

**Date: January 30, 2025**

**To: Infrastructure & Planning Committee**

**From: Varsity Community Association**

**Re: SOUTH SHAGANAPPI LOCAL AREA PLAN**

### **Introduction**

The Varsity Community Association appreciates the opportunity to comment on the final draft of the South Shaganappi Communities Local Area Plan. We would like to thank Calvin Chan and his entire team for their professionalism and hard work on the Plan.

We are supportive of increasing density around LRT stations and Activity Nodes and Corridors such as Market Mall but we believe changes to urban form and building scale need to be done with great care and attention to detail to enhance the community while respecting existing homes as well as the limitations of road infrastructure to support increased traffic generation.

It is important to have a sensitive transition from low density residential development to higher density development, particularly with respect to height. Sensitive transitions will reduce overshadowing and allow community members to protect the special character of Varsity including the mature tree canopy. Therefore, the existing context needs to be respected and there needs to be a balance between increasing density, massing, and height and preserving the highly valued existing low density residential areas within Varsity.

We would like to suggest some amendments to the Plan that takes into account the unique circumstances in the Varsity community in order to ensure the best possible future development.

### **Background**

Varsity is a stable, diverse, dynamic, thriving community which already demonstrates many of the goals in the Municipal Development Plan and other planning policies. Varsity has a population of 12,000 in over 5,400 dwellings, 55% of which are multi-family units in comparison to the city average of 45%. Unlike many other communities, Varsity has experienced population growth as shown in Attachment 2. Varsity has a wide variety of housing types at all price points including attainable, affordable housing, and market and subsidized seniors housing. Varsity has 38% renter households compared to the City average of 31%. We have a wide variety of commercial businesses, amenities, schools, and 2 LRT stations. Our parks and mature tree canopy are extremely important to Varsity residents.

The life cycle experienced by most communities is not Varsity's reality. Our community was developed over several decades from the early 1960s up to the early 2000s with several additional new developments since that time including the Groves of Varsity and the 4 storey affordable apartment building at the fire hall on 32 Avenue. There has been a gradual, continuous turnover and updating of homes from long-time homeowners to new families. We have not experienced a population decline and our schools and businesses have been thriving over the years. The majority of the housing stock is in excellent condition.

I would refer you to Attachments 1, 2, 3 for more detailed background information on the community of Varsity.

It is important to identify where redevelopment makes sense within the 30 year time frame of a local area plan. Forward planning needs to be thoughtful and pragmatic. There's no point

identifying a quiet residential street with homes in excellent condition for future apartment buildings. This type of redevelopment is unlikely to happen in comparison to other sites within the community that are more suitable. However, being designated for higher density can precipitate a slow decline of the street.

Instead of increasing predictability, this type of designation actually increases uncertainty and destabilizes the affected streets. Realtors have advised that prospective purchasers will be more willing to spend money on a home on a street that is not designated as a future apartment building as it would be safer than investing in a home where the context may change significantly. Not only does this uncertainty reduce the desirability of a street and affect sale prices, it discourages investment in those homes. For existing home owners on an affected street, decisions to make renovations, improve landscaping, install solar panels, or even spend money on regular maintenance become fraught with anxiety and indecision. If there is risk of a negative impact on their home from nearby redevelopment or a deterioration of other homes on their street as neighbours hesitate to invest in their homes, property values and quality of life could be adversely affected.

The Local Area Plan should demonstrate a vision that respects the existing context with great attention to detail in each and every community.

### **Infrastructure**

The City states that existing infrastructure and amenities can handle increased density. Specifically, the City states that: “Most mature communities, especially those built prior to 1980, are below their historical peak population, so most communities are already designed to handle more people than live here today. Due to the decline in population and higher efficiency houses being built, there is now infrastructure capacity. This includes roads, transit stops, water and wastewater management, etc. to handle more types of housing.”

As noted previously, Varsity is not below its historical peak population but has instead maintained peak population levels. Increases in population will inevitably require significant investments to upgrade and modernize local infrastructure.

The DA Watt Traffic Study conducted in 2007 for the Varsity Land Use Study provides a detailed analysis of the impact of future redevelopment of the lands south of the Dalhousie LRT station. Since it would be extremely difficult to increase the capacity of the roads in the area, the maximum densities that can be accommodated in this area have been established and this should be respected. See excerpts from the VLUS in Attachment C.

The Traffic Study states: *“In conclusion, traffic generated by redevelopment of the Varsity Land Use study area to its maximum potential (as governed by the maximum F.A.R. within the guiding policies) can be supported by the surrounding road network with improvements along Varsity Estates Drive and 53 Street. As select intersection movements are at capacity, no additional land use over and above the maximum F.A.R., can be supported by the surrounding road network within the context of Transit Oriented Development.”*

Higher density development can strain the ability of City infrastructure to handle the increased load. Therefore, careful evaluation will be required with each proposed redevelopment project. Traffic studies and shadow studies are essential to ensure roads can accommodate the traffic generated by increased density and to preserve the quality of life for homeowners and park users.

## **PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS TO THE SSLAP:**

Note that we have selected our five most urgent priorities for amendments to the SSLAP below. In the pages that follow, we have outlined additional streets where we believe the classification should be tweaked to give the best result for the community.

### **1. Varsity Estates Village (Silvera for Seniors), 5200 – 53 Avenue NW**

The existing two storey townhouses owned by Silvera are subsidized housing units for low income families and are located on the west side of the Varsity Ravine Park. They are identified as Neighbourhood Flex with a height up to 12 storeys. This height would overshadow the park and regional bicycle and pedestrian pathway immediately to the east. As the asphalt pathway is on a steep slope in this location where it connects to the pedestrian overpass over Crowchild Trail, icing is a significant safety concern.

Any redevelopment on this site should be a maximum of 6 storeys at the western and northern edges and needs to step down to a maximum of 3 storeys at the eastern and southern edges. It is important to create a sensitive transition to the single family homes on Valencia Road and Valencia Place and the two storey townhouses south of 53 Avenue.

A shadow study must be required for future development applications to ensure there is no overshadowing of the pathway and park.

### **Requested Amendment to the Plan:**

Change the Building Scale Map (Map 4) from Mid (up to 12 storeys) to Limited (maximum of 3 storeys) on the east and south property lines, Low-Modified (up to 4 storeys), in the middle of the site, and to Low (maximum of 6 storeys) on the west and north portions of the site.

As this site is at the end of a dead-end road with no direct access to Crowchild Trail, the Urban Form Category (Map 3) should be changed from Neighbourhood Flex which is more commercially-oriented to Neighbourhood Connector which is more oriented to residential development while still allowing some commercial uses.

In Section 2.5.4.4. Dalhousie Station Area, this site should be down in mauve as opposed to dark purple. It should be shown in the Dalhousie Transition Zone not in the Dalhousie Core Zone.

