

UDRP Comments 2019 January 23 (including applicant response)



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March 18, 2019

City of Calgary
Community Planning – Mail code #8073
P.O. Box 2100, Stn. Mfa
Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2P 2M5

Attention: Angelique Dean
Senior Planner
angelique.dean@calgary.ca

Dear Angie,

Re: **SOUTH MACLEOD CENTRE CALGARY**
OUR PROJECT #216065 – 6.1
RESPONSE TO URBAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL AND DETAILED TEAM
REVIEW 2 COMMENTS
DEVELOPMENT PERMIT NUMBER: DP2018-0932 (LOT 3)

Please accept the following as our response to the City of Calgary (CoC) UDRP and DTR 2 comments.

Note to the reviewer

The following is a comprehensive response to the City's DTR#2 comments. In addition, the Applicant's response to the two UDRP meetings for this application have been integrated into the document. We trust that this submission resolves all outstanding Prior to Decision comments and that this application will proceed with a recommendation for approval to the next available meeting of the Calgary Planning Commission.

Urban Design Review Panel Comments

A. Summary

1. The following consolidated comments address three individual Development Permit applications for Lots 3, 6 and 7 of the South MacLeod Centre. Each development is adjacent to each other as part of the larger master-planned community. As such, the design for each parcel is interlinked with the next with the intent that they each contribute to an overall vision for the complete development and therefore it is appropriate to consider these applications together.

Applicant Response:

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The three development permit applications (DP2018-0932, DP2018-1300, and DP2018-2164) that were before the panel are part of a larger regional commercial development named Township. The development is a master planned regional commercial centre located wholly within the boundaries of the South Macleod Centre Area Structure Plan (the "ASP") as approved by Council in October 2017 along with a corresponding direct control land use. The aforementioned development permit applications represent the first phase of Township and have been submitted in accordance with the Implementation and Staging Policies of the ASP. Each of the separate development permit applications were previously presented separately to the Urban Design Review Panel ("UDRP") on the following dates:

- DP2018-0932; March 21, 2018
- DP2018-1300; April 25, 2018
- DP2018-2164; June 13, 2018

Following the initial UDRP meeting and Detailed Team Review from the City the Applicant undertook extensive work and meaningful collaboration with Administration to revise the applications. Further, in consideration of the collective comments from UDRP, City administration, and the Applicant's own timing, a single comprehensive presentation of the revised plans were presented to UDRP on January 23, 2019 with the intention of showcasing the positive changes made in the plans and some of the great urban design features of the first phase of Township.

2. That said, the masterplan was not provided to the Panel, although it was briefly referred to and presented as a single slide in a presentation. It would be typical that the Panel would have access to the Masterplan to be able to review the applications for compliance. The Masterplan would set in place the long term vision for pedestrian movement, public space, green space, overall massing, form and density and would give the reviewers the ability to understand how each subsequent development would anticipate and set in place a framework for success for the next. Some general principals were discussed but not at the level of detail expected in an application of this size.

Applicant Response:

It should be noted that Administration, in addition to this meeting, did an outstanding job of presenting the Masterplan at the original three UDRP meetings, however due to inconsistencies in the members of the panel this prior investment in time was not able to be carried forward to the January meeting.

The Panel's comments reference a number of important urban design criteria that are included in the ASP, Masterplan and were previously presented to UDRP. In response to those comments the following letter is a description of how the ASP, Land Use, Masterplan, and current development permit applications respond to these items.



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Township will be a twenty-five-hectare regional commercial centre based on the C-R3 land use district in the current Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 (the "LUB"). This is important to note as C-R3 is the broadest commercial land use designation in the current LUB and is intended for "comprehensively planned and designed subdivision and development with multiple buildings on multiple parcels;" as stated in Section 880(1)(a). Further reinforcing this, Section 880(2) of the LUB states; "Areas of land less than 6.0 hectares should not be designated Commercial – Regional 3 District". Therefore, it is clear that the overarching intent of this land use is to accommodate large format general retail uses on a regional scale. This fact is reflected by the approved ASP which states the following in its introduction:

"The South Macleod Centre Area Structure Plan (ASP) provides policy direction for the development of the Plan Area into a comprehensively designed mixed use centre. The outer edge of the Plan Area will be comprised of a mix of retail format buildings located adjacent to Macleod Trail S.E., 210 Avenue S.E. and Legacy Village Link S.E., with convenient access to and high exposure from these surrounding streets."

