

Varsity View Local Area Plan Meeting #9
Topic: College Drive & Saskatoon Speaks Community Visioning
Wednesday, November 17, 2010
Brunskill School Library
101 Wiggins Avenue South
7:15 pm

Attendees: Karen Butler, Ewen Coxworth, Patricia Englund, Barb Giles, Anne Hardy, Don Harris, Susan Hatfield, Shalene Herron, Zoe Litman, Brian & Donna Noonan, Brenda O'Connor, James Perkins, Paige Triffo, Cathy Watts, Allan Woo, Tara Robertson, Amelia Lone, Paula Kotasek, Mark Emmons and Danny Gray – Planners, Pamela Larson – Planning Student U of S, Shirlene Palmer – Recording Secretary

1. Welcome & Introductions

Meeting called to order at 7:15 p.m.

Paula Kotasek introduced herself and Mark Emmons as co-facilitators. She again thanked the Community Association for inviting the LAP group to schedule their meetings immediately following the CA's monthly meeting.

The purpose of tonight's meeting is:

1. To discuss the College Drive Master Plan.
2. Collect feedback with Saskatoon Speaks toolkit to help the city better understand the community's aspirations for the future.

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. College Drive Streetscape Plan

Henry Lau, City of Saskatoon Urban Design Section

Mark introduced Henry who is here to discuss the College Drive Master Plan.

Henry stated after being in the private sector for 16 years he wanted to see the other side and has been with the City for two years. He noted of the 6 years he was at the U of S he lived 5 of them in Varsity View and after moving away from Saskatoon for a

while has now returned and feels privileged to be involved with the College Drive Streetscape Master Plan.

He noted this is a very significant project to not only Varsity View, but to many others in the area such as University of Saskatchewan, College Quarter, Royal University Hospital, Children's Hospital, Meewasin Valley Authority, etc. College Drive has been on the books to be reviewed for years and now the time has come for it to be done. Generating a good streetscape will not be the end of all problems, but will help with many issues if done properly and will plant the seed for more improvement around College Drive. The plan for the streetscape on College will include the west-east boundaries of Clarence Avenue and Preston Avenue.

This project could play a huge part in influencing future development in the area as well and will show we are proud of our environment.

Presently information is being gathered, as is baseline data and history from all persons who will be affected by this. He noted he is here tonight to engage the Local Area Plan (LAP) and Community Association (CA) for their input of what they want to see on College Drive in regards to vehicle traffic, pedestrians, aesthetics, etc. Think outside the box, think of transit, transportation, parks, CPTED, etc.

Currently he is meeting and talking with various stakeholders and steering partners. Next week there will be an integrated discussion/design session. This will not be to work on details; just basics. Details such as type of bricks, finishing, etc will be looked at later by him. This is to collect ideas, so then it can be put onto paper. There would be a few spots for some attendees here to come, but wants to keep these sessions smaller as it's easier to discuss. Everyone's comments and suggestions are important to this process though.

He stated it is important everyone realizes not all of the concerns/suggestions brought forward will be addressed/implemented, but serious consideration will be given to all comments/suggestions. This is a real opportunity for you. Your opinion is valuable.

Any comments or suggestions for the College Drive Streetscape Master Plan should be submitted in writing and can be emailed to Henry at henry.lau@saskatoon.ca or call him at 975-2866 for more clarification or to discuss the project.

Henry noted it is important to remember to be realistic with suggestions. Vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians need to co-exist and the plan shouldn't alienate any group. If more is put into human vibrancy and making it an appealing pedestrian environment, maybe people will walk instead of drive. This is an ambitious project and we don't want to fall short. We want everyone's input.

A major challenge of this project is that Henry has been directed to put it forward to City Council this spring, which a very tight timeline.

An open house will be held for the community and area prior to it going to Council to clarify any issues. Henry noted he would also be willing to present a draft version of the plan to the LAP and CA groups in the New Year for their comment.

It was noted that the group already has representation on the steering committee for this project, as Cathy Watts and Don Harris have met with Henry a couple of times already in the past weeks.

Questions:

- **If it is passed by Council in spring when might construction begin?**

After it is passed by Council, it will go to the Administration & Finance Committee to begin the process of allocating funding to the project. The master plan will be implemented in phases. There has been some funding secured by the Meewasin Valley Authority. If we are being very optimistic, Phase One could begin as early as Fall 2011.

- **What are you planning on building here? What are your plans?**

Henry noted we are not there yet. We are currently in the collecting and planning stages. You tell me what you want. What is your vision for College Drive? Varsity View is a very unique neighbourhood and deserves a unique design.

