



Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of December 10, 2020

To: Council **Date:** December 4, 2020
From: Mayor Helps and Councillor Loveday
Subject: Bring Back Main Street Report

Background

"In It Together: Bringing Back Canada's Main Streets" is a report released earlier in the fall by the Canadian Urban Institute to support small businesses in downtowns and village centres across the country. It was developed in consultation with Business Improvement Associations across Canada and included participation from the Downtown Victoria Business Association.

As noted in the Executive Summary, the purpose of the report is "to inform decision-making by policy makers at all levels of government, and other main street partners in communities of all sizes. It provides actionable solutions, options, ideas, and examples that can be used to support and strengthen main street businesses, organizations, and communities, and enable them to survive and recover from the pandemic crisis."

The report is excellent and has ideas about everything from retail to mobility to neighbourhood planning to real estate to arts and culture and more.

There are lots of good ideas for staff working on a variety of projects in a number of departments to consider. There is also a high-priority action that requires Council advocacy to the provincial government to reduce the property tax impacts on main street small businesses:

Action 4.21 Explore options to reduce or mitigate the property tax burden on main street small businesses, such as by enabling municipalities to set differential tax rates or caps to establish new commercial property classes, or to implement split assessment that reflect current rather than unrealized future use.

The Provincial government took a step in this direction in 2019 but the policy implications and process of implementation for local governments are unclear and the changes do not seem to go far enough to protect the legacy main street businesses, arts and culture organizations and non-profits downtown and in village centres.

Recommendations

1. That Council refer the Bring Back Mainstreet to staff working on the implementation of *Victoria 3.0, Create Victoria*, the Parks and Open Spaces Masterplan, Build Back Victoria, Neighbourhood Planning, and to staff in finance, real estate, economic development and planning for their consideration.

2. That Council refer “In It Together: Bringing Back Canada’s Main Streets” to the Minister of Municipal Affairs with request for consideration actions to reduce the property tax impacts to legacy main street businesses, arts and culture organizations and non-profits downtown and in village centres.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Helps", written in a cursive style.

Mayor Helps

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Loveday", written in a cursive style.

Councillor Loveday