



Brentwood Community Association

Mailing Address 5107 – 33rd St. NW, Calgary, Alberta T2L 1V3
Tel. (403) 284-3477 Fax. (403) 284-3951 office@brentwoodcommunity.com
www.brentwoodcommunity.com

April 15, 2024

Public Hearing Meeting of Council April 22, 2024 at 9:30 AM

Re: Blanket rezoning to R-CG

Dear Mayor Gondek and City Councillors,

The Brentwood Community Association has actively engaged and informed its residents since the initial Housing Affordability Task Force Recommendations were released. The BCA has posted information on our website, our community bulletin board, included articles in our monthly Brentwood Bugle, used direct mailouts, as well as community social media sites. In addition, a meeting on February 8th was attended by 130 people. Based on the feedback received over the past months, the BCA can confidently represent its residents on this topic.

What We Heard (WWH) Report

Attached is a copy of the WWH report, based on the many letters and comments submitted at the public meeting and received up to March 20, 2024. This does not include the subsequent verbal comments or feedback received via emails and at other community events. A full summary of the data, as well as verbatim comments are attached.

This letter focuses on the overall reasons that the BCA has opposed this blanket rezoning after weeks and months of feedback from our residents.

1. The Role and Scope of the Municipal Development Plan

The City of Calgary's Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is a strategic and statutory policy document as required by the Alberta Municipal Government Act (MGA). The MDP ensures that City building follows an orderly use of land and patterns of building: Section 617, MGA references *"the preparation and adoption of plans to achieve the orderly, economical and beneficial development, use of land and patterns of human settlement"*.

The MDP recognizes that Planning decisions, especially regarding land use and infrastructure, have very long-term impacts. For that reason, 2.2.5 STRONG RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOODS Policies states, *"The City promotes infilling that is sensitive, compatible and complementary to the existing physical patterns and character of neighbourhoods"*.

Blanket rezoning paints with too broad a brush and treats all R-C1 properties without consideration of the uniqueness of *"existing physical patterns and character"*. In Brentwood, the typical existing bungalow is under 1200 square feet, is only 1 storey high, and covers about 24% of a 50 x 100 foot lot. In contrast, an R-CG rowhouse that covers 60% of the lot, extends to 3 storeys high and largely eliminates space for grass and trees, is not in any way *"sensitive, compatible"* or *"complementary"* to the already existing homes.

The statutory MDP sets the ground rules for how and where redevelopment should occur. It pays particular heed to ensuring that such redevelopment takes place with respect to the existing community, not irregardless of it.



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2. Areas of Change and Stability - the Existing Station Area Redevelopment Plan

The Brentwood CA has an existing Station ARP that was created through thousands of hours of effort from residents in conjunction with the expertise of Planners, including those brought in from outside of Calgary at a not insignificant cost. The core guiding principle was that there would be “Areas of Change” and “Areas of Stability”. This was based on Planning Rationale and best practices: residents are unlikely to use such “planner-ese” or express their wishes in such a way.

The Areas of Change would be the commercial areas of Brentwood Mall, the Brentwood Co-op and portions of the University Research Park (now rebranded as University Innovation Quarter). In those areas, redevelopment “*is welcomed and....significant opportunities exist*” for building.

The statutory SARP pays particular heed to the “Areas of Stability”, which “*include established residential communities surrounding the Brentwood LRT. The character of these places will remain the same...*” Throughout the 129-page document, repeated references state the importance of “*stable residential communities that ... will remain relatively unchanged*” (page 47 of 129). Any change that does occur “*should be sensitive to existing communities, providing for transition in scale, form and character*” (page 61 of 129).

These are sound, guiding principles that should still be relevant today, and they emphasize the need for stability in much of the community, with other specific and targeted areas slated for change. Blanket rezoning is the opposite of this orderly and methodical process.

3. The Importance of Stability in Established Areas

As any realtor will tell you, the largest factor in selecting a home is “location, location, location”. For most homeowners, zoning is the tool which provides the information about what can or cannot be built nearby. Many of our residents have stated that “I bought R-1 for a reason”, referring not only to their property, but also to the properties around them. While it is true that any homeowner can apply to rezone their property, in the 1960s and the decades that followed, an R-1 property was viewed not as an investment, but as a home.

It is only within the past decade, that there has been an increasing trend to view the financial potential of a property, especially with regards to “flipping it” or using it as an investment for short-term gain. This leads to a loss of certainty and stability within the area. As one resident put it, “*this (blanket rezoning) proposal has me reconsidering where I will live in the future. I am very seriously considering moving out of Calgary even though I am retired and had not planned for this. However, I do not want to live in a city where I am always anxious each & every time a home near me goes up for sale.*”

Another resident contacted the BCA because they were having solar panels installed on their bungalow but are now concerned that there might be a much larger building next door overshadowing their property. They were wondering if it would be worth investing in their home if they didn’t have any certainty about what might happen when the house next door is sold. We were unable to offer any reassurance.

