

To: Committee of the Whole

Date: September 11, 2019

From: Janine Theobald, Inclusion & Collaboration Manager, Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (GVCEH)

Subject: Pandora Task Force Report and Recommendations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide background on the Pandora Task Force, the outcomes of engagement activities with varied stakeholders and provide immediate, short, medium and long-term recommendations regarding action on the 900 block of Pandora Avenue. This report will outline a plan to move from consultation to collaborative community action.

April 14, 2016, BC's provincial health officer declared a public health emergency in response to the rise in drug overdoses and deaths. A response to this was to open a Safe Consumption Site on the 900 block of Pandora Avenue. Additional ongoing systematic issues, some outside the jurisdiction of the City of Victoria, such as: the lack of affordable and shelter rate housing (Victoria hovers at approx. 1.2% rental vacancy rate¹), over-capacity health care services (including Mental Health & Addictions Services), lack of on-demand detox and stabilization services have facilitated a concentration of people gathering on the 900 block of Pandora Avenue for safety and services. This has resulted in challenges in community from increased bylaw and police calls to the block, to residents and businesses reporting fear, frustration and impact on their businesses and well-being.

The Mayor's Pandora Task Force, convened in 2015, has been working in consultation with varied stakeholders to work collaboratively and inclusively on the 900 block of Pandora Avenue. In March 2016 planters were installed in front of Our Place with the intent of supplying nutritious, locally grown food, fostering social connections and bolster well-being. September 2018, the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network presented a research paper and made recommendations (see Appendix A) for actions to support effective change in the area. In March of 2019 an engagement of the community via workshops and a charette on the 900 block was undertaken partnership with the City of Victoria and the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. The results of this engagement inform the recommendations below:

IMMEDIATE RECOMMENDATIONS

 Conduct no further consultations. The community has been engaged in discussion regarding this topic at many tables over the past decade, and clear action items have been identified.
 Implement the recommendations from community consultations and previous reports.
 Appoint the GVCEH and City of Victoria to coordinate implementation and report on results.

¹ (CMHC, Rental Market Report- 2018)



4. Request funding from Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions to support Peer engagement in Acton Teams and implementation of recommendations.

SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS²

- 1. Develop pilot program "Victoria On Call" modeled after the Downtown on Call program in Kelowna. Pilot is designed in collaboration with peer leaders.
- 2. Installation of Water Bottle Refill Station.
- 3. 24-hour accessible restrooms are installed on the 900 block maintained by street community members as a social enterprise.
- 4. Collaborative Space Making is undertaken on the 900 block.

MEDIUM TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Declare the 900 block of Pandora Avenue a 'Special Area' in alignment with the Motion carried by Victoria City Council, June 13, 2019, re: Application of Equity and Affordability Policies, which "Council direct the City Manager to imbed these four principles³ for the city's emerging equity policies."
- 2. Embed social enterprise into future development on the block by partnering with the business sector, i.e., GT Hiring Solutions, and service providers to develop a sustainable employment initiative.

LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Using the learnings from this community consultation process, implement a coordinated response in areas with a high demographic of community members who are underserved within the City of Victoria, and have a high number of calls to police and bylaw.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide background on the Pandora Task Force, the outcomes of engagement activities with varied stakeholders and provide immediate, short, medium and long-term recommendations regarding action on the 900 block of Pandora Avenue. This report will outline a plan to move from consultation to collaborative community action.

A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

April 14, 2016, BC's provincial health officer declared a public health emergency in response to the rise in drug overdoses and deaths. This public health emergency is ongoing as of this report being produced. In response the ongoing crisis, in June 2018, The Harbour, an Island Health & Lookout Society operated Safe Consumption Site (SCS) was opened. In the first month of operation the Harbour saw 3,378 visits, an average of 158 consumption visitors per day. The site continues to see this number of daily visitors, plus in excess of 300 additional visits for harm reduction supplies daily. There have been zero fatalities at the Harbour since commencing operations. The Harbour does not have a federal exemption to supervise inhalation of illegal substances; however, recently exemptions to supervise oral and internasal consumption have been granted.

² Full description of Short, Medium- and Long-Term Recommendations are at the end of this report

³ See page 11



Increased congregation and open drug use have been reported on the 900 block since opening of the Harbour. Some of this is due to the lack of inhalation services in the downtown core. Users reportedly feel safer to inhale substances outside of the SCS and overdoses are occurring, and being responded to, regularly on the street.

