



EDMONTON POLICE SERVICE



REPORT TO THE EDMONTON POLICE COMMISSION

DATE: 2006 Jun 16

SUBJECT: Whyte Avenue Commercial Overlay

RECOMMENDATION

That this report be received for information only.

INTRODUCTION

Quality of life and public safety issues in and around Whyte Avenue and other entertainment venues within the City of Edmonton have been identified and remain as ongoing areas of concern for several community, business and government stakeholders. Several reports and initiatives designed to address these issues are currently before city council in this regard, and many contain recommendations that may have varying degrees of impact on the Edmonton Police Service.

BACKGROUND

The EPS has partnered with a number of stakeholder groups, many of whom have taken a lead role on the issues of bar safety and other initiatives. Stakeholders include: The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Control Board (AGLC), municipal officials at all levels including Mayor Mandel and Councillor Leibovici, the City of Edmonton Old Strathcona Integrated Services Team (OSIST), the Old Strathcona Hospitality Association (OSHA), and the Old Strathcona Business Association (OSBA).

In an attempt to enhance the quality of life and increase personal safety, these groups have come forward with a spectrum of broad strategies and recommendations that range from revised planning and development procedures, to increased transportation and lighting. Other recommendations include additional policing resources, cross functional interagency enforcement teams, revised provincial liquor regulations, and enhanced training and best practices for the hospitality industry.

Some of the more prominent groups and/or initiatives include:

- The Alberta Roundtable on Violence In and Around Licensed Premises
Hosted by the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC) in partnership with the Solicitor General and Ministry of Public Security, the EPS and other stakeholders from around the province attended a series of roundtable discussions. One of the items discussed at the workshop was a rating system for bars and nightclubs. A full summary of findings and recommendations is scheduled for release in the fall of 2006.
- Mayor's Task Force
In January, 2006, Mayor Mandel held a meeting with EPS and requested that EPS produce a report with recommendations to enhance bar safety. The report which went forward to Community Services Committee outlined five recommendations including enhanced lighting and taxi services, changes to the provincial liquor regulations, the creation of a cross functional interagency enforcement team, and enhanced training and regulations for the hospitality industry. (Attachment 'A').
- Bar Safety Committee (Councillors Leibovici & Krushell)
This committee made up of city officials (including the EPS) and representatives from various post secondary educational institutions is examining solutions to increase bar safety. Among the solutions being discussed is a rating system for bars and nightclubs, similar in scope to that of the hotel industry.
- The City of Edmonton Old Strathcona Integrated Services Team (OSIST), and the West Edmonton Mall Integrated Services Team.
These committees researched and produced fourteen overarching strategies and initiatives to enhance the quality of life in the communities in and around Old Strathcona and West Edmonton Mall. The EPS is a suggested lead in 5 of the strategies, and is a stakeholder in several others such as the Responsible Hospitality Institute Process briefly outlined below:
 - The Responsible Hospitality Institute Process (RHI)
The RHI defines itself as "a vital networking, facilitation and web-interactive resource that assists cities in planning, managing and policing hospitality zones." For the past two months the City of Edmonton, the EPS and other stakeholder groups have been active participants in this process. Arising from their work will be a series of recommendations by the fall of 2006.

ISSUES

For the policing issues and challenges specific to Whyte Avenue see the attached report titled “Mayor’s Task Force – Whyte Avenue Recommendations.”

A list of all the initiatives that have occurred on or in relation to Whyte Avenue over the past 6 years is attached to this report. The enclosed list will form part of the interim report being produced by the Planning and Development Department for the July 10th, 2006 Community Services Committee. (Attachment ‘B’).

The bar and nightclub rating incentive system is currently being discussed within various groups at such as the *Alberta Roundtable on Violence In and Around Licensed Premises*. It is anticipated that further recommendations will be forthcoming around this issue and the other potential solutions that have been identified.

CONCLUSION

The EPS continues to play an active role in the many stakeholder groups looking for solutions to identified quality of life and other community issues that have arisen in relation to the hospitality industry.

**Written by: Staff Sergeant Ron Gabruck
South Division D Platoon**

**Approved by: Superintendent Mark Logar
South Division**

**Approved by: Deputy Chief Mike Bradshaw
Patrol Services Bureau**



EDMONTON POLICE SERVICE



MEMORANDUM

2006 February 02
Attachment A

TO: Superintendent Mark Logar
South Division

FROM: Staff Sergeant Ron Gabruck
South Division

SUBJECT: Mayor's Task Force - Whyte Avenue Recommendations

Report Summary:

This report responds to a request from Mayor Mandel for the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) to provide recommendations on how to increase both public and police safety on Whyte Avenue.

