

Community Association Letter



March 18, 2019

Development Circulation Controller
Planning & Development #8201
P.O. Box 2100 Station M
Calgary, AB T2P 2M5

Emailed to madeleine.krizan@calgary.ca, City of Calgary File Manager

RE: DP2019-0680 | 1116, 1122, 1124, 1128 – 5 Avenue NW or “Five Eleven” | New: Multi-Residential Development (1 building, 80 units)

Dear Ms. Madeleine Krizan,

The Hillhurst Sunnyside Planning Committee (HSPC) would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the above application. We have made every effort to educate, advertise and seek input for this proposal from community residents using traditional and online mediums.

We are providing comments using the Hillhurst Sunnyside Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP; 2009), the existing DC 2016d34 Land Use Designation, the 5th Avenue NW Enhancement Urban Design Concept (2012) and input curated by the applicant and from residents at public meetings.

At the time of writing, we note that a streetscape plan has not been provided. A streetscape view is critical and assists in our evaluation of the application in context with the area. It is difficult to comment on the fit with the comprehensive vision for 5 Avenue NW as there is no streetscape or rendering showing the building from the south side (other than the entry) and its relationship with the buildings on either side. We request provision for this view to aid the community, City Development Authority and Planning Commission in the review process.

Building Design

The proposed building appears to fit within the ARP and the established Land Use Designation for the site; it does not appear to push massing and volume boundaries. The tiered appearance with various stepbacks are a positive addition to 5 Avenue between 10-14 Streets NW, an area slated for higher density midrise buildings bordering Riley Park.

It is challenging to comment on more subjective matters such as the design of the project. While many other recently proposed developments have glass finishes and boxy outlines, the proposed masonry and shape better serves to ground the building. The wood soffit at the main entrance is a positive feature that adds texture and detail to define the front entrance to the building.

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We believe that the project could benefit from a warmer colour of brick/stone as to better integrate into the community. The ARP supports *"durable materials, specifically mentioning building materials and colour palettes that are compatible with existing development"* (Section 3.2.1) and *"materials which add warmth, texture and visual interest"* (Section 3.2.1 #10).

The projections stress the verticality of the project and thus appears to emphasize the appearance of height. While there are building material changes from the fourth floor up, perhaps there can be a different approach. Ground-level townhouses with defined entryways create a more human scale relationship with the street as with the adjacent building to the east and with the more recent *Ezra on Riley Park* (2017) development, which anchors the west side of the 5 Avenue NW planning area.

Community Context

The *Kensington on the Park* or KotP (1999) condominium to the east of the proposed development has provided a deliberate stepdown and increased front and rear setbacks as to create a sensitive transition to the bungalow currently on the site; it has become a cornerstone of "exemplary" development in the community, paying homage to the historical form of development on narrow lots and front patios.

We would suggest a further height reduction on the west side to ease the interface with the small residential building. While greater heights and densities are envisioned for the street, the proposed development before us today still needs to consider existing context. City planners and community stakeholders that worked on the ARP were very conscious to ensure that new redevelopment on 5 Avenue would not form a continuous solid street wall and to maintain permeability to Riley Park.

For further context, we reached out to the original architect for Kensington on the Park to inform the community association's upcoming Jane's Walk on *Gentle Density in Historic Hillhurst*. The architect told us about his influences and experiences in designing the building. Main ideas included:

1. "Eyes on the street", maintaining diversity in cities
2. The role of architecture and design on social well-being and human interaction
3. "Defensible space" and sense of well being as a result of physical design

These principles were reflected in the design of the front porches both fronting 5 Avenue and on the laneway. There was a strong push from the City Planning Department at the time to "be a good neighbour" by adding detail to the east façade and scaling the building down on the west side to soften the impact on the small bungalow that is now a part of the Five Eleven development site. Landscaping also played a large part in creating to integrate the building with the park.

While current City of Calgary planning policy does not encourage duplicating heritage building stock, we believe there are merits to traditional front porches, which activates and enlivens the street and adds "eyes" on the street. Soft accent or downward lighting could also help with illuminating the the front and rear of the building after dark. Social issues have become a sticky topic with many condos in the area and activating the street and the alley could help with mitigating security issues. We encourage a CPTED review be undertaken.