Comments:

- The LAPC has been meeting and discussing various issues for about a year. Many of the suggestions/concerns we have are already on the table. Can all these previous discussions be brought to your attention, so they won't get missed? College Drive is an issue, but also how to interface with Clarence and Cumberland Avenue.
- From our perspective, it seems like the City and U of S are not collaborating, so it feels like we will not have any impact.
- We need to remember that Henry is the person who is in charge of the College Drive Master Plan and is not working on those other U of S projects. He is here to ask for our input on this project. He is working with the U of S directly on this and exploring what opportunities there are to work together. Right now, he just wants to know our concerns, such as transportation issues, how do we want people to get through Varsity View, what do we want on College Drive?, what do we want it to look like to cross College not only for Varsity View residents, but also for others to utilize it as well.

Mark reminded attendees the timeline is very tight, so any suggestions/concerns should be submitted to Henry in writing within the next couple of days.

4. Saskatoon Speaks, Community Voices Tool Kit

Paula noted the Saskatoon Speaks Tool Kit for this evening has been condensed from 8 hours down to 2 hours to accommodate the meeting time.

The Saskatoon Speaks video was viewed by the committee.

Mark Emmons

A dialogue about the future

- Our discussion today is about the future, your future, your children's future, your neighbour's future, and the future of people who will decide to make this city their home.
- It is important to share your thoughts with the group today, but also, listen and learn from others.
- The process is about inclusive participation.

Visioning

The process of creating a vision for the city is a 4 phased process:

1. It began in May with Urban Strategies, retained to assist the city in preparing the vision, interviewing key municipal departments on challenges and opportunities facing the city.
2. In June, the discussion was broadened to include key community stakeholders and leaders in the community such as the University of Saskatchewan and the Saskatoon Tribal Council.
3. Many of you may have attended the City Summit in September and October which brought many people together to consider key directions for the future of the city.
4. What we hear today will help to establish a vision, goals and strategies.

The vision, goals and strategies will be explored and tested prior to preparing the draft vision to be presented to the community at a second city summit in February or March.

The Vision outcomes will be:

- a broad set of collective aspirations for the future
- an understanding of what is important
- goals to incorporate into the Strategic Plan,
- and new relationships and partnerships

Here's what we are going to do today.....

- The first presentation will look at how the city has changed over the last 130 years and set the stage for your perceptions on Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities
- The second presentation will focus on 7 important city building themes, such as shaping growth, or the environment and provide you with some background information prior to breaking into groups to address a set of questions in each of the theme areas

Mark reviewed the "Saskatoon – yesterday to today" PowerPoint.

Today, Saskatoon has much going for it and there are many exciting things underway. But, as with every city, there are issues to address and work to be done.

Strengths Exercise, Karen Butler

Mark said that Varsity View LAP Committee member Karen Butler would lead an exercise for the group in identifying strengths, challenges and opportunities for the city.

Karen outlined the exercise and asked the group to list a handful of examples for each category/question.

It's time to talk about what the future can bring. Cities that comprehensively plan for change and direct it to strengthen core assets, address challenges and captures new opportunities are best able to ensure future prosperity, the well-being of its citizens and a high quality of life for all. Consider Saskatoon's history, how we have grown and where we are today and then answer the following questions:

1. What are Saskatoon's greatest strengths or assets?

- River – Meewasin Valley – oak forest
- University
- Innovation Place – draws a creative class
- Farmers market – for food and social
- Public library system
- Agricultural land in middle of city

2. What are the key challenges that lie ahead?

- Poverty – there is a huge problem with poverty in the city and this leads to social problems
- Traffic
- Urban sprawl – density – second most spread out city of people per square acre
- Architecture of city is poor – loss of heritage funding, infill - ministry
- The inability of the City to regulate the architectural guidelines for infill.

3. What opportunities should the vision pursue?

- Take opportunity to keep what we have – preserve; clean water, clean air, urban forest
- Save heritage buildings like St. Mary's School
- Look at Enbridge pipe line in Outlook – pipes need replacing as they are past their due date or could damage the environment
- More affordable housing needed
- Look into why so much poverty
- Students come to U of S from all over the world, walking , cycling, transportation – need to look at helping these students get around safely
- Opportunity to engage First Nation
- Cold weather city – best in the world
- Visioning – healthy city, active city
- Should we grow out
- Attend to neighbourhoods that already exist i.e. playgrounds need updates - Paula noted this is what the LAP is currently doing, reviewing what needs to be done in more established neighbourhoods
- Opportunity to improve democratic process

Paula Kotasek

Opportunities and Directions for the Future

Purpose of this session:

- Highlight unique characteristics and strengths of Saskatoon
- Acknowledge challenges and identify opportunities
- Consider what other cities are doing
- Begin to identify important elements for the vision

This presentation looks at the unique characteristics of Saskatoon as they relate to each individual theme.

