

Lasby, Mary

Subject: Email - Communication - Mike Winter - Northeast Swale and Small Swale Boundary - CK 4205-40

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>

Sent: Sunday, February 5, 2023 7:42 PM

To: City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>

Subject: Email - Communication - Mike Winter - Northeast Swale and Small Swale Boundry - CK 4205-40

--- Replies to this email will go to contact@walkingsaskatoon.org ---

Submitted on Sunday, February 5, 2023 - 19:42

Submitted by user: Anonymous

Submitted values are:

I have read and understand the above statements.: Yes

Date: Sunday, February 05, 2023

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

First Name: Mike

Last Name: Winter

Email: contact@walkingsaskatoon.org

Address: [REDACTED] 2nd Street East

City: Saskatoon

Province: Saskatchewan

Postal Code: s7h [REDACTED]

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable): Walking Saskatoon

What do you wish to do ?: Submit Comments

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: 7.2.3

Comments:

Walking Saskatoon asks the committee to return the Northeast Swale and Small Swale boundary decision to administration with instructions to implement the boundaries proposed by the NE Swale Watchers (<https://swalewatchers.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Swale-Watchers-Recommendation-Jan-2023.pdf>).

Developing a financially responsible and environmentally sustainable city puts an onus on councillors to make the right decision when it comes to new urban development. Saskatoon has a unique and incredible opportunity to prioritize neighbourhood development in the University Sector, putting residents and businesses close to major job, health care and education hubs while reducing the need for expensive greenfield infrastructure investments that fall on taxpayers to build and maintain.

Planning for minimal to no development in the remainder of the University Heights sector is the smart and financially responsible choice and we urge councillors to respect taxpayers and the environment by rejecting this report.

Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting?: No

January 23, 2023

Swale Watchers Vision Statement

Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design and the Northeast Swales



This document is in follow-up to a recent meeting of the Northeast Swale Working Group regarding the establishment of conservation boundaries for the Northeast and Small Swales to meet the requirements of the Official Community Plan or OCP (Section E.2.5 most particularly).

Realizing the OCP objective: *'To identify and protect important ecosystems, wildlife habitats, and other natural areas and assets as part of the land development process'* has never been in clearer focus. This important local task aligns globally with the urgent [business case](#) for conservation of nature recently communicated by more than 1100 corporations across 70 countries. The case emboldened nation-states to commit to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) which includes putting 30 per cent of the planet and 30 per cent of degraded ecosystems under protection by 2030.

The nation is watching Saskatoon as consideration of our region for a National Urban Park is underway. The Northeast and Small Swales represent a significant opportunity. The benefits of capitalizing on this opportunity are well articulated in the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the area further provides an opportunity to meet the preferences outlined in that Strategy (i.e. providing contiguity, proximity and size) to ensure the maximization of these benefits.

Delineating boundaries helps guide investment – for resource management that secures the sustainability of this green infrastructure and for the surrounding urban context.

By leveraging the expertise and knowledge available within the Swale Watcher network, we have summarized the results of area studies, regulations and conservation guidance in the form of maps. The outcome is useful for the activity of boundary-setting as the minimum standards shown on the maps may provide some hope that the valuable natural assets observed within the area may be sustained.

Map 1: Swale Watchers Recommended Boundaries highlights acreage prioritized for urban development, together with recommendations for additional conservation areas beyond those currently proposed by the City.

The Swale Protected Area, shown in purple and green, includes all remaining natural grasslands and areas of high biodiversity value, as documented in recent studies. Minimal development would be permitted in the Protected Area.

The Swale Borders, shown in blue and orange, includes buffers and wildlife corridors necessary to safeguard the ecological and hydrological functioning of the Protected Area. “Soft” development such as trails, linear parks, storm water ponds and other amenities could be situated in the naturalized Swale Borders.


Map 2: Swale Watchers Sources places our recommendations in the context of science-based studies of the area that have been conducted in recent years. The sources for this map are listed in the bottom left margin of the map as well at the end of this document.

