

**Date:** March 11, 2025

**To:** **Mayor and Council.**

**Name and title:** Deanna Wasnik, Director of Planning and Development

**Subject:** Downtown Strategy Implementation Team Update

**Attachment(s):** None

## Recommendation(s):

That Council RECEIVES for information report dated March 11, 2025 from the Director of Planning and Development titled "Downtown Strategy Implementation Team Update".

## Purpose:

For Council information.

## Background:

The Downtown Strategy was presented to Council at the February 5, 2024 regular Council meeting laying out the framework and principles that will help move the community's downtown towards its vision of being a destination and gathering place of business and culture, while recognizing the challenges facing that vision. A main recommendation for the strategy's implementation was the establishment of a Strategy Implementation Team, a working group of key organizations that would identify initiatives, projects and strategies that will support the goals and outcomes as suggested in the Downtown Strategy, including bringing in additional organizations as appropriate.

Empowered by Council and equipped with the strategy, staff joined the proposed team core comprised of Downtown Prince George as the lead, along with Tourism Prince George, and the Chamber of Commerce. This team has since met bi-monthly and supported better interagency communication and identified projects and events in the downtown that have either been carried out by one of the strategy team members or other community organizations.

At the February 5, 2024 regular Council meeting, Council directed Administration to "return an update report to Council at the end of Q2, 2024 on the Downtown Strategy".

At the July 22, 2024 regular Council meeting, Administration provided Council with an update on the Downtown Strategy, as directed by Council on February 5, 2024. Following the update, Council again directed Administration to "return an update to Council in six (6) months regarding the Downtown Strategy Implementation Team". This report addresses this Council resolution.

## Discussion:

Since the last update, there has been a notable increase of event hosting by businesses and community organizations:

- B2B Expo
- Santa Claus Parade
- CrossRoads Street Fest
- Community Arts Day
- Pride Parade
- Downtown Winterfest
- Sip and Savor program
- Touch A Truck
- Foodie Fridays
- Downtown Summerfest
- Plaid Friday
- Downtown Fallfest
- Taste of Downtown
- Shop the Block
- Increase in events at locations such as:
  - Omineca Arts Centre
  - Knox Performance Centre
  - Two Rivers Gallery
  - PG Library
  - PG Farmers' Market
  - The Royal Canadian Legion
  - Prince George Senior Centre
  - PG Italian Club
  - Two active night clubs: Crush and Ignite
  - Live music and entertainment at downtown establishments

There have also been some significant projects and administrative or structural changes of note from the strategy team members that have occurred since the last update:

- Renewal of the 10-year BIA bylaw
- Façade Improvement Program regained funding from Northern Development Initiative Trust and disbursed \$5,000 in grants in 2024, with \$15,000 available in 2025
- Official appointment of the Chamber's Executive Director
- Retirement announcement from Downtown Prince George's Executive Director
- Official opening of Tourism Prince George's new location
- Continual enhancements of Tourism Prince George's container market
- Milestone progress on the Chamber's SupportPG initiative

## Strategic Priorities:

This project is aligned with myPG Goals, Council's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, and Economic Development Strategy goals:

- myPG goal: Vibrant Economy; Clear Identity and Pride
- Strategic Plan: Economic Growth and Diversity; Social Health and Wellbeing
- Economic Development Strategy: Create, Embrace, and Promote Place

## Summary and conclusion:

The Downtown Strategy's recommended first step of establishing an implementation team has been completed with Downtown Prince George as the lead and the City, Tourism Prince George, and the Chamber of Commerce as team members. The strategy's implementation will be a long-term endeavor and will require ongoing participation and support from not only the team member organizations but other community groups as well. A non-exhaustive list of notable events and developments has been provided.

Respectfully submitted:

Deanna Wasnik, Director of Planning and Development

Prepared by Deklan Corstanje, Manager of Economic Development

Approved:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting date: 2025/03/24