

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



**DATE:** September 9, 2024

**TO:** Mayor and Council

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

**SUBJECT:** Business Improvement Area (BIA) Survey Results and Direction for a New BIA Bylaw

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

THAT Council:

1. Receive the September 9, 2024, corporate report from the Director of Corporate Administration, titled “Business Improvement Area (BIA) Survey Results and Direction for a New BIA Bylaw;” and
2. Direct staff to bring forward a new Business Improvement Area (BIA) bylaw utilizing:
  - a. the *Community Charter* Section 212 (Petition for local area service) **or**
  - b. the *Community Charter* Section 213 (Local Area Service on Council Initiative – counter petition) noting that all previous BIA bylaws have utilized Section 213 / counter petition;
  - c) confirm the term (5 years);
  - d) confirm the annual amounts to be collected in accordance with the bylaw with suggested BIA levies for each year of the five-year term (2% or 4% increase from the previous bylaw); and
  - e) confirm the mandate.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The White Rock Business Improvement Area Bylaw, 2019, No. 2311 (Appendix A) is currently in effect until December 31, 2024. For the White Rock Business Improvement Area (BIA) to continue to exist following the end of 2024 a new bylaw must be established. The BIA has requested a new bylaw, similar to the existing that would have a five (5) year term (Appendix B).

Council were presented this information at their March 25, 2024, meeting (Appendix C) and staff were requested at that time to bring forward a survey to receive feedback from the property owners

and retail business owners/operators within the BIA bylaw boundary on the services and support provided by the BIA.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION**

<b>Motion # &amp; Meeting Date</b>	<b>Motion Details</b>
<p>2024-099 March 25, 2024</p>	<p><i>THAT Council:</i> <i>Direct there be a survey conducted by the City regarding the Business Improvement Area (BIA):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Staff and the BIA are to meet to discuss survey questions</i></li> <li>○ <i>The commercial property owners and the retail business within the BIA Area are to be surveyed</i></li> <li>○ <i>To be conducted within the next 60-day period</i></li> <li>○ <i>To be conducted not solely through email, would like to see door-to-door component</i></li> <li>○ <i>Draft survey provided On-Table at the March 25, 2024 meeting can be a starting point for discussion between staff and the BIA</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Results are to come back to the City</i></p>
<p>2024-130 April 15, 2024</p>	<p><i>THAT Council:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Receive the April 15, 2024 corporate report titled “Business Improvement Area (BIA) Survey Information and Process”;</i></li> <li>2. <i>Approve staff utilizing TheWGroup to conduct a BIA Member Survey at the cost of \$8,875; and</i></li> <li>3. <i>Approve the proposed objectives, methodology, timeline and draft survey outlined in the corporate report.</i></li> </ol>
<p>2024-264 July 29, 2024</p>	<p><i>THAT Council:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Receive the July 29, 2024 corporate report titled “City Survey Regarding Business Improvement Area (BIA) Membership Renewal”;</i> and</li> <li>2. <i>Direct staff to conclude the survey at this time.</i></li> </ol>

**INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

This corporate report will:

Provide a results summary from the survey conducted on the City’s behalf by The W Group (the Group) following Council’s direction; and

- a) Seek Council direction on elements of the future bylaw (term, mandate and levy amounts) as well as the petition process that is to be undertaken.

Attached as Appendix D is the White Rock Business Improvements Area Members Survey 2024, provided to the City on August 14, 2024. The survey research program objectives and survey methodology are included in the April 15, 2024, corporate report (Appendix E).

The Group, on the City’s behalf, surveyed the retail owners/ operators and commercial property owners located within the BIA boundary regarding their experiences with the BIA and its mandate.

**The BIA's current mandated activities as specified in the bylaw include:**

- Carrying out studies, preparing reports, and undertaking projects or initiatives to encourage business and commerce in the BIA area.
- Encouraging and promoting commercial business and encouraging entertainment, sports, and cultural activities within the BIA area.
- Creating a pleasant physical environment.
- Removing graffiti from buildings and other structures in the BIA area.
- Improving, beautifying, or maintaining streets, sidewalks or municipally owned land, buildings, or other structures in the BIA area.

