

# GROWTH PLAN TECHNICAL REPORT



**DRAFT - February 2016**

Prepared for the City of Saskatoon by Urban Systems Ltd.



**Growing Forward! Shaping Saskatoon  
Growth Plan to Half a Million**  
Technical Report

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE GROWTH PLAN</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>PART 3: TRANSIT</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>APPENDIX A - ALTERNATIVE RAPID TRANSIT EVALUATION</b>	<b>139</b>
1.1 The Imperative for the Growth Plan to Half a Million	2	3.1 Existing Conditions	64	Part 1 - Alternative Rapid Transit Technologies	140
1.2 Overview of the Growth Plan	3	3.2 Future 'Business-as-Usual' Transit	72	Part 2 - Alternative Routing for Rapid Transit	142
1.3 The Current Planning Framework	4	3.3 Problem Definition	75	Part 3 - Optional Configurations and Evaluations	143
1.4 The Growth Plan Process	5	3.4 Vision and Possibilities for Transit	76		
1.5 Technical Report Organization	6	3.5 Transit Plan	79	<b>APPENDIX B - PLANNED ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS</b>	<b>153</b>
		3.6 Implementing the Plan	98	Part 1 - Planned Future Roadway Improvements (all scenarios)	154
<b>PART 2: CORRIDOR GROWTH</b>	<b>7</b>	3.7 Financing Transit	103		
2.1 Saskatoon Past, Present and Future	9	<b>PART 4: CORE BRIDGES</b>	<b>105</b>		
2.2 Future Planned Growth Areas	16	4.1 Existing Network Characteristics & Conditions	106		
2.3 Problem Definition	19	4.2 Future 'Business-as-Usual' Network and Travel	110		
2.4 Vision & Possibilities for Corridor Growth	21	4.3 Problem Definition	115		
2.5 Long-Term Plan for Corridor Growth	30	4.4 Vision and Possibilities for Core Bridges	116		
2.6 Implementing the Plan	55	4.5 Long-term Plan for Core Bridges	136		
2.7 Financing Corridor Growth	61	4.6 Implementing the Plan	137		
		4.7 Financing Core Bridges	138		

Please note the Growth Plan Technical Report is intended to be printed on 11 x 17 sized paper.

# FIGURES

## PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE GROWTH PLAN

1

Figure 1.01 - City of Saskatoon Strategic Plan Goals - Sustainable Growth and Moving Around	2
Figure 1.02 - The Current Growth Model	4
Figure 1.03 - Planned Future Growth (Current Model)	4
Figure 1.04 - Conceptual Road Network	5
Figure 1.05 - Growing Forward! Shaping Saskatoon Public Engagement Process	5

## PART 2: CORRIDOR GROWTH

7

Figure 2.01 - City of Saskatoon Historic Growth Patterns (1915-1960)	9
Figure 2.02 - 1913 Plan for Greater Saskatoon	10
Figure 2.03 - Streetcar Lines & Population Distribution (1929)	10
Figure 2.04 - Saskatoon's Urban Character	11
Figure 2.05 - Existing Population Distribution by Suburban Development Area	12
Figure 2.06 - Existing Dwelling Unit Density	12
Figure 2.07 - Existing Employment Distribution	13
Figure 2.08 - Existing Employment Density	13
Figure 2.09 - Population and Employment Density	14
Figure 2.10 - City of Saskatoon Historic Population Growth	15
Figure 2.11 - Population Change in Peer Communities	15
Figure 2.12 - New Suburban Development Areas	16
Figure 2.13 - Strategic Infill Areas	17
Figure 2.14 - Neighbourhood Infill Areas	18
Figure 2.15 - Major and Minor Arterial Typologies	23
Figure 2.16 - Priorities for Corridor Growth Potential	24
Figure 2.17 - Summary of Priority Corridors for Growth	29
Figure 2.18 - 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street Context Map	31
Figure 2.20 - 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street Corridor	31
Figure 2.19 - 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street at Street Level	31
Figure 2.21 - Existing Street Design of 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street	32
Figure 2.22 - 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street Corridor Site Analysis	32
Figure 2.23 - 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street Corridor Site Analysis	33
Figure 2.24 - 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street Urban Structure	34
Figure 2.25 - 8 <sup>th</sup> Street Context Map	35
Figure 2.27 - 8 <sup>th</sup> Street Corridor	35
Figure 2.26 - 8 <sup>th</sup> Street Existing Condition	35
Figure 2.28 - Existing Street Design of 8 <sup>th</sup> Street (portion)	36
Figure 2.29 - 8 <sup>th</sup> Street East Corridor Site Analysis	36
Figure 2.30 - 8 <sup>th</sup> Street East Site Analysis	37
Figure 2.31 - 8 <sup>th</sup> Street East Urban Structure	38
Figure 2.32 - College Drive Context Map	39
Figure 2.34 - College Drive	39
Figure 2.33 - College Drive (looking west towards Downtown)	39

