

# TRANSIT VILLAGES ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

November 2017 - May 2019

## Engagement Process

To better understand current issues and to guide the level of development at future Transit Village sites, City staff engaged with multiple stakeholders between October of 2017 and May 2019. Residents, land and business owners, development industry and community groups all played a role in shaping the direction of the Transit Villages Report through participation in multiple engagement events.

There have been 14 stakeholder meetings and five public engagement events that have sought feedback on the content and directions for the Transit Villages Report.

## Feedback Themes

Throughout the project process there were multiple opportunities for engagement and discourse between the project team, stakeholders and Saskatoon residents. Over the course of these events, several important themes were discussed. These ideas informed and guided the project team's work in preparing the Transit Village Report.



### Identified Themes:

- **A Bold Vision and Identity:**
  - The community should be involved in shaping the Transit Village Plans as they play an important role for the entire city.
  - Transit Villages need to be bold and unique places within the city, and very walkable.
- **Sustainability and Resilience:**
  - Integrate a range of travel modes, including bicycles, as well as walking, transit and vehicles.
  - Transit Villages should be more sustainable, compact and walkable.
  - Integrate sustainable technologies in the Transit Villages.
- **Mixed Uses and Development Character:**
  - Support a range of land uses - people are interested in more diverse amenities, services, and employment opportunities.
  - Build up and move away from low-density development.
  - Provide sufficient density to encourage redevelopment, while creating a welcoming and beautiful place.
- **Public Realm and BRT:**
  - The BRT, local buses and the public realm should all offer a smooth, comfortable and enjoyable experience for users.
  - Provide more cycling infrastructure and connections.
  - Transit Villages should define a unique sense of place that contributes to and enhances citizens' experience of the BRT.
- **Manage Parking Supply:**
  - Manage parking supply and demand more effectively, including through pay parking.
  - Current zoning requires an excessive amount of parking spaces and limits redevelopment.
  - Consolidate surface parking to parking structures or underground.
- **Urban Integration:**
  - Phase growth so that the Transit Village feels complete over the short and medium term and not like a construction site.
  - Respect the Character of surrounding communities, and complement them.
  - Integrate with surrounding areas through an interconnected and multi-modal movement network.

### Stakeholders

The identified project stakeholders, communication techniques and engagement participation is listed in Table 1. Often the exact number of attendees by each stakeholder group is unknown; this is a limitation of the self-recorded event sign-in sheet. However the goal to provide the opportunity for identified stakeholders to be informed, provide feedback and influence the project outcomes was achieved based on engagement activities. Further opportunity for stakeholder engagement will occur during future phases of the project.



Table 1: Stakeholders

Identified Stakeholders		Communication Technique	Attendance or Response
Public	General Public	Radio, posters/billboards, social media, and City website	Members of the general public were in attendance at events
Development Industry	Developers Liaison Committee (DLC) – Infill Subcommittee	Request to speak at the committee meeting was sent to the Chair	Presented at meeting
	Developers	Sent invites to events via email and mail	Developers were in attendance at events
Businesses	All businesses located within the study areas	Personal phone calls and sent invites via mail and email	Business owners were in attendance at events
Landowners	Commercial landowners within the study areas	Personal phone calls and sent invites via mail and email	Landowners were in attendance at events

As indicated in Table 1, businesses and land owners within the study area were identified as stakeholders. The red bounded area on the Transit Villages Area Map (Figure 1) shows the portion of the study area that received invites to engagement events. Further stages of the project will include engagement with all stakeholders within the applicable study areas.

Figure 1: Aerial Map of Locations



*Figure 2 (clockwise from right):  
University Heights Commercial Centre  
Confederation Suburban Centre  
The Centre Mall*



## Engagement Strategy

The project team engaged with stakeholder groups (land and business owners and development industry) and the general public between November 2017 and May 2019.

Engagement activities included fourteen stakeholder meetings and five public engagement events. These engagement opportunities sought feedback on the land owners long-term aspirations, as well as development of the Transit Villages Report, including the guiding Vision and Planning Principles.

As redevelopment of Transit Villages will be undertaken with private investment, the Project Team developed a strategy to prioritize focused, one-on-one meetings with land owners to allow them to be candid regarding their aspirations and concerns, without sharing their business objectives with competing land owners. Likewise, several public pop-up engagement events were planned inside the malls at Transit Village sites to speak directly to the current users of these commercial centres, as well as those who regularly use transit services, in order to gather their feedback and understand their concerns.

