

# Drainage Regulation Capital Project Update

## ISSUE

This report provides an update on Community Standards' Drainage Regulation Capital Project ("project"), including a summary of completed and in-progress initiatives.

## BACKGROUND

In 2019, Administration began work on developing a comprehensive regulatory framework to better address drainage and lot grading matters in commercial, residential and infill developments. The primary objective of the project is to improve the current regulatory drainage framework to reduce the number of grading and drainage conflicts that occur as a result of new development.

The project was split into three phases which generally focus on public education, procedural and specification changes and the development of bylaw amendments or a new bylaw.

## CURRENT STATUS

### Completed Initiatives

The following initiatives have been completed:

- a. An Open House was held on this project in late 2019 to provide an overview of the project objectives and the initiatives being reviewed, with a broad range of industry stakeholders invited to attend. Those who attended recognized the limitations of the current regulatory framework and expressed support for an updated approach.
- b. A comprehensive manual focusing on residential lot grading guidelines was developed to provide builders and homeowners with information on the lot grading process, lot design elevations, sump discharge guidelines, drainage swales and other drainage related considerations. A copy of this document is attached (Appendix 1).
- c. A lot grading webpage has been created ([saskatoon.ca/lotdrainage](https://saskatoon.ca/lotdrainage)) to provide the public with access to information on lot grading and drainage practices. Additional content will be added as the project progresses.
- d. A database with lot grading plans has been developed. The database is located on the lot grading webpage and provides the public with easy access to the city's engineered lot grading plans. Such plans are available for all lots developed after 1975. Lots developed prior to 1975 do not have engineered lot grading plans but do have back lanes. These lots are sloped to drain to the street and/or back lane.
- e. Alterations were undertaken to the City's Building Permit workflow program to identify the residential lots designated for walk out style homes. This information helps the staff responsible for reviewing and approving building permit

applications to ensure walk out style homes are constructed on lots designed for this purpose.

- f. Lot grading survey audits were conducted on recently developed commercial, multi-family and low-density suburban sites. The survey findings were reviewed to determine if the onsite site grading aligned with the approved site grading or lot grading plans, for commercial, multi-unit or low density residential development. Based on the audits, site grading compliance rates for the various land uses were observed to be low which emphasizes the importance of developing site grading approval and inspection procedures to help ensure grading and drainage compliance.

### Initiatives in Progress

The following initiatives are currently in progress:

- a. Development of proposed drainage requirements for new multi-unit residential and commercial building permits and residential infill developments in established neighbourhoods. A framework is being developed to outline proposed mandatory requirements including submission and review of lot grading plans at the building permit stage and site inspections during construction to ensure compliance with the approved plans.
- b. Development of options to help ensure lot grading compliance in low-density residential suburban growth areas.
- c. Revisions to City specification documents related to improving rear property line elevation control, improving drainage interfaces between parks and residential development and eliminating problematic lot and block types have been drafted and are currently being reviewed by other internal departments.
- d. Development of guidelines to propose design elevations for attached and detached garage pad elevations for new residential development in new subdivisions.

Consultation with internal departments and industry stakeholders is currently underway on the above initiatives and expected to be completed in the fall of 2020. Consultation will be undertaken in a manner consistent with provincial public health orders related to COVID-19.

Input received through the consultation process will be used to refine and clarify proposed options and requirements. These components will be proposed as part of an amended or new drainage bylaw. Additional reporting will be brought forward for Council's consideration in the first and second quarter of 2021, which focuses on the establishment of grading permit review and inspection procedures and on the implementation of new drainage bylaw regulations.

### **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

Residential and commercial growth as well as the steady increase of infill developments require clear regulation and enforcement to ensure proper ownership and stewardship of drainage-related issues on private properties. The lack of regulation has resulted in a number of deficiencies and improved regulation is necessary.

The project is targeted for completion in the spring of 2021 and will include an amended or new Drainage Bylaw, in addition to the data, information and educational resources already made available.

Upon approval of an amended or new bylaw, implementation of new processes and procedures will be put in place for all new development projects. Project implementation will largely focus on integrating the necessary steps and procedures into the City's Building Permit workflow process in order to facilitate lot grading plan review and inspection procedures.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Approved capital funding is allocated for this project. A subsequent report will be tabled at a future Committee / Council meeting which outlines the financial impacts of proposed changes to the regulation of drainage, such as the implementation and administration of the various lot grading plan review and inspection procedures.

### **COMMUNICATION PLAN**

The Residential Lot Grading Guidelines manual is a key tool in educating the public and relevant stakeholders on recommended lot grading practices. The manual will be available in hard copy format at City Hall and posted online at [saskatoon.ca/lotdrainage](http://saskatoon.ca/lotdrainage). A targeted communication and distribution plan will be developed to help ensure this information reaches those impacted.

As work progresses, ongoing communication will continue and includes active input of the internal steering committee established to oversee this project, other internal municipal departments and external stakeholders including builders, developers, contractors and engineering and architectural firms.

### **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no other implications.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Administration intends to table additional two reports in Quarter 1 and 2 of 2021 on the remaining project initiatives as consultation feedback is received. Financial considerations and implications will also be outlined.

### **APPENDIX**

1. Residential Lot Grading Guidelines

### **REPORT APPROVAL**

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