Date August 13, 2019 Report No. 2019-416

To Chair and Members Committee of the Whole – Operations and Administration

From Jo Atanas, General Manager Health and Human Services

1.0 Type of Report

   [X] Consent Item
   [ ] Item For Consideration

2.0 Topic Brantford Downtown Outreach Team Update
   [Financial Impact: None]

3.0 Recommendation

   THAT Report 2019-416 Brantford Downtown Outreach Team Update BE RECEIVED.

4.0 Purpose and Overview

   This Report provides an update to City Council regarding the implementation of the Brantford Downtown Outreach Team (BDOT) Pilot Project.

5.0 Background

   In February 2019, Brantford City Council approved $280,684 from Casino Legacy to fund the development of the Brantford Downtown Outreach Team (BDOT). In recent years a number of community partners including Brantford Police Services, Wilfrid Laurier University (Brantford Campus) and the Downtown Brantford Business Improvement Area (DBBIA) have reported an escalation in social disorder and public drug use in the downtown. These
behaviours, although not always criminal, can lead to negative public perceptions, impact feelings of safety and decrease the willingness of residents, tourists, students and potential customers to visit and enjoy downtown Brantford.

The goal of the BDOT is to connect individuals to health and social supports and ultimately reduce the prevalence of social disorder activities. The BDOT consists of a Nurse Practitioner, Concurrent Disorders Clinician, Peer Support Worker and Outreach Coordinator who will connect individuals with services such as the Rapid Access Addiction Medicine Clinic, Withdrawal Management Centre, Grand River Community Health Centre, and the Housing Resource Centre. The BDOT will be headquartered at the Grand River Community Health Centre.

The operations of the BDOT are coordinated by a leadership group that includes representatives from Brantford Police Services, the City of Brantford, St. Leonard’s Community Services, the Grand River Community Health Centre and the Centre for Research on Security Practices (Wilfrid Laurier University – Brantford Campus). Other community partners, including the Brant County Health Unit, Faculty of Social Work (WLU), the Local Health Integration Network, and the Board of the Downtown Brantford Business Improvement Area continue to provide valuable insight in the planning, operation and evaluation of the project.

6.0 Corporate Policy Context

High Quality of Life and Caring for All Citizens

Brantford will be recognized as a safe and healthy community – one that promotes and enables the well-being of its citizens, and supports access for all citizens to a full range of health and community services.

7.0 Input From Other Sources

Brantford Police Services

St. Leonard’s Community Services

Grand River Community Health Centre

Downtown Brantford Business Improvement Area

Brantford Downtown Outreach Team

Centre for Research on Security Practices (WLU Brantford)
8.0 Analysis

Communities have deployed a variety of tools to address social disorder issues within downtown or ‘core’ areas. Interventions that solely rely on increased police presence are resource intensive, and often fail to create the desired long-term change. And because much of the social disorder is not ‘criminal’, enforcement-based approaches can have the net effect of making the community less safe, by deploying limited police resources away from higher-value policing activities, and lessening the capacity of police to suppress and investigate crimes throughout the community.

Street outreach teams have shown positive results in Guelph, Windsor, and Toronto (Yonge Street BIA), and can be an effective component of a larger community strategy by focusing on the underlying health and social challenges of marginalized persons, and by establishing positive on-the-street relationships that can result in connections to services or other supports.

The Brantford Downtown Outreach Team (BDOT) officially launched on July 2, 2019, and is scheduled to operate until June 2020. The Phase 1 “Area of Operations” is defined as the City Centre / Academic District and outreach connection points will be established at the Brantford Public Library, the Salvation Army and other identified locations. During the pilot, the hours, days and area of the BDOT will be reviewed monthly to ensure frequent and consistent contact with vulnerable persons.

BDOT Members will coordinate their response with other organizations in the downtown including the business community, B.E.A.T. Unit Officers, Brantford Public Library, Salvation Army, the Housing Resource Centre and Laurier Special Constables to support streamlined referrals and information sharing. The outreach team will also have the capacity to deploy higher-intensity resources as needed, including the Mobile Crisis Response Unit, Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Network, or the Brant Community Response Team.

In partnership with the DBBIA, the BDOT project has created training and marketing materials for community partners that teaches about the role of the BDOT, local resources, crisis response services and how to interact with patrons or customers that appear to have an addiction or mental health concern.

These resources and training are modeled from the successful Yonge Street BIA project that provides the business community and downtown stakeholders with tools, techniques and information that helps to create a collective, more effective response.
The pilot project is scheduled to run until June 2020 and is being evaluated by Dr. James Popham of the Centre for Research on Security Practices at Wilfrid Laurier University. This detailed evaluation and data framework will be used to monitor program effectiveness with the goal of securing ongoing third party funding. Areas of specific focus within the evaluation include number of interactions, client outcomes, emergency response calls, return on investment, and qualitative feedback from Members of the BIA and other downtown stakeholders regarding perceptions of the project and its effectiveness.

Preliminarily evaluation results will be available in March 2020, and staff continue to liaise with potential funders to discuss sustainability options.

9.0 Financial Implications

The City of Brantford is funding the Brantford Downtown Outreach Team from Casino Legacy Funds, however there are no Financial Implication directly related to this report.

10.0 Conclusion

The BDOT is an integral part of Brantford’s downtown revitalization approach that includes an investment in infrastructure, increased by-law enforcement, the modernization of homelessness programing, and the establishment and exploring the feasibility of closed circuit cameras. Staff will continue to provide oversight to the BDOT pilot and provide regular updates to City Council and community stakeholders, with the goal of positioning the project for sustainable, long-term funding.

Aaron Wallace, Director of Strategic Planning & Community Partnerships

Jo Atanas, General Manager, Health and Human Services

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required [ ] yes [x] no
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<td>Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk</td>
<td>[ ] yes [x] no</td>
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<td>Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council?</td>
<td>[ ] yes [x] no</td>
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