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Date: November 18, 2021

To: Chair Dan McCreary and Members of the Downtown Brantford Improvement Task Force (DBITF)

From: Maria Visocchi
Director, Communications and Community Engagement

Re: DBITF Engagement Campaign Findings

Outlined below for the Task Force's information is a detailed summary of the findings of the DBITF Engagement Campaign. Elements of the campaign included:

- Online public engagement opportunities on [Let's Talk Brantford](#) platform including an online survey and comment forum
- Social media campaign on City's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram platforms
- Two public virtual town halls on October 19, 2021
- Stakeholder Engagement session with *Community Supports Working Group* members
- Stakeholder Engagement session with *Economic and Cultural Vitality Working Group* members
- Stakeholder Engagement session with *Safety and Security Working Group* members
- People with Lived Experience survey conducted by Community Services and Social Development staff

The "[Let's Talk About Improving our Downtown](#)" engagement campaign ran on the City's Let's Talk Brantford (LTB) online platform from October 7 – November 7, 2021. During the campaign, 330 people visited the LTB project page and 175 people fully completed the online survey, while 25 additional individuals provided feedback via email to communications@brantford.ca.

Public Survey Results

1. 83% of respondents who completed the survey reported that they were residents of Brantford, and 70% of those respondents have lived in Brantford for 11 years or more.

2. With respect to how respondents described their association with the downtown:

- 38% said they live in Brantford, outside of the downtown
- 32% said they go downtown occasionally for a show, festival or event
- 31% said they work downtown
- 11.4% said they have no reason to go downtown
- .05% said they were a post-secondary student attending an academic institution downtown

3. Asked what single improvement could be made to improve the downtown:

- 18.7% said more focus on cleanliness/attractiveness
- 16.4% said an increased security presence
- 14.2% said more businesses
- 9.7% said more housing options
- 9.7% said more outreach/medical support agency presence
- 9.7% said more places to shop
- 5.2% said more restaurants

4. Asked what should be included in a potential safety program:

- 31.3% said increased presence of police
- 31.3% said enhanced implementation of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)
- 19.4% chose Other and specified all options should be implemented
- 9% said increased presence of security staff
- 9% said CCTV cameras

5. Asked what type of businesses respondents want to see more of downtown:

- 38.8% said restaurants
- 24.6% said entertainment/art venues
- 13.4% said clothing shops
- 9.7% said kids stores/activities
- 6.0% said home stores
- 4.5% said grocery stores

6. Asked what recreational activities respondents want to see more of downtown:

- 41.8% said more events/festivals (i.e. Jazz Festival)
- 20.1% said more events in Harmony Square
- 13.4% said this type of programming was not a priority
- 11.9% said cultural events (i.e. performance art)
- 3.7% said outdoor fitness programs (i.e. yoga in the park)

7. Asked what single area should be focused on to assist vulnerable citizens in the downtown:

- 41.8% said mental health and addiction treatment
- 15.7% said affordable housing
- 9.0% said employment support
- 7.5% said outreach services
- 3.7% said drop in day programming
- 3.0% said seniors' services
- 3.0% said youth services
- 3.0% said income support
- 3.0% said emergency shelter services

155 open ended public survey comments summary

- 69 comments (44.5%) – cited open drug use and the need for enhanced mental health and addiction services/supports
- 57 comments (36.7%) – expressed the need for enhanced police presence in the downtown
- 10 comments (.06%) – expressed the need to ease the traffic flow
- 10 comments (.06%) – made the suggestion that Grand River / waterfront be more incorporated into the downtown
- 9 comments (.05%) – cited examples of other cities that have successfully revitalized their downtown including Region of Peel (Drop in Centre located in Brampton), Peterborough and Guelph

