



---

## Bronte BIA Economic Development Study:

---

### Executive Summary and Action Plan



T H R E E  
S I X T Y

---

**collective**

**JULY 2022**



# Bronte BIA Economic Development Study: Executive Summary and Action Plan

## 1 Introduction

An overall strategic review and community engagement process undertaken over the last three years has enabled the Bronte Village BIA to better articulate what they want to area to become. BronteForward! sets a direction for Bronte that is both aspirational and pragmatic. The vision statement sets the tone:

***“Bronte is a vibrant community where everyone is welcomed and everything you need is here.”***

Three Sixty Collective was retained to better equip the BIA to build a strong economic future. Bronte is being transformed by more intensive development that is bringing thousands of new residents into the community and redeveloping its traditional commercial properties. The BIA wants to be proactive in facilitating the relocation of displaced businesses and in supporting landlords, developers and brokers in recruiting the types and businesses and amenities likely to succeed because they will serve the needs of the local residents.

We consider the initiative and foresight taken by the BIA in this regard to be very timely. While intensification and mixed-use development has been taking place in Bronte for several decades, the pace is accelerating. There currently are six active projects under construction, recently completed or being considered by the Town. This trend is widely expected to continue for the foreseeable future. By taking a more proactive and strategic approach to its economic development, the BIA can equip itself to influence how the new development happens and the kinds of businesses that move into the area instead of reacting to the consequences after the fact.



## 2 Scope of Work

### **Who We Are:**

Three Sixty Collective is a group of retail specialists with expertise in a number of disciplines and professions that go into making retailers and retail districts and developers successful. Retailing is the common denominator and has been at the core of each team member's work for several decades or more.

### **What we Mean by “Retail”:**

Throughout our work, we use the term “retail” to include the sale of merchandise to consumers (which is the industry definition of retail trade) as well as the other consumer-facing services and activities that are synergistic with stores and are typically found in shopping districts. We find this useful since the entire complex of consumer facing businesses intermingle in shopping districts and determine its success.

Increasingly, providing services and selling goods also intermingle within single businesses and physical spaces. Many of the same factors determine the success of a restaurant or hair dressing salon as a retail store. When our comments or recommendations are specific to a particular type of business, we have indicated that is the case.

### **What We Did:**

1. Reviewed Town and BIA strategies, plans and actions through a RETAIL-FOCUSED lens: We applied our specialized knowledge about retail business requirements to the work that has gone on before and to the resulting regulatory and strategic framework.
2. Analyzed demographic and expenditure statistics, other market opportunities, real estate conditions and physical conditions of the district from the perspective of retailers looking for opportunities to locate and operate successful businesses.
3. Applied our combined experience and knowledge of retailer requirements and trends to provide guidance on how best to prepare for the future.



## **The Tools We've Provided:**

### **Public Facing Resources:**

- Marketing Brochure, profiling Bronte's assets from a retail business' perspective to assist in attracting new businesses to Bronte.
- Economic Development Action Plan, summarizing the key actions we recommend the BIA take to build a stronger economic future (this document).

### **Back Office Resources:**

1. Retail-focused Assessments of:
  1. The BIA's Strategic Framework and Town of Oakville's Policies and Regulations that Impact Development and the Public Realm.
  2. The Bronte District's Physical Attributes, Commercial Space, Public Realm and Accessibility.
  3. Current Business Inventory.
  4. Market Opportunities.
  5. Business Recruitment Opportunities and Strategy.
2. Reference Documents:
  1. How To Manual – Streetscape and Physical Conditions: summarizes retail development best practices against which to evaluate Bronte
  2. How To Manual – CoStar Data on Real Estate Market Conditions: summarizes definitions and findings from downloading CoStar data about Bronte's retail real estate conditions as of Q1 2022
    - a. Real Estate Data 2022 (excel workbook)
  3. How To Manual – Business Inventory: summarizes how business inventory was collected and key definitions, classifications and codes.
    - a. Business Inventory 2022 (excel workbook)
  4. How To Manual – Site Specific Amenities: summarizes the key dimensions of spaces that retail businesses are interested in knowing about when researching locations and a suggested approach to developing and maintaining an inventory of available commercial units. We've also provided a sample commercial lease template and the Zoning Map for Bronte for the BIA Office's convenient reference.
  5. How to Manual – Downloading Statistics Canada Reports: lists key reports available from Statistics Canada that describe retail trends and economic conditions. Provides urls and instructions for downloading.
  6. Data – Statistics Canada Reports for Employment Trends by Establishment Size (Ontario); Open, Closed and Active Business Counts



Toronto CMA and Ontario; Toronto Retail Sales and Ontario Food Service Sales. Most recent reports as of April 2022 were downloaded. See instructions in How To Manual – Downloading Statistics Canada Reports to update.

