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**Date** December 4, 2025 **Report No.** 2025-579  
**To** Mayor Davis and the Members of City Council  
**From** Michael Bradley  
Chief Administrative Officer

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## 1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item   
Item For Consideration

## 2.0 Topic Design Approval for Sports and Entertainment Centre [Financial Impact: \$152 Million]

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## 3.0 Recommendation

- A. THAT Report 2025-579, entitled Design Approval for Sports and Entertainment Centre, BE RECEIVED; and
- B. THAT the designs for the Sports and Entertainment Centre, included in Appendices 1, 2, and 3 of this report, BE APPROVED, and
- C. THAT Staff BE DIRECTED to proceed with construction of the Sports and Entertainment Centre with a revised budget of \$152 million; and
- D. THAT the necessary By-law to authorize the submission of an application to Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corporation for partial financing of the project BE PRESENTED to City Council for adoption; and
- E. THAT Council WAIVE all internal planning and building related fees associated with this project.

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## 4.0 Executive Summary

In 2023, an Ontario Hockey League (OHL) team relocated to the Brantford Civic Centre (Civic Centre) from Hamilton to become the Brantford Bulldogs Hockey Club (Bulldogs). As part of this relocation, the City agreed to examine development of a minimum 5,000 seat Sports and Entertainment Centre (SEC). Over 2023 and 2024, the City conducted various analytical exercises and undertook public engagement initiatives to test the feasibility of developing an SEC, culminating in a decision in October of 2024 to move forward with the project. At that time, City staff received a number of directions including bringing a design for the SEC to Council in the 4th quarter of 2025.

The City, following further approvals to utilize the Progressive Design Build (PDB) process to procure the SEC, undertook a Request for Proposal process in accordance with the City's purchasing bylaw to select a firm to act as its PDB partner for the project. Design work on the project started in May of 2025 and has progressed rapidly through critical project milestones. Design work was informed through dialogue with key stakeholders including the Bulldogs. In September of 2025, public engagement on the SEC designs commences through digital and in-person formats.

The current plan for the SEC has the building situated prominently in the southeast quadrant of the existing Civic Centre site on Market Street, creating a civic plaza that frames the entry points to both the SEC and the Civic Centre. The building exterior incorporates a range of exterior materials to mix visual appeal and efficiency, including the use of metals, concrete, and glass to create an elegant palette of textures. The interior of the structure, with a net programmed square footage of 189,850 square foot, comprises 4 levels. The main level contains the event floor, Bulldogs team spaces, back of house space, visitor team space, green rooms, and abundant storage. The concourse level on the second floor will provide most facility users with seat access as well as access to a range of amenities. A suite level on the 3rd floor contains private suites, some additional premium seats, and areas for media and press. The 4th level contains mechanical systems and a catwalk to access an overhead rigging grid. The overall building design creates a premium spectator experience with abundant supporting infrastructure including washrooms and food and beverage services. Accessibility for persons with disabilities is integrated throughout the building. As well as OHL hockey, the building design will allow a range of other activities.

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Public engagement included a Let's Talk Brantford campaign and 3-in person public meetings. Feedback varied with concerns about the building's location, "box-like" exterior features, and parking being commonly cited. The building location was determined during the 2023-2024 process and is aimed at fueling prosperity in the broader downtown precinct. The current architectural renderings have evolved to create a more distinctive architectural character to the building. Based on prior analysis, parking in the area is adequate and in the coming months City staff will examine options to improve pedestrian movements throughout the area, release additional parking, and leverage Brantford Transit to bring people to the SEC.

Initial cost estimates made for the SEC were based on historic averages of projects constructed in Canada since the 1990's, with an estimated project cost of \$140 million being set as the initial project budget. Post COVID-19 construction has seen dramatic increases in construction costs, and more recently the City of Sudbury commenced a 5,800 seat sports and entertainment facility in Sudbury with an overall project budget, based on an architectural assessment, of \$200 million. The SEC project, currently designed with 5,235 seats, is projected to cost \$152 million. This includes a base construction budget of \$145 million which includes a contingency amount of \$5 million. The budget estimate also includes additional amounts related to the civic plaza, contaminated fill removal, site servicing, and the installation of a Light-emitting Diode ribbon in the event bowl. These additional amounts were not contemplated in preliminary estimates or the initial project scope and add just under \$7 million to the overall project budget resulting in the total \$152 million cost. This project cost is the outcome of a collaborative design and costing process that meets the needs identified by stakeholders for this facility.

A financing plan for the SEC project has been updated. The original financing plan for the SEC included aggressive assumptions on future tax revenues that would accrue within the downtown area that would be used to fund the financing costs for the project. Given the status of development activities within the downtown area, a more gradual flow of future tax revenues has been projected. The SEC financing plan projects that the \$152 million project cost would be paid for by raising a \$140 million municipal debenture with the balance paid from funds held in the SEC reserve. The SEC reserve would be funded from a number of funding sources including the proceeds of the sale of City lands, reallocated casino revenues, fundraising, sponsorships, operator contributions, Municipal Accommodation Tax revenues, and the net incremental tax increases resulting from new development within the downtown area. A detailed financial plan shows the inflows into the SEC reserve being adequate to pay for the

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project cost and to service the annual repayment of the municipal debenture for the entire financing life of the project. Thus, the SEC would not require any contribution from existing taxpayers.

If approved, the SEC will follow an aggressive construction schedule with the project commencing in early 2026 and reaching completion in early 2028. Procurement of the project's components would be the responsibility of the project's contractor and would prioritize Canadian sourced equipment wherever possible. The City will utilize a 3rd party to validate the construction process. If the project is approved to proceed, a major fundraising campaign will be initiated.

The ambitious SEC designs represent a mix of function and aesthetics aimed at creating a unique and memorable user experience for decades to come. The SEC will inject new vibrancy and prosperity into the downtown. The design has followed a robust and collaborative process aimed at creating a predictable cost and is supported by a sustainable financial plan. Aligned with the City's 2050 vision, the SEC is a transformational project that will have a generational impact on the City's future.

