

97 STREET AND AREA BUSINESS REVITALIZATION ZONE

STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN 2006-2009



Approved by the BRZ Board of Directors on September 21, 2006
Presented and supported at the October 17, 2006 Annual General Meeting of the BRZ



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“If you only look at what is, you may never attain what could be.”
– Anonymous

The 97 Street and Area BRZ has created a strategic business plan that will guide it for the next three years. This Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis to keep it current. This ambitious plan has the potential to significantly improve the BRZ area and to help revitalize this area of the city. This is a great opportunity to draw more tourists to our city as this rich multicultural area is truly a hidden gem with great potential. By investing in this area and its revitalization, all stakeholders will benefit. The City of Edmonton, for example, will gain more taxes from a rejuvenated area and Edmontonians and their visitors will have a great place to shop and entertain themselves.

The strategic plan is composed of numerous sections. There are smaller sections that clarify the plan, including BRZ background information, the mission statement that guides the strategic plan, BRZ character areas, methods used to gain input for the plan and appendices. The larger section on the action plan identifies the objectives, strategies, tasks and responsible partners. This section will allow the BRZ to focus on the various activities that it needs to complete in order to implement the strategic plan.

A major concern of the BRZ is the impact from the numerous social agencies and their clients located in this area on the businesses and their customers. This issue needs to be addressed by all the stakeholders and there are strategies put forward in this plan that will help achieve this.

The BRZ has identified a number of strategies and tasks as part of this plan. However, there are four key priorities that the business association would like to address in partnership with the City and other authorities:

1. Improvements to the public spaces in the BRZ, including various street and avenue areas;
2. Form an Integrated Services Team for the BRZ area to address social, policing and infrastructure issues;
3. Seek financial support to construct a combined Chinese Garden & Museum in the commercial core of Chinatown North; and
4. Persuade City Council and the Edmonton Public School Board to relocate the maintenance facility, and rezone and redevelop this site.

These priorities will allow the BRZ to focus on revitalizing the whole area and making it more attractive. The BRZ will work hard with all potential partners, including all levels of government, the business community and other private sponsors, local communities and various government agencies to achieve this plan.

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

The 97 Street and Area Business Revitalization Zone was established in 2000 and represents approximately 260 businesses in the area from 105 to 110 Avenue and from 95 to 101 Street. The BRZ continues to focus on economic development and business retention in the area, as well as street maintenance and beautification. Increasing attention has been directed to street maintenance and security, retail recruitment, as well as parking and transportation issues.



The purpose of this Strategic Business Plan is to direct the future of the 97 Street and Area BRZ, to serve as a framework for decisions for securing approval and support for strategies in the plan, and to provide a basis for more detailed planning in order to stimulate change. The plan also enables the BRZ to monitor and communicate its progress towards stated objectives to BRZ members and the City Administration. This plan is prepared in response to the recommendations by the City Auditor.

The strategic direction of the BRZ reflects the priorities of the Board to achieve operational success in specific areas, including safety and security, economic development and business recruitment, and public spaces improvements. The success of this plan depends on collaboration with and approval by the members of the 97 Street and Area BRZ, the Board of Directors, as well as a partnership with the City of Edmonton. This Strategic Business Plan is not a static document, and will be reviewed on an annual basis to provide the BRZ with a dynamic and flexible planning tool.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the 97 Street and Area BRZ is to create:

“A safe and vibrant multicultural showcase in the heart of Edmonton designed to attract businesses, citizens and tourists to a smorgasbord of shopping and cultural experiences.”

DISTINCT CHARACTER AREAS WITHIN THE 97 STREET AND AREA BRZ

The 97 Street and Area BRZ is a commercial district within Edmonton that is comprised of several distinct character areas, or precincts, as shown on the following map.

97 Street – Chinatown Main Street

Extending from 105 Avenue to 107A Avenue, 97 Street is the main street of Chinatown. The entranceway to Chinatown from downtown is on 97 Street through an underpass south of 105 Avenue. At the north end, there is a gateway at 107A Avenue. Along 97 Street, there is a mix of older one and two-storey commercial buildings with street front retail and restaurant establishments. The Pacific Rim Mall, which contains a variety of shops and services, is located at the southern entrance to the BRZ, and the Lucky 97 Supermarket is located near the gate at 107A Avenue. 97 Street, between 105 and 107A Avenues, has undergone improvements, such as painted and customized poles, banners, bollards and pedestrian lighting with strong Chinese themes. The area also contains the refurbished heritage building, the Hull Block, which has enhanced the area.



