



## **Regular Council Meeting, January 4, 2016**

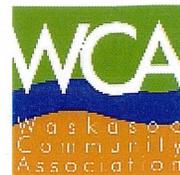
### **ATTACHMENT Waskasoo Area Redevelopment Plan**

**DOCUMENT STATUS:**            **Public**

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# Waskasoo Community Association Board of Directors



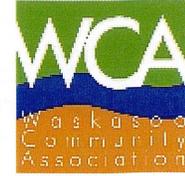
December 31, 2015

Honourable Mayor Veer and Esteemed Council Members,

The Waskasoo Community Association Board would like to thank council members for their work on these plans, particularly those members who were able to attend some or all of the numerous meetings where public input was gathered. We would also like to thank the City of Red Deer Planning Department for their hard work and for their invitation to comment on the draft Waskasoo Neighbourhood Plans as they go to council for first reading.

*There is much to like about these planning tools, but in particular, we would like to comment on the following:*

1. The Waskasoo Community Association and our drive to establish an Area Redevelopment Plan arose out of increased infill and subdivision pressures and especially the potential for the Riverglen School Property, now Gateway Christian, to be developed into a large residential area. We are very pleased that a strip along 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue has been designated as Municipal Reserve, which will protect the environment and the park system, as well as to see that this area will remain zoned for **Public Service** uses.
2. Another major concern in Waskasoo was that infill developments be done in a way that does not impinge on neighbourhood amenities and that maintains the character of the area. The use of **character statements** and the **immediate street context** to guide developments should allow the various areas of Waskasoo to retain their unique character elements while at the same time allowing the neighbourhood to remain alive – to grow and change into the future. In addition, requiring developers to provide a **letter of intent** that demonstrates how their development fits within the street context and character statements will open a dialog with planning and with area stakeholders. It will assist everyone to understand that redevelopment in existing areas is, to a certain degree, a negotiation. Key from our perspective is that it will make developers think about how what they want to do can be made to fit the neighbourhood in which they are building.
3. We are also pleased with the overall emphasis on green building practices, retention of green spaces, and protection of established healthy trees. This emphasis will ensure that Waskasoo retains one of its most important character defining elements: **a strong connection to the river, the park system, and the environment.**



*While there is much to appreciate in the plans, we would also like to register our remaining concerns:*

1. **Traffic** was the second main concern expressed by residents through the plan process, and we are concerned that the traffic issues in our area will continue in the future. Waskasoo is blessed with four major schools: Gateway Christian, Camille J. Lerouge, Parkland Class, and Lindsay Thurber. With those schools, however, comes increased traffic on residential roadways that were not built for the additional volume. Combined, these schools draw close to 3500 students and staff into the neighbourhood daily during the school year. In addition, the switch from River Glen County school to Gateway Public has meant that the school population has more than doubled and that the vast majority of the students are no longer being bused meaning that there are now many more cars using our residential roads to deliver and pick up passengers.

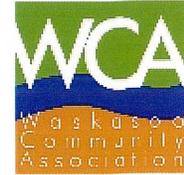
Some smaller measures such as additional crosswalks and changes to the timing of traffic lights have helped, but school traffic is still a concern and will likely increase with the upcoming expansion of the facilities at Parkland Class and the expected growth of Gateway's student body. This traffic congestion could be addressed by enhancing the mostly unused parking lot behind the Memorial Centre. By adding to the two already existing paved laneways located there, a turnaround and parking lot could be constructed and traffic redirected back onto 42 A Avenue to exit the neighbourhood.

Combined with widening 42 A Ave this would redirect much of the school traffic away from smaller neighbourhood streets and intersections and would:

- make the walk to school safer for area children,
  - make the drive to school easier and safer for thousands of parents and teachers from around the city,
  - create a large lay off area where parents who drive their children to school can safely drop them off and pick them up, and
  - provide parking for people attending events at the Gateway School so that they would no longer park on 44th and 43rd Avenues, making the area congested for residents.
  - Finally, it may reduce crime and unwanted activity in that corner of the neighbourhood. This lot was used by the buses for the county school and is currently empty. It has become even more of an eyesore over the past year and because of its location has begun to invite crime into the area. A turn around here would make an empty, uncared for area appear well tended and watched.
2. A second concern is with the **upcoming upgrades to 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue** north of 59<sup>th</sup> Street. We understand that there is a need to upgrade the road to the Kerry Wood Nature Centre and Mackenzie Trail(s), especially if bus services are to be provided to the park system. We would, however, like to ensure that traffic calming measure such as parkette bump-outs and raised crosswalks and stop signs for the bike and trail system crossings be implemented for safety purposes.

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Further, we would request that relevant studies be done to see whether a better option may be to close 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 59<sup>th</sup> Street and extend 42 A Avenue out to the Nature Centre. Doing so would move the roadway far away from the outside bend of the river, keeping automobile pollution away from the river and placing the street out of the erosion zone. It would also significantly add to the natural area surrounding the south bank trail system, enhancing the experience of trail users and helping to maintain a key wildlife corridor through the city. Finally, it may also be easier for city buses to reach the park system if they are able to use a roadway that is designed for them (42 A Avenue) rather than maneuvering down narrow and busy residential streets.

*While these concerns are urgent for safety and environmental reasons as well as for the retention of Waskasoo's amenities for its residents, we are generally satisfied with the plans and offer our conditional support as they go to council. However, because this will be the first time The City will use character statements to guide redevelopment, we would like to request a plan review be added in years three and six to make sure the character statements are working in the way they have been intended.*

The WCA Board would, once again, like to thank The City of Red Deer for their investment in our neighbourhood through these planning documents. This was a long and thorough process and the result is a set of documents that we believe reflect most of the stated desires and concerns of Waskasoo-ians. In particular, we would like to sincerely thank Randa Wheaton, Senior Planner, Tara Lodewyk, Planning Director, and Emily Damberger, Planning Manager, for their diligent work on these plans. It has been an interesting and educational process.

Sincerely,

Darcy Garrett  
President  
Waskasoo Community Association Board

