

Letter Number 2 from the Kingsland Community Association



Kingsland Community Association

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City of Calgary
Community and Neighbourhood Services – Heritage Office
502 Heritage Drive SW
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Re: SPUR – Kingsland Community Feedback

Kingsland would like to start out by stating that we were very proud to be selected to be the community to pilot the SPUR project. We hope that with some lessons learned that this project can be implemented in other communities in Calgary. The countless hours and the energy from your Team to take the projects to implementation are appreciated more than we can put into words.

Due to the flood, many of the projects have not been implemented on the ground. We understand that the flood is the root cause in the delays and want to see Calgary rebuild the damaged areas before focusing on our community. Healing Calgary is the most important thing to Kingsland and we understand that rebuilding should be the priority. We have always supported the implementation of SPUR projects in 2014 to allow for the rebuilding providing it meant the full amount of funding allocated to Kingsland through SPUR would remain.

We feel the public engagement at the beginning of this process did not manage the expectations of our residents. Our residents were asked to 'spend' SPUR money online to prioritize projects. This exercise was a great idea and our residents enjoyed this opportunity to prioritize projects. However, many of these projects were not feasible and/or the funding amounts drastically changed following the engagement process. The projects prioritized by our residents through this process may have been different if the true costs of the projects were known prior to the engagement. This prioritization list was then taken to Council, we feel prematurely, prior to determining the true costs and feasibility of the projects. With the exception of the walkways, this prioritization list became the final list for projects to be implemented, many at the cost of projects that drove true need for SPUR funding in Kingsland. Three road closure beautification projects initially valued and voted on at \$22,100 and ranked the lowest on the resident priority list have now grown to an estimated \$78,000 with \$35,000 being contributed from alternate funding. This item has now become one of only three large projects to be undertaken.

The adult fitness circuit was originally estimated to cost \$10,000; this amount was provided to residents to 'spend' SPUR money. As the project proceeded we were told the true cost could be in the range of \$75,000. Kingsland felt this cost was too high, particularly at the cost of

Letter Number 2 from the Kingsland Community Association

the walkway repairs and fought to have this amount reduced. Through the efforts of the City SPUR Team and in particular Ms. Lori Lozo, this amount was reduced to \$25,000. Over the summer we have heard from many disappointed residents. The primary disappointment is the lack of playground equipment that was promised through alternate sources. We understand (now) that SPUR funds could not be spent improving playgrounds in Kingsland; however, Kingsland residents were told that we would see \$32,000 in playground equipment put into our 80th Avenue Park and our 7th Street Park. This money was not SPUR money but was secured through alternate sources. The final projects implemented included two spinning cups and the replacement of one piece of equipment that was deemed unsafe. The final work totaled under \$2,000. Residents still question where this money went and why the alternative funding sources were not spent in Kingsland if these funds were identified to Council.

We believe the Council direction regarding playground reinvestment should be reconsidered. We understand that other communities fundraise to build playgrounds, and Kingsland will now fall into that category; however, if we want our children to be more active providing equipment that is of interest is important. We do not understand why playgrounds could not be a part of SPUR but an adult fitness circuit could be.

A recent concern has been raised by an avid cyclist and past President of Kingsland. Mr. Kris Fruin who bikes through Kingsland on a daily basis is concerned about the final design of the road closure beautification project. A curb at 69th Avenue SW impedes cycling at 5th Street SW. Our committee was given less than a week to decide on the final designs for the closures and was; therefore, unable to take the designs to residents in our community. We feel more time should be given to involve residents in the final designs prior to implementation of the projects on the ground so these types of concerns could be raised prior to construction. We hope to continue to work with the City to determine if adjustments could be made to allow the road closure areas to be more accessible to cyclists.

We asked committee members to summarize their feedback regarding the process and their comments are listed below:

- Committee members felt the City had projects that were already prioritized and that the community priorities were not as relevant.
- Public engagement was well done and brought the community together, allowing residents to have input into what projects would be implemented, with one common goal. There was a concern about the lack of signage advertising the opportunities for engagement at the north end of the community.
- Community engagement later in the process was limited and residents have asked what projects were implemented and when the work would be undertaken. The project started with good intentions with little action later in the process.
- More initial discussion with community representatives should have been undertaken to identify work to be completed that would reinvest in the infrastructure currently in the community. Several projects took on a life of their own (i.e. adult fitness circuit and road closure areas) resulting in existing infrastructure remaining in the current state or with reduced improvements (road closures at Heritage). It has been recommended by one committee member that relevant projects could be identified by a committee and then weighted for input from the community. The weighting

Letter Number 2 from the Kingsland Community Association

percentage should be limited so community representatives could not have one project completed and the implementation list would be more democratic.

