



February 2, 2016

The City of Calgary  
Councillors Offices (8001)  
P.O. Box 2100, Station "M"  
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2M5

To: All Members of SPC on Community and Protective Services

**Re: CPS2016-0107 The Future of Community-Building Scoping Study**

The Federation of Calgary Communities (the Federation) is the support organization for Calgary's 150 community associations, as well as eight residents associations. We continue to be supportive of work that will clarify the roles of community associations (CA) and residents associations (RA) in providing educational, recreational and social opportunities in our city. Many of the questions contained in this scoping report have been addressed in a letter sent to Council by the Federation on November 5, 2015 (attached).

We would like to request that we be included in this work from the outset, and not only during the engagement phase. The Federation has collaborated and partnered with City staff on numerous projects related to CAs in the past. Given our unique position in relation to CAs and the City of Calgary, we would like to offer our experience and research on the subject as a member of the project working group.

The challenge to be addressed by this work, as we see it, is this: How do we create an environment within Calgary's neighborhoods that maximizes the best use of lands, facilities, and volunteer energy to appropriately represent and respond to the needs of local residents? Our suggestions, concerns and comments as they relate to the scoping study CPS2016-0107 are as follows:

**1. Representation and Decision Making:**

At the present time, CAs and RAs have quite different roles, particularly in regard to planning and development representation and decision making. CA input in planning and development matters is not legally required, but current practice in Calgary is to circulate certain land use amendment and development permit proposals to CAs. They typically play an advisory role in planning matters, and have official standing at SDAB. RAs are not currently circulated planning applications, and we are not aware of any RAs who have requested such an arrangement. In addition, the objects of CAs and RAs are determined and registered by those organizations. In a large part, it is choice of that organization whether they would like to include broad

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community concerns, such as planning feedback, in their objects. This very important function for many of our CAs and formalizing this role with clarity around roles and responsibilities is important.

## **2. Use of Land:**

We support examining options for more efficient use of MR land set aside for CAs, including co-location and cooperation with local RA organizations as appropriate. MR land allocated at the for CA sites has historically been three to four acres to ensure the flexibility to enable the provision of a variety of community recreational amenities, including required setbacks. Historically this has meant two tennis courts and an ice rink. As communities evolve, recreational needs change, as will space requirements. What will not change is the need for flexible physical space for communities to adapt to local needs and preferences. While MR spaces may remain 'vacant' from a development perspective, they are important to local community associations as they represent the potential for future community-building activities. Instead of immediately building a community hall, we are seeing sequential development in communities, beginning with small community gardens or adopt-a-rinks that become full ice rinks, while making plans for future community facilities. In the meantime, these sites provide unstructured and valuable open space for local residents. They are often far from being vacant or underutilized.

## **3. Viability of Options**

We suggest that a variety of options for CA/RA collaboration and CA facility co-location be explored, and we are encouraged by the inclusion of a scan of leading practices in other jurisdictions. The Federation of Calgary Communities is engaged in research on this topic, and would like to offer our assistance in completing this work.

The scoping study appears to focus on limited options- largely focused on amalgamating CAs and RAs. We feel that the study should take a 'step back' and instead explore a wider range of options for CAs and RAs might work together. Again, the question should be: How do we create an environment within Calgary's neighborhoods that maximizes the best use of lands, facilities, and volunteer energy to appropriately represent and respond to the needs of local residents? Answering this question requires us to look outside Calgary for best practices, and Calgary, to understand the strengths of our current network. We need to utilize, respect, and strengthen what we already have in place.

## **4. Practical Concerns**

The scoping report is focused on the roles of CA and RA organizations in new communities, but its implications are city-wide. This is not clear in the scoping report. What effect will this work have on current communities without RAs, on their ability to participate in being a "voice for community life" and what will their involvement in this work be?

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The timeline also presents a challenge, as the key engagement is scheduled for Q3 of 2016. This will likely lead to lost opportunities for engagement and potentially requests for extension of the work. We would suggest that an extension of the final report to Q1 of 2017 would allow for engagement to occur in Q4 of 2016, when availability of both administration and stakeholders is greater.

This discussion is of great importance to community life in Calgary, and it requires a thoughtful and thorough assessment of its implications for a model that has served our citizens in community-building for so long. We need to build on existing strengths and openly explore opportunities for improvement. We look forward to being a key stakeholder, along with our CA and RA members in this work as it goes forward.