A summary of the engagement activities that have been completed, the stakeholders that were engaged, the level of engagement, the goals and outcomes are included in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Engagement Strategy

Engagement Activity	Stakeholders	Level of Participation	Objective/Goal	Engagement Outcome
Stakeholder Meeting	Land owners	Inform/Consult	To provide information on the project and to obtain feedback on land owners' long term development aspirations.	Feedback received resulted in changes to the scope of work. Due to limited interest/participation from land owners and longer term redevelopment timelines, the project began to focus on creating a framework for redevelopment rather than detailed development plans. Additionally, some participants commented that they thought this project was related to the transit terminal. Consequently, project language was altered to stress that this project involves redevelopment of these sites into mixed-use, transit-oriented communities.
Targeted Stakeholder Workshop	Land owners Business owners Developers Realtors	Consult/Collaborate	To develop a vision and planning principles for how these sites should be redeveloped in the future.	Through workshops and design charrettes, a draft vision and set of planning principles were developed.
Pop-Up Engagement Events	Public	Inform/Consult	To provide information and obtain feedback.	Met the objective of sharing information and recorded comments received during discussions. The draft vision and set of planning principles were shared with the public. Feedback from those that interacted was generally supportive of the draft vision and planning principles.
Come & Grow 2018	Public	Inform/Consult	To provide information and obtain feedback.	Met the objective of sharing information and recorded comments received during discussions. The draft vision and set of planning principles were shared with the public. Feedback from those that interacted was generally supportive of the draft vision and planning principles.
Come & Grow 2019	Public	Inform	To provide information on the project.	Met the objective of sharing information and recorded comments received during discussions. Feedback received showed support for the report recommendations and demonstration plans.
Focused Landowner Meetings	Land owners	Consult	To gather feedback on the draft Transit Villages Report.	Feedback received provided direction to show less detail and to allow for more landowner flexibility.

## Engagement Activities

The engagement activities that occurred between November 2017 and May 2019 are summarized in Table 3. Through these events and meetings, more than 600 people were able learn about Transit Villages and share their opinions and ideas.

Date	Engagement Activity	Description	Participation Numbers
November 2017	Land owner Meetings	The Project Team met with land owners from Transit Village sites to present the project and to hear what their long term aspirations were.	16
January 2018	Stakeholder Workshop	The Project Team met with land and business owners, developers, and realtors to workshop and collaborate and how these sites should be redeveloped. Attendees were broken out into several groups and asked what their vision for these sites is as part of redevelopment. Then, a set of planning principles were created between groups to help achieve the drafted vision. Participants were then given large trace sheets to draw redevelopment plans to demonstrate the above vision and principles.	11
January 2018	Pop-Up Engagement Events	The Project Team hosted a pop-up public event in a store front at Confederation Mall over two days. Participants were presented information about the project and were asked to provide information on how they envision these sites being redeveloped. Feedback gathered on interactive display boards included desired built form and density, what land uses they would like to see, integration with BRT, and how to make these sites pedestrian friendly.	55
March 2018	Focused Land Owner Meetings	In order for land owners to be candid, the Project Team met one-on-one with major land owners to provide feedback on the proposed vision and principles for their property.	7
March 2018	Come & Grow 2018	340 people attended this multi-project Growth Plan public engagement event. Attendees provided written comments on display boards relating to built form and density, public realm, and land use options.	340
March 2018	Pop-Up Engagement Event	The Project Team hosted a pop-up public event at Centre Mall for an afternoon. Participants were presented information about the project and were asked to provide information on how they envision these sites being redeveloped. Feedback gathered on interactive display boards included desired built form and density, public realm, and land use options.	36
January 2019	Come & Grow 2019	177 attended this multi-project public engagement event that focused on future growth of Saskatoon. The Project Team sought feedback gathered on interactive display boards on proposed built form and densities, public realm components, and land uses.	177
March to May 2019	Focused Land Owner Meeting	With the draft Transit Villages report completed, the Project Team met with individual land owners to ensure the components outlined in the report met their expectations and aspirations.	13

## Description of Engagement Events

### Landowner Meetings (November 2017)

**Approach:** This was the first opportunity for the Project Team to present the idea and scope of work to land owners. Despite mailing and emailing invitations, the Project Team received few responses from land owners to attend the event. Personalized phone calls were made to each land owner within the study area to briefly explain the project, how it would affect their property, and to personally invite them to the event.

**Feedback Received:** Through the phone calls, feedback was received that many thought the project was related to the existing transit terminal and did not know it involved redevelopment of these commercial centres. As this was the Project Team's first meeting with land owners, it also allowed us to hear what long-term plans and aspirations they have for these sites and where the objectives of this project could align with their vision. In several instances, land owners expressed their desire to diversify their commercial holdings and incorporate mixed-use development, but are presently limited by restrictive zoning requirements towards permitted uses, allowable density and high minimum parking requirements. The Project Team also heard from land owners who were happy to hear the City was trying to be proactive by developing plans for these commercial centres; however, many land owners were not ready at this point in time to commit to a detailed development plan. Instead, they preferred to have the Project Team create the ingredients for redevelopment for when they were ready to reinvest in their holdings

**Outcome:** As a result of confusion from the event invites, the Project Team reviewed the language used for further correspondence to emphasize the large-scale redevelopment opportunities and how they could affect their future development plans. From this point forward the Project Team has given special consideration to the language used for all correspondence to ensure stakeholders are aware of the total scope of work for the project. As a result of feedback received that land owners were not yet ready to create detailed

development plans, the project shifted instead to focus on a framework for redevelopment.

