

Holyrood Development Committee
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**RE: HOLYROOD GARDENS: REGENCY REDEVELOPMENTS REZONING APPLICATION
(delivered via email)**

Summary: The City of Edmonton has failed in its duty to provide effective community engagement and develop a neighborhood site context plan to fulfill obligations of Sustainable Infill Land Development Policy, Regulations and Guidelines where a Large Site Residential Direct Control Rezoning is proposed in a mature neighborhood.

This is the **second request** for the Edmonton Design Committee to review the Holyrood Gardens Regency Development Project and **first request** for inquiry into the planning procedures undertaken related the subject rezoning application noted above.

The Holyrood Development Committee (HDC) represents the Holyrood Community League in matters related to Regency Developments (the developer) rezoning application for Holyrood Gardens site on the east side 85 Street between 90th and 95th Avenues in the Holyrood community.

This letter urgently requests the City Manager, the Mayor and City Councillors investigate planning procedures followed on the rezoning application for Holyrood Gardens **before** the developer is approved to bring its application forward to a public hearing.

The HDC urges postponement of the developer's application because the conditions for a rezoning application have not been fulfilled (see sections "A" through "E" below).

The HDC also requests a review of the planning Design Review Group (DRG) procedures for this application. This group has allowed process steps critical to the interest of the neighbourhood to be abandoned as staff work with the developer to ensure the developer's project is heard by the current City Council on September 11, 2017.

The HDC urges the return of this proposal to the developer and the Planning Department for revision and completion under the provisions laid down in existing land development policy, regulations and design guidelines.

The way in which this entire process has been handled leaves HDC and the Holyrood residents with a distrust of public planning officials and the professionals responsible for coordination of the application submission. Rather than serving as trusted partners to the community, planning officials have been misleading, have ignored communications and disregarded requirements of this process. The HDC and Holyrood residents have been left in a disconcerting state of uncertainty. An exhaustive list of timelines, actions and communications can be supplemented for review upon request.

Areas of concern that have not been resolved or addressed in the rezoning application process are outlined below (items A through E). These circumstances warrant return of this proposal to the developer/city to complete the work.

A. Site Visions and Context Plan (i.e., Neighborhood Plan)

We understand that the City of Edmonton adopted a path to no longer require creation of Area Structure Plans (ARPs). As such, when an established mature neighborhood community is impacted by large scale infill, the City is responsible to generate the Site Vision and Context Plan working with the community to create a planning framework to be used in the evaluation of a rezoning development proposal. **This step was not initiated by the City** on this rezoning application even though the community requested an area plan on the prior rezoning application for this same site and asked how a neighborhood framework would be addressed for this development. The process to create a Site Vision and Context Plan is a well utilized urban tool also described in the Cities "Planning and Consultation Process for Rezoning Large Infill Sites in the Mature Neighborhoods" document. This is a streamlined process intended to work in conjunction with a rezoning application to create land rezoning process for neighborhoods impacted by density changes also forming part of Smart Choice Infill Policy.

The purpose of preparing a Site Vision and Context Plan is to establish a conceptual framework for the long-term development of a mature neighbourhood, impacted by densification. A Site Context Plan is to be initiated in response to an Application for a DC2 rezoning on a Large Residential Infill Site. The process is intended to be a consultative one between the community and the City, and to result in a Plan which is supported by both the community and the City. The applicant for the rezoning is involved in the process with the purpose of ensuring that if a project is generally desirable, the Plan reflects the general parameters of the rezoning proposal.

