

BUILDING AN ATTRACTIVE REGINA



A Collection of Student Papers
GES 346 Urban Planning, Winter 2026
Dept of Geography & Environmental Studies
University of Regina

Planning Project:

In winter 2026, as part of their coursework, undergraduate students in GES 346: Urban Planning (Geography & Environmental Studies, University of Regina) were tasked with answering the following question: What would an attractive Regina look like? There is some consensus that attractive cities reflect compact and well-ordered designs and contain some of the following components: authenticity; arts and culture; walkability; small scale/local; celebration of stories; complete communities; public amenities; public spaces; and accessible street design.

In building their proposals, students were encouraged to draw on best practices from other cities with attractive spaces/neighborhoods/buildings/projects and to consider how their proposals connect with local planning practices and frameworks. Some designs centered on a single underutilized lot, while others took up a broader focus on city practices and programs. Topics included artistic lighting designs, green spaces, fun zones, community spaces of exchange, and public art. Collectively the proposals brought forth a vision of Regina that is both ambitious and sensitive to place.

Students presented their work at a public event on April 2, 2026, in the Ad Hum Pit at the University of Regina. In attendance were university members, the public, City of Regina planners, and a city councillor. We hope you enjoy reading a selection of some of the papers completed for this project!



Dr. Vanessa Mathews
Associate Professor & Course Instructor for GES 346: Urban Planning
Department of Geography & Environmental Studies, University of Regina

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Making Regina More Attractive: Identifying Challenges and Planning Solutions

Jaxon S. Bergstrom

Making Regina More Attractive: Identifying Challenges and Planning Solutions

Regina is the capital city of the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. Situated in the south-central region of the province, 160 kilometres north of the United States border (Toth, 2025), it is the second-largest city in the province, with a reported population of around 226,000 people as of the 2021 census (Statistics Canada, 2024). It is an example of a planned city, meaning its location was specifically chosen and development has been carefully planned out. Despite extensive planning throughout the city's history, Regina continues to face noticeable challenges in terms of its transportation and economic activity in certain regions. It is one of a few major Canadian cities to experience a declining downtown population, its "growth" being the second-worst nationwide (Williams, 2022), and it trails far behind larger urban centres in terms of walkability. However, thoughtful and small changes to the city's urban planning, such as improving walkability and repurposing underutilized spaces, can have a meaningful and positive impact on the city's overall livability.

History of Urban Planning in Regina

Urban planning practices in Regina have drastically evolved over the city's 142 year history in response to the major shifts and improvements to transportation and technology.

Early Foundations (Pre-1946)

Regina was founded in 1882 as the capital of the Northwest Territories, replacing the original capital of Battleford the following year (Town of Battleford, 2025). The city's unusual location, notable for lacking major topographical features including a natural body of water (e.g. a river), was chosen by railway officials because of its flat elevation, which allowed for the

construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway through the region (Toth, 2025). The year after its founding, the already existing Wascana Creek was dammed between Angus and Rae Streets, two north-to-south roads in Central Regina, resulting in the man-made Wascana Lake, a common location for recreational use among citizens of the city today (Wascana Centre, 2025).

Contemporary Planning (Post-1946)

Following the Second World War, Regina experienced the same rapid suburban growth and increase in vehicle ownership seen across other parts of North America, driven in part by the shift of people away from rural communities, diverging from Saskatchewan's earlier tradition in which 67% of the province's population lived in rural areas (City of Regina, 2017, pp. 34, 53). Modern planning within the City of Regina can be traced back to 1946 with the implementation of the Faludi Municipal Plan. Commenced by the city's Planning Commission in collaboration with Toronto-based planning consultant Eugene Faludi, this municipal plan's primary goal was to address the projected growth of Regina for the next 30 years, and like its preceding federal National Housing Act of 1938, which encouraged residential development, this master plan saw varying levels of success (City of Regina, 2017, p. 44). According to City of Regina (2017), this plan first saw Faludi's advocacy of the establishment of shopping centres outside of the historic commercial centre, which critics have argued has "resulted in the decimation of historic downtowns through the shuttering of service and commercial businesses" and positioned the city towards the path of suburbanization (p. 44). According to Salomaa (1981), the city's Planning Department took a new approach under the leadership of Ron Clark from 1976 to 1980 (p. 2), whose ideas included the revitalization of Downtown, the challenges of "traditional low density,

car dependent suburban residential development,” and the improvement and promotion of public transportation (pp. 25-26).

In recent decades, Regina’s urban planning has focused primarily on infrastructure and transportation issues, which have sometimes taken public opinion and consultation into consideration (Mahani et al., 2024, p. 411). In the former example, an update to the city’s official community plan, first introduced in 2013, was passed in a unanimous vote in February 2026 to better reflect the recently updated growth projections of the city by 2051, with its main policy change being the division of neighbourhoods based on existing infrastructure such as wastewater capacity (Oldhues, 2026). In the latter case, several discussions have been made on relocating railway tracks which intersect major roadways including Ring Road and Winnipeg Street, where train activity frequently disrupts traffic flow (see Figure 1). Although a *Regina Leader Post* article from 2017 suggested changes to this setup would take “quite some time” (Baird, 2017), plans to possibly relocate the tracks on Ring Road (see Figure 2) were reviewed and later approved by members of the city council in August 2021 (Read, 2021). The following year, partial federal funding was granted by Transport Canada (2022), but as of 2026, no progress for this project appears to have been made.

Concerns and Underlying Challenges

Outside of challenges regarding the layout of Regina’s railway tracks, the city faces other significant challenges and concerns from citizens, in particular concerns relating to the declining Downtown region in regards to its amenities, population, and tourism.

Car Dependency

Like other major North American cities, a large portion of Regina's contemporary urban design has heavily emphasized the use of cars as the primary mode of transportation with the advancements in the automobile industry. In 2026, Seattle-based analytics company Walk Score, which assigns "walk scores" out of a possible 100 to cities and their neighbourhoods based on several criteria, including pedestrian friendliness and walking routes (Walk Score, 2019), assigned the City of Regina a walk score of 44 out of 100, indicating most errands require cars in order to accomplish (Walk Score, 2026b). Although not the lowest-ranked Canadian city, Regina's walkability score trails far behind those of major cities including Montreal and Vancouver, which score 65 and 80, respectively (Walk Score, 2024, 2026c). A study conducted by researchers from the University of Toronto in 2023 interviewed several policy-makers on how their ideas and their evidence influence planning within the City of Regina, of which one interviewee explained the city council was "particularly resistant to talk of best practices from urban planning—things like bike trails, dense communities, walkability, that kind of thing" (Mahani et al., 2024, p. 413).

Recent surveys compiled by Tracey (2023) of the National Association of Realtors found a growing number of Americans belonging to younger generations, particularly Generation Z and Millennials, prefer to live in walkable neighbourhoods, with 78% of overall respondents rating walkability as "very" or "somewhat" important, and 92% of Gen Z surveyed stating they would pay more to live more in walkable neighbourhoods (National Association of Realtors, 2023, p. 22; see Figure 3). Although the data from this survey originates from American respondents, they suggest trends likely applicable to Canadian cities, including Regina. Walkable environments have also been shown to promote the social health of citizens by "encouraging

walking and other outdoor activities, and thereby, facilitating social interactions among neighbours” (Zhu et al., 2013, p. 69), highlighting the importance of designing cities to improve mobility and encourage social interaction.

Empty and Underutilized Spaces

Most noticeable in the Downtown core, Regina is home to large sections of empty and underutilized spots, particularly a high number of surface-level parking lots and a large vacant lot just south of Dewdney Avenue (see Figure 4). Although these large parcels of underused areas may not initially appear as a problem, it becomes apparent when considering the declining population and tourism to the Downtown neighbourhood of Regina. From 2016 to 2021, the neighbourhood has seen a 36.3% decrease in population, and already existing activities “are not attractive enough at the moment to encourage youth to stay Downtown, [with] many of these activities [being] 19+” (City of Regina, 2024, p. 2; Squirra, 2025, p. 52). As many of these surface-level parking lots are large enough in area, they can be repurposed into businesses, housing units, or recreational areas to attract more citizens and tourists to the Downtown.

Urban Planning Practices in Other Cities and Countries

Revitalizing Streets for Cars and Pedestrians (Halifax, Nova Scotia)

One of the most notable redevelopment projects to occur in Canada throughout the past decade took place in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 2017. Prior to its redevelopment, Argyle Street, a four-block road located in the downtown core (Sokolowski, 2021, p. 29), was designed like most other roads in the downtown sections of Canadian cities: primarily for the use of cars with some pedestrian walkways. In 2015, a redevelopment project to redesign the street to be more

pedestrian-friendly, known as the “Argyle Streetscaping Pilot Project,” was approved by the city council, a strategy seen by city planners to attract tourism to the area (CBC News, 2015). According to Sokolowski (2021), the redesign was approximately “20 years in the making,” although discussions regarding a permanent redesign did not resurface until the *2011-2016 Economic Strategy* was adopted (pp. 31-32). The redesigned road officially reopened on 4 November 2017 (see Figure 5) featuring widened sidewalks, narrower vehicular traffic lanes, and the removal of curbs (Halifax Regional Municipality, n.d.; Sokolowski, 2021, p.34).

Overall reception to the project has been positive, and the project has been considered successful, receiving a walk score of 98 from Walk Score and winning several awards, including *Streetsblog USA*’s 2017 People’s Choice Award for Best Urban Street Transformation (Schmitt, 2017; Sokolowski, 2017, p. 37; Walk Score, 2026a). Vehicles can still access Argyle Street, although vehicular traffic is closed from April to November of each year since 2015, with the idea of making the entire street pedestrian-only being proposed to the city council in 2025 (Rent, 2025).

Repurposing Empty or Underutilized Spaces (Shaker Heights, Ohio)

Although Shaker Heights may appear as the typical Cleveland suburb from above, it has gained recent national recognition because of a major redevelopment project in the city’s south, transforming a large area of land from a single strip mall with a large parking lot into a mixed-use district home to several restaurants, housing units, and pedestrian-friendly areas.

The original Van Aken Shopping Center, a six-acre, \$2.5 million complex, was opened in 1953 to meet the shopping needs of those living in the rapidly-growing suburbs of Cleveland, initially housing 26 businesses (Cleveland Historical, 2026). However, by the 2010s, the strip

mall had largely declined, its large parking lot going underutilized due to a lack of economic activity. After years of discussion dating as far back as 2000, the strip mall and its subsequent parking lot were demolished in late 2016 to make way for the construction of the Van Aken District, of which its first phase was completed in 2019 (The Van Aken District, 2023; Figure 6).

The construction of the Van Aken's district is the largest project in Shaker Heights' history, creating a seven-acre "walkable getaway" serving 200,000 people and featuring a combined 160,000 ft² (14,864 m²) of office and retail space, 330 housing units, and three new streets (This Is Cleveland, 2026; see Figure 7). In addition, this redevelopment has received several nominations and awards, including winning Gold for the 2019 National Planning Achievement Award for Implementation (The Van Aken District, 2023).

Applying These Practices to Regina

When considering the redevelopment projects in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Shaker Heights, Ohio, a joint proposal can be made to repurpose the largest of the surface-level parking lots in Downtown Regina, creating an economic and pedestrian-friendly environment which does not completely eliminate the use of cars. Covering approximately 1.59 hectares ¹, this lot is found at the corner of the Saskatchewan Drive and Albert Street intersections (see Figure 8), and was selected for its convenient location, adjacent to the Empire Hotel and within walking distance of the Cornwall Centre.

The following changes are illustrated in Figure 9. McIntyre Street, currently a one-way street running north, can be extended beyond Saskatchewan Drive and continue further north, becoming a one-way crescent which loops around most of the lot, ending at a further eastern intersection with Saskatchewan Drive. Drivers would not be able to continue onto Lorne Street

or enter from the east given the conflicting directions of one-way traffic (Lorne Street, like McIntyre Street, is a one-way running north). In addition to the McIntyre Street extension, Smith Street can also be extended north from its original terminus, instead beginning at an intersection with the unnamed crescent. This proposal introduces mixed-use development to the site, allowing for the construction of several buildings hosting retail space, including but not limited to: restaurants, cafés, shops, grocery stores, and banks. Walking and other methods of transportation other than vehicles are promoted and encouraged with the inclusion of two pedestrian-only walkways, placed in between the district's three intersections connecting inner businesses throughout the district. In addition, a small park featuring a walkway and playground has been introduced to the western end of the lot to further encourage walking and recreation. Parking has not entirely been eliminated from the area, and is available along street edges with the exception of the corners and the entrances to the walkways.

Conclusion

To conclude, the City of Regina can create meaningful and positive impacts on the city's quality of life by improving its walkability and repurposing empty and underutilized spaces, particularly with the large parking lots found concentrated primarily along the edges of Downtown. As demonstrated with the redevelopment projects in Halifax and Shaker Heights, small tweaks in urban planning, such as improving pedestrian walkways and promoting mixed-use development, can significantly increase street-level activity and economic productivity in these locations. By placing emphasis on small changes, Regina would be able to gradually transform its downtown and other struggling locations into livable, attractive, and economically prosperous spaces.

