

Consultation Summary

Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association – The Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association was of the view that the current market is evolving quickly to the standard of front yard landscaping requirements already. Current market offerings will resolve many of the concerns in the future.

The Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association identified several concerns with respect to potential regulations on front yard landscaping completion, including negative impacts on home affordability, loss of creativity in terms of design and curb appeal, challenges with completion dates due to local climate patterns, and costs to the City of Saskatoon (City) to develop and administer the regulations.

The Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association was of the view that more practical solutions exist as opposed to additional zoning regulations, including more focused efforts on addressing weed growth and an educational approach, including the development of a best practice guide for neighbourhoods, focusing on landscaping guidelines.

A copy of Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association's letter on this matter has been attached.

Arbutus Properties – Arbutus Properties highlighted the importance of completing front yard landscaping within a timely manner as it is an important element in building quality communities in the city.

In its view, mandating the completion of front yard landscaping through the Zoning Bylaw is not the preferred way of addressing the issue. Arbutus Properties generally advocates for less regulation as opposed to more. Arbutus Properties currently includes front yard landscaping in its lot and house sales. Arbutus Properties was in general agreement with the position put forth by the Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association and was of the view that education, communication, and enforcement of issues under existing bylaws are approaches the City could consider.

Arbutus Properties was also of the view that the current market is now delivering a product that resolves the issue moving forward, though legacy issues may exist with some of the older neighbourhoods.

Dream Developments (Dream) – Dream identified the importance of completing landscaping within a timely manner and noted that it requires its builders to complete driveway surfacing as part of the home sale. Dream also reimburses the cost of front yard landscaping for all new single-family homes. In the Stonebridge neighbourhood, Dream regulated landscaping completion through an architectural guideline approach and noted that it received opposition from residents in working toward compliance. In general, Dream was uncertain as to a preferred approach to address the issue.

Saskatoon Land Division – The Saskatoon Land Division questioned the current regulatory framework and the fact that landscaping requirements exist for all land uses, except lower-density forms of residential development. In its view, it is a significant inconsistency within the Zoning Bylaw.

The Saskatoon Land Division noted that, in the future, it may play a role in encouraging builders to complete front yard landscaping as part of their build, as the benefits to the community are numerous. However, it was of the opinion that the Administration should not be counting on the developers to solve its regulatory problem by forcing the requirement on all of their customers.

Boychuk Homes – Boychuk Homes expressed concern over a regulatory approach through the Zoning Bylaw, largely highlighting perceived administrative concerns in enforcing and regulating any potential policy. Boychuk Homes is in support of the position offered by the Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association.

Boychuk Homes also note that it offers financial incentives for completing front yard landscaping in select areas, often off of collector roadways and major neighbourhood thoroughfares.



September 21, 2018

Matt Grazier,
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Subject: Landscaping requirements for residential development

Dear Matt,

We are of the understanding that City Council will be considering mandatory regulations for front yard landscaping on newly built homes in Saskatoon. Like City Council, the Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association has heard concerns on occasion related to new homes in new communities that have not been landscaped and the challenge it creates for some neighbours.

On the surface, it may sound reasonable to regulate front yard landscaping, but as you dig deeper, what one discovers is layers of complexity that would need to be addressed to regulate successfully. At the same time as the City of Saskatoon would be considering, researching and creating such a regulation, most community developers have implemented front yard landscaping requirements in their upcoming neighbourhoods. Developments without front yard landscaping requirements are typically in the end stages of development. We believe the market is evolving very quickly to the standard of front yard landscaping requirements already. These market changes for the most part will resolve many of the concerns in the future.

