



May 7th, 2014

To: Members of the Planning and Urban Development Standing Policy Committee

Re: Comment on PUD2014-0312, Corridor Program Proposal

Dear Council Members,

The Federation of Calgary Communities presented at the May 7th, 2014 Planning and Urban Development Standing Policy Committee in regards PUD2014-0312, Corridor Program Proposal. Attached is the Federation's presentation.

Regards,

Natasha Kuzmak, MEdes, RPP, MCIP
Urban Planner + Engagement Facilitator
p: (403) 244-4111 ext. 210 f: (403) 244-4129
w: www.calgarycommunities.com

Good morning,

My name is Natasha Kuzmak and I am an urban planner with the Federation of Calgary Communities, the support organization for 150 community associations. We cannot speak for every community, but we do try to represent a broad community perspective. I am grateful that I have had opportunities to meet with Administration to discuss their engagement strategy and the program in general.

The Corridor Program may be one of the largest planning projects that The City has ever undertaken. Many cities across North America are embarking on similar work and are facing similar challenges: promoting redevelopment that is more sustainable, determining how to reinvest in communities when public funds are diminishing, and intensify land uses. It is exciting that The City is exploring new approaches to implementing the MDP. However, it is important to avoid the downsides of reinvestment and revitalization, such as gentrification and drastically altering community character. This may be done by learning through other cities' experiences, as well as by reflecting on our own recent experiences in intensifying areas.

First, I would like to comment on the short timelines. 'Time' is identified as the primary priority for the Corridor Program. After discussing the importance of pursuing great outcomes throughout all of Transforming Planning, I am confused that 'time' is the priority. There is a lot of potential and promise in the Corridor Program. It would be unfortunate if we couldn't realize it because there wasn't enough time or capacity to invest in the process and the stakeholders involved.

Next, I would like to speak about the engagement strategy. I do not feel that the strategy places enough emphasis on understanding the local community character for each corridor. Though the intent is to create a city-wide policy, the corridors differ dramatically. What is right for Forest Lawn is not necessarily right for the Beltline.

The capacity of communities to contribute to this work varies. Some of the communities that are on the corridors include Highland Park, Marlborough, Bowness, Hillhurst/Sunnyside, Glamorgan, and Bridgeland/Riverside. Some of these communities are highly involved in the planning process and are very knowledgeable of the planning system. Others have little experience, and little capacity to provide input. It is critical that Administration provide the necessary support to those communities that require assistance to ensure that their voices are heard.

It is important to recognize that Administration is embarking on a new approach to creating policy, moving from a system where Administration sought to understand the aspirations and local community needs and issues to a system where broad policies are created. I am concerned that this approach will not make allies of the communities in the redevelopment of the corridors. To advance the goals of the MDP, it is critical that communities have a stake in the process that is meaningful to both Administration and to the communities. Currently, communities see themselves as land supply where they await development to happen to them; they don't see themselves as respected and active participants in the process with some skin in the game. To achieve great outcomes, it is essential to change these dynamics.

The Federation proposes that Administration create a framework for communities to receive the benefits of redevelopment, also known as 'density for benefits' agreements. This involves creating a framework to determine the value of agreements, to identify community priorities and to allocate benefits. I suggest that the Corridor Program engagement strategy be amended to include the creation of this framework, including a structure for communities to actively identify areas of significance and heritage, and also areas for improvement. This is a common approach in many cities including Vancouver and Toronto. Examples of benefits include road and streetscape improvements, community centre improvements, parks, infrastructure, affordable housing, and heritage preservation. Allocating benefits to affordable housing and heritage preservation would require that specific frameworks be put in place to support those priorities.

Next, I want to raise the issue of gentrification. As neighbourhoods become more desirable, lower-income residents get priced out of communities, and there are economic status and demographic changes that alter the character of a community¹. This can result in population segregation, and displacement of people. Though neighbourhood revitalization and reinvestment offer many positive changes, they may also come with negative impacts if not managed properly.

Gentrification occurs not only because of major developments, but also because of incremental changes to an area. I am concerned that, if not done suitably, the Corridor Program may enable the gentrification of communities. I would argue that some Calgary communities, such as Cliff/Bungalow Mission and Hillhurst/Sunnyside, are experiencing gentrification already. It is incumbent upon us to learn from these experiences and improve planning policy and processes to prevent the negative impacts of investment and intensification. The City of Portland, for example, has done a lot of research to understand and minimize the effects of gentrification.

In conclusion, common negative impacts of promoting significant redevelopment include loss of affordable housing, changing community character and losing the heritage stock. It is imperative that policies be created to address these potential issues in advance of determining land uses and implementing the program. This will better enable The City to respond to challenges as they arise. As is learned by the City of Portland:

"It is far easier to avoid the harmful effects of these changes than to mitigate them once they are underway; and far easier to mitigate them at an early stage than to shoehorn in solutions later in the process."

Again, I think that this program has a lot of potential and promise, however, I also think that we have to be thoughtful and cautious when embarking on such significant work that will have long-lasting impacts on the city as a whole and on the communities.

Thank you for your time.

¹ "Gentrification and Displacement Study: Implementing an equitable inclusive development strategy in the context of gentrification". Commissioned by the City of Portland, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/454027>