

Beltline Neighbourhood Association comments

July 7, 2020

The City of Calgary
Planning and
Development 700
Macleod Trail S.E.
Calgary, AB T2G 2M3

ATTN: Gareth Webster, File Manager

RE: DP2020-3534 – Addition: Trade and exhibition facility – 1404 3 Street SE – Calgary Stampede BMO Centre Expansion (BMOx) – BNA Response

Dear Mr. Webster,

I am writing this letter in response to the above-noted development application on behalf of the Beltline Urban Development (BUD) committee, representing the board of directors of the Beltline Neighbourhoods Association (BNA). We have had several opportunities to discuss the project with the Calgary Stampede over the past several years, including most recently at a community engagement meeting on June 9. We are extremely appreciative of the level of engagement that has occurred on this file, both on the part of the Calgary Stampede and the Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC).

The BMO Centre expansion represents an exciting opportunity for Stampede Park, the Beltline and the City. Bringing a world-class tier 1 convention facility to Calgary puts us on par with cities like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver in terms of our ability to attract and host major conventions and trade shows. The increased exposure will help to diversify our economy and bring additional investment. The proposed facility will be an important landmark and a new anchor for Victoria Park.

The BNA fully supports this application and is looking forward to seeing this transformative project completed. We have the following specific comments based on the circulated application materials:

- **Landscape Design:** The design of the landscaped plaza at the corner of the 17 Avenue extension and 4 Street (Stampede Trail) is very good. Enhanced by the shelter provided by the extension of the roof of the building, we are confident that this can be a significant public space for the City. However, we would encourage the applicant to consider opportunities to program this space and keep it active year round. Since it is somewhat off the beaten track, a concerted effort will be required to ensure that it can draw people in (especially outside of event periods). The Eau Claire plaza, which is also inward focused and oriented away from downtown, is an example of how similar spaces can fail when they are not thoughtfully executed and lack necessary vibrancy and activation outside of festivals. The proposed skating rink (as shown in renderings that have been released) is very small. To be effective, we think the space should be closer in scale to Olympic Plaza. We hope that we will see opportunities to accommodate active programs, larger events and installations as the design evolves.
- **Architectural Language:** We appreciate the architectural ambition of the proposal. We believe that the building will be a significant landmark, and will serve as a beacon for the Stampede from a distance. Formal gestures, such as the roof extension over the plaza will be fundamental to the success of the building.
- **Scale:** We fully support the decision to build a taller structure and free up horizontal space on the ground plane for exterior amenities. Although we feel that the design has done a good job of addressing scale from a distance, it is not successful at grade. The lower three storeys of the building are very austere and harsh. With only large glazed areas and pre-function spaces, it is lacking the level of articulation and care that went into the design of the plaza. We feel strongly that more must be done to activate these elevations and mitigate the scale.

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- **Active Edges:** We are concerned about the lack of active building edges. We note that elevations directly facing Stampede Park (arguably the primary public face) include a significant quantity of glazing and exit doors, with virtually no active programming. While we understand that the life safety implications of a large assembly occupancy are significant, we would have liked to see this corner support much more at-grade intensity. There are in fact very few active, permeable edges along either the 17 Avenue or 4 Street facades, which is concerning since the opposite sides of the street will remain surface parking lots for the foreseeable future (and will therefore not contribute to the vitality of the corridors). The 'gravitational pull' required to draw people southward on 4 Street and eastward on 17 Avenue appears to be lacking.
- **Interfaces with the Beltline:** The building is inward facing. The design lacks active faces on either the Macleod Trail or 12 Avenue interfaces with the Beltline. In our opinion, this is a missed opportunity to provide better community permeability and an improved front door for the Stampede. The southwest corner of the building perpetuates the existing disconnect between BMO Centre and businesses on 17 Avenue, breaking the continuity between this intersection and Stampede Trail. Retail units and human-scaled spaces should be accommodated to mitigate CPTED issues at Victoria Park-Stampede Station and act as a 'breadcrumb' to help draw people into the Park.
- **Rapid Transit Connections:** The Council-approved Green Line alignment features a new underground station at 11 Avenue and 4 Street SE. Given the proximity to the Victoria Park-Stampede station (currently being upgraded as part of the 17 Avenue extension), there is a need to accommodate connections and transfers between the Red and Green lines. We believe that there will be a strong desire line continuing diagonally across the site between Victoria Park-Stampede and 4 Street SE stations. Pedestrian movements along this route should be encouraged and facilitated. Opportunities to capture more human traffic should be leveraged to make this area an active node in the City's public transportation network, not just a stand-alone convention centre. It is not reasonable to assume that LRT patrons will choose to take the longer route northward along Macleod Trail -- adjacent to the RedLine track -- and then eastward along 12 Avenue.
- **Loading Areas:** We would encourage the applicant to look at ways to better enclose and conceal the loading areas on the east side of the building. Many world-class convention facilities locate this infrastructure underground, or within the building enclosure. While we appreciate that the longer term ambition is to 'screen' the loading areas with retail buildings, we are concerned that this will be insufficient to address blight, CPTED and sightlines from higher elevations along the Ramsay escarpment.
- **Alternate Modes of Transportation:** There appears to be insufficient exterior bicycle parking for a major destination. This project would be a great candidate for a large bicycle station, capable of accommodating a significant quantity of parking during events. A bicycle station would also help mitigate the historic lack of cycle parking on Stampede Park. Is there room on the upgraded 17 Avenue for an active mobility corridor, accommodating bike and e-scooter use?

Thank you for considering our comments and we look forward to continuing to provide input into the development of the significant and exciting project.

Sincerely,



Tyson Bolduc
Director of Planning, BNA