Footnotes

¹ This measurement was estimated by the author using Google Maps, which reported a total area of 15,911.05 m² (~1.59 ha). Sidewalks were excluded from this measurement and values may vary depending on definitions of the parcel's boundary.

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Appendix

Figure 1

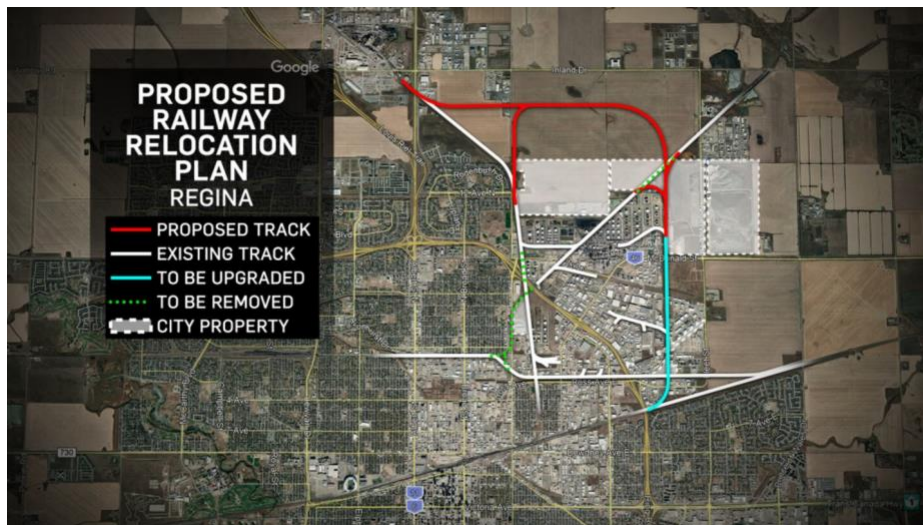
Railway Crossing on Ross Avenue, Regina



Note. Photograph taken by the author (2026), showing traffic delay caused by a train crossing Ross Avenue. Visible licence plates have been blurred out of respect for privacy.

Figure 2

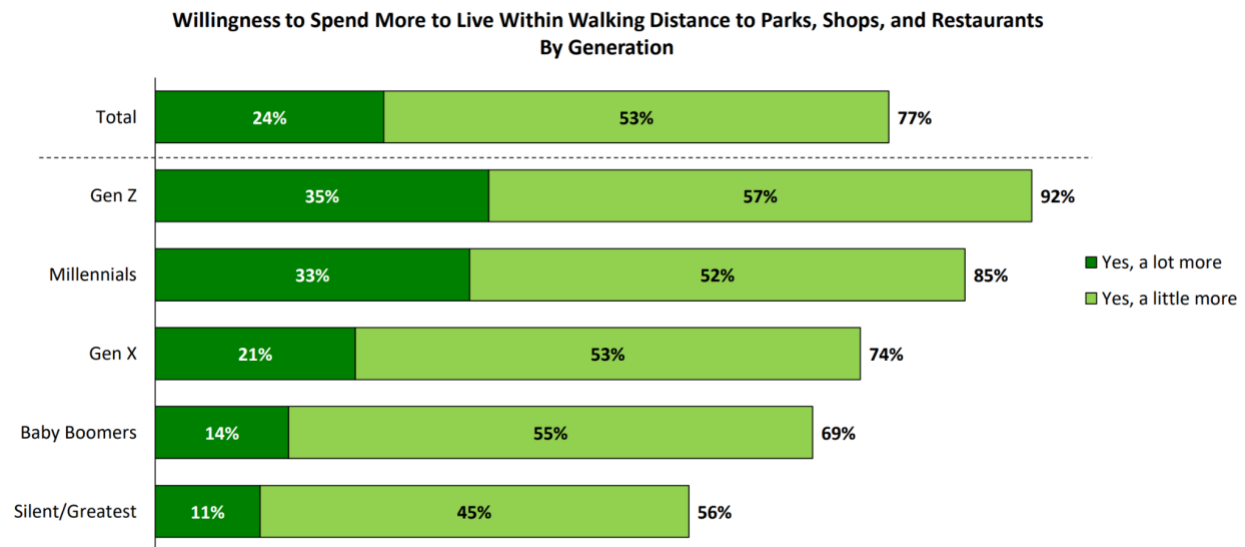
Proposed Railway Relocation Plan, Regina



Note. Map retrieved from CTV Regina (2021)

Figure 3

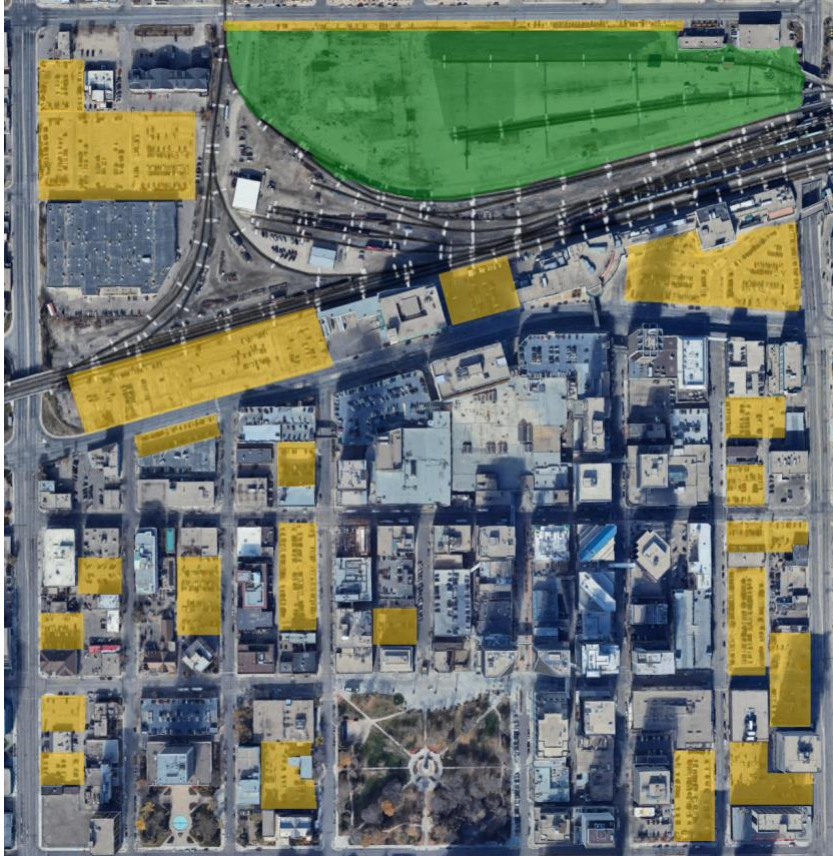
Willingness to Spend More to Live in Walkable Neighbourhoods by Generation, 2023



Note. This chart shows the survey responses from American participants and may not fully reflect the preferences held by the Canadian population. Retrieved from National Association of Realtors (2023, p. 22)

Figure 4

Empty and Underutilized Spaces in Downtown Regina, 2026



Note. Locations highlighted in yellow are parcels of land occupied by surface-level parking lots, and highlighted in green is a large vacant lot previously used for railway purposes. Not highlighted are parking garages. Satellite image retrieved and adapted from Google Earth Pro (2026).

Figure 5

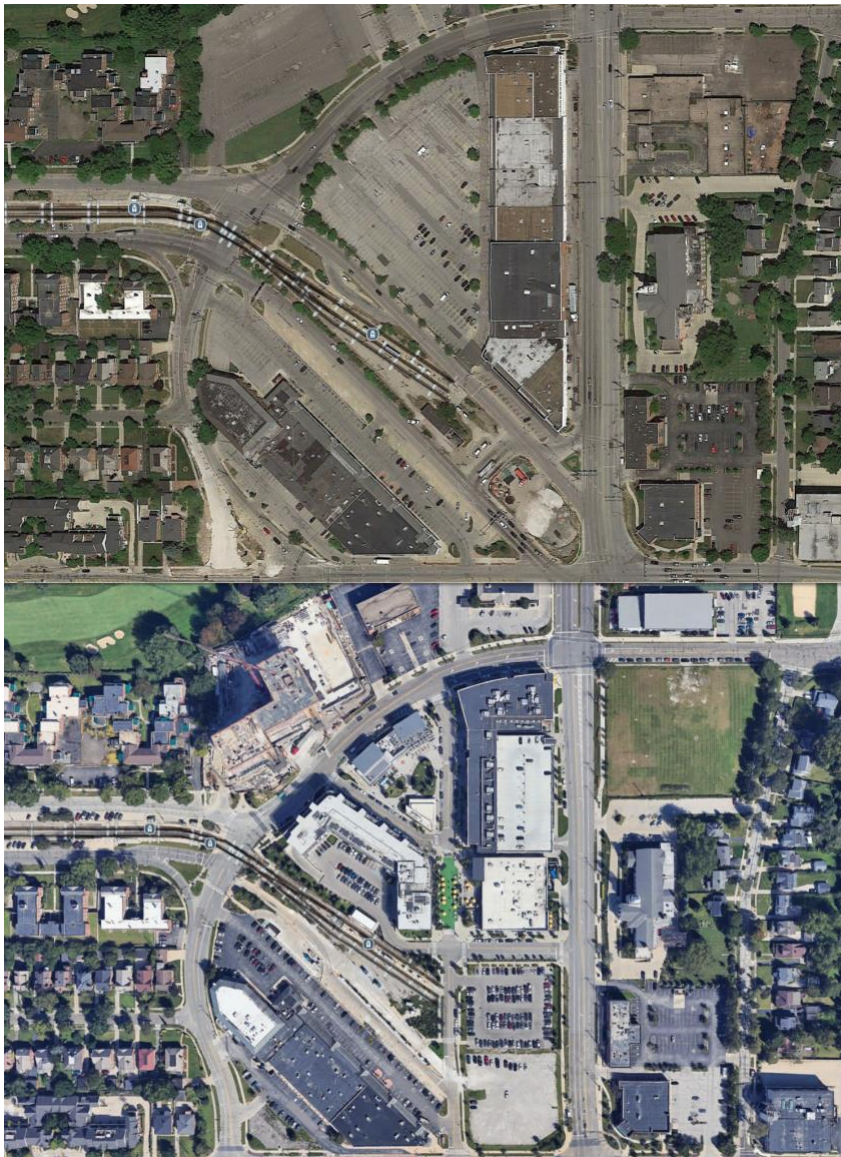
Argyle Street, Before and After (2004 vs. 2017)



Note. This figure shows Argyle Street in downtown Halifax before (top, 2004) and after (bottom, 2017) the redevelopment project. Top photo by Stainforth, T. (2004) and bottom photo by Lee, S. (2017).

Figure 6

Van Aken District, Before and After (2012 vs. 2026)



Note. These satellite images show the Van Aken District before (top, 2012) and after (bottom, 2026) the major redevelopment project. Retrieved from Google Earth Pro (2012, 2026)

Figure 7

Layout and Directory of the Van Aken District



Note. Map from The Van Aken District (2023).