"The center of the Plan Area will consist of two pedestrian-oriented High Streets containing smaller format retail stores with above grade office, residential and hotel uses. South Macleod Centre forms part of a larger Community Activity Centre where the adjacent lands will include retail, institutional, recreational and residential development that will complement and support the function of the Plan Area."

Figure 1 below illustrates the ASP Concept Plan with the locations of the three current applications overlaid on the Masterplan.

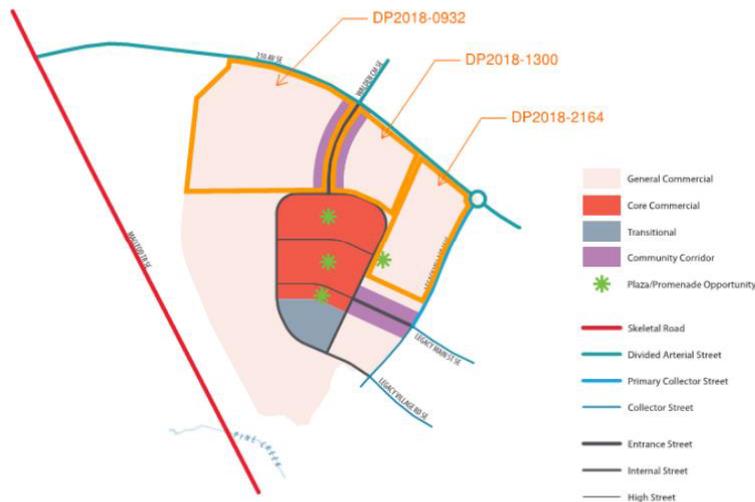


Figure 1 – South Macleod Centre Area Structure Plan with DP overlay



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The three development permit applications currently before the City are all located within the "General Commercial" Plan Area and Section 4 of the ASP sets out various land use and built form standards for each of the Plan Areas. Specifically, in the ASP General Commercial is characterized as:

"General Commercial: An integrated mix of retail formats is intended in this zone to create a dynamic commercial environment. To achieve this, the predominant uses in this zone will be medium to large format retail uses but can also include offices, hotels, residential and a number of small format retail uses."

Two of the development permit applications (DP2018-0932 and DP2018-1300) are also located in one of the Plan Area's two Community Corridors. The ASP characterizes Community Corridors as:

"Community Corridor: Buildings within this area are to offer an attractive interface with Entrance Streets and provide contiguous and/or stand alone uses."

While not documented by UDRP in their formal comments, there was substantial discussion at the meeting regarding these aspects of the ASP. The reaction from the panel chair was that the ASP was fundamentally flawed and should be revised, however the Applicant believes that as the ASP was the culmination of over two years of intensive collaboration with Administration and has been approved by Council, this comment was without merit.

In addition to the four discrete land use components of the Plan Area, the ASP also sets out the locations of key urban design elements such as plaza/promenade opportunities, pedestrian movements, form, and density. Each of the current development permit applications is in accordance with these aspects of the ASP as will be further illustrated in this letter.

- Of particular note were comments by the applicant that they do not anticipate building to the level of density allowed for by zoning. This is an important consideration, as the full FAR determines the extent of roadwork infrastructure required. Plans indicate a six lane roadway entering the site and four lane roadways for the most part elsewhere. The Panel is concerned that the road network is sized for a full build out that will never be realized, and, is far larger than would be desirable for a walkable, self sustaining community which the applicant states is the intent. The applications provide no explanatory diagrams to illustrate the guiding urban design concepts, massing distribution, gateway or other feature massing elements, viewlines, greenspace concepts or dedicated routes for bicycle or pedestrian movement. These are elements that should be described and presented as a whole before approvals are provided for individual developments.

Applicant Response:

The panel's comments with regard to density appear to be a misunderstanding of the response to this question by the Applicant and Administration during the meeting. Both parties attempted to explain to the Panel that the land use permits a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 0.64, but that it is assessed over the entire ASP Plan Area.



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The Applicant stated to the panel that to achieve the desired density in the Core Commercial, the General Commercial Plan area needs to be primarily single storey development. This is consistent with the ASP Masterplan. We regret that this may not have been effectively communicated to all members of the Panel. For clarity, the Applicant has every intention of achieving the ultimate cumulative FAR of 0.64, however this cannot be realized until the entire development is built out some years into the future. It should be noted that the land use specifically requires a density table to be provided with each application.

