

## Gay village bid set back by clashing surveys; Bank Street BIA steers away from status designation

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Byline: Matthew Pearson  
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Efforts to designate a six-block portion of Bank Street as a **gay village** may have hit a roadblock.

The Bank Street Promenade Business Improvement Area (BIA) hired an independent firm earlier this year to survey area businesses on two separate occasions.

The results were anything but conclusive -- the first survey showed 75 per cent of businesses surveyed were opposed, while a second survey showed 73 per cent of those surveyed were in favour.

According to Gerry LePage, the BIA's executive director, what the survey results demonstrated was a need for the BIA's board to have a policy on branding of the neighbourhood.

"They feel they needed a policy that would not convey any special status or treatment or benefit of one group over another," he said.

As such, the BIA supports the "bottom up" branding of the neighbourhood, which occurs when a specific culture congregates and consolidates businesses, residences, social and entertainment venues in specific, well-defined geographic area.

The BIA cited the examples of Little Italy and Chinatown as areas in the city where a cultural group branded a specific neighbourhood.

Mr. Lepage said he didn't think this has happened in the would-be **gay-village** area.

Still, he recognized the importance of the gay and lesbian community to the neighbourhood and suggested that concern was part of the reason for the delay in releasing the survey results.

"We're completely cognizant of the sensitivity of these issues, especially as it pertains to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans community. We didn't want to offend anybody," he said.

"The board is simply trying to be fair and equitable to everybody here."

Glenn Crawford, the activist leading the charge to demarcate the stretch of Bank between Nepean and James streets, said in a written statement he is disappointed, but not defeated.

"Our community will not be discouraged by this recent announcement, but will only work harder, united together, to see our dreams realized," Mr. Crawford's statement said. "We have a long history of rising to a challenge."

Mr. Crawford was out of the country and could not be reached for further comment.