

September 13, 2023

Re: Item 7.1 *Home is Here: The City of Calgary's Housing Strategy 2024-2030* CD2023-0749
September 14, 2023, Community Development Committee meeting starting at 9:30 a.m. in
Council Chambers

Dear residents,

We understand the importance of the housing affordability issues in Calgary which have come to a head. Many of us likely have family and friends caught up in issues related to the lack of affordable and low-income housing in many Canadian cities, including Calgary. As neighbours of the University of Calgary we are very aware of the housing shortage for students and the challenges it is posing.

This is an update based on a letter we submitted to the City for the September 14th Community Development Committee (CDC) meeting Item 7.1 which is expected to last for at least two days. The deadline for public submissions of September 5th was aggressive and unusual for a Standing Policy Committee meeting. The City of Calgary's new Housing Strategy report (based on the Housing Affordability Task Force (HATF) report) was not available ahead of the September 5th deadline and was only released to the public as part of the committee meeting agenda last Friday, days before the September 14th meeting. Individuals providing public submissions for this meeting had to base their comments on the HATF document that was replaced and, as a result, community associations and others have been scrambling to respond to the new *Home is Here: The City of Calgary's Housing Strategy 2024-2030* report. We find this practice utterly unfair to citizens of Calgary who care about their city and want to have a say on this highly important initiative.

In addition, Mayor Gondek called a Special Council Meeting for this Saturday, September 16th for follow-up, which we assume will involve debating and starting the process for a number of major initiatives arising from the CDC meeting which could include eventual upzoning of our entire city to a base level of Residential-Ground Oriented (R-CG) zoning which would allow single family dwellings, duplex/semi-detached dwellings, townhouses and rowhouses in the same land use district. Currently, University Heights has single family (R-C1), duplex/semidetached (R-C2), multi-residential contextual low profile primarily 3 to 4 storey apartment buildings and townhouses (M-C1), and Multi-Residential - High Density Medium Rise District (4-15 storeys) M-H2 land use districts for housing. We do not have R-CG which was recently amended to allow mid-block row housing, and two building rowhouses that may include secondary suites.

UHCA objected to the process that occurred with respect to the important discussion on housing affordability which is culminating in the week's meetings. The public was not informed nor formally engaged by the Housing Affordability Taskforce (HATF) which was a hand-picked group of citizens and City administration - not unlike the scandal that is unfolding in Ontario. In particular, we objected to the structuring of HATF Recommendation 1: *Make it easier to build housing across the city*. This included actions that involve major changes to the Municipal Development Plan and the land use bylaw which require a proper sequence of citizen

engagement and Council Hearings and, if passed, could have profound negative consequences to our City and most certainly to small communities like University Heights. We would prefer that the vote be called separately on each recommendation to allow full debate to occur. This would allow some recommendations to be implemented immediately while others would receive further scrutiny and engagement.

The current housing crisis has been decades in the making and is the result of many complex factors including failures of policy at all levels of government, gentrification of many areas instead of building low-income housing, the global financialization of housing, and perhaps most concerning, the abrupt increase in interest rates making mortgages unattainable for young and first-time buyers. There is no quick, one-size-fits-all solution to these complex problems, many of which have impacted the most marginalized and low-income populations and could continue to do so if the wrong solutions are applied.

We strenuously object to making R-CG the base land use district in Calgary. Such notions of blanket rezoning are simply an abdication in planning: every quadrant of the city, every neighbourhood, and every site has unique context and influences and must be respected. This is the process of how we became one of the most desirable cities to live in the world. Such sweeping recommendations should be taken to the citizens for their comment, approval, or rejection; as such this should be an election issue. As you may know, many respected planners and architects question the dogma that densification and upzoning result in affordability and this chorus is becoming larger and larger as more ill-conceived initiatives have resulted in no gain in affordability, in fact the opposite and with it the loss of community. R-CG land use allows lot coverage of 60% compared to the 45% in our low-density area which is unsustainable in terms of loss of tree canopy, landscaping and permeable land and could also result in heat islands, drainage problems and overwhelmed infrastructure.

UHCA recently entered into Local Area Planning (LAP) discussions which will be rendered mostly moot if the new housing strategy recommendations are implemented. Existing LAPs will have to be amended to accommodate some of the proposed changes.

Everyone deserves to have a reasonable amount of time to study these complex issues and respond. The constant barrage of short timelines on major issues undermines democratic process. Like all Calgary citizens, our residents are interested in fulsome engagement and we want our concerns meaningfully incorporated in all future planning for City and for our small but desirable community.

There is still time to participate if you wish. You can go to <https://www.calgary.ca/council/mayor/dyncrm-mayor-contact.html> and <https://www.calgary.ca/council/dyncrm-councillors-contact.html> and fill out the forms online.

You can also email the individual councillors at sonya.sharp@calgary.ca; jennifer.wyness@calgary.ca; jasmine.mian@calgary.ca; sean.chu@calgary.ca; raj.dhaliwal@calgary.ca; richard.pootmans@calgary.ca; terry.wong@calgary.ca; courtney.walcott@ca

[lgary.ca](#); [gian-carlo.carra@calgary.ca](#); [andre.chabot@calgary.ca](#); [kourtney.penner@calgary.ca](#); [evan.spencer@calgary.ca](#); [dan.mclean@calgary.ca](#); [peter.demong@calgary.ca](#).

If you wish to speak at the public hearing for the Community Development Committee meeting on September 14, Item 7.1 *Home is Here: The City of Calgary's Housing Strategy 2024-2030* CD2023-0749

go to <https://forms.calgary.ca/content/forms/af/public/public/public-submission-to-city-clerks.html>

For questions feel free to contact development@uhcacalgary.org It will be a busy very few days but we will do our best to respond. In addition to the committee hearing, we have our 2nd LAP meeting on September 14th.

Sincerely,

University Heights Community Association, Development Committee