



TITLE: City Hall Front Counter Redesign

DATE: October 9, 2025

TO: Budget Committee

PUBLIC: X

INCAMERA:

RECOMMENDATION:

That this report be received as information and filed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Solutions Hub is the City's Customer Service unit. Created in December 2023, the Hub addresses calls and inquiries on behalf of the entire organization. The Customer Service Unit has improved the customer service experience with the City with reported improvements in customer satisfaction. The Hub model is working well for the City and is anticipated to support the City's customer service function well into the future. An ergonomics review in 2024 identified issues with workstations that were not designed for the current customer service model. Design work completed in 2025 proposes changes that will address the ergonomics issues as well as improved workflow, security, sound dampening and wheelchair access.

PROPOSED APPROACH AND RATIONALE:

In 2024 front line Clerk Steno positions primarily assigned to answer calls on behalf of departments (City Clerks, Public Works, Community Services, and Planning and Development Services) were combined with existing Customer Service representatives in the Finance Department to create a single Customer Service unit known as the Solutions Hub. This unit answers all customer inquiries coming in through a single general inquiry phone line, inquiries submitted to the Solutions Hub email and all customers at the front counter at City Hall. This single point of contact has been the foundation for an improved system. The Solutions Hub has had early success in improving customer service at the City of Prince Albert and has established a model that is working well and is expected to support improvement into the future.

In 2024, the Solutions Hub averaged 5118 customer interactions each month which includes all phone calls, Solutions Hub emails and in-person visits to the front counter. Of these interactions, 2841 were visits to the front counter.

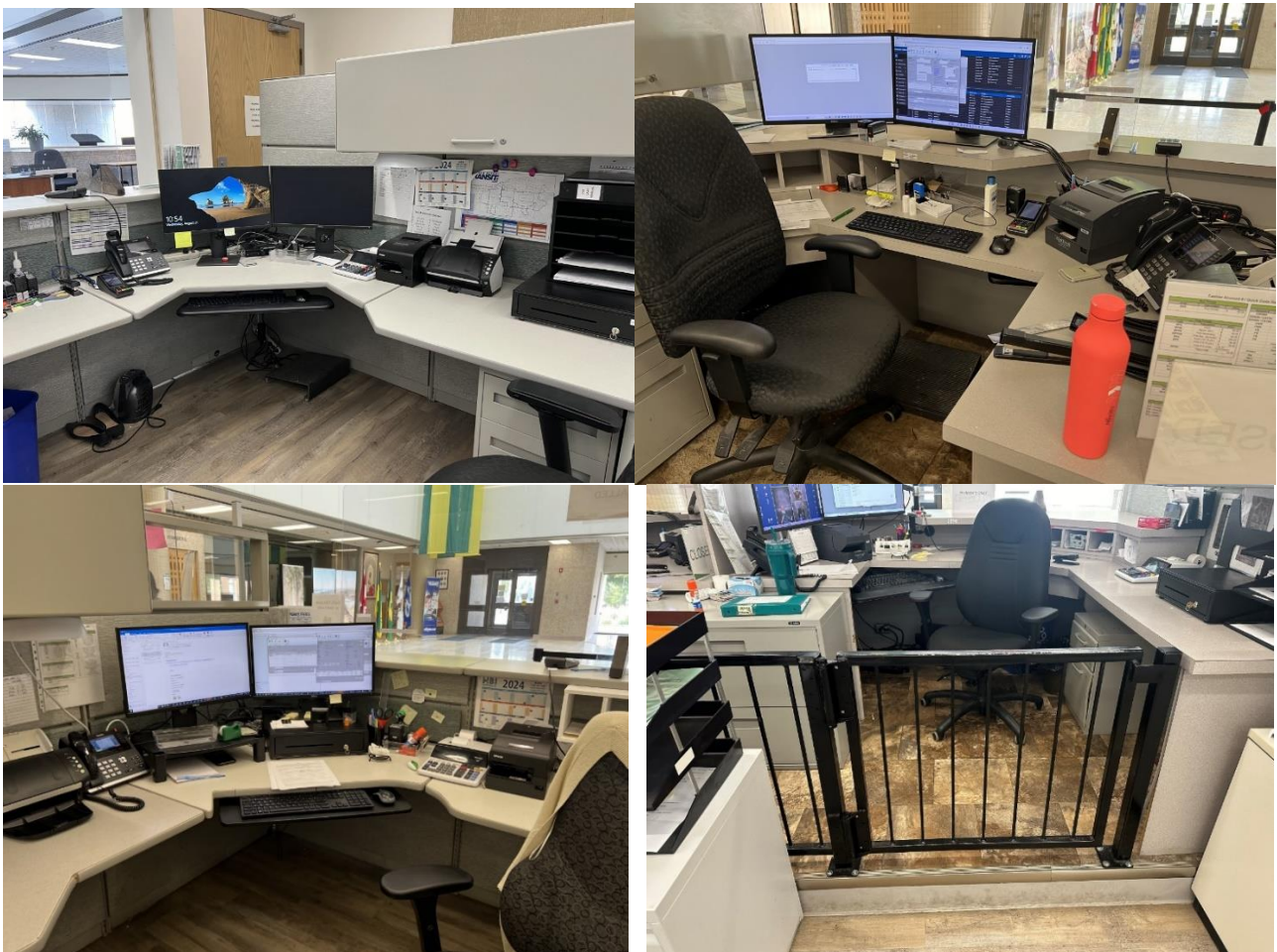
The City's front counter includes 5 kiosks. The function of these kiosks has changed over the years as the City has explored different operating models that meet customer needs. A recent ergonomics inspection of the front counter kiosks identified issues with the design of workstations.

