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## Festival Plaza: Conceptual Development & Engagement

City of Fort St. John

Stakeholder Engagement Summary  
November 27, 2018

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### **1. Introduction**

EDS Group Inc. (EDS) was retained by the City of Fort St. John to complete the conceptual design for a new urban plaza in downtown Fort St. John. This project includes a robust public and stakeholder engagement program that ensures local perspectives on the site development are included at the very onset. The following document summarizes public and stakeholder engagement activities over the past several weeks, leading up to the development of concept plans for Client review and acceptance.

### **2. Scope of Work: Engagement Activities**

The approved scope of work for this project includes a commitment to engage local residents and other stakeholder groups through conversations, learning sessions/ workshops and live meetings. We are also taking advantage of the Let's Talk website as a forum for information sharing and communications. In summary, engagement for this project will include:

- meetings and a workshop with individuals from local stakeholder groups and the general public;
- discussions and / or interviews with City staff;
- a public drop-in session to share work completed to date and to gather general feedback on the plan; and
- a combination of information sharing, communications and surveys available on the Let's Talk site.

EDS provided the City with a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy at the onset of the project. This document outlined:

- pertinent policy documents related to the development of Festival Plaza;
- a list of stakeholders that would be extended an invitation to the upcoming workshop;
- schedule for completing various engagement activities and the concept plan;
- levels of involvement for various stakeholders and project participants, using IAP2 guidelines for public participation; and
- detailed steps of public and stakeholder engagement, including the goals, activities, and desired outcomes of workshops.

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In summary, engagement for this project included:

- a. staff workshop – a three-hour series of presentations and working sessions to develop high-level understanding of the project;
- b. stakeholder workshop – an all-day workshop with numerous stakeholders and City staff, including a series of presentations and working sessions to develop the foundation for conceptual designs;
- c. Let’s Talk – a City managed online forum for the general public to review posted information and complete on-line surveys;
- d. public drop-in session – evening event allowing the general public to review information produced at the stakeholder workshop; and
- e. Council briefings – opportunities for the design team to convey project progress to member of Council prior to a formal presentation at a Committee of the Whole session.

### **3. Summary of Engagement Sessions**

#### **A. Staff Workshop**

- Held October 19, 2018 at Administration Office;
- 16 participants from City of Fort St. John;
- Topics included basics of placemaking, winter city design and programming, safety and security, and pertinent background information helpful to the concept design process; and
- Staff provided site concept plans for three scenarios of the Festival Plaza site.

Key responses to various questions included:

1. Words that describe “place” in Fort St. John – most prominent words included “big skies”, “aurora borealis”, “ice”, “energetic”, “land of opportunity”, “outdoorsy”, and “social”;
2. What words do we not want to describe Fort St. John – included “boom & bust”, “dusty”, “transient”, “pick-up trucks” and “The John”;
3. How the City promotes its identity – through programs and events, programming of activities, inclusion of local indigenous culture, family-focused activities, connection to industry and very outspoken and vocal residents;
4. Great outdoor winter-time events held outdoors in Fort St. John – High on Ice, Party in the Parka, Crystal Cup hockey tournament, Santa Parade, Lighting Festival, Matthews Park skating loop, and Christmas Tree Light-Up event;
5. What compatible activities take place in the City – farmers’ market, community engagements, ESS – emergency response services such as pet care, licensed venue for weddings and other celebrations, private rentals such as corporate parties, graduation celebrations, sports training and sheltered play;
6. What new events do we feel can be hosted here by developing this plaza – sheltered events such as a year-round farmers market, movie in the park, concerts, fitness programming, and a common meeting place for residents; and
7. What safety concerns are there in developing Festival Plaza – loitering, homeless presence, graffiti potential, and snow falling off a building’s roof. Positive aspects

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of safety for this site include close proximity of roads and public parking lots on all sides, great sightlines from surroundings for natural surveillance and high traffic driving by.

**B. Stakeholder Workshop**

- Held November 19, 2018 at the North Peace Cultural Centre;
- 24 participants from local stakeholder groups, City of Fort St. John and EDS;
- Topics included basics of placemaking, appropriate amenities for civic plazas, great open spaces we can learn from, events and activities, winter city design and programming, and safety and security; and
- Stakeholders provided site concept plans for three scenarios of the Festival Plaza site.