Figure 2.35 - College Drive (at street level)	39
Figure 2.36 - West of Cumberland Streetscape	40
Figure 2.37 - College Drive Site Analysis	40
Figure 2.38 - College Drive Site Analysis	41
Figure 2.39 - Local Restaurant at the Corner of Cumberland and College Drive	41
Figure 2.40 - Existing Parkade adjacent to College Drive	41
Figure 2.41 - College Drive Urban Structure	42
Figure 2.42 - Idylwyld Drive Context Map	43
Figure 2.43 - Idylwyld Drive at 30 <sup>th</sup> Street (looking north)	43
Figure 2.44 - Idylwyld Drive at 33 <sup>rd</sup> Street (looking north)	43
Figure 2.45 - Idylwyld Drive Corridor	43
Figure 2.46 - Existing Street Design of Idylwyld Drive (North of 25 <sup>th</sup> Street)	44
Figure 2.47 - Idylwyld Drive Site Analysis	44
Figure 2.48 - Idylwyld Drive Site Analysis	45
Figure 2.49 - Idylwyld Drive Urban Structure	46
Figure 2.50 - Confederation Suburban Centre Context Map	47
Figure 2.51 - Aerial View of Confederation Suburban Centre (and surrounding context)	47
Figure 2.52 - Confederation Drive at Confederation Suburban Centre (looking south)	47
Figure 2.53 - Confederation Suburban Centre Node	47
Figure 2.54 - Existing Street Design of 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street Adjacent to Confederation Suburban Centre	48
Figure 2.55 - Confederation Suburban Centre Site Analysis	48
Figure 2.56 - Confederation Suburban Centre Site Analysis	49
Figure 2.57 - Suburban Centres	51
Figure 2.58 - Areas Most Suitable for Redevelopment on High Priority Corridors	51
Figure 2.59 - Saskatoon's Proposed Red Line BRT	53
Figure 2.60 - Current Growth Framework vs Priority Growth Corridors	54
Figure 2.61 - Short, Medium and Long-term Corridor Plan Areas	56
Figure 2.62 - Corridor Area Plan Process	56

## PART 3: TRANSIT

63

Figure 3.01 - 2011 Journey to Work Transit Mode Share	64
Figure 3.02 - Annual Ridership and Service Hours	65
Figure 3.03 - 2012 Daily Transit Ridership	65
Figure 3.04 - Weekday Transit Boardings per Hour	65
Figure 3.05 - Saturday Transit Boardings per Hour	66
Figure 3.06 - Transit Ridership by Fare Type	66
Figure 3.07 - Primary Work Trip Destinations by Transit	66
Figure 3.08 - Average AM Weekday Boarding Activity with Land Use	67
Figure 3.09 - Average PM Weekday Boarding Activity with Land Use	67
Figure 3.10 - Peak Hour Transit Screenline Counts (AM (PM) passengers per direction)	68
Figure 3.11 - Annual Service Hours per Capita	68
Figure 3.12 - Existing Transit System Structure (Hub-and-Spoke)	69
Figure 3.13 - Transit Coverage (400m Buffer)	69

Figure 3.14 - Transit Frequencies (2013)	70
Figure 3.15 - Existing Car & Transit Travel Time Comparisons	71
Figure 3.16 - Municipal Operating Contributions per Person	72
Figure 3.17 - Projected Population and Base Transit Service Hour Growth to 2043	72
Figure 3.18 - Annual Service Hours per Capita and Transit Mode Share	73
Figure 3.19 - Future Transit Frequencies (Base)	73
Figure 3.20 - Forecast PM Peak Hour Transit ridership (Business-as-Usual)	74
Figure 3.21 - Forecast PM Peak Hour Screenline Ridership (Business-as-Usual)	74
Figure 3.22 - Improving the Customer Experience	77
Figure 3.23 - Comparison of Annual Service Hours	77
Figure 3.24 - Service Coverage vs Service Quality Design	78
Figure 3.25 - Example Transit Priority Measures	79
Figure 3.26 - Saskatoon Transit's New Real Time Bus Map	79
Figure 3.27 - Plan for Annual Service Hours Changes and Comparisons	82
Figure 3.28 - Potential Transit Markets	82
Figure 3.29 - Recommended Red & Blue BRT Lines	83
Figure 3.30 - Recommended Frequent Transit Corridor Structure	84
Figure 3.31 - Recommended Conventional Transit Service Structure	84
Figure 3.32 - Recommended Community Shuttle Areas	85
Figure 3.33 - Recommended Commuter Services (Martensville & Warman)	85
Figure 3.34 - Conceptual Long-term Transit Plan	86
Figure 3.35 - Existing City Centre Transit Terminal	88
Figure 3.36 - Alternative BRT Configurations for 3 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue	88
Figure 3.37 - Existing Place Riel Transit Terminal	89
Figure 3.38 - Alternative BRT Configurations for College Drive (Central Campus Station)	89
Figure 3.39 - Areas for Candidate Park-and-Ride Lots	90
Figure 3.40 - Proposed Red Line BRT	90
Figure 3.41 - Evolving Transit Service and Facilities	91
Figure 3.42 - Existing (Forecast) Average Peak Period Vehicle Speeds	92
Figure 3.43 - Curb Bus Lane (Ottawa)	93
Figure 3.44 - Centre Bus Lane (Toronto Area)	93
Figure 3.45 - Side Bus Lane (Barcelona)	93
Figure 3.46 - Rural Shoulder Bus Lanes (Vancouver)	93
Figure 3.47 - Optional Red Line BRT Corridor Configurations	95
Figure 3.48 - Alternative BRT Laning Configurations (6 Lane Road)	96
Figure 3.49 - Proposed Blue Line BRT	97
Figure 3.50 - 2013 Route Performance	98
Figure 3.51 - 5 Year Transit Plan Implementation Process	99
Figure 3.52 - Proposed Phasing for Red Line Dedicated Lanes and Stations	99
Figure 3.53 - 10 Year Transit Plan Implementation Process	101
Figure 3.54 - Key Factors to the Success of Transit	103
Figure 3.55 - Increased Transit Capital, Operating and Maintenance Responsibilities	104

