

Letters of Support



**Letter of Support: City of Calgary's Guidebook for Great Communities**

To Whom It May Concern

This letter is in support of the proposed new draft Guidebook for Great Communities, as shared in excerpts culminating in February 2020. As the City of Calgary's designated arts development authority, Calgary Arts Development has appreciated the opportunity to support City planning staff by reviewing drafts of this document and offering feedback from the perspective of ensuring the future arts and culture space needs of Calgarians are met.

The integrated references to arts and culture space throughout the document align with our Strategic Framework priority "Arts-led city-building" through a vibrant downtown, everyday creativity, and the creative economy. The current draft of the Guidebook for Great Communities is also a strong fit with the recommendations, outcomes and tactics from our 2017 arts and culture infrastructure report *Building on our Momentum*.

We believe that artists, arts organizations, and arts collectives can contribute a great deal to animating our downtown and neighbourhoods, contributing to quality of life for residents, and attracting talent and visitors to our city.

Please contact me if I can answer further questions about how important documents like this one support a resilient, sustainable arts sector contributing to a strong, vibrant, connected city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patti Pon", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Patti Pon  
President & CEO

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February 24, 2020

Planning and Urban Development Committee

**Re: The Guidebook for Great Communities**

The Federation of Calgary Communities (the Federation) is the support organization for over 230 community based non-profit organizations, including 152 community associations. Since the November 4, 2019 Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development (PUD), the Federation in partnership with the City, has organized four Guidebook for Great Communities (Guidebook) 101 sessions (one session was streamed online) and one Planning Exchange. Over 100 people from approximately 56 community associations attended the 101 sessions. In addition, we appreciate that city staff have attended many meetings with communities to present information and answer questions. This phase of “information and awareness” has been useful.

As a reflective voice of community, most of the feedback we have received involve questions about “what the low density district will look like” and “how the Guidebook will enable the next round of policy work, like the land use bylaw and multi-community plans”. Specifically, there are questions about potential land-use rezoning and redesignation, heritage, community character, lot-coverage, trees and funding, and the role of community associations in the planning process going forward. At this time, these questions are not adequately addressed through the Guidebook, as they are not ready for inclusion (i.e. heritage and funding) or will be covered in other statutory documents or policies (i.e. Land Use Bylaw and Municipal Development Plan).

We support the intent of the Guidebook. That said, while the Guidebook is a step forward, there needs to be a thoughtful process in order to continue to improve the Guidebook and to address concerns, like heritage, trees/green spaces, and funding, of which we will speak to at PUD on March 4. To this end, as per administration’s recommendation, we support the creation of a Guidebook Sustainment Team, made up of a variety of stakeholders.

Bottom-line, residents and community leaders are local experts on where they live. They close the loop on good planning. They need to be engaged for input and provided with timely plain language information to share with their residents. Their feedback needs to be heard; not only in policy work, but as growth happens. We would ask that you ensure that, as per November 4 PUD motion, that an engagement plan be created for all future planning policy work. All statutory plans should include broad stakeholder input.



Finally, we would strongly discourage council members from making motions from the floor to address perceived gaps in this version of the Guidebook. City planning staff have done extensive work on the Guidebook, understanding the intention and interconnectedness of the planning policies they are recommending. Motions made by individual councillors may be counter productive to “getting it right” and may erode the good planning principals that are being proposed. This might result in unintended consequences.

We would strongly support that any changes or recommendations be referred to staff, and appropriate input from stakeholders be sought, potentially through a sustainment team. If there are extensive recommendations arising on the floor, we would further encourage a delay in passing the Guidebook for Great Communities - redirecting proposed changes to administration for further consultation with stakeholders.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Leslie Evans, BSc., M.M.  
Executive Director

24 February 2020  
Planning and Urban Development Committee  
Re: Guidebook for Great Communities, 4 March 2020, PUD2020-0207

Based on Attachment 8 (Summary of *Guidebook* Revisions), below are my initial comments on the revisions to the Guidebook for Great Communities. By the time the committee meets, the revised Guidebook will be available, and I will have reviewed the revisions. Administration has been receptive to feedback from Calgarians who have been working closest with Local Area Plans that are being developed based on the Guidebook. I am optimistic the revisions will produce a better Guidebook.

