

## Attachment 13

*Budget 2025 Themed Memo -  
Community Belonging and  
Connectedness and Local Economy*



## Memorandum

To: Lisa Spitale  
Chief Administrative Officer

Date: November 25, 2024

From: Blair Fryer, Acting Director,  
Community Services

File:

**Subject:** 2025 Budget – Advancing the *Community Belonging and Connecting*, and *People-Centered Economy* Council Priorities

### **PURPOSE**

To update Council on how the *Community Belonging and Connecting* and *People-Centered Economy* strategic priority areas will be advanced in 2025.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Strategic Priorities Plan was approved by Council on May 8, 2023, and includes five strategic priorities. The *People-Centered Economy* priority has been led by the Economic Development division, which at the time was structured within the Office of the CAO Department. The *Community Belonging and Connecting* priority was identified as work happening across several different departments, so initially there was no clear lead division.

As part of the City's Budget 2024 process, a new department was proposed: the Community Services Department, with a mandate to serve the community and drive the implementation of the *People-Centred Economy* Strategic Priority and the *Community Belonging and Connecting* Strategic Priority. The new department is still in the process of forming, with some leadership positions and other roles currently in acting positions. The recruitment for the Director position is in progress.

Staff continue to advance the work of *Community Belonging and Connecting* and *People-Centered Economy* while continuing the process of setting up the new Community Services Department.



## **PRIORITIES FOR 2025**

Building on the most recent Strategic Priorities Plan Status Update report, provided to Council on September 23, 2024, staff are continuing to advance key projects and initiatives that support the *Community Belonging and Connecting* and *People-Centered Economy* priorities. Several significant achievements have been realized in 2024, such as the Business Licence Bylaw Update, the Anvil Centre 10-year Review process and resulting action plan, the Phase 1 refinements to the City's grants program, and the launch and implementation of the Community Advisory Assembly pilot project.

Notably, the Community Advisory Assembly began its term discussing Council's *Community Belonging and Connecting* priority and presented a set of recommendations to Council in May 2024. A high-level feasibility review of these recommendations is currently underway by staff.

However, staff capacity continues to be a challenge. The primary reason for ongoing staff capacity challenges is the continued formation of the new Community Services Department, as restructuring has led to several staff in acting positions. This is part of the planned restructuring process with the next phase of implementation expected in 2025, pending approval of operating budget requests.

In order to address the capacity challenges and advance the Strategic Priorities, enhancement requests in the 2025 Budget are required to re-establish the Economic Development team and solidify the new Community Partnerships division.

### ***Advancing People-Centered Economy:***

Several key work plan items that directly advance *People-Centered Economy* are anticipated in 2025, pending the Budget 2025 approval and endorsement. These initiatives seek to create the conditions that give people business opportunities and sustainable employment, and facilitate an environment that supports growth and innovation. Re-establishing a full staff complement within the Economic Development division is needed to ensure the City is well-positioned to collaborate and build strong positive relationships with local business-focused partners and regional organizations that promote and grow our local economy, and build a sense of belonging within our business community. Updating the Economic Development Plan will provide the community with an opportunity to articulate a refreshed vision for our modern economy and growing population, while completing e-Apply will improve process through customer service excellence. Implementation of the Retail Strategy will support active



and welcoming commercial areas, and includes actions such as updating retail design guidelines in response to best practices and changes in business and commercial area conditions, completing a zoning analysis for at-grade uses in core areas of business districts, re-establishing the Street Entertainment Program to support active and vibrant commercial areas, policy research and recommendations for affordable and community-building business, maker, and arts/cultural incubation opportunities through development scenarios, and developing a Commercial Tenant Assistance policy and related support materials for businesses during redevelopment scenarios.

**Summary of Proposed Operating Enhancements to Advance *People-Centered Economy*:**

- *Manager, Economic Development* – due to the previous structure of Economic Development under Office of the CAO, there was no full-time Manager of Economic Development. This function was previously performed on a 0.5 FTE basis by the senior manager. With the Economic Development division now also overseeing the City’s Business Licensing function, establishing a dedicated Manager of Economic Development is required which will also provide oversight to the revenue generating activities of business licensing. An acting manager is currently in place, but this position needs to be officially established and funded.
- *FIFA 2026 World Cup Coordinator (Program Coordinator)* – this temporary part-time position is required to deliver on Council-requested community activations for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, scheduled for June 2026.

