

**BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS
IN
BRITISH COLUMBIA**

by

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ABSTRACT

While most British Columbians have probably never heard of Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) or Associations most have been in commercial districts that they oversee. With approximately 57 BIAs in British Columbia today, BIAs have become de facto another level of government and are a fundamental part of the governance structure of many urban communities. The utilization of BIAs as a development tool raises important practical and theoretical questions about the use of public space, governance, public policy, municipal service delivery, and economic development. However, these questions cannot be addressed without a substantial pool of empirical data and analysis. This research project reports the result of a questionnaire survey of British Columbia BIAs. It catalogues and analyzes BIA structures, priorities, services, activities, and accountability measures, laying a foundation for better understanding of the variation, differentiation, and structural evolution of BIAs in the Province.

Keywords: Business Improvement Areas; Business Improvement Districts; Business Improvement Associations; Economic Development.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS A BIA?

When one thinks about some of the most economically successful and socially vibrant neighborhoods in British Columbia (hereafter BC), one will usually unknowingly think of an area under the Business Improvement Area (hereafter BIA) mandate. For example, in Vancouver one may think of Commercial Drive, Gastown, Robson Street, Yaletown, or Chinatown. In the rest of the province one may think of other places such as Fort Langley, Downtown Nanaimo, Downtown Victoria, Downtown Kelowna, Downtown Penticton, or Downtown Quesnel. All of these communities have BIAs, and are socially strengthened and physically enhanced due to the efforts of the local BIAs.

The BIAs are member-led organizations that work to assist local business people and property owners to enhance, upgrade, and promote their businesses, shopping districts, and the overall vitality of neighbourhoods by furthering trade, commerce, and socio-economic activity. In essence BIAs are legal mechanisms created by the local government, usually on the request of or support from the local business community, to raise funds over the long term to enhance the management of a business neighborhood.¹ Note that in some cases BIAs are also referred to by other names such as Business Associations (BAs), Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Business Improvement Zones (BIZs), Special Service Areas (SSAs), Self-Supported Municipal Improvement Districts (SSMIDs), Commercial District Management Authorities (CDMA), and Special Improvement Districts (SIDs) to list only some name variations.

According to Jerry Mitchell, Professor of Public Affairs at the City University of New York, all BIAs exhibit seven characteristics; as such all BIAs are.²

1. recognized by law,
2. created according to a process,
3. formed as an organization,

4. financed by a special assessment,
5. governed by a board,
6. managed by people, and
7. reviewed periodically.

In BC a proposed BIA must seek and obtain an approval from the local municipal authority in order to exist formally. As such, it is the individual local government that grants the legal recognition for a BIA to exist. However, as all local governments in BC are constitutional creatures of the provincial government, the legal authority for BIA establishment is also granted to the local government by the Province.³

At the local level the approval process in BC varies substantially. Usually the approval process involves a 50 per cent plus one vote in favour of the proposed BIA society and its by-laws by the membership. It is up to each individual community to work out the details such as the definition of BIA ‘membership’, rules on quorum, size of the BIA, the levy amount and so on. The BC Local Government Act does require the BIA to have clearly set by-laws that indicate the improvement area and the governance structures.

Once established the BIA is governed by its by-laws which outline all the rules around how the BIA is to be organized and governed. Worthy of note, many of the BIA practices are established over a period of time between the BIA membership and the local governing body. This makes BIA social conventions, particularly when it comes to BIA-city relations but also internally, somewhat dissimilar with many variations shaped by local conditions.

The funds for the BIAs in BC are also raised through diverse means but are usually tied to a mandatory assessment on real property that every BIA member pays; such an approach in many ways mirrors the traditional local property taxation structure. The municipality usually tags the BIA levy onto property tax bills of the BIA members, making sure that all members pay into the fund. The municipalities then pass on all the collected BIA levies to the BIA society to administer the funding. The individual BIAs define their own funding arrangement in the society’s by-laws, of course with the approval from the local

municipality. The by-laws and BIA structures are reviewed on a regular basis by the membership, often at the BIA annual general meeting where the board of directors is also elected. With the input from the membership and the assistance from the BIA staff, it is the board of directors' responsibility to oversee the operations of the organization.

As an economic development strategy, Jerry Mitchell characterizes a BIA approach as having four elements:

1. BIAs "proceed from the assumption that small-scale planning is more sensitive to community needs,"⁴
2. BIAs "contradict suburban development and draw substance from the critique of suburban life and the popularity of growth management policies,"⁵
3. BIAs "are part of a philosophy that administrative fragmentation helps rather than hinders the modern city,"⁶ and
4. BIAs are linked to the economic development policy school of thought that believes that "public interest is best advanced through the entrepreneurial activities of public-private partnerships"⁷ and the involvement by the community in development.

In essence by creating a BIA, local business and commercial property owners agree to be taxed an extra levy to pay for local improvements. The collected revenues are generally used to enhance security, provide maintenance, market and promote the area, fund cultural and social neighbourhood events, increase accessibility to the area, and support the general economic development of the shopping district.⁸ The BIAs also play an important advocacy role, speaking out and raising awareness of issues important to the membership and the shopping district. In all of this BIAs are required to be open and transparent organizations, particularly when it comes to finances. The host municipalities require the BIAs to provide annual financial statements for accountability purposes.

1.1 Historic Context

The first BIA ever is believed to have originated in Toronto, Ontario in 1969. Since 1969 the BIA model has expanded to various parts of BC, and

indeed the world. In 1988 the Province of British Columbia became the eighth province in Canada to introduce legislation allowing local governments to form Business Improvement Areas. Salmon Arm was the first community in BC to establish a BIA in 1989. Later that same year, Vancouver followed with two BIAs in Gastown and Mt. Pleasant.

Currently, there are about 57 BIAs in BC, and at least over a dozen more BIA-like organizations. The exact number of BIAs and BIA-like organizations in BC is hard to calculate since many such organizations are differently organized and structured, and some, particularly new and/or small BIA-like organizations, sometimes drift in and out of existence. The Business Improvement Areas of British Columbia (hereafter BIABC), an umbrella organization representing well-established BIAs in BC, represents 45 BIAs totaling about 60,000 businesses, and a combined operating budget of well-over 10 million dollars.⁹ The BIABC membership forms the population for this project survey.

Today, there are about 1200 BIA-like structured organizations around the world in countries such as Canada, United States, United Kingdom, South Africa, Netherlands, New Zealand, Germany, Australia, Belgium, Norway, and Japan.¹⁰ It appears that the BIA model for local economic development is gaining popularity and is growing. In fact, some have argued that the BIA model now dominates the urban revitalization policy having successfully been transferred intra- and inter-nationally by policy entrepreneurs to different urban conditions.¹¹

1.2 Framing the BIA Approach

From the local government's perspective, a BIA model represents many advantages to the community. First, as self help mechanisms BIAs provide socio-economic services and infrastructural improvements to the community without a financial cost to the community at large. For example, many BIAs provide benches, flowers, banners, security, greater accessibility initiatives, marketing programs, festivals, and many other services for minimal or no cost at all to the host municipality. Second, BIAs support localization and local economies. Most

BIAs, through implementation of various strategies, focus significantly on local business retention and promotion, as well as the over-all economic health of the shopping districts. As such, BIAs contribute to the community's economic vitality and the well-being of the municipal tax base. The BIAs support economic diversification and contribute to the establishment of robust local economies by minimizing local economic leakages through support for local consumption and smaller scale merchants. Lastly, BIAs help to build stronger communities by establishing avenues for involvement in district beautification and promotion which helps to create social capital.¹² By establishing vibrant shopping districts, BIAs help to bring about sustainable communities where one is able to work, recreate, and live.

Of course, BIAs have critics. Most critiques for the BIA-model of development claim that BIAs privatize public space and through landscape enhancements cause the gentrification of neighborhoods and as such displace populations.¹³ There are passionate arguments for and against gentrification and its effects.¹⁴ Regardless, most BIAs today are cognizant of the need to be inclusive, transparent, and accountable in efforts to minimize the harmful consequences of gentrification and negative publicity as they navigate the tough socio-political terrains.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Generally speaking, there is a significant lack of scholarly work that seeks to study and understand BIAs. Matters are further complicated since research into BIAs is largely locality specific and is not easily applicable across jurisdictions. The current publications on BIAs are often BIA advocacy pieces,¹⁵ and the limited impartial academic works that are available are for the most part specific to the American context.¹⁶ Having said that, the scholarly work on BIAs has been described to take three different and distinct tracks.¹⁷

The first track can be described as largely theoretical. This literature focuses on the public-private aspects of the relationship between the BIAs and the State. This track struggles to comprehend the relationship between the private interests and the public interests in what can be described as a recent trend towards downloading and privatization of the delivery of public service and of access to public space more broadly. The literature in this track attempts to understand the ideological and the socio-economic dynamics at play and the impacts they have on urban spaces and those that occupy them.¹⁸ In this regard the academic opinions and perspectives on BIAs, as it relates to private delivery of historically public services, can be divided into two polar assessments. First, those who see the BIAs through a lens of efficiency and entrepreneurialism, and share a philosophy that administrative fragmentation and public participation in policy implementation is positive and that the public's interest is best served through private-public partnerships.¹⁹ This perspective also includes those who simply believe that BIAs are necessary given the absence or abandonment of public service provisions by the public sector. Second, those who provide a form of a class analysis and see BIAs as private institutions that promote mass consumption, privatization of public space, exclusion, and the demise of the public sector.²⁰ This academic track tends somewhat to generalize and stereotype BIA activities and structures as it usually uses case studies for analysis, with this track caution must be exercised to make sure that such research relates to wider BIA trends in urban policy and governance.

The second track attempts to be more neutral and positivist by focusing on empirical data and quantitative analysis, usually through cataloging of BIA activities.²¹ This research track is more mechanical and highly descriptive in nature, focusing on typology. The types of things that are catalogued include BIA services, BIA structures, BIA accountability measures and other such variables. This research has been very helpful in providing greater clarity when it comes to BIA structures and issues, and in understanding the growth and popularity of BIAs as an economic development tool.

The third track of research, using similar quantitative and cataloging techniques as the scholarly publications in the second track, attempts to measure and evaluate the way and the degree to which BIAs have impacted the neighbourhoods in which they are located.²² As such, this track of research attempts to measure the efficiencies or what can also be explained as the benefits of the BIAs and their programs. This track of research often faces methodological problems with trying to isolate BIAs as an agent of change when examining a particular quality of life outcome.²³ To date by far the most popular and common among this track of research is the evaluation of statistical crime rates within BIAs. For example, Franck Vindevogel argues that by successfully implementing the principles of the broken windows theory American BIAs have not only supported a “non-confrontational approach” to crime prevention but have also “influenced American policing”.²⁴ Along the same lines, others have also suggested that the urban crime rates and in particular property crime rates decline and remain lower in areas under BIA jurisdiction than in and around other commercial areas, and that BIAs may also have a crime reducing influence on the surrounding areas.²⁵ This last research track is often connected to and based on preliminary research and data cataloging done by studies in the second academic track.

Previous work of Lorlene Hoyt and her research team at Massachusetts Institute of Technology inspired this project, that project also utilized the second track of research.²⁶ Hoyt’s multi-year and high-budget study was the first of its kind (and to date the only one) to survey and catalogue institutional structures of

BIAs around the world. Hoyt's research included BIAs from Australia, Japan, South Africa, United Kingdom, and Canada. Hoyt's research and its findings form an important base of data into BIA structures, data that can be used for some comparative purposes. Hoyt identified and contacted 347 BIAs in Canada, and received 92 responses which equates to a 27 percent return rate. A low response rate in Canada makes it hard to make any conclusive statements about BIAs in Canada based on Hoyt's work. Moreover, Hoyt did not distinguish between various internal jurisdictional boundaries within Canada. As such, Hoyt's survey forms a good analytical and structural foundation for this research, particularly when it comes to the survey formation, but is of minimal assistance when it comes to serving as a comparative data source.

3.0 RESEARCH RELEVANCE

With over 45 well established BIAs in BC and an active provincial BIA movement, BIAs have significant financial and political powers and influences that are connected to both the development and the implementation of public provisions. The powers and the influences of the BIAs are particularly visible in smaller municipalities where there are fewer political actors, and those that do exist are generally smaller and weaker. Additionally, and most significantly, the number of BIAs in BC continues to increase ever since first inception in 1989. In this context of continued growth and expansion of BIAs, the local governments and the BIA community in BC are struggling to comprehend the mechanical inner workings of BIAs.

Since BIAs are most often grass-roots local movements there is only limited information sharing that occurs between BIAs. There are some attempts to share best practices, and some structures to support information sharing within the BIA community but unfortunately, due to factors such as understaffing and others, many established and establishing BIAs are isolated from the activities of others in the BIA movement in BC and abroad. As such, there is a growing need to get a clearer picture of various techniques and structures that lay the foundation, construct, and reinforce BIAs as economic development institutions. This is the objective of this project; to more clearly understand the BIA movement in British Columbia by cataloging, comparing, and analyzing the priorities, structures, services, and accountability measures of individual BIAs in BC. Moreover, this project will attempt something that has never been done, to compare BIAs within BC and contribute to larger Canada-wide study.

4.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research objective of this project is to better understand the priorities, structures, services, and accountability measures of individual BIAs in British Columbia. Moreover, this study hopes to begin to lay the foundation for understanding variations, divergences, and structural evolutions of BIAs in BC. This research attempts to learn more about the structures of BIAs in BC by cataloging them and analyzing the data, taking what has been describe as the second track or academic approach to studying BIAs.²⁷ By analyzing BIA data related to priorities, structures, services, and accountability measures it is hoped that more can be learned about ways in which BIAs differ or are similar. The scope and the availability of data does not allow this project to delve deep into questions of comparative BIA structures among various jurisdictions, apart from BC. However, the hope is that this project will provide some food for thought, inspire further research into this topic, and provide some reliable baseline data and preliminary analysis of BIAs in British Columbia. Moreover, it is hoped that this study can provide an insight into the BIA movement in BC as an entity.

5.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Project Overview

This project, although conceptually formulated in isolation, was able to build research partnerships with other BIA researchers in other provinces at the annual Business Improvement Areas of British Columbia conference and convention in May 2008. One of the key partnerships was formulated with Think Tank Toronto. Administered through Think Tank Toronto, an agreement was established where a number of researchers would collectively formulate a similar type of survey and administer it in various Canadian provinces where BIAs exist. The partnership established grounds for mutual cooperation, data sharing, and financial help. This project focuses on BC, the province with second highest number of BIAs in the country, following Ontario.

From June to July 2008 the cooperative efforts created a shared survey, to be used by all the partners in administering the survey instrument (see Appendix 4). The initial survey instrument was further slightly adjusted to fit this project's surveying strategy. Because the researchers administering the Ontario portion of the project had more financial and other resources (such as human time) available to them they chose to administer surveys in person or via telephone. This research project decided on first mailing out the surveys, in hopes of saving time in the process. This is why some additional alterations were required to the questionnaire to fit the survey administration format in BC.

There are many BIA-like organizations in BC. Some of these organizations do not have legal authority to operate from the local municipalities and thus lack a secure levy funding structure, others have different divergences from traditional BIAs or simply do not identify as BIAs and with the BIA movement. As a result, for the purposes of this research project it was decided for practical reasons to limit BIAs and to define the sample as those member organizations that legally belong to Business Improvement Areas of British Columbia (BIABC) and operate in the province of BC.²⁸ This decision was made because BIABC member BIAs

all self-identify as being BIAs and because they meet all the guidelines for being classified as BIAs as established by BIABC. As such, for this research only BC BIAs that are members of BIABC were surveyed. Moreover, in this paper the reference to the BIA movement generally refers to the BIABC membership.

Following the survey creation, the draft survey was forwarded to BIABC. The organization was asked to review the survey, and to endorse it to the membership. In return, the research project offered BIABC access to the aggregate data results and the ability to participate and to add questions to the survey. The partnership and cooperation with BIABC was fundamental to this study. Although BIABC did not take up the researcher on the offer to add questions to the survey, the BIABC President endorsed the survey with an open letter to the membership (see Appendix 2) that was included with the mailed out surveys.

Following the support from BIABC for survey administration among BIABC membership, the survey packages were created. These packages included an introductory statement (see Appendix 1), a letter of support from the president of BIABC (see Appendix 2), research consent form (previously approved by SFU Research Ethics Board see Appendix 3), and of course the survey (see Appendix 4). The individual packages also included self-addressed envelopes with pre-paid postage to simplify the survey returns. These survey packages were mailed out to the 45 BIABC members. The membership list was acquired on August 11, 2008 from the BIABC website. The surveys packages were mailed out on August 27, 2008.

The response rate to the original survey mail out was initially low, with a return rate of around 13 per cent. To increase the response rate, survey reminder e-mails were sent and phone calls were made in late September to early November. In the meanwhile the methodology had to evolve somewhat. Personal visits and personal contact with BIA staff became the most productive way for gathering data. Personal visits and phone calls became the main data gathering strategy. However, it quickly became apparent that many BIAs in BC are understaffed, if staffed at all, and that the staff is generally overworked with

focus and prime priority given to the member services. Many of the BIAs in BC have only one staff person, that person is often employed less than full time. Moreover, some BIAs do not have offices and are administered out of home offices or via some other arrangement. For all those reasons, it was often challenging to get connected with some BIAs. However, persistence and continued networking within the BIA community did eventually pay off.

Over the months of October and November, with continued reminders, networking, and personal visits to BIAs across BC the survey packages started to get returned. Some BIAs preferred electronic copies of the survey as that made it easier for the BIAs to pass the survey to various people within the BIA who have particular knowledge or BIA background information. This was particularly the case with BIAs who have new staff that are less familiar with the BIA's past activities and history. Worthy of note, some BIAs took longer time to respond as they wanted approval for participation in the research project and/or input from board members.

5.2 Survey Response

As of November 21, 2008 (the cut off point for survey responses) in total 33 surveys were completed. However, one respondent refused for the results to be used for the purposes of the study and did not agree to the research ethics practices and as such that survey could not be used. So, in total 32 survey usable responses were received. Here is the list of the BC BIAs (in alphabetical order) that responded to the research project survey:

B.I.A. Participation/ Responses Received	Formation Date
Austin Heights B.I.A. (Coquitlam)	2008
B.I.A. of Tsawwassen	1991
Burnaby Heights Merchants Association	1994
Chilliwack Business Improvement Area	1995
Collingwood B.I.A. (Vancouver)	2001
Commercial Drive B.I.A. (Vancouver)	2000
Comox Business in Action	2001
Downtown Courtney B.I.A.	1995
Downtown Kelowna B.I.A.	1989
Downtown Langley B.I.A.	1994
Downtown Mission B.I.A.	1996
Downtown Nanaimo Partnership Society	1988
Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Society	1989
Downtown Penticton Association	2001
Downtown Prince George B.I.A.	1999
Downtown Squamish B.I.A.	2006
Downtown Surrey B.I.A.	2003
Downtown Vancouver B.I.A.	1990
Downtown Vernon Association	N/A
Duncan B.I.A. Society	1998
Gastown B.I.A. (Vancouver)	1989
Hastings North B.I.A. (Vancouver)	2001
Kamloops Central B.I.A.	2001
Mount Pleasant B.I.A. (Vancouver)	1989
Oak Bay B.I.A.	1994
Robson Street Business Association (Vancouver)	1991
Salmon Arm Downtown Improvement Association	1988
South Quesnel Business Association	2004
Strathcona B.I.A. (Vancouver)	2000
Vancouver Chinatown B.I.A.	2000
West End B.I.A. (Vancouver)	1999
West Quesnel Business Association	2002
Williams Lake Central B.I.A.	2004

Again, note that 32 of the survey responses were used to formulate the project data, that is a response rate of 71 per cent. Of the 32 surveys, one (1) was conducted in person, two (2) over the phone, and another thirty (30) were collected by mail, via email or in person but completed on individual basis. Also,

the returned surveys were completed to various degrees. Some respondents answered every question while others left many questions in the survey unanswered. It appears that the major reasons for survey incompleteness included survey length, lack of information on the topic, unwillingness to answer more controversial questions and/or to point out BIA weaknesses. As such responses to individual questions varied from the low of 26 responses to a high of 32 responses.

The survey results that are presented in this study are representative of the BC BIA movement, and are helpful in understanding central tendencies of BIAs in BC. From the geographic point of view, the province is well represented in the study sample size. There is a good survey representation from Vancouver BIAs, suburban metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley BIAs, interior BC BIAs, and the Vancouver Island BIAs. Moreover, the survey sample size is also highly diverse and representative of the complete BIA movement in BC when it comes to BIA sizes, financial resources, history, and other factors. For all these reasons to date this is the most complete study of BC BIAs, and one that presents the clearest picture of the BIA central tendencies in BC. Of course, further research based on this and other studies may provide a more complete picture, one that is more statistically significant.

5.3 The Survey Instrument

The survey itself can be categorized into a few sections (see Appendix 4). First, the survey looks to find out who is the person filling out the survey, in order to understand the background and the perspective that the respondent is coming from (question 2 and 3). The survey begins with background information about the BIA such as the name (question 1) and year of the BIA creation (question 5). The survey quickly moves to questions related to the creation of the BIA (question 7-17). Here, the focus is on the primary drivers and forces of opposition in the formation of the BIAs (question 12). Attention is given to the reasons for and against formation of a BIA (question 9). Attention is also given to the ways in which the BIAs mitigate encountered issues of opposition (question 14).

The next section of the survey focuses on the membership structures of the BIAs. There are inquiries about the membership size (question 18), membership type (question 19-21), and membership retention (question 16-17). There are also queries into the governance structure of the BIAs, such as the board of directors composition (question 22-27). There is also a question that attempts to understand the membership involvement in the BIA (question 29). Lastly there are probes into the staffing levels of the BIAs (question 30-33).

The next section attempts to focus on the priorities of the BIAs, actions taken to achieve those priorities, and perceived successes or outcomes achieved (questions 34-64). This section is significant in size as it is fundamental to the understanding of what it is that BIAs do in terms of service delivery, and how they go about doing it. This section also includes questions that examine the ways in which BIAs document and measure activities that impact their members and their own actions and plans (question 65-67).

The following section moves back into questions of BIA governance structures. This part of the survey attempts to see if BIAs are subdivided into sub-committees and which ones (question 69-71). These questions can also provide further insight into the BIA's priorities.

The next order of questions focus on communication tools used by the BIAs to communicate with the membership (question 72-73). The goal of these questions is to find out how active the BIA is in communicating and engaging the membership, and through which means. The communication medium can itself provide a variety of useful information about the BIA.

The following section deals with questions inquiring into the financial matters of the organizations. The questions examine the annual income of the BIA (question 74) and the funding sources (question 74-80). Also, this section looks into BIA expenditures (question 81) and expenditure priority areas (questions 82-90). These questions can provide further input into priorities and the sustainability of the organizations. To provide a more historic context to the financial picture, the research survey examines if the organizational budgets

have overall increased, decreased, or remained stable over the past five years (question 91-92).

The last part of the survey asks open ended questions about the main challenges facing BIAs. The interest here is to see if there are issues and concerns that are new and have not entered the academic debates about BIAs.

The survey was purposely not subdivided into sections in order to discourage and avoid 'section hopping'. The survey tool is organized in what is believed to be the most logical order for the research subjects.

The survey results are presented for the province wide collective, by regions, and by BIA membership size. Where regional breakdown is available the regional subdivisions include: the City of Vancouver under the 'Vancouver BIAs' title, Metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley BIAs (with the exclusion of the City of Vancouver) under the 'Metro Vancouver BIAs' title, all of Vancouver Island under the 'Vancouver Island BIAs' title, and all others under the 'BC Interior BIAs' title.

6.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

All but four surveys were completed by BIA staff; in three cases elected Presidents of the BIAs completed the surveys and in one the economic development officer from the local government did so. If anything, this perhaps suggests that most BIAs have staff to deal with BIA's daily operations such as public inquiries. In most cases, the chief BIA staff person is referred to as an 'Executive Director' however in some cases that same position is referred to by other titles such as the 'General Manager', the 'Executive Manager', the 'Manager', the 'Managing Director', the 'Coordinator'. In one case, the Executive Director is actually the past President of the BIA.

Interestingly, it appears that most of the respondents (staff and elected officials) are fairly new to their positions. The average involvement with the BIA is around 5 years, slightly less for BIA staff personnel. This may suggest some issues with staff retention with BIAs. However, in today's world where employee turnover is common it appears that such numbers are around the 'ball park' of what is average, normal, and accepted in the labour force.²⁹

6.2 BIA Formation

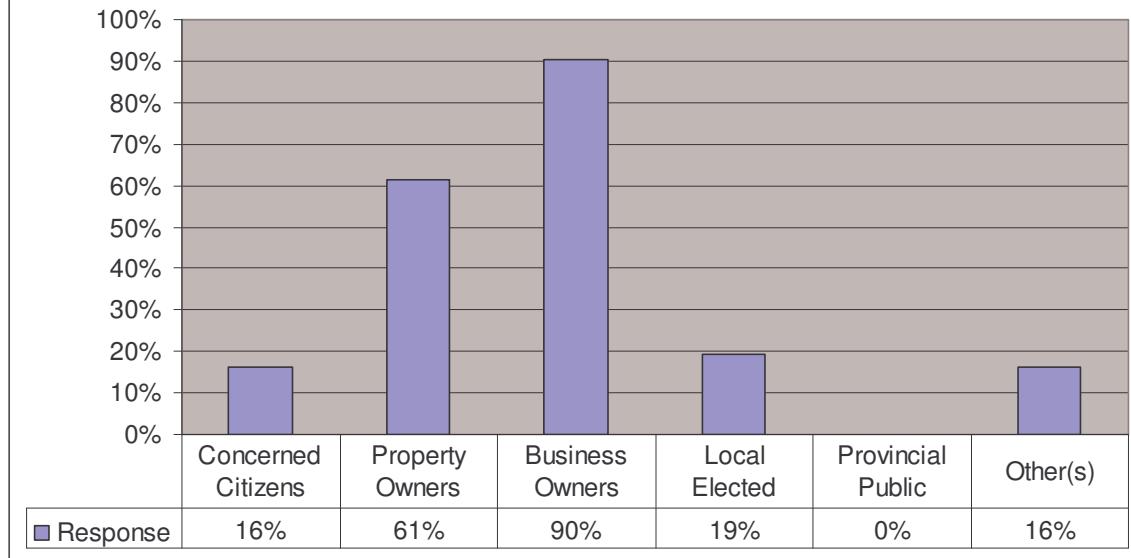
When it comes to BIA creation, it appears that most BIAs in BC are well established. The average (mean) response for the age of the BIA was 11 years. This entails that on average most BIAs have had two chief staff people or more. The respondents cited the year of BIA creation from 1988 to 2008. From the sample data 2001 comes out as the year when the most BIAs were established, with five BIAs reporting that year as their birth year. When results are compared with the Hoyt 2002 study, in the national context British Columbia appears to be a more recent jurisdiction to use this economic development tool which is not surprising given the known history of BIAs.³⁰

When asked to identify the number of people who were involved in the creation of the BIA, the average (mean) response was 9 people but the responses varied from 3 to 20 people. This suggests that most BIAs in BC are started by a relatively small but highly devoted group of individuals.

When asked to identify which person(s) or group(s) triggered the formation of the BIA: 90% identified business owners, followed by property owners with 61% of the respondents, local elected officials at 19%, concerned citizens at 16%, and other at 16% (see Table 1). Under the category of the “other” respondents most frequently cited the presence and the support from the established voluntary business association that predates the BIA formation. However, the responses also referred to the involvement of the local economic development office, the community police organization, and the municipal public servants. Of importance, no respondent identified provincial public servants as playing any relevant role in the creation of their BIA. This may suggest that in BC BIAs are creatures that deal primarily with local governments and local groups and organizations. Examining the results, all the indicators suggest that BIAs in BC are local community movements started by the local business and property owners.

When comparing the results with those from the rest of Canada conducted by Hoyt in her international BIA study, the responses seem to be similar. However, the BIAs in BC appear to have more property owners and concerned citizens involved in the BIA formation than in Canada as a whole, again suggesting a more ‘grass-roots’ BIA movement in this province.³¹ At the same time, BC BIAs seem to have fewer elected officials having a role in triggering the BIA formations.³² All this suggests that the BIA movement in BC is more organic and that BIAs as organizations are formed by local citizens and businesses to address local issues.

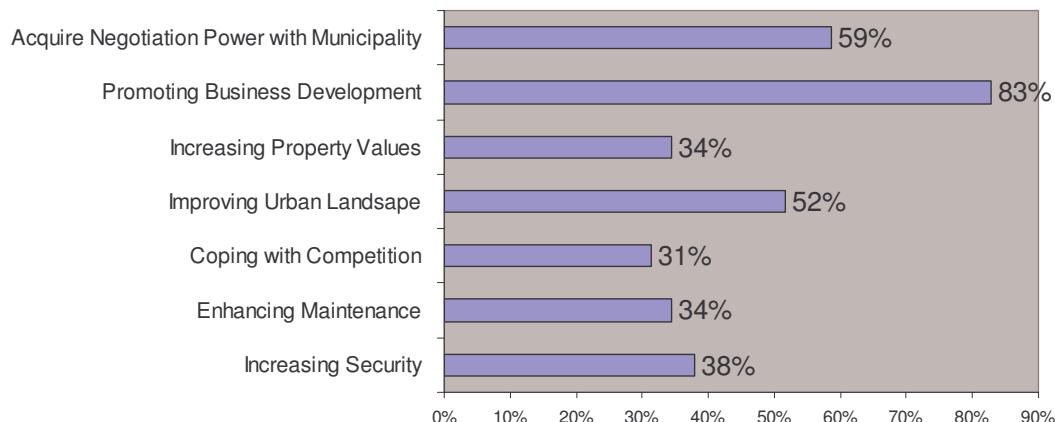
**Table 1: Person(s) and/or Group(s) that Triggered BIA Formation
(n = 31)**



When rating the potential reasons for BIA creation respondents referred to the following causes as “reasons” or “major reasons” for BIA creation: 83% answered to promote business development, 59% to acquire negotiation power with the municipality, 52% to improve urban landscape, 38% to increase security, 34% to enhance maintenance, 34% to increase property values, and 31% to cope with competition (see Table 2). The results to this question are very insightful; it appears that BC BIAs form to promote what may be classified as more social or political causes such as increasing negotiating powers related to issues of crime and urban landscape, rather than directly economic reasons such as to increase property values and cope with competition. It appears that BIAs perceive business development as more related to social and landscape issues. This is further supported by some of the ‘other’ reasons for BIA creation in BC that were cited by the respondents, these include the need for a stable funding source, to bring businesses together, to establish synergy among businesses, to increase awareness of downtown issues, and to deal with prostitution. Of course social and economic issues are largely intertwined and are both important to the success of the districts, as social and land-use issues can help to promote

property values and increase business. More examination into this question may provide better insight into this matter but preliminary data suggests that more than just economic self interest is at play in BIA creation.

Table 2: "Reasons" and/or "Major Reasons" in BIA Creation (n = 29)



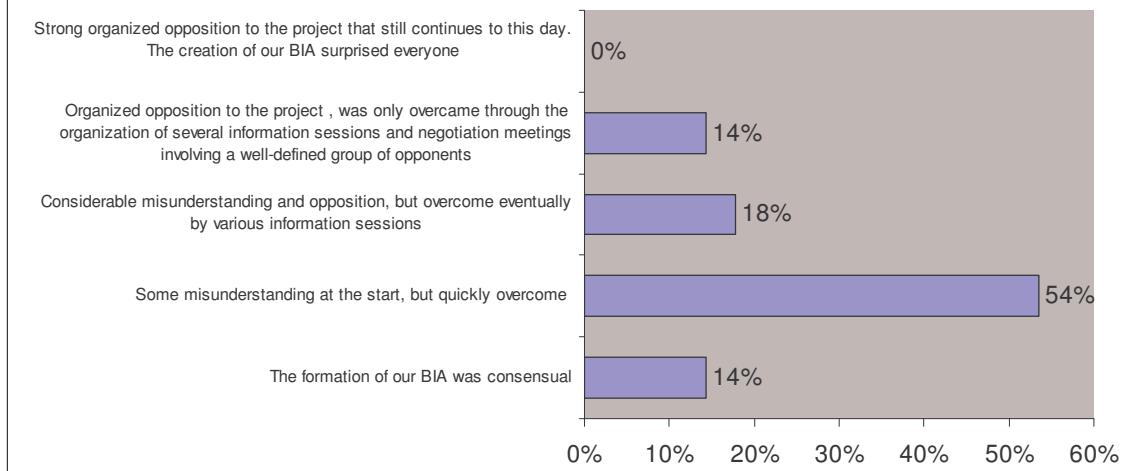
When it comes to the question of opposition to BIAs in BC, many BIAs were reluctant to answer the question of where the opposition to the BIA creation was coming from and which groups mobilized in opposition. However, the respondents were willing to indicate the existence of opposition, and to indicate groups that were supportive of BIA formation. All this made data interpretation more challenging. The Hoyt study indicated that most opposition to BIAs in Canada actually comes from business owners and property owners presumably from within the BIA area.³³

In response to this study's question about the opposition to the BIA formation, most respondents (54%) indicate that there was some misunderstanding at the start but that misunderstandings were quickly overcome with thorough information sessions and meetings (see Table 3). Another 18% of respondents indicated that their BIA experienced considerable misunderstanding and opposition that was eventually overcome with various information sessions. Additionally 14% of respondents indicated that they experienced organized

opposition to the BIA formation which was only overcome through the organization of several information sessions and negotiation meetings involving a well-defined group of opponents. Only 14% of BIAs reported that the creation of their BIA was consensual. No BIAs indicated experiencing strong and continued organized opposition, which seems to be logical given that all of the reporting BIAs were able to get and stay established (see Table 3). The results suggest that more often than not BIAs experience opposition to their creation, and that the BIA creation process requires communication, consultation, and even negotiations with various community stakeholders. Once again the data implies that the BIA formation process is local and organic in the way that the BIA is established and the opposition and concerns to the BIA are dealt with.

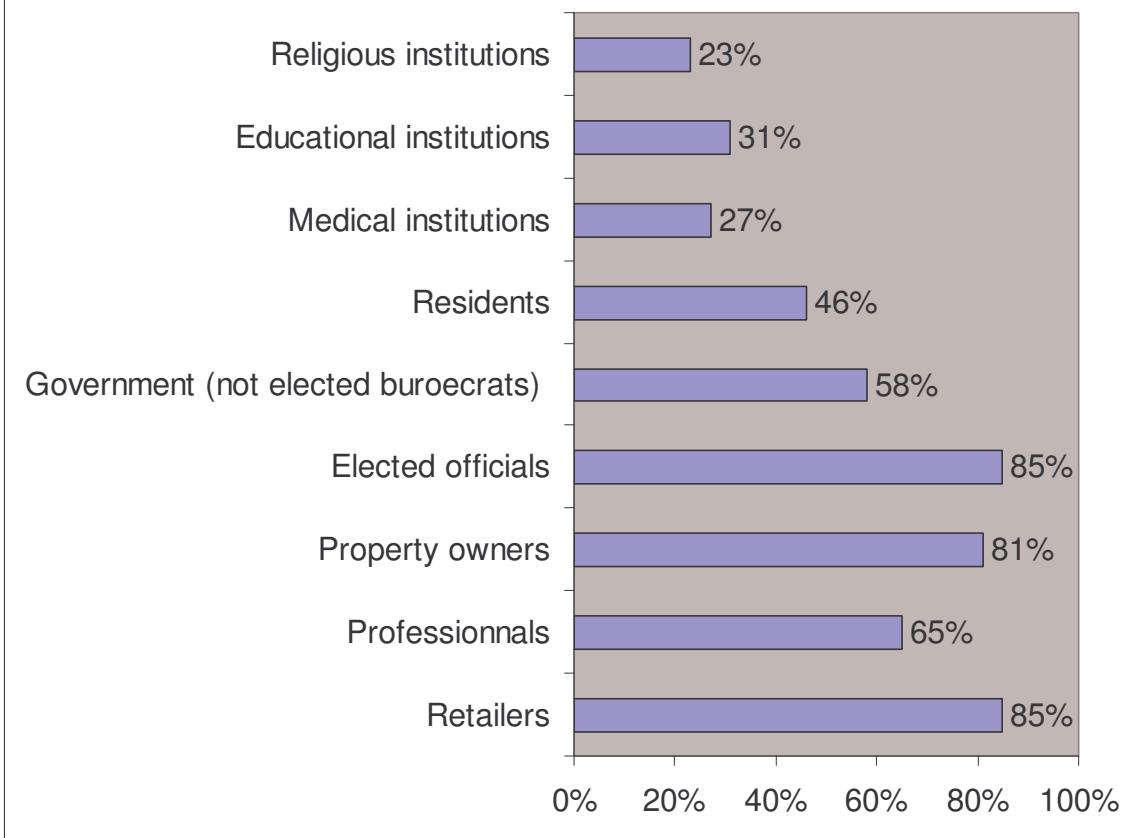
However, with 86% of the respondents indicating that their BIA experienced some degree of opposition to the formation of their organization it is clear that BIA formation process is complex, politically sensitive, multifaceted, and requires a degree of community dialogue and negotiations (see Table 3). This number is much higher than the one noted in the Hoyt study, in that study only 36% of Canadian BIAs note experiencing any opposition during the creation of the BIA. It is unclear as to why the results vary so much among the two studies when it comes to the question of opposition, further research may be able to establish reasons for such discrepancy. There may be a methodological reason for such difference, as the Hoyt study worded the opposition question as a yes or no proposition rather than a question of a degree of opposition. However, it may also be the case that BC BIAs experience a greater degree of opposition to their formation than BIAs in the rest of the country. If this is the case, one may wish to examine the reasons behind this more intense opposition.

