Terms of Reference
Future Growth Strategy Group

Background

For several years the City of Saskatoon (the City) has been experiencing higher than usual growth, and from 2005 to 2007, city wide building permit activity more than doubled from roughly 790 to approximately 1,750 units per year (City of Saskatoon, Monthly Building Permit Report). This demand for housing within the Saskatoon market has spurred the building and development community to exert pressure on both City Council and Administration to ensure that there is a readily available source of developable land. The City has responded by instituting an aggressive Three-Year Land Development Program (2007 – 2009), whereby 1,890 lots are projected to be serviced in 2008, and an additional 1,631 lots are projected to be serviced in 2009.

City Administration prides itself in being a well-planned municipality, and there is also considerable internal pressure within the organization to remain a well-planned community with technically and financially sound growth plans. This sentiment resonates in the City's Development Plan Bylaw No. 7799.

The City has prepared for future growth and in 2000, City Planning Branch prepared a comprehensive growth plan titled, Future Growth of Saskatoon. The principles of growth and development contained within this document are well developed and researched, and the sectors identified for future growth are still relevant.

However, over the last eight years, a number of factors affecting growth and development have changed. The strong real estate market has created considerable demand for housing, and coupled with a limited supply, ensuing price increases have become an issue. Price escalations have not only affected the housing side of the industry, they have also affected the land development industry, as the cost of servicing new communities has risen substantially. The cost and sheer volume of growth has created consternation for a number of City Departments, as well as the land development industry. It has become increasingly difficult to determine development phasing, servicing strategies, and funds flow analysis for sectors and individual neighbourhoods. The cost implications are significant when examining this issue. It is important that the City refine its strategy for efficient new growth and development and also incorporate redevelopment and densification opportunities.

Mandate

The Future Growth Strategy Group has been created under the direction of the General Managers of Community Services Department and Infrastructure Services Department to resolve the growth issue. This will involve a comprehensive examination of the strategic sequence for land development (including brownfield and densification opportunities) and expansion into new suburban development areas (sectors) and neighbourhoods from 2010 to the limits of the City's identified future growth sectors.

Master Future Growth Plan

The commissioned group will consist of planning, engineering, and accounting staff from the City Planning Branch and the Municipal Engineering Branch, and the assembled team will be responsible for preparing a comprehensive Master Future Growth Plan (the Plan) that will examine all aspects of growth. The following facets of growth will provide the framework for the document: assumptions (demographics), land-use, environment, infrastructure, finance, and public consultation. Each of the individual facets will be examined in depth, and the respective professionals that comprise the group will focus on their area of expertise. The Future Growth Section of the City Planning Branch will lead the development of the Master Future Growth Plan, and ensure that an interdisciplinary approach is used in its formulation.

Methodology

In order to have a Plan that is sustainable and adheres to the policy direction stipulated within the Development Plan Bylaw No. 7799, it will be necessary to examine growth within the context of compact city form and overall incremental densification of the City. New growth and development on the City's periphery is an integral part of growth; however, it should not preclude brownfield and densification opportunities.

As a result of this holistic approach to future growth, the team proposes to examine three different, yet probable, growth scenarios. The first scenario modeled will exclusively examine greenfield neighbourhoods on large tracts of land that have never been developed. The entire build-out will assume new construction, and this iteration will act as a baseline from which comparisons can be made with the other two scenarios modeled.

The second scenario will include large brownfield redevelopments in the growth model. An example of this type of development would be the redevelopment of the City Yards and additional housing development in the Downtown. The team will examine how this type of redevelopment could affect the growth of the greenfield scenario, and then the group will quantitatively analyse the financial impacts for the City.

The third scenario will model greenfield, brownfield, and densification of existing neighbourhoods. As the City grows and matures, new development will continue to occur within existing neighbourhoods. With the addition of more population to these existing areas of the city, infrastructure will need to be upgraded and these capital expenditures could in turn constrain potential growth of greenfield neighbourhoods.

