

Varsity View Local Area Plan Meeting #14 – Infill Development
Wednesday, May 18, 2011
Brunskill School Library
101 Wiggins Avenue South
7:00 pm

Attendees: Elsie Colenutt, Brian Noonan, Patricia Mathias, Pat Funk, Bernie Zuk, David Parker, Robyn Parker, Bryan & Gayle Skalicky, Daniel McLaren, Jack Rudolph, Corinne Mills, Laurence Thompson, Brent Custer, Rhonda Billard, John Owen, Jacqueline Owen, Barb Giles, Carl Lynn, Heather Kleiner, Evan Zuk, Susan Hatfield, Brenda O'Connor, Sandy Knezacek, Ron Greenwood, Gord Vaxvick, Marianne Amos, Michael Waslen, Shirley Fourney, Victor Das, Paige Goebel, J. Gorkoff, Allan Woo, James Perkins, Karen Sander, Tammy Denby, Cathy Watts, Evelyn Jones, Garry Ayotte, George Tannous, Kathy Probert, Dylan Czarnecki – Community Consultant, Mark Emmons & Courtney Johnson – Senior Planner, Robin Baxter & Jillian Gerlach – Summer Planning Interns, Darryl Dawson – Development Review Section, Shirlene Palmer – Recording Secretary

1. Welcome & Introductions

Meeting called to order at 7:10 p.m.
Mark Emmons introduced himself.

The purpose of tonight's meeting is to:

- Have a general discussion about infill development in Varsity View
- Using the activities from the Harold Madi workshop in February 2011 organized by multiple Community Associations as a basis for our meeting tonight.

Mark did a brief review of the Local Area Plan (LAP) process for those who were unfamiliar with the project. Varsity View is the twelfth neighbourhood to have a LAP done. The initial meeting was about 18 months ago. LAPs are done in established neighbourhoods to gather the local residents to discuss topics they feel are pertinent to their neighbourhood, such as traffic, safety, parking, infrastructure, as well as any other possible specific issues, such as College Quarter, that are taking place in the neighbourhood. The LAP report will inform the City of what the residents wish to take place in their neighbourhood.

Tonight's meeting is not to discuss any specific development proposals, but just to generally hear from the residents what characteristics they like about their neighbourhoods. What makes you like your community and what don't you want to see in your neighbourhood?

All the notes from the previous meetings can be found on the City of Saskatoon website. Anyone who wishes to have future correspondence sent to them can add their email address to the sign-in sheet.

Tonight we will do a mini version of Harold Madi's workshop titled "Breathing New Life Into Older Neighbourhoods: Guidelines For Shaping Healthy Growth" that was done in February and used Nutana as a case study in the exercises. We will be doing similar activities, but use Varsity View examples.

2. Agenda & Ground Rules

Through this Local Area Plan we have created Foundations for Success (or ground rules) to specify how meetings will be conducted. It ensures that group members feel comfortable in sharing their concerns, opinions and ideas with the group.

1. Listen to each other with respect
2. One person speaks at a time and no side conversations
3. Everyone has an equal voice
4. Let everyone speak
5. Stay focused
6. Speak loudly

3. Activity #1 – What does “infill development” mean to you?

Mark asked the group to close their eyes and picture infill development in Varsity View. What comes to mind? What does the term “infill development” mean to you?

- One house taken out and two squeezed in
- Character of the neighbourhood not being maintained
- Removing something that is old to put up new to enhance your investment in the future
- Opposite to urban sprawl, infill into center of area
- In terms of densification to prevent urban sprawl, in some cases it is negative, but also adds to renewal and growth and for the most part can be positive. The City manages that with policy. Some neighbours don't necessarily agree, but take into account all they can
- Higher density population, the other is a bone of contention, single dwelling home becoming multi-family revenue property. My yard is nice, but the others around me are deteriorating.
- There are many local revenue properties and many are not well maintained.
- Often in older areas revenue properties are fine, but they are not as enhanced as they could be because of zoning. They choose to redevelop, but have to build a multifamily dwelling if you cannot fit two single family dwellings due to size of the lot.
- New resident in last 4 years. We wanted an established area, but a new house. We're impressed with how Varsity View does infill.
- In Greystone, some houses are coming down and blocks of condos are going up instead of one or two single family units.

Mark noted none of the stated answers are wrong as there are all types/definitions of infill development.

4. Land Use & Infill Development Backgrounder

Darryl Dawson, Senior Planner, Development Review Section

Mark noted Darryl has some general information to provide on the topics of land use and infill development from the perspective of the City of Saskatoon Development Review Section.

