



həlisət

Bringing to life; awakening

Victoria's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan

June 2025

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The City of Victoria sits, in its entirety, on the ancestral land and current territories of the Ləkʷəŋən people, now the Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation. These lands have been stewarded for centuries by leaders, elders, matriarchs, knowledge keepers, and more, and we honour them and their presence on this land.

We collectively acknowledge that community safety and wellbeing work must be undertaken with truth and reconciliation in our hearts, and an understanding that respecting and including Indigenous ways of knowing and doing will make this work more relevant and effective. When carried in this spirit, community safety and wellbeing work may be seen as an act of reconciliation.

We thank the Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations for their willingness to walk together with us, share their knowledge, and help us envision a safer community for all.

Executive Summary

Over the last five years, cities across Canada have seen a rise in racism, discrimination, polarization and hate crimes at a time when communities are also challenged with housing shortages, homelessness, substance misuse and addictions, inaccessible healthcare, and mental health crises. These entangled challenges have resulted in increased disorder and a diminished sense of community safety and wellbeing for the residents of Victoria.

In 2023, as part of the development of the City's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, Council directed the development and implementation of a plan to address community safety and wellbeing.

Undertaking that direction, Mayor Marianne Alto selected a blue-ribbon panel of community leaders to guide the plan's development. The panel adopted a data-driven and community-informed approach to drive comprehensive and effective, evidence-based solutions.

The plan is a result of 18 months of public engagement, data mining and analysis, debate, discussion and scrutiny, before being presented to Council for consideration.

Integral to the plan is the concept that local governments and the Province must prioritize upstream and primary prevention by investing resources to build resilience. At the same time, Victorians have identified a need to balance upstream interventions with enforcement and action against crime and disorder. This balance is reflected in the plan.

By analyzing the community's protective factors – institutions and attributes that shield individuals, families, and the community from harm – and risk factors – the institutions and attributes that are not successfully shielding the community from harm, or are contributing to harm – the City can assess Victoria's strengths and create targeted actions to respond to weaknesses.

At a time of limited funds, capacities, and competing priorities, Council needs an evidence-based approach to public safety.

To that end, the plan outlines immediate and longer-term actions, upstream investments and advocacy to other orders of government and other sectors to build community wellbeing and resilience. At the same time, the plan is alive and intended to adapt, adjust, and respond to changing realities.

Underpinning many of the recommendations is the knowledge that local government is the closest to the issues and the most attuned to the needs of its own community. Local governments are highly adaptable in addressing emerging issues, and responding quickly and efficiently.

Additionally, key resources for community safety and wellbeing such as parks, public works, protective services, urban planning, and business development are already part of the City’s municipal framework and can adapt to emerging community needs.

Based on what we heard, at the heart of the community’s concerns are these interrelated issues:

- | | |
|---|---|
|  | 1. Housing |
|  | 2. Healthcare |
|  | 3. Service Delivery |
|  | 4. Downtown |
|  | 5. Residents |
|  | 6. Commerce |
|  | 7. Policing and Justice |
|  | 8. City’s Community Safety and Wellbeing Services |

Each of these issues provides insights into the community’s experiences, perceptions, and aspirations, influencing residents’ sense of belonging, opinions of safety, and overall wellbeing.

Key areas that need improvement, as identified by the data, include: housing; food security and poverty; belonging, social cohesion, and isolation; healthcare; transportation and mobility; safety and safety perception; mental healthcare; inequity; and service delivery.

This initiative's recommendations address all these concerns, and more. City services are at the heart of the work. The recommended actions are categorized by sector and lead organization.

Collaboration with the Province is key. The plan includes recommendations for consideration by the provincial government, in particular, by the Solicitor General and Minister of State for Community Safety who are essential partners, along with the Ministries of Health, Housing, and Social Development and Poverty Reduction.

Working alongside police, emergency responders and community service providers is a key component of this plan, as all play an essential role in community safety. Recommendations for each of those sectors are included in this plan.

It is recommended that the adoption of the plan moves forward in stages – with the majority of the actions first assigned to City staff for an assessment on budget implications, policy changes, and key performance indicators. These findings are to be presented to Council in advance of the 2026 budget deliberations.

There are no budget or tax implications for 2025, and any recommendations that can and should be actioned immediately are designed to be supported by the existing budget.



Victorians want the City to be bold, to act, to engage and to be the convener and facilitator of change that will create greater community safety and wellbeing. If taken as a roadmap for action, the recommendations in this plan will do just that.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the courage, inspiration, dedication, and time of many people - each of whom is uniquely attuned to - and invested in - making this community a safe, welcoming place for all. The deepest thanks and credit go out to the following individuals for their work, and commitment:

Community Leaders Panel

Brianna Bear
Dan Atkinson
Del Manak
Jonny Morris
Julian Daly
Marianne Alto
Mike Benusic
Robert Jawl
Sandra Severs
Shelly D'Mello
Suzanne Bradbury

Facilitators

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Cathy Matusicky
Jocelyn Jenkyns
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Laura Parent
Michelle Harris
Shannon Perkins
Sheldon Johnson

Project Partners

Canadian Centre for Safer Communities
HelpSeeker
Muflehun

This plan is owned and authored by many actors, and its composition reflects decades of experience in the fields of, and related to, safety and wellbeing, and a broad diversity of perspectives.

Special thanks are owed to the community partners, organizations, non-profits, and businesses that encouraged and participated in this work, and helped us learn the information needed to make practical, intentional, recommendations.

The biggest thanks are to every resident of Victoria, and to all the people that filled out surveys, came to events, wrote answers on sticky notes, and contributed their thoughts, ideas and suggestions. It takes courage to be vulnerable, to share your stories, and to speak your truths, and we are grateful for your time, your willingness, and your effort in thoughtfully helping shape the community we all call home.

Message from Mayor Marianne Alto



In this moment in time, democracies around the world are struggling to find balance among conflicting challenges like unpredictable economies, unaffordable costs for housing and food, rampant acceleration of inflation, broken social and health service systems, and a breakdown of civility.

The City of Victoria is not immune to these challenges. Municipalities, being the order of government closest to the people, are taxed with providing essential services every day, and increasingly filling gaps in

services that have traditionally been provided by regional, provincial, or federal governments.

In spring 2023, Victoria City Council adopted its 2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan, identifying eight priorities for action. One of these priorities declares the need to create a Community Wellbeing and Safety Plan.

In summer 2023, City Council endorsed my motion to undertake the work to create that plan; Council is now ready to consider its implementation.

Intentional and balanced, the plan is a practical re-imagination of community safety and wellbeing that speaks to current realities and proposes specific actions to be undertaken by the City, and proposes actions for other entities and governments. It recognizes that increasing community safety and wellbeing for people living in Victoria needs a collective approach to our multiple complex local issues.

While these issues are seen in other British Columbia municipalities, locally we are experiencing real examples of declining social cohesion, increasing social disorder, inadequate housing supply and increased homelessness, poverty, inequality, addictions, mental and physical health challenges, criminal activity, and other dynamics.

While local government cannot be expected to solve these issues, we accept that our city leaders have a unique and critical responsibility to identify and collaborate with others to find solutions and act. This plan proposes immediate interventions while creating longer term, systemic changes, acknowledging that the plan's utility and success rely on its capacity to adapt, adjust, and respond to changing realities.

None of this work would have been possible without the commitment and wisdom of the Community Leaders Panel, acknowledged herein. Their passion and willingness to be blunt, candid, vulnerable and embrace “wicked problems” through risky, sensitive conversations, created the resilient foundation of this plan.

There are few greater challenges confronted, nor more important remedies and actions undertaken, than those outlined in this plan. Victorians are counting on their city government to embrace the conventional and common, the innovative and novel – to change the experience of Victorians’ community safety and thus improve their day-to-day wellbeing.

At, and on the anniversaries of, this Council’s inauguration, I remarked that all of us – Council, staff, other governments, and allies – are here to do good work for Victoria, to be the authors and engineers of an intentional transformation of this city we love. The efforts and impacts of this plan may be the measure of that good work.

Messages from Community Leaders Panel Members

The Community Leaders Panel are the guides that challenged, stewarded, suggested, tested, and learned while engaging with diverse ideas, actions and possibilities. Arising from that discourse, coupled with extensive engagement and data analysis, this document proposes paths forward for multiple sectors in a collaborative journey to greater community safety and wellbeing. Below are some reflections from Panel members:

“I had the honour of being a part of the Community Leaders Panel that emphasized the importance of bringing our communities together to uplift and strengthen one another. Through this experience, I believe we have helped create a path forward that fosters community growth through diverse worldviews, shared responsibility, and deep-rooted connections. Though this plan will take time and patience, I am sure it will help pave the way for a beautiful community that fosters, uplifts, and cares for one another—just as I have experienced growing up in my local Songhees community.” - BRIANNA BEAR

“I found participation on the CLP to be an extremely valuable experience. The diverse experiences shared by the other Panel members really expanded my understanding and awareness of how broadly the term “safety” can be interpreted by different members of our community. It stretched my thinking and provided me with an opportunity to gain new perspectives on how each of us experience our city.” - DAN ATKINSON

“It was a positive experience being a part of the Community Leaders Panel and contributing to the development of the City’s Community Safety & Wellbeing Plan. I wholeheartedly believe that a well-designed, community-informed plan with realistic recommendations creates a roadmap for the future and will help greatly in improving the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.” - DEL MANAK

“As a mental health advocate serving on the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan panel, I’ve been deeply encouraged by the panel’s compassionate and comprehensive approach to mental health. The plan articulates clear roles for both provincial and municipal governments in promotion, prevention, early intervention, treatment, and crisis response. Most importantly, it embraces a holistic vision of wellbeing that addresses critical social determinants – housing, food security, and freedom from discrimination. This understanding of community safety demonstrates both ambition and practicality. It has been an honour to contribute to this vision, and I eagerly anticipate seeing these commitments translate into meaningful action.” - JONNY MORRIS

“I live in James Bay and work at Our Place so the wellbeing and safety of Victoria and those who live, work, and play here, is a central preoccupation of my personal and professional life. This process has been rigorous in trying to understand how ALL citizens perceive and experience wellbeing and safety in Victoria and, crucially, how safety and wellbeing can be enhanced and improved for us all.” - JULIAN DALY

“I believe these recommendations provide a path to improve community safety – both in the short and long term. The hard work, however, starts now – with prioritizing, funding, and enacting these recommendations.”

- MIKE BENUSIC

“Feeling deep gratitude for the opportunity to participate in this process and to offer these recommendations to Council for their consideration. I have appreciated the opportunities provided in this process to understand the municipal political system more thoroughly and to work with this group of leaders to offer the best of our knowledge and experience. The process has been thorough, ably guided by the wise leadership of Mayor Alto and well supported by City staff. Change is difficult and systemic change is especially fraught with challenges. I look forward to supporting the implementation of these proposals as we work to make our city a safer and more welcoming place.” - SANDRA SEVERS

“By creating safe spaces, both physically and socially, Victoria strengthens community ties, encourages participation in civic life, and builds a foundation where everyone, regardless of background or circumstance, feels valued and included. In this way, the city not only thrives economically and culturally but also cultivates a spirit of mutual respect, care, and resilience.” - SHELLY D’MELLO

“For our society to feel safe for all, we need both reliable safety nets for all citizens to access in times of trouble and equally reliable ladders to help us climb out of crisis towards a state of thriving. This panel has worked hard to identify levers within our control that might strengthen the elements currently missing from this system. An action plan is also needed to enlist the collaboration of other players in healing the gaps in effective service delivery. Community safety is not an us and them problem to solve – the safety and wellbeing of all citizens has been the focus of this work.”

- SUZANNE BRADBURY

Our Values

The purpose of this work is to create a safe, inclusive, and connected community where all residents feel welcome.

To do this work, at all stages of the completion of this plan, the team involved took an approach that encompasses, and champions the values that Victorians hold and share:

- **Upholding, promoting, and valuing truth and reconciliation**
- **Applying an equity and anti-racist lens**
- **Using place-based and local approaches**
- **Having an upstream focus**
- **Demonstrating compassion, empathy, dignity, and care**
- **Being community informed**
- **Being action orientated**
- **Applying measures and metrics**
- **Being courageous, brave, and inspiring**
- **Having hope and aspiration**
- **Being plain speaking, truth telling and honest**

Central to this work is the recognition that addressing complex, different visions of community safety and wellbeing means challenging our own comfort, and embracing a reality that is not confined to binary options.

Acknowledging that wisdom comes from many sources, and that each person, group, and community may have different, but complementary definitions of progress and success, are key to this work. Through collective and collaborative approaches, the City can listen, learn, and achieve meaningful change. This requires the understanding that the City can, and must, do things differently.

What is Community Safety and Wellbeing?

Community safety and wellbeing (CSWB) is a goal for which the City strives: enhancing the quality of life for our community, residents (housed and unhoused), workers, businesses, and visitors.

Community safety and wellbeing are intertwined. CSWB work looks at the social determinants of health and the social determinants of crime to understand what factors are leading to increased crime and declining social order. Some of these determinants work in favour of CSWB by protecting, promoting, and improving the state of wellbeing – these are **protective factors**.

Other factors that are not working well, or are causing more disruption, are **risk factors**. CSWB work focuses on strengthening the protective factors in the community, while mitigating the risk factors. As an example, when housing is insufficient and unaffordable, it is a risk factor, but when we collectively improve the state of housing in the community, it becomes a protective factor.

CSWB focuses on conditions, policies, and programs that make people feel a sense of belonging.

It includes:

- **Feeling safe walking down the street.**
- **Feeling welcomed and included, regardless of your background or circumstances.**
- **Living without fear.**
- **Fully engaging and participating in community.**
- **Supporting individuals and families in overcoming homelessness, poverty, addictions, and other challenges.**
- **Having access to activities that positively affect physical, spiritual and emotional health.**
- **Helping prevent systemic homelessness, poverty, addictions, and socioeconomic challenges.**
- **Treating all individuals with respect and dignity, and equal under the law.**

DEFINITIONS

Social determinants of health are the non-medical factors that affect a person's health and wellbeing, like income, education, and living conditions.

Social determinants of crime are the non-criminal factors that affect how people respond to, and participate in, crime and justice, like education, housing, and health.

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Goal of the work

What is a Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan?

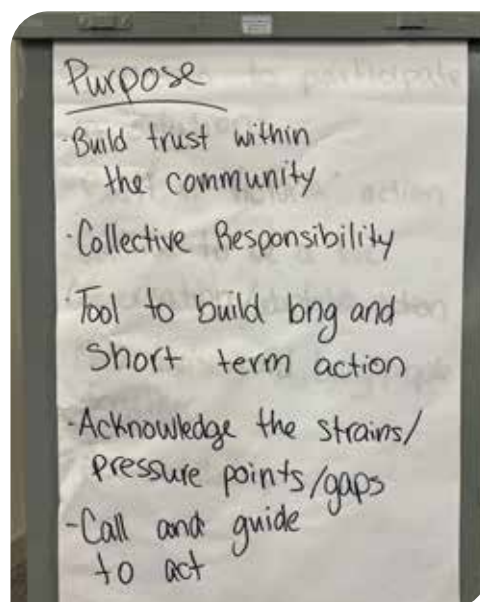
People define and experience community safety and wellbeing differently. While some may identify with more western concepts traditionally focusing on individuality, wealth, and the pursuit of happiness, others may lean to a decolonized approach that revolves around healing, connection to land and community, and spiritual strength.