Table 3: Degree of Support/Opposition Encountered in the Establishment of the BIA (n = 28)



When looking at the question of support for BIAs in BC: 85% of the BIAs noted both elected officials and the retailers as being “supportive” or “very supportive” of the BIA creation, 81% noted the same degree of support from property owners, 65% from professionals, 58% from non-elected government bureaucrats, 46% from residents, 31% from educational institutions, 27% from medical institutions, and 23% from religious institutions (see Table 4). Of particular interest is the perhaps surprisingly high degree of support that was noted from publicly elected officials. The results suggest that although elected officials are usually not involved in BIA creation, they are supportive once the BIA is proposed.

Table 4: Person(s) and/or Group(s) "Supportive" and "Very Supportive" to the BIA Formation (n = 26)

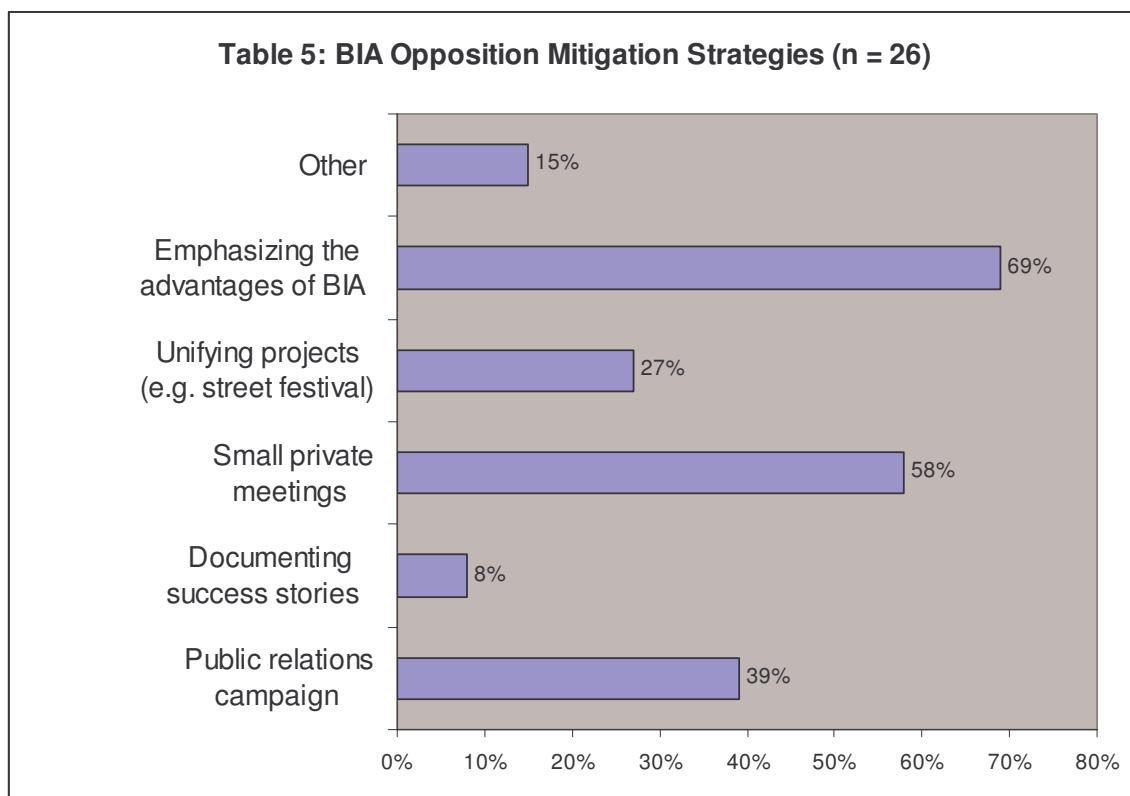


On the open-ended question of 'other' vocal supporters/opponents to BIA creation, BC BIAs provided some interesting responses. Support was noted most often from the voluntary business associations that pre-dated the BIAs, also social organizations such as the Legion and the Masons were noted as mostly supportive (with some levy negotiations). Opposition was noted from larger businesses, the accommodation industry, and anti-poverty groups.

When it comes to the strategies for the mitigation of opposition: 69% of BC BIAs noted emphasizing the advantages of BIA services to members, 58% of respondents said that they used small private meetings, 39% noted having a public relations campaign, 27% said that they tried unifying projects (such as street festivals and streetscape projects), 15% noted using some other strategies, and only 8% of BIAs reported that they used documented success stories to promote their BIA (see Table 5). Under the 'other' category for dealing

with the opposition to the BIA, respondents reported that they did things such as: modified BIA area or restructured BIA levy formula, worked with the opponents to work out issues and concerns, hired a consultant to provide advice, and hosted an anti-crime forum. The responses to the mitigation of opposition seem to suggest that BIAs focus on highlighting the benefits and advantages to having a BIA, and use individual small meetings to discuss concerns as a strategy for dealing with opposition. The BIAs approach to opposition mitigation seems to be localized, strategic, and targeted at specific local issues and groups. The data on opposition mitigation supports the earlier findings that BIAs in BC are member focused organization that are localized in scope and approaches.

Table 5: BIA Opposition Mitigation Strategies (n = 26)



6.3 BIA Membership

On the question of whether founding members are still part of the BIA, 83% of BC BIAs ($n = 30$) responded that they were. This is important as there may be much BIA history, background knowledge, and other information that is passed on from long time members of the BIA. This suggests that there is a relatively high degree of continuity when it comes to board members, although more examination of this question is required.

The size of the BIAs in BC, when it comes to membership, varies significantly. The average size (mean) of the BIA levy paying membership is 744 members ($n = 30$). The largest responding BIA has a total of 8000 members, and the smallest responding BIA has a total of only 60 members. Such results imply a degree of diversity among BC BIAs. One may deduce that the number of paying members largely determines the ability for a BIA to achieve goals, and wield powers and influences. The membership size may also play a determining role in organizational goals, objectives, and priorities.

The results also show that in total the membership of all BC BIAs consists of roughly half service providers/professional, a quarter retailers, and another quarter property owners. However, depending on how one classifies each category, this profile may fluctuate substantially. On the individual basis the results are highly different, with downtown BIAs usually having greater proportions of service providers/professional than other main street BIAs. However, it is fair to generalize that on average retail constitutes half or less of the membership base in most BIAs. This is interesting since most BIAs are usually characterized as retail shopping areas. Yet, in actuality the data suggests that professionals/service providers together with property owners may make up the majority of the BIA community, especially if one regards hospitality/food and beverage industry as a service. With more detailed data, such information may help to better understand and eventually even reframe the image of BIAs as being retail focused.

The membership has significant implications for the organizational structures and priorities. Generally, data from this survey indicates that property

owners and service providers/professional are less likely to be active on the board of the BIA than retailers. The historic dominance of retailers on many of the BIA boards may explain why the BC BIA movement today identifies strongly with the retail industry rather than other service industries. In any case, the data from the survey indicates that BIA membership in BC is diverse; this diversity may suggest a greater resilience in economic downturns as BIAs may be more sustainable economic instruments than previously assumed.³⁴

6.4 Board Structure and Governance

When it comes to BIA governance, the average (mean) BIA board of directors in BC is made of 12 members, although boards vary in size from the reported maximum of 23 members to the minimum of 5 members ($n = 31$). Such results seem to be very consistent with the findings of the Hoyt study of Canadian BIAs.³⁵

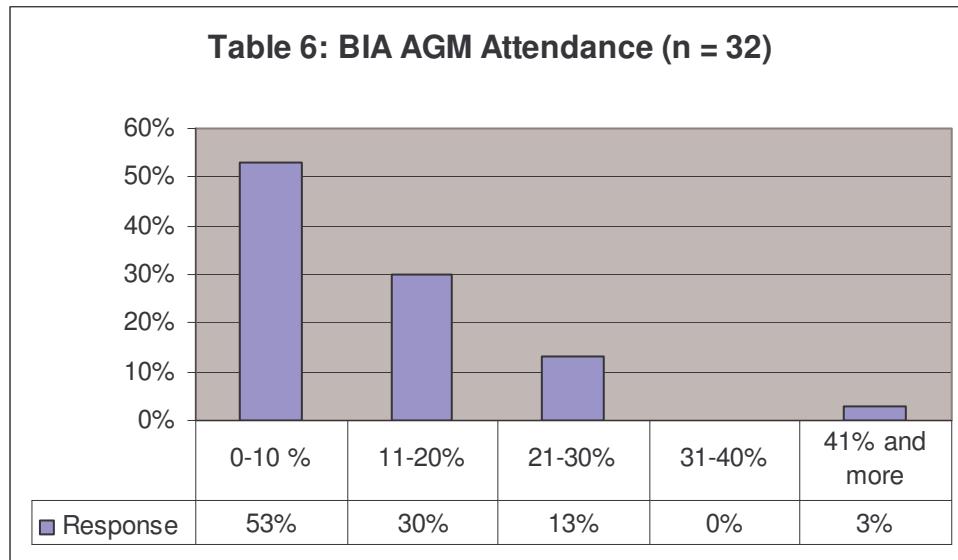
At a first glance from a macro provincial picture the BIA boards of directors are well balanced with roughly 1/3 being retailers, 1/3 being service providers/professionals, and 1/3 being property owners. However, as already mentioned it appears that the voices of retailers and service providers/professionals are better represented than the voices of property owners. This is especially the case as many of the property owners that are represented on the boards of directors are also retailers or service providers. There are few BIA board members who are solely property owners. Again, although classification is crucial in this type of data analysis, the data suggests that retail merchants may be overrepresented compared to other members of BIAs on the boards of directors. The composition of the board of directors can have policy implications.

There are of course many advantages to having more balanced boards of directors that are better representative of the membership and various points of view. Among these advantages is the ability to formulate better policy. However,

the various interests are sometime competing and require a delicate balance to make an organization work.

On average (mean) BIA board of directors in BC meets 11 times a year ($n = 32$). The maximum number of meetings for a BIA board of directors is reported at 18 meetings a year, and the minimum is reported at 6 meetings a year.

The BC BIA's seem to have a fairly low member turnout for annual general meetings. In fact, 53% of responding BIAs indicated having an annual general meeting attendance of 10 per cent of the membership or less (see Table 6). Such results suggest potential member apathy when it comes to BIA activities.



6.5 BIA Staff

The average (mean) BIA has 2 staff personal ($n = 32$). On average, there is one full time staff person and one part time staff person. Such staffing levels are supported by the Hoyt study.³⁶ However, the number of staff can be tricky to calculate. For example, many BIAs have security patrol officers or litter pick up people and usually such services are outsourced to a private service provider. It

is questionable whether such positions should be included in a tally of BIA staff. Consequently some BIAs include such positions in their tally of BIA staff and some do not. In any case, BC BIAs reported staff numbers from the high of 10 people (this probably includes security and street cleaning in the count) to a low of zero staff people. Only one BIA reported having no staff, and in that case it appears that the part-time BIA staff person is compensated for the time by the local economic development agency rather than the BIA. Only 3 BIAs reported using volunteer staff to any degree, suggesting a very low reliance on volunteerism for the daily operations of the BIA.

6.6 BIA Priorities

Knowledge about the BIA priorities can provide much information about the BIA movement and the activities of such organizations. The action priorities underline the meaning behind BIAs and help to explain their existence.

The survey shows that “Increased Security” is one of the leading priorities for 50% of BC BIAs, for another 31% it is one of the current priorities, for 13% it is not a current priority, and for only 6% it is not a priority at all (see Table 7). Such results suggest that security is the leading priority for most BC BIAs. As well, branding and marketing, and enhancing maintenance seem to be priorities that are of most importance for BIAs. On the other hand, accessibility issues, recruitment of new businesses, and coping with competition are some of the priorities that are of lesser importance for BIAs in BC. It appears that the prioritization of BIA issues is linked with the current conditions within the district, BIA’s capacity to influence the issues, and the perceived roles of the BIAs and the perceived conditions within the BIAs.

Table 7: BIA Priorities in BC

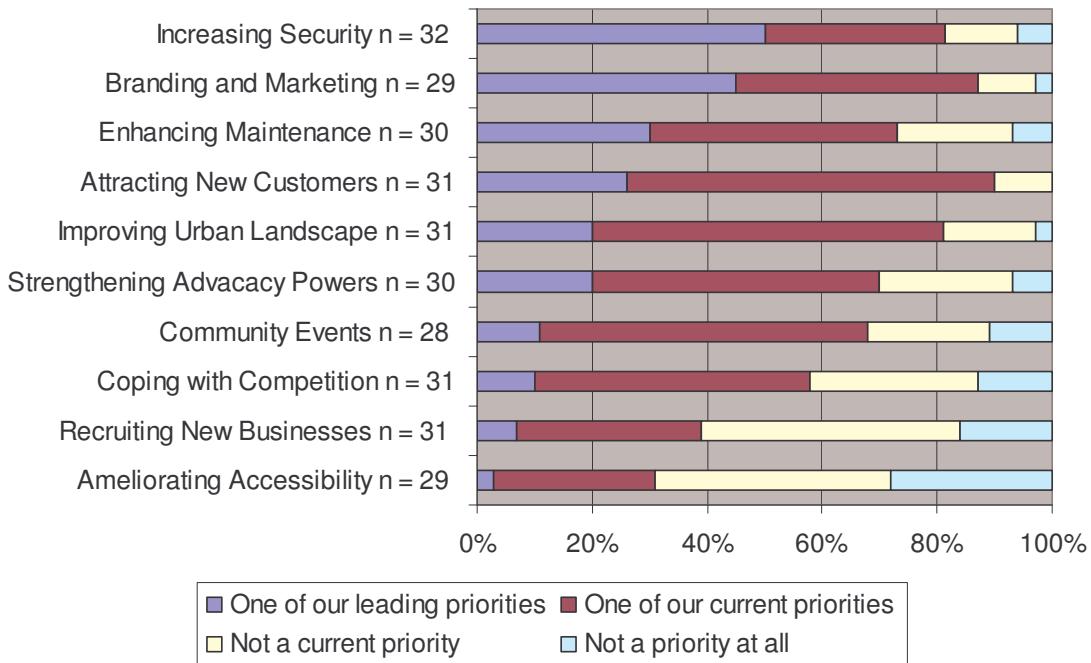


Table 8: "Increased Security" as a Degree of Priority by Region (n = 32)

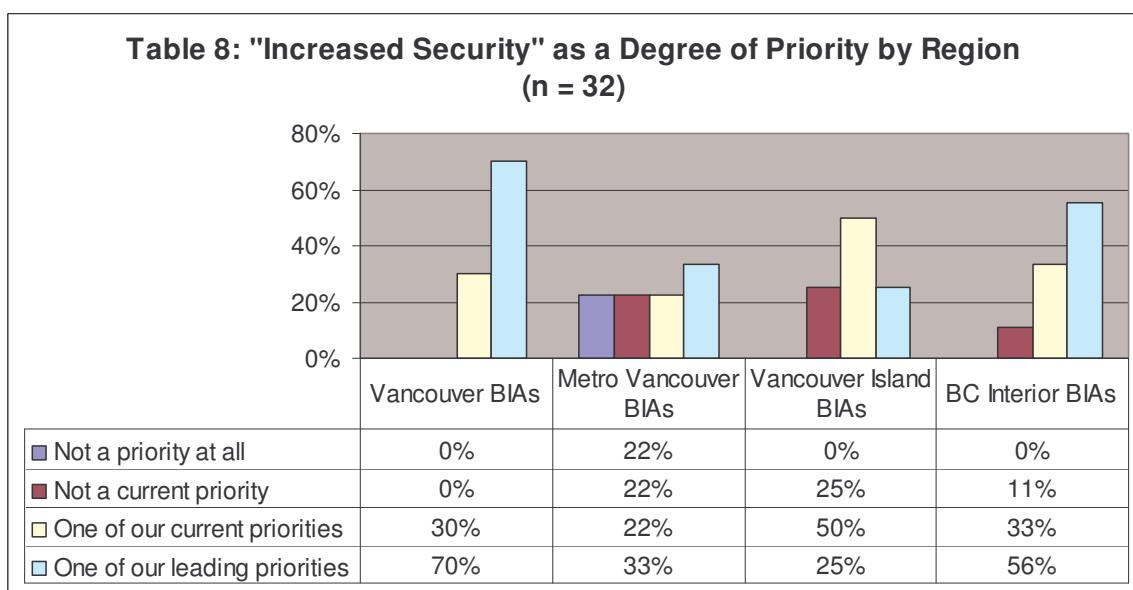
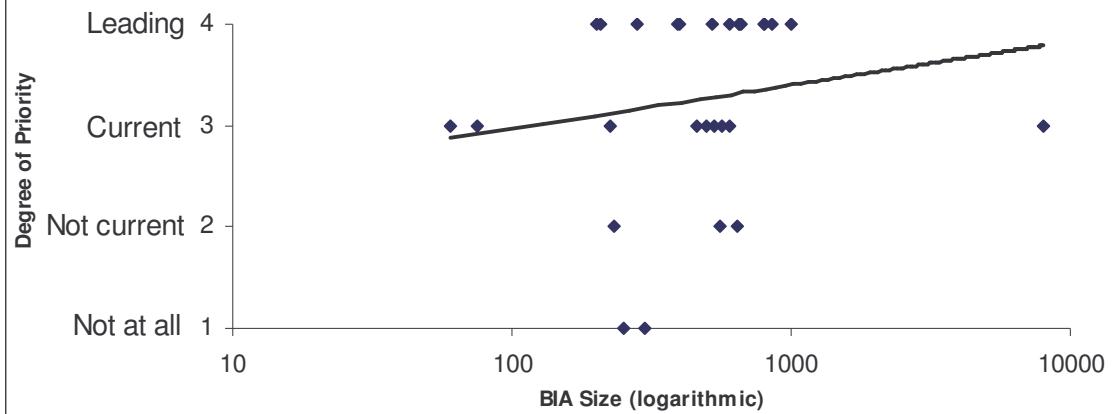


Table 9: "Increased Security" as a Degree of Priority by Membership Size (n = 32)



Safety and security seems to be of particular interest to BIAs located in the City of Vancouver and the BC Interior, with the BIAs located in Metro Vancouver/Fraser Valley giving the least importance to the issue of security (see Table 8). It also appears that BIAs with larger memberships seem to place more emphasis on security (see Table 9)³⁷. Table 9 shows the degree to which “Increased Security” is prioritised by BIAs of various size as; one of the leading priorities, one of the current priority, not a current priority, or not a priority at all. Such data seems to indicate that BIAs in larger urban centers with larger memberships, have more safety issues but also great financial capacity to place more attention on security.

