

Civic Affairs Newsletter Report for November 2009

Michael Benoit, Chairman

Planning activity in September and October:

DP2009-3121, for 920 – 20 Avenue S.E. An application for an infill development to replace an older home within Ramsay's historic neighborhood (ARP ref. Sub-area 1). The Civic Affairs Committee met on September 23 to review the comments from the City Planning Applications Group (CPAG), and the plans included with the application. The building plans indicated a very modern looking home with tall vertical windows in front, a set back front entrance with no porch, and a single sloping roof pitch of 12/1. Guidelines in the Ramsay ARP for sub-area 1 indicate particular attention to contextual building height, roof form, front entrances and detailing so that new infills conform to the rhythm of the established streetscape. With the new land use bylaw 1P2007, this conformity is called "contextual" development to simultaneously allow for more variation in housing forms and more importantly, to protect heritage neighborhoods from rogue infill designs that destroy that streetscape rhythm. The applicant had also asked for a relaxation on parcel coverage, with a house and detached garage footprint larger than 45% lot coverage. The Committee commented that we did not support the relaxation request, nor could we support the house design indicated in the building plans.

SB2009-0164 for 803R – 24 Avenue (Ramsay Exchange). A subdivision application has been filed by Stantec Geomatics Ltd. for the entire Ramsay Exchange site of 7.944 hectares. The file manager in City Planning, Doug Macdonald, explained to the Civic Affairs Chairman that this application is an internal matter in City Planning and its purpose is to attach to the Ramsay Exchange land use application which is still before City Council for second and third readings at a future date. When /if the land use application is approved, the subdivision application would allow the owners of the site to immediately begin selling off small or large portions to any developer interested in purchasing. The zoning placed on the various land use districts on the site would allow for building sizes and heights matching the Ramsay Exchange application, but building design and ultimate purpose could vary markedly from the original project descriptions.

This application puts into question the integrity of the ARP Amendment that the City wrote to favour the intentions of the original applicant, against the desires of Civic Affairs for more community discussion on its contents. The final draft Amendment was speedily completed to allow the application to proceed to the Calgary Planning Commission in November 2008 and eventually to City Council for first reading in February 2009. There was never any time allowed for the Ramsay community to review the Amendment publicly before it went to the CPC. Now we are wondering what all the speed was about – it seems there was never any real intention to maintain the entire site for the Ramsay Exchange development project that is still described on its website www.RamsayExchange.com

The Civic Affairs Committee welcomes new members. Contact the Chairman for details of the Civic Affairs Terms of Reference, Volunteer Code of Conduct and reading list of planning documents of record.

The community of Ramsay welcomes sustainable development that respects the history and emerging character of the neighbourhood, complies with the Area Redevelopment Plan and Bylaws, and will be a benefit to the people who live here.