

DATE OF MEETING October 25, 2021

AUTHORED BY BILL CORSAN, DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT DIANA KRALL PLAZA REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present the Governance and Priorities Committee with information on the recently completed Diana Krall Plaza redevelopment plan.

Recommendation

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to consider the material from the Diana Krall Plaza Redevelopment Plan as part of the upcoming discussions around the Commercial Street Revitalization Plan.

BACKGROUND

Downtown Nanaimo is the heart of the city. The downtown provides a variety of retail shops, a range of housing opportunities, professional offices and services, and the majority of cultural attractions in the city. The downtown is a transportation hub providing vital connections to Vancouver and neighbouring communities, as well as being the focal point of the city's transit and road network. Along with a spectacular waterfront walkway and large civic park, the downtown serves as the community's gathering space for events and festivals. The downtown is the historical, cultural, professional, and business centre of Nanaimo.

In July 2019, Council held a Governance and Priority Committee meeting focused on the downtown core. Five emerging themes arose from that session, and, consequently, a number of projects to help revitalize downtown. A redevelopment plan for Diana Krall Plaza (the "Plaza") was identified as an important project and a budget of \$20,000 was allocated to complete the plan.

The project was led by Dr. Dave Witty and students from Vancouver Island University's Masters of Community Planning Program. The work was overseen by an advisory committee that included downtown property owners, businesses, community members, and City Staff.

The project commenced in late 2019 and was put on hold during the height of the pandemic. The project was completed during the summer of 2021.

In terms of process, the key milestones included:

- **Context Analysis:** In January 2020, Vancouver Island University (VIU) students mapped the existing opportunities and constraints of the Plaza. This included the identification of zoning, accessibility, permeability, road network, pedestrian movement, and nodes and landmarks.

- Business Survey: A survey was completed in February of 2020 with the local business community to better understand strengths and opportunities for the Plaza as part of the downtown ecosystem.
- Ideas Forum: Held in March 2020 prior to the pandemic, the event included brainstorming, hands-on visioning, and discussion.
- Design Charrette: Held over two days in July 2021, three teams worked on concept plans for the Plaza. The groups reconvened in August 2021 to identify a preferred concept plan for the Plaza.
- Final Design: The final design plan for the Plaza sets out a phased approach for redevelopment.

The Diana Krall Plaza Redevelopment Plan is contained in Attachment A and will be presented by Dr. Dave Witty at the 2021-OCT-25 GPC meeting.

DISCUSSION

The Diana Krall Redevelopment Plan (the “Plan”) sets out a three-phase plan for the redevelopment of the Plaza:

- 2023: Initial Development Idea
- 2024-2027: Building Momentum Phase
- 2028 and beyond: Potential Build-Out Ideas

The goal of the Plan is to slowly build momentum and make public investments over time. The Plan has no 'big' expensive moves at the start.

Success of the redevelopment of the Plaza is tied back to the development of the air space parcel owned by Insight Holdings Ltd., and the reprogramming of the Coastal Community Credit Union Office and the Vancouver Island Library.

Increased programming by the City and the Downtown Business Improvement Association will assist in introducing more people to the space. The plan notes the importance of arts and music, greenspace, and creating a space that is active day and night. An important design element is the need to connect the inner and outer spaces of the Plaza.

More detailed information on the preferred option is included in Attachment A.

Overall, investment in the Plaza needs to be aligned with Council's overall priorities for the Commercial Street Corridor, and there is an opportunity to integrate the work from the Plaza Redevelopment Plan into the Commercial Street Revitalization Plan to ensure a unified guiding document for downtown Nanaimo.

CONCLUSION

The Diana Krall Plaza Redevelopment Plan provides the City and broader community with ideas and options for consideration to help revitalize this important part of the downtown core. The plan provides a common sense approach to phasing the redevelopment of the space by both the City and adjacent landowners.

The work completed through this process will be a useful input for the Downtown Revitalization Plan being prepared in the fall of 2021, which will assist Council in prioritizing capital investment in the Commercial Street Corridor in the coming years.

OPTIONS

1. That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to consider the material from the Diana Krall Plaza Redevelopment Plan as part of the upcoming discussions around the Commercial Street Revitalization Plan.
 - Advantages: Diana Krall Plaza is an important public space in the downtown core. The redevelopment plan for the Plaza provides excellent guidance to address the current short comings of the space. Considering the work as an input to the Commercial Street Revitalization Plan ensures consistency with the overall vision for Commercial Street and the roll out of investment.
 - Disadvantages: None identified.
 - Financial Implications: The Diana Krall Plaza Redevelopment Plan is a key input to the Commercial Street Revitalization Plan. Incorporating the material removes the need to re-examine this area as part of the larger study and reduces the overall project scope.
2. That Council provide other direction. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- In the fall of 2019, Council identified a number of projects that would assist in the revitalization of downtown.
- A redevelopment plan for Diana Krall Plaza was one of the initiatives that Council sponsored.
- The project was led by Dr. Dave Witty and students from Vancouver Island University.
- An Advisory Committee was established to help steer the project.
- Work completed included context analysis, a business survey, ideas forum, design charrette, and creation of final option.
- The final plan sets out a phased redevelopment approach for Council and the private sector to implement over the next ten years.
- The Diana Krall Plaza plan will be incorporated into the Commercial Street Revitalization Plan, which is scheduled to commence in the fall of 2021.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Link to Diana Krall Redevelopment Plan website |

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