



Governance and Priorities Committee Report

For the May 8, 2014 Meeting

To: Governance and Priorities Committee **Date:** April 22, 2014
From: Katie Hamilton, Director of Communications and Civic Engagement
Subject: Progress on Customer Service Action Plan

Executive Summary

The City's Customer Service Action Plan was approved by City Council in June 2012 and outlined three goal areas: 1) Maximize Customer's Ability to Access Information and Services, 2) Design Business Processes with the Customer in Mind and 3) Foster a "Customer-Focused" Organization.

Over the past two years significant progress has been made in all three areas and several initiatives are underway and will be completed in 2014.

From a policy perspective the organization is realizing strong synergy between the Open Government through Open Data initiative, the Customer Service Action Plan and the Civic Engagement Strategy.

Recommendation:

- 1) Council receive this report for information.
- 2) Staff to review 2013 Citizen and Business Surveys and customer feedback surveys received across the organization to identify areas for further focus and that Council direct staff to provide an update on customer surveys, 2013 Council and Business surveys, for Council's consideration during the 2015 strategic planning sessions.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katie Hamilton".

Katie Hamilton
Director of Communications and Civic Engagement

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be a stylized "M".
May 1, 2014

Purpose

To update the Governance and Priorities Committee on the progress made to date on the Customer Service Action Plan.

Background

The City's Customer Service Action Plan was approved by City Council in June 2012 and outlined three goal areas: 1) Maximize Customer's Ability to Access Information and Services, 2) Design Business Processes with the Customer in Mind and 3) Foster a "Customer-Focused" Organization.

From a policy perspective the organization is realizing strong alignment between the Council approved Customer Service Action Plan, the Open Government through Open Data initiative, and the Civic Engagement Strategy. There is opportunity for the three policy areas to be integrated more strategically as the strategies are reviewed.

Over the past two years significant progress has been made in all three areas. Due to organizational changes in the past year, some initiatives slowed and the annual progress report was postponed until now. Several initiatives are underway for completion in 2014.

Issues & Analysis

Maximize the Customer's Ability to Access Information and Services

Providing customers with clear, easy to access services and information has a significant impact on the customer experience. From ensuring that our physical space within public service areas is tailored to the needs of the customer, to ensuring that our information is easy to understand and available through a variety of ways; this is a major focus.

Over the past two years notable progress has been made in the area of online services. With the launch of the City's new website www.victoria.ca in the spring of 2012, the City was well-positioned to utilize the new technology for hosting several enhancements and to integrate with other initiatives, particularly in the area of civic engagement and open government.

The redeveloped website included improved navigation, a fresh design and a number of new features making it easier to access information and City services. The design of the site and content was prepared with the customer in mind. Responsive of requests of customers and staff, a new calendar of City events, RSS feeds for latest news, and an improved search function were added. Internal web editing capacity was added; allowing staff across the organization to update the website to ensure the site includes timely and relevant information for the customer.

A new '*I Want to*' section was created, enabling users to instantly jump directly to important customer service areas, and Latest News provides home page access to high priority initiatives. A Google translation feature can translate the site to one of over 40 languages with a click of a button. Accessibility options include text re-sizing and high contrast accessibility options, especially useful for low vision users. The site is mobile-friendly and is integrated with social media for ease of use with Facebook and Twitter.

On average, the website serves approximately 70,000 unique visitors each month, an increase of

over 10,000 unique visitors per month prior to the redevelopment. Consistently the top pages rotate between: parking, recreation, garbage, VicMap, and employment opportunities.

The site is a critical integration point for the City's social media channels. The City's Facebook page currently has 8,500 fans and the City's Twitter following is 13,300. Social media has become an essential tool for public information and customer service queries, in addition to the two-way conversations it facilitates directly between the organization and customers. The City's Twitter following has more than doubled in less than 18 months.

The City most recently launched a YouTube video channel hosting City videos including educational videos, promotional videos for initiatives such as webcasting, and tutorial videos for utilizing VicMap. In addition, the City recently launched a LinkedIn page to post employment opportunities and connect with professional networks.