Figure 8

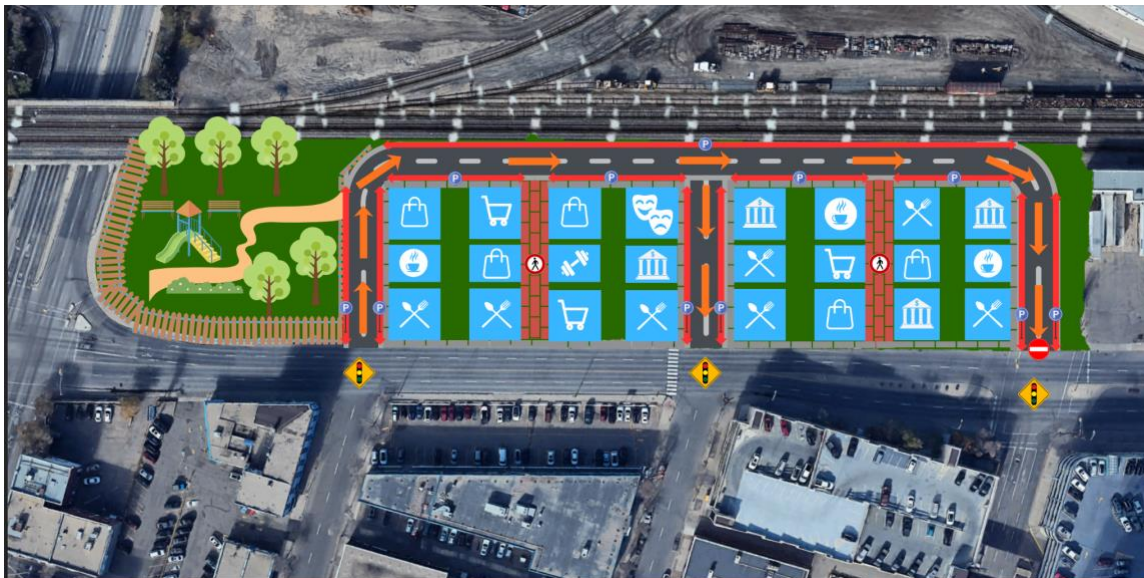
Surface Level Parking Lot at Albert St.-Saskatchewan Dr., 2026



Note. Retrieved from Google Earth Pro (2026)

Figure 9

Proposed District in Downtown Regina, 2026



Note. Retrieved and adapted from Google Earth Pro (2026)

Attractability in Attachment:

Developing a Sense of Place for Regina's Future Sprawling Development

Jonah Durnin

Despite being a major urban centre in southern Saskatchewan, Regina tends to not come off as very attractive. The City of Regina (2026a) Growth Plan Review outlines that by 2051 Regina is projected to reach a population of 370,000, ultimately bringing in 68,200 more jobs and 56,900 more housing units. As part of this expected growth, the Growth Plan Review designates additional greenfield lands extending outwards of the city (see Figure 1) as new neighbourhoods in order to meet the city's housing needs long-term in conjunction with its projected population growth (City of Regina, 2023; City of Regina, 2026b). Further, the growth plan map (see Figure 2) emphasizes subsequent urban growth that would take place in the city's periphery to encompass new neighbourhoods and future long-term growth (City of Regina, 2026c). This growth plan is indicative of sprawling development that will continue to extend Regina's periphery in the following decades (City of Regina, 2026d). To ensure the sprawling development in Regina works to foster an attractive city, it is essential that new greenfield neighbourhoods that come about to accommodate an increasing population are conducted in a way that is sensitive to place and community well-being. With that being said, given Regina's pattern and plan for continued sprawled growth extending into the city's periphery, it is essential that subsequent urban neighbourhood developments prioritize planning that is conducive of a sense of place which is fostered through an emphasis on priorities such as walkability, public displays of art, green spaces, and accessible mixed-forms of development.

According to Ungvarsky (2025), sense of place refers to a multifaceted concept that includes the emotional and psychological connections that people have with specific locations. This can be fostered within an individual from a variety of factors, including geography, history, culture, and personal experiences. Sense of place as a concept is rooted in the work of mid-twentieth century urban activists like Jane Jacobs, who emphasizes the importance of

preserving the distinctness of communities in her 1961 publication *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, which drew attention to how urban developments have not always been done for the best interest of the people within communities despite economic benefits (Ungvarsky, 2025). Further, “research indicates that sense of place plays a crucial role in... influencing how individuals relate to their environments throughout life. This sense of connectedness not only contributes to personal identity but can also impact community dynamics and perceptions” (Ungvarsky, 2025, para. 2). Because of the impact sense of place has on individuals, it has been determined that human geography and alterations on the landscape have incorporated a well-established sense of place to foster the foundational environment needed to create a self-identity (Ungvarsky, 2025, para. 11). Further, sense of place determines how people connect with distinct locations, making it a significant consideration in the realm of urban developments for the purposes of preserving and developing local identities and attachment to communities despite opposing modernization efforts (Ungvarsky, 2025, para.1). With the future development of new neighbourhoods and development of greenfield areas as outlined in the review of the City of Regina Official Community Growth Plan, it is important that as subsequent neighbourhood developments sprawl outwards of the city that they take into account factors that foster a sense of place. This means integrating the aforementioned factors such as geography, history, culture, and personal experiences to shape the development of these new neighbourhood developments, being sure to keep in mind an approach that reflects the needs of the people these new communities are wanting to serve. Only by ensuring the development of a sense of place in the planning of sprawling developments can these new neighbourhoods foster a sense of attractability that brings people in. By framing these communities with sense of place in mind, they can better work to serve the people who the communities are to be made up of, ensuring that Regina works towards future neighbourhood developments in a good way that is conducive of the populations that

make up the communities, and thus, create an aesthetic legacy for the city moving forward.

One way to frame the development of these new neighbourhoods to foster a sense of place is through ensuring walkability. According to Yassin (2019), recent studies have shown that walkability is an essential piece in creating building blocks that foster a sustainable environment and livable space. Further, pedestrianization helps to foster a livable city through prompting sustainable access and linking the residents of respective walkable neighbourhoods. By doing so, increased walkability works as a productive instrument in improving the “accessibility, mobility, safety and environment that make the city a good quality place to all its inhabitants”, ultimately increasing the city’s livability (Yassin, 2019, para. 3). Furthermore, increased walkability implemented through pedestrian street functions also contributes to fostering a public space for socialization through integrating increased accessibility and access to activities within a neighbourhood (Yassin, 2019, para. 3). These notions reflect the importance of creating walkable neighbourhoods to create an accessible, sociable, and sustainable living space, ultimately contributing to the development of a sense of place through altering the landscape to increase accessibility and sociability, creating connections to the neighbourhoods people reside within through fostering place by means of geography and personal experiences. Within the Regina context, it is essential that sprawling neighbourhood developments follow patterns of walkability that increase access for neighbourhood residents, ensuring that they are able to connect to the neighbourhoods they reside within, and foster connections with other residents and the neighbourhood itself which would seemingly otherwise be difficult without walkable conditions. Through framing new Regina neighbourhoods in this way, connections are able to be

built within the neighbourhood through experiencing it by increased access by foot, ensuring that the neighbourhood is conducive to fostering a sense of place, and thus, bringing an aspect of attractability to these sprawling neighbourhood developments.

In addition to increased walkability, the implementation of public art can help to assert a sense of place within a community. Adler (2021) emphasizes how proponents of public art suggest that it has the power of place making and demonstrates the sense of history within an area. Further, Adler states that “art and art events can also create a geographic identity where there isn’t one naturally” (2021, para. 15). These notions reflect the clear power that art installations within neighbourhoods can have in prescribing an identity to a neighbourhood, contributing to place making through providing installations that fit the regional context while simultaneously shaping the identity of the neighbourhood. Further, the implementation of murals and other forms of public art can play a critical component in community involvement and placemaking (Ellery & Ellery, 2019). With this in mind, integration of public art throughout neighbourhoods clearly makes a difference in developing a sense of place, ultimately connecting residents to the community they reside within while also shaping the geographic identity of said neighbourhood. Because of this, it is integral that sprawling developments in Regina create space for the display of public artworks and murals, enabling communities to develop aesthetics that are rooted in fostering a sense of place based on community involvement and artwork commissions within their distinct neighbourhood contexts, contributing to the culture of the landscape while adding potential historical elements that ensure the development of distinct urban forms of attractability shaped by their respective neighbourhood contexts.

To further create livable neighbourhoods for Regina rooted in the development of a sense of place, green spaces must be included to ensure people foster a natural connection with their

geographic landscapes. In regards to green spaces and sense of place, Zeng and Wang (2026) speak to how green spaces in all manifestations, such as parks, forests, and natural areas, are deemed as critical infrastructure for human well-being and sustainable infrastructure through cultivating meaningful connections between people and their environments, ultimately boosting quality of life. Further, it is emphasized that “for evidence-based green space planning[,] practitioners should prioritize accessibility...and quality characteristics—particularly naturalness, management, and facilities—over simple green space quantity”, and that “effective design must address Person-Process-Place dimensions comprehensively” (Zeng & Wang, 2026). These statements address the importance of effective green space planning rooted in accessibility and people first planning approaches to foster a natural connection between people and their environments. By doing so, a sense of place can be developed in neighbourhoods on the basis of physical geography, helping to cultivate connections to neighbourhoods through engagement and accessibility to natural features. Because of this, implementation of green space through a person-process-place planning design that prioritizes developing a sense of place for residents is integral to the planning to ensure that sprawling neighbourhood developments in Regina are appealing. By including green spaces in this way, residents can develop a sense of place through the natural connections that green spaces foster between people and their geographic environment, ultimately contributing to an urban form that has a sense of appeal and attractability.

To fully ensure an urban form is conducive to fostering a sense of place, planning efforts in new neighbourhood developments in Regina must ensure that mixed-use forms of development are utilized. According to Kong et al., “functional zoning [has] created many of its own problems as it was repeated mechanically in [20th century North American] cities, such as

congestion, pollution, urban sprawl, workplace-residence separation and the loss of urban vitality” (2015, para. 2). Further, in her 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs argues that successful and vibrant neighbourhoods, indicative of a sense of place, develop as a result from a mix of diverse uses (Kong et al., 2015, para. 2). This is because, as expressed by Kong et al. (2015), mixed-use development merges different commercial, residential, and recreational land uses, ensuring the development of walkable and compact mixed communities. When applied to sprawling neighborhood development in Regina, these notions express the importance of moving away from longstanding zoning practices which designate different uses of land as incompatible, and instead embrace mixed-use urban forms of development to ensure that vibrant and successful neighbourhoods are developed that enable increased walkability, access, and a sense of place while being devoid of the formerly highlighted problems that come about from North American zoning practices. Through developing new neighbourhoods in Regina with an emphasis on mixed-use development, urban forms can be developed that foster a sense of place through integration of all of the formerly mentioned aspects such as walkability, green space, and public art which are manifested through the blending of different commercial, residential, and recreational uses within compact neighbourhoods. By doing this, successive sprawling developments in Regina will not only foster a sense of place and distinct community contexts and forms that are linked through increased accessibility, but also hopefully set a new pathway legacy for how urban forms are developed in Regina. This mixed-use implementation would ultimately provide increased accessibility and be much more conducive to place-making while simultaneously limiting the negative impacts of North American zoning contexts such as urban sprawl, congestion, workplace separation and loss of urban vitality as formerly emphasized by Kong et al. (2015).

Overall, these mixed-use developments applied to Regina would ultimately work to foster neighbourhoods that are more conducive of place making and sustainability through the increased accessibility and connectivity to the neighbourhood that comes about from mixed-use urban forms, seemingly contributing to neighbourhoods that are more conducive of place and community well-being.

In regards to other cities which take these factors into account that Regina sprawling developments could take inspiration from, Calgary's University District is an excellent example of a neighbourhood that is conducive of all the formerly mentioned factors to develop an effective sense of place. According to University of Calgary Properties Group (2026), the neighborhood is Alberta's first community which was designed through a:

collaborative, people-first process that applies the best ideas in urban design and the needs of the community. Further, the community is detailed to encompass 200-acres of land which blend retail, commercial, residential, and open spaces, creating what they characterize as a 'city' within a city (University of Calgary Properties Group, 2026).

This notion reflects an innate connection with the neighbourhood environment through a design emphasizing community, ultimately fostering a sense of place based on community principles which exemplify the aforementioned factors that influence place building.

When examining this neighbourhood in relation to a similarly observed Regina context via Google Earth (2023; 2025), Figure 4 demonstrates the drastic differences between the urban forms emphasized in Figure 3, demonstrating how Calgary's University District is much more conducive of a sense of place than Regina's Chuka Boulevard. Through Google Earth observations, Regina's Chuka Boulevard (see Figure 3) seemingly attempts to display a mixed use urban form. However, it fails to do so in a way that is conducive to a sense of place, as the

main emphasis is clearly on the road, and thus vehicles, with smaller sidewalks and limited greenery and natural green space, ultimately framing it as difficult to navigate. Also, it seemingly lacks artistic expressions, emphasizing how nonconducive the sense of place is within this neighbourhood based on Google Earth observation. Further, examination from looking further down the road shows that this attempt at a mixed-use urban form ends abruptly, ultimately failing to increase accessibility for the residents of the neighbourhood.

On the contrary, Google Earth's display of Figure 4 showcases how Calgary's University District emphasizes walkability and pedestrian safety, with larger sidewalks blocked off from the road with patches of robust greenery which also facilitate easy access and proximity to the adjacent mixed-use forms of development that seemingly encompass both residential and commercial forms of development. Further, while there is not much public art for display, the buildings themselves bring in a splash of colour that provides a vibrancy to the environment that is missing from the Regina example as exemplified in Figure 3, ultimately contributing to an artistic element that is otherwise missing from Chuka Boulevard. Overall, based on the Google Earth observations in figures 3 and 4, Calgary's University district is seemingly framed in a way which is much more conducive of sense of place within its neighbourhood development than Regina's Chuka Boulevard. This is due to it being able to foster connections to the landscape through mixed-use developments, inclusion of green space, artistic elements, and increased walkability, ultimately fostering an accessible and sustainable neighbourhood landscape that is more conducive to creating attachments between people and their urban environment.

When framing Regina's subsequent sprawling developments, it is important that they are done in a way that is conducive to fostering a sense of place through planning principles rooted in mixed-use developments, green space, public art displays, and walkability to ensure they are

deemed attractive. By ensuring these principles guide the planning process, neighbourhoods can be framed in a way that enables people to foster an attachment to the environment. Increased walkability and mixed-use developments improve accessibility of neighbourhoods, while green spaces and public art help to foster connections to the neighbourhood environment and provide character to neighbourhoods. These principles are exemplified in the example of Calgary's University District, positioning that neighbourhood as a great example in framing the development of subsequent sprawling Regina neighbourhoods. It is essential that a sense of place and attachment is able to be prescribed to a neighbourhood to ensure attractability and attachment for residents, because if neighbourhoods are not built for the people they serve then what purpose do they serve at all?

Figures:

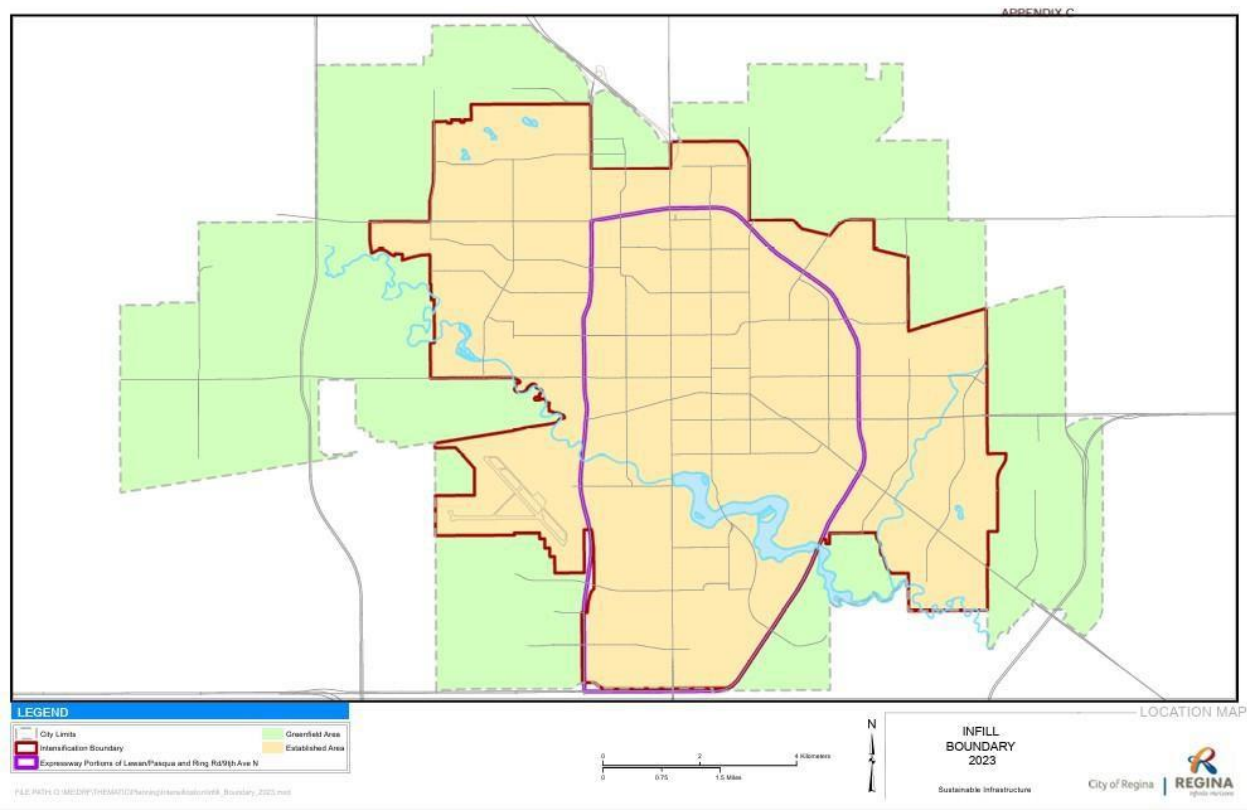


Figure 1 – City of Regina Intensification Boundary Map (City of Regina, 2023)

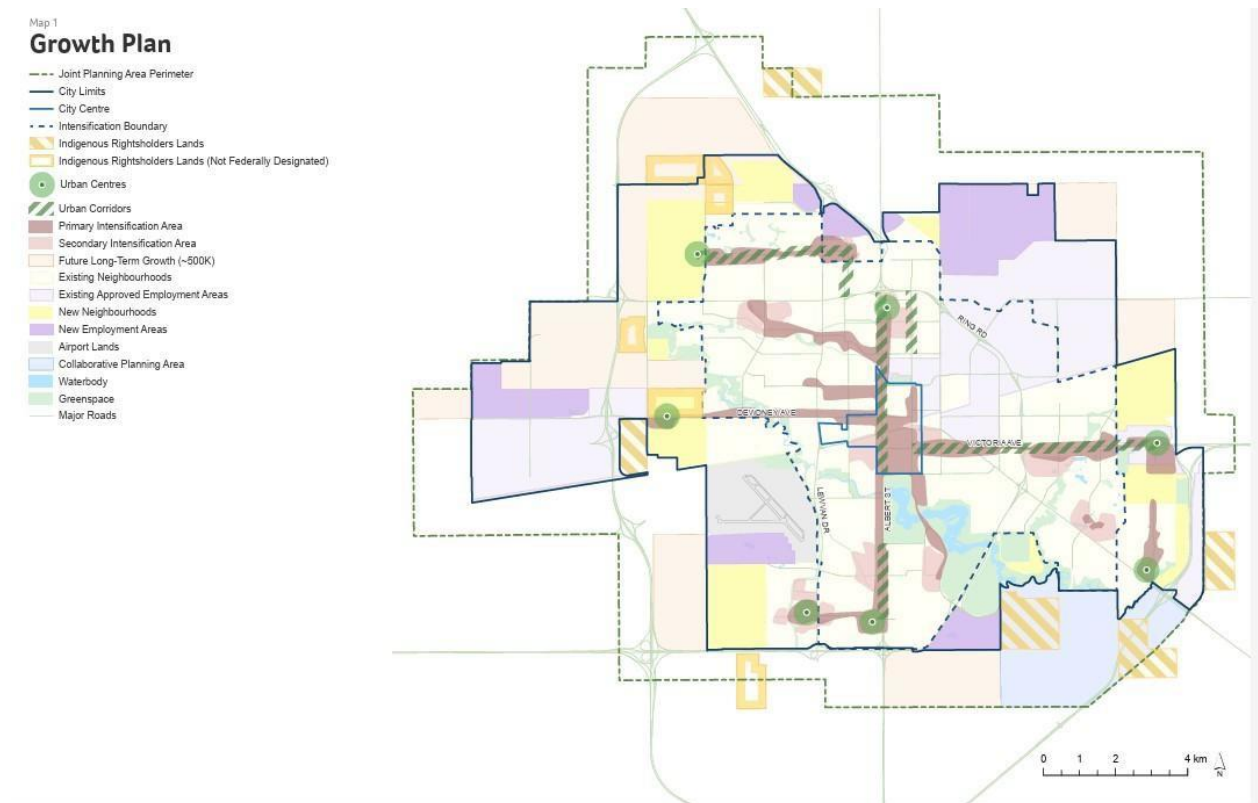


Figure 2 – City of Regina Growth Plan Map (City of Regina, 2026c)



Figure 3 – Chuka Boulevard, Regina (Google Earth, 2025)



Figure 4 – University District, Calgary (Google Earth, 2023)

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Beautification of Victoria Park

Loris Presley Jacob Ntoreyimana

Introduction

Attractive cities are defined by their ability to provide pleasant and inclusive public spaces that encourage social interaction, culture, and a strong sense of place. Public parks are important in achieving this because they provide recreation, relaxation, and community gathering opportunities. However, in winter cities like Regina, parks often become inactive during colder months. Victoria Park, located in Regina's downtown area already serves as a key gathering space and hosts seasonal events, but remains underutilized in winter, which shows the need for permanent design improvements that encourage full year use.

My project proposes a beautification plan to transform Victoria Park into a sticky place where people stay longer regardless of the season. The project includes an interactive illuminated "REGINA" landmark where visitors can add their names, a four-season glass pavilion with plants and community events, improved seating and pathways, food truck activity, and stronger security measures. Together these changes aim to improve accessibility, safety, and vibrancy while supporting downtown revitalization and community well-being.

Policy and Sticky Place Concept

Regina's long term planning framework demonstrates a clear commitment to recreation as a tool for improving quality of life and strengthening the city's attractiveness. The city of Regina's *Recreation Master Plan* outlines a long-term vision for publicly funded recreation that emphasizes the importance of designing spaces and places that are usable in all seasons of the year. The *Recreation Master Plan* states "Four season sport and recreation opportunities improve quality of life and make Regina a more vibrant and attractive place to live, work, and visit" (City of Regina, 2016, p.21). This vision is especially important for cities like Regina, where public spaces must remain usable beyond summer.

To achieve this long-term vision, the *Recreation Master Plan* identifies outcomes related to citizen well-being, community wellness, and healthy indoor and outdoor environments. These outcomes say that recreation should support physical literacy and well-being, provide opportunities for diverse ages and abilities, and promote social environments that create inclusion, self-confidence, and self-worth (City of Regina, 2016, p.22). The plan also highlights the importance of community spaces and events, and that recreation opportunities should be accessible and welcoming in order to create connection with individuals and families while at the same time attracting and retaining residents (City of Regina, 2016. p.22). The plan emphasizes that parks and open spaces should support residents to connect with the nature and that “indoor and outdoor facilities should be aesthetically pleasing and sustainable”, while remaining adaptable, multipurpose, and efficiently operated (City of Regina, 2016, p.22).

These outcomes connect with the concept of understanding how spaces can encourage people to stay longer and have repeat visitation. That concept is known as the idea of “sticky spaces”. Although originally developed with higher education planning, the “sticky campus” model provides a transferable framework for explaining how the built environment can encourage people to remain in the place for longer periods of time. Sticky environments are created when designers blur the boundaries between formal and informal space, creating environments that make users want to “stick” (Naomi Berman, Dhriti Mehta & Anna Matsuo, 2024). In this model, sticky spaces prioritize social experience and encourage integration by providing spaces for relaxation, eating, socializing and study, while also emphasizing “flexibility and variety” (Naomi Berman, Dhriti Mehta & Anna Matsuo, 2024).

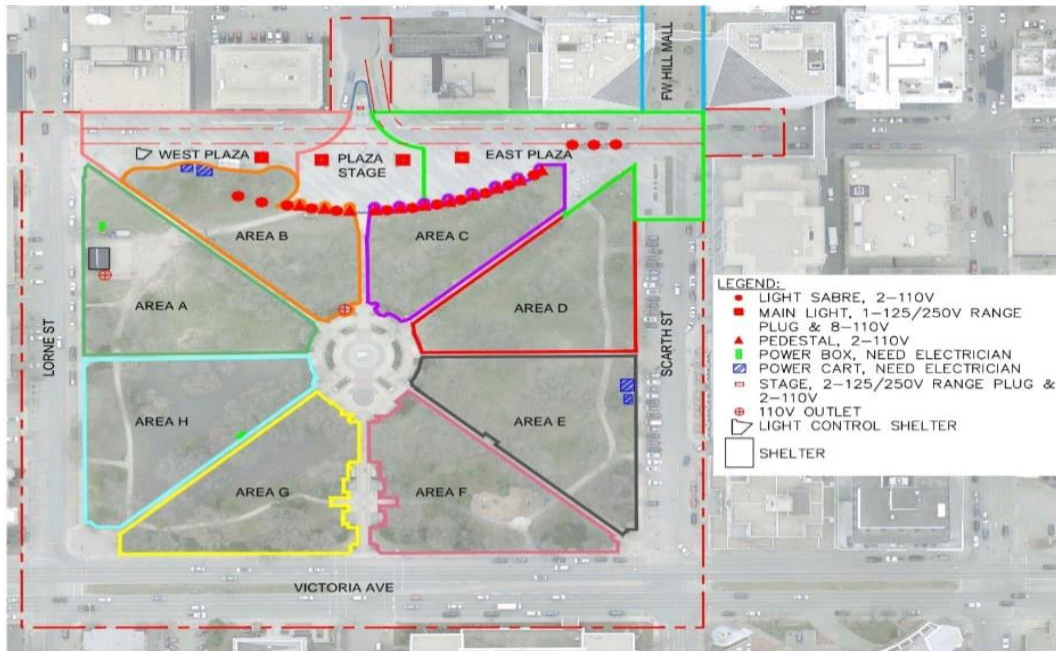
Applied to Victoria Park, this suggests that improving attractiveness requires year-round programs and activities that support everyday use and planned events, aligning with *Design Regina’s* policy foundation.

Victoria Park Today

Victoria Park is located in Regina's downtown core and is one of the city's most symbolic public spaces. Because it is close to many civic institutions such as the Hotel Saskatchewan and SaskPower, it naturally attracts community gatherings, recreation, and inclusive tourism activity. The park has big potential to support city goals related to walkability and downtown vibrancy but its use remains seasonal. In terms of accessibility, the park already includes important supportive infrastructure. Accessible parking is available nearby on Scarth Street, Lorne Street, Victoria Avenue, and 12th Avenue. Accessible washrooms with change tables are located in the plaza kiosk and the Regina Public Library. It also includes a free water refill station and a dog bowl, showing that it is designed to serve many types of visitors. Victoria Park is also a space where there are events happening such as I Love Regina Day, an annual celebration held since 2002. That event includes live entertainment, food, family and friends' activities, and interactive engagement with City services such as Regina Fire & Protective services. It also includes an accessible run and walk that ends in the park.

