



# MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** November 22, 2022  
**TO:** Chair Bryson and Public Works and Facilities Committee  
**FROM:** Katie Koester, Engineering and Public Works Director  
**SUBJECT:** New City Hall – what’s next?

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As we all know, a bond proposition for \$35M failed the October 2022 municipal ballot by 246 votes (2.7%). Not bad for a public facility that is mostly office space for bureaucrats (never an easy sell). From a facilities standpoint, CBJ still faces the dilemma of needing to sink millions into a City Hall that is not serving the needs of the community (as evidenced by the fact that over half the downtown workforce work out of rented space at a cost of \$820,000 a year and growing). Nevertheless, progress has been made in ruling out locations and determining many of the factors that are important to the public in a City Hall (parking, long life span, and sustainability – to name a few).

It is fair to take a step back, a deep breath, and some time to analyze the next steps. The purpose of this memo is to host a conversation about potential next steps without any particular sense of urgency. The Assembly appropriated \$6.3M to (new) City Hall. One option is to consider phasing improvements to the existing facility and get an accurate cost estimate for the timing of additional funds that are needed. An RFP is out now for a professional facilities assessment of City Hall, among other municipal buildings. Another, or parallel option, is to ask the public what was missing and what they would like to see changed in a proposed project. Armed with that information, the Assembly can make an accurate assessment of whether or not it is worth tweaking the proposal and going back to the voters.

## For example, ask the public:

Was the cost too high? Inflation will have a very real impact on today’s cost estimates tomorrow, but costs could be cut by eliminating underground parking and other potential measures.

Is it in the wrong location? Dozens of locations were analyzed – but is there a better location out there? It is our duty to investigate all potential location options and put them through the decision making matrix.

Did the design miss the mark? We have received feedback that the big box, while cost efficient, is not architecturally appealing. The level of design is VERY conceptual with many details to work out, maybe we need to work through more design with the public.

## Other thoughts on what to ask...

Renovation of City Hall or building new will require the public to have a better understanding of current conditions. Staff could offer site visits and a video tour of behind the scenes City Hall and the spaces employees work in. Parking comes up again and again as a concern; however there are more than 1,500 parking spots in the Aak’w Village district. A deeper dive into parking will help the Assembly and public understand how the parking needs of a new facility will be met. Furthermore, many don’t know CBJ

rents most of its office space and that could be turned into valuable housing. Outreach and education can take many forms, polling, listening sessions at strategic locations around town and a citizen committee to inform and advise the project.

Recommendation: Informational only. Discuss and provide input.