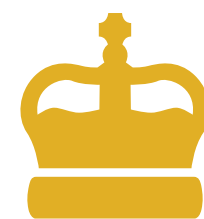




Downtown Livability Strategy

Economic Development Advisory Committee

January 7, 2022



NEW WESTMINSTER

Background

- At the September 13, 2021 Council meeting, a motion was passed to address challenges in the livability of the downtown neighbourhood.
- Downtown Livability Strategy was developed and endorsed by Council on October 18, 2021
- Approach is predicated on the City's vision that New Westminster is a vibrant, compassionate, sustainable city that includes everyone.
- Interdepartmental team includes Engineering, Police, Fire, Economic Development, Bylaws, Community and Social Planning, and Development Services.
- Five areas of focus for the immediate and short term actions:
 1. Cleanliness and 24-hour public toilets
 2. Homeless outreach and added emergency shelter capacity
 3. Opioid epidemic and illicit drug response
 4. Business support and engagement
 5. Work with Fraser Health to address mental health issues

Immediate and Short Term Actions:

- Larger garbage receptacles and increased collection frequency
- Specialized waste management contractor hired
- Portable toilet placed in Hyack Square, with robust maintenance plan
- Communication material and process developed for businesses and residents – updates at newwestcity.ca/downtownlivability
- Active outreach to impacted businesses and associations
- Interdepartmental team that works directly with street entrenched and vulnerable people has been established and City staff training underway
- Second Vulnerable Persons Liaison Officer has been hired by NWPD
- Two homeless support outreach workers have been funded by the City
- New Extreme Weather Shelter is now operational with 50 beds
- Fire and Police are working with service providers and government organizations to develop programs that support the opioid crisis
- Educational opportunities are being developed in conjunction with Purpose Society, NWPD, and the BIA on topics such as homelessness, overdose and opioid education, crime prevention, etc.

Medium Term Actions in Progress:

- Develop a work plan to reduce timelines for building permit applications and business licence applications that require building permits
- Sidewalk Café Bylaw (1997) revisions based on learning from temporary Patio Program
- Streetscape improvements
- Public washroom plan for new and existing permanent, accessible public washrooms

Ideas to Consider:

- Consideration of restriction of certain business licence types, recognizing some businesses are important for the vulnerable population.
- Specialized grants for public space activation and improved vibrancy
- Exploration of tax or other penalties for vacant properties, within the parameters of legislation
- Consideration for conditional approvals / operating permits to allow a business to operate while minor tenant improvements occur for a limited time
- Increased fire prevention strategies/requirements with the cost covered by property owners such as security or monitoring or timelines for demolition.
- *New Westminster Redevelopment Act, 1989*

Question & Comments:

- Are there additional items/actions that should be considered?
- Do you have additional suggestions on how the City can best engage with the business community on this work?
- How does this impact other commercial areas of the city?
- Additional comments?