Despite the strengths, the park still feels underused on regular days. From personal observation, I often take the bus route 3 that stops near Victoria Park for 5 minutes because it is a downtown transit terminus. During that time, the lighting is limited and does not create a strong sense of energy or safety. This reinforces the need for permanent activities that will increase the vibrancy and will make the park more attractive.

Overall, Victoria Park already functions as an accessible downtown gathering space with a strong history of public events. However, the fact that there is only temporary programs suggests that additional entertainment interventions are needed to improve vibrancy and long-term attraction.



<https://nuitblancheregina.ca/2025event-map/>

Phase 1 of the Project: Four-Seasons Pavilion

The first phase introduces a four-season glass pavilion in Victoria Park. The Pavilion would function like a greenhouse and a public space that would remain attractive throughout the year, even in winter. The pavilion would have colourful flowers, indoor plants, seating areas, and a small café corner where everybody could have some soft drinks and some snacks. The design of the pavilion, the colourful flowers, the events happenings inside, the temperature inside and the smell of the flowers will create a sticky place for the visitors because the place will offer them a warm, comfortable indoor environment where they can relax, socialize, and want to spend time there regardless of the weather conditions.

To maintain the green space in winter, the pavilion would rely on a controlled plant lighting system. Research in intelligent plant supplementary lighting explains that the program is set according to a plant's light recipe, including photoperiod, light quality, and light intensity required by the plant (International Low Carbon Technologies, 2026, p. 3). The research explains

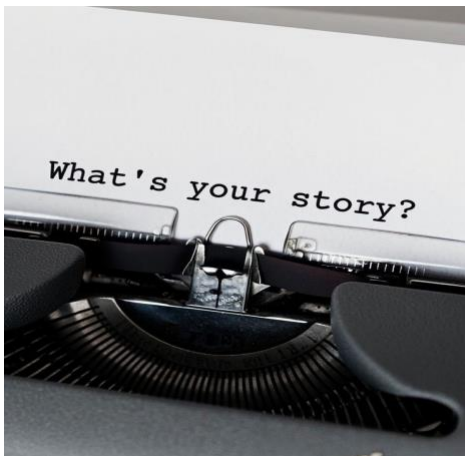
that the system would use sensors that monitor the temperature and the light levels in real time. For example, in December the sunset is very weak, there is even no sunset, so the LED lights would automatically increase to support the growth of the plant. So even in winter, the pavilion would still be colourful, warm in winter, and a little bit cold in summer (International Low Carbon Technologies, 2026, p. 3).

Aesthetic inspiration for the pavilion can also be taken from conservatory style of the Argo at the Four Seasons Hotel in Hong Kong, which was designed with architectural curves, floral patterns, mirrors that shows the exterior and reflect light. The designers describe the goal as creating a destination space that feels bright, elegant, and immersive, similar to a traditional conservatory. This kind of design corresponds to what my project suggests with the phase 1 of creating a pavilion meant to become a central attraction and a visually beautiful and memorable environment for visitors (Speros, 2021; Schmid, 2000: p. 17-18).

In addition, the pavilion would have events happening inside that would attract people such as open mic nights, poetry, storytelling sessions, small live music performances, and workshops such as paint and sip. This idea is supported by research showing that poetry performances such as slam and open mic events are shaped through relationships between the poet, the venue, and the audience which shows that the space plays an important role in creating a live cultural experience for the audience. As noted: “The poem becomes a public art, one that is composed in the chance interactions between performer, venue, and audience” (Schmid, 2000, p. 17-18). Overall, the pavilion would create a unique indoor experience that improves attractiveness and supports the year-round vision.



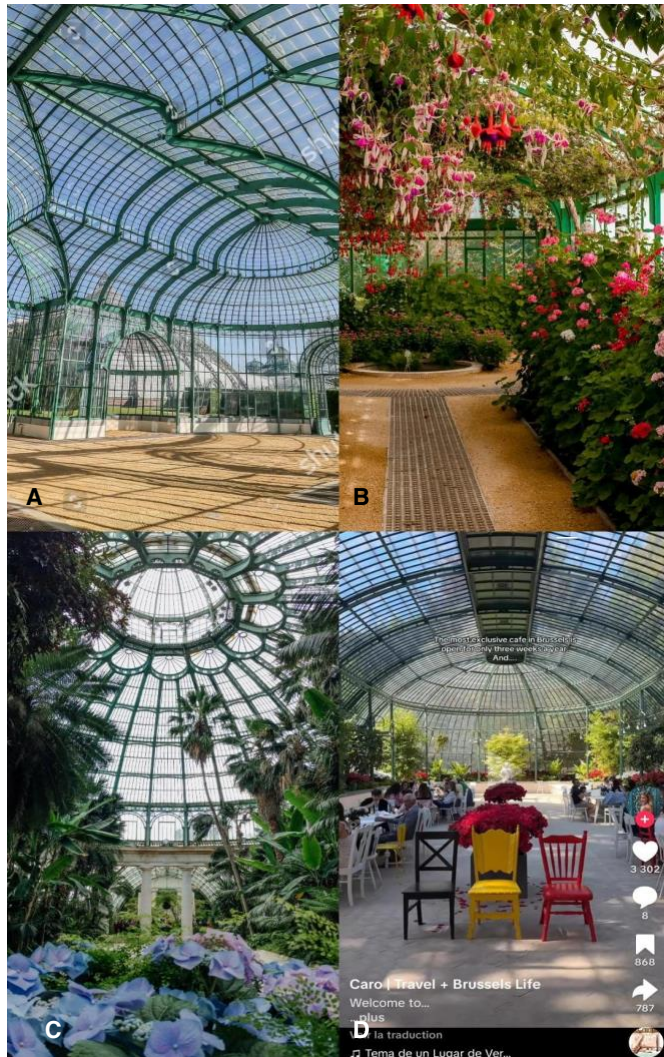
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A: Created by Stephanie Lecocq / EPA-EFE
B: <https://thetwirlingtraveler.nl/visiting-the-royal-gardens-of-belgium-in-laeken/>
C: <https://thegingerdiaries.be/2020/05/28/visiting-the-royal-greenhouses-in-laeken/>
D: <https://www.tiktok.com/@veggiewayfarer/video/7618966766751960352>

Phase 2 of the Project: The Big Panels “REGINA”

The second phase of my project is a public art installation. Large interactive panels spelling REGINA. These panels would become like a recognizable downtown landmark. The installation would be designed so that visitors can contribute by adding their names, nicknames, initials, through an interactive system. There would be a few stations where people line up so that they can put their names or initials with their handwriting and it would appear on the panels. At night, the panels stay dark grey but the millions of names and nicknames would light up at night. The installation will feel community-owned and emotionally meaningful. This phase of the

project promotes tourism and the city through social media, similar to how many cities use large public letter installations as a tool for branding.

Phase 3: Gardening Workshops and Educational Partnerships

The third phase of my project focuses on community involvement through a structured gardening and beautification program. This would include an outdoor activity that would be organized as an educational gardening zone supervised by professional gardeners. The purpose here is to involve schools and universities in hands-on learning experiences. In spring and summer, elementary school classes could visit the park for guided planting and watering workshops. Students would help the professional gardeners in the beginning of spring and come back to see what they planted and how the plants/flowers bloomed. Then, there will be pictures each year of the school that participated and their garden. Some of the plants would be placed afterwards in the pavilion where they will continue to bloom under controlled temperature and lighting. At the university level, students from biology, environmental studies, or urban planning could participate through workshops and seasonal projects. The park would therefore become a learning environment. This phase is important because it strengthens Victoria Park's community ownership and creates participation across all ages including youth, adults, and seniors.



Photo: Sergei Tolmachev



https://asez.org/usa_beautification_eng/

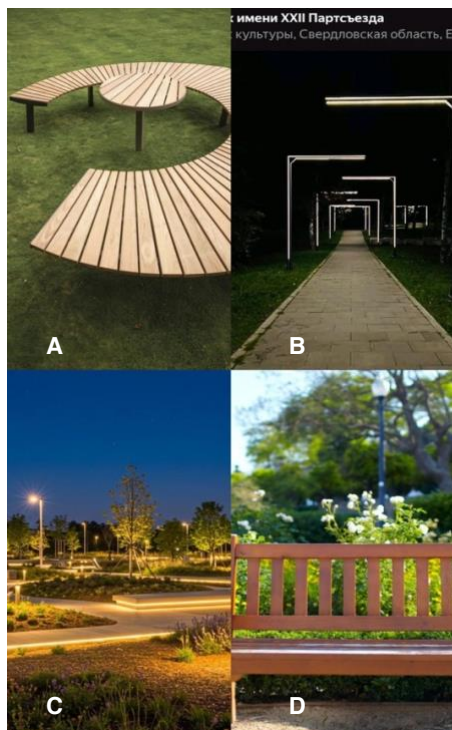
Pathways, Public Chairs and Security Guards

Security is essential in the Victoria Park beautification project because people cannot fully enjoy a public space, in downtown regina, if they do not feel safe. One important strategy would improve lighting in the pathways by installing LED lights that clearly illuminate walking areas, and seating areas as well. In addition, the park should include more rounded outdoor chairs with a capacity of having many persons, some small clusters, and one or two food trucks which will encourage social interaction. Finally, private security guards could be introduced as an additional safety measure. A key point raised in research about private guards policing public spaces is that those guards shouldn't operate in punitive or aggressive ways, but rather through dialogue and social care engaging respectfully with visitors (Kammersgaard, 2021, p. 7-9). However, the source also warns the guards about how they operate, that they should not use illegitimate authority and exclude marginalized individuals from public spaces (Kammersgaard, 2021, p. 7-9). Therefore, if Victoria Park uses private security guards, it must be done with proper training and clear ethical guidelines so that Victoria Park remains safe while still being inclusive and welcoming.

Expected Effects and Conclusion

Overall, the project would transform Victoria Park into a more vibrant, attractive, and sticky public space that supports Regina's long-term goals for inclusion, downtown revitalization, and year-round recreation. The four-season pavilion would increase visitation at Victoria Park during all months of the year by providing a warm and colourful indoor space for relaxation and cultural activities which would reduce the feeling that downtown becomes inactive during winter and would support a more vibrant city atmosphere. The illuminated

REGINA panels would strengthen the city identity by creating an Instagrammable landmark that encourages tourism and social media sharing. The gardening workshops would build community ownership by involving schools, university students, and seniors in beautification and environmental learning. Safety improvements such as pathway lighting, organized seating areas, and food truck activity would increase the number of people using the park in the afternoon, evening, and night. It reduces isolation and creates comfort and security. The combination of lighting, social activities, and respectful security supervision would help make Victoria Park feel safer while remaining inclusive.



A: <https://www.mmcite.com/en/lago-table>

B: https://yandex.com/maps/org/park_imeni_xxii_partsyezda/1181613588/reviews/?ll=60.575699%2C56.839649&z=16

C: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DUny3FrjS6W/>

D: Photo by Danil Rudenko

In conclusion, the project supports the City of Regina (2019) *Recreation Master Plan*'s vision by creating a four-season recreational space that improves quality of life and strengthens downtown attractiveness, and the three-phase design responds directly to Victoria Park's current underuse situation and seasonal limitations by creating a Victoria Park that remains active in all seasons of the year.

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Neon Nights Regina: The Queen City of Lights

Babatomiwa Oriola

Introduction

Picture this: you are driving into Regina from Highway 6 north as the sun goes down. The flat prairie stretches behind you, and just ahead, a warm glowing “Welcome to Regina” sign lights up the road - your first sign of what this city has to offer after dark. As you head downtown, the streets start to come alive with deep reds and warm amber neon running along Dewdney Avenue, 11th Avenue, and Scarth Street. It sounds like a dream, but it does not have to be. *Neon Nights Regina: The Queen City of Lights* is a proposal for a five-site permanent LED neon lighting system that would give downtown Regina a bold vintage identity, create a tourism experience that starts at the city's doorstep and carries visitors all the way to its core, bringing energy into streets that right now simply go quiet when the workday ends.

The plan helps address five key ideas: authenticity for Regina's city history and city culture; vibrancy from residents and tourists' desire to walk rather than drive; sustainable lighting that will handle summers and winters; affordability, from government investments to tourism-driven revenue; and inclusivity, from Indigenous representatives, community groups, property owners, and residents. This is not just about making Regina look good at night but also making it good at heart. A warm place full of colour, that people will want to come to, walk through, and remember.