The Varsity Land Use Study, a non-statutory plan, which was approved in 2007 has clear policies for the lands south of the Dalhousie LRT Station, excerpted as follows:

*Policy 6 - Development immediately fronting onto Valencia Road NW or the Park Space east of the study area should be no more than 3 storeys high. Buildings should be set back a minimum of 6 metres from the property line at these frontages.*

*Policy 7 - A shadowing study shall be provided when required by the Approving Authority. Planning applications should not be approved for proposals which, in the opinion of the Approving Authority, have an unreasonable shadowing impact on surrounding areas.*

These policies contained in the Varsity Land Use Study should be incorporated into the SSLAP.

## **2. Valparaiso Place**

This is a quiet cul-de-sac with 8 homes, 4 of which were built in 1998/99. There is no back lane. It is identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a height of 4 storeys. This cul-de-sac should be classified as Neighbourhood Local with a maximum height of 3 storeys. If a comprehensive development were to be built on this cul-de-sac, a modifier would be essential to ensure all eight homes are redeveloped as one unit without isolating individual homes.

### **Requested Amendment to the Plan:**

Change the Building Scale Map (Map 4) from Low-Modified (4 storeys) to Limited (maximum of 3 storeys). Change the Urban Form Category (Map 3) from Neighbourhood Connector to Neighbourhood Local. Change Figure 10, Section 2.5.4.4, to remove Valparaiso Place from the Dalhousie Transition Zone.

## **3. Varsity Estates Link and Varsity Estates Grove**

Varsity Estates Link is a quiet, heavily treed residential street with large well-maintained single family homes with only local traffic. The street pattern includes large side yards, no back lanes, and a pedestrian pathway between the homes on the Link and the Grove.

The houses on the west side of VE Link back onto 53<sup>rd</sup> Street with a 17 foot grassed boulevard between the road and the back fences which homeowners maintain. There are also 3 houses on Varsity Estates Grove that abut 53<sup>rd</sup> Street with the boulevard next to their side yards. This boulevard is a major underground utility right of way. There is also a large easement on the Varsity Estates Link (west) side of the properties. It is important to note that across 53<sup>rd</sup> Street is a major above-ground Enmax transmission line.

The west side of Varsity Estates Link is shown as Neighbourhood Local with Limited Height of 3 storeys. The east side of Varsity Estates Link and several homes on Varsity Estates Grove to the north and south of the Link are shown as Neighbourhood Connector and Low-Modified (4 storeys).

Splitting this street into two sections will destroy the character of this street and have a negative impact on quality of life and property values for the remaining homes on the west side of the street. This proposal does not respect the local context.

### **Requested Amendment to the Plan:**

Change the Urban Form Category (Map 3) from Neighbourhood Connector to Neighbourhood Local. Change the Building Scale Map (Map 4) from Low-Modified (4 storeys) to Limited (maximum of 3 storeys). Change Figure 10, Section 2.5.4.4, to remove Varsity Estates Link and part of Varsity Estates Grove from the Dalhousie Transition Zone.

## **4. Valencia Place & Valencia Road**

This is a quiet dead-end residential street and cul-de-sac with large, well-maintained homes. There are no back lanes and there is a major pathway to access the Varsity Ravine Park to the east. The homes backing onto the park and on Valencia Road are identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a height up to 4 storeys and the homes on Valencia Place are identified as Neighbourhood Flex with a height of up to 6 storeys. This is part of a continuous single family area and both roads should be identified as Neighbourhood Local.

**Requested Amendment to the Plan:**

Change the Urban Form Category (Map 3) from Neighbourhood Connector to Neighbourhood Local on Valencia Road. Change the Urban Form Category (Map 3) from Neighbourhood Flex to Neighbourhood Local on Valencia Place.

Change the Building Scale Map (Map 4) from Low-Modified (4 storeys) to Limited (maximum of 3 storeys) on Valencia Road. Change the Building Scale Map (Map 4) from Low (6 storeys) to Limited (maximum of 3 storeys) on Valencia Place.

**5. Varmoor Road between 42 Street and 39 Street**

Varmoor Road is identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a height of 3 storeys. We agree with limiting the height to 3 storeys, however, this road is a quiet residential street and should be classified as Neighbourhood Local.

**Requested Amendment to the Plan:**

Change the Urban Form Category (Map 3) from Neighbourhood Connector to Neighbourhood Local on Varmoor Road between 42 Street and 39 Street.

**COMMENTS ABOUT SPECIFIC AREAS OR STREETS WEST OF SHAGANAPPI TRAIL**

**Area South of Crowchild Trail & Dalhousie LRT Station:**

The policies contained in the Varsity Land Use Study should be incorporated into the South Shaganappi Local Area Plan. The proposed density needs to be reduced in order to accommodate manageable traffic volumes.

The Groves of Varsity has been developed with two 12 storey buildings, one 8 storey building, one 6 storey building (The Manor seniors' residence), and one 4 storey building (commercial). Crowchild Square has been rezoned for 12 storeys.

The Bow Valley Church is identified as Neighbourhood Flex with a height of up to 26 storeys. The DA Watt Traffic study indicated this density would overwhelm adjacent roadways and the height should be reduced to 12 storeys. Excerpts from the Varsity Land Use Study can be found in Attachment 1.

**Varsity Land Use Study**

The Varsity Land Use Study, a non-statutory plan, which was approved in 2007 has clear policies for the lands south of the Dalhousie LRT Station, excerpted as follows:

*“Policy 4 - The highest buildings should be located immediately adjacent to Crowchild Trail NW and shall be no higher than 12 storeys. The height of buildings should progressively step down in a southward direction from Crowchild Trail NW to a height limit of 8 and then 4 storeys (Refer to Plan 3).*

*Policy 5 - Developments immediately fronting Varsity Estates Drive NW and 53 Avenue NW should be no more than 4 storeys high. Buildings should be set back a minimum of 5 metres from the property line at these frontages.*

*Policy 6 - Development immediately fronting onto Valencia Road NW or the Park Space east of the study area should be no more than 3 storeys high. Buildings should be set back a minimum of 6 metres from the property line at these frontages.*

*Policy 7 - A shadowing study shall be provided when required by the Approving Authority. Planning applications should not be approved for proposals which, in the opinion of the Approving Authority, have an unreasonable shadowing impact on surrounding areas.*

*Policy 26 - Planning applications should not be approved where, in the opinion of the Approving Authority, proposals are likely to generate vehicle movements which cannot be satisfactorily accommodated by the road network.”*

The DA Watt Traffic Impact Study is attached to the VLUS as “Appendix 2 – Transportation Study” and clearly indicates that the density and heights proposed in the SSLAP are excessive and will overwhelm the existing transportation network. There has been extensive research in Canada and the USA regarding the negative impact of air and noise pollution from high traffic volumes. In addition, traffic congestion can create safety issues especially for the thousands of children in Varsity attending the six schools in the community.

