

MARDA LOOP BIA IS GROWING

The Marda Loop BIA is expanding to better support and involve businesses in the Marda Loop business district. The proposed Expansion Area would include about a dozen new businesses, most of which are in the new Harrison building at 33rd Avenue and 18th Street, just east of our current boundary.

HISTORY OF GROWTH

Since Marda Loop was first established in 1984, as one of Calgary's first "BRZs", the businesses of Marda Loop have worked together to promote and grow the area into the successful business district and asset to the community that it is today. Founded by 72 original businesses, the Marda Loop BIA has more than 170 businesses today. In case you are wondering, the Marda Loop name comes from a contest conducted by the new business organization to brand the area.

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The boundaries of the BIA (it stands for Business Improvement Area – changed from Business Revitalization Zone/BRZ a few years ago) have changed a couple of times before to accommodate growth. It expanded significantly in 2000 to include the new Garrison Gate/Safeway development, and in 2017 the boundary changed to include the businesses

These businessmen sweep own doorstep

By Don Atkinson
Executive Editor

With members ranging from taxis and medical practices to a tattoo parlor, a group of 72 South Calgary businesses is taking a new approach to improving their community and protecting it as a viable business and shopping area.

"It's a one-of-a-kind opportunity to really do something for an area," says Jon Lord, chairman of the Marda Loop Business Revitalization Zone (BRZ), formerly the South Calgary BRZ.

"I think the BRZ program has a lot of potential to really improve the community as a whole. Over the next few years, you might see some big changes down here."

Marda Loop is the second and smallest of three Calgary business revitalization zones now in various stages of formation. It basically covers 33rd and 34th Avenues S.W. between 24th and 17th Streets.

The first zone approved by city council was developed by a 47-member 17th Avenue S.W. group, called the Uptown 17. A third, the 96-member Kensington-Louisbourg Crossing zone, will seek city approval next month.

The program started in June 1983 when the provincial government passed legislation permitting municipal governments to establish BRZs and impose levies to finance the groups' activities.

Lord, owner of Capobianco Video, says his group may not be the biggest but it is the first to get rolling and stage a promotional event.

Announced to be held Thursday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at a venue yet to be chosen, the event will be held at the corner of 33rd Street and 33rd Avenue S.W., marking the first opening of a Calgary BRZ.

The festival, featuring a farmers' market, charity fund-raiser, car rally, comic event, live bands, flea market and other attractions, is designed to increase awareness of the area as a viable business and shopping centre.

Lord says the Marda Loop BRZ — named after the Marda Loop site, once a neighborhood of homes, and an old streetcar loop — has the potential to develop and improve a community that was in danger of deteriorating.

Its main hope is that a BRZ can do for an area what a large shopping mall does for the interests in promoting events and attracting customers.

As chairman, Lord heads a board of directors of nine business



LARRY MACDONALD, Calgary Herald

Jon Lord, left, and Pat Mattern are proud of their neighborhood

people, a South Calgary Community Association representative and two aldermen, Craig Reed and Barb Scott.

Each BRZ is supported by a compulsory additional city levy on business taxes. Lord says the Marda Loop levy has been estimated at 2.27 per cent. The city takes the levy and returns it to the board of directors, which is responsible for developing programs and submitting an annual budget to city council for approval.

The Marda Loop group has also obtained a government grant to hire university student Pat Mattern as a marketing manager to help the board promote the area. Mattern has been working this summer

out of business offices donated by a local law firm.

Lord and Mattern say they "will have to prove that they can fly."

Marda Loop wants to see signs, flowerpots, trees and other devices to improve the area's image. It hopes to attract new shoppers and businesses.

Lord also sees the BRZ as an effective lobby group representing area businesses at city hall. For example, there are now seven grocery stores in the area and the group could try to discourage any more overbuilding.

WHAT'S BEING PROPOSED?

The new Expansion Area extends the BIA east, to 17th Street, to include businesses in the new Harrison building, in the future Sarina 1900 development at the NE corner of 33rd Avenue and 19th Street, and a few



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