## PART 4: CORE BRIDGES

105

Figure 4.01 - Existing Roadway Network Classification System	106
Figure 4.02 - 2011 Weekday Hourly Traffic Volumes Across Screenlines (Arterial Roads)	107
Figure 4.03 - 2013 Peak Hour Traffic Volumes Across the City (AM/PM vehicles per direction)	107
Figure 4.04 - Laning of Collector & Arterial Roads	108
Figure 4.05 - 2011 Model PM Peak Hour Volume-to-Capacity Ratios	109
Figure 4.06 - Observed 2013 Network Performance (Google Traffic Data) - Weekday PM Peak	109
Figure 4.07 - Planned City & Provincial Long-term Network Improvement Projects	110
Figure 4.08 - Projected Change in PM Peak Hour Vehicle Trips	111
Figure 4.09 - Existing PM Peak Hour Vehicle Trip Origins	111
Figure 4.10 - Forecast PM Peak Hour Vehicle Trip Origins (30 year)	111
Figure 4.11 - Existing PM Peak Hour Vehicle Trip Destinations	112
Figure 4.12 - Forecast PM Peak Hour Vehicle Trip Destinations (30 year)	112
Figure 4.13 - Projected PM Peak Hour Model Directional Volume with Half a Million People	112
Figure 4.14 - Projected PM Peak Hour Directional Volume Growth (PM % Traffic Growth (30 Years))	113
Figure 4.15 - Forecast PM Peak Hour Model Trip Origin Patterns for Core Area Bridges	113
Figure 4.16 - Core Area Projected 30 Year PM Peak Hour Volume-to-Capacity Ratios	114
Figure 4.17 - Existing & Projected 30 Year PM Peak Hour Vehicle Travel Times (minutes)	115
Figure 4.18 - Forecast PM Peak Hour Roadway Volume-to-Capacity Ratios	115
Figure 4.19 - Forecast Change in Congestion for Core Area Bridges	116
Figure 4.20 - Core Area River Crossing Scenarios	117
Figure 4.21 - Long-term Transit Plan	117
Figure 4.22 - 33 <sup>rd</sup> Street and Preston Avenue /Attridge Drive Crossing Concept	118
Figure 4.23 - 24 <sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Concept with BRT on University Bridge	119
Figure 4.24 - 2045 PM Peak Hour Directional Transit Ridership Across Core Area Bridges	120
Figure 4.26 - Forecast 2045 PM Peak Hour Corridor Volumes (Scenario 2 : Transit Plan)	120
Figure 4.25 - 2045 PM Peak Hour Directional Traffic Volumes Crossing Core Area Bridges	120
Figure 4.27 - Forecast 2045 PM Peak Hour Westbound Traffic Flow Bundle for University Bridge	121
Figure 4.28 - Forecast 2045 PM Peak Hour Traffic Volume Differences (Scenario 2: Future Transit Plan vs. Scenario 1: 'Business-as-Usual')	121
Figure 4.29 - Forecast 2045 PM Peak Hour Transit Passenger Volumes (Scenario 2: Transit Plan)	122
Figure 4.30 - 2045 PM Peak Hour Traffic Volumes Crossing Core Area Bridges (Scenario 2: Transit Plan)	122
Figure 4.31 - Forecast 2045 PM Peak Average Vehicle Speeds (km/hr)	123

Figure 4.32 - Core Bridge 2045 Peak Hour Directional Volumes	124
Figure 4.33 - Forecast 2045 PM Peak Hour Corridor Volumes (Scenario 3: 33 <sup>rd</sup> Street Bridge)	124
Figure 4.34 - Forecast 2045 PM Peak Hour Traffic Flow Bundle for a 33 <sup>rd</sup> Street Bridge (Scenario 3: 33 <sup>rd</sup> Street Bridge)	125
Figure 4.35 - Forecast 2045 PM Peak Hour Traffic Volume Difference (Scenario 3: 33 <sup>rd</sup> Street vs. Scenario 1 'Business-as-Usual')	125
Figure 4.36 - 2045 PM Peak Average Crossing V/C Ratios	126
Figure 4.37 - 2045 PM Peak Average Vehicle Travel Speeds (km/hr)	127
Figure 4.38 - Core Bridge Forecast PM Peak Hour Directional Transit Ridership	128
Figure 4.39 - Core Bridge Forecast PM Peak Hour Directional Traffic Volumes	128
Figure 4.40 - Forecast 2045 PM Peak Hour Traffic Change (Scenario 4A and 4B vs. Scenario 2: Transit Plan)	129
Figure 4.41 - Forecast 2045 PM Peak Hour Eastbound Traffic Flow Bundle for 33 <sup>rd</sup> Street and 24 <sup>th</sup> Street Bridges	130
Figure 4.42 - Forecast 2045 PM Peak Hour Transit Passenger Volumes (Scenario 4A and 4B)	131
Figure 4.43 - Core Bridge Forecast PM Peak Hour Crossing V/C Ratios	131
Figure 4.44 - Potential Configuration of a 33 <sup>rd</sup> Street River Crossing	137

## APPENDIX A - ALTERNATIVE RAPID TRANSIT EVALUATION 139

Figure A.01 - PM Peak Hour Transit Ridership Forecast (2040)	140
Figure A.02 - Carrying Capacity of Cars and Buses	141
Figure A.03 - Peak Directional Capacity vs Transit Mode and Ridership	141
Figure A.04 - Typical Rapid Transit Facility Capital Costs	141
Figure A.05 - Alternative Routing	142
Figure A.06 - Alternative BRT Laning Configurations (6 Lane Road)	143
Figure A.07 - Evaluation Framework	144
Figure A.08 - 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street BRT Corridor	144
Figure A.09 - 3 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue BRT Corridor	145
Figure A.10 - 25 <sup>th</sup> Street and College Crive BRT Corridor	147
Figure A.11 - Preston Avenue and Attridge Drive BRT	148
Figure A.12 - South Preston Avenue BRT Corridor	149
Figure A.13 - 8 <sup>th</sup> Street BRT Corridor	150

## APPENDIX B - PLANNED ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS 153

# TABLES

## PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE GROWTH PLAN 1

## PART 2: CORRIDOR GROWTH 7

Table 2.01 - Assessment of Community Arterials, Urban Boulevards and Main Streets	25
Table 2.02 - Assessment of Suburban Centres	26
Table 2.03 - Assessment of Residential Arterial 1 Corridors	27
Table 2.03 - Assessment of Residential Arterial 1 Corridors - Continued	28
Table 2.04 - 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street Infill Potential	34
Table 2.05 - 8 <sup>th</sup> Street Infill Potential	38
Table 2.06 - College Drive Infill Potential	42
Table 2.07 - Idylwyld Drive Infill Potential	46
Table 2.08 - Confederation Suburban Centre Infill Potential	50
Table 2.09 - Potential Development Yields for Corridor Growth	52
Table 2.10 - Short, Medium and Long-term Corridor Area Plans	55
Table 2.11 - Potential Funding Sources Expanded	61
Table 2.12 - Potential Funding Sources	61

