

2018 BEST IN THE WEST AWARDS - ENTRY

ENTRANT: Annette O'Shea, Yaletown BIA

TITLE OF ENTRY: Member engagement creates partnerships

CATEGORY: Communications

TIMEFRAME OF THE PROJECT: Jan 1st – March 9

PROJECT SUMMARY: How a carefully crafted crisis management plan can bring the City to the

negotiating table.

OPPORTUNITY/NEED

Yaletown was once Vancouver's warehouse district and national railway terminal. Today, the old warehouses have been converted into unique shops and offices and railway loading docks feature vibrant restaurant patios. With over 900 members Yaletown is one of Vancouver's most successful shopping and business districts with the second highest demand for parking in the city.

However, in December 2017, the City of Vancouver alerted the YBIA to its plans to eliminate over 50% of the street parking on Mainland and Hamilton Street, in the central shopping and dining hub of Yaletown, and that the parking would be stripped within 6 weeks of the notification. The reduction of parking spots was needed to create a new Fire Lane to fit the larger fire trucks. While the YBIA also considers fire rescue and emergency vehicle access to be of utmost importance, this decision was made without any consultation with the YBIA and its members, and without any understanding of the negative impact this would have on the economic sustainability of the district. We needed a solution that kept Yaletown accessible for fire responders, yet maintains critical infrastructure such as parking, which is imperative for a sustainable business district.

January-February-March

The City was unwilling to engage in active consultation with the YBIA and was steadfast in removing parking immediately without any consideration of other approaches, or even tactics to mitigate the economic damage to the area. In January, when the City's intractable position became clear, the YBIA decided to fight the matter publicly and loudly. The YBIA determined that fighting for the economic sustainability of its members and its district outweighed its historically positive relationship with the City. With a budget of \$5,000, the YBIA developed a detailed "Save Yaletown Parking Crisis Management Plan" to lay out the strategy and tactics to attract public and member attention to the unfairness and closed-mindedness of the City's plan. The plan developed key messages, a targeted list of media, identified potential interviewees, developed alternate parking plans and drafted a public/members information campaign. Media coverage will take place prior to any public facing activity by the City on the parking matter.

The "Save Yaletown Parking Crisis Management Plan" included:

- Member information package: Produce and distribute information and support package to
 members to ensure they are aware of the parking threat. Produce multiple mail out and
 newsletters, as well as Town Hall and industry specific meetings to increase engagement of
 membership.
- Provide stakeholders direct contact information with City Councilors and Senior City staff



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- Social Media Content: Equip members with social media content supporting its position, develop social media hashtags, engage key social media influencers to amplify the message.
- Proactive media relations: targeted media outreach providing storyline "tool kits" containing: photos, interview contacts, empirical data, examples of failure by the City to consult.
- Encourage community participation: The YBIA will attend any public meetings or consultation regarding parking.
- · Create new solutions for parking in the area.

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

- Immediately secure media coverage to increase public attention to the elimination of parking in Yaletown, and the danger that it posed to the life of small business.
- Use media coverage to increase political pressure to force City staff to actively engage and negotiate with the YBIA.
- Ensure that YBIA members were aware that the YBIA was their champion and would do everything possible to fight for the sustainability of their livelihood.
- Demonstrate that the YBIA can create alternatives to the City plan that creates the necessary Fire Lane while reducing the loss of parking.

AUDIENCE

The primary audience of "Save Yaletown Parking Crisis Management Plan" is Yaletown BIA members, City of Vancouver senior staff, Mayor and Council and Vancouver Fire and Rescue.

The secondary audience is the general public and Yaletown residents.

IMPLEMENTATION

"Save Yaletown Parking Crisis Management Plan" launched in January 2018. Lead and funded by the Yaletown BIA, a Task Force composed of Yaletown BIA Executive Director and select board members and a professional media agency. Working quickly, the crisis management plan was developed first around its key messages, the media agency selected the most relevant media outlets, and then developed a media tool kit. Most importantly within the crisis management plan were two components that ultimately determined the successful outcome of the entire campaign; the risk assessment "if this, then that" set of rules to follow if the media or social media coverage became negative, and the media tool kit to maximize the amount of coverage received. Staff were in direct contact with members and their employees through door-to-door outreach, Town Hall meetings, protest rally organization, letter writing campaign, opinion surveys and phone calls. Members were engaged through outreach activities and direct requests for action. Many members even partnered with the YBIA to help increase the political pressure and public awareness through; video production, social media distribution, contact with City Councilors and protest rally organizing.

