

Council votes to move ahead with the KED

The city is moving forward with the Kingsway Entertainment District full throttle.

Ian Wood, executive director of strategic initiatives, community and citizen services, told council Wednesday the city has resumed meetings with its partners "and they are going well."

There is a lot going on and Wood said there are a number of tasks the city needs to begin or resume over the next few months, including finalizing the site plan; completing some infrastructure work; reviewing site preparation with BOT Construction; and launching the search for an operator for the events centre.

The city also needs to finalize the design of the events centre, which will confirm the final budget, Wood said.

"We are also looking at repositioning internal resources to make sure internally we are able to provide support to this project as it ramps up," he commented.

Ward 4 Coun. Geoff McCausland, who has long favoured a downtown location, said the KED played a big part in his entry into politics. McCausland was elected to council in 2018, so he did not participate in the 2017 vote that determined the centre's location.

He said he was embarrassed when he saw council had organized the scoring matrix to prioritize parking and convenience — "to make parking first and city-building last," McCausland commented.

McCausland said he was most bothered by the KED because of its "discriminatory" nature. The complex is not easily accessible to transit users, cyclists or pedestrians, the Ward 4 rep said. "We don't have to worry about biking down a busy highway at night to see a Wolves game or loading up the kids for an hour-plus trip each way on multiple buses to see their favourite, Paw Patrol," he said, noting the privileges enjoyed by council members. "We have chosen to put our community gathering place somewhere that is harder to get to for those who have the hardest time getting around. We have decided to move our city further away from walkability and sustainability. We have betrayed our plans and are working against so many of the values we claim to espouse."

But there is still a chance to change the outcome, McCausland said.

"We can still do the right thing and I urge my colleagues to please reconsider this path," he said.

Signoretti, also pro-downtown, echoed his colleague's comments. He said council seems intent on moving forward at all costs and despite common sense.

But Ward 5 Coun. Robert Kirwan called the operating plan staff has developed a remarkable achievement. He said he is eager to move forward and to see the project come together.

"The plan is set in motion now and I really do commend them for the timelines," he said, adding he hopes the events centre will "come to fruition in 2024."

Kirwan said he is certain the KED will become an iconic part of the Greater Sudbury landscape.

Through a lengthy and rather detailed resolution, council voted 8-3 to proceed with the plans for the KED outlined by staff.