

APPENDIX B



SOUL

OF THE

CITY

240-2300 Dewdney Ave
Regina, SK, S4R 1H5

March 9, 2021

Deborah Bryden
Director, Assessment, Tax and Utility Billing
City of Regina
2476 Victoria Avenue, Box 1790
Regina, SK S4P3C8

Re: Urgent Request - Pandemic Recovery Support for Regina's Warehouse District Businesses

Dear Ms. Bryden:

I am writing with an urgent request on behalf of Regina Downtown and Regina's Warehouse District businesses.

This letter is written in support of the communication you have recently received from Judith Veresuk of the Regina Downtown Business Improvement District, and it provides insights on the situation also currently faced by Regina's Warehouse District businesses.

Similar to the impact faced by Regina's Downtown, businesses in Regina's Warehouse District have been gravely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the resulting reduction in traffic throughout the RWBID area. Many businesses have been decimated; others are hanging on by a thread.

In Regina's Warehouse District, the nighttime economy has been very nearly obliterated – two of the districts more prominent night clubs have closed - permanently. Not only is this an issue for the business owners and the economy of the district, but the closures have also created vacant spaces for landlords, who are now struggling to fill those spaces during a pandemic.

The food and beverage industry in the District is also fighting for its very survival, already operating with a very tight margin, these businesses now have significantly reduced revenue, and in many cases aren't able to pay rent. Landlords are doing all they can to assist their existing tenants, but they can only do so much, because many of them are struggling.

The ongoing vacancy of downtown office towers is also negatively impacting the consumer traffic in the Warehouse District.

We are in urgent need of both short-term pandemic recovery assistance and a longer-term solution to support the economic recovery of our City Centre Core.

In the longer-term, we urge the City of Regina to consider property tax abatement programs directed at businesses in Regina's Downtown and Warehouse Districts. A tax abatement program would play a key role in assisting business and the BIDs to move past the pandemic and into a recovery mode.

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The City's current property tax abatement programs for the downtown development of condominiums and heritage properties, could be used as a basis for this new program.

In the immediate term, we appeal to you to implement a program similar to the **City of Calgary 2021 Business Improvement Area Relief Program**, recently announced by the City of Calgary. Through this program, the City of Calgary is providing more than \$4.2 million in provincial and federal COVID-19 recovery funding towards the City's Business Improvement Areas. All 6,044 the businesses located within the City's Business Improvement Areas (BIA) will receive a one-time credit equal to their 2021 BIA tax bill. Business owners will be mailed an updated statement showing the that the credit has been applied to their account.

For Regina's City Centre Core businesses, a program such as this would play a critical role in reducing business costs, and it would enable the City to act quickly in support of City Centre Core businesses.

Regina's Downtown and Warehouse Districts have already seen an alarming number of store closures. We must work proactively to enable businesses to continue to operate. The success of our city and our future recovery is tied to maintaining a vibrant city centre core.

We are in urgent and immediate need of both short term and longer-term recovery programs to enable the long-term viability of Regina's Downtown. We urge you to examine the **City of Calgary 2021 Business Improvement Area Relief Program** for immediate use with Regina businesses and to undertake serious consideration of a property tax abatement program for the longer-term.

We would be pleased to discuss both proposed programs and their impact on Regina Downtown and the Regina Warehouse District, in more detail, at your convenience. Please feel free to reach me at (306) 585-3904.

Sincerely,

Leasa Gibbons
Executive Director
Regina's Warehouse Business Improvement District

Cc Mr. Mark Heise, RWBID Chair
Mayor Sandra Masters, City of Regina
Councilor Cheryl Stadnichuk, City of Regina
Ms. Kim Onrait, City of Regina

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