

UDRP Comments 2018 March 21 (including applicant response)



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January 14th, 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 UDRP COMMENTS – LOT 6
DEVELOPMENT PERMIT NUMBER: DP2018-1300

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

Comments on Relevant City Policies

Note to the reviewer

The comments in this letter respond to the initial comments by the City of Calgary to our development permit application and offer a new proposed site plan for consideration and review. We trust this revised and improved site plan addresses and exceeds expectations by the City of Calgary and makes Lot 3 an introduction to this exciting development as outlined and anticipated by the South MacLeod Area Structure Plan.

The enclosed revised and improved set of documents is reflecting and documenting the outcome of several meetings held with various departments of the City of Calgary therefore we trust it would be acceptable in response to the comments below. We have added commentary to each item below as an introduction to the enclosed set of documents.

South Macleod Centre Area Structure Plan (ASP)

The ASP identifies "Street A" as a Community Corridor and establishes policies to guide development of this site adjacent to that corridor. This application has been evaluated considering the policies in that document, and further clarification of how the application can meet the intent of those policies is required.



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Applicant Response

The proposed site plan and building sighting is addressing and responding to the policies outlined on the ASP defining Street A as a "Link from the core commercial zone to the surrounding communities." and "... to offer an attractive interface with entrance streets and provide contiguous and/or standalone uses".

Further to commentary on this report from the City and during the Urban Design Review Panel, the design team also enhanced the connectivity between the Core Commercial and adjacent communities by creating visual and walkable connections in either way pedestrians or vehicles chose to approach the site.

The building locations, on both Lot 3 and 6, promote a visual and physical connection into the site for approaching patrons and members of the community. These entry features are focused on public uses and equipped with amenities such as wayfinding signage and site identification, seating opportunities, bike racks and many other attractive features.

East Macleod Trail Area Structure Plan

The East Macleod Trail ASP identifies this site as a Gateway Commercial Area, a Core Commercial Area, and as a Comprehensive Planning area. The plan calls for commercial uses in the area that will serve both the local and regional needs of the area, and must be comprehensively planned. This application has been reviewed against the policies in that plan and is considered to be generally in alignment.

Applicant Response

This application has been prepared as a Comprehensively Planned regional commercial development within the policies of the East Macleod Trail Area Structure Plan.

Municipal Development Plan (MDP)

The MDP identifies this site as a Community Activity Centre, and contains policies in Section 3.3.3 to guide development of these areas as a local destination for multiple communities, and calling for a minimum intensity threshold of 150 jobs and population per gross developable hectare. This application is considered to be in alignment with the MDP's intent for a Community Activity Centre.

Applicant Response

This application has been prepared as a comprehensively planned Community Activity Centre within the policies of the Municipal Development Plan.

Urban Design Review Panel Comments

Summary

The Panel understands this application for Lot 6 was submitted the same day (March 25/18) the Panel reviewed the Lot 3 application. In fairness to the applicant, there was no opportunity to apply the comments of the March 25 Lot 3 review to Lot 6.



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The Panel reiterates, that in Lot 6 the scale of the parcel and the buildings interfacing inward need to wrap around the entrances and corners to optimize the arrival experience. It seems self-evident that the immediate market opportunity of the surrounding Gateway Commercial Area (which includes Lot 6) is its adjacency to the existing neighborhood, where people should be given opportunity to arrive by walking, cycling or driving. All relevant to the long-term vision and full build-out design aspirations of the Core Commercial Area – pedestrian-oriented, community-focused. The Panel feels that the Gateway and Core need to be complementary in its aspirations. Gateway street activation (Streets A, B, F & 210 SE Ave) for all modes and an innovative design response to internal sidewalks and the central parking area is necessary to achieve meaningful placemaking. The kind of gateway placemaking that is mirrored in windows of restaurants and retail should be about people in the landscape setting fully integrated with the car parking.

