



Yonge North York BIA 2023 - 2027 Strategic Plan



Yonge North York BIA Strategic Plan

Backgrounder

A Business Improvement Area (BIA) is an association of commercial property owners and tenants within a defined area who work in partnership with the City to create thriving, competitive, and safe business areas that attract shoppers, diners, tourists, and new businesses.

By working collectively as a BIA, local businesses have the organizational and funding capacity to be catalysts for civic improvement, enhancing the quality of life in their local neighbourhood and the City as a whole.

A BIA is run by a volunteer Board of Management elected from its Members. The Board is nominated at an Annual General Meeting and, once approved by City Council, serves a four-year term concurrent with the term of Council. The Board works on behalf of its BIA and meets regularly to develop budgets, set priorities, implement capital improvements, plan events, and promote its business area.

Our Vision

To be the preferred destination in North Toronto for businesses, residents, visitors and workers to live, work and play.

Our Mission

By promoting the area as an accessible, safe, urban, vibrant and alternative destination to downtown Toronto and the suburbs.

By creating economic growth and opportunity for Members.

By improving the quality of life through business attraction, capacity building, events, marketing, public realm, retention and revitalization.

Our Values

Collaboration: Working together on the collective needs of our Members.

Leadership: Advocating and representing the BIA as the voice of Members.

Partnership: Building a connected, proud and unified BIA community.

Our Positioning

The CENTRE of North Toronto.



Our Purpose

The Yonge North York BIA is Business Improvement Area Board, created by By-Law 1024-2020, as defined in the Toronto Act, Chapter 19. This Act states:

§ 19-2.1. Purpose of a business improvement area board. Where Council passes a designating by-law, Council, or community council under delegated authority, may establish a board under this chapter:

- A. To oversee the improvement, beautification and maintenance of municipally owned land, buildings and structures in the business improvement area beyond City standard levels provided at the expense of the municipality generally
- B. To maintain business improvement area-initiated streetscaping capital assets within the business improvement area
- C. To promote the business improvement area as a business, employment, tourist or shopping area
- D. To offer graffiti and poster removal services respecting building façades visible from the street to all business improvement area Member property owners who provide written consent, upon approval of the program by the business improvement area Members
- E. To undertake safety and security initiatives within the business improvement area
- F. To undertake strategic planning necessary to address business improvement area issues
- G. To advocate on behalf of the interests of the business improvement area subject to the limits set out in this chapter

Our Pillars

Continuing with the approved budget and based on our vision, mission, values, and purpose of a business improvement area, we will focus our resources on four key pillars of the term:

1. **Public Realm**
2. **Marketing**
3. **Economic Development**
4. **Operations**

* [Click Here](#) To view the Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 19, Business Improvement Areas 19-1 July 22, 2022

1. Public Realm

Definition: Relates to any publicly owned streets, pathways, sidewalks, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities where the public has access.

Goal: Work in conjunction to create quick placemaking wins and maintain standards in the public realm in the interim of REimagining Yonge. Hire a Streetscape Master Plan team to ensure BIA member voices are heard ahead of the City led process. Overall, aim is to create a distinct downtown type of neighbourhood and collaborate to serve the interests of the business community in key public works projects.

Streetscape

- Complete a Member consultation and secure Board approval for a future streetscape-identified key project component for REimagining Yonge and Master Plan development
- Begin to develop terms of reference and hiring process for the future Streetscape Master Plan
- Hire a Streetscape Master Plan Team to canvas and work with the WD BIA on key issues and wants in conjunction with the REimagining Yonge Streetscape redevelopment by developing a Streetscape Master Plan (Removed traffic)
- Add to investment savings annually for future capital-cost shared projects in order to implement project charter and masterplan components in conjunction with REimagining Yonge, which will maximize the opportunity to reduce costs on such projects
- Communicate ongoing Streetscape updates to Members
- Continue with executing a Streetscape Issues Reporting system
- Implement a “Banner Program” and develop a regular system of replacement
- Explore and implement murals in conjunction with partners and potential funding opportunities
- Plan for the REimagining Yonge construction period mitigation and marketing during it

