

Kitchen Table Conversation Report

Name of Group/Organization: South Saskatchewan Regional Plan Compliance Initiative Environmental and Historic Resources Strategy Task Force

Conversation Topic: Environment and Historic Resources Strategy topics

Number of people in Conversation: 12

Date: August 19th, 2016

Describe your Conversation: Over the lunch hour members of the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan Compliance Initiative Environmental and Historic Resources Strategy Task Force gathered for a walking conversation about environmental and historic resources preservation and opportunities. The walking conversation began at City Hall, followed west along 4th Avenue South to the Galt Museum and Archives Parking Lot, and back. The first half of the conversation focused on environmental resources and was led by Coreen Putman from the Helen Schuler Nature Center. The second half of the walking conversation was led by Wendy Aitkens from the Galt Museum and Archives and focused on historic and cultural resources protection.

There was a great deal of consensus among the group about the benefits of preserving both environmental and historic resources in the City, as well as opportunities for improved action by both the City and residents. All in all, there was great dialogue among participants, and the conversation highlighted the great work that has been done in the past to preserve and protect resources in the City and where future action can be targeted.

Conversation 1: Where are the opportunities for greater environmental protection in the City?

- Community gardens in our urban core / downtown – can we transform some of our planter boxes into gardens?
- There are gaps in our urban canopy (in front of the Post Office building on 4th Avenue South)
 - Are there ways we can start to fill in some of these gaps? Or are some of these gaps because of infrastructure in the road rights-of-way (or other barriers)
 - There are many benefits to having well-developed urban canopies
- There are opportunities for living roofs and roof-mounted solar panels in the downtown
 - A lot of flat roof space, with minimal impacts on site lines (compared to residential lots)
 - There are places in Lethbridge where living roofs have been tested and are considered very successful (e.g., Helen Schuler, Park Place Mall) – what is preventing more of this?
- There are opportunities to choose plants for our urban planters that are much more “pollinator friendly”



Figure 1 - The first half of the Environment and Historic Resources Strategy Kitchen Table Conversation was a scavenger hunt and focused conversation about Ecosystem Services in Downtown.

- There are opportunities to incorporate more tree planting into downtown surface parking lots
 - Provides shade, climate control and aesthetic value (e.g., visual screening)
- We can have more edible trees along our roadways – such as the pear trees along 5th Avenue (which are very tasty!)
- Plant choice is important
 - Evergreens planted in our City don't have access to the necessary microorganism cooperative relationships that other species do, because they are not native to this ecosystem—in the end, many of them do not thrive or survive
 - When choosing plants/trees we need to consider what is the most appropriate choice, and how the species function within the larger ecosystem
- Off-road vehicles are having a huge impact on our sensitive landscapes (Six Mile Coulee and Alexander Wilderness Park)
 - Long lasting impact
 - Let's invasive species move in

Conversation 2: Where do we find Ecosystem Services present in our Downtown (City more generally)?

- Urban canopy provide: Shade/climate control, energy reductions (because of climate control), aesthetic value...among many other benefits
- Living roofs provide many ecosystem services (such as stormwater management) and can even prolong the lives of roofs because they reduce the impact of solar and wind exposure
- The no berry picking bylaw for our River Valley provides security for migrating and other local species to ensure they have access to the food sources they need – we need to know these rules and understand the reasons why they are in place
- There are plants in our River Valley that have been shown to prevent cancer (e.g., Golden Bean). There is research going on at the University on this topic.
 - There are potentially opportunities to grow these crops commercially, taking advantage of our native plants
 - There are also intellectual property rights challenges, as these species and their benefits have been traditionally known to the Blackfoot peoples and their ancestors
 - We need to ensure that as we explore these opportunities we are also considering over-harvesting and monoculture risks



Figure 2 - The second half of the Environment and Historic Resources Strategy Kitchen Table Conversation was focused on cultural and historic resources in the City.

Conversation 3: Open dialogue about historic and cultural resources in Lethbridge.

- The Paramount theatre is a great example of adaptive reuse of a heritage building
 - There are environmental impacts as well with adaptive reuse (reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfill because we aren't deconstructing and replacing a building)

- Buskers add to the cultural fabric of our City
- New immigrants leaning English in downtown Lethbridge—adding to the cultural identity of our City as it grows and diversifies
- We have changing cultural values associated with the River Valley
 - From traditional land use to industry (coal), garbage pit
 - Different groups in our City have different levels of access to our River Valley (expensive residential lots, retirement facilities and cemeteries)
 - Little commercial development is oriented to the River Valley to take advantage of its beauty—why is this?
- The Sesquicentennial is coming up (150th birthday of Canadian confederation)—how are we as a community going to celebrate?
 - Galt Museum and Archives are putting together an exhibit, curriculum and statue of Sir Alexander Galt to help the community learn more about his role in the founding of Canada and his son (Elliot Galt's) role in the founding of Lethbridge
- Greater incorporation of Indigenous heritage
 - Challenge around balancing knowledge with the additional negative impacts that come with additional access (e.g., site degradation)
 - Also a challenge around how we ensure appropriate site interpretation
 - City has recently done more to identify and protect Indigenous heritage
 - The Canyons Turtle Effigy – Melcor is creating a small interpretive site
 - Traditional Land Use Assessments for the Royal View and Southeast Area Structure Plans
 - Blackfoot Interpretive Park in Six Mile Coulee is conceptualized for the future
 - Traditional Knowledge and Use Assessment as part of the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan Compliance Initiative

Conversation 4: River Valley

- What are the cultural ecosystem services that we find our River Valley?
 - High Level Bridge
 - Helen Schuler Nature Centre
 - Wind (erosion of coulees)
 - University of Lethbridge
 - Galt Museum
 - Oldman River
 - Coal (history of coal)
 - Red Light District
 - Public Art
 - Some of our public art sites need more interpretation to we can better learn through them
- What does “water” mean to you?
 - River
 - Drinking water
 - Life
 - Swimming
 - Essential
 - Bottled water
- What are the challenges faced by our water supply in Lethbridge

- Pollution
- Drought / flood
- Landscaping
- Chlorine
- Overwatering
- Irrigation
- Bottled water
- What are the different uses of water?
 - Industrial uses
 - Recreation
 - Agriculture
 - Irrigation
 - Kainai has the largest privately owned irrigation system in Canada
 - Food
 - Dilution of different toxins/chemicals
 - Habitat