Designing a way to Evaluate Safety, Cleanliness, and Inclusion Initiatives in Prince George
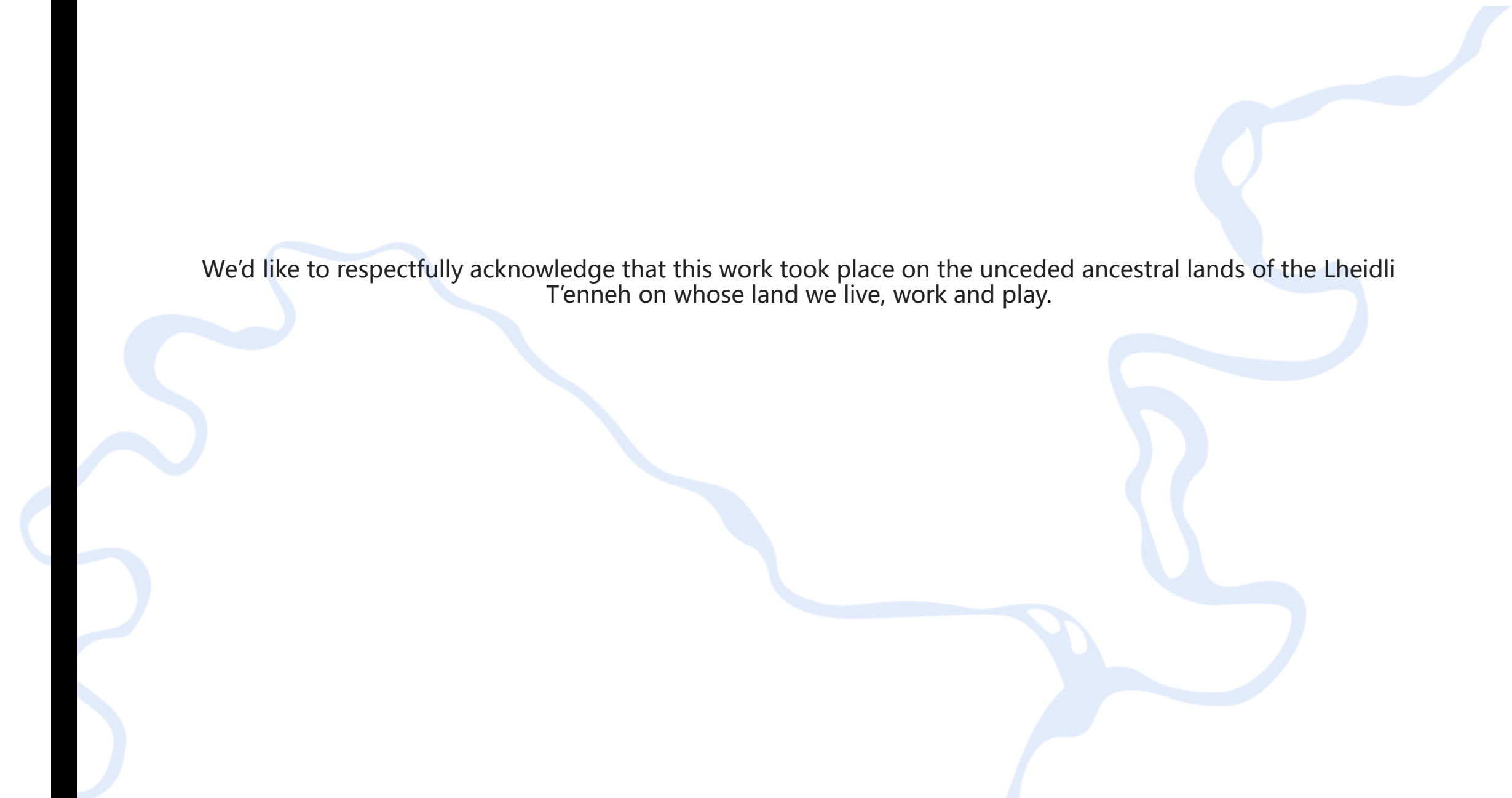
Evaluation Report Summary

December 2022

COEURAJ

CITY OF
PRINCE GEORGE

We'd like to respectfully acknowledge that this work took place on the unceded ancestral lands of the Lheidli T'enneh on whose land we live, work and play.

This document has been prepared by Coeuraj, a consultancy firm that worked with the Prince George community to develop the Prince George Safety, Cleanliness, and Inclusion (PGSCI) Evaluation Framework. We hope that this work contributes to a thriving community for all peoples in Prince George and inspires collective action to address issues and inspire change in downtown Prince George.

Contents

Introduction and Context

The City of Prince George and allied agencies are faced with numerous complex and interrelated social issues impacting safety, cleanliness, and inclusion for all members of the community. To assist in responding, the City funds and implements a variety of interventions aimed at increasing health, well-being, and safety in the community. Currently, there is no formal system in place to measure outcomes and impact of the interventions – up to this point, as it has not been clear what should be measured, or what constitutes success.

In 2021, the Civic Initiatives & Partnerships division of the City of Prince George initiated a co-design process, facilitated by Coeuraj to develop an evaluation framework to determine whether the City's safety, cleanliness, and inclusion (SCI) interventions are achieving their desired results and supporting systems change, as defined by the community of Prince George.

An evaluation framework is a system of goals, methods, and indicators that are used to support decision-making and improve service delivery. This allows an organization to better understand their interventions in terms of explicit outcomes and provides tools and indicators that can be used to demonstrate progress towards creating positive change in the community. Gathering data and evidence enables the organization to continuously learn from their actions and make informed, strategic decisions to deliver the best services possible to those who need them.

