

## **Business Improvement Districts in the Halifax Regional Municipality**

For the general improvement, promotion and revitalization of businesses in a defined area within HRM, a Business Improvement District (BID) can be designated, created and managed through a not-for-profit organization.

There are eight BIDs in HRM. The Sackville Business Improvement District (parts of Cobequid Road, Sackville Drive, Sackville Cross Road, Beaver Bank Road) was created in 2004 and is managed through the Sackville Business Association, also known as the SBA.

A BID is generally established by business through a democratic process or poll. If business and/or commercial property owners in the area vote to form a Business Improvement District, they also agree to self-fund the not-for-profit organization through a levy that they set. All businesses and/or property owners are generally required to pay the levy. In many districts that levy is administered by HRM and included with the property tax bill.

The BID is managed by the association's elected board of directors who come from the business and/or property owners within the defined area. These associations typically provide services like street cleaning, additional security, capital improvements, construction of pedestrian and streetscape enhancements, and promoting and marketing the area. The services provided by BIDs are designed to be specific to their area and supplemental to those provided by the municipality.

So the Sackville Business Association's role is to advocate for the needs of Sackville businesses, and by extension, their customers and neighbours.

SBA works closely with local Councillors and municipal staff to ensure the voice of business in Sackville is heard. A recent example of this is commercial tax reform. As a grassroots organization, SBA looked closely at the data for their members' 150 commercial properties, determined the tax trends, and formulated the impact on businesses' ability to operate. They talked directly to the business owners to get their feedback, and then presented the areas that need to be improved to Regional Council. If you want to influence change, it is easier if you are at the table and coming from a place of knowledge and respect.

The SBA also plays an important role in street beautification and events. The SBA is the lead organization for the Sackville Snow Days event, which more than 3,500 people participated in this past February. They also lead on the Sackville Christmas Tree Lighting, which more than 2,500 people attend each year. They partner with HRM on the hanging baskets that will go up along Sackville Drive this summer and are responsible for the LED holiday lights that were installed over the last two years, which I supported with \$30,000 from the Lower Sackville district capital funds. As a non-profit association, they are able to leverage funding beyond levies to make things happen.

The most important role of the SBA is to support and help grow current and future member businesses. Whether through signage upgrades, business and customer relationship training, graffiti removal, litter cleanup, promoting businesses or providing advice, hotel feasibility study, community events, and informative website, the Sackville Business Association works to make Sackville a place to “Live, Shop, Love”.

More information on the Sackville Business Association and their more than 300 business members can be found at: [www.sackvillebusiness.com](http://www.sackvillebusiness.com),  
[www.facebook.com/sackvillebusinessassociation](http://www.facebook.com/sackvillebusinessassociation) or [www.twitter.com/sbasackville](http://www.twitter.com/sbasackville).