College Corridor Plan: Introductory Phase Engagement Report June–October 2021

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
What We Did and What We Heard	4
Virtual Introductory Meeting – September 22 nd , 2021	4
Follow-up Stakeholder Conversations	5
College Corridor Plan Introductory Survey – Sep. 22 nd to Oct. 22 nd , 2021	6
Survey respondent demographics	6
What connection do you have with the College Corridor?	7
College Corridor experiences, special characteristics and stories	8
College Corridor opportunities and future benefits	9
College Corridor challenges and concerns	11
Engagement Evaluation	13
Participant List	13
Next Steps	14

Introduction

The **College Corridor Plan** is the first corridor plan to be created by the City of Saskatoon (City) to guide future development along major streets, or *corridors* in Saskatoon. The purpose of the City's **Corridor Planning Program** is to fulfill the City's long-term vision for increased growth within the *Corridor Growth Area* located along major streets or corridors. Corridor Planning is aligned with the future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, and is guided by the City's **Official Community Plan (OCP)** and **Corridor Transformation Plan**. These overarching policy documents were approved and endorsed by City Council in 2020 and built upon the **Growth Plan to Half a Million** endorsed in 2016.

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Figure 1: College Corridor Plan study area.1



Figure 1 shows the College Corridor Plan's study area, referred to as the College segment of the Corridor Growth Area. It includes a swath of land that follows **College Drive** from the South Saskatchewan River to Preston Avenue, as well as along **Preston Avenue** through University of Saskatchewan-owned lands from 14th Street East to the Canadian Pacific Rail line. Temperance Street is the southern study area boundary in the Varsity View and Nutana neighbourhoods. It is not expected that all lands within the study area will see changes. Most of the change will be on lands closest to College Drive and Preston Avenue. If a property is included in the study area it simply means it is a part of the overall vision for the corridor.

Figure 2 illustrates how a corridor plan is developed. Phase 1, *Foundations*, includes a report on the corridor's existing or baseline conditions. Phase 2, *Plan*, includes multiple stages to explore land use options, public realm designs, infrastructure upgrades and to finalize a land use and zoning strategy. Phase 3, *Implementation*, involves creation of a funding strategy and an action plan for implementation.

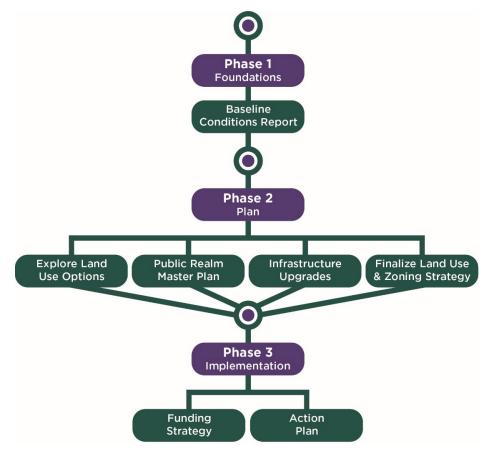
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Page 2 of 14

¹ For a larger, interactive map of the College Corridor Plan study area and the other corridor segments across Saskatoon, please refer to the <u>Interactive Corridor Growth Area Map</u> which is available through the project website <u>saskatoon.ca/engage/college-corridor-plan</u>.

Figure 2: Corridor plan process.



From June to October 2021 the project team completed the *Foundations* phase of the College Corridor Plan. The <u>College Corridor Background Report</u> provides the background and baseline data necessary to help understand the current conditions in and around the College Corridor Plan study area. It summarizes existing conditions and characteristics related to the area's history, contemporary plans, demographics, current land use, transportation and mobility, housing and neighbourhoods, parks, trails and open space as well as recreation and community facilities.

Working with the project team, the Saskatoon Heritage Society volunteered their time over the summer to provide additional considerations about heritage assets, viewscapes and stories about the College Corridor. The <u>Saskatoon Heritage Society inventory report</u> is available online and will be referenced when talking about land use and public realm in the College Corridor.

This **Introductory Phase Engagement Report** provides information on community engagement activities held for Phase 1 of the College Corridor Plan. These engagement results will be used with other background information, including the other reports noted above and input received previously from various community stakeholder groups, to help with the planning of the College Corridor. Please see the Next Steps section for more information.

As the College Corridor Plan is the City's first corridor plan and there are still some unknowns, this report simply presents information about who participated in the introductory phase and themes from the input received from participants.

