

Downtown Event and Entertainment District - Update on Upcoming Reports and Decision Milestones

ISSUE

What is the current anticipated sequence of upcoming reports and decision-making milestones for City Council in relation to the Downtown Event and Entertainment District project?

BACKGROUND

At its November 19, 2018 meeting, City Council considered a report entitled "[Considerations for TCU Place and SaskTel Centre Project](#)" and resolved, in part:

- “1. That the Administration be directed to include a future arena/convention centre when planning the future of Saskatoon’s Downtown;
2. That the focus of the planning work include consideration of an entertainment district, not just an arena and/or convention facility.”

At its April 26, 2021 meeting, City 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:

- “1. That Council confirm pursuit of a downtown entertainment district/BRT, including the necessary transit and parking improvements, as a priority for the City of Saskatoon;
2. That the Administration be directed to work with stakeholders and other levels of government on achieving a detailed funding plan based on the Administration’s presentation of April 19, 2021, (investigating all funding opportunities that include information on potential bonds for the arena) with the goal of constructing the entertainment district with no contributions from property taxes.
3. That a key objective of the entertainment district be to provide public benefit to all residents of Saskatoon;
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;
5. That as a component of ongoing engagement with stakeholders, the Administration lead an analysis of industry forecasts related to events and tourism that would be relevant to the planning of a downtown entertainment district/BRT;
6. That the Administration report on options for incorporating Indigenous placemaking and partnerships in the development of the downtown entertainment district; and
7. That as considerations are made for planning and design of the downtown entertainment district, the Administration report on opportunities to align these projects with the City’s High

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Performance Building Policy and provide leadership by pursuing carbon neutrality in the district.”

At its meeting held on June 21, 2021, the Governance and Priorities Committee received a report entitled “[Downtown Event and Entertainment District and Bus Rapid Transit – Sequencing of Upcoming Reports and Decision Milestones](#),” which provided an anticipated sequencing of reports and decision milestones.

At its meeting held on July 31, 2022, City Council approved the [City of Saskatoon 2022-2025 Strategic Plan](#), which highlights the connection of the Downtown Event and Entertainment District project to several City Council Priorities, including Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; Economic Development; Recreation, Culture and Leisure; and Downtown Development.

At its special meeting held on November 16, 2022, City Council received a report entitled “[Arena/Event Centre Site Selection and Public Engagement Results](#)” and resolved:

“That Option 1 be approved with the future event centre/arena to be located on Site A – Midtown Shopping Centre North Parking Lot.”

The purchase agreement for this property was also approved at this meeting.

CURRENT STATUS

The Administration is continuing to advance project development with work continuing on the:

- 1) conceptual design for the new event centre, new or expanded convention centre, public realm, parking, and related civic infrastructure;
- 2) district plan;
- 3) budget estimate for detailed design and construction; and
- 4) funding strategy.

Appendix 1 provides an updated projected timeline of the various reports the Administration intends to bring forward over the next year. Of note, the New Versus Expanded Convention Centre Decision Report will be combined with the conceptual design report anticipated in July/August 2023. As well, since the existing SaskTel Centre is expected to remain in operation for several more years, the Future of SaskTel Centre Decision Report will be deferred until detailed design and construction of the new event centre has commenced.

Appendix 2 provides the projected timeline for deliverables related to the District Plan.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

As outlined in the Background section of this report, City Council has made a series of key decisions over the past several years that have incrementally progressed the Downtown Event and Entertainment District project forward. There will be several

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important decisions by City Council over the course of 2023 that will inform the conceptual design, district plan, budget estimate, and funding strategy.

The overall funding strategy can be viewed as a funding plan that would be approved by City Council in principle, and conditional upon confirmation of factors outside of the control of the City of Saskatoon (City). For example, it is anticipated the funding strategy will include grant funding requests to the Province of Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan) and Government of Canada. In addition, some alternative revenue instruments, such as those originally described in the November 19, 2018 report to City Council entitled "[Considerations for TCU Place and SaskTel Centre Project](#)," if selected to form part of the funding strategy, are expected to require Saskatchewan to agree and enact any necessary amendments to *The Cities Act*. Subsequently, if granted the legislative authority, City Council would need to adopt bylaws to enact these new revenue instruments.

The two November 2023 public reports are of critical importance and will address the conceptual design and the City's funding plan for the projects. Should City Council approve a conceptual design and funding plan, for all intents and purposes, City Council will have decided to proceed with the project provided the funding plan can be achieved.

The City would then work with other orders of government to strive for approval of the City's grant funding requests and any changes to *The Cities Act* stemming from the funding strategy. As approvals are given, the Administration will periodically report back to City Council with update reports. Once all funding is in place, the project would then proceed to detailed design and construction. The Administration expects the process to be fluid and evolve over time, and ultimately the City will be in a position to proceed with the project in its entirety, or portions thereof.

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 Administration's work schedule continues to target late 2023 for a report to City Council with a proposed conceptual design and funding strategy to support the future detailed design and construction. The current project timelines and decision/report milestones are available publicly on the [project webpage](#).

APPENDICES

1. Downtown Event and Entertainment District Estimated Schedule of Reports – 2023
2. District Plan Components - Estimated Schedule of Completion – 2023/2024

Report Approval

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