

2026 SAUGEEN SHORES MUNICIPAL CANDIDATE SURVEY

Section 2: Partnership with the BIA

BIAs are local boards of Council. A productive relationship between the BIA, Council and municipal staff can help identify challenges, develop solutions and ensure municipal decisions reflect the needs of the business community.

QUESTION 5

How would you ensure the BIAs are meaningfully involved in municipal planning and policy processes that affect the business area, including Official Plan reviews, transportation planning, master plans and strategic planning?

Brian Putman (Not Putnam)

Mayor

It is my view that the BIAs as well as local businesses are primary rights holders when it comes to policies and municipal planning that is business related. While I view them as primary rights holders, I believe there are other rights holders that deserve a seat at the table when considering related policy changes and municipal planning issues.

Jeffrey J James

Mayor

By creating a predictable and open channel for BIA input from the start, Council and staff can tap into their valuable perspective, avoid surprises, and ultimately build stronger policy that works for both businesses and the wider community.

Luke Charbonneau

Mayor

The BIAs are key partners for the municipality on economic development and downtown improvement. The best connection between the BIAs and the Town are the Council representatives who serve on the Boards of Management. Those Members of Council along with the Community Development Coordinator will ensure that the BIAs are kept informed about important planning decisions that may affect the business community. BIAs will also be encouraged to participate in the public consultations that accompany the decision making process on all major projects and planning matters.

Diane Huber

Deputy Mayor

Might be great for the BIA administrative co-ordinator to have a schedule of bi-monthly or quarterly meetings with a key economic development team member (and possibly the Council Board reps) so that information can be shared on a timely basis as to what's coming up with regard to regular reviews, updates or new strategic/master planning processes.

Odette Bartnicki

Deputy Mayor

Council and staff should communicate early about plans and processes affecting BIA members, actively seek their input and work with the BIAs on a public communications plan with clear, shared goals. There should be no surprises. When suggestions are not adopted, the reasons should be explained openly—this transparency builds trust and support.

The Town should also help residents understand how successful local businesses contribute to employment, municipal services, vibrant downtowns and the overall quality of life in Saugeen Shores. I believe this awareness will create more loyalty to local businesses

Don Matheson

Vice Deputy Mayor

I think the biggest thing is to involve our BIAs early.

Whether we're talking about the Official Plan, transportation, master plans or the Town's strategic plan, if a decision is going to affect our downtown businesses, they should have an opportunity to be part of the conversation before the decisions are made.

Our business owners are there every day. They understand parking, traffic, deliveries, pedestrian access and what works—and what doesn't.

That doesn't mean Council will always agree with the BIA, but we should listen to them and make sure their input is considered.

For me, it's pretty simple: bring them in early, listen to what they have to say, and then make the best decision for the whole community.

Jordan MacKinnon

Port Elgin

The most important thing council can do is involve the BIAs at the early stages of projects and initiatives that impact our downtowns and small businesses. For important documents like Official Plans, a clear consultation process for BIAs should be outlined so the BIAs can gather relevant information and feedback from membership in a timely manner.

Patricia Corrigan-Frank

Councillor Port Elgin Ward

I think the MOU mentioned above is the first step. Then the BIAs should be consulted prior to the Official Plan review and other key discussions that directly affect them, like Transportation, Zoning, Tourism, etc. Something to consider: do the BIAs have an appointed board seat on any committees? Should they have? Should Council consider giving them a voting or non-voting seat on pertinent municipal committees? These are questions that should be asked.

Rachel Stack

Port Elgin Ward Councillor

With a term of Council under my belt, I have come to understand that providing information to constituents, including the BIAs, is the more powerful tool to empower people and businesses to have their voices heard on important issues facing the community. Accordingly, to ensure our BIAs are meaningfully involved in municipal policy issues that matter to them, I will work with the BIAs to ensure they are informed of policy matters before Council, encourage BIA representatives to make delegations, and raise strategic issues to Council (most importantly during the strategic planning process that leads into budget planning).

Tamara McDonald

Councillor- Port Elgin Ward

I'm not familiar enough with how this currently works to say where the gaps may be. As a councillor I would want the BIAs involved early when municipal planning or policy decisions could have a direct impact on their business area.

I think everyone needs to understand their role. Council has a responsibility to make decisions for the municipality as a whole, staff have the expertise to guide the process, and the BIAs bring an important perspective from businesses and the people they represent.

For me, meaningful involvement means being brought into the conversation early enough that their input can actually shape the discussion.

Eric Tolton

Saugeen Ward Councillor

The key is early involvement. When planning or policy decisions will materially affect a BIA, consultation should occur while alternatives are still being considered, not after the preferred solution has effectively been determined.

Neil Sarginson

Saugeen Ward Councillor

There should be, if there isn't already, joint BIA-municipal working groups dedicated to specific long-term initiatives like parking strategies or streetscape plans. Include the BIA in any street maintenance or reconstruction planning so the full business impact can be understood and built into the plan.

Brenda Reeves

Southampton Ward councillor

I would advocate for both BIA's to be involved from the beginning of any planning process affecting our business areas – not after the major decisions are made. That means invitations to working sessions, regular updates, clear reporting on how their input shaped the final plan. Early ongoing consultation leads to better decisions and helps businesses prepare for change.

Cathe McIntosh

Councillor, Southampton Ward

I see the Council representative as the connecting link between the BIA and the municipality and that representative should relay BIA ideas and concerns to Council AND make sure that relevant municipal information is relayed to the BIAs in a timely manner. Given my small business experience, I believe I would be a good fit as that representative. I would also suggest that the representative give regular updates to Council on what the BIAs are working on to keep communication lines open and identify opportunities that would support BIAs.

Cheryl Grace

Southampton ward councillor

All of the initiatives described above involve public consultation, usually with stakeholder groups as well as the general public. Make sure the BIAs are included as stakeholders, and that BIA Council reps keep BIA members informed about upcoming strategic initiatives.

Harry Mazmanian

Southampton Ward

From what I see on High Street in Southampton, the Southampton BIA is already meaningfully involved in all the processes mentioned. The residents of Southampton however have either been ignored or the consultation process has not been adequately conducted, recorded and published.

John Divinski

Councillor, Southampton Ward

See #1

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