

West Vancouver gets North Shore's first BIA

Ambleside, Dundarave merchants join together to direct improvements

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

December 16, 2015 12:00 AM



West Vancouver municipal hall. file photo Mike Wakefield, North Shore News

Business owners in Ambleside, Hollyburn and Dundarave are volunteering to pay a little more in taxes each year in exchange for complete control over what they do with that spendin' money.

District of West Vancouver council voted Monday night to set up the North Shore's first business Improvement area.

It means the commercial properties will pay an additional 95 cents per \$1,000 in assessed value that can be spent on things like marketing and promotions, beautification projects and special events all meant to turn fortunes around for businesses in the struggling area.

For a typical 1,500-square-foot retail space, that would be about \$750 per year.

All told, the BIA will collect enough to have a \$500,000 budget in its first year. It would be up to the BIA's board of directors, elected by the business owners, to decide exactly how that budget would get spent.

For the first year, the BIA's leaders have suggested that could take the form of street benches and banners, a rebranding and strategic marketing campaign to pull in customers from around the region and "down the hill."

West Vancouver council voted in the fall to hold a "petition against" the plan, meaning at least 50 per cent of 250 commercial property owners representing at least 50 per cent of the assessed value would have to formally register their opposition in a letter to the district in order for the petition to fail.

By the time the petition period ended on Dec. 9, only 44 of the property owners representing about 15 per cent of the total assessed value wrote to reject the idea.

Bad to have this "Negative Billing" process. - cjk

"The theme essentially was that the owners felt that they already paid high taxes in the district," West Vancouver clerk Sheila Scholes. "And of the properties that did respond, many of them felt the levy was not going to provide them any additional benefit."

But a unanimous council passed the bylaw with gusto, to the applause of the business owners who had been lobbying for the change for the last year.

"... Let's be honest, 50 years ago (the area) had a vibrancy it doesn't have today. Passing this is critical to getting the vibrant commercial centre for West Vancouver, which has always been Ambleside (and) Dundarave, to the level that it used to be," said Mayor Michael Smith. "There are so many issues down there that this Business Improvement Association can tackle – traffic, parking, sales, promotions, merchandising, getting together to put promotional activities on. This has to happen."

Coun. Bill Soprovich agreed, saying it was time for businesses in the area to provide a draw for residents beyond the daylight hours.

"It's been a long time coming. It's about time we get on with it and start this process going. I get sick and tired of walking Bellevue for 12 blocks before I see anybody at 9 p.m. There's hardly any cars on the road. How can we honestly sit by and not support the businesses in this community?" he asked.

Soprovich went on to say one of the most controversial developments approved during the last term of council also stands to make things better for local business.

"I hope once Grosvenor gets going, it's going to open the doors to a few other areas and maybe some of these landowners might see the light one day in approving their building," he said.

© 2016 North Shore News

[Sign up for the North Shore News FREE digital newsletter to receive top headlines from each issue in your Inbox. \(http://www.nsnews.com/newsletter/subscribe\)](http://www.nsnews.com/newsletter/subscribe)