



## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY**

### **Downtown Zoning Review**

### **Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendments**

#### **Engagement Description:**

Two phases of community engagement were undertaken throughout the Downtown Zoning Review project. At the time of the first phase, only the B6 District and surface parking regulations for the B6, MX2 and M4 Districts were within the project scope. During the second phase, which followed the approval of the City Centre & District Plan, the project scope was broadened to include the MX2 District and density bonus provisions.

The first phase involved meetings with a focus group comprised of local planners, architects and designers, developers, and business/industry representatives who provided feedback and suggestions about the regulations from a technical perspective. Five 90-minute sessions were held at City Hall in Spring/Summer 2023 to discuss land uses and development standards within the zone. The comments and advice informed the proposed changes to the regulations, and broader engagement occurred once the amendments were refined.

A [Downtown Market Analysis](#) of Housing and Retail Demand was conducted over Summer 2023 to assess future market conditions and provide guidance on potential development types within the Downtown. The analysis included interviews with developers, Downtown organisations and local businesses to inform recommendations for future growth and investment in the Downtown.

The second phase of engagement involved sharing information with and requesting feedback from property owners, interest holders and the public. In August 2024, an Engage Page was launched with information regarding changes to the B6 District and surface parking regulations. A notice was mailed to property owners within the affected zones, including a targeted letter to existing surface parking lot owners. An interim information report and presentation was provided to the Municipal Planning Commission at their December 2024 meeting to solicit their feedback as a stakeholder group.

In February 2025, a public open house was held at City Hall to provide information about the proposed changes and was attended by over 30 individuals. Changes to the MX2 District and density bonus provisions had been added to the project scope by this time.

A targeted notice was mailed to the owners of surface parking lots in April 2025.

### **Phase I – Targeted Engagement**

This summary describes the activities undertaken and comments received during the focus group sessions.

#### **Engagement Activities:**

##### **Recruitment**

- In January and February 2023, requests for participants were emailed to: Developer's Liaison Committee, Saskatchewan Professional Planners Institute members, Downtown Saskatoon newsletter recipients and planning, design and real estate development businesses licensed by the City of Saskatoon.
- Interested parties completed an online form indicating their profession, experience working with the regulations and thoughts on the current framework, and availability.
- Ten participants were selected based on their individual qualifications and the range of expertise and diversity of experience within the group overall.
- The group consisted of two planners, four architects/designers, two developers, and two business representatives, including private industry and the Downtown Business Improvement District.

##### **Meetings**

Focus group members attended five meetings to provide their opinions and expertise on land use and development standards.

Session	Date	Topic
1	March 24, 2023	Open Volume regulations
2	April 17, 2023	Surface parking regulations
3	May 9, 2023	Design guidelines
4	May 26, 2023	Miscellaneous items
5	June 16, 2023	Open Volume and surface parking follow-up

#### **What We Heard:**

Feedback and suggestions provided by the focus group members have been condensed and organized into topic areas denoted by green headings in the following table.

<b>Open Volume</b>
Clarify what open volume is and how the regulation is interpreted and applied by adding a diagram and explanatory statements to the Zoning Bylaw.
Present maximum permitted building height in graph and table format.
Increase the building height permitted with no open volume.
Increase development rights overall, especially for small sites.
Consider accepting bonusing features in lieu of open volume.
Consider allowing bonusing for buildings that are less than 76 metres in height.
<b>Surface Parking</b>
Concern about the number, size, and appearance of Downtown surface parking lots and their impact on the streetscape.
Supported changing them to a discretionary land use delegated to Administration.
Supported prohibiting them on certain blocks.
Temporary parking lots could have a four-year approval term with the potential for a two-year extension.
Few site improvements should be required for temporary parking lots.
After the approval/extension for a temporary parking lot expires, it should either become a permanent parking lot or cease operation.
Permanent parking lots should be subject to more stringent requirements.
Landscaping and other site improvements are desirable in the urban setting and should be required for permanent parking lots.
Considering limiting or prohibiting advertising/third party signs.
Also concerned about the size, location, and appearance of accessory parking areas.
<b>Design Guidelines</b>
Some felt that the design guidelines could be strengthened while others felt they are not necessary at all.
Need to clarify when the design guidelines are triggered.
Consider removing drop-off areas from permitted setback uses because they interrupt the pedestrian realm and street parking or loading stalls can be used for this purpose.
Consider adding retail as a permitted setback use.
Administration needs to consult experts to develop guidelines for wind mitigation studies, including triggers, methodology and evaluation criteria.
Consider increasing the building height trigger for wind mitigation studies from 15 metres to 20 metres, which is consistent with the approach some other Canadian cities have taken.
Consider establishing suitable mitigation/design measures that would negate the need for a wind analysis if implemented.
Need to clarify requirement for transparent openings, especially for sites with multiple frontages.

<b>Purpose Statement</b>
Revise the B6 purpose statement to reflect current policies and objectives for Downtown.
Ensure the purpose is reflected in the regulations.
<b>Permitted and Prohibited Uses</b>
Some types of manufacturing (especially those with experiential components for the public) might be appropriate Downtown.
Consider increasing permitting a production area greater than 25% of the building floor area, provided it remains ancillary to the principal use.
<b>Setbacks for Residential Uses</b>
Dense development is expected in the urban setting.
Remove or reduce this zoning requirement as National Building Code addresses life safety and property protection matters, such as spatial separation.
Consider only requiring setback for new construction to facilitate adaptive reuse of buildings.
Setbacks based on glazing is inconsistent with regulations in other zoning districts.
<b>Amenity Space</b>
Current requirement provides flexibility while ensuring amenity is provided.
<b>Number of Buildings on a Site</b>
More than one building should be permitted on Downtown sites.
Consider introducing a “mixed-use complex” land use and exempting sites Downtown zones from being limited to one principal building per site.
Design quality and integration provisions are needed to ensure sites are developed in a cohesive and attractive manner.
<b>Loading Spaces</b>
Increase floor area trigger for needing a loading space or have flexibility to waive the requirement.
Address contradiction of loading spaces being allowed in a front yard.
<b>Other</b>
Consider establishing a policy for office development in the city due to the impact that suburban office development has on demand for Downtown land.

## **Phase II – Public Engagement**

This summary describes the engagement activities undertaken and comments received from the public between August 2024 and April 2025.

### **Engagement Activities:**

#### **Public Notification and Comment Period**

- Engage page launched – August 2025.
- Public notification sent out – August 23 to 26, 2024:
  - Mailed to approximately 346 property owners.
  - Notification to surface parking lot owners – Notices indicated the approval status of the parking lot and how changes may impact the property, and recommended contacting City of Saskatoon Administration (Administration) to discuss bylaw compliance.
  - Emailed the Ward Councillor and Downtown Business Improvement District, Focus Group members.
- Informal comment period opened August 2024.
  - Correspondence received from five parties.
  - Email addresses of correspondents added to a Correspondence List for future communications and application updates.

#### **Municipal Planning Commission Meeting**

- Interim report and presentation provided at their December 17, 2024 meeting to provide information and solicit feedback.

#### **Stakeholder Meetings**

- Meetings were held with the Ward 6 Councillor and Downtown Business Improvement District to discuss the proposed changes – January to February 2025.
- Phone calls and meetings were held with individual property owners where requested – January to March 2025.

#### **Public Open House**

- Held at City Hall, Committee Room E on February 27, 2025, from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm
- Public notification sent out – February 2025.
  - Mailed to Downtown property owners January 31, 2025.
  - Emailed to: Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, North Saskatoon Business Association, Downtown Business Improvement District, Saskatoon Heritage Society, Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association, Focus Group members, Correspondence List, Building

Standards subscription list, Zoning Bylaw Review subscription list and other development industry stakeholders in February 2025.

- Featured in Downtown Saskatoon and Chamber of Commerce e-newsletters.
- Posted on Facebook, Instagram and X February 13, 2025.
- Come-and-go event with Administration available to explain the proposed changes and answer questions.
- Approximately 30 people attended.
- Formal comment period open February 3, 2025 to March 21, 2025.

#### Final Notice to Surface Parking Lot Owners

- Notification sent out – April 22, 2025.
  - Mailed to 50 property owners.
- Notices indicated the approval status of the parking lot and how changes may impact the property, and recommended contacting Administration to discuss bylaw compliance.
- Engage Page updated with more information about development standards for surface parking lots and how to apply for a Development Permit or Business License.

#### **What We Heard:**

Comments and questions received from the public are summarized below.

- General acceptance for the proposed changes and understanding of the rationale for new regulations.
- Administration did not receive significant opposition or concern.
- Several parking lot owners followed up to understand the status of their property, how the proposed changes might impact their property, and how to apply for a Development Permit and/or Business License.
- General questions about bylaw enforcement for existing parking lots.

Feedback from the Municipal Planning Commission has been condensed and organized into topic areas denoted by green headings in the following table.

General
Support for flexibility within the Zoning Bylaw and removing barriers to development.
Support for increased development density in the Downtown.
Desire to reduce cost and red tape for developers.
Ensure the zoning regulations benefit the public and Downtown streetscapes.

<b>Design</b>
Support for the proposed open volume changes and expanding opportunity for density bonusing.
Question about building setbacks and if they are necessary Downtown. Noted that the requirement is proposed to be waived for adaptive reuse and suggested this for new construction as well.
Question about horizontal building articulation and if a base, middle and top portions of a building are necessary past a certain height as the bottom/podium has the biggest impact to pedestrians.
Question about the intent behind the mechanical screening requirement and concern that it has cost and structural implications. Suggestion to negotiate this on a site-by-site basis based on how visible the mechanical equipment is.
Discussion about transparent openings and which design features are acceptable to prevent a blank wall (public art, architectural features, third-party advertising).
Question about wind mitigation studies and if the City of Saskatoon is involved in long-term monitoring, or if it is the responsibility of the private sector.
<b>Land Use</b>
Support for proposed changes to the ground floor retail requirements, especially the inclusion of community and public space uses.
Suggestion to allow more manufacturing and production Downtown, provided it is safe and appropriate.
Support for adaptive reuse of existing buildings and easily enabling this through the Zoning Bylaw.
Question about allowing more than one principal building on a site and where or why that would happen.
<b>Parking</b>
Support for a new approach to regulating surface parking lots and limiting the creation of new surface parking lots.
Question about bylaw enforcement for parking lots that have not been approved and/or do not meet current development standards.
Question about if new proposed surface parking lots would go to MPC under the new discretionary use framework.
<b>Other</b>
Question about when the new regulations would apply (i.e. for existing buildings or new construction only) and if there will be incentives or financial support for existing properties to meet new standards.
Question about whether the Zoning Bylaw contains accessibility and barrier-free requirements like the National Building Code and Accessibility Standards Canada.
Questions and concerns about signs and billboards Downtown. Support for imposing more restrictions on advertising in public spaces was noted.
Question about considerations for heritage properties or new development adjacent to heritage properties.