97 Street gateway below 107A Avenue looking south

106 Avenue – Pedestrian-oriented Area

The 106 Avenue Area is the heart of Chinatown. There are three major arterials that frame the area: 97 Street to the east, 101 Street to the west and 107 Avenue to the north. It is within walking distance of the downtown core and the refurbished Hull Block terminates the vista on the east side of 106 Avenue. This area has attracted retail development for the past few years and it is becoming a diverse oriental shopping district. There is a predominance of Vietnamese and Chinese retail operations. However, the area continues to be underutilized with 106 Avenue and 98 Street being too broad for their current car traffic levels. There are also large empty lots that dot this area.



106 Avenue at 98 Street looking west

105A Avenue – Transition Area

The Transition Area is located in the southern section of the BRZ between 101 and 97 Streets. It borders the proposed Station Lands redevelopment north of Downtown. It is an area that contains three social agencies whose clients occupy the private and public places of the area throughout the day and at night. Between 100 and 99 Streets there is a large Edmonton Public School Board maintenance facility that presents are development opportunity for a more complimentary land use within the BRZ.



105A Avenue and 100 Street beside the Edmonton School Board Facility

101 Street – Renewal Area

101 Street is a major arterial leading to downtown with a high number of vacant businesses and lots. The arterial has very little streetscaping and is not pedestrian-friendly. On the northern edge of this precinct, there is a large furniture store, a restaurant, and a few other businesses.



West side of 101 Street looking south toward the Downtown

95 Street – Little Italy

The 95 Street area, between 107A and 109A Avenues, is Edmonton's Little Italy. It has recently gained two impressive developments that have significantly increased the profile of the area. The renovated Giovanni Caboto Park is an amenity for local residents, as well as for pedestrians and visitors. A new mixed use development of retail and affordable housing in the northwestern corner of 107A Avenue and 95 Street will be a positive addition to the BRZ. This community is anchored around the very successful Italian Centre supermarket, which has long been a focal point for Italian culture in Edmonton.



