

Walter, Penny

From: City Council
Subject: FW: Email - Communication - Waseem Tannous - Housing Accelerator Fund - Permitting Up to Four Units in all Residential Zoning Districts – CK 750-1
Attachments: Letter-to-CityCouncil-MPC-May28-2024.pdf

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>
Sent: Monday, May 27, 2024 3:37 PM
To: City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>
Subject: Email - Communication - Waseem Tannous - Housing Accelerator Fund - Permitting Up to Four Units in all Residential Zoning Districts – CK 750-1

--- Replies to this email will go to [REDACTED]

Submitted on Monday, May 27, 2024 - 15:32

Submitted by user: [REDACTED]

Submitted values are:

I have read and understand the above statements.: Yes

I do not want my comments placed on a public agenda. They will be shared with members of Council through their online repository.: No

I only want my comments shared with the Mayor or my Ward Councillor.: No

Date: Monday, May 27, 2024

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

Pronouns: He/him/his

First Name: Waseem

Last Name: Tannous

Phonetic spelling of first and/or last name: Wass-seem Tan-noose

Phone Number : 306 [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

I live outside of Saskatoon: No

Saskatoon Address and Ward:

Address: [REDACTED] Osler St

Ward: Ward 6

What do you wish to do ?: Submit Comments

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: Municipal Planning Commission, May 28th, 2024

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: Agenda Items 7.4 to 7.7

Comments:

Please refer to attachments. I would also like that the councilor for my Ward (Ward 6) to read the attached letter at the council meeting.

Reference materials are provided at the end of the letter for all councillors if interested. Unless otherwise stated in the by-law, reading the reference materials section of the letter is not required.

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

Dear:

Councillor of Ward 6 (Cynthia Block),

Mayor of Saskatoon (Charlie Clark), and

Other Members of City Council (Darren Hill, David Kirton, Randy Donauer, Sarina Gersher, Zach Jefferies, Hillary Gough, Troy Davies, Mairin Loewen, Bev Doubois)

My name is Waseem, and I am a [REDACTED]-year-old resident living in Varsity View. I am currently, as of writing, a master's student at the University of Saskatchewan. I have been a proud resident of Varsity View for my entire life, and I am a dedicated supporter of effective public transit solutions to reduce transportation greenhouse gas emissions. It is of my pleasure today to present to you my requests for the City of Saskatoon to implement amendments to the land use and zoning bylaws proposed along BRT corridors. These amendments, outlined at the end of this letter, will help the City of Saskatoon align its growth plan to the Housing Action Plan of the Government of Canada to establish housing affordability for all residents of the City of Saskatoon and at the same time address the need for preserving biodiversity, trees, and environmental greenspace of all neighbourhoods along the BRT corridors. I strongly affirm that the amendments that I present in this letter will enable the City of Saskatoon to use its BRT corridor system to grow in a prosperous and sustainable way that meets the needs of every current resident and resident-to-be for housing affordability in Saskatoon.

The Canada Housing Accelerator fund, initiated by the Government of Canada, will provide up to \$ 4 billion dollars to build 3.87 million new dwellings across Canada by 2031.¹⁻³ Despite this, only \$ 41.3 million will be directly allocated for Saskatoon to build 25 240 units.¹ Furthermore, these funds will only begin to be available in fiscal years 2025-2026.¹ This makes the federal government's target to build 3.87 million new units by 2031 constrained. Unfortunately, simply rezoning housing to R4 is not going to accomplish this within the timeframe specified by the Federal Government and produced disputed results in actually making housing affordable for Canadians. One example that I give is the township of Kitchener and Waterloo in southern Ontario, a city-township that has the exact same population of Saskatoon. There are plenty of places in Kitchener-Waterloo zoned to R6 two to three decades ago. Most of these houses are still R2 classified. Therefore, simply rezoning land around BRT corridors will not be enough to help meet the housing goals of the federal government.

One way the City of Saskatoon can help achieve the housing goal of the federal government is to prioritize rezoning of parking lots that are within the BRT corridors. Currently and inherently, all parking lots in the City of Saskatoon have zero residents living on them, making the population density of all parking lots to be zero persons per square meter. Three to four parking spaces alone provide enough

size for one high density dwelling. Furthermore, to ease the concerns from other residents who prefer that parking still be present, we can require that parking be available on the lower levels and underground for dwellings being built over parking spaces, exactly similar to the public parking spaces implemented under the Remai Art Gallery and the Alt Hotel Building in the Karim W Nasser Square on the River Landing. The cities of Edmonton and Winnipeg currently have these kinds of dwellings in their downtowns. Prioritizing infill inside of parking lots will allow the city to unlock federal funds to implement the BRT across the city and allow the city to meet the goal of the Housing Action Plan of the Government of Canada.

