

Attachment #2

*DBIA Strategic Plan 2022-2025*

**Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Society  
2022 - 2025 Strategic Plan  
Final Report  
Ruby Group Fundraising and Event Management**

## **Introduction**

This report is the result of work done between June and October 2021. The process was guided by a group comprised of board and staff and facilitator Jason Campbell. The process included an extensive external stakeholder consultation, member and customer survey, conversations with the Executive Director, and a planning day with board and staff.

## **Purpose of the New Westminster Business Improvement Society**

- To develop, encourage and promote business in the Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Areas;
- To conduct studies of, and advance projects, plans, or improvements designed to benefit the Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Areas;
- To cooperate with and aid any person, body, group, or association in projects designed to benefit the Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Areas;
- To raise revenue to carry out the purposes of the Society;
- To promote matters of common concern and interest to businesses and property owners in the Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Areas, and to bring together businesses and property owners in the Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Areas for fulfilling the purposes of the Society

## **History of the Downtown New Westminster BIA**

1989 – BIA is proposed by merchants/property owners

City passes bylaw designating geographic boundary and levy is passed. Registered as a not-for-profit society, first AGM is held and election of first board of directors.

1990 –Netty Tam is hired as Executive Director.

Throughout the 90s, the focus of the BIA is on social issues, safety concerns, and launching events & initiatives

Columbia Streetscene & Fraserfest are launched in the early 90s followed by Dickens Days and an Easter Egg hunt event in the mid-90s.

The City of New Westminster and the BIA spend 3 years developing a vision for the downtown, finalizing it in 1996. The BIA office is transformed into a model of what the downtown could look like in the future. Focus on developing residential and upgrading commercial/retail spaces as part of the vision.

A Performing Arts Task Force is launched in 1996, with the aim that the old Columbia Theatre be redeveloped into a live performing arts centre, viewed as a catalyst to Downtown redevelopment.

Out of the Performing Arts Task Force a new separate society is registered called the “Raymond Burr Performing Arts Society” the BIA loans the new society \$10k to get started in 1997.

By 2000, The Burr Society has raised enough funds to approach the City who matches those funds and purchases the old Columbia Theatre. The Burr Society is tasked with running the theatre for the City, the BIA forgives the original \$10k loan made to the Society at the AGM.

The Riverboat casino was proposed in 1997 by Star of Fortune Gaming Company, lots of consultation by the City and the BIA, in the end the BIA supported the casino opening.

It opened in 1999, the casino pledged funds for a new conference centre in downtown New West (Anvil Centre opens 15 years later).

In 1998 most of the major banks leave downtown New Westminster, only Scotiabank remained. Crime, social issues & the beer parlours are blamed for public perception being at an all-time low. The BIA hired a PR person to combat the negative publicity.

In 1999 Netty Tam leaves the BIA and Jack Bass is hired as executive director.

The BIA believes that new events would bring people to downtown new west and show them how much it has changed – the first show & shine is launched and is considered a huge success.

In the early 2000s Columbia Street had many vacancies, the city works with the BIA to attract large tenants, West Coast College of Massage Therapy opens in 2001. Events are reassessed during this time and the BIA drops Easter, Dickens Days, passes Fraserfest on

to the Hyack Festival Association, and introduces the multicultural festival. The focus is on growing show & shine.

In 2004 Jack Bass leaves the BIA and the office goes without an executive director for almost a year. Events continue to be produced by support staff, and Brian Dodd is hired in July of 2005. Two new events are launched – Royal City Tea and Music in the Square. Royal City Tea only lasts a couple of years, music in square is eventually taken over by the City under Parks & Rec (programming Hyack square during the summer)

The first BIA website is launched in early 2007.

In 2008 Royal City Star Riverboat Casino closes (moves to a new facility in Queensborough).

The defunct Westminster Public Market is purchased by Mark Sheih and plans for a relaunch as River Market is announced. It takes them several years to get off the ground

In 2009 Brian Dodd leaves the BIA and Virginia Bremner is hired on contract as office manager.

The Burr Society officially folds and the city puts the Columbia Theatre up for sale.

The city celebrates its 150th birthday and the BIA is heavily involved in the yearlong series of celebrations.

The board starts discussing the city's plan to tear down the Parkade, this discussion starts in 1999 and continues until late 2013 when an official position is decided upon and communicated to mayor & council.

Virginia Bremner's contract ends in late 2010, the office is run by two admin assistants for the majority of 2011 until Kendra Johnston is hired in November.

In 2012 the BIA joins social media, launches a new website, and implements a weekly electronic newsletter to the membership. The show & shine is rebranded to the Key West Ford Show & Shine under a 3 year sponsorship deal. Maddison Mckitrick is hired as the programs & events coordinator in November of 2012.

As we move into 2013 the BIA starts sponsoring events to ensure their success in our downtown: New West Doc Fest, Pecha Kucha, and New West Pride for example.

The BIA launches Columbia StrEAT Food Truck Fest, a holiday tree lighting program, and decides to discontinue the multicultural festival. A new governance manual is adopted and new bylaws are passed at the AGM. In October a major fire destroys 3 buildings and affects dozens of businesses.

In 2014 the decision was made to no longer produce the show & shine after 15 years, after putting the word out, the Hyack Festival Association offers to continue on the show & shine's legacy.

