

September 12, 2018 – Council Chambers, City Hall

- Good Day, my name is **Diane Dalkin**, & I am the **President** of the *Friends of Reader Rock Garden Society (FoRRGS)*
- Further to the discussion of “*A Healthy & Green City*”, I **thank-you** for this opportunity to acquaint you with “*Calgary’s Best Kept Secret*”.
- The current 3 acres site hardly resembles its original development, which commenced ~**1910**. It is no longer a barren, wind-swept hill, but a verdant oasis.
- It is situated across from Erlton C-train station & is located in **Ward 9** – (under Councillor Carra’s purview)
- Our *volunteer, non-profit* group was established in **2003** & has worked diligently & collaboratively, side-by-side with City Parks’ staff on the *restoration, education and promotion* of this **Cultural Landscape** and now **National Historic** site.
- Since this recent designation, greater public awareness has been afforded, resulting in an increase in-attendance and private tours requests. The local onsite Café has also reported measureable improvements this season.
- As early as **1914**, one of our founding City Superintendents, *Mr. William Reader* noted that:
  - “A progressive **park** extension program is inseparably associated with **public welfare**.”
  - *It is not nowadays a question whether parks can be afforded, but rather whether we can afford not to have them.”*
- Clearly parks have been important for a very long time!
- Mr. Reader dedicated ~30 years of service to Calgary. Fortunately for us, he left a legacy of details & extensive notes in his Annual City Reports (dated 1913-42). Yet, over the past 100 years, I wonder if the lessons have really resonated with City leaders?
- **Reader Rock Garden** is a perfect example of what can occur (*& did indeed happen*) when neglect & shifting administrative priorities move ongoing *operational & capital investment* away from existing established resources. *I’m not sure if you are all aware*, that this City Park remained in severe disrepair and was barely recognizable for several decades, before the restoration & rehabilitation took place in 2005? **No one** wants to witness this sad possibility ever again. *Let us learn from this big past mistake.*

- These special places can easily slip back into demise without the dedication of *sufficient staff* and *supportive funds*. Overgrowth of weeds & lack of regular maintenance quickly suffocate the best intentions; *one season can do it*. Gardening is *labor-intensive*, that's a reality! This historic Garden cannot thrive without the caring hands of City workers.
- It is not enough to merely state priorities ... tangible, proactive provisions ... must be kept in-place to sustain this treasure we are so fortunate to have. As you know, "*Actions always speak louder than words*".
- This **National Historic Site, Reader Rock Garden**, needs to be protected and conserved. After all, public parks are part of *world-class cities*. It is all of **our responsibilities** to ensure this, especially under current constrained resources & trying economic times.
- We, @FoRRGS have done our parts, by volunteering hundreds of hours annually since 2003 & also by establishing a healthy **Endowment Fund** with the **Calgary Foundation** to assist with the care of this special Garden – which is meant to only *compliment City efforts*.
- City budgetary commitments must be directed here, for the well-being of Calgarians & our legacy for future generations. We urge Council to prioritize & promote Stewardship of **existing** local heritage. Our concerns are well founded, based on what has transpired in the history of this park!
- In closing, the *Friends of Reader Rock Garden Society* urge all Councillors & the Mayor to *get to know this hidden gem*. You can't make informed decisions without familiarity. We graciously invite you for a personalized tour(s) of the Garden / lunch at the onsite Café, ASAP.
- I **thank-you** for this opportunity to communicate with you directly.
- Our website can provide you further details: [www.ReaderRock.com](http://www.ReaderRock.com)
- *Merci pour votre temps!*



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ITEM: 7.1 VCS2018-1020  
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