

Danforth/VP Businesses to Form BIA

by *Bill McLean*

Beach Metro

It's always a good sign when businesses get together and make improvements to their businesses and the streets that they are on. It's also good that the City of Toronto supports these positive thinking business people by helping them set up official Business Improvement Areas or BIA's as they are known. Toronto is famous for its many successful BIA's: Yorkville, Bloor West, Greektown, and the new Beach BIA. All have been successful partnerships between merchants, residents and the city, where strong vibrant business districts have been created to the benefit of everyone involved. The latest proposed BIA is the Danforth Victoria Park BIA, taking in businesses along the Danforth from Victoria Park to Warden Ave and including businesses going up Danforth Rd to Warden.

The Danforth Victoria Park Business Association was formed roughly 4 years ago with the intention of evolving into an official BIA. Dan Glazier, current chair of the business association, and owner of the recently expanded Frontier Sales furniture store, has been the impetus behind the push for a BIA for the area.

"We want to give this area an identity", he said. "Right now, it's just an area that people drive through." Glazier acknowledged that the city has already done a lot of capitol improvement as part of the master plan. Apparently it was at one time designated as an ERA, or Employment Revitalization Area, but Glazier said that designation was dropped some time ago.

The Danforth Victoria Park BA has been very active over the past 3 years getting the word out to all the businesses and residents in the area and getting them involved in the new association.

"As an association we haven't had much conflict," Glazier said. "We realize that we have to get along, work together, and move ahead.... I tell people who come to our meetings to bring solutions." Glazier also acknowledged the support and contribution of the newly elected city councillor for Ward 35, Adrian Heaps, whom he said has been "very aggressive" in pursuing the BIA.

The BIA is still in the early stages of formation. Glazier said he had spoken to most of the larger businesses looking for their support. "I don't think we'll have any problem getting the vote," he said.

As can be expected, the biggest concern most business owners have about the BIA is the levy applied to their tax roll. Glazier says that he has assured the people that he has spoken to that "we're not going to have crazy levies." His members realize that it will take time to build up funds to achieve their eventual goals.

And what are the plans this future BIA has for the Danforth Victoria Park area? One of the first things that they would like is new and improved lighting. Glazier said that currently there is lighting only on the north side of Danforth, and he would like to see streetlights on the south side as well. Then there are plans to address many of the concerns that the Beach BIA is facing, namely graffiti, and keeping the area safe and clean.

A date has yet to be announced for the next public meeting, but Glazier assured me it would be soon. He still had a few businesses to meet with. But he did acknowledge that once the Danforth Victoria Park BIA is established it will mean that almost the entire length will be covered by BIA's which will be good for this historic street.