Corporation of the City of NEW WESTMINSTER

R E P O R T
Community Services Department

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council

Date: February 24, 2025

From: Blair Fryer, Director, Community Services

File:

Item #: 2025-57

Subject: Report Back on Community Advisory Assembly Recommendations on Belonging and Connecting

RECOMMENDATION

THAT staff be directed to continue work that is already underway that relates to furthering the Community Advisory Assembly's recommendations on belonging and connecting, and to explore potential additional actions where feasible.

PURPOSE

This report and attachments respond to Council's direction to staff in May 2024 to report back on the Community Advisory Assembly's 12 recommendations to the City on advancing Community Belonging and Connecting, including information on related City work plans and high-level feasibility.

BACKGROUND

The Community Advisory Assembly is a diverse group of New Westminster community members appointed to talk about City policies and projects that impact residents, and provide advice and recommendations back to staff and Council. The Assembly was a pilot project, and the pilot term ran from January 2024-January 2025. Evaluation of the pilot project is currently underway.

The first topic to come forward to the Assembly for discussion was Community Belonging and Connecting, which is one of Council's current strategic priorities. The Assembly was asked to discuss what community belonging and connecting meant to

them, and recommend actions that could increase community belonging and connecting in New Westminster.

Over three Assembly meetings in February, March and April 2024, the group participated in various discussions and deliberation processes to develop recommendations for Council. After sharing personal experiences of belonging and connection in New Westminster, or a lack thereof, the Assembly facilitators identified four broad areas of intervention within which to organize the group's experiences and recommendations:

1. Animating the Public Realm,
2. Expanding Facilities and Civic Spaces,
3. Protecting Renter Communities, and
4. Strengthening Outreach and Communications.

Assembly members then worked in facilitated small groups related to each of these four areas to develop recommendations for the City to consider. The recommendations were compiled and circulated to Assembly members, and the recommendations were refined by the group through a facilitated discussion. Once adjusted, the members voted on each recommendation to indicate whether they supported presenting the recommendation to Council or not.

On May 6, 2024, several members of the Assembly presented to Council a set of 12 recommendations that were supported by a minimum of 75% of members. The May 6, 2024 Council report and presentation are linked here.

Following the Assembly's presentation, Council resolved to receive the Assembly's recommendations for information, and directed staff to respond to each recommendation – including providing information on any related plans or strategies, and conducting a high-level feasibility review – and report back to Council and the Assembly.

DISCUSSION

The Assembly's recommendations were varied and related to a wide range of City services, programs, policies, and infrastructure. The recommendations connect with a variety of City departments, work plans, and strategies, both short and long term. In many cases, at least some aspects of the Assembly's recommended actions are planned or underway. Other recommendations would require additional staff capacity and/or funding to deliver.

See Attachment 1 for a spreadsheet that outlines the status of each recommendation, which City department is responsible, identified actions, estimated timeline and costs, and dependencies.

See Attachment 2 for a more detailed report back on each recommendation, which includes more details on how the recommendation connects to existing City work and policies, and a description of the high-level feasibility of delivering on the recommendation. This document was developed by staff to report back to the Assembly on its recommendations, and was provided to the group at the final Assembly meeting and wrap-up event on January 16, 2025.

Staff also gave a presentation to Assembly members at the January 2025 meeting with a summary of the report. The presentation slides are included as Attachment 3.

NEXT STEPS

For Assembly recommendations where related work is in progress or planned, staff will continue to further this work. In some cases, additional budget and/or staff capacity may be required and staff will bring forward enhancement requests for these as part of the City's annual budgeting process.

In addition, Council will receive further progress reports on Community Belonging and Connecting as part of regular status reports on the Strategic Priorities Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Estimated cost levels for delivering on each of the Assembly's recommendations are included in Attachment 1. For actions where additional budget and/or staff have been identified, budget enhancement requests would be prepared as part of the City's annual budget process.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

Staff from multiple departments collaborated on the report back to the Assembly and Council, including: Community Services, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Development, and Engineering. These departments are also involved in delivering the work outlined in the attachments.

OPTIONS

Two options are provided for Council's consideration:

1. That staff be directed to continue work that is already underway that relates to furthering the Community Advisory Assembly's recommendations on belonging and connecting, and to explore potential additional actions where feasible.

2. Provide staff with alternate direction.

Staff recommend option 1.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Report Back Spreadsheet, February 2025
Attachment 2 – Report Back to Assembly, January 2025
Attachment 3 – Staff Presentation to Assembly, January 2025

APPROVALS

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