## 5.0 Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this report is to validate and approve the final design for the SEC, following approval for the project to proceed in October of 2024 as a result of Report 2024-599, where the following recommendation was approved:

- A. THAT Report 2024-599 titled Approval to Proceed with the Development of a Sport and Entertainment Centre BE RECEIVED; and*
- B. THAT notwithstanding the limits established in Finance Policy 015 – Debt Management Policy, a budget of \$140 Million BE APPROVED for the Sport and Entertainment Centre to be funded from the issuance of debentures; and*
- C. THAT the necessary financing by-law BE PRESENTED to City Council for ADOPTION; and*
- D. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to proceed with competitive procurement processes for the following services:*
  - a. Prime Consultant for the design of a new Sports and Entertainment Centre,*

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*b. Consultant to undertake a corporate sponsorship campaign; and*

*E. THAT the CAO or acting delegate, City Treasurer, and the Manager of Purchasing BE AUTHORIZED to award the contract and sign the necessary agreements with the successful consultants identified in Clause D; and*

*F. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to return to Council with the detailed design prior to proceeding with a competitive bid process for the construction of the Centre; and*

*G. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to report back to Council by Q4 2024 with options to create a Downtown Entertainment area; and*

*H. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to negotiate naming rights for the Sport and Entertainment Centre; and*

*I. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to establish an SEC Reserve to hold any funds received from sale of naming rights, proceeds from land dispositions, operator capital contributions, and from a corporate sponsorship campaign; and*

*J. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to use the following sources of revenue to service debt payments:*

*a. City portion of the Municipal Accommodation Tax,*

*b. Redirection of Casino funds previously earmarked for a mid-size performance theatre space,*

*c. Incremental property taxes from developments in the entertainment area,*

*d. Use of funds from the SEC Reserve established in Recommendation I,*

*e. Use of proceeds from the disposition of City owned assets in the northern boundary; and*

*K. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to enter into lease discussions with the Brantford Bulldogs.*

In February of 2025, an update report was presented to Council where the following resolution was approved to allow the SEC project to utilize the

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Progressive Design Build (PDB) process for both the design and eventual construction of the project:

*A. THAT Report 2025-111 – Sports and Entertainment Centre Update be RECEIVED; and*

*B. THAT staff BE AUTHORIZED to proceed with the recommended Progressive Design-Build procurement model as presented in Section 9 of this report and this process BE AUTHORIZED to proceed in accordance with section 2.05(a) of Corporate Policy-012 - Purchasing Policy; and*

*C. THAT the authority provided to staff in Clause B above REPLACE the authority provided on October 29, 2024, for procurement of a Prime Consultant for design of the Sports and Entertainment Centre prior to a competitive bid process for its construction.*

This report will directly respond to recommendation C (financing bylaw) and F (detailed design) from Report 2024-599. In addition, this report will review current cost projections for the SEC, outline the construction plan for the project if Council approves the presented designs, update the SEC's financing plan, review the public consultation results regarding the proposed design for the SEC, and also provide status updates on other matters related to this project including a sponsorship and fundraising campaign.

## 6.0 Background

### 6.1 The SEC Process to Date

The SEC project has followed a robust process of analysis, review, and decisions which have led to the presentation of final designs for the project. A summary of the process is outlined below:

- In February of 2023, Council approved a term sheet between the City and the Bulldogs which outlined the principles of the Bulldogs' relocation to the Civic Centre. This term sheet also indicated that the City would consider the development of a new facility capable of holding, at minimum, 5000 spectators.
- In March of 2023, Council approved a recommendation directing that a plan to develop an SEC be completed by the end of the year.

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- In September of 2023, Council received an initial Business Case Assessment completed by KKR Advisors Ltd. (KKR) which, among other details, outlined the projected costs, benefits, estimated scale, and potential locations for the proposed facility.
  - In November of 2023, Council received and approved a further assessment from KKR which identified 79 Market Street South, the site of the Civic Centre, as the preferred site for the SEC.
  - In January of 2024, following a public outreach and communications campaign, Council endorsed the SEC as a Priority Project and initiated a process to seek potential business partners to develop the project.
  - Additional update reports were presented to Council in March and June of 2024 regarding the SEC project.
  - In September of 2024, Council received a report on the outcome of the process to seek potential business partners and directed that the project move forward as a municipal build funded through tax increment financing and through the sale of identified City-owned properties.
  - In October of 2024, Council authorized the SEC project to proceed through Report 2024-599 (outlined above), including approving a \$140 million budget for the project.
  - In January of 2025 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Bulldogs which outlined a commitment for the Bulldogs to serve as the SEC's anchor tenant for an initial 15-year term plus optional extension terms.
  - In February of 2025, Council authorized an amendment to the procurement process for the SEC to approve the use of the PDB process to procure both design consultants and a construction partner for the SEC project.
  - On March 4, 2025, the City issued a comprehensive Request for Proposals (RFP) for a contractor firm to serve as the PDB partner to design and potentially build the SEC. The City was supported in this process by Colliers Project Leaders (Colliers), a firm who specializes in supporting the development and delivery of large projects. This RFP closed on April 14, 2025, having received 7 detailed RFP submissions.
  - Between April 15 and April 24, 2025, under the facilitation of the City's Director of Facilities and Procurement, the review team conducted an

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evaluation of mandatory submission requirements and evaluated the technical components of all proposals received. The review team consisted of the City's CAO, the City's Director of Engineering Services, and three project specialists from Colliers, including two licensed architects and one licensed landscape architect.

- In accordance with the RFP evaluation criteria, interviews were held on May 1, 2025, with four shortlisted firms that met the technical evaluation benchmark. Consensus scoring for the interview stage was finalized on May 2, 2025. Proponents that maintained or exceeded the benchmark following the interviews advanced to the financial evaluation stage, where pricing submissions were opened and scored. These pricing scores were added to the technical and interview scores to determine the highest-ranked proponent.
- Upon completion of the evaluation process, Graham Construction and Engineering LP ("Graham Construction") was identified as the selected proponent in full compliance with the RFP requirements and a Letter of Intent issued on May 7, 2025. The entire process was overseen by the City's Director of Facilities and Procurement to ensure objectivity, legal defensibility, and adherence to the procurement standards outlined in the RFP document, the City's Purchasing Bylaw, and applicable provincial and federal regulations related to public procurement.
- On May 14, 2025, the City had its initial project "kick off" meeting with the design team led by Stantec, a Canadian multi-discipline consulting firm who is the architectural partner in Graham Construction's broader team.
- On May 21, 2025, the City's project team and the design team held the first of a series of "Big Room" design sessions which brought the broader project team together to commence the aggressive design schedule for the SEC. A project plan was developed that aimed to have a completed and achievable design for presentation to Council by the end of 2025.
- On June 3, 2025, the first of several meetings between the design team, the City, and the Bulldogs took place to start to build an understanding of the Bulldogs program needs.
- On June 25, 2025, the first of several meetings between the design team, the City, and Oak View Group (OVG) took place. OVG operates a large number of sports and entertainment venues and has provided consulting support to inform the SEC design from a non-hockey program perspective.

