

Planning & Development Report to
Calgary Planning Commission
2022 March 24

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CPC2021-0344
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**Land Use Amendment in Varsity (Ward 1) at 3536 and 3636 Research Road NW,
LOC2021-0010**

RECOMMENDATION:

That Calgary Planning Commission recommend that Council:

Give three readings to the proposed bylaw for redesignation of 1.11 hectares ± (2.74 acres ±) located at 3536 and 3636 Research Road NW (Plan 9812871, Block 3, Lot 4 and 5) from Special Purpose – University Research Park (S-URP) District to Direct Control (DC) District to accommodate the additional discretionary uses of School – Authority School and School – Private, with guidelines (Attachment 2).

RECOMMENDATION OF THE CALGARY PLANNING COMMISSION, 2022 MARCH 24:

That Council give three readings to **Proposed Bylaw 74D2022** for redesignation of 1.11 hectares ± (2.74 acres ±) located at 3536 and 3636 Research Road NW (Plan 9812871, Block 3, Lot 4 and 5) from Special Purpose – University Research Park (S-URP) District to Direct Control (DC) District to accommodate the additional discretionary uses of School – Authority School and School – Private, with guidelines (Attachment 2).

HIGHLIGHTS

- This application seeks to redesignate the subject property to a Direct Control (DC) District to allow for the additional discretionary uses of School Authority – School and School – Private.
- The proposal would allow for additional uses that are appropriate within the context of the existing adjoining development in the community, would foster further use of the site, and is in keeping with the *Municipal Development Plan* (MDP) and supportive of the adjacent *Brentwood Station Area Redevelopment Plan* (ARP).
- What does this mean to Calgarians? The proposal would contribute to the redevelopment and reoccupation of a site and building that has been vacant for several years. It will also address the under-supply of high school classrooms within the city by allowing for a new public charter school with a program focusing on technology.
- Why does this matter? This application would allow for the reoccupation of a building that has been largely vacant for a number of years, and contribute to a prosperous city by allowing for additional opportunities through two new uses that respond to a public need in the area.
- No development permit application has been submitted at this time.
- There is no previous Council direction regarding this proposal.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A prosperous city.

DISCUSSION

This land use amendment application was submitted by Carol McClary Consulting and TI Architecture on 2021 January 21, on behalf of the landowners, HOOP Realty Inc and University of Calgary Properties Group. The 1.11 hectare site is comprised of two parcels and is located on The University of Calgary lands in the northwest community of Varsity. The application was

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placed on hold by Administration at the request of the applicant during the Spring of 2021 due to funding issues.

The Applicant Submission (Attachment 3) indicates their request to add a School Authority – School and School – Private to the list of uses allowed in the current Special Purpose – University Research Park (S-URP) District. Currently, the subject site is occupied by a five-storey building commonly referred to as the SMART Building. It is occupied by research and scientific laboratories, offices and a child care facility. A significant portion of the building is currently vacant as the primary tenant, SMART Technologies, has gradually been downsizing its operations operating out of the building since 2012.

The intention of the application is to allow the STEM Innovation Academy (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), a public charter high school for grades 10 to 12, to occupy approximately 90,000 square feet of the existing building that previously had been used as office space by SMART Technologies. STEM Innovation Academy's curriculum will align with provincial standards outlined in *The Education Act*. However, it will also offer advanced subjects for students centered around science and technology. This includes, but is not limited, to artificial intelligence, medical technology, nanotechnology and robotics.

A detailed planning evaluation of this application, including location maps and site context, is provided in Attachment 1, Background and Planning Evaluation.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)

- Outreach was undertaken by the Applicant
- Public/Stakeholders were informed by Administration

Applicant-Led Outreach

As part of the review of the proposed land use amendment application, the applicant was encouraged to use the [Applicant Outreach Toolkit](#) to assess which level of outreach with public stakeholders was appropriate. In response, the applicant reached out to the Varsity Community Association to discuss details of the application. The Applicant Outreach Summary can be found in Attachment 4.

City-Led Outreach

In keeping with Administration's standard practices, the application was circulated to stakeholders, notice posted on-site, published [online](#), and notification letters were sent to adjacent landowners.

Administration received two letters from the public in opposition to the application citing concerns over an increase in traffic and parking issues.

One letter of support for the application was also received by Administration in regards to this application. The letter was from an employee currently working for SMART Technologies. They indicated that the proposed uses would be an excellent addition to the building because future

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students of STEM Innovation Academy would have access to other complimentary agencies and innovative technological labs.

The Varsity Community Association provided a letter on 2022 March 08 (Attachment 5) stating they are supportive of the application. Their only concerns were in regards to parking and ensuring the subject site had enough stalls on site to accommodate the needs of students and staff.

Administration considered the relevant planning issues specific to the application and has determined the proposal to be appropriate. STEM Innovation Academy will repurpose vacant space within the SMART Building, which was deemed to be compatible with the additional uses. The location of the school within the existing building will not interfere with existing scientific and research laboratories and the school and will be required to adhere to all safety standards that have been outlined in *The Education Act* by The Provincial Government. As a result, the development permit application will not result in changes to the exterior of the building or changes to the existing site plan.

Following Calgary Planning Commission, notifications for Public Hearing of Council will be posted on-site and mailed to adjacent landowners. In addition, Commission's recommendation and the date of the Public Hearing will be advertised.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

The proposed land use would allow for additional uses that may better accommodate the educational needs of different age groups and help to foster a more inclusive community.

Environmental

There are a number of aspects of this proposal which help fulfill the objectives of the [Climate Resilience Strategy](#). For instance, the proximity to the Brentwood LRT Station and overall Primary Transit Network will help encourage transportation to and from STEM Innovation Academy will primarily be conducted by public transit, therefore not increasing carbon emissions used for transportation. Furthermore, the SMART Building is already a certified a LEED Gold building with efficient building systems. Repurposing an office to a school is an innovative reuse of vacant space. This helps ensure that carbon emissions created with new construction are further mitigated. Further opportunities to align future development on this site with applicable climate resilience strategies may be explored and/or implemented at the development permit and building permit stages.

Economic

The proposal would allow for two additional uses to take place on the subject parcel, which could support additional employment and educational opportunities in the technology sector for prospective students and staff. Furthermore, the proposed uses may sustain a viable transit-oriented development that is in close proximity to Brentwood LRT Station and the greater

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Primary Transit Network. As a result, this may increase overall ridership and enhance the viability of the surrounding commercial area.

Service and Financial Implications

No anticipated financial impact.

RISK

There are no known risks associated with this application.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Background and Planning Evaluation
2. **Proposed Bylaw 74D2022**
3. Applicant Submission
4. Applicant Outreach Summary
5. Community Association Response
6. **CPC Commissioner Comments**

Department Circulation

General Manager	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform