
Community Support (Officer) Program – Alternate Office Location

Recommendation

That the report of the General Manager, dated August 14, 2017, be forwarded to City Council for information.

Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the possibility of relocating the head office of the Community Support Program (sometimes referred to as the Community Support Officer Program) to a space in the Lighthouse Supported Living Inc. building.

Report Highlights

1. The office space for the Community Support Program (CSP) must support the program and staff needs.
2. An office space in the Lighthouse Supported Living Inc. (Lighthouse) building is not considered an option for the CSP at this time.

Strategic Goal

This report supports the City of Saskatoon's (City) Strategic Goal of Quality of Life by ensuring Saskatoon is a safe, welcoming, and well-managed people place. This goal is supported through the CSP by reducing and preventing crime in the city, increasing public perceptions of safety, and identifying health and safety as top priorities.

Under the Strategic Goal of Quality of Life, the recommendation also specifically supports the long-term strategy to reduce and prevent crime and provide protective services in our Downtown core and neighbourhoods.

Background

The CSP was approved for permanent status at the September 28, 2015 City Council meeting. Additional resolutions were added during the City Council meeting, of which the following will be specifically addressed:

- “10. That the matter of the possibility of locating the Community Support Program head office in the Lighthouse be referred to the Administration to review with the Business Improvement Districts and the Lighthouse.”

Report

Community Support Program Office Location Must Support the Program and Staff Needs

The CSP performs highly visible foot patrols in the core Business Improvement District (BID) areas, and works in conjunction with the area's businesses, community support organizations, and the Saskatoon Police Service in the delivery of its services.

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Through the Street Activity Steering Committee, the program also provides information to the Safe Streets Commission to assist in identifying emerging trends and issues, as well as potential long-term solutions to issues arising on the street. The main duties of the Community Support Officers (CSO) are to:

- a) assist community members in need by accessing relevant supports;
- b) respond to requests regarding panhandling, loitering, public drunkenness, and other related activities;
- c) enforce relevant municipal bylaws;
- d) establish and facilitate partnerships with local businesses, residents, community support organizations; and the Saskatoon Police Service; and
- e) provide support in the prevention of criminal activities.

Considerable thought and effort went into establishing an office location for the CSP when it was set up in 2012. A secure central office location was needed to offer respite to the staff and to support the CSO's work, particularly by foot and by vehicle, and to access all three BIDs in the program. It was critical to the program that it be seen as independent of any one organization. Although the program has grown and equipment has been added, the current CSP office space within the 23rd Street Bus Mall is still functioning adequately for the program.

Office Space in the Lighthouse Building is Not a Viable Option for the Community Support Program

The Executive Director of the Downtown BID and the Manager of the CSP researched the opportunity to relocate the CSP to an office in the Lighthouse building. This research included:

- a) meeting with the Executive Director of the Lighthouse;
- b) reviewing potential space within the west side of the Lighthouse building in an area currently not in use; and
- c) meeting with the CSOs to determine current and future program needs and the viability of the Lighthouse site.

Although the Lighthouse building has a space larger than the current office space, the proposed space is in need of significant repairs. The space requires significant renovations, including upgraded wiring, internet connections, office furniture, drywall, and paint. The plumbing for water and washrooms has not been in use for many years and will need substantial upgrades. There was also concern that the CSOs may be perceived as part of the Lighthouse programming.

The current office is in a neutral location. The office space is in good condition and meets the needs of the team. The Administration is recommending that the Lighthouse building space not be considered for office space at this time as it does not meet requirements of the CSP. However, the subject of office space can be revisited as part of the comprehensive program review slated for the end of 2018.

Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement

The Street Activity Steering Committee, which includes the Downtown, Broadway, and Riversdale BID Executive Directors, was consulted and has reviewed this report.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no options, policy, financial, environmental, privacy, or CPTED implications or considerations.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

Further follow-up/discussion on office space needs or location will be included in a comprehensive review of the CSP slated for December 2018.

Public Notice

Public notice, pursuant to Section 3 of Public Notice Policy No. C01-021, is not required.

Report Approval

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Reviewed by: Lesley Anderson, Director of Planning and Development
Approved by: Randy Grauer, General Manager, Community Services Department

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