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- On June 25, 2025, the design team completed an initial design concept for the SEC.
  - On August 27, 2025, the design team completed a Schematic Design package for the SEC.
  - On September 17, 2025, a Let's Talk Brantford campaign was initiated containing design concepts for the SEC, providing an opportunity for residents to review and provide feedback on the proposed SEC designs.
  - Open houses to provide residents with the opportunity to engage directly with members of the design team and City staff were held as follows:
    - October 1, 2025 at the Wayne Gretzky Sports Centre;
    - October 8, 2025 at the Walter Gretzky Golf Course; and
    - October 16, 2025 at the Civic Centre.
  - On October 23, 2025 staff brought Design Update Report 2025-537 to the Brantford Accessibility Advisory Committee containing the proposed designs for the SEC. Feedback was collected and shared with the design team to inform the evolving designs.
  - On November 5, 2025, the design team completed a Design Development Package, which was informed by the feedback received through the public engagement and stakeholder consultations outlined above.

## **6.2 KKR Advisors Feasibility and Business Case Assessment**

A critical component that assisted Council in making decisions around the SEC was KKR's *Proposed Sports and Entertainment Centre Feasibility and Business Case Assessment*, dated August 31, 2023. This report was an extensive examination of the business and economic opportunities around a potential mid-sized sports and entertainment venue. While it is not the intent of this report to review this report in detail, its key conclusions were as follows:

- The average attendance for Ontario Hockey League (OHL) venues is 75% of total seating capacity;
- The estimated market penetration (which is the percentage of an area's population that would attend a regular season OHL game) in Brantford would be 3,800 to 4,200 attendees;

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- The recommended seating capacity for Brantford’s SEC would be 5,000 to 5,300 seats, with a proposed minimum target of 5,150 seats;
  - The projected cost of this building, using information from previous builds, would be in the range of \$115 million to \$140 million based on a per-seat cost of \$22,500 to \$27,500;
  - The cost assumptions exclude land costs, extraordinary site costs, infrastructure improvements, and parking;
  - This projected building cost was considered to not be an “extravagant building, nor one which includes extraordinary design features and elements”;
  - The operating pro-forma for the building identified annual operating revenues of \$3.5 million, comprised of a range of activities including OHL games, concerts, family entertainment, trade shows, other sports events, along with ancillary revenues from food and beverage sales, advertising, sponsorships, and facility rentals;
  - The operating pro-forma for the building identified annual operating expenditures of \$4.1 million, based on assumptions for staffing, utilities, maintenance, insurance, administration, and management fees;
  - The SEC would be projected to generate a range of short-term and longer-term economic benefits to the City and the broader area, including:
    - During construction, \$261 million directly, \$145 million in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) impact, 1,260 full time equivalent jobs, \$90 million in employment income, and \$24.9 million in federal and provincial tax revenues
    - Annually from operations, \$13.2 million in spending, \$7.6 million in GDP impact, 95 full-time equivalent jobs, \$6 million in employment income, and \$2.5 million in federal and provincial tax revenues
    - On a 10-year cumulative operating impact, \$145 million in spending, \$83.1 million in GDP impact, 1,030 full-time equivalent employees, \$67.8 million in employment income, and \$26.1 million in federal and provincial tax revenue.

## 7.0 Corporate Policy Context

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The development of the SEC aligns with the Brantford 2050 Vision, specifically *Focus Area: Tourism, Sport, and Culture - “Be a premier destination for sports, tournaments, entertainment, and culture”*.

The development of the SEC aligns with the following Council Priorities:

- Focus on productive and collaborative partnerships
- Commit to and implement the downtown revitalization plan and vision

The development of the SEC aligns with the following corporate plans and strategies:

- Economic Development Strategy (2016)
- Municipal Sport Tourism Strategy (2019)
- The Official Plan - Envisioning Our City: 2051
- The City of Brantford Urban Design Manual
- Downtown Brantford Priority Plan
- Downtown Community Improvement Plans
- Brownfield Tax Incentive Program (BFTIP)
- Downtown Property Tax Increment-Based Grant Program

## 8.0 Input From Other Sources

The design process for the SEC involved staff from the Community Development Commission, the Public Works Commission, the Corporate Services Commission, and the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, as well from external parties including the Bulldogs, OVG, Graham Construction and its associated team, Colliers, and KKR.

## 9.0 Analysis

### 9.1 SEC Design

As noted, the primary intent of this report is to validate and approve the final designs for the SEC following an aggressive design process. Below, the

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following design components are reviewed: Site Design; Exterior Building Design; Interior Layout; and Interior Amenities.

### **9.1.1 Site Design**

Early concepts from the SEC business case indicated the building would be situated immediately adjacent and to the south of the existing Civic Centre. However, more detailed site analysis indicated that to accommodate the projected program needs for the SEC there was inadequate space between the existing Civic Centre and the adjacent flood control dike to accommodate the building. For this reason, the SEC is positioned on the southeast quadrant of the project site with prominent frontage along Market Street. The project creates a proposed civic plaza on the northeast corner of the lot establishing a shared outdoor amenity that provides frontage for both the new building and the existing Civic Centre. The project will be visible from the downtown area to the North, as well as from the South across the Earl Haig Family Fun Park.

The design aims to make the best possible use of the project site by: providing appropriate space for surface parking and vehicular circulation; delineating clear and accessible service, loading, and team functions; defining visible and convenient building access and entry points that are fully accessible for individuals of all abilities; and, providing a sizable outdoor amenity space capable of hosting a variety of fan events and civic activities. The design also considers how the Civic Centre will continue to function during construction activities while also minimizing any temporary or permanent alterations to the existing building. The site plan for the SEC is included in Appendix 1 to this report, noting that at the time of this report, the civic plaza design is still preliminary and subject to further design work.