HISTORY OF PANDORA TASK FORCE

From 2015 to 2016, and again from 2018 to present, Mayor Helps has convened an informal working group known as the Pandora Task Force to work collaboratively and inclusively on the 900 block of Pandora Avenue. The group has included service providers on the block, Victoria Police Department, Council's Downtown Liaison, Staff Neighbourhood Liaison to Downtown, occasionally people with lived experience, members of the Greater Victoria Placemaking Society, and more recently lived experience staff at the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (GVCEH).

Declaration of Principles and Values for the 900 Pandora Block Working Group

As a working group we are committed to:

- 1. Recognizing the traditional territories of the Lekwungen speaking peoples.
- 2. Naming the challenges in a way that encourages creativity, caring and fairness.
- 3. Working in collaboration with those who share the block.
- 4. Learning together and learning from each other.
- 5. Building on success stories from other places.
- 6. Making Pandora a place for everyone.
- 7. Designing public spaces and programming in a way that creates belonging.
- 8. Creating and sustaining a long-term vision for the block.
- 9. Adequately resourcing the initiatives we develop.
- 10. Not giving up!

It is important to note that although many of the immediate challenges concentrated on the 900 block fall within the scope of municipal jurisdiction, i.e., traffic, bylaw, parks (boulevard maintenance) and policing; many of the visible issues concentrated in the area are a direct result of issues outside the capacity of the City to solely, nor jurisdictionally, manage, such as: the lack of affordable and shelter rate housing (Victoria hovers at approx. 1.2% rental vacancy rate⁴), over-capacity health care services (including Mental Health & Addictions Services), lack of on-demand detox, stabilization services in the midst of a public health emergency. The writer will address this in subsequent sections of this report. The 900 block is a hub, a community gathering place, and a conduit to other areas and services across the City, and Capital Region.

In March 2016 the Pandora Task Force and Our Place Society partnered with LifeCycles Project Society and the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network (GVPN) to pilot the PanFlora Garden Project. Garden beds in wooden boxes planted with vegetable seedlings were installed on the boulevard on the 900 block of Pandora Ave. The intention of the pilot was to supply nutritious, locally grown food, foster social connections and bolster well-being.

Although the PanFlora pilot project had elements indicative of a successful community project, the timing and capacity to maintain this endeavour were not aligned and the wooden boxes have since been removed.

⁴ (CMHC, Rental Market Report - 2018)



September 2018, the GVPN produced a robust report entitled the 'Pandora Dilemma Report' for the Pandora Task Force. (see Appendix B) The GVPN report often, and understandably, focuses on the conflicts that arise between businesses, housed residents and community members who are unhoused, accessing services on the 900 block. The writer of this report will focus on a Collaborative Working Solutions approach, with the belief conflicts can be addressed through collective action planning and co-development of solutions. The GVPN report contains information researchers collected from more than 30 communities and indicate lessons learned from other cities as follows:

- 1. Do Something.
- 2. Do Something Now.
- 3. Fully Assess the Situation.
- 4. Focus on Behaviours.
- 5. Create a Unique Program for Victoria.
- 6. Involve Homeless and Street Persons in the Solutions.

Many of the recommendations from the GVPN Pandora Dilemma Report are aligned with the findings of the recent engagement activities.

In December 2018 a request for funding for a consultant to complete a Full Neighbourhood Assessment (collection of data, qualitative and quantitative re: conflict, safety and experience of the 900 block from all stakeholder perspectives) was put forward to City Council for budget consideration but was not approved. Although this motion did not go ahead, the writer would submit the following consultations resulted in achieving many of the desired outcomes of the above proposal.

March 2019 the concept of holding a charette on the 900 block was proposed to the Pandora Task Force. Inclusion staff from the GVCEH were consulted on how to proceed with this endeavour in a way that ensured inclusion and equitable participation.

GVCEH/CITY OF VICTORIA ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

There have been 4 engagement sessions facilitated by the GVCEH and the City of Victoria.

The May 27th Pandora Task Force meeting was a Visioning Workshop (see Appendix C). Participation in this session intentionally broadened engagement and expanded the inclusion of people with lived experience who access services on the 900 block. The shared outcomes envisioning session was predicated on the principles of: *Recovery, Reconciliation, Relationships & Inclusion.* The group broke into small table Conversation Café style discussions and were asked to close their eyes and think about their answer to the following question: "*When you open your eyes and problems of the 900 block of Pandora Avenue are solved, what does it (the 900 block) look like?*" The focus of the day was collective vision, and common principles emerged from the responses.

