



Brandon Police Service Downtown Safety Strategy Engagement Summary

Project Background & Planning Process.....	2
Community Risks, Needs & Priorities.....	4
Part 1: Session Summaries.....	4
Community Partners.....	4
Brandon Police Service.....	5
Residents' Town Hall.....	7
Downtown Businesses.....	7
Residents Second Town Hall.....	8
Part 2: Synthesis of Themes.....	10
Social and Health System Pressures.....	10
Community and Public Safety.....	11
Proud Neighbourhood Identity and Respect for Place.....	11
Infrastructure, Cleanliness, and Physical Environment.....	12
Downtown Economy and Business Viability.....	12
Communication and Collective Accountability.....	13
Part 3: From Priorities to Action.....	13
Priorities & Strategies.....	14
1. Communication.....	14
2. Augmenting Enforcement.....	15
3. Resources.....	15
4. Infrastructure.....	16
Next Steps.....	17



Executive Summary

The Downtown Public Safety Strategy has been informed by a broad and diverse engagement process involving residents, business owners, service providers, and police personnel. Across all sessions, participants identified overlapping challenges: gaps in the social and health service system, visible disorder, safety concerns, and the decline of downtown’s physical and economic environment.

The process also revealed a strong sense of neighbourhood pride and a desire to see decisions made with – not for – the people who live and work downtown. The inclusion of a second resident session addressed an early gap in representation, ensuring that lived experiences and community-level priorities are embedded in the final plan. Residents emphasized the need for better communication, consistent property maintenance, dispersed social services, and visible, respectful enforcement that builds trust.

The result is a set of shared priorities and practical actions for the next year that focus on safety, service access, neighbourhood pride, infrastructure, and collective accountability – all grounded in the voices of those who experience downtown daily.

Project Background & Planning Process

Brandon’s Downtown Public Safety Strategy was informed by a series of focused community engagement sessions held between March and July 2025. The process brought together diverse groups who live, work, serve, or do business in the downtown area to ensure the strategy reflects real experiences, community-defined priorities, and feasible paths forward. Four sessions were initially planned, with a second Residents’ session added. These were held:

- Community Partners (March 13, 2025)
- Brandon Police Service (April 16, 2025)
- Downtown Business Owners and Leaders (April 22, 2025)
- Downtown Residents Town Hall (April 2025)
- Downtown Residents Town Hall (July 22, 2025)

In total, more than 90 participants contributed their knowledge and lived experience. Each session was tailored to the audience but followed a consistent structure:

- Reflect on the current reality of public safety in downtown Brandon
- Describe an ideal future
- Identify actions or strategies that would help bridge the gap



The community partner and business sessions followed a half-day format with a shared agenda that moved from identifying issues toward suggesting potential solutions and commitments. The police and first residents' sessions guided participants through a full cycle of reflection, visioning, and identifying possible actions. A second residents' session was later held to address the gap in resident participation, ensuring their perspectives were more fully integrated. Together, these sessions provided a comprehensive foundation of lived experience, local insight, and practical ideas to inform the action planning phase.

Participants were not asked to reach consensus. Instead, the sessions were designed to listen deeply, draw out patterns, and generate a foundation of community-grounded insight to inform the next phase of the strategy.

Building on this foundation, a cross-sector working group, including members from social services, downtown residents and businesses, and the Brandon Police Service, convened for three action sessions in May, June and August 2025. These sessions marked a shift from consultation to collaboration, bringing decision-makers and front-line leaders into shared dialogue. Participants moved beyond identifying challenges to taking ownership of potential solutions, ensuring that the final strategy reflects not just ideas, but informed commitments.

The sessions were structured to guide participants through a deliberate process:

- Reviewing and validating the emerging themes
- Identifying top priorities
- Drafting outcomes and actions for each area
- Evaluating alignment with scope, capacity, and commitment
- Developing indicators of progress, timelines, and accountability

Each session used practical facilitation tools, including brainwriting, the ladder of abstraction, an evaluation matrix, and short-medium-long term planning, to generate, refine, and evaluate ideas. While time was limited, participants worked with focus and urgency. The resulting priorities and actions are both grounded in current capacity and aspirational in intent, designed to support steady, achievable progress over time.