### **9.1.2 Exterior Building Design**

The exterior building design represents a 4 level above grade structure. The design incorporates a refined and elegant material palette that combines insulated metal panel (IMP), ribbed insulated concrete, and silicone jointed curtain wall glazing to craft a high-performance exterior envelope that can easily achieve energy performance targets while remaining mindful of cost and constructability.

IMP offers a large span, lightweight panelized system with superior air and water tightness and excellent thermal performance. IMP is primarily deployed across the upper floors of the building including the concourse, suites, and catwalk levels where the lightweight materials can be easily lifted and installed and the

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light gauge outer surface cannot be easily vandalized or damaged. The system accommodates a variety of textures, surface profiles, and finishes that can be used in combination to create a dynamic exterior elevation while providing a finished interior surface suitable for high-traffic arena buildings.

Insulated concrete panels provide an aesthetically pleasing, durable, long-lasting exterior material that is most suitable for ground floor applications where abuse resistant materials are desirable. As a result, concrete panels are the system of choice for much of the street level envelope including the Bulldogs team spaces, the lower Market Street façade, and the service and loading areas on the building's West elevation. The system offers opportunities for customizable graphics to be embedded in the panels during manufacture which can become an integrated part of the building signage and wayfinding strategy.

Curtain wall glazing provides essential natural daylight and transparency to the building envelope, providing arena-goers with a view to the outdoors, and the public with an impression of the activity animating the building. As insulated glazing is more costly than other materials, it has been used judiciously by localizing large expanses of openings to areas that will have the most impact: the main entry, lobby and atrium that look out across the north plaza; the lounge; the portion of the concourse above Market Street; and at certain areas within the suite level.

Wood-look phenolic panel is used as an accent material to provide warmth and colour and to highlight major design elements like primary points of entry and access. This feature also celebrates the inherent connection to the nearby natural spaces along the Grand River. Referencing wood on the project is an opportunity to nod to indigenous building traditions, cultural structures, and handcrafted objects through the building's façade design and to craft a design vocabulary that speaks to the layered history of the area.

Renderings of the exterior design of the SEC are included as Appendix 2 to this report.

### **9.1.3 Interior Layout**

The interior structure is comprised of 189,850 net programmed square feet, which can be categorized as follows:

- Spectator space, including seating capacity for 5,235 spectators and maximum floor seating capacity of approximately 1,700 depending on the stage configuration.

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- Food service and retail space, comprised of concessions, marketplaces, Bulldogs retail space, central kitchen facilities and serving pantries.
  - Circulation space, including main and secondary lobbies, the concourse, corridors, access tunnels, stairways and elevators. There are 3 passenger elevators and 1 service elevator in the building, as well as 2 escalators which can move patrons between the event and concourse level.
  - Event space, which includes the primary 85 foot by 200 foot ice sheet as well as space for performers, sport officials, and performance support staff.
  - Team facilities, which includes home team space, visitor team space, and auxiliary locker and change room spaces.
  - Administration space, including spaces for ticketing, operator staff, food service administration, and hockey operations staff.
  - Media space including a press suite, media technology stations, and camera locations.
  - Building services and operations space, including mechanical plant, storage, janitorial, and security space.

There are 4 levels in the facility, consisting of an Event Level, Concourse Level, Suite Level and Mechanical Level. A design summary of the 3 levels that are accessible to the public is outlined below.

#### **9.1.3.1 Event Level**

The Event Level serves as both General Admission (GA) and premium/suite holder entry points, including direct access for operations and staff. The primary entry for GA patrons is located on the north side of the building, directly from the adjacent civic plaza to the north. A grand stair and (2) escalators provide vertical access from the Event Level to the Main Concourse Level. An elevator is also readily accessible nearby. The Event Level will accommodate direct access to the arena floor for non-ice related events, as well as provide access to the ice from home team locker facilities, auxiliary lockers, officials locker areas, and back of house support areas. A central kitchen and commissary, central loading dock, ice plant, ice maintenance equipment room, and other support spaces round out a majority of the programmed space at this level.

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### **9.1.3.2 Concourse Level**

The Concourse Level will be served primarily from the grand stair and escalators from the north lobby, allowing all patrons 360-degree access into the seating bowl. An elevator is also readily accessible nearby. This uninterrupted concourse provides a continuous circle of amenities. Access to both premium and GA seating occurs from the concourse. A lounge with dedicated seating and food service is located on the concourse with additional patron amenities, team store and restrooms evenly distributed. The majority of the bowl is open to the concourse allowing patrons visible sightlines down to the event floor. Blackout curtains and lighting controls will be installed.

### **9.1.3.3 Suite Level**

The highest publicly accessed level in the building is the Suite Level, which is a horseshoe configuration, currently consisting of 16 suites, averaging approximately 300 square feet in size each. The Suite Level is serviced by 3 elevators, 2 of which are located directly off of the main lobby at the northeast corner of the building, and one elevator in the southwest corner, directly adjacent to the Bulldogs' team surface parking area. The Suite Level also contains media, writing press, broadcast, and sound/light programmed areas which are primarily located on the north side of the building.

## **9.1.4 Interior Amenities**

### **9.1.4.1 Spectator Experience**

The facility design layout consists of a 360-degree configuration for center stage and hockey events with a 270-degree end stage configuration with a range of diversified seating products.

Permanent seating will be comfortable, individual, self-tilting bottoms with arms. Each seat will be provided with a cup holder. The majority of seats will have a minimum width of 20" with larger width seats used to fill out rows between aisles. All seats within the bowl will have a minimum tread depth of 34 inches. The seating bowl will contain 8 rows of retractable platforms with folding telescopic chair seating that will be arranged on the west side of the bowl, with another movable telescopic unit to infill the southeast corner. This telescopic seating will retract for end-stage configured events.

The arena bowl will feature unobstructed, column-free sightlines from every seat. Views of the event will remain clear and uninterrupted by structural elements, mechanical systems, ductwork, spotlight or camera platforms, scoreboards, signage, or speaker arrays.

