

THE CORPORATION OF THE  
**CITY OF WHITE ROCK**  
**CORPORATE REPORT**



**DATE:** July 29, 2024

**TO:** Mayor and Council

**FROM:** Tracey Arthur, Director, Corporate Administration

**SUBJECT:** City Survey Regarding Business Improvement Association (BIA) Membership Renewal

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

THAT Council:

1. Receive the July 29, 2024, corporate report from the Director of Corporate Administration, titled "City Survey Regarding Business Improvement Association (BIA) Membership Renewal;" and
  2. Direct staff with next steps for the Survey (to be expanded or concluded).
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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The White Rock Business Improvement Area Bylaw, 2019, No. 2311 is currently in effect and will remain until December 31, 2024. In order for the White Rock Business Improvement Association (BIA) to continue to exist following the end of 2024, a new bylaw must be established. The BIA have requested a new mandate under a similar Bylaw for the next five (5) years. A corporate report outlining the process to achieve this was provided to Council at the March 25, 2024, Regular Council meeting. At that time, Council directed that staff and the BIA to work together to bring forward a survey to receive feedback from the property owners and retail business owners within the BIA Bylaw Boundary to be shared with Council related to the services and support provided by the BIA.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION**

<b>Motion # &amp; Meeting Date</b>	<b>Motion Details</b>
2024-099 March 25, 2024	THAT Council direct there be a survey conducted by the City: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff and the BIA to work on the survey questions together</li><li>• The commercial property owners and the retail business within the BIA Area to be surveyed</li><li>• To be conducted within the next 60-day period</li><li>• To be conducted not solely through email, would like to see door-to-door component</li><li>• Draft survey provided On-Table can be a starting point for discussion between staff and the BIA</li></ul>

**INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results to come back to the City</li> </ul>
2024-04-15 April 13, 2024	<p>THAT Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approve staff utilizing TheWGroup to conduct a BIA Member Survey at the cost of \$8,875; and</li> <li>2. Approve the proposed objectives, methodology, timeline and draft survey outlined in the corporate report.</li> </ol>

Staff were requested to meet with the BIA regarding possible survey questions and then provide a proposed survey to Council for consideration that would be distributed to both property owners and retail businesses within the designated BIA Boundary area. On April 15, 2024, staff brought forward a corporate report outlining the proposed Survey Information and Process (Attachment A) and Council agreed to hire a consultant to conduct the survey.

Staff hired TheWGroup (consultant), who specialize in operations of local government and associated partnerships. The consultant has extensive experience with the function of Business Improvement Associations. Their proposal included survey research program objectives whereby the survey research program will be established to satisfy the following objectives:

- Measure how well the BIA delivered on its mandated activities.
- Understand the perceived level of benefit members gained from the BIA activities;
- Identify levels of participation in activities among the BIA members.
- Determine the level of engagement/communication the BIA members have had with the BIA during the past year.
- Gather general feedback on how the BIA can provide its members with even greater support.

To satisfy the research objective of the BIA member survey, the survey methodology was to:

- Review and confirm the proposed research objectives with the City.
- Craft a survey questionnaire to satisfy each of the five (5) noted objectives above.
- Design and program the project survey considering invitation methods where it is proposed to hand deliver survey invitations to all BIA businesses and to mail survey invitations to all property owners. The invitation is expected to both use a QR Code and survey link leading to the responsive web survey. Individual business/property tracking may be used to enable participation stats and reminders will be sent and technical support for the survey will be provided.
- Field survey of approximately 282 properties and 360 businesses which exist within the BIA boundaries.
- Monitor survey performance and manage data quality, provide advice on and prepare reminders to be sent to ensure as high a response rate as possible.
- Complete data analysis of collected responses, and prepare a comprehensive report which will include overall findings from the BIA members.

The survey commenced May 21, 2024, with the in-person delivery portion and mailers were sent out later that same week.

By the end of June, the survey had a 10% response rate including two (2) more completed surveys since that time. This is a breakdown of the survey process to date:

- A total of 536 contacts were provided by the City of White Rock.
- 86 of the contacts were mailed invitations to complete the survey as they were non-White Rock-located business / property owners.
- Approximately 450 businesses remained and were targeted for an in-person visit to invite them to complete the BIA survey. A postcard was prepared with all relevant information including the survey's URL and QR Code.
- All locally based businesses (450) were visited over two (2) days. Of those, there were an estimated 400 businesses that were made contact with. There were an estimated 50 businesses closed at the time of the visit mainly as it was office space only open to appointments, closed what appeared to be permanently, or a few were due to being outside of regular business hours. A copy of the postcard invitation was left at all businesses that were not open at the time of the visit.
- During the in-person visits approximately 180 business cards were collected containing 137 usable email addresses. The email addresses were loaded into TheWGroup's survey software and 4 invitations and reminders were sent to those email addresses. Eighteen surveys were completed from the 4 rounds of email invites.

Some noted reasons for the low participation include:

- Lack of awareness of / or interest in what the BIA is and its mandate.
- Apathy among business operators, in general, or as it relates to the BIA.
- Invitations being misplaced or lost between the employee and the business owner.

Due to the number who have responded thus far being lower than anticipated, the consultant was asked to provide an extended scope for the task.

### **The Expanded Scope Objectives**

- Maximize the number of completed surveys from BIA business / property owners.
- Maintain a neutral approach to survey BIA members to avoid any potential skewing of results.

The consultant has provided the following recommendation as the expanded scope methodology to use the following mailed approach:

- City of White Rock official envelopes for mailing – use a postage stamp on the envelope as it will gain greater attention than a postage meter. Above the business name located on the mailing address label, there will be a highlight in colour, **“TIME SENSITIVE INVITATION.”**
- The written invitation will be coming from TheWGroup as the independent firm surveying on behalf of City of White Rock.
- The invitation would include the survey link and a QR Code for quick access to the online survey.

- The survey invitation will have a defined submission cut-off date (based on when the mailing occurs).
- The Invitation would also include the survey questionnaire reformatted to fit onto a double-sided 8.5 x 11" piece of paper. A self-addressed, postage-stamped envelope would be included for the survey returns. The return address will be to the City of White Rock address c/o TheWGroup. The City of White Rock will hold all returned mailings for TheWGroup to open (ensuring response data validation).
- TheWGroup will complete data entry of the printed survey questionnaire data.

The consultant has noted if the expanded scope were approved, they would require approximately one (1) week to prepare and mail the survey invitations. Then they would allow three (3) weeks for all returns to come in - online and via paper-based mail backs. At that time, they would close the survey and begin preparing the results report. The report would require approximately two (2) weeks for completion, for a total of a further six (6) weeks from confirmation to proceed with the further scope to final results report delivery. With this timing, staff could provide the information to Council in September for their consideration.

The consultant has advised that this work could be carried out at a further cost of \$3,196 (plus GST), this would be an additional cost to the originally approved funding of \$8,875.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Council at their April 15, 2024, meeting authorized the contracting of a consultant to conduct a survey of the properties included within the BIA boundary (both retail business owners and property owners) for a cost of \$8,875 (plus GST).

To expand the survey scope an additional cost of \$3,196 (plus GST) would be required, bringing the total cost of the project to \$12,071. (plus GST).

### **CONCLUSION**

Following the BIA survey, which has been active since May 24, 2024, as of mid-July there has been a 10% response rate. Due to the response level being lower than anticipated, the consultant was asked how the scope could be expanded and at what cost this could be done. The consultant provided a recommendation for a further mail-out program at an additional cost of \$3,196.

Council can direct staff should they want to proceed further with the survey process and the additional cost to come from Operating Contingency.

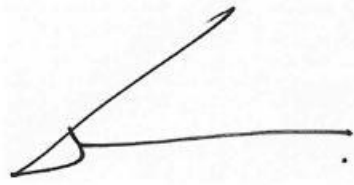
Respectfully submitted,



Tracey Arthur  
Director of Corporate Administration

**Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer**

This corporate report is provided for Council's consideration and direction to staff.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'G' followed by a horizontal line and a small dot at the end.

Guillermo Ferrero  
Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix A: April 15, 2024 Corporate Report "City Survey Regarding Business Improvement Association (BIA) Membership Renewal"