

August 24, 2016

Members of City Council,

**Re: Potential City land grant to College Avenue Campus Renewal Project**

I am writing to request permission to present to City Council on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016, as part of City Council's consideration of a land contribution to support the University's College Avenue Campus Renewal Project. As part of my presentation, I will provide a verbal summary of the attached submission to City Council members outlining the benefits that will result from the City's contribution of land. Joining me as part of the delegation representing the University will be our Vice President, (Administration), Dave Button.

As part of our submission, I am excited to update you on progress made to further the University of Regina's proposed partnership with Conexus Credit Union. Not only will the partnership contribute up to \$8.25 million to the renewal of our historic College Avenue Campus and save us millions of dollars as a result of synergies with Conexus; it will also help us save a cherished space that greatly enhances our community and University.

We have recently concluded public consultations during which the vast majority of people expressed support for the project. This included two open public forums, a series of targeted consultations with business groups, heritage groups and many others, as well as solicitation of electronic feedback from approximately 25,000 students, faculty, staff, alumni and members of the public. Members of our community articulated a considerable emotional attachment to the College Avenue Campus.

As you know, we need a small section of City land adjacent to College Avenue Campus to proceed with this partnership and ensure that the College Avenue Campus Renewal Project moves forward. Attached is a summary of the proposed partnership and the benefits it will have for our community. Included in this document is background information that contains a summary of the need for renewal, the proposed partnership with Conexus, the results of the public consultations, how the initiative aligns with the goals of our key partners, and a brief outline of the alternatives if we do not act.

The City of Regina and City Council have always proven to be some of the University's most important supporters. Our close relationship and willingness to work together is a strength many universities across the country lack.

As we work through this particular project and all the different variables and concerns that need to be accounted for and addressed, it is important to remind ourselves of the end goal – to save the College Avenue Campus and the programs that rely on it. Together, the City, the University and our partners can restore and enhance a vital hub of education, culture and the arts for the citizens of Regina.

Every year, thousands of people enroll in programs at the College Avenue Campus. Each comes with a story about how his or her life was improved by time spent at the campus. A member of the

Lifelong Learning Centre, located at College Avenue Campus, recently spoke about how the Centre helped her in a time of need:

**“The Centre provided a friendly respite for me in the daily care of my aging mother and the continuous support of my husband through his terminal illness.”**

Another story comes from a young student in the Conservatory of Performing Arts, also located at College Avenue, highlighting how his instructor, Barb Fitzpatrick, helped him:

**“When I was in the hospital with cancer at the age of nine, for almost nine months, she visited and taught me. I played little concerts behind my glass door for the sick kids who walked by the hallway. Playing the cello helped preserve my eye-hand coordination. My memory was affected by the chemo but it came back quicker because of cello.”**

These stories are a powerful reminder of why we are seeking support to help save our College Avenue Campus – to enable it to continue to change thousands of lives.

Thank you for your years of support on this project, and thank you in advance for considering the proposed land grant as a way of protecting and preserving our College Avenue Campus for future generations.

Sincerely yours,



Dr. Vianne Timmons  
President and Vice-Chancellor

Encl.

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# COLLEGE AVENUE CAMPUS

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RENEWAL PROJECT

## POTENTIAL CITY LAND GRANT TO COLLEGE AVENUE CAMPUS

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### GOAL

To revitalize and breathe new life into the University of Regina's historic College Avenue Campus by making it the hub of learning and culture for the City of Regina.

### BACKGROUND

For more than 100 years, the College Avenue Campus (CAC) has been a hub of learning and culture for both the University of Regina and the wider community. The long-term vision for College Avenue Campus is to be a leadership and outreach centre, linking community and industry with education, the arts and innovation.

CAC is home to the Centre for Continuing Education which includes the Lifelong Learning Centre and the Conservatory of Performing Arts. Enrolment in these programs is more than 8,000 per year, with learners ranging in age from infants to those nearing 100 years old!

One of Saskatchewan's premier performance spaces, Darke Hall, is also located on the Campus. Built in 1929, it is still heavily used by the Conservatory of Performing Arts and other external groups such as the Regina Folk Festival, Jazz Festival, and Do It With Class Theatre group. The theatre fills a much-needed and important niche, providing a mid-sized (500 seats) performance space not available elsewhere in the city.

The University has concluded a request for proposal (RFP) process seeking a development partner able to support the CAC Renewal Project. The result is a potential partnership with Conexus Credit Union to create a new head office building that would leverage the proposed City land grant to create up to \$8.25 million in direct revenue for CAC Renewal. It will also save millions of dollars more for the CAC Renewal Project through synergies with the proposed Conexus Project. This crucial partnership, however, is contingent on the City donating the land for the purposes of this development.