Maintenance

- Assess and repeat the annual community volunteer-based “Maintenance Beyond City Standards” event that will beautify and enhance the BIA area
- Price and undertake maintenance on certain elements that require further attention
- Development of an agreed reporting format for the annual programs

Transportation

- Actively engage and be part of the “Metrolinx North Subway Extension Consultation” and any other transit initiatives close and/or in the BIA boundaries

Decor

- Complete the review of the costs, locations and standards for seasonal decor
- Develop a décor plan that refreshes quarterly and focuses on “broad themes” that will appeal to the diverse community

Venues

- Apply for the City Innovation Grant to select a firm to undertake a study on how to work with and partner in a stronger manner with Mel Lastman Square for improved economic development benefits for the WD BIA



2. Marketing

Definition: Any publicly owned streets, pathways, sidewalks, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities where the public has access.

Goal: Introduce the rebranded BIA to all target audiences. Focus on awareness and engagement through strategically chosen media channels. Leverage events to help build member and community awareness in and then begin to build stronger engagement.

Brand

- Gain approval of the BIA name change from the City of Toronto
- Review the updated "Brand Blueprint", "Positioning" and new "Brand Style Guide" with the Board, Marketing Committee and to Members at the next AGM
- Finalize the creative package of new brand templates for all communication channels
- Update BIA Members in an e-blast about the new brand and review the reason for the change and what it means for them
- Brief all freelance marketing partners on the market research data, positioning, brand blueprint and brand style guide to ensure consistent messaging, tone, manner and style across all communication channels
- Create a launch campaign to engage and educate our key target groups - residents, businesses, workers and visitors

Event

- Participate and /or partner in 3 events that are seasonally timed
- Develop and execute one additional "signature" event pilot that specifically celebrates this BIA area
- Develop and implement basic sponsorship package and focus on recruiting current Members as sponsors
- Support Café TO in the parklet format
- Repeat the Live Music on Yonge program with a partner with the goal of presenting it in more locations
- Review lighting and virtual reality options based on the Innovation grant to determine what to implement in the BIA and at which events

Newsletter

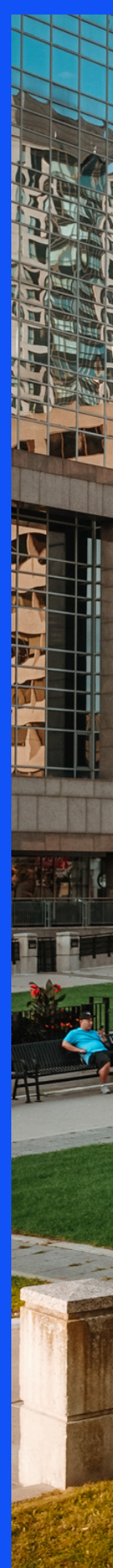
- Develop a new format and concept for Members and residents reflecting the new brand
- Expand communication distribution collaborating with our local Councilor, MPP, resident associations etc.

Plan

- Complete the development of a Marketing Plan that is actionable, doable and realistic

PR

- Engage a freelance PR consultant to assist with promoting key initiatives and events
- Develop a format for regular press releases for news and smaller initiatives
- Engage a freelance blogger/writer to create regular editorial feature content



2. Marketing (Cont'd)

Definition: Any publicly owned streets, pathways, sidewalks, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities where the public has access.

Goal: Work in conjunction to create quick placemaking wins and maintain standards in the public realm in the interim of Reimagining Yonge. Hire a Streetscape Master Plan team to ensure BIA member voices are heard ahead of the City led process. Overall, the aim is to create a distinct downtown type of neighborhood and collaborate to serve the interests of the business community in key public works projects.