Purpose of this Document

This document describes the development of the Prince George Safety, Cleanliness and Inclusivity (PGSCI) Evaluation Framework, which was designed to enable agencies to evaluate programs based on their performance in achieving specific results (i.e. program evaluation), and also based on their contribution towards generating positive impacts at a systems or population level (e.g. systems evaluation).

The evaluation framework focused on three main evaluation questions:

1. Do the current interventions contribute to the systems change we want to see?
2. Are we allocating resources effectively to contribute to this change?
3. Where do we need to go to realize our shared vision for safety, cleanliness, and inclusion?

This document presents the project journey that the community undertook to develop the PGSCI evaluation framework and presents the results of an evaluation used throughout the different phases of the pilot (sprints) to test the framework and gather data on current interventions. The sprints focused on the City interventions:

1. Downtown Prince George Clean Up
2. Increase in Bylaw Patrols Downtown
3. Community Safety Hub - and systems and community impacts

The findings are summarized for each intervention and improvement options are offered for the entire community of Prince George to enhance safety, cleanliness, and inclusion based on the vision of change developed throughout this work. The complete Evaluation Report and Guidebook can be found here.

Project Journey

Phase	Details
Phase 1: Mobilizing Stakeholders Jan – Feb 2022	Business owners, community members, NGOs, and government representatives from Prince George formed a "design team" to define key issues and identify participants of the evaluation framework co-design process.
Phase 2: Systems Research Feb – March 2022	Primary and Secondary research explored what issues are impacting safety, cleanliness, and inclusion in downtown Prince George. The research generated 5 themes that were explored throughout the journey: 1. Downtown lacks vibrancy 2. Housing crisis and unhoused peoples 3. Opioids and mental health 4. Graffiti, garbage, needles, and biohazards; and 5. Perception of safety
Phase 3: Co-design workshops March – May 2022	Over 50 community members participated in two in-person and two virtual co-design sessions to define key issues in Prince George and a vision for what change could look like. Participants generated a Theory of Change, which connects different activities with community shared goals in a way that allows assumptions to be tested and goals to measure progress. From here, we developed an initial Evaluation Framework that outlined intervention-level and systems-level indicators of change and key evaluation questions that connect to the community vision of change.
Phase 4: Evaluation Sprints July – October 2022	The sprints were led by an evaluation team - including two City outreach workers, and two program staff, and support from Coeuraj with project facilitation, evaluation design and data analysis. The sprints evaluated the program outcomes of three interventions (The Community Safety Hub, Downtown Prince George Clean-up, and Increased Bylaw Presence Downtown), and systems and community impacts. Once the data was collected, community members participated in a Community Sensemaking Workshop to interpret and give meaning to the evaluation data.
Phase 5: Final Reporting November 2022 – January 2023	Summarizing the evaluation framework and synthesizing key findings and recommended next steps and reporting them into this document and the accompanying Evaluation Guidebook.

Defining Change

In Phase 3 of the project journey, stakeholders from across Prince George developed and defined a Community Vision of Change:

COMMUNITY VISION OF CHANGE

Everyone is seen as a member of the community, deserving of **social**

There are many, complex factors that affect how we realize the Community Vision of Change.

In this evaluation, we have focussed on three aspects to serve as signals of change so that we can track our journey towards the Community Vision:
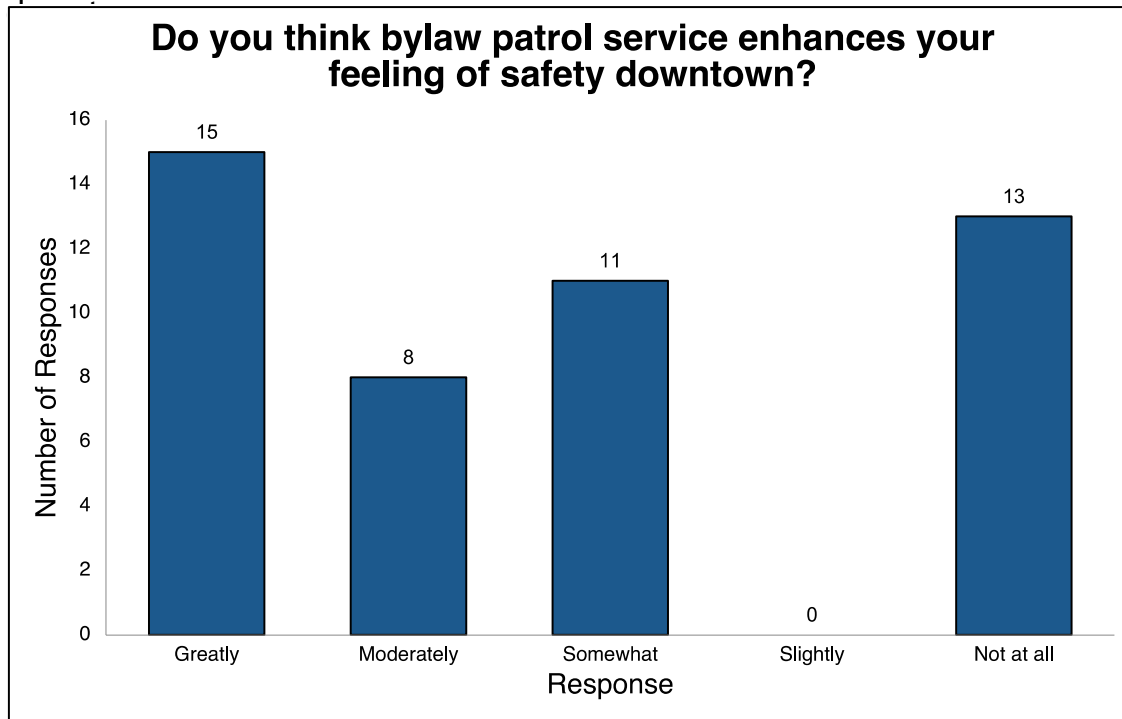- Feeling safe downtown
- Access to secure housing of reasonable quality
- Sense of belonging within the community

These factors were used to define indicators of systems change and the contribution of specific programs towards shifting these factors were considered within each program evaluation.

