

DATE OF MEETING April 29, 2024

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**SUBJECT DOWNTOWN NANAIMO COMMUNITY SAFETY ACTION PLAN
EVALUATION AND STRATEGY ALIGNMENT**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide the Governance and Priorities Committee with the Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan Evaluation and Strategy Alignment Report.

Recommendation

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to proceed with a cost analysis of the preferred scenarios found in the Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan Evaluation and Strategy Alignment Report for the expansion of the Community Safety Officer and Clean Team programs and to prepare a business case for 2025 budget deliberations.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, Nanaimo has experienced an increase in homelessness, open drug use, and social disorder in the downtown core. In response, the City of Nanaimo implemented the Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan (DNCSAP) in 2022 to provide a tactical response to the highest risk, most visible, and serious issues affecting the safety and viability of the city's downtown area.

The DNCSAP outlines strategies for tiered responses and includes the creation of the Community Safety Officer (CSO) team; programs to keep public spaces and infrastructure clean, safe, and accessible; and recommendations for a governance plan to align these efforts with measures taken by other agencies.

In April 2023, the City hosted the Premier, the Attorney General, and the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General to announce details around the Repeat Violent Offending Initiative (REVOII) and the allocation of \$75,000 for a Community Safety and Wellbeing (CSWB) Plan. A CSWB plan consults with community to identify risks and proactively works to develop evidence-based strategies and programs to address local priorities related to crime and complex social issues. With the extensive consultation done over the last two years through City Plan, the Health and Housing Action Plan (HHAP), the Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan (DNCSAP), and the Nanaimo Youth Resilience Strategy (NYRS), the Province supported using the funds to:

- evaluate the DNCSAP;
- consider options for expanding and enhancing the DNCSAP; and,
- ensure strategic alignment of the DNCSAP with City Plan, HHAP, and NYRS.

DISCUSSION

In January 2024, the City retained the consultant Deloitte to evaluate the DNCSAP, determine the feasibility of expanding the DNCSAP, and to ensure that the DNCSAP is aligned with other City initiatives and strategies. The scope of work for the project included a background review, conducting a current state analysis of the DNCSAP, consultations, building a strategic framework, and developing recommendations for next steps. The DNCSAP Evaluation & Strategy Alignment Report ("the Report") (Attachment A) is complete and is being presented to the Governance and Priorities Committee and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General in accordance with the funding agreement.

The analysis in the report consists of both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data was captured through surveys, interviews, workshops, and focus group sessions that included City employees, service providers, neighbourhood associations, business associations, and members of Nanaimo's vulnerable population. The quantitative data was captured through CSO calls for service. Due to the limitation of available quantitative data and the scope of work, the Report was unable to objectively measure whether the perception of downtown improved, or if there was a tangible decrease of social disorder. However, what is clear through consultations is that social disorder downtown would be worse without the implementation of the DNCSAP. There is overwhelming support for the CSO and Clean Teams from various stakeholders and it is noted that both teams have made a notable impact on the perception of safety and cleanliness of the downtown area. In addition, it is clear that the CSO team has added a more compassionate approach to connecting individuals in need to supports and services.

The key findings and recommendations found in the Report are reflected from the analysis of the DNCSAP, the feedback collected, and the consultant's experience in the community safety and wellbeing sector. The tables provided on the following pages summarizes the Report's key findings and recommendations.

Key Findings and Recommendations - Group One: Tiered Responses

Measure	Status	Recommendation
Downtown Ambassadors Program	<i>Not Delivered</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a Downtown Ambassadors program in collaboration with the Nanaimo Downtown Business Improvement Association and the RCMP as outlined in the DNCSAP.
Private Security for Parkades	<i>Delivered – effectively contributing to safety in parkades particularly in absence of CSO coverage overnight.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support the use of private security for City parkades when and where necessary.
Community Safety Officer Program	<i>Delivered – an important part of the emergency response continuum, a key contributor to public safety and health, takes a compassionate approach and provides key connections to service providers for people in need.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase resources and consider expansion of hourly and geographical coverage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scenario 1: Status quo – increase to 20 CSO FTE and 1 additional Supervisor to ensure adequate coverage of existing schedule and the safety and wellbeing of officers. Scenario 2: increase to 24 CSO FTE and 1 additional supervisor to allow for 24 hour, 7 days per week coverage. Scenario 3: increase to 30 CSO FTE and 1 additional Supervisor to allow 24 hour, 7 days per week coverage and increase geographical coverage outside of the downtown core. Investigate options for adequate and effective back up to CSOs when needed. Implement Mental Health supports. Create common standards. Invest in training. Investigate and implement technology tools.
RCMP Downtown Engagement Team	<i>Delivered – implemented in summer 2022 and planned for summer 2024.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider implementing this measure when there are sufficient resources within the context of the RCMP’s priorities.

