

Downtown Event and Entertainment District Engagement Strategy

The purpose of the **Downtown Event and Entertainment District Engagement Strategy (Strategy)** is to outline the City of Saskatoon's (City) goals, processes and timelines for working with community members throughout 2023 and early 2024 on the following projects:

- District Plan (See Table 1)
- Indigenous Placemaking / Placekeeping¹ (see Table 1)
- Conceptual Design for Event Centre/Arena
- Conceptual Design for District Core Plaza
- Conceptual Design for Convention Centre

Each of the above projects includes a variety of components (Table 1 outlines components for the District Plan), meaning that the scope of work that could be engaged on during 2023 and early 2024 is significant. Where possible, Administration will take a one-City approach to engage on the entire Downtown Event and Entertainment District Project, rather than engaging separately on each project, or component of a project. This one-City approach recognizes that similar questions and feedback will be asked for the various projects and makes it as easy as possible for community members to participate in engagement activities, while respecting their valuable time. However, Administration also recognizes that there are some issues specific to a particular project or component that may require additional engagement or need to be engaged on earlier. To do this, the Strategy takes a multi-phased approach that includes both opportunities for broad public engagement as well as targeted and issue-focused engagement.

Administration will only conduct engagement on the components of each project where there are opportunities for community members to influence the decision – so not all project components are included in this Strategy (though they may still have communications). Once the Technical Advisor is in place, Administration will update this strategy to include the specific decisions related to developing conceptual design plans for the Event Centre/Arena, District Core Plaza, Convention Centre and other supporting work.

¹ **Placekeeping** is a reframing of the more commonly known term 'placemaking' from an Indigenous lens. Placekeeping refers to the understanding by many Indigenous knowledge-keepers and practitioners that place (and the land that provides a foundation for place) inherently exists and has agency. As people, we can: hold place; be caretakers or stewards of place; respond to place; and form relationships to place. For Indigenous peoples, place is the setting and co-creator of our being in the world, ancestry and memories, stories and ceremonies, languages, land stewardship, cultural paradigms, and social identities. Indigenous placekeeping is a unique form of expression, design, process and praxis that prioritizes the ecological, historical and cultural setting of 'place'; and engages an expanded role of community in the design process and activations. Placekeeping practices also work to unsettle and re-present Indigenous histories and futures in the civic commons within urban areas (public places such as parks, trails, venues and libraries). Taken from [fcc-civic-indigenous-toolkit-final-2022.pdf](#) (futurecitiescanada.ca), p. 160

More information about the timelines for the Downtown Event and Entertainment District can be found at [Timeline and Milestones | Saskatoon.ca](https://www.saskatoon.ca/timeline-and-milestones)

Public Engagement will inform the following components of the District Plan:

Table 1: District Plan Engagement Topics

Land Use	Public Realm	Connectivity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoning analysis • Built form • Land use policy • Design guidelines • Supporting infill • Sustainable building practices • Facility integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetscaping • Indigenous placemaking/ placekeeping components • Design elements • All-weather design • Public art • District Core Plaza • Public space (event and non-event) • Activation/Programming • Heritage resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian network/comfort • Active Transportation integration • Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)/transit integration • Parking • Circulation (including loading, deliveries, ride share) • Gateways (all modes) • Accessibility
<p>Indigenous Placemaking / Placekeeping will inform all components of the District Plan. An Indigenous Placemaking / Placekeeping Strategy will be co-developed with, or developed by, Indigenous partners.</p>		

The Strategy will be regularly reviewed and updated throughout 2023 as more details evolve on other components of the larger project such as, but not limited to, the work being completed with the Technical Advisor. Specific engagement and communications plans will be developed for each phase.

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 (City), responsibility for final decisions typically remains with City Council.
- Engagement is not about informing or educating to gain project buy-in. Authentic engagement often means that some community members disagree with the final decision.
- Our goal is for participants to see the engagement process itself as authentic and to feel heard, even if they disagree with the final decision that is made.
- Additional engagement is typically required for large projects with many components that impact many people.