Key responses to various questions included:

1. Words that describe “place” in Fort St. John – most prominent words included “pioneering spirit”, “Peace River history”, “family-minded”, “good opportunity”, “winter” and “warm folks”;
2. Words that describe our community – most prominent include “history”, “adventurous”, “pioneering spirit”, “family-minded” and “winter friendly”;
3. Some of the great places outside Fort St. John that we can learn from as we develop Festival Plaza include Terrace Farmers Market, Carcross Market, Pickering ON Promenade, San Diego Old Town, Edmonton / Old Strathcona Fringe Festival, Vancouver’s Robson Square, The Forks in Winnipeg and downtown Hope BC;
4. Great places in Fort St. John include Fish Creek, Farmers Market area, natural areas around the Hospital, natural areas west of Fish Creek, Kin Park and Centennial Park;
5. Some challenges in programming existing parks in Fort St. John include limited access to power, parking, set-up time, lack of adaptability for different activities, weather protection, lack of washrooms and lack of lighting;
6. Potential activities for Festival Plaza that would compliment other open spaces in Fort St. John include a farmers market with weather protection (ie. A building), outdoor classroom, public art installations, ice carvings, food and beverage events, skating ring, and space for temporary events such as food trucks and movies in the park;
7. Potential winter-time events that can be held in Festival Plaza include Santa Clause Parade, Party in the Parka, walking, ice slides and charity hockey events on a skating surface; and
8. Potential general uses of Festival Plaza include farmers market, open mic nights, fitness activities, country dance lessons and performances, wedding receptions, corporate events, graduation, theatre performances, mini tourism kiosk, first nation celebrations and food festivals. There was a strong preference for a building on the site that maximizes site coverage, and provides wind protection

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on prevailing wind sides using roll-up doors, retractable walls or other screening devices.

**C. *Public Drop-In Session***

- Held November 19, 2018 at the North Peace Cultural Centre;
- Approximately 30 individuals attended;
- All information collected during the stakeholder workshop was available for public viewing; and
- Public feedback was collected using the on-line *Let's Talk* website and its survey.

General feedback from attendees received by facilitators include:

- Important that the site have a structure that can be used for a range of events such as farmers markets, food festivals, live performances, first nation celebrations and music festivals;
- Concerns of homeless population moving into any building, and the need to ensure this is mitigated for;
- Public washrooms are a must for the site, as there are few to none available in the area;
- Eluding to local history and geography is very important. Ideas such as local ecology on site with natural features (water flowing, native plants, interpretive signage, etc.) would be supported;
- Several people stating preference for very artistic lighting, using light as art and also aesthetic value;
- Do it right the first time – even if the budget is limited, look for opportunities for grants, additional capital funding and partnerships to build Festival Plaza to give the community an exceptional public amenity; and
- This development can be the marquee public open space for visitors coming to Fort St. John, and it is important that we tell the local story effectively.

**D. *Let's Talk***

- Information became live on approximately October 17, 2018;
- Site includes a project description, links to pertinent background documents, and a timeline for project completion;
- Two surveys were included to date. The first to gather high level information on community identity, safety, and potential events that can be held at the plaza. The second survey provided a list of proposed activities and proposed amenities resulting from the stakeholder workshop, and asked respondents to prioritize various elements;
- Survey #1 received 65 responses at the time of preparing this report. A summary of survey responses has been appended to this report; and
- Survey #2 received 67 responses at the time of preparing this report. A summary of survey responses has been appended to this report.

#### 4. Next Steps

The project timelines are as follows:



#### 5. Closing

This report was prepared for distribution to project stakeholders, workshop participants, City staff and other interested parties. Throughout the engagement program, information was collected under the authority of Section 33 (c) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and will be for the sole use of this project completed in collaboration between EDS Group Inc. and the City of Fort St. John. If you have any questions regarding the collection or use of this information contact Jennifer Decker at 250.794.3328

This report was prepared by:

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# Festival Plaza Conceptual Plan

