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# Saskatoon Winter City Strategy Update

## Recommendation

That the report of the General Manager, Corporate Performance Department, dated January 10, 2017, be forwarded to City Council for information.

## Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update and more detailed description of the components of a Winter City Strategy for Saskatoon.

## Report Highlights

1. A Winter City Strategy is 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. Facilitated through the City of Saskatoon's (City) leadership and engaging the interest and efforts of the entire community, a Winter City Strategy will articulate the changes necessary to help residents, businesses and visitors 'embrace' winter with as much enthusiasm as they have for the summer season.
2. The City is committing some existing operating resources (including staff time) to facilitate the development of the Strategy. The City will host a webpage that may act as a resource hub for the community with a focus on winter, including:
  - a. identifying existing assets;
  - b. describing the potential economic and quality of life benefits achievable through the strategy; and
  - c. providing opportunities to collect a 'blizzard' of ideas on ways in which Saskatoon can be made more inviting for all during the winter season.
3. Capital funds approved in the 2017 Budget will support the development of the Strategy. Details on the use of these funds to support community engagement and 'quick win' actions are provided in this report.

## Strategic Goal

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

The concept of a Winter City Strategy has been described in two reports to City Council in 2016:

- At its March 8, 2016, meeting, the Administration provided City Council with information on the movement toward “winter cities”; potential elements of a Saskatoon winter strategy; a possible timeline for strategy-development; and plans for an initial stakeholder event.
- On November 30, 2016, City Council approved a proposed plan and budget for broader, inclusive public engagement and related steps necessary to develop the Community Winter City Strategy for Saskatoon.

### **Report**

#### Overarching Objective for a Winter City Strategy

A Winter City Strategy is 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. Facilitated through the City’s leadership and engaging the interest and efforts of the entire community, a Winter City Strategy will articulate the changes necessary to help residents, businesses and visitors ‘embrace’ winter with as much enthusiasm as they have for the summer season.

A Winter City Strategy will improve broader community accessibility, inclusion, activity and energy, and lead to greater economic vitality (particularly within service, accommodation and retail sectors) as the opportunities of winter are realized and the challenges mitigated. The intent of the Strategy is to be broad, responding to opportunities associated with winter life, winter design and winter economy; as well as addressing perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of citizens to generate a positive winter culture.

#### Building on the Strength of Existing Assets

An inventory of existing assets that support the experience of winter will be developed from existing information available throughout the community. The inventory will be presented online, on a City webpage, using a map for facilities and amenities (e.g. outdoor skating rinks, ski trails, public washrooms, places to warm up, etc.), a calendar for events (e.g. WinterShines, NYE YXE 150, etc.), and a list for outdoor programs and activities (e.g. ski programs, winter camps, etc.). The Administration is also investigating a method for showcasing some winter-themed cultural assets, places open to the public for warming-up, and other non-recreational support programs and initiatives that contribute to quality of life during Saskatoon’s winter season.

The purpose of the inventory is to provide a foundation from which the City and community stakeholders can promote what already exists, seek synergies through cooperative efforts, and identify gaps to be filled by the Strategy.

#### Engaging the Community in Change

To achieve the goals of the Strategy, broad community engagement is required to identify opportunities and priorities. Targeted engagement of community stakeholders from the business and non-profit sectors is also required to move the Strategy, and the identified actions therein, forward.

To ensure Saskatoon is perceived to be inviting, vibrant and prosperous by every sector, the planned approach to community engagement has the goal of inclusivity. Achieving inclusivity will require an engagement approach that allows a broad cross-section of citizens, stakeholders and businesses to participate in identifying their needs, concerns and ideas. To gain the interest and attention of the community to participate in the engagement, efforts to concentrate engagement opportunities during the winter season will be made. Planning for winter in the winter season achieves additional benefits as barriers are more physically evident and opportunities are more perceivable. Ideas may also be piloted during the planning phase for the purposes of learning. For these reasons, Administration intends to initiate a concentrated round of community engagement for the winter months of 2017, develop an interim report, and then develop a further round of engagement for the following year.

Engagement across divisions of the City of Saskatoon is also planned in order to identify and implement changes to current plans, policies and procedures that align with the goals of the Strategy.

### Supporting 'Quick Win' Actions

A small amount of money (\$35,000) has been set aside within the Winter City Strategy capital project to support pilot initiatives deemed to advance learning or move core concepts of the Strategy forward. Administration intends to make grant dollars available for new winter program or design initiatives where a gap has been verified and need has been demonstrated.

Funding will be targeted to meet specific Strategy outcomes. Administration anticipates that grant dollars will focus on initiatives that:

- add a new dimension to existing initiatives;
- pilot an urban design concept in a high-use public area; and/or
- facilitate linkages between existing initiatives to create new outcomes.

### **Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement**

The focus of community engagement activities this winter season is on creating a common understanding of current assets, gaps, and opportunities for creating a city that is more inviting, vibrant and prosperous, even in the coldest months of the year.

The following tactics and approaches will be employed to help generate a 'blizzard' of ideas for inclusion in the Strategy:

- Solicit champions from various sectors of the community to share their vision and help craft a new story about winter in Saskatoon.
- Share precedents from other places to help citizens, stakeholders and businesses envision new possibilities.
- Gather community contributions to the asset inventory.
- Host roundtables with stakeholders to discuss opportunities, gaps, 'quick wins' and strategies.
- Empower self-directed 'kitchen-table-talks' utilizing online discussion guides and workbooks.

- Conduct online engagement to gather ideas and feedback.
- Benchmark current attitudes, perceptions and behaviours related to Saskatoon's winter season through a survey.

### **Communication Plan**

Communications and awareness about the Strategy will be multi-channeled (as described in previous reports) and focus on core content developed for a webpage hosted on the City's web-site 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 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
- Provides opportunities to collect a 'blizzard' of ideas on ways in which Saskatoon can be made more inviting for all during the winter season.

### **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. The first phase of community engagement activities described in this report are expected to cost \$50,000. Funding of \$35,000 has been set aside to fund 'quick win' actions based on ideas generated by the community during the engagement phase. These funds will be accessible to community groups through the community-support granting process managed by the Recreation and Community Development Division.

The City has also committed existing operating resources (including 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 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.

**Report Approval**

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Department

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