

## Memorandum

To: Lisa Spitale,  
Chief Administrative Officer

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File: 239600

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Subject: 2024 Budget – Creating Synergies and Community Partnerships with a new  
Community Services Department

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to provide Council with the rationale that creates a new Community Services Department. This department will have the mandate to drive implementation of the *People-Centred Economy* Strategic Priority and the *Community Belonging and Connecting* Strategic Priority.

### OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

This memo outlines a restructuring plan that establishes a new Community Services Department from seven divisions under the Office of the CAO and a division from the Parks and Recreation Department. Amalgamating these functions under a new department will better align community-facing functions, improve services to the community and create internal efficiencies.

The new Council Strategic Priorities Plan is an opportunity to evaluate the City's organizational structure to ensure appropriate alignment between departments, divisions, and functions in order to effectively and efficiently advance the strategic priorities and enhance service delivery.

The 2023-2026 Council Strategic Priorities Plan, like the 2018-2022 Strategic Priorities Plan, identifies synergies between the City's economic development and culture divisions, and provides a clear mandate for closer collaboration through the *People-Centred Economy* strategic priority. The Strategic Plan also highlights the importance of *Community Belonging and Connecting*, and the need to sufficiently resource work over



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the next three years to contribute positively to related objectives and outcomes of this strategic priority.

The Community Services Department will align several community-focused functions and divisions within the City. The Department mandate will focus on community services to support the needs and interests of the growing New Westminster community. Economic Development, Conference Services, Community Arts & Theatre Services, Museums & Heritage Services, Arts & Technology, Filming, Special Events, Public Engagement, and Communications will all be integrated under one department.

A new Community Partnership division will be created as a component of the Economic Development Office to support the *Community Belonging and Connecting* Strategic Priority. This division will look to leverage community partnerships and promote opportunities for unique events and activations throughout the community, including in the City's commercial areas. The Community Partnership division would consist of City Grants, Special Events, Filming and elements of the Downtown Livability Plan. The inclusion of Special Events and Filming will foster greater planning and coordination across both economic development and culture divisions.

### Department Objectives

1. Maximize effectiveness in implementation of strategic priorities and resulting work plans, and new initiatives as they arise.
2. Improve cross-divisional collaboration between the corporation's Culture and Economic Development functions.
3. Provide effective leadership, oversight, and information flow across the aforementioned divisions.
4. Better connect community-facing divisions through the addition of a new function that integrates Community Partnerships, Livability Initiatives, City Grants, Filming, and Special Events.
5. Ensure better connection between functions based out of Anvil Centre and those of the Corporation, to Council priorities and community needs.
6. Strengthen community connections through information-sharing (Communications) and inviting community voices into decision-making (Public Engagement).
7. Promote Community Partnerships by organizing and overseeing a variety of community relations and outreach programs, events and initiatives with residents, businesses, associations, and other community groups.
8. Provide corporate leadership and subject matter expertise to the *Community Belonging and Connecting* strategic priority area.



## **ALIGNMENT WITH THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

Establishing a new Community Services Department aligns with both the objectives and outcomes of the *People-Centred Economy* and *Community and Belonging* strategic priorities. It also highlights the integrated approach to economic development articulated during the strategic planning process and the role that arts and culture, film, special events, community development and partnerships, and non-profits all play in the community, and the local economy.

### **Community Belonging and Connecting**

The Strategic Plan identifies the *Community Belonging and Connecting* priority as a central and unifying theme anchoring the remaining four Strategic Priorities. As an extension of the City's vision to be a vibrant, compassionate, resilient city where everyone can thrive, *Community Belonging and Connecting* emphasizes further a community where everyone belongs and has the opportunity to connect and contribute.

Key objectives for this priority area include people feeling a sense of belonging through a shared sense of connection and identification with others; people experiencing shared connection points, created through an environment where their contributions matter and are welcomed; individuals, groups, and organizations becoming interconnected, linked, and working towards common goals; and community connectivity creating a strong sense of social cohesion enabling individuals and groups to support each other.

Appreciating that the *Community Belonging and Connecting* priority represents a new area of focus and the resulting outcomes are largely aspirational in nature, the City's focus is on effecting belonging and connectedness both individually and collectively; supporting greater awareness and appreciation for the diversity of cultures across our city; empowering and supporting groups and organizations to more fully reflect the evolving diversity of the community; and equipping City staff, services, and processes to more fully reflect and support a range of diverse community needs.

The establishment of the new Community Services Department is aligned with both the objectives and aspirational outcomes of the *Community Belonging and Connecting* Strategic Priority. The structure of the new department, particularly through the Community Partnerships function, addresses a previously identified need to provide leadership capacity and serve as a corporate and community resource for the Community Belonging and Connecting priority area. This approach has supplanted some of need to seek previously envisioned additional staffing resources to advance this priority.



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## People-Centred Economy

The City works to create conditions that give people access to business opportunities and employment, and an environment that supports growth and innovation. Through the *People-Centred Economy* strategic focus area, we work to ensure a local, nimble, resilient economy that serves our local community.

Key objectives for this strategic priority area include providing support for business in ways that shorten processing and permitting times, attracting and retaining businesses that improve the community's overall economic well-being and provide sustainable employment opportunities, including for Indigenous and equity-seeking communities, and strengthening of relationships with local business partners and regional economic organizations, including those in the arts, culture, and tourism sectors that make New Westminster a richer place.

*People-Centred Economy* outcomes flow directly from this priority area's objectives and include implementation of the recently-approved Retail Strategy to foster active commercial areas, aligning the City's organizational structure to acknowledge and amplify the important role arts, culture, special events and filming play in economic development, and, using the relevant data to inform decision-making, modernize business-related policies and procedures to better respond to the needs of the business community today, while preparing the community for the economic opportunities of tomorrow.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The new Community Services Department will be primarily comprised of existing positions within several divisions of the organization. A Director position is required to provide overall department leadership. The Director position will be funded by the reallocation of funding from a previous vacant Director position (in Legislative Services) with a top up to reflect the current pay band. No existing positions will be eliminated as a result of bringing together these divisions under one new departmental structure.

As part of the implementation of the Strategic Plan, departments had already identified where additional resources would be needed. The Parks and Recreation Department identified the following to advance the Community Belonging and Connecting Priority:

- **Assistant Program Coordinator (Special Events)**, 1.0 FTE, \$67.5K plus benefits (funding phased in over 2024 and 2025). This role, which has been funded on a temporary basis in 2022 and 2023, has proven essential in supporting and sustaining community events and activations to the levels recently enjoyed. The position has, and is proposed to continue to, provide an emphasis on activities and events organized with and through community groups and local businesses that promote community livability in the Downtown



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throughout the year and, among other responsibilities, to specifically facilitate community activations at Westminster Pier Park.

- **Events & Activations** – \$14K. Specific to auxiliary staffing and supplies for weekly Westminster Pier Park activations as part of the Downtown Livability response.

The Economic Development Office identified the following to advance the People-Centred Economy Strategic Priority:

- **Business Growth Coordinator:** 1.0 TFT, \$66K plus benefits (funding phased in over 2024 and 2025). This role would provide support to implementation of strategic plans and priorities (e.g. 2023-2026 Council Strategic Priorities Plan, Retail Strategy action items, etc.), including development and actioning of processes and programs targeting retention and expansion of existing local business.
- **Business Licensing Clerk (Clerk 3):** 0.6 (20hrs) TPT, 28K plus benefits. This role, which has been funded on an auxiliary basis in 2022 and 2023, supports the Business Licensing front counter and application processing.