To address issues of security many BC BIAs reported acquiring services from a private security services provider, others reported being active members of the block watch program and community policing services. Results indicate that most BIA security strategies are based on communication improvements and crime prevention awareness techniques among members. In the survey BIAs reported to use security workshops, crime prevention tips, records of crime statistics and other services in hopes of improving security in the district. One BIA reported looking to install private security cameras. To stress the importance of crime prevention measures, one BIA reported that it spends 48% of its budget on security issues and programs.

The survey indicates that “Enhanced Maintenance” is a current priority for 43% of BIAs, for 30% it is one of the leading priorities, for 20% it is not a current priority, and for 7% it is not a priority at all (see Table 7). Such results seem to indicate that enhanced maintenance is one of the top 3 priorities for BIAs in BC.

Table 10: "Enhancing Maintenance" as a Degree of Priority by Region (n = 30)

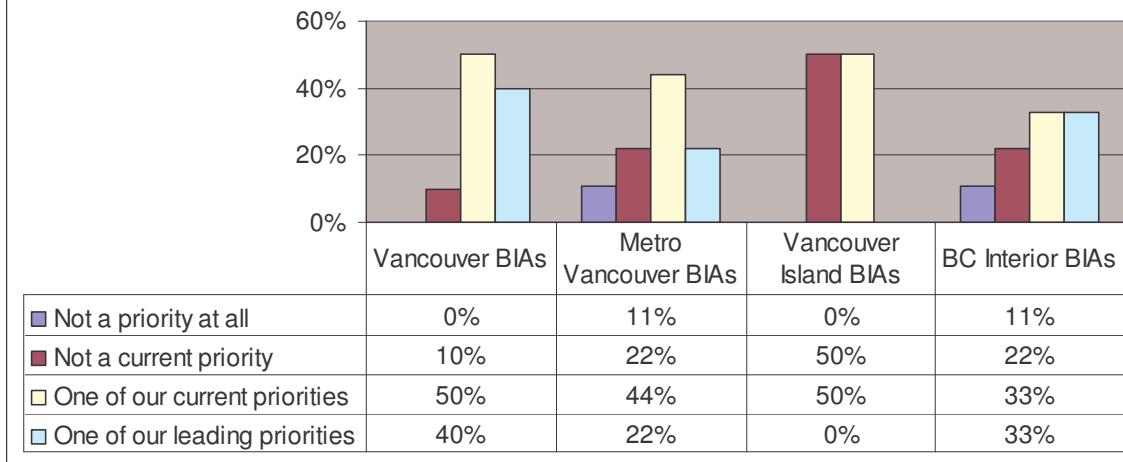
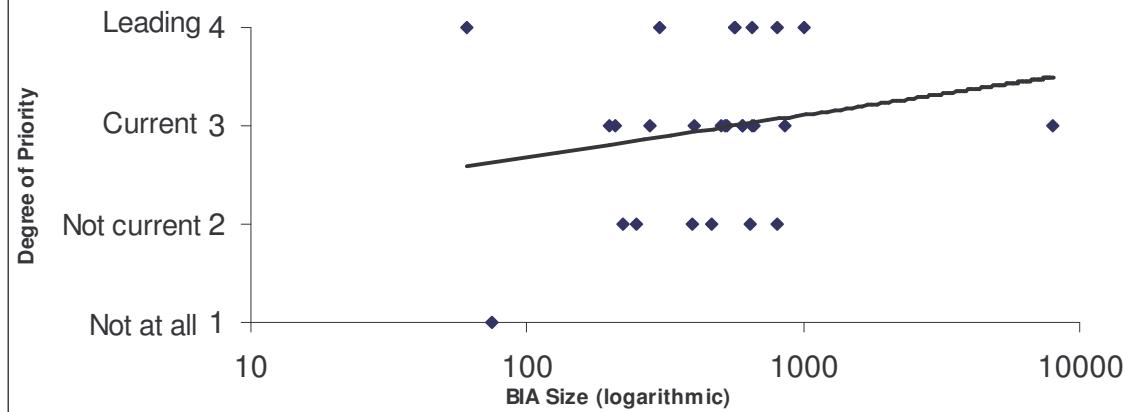


Table 11: "Enhancing Maintenance" as a Degree of Priority by Membership Size (n = 30)



Once again, it appears that Vancouver BIAs put more emphasis on enhancing the maintenance of the districts (see Table 10). In this case the correlation between the membership size and the degree of priority is not clearly obvious (see Table 11). This suggests that the degree of priority in this case has much to do with the maintenance services provided by the host municipality. Of course,

the capacity to implement the needed services is also connected with the BIAs size and financial abilities.

To enhance the maintenance of the district, BC BIAs are reporting to have litter pickup and graffiti removal programs. Many BIAs have also reported to be working on strategic trash can placements and alley improvements. Some BIAs also indicated that they are working in partnership with other community groups and government organizations to address this issue. A few BIAs reported having done aesthetic improvements such as floral plantings which are believed to discourage littering.

Survey results indicate that “Coping with Competition” is a current priority for 48% of BIAs, not a current priority for 29%, not a priority at all for 13%, and a leading priority for 10% (see Table 7). Such results suggest that coping with competition is a secondary issue for BC BIAs.

Table 12: "Coping with Competition" as a Degree of Priority by Region (n = 31)

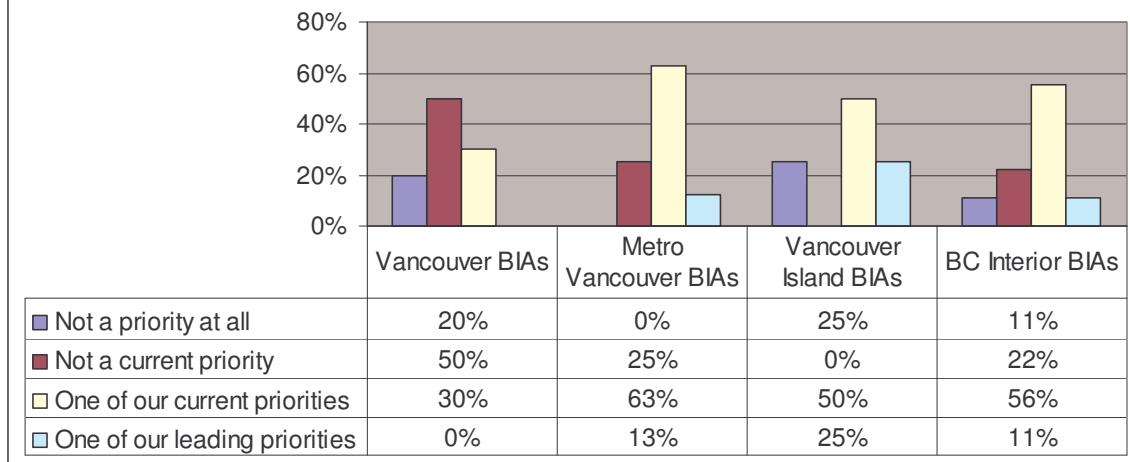
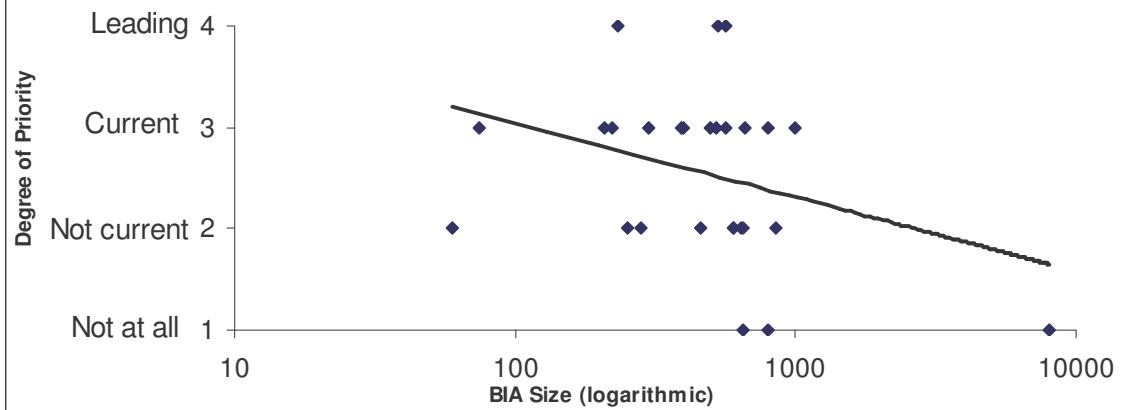


Table 13: "Coping with Competition" as a Degree of Priority by Membership Size (n = 31)



It appears that coping with competition is a secondary priority for most BC BIAs. This is not to say that BIAs do not care about the issue of competition, although a few clearly don't see themselves and what their district can offer as comparable with anything else and thus in no competition with anyone. However, it seems that many BIAs see strategies for dealing with competition more broadly related to matters such as anchor business attraction, marketing and promotion strategies, landscape planning, social events coordination, and what can be classified as a matter of over all keeping the district healthy. This probably explains why more suburban BIAs and smaller BIAs are concerned about competition, as they often can not offer the unique experiences that some of the other BIAs can (see Tables 12 and 13). For example, the Downtown Vancouver BIA is not in substantial competition with others as it offers shops, office spaces, and milieu that is hard to match.

The survey indicates that “Attracting New Customers” is a current priority for 64% of BIAs, a leading priority for 26% of BIAs, not a current priority for 10% (see Table 7). No BIA reported that attracting new customers was not a priority at all. Such results indicate that customer base expansion is something that BIAs are keenly aware of.

Table 14: "Attracting New Customers" as a Degree of Priority by Region (n = 31)

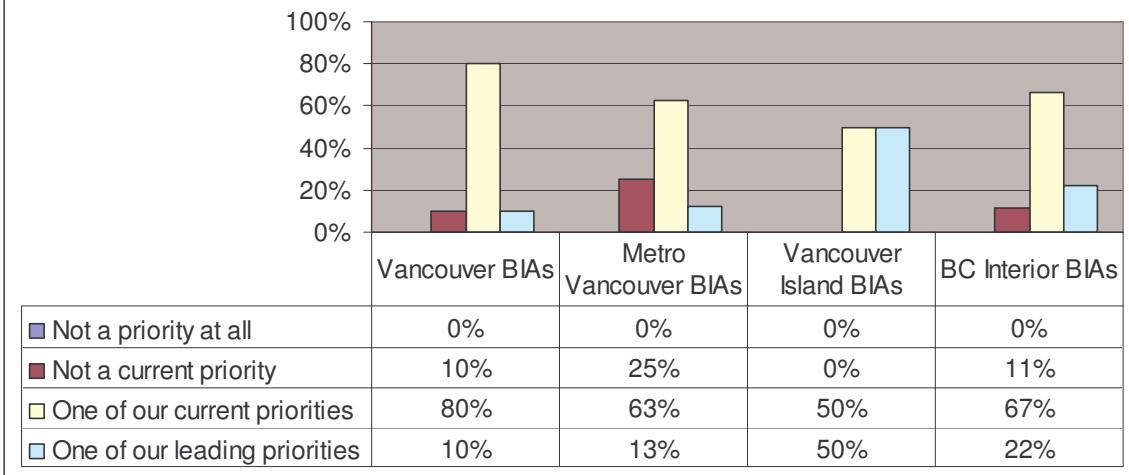
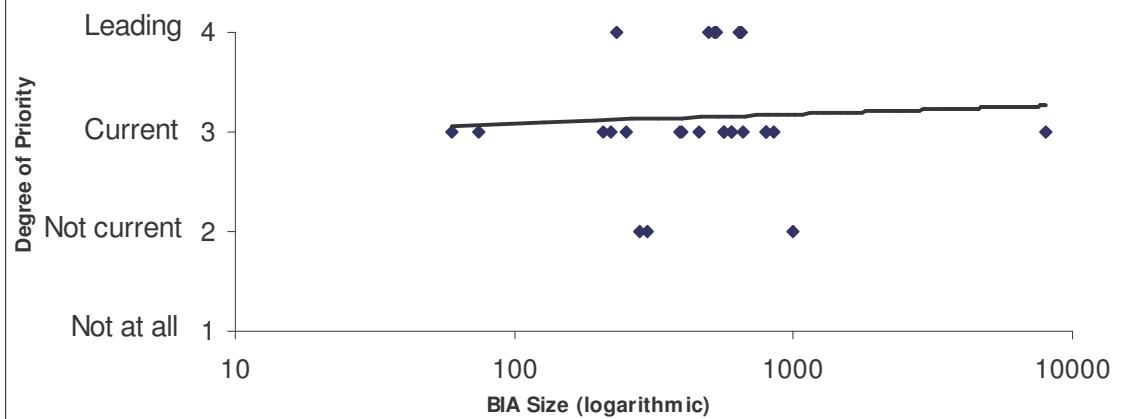


Table 15: "Attracting New Customers" as a Degree of Priority by Membership Size (n = 31)



There do not appear to be any regional or size based patterns, as all BIAs seem somewhat focused on new customer attraction (see Tables 14 and 15). Yet again, when it comes to action plans for priority fulfillments it appears that new customer attraction is a secondary priority that is closely related to marketing and promotion strategies, and special community events coordination. The events and marketing are the primary focus of the BIAs, new customer attraction is more of the objective of the activities that are of the primary focus.

The survey results indicate that “Ameliorating Accessibility” is not a current priority for 41% of the BIAs, not a priority at all for 28%, one of the current priorities for 28%, and a leading priority for only 3% (see Table 7). It appears that a few respondents did not understand what the question was asking and thus did not answer the question. Perhaps the question would have been better understood if worded in terms of transportation and walkability. In any case, the responses indicate that accessibility issues are generally not on top of the agenda for BIAs.

Table 16: "Ameliorating Accessibility" as a Degree of Priority by Region (n = 29)

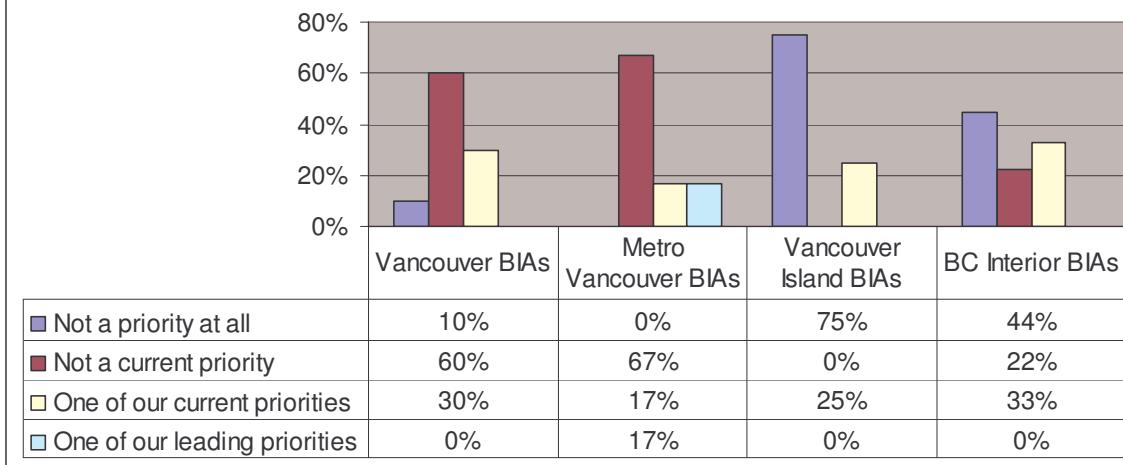
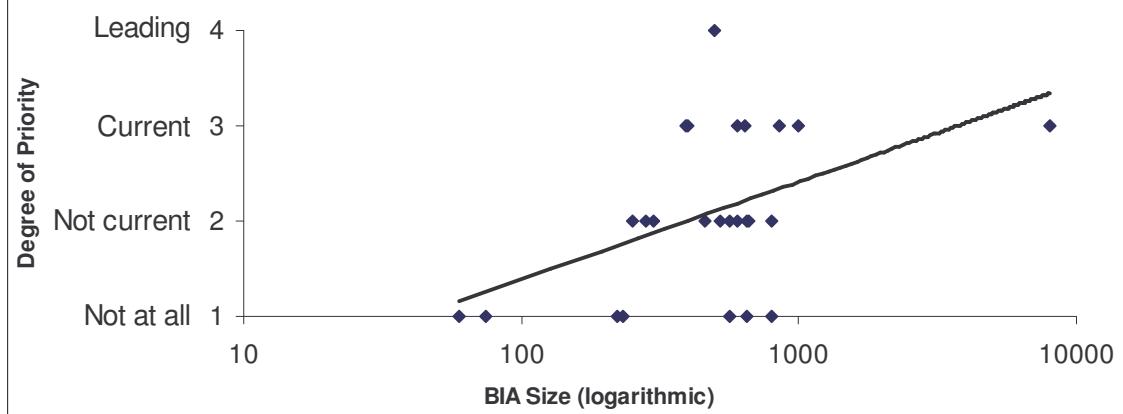


Table 17: "Ameliorating Accessibility" as a Degree of Priority by Membership Size (n = 29)



There does not appear to be any regional correlations related to accessibility issues and BIA priorities (see Table 16). The size of the membership however does seem to play a significant role, with larger BIAs giving more priority to this issue and smaller BIAs giving less (see Table 17). Once more, financial capacity and the size of the BIA as well as the size, level of services, and public infrastructure in the host municipality seem to all have influencing impacts in such prioritization. Nevertheless, accessibility does seem to play a role and is an issue that some BIAs focus on. In particular parking issues, public transit access, and district walkability are matters of concern to some BIAs. BIAs report creating accessibility audits, studies and reports, and working closely with various related agencies to address concerns and improve access to the district and within the district.

The survey responses show that “Improving Urban Landscape” is one of the current priorities for 61% of BIAs, a leading priority for 20%, not a current priority for 16%, and not a priority at all for 3% (see Table 7). The results suggest that landscape and landscape improvements are important to BIAs and on the priority action list of majority of BC BIAs.

