

VARSIITY CIVIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT

Civic Election Forum – October 6, 2025

The Ward 1 Councillor Election Forum was held on October 6, 2025 with a packed auditorium. The 6 candidates spoke on many civic issues. Thanks to the candidates for participating, The Sprawl for live-streaming, Rick Billington for moderating, our many volunteers, GM Doug Smith and the Varsity Community Centre staff, and Varsity residents for attending.

Civic Election - October 20, 2025

By the time you receive this newsletter we will have a new City Council and school boards. Thanks to all candidates for putting your names forward and congratulations to the successful candidates.

Rowhouse Applications in Varsity

We have had a number of development permit and land use redesignation applications in Varsity:

4607 Valiant Drive (DP for rowhouse - 12 dwelling units)(H-GO rezoning was defeated)
4804 Voyageur Drive (DP for rowhouse - 8 units) – approved & under construction
4816 Voyageur Drive (DP for rowhouse - 8 units) - approved
132 Varsity Estates Place (rezone to H-GO; DP for 5 units)
5004 Valiant Drive (DP for rowhouse - 8 units)
1257 Varsity Estates Road (subdivision & DP for 2 homes)

If you wish to view the plans for these sites, go to <https://developmentmap.calgary.ca/> and click on the property in question. Affected neighbours can appeal development permit approvals for discretionary uses such as rowhouses. Rezoning applications will include a public hearing before City Council. Subdivisions cannot be appealed.

132 Varsity Estates Place NW

This is a very controversial application on a cul-de-sac backing onto the golf course. A meeting was held on September 15, 2025 regarding rezoning the property to H-GO with several hundred people in attendance, most of whom oppose the project. Another meeting is scheduled for December 2, 2025 to review recently submitted development permit plans. Additional information can be found on the Varsity Community Association website.

Blanket Rezoning & New Setback Rules

Blanket rezoning came into effect on August 6, 2024. All properties in Calgary are now zoned R-CG which allows single detached houses, semi-detached houses, duplexes, cottage clusters, rowhouses, and townhouses. On a 50 foot lot, rowhouses can have 8 dwelling units – 4 on the main level and 4 secondary suites. This larger building footprint and height can overwhelm and overshadow neighbouring houses and create issues with on-street parking, waste disposal, and privacy. Currently, rowhouses and townhouses under R-CG are discretionary uses and can be appealed to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board.

The contextual setback rules were not brought forward into the new bylaw. Previously, the character of a streetscape was maintained by requiring a consistent front setback and rear setback. The contextual front setback established the average front setback of the 2 adjacent homes and allowed the new house (or renovation) to extend up to 1.5 metres beyond that average distance. This allowed for a gradual creeping forward of homes on a street but prevented a drastic change in the character of the street.

The new rule is a flat 3 metre setback from the property line for all housing types. This creates a very negative impact for the neighbours. The average front setback in Varsity is 10-15 metres so if a new home or renovation extends 7-12 metres in front of the adjacent homes it destroys peripheral views, overshadows, destroys the tree canopy, and disrupts the streetscape.

Backyard Suites

A backyard suite is a dwelling unit built in the back yard or above a garage. It is also known as a garden suite, carriage house, or laneway suite. Due to blanket rezoning, each property may now have both a secondary suite and a backyard suite in addition to the main dwelling unit. There is no parking requirement for a backyard suite. This is a discretionary use that can be appealed.

Additional City Planning Policy Changes

The City is proposing to change the Municipal Development Plan, the Calgary Transportation Plan, and the Land Use Bylaw within the next year. The new proposed Zoning Bylaw contains many new policies including an Open Parking Strategy which eliminates minimum parking requirements for all forms of residential development including apartment buildings. A number of discretionary uses will become permitted uses which are not appealable. Visit www.calgary.ca/citybuilding for more information.

Restrictive Covenants

Restrictive Covenants are an agreement between neighbours that limit the type of development that can be built on their properties. More information can be obtained at www.varsityrestrictivecovenant.com.

Playgrounds

This has been on hold due to other pressing issues but I'm hoping to get the committee activated within the next few months. Varsity has 30 playgrounds in need of upgrades.

For information regarding the Civic Affairs Committee, please contact JoAnne Atkins, Director of Civic Affairs, at joanneatkins@shaw.ca. Due to a large number of issues, there may be delays in responding to email inquiries. If you do not hear back from me within a few days, please email again.