

Letter from the Cliff Bungalow-Mission Community Association

Cliff Bungalow-Mission Community Association
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August 15, 2014

The City of Calgary
4th Floor, 800 Macleod Trail SE
Calgary, AB T2P 2M5

Attention: Thom Mahler

RE: LOC2012-0025

Parcel Address: 306, 308, 310 & 312 25 AV SW

The Cliff Bungalow-Mission Community Association (CBMCA) met with Councillor Woolley, and the applicant on Friday August 8th, 2014. Our thanks for arranging this meeting and giving us an opportunity to present our thoughts and concerns regarding the possible implementation of a density bonusing scheme in our neighbourhood.

Comments

1. We remain opposed to density bonusing for the following reasons.

- 1.1. We have an Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) that sets out the conditions for growth in our community. It was developed after extensive public engagement. It's also based on the principals of Smart Growth, making it relevant and complimentary to The City's Municipal Development Plan (MDP).
- 1.2. As a statutory planning document our ARP should be respected not undermined. Spot up-zoning undermines our ARP. It tells us that participatory planning processes are a waste of time

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and it leaves us feeling disenfranchised. For developers, we believe it signals The City's intent to pursue a planning agenda irrespective of its own planning bylaws. We think that's reckless.

1.3. We are an imagine Calgary (iC) partner, committed to realizing the shared vision of a City that is prosperous, sustainable and loveable. We support compact, complete communities built at human-scale; neighbourhoods that celebrate their unique character and provide residents with a sense place and connection. We believe that we are already leading the way when it comes to realizing the goals of iC and we therefore see that interventions to subvert our ARP are contrary to not only our goals but that of The City.

1.4. Our community exemplifies Smart Growth. We are a highly walkable, compact and loveable mixed-use community. Our population density is comparable to China Town and Beltline but unlike those communities, our urban form remains ostensibly human-scale (the gold standard for city building). This allows mature street trees (not tall buildings) to frame our outdoor spaces. The result is public space that people enjoy, feel connected to and want to inhabit.

Our existing stock of rental homes, walk-up apartments and low-rise condos provide a better range of choice and affordability than many places in Calgary. These types of buildings have also been shown to have better per capita energy performance than single detached homes and high-rise towers. In fact, a comparison of our neighbourhood's energy profile to the rest of the City, shows that Calgary would use 60% less energy if it were built like Mission!

Introducing tower-block development into the community degrades the public realm, erodes human-scale, reduces housing affordability and worsens environmental performance.

2. If our community is forced to accept density bonusing, ambiguity surrounding how the amount is derived and administered needs to be cleared-up.

2.1. The current method used to calculate how much the applicant should pay for increased density, is based on a derivation using available housing market data. In this case, the valuation is estimated at \$675,000 dollars. This may sound like a lot of money but this method does not address whether the amount is actually sufficient to ameliorate the negative impacts caused by

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the increased density. This worries us. Can \$675,000 buy the community additional park space? Is it sufficient for us to have a heritage building designated? We simply don't know.

In addition, we are concerned that the applicant is proposing a dollar value that is less than half of the valuation provided by The City's consultant. Being asked to entertain a lower valuation without a clear idea of what can be done with the money is troubling. For us and we hope the City too.

2.2. We believe that density bonusing schemes in Calgary are still fledging out. For example, we are not aware of any established scheme that has set out clear guidelines for the administration of funds. In the case of our community, there are no agreed criteria for disbursing funds (e.g. prioritizing heritage buildings over parks) or who should administer the funds. The City? The developer? The community? We are uncomfortable with being asked to accept a density bonusing scheme without resolution on these issues.

We are also concerned that the applicant would like sole spending authority over half of the funds to make improvements on his own development. At a minimum, we expect developers to create high quality buildings that enhance our neighbourhood. Proposing to spend money earmarked for community benefit on a private development smacks us as unfair. It would create uplift on a development that could be recovered in sales, while providing no benefit to the community.

Closing

We feel strongly that density bonusing isn't right for us. We see it as the thin edge of the wedge. Approving this application will set a precedent for future challenges to our ARP. That degrades our ability to have a meaningful say in the kind of community we want.

We're also pretty concerned that the density bonusing scheme in its present form leaves too many questions unanswered. The process feels ad hoc. We think this is a case of having the cart before the horse and that makes us nervous.

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If we are forced to accept density bonusing, our preference would be to work with The City to develop a framework that aligns with our community. Gives us a meaningful say in its administration and ensures that funds earmarked for the public good are recognized in the community.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Patrick Arnell', with a stylized, looping design.

Patrick Arnell MSc
Director Development and Planning
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