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To effectively reduce reverberation time and enhance sound clarity, the arena contain soundproofing systems. Acoustic wall panels will also be installed. Mechanical and electrical equipment will be designed to minimize background noise. A high-quality sound reinforcement system will be implemented to ensure clear and accurate amplification of both speech and music across a wide variety of events.

#### **9.1.4.2 Food Service**

The current designs for the SEC include food service concepts which are continuing to be refined through discussions with stakeholders. These concepts will include a combination of grab and go, bars, marketplaces, traditional walk-up concessions, and portable carts. All locations have been equally distributed throughout the concourse and premium spaces and are designed to efficiently move patrons in and out to reduce queuing and provide a better fan experience. An allowance for menu TV monitors will be provided at each location. Condiment stands and waste bins will be placed separately from concession lines to avoid crowding.

#### **9.1.4.3 Restrooms**

The SEC design includes approximately 5,600 square feet of public restrooms containing 137 individual public fixtures. All restrooms will be accessible to persons with disabilities. Universal/family/gender-neutral restrooms will be provided at all levels and will include infant-changing tables and barrier-free design. Additionally, an adult change room will be provided.

#### **9.1.4.4 Accommodation for Persons with Disabilities**

The building will be designed in full compliance with Canadian Accessibility Guidelines, local regulations, and all applicable local codes to ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Accessibility is integrated throughout the design and construction process, with elevator access connecting all floor levels and automatic motorized doors at public entrances. Access paths for wheelchair users meet province and local standards, providing safe and convenient routes to and from the venue.

Wheelchair seating will be available on all 3 levels of the facility, distributed across various price ranges and positioned to offer clear sightlines over standing spectators or those seated in front. A sensory room on the Main Concourse Level will offer a calming space for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, featuring high acoustic walls and adjustable lighting.

As noted, accessible/universal restrooms will be provided throughout the facility, and all public amenities, including ticket counters, guest services, drinking

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fountains, food service, portable carts, buffets, and bars, will be designed for comfortable wheelchair access. The arena will also include special audio systems and offer assistive listening devices to support guests with hearing impairments.

#### **9.1.4.5 Other Amenities**

Other spectator amenities in the facility include: a first aid room, which will be situated on the concourse level; recessed drinking fountains, which will be placed evenly throughout the facility; and a nursing/mother's room which will be located on the concourse level.

#### **9.1.4.6 User Group Accommodations**

A range of amenities are included in the SEC design to support user groups, including:

- Auxiliary lockers are present to support 4-team tournament style events. One pair of lockers is divisible to accommodate a larger visiting OHL team for league games. Separated team storage is provided adjacent to the auxiliary locker room domain.
- 4 officials rooms, which will also double as artist suites for non-hockey events, are located adjacent to the event floor.
- The Bulldogs team space is located at the east side of the event Level and includes private and dedicated entry and circulation pathways with direct ice access. This space will include a team members space, weight and training rooms, equipment storage, coaches offices, medical and wellness areas, and locker room. The Bulldogs will be responsible for fitting this space out.
- A private and secure entry from the loading area to four dressing rooms will be provided for performers and artists during concerts and events. This space can also be used by officials during hockey events.
- A flexible Green Room will support pre- and post-event activities. During hockey events and tournaments, these spaces can function as additional space for coaches and officials.

#### **9.1.4.7 Event Accommodations**

The stage, measuring 60 feet by 30 feet, with the potential for 2 additional 12 foot wings, will be positioned at the flat end of the west end of the bowl and feature an architectural backdrop. The overhead truss structure will support a

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full rigging grid with catwalk access for lighting and follow spotlights. The arena will also be able to accommodate a center stage setup for 360-degree event layouts.

A rigging grid will be installed with the capacity to support both end-stage and center-stage configurations, along with rigging capability across the entire event floor. The catwalk platform will be designed to provide access to the rigging grid, sports lighting, smoke exhaust fans, and designated areas for performance spotlights. Show electrical power will have capacity to accommodate the most stringent event power requirements.

A dedicated press area will be situated on suite level to support press overflow, radio, broadcast, coaches and audio-visual teams. It will be set apart from general seating and feature a continuous writing counter, with a clear view of the bowl.

The facility has a drive-in event loading door measuring approximately 15 feet high by 14 feet wide, which will allow truck access onto the event floor to allow efficient and rapid event setup. The design also includes 2 additional truck loading bays.

The event level will include approximately 5,600 square feet of total storage space. This includes a smaller storage space located on the north side and a larger storage space located opposite to the stage end. Each storage room will feature large overhead coiling doors to accommodate the movement and storage of oversized items.

#### **9.1.4.8 Interior Design Summary**

The interior designs that have been outlined above are outlined in detail as Appendix 3 includes 2-dimensional floorplans showing the Event Level, Concourse Level, Suite Level, and Mechanical Level.

#### **9.1.5 Summary of SEC Design**

The proposed design of the SEC reveals an architecturally appropriate facility with a mix of aesthetic balance, functionality, value, and long-term sustainability. The design, in the opinion of the design team, fits well into the local architectural landscape. It achieves all of the program goals identified for the facility from the prior robust public and stakeholder consultation. Accordingly, staff are seeking approval of the SEC designs outlined above and attached as appendices to this report.

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## **9.2 Results of Public Consultation**

### **9.2.1 Public Engagement Overview**

Public engagement for the Sports and Entertainment Centre project has been extensive and multi-phased, spanning from late 2023 through 2025. The most recent engagement phase, running from September 17 to October 24, 2025, focused on initial venue design concepts and gathered community input through the Let's Talk Brantford platform, social media, and three in-person open houses held on October 1, 8, and 16.

1,927 people visited the Let's Talk Brantford project page, while 461 participants completed a survey. Quantitatively, results indicate general support for the project's intent with mixed opinions regarding its proposed location, parking availability, and exterior architectural design. The three in-person open houses attracted a combined attendance of 180 residents. Generally, the attendees at these sessions expressed support or enthusiasm for the project, offering suggestions for exterior design improvements and reiterating interest in ensuring that parking and fiscal transparency remain key priorities.

A more fulsome summary of the recent public engagement process for the SEC designs is included in Appendix 4 to this report.