Community	Inclusivity	Business	Safety
Shared Space	Services	Change	Art
Healing	Support	Health and Wellness	Music



Most commonly, responses were directed at ensuring people were supported, safe and were able to get their needs met on the 900 block. The output of the day was a shared vision of "a Safe Healthy Welcoming Community, Inclusive of All." GVPN included a similar sentiment in their report to the Pandora Task Force indicating 'the challenge is to make Pandora Avenue a safe and welcoming place for everyone, considering all users of public space."

June 17th a BBQ was held in the courtyard of Our Place Society with the intent of introducing the idea of a charette on the 900 block of Pandora Avenue. Food was served and the attendees, who consisted of Our Place Family Members and Staff, Pandora Task Force Members, Save On Foods, local residents and businesses, were asked *"When you imagine the 900 block of Pandora Avenue as a safe healthy welcoming community, inclusive of all, what do you see?"*

The above question was also asked at the June 24th GVCEH drop in lunch for people with lived experience of homelessness. Feedback was rolled into the overarching data collection.



June 24th a charette was held on the boulevard of the 900 block. The consultation and charette process was supported on site through dialogue and a graphic visual sketching process. These onsite activities were supported and facilitated by architect Bruce Greenway, Joaquin Karakas and Anna Babicz, Senior Urban Designer and Urban Designer, respectively, with the City of Victoria. (see Figures 1, 2, 3 & 4)

The following questions were used to guide the onsite dialogue and consultation at the charette:

1. What do you like about the block today? What is working well now?

2. What types of arts and culture events and activities would help strengthen relationships, build community, connect and welcome people in the area?

3. What types of
landscape/public space
improvements would help make
the block feel safer and inviting
for all? Plantings

Lighting •

Furniture • Public Art • Other?









July 30th a Pandora Task Force Consensus Building Workshop was facilitated by the GVCEH. 257 responses collected through the consultations were synthesized into 11 focus area themes (see table 1.0). Attendees were asked to prioritize the top 3 areas on which to base the implementation of Collaborative Social Development Working Solution Plans for the 900 block of Pandora Ave. Of note, prioritization of focus area themes does not mean remaining areas would not be addressed in future work. Feedback from participants recognized the complex social issues beyond the scope and capacity of the Pandora Task Force and Municipal Government as well as acknowledging a continued desire to take collective action to address the identified issues.

The majority of the participants came to consensus on the following focus areas, which were an amalgamation and wordsmithing of some themes, created by the group:

- 1. Design of a healthy, shared, and safe space
 - arts, healthy place-making, inclusive of everyone! programs
- 2. Social Enterprise/Community Development
 - Progression of Support through community partners
 - Keep in mind: sense of ownership and responsibility

# of responses per theme	Loous area themes presented july 200 in order at valume at responses	
44	1. Shared Space: Water Access, Restrooms, Storage, Shared Space, Seating & Gathering, Accessibility (i.e., 50+)	
34	2. Design/Parks/Traffic: Parks, Pet-friendly, Traffic, Parking, Bikes, Designing, Landscaping, Water Features, Horticulture	
32	3.Community Development: Activities & Socializing, Best Practice Research, Kindness, Anti-Stigma, Faith & Spiritual Communities	
31	4. Policing & Safety	
27	5. Shelter/Housing	
21	6.Health, Services & Supports: Mental Health, Health, Off of Block Services, Services, Supports	
19	7. Food	
18	8. Harm Reduction & Substance Use	
17	9. Arts, Culture, Music, including Memorial & History of Place	
7	10. Social Enterprise: Social Enterprise, Education, Employment, Training	
2	11. Indigenous Culture & History*	

Table 1.1 Top 5 sub-themes**		
27	Shelter/Housing	
23	Policing	
19	Seating/Gathering	
19	Food	
15	Water/Restrooms	

*Only 2 items were specific to 'Indigenous' topics, the reader can anticipate many of the higher volume focus area will have significant representation of Indigenous Culture and perspective based on both the 2018 Point In Time Count, which indicates 33% of population of people experiencing homelessness in the Capital Regional District identify as Indigenous, and the GVCEH work with the Pandora Task Force is predicated on 'recognizing the traditional territories of the Lekwungen speaking peoples' & the principles of Recovery, Reconciliation, Relationships & Inclusion.