To be successful, solutions must emerge from different concepts and worldviews as CSWB work considers the perceptions, experiences, and concerns of diverse community members, including seniors, families, working people, and youth, as well as the intersectional and lived experience of marginalized communities and visible minorities. Collectively, understanding these perspectives shines a light on the root causes of poverty, harm, and social risk.

Acknowledging that community safety and wellbeing is not defined by the lowering or absence of crime stats is important to understanding the complexities of an individual's real or perceived sense of safety and belonging. Lower statistical levels of crime do not address the stigma, discrimination, bias, and fear that cause harm in communities.

The goal of the work is to realize this state of wellbeing through the intentional, balanced, practical reimagining of community safety and wellbeing by addressing a range of social issues, and embracing a continuum of solutions, from conventional and common to innovative and novel.

This work is a responsibility that is shared by the City, other orders of government, our business and not-for-profit partners, community governance and our residents.



Community safety and wellbeing plans serve as long-term tools to improve wellbeing, recognize community strengths, and act as an important call to action to all partners and agencies.

CSWB plans serve as a catalyst for inter-agency cooperation, recognizing that community safety and wellbeing is much bigger than a single sector, organization, or government. Community safety plans have multiple components, including social development, harm prevention, risk intervention, and crisis or emergency response.

A CSWB plan identifies solutions, and the mechanisms to achieve them.

DEFINITIONS

CSWB means something unique to each person. CSWB work must be nimble, adaptive, and reflective of the entire community.

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Goals of the Community Leaders Panel

As a process, it is about recognizing the positive work that is already happening within individual communities, through networks of agencies and service providers, and using these efforts to collaborate, coordinate, advocate, do more with those resources using local experience and expertise, and multiply their collective impact on the whole community, while identifying what new resources may be needed.

The challenge of this work is grappling with the diverse ideas and opinions that exist in the community. It is important to acknowledge the tensions that arise from a fundamental feeling of being uncomfortable in one's community.

The key to creating actionable, intentional, and useful recommendations is the ability to reflect on the diverse and opposing needs of the community, while ensuring that everyone can be seen and heard in the plan.

With this in mind, the Community Leaders Panel challenged this plan to:

- **Build and sustain trust within the community**
- **Serve as a tool to guide long and short-term actions**
- **Acknowledge the work that's already happening to improve community wellbeing, while recognizing and identifying the strains, gaps, and pressure points**
- **Be a call to action and commitment for community leaders, community members, partners, the City, and other orders of government**
- **Be an invitation for the community to participate in solutions**
- **Be adaptable, and prompt live and real-time conversations about actions, policies, and City directions**
- **Help identify frustrations and barriers with the current system, and recommend solutions**
- **Mend division and bring people together**
- **Build accountability**
- **Balance countering views**
- **Inform the community on different perspectives, policies, and worldviews**
- **Be transparent**
- **Recognize the importance of conversational, pragmatic responses**
- **Reduce stigma**
- **Be achievable and measurable**
- **Inspire a shift away from the culture of compassion fatigue, social fragmentation, and anti-social behaviour.**

Where We Started

In early 2023, Council adopted its Strategic Plan, which established the goals – and the road map to building a modern city that is responsive to existing and emerging needs through 2026.

The Strategic Plan embraces the idea that Victoria is an evolving, bright, and diverse city, with challenges, opportunities, and tough decisions in the future. It identifies the need for the City to be conveners, social engineers, and executors in the work that brings strategic partners, other levels of government, neighbourhoods, and residents together.

One of the Strategic Plan’s eight priorities is Community Wellbeing and Safety. The other priorities are functions of, and are interconnected to, the concept of community wellbeing.

Within the pillar of community wellbeing and safety, the Strategic Plan identifies six action items:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Support a range of civilian, bylaw, and policing crisis response and prevention services. |
| 2 | Beautify, support, and enhance Victoria’s urban villages. |
| 3 | Advance City policies that support accessibility, equity, diversity, and inclusion through a social justice lens. |
| 4 | Support innovative, wellbeing solutions to reduce harm for housed and unhoused people living in neighbourhoods where there are shelters. |
| 5 | Work with partner agencies and governments to create life opportunities for unhoused people. |
| 6 | Develop and implement a community safety plan. |

On June 1, 2023, the Mayor proposed a Council Member Motion that outlined a mechanism to achieve one of the paths – the creation of a community safety plan. Council endorsed the motion, and work began to develop a community safety and wellbeing plan.

8 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Climate Action and Environmental Stewardship
- Housing
- Transportation
- Parks, Recreation and Gathering Spaces
- Community Wellbeing and Safety
- Economic Health and Community Vitality
- Truth and Reconciliation
- Arts, Culture, Music Sport and Entertainment

STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

By 2026, Victoria will be a dynamic, inclusive, more affordable, safer, intentionally transformed city where people can imagine a future for themselves and seven generations to come.

We will be known for decisive leadership and innovation in climate action, housing, transportation and meaningful reconciliation with the Ləkʷəŋən-speaking Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations on whose lands the city exists.

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Our Current Challenges:

Addictions
Climate change
Compassion fatigue
Cost of living
COVID-19 aftermath
Criminal justice system
Discrimination
Domestic and intimate partner violence
Economic uncertainty
Food insecurity
Health challenges
Homelessness
Housing
Inequity, loneliness and social isolation
Mental health challenges
Need to attract tourism and business
Polarization
Political uncertainty
Poverty
Safety concerns
Service gaps
Toxic drugs

Why Now?

For almost a decade, British Columbia has been dealing with a housing shortage, a toxic drug crisis and a challenging criminal justice system. COVID-19 posed other challenges related to homelessness and an increasing number of individuals experiencing health, mental health and addictions challenges.

The pandemic affected everyone in the way they lived their lives with increasing isolation through the lockdown and limits on social interactions. While the pandemic may not have caused our current challenges, it did exacerbate them. Post-pandemic, communities are dealing with all of these issues which are driven by a rising cost of living and increasing food insecurity for many. Emerging political uncertainty, combined with significant international economic threats, have put stress on many people and families in our community.

As the capital city, lauded as one of the best small cities in the world, and as a renowned tourism destination, Victoria is dependent on the success of a local economy comprised of an array of businesses with unique offerings. In Victoria, as with many communities in B.C. and across Canada, safety concerns and the impacts of social disorder are negatively affecting business vitality. The City must be responsive to the challenges of business to retain our current economic community and to be able to attract future business.

There are also many individuals struggling under the weight of healthcare challenges, mental health concerns, a rising cost of living, a housing market unattainable for many, climate change, systemic discrimination, and poverty – with little support and hope for a way out. Collectively, we are feeling the consequences of compassion fatigue, and a growing ‘scarcity mindset.’ Social media can amplify polarizing sides and can induce fear of the ‘other.’ This plan recognizes these tensions, and the anger, frustration and vulnerability that exists on all sides, and seeks the balance among them.

Divisions are present across the community, more visibly than perhaps in recent memory. Competing priorities, interests, capacities and perspectives make the consideration and implementation of systems changes daunting.

” PARTICIPANT QUOTE

The community is constantly asking for this [a CSWB plan] - I think we are ready and have been ready.

Victoria has already invested in resources, partnerships, programs and planning to improve the quality of life for our residents. The City has contributed, and continues to provide, unprecedented levels of social, economic, and health supports, despite these being outside the usual responsibilities of local government.



**PARTICIPANT
QUOTE**

[We need] Expansion of community villages. A focus on supporting young people's economic needs (20-30yrs) to live and thrive in the city, walkable car-free, increase density, green space and safe, lighted pedestrian/accessible corridors. More affordable, shelter rate, and supportive housing to be available /spread across all neighbourhoods in Victoria, not concentrated in the downtown, creating more diverse communities and greater capacity to support residents across the city.

The City continues to invest in downtown revitalization, heritage revitalization and façade-restoration programs; Royal Athletic Park and other public space expansions and improvements; central street refreshes; expanded grant programs; the free bike valet and increasing transit; bicycle and walk-and-roll infrastructure; neighbourhood traffic calming; arts and culture programming; and other investments in quality-of-life improvements. It has also broadened its housing policies, making it easier to increase housing availability and affordability.

Yet, despite these efforts, some Victorians are in distress. People are discouraged, upset, and frustrated with the level of visible (and invisible) poverty, homelessness, and gaps in services. Many residents are troubled by observing others' suffering, angry at the gaps in provincial service delivery that has contributed to – if not created – the anguish experienced by the most vulnerable Victorians, and are looking for visible change in the city, particularly in the downtown core.

This plan acknowledges that frustration with declining social order is legitimate. The plan's goal is to show that there is a pathway forward, a path that enables action, together.

The Work

This work is driven by the recognition by Mayor and Council that increasing community safety and wellbeing for people living in every neighbourhood of Victoria requires a collective approach to many complex issues, like declining civility, a lack of social cohesion, inadequate housing supply, inequality, climate change, inaccessible healthcare, growing mental health concerns, socio-economic challenges, and the rising cost of living.

Every resident is affected by these challenges, and some of our community members, including seniors, youth, newcomers, people with disabilities, Indigenous people, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and more, feel the compounding effects of these crises acutely.

The City must acknowledge these challenges in the community. CSWB work can create immediate, medium and long-term, system-wide solutions.

The City (and other orders of government and agencies) spend more money each year doing the same things, often in the same ways and using the same thinking, without seeing substantial change at the ground level. Through the work of this plan, the City will reimagine the way in which it delivers services and makes future improvements.



PARTICIPANT QUOTE

The community is aware of the challenges. That is not the issue. The issue is that all levels of Government think it is an easy, quick solution and refuse to address the complex problem as a coordinated approach to overhaul all the broken systems that contribute to the problems. You can't improve if you only address part of the problem. Homelessness and addiction is not only an issue of affordable housing. It is a multifaceted issue that has many contributing factors.

Process and Community Input

In developing this plan, the community was engaged through surveys, open houses and pop-ups, and safe and supported dialogues with local facilitators. Over 1,600 voices were heard through the engagement process, which included 40 local organizations, the Songhees Nation, Xwsepsum Nation, local Indigenous organizations as well as the general public. Open data sources as well as regional data were also analyzed by HelpSeeker and Muflehun to inform the findings.

Timeline

Following the initial passing of Council’s Strategic Plan in May 2023, and the adoption of the Mayor’s June 2023 motion to create a community safety and wellbeing plan, work started immediately to gather a panel of leaders and knowledge holders, who then championed and guided this work through to the completion of the plan.



HelpSeeker is a Canadian company that collects and analyzes data to support social sector decision makers.

Muflehun, a resource centre that conducts research and analysis of current hate and extremism challenges, derived data from a variety of Canadian sources to compare data on crime, safety and hate in six communities to create comparators for local data.

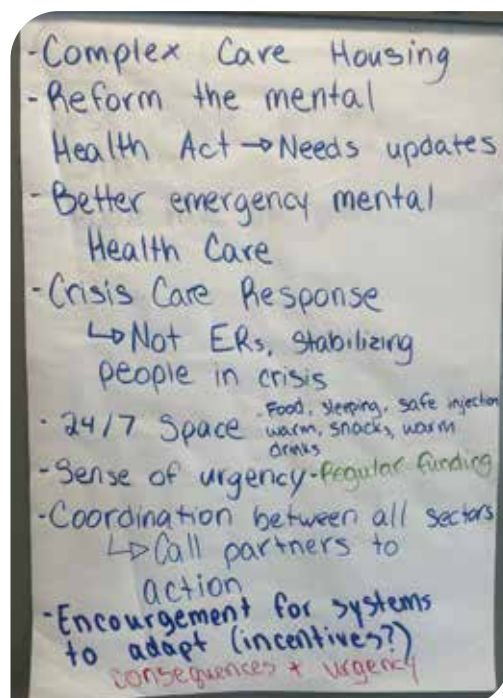
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Community Leaders Panel overview

Community Leaders Panel (CLP)

The work to create the community safety and wellbeing plan has been guided by an 11-member Community Leaders Panel (CLP), supported by City staff. Convened by the Mayor, panel members were selected to reflect different experiences, opinions, and perspectives in the community, while bringing together local leaders with knowledge and experience in the challenges – and solutions – surrounding community safety and wellbeing.

The panel members reflect expertise in social service provision, business and leadership, public health, housing, law enforcement, fire and emergency response, local neighbourhoods, local Indigenous knowledge, and newcomers.



The work of the CLP has been about developing a shared vision for change, reimagining the concept and reality of community safety and wellbeing, building new concepts of intervention, enforcement and response, addressing local challenges, and leveraging resources to act.

While the recommendations within the report are not authored by the panel, nor are they wholly endorsed in their entirety by the panel, they reflect the thoughts, observations, and concerns from panel members, as well as the broader community.

Collectively, this plan is a summation of that work, and the wide-ranging discussions, storytelling, collective and individual sharing and learning, debates about wicked problems and their possible solutions, heartfelt exchanges about personal and professional experiences and revelations – all situated within the context of the extensive data collected throughout the initiative.

Panel meetings began in August 2023, and continued monthly, to guide the creation of the engagement plan, provide strategic guidance and expertise, and build the components to develop this plan. Discussion focused on current community wellbeing discourse within the city and beyond, and how to use those understandings to develop frameworks to gather information and feed recommendations, to help redefine community wellbeing and describe the actions the City needs to undertake to realize that vision.

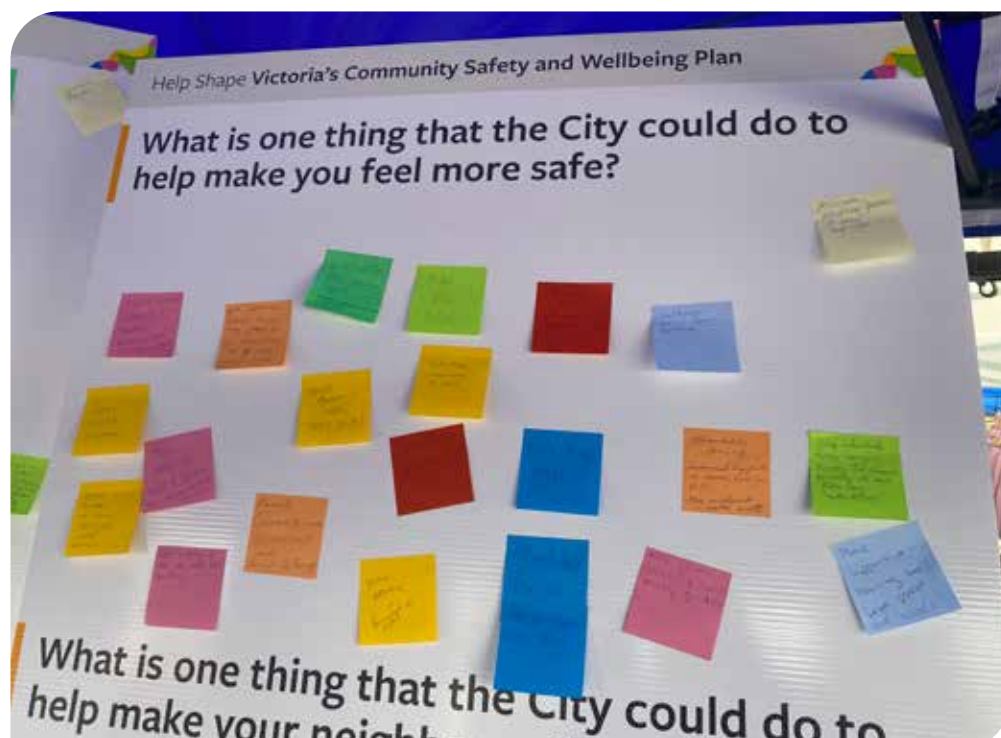
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Background on
engagement approach

Engagement

At the direction of the CLP, the engagement process was built to be as diverse, aware, and accessible as possible. The engagement process occurred from September 2023 to July 2024.

