
Winter City Strategy Preparations

Recommendation

That the report of the General Manager, Corporate Performance Department dated March 8, 2016, be forwarded to City Council for information.

Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to outline opportunities for activities in a winter city through a Winter City Strategy.

Report Highlights

1. There is a growing Winter City movement in North America that is drawing city leaders, community groups and the creative sector together to address specific winter problems as well as developing supportive plans and policies for the vitality of cities in winter.
2. Edmonton's Winter City Strategy offers many lessons for the City of Saskatoon (City), including how to integrate a wide range of topic areas, how to share responsibilities with community partners and focus on quick-wins as well as long term actions.
3. Existing City plans and policies already identify many opportunities for improving the local response to winter. Some of these will be acted on immediately as quick-wins in the lead-up to the launch of proposed public engagement to develop a Winter City Strategy in Saskatoon. The strategy will ultimately provide a roadmap for making Saskatoon as vibrant in winter as it is in summer.

Strategic Goal

This report supports the Strategic Goal of Quality of Life by providing opportunities for activities in a winter city.

Background

At its meeting on August 14, 2013, City Council adopted the 2013-2023 Strategic Plan. In support of the Quality of Life strategic goal, the Plan specified a set of four-year priorities, including for the City to "provide opportunities for activities in a winter city".

Report

Growing Interest in the Winter City Concept

In North America, the topic of winter design received significant attention from academics and officials in the 1990s, less so in the following decade. In recent years, a Winter City movement has been growing rapidly based on factors such as:

- a) The idea of a strategy: In addition to design, an expanded focus including mobility, recreation, culture and vibrancy. In place of one-off actions,

- integrating actions into a co-ordinated strategy and raising the profile of winter-specific needs and opportunities.
- b) A broad movement: No longer limited to academics and officials, ideas and actions are now being generated by community groups, neighbourhoods, the creative sector as well as leading cities.
 - c) The Prairies as a leading region: Key events such as the 2nd annual international Winter Cycling Congress (Winnipeg, 2014) and international Winter Cities Shake-Up Conference (Edmonton, 2015) attended by staff and Councillors.

In Saskatoon, this movement is already evident in events and initiatives such as the Optimist Hill recreation park campaign and Guinness World Record snowball fight at PotashCorp WinterShines 2016.

Edmonton's Winter City Strategy

Edmonton's 2012 Winter City Strategy has generated significant interest both for its engagement process and its creative actions. It is built around four pillars:

- a) Outdoor life - activities and getting around.
- b) Design - safety, comfort and beauty.
- c) Economy - festivals, commercial activity
- d) Story - communications and shifting attitudes about winter

Saskatoon can benefit from the Edmonton plan by using it as a basis for establishing a Strategy here. More information about the Edmonton Winter City Strategy is provided in Attachment 1.

Saskatoon's State-of-Readiness

Edmonton's Strategy framework and timeline is a valuable reference for Saskatoon. However, the City already has a number of existing plans that identify winter actions (Attachment 2). There is an opportunity and need to review other plans and policies to ensure they also work through a winter-lens.

A variety of winter-related actions are also already in-process. Communication of these initiatives, along with building greater public awareness of recently completed winter initiatives can help build interest in the lead-up to the launch of a process that will develop a more comprehensive strategy and greater enthusiasm for winter life in Saskatoon.

Currently, an inter-departmental staff working group has been formed with representatives from Facilities, Parks, Communications, Urban Design, Finance, Saskatoon Light & Power, Recreation & Community Development, Corporate Initiatives, and Community Standards. This group has generated an initial list of potential quick-win actions and will be pursuing the most feasible of these in the next months and reported on in June.

Although the shape of a Winter City Strategy for Saskatoon cannot be known until after public engagement, based on work-to-date and existing City priorities, some guiding

factors are known already. Attachment 3 shows possible Strategy content and vision areas as well as anticipated program and process outcomes.

Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement

An initial breakfast presentation and discussion is planned for March 15 at Le Relais to raise awareness of the potential a Winter City Strategy could have in Saskatoon and identify key stakeholders that can also play a significant role in the Strategy. Results of this event will be reported to City Council in June along with a proposed process for intensive public involvement that could begin in January 2017.

