

February 17, 2023

City Council to discuss lease of public lands for public market

A request to renew the license for use of by the owner of Red Deer Public Market Council will decide if the City is willing to lease the Servus Arena and Pidherney Centre parking areas to the private owner at the Monday, February 21 City Council meeting.

Red Deer Public Market has operated for more than 50 years and is a beloved amenity in our community. The for-profit business operates from Victoria Day to Thanksgiving on Saturday mornings, at the Servus Arena and Pidherney Centre parking areas, which are City-owned lands, since 1996.

The market is considered an asset to downtown but its impact on the adjacent purpose-built facilities and uses continue to cause challenges at the site.

1. What is The City's role in the location of the Red Deer Public Market?

The City, as landowner, has given the Red Deer Public Market business a license to occupy the site since 2007. This agreement was not renewed in October 2021, based on Council direction. In December 2020, Council directed administration to explore other locations which led to multiple viable downtown locations being identified. For the past 26 months, the City has worked with the market owner on a change of location, but they have not reached an agreement. A temporary license was issued in 2022, and administration is seeking further direction from Council on the future of the City's lands.

2. What is the decision City Council is making at the February 21 meeting?

The question before Council is not whether The City supports a downtown market, but whether a license for this private business to continue operating on public lands, which The City owns and maintains.

3. What are the challenges with the current location of the market?

The main challenge is the inability for The City of Red Deer and Red Deer Curling Club to fully capitalize on revenue generating opportunities through event hosting and facility rentals without access to parking areas on Saturdays during market hours.

The operation of the market impacts the south parking lots of Servus Arena and Pidherney Centre from approximately 5 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. every Saturday during market season. There are 20 to 22 markets in a regular season.

4. What changed?

The City supported the operation of a public market in its current location in the 2010 Rotary Recreation Area Park and South Study Site, but much has changed through subsequent Council decisions which have fundamentally transformed the vision for the area. The Servus Arena was built as a premier multi-season facility with capacity to provide dry space uses for a variety of events and is connected to the redeveloped Pidherney Centre, purpose-built to support non-curling, year-round activities. In addition:

- the speed skating oval was closed and rebuilt at Setters Place at Great Chief Park, removing the pleasure skating loop envisioned in the plan
- removal of the entrance and promenade from the 10-year capital plan
- relocation of the proposed multi-use aquatic facility to the Michener North lands

- decision to close the Kinex Arena at the end of its lifespan and create a second ice space at the newly renovated G.H. Dawe Community Centre
- adoption of The City's [Major Event Strategy](#) in 2021, which supports four season use of City facilities
- There are new spaces in Red Deer designed for outdoor community gatherings that did not previously exist.

5. What are the financial implications to The City's budget if they do not allow the business to use public lands?

There would be limited negative impact to The City to not lease the lands where the market has previously been held. Opportunities for increased revenue may be generated at Servus Arena and Pidherney Centre if there were guaranteed parking spaces adjacent to the site on Saturdays during the summer.

On Saturdays when Servus Arena is not rented, leasing the parking area to the market owner provides reliable revenue to offset operating costs. However, on Saturdays when it could be rented, the market lease does not fully offset the potential revenue opportunities.

6. What is the level of demand for facility rentals at Servus Arena during the summer?

The City has not promoted Saturday morning dry space opportunities from May to June due to restricted parking access. Historically, Saturday morning bookings from May to July have been low, with increased demand August through October.

7. Is The City working with the business owner to identify other potential sites?

Yes, discussions between administration and the market owner have taken place over the past several years to identify a new location for the business – preferably in the downtown. Since the market started, new areas in the downtown have been developed and would support the weekly market.

8. Was the community consulted on the location of the market?

To assist in their decision, Council has been provided with targeted input from community stakeholders and site facility owners and event hosts, including Red Deer Curling Club, Red Deer Minor Hockey Commission, Red Deer Tennis Club, Parkvale Community Association, Red Deer Museum + Art Gallery, Golden Circle Senior Resource Centre, Red Deer Children's Festival, Norwegian Laft Hus, Baymont Inn & Suites, and Red Deer Chamber of Commerce.

9. What are the next steps?

Council will decide how to direct Administration at the Tuesday, February 21 regular council meeting. Administration will communicate Council's decision directly to the affected stakeholders.

If Council supports the recommendation of administration, the business owner may choose to apply for a Special Event Permit in one of the locations recommended by The City, or to an alternate location.

As the market is a privately owned, for-profit business, the owner will be responsible to communicate a change in location to their vendors and customers. However, City Administration is prepared to support the relocation in appropriate ways for smooth transition.