West side of 95 Street with a view of the new mixed-use developments

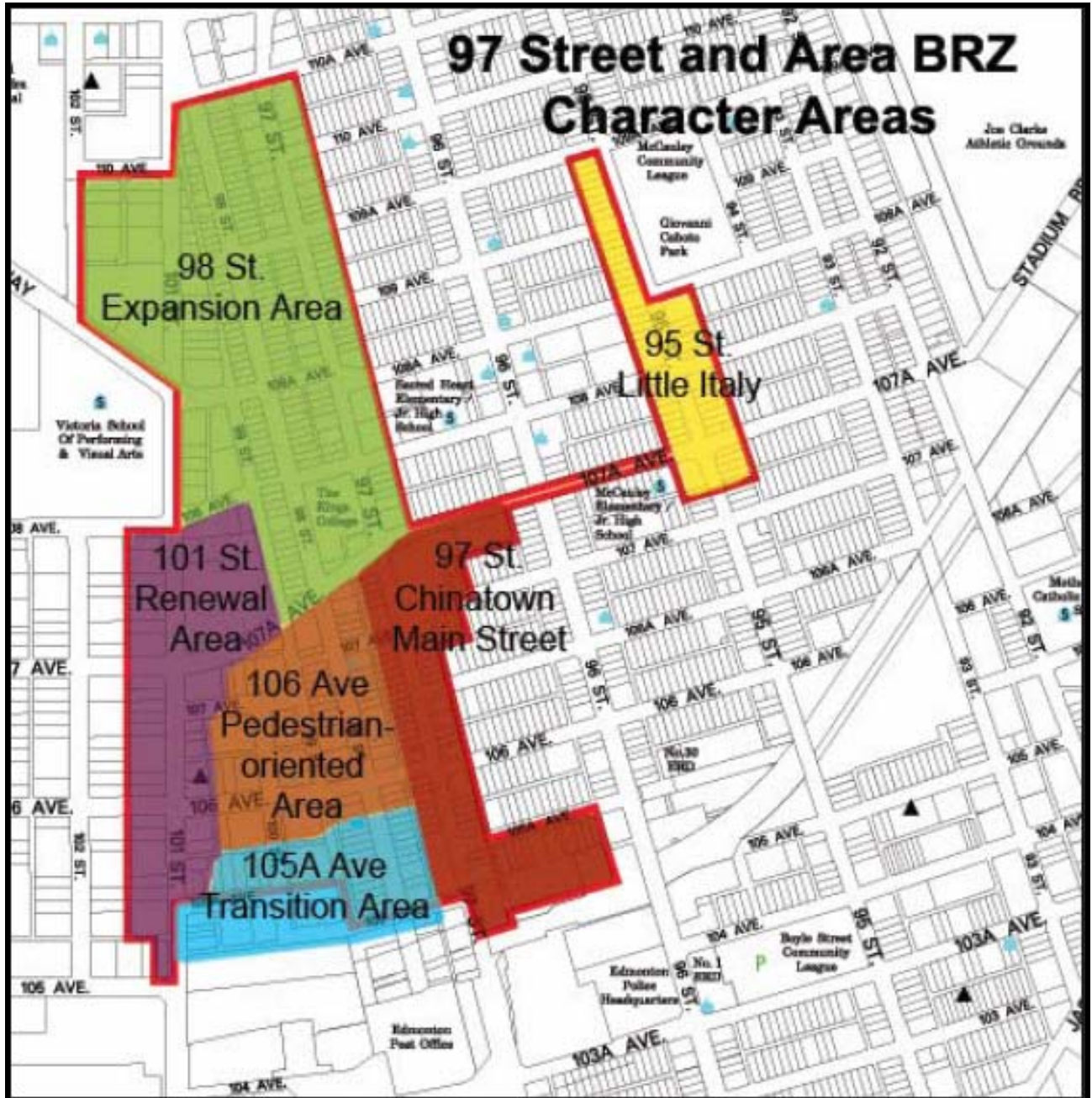
98 Street – Expansion Area

The Expansion Area is located between 107A and 110A Avenues and between 102 and 97 Streets. This large area contains many businesses along 97, 98 and 101 Streets. There is also a large educational facility bordering the area, the Victoria High School. The Excel Academy is located just north of 107A Avenue. This area will provide an opportunity for expanding the capacity of the BRZ in the future.