In making our recommendations, we applied the following principles:

- Conserve all documented biodiversity hot spots, including all remaining native and native-dominant grasslands. This includes areas of quality habitat identified in studies by Saskatoon Land, Meewasin and the City of Saskatoon, plus a small parcel in the northeast corner of the Small Swale previously misclassified as tame grass.
- Provide adequate protection for the sharp-tailed grouse dancing grounds in the Northeast Swale by fully and willingly complying with provincial guidelines and standard practice, i.e. a 400-meter setback measured from the perimeter of the lek.
- Meet or exceed all other recommended setbacks and standards, acknowledging that these are minimums.
- Protect the wetlands in the hydrologically sensitive Small Swale by observing the topography.
- Provide functional habitat corridors to facilitate animal movement.
- Create opportunities for habitat enhancement through restoration of previously disturbed or degraded parcels.
- Maximize the economic, cultural and environmental potential of the proposed National Urban Park.
- Identify a viable acreage for a future-oriented neighbourhood offering exceptional livability.

Map 1: Swale Watchers Recommended Boundaries

Sensitive Areas

 Species at Risk
breeding bird habitat

 Rare Plant Area

Proposed Boundaries

 City 2022/2023

Swale Protected Area

 City 2022/2023

 protection & restoration

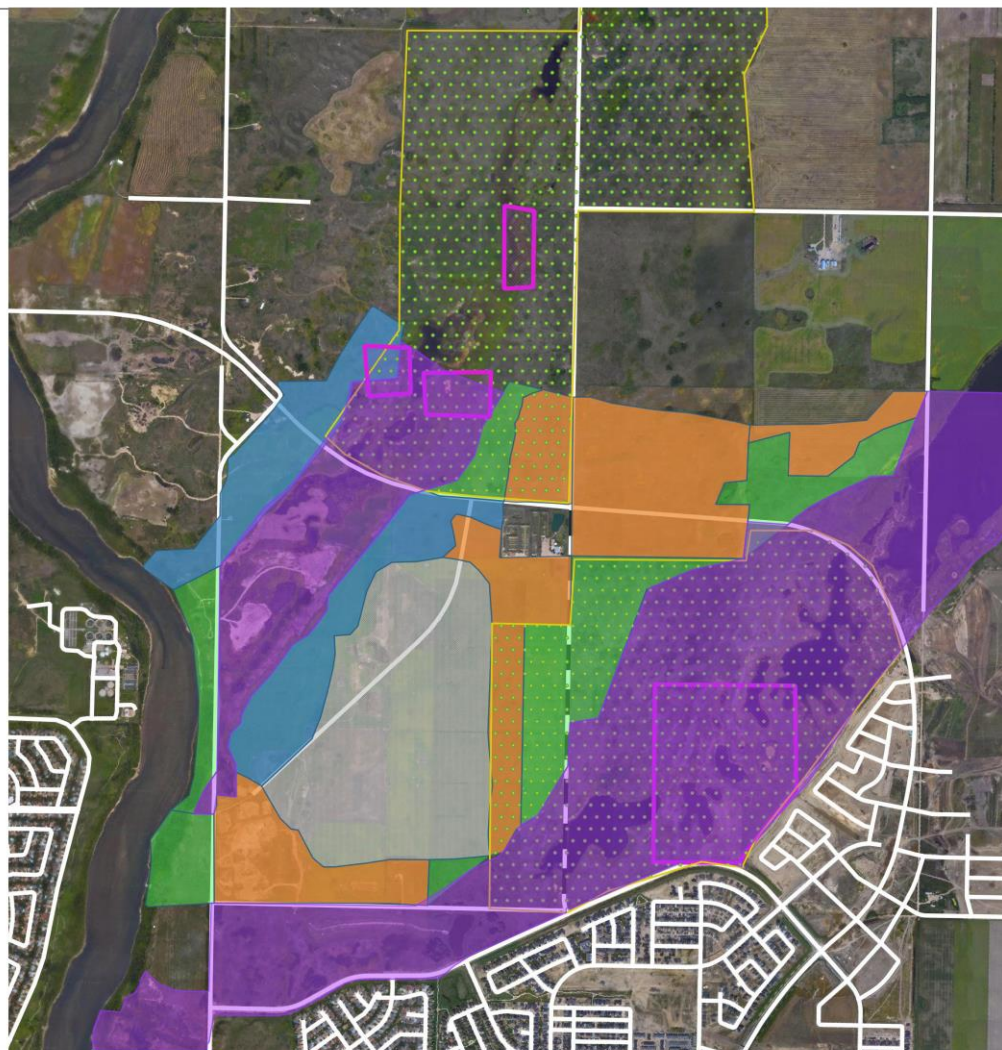
Swale Borders

 naturalized drainage buffer

 naturalized wildlife corridor

Development Area

 subdivision



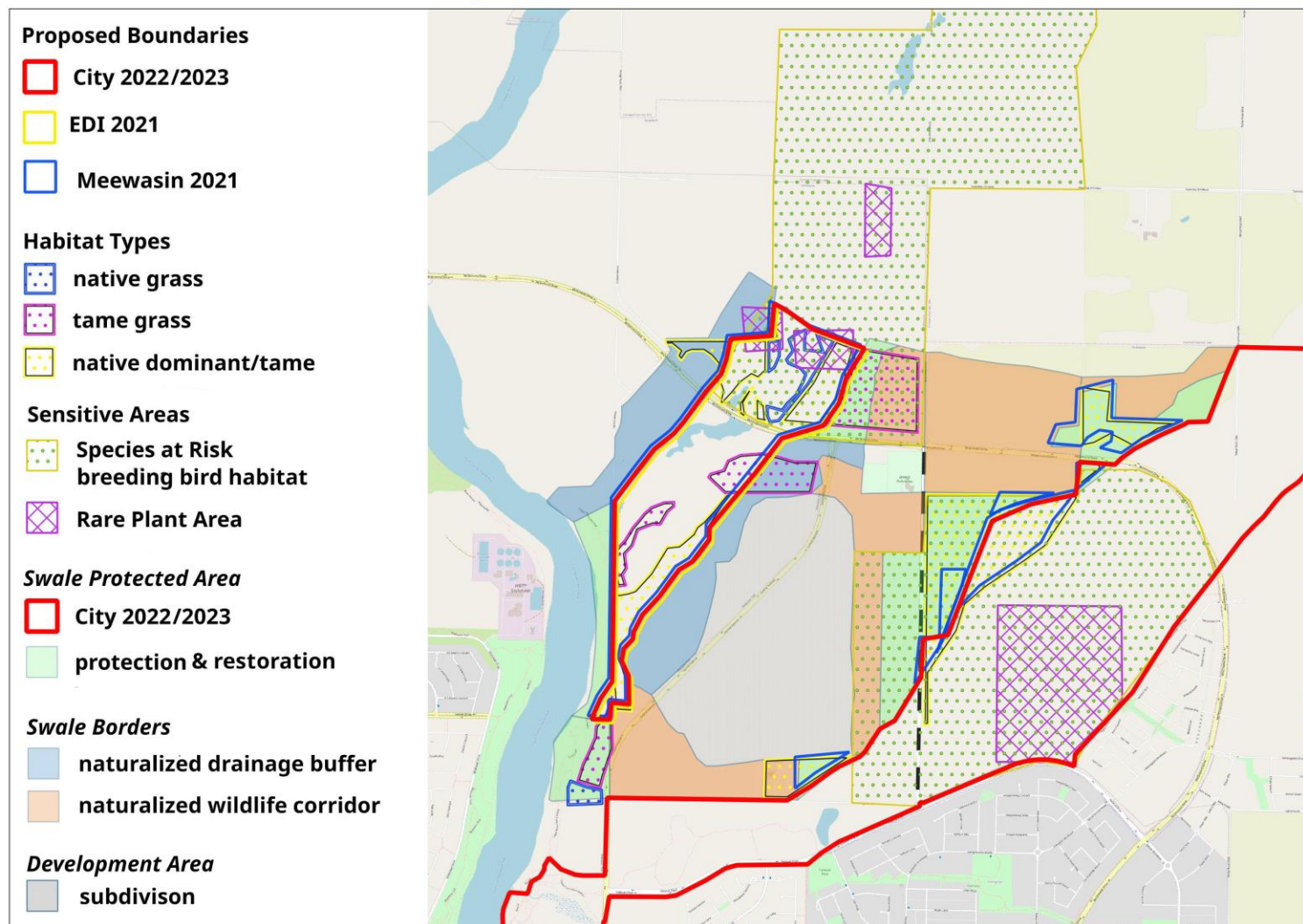
Map Sources

Environmental Dynamics Inc., 2021 March 16, UH3 Natural Area Screening Study Area
 Environmental Dynamics Inc., 2021 March 16, Habitats Identified in the Study Area
 Environmental Dynamics Inc., 2021 January 22, Recommended Ecological Zones and Linear Design Features within the Study Area
 Meewasin, 2020 March 18, Saskatoon Freeway Study Area
 Meewasin, 2021 November 17, UH3 Natural Area Screening Report Review and Proposed Recommendations
 City of Saskatoon, 2022 August 15, UH3 Natural Area Screening Recommendations
 City of Saskatoon, 2020 February, Saskatoon's Green Infrastructure Strategy - Map 18 Significant Natural Areas
 City of Saskatoon, 2020 February, Saskatoon's Green Infrastructure Strategy - Map 20: Ecology Actions and Priority Areas
 Inaturalist, https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?place_id=any&project_id=meewasin-northeast-swale&subview=map

