

## **CIVIC DISTRICT PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY**

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### **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 and implementation strategy is outlined in this report and is in alignment with the approach being used for the Centre City Plan implementation initiatives. Further information is provided in this report in response to comments that were discussed at the Standing Policy Committee of Planning and Urban Development on 2015 September 09.

### **ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

### **RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, DATED 2015 DECEMBER 09:**

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That the Administration Recommendation contained in Report PUD2015-0846 be approved.

### **PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY**

On 2015 September 09 SPC on Planning & Urban Development referred PUD2015-0497 back to Administration to provide more information on the funding and implementation strategies as described in the responses at the meeting and recommended that the final Strategy be completed no later than Q4 2015.

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 no later than 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.

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### **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.

#### *Document Purpose*

The Civic District Public Realm Strategy is a district/neighbourhood vision consolidation plan and implementation prioritization guideline that can be used to bring the right stakeholders to the table for the right projects leading to the realization of the vision.

The document describes an aspiration future state that reflects what citizens and stakeholders said was important. It includes public realm design principles and criteria that provide guidance for the review of development applications and assessing synergy opportunities in the district. The guidelines describe how spaces should be enhanced and provides a framework to connect the various cultural institutions in the area. In this context, the document provides guidance on the implementation and prioritization of initiatives, scoping of projects, lists of actions (short-, medium- and long-term) leading to work plans for investment projects, to assist in the sustainment of the economic engine of the city.

The Civic District Public Realm Strategy is not a statutory prescriptive policy document but a public realm design guideline to assist in assessing opportunities and needs of the district. In addition the document does not include funding strategies specific to individual projects as this would be developed with the projects as they become priorities. A funding strategy framework for the district is outlined below. The purpose description above has been added to the executive summary in Attachment 1.

#### *Why is this strategy important?*

A number of capital developments are planned or underway in the Civic District that will provide new tax revenue for The City when completed. In the East Village hundreds of millions of dollars have already been 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 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 reinvestment 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.

#### *Project/Strategy Implementation*

Further to PUD2015-0639 Strategies/projects have been prioritized in the document. With the identification of a strategy, or actions being a priority, these projects would be developed under

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The City's Project Management Framework from chartering, through engagement, design and construction. The implementation approach is under the umbrella of the corridor framework for implementing the Centre City Plan vision that is being used by Centre City Implementation. It is intended to identify current and future enhancement projects like the underpass projects, the wayfinding project, lighting projects like Centre Street Bridge, community building projects and Master Plans like Eau Claire West and 8th Street S.W., as well as Clean to the Core projects.

Similar to the light level funding strategy framework below in this report, there are three approaches used by Administration to prioritize and implement projects. These are development driven synergies, city initiated priority projects and partnerships between developments and The City.

For development application driven enhancements Administration would work with the Corporate Planning Applications Group (CPAG) to identify development proposals that are within the designated areas and provide assistance in determining what additional enhancements are desired for the site to respond to the aspirations in the document. These discussions would form part of the responses given to applicants on their development application.

For city initiated priority projects, Administration would look at synergies between various department project lists and collaborate with the business units to align their work to coincide with the development of the larger project and create corporate projects instead of department projects. The 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue reconstruction project used this method to align projects between Planning, Water Resources, Roads and Transportation Planning.

For partnerships between city initiated projects and development projects Administration would work with CPAG to identify where private sector investment is occurring and align city projects with the timing of the private sector development projects. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE Master Plan and implementation being undertaken by the Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC) is a project that was developed using this approach. Administration identified a number of development applications along the corridor including the New Central Library, a new Calgary Parking Authority parking garage at 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and a number of others. In order to coordinate the public realm improvements of these various projects and to have a consistent treatment along the corridor, discussions were initiated with CMLC to review the value of a master plan for the street. These discussions resulted in CMLC undertaking a master plan for the "3<sup>rd</sup> Street Zipper" (Strategy 4 in the document) as well as agreeing to construct the entire project, resulting in a consistent treatment from 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.W. to the Bow River. The outcome of this approach will be a better return on investment and the creation of a sense of place to support all the projects along the corridor. This above section has been added to the strategy in Appendix C (Attachment 1) for further clarification.

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### **INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS**

Through research on the engagement feedback 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

The Civic District Public Realm Strategy is an important tool to support what we have heard and help to 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 document 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 project specific funding approach 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 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.

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An engagement summary can be found in Attachment 2. No further engagement was required or provided since PUD 2015-0639 was heard at the Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development on 2015 September 09.

### **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. The development of a vision and 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 impact on current capital budgets. 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.

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### *Project Funding*

Projects will be funded through a variety of mechanisms depending upon development activity, Council priorities and funding availability. There are three streams that projects may take; development driven synergies, City initiated priority investment and partnerships between developments and The City.

### *Development Applications*

For development application driven enhancements CPAG would use the document to provide direction and work with the applicant to implement the vision on their site and adjacent public space. During this process The City may negotiate a funding partnership with the developer to achieve a better return on investment and a more enhanced outcome. In this model the funding for The City's portion would come from approved program budgets.

### *City Projects & Partnerships*

For City initiated priority projects, Administration would look at synergies between various departments approved budgets and coordinate the alignment of that funding with the scoping and development of projects. This approach is currently used in project development for the implementation of the Centre City Plan. Examples are projects like the 1<sup>st</sup> Street SW, 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW and 8th Street SW Underpass enhancements underway in this business cycle. In addition these projects engage and partner with private property owners adjacent to the locations, leveraging investment, enhancing the return on investment by each party, attracting future investment and increasing the tax base for The City.

If existing budgets cannot support a project, Administration would build a business case and, develop a funding strategy, which may include considerations for Community Revitalization Levies and/or other levies, grants, revenue generation or new budget assignments through reports to Council in the current or future business cycles.

### *Cost of the Strategies*

Further to PUD2015-0639 detailed cost estimates for the strategies themselves have not been prepared as that will be subject to future scope of work studies. Without actually designing the project the costs are very difficult to determine. In addition private sector partnerships will be pursued as they present themselves, reducing the cost to The City. If The City were to fund projects in their entirety the investment for all strategies in the document could be in the range of \$200M to \$300M with many actions costing very little in comparison. Allocation of funding, priorities and synergies with other investments will determine the order and timing of enhancements. This text has been added to the Strategy in a new Appendix C (Attachment 1).

## **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.

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### **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. The Strategy 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
3. Letters of Support