109A Avenue and 101 Street looking east

Map 1

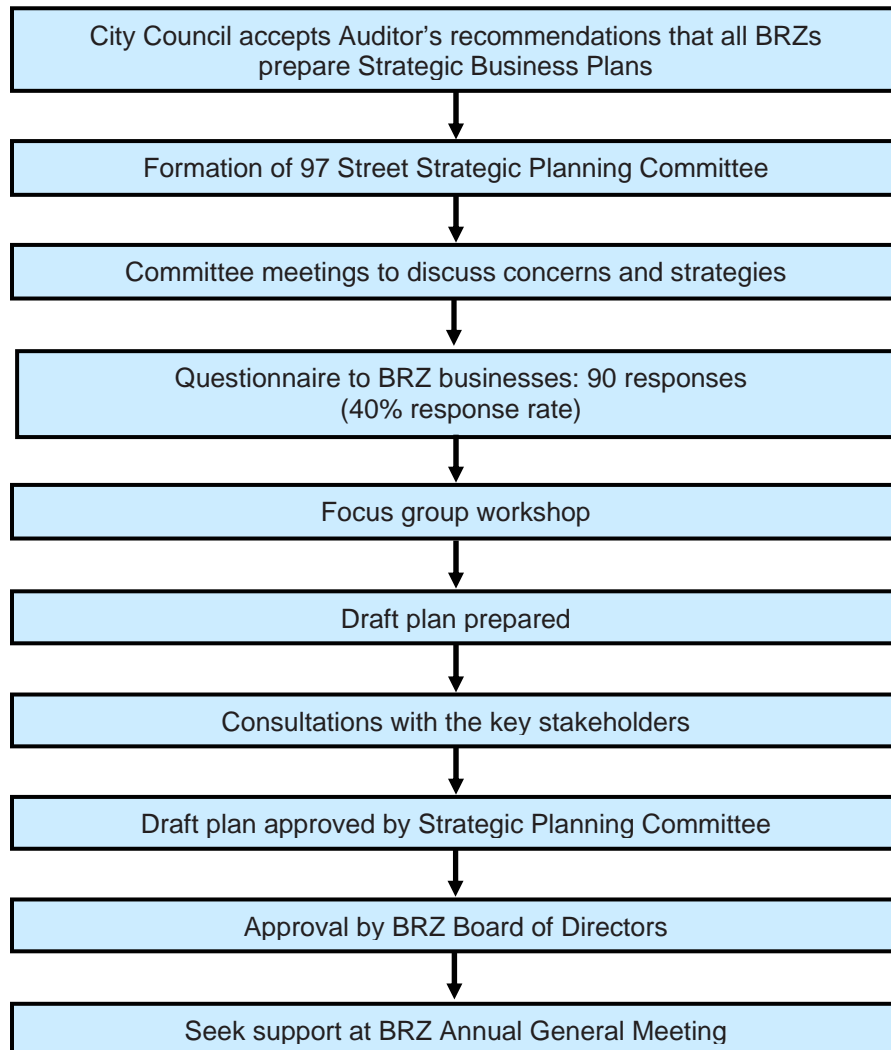


STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

This plan is based on information obtained from the following sources:

- Visual observations and photo documentation of the 97 Street and Area BRZ
- Research and assessment in and around the BRZ which included:
 - Social service agencies and community organizations
 - Police resources assigned
 - Major land development applications
 - Future land development potential
 - Potential for further capital investments by the City of Edmonton
- Meetings with the BRZ Board of Directors and the City of Edmonton Planning Department
- Distribution of a questionnaire to the BRZ business community
- A focus group workshop with the business community, City Councilors, Community Services, Edmonton Police Services, the Mayor's office and the Community League.

The process used to develop the Strategic Business plan is shown in the following flow chart:



SURVEY AND WORKSHOP RESULTS

Approximately 230 questionnaires (Appendix A) were distributed to the 97 Street and Area business community to determine their most prominent concerns. 90 questionnaires were returned within the deadline of two weeks, which represents approximately a 40 percent response rate. The high response rate and success of the questionnaire is attributed to the Executive Director of the BRZ in hand delivering the surveys, and translating the questions and responses for many of the survey participants.

The questionnaire included an invitation to attend a workshop to further discuss the concerns of the business community and provide feedback on the proposed strategies. The workshop was attended by 22 people, including members of the BRZ Board of Directors, BRZ members, two City Councilors, two Community Services representatives, and representatives from the Edmonton Police Services, the Mayor's Office and Community League. The workshop was successful in bringing forth additional strategies, and more importantly, initiating a discussion among key stakeholders to move towards a capacity building strategy. This Strategic Business Plan and the prioritization of strategies to accomplish the goals of the BRZ is a result of the concerns and opinions expressed by the 97 Street and Area business community and Board of Directors.

CONCERNS

The 97 Street and Area Business Association committee on the strategic plan brought forward several concerns that are currently affecting the BRZ. These concerns were then presented to the business members, which prioritized them thereafter. The concerns as identified by the BRZ members in order of highest importance are:

1. Crime and Safety: Insufficient police presence in area, drug trade, prostitution, and low perception of safety in the BRZ.
2. Nuisance from transient population: Loitering, panhandling, alcohol consumption and public urination.
3. Concentration of social agencies: Within and around the BRZ, and expansion of some agencies. Lack of open social facilities throughout the day for transients.
4. Parking concerns: Lack of free parking for BRZ visitors in time restricted areas due to heavy use as a result of proximity to the downtown core and lack of parking limit enforcement.
5. Garbage and graffiti removal: Lack of cleanliness in public and private areas, infrequent garbage removal promotes dumpster diving.
6. Maintenance of infrastructure: Presence of graffiti in area, lack of public areas maintenance, worn out metal banners and lights in the gateway.
7. Vacant businesses and lots: Vacant lots are neither maintained nor being developed and vacant buildings contribute to perception of blight.
8. 97 Street/105 Avenue underpass: Barrier for pedestrian access to Chinatown along 97 Street.
9. Inappropriate land uses: Large Edmonton Public School Maintenance facility inappropriate within the BRZ. This presents an opportunity for redevelopment but School Board is currently reluctant to relocate.