Figure 2 below is the current density table for Township.

Figure 2 - Lot Areas

Lot	Area (ha)	Area (Acres)	Area (SF)	ProShare	Building Area (SF)	FAR
3	5.683	14.04	611,713	26.2%	175,000	0.29
4	3.150	7.78	339,063	14.5%	120,000	0.35
5	2.776	6.86	298,806	12.8%	640,000	2.14
6	1.569	3.82	166,572	7.2%	40,000	0.24
7	2.859	7.06	307,740	13.2%	93,000	0.30
9	3.804	9.40	409,464	17.6%	120,000	0.29
10	0.931	2.30	100,188	4.3%	220,000	2.20
11	0.890	2.20	95,832	4.1%	94,000	0.98
Subtotal	21.662	53.48	2,329,378	100.0%	1,502,000	0.64
Total Site	25.026	61.84	2,693,776			
Public ROW	3.364	8.37	364,398			
Net Developable	21.662	53.48	2,329,378			



- It is for this reason that the Panel does not recommend acceptance of any of the individual applications. The City has stated that it wants new developments to follow the best principals in urban design creating sustainable communities that are less car dependant, place an emphasis on walkability, have clearly defined urban streets and have a legible plan with defined viewpoints and safe pedestrian first environments. While the proposals provide moments of these elements, they do not function as a cohesive whole in the designs as presented.*

Applicant Response

The Applicant strongly disagrees with the Panel's second round of comments on these applications, particularly in the context of the supportive and constructive comments from the first round of UDRP presentations. As will be further outlined in this letter, the Applicant believes that when true consideration is given to the context of the governing ASP and Land Use, Township not only meets current urban design standards, but will prove to be a unique and outstanding mixed use destination for all Calgarians.

In order to address specific comments regarding viewpoints and safe pedestrian first environment comments we have added a series of new renderings, as suggested by Planning Department on recent dialog in order to clarify our design and provide views as close to what pedestrian will experience the centre.

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5. **Overall Configuration** – Previous reviews of these three parcels have noted that they should set the tone for a 'Town Center' and a 'Community'. Instead we have a typical suburban retail center in each parcel with a sea of parking surrounded by inward facing retail. If this submission is part of, and the start of, a larger plan to fulfill these ambitions it is not apparent. Each parcel seems to have a different organizing structure which works against a cohesive and interconnected design.

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Applicant Response

The proposed development site plan creates a well-balanced building placement respecting the site geometry and the relationship with the context. The layout of Lots 3, 6 and 7 helps create a Gateway to the development, in conjunction with strategies outlined by the approved ASP for the future Core Commercial, by creating an "Arrival Experience" to pedestrians, bikes, and vehicles.



The gaps between buildings and connectivity to the multi-path network encourages people coming to the site by car, walk or bike to choose where they want to access the site. The "view cones" created by these public areas between buildings inform the public of what they will find while entering the site and allow them to make an informed decision. Wayfinding will also improve the visual information in addition to the physical aspect of the site.



The design team focused on a well-balanced design with portions of the buildings facing the adjacent streets by the means of patios and storefront; however, without disregarding the quality of the public spaces. The focus is on providing an excellent environment to promote the success of the retail tenants which in turn will make the development an inevitable success. The lack of parallel parking along 210 Ave. and Aldersyde Gate SE, would make it almost impossible that buildings would have their primary (or even secondary) entrance off those streets. Nevertheless the "back" of the buildings are treated Architecturally with the same quality of elements and materials as the elevations facing public access.



The site plan and building location respond to the geometry of the site as outlined by the City of Calgary Large Retail/Commercial Urban Design Guideline and offer opportunities for landscape features which promote public activity between buildings, creating seating areas supporting smaller food and beverage retailers amongst other activities.

In reference to the comments regarding the full build-out, I believe this is exactly the vision that is missing from the Design Panel as these first phases are more retail oriented. Once the Core commercial is built the overall concept will become a lot clearer and cohesive.

The site plan as proposed is NOT what one would expect for a suburban commercial shopping Centre and offers a unique approach to a modern, walkable and vibrant retail-oriented community. We have also included with this letter the original, more traditional site layout issued with one of our first applications to create a reference and comparison to the current angled arrangement, which we strongly believe was a huge improvement to the overall site layout, which was well received by Planning and previous members of the Design Panel.

With regards to the panel comment about a cohesive and interconnected design, we strongly disagree and would like to take this opportunity to add a couple of diagrams which hopefully helps understanding our approach to this site below.

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6. **Grid Rotation** – The grid rotation in Lot 3 is distinctly different from the other parcels. When queried, the applicant noted that this was done to facilitate the placement of the larger big box retail units, and to provide some open views to the interior of the parcel from the exterior roadways. The Panel expressed concern that this layout did not reinforce a street edge to the north and west – primary entry positions to the development. If the built form was arranged similarly to buildings illustrated in Lot 6 as they face Aldersyde Gate SE it would achieve the same result noted by the applicant and create a streetwall that is oriented to the entry roadway on both sides. The building footprints seem to be a slave to the grid rotation, rather than a considered urban design response to creating legible streets, connections and spaces.

Applicant Response:

Firstly, we would like to clarify a statement which was misinterpreted by the Panel as stated above: *“the applicant noted that this was done to facilitate the placement of the larger big box retail units, and to provide some open views to the interior of the parcel from the exterior roadways”*

That was not what we intended to say and not what the design is about. There are more complex issues which were taken into consideration on our proposed site plan as follows:

- The street to the North – 210th Ave. – doesn’t provide parallel parking therefore creating a streetwall as described by the panel makes no sense and doesn’t help in promoting retail or the views into the site. We strongly believe that orienting the buildings on an angle will create a more interesting and dynamic experience from the drivers going west and east bound along 210th Avenue. Please see Views 15 to 198 on the additional rendering package enclosed with this letter.
- The street accessing the site – Aldersyde Gate SE also presents the same issues, so creating the viewpoints and active landscape areas is a much better approach than creating a streetwall.

We strongly disagree that the *“building footprints seem to be a slave to the grid orientation”* and actually trust the orientation is responding to the site geometry and creating legible connections and active urban spaces as opposed to having a “streetwall” which is how suburban centers are configured.

7. The plaza design within Lot 3 has some nice moments but is very small within the overall scale of the parcel. Green spaces along the perimeter are residual – greater effort should be expended to place green space where it will be enjoyed by those using the site.

Applicant Response

The applicant recognizes the concern and acknowledges the comments however, we would like to point out a few requirements that influenced our design which may have been missed by the reviewer team:



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- The retail tenants, which are extremely important for the success of the development have specific requirement for number of parking stalls to be in front of their main entrance in addition to the City of Calgary parking bylaw.
 - The same tenants also have in their standard leasing agreements what is called “no-build zones” which means no other buildings can be within a certain radius from their front entrance. Visibility to their main entrance and signage is critical for retail.
 - We disagree with the comment that *“Green spaces along the perimeter are residual”* except for the area facing the green area east of Lot 3 facing the highway, in which we definitely didn’t put much effort. There is a significant amount of landscape along the north and east of the site which is a lot more than if a streetwall was created as suggested in previous comments.
 - The landscape “pockets” created between the buildings create a visual “break” to people biking, driving or (rarely) walking along 210th Ave. which can be enjoyed by those approaching and using the site.
8. **Axes and View Lines** – It is fundamental to good urban design that view lines and axis of movement should be respected through massing, building form and purpose. Axis of sight and movement should lead somewhere interesting or be terminated with celebration, emphasis and activity. A street and pedestrian corridor should not end on the blank side of a building. The flanking blank wall of the large grocery building on Lot 7 at the east terminus of the proposed High St/Main St with only landscaping, as currently shown, is not acceptable. The applicant is to consider alternatives such as fine-grained retail interface with outdoor patios or civic space – would be popular as a sunny, warm place to take in the long view of a vibrant main street environment. The end of an axis would preferably offer an entry to the grocery store, but if this is not possible, then an entrance to other desirable units should be provided. This position should be designed as a significant feature in the architecture that invites people. It should not be a blank wall or a false façade.

Applicant Response

In addition to the comments below, please find attached a complimentary set of additional renderings created at the request by the planning department which will help address the view lines into and within the site.

