

Dear Citizens of Regina,

The idea of building a new stadium in Regina has dominated water cooler discussion for the better part of two years now and those discussions are often lively as folks debate the various pro's, con's, if's, when's, and but's. I believe that the topic has even overtaken the weather as #1 in people's minds. Maybe there will not be a new stadium. Some claim it's the expensive pipe-dream of a city & province getting a false sense of grandeur. Count me among the new breed of optimists in Saskatchewan. I believe that we can, should, and will build a new stadium in Regina. I also believe that part of the change in the new Saskatchewan is a strong desire to do things the right way, the way we can be proud of for generations to come. That means that the project needs to be approached using the care and attention it deserves and not merely slapping some stands together and saying "There, we did it". What are the future implications of a project like this? How can the most people possible find opportunity as a result? How can the city? How can the end-users of the facility?

The Chamber of Commerce News Magazine's recent article on the Regina Revitalization Initiative seemed written after drinking a little of the City of Regina Kool-Aid. There needs to be more discussion undertaken, more voices heard, and more variables considered before final decisions are made by the City on what kind of stadium is built, and where. The Chamber News seemed to accept as an article of faith the City-proposed vision that an open-air stadium at Evraz was the best, if not only, option. As a completely biased owner of a downtown business, I happen to see it differently.

The first assertion of the City that Evraz was the best location was that the size of the CP Container Facility was not large enough to build on. Indeed, the available space at Evraz is larger but in truth it doesn't really need to be in order to build a first-class stadium on. The existing Mosaic site is 20 acres.



According to the City, the CP Rail Yard site is 32.91 acres in total. The City says that the CP yards site has approximately 17.5 acres to be used for a stadium project. A 17.5 acre site is approximately 762,000ft squared. This is more than adequate to construct a 33,000 seat stadium. If necessary, more of the 33 acres could be used. CenturyLink Field in Seattle is a U-shaped horseshoe, seats 67,000 for football, and occupies a footprint of 1,500,000ft squared (34.43 acres). CenturyLink was designed with steeper seating bringing the fans closer to the field and reducing the stadium footprint. (A side note, the design also makes CenturyLink the loudest stadium in the NFL despite being an open-air design. Imagine the home field advantage 'Rider fans would give the team!') I use CenturyLink as an example because it is one of the newest open-air football stadiums built in the United States, and is considered to be a model of stadium-

building innovation. (Further, its construction came in on time and on budget.) Now, it is a mistake to think that a 33,000 seat stadium will be only half the size of one that seats 67,000. The size of the playing surface itself is considerable, and not linked to seating capacity, and in fact the CFL field, (roughly two acres), is larger than the U.S. counterpart. Nevertheless, the point is made, by building in an oval shape with 360° seating, using a steep seating design, the CP Container Facility is large enough to build a new stadium on.

The second major consideration of a decision to build a new facility is the potential economic impact of the stadium in the years after it is built. The Chamber News article lauds the project for the economic benefits that it will create and sustain in the Evraz site. I don't believe, and I doubt anyone at the Chamber believes either, that the long-term economic benefits at Evraz will be remotely close to what would be generated at a downtown location. There's a Dairy Queen, a KFC, and a convenience store in the vicinity of the Evraz site. Otherwise the stadium will be surrounded by hockey rinks, empty parking lots, and lower income residential neighborhoods. Downtown the stadium site is already surrounded by restaurants, hotels, and retail shopping, as well as entertainment like Globe Theatre & Casino Regina. There is much more potential for growth as a stadium serves as an impetus for rejuvenation of the Warehouse District, and more investment in the Downtown core. Consider the possibilities.



Imagine if/when Canada Post moves operations to the Global Transportation Hub and the Post Office building gets re-developed as a boutique hotel overlooking the stadium. See in your mind's eye the shops and restaurants built right into the stadium itself, serving Regina every day, year-round. Envision the impact on the downtown hotels and restaurants, existing & new, packed with guests and providing employment to thousands. Within five years there would be a minimum of ten new restaurants/lounges built in the Warehouse District, the same in Downtown. And then game days can you visualize the sea of green as 'Rider fans work their way down the streets to the stadium? There is only one potential stadium location that can accelerate an already booming Regina economy, Downtown.

The third important consideration is the importance of capitalizing on the once in a generation opportunity of the project. This project has the potential to do more than provide a home for the Roughriders, it can change the city. The Chamber article mentioned a "pedestrian corridor linking Evraz to Downtown". Sorry, but that idea hardly recognizes the realities of how people actually move and behave. There will be no exodus of fans leaving the stands and heading for downtown businesses. It's too far for most to comfortably walk, especially since Regina residents consider parking more than six car-lengths away from the doors of a business to be inconvenient. Fans will jam into their cars, (ample parking being a supposed selling point of the Evraz site), and jam onto Lewvan Dr., Dewdney Ave., and Elphinstone Street. The bottlenecks will be horrendous. And the likelihood of backed-up traffic on Dewdney in particular could pose safety risks as ambulance access to the Pasqua Hospital becomes inhibited.



One “problem” cited regarding downtown is the perceived lack of parking. I think it is rather a lack of effective Transit solutions that inhibit Downtown. What if a forward thinking city council negotiated a ‘shared use’ arrangement with CP Rail, where commuter shuttles used the tracks to bring people into the downtown from the fast developing eastern part of the city? The downtown station could be built right into the plans for the stadium. Unload and walk to your seats. Take the idea further. The tracks run on an east-west

axis that could service stations built at Evraz, the Airport, and the GTH in the west, and park & rides built in east Regina, Pilot Butte, & north of White City/Emerald Park. Want to reduce fans drinking and driving? Give them another option. The benefits of a Transit station at a downtown stadium also would apply if replicated at Evraz, for events like Pats games, Agribition, & Farm Progress. Guests staying in downtown hotels would have direct transportation out of downtown to those venues. The everyday implication is that persons who work downtown but live outside downtown (or Regina) can commute in a clean, safe manner without the need to bring their personal vehicle downtown just to sit in a parking garage.

Saskatchewan is currently an economic island in Canada, and the rest of the world. The Stadium project represents an opportunity to also show the world that it’s not just because of an abundance of natural resources. We have a wealth of human resource here too. Let’s build a forward thinking stadium that recognizes the increasing need to live sustainably on our planet. The design plan could incorporate inexpensive but effective innovations to conserve & re-use water, generate power through wind & solar, manage waste and garbage effectively, all of which can reduce the ongoing operation costs of the facility. Done thoughtfully, the project will create more downtown green & public spaces on the site which just further highlights the community-focused nature of Saskatchewan people.

We can use the Stadium Project to showcase the extraordinary talents of the people of Regina & Saskatchewan as we build a stadium that will be the envy of, and model for, others across all of North America. This is the New Saskatchewan. This is really a once in a generation opportunity. Let’s use a new approach to realize a new vision for Downtown Regina and subsequently the rest of Regina.

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Looks like a 1st Class Grey Cup Venue to me!

References

City of Regina Website - Information regarding CP Container Facility & re Regina Rejuvenation Initiative
Information on CenturyLink Field:

CenturyLinkField.com - site dimensions, seating capacity

Design Team for CenturyLink – Ellerbe Becket

Seattle Post-Intelligencer. July 7, 2002).

"Allen's vision: Open venue with a view". The Seattle Times. April 14, 2004.