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To: [Gondek, Jyoti](#); [Magliocca, Joe](#); [Sutherland, Ward](#); [Chu, Sean](#); [Woolley, Evan V.](#); [Carra, Gian-Carlo S.](#); [Farrell, Druh](#); [Chahal, George](#); [Davison, Jeffrey R.](#); [Keating, Shane](#); [EAWard10 - Lesley Stasiuk](#); [Demong, Peter](#); [Colley-Urquhart, Diane](#); [Farkas, Jeromy A.](#); [Office of the Mayor](#); [Public Submissions](#)
Subject: [EXT] Please reschedule the Guidebook for Great Communities review to the March 3, 2021 PUD meeting.
Date: Wednesday, December 9, 2020 2:31:02 PM
Attachments: [Multi-Community Letter re Guidebook Review at PUD, Dec 9, 2020.pdf](#)

For Consideration at the Dec 14, 2020 Calgary City Council Meeting
RE: Review of the Guidebook for Great Communities at the SPC on Planning and Urban Development (PUD), January 13, 2021 meeting

Mayor and Council:

The guidebook for Great Communities is scheduled for review at the January 13 PUD meeting.

Our understanding is that the revised Guidebook will not be published until early January.

This schedule does not allow enough time for the public to review the document and develop meaningful input for submission at the PUD meeting, especially with the Covid 19 regulation and restriction.

Attached is a letter cosigned by 26 Community Associations (to date) requesting that the review of the Guidebook be rescheduled to the March PUD meeting. We hope this issue will be considered at the Dec 14 Council meeting.

Regards

Michael Read

VP, Development

Elboya Heights Britannia Community Association

December 09, 2020

The City of Calgary

Attention:

Councillor Gondek, Chair, Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Design (PUD)
Mayor Nenshi, City Councillors

Via Email

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Dear Councillor Gondek:

Re: Please reschedule the Guidebook for Great Communities review to the March 3, 2021 PUD meeting.

We understand that the revised Guidebook for Great Communities is scheduled to be reviewed at the January 13, 2021 PUD meeting and that this latest version of the Guidebook is not expected to be published until sometime late December or early January. This gives a window of less than 15 days for the Community Associations to review the revisions and get feedback from their members. We need more time.

Calgary's Covid 19 crisis is worsening. Restrictions are increasing and there may be more by the end of December. The Covid 19 realities and restrictions, including the inability to hold in-person Town Hall meetings and the busy holiday season, slow down our ability to engage with our members. Ten to fifteen days will simply not be enough time for a meaningful review of the Guidebook. Realistically it will take at least 60 to 90 days to review the latest changes, advise our residents, develop thoughtful and meaningful feedback, and put together an appropriate response for the PUD meeting.

The Administration's revisions to the Guidebook include clarifying the Urban Form Classification System. They are also including other textual amendments to respond to previous feedback. Their ongoing work with stakeholders has been meaningful and continues to improve not just the final document, but the conversation between stakeholders and Administration.

We appreciate the Administration's efforts and support the direction we believe they are taking for the proposed revisions to the Guidebook. We are heartened by their response and proposed revisions.

However, we can not know or fully understand the final revisions until the new Guidebook is published. In a statutory document like the Guidebook, details matter and words matter.

We request that the PUD Guidebook review be rescheduled to the March 3, 2021 meeting assuming it is published late December 2020 or early January 2021.

Thank you

Signed by 26 Communities Associations (to date) including:

CCC: Communities	Ward
Scenic Acres	1
Varsity	1
Brentwood	4
Cambrian Heights	4
Triwood	4
Dalhousie	4
Westgate	6
Banff Trail	7
Hounsfeld Heights Briar Hill	7
Hillhurst Sunnyside	7
Parkdale	7
University Heights	7
Rosedale	7
Crescent Heights	7
West Hillhurst	7
Cliff Bungalow Mission	8
Mount Royal	8
Rutland Park	8
Scarboro	8
Bridgeland Riverside	9
Inglewood	9
Elbow Park	11
Elboya Heights Britannia	11
Meadowlark Park	11
Mayfair Bel Aire	11
Woodcreek	13

December 30, 2020

Re: **File Number PUD2021-0015; January 13th**
Guidebook for Great Communities; Letter of Support

I am writing this letter in support of the amended Guidebook for Great Communities.

As a citizen, member of an established neighborhood, and individual with professional experience in the development industry, I believe this version of the Guidebook achieves its intent. **The Guidebook provides a comprehensive and inclusive approach to ensuring future developments align with the communities' long-term vision of themselves.**

I am a member of the Heritage Communities Local Area Planning Group. Our group ranged in demographic, professional background, affiliation to the subject communities, and included business owners, community members and development representatives. We worked through the first stages of planning our community and started at the end of 2019. Throughout the process, our group found the framework workable, applicable and enjoyed talking about the future of the Heritage Communities. At no point were there comments regarding lack of options or appropriate development when we planned our future community.

Our group has not been able to meet since the spring given the Guidebook's delays. We have lost momentum and our group's shared history and process is at risk of being lost if there are further delays.

While waiting for the Heritage Communities Group work to proceed, I participated in the supplementary Guidebook Focus Group to provide feedback on improved Urban Form Categories. The group again included a wide range of interests – personal and professional. Discussions were comprehensive and lively on how to improve the Guidebook Urban Form Categories. I am happy to see the results of the engagement and feel **the recent revisions made improvements to usability, clarified where there was confusion and addressed community members concerns over residential categories.**

Delaying this framework any longer will result in a loss of resources, hours spent to date by City staff, community members and industry on a project that is complete. Without approving this framework our communities have no unified plan to direct changes as development requests (permits) are submitted. Personally, as someone who participated in the Local Area Plan and Guidebook Engagement focus groups it is disheartening to think that all of our work may be for nothing.

Following are the key reasons I believe the Guidebook needs to be approved in its current, revised form:

- **The Guidebook has been tested through three concurrent Local Area Planning Groups.** Concerns raised in these groups have been addressed and integrated into the revised Guidebook.
- **Engagement has been extensive** – including additional focus group engagement sessions on revised sections. – always with a mix of citizens, industry representation, and professional planners. We need to trust this work and engagement process and respect the professionals who have contributed to the framework.
- **Communities each self-determine how the framework is applied** through Community Local Area Plans. This is not a top-down direction of development from the City. Using the local area plan approach, as in the case of the Heritage Communities Local Area Plan, North Hill and Westbrook, a mix of community members, planners, business owners and other interested in that community each contribute to the long-term vision. Each of these Local Area Plans include fulsome

engagement processes. Any fear of development being forced into an area inappropriately is addressed through the rigorous process of engagement, consultation and follow-up engagement.

- **The majority of delays have been due to misinformation** – there is a website full of incorrect information, fear mongering and even Councillor staff who are feeding misinformation about what the framework is, how it's applied and how development works. Further delays and changes to the policies are catering to misinformation rather than improving the framework. **Public policy makers should not be forced to make bad policy due to misinformation.** As noted above, engagement has been extensive and inclusive. We cannot waste further resources trying to correct misinformation rather than improving policy. We are spinning our professional planning and communicator's resources in circles as they attempt to please the political jockeying and misinformation.
- **The framework improves un-coordinated policies that overlap creating a one clear place to define development.** Currently, whether you are a homeowner, future homeowner, business owner etc., the ability for you to understand what you can and cannot do with your property can be challenging. We need to remember that the Guidebook applies to all levels of development and that all of us benefit from having one clear set of documents to define our options.
- **Development does not happen without a market – providing options does not equate to certain build out. Updated Residential Urban Form Category supports options.** At the end of the day, the Guidebook provides a framework, with Local Area Plans determining where the Urban Forms apply in the community. Regardless of what is "planned", the change will not happen without a private market desire to make the change happen. We need to hope for a City with more density, more vibrancy, and more choice rather than sprawl. Many outspoken voices highlight fears about densification disregarding the fact that development matches the market demand, not that development happens everywhere that it can. The updated Guidebook includes a good compromise on residential urban form to allow more people to live at a residence through secondary suites or carriage homes, while supporting the feel of single family homes that some are concerned about preserving. If our City is to be resilient for years to come, and support options, and higher density, this is the least we can do.

