

Business Advisory Committee Update to Council

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council receive the report for the corporate record.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Business Advisory Committee (BAC) continues to act as a conduit to address perceived City of Calgary barriers that business stakeholders face in their everyday operations. BAC continues to provide insights and perspectives from across a variety of business sectors to guide and support Administration in the execution of delivering services in an efficient and effective manner.
- The purpose of this report is for BAC to provide an update to Council on progress of this committee's work plan, priority areas, Change of Use work, and recommended updates to the BAC Terms of Reference to include the Business Sector task force as a subcommittee.
- **What does this mean to Calgarians?** Business owners and investors should perceive The City of Calgary as "open for business" and to deliver our services in an efficient and effective manner. With the current economic climate, it is more important than ever that The City look for ways to enhance and promote Calgary as a destination for economic diversity and investment. It is especially important to continue to reduce barriers for businesses during Calgary's recovery both economically and through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Why does this matter?** Calgary will continue to grow as a magnet for talent, a place where there is opportunity for all, and strive to be the best place in Canada to start and grow a business. We must continually assess our business practices and processes to ensure we are removing barriers and providing value for our customers.
- Ongoing collaboration between BAC, Administration's Business and Local Economy (BLE) team, and business stakeholders will continue to advance a stronger level of service, improve the customer journey and customer satisfaction, and resolve service delivery challenges.
- BAC and BLE have been working with industry stakeholders to focus on understanding and addressing concerns and systemic issues/barriers on streamlining the Change of Use process and permitting when dealing with The City.
- This report supports Administration's Rethink to Thrive strategy and its action for The City to "be champions for business success and apply a business-friendly lens to planning and service delivery." In addition, this report aligns with Business Environment Focus area of Calgary's Economic Strategy by working with government and business to continually improve City services to foster Calgary's business environment, innovation ecosystem and help build the foundation for business success.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: **A prosperous city.**
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included in **Attachment 1.**

DISCUSSION

Business Advisory Committee (BAC) Workplan and Priorities

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The BAC Q4 2019 – Q1 2020 Work Plan identified several opportunities to prioritize perceived system barriers. Three priorities were identified:

1. Restaurants: Importance of being more responsive with timelines. Municipal and Provincial collaboration,
2. Change of Use: Stakeholders would like a focus on streamlining process and permitting, and
3. Industrial Land: Ensuring City industrial land remains regionally competitive.

The BAC Working Group identified the following priorities for 2021/2022:

1. The continuation of improving the Change of Use process,
2. Maintaining a strong relationship with Administration's Industrial Growth Strategy team,
3. Initiate competitive timelines and permit process to enable a more competitive and stronger restart for Calgary.

The BAC process includes conducting confidential whiteboarding sessions with external stakeholders to ensure The City is streamlining the approvals processes for the necessary permits for entrepreneurs to conduct business in Calgary and in turn creating a flexible and functional customer service experience for them. See **Attachment 2** for BAC Timeline and Workplan.

Change of Use Update

BAC, in partnership with BLE, conducted whiteboarding sessions and workshops with targeted stakeholders who are characterized as experienced applicants and represent the major players in business in the Calgary market. They range from real estate and land development corporations, commercial property management, brokers and realtors. The outcome and goals of the sessions were:

1. Build a better understanding of businesses needs and perspectives when interacting with The City to open and manage their business, especially with the Change of use domain.
2. Identify opportunities to streamline the Change of Use (Policy; Land Use Bylaw; Timeline and Cost) process when opening a business

The What We Heard Report (**Attachment 4**) is a summary of the key findings based on the feedback from internal and external stakeholders. This includes major issues, potential considerations, an empathy map outlining the applicants experience when navigating the processes and activities related to Change of Use, and a high-level environmental scan of similar applications in comparable cities. The What We Heard Report will be distributed to Administration's applicable General Manager(s) to review and address the issues identified. It is critical for the customers and stakeholder to see improvements in this economic environment. Additionally, in collaboration with Administration, BLE will continue to work in a coordinated fashion to support activities to address issues and identify further ways to improve the Change of Use process. Details related to the opportunities for improvement, key findings, empathy mapping, and environmental scans are included in **Attachment 4**.

