



July 23, 2018

To Calgary Planning Commission,

We appreciated being part of the working group to discuss Infill issues and possible bylaw changes regarding front porches, subterranean development, and RC-G developments. The mix of City experts, industry partners, and community representatives facilitated a diverse, multi-pronged approach to these complex issues. There was high value in having all stakeholders at the table together to openly debate and question each other's points of view as well as to raise fresh issues warranting discussion from all perspectives. We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to these colleagues on this work; it was an enjoyable experience due the genuine goodwill in the room as well as the openness and professionalism of the participants. Of course, even within our own community, we can only hope to represent a very small sampling of community views on these complex issues so we would recommend a broader "check in" on final recommendations.

The process itself, although originally expected to involve 2-hour monthly meetings, grew to encompass significantly greater inputs of time through additional scheduled meetings and extensive email discussions, a commitment that all participants and our City of Calgary hosts willingly embraced to ensure that enough time and discussion was given to the topics at hand. The research and materials development by both Tammy Henry and Stephen Pearce was strong and appreciated, allowing discussion to be well informed. We appreciated that all participants took this work seriously and participated extensively both during meetings and offline.

In relation to the topic of R-CG homes, the discussions were fruitful within the limited scope of what was being addressed at this time. Within the existing R-CG zoning type, the idea of making suites discretionary in rowhouses will allow each development to be weighed on its merits more effectively. Innovative solutions were identified to achieve more breathing room between the rear portions of rowhouses and adjacent yards and to move rowhouses forward on the parcel. Hopefully this will provide flexibility in the design envelope to facilitate architectural originality while improving the interface for adjacent neighbours who may not be in a rowhouse. Work was also done on the interface of rowhouses with the street, encouraging much more "human scaled" interfaces of low fences and doors facing both frontages. Moreover, the cross section rules newly proposed for upper stories will provide more pleasing designs and integrate better with existing neighbourhood character. The parking flexibility close to transit will allow for appropriate density increases in transit corridors. It is important to note that we still have some concerns regarding the impact on street frontages based on the maximum 4.5m setback rule. It will take significant modeling and/or tracking of the early units built based on the revised rule to measure whether these concerns will prove well founded. Regardless we generally feel the changes proposed will improve the R-CG zoning type moving forward.

Discussion also reinforced certain issues relating to the R-CG zoning type in general. To us, R-CG is far too limited in its scope and application. The current zoning does not allow for much variety in built form options for builders, and it encourages disproportionate lot coverage within the context of established detached and semi-detached homes in most instances. Even with the current changes to the R-CG rules, block-end treatments of the current built forms will have some negative impact on the amenity space areas of existing viable housing stock and other infill homes that may be adjacent to R-CG developments. At first blush, the difference between 45% lot coverage and 60% lot coverage may seem insignificant; however, in practice, once setbacks are deducted from the equation, the lot coverage for an R-CG at 60% fills almost the entirety of the remaining lot area, leaving very constrained "yards". In the

result, rear yard space / “breathing room” for landscaping, light egress, and livability in general—considerations that many single detached and semi-detached property occupants relish—is very adversely impacted by that 60% rule, and the result is a walled effect.

As a solution, builders could be encouraged to produce more creative designs for multiple unit structures which could potentially include stacked units, front-back orientations, and the like, all of which relate to context. This objective could be reached by changing certain build-related requirements from a focus on unit count to one based upon lot coverage based instead. Further removing DSSP and ground water retention requirements for R-CG builds with under 50% total lot coverage would be one step in this direction. There are undoubtedly other areas that could also help in a similar fashion. Creating opportunities for increased density while working within similar lot coverages (*i.e.* similar to single detached and duplex built forms), and also with massing and appearance more in alignment with single family and semi-detached homes - would go a long way toward allowing established communities to retain desirable character districts and housing variety while working to meet the MDP goals. It would be great to allow for more options to fill this gap within the district while still maintaining ground-oriented feel and we hope this will be considered in the near future.

In regard to subterranean structures we also have a few outstanding concerns. The proposed change is limited to front setback, which is rarely built into, and does not address the main challenges we see with more common rear lot subterranean development. The amount of parcel coverage of a subterranean structure needs some degree of restriction to leave some area of the property in the rear yard for the potential use for future trees, and/or for water management (if required). New infills already cause some loss of surface permeability as bigger homes are being built with more hardscape coverage on each lot. Further our urban canopy is being gradually eroded in the inner city / established neighbourhoods as this infill process continues. Our concern is that the ability for homeowners to plant any substantial vegetation in the rear yard is compromised by a lack of soil depth over subterranean structures that extend under most of the yard. This shallow soil could also exacerbate runoff issues and raise drainage concerns, all of which need to somehow be mitigated. Usually issues relating to runoff are not visible until after construction is complete, by which point a full rear-lot subterranean development does not leave anywhere to create a water-retention location by way of remedy, nor does it allow a tree to ever be planted. With the high cost of these types of lot-intense homes, these issues in the case of new construction could easily result in a 50+ year or longer concern. We can appreciate that our colleagues have raised the question whether this should topic should be dealt with in the land use bylaw or in some other way via policy.

As for front porches, we will be interested to watch how the agreed upon changes work in practice, if approved. We support these changes and hope they produce useable porches that provide eyes on the street and active frontages at grade level. The changes still respect setbacks in established communities; however, we would like to see some contextual relationship to neighbouring parcels taken into account, an idea which was not included to avoid significant projection ahead of existing homes. We want to promote walkable, safe, and neighbourly communities, and porches can help achieve this broad goal. In hindsight, we would have preferred that the porch discussion, which was reviewed in isolation from the other infill issues planned for phase two (massing, height, context, etc.), be reviewed at the same time as these other elements. But within the limited scope of the working group, the work regarding front porches is positive step forward.

We very much enjoyed the opportunity to contribute to this group. The collaborative efforts of the team were much appreciated and it was a pleasure to work with everyone involved. We hope to do so again in the future.

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