

# Executive Summary

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The North Central Community Legacy Study was a three-phased process conducted over a three month period. Two successful Public Open Houses were held at the Albert Scott Community Centre, each followed by a series of stakeholder interviews and site visits to various community organizations to reach as many stakeholders as possible. Additional support and community feedback was generated through an Advisory Committee, comprised of community members, consultants from the North Central Shared Facility, city staff, and other government representatives active in the neighbourhood.

Background research on existing work to date, site visits, and original research was conducted during Phase I, recommendations were generated in Phase II and vetted with the Advisory Committee, which was then subsequently integrated into a final report that was submitted to the City of Regina in February 2009.

## Study Purpose and Objectives

The North Central Community Legacy Study is intended as a preliminary planning assessment of the North Central neighbourhood. This includes an examination, assessment and interpretation of the body of work already completed for this neighbourhood and original research through stakeholder interviews and field surveys.

The objective of the Study was to identify key considerations for planning in North Central, in light of the proposed North Central Shared Facility, a multi-million dollar project which will centralize state-of-the-art teaching facilities, health care, day care, correctional services, and other community services. The Study also seeks to identify initiatives, neighbourhood improvements, and urban design guidelines that will support the success of the Shared Facility, thereby supporting the future transformation of the neighbourhood as a whole.

The Study was conducted under a comprehensive assessment framework. The framework was comprised of four themes as key indicators of neighbourhood health and cohesion: Neighbourhood Sustainability, Housing, Transportation, and Land Use. These areas allowed for a practical comparison of existing conditions to proposed conditions, such as the Shared Facility. The overall proposed condition was based on the North Central 2020 Vision, a holistic vision established by the North Central Community Association in 2003.

### **North Central 2020 Vision**

*In the year 2020, North Central will be a safer, healthier, more generous, and prouder community. As such, from now until then we need to foster and nourish budding community leaders who can continue to drive the momentum of community development forward and be champions for North Central's transformation into 2020 and beyond.*

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## Study Area

The North Central Study Area is bordered by the Warehouse District to the east of Albert Street, the Cathedral Area to the south of the Canadian Pacific rail tracks, the Rosemont/Mount Royal neighbourhood to the west of Lewvan Drive, and Coronation Park neighbourhood to the north of the CP rail tracks. North Central is part of Inner City Regina with approximately 386 hectares of land, of which 75% is comprised of low-rise, low-density residential uses. Downtown Regina is connected to North Central by the Albert Street underpass at Saskatchewan Drive.

## Preliminary Planning Assessment

### Neighbourhood Profile Summary

North Central holds roots as early as the late 19th century, as testified through existing buildings and sites that collectively resonate a rich and active past. There are two significant points of heritage interest. The 1982 Territorial Administration Building on Dewdney Avenue is a Provincial Heritage Property, and includes the building and the grounds. The 1927 Albert Library building on Elphinstone St. is a Municipal Heritage Property, which is currently still in active use. Other points of attraction in the areas along Dewdney include Taylor Field, Exhibition grounds, and Pasqua Hospital. Major local services inside the neighbourhood include Four Directions Community Health Centre, Dewdney Pool, and the Albert Scott Community Centre. Four vital elementary schools (Wascana, Kitchener, Albert Community, and Sacred Heart) and one high school (Scott Collegiate)

service the area. Herchmer School was an elementary school centrally located next to Scott Collegiate, that was demolished in 2008.

### Demographic Profile Summary

North Central has a total population of 9,290 persons as of 2006 and has been experiencing a steady decline since 1961. The population is weighted towards younger cohorts, with a relatively young median age of 30.8 compared to the rest of Regina. Overall, however, there appears to be a shifting of weighting towards an older adult population (55-59, 60-64). Over 40% of the population identifies themselves as being of Aboriginal identity, but only 5.4% are of immigrant status. Most families (46%) in North Central are lone-parents, with 37% married, and 17% living as common-law status. The average household size is 2.4. The average household income is \$34,976 and the prevalence of low income occurs in nearly 47% of the population. Most residents over the age of 15 are occupied in the “sales and service” sector, “trades, transport, and equipment operators”, and “business, finance, and administration” positions, according to the 2006 Census.

