

Community Association Response

JULY 26, 2023 – INITIAL COMMENTS

[External] 2620 40 ST SE - LOC2023-0148 - DMAP Comment - Wed 7/26...



president@myforestlawn.ca

To ● Ochieng, Felix F.; ○ svc.dmap.commentsProd



7/26/2023



You replied to this message on 9/12/2023 9:19 AM.

If there are problems with how this message is displayed, click here to view it in a web browser.

This Message Is From an External Sender

This message came from outside your organization.

ATTENTION: Do not click links or open attachments from external senders unless you are certain it is safe to do so. Please forward suspicious/concerning email to spam@calgary.ca

Application: LOC2023-0148

Submitted by: Forest Lawn Community Association

Contact Information

Address: 4020 26 Ave SE

Email: president@myforestlawn.ca

Phone: 4038260731

Overall, I am/we are:

In opposition of this application

Areas of interest/concern:

Shadowing impacts

What are the strengths and challenges of the proposed:

This proposal threaten the existing youth centre which is currently located in the Forest Lawn and service in strengthening the community an looking into the changing g the discrimination factor where the youth in forest lawn are looked at as never have opportunity to succeeds. As per the provided rational, this youth centre have pompously located this area across the existing forest lawn youth area, which is also the first black operated youth centre in Calgary and we foresee an appartide

Will the proposed change affect the use and enjoyment of your property? If so, how?

YES, this change will bring an apartheid style relationship where the immigrant youth will start going to the FLCA located centre, and white kids going to this youth center. The fact is that this has already started where we see the existing use centre planning to have "Have and "Have Not in There Side" as a protest and bring in this systematic discrimination into light and making the news aware of this unfair treatment.

The City views applications in the context of how well it fits within the broader community and alignment to Calgary's Municipal Development Plan (MDP). Do you see the proposed changes as compatible to the community and MDP? If not, what changes would make this application align with The City's goals?

This will bring a huge disconnection to the community where the FLCA has tremendously build to bring in different cultural background to call this community home. The Forest lawn youth are from low income families, but do try hard to succeed and for a mind set which provide such explanation undermined the ability for a community to change the word "Ghetto" "Hood" and increase the youth vulnerability to crime/.

How will the proposed impact the immediate surroundings?

General comments or concerns:

This have never happen anywhere in calgary or in the world where a youth centre sees another youth centre on the same street. The comment was that we can buy anywhere we want since we can afford it. This mindset does expose the discrimination, and racism that happens.

Attachments:

SEPTEMBER 20, 2023 – ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

From: Gar Gar <president@myforestlawn.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, September 20, 2023 1:15 PM
To: Ochieng, Felix F.; Carra, Gian-Carlo S.; CLWARD9 - Alex Ramadan; WARD10; CAWARDS - Vacant; WARD7; WARD8; Councillor Dan McLean; The Office of Councillor Wyness
Subject: Re: [External] 2620 40 ST SE - LOC2023-0148 - DMAP Comment - Wed 7/26/2023 11:18:58 PM
Attachments: image001.jpg

This Message Is From an External Sender

This message came from outside your organization.

ATTENTION: Do not click links or open attachments from external senders unless you are certain it is safe to do so. Please forward suspicious/concerning email to spam@calgary.ca

Dear Felix Ochieng,

To clarify our concerns re: File number LOC2023-0148, Land Use Amendment to accommodate R-C1 to DC/R-C1, Address 2620 40 St SE – Legal Description 1301HK;T;11 – Community of Forest Lawn, Ward 9, Calgary, the following background will provide context for our opposition:

The concern, outlined below, is related to the applicant, Youth Centres of Calgary, proposing to operate across the street from an established, similar non-profit organization – the Youth Empowerment and Skills Centre (YES Centre) – which is located at the Forest Lawn Community Centre, 4020 26 Ave SE.

The Youth Empowerment and Skills Centre (YES Centre) was conceptualized and has been operational since 2012 and gained official, non-profit status in 2018. This centre provides safe and meaningful programs for at-risk children and youth, particularly in Greater Forest Lawn (Forest Lawn, Dover, Erin Woods, Marlborough, Applewood, and Forest Heights), to keep them away from vulnerabilities including gang and gun involvement and substance use and steer them in positive directions. It does this through tutoring, employment preparation, recreation programs, sports programs, summer camps, art programs and leadership building activities. In consideration of the financial restraints of the communities it serves, the YES Centre does not charge for its programs.

The YES Centre was started by me, a South Sudanese Calgarian, Gar Gar, who was an at-risk youth myself within Greater Forest Lawn. I became a youth advocate in 2009 based on my concerns about the trajectory of

vulnerable, including BIPOC, youth towards addiction, gang involvement and crime due to poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, and other factors.