With help and guidance from the Canadian Centre for Safer Communities, the panel built an engagement framework with multiple parts. The Canadian Centre for Safer Communities worked with the panel from August 2023 to May 2024, and assisted in facilitating meetings, providing frameworks, compiling information, and consulting on the engagement approach. Their role in the beginning of this process was crucial, providing much-needed analysis and information about CSWB community engagement approaches taken across the country.



Early on, it was clear that many people, regardless of whether they live in the city, have an attachment to Victoria. As a provincial capital, and an important piece of the modern history of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, people across the province, the Island, and Greater Victoria area are keenly attuned to the opportunities and needs of the city.

Victoria is the downtown core for the Greater Victoria area, which includes about 400,000 people. It is a prime tourist destination for both international and domestic visitors, and is also a major commerce centre for Vancouver Island. Many people who live outside the city limits visit Victoria to shop, dine, work, recreate, entertain, visit parks and amenities, and so much more.

Given such, it was important to the panel that people outside the city could participate in the engagement.

It must be acknowledged that while some engagement with the Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation (on whose historic and contemporary territories the city exists in its entirety) has informed this plan, ongoing meaningful consultation must and will continue to ensure that any actions taken on these lands respect the traditions, protocols and future visions of the two Nations.

The City values the generosity of the two Nations in their continued willingness to work together in service to a better quality of life for all our residents. Our relationships are currently strong, nurtured by years of learning, collaboration and shared dreams. The City is committed to our journeys together.

It was important to ensure that, as much as possible, everyone's voices were heard, and that every resident had the opportunity to be heard. This meant that special attention needed to be placed to ensure that residents who are not typically represented in surveys had the ability to participate. This includes people who are unhoused or underhoused, people with disabilities, people without internet access, and others.

It was equally important to ensure that the data collection process was thorough but not intimidating and was done to minimize harm, trauma, and inadvertent triggering. Care was taken not to share personal, private, and often emotionally-challenging information.

To inform the development of Victoria's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan, available data was compiled, and public input was sought over a five-month period (April to August 2024) through two surveys, facilitated community and sectoral dialogues, and a series of pop-up events in the community.



PARTICIPANT QUOTE

Victoria is renowned for being polite but cold and it is hard to make friends here. Why is that? How can we meet more like-minded folks to develop a strong supportive community? I wonder about that constantly as I am not from here and I know I need a support system and connections in general. I can see efforts made to have the community interact through free gatherings such as the arts festival last February, block parties, and farmer's markets. Yet, I still feel alone even though I feel a sense of belonging to the community.

GOAL

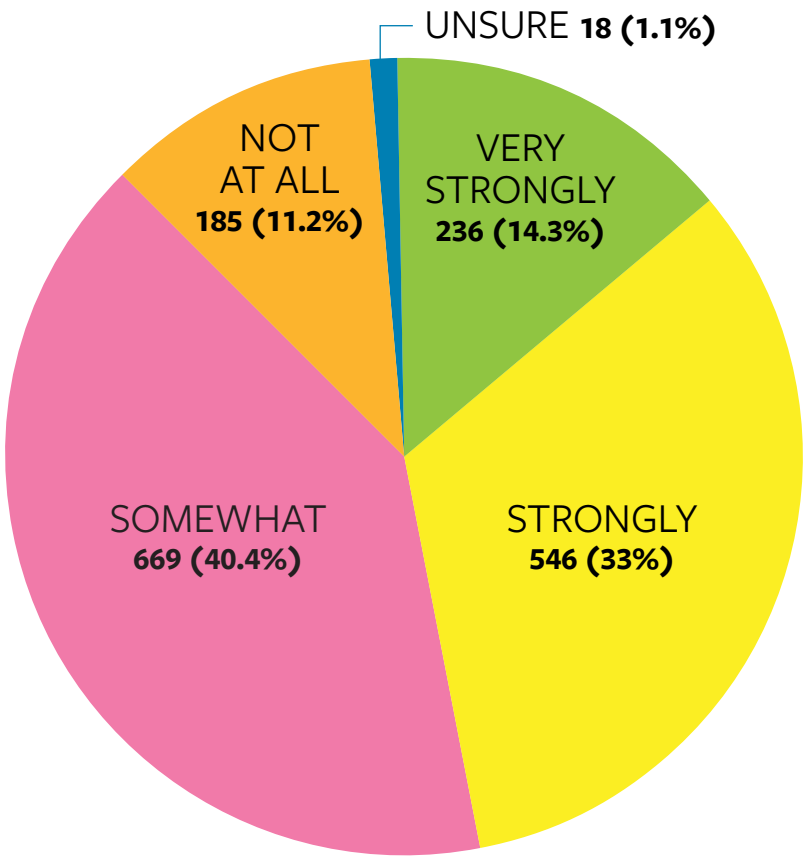
Given that this report is the first CSWB plan in the Capital Region, the Community Leaders Panel made clear that Victoria's work can and should set a standard of excellence for community engagement.

Survey One

The first survey was a public survey, consisting of approximately 30 questions. The survey could be completed online or via paper form and was advertised with posters, print ads, leaflets, in the news, on the City’s website, and the City’s social media. It was also sent directly to a number of organizations, encouraging them to participate along with their staff. The survey questions explored topics like experiences of crime and safety, perceptions of belonging, and factors that affect wellbeing. The survey was open for six weeks and resulted in 1,660 responses.

SURVEY QUESTION

How strongly do you feel a sense of belonging in the community?



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Overview of Survey Two

Overview of in-person sessions



Survey Two

The second survey was the Systemic Change survey, which was a targeted approach to understanding the systemic barriers and challenges affecting the wellbeing of our most vulnerable populations in the city. The survey was mostly open-ended questions and only available online via a closed link. This link was sent to organizations and individuals in the social services sector with deep involvement and understanding of the systemic barriers and challenges to wellbeing for at-risk people. The survey asked questions about key challenges faced in the city, barriers to collaboration, and systemic barriers. There were 135 responses.

In-person Sessions and Community Pop-ups

To host the in-person dialogues, the City engaged four local facilitators with specific knowledge and expertise in working with diverse communities. Facilitators worked with various agencies, sectors and communities within the city to have open-ended and free-flowing conversations about community safety and wellbeing. Topics included specific safety and wellbeing observations, community concerns, and potential actions.

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Overview of in-person sessions

Overview of community pop-ups

HelpSeeker data analysis

Twenty sessions were hosted with approximately 160 participants, spanning a range of demographics including youth, neighbourhood associations, the business community, faith groups, police, young workers, people with lived experience of homelessness, and more.

Five in-person community pop-ups were held across the community; each was a drop-in style session where participants could anonymously post feedback on sticky notes and/or speak with City staff and panel members.



Analysis Methodology

Given the vast amount of data collected, the City contracted HelpSeeker, a Canadian social-science data firm with experience creating community safety and wellbeing plans. HelpSeeker received the data from both surveys, the in-person facilitated dialogues, and the community pop-ups, and ran a frequency analysis to assess how many times themes, topics, suggestions, and observations were mentioned throughout the engagement process. This gave the Community Leaders Panel a comprehensive picture of the trends, ideas, and attitudes in the information collected.

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Publicly available data
analysis

Muflehun

Risk and protective factors

To supplement this data, Muflehun, a not-for-profit data agency, analyzed publicly-available data from Stats Canada, VicPD, and other sources to identify trends in the city's **risk and protective factors** as they relate to violent crimes, hate crimes, and terrorism, as part of the federally-funded Community Resilience Early Warning System (CREWS) Canada program.

This analysis examined over 75 socio-ecological factors across seven sectors and 24 subsectors to understand which factors contributed the most highly towards risk and which are most protective for the community. Sectors analyzed include community demographics, economics, education, health, neighbourhood dynamics, public safety, and social cohesion.

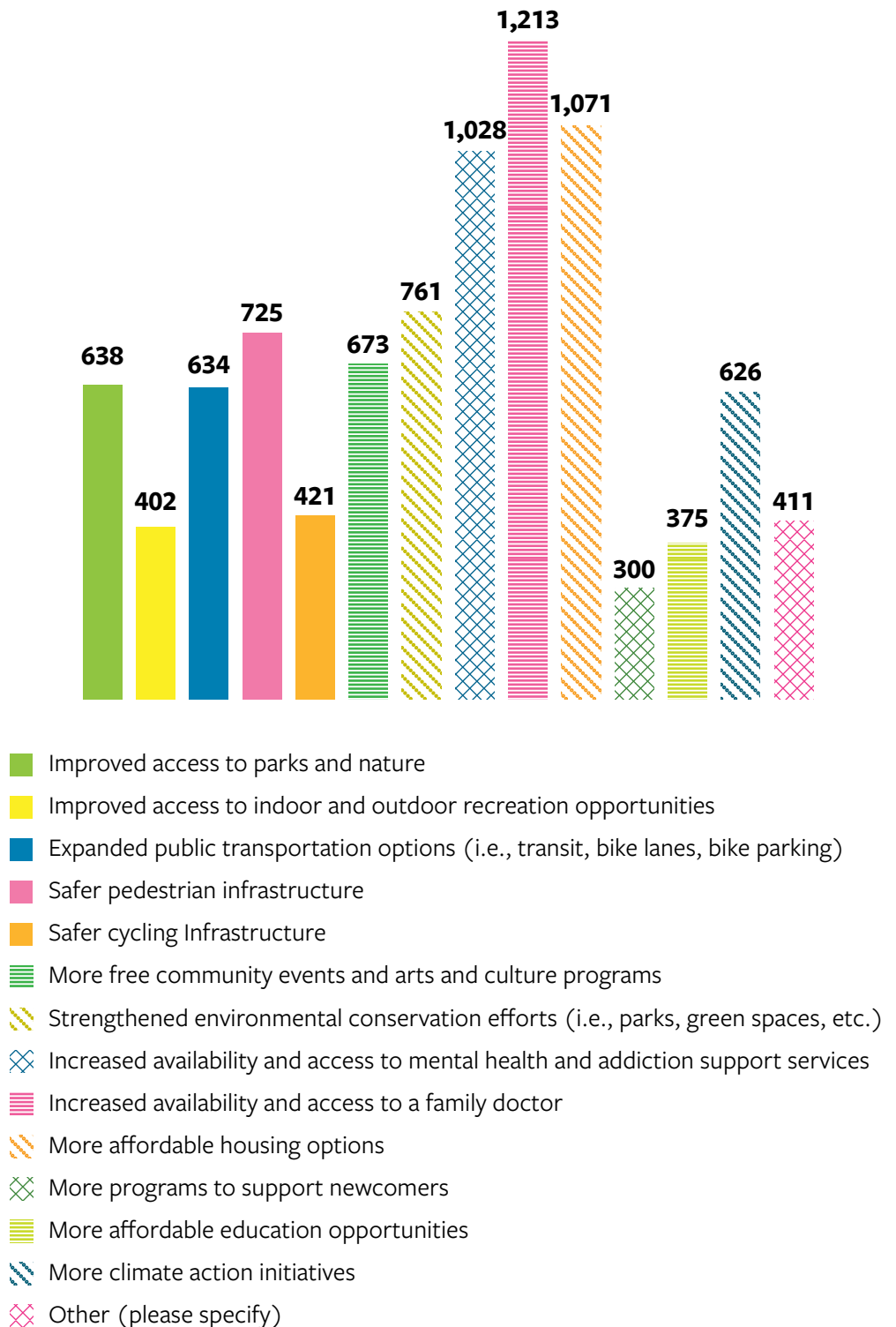


Together, each set of analyses provides a robust picture of the concerns, challenges, and strengths that the city is experiencing.

A full description of the engagement process is available as an appendix to this report.

SURVEY QUESTION

Which initiatives do you believe would be most helpful to your overall wellbeing? Select all that apply.



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Relationship between the police service and the City

Challenges experienced by police administration

Current Context for Community Safety and Wellbeing Services in Victoria

The following three components derive from all engagement inputs to date:

- **Policing in the Context of Community Safety Services**
- **Service Providers in the Context of Community Safety Services**
- **Coordinating City Community Safety and Wellbeing Services**

Each is a complementary path on the road map to greater community safety and wellbeing, and serves as a mechanism for action.

1 | Policing in the Context of Community Safety Services



Policing remains a service funded by, but outside, the operational authority of the City. That said, the relationship between the police service and the City is key to community safety and wellbeing.

While the City cannot make specific recommendations about police operations, this initiative can offer advice to police leadership about the direction, principles, values and tone of police services within Victoria as they relate to the broader context and goals of this community safety and wellbeing plan.

The concept and reality of community safety and wellbeing are changing in response to the evolution of society and the subsequent changes to our expectations and understanding of our collective responsibility for one another and community. Society now expects a more diverse, adaptable and nuanced response to community crises, and to the preventive work that ensures greater community safety and wellbeing.

Within those new concepts, expectations and understandings, policing remains a core constant, and an essential service.

As social structures evolve and adapt, so must policing. Recruitment, training and education, professional and operational development – all are assumed – and demanded – to evolve to inform operational policies and tactics that reflect community expectations and values.

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Civilian responses

Key elements of supporting the police

Police services around the world are grappling with these expectations, and with the intense work needed to balance effective policing with changing social structures.

The City of Victoria has been a leader in new civilian community response services, such as the Crisis Response, Community-Led (CRCL) team. It models civilian community crisis response teams, while building on and expanding blended teams, including police and health professionals, non-profit service providers and others (e.g., co-response teams, Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams, Integrated Mobile Crisis Response (IMCRT) teams, etc.).

A continuing thread of how modern policing complements an emerging demand for civilian community crisis response has been woven through the work of the Community Leaders Panel and throughout the diverse engagement practices that have helped inform these recommendations.

” PARTICIPANT QUOTE

We just need more affordable and supportive housing. Community oriented policing would also be helpful, with integrated teams doing more patrol like rounds so that we can better differentiate between criminal activity and mental health / more proactively connect people to services as needed. Supportive housing also needs to actually be supportive with programs that encourages independence in the long run. Meaning we need more trained staff and more resources.

The participation of the Victoria Police Chief on the panel, has ensured a practical consideration of real-life policing, allowing for an intentional, respectful – and realistic – design for harmonious police and civilian crisis response.

A key component of these discussions is resources – financial and human. Neither consideration on its own is sufficient to guarantee adequate policing – both are needed to fulfill this obligation. Funding and training (plus recruitment and retention) must be adequately supported.

In 2011, the City of Victoria’s population was approximately 80,000, with 243 sworn officers serving. Recent data shows the current population to be just more than 100,000, with 257 sworn officers serving in 2024.

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Policing and
population size

Police training

Amalgamated
police service

” PARTICIPANT QUOTE

[We need] More addiction support, housing options and mental health support including weight put into these by the courts. Allow police to deal with police issues rather than overdoses and mental health issues...Provide task forces in the city to deal with individuals suffering from addiction, mental health issues and other. Provide more assistance to ambulance/first responders rather than just training. Provide more bodies and funding to assist in hiring those with specializations in homelessness, mental health and addiction assistance.

Noting the approximate 25 per cent increase in the city’s population since 2011, the number of sworn police officers needed to keep pace with that population increase (assuming the ratio in 2011 was appropriate to provide adequate policing for the City of Victoria and the Township of Esquimalt), would be 304 in 2025.

To meet police recruit training demands from all B.C. municipal police agencies, the provincial government has agreed to increase the Justice Institute of BC Police Academy capacity by adding an additional 96 police recruit seats per year. Limits to current training capacity, in particular, and having one available training location, burdens police services and their municipalities with an insufficient supply of future-serving staff.