Evaluation Outcomes 1: Increased Bylaw Patrol Officers

Description

In 2019, Prince George Bylaw Services received an enhancement that allowed for an increase in Bylaw presence from five to seven days a week in the downtown area. Further, in 2021, Bylaw Services received an additional increase in funding, which was initially allocated for private security costs. This additional increase in funding permitted the hiring of four additional Bylaw Enforcement Officers and extended Bylaw's presence downtown daily from 7:00 AM to 11:00 PM. These enhancements led to a new model of delivery that features a "boots on the ground" approach, where officers are walking daily along scheduled routes

Do you think bylaw patrol service enhances your feeling of safety downtown?

Survey data showing community opinion on Bylaw enhancing feeling of safety downtown
Source: Evaluating Cleanliness, Safety, and Inclusion in Downtown PG Survey, Sept 20-Oct 14, 2022

Key Findings

The community appears to recognize the value of Bylaw patrols, but perspectives are mixed
- The community considers that Bylaw officers provide a valuable service even if the reported level of satisfaction is more neutral.
- Community feedback indicates that many seem to understand the role of Bylaw patrols in creating a safe environment downtown.
- There appears to be a conflation between Bylaw services and clean-up teams, as many people associated Bylaw services with keeping the city clean (e.g. of needles).

Relationships between Bylaw services and the unsheltered are unclear and/or strained
- Bylaw services own perspective of their role in the community has emphasized relationship building and educating people, rather than strictly enforcement.
- Responses from participants who were likely to be unsheltered indicate that there is still a negative perception of Bylaw patrols within that community.

Current program data is inaccurate and insufficient
- Community stakeholders appeared skeptical that existing program data was an accurate representation of incidents in Prince George.
- The evaluation revealed inconsistencies in how data related to bylaw incidents were collected and stored, including:
  - Incident records are split across two databases.
  - Incidents encountered by Bylaw while on patrol is not captured consistently.
  - It is difficult to distinguish incidents encountered on

Community Feedback

Key themes that emerged from community members and discussions at Community Sensemaking Workshop include:
- Safety depends on perspectives (e.g. People who visit downtown less will have a different sense of safety than those who live and work in the area).
- Bylaw patrols are becoming more about building relationships.
- Data doesn't show the whole picture.
- Bylaws do a good job but there are still gaps in patrols and safety (e.g. Late at night) and more is needed.
- A focus on enforcement alienates some of the population.
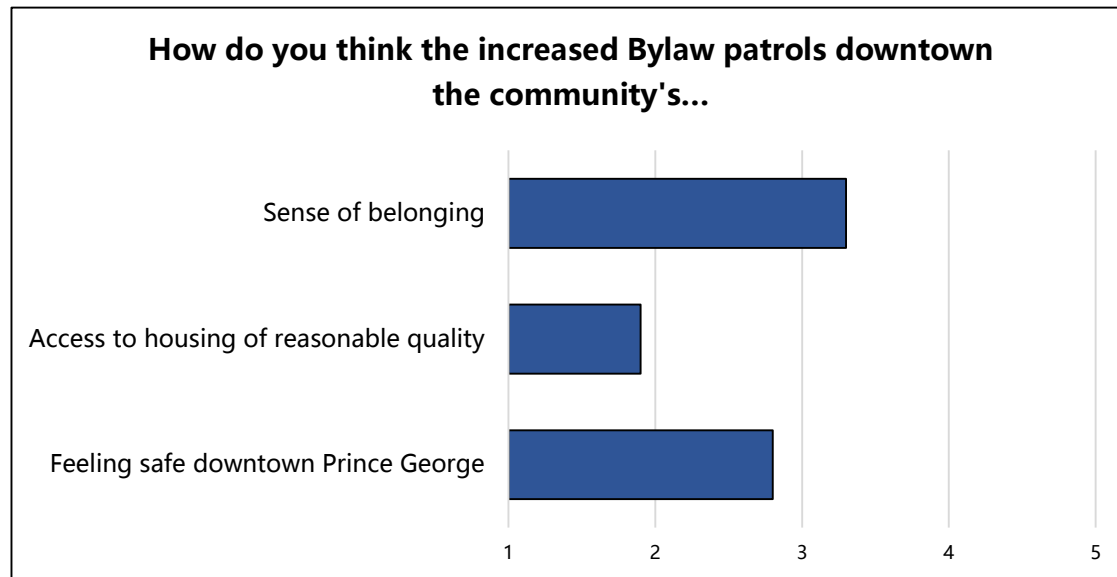
How do you think the increased Bylaw patrols downtown the community's...

Results of a poll (n=17), included in the survey issued to all Sensemaking Workshop participants, showing how the community stakeholders considered the Increased Bylaw Team to contribute to the three key systemic impacts shown in the Systems Theory of Change.

Improvement Options

1. Improved data collection
- Integration of CityWorks and Tempest databases can ensure that agencies are working from a shared measurement system.
- Evaluators should work with Bylaw officers to develop a method to collect data from their patrols in a way that can be integrated with existing data that Bylaw officers are already tasked with collecting.