Thank you for taking the time to review my reasons to support the Guidebook. I would like to thank the hard work of the planning and communications teams at the City of Calgary for all of their work in the past year and a half on the Heritage Communities Area Plan and hope we can continue to progress our vision for our community as soon as possible.

Respectfully,

Jacqueline Grabowski

6 January 2021

Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Development

Re: Guidebook for Great Communities

Since the fall of 2019, I have written three or four letters to this Committee about the Guidebook for Great Communities. As in my previous letters, **I am asking this committee to recommend Council approve the Guidebook in March. Also, please have a set time so many people can participate in the public hearing at Council.** In the past, I have tried to situate the Guidebook within North American planning trends to remove barriers and allow the next increment of intensity as-of-right so residents can adapt to an uncertain future. In this letter, I will look at local financial reasons why the City of Calgary needs this change. If any of my math is incorrect, please let me know how to get it correct.

For a few years, Council has been trying to respond to our fundamental predicament: whether we have enough private investment to support our public investment. Charles Marohn, co-founder of Strong Towns, suggests “a target ratio of private investment to public investment of somewhere between 20:1 on the risky end and 40:1 on the secure end.”¹ The most recent City of Calgary Infrastructure Status Report stated the City’s infrastructure and assets were valued at \$84.7B on 1 January 2017.² The average between the 1 July 2016 and 1 July 2017 total property assessments (\$303B³ and \$311B,⁴ respectively) gives us an estimated value of private property on 1 January 2017 of \$307B. Thus, **Calgary has a private to public investment ratio of 3.6:1.**

In other words, someone with property assessed at \$360,000 would have a ‘share’ of our infrastructure of \$100,000. To put that as a percentage, the City of Calgary’s infrastructure is worth 27% of the private property in town. The median detached home in Calgary (averaged between July 2016 and July 2017) was worth \$470,000; the median

¹ <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2015/3/29/the-density-question>

² City of Calgary 2017 Infrastructure Status Report, page 15,
<https://www.calgary.ca/content/dam/www/cs/iis/documents/pdf/infrastructure-status-report.pdf>

³ <https://newsroom.calgary.ca/download/282439/2017propertyandbusinessassessmentrolls.pdf>

⁴ <https://newsroom.calgary.ca/download/499159/factsheet-2018propertyandbusinessassessmentroll.pdf>

residential condo was worth \$265,000. Their ‘share’ of our public infrastructure is \$130,556 and \$73,611, respectively.

Dividing the replacement value by the remaining average asset life of each business unit’s assets shows us how much the City, like homeowners saving for their inevitable roof repair, should collect or save each year to maintain the infrastructure we had in 2017.⁵

Business Unit	Replacement Value (\$B)	Remaining Average Asset Life (years)	Annual Cost (\$B/year)
Roads	\$20.48	12.51	\$1.64
Water	\$52.39	37.98	\$1.38
Calgary Parks	\$2.58	7.97	\$0.32
Calgary Transit	\$3.89	24.05	\$0.16
Information Technology	\$0.42	2.89	\$0.15
Fleet Services	\$0.34	3.39	\$0.10
Calgary Recreation	\$0.78	23.76	\$0.03
Calgary Fire Department	\$0.58	19.81	\$0.03
Facility Management	\$0.96	35	\$0.03
Calgary Police Service	\$0.60	22.94	\$0.03
Calgary Housing Company	\$0.41	23.97	\$0.02
Calgary Housing Business Unit	\$0.48	31	\$0.02
Calgary Parking Authority	\$0.34	25.87	\$0.01
Waste and Recycling Services	\$0.32	45.43	\$0.01
Calgary Public Library	\$0.12	29.3	\$0.004
Total			\$3.92

In other words, if Calgary is going to maintain its infrastructure, it needs to collect \$3.92B every year – good, bad or pandemic-filled.

