Maria Filyk BA MD FRCPC

October 20, 2016

Calgary City Council

Your Worship Mayor Nenshi and Esteemed Councillors,

Above you see the view of downtown across what is now a much-used oasis from the very busy surrounding urban area. This is a view south from McKnight Blvd., the northwest corner of the former Highland Park Golf Course. I hope you can see that this area is a lowland, very treed and, as such, provides a

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naturally secluded and quiet space. Many people use this space as a refuge from the stress of the busy roadways and urban environment. Animals do, too.

As a physician and as a child psychiatrist I advocate for healthy practices, one of which is time in nature. To quote Richard Louv, (Louv, Richard. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Last Child in the Woods,Saving our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005, 2nd ed.2008):

"Within the space of a few decades, the way children understand and experience nature has changed radically...Today, kids are aware of the global threats to the environment - but their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading." (page 1). Yet scientific evidence is growing to support our innate knowledge of the mental, physical and spiritual healing benefits of nature.

As a participant of the Green Line charrette this week, I was encouraged to plan for high density. With that, I see a need for those dwelling in condos, apartments, seniors residences, low income housing, daycares - where there is limited nature - to have a place to go for 'therapy'. A healthier urban design would put children's daycares and pre-schools, seniors' housing and youth activity spaces near the current natural area where Confederation Creek flows into Highland Park. Please see also attached the site visit inventory of Mari Decker B.SC.,P.Biol. Senior Vegetation and Environmental Consultant.

You may say to yourself that people can travel to visit nature easily in Calgary. It is simply not so for most people, especially kids and seniors. And I know how much of a draw nature is as I walk through the Queens Park Cemetery and see the students from James Fowler High School drawn to the creek.

I ask that you demand the developer of our valuable resource to enhance this natural area so that all citizens benefit from it. I would like to see it become a destination park on the Green Line for all citizens, as the Jardin de Luxembourg is for Parisians.

Sincerely yours,

Maria Filyk

Mari Decker (B.Sc., P.Biol.), Senior Vegetation and Environmental Consultant with CH2M Hill Canada Ltd. Ms. Decker has over 15 years of experience consulting for development projects in western Canada, conducting vegetation inventories, rare plant and weed surveys, and recommending mitigation to lessen impacts.

A site visit was conducted at the Highland Park site on July 4, 2016. Three seeps and wetlands occur at the west edge of the Highland Park site. These features are likely the continuation of Confederation Creek, which is routed underground at the east edge of Confederation Park. The wetlands are 2 graminoid marshes (ie, dominated by grass-like species) and one wooded (deciduous) marsh. All three contain emergent vegetation; 2 contain standing water <0.5m deep, and one contains open water <0.5m deep.

On the west edge of the site, the seep emerges from the vegetated slope and forms an approximately 40x30m graminoid marsh. Native vegetation species include: fowl bluegrass (*Poa palustris*), Baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*), silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*; not a weed), northern willowherb (*Epilobium ciliatum*), and rush-like sedge (*Carex scirpoidea*). Non-native species include smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*), common plantain (*Plantago major*), and there is a trace amount of the Noxious weed Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). The center is grassy and standing water was observed.

From the northwest corner of the site, a seep emerges at a large willow tree with smaller Manitoba maple tree seedlings. An approximately 30x20m graminoid marsh occurs downslope. The wetland is dominated by native grass-like species including: water sedge (*Carex aquatilis*), beaked sedge (*Carex utriculata*), Baltic rush, tufted hair grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), and western wheatgrass (*Agropyron smithii*). Northern willowherb is also present. There are trace amounts of the Noxious weeds toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*) and perennial sow-thistle (*Sonchus arvensis*); one plant of the Prohibited Noxious weed nodding thistle (*Carduus nutans*) and Canada thistle is also present. The center is dominated by sedges and standing water was observed.

From the north edge of the site, a seep emerges from the vegetated slope and forms a wooded (deciduous) marsh edged by balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*), and Manitoba maple trees, with buckbrush (*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*) and wild rose (*Rosa acicularis*) shrubs in the understory. Native grasses and forbs include: fowl bluegrass, Baltic rush, northern willowherb, violets-not flowering (Viola sp.), silver weed. Smooth brome is present and there are trace amounts of Canada thistle and perennial sow-thistle. Open water pools occur in the center of this approximately 10x20m area.

These 3 marshes have been disturbed by past golf course activities, including soil movement, rock dumping, and seeding of non-native grass/forb seed mixtures (eg, alfalfa) in nearby areas. Despite this, savannah sparrows, and northern flickers were observed using the area in mid-morning, especially the wetland from the northwest corner which retains the most native vegetation and the most un-disturbed wetland structure and function. There may be a nest in this willow tree; further observation would be needed to confirm this. Further observation would also be needed to determine the potential for use by amphibians.

These features are on the edge of the property and it seems that it would be very feasible to incorporate them and related mature trees into the site redesign. Wetland and creek features would very likely be a draw to residents, making the property greener and more attractive and giving residents a calm outdoor area to enjoy. A pathway and benches/picnic table in proximity to the wetlands and trees would encourage pedestrians to enjoy the features. Simple restoration measures including eliminating the Noxious weeds and removing the dumped rock/asphalt in the wetland at the north edge, would be needed to improve the condition of the wetlands.