

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS WORK PLAN

Entrant: Maureen Healey, ABC, CAE, LPM	Pillar & Category: Leadership & Governance
Organization: Bronte BIA	Time period: January – May 2021
Entry title: Bronte Forward!	
Project description: The retail district of Bronte Village in Oakville, Ontario, is undergoing major redevelopment. However, developers are implementing <i>their</i> ideas for the future of the district vs including the community's vision leading to anti-development sentiment. Bronte Forward! engaged residents, business owners/operators and visitors to create a clear vision that could set the tone for future planning, development, and community improvement projects in the area, and would inform the advocacy work of the Bronte BIA as a partner in such projects.	

1. BUSINESS NEED OR OPPORTUNITY

The Town of Oakville is located on the shores of Lake Ontario, between Toronto and Hamilton. It's a suburban community of 211,000 predicted to grow to 255,000 by 2031. Densification is mandated by the Province of Ontario and intended to occur within defined areas, including Bronte Village.

Bronte is Oakville's waterfront tourism destination with a residential community of 13,500 people and an evolving commercial district. It is a designated Business Improvement Area (BIA) that represents 175 businesses with a mix of locally owned and operated establishments and chain stores that provide daily amenities for residents, along with destination retailers and restaurants. The BIA's mandate is to support economic development of the area through marketing, beautification and advocacy. Its \$350K budget is funded through an involuntary levy or tax paid by property owners and businesses within its 12-block defined BIA geographic area. It has 2 full-time staff and is governed by a volunteer board of directors representing member businesses.

As per the Town's [Livable Oakville Plan](#), intensification has been and will continue to occur in Bronte as many older, one-story buildings are primed to be replaced. Major redevelopments over the past 10 years have divided the community and met with strong, organized resistance due to their size and scale and incompatibility with community values and needs. This anti-development sentiment has been partly due to developers implementing their vision for the district vs reflecting the local community's collective vision, which didn't exist.

The BIA could let the change 'wash over it,' as more developments came on stream, or it could lead a community engagement process to help paint a holistic picture of who we are, what we care about, and what we aspire to be. It stepped up.

The collective vision would set the tone for future planning, development, and community improvement projects in the area, and would inform the advocacy work of the Bronte BIA as a partner in such projects through a new strategic plan.

2. AUDIENCE(S)

Community members included an unweighted but representative mix of business owners/operators, local residents, and other stakeholders, including equity seeking groups.

Business owners/operators:

- 175 property owners and tenants across 4 major retail categories, including retail (51%), service (21%), health care (21%) and other (7%)
- 70% are locally owned and/or operated small businesses with less than 10 employees; remainder are chain stores and/or larger local employers with 11-350 staff
- 65% are legacy businesses having been in Bronte 5 years or more; 35% are new businesses
- 50% of members are engaged with the BIA in some way, i.e., read the enewsletter, sponsor events, sit on the Board, participate in joint marketing efforts

Residents:

- Single-family homeowners (51%); apartment dwellers (25%); other housing options (24%)
- Transportation access to district by vehicle (78%), transit (15%), walking (6%), cycling (1%)
- Caucasian (79%); visible minority (21%)
- Median age: 48 with 18% seniors
- Median household income: \$113,000

50+ Oakville- and/or Halton Region-based community service organizations, including:

- Harbour-affiliated groups
- Local sports clubs and cultural associations
- Seniors-based organizations
- Schools and student-based organizations
- Equity seeking groups (non-white members, limited access to the area, language or other barriers to engagement in the district)

3. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Goal:

Bronte's values-driven community created vision story inspires an exciting future.

Engagement Objectives:

1. At least 400 community members complete the 37-question online survey between January – May 2021.
2. A minimum of 75 people share input through attendance at virtual stakeholder workshops.
3. At least 40 focus group attendees are representative of business owners & employees, seniors, students and equity seeking groups.
4. At least 20 of 50 potential community groups are represented in either focus groups, survey completion or one-on-one interviews.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

Timing = opportunity.

In January 2020, the Bronte BIA hired a new Executive Director after a 14-year tenure of her predecessor. In March 2020, COVID hit and priorities for the association were re-evaluated. And, June 2020 marked the one-year countdown for the opening of a new luxury rental building housing 1,000 new residents after almost a 10-year development, legal appeal and construction period.

With no current strategic or operating plans in place, the Board and staff had to determine where to start, the sequence and priority of its strategic focus for the next year, 3 years and beyond, while weaving in the unknowns of pandemic impacts to its small business members.

It started at the beginning by asking what does the community want? What is the best version of Bronte? What does it want Bronte to look, feel, smell and taste like in 20 years?

The new Executive Director had managed a similar engagement process at the Downtown Vancouver BIA in 2015. The biggest learning from that experience was that a BIA is well-positioned to lead such a process – it's not the municipality so can be nimble and unencumbered by bureaucracy, and it positions the BIA as big-picture, community minded, holistic leadership organization. And, to be successful, it needs an expert partner to do a lot of the heavy lifting.

With Board support and a \$30,000 investment, the BIA, in partnership with non-profit [8 80 Cities](#), conducted a community wide engagement process called Bronte Forward! from January - May 2021.

The multi-faceted approach sought to spark conversation and create open communication lines, ensuring all residents, business owners, employees and visitors alike felt their hopes for Bronte's future were represented. In particular, it sought to connect with people and groups who may be left out of traditional consultation processes through intentional outreach and inclusion.

Budget and staff resources enabled communication efforts that included using a small Advisory Group made up of connected residents, business owners and local stakeholders to open doors and drive engagement (*See Work Sample Amplification pkg*), posters in local businesses, an online social media campaign on the BIA and other partners' channels with a contest, bus shelter ads, an email campaign, personal outreach by the Board of Directors to targeted groups like seniors and youth, and a postcard drop within a 3km radius of the district. (*See Work Sample; pg. 22-23 in Final Report*) All efforts were designed to drive participation in the online survey – the main information gathering tool – and/or participation in a focus group or stakeholder workshop.

Timing & Tactics

Initial planning in 2020 sought to engage the public at large-scale community events, hosting workshops in public spaces, and having pop-up activities to encourage participation and feedback from people of all ages and abilities in spaces that are most accessible to them. This 'go-to them approach' was impacted due to COVID social distancing restrictions, and the strategy had to pivot.

The revised community engagement approach was tailored to a virtual audience. In conversation with a local seniors’ association, we engaged in a virtual talking circle where a question was posed to the room, and everyone could take a turn adding their perspective. While with a Grade 7 class from a local elementary school, the engagement focused on imagery, movement, games and open-ended discussion. This was a new way to ‘go to them.’

Challenges arose with a change in the project lead at 8 80 Cities that delayed the project a few weeks and required more hands-on input from BIA staff. Ongoing impacts of COVID restrictions challenged BIA staff’s time and focus as priorities were constantly shifting. The project came in on budget at \$30,000, which included all consulting fees, printing hard costs and final reports.

Project Elements

- Phase 1: Scoping and Planning
- Phase 2: Community Engagement
- Launch campaign & online survey
- Focus groups, one-on-one interviews, outdoor open house
- Online survey closes
- Virtual stakeholder workshop
- Phase 3: Development of Vision Document
- Complete draft of vision document
- Publish and launch final vision

Time Frame

- January - Mid March
- March 16 - Mid May
- March 16
- March 16 – May 7
- May 7, 2021
- Early/mid-May
- Mid May – Late June
- Early June
- Late June 2021

5. RESULTS

Objectives	Outcome
1. At least 400 community members complete the 37-question online survey between January – May 2021.	799 respondents completed the survey <i>(Read full report: https://bronte-village.ca/bronte-forward/)</i>
2. A minimum of 75 people share input through attendance at virtual stakeholder workshops.	100 people attended 2 virtual workshops
3. At least 40 focus group attendees are representative of business owners & employees, seniors, students and equity seeking groups.	50 participants attended five virtual focus group with representation from most audiences. Two equity seeking groups were re-targeted through one-on-one interviews.
4. At least 20 of 50 potential community groups are represented in either focus groups, survey completion or one-on-one interviews.	Approximately 15-20 community or cultural groups were represented across engagement platforms with about 10 engaged on multiple platforms.

Hindsight is 20/20

We hit a sweet spot of willingness by community members to engage virtually in the project and a COVID lockdown period of restrictions that garnered more survey responses than planned. However, this approach restricted our outreach to equity seeking groups due to limited personal connections with the representatives and an inability to meet in person to build relationships.

