

Exhibition Local Area Plan (LAP) Meeting #7
Riverfront Park Uses:
Diefenbaker Park, Optimist Hill & Meewasin Trail
Seventh Day Adventist Christian School - Gym
2228 Herman Ave
May 15, 2019
7:00 pm

Attendees: Lynn Adamson, Darlene Fonos, Kryshna Hylton, Arnie Riise, Jane Sullivan, Joseph Flegel, Dustin Harrison, Norm Shuttleworth, Nick Nicolichuk, Debra & Colin Ylwja, Everet Van Olst, Keith Folkersen & Mark Emmons – co-facilitators, Melissa Austin & Paul Whitenect – Senior Planners, Holden Blue - Planner, Councilor Mairin Loewen, Shirlene Palmer – Recording Secretary

Regrets: Kevin Ariss – Community Consultant

1. Welcome & Introductions

Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Holden Blue introduced himself as an Implementation Planner working with the facilitators on this LAP. It is his job to take the LAP action items (recommendations), put them on a work plan and work to accomplish what you are asking. He introduced Keith Folkersen and Mark Emmons co-leads of the Exhibition Local Area Plan (LAP) Project and welcomed everyone to the 7th LAP meeting. He introduced the additional City of Saskatoon representatives in attendance.

2. Foundations for Success

Foundations for Successful Meetings specify how the meeting will be conducted. It's our job to ensure that everyone feels comfortable sharing their concerns, opinions and ideas with the group here tonight and throughout the process. We'll be talking about topics important to the entire neighbourhood, so every local stakeholder's opinion is important.

It can be difficult to hear at times so we want to ask that people to speak up when stating their comments but also listen quietly when others are speaking.

The Foundations for Successful Meetings for this meeting are:

1. **Information Sharing & Gathering:** The purpose of tonight's meeting is for you to receive information about the LAP process and for us to obtain knowledge of the area from local stakeholders
2. **Respect:** Please listen to and respect whoever is speaking.
3. **Integrity:** We are here to have an honest and open discussion.
4. **Fair and Equal Representation:** Everyone will have an opportunity to speak.

5. **No Repetitive Discussion:** We want to make the best, most effective use of everyone's time, so once a point has been raised and noted, we want to move forward with the discussion.
6. **Orderly Participation:** Please raise your hand if you have a question or comment.

3. **Overview of Topic** **Holden Blue, Implementation Planner**

What are we here to discuss? Residents in the area asked us in the LAP survey and meetings multiple questions about the riverfront area. Some of the questions that kept coming up were:

- Can we improve access to Meewasin Trail?
- What is going on at Optimist Hill?
- Is there a way we can use the riverfront area more often or make better use of it?

Our goal was to bring in all parties involved in the riverfront area to have an open discussion about the riverfront park uses.

Who manages the riverfront?

It is complicated and many groups have a role. Some of those who deal with the riverfront are:

- The City of Saskatoon manages some areas of the riverfront by Exhibition including Diefenbaker Park
- Meewasin manages sections of the riverfront in lands adjacent to the river that are within their boundary
- A non-profit corporation started by the Optimist Club manages the new Optimist Hill development. OSP Development Corporation

Pioneer (Nutana) Cemetery **Keith Folkersen, Planner**

We heard some feedback on the importance of the Pioneer (Nutana) Cemetery. It was mentioned to be valuable to the community and there was requests for more information on it.

The Pioneer (Nutana) Cemetery is located at Ruth Street West and St. Henry Avenue and was designated as a Municipal Heritage Property in 1982.

The heritage value of the Pioneer (Nutana) Cemetery lies in its association with the early settlers of Saskatoon. A central cairn honours this resting spot of persons who succumbed to prairie hazards such as prairie fire and snowstorms, as well as casualties of the Riel Resistance. The Clark, Trounce, Fletcher and Caswell surnames are among the notable pioneer Saskatoon families represented on inscribed tombstones. With the first interment occurring in the spring of 1884, the cemetery was the community's first,

and for two decades, only cemetery. While the exact number of interments is unknown, 162 interments in total have been documented.