Appendix 6 of the "Planning and Consultation Process for Rezoning Large Infill Sites in the Mature Neighborhoods" (Council Approved in February 2009) provides the criteria to determine if a site vision and context plan is required (p. 53). When one or more of the conditions apply,

the City is required to establish a Site Vision and Context Plan for the neighborhood that is then reviewed by Edmonton Design Committee and approved by Council **prior to** accepting an application for redevelopment. Criteria that warrants a Site Context Plan for the Holyrood Gardens rezoning include:

1. The DC2 rezoning will fundamentally change the direction of the neighbourhood by introducing large scale buildings into an otherwise predominantly low scale neighbourhood of single family homes or if it represents a specific change in direction of zoning or intensification of the neighbourhood which is contrary to an existing ARP.
2. Additional large site rezoning applications have been initiated in the same neighbourhood or in immediately adjacent neighbourhoods.
3. There are other large sites in the immediate vicinity which could be redeveloped.
4. The context of the development site in the neighbourhood provides for unique opportunities that are not accommodated by the Residential Infill Guidelines, and the applicant wishes to significantly vary the Residential Infill Guidelines.
5. The redevelopment would significantly change the mix and balance of housing types in the neighbourhood.
6. There is a significant level of community concern raised as a result of the initial circulation of the Preliminary Rezoning Application.
7. There are other DC2 rezoning applications proposed in the area or there have been inquiries that indicate a general level of interest in infill redevelopment on large sites in the area.
8. The scale and intensity of development raise the potential for significant impacts on the adjoining neighbourhoods through increased traffic, shadowing, or the introduction of large scale buildings.

Appendix 5 of the *“Planning and Consultation Process for Rezoning Large Infill Sites in the Mature Neighborhoods”* states the following objectives should be addressed in the Site Vision and Context Plan.

1. To define the extent of redevelopment to be permitted in the neighbourhood, and:
 - a) Where redevelopment will be permitted;
 - b) What forms of infill will be permitted in specific areas of the neighbourhood;
 - c) The built form that may be constructed, including where medium scale and large scale buildings may be permitted;
 - d) The densities that may be achieved;
 - e) The phasing of redevelopment; and,
 - f) The housing mix to be achieved.
2. To determine any deficiencies in parks and other amenities that need to be resolved prior to, or through, the approval of a rezoning, including specifying how.
3. To identify any overall traffic and parking issues that will be created or exacerbated by infill development and how they will be resolved.

4. To identify key pedestrian streets, focal points, views, and essential connections to and through the site.
5. To identify the impact on existing residents in the area to be redeveloped, including how any loss of affordable rental housing will be mitigated.
6. To identify how the Residential Infill Guidelines, and other City policies, will be implemented.
7. To identify any infrastructure issues that will be created or exacerbated by infill development and how they will be resolved.
8. To identify any specific issue areas to be addressed and further detailed studies that may be required as part of the DC2 rezoning application process.

Please refer to Appendix A showing Council approved pre-application process rezoning large scale infill in a mature neighborhood and steps not undertaken in this application.

B. Community Consultation

According to the recommended process outlined in *“Planning and Consultation Process for Rezoning Large Infill Sites in the Mature Neighborhoods”* the consultation process for Site Visions and Context Plan preparation will be agreed upon with the community as part of establishing the detailed Terms of Reference for the preparation of the Plan. **No site context plan or terms of reference for community consultation were provided at any stage of this development application.**

Repeated requests by the HDC and community for workshop-style meetings, and a collaborative approach to open houses involving work group design charrettes, **were denied**. Open house sessions were styled as information sessions. The reason cited by the city and developer for using this approach was the lack of time available to accommodate round table/workshop formats that would involve more than one meeting per Open House.

The type of consultation used should be proportionate to the scale and impact of the development. Given this is a large-scale initiative with broad impact to several neighborhoods, care should have been taken to ensure engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. Given the City’s reluctance to notify the whole neighbourhood, the HDC produced an information flyer and promotions for the open house. Individual citizens paid the costs of this work in the form of goods and time.

To be effective, the consultation should take place as early as possible in the decision-making process. It should make clear its purpose, context and what will happen afterwards. Consultation should be targeted so relevant stakeholders are present and the methods used should be designed to ensure meaningful feedback.

