

Preliminary findings of update to SOEC Parking Study

(Penticton, BC – June 28, 2018) - The preliminary findings of an update to the SOEC Parking Study shared at the City's [open house](#) on June 25 are now available at shapeyourcitypentiction.ca. The update is being conducted to identify opportunities to better manage parking at the complex and gather data as part of a business case to determine the feasibility of a proposal to add a twin-surface arena on the northwest side of the site.

"The City has received feedback on the parking pressures at the complex from a number of different sources. Through the update to the original study, we can formally gather this feedback, address the concerns, and implement improvements in a coordinated manner," says Bregje Kozak, Recreation and Facilities Director.

As part of this phase of the update, the City conducted a survey between May 23 and June 13 to gather feedback from the community. Over 800 responses were received from [visitors](#) and 54 from [neighbouring residents](#). Parking [demand counts](#) were performed in June – one on a typical weekday (June 5) and the second on a Saturday of a busy weekend (June 9). Staff also met with representatives from the stakeholders of the site including the Penticton Curling Club, Spectra, the Penticton Trade & Convention Centre, the Community Centre, Dale Charles Physiotherapy, Travel Penticton, Wine Info Centre, the Okanagan Hockey Group, and Interior Health.

"The preliminary results from the parking demand counts, from the community survey and our workshops with tenants on the site not only confirmed our understanding of what the concerns are but they also offered new insights that will help identify solutions and alleviate the pressures," says Kozak. Some of the findings from the study include:

- The site is busier than the original estimate of 8 to 10 nights per year. Activity levels are closer to one busy weekend each month plus several nights with higher than normal activity.
- Special event weekends are the most challenging for parking for both visitors and residents. Event weekends are especially difficult for visitors who require accessible parking as well as for users of the community facilities. A lack of options for accessible transportation are increasing the demand for accessible parking.
- The first lots to fill are the Community Centre / Convention Centre and the Memorial Arena / Cascades Casino lots. Most of the parking lots on the south and west sides of the SOEC are largely empty on a typical weekday and tend to only fill during special events.
- All surface parking lots are at or near full capacity during busy weekends. Parking tends to overflow into residential areas on the east side of the complex more so than the west. Neighborhood residents also report inappropriate behaviour by event attendees in during some events.

- The primary access to the complex is on the east side along Hwy 97 which increases congestion in the roundabout and the neighbouring areas during special events in particular.
- Most of the survey participants are frequent visitors to the site taking advantage of the amenities a minimum of two to four times a week and for two to four hours each visit. Many participants can find parking on most days either a short walk (less than 5 minutes) or a medium walk (between 5 to 10 minutes) to their destination.
- Participants support many of the suggestions to better manage parking that are currently being explored such as improving signage and directions to drivers, removing the Visitor Centre trailers and developing the newly purchased lots into parking.
- Visitors to the site are willing to pay for parking during special events but not for regular use of amenities. There is support for a parkade but willingness to pay to use the parkade is limited.
- There is some willingness to use a shuttle service depending on the design of the service. The shuttle service provided for the Jehovah Witness convention, for example, was well received.
- There is reluctance to park on the west side especially during the evening due to the lack of pedestrian walkways and sufficient lighting.
- Some of the comments received in the survey expressed frustration with the decision to place the casino on the SOEC site and offered that the pressures could have been anticipated and prevented.

“There is a lot of information in the survey results and the parking counts,” says Kozak. “We will be completing remaining counts over the next few weeks and analysing the data with the goal of sharing the plan to better manage the available parking this fall.”

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Contact:

Bregje Kozak

Recreation and Facilities Director

250-490-2579

Bregje.kozak@penticton.ca