

NEWS RELEASE

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Nanaimo's downtown revitalization and safety plan closely linked

Summary

Since taking office, Nanaimo City Council has focused on the effects of homelessness, mental illness and drug addiction on the community, especially downtown. Through REIMAGINE NANAIMO, the City heard clearly that the community wants a flourishing, vibrant downtown that is safer for all users throughout the day and evening.

Depending on the outcome of discussions at City Council next Monday, both of those visions may move closer to reality.

The Downtown Safety Action Plan, presented to the Finance and Audit Committee on April 20, outlines a new, coordinated, proactive approach to public safety, and may set the stage for a revitalization of Nanaimo's core business and entertainment district.

The plan, commissioned by Council last year, was created by Neilson Strategies and includes new and augmented resources, programs and services. For the first time, Nanaimo City staff on patrol downtown would include Community Safety Officers (CSOs) whose role would be proactive, rather than complaints-based, and focused on conflict resolution and relationships with businesses, organizations and individuals.

The plan recommendations include hiring CSOs, two permanent Community Clean Teams, using Parks Ambassadors (2022 only), increasing downtown parkade cleaning, adding Downtown Ambassadors and undertaking an assessment of public spaces to improve safety.

Implications of the new safety plan for the 2022-2026 Financial Plan will be a tax increase of 0.9 per cent in 2022 and 1.0 per cent in 2023. Council will vote on the Downtown Safety Action Plan on April 25.

Strategic Link: A focused effort to address public safety concerns supports Council's priorities of Governance Excellence, Economic Health and Livability.

Key Points

- A Downtown Safety Action Plan was presented to the Finance and Audit Committee on April 20 and will go before Council for approval on April 25.
- The Plan recommendations include hiring Community Safety Officers, adding two more Community Clean Teams, using Parks Ambassadors, increasing downtown parkade cleaning, adding Downtown Ambassadors and assessing public spaces to improve safety.
- Improved public safety is as a priority for residents, Council and staff, and is a key component in the revitalization of Nanaimo's downtown.

Quotes

"Through REIMAGINE NANAIMO we heard the community say very clearly that downtown is the heart of our city and they want it to be great. Tackling social disorder is a necessary step in our revitalization and Council is considering this plan carefully. With Community Safety Officers working downtown, Bylaw Officers and RCMP can be more appropriately deployed and responsive to issues across the City."

Leonard Krog
Mayor
City of Nanaimo

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Contact:

For media enquiries, please contact
Communications
City of Nanaimo
Media.Requests@nanaimo.ca
250-754-4251



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