

Business Improvement Area Response



December 16, 2022

To: File Manager Quadri Adebayo, Quadri.Adebayo@calgary.ca
CPAG Circulation Controller, CPAGCirc@calgary.ca

Re.: LOC2022-0131, 1918 33 AV SW etc.

Comment re. Sarina 1900

The Marda Loop BIA is supportive of the proposed Sarina 1900 development. The project will add vibrancy to the area by adding housing for new neighbours within walking distance of local businesses and services.”

Commercial

We support the inclusion of ground floor commercial as it completes the “fourth corner” of the 33rd Avenue/19th Street SW intersection and is adjacent to the existing Marda Loop business district.

Height

Along 33rd Avenue and across the lane to the north, the height and density transition between contemporary “Main Street scale” and the pre-existing mostly “single-family residential” scale is steep. Managing this transition (in terms of shadowing, for example) as sites along the avenue redevelop at higher densities is a challenge.

Sarina 1900 is generally consistent with the vision for developments on Main Streets (per MDP policy 3.4.1) on the 33rd Avenue Main Streets (per 33rd /34th Avenue Main Streets Master Plan), and in the adjacent Marda Loop BIA area (per Marda Loop ARP, 2014 - MLARP). It is also consistent with many recent approvals along 33rd Avenue. However, this development (among others) is not consistent with the South Calgary/Altadore ARP (1986), indicating a need for a new Local Area Plan (LAP).

From our perspective, the analogue for looking at change on this site includes guidance from the Marda Loop ARP and a “base case” land use similar to the 2019 rezoning of adjacent MLARP area, which is also what was proposed for this site during the land use consultation associated with Main Streets: 16 m, 3 FAR, in most places. (Regardless, many recent approvals in the area have been in the 20 m range.)



Upper storey setbacks

The 23 m height proposed is a major change requiring mitigation via setbacks at upper levels, as indicated in the current (December 2022) engagement material. Rear and side setbacks are very important for immediate neighbours. From the BIA's perspective, the setbacks provided on the 33rd Avenue frontage are particularly important to reinforce pedestrian scale and maintain a sense of openness on the avenue, per MLARP section 4.2.

"Bonus" elements

The MLARP section 4.2.1.2 identifies sites where it suggests additional height up to 5 storeys might be considered in exchange for public art or contributions to the public realm - like public art or an open corner plaza. We do not see any contributions of this nature in the current plans, although the proposed all-season patio at the SW corner is welcome. Provision of public parking could also be a benefit.

Assurance of design

Land use applications with major increases in height and FAR should be tied to plans and/or concurrent DPs so that design elements that mitigate impacts of height/density is understood at the land use stage and assured in the DP and construction.

Parking

Parking for visitors to the business district is a growing challenge. While the bylaw requires 0.75 residential parking, we encourage closer to 1:1 residential parking to better ensure street parking is left for visitors. (MLARP section 5.2.5 re. on-street parking prioritizes visitors and customers with short-term needs over long-term parking.) We also endorse at least one parking stall per CRU for staff. To improve the parking situation in the area, we also encourage the inclusion of public parking in large projects.

Main Streets

This development, and growth in Marda Loop in general, indicates again the need for the improvement of 33rd and 34th Avenues through the City's Main Streets project. It is particularly important to improve the pedestrian realm and intersection/crossing safety. We are glad that construction work will be underway in 2023 and 2024 and we encourage implementation of the full plan from Crowchild to 14th Street SW ASAP. Growth in the area, past, current and future, including projects like this, both requires and justifies major investment in main streets project.



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General comment

The Marda Loop BIA supports developments that provide more neighbours within walking distance to businesses and other amenities. We also support human scale main streets and want to foster a vibrant pedestrian realm. In large scale redevelopment we prefer buildings to be in the 4-5 storey range as a maximum. Buildings of this height, or up to 6 storeys in this case, we can support if they have setbacks, such as per the Marda Loop ARP, that effectively mitigate the impact, and other benefits.

Recent applications and approvals along 33rd Avenue have been greatly at variance with the 1986 South Calgary – Altadore ARP and older land uses. During the Main Streets planning process the review of land uses east of the MLARP was put on hold and deferred to the West Elbow ARP process, which itself was suspended in early 2020, with no sign yet of re-start.

This has left land use changes adrift for years and applications subject to fraught individual processes in one of our busiest redevelopment areas. It is well past time that a Local Area Plan was done for the South Calgary/Altadore area.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Bob van Wegen
Executive Director

Cc:

Sarina Homes c/o Max Parish
Ward 8 Office – Councillor Courtney Walcott
Marda Loop Community Association c/o the President