

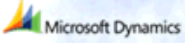


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News Story

Wellington Street West BIA proposed

*By Roman Zakaluzny, Ottawa Business Journal Staff
 Fri, Oct 12, 2007 4:00 PM EST*

Ottawa is one step closer to having a new Business Improvement Area (BIA).

The creation of a "Wellington West Business Improvement Area" will be on the corporate services and economic development committee's agenda this Wednesday. Staff is recommending that the committee and council go ahead and authorize its creation, after 85 per cent of businesses in the area pushed for such a group.

"The overall conclusion from (public) discussions: the time is right for a BIA in Wellington West," wrote Michael Frojmovic and Dennis van Staalduinen, two members of a committee established by city hall to look into the matter.

BIAs are a formal association of businesses within a specified area. They are intended as a "self-help" group with a goal of stimulating business and commerce among its membership.

They are funded through levies paid by property owners and tenants within the designated area.

The proposed area is not a perfect rectangle, but is roughly bordered by the O-Train tracks in the east, Scott Street in the north, Island Park Drive in the west, and Highway 417 in the south.

"The three areas along Wellington (Street) West have grown up at different times," background in a staff report on the matter reads, with Hintonburg first emerging in the 1800s, Wellington Village maturing from the 1920s onwards, and the Parkdale Market area redeveloping since the 1970s.

All three have "distinctive characteristics and different needs," the report reads, but are now yearning to be a collective force, more than a year of study has revealed.

"As of 2005, businesses from all parts of this area share a single main street: Wellington Street West, and a need to cooperate to promote and identify the area as a valuable destination for shoppers."

Upwards of 300 businesses were sent information packages from city hall. A steering committee was also established to solicit feedback through open houses.

"(Mr. Frojmovic) and I, along with the other members of our steering committee – which includes more than a dozen leading businesspeople and property owners from the area – saw the need and carried out the work on behalf of the businesses of the

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area," said Dennis Van Staaldunen to the *OBJ*. "We organized ourselves, carried out the surveys, held meetings, and went door-to-door canvassing business owners ourselves.

"While we were assisted by staff at city hall, and applied for and received some seed funding from the economic development officials at the city, this is very much a grassroots effort by business for business," he added.

According to the report, 85 per cent of business okayed the BIA, while only three per cent opposed it. The remaining 12 per cent were unsure.

"At various times, different associations have sprung up to address the needs of parts of the area, with varying degrees of success. This is the first time such a large group of businesses have come together with such a clear vision for creating a single, dynamic business district," the report, submitted by deputy city manager Nancy Schepers, states.

The area is to go through a major period of construction and renewal in the coming years, and BIAs "have proven themselves again and again to be the most effective single point of contact between area businesses and the city," the staff report adds.

Once a BIA is approved by committee then council, every business within its boundaries is automatically a member, with no exceptions, under the principle that "all who benefit should be required to bear their fair share of the cost of the program."

Currently, Ottawa has 13 BIAs which include more than 3,400 businesses. More than 230 BIAs exist across Ontario, and they are governed under the province's Municipal Act.

The report noted that the proposed BIA is bordered by "strong" BIAs serving up tough retail competition, including the Westboro, Somerset Chinatown and Preston Street BIAs, with Bank Street Promenade and Sparks Street BIAs not much farther away. Those BIAs together invest more than \$2 million annually to spruce up their neighbourhoods, and business along Wellington Street West needed to band together to keep up.

For more information and to view a map of the proposed BIA, visit www.city.ottawa.on.ca/calendar/ottawa/citycouncil/csedc/2007/10-16/ACS2007-PTE-ECO-0012.htm

Special Projects



Reader Poll 10/15/2007

Would your firm consider relocating from Ottawa to Gatineau?

Bien sur, in a heartbeat. The benefits of avoiding Ottawa's traffic jams and saving on Ottawa's rent are reasons enough.

Yes, but only if the corporate assistance programs offered by the municipal, Quebec and federal governments were as good as promised.

No, the language issue would be too difficult for some employees and management, and luring competent workers and clients to that side of the river would be too much effort.

Likely not. There's just too much of a je ne sais quoi.

Other.

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