



March 25, 2026

Mayor Jeromy Farkas & Members of City Council
City of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta

Re: **Additional Submission** - March 25, 2026 Hearing – Repeal of Blanket Rezoning

Dear Mayor Farkas and Members of Council,

The Varsity Community Association would like to submit these additional comments regarding Bylaw 9P2026, a bylaw amending Bylaw 1P2007.

We became aware of additional information after the release of the agenda last week and would like to clarify our previous remarks and add comments regarding the proposed amendments to the rules for rowhouses under R-CG and R-G.

One of our key concerns is that a clear and fair process be followed. The motion passed in December 2025 conflated two separate issues – (1) the repeal of blanket rezoning and restoration of previous land use districts and (2) changes to the rules for rowhouses.

The debate and vote on the repeal of blanket rezoning should be held *before* debate and voting on the amendments to the rules for rowhouses. We have attached more detailed information.

Thanks for your consideration of these comments.

Yours truly,

Jo Anne Atkins
Director of Civic Affairs
Varsity Community Association

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO 1P2007

Several amendments that are unrelated to the repeal of blanket rezoning have been included in Bylaw 9P2026. This creates an unwieldy and confusing process.

The debate and vote on the repeal of blanket rezoning should be a separate vote held *before* any further debate and voting on the change in rules for rowhouses.

Process is Important

Of the 12 proposed amendments to 1P2007 outlined in Attachment 4, only 4 pertain to the repeal of blanket rezoning – Sections 1, 2, 3.9 and 3.10. This is what the public is expecting from this hearing.

The other 8 proposed amendments are independent of a vote to repeal blanket rezoning. We are concerned that these additional items have not been properly advertised to the public and no engagement has occurred. The Notice of Public Hearing only referred to these changes vaguely as the third bullet point under “What is Being Proposed?” They were not listed in the official notice and citizens were forced to scroll through the city’s website to find them. The public is largely unaware of these significant proposals.

While changes to the rules for rowhouse development are badly needed, these are major changes and consultation with stakeholder groups and the public is essential.

Proposing amendments to the rules without engagement could result in unintended consequences as we saw with the elimination of contextual setbacks.

These changes need to be debated at length with different groups to determine whether they will actually solve the problems with rowhouses and what the impact is on developers and affected neighbours. Even a few meetings of a diverse focus group with developers, architects, lawyers, engineers, community reps, citizens, planners and council representatives would enable a better in-depth examination of these proposals. A collaborative approach will yield better results.

A 5 minute presentation is not sufficient time for speakers to address all these issues.

It would be appropriate to **defer a vote on the rule changes for rowhouses to a separate public hearing following engagement with stakeholders and the public.** These amendments should be debated separately from the restoration of the old land use districts.

If Council does not agree to further engagement and proper advertising of the rule changes for R-CG, **the next best procedure would be to vote on Sections 1, 2, 3.9, and 3.10 first.** Following debate and voting on those amendments, the additional amendments could then be debated and voted on individually. Following debate and voting on each amendment, a final vote on the amended bylaw can be held.

Opinion on Proposed Rule Changes to R-CG

1. Restore Land Use Districts

We strongly agree.

2. Revert Non-exempt Parcels

We agree with the reversion of non-exempt parcels and also with the exemptions as described in Attachment 7.

3. Amendments to R-CG District

These amendments should be deferred to another public hearing following proper engagement and notification.

1. Reduce lot coverage from 60% to 55%

We agree with a smaller building footprint, however, this is a minimal change that won't significantly reduce the negative impact on neighbouring single-family or semi-detached homes. What was the reason for 55% instead of 50%? This deserves further review and discussion to determine what would be appropriate lot coverage. Will H-GO rules also be changed to reduce lot coverage?

2. Limit building height to 10 metres

We agree with the reduction in height. Has the impact been evaluated? Is there a proposal to reduce the height for H-GO?

3. Contextual Setbacks

We support this amendment. Contextual setbacks are very important to preserving the aesthetics of the streetscape. The details need to be debated.

4. Eliminate zero lot lines

We support this amendment.

5. Limit parcels to one primary building

An interesting idea that deserves discussion and debate. What are the impacts of one building vs two? What do shadow studies show? In principle, this should improve the quality of rear amenity space depending on lot coverage.

6. Prohibit midblock rowhouses

We would agree with this prohibition as these rowhouses are not a gentle increase in density and they overwhelm single and semi-detached dwellings beside them.

However, it makes no sense to allow rowhouses on the 3 lots at the corner of each block, especially on cul-de-sacs where the impact is even more severe. The harm remains the same to the neighbouring homes. The 2 adjacent lots are also midblock parcels as they have homes on both sides.

Even rowhouses on corner lots have a negative impact on their immediate neighbours as three storeys of windows, elevated decks, and air conditioning units create an unreasonable amount of noise, activity, and overlooking. When located beside low profile bungalows in particular, a semi-detached dwelling would be a more appropriate increase in density and a more sensitive building envelope.

