

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHINATOWN DISTRICT BUSINESS REVITALIZATION ZONE (BRZ)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business Revitalization Zones (BRZs) are an important avenue to promote Calgary as a great place to visit, live, meet, work and study; they play an important role in supporting economic activity and community revitalization. In keeping with the Council-approved 2015-2018 BRZ Business Plan, which identifies the growth of new BRZs as a key outcome, a request has been received from the business community to establish a Chinatown District BRZ. Based on engagement with business owners and community members in the proposed zone, the request to establish a Chinatown BRZ focuses on strengthening community identity, encouraging investment, attracting visitors, and facilitating relationships amongst local businesses, residents and community partners. In addition, specific local improvements and area enhancements have also been identified as key objectives for the new BRZ to pursue. The proposal has met the legislative requirements of the province to form a BRZ, including providing signatures from a minimum of 25 per cent of the businesses in the proposed zone. As a result, Administration is recommending Council give three readings to the proposed Bylaw to Establish the Chinatown District Business Revitalization Zone (Attachment 1).

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Priorities and Finance Committee recommends that Council:

1. Give three readings to the proposed Bylaw to Establish the Chinatown District Business Revitalization Zone (Attachment 1);
2. Appoint, by resolution, the individuals listed in Attachment 2 as the interim Chinatown District Business Revitalization Zone Board until 2015 December 31.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2014 November 03, Council adopted PFC2014-0760 'Business Revitalization Zones 2015-2018 Business Plan,' which identifies the growth of new BRZs as a key outcome.

On 2010 November 08, Council adopted FCS2010-22 'Establishment of the Montgomery Business Revitalization Zone,' which established Montgomery as a BRZ.

BACKGROUND

The establishment and operation of BRZs is governed by the Alberta *Municipal Government Act (MGA)*, and the *Business Revitalization Zone Regulation*, AR 377/94 (the *Regulation*). Council may, through bylaw, establish a BRZ pursuant to MGA Sections 50 to 53 and the *Regulation* Sections 2 to 6 (Attachment 3). The MGA-mandated purposes of a BRZ are: to improve, beautify and maintain property in the zone; develop, improve and maintain public parking; and, promote the zone as a business or shopping area. BRZ operations are funded through a tax levy paid by all businesses operating within the BRZ. Calgary currently has 10 BRZs, established between 1984 and 2010. There are currently three annual reports associated with the BRZs. These include: the BRZ Budgets and Enabling Bylaws report; the Audited Financial Statements report; and, the BRZ Board Appointments report (Council is responsible for appointing BRZ boards on an annual basis).

The benefits of BRZs are wide-ranging. By working collectively with local businesses and other community entities, BRZs are catalysts for positive civic experiences. They help create thriving,

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safe and attractive areas that draw in a diversity of people. In partnership, BRZs work to enhance the safety, look and feel of neighbourhoods, and create lasting, positive social experiences as well as meaningful economic opportunities for businesses. In addition, BRZs act as a unified voice for their members and help to address emerging issues and capitalize on promising opportunities. BRZs play an important role in showcasing Calgary as a place of growth and opportunity. Calgary BRZs contribute \$59 million in annual business taxes and account for over \$660 million in assessed value. They account for 220+ city blocks of businesses and with 5,400 businesses represented; BRZs comprise 20 per cent of all Calgary businesses.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Impetus for the Establishment of a BRZ

The 2013 flood event had a dramatic impact on the Chinatown area. The Calgary Business Recovery Task Force was developed to help address business-related flood issues in the various affected areas, including Chinatown. Participants from the community, including BRZs in the flood affected areas, The City of Calgary, the Calgary Chamber of Commerce and Calgary Economic Development, among many others, worked together to enable local businesses to successfully resume operational status as quickly as possible. The representatives from Chinatown saw a direct benefit from their involvement and collaboration with other Task Force members. The impetus to establish a Chinatown District BRZ partially stems from this experience, along with the desire to move forward local area improvements and act as an incubator for business activity.

Request to Establish the Chinatown District BRZ

Following the collaborative benefits realized during the 2013 flood event, members of the Chinatown community formed a Committee to Establish a Chinatown District BRZ. The committee has conducted extensive public engagement to ensure alignment with the needs of the community, including open houses and a recent survey of Chinatown visitors and business owners. Feedback from the engagement process highlighted support for a BRZ to address enhancements to the streetscape, green space and support business vibrancy. The survey further identified the following desired areas for improvement in the Chinatown area: availability of parking and parking rates; cleanliness; attractiveness; and, an increase in the variety of shopping, attractions and dining experiences. Desired new or enhanced attractions that were identified include: a museum and art gallery; craft and gift stores; and, live stage shows. Ideas for new developments in the area include: a park and/or garden; a covered parking structure; and, a recreation facility, along with Asian-inspired streetscape; better walking and cycling amenities; and, additional street level retail. The stakeholder identified areas for improvement and growth will be further analyzed and aligned with a forthcoming business plan that will outline priorities as well as implementation tactics should the BRZ be established.

The unique cultural components of the Chinatown area, both historical and geographical, serve as a solid foundation to develop a BRZ that offers an open, participatory cultural experience. It is envisioned that the formation of a Chinatown District BRZ in Calgary will help revitalize the distinct Asian cultural and societal diversity present in the community, and will allow an increased opportunity for cultural sharing and participatory activities for the enjoyment of all.

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Based on the positive feedback regarding the possibility of establishing a BRZ, the Committee to Establish a Chinatown District BRZ has requested that Council approve the establishment of a BRZ to both address these community-identified issues and serve as an economic incubator for the proposed zone. For reference, the Proposed Chinatown District BRZ Boundary can be found in Attachment 4.