### Stakeholder Workshops (January 2018)

**Approach:** In order to workshop as a group to form a vision for these sites, this event was broadened to include land and business owners within the study area, as well as land developers and realtors. Participants were split into groups and asked to develop a vision statement for how Transit Villages should look and function in the future. Following this, each group was tasked with creating a list of steps needed to achieve their vision. Groups were then asked to use trace paper and sketch plans for Transit Villages that demonstrated the Vision and Planning Principles.

**Feedback Received:** Through these groups, themes emerged of how participants viewed the vision for these sites. Themes that were heard often included: Transit Villages should be bold and unique; compact and walkable; have their own separate character; be multi-modal; incorporate a sense of place through public realm design; manage parking supply more effectively; and, integrate well with surrounding communities





**Outcome:** Ultimately, participants worked together to help create the project’s draft Vision Statement and Planning Principles. These resulted in becoming the guiding foundation that provides a framework for redevelopment of these sites. The trace paper sketches were also consolidated and professionally designed by the Project Team to help illustrate one way redevelopment could take place if the Vision and Planning Principles were applied. These sketches resulted in the creation of Conceptual and Demonstration Plans for each Transit Village.

**Public Pop-Up Open House Events (January 2018)**

**Approach:** The Project Team held two full days of pop-up events inside a vacant commercial unit within Confederation Mall. The pop-up open house showcased the draft Vision and Principles, as well as the demonstration plan sketches, from the previous Stakeholder Workshop. The objective of the pop-up open house was to gather feedback from the users of the mall, including customers, mall tenants and business owners, transit users, and residents in the area. The

pop-up event was open from morning to evening, allowing the Project Team to gather feedback from a wide variety of residents – elderly citizens who meet at the food court each morning for coffee, young families who shop during the day, transit commuters who wait in the mall for their transfers, high school students who arrive after school, and others who shop in the evening. In addition to being asked to provide feedback on the draft Vision and Principles and demonstration plans, participants also used sticky notes to respond to specific questions on interactive display boards, including: land use and density options, public realm components, interaction with transit, and community character.

**Feedback Received:** Feedback from this event highlighted that participants value comfortability while accessing public transit and that a pedestrian-friendly environment was of high importance. We also heard that Transit Villages should explore opportunities for creating linkages and connectivity to adjacent neighbourhoods and services.



**Outcome:** The received feedback resulted in reinforcing the Principles that would include a grid street network and a built-form that was human scale and contained weather-protecting elements. Additionally, participants often shop and run their daily errands while they connect buses, which resulted in the Project Team including high-quality public spaces where users could linger and enjoy themselves, as well as providing a mixture of land uses that would serve their daily needs.

### **Focused Meetings with Landowners (March 2018)**

*Approach:* Individual meetings were held with land owners to gather feedback on the content and direction of the draft report completed to that date. The majority of land owners had already attended engagement events, but it was also an opportunity to meet with other land owners who could not make previous events. The one-on-one nature of the meetings provided an opportunity for individual land owners to be candid with the Project Team about their plans and aspirations for their property without sharing it with competing land owners.

*Feedback Received:* Throughout the meetings, the Project Team continually heard support for land owners to have flexibility in the redevelopment of their properties and not be locked into a specific design plan.

*Outcome:* This resulted in the Project Team continuing to create a development framework rather than strict, detailed plans that land owners would not have flexibility in.

### **Public Open House “Come & Grow” (March 2018)**

*Approach:* This event was held to update the community on progress made towards the Growth Plan. 341 members of the public attended. Information was shared from multiple projects, including: BRT, Corridor Planning Program, and Transit Villages, among others. The Project Team gathered feedback via sticky notes on interactive display boards relating to the emerging conceptual planning framework, including the

Vision and Principles, and demonstration plans.

*Feedback Received:* The feedback received confirmed that participants showed support for the draft Vision and Principles and placed a high degree of value on walkability, mix of land uses and creating comfortable spaces.

*Outcome:* This resulted in the Project Team continuing with the draft Vision and Principles and strengthening the wording to provide walkability, a mix of land uses and an inviting public realm.

### **Public Pop-Up Open House (March 2018)**

*Approach:* This event was held for an afternoon and evening in the main walking corridor of Centre Mall. The objective of the event was two fold: a) to share and gather feedback on the same information presented at the Come & Grow event, but from people who typically do not attend City open house events, and b) to hear thoughts and concerns from the users of Centre Mall, including shoppers, mall tenants and transit users.

