

## **Business Advisory Committee Update to Council**

### **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Business Advisory Committee:

1. Request that the Business and Local Economy team work with Planning and Development and report back to the Business Advisory Committee on focus areas 1, 2, 3 and 4 identified in the "What We Heard" report by the end of 2022 Q3; and
2. Recommend that Council approve and adopt the amended Business Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference as outlined in Attachment 2.

### **RECOMMENDATION OF THE BUSINESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE, 2022 APRIL 28:**

That Council approve and adopt the amended Business Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference as outlined in Attachment 2.

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Business Advisory Committee (BAC) has been mandated to act as a conduit to address perceived City of Calgary barriers that business stakeholders face in their everyday operations. The committee consults with key industry stakeholders and representatives from numerous sectors, who together form the committee's Working Group and Task Forces. These groups help to identify opportunities for The City of Calgary to improve its service delivery in support of business priorities.
- The purpose of this report is for the BAC to provide an update to Council on the progress of this committee's work plan, its priority areas for 2022-2023, and recommended updates to the BAC Terms of Reference, found in Attachment 2. The updated Terms of Reference would incorporate the Business Sector Task Force as a subcommittee of the BAC. These terms of reference were received for the corporate record at the 2021 June 25 Combined Meeting of Council as part of BAC2021-0956 but were not fully adopted by Council. The updated terms of reference also reflect changes to the Administration support that the committee receives due to the corporate realignment.
- **What does this mean for Calgarians?** Business owners and investors should perceive The City of Calgary as "open for business" and ready to deliver its 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 as Calgary starts to recover economically from 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 The City's business practices and processes to ensure we are removing barriers and providing value for Calgarians.
- The Business Advisory Committee (BAC) continues to channel insights and perspectives from across a variety of business sectors to guide and support Administration in the execution of business-friendly initiatives. Ongoing collaboration between the BAC, Business and Local Economy (BLE) team within People, Innovation and Collaboration Services, and business stakeholders will continue to advance a stronger level of service, reduce red tape, improve the customer journey and customer satisfaction, and resolve service delivery issues.

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- The Working Group, and Task Force have identified barriers and opportunities in four areas: support for the Downtown Strategy, red tape reduction, customer service improvements, and opportunities for advocacy to improve the business experience in Calgary, found in Attachment 4.
- At the 2021 May 31 Combined Meeting of Council, Council received the Business Advisory Committee's most recent report on its mandated work for the Corporate Record as report BAC2021-0956. No additional direction from Council was sought at that time.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A prosperous city.
- This report also 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 Calgary Economic Development's strategic plan, specifically the Business Environment focus area of *Calgary in the New Economy: The Economic Strategy for Calgary* 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.
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

### **DISCUSSION**

In the post-pandemic environment, The City of Calgary can aid in Calgary's economic recovery by improving the ways that businesses interact with The City, and by having its processes match the speed of the business community.

The BAC continues to explore opportunities to resolve barriers for businesses when working with The City. This includes conducting confidential whiteboarding sessions with targeted stakeholders, applicants who interact with The City on a regular basis, and who are leaders in the Calgary business community. Drawing on these discussions, the BAC aims to ensure City Administration is supported to continue to streamline the approvals processes for the necessary permits for business owners to conduct business in Calgary. This will create a flexible and functional customer service experience for all business owners, and especially entrepreneurs establishing new businesses. See Attachment 3 for BAC Timelines and Workplan.

The BAC has consulted the Working Group and Task Force monthly since 2021 monitoring the pulse of business activity across many sectors that interact with City services. Through these meetings, the BAC has identified the areas that create the greatest business barriers, and meetings were held on 2022 February 23 and 24 to establish priorities for 2022-2023 and to receive the Working Group's recommendations.

The Business Advisory Committee's What We Heard Report, found in Attachment 4, identifies several opportunities to address perceived systemic barriers in City processes. These opportunities are prioritized across a one-year period over 2022-2023, and fall into four focus areas:

1. Supporting Calgary's Downtown Strategy
2. Red tape reduction
3. Improving customer service practices at The City
4. Advocacy

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Detailed findings on barriers in these four areas of focus and the recommended scope of action to address them can be found in table 1 of Attachment 4. This table includes specific issues and relevant comments from the BAC Working Group and Task Force members. Building on these findings, the BAC's priorities are now to work with Administration on the following recommendations:

