



# Indigenous Land Developer's Resource

**A Guide to Developing  
Land in Saskatoon**








## Introduction

The purpose of this resource is to provide information to Indigenous groups, including Metis organizations and First Nations who intend to purchase and develop land in the Saskatoon region and to support the urban reserve creation process.

As required by Provincial legislation, the City of Saskatoon has various bylaws, policies, and requirements that may impact development opportunities. City staff are available and would be happy to help clarify how any of these may impact land you are considering purchasing. **Before purchasing land, it is recommended that you contact the Planning & Development Department to ensure your development interests align with municipal regulations and requirements.** Confidential discussion of potential land purchases and developments can be helpful to identify any issues early in the process. Contact Planning & Development at 306-975-2645 or [regional.planning@saskatoon.ca](mailto:regional.planning@saskatoon.ca).

-  *Book a meeting with City staff*
-  *Confirm the land is right for your project*
  - *Research plans, regulations and policies*
  - *Confirm available services*
  - *Develop a plan*

## Purchasing Land

When purchasing land, there are a number of items that need to be considered to ensure the prospective property meets your desired timelines and development objectives. Several important considerations are outlined below.

### Important Plans and Policies

The City has put in place plans and policies to guide development in a sustainable and efficient manner. All new development should align with the policies outlined in the:

- Official Community Plan (OCP) – the comprehensive and collective long-term vision for Saskatoon, guiding the physical, environmental, economic, social and cultural development of our community with overarching policies. See [saskatoon.ca/ocp](http://saskatoon.ca/ocp).
- Sector Plans – provide the broad framework for urban development and includes the location, size and phasing of future neighbourhoods, employment areas, parks, and significant natural areas using the vision from the OCP. See [saskatoon.ca/sectorplans](http://saskatoon.ca/sectorplans).
- Concept Plans – prescribe the development vision (including an outline of specific land uses), and the servicing and transportation framework for a defined area, in alignment with the Official Community Plan and approved Sector Plan. See [saskatoon.ca/conceptplans](http://saskatoon.ca/conceptplans).



## Types of Land

In addition to considering the above plans and policies, it is important to consider the characteristics or type of land it may be. An individual piece of land can fit within multiple land types, which may have different implications or require different considerations. If you are uncertain of the type of land you are looking at, please don't hesitate to call the City to confirm.

Type of Land	Considerations
<p><b>Greenfield:</b> a greenfield site is an area of land that has never been developed or built to an urban standard. It is often found near the edge of a city.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is important to know if a concept plan exists for greenfield lands and when it is expected to be serviced, subdivided and zoned for development.</li> <li>● In some instances, it may be decades before greenfield land is development ready.</li> <li>● If a concept plan does not exist, one will most likely be needed before development is possible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Brownfield:</b> a brownfield site is an abandoned, vacant, derelict or underutilized property that may have actual or perceived contamination.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Brownfield sites are often characterized by disuse, decay and evidence of previous development, such as paved areas. Examples of brownfield sites may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ former gas stations</li> <li>○ dry cleaners</li> <li>○ other industrial sites.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Some environmental cleanup may be required on these sites.</li> <li>● Brownfield sites are also typically infill sites, so the considerations noted below for these types of sites may also be relevant.</li> </ul>





Type of Land	Considerations
<p><b>Infill:</b> an infill site is a vacant or under-utilized piece of land within an area of the city that is already largely developed. Infill projects can range in size from a single lot to the development or redevelopment of significantly larger areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Development on infill sites typically uses existing infrastructure.</li> <li>● Infill sites often have access to full urban services, such as: paved roads, streetlights, sanitary sewer connections to the City system, City water from a pressurized connection, storm water management connected to the City system, and all other City services.</li> <li>● Despite urban services and infrastructure being available, it is important to confirm the capacity for existing infrastructure and if any upgrades or changes may be needed. Infill developments can often be more intensive than previous uses and require upgrades to services to accommodate the new development. This may add to the cost or timeline of the development.</li> <li>● Infill sites, such as those previously used for industrial purposes, sometimes pose challenges to developers that can include financing issues, incompatible land use and zoning regulations, and expensive cleanup required at contaminated (brownfield) sites.</li> <li>● It is important to confirm the current land use designation and zoning districts in place on infill sites and to confirm if your plans align with them. More intensive or significantly different development proposals may not always be possible, depending on the various plans and policies that may impact a site.</li> <li>● It is also important to confirm if a concept plan exists for the infill area you are considering or if one is needed. For larger infill developments, a concept plan may be required for development to proceed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Un-Serviced:</b> un-serviced or “raw” land has not yet been developed or serviced. It is not usually subdivided into individual parcels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Although urban development may be planned, servicing and development have may not reached the area yet. This type of land is usually found in areas planned to be future neighbourhoods and commercial/industrial areas or on the edge of the city.</li> <li>● Extending services to the area may be many years away and may be very costly.</li> </ul>

Type of Land	Considerations
<p><b>Serviced:</b> serviced land is land on which services including road, water and waste water management systems, storm water management, paved roads, and other utilities have been provided.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The availability of servicing on a parcel of land is a significant consideration as it will have a major impact on your ability to develop the land. Serviced land in the city generally falls under one of two general categories:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Fully Serviced land already has utility services in place. The capacity of existing services to accommodate proposed land uses also needs to be considered. Additional service capacity may be needed if a development proposal is significantly more intensive or substantially different from what was previously located on the site or in the area. Typically, development in Saskatoon cannot proceed if adequate services are not available. If existing services are not adequate, upgrades to servicing may be required for construction to proceed.</li> <li>ii. Lightly serviced land does not have full urban services. Instead, it has services commonly found in rural areas, such as on-site water and sewer systems. In many cases, lightly serviced land is rural land that has been annexed into the City.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Serviced land is typically more expensive to purchase than un-serviced land due to the availability of full urban services or planned availability of urban services that allow development to proceed.</li> <li>● Understanding what services are currently in place will help inform both the appropriate cost of a parcel of land and the timing and cost of your development. If services are already in place, development can happen much sooner as servicing is planned many years in advance and built sequentially, as growth happens. If the parcel has not yet been serviced, it is important to know when servicing is planned and what costs may be associated with this.</li> <li>● The financial impacts of servicing are also important. If the land is not yet serviced, all developers in the area will have to help pay for installing and connecting to services to the area. The costs associated with this can be significant. Each developer in the area will also need to allocate land to provide locations for services and amenities, such as roads, storm ponds, parks and recreation space, and more.</li> </ul>



## Land Use and Zoning

In addition, all land within city limits is divided into specific land uses and zoning districts which determine how individual properties may be developed. The City's land use pattern is established in the Official Community Plan (see Section F2 – Land Use and Appendix D Map 4: Land Use) and regulated through the Zoning Bylaw ([saskatoon.ca/zoning](https://saskatoon.ca/zoning)), which ensures complementary uses are grouped together and land use conflict is avoided. It is important to understand whether your proposed development idea is compatible with the surrounding area and if it is permitted within the existing land use and zoning framework.

Once you are ready to start construction, development permits, building permits and inspections are the main tools used by the City to support safe and effective growth. See the Contractor's Handbook ([saskatoon.ca/contractorshandbook](https://saskatoon.ca/contractorshandbook)) for more information on permits.

Once land is formally designated as an urban reserve, it is no longer subject to City bylaws and regulations as jurisdiction transfers from the City to the First Nation.



### Before Selection

- Generating ideas for the development
- Exploring what land is available
- Reviewing plans, regulations & policies
- Preliminary discussion with City (e.g. servicing, future land use, etc.)
- Selecting the right piece of land

#### Key Questions:

1. What do you want to do with the land/property and does it align with the current or future zoning for the property?
2. Has the City approved any plans for the land or neighbouring lands (such as Sector Plans or Concept Plans)?
3. What services does the property currently have? If the site is not fully serviced, what is the associated timeline and cost?
4. Are there environmental concerns on the land that need to be addressed or remediated? And if so, is there a timeline for remediation?
5. Have you contacted the City to discuss approximate timelines for servicing and/or development?

### Before Development

- Detailed design
- Construction
- Permits & inspections
- Ongoing communication

#### Key Questions:

1. Have you retained the proper professionals to undertake site planning and building design?
2. Have you read [A Contractor's Handbook](#)?
3. Have you verified that final design meets zoning requirements for the property?

### Before Purchase

- Forming partnerships
- Marketing analysis
- Business planning
- Environmental Impacts
- Conceptual site planning
- Infrastructure analysis
- Negotiation for municipal services

#### Key Questions:

1. Have you completed a business plan for the development?
2. Have you assessed if the zoning on the property supports your business plan?
3. Have you begun any servicing feasibility studies?
4. For Urban Reserve creation, have you negotiated a Municipal Servicing Agreement with the City? Have you initiated the formal process with the Province?





## Urban Reserves ([saskatoon.ca/urbanreserves](http://saskatoon.ca/urbanreserves))

The City of Saskatoon welcomes all Indigenous investors considering opportunities for investment and economic development in Saskatoon, including First Nations who may wish to establish an urban reserve within Saskatoon. While the urban reserve creation process is led by federal and provincial governments, the City has an active role in the process.

Before an Urban Reserve is created, the City of Saskatoon and the First Nation negotiate agreements for the provision of municipal and police services, to ensure land use

compatibility and to establish a commitment to ongoing communication. These agreements are negotiated between the City Solicitor's Office and the First Nation and signed by the First Nation's Chief and Council, City Council, and the Board of Police Commissioners, as appropriate.

The purpose of the agreements is to establish a long-term relationship of cooperation between the parties which recognizes and respects the separate jurisdiction of the First Nation while recognizing the need for ongoing compatibility and coordination between the City and the First Nation. If the land has not yet been serviced, a separate Servicing Agreement may also be negotiated between the City and the First Nation.

Components of a Municipal Services Agreement		
Agreement Type	Intent of Agreement	Parties
<b>Municipal Services and Compatibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure the urban reserve has the same building and fire standards, public health and safety and business regulations as non-reserve properties.</li> <li>• To ensure land use is compatible with neighbouring land use and the City's Zoning Bylaw.</li> <li>• Annual fee paid by the First Nation is equal to the amount that would be billed for municipal and library taxes for a similar property.</li> <li>• Fee paid to the City to provide municipal services that would be provided to any other similarly developed property, such as fire, snow removal, garbage pickup, infrastructure repairs, etc.</li> <li>• The First Nation enters into a separate agreement with the School Boards regarding the education portion of the standard property tax levy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Nation Chief and Council</li> <li>• Mayor and City Clerk</li> </ul>
<b>Police Services Agreement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide police service to the site that would be provided to any other non-reserve property.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Nation Chief and Council and Chair, Saskatoon Board of Police Commissioners</li> </ul>

It is important to note that once a property is formally designated as urban reserve by the Federal government, jurisdiction passes from the municipality to the First Nation, which means municipal bylaws and regulations no longer apply to the site.

In addition to the services outlined in the agreements, City staff is also available to provide support and services to guide you through the development process successfully. We encourage you to contact us as early in your development process as possible at 306-975-2645 or [regional.planning@saskatoon.ca](mailto:regional.planning@saskatoon.ca).









The information contained in this resource, while as accurate as possible, is intended as a general guide. We recommend seeking professional advice or contacting the appropriate governing body regarding specific issues related to your development.

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