Table 18: "Improving Urban Landscape" as a Degree of Priority by Region (n = 31)

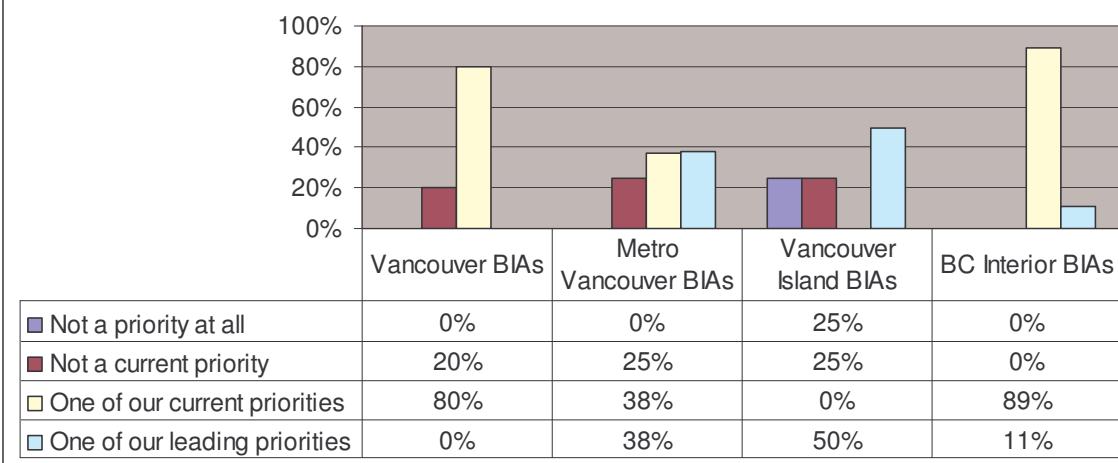
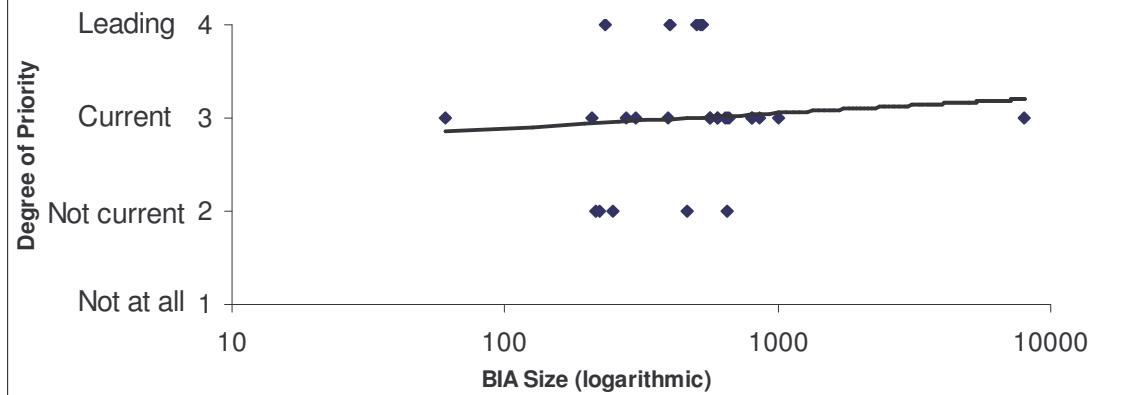


Table 19: "Improving Urban Landscapes" as a Degree of Priority by Membership Size (n = 31)



Of importance to this question is the understanding of what exactly BIAs see as related to urban landscape. The answer appears to be that BIAs see urban landscape improvements as a very diverse set of issues that includes: community planning, façade improvement programs, rezoning applications, public art, public furnishings, lighting, accessibility, and greenery to list some noted issues. What is clear however is that BIAs see urban revitalization through landscape improvements such as public art displays, traffic calming, and pedestrian improvements as important. From the survey responses it seems that sustainability underlines many of the BIA land use initiatives. In general, BIAs seem to be supportive of moving towards more walkable streetscapes and higher density.

The degree of priority given to the improvements of the urban landscape seems not to be clearly correlated with regional placement or the membership size of the BIA (see Tables 18 and 19). However, smaller BIAs appear to be more inconsistent in their prioritization of this issue, once again suggesting that the BIA's financial capacity and political conditions are influential in determining priorities and services that are delivered.

The results of the survey indicate that "Recruiting New Businesses" is not a current priority for 45% of BIAs, one of current priorities for 32%, not a priority at all for 16%, and is one of the leading priorities for 7% (see Table 7). It appears that for most BC BIAs targeted business recruitment is not major concern. A few

BIAs actually reported having a lack of vacancies in the district and a waiting list. Those BIAs that reported to be actively pursuing businesses have largely stated that they are cooperating with the local economic development office to see strategies through, suggesting that this issue may be largely out of the BIA's scope of influence.

Table 20: "Recruiting New Businesses" as a Degree of Priority by Region (n = 31)

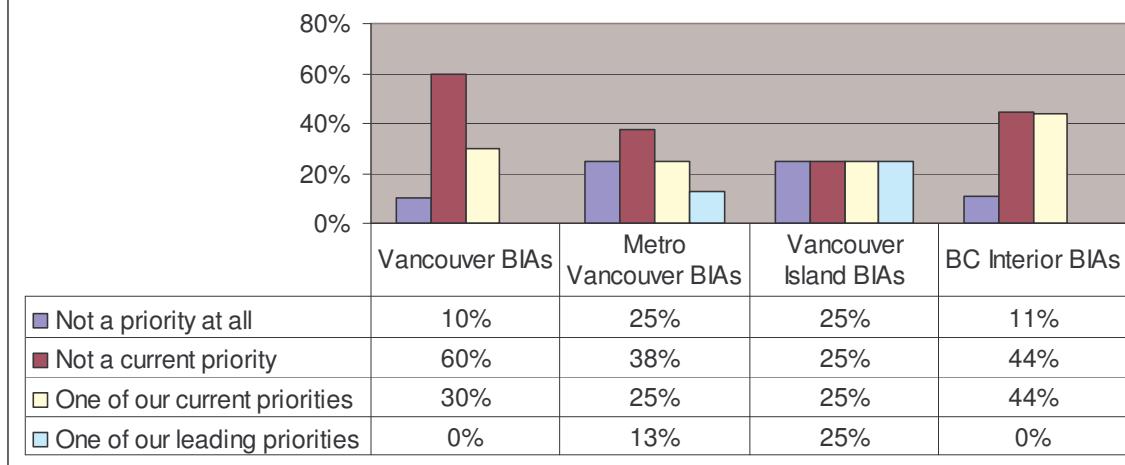
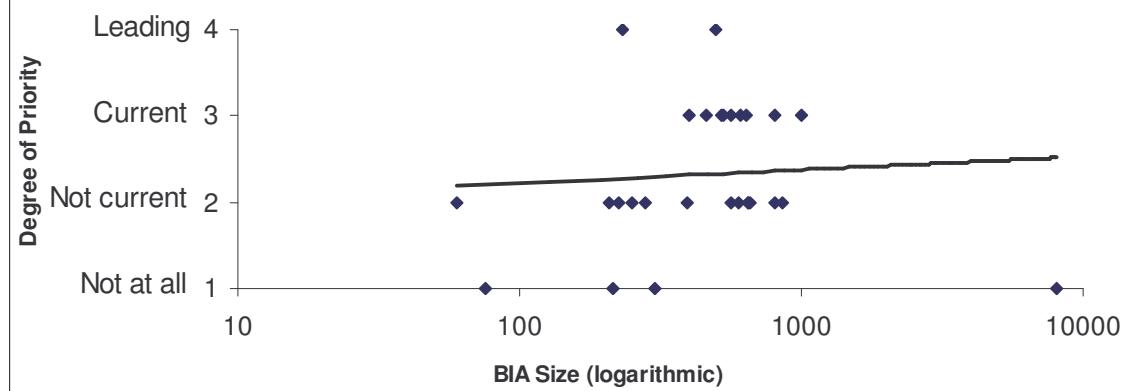


Table 21: "Recruiting New Businesses" as a Degree of Priority by Membership Size (n = 31)



Business recruitment seems to be of more importance in areas outside of the City of Vancouver, particularly on Vancouver Island and Metro Vancouver (see Table 20). Although the correlation is weak, the data appears to suggest

that BIAs with smaller memberships are less likely to deal with the issue of business recruitment, probably because they are poorly equipped to deal with this issue (see Table 21).

The survey shows that “Branding and Marketing” is one of the leading priorities for 45% of BIAs, a current priority for 42%, not a current priority for 10%, and not a priority at all for 3% (see Table 7). Based on such a response it would be safe to conclude that branding and marketing is one of the top priorities for BC BIAs, with perhaps only security being higher on the list of priorities.

Table 22: "Branding and Marketing" as a Degree of Priority by Region (n = 29)

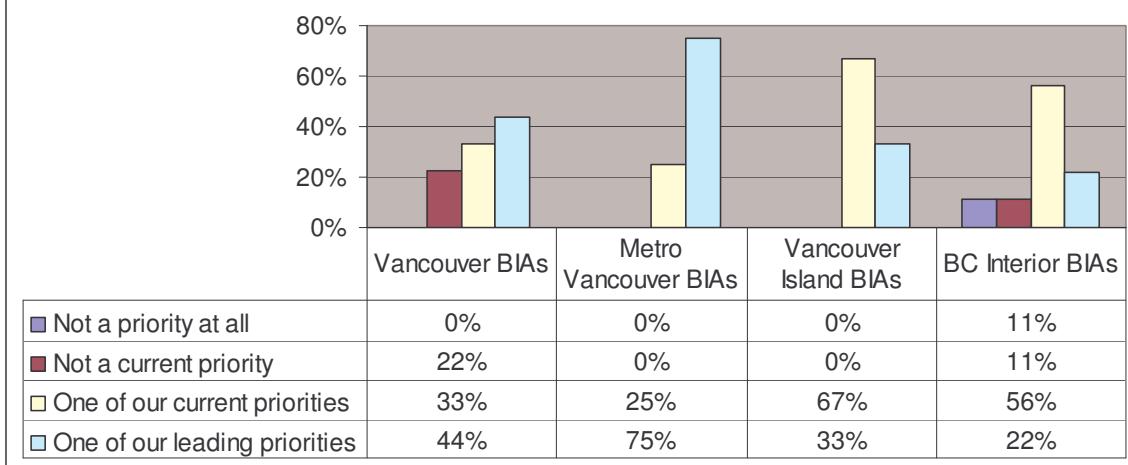
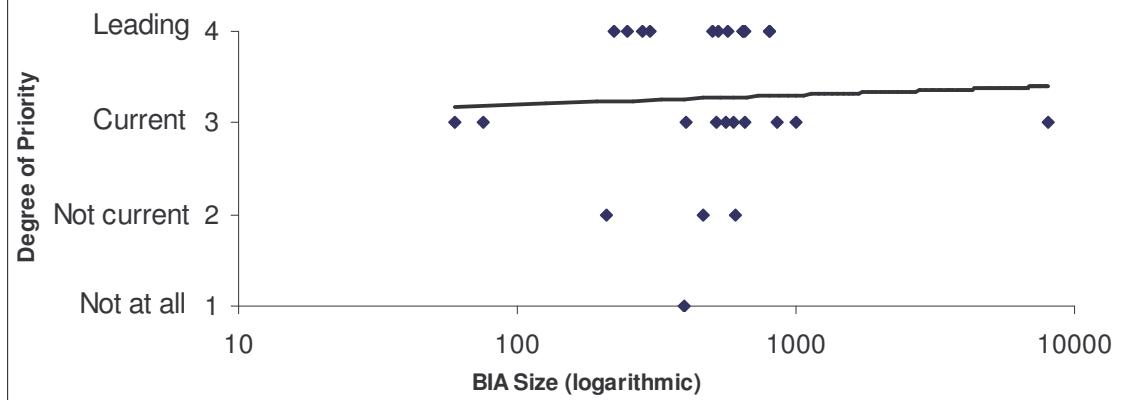


Table 23: "Branding and Marketing" as a Degree of Priority by Membership Size (n = 29)



The data suggests that branding and marketing is of highest priority for Metro Vancouver/Fraser Valley BIAs; there does not seem to be a clear pattern when it comes to this issue and BIA's membership size (see Table 22 and 23). In the survey, most BIAs reported having a marketing plan. Such plans include the development and updating of BIA logo, tag lines, website, newsletter, ads, communications plan, and the overall brand.

One may guess that larger BIAs may have greater capacity to promote the district, as they have more funds and resources. However this may not be the case as factors such as accessibility to the district, the historic and cultural context, the business and physical makeup of the district, the established reputation of the district, the BIA issue prioritization, and other factors contribute to the BIA's ability to brand and market itself. The issue of BIA branding and marketing is very complex and at the same time peculiar because the branding of BIAs can have a profound impact on the neighborhoods and communities within which BIAs are located. The BIA branding can have spillover effects on the persona of the surrounding area, in the process affecting all the inhabitance.³⁸ Moreover, branding and marketing are connected to various other BIA priorities such as coping with competition, business recruitment, urban landscapes, and community events. This is probably the reason why branding and marketing is regarded as one of the key priorities among most BIAs.

The survey results indicate that "Cultural and Historical Community Events" are a current priority for 57% of BIAs, not a priority for 21%, a leading priority for 11%, and not a priority at all for another 11% (see Table 7). Survey results suggest that most BC BIAs do put on various community events to promote the district, but that such events are not main priorities for BIAs.

Table 24: "Cultural and Historical Community Events" as a Degree of Priority by Region (n = 28)

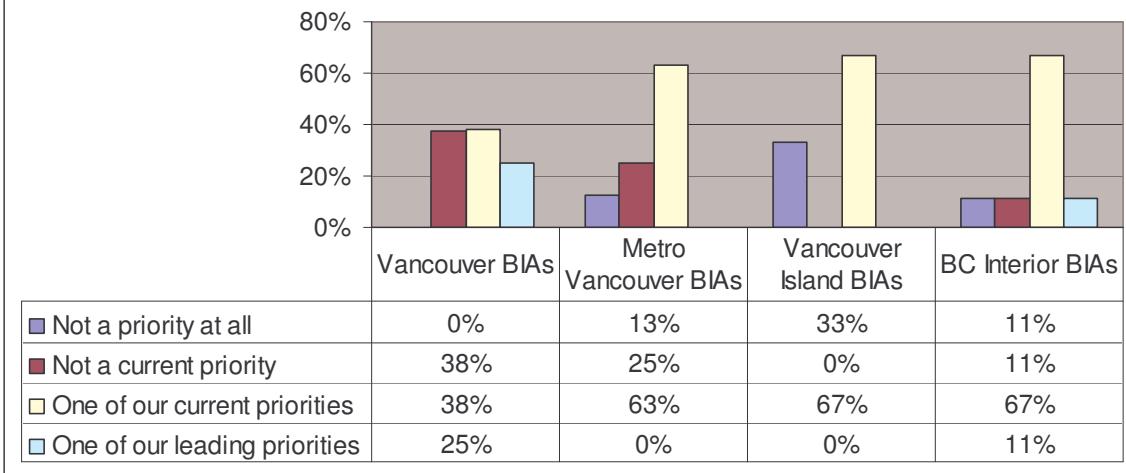
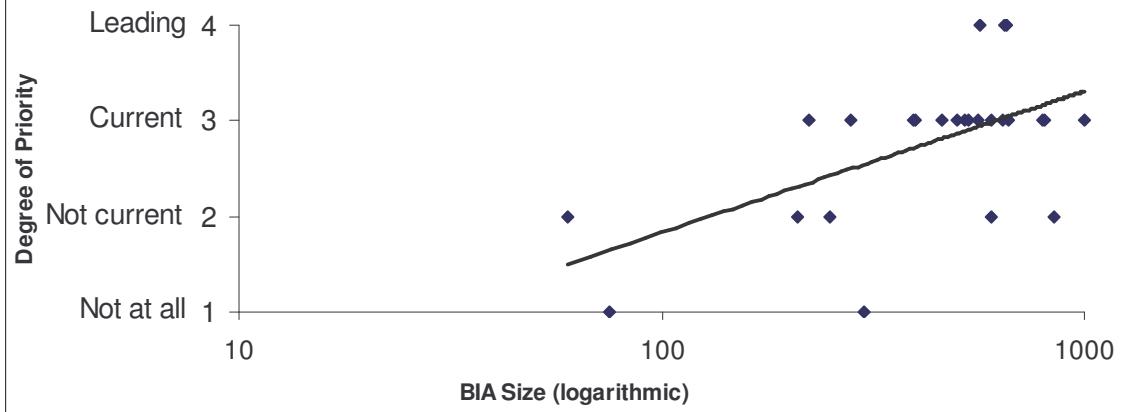


Table 25: "Cultural and Historical Community Events" as a Degree of Priority by Membership Size (n = 28)



Regional data suggest that Vancouver based BIAs seem to put more emphasis on community events than BIAs in other parts of the Province (see Table 24). The resurvey results also appear to indicate that BIAs with large memberships put more emphasise on events (see Table 25). Partially there is a correlation between Vancouver based BIAs and those BIAs which are larger in membership size, having said that when it comes to community events other factors such as the need to establish or re-establish a positive community image also factor in. It is unclear if Vancouver BIAs see themselves as having a greater

need to establish a positive image through public community events. Of course once again, large BIAs would also probably have better capacities to put on public events.

Apart from holding community festivals and parades for which many BIAs are famous, in the survey BIAs reported using other interesting promotional tools to attract customers to the districts. Such events include: seasonal festivals, concerts, car shows, public art displays, and historical walking tours.

The survey results show that “Strengthening Negotiating and Advocacy Powers” is a current priority for 50% of BIAs, not a current priority for 23%, a leading priority for 20%, and not a priority at all for 7% (see Table 7). From the results it appears that advocacy work is important to BIAs in achieving their goals but due to either a lack of a positive relationship with the governing bodies, or an already well established relationship with the governing bodies, strengthening advocacy is not essential for some BIAs.

