

Community Benefits

The development of an 'Arena and Entertainment District', if done well, could significantly contribute to improving the quality of life in our City. The experiences of other Cities provides for examples and learning's of what worked and didn't. The broader community benefit derived from this form of iconic investment can be significant.

Best practice and lessons learned (Lessons From Successful Experiences, Prepared by Mark S. Rosentraub) from other Canadian and American cities confirm significant benefits can be derived from the development of major sporting and entertainment facilities. These benefits can have a pronounced positive effect on the downtown, the broader community, the City and the Edmonton Capital Region.

Based primarily on Rosentraub's work, Administration has clustered "Community Benefits" into themes as follows:

1. The overall health of the sport franchise and its commitment to the host City:

- A new Arena can provide a more efficient facility design, improved profitability, financial security contributing to the overall health and vitality of the NHL franchise.
- Opportunities that lever resources of like facilities and their operations: e.g. Academia, Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, Katz Group of Companies, Northlands, AEG, Art Gallery of Alberta, Winspear, Citadel Theater, Library etc. for conferences, trade shows, major events, festivals, entertainment infrastructure, etc.

2. Optics, perception and image of the City and the Edmonton Capital Region:

- New opportunity to market and promote a new facility with links to the NHL, sports, entertainment and cultural.
- Branding the City and the Edmonton Capital Region in a new way providing for enhanced national and international recognition.

3. Direct financial and economic contributions to the local economy:

- A new Arena coupled to a financially viable NHL Franchise can foster job creation and attract new revenues to the City .
 - Encourage tourism and associated expenditures that may not have otherwise occurred.
 - Can contribute to economic growth, prosperity, confidence, and act as a catalyst for further real estate investment in the immediate area.
- Assuming that the Arena is built as proposed on 104 Avenue, opportunities for new development could include: the Entertainment District, Aurora Residential Development, Station Lands, Warehouse

District, other downtown residential and commercial developments that could be expected to move ahead.

4. Improvements to the physical environment and built form:

- Development of a high quality Edmonton appropriate Arena and Entertainment District can enhance the immediate urban environment. Streets, parks and open space linkages would connect surrounding urban and neighbourhood interests. If built as proposed on 104 Avenue, it would form a new downtown anchor on the north edge of the centre business district. It would also be the catalyst for further redevelopment of adjoining vacant lands.
- Adds to the existing downtown mix of architecture and built urban form and creates the opportunity to develop “Iconic” presence that provides “a showcase for Alberta and Canada”.
- Could align efforts in adjoining redevelopment areas; The Quarters, The Downtown and Municipal Airport redevelopment etc.
- Could lever investments to rebuild municipal infrastructure and to increase infrastructure capacity in the immediate area, e.g. pipes, wires, transit, etc.

5. Attracting and retaining human capital:

- Collaboration with Academic Institutions, Cultural Groups and Economic Agencies to develop strategies that attract and promote knowledge based economies built on human capital.
- Encourages further investment in cultural and entertainment facilities that generally appeal to “the Creative Class”.
“University of Alberta, Edmonton produces an extraordinary supply of human capital. The issue is how best to design a city that can retain this talented pool of labor. With ideas increasingly becoming the currency of innovation and the inputs that drive an economy and a businesses’ future, corporations now locate where people want to live.”¹

6. Creating a more desirable, livable, downtown with expanded lifestyle experiences:

- Renewed focus in establishing the downtown as the center for arts, culture entertainment and sports.

7. Reinforcing existing social networks and programs. A collection of possible Community interest could include:

- Access to Community ice.
- Access and use of the portions of the new facility.
- Community amenity areas within and external to the facility.
- Other opportunities to be reviewed with Community stakeholders
- Execution of Community Benefits Agreements

¹ A New Arena – Anchored Development in Edmonton: A Confluence of Public and Private Interests and Needs, Mark S. Rosentraub and Daniel S. Mason

As discussed in the section on Governance, some of these community benefits can be achieved through the use of a third party foundation or sports authority. Well defined roles of both the owner (City) and the major tenant(s) of a facility will also support the achievement of community benefits.

At the December 10, 2010 Council meeting, City Council was presented the early findings from the Arena Public Engagement Process recently completed in October 2010. The Engagement Process shared information on the downtown arena location proposed by the Katz Group of Companies. Community feedback generally was consistent on a number of important points (validation is still needed) as follows:

- Support in principal for a downtown location,
- Agree in principal that benefits should be; financial, economic and social
- Support for ensuring the development “Gives Back” to the community through some form of Community Benefit as yet undefined.
- The Community expects to be engaged in defining these Community Benefits.

The consultation process confirmed significant community interest in other areas:

- Sustainable, barrier free architectural and urban design,
- Connectivity with the surrounding community and urban environs,
- Levering this project to spark further downtown investment and redevelopment,
- Impacts on existing downtown office, LRT, parking, traffic, security,
- Displacement of social agencies and associated social impacts,
- Assurances regarding costs and risk vs. benefits and the disposition of revenues, and
- Given the scope and magnitude of this project Edmontonians expect “City Leadership” to lead and manage these efforts.