

TORONTO FINANCIAL DISTRICT BIA

2016 DOWNTOWN ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS SUBMISSION DOWNTOWN LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT CATEGORY

RAISING THE STANDARD: USING DATA AND TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE PUBLIC REALM MANAGEMENT

As Canada's premier economic centre and a global financial presence, the Financial District is Toronto's public face to the world. It occupies only 0.1% of the city's land area, but generates 6% of total property taxes and 15% of jobs in Toronto. Despite this, until 2013, there was never a consistent and cohesive approach to public realm maintenance, compliance or enforcement, resulting in states of disrepair which starkly contrast with the high-quality experience provided by the private sector and a haphazard approach to enforcement of by-laws related to licensing, parking and other issues.

Over the past three years, the Toronto Financial District BIA (FDBIA) has leveraged technology to address these concerns through programs based on real-time data of occurrences in the district, enabling the BIA to work directly with responsible agencies to remedy issues related to maintenance and public realm compliance, as well as develop improved models to address by-law enforcement in critical areas and share information with relevant agencies to improve collaboration and service delivery.

SNAPSHOT OF PROGRAM RESULTS

- **1,900+** state-of-repair items and by-law infractions identified and repaired that would not have been addressed by regular City operations.
- **92%** resolution rate from City and other responsible agencies.
- **2** additional Toronto BIAs have programs based on our prototype, expanding the benefits across City neighbourhoods, with interest from an additional **3** BIAs to implement in future.

KEY OBJECTIVES

Programs were developed to meet several key objectives through the use of technology and data:

- **Maintain an inventory and history of changes to public realm assets** to assist in planning and quantify improvements over time;
- **Report public realm maintenance** issues in real time with the ability to track through resolution and measure agency compliance and overall results;
- **Improve by-law enforcement of publication boxes** by using data and mapping to ensure removal of unlicensed boxes and consolidation of boxes into corral and kiosk structures;
- **Improve overall parking enforcement in the district** to reduce congestion by reporting, mapping and tracking by-law infractions by location, type and time of day and sharing this information with Toronto Police Services;
- **Improve film permit compliance** by reporting, mapping and tracking permit violations by location and production and sharing this information with the Toronto Film Office;
- **Assist the City's Streets-to-Homes Outreach Team** in helping people in need by communicating information about new people in need of assistance, changes in conditions and location of people in need to ensure outreach begins as early as possible and deteriorating conditions are addressed as soon as possible.

COLLABORATION AND DEVELOPMENT

To maximize staff efficiency and leverage both data and mapping to measure need and identify areas for improvement, the FDBIA determined that an adaptable software solution would be required. Following an RFP, the FDBIA selected GeoPal Solutions to provide a system on which the basis of these programs was built.

Each agency responsible for maintenance, compliance and enforcement was consulted as the programs were developed, to ensure efficient and clear reporting and to enable the FDBIA to track desired information to share with the respective agencies. For example, the Toronto Police Services did not have the ability to track parking infractions by type, so the FDBIA's system was developed to include this information to assist parking enforcement in staffing critical areas at appropriate times.

INNOVATION

With the progress of technology, developing and adapting programs to utilize technology to provide solid data, mapping and evidence-based information rather than anecdotal evidence is paramount to a BIA/BID's ability to effectively advocate for solutions. Efficiency is improved through reducing manual collection and entry of data, systemizing reporting and quantifying results with standardized measurements built into the system. More useful, however, is the ability to use visual data and real-time information to collaborate with relevant parties to ensure accountability, improve service delivery and ensure issues are addressed as needs change over time.

REPLICATION

A benefit to using technology and data to improve the public realm is that individual districts can develop programs based on their specific needs, and model new programs as needs change. Since the FDBIA's implementation of the initial asset inventory system, other BIA's in Toronto have adopted similar systems to meet their individual needs. In some cases, where similar programs are used by multiple BIA's, the FDBIA has shared the templates and program information to ensure consistency of reporting to agencies, allowing for both clarity and consistency of information provided to the agencies and the ability to develop joint reporting for larger areas over time.

SUSTAINABILITY

The system was developed originally to manage a public realm asset inventory and report issues to the appropriate agency. Over the past two years, additional programs have been built to leverage information through technology to address needs that have evolved since the program's inception, and the expectation is that all future programs related to maintenance, compliance and enforcement will be developed to leverage data and mapping to ensure high-quality results. With a budget of only \$300US per month for software, plus additional costs for labour, the program is adaptable to meet both small and large BID/BIA budgets.

OUTCOMES & ACHIEVEMENTS

These programs collectively have had numerous achievements accomplished by using data and mapping to improve service delivery in the Financial District. Key achievements include:

- **92% resolution rate of issues reported** to public agencies, resulting in a significantly cleaner public realm;
- **Improved timeliness and regularity of by-law enforcement and maintenance resolution by all agencies** responsible for public realm assets in the district;
- **51% reduction of newspaper boxes** through enforcement of unlicensed boxes and consolidation into publication corrals and kiosks;
- **Adjusted staffing for parking enforcement officers** based on maps and data showing locations and times of violations;
- **Adjusted permitted locations for film production parking** based on needs identified through tracking of film permits in district;
- **Additional and earlier outreach from Streets to Homes team** based on information provided about new individuals in need and timely notification of changing conditions.