**Advancing *Community Belonging and Connecting*:**

Staff continue to work inter-departmentally and with the community to shape the scope, focus areas and evaluation measures of the *Community Belonging and Connecting* Strategic Priority. We are still learning and understanding what role the City plays in delivering and facilitating belonging in New West, and what resources are available. We also continue to understand and analyze the work taking place across the organization in many different facets – both directly and indirectly – that support residents feeling connected. Strengthening the Community Partnerships team is a key component to advance the work of special events and the City’s grants and volunteering programs in 2025, with both a division manager and a dedicated grants staff person identified as needs for this emerging function. In particular the City’s grants program is at risk, including the Council-supported Phases 2 and 3 of grant program updates, without



dedicated staff resources in 2025. Implementation of the Anvil Centre 10-year Review recommendations is also underway with several key components planned in 2025, such as ground-level activations and development of a comprehensive communications strategy. The Community Advisory Assembly is also contributing to *Community Belonging and Connecting*, and pending decision-making about the future of this initiative, potential funding is needed should it continue.

**Summary of Proposed Operating Enhancements to Advance *Community Belonging and Connecting*:**

- *Manager, Community Partnerships* – the Community Partnerships function was newly established within the Economic Development division as part of establishing the new Community Services Department. The previous Economic Development Coordinator was reassigned to supervise the Community Partnerships teams, including special events, volunteer services, the City’s grants program, and revenue-generating filming office. Through the incubation of this new team, it has become clear that the annual budget, number of staff, and work plan of Community Partnerships warrants its own division, led by a manager. This forming division has seen significant achievements in 2024 and shows incredible promise as a key community-serving division as it continues to solidify and grow. The proposed manager position is an important component in leading this division to advance the *Community Belonging and Connecting* priority.
- *Grants Coordinator* – prior to formation of the new Community Services Department, administration of the City’s grants program was spread across multiple departments with no dedicated lead staff member. When the new Community Partnerships function was created within Community Services, staff identified that the grants program required significant updates and dedicated staff support to ensure efficient and effective coordination of the approximately \$975,000 granted by the City annually to community organizations. This position is required to deliver an efficient and effective grants program, and implement the Council-approved Phase 2 and Phase 3 grants program identified in the 2024 grants review.
- *Potential Facilitation and Event Costs for Future of Community Advisory Assembly* – pending results of the evaluation of the pilot year, and decision-making



## **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN**

Formation of the new Community Services Department is directly related to advancing Council's Strategic Priorities of *Community Belonging and Connecting*, and *People-Centered Economy*. Continuing to solidify this new department by completing implementation of the restructuring plan also directly connects to the Strategic Priorities Plan Foundation of Organizational Effectiveness.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The following resources are required to meaningfully advance *Community Belonging and Connecting* and *People Centered Economy* in 2025 and complete set-up of the new Community Services Department. Resources required also connect with Council-directed projects, such as Retail Strategy implementation, Anvil Centre 10-year Review implementation, and updates to the City Grants Program.

### **People-Centered Economy**

1. Manager, Economic Development – 1 FTE (\$136K per year plus benefits)

### **Community Belonging and Connecting**

2. Manager, Community Partnerships – 1 FTE (\$120K per year plus benefits)
3. Potential facilitation and event costs for future Community Advisory Assembly, pending evaluation of the pilot term and decision-making on the future of the Assembly initiative (\$50K estimate, placeholder funding)

### **Council Referred Enhancements**

4. FIFA 2026 World Cup Coordinator (Program Coordinator) – 0.5 TPT (\$45K per year plus benefits)
5. Grants Coordinator – 1 FTE (\$74K per year plus benefits)

Staff will be asking Council to consider these funding requests in the 2025 Operating Budget deliberation process.