

Subject: Highland Park Golfcourse development

Dear Councillor Chu,

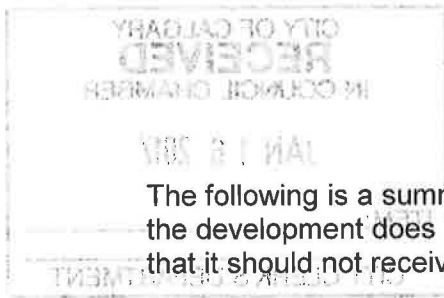
As a resident and homeowner in Calgary's northwestern community of Highwood, I am writing to express my objection to the proposed 'Highland Village Green development plan' based in Ward 4 which you represent. My wife and I moved into the community of Highwood in May, 2015. We live roughly two blocks away from the western edge of the proposed development. As such, we are concerned about the impact this development will have on the character of our neighbourhood, congestion of our streets & civil infrastructure and the loss of green space within our community.

Prior to seeing the development plans, I was excited about the possibilities this future development could bring to the surrounding communities. Such a vast, relatively unscathed piece of land in an inner city neighbourhood with mature trees, distinctive natural features, and a unique topography is a once-in-a-lifetime development opportunity. I was therefore highly disappointing when I saw the development proposal. Though I strongly believe that well managed density is vital for the promotion of vibrant and walkable neighbourhoods, this development adds numbers but not the infrastructure or amenities that would ultimately bring value to our community. Furthermore, it seemingly ignores slope adaptive design principles that I would have expected to see. While the Highland Park golf course is arguably one of the most significant sites remaining in Calgary, in my opinion, the development proposal fails to meet the site's potential.

I have several concerns with the Land Use application as proposed which I will outline in point form as follows:

- **Loss of consolidated green space.** The developer is dedicating 10.4% of their land to be retained as green open space (City requirement is a minimum of 10%). Much of this green space is interstitial between buildings, unconnected, and located in isolation from the communities that would benefit from it. Further, with this development, open space in Highland Park will decrease from 1.7 hectares/1000 people to 1.0 hectares/1000 people – only half of the City's target of 2.0 hectares/1000 people.
- **Destruction of natural features.** The site currently has 597 mature trees, of which, more than 90% will be demolished. In addition, the distinctive, natural topography will be destroyed, and confederation creek will be further buried under layers of fill. This approach may have serious consequences, including, but not limited to, loss of natural & community character, slope erosion, increased probability of flooding and the destruction of a natural habitat. Unfortunately, I believe many of these issues could have been resolved more balanced priorities on behalf of the developer.

Further to this point, The city of Calgary has a series of published guidelines and policies regarding slope adaptive development. If you have not yet read this document, I would strongly encourage you to do so prior to your decision on this item: http://www.calgary.ca/PDA/pd/Documents/planning_policy_information/slope-adaptive.pdf.



The following is a summary of some of these policies for your consideration. If the development does not meet these policies in your opinion, I would suggest that it should not receive your support as submitted.

- a. *Slope adaptive developments should be planned to minimize potential soil, geological and drainage problems.*
 - b. *Site planning should be undertaken to minimize grading, maximize views, and endeavour to maintain access to solar energy.*
 - c. *To minimize grading, roadways and driveways should be designed to complement the natural topography and conform to existing grades wherever possible.*
 - d. *Grading shall be designed to minimize the amount of excavation and filling required.*
 - e. *Staged grading, and the development of smaller pads or terraces, is preferred to mass grading of an entire sloped parcel of land.*
 - f. *Encourage protection of key topographic features (e.g. knolls, ridgelines, rock outcroppings, cliffs, ravines).*
 - g. *Best Storm Water Management Practices that disperse water over the subject site are preferred over channelling or underground methods, e.g. rain gardens, bio-swales, bio-retaining facilities.*
 - h. *Maintaining existing tree stands on sloped areas is encouraged.*
 - i. *Existing vegetation lines that reinforce the existing slope of the land should be maintained.*
- **Substantial density increase in an already congested neighbourhood.** While densification in a reasonable manner is welcome, 2070 added units with no planned infrastructure improvements will further strain existing road infrastructure that is already congested. While the Green line LRT will certainly mitigate some of the new demand, only 16% of Calgarians take public transit to commute to work with the bulk of the remaining population opting to drive to work. In addition, most of the proposed development falls outside of the Transit Oriented Development zone and is in closer proximity to Fourth street NW than Centre street North. I take the number 2 bus to and from work everyday. My experience is that the bus it is typically overcrowded and, at times, too full to stop to pick up additional passengers.
 - **Lack of Amenities.** While I understand that potential amenities will mostly be unknown until the time of a development permit application, it is unfortunate that the developer has opted not to commit to community amenities that would have made the proposal more appealing to the community. These amenities could include play areas, sport fields and/or courts, social spaces and investment into the existing community. The proposal is largely monotonous, focused solely on residential development – uncharacteristic of holistic and sustainable mixed-use development that is championed by the City of Calgary.
 - **Lack of community engagement.** My wife and I moved into the community over a year and half ago. During this time, plans were developed, submitted to the City, presented to council and were sent back for revisions and community input. Throughout this entire process, there has not been a single presentation,

workshop, charette or meeting between the developer and the general public. While there have been events hosted by the City which are appreciated – without the developer's direct participation, how can these be effective or productive? I have seen, and have participated in more community engagement sessions involving small building renovations in other Calgary communities than what I have seen from the developer regarding this prominent development.

I believe that the communities affected are willing to accept development and that they are open to compromise. A plan was put forward by the City as an outcome of the Green line LRT charette titled the "Community-based TOD concept plan" which did a much better job of acknowledging the community's concerns while still providing a profitable development opportunity for the landowner. While the proposal included over 1900 units, it preserved a large central green space which could retain existing trees & topography and could include a number of community amenities. Why was this proposal not acceptable to the developer? Likely, it didn't perform as well on their proforma. My question to you is the following – should communities be designed using spreadsheets that calculate profitability but little else? or by use of holistic, integrative, and sustainable design principles? If your answer is the latter, I encourage you to send this proposal back to the drawing board.

Finally, regardless of the outcome of your decision, I would like to suggest that Land Use approval be tied to Development Permit plans. This site cannot be another bait-and-switch victim – it is too significant and vital for the communities that depend on its success.

Best regards,

Dustin Unrau