

ABSTRACT

The North American downtown, or "Main Street", faced a major challenge in the 1950's and 1960's, when retail spending patterns shifted from the city centre to peripheral shopping centres. The decline of traditional commercial strips, in town and cities of all sizes, was a concern to both public and private interests. Downtowns and Main Streets are mixed-use environments that play an important economic and social role in their communities.

The 1970's and 1980's saw governments and other organizations undertake a variety of initiatives, designed to ameliorate the decline of downtown. One type of downtown revitalization tool is the Business Improvement Area (BIA), where the merchants in a designated community pay an annual levy toward a budget that is used for marketing and physical improvements to the area. The BIA concept in many ways replicates the centralized management of a shopping mall, and can help individual, often competing, merchants in a traditional shopping area work together to bring customers to their business community.

Activity relating to downtown revitalization, that helped many downtowns and Main Streets become successful and competitive, has slowed considerably. However, challenges to traditional retail strips remain, and merchants in these areas still have to work together to their business communities healthy. The goal of this report was to uncover the level and type of support that exists in the Glebe shopping district in Ottawa, Ontario, for a BIA, and the issues important to the merchants in this traditional shopping district. There are eight BIAs currently operating in the City of Ottawa. This report examined four Ottawa BIAs, to uncover the precedents set by these areas, regarding their BIA designation. The lessons learned by examining four Ottawa BIAs formed the basis for a merchant survey in the Glebe. The results of the survey indicated a BIA is the most appropriate type of business organization for the Glebe. A possible BIA scenario is offered in this regard.