As the Local Area Plan replaces all existing planning policy documents in the plan area, we would like the policies of the Varsity Land Use Study to be incorporated into the Local Area Plan. We

note in particular that a maximum height of 3 storeys and generous setbacks are indicated where there is an impact on low density residential housing and parks.

**Area North of Crowchild Trail:**

It is important to note that there is a large amount of land available for future redevelopment north of Crowchild Trail at the Dalhousie LRT Station. If increasing density at this LRT station is to receive comprehensive, thoughtful planning, this area should be included in the discussions. This area has much better access and egress than south of Crowchild Trail including a right-in/right-out directly off Crowchild Trail and 4 lane divided roads to the north (Dalhousie Drive) and west (53 Street) of the site. The access onto Dalhousie Drive is a signalized intersection.

It is important to recognize that the amount of density south of Crowchild Trail is limited by an unusual road network that was a retrofit from changing transportation plans in the 1960s (the abandonment of a through road to Silver Springs on 40 Avenue). The maximum density that can be accommodated in Varsity close to the LRT station was determined by a DA Watt Traffic Study done in 2007 and attached to the Varsity Land Use Study. A much greater amount of density on a larger parcel of land can be accommodated north of Crowchild Trail and a similar study should be conducted in Dalhousie.

***We believe Dalhousie and Brentwood should have been included in this local area plan. For future LAPs, we would recommend that all communities surrounding an LRT station or activity centre should be included to allow for comprehensive planning.***

**Redevelopment Projects Close to Varsity**

In addition to two new 15 storey apartment buildings in Dalhousie, it is important to note there are many mixed-use projects that have been approved in close proximity to Varsity, some of which are nearing completion. This includes University District (200 acres), Northland Mall (two 6 storey apartments plus commercial), Stadium Shopping Centre (14 storey residential tower and 8 storey medical office building), and the University Innovation Quarter (76 acres).

**Varsity Estates Village (Silvera for Seniors), 5200 – 53 Avenue NW**

The existing two storey townhouses owned by Silvera are subsidized housing units for low income families and are located on the west side of the Varsity Ravine Park. They are identified as Neighbourhood Flex with a height up to 12 storeys. This height would overshadow the park and regional bicycle and pedestrian pathway immediately to the east. As the asphalt pathway is on a steep slope in this location where it connects to the pedestrian overpass over Crowchild Trail, icing is a significant safety concern.

Any redevelopment on this site should be a maximum of 6 storeys at the western and northern edges and needs to step down to a maximum of 3 storeys at the eastern and southern edges. It is important to create a sensitive transition to the single family homes on Valencia Road and Valencia Place and the two storey townhouses south of 53 Avenue.

A shadow study must be required for future development applications to ensure there is no overshadowing of the pathway and park.

**Requested Amendment to the Plan:**

Change the Building Scale Map (Map 4) from Mid (up to 12 storeys) to Limited (maximum of 3 storeys) on the east and south property lines, Low-Modified (up to 4 storeys), in the middle of the site, and to Low (maximum of 6 storeys) on the west and north portions of the site.

As this site is at the end of a dead-end road with no direct access to Crowchild Trail, the Urban Form Category (Map 3) should be changed from Neighbourhood Flex which is more commercially-oriented to Neighbourhood Connector which is more oriented to residential development while still allowing some commercial uses.

In Section 2.5.4.4. Dalhousie Station Area, this site should be down in mauve as opposed to dark purple. It should be shown in the Dalhousie Transition Zone not in the Dalhousie Core Zone.

The following policies contained in the Varsity Land Use Study should be incorporated into the SSLAP.

### ***Varsity Land Use Study***

The Varsity Land Use Study, a non-statutory plan, which was approved in 2007 has clear policies for the lands south of the Dalhousie LRT Station, excerpted as follows:

*Policy 6 - Development immediately fronting onto Valencia Road NW or the Park Space east of the study area should be no more than 3 storeys high. Buildings should be set back a minimum of 6 metres from the property line at these frontages.*

*Policy 7 - A shadowing study shall be provided when required by the Approving Authority. Planning applications should not be approved for proposals which, in the opinion of the Approving Authority, have an unreasonable shadowing impact on surrounding areas.*

### **Varsity Estates Court**

Single family cul-de-sac and part of a continuous low density residential area with 12 large, well-maintained homes. It has been identified as Neighbourhood Flex with a height of 6 storeys. A modifier is essential to ensure the entire cul-de-sac is redeveloped as one unit property without isolating individual homes. The access point for a new building would need to be moved further west onto Varsity Estates Drive to avoid conflict with the T-intersection. A multi-storey building would create undesirable massing for the homes across Varsity Estates Drive to the south. It would be more appropriate for this cul-de-sac to be designated Neighbourhood Local with a maximum height of 3 storeys.

### **100 Varsity Estates Place**

This is a single family cul-de-sac and part of a continuous low density residential area with 8 large, well-maintained homes. It has been identified as Neighbourhood Flex with a height of 6 storeys. At a minimum, a modifier would be essential to ensure the entire cul-de-sac is redeveloped as one unit without isolating individual homes. It would be more appropriate for this cul-de-sac to be designated Neighbourhood Local with a maximum of 3 storeys.

### **Varsity Estates Drive (north)**

These are 3 single family homes that are a part of a continuous low density residential area with large, well-maintained homes. They have been identified as Neighbourhood Flex with a height of 6 storeys. It would be more appropriate to be identified as Neighbourhood Local with a maximum



height of 4 storeys. A modifier is essential to ensure all three homes are redeveloped as one unit without isolating individual homes.

#### **Cathedral Manor Estates, Varsity Estates View**

This is a 3 storey subsidized residence built in 1982 with 115 units for independent low-income seniors. It provides parking for those seniors who are driving and is heavily treed with a large garden. The walking distance to the Dalhousie LRT Station is 16 minutes which is outside the 5-10 minute desired walking time. It is bordered by Crowchild Trail and sound attenuation barrier to the north with single family homes on the other three sides and its access is off a quiet residential street. It has been identified as Neighbourhood Flex with a height of 6 storeys. This building is unlikely to deteriorate sufficiently within 30 years to warrant replacement and it provides a valuable and unique type of housing in the community which is well integrated with the low density residential neighbourhood. This property should be designated Neighbourhood Local with a maximum height of 3 storeys.

#### **Varsity Royal**

There are 17 well-maintained townhouses identified as Neighbourhood Flex with a height of 6 storeys which is appropriate due to its location. A modifier is essential to ensure the entire property is redeveloped as one unit without isolating individual homes.

