction impacts, connectivity with East Harbour and the Port Lands, and the accelerating pace of local development.

2. Coordinated Streetscape and Marketing Initiatives: The Riverside District BIA is known for its award-winning cohesive branding and high-impact events. Expansion would allow the continuation of these efforts into the new area, offering increased visibility through social media, events, and shared promotional campaigns, while expanding the BIA's "open-air gallery" of 30+ public art installations.

3. Consistent and Efficient Public Realm Enhancements: Expansion would enable the BIA to scale its existing streetscape maintenance and beautification services, such as graffiti removal, pole wraps, banners, and cleanliness initiatives, to an area that would greatly benefit from these improvements.

The Riverside District 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, including the determination of the expanded boundary, the development of 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

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SIGNATURE

Patrick Tobin, General Manager
Economic Development and Culture

ATTACHMENTS

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

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Riverside District BIA

