
Subject: FW: Email - Communication - Candace Norton - Optimist Park Potential City Centre School Location - CK 610-11
Attachments: citizen response to proposed expropriation of Optimist Park land.docx

From: Candace Norton <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2021 6:51 PM
To: Gough, Hilary (City Councillor) <Hilary.Gough@Saskatoon.ca>; Clark, Charlie <Charlie.Clark@Saskatoon.ca>; Web E-mail - City Clerks <City.Clerks@Saskatoon.ca>
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Please consider this for Monday's council meeting.

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Dear City Councillors and Mayor,

Please do not allow half of Optimist Park to be expropriated for a new SPSD school and/or re-envisioned White Buffalo Youth Lodge or mini recreation facility. I am writing to strongly suggest that it is unethical that the City of Saskatoon and Saskatoon Public School Division have proposed this in an area where there is an established park space deficiency of 9 acres¹, and without ANY community consultation with the residents, including the many new homeowners who recently built homes across the street from the park. We have a much better spot we wish civic administration to consider...

Right across the street from Optimist Park, adjacent to residential homes and visible from 20th Street, are two large contaminated lots that have sat vacant for over 25 years! This land is big enough to hold a new school and all that it requires. One lot is owned by Imperial Oil, and we have been informed that they have no intention to sell it OR remediate it. The other lot, which was contaminated by ground water from Imperial Oil, is owned by the City of Saskatoon and is currently leased to CHEP Good Food for container gardening until 2023. It is unacceptable that City-owned land can sit relatively vacant and contaminated for decades, and that a large corporation can walk away from their pollution and leave a vacant eyesore, and potential health risk, in our city centre. Please explore tapping into Federal funds and help the SPSD do the right thing to remediate these lots. Your Junction Strategy and Local Area Plan recommends “public realm improvements and identifying future uses for vacant/contaminated lands.” A school fits this perfectly. Don’t take our park, expropriate land from Imperial Oil and remediate those empty lots!

Optimist Park is loved by residents for it’s mature trees, shaded paddling pool, basketball court, outdoor rink, playground, new picnic area, baseball field, toboggan hill and bit of open green space for (dog) walking and play. We value our park greatly, and losing half of it to a large building, parking lot and fleet of school buses is unfair and unjust. Optimist Park serves as an oasis for residents who, due to archaic zoning established in the early 1900s, live next to noisy and smelly industrial operations.

One can’t help but wonder if the City administration and School Division initiative is a form of environmental racism. How can it be an acceptable idea to even consider building an elementary school across from a dangerous contaminated vacant area? Why has the City of Saskatoon left their land contaminated and underutilized? Would this happen in any other neighbourhood where people have money and more agency to complain? I don’t think so. Would City administration consider taking away half of a smaller park square in Kensington, or half of Wiggins Park in Haultain, or half of Peter Prebble Park in Evergreen?

Finally, a proposal to take away half of Optimist Park and then ‘appeasing’ residents by developing already-existing green school ground land is no deal for us. Please leave our precious Optimist Park alone!

Sincerely, Candace Norton, King George resident

¹ “By current standards, Riversdale is deficient by 7 acres while King George is deficient by 2 acres. A loss of 3.5 acres in Optimist Park could exacerbate this...” from Request to Investigate the Potential of Optimist Park as the Location for a Consolidated City Centre School