The redeveloped website was a foundation for the launch of the City's online mapping system, known as VicMap, and webcasting council meetings in 2013. Whereas mapping information was very low in web visitor rankings prior to redevelopment, it has risen to the top with staff focus and the introduction of VicMap. This reflects the increased accessibility and volume of content available, as well the public's interest in planning and development matters, as noted in the recent 2013 Citizen surveys. VicMap has made what has historically been data and information used by the municipality, available to the public. Property information such as ownership and tax information is available, locations of bike routes, parks and parking spots are all available. Staff strive to identify and add at least one new layer per month.

An open data catalogue was introduced in 2013 supplying City data for public use. Updated in real time and routinely as available, focussed effort continues to advance open government and open data initiatives. Utilizing City data in new ways holds potential in terms of improving communication of information and services in meaningful, less traditional ways. Improved visuals and infographics have been developed in the past year to make the budget and City services more accessible.

Webcasting was introduced in October 2013. Citizens interested in municipal issues can now stay up to date with the latest decisions of City Council and watch Council meetings live online, or archived later. Live viewing is generally 65-200 individuals for Council and Governance and Priorities meetings, and increases with City and stakeholder promotion, and tends to be agenda driven in terms of highest viewership. The highest live viewing occurred in October 2013 timed with the Janion public hearing at Council. The highest viewership of an archived meeting was in April 2014, when agenda items were the financial plan and the quarterly update on the Johnson Street Bridge.

Most recently the webcasting was also utilized to live stream an open house on the financial plan, also enabling an interactive component by soliciting questions from residents via Twitter.

The garbage collection widget and app was launched in February 2013 and is a service that allows residents to sign up to receive garbage day reminders. Residents simply enter their address to sign up, and the service then sends a text, email, phone or Twitter reminder prior to garbage day, and syncs with online calendars. It also allows residents to print off a personalized PDF collection calendar.

Physical improvements to City Hall in 2013 improved physical accessibility with a new elevator, new electronic signage, new way-finding signage, and seismic upgrading. The new Development

Centre on the second floor of City Hall serves 2,500-3,000 customers each month and is an important access point from an economic development perspective. The improved space includes private meeting areas to facilitate private conversations, larger areas to rollout plans, and self-service options. The physical space also facilitated the integration of business licensing and development staff and processes in one location for greater expediency and service in one-location.

The City recently issued an RFP for "pay by cell" technology for parking providing greater payment options for customers.

Design Business Processes with the Customer in Mind

New technology and changing times have initiated the review of many City processes. Recognizing that time is at a premium for everyone, we are focussing on ways to "save the customer a trip" where possible and reduce steps to simplify process and increase certainty for the customer.

The City recently initiated updating the Zoning regulation bylaw for Central business District which will modernize the bylaw and provide greater certainty for property owners, and developers. Over 200 people attended the open house to provide feedback on the regulations.

Business processes were reviewed and adapted to centralize the Business Licensing function in the second floor Development Centre. This removed steps for customers as they no longer have to navigate multiple entry points to the process.

A concerted effort to review and improve application processes is on-going. Manual print forms continue to be revised and standardized for email and online formats, and are made fillable for customer ease and reduced administration for staff. In Bylaw Services, an online bylaw reporting form was introduced which prompts customer to identify the information needed for processing complaints, reducing back and forth between staff and applicant and expediting resolution.

The introduction of mobile inspections, in which inspectors can email approved permits to the customer on-the-spot, expediting timelines, has begun and will expand through the year.

Expected turnaround times have recently been developed in Development Services and Permits and Inspections: providing greater certainty for customers.

Target timelines for complete applications should be processed within:

- Outright demos, blasting, emergency repairs (fire, flood, water), plumbing, electrical: 1 - 2 business days
- Commercial Tenant Improvements: 5-7 business days
- General permits: 10-20 business days
- New bldgs. (including Commercial): 15- 20 business days

For Development Applications:

- Development Permit/Heritage Alteration Permit: 3-4 months
- Rezoning: 6 - 8 months

Over the past two years, customer service surveys have been introduced in the development services area to measure customer interaction. Over 300 have been submitted to date.

In Engineering, Public Works construction coordinators have developed systems for improving notification of capital work and conducting post-construction surveys to impacted properties.

In 2012, a new engineering customer service representative was introduced to coordinate customer requests and enable technical staff to process applications faster. This has proved very successful in terms of coordination and application processing.

