

June 19, 2024

Mayor Clark  
Counsellor Gersher  
City Council  
City of Saskatoon

Sent via email.

Dear Mayor and Council:

We read the Zoning Notice published in the Saskatoon Star Phoenix on Saturday, June 8, 2024 and we have had subsequent discussions with fellow citizens of Saskatoon since that time, to understand more fully what this notice of Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment may mean. We have a number of concerns and unanswered questions about this proposal:

1. This appears to be a Zoning Bylaw Amendment of momentous impact and yet it was communicated in 8 pt font on City Pages A5 and A6, in language inaccessible to many and using diagrams that are too small and without enough detail to be truly illustrative. Why have there not been community forums advertised on television, radio, and social media that invite all citizens to attend and to be fully informed of proposed changes of this magnitude? What is the City's responsibility to ensure informed citizenry in this regard?
2. In a democracy, individuals have input into decisions that affect them. With limited notice of these proposed changes, and limited communications about the proposed changes, we do not feel many citizens are even aware of the proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment, let alone are well-informed about it. A published name of a city employee and a phone number to call does not create the public debate that we feel is required for proposed changes of such significance.
3. The City of Saskatoon has a long zoning history. The Zoning Bylaw Amendment proposes changes that will affect the city of Saskatoon forever. Such generational change to a city, change that appears to be a breach of our City's long-standing principles of development, is not change that should be taken lightly, made quickly, made without consideration of the impacts on each unique community, or done without the broadest public consultation possible.
4. In effect, property owners in communities zoned R1, single-family dwellings, bought their lots from the City with a certain and secure understanding about the nature of the community. Effectually, the City is breaking its 'contract' with the residents of R1 neighborhoods by proposing changes to the zoning. Without seeking community input in a substantial and fulsome way, this appears to be a violation of the 'contract' on the part of the City with its citizens living in communities currently zoned R1.
5. Saskatoon is a city marked by diversity and diverse neighborhoods. There is not a one size fits all Zoning Amendment that will work for all neighborhoods. We feel strongly that it is the responsibility of each City Councillor, with the support of the Mayor, to meet and collaborate

with community members, community by community, in order to gather input into a Zoning Plan that will work for each neighborhood.

6. In review of the Official Community Plan Amendment Notice, we do not see information that outlines what has been done in terms of assessing the environmental impact of this plan. Has that work been done? Is it publically available? What will be the impact to mature trees and vegetation in the Transit Development Area and the Corridor Growth Area? What will be the resulting impact on birds, insects, and wildlife? Again, we feel this information is critical to analyze prior to any approvals.

7. In this same vein, what is the impact of the Official Community Plan Amendment to infrastructure? Can the infrastructure of the city – e.g. current condition of roads, alleys, water, sewer, parking, traffic flow – absorb the changes that will occur in the Transit Development Area and the Corridor Growth Area? As citizens of Saskatoon, we would like, first, to know if these assessments have been done and, second, to be given an opportunity to consider those impacts? If they have been done, how are they being taken into account? How are they being broadly communicated, to ensure an informed citizenry?

8. Further to this, schools and teachers are overburdened with increasing student populations, class sizes, and class complexity. Do the schools in the Transit Development Area and the Corridor Growth Area have the physical capacity to absorb a greatly increased student population resulting from dense housing? Has this assessment been made by the City, in conjunction with local school divisions? If, through this assessment, it is found that these schools do not have the required capacity for growth, what will be the proposed alternatives for students, families, and the neighborhoods?

9. What will the implications of population density in the Transit Development Area and the Corridor Growth Area have for childcare requirements? According to a 2023 report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), 92 per cent of Saskatchewan children who are not yet attending kindergarten live in a postal code with more than three children competing for every licensed child-care space. David Macdonald, a senior economist at CCPA who co-authored the report, wrote that we need a public planning process that locates childcare centres where it is most convenient for children and families. Has this public planning process for the development of childcare spaces been initiated by the City in conjunction with the Zoning Bylaw Amendments? How will the City ensure that the Transit Development Area and Corridor Growth Area does not become another “childcare desert”?

10. Is the promise of Federal money, \$41.3 million, to help alleviate the housing shortage, particularly low-income/affordable housing, the motive for this proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment? We do not believe the future of Saskatoon should be determined by Federal promises for funding. We are reading of cities who are turning down the Federal dollars in order to maintain local control of local decisions. We are also reading of cities who are

negotiating specific details that create, as an example, a made in Halifax agreement. This decision is one to make by the citizens of Saskatoon, not by Federal determination.

If the objective of the proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment is to receive funding to support efforts to reduce homelessness and to expand the availability of affordable housing, we have not seen any specific evidence to date to suggest how the proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment will improve these two significant challenges in Saskatoon. As a rapidly growing city, what work has been done to determine what \$10 million/year in affordable housing construction might do to address homelessness? How will \$41 million over four years impact housing prices and ensure that lower priced housing is protected and maintained? We are very aware of the need to address homelessness and to ensure access to affordable housing across the city.

Nonetheless, we have seen no information on the analysis of the potential of this Zoning Bylaw Amendment to address these issues, nor have we seen benchmarks or accountability measures that might enable us to see proposed progress toward these vital issues.

In effect, the amount of money promised by the Federal Government amounts to approximately \$150 per Saskatoon resident over four years. When one considers this small financial gain against the loss of democratic decision-making, is the Federal financial contribution indeed that significant?

11. Finally, a municipal election is scheduled for November 2024. Given the magnitude of this proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment, it appears to be in the best interests of Saskatoon citizens to have this issue determined by newly elected City Councilors and Mayor:

- when due diligence can be afforded to both the elected members and Saskatoon's citizens,
- and when, as outlined above, attention can be afforded meaningful and broad-reaching consultation, community by community,
  - taking into account the uniqueness of each community,
  - voice in decision-making which affects citizens,
  - environmental impact,
  - and impact on infrastructure.

After the November election, our newly elected City Council will be accountable to the citizens of Saskatoon for the decisions they make. It does not seem reasonable, with half+ of the current Council not seeking re-election, that a decision of this magnitude would be imposed on a newly-elected Council, without their participation in this critical decision-making. In fact, we feel a bylaw change that impacts every citizen and every home in every community of Saskatoon should potentially be an item for a referendum, thereby allowing everyone a chance to have a say in this decision.

To this end, we believe the current City Council needs to stop this process at this time, in regard to the concept of multiple-unit residential development with more than five units in the Transit

Development area, the development of six-storey buildings adjacent to Bus Rapid Transit routes, and four-storey development in the Transit Development Area. If these aims are to be considered, it is imperative that the new City Council, after the November election, restart consultation, on a community by community basis, in a manner that ensures all citizens understand the impacts and accept the future of our communities that will result from these changes. Given potentially profound change, every citizen has the right to understand fully the way our neighborhoods will change and develop, and to have a voice in those decisions.

We understand that a Public Hearing is scheduled for Thursday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, beginning at 9:30 a.m. in City Council Chamber, City Hall. We would like the opportunity to speak to the proposed amendment during this hearing. We look forward to being contacted by a representative of the City Clerk's Office to have this opportunity scheduled.

Our best,

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Laurie Pushor

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Debbie Pushor

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City of Saskatoon residents