



Downtown Victoria Business Association  
20 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC  
V8W 1P7  
(250)386-2238  
info@downtownvictoria.ca

February 26, 2019

Mayor Lisa Helps & City Council  
City of Victoria,  
1 Centennial Square,  
Victoria, BC  
V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor Helps & Council,

**Re: Renewal of the Downtown Victoria Business Association**

On December 31<sup>st</sup> of this year, the most recent five-year mandate of the DVBA will expire. I am writing on behalf of our Board and membership to seek your support to proceed with the formal counter-petition approval process to allow the DVBA to continue for another five-year period.

Since 2005, our Board and staff have worked hard to support a vibrant and economically sustainable downtown. Our members are made up of large retailers, hotels, food and beverage outlets, and most significantly, small independent retailers and professional offices. The DVBA provides tremendous value to our members through our marketing efforts and our ability to liaise on their behalf with the City of Victoria. In 2019 we will be launching our new *Downtown Victoria: Your Place To Be* campaign that promotes the diversity and inclusivity of our downtown.

Through our Culture and Events Manager, we have embarked on a series of key Downtown Victoria events. YYJ Car Free Day has grown to become one of the pre-eminent events in the region every June. The Victoria Buskers Festival and Pumpkin Pursuit are also examples of events we produce; all of these are no cost for the public. In 2019 we are looking to enhance the connections between the Arts Community and downtown to further enhance the vitality and vibrancy of the core.

We have developed programs and undertaken initiatives – many in close co-operation or partnership with the City of Victoria – which we believe have increased the appeal of downtown. Our Clean Team last year safely removed 7,000 improperly discarded needles and painted over or cleaned 10,445 graffiti tags. They also augment the work done by City staff in keeping our downtown as clean as possible.

Our request this year has a time sensitive nature to it. The DVBA has identified an opportunity to produce a substantial winter light maze in downtown Victoria. This would be a zero-barrier event for all ages and abilities and no cost to the public. Our timing issue relates to financing, design and production of the various components. The DVBA would have to commit the design order and financing by May in order to have this attraction available for December 2019.



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In addition, we plan to enhance downtown through many exciting initiatives. Under the *Community Charter*, a Business Improvement Area must carry out a business promotion scheme which includes:

- (a) carrying out studies or making reports respecting one or more areas in the municipality where business or commerce is carried on,
- (b) improving, beautifying or maintaining streets, sidewalks or municipally owned land, buildings or other structures in one or more business improvement areas,
- (c) the removal of graffiti from buildings and other structures in one or more business improvement areas,
- (e) encouraging business in one or more business improvement areas.

Our plans match these requirements entirely.

Over the next 5 years we will continue to market our downtown to everyone from Sooke to Sidney. This will include traditional media as well as leading edge social marketing. In particular, our Events Calendar and email blast has become the recognized source for what's happening downtown.

Our Clean Team will continue to be the difference maker in augmenting the city's work to keep our downtown clean. Our ability to respond immediately to our members' needs to clean the sidewalk, or remove graffiti, is key to our core's positive appearance. This has been the DVBA's signature service to our members and the public.

We are very excited to enhance the vibrancy of downtown by being the facilitator for connecting the Arts and Culture community with activation opportunities downtown. Victoria has such a large arts and music scene and activating downtown with our local artists is key to the continued evolution of Victoria.

We will be publishing an annual "DVBA Report on Downtown" which will be the source for quantitative data on all things downtown. This research will be invaluable to business, policy makers and the public in better understanding the strengths and opportunities of our downtown.

We would appreciate the support of Council in proceeding with renewal of our organization by authorizing the "counter-petition" or Alternative Approval Process. This same process was employed in 2004 to establish our organization, as well as in both our previous renewals in 2009 and 2014. We would also like the City to approve a new by-law to replace the existing Business Improvement By-law, Number 14-062. Our proposed budget would include an annual budget increase of 2.5%, starting with the proposed 2020 budget of \$1,103,804 and culminating in 2024 with a budget of \$1,218,392.

# **DOWNTOWN Victoria**

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Our last renewal saw objections from 1.9% of the total assessed value of our area or 1.4% of the total number of properties on the petition. We will be inviting our membership to open houses during the counter-petition process to present the costs and benefits to property and business owners over the coming five years. We will provide City Council with a more complete look at what we have done over the past five years and what we will embark upon when we make a presentation to the Committee of the Whole.

Yours sincerely,

 

Kathy Hogan  
Chair, Downtown Victoria Business Association