

DOWNTOWN INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT, STREETScape
ENHANCEMENT & REHABILITATION PROJECT

**FINAL DESIGN
RECOMMENDATION REPORT**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Downtown Infrastructure Assessment, Streetscape Enhancement, and Rehabilitation Project seeks to implement a portion of the City of Grande Prairie's Downtown Enhancement Area Redevelopment Plan. The purpose of this report is to provide Grande Prairie City Council and Staff with a recommendation based on the findings of the Project. There were five discrete stages to this work, as follows:

- **Phase 1** - Infrastructure Assessment
- **Phase 2** - Council Visioning Workshop
- **Phase 3** - Conceptual Visioning & Preliminary Costing
- **Phase 4** - Engaging Council, the Downtown Association & the Public on Critical Infrastructure
- **Phase 5** - Engaging Council, the Downtown Association & the Public on Non-Critical Infrastructure (Streetscape Enhancements)

Subsurface Utility Assessment

Of the three deep utilities, the sanitary sewer is considered to be past its serviceable life and full replacement is recommended. In most locations, the capacity of the potable water system is considered adequate for current development densities, however, sizing to accommodate future resiliency and capacity is not anticipated to have a significant effect on pricing, and is included in the contingencies. The storm sewer investigations suggest that sections of 99th Avenue from 102nd Street to 101st Street, and 101st Street from 99th Avenue to 98th Avenue are at, or near, the end of their functional lifespan and should be replaced.

It is recommended that in areas where any utility and/or surface infrastructure is being replaced, all three deep utilities should be designed and constructed to maximize the long term capital and operational cost effectiveness.

Surface Infrastructure Assessment

The majority of downtown roadways can remain serviceable through continued maintenance, such as yearly crack sealing, spray patch, or asphaltic patch and pothole repairs, however some would require an

overlay or mill and inlay pavement rehabilitation **if** subsurface work is not required in the near to medium term future.

The areas of roadway (and curb and gutter) with the most severe conditions based upon visual and PQI assessment include:

- 100th Ave between 96th & 102nd St
- 101st Ave between 98th & 99th St and between 102nd St & west boundary
- 99th St between 100th Ave & Montrose College/Provincial Building
- 100th St between 96th & 103rd Ave
- 102nd St between 98th & 99th Ave and between 102nd & 103rd Ave

And for sidewalk:

- 99th St between 100th Ave & Montrose College/Provincial Building

It is recognized that either the roadway reconstruction or the need to upgrade the subsurface infrastructure will trigger the need to upgrade the other.

Additionally, it is suggested that a downtown mobility/transportation assessment plan be conducted as part of the streetscape enhancement implementation plan, further to the Community Mobility Plan that was recently completed.

Revisiting the Couplet

In light of the current work on the downtown streetscape enhancement project, Council made a request to revisit the couplet project and discuss whether it would benefit the enhancement of the downtown. Four Grande Prairie couplet scenarios were compared in terms of their impacts on design, parking, traffic congestion, business exposure, pedestrian experience, safety, cost, and long-term solutions.

Community Engagement

Engagement for the Grande Prairie streetscape design began with a visioning workshop held with Council, City Staff, and the Downtown Association. The purpose of this workshop was two-fold. Firstly, it

was to gain a greater understanding of the downtown (what works, what is missing, what are the opportunities). The second purpose was to understand how to define the success of a new downtown streetscape from Council's, Staff's, and the Downtown Association's point of view. These discussions provided the design team with the information they needed to draft preliminary streetscape options.

These preliminary streetscape options informed the discussion at the second Council, Staff, and Downtown Association workshops. Five options were presented and Councillors, as well as Downtown Association members, were asked to rate each option against a scorecard. These preferred options then informed the wider public engagement strategy.

The public engagement process took the form of a survey available both online and in-person from December 8, 2014 to January 16, 2015. This survey had a total of 1,301 participants who were asked:

- **Their vision for the downtown** - Key themes from this question include commercial businesses, urban design, and transportation.
- **Their priorities for the downtown** - The top three priorities were safety, convenience to get downtown, and ease of walking.
- **Their preferred streetscape option** - The majority of respondents chose a shared festival street as their preferred option, largely for urban design, transportation, and community reasons.

Urban Design Recommendations

VISION

As the metropolitan heart of the city, downtown Grande Prairie will be a modern reflection of urban spirit and cultural vitality. Through unique and adaptive urban design, the downtown streetscapes will attract growth and support year round activity, promoting a sense of civic pride.

Tied to the above vision are seven broad streetscape enhancement goals that will inform the design framework for the downtown: Urban; Modern; Unique; Attractive; Walkable; Cultural; and Active. In order to realize the vision and streetscape goals, objectives, informed by themes identified throughout the engagement processes, are proposed, as follows:

- **Identity** - To enhance an active and vibrant downtown destination that embraces the culture of Grande Prairie.