### **9.2.2 Response to Public Engagement**

#### **9.2.2.1 Location**

Feedback from the public consultation process questioned the proposed location for the SEC, citing parking and traffic constraints at the proposed site and indicating that a larger greenfield site would address these issues. The KKR business case referenced earlier included a detailed site assessment process which selected the Civic Centre site as the optimum location for the SEC. The information presented by KKR acknowledged the trade-off between a greenfield site, which would offer functional convenience, versus a downtown / urban core site, which would significantly enhance economic development in the City's core and stimulate development that could assist with financing the SEC.

#### **9.2.2.2 Architectural Design**

Feedback from the public engagement process suggested that the exterior design appeared too "boxy" and could better reflect the intent of the space while conveying a stronger civic presence. Accordingly, the current exterior plans for the facility have incorporated design attributes that reduce the box-like character of the building and introduces a more distinctive architectural expression

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appropriate for a major civic building. This design refinement also strengthens the relationship between the building and the main entry plaza, enhancing the visual identity and pedestrian experience along Market Street through a more dynamic and cohesive geometry.

### **9.2.2.3 Parking**

In June of 2024, as part of KKR Advisors Ltd. analysis of the SEC, a parking assessment was undertaken by BA Group. This assessment summarized parking needs for the SEC as follows:

- Parking for 1,375 vehicles is projected for hockey events; and
- Parking for 1,560 vehicles is projected for larger capacity events.

The parking available in the immediate vicinity of the SEC following completion of the project would be 1,647 spaces including on the SEC/Civic Centre site itself, at Earl Haig Family Fund Park, at the Icomm Drive Parkade, and at the Brantford Farmer's Market. This would include recovery of some parking spots currently under lease to the Casino which are currently underutilized by the Casino.

As outlined above, upon completion of the SEC there would be adequate parking in the immediate vicinity of the project for the SEC's projected parking needs. Notwithstanding this, there are in addition another 595 public parking spots within an estimated 15-minute walk to the SEC site in the broader downtown precinct. It is therefore the opinion of both the design team and City staff that the SEC project site has more than adequate parking for its needs.

Some discussions during public consultations pertained to parking during the construction phase for existing Bulldogs games in the Civic Centre. It is acknowledged that, as the project moves forward, constraints on existing parking at the Civic Centre will occur. If the project is approved to move forward based on the recommendations of this report, staff will undertake the following steps:

- Review pedestrian improvements at the Market Street / Icomm Drive intersection to create better pedestrian movements between the Civic Centre site and the Icomm Drive Parkade and Brantford Farmer's Market parking areas;

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- Explore opportunities to recover some of the City-owned parking currently leased to the Casino, noting that staff have already initiated this discussion with the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission; and,
  - Explore opportunities to enhance the use of Brantford Transit for patrons of the Bulldogs.

### **9.2.3 Status of Project Cost**

As outlined above, the KKR business case for the SEC outlined a projected cost of \$115 million to \$140 million or \$22,500 to \$27,500 per seat. This cost projection was based on analyzing the completed costs for 32 sports and entertainment venues constructed in Canada since 1990 and building an average per-seat cost assumption that was used to inform the SEC cost projections.

Staff respect the logic outlined in the KKR report but note that, normally, capital budget estimates are generally made using current and/or recent projects which represent current building trends and costs. As Council is aware, construction costs have increased significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic and various sources suggest the cost of building construction has increased by between 35% and 55% since 2021. Only 1 project in the 32 projects reviewed in the KKR report was completed in the post-pandemic era. Staff note that this project, the Centre Slush Puppie in Gatineau, contains 4,080 seats and was completed at a 2021 cost of \$103 million or \$25,250 per seat. If this amount is inflated by the annual percent-increase of the Canadian construction price index, it results in a 2025 cost of \$125.8 million or \$30,800 per seat.

In 2024, the City of Sudbury announced a 5,800 seat sports and entertainment facility in its south downtown core. An April 16, 2024 City of Sudbury staff report provided background context to the project that included an architect's estimate for a new build of \$187 million. This would translate into a per-seat cost of \$32,241 per seat. The projected cost outlined in the City of Sudbury staff report did not include costs for site servicing, parking, or demolition of the existing arena and, therefore, an overall budget of \$200 million was recommended.

Following the retention of Graham Construction as the PDB partner for the SEC, staff worked with the Graham team to develop a control budget for the project that would be updated in real-time as the design of the project proceeded. The control budget identified areas of the project that would be in the project's budget scope, including:

- All architectural, mechanical, electrical, and civil components for the building and the building site;
- All labour required to erect and complete the building;
- All consultant costs related to design, development, and completion of the building;
- The design builder’s fee to oversee the entire project;

The PDB process has design architects working collaboratively with trade partners to ensure that the project’s components have detailed costing as the project’s design evolves. This differs from the more traditional design-bid-build process where design has significantly less cost context and often results in cost overruns, change orders, and/or scope reductions after the project commences.

Table 1, outlined below, shows the current cost estimate for the SEC. As indicated, the project’s total projected cost is currently \$152 million.

*Table 1- SEC Project Cost Estimate*

<b>Base Construction</b>	
Design and Consulting	
Design Phase	7,000,000
Development Phase	5,000,000
Design Builder Fee	2,903,000
Construction	108,957,000
General Construction Conditions	13,120,000
Insurance	2,661,000
Bonding	680,000
Contingency	5,000,000
<b>Total Base Construction</b>	<b>145,321,000</b>
<b>Out-of-Scope Items</b>	
Site Services	1,150,000
Landscaping and Parking	3,326,000
Site / Contamination Remediation	1,241,000
LED Ribbon	1,100,000
<b>Total Out-of-Scope Items</b>	<b>6,817,000</b>
<b>Total Project Estimate</b>	<b>152,138,000</b>
<b>Cost per Seat</b>	<b>29,062</b>

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It is acknowledged that the total project cost estimate is higher than the approved project budget. Construction of the base project is estimated at \$145 million which includes a \$5 million contingency allowance. Items which were not considered in the initial project scope and consistent with the KKR cost analysis, result in a further \$6.8 million in costs. The per-seat cost for the total projected build is \$29,062, which is below the estimated 2025 per-seat cost for the completed 4080 seat Centre Slush Puppie and the cost estimates for the 5,800 seat facility planned in Sudbury.

