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Re: Support for Heritage Communities LAP

To: City of Calgary Infrastructure and Planning Committee - Councillor Sonya Sharp, Chair

The Fairview Community Association (FCA) would like to express its support for the current draft of the Heritage Communities Local Area Plan (LAP).

The communities of Fairview and Fairview Industrial currently lack a realistic, comprehensive area plan in alignment with both city and community goals. The LAP provides a much-needed vision for future development that begins to address the demographic and contextual changes affecting Calgary's early suburbs.

The FCA was pleased to participate in the engagement process via the working group and CA-focused sessions. We were encouraged by the wider public communication and engagement efforts undertaken by the City's planning and communications teams. There was extensive opportunity for resident input and many different perspectives were heard. While no plan can meet all expectations, the final plan reflects most of the key elements we heard again and again. We noted that many of the objections we heard were centered around growth and densification in general, which will take place regardless. If applied as intended, the LAP will be a helpful guide for all stakeholders to manage growth and change in a way that best meets the vision and goals of residents, communities, and the City of Calgary.

While each of the Heritage communities has its own unique characteristics, they have many commonalities and face many of the same challenges. In this case, the newer, multi-neighbourhood approach to planning was largely helpful in providing appropriate context for development, emphasizing connections and nearby amenities while including local knowledge and unique neighbourhood features and issues.

Like all growth and change, the future vision resulting from the LAP process requires City action in the coming years as demographics, density, and lifestyles change. Our preference would be for the LAP process to result in additional, more in-depth tactical planning policies, benchmarks, or even linkages to existing policies or departmental strategies that reflect *how* the plan will be implemented for current and anticipated growth needs in the Heritage communities. Some key examples, several related to Fairview specifically, include:

- **Infrastructure, amenities and facilities investment.** Local neighbourhood amenities are key factors in attracting and retaining residents and building community. With the loss of Fairview's arena in 2018 and the upcoming demolition of our former community centre (now the National accessArts Centre), Fairview lacks indoor common spaces for gathering and would benefit from City investment in neighbourhood public facilities.

- **Traffic** patterns must be observed and managed. The Fairmount Drive corridor has become a cut-through route where traffic volume and speed often make the street, bordered by several schools, unsafe.
- **Pedestrian and cycling routes** within the community and linkages to adjacent areas and routes. Some elements are briefly mentioned in Appendix A: Investment Opportunities, and we expect to see elaboration on these ideas and incorporation into the built environment as soon as feasible. While Appendix C: Mobility includes preliminary maps for these transport modes (Map C1: Pedestrian Corridors and Map C2: Cycling Network), both require further work on routes and on infrastructure supportive of current use. Examples include a lack of east-west linkages for Fairview, such as across Blackfoot Trail to the east towards the Calgary Farmers' Market, or across the CPR line and LRT to the west toward Macleod Trail; a lack of sidewalks on the east side of Fairmount Drive south of Glenmore Trail; and a lack of safe cycling routes on Fairmount Drive, particularly just south of Glenmore Trail, due to the busy four-lane road having no shoulder. We look forward to the implementation of 5A network principles to improve safety and connectivity.
- **Affordable and attainable housing.** Specific goals and strategies for housing should be clarified. Calgary will require a broad range of options in the future to support economic growth and ensure all residents have safe and secure options for living. Many of the Heritage communities include a bungalow on a relatively large lot as the most common type of housing. While a conversion to a double lot with two or more infill homes does increase density, our experience has shown the new infills are often much more expensive than the surrounding original bungalows. Affordability must be a strategic consideration so that the results plan for the actual housing needs of Calgarians, and don't simply open the floodgates to gentrification.
- **Urban canopy, green and natural spaces, and parks.** Serious efforts to maintain or increase our tree canopy and common outdoor spaces are important from a human and environmental perspective, and we look forward to seeing associated policies being prioritized.

Specific to Fairview and Fairview Industrial, we wish to note the following potential issues related to the LAP process and outcome:

- While just outside the plan area, **Chinook Station** has a greater practical impact on our neighbourhood than the stations included in the LAP. Densification, transportation corridors, and pedestrian/cycling access related to this station should be part of a comprehensive plan for Fairview and Fairview Industrial.
- **Fairview Industrial** was labeled a Special Policy Area (1.5.7.1) and received limited attention in terms of focused planning engagement. The FCA and a community partner in Fairview Industrial did benefit from a planning session where we discussed the area in a limited capacity. However, our residents' vision for the future of Fairview Industrial includes diverse uses and urban forms along with an emphasis on pedestrian connectivity with housing in Fairview. We believe it deserved more engagement and consideration. Although we understand that industrial-designated areas are subject to different policies and strategies, we suggest that these areas be discussed in a more integrated manner in future LAP processes when they are adjacent to or have clear connectivity with residential areas. The section on Fairview Industrial in the final LAP draft is in general alignment with popular community vision, but could be improved and expanded by considering in-plan light industrial areas more fully.
- Planning and development work regarding the possible **Midtown** development and associated infill LRT station is ongoing and has evolved during the past several years. The area was

identified as a Comprehensive Planning Site, and not sufficiently addressed during the LAP process. This large proposed development would greatly impact Fairview, Kingsland, and Macleod Trail in general. While the development would undergo its own engagement process and result in updates to the LAP if approved, we feel that the exclusion of the site, even during the pre-approval stage, is a missed opportunity for dialogue on the types of urban forms and amenities that residents would envision and support. Discussions should have included potential impacts, particularly of an infill station, and the final LAP maps should at least show potential density.

- Some proposed **building heights** (Map 4: Building Scale) may not be appropriate for the location, depending on factors like elevation and surrounding built forms at the time of a given development application. We will be observing and engaging with the City as development proceeds, and expect those involved in approvals to be mindful that each application is unique, regardless of whether it meets the basic criteria outlined in the LAP.

Of additional note is the language and education process best used in the working group and during public engagement. Planning is very involved and a wide variety of terms were used to describe and categorize the elements needed in an LAP. Plain language and easily understandable resources (summary reference documents (“cheat sheets”), explanatory videos, etc.) and a clearly defined scope and expected outcome for the LAP from the outset are critical for inclusivity and combating misinformation. All stakeholders must have a common understanding as a basis for collaborative, positive discussion.

Finally, we wish to thank the City teams for their work on this project dating back to 2019. They were always patient and respectful during a long project with many unpredictable bumps in the road. Engagement can be very difficult, and their effort was clear.

The Fairview Community Association looks forward to seeing the LAP’s vision activated across City departments and reflected in City investment and improvements in the Heritage communities.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Councillor Kourtney Penner, Ward 11
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