

## **SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIPS FOR URBAN REINVESTMENT (SPUR) FINAL EVALUATION**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Supporting Partnerships for Urban Reinvestment (SPUR) is a multi-disciplinary pilot project where Kingsland residents select and prioritize small-scale public space improvements to be implemented within their community. This report summarizes the results of this pilot and provides recommendations for future initiatives with similar objectives.

### **ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That the Priorities and Finance Committee recommends that Council direct Administration to explore lessons from SPUR and Inspiring Strong Neighbourhoods to further develop and implement the Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative for 2014, and report back to Council through the Priorities and Finance Committee no later than 2014 September.

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

On 2013 March 12 Council approved PFC2012-0826 Supporting Partnerships for Urban Reinvestment (SPUR) Capital Improvement Budget.

On 2013 January 14 Council approved Administration's request (PFC2012-0826 Supporting Partnerships for Urban Reinvestment (SPUR) Capital Improvement Budget Report – Deferral Request) to defer the requested report until no later than 2013 March 12.

On 2012 May 07 Council adopted PFC2012-42 Application to The City of Calgary Council Innovation Fund, SPUR (Supporting Partnerships for Urban Reinvestment), as amended, as follows:

Council approve the Application to The City of Calgary Council Innovation Fund; SPUR (Supporting Partnerships for Urban Reinvestment) as follows:

1. \$30,000 for engagement and public consultation to develop and verify priorities, and \$202,000 be approved for capital improvements subject to outcome of public engagement and in cooperation with City departments;
2. The capital improvement budget to come to the Priorities and Finance Committee for approval no later than 2012 December;
3. Community volunteer hours be included throughout the project, on an opportunity basis, and that identifying those community participation opportunities form part of the reporting back of the project; and
4. Direct Administration to quantify staff hours required and bring that number forward along with the capital improvement budget as requested in Recommendation 1.

### **BACKGROUND**

The SPUR pilot project allows residents and Administration to work together to realize small-scale public space improvements in the community of Kingsland. This project began by assisting the Kingsland Community Association (KCA) in resolving their local public space concerns identified in their self-produced Kingsland Community Plan. On 2012 May 07 Council approved the use of Innovation Fund resources for SPUR to develop a collaborative process to resolve these issues.

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Administration has worked with the KCA and residents of Kingsland to identify and realize their prioritized list of small-scale public space improvements. For the list of improvements and the project timeline, please see the SPUR Final Evaluation (Attachment 1).

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

This report provides an overview of the SPUR pilot project. Please see the SPUR Final Evaluation (Attachment 1) for a more detailed review.

As part of this overview, the project leads from Land Use Planning & Policy and Community & Neighbourhood Services business units developed five measures of success to determine the success of SPUR and vetted them through the business unit representatives and management.

#### **1. Project completion**

Due to outside factors or a change in policy, SPUR cannot complete all of the projects identified. Despite this SPUR scored high in this measure with 88% of projects scheduled for completion this year or next. Due to delayed construction because of the flood and later summer, the project will be completed in 2014 with the remaining Innovation and KCA Funding.

Since the Consultant (O2 Planning and Design) and Administration estimated high as a precaution, SPUR will have unspent money to use to finish projects and supplement other improvements on the SPUR list. The KCA has stated that they would like to see the entire SPUR budget spent to achieve the full value of the program. Administration has received feedback from residents expressing their disappointment about some projects and this feedback is documented in Attachment 1. Administration recommends allocating the remaining SPUR funding to the next priorities on the list.

#### **2. Financial sustainability**

SPUR needs improvement in this measure largely due to the amount of staff resources required to run the pilot project. Replication of this project will result in natural efficiencies and these can be supplemented by the recommendations contained in the Final Evaluation.

This report also considers the amount of funding leveraged through SPUR and the long term sustainability of that funding. Though SPUR's success in leveraging funds added value to the projects; future initiatives cannot rely on these funding sources in the future.

Most of the projects came under budget except for three projects: The two road closure redesigns and the outdoor fitness circuit. The two road closures that went over the estimated budget were because of integration with the cycling strategy and scope creep. To better estimate project costs, Administration recommends greater time between the 'idea generation' engagement phase and the 'prioritization' engagement phase. This time can occur in the summer to allow for site inspections to further increase the accuracy of the estimates.

