

Fort Saskatchewan



March 7, 2016

Planning Department
City of Fort Saskatchewan

RE: Bylaw C10-13

This response is based on Resolutions passed by the Downtown Business Council. Resolutions made by the Downtown Business Council require the approval of the majority of all members.

The Downtown Business Council has supported the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan. In particular, we have asked that new development downtown meet the pedestrian-friendly design requirements of the plan. However, we have also supported the right of downtown property owners and businesses to continue to operate unimpeded. We recognize that the changes proposed by the plan may also have potential to significantly harm existing businesses.

The change in planning documents represents the most significant concerns for the downtown. If Bylaw C10-13 were to be an ordinary planning document, it would simply bring in sweeping new rules that would instantly have a negative impact to any building that does not comply with the new rules where such “non compliant” properties become difficult to mortgage, buy, sell or redevelop.

We see that Bylaw C10-13 tries to avoid this with wording in places that outlines the intent to apply only to new development. However, we feel it is vital to improve the definition of these terms and make this innovation clear beyond any doubt.

We suggest specifically, that Section 13.9 Urban Design Regulations state:

“The Following regulations establish specific standards regarding urban design to create an attractive physical character at the pedestrian scale.

“As it is also vital that the downtown retain and encourage existing businesses and buildings, these regulations are to apply only to new buildings constructed after the approval of this bylaw.”

The Downtown Business Council also questions the limitation on the many pre-existing business activities that have been part of our district. These restrictions have crept into the plan over time. They are unnecessary and potentially harmful. We see no reason to ban auto repair of auto-related business from any part of the downtown. We see no reason to ban blacksmith shops or printing shops.

Many uses listed as discretionary should be permitted. A funeral home, for example, has no more impact than a professional, financial or office service. It appears most existing downtown businesses would become discretionary, rather than permitted, and this strikes us as contrary to the intent of the bylaw.

Parking rules listed in Bylaw C10-13 surprise us as they appear to be contrary to the intent of the bylaw. The parking stall requirements as listed would either restrict development or result in many more parking stalls being added to the downtown. The parking rules in the draft version of Bylaw C10-13 should be re-written entirely to reduce requirements and the discretionary options listed as permitted options rather than discretionary.

Sincerely

David Truscott
Secretary, Downtown Business Council