## PART 3: TRANSIT 63

Table 3.01 - Monthly Transit Fares & Sample Parking Rates	71
Table 3.02 - Summary of Transit Fleet Age & Accessibility	71
Table 3.03 - Summary of Transit Fares & Cost Recovery	72
Table 3.04 - Broader Range of Transit Serving Different Customer Needs	78
Table 3.05 - Bus Fleet Expansion Implementation Timing & Cost	87
Table 3.06 - Summary Costs & Benefits of Alternative BRT Configurations	97
Table 3.07 - 5 Year Customer Service and Facility Improvements	98
Table 3.08 - 5 Year Priorities for Transit Supportive Facilities	99
Table 3.09 - 5 Year Red Line BRT Implementation Priorities	100
Table 3.10 - 5 Year Blue Line Transit Priority Treatments	100
Table 3.11 - 5 Year Blue Line BRT Implementation Priorities	100
Table 3.12 - 5 to 10 Year Customer Service and Facility Improvements	100
Table 3.13 - 5 to 10 Year Priorities for Transit Supportive Facilities	102
Table 3.14 - 5 to 10 Year Red Line BRT Implementation Priorities	102
Table 3.15 - 5 to 10 Year Blue Line Transit Priority Treatments	102
Table 3.16 - Measures of Efficiency	103
Table 3.17 - Potential Funding Sources	104

## PART 4: CORE BRIDGES 105

Table 4.01 - Core Area Bridge 2012 Traffic Conditions	108
Table 4.02 - Projected PM Peak Hour Core Area Bridge Demands & Capacity (Eastbound or Southbound)	114
Table 4.03 - Core Area Bridge & Network Evaluation Criteria	132
Table 4.04 - Transportation Account Evaluation Summary	132
Table 4.05 - Community Account Evaluation Summary	133
Table 4.06 - Environmental Account Evaluation Summary	133
Table 4.07 - Financial Account Evaluation Summary	134
Table 4.08 - Overall Evaluation Summary for Core Bridge Scenarios	135

## APPENDIX A - ALTERNATIVE RAPID TRANSIT EVALUATION 139

Table A.01 - General Features of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Light Rail Transit (LRT)	140
Table A.02 - Evaluation of Alternative Downtown Red Line Routing	142
Table A.03 - Evaluation of Alternative East Side Red Line Routing	143
Table A.04 - 22 <sup>nd</sup> Street Bus Lane Configuration Assessment	145
Table A.05 - 3 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue Street Bus Lane Configuration Assessment	146
Table A.06 - University Bridge / 25 <sup>th</sup> Street Bus Lane Configuration Assessment	147
Table A.07 - College Drive Bus Lane Configuration Assessment	148
Table A.08 - Preston Avenue and Attridge Drive Bus Lane Configuration Assessment	149
Table A.09 - Preston Avenue (College Drive to 8 <sup>th</sup> Street) Bus Lane Configuration Assessment	150
Table A.10 - 8 <sup>th</sup> Street (Preston to Holmwood) Bus Lane Configuration Assessment	151
Table A.11 - Summary Costs and Benefits of Alternative BRT Configurations	151

## APPENDIX B - PLANNED ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS 153

Table B.01 - Planned Future Roadway Improvements (all scenarios)	154
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# PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE GROWTH PLAN



## 1.1 The Imperative for the Growth Plan to Half a Million

Saskatoon has evolved from a prairie community that once experienced modest growth, to one where prosperity and opportunity has made the city among the most attractive and exciting places to live in Canada. According to the 2011 Census, the City of Saskatoon had a population of 222,190. In recent years, the city achieved annual growth rates of approximately 3 percent per year. The estimated December 2015 population is 262,900<sup>1</sup>.

Moving forward, it is projected that there will be an average annual growth rate of approximately 2.5 percent. As a result, Saskatoon's population is expected to double to half a million people over the next thirty to forty years and change is inevitable. Growth provides many benefits, such as increased economic activity, employment, and business opportunities. However, with fast growth, there are also challenges associated with enhancing the quality of life and building and servicing a larger city.

This is a crucial time in Saskatoon's history, with significant choices to be made about how the city will continue to grow. Today's development and transportation infrastructure investments will last for decades if not centuries, and have a critical role in shaping land use patterns for generations to come. The City of Saskatoon has cast a vision for economic prosperity, quality of life, and environmental responsibility, and it is essential that today's land use and transportation choices set Saskatoon up to realize this vision.

The imperative is great and there are significant implications for the overall future livability of the city. Studies have found that Canadian cities are still continuing to sprawl, in spite of the revitalization of city cores. The average home is further from city centres than a decade ago. Commuting times and traffic congestion costs have increased. Growth patterns have resulted in higher servicing and infrastructure costs, less-effective public transit services, the displacement of large tracts of habitat and farmland, and compromised water and air quality. However, Saskatoon has already established a reputation for 'getting it right' and at this juncture there is an opportunity to define a future as a resilient city with a high quality of life.

By making the right choices now, Saskatoon will:

- better utilize its land and infrastructure assets;
- provide opportunities for the public to use an efficient, convenient transit system;
- have a scale of development, density of development, and mixture of land uses that support walking and cycling;
- provide a range of housing types to meet the needs of all people;
- provide jobs close to homes;
- provide the social infrastructure required to support families and other community needs;
- protect the natural environment; and,
- be ultimately more affordable to run in the long-term.

<sup>1</sup> Although the City provides annual population estimates, the analysis in this Technical Report generally uses data from the 2011 Census and other information sources (e.g. City of Saskatoon traffic data) available in 2013 when the Growth Plan process was initiated.