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### ***3. Resident satisfaction and participation***

Administration created an online survey to collect resident feedback. The positive comments generally expressed gratitude for the opportunity and pleasure with how it brought their community together. Other feedback heard from residents includes:

- Disappointment at the small-scale nature of the improvements
- Dissatisfaction by the amount achieved for the budget
- Desire for more and better communication from The City
- Desire for a cost comparison with private contractors for construction

Administration also requested that the Kingsland Community Association and The Kingsland Public Art Committee submit letters about SPUR and include feedback about how this pilot project can be improved. These letters are included as attachments 2, 3 and 4.

The difference in priorities between the KCA board and the resident voting results also affected resident satisfaction. Administration worked with the KCA to achieve their long-term concerns, while still respecting the resident voting results. This resulted in a greater number of projects on the final list accommodated through budget adjustments. In the end SPUR will achieve all implementable projects desired by both the KCA and the residents.

### ***4. Project variety and improvements to pedestrian mobility***

The community selected a good balance of projects that provide additional public amenity, improve mobility and beautify the public realm.

### ***5. Business unit satisfaction***

SPUR provided an opportunity for staff in various departments to collaborate and learn about each other's work. Business Unit representatives raised some concerns about resourcing, the sustainability of leveraged funds and the different standard from other public spaces that can result from these types of projects. Particularly Land Use Planning & Policy has contributed 1,697.25 out of the total 2,353.25 of staff hours devoted to the project. The staff person assigned was a land use policy planner and while the project was well managed, it would be advantageous that in future projects, staff with more experience in community development and managing capital projects would be better suited to lead such an initiative. Such positions can be found in business units with capital budgets or experience with coordinating capital projects such as Community & Neighbourhood Services, Parks, Roads, Transportation Solutions or Water Resources. It was also learned that a one window approach through Community & Neighbourhood services would work well for the community to ensure consistency.

### ***Overall SPUR Success***

SPUR is a good example of participatory budgeting and citizen directed decision making. Administration has reviewed the lessons from both the SPUR and Inspiring Strong Neighbourhoods (ISN) pilot programs to create a more efficient and meaningful program, the Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative.

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### **Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative**

After considerable evaluation and review of the two pilot programs along with our long history of community development practice at the neighbourhood level it was determined that improvements needed to be made in the following areas:

- Improve the level of community engagement and decision making
- Empower residents to influence City programs and services in their community
- Connect people and build capacity to allow residents to lead change in their neighbourhoods and build solutions for themselves.

Based on these findings, Community & Neighbourhood Services, together with Planning, Development and Assessment are in a position to implement an improved program in 2014. The Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative (NII) is the proposed name for this program and it will achieve the following outcomes:

- Residents, community associations, local businesses and social groups actively participate in enacting changes in their neighborhood. This includes identifying, planning, budgeting and implementing small-scale infrastructure and improving service delivery at the local level.
- City staff will focus on how best to work together to support community-based solutions to improve neighbourhoods. Along with Community & Neighbourhood Services and Planning, Development and Assessment, many departments and business units have indicated their interest in the project including Transportation, Parks, and Calgary Police Services. Working effectively and efficiently in an outcome based approach with neighbourhood residents will result in more citizen-centric services and reductions of red tape.

Recognizing the volunteer efforts to implement this initiative, it is expected the program would span approximately two years in each community. In the first year, engagement would occur to assess citizen needs and identify potential small scale projects that will make an impact to the quality of life in the community. The next phase will be to conduct a project feasibility analysis and identify budget requirements which would then inform a citizen prioritization exercise. The following year, implementation of the projects would occur, followed by evaluation.

It is expected upon completion of the 2 year program, neighbourhoods will be empowered to build a community vision and find solutions to build community well-being and sustainability. Community & Neighbourhood Services will support these communities as they continue to develop.

The intent for 2014 is to implement the new program in wards that are not currently involved in projects related to ISN, SPUR or similar. This will allow citizens of all wards to experience and benefit from a more citizen centric approach to delivering City programs and services. The work that is proposed for 2014 (engagement, feasibility, and prioritization) can be accommodated within current business plans and budgets. Requirements for the initiative for 2015-2018 will be developed as part of the Business Planning and Budget process. Progress on the Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative will be reported to Council through the Priorities and

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Finance Committee no later than 2014 September in conjunction with an update on the Inspiring Strong Neighbourhood Initiative.

