

Good day Mayor Nenshi, Councillors and members of the audience. My name is Mark Rees and I live on 36 St. SE. My son is a 4th generation Calgarian (hopefully the reason for including this will become clear!).

I have had to modify / expand my speech as I cannot continue to enjoy your company again on Tuesday as I have work commitments. Monday was an eye opening experience for me.

I speak today to request the rejection of the removal of the current designation of land use for the David Oughton site. I am taking the time to defend the site for those in our neighbourhood who could not be here today because of their jobs, income status, lack of knowledge of the process, or are future children of the neighbourhood who would use the site.

My concern is that the due diligence of the CMLC / planning team has made either false premises to base their logic on or they have inherent bias built in with their surveys. (One of the things I studied in information science to watch out for.) The CMLC has done excellent work with the East Village. So when I heard statements saying that the park is not heavily used – I agree, this is true, but why? Because the property was not taken care of for 10 years or more, becoming a haven for drug users initially, discouraging parents to allow their children to play there. Now that the school is gone, the park sees more use, but the playing field is neglected by the parks maintenance - discouraging use from other users.

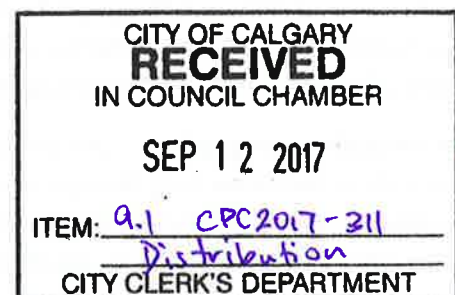
Thus causing the downward cycle, prompting this site to appear before you today to be re-designated. The community has participated in the redesign process but the whole process has one choice forced upon them - high density housing with limited park space. Going from 5 acres reserved (9 acres in total with the school land) to an “unguaranteed 2 acres” is not an improvement (this is what I have been told). While I'm all for increasing density and I understand the reasoning, I disagree that this location should be used for this purpose.

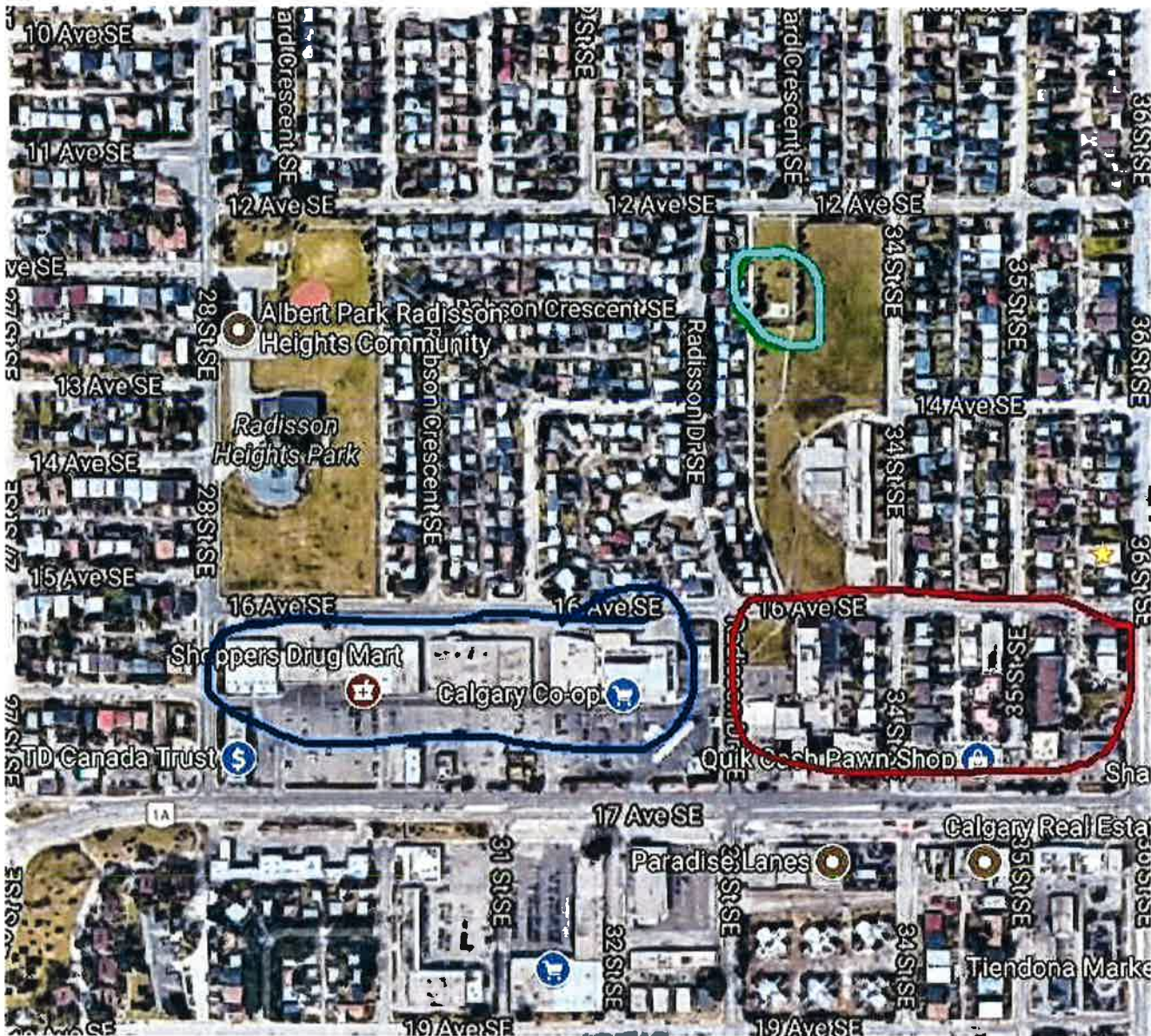
While the majority of feedback received focused on the six planning principles and related questions, two “side” topics emerged as conversation points among participants: that the site is retained as a park, and the need for a new community centre in Albert Park-Radisson Heights. – from the CMLC David Oughton Study report