Table 26: "Strengthening Negotiating and Advocacy Powers" as a Degree of Priority by Region (n = 30)

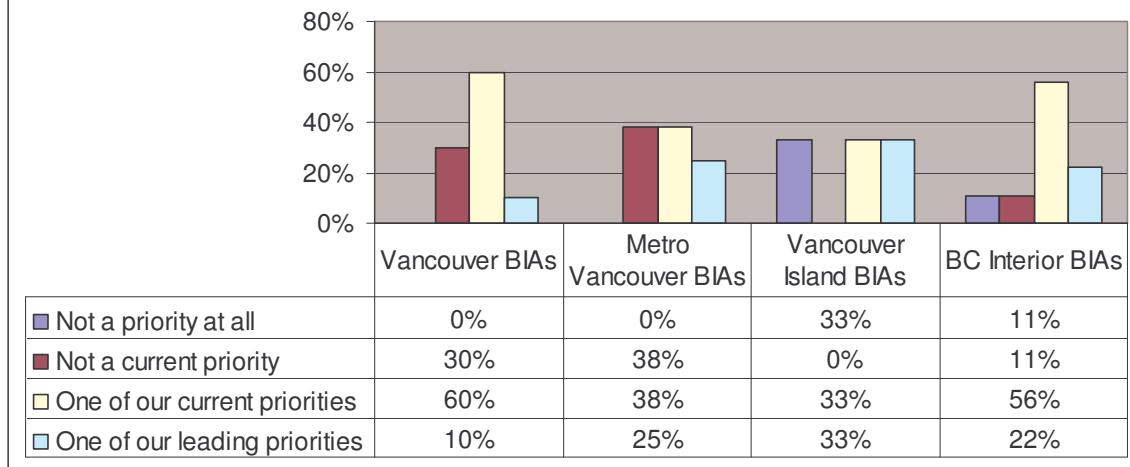
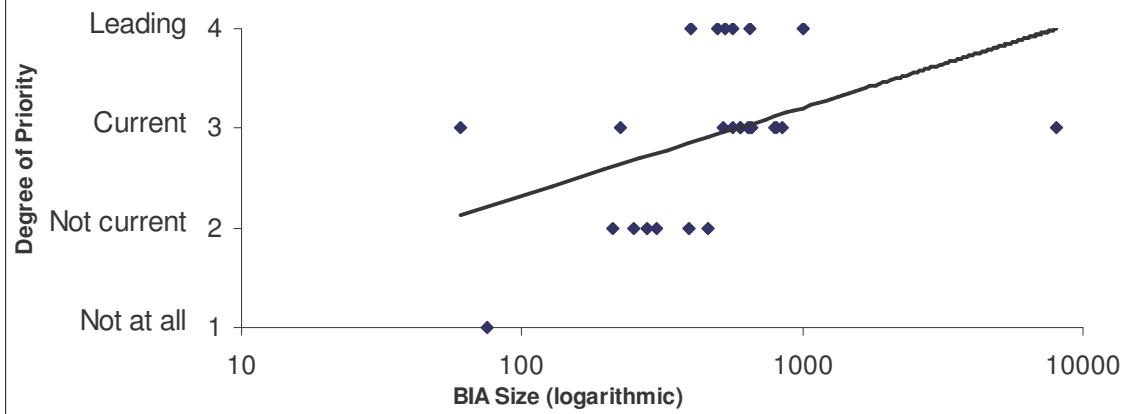


Table 27: "Strengthening Negotiating and Advocacy Powers" as a Degree of Priority by Membership Size (n = 30)



From the responses it appears that most BIAs have an ongoing relationship with governing bodies, there are no clear regional patterns suggesting that advocacy is a BIA issue in all parts of BC (see Table 26). There is a correlation between BIAs with larger memberships and those who report to focus more on the need to strengthen the negotiating powers (see Table 27). Survey replies indicate that in most cases advocacy work for BIAs mean regular meetings with both elected officials and bureaucrats. For BIAs the main negotiating issues include: financial matters, service delivery discussions, as well as zoning and bylaw discussions. A few BIAs reported working with all levels of government. However, most BIAs when talking about advocacy seemed to be focusing efforts and energy on the local level of government. A few BIAs reported that members of the city council and city staff attend BIA board of directors meetings. The BIAs focus on municipal politics and public policy once more reinforces the local community scope and nature of most BIAs.

A couple of BIAs reported that their success rate when it comes to advocacy has been limited but for the most part BIAs seemed to suggest that advocacy has resulted in some positive outcomes. Interestingly the issue of business tax was brought up by only two BIAs, both Vancouver based, suggesting that tax issues are of very little concern to the BC BIAs or that BIAs feel that it is an issue that is outside of their sphere and ability of influence.

On the open ended question of other current or leading priorities BC BIAs had mixture of responses. One of the key priority themes is the environment and sustainability initiatives. The BIA renewal was also a predominant theme. Some respondents noted the need to explore non-traditional marketing and promotional strategies. One respondent noted the need for a community social planner and one other noted parking as a key concern.

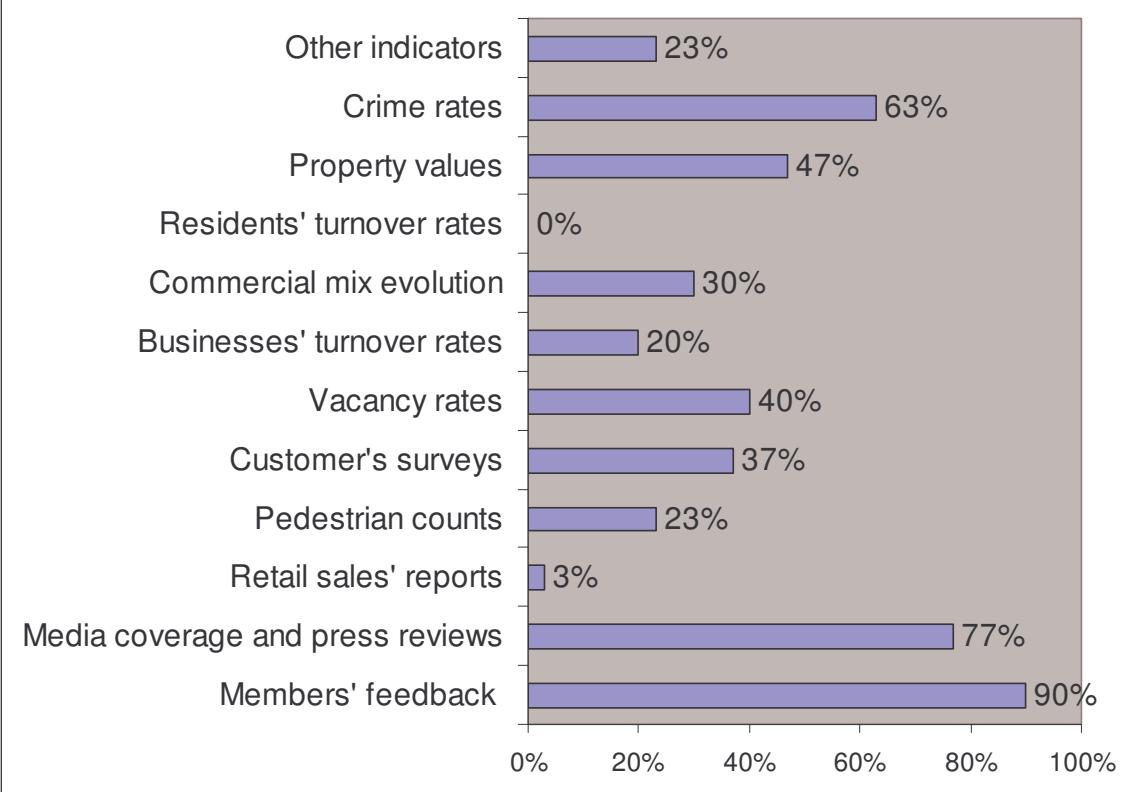
To summarize the results, it appears that the top priority for BC BIAs is security, followed closely by branding and marketing, and the need to enhance maintenance. These three priority areas can be classified as 'bread and butter' BIA issues in BC. Closely behind these three issues is the need for capital improvements. Perhaps not surprisingly these are also the issues that are most 'in the face' of BIA members and those who patronize the BIA districts. It seems that as BIAs want to emphasize value for their members, and show results in a reasonable time frame, BIAs focus on the above described priorities to achieve such goals.

Since the questions were very differently structured, it is hard to compare the results from this survey with Hoyt's when it comes to service priorities and delivery. A rough comparison suggests that the same four focus areas are of primary importance to BIAs in both studies, although the ordering is different. Hoyt's study shows that the top priority for Canadian BIAs is marketing, followed by capital improvement projects, maintenance, and only then security.³⁹ It is unclear as to why there are discrepancies in the findings, perhaps more research can provide information on whether some of the differences noted by the results in the study are in fact regional in nature. Also, it is challenging to isolate priorities as some priorities are interrelated such as marketing/branding and community events.

6.7 BIA Evaluation, Planning, and Communication

There are various ways to measure success and to document impacts of various actions on the BIA. When it comes to indicators, the survey results show that 90% of BC BIAs get members' feedback of some kind, 77% collect media coverage and press reviews, 63% keep track of crime rates, 47% keep track of property values, 40% note vacancy rates, 37% conduct customer surveys, 30% keep track of commercial mix evaluations, 23% keep track of pedestrian counts, another 23% use other indicators, 20% keep business turnover rates, and only 3% evaluate retail sales' reports (see Table 28). Generally, from the results one can conclude that BIAs are member focused organizations that keep track of local indicators. The results suggest that BC BIAs usually use the most basic indicator tools available to them, suggesting perhaps a lack of time but also lack of funding to measure BIA performance.

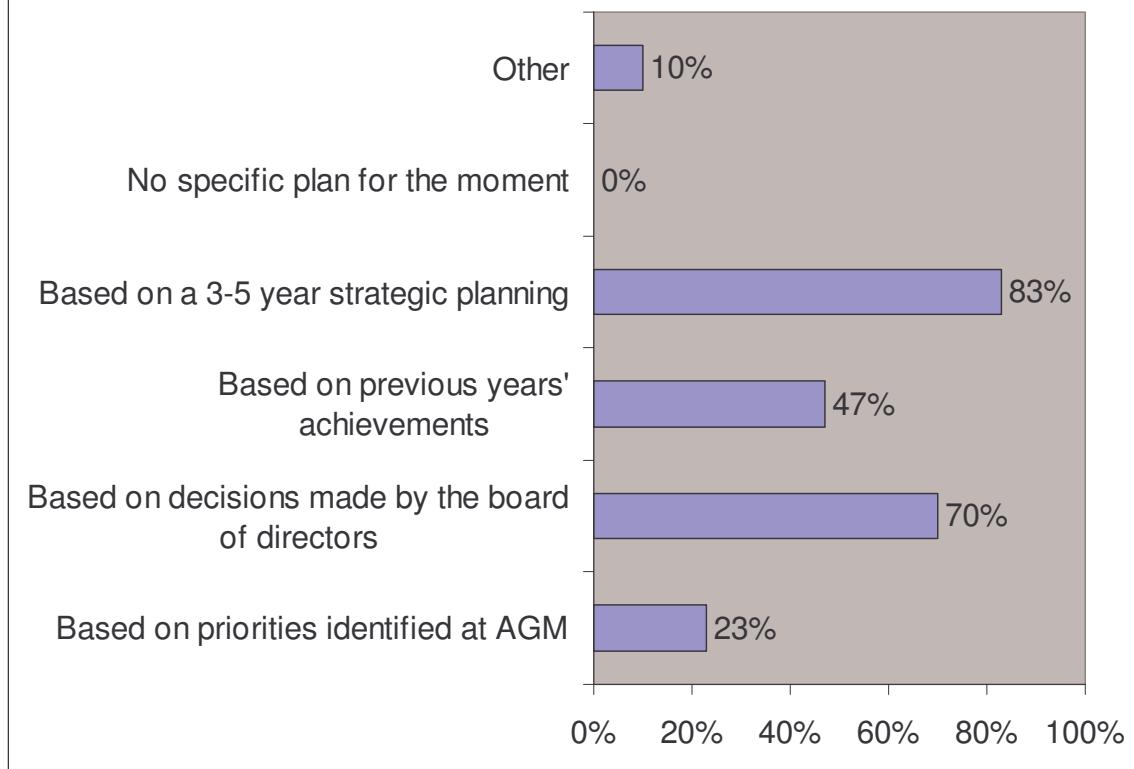
Table 28: BIA Indicators (n = 30)



The deficiencies in harder quantitative performance indicators (such as pedestrian counts and sales reports) appear to be supported by the Hoyt's study that reported that only 38% of Canadian BIAs established standards of performance.⁴⁰ This also raises some issues of accountability. It appears that most BIAs do keep track of personal feedback from members and more qualitative indicators but such indicators are harder to evaluate. As mentioned in the literature review, it is this lack of clear quantitative performance indicators that make it challenging to isolate factors and more clearly understand the role of BIAs as economic development tools. For example, BIAs often see community events as promoting the district but there is no quantitative evidence to suggest that community events lead to higher pedestrian counts in the district following the event or that events lead to higher sales among the members in the district.

Similar to impact evaluations, BIA strategic planning appears often to be ad hoc. The survey responses indicate that 83% of BIAs plan BIA activities based on a 3-5 year strategic plan, 70% based on decisions made by the board of directors, 47% based on previous years achievements, 23% based on priorities identified at the AGM, 10% based on some other strategies (see Table 29). If anything, the results suggest a mixture of planning tools. Although under the 'other' category BIAs report using surveys and tools for engaging the membership, it appears that most planning strategies for BIAs come from the top, in most cases the board of directors and staff. This structure seems to contradict the previously outlined grass roots tendencies and the membership focus of BIAs. The top down activity planning is probably the result of membership apathy but it is unclear if apathy is the by-product of a governance structure or the cause of it. The questions of BIA planning styles and techniques require more research.

Table 29: BIA Activity Planning in BC (n = 30)



The results also show that 80% of BIAs are structured into committees and sub-committees, and the other 20% do not have committees (n =30). Of the 24 BIAs that reported to be structured into committees: 92% reported having a committee dealing with marketing and promotion, 79% security and maintenance, 71% streetscapes, 71% other, 33% public affairs and advocacy, 17% member services, and 13% strategic planning. The results once again highlight the importance and focus of BIAs on issues of marketing and promotion, security, maintenance, and streetscapes. Moreover, the results seem to suggest a tendency for BIA in BC to have a narrow focus when it comes to strategic planning. Under the other category BIAs listed committees that deal with special events, parking and transportation, neighborhood design, AGM planning, website design, and business tax.

When asked to rate the importance of communication tools for keeping members informed BC BIAs reported that a personal visit to members was the most important tool, followed by newsletters, annual assembly, website, and

lastly committee meetings. The ranking of communication tools suggests an emphasis on personal contact with the membership and the focus on more traditional communication tools. For ‘other’ communication tools, BIAs reported using email and electronic bulletins, radio, and organized social networking events. One BIA reported looking at the usage of online blogs and other new technologies to communicate with members.

6.8 BIA Budget and Finances

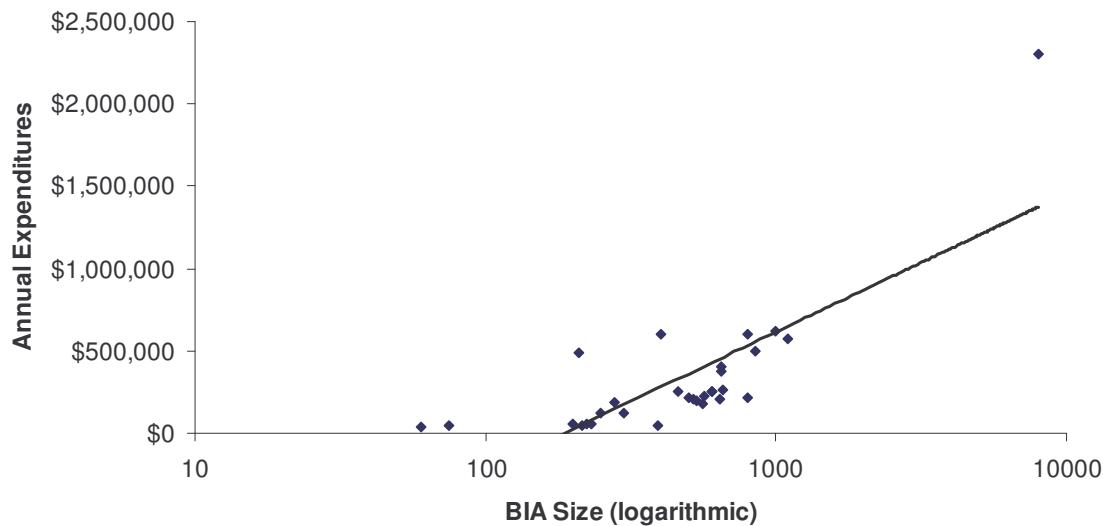
The survey results show that the average (mean) total annual BIA income is \$318,541, and the average total annual expenditures are \$329,347 ($n = 31$). The difference does not represent debt, it appears that the difference between income and expenditure can be explained in how the budgets are managed. It looks like some capital funds (usually from the municipality) are sometime not included in BIA income as capital funds but instead are held and managed separately by the BIA for the purposes of very specific projects. In any case, it is apparent that on average BIAs in BC have a budget of around \$320,000 a year. Of course the expenditures vary substantially based on the size of the BIA, from the maximum of \$2,200,000 a year to a minimum of \$35,000 a year suggesting a very different capacity to implement programs and services.

Examining the reported funding sources of income for BIAs it is clear that the majority of BIA funding comes from the members’ mandatory subscription or levy which on average (mean) accounts for roughly 87% of BIAs income ($n = 29$). Additional funding for BC BIAs is reported to come from: municipality’s contributions/grants to the average tune of 5%, sponsorships 5%, federal/provincial government grants or subsidies 2%, and commercial activity (sales, fundraising, etc) 1%. There do not appear to be any regional correlations regarding financial assistance from governments for BIAs. In fact, in some cases BIAs in the same jurisdiction can be treated very differently when it comes to financial assistance from the municipal government. It is unclear as to what exactly accounts for the inequity in financial support from the government for

BIAs, it may be political capital, the capacity of some BIAs to be better structured to ask or apply for funds, and a number of other reasons.

Generally there is a clear correlation between the membership size and the annual expenditure for a BIA, yet in a few cases BIAs have been able to tap into other sources of funding (in particular government grants and other partnership arrangements) to substantially increase their revenues (see Table 30). According to the survey results many priorities are linked with the financial abilities of BIAs but it is unclear if larger BIAs are more efficient or if they have a greater scope to their spending, most likely it is both.

**Table 30: Total BIA Annual Expenditures by Membership Size
(n = 30)**



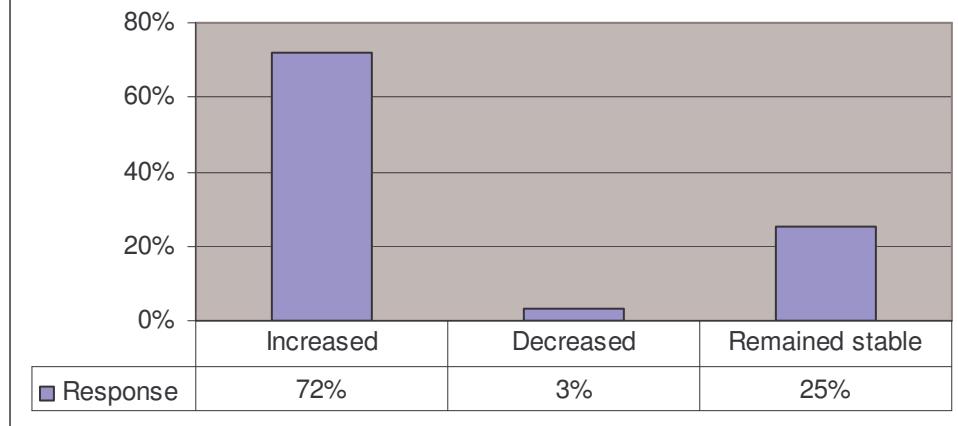
The survey budget allocation data also provides interesting information, on average (mean) 27% of BIA's budget goes towards human resources, 20% towards security and maintenance, 19% towards promotion, communication and marketing, 13% towards office operations (not including human resources), 8% towards capital improvements, 7% towards art and cultural activities, 3% towards community services, and 2% towards transportation and accessibility (n = 31). The budget allocation information provides further insight into the priorities of BIAs in BC, not coincidentally funding allocation information seems to support the

priority preference data also suggesting that security and maintenance are top priorities.

