

## **Committee of the Whole Report** For the Meeting of February 25, 2021

To:	Committee of the Whole	Date:	February 1, 2021
From:	Kerri Moore, Head of Business and Community Relations		
Subject:	Support Downtown Vibrancy & Vitality Report		

#### RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1. Approve \$100,000 from the 2021 Financial Plan contingency budget to be allocated toward a Downtown Vibrancy and Vitality Initiative to be administered by the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA) as outlined in this report.
- 2. Authorize a partnership agreement, on the terms satisfactory to the Head of Business and Community Relations and in the form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, with the DVBA to provide services on behalf of the City for the Downtown Vibrancy and Vitality Initiative.
- 3. That the above motions be forwarded to the daytime meeting of February 25, 2021 for ratification.

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the January 21, 2021 meeting, Council passed the following motion:

That staff work with the DVBA and report back to Council on options to support the vibrancy and viability of the downtown and to address the impacts of vandalism.

The motion was brought to Council in response to the recent surge of vandalism to businesses at a time when many business owners have already been impacted economically and emotionally by the pandemic. In a report issued by the Victoria Police Department (VicPD) on January 28, 2021, it states 2020 as the second-highest year for reports of break and enters in a 11-year period with 89, and between January 1 and January 27, 2021 there were 37 break and enters in Victoria and Esquimalt.

As a capital city, the importance of Victoria's downtown core to the region as a centre for business, shopping, dining, and entertainment is reliant on its vibrancy and vitality. Council may wish to consider taking steps to ensure the city is welcoming, safe, and beautiful for residents, visitors and those that live and work downtown and to support our local economy. The proposed Vibrancy and Vitality Initiative will assist downtown businesses affected by recent acts of vandalism to expedite repairs. This will avoid long delays with windows boarded by plywood and will maintain the aesthetic appearance of the downtown as a vibrant and vital commercial core of the city and the region. It will also support the safety of our downtown.

The city's economic action plan *Victoria 3.0 - Recovery Reinvention Resilience* under 'Recovery – Our Small Businesses are the Lifeblood of our Community' outlines actions to ensure downtown is safe and welcoming for all. This includes creation of a downtown clean and safe committee and a downtown ambassador program that will help provide a visible, welcoming presence for all. These improvements will not only contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of the downtown but, over time, it is hoped they can be expected to reduce front-line resource requirements for VicPD.

The proposed Vibrancy and Vitality Initiative would be administered for the City by the DVBA under a partnering agreement and provide the following services:

- Allocate \$60,000 towards a funding program to support any Victoria business that sustained damage to their windows, doors or locks due to vandalism or break-in to facilitate quick repairs.
  - This one-time funding would be approved based on a first-come, first-served basis, up to \$1,000 per business, and the business would be required to provide receipts and a police file number.
  - To ensure vibrancy and vitality the repair work must be initiated within 10 days.
- Allocate \$40,000 to establish a downtown business/resident block watch program in partnership with the Downtown Residents Association (DRA) and other partners to support and deliver the Victoria 3.0 actions to: Create a Downtown Clean and Safe Committee and Create a Downtown Ambassador Program.

## **OPTIONS & IMPACTS**

## Option 1: (Recommended)

- 1. Approve \$100,000 from the 2021 Financial Plan contingency budget to be allocated toward a Downtown Vibrancy and Vitality Initiative to be administered by the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA) as outlined in this report.
- 2. Authorize a partnership agreement, on the terms satisfactory to the Head of Business and Community Relations and in the form satisfactory to the City Solicitor, with the DVBA to provide services on behalf of the City for the Downtown Vibrancy and Vitality Initiative.
- 3. That the above motions be forwarded to the daytime meeting of February 25, 2021 for ratification.

This option will help to address the impacts of vandalism and maintain vibrancy and viability of the downtown and deliver on actions outlined in the city's economic action plan Victoria 3.0 Recovery Reinvention Resilience.

# Option 2:

## 1. Direct staff with alternative options.

Accessibility Impact Statement

There are no impacts to accessibility.

Impacts to Financial Plan

Should Council approve Option 1, the \$100,000 would be allocated from the contingency budget within 2021 Financial Plan. The contingency budget is typically used to fund unforeseen or emergency expenditures.

## CONCLUSIONS

In addition to other City initiatives to support business, such as the Build Back Victoria program, the proposed partner agreement with the DVBA will further help to maintain Victoria's downtown vibrancy and vitality. The City of Victoria will continue to listen to the business community to explore initiatives and programs to provide further relief and support during and following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Respectfully submitted,

Kerri Moore Head of Business & Community Relations

## Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager