
Winter City Strategy Update

Recommendation

That the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities & Corporate Services recommend to City Council:

That this report be considered during the 2018 Business Plan and Budget Deliberations.

Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update City Council on the work required for 2018 to develop the Winter City Strategy (Strategy) for Saskatoon.

Report Highlights

1. Engagement of the community in the co-design of a Winter City Strategy for Saskatoon has generated enthusiasm for the Strategy among a significant number of stakeholders across the community. There is more work to be done to ensure engagement is inclusive of the entire community, such that the Strategy appropriately reflects the challenges and opportunities associated with the winter experience of all Saskatonians.
2. Based on the successes of the last year and the ideas generated through community engagement, Administration is requesting \$350,000 from the Reserve for Capital Expenditures for the Strategy. Funding would be used to:
 - Maintain and expand the online inventory of existing assets;
 - Continue the community conversation about challenges and opportunities associated with winter;
 - Participate in the Winter Cities Institute;
 - Review and revise civic policies and procedures to better reflect the objectives of the Strategy and facilitate community initiative; and
 - Leverage increased winter activity by supporting investments in new winter assets.
3. The Strategy is intended to be co-owned by the community and the City. A Community Working Group has been formed and will continue to help identify critical success factors for Saskatoon.

Strategic Goals

This report supports multiple Strategic Goals, in particular:

- Quality of Life by providing opportunities for activities in a winter city;
- Sustainable Growth by ensuring our City Centre is vibrant in all seasons of the year;
- Moving Around by ensuring accessibility and connectivity continue to exist when snow and ice are present; and
- Economic Diversity and Prosperity by creating an environment for business sustainability through all seasons.

Background

City Council, at its meeting held on January 23, 2017, received the Saskatoon Winter Strategy Update report which provided an update and more detailed description of the components of a Winter City Strategy for Saskatoon. The Strategy was described as an intentional effort by the City of Saskatoon and community stakeholders to celebrate what makes Saskatoon unique as a four-season place that is inviting, vibrant and prosperous, even in the coldest months of the year.

Report

Status Update on the Development of a Winter City Strategy for Saskatoon

Attachment 1, Strategy Discussion Paper (September 2017), provides an overview of the four-step process by which the Strategy is being created with the community. The steps are implemented iteratively rather than sequentially and include:

- Building on the strength of existing assets;
- Engaging the community in change;
- Implementing actions; and
- Developing the Strategy.

Stakeholders gathered at a kick-off event in March 2016 identified the need to first inventory existing assets and improve awareness of them before embarking on further planned improvements to Saskatoon's 'winter experience'. Attachment 2, Online Winter City YXE Asset Inventory, provides a snap-shot of the online inventory created for the last winter season in response to this identified opportunity.

Continuing to Engage the Community in Change

Community Engagement in the co-design of a Winter City Strategy for Saskatoon began in January 2017 and enthusiasm for the Strategy has been communicated by a significant number of stakeholders across the community. Attachment 1 describes some of the specific opportunities that generated excitement among those engaged to date. These include:

- Improving mobility;
- Improving facilities and infrastructure;
- Providing more support to existing activities;
- Introducing new events and things to do; and
- Improving the promotion of events and activities.

The results of engagement activities between January and April were compiled into a brief (see Attachment 3, Engagement Results – Consolidated Report - April 25) shared with and discussed by stakeholders at a Community Workshop on April 27, 2017. The above list of priorities, along with a list of concepts that stakeholders felt would be important considerations as the Strategy developed, emerged from the Community Workshop and are elaborated in Attachment 1.

Continuing to learn from other communities has remained a theme throughout the strategy development process. Attachment 4, Selected Winter City Conference Observations, provides an overview of some of the observations from the Winter City

Shake-Up held in Edmonton in February where delegates from across North America, Europe, China and Japan shared their progress as Winter Cities.

There is more work to be done to ensure engagement is inclusive of the entire community to ensure the Strategy appropriately reflects the challenges and opportunities associated with winter. Also identified in Attachment 1 are some of the additional community engagement efforts the community identified as important next steps. These include:

- Making a special effort to hear from Saskatoon's youth, children, frail older adults, new Canadians, Indigenous peoples and restaurant owners as there have been fewer of these 'voices' or perspectives participating in the Winter City dialogue so far.
- Providing food, facilitators from within the community (rather than civic staff or professional facilitators) and meeting locations in community spaces when planning future engagement efforts, as these elements are critical to future success.
- Continuing to help community members understand what already exists (i.e. through further development of the asset inventory) as this is an important starting point to future conversations.

Engagement across divisions of the City of Saskatoon was also limited to date and significantly more is planned in order to identify and implement changes to current plans, policies and procedures that align with the goals of the Strategy and enable and facilitate community initiative.