2. Review the relationship between Bylaw and unsheltered groups
- Validating survey findings with unsheltered communities who felt that Bylaw did not enhance their feelings of safety.
- These responses should be explored more deeply to better understand how Bylaw services are responding to this information and adjusting their service delivery accordingly.
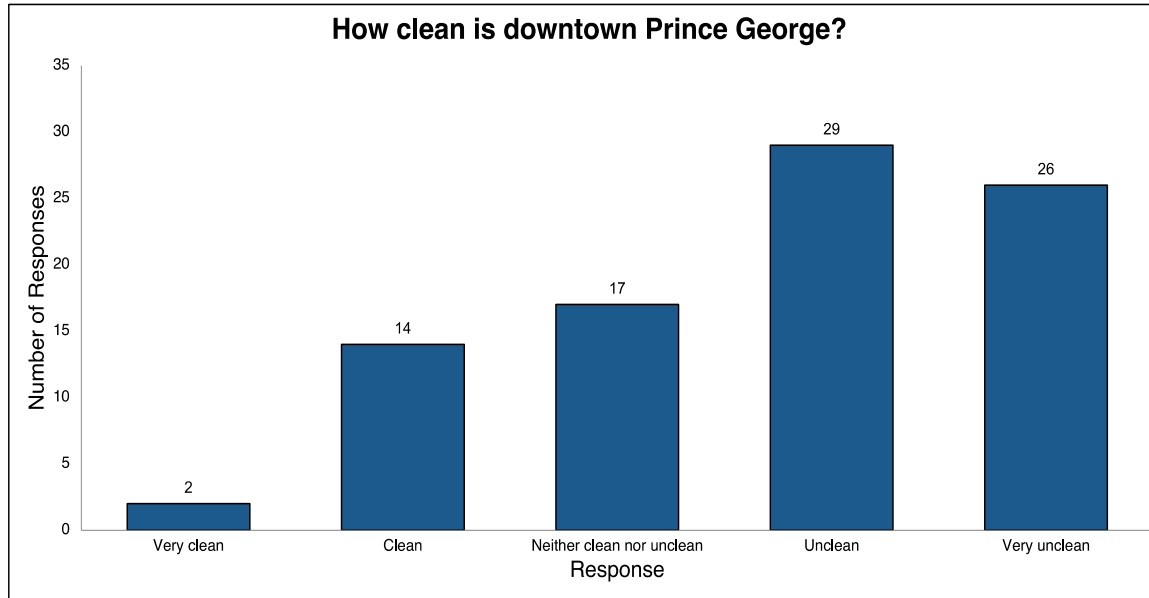
3. Increased training for Bylaw officers and more scope for outreach workers
- If Bylaw officers are continually working with unsheltered people, all parties should have trauma-informed and harm-reduction approaches/training.
- There also needs to be more formalized procedures for engaging with unsheltered people while on patrol and how are these engagements being captured in the program data.
- Increased support for outreach workers to expand their presence downtown can help improve relationships and collaboration between Bylaw, other Community Safety Hub agencies, and City staff.

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Evaluation Outcomes 2: Downtown Prince George Clean Up Team

Description

Since 2021, the City of Prince George has been working with Downtown Prince George to provide daily, and on-call, clean-up services in downtown alleys and streets. This intervention was introduced in response to increasing incidents of litter and biohazards in the wake of the Covid-19 lockdowns which disrupted the delivery of essential services to unsheltered and vulnerable members of the community.

How clean is downtown Prince George?

A bar chart titled "How clean is downtown Prince George?" with y-axis "Number of Responses" ranging from 0 to 35 and x-axis "Response":
- Very clean: 2
- Clean: 14
- Neither clean nor unclean: 17
- Unclean: 29
- Very unclean: 26

Survey data showing community opinion on downtown Prince George cleanliness
Source: Prince George Downtown Community Survey Results: September 2022

Key Findings

The community appreciates the presence of the DPG Clean-up service
- Members of the Prince George community feel that the downtown core is an unclean environment.
- Community members see the value of the downtown clean-up service.
- There appears to be a strong sentiment that things could be worse if the City and its partners were not providing the clean-up service.

Current program data and data collection is inaccurate and insufficient
- Community stakeholders felt that program data (primarily from 311 service records) did not accurately describe conditions on the ground.
- One reason suggested for this gap was that many business owners and residents just "deal with it" and clean the waste themselves without reporting the data.
  - This shows that the community is actively participating in efforts to improve downtown.
 - However, data needed to understand conditions downtown is less accurate.

Need to Increase clean-up service capacity and explore new solutions
- At present the clean-up service lacks the capacity to meet the need of the community.
- Community members suggested more support for additional initiatives aimed at cleanliness, such as increased access to public washrooms.