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What We Did and What We Heard

Community engagement for Phase 1 of this project included:

- College Corridor Plan virtual introductory meeting;
- College Corridor Plan introductory survey;
- Follow-up individual stakeholder conversations; and,
- Email and phone communications.

In early 2021, through preliminary engagement with targeted community stakeholders, the project team heard that it is important to consider benefits and impacts to people beyond current area residents.² This includes how changes could benefit or impact people visiting the College Corridor from other places to use the health services provided by the Royal University Hospital and Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, or to attend or work at the University of Saskatchewan. The project team worked to reach as broad an audience as possible and to treat all voices equally.

In addition, community stakeholders had recommended that the project team should make participation as easy as possible by offering opportunities for input that are flexible and adaptable for different participants. The project team has consistently paired each public meeting with an online survey to accommodate people who are unable to attend the meeting.

The project team had planned for pop-up in-person engagement opportunities on the University campus and at the hospitals but was unable to host those opportunities due to ongoing pandemic concerns. Pop-up in-person engagement would have allowed for more direct engagement with people in the area that have less familiarity with City matters and are less likely to be already signed up for City communications.

The project team did hand-deliver at the start of September a physical flyer to all residences and businesses located south of College Drive within the study area, prior to the first virtual introductory meeting.

Virtual Introductory Meeting – September 22nd, 2021

The major event in Phase 1 was the official public launch – a virtual introductory meeting on September 22, 2021. The virtual meeting was held in a townhall style and attendees were anonymous by default for this meeting. During the meeting the project team:

- Discussed the background of Corridor Planning and the objectives and process for the College Corridor Plan;
- Talked about the preliminary findings regarding the College Corridor Plan area's existing or baseline conditions; and,
- Facilitated a question and answer session with participants.

During the meeting, approximately 40 separate devices signed into the meeting. Each device may represent one individual watching the meeting or multiple individuals sharing a device.

Video recordings of the meeting were added to the College Corridor Plan website and the City of Saskatoon's YouTube channel. As of mid-November, they have been viewed approximately 300 times.

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² Please refer to the Corridor Planning Preliminary Engagement Summary and Report for details.



Page 4 of 14

Questions from audience members during the meeting related to the following topics, which can be generally grouped into two large categories.

Questions regarding land use, density and development

- Impact from the University of Saskatchewan's plans for the College Quarter.
- Oversight for development on University of Saskatchewan endowment lands.
- Properties and views of heritage interest.
- Impact to residential properties near the intersection of Clarence Avenue and University Drive.
- Impact to the area west of Clarence Avenue (Saskatchewan Crescent and University Drive).
- Appropriate pace and scope of new development and densification.
- Mitigating the impact of densification on College Drive for residents of Elliott Street.
- Including space for future public housing.
- Lack of outdoor recreational green space, and any plans to increase it.
- Benefits of densification for current area residents.
- Architectural standards for infill properties within Varsity View neighbourhood.
- Status of proposed high-rise development at College Drive and Clarence Avenue.
- Communication from the City about how concerns regarding developments were addressed in previous processes.

Questions or suggestions on changes to the corridor and infrastructure improvements

- Burying of power lines along Preston Avenue.
- Multi-use pathway along College Drive.
- Methods of financing needed for infrastructure upgrades.
- Planned active transportation improvements from the City's Active Transportation Plan.
- Adding vegetation (ideally native and edible), urban greenery and biodiversity.
- Improvements for pedestrians to cross College Drive.
- Design of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system on College Drive and location of BRT stations.
- Design of the intersection of College Drive, Clarence Avenue, the University Bridge and Saskatchewan Crescent.

Follow-up Stakeholder Conversations

The project team had additional meetings with individual stakeholders after the public virtual introductory meeting.

The first meeting was with a volunteer with Renters of Saskatoon and Area (ROSA). They felt City processes favour homeowners and marginalize low-income renters, which is an equity issue. They felt there are more urgent concerns for low-income renters in Saskatoon. They would like to see the City prioritize working towards the completion of a rental housing strategy to address safety and quality of life issues and other human rights needs experienced by low-income renters, renters with disabilities and other marginalized renters, prior to the City's long-term planning projects. The project team suggested that some of ROSA's significant interests may be addressed by the City's Housing Analyst being connected to Corridor Planning conversations when possible, in addition to continuing the conversations with the Corridor Planning team. Specific to College Drive, the volunteer from ROSA noted that there are vulnerable and marginalized renters in the area. There is a need for safer rental housing options in all parts of the city and renters' needs for services and amenities should be supported. It was also noted that vulnerable and marginalized renters visiting the Royal University Hospital and University of

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Saskatchewan campus for subsidized health and other services need more diversity of affordable, accessible access beyond public transit, particularly for weather changes, like more accessible neighbourhood sidewalks and inclusive parking restriction signage.