Mosaic Engagement compiled the full range of input from both sessions and refined the outcomes, actions, and measures with minimal alteration, ensuring alignment with the group's intent while supporting clarity and cohesion for implementation.



Community Risks, Needs & Priorities

Part 1: Session Summaries

Community Partners

Participants from a wide range of community service providers highlighted the complexity of public safety challenges downtown. Their feedback emphasized the need for systemic alignment, trauma-informed care, improved infrastructure, and stronger inter-agency collaboration. While respectful in tone, participants clearly named gaps and called for coordinated action that is both compassionate and accountable.

Current Realities and Risks

Recurring issues were grouped into thematic clusters by participants themselves. The most pressing included:

- Burnout and fatigue among service providers, often due to high caseloads, vicarious trauma, and a lack of stable infrastructure.
- Public safety concerns, including increased unpredictability, visible drug toxicity, and rising vulnerability among women and gender-diverse people. Structural limitations such as a lack of affordable housing, detox and stabilization beds, shelter space, and accessible mental health supports.

“The system expects us to be endlessly resilient, but we’re not being resourced to meet what’s being asked of us.”

Proposed Actions

Participants proposed specific strategies across five dimensions: systemic, psycho-social, physical, environmental, and economic.

Systemic

- Create a mobile outreach navigation service that connects people with supports in real time and helps them navigate complex systems
- Increase day-treatment and detox availability to reduce wait times and match support to readiness
- Provide education and support to individuals who perpetrate harm to reduce recidivism
- Co-design systems solutions with those most affected by policy decisions

Psycho-social



- Improve inter-agency communication and align care approaches (e.g. policies, staff training)
- Decentralize government services to reduce barriers caused by location and process

Physical

- Launch a community walk-through initiative (e.g. “sandwich walk”) by April 2025 in collaboration with MRC Men's Group, faith communities, and police cadets
- Introduce a “safe walk” program by June 2025 for evening pedestrian safety
- Enhance police-community communication channels by Fall 2025

Environmental

- Replace single-use supplies with biodegradable or reusable materials over the next two years
- Reinstate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) training for residents and businesses
- Establish a new municipal role: “Environmental Community Safety Navigator” within two years

Economic

- Reduce property crime by increasing foot patrol presence downtown within one year
- Create and maintain programs to support downtown businesses in improving the perception of safety
- Boost consumer activity through education and accurate information sharing

Brandon Police Service

The internal session with BPS personnel surfaced significant operational and systemic pressures contributing to perceptions of disorder downtown. Officers expressed both a deep investment in community safety and frustration with the limits of current systems. Their insights revealed how public safety is interwoven with mental health, infrastructure, and perceptions of place.

Current Realities and Risks

- Lack of access to detox beds, mental health assessment (MHA) beds, and long-term stabilization options
- Discharge of individuals into downtown without appropriate follow-up or housing

- Visibility of drug use, intoxication, human waste, garbage, and needles in public spaces
- Safety concerns from residents and businesses, compounded by uneven police presence and staffing challenges
- Public perception of crime, often reinforced by visible disorder

“The entire region funnels into Brandon and then stops downtown. We’re the end of the line for every gap.”

Proposed Actions

Thriving Downtown Businesses

- Relocate and decentralize social services to reduce overconcentration
- Offer tax incentives to attract and retain small businesses
- Reduce red tape for events, patios, and vendors; encourage public space animation
- Expand free and adequate parking options

Affordable Housing

- Offer tax breaks for developers and landlords building micro-suites or income-based housing
- Promote zoning and planning flexibility (e.g. mother-in-law suites, mixed-use development)

Mental Health and Addictions Services

- Increase psychiatric staffing and nurse availability
- Streamline emergency admission processes
- Build a dedicated mental health hospital or recovery centre
- Reduce reliance on police through updated mental health legislation

