

DATE OF MEETING JULY 29, 2019

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SUBJECT DOWNTOWN NANAIMO KEY OPPORTUNITIES

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide the Governance and Priorities Committee with a list of 'quick wins' for the downtown core following Council's recent Downtown Priorities session.

Recommendation

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council approve the 'quick wins' as presented in the Staff Report titled "Downtown Nanaimo Key Opportunities", dated 2019-JUL-29, and direct Staff to move forward with their implementation.

BACKGROUND

Downtown Nanaimo is the heart of the city. The downtown provides a variety of retail shops, a range of housing opportunities, professional offices and services, and the majority of cultural attractions in the city. The downtown is a transportation hub providing vital connections to Vancouver and neighbouring communities as well as being the focal point of the city's transit and road network. Along with a spectacular waterfront walkway and large civic park, the downtown serves as the community's gathering space for events and festivals. The downtown is the historical, cultural, professional, and business centre of Nanaimo.

The *2019-2022 Strategic Plan* recognizes the importance of downtown by prioritizing a number of initiatives, such as the Downtown Mobility Hub, investments at 1 Port Drive, and advocacy for the passenger ferry service to downtown Vancouver.

At the 2019-JUL-15 Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC) meeting, Council was taken through a visioning process to identify key issues and opportunities for enhancing the downtown core. Council's vision for downtown is captured in Attachment A.

In addition, Council identified five priority areas for the downtown. These, in no particular order, are:

- Public Realm Improvements/Beautification
- 1 Port Drive
- Redevelopment of Key Sites
- Social Issues/Order
- Mobility/Front Street/Waterfront Walkway

At the conclusion of the meeting, Staff were directed to return to Council with a list of 'quick wins' (projects that can be completed in 2019/2020), as well as longer-term actions that Council can consider.

This Staff Report outlines the 'quick wins' for the downtown core. A separate report on long-term actions will be brought forward to Council in the fall of 2019.

DISCUSSION

The following list of 'quick wins' was developed by Staff from across the organization. A number of these items can be completed by reallocating existing operating budgets. Some items may require additional funding, in which case, Staff will endeavour to identify other projects that can be adjusted.

Public Realm Improvements Beautification

- Up-lighting installed in sidewalk at Great National Land building
- Hoard and put a wrap around the excavation at 10 Front Street (potential for private investment)
- Animate decorative lighting or lasers to back wall of Port Theatre
- Improve or refresh way-finding signage
- Complete detailed design for Tideline Park
- Paint or powder coat street lights on the Bastion Bridge black, or possible replacement
- Clean out and update the public walkway from the end of Robson Street to Fitzwilliam Street
- Refresh crosswalk paint lines on Commercial Street and Front Street
- Install or update water fountains
- Reinstate gas line to eternal street lights adjacent to Cenotaph
- Increase frequency of street sweeping, sidewalk sweeping, and power washing
- Expand temporary art program to include Commercial and Fitzwilliam Streets
- Create a mural program for owners with blank walls
- Small-scale whimsical art interventions
- Renew playground equipment in Maffeo Sutton

1 Port Drive

- Complete and open Waterfront Walkway for public use (August)
- Return to Council with a separate report on interim issues and long-term strategy for redevelopment.

Redevelopment of Key Sites

- Work with BC Assessment to ensure that vacant and underutilized land in the downtown core is being assessed at its highest and best use value.

Social Issues/Order

- Continue to support the Health and Housing Task Force
- Program positive uses of dead spaces in the downtown core
- Intensify Graffiti Task Force activity

Mobility/Front Street/Waterfront Walkway

- Review implementation of a scramble corner at Bastion Street/Commercial Street
- Cut off slip lane at Front Street and the Cenotaph, possibility using planters
- Short-term trials of road diet on Front Street (e.g., nodes at Port Theatre crosswalk)
- Reconfigure pedestrian crossings at Commercial Street, Wallace Street, Albert Street, and Victoria Crescent

As Council is aware, Staff is currently undertaking the Downtown Mobility Hub Project. Staff recently received the Draft Community Engagement Summary (Attachment B). While its focus is on mobility, many of the themes that emerged are already well known. Many of the quick wins listed above are coherent with public input. |

OPTIONS

1. That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council approve the 'quick wins' as presented in the Staff Report and direct Staff to move forward with their implementation.
 - The advantages of this option: implementing these short-term actions should have a noticeable impact on the appearance of the downtown core. The general public and local businesses will see Council's commitment to the downtown core.
 - The disadvantages of this option: the long-term success of the downtown core will require increased levels of public and private sector investment. Staff time and resources will be temporarily redirected to focus on the 'quick wins' rather than the long-term objectives.
2. That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council approve the 'quick wins' as amended by the Governance and Priorities Committee and direct Staff to move forward with their implementation.
 - The advantages of this option: if there are additional ideas that Council wish Staff to implement in the short term, they can be added to the existing list.
 - The disadvantages of this option: additional ideas have not been vetted by Staff and may have cost considerations. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The downtown core is critical to the economic health of the City of Nanaimo.
- At the 2019-JUL-15 GPC meeting, five key priorities were identified by Council: Public Realm Improvements, 1 Port Drive, Redevelopment of Key Sites, Social Issues/Order, and Mobility/Front Street Waterfront Walkway.
- Council directed Staff to return with a list of 'quick win' projects to improve the downtown core.
- The GPC is being asked to endorse the list of 'quick wins'.
- A separate report on medium- and long-term actions for the downtown core will be brought to Council in the fall of 2019.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Graphic Recording from 2019-JUL-15 Governance and Priorities Committee

ATTACHMENT B: Downtown Mobility Hub Draft Community Engagement – Summary Page

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