



REQUEST FOR DECISION

MEETING DATE: October 21, 2024

TITLE: Safe City Review

DIVISION: Community and Protective Services

SUMMARY:

As part of Council's Strategic Plan, Administration was tasked with conducting a review of the Sage City Initiative, which was put in place in 2008. An internal review was conducted by Protective Services. Administration is reporting to Council the findings of that review.

PROPOSED MOTION:

A motion is not required.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:

Document Review

As a part of the examination of the Safe City Initiative a document review was conducted. This included the examination of several documents from retired Inspector Adamitz file system pertaining to the Program including the original Terms of Reference, meeting minutes, and Charter documents going back as far as 2008 when the program was initiated. A review was conducted of several documents from Community Social Development (CSD) / Outreach in relation to the joint agency / community initiatives as well as the City's Social Sustainability Plan Refresh 2023.

Internal Interviews and Discussions

Interviews were held with a variety of internal City of Spruce Grove employees who were either involved in the program, or whose areas they were in, including all the current Directors who may have touched on the program, and several managers. In addition, both Sergeants and

several of the longer serving Enforcement Services officers were interviewed in relation to their experiences and understanding of both the history and current state of the program.

Helpful discussions were held with the Director, Manager, and personnel within CSD, and specifically the program manager Danielle Peyton. Between those conversations and the document review that resulted from it, a great deal was learned about the processes and programs currently underway in that area in support of long-term interventions and prevention aimed at reducing harm and increasing safety within the City. A joint meeting was also held with Manager Peyton and the Directors of the program area originally charged with the program under the initial Charter, that being the Directors of Protective Services, CSD, and Communications. The Director of Communications was one of the few people interviewed who had any firsthand knowledge of the early days of the initiative.

External Interviews

Meetings were held with several external partners, including the Officer in Charge (OIC), Operations Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO), and Community Policing officer from the RCMP. Administration spoke with RCMP K Division program leads in integrated offender management and several of the workers as well as the head of the local (Stony Plain) Community Corrections (Probation) office. This shed light on a number of police-led partnerships and initiatives underway within the city and region directed at improving safety within the city.

Community Research

Research was conducted in relation to several municipal approaches towards safe city work both within Alberta and across Canada, and in select other international settings.

Systems Examination

The review examined the manner in which various systematic approaches entrenched within current City practices speak to some of the key areas of concern / interest to the City in setting up the Safe City Initiative.

Overview of Findings

Safe City Goals

The original initiative had two main goals. The first was managing rapid growth. Spruce Grove was (at that time) a rapidly growing city of 20,000 citizens and was considered to be very safe. The direction of Council to Administration was to ensure that as the City managed what was anticipated to be continued rapid growth in a manner which had the overall safety of citizens, businesses, and visitors in mind, and that the various departments of the City were coordinated in keeping this principle of safety at the forefront in all initiatives being undertaken.

The second area of focus seemed to be to use the program as a means of ensuring community collaboration and engagement primarily either to mobilize community members to participate

in solutions aimed at keeping the city safe, though later through the Traffic Safety Committee as a means of soliciting input from Citizens around safety issues and priorities.

What Was Accomplished

Internal leadership of the initiative was from Protective Services, Community and Social Development (as it is now titled) and Communications, with partnership from other departments as needed. Named external partners from the documentation on file were the RCMP, Business Community, Education, Health, Service Associations as well as broadly Community Residents. Areas of focus appear to have been traffic safety, family violence, Urban Design, Safe Housing Standards, and family safety.

Internal and External Programs

Several internal and external programs were developed as a part of this focus, including:

- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) expertise in Protective Services
- traffic safety / bike safety talks and initiatives
- dog bite prevention talks
- RCMP school liaison programming
- The Block Party program
- Support for Victims Services program
- a local drug strategy shared with the County and Town of Stony Plain
- participation in regional groups such as CRISP (Capital Region Intersection Safety Partnership)
- working with the Provincial Sheriff SCAN (Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods) teams.

There was a focus early in the initiative around issues such as adequate, affordable, and safe housing and eventually issues around homelessness which ultimately has led to the development of the Outreach program within CSD.

Internal Systems and Structures

Much of the internal focus for the City was ensuring that development and practices across the various departments took place in a collaborative manner, to keep public safety in mind. With continual guidance from Council, Administration ensured internal committee meetings focused on updates from established programs, as well as coordination and information sharing. This has, it would appear, resulted in the establishment of a number of baked in systems and processes within the City which speak to specifically ensuring this takes place. Some of these include:

- City View Process
 - This ensures all new developments and changes to existing development proposals are reviewed by multiple departments and units to ensure all aspects

of concern, including fire and public safety, are addressed before any project is approved. This overall collaborative focus has also resulted in improvements to engineering standards and reviews such as the creation of the crosswalk policy, deployment of Speed Signs program, and the recent review which led to the speed limit changes within the city.

- Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Organizational Leadership Group (OLG) meetings and decision-making structure
 - This is another systems-based approach to continuing to ensure this level of coordination and collaborative focus across the various city departments that was being discussed in the early days of the Safe City initiative was put in place.
- The recently approved Community Services Advisory Committee
 - This Committee has public safety within the city as part of their mandate and is also an example of a process and structure which has been developed to ensure lasting focus on the goals of the Safe City Initiative.
- Events Management Process
 - Led by Recreation and Culture, but engaging multiple departments as well as the RCMP, is yet another example of cross department collaboration with a safety focus.
- The Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) program
 - This has been integrated within the overall Traffic Safety Plan, developed in conjunction with the RCMP and overseen by Protective Services. It's an established program that arose from the Safe City Initiative, which is now a core piece of business.
- CSD led and involved Integrated Initiatives
 - Youth Focused Integrated Case Management program focused on youth at risk in the community involving several partners including the police.
 - Strategic interagency groups focused on communication, networking, and cooperation in areas such as Domestic Violence, homelessness and addictions.
 - Social Sustainability Plan catalogues many of these initiatives and efforts on the part of the City and provides a plan for future work in these external partnership areas.
- RCMP Initiatives
 - Youth Focused Integrated Case Management participation.
 - Multi-agency groups around domestic violence and homelessness.
 - RPACTs (Regional Police and Crisis Teams) integrating police with mental health support workers in working with persons in crises as an alternative to a traditional policy response.
 - Crime Reduction Units that work with partner agencies and general detachment personnel to take a proactive, intelligence-based approach to targeting prolific offenders in the region.
 - Potential for Integrated Offender Management being examined.

Overall Success

It is also important to note at this point that from almost all statistical data sets (overall crime rates, traffic safety data, crime severity index, etc.), Spruce Grove has in fact remained a VERY safe city despite the population doubling since the introduction of the Safe City Initiative. In that sense, through the leadership of Council and Administration, it is accurate to state that the Safe City Initiative and the efforts of the City and its partners have been very successful in ensuring responsible, safe, yet rapid growth in our community in the 16 years since this program was introduced. The City has created systems and processes which entrench collaboration and safety assessment into all aspects of development and growth.

Moving forward Administration, under the direction of Council, will ensure the City of Spruce Grove remains a safe place to live, work and recreate while remaining one of the fastest growing communities in the Province. Further to the above, highlights of the initiatives designed to accomplish this are:

- The Community Services Advisory Committee is being implemented, which will encompass feedback across all departments and integrate community safety feedback within the same.
- The Social Sustainability Plan will continue to act as the roadmap for partnerships aimed at fostering collaborative approaches to public well being and safety.
- The RCMP development of a Community Safety Plan to speak to how police are working with their municipality, other government and non-government agencies and their community to identify and address safety issues at the local level.
- A new form of police governance model, which is anticipated to be introduced in 2024 or 2025, will provide civilian input and oversight into policing and public safety in the city.
- Established internal structures are being maintained.
- The creation of a dedicated Development Compliance Bylaw officer position within Enforcement Services working closely with developers, Fire Prevention and Planning and Development within the City.

Conclusion

The Safe City Initiative has naturally evolved from being a specific stand-alone initiative to being integrated within the systems and approaches taken across the City's administration.

The city has doubled in size and maintained its very safe status during that period of growth and development. Through the guidance of Councils over that period, up to and including present day, and the diligence of Administration, the focus on collaboration, coordination, and a safety focus on development and operations across the City, has been built into every day structures used in decision making. The current and upcoming structures appear to have addressed and surpassed the goals of the initiative as they stood at its time of inception. As such, the program as a whole was successful as the maintenance of Spruce Grove as a Safe City has been built into the current and planned business and oversight processes within the City.

The advances and changes resulting from Safe City will be maintained as the current City structures and initiatives are operating effectively.

OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES:

n/a

CONSULTATION / ENGAGEMENT:

As identified earlier, extensive engagement has taken place with all interested and involved parties to the initiative. Further, as also identified, future engagement with the community will be available through the structures planned to be introduced such as the Community Safety Plan of the RCMP, the RCMP Governance model, and the Community Services Advisory Committee.

IMPLEMENTATION / COMMUNICATION:

Existing structures as well as planning for the new initiatives are already in place. This will include increased public information and engagement.

IMPACTS:

n/a

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Initially, \$50,000 in funds was identified for a review of the Safe City initiative. As an extensive review has taken place, this funding will not be required.