

This is an excerpt from [Sean Shaw's website](#) :

I strongly believe that the residents of Saskatoon as a whole should be given voice on any decision given the large tax dollar numbers attached to a new art gallery. \$58 million is a healthy chunk of taxpayer dollars (Federal, Provincial, and Municipal) and we should be well aware with recent examples that budgets on paper tend to be exceeded in reality (i.e. River Landing ballooning from \$35 million to nearly \$90 million, and growing). Not to mention the added year-to-year operation costs associated with an art gallery expected to exceed the Mendel in size by nearly five times.

As a candidate for City Council in the past civic election, I had the opportunity to knock on over 6,000 doors between May and Election Day in the neighbourhoods of Ward 4. I personally spoke with thousands of residents about their concerns for their neighbourhood and Saskatoon as a whole. Of those who did take the time to discuss their concerns with me, the proposed move of the Mendel Art Gallery to River Landing was the second largest, unprompted, issue raised by residents (*with regards to River Landing*). An overwhelming majority of the comments shared with me were in opposition to the recommendation being brought forward to you on November 30th.

The concerns expressed to me, in opposition to the proposed new art gallery, included:

1. The cost - in excess of 50 million in tax dollars and nearly 18 million of that from the City, which was, by far, the most cited reason for opposition.
2. Not wanting to see the Mendel move from its current site
3. Overloading of amenities at River Landing and wanting to see them instead spread along the River
4. The lack of public engagement in the decision making process that lead to the proposed new art gallery.
5. The unknown increase in year-to-year operating costs for the new art gallery.

Instead of spending City tax dollars on large attractions, which most agree are good for our city, the majority of those I had the opportunity to speak with expressed a desire to see more of their tax dollars re-invested into their neighbourhoods to address the growing infrastructure deficit,

improve public safety and policing, and expand neighbourhood parks.

There was a very strong sentiment on the doorstep from residents that their voice doesn't matter and that decisions will be made regardless of their opinions, something expressed loud and clear on Election Day through the extremely poor voter turnout.

It is exactly decisions like the proposed move of the art gallery, made without any real public engagement and seemingly behind closed doors, that breed the level of discontent I have heard over the past six months. If the proposed move is in the best interest of the City, or even if it isn't, it is incumbent upon our City Council and City Administration to properly inform and engage the residents of Saskatoon.

At the very least, keeping residents in the loop during the process that led from approval of renovations of the existing Mendel to an entirely new and bigger art gallery would mitigate the level of anger and cynicism experienced and likely forthcoming as this story gets wider attention. It is exactly this type of sentiment that leads to residents thinking their voice doesn't matter, which, in part, leads to the embarrassingly low voter turnout we experienced on October 28th (27%).

~ Dr. Sean Shaw