Online survey responses were collected anonymously between May 30 – July 29, 2024. In total, 65 respondents participated in the survey out of 536 (approximately 12%) as described below.

**Final summary numbers were:**

- Approximately 536 were on the list of property owners and retail business owners/operators within the BIA Boundary area.
- 86 were non-resident contacts – they were mailed invites.
- Of the approximate 450 visited there were 137 email addresses (there were approximately 50 businesses that didn't exist or were clearly out of business).
- Invites were sent in four (4) waves of the 137 email addresses collected.

**Some Key Highlights:**

- Respondents are most satisfied with the BIA efforts to remove graffiti (66%) and their work to encourage and promote commercial business and encouraging entertainment, sports, and cultural activities (60%).
- A theme emerged during the open-ended comments, the perceived need for the BIA to create greater awareness and understanding of their role.
- BIA could better support local businesses by improving their outreach and engagement efforts on a more consistent basis.
- Concerts at the Pier and the White Rock Jazz & Blues Festival are highly rated in terms of their overall effectiveness in helping businesses in the area.
- Although some praised the work and positive impact the public events had on the area and businesses, a significant proportion reports that the events are either not applicable to them, due to location (28 – 36%) or have not resulted in any increase in visitor numbers to their business (36 – 49%).
- Strong support for White Rock to host more diverse events that involve local businesses, direct attends/ visitors to their location, and subsequently positively impact them.

**Business/ Commercial property location:**

- Almost four (4) out of five (5) respondents are located in the Uptown Commercial Area, the remainder having waterfront (East and West Beach) locations or unsure of their location (2%).

- Majority (83%) identified as business owners and 3% as solely commercial property owners – the remainder had both business and commercial property interests in the area.
- Over half (53%) operate as a retail outlet or in food services while 41% provide professional or personal services.
- 62% have been operating their business in the White Rock BIA for more than six (6) years.
- Although based on a smaller number of respondents (65 out of 536), 73% of commercial property owners have been in the White Rock BIA for more than six (6) years.

**Among those who indicated their level of satisfaction with the BIA's delivery of specified mandated activities, they were most satisfied with the organizations' efforts to:**

- Remove graffiti from buildings and other structures in the BIA area (66%).
- Encourage and promote commercial business and encouraging entertainment, sports and cultural activities with the BIA area (60%).

Conversely, respondents are less satisfied with the BIA's efforts to:

- Carry out studies, prepare reports, and undertake projects or initiatives to encourage business and commerce in the BIA area (32%).
- Improve, beautify, or maintain streets, sidewalks, or municipally owned land, buildings, or other structures in the BIA area (26%).

**Comments regarding any of the BIA-specified mandated activities:**

- There were a number of respondents that had a negative perception of the benefits of the BIA membership.
- It was noted that the BIA needs to create greater awareness and understanding of their role and foster more engagement with local businesses. As well they need to offer more consistent and equitable support for businesses, street maintenance and beautification efforts should be more consistent across the City.
- A number of respondents mentioned challenges with the ongoing construction, as well as accessibility and parking challenges in the BIA areas.
- While some respondents recognize the positive public event and engagement efforts of the BIA others are calling for more advertising and marketing of public events and activities and more diverse events and activities in different locations throughout the city.

**Ways the BIA could better support local business:**

- Outreach efforts and general support for businesses including liaison with City Hall.
- Greater awareness and understanding of the role be made available.
- Production of more and better promotional and marketing support as well as organizing more public engagement events and activities that directly support these business and property owners.
- Parking concerns (availability, cost, complimentary for business owners).

- Improving street maintenance and beautification and working with the City to address homelessness and public safety issues.
- Some noted appreciation of the organization's work and positive impact on the area.