Also enclosed with our response is an improved set of landscape drawings responding to your comments as per below:

- Lot 3 specifically has a strong visual and circulation axis well defined by wide sidewalks heavily landscaped, same with Lots 6 and 7
- Those axes were specifically located in order to terminate on highly activated retail and landscaped areas where we created “landings” with sitting areas and opportunity for a pause to enjoy the site, meet and relax.
- With regards to your comment about a street terminating at a blank wall of the grocery building we have the following comments:
 - We strongly disagree with the comment and suggestion made during the UDRP meeting to add CRU’s with storefronts facing this plaza.
 - This comment seems inconsistent with other comments from the Panel which encourage the design team to create public spaces

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- We don't agree that retail storefronts are the only element that can animate a public space.
- There are several examples of famous places which attract thousands of people that have no relationship to retail whatsoever and sometimes rely on a "blank wall" as a canvas for artwork and activity. Some are illustrated below.
- Many of these are worldwide recognized as "Instagram Selfie Places"
- Most recently interactive digital installations have also been attracting people from all over the world.

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Example 1
Nashville TN
Art installation between residential buildings also present in Vancouver BC



Example 2
Las Vegas NV
The Park
Is located away from the strip with a sport arena with massive "blank walls" and community centers fronting this famous destination



Example 3
Various locations of interactive digital experiences.

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- The ASP identifies this as a plaza/promenade opportunity on section 4.4 – Open Space as list the following design criteria:
 - *Plazas, Promenades and Open Spaces should:*
 - *Be designed and maintained to create usable public gathering places for the community*
 - *Allow for unobstructed, universal and barrier-free public access to the space at all hours of the day;*
 - *Accommodate a variety of activities, functions and programming*
 - *Be designed in a manner that shelters users from prevailing winds; and,*
 - *Include native species of plantings that enhance biodiversity and provide shaded areas where appropriate.*

There is no reference to having these areas animated by retail and in our understanding adding retail to such “Plazas” will be detrimental to the main objectives for these spaces as outlined by the ASP.

9. **Street Network** – *The established planning and roads for this area make it very difficult to achieve good design outcomes. The large entry road in particular with multi-lane width does not allow for a good entry condition. The first intersection was appropriately modified from a traffic circle to the current condition. However, the design indicates that this is also a very busy pedestrian crossing zone. The scale of the intersection, the inclusion of “pork chops” and unclear pedestrian movement paths make this an unsafe or at very least an intimidating location to cross. The Panel notes that the Masterplan should deal with and provide safe and welcoming pedestrian routes between all parcels to knit the development together. Instead, it feels as though the only safe way to navigate the site is by car. The panel urges the applicant to reconsider the design of the intersection or to alter the pedestrian movement system to one that is more legible, safe, convenient and pleasurable to navigate. This may mean a reconsideration of the access points to the future pedestrian only internal street in the future blocks.*

Applicant Response:

Please refer to the response on item #3. The design of the public road intersections has been reviewed and approved by the City of Calgary in accordance with their guidelines and standards.

As a clarification, the design team had several meetings with Transportation and Engineering in order to try to achieve a customized (narrower) street section for this site which would have been more pedestrian friendly and not a result of transportation standards and oversized roads and intersections.

These were not accepted by the City and subsequently to our original submission for the Outline Plan, the city requested further widening of Aldersyde Gate SE and Longview Common SE.



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10. Internal block street structure has been entirely internalized. Each parcel places the backs of the retail to the primary streets. An alternative approach would focus retail toward Longview Common, Hartell Way, Cayley Road and Naptha Plaza – setting in motion a ring of active, “complete streets” with pedestrian activity and on street parking with larger parking areas behind – connecting all parcels into a cohesive community plan instead of isolated power centres. We note this alternative to underscore the reality of the design that has been proposed and encourage the applicant to consider design alternatives that knit the site together in a more effective and ultimately more powerful manner.

Applicant Response

Please see our answers to comments 5 and 6 which deal with similar concerns.

11. **Landscaping:** Although the landscaping is generally well designed and nicely detailed it can not overcome the constraint of poor overall configuration. Nice small scale green areas complimented by thoughtful hard landscaping are great to have but if they don't fit in a larger overall pattern with good connections they have only limited value.

Applicant Response

We appreciate the panel's positive feedback on the landscape design. We believe an appropriately scaled pedestrian and bicycle circulation network has been proposed that will connect the outdoor spaces of all three project phases to each other and the future core commercial. The use of larger scale trees supported by substantial growing medium volumes will humanize the scale of the sites to create a positive experience for visitors, encouraging them to return and spend more time. The varied sizes of the outdoor courts and gather places will allow for a wide range of programming opportunities including seasonal festivals and other events that help build community.



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