In 1910 the City of Saskatoon took over management of the Cemetery from the Pioneer (Nutana) Cemetery Company, and only those who already owned plots or had family buried there could use it. The last burial occurred in the Pioneer (Nutana) Cemetery in 1948.

Key elements which contribute to the heritage value of this historic resource include:

- its built features, particularly the cairn and the tombstones marking interments;
- its natural grass cover, footpaths, and planting of trees;
- the open view of the river valley on its west.

4. Presentations

Meewasin Trail

Alan Otterbein, Design & Development Manager

Meewasin

Alan explained the existing Meewasin Trail network in proximity to the Exhibition neighbourhood, and overview of the most recent trail counts, and planned future work in the area.

The existing trail network on the east side of the South Saskatchewan River runs now to Chief Whitecap Park. The trail network on the west side currently ends at the Sanatorium Site on Spadina Crescent West.

A trail count was done in the Diefenbaker Park area of the Meewasin Trail in 2017. The trail had 100,000 people travel through it (that number is total trips which could be the same person counted multiple times) in that location which is a fairly high volume compared to rest of the city so it is a fairly active zone. Of those numbers 2/3 were pedestrians and 1/3 were cyclists.

An extension of Meewasin Trail, off Spadina Crescent West is planned to Maple Grove south of Power Plant (approximately 2.35 km). Also, the most southern parking lot by Optimist Hill is being reconfigured due to utility lines running through and better access to them is required. The plan is to work with the City to do this summer (2019).

Brad Babyak, Recreation Services Manager
City of Saskatoon

Diefenbaker Park

- One of Saskatoon's larger parks – 81.5 acres
- Park was named after John George Diefenbaker (1895-1979)

Special Events

- Hosts 4 major events annually including:

- Rock 102 Cardboard Cup – March
 - Saskatchewan Marathon – May
 - Optimist Canada Day – July
 - Saskatoon Ribfest – August
- Combined attendance of the four events is estimated at 55,000

Sport Field

- Full size (325'), Class II, Shale Diamond
 - booked between May – August
 - Approximately 178 hours or 89 ball games per year
 - Amenities on site include:
 - a permanent home run fence;
 - Shale infield;
 - and irrigated outfield
 - Mainly utilized by Men's Baseball
 - Sometimes utilized by minor baseball (U18 age)

Disc Golf

- 18 Hole Course – Five (5) baskets were temporarily relocated from the top of the hill and around the hill once construction of Optimist Hill began
- Utilized year-round by disc golfers of all ages and skill level
- The City of Saskatoon & Gophertown Disc Golf are working on future development with a re-design of the layout

Cross Country Ski Trail

- 2.6 km of single track trail maintained by the City of Saskatoon

Other Amenities

- Three (3) designated picnic sites, including BBQ's
- Walking Trails - Diefenbaker Park is situated along the South SK River (west of the park) which has access to the 20 km Meewasin Trail throughout the City
- The trails in and around Diefenbaker Park are also utilized by the Saskatoon School Divisions for the fall Cross Country Track races

Optimist Hill at Diefenbaker Park

Background Information:

- November 2013 – representatives from Optimist Club of Saskatoon requested City Council to consider a legacy project for the City
- March 2014 – City Council approve Diefenbaker Park as the proposed location for Optimist Hill
- December 2014 – City Council approves capital funding for the design & installation of necessary utility services
- March 2015 – City signed MOU with Optimist Club
- August 2018 – City signed Design & Construction Agreement with OSP Community Development Corp. (OSP)
- April 2019 – City signed MOA with OSP

City of Saskatoon's Role:

- City owns the park and has an agreement to lease the space to OSP

OSP's Role:

- OSP is responsible for the construction & operation of Optimist Hill

**Brad Sylvester, Chair & President
OSP Community Development Corp.**

**Joe Van't Hof, Co-Chair
Optimist Hill Campaign**

Two videos shown:

- Optimist Hill Campaign Update - prior to building of hill
- OPC Final Project

Joe noted they were grateful they were able to open for the first full day on February 10, 2019 and stay open until March 17th of this year. In those 29 days of usage, there were 6434 visitors. The team is happy to see the usage of the park after a six year journey when they had a dream and vision. It is not complete yet and is excited to continue with the project. Next week 60 trees will be planted on the backside of the fence line, continue further construction on the tobogganing hill so it can be open next year. They had many great partners in this project including the City. Very pleased with what they see so far and hope there is not much of an impact on the streets in the neighbourhood. The city is growing and this is one of the many good things we can now offer to our community.

Brad S. noted this is the first time that the City has entered into a partnership with a third party to build in a park, they have a 40 year lease. Optimist is a nonprofit organization that had a long history of providing services in the city. They are building a legacy for the entire community to enjoy.

The park will be reseeded later in fall, a secondary conveyor belt will be up and running next year. They are working with groups to fund various things. There have been many company and private donations as they feel they are giving back to the community. Thanks to Dutch Growers for the donation of all the trees as well as Early's for all the grass seed.

5. Question & Answer

Questions:

- **This entire project is wonderful. Wondering if at some point St. Henry between park and Prairieland parking will be paved?**

Brad B. stated this would be a capital project to improve and pave the road. There is currently no capital funding source. It is on a long term plan to be done

but with the Optimist Hill Project and the increased activity in the park it may not take as long as it would have before.

Joe stated they are hoping once the hill is complete there will be more activities in the park during the summer as well as the winter. The sky is the limit, more discussion is required.

➤ **When will the tobogganing hill be open?**

Joe stated last year was an anomaly but due to safety it needed to be closed. This is being addressed this week and will be open next year.

Brad B. noted the tobogganing hill is now facing east instead of north but is still the same height.

➤ **Can they look at adding some type of traffic calming on the corner of Ruth Street and St. Henry Avenue? There is lots of speeding down St. Henry at all times of the day and night.**

Keith asked the attendee to email him with this query and he will add it to the appropriate meeting to discuss further.

➤ **In regards to Canada Day and festivals in the summer. Will the lower part of the park be open during these for people to sit on and will it be safe?**

All slopes are basically the same as they were before, big enough and open enough for safety. This summer it will be seeded again so don't want any traffic. Canada Day will be inside the park between St. Henry and the inside road. May be able to use hill to set off fireworks and have hot zone inside the fence. In future years there may be changes but will do best for safety and enjoyment of all attendees.

Comment:

- When the south bridge was built they should have added a second entrance to Diefenbaker Park if they knew about this development. The City made a mistake.
- Prairieland uses St. Henry road for many of their accesses. They should have to cover some of the cost of the paving.

Questions:

➤ **Why can't a grader be sent out to St. Henry?**

Brad B. noted this road is part of the Parks Division and they have limited resources so can be a bit of a challenge.

➤ **Also agree with needing a second entrance. Another issue is the traffic flow when there are events. Turning left from Ruth St to St. Henry Ave but**

also how can we make it easier if we live in neighbourhood to get to our home? Sometimes traffic is so slow moving.

Keith noted we can add to agenda of appropriate meeting to discuss further.

➤ **Will Optimist Hill be open this summer?**

Not this summer.

Brad S. noted the 5 holes that had to be moved for the hill have now been relocated and the plan is to try to reincorporate the hill into the disc golf in the future. Trees were removed as part of the project so they must now be replanted.

➤ **At night are they going to have more lighting or security to deter vandalism?**

Joe noted currently there is some lighting on the hill but is managed by them to turn on and off but not sure of what they will need in future.

Brad B. noted sometimes more lighting in park causes more illegal activity as the light attracts more people. The City bylaw is the same as in all parks, no one is allowed in parks between 12:00 to 5:00 am. Maybe able to look at some type of solar lights.

➤ **Is it possible to put gates in the park to stop vehicle traffic?**

Brad B. stated we don't have gates on any parks as then there is the logistics of locking and unlocking them. As of right now there is no plan to put in a gate.