As noted, certain project costs were not contemplated in preliminary designs or the initial project scope definition. Specifically:

- As outlined in the site plan presented as Appendix 1 and as depicted in the exterior renderings in Appendix 2, a landscaped civic plaza on the northeast quadrant of the project site is presented. Initial design concepts sited the SEC immediately south of the Civic Centre and included only limited landscaping and parking improvements. As design work on the SEC progressed, the limited space between the flood-control dike and the Civic Centre resulted in the building moving towards the south-east quadrant of the site and created an obvious opportunity to create the civic plaza to frame both the SEC entry and the Civic Centre entry. The costs for this attribute, as well as parking improvements to the site, are estimated at \$3.3 million as indicated in Table 1 above. The final design for the civic plaza is pending and is intended to be presented to Council at a future time and has the opportunity to include Indigenous cultural acknowledgements.
- External site services were not included in the KKR cost estimates nor in the preliminary scope of the project. These costs are estimated at \$1.1 million, driven mostly by upgrades to the local stormwater system.
- The project site was the location of former heavy industrial uses and contains demolition remains from former buildings as well as contaminated materials from these industrial uses. Removal and remediation of fill that will need to be removed for construction of the SEC is currently estimated to cost \$1.2 million.
- Through discussion with stakeholders including the Bulldogs, OVG, and residents, a desire for an Light-Emitting Diode (LED) ribbon surrounding the seating bowl has been strongly vocalized and has been added to the project at an estimated cost of \$1.1 million.

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Notwithstanding the above information on current estimated costs versus initial cost estimates, the projected cost of the SEC is founded on a collaborative design process where City representatives, architects, designers, trade partners, and cost consultants have worked together to design a project that reflects the program needs identified by stakeholders. The current designs for the SEC are projected to cost more than initial estimates but are still comparable to more recent completed and anticipated projects.

### **9.3 Capital Financing Plan for the Sports and Entertainment Centre**

Report 2024-599 included a capital financing plan for the SEC based on several cost, financing, and revenue assumptions. A review of the initial financing plan, as well as an updated financing plan, is outlined below.

#### **9.3.1 Initial Financing Plan for the Sports and Entertainment Centre**

The initial financing plan projected that the SEC would be funded by raising \$140 million from the issuance of a debenture, and that the annual \$8.4 million annual debt servicing cost would be funded by:

- Proceeds from the sale of the SEC's naming rights, sponsorships, and fundraising;
- Proceeds from the sale of City owned properties in the downtown area;
- Contributions from prospective venue operating partners;
- Utilizing the City's portion of the City's Municipal Accommodations Tax (MAT);
- Redirecting the City's previous commitment to the Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) mid-size performance theater, a project which WLU had indicated would not proceed;
- Incremental property taxes, net of community improvement plan tax increment grants, from development in the lower downtown precinct; and,

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- Allocation of proceeds from the sale of City owned lands north of Powerline Road in the area that was transferred from the County of Brant to the City in 2017.

The initial SEC financing plan projected debt-servicing costs in the initial 8-year financing life of the project totaling \$67 million, offset by revenues of \$67 million. Staff, having further analyzed this plan, agree with many of its assumptions but note that the plan contemplates significant revenues accruing early in the financing plan's horizon from incremental taxes from new developments in the lower downtown precinct. While staff acknowledge that development activities are occurring in this area, many developments have not started and the taxation revenues anticipated in the SEC financing plan will not likely accrue until later in the financing plan's timeline. For this reason, an updated financing plan has been developed.

### **9.3.2 Updated Financing Plan for the SEC**

As noted, an updated financing plan for the SEC has been developed. The financing plan makes the following assumptions:

- The total project cost will be \$152 million;
  - Construction financing will be used to finance the construction phase of the project using Infrastructure Ontario's construction finance program;
  - The SEC reserve, over the development phase of the project (being 2025 to 2028), will accumulate funds generated from land sales, the City's portion of the MAT tax, the reallocated WLU funds, proceeds from naming rights contributions, fundraising proceeds, and operator contributions. Fundraising allocations have been adjusted to reflect current trends in capital fundraising, with an overall target of 10% the project's cost anticipated to be raised from either donations, sponsorships, or naming-rights contributions.
  - In 2029, \$140 million will be raised through the issuance of a 30-year municipal debenture, which, combined with the funds already placed in the reserve, will discharge the construction financing.
  - In 2030, an additional contribution to the SEC reserve of \$44 million will be made from some of the proceeds from the sale of City owned lands north of Powerline Road.

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- Tax revenues from new developments in the lower downtown, net of tax incentives, will flow into the SEC reserve annually. More conservative and realistic estimates on these tax revenues have been made reflecting a gradual development of these lands.
  - The funds in the SEC reserve, combined with the annual contributions from the MAT tax, the reallocated WLU funds, and the net incremental taxes from development in the lower downtown, would be adequate to pay the \$8 million annual debenture servicing cost. As such, the capital costs for the SEC would not impact existing taxpayers at any time during the financing life of the project.
  - In 2042, which is the 14<sup>th</sup> year of the financing life of the project, net incremental tax revenues from development in the downtown would exceed the annual debenture servicing payments for the SEC. At this point, other revenues such as the MAT tax could be redeployed to other uses such as contributing to redevelopment of the Brantford General Hospital.

To more accurately depict the updated financing plan for the SEC, a detailed plan is provided in Appendix 5 to this report showing the annual income to and expenditure from the SEC reserve. The plan shows the cash inflows into the reserve and cash outflows from the reserve during the development phase of the project (2025 to 2028) and the first 14-years of the project's financing life (2029 to 2042). The plan demonstrates that the reserve remains in a positive balance for the first 14-years of the project's financing life at which point incremental tax revenues from developments in the lower downtown become adequate to cover the project's annual debt servicing costs.

In summary, the financing plan outlined above and depicted in Appendix 5 is adequate to fund the projected \$152 million cost for the SEC without resulting existing City taxpayers bearing the costs for this initiative.

#### **9.4 Operating Plan for the Sports and Entertainment Centre**

The business case prepared by KKR on August 31, 2023 for the Sports and Entertainment Centre included a projected operating financial analysis. This conservative analysis identified year-1 operating revenues for the SEC of \$3.5 million and operating expenses of \$4.1 million, leaving an operating deficit of \$669,000. These figures are exclusive of capital financing expenditures which are addressed earlier in this report.