Allowing rowhouses on these 3 parcels allows consolidation of those 2 or 3 lots which creates a much more imposing development.

There are additional problems with laneless parcels. In Varsity, the majority of homes do not have back lanes. This requires all parking to access the front street. Having a front attached garage and driveway to accommodate 4-6 vehicles (we have many lots larger than 50x110') creates an undesirable street pattern and pedestrian environment and prevents soft landscaping in the front yard. This is another reason why a blanket approach does not result in good planning as it does not take into account the context of the site.

Rowhouses should *ONLY* be located on corner lots and *ONLY* when it is determined at a public hearing of Council that it is an appropriate location that does not cause undue harm to nearby properties. Sensitivity to the existing context is the key consideration. Rowhouses should be prohibited on ALL midblock lots.

Even if rowhouses are allowed only on corner lots, this should explicitly exclude cul-de-sacs. We also believe rowhouses should be prohibited on all laneless parcels.

Again, further discussion and debate is required before a vote at Council. As with the other proposals, the public is unaware and needs to weigh in.

7. Retain Section 546 re: Parking Requirements

This requires extensive public engagement as it has a significant impact on residents. When parking was changed from 1.0 to 0.5 stalls per unit, the public was opposed. Their fears have been confirmed as parking congestion has

become a major issue with rowhouse development. Households in Calgary average 1.9 vehicles. For an 8-plex, there are usually 12-16 vehicles total with 4 on-site stalls resulting in 8-12 vehicles competing with existing homeowners for on-street parking. Each additional rowhouse on a street exacerbates the lack of available parking.

Rowhouses are especially harmful on cul-de-sacs, crescents, and laneless parcels. While some of Varsity Acres was built on a modified grid pattern with back lanes, most of the community is laneless with many cul-de-sacs and crescents.

Varsity has several areas with residential parking zones due to proximity to LRT, the University Innovation Quarter, several apartment buildings, and the University of Calgary. Parking congestion and enforcement are on-going issues.

The last minute changes to parking at the hearing for blanket rezoning were done on the floor of Council without public engagement. The public was unable to comment on the amendment as the public hearing was closed. There were a few wards that saw 1.0 stall per unit restored when it would have made more sense to take a look at this policy community by community. It would have been better to change the entire city back to 1.0 stall per unit.

The rationale given was that communities developed prior to the 1960s would have a reduced parking rate of 0.5 stalls per unit whereas newer communities would require 1.0 stall per unit. Varsity was developed over several decades starting in the 1960s up to the 2000s and yet it was not included in the list. We just celebrated our 60th anniversary in August of 2025 as the Varsity Community Association was established in 1965. According to the City's website, only 5% of homes were built in 1960 or before; 68% were built 1961-1980; and 27% after 1981.

Varsity is adjacent to the Brentwood and Dalhousie LRT stations but the reality is that even if people use transit for work, they still own vehicles for shopping, recreation, travel, appointments, etc. The majority of our residents are not within walking distance of the LRT stations. Even if Council votes to use a requirement of 0.5 stalls per unit within 600 metres of LRT, the balance of our community should require 1.0 stall per unit.

If Council adopts this policy we would request this error be rectified in the new bylaw and that Varsity be included in the table in the Bylaw.

This policy needs to be completely re-evaluated. It would make sense to have a requirement of 1.0 stall per unit city-wide with relaxations granted in exceptional circumstances.

8. Modify Section 546 – Units per Hectare

We would support reducing the maximum density from 75 to 60 units per hectare, but again we would stress that the public and development industry have not been consulted on the appropriate density. Consultation and detailed guidelines are needed.

We would also support the addition of a new category in the land use bylaw for **triplexes** that use a smaller building envelope than rowhouses – 45-50% lot coverage and 10 metres in height. This deserves further discussion and public engagement.

We believe secondary suites should be included in the density calculations as they are separate dwelling units. This would change the density to 120 units per hectare.

9. Modify Section 529

This is a housekeeping provision to incorporate amendments that were made after August 6, 2024. We have no objection to this amendment.

10. Non-conformity

Attachment 7 outlines in more detail the rules for exemptions in the bylaw. This has resolved most of our concerns as expressed in our previous submission. It would have provided more clarity if the Notice of Hearing had specified “received approval for a development permit for a *rowhouse, townhouse, or cottage cluster* under R-CG...., etc.” or if the rules had been provided on the City’s website prior to the deadline for submissions.

We believe only approvals and not applications should be grandfathered. Others with legal expertise will speak to this issue in detail.

We also want to ensure that any development permit or subdivision application that is withdrawn or that is not approved at Subdivision and Development Appeal Board is returned to its previous zoning.

Backyard Suites

We believe backyard suites should be prohibited on laneless parcels and that the requirement of 1.0 parking stall per unit be re-implemented. They should be discretionary uses.

