

April 20, 2026

**TO:** Toronto City Council

**FROM:** Old Town Toronto BIA

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**RE: EX30.3 - Towards a Beautiful City: Update on Priority Items**

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To Whom It May Concern,

The City’s “Beautiful City” initiative signals an important shift toward enhancing Toronto’s public realm. However, the March 30 Report for Action overlooks a critical opportunity minimizing the role that Economic Development and Culture (EDC) plays and does not acknowledge the role of Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) must have in shaping and delivering this Beautiful City vision.

BIAs are uniquely positioned to advance City-building objectives at the local level. They represent Toronto’s diverse main streets and neighbourhoods, invest directly in public realm improvements, enhance funding for capital projects and work closely with communities to reflect local character and needs. In recent years, many BIAs have proactively developed and continue to improve comprehensive Master Plans to guide neighbourhood evolution, improve safety and mobility, and support economic vitality.

Despite this, current City processes do not consistently require divisions to consider these locally developed plans in infrastructure and planning decisions. This creates a disconnect between City investments and community-led visions.

Council has already recognized this gap through direction to develop an *Implementation Strategy for BIA Master Plans (2025.MM32.11)*. This work should be central—not peripheral—to the Beautiful City initiative.

BIA Master Plans are essential tools to:

- Translate City-wide policies into context-specific, implementable solutions
- Coordinate cross-divisional decision-making at the neighbourhood level
- Reduce implementation barriers by aligning local priorities with City standards
- Leverage community investment and partnerships to enhance outcomes
- Accelerate delivery of safer, greener, and more vibrant streets



A Beautiful City cannot be delivered through top-down policies alone. It requires a coordinated, place-based approach—where locally developed BIA Master Plans play a central role in shaping the future of Toronto’s streets, neighbourhoods, and public realm.

To fully realize the Beautiful City vision, we would request that the City support a formal process to integrate BIA Master Plans into its planning and capital decision-making frameworks. This requires empowering EDC and the BIA Office with the mandate and resources to support plan development, ensure cross-divisional alignment, and embed these plans into City processes from the outset.

Sincerely,

Al Smith

Executive Director,  
Old Town Toronto BIA