BAC Terms of Reference

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In 2019 March 18, the establishment of BAC and its Terms of Reference was approved, and in 2019 September 30 minor revisions to the TOR were adopted. Membership of the working group includes external stakeholders who provide insight into perceived and systemic barriers businesses face when working with The City, and identify opportunities where The City can improve its practices to ensure services are delivered in an efficient and effective manner.

On March 16, City Council endorsed The City of Calgary's COVID-19 governance structure to help flatten the curve and continue service and support to citizens, communities and businesses. A Business Sector Support Task Force was established to respond to business needs and priorities in the response and recovery from COVID-19. This included making operational decisions and sharing information to ensure coordinated support for the business community during the pandemic, and into recovery and beyond. Membership of the Task Force included representation from City Council, Calgary Chamber, Calgary Economic Development, Calgary Arts Development, Tourism Calgary, Business Improvement Areas and non-profit and business owners from various sectors.

The Task Force advocated on behalf of the Calgary business community to other orders of government; supported frequent two-way communication with the business community to inform tools and resources created to support businesses, enabled local government to think outside the box to help businesses, and facilitated connections within the business community.

The Task Force, Chaired by the Manager, BLE served as a conduit for the business community to share their immediate needs in real-time. The biggest difference between the membership of BAC's current working group and the Task Force is the membership. The Task Force includes entrepreneurs and business owners, and the current working group does not.

Both groups will continue to exist, but the Task Force will now be considered a sub-working group of BAC. This will give the Task Force members a greater opportunity to provide feedback directly to Council on meaningful issues to the business community, providing more weight to their input.

As The City moves into restart and recovery, it is important the two way communication with the broader business community and business owners continues identify priorities to focus on. Transitioning Administration's Business Sector Task Force as a subcommittee to BAC will enable this to happen. See **Attachment 2** for the updated Terms of Reference.

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

Strategic communications and ongoing engagement with the business community and affiliated partners and stakeholders enables issues to be surfaced and improved, and as a result, creates improved conditions for businesses to thrive. The BAC will continue to receive advice and recommendations from the working group and task force, prioritize perceived systemic barriers,

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and create What We Heard reports, work with respective City departments to resolve, and extinguish issues and remove red tape. Essential to these conversations and improvements is creating awareness within the business community on how their feedback is being used or addressed, and new or improved services, information and resources. BAC will start to share updates with the broader community of business owners and investors once solutions or service improvements have been determined and implemented.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

Remaining responsive to the needs of the business community through these unprecedented times is a critical social consideration.

Environmental

There are no environmental implications anticipated to be associated with implementing these recommendations.

Economic

Ensuring Calgary's "open for business"/business-friendly reputation with investors and business owners is paramount in delivering services in an efficient and effective manner, further supporting Calgary's economic recovery.

Service and Financial Implications

No anticipated financial impact.

RISK

It is important to identify opportunities to improve the business journey to open and manage a business in Calgary. With the challenging economic conditions in 2019, 2020 and 2021, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the foundations of a strong and vibrant local economy are even more important. BAC will ensure the identification of person(s) in the collection of external stakeholder conversations in working group sessions remains confidential. Working group participants that partake in a whiteboard session are notified that all discussions are subject to Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP Act) of Alberta. The breaching of this confidentiality would have every negative impacts so it is the role of BAC and BLE to sustain the anonymity of those providing the feedback that will inform improvements.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Previous Council Direction and Background
2. Business Advisory Committee Terms of Reference Amendments
3. Business Advisory Committee Timeline and Workplan
4. What We Heard Report – Change of Use
5. **Public Submission**

**City Manager's Office Report to
Business Advisory Committee
2021 June 25**

**ISC: UNRESTRICTED
BAC2021-0956
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Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
David Duckworth	City Manager's Office	Approve