The Panel feels the overall gateway experience could be improved through modest adjustments to the single-use surface parking area (keeping the current capacity, as shown). Various aspects of the design discussion included:

- *Curb-stops for parking spaces to allow same-level, expandable-sidewalks with low-profile mountable curbs – to improve accessibility and an opportunity for occasional retail frontage sales events.*
- *Rethinking curb height, toward a relevant-to-retail place-making outcome with community benefit and innovative opportunities for shared-use parking and retail exchange in outdoor pop-up applications.*
- *Introduction of small-car parking spaces that would facilitate shifting the alignment of proposed trees to allow an east-west axial pedestrian connection to augment the proposed north-south cross-through walkway.*
- *Additional trees along the internal building facades will support a better integrated urban design response (as promoted on the front cover of the Applicant's submission).*

Applicant Response

The site plan creates a well-balanced site respecting the site geometry, the relationship with the context and creating a Gateway to the site in conjunction with strategies adopted on Lot 3 and future Core Commercial at the end of Street A, by creating an "Arrival Experience" by pedestrians, bikes and vehicles in different ways.

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 cone" 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 the focus is on making retail work and due to the lack of parallel parking along 210 ave and Street A, it is almost impossible that buildings would have their primary entrance of off those streets. Nevertheless the "back" of the buildings are treated Architecturally with the same quality of elements and materials as the front.



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As for the suggested strategy of “same-level, expandable-sidewalks with low-profile mountable curbs” we would love to have had the chance to implement this which was actually a proposal by the design team, however Engineering rejected such proposal.

As discussed at UDRP, we feel strong about NOT providing the suggested east-west pedestrian connection as we strongly believe that this is unnecessary and potentially detrimental to the site and the foot traffic in front of the retailers around the site. Public is encourage to walk around the site and experience the landscape features and retail opportunities.

URBAN VITALITY

1. Retail Street Diversity

Best Practice

Retail streets encourage pedestrians along sidewalk with a mix and diversity of smaller retail uses. Retail wraps corners of streets. Space for patios and cafe seating is provided.

UDRP Commentary

The retail layout is typical of a suburban development with respect to size and arrangement in proximity to the central parking area.

Applicant to consider enhancement of the building interfaces wrapping corners at street and walkway amenity area access points and along surrounding streets, including community corridor connecting with Walden north of 210 SE Ave.

The building interfaces internal to head-in parking areas should be further enhanced. Where space permits, increased tree count should be provided. Without these few additional trees, there is only a sparse placement of trees along the internal building facades interfacing sidewalks and parking.

Applicant Response

The site plan and building location responds 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.

The site plan as proposed is NOT what one would expect for a suburban commercial shopping centre as per above and offers a unique approach to a modern, walkable and vibrant retail oriented community.

The project has provided the overall required quantity of trees required per the bylaw. Trees have been located in areas such as at key entry nodes and around restaurant patios where people are more likely to gather. Trees have also been located throughout the parking and along circulation routes to reduce the perceived scale of the site, and located around the perimeter of the site facing the public streets to create visual interest and soften the building massing. These locations typically have better growing conditions with more soil volumes.

2. Retail street transparency, porosity



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Best Practice

Retail street maximizes glazing - 70% and more. Maintains view into and out of retail, avoids display-only windows.

UDRP Commentary

Glazing wrap-arounds at site accesses and back-of-building interfaces can reinforce overall street porosity.

The design of individual buildings is quite advanced. However, as discussed, the back of all buildings need improvement to relate better to interfacing streets. Building L facade on 210 Ave SE is particularly noticeable because of its stand-alone appearance because of the drive-thru lane, delivery bay and the waste/recycling enclosure. This area requires further study.

Applicant Response

The site is surrounded by high speed streets with four or more lanes to the north and west. These flanking arterial streets do not have parallel parking which does not promote a retail environment and public interaction with the rear of the buildings. The design team improved the back of the buildings and enhanced the pedestrian access points from streets and adjacent sites in order to respond to the "street porosity" issue referred to in the comment above.

A minimum of 70% of glazing is being provided on façades facing the internal parking, plazas and any other spaces which are intended to be animated as public amenities and promoting any interaction between these spaces and the retail spaces.

As for the stand alone building (Drive-through) please find enclosed revised drawings addressing your comments. Garbage and recycling enclosure have been relocated and loading is also in a much more desirable location creating the opportunity of a much better landscaped corner of the private access between Lots 6 and 7 from 210th ave.

3. Pedestrian-first design

Best Practice

Sidewalks are continuous on all relevant edges. Materials span driveway entries and parking access points. No drop offs or lay-bys in the pedestrian realm. Street furnishings support the pedestrian experience.

UDRP Commentary

Curb-stops for parking spaces facilitate parking and pedestrian accessibility - also allowing for same-level, expandable-sidewalks with low-profile mountable curbs. Rethinking curb height can innovate opportunity for shared-use parking and activation of the public realm through pop-up retail events.

The pedestrian connection between Building J and Building L could be made a stronger in the east west direction and possibly through surface treatment between the designated landscape pads. The opportunity here, to introduce small-car parking spaces would facilitate shifting the alignment of proposed trees into a portion of the shortened parking stalls, allowing space for an east-west axial pedestrian connection to augment the proposed north-south cross-through walkway.

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The vehicle-ramps at elevated pedestrian crossings should be lengthened to create a subtle and smooth change. Improving the experience for people walking should be balanced with the experience for people driving.

Applicant Response

Please see comments on item 1 - Retail street diversity regarding pedestrian-friendly approach to this site. Access to loading areas, which have been slightly relocated are much improved with regards to pedestrian safety and screening

4. Entry definition / legibility

Best Practice

Entry points are clear and legible

UDRP Commentary

The Panel supports the amenity entry points in the walkable realm of the site. However, it questioned the lack of connective relationship between a similar amenity area opposite the same community corridor. Applicant to review strengthening connective entry points.

Applicant Response

We appreciate the comments by the panel. Please refer to comments regarding improvements to sense of entry and connectivity at the site on item 2 above and enclosed revised and improved site plan and associated design documents.

5. Residential multi-level units at grade

Best Practice

Inclusion of two or three-story units are encouraged, particularly at street level. Private outdoor patios with access to the sidewalk are ideal. Patios are large enough to permit furnishing and active use.

UDRP Commentary

Applicant Response

We appreciate the comments by the panel. However, the inclusion of residential uses on General Commercial zones of the development, although supported by the ASP, was discussed with planning department and during the UDRP meeting, and was never anticipated to take place at Lot 6 subject to this application.

Multi-use residential uses are expected to be implemented on phase 2 of this project within the Core Commercial zone in multi-level buildings with retail at the ground level as outlined by the Table 2 of section 4.3 in the ASP.

6. At grade parking

Best Practice

At grade parking is concealed behind building frontages along public streets.



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UDRP Commentary

Single-use at-grade parking internal and central to the site is an opportunity in this case, to innovatively adopt pop-up placemaking potential opportunities. See comment #3.

Applicant Response

The design team improved upon the placemaking and seating/active spaces along the sidewalks, entry points to the site and other opportunities.

7. Parking entrances

Best Practice

Ramps are concealed as much as possible. Entrances to parking are in discrete locations. Driveways to garage entries are minimized, place pedestrian environment and safety first.

UDRP Commentary

No underground parking proposed.

Applicant Response

Acknowledged

8. Other

URBAN CONNECTIVITY

Provide visual and functional connectivity between buildings and places, ensure connection to existing and future networks. Promote walkability, cycle networks, transit use, pedestrian- first environments.

9. LRT station connections

Best Practice

Supports LRT use via legible, dedicated pedestrian pathways to stations with direct routes. Avoids desire lines / shortcutting through parking areas.

UDRP Commentary

The project site is within a 400m Transit Stop Catchment Area and will in future benefit from the LRT Red Line extension.

Applicant Response

Acknowledged

10. Regional pathway connections

Best Practice

Supports LRT use via legible, dedicated pedestrian pathways to stations with direct routes. Avoids desire lines / shortcutting through parking areas.

UDRP Commentary

Although Regional Pathway connections not explicit in the Applicant's submission, connectivity to the site and along the primary entry road provide adequate connection.



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Applicant Response Not applicable.

11. Cycle path connections

Best Practice

Supports cycling via intentional, safe urban design connections to pathway systems and ease of access to bicycle storage at grade.

UDRP Commentary

Pathway connections to the site and along the primary entry road provide adequate connection. Cycling routes were discussed and could be better illustrated in the Applicant's submission.

Applicant Response

Please refer to L0.03 pedestrian and bicycle network diagram for further information.

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12. Walkability – connection to adjacent neighborhoods / districts / key urban features

Best Practice

Extend existing and provide continuous pedestrian pathways. Extend pedestrian pathway materials across driveways and lanes to emphasize pedestrian use.

UDRP Commentary

From a walkability perspective, the Panel recognizes and supports the conversion of traffic circle to a T-intersection at the south edge of the phase. As discussed, the river rock banding in the boulevards surrounding the intersection will be removed from the boulevards. Walkable connections to the adjacent Walden residential community is deemed important to the success of the proposed commercial development.

Applicant Response

Please find enclosed revised and improved set of Landscape drawings addressing your concern. Together with the revised intersections, we have revised the two major entry nodes along Street 'A' to be more welcoming and attractive, while still consistent with the original design narrative.

13. Pathways through site

Best Practice

Provide pathways through the site along desire lines to connect amenities within and beyond the site boundaries.

UDRP Commentary

See comment #3 above.

Applicant Response

Please see our response above on items #2 and #3 and our revised and improved site plan enclosed with this resubmission.

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14. Open space networks and park systems

Best Practice

Connects and extend existing systems and patterns.

UDRP Commentary

The 45-degree rotation in the layout of the site plan positions buildings in a manner that creates open space optimization.

Applicant Response

Acknowledged.

15. Views and vistas

Best Practice

Designed to enhance views to natural areas and urban landmarks.

UDRP Commentary

Viewshed analysis to adjacent natural and urban landmarks is not explicit in the package provided.

Applicant Response

We believe this is not applicable to Lot 6 and will only be an issue on Phase 2 of the development on the area south of the development looking into the Environmental Reserve subject to a few discussions during ASP review and where we anticipate having viewpoints.



16. Vehicular interface

UDRP Commentary

Vehicle circulation responds to the site and adjacent uses.

Applicant Response

Not required

17. Other

Applicant Response

Not required

CONTEXTUAL RESPONSE

Optimize built form with respect to mass, spacing and placement on site in consideration to adjacent uses, heights and densities

18. Massing relationship to context

Best Practice

Relationship to adjacent properties is sympathetic

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UDRP Commentary

The Panel recognizes the 45-degree layout, the massing relationships, the design intent of architecture and signage related to the site and its development context. Variation in roofline, floorplate and façade treatments for internal frontage is indicative of good design.

Applicant Response

Thank you for the positive comment.

19. Massing impacts on sun shade

Best Practice

Sun shade impacts minimized on public realm and adjacent sites

UDRP Commentary

Information on this item is not included for review.

Applicant Response

Please find attached additional information added to the enclosed revise and improved design package.

20. Massing orientation to street edges

Best Practice

Building form relates / is oriented to the streets on which it fronts.

UDRP Commentary

The overall massing of the development is supported however, the Panel recommends improved architectural design detail of rear facades facing adjacent communities and roadways is recommended. Avoid large blank walls on rear and side facades.

Applicant Response

The site is surrounded by green space to the West (Future interchange), or high speed - 4 or more lane streets to the north and West, without parallel parking which does not promote a retail environment and public interaction with the rear of the buildings. The design team worked on as much improvement as possible to the back of the buildings in order to respond to the potential "street porosity" issue referred to in the comment above.

The open spaces around the sides of the project have been landscaped with large pockets of planting in lawn. The shape and layout of these planted areas are derived from the overall landscape theme and concept of the project. Care has been taken to ensure clear site lines into and through these spaces even though they are intended to be for visual relief and are not intended to be occupied. Full planting plans have been provided for review. The species mix, initial install size and spacing of the plants meet and exceed minimum City standards. In many cases we are using these areas to achieve the requirements for coniferous tree planting.

21. Massing distribution on site



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UDRP Commentary

Massing distribution illustrates adjacent landscape amenities.

Applicant Response

Not required

22. Massing contribution to public realm at grade

Best Practice

Building form contributes to a comfortable pedestrian realm at grade

UDRP Commentary

See comment #3 above.

Applicant Response

Please refer to our answers to items #2 and #3



23. Other

Applicant Response

Not required

SAFETY AND DIVERSITY

Promote design that accommodates the broadest range of users and uses. Achieve a sense of comfort and security at all times.

24. Safety and security

Best Practice

CPTED principles are to be employed - good overlook, appropriate lighting, good view lines, glazing in lobbies and entrances.

UDRP Commentary

The Panel encourages applying a best-practice approach to safety and security. The public realm, more than ever, needs to reveal the light and life of vibrant, thriving communities. In this case, at the threshold-phase of a community-focused town centre. The safe setting exchange should be about doing more to engage the in-between spaces, the backs-of-buildings, the wrap-around- corners and the 45-degree cross-through.

For example, there are precedents where glazing on blank walls can reveal inside activity such as the chef and crew in the back-of-restaurants. Even for retail, the back-of-house where window displays can be made fashionable in the most unexpected places. And then, how counter- intuitively, a loading area might contribute continuity in materiality, function and relationship to place-based outcomes.

Safety and security should be about exploring every possible opportunity to rise above the mundane and to elevate the placemaking experience. In so leading (by design), watch the market respond to value-attracted safe places.

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Applicant Response

CPTED is a proactive development philosophy whereby the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the incidence of crime. This is accomplished by thoughtfully employing natural forms of surveillance, access control, and territorial reinforcement to present a psychological deterrent to criminal behavior.

The design of Township utilizes natural surveillance, natural access control, and territorial reinforcement through the following design principals:

- Orienting access roads and pathways towards natural forms of surveillance such as building entrances and windows.
- Increasing visual permeability at main building entrances.
- Strategically lighting public areas and potential problem areas such as narrow pedestrian links and secondary building accesses.
- Providing clear sight lines and visual permeability.
- Limiting uncontrolled access to buildings and private spaces.
- Adding dense or thorny landscaping as a natural barrier to discourage unwanted entry.
- Providing amenities in public areas that encourage activity and use.
- Avoiding the creation of "no-man's land" by ensuring that all spaces have an assigned use.
- Creating clearly marked transitional zones as people move between public and private spaces.

With these thoughtfully employed natural barriers, we are encouraging positive social interactions while reducing the opportunities for criminal activity.

25. Pedestrian level comfort – wind

Best Practice

Incorporate strategies to block wind, particularly prevailing wind and downdrafts. Test assumptions and responses via Pedestrian Level Wind Analysis with attention to winter conditions.

UDRP Commentary

Information on this Topic was not included for review.

Applicant Response

The development has been thoughtfully designed to take into consideration the wide variety of environmental conditions that are experienced in Calgary. It is the Applicant's opinion that the current design does not have any extreme wind conditions worthy of detailed analysis.

26. Pedestrian level comfort – snow

Best Practice

Incorporate strategies to prevent snow drifting. Test assumptions and responses via Snow Drifting Analysis with attention to winter conditions.

UDRP Commentary

Information on this Topic was not included for review.

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Applicant Response

The Applicant has developed, owned, and actively managed its commercial properties for over forty years. This site will be maintained in a first class manner with the utmost priority placed on the safety and comfort of every visitor.

27. Weather protection

Best Practice

Weather protection is encouraged at principal entrances. Continuous weather protection is encouraged along retail / mixed used frontages.

UDRP Commentary

Information on this Topic was not included for review.

Applicant Response

The design team worked towards improving weather protection along the retail frontages also respecting the Architectural expression of buildings and tenant requirements.

28. Night time design

Best Practice

UDRP Commentary

The Luminaire schedule and modeling demonstrates area lighting that highlights the improvement needed at back of buildings and the perimeter amenity pedestrian areas.

Applicant Response

We will prepare renderings showing night time for review during UDRP upcoming meeting. These will not be included with the DP resubmission package.

29. Barrier free design

Best Practice

Site access to be equal for able and disabled individuals. Provide sloped surfaces 5% grade or less vs ramps.

UDRP Commentary

Information on this Topic was not included for review.

Applicant Response

The design of the development has incorporated best practices in barrier free design.

30. Winter city

Best Practice

Maximize exposure to sunshine for public areas through orientation, massing. Design public realm that supports winter activity.



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UDRP Commentary

Information on this Topic was not included for review.

Applicant Response

The orientation of the buildings and gathering spaces respect sun orientation and landscape/hardscape treatment supports winter activity. Please find enclosed sun study.

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31. Other

Applicant Response

Not required

SERVICE / UTILITY DESIGN

Promote design that accommodates service uses in functional and unobtrusive manner. Place service uses away from and out of sight of pedestrian areas where possible. Screening elements to be substantive and sympathetic to the building architecture.

32. Service Access

Commentary

Loading areas are integrated into the overall site plan, between buildings in many cases. The locations and proximity to the pedestrian realm suggest that design interventions of architecturally designed gates or moveable screens to provide an integrated urban edge and provide a visual screen to loading areas, waste collection and other associated back of house facilities and amenities.

Applicant Response

All loading, garbage and recycling areas are carefully integrated with the Architectural expression of building(s) it serve and when required are improved by landscape elements.

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We trust the above and attached addresses your concerns. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours truly

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ARCHITECTS DESIGNERS PLANNERS



Celso Stifelmann
ARCHITECT AIBC, M.Arch, M.A.I.C.
Celso Stifelmann Architect Inc., Partner

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