

# Business Improvement Associations 101

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## WHAT IS A BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION (BIA)?

A BIA is a specially funded business district, operated by a non-profit group of property owners and businesses, to promote and improve the business area. There are 22 BIAs in Vancouver representing 1000's of commercial property owners and local businesses! The first BIAs in Vancouver formed in 1989 – Gastown and Mt. Pleasant. In forming a BIA, businesses make a proposal to the municipal council to be designated as a “BIA”, to undertake activities to improve the area with an annual budget contributed by its members. All commercial property owners and businesses within the proposed boundary would be consulted with and a special bylaw would be approved.

## HOW IS A BIA FUNDED?

The City collects a levy from commercial property owners (usually derived from tenants) within the BIA boundary, and provides it to the BIA. All commercial property owners and businesses within the boundary are members, and can provide input to shape the budget. Budgets vary in different BIAs – from approx. \$125K to \$1 million+. Each commercial property owner's BIA levy is a small fraction of their total tax contribution.

## WHAT DOES THE BIA DO?

A BIA can make things better by **enhancing and promoting the area - making the area safer, beautiful, vibrant, and connected** - which will benefit all types of businesses and the community. Valuable projects from various BIAs can include banners, street lighting, marketing (business directory brochure, website, social media), events, business updates and advocacy to support small businesses. BIAs consult with businesses for input to implement initiatives that will enhance the business area.

## VALUE & REPRESENTATION:

**The cost to be part of a BIA is nominal in relation to the many benefits businesses will 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 will maximize resources and connect merchants, customers, community and government – working together to make things better.

## ACCOUNTABILITY & INCLUSIVITY:

**Businesses have a say in what the BIA does. A BIA is led by a volunteer Board** of local business and commercial property owners. A BIA consults with members throughout the year: there are monthly meetings to plan and develop initiatives, and an AGM to approve a draft budget and elect Board members. Participation and input is welcome!