



Concept depictions from Crosby Hanna and Associates Landscape Architecture

DREAMING OF BIGGAR POTENTIAL

THE WORLD VISUALIZES SASKATCHEWAN AS VAST OPEN SPACES, fertile land, abundant resources and communities of hardworking prairie people. Digging deeper each community's story encompasses unity, entrepreneurship, opportunity, growth, spirit and heart. The Town of Biggar sees 2021 as the year to spark civic pride, rally optimism and rekindle energy to advance the community's future chapters.

Powered by funds from numerous sources, Biggar's planned revitalization weaves together modern amenities, the town's rich history and this twist – New York is big, but our future is Biggar – on its well-known catch phrase.

Blending these intriguing elements to revitalize Biggar's business core will:

- re-energize Biggar in an era when other small Saskatchewan towns are fading;
- enhance the quality of life of people living in Biggar and surrounding area;
- generate engagement and excitement among present and past residents; and
- attract future residents, visitors, and businesses.

The impressive vision for revitalization evolved from community consultation and planning spurred by backing from a philanthropic couple with fond memories of growing up in Biggar.

SEEING THE BIGGAR PICTURE

THINKING OF BIGGAR'S MAIN STREET awakens warm memories among residents and visitors alike. Charming shops, friendly people and easy access draw residents and neighbours from nearby communities to Biggar, but the streetscape needs attention.

Providing a more welcoming, intimate and attractive presence is the focus of a plan inspired by a committee of stakeholders and refined via a series of local open houses. Changes along Main Street are expected to rejuvenate the town for its residents and attract travelers who pull off Highway 14, then find themselves drawn to explore Biggar.

While details continue to evolve, the plan will encourage people to discover renewed ways to connect in the town's revitalized business core. Trees, flowers, plants, lighting and reconfigured sidewalks will freshen the landscape. Ideas to enhance human connection and enjoyment for the senses involve benches, banners, public art, seasonal lighting, murals, outdoor cafes, bike stands, music, and signs pointing the way to interesting places. All features will add color and comfort that encourages community members to gather and chat awhile as happened on the street in years gone by.

A key feature will be a public park envisioned at the end of Main Street on the previous site of the CN railway station. Proposed elements of Grand Central Park – a nod to New York City's Central Park and Grand Central Station – range from beautiful gardens and hospitable green space for a farmer's market, picnic, or musical concert to a railway car styled restaurant.

People see these exciting changes as encouraging residents to frequent local shops for the sheer pleasure of it, visit with their neighbours, refurbish store fronts, enjoy outdoor leisure activities and celebrate weddings amid vibrant surroundings. Transforming Biggar's core also has the potential to draw tourists.

“The biggest thing about our small town is its heart. Right now Biggar's heart is filled with gratitude and excitement at the prospect of making our already amazing town even more beautiful.”

–Jeanne-Marie deMoissac,
Reeve, RM of Biggar



A love for Biggar motivates Wayne, Ina Lou, Ryder, Kara and Ryan Brownlee's matching gift from the Brownlee Family Foundation.

SOWING THE SEEDS OF REJUVENATION

INA LOU AND WAYNE BROWNLEE inspired Biggar's revitalization plan by approaching the Town of Biggar in 2019 with their desire to give back to the place where they were born, grew up, started dating, graduated Grade 12, and buried their parents.

They saw potential for a project going beyond what the Town normally does, benefiting a broad range of people, and generating energy, ownership and pride. Details were left to members of the community.

The couple then backed their interest with a \$2.5M matching pledge with the hope of inspiring contributions from others with an appreciation for Biggar.

Motivation for Wayne and Ina Lou's gift came from memories of an idyllic childhood in Biggar: walking, then later driving, up and down Main Street; hanging around with friends and playing sports in CN park; and seeing the Queen while perched precariously on a rooftop, along with other mischief.

“When people ask where were you raised, I think of Biggar and smile ... It's a love of Biggar, that's why we're doing it,” says Ina Lou Brownlee.

Beyond the physical changes to the business core, the Brownlees see their gift as engaging present and past residents and businesses around a common goal embodied by the phrase “New York is big, but our future is Biggar.”



CHAMPIONING BIGGAR'S FUTURE

LIKE THE RURAL TRADITION of neighbours helping neighbours build a barn or harvest a crop, achieving Biggar's revitalization plan requires a supportive team. Every individual, family, business and alum who holds Biggar in high esteem has an opportunity to donate. All contributions will build the fund to match the \$2.5M donation from the Brownlee Family Foundation.

Beyond the \$5M from the Brownlees and other generous supporters, the Town of Biggar is committing to upgrading the necessary infrastructure by partnering with other levels of government. As the total cost of the project is \$7.5M, some work may be completed in phases.

“As mayor of the Town of Biggar, I ask for your support in this project that will benefit our community in endless ways. With our civic pride and prairie enthusiasm it will allow us to celebrate ourselves, our past, and present, while paving our way to future opportunities. The future is ours, we must grasp this once in a lifetime opportunity.”

—Mayor Jim Rickwood





Photos provided by the Biggar Museum and Gallery.

BUILDING ON A FASCINATING PAST

THE PRANKSTERS who first painted the words “*New York is big, but this is Biggar*” on a sign are among a diversity of people to influence the town’s history.

For thousands of years before newcomers arrived, Indigenous people and bison inhabited the area as they roamed through the Northern Plains. Biggar’s story as a permanent community begins with the settlers who travelled the grueling trail between Swift Current and Battleford to farm in the region. A population boom – spurred by the arrival of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, which later merged with Canadian National Railway – led

to Biggar’s incorporation first as a Village, then as a Town, 110 years ago.

Since then people built homes, businesses, services and most importantly personal connections. Neighbours visited on house porches. Railroad employees and locals enjoyed CN’s café The Beanery. Hard-working farm families travelled to Biggar on Saturdays to shop, watch a movie, eat ice-cream, or chat with friends and family. Some folks may even have gathered to sneak a glass of bootlegged liquor, or so say the rumours.

Times have changed. Biggar now serves as a commercial hub for the surrounding area, with citizens employed in agriculture, retail, health care, education, manufacturing and finance. It offers such attractive amenities as an active outdoor recreation centre and pool, indoor stadium and ice rink, curling rink, museum, theatre, public library, health centre, and two schools and a regional college with classes from Kindergarten to adult education. The larger communities of North Battleford and Saskatoon are both an easy hour drive along the highway.

Today, present and past members of the community boldly dream of future revitalization that invigorates the community, while creating new opportunities to attract residents, businesses, and visitors.



“Biggar Revitalization...

an evocative plan to reveal, invigorate, and celebrate the business core.

The transformation will weave Biggar’s rich heritage, strong sense of community, and bold aspirations into inviting and cohesive spaces and opportunities...

New York is big, but this is Biggar.”

—Town of Biggar

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