



BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

124 STREET BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA (BIA) OVERVIEW

What is a Business Improvement Area (BIA)?

A Business Improvement Area (BIA) is a specific geographic area of the city in which businesses combine resources and work together, through a formal association, to enhance the economic development of their area.

A BIA is a statutory corporation created under the authority of Alberta's Municipal Government Act (MGA) Business Improvement Area Regulation.

A Business Improvement Area (BIA) is initiated at the request of a business community. It is set up and governed by a combination of provincial legislation and City policy. When a BIA is created, City Council establishes a Business Association, sets the BIA boundary, and approves a Board of Directors and annual budget.

The budgeted amount is collected through a special tax levy of BIA members. Once established, City Council annually approves the BIA's budget, Board of Directors, and special tax levy. All monies collected by the City are returned to the Business Association in quarterly instalments to fund the BIA's initiatives.

Who is a member of a BIA?

Any business that is located within the prescribed BIA boundaries is a Member of the BIA and contributes to the BIA budget by way of the special tax levy (see 124 Street BIA Boundary Map). Members of the BIA are entitled to attend the BIA's Annual General Meetings and are eligible to vote on the selection of members to the Board of Directors. Every member business is entitled to one vote at these meetings.

Who Governs a BIA?

A BIA is governed by an elected Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is composed of volunteers – business owners, property owners, community residents and other interested individuals who are nominated by a BIA member and elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The size of the BIA Board of Directors varies from one BIA to another, with a maximum of 15 members. The Board is responsible for the strategic, financial, and administrative management of the BIA including overseeing the planning, budget/finances, implementation, and evaluation of BIA programs and projects. The Board has a number of other responsibilities including:

- Selecting the Board executives, such as a Chair or Committee Chairs;
- Hiring an Executive Director;
- Establishing and assessing BIA policies, bylaws, and operating guidelines; and
- Establishing and assessing BIA programs and projects.



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The Board is a “governing board” and does not have direct responsibility of the day-to-day operations or management of the BIA which is the responsibility of the Executive Director. The Board works closely with the Executive Director in providing oversight and the strategic organizational direction of programs and projects for the Executive Director to implement. The BIA Board of Directors is accountable to the City of Edmonton and the BIA membership, which are the business owners in the BIA area.

BIA Mandate

The authority for BRZs in Alberta flows from Section 50 and 53 of the Municipal Government Act Section 50 states:

A council may by bylaw establish a business revitalization zone for one or more of the following purposes:

- a) improving, beautifying and maintaining property in the zone;
- b) developing, improving and maintaining public parking; and
- c) promoting the zone as a business or shopping area.

Further, the City of Edmonton identifies the mandate of a BIA is to encourage the economic and physical improvement of local businesses through beautification and maintenance of streetscapes, buildings and structures in the area, and to promote the area as a business and shopping district. To achieve these goals a number of strategies may be employed. These can include:

- *Maintenance*: sidewalk cleaning, graffiti removal, coordinated snow removal;
- *Special events and festivals*: organizing and partnering in events that highlight the unique assets of the BIA;
- *Marketing and economic development*: understanding the client base (consumer surveys) and creating effective promotional materials, newsletters, websites, maps, signage and banners, etc.;
- *Regulatory advocacy and bylaw enforcement*: assistance in enforcement of laws governing sidewalk vending, street performance, vehicle loading and unloading, as well as advocacy for municipal action on street furniture standards, building code compliance and standards of public behaviour;
- *Business recruitment and retention*: working with property owners to ensure an appropriate business and service mix is achieved, vacancy reduction, marketing to investors, financial incentives for new and expanding businesses;
- *Advocating for access to City incentive programs*: such as the Façade Improvement Program which provides funds to enhance the appearance and function of existing street-level retail and commercial buildings;
- *Parking and transportation management*: improvements encouraged through planning and advocacy;
- *Public safety*: establishing a partnership with local authorities, volunteer safety programs;
- *Streetscaping and capital improvements*: support for designing and obtaining more pedestrian and customer-friendly lighting, improved sidewalks, street furniture, signage and landscaping;
- *Open spaces*: improving open and green spaces for employees and visitors; and
- Any other services permitted under the Municipal Government Act (MGA), the BIA Regulation and the BIA Board.