Community Feedback

Key themes that emerged from community members and discussions at Community Sensemaking Workshop include:
- Are we overcomplicating things and missing simple solutions. (e.g. Larger garbage bins)
- People are often cleaning waste for themselves and just "dealing with it", which leads to gaps in data
- Bathrooms are a known solution
- How can we take and adapt ideas from other cities e.g. Vancouver?
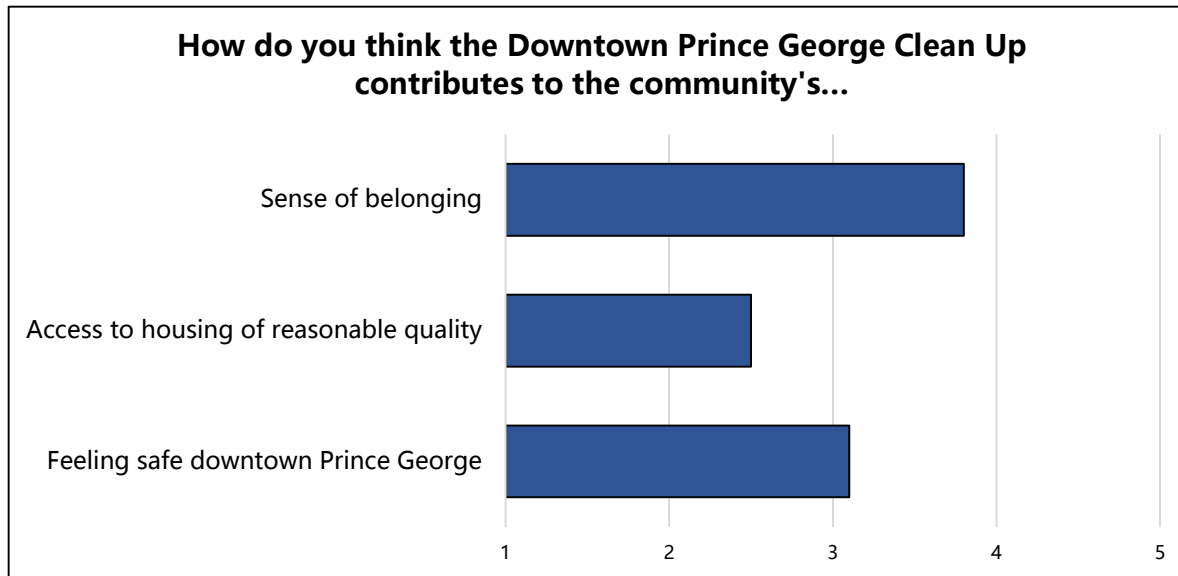
How do you think the Downtown Prince George Clean Up contributes to the community's...

Results of a poll (n-17), included in the survey issued to all Sensemaking Workshop participants, showing how the community stakeholders considered the DPG Clean-up service to contribute to the three key systemic impacts shown in the Systems Theory of Change.

Improvement Options

Co-develop a holistic and collaborative approach to collecting data with input and active participation in community members
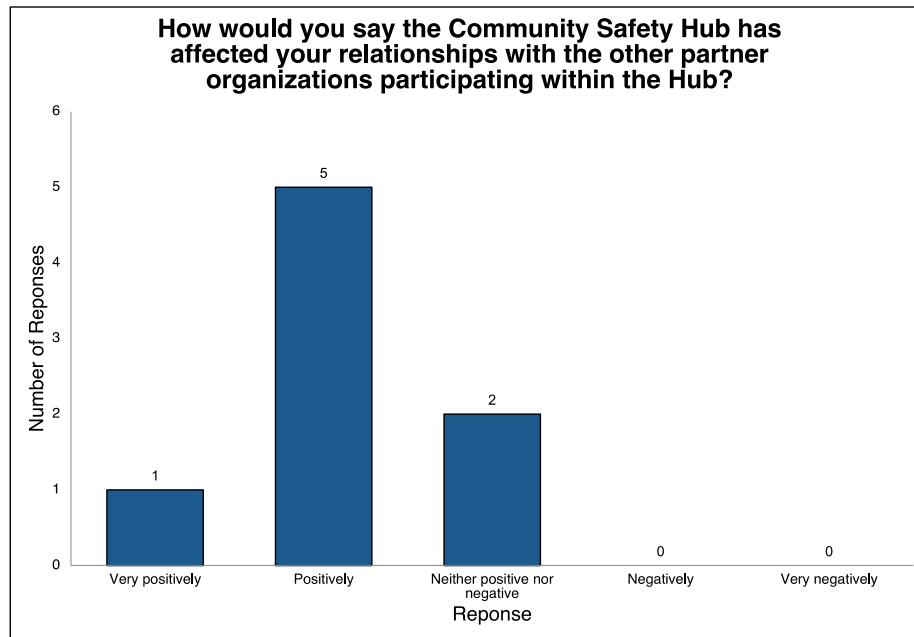- This is required to build a complete picture of incidents of waste, needles, and biohazards across the downtown area.
- The approach should combine, but distinguish between, reports made by the public and incidents from recorded in clean team patrol logs.
- The approach needs to engage and involve business owners and residents of downtown, especially those who are "just dealing with" the incidents themselves.
  - o The approach will need to gather data in a manner that is separate from the clean-up request.
  - o This is also appropriate as clean-ups on private property are not the responsibility of the City and the current "on-call" system is provided as a temporary service.
  - o Direct targeted engagement or crowd-sourcing options may be viable approaches.
  - o If possible, there would be several benefits to integrating this data collection process with proposed plans to distribute Safe Needle Disposal kits to downtown businesses in response to needle service requests.

Evaluation Outcomes 3: Community Safety Hub

Description

The Community Safety Hub (CSH), opened in April 2021, to provide a central location for partner agencies and social organizations to convene and collaborate in services of promoting greater integration and coordination between stakeholders and their programs.

The CSH provides resources and facilitates collaboration between key service agencies within Prince George. By fostering increased coordination and integration of key programs, the CSH aims to empower organizations to improve the availability, quality, and effectiveness of service delivery across the community.

How would you say the Community Safety Hub has affected your relationships with the other partner organizations participating within the Hub?

Survey data CSH's effect on relationships with other organizations
Source: Community Safety Hub Agencies Survey, September 20-October 14, 2022

Key Findings

Participating agencies believe the CSH is valuable and that is had a positive effect on collaboration
- Commonly cited benefits of this process were the opportunities to share information and learn from other organizations, learn more about services provided through other agencies, and work together to find solutions to emerging issues.

Agencies consider the working groups to support relationship building and have had tangible successes
- Working groups strengthened relationships with other agencies and have enabled more information sharing and mutual learning.

