

DOWNTOWN COURTENAY BIA

Info Sheet



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The Downtown Courtenay Business Improvement Area (DCBIA) has begun the process of reviewing and updating our bylaw. This process includes a review of our service levels, tax rates, and current boundaries to ensure we continue to serve our members and the Courtenay community to the best of our ability. Over the next couple of months, we are planning connect with current members and local business owners to understand what is going well, and what could be improved into the future.

CURRENT OPERATIONS

The Downtown Courtenay Business Improvement Area (DCBIA) is one of 70 Business Improvement Areas in BC. It has been in existence since 1995, with a goal of providing support for downtown Courtenay businesses and enhance a vibrant business community through leadership and advocacy. The DCBIA currently has approximately 200 members. It has operated with annual budget of \$60,000 since 1995, which is collected from the member businesses as part of their property taxes at a rate of \$0.8371/\$1000 based on the property's assessed value.

The DCBIA service levels are dependent on staff capacity and annual operating budget. Currently, the primary services that are offered are as follows:

- Marketing & Promotion (i.e. signage and marketing campaigns)
- Beautification & Revitalization (i.e. parklets, wayfinding, amenities, banners)



- Safety & Security (i.e. lighting, resources, evening patrol)
- Advocacy for downtown businesses to external organizations (i.e. external funders, City of Courtenay, CVRD, provincial and federal governments, Chamber of Commerce etc.)

The DCBIA is currently run by a *part-time* Executive Director and supported by a *working* Board of Directors. Due to limited staffing capacity, members are asked to volunteer their time to contribute the DCBIA committees. These committees have been successful in accomplishing the following initiatives:

Safety and Security



- RCMP Trespass Sticker Program
- City Alley Lighting Inventory
- City Camera Mapping Program
- DCBIA Motion Light Grants
- Resource Sheet at a glance
- City Overnight Patrol support
- The Morning Crew
- Evening Safety Escorts to Parking



Infrastructure

- Facade improvement grant
- Seasonal street pole banners
- Wayfinding phased installation
- Amenities wishlists
- 4th Street Parklet (in partnership with the City of Courtenay)
- Beautification including hanging baskets, street pole upgrades, garbage cans, benches, organized clean ups, and bike parking



Events

- Moonlight and Magic
- Comox Valley Christmas Parade
- Market Day
- Collaboration with third party events including Pride, Halloween, awareness walks and the Comox Valley Farmers Market

Marketing



- 5th Street Bridge Closure Campaigns:
 - Free Money Mondays Campaign
 - Time Well Spent Campaign
- Colourful Downtown Courtenay Rack Card
- C.V. Dine Around partnership with BCRFA
- C.V. Collective Ad Spread
- Trio Magazine Ad Spread
- Musicfest Ad Page
- Digital Elevation Expertise Program at NIC
- Website and social media
- Sponsored media partnership with radio and print



Community Engagement

- Advocates for the needs and services of the DCBIA within various organizations throughout the Comox Valley
- C.V. Coalition to End Homelessness
- C.V. Food Hub
- C.V. Tourism Advisory Committee

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COMPARABLE COMMUNITIES

To better assess the DCBIA performance, we have chosen several similar sized communities to compare average annual operating budgets per membership, annual levy increases and service offerings. We found that out of the communities listed in the table below, the DCBIA has the lowest annual operating budget per member, while still offering similar services. This means, with an increased budget, the DCBIA would be able to serve members more effectively.

| COMPARABLE COMMUNITIES (2021 POP) | MEMBERS | ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET (2021/2022) | \$ AMOUNT ALLOCATED PER MEMBER | LEVY INCREASE PER YEAR |
|--------------------------------------|------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Courtenay (28,420) | 200 | \$60,000 | \$300.00 | 0% |
| Chilliwack (100,580) | 350 | \$349,349 | \$998.14 | 2.8% |
| Prince George (76,708) | 500 | \$337,653 | \$675.31 | 3% |
| Vernon (44,519) | 400 | \$297,457 | \$743.64 | 3.6% |
| Campbell River (35,519) | 80 | \$53,870 | \$673.38 | 2.9% |
| Squamish (23,819) | 200 | \$93,824 | \$494.12 | 0% but will increase after 2025 |
| Duncan (5,047) | 250 | \$112,500 | \$450 | 2.5% |

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----|-----------|----------|--------|
| Downtown Kamloops (97,902) | 850 | \$296,096 | \$348.35 | 5-6.5% |
| Northshore Kamloops (97,902) | 460 | \$222,870 | \$484.50 | 4% |
| Parksville (13,642) | 230 | \$190,000 | \$826.10 | 2.7% |
| Comox (14,806) | 130 | \$72,900 | \$560.77 | 0% |

UNREALIZED OPERATING BUDGET

Using the information provided in the table above, the average levy increase per year among comparative communities is 3%. The following table shows the potential DCBIA annual operating budget if they had observed a 3% levy increase per year since our creation in 1995.

| YEAR | ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET |
|------|-------------------------|
| 1995 | \$60,000 |
| 2000 | \$69,556 |
| 2005 | \$80,635 |
| 2010 | \$93,478 |
| 2015 | \$108,367 |
| 2020 | \$125,627 |
| 2025 | \$145,636 |

FUTURE SERVICES

Despite capacity issues and a limited annual operating budget, the DCBIA has been effective at delivering quality services to the downtown business community for almost three decades. Through outreach and engagement as a part of the bylaw renewal project, the annual operating budget will be adjusted accordingly. With an increased annual operating budget, DCBIA members can expect the following services:

- Improved staffing levels to increase capacity including a full time Executive Director and marketing and events staff.
- Improved staff retention. We have had 4 directors within the last 5 years, with staff leaving for high paid roles with more support.
- Shift from a working board to a governance board, requiring less volunteer hours.
- Increase marketing budget to facilitate more print media, ads, and promotional campaigns.
- Additional placemaking and beautification efforts for the DCBIA area.
- Additional programming of public spaces within the downtown area (i.e. music at 4th street parklet).
- More frequent events that accommodate more visitors.

LOCAL MARKET FACTORS

When considering the potential expansion of the DCBIA, it is important to consider local market factors that may impact the decision to establish a business in Downtown Courtenay. This will create the ability to guide marketing to prospective business owners based on their values. The table below shows the varying factors a business owner may consider when choosing a location.

| FACTOR | OTHER COMMERCIAL AREAS | DOWNTOWN COURTENAY |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Price | Base lease rates average \$8-35 per sq ft. for retail depending on location | Base lease rates average \$8-20 per sq ft. for retail |
| Business Size | Better for larger businesses with anywhere from 20 to 100s of employees operating in larger buildings | Better for small businesses with few staff members operating in smaller buildings |
| Why people visit | Brand names with a diversity of affordable options | Visual aesthetics, destination for tourism, shop local movement |

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|------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| | | and range of shops in a small area |
| Grocery Store Options | Chain grocery stores | Old Farm Market, Edible Island, Farmers Market (local and organic options) |
| 'Member' Services | None | Marketing, safety, advocacy, community building, revitalization, events |

