



ALBERTA AVENUE
BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

**To Executive Committee
City Council
City of Edmonton**

**2019 ANNUAL REPORT
Alberta Avenue Business Association (BIA)**

Report Written on April 13th, 2020 with minor edits on May 1st. Submitted to City of Edmonton May 1st 2020

Board Executive

2019 Executive: Chair: Jonathan Rivero (Qi Creative), Co-Chair: Jesus Gonzalez Jr. (Paraiso Tropical), Treasurer: Suzanne LaGrange (ATB Financial) Secretary: Laura Truong (T&D Vietnamese Noodle House).

2019 Board of Directors:

Charity Durowaa (Kasoa Tropical Food Market), Jesus Gonzalez Jr. (Paraiso Tropical), Jim Nguyen (Downtown Auto & Tire), Christy Morin (The Carrot Community Coffee House), Jonathan Rivero (Qi Creative), Laura Truong (T & D Vietnamese Noodle House), Trevor Stride (Plaza Bowl), Suzanne LaGrange (ATB Financial), Amanda Nielsen (Norwood Dental Associates), Senait Tamere (Simba's Den Pub & Bistro).

Office Staff:

- One Full Time: Executive Director: Joachim Holtz, C.Mgr
- No Other Staff

Our Focus

Communicate a continued awareness of Alberta Avenue Business Association and Alberta Avenue District
Promote our business improvement area (BIA) as a business and shopping zone.

Our Vision

For Alberta Avenue to be recognized as a place where safety, family, and a commitment to nurturing the arts and businesses are essential ingredients in elevating the community.

Our Mission

Engage with business members and community groups to enhance the profile of Alberta Avenue District as a shopping destination.

Board Governance

Towards the end of 2019 the Chair at that time reiterated the importance of the board holding another strategic planning / board governance workshop session in the New Year, in the interest of keeping focused on the following four areas:

1. **Marketing & Promotion**....With the goal of supporting and creating activities that contribute to commerce and community pride
2. **Business Attraction & Retention**....With the goal of engaging in business support activities and attracting complimentary businesses to contributing to a strong, healthy local economy
3. **Organizational Effectiveness**....With the goal of strengthening Board of Directors leadership and increasing business engagement in economic development activities.
4. **Local market Expansion**....With the goal of supporting activities and advocating for enhancements that increase the customer base.

Plans for this were under way but got pushed back by Covid 19. The item will be placed back onto our May 2020 board meeting agenda.

BIA Economic Indicators

On the date of this annual report, our 2019 Alberta Avenue BIA Economic Indicators Report was being finalized by the City and we expect to receive it very soon.

Last year's report was very meaningful clearly identifying our strengths and weaknesses. As well, the support we have been receiving from the City's 'Local Economy' team has been outstanding.

In addition, the information we receive from the 2019 Economic Indicators Report will be of maximum benefit for our board's next strategic planning session.

Programs / Projects

1. **"Businesses Together"**

New Joint AABA / EPS Pilot Project: "Businesses Together"

'Businesses Together' is a joint AABA/EPS project that was officially launched on June 1st, 2019. At the outset with the assistance of both beat sergeants and their team members, and support from our Exec. Dir. Were able to sign up 170 businesses, placing the 'Businesses Together' Agent sticker to businesses' windows.

The Vision of the program: To establish a self-sustaining business watch community and enhance communication between all participants of the program.

The Mission:

- Revitalize interest in working together
- To connect businesses using new principles and technology with crime prevention in mind
- To reduce crime and disorder within the Alberta Avenue area
- Increase perception of public safety

We also held three 'Businesses Together' business mixers during 2019, and in February of this year held an EPS 'Brainstorming' session attended by a number of AABA businesses in addition to both beat Sgts. The number of ideas put forward were outstanding. Some critical of our BIA and some complimentary. Plans are to hold a second session as soon as possible at which action steps will be discussed.

City of Edmonton and EPS Net: 'Business Safety Matters'

A copy of this eleven part flip chart style brochure was distributed to all of our business members with our February 2019 electronic newsletter.

Topics are:

1. Introduction 2. Lighting 3. Visibility 4. Alarms and video surveillance 5. Beautification 6. General Maintenance 7. Lock up your property 8. Be aware and alert of your surroundings 9. Loss Prevention 10. Back Alley safety 11. Aggressive panhandling around businesses 12. Secure your vehicle at work and 13. Training & resources
2. **Eats on 118: 'Dine the Ave'**. 2019 was the fifth year that we held 'Eats on 118' promoting our hospitality businesses.