**Main focus area themes comprised of sub-themes



SCOPE OF WORK GVCEH

- The GVCEH will be responsible for management, coordination and facilitation of the Pandora Task Force in partnership with Alison James, Head of Strategic Operations, Mayor's Office City of Victoria. The Pandora Task Force will proceed with community development and implementation of Collaborative Social Development Working Solution Plans (See Appendix E).
- The GVCEH will review linkages within various meetings convened in the community specific to the 900 block (and immediate vicinity) and identify the purposes of each group to determine where they may be brought together to create efficiencies and reduce duplication, including:
 - Mayor's Pandora Task Force
 - Pandora Residents Meeting: Convened by Our Place to meet with neighbouring residents as part of the Good Neighbourhood Agreement
 - Pandora/Johnson Street Meeting: convened quarterly by Island Health
- There are concurrent initiatives which may overlap in purpose. The GVCEH will support coordination to ensure communication and reduction of siloed work, in order to increase the impact of aligned resources. These include but are not limited to the City of Victoria Community Wellness Task Force, and the Vancouver Street Bikeway (and potential extension of the greenway/boulevard).
- The GVCEH will develop and maintain relationships with business owners/operators on and abutting the 900 block with the express purpose of including them in development of Working Solutions planning.
- The GVCEH communicate with the Capital Regional District Regional Outcomes Monitoring Collaborative to determine if efforts can be aligned and focused in the 900 block.
- The GVCEH will collaborate with Steve Woolrich, Principal at Rethink Urban & volunteer at Greater Victoria Placemaking Network
- The GVCEH will develop a 900 block Key Stakeholder Matrix/Map
 - Who is there? (i.e., Businesses, Residents [housed/unhoused], Peers, Service Providers/Accessors, Government)
 - Who resources what?
 - Determine roles, responsibilities, gaps and overlaps

SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

The writer recommends the City of Victoria request funding from the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions to support the Action Teams below.

The City and GVCEH facilitate and fund Action Teams to initiate the following strategies using Working Solutions Implementation Plans to achieve the intended outcomes for the 900 block; these plans will be aligned with the Key Stakeholder Matrix/Map to ensure coordination of efforts and resources, as well as reflective of the principles and values of the Pandora Task Force.



TABLE 2.0 - SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS		
ACTION	Description & Anticipated Outcome(s)	Funder(s)/Team Members
 Develop pilot program "Victoria On Call" (VOC) modeled after the Downtown on Call program in Kelowna. Pilot is designed in collaboration with peer leaders. 	 Peer Teams to do 'wake ups' on the 900 block and on the downtown core. Teams respond to, and deescalate potential issues when safe to do so The recent coroner's service Death Review Panel found that one in four police encounters in B.C. has a mental-health component. In order to alleviate this issue, peer teams could respond and support the person in crisis without need for police intervention Pilot designed not to displace, but to support the community in a way that does not require police and bylaw enforcement as the first point of contact VOC members become researchers in collaboration with community to develop best practices This will be developed with robust training plans and trauma informed practice OUTCOME Community is empowered through Social Enterprise Actual and perceived safety of the public is improved due to team's presence and ability to respond to issues Reduction in bylaw and policing costs Team can support other initiatives on the 900 block and area 	Funder: City of Victoria Proposed Team: DVBA, people with experience of homelessness and accessing services on the 900 Bock (Peers), Bylaw, VicPD, GVCEH, Our Place Society
Item 1: BUDGET de	velopment in progress with Vic PD/Bylaw, DVBA & GVCE	Н
2. Installation of Water Bottle Refill Station	 Water bottle refill stations, such as the ones located on the Galloping Goose are installed on the 900 block This can be placed in conjunction with the development of the Vancouver Street Bikeway OUTCOME Basic human needs are met: all people in the area have ready access to on-demand clean water 	Funder: City of Victoria Proposed Team: City of Victoria Traffic/Parks Depts
recommendation #3	velopment in progress (TBD based on installation in conjur , and feedback from CRD & City of Vancouver)	nction with
-	ased on online research	
3. 24-hour accessible Restrooms are	 Purchase or build permanent or semi-permanent restrooms on the 900 block 	Funder: City of Victoria



installed on the 900 block	 Restrooms are maintained by the community through creation of social enterprise If modeled after the award-winning restroom in Downtown Victoria on Langley Street, the restrooms could be power washed once or twice daily (as are the sidewalks in front of Our Place Society) OUTCOME Basic human needs are met 	Proposed Team: City of Victoria, Peers, Our Place Society, GVCEH, Students	
	 A sense of ownership and responsibility is fostered by social enterprise 		
	 Reduction in complaints of urine and feces in the vicinity 		
Item 3: BUDGET Esti	imate: \$230,00	L	
\$180,000 - 2 x Restro	ooms @ \$90,000 each (estimate based on cost of Langley	Street facility)	
\$5,000 – Developmer	nt of Restroom Maintenance Program (Action Team)		
\$45,000 – Program fa	\$45,000 – Program facilitation and delivery (1 year)		
4. Collaborative Space Making is undertaken on the 900 block	 People need a place to safely sit and rest on the 900 block, this is where they gather and are not to be displaced A barrier is created between the boulevard and Pandora Avenue (this could include decorative elements and be co-designed by the community) Look to rezoning the boulevard on the 900 block to allow for seating, or amend bylaws Design can be created to ensure unencumbered access of adjacent businesses and sidewalks. This can be support of the Peer 'Victoria On Call' Team and co-development of agreements on how to use the space 	Funder: City of Victoria Proposed Team: Peers, City of Victoria, City of Victoria Parks, City of Victoria Arts & Culture, GVCEH, GVPN, Volunteer Mason, Students	
	OUTCOMES		
	 The community on the block feels listened to The experience for those on the block is improved Access and pathways are clear and shared Actual and perceived safety for pedestrians and motorists is increased 		
Item 4: BUDGET Esti	imate: TBA		