## 1.2 Overview of the Growth Plan

The Growth Plan to Half a Million (Growth Plan) is about making choices to proactively manage the changes associated with growth, and to create a city that is vibrant and attractive to future generations. A vibrant Saskatoon is a city with a diverse mixture of housing, commercial, social, cultural, and recreational opportunities that are universally accessible by all modes of transportation including walking, cycling, transit, and driving. Creating a healthy and sustainable Saskatoon is also essential to support and attract people from other parts of Canada and the world. This migration is necessary to sustain current and anticipated levels of economic growth and to increase diversity, which benefits the region, the province, and Canada as a whole.

This vision was first articulated by residents as part of the Saskatoon Speaks process, which occurred a few years ago. This City-led initiative engaged a large portion of the community in a discussion about the city's future. Residents were asked to share what they value and articulate their aspirations for Saskatoon. Eight interrelated themes and visions were identified. These themes contributed significantly to Council's Strategic Plan 2013-2023 (Strategic Plan).

In an integrated fashion, the Growth Plan advances the Strategic Plan goals around *Sustainable Growth and Moving Around*. These goals are about building places to bring people together and providing more transportation choices so Saskatoon will be a healthier, more sustainable, accessible and attractive place to live as described in **Figure 1.01**.

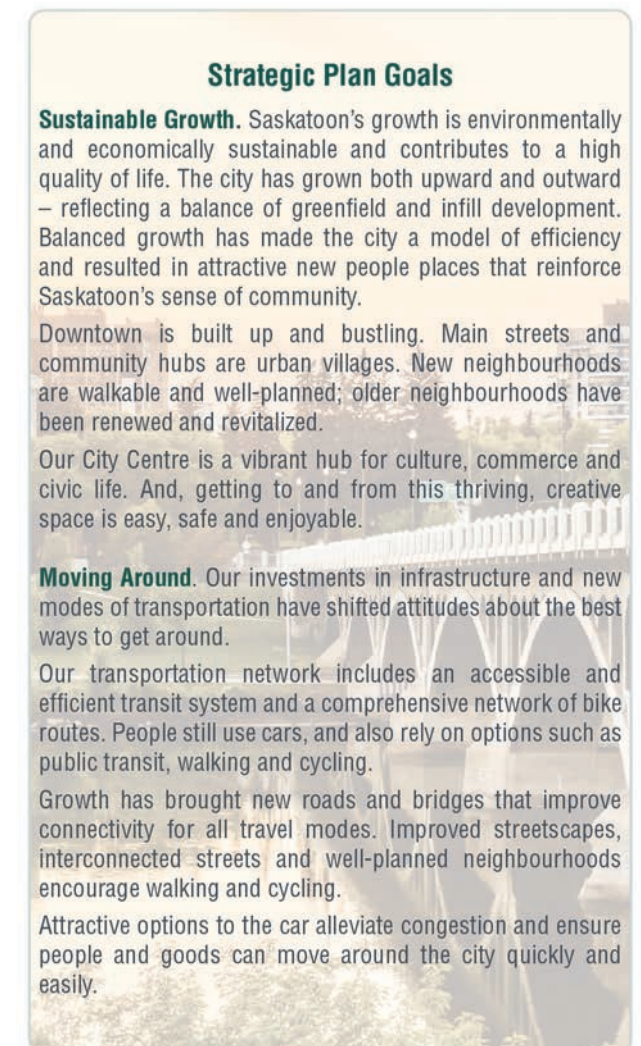


Figure 1.01 - City of Saskatoon Strategic Plan Goals - Sustainable Growth and Moving Around



The Growth Plan is made up of several parts that when pieced together form a new growth model for Saskatoon. Corridor Growth, Transit, and Core Bridges make up the core initiatives within the Growth Plan. In addition there are four supporting initiatives that will also help meet the needs of our growing city. These supporting initiatives include Employment Areas, Active Transportation, Water & Sewer, and Financing Growth.

### Corridor Growth

This aspect of the Growth Plan explores ways to encourage growth and redevelopment near Saskatoon's major corridors in order to reduce outward growth pressures, provide more housing options close to employment areas, and enhance transportation choices throughout the city. Residents have expressed a desire for sustainable growth options and a balancing of outward growth with upward growth. Corridor Growth will complement key planned infill growth areas, including Strategic Infill (i.e. Downtown, North Downtown and University of Saskatchewan lands) and Neighbourhood Infill (i.e. smaller scale residential infill in core area neighbourhoods). Corridor Growth is essential to transform low-density, auto-centric land uses into vibrant, complete communities that support attractive transit and the long-term success of the city as a whole.

### Transit

Public transit is a major focus of the Growth Plan, given the important role that transit service plays in supporting and shaping the growth of any city. Residents have expressed a desire for Saskatoon to have an accessible and efficient transit system with an attractive customer experience. While people will still use cars, an efficient transit system with rapid transit priority lanes will provide options to alleviate and even bypass congestion, ensuring that people can move around the city quickly and easily. Attractive transit will also reinforce opportunities for sustainable growth along major transit corridors.

### Core Bridges

As Saskatoon's population grows, so too will demands for travel across the river. This aspect of the Growth Plan explores options to improve access to and from the core area of Saskatoon over the next 30 to 40 years. The emphasis is a review of the city's core area bridges and analysis of opportunities to balance the movement of more people across the core area bridges. The focus is on making the most of existing infrastructure while also reviewing the potential need for an additional river crossing in the long-term.



### Supporting Initiatives

As indicated, the Growth Plan includes four key supporting initiatives:

- **Employment Areas** is about ensuring that the city has the right amount of employment in the right areas;
- **Active Transportation** is about providing more choices for how people move around the city, particularly with respect to walking and cycling;
- **Water & Sewer** is about ensuring that the critical infrastructure required to support growth is in place; and,
- **Financing Growth** is about assessing growth patterns and ensuring cost effective growth.

While these supporting initiatives are being addressed by the City as a key part of the Growth Plan, this Technical Report focuses on Corridor Growth, Transit, and Core Bridges.

