

Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square Project Update – September 2024

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Recommended by:	Chief Administrative Officer

Report Summary

This report and presentation provides a recommendation regarding authority being provided to the Chief Administrative Officer to enter into a funding agreement with the Government of Canada in support of the Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square and provides an update on the status of this project.

Resolution

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury authorizes the Chief Administrative Officer to enter into, and execute an agreement in a form satisfactory to the Director of Legal Services relating to the Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities Canada, Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program Grant for the Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square project.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Climate Action Plans

This report addresses Strategic Objective 2.0 – Economic Capacity and Investment Readiness, from the City of Greater Sudbury Strategic Plan 2019-2027 (Revised July 2023). The Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square will address the sustainability goals of the CGS Community Energy and Emissions Plan.

Financial Implications

The federal funding provides \$24.9 million for the Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square project, which has a budget of up to \$65 million as approved via previous motions of Council (specifically, Resolutions CC2023-287, 288, and 289 carried on November 28, 2023). The effect of this funding reduces anticipated debt financing requirements for this project.

Background

In November 2023 through Resolutions CC2023-287 to 290 Council directed staff to proceed with incorporating a new Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square. With those resolutions, Council also established the project would have a budget of up to \$65M. At that time, it also approved a financing plan which contemplated debt financing to support the project if funding from senior governments did not materialize.

Over the past nine months, staff have worked to advance the project as directed by Council. A request for proposal (RFP) was posted to retain a design and consulting team for the project in December 2024. Through the RFP process, the City is fortunate to have retained a design team that is led by Teeple Architects, in a collaborative partnership with Two Row Architect and Yallowega Architecture. The design team made a presentation to Council in April, 2024.

This project produces a nationally significant hub providing a venue for arts, culture, technology, knowledge, and innovation. The Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square incorporates a new central library, a Category A art gallery, and a multicultural association for community members to enjoy, and access to a greater number of services all in one convenient location downtown. The existing Municipal One-Stop Service Centre will continue to deliver a variety of services from its current location.

The art gallery will attract visitors to see one of northern Ontario's largest public art collections, including a new gallery dedicated to the famed Group of Seven artist Franklin Carmichael that will house works generously donated by his grandchildren. The new central library will be a twenty-first century library to bridge the technology access divide and support the community in meaningful ways, while still providing access to a great collection. The project makes a statement about our city's position as the Capital of northeastern Ontario and our community's commitment to accessibility, environmental sustainability, multiculturalism, Indigeneity, social inclusion, and the importance of the cultural industry.

The transformation of Tom Davies Square into a cultural hub is a catalyst for further downtown revitalization. It establishes an accessible, inviting, contemporary, people-oriented space for connecting citizens not only to each other, but also to a world of art, information, and technology. The project contributes to growing the local economy and tourism, drives municipal environmental performance and models green building technologies other commercial building owners could emulate, all while providing a welcoming gathering place for citizens and visitors alike.

Engaging with Indigenous communities has been, and will continue to be, an important aspect of this project. Such engagement is not only a matter of respect and recognition of the historical and cultural significance of their presence on the land but also a fundamental step in building inclusive and sustainable communities. As stewards of the traditional territory where Greater Sudbury is now located, local Indigenous peoples bring invaluable knowledge, cultural insights, and perspectives that enrich the design and development of public spaces. As the Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square project continues, it will be informed by advice from Two Row Architect, which specializes in meshing local traditional knowledge with current building technology. Staff's intent is to maximize indigenous involvement through engagement.

Analysis

Schematic Design

Since retaining the design and consulting team, the project has progressed through a detailed program review and engagement to prepare a schematic design and Class C cost estimate.

The meeting on November 28, 2023 presented a test-fit scenario of the Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square to Council. The intention of the test fit was to verify if the existing facility can house a library and art gallery within its existing structural and facility parameters, while navigating the facility design limitations. For the partners, this involved rethinking their operations to picture how the form and limitations of the existing facility can be leveraged.

One initial task that the City challenged the design team with, was to apply their experience and expertise to develop a best-case design scenario for each of the cultural hub partners. Council will recall that as presented in November 2023, the test-fit scenario could not accommodate all of the art gallery's requested functional program such as the original collections storage space identified with the former Junction East project. Also, since the former project, the art gallery has increased their need for storage within the facility.

The schematic design to be presented to Council by the design team is reflective of this best-case scenario for the partners and municipal service delivery, all while targeting the Council approved total project budget. The schematic design accommodates all the partners' space needs and creates a true cultural hub connection.

The design of the municipal office environment will reflect the design principles to the best possible scenario. However, as directed at the meeting in November 2023, the reduced budget for municipal services creates challenges that the design team must continue working to address.

Paris Street Upgrades

Following the meeting on November 2023, Council expressed the importance of a ramp construction between the 1st and 2nd floor of 200 Brady Street. This prompted an investigation into the feasibility of constructing a ramp at the TDS facility and, if feasible, the most suitable location. Several locations were assessed, and the investigation determined that the most suitable location for ramp construction is on the Paris side of the facility for the following reasons:

- The location does not reduce the ground floor area of the facility and therefore maintains the space availability that can accommodate the structural requirements for the library's collection.
- A ramp within the existing building or courtyard footprint will require piles and foundations. The proposed location ensures piling for the ramp structure is outside of the basement and will not impact the existing structure or reduce the parking lot. This significantly reduces the risk to the existing foundation and micropile system.
- The new ramp will be a beacon for the project on the corner of Paris Street.
- The ramp slab extends to form a canopy to protect the existing Paris Street entrance.
- The ramp may be programmed to provide reading areas that look back over Paris Street adding to the patron experience of the library.
- This is the most cost effective, functional, and buildable option for introducing an accessible ramp into the project.

