

I wanted to chime in on this ^{report} because I believe this conversation is imperative to the future health of the City of Calgary, and this report just touches on the people part.

Part of this report mentions - where "Every Calgarian lives in a safe, mixed and just neighborhood, **and has the opportunity to participate in civic life**"

This is where I believe the importance of this conversation stretches so far beyond the land interaction – and is only hinted at later in a comment about "**leaving gaps**" in service levels for Calgarians.

I agree with the gap comment, for me personally I see a great void between the people of Calgary and City Hall. That void continues to manifest itself in communities rising up to fight the work that City Hall does.

Why is that? What democratic mechanism is lacking? How is it that City Hall and Calgarians can be so far apart on the opinion of what needs to be done. My hope is this work leads to answers about how we can all better live up to the expectations of Calgarians.

Also, a by-product of the way we do business to today is Calgarians express their disenfranchisement and general lack of enthusiasm by voter turnout. This could improve that. *civic life*

I also think the reality of what council can actually accomplish ~~do~~ gets diluted as time goes on.

Historically, when Calgary first adopted the 14 ward system we have today - 1976 - the population was a little more than 450,000 people. Giving a representative ratio of about 1 to 33,000. In 91 – 15 years later – about 1 to 50,000 – 2006- about 1 to 70,000 – in the next election will be about 1 to 100,000.

So in roughly 40 years we've increased the burden on the councillor to represent the people of a ward by 3 fold.

I think it's virtually impossible to believe that any one person could possibly have their finger on the pulse of 33,000 people never mind a hundred thousand.

So, over time the councillors area of responsibility has gotten bigger, but we didn't beef up the machine to handle the extra work. So, today we're faced with a great disparity between the needs of the man on the street – the Calgarian – and those who make decisions for us. The city has so much high level business to take care of that it's really at the discretion of the councillor of how much of "the other stuff" is taken care of.

So,

Enter the Community Association: Community Associations are for the most part - neighborhood leadership – I call it that because not all Calgarians are Community Association members, but Community Associations still have a fairly acute sense of the what is needed in their neighborhoods.

The report mentions the city affords us the opportunity to forge our own paths in social and recreational opportunities – by policy that is for sure what we do.

But, – for whatever reason - some of us seem to think we should have a say in how our neighborhoods look, how the cars of Calgary interact with our neighborhoods, how companies can (or cannot) use our neighborhoods to make a profit.

This seems to be the larger point of conflict. Most times when we go down that path; either we don't like a development coming down or we're choked about traffic... when that happens we in effect need to "ask permission" to interact with the resources of the city that could help us and effect change the environment we live in – the environments we know best.

I'd say that over time Calgarians have become victim of trying to get the biggest bang for the buck and as Calgarians we've lost touch. Through "economizing" we've lost mechanisms on how we can best serve ourselves. I feel as a rule we no longer have the mechanisms to make decisions about our own neighborhoods.

This work has the potential of changing that.

That said, I won't for a moment suggest all Calgarians have the toolbox to do or make decisions on what needs to be done, but to expect council and administration to know all the details of the concerns on the street is ludicrous.

Really we, and our neighbors know what we want (for certain we could ask neighbors what they don't want and they'll tell us) – Community Associations largely know what is needed to make their neighbors happy.

This work has the potential of bringing Calgarians back to the table and once again being an integral part of the City.

Kudo's to those in admin who asked "is there a better way to interact." - Calgarians are asking the same questions. Definitely the right fight, but, there's still a long way to go.

Thank you.

