



The Honourable  
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Mayor of Edmonton

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Reference No.: 448031565

Downtown Recovery Coalition  
Alexandra Hryciw, Chair  
Anand Pye, Vice-Chair  
Coalition Members

Re: Follow up to Downtown Public Safety Event

Thank you for your attendance at the update that myself and City Manager Andre Corbould provided on Public Safety in the Downtown, Chinatown, and on our transit systems on September 15th. This was one of many engagements that my office and I had with your group and the Downtown Business Association, other business leaders, and several Chinatown community stakeholders because I have made Downtown and Chinatown safety a priority ever since I was elected as your Mayor. I hope that the important information we provided to you was shared with members of your organizations.

I want to firmly reiterate that the City of Edmonton has taken serious actions to address the concerns heard from the Downtown and Chinatown community members and our Council has prioritized significant investments in safety, cleanliness and COVID-19 recovery initiatives.

Some of the actions that I personally have undertaken in this area since being elected are:

1. In my first meeting with Premier Jason Kenney in November of 2021, I discussed the importance of the Government of Alberta investing in increased shelter capacity over the winter. This resulted in an investment of almost **\$9 million dollars** for Edmonton announced just two weeks later.
2. Earlier on in my mandate, I facilitated the meetings between the Downtown Business Association and the federal department of PrairiesCan to explore funding options to support Downtown recovery efforts. These efforts led to **\$6.7 million** of investment in Edmonton with a significant portion of that going to support Downtown and business improvement areas.

3. My office and I worked with the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation to ensure a representative from Edmonton's Downtown community be appointed to the Provincial Regional Recovery Task Force, which led to the addition of the representative of the Downtown Business Association. The work of this group is concluding soon and I look forward to seeing the report with recommendations on how the provincial government can support recovery within the Edmonton Region later this fall.
4. Our Council prioritized five items out of a lengthy list of asks to the provincial government to be included in the 2022-2023 provincial budget, one of which was **\$5 million dollars** in matching funding for the Downtown Vibrancy Strategy. This request was approved and the \$5 million was included in the provincial budget to be shared between the City of Edmonton and the Downtown Business Association. On May 16th's City Council meeting, I made a motion to allocate this \$5 million of support from the provincial government to the Downtown Business Association and to your organization to improve safety and wellbeing in Downtown in collaboration with the Edmonton Police Service, social workers and mental health specialists. This money is directly controlled by the provincial government and we had asked for your help in engaging with the province to release this money. I would be interested in learning more about your advocacy efforts with the provincial government on this money.
5. Representatives from my office and myself have had at least 40 official meetings with provincial government representatives as well as community organizations and stakeholders to discuss Downtown Safety and Recovery. This does not include numerous informal conversations with federal and provincial government representatives at both the political and administrative levels. A list of these formal meetings is attached below.
6. I sent a letter to the Edmonton Police Commission on May 6, 2022 outlining concerns heard from the Downtown Recovery Coalition as well as other community stakeholders about Edmonton's Downtown. This letter asked a series of questions to the Police Commission about police resources for Downtown, Chinatown and LRT station safety. The response from EPC was received on July 5 and has been included as an attachment along with this letter.
7. I advocated to the Board of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region at their Committee of the Whole meeting on September 16, 2022 to include a focus on social issues, including affordable and non-market housing, and mental health and addictions to the work being undertaken this year on the 5-year review of the EMRB Growth Plan. Plans are underway to co-host a housing symposium to share information with our regional partners so they can help us in our advocacy efforts to the province.

I also want to highlight the additional work that the City of Edmonton Council and Administration has done over the past few years to support vibrancy, safety and wellbeing in Edmonton's Downtown and Chinatown. These investments, totalling close to **\$300 million dollars**, included items such as:

- A **\$1.48 million dollar** grant from Western Economic Diversification to be allocated to support Downtown Economic Recovery through the Downtown Spark program
- A **\$22.9 million dollar** grant was created to offer COVID-19 recovery initiatives to the construction sector
- **\$2.9 million** dollars in funding to Boyle Street Service Society and Bissell Centre for expansion of day shelter services in their home locations
- A **\$3.9 million** investment in the Transit Safety Plan, resulting in enhanced transit security and cleaning, deploying joint operational teams of police officers and transit peace officers within Downtown areas on the transit system, as well as cleanup efforts that provide free litter kits to businesses and focus on alleys.
- 2021 Business Licencing Fee Waivers and Business Improvement Area Levy Waivers which have provided **\$1.2 million dollars** in relief to Downtown businesses
- Tipinawâw Temporary Shelter received **\$13 million dollars** in funding which provided 93,000 check-ins for day services, 150,000 meals, 5953 visits to the overdose prevention site, and connected 126 people to housing first teams
- 2021 Technology Accelerator Program funding approval of **\$5 million dollars** to accelerators that are successful in their application with Alberta Innovates
- Establishing a Healthy Streets Operations Centre
  - City Council approved more than **\$15 million dollars** in funding for this Centre
  - Scheduled to open in 2023
  - Enhanced presence of Edmonton Police Service, bylaw and peace officers, Emergency Management Services and private security to achieve nearly 24/7 monitoring of Chinatown
- Increased investment in the City's Encampment Response Team by **\$860,000** to focus on priority hot spots
- City Council also approved **\$850,000** to extend the Community Property Safety Team pilot for up to 18 months, and more than **\$900,000** to extend a pilot project that focuses on problem properties. This is scheduled to run till Oct 2023
- City provided a **\$300,000** grant to the Chinatown and Area Business Association to help fund private security resources in and throughout Chinatown
- City has established a **\$1 million** Chinatown Recovery Fund
- Downtown Vibrancy Strategy Grant has also funded projects and initiatives in Chinatown including:
  - **\$47,000** to the Chinese Elders Mansion for outdoor lighting and security cameras
  - **\$35,000** for the Enjoy Chinatown Immersive Experience
  - **\$15,000** for the Long Table Celebration at the Downtown Farmer's Market.
- City installed 12 washrooms in high-traffic areas across the city, including four Downtown
- City is working with the Chinatown and Area Business Association to coordinate the installation, timing, location and operational plans for an additional temporary public washroom

- Patrols for loose litter, waste, and hazardous waste like needles or fecal matter were increased from weekly to daily throughout all streets in the Chinatown area. This includes power washing of public amenities as needed
- In addition, lighting, furniture and public amenities are being assessed and repaired across the Downtown and the Chinatown areas. The City is working in Alex Decoteau, Mary Burlie, Michael Phair and Beaver Hills Parks so that these public spaces are cleaner and feel safer
- City Park Rangers and REACH volunteers have been doing needle clean up on a daily basis and this frequency will continue until December 2022
  - REACH reported 5,164 needles have been cleaned up from Chinatown and the McCauley neighborhood
- The City and partners also continue daily cleaning of streets and back alleys throughout Chinatown
  - REACH reported 2,062 bags of litter have been collected from Chinatown and the broader McCauley community
- Through the Downtown Vibrancy Strategy Grant, the City of Edmonton, Downtown Business Association and Boyle Street Community Services started a new pilot program called Overdose Prevention and Response Teams (OPRTs)
- Council approved **\$25,000** in one-time funding for community partners to enhance educational and awareness opportunities about the drug poisoning crisis, engage with people with lived experience, and ensure NARCAN supplies are available in the community
- Separately, Council has allocated **\$1.8 million** to fund day services at the Bissell Centre Community Space. This funding helps support services including:
  - two meals a day, access to washrooms and shower facilities
  - use of self serve laundry services
  - intake and referral services, including housing
  - Indigenous cultural support and trauma-informed services
  - mental health support
- In an effort to bring business and vibrancy back into Downtown, the City established a **\$5 million** Downtown Vibrancy Strategy grant
- The grant has awarded approximately **\$4.5 million** towards more than 40 projects.
  - These projects have included festivals, events organized by community partners, business support, placemaking, lighting and public safety
- Given the grant program has been successfully subscribed to by the Downtown community, an additional **\$1,552,000** has been added to support future applicants, to seed a broken windows/storefront vandalism replacement program in core neighbourhoods, and to continue the overdose and prevention response teams

Our Council and Administration know the challenges facing Chinatown and Downtown are complex and multi-faceted. The efforts listed above speak to the fact that your City Council and Administration are deeply committed to improving the safety and wellbeing of those who are living, working and visiting Downtown. During the last municipal election, Edmontonians gave us a mandate that our approach to safety and wellbeing must be rooted in compassion, empathy and care for those who are struggling with houselessness, mental health, addictions and trauma. Edmonton belongs to all of us including our most vulnerable who are suffering these horrible conditions each and every day because of the systems that have let them down. That is why it is so important that we work together to eliminate the root causes that create pain, trauma and social disorder in our communities. It is even more important that two days from now, we will be reflecting on our commitment to truth and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. I invite you to continue to work with us, alongside our provincial and federal partners, to find more long term and sustainable solutions.

While we work together to tackle these challenges, we must also continue to highlight the good news stories that are emerging from our collective efforts on Downtown recovery and revitalization. It is important that as leaders, we do not always focus solely on challenges but also recognize the wonderful work being done by businesses, community organizations and government partners. Our Downtown is seeing more people coming back to work in person, more students going back to school and more activities and festivals including the Edmonton Oilers recent playoff run that drew tens of thousands of visitors to the Ice District. LRT ridership is back to over 97% of pre-pandemic levels which is higher than any other big city in Canada which shows that our strategies towards improving LRT safety and cleanliness are working.

On September 15, we highlighted some of this work to you and committed to working with you to tackle additional challenges that you identified but we also asked for your help because we cannot do this alone. We asked you to help us to advocate to the provincial government for support in addressing the systemic issues that are the root cause of much of the trauma and mental health challenges that our houseless population are facing. Our vulnerable neighbours need help from both the community and all orders of government and it is important that we work together to raise awareness and gather support. We hope that you and your members, as well as their organizations and any other stakeholders they communicate with, will join us in this important work.

Should you have further questions from Administration please connect with Tom Girvan, Director, Downtown Vibrancy at [tom.girvan@edmonton.ca](mailto:tom.girvan@edmonton.ca) or [downtown@edmonton.ca](mailto:downtown@edmonton.ca). And as always, I can be reached at [amarjeet.sohi@edmonton.ca](mailto:amarjeet.sohi@edmonton.ca).

Yours truly,

A. Sohi

Honourable Amarjeet Sohi  
Mayor, City of Edmonton

cc: Members of Edmonton City Council  
Andre Corbould, City Manager

Attachment: List of meetings Mayor's Office has had with stakeholders where Downtown/Chinatown issues were on the agenda. This is not inclusive of phone calls, emails and other informal discussions.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Met with</b>	<b>Attendee</b>
11/04/2022	DBA & Cllr Stevenson	Mayor & Staff
12/02/22	Chinatown BIA	Mayor & Staff
12/13/22	PrairiesCan ADM & DBA	Mayor & Staff
01/26/22	Minister Toews	Mayor & Staff
02/8/22	Minister Mclver	Mayor & Staff
02/24/22	Chamber of Commerce Board	Mayor & Staff
02/24/22	Minister Pon	Mayor & Staff
03/01/22	BOMA & Cllr Stevenson	Mayor & Staff
03/02/22	Chinatown Forum	Staff
04/01/22	Chinatown Forum	Staff
04/25/22	Minister Copping	Mayor & Staff
04/19/22	PrairiesCan DM, ADM	Mayor & Staff
05/10/22	DBA, 124 St BIA, Strathcona BIA	Staff
05/16/22	DBA	Staff
05/17/22	Chinatown Stakeholders	Staff
05/19/22	Meeting with Chinatown Stakeholders	Mayor & Staff
05/24/22	Minister Pon	Mayor & Staff
05/25/22	Chinatown Stakeholders	Staff
05/25/22	Follow-up meeting with Chinatown Stakeholders	Mayor & Staff
05/26/22	Minister Schweitzer	Mayor & Staff
05/31/22	Minister Shandro, Minister Ellis, Minister Luan	Mayor & Staff

05/31/22	Chinatown Meeting with Ministers Shandro, Ellis, Luan, Pon, Nixon, Madu	Mayor & Staff
06/06/22	Minister Glubish	Mayor & Staff
06/07/22	Hosted Downtown and Chinatown Community Safety Update	Mayor & Staff
06/09/22	Chinatown Safety Luncheon	Staff
06/11/22	Hosted SOTC Roundtable: Housing & Homelessness	Mayor & Staff
06/13/22	Hosted Chinatown Roundtable	Mayor & Staff
06/16/22	Chinatown Stakeholders	Staff
06/20/22	Premier Kenney	Mayor & Staff
06/21/22	Hosted SOTC Roundtable: Youth	Mayor & Staff
06/20/22	Chinatown Forum	Staff
07/26/22	Reach Edmonton	Staff
08/12/22	Cllr Stevenson & DBA	Staff
08/12/22	Downtown Recovery Coalition	Staff
09/15/22	Hosted Community Public Safety Plan update with ~100 Stakeholders	Mayor & Staff
09/21/22	Minister Madu	Mayor & Staff
09/21/22	Minister Mclver	Mayor & Staff
09/22/22	Minister Pon	Mayor & Staff
09/23/22	Premier Kenney	Mayor & Staff
09/27/22	Minister Luan	Mayor & Staff