

# ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

March 2021



## Contents

Contents .....	2
Table of Figures.....	3
1 Executive Summary .....	4
Consideration of Results .....	4
2 Background.....	4
2.1 Strategic Goals.....	4
3 Stakeholders .....	5
4 Engagement Activities.....	5
4.1 Open House .....	5
4.1.1 Intended Audience.....	7
4.1.2 Marketing Techniques .....	8
4.1.3 Analysis .....	8
4.1.4 What We Heard .....	8
4.2 Public Surveys and Comment Forms.....	8
4.2.1 Intended Audience.....	8
4.2.2 Marketing Techniques .....	9
4.2.3 Analysis .....	9
4.2.4 What We Heard .....	9
4.3 SRHBA Presentation.....	10
4.3.1 Intended Audience.....	10
4.3.2 Analysis .....	11
4.3.3 What We Heard .....	11
5 Limitations.....	11
6 Next Steps .....	11

**Table of Figures**

Figure 1: Open House Story Boards ..... 6

## 1 Executive Summary

This summary includes the engagement activities and results through the first two phases of the Drainage Regulation project. Several forms of engagement events were completed to obtain feedback from various stakeholders. Events included:

- Open House – September 2019
- Online survey and Comment Forms – July 2020 and February-April 2021, including social media ads directing the public to the Engage Page to learn about the project and provide feedback
- SRHBA Presentation – January 2021

### Consideration of Results

Feedback reinforced the proposed drainage project initiatives and helped refine the content of the educational resources and shape the proposed lot grading processes for both infill and commercial developments.

## 2 Background

The City of Saskatoon currently has a Drainage Bylaw, as well as various regulatory standards and guidelines regarding drainage and elevation. However, there is no comprehensive regulatory framework to apply and enforce these standards and thereby control lot drainage in new or existing developments.

This lack of regulation and enforcement can create drainage problems in new and existing developments and without an appropriate regulation in place, it leads to many neighbour disputes. In addition, rapidly growing neighbourhoods and the steady increase of infill developments in existing neighbourhoods require clear regulation and enforcement to maintain quality of life and ensure proper handling of drainage-related issues.

The Drainage Regulation Project is aimed at developing a more comprehensive drainage regulatory framework, as well as enhanced public and industry education on lot drainage. The project was developed into 10 initiatives distributed across three phases:

1. Development of Public Education Resources and Standards Review
2. Process Review and Development
3. Drainage Bylaw Amendments

### 2.1 Strategic Goals

The Drainage Regulation Project supports the City of Saskatoon Strategic Goal of Quality of Life. The project aims to increase the quality of life for residents through

improved education and regulation of storm water which will result in reduced risk of flooding and property damage along with fewer bylaw compliance inquiries.

This project also supports the goal of Sustainable Growth by ensuring the proper regulatory frameworks are in place to allow Saskatoon to grow in a controlled fashion, sustaining high-quality developments.

### 3 Stakeholders

An internal stakeholder committee was formed as part of the Drainage Regulation Project to help identify common issues related to lot grading and drainage and towards the development of potential solutions.

The external engagement and communications strategy largely focused on targeting external stakeholders related to the building, development and engineering consulting industries. Information on the project and opportunities for providing feedback was also provided to the broader public through social media and the City's Engage Page. Due to the technical nature of the project, it was anticipated that project interest held by the broader public would likely be limited to individuals who experienced grading or drainage related issues with their property.