- **Mobility** - To support the complete streets model, emphasizing pedestrian accessibility, transit supportive design, convenient parking, and opportunities for cycling infrastructure.
- **Safety** - To achieve safety for pedestrians, vehicles, and cyclists throughout the downtown enhancement area.
- **Urban Design** - To establish a cohesive design language through coordinated and complementary streetscape elements.
- **Economy** - To enhance the economic vitality of the downtown by attracting a mix of businesses that serve a wide variety of people.
- **Landscape** - To provide for sustainable landscape treatments that complement the character of downtown streets and result in their distinctive identity.
- **Architecture** - To promote high quality architecture and redevelopment opportunities.
- **Seasonality** - To incorporate flexible design solutions into the streetscape to accommodate a range of functions and activities that can vary throughout the seasons.
- **Maintenance** - To ensure ease of year round maintenance through the use of appropriate streetscape materials.

LAND USE & INTENSIFICATION

A theoretical investigation of downtown intensification and parking was conducted, which yields the following high-level recommendations that are worthy of future study:

- Consider establishing policies to encourage and/or incentivize future downtown redevelopment.
- Consider undertaking a downtown parking study to determine feasibility and potential locations of future city owned parkades.
- Work with the development and real estate industry to determine collaborative opportunities for increasing densities.
- Verify that infrastructure improvements are consistent with the most probable timelines and densities for intensification.

DOWNTOWN ROAD UPGRADES

A hierarchy is proposed that defines each of the road ROWs within the downtown through the application of distinctive streetscape treatments, tied together by an over-arching theme and modern material palette. The following recommendations are provided:

- As part of the streetscape upgrades, implement a hierarchy for road ROWs within designated zones.
- Complete a cycling study to establish demand for, and feasibility of, a dedicated cycling network throughout the city.

- As redevelopment occurs, encourage the expansion of public realm in key areas by gaining back ROW from developers through purchase or height/density trade-offs.

CREATING A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The cultural elements that make up the proposed streetscape kit of parts are representations of Grande Prairie’s past, present, and future. The following broad recommendations are proposed to lead the city and local stakeholders into the detailed design process:

- Apply a material palette of stainless steel, corten steel, wood, concrete, and polycarbonate panels to modernize the downtown, while at the same time reflecting Grande Prairie’s heritage.
- Adopt a unified kit of parts comprising lighting, street furniture, planting, paving, and transitional components to be applied to designated zones within the downtown.
- Support the detailed design of the kit of parts features, as well as various upgrade opportunities, such as gateways, intersection upgrades, and mid-block crossings / gathering spaces.

WINTER CITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to Grande Prairie’s northern climate, its downtown must be able to function as an all-season environment. To address this reality, winter city recommendations are provided in the following categories:

- Year-round Activity
- Snow & Ice Removal
- Pedestrian Circulation
- Vegetation
- Materials
- Future Development

Capital Costing Estimates

The overall budget for the project is approximately \$131,500,000, including approximately \$100,000,000 in capital costs, and the remainder in fees for design, testing, and contingency. In the 2015 budget, Council has approved \$20,000,000 for the next four years to complete four phases of the work. Costs are broken into four distinct categories, as follows:

- Demolition
- Roadway
- Utilities
- Streetscape Elements

Phasing Recommendations

Council’s approved budget will allow four \$5,000,000 phases of work to be completed. During the final workshop, Council discussed potential phasing strategies with two options arising, as follows:

Option 1: Main Street Focus

1. 101st St
2. West side of 100th Ave
3. West side of 101st Ave
4. Continue along 100th Ave or examine private incentives for the funds

Option 2: Shared Festival Street Focus

1. 101st St
2. West side of 101st Ave
3. West side of 100th Ave
4. Continue along 100th Ave or examine private incentives for the funds

Council Decision

On April 20, 2015, the Downtown Infrastructure Assessment, Streetscape Enhancement, and Rehabilitation Project Final Recommendation Report was approved by Council with the direction to proceed with Phasing Option 2 (Shared Festival Street) on 101st Avenue.

The project will commence Phase 1 to coincide with Aquatera’s planned replacement of the 101st Street sanitary trunk. Phase 2 will include the construction of a portion of the Shared Festival Street on 101st Avenue, from 102nd Street to 100th Street. Phase 3 will include enhancements on 100th Avenue, from 102nd Street to 100th Street, and Phase 4 will include either the continuation of the 100th Avenue enhancements or the reallocation of funds to spur the intensification of key downtown areas.

In response to the “Revisiting the Couplet” discussion and alternative scenario comparison, Council confirmed that the 101st Avenue couplet will not be constructed.