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Secretary, Calgary Planning Commission
Development and Building Approvals
Box 2100, Station M #8073
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To the City of Calgary Planning Commission;

We are writing to request that the Planning Commission insist that City Planning and Western Securities respond immediately to major concerns about the Stadium Mall redevelopment, as expressed by the University Heights Community Association, and also explain specifically to local residents exactly the dimensions and expected population of their proposed project. We are alarmed by projections of ten story buildings and 2000 daily workforce deluging our little 450 - home neighbourhood.

In addition, we urge the Planning Commission to consider the proposal in the overall context of the immediate region, including the University of Calgary's plans to build residences and commercial floor space on the lands between the Hospital for Sick Children and 32nd Avenue NorthWest. At a Red & White Club display a couple years ago, University representatives were projecting an estimated new 9000 people in that area daily.

As longtime residents, we concur with the results of the UHCA survey, which found three-quarters of residents opposed to any density greater than C-1 for the redevelopment, and 97 percent opposed to any building higher than six stories.

Like trying to build on a flood plain

We strongly support C-1 as maximum density for this site. Furthermore we suggest that trying to estimate density on any commercial district in this area is like trying to build on a floodplain, because of frequent activities at McMahon Stadium and the athletic fields – not to mention the big and little baseball parks behind them. Stampeders' football games already swamp the whole area with floods of excited sports fans and their cars. Music fans also spill out of McMahon into the surrounding neighbourhood, doubling density in areas like Stadium mall, and leaving their trash on our lawns. Beer cans litter the gutters on Bermuda Shorts Day.

Helicopter flight paths

Building height is a huge issue here, not just because being on the heights makes us vulnerable to strong winds, but also because University Heights is perhaps the only neighbourhood in Calgary to be buzzed daily by helicopters – the STARS ambulances, going to Foothills and to Sick Children's Hospitals. The HAWKS helicopter also visits often. That chop-chop noise overhead has become as familiar to us as to the denizens of Los Angeles. Even though the neighbourhood

is not supposed to be on the STARS route, we have personally observed the cherry-red bird over houses, many times – and we’ve ducked involuntarily when it flew low over the Boardwalk apartments or University School, on approach to Foothills Hospital. Tall buildings seem inadvisable.

Likewise, we find the notion of building more medical office space at the Stadium Mall location somewhat bizarre, given that the medical building kitty-corner across 16th Avenue seems to have trouble keeping all its offices rented out. Also, Foothills Hospital has rebuilt and intends to continue rebuilding extensively, creating more medical office space right on campus. Similarly, we’re appalled to learn that “discretionary uses” might include a hotel. The University has the Hotel Alma now, and of course the Motel Village hotels are just a few blocks away from us. The Savoury Lounge replacement is already four stories tall.

Ah, some might say, but you would not care to walk from University Heights to Motel Village along Highway One, especially in inclement weather. We agree – and for that very reason, we wonder how in the world the Calgary Transit Plan is deemed to include University Heights. Transit runs in a big loop around UH, but not through it. In fact, we lost one bus stop a couple years ago. Now the nearest bus is a brisk ten-minute walk from our house; the nearest LRT station is at least twenty minutes. Stadium Mall ain’t the Brentwood Mall, where transit is literally at the doorstep.

University Heights is a closed subdivision, with only four exits, of which two are restricted in a vain attempt to deter cut-through traffic. Traffic piles up quickly on University Drive as well as on 16th avenue, at rush hours and during concerts or football games – or when a bus pauses to load or unload passengers. We’ve seen Foothills ambulances have trouble getting through.

A left turn from 16th already takes three or four lights at rush hour. The right turn off 16th Avenue onto Uxbridge is a horror at any time, with cars potentially coming into the right turn lane from *four* directions (because of the malls), not to mention the pedestrian crosswalk.

Sixteenth Avenue is also Highway One – and therefore not just another commercial strip. The green municipal reserve land is an important buffer protecting everything north and west of it from the possibility of a hazardous spill along an important Dangerous Goods Route, Highway One. Sixteenth Avenue is also a major foot highway to the reserves west of Calgary, as a few months’ observation will attest.

Nor is there any practical sense to the suggestion to obliterate the 16th Avenue green strip to add a third lane and exit at the mall site, especially with the divided highway just ahead. Rather than convenience, the third lane is likely to create a bottleneck of frustrated motorists trying to reach Shaganappi Trail. The road is confusing enough already, with all the entrances and exits. We count nine intersections or ramps, from 19th St (already a site of frequent accidents) to the Bowness exit. It’s as if the city is inviting drivers to play, “How fast can you weave in traffic?” Nor would an exit that connected to the existing back alley be feasible, because it would be likely to infringe on University and Westmount school playing fields.

Although University Heights may seem to be a privileged enclave, in reality we are a vital part of a vibrant city, with two showcase schools and a playground that attracts parents from across

Calgary. We not only house the renowned Westmount Charter Middle School, our K-6 University School is a model of scholarly multiculturalism, as the children of exchange students from all over the world start their education by learning about Canada – and the local children learn that the world is much, much bigger than Calgary. Hospital workers and university visitors explore our safe streets on foot and on wheels, enjoying our gardens and park areas. So do national and international athletes training at the Olympic Oval, like Chantal Petitclerc, who I saw training here years before she won five Olympic medals.

We who dwell in University Heights live on a residential island surrounded by institutions, always at risk of being swallowed, yet our gardens and greenery add beauty and breathability to the urban scene. Please respect our voices. Please respect our representatives. Please respect our wish for human scale development.

Thanks for your time and attention,

Penney Kome and Bob Pond