By making City Council and Senior Administration aware of the various growth options and the resulting consequences of certain growth models, more informed decisions should result with regards to the future growth and development of the City of Saskatoon.

Plan Assumptions

The basis or framework for this Plan will rely on key assumptions that will be made from the outset of the planning process. These assumptions will fundamentally affect the entire exercise,

and will therefore, need endorsement from the General Managers and members of the Executive Committee. These assumptions will most likely change the ultimate time frame for population build-out stipulated in the Future Growth of Saskatoon. The Plan assumptions will also be used to illustrate the growth and development of industrial and commercial lands. Listed below are the specific terms that will be reviewed as part of this exercise:

- Growth Rate**:** This is a critical assumption that will need to be as accurate as possible. This will be challenging, as it is difficult to predict whether or not the recent growth trends will persist into the foreseeable future. The 2001 City of Saskatoon Population, by Neighbourhood has low - 1.3 percent, medium – 1.4 percent, and high – 1.55 percent growth rates. Yet, last year the growth rate was approximately 1.9 percent (Statistics Canada).

- Density**:** The City's current density target (outlined in the Development Plan Bylaw No. 7799) of five units per acre is towards the low end of industry standards. Communities in the Calgary region are aiming for eight to 12 units per acre in order to curb urban sprawl, make more efficient use of infrastructure, and provide for a more diversified housing choice in the market place. The density target was examined as part of the New Neighbourhood Design and Development Standards Project, which will be submitted to City Council in the near future. Proposed increases to the density target would be addressed as part of the capital project to review the Development Plan Bylaw No. 7799.

- Population Density**:** To support potentially higher densities in the future, Infrastructure Services Department will need to base their calculations on a higher population density than the traditional 35 persons per gross hectare (this equates to approximately 5.7 units per acre). The population density selected should have enough capacity built into the system, to ensure that there is some flexibility in the Plan to allow for brownfield development and densification of existing neighbourhoods. Industrial and commercial population densities will also be examined as part of this exercise, to see if any changes need to be made with regards to developing these types of land uses. This examination will also look at 'wet' and 'dry' industrial uses, as these have different impacts on the City's infrastructure systems.

- Population per Household**:** It is important to know the most current, as well as future trends with regards to this assumption. Family structures are changing and many baby boomers are retiring. It will be necessary to forecast how household compositions will affect future housing styles and types, and the make-up of future neighbourhoods.

Land Use Planning

This long-range planning exercise will be premised upon the core fundamental values outlined in the Development Plan Bylaw No. 7799. Saskatoon needs to be a sustainable community, and one that ensures the "efficient use of land, infrastructure, and other resources in managing the City and accommodating growth and change" (Section 2.1 d) Development Plan Bylaw No. 7799).

The long-range planning component for this project will focus on the timely and efficient development of Suburban Development Areas (SDA's). The three residential-based sectors (Blairmore, North East, and East) were established in the Future Growth of Saskatoon, and will be planned around the SDA format of eight to ten neighbourhoods comprising at least 50,000 people per SDA. Long-range planning for these sectors are in various stages of the planning process and the creation of this Plan will aid in the timely and effective planning of these areas. The Group will also examine the development of primarily non-residential sectors, such as the North Industrial and Southwest sectors, as these tracts of land can be expected to play a key role in the future development of the City. The specific planning elements for this project are listed below:

Development Phasing

- Creation of development phasing (neighbourhoods and timing): neighbourhoods should be developed in time frames (zero to five years, five to 15 years etc.)
- Amending the Development Plan Phasing Map, in accordance with a rationale to be largely determined by financial cost of servicing. (All other considerations for phasing of development will follow Policy 3.2.2 b) of the Development Plan Bylaw No. 7799).

Sector Planning

- Comprehensive land use planning for large tracts of land
- Development area
- Design concepts and principles (Incorporation of approved recommendations from the New Neighbourhood Design and Development Standards Project)
- Land use statistics

Annexation

- Determination of when land within the Rural Municipality of Corman Park should be brought within City limits.