Site Design and Public Realm Considerations for 5 Avenue NW

The north side of 5 Avenue NW is envisioned as a pedestrian mall and 5 Avenue is a major east/west connector street that sees a fair amount of pedestrian, car and bicycle traffic. The quality of the public realm on both the north (laneway) and south side is very important to the long-term vision for 5 Avenue and enshrined in the City of Calgary's Urban Design Concept document.

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We look forward to seeing a detailed landscaping design, which we understand will be provided by the applicant once it is ready. The 5th Avenue Urban Design Concept document supports the ARP for boulevard trees, which is a valued congruous feature in the community.

Mobility

We have mixed feelings about the visitor parking located on the laneway. On the one hand, having vehicles on the back lane adds people to the rear lane, but it also detracts from the interface between the lane and the building. The Ezra and KotP developments have set a high standard that complements the 5th Avenue Urban Design Concept to increase the interface quality along the lane with Riley Park with units facing the park and a less prominent entryway to the parkade. Alternatively, if the amount of parking was reduced and the parking pad was lower than the laneway, it would be less intrusive.

A parking reduction for the residential portion fits the relaxations available for Transit Oriented Development areas where there is transit, bike infrastructure, car/bike-share and as a “complete” community. The proposed bike repair station and bicycle storage is also a positive asset for the project.

Social Considerations and Livability

The applicant’s proposed purpose-built rental building is a welcome addition to our already diverse community and builds on the strong mix of rentals, home ownership and social housing that has long been entrenched in Hillhurst Sunnyside.

The provision of amenity spaces for residents seems favourable, however we echo the concerns of the councillors’ office that indoor gyms are often not well used and that it could be moved from the ground floor to the top floor amenity space. We note that the project backs an impressive park space, has ready access to the Bow River pathway network and the future Bow to Bluff park and there several gyms operating in the community.

We approached the applicant to ask about the possibility of sponsoring individual or family Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Association memberships for the 80+ new neighbours to welcome the future residents to the neighbourhood and encourage people to become engaged with community life.

Community Benefits

The Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Amenity Fund is a density bonusing fund that collects bonus Floor Area Ratio contributions for projects in the Transit Oriented Development area to offset the impacts of increased density. The contribution rate of bonus FAR at \$17.85/m² is significantly lower than in other areas of the city (compared with \$272/m² in the Beltline or \$188/m² in Brentwood).

We are in favour of developer-funded amenities that benefit the wider public and as a gesture of goodwill. For example, heritage is identified as a priority in the ARP and with the project’s location bordering historic Riley Park, some form of acknowledgement could be appropriate. There is precedent as the developer of *Ezra* provided a monetary contribution towards heritage initiatives (interpretive plan or commemorative elements). We suggest that the applicant follow up with conversations through the HSPC and with the City of Calgary Heritage Planning Department.

Engagement

The applicant’s team has led a very thorough engagement process providing information and listing aspects that they sought feedback. Hillhurst Sunnyside has seen a large amount of development in the

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last ten years since the ARP was updated. As a development-active community, we appreciate being informed about this proposal from the outset to communicate with our residents through our channels.

We provided a “best practices” for engagement document to the applicant tailored for Hillhurst Sunnyside. The applicant has held several engagement opportunities beyond the minimum to collect and report on residents’ input. A summary of engagement to date is included as follows:

Timeframe	Type of Engagement
Oct 2018	Planning consultant’s initial presentation to Hillhurst Sunnyside Planning Committee with package including guiding principles for the proposed development
Oct 2018	Letter drop to neighbours with an invitation to a series of applicant-hosted engagement sessions
Oct 2018	Open house to collect feedback on building materials and to provide information
Oct 2018, Jan, Feb 2019	Series of pop-up booths at the HSCA farmers’ market on Wednesdays to provide information and the opportunity for the applicant’s team to chat with participants
Oct 2018 to Present	Dedicated project website collecting feedback on building materials and later, updated with feedback and initial renderings at www.fiveeleven.ca
Jan/Feb 2019	What We Heard Reports (documentation) provided to the community association to share with residents
Feb 2019	Architect’s presentation to public meeting of Hillhurst Sunnyside Planning Committee
Throughout	Multiple touch points via email to the HSCA

That said, this is the HSCA’s first opportunity to provide formal comments on this application through the City File Manager and we have copied the applicant’s team and other relevant parties. Thank you for your consideration of our letter.

Sincerely,

Hillhurst Sunnyside Planning Committee
Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Association