The CSH is rarely used as a resource for collaborative working
- Although facilitated meetings and working groups at the CSH to foster collaboration, the space itself does not appear to be used as a resource for agencies to organize their own collaborations.
- The CSH does not appear to be used as a space for greater collaboration or "co-working", however, some agencies do use the facilities for their own meetings.
- For some agencies, the CSH space did not meet the requirements for the space to be relevant to their work, suggesting that there is a misalignment between the current facilities and the needs of some organizations.

Persistent challenges stem from the indistinct mandate, agenda, and differing levels of commitment from partners
- CSH participants are committed to working towards a long-term vision better Prince George.
- However, each agency represents different interests that do not always align in the short-term.
- This leads to differing levels of commitment, difficulties in communications, and tensions that may result in perceived "finger-pointing".

Community Feedback

Key themes that emerged from community members and discussions at Community Sensemaking Workshop include:
- The CSH needs its own North Star and identity.
- Could the CSH have a more explicit focus on preventative action.
- It is unclear how/if the CSH should benefit clients, directly or indirectly.
- It would be useful for the CSH to focus more on preventative measures
- The CSH enables collaboration
- It is challenging to balance the different mandates, perspectives, and agendas
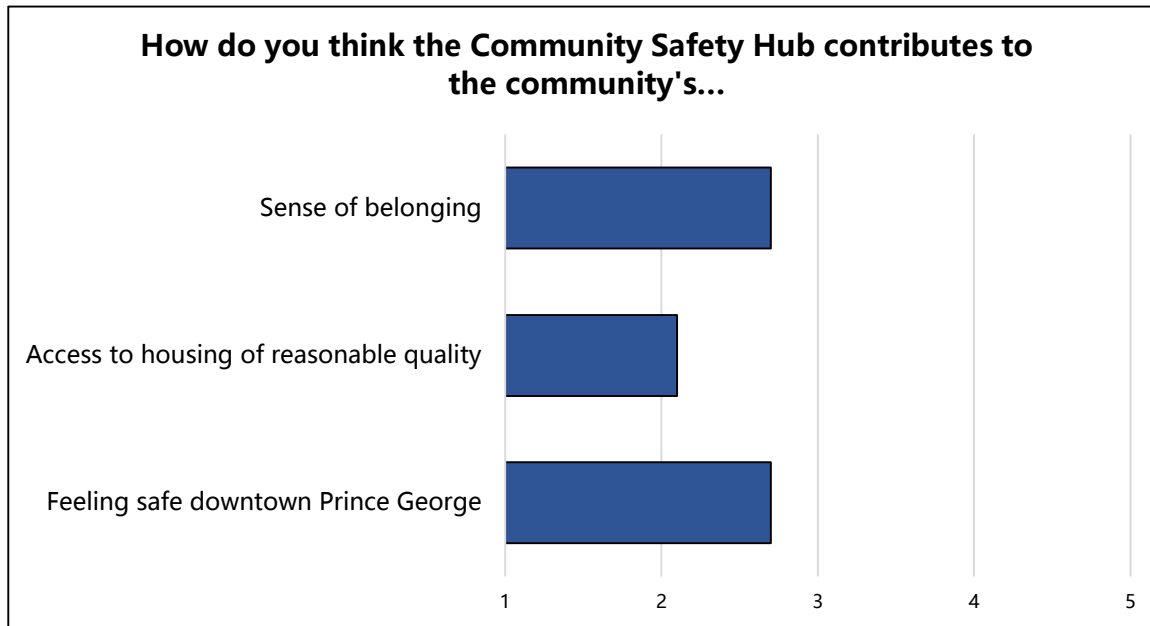
How do you think the Community Safety Hub contributes to the community's...

Results of a poll (n=17), included in the survey issued to all Sensemaking Workshop participants, showing how the community stakeholders considered the Community Safety Hub to contribute to the three key systemic impacts shown in the Systems Theory of Change.

Improvement Options

1. Collaboration by Design
- The Community Safety Hub partners and other participating agencies should engage in a process to review and realign on the purpose of the hub, the balance of joint efforts towards the Community Vision and their individual mandates and priorities, and the appropriate level of collaboration they feel is suitable and that they can commit to.
- A useful framework for organizing this is the Collaboration Spectrum, developed by the Tamarack Institute.

2. Review and operationalize the Terms of Reference (TOR)
- Reviewing and revising (if necessary) the TOR would be a substantial step in creating greater alignment among CSH participants.
- Within the collected data, there were few references to the TOR which suggests that raising awareness are verifying that they still resonate with partner agencies is advisable.

3. Capture and review CSH meetings and develop a follow-up process
- An approach that can collect suitable data but is not onerous in terms of effort and is standardized enough that the responsibility for data entry can be shared between groups.
- Attendance records, a high-level summary of key topics and decisions, and a note of ideas that emerge and proceed to actionable steps would be valuable.

4. Conduct a "co-working space" needs assessment
- Some agencies indicated that the space is unsuitable to their specific needs.
- More detailed follow-up work, for example, a series of focus group discussions, would be valuable in validating these findings and determining what agencies would require to work from the space and how feasible such requirements would be to implement.

