

DATE OF MEETING July 27, 2020  
AUTHORED BY BILL CORSAN, DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
SUBJECT PROPOSAL FOR CIVIC PRECINCT REAL ESTATE STRATEGY

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To provide Council with background information on City-owned lands in the Civic Precinct and to seek direction to prepare a real estate strategy for the future space needs of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

### **Recommendation**

That Council direct Staff to address the space needs of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police by exploring options within the Civic Precinct and subsequently develop a strategy for Council's consideration.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) detachment building is a municipal asset located at 303 Prideaux Street. The building was originally built in 1987 and then expanded in 2003. Currently the building is at capacity with no availability for additional personnel in the facility; as new space needs arise, Staff are being assigned to other nearby City facilities on an interim basis. By 2025, there will be spacing needs for at least 224 employees – 160 authorized RCMP members and 64 municipal support staff.

In 2017, the City engaged the services of an architect to examine options for expanding the existing building at 303 Prideaux Street. The report identified the opportunity to create a new two-story addition at the corner of Milton Street and Fitzwilliam Street, or an addition fronting on Prideaux Street. Both options include the need for a full renovation of the existing building.

In addition to the land at 303 Prideaux Street, the City owns seven other properties (approximately six acres of land) within the 'Civic Precinct', which is centred around Fitzwilliam and Prideaux Street.

The City-owned lands are being actively used for a variety of municipal purposes. This includes a building housing mostly Federal RCMP, two fire service buildings (one fire hall and one administration), the Community Services Building, a multi-family affordable housing project, and two parking lots (see Attachment A).

The following commitments have been made to the City-owned lands within the Civic Precinct:

- 666 Fitzwilliam – The Firehall #1 replacement project has been awarded and construction is expected to start in August 2020.

- 285 Prideaux Street – The City has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with BC Housing to redevelop the existing Community Services Building into an affordable housing project, with construction anticipated in late 2021.
- 350 Prideaux Street – The City has a long-term lease with Nanaimo Affordable Housing to provide affordable housing at this location.

The remaining City-owned properties within the Civic Precinct do not have long-term commitments and could be repurposed for a number of uses, including as a municipal police detachment.

The 2020-2024 Financial Plan does not include a budget to review the RCMP space needs and opportunities.

## **DISCUSSION**

Staff recommend a holistic review of the City's land assets be completed in the Civic Precinct. With the assistance of a consultant, a Real Estate Strategy for the Civic Precinct will be developed to ensure an orderly, phased redevelopment of this important area of the downtown core. The Real Estate Strategy will outline options and present a financial analysis of the preferred option.

Once a preferred option is identified, a detailed development strategy will be prepared to map out the timelines and key milestones with future planning, design, and construction.

The study is anticipated to cost \$120,000 and will be completed by the end of 2020.

While the Real Estate Strategy will focus on the space needs of the municipal RCMP, it will also examine other uses and opportunities for the City-owned lands in the Civic Precinct.

## **NEXT STEPS**

If Council proceeds with the Staff recommendation, the following next steps are anticipated:

- Staff will engage a consultant to undertake the Real Estate Strategy.
- Staff will report back with the multi-criteria analysis outlining potential options for Council's consideration.
- A development strategy will be created for the preferred option outlining costs and timing.
- The final report will be presented to Council for consideration as part of the 2021-2025 Financial Plan.
- Electoral approval will be sought to authorize borrowing for the project (2021).

## **OPTIONS**

1. That Council direct Staff to address the space needs of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police by exploring options within the Civic Precinct and subsequently develop a strategy for Council's consideration.
  - Advantages: Undertaking a comprehensive review of the City's existing assets in the Civic Precinct will enable Council to make an informed choice for future investment in the RCMP detachment. The strategy will also provide valuable information on options for other City-owned assets in this area of the downtown core.
  - Disadvantages: A previous study identified options to expand the existing RCMP facility at 303 Prideaux Street. The preferred option may lead to a similar finding. Undertaking the Civic Precinct Real Estate Strategy will take up to five months to complete.
  - Financial Implications: The work is anticipated to cost \$120,000. Funding for the project is available from the \$300,000 set aside in the 2020 budget for the establishment of the external Economic Development function.
  
2. That Council direct Staff to advance plans to expand the existing RCMP detachment in its current location.
  - Advantages: Preliminary work for the existing RCMP building can be used as a base and further refined and advanced. Using the existing studies will enable Council to focus Staff efforts on options for one property.
  - Disadvantages: Focusing on the existing RCMP building at 303 Prideaux Street eliminates analysis of other options in the Civic Precinct that may be more suitable.
  - Financial Implications: Council will need to dedicate additional resources to define the options at 303 Prideaux Street. Staff will need to engage the services of a consultant to obtain a quote for the assignment.
  
3. That Council provide alternative direction.

## **SUMMARY POINTS**

- The RCMP detachment building at 303 Prideaux Street does not meet the needs of the existing complement of RCMP officers and municipal employees.
- The City of Nanaimo owns six acres of land centred around Fitzwilliam and Prideaux Street in downtown Nanaimo. This area is referred to as the Civic Precinct.
- To meet the space needs of the municipal RCMP, the existing building needs to be expanded or rebuilt in a different location within the Civic Precinct.
- Staff are seeking Council direction to engage a consultant to undertake an analysis of the City's land holdings within the Civic Precinct to determine an optimum financial and strategic option for the RCMP detachment. Once a preferred option is identified, a detailed development strategy will be prepared to map out the timelines and key milestones with future planning, design, and construction.
- While the strategy will be focused on the space needs of the municipal RCMP, it will also examine other use/opportunities for the City-owned lands in the Civic Precinct.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

ATTACHMENT A: Aerial view of the Civic Precinct area |

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