Foster a “Customer Focused” Organization

Empowering staff to be innovative and make the best use of technology and resources represents one way of maximizing our organizational capacity, at the same time it fosters a highly engaged work force committed to continuous improvement. Supporting the City team of employees with the training and technology needed to meet this objective is essential.

Within the past year, customer service training has been provided to over 600 of the City’s 990 staff.

The City has increased the frequency of organizational updates by distributing media releases to all staff as matter of routine course, improving the format for e-bulletin distribution to encourage greater readership, and the new City Manager has introduced regular staff updates for all staff.

Over the past three years, the City has also introduced employee forums for information sharing across the organization. The next forum is being planned for June 2014.

In an effort to learn about the organization and meet staff, the City Manager has been visiting all areas of the City and been working out of offices in satellite areas to his own.

Employee focus groups have been conducted to engage staff in discussions about improving information sharing and designing new employee tools, such as the intranet.

In 2012, service delivery standards were piloted and continue to be implemented, applying consistent turnaround times and tools to assist staff in consistently serving customers, regardless of department or location.

Customer Service enhancements in 2014 include:

1) Maximize the Customer’s Ability to Access Information and Services:

- Online registration for recreation programs
- New one-stop, searchable document library for City website for quick access to reports, forms, and applications
- Introduction of a new City blog
- Introduce new online consultation portal to improve surveying and community dialogue opportunities
- New Open Data Licence to encourage use of data sets
- Select vendor to supply new pay by cell parking application for mobile devices (likely to launch in 2015)
- Introduce new E-billing options for utilities and property taxes
- A new standardized system and communications plan for utility bill inserts to raise awareness of online services designed to save customers a trip.

- “Responsive design” will be introduced so City website automatically adjusts to customer’s device (phone, PC, tablet)
- New online emergency notification system to be introduced to public in May
- Identifying capital projects and corresponding details, on VicMap
- Improved notification and options for searchable of City agendas, meetings and minutes is being explored.

Further focus on maximizing the in-person experience at City Hall will occur.

- Free Public Wi-Fi in City Hall
- Customer Service Ambassador position created for foyer of City Hall
- Create free 15 minute customer parking in front of City Hall by eliminating dedicated Mayor/City Manager parking
- Introduce foyer signs to welcome groups and clients to City Hall, raising awareness of City Hall activities and creating a welcoming environment for groups and customers (e.g. Twin City High school groups, attendees for training, elected officials, Youth Caucus etc.)
- Renovations to the Public Service Centre, with new signage and electronic information screens consistent with the Development Centre and Crystal Pool
- Consolidated bylaws for increased usability and online access, as well as summary overviews to support plain language understanding and frequently asked questions.

2) Designing business processes with the customer in mind:

- Introduce survey mechanisms at other customer service points within the City as well as online feedback forms to solicit feedback about special events.
- Update Building Bylaw to better address roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the building and inspections processes to clarify outcomes and accountabilities.
- A new Zoning Bylaw will come to Council for consideration, updating language and regulations providing for greater customer understanding and certainty
- Explore opportunities for increased mobile access to information for “outside employees”
- Update Sidewalk Café Bylaw to refine process for customer benefit.
- Initiate pilot for online application tracking, starting with rezoning applications.
- Booking of inspections will be available online.
- A workshop with Council on opportunities to delegate minor development permit applications to staff will occur this year

3) Fostering a “customer service focused” culture:

- Recently introduced customer service training program will continue to be provided to ensure all City employees have consistent training
- A new training program will be developed in partnership with the DVBA to improve customer service in all areas of parking services
- New employee recognition program will be developed to recognize and celebrate achievement and “above and beyond” customer service
- Raise awareness of customer service delivery standards for consistent customer response times
- New employee orientation program will be introduced to provide tools and understanding about the City’s commitment to excellence in customer service.
- City job descriptions will be updated to highlight City’s commitment to customer service.
- Parking services staff will be engaged in discussions around how to improve the

- parking experience downtown
- New intranet will be introduced to overcome physical and cultural silos, and will include a staff directory with photos and frequently asked questions, policy library and interactive components for staff to collaborate and share information.
- Utilize new blog to provide context and understanding of City services and achievements

Recommendations

- 1) Council receive this report for information.
- 2) Staff to review 2013 Citizen and Business Surveys and customer feedback surveys received across the organization to identify areas for further focus and that Council direct staff to provide an update on customer surveys, 2013 Council and Business surveys, for Council's consideration during the 2015 strategic planning sessions.