**Overall Effectiveness of Events in terms of helping businesses (The White Rock Jazz & Blues Festival, White Rock Buskers & Comedy Festival, Concerts at the Pier, Presented by TD Ready Commitment and White Rock Craft Beer Festival)**

- Perception of the overall effectiveness of the events are mixed: The Concerts at the Pier and The White Rock Jazz & Blues Festival are rated as being effective or very effective (57% and 42% respectively).

**Visitor Impact on Businesses:**

- The Concerts at the Pier is most immediate for 21% of respondents compared to 13% for the other three (3) events, however between 70 – 77 % reported that these events are either not applicable to them (due to location) or have not resulted in increased visitor numbers to their business.

**Comments / Concerns regarding the events and how they specifically impacted businesses:**

- A number of respondents commented that the events are not relevant to their business and / or the BIA has had no impact on their business. Conversely some praised the BIA for their work and the positive impact these events have had on the area and their businesses.
- Traffic, accessibility and public safety concerns related to the events.
- Broader variety of events that involve local businesses, direct attendees to their location and subsequently positively impact these businesses.
- Would like to see events throughout the area instead of in the same locations and closing different streets.

**Thoughts / Suggestions on what more the BIA could do for its members:**

- More outreach, communication and support related to business development and marketing.
- Organize events/activities that are business-related to benefit businesses and property owners directly.
- More effective promotion and marketing of events and leveraging of local businesses to support advertising and promotional efforts.
- Act as a Liaison with City Hall.
- Arrange more public art, street landscaping and beautification.
- Make changes to BIA funding and membership (no longer mandatory / donation).
- Better communication and information sharing.
- Facilitate the businesses to better support and promote local events, festivals, etc. by generating more awareness and providing promotional materials that they can display and distribute to customers.

Appendix D should be referred to for more in-depth information regarding the survey results. Now the survey is complete and given the noted highlights Council may wish to consider the BIA mandate moving forward.

The BIA has proposed another five (5) year mandate, from 2025 to 2029, with an annual levy increase of at least 2% per annum with a notation that additional revenue of a further 2% (4% total) would allow the BIA to sustainably continue successful pilot projects and launch new initiatives.

The BIA is promoting a collaborative relationship with the City benefitting both local businesses and the community overall. Core functions during this mandate have been noted to involve the following:

1. Festivals and Events.
2. Street Beautification and Enhancement.
3. Marketing, Advertising and Promotion.
4. Communications.
5. Community relations and Advocacy.
6. Member Services and Education.

Past BIA levies have reflected inflationary increases each year. The 2024 BIA levy will be \$364,037 and will be assessed to 282 business properties in the BIA Area. For 2025, if the BIA levy was increased by 2% that would represent an increase of \$7,263 and a 4% increase would represent an increase of \$14,563. Subsequent years would be increased by either 2% or 4% depending on which proposal is accepted.

The BIA levy amounts, assuming a 2% or 4% annual increase, would be as follows:

Year	2 % inflationary increases	4 % (sustainably continue pilot projects and launch new initiatives)
2025	\$371,300	\$378,600
2026	\$378,700	\$393,700
2027	\$386,300	\$409,400
2028	\$394,000	\$425,800
2029	\$401,900	\$442,800

Increases for each property will vary as this levy is based on the assessed value of each property.

**Legislated statutory process for a BIA bylaw to follow prior to final reading:**

Council has two (2) legislated requirement options to complete for a BIA bylaw that staff are seeking direction on. The current BIA bylaw and all previous City BIA bylaws were initiated and adopted following a counter-petition process according to Section 213 of the *Community Charter*.

- 1) Section 212 (Petition for local area service) of the *Community Charter* enables the bylaw to be adopted only if a petition in favour of it is signed by the owners of at least 50% of the parcels within the designated area, and the persons signing represent at least 50% of the assessed value of the properties in the area. This requires the BIA to develop the petition, contact all owners of parcels within the proposed area and obtain the required signatures.

