

DATE OF MEETING | October 16, 2019 |

AUTHORED BY | BILL CORSAN, DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT |

SUBJECT DOWNTOWN PRIORITY PROJECTS – UPDATE AND FUNDING REQUEST

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide the Finance and Audit Committee with a status update on the short-term projects identified by Council for the downtown core and to request additional funding to facilitate the completion of these projects. |

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council:

- a) allocate \$220,000 from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund to implement the Public Realm Improvements identified for the downtown core; and
- b) accelerate the Front Street bi-directional cycle track portion of the Downtown Cycling Loop project from 2021 to 2020.

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.

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 2019-JUL-29 Governance and Priorities Committee meeting, Council was presented with a list of ‘quick wins’ for the downtown core that were developed by Staff from across the organization (Attachment A). The list was approved by Council at the 2019-AUG-26 Council meeting.

DISCUSSION

Since Council provided approval, Staff have made progress on delivering the short term projects. A number of the projects on the list are now complete, or underway by reallocating existing operating budgets.

In addition, Staff have had meetings with representatives from the Old City Quarter (OCQ) and Victoria Crescent who have identified projects that assist in beautification and public safety. These projects are included in Attachment A.

Staff have identified a set of beautification projects which require additional funding and are requesting that Council reallocate \$220,000 from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund.

As part of the Downtown Mobility project, staff have identified an opportunity to accelerate the bidirectional cycle track from 2021 to 2020. This project would cost \$400,000 and be funded from the Community Works Fund. The Front Street Cycle Track project will have a noticeable, positive impact on the downtown core.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council:
 - a) allocate \$220,000 from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund to implement the Public Realm Improvements identified for the downtown core; and
 - b) accelerate the Front Street bi-directional cycle track portion of the Downtown Cycling Loop project from 2021 to 2020.
 - 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.
 - Financial Implications: The 2019 – 2023 Financial Plan will be amended to incorporate these changes.

2. That the Finance and Audit Committee provide alternate direction.
 - 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.
- Financial Implications: The 2019 – 2023 Financial Plan will be amended to incorporate these changes.

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.
- At the 2019-Jul-29 GPC meeting, Staff provided Council with a list of projects that could be completed in 2019/2020. Council approved this list at the 2019-Aug-26 meeting.
- A number of the projects on the list are now complete or underway by reallocating existing operating budgets.
- Staff have identified a set of beautification projects which require additional funding and are requesting that Council reallocate \$220,000 from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund and that the Front Street bi-directional cycle track portion of the Downtown Cycling Loop project be accelerated from 2021 to 2020.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Downtown Nanaimo Short Term Improvement Projects |

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