



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: February 10, 2026
Contact: Siobian Smith
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RTS No.: 18409
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: March 10, 2026
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Director of the Business and Economy Office
SUBJECT: Proposed Vancouver Charter Amendment - Business Improvement Area (BIA) Renewal

Recommendations

THAT Mayor and Council approve the proposed amendments to the *Vancouver Charter* as outlined below, and direct staff to formally submit them to the Government of B.C. for consideration:

- Remove the requirement that a BIA be designated with a finite operating term;
- Remove the restriction that a BIA may be designated for no more than 20 years;
- Remove the limitation that specifies the total special levy a BIA may collect during an operating term; and
- Integrate the dissolution procedure recommended in this report.

Purpose and Executive Summary

This report seeks Council's approval of proposed amendments to Part XXI of the Vancouver Charter. Building on the findings of a previous Council Report from March 2015, staff have reviewed the relevant considerations, including feedback received from the Vancouver BIA Partnership, which represents all 22 BIAs in Vancouver.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- Council authority to establish, renew and/or alter boundaries of a BIA, by by-law, is set out in [Part XXI](#) of the Vancouver Charter.

- In accordance with Sections 456(2) and 462 of the *Vancouver Charter*, a by-law designating a BIA must specify boundaries of an area and must establish the maximum BIA grant (special levy) for an operating term not exceeding twenty years.
- Requirements for the notification process and threshold for Council approval for establishing or altering boundaries of a BIA are set out in section 506(2) of the *Vancouver Charter*, including an updated Council Policy for approval of BIA Council initiatives, recorded on [November 28, 2017](#).
- On [March 3, 2015](#), Council directed staff to submit a request to the Province of British Columbia to consider amendments to the *Vancouver Charter*, specifically the elimination of termination dates for BIA designation by-laws and the incorporation of mechanisms for dissolving a BIA.

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

BIA Renewal Process

In accordance with the *Vancouver Charter*, Council has the authority to designate a BIA by enacting a by-law that re-establishes the BIA's boundaries, its operating term (i.e., the expiration date of the by-law), and the maximum levy that may be collected from commercial and light industrial property owners within the area to fund BIA programs and services. Prior to the expiration of each operating term, a BIA must undergo a renewal process, which includes the BIA engaging with its membership, the City issuing formal notifications to property owners and businesses within the BIA and the collection of feedback, followed by Council's review and decision on the renewal application. Maintaining an active BIA provides the legal basis for collecting levies from members and for continuing a BIA's operations. Appendix A provides a detailed description of the current BIA renewal process.

BIA Renewal Requirements

Most BIAs across the City operate on a five-year renewal cycle. As each operating term approaches expiry, BIA societies are required to engage property owners and businesses within their boundaries to communicate their intent to renew and to secure support for continuing the BIA. Renewal engagement often requires hundreds of touchpoints with property owners and businesses over a period that typically extends beyond six months (from spring to early fall).

As of February 2026:

1 BIA	three-year operating term
14 BIAs	five-year operating term
5 BIAs	seven-year operating term
2 BIAs	ten-year operating term

On receipt of a formal renewal request from a BIA, the City must issue official renewal notifications to all affected property owners and businesses. Taken together, the renewal process is resource-intensive for both the BIA society and the City. This work diverts time and resources away from a BIA's core mandate of business promotion, placemaking, and local economic development. Moreover, fixed operating terms can cast uncertainty over the continuity of programs and initiatives that extend beyond existing expiration dates.

The current renewal requirements serve largely as a dissolution procedure, requiring BIA members to periodically reaffirm whether they wish to extend the operating duration of their BIA. Since the establishment of the first two BIAs in 1989¹, the network has expanded to 22 BIAs, most of which have undergone the renewal process every five years. Notably, all 22 BIAs have successfully renewed their terms since their inception.

Previous Council Direction

Following consultation with Vancouver BIAs in fall 2014, staff presented a Report to Council on March 3, 2015 that provided a comparative overview of best practices for establishing BIAs without renewal requirements based on experiences from municipalities outside of British Columbia. The report included a recommendation that proposed amendments to the Vancouver Charter be sent to the Government of BC for consideration. The following summarises the key recommendations from the 2015 report:

- A. Remove the requirement that a BIA be designated with a finite operating term.
- B. Remove the restriction that a BIA may be designated for no more than 20 years.
- C. Remove the limitation that specifies the total special levy a BIA may collect during an operating term.
- D. Incorporate provisions to enable a BIA to adjust its area boundaries.
- E. Revisit the definition of 'business promotion scheme' to ensure it accurately reflects the core activities and responsibilities of a BIA.

Following Council's direction on March 3, 2015, staff submitted a request to the Government of BC to consider amendments to the Vancouver Charter. Since then, no update or indication of progress on this request has been received from the Government of BC.

Discussion

Practices in Other Jurisdictions

BIAs across British Columbia are similarly bound by renewal requirements (as per the Community Charter), which mandate that a BIA be designated with a finite operating term and a defined maximum levy that may be collected from commercial and light industrial property owners within the area. In contrast, in other Canadian provinces, BIA designations are not tied to fixed operating terms. Instead, municipalities rely on defined dissolution procedures as a

¹ Gastown BIA and Mount Pleasant BIA

safeguard, allowing members to formally discontinue a BIA if they no longer wish to maintain one in their area. The following table highlights two examples of dissolution procedures from other municipalities.

