

DATE OF MEETING May 25, 2020

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SUBJECT CITY SPARK – PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To provide Council with an update on the status of the City Spark (Coordinated Strategic Policy Review 2020-2021) process and obtain Council approval to proceed with implementation of the proposed Public Engagement Strategy.

### **Recommendation**

That Council receive the report titled “City Spark – Public Engagement Strategy” dated 2020-MAY-25, and direct Staff to proceed with implementation of the proposed Public Engagement Strategy.

## **BACKGROUND**

At the Regular Council Meeting held 2020-FEB-24, Staff provided a progress update on the City Spark Coordinated Strategic Policy Review (2020-2021) project, including a draft Terms of Reference for the overall process. Council endorsed the following motion:

*“That Council receive the report titled “Coordinated Strategic Policy Review (2020-2021) Status Update” dated 2020-FEB-24, and adopt the attached Coordinated Strategic Policy Review (2020-2021) Terms of Reference.”*

Following this direction from Council, Staff have since proceeded with the implementation of the Terms of Reference.

The focus of the City Spark process is a comprehensive update of a number of key strategic planning policy documents. Central to this undertaking is an update of Nanaimo’s 2008 Official Community Plan, the 2005 Parks, Recreation and Culture Plan, and the creation of an Active and Sustainable Transportation Plan.

Planning and engagement on these plans will be done as part of a broader process that involves coordinating engagement to inform the review and update of other strategic plans including the Economic Development Strategy, Water Supply Strategic Plan, and Climate Action Plan.

Coordinated community engagement on these interrelated policy documents is intended to maximize community participation, ensure consistency between the plans, ensure efficient resource use, and avoid public confusion and potential engagement fatigue from multiple

overlapping planning processes. The process also provides an opportunity to consider combining several plans into one document. |

## **DISCUSSION**

| Under the Terms of Reference, the City Spark process has been separated into five key phases (see Attachment A, Terms of Reference - Coordinated Strategic Policy Review (2020-2021) and Attachment B, May 2020 Status Update).

Work on Phase 1 (Starting - Plan Initiation) has been achieved despite the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, and within the timeline identified in the Terms of reference October-April 2020. This includes the hiring of a consultant (Lanarc), creation of branding, and completion of various background studies, including demographic projections and a Land Inventory and Capacity Analysis.

Work on Phase 2 (Exploring - Issues and Opportunities) is now at a stage to begin. In this regard, Lanarc has prepared an innovative draft public engagement strategy for Council's endorsement (see Attachment C, City Spark - Public Engagement Strategy). This strategy has been designed to respond to the changing requirements for physical distancing and other health considerations posed by the evolving COVID-19 pandemic situation.

### **City Spark – Proposed Public Engagement Strategy**

The proposed Public Engagement Strategy is comprehensive and innovative, and will provide an accessible and flexible approach for seeking and understanding the ideas, needs, and values of the community at large. This will, in turn, ensure the plan updates and policies that are confirmed and generated by the process are reflective of the community's input and aspirations. Upon endorsement by Council, Staff will work with Lanarc to implement the strategy for public engagement over the course of the City Spark process.

## **OPTIONS**

- | 1. That Council receive the report titled "City Spark – Public Engagement Strategy" dated 2020-MAY-25, and direct Staff to proceed with implementation of the proposed Public Engagement Strategy.
  - Advantages: Implementation of the proposed public engagement strategy will provide an accessible and flexible approach for seeking and understanding the ideas, needs and values of the community at large. It will ensure plan updates and policies that are confirmed and generated by the process are reflective of the community's input and aspirations. Starting an engagement strategy that is adapted to COVID-19 considerations will provide positive, innovative opportunities for our community to participate in planning for the future, while also helping maintain project timelines and objectives.
  - Disadvantages: The original intention to use larger public engagement events and even smaller forums for engagement activities are very unlikely to be available for the next 6 to potentially 12 months, and there is the possibility that some community members may not adapt well to new ways of engaging with

respect to COVID-19. This could result in the need for extending engagement timelines.

- Financial Implications: None beyond the initial budget commitments already made to the City Spark process.

2. That Council direct Staff to revise the proposed City Spark - Public Engagement Strategy.

- Advantages: Will ensure any edits, omissions, or lack of clarity identified by Council in the proposed City Spark - Public Engagement Strategy are addressed before the strategy is endorsed.
- Disadvantages: May delay implementation of the policy review until the strategy is endorsed.
- Financial Implications: None beyond the initial budget commitments already made to the City Spark process, but may result in some budget carry forward to 2022 if the project is delayed.

### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the status of the City Spark (Coordinated Strategic Policy Review 2020-2021) process and obtain Council approval to proceed with implementation of the proposed Public Engagement Strategy adapted to address the changing physical distancing requirements of the COVID-19 response.
- The focus of the City Spark process is to complete a comprehensive update of a number of key strategic planning policy documents. Central to this undertaking is an update of Nanaimo's 2008 Official Community Plan, the 2005 Parks, Recreation and Culture Plan, and the creation of an Active and Sustainable Transportation Plan.
- A number of key steps in the City Spark process that have been completed or are pending since the project Terms of Reference was endorsed by Council on 2020-FEB-24 are outlined in the report.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

ATTACHMENT A: Terms of Reference – Coordinated Strategic Policy Review (2020-2021)

ATTACHMENT B: May 2020 Status Update

ATTACHMENT C: City Spark Public Engagement Strategy |

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