

News & Views

A NEWSLETTER FOR BIA STAFF AND BOARDS | January 2013 | Vol. 4 No. 1



PINTEREST - REPUTEDLY ADDICTIVE!

It's a site that allows visitors to share images they like.

Sounds pretty simple, eh?

Go to pinterest.com and learn more about creating a business account.

News & Views editor, Deborah, and TABIA officer manager, Patricia, attended an info session on Pinterest in early December since interest in Pinterest is so high. BIAs and their member businesses should explore it as another avenue for awareness and promotion. If you are already using Pinterest or you know of businesses within your BIA that are having success with it, please let this editor know.

How it works if you want to post images

This social media tool can work like a virtual store catalog but if it looks like all you're doing is blatant selling, you will turn off possible buyers. That's because most of the content on this site is gorgeous and inspiring. The sales pitch should be almost an afterthought. It shouldn't be your only social media tool, but one of many to help promote your brand.

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Artist's depiction of the focal point of a revitalized Baby Point Gates BIA. See p. 3.

MPAC MAKES AN IMPACT

By John Kiru, Executive Director, TABIA

By now every property owner should have received an updated assessment notice. They were sent out late fall with the last ones arriving in early December. This assessment spans four years, replacing the previous 2008 assessment. And like last time, the increases will be phased in over four years.

TABIA'S ROLE IN TAX MONITORING

TABIA has a Tax Committee under Lionel Miskin's leadership that has been actively reviewing this issue. At an early November meeting the committee discussed how BIAs fared in this recent assessment. City-wide, the average commercial property increased by 23.4 per cent while BIAs increased on average by 33 per cent. While this can be interpreted that BIAs have more successful "main streets," there are many BIAs with little to no increase and even one or two with a slight decrease. Not surprisingly, the areas with the greatest gentrification have seen the largest increases.

Since City Council is in the midst of its budget sessions, TABIA will be asking them to keep commercial property taxes at a fair level. In the past, we lobbied hard to help bring the rate down from 7.5 to 3.25 times the residential rate. Now we'd like to see it at 2.5 times the residential rate. We want to ensure that commercial properties remain competitive and that they are not driven out of business by unfair increases. We also want Council to make sure they are given the same advantages that Big Box stores enjoy because Big Box stores are assessed differently.

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KUDOS!

TO STOPGAP for the COMMUNITY RAMP PROJECT

Kudos to the brilliant and generous company that considered the dismal accessibility challenges so many* must face in our City and decided to improve life for them with an inventive and inexpensive solution. And kudos to the businesses that have availed themselves of Ramps.

In a little more than a decade all Toronto buildings must be barrier-free and wheelchair accessible. But for those who can not and will not wait that long, there's a great solution. And, believe it or not, the ramps are free, for the asking!!

The Ramp Project was founded by two engineers, Michael Hopkins and Luke Anderson, the latter a wheelchair user. Luke became tired of not being able to enter certain businesses, and that frustration helped him to launch the business.

They founded a group called StopGap that aims to create awareness of barriers in the built environment and then designs, builds and installs the ramps to help address the single-step barrier. Each colourful ramp is sized to fit its own building.

Already, ramps can be spotted in The Junction (13), Roncesvalles (42), Kensington Market (15), Stouffville (12)—Anderson's home town, and Orillia (10). Cranbrook, B.C. has undertaken its own ramp project.

The project depends upon donations to stay afloat. Although they're not a registered charity and can't give charitable receipts, donations are appreciated. Thanks also go to volunteers who helped build the ramps and hardware stores like Home Depot that have donated materials.



"A single step makes life complicated. A simple ramp makes life easier."

To contact StopGap: www.stopgapblog.blogspot.ca

Or meet them at the Ontario BIA conference in April!

**As well as benefiting those in wheelchairs, access ramps assist people pushing baby strollers and older people who don't enjoy stairs. Can any business these days be insensitive to a wide spectrum of peoples' needs, and bottom-line, can they afford to turn away potential customers by not having ramps? Big kudos to all involved!!*

PINTEREST (cont.)

To start off, you need to set up a business account. After you make a request, you will be invited to join. From the book *Pinterest for Business*, which we received at the session (and which we would be pleased to lend to any BIA): "It is up to the business to have compelling content featured as their pins. It is the user who sets the wheels of marketing in motion by repinning and exposing the brand, product or message to a new set of eyes. In a sense it is passive marketing." It's up to the vendor to have different boards that are like different scrapbooks, each with a slightly different topic. Pins or images will be added onto each of those boards.

