

Downtown Event and Entertainment District and Bus Rapid Transit – Sequencing of Upcoming Reports and Decision Milestones

ISSUE

What is the anticipated sequence of future reports and decision-making milestones for City Council (Council) in relation to the Downtown Event and Entertainment District and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects?

BACKGROUND

At its April 26, 2021 Regular Business Meeting, Council received a report entitled "[A Vibrant Future for Saskatoon's Downtown - An Exploration of Potential Funding Opportunities to Bring the Vision to Life](#)" and resolved, in part:

- “4. That the Administration provide a report including a public process map outlining the anticipated reports and decision-making milestones related to a downtown entertainment district/BRT;”

CURRENT STATUS

Downtown Event and Entertainment District

Further to the direction of Council in [2018](#), the Administration has been undertaking the following activities:

- researching best practices and reviewing the experience of other cities in developing comparable downtown event and entertainment districts;
- getting advice from experts in the development of event and entertainment districts on technical, crowd movement, and operational requirements;
- negotiating with owners of parcels of land that would be good potential sites; and,
- assessing all potential City of Saskatoon (City) owned property.

Bus Rapid Transit

Council has considered [numerous reports](#) and made several decisions between 2016 and 2021 pertaining to the BRT project. The funding plan for the project has been approved by Council, with the project put forward for consideration under the Transit stream of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP).

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Downtown Event and Entertainment District

This report has been written assuming the Administration is the primary lead on this project, with extensive engagement and consultation throughout the process. If Council sees that differently, further direction is required.

A series of reports and decision-making milestones are required before design and construction of the new Downtown Event and Entertainment District can commence. A

project sequence roadmap is provided in Appendix 1. The Administration's view on the anticipated reports associated with this project sequence are described below. The list is expected to change based on feedback from Council, and will need to be updated periodically as the initiative develops. The timelines provided are based on the information available at the time of writing this report.

1. *Downtown Arena and Convention Centre Project Governance – Approval Report*

A governance model for the project development and delivery and how key stakeholders will be engaged in an advisory capacity. For example, how the TCU Place and SaskTel Centre Boards and Administrations will be involved in the initiative; the potential role of community champions; how the Indigenous community will be included; and how key stakeholders will be included such as the Business Improvement Districts, the Chamber of Commerce, the NSBA, and Tourism Saskatoon, and others. The roles of other levels of government also need to be considered at this phase, and private sector proponents who may have a financial interest in the initiative will need to be consulted in a very deliberate manner. This report is anticipated in the third quarter of 2021.

2. *Updated Public Engagement Plan for Downtown Arena Site Options – Approval Report*

A detailed plan to guide the public engagement process for the site options once the negotiations and site analysis are completed. This report is anticipated in the third quarter of 2021. The criteria for ranking the sites will be outlined in this report.

3. *Downtown Arena Site Options – Information Report*

A description of each of the sites evaluated, advantages and disadvantages for each site, and the ranking of the sites based on Council's approved criteria. Public engagement to receive feedback on the site options will be undertaken following this report. This report is anticipated in the fourth quarter of 2021. Although land negotiations have slowed with one owner, other opportunities are being pursued concurrently. Considering the need to advance this initiative, in the coming months the Administration will wrap up all land negotiations whether successful or not and present all available options to Council in late 2021.

4. *Downtown Arena and Convention Centre Site Selection – Decision Report*

A recommendation to Council for approval of the Arena and Convention Centre site, or sites, including the results of public engagement. This report is anticipated in the first quarter of 2022.

5. a) *Downtown Arena and Convention Centre Partnership and Governance Model Stage 1 – Decision Report*

Options and a recommendation will be presented to Council regarding a possible Expression of Interest (EOI) to gauge private interest in the participation in the initiative, in particular for the Arena and Event Centre component of the initiative. This

report is anticipated in the fourth quarter of 2021. Subject to Council approval, the following follow-up report is contemplated.

b) *Downtown Arena and Convention Centre Partnership and Governance Model Stage 2 – Decision Report*

