



Mayor and City Council
City of Saskatoon
222 3rd Avenue North
S7K 0A5

Dear Mayor Clark and City Councillors,

We are writing to you today to highlight alignments that Prairieland Park has identified with your Recreation and Parks Master Plan, December 2015.

Your plan is very thorough and anticipates the needs of a Saskatoon that continues to grow.

We believe that Prairieland Park and Living Sky Sports and Entertainment will be able to contribute to satisfying the needs that are highlighted in your very well substantiated plan.

The kinds of partnerships the City of Saskatoon has been able to forge to build world-class facilities at both the Gordie Howe Sports Complex and Merlis Belsher Place, have proven that partnership with private sector players can not only help the city with the capital costs of construction, but the ongoing management costs also associated with these facilities, in this case a multi-use venue, would be undertaken by Prairieland Park.

We have quoted directly from the 2015 study and have highlighted where there are alignments in purpose.

“Building on What We Value Most Saskatoon cherishes and builds upon what it values most: its people and their strong sense of community; its educational, recreational, and cultural resources; and its access to a wealth of natural resources. Arts, sports, and culture are accessible to all, and central to the city’s identity and livability. It is a city of all seasons, as welcoming and active in winter as it is in summer.”

The vision of the repurposed Marquis Downs as a multi-use facility will build on Saskatoon’s strong sense of community especially for those new Canadians who love soccer, cricket, and rugby. Traditionalists will find a home for outdoor lacrosse, and concert goers will find an outdoor concert venue that will provide another exciting option for those passionate Saskatoonians who love music.

With Saskatoon entering a new stage of growth, planning must consider how to best respond to future program and infrastructure needs, not just for today's citizens, but for the generations to come. These, and other factors, have led the City to develop a comprehensive Recreation and Parks Master Plan.

According to Statistics Canada (StatsCan), Saskatoon ranks among the top 10 urban centres in the nation when it comes to its rate of growth. Much of that growth is seen with a surge in population growth in new Canadians calling Saskatoon home. 16% of Saskatoonians are foreign born, nearly 50,000 of our citizens. Almost 20,000 of those have recently immigrated here. Almost 4,500 **per year** choose Saskatoon as home.

Many of those new Canadians are passionate about soccer, cricket, and rugby. We believe it's time to address this important demographic's needs.

We envision a city in which everyone is engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences that enhance quality of life and foster:

- Individual wellbeing
- Community wellbeing
- The wellbeing of our natural and built environments.

Partnership Framework

A partnership framework has been developed to increase clarity on how and why the city manages its relationships.

The framework:

- Allows agencies to better structure future proposals and manage their relationship with the city
- Provides for increased accountability and transparency by clarifying and
- Reduces management time by providing a more consistent policy framework for managing relationship.

The policy framework allows for a constructive dialogue about the multi-use facility potentially located at Prairieland Park.

Level 3

Partner owned and operated (potentially on City land).

Using the project development framework. Full public engagement. Process-driven by partner(s) with involvement from the city.

Given that Prairieland Park resides on city land, Level 3 would meet the city's expectations.

Prairieland would take full responsibility and cost associated with the management of the facility providing the City of Saskatoon with no additional operating expenses.

Level 4

Partner owned and operated

Using the project development framework City resident needs are considered. No City representation required.

This level, too, is a potential option for the proposed facility at Prairieland Park.

Merlis Belsher, partially funded by the City of Saskatoon, has been utilized by the community. Recent conversations with management there confirm that the facility is in near-constant use from the community. We understand that Merlis Belsher is fulfilling its community obligation.

We envision a similar community use for the proposed facility.

Recommendations

1. The City will develop a partnership policy based on the partnership framework.

As indicated, Prairieland Park will work within any partnership policy that accommodates the needs of the City and fulfills the management requirements going forward.

2. The city will use the partnership framework to explore partnership opportunities for all recreation and parks infrastructure development.

Prairieland is a willing, and capable, partner for this endeavor.

8. The City will continue to promote and market City recreation and parks opportunities with enhanced focus on benefits and motivating participation.

The proposed multi-use facility will serve as a multi-use gathering place for those wishing to play soccer, rugby, cricket, and outdoor lacrosse. The stadium would also be constructed with a permanent stage, and a convertible stage. Expanded Canada Day celebrations (currently held nearby at Diefenbaker Park) would be an ongoing locale for those well attended activities.

The SaskTel Jazz Festival and the Saskatoon Symphony may want to take advantage of this venue at no charge.

15. The City will work with other program providers to reduce redundancy and optimize investment wherever possible.

There are 400 cricket players in Saskatoon, nearly 8,500 kids and nearly 5,000 adults playing soccer. The opportunity to host international, and national, events would become a reality with a facility of this kind in Saskatoon.

Saskatoon has always excelled at hosting sporting events.

With the FIFA approved pitch, this facility would open Saskatoon to many hosting opportunities. This includes international friendlies, international youth tournaments such as FIFA under-17, under-21, or regional qualifiers. It would also allow for professional club matches such as the New York Cosmos v Valencia that was held in Regina a few years ago.

Another example is the Canadian Women's Soccer Team is their Olympic Gold Medal winning 'Celebration Tour'. This would add Saskatoon as a potential landing spot to the list of games being played in places such as Victoria, Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.

18. The City will review its Fees and Charges Schedule to determine admission fees that encourage greater use and revenues, including potential use of a tiered system with different fees based on facility type and capacity.

Prairieland will subsidize all community-based activities taking place at the facility. That subsidy will be \$24,000 per year and will be reviewed after 7-years. This is an additional \$175,000 commitment. This subsidy will lessen the costs for soccer, cricket, rugby, and lacrosse activities by the community.