What is also of interest is the data regarding the annual net expenditures that BIAs spend per member. The survey results indicate that on average (mean) BIAs report spending \$536.80 per year per member of the BIA ($n = 30$). This includes all the funding from member levies but also all other sources including grants. The per member annual net expenditures vary from a high of \$2,330 to a low of \$127 per member per year. Such a range suggests a substantial variance in BIA levy, and the ability for a BIA to get grants and access to other funding sources. There does not appear to be any pattern to explain such difference. However, it seems that BIAs with more members are able to attract more outside funding and receive more grants but there is no clear correlation between size and per member annual expenditures. Moreover, one should be cautious in analyzing budget data as various BIAs measure and report income and expenditures differently. For this reason until further data and analysis is obtained the above provided budgeting data should be considered as preliminary estimates.

However, the survey results show that for 72% of BIAs the budgets have increased in the past five years, for 25% the budgets remained the same, and for 3% the budgets decreased (see Table 31). The data suggests that most BIAs are increasing their budgets and are growing. However, most reported very marginal increases, increases large enough to keep up with the inflation and to meet the needs of some new service provisions. A few BIAs reported increases as a result of BIA expansion which requires a vote of membership approval.

Table 31: BIA Budgets in BC in the Past Five Years (n = 32)



The Hoyt study structured financial questions very differently, making comparisons challenging. However, it looks like Hoyt's data on BIAs annual budgets is similar to those of this study. The Hoyt study also seems to support the finding that Canadian BIAs are growing when it comes to budgets, physical size and membership size, and services they provide.⁴¹

6.9 BIA Challenges

In an open-ended question the respondents were asked to comment on the challenges facing their BIAs. The responses to this question varied, with some BIAs providing long and detailed lists of issues and others leaving the question blank. For the purposes of clarity the responses were organized in a few main consistent themes. Here are the responses:

Mandate Renewal/Member Apathy/Social Capital Issues

- “Increasing member involvement”
- “Appealing to those of different cultures”
- “To get more participation from the property owners and the business owners”
- “Get our renewal approval so can move forward”
- “Foster a high degree of member involvement and dialogue”
- “Renewal”
- “Overcoming some degree of apathy”
- “Inclusion of outlying BIA areas”
- “Merchant apathy”

“Bringing in the public”
“Continue to find committed volunteers”
“Maintaining relevance to our members and stakeholders while demonstrating value to them”
“Member apathy”
“Reducing ‘hand holding’ of members – engaging members to take responsibility for their own success”
“Membership involvement”
“Apathy”
“Communications”

Security/Social Issues/Maintenance

“To deal with the social issues in the area”
“Addressing social issues affecting businesses”
“Lack of police resources”
“Keeping crime and crime related activities to a minimum”
“Safety and security”
“Social and security issues”
“Crime/social issues”
“Maintenance and upkeep”
“Security”
“Homeless and street-people”

Streetscape/Land use planning

“Managing development”
“To increase more diversity of the retail”
“Maintaining a strong business mix that fits the needs of the community”
“Deal with rapid transit”
“The aesthetics of our streetscape”
“Overcoming transportation challenges”
“Strategic business recruitment”
“Transportation challenges”
“Providing services that the influx of residents will require”
“Keeping businesses in the downtown”
“Downtown Revitalization”
“Infrastructure improvement in commercial district”

Budget/Financing

“Downloading of city services to BIAs”
“Funding and sponsorship”
“Working with a limited budget but large ambitions”
“Budget restraints”
“Finding – support from the city”

Marketing

“Enhance the impact of our website on all fronts”

“Major marketing and branding”
“Promoting the area”

Advocacy

“Addressing government policies at the city, provincial, and federal level that impact our neighborhood”
“Being taken seriously by government”

Tax

“Property tax issues”
“Ensure members get a fair break on taxes so can afford to be in business”

Other

“The downturn in the economy”
“To increase more new customers”
“Employee retention”
“Build strong board and committee structures”
“Establishing our new BIA”
“Developing credibility”
“The overall community population and workforce will greatly impact BIA”
“Proposed Arts and Cultural Corridor”
“Increasing merchant competitiveness”
“Expansion of BIA boundaries”
“Continuity of leadership, vision, and determination”

Clearly it appears that member apathy and lack of member involvement is a major concern for many BIAs. In fact, based on the results it would be fair to conclude that member apathy is the most significant challenge facing BIAs in BC. Also, social issues related to crime, security, and street maintenance are once again high on the priority list. Streetscape concerns and land use planning issues, as well as issues of finance also appear to be predominant.

Of particular interest are two factors. First, it appears that unlike most business advocacy groups BIAs are not fixated on the issue of taxes, instead it is social infrastructure and social capital issues related to apathy and lack of engagement that appear to be of primary concern. Second, is the fact that no BIA reported staffing levels as an area of concern. This is particularly surprising given the fact that BIAs seem often to be understaffed, and that this survey was mostly filled out by BIA staff.

7.0 THE MACRO PICTURE OF BC BIAs

An average BIA is 11 years old. The respondents cited the year of BIA creation from 1988 to 2008. From the sample data 2001 comes out as the year when the most BIAs were established, with five BIAs reporting that year as their birth year. In a global context BC BIAs are relatively new economic development tools, with many other jurisdictions predating the use of this or a similar tool.

When asked to identify the number of people who were involved in the creation of the BIA, the average response was 9 people but the responses varied from 3 to 20 people. This suggests that most BIAs in BC are started by a relatively small but highly devoted group of individuals. The responses indicated that BIAs in BC are primarily triggered by business and property owners.

Top responses for the rationale behind BIA creation in BC include the promotion of business development, the need for negotiation power with the municipality, and the need to improve urban landscape. During formation most BIAs report a degree of misunderstanding, and usually at least mild opposition that had to be overcome with consultations and negotiations. It appears that voluntary business associations in many cases spurred the establishment of BIAs, as such there seems to be a causal link between the two that needs to be explored further. The link also suggests a highly voluntary approach to the formation of BIAs with limited government involvement.

On average, BIA boards of directors in BC are made of 12 members, although boards vary in size from reported 5 members to 23 members. The BIAs boards of directors in BC on average meet 11 times a year. The maximum number of meetings for a BIA board of directors is reported at 18 meetings a year, and the minimum is reported at 6 meetings a year. The BIAs seem to have a fairly low member turnout for annual general meetings, with most reporting 10 per cent of the membership in attendance or less suggesting a high degree of member apathy.

The BIA's head staff person is most often referred to as an 'Executive Director'. On average, BC BIAs are able to retain executive directors for 5 years.

It appears that most BIAs have 2 office staff personal, usually one full time staff person and one part time staff person (this does not include litter pick up and security crews). However, BIA staffing levels in BC range from the reported high of 10 people to a low of zero people. Only one BIA reported having no staff. Only 3 BIAs reported using volunteers to any degree.

The average BIA levy paying membership size in BC is 744 members. The largest BIA in BC has a total of 8000 members, and the smallest BIA in BC has a total of only 60 members. Generally BIAs are linked with tertiary industries. The results also show that in total BIA memberships in BC are made up of roughly equal numbers of service providers/professional, retailers, and property owners. Thus, it is fair to generalize that retail makes up for about half of most BIA memberships, much less than often is assumed. It seems that BIAs are also concentrated in areas where a large number of office professionals and service providers can be found.

The majority of BIAs report being structured into committees and sub-committees. Most commonly BIA committees deal with issues of marketing and promotion, security and maintenance, streetscapes, as well as public affairs and advocacy.

It appears that the top priorities for BIAs in BC are: security, branding and marketing, and maintenance. These three priority areas can be classified as 'bread and butter' BIA issues. Closely behind these three issues are capital improvements.

Almost all BC BIAs report getting members' feedback of some kind, these include media coverage and press reviews, tracking of crime rates, tracking of property values, tracking of vacancy rates, and customer surveys to name a few. When asked to rate the importance of communication tools for keeping members informed BIAs reported that visits to members were the most important tool, followed by newsletters, annual assembly, website, and lastly committee meetings.

Most BIAs report planning activities based on a 3-5 year strategic plan with input from the board of directors. It appears that previous years

achievements to a large degree also structure current activities. The AGM seems not to be a very significant priority setting tool for BIAs. If anything, the results suggest a mixture of planning tools and although strategic plans are often created they are sometimes overruled by the board of directors.

On average BIAs in BC have around \$320,000 in annual income to work with. Of course, the expenditures vary substantially based on the size of the BIA, from the reported maximum of \$2,200,000 to a minimum of \$35,000. The difference suggests a very different capacity to implement programs and services. By far the vast majority of BIA funding comes from the members' mandatory subscription or levy which on average accounts for roughly 87% of BIA's income.

On average almost three quarters of the BIA's budget seems to go towards three main priority areas: human resources, security and maintenance, as well as promotion, communication, and marketing. Roughly three quarters of the BIAs reported that their budgets have increased in the past five years, and one quarter that their budgets remained stabled or decreased.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Most British Columbians have probably never heard of a Business Improvement Associations and are unaware of why BIAs exist but most have been in areas and districts that they oversee. Certainly, BIAs and their popularity as economic development tools raise important practical and theoretical questions about the use of public space, governance, public policy, municipal service delivery and economic development. However, none of these questions are possible to answer without a substantial pool of empirical data and analysis. The goal of this project was to begin to catalogue BIA structures, priorities, services, activities, and accountability measures. As such this project is more mechanical and descriptive in nature.

It is hoped that those who are interested in BIAs will use this project for further understanding the BIA movement, and the issue related to downtown and main street revitalization. The objective of this project was to use quantitative analysis in beginning to better understand BIAs in BC and in general. However, one may also provide some analytical conclusions to this descriptive project.

It appears that over the last 20 years BIA have become synonymous with the downtown and main street renewal in BC. In fact, it perhaps would not be a stretch to conclude that in some communities BIAs have become de facto another level of government. Certainly, BIAs are a fundamental part of the governance structure of many communities. It is outside of this project's scope to delve into the evaluative nature of BIA and to assess the impacts of BIAs on the broader communities in which they exist. Perhaps with further data collection, and adoption of analysis based on analytical frameworks, some of the macro questions about the nature of BIAs, and impacts of BIAs may begin to be answered. Such examinations will hopefully serve to better understand and improve the BIA movement. At this point there is not enough empirical data to provide a fair and comprehensive analysis of this caliber. Moreover, this type of analysis is a challenge as BIAs are organic organizations in their formation and

operations, and as such are different from one another when it comes to priorities, structures, services, and accountability measures.

Based on the results from this preliminary study, it appears that BIAs are somewhere between a quasi-government and a local business lobby group. The BIAs do not neatly fit into any previously established categories or boxes. As local business advocacy groups, BIAs are probably most closely comparable with local chambers of commerce but yet BIAs are much different and more complex in that their membership levy is mandatory, and in that they deliver many public provisions to both members and the community at large. The BIA mandates, structures, priorities, accountability measures, and activities probably more closely resemble those of local governments.

In fact, based on the results from this project one can conclude that BC BIAs are struggling with many of the same issues as local governments, issues such as service downloading, member apathy, funding for services and initiatives, social issues (homelessness, crime, security), land use issues and neighborhood esthetics, promotion and marketing of the jurisdiction, and lobbying of senior levels of government.⁴² As such, it appears that local governments in particular have much in common with BIAs.

At a time when all levels of government are looking for greater input and financial support the BIA model presents an interesting option and much potential. With greater focus from many local governments on sustainability, local economic development, buying local, walkable communities, and smart growth principles many governments are awakening to the fact that BIAs represent and may help to achieve exactly those goals. It is unclear where the BIA movement in BC and across Canada will go in the future. Certainly new partnerships (in particular with senior levels of government which have largely been absent and which have the most resource available to them) present interesting opportunities for growth and rejuvenation of BC's main streets and downtowns which are the core of today's urban based economy.

This research has tried to identify some of the objectives, priorities, and structures of the BIA movement in BC. This paper pointed to some preliminary

trends and issues, and suggested some further areas for research. The preliminary results from this research indicate that BIAs are highly individualized in their structures as to fit local condition and needs. It is this improvisation and organic nature of BIAs that makes it challenging to comprehend all the diversities found in BIAs in BC. For example, the survey results suggest that BIAs in BC are locally focused organizations with grassroots tendencies but the degree of this localization and bottom-up orientation varies. From this project one can also conclude that BIAs do not exist in a vacuum and thus should probably not be studied in isolation.

There is value in trying to understand BIAs as a movement in itself but one should always remember that BIAs exist in particular environments that determine the opportunity structures. This project examined some preliminary BIA considerations in BC looking at the formation, size, funding structure, governance, administration, priorities and other issues. This provides part of the picture. A more complete picture can only be achieved if one includes local host community conditions (such as infrastructure evaluations, service provision levels, and so on) as well as more macro provincial, national, and international environmental factors (such as the economic system and trends, prevailing ideological beliefs, political system, Constitutional factors, and others). For example, one of the preliminary themes that emerged from this study is that BIAs with more members, and thus more funds and more political powers, can generally provide more services to the members and the community and usually do so more efficiently and transparently. If one is to explore the question of the perfect or optimal BIA membership size further, one would probably find that such analysis is difficult without a comprehensive understanding of environmental conditions in which BIAs operate.

The existence of BIAs is often explained and justified due to the need to deliver services that are not provided by the public sector or that are not delivered by the public sector efficiently. To prove this or the contrary, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative analysis of BIA environmental conditions is required for further understanding of BIAs as an economic development tool.

One of the main objectives of this project is to serve as a bank for BIA data in BC, data that will eventually be used for a national BIA study. However, one must caution that the data that is provided in this project must not be taken out of context. One should be careful in comparing BIAs even from within the same province as local host community conditions are very different, and of course the challenge of comparing BIAs between provinces is even greater as environmental factors vary to a larger degree (particular factors such as the legal framework for BIA establishment).

Lastly, it is important to note a few limits of the survey as a tool for understanding BIAs. All surveys require a degree of standardization in regards to the questionnaire, and this makes surveys inflexible. Moreover, surveys are somewhat superficial in covering complicated issues; it is practically impossible to measure everything through a questionnaire. The survey used in this study is a collection of self-reports and of recollections. Since BIAs are all unique and because BIA issues are so complex it is important to remember that this survey project is limited in scope, as surveys do not develop total life situations.⁴³

If one key lesson can be learned from this project it is that BIA factors must be understood in a fuller environmental context that provides for opportunity structures. As such, this project must be understood to be only part of the puzzle that will hopefully lead to a bigger and more complete picture of the BIA movement in BC and Canada.

Appendix 1



Survey Business Improvement Areas in British Columbia

Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) are more than economic development tools. Collectively, BIAs form a social movement that has fundamentally shaped and reshaped our municipal landscapes in profound ways. This survey attempts to understand the ways in which BIAs in British Columbia are formed and structured. Moreover, this survey endeavours to recognize the issues and priorities that face BIAs in British Columbia, and ways in which BIAs deal with them.

This Simon Fraser University Urban Studies Master's Degree research survey is part of a larger national study of BIAs, administered by Think Tank Toronto and York University. As such, the results of this survey will not just provide a better understanding of BIAs in British Columbia but will also allow for a comparative analysis of BIAs from across Canada. However, to make this national project possible it is vital that surveys are completed and mailed back with consent forms in the provided self-addressed envelopes in a timely way.

There is a great benefit to both Business Improvement Areas of British Columbia (for BIABC letter of endorsement see next page) and to individual BIA members in completing this survey (for example: in applying for grants, understanding organizational needs, in comparative and evaluative analysis, and so on). Please note that the analysed data from this survey will be available to BIABC and to all BIABC member organizations that request it. Individual survey responses will remain confidential.

Thank you in advance for choosing to participate. Please read each question carefully, answer it to the best of your ability, and promptly return the completed survey. If you have any questions or comments please contact the project researcher.

Regards,
Andre Isakov

BIA Research Project
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Coquitlam, BC
V3B 7S2
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Email: aisakov@sfsu.ca

Appendix 2



August 13, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: BIA Survey

On behalf of BIABC I would like to state that I support the research being undertaken by Andre Isakov in coordination with Think Tank Toronto. I understand that this research is part of a larger Canada wide project looking at the structural, administrative, ideological and other differences and similarities among BIAs.

I encourage BIABC membership to take part in this survey as I believe that the information will be very helpful to all of us. We acknowledge that the survey is quite lengthy but believe the information being requested is reasonable and will assist in giving everybody a better understanding of the BIA movement across Canada.

I have been assured that the findings will be made available to BIABC upon completion of the research and am looking forward to learning more about BIAs in British Columbia and similar associations in other provinces.

Yours sincerely,

Patricia Barnes

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Appendix 3

INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH INTO BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures. Your signature on this form will signify that the procedures and benefits of this research project have been described to you, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project.

Any information that is obtained during this study may be made public unless otherwise specified by the research subject. Knowledge of your identity may also be required and divulged. The research materials will be held in a secure location and will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

Having been asked by Andre Isakov of the Urban Studies Program at Simon Fraser University to participate in a research project, I understand the project and agree to partake in it.

I understand the procedures to be used in this study and that there are no personal risks in taking part. The information that will be requested from me is not private and is in the public domain. I understand that permission for me to participate in this questioner has not been sought or obtained from my supervisor or employer.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this study at any time, even if I sign this consent.

I also understand that I may register any concern I might have about the study with the researcher named above or with Dr. Hal Weinberg, Director, Office of Research Ethics at hal_weinberg@sfu.ca or 778-782-6593.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Andre Isakov, # 215, 3075 Primrose Lane, Coquitlam, BC, V3B 7S2 or aisakov@sfu.ca

I agree to participate by: answering questions and offering opinions regarding the Business Improvement Area that I represent, either in writing, by email, or by answering in person to researcher Andre Isakov, working under the supervision of Dr. Peter V. Hall, during the time period August 2008 to February 2009. I understand that the information I provide will contribute to the publication of a Masters Thesis project and that the data on BIAs in BC that is collected will be available to me, BIABC, and all those who wish to have access to it.

