

Moneris  ^{®/MD}

DOWNTOWN



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Line of business:

- Municipal, Not-for-profit service

Products used:

- Moneris Consumer Location Data (CLD)(Geo-level)

Website:

- <https://downtownyonge.com/>





What is BIA?

BIA or 'Business Improvement Area' is a non-profit organization committed to improving the experiences, and ensuring the success, of residents, businesses, members, and all other stakeholders through value added programs and community activations. Today, there are over 80 BIAs in the City of Toronto.

Background

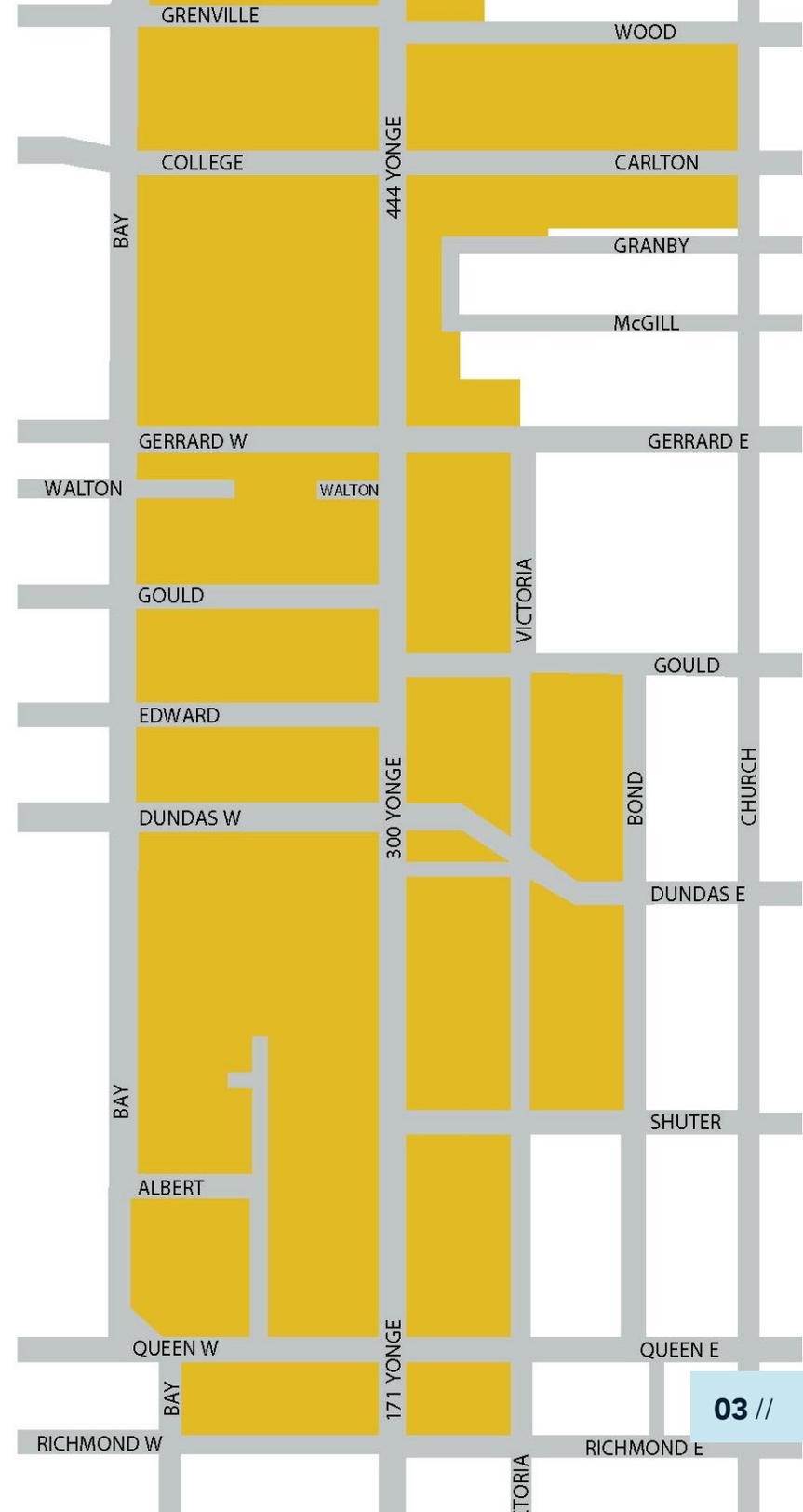
The Downtown Yonge BIA was founded in 2001, and offers a variety of services to the neighbourhood, including full-time crisis outreach, street-operations, public art installations, events, and more. Susie Barbosa-Pizzirusso, Manager of Economic and Community Development at the Downtown Yonge BIA, works with over 2500 businesses in the BIA to ensure they have all the tools they need to succeed. As one of the busier BIAs in Toronto, Susie and her team are always working to make sure the neighbourhood is activated and exciting year-round. So, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, she turned to data to understand the scope of its impact on the neighbourhood, and what steps needed to be taken for recovery. The BIA used Moneris Consumer Location Data (CLD)(Geo-level) to help with the assessment.



