

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Business Improvement Area concept was first introduced in 1970 in response to the decline of the traditional downtown. It is considered the most successful downtown revitalization scheme introduced by the Province of Ontario. Unlike previous revitalization programs which were based solely on physical improvements, the BIA concept focusses on two areas to improve a downtown. This is the reason for the program's long term success. The two areas are as follows:

Physical Improvements: a downtown striving for excellence will maximize its returns by focussing on physical improvements in the early stages of the organization. The focus will be on initiatives that are easily recognized by the public such as streetscaping, greenery, improved lighting and facade rehabilitation. Physical improvements tend to be simple, less costly and are a more short term solution for a downtown, but should be an important initiative in the long run.

Promotional/Marketing: once there is something to promote the emphasis should switch to promotion and communications which allows a downtown its long term success. All promotions and marketing should be geared to get people to sample the downtown. The implementation of long term programs and practices such as marketing, business recruitment, innovative thinking, effective management and a commitment to bring festivals and activities to the downtown will heighten the profile of the area.

The purpose of this report is to compare the management practices of an Ontario Business Improvement Area to a set of guidelines established by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing which indicate the practices that should be followed for excellent management. Based on the findings, conclusions were drawn that describe the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. The basis for discussion is a case study of the Downtown Kingston! Business Improvement Area. The information sources that formed the study framework include people both directly and indirectly involved with the BIA, as well as reports, market studies, policy documents, and government legislation.

The Downtown Kingston! BIA was established in October 1973 because many business owners felt that the Downtown was lacking the appropriate mix of businesses that should exist in a prosperous downtown. Today the Downtown offers an eclectic mix of specialty shops, and services that are used on a regular basis; all in a charming environment. The Downtown Kingston! Business Improvement Area has been an important part of the success of the core because of the organization's commitment to the long term prosperity of the area.