Currently, an amalgamated police service provides policing for the Township of Esquimalt and the City of Victoria. Both municipalities have agreed that, while the Township and the City support a regional police service, in the absence of a move by the provincial government to provide regional policing for multiple municipalities on the South Island, the Township and the City would be better served by individual police services.

As of November 2024, the separation of police services is under negotiation among the three involved parties – the Province, the Township and the City. While no firm timeline has been established, the Framework Agreement that sets out the terms of the joint police service funding arrangement is being renewed on an annual basis through 2026. There is a high expectation that a resolution to the process will occur before then.

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Amalgamated police service

2007 Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness

The impact of that resolution will undoubtedly affect how police services interface with the City's CSWB plan and services, insofar as a degree of uncertainty may be introduced about police leadership, capacity and priorities. (For example, will there be one local chief or two? How will strengths of the respective forces be allotted? Will any change affect the priorities for policing in each community?) Additionally, the next few years will see a number of senior police staff become eligible for retirement which will require intentional and acute transition planning.

Increased capacity for training new recruits, and for ongoing professional development, education and training for sworn officers and civilian police staff, is crucial to ensure a professional, evolving police service that adapts to the changing needs and expectations of a city being intentionally transformed.

” PARTICIPANT QUOTE

I'm very fortunate to have a strong foundation of support with our neighbours, family and friends, but I do feel let down by our city, our police and the justice system... we have seen much crime and harm. It's beyond frustrating ... we need to get the police the resources they need to deal with major criminal behaviour.

2 | Service Providers in the Context of Community Safety Services

For decades, the City of Victoria has been responding to community safety, which has been impacted by addiction, a lack of mental health care, homelessness – the disorder at times arising from these issues – and the changing influences, politics, values, and realities that have shifted public understanding of these social challenges.

In 2007, a Task Force found that there were over 200 organizations in the Greater Victoria area engaged in addressing the needs of homeless, addicted and/or mentally ill people in our community.

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Identifying needs

” PARTICIPANT QUOTE

Increase downtown foot patrols by all emergency services. Police, bylaw, Outreach and EMS. PRESENCE, I don't mean enforcement, but just be out, be visible, talk to people, all people, problem solve, offer solutions, and act.

The Task Force noted then that “By not addressing the needs of the homeless population in Greater Victoria, we are spending at least \$62 million in other services, such as policing, jails, hospital services, emergency shelter, clean-up, etc.” Their report went on to ask “With this level of investment, dedication and activity, why are the numbers of homeless residents increasing? And why is the severity and visibility of their substance use and mental health issues so evident on our sidewalks and in our public parks? Most importantly, what can be done?”

These same questions are still relevant.

During the engagement to help inform this plan, participants asked similar questions. Why does it take so many providers to support our vulnerable residents? Whose responsibility is it to do so? Why isn't there greater coordination among service providers, orders of government, residents and recipients of social services?

Ultimately, the answers to these questions reside in wicked problems – complex social issues that are difficult to solve. Income inequality creates a system where there is constant competition for limited resources, and we see cycles of poverty, trauma, and illness continue. A goal of this CSWB plan is to interrupt those cycles by aligning resources, bringing partners together and addressing people's wellbeing needs.

Coordination, cooperation and collaboration have improved dramatically since 2007. Thousands of individuals have since been housed, served and supported, but the numbers and the needs of the unhoused and underserved Victorians have continued to grow.

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Challenges to service delivery

Supportive housing

Sheltering

Underlying the continuing effects of fragmented, inadequate social services is society's incapacity to resolve poverty and its impact as a driver of systemic social inequality. Unresolved systemic social inequity – combined with inadequate “upstream” interventions to interrupt and prevent the need for responsive services – continues to hamper social service delivery.

Housing providers perform essential work to address homelessness and street disorder. As a key part of social service delivery, housing providers must be a focus in any community safety and wellbeing work.

The current housing delivery system includes shelters, which are non-permanent, overnight housing. Transition housing supports people by giving them independent spaces to help them transition out of homelessness and sheltering.

This housing system is plagued with challenges, far beyond the control of the invaluable providers who operate them. Housing services are underfunded, creating significant challenges for maintenance, repairs, and cleanliness.

» PARTICIPANT QUOTE

The current trajectory of supportive housing is grim... expectations on housing providers continue to rise while their perspectives, concerns, and requirements to operate are diminished or ignored. This lack of support will push [housing providers] to instate policies that result in higher barrier housing sites, further alienating and distilling the most visible, acutely unwell unhoused populations. The City and Province must start building good housing, along the complete continuum, as required.

Residents need support services to maintain independent and dignified living, which are often unavailable. Staff are overworked and lack the training and support to adequately assist residents. In many cases, both staff and residents feel unsafe in supportive housing facilities, as criminals and other abusive individuals are able to affect residents in these spaces.

Supportive housing can also be difficult to incorporate into neighbourhoods, often drawing in unwanted guests, disruptive behaviour, or garbage and vandalism to surrounding blocks. Ultimately, these problems are due to residents lacking the support services they need to make healthy choices, and providers do not have the tools and resources to maintain surrounding areas.

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Supportive housing

Sheltering

Healthcare services

Wellbeing organizations

Neighbourhood
associations

Supportive housing is subject to the provincial *Residential Tenancy Act* (*RTA*) but is excluded from certain provisions, which allow them to prohibit guests, for example. More work and consultation between housing providers and the provincial government are needed to find more avenues to amend the *RTA* to maintain dignity and human rights of residents, while balancing community safety and security needs.

In shelters, many residents feel unsafe and unstable. Relying on shelters often means chronic displacement and an inability to have basic needs for security, hygiene, and food met. In recent years, the demand for shelter services has far exceeded the number of beds available, which poses significant challenges during extreme weather events. Collectively, social service providers work to fill these gaps, as much as possible.

A dominant narrative in advocacy work related to homelessness hinges on “housing first.” While housing is absolutely essential to ending homelessness, housing without wrap-around services and sophisticated healthcare services is not effective, and in many cases, harmful.

Many individuals are unable to be successful in supportive housing due to gaps in support systems, including behaviour regulation support, substance abuse support, social and cultural connection, life-skills assistance, and medical care for chronic health issues. Many people who shelter on the street have compounded and complex health-related challenges, including brain injuries, chronic pain, complex health diagnoses, mental health challenges, and addiction concerns. These challenges must be addressed with a healthcare approach, but are currently not.

While homelessness is related to housing, the poisoned drug crisis that fuels these challenges is a health problem, and the health system has not stepped up to integrate effectively within the housing system, nor deliver the services needed.

Community safety and wellbeing cannot be addressed until the health system becomes an active and leading partner in community wellbeing. There are many social service agencies that work to advance healthcare for vulnerable and street-entrenched populations, but they need support from health authorities and provincial agencies.

»
PARTICIPANT
QUOTE

[We need] Broad investment in supportive housing... increased availability of a range of healthcare and treatment options for mental health and addiction... and healthcare delivered to supportive housing.

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Wellbeing organizations

Neighbourhood
associations

Emergency response

Current non-profit service agencies collaborate to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. Almost all downtown service providers meet regularly to share experiences and improve programs and services in the fast-paced, ever-changing realities of community members and their needs.

Recognizing the compounded challenges that Victorians are experiencing, the City has worked to shift operations and adapt to the community's needs. This includes changes to procedures and operations in the Bylaw department, and the Victoria Fire Department; both of which play an important role in supporting community service delivery.

As an example, Victoria has experienced an increase in demands for emergency medical calls, with a disproportionately high number of responses to areas where sheltering or outreach services are provided. This reflects the ongoing drug poisoning crisis, and a rise in the number of individuals experiencing medical distress from toxic drugs or other medical concerns. Of all emergency responses from the Victoria Fire Department, 65.6 per cent are for medical emergencies. In these cases, sending large, conventional fire apparatus negatively impacts the response reliability of the department for other emergencies, while drawing on Fire Department resources and putting bigger vehicles on the road.

To ensure service levels can be maintained, and to maximize response capabilities, the Department has implemented a new operational response model, using Fast Response (FR) units. These units are trucks that are both designed and equipped for emergency medical

responses. These light-duty vehicles can respond with fewer personnel, and are better suited to navigate city streets, thus decreasing response time and improving patient outcomes. With this updated model, station reliability has risen significantly in all three fire stations, and the Department is improving community safety by ensuring that the right resources are available when needed.



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Emergency preparedness

Community resilience

Wellbeing organizations

Arts and culture

The Fire Department Emergency Management Division has also begun offering free emergency preparedness workshops to individuals, families, groups, organizations, businesses, and multi-unit residential buildings. These workshops are tailored to the unique needs of the participating audience with the goal of educating and empowering people to prepare for any emergency that may affect them. These customized workshops cover everything from emergency plans for all hazards, to how to connect with community resilience centres, and more. They have been delivered to groups with unique care needs like seniors, day care centres, youth, and various community groups.

The Division has also launched a multi-year initiative to designate community centres as resilience hubs to link community resilience, emergency management, and climate adaptation to support residents before, during, and after emergency events. This will help ensure that every neighbourhood in Victoria will have a resilience hub, and will support healthy, welcoming, neighbourhoods and community connections.

These changes reflect the need to adapt to ongoing situations, and the City's willingness to be a partner in service delivery.

There are countless organizations that contribute to the thriving and diverse culture within the city. Volunteer groups, social organizations, non-profits, and more provide invaluable services connecting residents, and enriching life in Victoria.

Within the field of arts and culture, art galleries, community art groups, pottery studios, spoken-word poetry, performance groups, symphonies and choirs, creative producers, and many others play an essential role in supporting wellbeing. There are dozens of sectors and hundreds of community groups that fill this role, whether it is sports and recreation, health and wellness, youth activities, environmental causes, food security, anti-discrimination, and so many more.



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Neighbourhood
associations

Recreation services

Healthcare challenges

Funding challenges

Similarly, community neighbourhood associations are an essential backbone in the community fabric. Neighbourhood associations connect residents with the City and with decision makers, perform necessary advocacy services, and support residents in countless ways. Each neighbourhood association has a unique set of programs and services, and a distinct culture and identity.

Zumba classes, childcare, food box programs, art classes, community dinners, block parties, recycling programs, among others, all fall within regular operations of neighbourhood associations. Further to this, many associations have physical community centre spaces, making them important beacons in community preparedness and resilience.

Placemaking, also known as the process of community participation that shapes public spaces, reflects the importance of these organizations and is a priority in this CSWB Plan. These services, networks, and organizations are all essential to wellbeing in Victoria. Residents rely on these programs for social connections, security, and belonging.

Health challenges remain a constant challenge in Victoria, despite many organizations working to bridge community gaps. The absence of a coordinated systemic health care response to the opioid and other health care crises, chronic unavailability of health professionals, lack of access to routine health services, and a host of other capacity and availability gaps in health services, adds a high degree of stress to the community agencies dealing with the urgent needs of vulnerable Victorians, and offers little care to less vulnerable persons dealing with addiction and mental health challenges.

The systemic reliance on short-term project funding sources (rather than sustainable funding) has meant that chronic underfunding of operations undermines the capacity of agencies to resolve ongoing complex issues.



**PARTICIPANT
QUOTE**

[There is a] lack of collaboration from police with outreach and social services. I understand that each sector has their individual mandates but more collaborative practices would likely have better results. Maybe we need more integrated teams and on a larger scale revisit how the judicial system decides what parameters constitute remaining in custody vs not.

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City-led community safety and wellbeing coordination

While the commitment and dedication of individuals and their community service organizations try to keep pace with service demands, ongoing gaps in provincial and other funding sources for ongoing basic social services (creating a need for multiple unique services to fill those gaps), means there is still a conversation to be had about how we can better harmonize and provide so many services, affecting and supporting so many different people, each with different needs.

The City could play a role in facilitating this community-based conversation.

3 | Coordinating City Community Safety and Wellbeing Services

The following relates to a key recommended action in this plan – **to coordinate and convene City CSWB services by establishing a community wellbeing service.**

Coordination and leadership of the City's CSWB services would provide a mechanism to harmonize recommendations and actions that are within the City's authority.

Coordinated by City leadership reporting directly to the city manager, with the capacity to work with all City departments, this mechanism would create practical, peer-supported teams that have the training and experience necessary to deliver compassionate, appropriate, and culturally-sensitive proactive and reactive care and support.

Together with police service providers, institutions, residents, people with lived and living experience and other allies, the City would convene partners to support community safety and wellbeing and fill gaps, while supporting community and police services.

This approach is designed to be comprehensive, collaborative, compassionate, and, when needed, responsive, while ensuring the City's teams are dynamic and able to support our community's changing needs, and fill the gaps necessary to create a cohesive, holistic community of care.

Support for unhoused, underhoused, and vulnerable populations is specialized, time consuming, and resource-intensive work. A focus on upstream intervention to address the root causes of the issues ultimately reduces criminal activity, thus reducing the burden on reactive response services.

Individuals suffering from addiction and mental health disorders, and who are experiencing homelessness, need access to treatment and support wherever

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Future of City community safety and wellbeing services

Importance of education

they are and whenever they are ready. Businesses need a safe environment in which to serve their customers, and their staff need assurance that they can do their work, and customers can access businesses with safety and security.

A comprehensive package of City-based CSWB services could deliver these realities.

”
PARTICIPANT
QUOTE

Rather than dividing up responsibilities between different levels of government, [we should] empower local government to find their own solutions that [are] funded adequately from Provincial/Federal bodies rather than a piecemealed approach. Use metrics and evidence based solutions that can be measured. More people, better public spaces with well managed and cared for spaces with adequate programming will make public spaces feel more welcoming and safer.

Through the reorganization of existing City services, diverse streams of City community wellbeing services would include:

- **liaison and stakeholder management**
- **education**
- **community service delivery**
- **community response**
- **community action**
- **training and policy**

Specific portfolios of focus would include youth; equity, diversity and justice; health; housing and poverty reduction; and business and community. These themes reflect the priorities identified from the public engagement analysis.

The work would identify issues and gaps in services and proactively bring stakeholders together to address concerns.

Proactive education is key to a new reality of community safety and wellbeing. Through the CSWB engagement process, the public identified a need to

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Non-emergency responses

Upstream intervention

Training and policy
management

improve education in different sectors, community social supports, anti-racism, safety awareness, and more. This CSWB work would develop and lead education campaigns for different community sectors, such as youth, seniors, underhoused individuals, visible minorities, and the public.

Our community also identified a gap in public-facing ways to call for non-emergency service. An easily accessible, coordinated access service would open a single door to multiple services in a comprehensive manner to receive and respond to the diverse calls for assistance that now come from local residents, but which do not require acute or urgent attention by police.

Some elements of this comprehensive service already exist, such as the City’s “Feet on the Street” program which could expand to include outreach or project teams taking on low-risk community safety files. This could also include a team that responds to traffic or noise complaints, or a team equipped to proactively support people sheltering in the City, working collaboratively with service providers.

These programs would need flexible hours, and focus on long-term solutions, investigations, and issues that affect community wellbeing, like late-night disruption in a residential neighbourhood, repeated graffiti tagging, or chronic bike/pedestrian accidents at a specific intersection. Key issues would be tracked across the municipality, identifying City and community stakeholders, bringing together those affected, investigating and working to find solutions.

While the City’s CSWB services would reflect the social determinants of health and provide upstream mitigation and risk intervention, there would be mechanisms to provide enforcement in reimagined, compassionate, trauma-informed, and constructive ways.

As the City’s CSWB services evolve, ongoing professional training and policy management would ensure that programs remain effective and adapt to support community safety and wellbeing.