Safety

- Expand foot and bike patrols and community policing presence
- Install public safety cameras and improve lighting in alleys, parks, and corridors
- Enforce quality-of-life laws with consistency and care
- Enhance pedestrian infrastructure (e.g. wider sidewalks, traffic calming)
- Tear down or repurpose abandoned properties
- Strengthen alignment with corrections for post-release re-integration

A Vibrant Destination

- Prioritize placemaking: art, patios, vendors, and entertainment spaces

- Encourage private investment and downtown activation (e.g. live performances, markets)
- Support businesses that contribute to a sense of place

Residents' Town Hall

In the residents' town hall, participants described a deep emotional connection to the downtown core and growing unease about their safety and well-being. Their reflections pointed to inconsistent responses, visible disorder, and social issues that feel both overwhelming and unaddressed.

Current Realities and Risks

- Concentration of social services in one area
- Escalation of trespassing, theft, sexual harassment, and drug-related activity
- Inconsistent police presence, with some residents expressing distrust or feeling dismissed when seeking help
- Closing of critical supports like Blue Door with no clear alternatives
- Rise in homelessness and visible vulnerability

"I used to leave my screen door open. Now I need cameras, and my kids don't play at the park."

Proposed Actions

Residents focused on communication, visibility, and collaborative safety approaches:

- Increase visible police and cadet presence downtown, especially in the evenings
- Develop collaborative crisis response units and outreach teams
- Improve transparency in police reporting and communication
- Launch public education efforts about available supports, safety tips, and who to contact
- Use utility bills, mailouts, radio, and social media to distribute information
- Host regular community forums and workshops (e.g. "what to do if..." scenarios)
- Foster stronger relationships between police and residents through respectful, consistent engagement
- Expand and promote neighbourhood watch options that allow for anonymity

Downtown Businesses

Business owners brought both passion and urgency to the session. They described safety as a precondition for economic recovery and emphasized that revitalization efforts must be matched with visible action on safety and maintenance.

Current Realities and Risks

- High cost of doing business due to security concerns, vandalism, and staff safety
- Poorly maintained spaces and infrastructure (garbage, snow removal, unswept sidewalks)
- Visibility of loitering, drug use, and property crime
- Vacant buildings and a lack of incentives to invest or remain downtown
- Fragmented communication between businesses, government, and police

“You can’t rebuild a local economy when people don’t feel safe walking to their car.”

Proposed Actions

For a Safer Downtown

- Increase police presence and active enforcement 24/7
- Launch a centralized downtown safety program (potentially led by Downtown BIZ)
Pilot city-led camera placements and coordinate funding support
- Create a shared safety framework across businesses, police, and community groups

For a More Attractive Downtown

- Prioritize daily cleaning and bylaw enforcement for snow, garbage, and property upkeep
- Expand mural programs, public events, and tours to celebrate downtown identity
- Use city platforms to promote business success stories

For a Financially Sustainable Downtown

- Streamline permitting and reduce red tape for improvements
- Update Brandon’s Downtown Secondary Plan within one year and begin implementation
- Offer financial incentives for safety investments (e.g. waived development fees, security camera grants)
- Organize business networks to coordinate advocacy and funding efforts
- Encourage collaboration with provincial and federal partners for long-term downtown investment

Residents Second Town Hall

In a second residents’ session, participants built on earlier community feedback and offered a more detailed picture of both the challenges and aspirations for downtown.

Discussion centered on identity, respect for the neighbourhood, and safety, with a strong emphasis on equitable decision-making and visible action.

Current Reality

- A proud neighbourhood identity remains, but residents feel overshadowed by external decisions and the loss of local retail.
- Visible decline in property standards, with derelict buildings, litter, used needles, and public urination contributing to perceptions of neglect.
- Safety concerns tied to concentrated social services, transient populations, and insufficient police presence, leaving some residents feeling unsafe in their own homes and public spaces.
- Growing frustration that city by-laws and community standards are not enforced consistently across neighbourhoods.

“We take pride in our homes, but the City needs to meet that standard too.”

Ideal Future

- A vibrant, welcoming neighbourhood with active businesses, patios, festivals, and more owner-occupied homes.
- Social services more evenly distributed throughout the city.
- Cleaner streets, restored heritage buildings, and greater community outreach.
- Visible safety measures such as street-level police, better lighting, and expanded mental health resources.

Proposed Actions

Proud Neighbourhood Identity

- Encourage more community involvement and provide spaces for neighbours to gather.
- Enforce property maintenance standards for both private and City-owned properties.
- Restore and promote heritage buildings.

Lack of Neighbourhood Respect

- Promote civic pride and respect for shared spaces through school programs and community engagement.
- Improve public amenities such as washrooms.
- Apply by-law enforcement consistently across all neighbourhoods.
- Include residents in decisions that directly affect the community.

Safety

- Distribute social services across the city to reduce overconcentration.
- Create a neighbourhood liaison role to connect residents with services and decision-makers.
- Strengthen partnerships between residents, homeowners, and police.
- Increase cameras, lighting, and hosting of community activities to foster a sense of safety.

Part 2: Synthesis of Themes

This section synthesizes input from all engagement sessions, including community services, police, businesses, and residents. A second resident-specific session was added to ensure the strategy reflects the full range of neighbourhood perspectives.

While language and emphasis varied, the themes were remarkably consistent across groups. Participants described a downtown facing intertwined social, structural, and economic challenges:

- Service gaps for people experiencing homelessness, mental health crises, and substance use.
- Visible disorder and public safety concerns.
- Declining physical infrastructure and cleanliness.
- An economic climate where safety and perception influence investment and activity.

Alongside these challenges, residents and other participants expressed a strong commitment to revitalizing downtown, protecting its heritage, and restoring respect for shared spaces. The priorities outlined in the following sections integrate both practical action items and the broader goal of fostering a safe, welcoming, and vibrant downtown core.

Social and Health System Pressures

Risks and Needs

- Lack of accessible and timely services for people experiencing homelessness, mental health crises, and substance use.
- Overreliance on police to respond to social and health issues.
- Insufficient detox beds, transitional housing, and stabilization options.
- Fragmented communication between systems, resulting in service gaps and missed opportunities.

- Overconcentration of social services downtown, contributing to safety concerns and perceptions of disorder.

Priority Areas

- Expand local access to detox, day treatment, and recovery programs.
- Increase psychiatric and crisis care capacity across the region.
- Improve cross-agency communication and collaboration.
- Reduce barriers to accessing services through decentralized delivery and low-barrier supports.
- Create a mobile outreach/navigation service to engage people where they are.
- Work with service providers to distribute social services more evenly across the city.

Community and Public Safety

Risks and Needs

- Public concerns about open drug use, intoxication, harassment, and property crime.
- Visibility of loitering and disorder impacting the perception and reality of safety.
- Increased vulnerability among women and gender-diverse people.
- Frustration over unclear accountability and inconsistent police presence.
- Residents feeling unsafe in their own homes due to violence, trespassing, and disorder.

Priority Areas

- Increase visible police presence through foot patrols and cadets.
- Implement or expand community walk programs, including safe walk and collaborative evening patrols.
- Pilot public safety camera programs in high-activity zones.
- Launch neighbourhood-based information campaigns about when and how to access help.
- Establish a centralized program to support safety coordination across sectors.
- Explore a neighbourhood liaison role to connect residents, police, and services.

Proud Neighbourhood Identity and Respect for Place

Risks and Needs

- Strong pride in downtown's heritage and community identity, but a lack of investment in preserving it.
- Perception that civic decisions are made without meaningful resident input.
- Limited spaces for neighbours to gather socially and build relationships.

- Inconsistent enforcement of property maintenance and community standards for both public and private property.
- Litter, vandalism, and lack of respect for shared spaces.

