

Bridgeland-Riverside Community Association Response

BRIDGELAND-RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
12 November 2024

Dear Councillor Gian-Carlo Carra,

The Board of Directors for Bridgeland-Riverside Community Association (“BRCA”) is writing with regards to the development application at the northwest corner of 4th Street NE and 1st Avenue (LOC2024-0166; LOC2024-0221). This project is the beginning of what will no doubt be many development applications that will change the face of this part of our community.

The Couplet

The area between Memorial Drive north to 2nd Avenue NE and between 4th Street southbound and Edmonton Trail northbound is often referred to as the Couplet. The area in between and on either side of the two north-south streets has a significant amount of land that is and will be developed over time.

As you’re aware, Edmonton Trail is a thoroughfare that was cut through the community in the early 1970s, when a significant number of houses were expropriated and removed. This was part of the East Memorial Drive project, which was built to facilitate traffic into and out of the downtown core. The change to traffic patterns – with 4 lanes of vehicles providing a route to and from downtown – significantly impacted the businesses in and around the Couplet, especially along historic 4th Street. In essence, the vibrancy of 4th St was relinquished in favour of cars accessing the downtown.

On that note, our community has welcomed the current and ongoing Main Streets work on Edmonton Trail. Unfortunately, given the volume of traffic, the work on Edmonton Trail is only a very first step in the revitalization of the Couplet. As a Community Association, we take the position that the real Main Streets work is on historic 4th Street, where the streetcar once travelled and where small local businesses flourished for many decades.

The difficulty in revitalizing the Couplet is compounded by its division between Bridgeland-Riverside and Crescent Heights. The west side of 4th St is within Crescent Heights while the rest to the east is within Bridgeland-Riverside.

Fortunately, the remnants of our communities’ history and heritage remain visible along 4th St – at the Armour/Reliance Block, the Dewaal Block, Alberta Furniture, Lukes Drug Mart as well as the Gallelli Block and Roma Grocery.

We strongly believe there is remarkable potential for development along 4th St that will create a unique and attractive Main Street for our city. It could take the form of a modern “Little Italy”-like street that exemplifies the Main Streets program and fulfils its mandate to support



917 Centre Avenue NE
Calgary AB | T2E 0C6
403.263.5755
www.brccalgary.org

BRIDGELAND-RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

12 November 2024

character and identity, economic vitality, functionality and social & healthy lifestyles. With smaller storefronts, a mix of heritage and modern buildings, and public spaces, the area could be a magnet for inner city as well as suburban visitors. The alternative is for the piecemeal development of the 4th St corridor, which will miss this opportunity to harness the added value before the city and limit the area's potential.

Our Community Association wishes to play an active and supportive role in fulfilling the potential of the Couplet. Given our experiences supporting heritage as well as with developments of this magnitude, we wanted to provide a submission to your office on the application at 4th St NE and 1st Ave as it works its way through the planning process. We welcome your engagement and look forward to discussing further.

Roads

At the Open House for this development application, it was noted that the developer has requested a traffic study for the 4th St/Edmonton Trail corridor. We welcome this study and are interested in learning more about its results, since there are currently 2 other major development permits nearby on Edmonton Trail that will also gain from this study.

We would like to note a few lessons learned from our experience with large developments, specifically relating to roads, parking, and safety. 9th Street NE has seen significant development over the years. It's an important entry and egress for our community. The amount of traffic on this street has increased, and we welcome the construction updates to slow traffic and increase pedestrian safety. However, more work is needed, particularly at the intersection of McDougall Rd and 9th St, as well as at McDougall Rd and 12th St.

4th St and Edmonton Trail are major thoroughfares in and out of the downtown core. While different than 9th St, some lessons we have learned are:

- Condo building traffic can impede the use of a road.
 - One example is the presence of parkade entries, which can slow down traffic and which raise the risk of using adjacent sidewalks, especially for those using walkers and wheelers. We encourage the new development to place all parkade entrances and exits on side streets to enable traffic and pedestrian flow within the Couplet.
 - Another example is the presence or lack thereof of short-term delivery carve outs. On 9th St, the lack of such carve outs has resulted in significant blockage of traffic flow due to the number of deliveries and passenger drop-offs on a daily basis. We encourage the new development to ask for carve outs for their front entrances to facilitate traffic flow.