#### **Varsity Estates Park**

##### **(Townhouses west of 53 Street between Varsity Royal & Valparaiso Place)**

There are approximately 40 newer well-maintained townhouses (2000's) identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a height of 6 storeys. Only 4 units face 53<sup>rd</sup> Street. A multi-storey building would create undesirable massing for the homes immediately adjacent to the south on Valparaiso Place so there should be a maximum height of 3 to 4 storeys.

#### **Valparaiso Place**

This is a quiet cul-de-sac with 8 homes, 4 of which were built in 1998/99. There is no back lane. It is identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a height of 4 storeys. This cul-de-sac should be classified as Neighbourhood Local with a maximum height of 3 storeys. It should also be removed from the Dalhousie Transition Zone in Figure 10, section 2.5.4.4. If a comprehensive development were to be built on this cul-de-sac, a modifier would be essential to ensure all eight homes are redeveloped as one unit without isolating individual homes.

#### **Varsity Estates Link (plus 4-5 houses on Varsity Estates Grove)**

Varsity Estates Link is a quiet residential street with large, well-maintained homes with only local traffic. The street pattern includes 8 foot side yards, no back lanes, and a pedestrian pathway between the homes on the Link and the Grove. The homes on the west side back onto 53<sup>rd</sup> Street. There is a major underground utility right of way between these homes and 53<sup>rd</sup> Street. On the east side of 53<sup>rd</sup> Street is a major Enmax transmission line. The walking distance to the Dalhousie LRT Station is 13-17 minutes which is outside the 5-10 minute desired walking time. This street should be identified as Neighbourhood Local with a maximum height of 3 storeys.

The west side of Varsity Estates Link is shown as Neighbourhood Local with Limited Height of 3 storeys. The east side of Varsity Estates Link and several homes on Varsity Estates Grove to the north and south of the Link are shown as Neighbourhood Connector and Low-Modified (4 storeys).

The houses on the west side of VE Link back onto 53<sup>rd</sup> Street with a 17 foot grassed boulevard between the road and the back fences which homeowners maintain. There are also 3 houses on Varsity Estates Grove that abut 53<sup>rd</sup> Street with the boulevard next to their side yards. This boulevard is a major underground utility right of way. There is also a large easement on the Varsity Estates Link (west) side of the properties. It is important to note that across 53<sup>rd</sup> Street is a major above-ground Enmax transmission line.

Splitting this street into two sections will destroy the character of this street and have a negative impact on quality of life and property values for the remaining homes on the west side of the street. This proposal does not respect the local context.

It is important to note that 53<sup>rd</sup> Street in Varsity is a 2 lane residential street with bike lanes on each side. The nature of the road completely changes north of Crowchild Trail into a 4 lane divided major roadway but the Varsity portion is built to the same standard as any local collector residential road such as Varsity Estates Drive. It is similar to 37 Street in Varsity except that it has houses on both sides of the street.

Consideration must be given to the location of the transmission line and underground utilities along 53<sup>rd</sup> Street. If apartment buildings are built facing 53<sup>rd</sup> Street they will need to be set back quite far from the roadway which will result in a pretty shallow building (front to back) and the residents will be looking out their windows straight at a major transmission line just a few feet away.

If the apartments were to be built facing away from 53<sup>rd</sup> Street and towards the Link there would still be harm to the neighbours across the street due to the massing of the building, parking issues, and lack of landscaping.

There is also a significant risk that houses will be acquired, torn down, and apartment buildings constructed on several lots while leaving individual homes isolated and surrounded by higher density development. Again, this would have a devastating impact on quality of life and property values.

#### **Section 2.5.4.4. Dalhousie Station Area**

The east side of Varsity Estates Link is shown in mauve, Dalhousie Transition Zone. This section states: "New development located between 53 Street NW and Varsity Estates Link NW is strongly encouraged to front both streets.

Development should consider:

- i. consolidation of parcels into larger lots;
- ii. the construction of internal lanes;
- iii. shared parking entrances to minimize pedestrian and vehicular conflict; and,
- iv. streetscape improvements along 53 Street NW such as sidewalks."

This section does not resolve the issues I have mentioned above. It's not an appropriate street to have identified as a transition zone.

#### **Requested Amendment to the Plan:**

Change the Urban Form Category (Map 3) from Neighbourhood Connector to Neighbourhood Local.

Change the Building Scale Map (Map 4) from Low-Modified (4 storeys) to Limited (maximum of 3 storeys).

Change Figure 10, Section 2.5.4.4, to remove Varsity Estates Link and part of Varsity Estates Grove from the Dalhousie Transition Zone.

### **Varsity Estates Grove**

This is a quiet residential street including a cul-de-sac with large, well-maintained homes with only local traffic. The street pattern includes 8 foot side yards, no back lanes, and a pedestrian pathway between the homes on the Link and the Grove. There are 2 pathways to the adjacent playground and playing fields from this residential area. The walking distance to the Dalhousie LRT Station is 12-20 minutes which is outside the 5-10 minute desired walking time. We greatly appreciate the change to designate this road as Neighbourhood Local on both sides with a maximum height of 3 storeys. Comments with respect to the few houses that were included with Varsity Estates Link (approximately 4-5) are noted under Varsity Estates Link.

### **Townhouses south of 53 Avenue & west of 53 Street**

There is a mix of older and newer housing developments identified as Neighbourhood Flex with a height of 6 storeys. This is a quiet residential street that also serves the church. When the church site is developed the new access will be from the roundabout at Varsity Estates Drive and 53 Street. There are no back lanes. If some of these properties were to be redeveloped, the height needs to be sensitive to the homes on Valencia Place to the south. Rather than Low (up to 6 storeys), Low-Modified (up to 4 storeys) would be more appropriate.

### **Homes on East Side of 53 Street (between 53 Ave & Valencia Place)**

53<sup>rd</sup> Street is a primary collector street with residential characteristics. While 53<sup>rd</sup> Street north of Crowchild Trail is a 4 lane divided roadway, 53<sup>rd</sup> Street south of the roundabout and north of Varsity Drive is a 2 lane roadway with bicycle paths and no parking. These 7 single family homes are newer housing developments. These homes are identified as Neighbourhood Flex with a height of 6 storeys, however, this height would significantly overshadow the two-storey townhouses (also newer homes) immediately to the east. There is also a major Enmax transmission line on the east side of 53 Street which would impede the construction of taller buildings. Therefore, these homes should be identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a maximum height of 3 or 4 storeys.

### **Valencia Place & Valencia Road**

This is a quiet dead-end residential street and cul-de-sac with large, well-maintained homes. There are no back lanes and there is a major pathway to access the Varsity Ravine Park to the east. The homes backing onto the park and on Valencia Road are identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a height up to 4 storeys and the homes on Valencia Place are identified as Neighbourhood Flex with a height of up to 6 storeys. This is part of a continuous single family area and both roads should be identified as Neighbourhood Local.