When residents stop investing in their homes, or when residents are considering moving out of their community before they are faced with a redevelopment that negatively impacts them and the value of their property, then the community has lost a valuable asset – stability.



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Stability is not a vague, unquantifiable term: the fact that the Station ARP, created by Planners, repeatedly references the “Areas of Stability” shows that there is both value and merit in the concept.

4. Concerns around Park Spaces within Brentwood

Many areas along the greenspace / park just south of John Laurie Blvd, running from Brenner Drive to 14th Street, have a current Land Use of R-C1, but will be rezoned to R-CG.

This has become a major concern for many Brentwood and Charleswood residents, with the Brentwood CA receiving many emails and comments from residents. The City response was *“Many city open spaces and parks have a residential zoning going back decades. Parks is a permitted use, for example, in R-C1 and R-C2. While these parcels are being proposed for rezoning (i.e. shifting from R-C1 to R-CG), this does not mean they are being proposed for development. They will remain park spaces even if they are rezoned.”*

Without Land Use designations and protections to ensure the parcels along John Laurie Boulevard continue as green spaces and park, other assurances that these areas will not be developed will not satisfy the concerns of community members. R-CG zoning allows for a number of “permitted” uses, ranging from parks to a contextual semi-detached dwelling or a rowhouse building, and there is nothing in the LUB that prohibits these open spaces and parks from being developed if rezoned R-CG.

Future city councils and/or administration may sell these parcels for development at their discretion, for any of the stated “permitted” uses. The selling of green spaces for development is not without precedent. For example, the parcel at 3502 Charleswood DR NW, historically used by the community as green space was recently rezoned H-GO, despite feedback from the Triwood CA opposing this redesignation.

Recommendation: Since the intent of both the City and area residents is to ensure that these parcels remain park spaces, the BCA would like to work with the City of Calgary and Parks and Corporate Properties to redesignate all of the areas in question to S-SPR, Special Purpose - School, Park and Community Reserve, and to designate the site as Municipal Reserve on the land title.

5. What We Heard from Brentwood Residents

Data was collected and analyzed into Quantitative and Qualitative information. See appendix.

Through repeated review of these data, citizen responses were sorted into 11 broad categories (topics), as follows (not in order of importance):

- general opposition to ‘blanket rezoning’
- concerns about the role of the City/goal of proposed ‘blanket rezoning’
- affordability/densification
- infrastructure issues: waste management, (storm)water management, schools
- property values
- crime/conflict
- community character/sense of place/quality of life/privacy
- what will be built: shadowing, aesthetics
- parking
- green space/parks/trees/tree canopy/shrubs
- suggestions for alternative approaches to blanket rezoning



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What we heard was that residents were extremely concerned about a blanket rezoning approach. Many commented on the need for affordability but they felt that without targeted metrics, the developers were being given a large financial benefit to the detriment of homeowners who had invested their time and energy into their community.

Please read the specific comments from residents who put much thought and effort into their submissions.

Summary

1. The Role and Scope of the Municipal Development Plan

- Ensure that redevelopment complies with the MDP goals for “sensitive, contextual” redevelopment that is compatible to the exiting community character.
- Other documents such as the Established Areas Guidelines and the Infill Guidelines also provide specific recommendations to guard against negative impacts from overlooking, massing, shadowing, and others. Use and apply these guidelines to any redevelopment.

2. Areas of Change and Stability - the Existing Station Area Redevelopment Plan

- The core guiding principle in the existing statutory Station ARP document refers to “Areas of Change” and “Areas of Stability”. This was based on Planning Rationale and best practices that still apply. Blanket rezoning is in direct contradiction to those sound and reasoned principles.

3. The importance of Stability in Established Areas

- Property owners and communities need certainty so that they continue to invest their time, money and efforts into their communities. Blanket rezoning removes that certainty.

4. Concerns About Park Spaces (Rezoned to R-CG)

- This is a major concern for many residents but has a relatively simple solution. Instead of rezoning these park spaces to R-CG, rezone them appropriately to S-SPR.

5. What We Heard – Resident Concerns

- A blanket rezoning approach raises many concerns, including massing, shadowing, loss of trees and greenspaces and many others as identified by Brentwood residents in the attached Appendix. Residents deserve to have their concerns addressed, not to be dismissed for having raised these concerns in the first place.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit feedback on behalf of the Brentwood Community Association.

Sincerely,

Bonita McCurry, BCA President

Kirk Osadetz, BCA Vice-President

Melanie Swailes, Peter Johnson, and Lori Santink, on behalf of the Development and Transportation Committee

And,

All the many residents who submitted their letters, phone calls and emails.