

S-PARK PILOT PROJECT EVALUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an evaluation of the s-Park pilot project. An s-PARK (pronounced “spark”) is a fusion of two words: *Street* and *park*. The concept converts a street environment into a temporary public space that accommodates diverse programming and events. First introduced in the Centre City Plan (2007) and further supported in the Centre City Parks & Public Realm Enhancement Plan (2010), s-PARKS reinvent the street environment as a temporary community and pedestrian space encouraging both passive and animated activities. Administration partnered with the Downtown West Community Association to implement an s-PARK pilot in Downtown West from 2013 August 09 to 25.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Priorities and Finance Committee receives this report for information.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

At the 2013 December 10 meeting, the Priorities and Finance Committee considered PFC2013-0696 s-PARK Pilot Project Report Back on the Use of the Innovation Fund and directed Administration to provide a short evaluation on the s-PARK Pilot Project.

At the 2013 July 29 meeting, Council approved TT2013-0504 S-PARK Street Bylaw (20M88) Amendment to address the approval and issuance of permits for Temporary Parks on Streets.

At the 2012 July 30 meeting, Council approved report C2012-0507 to approve the application to the City of Calgary Council Innovation Fund for the s-PARK Pilot in the amount of \$20,000 as set out in PFC2012-0405.

BACKGROUND

In 2012 Administration and the Downtown West Community Association worked together to develop initiatives to address community concerns, including a shortage of community gathering places, lack of community identity and community vibrancy, and cleanliness and safety issues.

Administration proposed a pilot project to create an “s-PARK” to be temporarily installed on 10 Street SW between 6 and 7 Avenues during 2012 August/September. Conflicts with West LRT construction in the area and issues with respect to road closure forced the postponement of the pilot project until 2013.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Administration partnered with the Downtown West Community Association to implement the pilot in Downtown West from 2013 August 09 to 25. During this time the south end of the block between 6 and 7 Avenues on 10 Street SW was closed to create a community passive ‘park’. On weekends the north end of the block was also closed and recreation programming enlivened the space.

With programming funded through the Council Innovation Fund, Administration engaged the Downtown West Community Association to develop and implement a recreation program plan for the pilot that balanced passive and active programming. Residents/visitors were

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encouraged to use the s-PARK as they would a neighbourhood park. During the week visitors participated in passive activities such as reading, socializing with friends, enjoying coffee or lunch in the park. On the weekends the full block was closed with free public recreational programming animating the streetscape.

Community volunteers conducted on site surveys of s-PARK visitors; however, the surveys were misplaced and the Community Association has been unable to find them. Anecdotal on-site observations and conversations with participants, businesses and residents by volunteers and Administration form the basis of the pilot evaluation (Attachment 1). Feedback from participants was generally positive with an overall appreciation of the concept and the programming. In particular participants acknowledged the wide range and diversity of the activities/programs. Many indicated an interest in seeing the community association continue to host activities to bring residents together in the future. There were complaints regarding the road closure from some residents, businesses and commuters. Many suggested that a partial road closure or shorter program duration would have been preferred.

Overall this project was a strong collaboration between Administration and the Community Association. The project team accomplished the project objectives to work with the community to create a community gathering place and introduce the s-PARK concept to Calgarians.

Centre City Planning & Implementation will continue to champion the s-PARK concept and encourage community organizations and other Business Units to identify opportunities to implement the program to create spaces for communities to interact, experience, recreate and socialize.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

The s-PARK Pilot Project 2013 has laid the groundwork for continued partnerships on future projects to enhance the community.

The Downtown West Community Association worked with Administration to communicate the pilot project to residents, businesses and local organizations. A presentation at the Community Association Annual General Meeting, posters/flyers, community meetings and open houses, door knocking at local and neighbouring businesses and social media promotion were some of the communication tactics used.

Strategic Alignment

The s-PARK project aligns with Council's Fiscal Plan for Calgary with a particular focus on "Investing in great communities and a vibrant urban fabric". This focus on "community well-being" also supports the 2020 Sustainability Direction and aligns with the *imagine* Calgary vision of strong and complete communities. The s-PARK pilot project contributes to the vision of the Centre City Plan (2007) "to make Centre City a liveable, thriving and caring Centre City". The project supports many of the fundamental principles of the plan that are easily transferable citywide to benefit all Calgary communities.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

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s-PARKS are flexible, eco-friendly places/connections that complement neighbourhood activities and create spaces for the community to interact, experience, recreate and socialize. s-PARKS provide a place for temporary activities that bring life to a community supporting residents and businesses alike. s-PARKS can help to engage a diverse group of people, foster a healthy social exchange, and build a sense of community.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

The Council Innovation Fund covered the cost of recreation programming. The project team used existing infrastructure where possible and funded additional project components from existing 2013 operating budgets (Attachment 2). It is anticipated that future s-PARK projects will be funded by the sponsoring organization/Business Unit.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

No capital dollars were expended on the pilot project. Major structural components of the modular furniture and place making/design elements were rented. There is no expectation of capital budget requirements for future s-PARKS.

Risk Assessment

There are no significant risks associated with this project.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

This report fulfills the requirement to report back with an evaluation of the s-PARK pilot to Council through the Priorities and Finance Committee.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. s-PARK Pilot Project Evaluation
2. s-PARK Pilot Project Budget