

WHAT WE HEARD

Community Safety Meeting with Business Stakeholders

NOVEMBER 7, 2022

Vandalism / Theft

CONCERNS:

- Vandalism and graffiti are out of control and costing businesses. Many taggers wear masks so video footage is not always beneficial.
- There's a cost for businesses and non-profits to download files from security cameras for use by police. Surveillance footage rarely leads to arrest.
- Many business owners are unsure of when to call the police.
- Vandalism and drug use is happening more frequently in alleys and in spaces behind businesses.
- Businesses constantly having planters, umbrellas, cushions etc vandalized or stolen.
- Business owners and their staff are worried about confrontation with people struggling with addiction and homelessness. Many examples of aggressive behaviour toward staff and customers. "We are scared for our employees and patrons."
- Some tenants living in the downtown have been threatened and intimidated by people struggling with addiction and homelessness.
- People are feeling uneasy and unsafe.
- This is a drug problem, not a homelessness problem.
- Lack of confidence in the judicial system: Even when people are arrested, there are few or no repercussions. It feels like nothing happens to young people who break the law. "Our freedoms and rights are being taken away by people whose rights we are protecting."
- Frustration with excuses from police, judges, politicians and media as to why the problems persist.
- No leadership from politicians/City on solving problems.
- Justice system is not a deterrent to these types of crimes.
- Lots of damage to public washrooms, the Fredericton Public Library washroom, Credit Union, ATM vestibules.
- Theft of catalytic converters is a big issue.
- People are cutting wires on telephone poles.
- People are using generators outside businesses for warmth.
- Folks do not seem to want help.

- Not enough police officers on patrol on the northside.
- Need more and better law enforcement.
- Heat map is needed showing where break-ins and vandalism are happening.
- Insurance costs are rising due to thefts.
- Businesses are “damned if we do and damned if we don’t” complain publicly about problems brought on by those struggling with homeless and/or addiction: “We’re in a woke culture that can damage a business’s reputation pretty quick.”
- Shoplifting at Regent Mall has increased.
- People are feeling uneasy and unsafe.
- There should be a registration program for bikes, which would make them easier to track when they’re stolen.

IDEAS:

- An app to inventory graffiti and cover graffiti tags immediately.
- Would be useful to have possibility of uploading video and photos to an online crime reporting portal.
- Should businesses be using private companies for security? Depends on cost-benefit analysis.
- Need harsher penalties: People caught vandalizing should be made to do community service.
- More cameras needed.
- Make public photos of criminals.
- Need to lobby the provincial government for assistance.
- Police should promote use of the non-emergency line to report crime.
- High-traffic areas seem to have low criminality.
- Police staffing may be impacting services.
- Safety sessions for employees re: working alone.
- UNB/City need to work together to reduce issues around the university.
- Extend trespassing act.
- Police ride-alongs for councillors and MLAs.
- Property assessment breaks for those whose properties have been damaged.
- “Stop being so welcoming to drugs and criminals.”
- Neighbourhood Watch should be back up and running.
- Crime prevention through environmental design should be promoted.
- The Works Enterprise: Helps people to re-engage with small jobs around the neighbourhood.

Traffic

CONCERNS:

- Panhandling at busy intersections.
- Tim Hortons drive-thrus create traffic back-ups.
- People running red lights.
- People riding bikes on the sidewalk and in the road with no head protection.
- E-scooters should not be on sidewalks.
- ATVs are frequently on the trails illegally.
- Motorized bikes should have to be registered and insured.
- Too much jaywalking.

IDEAS:

- We love traffic circles.
- Parking on Regent St between King St and Queen St should be removed.
- Queen St should be pedestrian-only.

Drugs

CONCERNS:

- Drugs are fueling the majority of crime and other problems.
- Meth is on the rise to the point of crisis. It has replaced all other drugs in popularity.
- Addicts are hanging out and soliciting at the Regent St / Prospect St traffic lights.
- Seeing more drug paraphernalia in the streets. Lots of dirty needles on business properties.
- More housing will help get people with addictions off the street.
- More needs to be done to support people who are struggling with addiction.
- Safe injection sites help reduce health risks that come with drug use.
- Northside and southside safe injection sites would be useful.
- Need an education campaigns aimed at dispelling the myths around drug use and the needs of those who use.
- Decriminalize drug use and sanction sites for drug use.
- Three drug overdoses at Regent Mall recently.
- Social services and government programs aren't working.
- "Start at the top" – Mayor and councillors need to acknowledge drug issues and not ignore them.

