

# NORTH CARIBOO multi-centre

## Backgrounder

### Project overview

The goal is to replace an aging facility with contemporary buildings that take environmental, economical and social considerations into account.

A downtown location in the vicinity of the existing arenas has been deemed superior, with the preferred site featuring the arena on the existing library lot and the theatre encroaching slightly into LeBourdais Park.

The project would see significant expansion of the seating capacity of the current arena complex (from roughly 1,000 to 2,000), allowing special event opportunities that aren't possible in the existing facility. These events would be offered in a superior, climate-controlled environment. A state-of-the-art, 450-seat multi-use theatre is also included. A performing arts centre would enhance the local artistic community while helping attract out-of-town performers to the region.

By including the theatre in conjunction with the arena and shared assembly and meeting spaces, the Multi-Centre would serve as a conference centre for many types of small- and medium-sized events. This facility integration will maximize the economic benefits of each, while reducing construction and operating costs.

### Project rationale

The Cariboo Regional District and the City of Quesnel are working together to meet community needs. Comprehensive planning initiatives have identified the replacement of Arena 1 and construction of a performing arts centre as keys to the community's future.

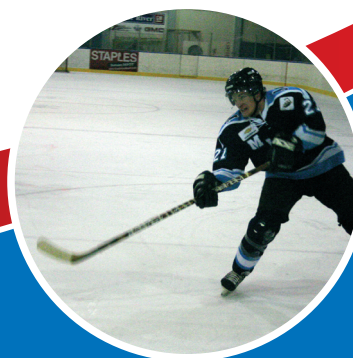
- Arenas and performing arts theatres are key social infrastructure facilities. Investment in them to retain and attract a skilled workforce and entrepreneurs is critical to a community's long-term viability. It is important to diversify the economy now and create an environment in which people want to live and invest.

- Would provide first-class sporting and cultural facilities for the community for decades to come.
- Approximately 40% of Quesnel's workforce is due to retire in the next 10 years. A cultural centre for all ages could help retain those retirees as well as attract others looking for affordable cost of living options.
- The arena must be replaced – it is fiscally wasteful to renovate it.
- Some activities at the proposed Multi-Centre will attract out-of-town visitors enhancing economic growth by hosting a wide range of entertainment, cultural and sporting events.
- The new arena, theatre and conference facilities could be strongly marketed in tandem with other local event facilities, such as the new indoor sports centre in West Quesnel, to maximize economic benefits.
- Risk scenarios for taxation impact were developed in the Business Plan. These were based on three scenarios for tax base reduction due to mill closures. The impact is lessened because the tax formula used for North Cariboo Recreation and Parks is not heavily dependent on industrial taxes.

### Project history

Quesnel has two arenas; one was built in the 1950s and is near the end of its useful life. The second, built attached to the first in the late 1980s, is in good condition. In 2001 a report studying the future of arena #1 laid out a number of options. NCJPC decided the best option was to keep it operating for five more years, during which time planning for a replacement would begin.

During 2004 and 2005, a separate planning initiative defined a future vision for Quesnel, entitled Quesnel 2020. The group worked over many months identifying a number of key initiatives. Among those was a replacement for the arena and the construction of a theatre.



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These projects were examined in 2005, with two reports, one by Schick Shiner & Associates that examined the possibilities for a performing arts centre, and a pre-feasibility study for the Multi-Centre by Cannon Design.

In September 2006, the NCJPC struck the Multi-Centre Task Force. The task force reviewed all the reports and defined a vision for the Multi-Centre, which included a 450-seat theatre, a 2,000-seat arena and assembly space.

Once the vision was generated, a comprehensive public consultation process was undertaken. During this process a survey was completed, gathering 446 responses. The results were used to hone the vision and determine the next steps.

A business plan for the proposed Multi-Centre was completed in July 2007. The report includes:

- Past, present and future demographic trends.
- Past, present and future demand for the three proposed components of the multi-centre.
- The economic impact on the community.
- Sources of capital funding for the multi-centre.
- Operational costs of the current arenas and those of the future multi-centre.
- Operational options for the multi-centre.
- Current taxation rates and projections for the future based on other assumptions
- The need for a third arena and consideration of options for its operation.
- Commentary on the pros and cons of a downtown location for the multi-centre, its economic impact, and proposals for an approach to its development that would maximize leverage of other business and community investments.

It is available on the Multi-Centre website at [www.city.quesnel.bc.ca/multi-centre](http://www.city.quesnel.bc.ca/multi-centre).

In the fall of 2007, Urban Systems completed a traffic and parking study, looking at two locations – the proposed downtown location and Alex Fraser Park. The downtown location features 2,300 private and public parking spots within a 400-metre radius, which could adequately serve the needs of the facilities in the area. The Alex Fraser Park site required

significant investment in new parking infrastructure that would obliterate a large portion of the Park's green space.

This report is also available on the Multi-Centre website.

In December 2007 a statistically valid survey of area residents was conducted. The survey is considered accurate within plus or minus 5.5%, 19 times out of 20. The results showed 51% support construction, with 28% undecided and 21% not in favour.

After these key reporting pieces were completed, the project's final scope was recommended to the NCJPC in May 2008. This was followed with a final location recommendation, made in June 2008. In July 2008 the Cariboo Regional District Board approved the first three readings of the bylaw, paving the way for the referendum on November 15, 2008.

In November 2008, North Cariboo residents voted in favour of borrowing up to \$15 million towards the total \$30 million budget for the project.

The Multi-Centre Design Advisory Committee is currently working on the preliminary design for the building. A contractor has been hired to assist with this process.

The committee will take the project to the point where a Request For Proposals for a Design-Build project can be issued. No work after that point can be done until all the project's funding is in place.

The CRD has submitted a grant application to the Building Canada infrastructure program in hopes of securing the remaining \$15 million.

This project remains a top priority for the City and CRD. Elected officials from both parties continue to actively lobby representatives from senior government in hopes of securing the funding that will allow the project to proceed.

#### For more information:

Website: [www.city.quesnel.bc.ca/multi-centre](http://www.city.quesnel.bc.ca/multi-centre)

E-mail: [multicentre@city.quesnel.bc.ca](mailto:multicentre@city.quesnel.bc.ca)

Telephone: Cariboo Regional District at 1.800.665.1636  
City of Quesnel at 250.992.2111