Communication Plan

The success of the Winter City Strategy will hinge on the level of support and participation we have from citizens, businesses and other stakeholders. The program is anticipated to encompass programs and initiatives that inspire activity by many organizations, not simply those run by the City. As such, this plan will focus on communicating the potential benefits of successfully implementing a winter city strategy, and seek to motivate these audiences to engage with the City to help build the strategy that will benefit us all.

To achieve this success, a multi-channeled communications campaign will be used to raise awareness of this project and inspire participation in the pre-launch phase. The planned campaign will reach our target audiences through the kick-off event on March 15th, progressing to private and public engagement opportunities, citywide awareness initiatives through business and stakeholder groups, a social media campaign, postcards and printed communication materials, leveraging content on our website and the Shaping Saskatoon online engagement webpage, as well as news releases, PSA's and media coverage for key events.

A more detailed communications and engagement plan is being developed to support the various development stages of the Winter City Strategy.

Financial Implications

Edmonton's strategy was developed by Stantec Consulting at a cost of \$362,000. Its implementation plan detailed added capital and operating costs of \$2.75 million over a 10-year period (including \$1.5 million for free transit during extreme weather). At present, no funds are designated for a Winter City Strategy in Saskatoon.

The Administration is developing the Saskatoon strategy in-house and is looking for ways to deliver identified 'quick-win' actions by re-allocating existing resources. Additional resources will be required for the public engagement phase. A funding request for this component will be brought forward for the consideration of City Council as part of the 2017 Business Plan and Budget deliberations.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no environmental, policy, privacy, or CPTED implications or considerations at this time.

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

Attachment 4 shows a proposed project timeline that would lead to the adoption of a Winter City Strategy for Saskatoon. A report requesting capital funding for public engagement will be provided to the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities & Corporate Services in June 2016. A report later in 2016 will also be provided to outline detailed plans for public engagement that could begin in January 2017 and provide an update on quick win actions to be implemented in winter 2016/17.

Attachments

1. Edmonton Winter City Strategy Framework
2. Existing City Plans and Policies Related to Winter Actions
3. Guiding Factors for a Saskatoon Winter City Strategy
4. Draft Winter City Strategy Timeline

Public Notice

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

Report Approval

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Edmonton Winter City Strategy Framework

The Winter City Strategy developed in Edmonton has been identified as a best practice approach due to its engagement process and its creative actions. The four pillars of the Strategy have been expanded into 10 goals and 64 actions, examples of which are shown below. A particular emphasis is on quick-win actions which involve re-allocated rather than new funds. Edmonton’s strategy is a city-community partnership. Its Implementation Plan details which actions are City led vs. led by community partners with the City in a supportive role.

High-profile creative actions resulting from Edmonton’s strategy include:

- a) River Valley freeway, a 400m wooded skating trail with artistic lighting. Pilot project to be expanded to 800m next winter.
- b) Official winter drink competition (alcoholic and non-alcoholic).

Pillar	Goal	Quick Win Actions	Longer Term or Foundational Actions
Winter Life	More outdoor activity opportunities	Free skates; outdoor fire locations	Winter commercial anchors in parks
	Improvements for active transportation and transit.	Snow clearing on more park walkways	Transit shelters
Winter Design	Improved safety and comfort		Design guidelines
	Urban design for fun, beauty and interest	Colourful lighting of public spaces and buildings	
Winter Economy	Improve capacity and sustainability of festivals		Facilitating agency for festivals
	Develop a four-season patio culture	Simplify process & regulations for patios	Winter patio development program
Winter Story	Celebrate winter and embrace winter daily living	Winter beautification program	Edmonton in Winter smartphone app
	Promote City's winter story locally and externally	Share images & digital assets between partners	Create a winter brand

NOTE: Table above shows excerpts from Strategy’s complete list of 64 actions. Of all these, 28 are Quick Wins (44% of total).