On August 19<sup>th</sup>, the Government of Canada announced \$27.6 million in funding for the CAC Renewal Project. These funds must be matched by the University. The proceeds from the Conexus partnership are essential to enable the University to fully match the Government of Canada funding.

### THE NEED FOR RENEWAL

CAC needs support now to help enable renewal of CAC for four key reasons:

**1. History is at risk of being lost:**

- A 2009 study concluded that the CAC has great historical significance and importance to the community. The campus has been further recognized by the Province as holding important heritage value due to its historical, cultural, architectural and contextual significance locally, provincially and nationally. Without renewal, the CAC is faced with diminished capacity until it can no longer be used, putting the historic buildings at risk;

T H E

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# COLLEGE AVENUE CAMPUS

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R E N E W A L P R O J E C T

- From a physical and fiscal perspective, the need for support is now. A report from JC Kenyon Engineering concluded that the Conservatory and Gallery buildings “display serious structural damage . . . beyond what is reasonably restorable”;
  - The poor structural condition of these buildings are beginning to negatively impact the structural condition of the adjacent College Building, further underlining the need to demolish the Gallery and Conservatory buildings and begin restoration as soon as possible on the remaining facilities at the CAC.
- 2. A key educational hub is at risk of under-serving a growing community:**
- According to Statistics Canada data, the City of Regina grew by more than 20,000 people between 2011 and 2014, nearly a 10 percent increase in population. At the same time, as a result of the deteriorating facility conditions at CAC, some community services have been moved or reduced. For example, the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy has temporarily moved to Innovation Place at the main campus as a result of facility issues;
  - Continued deterioration will erode the University’s ability to serve the 8,000 learners per year that rely on CAC. This includes seniors taking lifelong learning courses, employees from across economic sectors seeking professional development, and new immigrants seeking English language proficiency.
- 3. A key cultural hub is at risk of under-serving a growing community:**
- Without significant restoration, Darke Hall will not be able to serve community groups like Jazz Fest, the Folk Festival, or the Do It With Class Theatre Company;
  - Additionally, Regina would not have a premier historic performance venue at the heart of the city, forgoing the economic and community benefits created by having such a 500-seat concert venue and performance space.
- 4. Failure to invest will result in forgoing significant economic benefits:**
- According to Statistics Canada, increased educational attainment leads to lower unemployment and higher income levels;
  - A survey of CEOs and senior business executives in Regina released in May 2016 by Economic Development Regina ranked the availability of post-secondary programs as Regina’s most attractive factor;
  - CAC plays a key role in fostering the above economic benefits, particularly for groups poorly served by traditionally-delivered University programs. Renewal will enable the University to expand this type of programming and better serve this key demographic and the needs of a growing city.

Overall, the CAC is a historic gem in Regina. It is a crucial asset to the community economically, educationally, historically and culturally. It is critical that it be saved.

T H E

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# COLLEGE AVENUE CAMPUS

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R E N E W A L P R O J E C T

## SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP WITH CONEXUS

The Conexus proposal offers significant benefits to all the community partners involved, as it would add value to the CAC Renewal project, add a partner that is committed to social responsibility, diversity and sustainability, and help create competitive advantages for the University and the City of Regina.

The proposal is to create a new 80,000 square foot environmentally-sustainable LEED quality, three-storey building on the site that would include:

- 55,000 square feet for the Conexus head office, enabling the credit union to centralize 200 of its corporate services staff together under one roof, plus 10,000 square feet to accommodate future growth (building will not include any Conexus retail space);
- 15,000 square feet of business incubator space for small start-up companies, leveraging Conexus and University expertise to help spur economic growth in Regina.

Although there are myriad reasons the Conexus proposal should be supported, the most critical are that the Conexus proposal will result in:

- Up to \$8.25 million in direct financial support for CAC Renewal;
- Significant ongoing revenue for the University, the City and the Wascana Centre Authority, including property tax revenue to the City, and fees to WCA as a result of development and tenancy in the Park;
- Enhanced and shared amenities that help all partners avoid costs and increase services for users of CAC and the Park;
- Millions of dollars in cost avoidance on shared maintenance and utilities like shared heating/cooling infrastructure, shared HVAC systems, loading docks, etc;
- Minimal or no costs to the University to add an atrium and promenade area for Darke Hall, breathing new life into the historic building by making it more accessible, and giving the University new revenue opportunities as owner of Saskatchewan's premier heritage concert venue;
- Greater economic productivity through the creation of a business incubator site for small start up companies, providing the support and mentorship they need to grow;
- Increased support for arts and culture in Regina by adding a valuable community partner in Conexus to the vibrant arts and culture scene supported by CAC programs and activities;
- Potential enhancements to parking in Wascana Centre, particularly on weekdays after hours and on weekends when the park is most used by the citizens of Regina;
- Increase the vitality and activity in Regina's downtown region by keeping Conexus headquartered at the heart of the city.