The revisions to the Urban Form Classification System appear to be improvements. As I told the committee in November, a single category for Neighbourhood Industrial Transition is appropriate.

I hope the added policies about storm water retention and infiltration are an improvement and will be in line with other City policies.

The future consideration and sustainment process seem appropriate. I will be very interested to see what scale category will be proposed between limited and low.

I am glad the Guidebook and heritage tools are both scheduled to go to Council on April 27<sup>th</sup>.

In November, I said the Guidebook's Urban Form Classification System seems to be modelled on Japan's planning system. Recently *The Economist*, noting that "in rich countries, and especially in the English-speaking world, housing is too expensive, damaging the economy and poisoning politics," described the effects of Japan's planning system:

**"In Japan a series of reforms in the early-to-mid-2000s loosened the planning system, allowing applications to be processed more quickly and giving residents more discretion over how to use their land. Tokyo's rate of housing construction has risen by 30% since their reform; in 2013-2017 Tokyo put up as many houses as the whole of England. Tokyo is a more jumbled city than most rich ones, but current zoning laws ensure that it is not quite as higgledy-piggledy as, say, Houston. In inflation-adjusted terms, house prices in the Japanese capital are 9% lower than they were in 2000, while in London they are 144% higher."<sup>1</sup>**

I hope the Guidebook has similar effects in Calgary, allows families and neighbourhoods to adapt to changing circumstances, and helps stabilize Calgary's private-to-public investment ratio.

Thank you,  
Nathan Hawryluk

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<sup>1</sup> Callum Williams, "Special Report: Housing: Shaking the Foundations," *The Economist*, January 18, 2020, 1, 12.

Attached is my original letter to this committee. I still enthusiastically support the low-density district.

31 October 2019

Planning and Urban Development Committee

Re: Guidebook for Great Communities, 6 November 2019

As the Renfrew Community Association's Director of Planning and representative on the North Hill Local Growth Plan's working group, my experience with the Guidebook for Great Communities through the North Hill Local Growth Plan is relevant to this committee's discussion.

#### North Hill Local Growth Plan

In fall 2018 and winter 2019, the North Hill Local Growth Plan working group met to understand the planning system and to use online input to create a vision for the growth plan. In April, we had an activity looking at where we expected people would be and what activities they'd do. Essentially, it was an area map showing body heat — where many people would be moving around by many means and where few people would be. In May, we took the area map magnified so the scale worked with Lego blocks and talked about the height of buildings. In June, we reviewed specific sections of the area to go over details about activity and scale. It wasn't until our session in September when we were introduced to the Guidebook that I realized that we weren't just piloting local area plans that included more than one community, we were piloting the new Guidebook.

Those sessions from April and May make me trust the Guidebook, but I doubt I or other working group members have fully digested the Guidebook's contents. I expected the new Guidebook would add a few new forms (ideally including urban townhouses and rowhouses so we can have abundant, dense, family-sized homes) and we'd just slide some streets up the scale in the last Developed Areas Guidebook by a certain number of increments. That method might work but wouldn't produce homes for all the people who want to live in Calgary in the next generation or two. The Guidebook's method does that more effectively and allows more flexible designs than my idea or our current system.

#### What I don't like about the Guidebook right now

1. It's long. Could an external technical writer or editor go over it? A high school graduate with an hour or two should be able to understand the land use bylaw and have a hope of developing something. **Developers shouldn't just be people who can hire consultants to work through the code and lawyers to fight through the application and appeal process.** A shorter, simpler Guidebook should make it easier for many people to be small scale developers. A compact code is more likely to produce a compact city.