Deliberative public engagement was needed in this process to ensure participants had an opportunity to consider relevant information, discuss issues and options, and develop their thinking together before providing feedback to the developer and the City. Deliberation is critical if the City is serious about taking account of public views on complex issues like large-scale infill projects in the mature neighborhoods. Pre-application open houses presented information to participants rather than engaging participations in co-creation. In many cases information was missing. For the formal Open House, the City’s feedback forms were primarily focused on

gathering feedback about the meeting logistics rather than actual feedback about the rezoning proposal. The pre-application meetings and formal Open House were co-delivered by the developer and the City. Independent facilitators should be on hand to reduce real or perceived bias. **Even at the pre-application stage City staff were presenting themselves as on board with the developer's proposal.**

Consultations should be transparent about what they are covering, and how citizen feedback will be used. Consultation documents should be concise, clear and written in plain language so that all of the potential impacts are clear. At the second pre-application meeting, the developer presented citizens with two options and asked which one they liked, but it did not have all of the potential impacts identified. This approach was disingenuous as both options pushed a high density solution without disclosing many negative impacts to the community. The process to be followed should be clearly laid out from the start. The HDC was not engaged in the formal Open House and was not informed of how the event would be designed until just a few days before the meeting.

In short, engagement opportunities have been poor quality leaving no space for citizens to provide informed feedback.

Refer to Appendix B- HDC Open House Feedback

C. Traffic Impact Assessment

The Traffic Impact Assessment for this rezoning concludes congestion is "certain" at various locations. The HDC believes this is the result of the cumulative impact of numerous conditions, (the LRT and intense infill taking place in Holyrood and surrounding neighborhoods of Strathearn and Bonnie Doon.

The City Traffic Engineer indicated on July 26, 2017 the rezoning proposal was sign off ready. This, despite HDC's concerns that appropriate community consultation had not taken place and without resolution to associated issues of congestion. Residents were left with an understanding the approved TIA will not address traffic back up into Holyrood's neighborhood along school and playground routes or manage short-cutting through the neighborhood.

In response to citizen concern, the City traffic engineer suggested that problems would be fixed after they knew what they were.

The developer's consultant implied that citizens do not have say in the matter. The issues are technical and decisions are made by the professionals that govern.

An overwhelming majority of residents in this community agree the City's reluctance to plan for known traffic congestion problems is not an acceptable or sustainable decision for long term infrastructure.

Appendix C provides a map of traffic impact concerns and suggestions brought forward by citizens at the July 26 Open House. This summary was prepared by HDC on August 02, 2017.

D Urban Design

The City of Edmonton's Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Infill Design Guidelines contain design parameters to assist professionals in calculation of appropriate scale and baseline density for infill sites in the mature neighborhoods. The guidelines are intended to encourage use of urban design principals to provide City wide design excellence and

consistency of urban form related to Infill or Transit Oriented Development or specific to type of transit stop. Holyrood Gardens is a Neighborhood Stop.

The developer's rezoning application lacks specific/comprehensive design details to ensure land use conflicts with neighbouring properties are minimized, including a design rationale outlining how the increased density fits the City's vision. While a baseline calculation for allowable density on this site has never been provided, the HDC estimates this to be a **maximum of 600 units**. The developer is **proposing 1,200 units – double the allowable density**.

Urban design was raised as a major concern from the beginning of this project because the initial proposal sought to place a multiple high rise box form buildings beside single family dwellings. No studies were provided with reference to massing, sun shadows, overlook or height transition considerations to fit the neighborhood. For these reasons, on July 5th, 2017, the HDC requested the development be reviewed by the Edmonton Design Committee (EDC). The Planning Department made the request to the Developer, although Stantec refused, citing that Urban Design was part of the Planning Department Review circulations and there was insufficient time to complete that work prior to the Council meeting on September 11, 2017.

For HDC Initial Request for EDC refer to Appendix D.

While some changes were recently made to the proposal, (August 1, 2017) the massing strategy continues to exceed the City's urban infill intentions for a site of this nature. The proposed massing design strategy is out of context with urban design principals intended for both Neighborhood Stop TOD and large scale infill in the mature neighborhood. The design sensibility towards sun shadow impact has not been analyzed in context of adjacent properties sun amenity, West Exposure and evening sun. The development makes no attempt to use sustainable design strategies or transition height in ways that unify and fit the design within the existing fabric of single family homes. The community has requested the building heights be lowered and internal amenity areas be reduced to accommodate density and onsite road access for the development. Goals to replace quantity of existing low cost 3 bed room housing units suitable to young children are not being met.

