

Mayor and Members of Council,

Re: CR21-3 – Temporary Downtown Surface Parking Lots

My name is Jim Elliott. I have participated in most of the recent planning processes including Design Regina, Zone Forward and the Downtown Neighbourhood Plan. I have also been on task forces surrounding the Laneway & Garden Suite Guidelines and the Infill Housing Guidelines.

What I would propose to you this afternoon and having listened to the discussion of this tangentially at the Regina Planning Commission last week is that this study will not solve any of the problems you face nor will it solve the parking problems. These problems will not go away with for either the city or the downtown businesses. What this pandemic has shown is that there needs to be a full rethink of the Downtown Plan given the current situation.

What I would like to show you is a glimpse of what needs to happen in my opinion. As stated in the report, 46% of the downtown is surface parking lots. There are a few multistory ones but not a significant number. That is 46% downtown undeveloped property that could be providing taxes to this city.

If we were to put housing on those same parking lots, given an assumption of only 60% of the surface could be rentable space, which would amount to 2,610,000 square feet, 2,610 units or approximately 6,264 additional residents. If you then put an equivalent underground parking space below these, you could increase the population without losing parking capacity. If you added a floor to each, the population increase would double to 12,528. If you were to add a commercial space on the first floor, you could add an additional million square feet of rentable office or business space. And lastly, one of the visible things with the aerial photograph provided in your report is that most of these parking lots are unencumbered by lack of access to solar gain.

So I would like to suggest to you a scenario or end game to my thoughts. You are a resident in one of those new multi-use buildings. You could go downstairs a few floors and grocery shop. Within a few blocks, you could be walking to work. There is a downtown library that could cover off most of those services for you and your family. Currently there is a theatre there and so could begin to visit there in the evenings. But with developments, there are a few other options for theatre or entertainment being built in your neighbourhood. Within a few blocks, your relatives could be staying at a hotel and joining you on other outings in the city or nearby. Any part of the city is available to you through public transportation. In the block next door is a repurposed gymnasium and fitness centre. You are also within 5 blocks of Wascana Park, the Devonian Pathway and an outdoor pool.

One additional feature that would be built into this building scenario is that every building and parking lot will be designed and provide net zero energy demand. Most of

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the buildings would be powered substantially by solar energy. Energy conservation would also be integrated into the building envelop. Most parking lots would have built in charging stations for your electric cars or car-share vehicles. There would be energy recover from waste water. Some buildings would have community gardens or green space on the roof. There would be a few additional parks established. Some of the commercial space would be individual or collective desk space rentable by a new business or someone that normally would work from home but needs some additional space or technical supports like 3D printers, scanners, conference technology or presentation space. With this size of a residency, there would be need for social, recreational and cultural program spaces. What I am proposing is to intentionally build a complete community.

All of what I have presented to you this afternoon is what we have today and what we could readily begin to showcase outward as the downtown of the future.

So as I outlined in the front part of my presentation, dealing with temporary parking lots isn't the solution to the problem but rather we need a bolder, bigger rethink of what it means to be downtown and what the space would look like going into the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Elliott