

Kitchen Table Conversation Report

Name of Group/Organization: Lethbridge Evangelical Ministerial Association (LEMA)

Conversation Topic: Growth/Development/General

Number of people in Conversation: 26 divided into 4 groups

Date: January, 2017

Describe your Conversation: The Lethbridge Evangelical Ministerial Association (LEMA) has a mandate of fellowship and worship, and to coordinate untied efforts in the community, among and with the support of the member churches.

At LEMAs general meeting in January 2017, 26 members divided into 4 groups took part in the conversation. This included pastors, church staff, and leaders of local ministries. The conversations of each group was recorded, and the general themes are shown below. The conversations that were recorded reflect the opinions of those involved in the conversation, not the entire organization necessarily.

Group 1 (6 people)

Neighbourhoods the group lives in:

Uplands, New Dayton (works in Lethbridge), Fairmont, Riverstone, Red Crow (Indian Battle Heights)

Thoughts on Mature areas of the city:

Redevelopment of those areas to attract families to move to:

- i. Financial and/or other incentives to fix up old neighbourhood homes and parks
- ii. Upgrade old infrastructures and utilities such as electrical, cable, and phone wires to be put underground where they are above ground at present.

Thoughts on Downtown:

- i. Increase the residential population downtown with high density housing above existing shops and stores
- ii. Build apartment buildings downtown for high density population, some could be built by adding stories to existing building downtown (*single to family size apartments or condo's with penthouses at the top*)
- iii. It needs a supermarket where people are able to walk to, as most of them are away from the downtown areas

For the city at large:

- i. A need for low income housing amongst the people, not away from the population on the fringes of the city
- ii. There seems to be a sense of absence when it comes to planning for the faith community and land usage bylaws, we would like to see this addressed as the faith community has quite an impact on the City of Lethbridge.
- iii. There seems to be a push for creating high density communities, but there are limited places for Community Centers unless you have a vehicle. Most of those centers are far away from the medium to high density residential areas
- iv. Due to its broad spread of land in the City, Lethbridge may not have as close a community as other cities that have High-rises and apartment buildings.
- v. Religious bylaws that were created for holding church services in residential areas and house churches in residential neighbourhood how does that fare with when people have house parties and plug up the streets? Maybe to give that some thought. Is the city going to be able to police that all and is there equality and fairness in the above thoughts.

Group 2 (7 people)

What neighborhood type do each of the individuals around the table currently live in?

Some of Central, Mature, and Established Areas. None in Developing areas

What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of each neighborhood type?

Weakness is balance of services for neighborhoods.

Also, public transportation to all areas in a timely manner is a weakness.

Strengths: downtown -everything is within walking distance

Opportunities: growth for providing more services in neighborhoods.

Importance of minimizing urban footprint

As communities increase, there are more amenities closer to its residents because of increase in services. Minimizing the urban footprint is not a priority.

What is the most important argument for minimizing urban footprint?

The social argument. The urban concerns are not that important right now.

What ways can a city support the minimizing of its footprint?

Efficiency and a strength would be to focus on establishing this in new neighborhoods rather than established neighborhoods.

Do you support the idea of residential classification?

Hesitantly

Does your view change if it's in your neighborhood?

Yes

Where are the most appropriate areas in the City for residential densification?

Downtown, college/universities, new developments

Do you believe your neighborhood offer opportunity to "live, work, shop, and play" within close proximity?

North side is under developed in parks and recreation

Which component of "live, work, shop, and play" do you feel is most missing from your neighborhood?

West side -lacking in most things. Recreation is good.

Do you support the idea of mixed housing types?

No. It effects value of existing homes

Does your support for a mix of housing types change when it is being located in your neighborhood or on your street?

Yes it would. If mixed housing is contained to certain sections that's fine, but not if it's totally mixed everywhere.

Group 3 (7 people)

We were a group of seven (2 females and 5 males) with three under 50 years and four over 50 years of age.

We looked at the four types of neighborhoods realizing everyone lives in all of them but the Central downtown area. One also lives rural.

We discussed that as our city grows in population its important that neighborhoods (depending on their size) within the four types provide amenities within walking distance; instead of clumping retail together in bigger, but further away, areas. Parks, mini-grocery marts, coffee shops, salons, banks, family restaurants, places of worship and community centers help create and foster community. Because we have many college and university students, immigrants and those struggling financially (single mothers, low income, etc) who do not have access to vehicles, they need to be able to get places on foot. They also need opportunity for employment closer to home.

We also realized that opportunities for creating/building places of worship within the design of newer neighborhoods or existing neighborhoods is sadly lacking and difficult to obtain. Churches create a sense of community, reach out to those in need and have support systems and resources for families and individuals that can help take the burden off of city and government organizations. They shouldn't be overlooked or disregarded as unnecessary.

We all agreed that we don't want to keep stretching out and out as a city just because there is land. We do not want to become like Calgary with nothing really to stop its urban footprint. It is important to provide a variety of housing opportunities like apartments, two & fourplexes, condos and single family homes and the financial diversity they offer. Building up seemed a viable option.

Someone asked why there were no hotels on the Westside since many people have family visiting and do not always have room for them.

There are also no automotive shops and construction (as in lumber) supply businesses either. Since the Westside will continue to grow these should be factored into that growth.

Group 4 (6 people)

Comments around General Items

- 1.) The city does Parks and green spaces well
- 2.) Transit needs to improve in terms of scheduling, especially around Sunday. This is not only for church but for general public who don't want to use a car. Sunday travel is very restricted.
- 3.) New neighborhoods don't appear to have a community facility design for them. Something like a community centre would create opportunities for places of worship for small congregations as well as needed space. The Westside has no community center for 35,000 people. It was felt that developers should be encouraged to look at perhaps building this space as a main floor of a multi apartment or condo complex.
- 4.) There was a consensus that while we are approaching 100,000 the City is still trapped in small town thinking that is not going to change overnight.