Specifically, the YES Centre not only provides a welcoming safe space, but a place where kids can see themselves thrive. As such, programming for children and youth includes mentorship, skill and innovation development, tutoring, employment preparation, sports initiatives, social gatherings, arts activities. Information and referral are available to families for crisis support as needed. It initiated bicycle and computer refurbishing and distribution as well as school supply give-aways to help elevate and “level the playing field” for less fortunate children, youth and families.

The YES Centre provides the at-risk, young community members with food security both at the centre and home. It responds to the food security of families with its “in-house” community foodbank in partnership with the Forest Lawn Community Centre to offer nutritious food hampers of fresh fruit and vegetables along with culturally appropriate food staples. As well, the Centre has offerings of breakfast, lunch, snacks, and afterschool meals to children in need. This service is provided based on the knowledge that often children feel a sense of shame and stigma when receiving food at school.

Given the culturally diverse demographic of Greater Forest Lawn, and my own immigrant/refugee background, cultural appropriateness plays an important role in all the services provided and is an important reason for the Centre’s success. Cultural elders, influencers, and leaders are brought in and included for direction and insight as well as to connect at-risk kids to their traditional cultural roots. Furthermore, it’s well known that kids of diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds need to see themselves reflected positively and the YES Centre provides this.

The strategic location of the YES Centre, at the Forest Lawn Community Centre, makes it more accessible to members of the community (located within range 3 neighbourhood schools and near Calgary Housing complexes) and creates opportunities for partnership to enhance opportunities for children and youth.

The YES Centre has worked closely with the Forest Lawn Community Association and has been influential in seeing the restructuring of the land and property to increase its usability (with picnic areas, basketball courts, soccer pitches, etc being installed). This restructuring is currently taking place and was the YES Centre’s vision for improving opportunities and enhancing a sense of belonging for vulnerable children and youth.

An important new initiative will be rolling out this fall by the YES Centre - implementing a gangs and guns prevention and intervention framework - funded by the City of Calgary, Building Safer Communities. This framework was designed by the YES Centre based on its 2022 community-based, qualitative research project, *Dying to Fit In*. The research and subsequent framework were informed by the youth voice – the lived

experiences of vulnerable youth from the community. It is holistic and factors in many issues that lead to gang and gun involvement.

The YES Centre has been diligently building its capacity to serve youth and this new proposal by Youth Centres of Calgary, originally serving Ogden, **seems to be in direct competition** by locating itself across the street from the YES Centre. No consultation with YES Centre personnel took place before the Youth Centres of Calgary proposed its Land Use Amendment to serve Forest Lawn and area children and youth. This is particularly concerning. And by setting up in this competing, Forest Lawn location, there is further worry that the success of the YES Centre's new initiative on gangs and guns prevention and intervention will be put at risk.

The YES Centre and Forest Lawn Community's Centre's efforts to collaborate and provide needed services to the community are put in jeopardy through this land use proposal. It puts the Youth Centres of Calgary in direct competition towards service duplication, sabotaging the important work already established by the YES Centre.

More details about the YES Centre for reference include:

- Serves children and youth, ages 6 to 18 from 7:45am - 8:45am, 12pm to 1pm, and afterschool 3:00 to 6:00 pm daily.
- Has 250 registered kids and an average attendance of 45 to 75 youth each day.
- Operates out of a safe welcoming, warm, youth space.
- Programs are all free financial barrier, is inclusive, and kids on to drop in or register for programs.
- Is located in a high-risk area of the city with negative stigmatization.
- Within walking distance of Holy Cross, Ian Bazalgett, and Valleyview schools.
- Offers non-scheduled, optional activities and opportunities for youth to establish meaningful, supportive connections with healthy adults.
- Nurtures resilience and self-confidence through mentoring, homework help, games, sports coaching, arts, and music lessons.
- Is open every weekday at breakfast and during after school hours when youth are at most risk of getting into or causing trouble.
- Provides free registration on competitive sports teams for kids who are otherwise unsupported financially and logistically to engage in club sports.
- Offers free summer day camps to all kids, 9-15, for sports, art, music and nutritious food.
- To date, 3950 new and refurbished bicycles have been given to children/families, and 4200 new and refurbished computers have been distributed.
- The YES Centre is volunteer-based and engages diverse, passionate Calgarians with a proven track record of leadership, talent and skills who are giving back to the community through volunteerism.

I hope this provides clarity on our opposition. I am happy to answer further questions you have. Please let me know of next steps in this process.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Gar Gar

YES Centre Founder

FLCA President