



2020 – 2022 Downtown Clean & Safe Strategy Overview

CITY OF LETHBRIDGE

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Introduction

In order to effectively revitalize downtown we need to create a positive, unforgettable downtown experience. To achieve this the most fundamental issue we need to address is the real and/or perceived notion that Downtown is messy, dirty, and feels unsafe.

Since the adoption of the Heart of Our City Master Plan in 2007, creating a clean and safe downtown has been a fundamental goal of downtown revitalization. These efforts have seen a number of initiatives implemented such as the Clean Sweep Program, Downtown Ambassadors, expansion of Lethbridge Police Services' downtown presence, and private security in Galt Gardens. As a result of these initiatives and the continued efforts to improve the downtown, between 2007 and 2016 downtown experienced a noticeable improvement in terms of cleanliness and safety.

Unfortunately, over the past three years the downtown has faced escalating instances of drug use, theft, erratic behavior, petty crime and violence. While the majority of incidents are considered minor on the spectrum of crime, due to the small and concentrated nature of downtown and the increased use of social media, every negative incident is extremely impactful to people's perception of cleanliness and safety in the downtown.

Full version of the 2019 Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy can be found at www.lethbridge.ca/downtown.

Background

In November 2018, a group of downtown and community safety stakeholders got together to discuss the issues facing the downtown with the increase of drug use, theft, erratic behavior, petty crime and violence. The intent was to provide an opportunity for the various stakeholders to meet each other, become better acquainted with programs, events, roles and responsibilities and exchange ideas to improve the downtown experience for all.

The feedback from this meeting was combined with a number of other community engagements (business stakeholder meetings, community drug strategy engagement, presentations from Chamber and BRZ to Council, etc.) to form an extensive list of the issues being faced and what priority areas we should be focusing on in the downtown and surrounding areas.

This feedback would evolve quickly at the direction of the City Manager into the Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy (DCSS), a city-led strategy that highlighted, coordinated and implemented a variety of new and existing programs and initiatives related to addressing the negative perceptions on cleanliness and safety in the downtown (and adjacent areas). The DCSS initiatives that did not have funding in place were funded internally by the City Manager and the strategy was presented to Council and the public in January 2019.

After 3 months of implementation efforts, administration reported back to Senior Management on progress being made and new found challenges. This resulted in the addition of 4 additional programs – biohazard cleanup, safe community call centre, Clean Sweep hot spot team, and encampment cleanup.

In addition to the formal programs and initiatives, the ad-hoc committee established under the DCSS were involved in addressing other areas including, but not limited to: needle collection and boxes, 311 involvement and knowledge articles, laneways and unsightly premises processes, washroom concerns in public facilities including protocols, relocation of Streets Alive Night Meal Program and removal of the Crabb Street self-cleaning washroom.

Many of the programs/initiatives within the DCSS were funded for one year, either through the 2019 DCSS OR within the 2019-2022 Operating Budget, with the understanding that administration and the various community partners would review programs, report back to Council, and identify funding requirements for 2020-2022.

Strategy Alignment

Development, coordination and implementation of the strategy is led by the City Manager's Office and the Urban Revitalization Manager. Given that the strategy is rooted in the Clean and Safe pillar of the Heart of Our City Master Plan, the Heart of Our City Committee (HOCC) have had a significant role in supporting the development and implementation of the strategy.

In addition to the Heart of Our City Master Plan the strategy aligns with:

- City Council Strategic Plan;
- Municipal Development Plan;
- Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan; and
- Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy.

There is an important differentiation to be made between the Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy (DCSS) and the Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy (CWSS). The CWSS was developed by the City of Lethbridge's Community Social Development (CSD) Department along with significant feedback from stakeholders and the public.

The purpose of the CWSS is to enhance and integrate social development efforts in the community to address common priorities of wellbeing and safety collectively, ultimately over time providing tangible solutions to the large underlying issues impacting the social issues within the community including homelessness, addiction and unemployment.

The DCSS is about directly and immediately addressing issues and negative perceptions on cleanliness and safety in the Downtown (and adjacent areas).

Strategic Goals	
Downtown Clean and Safe Strategy	Community Wellbeing and Safety Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To implement a strategic approach to addressing the real and/or perceived notion that downtown is dirty and feels unsafe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To improve integration of diverse services, efforts and resources towards the creation of a person-centred social safety ecosystem.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To promote new initiatives in the downtown in a way that makes the community feel safe for the purpose of reducing negative sentiment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus on prevention/intervention measures to mitigate vulnerability to addictions, abuse, violence, trauma, etc. and enhance resiliency for individuals and communities to be safe and to thrive.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To promote positive downtown activities and events in a way that supports business owners and builds confidence in investors for the purpose of increasing vibrancy and revitalization in the downtown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure the basic necessities of life are adequate and accessible, including shelter, food, transportation, as well as access to education, recreation, employment, and training.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To inform residents on what the City of Lethbridge is doing that builds understanding for the purpose of dispelling myths about safety in the downtown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus on engagement and building strengths to create welcoming communities, social cohesion and belonging.

