

2nd Avenue Adjacent to New Central Library Street Redesign

ISSUE

The Saskatoon Library Administration has requested that 2nd Avenue North adjacent to the new library be re-constructed to enhance accessibility at the street level.

BACKGROUND

The Planning and Operations Committee, at its meeting held on October 18, 2013, considered the City Centre Plan – Phase No. 3 of the City Centre Plan Project report, and resolved:

- “1) That a report be forwarded to City Council recommending endorsement of the key strategies outlined in the City Centre Plan; and
- 2) That the Administration report back with an Implementation Plan for the immediate, short-, medium-, and long-term implementation of the plan.”

The report highlighted the following:

The Plan is organized into three major components:

1. Public Places;
2. Moving Around and Infrastructure; and
3. Policy to Enable Development.

The Plan then builds out 12 key strategies that will lead to achieving the vision:

1. a strong and unique retail centre as a destination for the region;
2. a new west Downtown;
3. a new network of public spaces throughout the city to serve all seasons;
4. a broad network of pedestrian priority streets;
5. improved connections to surrounding neighbourhoods;
6. advancement of arts and culture within the City Centre;
7. stronger existing neighbourhoods;
8. improved transportation, transit, bike, and parking systems;
9. sustainable design;
10. City policies to foster private and public investment;
11. residential development is a priority; and
12. business development is a priority.

A review of the City Centre Plan document yields the following:

1. 2nd Avenue North between Spadina Crescent East and 26th Street East is identified as a “Pedestrian Priority Street”.
2. “The Walkable Development Framework Plan builds upon 2nd Avenue as one of the Downtown’s primary north-south pedestrian priority streets. It is already a successful avenue partially because it accommodates pedestrians with reduced street width crossing points, mid-block crossing areas, and landscape. The Plan recommends this pedestrian priority street be extended on both its northern and southern ends in order to fully connect the major neighbourhoods of the

Downtown including City Park, the City Hall Square area, the Central Business District, and the waterfront of River Landing.”

3. A Pedestrian Priority Street is defined as follows, “A pedestrian priority street is not a street that eliminates cars or trucks, but one that provides a balance between pedestrians and vehicles. These streets have walkable design features, encourage pedestrian-orientated economic development, place making, and enhanced neighbourhood identity while accommodating vehicles.”

City Council, at its Regular Business Meeting held on December 16, 2013, considered the City Centre Plan – Phase No. 3 of the City Centre Plan Project report, and resolved: “That the recommendation of the Executive Committee be adopted.”

In October 2022, the City Manager received a request from the Saskatoon Library Administration to redevelop the public realm on 2nd Avenue North adjacent to the site of the new library to enhance accessibility at the street level. This request is attached as Appendix 1.

CURRENT STATUS

Currently 2nd Avenue North between 23rd Street East and 25th Street East includes sidewalk on both sides, two southbound through lanes, two northbound through lanes, and parallel parking on both sides. South of 23rd Street East, the cross-section of 2nd Avenue North is revised to include one southbound through lane, one northbound lane, and angled parking on both sides.

The new library is scheduled for construction on the west side of 2nd Avenue North between 24th Street East and 25th Street East. Construction is planned to begin in spring 2023 and be complete by the end of 2025 and is expected to damage the existing sidewalks that bound the site.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

It appears that the request for a redevelopment of the public realm on 2nd Avenue North adjacent to the new library site aligns with the City Centre Plan vision for 2nd Avenue North. The letter from the Saskatoon Library Administration references ‘accessibility’ several times. The Administration agrees that this is a very important consideration, however, other factors must also be considered to ensure a successful project. An initial preliminary list of considerations that require addressing in addition to accessibility include:

- Suitable dimensions for sidewalk widths, furniture zones, amenity strips, parking lanes, driving lanes, relocation of traffic signal infrastructure, parking kiosks, light standards, and medians;
- The number of driving lanes;
- Operations of the traffic signals along 2nd Avenue North;
- Urban design considerations include:
 - Space and infrastructure for street trees;
 - Consistency with Urban Design’s aesthetic plans for the street;
 - Consistency with Urban Design’s and Parks’ operational requirements;

- Removal of the existing overhead cantilever sign facing southbound traffic;
- Consistency of cross-section across 2nd Avenue North;
- Transition to a revised cross-section (for example at 25th Street East);
- Drainage;
- Snow removal operations;
- On-street parking;
- On-street loading; and,
- Active Transportation.

Significant consultation is also required with, at a minimum: existing business owners on both sides of 2nd Avenue North; the Downtown BID; Saskatoon Library; Saskatoon Transit; Roadways, Fleet and Support department; Planning and Development department; Parking Services; Saskatoon Water; and the Transportation department.

The Administration also suggests that it would be very difficult to re-construct 2nd Avenue North between 24th Street East and 25th Street East only. If this was done, then there would be a gap in road design consistency between 23rd Street East and 24th Street East where the street would remain as is. The Administration recommends that this project, if moved forward, considers 2nd Avenue North between 23rd Street East and 25th Street East. If funded, it is recommended that a design be completed for these two blocks, and the design project investigate the feasibility of only re-constructing one block between 24th Street East and 25th Street East.

A preliminary list of issues created if 2nd Avenue North between 23rd Street East and 24th Street are left as is, but the street between 24th Street East and 25th Street East is re-constructed are:

- Constructability – Can the cross-section be transitioned at the intersections from four through lanes to two through lanes, with potentially different parking orientations.
- Road Safety – Drivers prefer a consistent road cross-section as expectations are met, resulting in less driver uncertainty and hesitation.
- Public Realm Continuity – Improvements to public realm made in conjunction with any re-construction could be interrupted by a one block “gap” in the quality and comfort of the pedestrian environment. The City Centre Plan envisions 2nd Avenue North as a continuous pedestrian priority corridor through the Downtown.

The Administration suggests that it is feasible to complete the design work by fall 2023, with important outcomes of this design work being the feasibility of constructing only one block, and a construction cost estimate. The Administration currently is not able to determine preliminary construction cost estimate due to the numerous unknowns at this point.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost to complete the design project is estimated to be \$175,000. Currently there is no funding available to complete the work. Reserve Capital Expenditures (RCE) is a viable source of funding to complete this work, and the Standing Policy Committee on

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Transportation and subsequently City Council would need to provide the resolution to provide this funding.

If funding is provided, the Administration would then move forward with retaining a consulting firm to complete this work on behalf of the City.

If the design project moves forward in early 2023, it is anticipated that the Administration could bring forward the cost of the re-construction project at the end of 2023 through the 2024-2025 Multi-Year Budget Process. City Council could then make the decision at that time to move forward with the construction, or not.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Privacy, legal, social and environmental implications have not been assessed at this time.

NEXT STEPS

None planned. If City Council provides direction and a funding source, then the next steps would be to form an internal steering committee, select an internal project manager, and prepare a Request for Proposal to retain consulting services.

APPENDICES

1. Request from the Saskatoon Library Administration

Report Approval

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