

**Highland Park Golf Course Redevelopment: LOC 2014-0190**  
**Community Association Draft Letter (Highland Park Website) Information Response**  
2016April7

Prepared by: B&A Planning Group (applicant)  
Prepared on behalf of: Amble Ventures (developer)

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you to the City of Calgary for allowing me the opportunity to comment on the most recent outline plan for the proposed redevelopment of the Highland Park Golf Course.

First and foremost, as a resident of Highland Park, I want to enhance what I value most in Highland Park- **green space**. While our community is not opposed to the development of this site I believe there is room for improvement in the current plan. I wish to have defined landscaping, green space and buffer of an appropriate scale for the buildings. **The low density residential housing is separated from the development by a 6-metre lane. In addition to the existing lane, the applicant is providing a 10-metre landscaped buffer at the rear of Parcels 3, 5, and 6 and on Parcel 10 (north and west sides adjacent to a lane) to address concerns from residents living in the adjacent single-family homes. There are rules in the Direct Control Districts to ensure this landscaped buffer is part of the development. The applicant is also providing an additional 3-metre minimum building setback from this buffer area. So in total, there will be a minimum 19-metre separation from the low density residential rear property line to the new development being proposed on the site.**

**The developer also plans to provide the required landscaping within the buffer area at the stripping and grading stage to minimize the disruption for the adjacent residents and to provide a more appealing buffer in advance of development.**

At this stage I feel the current plans lacks integration with my community, I am concerned by the strip and fill approach and I am disappointed in the lack of preservation of any aspect of this historic site. I would like the developer to limit stripping, backfilling and tree removal to ensure a buffer is established not only for the long term life cycle of the development but also over the estimated 15 year construction period. **Through early community engagement, the community expressed their desire to limit vehicular access from the site to the community. The applicant has respected this and has kept vehicle access to a minimum. A number of pedestrian connections have been incorporated to connect the existing community to the site. The applicant has made efforts to minimize the amount of fill; however, there will be fill and disturbance to the existing ground due to site servicing and access requirements. The grades at the bottom of the site will be raised as this is necessary to provide servicing to the site in the most sustainable way, to permit safe road connections to existing streets, and to help control flooding that currently occurs on the site. There should be very little impact to the edges of the site.**

**Unfortunately, most of the existing trees will be impacted by these changes and will have to be removed. Some of the trees are in conflict with the existing utilities that cross-cross the site and transplanting is not an option given the size and condition of many of the trees.**

**The applicant is planning to retain healthy trees along the perimeter of the development, on the regional pathway corridor and in the public parks where grading is not required for servicing the site. There will be extensive tree planting along the public roadways and in parks. Given The City's**

requirements for landscaping, the developer will likely plant more trees in public places than currently exist on the site. In addition, the developer will be required to provide landscaping for each development site, which will add considerably more trees to the site.

I believe that a development of this size and scope require significant policy and design considerations. I believe that the best way to achieve a quality redevelopment of the Highland Park Golf Course would be through an Area Redevelopment Plan. The Green Line and McKnight widening are on an expedited timelines and it is anticipated these answers will be available in the next 3-6 months. This current proposal reflects an unbalanced site and a reversal of good planning principles regarding integration of the existing community. The City undertakes detailed planning and design of new communities, or the redevelopment of large areas of existing communities, through the outline plan and subdivision process. This involves design details such as open space areas and reserve dedications, development patterns, land use mixes and local street networks. Not all areas undergoing development have the benefit of an area redevelopment plan to provide guidance to a local community or specific application. In such cases, The City's Municipal Development Plan is used to provide guidance on the application of an appropriate land use district. It also helps identify appropriate land uses and the urban design policies that guide the overall urban design vision for Calgary. The policies and guidelines in the Municipal Development Plan are intended to inform a level of decision-making that includes area redevelopment plans, outline plans, land use amendments and development permits. They are also relevant to transit station area planning.