917 Centre Avenue NE
Calgary AB | T2E 0C6
403.263.5755
www.brcacalgary.org

BRIDGELAND-RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
12 November 2024

- Parking relaxations for large buildings where density already exists or is planned for the immediate future need reconsideration.
 - Generally, we support transit-oriented developments (“TOD”) but our neighbourhood’s experience with them is that residents still retain their own personal vehicles. Because TOD developments in our densifying and growing community do not have sufficient parking spaces, we are seeing an increase of parking and related traffic on side streets adjacent to major residential buildings. Our older side streets are narrow and not built for significant parking and traffic flow.
 - Relatedly, more on-street parking and traffic flow on narrow roadways is a significant safety issue for active transportation users and for seniors. Interactions between cars, bicycles, scooters and pedestrians are inevitable but the squeeze on narrow streets presents a growing safety concern, particularly given the number of close calls residents are observing.
 - Most of the new developments in or planned for our community are mixed use, with businesses on ground floors. However, they are without sufficient parking, particularly given their services are for all Calgarians, and so are dependent on visitors’ ability to access them. If there remains insufficient parking space, it will be difficult to retain our community’s vibrancy and competitiveness.
 - **We strongly encourage the Planning Department to ensure sufficient parking is available for residents, visitors and businesses at these new developments.**

Public Spaces, Heritage and Main Streets

Also at the Open House, it was suggested by developers that a public space, such as a piazza, could be planned for this development at the NW corner of 4th St and 1st Ave. Our experience of having La Piazza along General Ave has been immensely positive and we are excited to have another public space in the vicinity.

Our lessons on managing a piazza from a community association perspective will be different than a space managed by a condo association and manager. However, some thoughts are worth mentioning, particularly on its design within the context of Main Streets program:

- Main Streets is designed to consider street activation, liveliness, liveability and effectiveness. We note that one of Main Streets’ core values is character and identity, with a Main Street establishing a “unique sense of place and offer[ing] memorable experiences”.



917 Centre Avenue NE
Calgary AB | T2E 0C6
403.263.5755
www.brcacalgary.org

BRIDGELAND-RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

12 November 2024

- We highlight with some urgency that the new development will impact Roma Grocery, a 1910 Edwardian commercial building that is on the City's Inventory of Historic Resources.
- **We strongly recommend the preservation of this building in some capacity.**
- **Given the desire for a piazza or another kind of public space, this is a great opportunity to incorporate Bridgeland-Riverside's historic 4th St Main Street into the design.** This would retain the historic aesthetics, character and feel of a neighbourhood that has seen remarkable changes over the last century. Our community members are proud of our history and our historic buildings offer a uniqueness, a sense of place and a reminder of our diversity that is attractive to residents, businesses and visitors alike. Retaining our historic character is a priority for our community and our members are available to provide more information and consult on options for preservation.
- While keeping heritage buildings in their original place is always the best option, we note that the present opportunity to design a piazza just down the block from Roma Grocery is too good not to consider other options. These may include moving the building or retaining its core elements and materials.
- Respecting this historic building is an opportunity to enhance and activate the public space of the new development such that it becomes an attractive destination for residents and visitors. This would also help to enliven the surrounding streets and businesses, which have struggled in the last few years. It also helps achieve the other Main Street core values: economic vitality, functionality, and social & healthy lifestyle. Given how Edmonton Trail is a busy street, some thought will be needed to avoid creating a space that is unattractive, unused and a source of social decay rather than a place that celebrates community, keeps history alive, and promotes social connectivity.

One final point: we would like to draw your attention to our experience in developing the East Riverside Master Plan. This was developed through an ad hoc group of stakeholders who are located in that part of the neighbourhood and who came together to consider and plan for future development. **We recommend establishing as soon as possible a similar stakeholder's group to consider the planning opportunities along the historic 4th St corridor. A next step in this process would be to circulate a meeting proposal to stakeholders through your office, if you agree.**

Thank you for taking the time to consider our community's experiences and how they may relate to the new development. We are pleased to have this opportunity and to see our community continue to change in respectful and meaningful ways. We are available to discuss at your convenience.



917 Centre Avenue NE
Calgary AB | T2E 0C6
403.263.5755
www.brcacalgary.org

BRIDGELAND-RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
12 November 2024

Sincerely,

Board of Directors
Bridgeland-Riverside Community Association

CC: Office of Councillor Terry Wong
O2 Designs
Crescent Heights Community Association



917 Centre Avenue NE
Calgary AB | T2E 0C6
403.263.5755
www.brcacalgary.org