7. Data - Demographics 2021 (Provided by Town; excel Workbook and map of neighbourhood definitions (15-minute walk and 5-minute drive times).
8. Household Expenditure Analysis – an analysis and summary of the kinds of goods and services Bronte neighbourhood residents buy and how that might change in the future with more intensification.
9. Data - Hotel Inventory (excel spread sheet)
10. Data - 2018 and 2019 Events Held in Bronte Park and Marina Berths (Provided by Town; Excel Spread sheet)



### 3 High-Level Conclusions

1. Bronte is a great place to live, work and play. The neighbourhood's access to the waterfront and marina is among the best in the GTA. It is accessible to a wide range of other places by road and transit and has recently been officially certified as "Bicycle-Friendly". It is connected with its past as a 19<sup>th</sup> century fishing village and "stone-hooking" centre with some heritage buildings still remaining. It offers a wide range of housing types from single detached dwelling and townhouses to high rise rental apartments and luxury condos.
2. Overall, the business district is well positioned to build off its strength as a local neighbourhood centre providing a range of goods and services for local residents.
3. Intensification is happening and probably will continue for the foreseeable future since the area is a desirable residential neighbourhood with Zoning and Official Plan designations that permit significantly more development than currently exists.
4. Intensification will add new residents to the Bronte BIA area, increasing the potential demand for goods and services. The new residents are likely to have somewhat different lifestyles and spending patterns than current residents, creating new opportunities for a more diverse business mix.
5. Bronte's accessible location and proximity to the lake, waterfront parks and marina make it ideally positioned to attract people from beyond the immediate neighbourhood and support a more varied business mix. Doing so would be aligned with the interest that local residents have expressed in Bronte becoming a more varied, interesting and pleasant shopping district and community centre.
6. We strongly support the BIA's and Town of Oakville's previously identified strategies and actions to improve Bronte's walkability and enhance the pedestrian environment, and have included additional considerations in our recommendations. Improving the pedestrian environment will increase the amount of browsing and walking throughout the district, increasing sales potential for all tenants and providing opportunities for new types of businesses.



## 4 Recommended Action Plan

### Action Plan Framework

#### Goal:

Build a strong local economy within the Bronte BIA that supports the achievement of its vision to become a vibrant community where everyone is welcome and everything you need is here.

#### Three Objectives:

1. Set the stage for retailer-friendly development, public realm and infrastructure by influencing the regulatory framework and policies influencing development and public investment.
2. Increase discovery and visits to Bronte businesses by encouraging people to walk throughout the BIA.
3. Market Bronte as a business location and strategically recruit businesses that are likely to be successful and will strengthen the overall retail structure of the district.

#### Time Frames for Action:

##### **Immediate (2022-2023)** – Getting started

- The BIA began its economic development work in 2021. The recommendations for immediate actions continue these initiatives and build on them to strengthen Bronte's retail structure.

##### **Short Term (2024-2025)** – Lay the Foundation for Change

- Continue to ameliorate the temporary dislocation being created by redevelopment and prepare to leverage the opportunities afforded by the reconstruction of Lakeshore Road West and the new residents who soon will be making Bronte their home.

##### **Mid-Term (2026-2027)** – Lakeshore Construction

- Work with the Town to ameliorate disruption and ensure that the final product supports a strong pedestrian environment along and across Lakeshore. Continue to lay the foundation for a re-invigorated Bronte. Promote the change that is coming. Keep people coming to Bronte with programming at south and north end and promotional / on-line opportunities for Lakeshore businesses.



### **Long-Term (2028-2032) – Introduce a Re-invigorated Bronte**

- Celebrate and widely promote Bronte's new developments and public realm. Develop new markets. Build on lessons learned and progress made.

