

Calgary Planning Commission (CPC) Meeting of June 6, 2013 re: Proposed Area Redevelopment Plan for Stadium Shopping Centre (SSC)

Background on CPC

CPC is a committee appointed annually (ie. each November) by City Council to:

- make recommendations to City Council on land use planning matters in Calgary
- act as the Approving Authority on all subdivision matters, and
- act as Development Authority on some development matters

The CPC is made up of the following members:

- General manager, Planning, Development & Assessment (Chair, who only votes if there is a tie) (currently Rollin Stanley)
- General Manager, Transportation
- Two members of City Council (currently Aldermen Farrel and Lowe. Alderman Lowe was absent and Alderman Farrell was present for all business except for the Stadium Centre ARP.
- Six Citizen Members (Currently: Paul Battistella, Jeremy Sturgess; Mrs Jyoti Gondek; Robb Honsberger; Ms Marianne Wade; Roy Wright) These members are predominately developers and consultants.

CPC Schedule: meets every second Thursday, starting at 1 pm, in the Engineering Traditions Room in the old City Hall building). It is not a public hearing. The process is that City officials describe the item and then CPC members ask questions, potentially offer an amendment and then vote on the final proposal. Representatives of the developer or community only speak if the CPC Chair requests that they respond to a specific question from a Commissioner. The media can be present in the meeting room as well.

Summary of CPC Proceedings re ARP for SSC

The session began with Desmond Blik of the City Planning Dept providing an overview of the SSC site (with photos), of the ARP's objectives and provisions, and of the concerns / views of UH residents and other groups as expressed in the City's engagement process (which he summarized).

1. CPC shocked observers from the affected community of University Heights by starting off by voting 5 to 2 to **not admit the detailed submission (ie. 16 pages identifying and explaining 21 different concerns and requests) from the UH Community Association** because it arrived late (It was submitted on May 31 and distributed directly to CPC members with the assistance of the Alderman). The CPC rejected late correspondence although it was aware that the lateness of the filing was due to schedule misinformation provided to UHCA by the City's Planning Department. In rejecting late correspondence, 2 other letters (from concerned citizens, one from the Foothills Mennonite Church) were also not admitted. **All other late submissions for other agenda items were accepted by the CPC that day.**
2. Mr. Honsberger noted that the ARP refers to the SSC as a being a NAC or **Neighbourhood Activity Centre** (ie defined in the Municipal Development Plan as having the minimum density of 100 people and jobs per hectare), but that it makes no reference to either the possible density or population on the redeveloped site. Mr Blik responded that the City's Planning Dept had concluded that on the basis of

the Transportation Impact Assessment, C-C2 zoning, a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 3.0, the land use mix, and planned mitigation measures, a density of 700 jobs and people per hectare was manageable on the SCC site. Paul Docker also added that the community reps who participated in the South Shaganappi Communities Area Plan had indicated their support for increased density at the SSC site.

