

Community Association Response

CLIFF BUNGALOW-MISSION COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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May 21, 2020

The City of Calgary

Re: LOC2020-0048

Address: 306 25 Avenue SW

Decision: Opposed¹

INTRODUCTION

The Cliff Bungalow-Mission Community Association (CBMCA) has reviewed the LOC2020-0048 application and is opposed to its approval for the reasons detailed below.

¹ The CBMCA issues four types of decision: 1 Opposed, 2 Concerned, 3 No Objection/Comment & 4 Support.

1. **Letters of Opposition** indicate that the Application has serious discrepancies with respect to our ARP's and/or Bylaw 1P2007. When a letter of opposition is issued we will consider filing an appeal with SDAB if remedial actions are not forthcoming in an amended Application.
2. **Letters of Concern** indicate that either we have insufficient information on which to base a decision or that the Application has some discrepancies with respect to our ARP's and/or Bylaw 1P2007. When a letter of concern is issued we may consider filing an appeal with SDAB if further clarifications and/or amended plans are not provided.
3. **Letters of No Objection/Comment** are provided for reference. They do not indicate approval or opposition. We would not normally consider filing an appeal with SDAB after providing a letter of No Objection/Comment, unless affected residents requested our support or the DP is issued with relaxations to the relevant bylaws.
4. **Letters of Support** indicate that we consider the Application to be in general accordance with our ARP's. To obtain a letter of support the applicant is strongly encouraged to work the CBMCA and affected residents through a charrette or similar community engagement design-based workshop. We would not consider filing an appeal with SDAB after providing a letter of support.

COMMENTS ON THE APPLICATION

It is in direct conflict with the objectives, intent and policy of the Mission Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP)

This application for spot upzoning under the guise of 'transitioning' does not constitute good planning practices. It is an arbitrary and damaging application to change land use for a relatively small parcel at variance with a comprehensive community-wide plan.

A seven-year process involving the community association, area residents and City of Calgary employees, with the assistance of an external consultant and the University of Calgary Faculty of Environmental Design, resulted in a land use policy that would ensure the continued vitality of the community through inevitable growth and change and still retain a 'sense of place' and cultural context. One of its major platforms was a medium high density residential policy allowing a maximum density of 3.5 FAR with a maximum height of five storeys. The Mission ARP accommodates considerable growth and densification while retaining the essential character and liveability of the community.

The DC zoning that was established in 2006 for the majority of Mission was designed to protect, encourage and perpetuate the unique history and character of the neighbourhood. City Council, in setting a maximum height of five floors in that DC zone, acknowledged that considerable density could be achieved in Mission while respecting and conforming to the existing scale and traditions in the community.

Mission Area Redevelopment Plan relevant sections:

3.2 Goals of the ARP

The goals of the Mission Area Redevelopment Plan are:

2. To establish a policy framework for sensitively managing growth and change within the context provided by the Municipal Development Plan (The Calgary Plan) while maintaining and protecting the special historical character of the community;
5. To encourage new residential and commercial development to be compatible with the special character of Mission.

3.3 Guiding Principles of Smart Growth

- Encourage growth in existing communities by finding ways for new development to fit in with the older neighbourhood.

6.1.1 Context

- The medium high density residential sector between 2 and 4 Streets SW and 18 and 25 Avenues SW contains a substantial number of older, distinctive homes and apartments. This sector is subject to a number of policy changes addressing the *special character of the community, affordability, mobility and quality of life*.

6.1.2 Objectives

- Encourage the preservation of the special character homes, apartments and streetscapes of Mission;
- Support apartment redevelopment that is sensitive to the existing community character and the older architecture;
- Facilitate the provision of affordable housing;
- Provide the opportunity for a broad mix of dwelling types.

9.2 Implementation

- The design of new buildings should complement adjacent development in terms of massing, scale, proportion and façade articulation.

It does not support the goals of City of Calgary policy documents

We consider our neighbourhood to be the one of the best models in the city of a rich, vibrant, inner city mixed-use culture. The community association has contributed to, and participated in, a number of progressive planning policies, including densification in an established community through our designated areas of mid- and high-density zoning, application of mixed residential/commercial use on our High Streets, and the initiation of a concept plan for high density development on the 20-hectare Holy Cross sight.