After reading further into the Housing Action Plan of the Government of Canada, I noticed that there are only a few items from the plan that will directly address high rental prices across Canada for all Canadians. The first item in the Housing Action Plan the federal government introduced that helps with affordability is a GST exemption for purpose-built housing including non-equity cooperatives, not-for-profit organizations, and student housing.^{1,2} The second item mentioned in the Housing Action Plan that also directly helps with housing affordability is to strengthen the Co-operative Housing Development Program by investing \$ 309.3 million into the program.^{2,3} These are the two items in Housing Action Plan that directly help lower housing costs for Canadians. The City of Saskatoon can help the federal government fulfill its Housing Action Plan by prioritizing cooperative housing to receive more funds for BRT corridor planning, which is what the Housing Action Plan intends. Fortunately, at least 10% of the funds provided for affordable housing in the 2024 Federal Budget will be provided and prioritized for Cooperatives and Not-For Profits to provide more affordable homes to Canadians.¹ The cooperative model is effective at promoting affordability as it can allow for revenue sharing among tenants by receiving rebates through dividends, which lowers the yearly cost of rent for tenants. Furthermore, it can allow improvements in housing conditions by allowing tenants to be stakeholders. I strongly request the city to implement policies to promote cooperatives in the housing market and to incentivize affordable housing for public benefit through funds provided through the Canada Housing Action Plan and the 2024 federal budget.

Finally, the City of Saskatoon must prioritize the preservation of environmental greenspace that currently exists in the city. Numerous peer-reviewed studies have repeatedly shown that preserving mature trees and enhancing environmental greenspace lowers costs for both health and infrastructure, reduces crime, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that harm the Earth's climate.⁴⁻¹¹ One main issue in the BRT Corridors is that there are no requirements along any of corridors that require a minimum amount of mature tree and environmental greenspace. The lack of mature trees and greenspace along corridors will increase the average temperature of the neighbourhood during the non-winter months. This

is known as the urban heat island effect, which is when urban spaces without mature trees and environmental greenspace can be up to 10°C higher on average than urban spaces with mature trees and environmental greenspace due to the increased heat presence from more buildings, concrete, and asphalt.¹² Mature trees also reduce greenhouse gas emissions by trapping in more carbon dioxide, eliminating the heating effects from those greenhouse gasses and mitigate rising climate temperature trends in Saskatoon.⁷ By incorporating requirements to limit the presence of heat in neighbourhoods during the summer, the neighbourhood becomes more hospitable and welcoming. Therefore, including requirements on preserving current mature trees for all lots along the BRT corridors will regulate the climate of Saskatoon to mitigate unintended heating and attract more residents to areas with more tree density and environmental greenspace density.

Researchers in Australia conducted a study with 110,134 participants to see if regions with mature tree canopies have a positive effect on health. What they found is that participants who lived in regions of Sydney, Australia with mature tree canopies had saved up to \$AU 600 (\$545 CAD) per person every year on health-related costs, translating to about a reduction of \$AU 19.3 million (\$17.5 million CAD) in healthcare costs per 100,000 people every year.¹³ This occurs from the fact that mature trees diminish the risk of heat stroke by providing shade to mitigate the urban heat island effect.⁵ Mature tree canopies decrease the risk of skin cancer by providing shade to block direct exposure to solar UV rays during core daytime.¹⁴ Researchers have found that trees reduce the likelihood of mental health diagnoses for residents.¹⁵ Trees also show to reduce exposure of particulate matter from car exhaust that are toxic to human health including CO (carbon monoxide), NO₂ (nitrogen dioxide), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), and soot (C₆₀).¹⁶⁻¹⁹ Therefore, trees lower healthcare costs and decrease health risks associated with chronic exposure of particulate matter in neighbourhoods. By keeping mature trees and biodiversity in environmental greenspaces along BRT corridors will increase the overall well being residents by reducing health costs and decreasing the burden of healthcare facilities to treat more patients. Since healthcare facilities across the entire province of Saskatchewan have increasing burdens to provide healthcare access for patients, preserving current mature trees along the BRT corridors is crucial as a preventative health policy for lowering healthcare costs and preventing the overburdening of healthcare facilities across the province.

Dwellings in high density neighbourhoods will benefit from the presence of mature trees from the reduction of the urban heat island effect by lowering utility costs. The lower apparent temperature will decrease the demand of electricity for to power air conditioning units thus lowering the amount of electricity used.^{16,20,21} Researchers in one study for cities in the United States with mature tree canopies have found a significant reduction of electricity usage that amounts to savings of up

to \$4.7 billion USD (\$ 6.4 billion CAD) annually.²⁰ This benefit provided from mature trees remaining in the neighbourhood will lower costs for residents as intended by the Housing Action Plan of the federal government and reduce greenhouse gas emissions that harm the Earth's climate. Preserving the greenery, mature trees, and environmental greenspace will address housing affordability issues that may arise from rezoning BRT corridors to high density housing by lowering utility costs for dwellings along the BRT corridors.