The second meeting was with representatives of Bus Riders of Saskatoon (BRS). This meeting discussed suggestions for community engagement, such as providing more clarity about the plan process and upcoming activities. Also discussed were many ideas related to public transit, active transportation and public spaces. For example, BRS's representatives observed that many people find College Drive unpleasant for walking and cycling purposes and noted that it is likely to remain so in the future. Thus, people would prefer to walk and cycle elsewhere (for example, to get Downtown from campus), perhaps on the adjacent neighbourhood side streets or back lanes and on an extension of the University of Saskatchewan campus path network rather than directly along College Drive. Additionally, BRS's representatives mentioned that this land use plan also needs to identify and protect spaces from development that may be required for public uses such as walking, cycling and transit routes across College Drive. They also suggested that the College Corridor Plan should draw upon and integrate the many existing plans applicable to the College Corridor that were either done by the City, such as Local Area Plans and plans for the Field House and Merlis Belsher Place, or the University of Saskatchewan, such as the Campus Master Plan and plans for the College Quarter. Finally, BRS also reminded that the other major institutions in the area besides the University of Saskatchewan and sports complexes, namely the Royal University Hospital and Innovation Place, need to be fully integrated into the corridor plan.

College Corridor Plan Introductory Survey – Sep. 22nd to Oct. 22nd, 2021

The bulk of public feedback received during Phase 1 was received through the College Corridor Plan introductory survey which was open from September 22 until October 22, 2021.

Survey respondent demographics

The introductory survey received 170 responses in total. Respondents self-identified the following demographic details:

- Responded on behalf of an organization or association: 18 respondents (11%)
- Age:
 - Under 18: 1 respondent (1%)
 - 19 to 34: 33 respondents (19%)
 - o 35 to 49: 51 respondents (30%)
 - o 50 to 64: 46 respondents (27%)
 - o 65 to 79: 36 respondents (21%)
 - Over 80: 1 respondent (1%)
- Gender identity:
 - Female or woman: 75 respondents (44%)
 - Male or man: 80 respondents (47%)
 - Non-binary or gender fluid: 1 respondent (1%)
- Person with a disability: 17 respondents (10%)
- Member of a visible minority group: 11 respondents (6%)
- Indigenous person: 1 respondent (1%)

Optional demographic questions in the survey were asked to assess how accurately these demographics reflected the make-up of Saskatoon residents. This is a standard part of all City of Saskatoon community engagement processes.

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Comparing the self-identification results with Statistics Canada data³, there was a gap in reaching people with a disability, people who are members of a visible minority and people who are Indigenous.

What connection do you have with the College Corridor?

To understand what perspectives people were coming from, respondents were asked to indicate what *connection* they have with the College Corridor. Respondents could choose multiple options.

Table 1: Connections to the College Corridor.

Connection	Number	Percentage
I live here.	41	24%
I study here.	14	8%
I work here.	67	39%
I own property here.	20	12%
I own a business here.	7	4%
I visit the area for services and amenities –	90	53%
for example, health services or recreation.		
No physical connection but I have a personal, emotional,	26	15%
historical, or other connection.		
No connection to this area but interested.	16	9%
Other – this open option had responses such as:	22	13%
I live just outside the area.		
Family lives in or near the area.		
I travel through this area regularly.		
 Interested in developing in this area. 		

As Table 1 shows, many survey respondents indicated they visit the College Corridor for services and amenities and a sizeable number indicated they work here and/or they live here. A total of 50 respondents (29 percent) indicated that they live in, own a property and/or own a business, either directly within the College Corridor or just outside it (i.e., within the Varsity View neighbourhood but south of the study area boundary). Of those that said they live within or just outside the College Corridor, 23 respondents (14 percent) indicated that they live in/near the area but did not say that they own property. This could reflect that they rent in/near the College Corridor rather than own a home. 20 respondents (12 percent) said they both live in/near the area and own a property in the area.