1. Supporting Calgary's Downtown Strategy within the BAC's mandate. Downtown is home to many Calgary businesses, and the vitality of downtown affects businesses across the city. Elements of the Downtown Strategy within the BAC's mandate include simplifying the regulatory/permitting process to encourage downtown development, improvements to the public spaces, and advocacy for investment in the downtown at all levels of government. Additional downtown initiatives brought forward by BAC members include a campaign to get people back downtown after two years of provincial work-from-home orders, addressing downtown parking costs and incentives, addressing issues faced by the homeless and vulnerable populations and second-order issues with a tangible strategy, and reinforcing and amplifying our arts and culture sector. Several of these initiatives align with the tools and levers Downtown Strategy has identified as ways that municipal government can help revitalize downtown.
2. Reducing red tape that affects businesses, including a further review of permits and licensing and the timelines to obtain them, streamlining the Change of Use process, and removing barriers to establishing innovative business practices. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) gave a presentation to BAC members entitled "A small business perspective of municipal issues" found in Attachment 5, which identifies municipal red tape as a major issue for small businesses.
3. Improving customer services practices at The City in order to deliver more efficient service for the benefit of businesses who interact with The City and for the city itself. Opportunities identified include customer service training for all City employees that work with businesses, succession planning within business units, the potential for a business construction mitigation liaison or overall construction mitigation strategy, business process journey mapping, and being mindful of unintended consequences that The City of Calgary's realignment could have for already struggling businesses.
4. Evaluating opportunities for advocacy to improve the experience for businesses including greater recognition and consideration of Calgary Economic Development's Business Environment focus area of *Calgary in the New Economy: The Economic Strategy for Calgary*, advocacy for better services for unemployed Calgarians, and a consistent emphasis on business-friendly messaging in all communications across the Corporation.

These priorities identified by the BAC reflect the business community experience and provide recommendations of how to make it easier for businesses to interact with The City.

### **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)**

- Public Engagement was undertaken
- Public Communication or Engagement was not required

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- Public/Stakeholders were informed
- Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

Engagement and two-way communications with the business community and affiliated partners and stakeholders is a priority for The City. Strategic communications and ongoing engagement enable issues to be surfaced and improved, and as a result, create better conditions for businesses to thrive. The BAC will continue to receive advice and recommendations from the Working Group and Task Force, will prioritize perceived systemic barriers and will create more What We Heard reports resulting from this work. The BAC will also work with the appropriate City departments to seek resolution to perceived barriers and to remove red tape. Essential to these conversations and improvements is creating awareness within the business community of how their feedback is being used to inform the BAC's work with Administration, and to update the business community on new or improved service processes, information, and resources. The BAC will contribute updates to the broader community of business owners and investors of service improvements as they are implemented.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Social**

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

Recognizing business stressors experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic are essential to becoming more resilient. The burdens faced by businesses over the last two years cannot be understated and require support from The City to allow all of Calgary to thrive.

#### **Environmental**

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

#### **Economic**

As the impact of COVID-19 continues to affect the economic environment and as Calgary moves into recovery, it is imperative that The City of Calgary remain competitive on how we attract, retain and conduct business. The City can contribute to Calgary's competitiveness by implementing business-friendly practices and showing investors we are intentional in reducing barriers to doing business in Calgary.

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

Other: No anticipated financial impact with this report and future budget may be requested as part of the next business cycle service plans and budgets.

### **RISK**

The BAC and Administration are responsible for identifying and mitigating risks related to implementation of the findings of the What We Heard Report, including assessing the capacity of The City to deliver on these recommendations and challenges that may arise from doing so.

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Business Advisory Committee  
2022 April 28**

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BAC2022-0518  
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The BAC Working Group and Task Force 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 impact so it is the role of BAC to sustain the anonymity of those providing the feedback that will inform improvements.

#### **ATTACHMENT(S)**

1. Previous Council Direction, Background
2. Business Advisory Committee Terms of Reference Amendments
3. Business Advisory Committee Timeline and Workplan
4. 2022-2023 Business Advisory Committee Priorities - What We Heard Report
5. Excerpt from CFIB – A small business perspective on municipal issues

#### Department Circulation

| General Manager/Director | Department                       | Approve/Consult/Inform |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| David Duckworth          | City Manager's Office            | Inform                 |
| Chris Arthurs            | Deputy City Manager's Office     | Consult                |
| Bruce Cullen             | Corporate Analytics & Innovation | Consult                |
|                          |                                  |                        |