If the goal of council is to bring in diverse family types (single, couples, young starting families) as well as the existing aging in place group, they need an enticement. What is one of the draws for families with children or thinking about children? PARKS! Big open spaces! If you eliminate them, you eliminate the desire for families to be in that community.

Also, parks are a meeting place for children to make connections with each other. When have you heard of children making new friends instantly in an apartment building? Rare isn't it? But just the other week, my son was at a playground, we were playing on the equipment and he made new friends by just playing. That's how we start building connections and community and bridges to new people we never have met before. Through our children. We need our parks to do that.

I look at the future of how I want to influence this city to be a better place for my child to grow up in. Just like my grandmother thought when she grew up here. Or my grandfather when he was living on what was to become Glenmore Trail. “We want to move your garage sir. – they said. Okay he said. (Who am I to do to impede the progress of the city? I can help make it better.)” Of course, his garage fell apart but that just meant he made it better by getting a better garage! He didn't rant against the city. This is my opportunity to assist.





If you look at the satellite map, the circled red area is full of high density - 4 storey, multifamily, and a 10+ storey apartment building. North of that is an area full of duplexes. This area doesn't need more density, it needs a well maintained, easily accessed park for all the families in the area or to bring such into the area.

The area circled in cyan is the existing playground. My suggestion to council would be to think about what the soul of a community is? is it the buildings? is the roads? is it trees? I believe that it is the people, in particular, the families and the CHILDREN PLAYING and LAUGHING. It is just within walking distance of most of the houses, any further and I think it would start to discourage use.

The area in blue would be an ideal area for increasing very high density multifamily dwellings - replacing the parking lot wasteland and perennial underutilized commercial buildings. For example, the Brentwood University district would be a nice touch. Co-op on the main floor, apartments above, etc. While council doesn't have control over this, they can encourage redevelopment by making the David Oughton site interesting enough that families will want to move into the area. Especially since the new 17th avenue BRT is coming in.

This is my thought on the cycle of taxes and playgrounds. As children have less access to playgrounds (for various reasons we don't have time for), they get less exercise. Less exercise, more health problems. More health problems, more healthcare. More healthcare, more provincial taxes consumed. Leaving less taxes for municipalities. Municipalities looking for more money other ways, sell off assets like - playgrounds. And the cycle continues. Please break the cycle.

My son and I regularly walk to this playground and play in it, year-round since we moved into the neighbourhood several years ago. We use it - winter and summer; we have snowshoed in it with friends. I don't foresee us being able to do that with the plans being laid out. And with the continued direction I see this process, within a year or two (or at the end), I expect we will be moving to a new neighbourhood more child friendly. I prefer to be inner city, don't make me move to the suburbs please.

Parks are an asset that a city can't get back if it is developed. PLEASE think of the future generations before you consume this asset.

In closing I would like to see a plan (any plan!) in place BEFORE the land use is removed. Thank you.

I look forward to your questions.

I thank you for your hard work and consideration on this matter. I'm sorry I am unable to continue to attend and participate in this process.

Mark Rees