

Entry 3 - Downtown Kelowna Association

On-Street Services - Downtown Kelowna Association

Safety & Security

Ongoing

Covering a 42-square block radius, DKA's On-Street Services teams are dedicated to the safety, security, and cleanliness of Downtown Kelowna during and after business hours. The Downtown On Call (DOC) and Clean Team ambassadors are the most visible members of the DKA, working with business members, visitors to Downtown, the RCMP, and social service agencies to help foster and maintain a positive social environment in Downtown Kelowna

The need for providing security measures in Downtown Kelowna came to the forefront in 2002, at which time the DKA hired International Crowd Management (ICM), followed by Highland Security, to act as the 'Downtown Patrol'. Outside security firms employed a 'hands-on' approach to security, which resulted in friction between the DKA and those who were deemed as 'problem residents of the Downtown area'. The DKA then decided to create an in-house solution that would allow them to meet the needs of the business community and visitors to Downtown Kelowna, while creating better working relationships with problematic individuals and social service agencies. In 2008, DKA's Downtown on Call Ambassadors assumed the duties of managing on-street issues in Downtown Kelowna. Twenty years on, the city has welcomed an additional 50,000 residents with Downtown Kelowna experiencing a high rate of development in the last decade. The population increase, (3,200 new residents in Downtown in the last 2 years) combined with a lack of housing affordability and treatment options for the mentally ill and/or drug addicted, has created a set of problems that are common in many cities' downtown areas. On-Street Services continues to meet the challenges of a growing Downtown and strives to strike a balance between helping to ensure businesses prosper while managing an increasing number of social challenges. On-Street Services is an integral piece of our organization, playing a key role in making Downtown Kelowna a safe and enjoyable environment in which to live, work, play, and own a business.

1. To provide a safe and enjoyable environment for work, living, commerce, and leisure through a respectful approach to interacting with mentally ill and/or drug addicted individuals. This is achieved through the daily on-street presence and actions of the DOC Ambassadors and Clean Team members.
2. Act as the liaison between business owners and social service agencies such as the RCMP, Interior Health, and City of Kelowna Bylaw, ensuring lines of communication are healthy and DKA's objectives for On-Street Services are being met.
3. To help enforce the law through education, communication, and respect rather than taking a combative, hands-on approach.
4. To maintain the cleanliness and safety of Downtown Kelowna through daily removal and disposal of biohazards, graffiti, and refuse.
5. To maintain a highly visible daily on-street presence and act as a source of reliable information, navigation, and assistance for visitors to Downtown Kelowna

All stakeholders in, visitors to, and residents of Downtown Kelowna. This includes individuals and/or groups who are somehow disenfranchised, mentally ill and/or drug addicted.

In 2008, the DKA Board of Directors approved the creation of 'Downtown on Call'. DKA Program Manager, Ron Beahun, was named On-Street Services Manager and five (5) other team members were hired for patrol duties. 'Clean Team' is created out of the need for assistance with cleaning duties. In 2010 the first DOC vehicle and power washer purchase, with one (1) part-time Clean Team member hired (March-November). In 2016, the first full time, year-round Clean Team employee is hired. The DKA's On-Street Services department now comprises of both the Downtown on Call Ambassadors and the Clean Team, a group of fourteen(14) employees led by On-Street Services Manager, Ron Beahun. FUN FACT: Cleaning was not initially part of the Downtown on Call strategy. The bulk of cleaning duties fell almost solely to Ron Beahun; while he occasionally had assistance from a summer student, he performed these tasks otherwise on his own. A broom and dustpan, garbage bags, a few cans of

paint, and jugs of water were hand-pulled by Ron in a John Deere wagon as he patrolled the Downtown core, cleaning up overnight sleep sites, drug paraphernalia, and graffiti.

Through perseverance and dedication, On-Street Services has been overwhelmingly successful at meeting their objectives. A province-wide opioid epidemic, lack of funding for mental health care, inadequate supportive housing, and rising inflation—all coupled with a rapidly growing urban centre—continues to keep the On-Street Services department busy. To meet their goals, On-Street Services now comprises over 50% of the DKA's annual budget.

Despite challenges, On-Street Services is consistently held in high regard by business owners, property managers, visitors to Downtown, and residents of the Downtown core. Our Downtown streets are safer and cleaner, communication with social service agencies is consistent and effective, and On-Street Services is now viewed as a direct conduit between stakeholders and the RCMP. The hands-off, consultative approach continues to prove an effective method of managing the disenfranchised population.