

Saskatoon's City Centre and District Plan

ISSUE

The City Centre Plan (2013) represents the City of Saskatoon's commitment to ensuring Downtown retains and enhances its significance, while meeting the evolving needs of the community as the city grows. Over the past two years, Administration has been working to integrate the Downtown Event and Entertainment District into an updated City Centre Plan framework.

The new City Centre and District Plan updates and replaces the City Centre Plan (2013), with the incorporation of the Downtown Event and Entertainment District.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend to City Council that:

1. Saskatoon's City Centre and District Plan be approved as the guiding framework for Administration to prepare future budget and implementation requests for City Council consideration; and
2. The Administration create a business plan option for the implementation of Saskatoon's City Centre and District Plan for consideration during the 2026/2027 Business Plan and Budget deliberations.

BACKGROUND

City Council, at its Regular Business [meeting](#) on December 16, 2013, received a report entitled City Centre Plan – Phase No. 3 of the City Centre Plan Project, and resolved:

“...that the key strategies outlined in the City Centre Plan be endorsed.”

City Council, at its Regular Business [meeting](#) on November 19, 2018, received a report entitled TCU Place/SaskTel Centre Market Analysis 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;
3. That the Administration report back on terms of reference for a process for identifying the best location for a future entertainment district and how it would fit into a wider vision for a strong downtown for the future;
4. That one of the overall principles be to seek approaches that minimize the reliance on Property taxes to pay for this arena; and
5. That the approach also recognize that while the City of Saskatoon has a leadership role, it will take collaboration with stakeholders and the community as a whole to come up with the best solution.”

City Council, at its Regular Business [meeting](#) on March 29, 2023, received a report entitled Downtown Event and Entertainment District Plan – Vision Statement and Guiding Principles and resolved:

- “1. That the vision statement and guiding principles for the Downtown Event and Entertainment District Plan, as contained in Appendix 2, be approved with accepted changes.
2. That in addition to the wording changes highlighted in Appendix 4, that the Robust and Diverse Economy principle be amended as follows:
Preserve the Downtown as the culture, social and employment centre of the community, while encouraging a thriving, diverse economy that attracts local, regional, and global employers that generate quality job opportunities throughout the Downtown and city.”

The Governance and Priorities Committee, at its [meeting](#) on February 14, 2024, received the report, entitled Downtown Event and Entertainment District – Conceptual Design.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Saskatoon's City Centre and District Plan (Plan), (see Appendix 1), is a non-statutory plan outlining the vision and strategic initiatives to support the Downtown Event and Entertainment District (District) and the broader City Centre. Achieving the Plan's vision will require building on momentum, strategic investment, multi-party collaboration and adaptability.

This Plan updates and replaces the 2013 City Centre Plan. Considerable progress was made over the past decade on implementing the City Centre Plan, outlined in Appendix 2; however, with the introduction of the District and other transformative projects, there was need for a new modern Plan.

The Plan outlines guidance and actions for enhancing the public realm, creating new plazas, park spaces and shaping land use policy for the District and the broader City Centre. It includes strategies to improve connectivity and mobility, as well as a framework to promote heritage, safety and culture to foster an inclusive and accessible environment. The Plan will also inform future budget requests to prioritize actions by the City of Saskatoon.

Vision and Goals

The vision of the City Centre and District is:

“A safe and vibrant Downtown is a welcoming and inclusive place for all people to come together in cooperative spirit. The City Centre and District supports a strong economy, strengthens our diverse community, and attracts people to live, work play and learn in the Downtown.”

The Plan is guided by the following goals and guiding principles:

- Goal 1: Reconciliation by honouring Indigenous Peoples, histories, languages and culture;
- Goal 2: A distinctive identity through placemaking/placekeeping;
- Goal 3: Architectural and public realm design excellence;
- Goal 4: Reliable and efficient transportation options;
- Goal 5: Downtown density with a focus on housing;
- Goal 6: Leadership in sustainability and resiliency;
- Goal 7: A robust and diverse economy; and
- Goal 8: A healthy and safe community.