Background:

Public safety in and around the area of Whyte Avenue has been identified and remains an ongoing concern for several community, business and government stakeholders.

The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Control Board (AGLC), municipal officials at all levels, the City of Edmonton Old Strathcona Integrated Services Team (OSIST), the Old Strathcona Hospitality Association (OSHA), and the Old Strathcona Business Association (OSBA) are among the groups actively involved in seeking a solution to the unique problems of Whyte Avenue. Several reports are currently before city council in this regard.

Issue:

Although Whyte Avenue has a significant presence of retail and commercial business, many of the businesses on Whyte Avenue are focused around the hospitality industry thus, making it the largest entertainment district in the Edmonton metropolitan area. The area consists of approximately 40 bars, lounges and restaurants, with a total seating capacity of an estimated 13,000. The Whyte Avenue entertainment district attracts people of all ages however; it is particularly appealing to the 18-30 year-old population. During the summer peak hours, it is

common for Whyte Avenue to be frequented by upwards of 20,000 people. The convergence of a large number of people in this concentrated area, combined with the excessive consumption of liquor; exuberant and rowdy behavior; contributes to significant public safety and policing issues. Likewise, the inappropriate behavior of some Whyte Avenue patrons contributes to the perception of criminality, thereby fueling the fears of the neighboring residential community and reducing their quality of life.

The EPS has utilized both reactive and proactive strategies as it strives to increase public safety. Programs such as '*Education through Enforcement*' and '*No Booze on Board*' and *Canada Day, Fringe Festival* and other Standard Operating Plans, are examples of focused enforcement campaigns and strategic staffing that have been effective in the maintenance of order on Whyte Avenue. Furthermore, the EPS has partnered with the various stakeholder groups, many of whom have taken a lead role on the issues of bar safety and other initiatives.

In 2005, the EPS responded to over 3600 calls for service on or immediately adjacent to Whyte Avenue and another 2400 calls to the nearby neighborhoods. These calls represent a broad spectrum of public disorder and criminal activity ranging from public urination, vandalism, to theft and assaults. It was not uncommon to determine that the offenders in many of these situations were in fact patrons leaving the Whyte Avenue entertainment district. The financial and social consequence of these behaviors is borne by the residents, the business community, and the City of Edmonton who by default bear the costs of cleaning, repairing, and replacing property.

Recommendations:

The EPS is of the opinion, that a multi-level interdisciplinary approach is required in order to optimize public safety and improve the quality of life on or in relation to the Whyte Avenue entertainment district. Therefore, the EPS advances the following recommendations that have been assigned into municipal, provincial and hospitality industry categories:

Municipal:

1. Lighting

Experience suggests that in areas where street lighting is poor or non-existent, it can contribute to increased criminal activity (i.e. public urination, consumption of alcohol and narcotics, graffiti, vandalism, drug trafficking and so forth). Enhanced street lighting should significantly decrease inappropriate social and criminal behaviors. The EPS understands that the streetlights on Whyte Avenue are currently operating at less than optimal illumination levels. Likewise, the EPS has been informed that technology could allow the street lights to be programmed to provide brighter illumination at predetermined times. We further recommend that streetscape lighting in adjoining lanes also be improved.

2. Transportation:

- a. **Taxi Stands** – Taxi stands should be erected at designated sites on or in the immediate vicinity of Whyte Avenue. Similar in fashion to an airport taxi terminus, taxis would queue and receive walkup fares. In doing so we believe it would result in the following:
 - i. Eliminate conflicts between patrons.
 - ii. Reduce fare refusals.
 - iii. Improve the take away of Whyte Avenue patrons – decrease waiting times.
 - iv. Reduce vehicle congestion on Whyte Avenue proper.
 - v. Enhanced pedestrian safety - reduce jaywalkers trying to hail a cab.
 - vi. More effective supervision of patrons.

This process will be enhanced with the cooperation and self-policing of the taxi companies.

3. Inter-Agency Enforcement Team:

Modeled after the successful program currently in place in Calgary, the EPS proposes the forming of an inter-agency enforcement team to be comprised of: the Fire Department; AGLC; Planning & Development; By-law Services and the EPS. The inter-agency enforcement team will provide for more effective, cooperative and efficient enforcement of legislation governing the entertainment district. This group would also be tasked with conceiving, implementing, and delivering educational, crime prevention and public safety campaigns.