Considering the significant presence of the University of Saskatchewan in the College Corridor, there were lower than anticipated numbers for respondents who indicated that they study, i.e., they are students, in the College Corridor area.

There were also low number of responses from businesses in the College Corridor. It has been more difficult to reach out to small businesses in the area due to constraints on in-person engagement; however, businesses along College Drive did receive the project team's hand-delivered flyer.

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³ 2016 Census data for Saskatoon: Visible minority population: 20%, Indigenous population: 11%. 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability data for Saskatoon: Population over 15 years of age with disabilities: 22%.

College Corridor experiences, special characteristics and stories

Three open-ended questions were the focus of the introductory survey. There were themes identified based on the answers to these questions.

Given that these questions invited open-ended answers rather than supplying individual options for respondents to choose from, it may be inaccurate to use this survey data to draw conclusions about the level of support or opposition for specific items. For that reason, this report highlights themes that were most commonly repeated, while also listing themes from a smaller number of respondents, without drawing distinctions between groupings of respondents.

The first open ended question was "What comes to mind when you think of the College Corridor?" This question was looking to discover what experiences, special characteristics, stories, histories or meanings people associate with the College Corridor. Table 2 shows the common themes. The top responses associated with the College Corridor were the University – both the campus and the agricultural research lands – and traffic issues for all users of the street.

Table 2: Top themes associated with the College Corridor.

What comes to mind when you think of the College Corridor?	Respondents who shared this theme
The University of Saskatchewan	61
Traffic and congestion	41
Many pedestrians, cyclists and transit users, but unpleasant and unsafe	27
University agricultural lands and associated open space	21
Historic area and built heritage – "old college" or "collegiate" feel, also the mature neighbourhood feel	17
The hospitals and other health services, e.g., Ronald McDonald House	16
Nature, greenery and the Meewasin Trail	15
Physical connections to other areas, e.g., Downtown	13
A place of employment, e.g., on campus or Innovation Place	13

Other responses that were given by at least two respondents include (in order of prevalence):

- Parking problems
- It's underutilized, forgotten and unchanged, with much opportunity
- Students
- It's a beautiful area
- Taking transit
- Walking and cycling networks
- It has been some residents' home for a long time, even decades for some
- Walkable for leisure or for amenities
- History of healing, research, learning, gathering, Indigenous heritage and agriculture these are all non-physical (intangible) types of heritage
- Lacking amenities, businesses and services what some call "a true campus community"

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- Sports and recreation
- Mix of housing, mix of uses



- College Drive being a soulless, ugly, busy and dirty street
- Concerns with high density or overdevelopment
- Personal social networks
- Driving through the area
- Lack of green space
- It's an area under change
- The University is disconnected from its surroundings
- Patterson Garden
- It's where people come together
- Sense of community
- Preserve the University agricultural lands and open space

Less common though more specific items that were mentioned by individual respondents include:

- This area being visitors' first impression of Saskatoon
- The former Place Riel transit terminal
- It's a young and vibrant area
- Student rental properties
- Infill properties that feel intrusive
- Private yards and gardens
- College Quarter
- Areas outside the campus do not feel safe and welcoming

College Corridor opportunities and future benefits

The next question asked, "What changes would you like to see made to the College Corridor?" Specifically, "are there benefits or opportunities that could come from changes to the streetscape and the lands surrounding College Drive and Preston Avenue?"

This question was looking for opportunities or future benefits that people see for the College Corridor as changes are planned. Table 3 shows the common themes for this question. The top response was for changes to the streets to make the area friendlier and safer for walking and cycling. This will be a major topic for discussions on public realm in later stages of the project. Public realm will also cover topics like greenery (landscaping improvements) and potential changes to street crossings for pedestrians.

The second most common theme requested more commercial services in the area, such as food establishments, grocery stores and personal service businesses. This is relevant to discussions on land use in the Corridor Plan process, specifically with regard to locations within the study area where more mixed-use development should occur.

Traffic flow improvement was the third most common theme. This project is not intended to include major roadway design changes; therefore, it is unlikely to address major concerns like the railway crossing on Preston Avenue or intersection changes. The project team will share these results with the Transportation department and the Bus Rapid Transit project team.

The high prevalence of responses relating to roadway design improvements suggests that more communication may be needed about the objectives of Corridor Planning, as well as who is responsible for what areas at the City.

