



November 14, 2018

Shauna Bzdel
 Director, Planning
 City of Regina
 2476 Victoria Avenue, Box 1790
 Regina, SK S4P3C8

Re: Underutilized Land Study

Dear Ms. Bzdel:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Underutilized Land Study on behalf of Regina Downtown Business Improvement District (RDBID).

Regina Downtown Business Improvement District **supports Administration's recommendation that an Underutilized Land Improvement Strategy be developed based on the Underutilized Land Study's recommendations.** Underutilized properties and vacant buildings are a high priority for Regina Downtown. Several initiatives to encourage the redevelopment and repurpose of underutilized land/buildings have been identified within our recently adopted 2019-2021 Strategic Plan. A City-endorsed Underutilized Land Improvement Strategy would further support RDBID's priorities.

Underutilized land continues to be a challenge that all city centres face across Canada. The five priority recommendations identified by the Consultant will be key to encouraging the redevelopment of underutilized land and demonstrate the viability of vacant property within our inner core.

RDBID strongly supports the recommended improvements to the infill development process. As stated on page 70 of the Study, "**a straightforward, comprehensible, co-ordinated process is more valuable than most financial incentives**". Implementing performance factors to improve the process for infill development is a low cost way to encourage development. City of Regina staff should play a pro-active role in providing additional support and assistance to builders interested in infill development. Having an **experienced infill coordinator** within the City of Regina Administration can help streamline the development process and provide a consistent point of contact for developers and investors through to project approval.

The study also recommends that the City allow temporary uses on suitable infill parcels. RDBID supports this recommendation. Any temporary use requests by owners should be expedited. **Allowances should be made for new and innovative projects/initiatives that may not fit into the existing City of Regina policies and bylaws.** For instance, shipping containers have been retrofitted for commercial uses across North America, however, the current City of Regina Zoning bylaw does not allow the placement of shipping containers in Downtown Regina. Attachment 1 includes photos of shipping container food service buildings, pop up retail and cultural support buildings currently used in New York City, NY, Austin, TX and Toronto, ON. Please note that all the examples provided would not be permitted in Downtown Regina based on our current zoning bylaw. We recognize that current policy is slow to react to new ideas, however, City Administration should explore temporary use trends and develop a process to encourage and promote the



implementation of these innovative ideas in Regina, which could be a catalyst for permanent development in the future.

Another key recommendation is the consideration of a concentrated "Maintenance Campaign", which would elevate the effort and staff resources towards the maintenance of infrastructure within areas of strategic importance. The statement on page 38, "If your city doesn't want to invest, why would you as an investor?" is a sentiment RDBID hears often from property owners and developers. RDBID is asked routinely by leasing agents about timelines for sidewalk and road repairs. Care and maintenance of the public realm is an important consideration when deciding where to invest. **An improved pedestrian experience would serve as a catalyst for new investment, while creating an attractive environment for current users and existing businesses.**

Lastly, redevelopment of underutilized land in the city core should remain a priority for City Council and Senior Administration. Emphasis should be placed on encouraging and empowering individual departments to work collaboratively on intensification applications. In order to encourage investment in infill lot redevelopment, **the City of Regina must be viewed as a leader in redevelopment.** Any future development policies and bylaws should support the importance of infill redevelopment.

RDBID was a contributor to the creation of the Underutilized Land Study. We consider this study to be the first step in supporting the redevelopment of infill sites across downtown Regina. **We urge the City to endorse the Underutilized Land Study and to begin the development of an Underutilized Land Improvement Strategy that addresses the concerns brought forward by the development and business communities.** We look forward to engaging in the strategy development process over the next year.

Should you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 306.359.7573.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judith Veresuk", written in a cursive style.

Judith Veresuk
Executive Director
Regina Downtown Business Improvement District

Cc Mr. Chad Haidey, Chair, RDBID
Ms. Diana Hawryluk, Executive Director, City Planning and Development
Mr. Jim Nicol, City Clerk, City of Regina

Attachment 1 – Shipping Container Reuse Examples



Restaurant Use, Flatiron District, New York City



Restaurant Use, Flatiron District, New York City



Retail Use, South Congress District, Austin TX



Restaurant Use, Downtown District, Austin TX



Skating Rink Seating Area, The Bentway, Toronto, ON



Skating Rink Rental Counter, The Bentway, Toronto, ON