

Business Associations



Riley Park/South Cambie **RPSC**

Business Improvement Areas

The Business Improvement Area (BIA) Program provides an opportunity for merchants and commercial property owners to help each other promote business vitality in their local commercial district.

BIAs are formal associations, approved by the City, with the agreement of local property owners and businesses. If a BIA is approved, Council may raise funds for the BIA by adding a special tax levy to each commercial property.

Neighbourhood BIAs typically raise \$75,000 to \$350,000 from owners. For example in the Mount Pleasant BIA, most properties pay between \$100 and \$1000 per year; some pay more.

BIAs engage in activities such as street beautification (e.g. banners), area clean-up and graffiti removal, business promotion, safety and security measures, and community services.

There are now sixteen BIAs in Vancouver. These include Downtown, Robson Street, Chinatown, South Granville, Kerrisdale, Marpole, Yaletown and Commercial Drive. Two other areas, Victoria Drive and West 10th Avenue are in the final stages of establishing a BIA for their area.

How to Start a BIA

To start a BIA, a group of local merchants and/or commercial property owners gets together and forms a non-profit society. They contact all the other owners and businesses to gain their support for a BIA.

If assured of support, the group documents its outreach efforts and applies to Council to approve the BIA. City Hall receives this information, sets a date for the hearing ("Court of Revision") and formally notifies all commercial property owners and businesses within the proposed BIA. If one-third of the property owners or businesses oppose the application, the BIA will not proceed.

BIA Funding Process

If the BIA is approved, its Directors propose a "business plan" and budget. The BIA holds a general meeting of all the property owners and businesses to vote on the first year budget.

If Council approves the budget, the next commercial property tax bills will include an additional assessment, the proceeds of which go to the BIA to fund business improvement activities. Landlords generally pass this additional cost to their business tenants as additional rent.

Each year, for five years, the BIA establishes a new budget and assessment, limited to a five-year funding ceiling. At the end of the 5-year term, another hearing is scheduled to determine whether the property owners and businesses support the BIA being renewed for another term.

For more information on forming a BIA, call Peter Vaisbord, Coordinator, BIA Program, at 604-871-6304 or e-mail to: peter_vaisbord@city.vancouver.bc.ca

Other Business Groups

Many commercial areas have voluntary organizations, called 'chambers of commerce' or 'business associations'.

Like BIAs, they come together to promote business in their areas. Unlike BIAs, they cannot raise funds through commercial property tax levies. As these groups rely on memberships, donations, and volunteer time to support their activities, their resources are generally limited. Some of these organizations have decided to apply to become BIAs to help accomplish their goals.

In Riley Park/South Cambie (RPSC)

There are three business associations in RPSC.

On Main Street, two associations have worked to promote and beautify their area. The Antique Row Merchants Association represents the Main Street antique dealers. In the late 1970s, the Association worked with the City to create the street beautification between King Edward and 29th Avenues.

The Mid-Main Business Association represents Main Street businesses between 16th and 33rd Avenues. The Association hosts a website and business directory, installed sidewalk benches and flower planters, and worked with the City to repaint the lamp posts a glossy black.

The Cambie Merchants Association is centred on the area near the Park Theatre, between 16th and 19th Avenues, and is currently working to organize businesses on the street.

There are currently no BIAs in RPSC, although the Uptown/Mount Pleasant BIA borders the northern edge of RPSC at Main Street and 16th Avenue.