

Calgary Planning Commission Member Comments



For CPC2023-0295 / LOC2020-0100
heard at Calgary Planning Commission
Meeting 2023 April 06



Member	Reasons for Decision or Comments
<p>Commissioner Tiedemann</p>	<p>Reasons for Approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline plan and land use application for the new/future community of Ricardo Ranch. I really liked to see how towns/missing middle is being mixed into various areas within the plan. The commercial zone and Neighbourhood Activity Center has been very thoughtfully located. This plan offers and immense amount of green/open space and opportunity for amazing views. I was happy to support this application and I hope that more new communities are designed in a similar fashion.
<p>Commissioner Hawryluk</p>	<p>Reasons for Approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parts of this Land Use Amendment are great. The Neighbourhood Activity Centre and multi-residential area are well placed. The grid, which is part of the outline plan that Commission already approved, is excellent. <p>This application requires an amendment to the Ricardo Ranch Area Structure Plan (ASP) to allow a road in what is considered Environmental Reserve (ER). There haven't been any policy changes since 2019 to justify this amendment. The argument for the ASP amendment is to avoid doing more damage to the slope by running the road where the ASP currently allows. The topography has not changed since 2019, so I find it odd that the ASP did not consider that the logical place for a road would be in ER, but I also haven't been involved in the process of creating a master-planned community.</p> <p>The wetland plateau at the bottom of the escarpment is considered Class 2 wetland. The wetlands on the slope, which would be lost if this application is approved, appear to be fed by groundwater, which might be unique in Calgary. The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) intends to "ensure no net loss principles of significant wetland habitat and preserve existing wetlands as a priority over reconstruction" (2.6.4.i). This discussion likely depends on how one defines 'significant.' It appears that the City and applicant are using 'significant' to refer to the size of the wetlands; environmental proponents might view a unique wetland as 'significant.'</p>

There have been three Great Blue Heron colonies in Calgary. The Fish Creek Park colony was used for over 40 years and became inactive in 1986 (about ten years after the Provincial Park was created). There was human activity within 400m of that site. A second colony was in Douglasdale for a couple of years starting in 1991. The last colony is south of this site. Provincial guidelines from 2011 recommend restricting activity and disturbance within 1000m of a Great Blue Heron rookery (<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/e269aad8-3664-402a-b7cb-77abe89e9617/resource/6195d2d4-9f7d-43e5-ada5-81a8210fae38/download/3054250-2011-recommended-land-use-guidelines-protection-wildlife-species-habitat.pdf>). In this location, that guideline has been relaxed, but regulated, to 750m. One wonders about the value of guidelines that are relaxed in the only location in the city where they apply. The Biophysical Impact Assessment has not been released but will be available on the applicant's website. Commission was told that it will include education, fences, and signs. We were also told that if the Heron move away, the City will not be liable if the applicant and City follow the regulations.

I asked about light pollution and was told that there would be bird friendly designs for light standards and dark sky policies.

From what I can tell, this application meets the current regulatory requirements. Some of those regulations have been relaxed in this location. Given that regulations tend to be shaped by past events, time will tell whether those regulations will suffice in a time of climate change.

I voted for this application because its good parts are great, the other parts meet the current requirements, and because people need a variety of homes. Current City policies make it difficult to build more houses in most of the developed areas, so the only way to meet current and future housing demand is to build in the developing areas.