

OLYMPIC PLAZA CULTURAL DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Olympic Plaza is the living room of the city. It is the economic and social heart for citizens, businesses and visitors. It is the one place where Calgarians know they can gather to celebrate, remember, have fun or simply just relax. Calgary has changed dramatically since the Plaza as we know it today was built in 1988 prior to the Winter Olympics. The city's population has nearly doubled since then and as the city has changed so too has the need to think about the Plaza, how it functions, who uses it and whether there is a need to better integrate it into the activities and spaces around it. The Municipal Plaza, built prior to the Olympic Plaza, has always been considered its own space separated from the Olympic Plaza by Macleod Trail. Nearly three decades later, there is a growing need to think about the future of these two important public spaces.

The Civic District Public Realm Strategy was approved by Council in January 2016. As an investment implementation strategy, it identifies a range of public realm and infrastructure improvements that should be undertaken by The City of Calgary over time, to strengthen the area's importance as a key destination for Calgarians and visitors. The strategy identified Calgary's Cultural Heart – spaces around Municipal Plaza, Olympic Plaza and the Municipal Building – as the priority area in need of repair, maintenance and enhancement.

One of the actions identified in the Civic Districts Public Realm Strategy is to refine, phase, and implement a comprehensive Master Plan for the redevelopment of Olympic Plaza, Municipal Plaza, and surrounding buildings. Urban Strategy is leading this initiative in partnership with other City departments and the Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC). The project will be split into four phases: engagement, design/programming, construction and operating.

In order to realize the redevelopment of the Olympic Plaza Cultural District (previously "Cultural Heart"), it is important to determine the land, funding and financing strategy for the project. This will be done in collaboration with CMLC.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Standing Policy Committee (SPC) on Planning and Urban Development recommend that Council receive this report for information.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, DATED 2016 APRIL 13

That the Administration Recommendation contained in Report PUD2016-0277 be approved.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2016 January 11, Council approved PUD2015-0846, approving the Civic District Public Realm Strategy including ten strategies that will guide the development and enhancement of the Civic District. A funding and implementation framework is also outlined in the approved document that will guide future initiatives.

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BACKGROUND

The Urban Strategy Department is leading Administration's efforts to develop an exciting new vision for the Olympic Plaza Cultural District, including linkages to the area surrounding it and amenities such as the New Central Library. This project was identified as a priority investment opportunity in the Civic District Public Realm Strategy. Urban Strategy has engaged resources to help with the first phase of the project, engagement of Calgarians, which builds on past engagement. This phase of the project will provide the background for the creation of a vision for the redevelopment of the Olympic Plaza Cultural District through an international design competition. The area included in this project, and referred to as the Olympic Plaza Cultural District, is shown in the Attachment.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Project Overview

The Olympic Plaza Cultural District redevelopment project will be undertaken in four separate phases: engagement, design/programming, construction, and operating. Urban Strategy will lead Phase 1, with extensive engagement of City departments, stakeholders and the public. The goal of this phase is to deliver a foundation document containing the ideas that will feed into future phases of the project. After public engagement is completed, Urban Strategy will work in partnership with CMLC to deliver on subsequent phases of the project including the Request for Qualifications which will initiate the call for proposals from qualified design and construction teams in Calgary and from around the world. The final deliverables of the project as a whole will be a phased Master Plan for the plazas and surrounding buildings.

In order to align with other projects currently underway the project team has set aggressive timelines. Public engagement is already underway with deliverables anticipated for the end of 2016 June. The next phases are anticipated to begin shortly after engagement is completed with a call for proposals from qualified design and construction teams anticipated for July.

Phase One: Public Engagement

The first phase of work in the Olympic Plaza district redevelopment is to engage Citizens, Community Groups, Businesses, Institutions, City of Calgary Business Units. The redesign of the plazas should be a community driven, collaborative effort of placemaking that advocates citizen ownership and public participation, building on the feedback outlined in the Civic District Public Realm Strategy.