The BIA moves to a new office, implements a new grant program for façade improvements and launches a monthly “VIP” e-newsletter to more than 2k people to promote our membership. Recently, the BIA launched the hugely successful Fridays on Front event. In 2017 the BIA area was expanded to include businesses in the lower 12<sup>th</sup> area.

The last two years have seen the BIA help downtown businesses deal with the difficulties brought on by Covid 19. One valuable support was the Covid 19 business grants that cover the cost of installations that support health orders. Other innovative initiatives included the #togethernewwest campaign and the Quest New West event.

## **Stakeholder Consultation**

The following external individuals and groups were surveyed for information in person:

- Blair Fryer, City of New Westminster EDO
- Barb Fairbrother and Deb Yule, Tourism New West
- Councilor Mary Trentadue
- Mayor Jonathan Cote
- Jordan Foss, Steel and Oak
- Stephen O'Shea, Arts Council of New Westminster
- Tracy London, Douglas College Foundation
- Lisa Leblanc, Director of Engineering
- Erika Mashig, Manager Parks & Open Space Planning, Design and Construction

External Stakeholder Consultation Themes:

- Positive feedback toward the work of the Downtown New Westminster BIA
- BIA is seen as a respected leader in the community providing a valuable service
- Although large live events have been cancelled, they continue to be well recognized and seen as a benefit to New Westminster as a whole
  - Fridays on Front was consistently noted
- Social media presence recognized and seen as a great marketing tool
- The BIA is seen as a great organization to partner with. Douglas College expressed a keen interest in partnering
- There continues to be a need to differentiate the role of the BIA, Tourism New West and New West Chamber. The BIA was also seen to have taken on some of the responsibilities of other organizations during Covid.

- The new Economic Development retail plan is being developed and will help guide the priorities of the City of New Westminster Economic Development Department.
  - There is an opportunity here for leadership from the New Westminster BIA.
- It was recognized that the BIA is a valuable advocate for businesses and has the capacity to take the lead with other organizations
- Hyack Square was repeatedly mentioned as an opportunity to be a focal point for downtown
- There was some agreement that the Downtown BIA should be a top priority for the City of New Westminster
- The downtown is very much seen to have lost momentum
- Social issues like homelessness was recognized as a growing issue
- Vacant buildings/lots consistently came up as an issue but with no real solutions
- City initiatives such as outside patios seen as a positive step and the process the city took to listen to businesses has potential for positive change

A detailed survey was sent to all BIA members. We received 79 responses and the survey results can be found in the survey results document. Survey summary:

- Facts and Figures
  - 36% of businesses less than 5 years' old
  - 44% with less than 5 employees. This is very similar to 2015 and 2018.
  - 48% of businesses were retail or professional service
- The top three rated Covid 19 specific programs:
  - Covid 19 business grants
  - #ReDiscoverNewWest initiative
  - Shine Bright New West
- The top three rated pre-pandemic initiatives or programs
  - Fridays on Front
  - Attracting/sponsoring events to Downtown
  - Columbia StrEAT Food Cart Festival
- Top three issues:
  - Construction fatigue (same as 2018)
  - Safety, Security and Social Concerns
  - Parking
- Construction was rated number one issue by far
- Acknowledgment that some issues (eg. construction) are not under the control of the BIA
- BIA continues to be a positive influence on downtown (events, social media, supportive of business)

## Planning Day

The Downtown New Westminster BIA held a planning day on September 13, 2021 (in-person and via zoom) with board and staff to determine strategic goals for 2021-2024.

Through an exercise to identify values that best represent the work of the BIA the following were identified.

### Values

*Inclusive  
Respectful*

*Community  
Pride*

*Positive  
Support*

Through an exercise to identify a vision to best represent the work of the BIA the following was created:

### Vision

*Downtown New Westminster to be vibrant, inclusive, and welcoming to all to create a connected community.*

A goal setting exercise was conducted to set broad three-year goals for the board and staff. Four major goals were identified:

#### *Strategic Direction 1: Support Downtown New Westminster businesses through the pandemic*

##### Priority Strategic Goals

- Provide timely updates, resources, and opportunities to all businesses
- Provide resources for better business preparedness

#### *Strategic Direction 2: Be the collective voice of Downtown New Westminster businesses on matters that will impact their businesses*

##### Priority Strategic Goals

- Maintain and develop relationships with the City of New Westminster and any other governing agencies
- Petition government agencies for outcomes that benefit our members
- Advocate for solutions on behalf of the board and businesses regarding the issue of

- vacant properties
- Advocate for better communication and mitigation of challenges for businesses during construction
- Advocate for limiting concurrent construction

*Strategic Direction 3: Attracting people to Downtown New Westminster in support of its members.*

Priority Strategic Goals

- Develop an overall marketing plan for the BIA and BIA initiatives
- Engage more members from different language/cultural groups
- Prioritize diversity among the BIA Board to ensure better representation

*Strategic Direction 4: Make Downtown New Westminster a place where people want to spend time.*

Priority Strategic Goals

- Advocate for a safer and cleaner downtown (restrooms, housing, safe spaces)
- Expand on placemaking and beautification strategies
- Continue to support the I's on the Street program