



CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE



DOWNTOWN SAFETY INITIATIVE – FALL 2025 PROGRESS REPORT

In June 2025, the City of Yellowknife and the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce hosted a Downtown Business Safety and Vitality session to hear directly from business owners about their experiences and ideas. The What We Heard Report (released July 2025) outlined key short-term actions to enhance downtown safety, vibrancy, and community friendliness.

Since then, the City and the Chamber have made progress on several of the top initiatives identified:

1. Create festivals, events, and generate more foot traffic in the downtown. The City's Municipal Enforcement Division (MED) has boosted its downtown presence to enhance visibility and safety.
 - a. The Economic Development team has actively supported local event organizers by helping streamline logistics such as security, insurance, and permitting, while also promoting collaboration.
 - b. The City has co-hosted and supported multiple downtown events this summer, helping to bring more positive activity and energy to the area, including the following:
 - Remembrance Day
 - Shop Local
 - Culinary Festival
 - Farmers Market
 - Canada Day parade
 - Truth and Reconciliation March
 - 2025 Holiday Shop Local Initiative
 - Santa Claus parade
2. Exploring a Business Improvement Area (BIA)
 - a. The Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce has submitted a CanNor funding application to explore creating a Business Improvement Area. The proposed three-year pilot would support coordinated efforts, such as shared security, beautification, and joint promotions, without requiring immediate self-funding.
 - b. Application update as of Dec 2025: The Funding application was *not approved*.
 - c. Other funding sources and opportunities are actively being explored
3. Downtown Ambassador Program
 - a. Based on research of similar programs across Canada, City staff have worked with Northwest Territories Tourism and the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce to develop a project scope and draft budget to operate a Downtown Ambassador Program.
 - b. A CanNor funding application was not approved. In follow-up discussions, CanNor shared that they've been directed to tighten budgets (as with other federal departments) and are also being asked to assess project fiscal returns in greater detail.



That said, we still see value in advancing the downtown BIA and have begun exploring alternative funding sources to support an initial launch.

4. Continue reporting to authorities

- a. The City developed an *Incident Response Guide* to help businesses and staff know who to contact for what, including RCMP, Municipal Enforcement, and private security. This resource clarifies roles and responsibilities to reduce confusion and response delays. It has been distributed to businesses throughout the city/downtown.

5. Social Enterprise Proposal

- a. A local business owner submitted a budget proposal for a social enterprise model to support employment and social inclusion initiatives downtown, in the City's 2026 budget deliberations.
- b. The initial application requesting funding in the 2026 budget was withdrawn after the primary proponent secured alternative funding for the program. The City will continue to support this initiative where possible.

NEXT STEPS

The City and the Chamber remain committed to supporting these initiatives through continued collaboration, coordination, and communication with local businesses. Work will continue through 2026 to maintain downtown safety, strengthen economic activity, and foster a welcoming environment for all.

- **Strengthen Collaboration and Support Community-Led Actions**
 - Work with businesses, service providers, and community leaders who are ready to take the lead on initiatives, such as event planning, working groups, or the proposed social enterprise model, by providing facilitation, promotion, and guidance to ensure efforts are coordinated and effective.
- **Integrate Efforts with Existing City and Chamber Initiatives**
 - Connect new ideas with current City strategies (public space improvements, economic development actions) and Chamber priorities to reduce duplication, increase efficiency, and amplify community impact.
- **Increase Awareness of the Incident Response Guide**
 - Expand distribution and visibility by providing additional printed materials that businesses can post or share with employees and customers, making it easier for people to know who to contact and when.
- **Promote Downtown and Support Foot Traffic**
 - Seasonal campaigns (e.g., #ShopLocalYK) will be adapted and reused to support ongoing business visibility and foot traffic. Joint communications will help reinforce a positive, welcoming image of the downtown.



- **Advance Longer-Term Priorities**

- Continue scoping and preparing funding applications for longer-term initiatives such as the Downtown Ambassador Program and other economic vitality and public safety projects identified by businesses.

APPENDIX:**A. Full report:**

[*Business Owners Safety Initiative – What We Heard Report \(June 2025\)*](#)

B. Short-Term Priorities and Interest in Participation

During the session, participants were asked to vote on short-term initiatives they would most like to see implemented this summer and indicate if they or their organization would be willing to contribute time, effort, or resources. Participants could vote up to 3 times. These are the results, with status updates since the meeting:

Initiative	Votes	Status
Create festivals, events, and generate more foot traffic in the downtown	19	● Ongoing
Business Improvement Area	18	● Started / with delays
Downtown Ambassadors– Positive presence, builds trust– Trained, connected to services	14	● Started / with delays
Lobbying together – collective voice (downtown-centric)	13	● Ongoing
Continue reporting to authorities – no matter what!	6	● Ongoing
Maintain properties / beautification	6	● Not started
Forum for business owners to connect with unhoused	4	● Not started
Social enterprise – gathering space (e.g., “Mustard Seed Café”)	3	● Ongoing



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Initiative	Votes	Status
Tool for business owners to connect in real-time (e.g., WhatsApp group)	2	Not started
Pooling resources – information, funds	1	Not started
Public washrooms	1	Not started
Training for de-escalation	1	Not started but can be tied to Ambassador Program
Citizen patrols with direct access to MED/RCMP	0	Not started but can be tied to Ambassador Program