Darryl stated Tim Steuart, a colleague in the Development Review Section attended a past meeting of the Varsity View LAP to discuss zoning and infill development in detail, from that discussion it was noted that Harold Madi's presentation focused on Nutana examples and that

it would be relevant to carry out similar exercises with Varsity View examples, to help envision infill development potential in Varsity View.

It was noted only a few in attendance tonight were at the Harold Madi workshop in February.

The Planning and Development Act provides two main documents that guide growth in Saskatoon; the Official Community Plan (OCP) and the Zoning Bylaw.

The OCP defines, directs and evaluates development, and guides Administration and City Council in making development and land use decisions. By ensuring development takes place in an orderly and rational manner, the OCP balances the environmental, social and economic needs for the community. This document provides the goals and objectives that govern growth and development.

The OCP does have specific policies related to infill and identifies infill development as development on vacant or underutilized parcels of land in established neighbourhoods, the conversion of non-residential buildings and sites to residential use, or the redevelopment of existing residential properties.

The purpose of the Zoning Bylaw is to regulate development in the City. Along with general development standards, the Zoning Bylaw divides the City into zoning districts. Each zoning district section of the document states the purpose of the district, a list of permitted land uses within the district, and a list of development standards establishing minimum and maximum requirements that must be met before development can proceed. Each zoning district may also have uses requiring discretionary use approval, or that are specifically prohibited.

There are two categories of redevelopment

- A parcel needs a zoning change, like BlackRock Developments' Main Street condos.
- Or it meets existing zoning (one unit dwellings are a permitted use in all residential zoning districts, as are secondary suites. Two-unit dwellings are a permitted use in all zoning districts except R1, R1A and the R1B Districts. For established neighbourhoods, R2 zoning is predominant).

In both cases, zoning does provide for some regulation for infill development. For one and two unit dwellings, the current regulations do cover three areas:

- Site width is required to be at least 70% of other properties on the block and opposing block face
- Maximum building height in established neighbourhoods cannot exceed 8.5 metres (28 feet) in established neighbourhoods (otherwise 10 metres – 32.8 feet)
- Dwelling cannot exceed 3 metre variation from setback from adjacent homes.

We do know that there are concerns related to infill that these regulations do not cover and there are other tools available, such as possibly developing civic infill guidelines that provide voluntary direction for development; there are also areas that we can look at within regulation, such as rear yard setbacks, building volume that can be addressed through zoning.

Infill development was definitely one of the many themes that were common in the Saskatoon Speaks visioning process and once that document is finalized, we will be embarking on a comprehensive city-wide infill development strategy.

Questions:

- **You said that a home in this neighbourhood can have two dwellings in it?**
Yes, a secondary suite would be allowed in any home in Varsity View. However, there are very specific minimum building code requirements that are necessary in order to receive approval to have a secondary suite.

Comments:

- Living in the area since 1975, there are many houses that have illegal suites around my home as they seem to have more than one dwelling.
- In regards to legal height of an infill building, there is a building on Cumberland being built that seems to be higher than 8.5 metres.

Darryl noted the development would not have been approved if it was not of legal height. He noted the way height is measured may be why it looks taller. The height is measured from halfway between the eavestrough and the roof peak down to the ground. It is not simply the height of the highest peak of the building.

Questions:

- **The 70% rule seems illogical as it seems to support semi-detached homes, which usually leads to revenue property instead of single family developments. Many times this does not make the property very aesthetically pleasing.**
Darryl noted he doesn't disagree with this statement as developers want to put as much housing on a lot as possible and if they are not able to do two single family homes then they will often do some type of semi-detached.

Comments:

- Attendee noted an opinion that the reason many people leave an existing, older house on a property and build a new attached home is for tax purposes. If you build a brand new house, the taxes are higher than if you simply add a new building on to an existing house, as the taxes are an average of the old and new building rather than a higher tax on only a newer building.

Questions:

- **Is it correct to assume that there are no guidelines in Varsity View for developers when they are coming into neighbourhood to build?**
Darryl noted there are no official "infill development guidelines" for any neighbourhood in the City. Guidelines are not enforceable and are only suggestions, while documents like the OCP and Zoning Bylaw contain specific regulations that must be adhered to.

Mark noted this is one reason why the LAP report is important. When the Neighbourhood Planning Section is contacted in regards to a rezoning application request we will immediately look at what the LAP said in regards to infill in the neighbourhood; it provides a voice for the neighbourhood.