### Existing Conditions Summary

- The general land uses in North Central include low-rise residential (1,600,413 m<sup>2</sup>), parks/open spaces (523,237 m<sup>2</sup>), institutional (187,177 m<sup>2</sup>), and commercial (264,628 m<sup>2</sup>). Nine blocks, or roughly 523,237 m<sup>2</sup> of open space is available. However, not all of this space is maintained in a usable condition, nor are perceived as accessible due to safety concerns. The neighbourhood contains several local and city-wide destinations including schools, sports complexes, the Pasqua Hospital and the Exhibition Grounds.

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- North Central is divided into two general forms. North of Dewdney Ave. is a homogenous fine grained urban fabric comprised of single detached one to two storey houses, with few multi-unit mid-rise developments on blocks sized 93m by 163m. South of Dewdney Ave. is a large grained urban fabric with many city-wide uses (e.g. Pasqua Hospital, Evraz Place, Taylor Field) and large building footprints. Collectively, these uses cover more than 50% of the area between Dewdney Ave. and the CP rail line border to the south.
  - Houses are typically set back 8-12 metres from the road with parking lots located behind houses and adjacent to laneways. Parks and open spaces are distributed evenly throughout, and each home is within a 5 min walking distance from a public park.
  - The typical grid network of streets in North Central is in good repair, and define the boundaries of the neighbourhood blocks. Roughly 30,000 to 40,000 vehicles flow through both Lewvan Dr. and Albert st. on a daily basis. Each block is divided longitudinally by a laneway, which provide additional routes to travel but are considered unsafe at night. Laneways and street sides are used for parking. Transit routes 1,3,4,11, and 13 service the area, although residents feel they are not frequent enough or reach the necessary destinations.
  - A total of 52% of the occupied private dwellings in North Central are owned and 47% are rented. Average gross rent was \$598 in 2006, 36.3% of households are in core housing need (spending more than 30% of their income on dwelling costs) and 20% of occupied private dwellings are in need of major repairs. These are considered to be conservative estimates due to the decline in availability of affordable housing alternatives.
  - A CPTED audit published in 2004 indicated that safety perception was a major deterrent to using local parks. Lighting and trimming of trees were recommended solutions to improving safety on the streets, although boarded-up and neglected homes on any street added to the perception of danger.
  - Neighbourhood businesses were surveyed and categorized into five business types. The survey indicated that 40% of the business establishments are of a retail type, 36% are of the general service establishments, 9% are of the office and health services each, and 5% are restaurants. The predominant building type occupied was a single to two-storey building. The number of jobs were not measured.
  - Community agencies in North Central were surveyed through the internet and cold calls, leading to a master list of identifiable agencies in the neighbourhood. The abundance of neighbourhood-based charitable organizations, particularly those serving the aboriginal community, tells us that the needs of this community are overwhelming.
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## Planning Considerations

Three key planning considerations were identified as a result of the Study, which should inform future planning processes in North Central.

### 1. Physical Realm: North Central has good bones

From an urban design perspective, the neighbourhood has the right elements of neighbourhood building which are in good repair. The street grid provides a framework for a truly walkable neighbourhood, while parks and schools are well distributed to be within a 5 minute walking distance from homes. These elements need only to be enhanced through minor public realm enhancements which will improve connectivity between neighbourhood destinations.

### 2. Social Realm: Conventional approaches to not apply

The complexity of the social fabric in this neighbourhood cannot be underestimated on its implication on planning decisions. Planning must accept specific conditions in order to more accurately plan for neighbourhood improvement. Three significant conditions identified are that (i) North Central is a low-income neighbourhood, (ii) half the population lives with a First Nations and Metis culture that conventional planning does not model, and (iii) the dominant cohort group is young compared with the city as a whole, which will have implications on the services that are necessary and their relative accessibility to young people.

### 3. Realm of Governance: Incorporate adaptation in Planning

Neighbourhood planning is about growth management. In a complex neighbourhood like North Central, management must be as adaptive as possible, to minimize resources spent on non-essential activities. This will require constant monitoring of the implementation and execution of services and their outcomes. Monitoring and evaluation should be conducted in collaboration between community groups and the City.

## Directions for Change

The Directions for Change are both an affirmation of existing recommendations from existing documents, and new recommendations based on the preliminary planning assessment. The recommendations in the following documents were brought forward:

- North Central Community Vision and Action Plan
- Regina Community Plan 2007: A Home for All
- An Employment Development Strategy for Inner-City Regina
- North Central Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
- Renewing Regina's Public Schools – A 10-Year Plan

The Directions for Change do not seek to be comprehensive, rather the objective has been to identify key areas where immediate action should take place in order to capitalize on the opportunity

presented by the proposed Shared Facility, and to support and ensure its success. The emphasis has also been on initiatives that do not require significant amounts of capital investment. The following is a list of the Directions for Change according to the framework of the preliminary planning assessment.