Strategies

The Business Association members prioritized the proposed strategies as shown in Appendix B. The top three strategies identified were:

1. Enhanced police initiatives
2. Social agencies study and recommendations
3. Parking strategy

The objectives of the 97 Street and Area BRZ are to:

- 1. Create and market a positive image for the business area.**
 - a. Work with the City and property owners to undertake improvements to the public spaces in the BRZ
 - b. Work with the City and property owners to create linkages from surrounding areas.
 - c. Additional clean-up activities of neglected areas.
- 2. Make the business area safe at all hours of the day.**
 - a. Enhanced Police presence in the area.
 - b. Undertake a safety audit of the area.
 - c. Advocate for the formation of an Integrated Services Team with a budget to address some of the key issues.
- 3. Increase the number of people who shop and visit the BRZ area.**
 - a. Improve public parking availability.
 - b. Create more attractions and amenities to bring visitors to the area.
 - c. Negotiate relocation of the Edmonton Public School Board facility.
 - d. Support additional housing in the area.
 - e. Explore the potential of an Ambassador Program.
- 4. Attract more businesses to the area and help existing businesses stay vital.**
 - a. Undertake a business recruitment program.
 - b. Organize business workshops on topics that would benefit local businesses.
- 5. Promote and enhance the multicultural business aspects of the area.**
 - a. Adopt a new name for the BRZ that promotes and raises awareness about the predominantly Chinese and Italian cultural heritage of the area.
 - b. Increase the number of special events such as summer parades and festivals.
 - c. Promote Chinatown North and Little Italy as an important tourist destination of Edmonton.

ACTION PLAN

Objective 1: Create and market a positive image for the business area.

Strategy	Associated Tasks	Responsible Partners*	Outcomes/Impact	Priority
Work with the City and property owners to undertake improvements to the public spaces in the BRZ (Map 2)	Request Planning and Development to undertake design schemes for improvements to: a. 106 Avenue area and the Pedestrian-oriented area b. 101 Street renewal area (Map 1)	City of Edmonton Property Owners	Improved image of the area will bring in more customers and visitors to the BRZ Improve pedestrian lighting and parking layout Provide more pedestrian improvements, such as wider sidewalks and landscaping	High
Work with the City and property owners to create linkages from the surrounding areas (Map 2)	Encourage the improvement, maintenance and cleanliness of the 97 Street underpass at 105 Avenue Improve the pedestrian linkage between Chinatown North to Little Italy, Downtown and Chinatown South (107A Avenue, 101 and 97 Street) through banners, signage and art	City of Edmonton Property Owners	Chinatown is in close proximity to the downtown but will become more accessible and pedestrian friendly through improved linkages	
Additional clean-up activities of neglected areas	Investigate improved methods of garbage collection in the BRZ (i.e. removal of dumpsters, more frequent pick-up schedule) Promote increased maintenance of private areas to businesses, including alleyways Business workshops and other materials on topics such as cleaning activities and safe needle disposal (see the City of Edmonton Safe Edmonton Initiative for needle disposal info or www.streetworks.ca)	City of Edmonton Business Owners	Reduced problems with garbage pickers and rodents Reduced garbage on streets, sidewalks and in alleys provides clean and aesthetic business area Business owners more proactive in dealing with issues, and more involved with community	

* Includes the 97 Street and Area Business Association

ACTION PLAN

Objective 2: Provide a sense of security in the business area at all hours of the day.