25. The City will explore opportunities to develop integrated facilities when contemplating the development of new or enhanced recreation and parks infrastructure.

The proposed multi-use facility fits with the above recommendation.

The integrated facility will meet, and exceed, recreation and parks infrastructure for Saskatoonians.

29. The City will explore the application of synthetic playing surfaces when contemplating major outdoor recreation and park facilities.

The proposed pitch will be synthetic with an anticipated cost of \$3.5 million.

32. The City will ensure that healthy food and beverage options are provided in recreation facilities and parks where possible.

Prairieland's food and beverage facilities, and product, are world-class. We would bring the same level of commitment to the menu offerings at the park.

Moreover, given the multi-ethnic nature of the audience attracted to many of the events hosted, Prairieland would ensure that a diverse menu be offered that would help showcase world cuisine.

34. The City will consider revitalization, enhancement, and potential expansion of existing facilities, including but not limited to playground structures, recreation units, and leisure centres when contemplating future recreation and parks infrastructure development.

The proposed multi-use facility is an expansion, and improvement, on the currently vacated Marquis Downs track. The current proposed park would provide a state-of-the-art playground structure – located outside of the stadium – would be another enhancement to the current offerings available in the city.

36. The City will strive to achieve the park amenity strategies as well as the desired outcomes related to natural areas, trails, and the river valley.

The proximity of the proposed facility is adjacent to the Meewasin Trail. We anticipate that it could be used as a gathering place for many of events – The Saskatchewan Marathon, for example – where pre and post event activities could be held.

37. The City will strive to achieve the recreation facility (e.g.,) arenas, indoor aquatics, dry-land, fitness/wellness) strategies outlined in the Plan.

Again, the facility, adjacent to the Meewasin Trail, could serve as a stepping off point for fitness and wellness activities.

Washroom and change facilities could be utilized by the public for many of these events. Prairieland would offer these at no charge to the public and would provide custodial services at no additional charge to the city.

42. Where applicable, the city will pursue grants from external sources to leverage public investment in recreation and parks services.

Prairieland has applied for Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) to assist with the financing of the project, and positive discussions have begun with the provincial government to contribute as well. Funds are being sought through the Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure Stream.

INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS:

As the primary provider of public sector recreation and parks services, the city currently owns and operates a significant array of recreation and parks facilities and spaces. Operating and maintaining these facilities is a major responsibility. Residents and local groups show high levels of satisfaction with these facilities, yet there is an appetite in the community for investment in new and/or enhanced infrastructure. Meeting future needs will understandably involve partnerships with other service providers and regional municipalities.

We agree, wholeheartedly.

This potential partnership with the City of Saskatoon and Prairieland Park would satiate that appetite for new and enhanced infrastructure that the citizens of Saskatoon have come to expect.

As one of the “other service providers” Prairieland Park brings over one-hundred years of experience in hosting large events, providing outstanding food and beverage services, all at a venue with easy access from all areas of Saskatoon with ample parking. There are 3,000 parking spaces at Prairieland.

Our long-standing commitment to Saskatoon can only be enhanced with the kind of partnership we currently envision with the City of Saskatoon.

Criteria for prioritization include community demand, service outcomes, existing provision level, cost savings through partnerships/grants, cost/benefit, regional partnership appeal and economic impact.

This multi-use facility *is* a priority.

The attached economic impact study conducted by SREDA shows the level of economic impact the proposed facility would create.

While that study shows tangible, dollars and cents, benefits, a facility of this kind would provide a venue where Saskatoon could become part of a much larger cohort in Canada, and we would suggest, the world.

While the facility would provide use for various sports, the anchor tenant, Canadian Premier League Soccer, would use the facility 15% of the time. Other activities would have ample access to the pitch.

The fact that Canada’s men’s and women’s soccer teams are the talk of Canada, Saskatoon deserves to be a part of that passion. Add to that the ascendant cricket, rugby, and lacrosse interest in the new pitch, and we believe that this project will contribute tremendously to the sporting and entertainment offerings in the city.

Our Ask:

There is currently \$4 million committed from Prairieland Park and Living Sky Sports and Entertainment (LSSE).

An additional \$7 million has been committed from LSSE for the franchise fee. The total commitment is \$9 million for both stadium enhancement and the franchise; both will help contribute to the vitality and cultural opportunities for the citizens of Saskatoon.

Prairieland Park and Living Sky Sports and Entertainment are seeking \$24 million from 3 levels of government.

For the City of Saskatoon, the ask is as follows:

- \$8M committed for 2024.
- Prairieland Park will finance the City of Saskatoon's portion over 8 years with *no interest charged over this period. PP is only offering this loan arrangement to the City of Saskatoon.*
- We respectfully request that the city be a part of any ongoing discussions with the provincial and federal government to assist in advocacy for this project. To reiterate, there are very positive indications from the province about their involvement in the proposed stadium.

We understand that financial circumstances for the city have changed, dramatically, because of Covid. It has affected Prairieland's financial outlook, as well. That is why our board has taken the courageous step of advancing this project, and by agreeing to contribute \$2M now and financing the city's portion. The loan to the city amounts to an additional \$1.723 million in carrying costs.

This is an incredibly exciting time for Saskatoon with many fantastic projects on the horizon.

We believe this is one of those projects and we ask that council give it serious consideration.

We look forward to future discussion about the multi-use stadium at Prairieland Park.

Yours truly,



Steve Chisholm, Chair
Prairieland Park



Mark Regier, Chief Executive Officer
Prairieland Park