There are 7 inter-related ‘city building’ themes that the vision must address:

The Economy

Where do you think Saskatoon’s future economic opportunities lie?

What should we be working on to reinforce and diversify the economy?

Social Well-being

How do we plan and grow a city for everyone – people of all ages, incomes, cultures and abilities?

The Environment

Should Saskatoon strive to be one of the greenest cities in Canada? In the world?

What will it take?

Recreation and Culture

What will make Saskatoon even more culturally vibrant and enhance leisure and recreation opportunities?

Shaping Growth

What might ‘balanced growth’ look like in Saskatoon?

Where are the opportunities for infill?

Moving Around

What is your vision for moving around in Saskatoon?

The City Centre

What is your vision for the City Centre?

The attendees were asked to pick two topics they wanted to talk about further. They were divided into groups to discuss three of the seven topics and answered a list of questions together in their group. The three themes discussed were Moving Around, The Environment, and The Economy.

Moving Around

What is working well in terms of moving around in Saskatoon?

- Number of major arteries; Idylwyld Bridge finally open again. 4 bridges; Sharrows; Bus routes

What are the key challenges facing the City's transportation system in the future?

- Bus routes – timing, not dependable; Lack of bus shelters – aesthetic/clean bus shelters; River – Trying to get across – walking/busing/driving; CP Rail – should be located outside of city; Doughnut development – challenge to get into city

Based on the above responses, how would you rate moving around in Saskatoon overall?

- Poor, but leaning towards Fair

What type of transportation system should we build to accommodate the future needs of a growing city?

- City could use more bike paths – needs to tie together parks/links without using major roadways (safety concerns).

What is your vision for moving around this city by car?

- Carpooling; Better bus transportation

What are the components of an attractive, effective public transit system that would provide a viable alternative to the car?

- LRT supported by bus system – A bus trip can't take 1.5 hours to get somewhere; Make a bus pass part of the tax system and provide all citizens with bus passes to encourage transit use.

What can we do to encourage more walking and cycling?

- Safety; More sidewalks; Neighbourhood walking buses

What is needed to make Saskatoon easier to get around for people of all ages and abilities?

- Better/safer walking on Broadway bridge, especially for seniors; Adopt age alive policy – if a young person can move around, then a senior can move around; Drop down sidewalks

The Environment

What are the positive things going on in Saskatoon to support the health of the environment?

- MVA; Starting to discuss recycling; Recognizing the importance of the urban forest

What are the most important environmental issues facing Saskatoon?

- Garbage/Recycling; Urban sprawl; Protecting water supply and quality; Improving energy efficiency of older housing stock such as alternate energy sources, City support of financial grants (Varsity View in particular), allow gardening on boulevards (Varsity View in particular)

Based on the above responses, how would you rate our environmental health overall?

- Good

What steps can we take as a community to reduce the total amount of resources we consume to live our lives (that is, our ecological footprint)?

- Grants & research for reducing energy impact of older houses; Decreasing amount of parking; Better infrastructure for cycling; Light rail transit/trolleys

Based on the above, what are the top priorities to enhance Saskatoon's environment?

- Preserve urban forest; Improve recycling

The Economy

What are the greatest strengths of Saskatoon's economy?

- Resource-based; University-influences; Booming

What are the greatest challenges that Saskatoon faces in sustaining economic growth?

- How to diversify; How to add value to current natural resources; Attracting and retaining youthful workforce

In light of our changing demographics what should we do to build a sustainable workforce in the future?

- Pre-school education; K-12; Welcome immigration; Public education

What will continue to make Saskatoon a competitive city for business?

- Ensure corporate community responsibility to growth

4. Closing Remarks

Mark noted there is no Community Association meeting on December 15 and there is a possibility that the school will not be available. If the meeting cannot take place on this date do we want to reschedule it for another date in December or adjourn until the January meeting?

Committees agreed if the meeting could not take place on December 15 it should not be rescheduled and just meet in the New Year.

Paula thanked everyone for coming out to the meeting. You are making your neighbourhood better for all. Your participation is crucial to the success of this project.

5. Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 15, 2010
Topic: Heritage & Culture

Meeting adjourned: 9:45 pm