Request Process Summary

The following outlines the required processes and related actions regarding the request to establish a Chinatown District BRZ:

1. In compliance with the *MGA*, a request was submitted to Administration by the Chairman of the Committee to Establish a Chinatown District BRZ on 2015 June 04 (Attachment 5). This request included signatures from 43 per cent of the businesses in the proposed zone that would be taxed if a BRZ was established. The required percentage of signatures needed to establish a BRZ is 25 per cent.
2. Subsequently, as required by Section 3(3) of the *Regulation*, notification of the request (including translations in Traditional and Simplified Chinese) was mailed by Administration on 2015 July 06 to every taxable business in the proposed zone (Attachment 6).
3. Businesses in the proposed zone subsequently had 60 days to petition against the establishment of the BRZ. Administration did not receive any petitions against the formation of the BRZ by the 2015 September 04 deadline.
4. Administration then confirmed that the proposal to establish a Chinatown BRZ met the legislative requirements of the province to form a BRZ, including providing signatures from a minimum of 25 per cent of the businesses in the proposed zone.
5. As per the *Regulation*, Council may therefore pass a BRZ bylaw to establish the Chinatown District BRZ.

As a result, Administration is recommending Council give three readings to the proposed Bylaw to establish the Chinatown District Business Revitalization Zone (Attachment 1). Administration is also recommending Council appoint, by resolution, the individuals listed in Attachment 2 as the interim Chinatown District Business Revitalization Zone Board until 2015 December 31. This is required, as under Section 10 of the *Regulation*, all BRZs must submit a proposed annual budget to Council. In order to prepare a proposed budget by 2015 December 10, the proposed Chinatown District BRZ will require an interim board until 2015 December 31.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

The Committee to Establish a Chinatown District BRZ has conducted stakeholder engagement activities leading up to the submission of the request to establish a BRZ, and has continued to engage the community following the submission. An initial letter explaining the intent and mandate of the proposed Chinatown District BRZ was sent to businesses in the proposed area by the Committee. Following this, in-person visits were conducted, along with two open houses: one at the Dragon City Mall, and one at Livingston Place. In addition, during the Canada Day Chinatown Fest, there was an information booth that provided educational materials and an opportunity to participate in a survey to collect additional data regarding perceptions and feedback for the proposed Chinatown District BRZ.

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Every business in the proposed zone that would be taxable if a zone was established was notified of the request to establish the BRZ (Attachment 6) by Administration by mail, as required by Section 3(3) of the *Regulation*. Translations of the letter were provided in both Traditional and Simplified Chinese. As mentioned, no petitions against the formation of the BRZ were received by the 2015 September 04 deadline.

Strategic Alignment

Municipal support for BRZ growth and development aligns with Action Plan 2015-2018 and the associated Council Priorities of creating “A Prosperous City” whereby Calgary is “...a place where there is opportunity for all, and the best place in Canada to start and grow a business,” and “A City of Inspiring Neighbourhoods” where “every Calgarian lives in a safe, mixed and just neighbourhood, and has the opportunity to participate in civic life.”

In addition, the Council-approved Business Revitalization Zone (BRZ) 2015-2018 Business Plan identifies the growth of new BRZs as an important outcome of the implementation of the Plan.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Social

BRZs are key partners in creating a safe and appealing community to attract and retain patrons, residents and businesses to their zones. Businesses within BRZs provide a range of services to help create complete communities.

Environmental

In addition to beautifying and improving their areas, BRZs promote active modes of transportation within their geographic areas. Further, BRZs make environmental sustainability a priority through their support of recycling at festivals and innovative community development programs.

Economic (External)

BRZs make a significant contribution to Calgary’s economic well-being by helping to nurture business in the city and by improving the quality of life for those living and working in the zones. In shaping a dynamic business environment, BRZs attract customers and residents to their vibrant business districts.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

There are no operating budget implications associated with this report. The revenue raised as a result of the levy will be transferred directly to the Chinatown District BRZ.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

There are no capital budget implications associated with this report.

Risk Assessment

The compliance with the requirements of the *Business Revitalization Zone Regulation 377/94* serves to mitigate potential risks associated with the establishment of the Chinatown District

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BRZ. This includes mitigation of the risk associated with stakeholder engagement. Ensuring that notification of the request to establish a Chinatown District BRZ was mailed to every taxable business in the proposed zone and ensuring that a petition against the request was not received during the 60 day wait period, are essential components of this mitigation. In addition, the establishment of a BRZ in Chinatown and its mandate to promote economic activity and local improvements serves to address risks related to economic growth and community revitalization.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

In keeping with the Council-approved Business Revitalization Zone (BRZ) 2015-2018 Business Plan, which identifies the growth of new BRZs as a key outcome, a request has been received from community members to establish a Chinatown District BRZ. Based on engagement with business owners in the proposed zone, the request to establish a Chinatown BRZ focuses on strengthening community identity, encouraging investment, attracting visitors, and facilitating relationships amongst local businesses, residents and community partners. The proposal has met the legislative requirements of the province to form a BRZ, including providing signatures from a minimum of 25 per cent of the businesses in the proposed zone.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Proposed Wording for the Chinatown District Business Revitalization Zone Bylaw
2. Interim Chinatown District Business Revitalization Zone Board
3. Summary of the Business Revitalization Zone Enabling Legislation
4. Proposed Chinatown District Business Revitalization Zone Boundary
5. Committee Request to Establish the Chinatown District Business Revitalization Zone
6. Administration Notice of Request to Establish a Chinatown District Business Revitalization Zone