

Proposed Action Plan

We, as a committee, must look at the issues plaguing our community in relation to safety and crime in the City. Any activities left unchecked will over time spread to surrounding areas, this is the concept behind the "[*Broken Windows Theory*](#)". Though our concerns are focused on the downtown core, this is the geographical "center" of our issues. Addressing these most pressing situations at the "core" will result in a decrease in issues in the surrounding areas as a natural trickle-down effect.

A [Pragmatic approach](#) would serve the committee best, as it is based on a logical outcome or solution over a perceived understanding held by any one individual. The goal being to resolve the problem in as few steps as possible in the most cost effective manner possible.

1. **Every action and inaction** comes with costs, not borne by the City directly, but by property owners, business owners, tax payers and the general public as a whole and seldom considered by City Administration and Council. With every increase in issues involving Police, Fire and Bylaws response there's a cost. Simply increasing the staffing for these agencies will not solve the issues leading to a response. However, finding the triggers for these issues and resolving them before they become a response issue saves, staff time and costs most of which can never be recovered for the source of the issues.
2. **Statistics are the devil's workshop**, we can look at a decrease in call volume and wrongly assume there is a decrease in, let's say "criminal activities". When in fact due to the previous issues with getting crimes addressed, complacency has taken hold, and the public no longer bothers to report issues. Thus the statistics show a decrease in crime, which is most often far from correct. Some would say numbers don't lie, and that is somewhat correct, however, how those numbers are interpreted can throw that belief into conflict.
3. **Catch and release is a problem** for us here locally and is the case in every community in B.C. currently. How we address this problem with our Provincial partners is where a solution could be found. Working with First Nations groups and the Province may lead us to a resolution that addresses the issue while avoiding needless incarceration, which often than not, doesn't return the offender to the community as "rehabilitated". Our community is also the local "dumping ground" for those who are released from correctional facilities. We need to look at the feasibility of returning these folks to their home communities. It has been shown statistically that those who are returned to their home communities are less apt to reoffend due in part to family, friends and local support networks available to them.
4. **A messed up reporting system**, who do we call to report issues? What is considered an emergency and what is considered a nuisance call for the Police. What warrants a call to Bylaws or using the 311 App? What about patrols? Who is doing what? The RCMP will patrol when they

are not back logged with calls but what about Bylaws? We, by Administration, are often told that “Bylaws is complaint driven”, so what does that mean to the public? No complaints, therefore no patrols? It’s not uncommon to see two or three Bylaws officers moving as a pack through a downtown function like the Saturday Farmers Market. Meanwhile three blocks over, there’s a group of individuals camping in an alleyway behind a building. These are not “random” occurrences in the downtown core.

5. **What about our Outreach Groups?** What are they actually doing to offset the call volume and issues in the downtown? It seems that there is no co-ordination between the City Outreach team and these independent agencies. At least we have not heard anything to the contrary. How many agencies are there in the City that do outreach, who do they answer to? Is there a way of getting some form of co-ordination between these agencies and the City? The last Administration under Mayor Hall had a Situation Table located at the Energy Building, what is going on with that? These are all great questions that need to be answered by this Committee.
6. **Effective Policing & Bylaw Enforcement.** What system of policing and enforcement of community bylaws is most effective in operational success and ensuring public safety? How much money needs to be spent to “uphold the right”, upholding the public rules and standards of order in the community. What do we need to look at changing when it comes to street level coverage by a policing agency? Are we using our contracted policing services effectively? Are we getting the desired effect of enforcement and public order from our Bylaws Enforcement body? What are the trouble times for our community and the peak trouble times for the downtown core? What is the actual scheduling and staffing levels for both agencies (Police & Bylaws)? We need to see an overview of the community, and see where the true repeat issues are occurring during the day and night time hours. What steps can be taken to help the police to be more proactive as opposed to reactive to criminality in the community and City core.
7. **Outside “Contracted” Security Services.** How much money is the City spending on security patrol services for Civic facilities, are all the civic facilities protected to an acceptable level to reduce or mitigate losses to the City from criminal activities on or against Civic assets? Security Patrols are effective in mitigating potential risk to civic properties, yet we suffered extensive losses from the loss of wiring, P.A. Equipment and Scoreboard components at the Carrey Jane Grey Baseball diamond and the theft from the concession stand at the same location. So clearly, all civic properties are not protected as they should be to report acts against the property and its content. What are we paying out for services for what we are getting in return for actual “services” to the community.
8. **Fire and Medical response calls.** Under the requirements for the City to provide Fire Protection services as part of Public Safety, we need to look at the costs involved in providing those services to the community. Medical calls are a bulk of the calls currently seen answered by our

Fire Rescue Services, of those calls it appears most of those calls involve rolling expensive apparatus, most often needlessly. Should we look at a more “purpose or task built” response unit to address medical and rescue calls? A smaller unit with the intent on responding to medical assistance calls and rescue support calls. It follows logic that a smaller compartment truck (Rescue Squad) with two trained paramedic/firefighter staff members would be easier to maneuver and respond with, than a loaded half million-dollar pumper with four Fire fighters, one Engineer and one Captain. Cutting costs while still providing the same required level of service. As for seeking compensation from the Province for medical response calls, that’s an ongoing discussion between the City and the Province and outside of the focus of the committee currently. Provision of “service” is still the concern of the Committee so the results of those discussions should be shared with this committee to help form future plans moving forward.

9. **Idle assets don’t serve a purpose, nor do we recoup any expenses.** The City spent good money years ago on installing a City owned fiber optics network, as the community evolves this becomes an asset we are not using in a “proactive manner” in the best interests of the City. We need to know where the fibre optic nodes are in the downtown core and other areas of the community, this is an asset that can help us address some of the concern in regards to safety and security of the community. Tax payer funded, this network belongs to the people of the City and as such should be used to improve the level of safety in our downtown. The strategic use of video surveillance (either active or post event) can benefit the City and its community members. How we apply this technology can be a cost cutting measure in so many ways, effective use of Bylaws staffing, Police assets & Fire Rescue go from being, in some cases reactionary, to proactive.

10. **Vacant Buildings and vacant land and unsightly properties.** What conditions are in place to not only protect the City, but the general public at large from issues involving vacant buildings and lots within the City? We had an explosion in a vacant building downtown, this caused personal injury and extensive property damage in the downtown core. What Bylaws are in place to protect the City and more over the public from the risk these vacant buildings pose? Same applies to vacant fenced off lots, the lot beside the Ignite Night Club is another example of poor risk management, who owns this lot and why is it left in the state it’s currently in. Exposed concrete and rebar pose a safety risk as the temporary fencing is not keeping people off that lot. This also applies to the open pit mine shaft beside Birch and Boar, this has been like this for a long time, what is going on and when will it be completed? Vacant buildings like the former Northern Hardware building pose a threat to downtown safety as being a lure for illegal activities and a visual eye sore with the boarded up windows (done frankly in a haphazard manner). We need to encourage, by use of bylaws, the building owner to be considerate of the surrounding businesses and how the appearance can effect overall business for neighboring shops. Do we have a vacant building policy in Bylaws putting a time limit on how long a property can sit unused and “shuttered”?