Economic Recovery Plan
Update to Community Committees

June 2021

Context

On April 29, 2021 Council concurred in the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee, as amended, and adopted the following:

1. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to consult with the City of Winnipeg Emergency Management Leadership Team (EMLT) and be directed to report back in 90 days to each Community Committee for input and recommendations to the Executive Policy Committee, with a proposed framework response and recovery plan to guide and develop the City's COVID-19 short term response and recovery strategies and actions that includes:

    A. A re-imagining of the way the City can deliver programs and services that have been impacted by COVID-19;

    B. A 2-year recovery plan that includes existing and new measures and strategies to promote job and economic growth, equity and resiliency

    C. A plan to initiate dialogue with federal, provincial and indigenous governments as well as Economic Development Winnipeg to take a wholistic approach to address the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated recovery plan;

    D. A process for community consultations that identifies the economic and social impacts of COVID-19 and provide recommendation to the EMLT for consideration into the Winnipeg COVID-19 recovery plan.

    E. A focus on the City of Winnipeg's downtown area, one that reflects the current collaborative economic recovery efforts of downtown stakeholders.

    F. Options to accelerate the servicing of un-serviced employed lands in Winnipeg.

2. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to incorporate the previously approved reports, as outlined below, in the report required in Recommendation 1 above:

    A. The Development of an Economic Recovery Plan for Community Centers, as directed by Council on March 25, 2021;

    B. Information on the feasibility and financial implications of providing a grant to all; establishments including hotels, motels and inns, which are required to collect an Accommodation Tax for the City of Winnipeg, equal to 50% of the value of the Accommodation Tax, to be provided on a monthly basis in 2021, as directed by the Executive Policy Committee on March 17, 2021.

That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

Actions taken by Council

Council actions to address COVID impacts in the 2021 budget:

- Continued the Infrastructure investment of $386 million in 2021 despite financial risk from COVID
- Maintained Transit service for residents to facilitate continued economic recovery
- Introduced economic recovery grants
- Relaxation of parking regulations
- Waiver of interest charges or late fees on taxes, utilities and ambulance charges
- Deferral of property and business tax payment deadlines
- Additional funding for affordable housing (RHI)
- Process improvements to PPD
- Establishment of an economic development office
- Waiver of temporary patio fees and expanded program
- Wellness Grant program
- Support to the Convention Centre and Garden City Community Centre

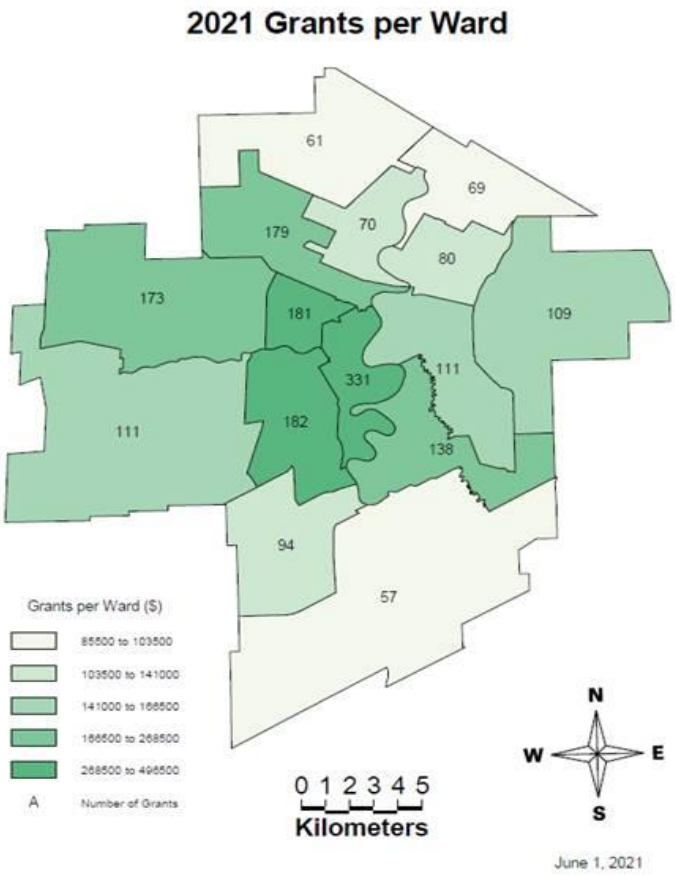
Actions taken by the Public Service include

- Introduction of Microsoft Teams to the Public Service which has created efficiency
- Approximately 1,800 members of the Public Service remain working from home to ensure service continuity for residents and businesses
- Technology used to perform inspections by assessment, PPD as well as the WPS
- Training is being done on-line where possible including by the WFPS
- All tenders and RFP's are now completely electronic
- All claims are received and adjusted electronically
- Recreational facilities have modified how residents interact and use golf courses and other services
- Discretionary expenses have been curtailed including travel
- Capped expenditures for Fleet
- Hiring freeze for those positions that are not critical or urgent, including deferrals
- Libraries have expanded their digital offerings and have provided hold-pickup services to residents.