### **Ongoing Throughout All Periods**

- Represent and promote collective interests of Bronte businesses and property owners to build a stronger retail structure.
- Advocate for positive change and influence actions of others. Nurture strong partnerships.
- Undertake actions within BIA's mandate that are aligned with vision for the future.
- Market Bronte to local residents, prospective businesses and the broader region.
- Be an Information Broker: Make it easier for businesses to find out about and locate in Bronte. Make it easier for property owners to find business tenants. Make it easier for residents and prospective visitors to find out why come to Bronte.
- Celebrate Success and the role the BIA played in achieving it.

Please note that the calendar years describing each of the time periods are somewhat approximate and assume that the reconstruction of Lakeshore Road West happens as currently scheduled (2026-2027).

### **Recommended Actions**

The following series of tables summarize the key actions we recommend the BIA undertake immediately (I – 2022-2023), in the short term (ST- 2024-2025), in the mid-term (MT- 2026-2027) and in the long term (LT- 2028-2032). Please note that the assignment of actions to time periods is intended to be used as a general guide. The rate of progress, lessons learned, new opportunities and unforeseen events or trends probably will influence the roll-out of the action plan.

The rationale, detail and guidance in achieving the actions are set out in the five Retail-Focused Assessments and in the Resource Documents provided to the BIA.





**1. Strategic and Regulatory Framework – actions to set the stage for retailer-friendly development, public realm and infrastructure**

	Recommended Actions	Time Frames			
		I	ST	MT	LT
1.1	Advocate with Town for incorporating more effective retailer-friendly design guidelines in Development and Site Plan Approval Process (as detailed in Strategic and Regulatory Assessment)	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.2	Monitor new MPAC property valuation and work with Town to understand impact on Bronte commercial property tax levels. Advocate for amelioration if necessary (timing uncertain; might be 2023 – see District Assessment for more information).	✓	✓		
1.3	Advocate for suggested modifications in Town Official Plan and Zoning By-law (as detailed in Strategic and Regulatory Framework Assessment)	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.4	Advocate for the initiation of a Community Improvement Plan and associated loan and grant programs to motivate private sector investment (as detailed in Strategic and Regulatory Framework Assessment).	✓	✓	✓	
1.5	Monitor property sales in area to identify potential future development sites; establish relationship with developer as early as possible to share perspectives on Bronte's business opportunities and how the BIA can support them.	✓	✓	✓	✓



1.6	Strengthen relationship with Town of Oakville Planning.	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.7	Review and provide comments on development applications through a “retail lens” (use published Retail Design Manuals as a guide unless/until Town develops their own).	✓	✓	✓	✓

**Time Frames:**

I – Immediate. 2022 and 2023;  
 ST – Short Term. 2024 and 2025;  
 MT – Mid Term. 2026 and 2027;  
 LT – Long Term. 2028 to 2032.

**2. Placemaking and Walkability Enhancements – actions to encourage people to enjoy being in Bronte, walk along its sidewalks and explore and browse in its businesses.**

	Recommended Actions	Time Frame			
		I	ST	MT	LT
2.1	Pilot-test temporary curb extensions across Lakeshore.	✓	✓		
2.2	Discuss with the Town the addition of wayfinding signage in the Ontario Street municipal parking lot promoting and directing people to business district (could be done in context of current commercial parking strategy and on-street parking pilot).	✓			
2.3	Monitor current Town Commercial Parking Study and On-street Parking Pilot. Advocate for change that better supports Bronte businesses' needs (see Assessment of Bronte District for detail).	✓	✓		
2.4	Advocate with private parking lot owners to reduce towing during at least non-peak occupancy periods.	✓	✓	✓	✓