Promotion

- Develop creative for a small toolkit of promotional items
- Procure items that are durable, have longevity and simply express the new brand

Social Media

- Update all digital channels with the new brand identity
- Work with our marketing partners to determine your key audience for these channels and adjust content and messaging accordingly

Website

- Develop a new website with enhanced content and features in two phases
- Apply the new brand identity to the website
- Begin development of new sections of the website to support Business Attraction and Recruitment
- Development and implementation of a Map Project in conjunction with Innovative Grant Funding Opportunity



3. Economic Development

Definition: Building connections, mobilizing resources, developing economic links, utilizing support programs and grants and creating a supportive environment that attracts, retains and expands business in the Willowdale community.

Goal: Improve our ability to attract and provide support to businesses in to the Yonge North York BIA by removing barriers and creating an opportunity for local entrepreneurs, independent businesses, and other businesses to thrive.

Business Attraction

- Review and incorporate the Toronto Retail Design Manual in any review of development applications for stronger ground floor spaces and placemaking
- Add to the Business Attraction section on the website to include key economic data on supply side and demand side
- Development of a system for reporting on BIA outputs and public and private investment in the WD BIA to track progress, measure ROI, provide credibility to the City and other partners and to evaluate effectiveness for Board Strategic Planning (Both Elements--Business Attraction & Support)
- Identify the gaps in retail offering that will support the new BIA strategic positioning (live, work, play) and meets the needs of our target groups
- Develop a segmentation profile of the types of business owners (e.g., 30-year recent immigrant) that would fit well into WD BIA
- Create a database of vacant and available (sublease) retail and office space for rent and sale
- Communicate regularly with brokers and property managers on BIA updates and opportunities
- Additional Economic Development videos for the website and social media channels
- Develop a specific mini retail ground-level design manual for new development that emphasizes walkability and active retail street frontages specific to their local constraints and opportunities

Business Support

- Develop a “Welcome Handbook and Kit” for new businesses who locate in the BIA
- Continue to issue a monthly Member e-newsletter
- Pilot “networking” events for Members that is both educational and social in nature
- Connect with Enterprise Toronto and Digital Main Streets among others to assess the value in partnering and what resources they have that would be beneficial for BIA Members
- Develop a “How to get to the WD BIA” section of the website
- Conduct a Member Contentment & Feedback Survey to assist with updating the strategic plan in 2027 with the new term and Board
- Undertake a study of public parking in terms of locations and build a database of availability that is updated to facilitate travel to the area during the REimagining Yonge construction period



4. Operations

Definition: All of the activities required to govern, plan and manage the day-to-day activities of the BIA in pursuit of its vision and mission and operate in a manner that is consistent with its values.

Goal: Continue to enhance the operational governance structure and establish operational components required to support the Strategic Planning priorities & objectives. Build capacity and communicate effectively with Members and stakeholders on successes and progress. Build out partnerships.

BIA Resources

- Develop Short-Term Advisory Groups to assist with planning and launching new initiatives and projects including select priority topics identified in the new term such as an initiative to support persons experiencing homelessness
- Utilize available resource tools from TABIA, OBIAA, and IDA to educate and train new BIA staff and freelance partners
- Continue to apply for funding from identified resources while also researching other potential grants that may be available to supplement staff resources
- Implement operational technology solutions to improve communications etc. (i.e. phone systems, software, etc.)

Board

- Host an updated governance session with the Board
- Review and finalize board and staff protocols and clear lines of responsibility
- Utilize available resource tools from the City, TABIA, OBIAA, and IDA to educate and train new Board Members
- Develop new Board Committees as needed to provide advisory support to the staff with multi-faceted key pillars
- Maximize the impact of the AGM via ZOOM to increase attendance and Member participation

HR

- Evaluate the HR resource gap for execution as projects and BIA initiatives become more established and continue to grow
- Attend conferences such as IDA, EDCO and OBIAA to increase staff knowledge

Partnerships

- Develop a relationship with the new area Councilor
- Develop a schedule of regular communication and meetings with Councilor staff
- Agree on issues of importance with the City and the WD BIA, and have semi-annual review meetings with the BIA office
- Collaborate (share information, data, experiences) with other Toronto BIA organizations (e.g., Big Six Downtown BIAs), other associations (TABIA, OBIAA) and other associations/organizations (e.g., ethnic) on matters of importance on as needed basis. Attend TABIA meetings every other week to keep informed and participate in discussion on key issues





Appendix: Member Survey Results 2021

Member Survey Summary

In late 2021, Willowdale BIA conducted a member survey to better serve its members. This survey had 16 questions regarding business improvement initiatives, future project benefits, information about outreach and an opportunity for local businesses to share their thoughts. In total, the BIA received 306 responses.