We have contributed to the development of many of the City's policy documents and we believe in adhering to their rules and guidelines.

The Municipal Development Plan

The MDP states in section 2.3.2 *Respecting and Enhancing Neighbourhood Character*:

Objective: Respect and enhance neighbourhood character and vitality. The "sense of place" inherent in Calgary's neighbourhoods is a function of their history, built form, landscape, visual qualities and people. Together, the interaction of these factors defines the distinctive identity and local character of a neighbourhood.

The MDP also states the objective to "ensure infill development complements the established character of the area and does not create dramatic contrasts in the physical development pattern."

The Guidebook for Great Communities

The Guidebook features the following policy for Scale Transitions:

When adjacent parcels have different scale modifiers, special transition considerations should apply to support and foster the creation of well-designed buildings that respect their neighbourhood context. There are many architectural tools that can be used to support a sensitive transition between different building scales. Transition should consider the vision for the community, interface, scale, intensity, heritage and sense of place.

- a. New development should transition building height, scale and mass between higher and lower scale development in accordance with the identified scales in the local area plan.
- b. To transition building height, scale and mass, combinations of the following strategies may be used:
 - i. building step-backs and stepping down heights within individual buildings;
 - ii. angular planes to step building height between higher and lower building scales;
 - iii. reducing the street wall height to transition the visible mass of a taller building to match the cornice line for a shorter building;
 - iv. decrease scales incrementally through a block;
 - v. setbacks and landscaping to buffer higher intensity development from lower-intensity development.

It is not sensitive to its context and will not complement adjacent properties

The context of the application site on the north side of 25th Avenue consists of two- to five-storey buildings – including Edwardian era houses – for almost the entire length of 25th Avenue in Mission. This avenue, initiated at its eastern end by the historic Scollen Bridge, is considered a character streetscape and gateway into the community.

The XOLO building, across the alley to the north of the application site, perfectly conforms in spirit and built form to the present DC and would be very negatively affected, thrown into shadow and overlooked by an oversized and incompatible new development.

Land use zoning by definition means there are boundaries where the City and stakeholders have defined the uses, forms and allowables that protect and enhance neighbourhood character. One of those boundaries is 25th Avenue.

It will destroy heritage homes and further diminish the community's stock of affordable housing

This project would result in the loss of four of the few remaining Edwardian-era heritage houses in Mission. It would also cause the loss of affordable multi-family dwellings and the diminishing of housing diversity – and the diversity of people – in the community.

These houses are identified as “heritage assets” in the ‘windshield survey’ of the City of Calgary’s *Heritage Conservation: Policy Tools & Financial Incentives Report* (April 2020). They constitute “a concentrated group of historic buildings... (that) possess architectural significance and integrity” and “reflect a pattern of historic development in the area.” As such, these four heritage houses should warrant special consideration.

Heritage is considered one of Mission's most important community amenities. We question why Density Bonus compensation is not being considered for the destruction of these heritage assets, the loss of an important amenity, and the upzoning of the parcel.

It does not represent a sound approach to community building

Spot upzoning of this sort is a highly counterproductive practice that unnecessarily creates adversarial situations and winner/loser outcomes. It shatters a citizen's faith that rules apply to all and infers that a developer has greater influence with the City than the very residents whose lives and community will be most impacted.

With this sort of ad hoc height relaxation the City – rather than providing a stable planning framework – introduces a level of unpredictability which is confusing to community residents, contradictory to good city planning, and could set a damaging precedent, moving us even further away from a planned approach to sensible densification.

In summary, the CBMCA believes that this proposal for piecemeal zoning is antithetical to sound planning practices, detrimental to neighbouring properties and the community as a whole, and contrary to the objectives and intent of various City of Calgary planning policy documents. A great many developers have built successful projects under Mission's existing DC land use – soon to be joined by the developers of a 5-storey rental project to the west of this site – and we see no reason that this applicant cannot develop a successful project within that same framework.

Robert Jobst

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