

## **SUMMARY HATF Report Comments: Tony Morris KC**

Good day Mayor, Councillors and members of City Administration.

My name is Tony Morris and for the last 10 years I've been the Co-President of the Calgary River Communities Action Group, a not-for-profit volunteer society formed in the days after the 2013 floods. Our mandate includes addressing numerous policies proposed by all three levels of government, knowing that bad policy poorly made can do more damage than flood waters. Thankfully, almost without fail, our elected representatives, including City Council, did not just hear, but listened, and the final outcomes were invariably better.

Today I'm speaking to you not as a representative of the Action Group, but on behalf of the Rideau-Roxboro Community Association, the neighbourhood in which my wife and I have worked and lived for 20 years and where we've raised our 3

sons.

Late this summer I was asked to participate with other neighbours in the West Elbow Local Area Plan process just getting underway this month, which will involve an extensive and well-planned discussion between the City and numerous community representatives, to formulate a comprehensive plan to evolve and refresh these communities over time. This process makes sense to us as it's to be a dialogue among key stakeholders to set a path for the growth of West Elbow, within the context of the needs of Calgary as a whole.

Given my work with the Flood Action Group, I believe in the power of citizen engagement. Given my work as a lawyer for 32 years, including with large public entities, I've been a part of important policy decision making. What prompts us to speak to you today is the Task Force Report's blanket up-zoning Recommendation. In our community's view, this is a potentially damaging policy.

Before I elaborate, let me say that most of the Recommendations in the Report appear to us to be sensible, workable and laudable. We would like to see all Calgarians, regardless of economic means and circumstance, have housing options that address their needs and where they and their families can thrive.

But the up-zoning Recommendation is fundamentally different. It's a profound and irreversible change to the base housing stock to this City built over decades, which we understand represents approximately 60% of Calgary's residential communities. It instantly changes the development expectations of the hundreds of thousands of families who've made investments in these neighbourhoods, based on the "social contract" with the City expected by residents through zoning. Most importantly, it excludes the citizens each Councillor here represents from fundamentally important conversations. The myriad unintended consequences to blanket up-zoning spoken to so eloquently by Jessica in Panel 19 last evening cannot be ignored and must be rigorously

considered. Blanket up-zoning may well result in a land rush by speculative investors and developers that drive land prices much higher throughout the City, as we also heard last night. Up-zoning will increase density but may simply not address affordability for those folks most in need. This one Recommendation is the nuclear option.

When I first heard that the Task Force recommended blanket up-zoning, I went to the webpage in order to learn more. The first thing I did when I opened the Report was to scroll to the bottom, expecting to see an extensive list of academic references regarding most effective affordability strategies, to look to the underlying data driving the Recommendations. Nothing. No detailed discussions regarding the efficacy of up-zoning, no data drawn from jurisdictions that have done this, no scholarly discourse. The up-zoning Recommendation is not justified by the Report or on the Task Force website.

But we're not here to debate the question of whether up-zoning will actually achieve the stated

ends. We're also unable to tell you how residents may wish to see Rideau-Roxboro evolve over time as we're just starting our LAP process.

What I can confidently say is that my community has no interest in being excluded from discussions regarding the housing forms built in it. The community does not wish to evolve at the whim of the for-profit property developers and the speculative investors that ply their trade in neighbourhoods under transition, looking for highest margins.

The up-zoning Recommendation is also unnecessary. The pathway to evolve communities now exist through the Local Area Planning process. The City has already finalized 2 wide areas LAPs and numerous others including West Elbow are underway. The LAP process is the type of inclusive community engagement that should be championed by all Councillors on behalf of their constituents.

When I read Housing Minister Fraser's letter to

Mayor Gondek, I couldn't believe it. The Federal government, decades after initiating the problem municipalities are now left to address, is making any funds provided **contingent** upon implementing blanket up-zoning. I've looked at the Accelerator Fund website and the "Preapplication Reference Material" document posted there, but I did not see a requirement that blanket up-zoning was lynchpin to **any** funds flowing. The Minister's condition does not appear to me to be based on the Accelerator Fund's own terms. It also appears to me that blanket up-zoning is the Federal government's new and untried grand Canadian experiment in putting for-profit players in charge of affordable housing development, with municipalities bearing the risk of all outcomes, good and bad.

With residents being disenfranchised in such a critical way, does Council really have the mandate for blanket up-zoning? As a lawyer, when I hear someone say they wish to "be bold", I hear them saying that they're prepared to be careless. We suggest that Council take this generational decision to the people that elected it. It is much more

significant to this City's future than whether another Olympic Games is held here. So let the people decide through a clear plebiscite or at the next election. Who drives how this City matures, residents or market housing investors and developers chasing highest margins and moving on to the next street? There is so much else that the Report suggests could be done now to address these issues for the folks that really need immediate support, which do not silence the people who elected you. Will this Council reach for Federal funds under Minister Fraser's unjustified threat, or decide its future on its own terms? Given the City's own very substantial budget surplus recently announced, should undetermined Federal dollars take precedence over all other considerations to this critical decision?

The Rideau-Roxboro Community Association respectfully asks Council to remove the up-zoning Recommendation from its current consideration of the Task Force Recommendations. Please take your fingers off the nuclear button. It's unnecessary given Calgary's own processes to evolve this great

City.

Please, don't confuse being careless with being bold. Let's develop this City together, through the processes you've already put in to place to do just that.

Thank you for listening and for your hard work on this complex and challenging matter.