Key Findings and Recommendations - Group Two: Public Spaces & Assets

Measure	Status	Recommendation
Enhanced Clean Team	<i>Delivered</i> – has had a visible impact on the cleanliness of downtown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase resources and expand geographical area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scenario 1: status quo - increase to 6 FTE to ensure sustained coverage of downtown. ○ Scenario 2: increase to 10 FTE to expand coverage outside of the downtown area. • Expedite the procurement of the required number of purpose-built vehicles allowing the Clean Team to be more effective and efficient. • Services planned for persons in need such as facilities, temporary or permanent, need to consider the decrease or increase support costs associated with Clean Teams. • Review reporting lines for Clean Teams to ensure more effective and efficient management of resources. • Explore the co-location of the Clean Teams with the CSO Team. • Implement common standards to determine hand over processes and responsibilities between Clean Team and CSO Team.
Vandalism Relief Grant	<i>Delivered</i> – very well received by the business community to offset the expenses of vandalism to businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide the grant program and consider enhancing the public awareness of the program. • Review compliance and enforcement of graffiti bylaws and other actions resulting in uncleanliness or contributing to urban decay.
Downtown Parkade Cleaners	<i>Delivered</i> – feedback from consultations revealed a positive difference in parkades' cleanliness and feelings of safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to use parkade cleaners to supplement the Clean Teams to strengthen cleanliness and sense of safety.
Parkade Security Improvements	<i>In Progress</i> – implementations of improvements are currently underway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to pursue the implementation of the measures recommended by the security consultant.

Key Findings and Recommendations - Group Two: Public Spaces & Assets (Continued)

Measure	Status	Recommendation
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Improvements	<i>In Progress</i> – several changes to public spaces downtown have been identified and are intended to be implemented in fall 2024 and CSOs have received CPTED training and identify CPTED needs as required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish clear roles and responsibilities for the continued execution of this measure. Establish a clear process of review, assessment, and decision making between CSO Team and City Departments to implement CPTED recommendations where appropriate.
Rules and Resources	<i>Delivered</i> – a guide has been published and made available to people in need and service providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post guides in shelters and other high visibility places where people in need frequent. Ensure guides are up to date and easy to understand.
Park Ambassadors	<i>Partially Delivered</i> – program was initially launched in summer 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proceed with plans to re-establish the program in summer 2024.

Recommendations - Group Three: Action Plan Governance

Measure	Status	Recommendation
Downtown Safety Coordination	<i>Partially Delivered</i> – supporting the CSO program and liaising with stakeholder groups have been undertaken by existing City Staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for the hiring of an additional internal manager as originally recommended in the DNCSAP to lead the ongoing coordination and monitoring of the existing plan and to be involved in future planning activities.
Interdepartmental Working Group	<i>Partially Delivered</i> – the Public Safety Department hosts a bi-weekly meeting attended by City Staff from other departments to discuss issues, and the planning and directing of resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a clearly defined governance model for the ongoing monitoring, tracking, and reporting of the DNCSAP and any future plans.
Stakeholder's Committee	Partially Delivered - the Public Safety Department hosts a bi-weekly meeting attended by City Staff from other departments to discuss issues, plans, and directing resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an overarching vision for CSWB in collaboration with external stakeholders and clearly articulate roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder towards the collective vision. Develop key performance indicators to measure the impact of the DNCSAP.

The Report identifies the critical need to invest in the CSO and Clean Teams to ensure the sustainability of the program and the safety and wellbeing of CSOs and Clean Team Staff. This will allow for the continued comprehensive supports to the downtown area. Staff will return to a future Finance and Audit Committee meeting with a cost analysis of the preferred scenarios for the CSO and Clean Team expansions. This will include options for a governance model to support the teams and any additional program and capital costs that will be needed to support the expansion of staffing. Options for the Committee to consider may include a phased approach allowing for ongoing evaluation and monitoring of resources and budget capacities.

OPTIONS

1. That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to proceed with a cost analysis of the preferred scenarios found in the Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan Evaluation and Strategy Alignment Report for the expansion of the Community Safety Officer and Clean Team programs and to prepare a business case for 2025 budget deliberations.
 - The advantages of this option: Conducting the cost analysis and business case for the expansion of the Community Safety Officer and Clean Teams will allow the City to determine the capacity and resources to ensure the teams can continue promoting community safety and wellbeing in the city effectively, efficiently, and sustainably.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Staff time is required to conduct the cost analysis and prepare the business case.
 - Financial implications: No additional funds are needed to conduct the cost analysis and develop the business plan.

2. That the Governance and Priorities Committee provide alternative direction.

SUMMARY POINTS

- In 2022, the City of Nanaimo implemented the Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan, which recommended specific measures to address the increase of social disorder, homelessness, and drug use in the downtown core.
- In April 2023, the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General allocated \$75,000 to the City of Nanaimo to conduct a review of the Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan, consider options for expanding and enhancing the plan, and to ensure the plan is strategically aligned with other City strategies and initiatives.
- The Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan Evaluation and Strategy Alignment Report is being presented to the Governance and Priorities Committee and will be submitted to the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General in accordance with the funding agreement.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Link to “Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan Evaluation & Strategy Alignment Report – 2024”

ATTACHMENT B: Link to “Downtown Nanaimo Community Safety Action Plan – 2022”

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