The Tourism Gap

Regina is a city that many people drive through but rarely stop to explore. Parked along the Trans-Canada Highway, it has been known by travellers as a convenient pit stop rather than a destination. Walk through downtown on a weekday evening and you will see why. Storefronts

close early, surface parking lots swallow up entire blocks, and the streets that buzzed with activity during the day feel empty, unwelcoming, and at times unsafe once the sun goes down.

The City of Regina's own *Downtown Neighbourhood Plan* points to the city's lack of "Appropriate Density" as one of the causes of this problem (City of Regina, n.d., p. 5). Simply put, downtown needs more people to survive. More foot traffic means more businesses can stay open, more cultural events can happen, and public transit can expand. People will not linger in spaces that feel cold, dark, and uninviting. They would prefer places that feel alive.

That is where lighting comes in. Warm, well-placed neon lighting changes how a street feels after dark. It shows that a place is active, safe, and worth exploring. It also gives birth to so many ideas, from attractive community events to commercial business growth and even real estate opportunities. All these would draw people in, keep them around, both short and long term, therefore creating the very density the downtown needs to thrive. My *Neon Nights Regina* proposal is the missing link that offers the city so much potential, transforming it into a place people actually want to be.

The Design Concept

The design for *Neon Nights Regina* is inspired by the warm, vintage look of 1980s–90s North American commercial streets. It uses colours like amber, deep pink, and soft red to create a nostalgic feel that different people can connect with, while also looking great in photos and on social media. The goal is to give Regina a stronger visual identity that feels both familiar and exciting.

All five installations would use LED neon flexible lighting technology, which is safer and more practical than traditional glass neon. Texas-based neon sign company, Echo Neon defends

their LED neon flex lighting as non-toxic and recyclable, with no harmful gases and good energy efficiency (Echo Neon, 2025). Alva's blog from COLORS, a LED manufacturing company, highlights the benefits of their weather-resistant LED neon flex lighting, one being the ability to work in temperatures from -40°C to $+60^{\circ}\text{C}$ (Alva, 2025), which works within Regina's extreme weather range. Being eco-friendly and of lower power, lighting tech like the above will work in line with the City of Regina's *Energy & Sustainability Framework* (City of Regina, 2022). To further support the city's energy goal, the lighting would be also powered by renewable energy, benefiting from the city's flat prairie environment. Examples include using the hot summer sun for solar energy and the strong winter wind for mechanical energy.

The five sites would be connected like a loose circuit, with two serving as gateway entrances and three placed downtown to encourage less driving and more walking. In time, the lighting will help the city grow sticky spaces where people will naturally slow down and hang around. With all this in place, it would bring vibrancy not just at night, but also during the day, and thanks to our seasonal power sources, Regina will have its colour both in the summer festival season and the winter holiday season, making downtown feel alive and active year-round.

The Five Case Studies

Hollywood Boulevard is one of the most recognizable streets in the world, where decades of glowing neon signs and theatre canopies have turned a simple commercial strip into a world famous landmark (see Fig. 1). The neon here is not just lighting. It tells the story of the city and the people who built it. In an external case study, Architektury et al (2022, p.35) explain that neon signs work as "a vehicle for personal expression" where signage becomes "part of the social

experience" shaping the identity of a place. For Regina, this means that investing in neon lighting connected with history and culture has the power to give the city a famous look that residents will feel proud of and tourists will remember long after they leave.

Figure 1 - Hollywood Boulevard, Los Angeles, California



Victoria Hughes (n.d.). *Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles: The City's Most Glamorous Street*. Hotels.com.

<https://ca.hotels.com/go/usa/hollywood-boulevard-los-angeles>

Figure 2 shows the Quartier des Spectacles, a downtown Montreal district that has become one of Canada's most visited urban spaces by bringing together lighting, public art, and festivals into one lively package. It works because it finds a balance between the physical look of a place and the human energy that fills it. Di Croce et al (2022) discuss the district's history before and after the COVID pandemic: how factors like the district's "touristification" were

major challenges at the time. The authors make the point that a city's appeal depends equally on its built environment and its social life, and that the “body” and “soul” of a city need to work together for people to truly enjoy a place (Di Croce et al., 2022, p. 134). For Regina, this means that neon lighting is only the beginning. When paired with community and cultural events, neon lights will help turn downtown into a space that people will love and enjoy.

Figure 2 - *Quartier des Spectacles, Montréal, Quebec*



PQDS (n.d.). *Winter In The Neighbourhood Of The Shows*. Quartier Des Spectacles Montreal.

<https://www.quartierdesspectacles.com/fr/activites-et-evenements/thematiques/lhiver-dans-le-quartier-des-spectacles>

Take a look at the Edmonton Neon Sign Museum at night, and how its restored vintage signs glow along the street, bringing life into it (see Fig. 3). This is the most relevant Canadian example to what can be achieved in Regina. In an article by Dalton et al (2023), the importance

of signage is explained. The article addresses signage as one of the most powerful tools for “placemaking”, making streets feel welcoming and active, with signs helping buildings and environments shape how people experience a place (Dalton et al., 2023, p. 39). For Regina, this proves that a smart investment in city lighting can provide signage for various parts of the city, making a big impact on how safe, interesting, and alive downtown will feel to everyone who walks through it.

Figure 3 - *Edmonton Neon Sign Museum, Edmonton, Alberta*



Edmonton (n.d.). *Neon Sign Museum*. City of Edmonton.

https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/edmonton_archives/neon-sign-museum

As seen in Figure 4, Dotonbori is a beautiful district in Osaka where massive neon signs and warm glowing lights pull millions of tourists in every single year. What makes it work is that

the lights feel genuinely connected to the city's history and culture rather than just put there for show. Liu et al (2023) argue that the most successful neon districts make their signature around local heritage, creating a nostalgic feel empowered by retro aesthetics and a lively ambiance. For Regina, this shows that the strongest case for neon lighting is not just that it looks good but that when it reflects something real about a city's past and character, it becomes a reason for people to visit in the first place.

Figure 4 - Dotonbori, Osaka, Japan



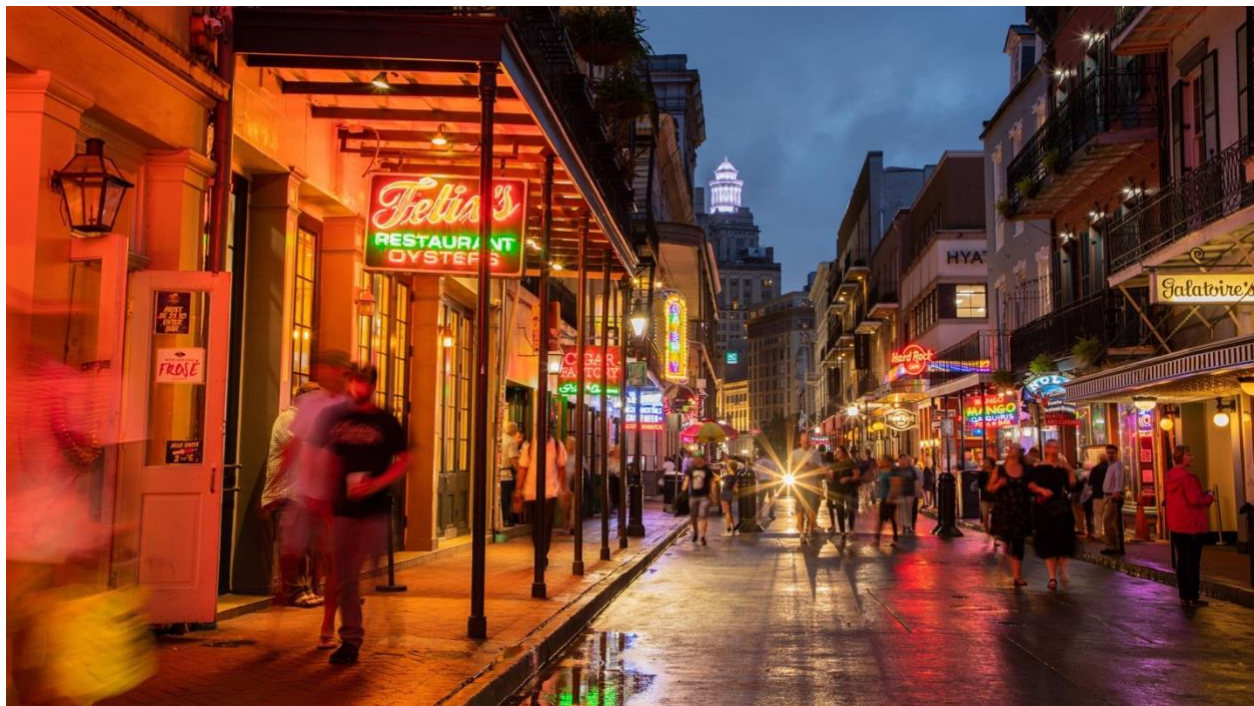
Japan Rail Pass (2023, June 20). *Dotonbori: Access and things to do*. Japan Rail Pass.

<https://www.jrailpass.com/blog/dotonbori-osaka>

Lastly, Figure 5 shows Bourbon Street, a thirteen block stretch of neon lit bars and live music venues that has become one of the most economically powerful entertainment corridors in all of North America. It is both a great success story and an important lesson. Gotham's article,

Tourism Gentrification, highlights the pros and cons of Bourbon Street explaining how it “has long been one of New Orleans’ most valuable commercial real estate strips” (Gotham, 2005, p. 1109). He shows what vintage street lighting can do for a city’s economy when given enough time: providing much revenue but later becoming expensive. For Regina however, this can be both an inspiration and a reminder that the goal of neon lighting is not just to bring in tourists and raise property values but to do so in a way that can keep the downtown affordable, welcoming, and true to the community it belongs to.

Figure 5 - Bourbon Street, New Orleans, Louisiana



Expedia (2026). *Bourbon Street Tours and Activities*. Expedia. <https://www.expedia.ca/Bourbon-Street-French-Quarter.d6139836.Vacation-Attraction>

Action Planning Framework

The city has plans in place that give Regina potential relating to the case studies. The *Design Regina Official Community Plan* is the City of Regina's main long-term plan that guides how the city grows, develops, and spends money over time. It focuses on building a city that is more compact, attractive, and economically stable. It also has financial policy goals that talk about improving "revenue sources" (City of Regina, 2025, p. 15), showing the importance of being financially smart and sustainable as Regina continues to grow.

Next, the *Downtown Neighbourhood Plan* is a more focused plan that looks specifically at improving downtown Regina's layout, design, and overall feel. It shows different maps of Regina, highlighting sites that have strong potential for future investment (City of Regina, n.d). As stated earlier, it also points out current challenges the city faces like low population density (City of Regina, n.d., p. 5), showing that downtown Regina still has room to become more active and lively.

The City of Regina *Cultural Plan* entails a different strategy, focusing on how arts, culture, and creativity play an important role in shaping the city's identity and everyday life. It starts with Regina's 10-year plan, expressing the need for public spaces to be "animated by cultural activity" supported by the city's "commitment to public art, architecture and urban design" (City of Regina, 2016, p. 2), showing that investing in culture can make Regina more vibrant, welcoming, and enjoyable for both residents and visitors. The plan supports public art, cultural programming in public spaces, and the idea that Regina's unique stories and heritage should be expressed visibly in the city's built environment.

Finally, the *Energy and Sustainability Framework* outlines the city's plan to become more environmentally friendly by using renewable energy and reducing emissions. It includes

Regina's commitment of reaching 100% renewable energy by 2050 (City of Regina, 2022, p. xi), showing that Regina is working toward a cleaner, more sustainable future while also supporting long-term economic growth.

The Five Proposed Sites

Dewdney Avenue

Dewdney Avenue is already known for its warehouse buildings, nightlife, and industrial history, making it the perfect place to build strong neon lighting without forcing something new.

Figure 6 - Dewdney Avenue



Designed by Tomiwa Oriola using iPhone Photos.

