

Downtown Event Centre/Arena Site Options Engagement Plan

The development of the Downtown Event & Entertainment District project, anchored by a new Downtown event centre/arena and a new or expanded convention centre, made accessible through the future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, is ongoing. Of critical importance at this stage of the project is the selection of the future location of the Downtown event centre/arena. As reported in June 2021, public engagement to receive feedback on the site options for a Downtown event centre/arena will be undertaken once technical analysis and negotiations with private landowners are complete.

City Administration retained two consulting firms to assist with technical assessments of five potential locations. Based on the consultants' assessment, along with the City's own analysis, two sites have been determined as feasible options and were ranked based on technical criteria (e.g., available land area, access to parking, proximity to a future BRT station and existing businesses, etc.).

The locations are:

- **Midtown Shopping Centre North Parking Lot** (this is the current parking lot across the street from TCU Place, next to the Hilton Garden Inn).
- **North Downtown/City Yards** (this is between the new police station and 1st Ave on the north side of 25th Street).

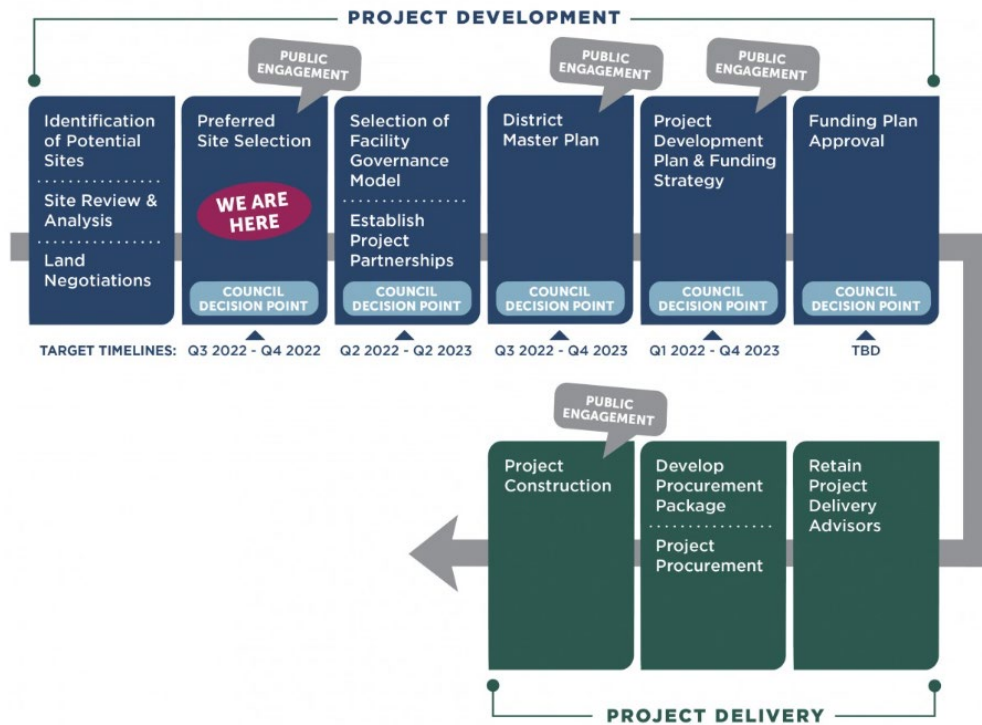
The purpose of this engagement plan is to outline the City's goals and processes for asking community members for feedback on the two feasible locations for the new Downtown event centre/arena.

Decision-Making Process

The Midtown Shopping Centre North Parking Lot is the highest scoring site for the future Downtown event centre/arena (a key anchor within the future Downtown Event & Entertainment District) given approved technical criteria, with North Downtown/City Yards identified as an alternate option. In addition to the technical criteria, City Council is seeking feedback from the community on the opportunities and challenges they see for each site. The feedback from engagement activities will be shared with City Council who will make the final decision on the Downtown event centre/arena location.

The City is still in the early stages of planning the new Downtown Event & Entertainment District. The Administration will consider ways to address the feedback that we receive from this round of engagement during future phases of the project. There will also be future opportunities for community members, partners, and stakeholders to engage on upcoming phases of the project - these project phases are outlined in Figure 1: Estimated Project Timeline.

