



**The Waterfront BIA's Clean Streets Team - Toronto, Canada
IDA Award Submission 2018**

With Waterfront Toronto's revitalization mostly complete, we've expanded our streetscaping activities and combined this crucial undertaking with community engagement. Introducing The Waterfront BIA's new Clean Streets Team, in partnership with Progress Place!

Progress Place offers an inclusive, respectful and engaging community for people living with a mental illness. Combining a comprehensive network of services that includes employment, education, recreation and housing, they are committed to helping people stay out of hospitals, achieve their personal goals and contribute to the communities they live in. We are proud to be working with this organization to bring about positive change for Progress Place members and the Waterfront.

Two teams of five (with differing members to maximize the program's impact), spent approximately four hours, twice a week (675 man-hours) beautifying the Waterfront. From May to October, teams dressed in fluorescent green safety vests and branded BIA baseball hats cleaned up litter, broken glass and cigarette butts; removed graffiti, posters, stickers and residue; assisted City of Toronto Parks staff by regularly sweeping the Martin Goodman Trail gutters; removed staples from public message boards; and reported on a variety of area and asset issues. Occasionally, they also assisted with placement of our promotional event posters. To combat heavy rain, teams took shelter under one of the area's many awnings. If after 15 minutes it didn't appear to be easing up, the shift was cancelled. In many cases, teams were able to resume their activities after a short hiatus. This system resulted in the cancellation of only 3 shifts. A mapping system of the BIA was implemented and adjusted throughout the program's duration to assist team members in learning the area, advise the next team of high-priority locations, and track each day's progress. Daily debriefs were incorporated into the program to address successes and challenges, maintain preferred supplies and keep lines of communication open.

The program represents an innovative approach to the augmentation of the City's limited streetscaping activities, coupled with community engagement that aims to help rehabilitate those less fortunate. It's easy to hire a professional cleaning service. However, using a method similar to ours adds an extra component that is highly valuable to a community in need.

Community Centres or Rehabilitation Centres are great partners for this program and can work with your organization to recruit staff. They may have tools on-hand that can be borrowed for the program, or available staff that can act as the on-site supervisors. This program could also be replicated through a volunteer group or youth employment service centre, where your organization may supply the staff supervisor.

In our upcoming second season, the Clean Streets Team will be growing to include more staff and more hours, and we will continue to expand to meet the growing demands of our BIA, the City's second-most prominent destination. We also see the positive environmental impact of the program as we keep our neighbourhood clean and encourage safety through low tolerance of graffiti, drug-paraphernalia, damaged street signs and other safety hazards.

We partnered with Progress Place, who provided staff and team supervisors. Progress Place has been a recognized leader in psychosocial rehabilitation throughout Canada for over 30 years. At the heart of the organization is the

facilitation of an inclusive community, a model that helps individuals find their own unique path to recovery, and work through that path at their own pace. Members and staff work side by side to create an environment conducive to health and wellness. At the onset, eight Progress Place members filled the maintenance staff roles, ensuring our BIA was kept in prime condition. Throughout the season, additional members took part, either as sub-ins or new permanent staff, to offer the work placement to as many as possible. Three Progress Place staff took on supervisor positions, directing teams; filling out weekly reporting forms; recording completed activities; and tracking work hours (which they later submitted to payroll). Using a mapping system of the BIA, finished areas were marked and high-priority tasks identified for the next shift. Supervisors were also responsible for cancelling shifts due to inclement weather.

The program is fully representative in that any member of Progress Place could participate, and if specific aspects of the job were unfavoured, colleagues gladly filled in the gaps allowing others to focus on preferred tasks. Weekly debrief meetings with participants facilitated real-time program adjustments; there's no one better qualified to provide input into best practices! We managed the program including weekly debriefs, supply tracking and procurement, area/asset issue reports and resolutions, and implementation of solution-based strategies.

Our goal: To improve on and maintain a clean, safe environment; increase the pace at which area issues are reported to the City/Owner and resolved; and engage with the community to establish inclusiveness and a local contribution. Graffiti, garbage, broken glass, cigarette butts, outdated posters and more were removed daily, resolving approximately 3,375 issues throughout the season. We reported over 100 incidents including vagrants, drug paraphernalia, trip hazards, hateful graffiti and damaged traffic signs, resolving over 75% within 6 months. 13 Progress Place members contributed to our local community, building their skills and confidence in the workforce and bringing them one step closer to their personal goals. We love the 'feel-good' component for participants! The positive feedback received from the community is a testament to the program's success and public value.

The impact: Cleaner streets were yielded, area issue reporting has been expedited, and weekly turn-around for graffiti and poster removal achieved - an enormous success compared to the City's timeline of 8+ weeks. These changes resulted in a more welcoming neighbourhood and promoted safety. The considerable role that graffiti and poster removal took on, and the ongoing challenge of litter and cigarette butts demonstrates the program's necessity from a BIA and City maintenance perspective, and daily reduction was undeniable. Positive community feedback was often received. Most notable, the joy of seeing such attention being paid to the area. As a tourist destination, this program promotes an elevated level of cleanliness to keep visitors returning; and helps set a standard for street maintenance throughout the City. Offering a chance to work in today's competitive job market, developing new skills, earning a competitive wage and improving self-confidence. Grateful team members thoroughly enjoyed the work, proud to be an essential component of this neighbourhood improvement initiative. By offering short-term, part-time work, we contributed to Progress Place's Transitional Employment Program and one of their major goals: providing the opportunity for members to transition smoothly into the workplace to become confident and contributing members of their community. We've developed a creative solution to a fundamental City challenge, that directly effects our members in a positive way and contributes to an improved society; a substantial value for the public, The Waterfront BIA and its members, the City of Toronto and our community partner, Progress Place.

The program is funded by The Waterfront BIA. Total cost for year one: \$13,000. As a partner in the program, Progress Place donated their time, supervising onsite and participating in daily debriefs with BIA staff. Their participation/donation to the program reflects the importance of our contribution to their facility.