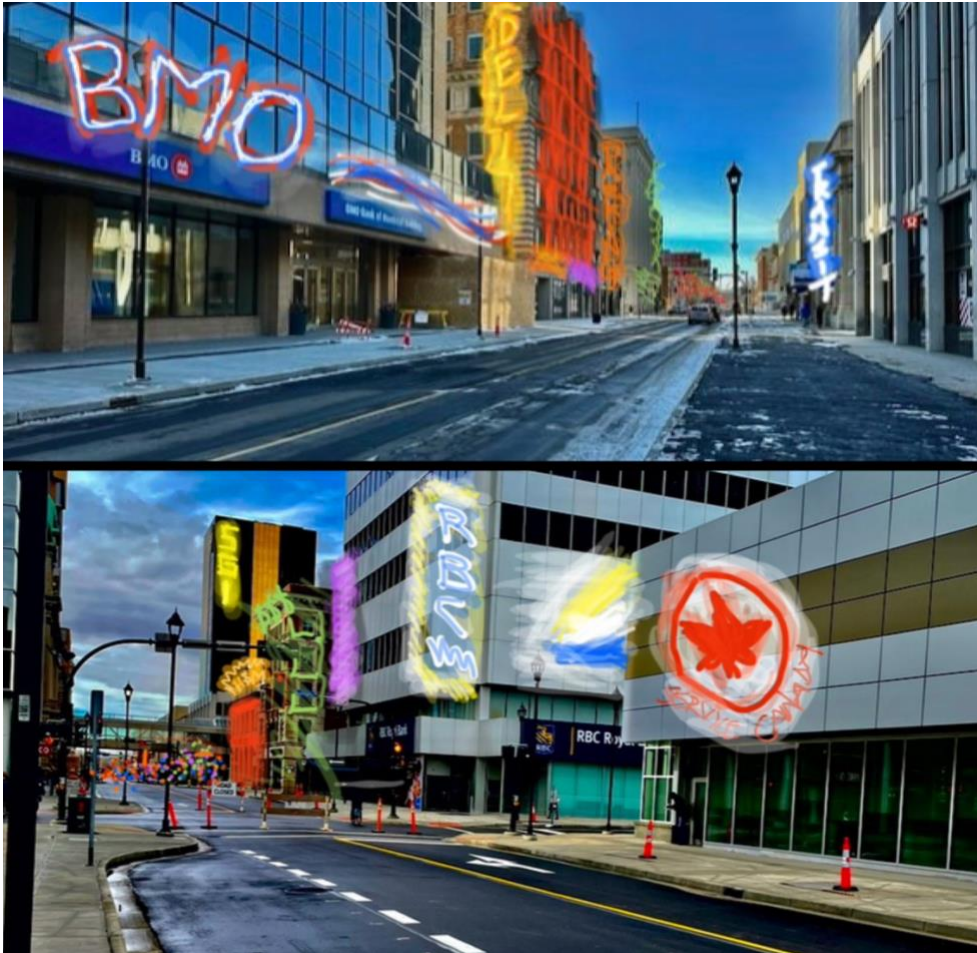
Backdrop Image – Mayor Chad Bachynski (2025). *Regina*. Instagram. @mayorchadbachynski

Instead of changing the area, the design proposal will work with what already exists. A continuous trail of overhead LED neon signs would run along the street as well as on top of buildings (see Fig. 6). This would highlight the gritty, retro vibe of the nightclubs and the warehouse district while making both more visually exciting. During the day, people can appreciate the architecture and culture, while at night it clearly becomes a popular spot in town. In winter, it turns into a popular glowing drive-through experience that feels festive and lively even in the cold. Its inspiration comes from the features of the Hollywood Boulevard as well as the Edmonton Neon Sign Museum.

11th Avenue

11th Avenue is one of Regina's most important streets, lined with major buildings like banks, offices and the Cornwall Centre, but it currently falls dull and lifeless after dark. This proposal transforms it into a more engaging and welcoming space. Each building will have its own vintage-style LED neon sign that's unique to itself while matching a shared retro theme with the city's avenue (see Fig. 7). Warm lighting at street level would make the area feel safer and more comfortable for walking. During the day, it would keep its professional, business-like feel, but at night it would become a brighter, more energetic space. Seasonal lighting would also help make the street feel inviting even during cold winter months. Its inspiration comes from the beauty of Montreal's Quarter des Spectacles.

Figure 7 - 11th Avenue



Designed by Tomiwa Oriola using iPhone Photos.

Backdrop Images – Martin Oldhues (2025, Nov 10). *11th Avenue reopens in Regina as businesses look to rebound*. Sask Today. <https://www.sasktoday.ca/regina-today/regina-news/11th-avenue-reopens-in-regina-as-businesses-look-to-rebound-11470726> – Sierra D'Souza Butts (2025, Nov 10). *Construction on 11th Avenue finishes for year, transit plans remain*. CTV News. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/regina/article/construction-on-11th-avenue-finishes-for-year-transit-plans-remain/>

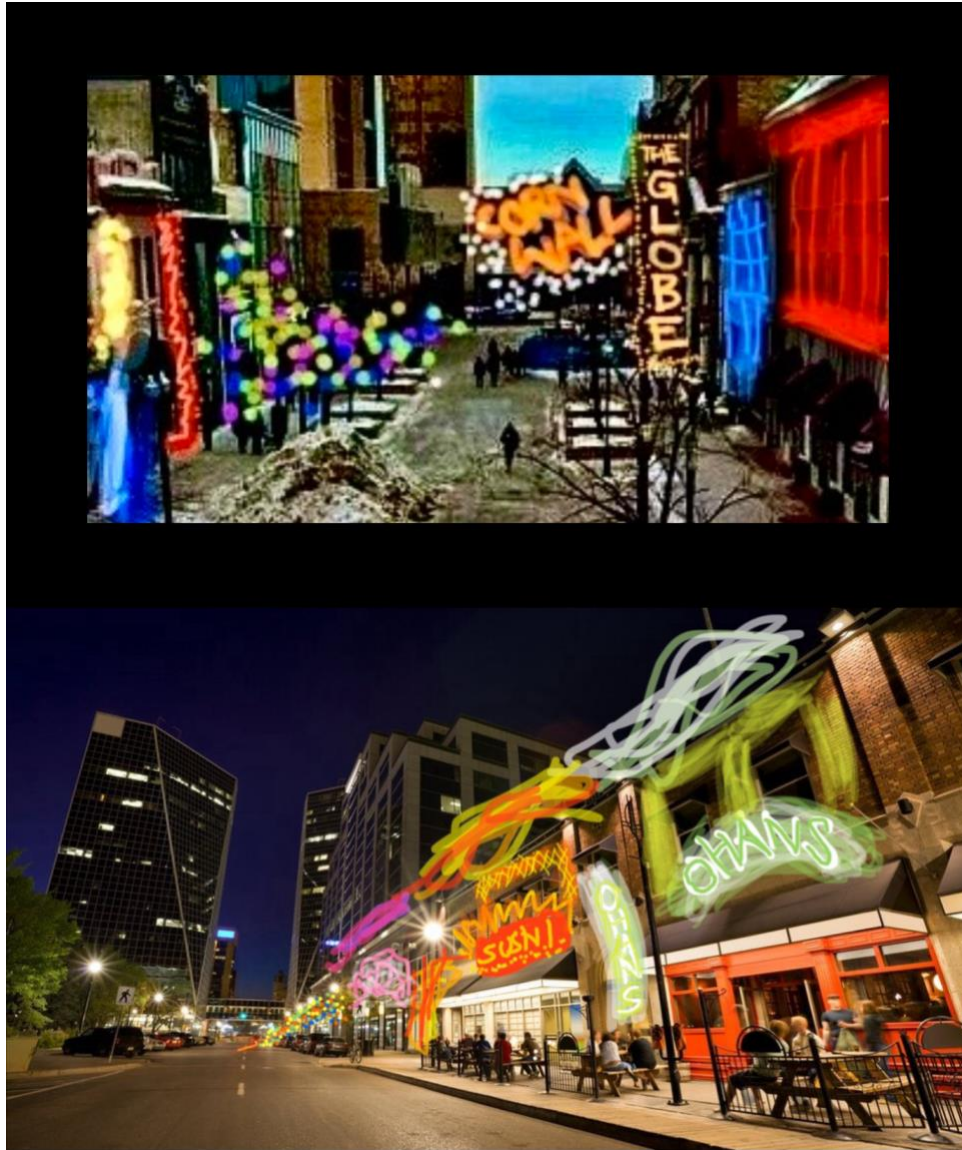
Scarth Street

Scarth Street is already one of Regina's most walkable and social areas, filled with restaurants, pubs and leading through the walkway to key destinations such as the Globe Theatre and the Cornwall Centre. However, it lacks a strong visual identity at night. The design adds overhead LED neon lighting in warm colours across the street, creating a cozy and lively atmosphere (see Fig 8.). Store businesses would be encouraged to add more vintage neon signs to their storefronts. The walkway connecting to the Cornwall Centre would become a major sticky space with beautiful lighting that encourages people to sit, gather and admire the section. There will also be a beautiful canopy idea for the Glode Theatre, making it look Broadway-like. Overall, it would feel entertaining in the day and very dreamlike at night. Scarth Street has its festive inspiration from Bourbon Street while the walkway uses the idea of dreamlike nostalgia from Dotonbori.

Highway 6 North Gateway

The Highway 6 will feature large illuminated welcome signs designed in a vintage neon style (see Fig. 9). This would bring the idea, brought up earlier in the introduction, to life and create a strong first impression for visitors. Using warm colours and weather-proof technology, it would work year-round and help make Regina feel like the destination rather than just a stop along the way. This design will serve as templates for welcome signs that would be developed in other entrances, east, west, and south to the city.

Figure 8 - Scarth Street to Cornwall Centre



Designed by Tomiwa Oriola using iPhone Photos.

Backdrop Image – Chloe Kim (2023, March 21). *City of Regina in Canada sorry for 'sexualised' ads*. BBC.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-65027558>

Figure 9 - Highway 6 North Gateway



Designed by Tomiwa Oriola using iPhone Photos.

Backdrop Image – r/musicsuggestions (2024). *Which song(s) do you play in this situation?* Reddit.

@r/musicsuggestions.

https://www.reddit.com/r/musicsuggestions/comments/1frk5y2/which_songs_do_you_play_in_this_situation

Airport Roadway

Along the airport roadway, colourful LED lighting would highlight cultural figures placed alongside the flagpoles (see Fig. 10), designed in stop motion to look like they are welcoming visitors into the city. These figures could represent Indigenous history and local identity, giving travelers an idea of what Regina is all about: lights and cultural expression.

Figure 10 - Airport Roadway: Regina Flags Installation



Designed by Tomiwa Oriola using iPhone Photos.

Backdrop Image – 980 CJME (2022, February 3). *Federal government gives Regina airport \$16-million subsidy*. 980 CJME. <https://www.cjme.com/2022/02/03/federal-government-gives-regina-airport-16-million-subsidy/>

Together, these two entry ideas (Highway 6 North and Airport Roadway) create a strong arrival experience for both drivers and air travelers, setting up the tone before people reach downtown. Because they are of lower cost and easier to build than the first 3 sites, the gateways and airport roadway can be done first to build excitement and support for the larger lighting projects.

Sustainability & Affordability of the City

LED neon lighting is a very beneficial proposal as its technology uses up to 80% less energy than traditional glass neon which directly supports Regina's Renewable City goals. The materials used will be non-toxic and fully recyclable while the lighting hardware will be weather

rated for prairie temperature extremes and powered with renewable energy. These must be major points to address in the design process. As said before, the design will start with the two minor sites, i.e. the roadway and the airport gateway, then it will progress to 11th Avenue, Scarth Street and finally Dewdney Avenue.

Conclusion

LED neon lighting is more than decoration because it helps create a sense of place and shows what Regina is becoming as a city and tourism destination. Located along the Trans-Canada Highway with strong prairie roots and an underused downtown, Regina needs something that adds feeling, not just simple buildings. Cities are often remembered for how they feel at night, and my *Neon Nights Regina: The Queen City of Lights* proposal gives Regina something unique and worth remembering.

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“Is there a greater dream than going home”:

Derelict Properties, Homelessness, and Life in Regina’s Heritage Neighbourhood

Ethan B. Wiechert

Introduction

As part of Geography 346: *Urban Planning* students were tasked with planning an attractive city. This paper examines the historic urban planning, derelict properties, and homelessness crisis within Regina's Heritage neighbourhood. While the area has a good urban fabric and rich history, it currently struggles with underutilized land and drastic increases in homelessness. By analyzing the impact of services like Carmichael Outreach in conjunction with new City policies this paper will highlight the benefits and high revitalization potential that Heritage has. It argues that urban infill and a 'housing first' mindset can effectively address the vacancy and homelessness crises while preserving the community's unique history and social ties. Ultimately, the path to an attractive city lies not in greenfield expansion, nor monument building, but in the intentional restoration of the existing core.

Section 1: Background

1.1: History

Carved between colourful murals are the hidden remnants of an era where people walked more, a story of arriving to Canada, and of already being here. A community built block by block, covered in ashes, addiction, and abandonment – this is Heritage. Located east of downtown bounded by Broad Street, College Avenue, Winnipeg Street, and the Canadian-Pacific Rail, and including the so-called Arcola Triangle (Figure 1), Heritage is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Regina. But it was not always called that. In the 1890s due to the abundance of German settlers in the region, it was called Germantown (*About the Heritage Neighbourhood*, 2024), however, do note this more accurately describes the section of 11th Avenue in Heritage. Throughout the 20th century Germantown culturally boomed with diversity, while hotels, shops,

and other services settled along 11th Avenue. Germantown continued to grow until the post Second World War era, where following a series of government policies outlined in the colloquially called ‘Curtis Report,’ urban growth was largely shifted to the suburbs (Gordon, 2024, p.782). As returning veterans fled to the suburbs, Germantown, which was situated in the neighbourhood dubbed “Core Area” in 1976 (City of Regina, 2007, p.51), experienced new immigrant growth, primarily Chinese, and around 1987 the stretch of 11th Avenue in Heritage was renamed Chinatown (Lai, 2007, pp. 175-176). While new immigrant growth was large, the net occupancy of the Core Area was a loss, eventually leading to “the community ... [being] associated with high levels of poverty, crime and unemployment, where businesses were strained and houses deteriorated” (*About the Heritage Neighbourhood*, 2024). At some point after 1987 the Core Area was renamed Heritage to represent the regions history in Regina.