January 2023
Swale Watchers



Map 2: Swale Boundaries, Sources



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January 2023
 Swale Watchers



It is noted that the lands that remain for potential future urban development encompass approximately 260 acres. For comparison purposes, the Riversdale neighbourhood is approximately 215 acres and Varsity View is approximately 315 acres while suburban neighbourhoods of the area are much larger at 635 (Aspen Ridge) and 655 (Evergreen) acres.

The University Heights Sector Plan anticipates a neighbourhood in this area. A unique neighbourhood, designed to fit a 260-acre footprint has the potential to meet many of the objectives set out in the OCP but sometimes described as requiring balance or trade-off. Here we wish to provide some helpful examples of urban developments that might be fit for purpose in this context.



Example of 15 du/acre (Low-mid density) development providing space for Biodiversity-sensitive urban design



Example of 34 du/acre (Medium density) development supporting at-grade retail and mixed uses



Example of a 44 du/acre (Medium-high density) development creating shorter walk distances

Communities working on similar concepts:

- Nanaimo, Canada
(<https://greenplan.ca/2019/09/20/nanaimo-to-showcase-first-sustainable-green-neighbourhood/>)
- Cambridge, UK
(<https://www.pbctoday.co.uk/news/planning-construction-news/sustainable-neighbourhood-cambridge/97710/>)
- Ecovillages across the United States
(<https://www.treehugger.com/thriving-sustainable-communities-4863872>)
- Sample checklist for Neighbourhood Plans
(<https://www.cse.org.uk/downloads/reports-and-publications/policy/community-energy/planning/renewables/how-green-is-my-plan-urban-suburban.pdf>)

These examples highlight how a unique neighbourhood in the University Heights sector could:

- Use higher residential densities – particularly ranging from Low-mid (12 to 20 dwelling units [du] per acre) to Medium (20 to 35 du/acre) – to accommodate sufficient population to achieve a complete and walkable neighbourhood as well as density sufficient to support retail such as a supermarket (which may require 900+ households to be viable).

- Include [Biodiversity-Sensitive Urban Design](#) principles (see link or the attached descriptive resource).
- Incorporate other principles of livability and a low environmental footprint.

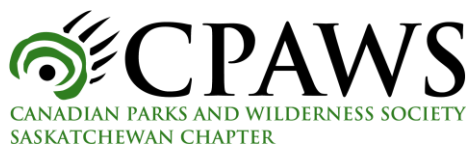
A unique neighbourhood utilizing a mix of Low-mid and Medium density development could be expected to realize a population of 6,500 (if 100% Low-mid) to 17,000 (if 50% Low-mid and 50% Medium). This assumes 30% of the developable area is allocated to utility and infrastructure requirements. This density compares to the neighbouring Evergreen neighbourhood (8,800) and projections for Aspen Ridge (12,500).

We appreciate development in this area may not occur for a while as the City's OCP, along with a number of other civic plans and strategies, highlight the criticality of encouraging a significant share of the city's overall housing development to take place within the Downtown, City Centre (including a new Entertainment District), corridors supporting Bus Rapid Transit, and other Strategic and Neighbourhood Infill areas identified in the City's Growth Plan. However, the type of development examples shown above are similar to the Low-mid and Medium density residential developments that many of these other priority development areas of our community will also desire to achieve the goals of the OCP.

As the desire for greenfield development advances to this area, Swale Watchers look forward to working with the City, Meewasin and others to develop clear biodiversity targets to guide decision-making, so that the natural assets of the Northeast and Small Swales are protected and enhanced for the benefit of future generations. In the meantime, we would welcome an opportunity to discuss our recommendations with you and answer any questions you may have.

This vision statement was researched and written by the strategy committee of the Swale Watchers, including Meghan Mickelson, Dr. Warrick Baijius, Sara Bryson, Dr. Ryan Brook, Valerie Martz, Candace Savage, et al.

This proposal is supported by:



Map Sources

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