

Civic Block Plan

Report to the Community #1

Local land owners, businesses, interest groups, and the community-at-large are contributing to the creation of a plan for the Civic Block area of downtown. Through meetings, workshops, open houses and other online and public engagement activities, the community will help to identify the issues, principles and design elements that will provide direction for the plan. Learn more about the work and how to become involved at www.kelowna.ca/mydowntown.

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First community workshop generates big ideas

The first of two community workshops was held on May 13 at the Rotary Centre for the Arts. The workshops are part of a comprehensive engagement program designed to gather community input into the creation of a plan for the Civic Block area. Thirty –two people participated in this first workshop. A second workshop to review draft concepts is planned for June. Following this workshop, there will be opportunities for the public to provide input on the plans before the preferred plan is shared with City Council and the public in the fall.



In attendance

Workshop participants included key stakeholders in the Civic Block area as well as interested members of the community who registered to participate on our website. A wide range of interests were represented at the workshop including:

- Business enhancement and economic development (Urban Development Institute, Downtown Kelowna Association, Melcor)
- Arts and culture (Kelowna Museums, Kelowna Art Gallery, Okanagan Regional Library)
- Social and recreation (Metro Central, Kelowna Cycling Coalition)
- Government services (Interior Health, RCMP)
- Community at large



Participants broke into three groups to explore the needs and opportunities. Each group reported the outcome of their conversations at the end of the workshop.

“We are all very similar in what we want even though we come from diverse backgrounds.”

Arnica Rowan
Workshop Participant

Design principles drafted

Participants in the workshop helped to develop the following principles to guide the design of the Civic Block plan.

The plan for the Civic Block will:

- recognize the value of the area as a community amenity
- make the area a distinct and diverse cultural precinct
- build on existing facilities and patterns of infrastructure wherever feasible
- encourage vibrancy through a broad mix of land uses and activities
- restrict market residential developments
- use public land for community amenities
- look for partnerships with the private sector to benefit the community
- be pedestrian oriented while still accommodating vehicles
- examine parking strategies holistically
- encourage alternative travel modes
- create landmark and diverse public spaces
- enhance opportunities for a healthy and complete community
- consider the economic and financial impacts of all proposals

BIG ideas

Participants were asked for ideas to increase the vibrancy of the area as well as suggestions for specific sites that are in transition. A selection of the ideas is included below. The consultants have taken note of these ideas and will come back with a few scenarios to reflect the input from the workshop. Please note that as the mandate is to develop a plan that is financially viable and possible to implement, some ideas may not be incorporated or may need to be refined.

Things to avoid

Participants highlighted a few things they don't want to see in the Civic Block plan including:

- Big, single-use facilities
- Buildings with large floor plates
- Parking at ground level
- Poor wayfinding and lighting
- High-density residential
- Tall buildings near the waterfront

- **Encourage pedestrian and cycling mobility and connectivity**
Participants suggested creating a north/south corridor with east/west connections.
- **Create a central public plaza**
Participants supported the creation of a central public space as a focal point. The space should incorporate art, greenspace, performance areas and recognize our history.
- **Convert RCMP site to public space**
Some participants wanted to see the RCMP site demolished and replaced with a greenspace or event plaza that is family-friendly and encourages multi-generational uses.
- **Convert arena to recreation centre**
Participants like the idea of keeping the Memorial Arena site for recreation and sport but not necessarily as an ice rink.
- **Maintain theatre site and broaden services**
Participants support keeping the theatre space downtown. They suggest looking at options to expand the use of the space such as making it a performing arts centre and incorporating exterior uses.
- **Bundle museums in one location**
Participants would like to see the Kelowna museum move out of its current space and bundled with other museums in the area. This could include adding a discovery centre or children's museum.
- **Enhance the Artwalk**
Participants suggested looking at opportunities to extend the Artwalk, make it a concentrated pedestrian spine, allow it to meander through the Civic Block area and add more access through buildings along the route.
- **Integrate Kasugai Gardens**
Participants strongly support the value of Kasugai Gardens and would like to see recommendations on how to better showcase this 'hidden jewel' of the downtown.
- **Support downtown living**
Participants agreed that having housing in the proximity was an advantage for the area and amenities (i.e. Community Centre) should be provided in the Civic Block for residents. Participants also identified the need for affordable housing and encouraged a mix of housing in the downtown.
- **Explore mixed uses for Interior Health**
Participants suggested incorporating a mixture of uses in the Interior Health building once it is vacated. A greater diversity of uses will increase activity at all hours, providing more eyes on the street and people moving through the area. Participants suggested opportunities to have an academic presence downtown (i.e. UBCO, OUC), allow private enterprise and to support additional amenities such as a daycare or fitness centre.
- **Minimize and disguise parking**
Participants suggested incorporating parking above ground levels, masking parking areas, avoiding prime real estate and finding ways to use parking in off hours. Some participants would like to see street parking given up for wider sidewalks and bike paths.
- **Finance creatively**
As any public developments would need to be funded through the capital plan, participants also explored opportunities to generate revenue. Ideas include residential developments, public-private partnerships, and integrating commercial uses within public facilities.