### **Requested Amendment to the Plan:**

Change the Urban Form Category (Map 3) from Neighbourhood Connector to Neighbourhood Local on Valencia Road. Change the Urban Form Category (Map 3) from Neighbourhood Flex to Neighbourhood Local on Valencia Place.

Change the Building Scale Map (Map 4) from Low-Modified (4 storeys) to Limited (maximum of 3 storeys) on Valencia Road. Change the Building Scale Map (Map 4) from Low (6 storeys) to Limited (maximum of 3 storeys) on Valencia Place.

#### **Townhouses west of 53 Street between VE Grove & VE Drive**

This is a quiet townhouse complex with 16 units identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a height of 4 storeys. This height would cause overshadowing of the adjacent homes to the north on Varsity Estates Grove. The walking distance to the Dalhousie LRT Station is 20-25 minutes which is outside the 5-10 minute desired walking time. This complex should be identified as Neighbourhood Local with a maximum height of 3 storeys.

#### **Vienna Drive**

This is a very quiet dead-end road separated from Crowchild Trail by a sound attenuation barrier with well-maintained houses that are identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a height of 4 storeys. There are 17 houses west of 48 Street and 13 houses east of 48 Street on the south side of the road only. Vienna Drive is a narrow road with parking allowed on one side only. Across the back lane are single family homes. There is only one access road (48 Street) in and out of this area which currently experiences traffic congestion at peak hours. Any significant increase in density in this area would require a traffic study. This street should be designated as Neighbourhood Local.

#### **Horizon Village**

This is a quiet, well-maintained seniors' townhouse complex with 61 units that is identified as Neighbourhood Local with a height of 6 storeys. There is only one access road (48 Street) in and out of this area which currently experiences traffic congestion during peak hours. While additional height in this area will not cause overshadowing of low density residential development, any significant increase in density in this area would require a traffic study to ensure the road network can accommodate the traffic generated. A modifier would be essential to ensure all townhouses are redeveloped as one unit without isolating individual homes.

#### **53 Street between Varsity Drive & 40 Avenue**

These homes are identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a maximum height of 3 storeys. We support this designation.

#### **Varsity Drive between 53 Street & 49 Street**

The houses on the north side of Varsity Drive are identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a maximum height of 3 storeys. We support this designation in this area.

#### **Varsity Drive between 49 Street & Shaganappi Trail**

The houses on the north and south sides of Varsity Drive are identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a height of 6 storeys. This includes the newer 3 storey Attainable Homes apartment building. We would note that when the Attainable Homes project was approved it was agreed that a maximum height of 3 storeys was appropriate to avoid excessive overshadowing of the single family homes across the lane to the north. We believe the Neighbourhood Connector designation is appropriate in this location due to the higher activity level of this section of Varsity

Drive, however, we believe the height should be a maximum of 3 storeys for a sensitive transition to the adjacent single family homes which are mostly bungalows.

#### **40 Avenue between 53 Street & 49 Street**

The houses on the north side of 40 Avenue are identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a height of 6 storeys. This height would cause significant overshadowing to the homes across the laneway immediately to the north. While Neighbourhood Connector is appropriate, we believe the height should be a maximum of 3 storeys for a sensitive transition to the adjacent single family homes which are mostly bungalows.

#### **40 Avenue between 49 Street & Shaganappi Trail**

The houses on the north side of 40 Avenue are identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a height of 6 storeys. This height would cause significant overshadowing to the homes across the laneway immediately to the north. While Neighbourhood Connector is appropriate we believe the height should be a maximum of 3 storeys for a sensitive transition to the adjacent single family homes which are mostly bungalows.

#### **32 Avenue between 50 Street & Home Road**

These homes on the north side of 32 Avenue are identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a maximum height of 3 storeys. We support this designation.

#### **Market Mall**

Market Mall is identified as Commercial Centre with heights of up to 26 storeys. The traffic generation and overshadowing would be significant on this large site with this height. Traffic studies would be required with any future redevelopment. Development should step down to no more than 6 storeys on the north and west sides of the site.

#### **Townhouses West of Market Mall (49 Street)**

These are well-maintained townhouses ranging from 2 to 4 storeys in height. They are identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a height of 6 storeys. In order to have a sensitive transition to the single family homes across 50 Street to the west and to reduce massing and overshadowing, a maximum height of 4 storeys would be more appropriate.

#### **COMMENTS ABOUT SPECIFIC AREAS OR STREETS EAST OF SHAGANAPPI TRAIL**

##### **Varsity Drive from Viscount Drive to 37 Street**

On the north side of Varsity Drive between Shaganappi Trail and Viscount Drive there is a small retail building called Varsity Plaza and the Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church. Between Viscount Drive and 37 Street are single family homes, primarily bungalows.

On the south side of Varsity Drive between Shaganappi Trail and 40 Street on the south side of Varsity Drive there is a regional mall, the Shaganappi Village Shopping Centre, several apartment buildings, the Varsity Community Centre, and Varsity Acres School. Between 40 Street and 37 Street are single family homes, mostly bungalows. The housing stock is well maintained with extensive mature landscaping as is the pattern in Varsity.

Neighbourhood Connector applies here due to slightly higher traffic volumes but 6 storeys is not an appropriate height. It is important that heights not exceed 3 storeys to prevent overshadowing of neighbouring homes and to preserve the integrity of the single family residential neighbourhood.

**Valiant Drive between Shaganappi Trail and 40 Street**

On the north side of Valiant Drive are apartment buildings, playing fields, the Varsity Community Association, and Varsity Acres School. On the south side are single family homes, mostly bungalows, on quiet residential crescents. Neighbourhood Connector applies here due to slightly higher traffic volumes but 6 storeys is not an appropriate height. It is important that heights not exceed 3 storeys to prevent overshadowing of neighbouring homes and to preserve the integrity of the single family residential neighbourhood.

**Oxford Mews, Townhouses to the southeast of 46 Avenue & 39 Street**

Oxford Mews contains 38 two storey or split level units with a large landscaped courtyard in the centre of the heavily treed site. This complex has been designated Neighbourhood Connector with a height of 12 storeys. The only access point is 39 Street off Varsity Drive which is a quiet dead-end street with parking on both sides. Across 39 Street are single family homes. This is a quiet residential street and there is no through traffic so local-focused commercial would not be appropriate. The street is not a higher activity road and this area is not close to either LRT station or a transit hub. It should be designated Neighbourhood Local with a maximum height of 3 to 4 storeys. If the site were redeveloped to 6 storeys, the building should step down to no more than 4 storeys at the west and south property lines.

