

Business Improvement Associations 101

WHAT IS A BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION?

A business improvement area (BIA) is a specially funded business district, operated by a non-profit group of property owners and businesses, whose goal is to promote and improve their business district.

A BIA HAS A TWO-FOLD MANDATE:

1. To improve, beautify, and maintain public lands and buildings within the BIA, **beyond what is provided by the municipality at-large.**
2. To promote the area as a business and shopping area - including eateries, shops and services - **beyond what businesses can do individually.**

WHAT DOES A BIA DO?

BIAs improve the vitality and economic sustainability of an area. They maximize resources to develop infrastructure and implement valuable initiatives, such as, street pole and tree lighting, banners, business directories/brochures, websites, social media, advertising, promotions, events, campaigns, community engagement, and advocacy (e.g., pandemic economic response & recovery, property assessments, tax policies, development, permits, licenses, transit, and street issues).

VALUE & REPRESENTATION

The cost of being a part of a BIA is nominal in relation to the many benefits businesses receive. This is possible because businesses collectively contribute to an organization that represents the entire business area and is accountable to each business. A BIA is a valuable tool that maximizes resources and connects merchants, property owners, patrons, the community, and the government—all working together to improve things.

HOW IS A BIA FUNDED?

The City collects a levy from each commercial property owner in the BIA and provides it to the BIA for their operating budget. Members provide input to shape the budget and vote on the budget at the BIA's AGM. Vancouver BIA budgets vary considerably, based on factors like a BIA's size and property value, and range from approx. \$125,000 to \$1 million+.

HOW IS THE LEVY CALCULATED?

Each commercial property owner's contribution to the annual BIA budget is proportionate to their share of the total taxable value in the BIA boundaries. Most commercial property owners pass this cost on to business tenants in their lease agreements. **Each commercial property owner's contribution to the BIA is a fraction of their total tax contribution.** The BIA levy is a nominal amount of the area's total commercial property taxes.

ACCOUNTABILITY & INCLUSIVITY

All commercial property owners and business tenants within the boundary are members of the BIA and **all members have a say in what the BIA does.** The BIA is led by a volunteer Board of local businesses and commercial property owners, elected by members at the BIA's AGM. The Board meets regularly to plan & review the BIA's operations, and the BIA's Executive Director executes the Board's plans. The Board welcomes input from ALL members at any time as it helps shape the BIA's goals and operating budget.

WHEN WAS THE DUNBAR VILLAGE BIA FORMED?

In 2008, Dunbar Village business owners organized to establish the Dunbar Village Business Improvement Association (DVBA). The DVBA includes nearly 250 business and property owners along Dunbar Street from West 16th Ave to West 41st Ave and east along West 41st Ave to Collingwood St. As one of the smaller BIAs, we optimize resources through partnership and collaboration. **The DVBA partners with the Vancouver BIA Partnership on advocacy and citywide initiatives to support local businesses.**

HAS THE DVBA's LEVY EVER BEEN INCREASED?

The DVBA's budget has remained the same since 2008. However, the costs of services and products have increased over the past 17 years. If members wish to continue to enjoy the current level of services and benefits, or add more, then **the DVBA must ask its members to vote 'yes' to a small increase to the levy at the AGM this fall when the DVBA seeks a mandate for a 5-year term.** Dunbar's BIA levy is the smallest of all 22 Vancouver BIAs, with a budget of currently \$155,250 that represents 3.52% of the area's total commercial property taxes.