Most importantly Conexus is the right partner. Committed to both CAC renewal and to enhancing Wascana Centre, Conexus has a demonstrated 80-year history of social responsibility and community investment in Saskatchewan. With 120,000 members and a responsibility for \$7.14 billion in funds, Conexus is a strong and growing company that's structure as a member-based cooperative actively shapes its values and commitment to giving back to the community.

THE

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**COLLEGE AVENUE CAMPUS**

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RENEWAL PROJECT

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

The University of Regina and the Wascana Centre Authority have both introduced the concept of development on the specific parcel of City land in question through their respective master planning work, including public engagement through the spring and fall of 2015. This included three public meetings and opportunities for input through online surveys.

The partnership with Conexus was developed based on a proposal through a competitive RFP process that highlighted development partnership opportunities west of Darke Hall, east of the College Building and between Darke Hall and the College Building. The RFP was posted publicly and attracted interest from many potential vendors.

On June 11<sup>th</sup> and June 18<sup>th</sup>, the University placed advertisements in the Leader Post to publicize the two open consultation sessions, as well as sending direct email invites to nearly 25,000 students, alumni, faculty, staff and community members.

Approximately 50 people attended the first open consultations session held June 16. A second open consultation session was held June 23 with approximately 60 people attending. The presentations and video from these consultation sessions are available online at [www.uregina.ca/giving](http://www.uregina.ca/giving).

The University also held targeted consultation sessions during June with donors, key community members, general public, staff and users of CAC, heritage groups, Wascana Centre Authority, Regina Chamber of Commerce, Regina Downtown Business Improvement District, CAC users, and more.

To date, none of these consultations has yielded any significant negative feedback. Of the 24 people who registered their opinions by email about the proposed Conexus partnership, only five were completely opposed. Minor concerns that were cited are being considered and incorporated into the joint University/Conexus planning for the development phase. Key takeaways from the process included:

### **Support for the Project Outweighed Opposition**

Feedback received through email, questions and comments at the open consultation session and targeted consultations were generally positive. Stakeholders felt that the partnership with Conexus justified an exemption to WCA land use policy based on the positive impacts in stimulating College Avenue Campus Renewal. It was also widely agreed that such creative financing partnerships are needed given the current fiscal conditions facing Saskatchewan.

### **Concerns were mitigated by the strong reputation of Conexus**

Concerns expressed about the project were largely mitigated by the proposed partner. For example, while there were some who questioned any commercial development in the park, the University received positive feedback from these opponents that partnering with a co-operative was an ideal path if it helped advance the CAC Renewal Project.

THE

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# COLLEGE AVENUE CAMPUS

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RENEWAL PROJECT

## **Few options left for saving College Avenue Campus**

Most participants in this process expressed support for, and in many cases, considerable emotional attachment to, College Avenue Campus. While some expressed concerns, there was widespread understanding that the alternative to a partnership with Conexus may be losing College Avenue Campus altogether. News about the poor condition of the Conservatory and Gallery Buildings underlined this point for many participants. Those who expressed a desire for the project to be completely publicly funded understood that the consequence of waiting for such public funding presents a risk to the ongoing survival of the historic campus.

## **Demolition of the Gallery Building and Conservatory Building underlines urgency of overall CAC Renewal Project**

Demolishing the Gallery Building and most of the Conservatory Building (excluding the front facade) is not our preferred choice; however, a report by JC Kenyon Engineering indicates these buildings are damaged beyond what could reasonably be considered restorable. We are concerned that failure to move forward with the renewal of Darke Hall and the College Building now will result in these buildings also becoming unsalvageable in the next decade or so.

To ensure ongoing communication with interested stakeholders on this issue, the University has created an advisory committee made up of stakeholders from heritage, architectural, cultural and artistic groups.