**Varsity Landing, 39 Street**

Varsity Landing is immediately north of Oxford Mews at the end of 39 Street. It is shown as Neighbourhood Connector with 6 storeys in height. This building also has access only on 39 Street. This site should also be Neighbourhood Local with a height of 3 storeys which is what currently exists. This building is in new condition and would not be replaced within a 30 year time frame.

**Holly Acres, 37 Street**

Holly Acres is an apartment building east of Oxford Mews and was built in 1975 and is in good condition. It has two access points; 39 St/46 Ave and 37 St. It is 12 storeys and contains 139 rental units. We support the designation of this site as Neighbourhood Connector with 12 storeys in height.

**McLaurin Village, 3500 Varsity Drive**

McLaurin Village is a large parcel with numerous townhouses located east of 37 Street and north of Varsity Drive. We support the designation of this site as Neighbourhood Flex with 12 storeys in height due to its proximity to the Brentwood LRT station, however, road improvements would be required to accommodate the traffic generated from this increased intensity.

**37 Street, Valdes Place, 36 Street, Vernon Place**

These homes are between Varsity Drive and 40 Avenue and east of 37 Street. Valdes Place and Vernon Place are cul-de-sacs with 7 homes each. There are 5 homes on 37 Street and 8 homes on 36 Street. None of these homes have back lanes. They are designated Neighbourhood Flex

with 6 storeys in height. Due to its close proximity to the Brentwood LRT Station these designations are appropriate, however, it is important that a modifier be added to these parcels to ensure the entire area is redeveloped as one redevelopment project to avoid isolating individual homes. In addition, the road network would require upgrading, particularly in conjunction with the development of McLaurin Village to the north.

#### **40 Avenue between Shaganappi Trail and 37 Street**

On the south side of 40 Avenue there are single family homes backing onto the roadway. On the north side of 40 Avenue there are single family homes, mostly bungalows, fronting onto the roadway. The homes on the north side of 40 Avenue are identified as Neighbourhood Connector which is appropriate as it is a higher activity street. However, the proposed height of 6 storeys will have a negative impact on neighbouring homes to the north due to massing and significant overshadowing. There should be a maximum height of 3 storeys to ensure compatibility with neighbouring streets.

#### **42 Street – Townhouses on East Side**

The existing 2 to 4 storey multi-family developments between Shaganappi Trail and 42 Street are identified as Neighbourhood Connector with 6 storeys in height. This is a residential street which serves the houses between 32 & 40 Avenues. Neighbourhood Local would be more appropriate and the height should not exceed 4 to 6 storeys.

#### **Varmoor Road between 42 Street and 39 Street**

Varmoor Road is identified as Neighbourhood Connector with a height of 3 storeys. We agree with limiting the height to 3 storeys, however, this road is a quiet residential street and should be classified as Neighbourhood Local.

#### **Requested Amendment to the Plan:**

Change the Urban Form Category (Map 3) from Neighbourhood Connector to Neighbourhood Local on Varmoor Road between 42 Street and 39 Street.

#### **University Innovation Quarter**

This 76 acre site is shown as Neighbourhood Flex with heights ranging from 6 storeys (Low) to over 27 storeys (Highest). It is between the Brentwood LRT station and 32 Avenue and east of 37 Street. The maximum height bordering 37 Street should be a maximum of 3 to 4 storeys to create a sensitive transition to the single family homes on the west side of 37 Street. There is precedent for this as this was the appropriate height determined by Council recently for the affordable housing unit under construction on 37 Street & 32 Avenue.

Also, University District stepped down the height to three storeys south of 32 Avenue as a sensitive transition to the single family homes on the north side of the street. Redevelopment with greater height and intensity is appropriate in close proximity to the LRT station, however, the heights need to taper off towards 37 Street and 32 Avenue. Adequate on-site parking is crucial even with the close proximity to the LRT station. A traffic study will be required to determine what roadway upgrades are required.

**Fire Hall & Mixed Use Site on the NE corner of 37 Street and 32 Avenue**

The Urban Form Map shows this site as Civic and Recreation, indoor and outdoor recreational facilities on public land. We don't believe this designation properly describes the city-owned site which contains a fire hall, commercial space, 4 storey affordable apartment building, and new park. Perhaps for this unusual mixed-use site, a new designation could be created. The height of 4 storeys was approved by Council in 2023 in recognition of the impact on the single family homes directly across 37 Street.

**Attachments**

- 1 – Background Information
- 2 – Population Growth Map
- 3 – Historical Varsity Population Chart
- 4 – Photos of Varsity Homes and Streets



## **ATTACHMENT 1 – SSLAP SUBMISSION – JANUARY 2025**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE COMMUNITY OF VARSITY**

Varsity is a stable, diverse, dynamic, thriving community which already demonstrates many of the ideals expressed in the Municipal Development Plan and other planning policies. Varsity has a wide variety of housing types at all price points including attainable and affordable housing.

For example, Varsity has a wide variety of housing types at all price points including numerous apartment buildings ranging from 3 to 12 storeys, townhouses, duplexes, single family homes, secondary suites, attainable housing, and affordable housing. Forty-five percent of dwelling units in Varsity are single family homes compared to the city average of 55%. Furthermore, additional multi-family housing has already been approved or proposed on several sites in Varsity.

According to the 2021 census, Varsity has 38% renter households compared to the city average of 31%; 10% subsidized rental housing compared to the city average of 9%; and 28% of dwelling units are in 3-4 storey apartment buildings in comparison to an average of 16% in the rest of Calgary. For units in apartment buildings 5 storeys and taller, Varsity has 11% as compared to the city average of 8%. These statistics illustrate that our community has already achieved most of the densification and diversification goals of the City and we think this is important to acknowledge.

Our residents are easily able to age within the community and many who downsize choose bungalows, townhouses, or apartments to minimize stairs and we have several seniors' residences in the community serving all ages and abilities including memory care – Cathedral Manor (subsidized), The Manor Village Varsity Retirement Home, Horizon Village, Foothills Lutheran Manor (subsidized), and Chateaux on the Green. We also have Cambridge Manor Care Home immediately south of 32 Avenue in University District.

Our local businesses in 6 different shopping and professional centres are very well supported and successful with low turnover. Our 6 schools as well as before and after school care programs, preschools, summer camps, and daycares are all full, most with waiting lists. The Varsity Community Centre is extremely busy with activities and the facility is fully booked throughout the year.

Varsity residents have excellent access to amenities and transit including 2 LRT stations. We have Vecova and Christine Mickle School offering unique recreation and educational services. We are close to the University of Calgary, the Children's Hospital, Foothills Hospital, and University District.

Our parks, off leash areas, playgrounds, playing fields, outdoor skating rinks, toboggan hills, walking pathways, and bike paths are heavily used. Wide boulevards with large elm trees create a beautiful buffer between our collector roadways and sidewalks. The

Silver Springs Golf Course provides additional open green space and is an important community amenity. In the winter it is used for cross country skiing and walking and the ponds are used for skating.