Timeline Edmonton Followed to Develop Their Strategy:

- Mid-late 2011: Pre-launch engagement of community partners; formation of City/community Steering Committee; and planning public engagement.
- Jan to June 2012: Intensive public engagement.
- June to Oct 2012: Writing the Winter City Strategy and final adoption by Council. Strategy included 64 actions.
- Jan to Sept 2013: Prioritizing and costing of actions in consultation with stakeholders, resulting in a Winter City Strategy Implementation Plan adopted by Council.

Existing City Plans and Policies Related to Winter

Winter-Related Actions or Standards Already Defined
Saskatoon Speaks
Official Community Plan
Local Area Plans: 11+ neighbourhoods
Junction Improvement Strategy
Mendel Gallery Neighbourhood Safety Report
Nutana Neighbourhood Safety Report
Optimist Park Neighbourhood Safety Report
North Downtown Master Plan
City Centre Plan
DCD1 Zoning District
Broadway 360 Design Guidelines
Children’s Museum Business Plan
Kinsmen Park & Area Master Plan
Culture Plan
River Landing Interpretive Plan
Accessibility Action Plan
Winter Level of Service: Roadways
Winter-Related Actions or Standards Not Yet Defined
Recreation and Parks Master Plan
Winter Level of Service: Sidewalks
Winter Level of Service: Trails
Park Development Guidelines
Landscape Design and Development Standards
Other plans and policies TBD

Guiding Factors for a Saskatoon Winter City Strategy

Although the content of the strategy will depend on outcomes from public engagement, key content areas are likely to include:

- a) Recreation and sport
- b) Active transportation
- c) Arts, culture and festivals
- d) Local-serving as well as tourism-related actions
- e) Indoor activities and events as well as outdoors
- f) Neighbourhood-based and city-wide actions

The strategy will need to communicate a vision and be clear about outcomes on the ground. Because all citizens are winter stakeholders, the success of the strategy will also be closely linked to the success of public engagement in its creation.

Examples of vision components:

- a) Envisioning Saskatoon as vibrant in winter as it is in summer.
- b) Ensuring equitable access to winter opportunities.
- c) Creating more opportunities to gather as well as pursue individual passions.
- d) Encouraging an entrepreneurial culture of experimenting with new winter ideas.

Examples of program success:

- a) Moving towards an attitude of embracing rather than escaping winter
- b) Improved knowledge of the range of winter activities available and improved ways of accessing facility, program and event information.
- c) Improved event attendance and economic activity.
- d) Increased pedestrian counts as a result of improved safety and mobility
- e) Increased number of community-led winter events and programs
- f) Reducing barriers to newcomers for participating in winter life

Examples of process success:

- a) Key stakeholders engaged, motivated and contributing resources
- b) Broad and representative citizen input and awareness
- c) New partnerships formed to act on ideas
- d) Visionary and small-scale practical ideas generated
- e) Consensus on priority actions and readiness to move on quick-wins

Draft Winter City Strategy Timeline

Steps to Date

- Staff and Councillors attend February 2015 Edmonton winter conference
- City joins Winter City Institute networking group
- Formation in January 2016 of staff working group; identification of potential quick wins

March – June 2016

- Staff working group continues to identify and advance quick win actions.
- March 15: first public engagement at awareness-raising breakfast event
- June: capital funding request for 2017 to Council for public engagement.

June – Dec 2016

- Formation of stakeholder project Steering Committee.
- Planning of public engagement phase.
- Staff working group prepares for roll out of quick win actions in January.
- (November/December): Preparation of logo and campaign graphics, and targeted communications ahead of engagement.

Jan – June 2017

- Intensive winter/spring public engagement in developing the Strategy
- Staff working group begins roll out of quick win actions.

June – Dec 2017

- Staff analyze engagement process results and draft Strategy
- Fall 2017: Strategy presented to Council for approval
- Continuing roll out of quick win actions.

Jan – Sept 2018

- Staff consult with stakeholders to prepare Strategy Implementation Plan.
- Continuing roll out of quick win and foundational actions.
- September 2018: Implementation Plan presented to Council for approval.