## **A small number of people expressed concerns about the site chosen for the Conexus development**

All three sites are identified in the University's and Wascana Centre Authority's Master Plans. However, site A offered the greatest flexibility for Conexus and allowed it to directly support the renewal of Darke Hall through the development of a shared atrium, which would include a crush area for events at Darke Hall, provide an accessible entrance and shared utilities/mechanical systems. None of the other sites offered a viable partner for the University, despite being included in the RFP process.

## **Concerns about parking were largely addressed by the University's analysis on excess parking and commitment by Conexus to an underground parkade**

The University committed that there would be no new surface parking developed as a result of the Conexus development. The University cited parking analysis highlighting excess capacity at College Avenue Campus and noted that any excess demand created by Conexus would be accommodated through the development of an underground parkade.

## **The design process should be inclusive**

The partners highlighted that the development will go through design requirements with WCA and its Heritage and Architectural Advisory committees. In addition, Conexus committed to sharing its design with the public once the project moves into the design phase, also indicating they will work with heritage experts to understand the best approach to designing a new building



T H E

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# COLLEGE AVENUE CAMPUS

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R E N E W A L P R O J E C T

adjacent to heritage buildings. The new advisory committee noted above will also be part of the ongoing process for getting feedback on the next stage of the various components of the CAC Renewal Project.

## ALIGNMENT WITH KEY PARTNERS

By supporting CAC, our partners will be investing in the educational, economic and cultural vitality of our city. CAC Renewal will advance a number of priorities, including:

- Community priorities chosen by the citizens of Regina as part of the development of the City's Official Community Plan by:
  - Enhancing quality of life, community identity and pride by supporting heritage preservation and investing in the City's arts and culture community; and
  - Fostering economic prosperity by serving learners of all ages, educating new immigrants, offering professional development opportunities, providing space and support for business innovation and mentorship, and cultivating Regina's arts and culture scene.
  
- Wascana Centre Authority priorities as set out in its mandated commitment to:
  - *The enlargement of educational opportunities*, which would be enabled through a renewed College Avenue Campus;
  - *The enlargement of research opportunities*, something that would be supported by a renewal project that brings the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School back to College Avenue;
  - *The advancement of cultural arts*, a priority that must include saving Saskatchewan's premier historic concert venue, Darke Hall, and making the upgrades necessary to ensure the Conservatory of Performing Arts survives and thrives;
  - *The improvement of recreational facilities*, such as rejuvenating Darke Hall and the other performance areas of the College Building;
  - *The conservation of the environment* by increasing the energy efficiency of the facilities at College Avenue Campus.
  
- Provincial priorities as set out in the Government of Saskatchewan's Plan for Growth:
  - Growing and developing Saskatchewan's labour force through expanded flexible learning programs that help serve students poorly served by traditionally-delivered University programming.
  - Increasing Saskatchewan's competitiveness through the creation of a business incubator site for small start up companies, providing the support and mentorship they need to grow.
  - Connecting Saskatchewan to the world by enabling the distance learning opportunities and English-as-a-Second-Language programming led by the Centre for Continuing Education at College Avenue Campus.
  - Building a better quality of life for thousands of seniors that access programming through the Lifelong Learning Centre at College Avenue Campus.



T H E

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# COLLEGE AVENUE CAMPUS

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R E N E W A L P R O J E C T

- National priorities set forth by the Government of Canada:
  - Promoting innovation and long-term economic growth by creating a home for the Canadian Institute for Science and Innovation Policy. The Institute will focus on enhancing existing strength areas in science in Saskatchewan, namely energy, digital analytics, bioscience, food security, water security and health.
  - Advancing Canada's climate change and sustainability goals by increasing energy efficiency, integrating sustainability into the design of CAC (equivalent to LEED gold);
  - Increasing capacity and functionality of specialized training facilities to meet industry demands; and
  - Benefiting Aboriginal populations by continuing or expanding existing, and developing new, programming that supports improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal learners.

## ALTERNATIVES

During the June 2016 public consultations, a few people were critical of the University and the community for not having acted in previous years to save the Conservatory and the Gallery buildings. This is a valid criticism, but there is nothing anyone can do now to address the past inaction that left these buildings in a state of disrepair and beyond restorable.

**The alternative now is to invest in restoring the other facilities at College Avenue Campus or condemn them to the same fate as the Gallery and Conservatory buildings.**

The current fiscal situation facing Saskatchewan demands that the University think outside the box on financing this project, rather than waiting for it to be fully publicly funded. The Conexus project helps give the University this flexibility.

**To fail to act, would not just risk the physical buildings, but risk the University's ability to serve thousands of people through the programs at CAC – programs that disproportionately serve vulnerable populations like children and seniors or those social groups not well served by traditional University programming.**