

Executive Summary

of their respective communities with indications of higher socioeconomic levels. Conversely, VC BIAs do not perceive such high levels of social service delivery in their territories but typically operate in areas of lower socioeconomic levels² areas where conventional wisdom would suggest actually necessitate higher levels of social services. Accordingly, VC BIAs might be seen to be more accepting of social service provisions.

BIAs across the Metro Vancouver region generally perceive social issues in a similar fashion. That is, property theft, vandalism, homelessness, substance abuse, drug dealing, and panhandling are all perceived as issues more relevant in the management of Metro Vancouver BIAs than the remaining six social issues on the survey. Three social issues, however, were identified that VC BIAs perceive as more relevant to their BIAs than OM BIAs: street vending, panhandling, and vandalism. Moreover, municipal policies may, interestingly enough, influence the VC BIA perception of these issues.

All in all, BIAs in Metro Vancouver certainly perceive social issues as intertwined in economic objectives and the results of the survey analysis point to differences between VC and OM BIAs with respect to the perception of and response to social issues. The differences noted among BIAs in each subsample suggest it is likely that municipal social policies have some affect on the economic objectives of BIAs. Whether municipal social policies are the primary factors that cause these differences is interesting to consider yet inclusive. An in-depth case study analysis is required in order to draw any significant conclusions about the impact municipal social policies have on the economic objectives of BIAs. Future research could evaluate the implications of municipal polices on the actions of BIAs and² as this research project demonstrates² the municipalities of the Metro Vancouver region certainly represent a unique opportunity for such an inquiry.

Recommendations

This report culminates with three recommendations to help guide the future direction of BIAs in BC. The recommendations are from the perspective of BIAs, municipal governments and, lastly, the provincial government.

- 1. BIAs should extend their policy advocacy positions when social issues are prioritized.*

BIA's do conduct advocacy for policies and approaches that address issues relevant to their organizations. However, BIA's in areas with high occurrences of social issues should make policy advocacy a higher order tool. Policy advocacy detracts little from the already limited financial resources of BIA's and functions to establish partnerships and create co-leadership opportunities.

- 2. Municipalities that foster BIA's as economic development tools should consider how BIA's are involved in local social issues as well as their role in effectuating social planning goals.*

Municipalities should reflect on the democratic nature of BIA's and the manner in which they are accountable. BIA's represent private business interests and are business-minded organizations that typically lack the expertise to extend their roles into social service areas. However, municipalities can benefit substantially as BIA's emerge to take on more comprehensive roles in the community.

- 3. The Province of British Columbia should enable BIA's to evolve toward becoming tools of social innovation.*

The Province of British Columbia is in the position to enact legislation that would enable BIA's to evolve into tools for social innovation. The BIA tool is required to be as adaptive as possible in order to respond to the unique social and economic characteristics of the territories in which they operate. New forms of governance would enable BIA's to expand their reach in order to affect social outcomes in the community and build the capacity to address social issues more readily. This vision for BIA's in the future recognizes the unique position of BIA's in the community and among the various sectors of the economy and sees potential for BIA's as a form of social innovation.