- Is the reporting of statistics correct and up-to-date?
- Communication of safety/threat issues not robust or regular enough. Accuracy of info needs to be ensured.
- Organized crime is a major issue fueling the rise of drug use.
- What is the purpose of the Riverstone Recovery Centre? Is anyone recovering? It only seems to be attracting more people.
- Get rid of free drugs (methadone), which just brings more troubled people to the city. Open a weed store instead.
- Drug use in washrooms at Regent Mall.

IDEAS:

- More sharp disposal containers around the downtown, affixed to walls.
- Community deterrence through work programs/community service.
- Highlight societal consequences of drug use.
- Create social infrastructure to handle drug addiction.
- What can you do? Create a checklist of what individuals/businesses/organizations can do to alleviate the impact of drug use.
- More funding relative to social support/structures for drug addiction, police leadership/involvement in solutions.
- Appropriate staffing solutions, not necessarily only police officers.
- Connection to mental health services or an advocate should be in place for people with addiction issues to access before they enter the prison system.
- Comprehensive data on all issues/problems with long-term tracking.
- Homeless shelters need to report drug use on or near their premises.
- Municipal auditor-general-type position? Would provide better accountability and measurement when attempting solutions.
- Need "driving high" awareness campaign.

Living Rough

CONCERNS:

- Victory/Subway/Medicine Shoppe area: Many doing drugs and trading in drugs in full view. Fear that this population will move to 554 Brunswick St clinic and be hanging out next to George St Middle School.
- Those living rough should engage with community by doing clean-up.
- Need a daytime warming centre.
- Need more government programs to provide supports for those living rough.

- People in unstable housing are becoming homeless: More housing options are needed.
- More people with mental health and addiction problems are coming to the downtown area.
- Mayor and politicians want to help those living rough “but not those of us paying the bills.” This attitude is hurting business.
- Housing first and support services are key to success.
- Loitering by those living rough has increased in recent years and many are harassing patrons/customers/staff.
- When police move people experiencing homelessness to another location, the problem just persists elsewhere.
- Too many bleeding hearts in the media.
- People struggling with addiction and/or homelessness are migrating uptown from downtown.
- Fredericton is more attractive to those struggling with homelessness because it is assumed we have more services to help them. Suspicion that people who are homeless are being sent to Fredericton from other cities.
- Businesses and landlords are made out to be the bad guy when they are simply trying to protect and advocate for their businesses.
- Businesses need to lobby government to spend budget surpluses on this issue.

IDEAS:

- Churches should be approached about providing warming centres.
- Those struggling with homelessness need cubicles for storage and a place to get clean.

Trail Safety

CONCERNS:

- People don't feel safe along many sections of the trail system, especially the waterfront trails.
- More brush clearing adjacent to trails.
- There should be supervision at the skate park downtown.
- Lots of debris and dirty needles along the trails.
- Shopping carts and tents everywhere along the trails.
- Remove politics from decision-making around trail safety.
- Trails are a highway for crime.

IDEAS:

- Better lighting is needed.
- Need legislation on scooters.
- Need trail patrols (could retired police officers volunteer to do this?)

- Surveillance cameras should be installed along the trails.
- Base Gagetown training marches could be done on the trails.

General Ideas:

- Business groups should host community health presentations for businesses.
- Assess appropriateness of police resources/funding.
- Remove politics from decision-making process, focus on real, proven solution.
- Ensure reputation of police force is a positive aspect of problem solving.
- Measure impact/effectiveness of previous projects/solutions to gauge future projects/solutions design and implementation. Don't repeat mistakes.
- Political correctness can't drive conversation – focus must be on outcomes.
- Public education campaign on homelessness, drugs, etc. impact on community, individuals, businesses, etc. Personify the costs, and the solutions.
- Be realistic on issues of public/personal safety, have realistic expectations of what police can do.