

# STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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**DATE:** March 9, 2022

**TO:** MAYOR AND COUNCIL

**NAME AND TITLE:** Deanna Wasnik, Director of Planning and Development

**SUBJECT:** Civic Core Plan

**ATTACHMENT(S):** Civic Core Plan Presentation

## RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. THAT Council DIRECT Administration to proceed with the next steps on the Civic Core Plan as described in the report dated March 9, 2022, from the Director Planning and Development, titled "Civic Core Plan".

## PURPOSE:

To provide Council with the proposed objectives and next steps to procure consultant services for the Civic Core Plan as identified within Council's Strategic Plan, and to seek Council's direction to initiate the project as identified within this report.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The proposed project aligns with Council Goals identified within the 2022-2024 Strategic Plan to:

- **Create a Vibrant Civic Precinct:** "Initiate the Civic Precinct plan, including a link to land use and infrastructure planning.
- **Ensure infrastructure meets the needs of a growing city:** "Address the City's infrastructure gap";
- **Increase the Population of Prince George:** "Maximize the quality of life for all residents"; and,
- **Build a Strong, Innovative, and Resilient Economy for Prince George:** "Support the continued implementation of the 2020-2025 Economic Development Strategy".

The project is further identified within the City's 2022-2023 Corporate Workplan to "Develop and begin implementation of a strategy to develop a downtown civic core district-specific plan."

The Civic Core Plan project intends to align a number of community needs, as expressed through the Official Community Plan downtown vision (2012), Community Recreation Services Plan (2014), Economic Development Strategy (2020-2025), and Draft Downtown Arts Strategy (2020).

## BACKGROUND:

Prince George's downtown is undergoing rapid change through the private and public investment of aging infrastructure and services which help support a number of community needs. Much of this change has been catalyzed through Council's continued priority to implement the Downtown Smart Growth on the Ground (SGOG) Concept Plan and vision. The SGOG downtown vision was developed

through an extensive collaboration of community members and interested parties, and received by Council in 2009. These downtown policies are integrated into the Official Community Plan (OCP) Bylaw No. 8383, 2012 to provide guidance for downtown land use planning and improvements.

The City, along with the collective efforts of community partners, have been advancing this downtown vision (details regarding this work are available on the City's [website](#)). Recent initiatives aligned with the SGOG concept plan include:

- Private investment such as downtown business improvements, Hyatt Hotel development, Vida student housing and Parkhouse multi-family residential;
- Construction of a new downtown childcare centre for operation by the YMCA;
- Construction of the new downtown pool currently underway with adjacent infrastructure and streetscape improvements;
- Expanded 2022 transit service and frequency connected to the downtown transit exchange;
- Expansion to the Downtown Renewable Energy System;
- Main entrance improvements to the downtown library;
- Trail improvements at Connaught Hill Park;
- Increased off-street parking availability;
- Road closures with pedestrian improvements between City Hall and Parkhouse condominiums, and along 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue between the new pool and Hyatt hotel;
- Replacement and upgrades to aging infrastructure that will support continued growth;
- Various safety, security and cleanliness measures; and,
- Development of a Downtown Marketing and Place making Strategy currently underway (Goal #5 of the 2020-2025 Economic Development Strategy).

There are a number of emerging priorities for downtown reinvestment associated with aging civic and community facilities, streetscape and utility infrastructure. The key assets that underscore the need for prioritized future investment considerations include the following:

- **Aging Rolling Mix Concrete Arena (RMCA):** Built in 1958, the oldest arena is located in the civic core area and is nearing the end of service life with mounting capital reinvestment needs anticipated over the coming years, as identified in the Civic Facilities Reinvestment Strategy (CFRS) presented to Council on [July 15, 2019 Item F1](#). The CFRS identifies that the arena facilities require the most renewal investment and recommends options be reviewed for the downtown RMCA.
- **Aging City-owned Arts & Cultural buildings:** The draft Downtown Arts Strategy presented to Council on [December 20, 2021 Item E4](#), summarized a number of tasks the draft strategy sought to achieve and reviewed a number of cultural assets. The strategy included recommendations of various arts and cultural functional space needs for the downtown that can inform future infrastructure needs.

A number of existing City-owned cultural facilities exist outside of the downtown such as the PG Playhouse (built 1971, major renovation in 1996) and Studio 2880 (built 1942), also nearing the end of its estimated service life and both buildings require substantial infrastructure reinvestment.

- **Demolitions:** Both the Four Seasons Leisure Pool (Built in 1970) and Fire Hall #1 (Built in 1956) are scheduled for demolition in 2022 and 2023, and present an opportunity to explore future redevelopment within the civic core area.

These recent investments and emerging issues have a common theme; they are connected to an area in the downtown identified in the SGOG as the *Civic Core District* (#1 in image below). The Civic Core District represents the heart of the downtown with various civic entertainment, conference, education, sports, cultural, and event uses at civic buildings and exterior spaces. This district area is an anchor of investment and activity within the downtown, with connections to various downtown districts and adjacent parks, residential, industrial, and community areas.



smart growth on the ground

## DOWNTOWN PRINCE GEORGE CONCEPT PLAN



- 1 Civic Core District
- 2 River Park / Quebec Corners District
- 3 Market and Cultural Core District
- 4 Vancouver-Victoria Flex/Transition District
- 5 Financial Core District

## DISCUSSION

Initiation of a Civic Core Plan has been identified within Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2024 and within the 2022-2023 Corporate Workplan. The goal of the Civic Core Plan is to develop an aligned 10-year strategy with a roadmap of prioritized land use planning and infrastructure investment considerations.

This goal would be achieved through a number of objectives, which include:

- Consideration of aging infrastructure replacement needs, timing and costs;
- Alignment with policy direction and recommendations from related strategies, policies, projects and priorities;
- Definition of the civic core boundary and exploring connections to adjacent land-uses;
- Development of options and the feasibility of a multi-functional use facility to support various recreational and cultural space needs;
- Utilization of feedback from previous engagement mechanisms and pursuing supplemental multi-user engagement to gauge community support for infrastructure reinvestment;
- Recommends strategies and standards for civic facilities, pedestrian streetscapes, transportation networks and realm for public and private investment; and,
- Identifies short, medium and long-term options and recommendations roadmap for the various civic uses (entertainment, conference, education, sports and cultural) to refine land use and infrastructure direction.

Subject to Council direction, Administration will seek consultant services this Spring 2022 to develop the Civic Core Plan. A report and presentation to Council on the successful proponent's workplan and engagement plan will be provided in Fall 2022, followed by the plan development and final deliverables in 2023.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

Administration anticipates that project costs could be covered with existing 2022 operating budget, however an update on the project costs, funding requirements and detailed project plan will be provided to Council following the procurement process to allow the appropriate market sounding.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:**

A number of changes have occurred in the downtown and are expected to continue with the growing multiple user needs and aging infrastructure investment requirements. The emergent needs identified in this report include a downtown arena nearing the end of its service life, arts and cultural space needs, and an upcoming demolition of the old pool and fire hall. Council has indicated the need to support a vibrant civic precinct within their 2022-2024 Strategic Plan through the development of the proposed Civic Core Plan that would establish a clear strategy forward and alignment of community needs and infrastructure investment within the Downtown Civic Core District.

This report provides Council the proposed objectives, next steps and timing to procure consultant services for the Civic Core Plan and to seek Council's direction to initiate the project as identified.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

Deanna Wasnik, Director of Planning and Development

**PREPARED BY:** Tiina Schaeffer, Manager of Infrastructure Planning & Engineering

**APPROVED:**

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting Date: 2022/03/28