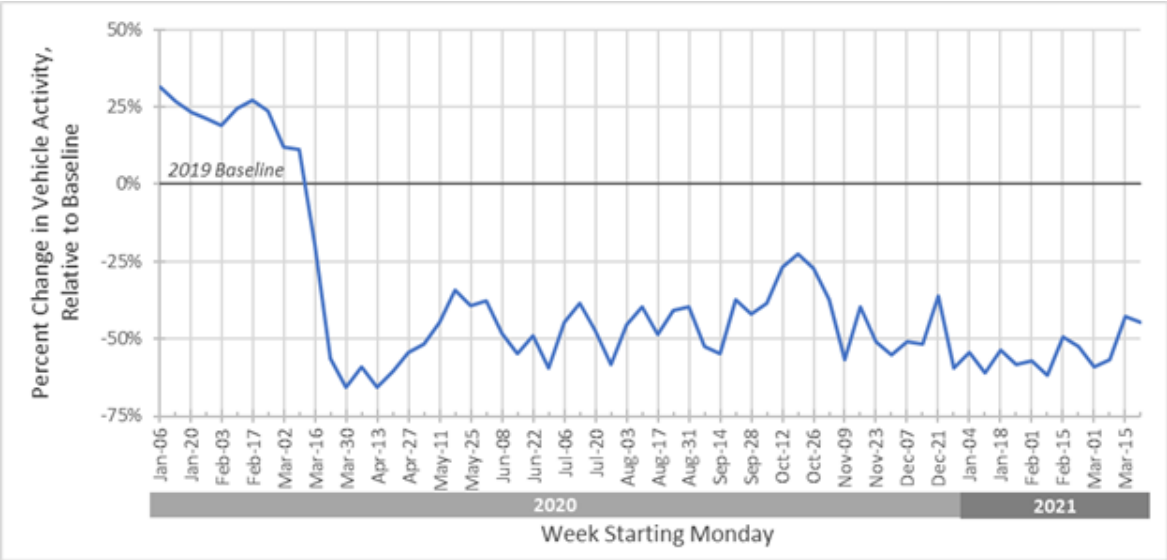
Downtown Challenges

The pandemic had a significant impact to the downtown and the Public Service plans to align the City's recovery plan in collaboration with the Downtown Winnipeg BIZ.

The economic recovery grants were distributed to businesses in every corner of the city, and the map below shows larger numbers were issued to downtown businesses given the density of business activity in those wards.



Similar to the reductions seen in transit ridership, there is a consistent 50% reduction in vehicle traffic downtown.



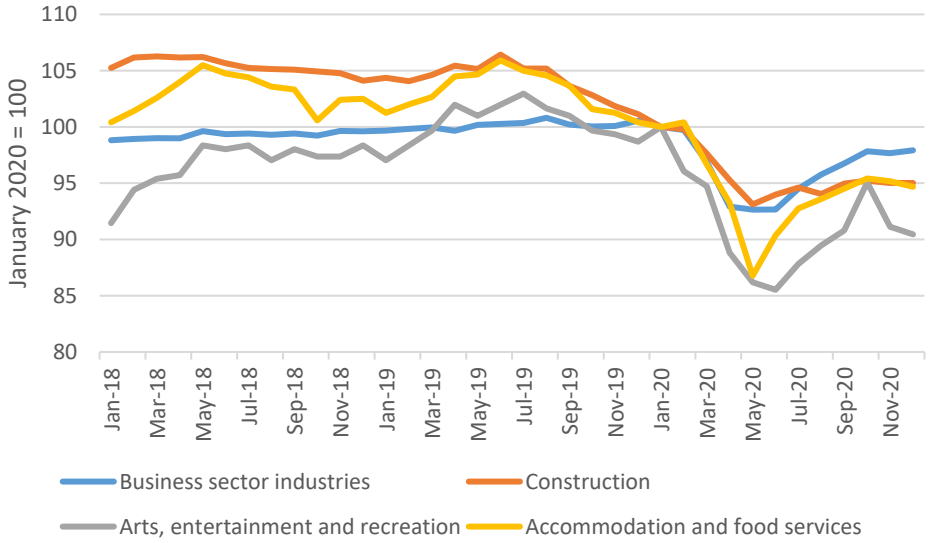
Community Centre Challenges

Analysis of the financial condition of community centres indicates that the majority have used government programs to remain sustainable and there may be opportunity to ensure they remain viable through some targeted initiatives.

Hard-hit sectors

An economic impact analysis shows that Art, Entertainment and Recreation (AER), Accommodation and Food Services (AFS), and construction industries have been the hardest hit sectors. The AFS impact is evidenced by the below-normal amounts in the Destination Marketing Reserve Fund indicating an inability to provide additional funding over specified minimums to Economic Development Winnipeg (EDW) and the Convention Centre.

Chart 2: Select Active Business Indices, Winnipeg (CMA)



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 33-10-0270-01 Experimental estimates for business openings and closures for Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas, seasonally adjusted, Economic Research Calculations

Next Steps

1. Seek input from this Committee on ways to support the COVID-19 framework response and recovery plan through:
    a. Tax measures
    b. Policy changes
    c. Process improvements
    d. Collaboration and advocacy
    e. Other measures

2. Present the summary of input from all five Community Committees to Executive Policy Committee for review and consideration.