

Civic Affairs Newsletter Article October 2009

Michael Benoit, Chairman

September Activity: DP2009-2765, 1124 – 9 Street S.E. An application to build a new single family dwelling using the foundation of the existing house on the site, with a modest increase in the building footprint. The applicant had not requested any building bylaw relaxations and the Committee noted that the redevelopment proposal was contextual with the existing streetscape and the design quality appeared to be very high.

DP2009-2959, 2018 Salisbury Street S.E. A similar application to renovate and slightly enlarge an existing two storey home. No bylaw relaxations were requested and the building plans indicated a high quality of design and construction to improve and enhance the existing streetscape.

Pre-DP meeting on 725 – 23 Avenue S.E. The Committee met with the owners of the building lot who have recently demolished the home situated there. The lot owners shared their redevelopment building plans with the Committee and an informal discussion centered around removal, rescue and replacement of trees, potential privacy issues with neighbours for window and deck placement, and possible hurdles to approval with the City Planning department.

The Ramsay Annual General Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday October 6, and at that time I will be stepping down as Chairman of Civic Affairs, having served my two year term. I was a member of the Civic Affairs Committee before becoming Chairman and I will continue to be a Committee member to ensure that there is continuity and consistency in the community's interaction with external stakeholders. Over the two years that I was Chairman, the Committee worked very hard to research and understand the issues surrounding the Ramsay Exchange redevelopment proposal, and I wish once again to thank all the Committee members who volunteered many, many hours of time in meetings with stakeholders and in researching inter-governmental legislation, environmental issues and transportation analysis. The conclusions of the Committee in early 2008 were that this development proposal would not benefit the community enough to outweigh the enormous increase in traffic volumes, shadowing from the seven tall buildings being proposed, the allotment of public spaces on the site, and the risks to public health for the future residents. This conclusion was not popular with some residents of Ramsay who wished to see the large 22 acre site redeveloped at any cost. A vocal segment of community opinion over those two years was that the Torode project would be the salvation of Ramsay, bringing restaurants, shops, a hotel, commercial activity and high-rise residential housing to the south end of the community. As I write this article, it is unknown if the project will proceed because of the recessionary financial crunch and oversupply of both commercial and multi-family residential real estate in Calgary. It is my personal wish that in the future, new owners of the site will formally engage the community to discuss a development proposal that will allow for modest height townhouses along the perimeter of the site to attract young families with children to populate the historic Ramsay Elementary School, and to redevelop the historic industrial buildings under direct control (DC) with support from the City of Calgary, for working spaces for artists and possible public uses like theatres and rehearsal spaces for the performing arts, in a pedestrian oriented environment. There are many examples of successful adaptive

reuses of historic and industrial buildings in Toronto, Vancouver, Portland Oregon and many other cities in North America and Europe. There is enormous potential for Ramsay to become the true historic centre of a vibrant, healthy, diverse and sustainable inner city. Any future development in the community of Ramsay must demonstrate that it will benefit the community to maintain and enhance its village-like residential ambience. Hence the mission statement of the Civic Affairs Committee: *“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.”* For a complete review of all documents on Ramsay Exchange, visit www.ramsaycommunity.ab.ca , under Civic Affairs.

In an effort to understand what the future of Ramsay might look like as an inner-city residential community, it is vital that community leaders undertake a visioning exercise with help from professional planners, architects and developers. The process would involve taking an inventory of existing streetscapes and types of land use zoning, discussing what the impacts of the future S.E. LRT line and any new road improvements will be, and what the external threats from development might be – the City’s buildout of the Manchester Business Park, the Stampede’s continuing expansion plans, Lilydale’s exit date, the Blackfoot to Macleod Trail transportation corridor, and the new site for the Saddledome in Victoria Park. All these things and many more, will have an impact on this community and it is important that community leaders create a community plan that can eventually form the basis for a much-needed update and revision of the Area Redevelopment Plan for Ramsay. I hope to help undertake this process with other residents and whatever help we can recruit from community planning professionals. If we don’t do this ourselves, the City and developers will do it for us, with results that may adversely affect the community fabric. This was demonstrated with the proposed ARP amendment that was written to favour the Ramsay Exchange development at the expense of the community.

As always, the Civic Affairs Committee welcomes new members. Contact the Chairman for information about upcoming meetings and the Committee Terms of Reference and the Volunteer Code of Conduct.