WORK SAMPLES:

Postcards to invite people to fill out survey:



Media release:



Bronte Village BIA launches new community-wide campaign to move Bronte Forward!

Tuesday March 18, 2021

For Immediate Release

OAKVILLE, ON - Today the Bronte Village BIA launches an exciting community-wide campaign to capture what people value most about and aspire for Bronte Village. Over the next two months, the *Bronte Forward!* campaign will be an opportunity for residents, business owners, employees, and visitors of all ages and backgrounds to shape the future of Bronte. The campaign is geared at understanding what people care about most when it comes to creating a thriving waterfront community that is both a cherished destination and a place people call home.

Bronte Village is currently home to over 10,000 residents, 200 businesses, and a beloved recreational harbour. Given all the recent and emerging changes in our community, we're seeking input into creating a collective vision. Now is an opportune time to ask, *what makes Bronte Bronte?* How do we build on the uniqueness of the area towards making Bronte even better and more welcoming for everyone?

All the stories and feedback we collect from *Bronte Forward!* will be captured in a vision document that will inform the advocacy work of the Bronte BIA. The vision will highlight a set of *core community values that will guide future planning, development, and community improvement projects in the area.* *Bronte Forward!* is a chance for our community to step forward and paint a holistic picture of who we are, what we care about, and what we aspire to be.

What would Bronte look and feel like at its very best? What would make you love it here even more? Share your distinct ideas and aspirations and shape your community's future.

[Share and fill out our survey](#) to let us know your ideas for bringing #BronteForward and enter for a chance to win a \$100 gift certificate to a local Bronte business. The *Bronte Forward!* team will randomly select and announce the three winners in May 2021. [Take me to the survey!](#)

[Visit the Bronte Forward! website](#) for more information and updates on the project.

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#) to stay up to date on *Bronte Forward!* news.

Join the conversation online by sharing your thoughts and ideas on social media about what you love about Bronte and how you'd like to make it even better. By posting an image and using the hashtag #BronteForward entrants will automatically be entered for a chance to win a \$100 gift certificate to a local Bronte business. The *Bronte Forward!* team will select and announce the two winners in May 2021.

Bronte Forward! is led by the Bronte Village BIA. For all project-related questions and/or media inquiries, please contact:

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 T: 905-825-3258

Infographics sample of visioning results:



One-pager visioning outcome:

Bronte is a vibrant community where everyone is welcomed and everything you need is here.

BRONTE IS WALKABLE & CONNECTED
Bronte is a community that emphasizes its connection to the water by creating safe, comfortable parks, streets, and public spaces that are easily walkable and inviting for people to linger.

- Bronte prioritizes walkable streets that connect community to the business district and to the water.
- Bronte invests in wayfinding at key locations that will invite pedestrians to institutions and destinations.
- Bronte is accessible and multi-modal by supporting the cycling network, investing in a safe pedestrian realm while prioritizing equity.
- Bronte features cohesive parking management that ensures options are robust and responsive to local needs.

BRONTE CELEBRATES LOCAL VIBRANCY
Bronte's vibrant business district is a dependable place where everyday needs can be met, and community celebrations embrace local assets.

- Bronte embraces its unique waterfront assets through both passive and interactive design elements and programming.
- Bronte is dependable for everyday needs, a place where business hours are reliable and there is something for everyone.
- Bronte celebrates local heritage by acknowledging Indigenous history and stonehooking roots.
- Bronte champions local business through partnerships, open lines of communication and community support.
- Bronte is an attractive place for new businesses as support from the community and BIA make growth possible.
- Bronte amplifies local talent and community stewardship to host locally-relevant programming and events all-year round.

BRONTE EMBRACES INCLUSIVITY & ANTICIPATES CHANGE
Bronte is an inclusive community where new residents are welcomed; diverse business owners are embraced, and development is harnessed for the betterment of the future.

- Bronte embraces diversity and champions inclusivity through culturally relevant affordable and representational businesses as well as programming and events.
- Bronte anticipates community evolution and ensures that growth keeps pace with the increased demand on parks, public spaces and the business district.
- Bronte prioritizes local benefit through development by advocating for new and improved investments to the public realm and business district.

September 2021 www.bronte-village.ca 905-825-3258