Outline plans provide more detail than an area redevelopment plan. There is an extensive list of requirements that must be included with an outline plan and land use amendment application including all the necessary studies that must be undertaken. Streets that are introduced at the outline plan stage go through a technical review and are approved as part of the outline plan process as opposed to a conceptual street cross-section introduced in area redevelopment plans. An applicant must submit concept plans that illustrate details of how the open space will function. And in this case, the application has provided the appropriate land required for the future Green Line and McKnight Boulevard. The proposed land uses and density will support the Green Line initiative.

I encourage the City of Calgary to delay making a decision on this proposal until such time as the outstanding issues are resolved. After a thorough technical review process, Administration has indicated that they are in support of the application. Administration will be providing a recommendation to Calgary Planning Commission – a technical planning committee that will then provide a recommendation for Council to consider.

The design must incorporate safe, logical pedestrian and cycling crossings of major roads (Center Street and 40th Avenue). The Outline Plan was reviewed by The City's technical staff for pedestrian and cycle crossings and as a result changes have been made to the application. The park spaces should reflect the Community's desire for green, naturalized space similar to Confederation Park and must be usable for both active and passive activities. As part of The City's review, Administration has reviewed the application for open space function (that is, usable active and passive space) and as a result, changes have been made to the application. As part of the application package, the applicant has provided open space concept plans – that is, detailed open space concepts for all public open spaces. In addition, based on the community's desire for open space, the developer is providing a regional pathway and landscaping enhancements to The City's property (a public utility lot that runs through the site) at the developer's cost. These enhancements have been planned to contribute to the overall open space

planned for within the development. The open space between the proposed buildings and the existing residents should be balanced on both sides of the outline plan area. Review of the landscaped buffer confirmed that it will be provided equally to the areas where low density residential houses are located. The open space system is balanced on both sides of the outline plan area as parks and park connections have been planned for usage by existing surrounding residents and new residents. For example there is a park from 44 Avenue NW to Highland Drive and further linear park space from 42 Avenue NW to the open space corridor. The ability to easily connect to the open space corridor and park functions along Highland Drive NW is balanced and provides diversity within an open space experience for the surrounding residents and community. The interface with the existing adjacent residences should respect the current and historical low profile design, which was implemented to provide passive visual experience of the open space to as many residents as possible. Initially, the plan had 46 buildings at 4 storeys across the site. The community's priority for open space led the team to increase building heights and to reduce the number of buildings to 21. Based on community input, the decision was made to grow up rather than out to preserve open space.

Furthermore, there have been significant changes in planning standards since the Highland Park community was developed. Specifically, two of the City's key documents, the Municipal Development Plan and Calgary Transportation Plan, propose a more compact city form for Calgary by encouraging a greater amount of future growth in developed areas of the city and a reduction in the outward rate of expansion over time. These documents focus higher intensity housing and employment in nodes (Activity Centres) and Corridors served by the Primary Transit Network. The application is proposing higher intensity housing along the Centre Street Corridor and within the transit-oriented development area identified within 600m of future Green Line stations.

I am opposed to the significantly higher buildings proposed /permitted immediately adjacent to residents. Taller buildings are concentrated at the perimeter of the site. The development provides the potential for taller buildings along Centre Street North (up to 15 stories) and within the northwest corner of the project (up to 18 stories) adjacent to where The City has plans to widen McKnight Boulevard. The maximum height of the buildings along Centre Street North have been reduced from 18 storeys to 15 as an outcome from the March 14 Open House. The other remaining sites will accommodate between 4 and 8-storey buildings. The Direct Control Districts have been shaped to create a building form that is compatible with the existing community scales and the proposed public realm through rules for height, massing and design considerations.