# 1.3 The Current Planning Framework

The City has already undertaken a number of land use planning and road network planning initiatives as a precursor to the Growth Plan. These initiatives provide the foundation for the work on the Growth Plan, and they are highlighted briefly below.

## 1.3.1 Land Use Planning Initiatives

The City has already prepared several strategic plans to support a doubling of Saskatoon's population over the next thirty years. **Figure 1.02** illustrates sustainable land use plans developed for New Suburban Areas, Neighbourhood Infill Areas, and Strategic Infill Areas. Additionally, road network improvements for expanding areas of the city have also been planned to serve the movement of people, goods and services.

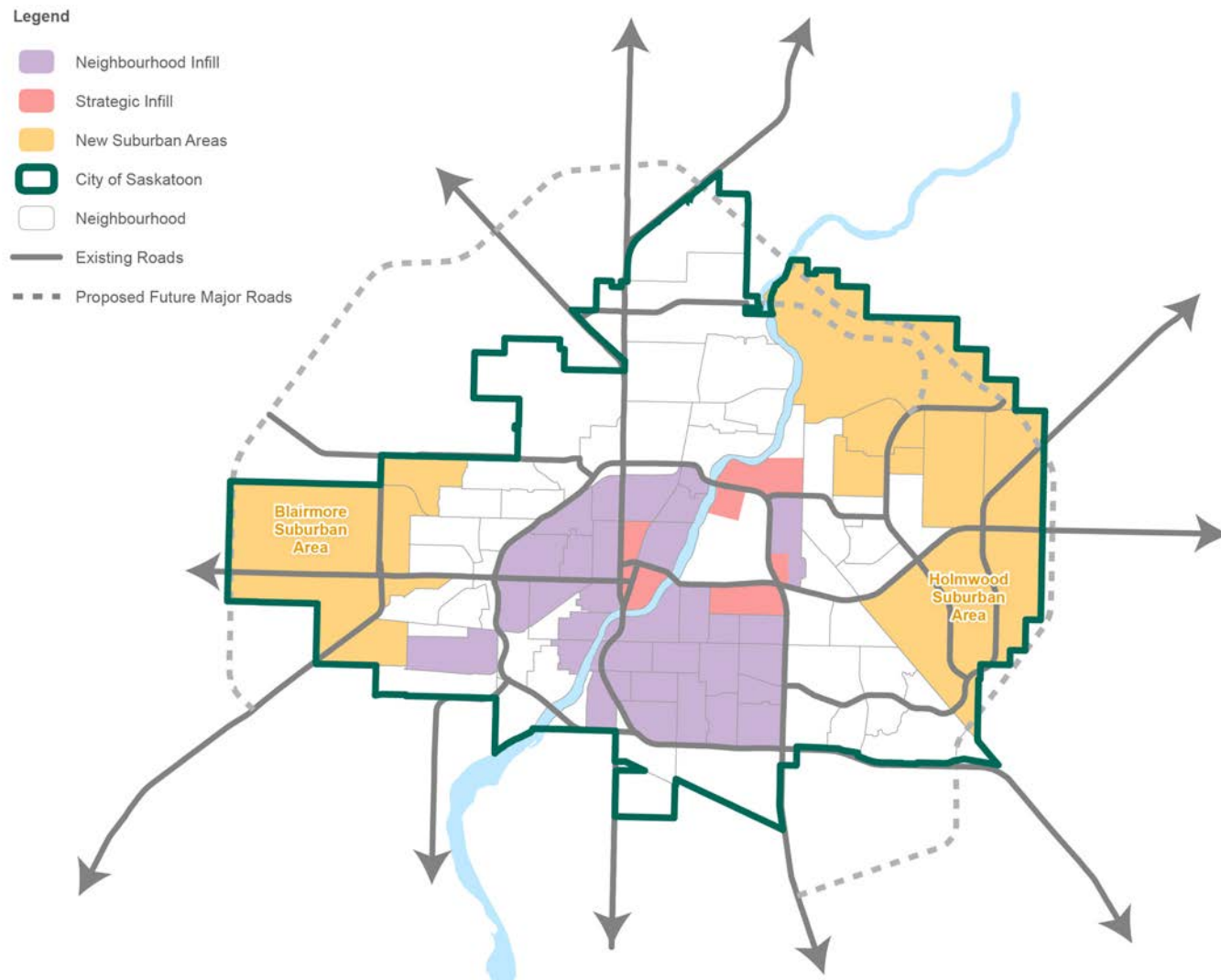


Figure 1.02 - The Current Growth Model

These planned land uses and transportation system improvements provide the basis for further work on the Growth Plan.

### New Suburban Neighbourhoods

The City has recently developed detailed plans for new growth areas including Blairmore, University Heights and Holmwood. Through these area plans, the traditional models of suburban growth are being re-imagined so that new neighbourhoods include mixed-use buildings, apartments and townhouses that are focused around higher density cores and include public gathering spaces. These neighbourhoods could support approximately 65% of the long-term population growth in the city.

### Strategic Infill

Saskatoon's Downtown, North Downtown and areas around the University of Saskatchewan have the potential to accommodate significant growth. As major employment and activity hubs, these areas support opportunities to work, live, shop and socialize in the same neighbourhood. These areas are focal points for Saskatoon, and their success as complete communities is critical to the economic success of the city, region, and province. Once completed, these areas could accommodate approximately 25% of the city's growth to half a million people.

### Neighbourhood Infill Areas

The City has also identified an existing trend towards increasing density in established residential neighbourhoods that can accommodate smaller-scale growth (e.g. duplexes, townhouses, secondary suites). Known as Neighbourhood Infill, growth in these areas will provide additional housing options for current and future residents. Neighbourhood Infill could accommodate approximately 10% of the city's long-term population growth.