### Sustainability

Objective: To ensure the long-term viability of North Central as a place to live, work and play in an environment that is safe, healthy and supports the overall well-being of its residents.

#### **Direction 1: The City needs to play an expanded leadership role moving forward.**

- Action: Renew the commitment of the Regina Inner City Community Partnership, the City of Regina and other key stakeholders, to fulfilling the mandate of the North Central 2020 Community Vision and Action Plan.
- Action: Explore an expanded leadership role for the City, moving forward.

#### **Direction 2: Build leadership capacity for community involvement.**

- Action: Strengthen and coordinate mechanisms to support leadership capacity and community involvement.
- Action: Continue to strengthen leadership training for youth, to further develop long-term leadership capacity and soft skills development.
- Action: Create a neighbourhood-wide mentorship program, whereby youth or other potential community leaders are

mentored by community leaders from across the City.

- Action: Celebrate and raise awareness about neighbourhood services that are not crisis oriented.
- Action: Reinforce public schools as places of community and neighbourhood development.

#### **Direction 3: Actively implement, monitor and evaluate initiatives and recommendations.**

- Action: Identify and adopt measures, indicators, and targets for monitoring and evaluating change in neighbourhood stability, community cohesion, public safety, public health, economic development, and physical infrastructure, to be published on an annual basis (see Chapter 9 of this document).
- Action: For each of the key documents below, responsible authors should produce a Report Card to measure implementation. Where necessary, continue to do so, on an annual basis.

#### **Direction 4: Prioritize safety, as a first condition that is necessary for other initiatives to be successful.**

- Action: Assess the impact of CPTED initiatives in North Central. This may include an auditing of back alleys. Assess the impact of other crime prevention initiatives. Continue to develop, strengthen and evaluate initiatives that address the social dimensions of community safety issues in North Central.
- Action: Ensure that through the City's review of its Winter Maintenance

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Policy that snow removal on sidewalks in North Central, particularly near the future North Central Shared Facility, is prioritized.

- Action: Improve safety in parks by enhancing landscaping and adding desirable recreational facilities to increase eyes on the streets (e.g. basketball courts).
- Action: Explore the viability of motion-sensor alleyway lighting with a low setting though the evening period that brightens to illuminate the area based on movement.
- Action: Consider an incentive program for residents to install and/or improve motion-sensor lighting on garages and homes.

### **Housing**

Objective: To position North Central as a desirable place to live within the City, where residents take pride in their neighborhood and their homes.

### **Direction 5: Reverse the concentration of poverty in North Central.**

- Action: Develop housing incentives whereby the City partners with organizations under a unified vision to create more quality affordable single family houses, to increase opportunities for home ownership in the Priority Housing Revitalization Area.
- Action: Develop a strategy to transform renters into owners.
- Action: Devise a strategy to eliminate boarded up homes
- Action: Explore models for alternative housing typologies (not

single family dwellings), as well as alternative ownership models, such as cooperatives.

### **Transportation**

Objective: To ensure that it is possible to move within and through North Central in a variety of ways with ease; to ensure that transportation systems do not contribute to larger social issues.

### **Direction 6: Improve mobility options and connections.**

- Action: Ensure that in the context of the Transit Service Review that transit service to key neighbourhood destinations (e.g. Pasqua Hospital; North Central Shared Facility) is examined. Ensure patrons board and alight from the bus on the same side of the street as the proposed Shared Facility.
- Action: The grid system of streets should be conserved and restored wherever possible.
- Action: Extend neighbourhood streets (and connections) to the north, east and west wherever possible.
- Action: Improve connections from North Central to the Downtown by redesigning the underpass south of Saskatchewan Drive, on Albert Street.
- Action: Provide adequate, secure and visible bicycle parking at school locations and other public spaces. Continue to strengthen and improve initiatives that provide low-cost revamped bikes to children. Action: Continue to allow street side parking throughout the neighbourhood, as a means to providing “eyes on the street” and easy access to parking.

### Land Use

Objective: To utilize land in a manner that supports community development, respects and reinforces the unique assets of the neighborhood, and creates a safer environment for all.

