



THE CALGARY HERITAGE INITIATIVE & CALGARIANS FOR HERITAGE DISTRICTS GIVE CONSENT TO THE CITY OF CALGARY TO PUBLICLY DISTRIBUTE THIS LETTER BY ANY METHOD.

May 5 2021

**Re: Letter of Support for 7.1 Guide to Local Area Planning: Heritage Amendments and Sustainment PUD2021-0577**

Dear Members of the Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development

The risk assessment for the Heritage Conservation Tools and Incentives Report, approved in July of 2020 acknowledged that....

*“Heritage and “community character” are among the most prominent concerns identified during the local area planning process for our inner-city communities. If the recommendations of this report are not approved, many of the ongoing and upcoming local area plans (North Hill Communities, West Elbow, Historic East Calgary, and West Hillhurst, Hillhurst/Sunnyside, Hounsfeld Heights) will be at risk or face increased opposition due to the high concentration of heritage assets in these communities. This risk is mitigated by the proposed recommendations.”*  
(Planning and Urban Development PUD2020-0259 2020 April 01)

By extension, the Guidebook for Great Communities faced increased opposition because protecting heritage and community character were not adequately addressed, communicated, nor were the tools and incentives tested in the pilot LAP. Calgaryans are passionate about their communities and the built and landscaped heritage that contributes to a sense of place.

**We want to see the new approach to Local Area Planning succeed with the application of the Heritage Tools and Incentives. And without delay – every day without implemented policies puts heritage at risk of demolition. We support the proposed amendments to the improved Guide to Local Area Planning that will help achieve this and ask that you do the same.**

The amendments to the Guide (described in this letter) apply not just to the pre 1945 communities with identified heritage assets. They also apply to our mid-Century communities, those built-out during Calgary’s second big development boom. Interest in the protection of mid-Century architecture and development patterns is growing; it represents the next group of heritage assets to be identified.

The amendments highlighted in this letter support community and street context, often an important consideration when a property owner weighs the pros and cons of designating their property. Designation is the only real heritage retention tool currently available to Calgaryans.

#### **A. Amendments: Clarity, Predictability and Certainty:**

Making the Guide non-statutory will allow more flexibility for specific community context. However, it also removes a degree of certainty that the statutory “Guidebook” was intended to provide. Certainty must therefore be reflected in the LAPs. We support the adoption as a non-statutory Guide to enable the completion of the North Hills Community LAP with Heritage Conservation Tools and Incentives applied. Learnings from a completed pilot will inform improvements to the Guide and other LAPs.

We support direction for “a collaborative planning process with a robust engagement strategy” for local area planning. We recommend that a Partners in Planning (PIP) type heritage education workshop be offered to working group members. We at CHI and CFHD are offering to participate in content development and delivery that could, for example describe the economic, environmental and social benefits of heritage retention. Supporting materials could also be shared at public engagement sessions. And Chris Edwards’ offer to participate in the application of the Heritage Tools and Incentives layer 2 program to the North Hills pilot LAP stands. Chris is a founder and now president of CHI. He lives in a century-old home in the North Hills plan area.

#### **B. Amendments: Complete Communities:**

- Adding language that respects and enhances the existing context of the area and sense of place to acknowledge that community planning does not start from a blank slate.
- Including streetscapes, historic block patterns (these terms should be defined in the glossary) and significant tree canopies to help define the context when planning for complete communities.
- Allowing for development policies that are specific to the unique aspects of individual communities within the plan area.
- Improving language around climate resiliency and protecting tree canopies that will also enhance quality of life.

#### **C. Amendments: The proposed heritage resource amendment:**

- This is a very minor change and simply restores the strength of the policy that is in the current Developed Area Guidebook regarding development abutting inventoried heritage resources.

#### **D. Amendments: Neighbourhood Stability and Character – Neighbourhood Local Policies:**

The proposed amendments include changes to where limited scale policies apply, latitude for the LAP process to define higher activity streets (rather than defined collectors), a new single-detached special policy area and recognition of the role of RCs in informing LAPs on the built form of communities. We anticipate that these policies, in consort with the Heritage Guideline Area Tool, will help preserve the historic character of Calgary’s most heritage rich residential streets. By discouraging upzoning on these streets, more homeowners may be encouraged to designate.

**Regarding Sustainment**, we appreciate that the Guide will evolve as the Heritage Tools and Incentives are rolled out in the LAPs and that work on commercial heritage streets and density bonusing continues.

A number of heritage-related “Asks” were identified as “Not Being Considered” in Attachment 9 to the “What We Heard” report. These items reflect gaps in the proposed amendments provided by Administration. Some of these gaps will be addressed in the LAPs, others are being addressed in other

work (e.g. heritage commercial streets, density bonusing, residential tax credits), and a few may be outside of the scope of the Guide for Local Area Planning.

**Items that require further discussion are:**

- Making development permit applications for all identified heritage assets discretionary;
- A risk assessment for heritage loss (and mitigations) while Heritage Tools and Incentives are being developed and implemented;
- Identification and mapping of buildings suitable for repurposing;
- Policies for contiguous, inclusive heritage districts (e.g., residential and commercial);
- Policies for a Heritage Guideline District tool for residential (extends to groupings of block faces);
- Metrics (KPIs) to monitor the retention of heritage properties and the repurposing of significant historic buildings.

We will commit to working with Administration, Heritage Calgary and, if necessary, the Province, to clarify these suggestions. We will continue to work to advance more comprehensive heritage district-type protections. And we will support Heritage Calgary's many suggestions that incent conservation.

The City has just taken a bold step with the adoption of the Downtown Plan which may relieve some development pressure on historic inner-city communities. The designation of 26 historic streetscapes and the direction to investigate private tree protection options are positive steps to protect the urban tree canopy and therefore community character.

As advocacy groups, we are encouraged that the Guide to Local Area Planning process has opened doors for better collaboration with the city, its heritage partner, the communities, and other interest groups that promote a sustainable and inclusive future for Calgary.

Thank you for your attention. Please support amendments to strengthen heritage policies in the Guide and the Local Area Plans to which they will be applied.

Regards,

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The [Calgary Heritage Initiative Society](#) (CHI) advocates to preserve and promote the productive use of buildings and areas of historic significance. Established in 2006.

**Lorna Cordeiro**  
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[Calgarians for Heritage Districts](#) (CFHD) focuses on educating government and the public about Calgary's potential Heritage Districts. Established in 2014