Given this evidence, I request that city council adopt and implement the following amendments, either in the current meeting or in a forthcoming meeting, to improve the BRT Corridor Zoning By-Law plan and the BRT Corridor Land Use plan to include these requirements as part of the BRT zoning and land use bylaws and to implement effective initiatives that meet the growth plan of the City of Saskatoon that will allow the City of Saskatoon to effectively meet its sustainability goals and to implement housing affordability through the Canada Housing Accelerator Fund:

1. Use the federal funds allocated from the Canada Housing Accelerator Fund to attract housing cooperatives to provide opportunities for housing affordability within the city of Saskatoon.
 - a. A large portion of the Canada Housing Accelerator Fund will require that the City of Saskatoon use the funds to help expand not-for-profit organizations and cooperatives to be the main stakeholders in the increase of housing supply across Canada.
 - b. Cooperatives and non-profits will be eligible for the GST exemption on renters allowing residents to rent from cooperatives and not-for-profit organizations at lower rates.
 - c. Cooperatives allow for revenue sharing which directly lower the yearly rental costs through dividends and can allow for stakeholder involvement to improve housing conditions and benefits.
2. Prioritize rezoning and developments in parking lots situated within the boundaries of all BRT corridors to accommodate multiple unit housing with on-site parking in underground, ground-floor, or first floor parking.
 - a. This along will help the Federal government meet its goal of increasing the supply of housing and at the same time meet the needs of all residents and stakeholders within Saskatoon.
3. Require minimum mature tree and environmental greenspace requirements to all lots being rezoned to Corridor Residential and R4 along all BRT corridors.
 - a. This amendment will reduce the urban heat island effect caused by the lack of environmental greenspace and lower utility and infrastructure costs by reducing the reliance on electricity and by minimizing the usage of AC units in all dwellings.

- b. This amendment will lower health costs and improve the physical and mental well-being of all residents by lowering the risk of heat stroke, lowering the risk skin cancer, and lowering the exposure to particulate matter from car exhaust.
 - c. This amendment will preserve vital trees, mature trees, and environmental greenspace that provide the natural character of each neighbourhood, preserve the unique biodiversity of the City of Saskatoon, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by being greenhouse gas sinks.
- 4. Require minimum mature tree and environmental greenspace requirements to all lots being rezoned to Corridor Mixed-Use along all BRT corridors.
 - a. Reasons are the same as listed under amendment 3 (3a, 3b, and 3c).
- 5. Require minimum mature tree and environmental greenspace requirements to all lots being rezoned to Station Mixed-Use along all BRT corridors.
 - a. Reasons are the same as listed under amendment 3 (3a, 3b, and 3c).

Thank you very much for your time and interest in listening to my request to adopt and implement these amendments. My support for the BRT Zoning and Land Use By-Laws will rest on whether City Council will adopt and implement these amendments. I strongly affirm that the amendments presented above in this letter will allow the City of Saskatoon to grow and prosper in a meaningful and sustainable way that is beneficial to every current resident and future resident of Saskatoon for housing affordability. These amendments will provide needed improvements to definitions and the requirements in the zoning and land use bylaws of the BRT corridors and to promote prosperity, well-being, and sustainability in Saskatoon.

Sincerely,

Waseem Tannous

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

References

This section is a list of all the citations used in this letter. Peer-reviewed articles have a DOI identifier that you can use to directly access the article at <https://doi.org/>. In the case that one of the citations is behind a paywall, the reader is welcome and encouraged to use either the Saskatoon Public Library (<https://saskatoonlibrary.ca/>) or the University of Saskatchewan Library (<https://library.usask.ca/>) to retrieve the articles shown below.

- (1) Canada, D. of F. *Chapter 1: More Affordable Homes | Budget 2024*. <https://budget.canada.ca/2024/report-rapport/chap1-en.html> (accessed 2024-05-26).
- (2) Canada, D. of F. *Chapter 1 - Canada's Housing Action Plan | 2023 FES*. <https://www.budget.canada.ca/fes-eea/2023/report-rapport/chap1-en.html> (accessed 2024-05-26).
- (3) Canada, D. of F. *2023 Fall Economic Statement*. <https://www.budget.canada.ca/fes-eea/2023/home-accueil-en.html> (accessed 2024-05-26).
- (4) Wang, Y.; Akbari, H. The Effects of Street Tree Planting on Urban Heat Island Mitigation in Montreal. *Sustain. Cities Soc.* **2016**, *27*, 122–128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2016.04.013>.
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- (9) Chan, T.-C.; Lee, P.-H.; Lee, Y.-T.; Tang, J.-H. Exploring the Spatial Association between the Distribution of Temperature and Urban Morphology with Green View Index. *PLOS ONE* **2024**, *19* (5), e0301921. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0301921>.
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- (13) Feng, X.; Navakatikyan, M.; Eckermann, S.; Astell-Burt, T. Show Me the Money! Associations between Tree Canopy and Hospital Costs in Cities for Cardiovascular Disease Events in a Longitudinal Cohort Study of 110,134 Participants. *Environ. Int.* **2024**, *185*, 108558. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2024.108558>.
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- (21) Shickman, K.; Rogers, M. Capturing the True Value of Trees, Cool Roofs, and Other Urban Heat Island Mitigation Strategies for Utilities. *Energy Effic.* **2020**, *13* (3), 407–418. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12053-019-09789-9>.