One suggestion from *Pinterest for Business* is to tweet about a new pin you've posted to all your Twitter followers. Essentially, the more you link your Pinterest boards, the more attention they will get. Pinterest also plays well with Facebook. Again, from the book: "Because Pinterest accounts can link to personal Facebook accounts, all your friends who are on Pinterest will become followers of yours when you sign up." The book notes that the images you pin help to establish your brand and will add a new dimension to your business.

When you want to see what's there

So how does this work, if you are *searching* for various types of products, or even services? You go to pinterest.com, type in a word or phrase to describe what you are looking for and then a large selection of images will appear. For example, if you type in teapots, you'll likely see pots that are

historic, futuristic, humorous, traditional, or just plain bizarre. You may even see products that are similar to teapots, like teapot jewellery or a teapot terrarium!

Small descriptions may be part of the image, adding to the interest and allure, as long as it's not a hard sell. It makes perfect sense for any store to add a name and web address to make following up easier. But you can always click on the image to get to the hyperlink of the original vendor, which inevitably leads to the right website for purchasing products.

If a person likes a product, he or she may choose to "follow" the poster of the teapot and see what other things they are "pinning." Or they may "like" the poster of the image or even "repin" the image to their own virtual collections. It's like location, location, location, except this time it's exposure, exposure, exposure!

Who can use Pinterest

You might think that Pinterest only applies to products that are beautiful and photo-friendly, but you can create interest in any product or service by posting or pinning pictures that are related. For example, if you have a dentistry practice, you might want to post images of beautiful smiles, whether they are on animals, smiley face cloud images or even pieces of art. Your creativity and whimsy will help to sell your service. If you own a restaurant, you may want to post or pin items related to dining, such as creative dishes or cutlery, images of your kitchen staff, favourite recipes of the chefs and so on.

Promoting your BIA or finding out what other BIAs are doing

You can certainly promote or create awareness of your BIA by posting beautiful, intriguing, creative photos of the streets, festivals, events, stores and merchants. You can even use Pinterest to see what other Main Streets, downtowns or BIAs are doing creatively. For example, your editor has been cruising Pinterest to have a look at "Main Streets" as well as BIAs and even interesting "street furniture." It will give you out-of-the-ordinary ideas to adapt for your own BIA. If you look for "Deborah Etsten" on Pinterest, you can then follow one of my Boards in the areas that pertain to your BIA. Or, you can search on your own. It's definitely exciting, but fair warning: it can be addictive!

ON THE MOVE

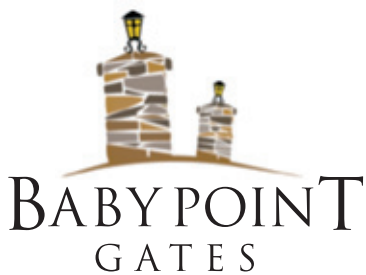
STAFF

Mark Garner, most recently from the Downtown Kitchener BIA and currently a member of the OBIAA Conference Committee, is the new Executive Director of the Downtown Yonge BIA.

BOARD MEMBERS

Crossroads of the Danforth BIA welcomes its new Board Chair, **Joe Murillo** and new member, **Gary Bintsis**.

Let us know the changes within your BIA at detsten@Toronto-bia.com



PROFILE: BABY POINT GATES BIA

YOU CAN CALL ME BABY, IF YOU WANT TO...

A two-year-old BIA with approximately 90 businesses on a T-shaped strip of land with its centre at Jane and Annette has been making quite an impact lately, despite its size. The gates themselves, Baby Point's* most distinctive feature, were built 100 years ago as an entrance to one of the city's first planned communities.

Board Chair, Darryl Kaplan, and a few other business people started the BIA to give some love and attention to the street and to deal with a high business turnover rate. Says Darryl, "I'm most proud of the businesses that have been coming in since our formation. Every time there's been a turnover, there's been a better and brighter business... We now have some real gems in the area."