BIA Sector Businesses

Willowdale BIA has approximately 1,800 members. Below displays the sectors of our respondents.

Yonge Street Festival

75% of our members expressed interest in closing Yonge Street for a weekend street festival, while 18% were not interested and 7% were unsure.

75%
18%
7%

Key Priority Benefits

Willowdale members rated the level of benefit of the nine items listed below would be for their business.

Beneficial Events

Members rated most beneficial events.

Events Schedule

Members chose the best times for events to take place in the community.

First
Saturday

Second
Seasonal

Third
Sunday

Membership Communications

Communicating events, projects, resources or more, these top forms are most useful.

1 E-Newsletter

2 Phone

3 Mailed Newsletter

BIA Communications

Respondants voted on types of communication content that would be of most interest.

90% **Event Updates** voted updates on events in the area as valuable.

86% **BIA Interviews** voted interviews with influential professionals and leaders in the neighbourhood as beneficial.

76% **Reposting Member Content** voted reposting member content as valuable to their business.

87% **Construction Updates** voted updates on construction in the area as beneficial.

85% **Posting BIA Content** voted content talking about their business as beneficial.

Unique Comments

Businesses and property owners were given the opportunity to share concerns and suggestions for future consideration.

Safety Initiatives
More safety and aid programs on account of late business hours and an increase of homelessness in the community.

Partnership Opportunities
Networking between local businesses and opportunities to partner with BIA events.

Traffic Improvement
Yonge Street traffic improvement would be beneficial.

Event Awareness
An increase in visual communication to our members about events and projects.

Interactive Events
Participant events might be more successful than spectator events.

Business Directory
A directory and customer review section on the BIA website would be helpful.

Social Media Representation

Our membership uses these social media platforms to reach their target audience.

@WillowdaleBIA

For more details, please contact us directly at hello@willowdalebia.com

Follow us for updates on projects, events, resources, opportunities and more.