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 Commitments

Engagement commitments outline how we will implement the Guiding Principles of the [Public Engagement Policy](#) for this project.

1. Public engagement is aligned with the approved Vision and Guiding Principles of the District Plan and adheres to the Council Policy on Public Engagement;
2. Engagement is participant focused and takes a one-City approach;
3. Administration develops and maintains continuous, positive working relationships with all groups that have an interest in the Downtown Event and Entertainment District;
4. Administration will provide clear, understandable, transparent and timely communications throughout the project. Wherever possible, plain-language principles will be applied;
5. Administration will conduct inclusive engagement that values a diversity of perspectives, with a range of feedback. There will be opportunities for anyone who wants to provide feedback to participate in engagement activities;
6. Administration will strive to hear from those who will be impacted by decisions and from those who have expertise and living experience that can inform our decisions;
7. Input received will be considered and help inform decisions for which the input was collected; and
8. Administration will be transparent with our engagement by clarifying the level of influence for each engagement phase and reporting back on what we have heard and how that input was used.

Engagement Goals

Engagement Goals indicate the level of influence that community members will have and connect our engagement more clearly to decisions.

The following levels of influence are based on the [International Association for Public Participation's Engagement Spectrum](#):

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.

Empower: Community members and stakeholders make the decision.

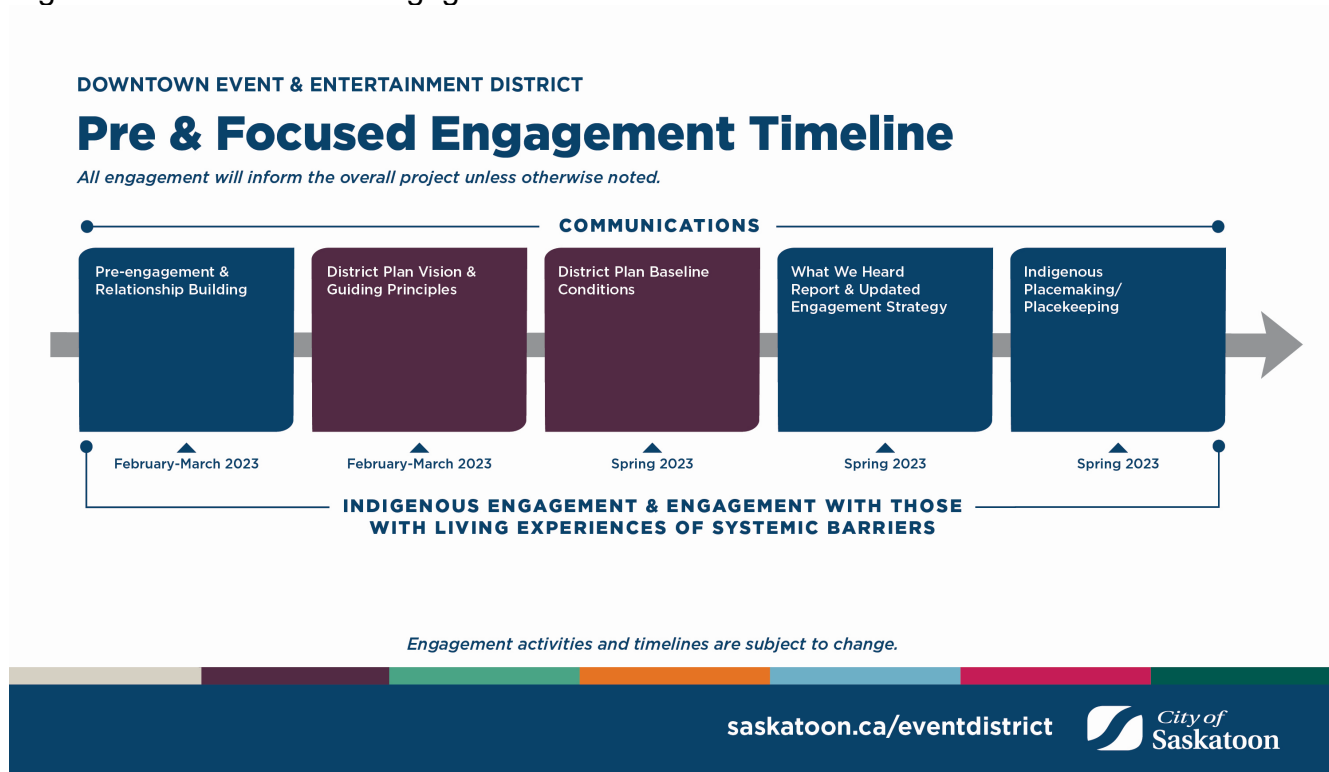
1. **Work together** with stakeholders, partners, and those with living experiences or systemic barriers to develop our engagement processes;
2. **Work together** with Indigenous leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers to develop an engagement process;
3. **Work together** with Indigenous leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers to develop and incorporate an Indigenous Placemaking / Placekeeping Strategy;

4. **Involve:** Understand the historical and cultural significance of the study area, including Indigenous peoples' histories and those of other cultures with connections to the place;
5. **Involve:** Understand what ideas stakeholders, partners, residents and those with living experiences have for the Downtown Event and Entertainment District;
6. **Involve:** Understand what ideas residents, stakeholders, partners and those with living experiences have to mitigate issues that are identified;
7. **Involve:** Understand how different options or scenarios will impact stakeholders, partners, residents and those with living experiences; and
8. **Consult:** Get feedback on draft plans from stakeholders, partners, residents and those with living experiences.

Pre-Engagement & Focused Engagement Timeline

From February through March 2023, Administration will be conducting some pre-engagement and focused engagement work with stakeholders, rights holders and community partners. This work will inform the targeted and broad engagement that will begin in mid-to-late April 2023.

Figure 1: Pre & Focused Engagement Timeline



Pre-Engagement: Preparing to Engage: The focus of pre-engagement is to co-develop engagement plans (tactics etc.) with those that we often struggle to reach to make engagement more inclusive. The Strategy will be updated based on pre-engagement.

This work is currently underway. Pre-engagement will help to identify engagement tactics, identify specific issues requiring targeted engagement, make sure that timelines work with

participants (particularly summer engagement), and identify communications tactics. This Strategy will be updated when pre-engagement is completed, as there is potential for the recommended approaches to change. Specific Engagement Plans will be developed for each engagement phase. Plans will include specific tactics, timelines and budgets.

Time is planned between conducting pre-engagement and implementing Phase I of engagement to make sure that there is time to properly resource and communicate engagement opportunities.

District Plan Specific Engagement: Some targeted engagement will be completed on the Vision and Guiding Principles and the Baseline Conditions Report. Additional District Plan specific engagement may be identified throughout the process.

Indigenous Placemaking / Placekeeping: More details will be developed during pre-engagement and working with Indigenous peoples. To allow more time to develop and implement a meaningful process, the focus of 2023 and early 2024 is to develop an Indigenous Placemaking / Placekeeping Strategy. However, it will be important that enough work is done early on so that this can inform the other components of the conceptual design.

Targeted & Broad Engagement Phases and Timeline

Targeted and broad engagement will provide opportunities for all residents and visitors to provide feedback on the project, as well as targeted engagement with stakeholders, rights holders and partners. Engagement has been divided into five major phases. At the conclusion of each phase, engagement reports on *What We Heard* will be completed. Some time is included between each phase for data analysis and to allow Administration to incorporate feedback into the next phase of work.

Engagement with Indigenous peoples, as well as those with living experiences of systemic barriers, will take place through all phases.

Figure 2: Targeted and Broad Engagement Phases and Timeline

DOWNTOWN EVENT & ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

Targeted & Broad Engagement Phases & Timeline

All engagement will inform the overall project unless otherwise noted.



Engagement Phases and Timelines are subject to change.



Phase 1 - Engaging on Ideas This is the public launch of engagement. This phase is about understanding what ideas community members have for the Downtown Event and Entertainment District. More targeted and issue-specific engagement will also take place.

Phase 2 – Building a Plan This phase is asking for feedback on different options or scenarios that are developed based on Phase 1 engagement and technical considerations. This phase will also include targeted and issue-specific engagement.

Phase3 - Review Draft Plans Technical Advisor In this phase, draft plans are shared for a final round of feedback.

Phase 4 - Review Draft District Plan The Draft District Plan is shared for a final round of feedback.

Phase 5 - Closing the Loop Final Engagement Reports are shared back. The City clearly explains how feedback has been used.

Future Engagement: There will be additional opportunities to engage on this project. The focus of 2023 / early 2024 is to create conceptual plans with more detailed design work and implementation plans to follow in later years.

Each engagement phase will include the following:

- Developing a detailed Communications and Engagement Plan;
- Carrying out engagement activities (public and targeted; virtual and in-person; in real time and at the participants own pace);
- Data analysis and providing information to project teams;

- Reporting back to participants; and
- Process evaluation.

Each engagement phase will involve a variety of opportunities for community members to participate. Specific activities and tactics will be developed, in part, through the pre-engagement phase, where Administration works with specific stakeholders, rights holders and partners to co-design aspects of the engagement strategy to make it more inclusive and accessible.

Engagement Participants

In general terms, stakeholders, rights holders and community partners who will be engaged on various elements of this project will include the following. This list may be adapted in the future if other stakeholders or community partners are identified.

Engagement will include efforts to reach those in all areas of the city, but extra attention will be provided to those who are located in the District study area, immediately adjacent, located in the Downtown and in surrounding areas.

Table 2: Engagement Participants

Group	Examples
City Advisory Groups/Council Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee • Downtown Event & Entertainment District Advisory Group • Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee • Municipal Planning Commission • Public Art Advisory Committee • Saskatoon Accessibility Advisory Committee • Saskatoon Environmental Advisory Committee
Indigenous Peoples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members • Grassroots groups • Elders / Knowledge Keepers • First Nations with land holdings in the Downtown / surrounding area • Métis locals • Métis Nation of Saskatchewan • Indigenous Organizations • Saskatoon Tribal Council • Those who organize / host festivals and events • Youth

Group	Examples
People with Living Experiences of Systemic Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) • LGBTQIA2S people • Low-income people • Newcomers • People who are houseless • People with disabilities
Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All ages, abilities, ethnicities, genders, family status and incomes • Personal vehicle users, transit users, those who rely on active transportation (walking, cycling, etc.) • Renters and homeowners • Those who attend events at TCU Place and SaskTel Centre, and those who do not • Those who participate in activities that could take place in the Downtown Event and Entertainment District and those who don't
Stakeholders / Partners: Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Associations • Businesses (all sizes) • Development industry • Event organizers • Housing providers • Tourism / hospitality industry • Property owners
Stakeholders / Partners: Non-profits, Organizations, and Community Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility organizations • Active Transportation groups • Arts organizations • Community Associations • Environmental groups • Ethnocultural organizations • Heritage and culture groups • LGBTQIA2S organizations • Organizations whose work relates to safety and well being • Organizations working with those in poverty or experiencing houselessness • Religious organizations • Renter organizations • Settlement agencies • Sports organizations • Student groups • Those who organize/host festivals and events

Group	Examples
Visitors (Included in any broad public engagement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who attend events and reside in neighbouring communities outside of Saskatoon • Those who attend events and reside in other parts of the province • Those who attend events and reside outside of Saskatchewan.
The list is not intended to be exhaustive and if additional stakeholders, rights holders, and community partners are identified the list will be modified.	

Next Steps

Pre-engagement is currently underway and will continue throughout February. This Engagement Strategy will be updated based on pre-engagement and information from the Technical Advisor. Detailed Engagement Plans will be developed based on pre-engagement.