- 2) Section 213 (Local area service on Council initiative – subject to petition against) of the *Community Charter* requires public notification of Council's intent to adopt the bylaw, and notification to be mailed to all property owners of parcels within the designated area. Unless a petition against it (counter-petition), signed by owners of at least 50% of the parcels, representing at least 50% of the assessed value of the designated area, is received within 30 days after the second public notification of Council's intent or when the last notice was mailed, the bylaw can proceed for adoption. If prevented by counter-petition, the same initiative cannot be proposed for one (1) year unless it is for a lower levy or of a different scope.

Creating the business improvement service area in accordance with Section 213, by Council initiative, is considered more effective and expedient than Section 212, as it requires a counter-petition process, which is a negative vote. The Section 213 process is widely used by other municipalities and is more likely to result in the enactment of the bylaw; therefore, it is recommended.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The survey was conducted by The W Group at a final cost of \$8,900 plus applicable taxes.

In regard to the BIA bylaw moving forward, there are no financial implications to the City. The City levies the taxable properties on the annual tax notice and then remits the collected funds to the BIA as per the payment schedule (noted above) to be outlined in the Bylaw.

### **OPTIONS / RISKS / ALTERNATIVES**

1. That Council direct staff to bring forward a new BIA bylaw with an amended mandate (as directed) to begin its legislated process including utilizing Section 213 Counter Petition Process (notifies of Council's intent to adopt the bylaw unless a petition against it is signed by owners of at least 50% of the parcels, representing at least 50% of the assessed value for the designated area is received within 30 days after the second notification has been issued including either a 2% or 4% annual increase - this has been the format previously utilized).
2. That Council direct staff to bring forward a new BIA bylaw with an amended mandate (as directed) to begin its legislated process including utilizing Section 212 Petition Process (adopted only if a petition in favour of it is signed by the owners of at least 50 of the parcels within the designated area, and the person signing represent at least 50% of the assess value of the properties in the area including either a 2% or 4% annual increase).
3. That Council direct staff to bring forward a new BIA bylaw to begin its legislative process with the current mandate to begin its legislated process including utilizing Section 213 Counter Petition Process (notifies of Council's intent to adopt the bylaw unless a petition against it is signed by owners of at least 50% of the parcels, representing at least 50% of the assessed value for the designated area is received within 30 days after the second notification has been issued including either a 2% or 4% annual increase - this has been the format previously utilized).
4. That Council direct staff to bring forward a new BIA bylaw to begin its legislative process with the current mandate to begin its legislated process including utilizing Section 212 Petition Process (adopted only if a petition in favour of it is signed by the owners of at least 50 of the parcels within the designated area, and the person signing represent at least 50% of the assess value of the properties in the area including either a 2% or 4% annual increase).

5. Council not proceed with a further BIA bylaw, whereby the current bylaw 2311 will expire December 31, 2024.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is recommended that staff bring forward a new White Rock Business Improvement Area bylaw for consideration, with a five-year mandate. Staff are recommending that the BIA levies would not exceed an annual amount starting at \$371,300 in 2025 at 2% increase or \$378,600 at 4% increase and then further increased by 2% or 4% annual to \$401,900 at 2% or \$442,800 at 4% increase in 2029.

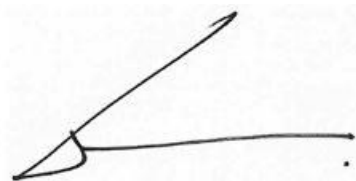
Respectfully submitted,



Tracey Arthur, Director of Corporate Administration

### **Comments from the Chief Administrative Officer**

I concur with the recommendations of this corporate report and for Council's direction to staff.



Guillermo Ferrero  
Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix A: White Rock Business Improvement Area Bylaw, 2019, No. 2311

Appendix B: BIA Proposal, March 8, 2024

Appendix C: March 25, 2024 Corporate Report – White Rock Business Improvement Area Bylaw

Appendix D: Results of the White Rock Business Improvements Area Members Survey 2024

Appendix E: April 15, 2024 Corporate Report – Business Improvement Association (BIA)  
Survey Information and Process