

CENTURY GARDENS REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Century Gardens has functioned as an urban plaza for over 30 years, providing space for respite in Calgary's urban core. This cultural landscape has been evaluated by the Calgary Heritage Authority and is listed on The City's Inventory of Historic Resources as a site with city-wide significance. The Century Gardens Redevelopment Plan (Attachment 1) was completed to re-establish its value as a public open space, to ensure historic preservation, and to improve long-term functionality for a wide variety of park users. Park assets in Century Gardens are nearing the end of their lifecycle and require replacement or upgrades. The proposed improvements in the Preferred Concept Plan (Attachment 2) will optimize visitor experience through addressing the lifecycle and safety concerns, preserving and enhancing the park's historical significance and re-imagining the space as a multi-use site. The redevelopment plan was created through stakeholder engagement, a review of the park's current state and utilization patterns, and an exploration into the park's history. Funding for this project is approved.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the SPC on Community and Protective Services recommends that Council:

1. Receive for information the Century Gardens Redevelopment Plan (Attachment 1); and
2. Approve the Century Gardens Preferred Concept Plan (Attachment 2).

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES, DATED 2016 JANUARY 15:

That the Administration Recommendations contained in Report CPS2016-0039 be approved.

Excerpt from the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the SPC on Community and Protective Services Held 2016 January 15:

"And further, that the letter received with respect to Report CPS2016-0039 be attached to the report prior to being forwarded to Council.

CARRIED"

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

At the 2014 October 17 meeting Council "approved proposed projects" in the Phase 3 ENMAX Legacy Parks, including \$9.69 million in capital funding for Century Gardens (LPC2014-0823).

At the 2003 June 21 meeting Council approved LPC2004-02, identifying Century Gardens for funding through the ENMAX Legacy Parks Program.

BACKGROUND

Century Gardens is a recognized historic resource in downtown Calgary and was originally developed in 1975 to celebrate Calgary's Centennial. The existing design is based on abstract expressions of Calgary's surrounding landscape; rivers, mountains, foothills, and prairie are represented in the concrete structures and landscape of the park. When built, it was considered

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a symbol of The City's growth and maturity. Today, its design is recognized as being a unique and rare, modern form of landscape architecture. Public engagement results showed that retention of the park's heritage components should be a main objective of the Preferred Concept Plan.

Century Gardens has not seen significant changes from its original design in over 30 years. The park's infrastructure requires much needed improvements. Mechanical and electrical equipment are at the end of their lifecycle and park structures and site furnishings are worn. While the original purpose of this park was to create intimate spaces for respite from urban life, the intimacy and lack of visibility in some areas leads to safety concerns. A review of the park's original purpose was required to meet current and future needs and to restore the park's prominence in Calgary's downtown urban core.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

In February 2010, Administration initiated the project with the retention of a design consultant through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process. Scope for this work was to establish a redevelopment plan for the park. The intent of the redevelopment plan was to analyze park layout and dominant features, connections to the street, relationship to neighbouring spaces, and dated infrastructure. The plan explores site context and current use patterns, and contains current condition assessments of park elements and a summary of historical significance. An extensive engagement process drove the creation of the Century Gardens Redevelopment Plan.

The redevelopment plan contains a Preferred Concept Plan that emerged following a clear consensus amongst stakeholders. The features of this concept include:

- Retention of many of the precast concrete elements (representing the Rocky Mountains) and the central berm (representing the foothills).
- Re-imagined pond areas (representing the Bow River) with integrated with spray elements for children.
- Pathway network improvements such as widening entrances and increasing route options
- Retention of the existing Parks' office with expansion to include public washrooms and a new building for a cafe along the south entry.
- Protection of mature trees where possible and new landscaping to respond to the cultural landscape.
- A small, grassed amphitheatre that can be programmed.

The Century Gardens Redevelopment Plan along with the Preferred Concept Plan will guide redevelopment of the park. The site on the northwest quadrant of the block is privately owned and is currently going through the planning applications process for a high-rise office building. Phasing of the Century Gardens redevelopment is proposed to account for adjacent development impacts and is somewhat contingent on the timing of adjacent development. Administration continues to work closely with the private developer to coordinate timelines and an interim greenspace has been constructed on the private site and will be accessible to the public during the planning applications process.

