

Core's growth 'fascinating' for council member

As a resident who has taken considerable interest in the history of his community, town Councillor John McDonald says he is particularly "fascinated" by Georgetown's downtown core and its uniqueness among others throughout the province.

"It has a big advantage," he said, "because, while it is not on the main (Highway 7) thoroughfare, it's still a lovely place with beautiful buildings."

Joining fellow Ward 3 Councillor Walter Biehn as the Business Improvement Area (BIA)



JOHN McDONALD

board's liaison with the town administration. Councillor McDonald says that much of their involvement is spent checking board requests with the town's clerk-administrator or investigating anticipated engineering problems with improvement area proposals.

But, he stressed, the BIA is a completely autonomous body and the town's only real involvement, outside of acting as the board's voice at the provincial level and offering technical assistance, is to collect the BIA tax from the downtown merchants. Amounting to approximately \$25,000, the tax is returned to the board to make general improvements in the downtown area of old Georgetown.

At the moment, the town planning department and the BIAs in Acton and Georgetown are working together to get money from the province to help fund downtown core studies for both improvement areas. Under the Municipal Act, the province recognizes only one BIA per urban centre.

Downtown lawyers, doctors reap BIA benefits

Although less likely to benefit from joint retail advertising which merchants pursue as members of the Georgetown Business Improvement Area (BIA), downtown professionals experience some appreciated side-effects from working in a unique shopping area.

Working out of a 33 Main Street office, lawyer Monty Hyde, the BIA's secretary for the past year, says that professionals are involved with improving the area because they are paying into the "greater success of the downtown core" with their retail neighbors.

Professionals do much of their business through recommendations from other clients or patients, but Mr. Hyde admits that there is a certain uniqueness about doing business in an increasingly well-polished downtown business core as opposed to working out of a mall or plaza environment.

The Georgetown BIA is not patterned after another community's, Mr. Hyde said, adding that improvement areas of this kind have long-term plans in mind and have consulted with planners to achieve the best marketing environment.

Georgetown's Main Street merchants and professionals also benefit from the ample off-street parking available behind the McGibbon Hotel.

Downtown business shopping, Mr. Hyde noted, may be making a comeback as people find the cost of travelling to the popular, enclosed regional malls too much of a luxury. Many developers are now looking to attract high-density housing around their malls in order to tap into a close, readily available market.



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