



Business Improvement Areas

Establishment Guide

Edmonton

The process to establish a BIA aligns with requirements set out in the [Municipal Government Act](#) as well as in the City of Edmonton's [Business Improvement Area Establishment and Operation Procedure](#). In Edmonton, the process for establishing a BIA is ideally divided into two stages. Some activities are accomplished solely within each stage, many others overlap between them.

Stage 1 - Initial Interest and Confirming Viability “Pre-Application”

Step 1 - Identify the Area and Consider a Common Identity

What section of the City and commercial corridor(s) within it may have common interest to work towards strengthening the economic development, vibrancy or safety or security of the area? Some considerations might include:

- **Scale:** Current BIAs range from 100 to over 1,000 members.
- **Boundaries:** Look for natural borders and consider how others might view the area as a natural "grouping".
- **Connection:** Ensure potential members feel like they belong to the area and see the value in collaborating.
- **Membership Considerations:** As BIA membership is restricted to businesses, selecting an area with a large residential base may not make sense.

Step 2 - Gauge Interest from Potential Business Members

Make an effort to reach out to potential business members in the area to gauge their level of interest. This does not have to be formal, but a “straw poll” to confirm that there is in fact a reasonable level of interest. Keep a record of contact information and who expressed support, as this will be helpful later.

Step 3 - Meet with the City

If the majority of the potential business members seem interested, now it is the time to contact the City of Edmonton's Urban Planning and Economy Department (UPED) to discuss the expectations, information, framework for a draft proposal, and other requirements related. This discussion would include, but not be limited to:

- The best size and business mix for your BIA.
- Deadlines, legislative requirements, and municipal data.
- Application requirements.

- Other considerations for demonstrating support and a business case to City Council.

Step 4 - Consultation and Finalizing the Proposal for Establishment

Now it's time to finalize your plan and prove support.

- **Public Meetings:** Hold at least two meetings (in-person or virtual) to debate the proposal and get feedback so it can be integrated into the finalized version of the proposal.
- **Additional Attachments:** UPED will support you in preparing a map of the proposed area and a preliminary budget.
- **The 25% Rule:** You must collect signatures from at least **25%** of the businesses that would be taxable within the new BIA. If the required amount of signatures is collected, proceed to Stage 2

Stage 2 - Formal Application to Establish a BIA (“Application Process”)

Step 1 - Proponents submit their request to establish a BIA by April 30th of a given calendar year (to be effective January 1st of the following year).

The application must include:

- A statement of objectives of the proposed BIA
- Justification of need and of the area chosen
- Proposed BIA area map
- Description of the consultative process followed by the proponents, including, but not limited to, the process of and feedback from the two information sessions that were part of Stage 1.

This application should also contain an attachment consisting of a list of all businesses who are supportive of the creation of the BIA that includes:

- business name as per license (if applicable)
- business locations/addresses within the proposed area
- printed names of the business taxpayers (owners of businesses)
- Signatures, witness signature accompanied by an Affidavit of Execution, and dates signed.

The application must also include a preliminary operational budget in a format agreeable to UPED. Letters of support may also be included to the attachment, but are not required.

Step 2 - Application Review

Once the application is received by UPED, it's forwarded to the Office of the City Clerk and Legal Services Branch for review and verification, as well as ruling on the compliance of legislation. If the application is valid, the UPED will verify the accuracy and completeness of the business lists and will check with other relevant City functions to understand implications, and include these in any reports to City Council that accompany the draft bylaw.

Within 30 days of the receipt of the validated application, the UPED will deliver to all identified businesses within the proposed BIA area:

- Notice of the Request for formation of the BIA
- Information sheet regarding BIAs

- Map and description of the boundary of the proposed zone
- Preliminary budget
- Instructions for petitioning against the bylaw.

Step 3 - BIA Bylaw to Council

Should there be no formal objection (petitioning) to the proposal filed as per the requirements set out in the [Business Improvement Area Establishment and Operation Procedure](#), City Council may pass a BIA bylaw that confirms the establishment of the new area based on the request.