

Services and Supports for the Homeless

Community Safety Hub

The City of Prince George and its partners launched the Community Safety Hub in the downtown area on April 6 to help improve the health and safety of unsheltered homeless. The Hub will also support service coordination between local and provincial government agencies and community organizations responding to social issues like homelessness, substance abuse, and mental illness. The location provides flexible work and meeting space for City Bylaw Services, Northern Health, BC Housing, RCMP including the Downtown Safety Unit, the Prince George Native Friendship Centre, Downtown Prince George, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and more.

Homeless Service Hubs

In 2019, the City helped launch two new projects in the downtown area aimed at providing washroom and storage access for vulnerable and homeless people.

- The site at 181 Quebec street offers storage, washroom, and outreach services.
- The second site at 144 George Street provides access to storage, washroom, shower, laundry, and outreach services.

The City has partnered with BC Housing, the Prince George Native Friendship Centre, and the Association Advocating for Women and the Community (AWAC) to provide these critical services.

First Avenue Affordable Housing and Healthcare Partnership

BC Housing is collaborating with the City of Prince George and Northern Health on one of the most significant and innovative housing projects in Northern B.C. Together, the partners are adding affordable housing integrated with healthcare services to serve Prince George's most vulnerable populations and improve the community, particularly the city's downtown area.

The initiative - separated into two projects - will provide up to 150 new affordable homes at 808/855 First Avenue (NR Motor's previous location) with support and services. The City has provided the land for the project.

Improving Cleanliness and Safety

Service Agreement with Downtown Prince George

In early 2021, the City of Prince George established a funded service agreement with Downtown Prince George (DPG) to provide biohazard and graffiti removal services on private property in the C1 Zone. The service agreement enables DPG to provide biohazard inspection and removal services six days per week, and graffiti removal services on a seasonal basis from April – October.

Civic Operations

The City's Civic Operations Department works to ensure a clean downtown by providing a range of services including:

- Litter patrols every morning Monday – Friday, year round. In the summer months, mechanical litter collection occurs 7 days per week;
- Clean up and disposal of localized small debris and overnight shelters, during inspections or as reports;
- Winter sand pick up;
- Pre-scheduled sidewalk flushing in areas of need;
- Street sweeping of downtown streets twice per week on night shift during the summer months and;
- Bio-hazard cleanup on public and civic property and;
- Collaboration with the DPG's Downtown Clean Team to facilitate the provision of modified residential garbage carts for litter transport, manufactured tool racks for the carts, and hand tools to assist with litter pick-up.

Enhanced Policing

The City currently allocates \$273,249 for enhanced RCMP patrols in the downtown core. Funding is utilized to schedule a two-member patrol for six hours per day. The enhanced patrols provide a dedicated police presence on the days that the Downtown Safety Unit (DSU) is not on shift and provide some surge capacity overlap with the DSU during the high traffic late afternoon hours of the day. The enhanced patrols also extend dedicated police presence in the area up to six hours beyond the nine-hour DSU shift.

Dedicated Bylaw Presence

In early 2021, Council approved the reallocation of the \$400,000 annual budget from Civic Facilities for security costs to Bylaw Services to enable the hiring of four Bylaw Enforcement Officers. This allowed expansion of Bylaw Services. Combined with the 2019 Bylaw Services enhancement that increased bylaw presence from five to seven days per week in the downtown area, this reallocation enables Bylaw Services coverage from 7 am to 11 pm, 7 days per week. The new downtown Bylaw Services model features a “boots on the ground” approach with officers walking pre-determined downtown routes and managing services previously provided by private security.

The City of Prince George also worked with partner agencies to prepare and submit an application to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Strengthening Communities' Program. UBCM is administering the \$100,000 million program enabled through the Government of Canada and the Province of BC's Safe Start Agreement. If successful, the City of Prince George could receive up to \$2 million to further improve the health and safety of unsheltered homeless people, reduce community concerns about public health and safety in the downtown where unsheltered homeless populations are seeking temporary shelter and services, and further enhance coordination amongst agencies working on housing, homelessness and service provision. The City will be advised of the outcome of its application in late July 2021.

For additional information and updates check the City's Downtown Social Well-being webpage:
<https://www.princegeorge.ca/Business%20and%20Development/Pages/Planning%20and%20Development/Downtown.aspx>



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