

## CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

### Economic Development Update

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#### **Purpose:**

To provide Council with an annual update on the activities of the Economic Development Department with regards to industrial/commercial development, business support and licensing, promotional activities, and ongoing/upcoming projects.

#### **Background:**

1. **Industrial Development** – Compared to previous years, industrial development has been slower this year due to the challenging economic situation the region and province are experiencing. Many of our key prospects (businesses we have actively targeted to develop in the City) are now struggling to stay in business and not in a position to expand to our region. This trend is expected to continue in the short-term until such a time when the oil and gas industry recovers and more projects begin to develop. The Department is currently reviewing its strategy for attracting industrial development as well as the sectors the Department targets. Economic Development is happy to report that partnership efforts with Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association (AIHA) to attract major industrial development to the region continues to produce results as the Department is seeing an increased number of international investors visit the region and discuss potential projects with the City. This is a direct result of the increased marketing efforts of AIHA, which the Department is heavily involved in.
2. **Commercial Development** – Despite the economic downturn, the City continues to see growth and development of its commercial sector, with several new developments planned for this year and for 2017. The Department is actively working with developers of these commercial sites to attract businesses that meet the needs of our residents.
3. **Business Support Programs** – As noted in the Department's October 20, 2015 presentation to Council, the Business Support Programs have been updated and enhanced for the existing Storefront Improvement and Curbside Enhancement programs, which were created under the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan. Launched in February of 2016 with a total budget of \$60,000, the Department is pleased to report that uptake of these programs has been better than expected. To date, the Department has received 16 applications from local businesses, compared to 2 last year. The Department has approved 13 applications, and has committed over \$41,000 in funding to support to local business community.
4. **Business Licensing** – Earlier this year Council approved the updated Business Licence Bylaw, which was part of an overall effort to improve the City's licensing processes. Further to these efforts, the Department is currently working to implement online licensing for new and existing businesses, as well as streamlining the process to reduce the amount of staff time and resources required for business licence approvals. As the primary purpose of a business licence is to provide the City with data and statistics on the local business community, the Department is also expanding the amount and type of data that is collected as part of the licensing process. This will provide the City with more accurate and relevant information and will assist in the Department's efforts to support and expand the local economy.

5. **Promotional Activities** – The Department has been working in close partnership with Corporate Communications to redevelop its marketing and promotional materials that are used to attract development to the City. One of the Department's marketing projects, the Discover Fort Sask video project, recently won a major international award from the International Economic Development Council. Economic Development is also pleased to advise that this project won a major Canadian award from the Economic Developers Association of Canada. In addition to the video project, the Department is developing a series of profiles on the City that outline the industrial and commercial opportunities which exist here, as well as an overall community profile. These efforts help provide prospective companies and businesses with a good picture of how successful they can be in Fort Saskatchewan. Once developed, they will continue to be updated regularly.
6. **Ongoing/Upcoming Projects** – The Department has a number of projects and activities underway or planned for the upcoming year, which will be of interest to Council. These include a comprehensive Business Retention and Expansion Strategy, an update to the Retail Analysis, an update to the Department's Industrial Land Strategy, downtown business consultations, as well as some land management activities.

**Attachments:**

Economic Development Department Presentation

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File No.:

Prepared by:	Mark Morrissey Director, Economic Development	Date: October 18, 2016
Approved by:	Troy Fleming General Manager, Infrastructure & Community Services	Date: October 19, 2016
Reviewed by:	Kelly Kloss City Manager	Date: October 19, 2016
Submitted to:	City Council	Date: October 25, 2016