- **If there is back lane parking and access to a garage is there any regulation of not then having front lane double wide garage in front of house as well? There are a couple properties on University Drive that now have this and it breaks up the flow of traffic. This is something that we need to put on as a guideline of some type.**
Darryl noted there is no City regulation on front lane drives, although curb crossings are regulated by Infrastructure Services. They also need to meet the front yard setbacks

and detached buildings can only cover a certain percentage of your entire property, as laid out in the Zoning Bylaw.

Mark thanked Darryl for coming out and speaking tonight. Darryl noted he will be staying for the remainder of the meeting if anyone has any questions for him.

5. Group Activities

The attendees were divided into seven groups to go through similar activities done at the Harold Madi workshop.

Activity #2 – Identifying Different Areas of Varsity View

Within a neighbourhood there may be areas that have differing housing character, often corresponding to different types of streets.

- a. Discuss this as a group and, as a group, identify the different character areas evident within VV. Using a marker, draw their general boundaries and number them to reference the area in part b.
- b. Using the space below, list the defining patterns of quality that differentiate the character areas.

Group Sharing (one comment from each group)

Group 1

Main Street and 9th Street – most buildings on 8th Street are single story commercial – other side of 9th mostly homes which are 30 plus years. Some are nice and others not so nice and with times changing there will be some changes to properties in the near future.

Group 2

Varsity View is bordered by very busy streets, it is typically multicultural, multi-family and commercial, and it is already higher density and different feeling than outside of Varsity View.

Group 3

Around President Murray Park there are lots of older houses, but the older the house the more likely it is to be torn down and replaced with new.

Group 4

The most expensive area is by the university, lots of trees and slightly bigger homes and most garages are out back.

Group 5

Parking around President Murray Park is not permitted, parking permit zone does not go far enough and this narrows the streets due to parking all along both sides of street.

Group 6

University has bigger houses with detached garages, character homes, many various roof lines, wood, stonework and shingles.

Group 7

Cumberland and Bottomley from about Elliott up to 14th Street are houses built in the 50s, mostly single family now have moved on and have many absentee landlords, so some are rundown and shabby and we don't want that. Don't want multi-family here though.

Activity #3 – Identifying Characteristics of Existing Streetscapes

Infill development should fit harmoniously in its surrounding and reinforce the best qualities of the block in which it is located.

Using the map and photos for reference, identify and list the key built characteristics of the case study block assigned. Blocks include 1200 College Dr (even house #s) and 1200 Elliott St (odd #s); 1000 Aird St (even #s); 1100 Main St (odd #s); 1400 Main St (odd #s); 300 Clarence Ave N (odd #s) and 300 Arthur Ave (even #s); and 1100 8th St E (odd #s) and 1100 9th St East (even #s). These blocks were selected by Varsity View LAP Committee members and are intended to be relatively representative of different areas within the neighbourhood.

Activity #4 – Identifying Key Design Objectives

Referencing the built characteristics of the case study block that your group examined in Activity #3, what would be the key design objectives if an infill development project was proposed here?

Groups were welcome to consider any aspect of the built environment. Some examples could be: Appropriate building types, Building placement on the lot, Scale and massing of the building, Façade treatments, Parking, Material and architectural quality, Landscaping, etc.

Mark noted the majority of the groups agreed they would trust what other tables discussed about the other case studies and did not feel they required to do Activity 3 & 4 again for one of the other blocks.

Mark reminded attendees the infill discussion is a large contributor to Varsity View LAP, so wanted to make sure enough information was gathered. One section will be Infill Development and included will also be the information gathered from the previous meeting with Tim Steuart.

Questions:

- **Earlier the size of a detached garage was discussed, how does this relate to garage/garden suites? This would not be a secondary suite, it is an auxiliary suite in back yard.**

Mark noted there are no regulations on garage/garden suites because they are not currently allowed in Saskatoon. They may be considered in the future though.

6. Closing Remarks

Mark thanked everyone for attending tonight. The engagement of residents will help in writing the LAP for Varsity View. It's important that everyone understands what it is about their neighbourhood that is important.

The next meeting will be the final review before writing the Varsity View Local Area Plan, but it's possible we may need to have additional information gathering meetings in the fall if the group decides we should re-visit any topics. We want to make sure we maintain our momentum and keep the entire LAP Committee engaged in this process.

7. Next Meeting: June 15, 2011
Topic: Final Review

Meeting adjourned: 9:15 pm