

Circle Project Delegation to Regina City Council – December 16, 2020

Re: RPC20-35 – 3435 5th Ave. Discretionary use application

Good afternoon Madame Mayor and City Councillors. Congratulations on your recent elections, and I know the City of Regina will be in good hands for the coming four years.

My name is Ann Perry, and I'm the Executive Director of Circle Project. I am here to fully support the recommendation of the Planning Commission to grant the discretionary use "Institution – Humanitarian Support" for the building at 3435 5th Ave.

I want to thank Ben Mario and the Planning Department staff for moving this application forward as quickly as possible. And I'd like to thank Dave Edwards and Yuna Zou for their professional services and good advice on moving through the planning process. If approval is granted today, our understanding is that our general contractor, Westridge Construction, is prepared to begin work without delay. After six months, when construction is finished, the building will have about 10,000 square feet of space.

Let me give you a bit of background on Circle Project and this proposal.

First, Circle Project is an Indigenous organization, governed by a board which must be seventy five per cent Indigenous. Our staff is mostly Indigenous and the great majority of clients we serve are as well. We are a 'status-blind' organization and welcome everyone into our programs and events.

We have been serving the Regina community for well over three decades and over that time our programming and special events have been consistently supported by the City of Regina.

After Conexus Credit Union announced the closure of their branch at 5th Avenue and Elphinstone Street, right in the heart of the North Central Community, they put out a call to interested groups to express interest in the building, asking what they planned to do with the property.

Circle Project responded, saying our intention would be to create a "Community and Cultural Hub". Conexus felt our proposal best matched their intention of leaving a legacy in the North Central community, and virtually gifted us with the building in 2019.

We've spent the past year finalizing the plans for the Community and Cultural Hub, getting approvals, arranging contractors and getting ready to launch our fundraising campaign. We are planning the public launch of the project for next month, and we hope you'll be hearing a lot about it.

So what is a Community and Cultural Hub, and why do we, and others, feel so strongly it will be an important addition to the North Central community?

Our vision of a Community & Cultural Hub is a place where people can come in safety and learn ways to improve the health and success of their family and community.

We have provided programs and services for years at our old location, across from Nicky's Café. Many of our clients find it very hard to get there so we mapped their addresses and know moving into North Central will make our services much more accessible to the people we serve.

Walking in you'll find lots of room on the main floor to hold the offices of program staff, private rooms for counseling, open space for community activities and a welcoming drop-in space. The basement level will hold more community areas, and a partial second storey will be added to house Circle Project's administration.

Our Community & Cultural Hub will welcome everyone, whether it is for meetings or a quiet time and a cup of coffee. Circle Project is there to support the community in health and safety.

Circle Project's programs are based on the Indigenous vision of wholeness, balance and healing. Our board and staff have always been guided by Elders. These constants will always be front and centre at the Community and Cultural Hub.

Circle Project's first Elder was Louis Whiteman, who said "Do the right thing for the right reason, and a way will be made for you."

We believe creating the Community and Cultural Hub is the right thing for the right reason. Despite the challenges we face as a volunteer board and small but dedicated staff, we have great faith the Circle Project Community and Cultural Hub will be a valuable addition to the North Central Community.

Your support today will be an important step in our journey.

Thank you for your time, and if you have questions I'll do my best to answer them with the help of Dave Edwards.