Geographic Focus Area

It is important to note that typically downtown is defined by a set boundary of the coulee setback to the west, CPR line to the north, Stafford Drive to the east, and 6th Avenue to the South.

For the purposes of the DCSS, "downtown" as defined above will be extended to reflect the area of greatest need. This area will not be set in stone and will be flexible to address certain initiatives, programs, tasks, or issues on a case by case basis.



DCSS 6 Month Stakeholder Debrief Summary

Overview

On August 13, 2019 many of the same leaders involved in the strategy's initial development got back together in a facilitated session to discuss how the first 6 months of implementation of the 18 components (pre-existing, expanded and new) of the DCSS have gone.

The session was attended by representatives of the following organizations and City departments: Lethbridge Police Service, The Watch Program, City Manager's Office/Urban Revitalization, Community Social Development, Recreation and Culture, Waste and Recycling, Parks, Bylaw Services, Lethbridge Public Library, Downtown BRZ, Lethbridge Chamber, Heart of Our City, Clean Sweep Program, Canadian Mental Health Association and Diversion Outreach Team.

Conversation 1

Stakeholders were asked to write down all of the issues they are responding to as it relates to the drug crisis – specifically under 5 subcategories (no longer relevant, reduced but relevant, the same, increased, new). Once the exercise was complete they were to discuss their list of issues and to create common themes.

For the subcategory “no longer relevant” no issues were identified by any of the 3 groups.

Issues (Themes)			
Reduced but Relevant	The Same	Increased	New
Public drug use on streets	Aggressive behaviors	Need for transportation (outside of city)	Violence towards services and those trying to help
Departments and organizations receiving misplaced calls	Business trespassing	Need for somewhere for people to go	More groups of people on drugs as opposed to individuals
Publicly visible needle debris	Lack of evening and weekend usage	Racial insensitivity	Creative trespassing/theft techniques
Publicly visible encampments	Overall negative perceptions of safety	Biohazard (public urination and defecation)	Polarized community
Publicly visible overdose	Littering	Littering in park	Pipes in public
Safety issues between 8am-5pm	Washroom misuse including debris and biohazard	Graffiti/Tagging	Discarded drugs
Loitering and panhandling	Thefts	Impact on staff incl. mental health	Videos on drug use on social media
Illegal dumping and cleanup calls	Overdoses	Loitering, Drug Use and Intoxication in Park	
	Intoxication & Drug Use	Loss of profits for business	
	Fighting on Streets	Erratic behavior	
	Mental health issues	Sleeping in public spaces/individuals not feeling safe at shelter	
	Business Concerns	Calls to DOT	
	Individuals in crisis	Garbage bin scavenging	
	Prostitution	Trespassing on rooftops	
		Decrease in overall safety and cleanliness of Galt Gardens	

*Themes were not unanimous by groups in which category they were under, as displayed represents majority.

Conversation 2 & 3

Stakeholders were asked to consider the 18 initiatives that now contribute to the DCSS and the themed issues discussed in conversation 1 and to discuss whether any of the initiatives could be discontinued, which could be improved and what potential gaps still exist that would potentially require “new” attention that may take shape in a new initiative or action item.

These were captured as priority actions and were then placed in a priority framework based on immediate, short, and medium term.

Priority Actions		
Immediate Term (0 – 6 months)	Short Term (6 – 12 months)	Medium Term (12 – 24 months)
Redo the Business Safety Card with updated numbers once programs confirmed in Fall.	Destination for vulnerable individuals who are not being met by existing services	Meaningful Daily Activities – Capture existing and create new. Does housing first \$ still exist for programs like Casa RAW
Investigate Reallocation of Galt Gardens Private Security Funding to effective services that better address challenges in Galt Gardens.	Continue if not bolster public realm improvements including signage and wayfinding of events and where to find positive things downtown.	Detox and Intox
Advocacy/Letter writing campaign to Provincial/Federal Governments to fund needed services. Coordinated by all critical organizations.	Coordination of services – continue improving how services work together. Explore how to integrate with LAMP/helpseeker.	Supportive Housing
Bolster positive engagement campaigns for the positives in downtown and community e.g. ambassadors, day in the life of downtown with services.	Build capacity and resiliency in existing programs/initiatives that are demonstrating positive outcomes e.g. CSP	Interventions on “normalization of drug use” through enforcement legislation
Maintain programming while pressuring root solutions	Improved training and awareness for internal employees dealing with related issues e.g. Parks	Improve shelter operations including size, safety, and support services.
Clear internal process flow charts to city staff	Increased coordination with Blood Tribe including opportunities for transportation.	
Explore necessary amendments to parks bylaw for ability to better respond to behaviour	Expanded financial supports for cleanup and landscaping programs to beautify hardest hit areas.	
Expanded communications on strategy and programs	Neighbourhood CPTED Study/Strategy for City Core	
Continue to encourage and support businesses on CPTED improvements .	Public Washroom Study/Strategy for City Core (maybe community wide)	
Continue to invest in hardest hit areas with public investment.		

Conclusion

The DCSS was developed as a strategy focused on dealing with the resulting impacts of the drug crisis that effect businesses and residents in surrounding areas, specifically those mentioned above. The strategy’s purpose was not to provide solutions to the root causes of the drug crisis such as homelessness, addiction, and unemployment. That work is part of other initiatives such as the Community Drug Strategy, Municipal Housing Strategy and others.

Despite, the short time frame on which to evaluate the success of the DCSS as a whole, the initial impressions of those involved in implementation of the strategy is that it has created a vital toolkit of

resources. This has developed a more coordinated, timely and effective response to the majority of the community's concerns and issues. While the challenges have not gone away, generally, the community has also responded positively to the initiatives and programs of the DCSS as it provides tangible resources to assist them with a variety of challenges.

Critical social infrastructure including intox, detox, supportive housing and other wrap around services will have a significant impact in reducing the number of individuals struggling with addictions. Until these are addressed we will continue to see numbers of people battling addictions and the resulting impacts rise in the community.

There is strong support from downtown and community safety stakeholders for the continuation and expansion of DCSS initiatives, programs, and actions until such time that the necessary critical social infrastructure is fully implemented. The feedback from debrief has been combined with data/performance measures from initiative reporting to inform the 2020-2022 funding request.

2020 – 2022 Initiatives and Required Funding

	Initiative	Description	Funding		
			2020	2021	2022
General	Safe Community Call Centre	Call center administered by Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) that serves as a single point of entry for the community to designated services. The SCCC coordinates response to issues such as public biohazard, needle debris, encampments and access to the Diversion Outreach Team, for example. Program established in June 2019 as appropriate triage was beyond scope of 311.	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000
Enforcement	LPS Downtown Policing Unit (DPU)	Composed of 1 Sergeant and 8 constables that operate in 4 teams of 2. The DPU patrol on foot and bike when the weather permits and also the dedicated DPU Police van. The expanded presence in the downtown was more noticeable in 2019 as compared to 2018. There is overall support for more officers who focus on the downtown, especially officers on bike and/or on foot.	\$0	\$0	\$0
	LPS Community Peace Officers (CPOs)	Trained officers with specific duties within the LPS force. These officers were implemented to provide additional boots on the ground and to supplement regular police officers. Enhanced authorities to address shoplifting, trespassing, mischief and obstruction. 9 CPOs currently completing training in final months of 2019. Will be on the streets 7 days a week, 8am-midnight w/ overlap. Max of 5 and min of 2 at any given time. Will be a welcomed addition to the downtown and rest of the community in 2020.	\$0	\$0	\$0
Security	Public Facility Security	Provide private security coverage for Galt Gardens, SAAG, CASA, Park 'n' Ride and a mobile patrol of Galt Gardens during winter season.	\$0	\$42,500	\$42,500

Outreach	Watch & SafeWalk Program	<p>New initiative of LPS with the objective of enhancing the community as a safe and friendly place to work, love, shop and enjoy. The overall intent of The Watch is to promote the community, increase visibility and enhance the sense of public safety. Cover the DPU area from the river bottom to Mayor Magrath Drive, 6th Avenue South to 5 Avenue North.</p> <p>Began first patrols in May with an initial staff of 11 (1 Manager and 10 FT) accompanied by 24 volunteers. Between May and October, the program averaged 4-5 teams during the hours of 10am – 10pm for a total of 105 shifts/week. Recent shift to 4 FT, 5 PT, and hiring of a new manager. Recent recruiting campaign now has 30 volunteers with short term goal of 50.</p> <p>The WATCH Ambassador Program provides a Safe Walk service to community members who would like someone to walk with them to a business or to their car.</p>	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Diversion Outreach Team (DOT)	Provide outreach and transportation supports for persons vulnerable to homelessness or other street behaviors and who may be exhibiting symptoms of public intoxication or drug use.	\$145,000	\$145,000	\$145,000
	Galt Gardens Outreach Team	NEW INITIATIVE TBD – an alternative to private security in Galt Gardens is desired to provide more outreach, connections and assistance that better suits the needs of park users. This format is yet to be determined.	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
	S.A.G.E Clan Patrol Team (SAGE)	A patrol team tasked with engaging the aboriginal community through conversations, presentations and participation. The group has been responding to individuals that require assistance as well as other duties such as needle debris collection.	\$0	\$0	\$0
	ARCHES Community Outreach Addictions Program	Provides outreach services in response to street involved activity around the Consumption Site. Responds to street involved activity in the location surround the Lethbridge Supervised Consumption Site. Operates from 1 st – 4 th Avenue and from Stafford to 13 th Street. Captured within the DCSS suite of programs for public’s information. City does not fund the COAP team, nor provided direction on how they function.	\$0	\$0	\$0

Cleaning	Mess in Lane / Unsightly Premises	General messes in lanes (Waste and Recycling) or on private property (Regulatory Services) are handled by established processes of the City of Lethbridge. Important to ensure that current processes are not circumvented if not necessary.	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Needle Drug Debris Collection Program	To combat needle and drug debris issues, a needle collection program was established which includes a needle collection hotline, collection of needles from needle boxes and sharps containers. Needle collection program is currently funded by the Province of Alberta and administered by ARCHES.	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Base Downtown Clean Sweep Program (CSP)	Offers individuals experiencing homeless the opportunity to engage in employment related activities such as cleaning up garbage, sweeping sidewalks, shoveling snow, needle cleanup and other cleaning tasks etc.	\$75,000*	\$75,000*	\$75,000*
	Hotspot Clean Sweep Program (CSP)	CSP offers individuals experiencing homeless the opportunity to engage in employment related activities. "Hotspot" service to provide additional traditional cleanup services for clothing, garbage, etc. in areas including around the shelter, Stafford overpass, and 13 th Street N.	\$75,000**	\$75,000**	\$75,000**
	Encampment Cleanup Program	Program to ensure that if individuals are encountered proper outreach is provided, safe deconstruction and disposal of the structures, any belongings or items found are properly reported to Police and the site is cleaned up of any needle debris or biohazardous materials. Available throughout the community.	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
	Biohazard Cleanup Program	Biohazard cleanup service to provide appropriate and safe cleanup of biohazardous materials in the community including defecation, vomit and blood.	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000

Promotion	Downtown Ambassador Program	Year-round engagement and promotion offering daily connection with businesses, residents and tourists on the street in our downtown - a visible and welcoming presence. Provides high value to the BRZ and downtown with increased visibility and positivity shared through social media and on the street.	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Education	Downtown Safety Education Program	Designed after a successful LPS and BRZ "Business Watch Program" program from 2001 this education program would be a program outlining everything to do with downtown safety and security. This program includes a business education and who to call resources, education seminars on important issues, needle pick-up kits and training as needed and other opportunities for education and awareness.	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Built Environment Improvements	Mainstreet CPTED Grant Program	An expansion of the municipal main street program providing matching grant funding for Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) evaluations and improvements identified within evaluation.	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
	City Department Tasks and Actions	The City of Lethbridge's various departments are continually attending to a variety of tasks and actions related to their departments operations which address downtown cleanliness and safety. Many of the action items that would be delivered by existing City services fall into this initiative.	\$0	\$0	\$0
	City Core Safety & Security Evaluation and Strategy	New Initiative Advance the CPTED evaluation from single sites to a <i>Full Spectrum</i> Community Safety assessment and recommendations that fuse best practices such as CPTED, Healthy Built Environments, Placemaking, Economics and Leadership to evaluate the urban built environment of the entire core area.	\$75,000	\$0	\$0
ANNUAL TOTALS			\$583,000	\$550,500	\$550,500

2020-2022 Required Funding Summary

Initiative	Required Funding		
	2020	2021	2022
Safe Community Call Centre	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000
Public Facility Security	\$0	\$42,500	\$42,500
Diversion Outreach Team (DOT)	\$145,000	\$145,000	\$145,000
(New) Galt Gardens Outreach Program	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Base Downtown Clean Sweep Program (CSP)	\$75,000*	\$75,000*	\$75,000*
Hotspot Clean Sweep Program (CSP)	\$75,000**	\$75,000**	\$75,000 **
Encampment Cleanup Program	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Biohazard Cleanup Program	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Downtown Ambassador Program Expansion	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Downtown Safety Education Program	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Mainstreet CPTED Grant Program	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
(New) City Core Safety & Security Evaluation/Strategy	\$75,000	\$0	\$0
TOTAL:	\$583,000	\$550,500	\$550,500

*CSP base program is currently funded \$75,000 by OSSI, with the changes to the funding program the eligibility of CSP is not confirmed at this time. An application to the RFSQ is being prepared. This funding is to be utilized only IF the required OSSI funding is not awarded.

**CSP hotspot program was not previously included in the OSSI funding of CSP as it was an initiative added part way through year. This additional funding will be included in the application to the RFSQ that is being prepared. This funding is to be utilized only IF the required OSSI funding is not awarded.