3. Mr. Honsberger also asked if the City Planners thought that a **FAR of 3.0** for the SSC site was high enough. Was a FAR of 5.0 or 6.0 (essentially double the density) considered? The City Planners responded that the City does not own the site and therefore must discuss such issues with the developer.
4. Mr. Battistella, the one Commissioner who indicated he had read the UHCA submission, asked what was the reasoning/principle/standard that led to the conclusion that the **number of housing units** in the site be limited to 225. Bliet responded that this was decided through City “discussions with the developer” and that they concluded the number of residential units should be “more than token” while maintaining the economic viability of the development. Mr Battistella asked the Planning Dept to inform the CPC as to what proportion of the total SSC site would be comprised by residential dwelling units.
5. Regarding building mass, Mr. Battistella asked why the ARP did not provide any direction or guidance regarding the **maximum dimensions (as opposed to height) of any building on site**, therefore potentially allowing immense 14 story buildings of about 15,000 sq ft per floor. The City said they were confident building impacts could be mitigated by location, setbacks, land use mix and height limitations in the NE corner of the site etc.
6. Mr Battistella’s questions revealed that the City had had only very general discussions with the developer about the ball-park capital **cost of the required infrastructure requirements** and no discussion at all about **what costs what have to be covered by the developer**.
7. There were questions about the **Municipal Reserve** and the future process for deciding whether it remains where it is or is incorporated into the development plan. City reps emphasized their intent to ensure that the community of UH benefitted from any decision through the new public space (ie its size, amenities and “microclimate”).
8. Mrs. Gondek commented that it was her experience that people visiting friends and relatives in Foothills hospital would benefit from a **hotel, restaurants and meeting rooms** (for medical profession conventions etc) at the SCC site and that such people would not create a security risk for nearby school children. She also pointed out that there already was a major drinking establishment at SSC.
9. Mr. Battistella persuaded the CPC to pass an amendment to the ARP that would prevent a single large tall structure to be built on the site: “With regards to building heights and massing consideration should be given to providing a variety of building form types. An appropriate proportional relationship to floor plate size and building heights should be considered.”
10. **CPC voted then voted 7 to 0 to approve the Stadium ARP** which now goes to a public hearing at City Council on July 22nd.

UHCA Concerns about the CPC Hearing

1. The dozens of letters written by concerned residents and citizens were not attached to the city's filings to the CPC. Instead this correspondence was summarized, vaguely, at a high level. Also, letters submitted by the UHCA prior to the CPC hearing, which were on time, were not included. One letter in particular requested that the city provide cost analysis of upgrades expressed in 2013 dollars. **By not including community letters in the core filing and then excluding late submissions, information provided to the CPC was incomplete and gave an unrealistic view of public support for the scale of the development.**
2. The policies guiding the MR Lands are vague and contradictory. On the one hand the Proposed ARP makes reference to leaving a 3 m path along 16th Ave (the minimum allowed by parks), which one of the commissioners thought was not wide enough. On the other hand, the Proposed ARP allows for all of the MR land to be incorporated in the development. These contradictory and vague policies leave the community with little or no protection from getting little value from incorporation of the MR into the development.
3. It appeared that little weight was given to traffic issues. The planner's presentation gave the impression that the community gave input to the traffic input assessment (TIA) and there were few issues. Unfortunately, two letters from the community association, which were on time but not presented to the CPC, were critical of the accuracy of the TIA and challenged many of the assumptions and conclusions of the TIA, with reasons explained in detail.
4. The CPC hearing lacked a critical discussion about the 16th Avenue/29th St./Uxbridge intersection being critical to the Foothills Medical Centre (the largest Hospital in Alberta and one of the busiest trauma units in Canada.) The community pointed out that the current traffic (with no build out) experiences significant problems at this critical intersection. The planned buildout, would significantly worsen traffic even with several traffic mitigations measures in place.
5. Although a question was asked about the costs of investments, the answer was that the City did not know but was trying to find out. Further, no one at the CPC expressed any concern that the City might be unable to pay for the investments that would be needed to mitigate traffic problems. Based on the City of Calgary's 2013 Capital Projects list, it appears that none of the upgrades are currently budgeted. Should the development be scaled back to a more moderate level if money for upgrades is not available? What proportion of the costs would the Developer be required to pay? The cost of upgrades is an essential missing element in the City's presentation to the CPC.
6. Transitions to the community was another issue not adequately addressed. Mr. Battistella could see there were problems and made an amendment - which in the view of the UHCA, will not be sufficient to offer reasonable transitions to the community. It also does not appear to be a mandatory provision because the word should was used. In fact, the entire issue of vagueness and uncertainty of the ARP was not addressed. (Should was used 67 times in the proposed ARP).
7. The issue of phasing of the development was also not adequately addressed. In the 16 page rejected submission, the community recommended that building density be tied to infrastructure upgrades. The phasing of density tied to upgrades would significantly mitigate the negative traffic impact to the community and hospital.