As a result of the ramp construction, staff will accelerate the timing of a pending capital project and include it for consideration in the upcoming capital budget. This project includes exterior facility upgrades along the Paris facing side of the building from the Brady Street intersection toward Larch Street.

Completing these exterior upgrades in concert with the ramp construction makes sense, as opposed to waiting approximately five years as originally contemplated before the Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square project was conceived. The scope of this work would include waterproofing along foundations and the parking garage entrance to resolve issues with water infiltration, reconstructing the exterior stairs and substandard ramp to meet legislation, reconstructing the concrete ramp access for vehicles that enter and exit the Paris Street parking garage entrance, replacing the original stone pavers, waterproofing and reconstructing the flower beds and landscaped areas.

Currently this scope of work is outside of the Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square. This exterior work was not previously incorporated into the capital outlook because the capital prioritization indicates that the work is not urgent. However, the work cannot wait 10 years. Additionally, this project is a building lifecycle intervention, includes code upgrades to comply with legislation such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and also aligns with desired outcomes of the Downtown Masterplan.

Parking

A parking study for the Cultural Hub at TDS has been initiated with the transportation subconsultant. The project will not be constructing new parking spaces. However, the parking study will analyze parking availability compared to the partners' needs. The parking study will make recommendations for the parking space allotments and required parking duration and will advise on how to maximize the use of the underground parking capacity at Tom Davies Square, for staff to consider.

Furthermore, staff recently updated parking studies for the South District and Downtown as a whole. These studies will advise future decisions regarding municipal parking lots in the Downtown.

Class C Cost Estimate

Through the design and consulting RFP, staff retained a quantity surveyor to perform the primary cost estimating duties for the Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square. The quantity surveyor submitted a first draft Class C cost estimate to the City for review in late August. This initial submission exceeded the total project budget. Staff worked with the design team to identify cost adjustments that align with the budget set by Council. For example, the estimate identified municipal service relocation and renovation was trending over the total project budget. As a result of reviewing the estimate in detail, the scope of the renovation work was reduced by targeting items such as replacing the ceilings in future municipal space.

The final Class C Cost Estimate (+/- 15%) is summarized below. This includes the municipal service relocation, all construction work associated with the project, soft costs such as furniture, and permits, and contingencies. The allowance for escalation is determined by analyzing the current market to project an inflationary index for the period leading up to the project completion. The escalation is currently 6.7% per annum.

Also detailed below are the costs associated with the single story ramp construction and accessibility upgrades to Council chambers. Each of these project items are presented separately as they were not captured in estimates completed to date. Staff and the design team will continue to work toward the total project budget as the project advances.

Project Cost Summary	
Cultural Hub Construction (Pre-Contingency)	\$20,700,000
Municipal Service Relocation (Pre-Contingency)	\$9,100,000
Contingencies (including escalation allowance)	\$8,600,000
Soft Costs	\$6,700,000
Enhanced Accessibility	\$1,300,000
Enhanced Sustainability	\$16,300,000
Public Art	\$500,000
Other Costs (Administration, Grand Opening, Funding Announcement)	\$900,000
	Subtotal = \$64,100,000
	Municipal Portion of HST (1.76%) = \$1,100,000
	Total = \$65,200,000
Single Story Ramp Construction	\$2,700,000
Accessibility Upgrades to Council Chambers	\$200,000
	Subtotal = \$2,900,000
	Municipal Portion of HST (1.76%) = \$100,000
	Total = \$68,200,000

Project Funding

A preliminary funding plan was presented to Council in November 2023. As described at that time, staff were making substantive efforts to promote the Cultural Hub at TDS project as a worthy investment with senior levels of government and their associated funding streams. Discussions are ongoing, but the recent federal announcement providing \$24.9 million from the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program is a successful outcome from the corporation's efforts to secure senior government funding. The recommended motion in this report is needed to enable staff to enter into a funding agreement with the federal government.

Schedule

The schedule requested for the November 2023 meeting for Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square is summarized below. To date, work has been completed while maintaining the schedule with careful planning on how to compress and overlap phases of design. However, it should be noted that with an aggressive schedule, there is elevated risk of the schedule slipping. Staff, the design team, and the project partners will continue to work toward achieving the schedule requested.

Milestone	Begins
Design (Schematic and Design Development)	Underway
Contract Documents Phase	Q4 2024
Tender Award	Q2 2025
Construction (18 Month Duration)	Q3 2025
Municipal Relocation	Phased throughout 2026
Cultural Hub Partner Occupancy	End of Q4 2026

Next Steps

The next steps for the Cultural Hub at TDS project include:

1. Subject to Council's approval of Resolution 1, prepare and execute a funding agreement with Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities Canada.
2. Issue a Request for Prequalification for the construction phase of the project.
3. Staff, the design team, and the project partners will continue to work through the project design.
4. Engagement with various committees, stakeholders, and groups such as but not limited to the Accessibility Advisory Committee will continue as the project evolves.

Resources Cited

1. Cultural Hub at Tom Davies Square Project Update, Report to City Council, November 28, 2023. <https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=51756>