*Feedback Received:* The results confirmed that participants showed support for the draft Vision and Principles and placed a high degree of value on walkability, mix of land uses, and creating comfortable spaces. Several participants also noted how important spaces for dogs are. They noted that dog-friendly environments invite them to use the spaces more often and to stay longer.

*Outcome:* Feedback received resulted in the Project Team revising the design of park space illustrations on the demonstration plans to incorporate larger green areas where pet owners could use the space.



### Public Open House “Come & Grow” (January 2019)

**Approach:** Come & Grow 2019 included content from the Plan for Growth project team, along with teams from the Official Community Plan and the University Sector plan. Display boards were used to explain the project and to update the community on progress made. At this time, the Transit Villages Report was drafted and the display boards presented high-level information on the content. Participants had the opportunity to provide comments on the interactive display boards.

**Feedback Received:** Participants were supportive of the Principles and comfortable they would achieve the vision for future Transit Villages.

**Outcome:** The results confirmed that participants showed support for the report content. This resulted in the Project Team moving forward with the draft report and to plan individual meetings with landowners to gather their feedback on the draft report.

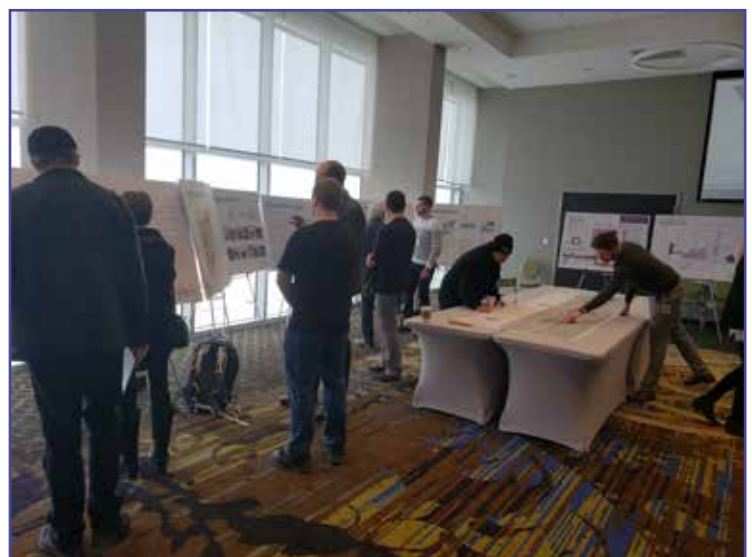
### Landowner Meetings (March to May 2019)

**Approach:** From March to May, individual meetings were held with landowners. The objective was to inform any landowners unaware of the plan, to update those landowners who were aware, and to gather feedback on the draft Report. The Project Team was able to meet with several land owners who had not participated in past events. Each meeting involved a high-level presentation on the overview of content from the draft Transit Villages Report, followed by an open discussion where each land owner could provide feedback.

**Feedback Received:** Despite not having current redevelopment plans, land owners were supportive of the project and liked the additional opportunities it may provide them in the future. While supportive of the Vision and Principles, some land owners had concerns with the Conceptual and Demonstration Plans as they worried they appear to be finalized plans that they would have to follow. It was explained that these were just illustrations to apply the Vision

and Principles, and the administration would work with land owners in the future to develop detailed plans they are supportive of. The land owners were supportive of this resolution, but requested wording in the Report to note that these visuals are not proposed development plans.

**Outcome:** The Project Team amended the report to include a statement under each visual to denote they are for illustrative purposes only.



## Limitations and Next Steps

Transit Villages engagement to date has reached a significant number of people and incorporated a variety of different tactics that were often well received by participants. Administration engaged with members of the public, business and land owners, and industry early and provided several opportunities to provide information and updates regarding the project.

All of the engagement activities seeking feedback was completed prior to the Council Policy on Public Engagement coming into effect in September 2019. As a result, there are some potential limitations to the data that was gathered and in some cases, it may not fully align with the City's new approach.

In general, limitations in qualitative data collection occur when events or activities seeking input are not able to capture a full representation of the stakeholder list. Some limitations in the data collection means the results may not necessarily reflect the broader population or invited stakeholders. In some situations, the way questions were asked or how data was evaluated could potentially cause an information bias. In the future, it will be important to identify stakeholder participation challenges as early as possible in the planning process or engagement activities to try and mitigate the risk of potential data limitations. It will also be important to evaluate each public engagement activity by seeking input from participants to ensure the objectives of each engagement event are being achieved.

New engagement strategies will continue to be developed for the Implementation Phase of Transit Villages. On-going engagement with land owners, members of the public and industry, as well as other important stakeholder groups including First Nations and Metis, newcomers, and people with mobility challenges will be important in the next steps.