Figure 1: Estimated Project Timeline



Note: Future public engagement plans and timelines for future phases in the project are still to be determined.

Engagement Process

What is Engagement?

- Engagement involves including those who are affected by a decision in the decision-making process to improve the quality of decisions.
- Engagement ranges from asking community members for feedback to working together to find solutions, to having the community make the decision.
- At the City of Saskatoon, responsibility for final decisions typically remains with City Council.

The City strives to conduct public engagement in a way that meets the vision and guiding principles of the City's [Public Engagement Policy](#).

Engagement Goals

The overall goals for Downtown event centre/arena Site Options Engagement are:

- Develop and maintain continuous, positive working relationships with all groups that have an interest in the Downtown event centre/arena and the broader Downtown Event & Entertainment District.
- Get feedback on the two feasible Downtown event centre/arena locations.
- Understand what stakeholders, partners, residents, and visitors see as opportunities and challenges for both locations.
- Have a range of feedback to share that is representative of the diversity of stakeholders, partners, residents, and visitors.

- e. Have opportunities for anyone who wants to provide feedback to participate in engagement activities.
- f. Provide clear and transparent communications in a variety of formats about project timelines, the decision-making process and how the project may impact stakeholders, partners, and residents.

Engagement Participants

Downtown Event & Entertainment District Advisory Group

The engagement approach and draft materials were shared with the Downtown Event & Entertainment District Advisory Group for their feedback. The City will work with members of this Group to promote our engagement activities and to work to meet our principle of inclusivity.

Businesses, Organizations and Property Owners

Tourism, Hospitality & Local Entertainment Industry

Perspectives of the Tourism, Hospitality and Entertainment industries will be important to include. Entertainment Industry refers to stakeholders who may make use of the future venue as athletes or artists, as well as other businesses and organizations related to entertainment (movies, theatre, music, sports, etc.).

The Administration will work with Discover Saskatoon (formerly Tourism Saskatoon) and other members of the Advisory Group to reach these stakeholders.

Business Associations

The Downtown Business Improvement District (BID), Riversdale BID, Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, and the North Saskatoon Business Association (NSBA) have been consulted as part of the Advisory Group. We will work with Advisory Group members to share information about engagement opportunities with their members. The City will also reach out to other BIDS and business associations as part of our communications strategy.

Businesses

In addition to engaging with business associations, it will be important to provide opportunities for businesses to provide direct feedback. We plan to work directly with business associations to share information about engagement opportunities with their members. We also have targeted communications planned for businesses.

Property Owners

Nearby property owners may have unique interests and concerns related to the Downtown Event & Entertainment District. Property owners will receive a mailout about how they can participate in engagement activities.

Non-profits, Organizations, and Community Groups

These stakeholders may have different interests and concerns related to the Downtown Event & Entertainment District. Involving non-profit/community groups can help to work towards engagement activities that reflect the diversity of Saskatoon and consider the implications of the Downtown event centre/arena location on (a) various residents that the organizations serve and represent, and (b) non-profit organization operations.

We will work directly with members of the Advisory Group to reach non-profits, organizations, and community groups. We also have targeted communications planned for these organizations.

Indigenous Engagement

Involving First Nation and Métis nations, communities and organizations can help reflect Indigenous values and consider the implications of the Downtown event centre/arena location on Indigenous peoples and Indigenous organizations in the city. Events such as Pow Wows often take place at SaskTel Centre so consulting with event organizers – such as Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC), the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) and the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (SIGA) – will be important to understand the impacts of various downtown locations.

It is important to establish relationships with Indigenous Nations and organizations earlier to improve participation in future engagement activities. We will work with Advisory Group members to strive towards engaging with First Nations and Métis nations, organizations, and community members.

Public

Saskatoon Residents

The location of a new Downtown event centre/arena and the related Downtown Event & Entertainment District has the potential to impact and interest all residents of Saskatoon. Efforts will be made to reach residents from all areas of the city, as well as residents from diverse ages, genders and incomes. We will try to hear from community members who are Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, as well as members of the LGBTQ2S+ communities and people with disabilities.