Bowmont Natural Environment Park, Dale Hodges Park, and the Bow River are on Varsity's southwest boundary. Varsity residents place a high value on these regional parks as well as the open, green spaces and extensive mature urban tree canopy throughout the community. Residents have worked hard over the past decades to create and preserve these exceptional parks. These green spaces enhance quality of life for residents of Varsity and users from outside the community. They provide natural cooling, improve air quality, and support water management. They are social places for people of all ages (& their dogs in some parks) to gather, meeting, play, and talk. They encourage organized or spontaneous physical activity in all seasons. They are spaces where children can play or learn to ride a bike or skate. The mental health benefits cannot be underestimated. Open spaces create a sense of well-being by providing calm places to stop and think without the city noise and activity. This helps reduce stress by providing a respite from the busyness of the city. Best of all, they provide all these benefits for free.

Why have we devoted so much space to this description of our parks and open spaces? We care because with an increase in population, these parks and open spaces become even more important and must be protected and maintained. Many residents have moved to this community specifically because of these incredible spaces and our mature tree canopy. It's an integral part of our identity.

With respect to walkability, the planning of Varsity Village and Varsity Estates was based on the Radburn Plan which adapted the ideas of the English Garden City, developing a street hierarchy that segregated through traffic from local traffic and automotive traffic from pedestrian traffic. The developers used as many cul-de-sacs as possible and forwent rear lanes in favour of pedestrian pathways that connected to parks behind the houses. The intent was to create a park-like setting for users of the rear walkways and this intent has been maintained throughout the years. These pathways provide a beautiful and enjoyable way to walk in the community and are enjoyed by many residents daily.

The purpose of a local area plan is to provide direction on future redevelopment over the next 30 years. The City states: "There is a stage in each community's life cycle when the choice to rebuild or redevelop homes and buildings becomes more and more frequent (generally as homes and buildings reach 50+ years)." The Engagement Booklet describes the Life Cycle of a Community, however, this Life Cycle is not the reality experienced in Varsity. One reason is that Varsity has developed over several decades and there has been a gradual, continuous turnover and updating of homes from long-time homeowners to new families. This is illustrated in the spreadsheet in Attachment A and in the chart in Attachment B (data obtained from the City's website). Attachment C, Population Change from the 2019 Census, shows that Varsity experience 1-5% growth from 2018 to 2019.

Once the population of Varsity peaked after construction of new homes between 1968 and 1980, it has stayed stable from 1980 to the present. We have not experienced a population decline and our schools and businesses are not “struggling to stay open”. It is the complete opposite of this scenario. The assumptions made by the City are not accurate for the Varsity community.

Residents appreciate how special Varsity is and develop deep roots within the community which includes a long-term commitment to maintain and renovate their homes. The “50 year” rule is definitely not the case in Varsity since the vast majority of homes are in excellent condition and highly sought-after. They won't be ready for the landfill for many years to come.

Therefore, it is important to identify where redevelopment makes sense within the 30 year time frame of a local area plan. Forward planning needs to be thoughtful and pragmatic. There's no point identifying a quiet residential street with homes in excellent condition for future apartment buildings. This type of redevelopment is unlikely to happen in comparison to other sites within the community that are more suitable. However, being designated for higher density can precipitate a slow decline of the street.

Instead of increasing predictability, this type of designation actually increases uncertainty and destabilizes the affected streets. Realtors have advised that prospective purchasers will be more willing to spend money on a home on a street that is not designated as a future apartment building as it would be safer than investing in a home where the context may change significantly. Not only does this uncertainty reduce the desirability of a street and affect sale prices, it discourages investment in those homes. For existing home owners on an affected street, decisions to make renovations, improve landscaping, install solar panels, or even spend money on regular maintenance become fraught with anxiety and indecision. If there is risk of a negative impact on their home from nearby redevelopment or a deterioration of other homes on their street as neighbours hesitate to invest in their homes, property values and quality of life could be adversely affected.

The Local Area Plan should demonstrate a vision that respects the existing context with great attention to detail in each and every community.

### **Varsity Land Use Study**

The Varsity Land Use Study, a non-statutory plan, which was approved in 2007 has clear policies for the lands south of the Dalhousie LRT Station, excerpted as follows:

*“Policy 4 - The highest buildings should be located immediately adjacent to Crowchild Trail NW and shall be no higher than 12 storeys. The height of buildings should progressively step down in a southward direction from Crowchild Trail NW to a height limit of 8 and then 4 storeys (Refer to Plan 3).*

*Policy 5 - Developments immediately fronting Varsity Estates Drive NW and 53 Avenue NW should be no more than 4 storeys high. Buildings should be set back a minimum of 5 metres from the property line at these frontages.*

*Policy 6 - Development immediately fronting onto Valencia Road NW or the Park Space east of the study area should be no more than 3 storeys high. Buildings should be set back a minimum of 6 metres from the property line at these frontages.*

*Policy 7 - A shadowing study shall be provided when required by the Approving Authority. Planning applications should not be approved for proposals which, in the opinion of the Approving Authority, have an unreasonable shadowing impact on surrounding areas.*

*Policy 26 - Planning applications should not be approved where, in the opinion of the Approving Authority, proposals are likely to generate vehicle movements which cannot be satisfactorily accommodated by the road network.”*

The DA Watt Traffic Impact Study is attached to the VLUS as “Appendix 2 – Transportation Study” and clearly indicates that the density and heights proposed in the SSLAP are excessive and will overwhelm the existing transportation network. There has been extensive research in Canada and the USA regarding the negative impact of air and noise pollution from high traffic volumes. In addition, traffic congestion can create safety issues especially for the thousands of children in Varsity attending the six schools in the community.

As the Local Area Plan replaces all existing planning policy documents in the plan area, we would like the policies of the Varsity Land Use Study to be incorporated into the Local Area Plan. We note in particular that a maximum height of 3 storeys and generous setbacks are indicated where there is an impact on low density residential housing and parks.

### **Infrastructure**

The City states that existing infrastructure and amenities can handle increased density. Specifically, the City states that: “Most mature communities, especially those built prior to 1980, are below their historical peak population, so most communities are already designed to handle more people than live here today. Due to the decline in population and higher efficiency houses being built, there is now infrastructure capacity. This includes roads, transit stops, water and wastewater management, etc. to handle more types of housing.”

As noted previously, Varsity is not below its historical peak population but has instead maintained peak population levels. Increases in population will inevitably require significant investments to upgrade and modernize local infrastructure.

