

DATE: November 27, 2023

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

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

SUBJECT: Civic Core District Plan – Consultation Summary

ATTACHMENT(S): Civic Core District Plan Area Map
Summary of Survey Responses

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council DIRECTS Administration regarding next steps on the Civic Core District Plan process following consideration of the options described in the report dated November 27, 2023, from the Director of Planning and Development titled “Civic Core District Plan – Consultation Summary”.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the results of the community consultation processes for the Civic Core District Plan. The Civic Core District Plan is a continuation of the Smart Growth on the Ground Concept Plan which was developed in August 2009. The Civic Core District Plan area includes City owned parcels fronting a portion of 7th Avenue and Dominion Street, identified on the enclosed map.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The Civic Core District Plan project intends to align several community needs, as expressed through a number of City of Prince George policy, plans, and strategy documents including the Official Community Plan downtown vision (2012), Community Recreation Services Plan (2014), and Economic Development Strategy (2020-2025).

DISCUSSION:

This report summarizes the consultation methods and feedback received through all engagement sources between July and September 2023.

Project Webpage

A dedicated project webpage for the Civic Core District Plan was launched on August 3, 2023. The webpage provided the community with an overview of the OCP planning process, along with a link to the online survey, and an engagement event schedule. The project webpage can be viewed by clicking [here](#). In total, the project webpage received 2,454 views between August and September 30, 2023.

Social Media

Social media posts were shared across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, announcing and promoting the Civic Core District Plan process, survey and the community pop-up events. In total, there were more than 50,766 impressions across all platforms.

Advertising

Information about the Civic Core District Plan process and the community pop-up events were advertised utilizing:

- 164 radio ads from August 3 to August 17, 2023 (Country 97FM, 94.3 the Goat, 101.3 the River, and 99.3 Rewind Radio);
- 10 TV ads from August 21 to August 25, 2023 (CKPG-TV);
- Beyond Business monthly e-newsletter to Chamber members on August 28, 2023;
- Downtown Prince George monthly e-newsletter to Downtown Business Improvement Area members on September 6, 2023;
- Digital ad campaigns from August 3 to September 14, 2023 (1013theriver.ca, 993rewindradio.ca, CKPGToday.ca, and princegeorgecitizen.com);
- Super Citizens September newsletter issued on September 8 to 266 subscribers; and
- One (1) print newspaper ad on August 31 (approximately 17,500 copies printed).

Roundtable Discussions

Five (5) roundtable discussions were held with community interest groups. Over 30 community organizations were emailed and invited to attend. Each discussion session involved an overview of the Civic Core District Plan area and aging facilities infrastructure (i.e. Kopar Memorial Arena, PG Playhouse, and Studio 2880).

Community Pop-up Events

Municipal staff held three (3) pop-up events:

- Friday, August 11, 2023, from 11 am to 3 pm at the Civic Centre for Touch a Truck and Foodie Friday;
- Saturday, August 19, 2023, from 8:30 am to 2:30 pm at the Prince George Farmers Market; and
- Thursday, September 14, 2023, from 4:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the Love Local Events' Night Market at the CN Centre.

These events provided information boards, table-top exercises, tablets to complete the online survey, and staff from the City's Planning and Development Department to discuss the Plan and answer questions from visitors.

Community Survey

An online survey was conducted from August 11 to September 15, 2023. The survey included eight (8) questions focusing on the Civic Core's vision. In total, 1,032 surveys were submitted. The responses to the survey questions have been summarized and are attached to this report for Council's information.

Written Submissions

A dedicated email address was provided, so the community could share their thoughts on the Plan area with municipal staff. In total, three (3) written submissions were received. Two (2) providing a historical background on similar land use plans or campaigns aimed at downtown revitalization, and one (1) identifying concerns with car-centric planning and recommendations for rapid transit.

Consultation Summary

Overall, residents have commonly identified the need for shops and cafes with housing above, a performing arts centre, and an ice arena within the Civic Core District Plan area.

The top three significant items/facilities that respondents indicated should be included within the Civic Core District Plan area (Survey Question 3) are:

1. Shops and cafes with housing (i.e., mixed-use housing - commercial on the first storey with housing above) (51.84%)
2. Performing arts centre (43.41%)

3. Ice arena (29.46%)

Respondents also indicated several short-term, temporary, low-cost uses for implementation within the Civic Core District Plan area in the interim (Survey Question 8):

- Indoor recreation (i.e., playground or trampolines)
- Lighting (i.e., string lights, lanterns, streetlamps)
- Greenspace/landscaping (i.e., community garden, flowers, trees)
- Benches
- Recycling/garbage receptacles
- Utilize existing fountain/ice rink
- Downtown development and housing incentives
- Business incentives
- Public art including interactive art/music installations
- Extend transit hours
- Wayfinding
- Market/vendor spaces
- Heated spaces
- Free Wi-Fi
- Bike racks
- Sheltered seating
- Chess board
- Food trucks
- Music/festivals and similar events
- Visitor centre
- Police/security presence
- Washrooms
- Parking
- Remove 3 hour parking restriction
- Closed to vehicle traffic/pedestrian only area
- Routine maintenance and cleaning
- Update existing civic buildings and clock tower
- Accessible space

Although survey respondents favour improvements within the Civic Core District Plan area, general comments have also been received indicating concerns associated with the cost of new infrastructure and civic facilities.

NEXT STEPS:

Administration has prepared the following options for Council's consideration and direction regarding next steps for the Civic Core District Plan process:

1. Administration procures consultant services to prepare conceptual options and site design(s) for the Civic Core District Plan area that includes community consultation results and previously identified priorities including arena, arts and culture uses; or,
2. Council identifies the uses and types of buildings to focus on and directs Administration to procure consultant services to prepare options and conceptual site design(s) based on Council direction; or,
3. Defer or otherwise address the Civic Core District Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There will be financial implications related to the proposed Civic Core District Plan both in the short term and long term. Administration anticipates that costs associated with conceptual option(s) and site design(s) could be covered with the existing operating budget.

SUMMARY:

This report provides Council with the results of the community consultation that was held to gather public input for the Civic Core District Plan. Overall, the feedback collected indicates support for civic facilities; however, the comments also point to concern of the costs associated with new infrastructure and civic facilities.

Administration is seeking Council direction on next steps for the Civic Core District Plan as provided in this report.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Deanna Wasnik, Director of Planning and Development

PREPARED BY: Kali Holahan, Supervisor, Land Use Planning

APPROVED:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting Date: 2023/12/18