

TO: Secretary, Executive Committee
FROM: General Manager, Community Services Department
DATE: May 28, 2008
SUBJECT: Terms of Reference: Future Growth Strategy Group
FILE NO: PL. 4110-12-6

RECOMMENDATION: that a report be submitted to City Council recommending:

- 1) that the attached Terms of Reference for the Future Growth Strategy Group be endorsed; and
- 2) that the Future Growth Strategy Group be directed to begin working on a Master Future Growth Plan.

BACKGROUND

In early 2008, the General Managers identified the need to create a Future Growth Strategy Group (the Group) to ensure that the City of Saskatoon (the City) continues to take a well-planned, technically sound, and fiscally prudent approach to growth and development. This approach has not only ensured efficient and effective municipal operations, it has also created a positive climate for economic development.

The Group will consist of planning, engineering, and accounting staff from the City Planning Branch and the Municipal Engineering Branch. Over the next three to five years, the assembled team will prepare a Master Future Growth Plan (the Plan). The proposed Terms of Reference for the Group is attached. (See Attachment 1.)

Over the short term, the Group has recognized that there are some time constraints attached to the completion of projects such as the East Sector Plan and the review of the Blairmore Sector Plan. To move these projects forward in a timely manner, while maintaining key links to the Master Future Growth Plan, members of the Group will be working on the projects simultaneously or will be working closely with the staff leading the Sector Plans.

REPORT

Over the last few years, the City of Saskatoon has been dealing with accelerated growth. The cost and sheer volume of growth has created consternation for a number of City Departments and the land development industry, as 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.

The Group has been created under the direction of the General Managers of the 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 redevelopment opportunities) and expansion into new suburban development areas (sectors) and neighbourhoods, from 2010 to the limits of the City's identified future growth sectors.

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 Group proposes to examine three different, yet probable, growth scenarios. The first scenario modelled 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 modelled.

The second scenario will include large brownfield redevelopments in the growth model. Examples 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.

In formulating the Terms of Reference, the Group considered a number of different growth scenarios before deciding on the current approach. One of the options considered was to limit the modelling to only greenfield development. This option was rejected by the members of the Group, as it was believed that by only modelling this scenario, it would not provide City Council or Senior Administration with an accurate or realistic view of what the City's growth options could be in the future.

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.

The assumptions and further information needed for the modelling and ensuing Plan are detailed in the attached Terms of Reference.

OPTIONS

1. (Recommended.) Recommend approval of the attached Terms of Reference, and recommend that the Group be directed to begin work on the Plan.
2. Decline to recommend approval of the attached Terms of Reference or to recommend that the Group be directed to begin work on the Plan. This option is not recommended because, in the opinion of the members of the Group, the Terms of Reference is an appropriate approach to reviewing and updating the City's long-term planning and development strategies. Also, delaying work on the Plan will have a negative effect on municipal operations and on the development industry, particularly in the current development climate.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

For this exercise, it will be essential that the proposed specifications within the new Engineering Standards Manual, a component of the New Neighbourhood Design and Development Standards Project, be agreed upon and approved. The mechanics within this document are integral for the modelling component of the Plan. Without the latest coefficients and specifications, determination of accurate threshold points needed for the assessment of major infrastructure, will not be possible. (The draft Engineering Standards Manual is incomplete at the present time; however, the estimated date of completion is fall of 2008). Also, a mutually consistent set of design standards applied to planning, development, and design activities should help avoid the capacity conflicts arising between older standards and contemporary land use. In addition, the engineering standards will provide the foundation for all engineering work that flows from the Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

As recently reported to City Council via the Planning and Operations Committee, it is estimated that the cost of the Group for three years will be approximately \$930,000, which will fund additional planning and engineering staff resources. The Group's work will benefit the community as a whole; therefore, approximately 40 percent of the cost of the Group will be funded from current operations. The remaining 60 percent of the cost will be funded from an increase to the planning levy rate. The 2008 rate was approved by City Council on May 5, 2008. This levy rate will be reviewed annually in conjunction with the annual review of all levy rates. The continued need for the Group will be reviewed at the end of 2010.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

The Developers' Liaison Committee has been advised that the Group has been created. The Committee has acknowledged the merits of the Group's work and expressed an interest in regular updates on the Group's activities. A complete description of the proposed stakeholder involvement in the Plan is set out in the attached Terms of Reference.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice, pursuant to Section 3 of City of Saskatoon Policy C01-021 (Public Notice Policy), is not required.

ATTACHMENT

1. Terms of Reference: Future Growth Strategy Group

Written by: Mitch Comb, Senior Planner 1

Reviewed by: “Alan Wallace”/for
Lorne Sully, Manager
City Planning Branch

Approved by: “Paul Gauthier”
Paul Gauthier, General Manager
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Dated: “June 5, 2008”

Approved by: “Gaston Gourdeau”/for
Murray Totland, General Manager
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Dated: “June 6, 2008”

Approved by: “Phil Richards”
Phil Richards, City Manager
Dated: “June 6, 2008”

cc: His Worship the Mayor