This work is specialized and unique, requiring teams that have structured training and competencies, including first aid, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) training, trauma-informed harm-reduction training, skilled communication and conflict resolution tools, culturally-informed and anti-racism practice, and social work. These skills and experience would ensure the teams have capacity to respond to the community’s diverse and changing needs, while bringing reliability and confidence in the services.

To make sure this CSWB initiative is practically operational and delivers improved perception and reality of community safety and wellbeing, the City must be committed to establishing, resourcing and continually adapting its CSWB services.

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Protective factors

Risk factors

What We Learned: Data

Analysis of pre-existing data and data collected during engagement, creates a picture of Victoria’s strengths and areas for improvement.

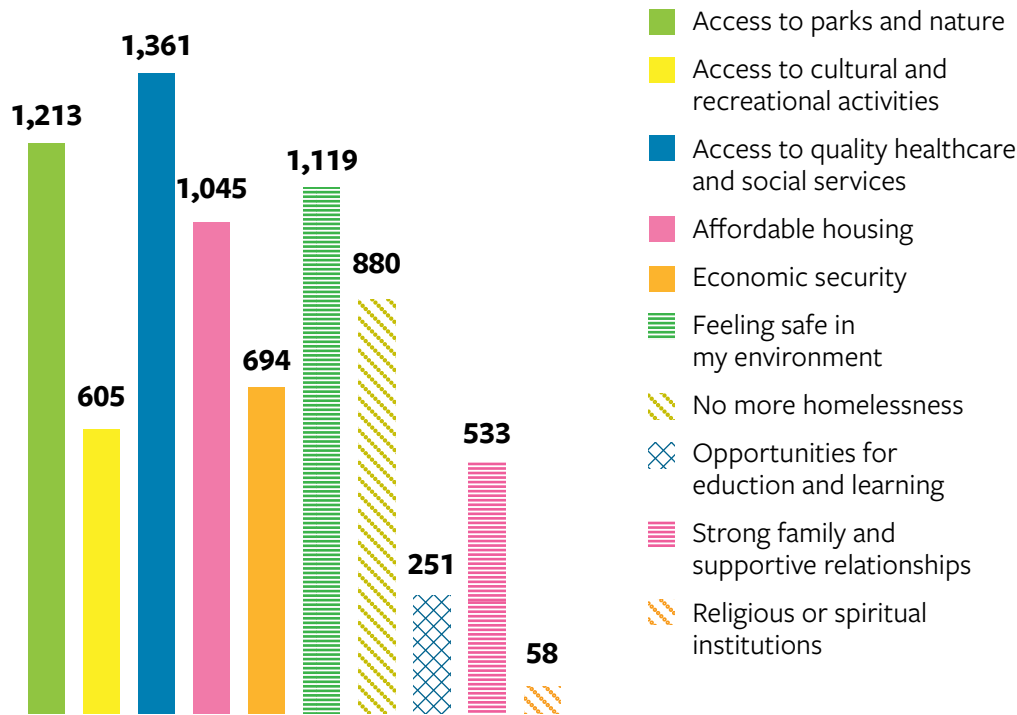
To address safety and wellbeing concerns in the city, we must look at the factors that are helping or hurting our work. Many **protective factors** help to prevent safety concerns, like our city’s diversity, consistently high quality of life satisfaction rating, and high rates of high school and post-secondary education.

However, there are **risk factors** that could contribute to safety but currently do not. In some cases, they actually increase harm; issues like social cohesion gaps, access to healthcare, and housing instability.

SURVEY QUESTION

Which of the following do you believe is most important to your overall wellbeing in Victoria?

(Select your TOP FIVE from the list below.)



PROTECTIVE FACTORS:
Characteristics that have a positive influence on the community and help reduce the likelihood of crime and violence.

RISK FACTORS:
Negative characteristics, conditions, or systems that can lead to increased social disorder, crime, fear of crime, or stress.

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Key housing factors:

Lack of affordable housing

Shelter capacity

Visible homelessness

Sheltering and supportive housing

By identifying and tracking these ‘protective’ and ‘risk’ factors and assessing how they change over time, the City can identify gaps, and shape policies that target those needs. This is how cycles of harm are interrupted, instead of taking a solely reactive, ‘band-aid’ approach.

The following factors were identified by Muflehun’s analysis of existing data and data collected from the community engagement.

Housing:

- Unaffordable and inadequate housing disproportionately affects Indigenous populations, visible minorities, and single-parent households.
- Access (or lack of access) to affordable rental housing, domestic violence spaces, transitional housing beds, and emergency sheltering beds are risk factors in the city.
- Previously, shelter capacity was a community protective factor, but despite an increase in the number of shelter beds since 2014, the need has outpaced the growth, and the lack of shelter beds has now become a source of vulnerability.
- Housing providers, and particularly staff in housing services, are overworked and under constant stress. They shared that they feel unsafe at work, and do not have the resources or personnel support to adequately support vulnerable people and staff supportive housing facilities.
- Overwhelmingly, residents said they were uncomfortable with visible homelessness, and the preferred solution is to adequately house all Victorians.
- Respondents shared on many occasions that the current shelter and supportive housing system is unsustainable, and causes them to experience significant mental and physical harm. Some of the challenges identified include: feeling unsafe in supportive housing, being unable to access supportive housing, being removed from shelters during the day and having nowhere to go, being unable to access necessary services in supportive housing, experiencing gaps between recovery and healthcare services and available supportive or transition housing, chronic maintenance issues in supportive housing, and more.
- Across all the data collected, “housing” was mentioned nearly 30,000 times. This includes mentions of housing, both as a challenge, and as a solution.

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Key food security and poverty factors:

Food security
Graduation rates
Income inequality

Key belonging, social cohesion, and isolation factors:

Cost of living
Low sense of belonging
Social supports and civic participation
Accessible neighbourhoods
Social isolation

Food security and poverty:

- Victoria has high rates of high school graduation and post-secondary education, which serve as protective factors against socio-economic vulnerabilities, including food insecurity.
- Income inequality arose as a risk factor in Victoria, while it was a protective factor prior to 2020.
- Food insecurity rates have been increasing across B.C. and are linked to economic factors. 40% of Indigenous populations are food insecure, and 29% of all children are food insecure.
- Food insecurity, which is worsened by the high cost of living, has emerged as one of Victoria’s key risk factors, particularly for medium income individuals and families.
- When asked about what could be done to make the city safer, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that increasing income to combat the price of housing, the cost of living, and the cost of food are key.

Belonging, social cohesion, and isolation:

- Life satisfaction and a sense of belonging remain consistently high, reflecting strong social cohesion.
- There are deficits in social supports, meaning vulnerable people are less likely to feel belonging in the community. This can be strengthened with community engagement, encouraging civic participation, and localized community initiatives to foster connection.

**”
PARTICIPANT
QUOTE**

I often feel a sense of community during community events such as markets, concerts, or block parties and I feel that Victoria does a great job of hosting these events in the warmer months. If it was possible to create more of these events during the colder months I feel it would help with folks seasonally feeling down. An idea that may not tackle the larger socio-economic issues but I think it would help boost morale.

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Key belonging, social cohesion, and isolation factors:

- Accessible neighbourhoods
- Social isolation
- Community spaces and networks

Key healthcare challenges:

- Disproportionate health impacts on Indigenous people
- Health access and unmet needs
- Visible drug use

- Having walkable neighbourhoods and accessible neighbourhood villages were identified as factors contributing to community resilience.
- Low social participation and a lack of social support services are significant risk factors in the city.
- Social isolation is prominent in Victoria, and drives mental health concerns. It is also intertwined with economic stress.
- Isolation in one-person households is a critical factor contributing to crime.
- Many engagement participants shared that it is difficult to build social networks, and find significant divisions between people who are perceived to be ‘newcomers’ and those who are perceived to be ‘established residents.’ Many shared that a lack of community spaces and a lack of evening activities contribute to this.

”
PARTICIPANT
QUOTE

[We need] More community programs designed around building community and making friends aimed at working-age-adults...Loneliness and social isolation post pandemic is not restricted to traditional high-risk groups like seniors and youth any longer and we need to strengthen pathways to connection for our 30-60 year old population.

Healthcare:

- Barriers accessing healthcare disproportionately impact Indigenous and visible minority populations, with rising unmet healthcare needs linked to housing instability and economic inequality.
- In 2020, there was a dramatic drop in protective factors in Victoria, particularly in the health sector. Prior to 2020, health was a protective factor but is now one of the biggest – and growing – risk factors. This can be attributed to growing unmet healthcare needs. Unmet health issues are the most frequent and most prominent factors contributing to violent crimes and hate crimes in the city.
- Many respondents shared that witnessing drug use was deterring them from patronizing businesses and travelling downtown.

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Key healthcare challenges:

Health access and unmet needs

Disproportionate health impacts for people with disabilities

Key transportation challenges:

Public transportation

Infrastructure

Key safety and safety perception challenges:

Crime

- The percentage of the population with unmet healthcare needs has risen by 88% in the last decade.
- An overarching concern expressed during engagement was a lack of access to healthcare, be it primary, specialty, or accessible healthcare.
- Residents also expressed that they were particularly concerned about access to healthcare for disabled and immunocompromised individuals, which was mentioned 1,214 times.

Transportation and mobility:

- Active transportation commuting is a protective factor in the city, which is on a steady increase. However, public transit remains a risk factor. To make it a protective factor, there must be a focus on increasing the hours of service, improving frequency, improving safety at bus stops, and more protection for drivers and passengers.

”
PARTICIPANT
QUOTE

Less division and hate. I’m tired of people from outside our city complaining about bike lanes, people living on the street, or parking access. I love my city and I’m so grateful for everyone that’s a member of it. I use the bike lanes daily, I have been able to walk to all my amenities and don’t need to drive anymore. I’ve never had a bad experience with someone that doesn’t have housing. I love how the city has evolved over the past few years and want to be part of this community.

- Residents frequently cited urban planning and infrastructure issues as barriers in the community, including and in order of priority: inadequate public transportation, accessibility for people with disabilities, and ongoing improvement to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.

Safety and safety perception:

- 69% of respondents to the 2024 Victoria Police Community Survey expressed a belief that crime had increased over the past two years.
- According to the Violent Crime Severity Index, minor assault incidents are the most common type of incident by a large margin.

DID YOU KNOW?

Active transportation are modes of movements that are human-powered, including cycling, using a mobility aid, and walking.

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Key safety and safety perception challenges:

- Crime
- Enforcement and peer-led support
- Unpredictable behaviour
- Perceptions of risk

Key mental healthcare challenges:

- Addictions
- Care access
- Declining mental health

- Following a spike in 2015, violent crimes (including minor assault, major assault, sexual assault, and robbery) declined until the pandemic, which saw a spike that continued until 2021. These rates are now decreasing, with the exception of robbery.
- Victoria’s Violent Crime Index has seen more pronounced spikes in violent crime compared to the provincial average, but is recovering post-pandemic faster than the provincial average.
- Respondents shared that they were concerned with aggressive panhandling, or unpredictable behaviour from people using substances, and this was deterring them from visiting downtown or other core areas of the city.
- The majority of respondents identified that visible enforcement was important to improve safety, wellbeing, and belonging. At the same time, a significant portion of residents also indicated support for civilian and peer-led teams to address street disorder.

Mental healthcare:

- Prior to 2020, good mental health was a protective factor in the city. However, after 2020, declining mental healthcare has become one of the city’s most vulnerable risk factors, next to general health.
- There are significant challenges with the current system of mental healthcare, be it a lack of addictions treatment beds, concerns about visible drug use, inaccessible youth mental healthcare, cost of mental healthcare, or otherwise.
- Overwhelmingly, improved mental health and addictions care was the single most cited challenge and solution, with thousands of mentions.

”
PARTICIPANT
QUOTE

[We should] House as many unhoused people as possible with all the care they need so they can return to a normal life. Drugs are a big problem, not just for the unhoused community. Mental health issues being relegated to the street is not a solution. People need help.

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Key inequity challenges:

Discrimination
Diversity demographics
Hate crimes

Key services challenges:

Need for diverse community events
Lack of social service resources
Social cohesion

Inequity:

- Inequity, including racial discrimination, homophobia, gender discrimination, economic inequality, ableism, ageism, and more were frequently cited in the engagement.
- While diversity and some aspects of equality are currently protective factors, growing inequality can become a risk factor in the city. As an example, gender diversity is currently a protective factor in the city, but growing income inequality and equity issues are risk factors.
- Hate crimes are often under-reported in Victoria, with many visible minorities sharing that they have experienced hate crimes, but have not reported them.
- Respondents also indicated that there is a lack of diverse cultural events and activities. In particular, it was emphasized that residents often feel out of place due to different cultural backgrounds, they struggle with a lack of representation in community leadership, there is limited cultural awareness, and they feel restricted by language barriers and limited opportunities to express and celebrate cultural identity.

» PARTICIPANT QUOTE

Q: What would give you a greater sense of belonging in the community? A: Decolonization and indigenization, also more welcoming to immigrants and refugees, and less racism and classism.

- Residents reported significant challenges with discrimination. This was the third highest-mentioned challenge to sense of belonging (out of 17 identified challenges) and includes racism, xenophobia, classism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, ableism, and ageism.

Improved services:

- A common theme shared by residents was that they struggle to understand what resources and services are offered by the City. This includes social services, recreation programming, emergency preparedness, and more. As an example, respondents identified gaps in emergency preparedness as an issue affecting them, and was mentioned nearly 1,400 times.
- Social cohesion is a significant protective factor that can be expanded in Victoria. Currently, low rates of social participation and constrained social services are risk factors, meaning they are not adequate enough to reduce harm.

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Key services challenges:

Need for diverse community events

Lack of social service resources

Social cohesion

Need for recreation programs and community events

Urban design challenges

Lack of service coordination

- Suggestions to improve social cohesion from engagement respondents include a focus on accessible neighbourhood events, placemaking, mixed-age facilities, support for public arts and events, and free community activities.
- There were over 1,800 mentions about improved lighting and urban design, as necessary components for improved safety.
- Many respondents indicated a desire for accessible educational programs, recreation activities, and adult learning activities over a variety of subjects, including internet safety, arts and culture, physical fitness, truth and reconciliation, diversity and cultural awareness, and more.
- There is significant frustration about the lack of coordinated services across Greater Victoria, whether it is social support services, policing, housing services, or otherwise.

In Summary

The feedback gathered from the community provides a strong foundation for developing a community safety and wellbeing plan that reflects the needs, concerns, and aspirations of Victoria's residents.

To be effective and create experiential change for Victorians, the plan must be alive, able to adapt, adjust, and respond to the City's changing realities. This cannot be a one-time shiny object or event that suggests the work is done, the job is finished.

The City faces substantial challenges, but is equipped with robust collective wisdom and engagement from its community. By leveraging these insights and embracing innovative, integrated approaches, throughout the ongoing activation of its CSWB Plan, Victoria can become a model for urban resilience, inclusivity, and wellbeing.

” PARTICIPANT QUOTE

I would like to see an increased level of care and attention to the members of our community who are unhoused, struggling with mental health and addictions. There also needs to be better supports in place for residents who are impacted by unpredictable and often frightening behaviours from some of the unhoused population. All levels of government have a responsibility in creating and supporting a healthier and safer community for all of its members.

As cities evolve, taking on more and more unconventional responsibilities, the emerging narrative demands that other orders of government recognize the unique capacity of a local government to know its residents best, and to know how best to serve those residents.

With that respectful acknowledgment, perhaps the most productive route to increased community safety and wellbeing is for other orders of government to redistribute government finances and taxation, and share resources more equitably in relation to responsibilities. In simple terms, give cities the money and get out of the way.