If this project moves forward, staff will move to finalize negotiations with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties related to promotion/programming and food and beverage operations. These negotiations are anticipated to positively impact this original operating analysis.

## 9.5 Sports and Entertainment Construction

If Council approves this report, the SEC will move to the construction phase. The timeline for this project is outlined in Table 2 below.

*Table 2 - Sports and Entertainment Centre Construction Schedule*

<b>Project Component</b>	<b>Starting</b>	<b>Completing</b>
Site Mobilization	January 2026	January 2026
Foundations	February 2026	April 2026
Rink Slab Installation	February 2026	April 2026
Structural Steel	April 2026	July 2026
Building Envelope	July 2026	February 2027
Roofing	October 2026	February 2027
Interior Fit-Out	November 2026	December 2027
Exterior Works	May 2027	December 2027
Commissioning	January 2028	February 2028

As noted, if Council approves this report, the project will follow a very aggressive timeframe with the intent to have the project commissioned in early 2028, allowing the Bulldogs appropriate time to complete their tenant improvements. The overall goal of the construction schedule will be for the Bulldogs to play their 2028 home opener game at the SEC.

### 9.5.1 Procurement Plan for the Sports and Entertainment Centre

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If Council approves this report, staff will negotiate a construction contract with Graham Construction to build the SEC. Once all costs are finalized for the project, a Guaranteed Maximum Price Contract will be entered into with Graham Construction which will define the maximum price for the project.

As the project contractor, Graham Construction will procure all components and trade partners for the project. As an employee-owned Canadian company, Graham Construction's procurement strategy for the proposed SEC prioritizes Canadian-sourced materials and equipment wherever feasible. It is acknowledged that some specialty components of the SEC have limited domestic availability. Graham Construction will focus on qualifying and selecting vendors to emphasize local representation, serviceability, and lifecycle support for all major equipment packages.

### **9.5.2 Cost Due-Diligence for the Sports and Entertainment Centre Project**

The City issued RFP 2025-92 on August 28, 2025 to secure the services of a payment certifier for the SEC project. The use of a payment certifier to review, measure, validate completed work, and certify payment applications is standard practice on large-scale projects. City staff proactively released this RFP so that it can be awarded if Council approves this report. As noted earlier in this report, Colliers was retained in the earlier stages of this project to provide 3<sup>rd</sup> party oversight and due-diligence for the selection and onboarding of the project contractor.

## **9.6 Other Matters Related to the Sports and Entertainment Centre**

### **9.6.1 Fundraising, Sponsorships, and Naming Rights**

A component of the financing plan for the SEC involves raising funds through the sale of Naming Rights for the facility, entering into sponsorship arrangements for the facility, and undertaking a fundraising campaign to raise donations towards the project.

Staff have had preliminary discussions with several potential major donors for the SEC as well as potential naming rights sponsors. It is acknowledged that it is very difficult to formalize and finalize these types of discussions while a project's status is still undecided, with the optimum time for capital fundraising occurring in the middle of a project's construction phase. Accordingly, if Council approves this

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report, staff will move to finalize a contract with a fundraising consultant that will develop and lead a major capital campaign. This campaign will include securing naming rights contributors, donors, and corporate sponsors towards the project.

## 10.0 Financial Implications

Financial matters related to the SEC including the project cost and capital financing are outlined earlier in section 9.3.2 of this report. On October 29, 2024, Council adopted By-law 141-2024 which authorized the use of up to \$140 million of debentures towards this project. This level of debenture financing, in addition to the other revenues identified in the updated plan (Appendix 5) is still expected to be sufficient to fund the project without increasing the tax levy.

Upon Council's approval of the recommendations in this report, staff will submit the necessary application to Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corporation to provide the City with this level of borrowing.

Included in this report is a recommendation to waive planning and building permit fees, which would be anticipated to be approximately \$450,000. It is common to waive these fees for municipal projects but Council approval is required for this fee waiver.

## 11.0 Climate and Environmental Implications

The designs for the SEC embody a significant number of elements aimed at helping the City achieve its climate change goals. The building rooftop will be developed for solar photovoltaic readiness as well as readiness for both exterior and interior green walls. A business case for rooftop solar generation will be developed in the future. Parking for 57 bicycles will be available on the completed project site with the opportunity to introduce additional bike parking if there is demand. The building's energy performance will be 10% more efficient and will produce 11% less greenhouse gas emissions than the reference level set by Ontario's Building Code. Energy recapturing technology will be implemented in systems such as the building's ice plant, ventilation system, and heating system. A high-albedo roof surface will be installed to mitigate the urban heat island effect, and improvements to the site's stormwater system will reduce stormwater discharge into adjacent natural systems.


All building systems will have full automation to drive efficiency and reduce energy use and all mechanical systems will be optimal from an energy management perspective. The building is oriented on an east/west axis to create passive solar to optimize heating, cooling, and daylighting. As part of the

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civic plaza landscape, native trees with a high tolerance for the urban environment will be planted.

## 12.0 Conclusion

The SEC designs attached to this report depict an ambitious and appropriate design that will invigorate the broader environment in the lower downtown precinct. The interior designs for the SEC represent a mix of function, usability, and aesthetics that will create a unique and memorable experience for users of the facility. The designs are informed by users and stakeholders and the SEC design team have worked to incorporate the feedback from residents, the Bulldogs, Council, and staff. This facility, if built, will provide decades of enjoyment to current and future Brantford residents. The SEC also represents a unique opportunity to create new vibrancy into Downtown Brantford and will supercharge the lower downtown precinct with development and prosperity. This transformational project is a critical step towards a future that aligns with the City's 2050 vision to create civic pride for generations to come.



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Michael Bradley  
Chief Administrative Officer

### Attachments:

Appendix 1 – Sports and Entertainment Centre – Site Plan

Appendix 2 – Sports and Entertainment Centre – Exterior Renderings

Appendix 3 – Sports and Entertainment Centre – Floor Plans for Event Level, Concourse Level, Suite Level, and Mechanical Level

Appendix 4 – Sports and Entertainment Centre – Public Consultation Summary

Appendix 5 - Sports and Entertainment Centre – Detailed Capital Financing Summary

### Copy to:

Senior Leadership Team

Jennifer Elliott, Director of Engineering Services

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required  yes  no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk  yes  no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council?  yes  no