2. There has been talk of removing heritage policies from the Guidebook, which is concerning.
3. Our built form policy and our stormwater management policy don't seem to align with each other. I'm sure industry has pointed out other technical details where City policies disagree with each other.
4. There's a sense that there hasn't been enough engagement or acceptance of the Guidebook. Having time for more engagement and discussion so the Guidebook and North Hill go to Council together, or two weeks apart so North Hill can be updated if needed, seems to be a remedy.

#### What I like about the Guidebook

1. **Life happens at street level.** The Guidebook's focus on what happens on the ground should help us better consider trade-offs between buildings' street level design and height. I hope the Guidebook's approach allows for more lovable and durable buildings, so we see replacing aging buildings as an upward trade.
2. The parking section of chapter 3 is an improvement. Notably, **the direction that parking requirements should be based on geographic location, not the type of use, should produce better local buildings and encourage adaptive reuse.** A few months ago, an applicant wanted to put a restaurant with a residence above in a century-old brick building on Edmonton Trail. The current work-live parking requirement of five stalls makes parking consume as much land as the building. This is an unproductive use of valuable land. **It would be better to remove red tape and let businesses decide how much parking they need.** Until then, the Guidebook is an improvement because it doesn't require a building on Edmonton Trail to have as much parking as a building in isolated places.
3. Finally, the Guidebook's provision for a single low-density district will be essential in how Calgary grows while **retaining abundant, attainable family-sized homes.** I hope it allows for **widespread incremental growth that allows families to adapt as their circumstances change.** Done right, it should help us have children in neighbourhoods with schools, help our local businesses be profitable and stay open, and perhaps produce a range of unit sizes so three generations of a family can live within walking distance of each other.  
  
**The low-density district is an example of deregulation.** Our current planning system doesn't prevent local redevelopment; it only ensures that existing detached homes will be replaced by larger detached homes with one door, instead of those with two or more. **Allowing market-rate, attainable housing throughout the city would give us a competitive advantage over other cities like Vancouver and Toronto that, instead of a free market, believe that a detached home should only be replaced with a larger home for residents who are as rich or richer than current residents.**

Our neighbourhoods may change as a result. However, those changes may be better than the alternatives. As Alex Bozikovic, a Toronto-based architecture critic, describes, "The 'character,' in the way we often think about it, will change. There will be more front doors. But the alternative is a city that shuts out new arrivals, or shunts them into illegal rooming houses, and grey-market basements, and condos on old industrial sites. If that is the city we end up building, it will say a lot about our character."<sup>2</sup>

**We may begin to see 'stability' as many small changes on every block rather than neighbourhoods that are emptier than they were a few years or a generation ago and schools that are kept open by bussing children across the city.** Parts of Renfrew show what a low-density district could look like in Calgary with multi-unit or clustered housing types that are compatible in scale with detached homes.

Today, some neighbourhoods contribute more to MDP growth goal than others because zoning prevents growth. If that continues, residents of the neighbourhoods that grow will likely want more and larger amenities, adding more public infrastructure that we won't be able to afford to maintain.

Cities are complex, adaptive systems consisting of people and land. **If we're like other North American cities, we're functionally insolvent.** Fortunately, Calgarians can decide what to do with our land in response to this predicament. **I don't know how much private investment we're going to need or how much public infrastructure we'll have to stop repairing to balance our private-to-public investment ratio.** Maybe I shouldn't be enthusiastic about what that means for my neighbourhood. However, I'd much rather have all of Calgary's neighbourhoods allowing many different types of small changes, than have Renfrew punch above our weight to get Calgary's finances in order while other parts of the city get a pass because they claim 'heritage' or 'character.' **It took us decades to get here. Like post-flood clean up, it's going to take many people to get us out of this mess.**

Thank you for considering my perspective,  
Nathan Hawryluk

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<sup>2</sup> Alex Bozikovic, "The term 'neighbourhood character' is a euphemism for something ugly," The Globe and Mail, June 7, 2019 (updated June 14, 2019), <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-the-term-neighbourhood-character-is-a-euphemism-for-something-ugly/>