Evaluation Outcomes 4: Systems and Community Change

Description

To evaluate if the work of agencies within Prince George are delivering systemic change it is necessary to determine if conditions within the system are changing. The systems indicators presented in the PGSCI evaluation framework are intended to provide the means to observe genuine change within the system at community population level. During the pilot evaluation the evaluation team collected baseline data for indicators connected to perceptions of safety, feelings of belonging, and housing stability, all key areas of impact represented on the Theory of Change.
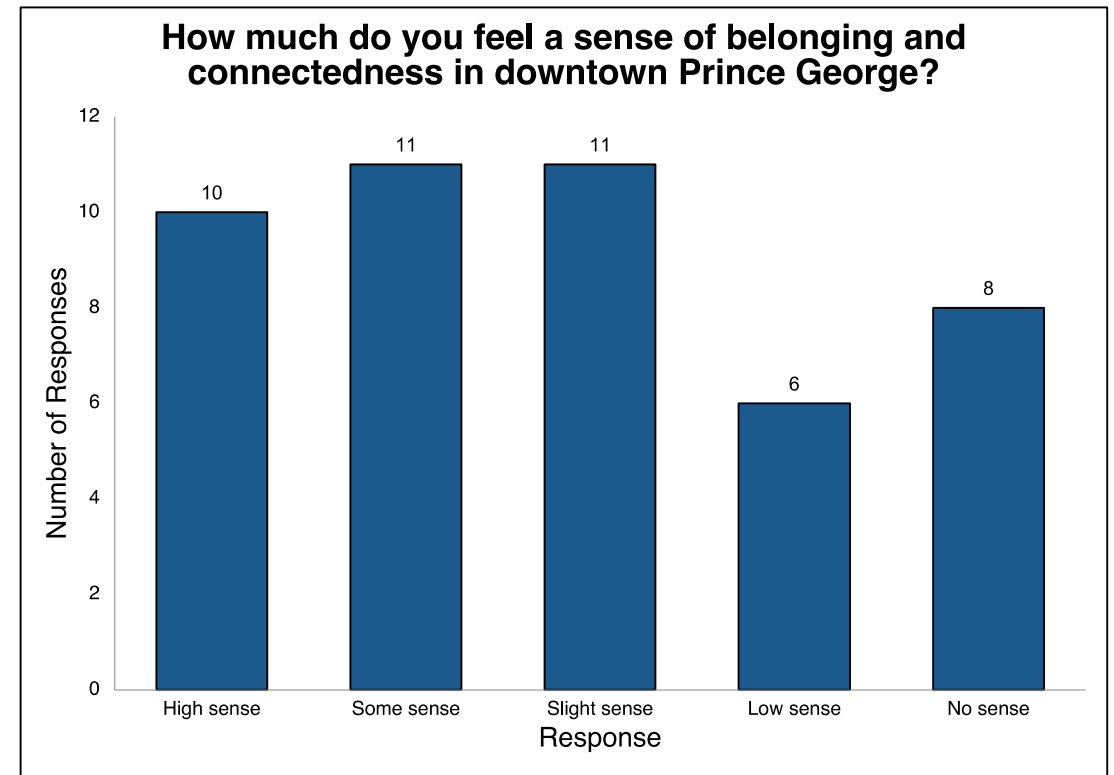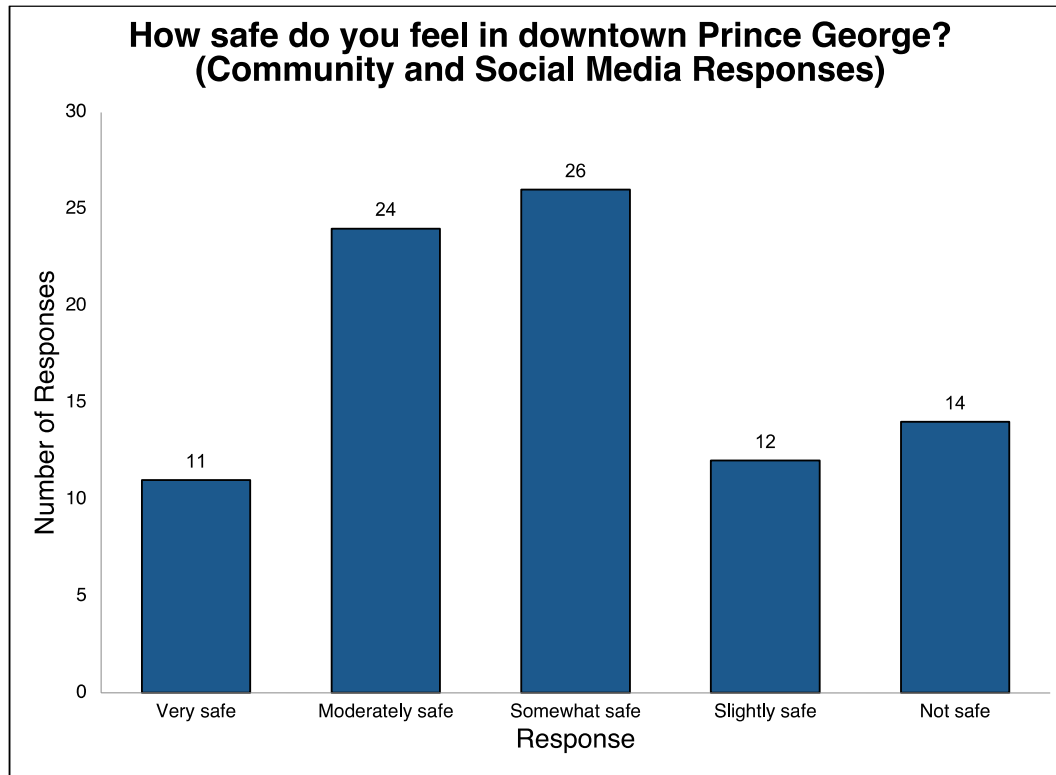
Survey data showing feelings of belonging and connectedness and safety downtown.
Source: Evaluating Cleanliness, Safety, and Inclusion in Downtown PG Survey, September 20-October 14, 2022

Key Findings

Unlike the data presented to evaluate each of the three indicators that were the focus of this pilot study, there is little to be said in terms of synthesizing learnings and suggesting improvements for systems indicators. Systems indicators represent the ultimate impact of SCI interventions in Prince George i.e. they represent the outcomes that are used to determine how interventions can be improved instead of tracking a process that could be adjusted.

