

Community Association Letter



Planning Committee
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Circulation Control
Planning, Development & Assessment #8201
The City of Calgary
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cc: Breanne Harder, File Manager (Breanne.harder@calgary.ca)
Ali McMillan, BRCA Planning Director (planning@brcacalgary.org)

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: LOC2019-0047 (65 7A St NE)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment with respect to this application. We have been working on various applications for these parcels of land since 2015.

This Land Use Application was most recently discussed pre-application at a meeting of our Planning Committee convened April 1, 2019. Notice of that meeting was given to neighbours adjacent to the subject parcel through emails that we had collected from previously concerned residents on prior applications we had for this parcel – and we also asked these residents to share with their neighbours. Approximately 5 neighbors attended, as did 3 regular Planning Committee members. The applicant attended the meeting along with Civic Works and did a presentation overview. Further, our Planning Director and the City Councillor had a pre-application meeting with the applicant.

At present the application is being submitted alongside a set of DP plans, proposed to follow in conjunction with this proposed change in land use, but this is not a true “tied to plans” application. The applicant’s use of the word “concurrent” during the pre-application meeting had caused confusion for several attendees, and the applicant was encouraged to be precise about the lack of legal connection between the two distinct applications. Some at the meeting expressed issue with the uncertainty created by this lack of legal connection (many liked the high-quality design but no guarantees this is what will be built). Indeed, it was this same applicant who sought and obtained a prior land use amendment for the same site alongside a development proposal that the community was assured would be built, only to have that proposal not be built and this fresh land-use application be made instead. BRCA had opposed that earlier application for a land-use amendment, at a time when (among other

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things) ARP discussions affecting the community had not even begun. Bygones are bygones, but the point is simply that we have been here before, in terms of looking at assurances of what will be built at the time of a bare land-use application.

Some adjacent residents raised concerns about the land use change to commercial in this residential area. Concerns about the implication of creep of commercial uses happening to the west into the low-scale quiet area of the community were raised. In the ARP work there has been discussion about the community wanting to use 7a St as a transition zone to the lower scale residential to the west of this street. Many felt that commercial uses should be concentrated on the "Main Street" of 1st Ave which is only one block away and that it would be undesirable to allow such uses along another street which is NOT similarly consider a "Main Street". Many mentioned that the existing "Main Street" shopping area along 1st Avenue is under-utilized already, and establishing additional commercial away from this area may further weaken the retail environment there.

Others (or, in some cases, the same people) conversely expressed the view that creating a low scale neighborhood commercial opportunity that interfaces with Murdoch Park could work well, provided that the uses align to activate the park and provided also that the eventual DP design addresses the public realm adequately. Several specific uses were presented to the community which to our understanding are in no way guaranteed *i.e.* Village Ice Cream, a coffee shop, and a juice bar. These uses are all very appealing to many residents in the area but there is definitely a concern that these uses are not solidified or could change to undesirable uses in the future (*i.e.* businesses don't survive over time). There were requests to restrict certain types of commercial uses. The community would prefer to limit certain uses in this location due to its sensitive location and different implications of various commercial uses – is this possible through the land use (*i.e.* no cannabis, no medical, etc.)? The reality of this site facing Murdoch Park should be considered a key factor in respect of the land use application. It is easy to imagine a whole variety of commercial uses that might contradict, rather than enhance, enjoyment of the public park as a key community amenity.

Additionally, residents had typical concerns often expressed in this context about parking ratios, delivery trucks, and the traffic implications of a commercial use. With the proximity to Langevin School and the high traffic surges at school pick-up and drop-off times that adjacent neighbours already endure, they further expressed safety concerns about increased volumes and parking concerns that come with commercial uses. By way of example, one attendee at the meeting mentioned a worry about idling delivery trucks with refrigeration units.

Tied to this were concerns about adjacent parking along the park area being predictably converted to paid parking to manage congestion, which some expressed could become a detriment for community residents who go to the park with sports equipment, toboggans, or strollers; perhaps time-limited parking options could alleviate this.

Many were happy with the 11m height modifier to make the building fit into the surrounding context better, although some concerns were added here about what type of "mechanical hat", if any, beyond that base height might be added.

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The applicant's early and broad engagement is very much appreciated. Aesthetically and operationally, the design-and-use presentation offered in support of the land use application has been generally well received. Large signage on site including renderings and broad postcard drops are the gold standard for engagement and we strongly support this approach. Online information accessible to the community has been shared on social media. We appreciate this in-depth information being accessible to the community 24-7 and the ability for individuals to send feedback easily with all the applicable information at hand. In general, even from those who have expressed the concerns noted above, there has been positive feedback about the suggested development in architectural / aesthetic terms, and about the proposed specific uses.

Sincerely,

BRIDGELAND-RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Per: BRCA Board of Directors
Planning Committee