In September 2016, the Alberta Avenue Business Association, in partnership with the City of Edmonton successfully launched the first food focused campaign for the hospitality businesses on 118th Avenue. There was an overwhelming response from the community with four sold out tours. 14 local businesses participated in the guided food tours with 34 patrons per tour and 135 tickets sold.

There was an overwhelming amount of positive media surrounding the first Eats on 118 tours. Local media personalities like Lorraine Mansbridge, Liane Faulder, Graham Hicks and bloggers were hosted in the kitchens of talented restaurateurs for a first-hand look at the life and culinary delights of 118th. This success continued right thru for 2017 and 2018 with back to back sold out tours.

In 2019:

- We completed a 7 day marketing and food campaign, from June 17th to June 23rd featuring a taste of various restaurants, quick service, cafés and bistros of the Alberta Ave BIA that is self-guided by patrons and managed by a pre-set menu and costs by participating restaurants.
- 1 exclusive pre-food tour was held with media preview and small patron audience to 2 to 3 restaurant stops prior to the launching of Dining Week. The media coverage we received was awesome! And very gratifying.
- A mix of 22 hospitality businesses participated in last years' Dine the Ave, from sit down restaurants, bistros, bakeries and quick take out foods.
- The mixed media coverage we received was very gratifying.

- Eats on 118 continues to be a great success story for us

For 2020, we are holding 'Dine the Ave' again, but due to COVID 19 we have had to make adjustments to the venue. Unfortunately we will not be able to hold the media tour this year due to social distancing enacted by AHS.

Plans are to run DTA starting July 1 (Canada Day, National Take Out Day) and running until July 31. We will feature every food service in three categories, as before: cafe/bistro, quick service, and then Dine-In should AHS allow restaurants to open and if any restaurants on the Avenue are comfortable including their establishment on the list.

Will continue to follow AHS Social Distancing directives.

We will promote it online and on billboards and integrate our Mosaic of Curiosity tagline to feature the menu and approach of each establishment.

3. Marketing / Advertising

- 2019 saw our small BIA with one of our largest Marketing / Advertising budget @ \$35,000. We hired Bottom Line Productions (BLP) for a second year to work with us on carrying the plan out. The exec. Director worked in concert with BLP throughout the plans progression and provided updates to the Board.

Goal: The goal of the 2019 Alberta Avenue Business Association marketing plan was to establish Alberta Avenue as a popular, attractive, top-of-mind destination for Edmontonians, visitors and developers to Shop, Dine, Play and Work.

Advertising: The 2019 advertising campaign included a mix of traditional media (TV, Print, Radio) and digital media. Building on 'Shop Dine Work Play', which was established in 2018, the 2019 campaign had a distinct look, in-line with already existing branding.

Advertising was purchased with a variety of outlets with the desired target market; people who are locally conscientious, adventurous, 'foodies', community minded, people that live within the Alberta Avenue community, as well as the greater Edmonton area.

Buys included CKUA Radio, CBC Television, Info Edmonton, Rat Creek Press, Pattison, Yeg Inspired and Avenue Magazine. Facebook and Instagram ad were also incorporated into the monthly social media plan.

Online Website: The Alberta Avenue Business Association website was monitored and updated at least once per month. Original content featuring business spotlights, initiatives and events relevant to AABA were created for the blog on average twice per month.

The business directory was updated as necessary in coordination with the Executive Director.

Alberta Avenue events and business information including notices from the City of Edmonton and business resources were posted as required in the appropriate sections on the website (News, Resources etc.).

Social Media: In 2019, AABA's social media networks saw steady growth, with Instagram being the fastest growing (370+ new followers to date from January 2019). The platforms were well maintained with engaging, original content. Interactions (commenting, liking, sharing) with businesses and organization's content aided in raising AABA's presence online.

Current social media followers as at December 2019:

Facebook: 785 followers

Twitter: 542

Instagram: 980

Monthly social media reports were provided to the Executive Director. Examples provided in report (January & November).

Newsletter: A public newsletter was established highlighting businesses, events and initiatives. Newsletters were sent out on the last Wednesday of each month.

Quick News Bulletins to business owners were also sent out as needed. Messaging included notices from the City of Edmonton, information about special meetings and resources such as graffiti clean-up for business owners.

Newsletter and Quick News examples provided in final report.

Publicity and Promotions: Throughout the year, Bottom Line Productions acted as a liaison between media and Alberta Avenue Business Association spokespersons, provided key messaging for specific projects (Dine the Ave, Businesses Together) and media training when necessary.

2019's edition of Dine the Ave garnered substantial media attention with feature interviews on Global News AM, CBC Edmonton AM, CBC Radio Active and was attended by several Edmonton bloggers.

Full publicity timeline included in report.

Promotions with local bloggers, businesses and non-profits were arranged throughout the year. These included special offers and giveaways. Promotions were shared through social media and E-newsletters.

Businesses Together: Businesses Together is an initiative that was started early 2019 with the Edmonton Police Service. Bottom Line Productions assisted in the creation of a Businesses Together logo, created a website forum, provided copy for the website and supplied key messaging to AABA Executive Director and board members for public relations purposes. Bottom Line Productions also helped facilitate the creation of ads for the Businesses Together televisions along the Avenue.

Part of the Marketing Plan was also for BLP to handle some social media components for the Eats on 118 Dine the Ave project.

Communications

On October 1st, 2017 a new "Communications Initiative" was put into place with the hiring of 'Bottom Line Productions' to provide strategic social media and website management, in order to significantly enhance our business associations' connection to its business members and the public at large.

To this date we continue to use them and are exceptionally satisfied with their service.

4. Beautification:

- For 2019 we hung 38 flower baskets to help beautify the Ave.
- For 2020 we are hanging 38 flower baskets and placing 6 sidewalk flower barrels
- For 2019 we also budgeted \$1,200 for litter pick up (by youth clubs members) but were unable to get that off the ground due to OHS changing the insurance / liability rules. In any event we encouraged business owners to sweep regularly in front of their businesses.

- Graffiti continues to be a big problem, and burns up endless and unproductive hours of time for both the property owners and us in getting rid of the tags.

5. **Alberta Avenue Infrastructure:**

- Our Executive Director works close on this with the City's BIA Infrastructure Specialist.
- As at the date of this report, the following is an update:

The Alberta Avenue BIA and the City of Edmonton are working together in maintaining infrastructure that is important to BIA members. The following is work that is scheduled for Spring 2020:

TREE LIGHTING

-Alberta Ave, from 77 St to 87 St: A review is underway on how best to light these trees, given that there is not currently underground infrastructure on this stretch of the street. Further updates will be provided once a plan is in place, understanding that this is of interest to business members on this part of Alberta Avenue.

-Alberta Avenue, from 87 Street to 97 Street: An annual inspection of the existing tree lighting and repairs is scheduled.

-Alberta Avenue, from 103 Street to 106 Street, North Side: The electrical cabinet on the NE corner of 105 St at 118 Ave was energized in February 2020. Repairs to the electrical receptacles and attachments on the trees is scheduled, which will illuminate these trees for the first time.

STREET LIGHTING

-A walk-about inspection is scheduled to identify damaged street lights. This includes identifying broken and missing shrouds on the lower part of the street light poles. Replacement of damaged parts will follow.

6. **Facade Program / Development Incentive Programs:**

- 2019 saw some welcome changes to the programs and compliment the City on that. We continue to have a great working relationship with the Facade program Manager. She has been very helpful and commercial property owners like dealing with her.
- We had three projects approved for 2019: Coliseum Steak & Pizza, CEASE Building and the former Dacia Restaurant building.
- Since inception of the Facade program in 2005 we have had 30 completed projects.

7. **BIA Tool Kit and BIA Tax Process Guide**

In 2019, the City's Local Economy, Economic & Environmental Sustainability Department released a new 'BIA Toolkit'. Understanding what a BIA is and how they work is of prime importance to anyone business or property owner operating within a BIA zone, such as Alberta Avenue BIA.

The "BIA Toolkit" is comprised of four parts:

Part 1: Overview

Part 2: Key People and Responsibilities

Part 3: Operating a BIA

Part 4: Working with the City You can access the complete toolkit using the link below.

A copy of this kit along with a copy of the BIA Tax process Guide color graphic was sent out to all of our businesses both electronically via Mail Chimp and via Canada Post.

Quick News

Quick News, which began in 2016, is our electronic newsletter/bulletin delivery method sent out during the year via Mail chimp to our business members. The purpose is twofold: Firstly, to get newsletters and important information out to our members very quickly, and secondly, to eliminate the need for postage, envelopes and paper costs and redirecting the saved monies for other budget lines.

For the first time in 2019, Bottom Line Productions started to send out a public newsletter for our BIA. This is different from our electronic “Quick News” newsletter sent out specifically to our business members. It is targeted to people interested in our businesses and events on Alberta

Business Directory

A complete listing of all our BIA businesses can be accessed by going onto our website at www.alberta-avenue.com. It is kept up to date for us by Bottom Line Productions (BLP) working in concert with the Executive Director. BLP is working on including some additional short info on each business in the Directory.

Commercial *Problem* Properties

Our business association has a board sub-committee to deal with the above captioned on an ongoing basis. We held three meetings in 2019 which included John Amerongen, Building Compliance Officer and Vadim Budman, Municipal Enforcement Officer II, both from the City’s “Complaints & Investigations” branch.

We thank both John and Vadim for providing us with updates from their end on identified problem properties on Alberta Avenue and those properties they were able to remove from the list.

As soon as the Social Distancing measures have been lifted, hopefully soon, our office will be calling a meeting of the problem properties committee. We’re also thinking of a walkabout of the BIA regarding problem properties.

Our continuing aim is to work with commercial property property owners in a co=operative fashion in order to achieve a ‘win/win’ result for both them and our BIA.

Revite 2.0

Highlights from 2019 for the Avenue Initiative

- On April 29, 2019 - Edmonton City Council approved \$160,200 for the Avenue Revitalization Initiative in 2019 and 2020 respectively, including a dedicated City of Edmonton Revitalization Coordinator for both years;
- 26 Revitalization Matching Fund grants were approved and disbursed in 2019 for a total of \$170,640;
- 14 Small Sparks grants were approved and disbursed in 2019 for a total of \$3500 for community and residents projects;
- Matching Fund and Small Sparks Grants support the following initiatives:

Enhancing community safety
Inspiring community connections
celebrating multicultural connections/awareness
Promoting beautification and cleanliness
Building community capacity
Advancing arts in the community
Improving parkland

2020 Highlights

- The Avenue District Council (10 local organizations) drafted the 2019-2020 Strategic Revitalization Framework, which includes 4 priority areas
- Priority areas help applicants and the City align funding requests.

1. STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP & SUSTAINABILITY

Enhance the capacity of individuals, organizations and businesses to find creative ways to grow and sustain initiatives that make our community resilient.

291040248. INCREASE COMMUNITY SAFETY

Protect citizens, organizations, and businesses against threats to their well-being and prosperity.

291039856. SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH

Encourage diverse and innovative economic activities and economic opportunities for all residents.

291040304. ENHANCE COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

Create socially connected communities welcoming to all that are resilient, healthy and inspiring.

- The Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the number of community projects and initiatives being able to go forward. As such, the Revitalization Matching Fund and Small Sparks application process has been reduced tremendously;
- In June, City Administration is bringing a report forward to the Community and Public Service Committee of Council to be received for information in consideration of City of Edmonton funding sources to support the continuance of the revitalization programs for not only the Alberta Avenue Initiative, but also for the Jasper Place Initiative in 2021 and 2022. The report outlines two viable funding options which include reallocating operating dollars or utilizing City Council's Financial Sustainability Reserve. In each case there would be financial and programmatic trade-offs and impacts.

Operations / Management:

Executive Director:

Joachim Holtz, our sole full time employee has looked after the daily operations of our Alberta Avenue Business Association (BIA) since January of 2008 and is answerable to the Board.

The following assorted tasks were carried out by the executive director during 2019. These are over and above additional tasks that may have been assigned to him by the board, on top of various other incoming inquiries from businesses and the public into the AABA office throughout the year.

In addition, all incoming / outgoing emails, phone calls, text messages and reply to same are handled solely by the Exec. Director during the year.

- ❖ Completed all tasks, reports and documentation as required by the City of Edmonton, under the 2019 Timetable for the Administration of BIA's.
- ❖ Presented our 2018 Annual Report to City Council Executive Committee. (We were first up again to present our report, 12yrs running).
- ❖ Assisted in co-ordinating the 2019 Eats on 118 "Dine the Ave" project with Wild Heart Collective.
- ❖ Worked with our Auditor on the 2019 Audit, from start to finish. We received a fully satisfactory audit and no discrepancies
- ❖ Arranged all monthly Board meetings and AGM in a timely manner.
- ❖ Continued to work within budget on a best effort basis.
- ❖ Monitored Revenues and Expenses on an ongoing basis and submitted quarterly Budget vs. Actual reports to City's Local Economy Department. Having received no complaints since reports were 1st submitted in 2008.
- ❖ Maintained a satisfactory working relationship with Jeff Chase and his Local Economy Team, who continue to be actively supportive in working with our BIA.
- ❖ Sent out 'Quick News' newsletters to the membership, as well as other special notifications when necessary. Called on businesses on a 'best effort' basis.
- ❖ Dealt with Graffiti, Litter and back alley garbage problems
- ❖ For the 12th year, represented our association on the Edmonton Council of BIA's
- ❖ Represented our association on the Alberta Avenue District Council throughout the year. .
- ❖ Personally 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.
- ❖ Brought the issue of irregularly kept operating hours by many businesses to the board's attention.
- ❖ Co-ordinated Hanging Flower Baskets project with Zocolo's
- ❖ Attended Façade Program Site Visits with Commercial Property Owners and City of Edmonton's Façade Program Manager
- ❖ Met with Mark Holmgren (ECDC) and had him present to our board on two occasions.
- ❖ Attended numerous meetings, on behalf of our business association.
- ❖ Met with EPS Beat Sgts. on initiating the "Business Together" project
- ❖ Arranged for Bottom Line Productions to present our 2019 Marketing Plan to our Board
- ❖ Met with a Sr.City Planner to review the 2018 Economic Indicators Report on our BIA

- ❖ In January 2019 provided Executive Director's 'Annual Letter' to the Board.
- ❖ Met with new Avenue Initiative Co-ordinator
- ❖ Dealt with Bottom Line Productions throughout the year on our Website, Social Media Platforms and Marketing and Advertising.
- ❖ Prepared monthly board agendas in concert with the Board Chair
- ❖ Connected with Arts on the Ave as to providing financial donations to their Kaleido Fest and Deep Freeze Fest. We fully support the local arts scene and the many positive things that are done by AOTA.
- ❖ Reviewed all of our monthly bookkeeping postings throughout the year in concert with our bookkeeper. Back up provided to our Auditor at year end
- ❖ Arranged for installation of an alarm system for our office.
- ❖ Kept our List of Businesses and online Directory up to date in concert with Bottom Line Productions.
- ❖ In concert with Bottom Line Productions prepared "Quick News" Information and 'Flash Bulletins' for our business members throughout the year
- ❖ Attended Info session on Businesses Licence Bylaw revamp
- ❖ Connected with a designated Commercial Realtor throughout the year to stay informed on the latest in the commercial real estate market.
- ❖ Attended and / or requested to speak at numerous Revite 2.0 meetings.
- ❖ Attended several meetings of the Community Exhibition Lands Committee.
- ❖ Prepared our Annual Budget.
- ❖ Did several media interviews on behalf of AABA
- ❖ Prepared Annual Report

- ❖ Prepared Letter on behalf of AABA supporting Counc. McKeen and Counc. Walters push for Affordable Housing. Received acknowledgement from Josephine Pon, Minister of Seniors and Housing
- ❖ Negotiated a satisfactory 2020 – 2023 Commercial Lease renewal for our office.
- ❖ Reviewed or Insurance Policy
- ❖ In addition to dealing with any other matters as they arose.

Engagement

The success of any business association depends to a large degree of engagement by its business members. As in any BIA, this is a work in progress.

We continue to encourage our business members to get more involved in the happenings of their association, such as:

Contacting our Executive Director with any questions, suggestion or concerns they may have. Dropping in to our AABA office for a coffee or tea, or have Joachim meet with them at their businesses.

Connect with the AABA Board Chair. Let him or her know what their biggest issue of concern is in the running of their business at the moment on Alberta Avenue and what they think the solution to it should be.

Attend the Annual General Meeting in September. It is their opportunity to ask questions from the floor.

Make connections! Do they know who their businesses next to them is? Or located across from their business? Why not drop in to see those businesses owners. Networking is a powerful thing.

Share a story about their businesses with us! Let us know how we can get their business on our business association's social media platforms, blog and participate in monthly promotions.

Our 2020 Board of Directors

1. **Jim Nguyen** (Downtown Auto & Tire)
2. **Amanda Nielsen** (Norwood Dental Associates)
3. **Christy Morin** (Carrot Community Arts Coffee House)
4. **Jesus Gonzalez Jr.** (Paraiso Tropical Food Market)
5. **Senait Tamere** (Simba's Den Pub & Bistro)
6. **Jonathan Rivero** (Qi Creative Inc.) (Resigned in January)
7. **Suzanne La Grange** (ATB Financial)
8. **Neilson Nguyen** (Canadian Dollar Store)

- 9. Trevor Stride** (Plaza Bowling Co.)
- 10. Laura Truong** (T & D Vietnamese Noodle House)
- 11. Mona Mohammud** (CLI College Bus/Health/Tech)
- 12. Tariq Khan** (Jimmy's Place)

Respectfully submitted,

Joachim Holtz, C.MGR
Executive Director
Alberta Avenue Business Association (BIA)