How this came about was no accident but, in part, through the hard work of the Development Committee of the Board, led by Vice-chair, Dennis Maslo, who teamed up with real estate agents to target the area to prospective retail clients. Businesses started gravitating to the area and never stopped, lured by attractive streets, reasonable rents as well as the strong commitment to quality and prosperity that emanated from existing businesses and the BIA. There are few BIAs like this one that are composed of nearly *all* unusual, one-of-a-kind, owner-operated businesses. These include: a Columbian restaurant, a tennis supply store, a computer recycling business, a cookbook store, an organic chocolate shop, a gaming store, a maternity/breastfeeding boutique, fitness and arts studios – and opening soon, the western "branch" of the wildly popular Queen Marguerita pizza. Nowadays, their dilemma is a good one – appealing people who desperately want to find business space there.



**The name Baby Point can be pronounced "Bobby Point" in keeping with the original historical pronunciation, but locals don't stress about it and are happy to respond to either pronunciation. Historical Society people do have their preferences, though, according to Board Chair, Darryl Kaplan, even though the majority of people choose to pronounce it Bay-bee Point.*

Board executive, Darryl Kaplan, Dennis Maslo and Rada Belomarkovic, as seen in May's Bloor West Villager (photo: Lisa Rainford)

GATES AND STREET BEAUTIFICATION

As the historic gates reached their century-old status in 2011, Baby Point Gates also became a BIA. Since that time, the BIA has been working with the City to restore the area and make it an attractive focal point. The BIA's original strategic planning exercise indicated that's what they needed to do.

Under the leadership of Gates Committee chair, Danica Loncar, this will translate into landscaping, seating and modest lighting, with an anticipated groundbreaking this year. The City owns the actual gates so any restoration on the stone would have to involve them and is not likely an initiative that members would fund.

Additionally, the BIA in its short existence, has already commissioned and installed three murals and banners and has given existing planters a new life.

STREET "ISSUES"

The less glamorous side to running a BIA is working out various issues. For this BIA, the big ones are parking, transportation and zoning. Due to the bike lanes on Annette, the BIA now has no parking during morning and evening rush hours. Unlike Bloor West Village, they don't have parking lots. When customers park on side streets, the residents get upset.

Zoning is another issue because nearly 30 per cent of the businesses are zoned as residential. When a business is sold, a developer can buy the land and build town houses or other types of residence without any commercial space on the ground floor. In fact, even if they wanted to create retail space, they wouldn't be allowed. With the assistance of Councillor Doucette and others, the BIA is working hard to protect its retail space.

BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE!

Even though events have not been a high priority for this BIA, they staged their first community open house last November. It featured entertainment, specials and treats, relying on the businesses to work out what would be best. Called "Baby, it's cold outside," the event was a success, so the BIA plans on staging similar events this spring and again in the fall. Road closures aren't part of the plan, at this point.



THE BOARD

The Board is composed of nine active and busy members and since there's no hired staff, they have much to do. All but one is a property owner as well as a business manager. They can sit on any of the three committees – Marketing, Gates and Development. Since the Development committee was so successful in getting businesses interested in the vacant spaces, there's no longer a need for that committee.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Darryl Kaplan, Chair

Dennis Maslo, Vice-chair

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Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BabyPointGates>

www.babypointgates.ca

MPAC MAKES AN IMPACT (cont.)

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- First, you should ensure that your assessment notice is correct and that you are being assessed on what you actually own.
- If you think your assessment is high, compare it to others in your vicinity, or even others in similar areas. It's easy to do this online now through the related website AboutMyProperty at www.aboutmyproperty.ca
- If you are concerned, send us a copy of your assessment notice. If we are to see change, TABIA needs real life stories to tell. Let us know what has changed and by how much and anything else you think we need to know. We will keep your name and property address *private*, but we need to have the basics to tell a story. Email this information to Lionel at lionelmiskin@gmail.com or fax to TABIA at 416-263-3125, *please!*

NEWS TO USE

FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND MANAGERS

DISPUTING PARKING TICKETS

One of the biggest gripes we hear in BIAs concern overly aggressive ticketing for cars parked along the Main Streets. But there's news to counteract over-zealous ticketing that businesses might want to share with their customers. Someone who has been ticketed has the right to dispute a parking ticket that's been issued less than 10 minutes from the time stamped on the ticket. But the right to do this can only be done once. This 10-minute grace period was approved by City Council in July. Find this info on the parking dispute page of Toronto.ca. Here's the link: www.toronto.ca/pay-toronto-tickets/pdf/cancellation_guidelines.pdf