The systemic indicators can be used to monitor changes in "upstream" factors that contribute to more symptomatic issues such as needles and biohazards or Bylaw offences. However, repeated measurements over time are required to determine if the system is, in fact, changing. This pilot study established the baselines set of measurements for three systems indicators and tracking these results as part of ongoing evaluation efforts will provide a benchmark on if the systemic conditions within Prince George are changing for the better.

Although, the results of this study cannot yet definitively answer the question "Do the current interventions contribute to the systems change we want to see?" the data does confirm that community organizations are taking profound steps in the right direction.

Improvement Options to Influence Upstream Root Causes

To change a system, the actions we take today must often find their way upstream against the current that would keep things as they are. This is a gradual process, but one that will lead to a lasting difference. Here's a map outlining how the key issues facing downtown Prince George are connected and which ones are upstream.

UPSTREAM

DOWNSTREAM
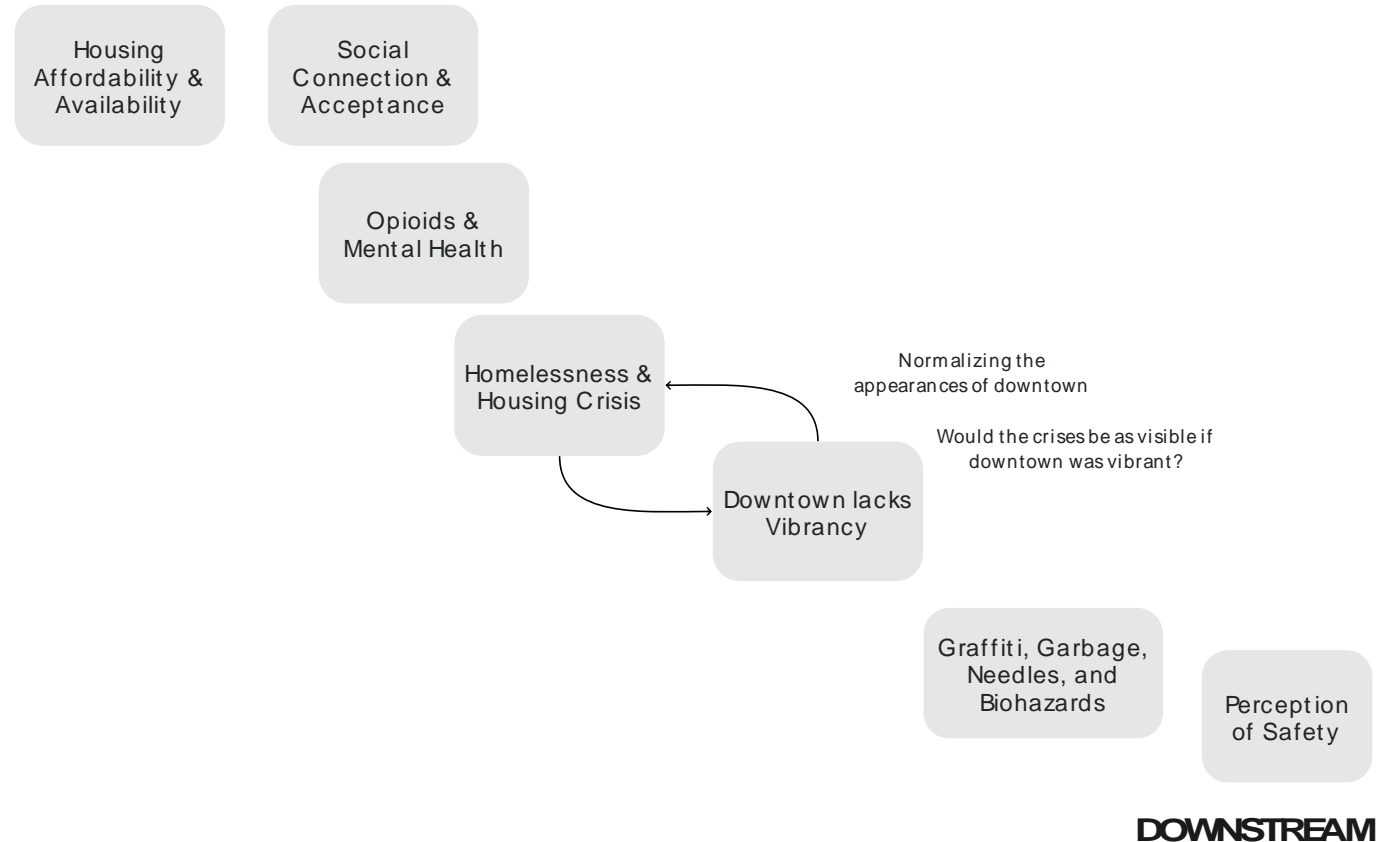
Conclusions

The process to develop the PGSCI Evaluation Framework and the evaluation outcomes determined that there is a common vision for the Prince George community, yet polarized perspectives of how to get there. Relevant stakeholders saw value in all three of the interventions yet there were also negative perceptions of how each contribute to the common vision for change.

The results demonstrate that the Prince George Safety, Cleanliness, and Inclusion (PGSCI) evaluation framework, alongside quality data, has the potential to generate useful insights to improve interventions. However, the true value of the framework can only be realized over time. Only repeated measurements of chosen indicators, over regular periods, can demonstrate that change has occurred, in either program performance or systemic conditions.

This work has laid a strong foundation for future evaluations and is a starting point to achieve a collective vision that will entail all agencies and community members working together.

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