We believe lessons can be learned from this process. Prior to engaging residents, costs should be more accurately estimated and projects should be discussed with internal departments to determine feasibility prior to engaging residents. These two approaches will help to manage the expectations of residents, making the SPUR process more supported by residents. Many of our residents have contacted the community asking why projects that were prioritized are not being implemented. We must explain that some of the projects were never feasible and had to be removed from the implementation list or that external funding was not available and the projects were reduced in scope. The good that came from the engagement is that our residents are calling the association and asking questions. Our residents are involved and they want to see the projects implemented. The engagement strengthened our community and we have met new residents and been reintroduced to long time residents.

As SPUR progressed we have heard from our residents that the playground upgrades and walkway improvements were the most important to them. Kingsland will be applying for grants and fundraising to redevelop our playground equipment. We have already begun working with the City to ensure we have the information needed to start this work. The SPUR committee has been asked to prioritize the work needed in our walkways because funding has gone to the road closure beautification project and the adult fitness circuit. We feel that the need for reinvestment in existing infrastructure (i.e. walkways) was overlooked for new projects (adult fitness circuit) and projects where budgets and costs should have been discussed prior to implementation (road closure beautification projects). We appreciate that the walkway work was all completed within the budget given to the Roads contractor; it would have been terribly disappointing if the walkways were not improved because funds had gone to new infrastructure in the community.

We have not been provided the final costs on many of the projects and; therefore, find it difficult to comment in this regard. Kingsland has been told that all SPUR funds have been used; however, we have not been provided the final summary of the costs and work completed. We need to be accountable to our residents and this situation is difficult as we cannot provide the costs to them.

Over the summer several ad hoc meetings were held to ensure the projects continued during the summer break, with the expectation that SPUR meetings would resume in September. We appreciate that City staff took time to meet with us and ensure that the projects continued. These meetings were very valuable and we felt we had a role in the implementation process. Unfortunately, in September the Kingsland SPUR committee met without representation from the City. City representatives were in attendance at our SPUR meeting in October, and this meeting acted as a wrap up to the process.

The City has failed to advise of the timelines when many projects will be implemented. Within five days of our October meeting with City staff, Roads contractors broke ground on the road closure beautification projects. We were not informed of this work during our meeting with City staff and were unable to notify residents of the projects that would be affecting their properties. Ann Clarke spent some of her Thanksgiving weekend meeting with upset residents and trying to determine what work was going to take place. For future SPUR

Letter Number 2 from the Kingsland Community Association

projects we would recommend that residences in proximity to work should be notified. Residents will then have the knowledge that a SPUR project was implemented in their area and will know who to contact in the event there are questions regarding the work. We do commend the City SPUR team for responding quickly to our Roads construction questions over the Thanksgiving weekend so we could work with the concerned residents. Throughout the SPUR process residents were asking our committee members the status of projects and we had few answers for them. This is difficult as a large part of their community money has been spent was included in the cost of these projects. As Board members we have to be transparent to our residents and it disappoints us that we could not answer their questions. We recommend better communication between the City and the community regarding budgets, timelines and project work for future SPUR projects.

Much good has come from SPUR. Kingsland has formed many strong relationships with City staff. We feel the projects that will be implemented will benefit our community, and that we now have direction on how to meet the additional needs of our residents so reinvestment from various forms can come to Kingsland. Our community has also been more engaged than ever, and has developed a Public Art Committee, dedicated to bringing more public art to Kingsland. The engagement process brought out residents that were old and new to Kingsland. This process has strengthened our membership and our residents are getting involved in community projects now and on the horizon. We truly appreciate all of the efforts of City staff. Credit must be given to yourself, Mr. Paul Donker, Ms. Rachelle Dillon, Ms. Natalia Zoldak, Ms. Cheryl Herperger and Ms. Lori Lozo, however we know the efforts of SPUR have involved many others. We thank all of the City staff at City Hall and in the field in the implementation of the projects. Your team has listened to us, worked with us and helped us throughout the process. We hope with a few lessons learned and by focusing on what worked, that SPUR can provide reinvestment in many other communities in Calgary.

Respectfully,

KINGSLAND COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Ann Clarke
President

Brandy MacInnis
Vice-President and SPUR Chair

c. Mr. N. Nenshi, Mayor
Mr. B. Pincott, Ward Alderman
Ms. R. Dillon, City of Calgary