Strategy	Associated Tasks	Responsible Partners*	Outcomes/Impact	Priority
Enhanced Police presence in the area	Increase the overall presence of police in the BRZ	Edmonton Police Service	Crime reduction and increased sense of security for residents, businesses and customers	
Undertake a safety audit of the area	BRZ businesses to be part of a Safety Audit which will identify and reduce opportunities for crime Implement Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Principles (CPTED)	Edmonton Police Service Community Services Business Community McCauley Community	Address specific safety concerns of the businesses in the BRZ Physical improvements can have positive results by encouraging a more protective attitude towards property and the neighbourhood, and increase interaction among residents	
Advocate for the formation of an Integrated Services Team for the BRZ area with a relatively small amount of funds provided by the City of Edmonton.	Persuade City Council to form an Integrated Services Team for the BRZ with some funding to help address social, policing and infrastructure issues with representation from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BRZ • Social Agencies • City of Edmonton • Police Services • Emergency Response • Local communities • Capital Health, etc. Work with Capital Health and the other Social Agencies on issues like public urination and the provision of washrooms for the transient population Implement Crime Prevention Through Social Development (CPSD) initiatives	City of Edmonton Community Services Social Agencies BRZ Business Community & Association Edmonton Police Service Capital Health Boyle Street/McCauley Community	The Integrated Services Team would use this \$40,000 of City funding to bring in expertise to assist in addressing some of the social issues of the BRZ and the broader community. This expertise would provide an overview of the problems, address key issues, and focus on solutions, some involving relatively small scale capital projects with limited costs that could be implemented immediately, or in some cases, over a longer period, while exploring cost sharing opportunities for these projects. Increase communication between BRZ and other stakeholders.	High

* Includes the 97 Street and Area Business Association

ACTION PLAN

Objective 3: Increase the number of people who shop in and visit the BRZ area.

Strategy	Associated Tasks	Responsible Partners*	Outcomes/Impact	Priority
Improve public parking availability	Request the Transportation Department, with assistance of Planning and Development, to undertake a review of the parking situation in the BRZ to address local parking concerns in terms of the management of public parking spaces Work with the Planning and Development Department to ensure that parking infractions are being enforced	Transportation Department Planning and Development	Increase parking availability for BRZ customers closer to the businesses they are visiting.	
Create more attractions and amenities to bring visitors to the area	Seek financial support to construct a Chinese Garden/Museum in the commercial core of Chinatown North	Three levels of government Friendship cities** Business Community Private sponsors	Provide for an enjoyable cultural experience and visitor destination	High
Negotiate relocation of the Edmonton Public School Board facility	Persuade City Council and the Edmonton Public School Board to relocate this maintenance facility and rezone and redevelop this site; as identified in the Boyle Street/McCauley ARP*** (Section 7.2.3 Policy 1)	City of Edmonton Edmonton Public School Board	Removal of this inappropriate land use in Chinatown will create a redevelopment opportunity Supports the Boyle Street/McCauley ARP	High
Support additional housing in the area (Map 2)	Encourage the development of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable and market-rate housing Mixed use developments 	Property Owners	Increase the number of potential customers for BRZ businesses	
Explore the potential of an Ambassador Program	Negotiate the expansion of the Ambassador Program in the Downtown BRZ to include 97 Street BRZ Research opportunities for a tourist welcome program, similar to program offered by the City of Chicago	Partnership with other Business Associations Local residents Edmonton Tourism	Tourists and visitors have a safe and enjoyable experience in the BRZ Knowledge and history from local residents shared	

* Includes the 97 Street and Area Business Association

** Harbin & Chengdu

*** Site to be developed for commercial, affordable housing & possibly a Chinese Garden/Museum.

ACTION PLAN

Objective 4: Attract more businesses to the area and help existing businesses stay vital.

Strategy	Associated Tasks	Responsible Partners*	Outcomes/Impact	Priority
Undertake a business recruitment program	<p>Make contacts and develop proposal to local post secondary Business or Asian Studies program (GMCC, NAIT, U of A) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a business and demographic analysis of the area • Determine amenities and services needed in the BRZ • Create a business recruitment package 	Post secondary schools	<p>Increase the number and assortment of appropriate businesses and services offered in the BRZ</p> <p>Filling vacant buildings and lots with appropriate uses will improve image of BRZ</p>	
Organize business workshops	<p>Identify topics that businesses would benefit from</p> <p>Source potential resources to deliver workshops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Health or Streetworks on safe needle disposal • Waste disposal • Theft/robbery prevention 	Business Association to create partnerships with various agencies	<p>Build on success of existing businesses</p> <p>Increase business operators ability to deal with issues and proper reactions</p>	

* Includes the 97 Street and Area Business Association

ACTION PLAN

Objective 5: Promote and enhance the multicultural business aspects of the area.