MEDIUM TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5. Declare the 900 block of Pandora Avenue a 'Special Area' in alignment with the Motion carried by Victoria City Council, June 13, 2019, re: Application of Equity and Affordability Policies, which "Council direct the City Manager to imbed these four principles for the city's emerging equity policies."
 - Apply an equity lens to siting, design, amenity selection, engagement, procurement, and evaluation, to inform decisions about and investment in community
 - Apply an affordability lens to assess total cost of ownership, siting, amenity selection, operating costs, costs to taxpayers and users
 - Invite potential partners and neighbourhood representatives to collaborate to align and help achieve these equity, accessibility and affordability objectives
 - Embed distributional, procedural, structural and inter-generational equity into the City's corporate policies guiding hiring, staff training and professional development, procurement and civic engagement (See Appendix F)

This mechanism would support financial investment in new and ongoing endeavours to improve the life of people experiencing homelessness in the area. Approximately 200 people use Our Place Society (919 Pandora Avenue) as their mailing address which supports indication of need.

6. Embed social enterprise into future development on the block by partnering with the business sector, i.e., GT Hiring Solutions, the DVBA, Chamber of Commerce, and service providers to develop a sustainable employment initiative. Collaborative Social Development engages community in a meaningful way, in such that the process itself is part of the outcome. As people become engaged, are listened to and can contribute to solutions that directly impact them, a sense of connection, belonging and well-being is fostered.

LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2. Using the learnings from this community consultation process, implement a coordinated response in areas with a high demographic of community members who are underserved within the City of Victoria, and have a high number of calls to police and bylaw. Particularly:
 - a) Pandora 900 block
 - b) Johnson Street
 - c) Centennial Square
 - d) Burnside/Gorge Road



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A		
Recommendations from GVPN Pandora Dilemma Report (Sept 2018)		
1. Engage the Downtown Service Providers Committee in implementing policies that address		
the conflicts. Include representatives from the street population on the Pandora Task Force.		
2. Expand the scope of DVBA "Clean Team" to include the 900 block of Pandora Ave. The		
DVBA could consider including members of Our Place on their team.		
3. Conduct a full-spectrum CPTED analysis. This effort would provide a wealth of baseline		
data for decision-making and help target specific programs.		
4. Establish a data centre within a City Department to identify and quantify homeless conflicts		
within the jurisdiction. Consider a hotline that businesses can call to report incidents to collect		
a time record of issues.		
5. Explore the costs and benefits of a portable or permanent public washroom, separated by		
gender, on Pandora Avenue.		
6. Work with the legal system and volunteers to develop an easy-access community court		
system for street persons.		
7. Train members of the street community in supporting medical crises as a "Street Medics		
Team."		
8. Enact an Ambassador program on a trial basis. Combine a few paid staff with community		
volunteers to create a presence on Pandora Ave. With appropriate training, Ambassadors		
would be able to:		
o Serve as advocates for street persons and act as on-the-street links with current		
outreach and mental health organizations.		
o Directly monitor effects on businesses and residents.		
o Provide a moderating presence, intervene early in disruptive behaviour, reducing		
police calls.		
o Lead activities that draw citizens and street persons together, such as outdoor		
musical events and games.		



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APPENDIX_B_Pando APPENDIX_C_PTF_Re APPENDIX_D_Consu APPENDIX_E_PTF_W APPENDIX_F_Equity-raDilemmaReport-Fi port&NextSteps_201 ltation_Data.pdf orkingSolutionsPlar motion-June-13.pdf

RESOURCES

https://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/garden-takes-root-on-strip-of-pandora-next-to-our-place-1.2211551

https://victoriaplacemaking.ca/panflora-gardens/

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/initiatives-plansstrategies/mental-health-and-addictions-strategy/bcmentalhealthroadmap 2019web-5.pdf