Though Roads’ assets of \$20.48B are a quarter of our total infrastructure, because of their remaining average asset length, they should be 40% of our total annual infrastructure costs. If Calgarians looked at this table and wanted to lower taxes, what maintenance would they prioritize: roads or water?

⁵ City of Calgary 2017 Infrastructure Status Report, Appendix 1 and 3, pages 36 and 38.

Knowing the total that the City should collect avoid having unfunded liabilities, by dividing the total annual cost (\$3.92B) by the total private investment (\$307B) and multiplying it by \$100,000, we find that **the City should collect an annual share of \$1,277 for every \$100,000 worth of private property. The person in Calgary's median detached home assessed at \$470,000 would have an annual 'share' of \$6,002 (\$3,384 for someone in the median condo).** Calgary's median residential tax bill in 2016 and 2017 averaged to \$1,848.⁶ **To meet that annual 'share' or infrastructure maintenance, we would need to more than triple our taxes.**

In 2017, Calgary's operating budget was \$3.97B.⁷ It is unlikely the City devoted \$3.92B to infrastructure maintenance. If I have read the report correctly, the \$3.92B we need every year would cover rebuilding all \$84.7B of infrastructure up to installing the first set of light bulbs, but not keeping the lights on or replacing burnt out lights. It pays to replace garbage and recycling trucks, but not drivers' salaries. That, plus paying for other services, would need to come from the remaining \$50 million.

If this math is correct, it shows why we cannot have nice things, whether we are thinking of heritage preservation, business supports, great transit, sound walls, street trees, or reducing taxes. Common sense says that most of our costs were set when we built our infrastructure, so there is only so much any Council can cut before we have unfunded liabilities, which the infrastructure report calls 'infrastructure gaps.'

Combining low density development with expensive infrastructure is a recipe for becoming a functionally insolvent city. It makes a fragile city that cannot endure difficulty. We may say that people want that combination, so the market should supply it. However, because we ignore the long-term infrastructure costs, people cannot make fully informed decisions. It is like saying that people prefer tenderloin steak over burgers in a restaurant where they cost the same because the full bill does not arrive until after the diners have left the table.

⁶ <https://www.calgary.ca/cfod/finance/property-tax/statistical-data/median-residential-property-tax.html>

⁷ <https://www.calgary.ca/content/dam/www/cfod/finance/documents/plans-budgets-and-financial-reports/annual-reports/annual-report-2017.pdf>

Calgary is not the only place with this predicament. The Black Diamond and Turner Valley amalgamation report put it directly: “The growing need for funding to address infrastructure deficits and replacement needs is colliding with either a shrinking, or a peaked ability to generate revenue. **The ability to tax our way out of these challenges is no longer possible.**”⁸

Historically, Council has tried to deal with this predicament by taxing business at higher rates. That worked while large companies that were based downtown were highly profitable. Then Council tried to have businesses outside downtown shoulder more of the cost, like taking a loss on 80% or 90% of what the City does while trying to make up for the loss with the remainder. That approach may work for a business that can try to make an annual profit in December, but cities are playing an infinite game; they cannot go out of business and sell their streets and pipes to neighbouring towns. More recently, Council has shifted more of the responsibility for our maintenance costs to residents.