	Recommended Actions	Time Frame			
		I	ST	MT	LT
2.5	Advocate for shared parking management strategy for at least some of the private parking lots (Town could coordinate per Official Plan policy and has been done in other municipalities. See Assessment of Bronte District for detail).		✓	✓	✓
2.6	Advocate with private parking lot owners to permit temporary animated uses when lots aren't busy – e.g. temporary gardens, cafes, markets. Support for additional cost might be feasible through Community Improvement Plan (Action 1.4).		✓	✓	✓
2.7	Advocate for more animated and dynamic use of window display and front setback areas. BIA could collect and promote good examples from other areas, possibly hosting a workshop with guest speaker or expert if there is sufficient interest. BIA could partner with local arts organizations or schools to install art in storefront window areas of vacant units, offices, and other businesses that currently shutter their windows.		✓	✓	✓
2.8	Review street lighting infrastructure throughout district to assess options for increasing pedestrian scale lighting and illuminated decorations. Lakeshore reconstruction presents an opportunity to enhance pedestrian lighting. Also advocate for pedestrian lighting on Bronte Rd., Jones St. and new walkways.		✓	✓	
2.9	Advocate for “open street” approach on Bronte Road south of Marine Drive.	✓	✓		
2.10	Advocate to be an active participant in detailed streetscape design for Lakeshore Road (scheduled for 2024). Encourage Town to include retailer-friendly design criteria in landscaping, sidewalk and right of way design. Encourage inclusion of infrastructure for pedestrian-scale lighting. (see	✓	✓	✓	



	Recommended Actions	Time Frame			
		I	ST	MT	LT
	Bronte District and Strategic and Regulatory Framework Assessments for detail).				
2.11	Evaluate need for additional streetscape enhancements on Jones St., Bronte Road and Ontario Street (for implementation before Lakeshore Road Construction). (Detail in Bronte District and Strategic Framework Assessments).	✓	✓		
2.12	When implementing public realm improvements, review design through a “retailer-friendly” lens as detailed in the Assessments of Bronte District and Strategic and Regulatory Framework.	✓	✓	✓	✓

**Time Frames:**

- I – Immediate. 2022 and 2023;
- ST – Short Term. 2024 and 2025;
- MT – Mid Term. 2026 and 2027;
- LT – Long Term. 2028 to 2032.

**3. Market Bronte as a business location and strategically recruit businesses that are likely to be successful and will strengthen Bronte’s overall retail structure.**

As is detailed in the Assessment of Recruitment Opportunities, the business recruitment process is made up for four interrelated activities:

1. Information collection and distribution (Information Broker);
2. Building partners in the Recruitment Ecosystem (Partnership Builder);
3. Identifying and developing Leads (Lead Developer); and
4. Matching businesses’ locational and space requirements with space available to lease (Matchmaker).

The BIA’s current focus is on facilitating the relocation of tenants displaced by redevelopment projects within Bronte. This involves it undertaking all four roles,

As it looks to the future and begins to strategically attract new businesses to Bronte, we recommend that the BIA focus on playing Information Broker and Partnership Developer Roles.



	Recommended Actions	Time Frames			
		I	ST	MT	LT
<b>Business Retention</b>					
3.1	Meet with dislocated tenants to discuss interest in relocating within Bronte. Share information about vacant units and space coming onto to the market (requires information from Action 3.7 below). Facilitate businesses' connections to property owners.	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Information Broker – Marketing Brochure</b>					
3.2	Promote and distribute brochure from website and to property owners, real estate agents, Oakville and Halton Economic Development Offices, Small Business Centres and other business recruitment “gate-keepers” as may be identified in partnership development discussions. (see Action 3.13).	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.3	Work with Town to update the brochure with 2021 Census information when it becomes available for the 15-minute walk and 5-minute drive times.	✓			
3.4	Collect and update personal testimonials from businesses about why they located in Bronte (see Assessment of Recruitment Opportunities for detail). Use on website, brochure updates, media relations, etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.5	Reposition brochure to an “under construction but open for business” and “locate now to build for the future” themed messaging. Update demographics.			✓	
3.6	Reposition brochure to a “come see us now” theme. Update stats and messaging to focus on progress, new residents, new businesses, new markets.				✓