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Table 3: Top themes for opportunities or future benefits.

What changes would you like to see made to the College Corridor?	Respondents who shared this theme
Changes for friendlier and safer walking and cycling – e.g., enhanced walkways and bicycle lanes	52
More commercial services – food, groceries, personal services	27
Improvements for traffic flow	20
Add and maintain greenery and nature – e.g., trees	19
Improved or added street crossings/crosswalks	13
More housing/density in general	13
Improved transit in general – e.g., frequency and speed	11
Spaces for relaxation and recreation, such as parks	9

Other responses that were shared by at least two respondents include (in order of prevalence):

- Less and/or slower traffic
- More density directly on the corridor
- Pedestrian overpass(es)
- More affordable housing for students, renters or area employees
- Address the train crossing problem
- More mixed use buildings
- More transit coverage within the campus and the corridor area
- Keep green space and the area's existing peaceful character
- Have separate transit stops and bus lanes
- Develop the University agricultural lands
- Pathway maintenance and snow clearing
- Limit density off of the corridor on side streets such as University Drive
- Revitalize existing buildings on College Drive
- Physical accessibility for pedestrians with mobility challenges
- More employment developments e.g., technology and research
- More street furniture and streetscaping e.g., benches
- More places to gather
- Gardens for recreation, research or food
- Promote innovative and sustainable developments
- Road maintenance
- Preserve and enhance views to heritage buildings
- No strip malls
- Preserve the University agricultural lands
- Improved transit stops and shelters
- More interesting and diverse architecture and building designs

Less common though more specific opportunities mentioned by individual respondents include:

- Connection to Meewasin Trail
- Public art
- Shelter for people who are homeless
- Support existing agriculture research activities
- Potential to reflect Saskatoon's culture, arts and heritage



- Address parking problems
- Beautification, in general
- · Architectural standards for infill development
- Address the smell of the agricultural lands
- Enhance safety off of campus
- Enhance pedestrian access to facilities e.g., Field House and Patterson Garden
- Preserve openness by stepping back buildings
- Expand the residential parking permit zone
- Concerned about density effects on traffic, hospital access and property value
- Direct transit route to Sutherland
- Upgrade water mains
- Bring back the historic streetcar
- Slow down traffic on the adjacent neighbourhood streets
- Apartment buildings should have internal outdoor amenity spaces
- Keep Place Riel terminal to avoid traffic issues

College Corridor challenges and concerns

The last open-ended question asked, "What is needed to support those changes for the College Corridor to be a desirable place to live, work, study and visit?" Specifically, "are there concerns or challenges that should be considered with new development, adding density and residents to College Drive and Preston Avenue?"

It is possible to see this question on challenges and the previous question on opportunities as flip sides of the same question. Many of the responses here are similar to the top responses for the previous question. Just as with opportunities, the project team will be considering ways to address the challenges people have cited in further detailed discussions on topics such as streetscaping, land use and open space. Table 4 shows the common themes for this question.

Table 4: Top themes for concerns or challenges.

What is needed to support those changes for the College Corridor to be a desirable place to live, work, study & visit?	Respondents who shared this theme
Improvements for active transportation, for issues such as safety and access to existing facilities and destinations	31
Traffic calming and/or decreasing traffic	13
Add housing options and density	13
Enable greater use of transit – e.g., easy access, viable alternative	11
Ensure adequate parking availability	11
More shops and restaurants	10
Sufficient green space and parks	9
Nature, greenery and trees	8

Other responses that were shared by at least two respondents include (in order of prevalence):

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- Reconcile traffic demands of all users of College Drive
- Affordable housing for example, for families, students, renters or seniors
- More grocery stores and pharmacies
- Physical accessibility for people with mobility challenges
- Promote mixed use density on the corridor



- Limit density changes off of the corridor
- Development and design standards to maintain area character and/or to limit development impact
- Appropriate design for high density development, with regard to things like laneways, visual impact and adjacent heritage properties
- More gathering spaces and community spaces
- Address the train crossing issue
- Do not densify
- Include buffer space between buildings and the street
- Buy in from residents and community engagement
- Address density concerns off of the corridor, such as noise and parking
- Reconcile loss of the University agricultural lands
- Pedestrian overpass(es)
- Promote mixed use development in general
- Address traffic noise and dust for people living on the corridor
- Transit services off of the corridor but within the area, such as to the hospitals and the Field House
- Walkways on campus and within the College Quarter
- Height limits for new development
- Friendlier directional signage, such as for newcomers
- Year-round maintenance of pathways and sidewalks
- Enable more creative architecture and building design

