

## Project Update on Tomorrow's Chinatown

### RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Priorities and Finance Committee receive the report and the associated attachments for the Corporate Record.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- *Tomorrow's Chinatown* is a City-led project approved with financial support from the Council Innovation Fund. A condition of the funding was to report back with an update no later than Q3 2020. Access to funding was directed to the 2019 and 2020 fiscal years, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic the project timeline has been adjusted. It is anticipated that the project work will continue well into 2021.
- What does this mean to Calgarians? *Tomorrow's Chinatown* is a pilot project that is applying a new and different way of doing The City's planning and engagement work. As a pilot project it has the potential to change city-wide policies and procedures in how engagement for future local area planning is undertaken, and the role of culture in shaping community.
- Why does it matter? Chinatown is one of Calgary's most distinctive neighbourhoods with a long and deep history vital to the fabric of Calgary and important to residents, citizens and visitors. Chinatown's importance in recalling and reinforcing the history of Asian immigration to Calgary cannot be overstated. Moreover, Calgary Chinatown is located along a strategic gateway to downtown, and serves as a critical link to the Centre City communities of Eau Claire and East Village. New re-development opportunities in Chinatown have the potential to shift and diversify Calgary's new economy that builds on the foundation of an already established cultural hub and destination.
- Key areas of innovation enabled by the funding:
  - Development of a Request for Proposal (RFP) procurement process that included members of the community;
  - Creation of a combined Cultural Plan and Local Area Plan engagement process that responds to community input and enables community support in the delivery; and
  - Urban Alliance partnerships enabling academic researchers from the University of Calgary to inform the project's outcomes.
- Although minor refinements to specific budget items have taken place as information and project requirements were identified, no changes are proposed to the overall consulting budget in the amount of \$500,000.
- The greatest value in undertaking this project has been leveraged by the funding, which has allowed Administration to advance a unique, culturally sensitive and collaborative framework. This framework has enabled community guidance in a creative process of sharing and relationship building.
- On 2019 March 18, Council approved the project funding and the recommendations of PFC2019-0282 and PFC2019-0294 by: 1) approving the application for Council Innovation Funding for the Chinatown Cultural Plan and Area Redevelopment Plan in the amount of \$250,000; and 2) directing Administration to report back to PFC with a project update and how the funds were utilized no later than Q3 2020.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: **A prosperous city**
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

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### DISCUSSION

*Tomorrow's Chinatown* was approved with financial support from the Council Innovation Fund (CIF), and as such specific requirements for innovation have been incorporated into the project. This report is responding to Council direction tied to the funding, and offers updates on the areas of innovation, funding, timelines, and work in progress.

#### Areas of Innovation

Innovation has been a specific area of focus and attention for the project. To date eight specific areas of innovation have been noted. Administration continues to identify additional opportunities as the project progresses, and on a quarterly basis undertakes "lessons learned" sessions to document the learnings. Identified areas of innovation include:

- Procurement process improvements
- Combined engagement plan delivery and innovation
- Support of the Chinatown Artist-In-Residency program in partnership with The New Gallery
- New on-boarding process for community members on Advisory Groups
- Consultation with community stakeholders on project communications and participatory engagement
- Council-directed scope changes to address community needs
- Academic research and project support from three Urban Alliance partnerships
- Implementation of new technology to undertake consultation during COVID-19

#### Project funding

The \$500,000 approved consulting budget for *Tomorrow's Chinatown* project came from three City sources, being Planning & Development's 2019 and 2020 operating budget, Planning & Development's reserve funds, and the CIF application. A total of \$250,000 was allocated from Planning & Development's operating budget and reserve funds and the remaining balance came from the CIF application (PFC2019-0282).

Based on the project work completed to date, the approved consulting budget for the project is sufficient. No significant changes are expected to the overall budget. The table below highlights the progress made to date.

	Approved Funding (2019-20)	Actual Spent (2019)	Actual Spent to-date (2019-2020)	Committed Costs (excluding paid) to date	Estimate at Completion (2021)	Projected Contingency
Total	\$500,000	\$51,000	\$139,000	\$348,000	\$487,000	\$13,000

#### Project timelines

Four primary factors have impacted the original project timelines:

- Administration required approval of the project scope at the 2019 September 04 meeting of SPC on Planning and Urban Development before releasing the RFP for the Cultural Plan consultant.
- A unique project charter identifying a governance structure and formalized levels of authority was required prior to undertaking the project. This has ensured transparency and responsible decision-making.

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- A one-of-a-kind RFP to hire the Cultural Plan consultant that involved community stakeholders in the decision-making process was developed and piloted. This process can now be used for future projects.
- With the declaration of the State of Local Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, additional disruption to the tentative project timelines became apparent. In response, Administration pivoted to respond to the cancellation of all in-person public events and engagement. This meant that the recruitment and announcement of the Advisory Group was temporarily delayed. Moreover, the initial Advisory Group meeting was delayed by nearly three months.

Impacted timelines now show that the delivery of the draft Cultural Plan is expected in Q2 2021. The draft Local Area Plan is targeted for completion in Q3 2021. Refer to Attachment 2 for a more detailed breakdown of the revised timelines and updated consulting costs.

### Work In Progress/Next Steps

- Three distinct project phases, being “Discover, Create, and Realize” are being used to deliver the project.
- An external community Advisory Group recruited through a City-wide application and nomination process is assisting with the project delivery. Meetings with the Advisory Group are on-going with four meetings held between June and August. Another 15 sessions have been tentatively identified extending into 2021.
- An on-going virtual lunch series called “Let’s Talk Culture!” has allowed the project to focus on additionally engaging youth, seniors and community advocates.
- Work is underway on the 2020 June 15 Council-supported streetscape masterplan for Centre Street and the 2020 July 20 James Short renaming Notice of Motion.

### **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)**

- Public Engagement was undertaken
- Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- Public/Stakeholders were informed
- Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

This project update did not require engagement, but broader engagement is underway tied to the overall project deliverables.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Social**

*Tomorrow's Chinatown* provides an opportunity to advance the goals and priorities captured in The City's 2016 Cultural Plan. This project responds to a more deliberate and formalized approach to include cultural planning and cultural elements in planning policy. Moreover, the project is developing and piloting new processes that will influence The City's approach to ethno-cultural engagement and develop cultural competency benefiting not only Chinatown, but also other communities city-wide.

#### **Environmental**

*Tomorrow's Chinatown* will deliver a new culturally-based Local Area Plan for Chinatown that will apply smart growth principles as they relate to sustainable, walkable, and complete

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communities. The new Local Area Plan will establish a Land Use framework that responds to recent decisions made on the Green Line alignment and capitalize on the opportunity for station area place-making and transit-oriented development.

### **Economic**

The economic strategy for Calgary, identifies "Place" as one of the four interconnected focus areas to an enduring and prosperous economy. Cultural activities play an important role in resilient cities that are able to attract talent and businesses because of the quality of place. Moreover, an updated policy framework provides certainty for growth and economic investment.

### **Service and Financial Implications**

*Tomorrow's Chinatown* is included on the 2020 workplan for the City Planning and Policy Service Line and is part of the Downtown Strategy – Positioning Downtown for the New Economy. Any unused 2020 one-time operating budget for *Tomorrow's Chinatown* project in Community Planning, City Planning & Policy will be requested to be carried forward to 2021. It has no financial impact to the Service Line budget and specifically to the staffing costs as the project work is expected to be completed in 2021.

### **Existing operating funding - one-time**

Any unused 2020 one-time budget will be requested to be carried forward as part of the mid-cycle adjustment process. The estimated amount is \$230,000.

### **Opportunity cost of pursuing the recommendation**

Administration has considered the opportunity cost of undertaking this project, and any shift away from *Tomorrow's Chinatown* will result in an outdated policy plan that does not align with community expectations and Council's priority on A City of Safe and Inspiring Neighbourhoods. Not pursuing this work will also fail to realize the sunk cost and resources from the community volunteers, business support and on-going consulting work.

### **RISK**

The work on *Tomorrow's Chinatown* has been a priority for a number of years and is well established. Recent Council-directed changes to the project's scope pertaining to Centre Street streetscape plan and the renaming of the James Short site are currently unfunded.

### **ATTACHMENT(S)**

1. Background and Previous Council Direction
2. Anticipated Project Timelines and Consulting Budget

#### Department Circulation

<b>General Manager</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Approve/Consult/Inform</b>
Stuart Dalglish	Planning & Development	Approve
Katie Black	Community Services	Inform