Home | What's New | Events | Blog | Contact Us |

Select Language ▼



SEARCH

Community

Business

City Hall

Departments

I Want To...

Victoria: The Capital of British Columbia Proud History. Bright Future.

Home

Text size

Share page



Latest News

Have Your Say about the Bicycle Master Plan
April 28, 2014

Emergency Preparedness Workshops in May
April 28, 2014

Online Survey: How Can We Improve Parking Downtown?

Events Calendar April 2014

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3

Register Now

Spring/Summer
Programs



17°C
Apr 30



Have Your Say, Victoria!

Find out about current **projects**, join in on **discussions**, and take **surveys** that will help us shape the future of our city.

[SHARE your feedback](#)[POST your ideas](#)[JOIN the discussion](#)

Do you have ideas on how we can improve cycling in Victoria?

We are working on making improvements to our cycling network. Whether you cycle daily, sometimes or hardly ever we want to hear from you! Email to register for one of our upcoming workshops: bike@victoria.ca

Already cycle?

Monday, May 12, 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Victoria Conference Centre, 720 Douglas Street

Wednesday, May 14, 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

De Vincl Centre, 195 Bay Street

Rarely cycle?

Monday, May 26, 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Fairfield United Church, 1303 Fairfield Road

SIGN UP

email address...

Sign Up



PROJECTS

Parking Services Review

2014-2018 Draft Financial Plan

Stormwater Engagement Summary Report



SURVEYS

Bicycle Master Plan Update

Blog

2014

[Blog](#)

[About City Blog](#)

City Blog

 [Subscribe to the City Blog RSS Feed](#)

[Welcome to our new City Blog!](#)

April 28, 2014 / [No Comments](#)

Welcome to our new City Blog! We are excited to launch a new way of communicating with you, and hope that it won't just be a one-way conversation. Join in – we want to hear from you. So, why would the City of Victoria decide to start a blog? Because City matters are important to...

[READ MORE](#)

Recent Posts

[Welcome to our new City Blog!](#)

[Register Now](#)

[Spring/Summer Programs](#)

[More information](#)

Email or Phone

Password

Log In

☒ Keep me logged in

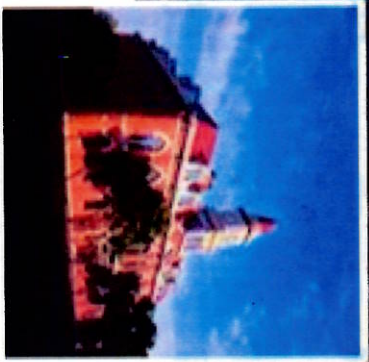
[Forgot your password?](#)

City of Victoria - Local Government is on Facebook.

To connect with City of Victoria - Local Government, sign up for Facebook today.

Sign Up

Log In



City of Victoria - Local Government

3.6 ★★★★★ (15 ratings)

8,577 likes · 152 talking about this · 3,758 were here

Government Organization

Proudly representing BC as the Capital City, the City of Victoria is a community of choice for its temperate climate, natural beauty, recreational sites & economic