Comments:

- With the new development it is quieter than it used to be, not as easily assessable as cannot drive car up the hill anymore.

Joe noted they are trying to learn the dynamic of running this park, never thought of all the things but we are working with City to work through it.

This is the first ski facility someone can take a City bus too as it is within the city.

- When there are large events such as fireworks there is a gridlock of cars. If a resident in the neighbourhood needs emergency services there is no way they will be able to get to them. It used to be 40 minute gridlock but has gotten a bit better, down to 20 minutes. Traffic needs to be moved along quicker.

Keith noted this will be something that will be added to a future meeting.

Questions:

- **What will be going in the chalet/building? What facilities will be there and will they be available in the summer?**

Joe noted when it is fully operational there will be washroom services available in the park year round, concession in summer possibly if traffic warrants it.

- **A lot of people enjoy biking along the trail. There is a small section between Gabriel Dumont and Gordie Howe that is not paved but has crusher rock. It can be very messy in spring time. Are there any plans to pave this?**

Alan stated there is no plan to upgrade to asphalt. A balance is needed between natural areas where they use crusher rock and other areas where they pave. The Gabriel Dumont area is considered more of a natural area and is why it currently has the crusher rock.

- **The Exhibition area is unique with Canada Day, Saskatoon Exhibition, other larger events and now Optimist Hill. We really get hit hard with traffic. Is there any other neighbourhood that is experiencing similar issues to us and if there is what have they done, if anything, to help alleviate the issues?**

Brad B. stated the only other neighbourhood that is a bit similar would be City Park as they have Kinsmen Park, Saskatoon City Hospital, Children's Museum, Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan and YWCA close by. They have parking and traffic issues as well and are adjacent to residential. Not as large activities/events but a lot of them throughout the summer. Not aware of anything specific actions being done to address any concerns. City Park does have a Parking Permit Program that is active all year round.

Keith noted this is a different type of traffic. Here it happens in high volumes at certain times, during events. Hard to tailor a fit the erratic nature of the traffic. We hope to have conversations with Prairieland, transportation experts, etc in regards to how traffic could flow better.

- **Heard throughout the process that people are looking for better access to the trails. Is Meewasin looking at creating some more like the natural path where Taylor meets the river at St. Henry? This would be a prime location.**

Alan noted there are issues with certain natural paths that lead to the river. There can be geotechnical problems with the land. They also need to ensure where there is a path there is also a ramp so is fully accessible and this adds a challenge.

Comments:

- There is a "goat" trail between Hilliard and Isabella Streets that many people walk their dogs, go for walks, sit and enjoy the river. This would be a good location to have, stairs, a path and maybe some benches to sit and enjoy the view.

6. Next Steps

- Investigate ideas for improvements with our partners;
- Determine if further action needs to be taken to understand identified issues;
- Coordinate with partners on strategy for improvements if necessary; and
- Communicate with area what recommended action items could be.

7. Closing Remarks

Holden noted it was nice to see some new faces. Attendees were thanked for coming out to the meeting.

If you have any questions or concerns that arise after this meeting, please feel free to contact either Keith or Mark as we work through the Local Area Plan process for Exhibition.

8. Next Meetings

Reminder to fill out the Neighbourhood Safety Action Plan survey – open until May 27th 11:30pm (have until the end of next week) – was sent to mailing list. Also link on www.Saskatoon.ca/lap

Open House

Thursday, June 20, 2019 6:00 – 8:00 pm

The purpose of the Open House is to present the neighbourhood with 'this is what we heard' information on all the topics to confirm and refine the information we've gathered to date from residents. We will also present ideas for potential improvements ("recommendations") and ask for additional feedback on the topics and issues.

The hope is that by offering another means or opportunity for community members to provide feedback, not just at a 2-hour classroom style meeting in the evening, that we see a few new faces and get everyone critically thinking about the potential ideas for improvements. We want to make sure we are on the right track to improving these issues and concerns.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.