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Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

The process to develop the Century Gardens Redevelopment Plan included several phases of stakeholder engagement. A variety of methods were used to gather citizen input including:

- An onsite sounding board to gather user input including suggestions and comments for park improvements. A survey consultant was also hired to observe and record activities of park users. A total of 9102 park users either provided input formally or were observed through these efforts.
- Extensive engagement with the neighbouring private land owners to stage and discuss development on the site.
- Four engagement sessions to gain stakeholder feedback using a design continuum scale with design options that ranged from maximum preservation to maximum intervention.
- A project webpage was created on www.calgary.ca to inform stakeholders throughout the engagement process.

Stakeholders from Transportation and Planning, Development and Assessment were engaged to ensure that the preferred concept for Century Gardens aligns with other initiatives and plans currently taking place in Calgary's Downtown including initiatives such as: 8 Street Public S.W. Corridor Public Realm Plan (2014), The Centre City Mobility Plan (2010), and the Centre City Plan (2007). Further details on the engagement process and results can be found in Attachment 1.

Strategic Alignment

The Century Gardens Redevelopment Plan aligns with:

- Council Priorities including a city of inspiring neighbourhoods and a healthy and green city through improvements in the park that will optimize visitor experience, provide access to nature and increase park safety, while retaining the park's historical significance
- The Open Space Plan (2003) policies for 'Downtown and Commercial District Plazas' by designing the park with unique features, interesting surface treatments, and seating to contribute to its distinct identity and create a sense of place that compliments and supports the adjacent land uses
- Direction in the Municipal Development Plan (2009) by proposing enhancements that support the Downtown's position as a premier urban living environment, providing opportunities for cultural enjoyment and artistic pursuits, ensuring compatibility with nearby land uses, preserving historical and cultural significance, and by fostering a distinct sense of place

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Social

The Century Gardens Redevelopment Plan proposes enhancements to the park that will address safety concerns and lifecycle requirements, and increase access to nature for downtown residents. The design for the plaza also takes into account the transit users of the adjacent 8 Street C-train Station and integrates the platform into the park. The preservation of the historically significant elements of the park will support Calgarians and visitors sense of place and connection to Calgary's heritage.

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Environmental

An Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) will be completed and the existing water system will be upgraded to optimize efficiency. The park will provide revitalized greenspace in the downtown core.

Economic (External)

High quality park space favourably impacts the park's image and property values and provides an attraction for Calgarians and visitors to the city. The proposed improvements will create a park environment that will attract additional use and increase opportunities for events and festivities.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget

Administration completed a preliminary analysis of current and future operating impacts as part of the redevelopment plan process. Initial estimates indicate an increase of up to \$150,000 in operational costs per annum. Revenue generated from the proposed commercial spaces may off-set the operating costs of the park and efficiencies will be gained from upgrades to systems and infrastructure. Administration will continue to refine costing and impacts to operations due to new park assets and increased usage. If necessary, Administration will bring forward a funding request through the budget process.

Current and Future Capital Budget

The project is funded with a current and future capital budget of \$12.86 million. The budget includes ENMAX Legacy Parks Program funding and Tax Supported Debt.

Risk Assessment

Budget variance may occur as detailed drawings and structural and cultural landscape assessments have not been completed.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

Century Gardens is a prominent downtown urban plaza. The Century Gardens Redevelopment Plan was developed to ensure the plaza's long-term significance, historic preservation, and value as an open space for varied park users. Many park assets in Century Gardens are nearing the end of their lifecycle and require replacement or upgrades. The proposed improvements in the Preferred Concept Plan will support the optimization of visitor experiences and access to nature, while enhancing the parks safety and retaining the park's historical significance. The concept requires approval as it will guide future redevelopment of this important public open space.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Century Gardens Redevelopment Plan (Attachment 1)
2. Century Gardens Preferred Concept Plan (Attachment 2)
3. **Letter, Calgary Heritage Authority**