Table 1: Notable Dissolution Procedures in other Municipalities

<p><i>City of Toronto</i></p> <p>Chapter 19 (BIAs) Toronto Municipal Code</p>	<p><u>Step 1:</u> A resolution from the BIA members (property owners and businesses) adopted at a formal public consultation meeting called specifically for that purpose; (or)</p> <p>Individual request (petition) for repeal from a minimum of more than 50 percent of BIA members (property owners and businesses).</p> <p><u>Step 2:</u> Council shall not repeal a designating by-law if 40 percent or more of the accepted ballots respond in the negative (property owners and businesses). Proof of membership must be attached.</p>
<p><i>City of Calgary</i></p> <p>BIA Regulation Municipal Government Act</p>	<p><u>Step 1:</u> A petition to repeal a BIA must be signed by at least 25 percent of the taxable businesses within the BIA.</p> <p><u>Step 2:</u> Council must repeal a BIA if more than 50 percent of the taxable businesses within the BIA vote in favor of repealing a BIA.</p>

Feedback from Vancouver BIAs

Vancouver BIAs have consistently advocated for the removal of renewal requirements. Not only is the renewal process resource-intensive for BIAs and City resources, it also creates uncertainty for programs and partnerships. In a recent letter to the City's Business and Economy Office (BEO), the Vancouver BIA Partnership (representing all 22 BIAs) reaffirmed its request for removal of BIA expiration dates and expressed support for the proposed addition of a dissolution procedure. A copy of the letter from the Vancouver BIA Partnership is attached as Appendix B.

Table 2: Proposed Dissolution Procedure

Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A formal petition containing the signatures of 25 percent or more of the business tenants within the BIA. (or) - A formal petition containing 25 percent or more of property owners representing at least 25 percent of the total commercial assessed property value within the BIA. If either threshold is met, Step 2 may be initiated.
Step 2	<p>The City notifies all business tenants and property owners in the impacted area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If 50 percent or more of the business tenants, or 50 percent or more of the property owners, representing at least 50 percent of the total commercial assessed property value, support the dissolution, Council may then vote to dissolve the BIA.

Conclusion

Studies of municipalities outside British Columbia have shown that adopting a dissolution process, rather than relying on mandatory renewal requirements, improves administrative efficiency and provides greater predictability for planning programs and initiatives that support commercial districts.² The governance and administrative mechanisms that support accountability and transparency for the operation of the BIA would remain in place. These include an obligation to submit an annual budget for approval by its membership at an Annual General Meeting (AGM), submission of audited financial statements, and budgetary review and approvals by Council. To further complement existing governance measures, the BEO will redirect resourcing for the renewal process to instead support work with BIAs on alignment of governance processes, supporting transparency and accountability for membership, with recognised best practices for non-profit societies.

Should Council approve the proposed changes, staff will formally submit the following Vancouver Charter amendment requests to the Government of BC:

- Remove the requirement that a BIA be designated with a finite operating term;
- Remove the restriction that a BIA may be designated for no more than 20 years;
- Remove the limitation that specifies the total special levy a BIA may collect during an operating term; and
- Integrate the proposed dissolution procedure recommended in this report.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report's recommendations.

² "Overview of Dissolution Procedures in other Canadian Jurisdictions", [Council Report](#), dated March 3, 2015

Legal Implications

If the Recommendations in this report are approved, Council will seek various amendments to the Vancouver Charter related to BIAs.

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Appendix A Current BIA Renewal Process

The following outlines the key steps for renewals:

- **Spring** - The BIA engages property owners and businesses within its area and shares its intent to renew and/or alter its boundaries. Feedback from the membership is used to shape the renewal proposal.
- **Summer** - The BIA presents its renewal proposal to its membership at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). At this meeting, the membership votes on a resolution to seek Council approval to renew the BIA based on the proposed term and the maximum levy to be applied to eligible properties within the BIA.
- **Post-AGM** – Following approval of the proposal by its membership, the BIA submits a renewal request to Council for consideration.
- **November** – Council directs staff to notify property owners and businesses within the affected area and collect feedback on the proposed renewal. Council also instructs staff to forward the BIA's renewal request to a hearing of the Court of Revision, where property owners may raise concerns about errors related to their property, such as ownership details or property measurements. Notifications are sent in December, and property owners and businesses are given almost double of the required minimum of one full month to provide feedback.
- **February** - Council reviews the feedback received through the formal notification process and considers each renewal request. Should Council approve the renewal request, it will further direct the Director of Legal Services to bring forward by-laws to re-establish the BIA and to establish a new funding ceiling for the BIA.
- **March** – Council enacts the Designation and Grant Allocation By-laws for renewing BIAs. These by-laws must be enacted prior to Council's approval of a renewing BIA's annual budget, which is composed of the BIA levies to be collected in the subsequent fiscal year.

Appendix B
Letter from Vancouver BIA Partnership



February 9, 2026

Siobian Smith
Business and Economy Office
City of Vancouver

Re: Elimination of BIA Renewal Requirement

Dear Ms. Smith,

I am writing on behalf of the 22 BIAs in the City of Vancouver regarding the elimination of the BIA renewal requirement. With the removal of this clause, we also support the addition of a dissolution clause to the BIA Legislation in the Vancouver Charter.

The 22 Vancouver BIAs are in unanimous support of the removal of the renewal clause and support the addition of the Dissolution Clause as included in the recommendation from the Business and Economy Office. We have been advocating for this action for many years and see it as a step in the removal of red tape by the province. We recognize that it is important that BIAs are accountable to their members and want to assure council that this is important to the BIAs as well.

We are happy to work with council and the Business and Economy Office to move this initiative forward as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Hastings North BIA

s.22(1) Personal and Confidential
[Redacted signature area]

Received by City Clerk's Department

on FEB 09 2026

453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

Patricia Barnes, Executive Director

On behalf of the Vancouver BIA Partnership