
Civic Conservatory Repair Assessment and Renewal Options

Recommendation

That the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and 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 conservatory operations and building condition and seek direction on initial steps for renewal of the facility.

Report Highlights

1. In 2016, the conservatory attracted over 70,000 visits despite the art gallery's closure. This is 17% down from the 2014 peak yet similar to 2012 and 2013 totals. Many are repeat visitors and come from diverse user groups.
2. The City is in discussion with the Children's Discovery Museum (CDM) on future program partnerships. The City's Healthy Yards and Winter City programs also present opportunities for collaboration.
3. An updated building condition assessment shows the need for a new roof and glazing as well as significant accessibility upgrades.
4. A \$2.3M restoration option would result in addressing identified deficiencies, leaving a program area of 1,011 sq. ft. at a cost of \$2,318/sq. ft.
5. A \$3.5M expansion option would address deficiencies and result in a program area of 2,798 sq. ft. at cost of \$1,252/sq. ft. It would also allow for more functionality and revenue generation opportunities.
6. Further program development is needed in order to pursue expansion. Engaging stakeholders in initial design development is a proposed first step.

Strategic Goals

This report supports the Strategic Goals of Asset and Financial Management, Quality of Life, and Sustainable Growth. The proposed project will improve a City-owned asset and increase access and functionality of this cultural facility. It also supports the City Centre as a cultural and entertainment district and preserves the character of the Mendel Building as a heritage structure.

Background

In August 2010, a condition assessment of the conservatory found that the original 1964 fibreglass roof needed replacement and that the single-ply wall glazing should be upgraded for aesthetic, operational and energy usage considerations. An Accessibility Audit was completed for the City by ADA Architecture in 2014. It outlined the need for interior path widening, a power entrance door and a passenger elevator or platform lift to meet the City's 2012 Facilities Accessibility Design Standards (FADS).

In 2016, the City retained Kindrachuk Agrey Architects (KAA) to update the 2010 building condition assessment, propose a technical approach to repairs and estimate costs. Proposed initial designs were to be sympathetic to the Mendel's architectural character. The idea of expanding the conservatory was an outcome of the Kinsmen Park and Area Master Plan approved by Council in 2011.

Report

Current Use

Apart from evening closure, the conservatory has continued normal operations since the Mendel Art Gallery closed. The Civic Conservatory - Current & Future Use document, Attachment 1 shows visitor data. Although estimates for 2016 show a 17% drop in attendance from the peak pre-closure total (2014), they do not differ from 2012 and 2013 totals. Despite evening closure and the lack of gallery spin-off visitors, the conservatory continues to draw over 70,000 visitors per year. Visitor numbers are higher January-June. A 2013 survey (677 visitors) revealed 61% visited four or more times per year, 96% were satisfied with the displays and 90% supported user fees if necessary. In addition to random visitors, the conservatory plays a role in Open Door Society programs and relates to users of City Hospital and a variety of other stakeholder groups. The conservatory will temporarily close in September 2017 to allow for the start of Mendel building asbestos remediation and construction of the CDM.

Future Use

Attachment 1 is an initial list of possible opportunities for future use. In addition to continuing its current function, collaboration is underway with the CDM to partner in programming once the museum opens and in the pre-opening period as part of a City/CDM Programming Services Agreement. In an expanded conservatory, additional functions could be possible, such as supporting Healthy Yards showcasing alternative energy and supporting Winter City Strategy actions.

Building Condition Assessment

The Civic Conservatory - Building Condition Assessment - Summary (Attachment 2) indicates that the 1964 fibreglass skylight roof is well past its 15-year life expectancy and is leaking. It is not up to code regarding snow loads but its support structures are in good condition. Safety rails and tie-offs are not present. It is uncertain whether existing glazing is up to code with respect to wind loads. Roof and glazing replacement is estimated to reduce heat loss by 70%. On accessibility, KAA found that in addition to the 2014 audit findings, upper and lower level washroom upgrades are also needed to be FADS-compliant.