Strategy	Associated Tasks	Responsible Partners*	Outcomes/Impact	Priority
Adopt a new name for the BRZ that promotes and raises awareness about the predominantly Chinese and Italian cultural heritage of the area	Gain approval of name and make legislative changes		Unique name to promote the image of the area as a Chinese and Italian area of Edmonton Increased tourism and visitation to the BRZ	
Increase the number of special events such as summer parades and festivals	Identify cultural festivals and activities that would bring interested Edmontonians and tourists to the BRZ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rickshaw for hire • Bus tours between BRZs 	Other BRZ Associations	Increased tourism and visitation to the BRZ	
Promote Chinatown North and Little Italy as an important tourist destination of Edmonton	Launch BRZ website Develop tourist information such as maps, business directories	Edmonton Tourism Other BRZ Associations	Increased tourism and visitation to the BRZ	

* Includes the 97 Street and Area Business Association

Map 2



LEGEND

- | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| BRZ Boundary | Chinese Garden | North Edge |
| 101 St Arterial | Entranceway | Station Lands |
| 107 Ave Arterial | Bridge Decoration | Heritage Restoration |
| 106 Ave Improvement | Bike Trail | Highrise Development |
| Pedestrian-Oriented Area | Multi-use Trail | |
| Relocation of Facility | Linkage to Downtown | |
| | Linkage to Chinatown South | |

Questionnaire to BRZ Businesses

As a member of the 97 Street Business Association, please answer the following 4 questions to determine the priorities and direction of the Association's activities. Your input is valuable.

1. As a business owner, please list your top concerns that affect your business area.

2. The Business Association has identified 9 key concerns affecting the business area. Please rank these concerns in order of highest to lowest priority.
(1 = highest priority, 9 = lowest priority)

- _____ Garbage removal and graffiti
- _____ Vacant businesses and lots
- _____ 97 Street underpass at 105 Avenue
- _____ Concentration of Social Agencies
- _____ Inappropriate land uses (non-commercial or residential uses)
- _____ Nuisance from transient population
- _____ Parking concerns
- _____ Crime and Safety
- _____ Maintenance of public and private areas

3. The Business Association has identified a number of strategies to address the above concerns. Place an 'X' beside the top 5 strategies which you feel would be most effective.

- _____ Provide a stronger Police presence
- _____ Undertake a Social Services study to address social issues
- _____ More marketing and special events
- _____ Removal of parking meters and limit parking to 2-hours
- _____ Develop more housing in the area
- _____ Build a Chinese Garden
- _____ Attract new businesses to the area
- _____ More streetscape improvements (trees, lighting, banners)
- _____ Provide additional clean-up activities
- _____ Increase tourist information
- _____ Removal of 97 Street underpass at 105 Avenue

Additional suggestions: _____

APPENDIX A

4. If you would like to discuss your concerns and possible solutions, please indicate ('X') that you will attend a workshop on Tuesday, July 11, 2006 at 7:00 pm at the Century Palace.

_____ Yes, I will attend the workshop.

Name: _____

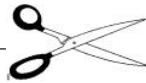
Business Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail: _____

Please deliver or fax both pages by **July 7** to:

**Ratan Lawrence
Pacific Rim Mall
#222, 9700 – 105 Avenue
Fax: (780) 423-2612**



97 Street and Area Business Association

**invites you to attend a workshop to
identify your concerns
and
provide possible solutions to these concerns.**

Date: July 11, 2006

Time: 7:00 pm

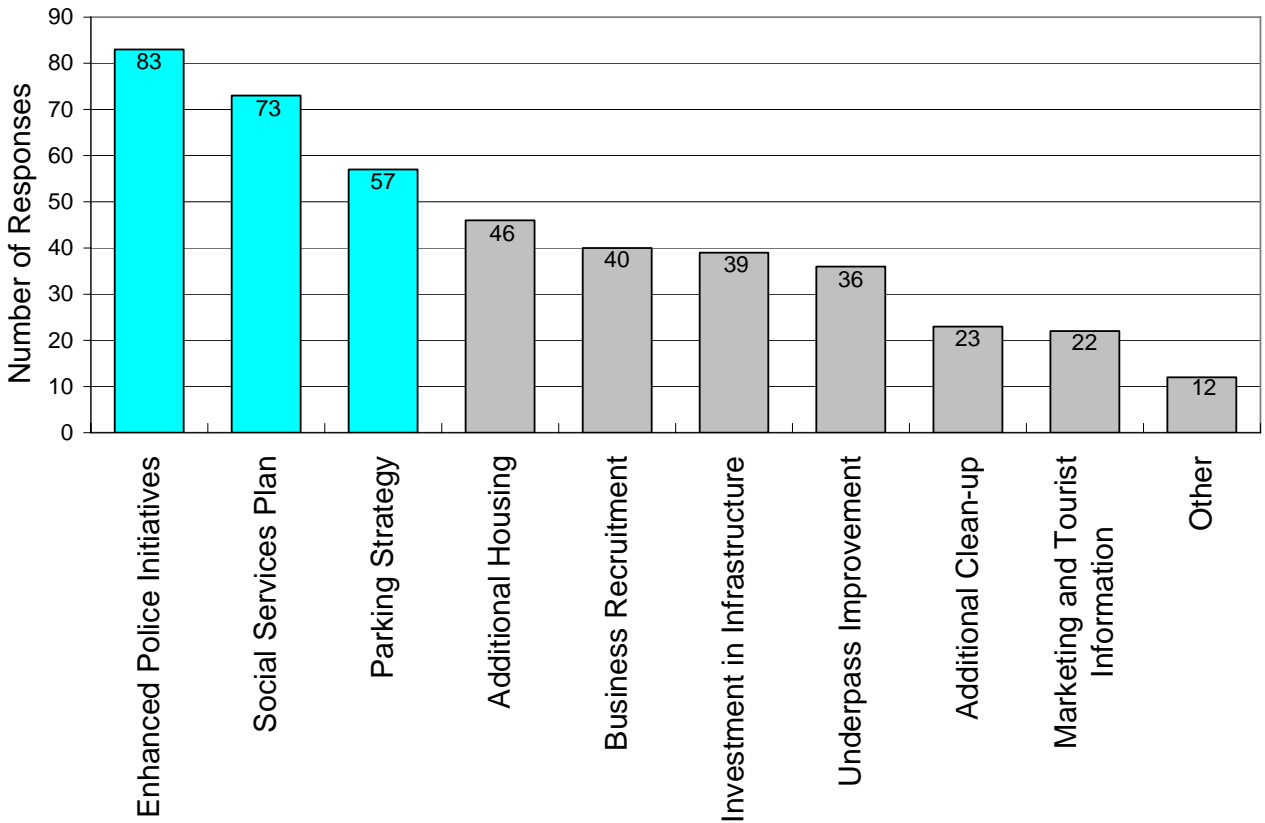
Location: Century Palace Restaurant
Pacific Rim Mall
#206, 9700 – 105 Avenue

Mission Statement

"A safe and vibrant multicultural showcase in the heart of Edmonton designed to attract businesses, citizens and tourists to a smorgasbord of shopping and cultural experiences."

For more information, please contact Ratan Lawrence at 423-2628 or brz@telus.net

Prioritization of Strategies by the 97 Street and Area BRZ Business Community
(90 responses)



ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

Executive Director Ratan Lawrence
President Herbert Chui
Vice President Kim Mah
Treasurer Samuel Young
Past President Frank Gee

Director Raymond Ng
Director Ken Bregenser
Director James Li
Director Frankie Lee

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Lunar New Year event
- Increasing number of businesses each year
- Crosswalk improvement at 106 Avenue on 97 Street
- Giovanni Caboto Park upgrades
- Clean-up program
- Hull Block heritage restoration