The majority of the green space should be located next to the existing community rather than in the middle of the future development and adjacent to a major arterial roadway (McKnight Blvd.) As a general rule, land for roadways, parks, playgrounds and schools must be dedicated (without compensation) by a developer of the land being subdivided in an amount proportionate to the needs generated by the subdivision. The Alberta Municipal Government Act, which provides a legislated policy framework, limits the area of land that can be taken for Municipal Reserve to a maximum of 10% of the title's area, less environmental reserve. When the community was developed, it adhered to the regulations in place at that time, and as such, the developer provided the parks, playgrounds and schools required for the land being subdivided at that time. Those regulations are responsible for the parks, playgrounds and schools within the existing developed area.

Today, the site is private property, and actually provides no publicly accessible green space to the community. People who currently walk through the site are technically trespassing, and there are safety

and liability issues associated with public access. The developer is required to provide open space on the land being subdivided as per the Alberta Municipal Government Act. This public open space is intended to supplement the open space that exists today.

The development should result in a community enhancement fund to address the added pressures on community resources and to add some amenity features within the existing community to provide a cohesive image in both the existing areas and the new development. There is no Council policy requiring a “community enhancement fund” for Highland Park. A “community enhancement fund” is one method of funding needed infrastructure improvements or park amenities arising from proposed additional densities. In the case of Highland Village Green, the developer is entering into a development agreement/special development agreement for the development site, which will secure the necessary infrastructure. The former Golf Course lands will be transformed into a neighbourhood within the Highland Park community and will contain 1926 metres of new pathways—and by integrating and enhancing The City’s 30m wide utility right-of-way, there will be a contiguous open space corridor to access and connect to some of north Calgary’s most significant regional open space amenities. The area will add 5.36 hectares of enhanced public open space to the community and will contain both naturalized and manicured landscapes including play and leisure amenities (e.g., benches, picnic tables), all at the developer’s expense. The quality and livability of the neighbourhood will further benefit from the pedestrian-friendly streetscapes that are being introduced by opening up these lands to the public. All of these improvements amount to more than \$2.5 million in enhancements.

We understand that Community Enhancement Funds have been introduced for defined geographic areas via area redevelopment plans as a mechanism to acquire public realm improvements (including park acquisition, park design, redevelopment or enhancement, streetscape design and improvements within City rights-of-way, implementation of urban design strategies and public art on public land) but these occur when there is **no other tool or mechanism** to acquire the needed infrastructure improvements or park amenities. This is not the case for the Highland Village Green development.

The applicant recognizes that as development intensity increases, there is an increased demand for public parks and open spaces, sidewalks, lanes and roads. The development of Highland Village Green will provide a quality public environment and high-quality public park space (including 1.74 ha/4.31 ac of new municipal reserve and .25 ha/.61 ac of non-credit municipal reserve) within the development. Furthermore, on 2016 January 11, City Council approved a new off-site levy (for the treatment component of water and wastewater) for Established Areas. A density incentive program for high density development in the Established Areas was also approved to ensure that the impact of charging off-site levies will not discourage this form of development. Highland Village Green will be one of the first developments to contribute to this off-site levy.

This development will reshape Highland Park, a 43 acre redevelopment which is similar in scope to The Bridges and will be equally as transformational. My community has welcomed densification, the opportunity to reshape Centre Street through the North Central LRT and we now welcome the opportunity to be a constructive stakeholder in the redevelopment of the Golf Course. My community wants to be a part of a quality re-development, this can be best achieved through an Area Redevelopment Plan. Since 2013, the applicant has undertaken extensive (and voluntary) public engagement with the community, at the developer’s own expense. More than 1,270 area residents participated in the pre-application engagement process, providing 739 ideas in five key areas (housing,

traffic, commercial development, stormwater management and open space) prior to the submission of the application in August 2014. Since then, the project team has continued to respond to questions and to provide additional information for the community, maintaining an electronic newsletter, 24-hour phone line, social media updates, project email and an active project website, [reimagining.ca](http://reimagining.ca). They have also attended the three City of Calgary public information sessions held in January 2015 and March 2016.

Sincerely,