Implementation Tactics February 1-28th included;

- A media release was circulated to all major media, followed by personal calls to provide story lines targeted for that specific media channel and audience.
- A media tool kit was provided to targeted media to assist them in story production as quickly as possible. The tool kit included photographs, hashtags, suggested interviewees, sound bites, quotes, economic and parking data.



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- YBIA Member Communications Package: Alerted members on the City's plan to remove parking, our rejection of that plan, our proposals to develop a better plan, hashtags, quotes and a call to action to support the maintenance of the parking.
- Multiple newsletters to members to keep them updated on the issue and the outcomes.
- Multiple Town Hall meetings: To provide information, progress report and provide a direct "call to action" from our membership.
- Letter mail out to every commercial address in Yaletown.
- Hosted industry meetings with members to develop engagement plans.
- Door-to-door member communications to increase awareness and request engagement.
- 18 Social Media posts to increase awareness of the threat.
- Produced a video and distributed it to over 10,000 viewers online.
- Produced a Save Yaletown Rally to generate a crowd at the City Open House and to continue to attract media attention and put public pressure on City. Rally supported through social media postings, street posters, e-news Member Alert, and "I love Yaletown" branded t-shirts.
- Installed "Save Yaletown Parking" signage throughout the district.
- Secured Media Coverage: TV interviews, radio interviews, news articles.
- Risk Assessment Plan: Dealt with City, Fire Department and social media pushback on the crisis.

Challenges encountered

The YBIA fielded many phone calls, letters and emails from members and the media in a very short time period. All demanded immediate response and explanation. The media interest was substantially higher than expected, including 14 media interviews on day one of implementation. The YBIA dealt with the increased pressure by adhering to the crisis management plan, carefully articulating the key messages, and providing examples of failure by the City to consult. The Executive Director prepared for each interview by using a "cheat sheet" of key words, breathing techniques, and visual cues. A diet of Tylenol and coffee was helpful in overcoming the pressure as well.

The heritage streets of Yaletown are unique in the entire City, and they require a unique solution therefore not only was the YBIA dealing with crisis management and outreach to the community, but we were also coming up with creative solutions for the City to help solve the problem. The YBIA reached out through the network of BIA/BID's and received assistance from other BIA's who have narrow heritage streets in San Francisco, Portland and Seattle.

After many different ideas, parking layouts and countless measurements of the street the YBIA narrowed it down to an option that we believed will work for Yaletown, and create the fire access being demanded. If the angled parking on Mainland and Hamilton Street remains, and the sidewalk parallel spots are removed, the fire access lane of 6m is created. All parking would then be on the angled side of the street and Yaletown would only be losing 25% of their parking instead of 50%.

RESULTS

"Save Yaletown Parking Crisis Management Plan" was successfully executed and it achieved its goals. YBIA members are aware not only of the economic value of street parking, but most importantly that the YBIA is well positioned to fight City Hall as the champion of our members. This awareness has raised the value of the YBIA to the members, as they clearly appreciate that the YBIA can engage with City, and win. Throughout the campaign, hundreds of emails, phone calls, opinion surveys and personal messages were received from members. We created an awareness of parking crisis and of the YBIA stance, enough to be heard by the City and the Fire Department.



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The initiative produced a range of positive outcomes from each component of the plan; media relations to build public awareness and political pressure; member engagement and communications to profile the YBIA as their champion, force the City to the negotiate with the YBIA on parking alternatives.

Outcomes of the media relations campaign by the numbers

- 60 media stories published, including local and national TV news, radio, print and social media stories
- 19,119,566 impressions
- Advertising value of \$573,336 was received

Additional outcomes of the "Save Yaletown Parking Crisis Management Plan" included massive increase in member engagement through Town Halls, protest rally, industry specific meetings, opinion surveys, door-to-door discussions, newsletters and alerts. As well as member partnerships with various aspects of implementation such as video production, public postering, social media distribution, and organizing the rally

City of Vancouver launched a series of consultative meetings with Yaletown to re-examine the plan and how its implementation would affect the business district.