

Report to Council



Date: April 18, 2016
File: 1200-40
To: City Manager
From: James Moore, Acting Department Manager, Policy & Planning
Subject: Downtown Plan - Sense of Safety

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives for information the report from the Acting Policy & Planning Department Manager, dated April 18, 2016, with respect to monitoring sense of safety downtown.

AND THAT Council directs staff to add one or more questions, as necessary, to the Citizen Survey to assess the public's sense of safety in the downtown core.

Purpose:

To consider strategies to monitor the public's sense of safety in Kelowna's downtown core.

Background:

At its adoption in 2012, the Downtown Plan established a series of indicators that would allow staff to evaluate the plan's success over time and to make any adjustments in direction, as necessary. Indicators were established corresponding to each of the three (3) key Downtown Plan goals: attract people to downtown, increase sense of safety, and attract private sector investment. The intention of these indicators was not to provide a complete and detailed picture of progress; rather, the indicators were meant to act as signals that further work or investigation was warranted in one or more areas. For example, if indicator data for private sector investment were to stall or show a decline, the indicators themselves would not tell us why, but would identify that further study may be justified.

Looking specifically at sense of safety, the Downtown Plan indicators rely on data from two sources: (1) crime data for downtown from the RCMP, and (2) accident data from ICBC. Both of these sources are able to provide consistent data each year that allow staff to measure progress. The indicators are as follows:

- Number of crimes against persons (RCMP)
- Number of crimes against property (RCMP)

- Number of other criminal code violations (RCMP)
- Number of controlled drug and substance act violations (RCMP)
- Number of liquor violations (RCMP)
- Number of pedestrian injuries (ICBC)
- Number of cyclist injuries (ICBC)

At its regular meeting of October 26, 2015, Council reviewed the annual monitoring report for the Downtown Plan. Through discussion on the topic, Council noted a concern that the indicators for Sense of Safety captured exclusively *actual* safety (i.e.: actual risk of harm), and did not provide any insight into the public's *sense* of safety (i.e.: perception of safety). As a result of the information presented, Council resolved as follows:

THAT Council direct staff to hold a Workshop on the Downtown Plan Goal No. 2 Increase Sense of Safety.

Measuring Sense of Safety is a challenging task. It is simple enough to ask people how safe they feel. The challenge is found in how a local government can act on the data that comes from such a question. Some research suggests that simply asking the question produces highly unreliable data year over year¹. This is because individual perceptions of safety are influenced by an array of factors, many of which are outside the sphere of municipal influence. For instance, an international security event may reduce a person's perception of safety in public. Ultimately, without data regarding the key factors that contribute to a sense of safety, it is difficult for a local government to take meaningful action.

Currently, Mayor and Council correspondence and Service Request System items pertaining to downtown safety are monitored for immediate and short-term concerns among the public and businesses.

The City of Kelowna's Citizen Survey currently measures the general public's sense of safety across the City. The results shown in 2015 were very positive, with 94% of respondents saying that Kelowna is a safe community². To obtain this data, the survey asks the following initial question:

- Overall, would you describe the City of Kelowna as a _____ [very safe, somewhat safe, not very safe, not at all safe] community?

Taking this further, the Citizen survey asks three (3) follow-up questions in order to identify what key factors are contributing to an individual's sense of safety.

- Do you feel community safety in Kelowna has _____ [improved, stayed the same, worsened] over the past three years?
- Why do you feel community safety has improved/worsened?

¹ "Sense of Safety." Harvard Kennedy School, The Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management. n.d. Web. 30, Mar. 2016. <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/programs/criminaljustice/research-publications/measuring-the-performance-of-criminal-justice-systems/indicators-in-development-safety-and-justice/indicators-under-development/country-led-indicators/sense-of-safety>

² Ipsos-Reid (2015). City of Kelowna - 2015 Citizen Survey, pg. 30.

This additional layer of questioning is extremely valuable, allowing the City the ability to identify where its actions could be most effective. For instance, answers to these follow-up questions in the 2015 Citizen Survey included “more policing/law enforcement” and “decreased crime rate” as reasons why safety has improved³. Community policing is an area of direct City influence, meaning that staff and Council are able to act effectively upon the findings of this survey.

The Citizen Survey is completed biennially. Staff are recommending that an additional question(s) be added to the existing Citizen Survey in order to provide a specific focus on the public’s perception of safety in Kelowna’s downtown core. The specific questions will be crafted with the assistance of the survey provider (Ipsos-Reid). Data from this would become available in the spring of 2017 and would be added to the list of indicators for the Downtown Plan.

Other alternatives considered included:

- a separate bi-annual statistically significant survey for the downtown; and
- working with the Downtown Kelowna Association (DKA) to access any relevant data they collect.

Staff feel that a separate, statistically significant survey would not be cost effective and that it would be more efficient to bundle additional questions in the existing Citizen Survey format. Staff has been in contact with the DKA, however the DKA has suggested that there is no data that they currently collect that would be helpful in determining sense of safety downtown.

Internal Circulation:

Garth Letcher, Crime Prevention Supervisor
Colleen Cornock, Community Policing Coordinator
Kari O’Rourke, Community Engagement Consultant
Stephen Fleming, City Clerk
Rob Mayne, Divisional Director, Corporate & Protective Services

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

No additional costs are anticipated for the addition of one or more questions to the existing Citizen Survey.

Conducting an independent, statistically significant survey for downtown would cost approximately \$7,000.

Personnel Implications:

No significant personnel implications are expected.

External Agency/Public Comments:

³ Ipsos-Reid (2015). City of Kelowna - 2015 Citizen Survey, pg. 31.

The Downtown Kelowna Association - The DKA supports the collection of data around sense of safety. The more information that can be gathered the better we can understand the roots causes of this perception. It is hoped that with this information all of us (the City, RCMP, By-laws, Downtown on Call) can work together to reduce the public concern about safety Downtown.

Communications Comments:

The biennial Citizen Survey is expected to occur no later than Q2 2017. The Citizen Survey is important research to provide insight into major decision making regarding planning, budgeting and understand timely issues important to the community. Understanding the perception of safety in the downtown will be a focus.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority
Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements
Existing Policy
Alternate Recommendation

Submitted by:

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Acting Department Manager, Policy & Planning

Approved for inclusion:



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cc:

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