While there are limits to how Council can change our tax system, Council can deal with the trouble at the heart of our predicament: **most neighbourhoods in our city are not productive enough in terms of value/area to maintain their own infrastructure.** We do not need to blame those areas or their residents for that lower productivity. Most neighbourhoods were not designed to be more productive. Some neighbourhoods were even designed to hinder adaptation and productivity. Sometimes people claim that their neighbourhoods’ development patterns, which consume more resources than they contribute to the city, are part of their community character. However, **‘community character’ should not bankrupt our city.**

Council can improve our private to public investment ratio by changing our city’s development pattern by **allowing every neighbourhood to become incrementally**

⁸ Black Diamond and Turner Valley: Amalgamation Feasibility Study, 12 July 2017, page 9.
<https://www.town.blackdiamond.ab.ca/DocumentCenter/View/1053/Final-Amalgamation-Feasibility-Study---July-2017>

more productive. The simplest, fastest, and, I would say, most conservative approach would be to ask Calgarians what they think the next increment of intensity should be in their neighbourhoods and allow it as-of-right (in Calgary's planning language "permitted" or "contextually approved") everywhere. It could be adding a suite or becoming a duplex. It could be higher intensity like a three-plex, four-plex, or more. Council could change the city's base zoning or simply add "semi-detached, etc." as a permitted use in every land use category of the Land Use Bylaw. Then many Calgarians could build lasting wealth in Calgary. It would allow a freer housing market which can better respond to demand and prices. It would allow people to adapt to uncertain times.

Though Council has avoided that quick step by asking administration to create the Guidebook, **the Guidebook should be the first step toward gentle density everywhere and actual density where it makes sense so we can become a more financially stable city.** And the Guidebook **must** include some form of low-density district that allows higher productivity than detached homes.

It has been argued that the Guidebook "may be a further step towards the extinction of the traditional single-family home."⁹ Respectfully, that is baloney. Renfrew has been zoned for duplexes for forty years. Detached homes from decades ago still stand. New detached homes are being built. Renfrew includes a century-old duplex that is being adapted into a detached home. Parents are raising children in family-sized duplexes and rowhouses. Unless Council decides to add density minimums, which I would not suggest, **allowing more housing options is not banning detached homes.**

Some people have told me we should follow Toronto's and Vancouver's approach of "high-rise density, low-scale suburbia, little in between."¹⁰ Yet, this means "the housing needed for a constantly growing population is restricted to a few areas, where increasingly tall towers are erected. This tall-and-sprawl straitjacket dominates

⁹ <https://calgaryherald.com/opinion/columnists/opinion-is-calgary-moving-toward-the-extinction-of-single-family-homes>

¹⁰ <https://pricetags.ca/2019/10/17/the-grand-bargain-illustrated/>

development.”¹¹ It leads to further speculation where if one lot is worth \$100 million because a 20-storey building can be built on it, and a lot is worth \$1 million two blocks away because it can build a detached home, what is the empty lot between them worth? The owner of that empty lot is betting on finding out. Yet that approach does not build enough houses for people who need them at prices they can afford or create enough lasting wealth to maintain our infrastructure.

A better approach is making small levels of change easy everywhere by removing barriers that prevent bottom-up participation. We can allow neighbourhoods to become more productive and help us improve our private to public investment ratio. We can make the next increment of intensity as-of-right. We can make it easier for people to start home-occupied businesses. As Curtis Carlson observes, “innovation that happens from the bottom up tends to be chaotic but smart. Innovation that happens from the top down tends to be orderly by dumb.”¹²

The Guidebook and Local Area Plans can still produce large changes. However, rather than force every neighbourhood to become as productive as downtown and the Beltline at once, each neighbourhood can incrementally become a little more like Renfrew with its mix of missing middle housing, then more like Cliff-Bungalow, then like the Beltline. That is wiser than allowing them to decay, like the East Village, before highly disruptive changes eventually arrive. It is also essential if Calgary is going to continually improve.

Recommending the Guidebook for Great Communities go to Council will benefit many Calgarians and make a more financially stable city. If future Councils continue to do the math, they can avoid having budget battles like this Council has had to have for the last three years. **This is a chance to make a strategic decision. Please make it.**

Thank you,
Nathan Hawryluk

¹¹ <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/editorials/article-how-to-change-canadas-cities-for-the-better-without-changing-them-much/>

¹² <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/05/opinion/05friedman.html>