BE INFORMED ABOUT YOUR CITY

Maybe you want to know a little about the City you live in; maybe you want to know a lot. You can subscribe to one or more topics through the city's e-newsletters to get the latest news

releases from the City, emergency road closures, updates regarding a casino in the GTA, business news, specific community issues like the Dundas St. W streetscape improvements... and more! www.toronto.ca/e-updates

ECO-UPDATES

What business wouldn't want a lower energy bill? There are ways for TABIA members to save, save, save. The greenTbiz team features energy efficient technology that will drastically minimize consumption. See here: <http://greentbiz.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/January-2013-Newsletter-.pdf>

TSN TANTALIZER

Contact Liana Ling if you'd like to learn more about advertising spots on TSN radio for only \$25! lling@toronto-bia.com

UPCOMING EVENTS AND DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

HERE'S THE INFO YOU NEED NOW, FOR YOU, YOUR BOARD AND YOUR MEMBERS

Third Tues. of each month-TABIA inter-departmental meetings.

(No meeting in Jan.) City Hall, from 2-4 p.m. These are great sources of information on the latest news coming from City Hall or issues affecting BIAs. Questions? Contact Patricia at TABIA at 416-263-3229 or pmccartie@toronto-bia.com.

Enterprise Toronto – free programs and seminars for business people. Various Dates and Toronto locations www.enterprisetoronto.com/index.cfm?linkid=99&linktype=mainlink&fromurl=boxes&content_id=2580

Mar. 5 – Deadline for submission for 2013 OBIAA Awards. Have you entered yet?

April 14-17 – TABIA OBIAA Conference at the Marriott Eaton Centre

LET US KNOW ABOUT YOUR UPCOMING EVENTS.

Send details to Patricia at TABIA who will publicize it on the TABIA website and share the info with *News & Views*. info@toronto-bia.com

AT THE BIAs

NOW!... Waterfront BIA. Open for business, for you to eat, shop and play, despite the construction! www.waterfrontbia.com

Jan.– Parkdale Village BIA. Celebrate the 134th anniversary of the village. Share your memories at www.facebook.com/ParkdaleVillage and visit www.parkdalevillagebia.com

Feb. 17 – Beach BIA's Family Sunday in the Beach. Petting zoo, hop on and off vintage trolley, entertainers, ice sculpting, wine tasting and more. www.beachbia.com/Community/Event-Calendar/Events/Family-Sunday-Event

Feb. 18- Toronto Waterfront BIA's Family Day. Free Artbarn crafts, family movies, winter warm-up and Pawsway and Woofjocks events. www.waterfrontbia.com

Feb. 25 & 26 - Bloor-Yorkville BIA's 8th Annual Icefest, in Bloor-Yorkville park with ice carving demonstrations and an on-street skating performance. Many restaurants participating. www.bloor-yorkville.com/icefest

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Website: <http://www.toronto-bia.com>

TABIA Board Executive

President: John Wakulat, *Roncesvalles Village BIA*
Past-President: Alex Ling, *Bloor West Village BIA*
Secretary: Paul Dineen, *Cabbagetown BIA*
Treasurer: Henny Varga, *The Kingsway BIA*
Vice-Presidents: Amy Chow, *The Danforth BIA*
and Lionel Miskin, *Kennedy Road BIA*

Board Directors (BIA Board Chairs or Members)

Christena Chruszez, *Bloor-Yorkville BIA*; Harbhajan Dhillon, *Emery Village BIA*; Beverly Don, *Yonge Lawrence Village BIA*; Jeff Gillan, *Corso Italia BIA*; Jacques Jones, *Bloorcourt Village BIA*; Darryl Kaplan, *Babypoint Gates BIA*; Tonny Louie, *Chinatown BIA*; Don Panos, *St. Clair Gardens BIA*; Carl Porritt, *Long Branch BIA*; Spencer Sutherland, *Queen St. West BIA*

Board Directors (BIA staff):

Lynn Clay, *Liberty Village BIA*; Keith Denning, *Roncesvalles BIA*; Grace Russo, *Little Italy BIA*; Robert Sysak, *West Queen West BIA*

This newsletter is also produced electronically and can be found at www.toronto-bia.com