Recommendations

Throughout the dialogues, among all participants and at various tables in the community, a recurring theme emerged: **the City should make some “big, bold moves,” and advocate to others for equally bold actions.**

Ultimately, while many of the issues that contribute to the community’s concerns fall outside the role of local government, changing the way people experience Victoria, whether it is through housing, healthcare, policing or otherwise, is directly within the mandate of local government, which is best positioned to take action quickly, and bring people to the table.

While the City has not assigned timeframes for the actions recommended for community partners, it encourages them to carefully consider their organizational capacity, budgets, and the needs of Victoria residents.

The following recommendations arise from the community engagement, analysis and debate, though not necessarily from one entity, individual, or organization. They are organized by sector and the entity with the authority to act.

These sectors include:

- | | |
|---|---|
|  | 1. Housing |
|  | 2. Healthcare |
|  | 3. Service Delivery |
|  | 4. Downtown |
|  | 5. Residents |
|  | 6. Commerce |
|  | 7. Policing and Justice |
|  | 8. City’s Community Safety and Wellbeing Services |

SECTOR 1: Housing

OBJECTIVES:

- Support renters and increase the housing supply in the city.
- Improve the system of supportive housing and address gaps in the delivery of sheltering.
- Address current homelessness concerns while preventing people from becoming homeless.

Housing ACTIONS		LEAD	TIMELINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
1.1	Facilitate coordination of local housing and social services in the city. (compliments 1.2 and 1.9)	City of Victoria	2025	housing; improved services
1.2	Continue to improve and simplify City housing support policies to make building all types of housing easier.	City of Victoria	Ongoing	housing; improved services
1.3	Hold education workshops on issues related to housing, like tenancy rights, eviction prevention, roommate conflict management, housing options, and financial literacy.	City of Victoria	2025	housing; improved services; inequity; belonging, social cohesion, and isolation
1.4	Fund anti-hoarding supports and programming through the Victoria Fire Department, to help ensure the safety and security of supportive housing buildings, in addition to supporting local residents in need.	City of Victoria	2026	housing; improved services; safety and safety perception
1.5	Create easy access to information and direct links to social service providers, where available.	City of Victoria	2025	housing; improved services
1.6	Expand the existing parks relocater coordination.	City of Victoria	2025	housing; improved services
1.7	Explore the feasibility of establishing designated sheltering spaces and small-scale tiny homes to support people transitioning from homelessness.	City of Victoria	2026	housing; improved services
1.8	Work with other partners to create a regional approach to housing. This work should be supported by the provincial government and the Capital Region District. (compliments 1.1 and 1.9)	City of Victoria Capital Regional District	2026-2027	housing; improved services

Housing ACTIONS		LEAD	TIMELINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
1.9	Create and implement a Regional Homelessness Strategy. This strategy must include financial resources and a commitment from the CRD, and its membership, to work proactively and cooperatively to address homelessness in the region.	Capital Regional District and Other Local Governments		housing; improved services
1.10	Regularly contribute funds through the budget process for the Greater Victoria Rent Bank.	Capital Regional District and Other Local Governments		housing
1.11	Allocate resources directly to municipalities and let them do the job directly, if municipalities are expected to continue to respond to local homelessness and its impacts. (compliments 1.1 and 1.8)	Provincial Government		housing; improved services
1.12	Improve BC Housing's operations by direct and regular communication with local governments, more staff resources, and better integration with local non-profits.	Provincial Government		housing; improved services
1.13	Redefine what affordable housing means and create affordability indexes that are unique to each community, so these indexes can be used to assess disability incomes, BC Housing rent supports, etc.	Provincial Government		housing
1.14	Expand complex care housing, while creating reforms, including an expansion of purpose-built complex care, peer support, and wrap-around services. The Province must report on unmet needs of complex care, including vacancies.	Provincial Government		housing; improved services; healthcare; mental healthcare
1.15	Reform the supportive housing system, including creating minimum staffing requirements, mandatory staff training, expanding on-site services like emotional regulation and restorative justice, and increasing funding for repairs and upgrades for service providers, while supporting positive flow into other forms of housing.	Provincial Government		housing; improved services
1.16	Develop emergency shelter standards for all municipalities that set expectations for low-barrier shelter spaces that allow pets, partners, and property, as long as BC Housing exists.	Provincial Government		housing; improved services
1.17	Establish a specific mandate for BC Housing, with a business case and resources for sheltering, so that their organization, goals, and staff are reoriented towards shelter, and sheltering provision, not just working solely towards building shelter, or securing spaces for shelter.	Provincial Government		housing; improved services

Housing ACTIONS		LEAD	TIMELINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
1.18	Create a new organization with the mandate, business plan, and expertise to manage sheltering specifically, not just housing broadly, and both enact and enforce standards for emergency shelters.	Provincial Government		housing; improved services
1.19	Provide financial resources and amend future contracts to support social service providers operating supportive housing facilities to maintain a 150-metre radius outside their property, to ensure community integration of their sites.	Provincial Government		housing; improved services; safety and safety perception
1.20	Utilize quick-build, temporary housing while purpose-built housing is under construction to provide immediate housing options.	Provincial Government		housing
1.21	Expand access to dry and substance-free supportive housing.	Provincial Government		housing
1.22	Improve safety in supportive housing facilities by working with police and supportive housing providers to amend the <i>Residential Tenancy Act</i> to permit: lawful interventions in cases where tenants may have weapons; transferring residents deemed unsafe; and staff entering units to support healthy and safe living conditions.	Provincial Government		housing; safety and safety perception
1.23	Create a national Encampment and Homelessness Response Plan, taking guidance from the At Home/Chez Soi study, and provide resources to local governments to action the plan's work.	Federal Government		housing
1.24	Expand the National Housing Corporation objectives to include shelter-rate housing.	Federal Government		housing

SECTOR 2: Healthcare

OBJECTIVES:

- Address issues like crime, safety, and the local impacts of homelessness by investing in, and supporting, up-stream interventions.
- Increase access to general health and mental health services.
- Improve health outcomes for people, families, seniors, and newcomers in Victoria.

Healthcare ACTIONS		LEAD	TIMELINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
2.1	Support the delivery of mental health first aid training, in addition to mental health workshops like substance use and addiction workshops, grief counselling, and more.	City of Victoria	2026	mental healthcare; improved services
2.2	Work with non-profit, other governments and/or health professionals to pilot health and social services to test evidence-based programs with the goal to transfer provincial support and authority, supporting system changes.	City of Victoria	2027	healthcare; mental health care; improved services
2.3	Analyze the impact from Bylaw Services and Victoria Police enforcement on vulnerable persons' health.	City of Victoria	2026	healthcare; mental healthcare; safety and safety perception
2.4	Coordinate information about services provided by provincial ministries responsible for health, safety and social services in Victoria.	City of Victoria	2025	healthcare; safety and safety perception; improved services
2.5	Explore municipal models for attracting and retaining allied health professionals and primary health clinic models.	City of Victoria	2027	healthcare; improved services
2.6	Through Island Health, set public goals on access to substance use services, including wait times for treatment and supportive recovery services, and regularly report on progress.	Provincial Government		mental healthcare
2.7	Increase the scope of comprehensive, publicly-funded mental healthcare under the Medical Service Plan.	Provincial Government		mental healthcare; improved services

Healthcare ACTIONS		LEAD	TIMELINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
2.8	Continue to incentivize primary care providers to attach patients and provide comprehensive longitudinal care. The Province must report on progress made on the proportion of Victorians attached to a primary care provider and wait times on the Health Connect Registry.	Provincial Government		healthcare; improved services
2.9	Through Island Health, improve access to episodic primary care by moving to a mix of same-day and pre-booked appointments through the six Urgent & Primary Care Centres in Greater Victoria.	Provincial Government		healthcare; improved services
2.10	Incentivize primary medical care practice in Victoria, by taking actions including, but not limited to, a) paying for the space to operate family practice centres, b) offering scholarships, rewards, or subsidies for individuals from Victoria pursuing medical careers and returning to Victoria to practise, and c) expanding options for multi-use and wrap-around clinic spaces that include nurse practitioners, mental health practitioners, physiotherapists, and more.	Provincial Government		healthcare; improved services
2.11	Continue to simplify the process of accreditation for internationally-trained physicians and health professionals.	Provincial Government		healthcare
2.12	Work with school districts to provide in-house health, mental health, and trauma-supportive care for students, so youth care becomes more integrated within the school system, and reinforce the need to provide upstream care and mitigation for vulnerable students.	Provincial Government		healthcare; mental healthcare; improved services
2.13	Through Island Health, fund stabilization services and spaces that do not discharge people onto the street, so these services become part of a continuum of care that includes case management, wrap-around services, and access to further supports including detox beds and housing services, and people are not forced to move because they are 'too well' to stay, and discharged into homelessness.	Provincial Government		mental healthcare; improved services
2.14	Resource community-led crisis care teams (like CRCL) to be 24 hours in every community with more than 50,000 residents, and integrated within the 911 calling system, to reduce the burden on police, and alleviate tensions between police and vulnerable individuals.	Provincial Government		mental healthcare; safety and safety perception; improved services
2.15	Resource and support the creation of Crisis Response Stabilization Centres to offer a single-door entry into mental health and substance use care that accepts walk-ins and people transported by ambulance, fire and police.	Provincial Government		mental healthcare; improved services

Healthcare ACTIONS		LEAD	TIMELINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
2.16	Assign a dedicated forensic psychiatric health professional to every provincial court to support immediate psychiatric assessments and recommend treatment and/or diversion opportunities.	Provincial Government		mental health care; safety and safety perception; improved services
2.17	Create voluntary care facilities with comprehensive resources to support persons with complex mental health issues and substance use.	Provincial Government		mental healthcare; improved services
2.18	Reform the outdated and antiquated <i>Mental Health Act</i> , and create a <i>Youth Mental Health Act</i> , minimizing the harm associated with police-enforced apprehension, and recognizing addiction as a unique mental health disorder.	Provincial Government		mental healthcare; safety and safety perception
2.19	Legislate diversion laws that enable accused persons with severe mental health disorders to be diverted from the criminal to the forensic systems (akin to the United Kingdom's 'restricted patient' laws).	Federal Government		mental healthcare; safety and safety perception

SECTOR 3: Service Delivery

OBJECTIVES:

- Target discriminatory behaviour in all forms, like racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, xenophobia, ableism, and ageism.
- Improve, streamline, coordinate, and support social service delivery to better support vulnerable individuals.
- Make social supports more accessible to people who need them.

Service Delivery ACTIONS		LEAD	TIMELINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
3.1	Support multi-sectoral planning and response tables of decision makers committed to action, with the authority to act or direct action, to better identify, direct, and improve coordination and alignment of services and actions.	City of Victoria	2025	improved services
3.2	Convene and resource a community-led conversation about the evolution of community social service delivery, including what resources are needed to address ‘upstream’ preventive measures and ‘downstream’ responsive programs.	City of Victoria	2026	improved services
3.3	Serve as a resource to provide information about available social services for vulnerable housed and unhoused individuals so that information is easier to understand and reach.	City of Victoria	Ongoing	improved services; housing
3.4	Serve as a convener to help bring service providers together, to assist and facilitate better coordination.	City of Victoria	Ongoing	improved services
3.5	Review the City of Victoria’s EDI operations to sustain and improve its anti-oppressive approach and proactively ensure that its programming reflects the need to use equity in its work, in addition to reaffirming a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in its daily work.	City of Victoria	2025	improved services; inequity
3.6	Working with partners, develop and maintain asset maps as part of the usual City mapping to identify services and programs to address priority risks, and work with other local governments to do the same. Asset mapping includes identification, data collection, and mapping the locations of community assets, including local institutions, organizations, services and resident associations that serve as positive community resources in the area.	City of Victoria	2025-Ongoing	improved services
3.7	Pilot storage systems to assist people who are experiencing homelessness to achieve compliance with the Parks Regulation Bylaw.	City of Victoria	2026	improved services; housing

Service Delivery ACTIONS		LEAD	TIMELINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
3.8	Address homelessness and service provision for vulnerable individuals in their own communities, meaning communicating, cooperating, and collaborating with the City of Victoria and other local governments to improve housing, health, and addictions outcomes and social supports within each community in the CRD.	Capital Regional District and Other Local Governments		housing; improved services
3.9	Increase administration cost funding in grants and contracts to at least 15%, from the current 10% for non-profits and service providers.	Provincial Government		improved services
3.10	Create a publicly-funded, inter-community transportation system, to ensure that individuals can return to their home communities after receiving services in regional centres.	Provincial Government		improved services; transportation and mobility
3.11	Invest in services in communities across Vancouver Island and British Columbia, including housing support services, mental health and addictions services, primary care services and more, to ensure that people have access to the services they need in their own community, preventing the need for people to travel to larger centres like Victoria, adding stress on local resources.	Provincial Government		improved services
3.12	Work with local service providers to review and strengthen culturally-relevant services, including delivery in multiple languages.	Provincial Government		improved services

SECTOR 4: Downtown

OBJECTIVES:

- Support downtown businesses in responding to the financial impacts of street disorder while encouraging economic activity.
- Ensure downtown is safe and welcoming for residents and visitors.
- Encourage people to visit, and spend time in, downtown.

Downtown ACTIONS		LEAD	TIMELINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
4.1	Encourage people to spend time downtown, particularly in the evenings through the OUR DWTN program and by supporting patios, late-night businesses, and a safe and abundant transportation network.	City of Victoria	Ongoing	belonging, social cohesion, and isolation; transportation and mobility; safety and safety perception
4.2	Increase funding to the Downtown Victoria Business Association to support local businesses with graffiti removal and facade repairs.	City of Victoria	2026	safety and safety perception
4.3	Increase funding to maintain and improve the cleanliness and appearance of public spaces, including street and boulevard washing, garbage collection, and garden maintenance.	City of Victoria	2026	safety and safety perception
4.4	Invest in late-night support teams, to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of individuals enjoying late-night events or businesses between 9 p.m. and 2 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and with 24-hour “foot teams” trained and resourced to support people to be downtown safely.	City of Victoria	2026	safety and safety perception; improved services; belonging, social cohesion, and isolation
4.5	Pilot a ‘corporate block watch’ program.	City of Victoria	2025	safety and safety perception
4.6	Invest in downtown public realm amenities, like benches, trees, lighting, murals, micro-plazas, Indigenous storytelling plaques, historical markers, wayfinding, light projections, etc.	City of Victoria	2025 - Ongoing	safety and safety perception; belonging, social cohesion, and isolation
4.7	Support the establishment of expanded peer support services to assist in unwanted person or loitering calls, with a focus on early morning support.	City of Victoria	2026-2027	safety and safety perception; improved services
4.8	Direct the provincial public service to return to in-office employment to generate positive daily impact of persons working and investing in downtown.	Provincial Government		safety and safety perception; belonging, social cohesion, and isolation

SECTOR 5: Residents

OBJECTIVES:

- Address social isolation and community cohesion by improving and facilitating community get-togethers, events, and communication.
- Continue to support livability and wellbeing by investing in public amenities and resources.
- Ensure high-quality public spaces and parks are climate adapted and meet the needs of residents.

