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City Clerk's Office
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Online via Public Submissions to City Clerk's Office

Dear City of Calgary Council,

RE: Rezoning for Housing

The Dalhousie Community Association ("DCA") appreciates the opportunity to comment on the City of Calgary's "Rezoning for Housing" proposal ("Rezoning"). Through social media and our website, the DCA has endeavored to inform community members of the proposed changes and encouraged their participation in engagement opportunities and the Public Hearing. The DCA has not directly surveyed the community for a consensus view on Rezoning so we cannot speak to a community position. We can provide community context with respect to Rezoning and state that we have concerns with how higher density will integrate into our community.

The DCA acknowledges the importance of ensuring a variety of housing forms and affordable housing options are available throughout all Calgary communities. We also recognize that increased density can bring benefits to our community, such as; increased vibrancy and diversity, increased utilization of existing amenities, support for new amenities and potential to reduce dispersion of amenities to far-flung communities, greater opportunity for local business to succeed, more efficient use of land and the transportation network (transit, walking and cycling), potential to blunt, if not decrease, rising housing costs. Further, we recognized that Rezoning will not result in proposals for increased density everywhere all at once, but that they could happen anywhere at any time in our community.

The DCA believes that direct engagement by City staff would have allowed us the opportunity to discuss and potentially mitigate some of the challenges we see with Rezoning. We also believe that zoning changes would have best been accomplished in conjunction with a Local Area Plan, as this would have provided for comprehensive community participation in planning for and leveraging the opportunities of increased density, while minimizing the challenges.

Community Context

Most of Dalhousie's 3,505 dwellings were constructed from 1961-1980. 54% of current dwellings are single-detached vs. 55% city-wide. A major new multifamily development was initiated in 2016 near Dalhousie LRT and will add up to 979 dwelling units (874 net) with 451 actual units in two nearly-complete buildings of the first phase. Most multi-family is located in close proximity to Dalhousie LRT, principally south of Dalhousie Drive between Shaganappi Trail and 53rd Street NW. The remainder of Dalhousie is primarily Low Density Residential R-C1 and R-C2.

It is the DCA's understanding that Rezoning would allow for grade-oriented semi-detached homes, duplex homes, rowhouses, townhouses and cottage housing clusters in the Low Density

Residential area. Single-detached homes would be added as permitted use along with semi-detached, while all other uses would remain discretionary, with the possible exception of rowhouses meeting certain criteria as defined in the Bylaw. Secondary and backyard suites would be allowed on the same parcel, though we are not clear on whether both would become permitted use or whether backyard suites would remain discretionary.

There is no community-specific statutory plan to guide redevelopment in Dalhousie. In the absence of such guidance, the DCA can reference a 2021 community engagement-based University of Calgary School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape visioning project titled *The Future Layers of Dalhousie*. When asked about where new development should go, responses suggested a targeted approach to density with varying degrees of increased density proximal to Dalhousie Drive and Dalhousie LRT and extending a limited distance into the Low Density Residential area along 53rd Street and to a lesser extent collector roads such as Dalton Drive.

Challenges with Rezoning

Much of Dalhousie consists of laneless parcels including nearly all of the Low Density Residential area west of 53rd Street and about one third of the Low Density Residential area east of 53rd Street and west of the north-south regional pathway connecting Dalhousie to Varsity and lower Edgemont. Accommodating higher density housing forms with on-site parking on laneless parcels will have significant impact on the pedestrian realm, as it would necessitate additional front access/egress across public sidewalks, decreasing pedestrian safety and accessibility due to increased traffic exposure and requirement to navigate sidewalk ramps.

Many streets in Dalhousie have sidewalks on only one side and some have no sidewalks. While we have an extensive network of walkways running along the backs and sides of parcels, they are unmaintained in winter to the point of being inaccessible and they often intersect streets with poorly conceived connections to the broader sidewalk network. As this means pedestrians are often forced to share the streets with vehicles, the ability to get around safely and comfortably as a pedestrian could significantly deteriorate with density-associated increased traffic and parking pressures.

As an older community, Dalhousie benefits from an extensive canopy of mature trees. We have already seen some loss of this tree canopy in association with new large single-detached homes that are common with re-builds. It is conceivable that loss of the tree canopy could be exacerbated with larger higher-density building forms with associated loss of the environmental benefits of a healthy tree canopy and overall community aesthetic.

While we have already acknowledged that increased density will not happen everywhere all at once, the stated goal of Rezoning is to increase the supply of housing. Redevelopment will likely be accelerated and so will the potential for disruption for those living nearby during construction.

Accommodating Rezoning

Increased density must be sensitive to community context and actions must be underway prior to or in conjunction with redevelopment to accommodate density in a way that maximizes benefits and minimizes negative impacts. In our view this includes providing firm criteria for

where various forms of housing in R-CG would be considered appropriate. Consistent with DCA feedback on past proposals for increased density, it also includes demonstration of a firm commitment by the City to diligently pursue the following as a means to mitigate traffic congestion and parking pressure by reducing the need to drive everywhere for everything:

- Ensuring transit is reliable, frequent and safe and that service delivery commitments are met, i.e. four-car trains on the Red Line consistently during peak hours, and that efforts continue to make stations and vehicles feel safe and inviting to Calgarians of all ages.
- Investing in active travel infrastructure improvements and maintenance/SNIC, including sidewalks, improved crossings with pedestrian-priority signal timing, building out the 5A cycling network along street corridors and directly into amenities, near them.
- Encouraging local amenities such as shopping, recreation, education, health, etc. so that community members can access more of the services they need locally.

With respect to the tree canopy, strengthening the Bylaw to limit loss of trees and ensure replacement with adequate numbers of appropriate new trees is a must. To reduce disruption during construction, the City needs to undertake proactive enforcement of community standards and be responsive and understanding to resident complaints.

Comments Received from Community Members

The DCA has received some comments from community members and our volunteers on blanket Rezoning. This feedback has not generally expressed support for Rezoning and has identified concerns. Concerns include changes to community character/reduction loss of low-impact single-detached homes, incompatibility of certain forms of housing with the current streetscape, particularly where streets may not well-accommodate more traffic and parking, loss of privacy due to overlook from taller dwellings with increased residents and decreased screening by trees. In addition, there is concern that removing Council from the equation when deciding on rezoning of individual parcels takes away opportunities for residents to have their voices heard by Council on matters they feel significantly affect them.

Once again, we thank Council for your time and for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

James Reimer, President, Dalhousie
Community Association

Brent Clark, Chairperson, Planning and
Development Committee, Dalhousie
Community Association

Cc: Sean Chu, Councillor, Ward 4
General Manager, Dalhousie Community Association
PD Committee Members