Transformative Projects

The Plan includes transformative projects which will have profound impacts on the growth of the City Centre and District. These projects support ongoing revitalization while positioning the City Centre and District for success and prosperity in the future. The Plan includes key elements of each transformative project while allowing specific plans to evolve and respond to changing contexts and new opportunities. The transformative projects include:

- A. Transformative Streetscape Projects
 - A1. 22nd Street Festival Street
 - A2. Imagine Idylwyld
 - A3. 23rd Street Greenway
- B. Catalyst Facilities
 - B1. Event Centre
 - B2. Convention Centre and Theatre
 - B3. New Central Library
- C. Spaces
 - C1. Community Park
 - C2. Linear Park
 - C3. The District Public Gathering Spaces
 - C4. Outdoor Permanent Festival Site
 - C5. Potential National Urban Park
- D. Connections
 - D1. Bus Rapid Transit (Link)
 - D2. Connecting Downtown All Ages and Abilities Active Transportation Network

Actions of the Plan

The Plan outlines actions to achieve the vision of the City Centre and District to shape decision-making, prioritization and investment by the City and its partners. Actions are defined as tangible projects, studies or work items which are based on objectives of each of the goals outlined in the Plan. The full list of actions are outlined in the Plan. Some highlighted actions include the following:

- Name the 'Downtown Event and Entertainment District' through a meaningful and appropriate process for commemoration of the land;
- Implement Indigenous placekeeping elements and stories in public spaces and building designs;
- In partnership with Downtown organizations, issue a call for proposals to transform and activate a strategic back lane in the Downtown;
- Implement a streetscape phasing plan throughout the City Centre and District;
- Implement a new zoning district for the Event and Entertainment District;
- Establish an outdoor display to collect and showcase retro signs;
- Explore parking management systems and partnerships to manage both private and public parking assets;
- Develop a land disposition strategy for City-owned land;
- Amend and introduce height bonus provisions to Downtown zoning districts in exchange for public benefits.
- Upgrade the water sanitary system to support City Centre and District development;
- Establish a new tree maintenance and planting service level specific to the Downtown;
- Strengthen Downtown's position as the prime location for office development in the city through policy amendments;
- Establish and expand publicly accessible internet; and
- Align with the City's Housing Strategy to increase the number of affordable housing units in the Downtown.

Implementation

The Plan provides guidance for a 10-year timeframe. Establishing a City Centre and District Implementation Program is essential to completing the actions outlined in the Plan. Implementation will require resourcing to manage the implementation of the Plan, with appropriate resources to complete the actions, including the public realm and streetscaping projects identified for the District.

The Plan will be used as a foundation upon which future Downtown-related budget requests, both capital and operating, will be based. City Council is making no commitments to implementation with approval of this report. Each action outlined in the Plan requires future reporting, scoping and costing to City Council for their consideration before proceeding to implementation.

The Plan also recognizes the importance of community and private partnerships in the successful implementation of the Plan. Actions may be feasible through the efforts of organizations and developers outside the City of Saskatoon. These partnerships will be continually sought and encouraged through the implementation of the Plan.

Engagement

Engagement on the development of the City Centre and District Plan was conducted throughout the project. Engaging on ideas regarding the District occurred in April and May of 2023. A total of 3,134 respondents completed the survey and a further 10 targeted group meetings were held, with a total of 102 participants related to community groups who may experience systemic barriers to participation in civic engagement.

Further engagement included targeted workshops open to the public and a public survey on specific topic areas related to the City Centre and District in Fall of 2023. A total of six targeted workshops were held, with 87 participants taking part in-person and an additional 62 respondents provided feedback through an online survey.

Feedback from the Advisory Committees of City Council were received, both early on while developing the vision, goals and guiding principles of the Plan and an update of the planning efforts, ahead of City Council consideration.

A group of Indigenous community leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers to represent First Nations and Métis Communities and interests in Saskatoon was established in 2023. Feedback has been gathered on the aspirational themes for the District, along with uses for the public spaces, Event Centre and Convention Centre.

Feedback received throughout engagement has influenced the design and considerations of actions represented in the City Centre and District. An engagement summary is included in Appendix 3.

A public open house is scheduled for mid-September to provide an opportunity for the public to learn about and ask questions of City staff regarding the Plan, ahead of City Council consideration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications with the approval of the Plan, at this time. A business plan option to support the implementation of actions from the City Centre and District Plan will be brought forward for City Council's consideration during future budget deliberations, which will outline the financial implications to implement the Plan.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no communications, Triple Bottom Line, policy, privacy or CPTED implications or considerations at this time.

NEXT STEPS

Should the Plan be approved, Administration will prepare a regulatory framework as a result of the newly approved Plan. The regulatory framework includes amendments to [Bylaw No. 9700, the Official Community Plan Bylaw, 2020](#), a new zoning district for the District and amendments to other Downtown zoning districts.

Administration will develop a business case option to implement the Plan for consideration at the 2026/2027 Business Plan and Budget deliberations.

APPENDICES

1. City Centre and District Plan
2. Building on Success in the City Centre
3. Community Engagement Summary

REPORT APPROVAL

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