

## Letter from the Cliff Bungalow Mission Community Association

### Cliff Bungalow-Mission Community Association

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Calgary Alberta, T2S 1W2

Community Hall & Office Located at 2201 Cliff Street SW

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Sept 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018

The City of Calgary

RE: DP2018-3498

Parcel Address: 2412 5 ST SW

Decision: Concern<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

The Cliff Bungalow-Mission Community Association (CBMCA) has reviewed DP2018-3498 as presented most recently to us in September, 2018 (the Application). Based on our review, the CBMCA expresses its concern in relation to the Application. Our specific comments about the Application are provided in Section 3 below using The City's questionnaire format.

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<sup>1</sup> The CBMCA issues four types of decision: 1 Opposed, 2 Concerned, 3 No Objection/Comment & 4 Support.

1. **Letters of Opposition** indicate that the Application has serious discrepancies with respect to our ARP's and/or Bylaw 1P2007. When a letter of opposition is issued we will consider filing an appeal with SDAB if remedial actions are not forthcoming in an amended Application.
2. **Letters of Concern** indicate that either we have insufficient information on which to base a decision or that the Application has some discrepancies with respect to our ARP's and/or Bylaw 1P2007. When a letter of concern is issued we may consider filing an appeal with SDAB if further clarifications and/or amended plans are not provided.
3. **Letters of No Objection/Comment** are provided for reference. They do not indicate approval or opposition. We would not normally consider filing an appeal with SDAB after providing a letter of No Objection/Comment, unless affected residents requested our support or the DP is issued with relaxations to the relevant bylaws.
4. **Letters of Support** indicate that we consider the Application to be in general accordance with our ARP's. To obtain a letter of support the applicant is strongly encouraged to work the CBMCA and affected residents through a charrette or similar community engagement design-based workshop. We would not consider filing an appeal with SDAB after providing a letter of support.

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### 2. Preamble

The neighbourhoods of Cliff-Bungalow and Mission (the Community) are twin turn of the century communities whose unique character has been informed by our unique biophysiography and the quality of our built environment, which maintains a legible and coherent arrangement of residential and commercial buildings, grounded by historical context.

These qualities in addition to creating a strong sense of place and community also provide the City of Calgary (The City) with its best example of a neighbourhood, which embodies the principles of Smart Growth (a central tenant in the City's Municipal Development Plan).

Yet despite its exemplary nature as a model neighbourhood, the Community faces a number of pressures, which threaten to irreparably harm its unique character. A review of the Community's alignment with the City's principles of Smart Growth and the threats to those principles are summarized below to provide context for our specific comments to the Application (Section 3).

#### *Our Community & Smart Growth*

The dominant elements of Smart Growth embodied by our Community are presented below.

#### *Compact Communities with a Range of Housing Opportunities*

Our Community is one of Calgary's most dense neighbourhoods (Calgary Herald, 2013). At an average density of 8,945 people/km<sup>2</sup>, the Community is Calgary's fourth most dense, yet its urban form remains ostensibly human-scale in comparison to its peer group (see for example China Town at 8,274 people/km<sup>2</sup> and Beltline at 8,999 people/km<sup>2</sup>).

While our Community is compact it also manages to provide a range of housing opportunities including: single detached, semi-detached, row house, suited character homes, apartments and condominiums. This stands in sharp contrast to The City average, where nearly 60% of the housing stock is comprised of single detached homes (City of Calgary, 2014).

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### *Walkable Mixed-Use Neighbourhoods*

Cliff Bungalow has Calgary's highest walk score and the combined neighbourhoods of Cliff Bungalow and Mission rank 7<sup>th</sup> overall in terms of walkability (Walk Score of Calgary Alberta, 2014). This is readily apparent to anybody walking down 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Our selection of services includes health and dental care, banks, pharmacies, grocery stores and a variety of shops, restaurants and boutiques making our Community one of Calgary's few truly complete communities. It is perhaps unsurprising to note that our walkability has translated into our Community being Calgary's only neighbourhood where vehicle ownership is less than 1 per capita (NRC, 2009).

