

June 21, 2021

## **Saskatoon Environmental Advisory Committee (SEAC) Feedback to City Council on the High- Performance Civic Building Approach**

### **Re: High Performance Civic Building Approach [CK 600-0 x 375-4]**

On June 7, 2021, the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services considered a report on the High-Performance Civic Building Approach and resolved:

1. That Option 1B – LEED Silver Certification is defined as the minimum standard for the design and construction and major renovation of applicable buildings in the High-Performance Civic Building Policy;
2. That mandatory LEED credits for the construction of new civic buildings are permitted in the High-Performance Civic Building Policy; and
3. That the energy and air tightness targets and timeline recommended in Option 3D are included in the High-Performance Civic Building Policy.

This letter comprises SEAC's comments on this report and recommendations:

### **Support for the High-Performance Civic Building Approach**

SEAC supports the principles and approach outlined in the report. Specifically, the Committee values the following aspects of the proposed approach:

#### **1. Aligned with Existing Policies**

The approach outlined in this report directly supports implementation of the Low Emissions Community Plan. It will also support a variety of existing water, energy, waste and green infrastructure policies through the identification of mandatory LEED credits. It also anticipates and ensures alignment with future federal building energy targets.

#### **2. Rigorous but not Arduous**

A high-performance building policy should establish criteria that are rigorous but not arduous. The proposed approach: a moderate LEED standard, additional energy targets, and mandatory credit enables flexibility but places an emphasis on priority areas of building design and construction. This approach will provide greater clarity and

certainty for project planners related to expected outcomes, which will ultimately streamline design options and deliberations.

### **3. Well-Defined Energy Intensity Targets**

Due to Saskatchewan's weather extremes, energy efficient building design, enhanced insulation, and air tightness have an outsized importance in our region, when compared to municipalities situated in more moderate climates. Accordingly, buildings make up the largest single category of the City of Saskatoon's corporate GHGs and significant reductions will be required in this area. The decision to include additional energy and air-tightness standards that are above and beyond LEED is a very important element of the proposed approach.

### **4. Proactive Cost Prevention**

Constructing high-performance buildings is an investment in operational cost savings. Decisions made at the design and construction phase of a building have the greatest impact over how the building operates long-term. The proposed approach will result in long-term operational cost savings for the City of Saskatoon.

### **5. Quick Adoption of the Approach**

Once a building is constructed, its expected lifespan can be 80-100 years or more. A building constructed today creates a legacy that is difficult and expensive to adapt later. SEAC supports the timelines outlined in Option 3D as Saskatoon needs to move quickly towards the desired outcomes.

## **Additional considerations for the High-Performance Civic Building Approach**

In addition to the elements that have already been proposed as part of the High-Performance Building Approach, SEAC is recommending the following:

### **1. Energy Target Performance Periods**

In best practice, energy targets for new facilities are assessed over a 12-month performance period when the building is fully occupied and operating under normal conditions. This approach ensures the energy assessment reflects the true energy consumption of the facility when fully operational. Where a performance period is not specified, energy assessment is often completed immediately upon construction, sometimes prior to building occupancy.

SEAC recommends that a 12-month performance period assessment be associated with the proposed energy and air tightness targets.

## **2. LEED Applicability Review**

Not all types of facilities can qualify for LEED certification. Buildings that have very specialized equipment or are energy intensive by nature may not always be well suited for LEED. It would be unfortunate if LEED Silver were adopted as a key feature of the approach, only to discover that many upcoming projects are not LEED eligible or that the mandatory credits are not relevant to type of facilities that are currently proposed.

The proposed standard is good, although a cursory review of upcoming projects and their potential for LEED eligibility broadly, and in relation to potential mandatory credits, may inform how meaningful the approach may be in practice. If any capital projects are not eligible for LEED certification, SEAC recommends that the intent of the mandatory credits are still pursued where possible, and that the energy and air tightness targets remain.

## **3. Automatic Review of LEED Standard**

The High-Performance Building Policy is intended to guide building design and construction long-term. To drive continuous improvement of building design and construction standards, the LEED program is constantly evolving. SEAC recommends that the High-Performance Building Policy includes an automatic review that is triggered when a new version of LEED is released.

## **4. Additional Components for a Comprehensive Approach**

While the outlined approach supports the Low Emissions Community Plan, it is not a pathway to achieve the GHG reductions that is required from within the category of building operations. Constructing high-performance buildings does not reduce current GHG emissions, it simply reduces further increases to GHG emissions.

A comprehensive approach to limiting GHG reduction from civic buildings also requires:

### **a) Existing Building Approach**

It is important that both the construction and the operation of all facilities owned by the City of Saskatoon are guided by high-performance criteria. As highlighted in the report, the proposed approach must also be accompanied by an Existing Building Approach to ensure that all civic buildings are captured within the scope of a High-Performance Building management. Greater operational cost savings and benefits for occupants can be achieved from enhanced performance of existing buildings. LEED also has a certification program for existing buildings that could inform that approach.

b) Facilities Owned and Operated by Controlled Corporations

If facilities operated by controlled corporations are owned by the City of Saskatoon or included in the corporate GHG Inventory, then it is essential that these facilities also be included within the scope of any new or existing building approaches.

c) Building Performance Portfolio Reporting

Reporting is an essential element of any environmental management system. To evaluate overall progress, individual facilities should not be considered independently for reporting. Progress on energy conservation and GHG reduction should consider the entire portfolio of City of Saskatoon facilities. This information is likely being compiled for other purposes but can also be used to inform the effectiveness of this approach within Climate Action updates so that it is incorporated into existing reporting.

Yours truly,

**Erin Akins, Chair**  
**Saskatoon Environmental Advisory Committee**