

<http://www.insidetoronto.ca/News/Etobicoke/article/13410>

Etobicoke Guardian

September 28, 2006

New BIA created after five attempts - Garbage cleanup first priority

by Tamara Shephard

Garbage cleanup will be the first priority of a new Business Improvement Area in northwest Etobicoke.

Toronto Council ratified the establishment of the Albion Islington BIA earlier this week.

The BIA encompasses the commercial area along Albion Road from Lund Avenue to the west of John Grubb Court and Islington Avenue, north of Sandhill Drive and south of Wardlaw Crescent.

Five past attempts over 20 years by residents to strike a BIA in the area failed, said **Etobicoke North Councillor Suzan Hall**.

This time, business owners themselves were the ones clamouring for improvement, the Ward 1 councillor said.

"Some members of the business community asked me to help them get a BIA," Hall said. "It's a very diverse community of small businesses. Owners are focused on operating their businesses. We worked with them to help them understand the benefits (of a BIA)."

BIAs use member funds to promote and improve their areas with streetscape improvements, decorative lighting, planting, banners, community festivals and special events.

Once approved by Toronto Council, every business in the prescribed area becomes a member, and shares the costs, and benefits of membership.

Toronto boasts 55 BIAs, Business Improvement Areas with 22,000 Toronto business owners as members, reports TABIA (Toronto Association of BIAs).

Buy-in from business owners and landlords wasn't a problem, reports BIA steering committee chair Irshad Ghafoor.

"This time we were successful because we did our homework. We went to talk (about a BIA) to each and every business owner and landlord and most agreed something has to be done," said Ghafoor, who has owned and operated Chicken Cabana on Islington Avenue just north of Albion Road for 18 years.

The business community is known for its diversity, evolving in the past 10 years from mostly Italian-run businesses to African, Middle Eastern, Pakistani, Indian, Sri Lankan and Chinese businesses, Ghafoor said.

Ridding the area of overflowing garbage bins, and garbage strewn on the street, is a top priority.

"This area needs some lifting to make it look good. Businesses need to bring in more (customers) and we need to improve the area to do that," Ghafoor said.