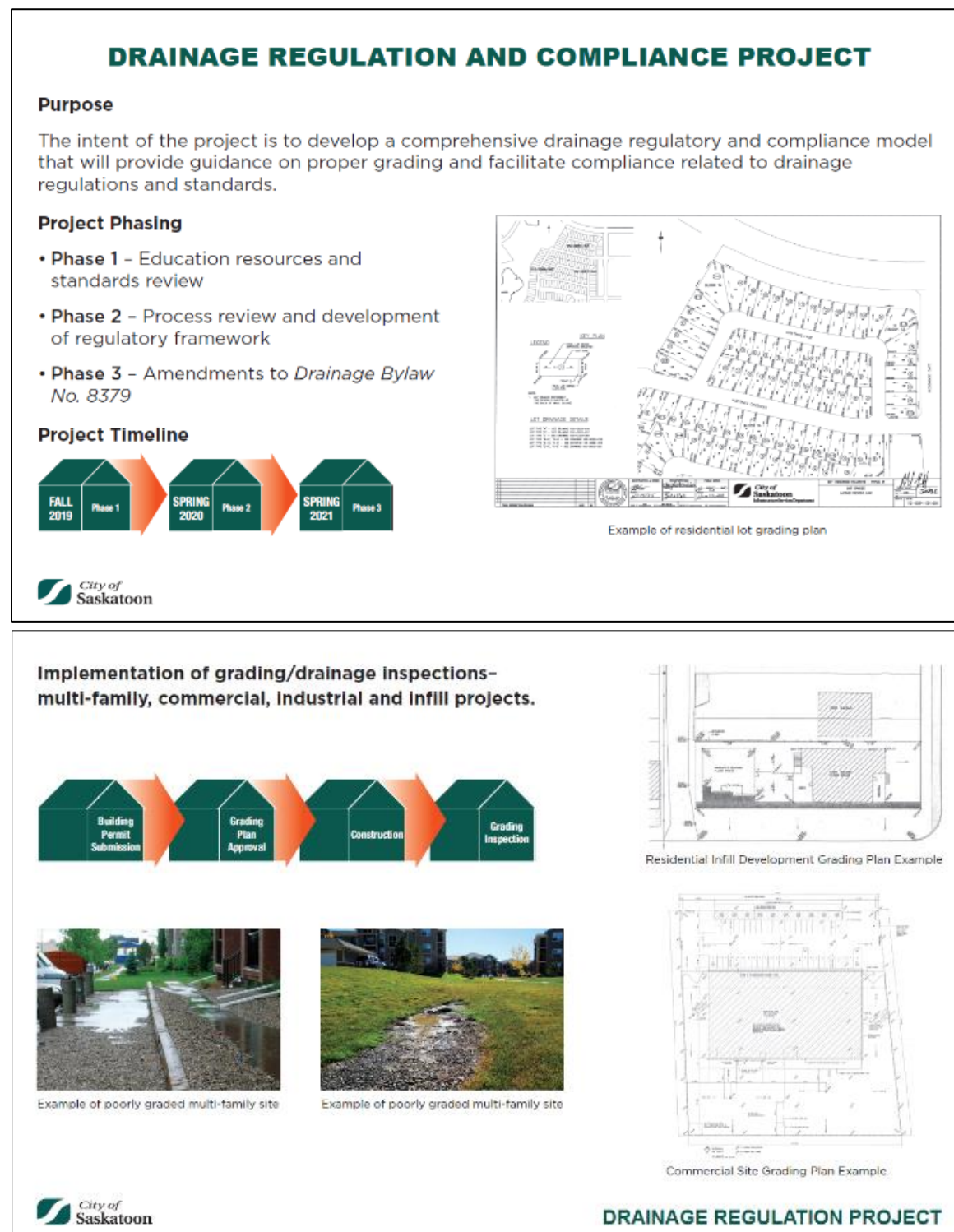
## 4 Engagement Activities

### 4.1 Open House

Administration held an open house on September 26, 2019. The open house outlined the 10 proposed initiatives of the Drainage Regulation project along with the timing of the three phases. Attendees were given the opportunity to review the proposed initiatives and provide feedback in-person or by email.



Figure 1: Open House Story Boards



**Implementation of standards associated with elevation control, including:**

- Concrete swales, Inspection grading certificates, Lot grading markers, As-built survey;
- Garage pad elevations; and
- Walk-out basements.

Standards aimed at ensuring compliance with approved lot grading plans and mitigating adverse impacts of surface drainage.



Example of matched driveway grades



Example of front driveway grade separation



Example of walk-out home constructed on non-walk-out lot



Concrete swale example



Side-yard grass swale example

**DRAINAGE REGULATION PROJECT****Develop homeowner/builder/developer educational resources**

- Homeowner How-To Guide to grading your property;
- Lot grading database accessible on the City's website; and
- Building permit applications/Lot Grade type.

Educational initiatives aimed at assisting homeowners, builders and developers with tools to grade their lots appropriately.



Example of back to front lot grade type



Good rough grade slope away from foundation wall below a future deck



Example of single-family home at final grade



Single-family home at rough grade stage

**DRAINAGE REGULATION PROJECT****4.1.1 Intended Audience**

The event was primarily intended for engineering consultants, landscape architects and builders and developers; however, the event was also open for the public to provide feedback.



### 4.1.2 Marketing Techniques

1. Mail – Event invites were sent out by mail to targeted industry stakeholders.
2. City Website – Updates to the Engage Page included an open invite for the public to attend the event.

### 4.1.3 Analysis

There were approximately 30 participants at the open house.

The feedback provided was considered throughout the progression of the Drainage Project.

### 4.1.4 What We Heard

The bulleted points below summarize the input and feedback received at the open house, based on comments received and conversations the project team had with attendees.

- Adjacent lots are too high. A lack of clay fill sites results in builders improperly grading their lots.
- Lots adjacent to parks are eroding the parks with their direct drainage. There are downspouts and sumps directly discharging to the adjacent parks.
- We do not want house types broadly restricted. We do not want to eliminate homes with walk-out basements.
- Preference for controlling lot grade elevations is through a lot grade certificate approach as opposed to concrete swales.
- Pleased with proposed initiatives, comparable to the City of Edmonton's model.
- The City must have a tough bylaw with enforcement and inspections to ensure that homeowners and existing neighbours are not left with all of the responsibility.
- Consideration should be given to the information provided in educational documents to ensure that they do not suggest that anyone is capable of properly grading their lots. In many cases, people will lack the expertise to grade their lot appropriately.
- Some concern expressed over lack of significant sump regulations.

