



## CITY COUNCIL DECLARES DOWNTOWN IN CRISIS

### *City to organize a town hall meeting for community discussion*

At the June 14, 2021, regular council meeting, Council discussed the challenges around homelessness, mental health, and addictions in the downtown area, declaring the City of Terrace downtown is in crisis and that more collaboration and conversation is needed to effect change.

Councillor Lynne Christiansen put a motion on the floor to direct staff to organize a virtual town hall meeting to address the downtown crisis of safety and livability. Council also discussed inviting Northern Health, Crown Counsel, provincial government ministers, and others to take part. The motion passed unanimously, and staff are currently planning the logistics of this event.

“We are all aware of the crisis in the downtown. Because we are a compassionate community, we as a municipality have offered a lot to disadvantaged people without the support that we need from other agencies or levels of government,” said Christiansen. “I’m not sure if the community is aware of how much time, effort, and money we put into this. We need to be able to communicate with our citizens, and our citizens need to have an opportunity to communicate with us and understand where our barriers are, and to look at what we can do together.”

Since the [last public forum](#) held in September 2019 on the topic of homelessness, the City has taken on a number of initiatives to address public concerns. In 2020, the City created the Terrace Situation Table, which is made up of agencies including City of Terrace bylaw officers, RCMP members, Northern Health representatives, and others. The group meets weekly to identify vulnerable people and collaboratively and rapidly connect them to services before they experience a negative or traumatic event like overdose, victimization, or eviction. The City is also in the process of hiring a Social Development Program Coordinator to provide coordination of policy development and implementation of activities to address priorities associated with social equity, community health and safety, and well-being in the City of Terrace. Also in the works for 2021 are a Safe Streets Bylaw, a permanent downtown public washroom, and a downtown security patrol, among other actions.

At Monday’s meeting, all councillors weighed in on the topic. “The reality is that Council cannot solve these problems in the downtown alone—if that were the case, we would have done so a long time ago,” said Councillor James Cordeiro. “I think it’s important for the public and the business community to have an opportunity to voice their concerns.”

Mayor Carol Leclerc said after the meeting that Council has been discussing these topics repeatedly in council meetings, committee of the whole meetings, and with the public through various channels for a long time. “We have been working on these issues for years now without seeing the results that we and the community are looking for. Calling this a ‘crisis’ is not us being dramatic—it is the unfortunate truth

that other agencies and levels of government beyond our community borders need to take notice of. They need to hear from the community about how the challenges of homelessness, addictions, and mental health in the downtown core are affecting both individuals and businesses. Council is eager to have this discussion to hear these concerns from the public, help everyone understand where we're at and what we've done so far, and communicate where we need more resources, collaboration, and support."

Depending on COVID-19 restrictions, staff will be organizing a town hall event sometime this summer that may be virtual-only or contain an in-person component.

"Although provincial guidelines are still in flux, we hope to be able to time this event so that it can include an in-person session," said Kris Boland, Chief Administrative Officer for the City. "In addition, the City recently signed a contract with Bang the Table for a new online engagement platform called EngagementHQ that will allow us to connect with community members online in a more constructive, collaborative, and effective way than is currently possible through our website or social media alone. We hope this public forum can be one of the first engagement opportunities we launch through EngagementHQ. This topic is crucial to the future of Terrace, and we want to connect with the community about it in as many ways as we can."

More information on the town hall meeting, EngagementHQ, the Safe Streets Bylaw, and other topics mentioned in this news release will be provided when available.

**Media Contact:**

Kate Lautens  
Communications Advisor  
City of Terrace  
[klautens@terrace.ca](mailto:klautens@terrace.ca)  
250-638-4712

**###**