1.2: Urban Fabric

Heritage’s urban fabric is reminiscent of a forgone era. It has narrow streets, two centralized parks, locally owned and operated shops, tall sturdy trees, wide sidewalks on busy roads, and a traditional neighbourhood design. Characteristics that induce an active living environment (Government of Canada, 2025) and encourage community living. The houses are small scale with a backyard sandwiched between the house and garage with back-alley access freeing the front yard to be private-public space. This style of housing encourages Jane Jacobs’ notion of “eyes on the street,” and has a positive correlation with crime reduction (Vidal-Domper et al., 2025). Almost every street has tall trees along the sidewalk that encourage children to walk to the nearby school, and others to walk for leisure or work (Lee, 2021). The high walkability is further enforced with narrow streets that subconsciously make drivers move slower resulting in

theoretically fewer collisions (Hamidi & Ewing, 2023, p. 4) when compared to new neighbourhoods like Westerra which follow Regina's Design Standard for Transportation minimum street width of 3.5 meters (2026, p. 17). Narrow streets also encourage more cycling and walking as perceived danger and actual risk are reduced when sharing the road with slower traffic (Hamidi & Ewing, 2023, pp .4-3). This type of reduction in speed has been legislatively recreated in neighbourhoods like Cathedral that now has a community maximum speed of 40km. Furthermore, shops and parks in walking distance are shown to have positive health correlations (Government of Canada, 2019) and build a sense of community. Heritage's abundance of locally owned shops also benefits it economically with local shops having better dollar retention, and increased engagement with the community (CFIB, 2023). This concept of community is thread throughout Heritage in its collection of beautiful street murals (Figures 2-7) which also strengthen walkability since they are memorable landmarks that build branches in so-called mind maps. In short, the Heritage neighbourhood has an exceptionally strong urban fabric, with well-structured bones that new neighbourhoods are increasingly pressured to adopt, and a rich history, culture, community, and art.

Section 2: What is Happening

2.1: Addiction & Homelessness

From 2015-2024 homelessness in Regina increased 255%, nearly quadrupling (Namerind, 2024, p.2). Namerind, a local Indigenous-led nonprofit targeting homelessness, found in their 2025 point in time (PiT) count the unhoused decreased from 824 to 767 (2026, p.1). While incredibly helpful, it is important to note that PiT counts often fail to grasp the full depth of homelessness since the "count cannot reach all of the people who are homeless in the community" (Government of Canada, 2022). Namerind partitions its survey areas into four

sections: North Central, Downtown Core, Service Hubs, and Commercial Areas. Importantly, the ‘North Central’ area does not align with the neighbourhood boundary of the same name, but rather the general location; this is evident since Namerind considers Waterson House – a location in Heritage – as North Central (2024, p.43). This is also true for Namerind’s ‘Downtown Core’ which includes some parts of Heritage like the 7-11 on 14th Avenue and Broad Street (2024, p.43). Due to these complexities some generalizations will be made that may over or underrepresent Heritage’s homeless population. That said, of the 132 people surveyed some 38 respondents, or 28.789%, came from Heritage (Namerind, 2024, p.44). When adjusting for overrepresentation, of the three major neighbourhoods -- Heritage, Downtown, and North Central -- Heritage accounts for the second highest proportion of the homeless surveyed. This may be because Heritage has three critical services for vulnerable people. It has 2 of the 3 shelters that offer male housing being Salvation Army, Waterson House, and New Beginnings Enhanced Emergency Shelter (here-in referred to as New Beginnings) with all other shelters in Regina serving women, children, or those with diverse gender expression. New Beginnings was not yet constructed as of the Namerind PiT count, but Waterson House accounted for 20 people surveyed, or 15.152% (2024, p.44). Carmichael Outreach, a locally registered charity for challenging poverty, hardship, and substance use, and a means to arrange low-income housing, is also in Heritage. In 2024-2025, Carmichael Outreach provided 49 227 meals, 698 showers, and housed 46 individuals (Carmichael Outreach, 2025, p.2). Substance use and homelessness are bidirectional experiences with “addiction or substance use ... [being the] most commonly cited reason for housing loss ... [and increasing] with time spent homeless” (Government of Canada, 2022). The Newo-Yotina Friendship Centre, similar to Carmichael Outreach, offers meals, albeit less frequently, and a housing program. They also operate Regina’s only reduced harm injection

site combatting rates of HIV, STIs and bloodborne illness, overdoses, and encouraging recovery (Levengood et al., 2021). Harm reduction sites have not been shown to increase crimes such as “assaults, robberies, thefts over \$5000, bicycle thefts, and thefts from motor vehicles” but do increase “break and enters” (Panagiotoglou et. al., 2025). One may incorrectly assume these services are the cause of Heritage’s 3.98% decrease in population (City of Regina, 2021), but in reality, the neighbourhood supports their existence, writing to City Council in 2016:

Carmichael Outreach is an integral part of our neighbourhood, serving our City’s most vulnerable people. Nearly all of the community feedback we have received is in support of Carmichael staying in the neighbourhood and expanding their services. There has been wide acknowledgement by Heritage community members that Carmichael’s work is important and welcome in our neighbourhood. (Heritage, 2016)

The question then is not how to remove vulnerable people but how to integrate them.

2.2: Underutilized Land & Derelict Properties

In 2023 there were 41 abandoned so-called nuisance properties in Heritage (Frew, 2023). During an informal conversation with Ward 3 Councillor Victoria Flores, she expressed that this number has increased significantly. Nuisance and derelict properties are abandoned, boarded up, or otherwise dangerous properties that reduce livability, the ability to enjoy one’s property, or community amenities. Derelict properties reduce land value (Frew, 2023, para. 1), increase crime (Spelman, 1993), and are fire hazards that are “extremely treacherous to firefighters as they lack structural integrity and may contain other hazards” (United States Government, 2023). Due to all these considerations, on March 25th, 2026, Regina City Council narrowly passed an unprecedented new subclass for nuisance and derelict properties, and with it a 5 times tax on

them. This is a monumental move in bettering North Central and Heritage. This new subclass will hopefully have a similar impact to Edmonton's 3 times tax which observed 30.69% reduction in overall nuisance properties from 202 to 140 in the first year and shockingly made Edmonton a net revenue of \$184 000 with 90% of Edmontonians supporting the approach (Salvador, 2025). This approach is further supported in Regina because it aligns with the City's Strategic Plan, the recommendations and objectives set out in the Underutilized Land Improvement Strategy, the Community Safety & Well-being Plan, and is an act of reconciliation with Heritage having the second largest population of Indigenous people in the city (City Operations, 2026, pp. 197-198). Heritage also has a surface lot parking problem, though it is very difficult to find exact figures of this. Parking lots are wasted space that could be intensified to support housing, mixed-use developments, or retail trade or shops.

Section 3: Recommendations

3.1: Urban Developer & Infill

Infill projects like the renowned Osler 2107 (Figure 8) in Heritage are expensive, though considerably cheaper than building on greenfield sites. Speaking with Osler builders Brandon Webber and Devon Schollar, "[h]ard costs + [s]oft [c]osts totalled together, the project [Osler 2107] cost ~\$1.8M ... roughly \$360k per unit," (Webber & Schollar, personal communication, March 31st, 2026). They also expressed that the financing they used had a better interest rate but cost substantially more in legal fees. In comparison, the cost of greenfield land per hectare alone is \$385 585 (City of Regina, 2026b). The lower cost for infill development and its ability to access funding with the Housing Accelerator Fund poses an incredible opportunity to build low-income housing or City run shelters in core areas. If the City were to build a larger shelter, and perhaps transition to a housing first policy, they would in fact save money long-term (Michel,

2025). This fosters the idea of the City being a developer. To that extent, Regina is partnered with the National Affordable Housing Corporation, but as illustrated by the Namerind count, more must be done. An option is to follow the practices that are working for other major cities. Vancouver for example now manages projects at its core, and mandated that middle-income housing be developed on city owned property. Toronto's Community Housing Corporation houses over 41,000 people (TCH), and their modular housing initiative helped create 200+ city owned sites (City of Toronto, 2026, para. 2). More broadly, Regina's relatively vacant and highly underutilized land stands as an opportunity to house those unhoused in the communities they are in rather than relocate them. For example, the vacant lot near Carmichael Outreach, which is currently an informal settlement, could be converted into modular housing. This would facilitate a safer environment while maintaining the communities existing social ties (Figure 9). In fact, some nonprofits like the Lilium Day Care have already captured Heritage's well of opportunities by renovating the vacant Trinity Lutheran Church into a day care and shelter.

3.2: Conclusion & Theory

In theory, the new tax and Housing Accelerator Funds will work to intensify Heritage, and in turn revitalize the community, generating tax for the City, and fostering a memorable location in Saskatchewan. With Heritage's urban fabric one can hope that the more progressive current City Council will help Heritage regain the presence, cultural importance, and quality of life it held prior to the Second World War. The Heritage Community Association is turning 50 this year and is considering painting 50 murals for 50 years. Let them be Instagram-able. Let them be a mosaic of Heritage's culture and diversity. Let them remind us of the atrocities we attempt to reconcile. Let them question "Is there a greater dream than going home."

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Figure 1

Heritage Neighbourhood



About the Heritage Neighbourhood. Welcome to the Heritage Community. (2024, June 24).

<https://hcaregina.com/about-our-neighbourhood/>

Figure 2

Ukrainian Co-Op



Photo taken by author

Figure 3

“Pepsi Park” Core Community Park



Photo taken by author

Figure 4

Art Park



Photo taken by author

Figure 5

Lucky Eleventh C-Store



Photo taken by author

Figure 6

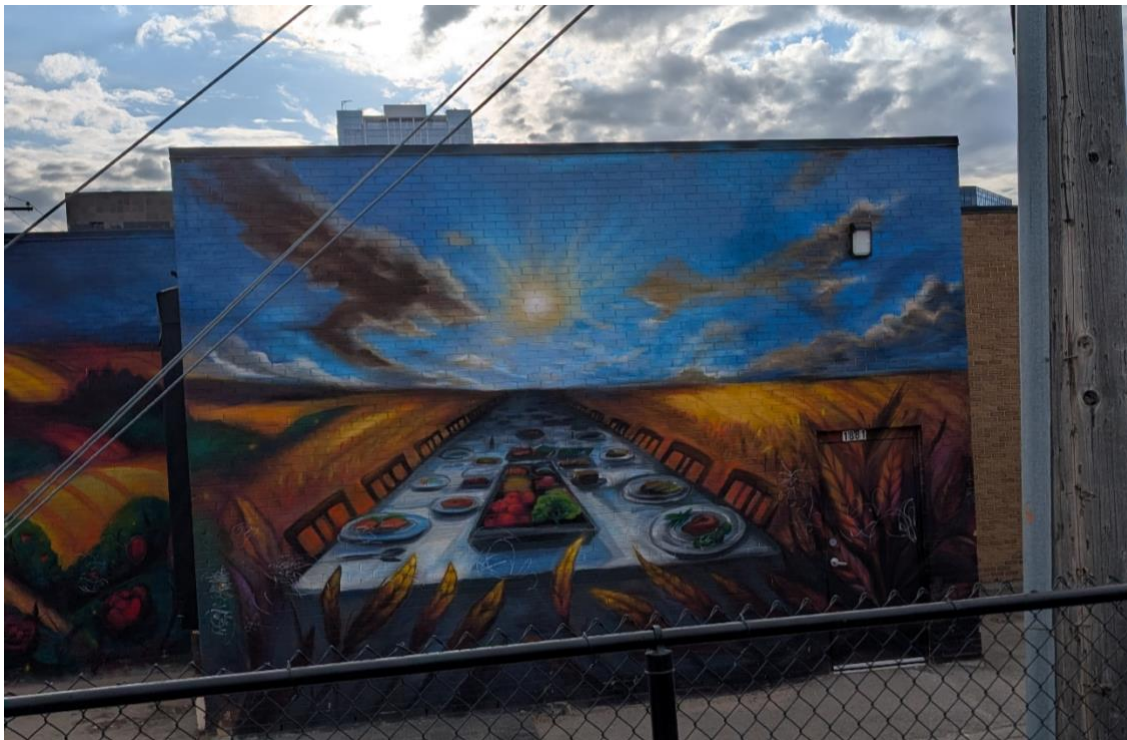
Salvation Army Waterston House



Photo taken by author

Figure 7

Regina Food Bank “Asahtowikamik Food Hub”



Photos taken by author

Figure 8

Osler 2107



2107 Osler, Regina, Saskatchewan. (n.d.). <https://2107osler.ca/>

Figure 9

Settlement near Carmichael Outreach



Photo taken by author