### **Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication**

Administration created a comprehensive public engagement process to identify small-scale public space improvements and to prioritize those improvements. The KCA formed a SPUR committee comprised of residents to partner with Administration on public events and to provide local insight. After Council approved the final list, Administration conducted project-specific engagement (see Attachment 1).

### **Strategic Alignment**

The SPUR project aligns with the Municipal Development Plan section 2.3.7 *“Foster community dialogue and participation in community planning”*. It also supports the goals of Council's Transforming Government initiative – transparency, accountability, civic engagement, innovation, citizen orientation and sustainability. SPUR is also an example of participatory budgeting, following Imagine Calgary's direction and target: “By 2016 Calgary City Council establishes a participatory budgeting process”.

### **Social, Environmental, Economic (External)**

#### **Social**

Residents made decisions regarding the project list and Administration provided multiple opportunities for sharing ideas and volunteering. To date the community has contributed 428 volunteer hours. Kingsland residents identified and prioritized the projects, joined local committees, attended events and open houses and helped implement projects when feasible. Administration provided technical expertise, reviewed costs and led the implementation. This can be improved through clearer communication and more defined roles to strengthen the partnership between The City and the community.

#### **Environmental**

Some of the SPUR projects repair or improve pedestrian connections thus potentially reducing automobile trips within the community and to amenities around its perimeter.

#### **Economic**

At this time SPUR needs further work to improve its economic sustainability, especially the ratio of staff time to capital costs, which is approximately \$100,000 to \$300,000. The attached Final Evaluation provides recommendations to create a more efficient use of staff time. This issue will be addressed as Community & Neighbourhood Services develops the new Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative based on the evaluation of SPUR and Inspiring Strong Neighbourhoods.

### **Financial Capacity**

#### **Current and Future Operating Budget:**

Considerations for the new Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative include reducing the amount of staff resources required to manage the project. Administration has dedicated 2,353 staff hours to SPUR (more than 1 year of a full time equivalent employee's time). The project lead hours account for approximately half the hours with the majority of time spent on communicating

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regularly with the community and the business unit representatives regarding individual projects. A change in structure to become more effective with a one-window-in approach through Community & Neighbourhood Services would help reduce staff hours and create efficiencies. A significant amount of time was spent negotiating various options after the community expressed their desired outcome.

There would be no significant costs for on-going maintenance of the community enhancements for any business unit.

### **Current and Future Capital Budget:**

Through PFC2012-42, Council approved \$202,000 for the capital improvements and \$30,000 for public consultation to develop and verify priorities. The KCA then contributed an additional \$25,800 for capital improvements. In the future the public consultation would likely be funded from an operating budget.

Of the \$227,800 capital budget, SPUR would complete 18.5 projects by the end of 2014. Five of the 18 projects had additional funding from a number of sources such as business unit lifecycle budgets. Administration also leveraged additional funding to enhance some of the SPUR funded projects. The total amount leveraged is approximately \$62,000 above the SPUR capital budget. Administration cannot provide an updated budget at this time since many projects have yet to be completed at the time of writing this report.

### **Risk Assessment**

There are no significant risks associated with extending SPUR to the end of 2014. As The City transforms to this new way of working, there may be difficulty in managing community expectations and meeting the funding requirements. The 2015-2018 Business Planning and Budget process will allow Council to set this new direction and ensure funding is allocated in the next business cycle either by shifting priorities or allocating new funding.

### **REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):**

SPUR and Inspiring Strong Neighbourhoods have several similar outcomes thus combining the two initiatives through the new Neighbourhood Improvement Initiative makes good sense. The new initiative will include enhanced resident engagement from start to finish, provide one window into The City, improve efficiency, cut red tape, build community capacity, improve the quality of life for citizens and ultimately create stronger neighbourhoods. This will foster a great City that people want to live, work, play and invest in.

### **ATTACHMENT**

1. SPUR Final Evaluation
2. Letter Number 1 from the Kingsland Community Association
3. Letter Number 2 from the Kingsland Community Association
4. Email from the Chair of the Kingsland Public Art Committee