Option 1 - Restoration

Option 1 as outlined in the Civic Conservatory - Option Estimates and Drawings document (Attachment 3) would remedy current structural and accessibility issues and entails no expanded conservatory footprint apart from adding an elevator on the east side. This elevator would provide access from both upper and lower levels of the building. Main and lower level washrooms receive accessibility upgrades. Due to path widening, program area would be reduced by 26%. The new roof would have a similar

appearance to the existing one. The cost of this option is estimated at \$2.3M for 1,011 sq. ft. of program area, or \$2,318/sq. ft. Replanting of the program area would be similar to existing.

Option 2 - Expansion

Option 2 as outlined in Attachment 3 would remedy current structural and accessibility issues and double the conservatory footprint, replacing the existing outdoor garden. Key elements of this garden were re-located to the Forestry Farm Park in 2008. Accessibility would be provided through internal ramps and lowering the conservatory floor to match the lower level of the main Mendel building. No elevator is needed. Main and lower level washrooms receive accessibility upgrades. Space efficiencies in path design mean program area would increase by 105%. Both the new roof and additional pillars would have a similar appearance to existing ones. The cost of this option is estimated at \$3.5M for 2,798 sq. ft. of program area, or \$1,252/sq. ft.

Expansion could both broaden functionality and strengthen the facility's financial sustainability. Revenue could be generated from weddings, corporate meetings and community gatherings. An expanded space would also be more marketable to a corporate sponsor. It would provide value both in capital and operating costs. In program area, per square foot construction costs would be 46% less. Operational costs would be less than double partly due to not requiring elevator maintenance.

Proposed Design Development Consultation

Although expansion provides more compelling value, further development of program ideas is needed to justify the investment. The proposed step of completing initial design development would engage stakeholders and the public in creating an integrated program for the expanded space, with the understanding that construction is contingent on senior government funding. This process would be led internally by existing staff.

Options to the Recommendation

City Council may choose instead to approve design development of Option 1 (restoration), or permanent closure of the Civic Conservatory.

Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement

Consultation will engage current and potential Conservatory users and will employ workshop and digital formats. Designs will also be presented to the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee for comment.

Communication Plan

A communications plan will be created once the general direction of the Conservatory planning is established. The City's project webpage will be updated accordingly.

Financial Implications

No Civic Buildings Comprehensive Maintenance (CBCM) Reserve funds nor Corporate Accessibility Implementation funds are currently allocated for this project. Accordingly, further work is needed to identify appropriate funding sources. Phase II of the federal

Investing in Canada Plan was announced in July and specifies \$56M in Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure funding for Saskatchewan. The proposed step of stakeholder consultation and design development is intended to generate a supportable project for grant funding.

Estimates from Attachment 3 show that design development of Option 2 (expansion) will require \$135,000. The detailed design phase and design costs are included in the construction cost estimates in future years. Funding is recommended via the Asset and Financial Management Departmental Capital Reserve. This work will include initial estimates of projected operating costs based on the higher-efficiency roofing and glazing, larger building volume, and any operating implications.

As a high visibility unique space, the conservatory may also have significant sponsor appeal. It will be referred to the Naming Rights & Sponsorship Capital Project Committee to include in its asset inventory and valuation.

Other Considerations/Implications

The Administration will be recommending to Council later this year that the Mendel building receive municipal heritage designation. Potential expansion of the conservatory will be accounted for in the designation.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

Following stakeholder consultation and design development, the Administration will report to Council in early 2018 with a proposed program for an expanded Conservatory and a strategy for securing capital funding.

Public Notice

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

Attachments

1. Civic Conservatory - Current and Future Use
2. Civic Conservatory - Building Condition Assessment - Summary
3. Civic Conservatory - Option Estimates and Drawings

Report Approval

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