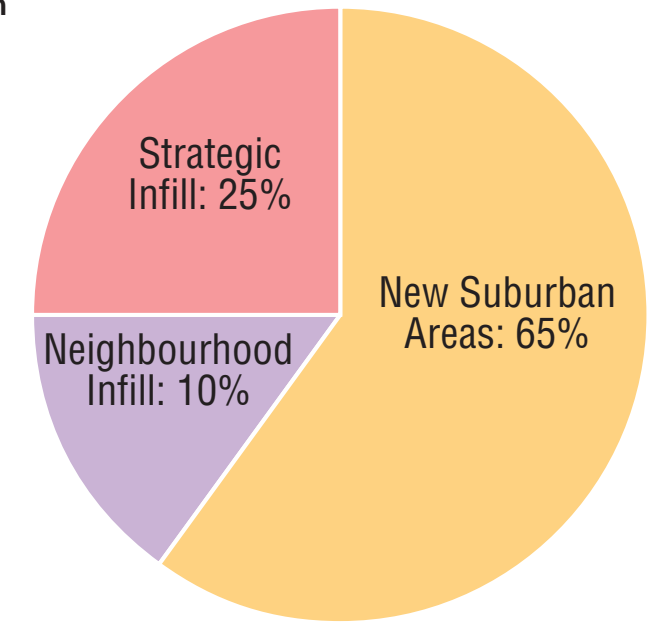


Figure 1.03 - Planned Future Growth (Current Model)

## Roadways

The City has been working with residents, as well as the Province of Saskatchewan, on the provision of new and improved roadways that will serve New Suburban Neighbourhoods and support the movement of people, goods and services (see **Figure 1.04**). Investments in major municipal roads and the Saskatoon Freeway are necessary to serve new areas of the city, including employment growth planned for the North Industrial area. Other network improvements within the core area of the city and new crossings such as the Traffic Bridge will make best use of existing infrastructure, and serve other modes such as transit, walking and cycling.

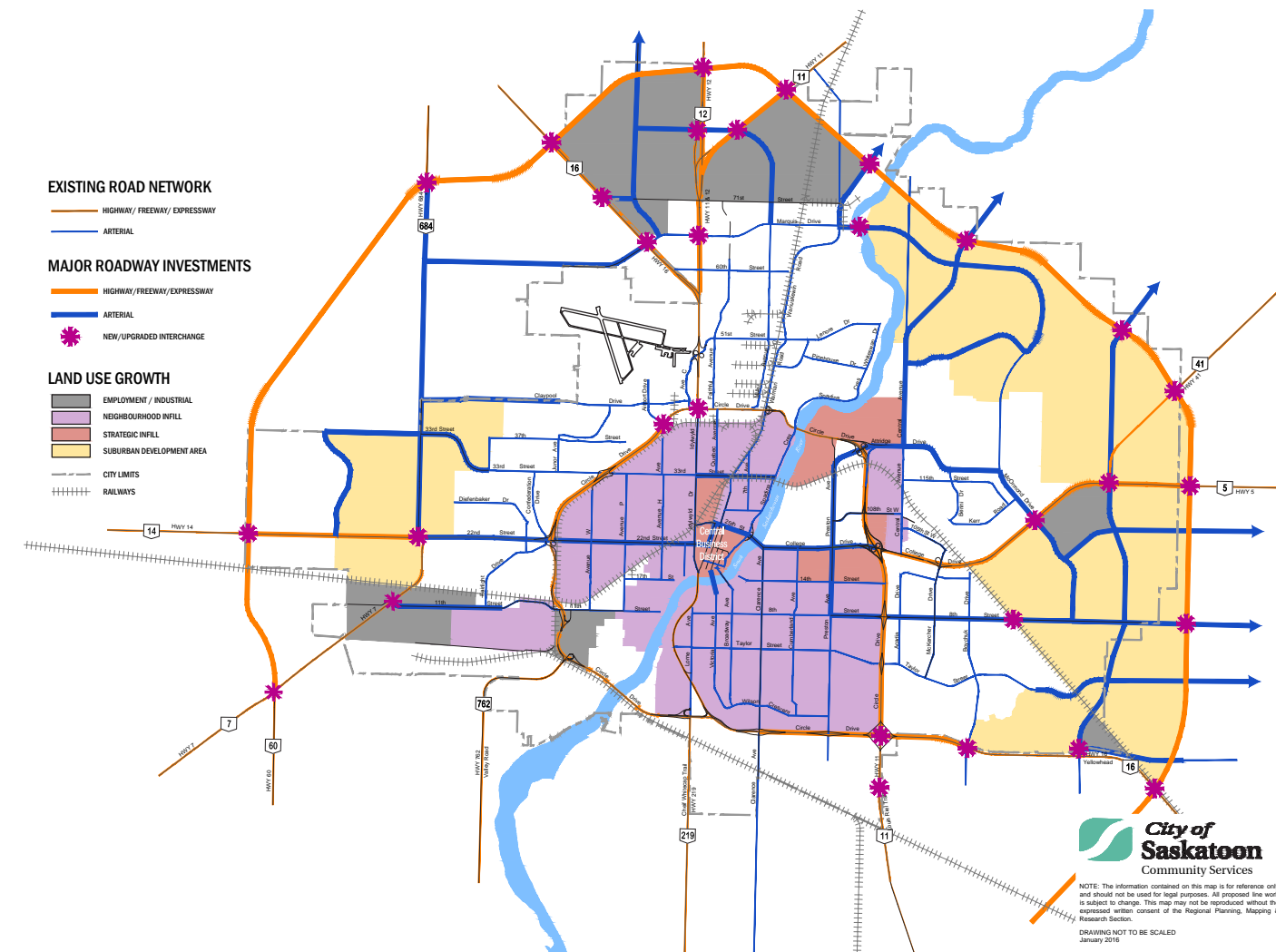


Figure 1.04 - Conceptual Road Network

## 1.4 The Growth Plan Development Process

The Growth Plan was developed through a five phase public engagement process called Growing Forward! Shaping Saskatoon. The timing and outcomes of each phase are described below and illustrated in **Figure 1.05**.