'Quick Win' Actions

\$35,000 was set aside to support community initiatives deemed to advance learning or move core concepts of the Strategy forward. \$25,000 of this funding was used in a call for submissions, administered by the Recreation and Community Development Division in alignment with other community granting processes. Attachment 5, 2017 WinterCity YXE Grant Awards, provides a summary of the selected projects that the community intends to deliver this winter that will add a new dimension to existing initiatives and/or facilitate linkages between existing initiatives to create new outcomes.

From the emerging themes identified through engagement activities at the Community Workshop and in ongoing discussions with the Community Working Group, Administration proposes to undertake the following next steps throughout 2018 to achieve additional 'quick wins':

- Maintain and expand the online inventory of existing assets;
- Continue the community conversation about challenges and opportunities associated with winter, ensuring under-represented population segments have a voice in the further development of the Strategy;
- Review and revise civic policies and procedures to better reflect the objectives of the Strategy and facilitate community initiative by taking a less 'risk-averse' perspective; and

- Leverage (through capital funding) increased winter activity by supporting investments in new winter assets that may include:
 - Creatively designed warmup shelters;
 - Washrooms available through the winter;
 - Clear paths and sidewalks to support persons of all abilities;
 - Address accessibility barriers to active transportation (particularly for those with mobility challenges);
 - Winter festivals introducing new themes;
 - Intergenerational events;
 - Neighbourhood-level events;
 - More cultural events (particularly Indigenous);
 - Indigenous winter structures in parks (e.g. tipi with warm-up fire);
 - Coordinate efforts through partnerships and collaborative funding;
 - Heated outdoor patios;
 - Add more food and drink options to existing events;
 - Focus on affordability to enable participation by all Saskatonians;
 - Implement 'pop up' features to better utilize existing spaces; and
 - Continue to provide small amounts of community grant funding to support community innovation.

Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement

As outlined throughout this report, the focus of continuing community engagement activities are intended to create a common vision and a shared understanding of current assets and opportunities for creating a city that is more inviting, vibrant and prosperous, even in the coldest months of the year.

Prior to the 2017-18 winter season, a benchmark survey on current attitudes, perceptions and behaviours related to Saskatoon's winter season will be implemented to help in further refinement of the Strategy and provide insight on what initiatives, once implemented, may affect positive change.

Communication Plan

Communications and awareness about the Strategy will continue to be multi-channeled (as described in previous reports) and focus on core content developed for a webpage hosted on the City's website that acts as a resource hub for the community and provides information about:

- The goals and rationale for creating a Community Winter City Strategy;
- The ongoing process for developing the Strategy through engagement, 'quick win' actions, and learning from other centres;
- An inventory of winter-related assets;
- Descriptions of the potential economic and quality of life benefits achievable through the Strategy; and
- Continuing to provide opportunities for community innovation to collect a 'blizzard' of ideas on ways in which Saskatoon can achieve renown as a Winter City.

Policy Implications

A number of changes to existing policies as well as the development of new policies is anticipated as a result of the Strategy development process.

Financial Implications

Capital Project #2519 – Community Winter City Strategy Development received funding of \$85,000 in the 2017 Budget. These funds supported engagement and awareness efforts (\$50,000) and small-scale community initiatives (\$35,000) including supporting community members to participate as delegates at the Winter City Shake-Up conference in Edmonton in February and six (6) small grants to support activities this upcoming winter.

Based on the successes of the last year and the ideas generated through community engagement, Administration is requesting \$350,000 be allocated from the Reserve for Capital Expenditures for the Strategy. Funding would be used to:

- Hire temporary staff to conduct reviews of civic policies and draft amendments and new policies supportive of Winter City themes where necessary, develop winter design guidelines and participate in internal civic service and process reviews to ensure the objectives of the Strategy are internalized and community initiative is facilitated as effectively as possible;
- Maintain and expand the online inventory of existing assets;
- Continue community dialogue, communications and outreach to promote existing assets and new community initiatives;
- Continue to provide a small amount of funding to community groups to support community-led initiatives that generate learnings for the Strategy; and
- Invest in new assets that support outdoor winter activities (such as warming huts or some of the other priorities identified in this report).

The Administration will also continue to commit existing operating resources (most specifically in the form of staff time) to facilitate the development of the Strategy as described in this report.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no environmental, privacy or CPTED implications or considerations at this time.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

The Administration will report back to the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services in May 2018 to provide an update on work-to-date, initial engagement results and options for moving the Strategy forward.

Public Notice

Public Notice pursuant to Section 3 of Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice Policy, is not required.

Attachments

1. Strategy Discussion Paper (September 2017)
2. Online Winter City YXE Asset Inventory
3. Engagement Results – Consolidated Report - April 25
4. Selected Winter City Conference Observations
5. 2017 WinterCity YXE Grant Awards

Report Approval

Written &

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