

# Churchill Square Development Options

## Recommendation:

That Executive Committee recommend to City Council:

That the approved 2011 budget of \$250,000 be released to allow Administration to enter into a management contract with The Edmonton Arts Council for the promotion and programming support of the Square.

## Report Summary

**This report provides a status update of activities and changes made to the management and programming of Sir Winston Churchill Square with a recommendation for a one-time funding for continued programming support of the Square.**

## Previous Council/Committee Action

- At the June 30, 2010, Executive Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:
  - That Administration provide a status report to Executive Committee in January 2011 on the development in Churchill Square including 102A Avenue.
- At the November/December 2010 City Council Budget meeting, the following motion was passed:
  - That the Deputy City Manager's Office 2011 Operating Budget be increased by \$250,000 to fund Churchill Square programming, on a one-time basis, with funding available from one-time funding available to City Council subject

to a report being brought to City Council via Executive Committee.

## Report

Based on public and stakeholder input, Administration began testing a series of changes to the physical site features/layout, programming and management of Churchill Square, with a goal to determine the right balance of activities and events that would best draw and increase casual users to the site.

Since August 2010 the following activities and events have taken place:

- physical changes (chairs, tables, seasonal planters, heaters) were provided to create a more casual/festive atmosphere so users would feel more comfortable
- increased police presence on the Square
- summer programming saw 41 days of programming with five to six activities per day, including an average of four vendors. Public participation ranged from 40 to 250 per day – two to three times as many users as when no activities are scheduled
- skateboard Park pilot project was implemented and evaluated during the summer and fall months
- 104 Street Market was held four times (twice at City Hall and twice on the Square)
- the Library has participated in activities on the Square by holding a book sale on the site. We continue to work together to explore opportunities

Further details on these activities are included in Attachment 1 of this report.

### **Current Actions:**

Administration is continuing to build on the learnings and successes of the past several months:

- winter programming is evolving as the season progresses
- activities will be occurring two days a week during February and March. This will include ice skating rentals, demonstrations and participation sports such as snow shoeing and cross country skiing, bannock making (supported by Community Services – Program Team) and Nordic Walking (external agency).
- starting March 5, 2011, the 104 Street Market will continue to use City Hall facilities and the Square (as weather permits) for 10 weeks

### **Management and Programming of the Square**

During the past year, the management of the Square was focused in one project office responsible for coordination of maintenance, communications and programming.

Although this model has been effective in the short-term, Administration recognizes that management and programming of Sir Winston Churchill Square presents its own unique issues and challenges, requiring a specific set of skills to ensure a successful long-term operation of the site.

In exploring how other Cities provide programming services, two cities stood out as different, one was run by a

volunteer Board of Management (Toronto) and one was exploring contracting the service out (Vancouver). Many do it through Civic resources (similar to current City practice).

Administration is working with the Edmonton Arts Council to structure a management contract in which the not-for-profit will provide direct programming and promotions for the Square. The Arts Council is well connected and respected within the community and has agreed in principle, to be responsible for day-to-day programming, promotion and marketing of the square on behalf of the City.

As The Arts Council has already assumed the management of the City Store located on the Square, there is potential for efficiencies and synergies in the operation, management and staffing costs.

A formal management contract will be initiated upon City Council's approval of the recommendations in this report.

It is anticipated that the program manager of the Square will consult with Administration and will receive direction from an appointed advisory committee.

The program manager of the Square will provide an update report on their activities and outcomes twice a year to Council.

### **Future Actions**

The redesign of Churchill Square reinforced its role as a major focus for the downtown core supporting an active and vibrant square.

New challenges and opportunities within and around the Square are emerging:

- incorporating the closed 102 Avenue into the Square to address infrastructure shortfalls (i.e. need for increased water and electrical supply to support the festivals)
- as identified through the public input process, the Square should be integrated in a more holistic way into the Civic Precinct and the downtown neighbourhoods (i.e. create better physical connections to Centennial Plaza, the Quarters, the warehouse district, the River Valley System and Louise McKinney River Front Park)
- identify and address impacts of changing context for the Square (i.e. the impact of the LRT line along 102 Ave, closure of 99 Street)
- explore the opportunities that the Arena proposal may present
- explore current state models for management of the Square and provide recommendations on how this service could be delivered

In order to address these issues, it is anticipated that Administration would develop a Civic Precinct Master Plan which identifies, addresses or provides direction for all these issues in a comprehensive manner. Administration is currently finalizing the terms of reference for this project and identifying a source of funds. Once completed, a Request For Proposal for the work will be issued.

The plan would fully respect the original vision proposed for Churchill Square, formally define the physical boundaries around the area referred to as the 'City

Precinct,' and develop strategies and action plans.

As part of the Civic Precinct Master Plan, the consultant will be asked to explore current state models and bring forward a recommendation on how to optimally manage the Square. The management of the Square is currently the responsibility of Community Strategies Section in the Community Services Department who oversees the day-to-day operations and will guide the long term vision and direction for the Square.

### **Corporate Outcomes**

Improve Edmonton's Liveability:  
Preserve, celebrate and support Edmonton's heritage, arts and culture.

### **Budget/Financial Implications**

One-time funding of \$250,000 for program support was allocated during the 2011 budget review.

### **Justification of Recommendation**

To reach the goal of increased casual use on Churchill Square funding is required to support programming and marketing.

### **Attachments**

1. Churchill Square Actions to Date

### **Others Reviewing this Report**

- L. Rosen, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer
- L. Cochrane, General Manager, Community Services Department

## Churchill Square Actions to Date

Physical changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Physical changes were made to make users feel more comfortable (chairs, tables, seasonal planters and heaters). These changes have been well received with the chairs and tables being used throughout the day (heaviest use at lunch times on bright sunny days). Planters are proving to be very popular with citizens and tourists who are using the floral displays as back drops for photographs.</li> </ul>
Increase in police presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Edmonton Police Services has continued to monitor the Civic Precinct. These activities were supported by the ad hoc committee led by the Edmonton Police Service and looked at solutions to the fundamental issues that influenced illegal activities.</li> </ul>
Summer programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Summer programming was implemented with the “Live at Lunch Program”, from mid August to the beginning of October (with the assistance of Community Services). During this period there were 41 days of programming with five to six activities per day including an average of four vendors each day. The programming focused on entertainment, education and recreational activities. Public participation ranged from 40 to 250 individuals per day. This represented two to three times as many users than when no activities were scheduled. The variation in attendance correlated with weather conditions.</li> </ul>
Skateboard Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The skateboard park pilot project was implemented and evaluated during summer and fall. Attendance was encouraging at the start but fell off dramatically as the summer proceeded. The evaluation of the project indicated that factors contributing to the decrease use were: the skill level of the visitors was beyond the challenge the equipment provided and that the standard equipment did not entice visitors to return. Future of a skate park in the Civic Precinct will be evaluated as part of the proposed Civic Precinct Plan.</li> </ul>
104 Street Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ During November and December the programming activities focused on bringing the 104 Street Market to the Square. During this period the market was held four times, twice in City Hall and twice on the Square. The trial was viewed as very successful by the Market Board who has asked to return to City Hall and the Square.</li> </ul>