

## Smart Growth

# Campus conundrum

By Lachlan Labere  
OBSERVER STAFF

Okanagan College's Salmon Arm campus is a key element to any discussion about growth in the community.

The campus is certainly a major focus in the Downtown Salmon Arm Smart Growth Process Final Results and Background Report.

Initiated by the Committee for a Strong and Sustainable Salmon Arm (CASSSA) in partnership with Smart-Growth BC and the City of Salmon Arm, and completed with input from approximately 500 volunteers – including representatives from the college's board of directors – the report looks at options to increase the future campus' educational, cultural, social and commercial spaces in the city's downtown core.

"It has become clear that the current college of approximately 40,000 square feet is now operating at maximum capacity and, in order to offer more programs, the college needs to expand in some way," states the report.

Bill Remphrey, who was part of a group that focused specifically on the college, said coming up with options for the campus' relocation prompted much debate. But the one thing clear to everyone is that the

college requires more space – at double the square footage it currently occupies.

Of all the options considered, four were arrived at for the report. One was to acquire 20 or more acres on the outskirts of town. While this may be more affordable (provided land is available), it is not in sync with Smart Growth principles, and would not be of direct benefit to downtown.

Another option goes in the opposite direction – having the college occupy a multi-storey building right in the downtown core. Such a facility constructed above the Ross Street parking lot was looked at, but it was determined such a facility would not be attractive to students seeking a traditional campus experience.

Keeping the campus in its current location and building up over its parking lot was also considered. In addition, the college could look at establishing satellite campuses elsewhere in the city.

The final option considered was moving the campus in the downtown area onto the northeast corner of the Fall Fairgrounds.

"Even though people would like a more traditional campus, it would be nice to have it in the downtown area because

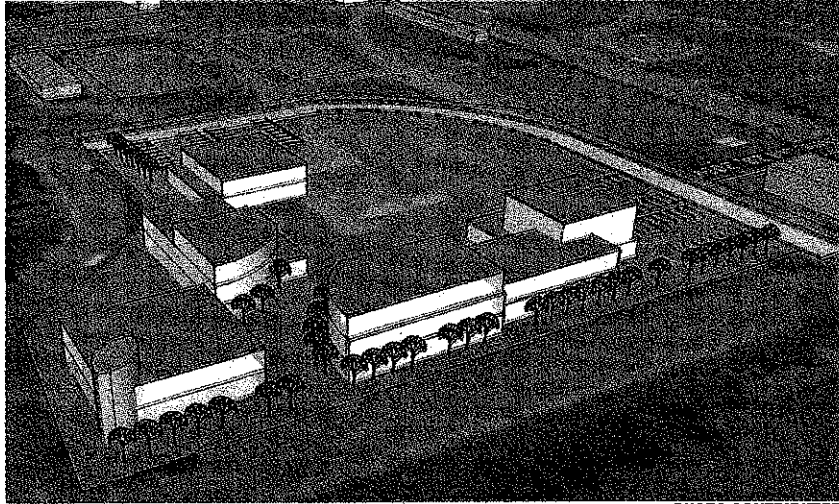


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**Idea:** A conceptual drawing of the Okanagan College campus located on the northeast corner of the current fairgrounds.

it could be a place that would stimulate that area in terms of people living downtown, and when people live downtown, they shop downtown and so on," says Remphrey.

Having the campus in the downtown area would also allow for its integration with the existing network of downtown community gathering places such as the art gallery, the Ross Street Plaza and McGuire Lake Park. The report also explores these social hubs, and how they might be better unified and enhanced with an emphasis on local art and heritage.

"We have extraordinary people living here, people who were born and raised here, and whose families helped establish this city, its orchards and farms, First Nations commu-

nities, descendants of the gold rush, maybe even a few people who remember why Pierre Trudeau gave us what is internationally known as the "Salmon Arm salute," comments SAGA Public Art Gallery executive director Tracey Kutschker, who provided some of concepts included in the report.

"The salmon industry, the railroad, there are a variety of historical anchors that brought many of our families to Salmon Arm. We can look to our own people to help us shape our identity, and move forward with some exciting public art projects to celebrate that."

The report suggests more public art could be used to accentuate downtown gathering places. It also recommends the city use amenity contribution

agreements and density bonuses for creating new public spaces and amenities such as an outdoor skating rink and community art and sidewalk improvements.