Social Media Summary – 162 comments across platforms

- 75 comments (49.3%) – referenced the problem of open drug use
- 47 comments (29%) – cited safety perception issues (calling for more police presence and that laws/prison time sentences should be stronger)
- 15 comments (.09%) – referenced lack of cleanliness (garbage on the street every day)
- 25 comments – were not related to this topic

Public Virtual Town Halls

Two virtual Public Town Hall opportunities were offered on October 19th at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. 6 members of the public registered for the afternoon session and 8 members of the public registered for the evening session. A presentation was delivered by Communications and Community Engagement staff and each of the 3 Working Group leads. While none of the registrants opted to provide feedback during the live broadcasts, their feedback was later shared via email. 47 people watched the afternoon Virtual Town Hall and 129 watched the stream of the evening broadcast on the City's YouTube channel.

Stakeholder Engagement Sessions

During each of the Working Group stakeholder sessions conducted on October 13th, 14th and 18th. Working Groups were asked to identify short, medium, and long-term actions that could be implemented to improve support services, economic and cultural vitality and safety and security in the city's downtown core. Proposed solutions were divided into two categories; actions the community can take independent of other levels of government and actions that require assistance/support from the province and/or federal government.

Below is a summary of the key themes discussed in each stakeholder session. A detailed synopsis of the sessions will be presented individually at each of the next Working Group meetings to help inform individual Working Group action plans.

Community Supports Main Themes

- Enhanced Harm Reduction strategies
- Housing supports / wrap around services
- Improved coordination/knowledge sharing processes among agencies and organizations (i.e. community agencies)
- Drop In Centre location overseen by medical staff and support agencies
- Anti-stigma campaign
- Standardization and coordination for barrier free access to services

Economic and Cultural Vitality Main Themes

- Public Art installations
- Indigenous focused cultural events
- Waterfront development
- Pop up shops
- Modified waste collection processes to reduce frequency of garbage out on streets

Safety and Security Main Themes

- CCTV coordination and expansion
- Parkade improvements (lighting, cleanliness, security)
- Daytime Shelter - managed location where vulnerable individuals can access food and support services
- Safe walk program for students
- Bail reform advocacy to AMO, other levels of government

People with Lived Experience survey results

A survey was conducted among 32 individuals with lived experience by Community Services and Social Development staff.

Asked why they are downtown most days:

- 46.8% said to access food/support services
- 21.8% said to see friends
- 18% said to find shelter/experiencing homelessness
- 12% said to work

Asked what downtown needs more of (could select more than 1 option):

- 100% said housing
- 96.15% said outreach/medical supports
- 95.83% said an indoor drop in centre/common space
- 92.31% said mental health and addiction supports
- 82.35% said green/public spaces
- 47.7% said increased security presence
- 46.7% said restaurants

Asked what would make them feel safer:

- 32% said they feel safe
- 17.8% said more resources for homeless people
- 16% said more police presence
- 14.2% said a safe injection site

Asked what service providers should focus on most:

- 40.91% said affordable housing
- 34.7% said emergency shelter services
- 22.2% said rent geared to income
- 20% said housing with staff supports and programming on site

Additional suggestions provided by people with lived experience:

- Acknowledge and appreciate the indigenous community
- Different agencies all housed in the same drop in centre to provide supports and referrals from one place
- Provide agencies with more options to serve clients

Findings Summary

Findings of the public engagement campaign demonstrate a clear consensus by stakeholders that additional mental health and addiction supports are needed for vulnerable citizens who frequent the city's downtown. Furthermore, people with lived experience identified the acute need for a Drop In Centre to acquire support services from one central location. Other key themes among the findings was the cause and effect connection between mental health and addiction and lack of housing among vulnerable individuals, as

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well as the need to develop additional motivations/reasons for people who live outside the downtown to visit (i.e. festivals and cultural events). Also repeated frequently was the requirement for a community anti-stigma campaign and enhanced recognition of indigenous individuals, culture and heritage.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Visocchi', written in a cursive style.

Maria Visocchi
Director, Communications and Community Engagement