Property Values and Tax Revenue

Many have stated that blanket rezoning increases property values and therefore tax revenue to the City. That may be true for the property that is redeveloped but what is

often ignored is that the property values of nearby homes, particularly adjacent homes, are negatively impacted. Overall, the tax revenue to the City is probably neutral unless every property on a street is redeveloped to multi-family. Neighbouring homes are harder to sell as quality of life has been reduced and they often sell at a steep discount which results in reduced assessed values. This also depends on whether the housing in the area is well maintained or “tear-down” housing stock.

The street becomes less desirable for families looking for a single family home with a yard. Neighbours are wary of investing in the maintenance and upgrading of their home for fear they won't see a return on their investment. Existing residents feel betrayed as they bought into a community that had characteristics that they valued and they see this unique character being damaged.

Every time a For Sale sign goes up, neighbours experience a huge surge in anxiety for fear a developer will buy the home and build a rowhouse. We have had several applications in Varsity and the response is very consistent – anger, extreme disappointment, sadness, and in some cases, people choose to move which destabilizes a close-knit community. There is a lot of grief at losing beloved mature trees. Sometimes that is unavoidable but with 60% lot coverage, there is no opportunity to replace those trees for future generations. People are often devastated and there is a very real impact on people's mental health when a rowhouse is proposed in a quiet low density residential area. I have yet to come across a person who considered a rowhouse “low density”.

The Proposed Zoning Bylaw to Replace Land Use Bylaw 1P2007

Repealing blanket rezoning and reopening LAPs are two important policy issues but the biggest issue is the new Zoning Bylaw which proposes a major change in planning policies including collapsing all residential districts into three categories, H-1 (R-CG), H-2 (H-GO), and H3 (everything else). It essentially restores a base zoning of R-CG for all properties which reverses the repeal of blanket rezoning. There is no demonstrated need to replace the Land Use Bylaw as amendments can be made to update the existing bylaw as required. Engagement has been poor so far on the proposed Zoning Bylaw. Calgary's engagement policies need to be addressed and improved before any action is taken to replace the Land Use Bylaw or the Municipal Development Plan.

There are many embedded policies that are very controversial such as eliminating residential parking requirements, changing many discretionary uses to permitted, changing parks categories, etc. The public needs to be made aware of these and involved in a truly collaborative effort to look at both of these proposed plans.

For now, work on the Zoning Bylaw and Calgary Plan (to replace the current MDP and Transportation Plan) should be put on hold.

Local Area Plans

Many people refer to “proper planning” through Local Area Plans. Having experienced the LAP process, we can confirm that unless the City revamps its engagement process, this will not result in a good outcome. Administration has a very “top-down” approach. We need a more collaborative approach with citizens to truly re-set planning in the City and respect the values of Calgarians.

Many good policies in existing ARPs and Land Use Studies were ignored in the final plans. Fewer communities in each LAP would be helpful but the geographic location is also very important. For example, in the South Shaganappi Local Area Plan all the communities surrounding the Brentwood and Dalhousie LRT Stations should have been included. The entire LAP process needs to be restructured.

We would suggest a working group of past participants and City Administration could be involved in the re-evaluation process.

SDAB

We do not agree with raising the fees for SDAB appeals. It is already difficult for some people to afford the fees and a day off work and this would limit accessibility to homeowners with lower incomes. The Board could be enlarged in order to hear appeals more quickly, however, it is crucial Board members be well trained. The addition of supernumerary members could be considered. These would be experienced past Board members who could be “on call” during busy periods to help out.

OMBUDSMAN

Citizens adversely affected by development don't understand how to navigate the system and often have nowhere to turn. There can be many impacts on neighbours ranging from annoying to catastrophic. A recent example is a yard and deck caving into the excavation of a neighbouring property. Other common examples are construction damaging trees on neighbouring properties, grade changes resulting in stormwater runoff onto adjacent lots, and non-compliance with conditions of approval.

It would be helpful to create an Ombudsman position where citizens can go if they are not able to navigate the system or get help from CPS, bylaw enforcement, and other services. An ombudsman should be skilled in mediation.

Conclusion

1. The Varsity Community Association supports the repeal of blanket rezoning and the reinstatement of the wording of the land use bylaw prior to August 6, 2024.
2. We recommend that all properties revert to their original zoning except for those with development permits for rowhouses, townhouses, or cottage clusters that are approved prior to first reading of the bylaw. Approvals that expire or are overturned at SDAB should revert back to their original zoning.
3. We recommend that changes to the rowhouse rules under R-CG and R-G be the subject of a subsequent public hearing following collaborative public engagement and clear advertising.
4. We recommend that re-evaluation of the rules for rowhouses under H-GO be initiated.
5. We recommend that the City's engagement process be reviewed and amended after extensive engagement with the public.
6. We recommend that Council halt current work on Local Area Plans and re-engage with communities that have approved LAPs.
7. We recommend that Council halt work on the new Zoning Bylaw and instead focus on amendments to 1P2007 as required.
8. We recommend that Council halt work on the new Calgary Plan and instead focus on amendments to the Municipal Development Plan and Transportation Plan as required.