

Wellington West Business Improvement Area one step closer

WELLINGTON STREET WEST: The merchants, property owners, and business leaders of this blossoming area have taken a significant step toward becoming the Wellington West Business Improvement Area (BIA). Within a few months, a BIA should allow them to promote one of Ottawa's most important creative hubs, with great food, green spaces, and a lively urban lifestyle.

Today, Ottawa City Council unanimously approved a proposal to begin forming the Wellington West Business Improvement Area. Now a 60-day objection period begins, and if less than 1/3 of area businesses object, a BIA will begin operating here in early 2008.

John Ferguson, manager of the Wellington Street West Giant Tiger says that the BIA is a very positive development for him and his neighbours: "I'm looking forward to working strategically with the BIA year after year to make Wellington Street West a shopping destination of choice."

This milestone comes after more than a year of work by a steering committee of retailers, business leaders, and property owners, along with Kitchissippi Councillor Christine Leadman and city economic development staff. Very early on, this group decided to cut across neighbourhood boundaries to include businesses from both the historic Hintonburg main-street area, with its significant heritage buildings, parks, and public gathering places, and the booming Wellington Village commercial area, with new developments, specialty stores, and a growing "epicurean row" of gourmet food retailers and restaurants.

The new BIA will follow the entire 2 km length of Wellington Street West from Island Park to the O-Train. The area between Holland and Parkdale Avenues, with the new Irving Greenberg Theatre, Parkdale Market, and dozens of galleries, studios, and creative industries, will form the heart of the newly defined district.

Councillor Christine Leadman, a long-time BIA advocate, says: "I am very excited to see businesses coming together to establish a BIA for Wellington West. The 400 plus businesses in that area will be able to continue to enhance the sense of community spirit that has been created on this traditional main street to enrich not only themselves but the community as a whole."

There are several steps to go before the BIA can begin operating, but the Steering Committee has seen a very strong level of support to date, with 85% of respondents to a door-to-door and online business survey saying "yes" to the BIA, and only 3% opposed. After successful completion of the objection period, the new BIA should begin operating in the beginning of 2008.

As Mike Steinberg, an area property owner and owner of Herb & Spice, says "The Wellington West BIA will be very important. It will help us work together to create a greener environment and an enhanced community experience."

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