

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN THE BOARD ROOM, CITY HALL, ON THURSDAY,
2004-NOV-18, COMMENCING AT 3:42 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillor L. J. Sherry, Chair

Members: Councillor R. A. Cantelon

Absent: Councillor W. J. Holdom

Staff:	A. C. Kenning	C. Sholberg
	B. N. Mehaffey	K. L. Burley
	A. Tucker	K. King
	A. Millward	

1. ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

- (a) Minutes of the 2004-OCT-18 Meeting of the Planning, Environment and Development Standing Committee held in the Board Room, City Hall at 4:00 p.m.

It was moved and seconded that the Minutes be adopted as circulated. The motion carried unanimously.

2. RECEIVING OF DELEGATIONS:

It was moved and seconded that the Delegations be permitted to address Council. The motion carried unanimously.

- (a) Ms. Carolyn McWhinnie, Chair, SAFER Downtown Nanaimo Project, provided a Power Point Presentation regarding the findings of the SAFER Project.

It was moved and seconded that the delegation be received. The motion carried unanimously.

3. REPORTS OF ADVISORY BODIES:

Social Planning Advisory Committee:

- (a) Safer Downtown Nanaimo Project

The purpose of the report was to introduce to Council the final report from the SAFER Downtown Nanaimo Project and suggest potential actions to address the report's findings.

SAFER was sponsored by the Social Planning Advisory Committee's sub-committee, the Working Group on Downtown Social Issues (WGDSI). The project was partially funded by a \$10,000 grant from the National Crime Prevention Foundation's Community Mobilization Program.

The SAFER project had three phases. Phase I involved a city-wide telephone survey aimed at understanding and quantifying residents' perception of safety in the downtown area. Phase II involved a physical audit of streets in the downtown core commercial areas. Phase III reviewed crime statistics across the community and briefly looked at implications for social development highlighted by the research findings. The results of these phases are summarized below.

Phase 1:

The random phone survey of 501 households revealed that:

- For the most part, residents feel safe in the downtown;
- Men feel more safe than women, particularly in the evening;
- Areas of concern coincide with the location of drinking establishments;
- Youth feel vulnerable in the downtown;
- Respondents believe more could be done to improve the feeling of safety in the downtown; and
- Responsibility for improving safety is perceived to be the responsibility of numerous parties including the RCMP, City of Nanaimo, businesses themselves and citizens.

Phase 2:

The physical audit done by 75 volunteers over 3 nights in November, 2003, in the Old City Quarter and the downtown core revealed that:

- Lighting was poor in some areas – street lighting, transit shelters and exterior lighting of buildings, especially storefronts of vacant buildings;
- General maintenance should be improved – remove graffiti, fix broken windows, pick up garbage, maintain information kiosks and landscaping;
- Public amenities are lacking – pay phones, rest areas, and public washrooms;
- Empty storefronts associated with vacant buildings could be greatly improved by displays;
- The many recessed entranceways and alcoves in new and old buildings create “hiding spots”; and
- High speed of traffic through core makes downtown feel less safe to pedestrians.

Phase 3:

A review of recent crime statistics provided by the RCMP found that a visitor is no more likely to be a victim of crime downtown than they would be in any other area of the city. When compared to communities across the province, Nanaimo rates average or better in a number of significant indicator areas such as, serious drug offences, motor vehicle theft, spousal abuse, serious property crime and serious violent crime. Nanaimo does, however, rank higher than the provincial average for juvenile involvement in non-cannabis drug charges.

The SAFER Downtown project has concluded its audit. Implementation will rely on the support of the DNP, the RCMP, the City of Nanaimo, and individual businesses and property owners. Two areas that seem to require particular attention are the concentration of bars and nightclubs and downtown property maintenance. Actions appropriate for implementation through community efforts include:

- (a) Involving business operators and building owners in a program to:
 - turn on exterior and interior lights;
 - program vacant storefronts; and
 - paint out graffiti as soon as possible, and
- (b) Involving youth serving agencies, youth themselves, bar and club owners and managers, the Downtown Community Police Officer, parents, and others to evaluate the needs of disenfranchised youth who frequent the Downtown.

Downtown Nanaimo is about to undergo a major transformation with the construction of residential towers at 10 and 38 Front Street and the proposed New Nanaimo Centre which would transform the east side of Commercial Street and the Gordon Street/Museum Way area. Residential development is also proposed for the Civic Arena/Foundry site. In addition, the City and the DNP have recently embarked on a comprehensive design for Front Street focussed on pedestrian and vehicle safety. It is expected that completion of these various initiatives will result in the reduction or elimination of many of the concerns identified in the audit phase of the SAFER Downtown project.

Recommendation: That the PEDSC recommend that Council receive the SAFER Downtown Nanaimo Report and direct staff to distribute the report to the appropriate agencies for their consideration.

It was moved and seconded that the recommendation be adopted. The motion carried unanimously.

4. INFORMATION ONLY ITEMS:

Report from Mr. A. J. Tucker, Manager, Community Planning, re: Review of Neighbourhood Planning Process.

Mr. A. Tucker introduced five second-year Master's students from the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia:

- Alison Aloisio
- Brian Patterson
- Ian Marcuse
- Daphne Powell
- Aleksandra Brzozowski

The students are assisting in a City review of the neighbourhood planning process to develop a revised neighbourhood planning process and to develop a new template that will assist neighborhoods and the City in developing plans for the future.

It was moved and seconded that the report be received. The motion carried unanimously.

5. ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved and seconded at 4:16 p.m. that the meeting terminate. The motion carried unanimously.

C H A I R

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

DEPUTY MANAGER,
CORPORATE ADMINISTRATION