Environmental

Developing large tracts of land will change the environmental landscape, and in order to be a sustainable city, it will be necessary to consider environmental protection measures. There are definite costs to protecting the environment and these should be considered when development phasing rationales are being created. Future growth should not compromise the health of our urban environment for future generations. Below are the environmental elements that should be examined as part of this master planning exercise:

Meewasin Development Review Zone

- Final establishment of this area will need to be finalized.

Wetlands

- A Wetland Policy (Capital Project P2390) will need to be formulated to ensure complicated ecosystems are not impacted in an adverse manner.

- This policy will need to be compatible with the master drainage portion of the stormwater management component of this Plan.

Infrastructure

It is also proposed that this Plan take an infrastructure-based approach. This type of practical approach will be necessary, as the systems constructed will have a significant influence on where, when, and how growth will occur. It is highly recommended that this component of the Plan be as detailed as possible and improve upon the limitations of the dated Future Growth servicing study prepared in 1988. In-house engineering expertise will be required to handle this component of the Plan, as previous consultant feasibility studies conducted for the East and North East Sectors have been costly and already require updating. The engineering portion of the project will include detailed illustrations mapping out supply and distribution systems and will be coupled with engineering assumptions, models, and calculations.

This comprehensive engineering report will identify what major infrastructure is needed and will allow the City to review servicing options and then select the option that is preferred from both a technical and financial basis. New growth has down stream effects, and this Plan will also examine existing infrastructure to make sure that functioning systems can handle additional capacity, as well as identify potential large scale brownfield redevelopment opportunities. As noted above, this engineering component will also look into densification activity in existing neighbourhoods and will provide information as to how this type of evolving development could impact the City's infrastructure capacities.

Finance

City Council has two core issues with regards to capital budgeting:

> "how to finance its capital program, and how to assess the impact of not proceeding with a capital program that is necessary to meet expansionary needs and to protect the existing infrastructure" (Ten-Year Capital Deficiency Discussion Paper 2007-2016).

This is a critical question that will need to be addressed, and the creation of this Plan should provide some detailed analysis that will enable City Council to make more informed decisions about how to spend the City's resources. The Plan will more accurately inform City Council and Administration as to the magnitude of possible shortfalls, the timing of shortfalls, and possible financial strategies to address any shortfalls.

To assign the capital costs associated with providing new infrastructure, a detailed capital analysis will form part of this Plan. By allocating capital costs for development projects, City Council and Administration will be able to budget for growth, and rational decisions can be made about development phasing. The capital costs and costing of upgrades for the following infrastructure components will need to be analyzed:

- Water supply and distribution systems (e.g. treatment plants, reservoirs, distribution pump stations, and distribution and transmission mains)
- Sanitary sewerage system
- Stormwater management
- Transportation network (e.g. roadways, interchanges, and bridge crossings)

Plan Process

Consultation for the Plan should occur throughout the planning process and should include key stakeholders and the community at large. Requests for endorsement of the Plan's key assumptions, and regular reports on the status of the Plan will be submitted to key Administrators and City Council members through mechanisms including the General Managers, Executive Committee, and the Development Review Committee.

Regular external consultation should occur when the necessary internal process has taken place. The Rural Municipality of Corman Park, for example, will be a key stakeholder as much of the land in the identified future growth sectors is currently in their jurisdiction. Other key stakeholders include First Nations with Treaty Land Entitlement holdings and/or Reserves, Meewasin Valley Authority, University of Saskatchewan, Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure, PotashCorp, SaskWater, Municipal Engineering Planning and Design Committee, Technical Planning Commission (which includes the utility companies and the school divisions), Developers' Liaison Committee, and Municipal Planning Commission.

Residents of Saskatoon should also be informed of the City's potential long-range plans, and have a mechanism to voice any potential concerns. The public consultation process for sector plans, which includes meetings with landowners, public open houses, and public hearings will serve as a template for the process for this Plan.

Finally, the Plan will be submitted to City Council for review and approval.