Moneris played a key role in providing data that helped confirm many of our assumptions. Anecdotally, we heard many different things about the impact of COVID on our neighbourhood. But to have the data and say, yes this is what's happening and here are how our businesses can best utilize that information to benefit our stakeholders, was so valuable.



- Susie Barbosa-Pizzirusso, Manager,
Economic & Community Development at the Downtown Yonge BIA





Challenge

A self-proclaimed data-enthusiast, Susie always championed the use of data and dreamt of having a set of data tools at her disposal for her work at the BIA. However, budgetary constraints made it difficult to obtain. During the pandemic, she made her case to reallocate funding towards data and research. This would help her, and her team, understand just how much the pandemic had affected the downtown core. “The pandemic hit us hard. For instance, because we are a transit-oriented neighbourhood, our businesses rely on employees to come into work, people to come out to shows, restaurants, shops, etc.,” said Susie. “But at the height of the pandemic, our pedestrian counts decreased by an average of about 60 per cent, which was a significant drop for an area that sees, pre-pandemic, about 42 million people on Yonge Street every year.”

Why Moneris?



It's hard to get this kind of data. I've searched everywhere to see what other suppliers were out there, or who else was working with the kind of data we were looking for, and there really isn't anyone else doing this. So, to some extent, Moneris is a pioneer on that front.



- Susie Barbosa-Pizzirusso, Manager,
Economic & Community Development at the Downtown Yonge BIA

Data became a key focus in Susie's portfolio as it would help to tell the full story of the pandemic's impact. Using other data points like traffic counts, retail vacancy and inventory, and resident and visitor mobility, she reached out to Moneris to obtain consumer location data. "Coupled with data from Moneris, we were able to create this picture of who was coming into the area and understand how businesses can best utilize all of this information to ensure success." Susie first came across Moneris data while looking through a report on neighbourhood spend. As a data-focused BIA, she was keen to have that kind of information in the BIAs repertoire as they base a lot of their planning and decision making on research and data. "It's one thing to make assumptions, and another for businesses to say, who is coming downtown to spend money? Who is doing the transactions? How much are people spending and where are they coming from? And who should we be marketing to?" Obtaining Moneris data answered many of these questions and helped them understand the needs of their businesses, especially as the neighbourhood slowly worked its way back to meet pre-pandemic levels.





What did the data reveal?

"When I had the final data, it was exciting to see it all come together because it validated a lot of our suspicions," said Susie. The data confirmed that people living within walking distance spent the most amount of time in the downtown Yonge Street area. But those who spent the most per transaction were actually visitors who lived outside of Toronto. This was helpful to her and her team as they couldn't quantify these assumptions and didn't know if this translated into sales for their businesses. Having this data from Moneris line up perfectly with what their other data sets were saying, confirmed they were on the right track. It also showed how businesses can use this data to target their customers effectively.

"The data solidified that people coming into the area most often, are the ones who live within a 10-to-15-minute walk. Whereas if you're a business looking to target more of the 'one-time shopper', or you're a destination business who pulls customers from all over and you want to target that demographic, the data will show you who is spending the most per transaction but not coming by your business every day."

The data also showed that around 2021, there was an increase in interprovincial travelers, many who were from Quebec, as well as people from neighbouring towns within Ontario such as Windsor, Owen Sound, and Ottawa. More recently, Susie and her team have noticed an increase in international travelers as hotels and restaurants saw increased bookings. Overall, Susie found that the data they received from Moneris was a great 'level-setter' to understand what was happening nation-wide, and how it's reflected in what her team were seeing on a local level. For BIA members, she has been hosting learning sessions using Moneris data, which members have found both interesting and helpful for their business needs. The team have also created a bi-annual economic newsletter for members, which includes Moneris data.





Looking forward

The biggest priority for the BIA is to keep the same core focus by continuing to improve the daily experiences of their members, employees, residents, and all other stakeholders with the end goal of strengthening the culture and economics of the neighbourhood. According to Susie, integrating the data piece to their strategic plans will be a big focus in the coming years. Especially as she's had an overall positive experience working with data sources like Moneris. She found that the Moneris Data Services team was very knowledgeable, quick to respond, and took the time to go over her questions, some which were very sector-specific, in order to fully understand what story the data was trying to tell.



The main thing that appealed to me about the data was where people were coming from and, specifically, their spending by sector. The fact that there were over 30 different sectors outlined that I could drill down on and learn from really piqued my interest.



Moving forward, she hopes to obtain time-specific data that will allow her to compare past and present trends across the BIA and see how members might be able to use it for their business. The data has also helped the BIAs events team learn more about the neighbourhood's residents and solidified their focus on hosting more community and family-oriented events. Doing more events throughout the year versus when there are more people in the city (such as peak tourist seasons), justified our thinking that we need to focus more on our residents. We want people living in the downtown Yonge Street area to feel like this is their community, and not just a transient neighbourhood where you don't know your neighbours.



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