

# THE COMBINED BUSINESS GROUP:

## Municipal Election Policy Priorities

*theChamber*  
GREATER SASKATOON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**SREDA**

**DTM  
YWE**  
DOWNTOWN  
SASKATOON

**RIBID**  
RIVERSDALE  
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

**SUTHERLAND**  
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

**SASKATOON CONSTRUCTION  
ASSOCIATION**

**33<sup>RD</sup>  
STREET**  
- HISTORY & HEART -



**NBA**

Saskatoon & Region  
Home Builders'  
Association

**TourismSaskatoon**

**SRA**  
SASKATCHEWAN  
REALTORS®  
ASSOCIATION



## Municipal Election Policy Priorities

The Combined Business Group (CBG) is an affiliation of 12 business organizations that collectively represents thousands of businesses, employing tens of thousands of people in the Saskatoon Region. We bring tremendous value as stakeholders and we are highly invested in the City's economy, in our community overall and in our way of life. Simply put, a society is built by, for, and around its business community. Therefore, we must do everything within our respective powers to be mindful and proactive regarding the City's responsibility to guide our community and move forward during these challenging times.

The leaders within the Combined Business Group met to discuss the issues affecting our business community and identified three focus areas that will require the City's leadership as we move forward as a community.

### **Pillar 1: Public Safety/Crime/Policing**

**CBG "Lift Up" Pillar Team:** Brent Penner, Silvia Martini/Jason Aebig/Margot Orr; Randy Pshebylo, DeeAnn Mercier

---

#### **Position Statement:**

The CBG is acutely aware of the increasing concerns of safety in our Downtown Saskatoon community, with noted migration to other neighbouring communities in the city center and beyond. We contend we must readdress the delivery of services to more sustainable and effective outcomes. A failure to act now will assuredly lead to continued problems and the escalation of broad-based community and economic challenges. This complex issue and detrimental outcomes must see an integrated and effective approach, with measurable and accountable outcomes.

Efforts have been made for many years around building a safe Downtown and Riversdale. While the issues of mental health, addictions, and homelessness are complex, focused and immediate resources are needed to address the safety in these key commercial districts. As business owners are experiencing the turmoil of the COVID-19 pandemic, Saskatoon city centre's safety concerns amplify the many challenges these businesses are already facing. Economic recovery is threatened for many as businesses lose customers, the tourism and hospitality industry significantly curtailed, and the vibrancy of a city centre is diminished. It is vital citizens and businesses of the city are protected and kept safe.

#### **Recommendations:**

##### **Short Term/Ongoing**

- To ensure the fair and firm enforcement of the existing rules, laws and regulations of the City of Saskatoon administered by law enforcement.

- City review Bylaw 2954 - Street Use Bylaw with key stakeholders to ensure that police and community support officers have the resources and tools to deal with sidewalk related safety concerns.

#### Ongoing

- The CBG is encouraged with the recent announcement of the funding and partnership collaboration with the Provincial Government, City of Saskatoon and Saskatoon Tribal Council. We recommend continued collaboration on this file and that further funding be allocated to extend meaningful programming needs toward sustainable address, and within accountable metrics.
- Develop, in consultation with key business stakeholders, an accountable Downtown and Riversdale safety and crime mitigation strategy and action plan. A specific action plan for this area is necessary as the needs of the dynamic city center vary greatly from the city's residential neighbourhoods.

### **Pillar 2: Business Attraction and Retention**

**CBG “Revitalize” Pillar Team:** Keith Moen, Andrew Shaw, Joanne Baczuk, Stephanie Clovechok, Tom Deibert

---

#### **Position Statement:**

The CBG is looking for the City Administration, through the direction of City Council, to look to the future with visionary leadership that embraces out-of-the-box thinking. These are challenging times. If now is not the time to do a complete re-evaluation of how things are done, when might that be? As has been previously noted, we should ‘Never Let a Good Pandemic Go to Waste!’

Understandably, due to the pandemic, much of the focus has myopically been on the next hour, the next day, and the next week. We need our City’s leaders to keep their vision on the future, on the horizon, for the opportunities that are before us. There is a unique opportunity now to facilitate growth within the framework of civic priorities. One example of this type of leadership would be through the development of a Downtown Entertainment District; another would be to embrace and advance the Saskatoon’s visitor economy, which plays an essential role in the city’s overall economic vitality. Over the past eight months, this entire economic network has been devastated. It now requires urgent attention. In a highly competitive world, our city is our front door attracting visitors, critical investment, and human capital. The tourism sector can be used as a strategic tool for recovery, transition, and renewal if collaboration ensures its survival.

Our final point is for the City to foster creative, permissive and solutions-based thinking within its Civic Administration. We would encourage you to direct senior administration to create a permission structure that changes City staff’s understanding of their role as administrators from

being cogs in a rules-driven system to being leaders that facilitate growth and development within the framework of civic priorities. In summarize we are challenging the City to aspire to a “concierge” level of service when dealing with business attraction and retention. By this we mean to universally adopt an attitude of “how do we help you make this happen?” and make the necessary resources available to implement the answers.

