

# Meet Leslie Kellen, incoming president of the LBPA

If you haven't already met Leslie Kellen, the newly appointed president of the Leaside Business Park Association (LBPA), all you need to know is he is a man of action. Recently, and armed with a set of questions from the editorial team at *Leaside Life*, I had the opportunity to sit down with Leslie to discuss his views on the LBPA and the role it plays in the community. "Chop wood," "pull on that thread," "do the hard yard" are some of the action-oriented phrases he adds to almost every answer. I found Leslie to be full of energy and passion, and this bodes well for the future of business in Leaside.

Leslie is a partner and the director of operations for XYZ Storage, a business with five locations in Toronto including the facility at 1 Laird Drive. He was appointed president at the last LBPA annual general meeting a month ago and has hit the ground running. His overarching focus for the LBPA will be on driving accountability, building a unified voice for the park, capitalizing on synergies with key Leaside stakeholders, and enabling proactive communications. Here's a

Glenn Asano  
The Business  
of Leaside



snapshot of what we discussed:

To begin, he noted, "I am grateful to my predecessor, Dag Enhorning, for his leadership and outstanding contributions to the LBPA during his presidency." Mr. Enhorning will continue to serve the board as treasurer.

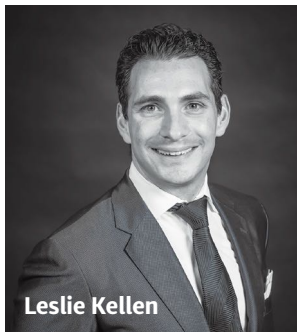
Then, Kellen confirmed the biggest change at the LBPA is that it is growing and "looking to proactively expand our membership; this is the biggest difference you will notice in 2021." The need for a unified voice and broad representation of businesses located in the park comes at a time when there are several external factors affecting the

business park including responding to the pandemic, the arrival of the Eglinton Crosstown stations, Metrolinx planning, various development initiatives, and the increased adoption of new technology.

## Working together to succeed

"The LBPA will be inclusive and support innovation and explore synergies with the excellent and diverse stakeholder groups in the park and throughout the city of Toronto," he told me. The key to the

LBPA's future success leading business in the park is the "ability to adapt and grow and to work together with all our stakeholders but through the lens of the business park while continuing our advocacy efforts to answer the needs in the community."



Leslie Kellen

On plans for the business park, his focus will be deliverables associated with the LBPA mandate: promoting the business park as a desirable place to conduct business is a given. The real challenge is how the LBPA will operationalize that mandate. The first step is to come together with their stakeholders and "begin to speak more openly with those players to identify synergies and of course areas of potential disagreement before they become an impediment to progress." He would like to "get out ahead of legacy issues that may have caused friction in the past, but are worth revisiting given the challenge we collectively face and, armed with new information and goals, work collectively and holistically to mitigate those concerns."

He added, "we have so many important groups, like the Leaside Residents Association, the Bayview Leaside BIA, the Thorncliffe Park community, that you can't discuss this in a vacuum." He even brought up the importance of the new Leaside Heritage committee and how "it could play a role in promoting the business park's rich history." Successful businesses in Leaside have a long-term view, he noted, because the City of Toronto is well-positioned for growth, and Leaside is well positioned within the city because of its unique set of advantages. "Businesses that put down roots in the park will benefit from generational investments like the new Laird and Leslie



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stations, not to mention our unique composition of mixed-use, industrial and retail space.”

### Setting priorities

The future will be about “assessing the park’s infrastructure and general readiness to successfully support our desire to see all business grow and thrive in the park.” It will be a “two-pronged approach where we prioritize between the urgent and the important. For example, COVID-19-related changes that affect members have been our immediate focus. Post-pandemic, the planning process that Dag originally initiated will form the platform to support our future growth. For the ‘important’ initiatives, that is where it gets exciting and fun because we see attractive mid- and longer-term opportunities for improvements in infrastructure and positioning that will benefit the wider community.”

When asked how he sees working with LRA on future issues, he responded “absolutely, and on as many issues as possible.” In my opinion, collaborating on issues that have the backing of both our business community AND our residential community to further Leaside interests presents a much more pow-

erful voice to the powers that be.

Leslie left me with an ‘ask’ – how do we get more people involved with LBPA initiatives? From what I have seen, if the LBPA works through 2021 to grow its membership, reaches out to key stakeholders to do some collaborative planning, and increases its outward communication, then more people will naturally get involved. In the meantime, I am more optimistic than ever that the LBPA will successfully emerge post-pandemic stronger and more passionate about its mission than ever before.

What are some key projects you would like to see Leaside’s various organized community groups collaborate on to improve outcomes for all of us? What LBPA programs would you like to see in the community? Would you like to volunteer time to work on unique projects together with the LBPA? ■

*Leasider Glenn Asano is a partner and principal consultant for the strategy and business development practice at Centred Performance. He is also an Instructor with the Ted Rogers School of Management at Ryerson University.*

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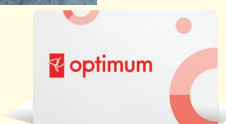


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