About

Photos



Likes

8,577

Events



Videos



1

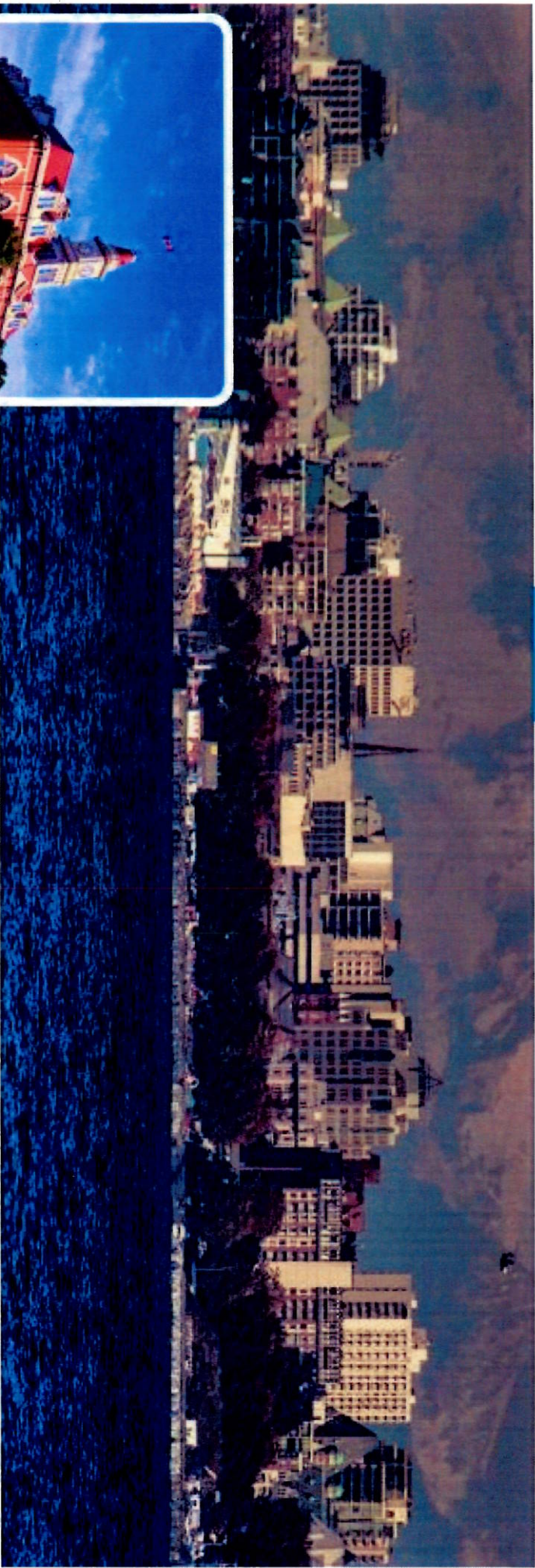
Highlights

City of Victoria - Local Government shared a link.

about an hour ago · Edited

Reviews

See All



City of Victoria

@CityOVictoria

The capital city of BC, Victoria is a community of choice for its temperate climate, natural beauty, recreational sites and economic opportunities.

TWEETS 2,262 PHOTOS/VIDEOS 86 FOLLOWING 9,923 FOLLOWERS 13.4K FAVORITES 318 [More](#) v

Tweets Tweets and replies



City of Victoria @CityOVictoria · 2h

Markets and bikes- what a good pairing! Come visit our 'Time to Ride' table at Vic Public Market today from 11-3 victoria.ca/cycling



2



Join LinkedIn and see how you are connected to City of Victoria BC.

It's free.

Get access to insightful information about your network at thousands of companies!

Join LinkedIn

Already a member?
Sign in »

City of Victoria BC



The City of Victoria is located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island, one of 13 municipalities that make up Greater Victoria. The Capital City of British Columbia, Victoria is a community of choice for its temperate climate, natural beauty and recreation opportunities.

Victoria is a small urban city, with a resident population of approximately 83,000. That figure swells to 200,000 each day as the region's economic and employment hub. The region is known as a centre for technological innovation, and remains an international tourism destination. Other large industries include post-secondary education, marine use and government.

Located in a sub-Mediterranean zone, Victoria enjoys the mildest climate in Canada. This, combined with spectacular outdoor setting adorned with ocean views and mountain vistas, encourage year round recreational opportunities including hiking, golfing, cycling, gardening and kayaking.

Each day City employees work to provide the best services possible for our citizens. From the provision of clean water, garbage collection, and emergency services to recreation classes, transportation planning and land-use development, first-rate City services are the foundation for building a healthy, safe and sustainable community.

Facing new challenges each day, the City of Victoria is evolving to find innovative ways of providing the highest level of service possible.

Ads By LinkedIn Members



Successful Women Network
Apply Now to the Worldwide Who's Who network for Successful Women.

[Learn More »](#)



Repair Center Manager
Lead one of the largest Service Technician teams in Canada! Langley, BC.

[Learn More »](#)

Type
Government Agency
Company Size
501-1000 employees