

## Winter City Strategy

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Community Development Committee recommend that Council:

1. Receive the Winter City Strategy for information, developed as directed by Council through One Calgary 2019-2022, and
2. Refer future operating and capital requirements to the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets process.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- The Winter City Strategy will increase opportunities for citizens and businesses to embrace winter by creating and promoting unique winter experiences and activities that foster social vibrancy and equity, improve accessibility and increase economic activity.
- **What does this mean to Calgarians?** The Winter City Strategy will result in economic diversification and opportunities for Calgarians to be more active and creative more often during the winter months.
- **Why does it matter?** A strategy that promotes winter experiences and celebrations strengthens Calgary's appeal as a winter destination for visitors and creates opportunities for Calgarians to experience our city in a healthy and meaningful way.
- Environmental scans, citizen surveys and stakeholder engagement revealed gaps in our current winter-focused activities, business practices, accessibility, infrastructure design, health and safety.
- Engagement with internal and external stakeholders identified ways to improve available winter activities, increase support for winter-focused businesses, address barriers to inclusion and accessibility, and improve participant comfort and safety through winterization of amenities and public realm improvements.
- In 2021-2022, the Winter City Strategy will focus on actions that can be accomplished through existing budget allocations across the corporation. Funding required to fully implement the Winter City Strategy will be referred to the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets process.
- Background and Previous Council Direction: "The development of a Winter City and Event Strategy will increase opportunities for citizens to participate in civic and community life. By leading tourism programs and delivering high quality cultural attractions we will help grow the travel and tourism industry" (2019-2022 Service Plans and Budgets, pg. 32).
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A prosperous city

### DISCUSSION

Municipal comparisons and citizen and stakeholder engagement revealed current gaps in Calgary's winter programming, outdoor business activities, infrastructure and accessibility. The Winter City Strategy addresses festivals and events, outdoor business activities, and outdoor-focused programming and initiatives during the winter months (November – March).

To expand Calgary's brand to include 'winter city', the Winter City Strategy recommends aligning with global best practices to enhance mobility and public space to create more vibrant, healthy and equitable communities. This includes addressing social isolation, mobility barriers, lower activity levels and creating support for businesses in the winter. Winter initiatives promote

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individual and community health and well-being, strengthen social connections, enhance cultural vitality, and drive economic prosperity.

The Winter City Strategy's framework includes a vision, desired outcomes, goals and actions. The vision of the Winter City Strategy is that Calgary be celebrated as a world-renowned winter city, harnessing winter as an asset to create social and economic benefit. Desired outcomes focus on four key areas: Economic Diversification, Accessibility and Equity, Infrastructure and Design, and Calgary's Winter Story. Outcomes will be achieved with 12 strategic goals establishing Calgary as a recognized winter city (Attachment 1 – Winter City Strategy Overview).

Citizen surveys and stakeholder engagement were used to develop and validate the framework (vision, outcomes and goals) and identify 35 actions to achieve the strategic goals (Attachment 2 – Winter City Strategy Summary of Engagement).

COVID-19 pandemic restrictions created an immediate opportunity to put four of the identified actions into practice to address social isolation and support communities and businesses during the winter months in 2020-2021. The success of the piloted actions proved the value of having a strategy to address winter as a time of opportunity for residents and businesses:

- **Calgary's Winter Story:** The 'Love Winter' awareness campaign's social media plan generated positive comments about outdoor winter activities and initiatives from citizens across the city and delivered over 6.8 million impressions through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- **Economic Diversification:** Federal and City investment in the inaugural Chinook Blast, Calgary's Midwinter Roundup festival, saw 390,000 people attend the free, three-weekend event employing over 120 artists and 50 businesses, resulting in an estimated economic impact of \$3.5M.
- **Accessibility and Equity:** Embrace the Outdoors, a winter placemaking grant program delivered in partnership with the Calgary Parks Foundation, funded 29 local community projects that attracted over 32,000 citizens.
- **Infrastructure and Design:** The City's Winter Firepit Program resulted in almost 2,400 free bookings for families or groups across 95 temporary and permanent firepits throughout the city.

## **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

The "Love Winter" information campaign in February-March 2021 informed citizens about existing winter activities Calgary has to offer.

Two citizen surveys provided insight on citizen behaviour, expectations and preferences related to winter activities. 1,784 respondents participated in the surveys in November 2020 and March 2021.

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Two key stakeholder workshops with 29 representatives from community-based organizations including Civic Partners, were conducted in May 2021 to review and validate the strategy's vision, outcomes, goals and identify actions for implementation. In July 2021, workshop participants completed a validation survey to prioritize actions.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Social**

Implementation of the strategy will address gaps between supply and demand for community-based outdoor winter activities, programming, and events, and create more equitable access for all ages, abilities, and income levels. The strategy outlines ways to create more opportunities for participation, address social isolation, improve multi-modal transportation for all abilities, winterize public spaces to increase comfort and safety, and increase activity for new and long term residents to experience a more vibrant, healthy and accessible city during winter.

#### **Environmental**

New outdoor winter decorative lights and temporary light art installations in downtown and select parks will adhere to the City Centre Illumination Guidelines for light source energy efficiency and the Parks and Pathway Lighting Plan's guiding principle for minimal lighting when a project is within proximity of a natural or environmentally sensitive area.

#### **Economic**

The strategy will create opportunities for tourism and employment through outdoor winter-focused family programming and experiences that extend Calgary's appeal to residents, visitors and businesses.

#### **Service and Financial Implications**

*Other: New Operating (One Time and Base), New Capital*

An annual investment to support the strategy's implementation and a one-time investment to develop winter guidelines for infrastructure will be proposed in the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets process.

A capital investment will be requested in the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets process to increase outdoor winter animation, winterize utilities and amenities, and install outdoor temporary winter infrastructure. (Attachment 3 – Winter City Strategy Investment Benefits and Budget).

### **RISK**

Without Winter City operating and capital investments in the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets, The City will miss an opportunity to empower communities, build resiliency, support Calgarians' mental and physical health, bolster local businesses, improve safety, expand tourism value propositions, strengthen vibrancy and civic pride, and increase access and equity for all Calgarians during the winter months.

If the recommendations are approved, some citizens may question if the proposed investments are an essential service. Administration will ensure communication of the alignment of the strategy with Council's citizen priorities.

**Community Services Report to  
Community Development Committee  
2021 December 8**

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**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Winter City Strategy Overview
2. Winter City Strategy Engagement Summary
3. Winter City Strategy 2023-2026 Investment Categories and Benefits
4. Public Submissions

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Doug Morgan	Operational Services	Inform
Stuart Dalgleish	Planning & Development Services	Inform
Michael Thompson	Infrastructure Services	Inform
Carla Male	Corporate Planning & Financial Services	Inform