

CIVIC DISTRICT PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report requests approval of the Civic District Public Realm Strategy. The project team has completed the final phase of the project inclusive of internal and external engagement, and has developed ten strategies that will help guide the development and enhancement of the civic district. A funding strategy is being developed for Centre City public realm investments and this project will be a part of that overall strategy.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the SPC on Planning & Urban Development recommends that Council approve the Civic District Public Realm Strategy (Attachment 1).

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, DATED 2015 SEPTEMBER 09:

That the SPC on Planning & Urban Development recommend that Council **refer Report PUD2015-0639 to Administration, in order to address matters raised during the 2015 September 09 Committee meeting, to return to Council through the SPC on Planning and Urban Development no later than Q4 2015.**

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2015 June 10 Council approved PUD2015-0497, which requested a deferral on the completion of the Civic District Public Realm Strategy and recommended that the final Strategy be completed no later than Q3 2015.

On 2014 September 10 Council approved PUD2014-0618, which provided an update on the development of the Civic District Public Realm Strategy and recommended that the final Strategy be completed no later than Q2 2015.

On 2013 September 06 Council approved PUD2013-0622, which provided an update on the development of the Civic District Public Realm Strategy and recommended that the final Strategy be completed no later than Q3 2014.

On 2012 November 19 Council approved PUD2012-0671, which outlined the scope of work, timeline and budget for an urban design study of the Civic District, and directed Administration to proceed with the study and report back to Council through the SPC on Planning & Urban Development by Q3 2013.

On 2012 July 11 NM2012-34 directed Administration report back to Council through the Planning & Urban Development Standing Policy Committee with a scoping study and funding sources for the Civic District Urban Design Study report.

BACKGROUND

The Civic District is centred around City Hall, Olympic Plaza and the New Central Library, and radiates outward towards East Village to the East, the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks to the South, Centre Street to the West and the Bow River to the North.

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Why is this strategy important?

There are a number of capital developments planned or underway in the Civic District that will provide new tax revenue for The City when completed. In the East Village there has already been hundreds of millions of dollars invested in streetscapes, building restoration, the new Central Library and the National Music Centre. Feedback from the development and business community indicates that public realm investment by The City will enhance this private sector investment by adding more vitality and amenity in the area, assisting in the attraction and retention of employees and making it a desirable place to work and invest. Given the importance and magnitude of these investments, it is important for The City to help sustain the Calgary economy through re-investment in the Centre City. The Centre City is the economic engine for the city; generating 25% of the tax revenue, from 1% of the land area of the city. For this reason it is important to have a strategy that consolidates the various policy documents in place and individual visions from these developments, into one common vision. This consolidated vision enhances and clarifies the relationships and connections between the many developments, and provides a coherent basis for providing guidance on future development in a way that supports the creation of great public spaces.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Through research on the engagement feed back for past initiatives and engagement feedback undertaken by this project, six key areas were identified as important to Calgarians in the Civic District (Attachment 2).

- Improved safety
- Improve Olympic Plaza & the Municipal Plaza
- More animation & amenity
- More and better gathering spaces
- Improved pedestrian experience and connections
- More attractive and memorable

For these reasons the Civic District Public Realm Strategy is an important tool to support what we have heard and help guide future development and investment.

As an investment implementation strategy, the Civic District Public Realm Strategy 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 implementation strategy identifies ten prioritised strategies, complete with short, medium and long term actions for improving public spaces, which will better connect visitors in the district with the area's many public destinations. These strategies can be used to develop project charters and undertake the design and construction of the work. The funding approach for the projects will be developed at the inception of the project(s) and is part of an overall funding strategy developed for all Centre City public realm investments. Private sector partnering forms part of this strategy.

The Civic District Public Realm Strategy will lead to improvements in public spaces, which should help attract future high-quality private developments and provide great spaces for

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Calgarians and visitors to engage in, contributing to the vibrancy and economic development of the downtown area.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

Stakeholder and citizen engagement was undertaken in three phases in the fall of 2013, the winter of 2014 and completed in the summer of 2015. The project team engaged a broad spectrum of stakeholders active in the Civic District, including institutions, organizations, businesses, community groups and City of Calgary business units. In addition over 530 Calgarians, from across the city and across all wards, were engaged through online and in-person engagement opportunities. The stakeholder engagement process included:

- One-on-one meetings with individual stakeholders to build a collective understanding of the various private and public developments proposed or underway in the area, including the New Central Library;
- Stakeholder workshops to inform and refine a collective vision for the district, identify issues and opportunities for improving the area, and to seek input on initial draft strategies for the Civic District; and
- Online and roving public open houses which resulted in over 1,500 citizen comments that are being used to inform the strategy.

Strategic Alignment

The Civic District Public Realm Strategy aligns and is supportive of the “Seven strategies for our cyclical economy in The City of Calgary: Economic Resilience”, particularly the seventh strategy; “The City will implement strategies to ensure a vibrant and prosperous Centre City, recognizing downtown as an important economic engine”. The Civic District Public Realm Strategy aligns with Section 8 of the Centre City Plan, to develop more detailed district strategies to enhance the vitality and richness of the Centre City.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Social

The Civic District Public Realm Strategy will confirm the priorities for amenities that are most important to Calgarians and provide a broad vision that encourages socialization and inclusion, builds a greater sense of community and fosters a safe, caring, vibrant and healthy environment.

Environmental

Creating a strong and compelling vision for the Civic District that focuses on the public realm aligns with the City of Calgary's Environmental Policy and aim to have a positive environmental impact. The vision will support citizen use of the area and support more sustainable modes of travel; walking, biking and transit.

Economic

Attraction and retention of a creative young workforce is a key factor in the long term economic 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 so the development of a vision and

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implementation strategy for this area by The City will support private sector investment and enhance the amenity of this area.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

There is no impact on the current budget cycle operating budgets. As projects are built they may impact operating budgets in future budget cycles.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

There is no anticipated impact on current capital budgets and it is anticipated that the Civic District Public Realm Strategy will better help identify priorities and timelines for optimizing future capital investment in the area, which will benefit future business cycle budgets and capital planning programs (i.e. CRIIPS, TIIPS). This work will be coordinated with the larger Centre City Funding Strategy.

As projects are developed they may impact future capital budgets in this budget cycle and in future budget cycles. Any requested changes would be vetted through the appropriate channels.

Risk Assessment

Without the support for this project and the suggested strategies, the planning and prioritization of expenditures in the civic district will be less cost effective and coordinated. The review of development proposals will not benefit from a holistic vision for the area leading to lost opportunities for synergies between projects.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

A consolidated vision for the Civic District will allow business units to further their collaborative efforts in developing corporate projects that reinforce that vision/framework and connections into the surrounding lands that will create spaces that are lively, active, programmable and integrated into the area. This will provide a framework for cost effective reinvestment of citizen's tax dollars in a logical and prioritized way. Further this reinvestment will be based on what citizens have identified as important, both from what we heard and what we know from past engagement.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. "Building our Heart" -Civic District Public Realm Strategy
2. Civic District Engagement Summary