Local Residents (Downtown and Surrounding Neighbourhoods)

Additional efforts are needed to promote the engagement opportunity to those whose home is downtown, including property owners, condominium boards, renters of all incomes, as well as people who are experiencing homelessness.

Visitors

We recognize that a new Downtown event centre/arena will be a venue that is frequented by visitors from all parts of Saskatchewan. We will work to reach people from outside of Saskatoon through our engagement activities and communications.

Engagement Activities and Timeline

Overview

An outline of engagement activities and timelines are included in Table 1: Engagement Components, Activities, and Estimated Timelines. Each engagement component has a corresponding level of influence for participants as described below:

- **Inform:** We will provide information on the project that is open, timely, and useful.
- **Consult:** We are asking for feedback to inform a decision.
- **Involve:** We want to understand how community members will be affected by a decision.
- **Working Together:** We want to work together to develop solutions.

Table 1: Engagement Components, Activities, and Estimated Timelines

Engagement Component	Activities	Estimated Timelines
Communications/Promotions <i>Inform</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News Releases • Social Media • Targeted Emails/Mailouts • Digital Screens and Billboards • Print Ads • Promotional Materials • Radio • Website Information • Attending events 	Ongoing
Pre-Engagement on Approach <i>Involve/Working Together</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Advisory Group on engagement process 	Ongoing
Engagement with Saskatoon Residents <i>Consult</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative-Sample Survey (720 online panel, 80 phone interviews) • Opt-in Public Survey • Intercept Surveys 	Representative Sample Survey: Late-August/Early September (1 week) Opt-in Survey & Intercept Surveys: Mid-September/Early October (3 weeks)
Engagement with Visitors/Those from Other Communities that are Interested in the Event Centre/Arena <i>Consult</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opt-in Public Survey • Intercept Surveys (Particularly those at events) 	Mid-September/Early October (3 weeks)
Engagement with Saskatoon Businesses and Organizations <i>Consult</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opt-in survey for businesses and organizations 	Mid-September/Early October (3 weeks)
Analysis and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic coding • Engagement evaluation 	October/November
Reporting <i>Inform</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement Report • Engagement Summary 	November

Methodology

This public engagement will include four qualitative surveys:

- **Representative Sample Survey**
This survey is only for Saskatoon residents and will include a telephone component (80 calls) and 720 responses from an online panel.
- **Opt-in Online Public Survey**
Saskatoon residents, as well as those from other communities, can self-select to participate. The survey link will be shared with the City of Saskatoon Online Citizen Advisory Panel that includes over 1,800 participants. The survey will also be promoted through City communications.

- **Opt-in Local Business and Organization Survey**

This survey will be promoted through calls to local businesses and organizations. Screening questions at the start will determine if the participant is answering the questions on behalf of a business/organization. If they are not, the survey will send them to the Opt-in Online Public Survey.

- **Intercept Surveys**

Approximately 400 in-person surveys will be conducted to make sure that we hear from residents across the city. Anticipated areas for surveys include the Downtown/Surrounding Neighbourhoods, various shopping malls, as well as events at SaskTel Centre and TCU Place.

Each survey will include short qualitative questions to gather opinions on the opportunities and challenges of the two feasible site location options. Demographic and survey evaluation questions will also be included. Results from the representative sample survey will be used to create drop-down menus for the Opt-in Online Public Survey and the Intercept Surveys, which will include space for participants to add ideas that are not included in the menu. This will make the surveys quicker and easier for community members to complete.

Utilizing a variety of surveying methods, supported by robust communications and marketing, will provide opportunity to a diversity of stakeholders, partners, residents, and visitors to participate in this phase of engagement.

Timeline Constraints

As the Administration explored ways to engage with the public on site options, it became clear that conducting public engagement activities prior to the conclusion of land negotiations would not be in the best interest of the City. Engaging during or prior to negotiations would significantly reduce the opportunity for the City to secure conditional purchase agreements within a competitive market price range.

The City has now secured conditional purchase agreements for the Midtown Shopping Centre North Parking Lot, which is subject to City Council approval by the end of November. As a result, the timeframe for engagement, data analysis, and reporting is tight.

Getting Involved

More specific details about engagement opportunities will be continuously updated and shared on the City's Engage Page and through the subscriber and stakeholder mailing lists.