

DATE OF MEETING April 12, 2021

AUTHORED BY BILL CORSAN, DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT DOWNTOWN NANAIMO – COUNCIL UPDATE

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

To provide the Governance and Priorities Committee with an update on the various initiatives that are planned or underway in the downtown core.

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 downtown core is also an area with a concentration of social services and has, in recent years, seen an increase in homelessness and social issues.

Downtown has been a focal point by previous Councils, who have made investments in facilities and infrastructure. Development in the downtown core is encouraged through a number of policy documents, including the Official Community Plan, the Transportation Master Plan, and the Nanaimo Downtown Plan Urban Design Guidelines. Incentives such as the Hotel Revitalization Tax Exemption Program and the Downtown Revitalization Tax Exemption Program have been put in place to entice investment.

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

DISCUSSION

Given the focus by Council on the downtown core, a Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC) meeting was held on 2019-JUL-15 to develop a better sense of Council's priorities and to obtain direction on a number of initiatives.

A graphic recording of the meeting (Attachment A) highlights five key areas which Council directed Staff to focus attention on. This includes (in no particular order):

- Public Realm Improvements
- Downtown Mobility
- Social Issues (Safety and Security)
- Key Site Redevelopment
- 1 Port Drive

Following the 2019-JUL-15 GPC meeting, Staff advanced a wide range of initiatives under the objectives. Staff from numerous departments came together to implement a series of 'quick wins' for the downtown that would address some of the issues identified by Council at the GPC meeting. Staff also advanced longer-term studies and initiatives around Downtown Mobility, Safety and Security, redevelopment of key sites, and 1 Port Drive.

The purpose of the 2021-APR-12 GPC is for Staff to provide Council with an update on work that has been completed since July 2019 and to seek direction and clarification on next steps.

The GPC will be split into the specific topic areas with the information presented in a PowerPoint format. To keep the session more informal, Staff will be facilitating the session and using various tools to collect data and rank Council priorities.

The goal is to return to Council in the summer of 2021 with a summary document showcasing the work that is underway in the downtown core and the investments planned for the upcoming years. |

CONCLUSION

Downtown Nanaimo is the heart of the City's transportation network, a cultural centre, a retail hub, the business centre and a fast growing neighbourhood. Council has committed to ensuring the success of downtown and a number of key projects are underway to enhance the experience for residents and visitors alike. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- 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 *2019-2022 Strategic Plan* recognizes the importance of downtown by prioritizing a number of initiatives, such as the Downtown Mobility Hub, investments in 1 Port Drive, and advocacy for the passenger ferry service to downtown Vancouver.
- A Governance and Priorities Committee meeting was held on 2019-JUL-15 to develop a better sense of Council's priorities and to obtain direction on a number of initiatives.
- The purpose of the 2021-APR-12 GPC is for Staff to provide Council with an update on work that has been completed since July 2019 and to seek direction and clarification on next steps.

ATTACHMENTS

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

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