Priority Areas

- Restore and promote heritage buildings as community assets.
- Create or improve public gathering spaces for residents and neighbours.
- Include residents in decisions that affect their neighbourhood.
- Apply and enforce property standards consistently, including City-owned properties.
- Introduce school and community-based initiatives to build civic pride and respect for shared spaces.

Infrastructure, Cleanliness, and Physical Environment

Risks and Needs

- Poorly maintained public spaces, including garbage, needles, and deteriorating buildings.
- Vacant properties and low-visibility areas perceived as unsafe.
- Physical disorder seen as both a symptom and driver of declining investment and activity.
- Lack of basic amenities, including public washrooms.

Priority Areas

- Reinstate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) training for businesses and residents.
- Prioritize daily cleaning and maintenance of sidewalks, streets, and alleys.
- Remove or repurpose abandoned buildings.
- Improve lighting and sight lines in key pedestrian areas.
- Pilot a staffed public washroom in a central location.
- Designate a municipal role focused on the physical environment and community safety.

Downtown Economy and Business Viability

Risks and Needs

- Rising operational costs due to security, vandalism, and insurance.
- Reduced customer traffic and increasing storefront vacancies.
- Concerns about business closures and declining property values.

Priority Areas

- Offer tax incentives and fee waivers for businesses investing in safety and infrastructure.
- Create funding streams to support safety improvements (e.g., lighting, cameras, storefront upgrades).
- Promote downtown through success stories, public events, and a refreshed brand.
- Align city planning tools (e.g., Brandon's Downtown Secondary Plan) with revitalization needs.
- Reduce red tape to support pop-up events, vendors, and flexible public space use.

Communication and Collective Accountability

Risks and Needs

- Limited and inconsistent communication between police, service providers, and the public.
- Lack of clear, accessible information about resources, reporting, and support pathways.
- Desire for shared responsibility and better coordination across groups.

Priority Areas

- Increase communication from police to residents and businesses (e.g., updates, how-to guides, safety info).
- Use multiple channels to reach residents: radio, social media, community forums, utility bills.
- Establish clearer pathways for community feedback and participation.
- Form a working group or advisory structure with representation from residents, businesses, police, and service providers.
- Ensure continued public involvement in strategy refinement and implementation.

Part 3: From Priorities to Action

The themes outlined from the community consultations reflect a broad base of lived experience, professional insight, and local knowledge. While the challenges are complex, the conversations revealed clear opportunities for progress and change.

The engagement process laid a strong foundation for the next phase of work which included two action planning sessions that brought together representatives from Brandon Police Service, local service providers, and the downtown residents and business communities. These sessions built directly on the priorities voiced through the community



engagement phase and focused on drafting coordinated, concrete actions to advance shared goals.

In this stage, participants refined the most pressing issues into four shared priority areas. They worked together to define clear outcomes, articulate their purposes, and identify practical objectives. Throughout, the emphasis remained on feasibility, collaboration, and ensuring that actions reflect the real capacities and commitments of those involved.

Priorities & Strategies

The following section outlines the four priority areas that emerged through focused discussion and collaborative planning. Each priority includes a clear outcome statement, a shared purpose that explains why it matters, and a set of practical objectives to guide coordinated action. These elements reflect the voices of those who live, work, and serve in the downtown and have been refined to ensure they are clear, actionable, and aligned with the broader vision of a safe, healthy, and vibrant downtown.

1. Communication

Outcome:

A coordinated and respectful communication network strengthened collaboration and created a shared public message about a safe and thriving downtown.

Purpose:

To ensure communication efforts are informative, collaborative, respectful, and inclusive of diverse downtown experiences, and to celebrate success.

Objectives:

- Establish a downtown working group (representatives from residents, businesses, agencies, and police) that meets regularly to support open, respectful dialogue and collective action.
- Develop a shared messaging strategy to promote accurate and balanced public narratives about downtown, and to highlight positive stories and successes.
- Ensure residents are meaningfully included in decision-making processes that affect downtown, with clear feedback loops on how input is used.
- Maintain a static BPS webpage for the Downtown Safety Strategy, noting priority areas, outcomes, and purposes, with quarterly progress updates shared publicly through partner channels.