If Council resolves to proceed with the EOI, this report will present the results of the EOI and provide a recommendation to Council for approval whether to proceed with a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a private project partner. The scope of any private partnership has not yet been determined by Council. The Boards and Administrations of TCU Place and SaskTel Centre will be heavily engaged throughout the initiative, and in particular for this portion of the project. If an RFP is in fact issued, the Administration will engage the support of an external consultant experienced in partnerships of this type to assist in the RFP development, open period, and if required, negotiations. This report is anticipated in the second quarter of 2022. Subject to Council approval, the following follow-up report is contemplated. Governance impacts will be further discussed in this report or a companion report.

c) *Downtown Arena and Convention Centre Partnership and Governance Model Stage 3 – Decision Report*

This report will present results of the RFP and provide a recommendation to Council on whether to award the contract. This report will include a recommendation regarding a controlled corporation role in the new facilities. This report is anticipated in the fourth quarter of 2022.

6. *Downtown Event and Entertainment District Master Plan – Decision and Information Reports*

A series of information and decision reports regarding the Downtown Event and Entertainment District Master Plan will be presented, which will outline the conceptual layout of the district, public realm improvements, potential land use and zoning changes, and other elements as required. The District Master Plan will be important to guide design development of the arena and convention centre. This project will need to begin after site selection, will involve public engagement, and will result in a final approval report or reports presented to Council. These reports are expected to begin by mid-2022 and continue to the end of 2023.

Of note, the Administration is using the working title “Downtown Event and Entertainment District” to describe the district which will encompass the future Downtown arena and convention centre. Among the various reports to be presented throughout the development of the Master Plan will be a decision report to confirm the process to determine an official name for the district and an approval report to formally confirm the name.

7. *Downtown Arena and Convention Centre Project Development Plan – Information Report*

Conceptual plans for the proposed arena, convention centre, and site plan along with capital budget estimates that will be used to support development of the funding strategy. The Administration will engage various consultants experienced in the design of these types of facilities, including the design of adjoining public spaces within the district, to assist in the preparation of the project development plan. This report will be prepared in parallel with the Downtown Event and Entertainment District Master Plan and is anticipated to be presented at a similar timeframe. At this stage, additional implications may also have been identified that require input and direction from Council.

8. *Downtown Arena and Convention Centre Funding Strategy – Decision Report*

A proposed funding strategy for Council approval. The funding strategy is contemplated to include a combination of sources including but not limited to private partner capital contributions, tax increment financing, parking revenues, provincial and federal transfers, amusement tax revenues, and new alternative tax revenues (e.g. rental car tax, hotel tax, district sales tax), and the City's already-approved funding strategy for BRT.

9. *Downtown Arena and Convention Centre Funding Plan – Decision Report*

Upon confirmation of all required aspects of the funding strategy to fully fund the overall project, the proposed funding plan will be presented for Council approval. The timing for this report will be dependent upon external factors (e.g. approval by other orders of government).

10. Regular Information Reports

In addition to the reports contemplated above, further reports will be required. Examples will include follow-up reports requested during the process described above, and updates on the design development and construction of the various sub-projects (e.g. arena, BRT, convention centre).

Bus Rapid Transit

Upon approval by the Province to apply ICIP funding to the project, a report would be provided to Council to approve the necessary funding, including borrowing, to support the City's funding contribution, following which, project procurement can be completed and construction commenced.

1. *Additional Station Locations – Decision Report*

A recommendation to Council on the inclusion of additional stations identified during implementation planning.

At this time, the above-noted decision-making milestones are anticipated in relation to this project. Additional items may be identified through the process and will be brought forward

as required. Regular information reports on the progress of the project are anticipated during construction.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications have been considered extensively in previous reports and will be considered in other future reports as well. The Administration is currently finalizing the 2022/2023 Business Plan and Budget process, which will include funding for the 2022/2023 portion of work outlined in this report.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no communications, Triple Bottom Line, policy, privacy, or CPTED implications or considerations at this time. These will be considered in other future reports as required.

NEXT STEPS

The Downtown Arena and Convention Centre Project Governance report and Updated Public Engagement Plan for Downtown Arena Site Options report, noted in the preceding, are planned for the third quarter of 2021. The Downtown Arena Site Options reports will be presented as soon as possible following the successful conclusion of land negotiations.

APPENDIX

1. Downtown Event and Entertainment District Project Timeline

Report Approval

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