<b>Information Broker – Recruitment Toolbox</b>					
3.7	Work with property owners and realtors to develop an inventory of vacant space available for lease (see Assessment of Recruitment Opportunities and How To Manual – Site Specific Amenities for detail. Encourage owners & realtors to share new information with BIA and to post vacancies on Realtor.ca and Spacelist.ca.	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.8	Consistently communicate Bronte's "value proposition" as a business location and work with partners to encourage them also use the same messaging and definitions in their communications (as detailed in Assessment of Recruitment Opportunities).	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.9	Maintain list of suggested recruitment targets by updating progress in attracting targeted businesses and adding new gaps created by businesses closing or leaving Bronte (detailed in Assessment of Recruitment Opportunities). Share with property owners, realtors, and other partners in the recruitment ecosystem.	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.10	Look for opportunities to connect with residents moving into new developments. What do they like about shopping in Bronte and what should change? (see Assessment of Recruitment Opportunities for more detail.) Use insights to update recruitment targets and action plan and brochure.	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.11	Consider the need to assist small property owners and independent businesses in working with commercial leases, for example through workshops with experts. See Assessment of Recruitment Opportunities for more detail and suggestions.	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.12	Assess the potential to develop additional markets for BIA businesses, as is detailed in the Assessment of Market Opportunities. Consider Bronte's			✓	



	competitive advantage relative to other locations in attracting the broader community's residents, employees and tourists. Develop new marketing strategies and tactics to act on the results.				✓
<b>Recruitment Partnership Developer</b>					
3.13	Use the Marketing Brochure as a conversation starter to introduce the BIA's interest in taking a more proactive approach to attracting businesses to Bronte and the role each partner can play in supporting a recruitment ecosystem. Discuss the value added by this approach.	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.14	Meet with BIA property owners, starting with those with active listings as detailed in the Assessment of Recruitment Opportunities. Over time, build comprehensive property owner contact plan and data base.	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.15	Monitor Property Sales and identify redevelopment projects. Meet with developers to discuss commercial leasing plan, ground floor design and interest in working with the BIA.	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.16	Meet with commercial real estate brokers and agents active in area. Discuss marketing brochure, recruitment targets and how the BIA can support recruitment and leasing.	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.17	Build stronger relationships with Oakville and Halton Economic Development Departments and Small Business Centre. Discuss alignment in interests in business incubation and nurturing strong independent businesses in Oakville's BIAs, and between BIA's interests. Advocate for increasing municipal role in "lead development" and "matchmaking" for BIA business recruitment.	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.18	If partnership discussions lead to identification of business incubation opportunities, partner with relevant organizations and property owners to			✓	✓



	facilitate new businesses opening their first locations in Bronte.				
3.19	Build relationships with Tourism Oakville, area hotels, Marina and other regional attractions if decision is made to expand marketing targets.			✓	✓
<b>Evaluate Progress and Assess Next Steps</b>					
3.20	Evaluate progress of recruitment program and effectiveness of partnerships developed. What's working well and generating results and where are the gaps?		✓	✓	
3.21	Consider need for a stronger role or different approach to lead development and matchmaking. See Assessment of Recruitment Opportunities for detail and suggestions.		✓	✓	✓

**Time Frames:**

- I – Immediate. 2022 and 2023;
- ST – Short Term. 2024 and 2025;
- MT – Mid Term. 2026 and 2027
- LT – Long Term. 2028 to 2032.





## 5 SUMMARY

The recommended Economic Development Action Plan is intended to better equip the Bronte BIA to build a strong local economy that supports its vision of becoming a vibrant community where everyone is welcome and everything you need is here. It recommends that the BIA advocate, influence, collect and provide relevant information and develop strong partnerships directed at:

1. Setting the stage for retailer-friendly development, public realm and infrastructure by influencing the regulatory framework and policies influencing development and public investment;
2. Increasing discovery and visits to Bronte businesses by encouraging people to walk throughout the BIA; and
3. Marketing Bronte as a business location and strategically recruiting businesses that are likely to be successful and will strengthen the overall retail structure of the district.

It is extremely timely for the BIA to become an influencer in the economic development process. Bronte is experiencing considerable redevelopment and intensification which is bringing thousands of new residents into the area and changing its built form. The Action Plan provides the BIA with the tools it needs to better ensure that the result is a strong commercial district that is a good location for retail businesses. Providing the recommended information and support should be especially helpful to the small property owners who own a high proportion of Bronte's commercial real estate and to independent businesses who are the preferred recruitment targets.

Economic development is an extremely hands-on activity that relies on developing relationships on an ongoing basis. It doesn't usually bring instantaneous results. Persistence and patience is required, but the ultimate payback is the development of a strong synergistic cluster of businesses that is valued by the community and contributes to job creation and economic prosperity.