Less common though more specific challenges mentioned by only one respondent include:

- Social supports for vulnerable populations
- A community association for areas not part of existing community associations
- Quicker development on the University endowment lands
- Speak with people experiencing homelessness, low income renters and students
- Friendliness and cleanliness
- Interchange at College Drive and Preston Avenue, and fence to stop jaywalking across College Drive

- Address crime
- Add office spaces
- Move the University "model farm"
- Connection to Meewasin Trail
- Need for leadership
- Green infrastructure and designs that are resilient to climate change
- Honour local Indigenous history
- Cultural facilities, community health facilities and services for families
- Maintain a student-friendly and family-friendly area
- Leave space for future long-term transportation needs
- Disincentivize vacant lots
- Prohibit public parking
- Keep the Place Riel terminal
- Utility infrastructure upgrades
- Promote innovative and sustainable developments



Engagement Evaluation

The introductory survey asked respondents for feedback about the survey and the information presented at the virtual introductory meeting and on the project website. Table 5 shows a summary of this feedback.

Table 5: Evaluation by respondents on the introductory survey.

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
The information was presented clearly.	66%	31%	2%
I understand how my feedback will be used.	40%	47%	13%
I was able to provide my feedback fully.	69%	28%	4%
This survey was a good use of my time.	62%	35%	3%

It is notable that a significant number of respondents did not understand how their input will be used. The project team will aim to improve this by communicating, wherever appropriate and relevant, what input has been incorporated into the deliverables of the College Corridor Plan.

The following are other points of feedback from participants during Phase 1:

- More checkbox-type questions or questions with comprehensive options, rather than open ended questions that can be difficult to answer.
- More informational materials for people to read, as some people do not have time to watch recorded video presentations.
- Provide informational materials in a timelier manner.
- Perception or worry that engagement activities are for public relations than for meaningful feedback.
- More clarity about the purpose or objectives of this survey and this project.
- Hope that upcoming activities will include opportunities for verbal input, beyond the chat function in a virtual meeting.
- Thank you for providing the opportunity to share thoughts and feedback.

Participant List

Thank you to all residents, organizations and other interested individuals that participated in the introductory meetings and survey. The list below includes groups that have granted permission to publicly acknowledge them as participants in this introductory phase of the College Corridor Plan. This list is not comprehensive, given participants' identity in the introductory survey was an optional question, and attendees at the introductory meeting were anonymous by default.

Please note: This is not intended to imply endorsement by these groups.

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Bus Riders of Saskatoon
- Campus Daycare
- CHEP Good Food
- Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op
- Globe Excavating
- Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools
- Innovation Place
- Lutheran Campus Ministry



- Renters of Saskatoon and Area
- Ronald McDonald House Charities SK
- Saskatchewan Athletics
- Saskatchewan Health Authority
- Saskatoon Heritage Society
- The Salvation Army
- Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada

Next Steps

Phase 2 of the College Corridor Plan began at the beginning of November with workshop-style meetings on the topic of land use and density. Key ideas from the introductory phase engagement results that were incorporated into these meetings include:

- There is general agreement among community members for locating density directly on the corridors (College Drive and Preston Avenue), compared to adding density off the corridors in adjacent residential neighbourhoods.
- As the City targets additional housing and density, it is necessary to consider supportive land uses to make this area a more attractive place to live and experience. This may mean, for example, grocery stores, shops and parks.
- As the College Corridor densifies, it is important to consider what improvements are needed so that area residents and others who come or move here experience benefits from new development.
- As the project moves into discussions on more detailed topics, the team has added opportunities for verbal input during the workshop-style meetings, and have also added to online surveys some questions that have discrete options for answers when presenting and collecting feedback on different scenarios.

Components of Phase 2 exploring public realm and infrastructure improvements are planned for early 2022 after a preliminary land use map has been developed with community stakeholders. This preliminary land use map is a necessary tool to have in place, as it will allow the project team to better determine what types of public improvements that have been suggested by community members are appropriate and feasible.

To stay informed about the College Corridor Plan, please refer to the project website: saskatoon.ca/engage/college-corridor-plan.