Provincial:

4. A comprehensive review of the regulations governing licensed premises.

This would include:

- a. Mandatory hospitality industry training for employees of licensed premises:
 - i. Liquor Act / Regulations.
 - ii. Crisis intervention.
 - iii. Dealing with difficult people.
 - iv. First Aid /CPR.
 - v. Citizens' powers – criminal code.

b. Regulated Liquor Pricing:

- i. To reduce '*cheap drinks specials*' which contributes to excessive consumption and over intoxication.

c. Eliminate glass beverage containers:

Prevents bottles and beverage glasses being used as weapons. Beer bottles or glass beverage containers are slowly becoming the weapon of choice on Whyte Avenue. In 2005 through January 2006, the EPS responded to and/or investigated approximately 7 assaults in which the victim was struck with a beverage bottle or drinking glass. The EPS refers to this type of assault as '*bottleing*'. In order to curb this nature of assault, a number of U.S. cities have prohibited the service of alcoholic beverages in glass containers and we believe there is merit to this initiative.

Hospitality Industry:

5. Safety and Security Initiatives:

a. Training & Education:

- i. Formally trained and certified staff in customer service, beverage service.
- ii. Public safety, first aid & CPR.

b. Standard Policies & Procedures:

- i. Crowd management.
- ii. Liquor service.
- iii. Emergency Services response.
- iv. Safety & Security.
- v. Video surveillance.

The Edmonton Police Service is of the opinion that should the preceding recommendations be accepted, the Whyte Avenue entertainment district will reclaim its reputation as one of Edmonton's premier entertainment and retail destinations through:

- 1. Reduced crime and victimization.**
- 2. Minimized damage to private and commercial property.**
- 3. Cessation of late night and early morning traffic congestion and street noise.**
- 4. Increased public safety.**
- 5. Enhanced public order.**
- 6. Greater quality of life.**

Staff Sergeant Ron Gabruck
Cst. Randy Loxterkamp
Edmonton Police Service
D Platoon



Old Strathcona Foot Patrol Initiatives 2001 - 2006

Date	Initiative	Summary	Result
2001 Apr	Charity Parking Meter Program	Use of meters to discourage panhandling.	Discontinued program due to damage to property (parking meters).
2001 Aug	Neighborhood Foot Patrol Program - Expansion	Increase in constables along Whyte Avenue from 4 to 12.	Met increased policing demands.
2001 Aug	Bar Watch Program	Whyte Avenue Bars agreeing to follow safety guidelines.	Discontinued after bar contracts broken, due to high industry turnover.
2001 Aug	Community Coordinator	Constables assigned to liaise with various community stakeholders.	EPS representation and involvement in various community initiatives.
2002 Jan	Warming shelters	Warming shelters in area churches for indigents.	Discontinued due to negative public reaction.
2002 March	Mountain Bike Program	Mountain bikes used to patrol Old Strathcona area.	Positive program enhancing police visibility and response to calls in the community.
2002 May	Education through Enforcement Program. (May thru September).	Strict enforcement of traffic legislation.	Ongoing.
2002 July	Canada Day Operating Plan.	Development of proactive and innovative crowd management strategies for Canada Day	Successful crowd management strategies implemented.
2002 July	CCTV Program	Use of cameras to monitor Whyte Avenue	Program operated for two years. Discontinued - deemed ineffective.
2003 Feb	Mounted Horse Program	Use of horses on Whyte Avenue	Discontinued, not operational or cost effective.
2003 Jan	Control of liquor sales	Liquor outlets discontinuing sales of cheap beer	Reduction of low cost single units of alcoholic beverages. Meant to reduce unlawful conveyance and consumption on Whyte Avenue.
2003 May	Whyte Avenue Graffiti Clean Up Program.	Removal of all graffiti in Whyte Avenue area by convicted youths meeting community service time obligations.	ongoing
2003 May	Agent Letter- Petty Trespass Act	Agent status for members to deal with known gang members in licensed establishments.	ongoing

2003 May	Bar Information Meetings	Educational meeting with Whyte Avenue bars	ongoing
2004 May	Community Police Radio Network	Volunteers used to patrol Old Strathcona on Friday nights.	ongoing
2004 July	Whyte Avenue Vehicle Enforcement (WAVE)	Specific enforcement for stunting and speeding violations.	ongoing
2005 March	No Booze on Board Campaign	Enforcement of liquor laws relative to conveyance and/or consumption of liquor on tour buses and limousines.	ongoing
2006 March	Expansion of the Old Strathcona Foot Patrol Program.	Expanded program from 1 sergeant and 12 constables to two sergeants and 16 constables.	To be determined.
2006 June	Farmers Market Information Booth (Proposed)	Booth Staffed by EPS members at Old Strathcona Market	In Progress
2006 July	Taxi Stands Initiative. (Proposed)	Restricted parking from 103 Street to 106 Street between 2400 - 0600 hrs. Parking limited to taxi's only	In progress- proposal stage.