This endeavour will build on previous engagement completed by Administration through the Civic District Public Realm Strategy and other initiatives. To help complete the outreach done to date, the engagement firm *Intelligent Futures* is assisting in the public engagement starting April and running to June. Through a variety of tactics engagement will focus on two streams of conversation: remember and dream. What are the important elements of the Plazas and surrounding spaces? What kinds of activities/amenities/programming should happen in the district?

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Final reporting on the engagement findings will be delivered by *Intelligent Futures* to Urban Strategy and CMLC in 2016 June and will consist of a functional program plan that will be used in preparation of the RFQ for Design and Construction of the project.

Funding & Financing: Land Strategy

A number of revitalization projects and city building initiatives in the area have already started including the rehabilitation of Historic City Hall, the New Central Library, and Third Street S.E Master Plan.

In addition to the public space improvements, cultural institutions like Art Commons, The Glenbow Museum and the Convention Centre are important pieces of the overall plan for upgrading the Olympic Plaza Cultural District. Administration is collaborating with a range of stakeholders to understand how these pieces fit into the overall strategy of capital improvements and funding within the area.

Governance for this project is key to its ultimate success. Administration has been working closely with CMLC, and learning from the New Central Library project, an accountable and efficient structure will be proposed and brought forward to Council along with the overall project financing and governance strategy for approval in 2016 Q3.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

There was a comprehensive public engagement component undertaken as part of the recent Civic District Public Realm Strategy, which included the results of previous engagement for the Centre City Plan, the Olympic Plaza Cultural District Manifesto, and the Centre City Parks & Public Realm Enhancements Plan. The general consensus among Calgarians, from the engagement noted above, revealed that Olympic Plaza could be a more vibrant, comfortable, safe, and animated space for citizens and visitors alike.

Strategic Alignment

The Olympic Plaza district redevelopment aligns with the *Municipal Development Plan (MDP)* and the *Centre City Plan* in terms of creating a city attractive to people and to business, creating a vibrant centre city, focusing on heritage and public art, and creating a beautiful city.

The Olympic Plaza implements the medium-term action identified in the Civic Districts Public Realm Strategy to refine, phase, and implement a comprehensive Master Plan for the Olympic Plaza, Municipal Plaza, and surrounding buildings.

Proceeding now with both the Olympic and Municipal Plaza coordinates design and construction with the renovations to Old City Hall as well as coordinating design with other initiatives like the Arts Commons plans for expansion.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Social

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This initiative will confirm priorities for amenities, features, programming that are most important to Calgarians and provide a vision that supports socialization, inclusion, builds a greater sense of community and fosters a safe, caring, vibrant and healthy environment.

Environmental

Implementing this redevelopment with a focus on public realm improvements aims to have a positive environmental impact through opportunities to incorporate sustainable development.

Economic

Attraction and retention of a creative young workforce is a key factor in the long-term robustness in the Centre City. Vital, engaging and beautiful public spaces will support this effort. Feedback from the private sector investment community indicates that investment dollars are attracted by areas with a high level of amenity.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

The current work, public engagement, is funded through existing operating budgets. The impact of the ultimate redevelopment project on operating budgets will be assessed during the next phases of the work.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

The current work, public engagement, does not impact capital budgets. The impact of the ultimate redevelopment project on capital budgets will be assessed during the next phase of work. Administration has been considering funding options to support this project as well as working with CMLC on the possible use of CRL funds in the Cultural District.

Risk Assessment

There are several projects already underway that will impact this area and will result in the need for investment in the near future. Not proceeding with the Olympic Plaza Cultural District project, will result in duplication of some construction elements and increase public costs. There is a narrow window of opportunity for funding this project through the Rivers District CRL and if this project is delayed that financing option will be lost and the enhancements to the area delaying indefinitely until alternate funding is secured.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

Several capital infrastructure projects are underway adjacent to the Olympic and Municipal Plazas. The coordination of these efforts along with the integration of the various public spaces identified in recent approved plans will result in the optimal investment of city resources while at the same time creating the celebratory public spaces Calgary needs. Also, funding options are available now to help bring the plans to reality.

ATTACHMENT

Map of Olympic Plaza Cultural District