

Attachment 1
*2025 Budget Departmental Memo -
Community Services*

Memorandum

To: Lisa Spitale
Chief Administrative Officer

Date: November 25, 2024

From: Blair Fryer, Acting Director,
Community Services

File:

Subject: Community Services Department: 2024 Highlights and 2025 Corporate Priorities

The Community Services Department was newly established in 2024 and is still in the process of forming, having brought together several functions from the Office of the CAO and Parks and Recreation into a new department. The Community Services Department includes the following City divisions (listed in alphabetical order):

- Arts and Theatre Services
- Communications
- Conference Services (Anvil Centre)
- Economic Development (including Business Licencing and Community Partnerships)
- Heritage Services (Museum and Archives, etc.)
- New Media Gallery
- Public Engagement

Community Services is also the lead department for two of Council's Strategic Priorities:

- *Community Belonging and Connecting*
- *People Centred Economy*

The new department is currently being led by an acting director and acting deputy director while recruitment is underway for the permanent director position. Several other divisions are also being led by acting positions during this departmental start-up phase. The department will continue to staff up in 2025, pending several key budget requests to complete the new department development plan.

2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

A significant accomplishment in 2024 has been the formation and launch of the new Community Services Department, including the incubation of a new Community Partnerships division that is temporarily housed within Economic Development.

Community Partnerships includes the City's grants program, volunteer services, special events, and revenue-generating filming function. Bringing these functions together is providing new opportunities for collaboration and strengthening relationships, both internally and within the community – a key component towards progress on the *Community Belonging and Connecting* Council priority.

Below are some highlights of the 2024 accomplishments, listed by Community Services divisions. Please note, this is not an exhaustive list.

Arts and Theatre Services

- Completion of several public art projects across the City: *Miyíwts -Water's Edge* by Indigenous artist James Harry at təməsewtxw Aquatic and Community Center; *Ensemble* by Filipino-Canadian artist Karen Zalamea installed on the glass façade of Anvil Centre; *Guardians of the Pump* by artist Hanna Benihoud at Boundary Pump Station; and, *River's Legacy* by artist Elinor Atkins on the back of the Scotiabank building on Columbia Street.
- Temporary public art interventions based on the Irving House Artist in Residence program where two artists, Holly Schmidt and Janet Wang, were invited to explore and experiment in response to the site and surroundings of Irving House, one of BC's oldest post-contact historic homes.
- Working in partnership with Arts New West, hosted the New Westminster Cultural Crawl at Anvil Centre, including exhibitions, artist vendors, hands-on workshops and public art tours.
- Expanded opportunities for community artists to exhibit their work with the addition of exhibition spaces at City Hall and Anvil Centre.
- Hosted a wide and varied range of local, regional, and national performing arts events and welcomed new presenting partners throughout the year, including Coastal Dance, Arts Club Theatre, Royal Canadian Theatre Company, the Vancouver Chamber Music Society, and Piva Modern Italian.

Communications

- Produced internal and external communications assets to support the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) pilot and mass deployment.
- Developed several key publications and campaigns in support of City initiatives including: ReGenerate Ideas Challenge, Pet Ownership Awareness Month, Solid Waste Collection Brochure, and others.
- Developed communications assets and promotion campaigns for several events including Earth Day, Remembrance Day, Summer Showcase, and more.
- Revamped departmental sites on the City's internal communication platform – The Hub – and led training for new departmental content authors to ensure internal communications are current, topical and informative for City staff.

- Provided critical communication support and developed material and assets for the City's Crises Response Pilot Project.

Conference Services

- Increased the number of community event bookings at Anvil Centre, including Hong Kong Cultural Days and New West Pride Festival.
- Added 16 new clients and 20 events to the conference services roster.
- Maintained existing client roster with many repeated events and clients over the course of the year.
- Completed an Outside Food Policy in response to community feedback on the need for more affordable catering options for community events.