Following the assessment, a number of small changes were implemented that helped to improve conditions. Examples include changing the location and positioning of screens, purchasing headsets to reduce shoulder cradling while dealing with customers and moving equipment and files to eliminate out of arms length reaching.

The ergonomics assessment also revealed structural challenges with the design of the desks. In two of the four stations it was noted that:

“During the course of a transaction or assisting with a utility query the employee would be required to stand at the counter which is an extension of the workstation. Subsequently if the employee is required to assist a customer with completing a paper document, they would lean forward to indicate and review the appropriate form with the customer. This requires a sustained stoop with a slight bend at the waist.”

The ergonomics assessment prompted a fuller discussion on the general design and functionality of the Solutions Hub workspace. The entire workspace is an amalgamation of desks and furniture with some elements of customization pieced together over the last 30 years. The furniture in the space is furniture that is traditionally used in office spaces, not customer service stations.



In 2025, the Corporate Services Department initiated a review of the functionality of the workspace requesting a design that considered the following:

- Ergonomics design
- Workflow optimization, file, and cash access
- More functional security screens
- Queue management
- Sound dampening
- Improved seating for disabled/elderly

Attached is a design for the reconfiguration of the front counter at City Hall that better suits the function of the division and addresses ergonomics and workflow issues.

Two phases have been identified for the project. The first phase would include the essential renovation of the front counter.

Phase 1 (2026)

- Remove counter space that forces CSRs to lean when assisting customers; all workstations will be at customer height.
- Add one extra workstation for flexibility during peak times and training.
- Narrower workstations to resolve “out of arms reach” ergonomic issues from traditional furniture.
- Install permanent glass with adjustable speak-through and acoustic partitions for better security and communication.
- Shared printing stations for easier access.
- Introduce raised kiosks allowing CSRs to sit or stand; maintain one seated kiosk for wheelchair accessibility.

Phase 2 (TBD)

- Implement a self-serve queue system with numbered tickets
- Upgrade foyer seating to create a more welcoming waiting area and designated space for those waiting in the queue.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The estimated project budget for phase one is \$185,000 including site labour, new desks and equipment, millwork/cabinetry, filing/storage cabinets, acoustic dividers and safety glass and flooring.

The estimated budget for phase two, not proposed for the 2026 budget, is \$97,000 including waiting room furniture and a queue management system.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Public Notice pursuant to the Public Notice Bylaw No. 24 of 2015 is not required.

ATTACHMENT:

Front Counter Conceptual Design

Written by: Kiley Bear, Director of Corporate Services

Approved by: City Manager