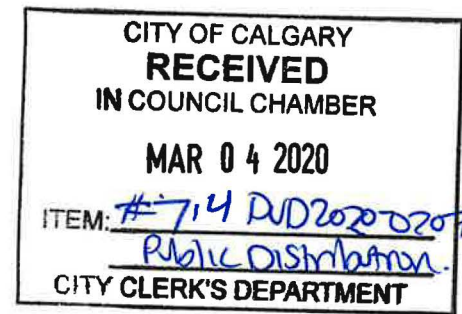


Members of SPC on Planning and Urban Development
City Clerk's Office, Legislative Service Division #8007
The City of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta



4 March 2020

Objection to the Guidebook for Great Communities

I am writing to object to the proposed approval of the Guidebook for Great Communities coming forward for your consideration. I urge you to defer approval until serious flaws in the content are corrected.

With respect, this plan is not ready to be put into effect. In its present form, it will damage aspects of Calgary's urban landscape that are critical to the liveability of the city.

For context, I write as a resident of a single-family residential neighbourhood, presently under the R-C1 designation. I have lived in Scarboro with my family for over twenty years and greatly appreciate the opportunity to live in such a neighbourhood, a relatively secure inner-city setting, with an exceptionally functional and civic-minded community. A major focus of community action has for decades been centred on protecting the character and liveability of the neighbourhood. Of course, there are many other such single-family residential communities in Calgary, with residents who appreciate their neighbourhoods and are prepared to work hard to defend aspects they value.

Many Calgarians have engaged responsibly and civilly in City planning processes to protect the character of their residential neighbourhoods. The new initiative sweeps aside that cumulative effort, for no apparent net benefit.

The policies for urban planning that have been proposed in the Guidebook and the proposed Bylaw for "low density residential" are complicated. My points are not to detail the proposals, but to speak to their effect.

There are three serious deficiencies that need to be addressed before the Guidebook and related changes go any further.

1. There must be a single-family residential designation

The "Local Housing" category proposed in the Guidebook, combined with a new Bylaw for "low density residential," will effectively remove the R-C1 category, which currently reserves many neighbourhoods for single-family residential use. The new category will allow for light commercial uses, as well as multi-family residential buildings

This will affect hundreds of thousands of Calgarians in ways that I fear very few are yet aware. Many Calgarians place a high value on R-C1 neighbourhoods, especially for the relative security and calm of such neighbourhoods for certain phases of life. By suggesting a mixed-use definition of Local Housing, the Guidebook removes an important and valued choice, not only for existing residents, but for people considering Calgary as a new home.

2. There needs to be an integration between planning tools and green spaces, including tree canopy and urban forest.

The proposed planning regime does not consider the need to restore and to build the tree canopy in the City. The canopy has been in decline, with an aging stock and severe weather events taking a heavy toll. An urban forest is known to be a vital to the physical and mental health of individuals and communities, for adaptation to climate change, and for energy efficiency. Trees do not survive in small patches, or where light is obstructed by nearby structures. The lower lot coverage and height of structures in single-family residential areas is important to tree-growth. The Guidebook needs to be amended in keeping with the City of Calgary's stated commitment to the health of trees and greenspace.

3. There needs to be provision for notice to residents of applications for developments that are significantly different from current building forms in a neighbourhood, and opportunities to consult and influence such decisions.

Once the Guidebook for Great Communities is approved and proposed changes to Bylaw and districts are implemented, residents of what are now single-family residential neighbourhoods will have little input on decisions to allow commercial developments or multi-family projects on adjacent properties. In the case of contextual Development Applications, there will be no consultation. Residents will be given no notice, no opportunity to provide input and no influence on the character of new developments in their neighbourhood or across their property line.

The planning regime proposed here will reduce the influence of local residents on the evolution and character of their communities. Citizens will still be called upon to engage in local area planning processes, but there will not be the options for single family residential neighbourhoods that currently exist.

Finally, from a communications point of view, the implications of the new regime for single family neighbourhood needs to be better explained to all Calgarians, and their concerns solicited and addressed before the Guidebook for Great Communities is approved.

Thank you,



Jessie Sloan