## 4.2 Public Surveys and Comment Forms

Online public surveys and comment forms were posted on the City's Engage page to solicit comments on the project.

### 4.2.1 Intended Audience

These items targeted land developers, home builders, contractors and the general public.



### 4.2.2 Marketing Techniques

These items were promoted via direct emails to stakeholder groups, information on the City's Engage page and boosted posts on the City's social media channels. The social media campaign has helped to raise public awareness on the Drainage Project and has provided Administration with additional feedback on the project. Some members of the public posted comments in response to the social media ads. These comments will be reviewed and considered.

### 4.2.3 Analysis

The feedback received was considered throughout the progression of the Drainage Project.

### 4.2.4 What We Heard

At the time of this report, a total of 15 individuals/parties had completed the surveys and/or provided comments. A full analysis will be completed once the survey closes at the end of April. Some comments have been edited for clarity.

- There are significant concerns with infill drainage and the response from the City, to the homeowner, has been to pursue litigation with the builder/developer. The City should have more responsibility to prevent the situation in the first place.
- Compliance in suburban areas is a large part of the problem. Neighbours have blocked our rear yard drainage swale and storm water cannot make it to the street.
- The City needs to establish a benchmark for lot grades in relation to drainage. Developers and builders need to be held accountable by city bylaw inspector staff.
- Drainage plans need to be given to homeowners who build new homes in the City. We were never provided drainage plans by the developer who we purchased lots from.
- Storm water in my area flows over sidewalks causing dangerous and slippery sections on the sidewalk.
- Additional lot grading and drainage regulations are a great idea. Several people on my block have had to spend thousands of dollars to rectify massive storm water issues due to lack of planning and follow up. Developers, builders and the City all point the finger at each other.
- The City needs to regulate basement depths and ensure that basements are all poured at the same depth.
- Bylaw provisions should be added that require homeowners to redo their grades if they are affecting their neighbours. There should be an inspection process in place for grading your yard like the building permit inspection process.
- A lack of proper drainage in place can make walkways very treacherous.

- We live in a new subdivision and have problems with grading and drainage and would welcome additional regulations. It will be great to have more enforcement and some educational guidelines.
- Mass builders need to be held accountable for grading and drainage matters. More education should be provided to new home buyers as well to ensure that landscaping is done correctly.
- New lots are so small and it makes it difficult to route drainage to the proper location.
- Enhanced drainage regulations are needed and it will be important to ensure that the public is aware of this information.
- We agree with the proposed grading inspection procedures.
- A combination of requirements for concrete swales and a grading inspection process may be relevant in new suburban development areas.
- On commercial/multi-family sites, requirements for as-built surveys should only be optional if the inspector detects variances upon inspection.
- Final grade inspection reports need to be digitally linked to the property to ensure that future homeowners have access to them.
- A Lot Grade Certificate approach is preferable compared to concrete swales.
- Options for concrete swales or lot grade certificates will have very different cost implications for the City.
- General site grading and compliance could be evaluated effectively through the proposed rough and final grading inspections. However, as-built surveys are an unnecessary expense and will detract from housing affordability. We are in favour of the inspection process, but not the as-built survey. The City needs to trust its builders and building officials and housing affordability should be top of mind.
- In better addressing suburban grading issues, grass swales should be sufficient. Concrete swales are an unnecessary expense taking away from home affordability.
- We support the City's enhanced educational efforts on drainage and lot grading.

### 4.3 Saskatoon & Region Homebuilders' Association Presentation

Administration presented the Drainage Regulation initiatives to the (SRHBA) on January 22, 2021.

#### 4.3.1 Intended Audience

The intended audience was members of the SRHBA.

### 4.3.2 Analysis

The feedback received was considered throughout the progression of the Drainage Project.

### 4.3.3 What We Heard

It is noted that Administration has not received formal written comments from the SHRBA on the project.

- Concerns were expressed over concrete swales limiting the size of house that can be built, though it was clarified that concrete swales flank the rear property line and would not impact any potential building footprint.
- Some support was received for the usage of concrete swales.
- Concerns were expressed on the impact of concrete swales on overall lot/home purchase prices.
- Concerns were expressed indicating that grading plans completed by qualified professionals would be costly.
- It was questioned whether or not practical options existed other than concrete swales or inspections/grade certificates for regulating suburban grading.

## 5 Limitations

- COVID-19 creates a number of challenges to public engagement. All public engagement conducted by the City since the first case of COVID-19 was identified in Saskatoon in March 2020 has been conducted virtually (e.g., online meetings and surveys, telephone, email, mail). Further, some members of the public may be experiencing particular difficulties related to COVID-19, which might make some less likely to participate in engagement activities when they were held.
- Information on the project was also provided to the broader public, though due to the technical nature of the project, it was anticipated that project interest held by the broader public would likely be limited to individuals who experienced grading or drainage related issues with their property.

## 6 Next Steps

The revised Drainage Bylaw is anticipated to be complete in Q2 2021. Completion of remaining project initiatives, which primarily involve new drainage-related construction specifications, is anticipated to be complete in Q3 2021.