

Letter of Support: Federation of Calgary Communities



May 18th, 2017

David Down, Chief Urban Designer
City Wide Urban Design - Community Planning
The City of Calgary P.O. Box 2100, Station M
Calgary, AB T2P 2M5

Re: Urban Design Review Framework

Dear Mr. Down,

Thank you for your efforts to engage the Federation and Calgary's Communities on Urban Design Review Framework. The Federation is the support organization for Calgary's 152 community associations. While we attempt to provide a broad community perspective on issues, we cannot represent the opinion of every community or individual communities that may have differing opinions.

Urban design has an impact on all communities across Calgary. The Federation engaged its membership through correspondence sent to community presidents and planners as well as their internal Urban Planning Committee to introduce the project and ask for feedback. As a result of our engagement with our membership, our comments are as follows:

1. Through the various opportunities to liaise with the City and various external stakeholders, we are pleased with the direction this project is taking to elevate urban design in our City. Urban design is an important aspect of city planning that considers the form and function of our communities. The incorporation of the Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP) into two stages of the process will not only elevate the caliber of design that we should be expecting but also challenge those in the development industry to meet these standards and to promote the benefits of good urban design. The UDRP may even challenge the City to change some of the existing policies that limit good design from occurring in Calgary.
2. As the UDRP understands its role and responsibility, one of the changes that we would like to see expanded in their scope and mandate is the review of Outline Plans (OP) and Area Structure Plans (ASP). Urban Design as defined by the *Revised Terms of Reference* is "the practice of giving form, shape, and character to the arrangement of buildings, or **whole neighbourhoods**, or the city." (*Urban Design Framework, City of Calgary, 2011*) If we follow this definition then by default, whole neighbourhoods that are characterized by OPs and ASPs should also be reviewed. We believe that if the City wants to move towards principles that promote a healthy and walkable environment, we need to change the structure of how we design our communities and this starts with the outline plans. Creating a masterplan that focuses on challenges such as circulation from the initial stage will potentially prevent some of the challenges that we have found as a development builds out, such as congestion from developments that have circulation issues which push onto the greater community, piecemeal applications which do not compliment the community, speeding, lack of pedestrian environments, inefficient use

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of spaces, and etc. While we acknowledge the change to incorporate urban designers into the community planning team is one step in the right direction, an independent body of professionals has the opportunity to objectively challenge our existing city standards for the overall sake of better design.

3. Urban design is a separate and recognized profession outside of Canada. If we want to not only elevate design in our city but also the profession, the UDRP panel should also include professionals that collaborate in the urban design process such as urban design professionals, social planners, and transportation planners. With the appropriate players, collectively as a city, we can begin to maximize the benefits of urban design, such as using design to address larger social issues such as mental or physical health.

Sincerely,



Carrie Yap B.A., M.Sc. Urban Design
Urban Planner

Cc: Dawn Clarke, City Wide Urban Design, Community Planning

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