
March 23rd, 2022

Office of the Mayor and City Councillors
2nd Floor, City Hall
1 Sir Winston Churchill Square
Edmonton, AB T5J 2R7

Dear Mayor Sohi, Edmonton City Councillors,

As you know, COVID-19 has created or accelerated many economic and social challenges in the heart of our city, which need to be addressed through an immediate and coordinated response that protects the future of our local economy and municipal tax base. We appreciate the importance many of you placed on downtown recovery in your election campaign priorities.

The current community safety challenges facing Downtown residents, workers, and small business owners are very real, and reports have grown alarmingly more severe and damaging in recent months. Our Downtown business and community leaders are aligned with City Council in our understanding of the long-term, systemic and structural changes that are required to build a city that is safe, prosperous, and welcoming for all Edmontonians, and this is reflected in our ongoing advocacy to the Provincial and Federal governments for investments in long-term solutions like permanent supportive housing, harm reduction, mental health supports for all, and equitable pathways out of poverty.

However, these long-term solutions do not address the immediate and devastating public safety crisis that we as the Downtown community currently find ourselves in. As such, this letter is an *urgent* plea for Council to move the following requests as they relate to the City of Edmonton's upcoming Community Safety and Well-being discussions and budget items.

Reduce crime and enhance safety

Downtown residents, workers, and employers have reported a significant recent increase in crime and a decrease in the perception of safety. [Recent reporting](#) indicates that, in the short term, focused enforcement efforts are effective at reducing crime and improving public safety outcomes. With organizations now activating back to office plans, major national and international conferences returning to our city, and our summer festival season quickly approaching, we are asking Council to take the following action:

- Direct Administration to work with the Edmonton Police Commission to assign a greater allocation of community safety resources for the Downtown Business Improvement Area and surrounding areas, that could include:
 - An increase in 'hotspot' EPS *foot patrols*,
 - Ensuring 7 day/week, early morning and evening officer coverage

With a goal of substantially improving response times within downtown.

- Meet with and work through the Downtown Recovery Task Force as the convening leaders of downtown, specifically inputting on priorities for the unallocated savings to support downtown community safety and recovery.

We believe the above requests are necessary to address current criminal activity and public safety in the core.

The Downtown neighborhood contributes a disproportionately large percentage of property tax revenue to the City of Edmonton when compared to other communities, and any major reduction in Downtown property values will result in reduced City revenues and/or an increased tax burden on residents and businesses outside of the core. We urge Council to act swiftly and decisively to prevent this shifting of the tax burden.

Now is the time for bold, clear action from City Council to support the recovery and resiliency of Downtown Edmonton. We appreciate your leadership on these matters to date, and we look forward to working with you on regaining the vibrancy and economic momentum within our downtown core that is vital in making our city attractive to residents, visitors and investors.

Sincerely,

Alex Hryciw
Co-Chair, Downtown Recovery Task Force
Director of Strategy, Edmonton Chamber of Commerce

Anand Pye
Executive Director
NAIOP, Commercial Real Estate Development
Association

Kalen Anderson
Executive Director
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