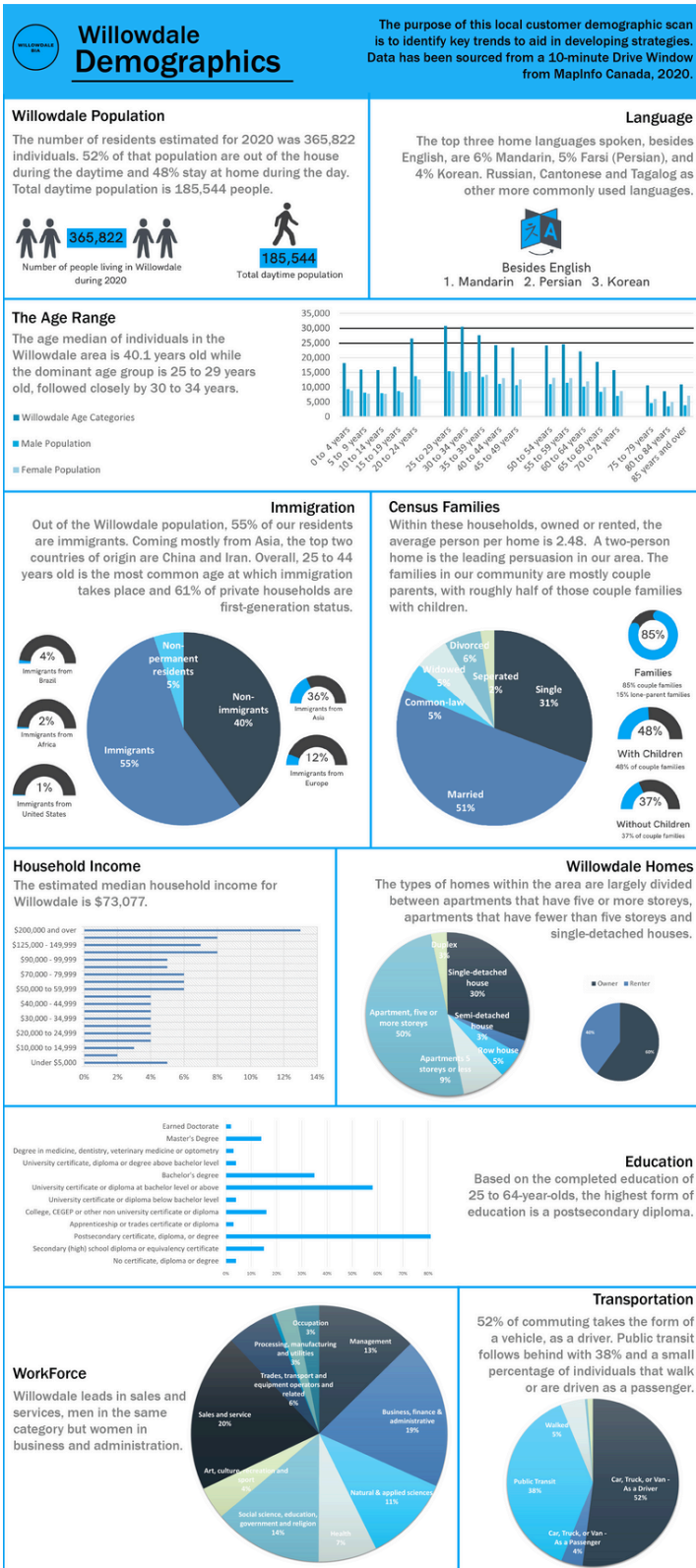
willowdaleBIA.com

The BIA conducted its first annual Member survey in 2021 regarding business improvement initiatives, planned project benefits, and outreach for future planning.

- Of the 306 responses, safety, security, and crime prevention initiatives were considered the most beneficial priority project. The second was creating a clean environment.
- The most beneficial events for our Members were street festivals, food events, and music events. In order, the best times for these events would be Saturday, seasonal, and Sunday.

This survey continues to help shape our Strategic Plan, both in what our Members hope to see as the BIA develops, but also in business-focused community improvements.

Appendix: Yonge North York Demographics Results 2021



Over the course of four months in 2021, our team collected and analyzed a data about the Willowdale area to better understand its Members and how to best serve them. The key trends displayed in these infographics were meant to aid in the Willowdale BIA's developing strategies.

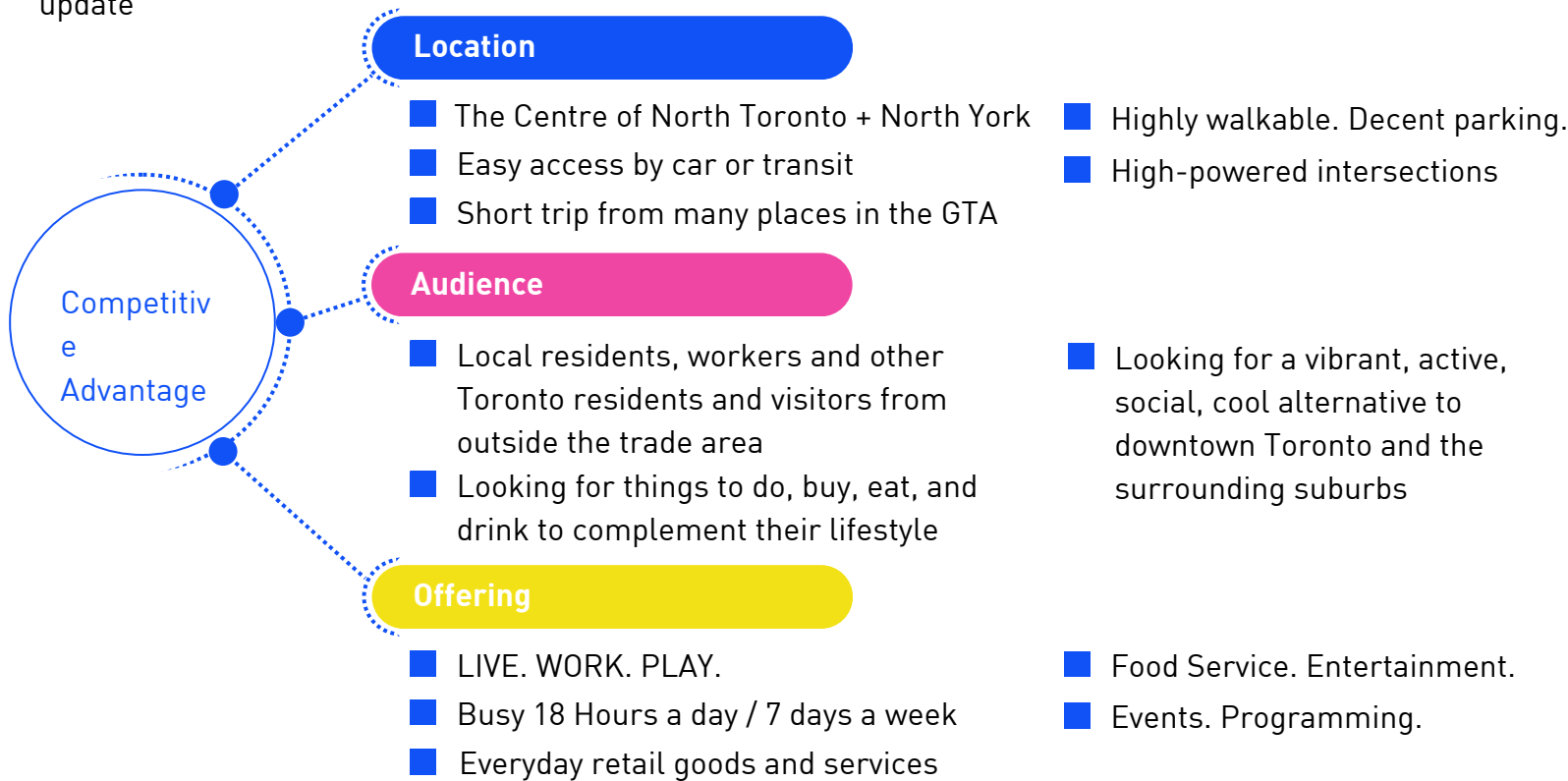
- **Out of the 365,822 Willowdale population, Mandarin, Persian, and Korean are the top spoken languages besides English.**
- **The primary age group for the community is 20 to 39 years old, secondary is 50 to 59, and the median household income at \$73,077.**

After the demographic data was processed, the BIA used the statistics to aid the building of marketing, events, and communication.



Appendix: Brand & Strategic Positioning 2022

Except Summary from Strategic Audit Report by 360 Collective employed in this strategic plan update



Resident Outreach

- 537 Residents completed our online survey
- Distribution of the Survey URL through Community groups, postcards handed out at community events

Worker Outreach

- 1,903 Workers completed our online survey
- Distribution of the Survey through postcards handed out at community events and in the lobbies of Office Towers in the BIA

Member Outreach

- Online Zoom Workshop, 6 Members from different sectors participated

Segmentation, Socio-Economic Profile, Trade Area Profile etc.

- Resident Survey, Worker Survey, Stats Can, Environics, Mobile Cellular Data

Audits, Materials Review, Environmental Scan etc.

- Current plans, WD BIA documents, other BIA organizations, City of Toronto BIA office interviews, City of Toronto BIA budgets etc.

Team Meetings

- Weekly working meetings June - August 2022

The Board of Directors and Staff of Yonge North York BIA thanks the Membership, including property owners and business owners in our business district.

This strategic plan is for everyone who lives, works, plays, and invests in our business district.

Updated November 2022



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YongeNorthYork.com



Visit our website to sign up for our newsletter to receive resources and updates on projects, events, opportunities and more.