Sincerely,

**Leslie Evans, BSc., M.M.**

Executive Director

**Dan Godin, B.A., M.E.S.**

Urban Planner

**Carrie Yap, B.A., M.Sc.**

Urban Planner

cc: Office of the City Clerk

cc: Communities Associations – Presidents and Planning Chairs

encl: Letter to Calgary City Council, November 5, 2015

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November 5, 2015

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To: All Members of Calgary City Council

**Re: LOC2014-0117 Calgary Planning Commission's Recommendation to Create a Working Group to Identify Roles of Community Associations (CA) and Resident's Associations (RA)**

Your Worship and Members of Council,

The Federation of Calgary Communities (the Federation) is a support organization for 150 of Calgary's community associations, as well as many other non-profit organizations, including eight residents' associations. The Federation welcomes the opportunity to establish more clarity around the roles of CAs and RAs within Calgary and we look forward to being full participants. Prior to our involvement in any such work, we ask that Council clarify expectations of the working group and the Federation as a participant. The motion only lists one example of a topic of discussion, regarding input into planning decisions. Are there other examples of what the group might examine, or would the scope be limited to the roles of each as planning stakeholders? This is a complex issue whose scope extends beyond roles in the planning system.

Over the past seven years, there have been a number of discussions with City officials and developers on how to fund CAs more effectively, how RAs and CAs can work together, how they might share space and on how much land is truly needed for CA activities if there is a fully built RA amenity. Some of these discussions have come out of motions from Council, others as a result of the Federation and developers talking about possibilities and still others, on an individual basis, at the neighborhood level where RAs and CAs co-exist. The barrier to moving these conversations forward is always around the dependency on the relationship at the community level between the RA and CA and inequity between the two types of organizations. The fundamental difference between these two types of organizations is that participation in a CA must be open to all Calgarians, whereas participation in an RA can, and is often limited to homeowners who pay the levy in a particular community. With Calgary encouraging the provision a variety of housing forms in new communities, we have concerns about creating 'two-tier communities' where non-homeowners are not able to become members of the local community organization. Regardless of the model used in a community, it is key that participation remains open to all and be financially accessible.

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While the Federation is always willing and supportive of continuing this important conversation, we have a number of concerns with the current wording of the motion before Council. Our concerns with the motion are as follows:

**Input on Planning Matters:**

We find the framing of this discussion as who 'deserves' a voice troubling. We believe that all potentially impacted parties deserve a voice. In regards to having an 'official voice', community associations have official standing only at SDAB and in public hearings. Community associations are one of many participants in our planning system.

In addition, we feel that this question hinges on the societal objects of these organizations and is not The City's or any other organization's right to dictate. As stated in the Societies Act of Alberta, societies are bound by their objects. Based on our experience in this field, the objects of these two organizational types are as follows:

- The objects of a residents association are typically limited to maintaining and operating public amenities built by the developer of a community. They are funded by levies on properties and are therefore limited to homeowners in a community. They serve an important purpose, but have limited scope and are not open to all Calgarians.
- The objects of a community association are typically broader and include things like providing recreational, social, and quality of life opportunities, managing public facilities, and providing a voice for community life. These organizations and the facilities they operate are required to be open to all Calgarians, with reasonable membership fees. As a result of their broader mandate, CAs are often included as an important stakeholder in planning decisions.

Each of these organizations registers their objects with Corporate Registries. At present, if an RA wishes to expand their objects to include broader community concerns (such as planning matters), they are free to do so, so long as they remain in accordance with the non-profit legislation they are registered within. However, it is not within The City's or any other organizations' rights to mandate that an RA do so. This is at the discretion of individual RAs and their membership. To date we have not received any member requests from RAs looking to expand their objects to include providing feedback on planning matters.

**Developer Membership in RA:**

To our understanding, when an RA is initially established, memberships for unsold homes are held by the developer of that community. Developers can, and do, remain involved in RAs as voting members after the RA has been incorporated. To give the RA a formal role in planning decisions within that community would appear to create a conflict of interest, particularly if the developer initiates any proposed changes within the community for which the RA is asked for comment.

**Mandating Relationships:**

It is also important to note that Council cannot mandate a relationship between RAs and CAs. As independent organizations, the relationships between CA and RA groups are dependent on the membership and leadership of

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each. A change in leadership or a change in the relationship between the two groups can jeopardize any shared management of community space. This dynamic is made worse by the unequal financial tools available to each. RAs have a consistent source of funding that often puts CAs on unequal footing should a dispute between the two arise.

Should Council wish to pursue a motion around this we ask that the direction they give to another future working group be clear in its intent, and be mindful of the resources and time required in setting a deadline for this work.

We would like to thank Council for taking the time to consider this important topic for the future of community life in Calgary.

Sincerely,

**Leslie Evans, BSc., M.M**

Executive Director

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