Residents ACTIONS		LEAD	TIMELINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
5.1	Provide resources and grants for businesses, societies and organizations, and residents to build emergency operations plans.	City of Victoria	Ongoing	safety and safety perception; improved services
5.2	Establish support for events and placemaking in neighbourhoods, not just the downtown core, with a focus on events that are suitable for wide audiences. This support includes financial and planning resources for neighbourhood associations, community groups, and grass-roots event planning.	City of Victoria	Ongoing	improved services; belonging, social cohesion, and isolation
5.3	Promote city-wide events by publishing the CityVibe updates twice a year.	City of Victoria	2025	improved services; belonging, social cohesion, and isolation
5.4	Continue to invest in active and alternative infrastructure and public transit, while simplifying key intersections and improving traffic calming measures on residential streets.	City of Victoria	Ongoing	transportation and mobility
5.5	Create a Parks and Tree Cover Strategy that prioritizes access to the natural environment in all neighbourhoods, and for all ages and abilities through acquisition and upgrades to existing parks, while noting the importance of shade and heat mitigation.	City of Victoria	Ongoing	belonging, social cohesion, and isolation
5.6	Focus on creating quality public spaces through intentional design and develop incentives for private investment of public spaces, and the creation of privately-owned public spaces, including a class analysis to ensure that spaces are welcoming to all.	City of Victoria	2027	inequity; belonging, social cohesion, and isolation
5.7	Conduct a diversity, equity, and inclusion review of all external City services, programs, and grants offered.	City of Victoria	2026	inequity; improved services
5.8	Pilot a universal basic income program, and if unsuccessful in that endeavour, support the City in administering a pilot of a limited-income supplement program.	Provincial Government		inequity; food security and poverty

SECTOR 6: Commerce

OBJECTIVES:

- Support economic development and make it easier to do business in the city.
- Support employers and employees by ensuring commercial viability.
- Ensure that residents and visitors have access to world-class small businesses, shops, experiences, and services.

Commerce ACTIONS		LEAD	TIMELINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
6.1	Audit City business and permit approval processes to address redundancies and improve the experience of people seeking, or applying for, permits.	City of Victoria	2025	improved services
6.2	Invest more resources into dedicated beautification, maintenance and “clean-up” programs across the city.	City of Victoria	2026	safety and safety perception
6.3	Equalize the differential rates between business, commercial and residential property taxes.	City of Victoria	2025-2030	improved services
6.4	Incentivize businesses to build housing for their employees, or on their properties, by offering tax breaks and financial incentives.	City of Victoria	2027	improved services; housing
6.5	Create a funding stream and support hub for small businesses to access emergency financial supports, to respond to volatile economic conditions and support resiliency.	Provincial Government		improved services

SECTOR 7: Policing and Justice

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure residents and visitors feel safe across the city.
- Support the relationship between the City and Victoria Police.
- Ensure that the police force is nimble, and able to be adaptive to the changing needs of the city and its residents.

Policing and Justice ACTIONS		LEAD	TIMELINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
7.1	Continue the work to separate the existing single-blended service into individual services for the City of Victoria and the Township of Esquimalt, until regional policing becomes a clear action by the Province.	City of Victoria	Ongoing	safety and safety perception; improved services
For the existing police service and its future City of Victoria component/configuration:				
7.2	Acknowledge the role of, and work in collaboration with, its Police Board.	City of Victoria	2025	safety and safety perception
7.3	Confirm minimum automatic annual police budget increases matching annual inflation rates.	City of Victoria	2026	safety and safety perception; improved services
7.4	Support the Victoria Police Department Five-Year Personnel Plan to ensure intentional growth in the number of sworn officers and professional civilian staff.	City of Victoria	2026	safety and safety perception; improved services
Recommend these police operational priorities:				
7.5	An increased emphasis on community resource officers and foot/bike patrols in the downtown core.	VicPD		safety and safety perception; improved services
7.6	A hiring focus that prioritizes new recruits from Indigenous and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) communities.	VicPD		safety and safety perception; improved services; inequity
7.7	Establish one or more dedicated staff position(s) to operate as primary liaison(s) between Victoria Police and the City's Community Safety and Wellbeing services.	VicPD		improved services
7.8	Create a job description for the liaison position(s) identifying roles, desired expectations and experiential relevance.	VicPD		improved services
7.9	Create a quick-report tool to report hate crimes, while reporting on hate crimes statistics to the public, annually.	VicPD		safety and safety perception; inequity

Policing and Justice ACTIONS		LEAD	TIMELINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
7.10	Maintain police leadership participation in whatever oversight mechanism emerges from the CSWB Community Leaders Panel.	VicPD		improved services
7.11	Increase new recruit and professional development police training capacity throughout the province.	Provincial Government		safety and safety perception
7.12	Develop a specific path toward regional police services in Greater Victoria urban municipalities with capacity to align regional and local needs.	Provincial Government		safety and safety perception; improved services
7.13	Implement the remaining recommendations in the 2022 <i>Transforming Policing and Community Safety in British Columbia</i> report from the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act, which can be directly linked to and aligned with the City's CSWB plan.	Provincial Government		safety and safety perception; improved services
7.14	Reform the provincial police budget regulations that recognize municipal governments' 'ability to pay.'	Provincial Government		safety and safety perception
7.15	Move to adopt bail reform policies, which would see repeat and violent offenders held within institutions for longer, while increasing focus and emphasis on rehabilitation and community-based intervention programs to address over-incarceration of visible minorities, Indigenous people, and people of colour, while emphasizing upstream interventions and prevention.	Federal Government		safety and safety perception

SECTOR 8: City's Community Safety and Wellbeing Services

OBJECTIVES:

- Support up-stream interventions to address the social determinants of health and crime.
- Reorient City service delivery to ensure it reflects and upholds the principles of community safety and wellbeing.
- Create better outcomes and experiences for individuals who interact with City community safety staff.
- Create practical improvements to the community safety and wellbeing experiences of Victorians

City's Community Safety and Wellbeing Services ACTIONS		LEAD	TIME-LINE	SAFETY & WELLBEING FACTORS
8.1	Reorganize City staff and services to operationalize community safety and wellbeing services, with leadership reporting directly to the City Manager. This service should expand or create operations relating to prevention, intervention, outreach, communication, and response.	City of Victoria	2025-2026	safety and safety perception; improved services
8.2	Require that every project, plan, and report produced by the City incorporates a community safety and wellbeing impact analysis.	City of Victoria	2025	improved services

Expect City community safety and wellbeing leadership to create:

8.3	a. a plan to manage current and potential encampments in the city, in collaboration with other orders of government and their ministries and/or services, community and service organizations, persons with lived and living experience, and any other allies deemed by City leadership to be helpful in such efforts.	City of Victoria	2025-2026	safety and safety perception; improved services
	b. ongoing mechanisms through which community safety and wellbeing City leadership can engage regularly with persons with lived experience of poverty and homelessness, and businesses and residents.			
	c. ‘wellness indicators,’ including observations of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, by which the City can measure the impact of its community safety and wellbeing actions and services.			
	d. a Vulnerable People Strategy.			
	e. a Comprehensive Risk Assessment (CRA), in conjunction with the Victoria Fire Department. The CRA will identify neighbourhoods, communities, and properties which are vulnerable to increased risk for a variety of hazards. The CRA will inform targeted, strategic approaches for reducing the identified risk through education, engineered solutions, and resource allocation.			
8.4	Engage the Community Leaders Panel as an observational monitoring group to provide advice and oversight, and to critique the plan as it is operationalized.	City of Victoria	2025	safety and safety perception

Actions at a Glance | City of Victoria

SECTOR	City of Victoria's ACTIONS	
Housing	1.1	Facilitate coordination of local housing and social services in the city.
	1.2	Continue to improve and simplify City housing support policies to make building all types of housing easier.
	1.3	Hold education workshops on issues related to housing, like tenancy rights, eviction prevention, roommate conflict management, housing options, and financial literacy.
	1.4	Fund anti-hoarding supports and programming through the Victoria Fire Department, to help ensure the safety and security of supportive housing buildings, in addition to supporting local residents in need.
	1.5	Create easy access to information and direct links to social service providers, where available.
	1.6	Expand the existing parks relocater coordination.
	1.7	Explore the feasibility of establishing designated sheltering spaces and small-scale tiny homes to support people transitioning from homelessness.
	1.8	Work with other partners to create a regional approach to housing. This work should be supported by the provincial government and the Capital Region District.
Healthcare	2.1	Support the delivery of mental health first aid training, in addition to mental health workshops like substance use and addiction workshops, grief counselling, and more.
	2.2	Work with non-profit, other governments and/or health professionals to pilot health and social services to test evidence-based programs with the goal to transfer to provincial support and authority, supporting system changes.
	2.3	Analyze the impact from Bylaw Services and Victoria Police enforcement on vulnerable persons' health.
	2.4	Coordinate information about services provided by provincial ministries responsible for health, safety and social services in Victoria.
	2.5	Explore municipal models for attracting and retaining allied health professionals and primary health clinic models.
Service Delivery	3.1	Support multi-sectoral planning and response tables of decision makers committed to action, with the authority to act or direct action, to better identify, direct, and improve coordination and alignment of services and actions.
	3.2	Convene and resource a community-led conversation about the evolution of community social service delivery, including what resources are needed to address 'upstream' preventive measures and 'downstream' responsive programs.
	3.3	Serve as a resource to provide information about available social services for vulnerable housed and unhoused individuals so that information is easier to understand and reach.
	3.4	Serve as a convener to help bring service providers together, to assist and facilitate better coordination.
	3.5	Review the City of Victoria's EDI operations to sustain and improve its anti-oppressive approach and proactively ensure that its programming reflects the need to use equity in its work, in addition to reaffirming a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in its daily work.

SECTOR City of Victoria's ACTIONS		
Service Delivery	3.6	Working with partners, develop and maintain asset maps as part of the usual City mapping to identify services and programs to address priority risks, and work with other local governments to do the same. Asset mapping includes identification, data collection, and mapping the locations of community assets, including local institutions, organizations, services and resident associations that serve as positive community resources in the area.
	3.7	Pilot storage systems to assist people who are experiencing homelessness to achieve compliance with the Parks Regulation Bylaw.
Downtown	4.1	Encourage people to spend time downtown, particularly in the evenings through the OUR DWTN program and by supporting patios, late-night businesses, and a safe and abundant transportation network.
	4.2	Increase funding to the Downtown Victoria Business Association to support local businesses with graffiti removal and facade repairs.
	4.3	Increase funding to maintain and improve the cleanliness and appearance of public spaces, including street and boulevard washing, garbage collection, and garden maintenance.
	4.4	Invest in late-night support teams, to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of individuals enjoying late-night events or businesses between 9 p.m. and 2 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and with 24-hour "foot teams" trained and resourced to support people to be downtown safely.
	4.5	Pilot a 'corporate block watch' program.
	4.6	Invest in downtown public realm amenities, like benches, trees, lighting, murals, micro-plazas, Indigenous storytelling plaques, historical markers, wayfinding, light projections, etc.
	4.7	Support the establishment of expanded peer support services to assist in unwanted person or loitering calls, with a focus on early morning support.
Residents	5.1	Provide resources and grants for businesses, societies and organizations, and residents to build emergency operations plans.
	5.2	Establish support for events and placemaking in neighbourhoods, not just the downtown core, with a focus on events that are suitable for wide audiences. This support includes financial and planning resources for neighbourhood associations, community groups, and grass-roots event planning.
	5.3	Promote city-wide events by publishing the CityVibe updates twice a year.
	5.4	Continue to invest in active and alternative infrastructure and public transit, while simplifying key intersections and improving traffic calming measures on residential streets.
	5.5	Create a Parks and Tree Cover Strategy that prioritizes access to the natural environment in all neighbourhoods, and for all ages and abilities through acquisition and upgrades to existing parks, while noting the importance of shade and heat mitigation.
	5.6	Focus on creating quality public spaces through intentional design and develop incentives for private investment of public spaces, and the creation of privately-owned public spaces, including to read a class analysis to ensure that spaces are welcoming to all.
	5.7	Conduct a diversity, equity, and inclusion review of all external City services, programs, and grants offered.

SECTOR	City of Victoria's ACTIONS	
Commerce	6.1	Audit City business and permit approval processes to address redundancies and improve the experience of people seeking, or applying for, permits.
	6.2	Invest more resources into dedicated beautification, maintenance and “clean-up” programs across the city.
	6.3	Equalize the differential rates between business, commercial and residential property taxes.
	6.4	Incentivize businesses to build housing for their employees, or on their properties, by offering tax breaks and financial incentives.
Policing and Justice	7.1	Continue the work to separate the existing single-blended service into individual services for the City of Victoria and the Township of Esquimalt, until regional policing becomes a clear action by the Province.
	For the existing police service and its future City of Victoria component/configuration:	
	7.2	Acknowledge the role of, and work in collaboration with, its Police Board.
	7.3	Confirm minimum automatic annual police budget increases matching annual inflation rates.
	7.4	Support the Victoria Police Department Five-Year Personnel Plan to ensure intentional growth in the number of sworn officers and professional civilian staff.
City's Community Safety and Wellbeing Services	8.1	Reorganize City staff and services to operationalize community safety and wellbeing services, with leadership reporting directly to the City Manager. This service should expand or create operations relating to prevention, intervention, outreach, communication, and response.
	8.2	Require that every project, plan, and report produced by the City incorporates a community safety and wellbeing impact analysis.
	Expect City community safety and wellbeing leadership to create:	
	8.3	a. a plan to manage current and potential encampments in the city, in collaboration with other orders of government and their ministries and/or services, community and service organizations, persons with lived and living experience, and any other allies deemed by City leadership to be helpful in such efforts.
		b. ongoing mechanisms through which community safety and wellbeing City leadership can engage regularly with persons with lived experience of poverty and homelessness, the city's businesses, and residents.
		c. ‘wellness indicators,’ including observations of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, by which the City can measure the impact of its community safety and wellbeing actions and services.
		d. a Vulnerable People Strategy.
		e. a Comprehensive Risk Assessment (CRA), in conjunction with the Victoria Fire Department. The CRA will identify neighbourhoods, communities, and properties which are vulnerable to increased risk for a variety of hazards. The CRA will inform targeted, strategic approaches for reducing the identified risk through education, engineered solutions, and resource allocation.
	8.4	Engage the Community Leaders Panel as an observational monitoring group to provide advice and oversight, and to critique the plan as it is operationalized.

Recommended Actions at a Glance | VicPD

SECTOR	VicPD's RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	
Policing and Justice	Recommend these police operational priorities:	
	7.5	An increased emphasis on community resource officers and foot/bike patrols in the downtown core.
	7.6	A hiring focus that prioritizes new recruits from Indigenous and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) communities.
	7.7	Establish one or more dedicated staff position(s) to operate as primary liaison(s) between Victoria Police and the City's Community Safety and Wellbeing services.
	7.8	Create a job description for the liaison position(s) identifying roles, desired expectations and experiential relevance.
	7.9	Create a quick-report tool to report hate crimes, while reporting on hate crimes statistics to the public, annually.
	7.10	Maintain police leadership participation in whatever oversight mechanism emerges from the CSWB Community Leaders Panel.

Recommended Actions at a Glance | Capital Regional District and Other Local Governments

SECTOR	Capital Regional District and Other Locals Governments' RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	
Housing	1.9	Create and implement a Regional Homelessness Strategy. This strategy must include financial resources and a commitment from the CRD, and its membership, to work proactively and cooperatively to address homelessness in the region
	1.10	Regularly contribute funds through the budget process for the Greater Victoria Rent Bank.
Service Delivery	3.8	Address homelessness and service provision for vulnerable individuals in their own communities, meaning communicating, cooperating, and collaborating with the City of Victoria and other local governments to improve housing, health, and addictions outcomes and social supports within each community in the CRD.