- **Phase 1: Setting the Stage (October to December 2013)** provided a review of past planning initiatives, presented current plans, and summarized existing conditions and baseline growth patterns in order to highlight what's at stake for Saskatoon.
- **Phase 2: Focusing Our Shared Vision (January to March 2014)** utilized input from Saskatoon residents to create the goals and objectives that will shape the long-term directions for Corridor Growth, Transit, and Core Bridges. Public Event #1 examined what's at stake for the city, in order to solicit input on challenges and opportunities to be addressed by the Growth Plan.
- **Phase 3: What are the Possibilities? (April to December 2014)** included the development and evaluation of optional strategies for Corridor Growth, Transit, and Core Bridges. Preliminary ideas were presented at Public Event #2 and further evaluated based on community input and feedback.
- **Phase 4: What is the Preferred Plan? (January to June 2015)** formed the long-term directions of the Growth Plan. Public Event #3 examined preliminary long-term directions with the community and the feedback was used to shape the preferred plan.
- **Phase 5: How do We Make this Happen? (July 2015 to March 2016)** outlines the steps to start implementing the Growth Plan. The preferred plan and implementation priorities were presented to the community during Public Event #4.

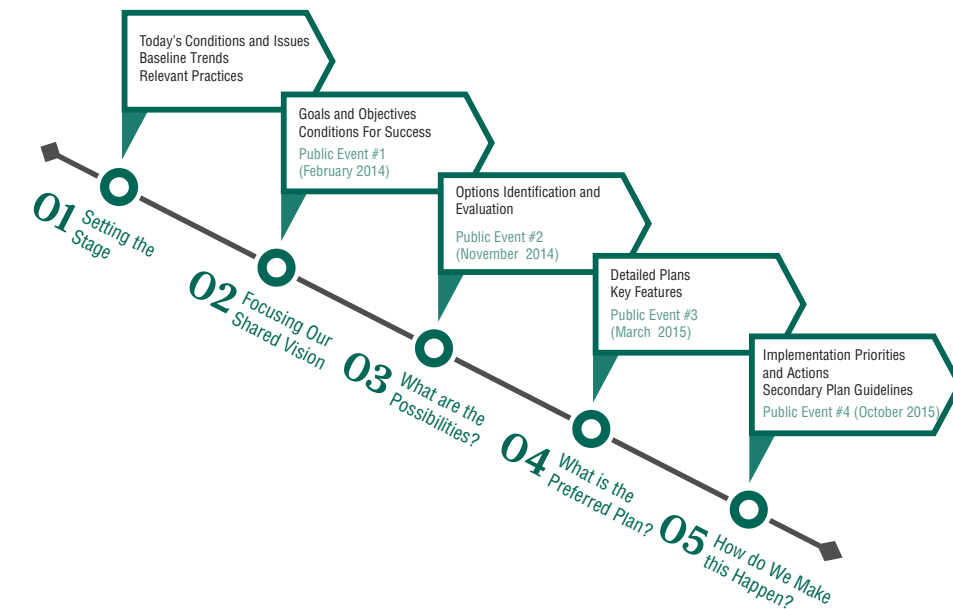


Figure 1.05 - Growing Forward! Shaping Saskatoon Public Engagement Process



The Growth Plan development process included ongoing engagement with residents of Saskatoon to discuss current and future challenges and to assist in identifying potential long-term changes to the city. This process was consistent with International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) guidelines.

While much of the community involvement took place during key project milestones as illustrated in **Figure 1.05**, several forms of outreach and engagement have also been available throughout the process as outlined below.

- **Public events:** included presentations, open houses and workshops with residents and community stakeholders at four key milestones during the project.
- **Website:** the project website, [www.growingfwd.ca](http://www.growingfwd.ca), was used to allow interested individuals the opportunity to learn more about the Growth Plan, share opinions through surveys, find out about upcoming events, and sign up to receive project updates.
- **Community outreach:** targeted towards groups that were under-represented at public events and to promote greater opportunity for discussion among key stakeholders.
- **Council meetings:** preliminary directions and public feedback have been shared with City Council throughout the process.

## 1.5 Technical Report Organization

This Growth Plan Technical Report provides the long-term directions and implementation priorities for each of the Growth Plan's core initiatives – Corridor Growth, Transit, and Core Bridges. The Growth Plan builds from the foundation and aspirations articulated in the 2010-2011 Saskatoon Speaks process and Council's Strategic Plan 2013-2023 (Strategic Plan).

The Growth Plan Technical Report is separated into four chapters as follows:

- **Chapter 1** – Introduction and Overview of the Plan provides the context for preparing a Growth Plan for Saskatoon and describes the progressive steps toward creating a long-term plan.
- **Chapter 2** – Corridor Growth provides an overview of Saskatoon's land use patterns and demographic characteristics as well as the context for growth based on historical and more recent plans developed by the City. The chapter articulates a vision, goals, and objectives for Corridor Growth to increase sustainable land use patterns and choices for residents. It also includes an identification and evaluation of those corridors with the greatest long-term potential for infill and redevelopment in order to create vibrant places for people.
- **Chapter 3** – Transit includes an overview of existing transit services and facilities, and explores future pressures associated with a 'business-as-usual' approach to managing and investing in transit. The report outlines the vision, goals, and objectives for transit, and describes long-term possibilities, which were developed based on extensive input and discussion with the community in order to develop the long-term plan and implementation priorities.
- **Chapter 4** – Core Bridges provides an integrated look at the city's core area crossings of the South Saskatchewan River, as well as planned changes to major roadways. Needs are assessed based on both today's conditions and a long-term horizon for growth to half a million people. The vision, goals, and objectives presented for core area bridges reflect the community's desire for an integrated solution that encourages transit, walking and cycling and supports growth planned inside Circle Drive. Packages of candidate crossing strategies are described and evaluated to develop a long-term direction that is designed to increase transportation choice and support infill growth in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods.