

Community Association Letter



August 20, 2020

Sent Via Email:

The City of Calgary/Mail Code: #8076
Floor 5, 800 Macleod Trail S.E.
P.O. Box 2100, Station M
Calgary, AB T2P 2M5

Attention: Calgary Planning Commission

Dear Commissioners;

Re: Varsity Community Associations Comments on LOC 2019-0189

The Varsity Community Association (VCA) has been working with the City of Calgary and the Applicant (City of Calgary- Building Infrastructure-Facility Management) for more than two years on this proposal before you. The VCA has been supportive of both the renovation or replacement of Fire Hall #17 and of the proposed Affordable Housing project of 48 units. However, we are unable to support an approval of the project as proposed due to some serious flaws, including:

1. Lack of a Concept Plan for the full site, as required by the MDP
2. The Use of a DC District
3. Access/Egress
4. The arrangement of uses on the site

1. Lack of Concept Plan

The MDP on p. 2-17 states that large redevelopment sites mandate "In Developed Areas, require comprehensive plans when large sites (greater than 1.0 hectare in size) become available for redevelopment. To the greatest extent possible, new development should be integrated into the fabric of the surrounding communities." The applicant, in response to item #4 of the DTR 1 implied there was a Master Plan done in 2018, but dividing the site into two and labelling the north part for housing/fire hall does not meet even basic standards of a comprehensive site plan. The City review team asked the applicant to prepare a comprehensive plan after this and the applicant then suggested lots 2 and 3 would be for mixed use and a park as its view of the comprehensive plan in October of 2019. This, in our minds, also does not pass the comprehensive plan minimum requirements. The whole site has not been examined in a comprehensive manner as required and as such a valuable piece of land warrants.

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Such a concept plan needs to recognize both the University of Calgary master planning immediately to the south (with the possibility of creating a complementary mixed use node with U of C), long range plans for University Research Park, ties to Varsity (especially the housing component), the linkages (pedestrian and bike) to the area, and the relationship the proposed park would have with other land uses and its likely usage. Such a plan would attempt to optimize the range of uses on the site to achieve the highest and best use of the almost 4.0-acre site.

2. The Use of a DC District

The City strongly discourages the use of DC Districts. Given the range of uses proposed for the site (affordable housing, fire hall, shared office space and day care), the MX-1 or 2 Districts provide for the range of uses proposed and the DC confirms that range of uses. The proposed DC allows for an increase from 16 metres to 23 metres for height, in addition to removing any controls on the maximum allowable density. It appears the only need for the DC is to support the extra height of the housing on top of the fire hall. If the housing component was separated from the top of the fire hall and located apart from the fire hall, perhaps fronting 37th St., there would be no need for a DC District (unless the intent is to appeal-proof the subsequent development permit). That topic is further expanded in item 4 below.

3. Access

Presently, the fire hall gains access onto 32 Ave. NW, an arterial standard Road. The VCA requested from the beginning that access remain on 32 Ave NW. Originally, the Fire Department stated the current access configuration was fine. More recently, the Fire Department has changed its opinion and now insists access come onto 37th St., which is a local residential street, with bike lanes. The VCA transportation consultant, a professional transportation engineer, examined both access points and concluded, while both have issues, one is not significantly operationally better or safer than the other and both can be used. An additional issue with the proposed egress is the direct visual and noise impacts on the adjacent residential properties along 37 St. NW. Introducing such impacts into an established area with no proposed measures to mitigate the impacts is inconsiderate at a minimum. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that access remain on 32 Ave NW as a reasonable accommodation for community concerns.

4. The Arrangement of Uses on the Site

The VCA is supportive of both the affordable housing and fire hall on the site. With regard to shared office space/corporate accommodation, the amount of space has been reduced from 1000 m2 of regular office space to now to about 170 m2 for corporate accommodation. Given that when this project was first circulated to other City departments, the only department who expressed interest was Affordable Housing, there remains some doubt if that space is actually required. Lastly, while the VCA supports affordable housing and childcare, it is not convinced placing those uses on top of the fire hall is the most appropriate, particularly in view of the other options that are available on this site, unlike some other locations. While examples of housing on top of fire halls

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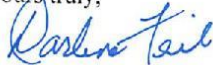
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can be given (including Calgary), this project accommodates children in both the housing and the day care which may be stressful for the children. We also must remember that this fire hall will be the largest in all of Calgary with 5 bays servicing more than 50,000 people (usual target is 30,000 people).

Community Request (we need to see the CPC report before we determine our approach.)

The VCA would request that CPC table the project with the request that the applicant prepare a fulsome comprehensive plan in conjunction with the VCA and that primary access to the fire hall remain on 32 Ave NW.

Yours truly,



Darlene Feil, Chair
Varsity Community Association
Civic Affairs Committee

cc. Councillor Ward Sutherland, Ward 1 (by email)
cc. Councillor Druh Farrell, Ward 7 (by email)
cc. Ms. Courtney Stengel, City of Calgary (by email)
cc. Mr. Roy Wright, Roan Consulting (by email)
cc. Mr. Mac Logan, Maplehawk Consulting (by email)
cc. Mr. Robert A. Benson, VCA (by email)

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