Economic Development (includes Economic Development Office, Business Licensing and Community Partnerships functions)

- Completed a multi-year business license bylaw modernization project.
- Expanded the Inter Municipal Business License program to include home-care services.
- Continued progress on e-Apply project to modernize and move online business license application function to respond to business community need.
- Developed and launched a street busking and street activation pilot project in commercial districts throughout the City, with positive response from community.
- Continued work on implementation of the Retail Strategy (approved in 2023).
- Increased business licenses and associated revenues over previous year.
- Successfully delivered over 15 City events and programs and provided support to more than 50 community-led events, while providing support and guidance to 30 new potential community events.
- Restored and increased filming revenue to pre-pandemic levels.
- Completed Phase 1 of the Community Grants Program refinements with Phases 2 and 3 pending staff enhancement request approval.

Heritage Services

- Successfully completed "Artifacts, Archives & People", a two-year pilot heritage school program in collaboration with Fraser River Middle School. The program is now available for any New West school, offering students an opportunity to connect with our community story through the Museum archives and exhibitions.
- Created two exhibits centred on New Westminster's Filipino community, increasing awareness and appreciation for the important role Filipinos play in our community while fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness to the City's diverse history.



NEW WESTMINSTER

- Working in collaboration with New Westminster Public Library, consolidated the City's heritage material at the archives, completing a process that began in 2018.

New Media Gallery

- Guided 80-90 visitors a day through four curated exhibitions, working with 13 artists from nine countries.
- Conducted 39 guided school tours, 14 school workshops and 32 university tours, serving close to 2,300 participants.
- Hosted 77 Lab and outreach programs in addition to 22 Open Lab drop-in sessions.

Public Engagement

- Successfully launched the new Community Advisory Assembly pilot project as a potential new model for committee-style engagement. To date, coordinated an Assembly kick-off event, nine Assembly meetings, one Council presentation and one Council update report.
- Led planning and implementation of several high-profile community engagement processes, including the Anvil Centre 10-year Review, and Themes for a New City Logo processes. In addition, supported several project teams with consultant-led engagements such as People, Parks and Play for the new Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan.
- Added capacity to deliver staff-led engagement by adding one new FTE coordinator to the division.
- Delivered three staff training workshops to 40+ staff members across several City departments, and started hosting Public Engagement "office hours" biweekly for staff.

2025 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Looking ahead to 2025, the Community Services Department is leading two key projects that have been identified across the organization as high urgency, high impact and that require high levels of participation from other departments.

New Website

Last updated in 2015, the City of New Westminster website is overdue for re-vamp and update to modern standards, including accessibility to ease access to community information for all residents, and cyber security to safeguard the organization. In addition, as the new logo work nears completion, the City's main tool for communication needs to reflect the updated branding.



The new website project will involve representation from all departments, and will include community outreach to better understand information needs and potential new features that should be explored for implementation in a new site. As the community's primary way to access information, the City website **MUST** be reflective of current standards, as indicated by the number of neighbouring municipalities that have already completed this work.

Community Advisory Assembly Evaluation and Future

The Community Advisory Assembly pilot, introducing a new model for committee-style engagement, is wrapping up in January, with a formal evaluation process and planning for the future to take place in 2025.

Since launching the pilot group in early 2024, the innovative project has held monthly meetings and provided valuable community feedback on several high profile City initiatives. From the start, the group has been characterized by the establishment of strong relationships across demographic differences, fostering a feeling of greater community belonging and connecting amongst Assembly members. The potential that this model holds for the City in being able to do deeper engagement, earlier in our project and policy planning cycles, is significant. However, to achieve this potential we will require greater involvement from department project teams, and planning for Assembly activities to occur earlier in the project process.

The evaluation process for the Community Advisory Assembly will include Council, staff, Assembly Steering Committee members, facilitators, and Assembly members working towards a decision to continue or sunset this project. Should a decision be made to not continue, it will still be a corporate priority to determine how to involve community members and their feedback in the planning of City projects and initiatives through committee-style engagement.