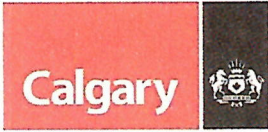
The DA Watt Traffic Study conducted in 2007 for the Varsity Land Use Study provides a detailed analysis of the impact of future redevelopment of the lands south of the Dalhousie LRT station. Since it would be extremely difficult to increase the capacity of the roads in the area, the maximum densities that can be accommodated in this area have been established and this should be respected. See excerpts from the VLUS in Attachment C.

*The Traffic Study states: “In conclusion, traffic generated by redevelopment of the Varsity Land Use study area to its maximum potential (as governed by the maximum F.A.R. within the guiding policies) can be supported by the surrounding road network with improvements along Varsity Estates Drive and 53 Street. As select intersection movements are at capacity, no additional land use over and above the maximum F.A.R, can be supported by the surrounding road network within the context of Transit Oriented Development.”*

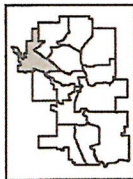
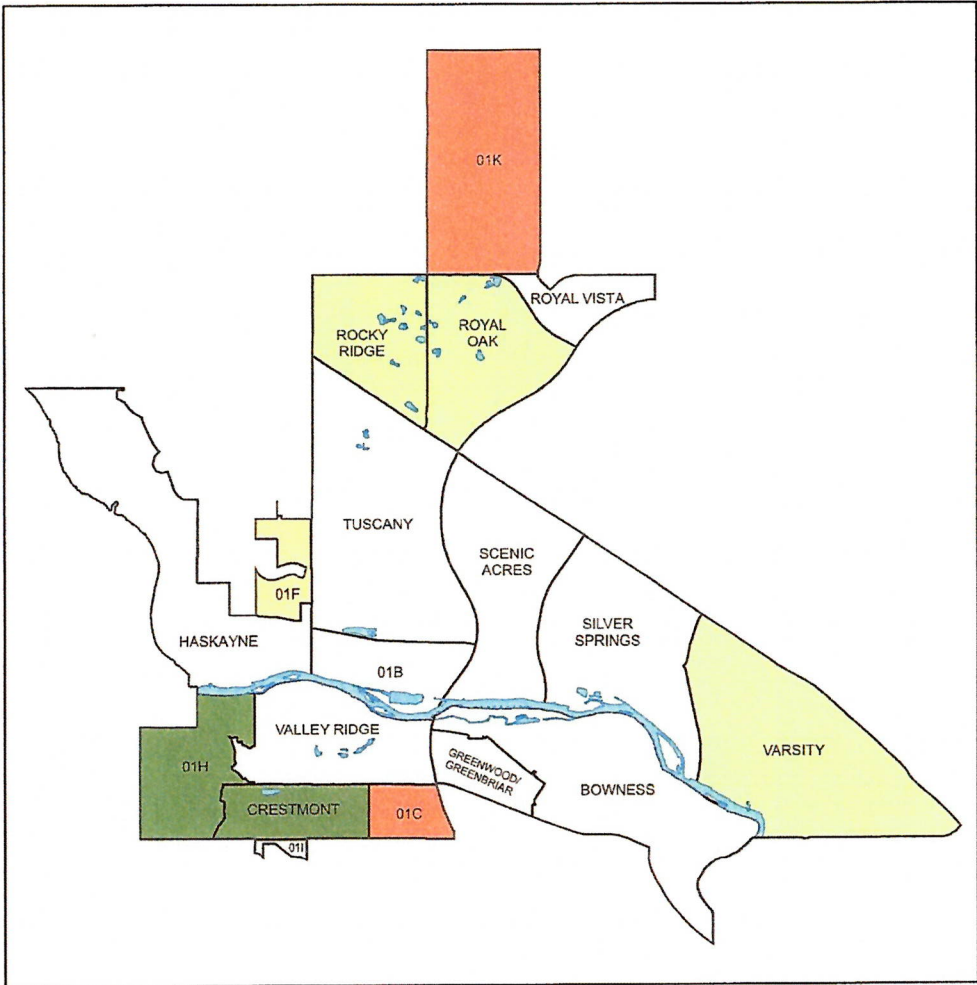
Higher density development can strain the ability of City infrastructure to handle the increased load. Therefore, careful evaluation will be required with each proposed redevelopment project. Traffic studies and shadow studies are essential to ensure roads can accommodate the traffic generated by increased density and to preserve the quality of life for homeowners and park users.

**ATTACHMENT 2 –SSLAP - VARSITY SUBMISSION – JANUARY 2025**

**ATTACHMENT C – 2019 CENSUS – POPULATION CHANGE - PAGE 1**



**2019 Census - Population Change**  
Ward 1 & Community Boundaries



**Percentage Population Change**  
**2018 - 2019**

White	1 - -1%	Light Green	-1 - -5%
Light Green	1 - 5%	Orange	-6 - -10%
Green	6 - 10%	Dark Orange	>-10%
Dark Green	>10%		



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Date Printed: July 25, 2019  
ISC: Protected

**ATTACHMENT 3 – SSLAP – VARSITY SUBMISSION – JANUARY 2025**

**ATTACHMENT B – CHART VIEW OF HISTORICAL POPULATION OF VARSITY**

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### Historical Calgary Community Populations

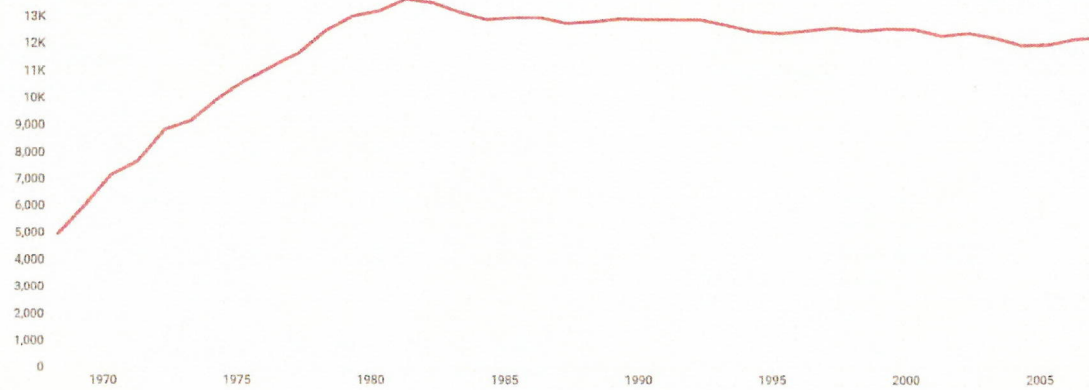
Demographics

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Chart View

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ATTACHMENT D – PHOTOS OF VARSITY

Townhouses East of 53 St & South of 53 Ave



Valparaiso Place



Valencia Road



Walking Path Behind Valencia Road & Place





ATTACHMENT D – PHOTOS OF VARSITY

Varsity Estates Link



Pathway Between VE Link & VE Grove



Varsity Estates Link



Varsity Estates Link Streetscape