Yards are new to many >>

The face of our city has been changing as it welcomes newcomers. It is easy to understand that some of our new citizens are dealing with a lot of new experiences. For those of us who have lived here for a long time, we may take for granted our cultural norms that can take time for newcomers to adapt to. Shoveling our sidewalks, parking our cars, cutting our grass, and watering our trees and shrubs can be all new to someone arriving from places where they have never had a yard. They are only now learning what to do with this green space. For others, a busy lifestyle can create choices for low maintenance yard designs. Some will choose to hire a professional landscaper and landscape architect to design significantly enhanced yards. Others, many first-time home owners, will choose to save a significant amount of money by doing much of the work, if not all, themselves.

If the builder is mandated by the city to deliver this service, other issues such as warranty and irrigation, to name a few, come into play, all of which bring additional margins in place that we know will have an impact on the price of homes, negatively impacting home affordability.



There are significant choices that people should be able to make to enhance their own home's curb appeal. It would be rare to find two identical front yards in Saskatoon and that variety makes a walk through a neighbourhood more interesting. Once the individual choices are taken away from home owners and they are required to reach some sort of minimal standard, we will see a loss of individuality and creativity. A front yard landscaping requirement will ultimately lead to bureaucratic view of what is appropriate and what is not.

Long term health of landscaping is best completed 1 to 2 years after construction >>

A review of best practices would suggest the best time to landscape is one to two years after construction to allow for ground settling, however opinions vary widely and are subjective. The subjectivity is always an obstacle to developing equitable regulations.

For the new home buyer, a lot of decision making is required throughout the entire process. By the time the homeowner is at the end stage of their home construction, they have made a lot of decisions. Blinds, decorating, landscaping are only a few of those decisions. Often, they need some time to take a deep breath and decide what they want to do. Having to make a landscape plan that will meet city standards only adds even more stress.

We live in a four-season City >>

Time frames of such regulations and the fact that we live in a four-season city will be very challenging to align. For example, winter occupancy with two feet of snow on the ground. If the city was using occupancy permits as a tool to enforce compliance, the additional costs to delay a family from moving into their new home would be very significant.

Overgrowth of weeds is the real problem >>

We can all appreciate the frustration created when neighbours don't maintain their front yards resulting in an overgrowth of weeds. The fact is a neighbour who does not maintain their front yard will have significant weeds whether the front yard is landscaped or not. The best solution might be for the city to better enforce or enhance bylaws addressing out of control weeds.

Regulation will create higher cost to homeowner and City >>

To enforce such a regulation will come at a significant cost to new home buyers and the municipality. We are not referring to the actual cost of landscaping, but the ongoing *costs of red tape and infrastructure to regulate and enforce*. It would be a significant concern if the city would rationalize this as a growth cost.

Minimum and maximum specs will need to be developed, along with acceptable and reasonable timeframes, which is very subjective. More resources will be needed to review landscaping plans, provide inspection, and in some cases re-inspection. City Administration already appears to be concerned about the level of service it can deliver in the coming years, which is especially important to consider given we are looking at another increase in property taxes in the 2019 budget. If the city budget does not include additional resources to deliver on such a regulation, then an already over-strained Administration will only increase red tape and add even more delays to an already overburdened process. Let's focus on appropriate priorities for the smart growth and maintenance of our city.

And at the same time, the problem that is trying to be resolved will, for the most part, be delivered on by the community developers. One could suggest that the industry's self-regulation may not address every possible concern and there will be front yards that fall through the cracks. However, regulating is the most expensive way to deal with these few exceptions. Most often people buying a new home for themselves and their family are efficient at getting their landscaping done.

Simple steps to support industry in addressing exceptions that occur >>



The City of Saskatoon could partner with our Association to develop a best practice guide for neighbours, which could include information on:

- Front yard landscaping
- Where and how to plant trees
- Materials that grow best in our climate
- How much to water

The City of Calgary provides a good example of this in their Good Neighbour Reference Guide. See link below:

<http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Documents/Bylaws-by-topic/Good-Neighbour-Practices-Reference-Guide.pdf>

We would suggest a collaboration like this would be a far more prudent outcome than forcing design landscape requirements on home owners and citizens.

Bien à vous,

Chris M. Guérette
CEO