



Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of December 12th 2019

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** December 05 2019
From: Councillor Dubow, Councillor Thornton-Joe, and Mayor Helps
Subject: Welcoming City Strategy

INTRODUCTION

The City of Victoria is committed to creating a Welcoming City Strategy as reflected in Strategic Objective 5 in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. As part of this goal, the City is committed to joining Welcoming America's Welcoming Cities network and will strive to meet the Welcoming Standard in order to promote inclusive, welcoming community spaces where all people – including immigrants and refugees – feel accepted and are able to participate in the community in a meaningful way. In order to achieve this, the City must take proactive measures to counter fear mongering and racism and build up the capacity of the Victoria community to develop in a direction that works for all residents, including newcomers.

The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed next steps, including formally joining the Welcoming Network, working towards meeting the Welcoming Standard, and securing adequate resources in the 2020 budget to develop a Welcoming City Strategy and to begin to implement the directives, decisions, and policies needed to create a welcoming city in the Victoria community.

BACKGROUND

The Welcoming Network is a global group made up of a growing number of local governments, organizations and individuals who are committed to creating inclusive communities where everyone - including immigrants and refugees- can thrive. The Welcoming Network is an international initiative. See

<https://www.welcomingamerica.org/sites/default/files/Welcoming%20Standard%20%2B%20Certified%20Welcoming.pdf>.

In the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, the City of Victoria committed to joining Welcoming Cities initiatives through the Welcoming Network. Joining the network will support City efforts to meet international standards of what makes a welcoming community and will provide resources and supports to inform policies, programs, and partnerships that work for all community members. This positions the City to lead the way in purposefully creating a strong and resilient city and

community that works for everyone and complements the existing work being undertaken to support immigrants and their local businesses. Joining the network will enhance the City's capacity to do the following:

- Access tools, resources, and technical assistance to transition to be a more welcoming city
- Access support to develop a roadmap to meet the Welcoming Standards
- Demonstrate economic benefits of officially becoming a welcoming city
- Connect with other municipalities internationally and learn from best practices and challenges

Welcoming Standards are community specific roadmaps that provide a guide with community determined benchmarks to develop stronger, more inclusive communities and bridge the gaps between newcomers and long-time residents. These standards help communities imagine the possibilities of what they could look like while also providing a framework of accountability to measure progress. In order to be effective, strategies around four key sectors must be in place:

1. Engage long-term residents
2. Set goals, monitor impact and adjust strategies as needed
3. Design for equity and inclusion
4. Implement in partnership

The Welcoming Standards are organized according to the following framework categories:

- Government Leadership
- Civic Engagement
- Equitable Access
- Education
- Connected Communities
- Economic Development
- Safe Communities

The development of a Welcoming City strategy complements other 2020 initiatives including the development of an equity framework, the 2020 participatory budgeting project which is focussed on projects by and for newcomers, and the adoption and implementation of the City's new economic action plan, *Victoria 3.0 – Pivoting to a Higher Value Economy* which is currently under development. These activities taken together will support United Nations sustainable development goal #11 to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

The development and implementation of a Welcoming City strategy will also support many of the other Strategic Plan action items that fall under Health, Well-being and a Welcoming City including developing a trans inclusion policy and an accessibility policy, supporting a strategy to deal with mental health and addictions, and supporting community events and activities including local cultural festivals, murals, and neighbourhood activities like BBQ stations in public spaces.

The City of Victoria has already committed to joining the Welcoming Cities network. In order to undertake the work needed to develop a Welcoming City Strategy and strategically create a community specific framework that sets out focused relevant standards, consultant support will be required in the 2020 budget. The individual or team will be responsible for assessing the City against the Welcoming Standards and creating a Welcoming Cities Strategy. There could be the opportunity for this resource to support other initiatives that the City has already undertaken in order to ensure a united and cohesive approach to making the City of Victoria a more inclusive community for all.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives this report for information and considers allocating one-time funding from the 2019 surplus during January 2020 budget deliberations in order to develop a Welcoming City Strategy as identified in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan.

Respectfully submitted,

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Councillor Dubow

A cursive signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Helps'.

Mayor Helps

A cursive signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Charlayne Thornton-Joe'.

Councillor Thornton-Joe