### *Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place*

Nestled between the "cliff" and the Elbow River, our Community's unique and attractive character is further informed by its remaining stock of heritage buildings and tree-lined streets. Along 4<sup>th</sup> Street, buildings like Bannerman and Wright Blocks provide a glimpse to an earlier time. In the spring, the early morning air is filled with songs of robins and in the evening with the scent of lilacs and fruit blossoms. In the fall you see that the fruit trees here are surprisingly productive. Throughout the year, 4<sup>th</sup> street is a bustle of activity from first light to late evening. Neighbours often recognize each other to say hello and it is not uncommon to see people stopping to chat, pet a dog and engage in some idle gossip. These qualities give our neighbourhood a strong sense of community, shared by those who relate and identify with its strong sense of heritage, liveability and place.

### *Threats to Our Community*

Some of the threats faced by our Community are summarized below.

### *Un-Collaborative Development Process*

One of the key tenants of Smart Growth is to encourage community and stakeholder engagement in the development process. As a key stakeholder in redevelopment and planning, we believe that we should have a seat at the table early in the design process. Too

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often however, we are invited to comment on a proposed development only after it has been submitted to The City. At this stage, time and resources have already been allocated to produce a single design solution. Additionally, the proposed design often presents architectural forms that are devoid of care for the public realm or reference to the unique nature of the Community. At this stage we find our options for promoting the interests of the Community greatly limited. This sets the stage for a process to evolve where The City, the Community and the applicant are less likely to collaborate but instead engage each other in an adversarial manner. Good outcomes are rarely achieved under such circumstances.

### *Insensitive Redevelopment*

Infill and redevelopment that ignores place, scale, massing, materiality, heritage and community values (all of which are discussed within our ARP's) diminishes the Community's sense of place. Perhaps more insidiously, this often creates the reference standard by which the next development is judged. It is disheartening to see projects, which reference other recently completed (and often-insensitive developments) as the justification for their own inappropriate design solutions. This cycle of development if left unabated threatens to irreparably harm the Community. Not because any one development causes irreparable harm but because overtime the cumulative impact of these developments erode and degrade the character of our Community which has come to inform our citizens sense of place.

### 3. Comments on the Application

**3.1.** From a Community perspective what are the merits of the proposed development and what could be improved to make it more compatible or beneficial to meet your community's needs?

We'd like to start off with expressing some merits of the building. We appreciate the materiality of podium reflecting the heritage character of the community. In addition, the articulation on south-east side of the building also speaks to the existing character of the neighbourhood and helps distract from the excessive height of the building. Finally, we appreciate the relative transparent main floor providing the ability to look inside creating a pedestrian interface.

The below are areas where we believe there still is room for improvement.

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### Perception of height:

We invite the applicant to incorporate architectural considerations that reduce the perception of height. For example, the “Black frame” wrapped around the building draws the attention to the upper floors and the height of the building perhaps this could be altered. The solid concrete balconies create “weight” at upper floors – this could also be modified. Finally, the limited articulation on the west side and north side of the building also emphasizes the height of the building. The south side of the building opens up to the community the most (face of the community) – this appears to be a 12-story wall that, unlike the south east corner, has very little relief. We encourage the developer to treat all sides of the building equally, since, given its height, all sides will be visible from the community.

### Landscaping:

We are concerned about the tree removal on 5 ST SW. We are also concerned that the tree’s planted in the planters are at high risk for poor health if not maintained properly.

It appears that landscaping coverage does not meet the 30-40% requirement at grade (developer appears to account raised patios on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and up as landscaping which has no community at-large benefit.

A considerable amount of landscaping appears to be hardscaping (ie. paved patio space). This means that the development provides little green space which is not entirely aligned with the feeling of openness (and preservation of nature) as one of the most charming and identifiable characteristics of Mission. To compensate for the “lack” of green space in the current landscaping approach, we hope that the Developer considers planting of trees on the City land in front of the development. We would be in support of such a decision – warranting that the trees would fall under some sort of maintenance regime.

### Respectful neighbor:

There is zero setback on east side of the building thus an invasive wall for residents living in the Gordon Suites is a concern. In addition, tight space on the corner of 5 ST SW and 25 AVE SW is not pedestrian friendly. We would suggest to open up this space and use as public space.

3.2.How will the proposed development impact the neighbours and the community?

Refer to 3.1

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3.3. Were adjacent neighbours or owners of the subject site present and/or involved in the Community review of this application?

No

### **4. Closure**

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,

Sander Jansen MSc  
Planning & Development Director

Cliff Bungalow-Mission Community Association  
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### References

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