

Alberta Avenue Business Association – 2015 Executive Directors Report



Prepared March 2nd, 2016

To Executive Committee of City Council
City of Edmonton

2015 ANNUAL REPORT Alberta Avenue Business Association

Board 2015

Executive: Chair: Jim Nguyen (Downtown Auto & Tire), Co-Chair: Zaher Samnani (Nolan Drugs) Treasurer: Linda Kon (ATB Financial), Secretary: Denise Leclair (Bedouin Beats).

2015 Board of Directors:

Charity Durowaa (Kasoa Tropical Food Market), Jesus Gonzalez Jr. (Paraiso Tropical), Linda Kon (ATB), Denise Leclair (Bedouin Beats), Jim Nguyen (Downtown Auto & Tire), Zaher Samnani (Nolan Drugs, Ann-Pugh Jones (The Carrot Coffee House), Jonathan Rivero (Qi Creative), Sherry Hardin (Scotiabank).

Resigned from the board during the year: Sherry Hardin (Transferred with her employer), Linda Kon (Transferred with her employer), Ann-Pugh Jones (took on 'Contract Work' with our business association)

Office Staff:

- Executive Director: Joachim Holtz, P.Mgr
- Part-Time Assistant: Doug Thompson (resigned in April) position vacancy not filled.

Overview

2015 was another busy year for our business association as we worked on a number of activities as outlined in detail within this 8 page report. As well, decisions were made on new projects and initiatives planned for 2016.

We concentrated on the importance of 'Beautification and Cleanliness' for Alberta Avenue with colorful hanging flower baskets and flower planters. In addition, we supported the Diakonos Society via EMS through Capital City Clean Up's 'Business Supporting Community Program' picking up litter over a sixteen week period. As well, we remained vigilant in monitoring Graffiti in our area.

To encourage business owners to become more engaged and to meet other business owners within our BRZ, we held a 'Business Mixer' in June, a 'PopUp Market' in July, and three 'Information Seminars' for our business owners covering Small Business Banking, Business Safety and Security and Social Media in Business. We also communicated with our membership via newsletters as well as any special notices, when needed. In addition the Executive Director visited businesses 'on a best effort' basis.

In 2015 we kept a list of commercial spots available for rent or sale and provided that information to the various calls we received by prospective individuals wanting to open a business or purchase commercial property on Alberta Avenue.

We started a new 'Communications Program' to enhance our engagement with the businesses.

Looking ahead for 2016, the board executive will be attending a Board Leadership and Governance Seminar in March held at McEwan University. A new Strategic Plan will be developed for our association including full involvement by our board of directors and with assistance from the Economic and Environmental Sustainability Branch of Sustainable Development.

A first time 'Meet and Greet' meeting will be held in mid-March or April between our Board of Directors and that of the Arts on the Avenue Board.

In addition, and in view of the weak economy we are experiencing, a 'Hospitality Project' is being prepared to promote up to 40 different 'Food and Beverage' establishments on Alberta Avenue.

Our Focus

Communicate a continued awareness of Alberta Avenue Business Association and Alberta Avenue

Promote our business revitalization zone as a business and shopping area.

Our Vision

In 2020, Alberta Avenue will be recognized as a place where business, safety, family, affordability, festivals and events are essential ingredients in elevating the community.

Our Mission

To collaborate with its business members and other community groups and develop programs and initiatives that enhance the profile of the area and invite residents and visitors to experience a diverse range of offerings

DETAILS

Safety and Security:

- ❖ In 2015 our business association, continued to openly communicate with EPS and the NET team throughout the year.
- ❖ Were informed when Alberta Ave came under the new NW Division. Our working relationship with the new member team has been very good.
- ❖ Were provided with a Sergeant and Constable to lead our May 'Safety & Security' seminar for our businesses.
- ❖ During 2015 our association took ownership of the "We Believe in 118" initiative, 'Working together towards a safer community' and we are receiving EPS's continued support.
- ❖ Communicated and dealt with concerns about safety and security brought to our attention by business members.
- ❖ Communicated with Capital City Clean Up, including Graffiti issues.
- ❖ Communicated with City By-Law

Area Development:

- There continues to be an increasing real estate interest by developers and private individuals in Alberta Avenue.