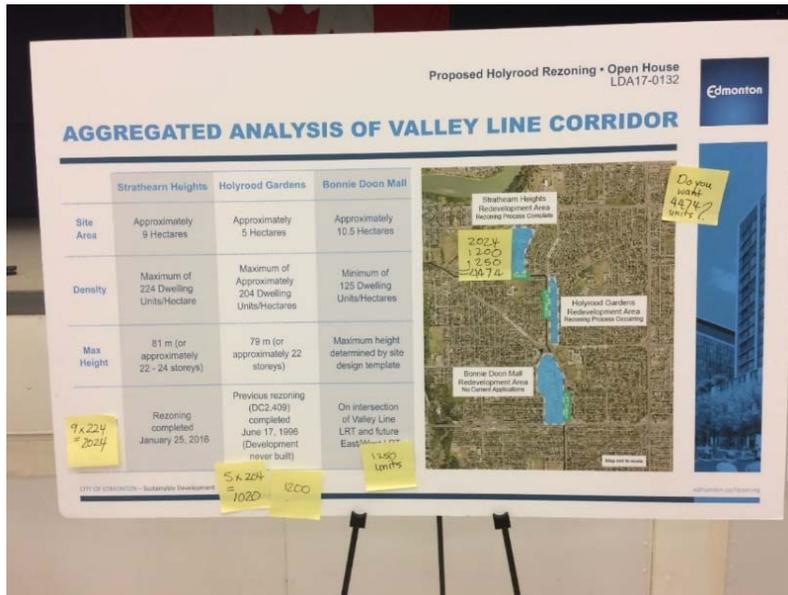
Clear definition of required community amenity space and/or reasonable contribution toward community infrastructure improvements has not been addressed. The specified contributions have never been mutually discussed or agreed to. Ideals set out in new Winter City design guidelines are not demonstrated in this proposal despite the fact the design brief suggests they are. With no Site Context Plan or urban design framework in place, the logic necessitating a proposal that exceeds design guidelines and urban principals for large scale development in the mature neighborhoods has not been justified in the proposal documents or through community engagement.

Please refer to Appendix E showing HDC feedback for August 1, 2017 massing/transition design including perceived omissions and errors on these drawings and others submitted to the community for information or feedback.

E. Access to Information:

The drawings provided throughout this application add to HDC's concern that an appropriate level of professional effort was applied for a project of this scale and budget. Documents presented to the community lack information and detail. HDC has made numerous requests for

fully developed drawings with details, dimensions, areas, calculations and extents necessary to review this project in the context of the regulations that apply.



Open House July 26, 2017 Post-It Notes Add Missing Information to City Presentation

The “*Planning and Consultation Process for Rezoning Large Infill Sites in the Mature Neighborhoods*” states that a project of this nature shall include building programme, landscape plans, elevations and 3D concepts of the proposal at the pre-application stage. Very little visual information has been provided to back up or validate statement of design intent. **The City and the developer deny this is a necessary requirement for a rezoning.**

For all of these reasons, the HDC requests:

- the City investigate the established process for large scale infill in mature neighbourhoods and the extent to which the City’s Planning Department and developer are following the process.
- that this project be referred to the City’s Public Engagement Office to develop a community engagement plan.
- that the City initiate a Site Vision and Neighborhood Context Plan in order to set out a neighborhood frame for large scale infill and establish a path in which this community can evaluate the rezoning proposal,
- that the City Manager not permit the rezoning proposal to proceed until the developer and Planning Department meet the requirements of the established process for large-scale development in mature neighbourhoods.

For the second time the HDC asks that the developer be required to submit its proposal to EDC through available channels in this DC rezoning process.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to working together so the City, the Developer and the residents in the communities bordering this proposal have a development we can all be proud of.

Sincerely,

(via email)

Sherri Shorten, HDC Chair

Wendy Weir, Holyrood Community League President

Dave Sutherland, Civics & Development for Holyrood Community League

Holyrood Development Committee members:

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