Name of participant_____

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 4

The 2008 Business Improvement Areas Survey (British Columbia)

[A02800] 1. What is the Business Improvement Area (hereafter BIA) that you represent?

Answer: _____

2. What is your position occupied within the BIA organisation:

- [A00101] President
- [A00102] Director
- [A00103] Treasurer
- [A00104] Secretary
- [A00105] Municipal representative
- [A00106] Active consultant board member
- [A00107] Other (specify)

[A00200] If other, please specify:

[A00300] 4. Since what year have you been active in the BIA?

Answer: _____

[A00400] 5. What year was this BIA created?

Answer: _____

[A00500] 6. How many people were involved in the formation of your BIA?

Answer: _____

7. Which person(s) or group(s) triggered the formation of your BIA?
(Multiples answers acceptable)

- [A00601] Concerned citizen(s)
- [A00602] Property owner(s)
- [A00603] Business owner(s)
- [A00604] Local elected officials
- [A00605] Provincial public servants
- [A00606] Other (specify)

[A00700] 8. If other persons, please specify:

9.Why did this person(s) or group(s) want to create a BIA?

Rate each potential reason accordingly: 1 = Was not a reason at all, 2 = Was not really a reason, 3 = Was a reason, 4 = Was a major reason.

- [A00801] Increasing security
- [A00802] Enhancing maintenance
- [A00803] Coping with competition
- [A00804] Improving urban landscape
- [A00805] Increasing property values
- [A00806] Promoting business development
- [A00807] Acquire negotiation power with the municipality

[A00900] 10. Is there any other reason(s)? Other:

[A00A00] 11. Which of the following statements best describes the degree of support/opposition encountered in the establishment of your BIA?

- 1. The formation of our BIA was consensual.
- 2. Some misunderstanding at the start, but quickly overcome with thorough information sessions and meetings.
- 3. Considerable misunderstanding and opposition, but overcome eventually by various information sessions.
- 4. Organized opposition to the project , was only overcame through the organization of several information sessions and negotiation meetings involving a well-defined group of opponents.
- 5. Strong organized opposition to the project that still continues to this day. The creation of our BIA surprised everyone.

12. For each of the following persons or groups, rate the degree of support/opposition given to the formation of your BIA.

Rate each potential reason accordingly: 1 = Opposed, 2 = Reluctant, 3 =Supportive, 4 = Very supportive

- [A00B01] Retailers
- [A00B02] Professionnals
- [A00B03] Property owners
- [A00B04] Elected officials
- [A00B05] Government (not elected buroecrats)
- [A00B06] Residents
- [A00B07] Medical institutions
- [A00B08] Educational institutions
- [A00B09] Religious institutions

[A00C00] 13. Is there any other group(s) and/or person(s) that was vocal in supporting/opposing the formation of the BIA?

14. How did your BIA manage to mitigate encountered opposition?
(Answer if question is pertinent)

- [A00D01] With a public relations campaign
- [A00D02] With documented success stories
- [A00D03] Through small private meetings
- [A00D04] With a unifying project (e.g., a street festival, streetscape investment)
- [A00D05] By emphasizing the advantages of BIA services to members
- [A00D06] Other (specify)

[A00F00] 15. If other persons, please specify:

[A00E00] 16. Are some of the founding members still a part of your BIA?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

[A00G00] 17. We may want to contact them to discuss their motivation in establishing the BIA. Would you please give us their names and contact information?

[A00H00] 18. What is the total number of members in your BIA?
Answer: _____

[A00I00] 19. How many members of your BIA are retailers?
Answer: _____

[A00J00] 20. How many members of your BIA are service providers/professionals?
Answer: _____

[A00K00] 21. How many members of your BIA are property owners?
Answer: _____

[A00L00] 22. How many members serve on your BIA's board of directors?
Answer: _____

[A00M00] 23. How many of the BIA's directors are retailers?

Answer: _____

[A00N00] 24. How many of the BIA's directors are service providers/professionals?

Answer: _____

[A00O00] 25. How many of the BIA's directors are property owners?

Answer: _____

[A00P00] 26. What are the advantages of having both business and building owners as members of a BIA?

[A00Q00] 27. What are the limitations of having both business and building owners as members of a BIA?

[A00R00] 28. How many meetings per year does your BIA board schedule?

Answer: _____

[A00S00] 29. How would you categorize your members' attendance to BIA general assembly (Annual General Meeting or AGM)?

- 1. 0-10 %
- 2. 11-20%
- 3. 21-30%
- 4. 31-40%
- 5. 41% and more

[A00T00] 30. What number of staff (include both full-time and part-time) is employed by your BIA?

Answer: _____

[A00U00] 31. How many BIA staff are full-time employees?

Answer: _____

[A00V00] 32. How many BIA staff are part-time employees?

Answer: _____

[A00W00] 33. How many BIA staff are volunteers?

Answer: _____

Rate each of the following items according to the degree of priority with which your BIA treats them:

[A00X00] 34. Increasing Security

- 1. 1 = Not a priority at all
- 2. 2 = Not a current priority
- 3. 3 = One of our current priorities
- 4. 4 = One of our leading priorities

[A00Y00] 35. What steps has your BIA taken in order to fulfill this leading priority?
(Answer if question is pertinent)

[A00Z00] 36. Describe any results or outcomes that your BIA had in addressing issues of security?

[A01000] 37. Rate the degree of priority of Enhancing Maintenance to your BIA:

- 1. 1 = Not a priority at all
- 2. 2 = Not a current priority
- 3. 3 = One of our current priorities
- 4. 4 = One of our leading priorities

[A01100] 38. What steps has your BIA taken in order to fulfill this leading priority?
(Answer if question is pertinent)

[A01200] 39. Describe any results or outcomes that your BIA had in addressing issues of Maintenance?

[A01300] 40. Rate the degree of priority of Coping with Competition to your BIA:

- 1. 1 = Not a priority at all
- 2. 2 = Not a current priority
- 3. 3 = One of our current priorities
- 4. 4 = One of our leading priorities

[A01400] 41. What steps has your BIA taken in order to fulfill this leading priority?
(Answer if question is pertinent)

[A01500] 42. Describe any results or outcomes that your BIA had in Coping with Competition?

[A01600] 43. Rate the degree of priority of Attracting New Customers to your BIA:

- 1. 1 = Not a priority at all
- 2. 2 = Not a current priority
- 3. 3 = One of our current priorities
- 4. 4 = One of our leading priorities

[A01700] 44. What steps has your BIA taken in order to fulfill this leading priority?
(Answer if question is pertinent)

[A01800] 45. Describe any results or outcomes that your BIA had in Attracting New Customers?

[A01900] 46. Rate the degree of priority of Ameliorating Accessibility to your BIA:

- 1. 1 = Not a priority at all
- 2. 2 = Not a current priority
- 3. 3 = One of our current priorities
- 4. 4 = One of our leading priorities

[A01A00] 47. What steps has your BIA taken in order to fulfill this leading priority?
(Answer if question is pertinent)

[A01B00] 48. Describe any results or outcomes that your BIA had in Ameliorating Accessibility?

[A01C00] 49. Rate the degree of priority of Improving Urban Landscape (or BIA Landscape) to your BIA:

- 1. 1 = Not a priority at all
- 2. 2 = Not a current priority
- 3. 3 = One of our current priorities
- 4. 4 = One of our leading priorities

[A01D00] 50. What steps has your BIA taken in order to fulfill this leading priority?
(Answer if question is pertinent)

[A01E00] 51. Describe any results or outcomes that your BIA had in Improving Urban Landscape?

[A01F00] 52. Rate the degree of priority of Recruiting New Businesses to your BIA:

- 1. 1 = Not a priority at all
- 2. 2 = Not a current priority
- 3. 3 = One of our current priorities
- 4. 4 = One of our leading priorities

[A01G00] 53. What steps has your BIA taken in order to fulfill this leading priority?
(Answer if question is pertinent)

[A01H00] 54. Describe any results or outcomes that your BIA had in Recruiting New Businesses?

[A01I00] 55. Rate the degree of priority of Branding and Marketing to your BIA:

- 1. 1 = Not a priority at all
- 2. 2 = Not a current priority
- 3. 3 = One of our current priorities
- 4. 4 = One of our leading priorities

[A01J00] 56. What steps has your BIA taken in order to fulfill this leading priority?
(Answer if question is pertinent)

[A01K00] 57. Describe any results or outcomes that your BIA had in Branding and Marketing?

[A01L00] 58. Rate the degree of priority of holding and supporting Cultural and Historical community events and programs to your BIA:

- 1. 1 = Not a priority at all
- 2. 2 = Not a current priority
- 3. 3 = One of our current priorities
- 4. 4 = One of our leading priorities

[A01M00] 59. What steps has your BIA taken in order to fulfill this leading priority?
(Answer if question is pertinent)

[A01N00] 60. Describe any results or outcomes that your BIA had in holding and supporting Cultural and Historical community events and programs?

[A01O00] 61. Rate the degree of priority of Strengthening Negotiating and Advocacy Powers with the city government/municipality to your BIA:

- 1. 1 = Not a priority at all
- 2. 2 = Not a current priority
- 3. 3 = One of our current priorities
- 4. 4 = One of our leading priorities

[A01P00] 62. What steps has your BIA taken in order to fulfill this leading priority?
(Answer if question is pertinent)

[A01Q00] 63. Describe any results or outcomes that your BIA had in Strengthening Negotiating and Advocacy Powers with the city government/municipality?

[A01R00] 64. Does your BIA have any other current or leading priorities? Specify the topic, the steps taken and the results:

65. Select the indicators that your BIA uses to document the impacts of its activities to its members? (Select all that apply)

- [A01S01] Members' feedback
- [A01S02] Media coverage and press reviews
- [A01S03] Retail sales' reports
- [A01S04] Pedestrian counts
- [A01S05] Customer's surveys
- [A01S06] Vacancy rates
- [A01S07] Businesses' turnover rates
- [A01S08] Commercial mix evolution
- [A01S09] Residents' turnover rates
- [A01S0A] Property values
- [A01S0B] Crime rates
- [A01S0C] Other indicators?

[A01T00] 66. If other indicators, please specify:

67. How does your BIA plan its activities?

- [A01U01] Based on priorities identified in a general meeting or assembly
- [A01U02] Based on decisions made by the board of directors
- [A01U03] Based on previous years' achievements
- [A01U04] Based on a 3-5 year strategic planning
- [A01U05] No specific plan for the moment
- [A01U06] Other: Specify

[A01V00] 68. If other, please specify:

[A01W00] 69. Is your BIA structured in committees and sub-committees (e.g., such as safety committee, marketing committee etc.)?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

70. If yes, which committees? (select all that apply)

- [A01X01] Strategic planning
- [A01X02] Streetscape
- [A01X03] Marketing and promotion
- [A01X04] Security and maintenance
- [A01X05] Public affairs and advocacy
- [A01X06] Members services
- [A01X07] Others: Specify

[A01Y00] 71. If other, please specify:

72. Rate the importance of the following communication tools when it comes to keep your members informed about the issues relevant to their BIA?

Rate each potential source accordingly: 1 = Not important at all, 2 = Not really important, 3 = Important, 4 = Very important.

- [A01Z05] Website
- [A01Z06] Newsletter
- [A01Z07] Committee meeting
- [A01Z08] Annual assembly
- [A01Z09] Visit to members

[A02000] 73. Do you use any other communication tools? Please specify:

74. What is the total annual income (in CDN dollars) of your BIA?

\$ _____

For each of the following sources of funding, estimate the share (as a percentage) of your annual budget that the source accounts for:

[A02F00] 75. Members' mandatory subscriptions
Share of budget: _____ %

[A02B00] 76. Municipality's contribution/grants/funding
Share of budget: _____ %

[A02C00] 77. Subsidies or grants from federal/provincial governments
Share of budget: _____ %

[A02D00] 78. Sponsorship
Share of budget: _____ %

[A02E00] 79. Commercial activities (sales, fundraisers, etc.)
Share of budget: _____ %

[A02200] 80. Do you have any other source of funding? (specify the source and the share of the annual budget)

81. What are your BIA's total annual expenditures (in CDN dollars)?

\$ _____

Estimate your BIA projects' expenditures in the following categories (as a percentage) of your annual budget that the source accounts for:

[A02G00] 82. Office operations (not including human resources)
Share of expenditures: _____ %

[A02H00] 83. Human resources
Share of expenditures: _____ %

[A02I00] 84. Promotion, communication and marketing
Share of expenditures: _____ %

[A02J00] 85. Security and maintenance
Share of expenditures: _____ %

[A02K00] 86. Art and cultural activities

Share of expenditures: _____ %

[A02L00] 87. Transportation and accessibility

Share of expenditures: _____ %

[A02M00] 88. Capital improvements

Share of expenditures: _____ %

[A02N00] 89. Community services

Share of expenditures: _____ %

[A02400] 90. Do you have other expenditures? (specify the source and the share of the annual expenditures)

[A02500] 91. Considering the past five years, would you say the budget of your BIA has:

- 1. Increased
- 2. Decreased
- 3. Remained stable

[A02600] 92. Why? (please explain)

[A02700] 93. What do you feel are your BIA's main challenges for the future?

94. Feel free to provide any additional information or comments:

ENDNOTES

¹ Bradley Segal, ABC's for Creating BIDs (Washington, D.C.: International Downtown Association, September 2002).

² Jerry Mitchell, Business Improvement Districts and the Shape of American Cities (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 55-56.

³ See BC Local Government Act, Part 23 - Improvement Districts.

⁴ Jerry Mitchell, Business Improvement Districts and the Shape of American Cities (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 39.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Lawrence Houstoun, Jr., Business Improvement Districts, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute 2003).

⁹ BIABC Handbook "section A1" available online at www.bia.bc.ca

¹⁰ Lorlene Hoyt, Business Improvement District: An Internationally Diffused Approach to Revitalization (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002), 12.

¹¹ Lorlene Hoyt, Importing Ideas: The Transnational Transfer of Urban Revitalization Policy (International Journal of Public Administration, 29: 221–243, 2006).

¹² Lawrence Houstoun Jr., BIDs: Business Improvement Districts, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: The Land Institute in cooperation with the International Downtown Association, 2003), 13.

¹³ Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, Elvin Wyly, Gentrification, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 196-197.

¹⁴ See the following:

Peter Byrne, Two Cheers for Gentrification, (Howard Law Journal 2003, 46, 3: 405-432).

Rowland Atkinson and G. Bridge eds, Gentrification in the Global Context: The New Urban Colonialism, (London: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁵ This includes all of the literature on the BIAs publishes the Urban Land Institute and the International Downtown Association such as: Richard Peiser ed., Regenerating Older Suburbs, (Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute 2007).

¹⁶ For Example: Jerry Mitchell, Business Improvement Districts and the Shape of American Cities (State University of New York Press, 2008).

¹⁷ Robert Stokes, Business Improvement Districts and Small Business Advocacy: The Case of San Diego's Citywide BID Program (Economic Development Quarterly 2007; 21; 278), 280.

¹⁸ See the following:

S. Zukin, The Cultures of Cities, (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1995).
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¹⁹ See the following:

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J. Pack, BIDs, DIDs, SIDs, SADs: Private Government in Urban America, (Brookings Review, 1992, 10, 18-21).
M. Sorkin, ed, Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space, (New York: Hill & Wang, 1992).

²⁰ G. Caruso and R. Weber, Getting the Max for the Tax: An Examination of BID Performance Measures, (International Journal of Public Administration, 29(1-3), 187-220).

²¹ See the following:

Caruso, G., & Weber, R., Getting the Max for the Tax: An Examination of BID Performance Measures, (International Journal of Public Administration, 29(1-3), 187-220).

Lorlene Hoyt, Do Business Improvement Districts Make a Difference? Crime In and Around Commercial Areas in Philadelphia, (Journal of Planning Education and Research, 23(2) 185-199.)

Robert Stokes, Place Management in Commercial Areas: Customer Service Representatives in Philadelphia's Central Business District, (Security Journal, 2002, 15(2), 7-19).

²² See the following:

Lorlene Hoyt, Collectivizing Private Funds for Safer Public Spaces: An Empirical Examination of the Business Improvement District Concept, (Environment and Planning B, 2004 31(3), 367-380).

Stokes Robert, Business Improvement Districts and Inner City Revitalization: The Case of Philadelphia's Frankford Special Services District, (International Journal of Public Administration, 2006, 29(1-3), 173-187).

²³ As explained by Robert Stokes, Business Improvement Districts and Small Business Advocacy: The Case of San Diego's Citywide BID Program, (Economic Development Quarterly 2007; 21; 278), 280.

²⁴ Franck Vindevogel, Private security and urban crime mitigation: A bid for BIDs, (Criminal Justice, Vol. 5, No. 3, 233-255, 2005).

²⁵ Lorlene Hoyt, Do Business Improvement District Organizations Make a Difference? Crime In and Around Commercial Areas in Philadelphia, (Journal of Planning Education and Research 25:185-199, 2005).

²⁶ Lorlene Hoyt, Business Improvement District: An Internationally Diffused Approach to Revitalization, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002).

²⁷ Robert Stokes, Business Improvement Districts and Small Business Advocacy: The Case of San Diego's Citywide BID Program (Economic Development Quarterly 2007; 21; 278), 280.

²⁸ There is one BIABC member that is located out of province, this member was not surveyed.

²⁹ Statistics Canada, Workplace and Employee Survey: Do innovative work practices reduce labour turnover? March 17, 2003, see <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/030317/dq030317b-eng.htm>

³⁰ Lorlene Hoyt, Business Improvement District: An Internationally Diffused Approach to Revitalization, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002), 24.

³¹ Ibid, 13.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid, 27.

³⁴ Michael H. Shuman, Going Local: Creating Self-Reliant Communities in a Global Age, (New York: The Free Press, 1998).

³⁵ Ibid, 30.

³⁶ Ibid, 29.

³⁷ In this table the one to four scales along the y-axis indicate the following: the score of 1 indicates that issue is not a priority at all, the score of 2 indicates that an issue is not a current priority, the score of 3 indicates that an issue is “one of the current priorities, and the score of 4 indicates that an issue is one of the leading priorities.

³⁸ Rowland Atkinson, and G. Bridge eds, Gentrification in the Global Context: The New Urban Colonialism (London: Routledge, 2005), 195.

³⁹ Ibid, 33.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 38.

⁴¹ Ibid, 44.

⁴² Edmund Fowler and David Siegel, ed., Urban Policy Issues: Canadian Perspectives. Second Edition. (Canada: Oxford University Press Canada, 2002).

⁴³ See Earl Babbie and Lucia Benaquisto, Fundamentals of Social Research, First Canadian Edition, (Canada: Thomson Canada Limited, 2002), 268.

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