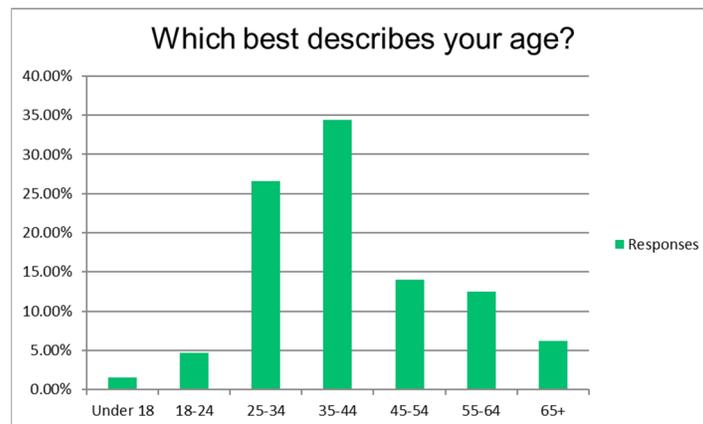
## Survey #1 Summary

November 27, 2018

65 surveys completed at the time of completing this report accesses to the website and Average time to complete the survey – 3min. 50 sec.

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### 1. Which best describes your age?



Comments:

- Largest proportion of respondents are between 25 and 44 years of age, which is consistent with the local demographic of a fairly young community.

**2. Urban plazas are often great places to celebrate the identity of a community. Please provide individual words or short phrases that describe Fort St. John. For example, “energetic” or “incredible northern lights”**

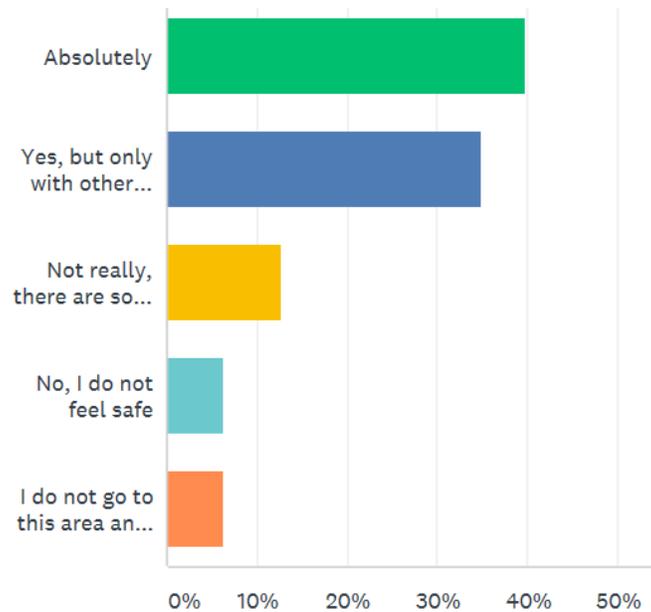
Welcoming<sub>Big sky</sub> Active<sub>Giving</sub> Strong<sub>Pioneering</sub>  
Community<sub>Busy</sub> Winter<sub>Fun</sub> Energetic  
Opportunities Friendly<sub>Families</sub> Northern Lights  
Sunshine Young<sub>Growing</sub> Vibrant<sub>Dirty</sub> Resourceful

Comments: ten most prominent words, starting with the most common, includes:

1. Energetic
2. Winter
3. Friendly

4. Community
5. Northern Lights
6. Strong
7. Young
8. Active
9. Vibrant
10. Welcoming

**3. Creating a safe environment for people to enjoy is very important. Do you feel safe in the Centennial Park neighbourhood in downtown Fort St. John?**



Comments: responses with the following statistics:

- absolutely – 40%
- yes, but only when with other people – 35%
- not really, there are some challenges – 13%
- no, I do not feel safe – 6%
- I do not go to this area and have no opinion – 6%

**4. What types of public events do you attend in Fort St. John? For example, the Remembrance Day Ceremony, Santa Claus Parade, etc.**

Movies in the Park Fairs Santa Claus Parade Winter  
High on Ice Christmas Canada Day  
Remembrance Day Farmers Market Party in the Park

Comments: five most prominent events, starting with the most common, includes:

1. Canada Day
2. High on Ice
3. Farmers Market
4. Santa Claus Parade
5. Movies in the Park

**5. What types of activities would you feel can be hosted at a new public plaza, that are not already available here in Fort St. John?**

Events Street Music Open Mic Market Games  
Food Local Talent Art Party

Comments: five most prominent events, starting with the most common, includes:

1. Market
2. Music
3. Food
4. Events
5. Art

# Festival Plaza Conceptual Plan

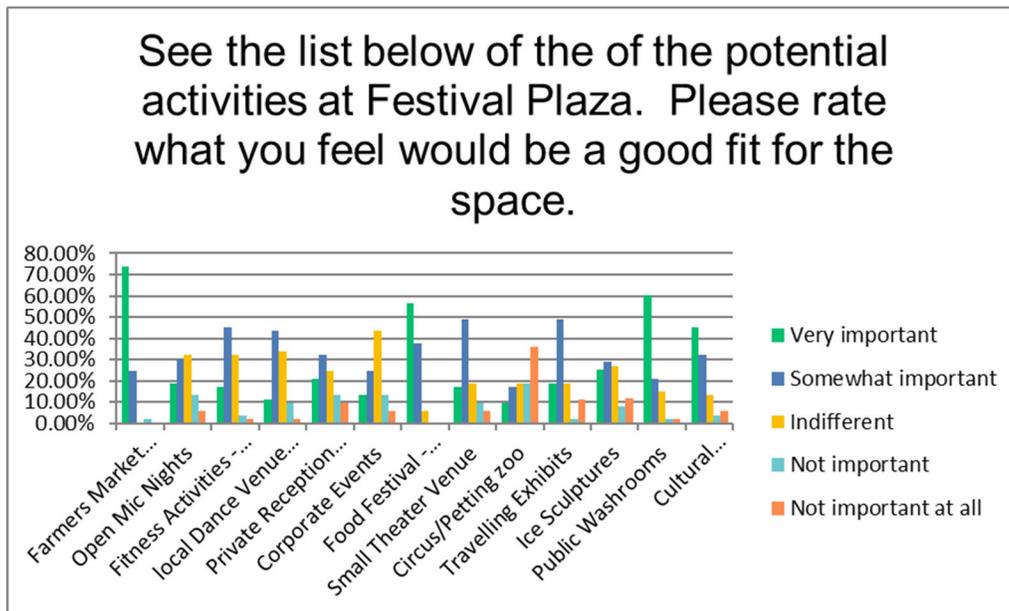
## Survey #2 Summary

November 26, 2018

67 surveys completed at the time of completing this report accesses to the website and Average time to complete the survey – 3min. 25sec.

### 1. Potential Activities in Festival Plaza

	Very imp	Somewhat	Indifferent	Not imp.	Not at all
Farmers Market Venue	73%	24%	0%	3%	0%
Open Mic Nights	18%	28%	31%	15%	7%
Fitness Activities - Yoga/Group fitness classes	15%	46%	33%	4%	1%
local Dance Venue ie. Country Square Dancing	11%	43%	34%	9%	2%
Private Reception Venue ie. Weddings/Grads	19%	33%	24%	12%	12%
Corporate Events	23%	24%	42%	15%	7%
Food Festival - Taste of Fort St. John	57%	36%	7%	0%	0%
Small Theater Venue	22%	42%	19%	10%	6%
Circus/Petting zoo	10%	18%	20%	21%	33%
Travelling Exhibits	21%	48%	19%	3%	9%
Ice Sculptures	29%	27%	27%	8%	9%
Public Washrooms	64%	19%	12%	1%	3%
Cultural Celebrations ie. Local Indigenous fair	43%	36%	12%	4%	4%



## 2. Potential Amenities in Festival Plaza

	Very imp	Somewhat Imp	Indifferent	Not Imp	Not at all
Ensure outdoor amenities accommodate year-round use	79%	18%	1%	1%	0%
Sustainable design such as water re-use or solar panels	46%	36%	16%	3%	1%
Creative lighting, such as colourful LED lighting	37%	33%	24%	1%	4%
Indigenous representation	22%	24%	86%	12%	13%
Natural design elements, ie. water feature, native plants	37%	37%	19%	3%	3%
Edible fruit-bearing plants such as saskatoons	21%	31%	21%	16%	10%
Plenty of natural lighting - sun exposure	54%	33%	10%	3%	0%
Overhead structure for rain and snow protection	85%	13%	1%	0%	0%
Fire pits	18%	22%	30%	21%	9%

See the list below of the of the potential design elements to be considered for the project. Please rate how important each of these are.