Recommended Actions at a Glance | Provincial Government

SECTOR	Provincial Government's RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	
Housing	1.11	Allocate resources directly to municipalities and let them do the job directly, if municipalities are expected to continue to respond to local homelessness and its impacts.
	1.12	Improve BC Housing's operations by direct and regular communication with local governments, more staff resources, and better integration with local non-profits.
	1.13	Redefine what affordable housing means and create affordability indexes that are unique to each community, so these indexes can be used to assess disability incomes, BC Housing rent supports, etc.
	1.14	Expand complex care housing, while creating reforms, including an expansion of purpose-built complex care, peer support, and wrap-around services. The Province must report on unmet needs of complex care, including vacancies.
	1.15	Reform the supportive housing system, including creating minimum staffing requirements, mandatory staff training, expanding on-site services like emotional regulation and restorative justice, and increasing funding for repairs and upgrades for service providers, while supporting positive flow into other forms of housing.
	1.16	Develop emergency shelter standards for all municipalities that set expectations for low-barrier shelter spaces that allow pets, partners, and property, as long as BC Housing exists.
	1.17	Establish a specific mandate for BC Housing, with a business case and resources for sheltering, so that their organization, goals, and staff are reoriented towards shelter, and sheltering provision, not just working solely towards building shelter, or securing spaces for shelter.
	1.18	Create a new organization with the mandate, business plan, and expertise to manage sheltering specifically, not just housing broadly, and both enact and enforce standards for emergency shelters.
	1.19	Provide financial resources and amend future contracts to support social service providers operating supportive housing facilities to maintain a 150-metre radius outside their property, to ensure community integration of their sites.
	1.20	Utilize quick-build, temporary housing while purpose-built housing is under construction to provide immediate housing options.
	1.21	Expand access to dry and substance-free supportive housing.
	1.22	Improve safety in supportive housing facilities by working with police and supportive housing providers to amend the <i>Residential Tenancy Act</i> to permit: lawful interventions in cases where tenants may have weapons; transferring residents deemed unsafe; and staff entering units to support healthy and safe living conditions.
Healthcare	2.6	Through Island Health, set public goals on access to substance use services, including wait times for treatment and supportive recovery services, and regularly report on progress
	2.7	Increase the scope of comprehensive, publicly-funded mental healthcare under the Medical Service Plan.
	2.8	Continue to incentivize primary care providers to attach patients and provide comprehensive longitudinal care. The Province must report on progress made on the proportion of Victorians attached to a primary care provider and wait times on the Health Connect Registry.

SECTOR	Provincial Government's RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	
Healthcare	2.9	Through Island Health, improve access to episodic primary care by moving to a mix of same-day and pre-booked appointments through the six Urgent & Primary Care Centres in Greater Victoria.
	2.10	Incentivize primary medical care practice in Victoria, by taking actions including, but not limited to, a) paying for the space to operate family practice centres, b) offering scholarships, rewards, or subsidies for individuals from Victoria pursuing medical careers and returning to Victoria to practise, and c) expanding options for multi-use and wrap-around clinic spaces that include nurse practitioners, mental health practitioners, physiotherapists, and more.
	2.11	Continue to simplify the process of accreditation for internationally-trained physicians and health professionals.
	2.12	Work with school districts to provide in-house health, mental health, and trauma-supportive care for students, so youth care becomes more integrated within the school system, and reinforce the need to provide upstream care and mitigation for vulnerable students.
	2.13	Through Island Health, fund stabilization services and spaces that do not discharge people onto the street, so these services become part of a continuum of care that includes case management, wrap-around services, and access to further supports including detox beds and housing services, and people are not forced to move because they are 'too well' to stay, and discharged into homelessness.
	2.14	Resource community-led crisis care teams (like CRCL) to be 24 hours in every community with more than 50,000 residents, and integrated within the 911 calling system, to reduce the burden on police, and alleviate tensions between police and vulnerable individuals.
	2.15	Resource and support the creation of Crisis Response Stabilization Centres to offer a single-door entry into mental health and substance use care that accepts walk-ins and people transported by ambulance, fire and police.
	2.16	Assign a dedicated forensic psychiatric health professional to every provincial court to support immediate psychiatric assessments and recommend treatment and/or diversion opportunities.
	2.17	Create voluntary care facilities with comprehensive resources to support persons with complex mental health and substance use.
	2.18	Reform the outdated and antiquated <i>Mental Health Act</i> , and create a <i>Youth Mental Health Act</i> , minimizing the harm associated with police-enforced apprehension, and recognizing addiction as a unique mental health disorder.
Service Delivery	3.9	Increase administration cost funding in grants and contracts to at least 15%, from the current 10% for non-profits and service providers.
	3.10	Create a publicly-funded, inter-community transportation system, to ensure that individuals can return to their home communities after receiving services in regional centres.
	3.11	Invest in services in communities across Vancouver Island and British Columbia, including housing support services, mental health and addictions services, primary care services and more, to ensure that people have access to the services they need in their own community, preventing the need for people to travel to larger centres like Victoria, adding stress on local resources.

SECTOR	Provincial Government's RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	
Service Delivery	3.12	Work with local service providers to review and strengthen culturally-relevant services, including delivery in multiple languages.
Downtown	4.8	Direct the provincial public service to return to in-office employment to generate positive daily impact of persons working and investing in downtown.
Residents	5.8	Pilot a universal basic income program, and if unsuccessful in that endeavour, support the City in administering a pilot of a limited-income supplement program.
Commerce	6.5	Create a funding stream and support hub for small businesses to access emergency financial supports, to respond to volatile economic conditions and support resiliency.
Policing and Justice	7.11	Increase new recruit and professional development police training capacity throughout the province.
	7.12	Develop a specific path toward regional police services in Greater Victoria urban municipalities with capacity to align regional and local needs.
	7.13	Implement the remaining recommendations in the 2022 <i>Transforming Policing and Community Safety in British Columbia</i> report from the Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act, which can be directly linked to and aligned with the City's CSWB plan.
	7.14	Reform the provincial police budget regulations that recognize municipal governments' 'ability to pay.'

Recommended Actions at a Glance | Federal Government

SECTOR	Federal Government's RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	
Housing	1.23	Create a national Encampment and Homelessness Response Plan, taking guidance from the At Home/Chez Soi study, and provide resources to local governments to action the plan's work.
	1.24	Expand the National Housing Corporation objectives to include shelter-rate housing.
Healthcare	2.19	Legislate diversion laws that enable accused persons with severe mental health disorders to be diverted from the criminal to the forensic systems (akin to the United Kingdom's 'restricted patient' laws).
Policing and Justice	7.15	Move to adopt bail reform policies, which would see repeat and violent offenders held within institutions for longer, while increasing focus and emphasis on rehabilitation and community-based intervention programs to address over-incarceration of visible minorities, Indigenous people, and people of colour, while emphasizing upstream interventions and prevention.

Short-Term Actions (2025 | Ongoing)

Housing	1.1	Facilitate coordination of local housing and social services in the city.
	1.2	Continue to improve and simplify City housing support policies to make building all types of housing easier.
	1.3	Hold education workshops on issues related to housing, like tenancy rights, eviction prevention, roommate conflict management, housing options, and financial literacy.
	1.5	Create easy access to information and direct links to social service providers, where available.
	1.6	Work with other partners to create a regional approach to housing. This work should be supported by the provincial government and the Capital Region District.
Healthcare	2.4	Coordinate information about services provided by provincial ministries responsible for health, safety and social services in Victoria.
Service Delivery	3.1	Support multi-sectoral planning and response tables of decision makers committed to action, with the authority to act or direct action, to better identify, direct, and improve coordination and alignment of services and actions.
	3.3	Serve as a resource to provide information about available social services for vulnerable housed and unhoused individuals so that information is easier to understand and reach.
	3.4	Serve as a convener to help bring service providers together, to assist and facilitate better coordination.
	3.5	Review the City of Victoria's EDI operations to sustain and improve its anti-oppressive approach and proactively ensure that its programming reflects the need to use equity in its work, in addition to reaffirming a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in its daily work.
	3.6	Working with partners, develop and maintain asset maps as part of the usual City mapping to identify services and programs to address priority risks, and work with other local governments to do the same. Asset mapping includes identification, data collection, and mapping the locations of community assets, including local institutions, organizations, services and resident associations that serve as positive community resources in the area.
Downtown	4.1	Encourage people to spend time downtown, particularly in the evenings through the OUR DWTN program and by supporting patios, late-night businesses, and a safe and abundant transportation network.
	4.5	Pilot a 'corporate block watch' program.
	4.6	Invest in downtown public realm amenities, like benches, trees, lighting, murals, micro-plazas, Indigenous storytelling plaques, historical markers, wayfinding, light projections, etc.

Short-Term Actions Continued (2025 | Ongoing)

Residents	5.1	Provide resources and grants for businesses, societies and organizations, and residents to build emergency operations plans.
	5.2	Establish support for events and placemaking in neighbourhoods, not just the downtown core, with a focus on events that are suitable for wide audiences. This support includes financial and planning resources for neighbourhood associations, community groups, and grass-roots event planning.
	5.3	Promote city-wide events by publishing the CityVibe updates twice a year.
	5.4	Continue to invest in active and alternative infrastructure and public transit, while simplifying key intersections and improving traffic calming measures on residential streets.
	5.5	Create a Parks and Tree Cover Strategy that prioritizes access to the natural environment in all neighbourhoods, and for all ages and abilities through acquisition and upgrades to existing parks, while noting the importance of shade and heat mitigation.
Commerce	6.1	Audit City business and permit approval processes to address redundancies and improve the experience of people seeking, or applying for, permits.
Policing and Justice	7.1	Continue the work to separate the existing single-blended service into individual services for the City of Victoria and the Township of Esquimalt, until regional policing becomes a clear action by the Province.
	For the existing police service and its future City of Victoria component/configuration:	
	7.2	Acknowledge the role of, and work in collaboration with, its Police Board.
City's Community Safety and Wellbeing Services	8.1	Reorganize City staff and services to operationalize community safety and wellbeing services, with leadership reporting directly to the City Manager. This service should expand or create operations relating to prevention, intervention, outreach, communication, and response.
	8.2	Require that every project, plan, and report produced by the City incorporates a community safety and wellbeing impact analysis.
	Expect City community safety and wellbeing leadership to create:	
	8.3a	a plan to manage current and potential encampments in the city, in collaboration with other orders of government and their ministries and/or services, community and service organizations, persons with lived and living experience, and any other allies deemed by City leadership to be helpful in such efforts.
	8.4	Engage the Community Leaders Panel as an observational monitoring group to provide advice and oversight, and to critique the plan as it is operationalized.

Medium-Term Actions (2026 - 2027)

Housing	1.4	Fund anti-hoarding supports and programming through the Victoria Fire Department, to help ensure the safety and security of supportive housing buildings, in addition to supporting local residents in need.
	1.7	Explore the feasibility of establishing designated sheltering spaces and small-scale tiny homes to support people transitioning from homelessness.
	1.8	Work with other partners to create a regional approach to housing. This work should be supported by the provincial government and the Capital Region District.
Healthcare	2.1	Support the delivery of mental health first aid training, in addition to mental health workshops like substance use and addiction workshops, grief counselling, and more.
	2.2	Work with non-profit, other governments and/or health professionals to pilot health and social services to test evidence-based programs with the goal to transfer to provincial support and authority, supporting system changes.
	2.3	Analyze the impact from Bylaw Services and Victoria Police enforcement on vulnerable persons' health.
	2.5	Explore municipal models for attracting and retaining allied health professionals and primary health clinic models.
Service Delivery	3.2	Convene and resource a community-led conversation about the evolution of community social service delivery, including what resources are needed to address 'upstream' preventive measures and 'downstream' responsive programs.
	3.7	Pilot storage systems to assist people who are experiencing homelessness to achieve compliance with the Parks Regulation Bylaw.
Downtown	4.2	Increase funding to the Downtown Victoria Business Association to support local businesses with graffiti removal and facade repairs.
	4.3	Increase funding to maintain and improve the cleanliness and appearance of public spaces, including street and boulevard washing, garbage collection, and garden maintenance.
	4.4	Invest in late-night support teams, to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of individuals enjoying late-night events or businesses between 9 p.m. and 2 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and with 24-hour "foot teams" trained and resourced to support people to be downtown safely.
	4.7	Support the establishment of expanded peer support services to assist in unwanted person or loitering calls, with a focus on early morning support.
Residents	5.6	Focus on creating quality public spaces through intentional design and develop incentives for private investment of public spaces, and the creation of privately-owned public spaces, including to read a class analysis to ensure that spaces are welcoming to all.
	5.7	Conduct a diversity, equity, and inclusion review of all external City services, programs, and grants offered.
Commerce	6.2	Invest more resources into dedicated beautification, maintenance and "clean-up" programs across the city.
	6.4	Incentivize businesses to build housing for their employees, or on their properties, by offering tax breaks and financial incentives.

Medium-Term Actions Continued (2026 - 2027)

Policing and Justice	For the existing police service and its future City of Victoria component/configuration:	
	7.3	Confirm minimum automatic annual police budget increases matching annual inflation rates.
	7.4	Support the Victoria Police Department Five-Year Personnel Plan to ensure intentional growth in the number of sworn officers and professional civilian staff.
City's Community Safety and Wellbeing Services	Expect City community safety and wellbeing leadership to create:	
	8.3b	ongoing mechanisms through which community safety and wellbeing City leadership can engage regularly with persons with lived experience of poverty and homelessness, the city's businesses, and residents.
	8.3c	'wellness indicators,' including observations of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, by which the City can measure the impact of its community safety and wellbeing actions and services.
	8.3d	a Vulnerable People Strategy.
	8.3e	a Comprehensive Risk Assessment (CRA), in conjunction with the Victoria Fire Department. The CRA will identify neighbourhoods, communities, and properties which are vulnerable to increased risk for a variety of hazards. The CRA will inform targeted, strategic approaches for reducing the identified risk through education, engineered solutions, and resource allocation.

Long Term Action (2025 - 2030)

Commerce	6.3	Equalize the differential rates between business, commercial and residential property taxes.
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Conclusion

Now that the background, research, and road map are established, Victoria City Council has an extraordinary opportunity to act. Each of this plan's carefully and thoughtfully crafted recommendations is reflective of the community's needs, observations, perceptions, experiences, and realities.

The recommendations suggest that the Community Leaders Panel continues to serve as an external advisory panel of this work, to observe progress and support community oversight in the forthcoming actions.

Some recommended actions are crafted with a sense of urgency – meaning they can and should be actioned immediately, while others reflect ongoing work in the city, with some requiring analysis by City staff.

A fundamental principle of this plan is its ability to remain alive, to adapt, adjust, and respond to changing realities and circumstances facing our city and residents.

To achieve the recommendations in this plan, Council will be asked to:

- **Endorse this plan in principle**
- **Direct the Mayor to engage City partners and other orders of government on the plan's components and recommendations that require regional, provincial, and/or federal support, and**
- **Direct City staff to:**
 - 1. Assess and identify the plan's:**
 - a. budget implications
 - b. required policy changes, and
 - c. key performance indicators
 - 2. Present City Council with the analyses in advance of the 2026 Draft Budget deliberations.**
- **Direct the City Manager to implement preliminary actions as needed to support the CSWB Plan, within the existing 2025 budget.**

This will enable immediate advocacy, while providing staff time to complete a fulsome analysis for Council's consideration.

Community safety and wellbeing work is an exercise in compassion, strength, resilience, and determination. Collectively, the community has the tools necessary to bring people together and solve some of the most pressing challenges we face.

Together, we can use these recommendations as a road map to bring to life our dreams for a better Victoria.

Appendices



Scan here.