2. Augmenting Enforcement

Outcome:

Consistent, visible enforcement and safety presence downtown contributed to a sense of safety and reduced criminal activity.

Purpose:

To enhance safety through a clear, visible presence and consistent enforcement that builds community confidence.

Objectives:

- Increase foot, bike, and vehicle patrols in key downtown locations during peak hours and community events.
- Implement proactive enforcement approaches for chronic concerns, including petty crime, loitering, unsafe behaviour, and substance-related calls. Develop and publish a “Who to Call for What” guide, with clear, accessible instructions for residents and businesses on reporting each type of concern.
- Strengthen coordination between enforcement and community partners to clarify the role of cadets and improve communication and engagement with residents and businesses.

3. Resources

Outcome:

Timely, coordinated access to support services (including detox, mental health, and navigation) reduced crises and improved safety for individuals and the broader community.

Purpose:

To make it easier for people to access the services they need when they need them, and to improve coordination across supports to reduce crisis situations.

Objectives:

- Advocate for mobile and 24-hour service options for detox and crisis intervention to reduce service gaps.
- Advocate for the development of a centralized hub to streamline referrals and service navigation across agencies, avoiding duplication of existing efforts, and receive regular updates on its progress.

- Strengthen partnerships between police and mental health services to provide collaborative response options for individuals in crisis, clarifying scope and eligibility (e.g., age parameters) where appropriate.
- Explore a paid Community Safety Liaison role to serve as a direct connector between residents, services, and the working group.

4. Infrastructure

Outcome:

Timely, coordinated access to support services (including detox, mental health, and navigation) reduced crises and improved safety for individuals and the broader community.

Purpose:

To make it easier for people to access the services they need when they need them, and to improve coordination across supports to reduce crisis situations.

Objectives:

- Advocate for mobile and 24-hour service options for detox and crisis intervention to reduce service gaps.
- Advocate for the development of a centralized hub to streamline referrals and service navigation across agencies, avoiding duplication of existing efforts, and receive regular updates on its progress.
- Strengthen partnerships between police and mental health services to provide collaborative response options for individuals in crisis, clarifying scope and eligibility (e.g., age parameters) where appropriate.
- Explore a paid Community Safety Liaison role to serve as a direct connector between residents, services, and the working group.

With shared priorities and practical objectives in place, the next step is to begin implementation. Progress will depend on clear timelines, meaningful measures, and committed leadership across the community. The following section outlines the actions needed to move forward, along with a structure for accountability and tracking results over time.



Next Steps

This report reflects the depth and care brought forward by community members, service providers, local businesses, and law enforcement to develop a collective strategy for improving safety and wellbeing in downtown Brandon. It integrates the voices of more than 90 participants from the engagement phase through to the focused work of the cross-sector working group.

The plan now includes clear outcomes, purposes, objectives, and deliverables for each priority area, designed as a one-year action framework. It is intended to guide immediate, coordinated steps while recognizing that the challenges facing downtown are complex, interdependent, and influenced by broader systems.

Not every action identified during engagement can or should be tackled at once. Some will require more time, resources, or policy shifts beyond the scope of this group. Others are already underway through existing programs and can be supported or amplified. The role of the working group is to focus on what can be moved forward in the short term, while keeping momentum toward longer-term goals.

The next phase of work will include:

- Finalizing and endorsing the plan as the shared reference point for action.
- Assigning roles, responsibilities, and timelines for each deliverable, recognizing that this is “off-the-side-of-the-desk” work for members and must be feasible.
- Launching priority early-action items that can build visible progress and trust.
- Maintaining transparent, regular updates through quarterly reporting shared publicly, with Council, and via members’ own communication channels.
- Monitoring progress and adjusting as needed based on what is working, emerging challenges, and new opportunities.

Ongoing communication and collaboration will be essential. The strategy is not an endpoint, but a shared reference point to align efforts and measure impact over time. With commitment, clarity, and collective leadership, this plan can be a catalyst for meaningful change.