- The empty lot west of the old shopper's drug mart building was again sold and purchased by another party. In 2014, a mixed use commercial/retail /residential was ready to proceed but the deal collapsed. The current owner of the land is considering a likewise development.
- The empty lot next to Nina Haggerty is once again sitting empty awaiting development.
- The former shopper's drug mart building space was released in 2015 and reopening as Alberta Avenue Medical Clinic and Pharmacy.
- The former 'Eastwood Hair' building on 95th St was redone and completed last year under the Façade program and development incentive fund. Norwood Grocery is the current tenant.
- Renovations on the second part of the Wee Book Inn building on the east end of our BRZ was completed in 2015 and leased out to 'Go Café'.
- The former Parkdale Liquor store space and former EasyHome space next to it has been leased through CBRE. A medium sized retailer is to go in there.
- In 2015 the Bargain Store closed in the Park Plaza Shopping Center across from NAIT and the space was taken over by Dollarama.
- A mixed use development is going in just off 118th @ 83rd with construction to start Spring 2016.
- The old Alberta Cycle building lot continues to stay vacant while ArtsHub continues to raise funds for the planned new build project. We have asked for an update
- The former Avenue Theatre building continues to sit empty and we have emailed the owner/s for an update.
- There is one other property owner considering a mixed use new build.
- The brownfield lot at the corner of 118th and 97th Street continues to sit with Esso having no plans to place it up for sale. Several approaches /conversations have been made with them over the last seven years to no avail.
- The situation with the former Dacia restaurant property next to the Alberta Ave Medical Clinic Building remains unchanged.
- It is our understanding that a report will be going forward to the City this year with respect to enforcement against nuisance properties.
- Vacant, Derelict and Unsightly commercial properties are not only a concern on Alberta Avenue but elsewhere in the City as well. We as a business association have no legal power against the owners of these private properties and can only continue in our ongoing efforts to strongly suggest to them to do something about the condition of their properties. And to also remind them of the adverse effect their unsightly buildings are having on the revitalization efforts of our BRZ and the community at large
- We are awaiting the outcome of Northlands' Vision 2020 proposal, and how it might affect Alberta Avenue.

Projects and Initiatives:

In 2015

1. Seminars

In order to bring added value to our businesses' membership, it was decided to hold several seminars on topics that we felt would be of direct benefit to our business owners:

- ❖ In February, we held a 'Small Business Banking seminar'. The Exec. Director lined up a panel of high profile speakers from the banking industry in addition to representatives from the Business Link and a local Chartered Accountant.
- ❖ In May, we held a 'Business Safety & Security' seminar. This was led by Sargent Curtis Hoople and Cst. Jeff Tompsen from EPS NW Division who did an excellent job.
- ❖ In November we held a 'Social Media in Business' seminar. We thought this one important in view of the continuing technological advances.
- ❖ In July we held a 'PopUp Market' in the East end of our BRZ. Close to thirty business participated who put out tables in front of their establishments, displaying their wares. It also gave them the opportunity to invite people inside their stores to show all of what they had to offer. The event also included a number of performers including a mariachi band.
- ❖ In June we held our 'Business Mixer' at the Nina Haggerty Art Gallery. In view of the uncertain economic times we were already seeing at that time, we decided to invite John Rose, Chief Economist from the City to speak to us. His presentation was very well received.

2. Beautification and Cleanliness:

- In 2015, through Zocolo's and with the grateful assistance of a Great Neighborhoods Matching Grant we hung 46 flower baskets and placed 40 flower planters along Alberta Avenue to help beautify our BRZ. In addition, the City placed 10 large rectangular flower planters in our business zone with the flowers displaying the FIFA colors. There was a very positive response from the public.
- We once again participated with Capital City Clean Up and had an EMS supported non-profit group pick up litter once a week over a sixteen week period. We compensated them for their hard work, monies which they used in turn to fund some of their own programs.
- We continued to aggressively stay on top of Graffiti Tags on our commercial buildings. In the spring of 2015 we were subjected to the largest 'tag hit' ever consisting of a total of 35 buildings. We were able to clean this up by working in concert with City By-law, Capital City Clean-Up and EPS who in the end charged the perpetrator.
- We also encouraged all of our businesses to keep the front of their stores, windows and sidewalks, in clean condition.

3. 'Flavors of the Avenue' brochure/ map

We continued to make this brochure available for hand out, outlining up to forty different multicultural restaurants, bakeries, other eateries and pubs and their location on Alberta Avenue.

4. Advertising

We continued to advertise in the local community Rat Creek Press Newspaper.

We advertised in the locally based Diversity Magazine to reflect the many small multicultural businesses we have on Alberta Avenue. One article featured our Latino businesses on Alberta Avenue.

5. Marketing

A New marketing committee was established

6. Donations

Although we only have a small amount of money set aside for donations we did so for the following entities in 2015:

- ❖ Arts on the Avenue: We continue to support the Arts which plays an active part within our BRZ. Two key festivals, Kaleido Family Arts Festival and Byzantine Deep Freeze Festival attract thousands of people to the Ave each year from which many of our businesses benefit.
- ❖ Crystal Kids: This organization does a lot of good for community. In concert with Scotiabank we donated in 2015. The Exec. Director for Crystal Kids on the Ave also sat on our marketing Committee.
- ❖ Sudanese Community: Alberta Avenue has many multicultural businesses and organizations on it. Last year we donated a small amount towards one of their one day festivals held on the Avenue.

7. Other

In the interests of strengthening our communications with our diverse base of businesses on the Avenue, we had a couple of items translated into Somali for the benefit of our Somali business Owners.

8. Initiatives

- ❖ During 2015 on the recommendation of the Executive Director to the Board work commenced on a new 'Communications Program'. It was felt that there needed to be an increased enhancement in connecting with our businesses.

This entails:

- Keeping our List of Businesses up to date at all times and to keep the City informed of Businesses closing and new ones coming on stream.
- Switch from MS Outlook to Mail Chimp for send out of important communications
- Creation of a new Newsletter layout
- Hire a new Website Hosting company to include a refresh of our site and social media Enhancement features, to include a new 'Translate' button.
- Develop a new Communications Plan.
- 'Discussion Paper' outlining the template and assumptions for this proposed plan provided to the Board December 2015 by the Exec. Director
- Hiring a person on an 'as needed' hourly contact basis to assist the ED with this.

9. Looking Ahead...

For 2016

- Hospitality Project: In light of the economic downturn and the impact this is having on businesses a promotion will be held of our many Food & Beverage establishments on Alberta Avenue for the Spring/Summer
- A new 'Flavors of the Avenue' Brochure in conjunction with this project
- The Board Executive, accompanied by the ED, will be attending a 'Board Leadership-Governance workshop on March 5th being put on by McEwan University.

- A new Strategic Plan will be worked on, including but not limited to, the full involvement of the Board and implemented in 2016.
- A first time 'Meet and Greet' meeting will be held in March between our Board of Directors and that of the Arts on the Avenue Board.
- Continuation of the 'Communications Program' initiative

Façade Storefront Improvement Program:

- ❖ Alberta Avenue BRZ has been the most active and results oriented with this program since its inception in 2005, with thirty completed projects and one million one hundred thousand dollars in reimbursement cheques issued back to participating commercial property owners on the Avenue
- ❖ Although we did not see much in applications during 2015 we will continue to in our drive for more sign ups under this program.
- ❖ Last year saw the completion of ABC Weddings & Rentals façade, the Norwood Grocery building, Building façade, The new Nolan Drugs building, the Norwood Center Building,
- ❖ For 2016, we are looking forward to the completions of the following projects:
 - The former Piggy Bank Liquidation space next to Kasoa Food Market,
 - The Qi Creative Building
- ❖ We have also approached the owner of the building housing Maria's Restaurant, Dr. Klesko (Chiropractor) and Northland Daycare.
- ❖ We have also been in discussions with Bissel as to their store on Alberta Avenue

Operations / Management:

Executive Director:

- ❖ Prepared and presented all board members with a 'Board Orientation' binder.
- ❖ Arranged for Board Governance Session
- ❖ Completed all tasks, reports and documentation as required under the 2015 Timetable for the administration of BRZ's by the City's Sustainable & Economic Development Department.
- ❖ Delivered our annual report to City Council Executive Committee. We were the first up to deliver our report, seven years running.
- ❖ Completed a comprehensive Budget Plan for 2015
- ❖ Arranged for the 2015 Year End Audit with our Auditor. We received a fully satisfactory audit.
- ❖ Conducted and held monthly Board meetings and AGM in a timely manner, within the time schedules, as required by the City of Edmonton...
- ❖ Continued to work within budget on a best effort basis. Slightly over budget for 2015, first time in 7 yrs.

- ❖ Monitored Revenues and Expenses on an ongoing basis and submitted quarterly Budget vs. Actual reports to Sustainable Development Dept. having received no complaints since reports were submitted in 2008.
- ❖ Maintained a good working relationship with Council. Caterina's office, Judy Allan, Avenue Initiative Co-ordinator (City) and Stuart Kehrig, Sr. Planner (Sustainable Dev. Dept.) who oversees all BRZ's
- ❖ Collaborated with Darryl Safranski (Director of Communications) at Northlands on our Popup Market
- ❖ Sent out newsletters to the membership and other special notifications when necessary. Called on businesses on a 'best effort' basis.
- ❖ Represented our association at BRZ Council meetings throughout the year
- ❖ Represented our association at Avenue Initiative Steering and Development committee meetings.
- ❖ Obtained updates from Marketing Committee Chair.
- ❖ Oversaw P/T Assistant
- ❖ For third year in a row volunteered as one of the judges for the 2015 'African Entrepreneur of the Year' event
- ❖ Volunteered on Council. Oshry's "Emerging Economy" committee
- ❖ Assisted businesses with questions, concerns and suggestions throughout the year. Also helped a number of businesses, since starting with our association in 2008, with helpful suggestions for them on small business management and banking.
- ❖ Attended Northlands' Neighbors meetings and their Vision 2020 meeting
- ❖ Dealt with key pedestrians lamp poles light bulb burn out issue.
- ❖ Attended the joint BIA/BRZ Conference held in Edmonton
- ❖ Attended Façade Program Site Visits with Commercial Property Owners and City of Edmonton's Façade Program Manager
- ❖ Spoke to several delegates from the Municipalities Conference at the Nina Haggerty Center on our BRZ.
- ❖ Spoke to several visiting U of A MBA candidates on our BRZ for their class projects
- ❖ Participated in a city bus tour of Alberta Avenue with the Avenue Initiative co-ordinator showing delegates from the Edmonton 2015 BIA/BRZ conference around.
- ❖ In early 2015 reduced employee payroll costs. Office Rental costs and Communication costs will be revisited in mid 2016 prior to preparation of the 2017 budget.
- ❖ **Plus** other duties as assigned by the Board of Directors

END

Respectfully submitted,

Joachim Holtz, P.Mgr
 Executive Director
 Alberta Avenue Business Revitalization Zone Association