## **Recommendations:**

### Short Term/Ongoing

- Accelerate with the advancement of an **Entertainment District in the heart of downtown Saskatoon** that will be anchored by a multi-purpose facility including an arena and convention centre, supported by an efficient public transportation system that can move thousands of people in minutes, not hours. This will keep Saskatoon competitive for future conventions and event attraction proposals. This is a necessary component of our future civic infrastructure.
- We encourage City Council to consider the **tourism sector as a strategic tool for recovery**, transition, and renewal. In a highly competitive world, our city is the front door attracting visitors, critical investment, and human capital. By securing major business and professional events, the tourism sector generates key legacies for our community, are magnets for individuals and investment resources and undoubtedly attracted international attention to invest and retain business in our key sectors.

*Evolving social and economic conditions arising from the pandemic-induced recession means that the new economy will likely be quite different, embodying elements of the experience and knowledge economies that are replacing older models. Business events and delegate hosting achieved through the tourism sector will serve as necessary agents of change and transformation to ensure a more progressive form of economic activity and a more stable and therefore resilient economy for the future, which is a new goal for governments everywhere. The visitor economy ripples economic and social prosperity throughout our city. Saskatoon can lead with safety, ensuring job security in one of our province’s largest employment sectors and securing our survival through 2021 and beyond. This will also elevate our destination reputation worldwide while generating a legacy of safety and well-being in our community.*

- The CBG urges the City to foster creative, permissive and solutions-based thinking within its Civic Administration. We encourage City Council to direct senior administration to create a permission structure that changes City staff’s understanding of their role as administrators from being “cogs in a rules-driven system” to being leaders that facilitate growth and development within the framework of civic priorities. So often we hear of truly



head-scratching instances where a worker’s focus is on impediments of getting a job done rather than seeking the common-sense solution that might require that out-of-the-box thinking. We understand the laws and rules are there for a reason, however there are times when certain bylaws or rules seem counter-intuitive to the end goal. We believe that there is a way to balance the City’s priorities and those of developers that results in much needed investment coming to or staying within Saskatoon. By this we mean to universally adopt an attitude of “how do we help you make this happen?” and make the necessary resources available to implement the answers.

### **Pillar 3: Sustainable & Resilient Growth**

**CBG “Brilliance” Pillar Team:** Sheldon Wasylenko, Samantha Krahn, Shannon Friesen

---

#### **Position Statement:**

New developments in our communities and neighborhoods, and the associated rezoning applications, public hearings, and development approvals, are often contentious. The CBG would like to work with our City officials to make these systems more effective and to help educate our community about the vital role that development and growth play in a healthy community; that they are crucial to a strong and resilient economy.

While fear of the unknown often manifests itself in a resistance to change, the alternative to renewal and growth in our communities is far less desirable. “Yes, In My Back Yard”, or “YIMBY”, can be described as an openness to development, investment, and densification in our community. Policies and regulations at various levels of government, as well as the sentiments of residents, all have an influence on how open to development a community is perceived. A positive perception will drive more investment into the local economy because investors know there are lower barriers to achieving a return on investment.

It should be recognized that sustainable growth is founded on making fiscally responsible decisions. Now, more than ever, the City of Saskatoon ought to revisit its list of most notable list of capital projects to determine whether proceeding with them is prudent to do so at this time. Financial decisions ought to be evaluated giving priority to projects that advance sustainable growth initiatives or support growth-related investments.

There continues to be a shortage of housing in our city. Office, retail, and hospitality spaces struggle to fill their seats, rooms, and desks. Saskatoon could benefit from a shift away from spending tax dollars to support housing and instead focus on finding ways to support a property conversion program to repurpose distressed properties including hotels, office buildings and store

fronts. These kinds of opportunities will support sustainable and resilient growth in our communities and potentially shield some of those hit hardest by the pandemic. The city can focus on re-zoning efforts and facilitating new uses of spaces instead of in capital investments.

### **Recommendations:**

#### Short Term/Ongoing

- We need to make sure we are doing everything we can, both as policy makers and as residents, to welcome renewal and development in our neighborhoods.
- Targeted education and messaging so the public understands the benefits of developments, and conversely the results of lack of development in older, stagnating neighborhoods with aging or non-existent services.
- Reassess the decision to invest in capital projects that may add further stress to the City's already strained fiscal plans and resources.
- Consider property conversion to address municipal capital and housing needs.

#### Ongoing

- Growing the tax base should become a key performance index of municipalities looking to compete in the modern post-COVID economy. Even before the pandemic, with the transition to more tech sector employment, economic activity needed not be focused around resource extraction or manufacturing hubs. Jobs can be based anywhere, so the key to growth and sustainability will be attractive and welcoming communities that offer a wide range of services, housing, and facilities that the modern employee has come to expect.
- Improve processes for development approvals so that we can attract and welcome renewal and development in our communities.