#### **Direction 7: Develop a strategy related to vacant sites.**

- Action: Consider establishing an active public use in the Albert Library building, to ensure this historic building remains a hub within the neighbourhood.
- Action: Consider the current Four Directions site as a place to offer a component of the Regina Trades and Skills Center programming.
- Action: Four community gardens currently exist in North Central (south east quadrant: Blocks 172-173). Create community gardens within a 5 min walking distance of all neighbourhood homes.
- Action: Generate a strategy to coordinate housing development and school programming with community gardens.
- Action: For the short-term, and prior to the building of new home construction, use City-owned vacant lots for temporary community gardens.
- Action: Explore a partnership between the community gardens initiative and Reach, as a means to educating about healthy food and food growing.

#### **Direction 8: Conserve and leverage heritage resources to restore a sense of identity and neighbourhood pride.**

- Action: Explore the value of creating a strategy that reinforces the historic nature of the neighbourhood to leverage and trigger change.

#### **Direction 9: Improve the physical infrastructure of the neighbourhood and ensure future development is of the highest design standard.**

- Action: Adopt the proposed Urban Design Guidelines (Chapter 8) and ensure future development conforms to them.
- Action: Encourage development along Albert Street that facilitates better pedestrian connections into North Central and towards the Warehouse District.

#### **Direction 10: Enhance accessibility to regional recreational services in the South Recreation and Sports Amenities area (refer to Chapter 8.5.3) specifically for North Central residents.**

- Action: Encourage the use of recreational services in this area by better advertising programs.
- Action: Through partnerships, tailor programming that is geared specifically towards North Central youth. This might be partly accomplished by created dedicated use times for North Central residents only.

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## Urban Design Considerations and Guidelines

The Urban Design Considerations and Guidelines were generated to execute Direction 9. Until a Neighbourhood Plan is adopted, these considerations and guidelines should be employed when evaluating any new development within, or adjacent to, North Central, as well as for significant investments and initiatives affecting the public realm and/or community facilities.

The Guidelines address design preferences in the following areas:

1. A Neighbourhood Structure
2. An Open Space Framework
3. A Safe, Attractive and Walkable Public Realm
4. Mobility
5. Character Areas
6. Built Form Framework
7. Heritage: Conserving the Legacy

Urban design considerations in the above areas may prescribe the conservation of building characters, architectural design elements, laneway orientation, building orientation, and landmark sites. Other prescriptions define high-level principles to follow for the placement and design of community gardens and other neighbourhood parks. Principles for street networks and transit systems, including the importance of Albert Street as a major corridor, are included for planning and design consideration.

## Monitoring Progress

Carrying out the recommendations presented in this Study requires an ongoing monitoring of their implementation and effectiveness. The City of Regina, in partnership with community agencies, will need to establish proper mechanisms to monitor the implementation of each recommendation.

To implement this approach, a two-tiered approach is recommended:

1. Set up a working group (not more than 4 or 5 key partners) to develop an initial set of targets and proposed indicators and proposed measures. This could be achieved under the auspices of a group like RICCP or RIC, with input and participation from City staff with knowledge of the neighbourhood.
2. Ask funding bodies to adopt a protocol regarding the evaluation of projects to be funded in North Central. They should set funding priorities, report on what services were provided, who was actually helped, and track changes in the population they are assisting. Employment, safety, housing, and education are some obvious project areas to begin evaluating initiatives.

A monitoring framework should include the following elements in a hierarchical manner:

- A Vision
- Direction
- Measures
- Indicators

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- Targets
  - Strategies
  - Actions
  - Triggers

Potential measures and indicators have been identified for North Central, based on the Study assessments that as a reporting framework can assist with monitoring change and communicating outcomes. These should all be measured and evaluated over time, with indicators remaining constant over time in order to remain comparable.

1. Neighbourhood Stability (i.e. family structure, transience, home ownership)
2. Community Cohesion (i.e. use of library, community gardeners, live-work in North Central)
3. Public Safety (i.e. crime rates, measure of safety perception)
4. Public Health (i.e. measure of disease rates)
5. Economic Development (i.e. number of jobs in North Central, number and types of businesses)
6. Physical Infrastructure (i.e. service quality of transit, distance to walk to destinations)
7. Mobility (i.e. modal split)

## Conclusion

The North Central Community Legacy Study highlights the key planning considerations for this community as well as identify Directions for Change – recommendations for moving forward in the development of this neighbourhood. The Study emphasizes that in this neighbourhood context, adaptability and development efficiency is closely tied to an effective monitoring and evaluative framework of community services and initiatives, which is currently lacking. This should only be done through a cross-collaborative approach between the city and community. Leadership and tenacity will be required.