

# Q&A

## Events Centre

The City of Nanaimo is considering the construction of an events centre that could host larger-scale concerts, touring shows, sports and other cultural and community events. This infosheet is intended to provide helpful information and answers to some of the questions being asked about this proposed project.

### **Why is the City considering building an events centre?**

An events centre offers significant economic opportunities for Nanaimo such as providing a tourism anchor, boosting downtown revitalization, anchoring the waterfront and creating a new cultural space as per the City's Cultural Plan. It will create jobs and draw visitors to the area, resulting in significant positive ripple effects. This project reflects Council's strategic priorities of improving the South Downtown Waterfront, promoting community wellness and seeking and developing opportunities for recreation, culture, sports and tourism. As well, there is a current opportunity for the region to attract a Western Hockey League (WHL) team, so this is a factor being considered in assessing the project.

### **What is an events centre?**

Events centres are large interior public venues, most often found in or near urban areas, that can host activities and gatherings that are of interest to all residents. They are multi-purpose sports and entertainment settings and are major public assembly facilities that attract people of all ages, social backgrounds and interests.

### **How would an events centre benefit the residents of Nanaimo?**

By creating jobs, drawing visitors to the area, and boosting downtown revitalization. An events centre would offer residents and visitors opportunities to see professional sporting events, larger-scale concerts and touring shows, in addition to being a gathering place for arts and cultural activities and community events. It would draw people from a much wider area than just within the city boundaries, creating a positive ripple-effect for the economy. A business case developed in 2016, showed a potential market population north of the Malahat of over 370,000 people for whom time and cost to attend events in Nanaimo would be considerably less than going to Victoria or the mainland.

### **How much will the proposed events centre cost?**

The events centre will cost up to 80M to prepare the City-owned waterfront location (1 Port Drive) for development, realign Front Street, create an access road, and upgrade sewer and storm lines. The referendum will ask residents whether they support the city borrowing up to \$80M for the project. Estimated costs for annual operations are separate from building costs and are in the process of being determined and will be fully funded through facility rentals, suites, tickets, concessions and catering, advertising, naming rights, ice rental, and luxury seats. Funding for the development, construction and operations of the events centre will come from a mix of public, private and other sources. Property taxes will not be increased to pay for borrowing the money for the events centre.

### **What could an events centre look like?**

The actual design will be developed as planning proceeds, but similar-sized events centres in other cities include ice arenas, flexible seating to accommodate larger concerts and shows, covered outdoor public plaza areas, public galleries, indoor walking routes and rooms that can be used by not-for-profit community and cultural groups at non-event times.

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### **Has the City assessed the feasibility of an events centre here?**

Yes. In September 2016, the City retained BBB Architects to conduct preliminary research and analysis of the feasibility of a sports and entertainment centre. The results showed Nanaimo has strong potential to obtain a WHL hockey team franchise and to host larger touring shows. The City then had BBB Architects undertake a more detailed review with additional external expertise—through credible third parties such as MNP and BTY—developing a capital cost estimate, operating business plan, economic impact analysis, traffic and parking assessment, geotechnical assessment and environmental impacts related to the two proposed sites.

### **Where would an events centre be built in Nanaimo?**

After assessing two potential locations for an events centre (the Howard Johnson site and 1 Port Drive) the City determined that the city-owned land at 1 Port Drive is the preferred location. Because the City already owns the site, this location offers reduced costs related to construction, site remediation and access. It also scored better in assessment of geotechnical issues and transportation requirements.

### **Are there places of similar size to Nanaimo with successful events centres?**

Yes. As part of the business case, similar-sized cities were investigated. For example, two cities with comparable demographics to Nanaimo (Kelowna and Red Deer) were used as comparisons to assess potential for a WHL team. In those communities, average game attendance has been 5,200-5,700.

### **What will the events centre offer that the existing conference centre and Port Theatre don't?**

Neither the Port Theatre nor the conference centre host sport events and both have limited seating compared to that offered by an event centre. An events centre could complement the Port Theatre by providing features and capacities that are non-competitive and by working together on shared resources such as coordinated marketing and ticketing. The conference centre and an events centre could collaborate as well. For example, to accommodate larger meeting and conferences both facilities could be used together.

### **What happens next?**

Residents and property owners in Nanaimo will be asked whether they support borrowing funds to build an events centre in a non-election assent vote (referendum) proposed for Saturday, March 11. Watch for a separate mail-out closer to voting day with more details about the referendum, including details on times/ locations, ID requirements and more.

### **How can I learn more?**

A newsletter is being mailed to households which will outline the project and share answers to questions raised by the public. A flyer is planned to share voting information prior to the referendum. Additionally, you can attend one of six upcoming public open houses, email [eventscentre@nanaimo.ca](mailto:eventscentre@nanaimo.ca), post your questions on the City's [Facebook](#) and/or [Twitter](#) pages, and visit [www.nanaimo.ca/eventscentre](http://www.nanaimo.ca/eventscentre) to learn more.