



February 6th, 2017

To Members of Council,

Re: Council Innovation Fund

This is a letter in support of the Cliff Bungalow-Mission Community Association (CBMCA) 17th Avenue SW pocket park application for the Council Innovation fund. The pocket park is not a new idea, but the plan led by the CBMCA is an innovative approach to how communities and other resident-led projects can contribute to city building.

Calgary, like many other cities, is experiencing the consequences of Euclidean zoning and rapid urbanization which has resulted in S.L.O.A.P or Space Leftover after Planning. Leftover spaces or underutilized land that was once thought as an eyesore, are now being seen as opportunities by our Calgary communities to reclaim the space for public use. In the last few years we have noticed a growing trend amongst our communities towards placemaking, with the particular theme of creating spaces for community life.

From the Botanical Gardens in Silver Springs, to the former convenience store in Hillhurst-Sunnyside, the desire for more community spaces that help foster community life are growing, and the pocket park initiated by CBMCA is no different. Some of the benefits of these resident led initiatives other than the community space itself are the sense of identity and character that form, while social benefits include increased resident engagement, sense of empowerment through community ownership of space, and the development of neighbourly and community relations. Projects or initiatives like the ones listed above can also fill the gap for what is deficient in our communities. In particular, the 17th avenue pocket park could be a modeled solution for creating community amenity spaces in areas of the city that are underserved.

Jan Gehl says that "Good architecture ensures good interaction between public space and public life. But while architects and urban planners have been dealing with space, the other side of the coin-life has been forgotten." The 17th Avenue pocket park attempts to resolve this challenge by taking an underutilized public space and breathing public life back into it. Similar to the planning process, the task of city building should not be left to two stakeholders. Encouraging resident-led initiatives that address some of our urban problems is a way that we can all contribute to city building and building a stronger city together. We encourage Council to support this project and to look at other opportunities where the City can assist and encourage these types of projects to form.

Sincerely,

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