

**Comments re: 132 Varsity Estates Place NW**

**LOC2025-0141 – Land Use Redesignation to H-GO**

**DP2025-05349 – Rowhouse (2 buildings)**

**Date: May 25, 2026**

**To: Reza Bacchus, File Manager, City of Calgary**

**From: JoAnne Atkins, Varsity Community Association**

**Re: DP2025-05349 & LOC2025-0141 – 132 Varsity Estates Place NW  
Summary of Concerns & Request for Refusal**

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**Introduction**

We note that LOC2025-0141 is being reviewed concurrently with DP2025-05349. Our concerns for each application overlap and will therefore be outlined in this document.

As this development permit has been submitted under H-GO zoning, we understand if the land use redesignation application is refused, that the development permit application will be null and void. If the applicant then wishes to submit an application for a development permit for a rowhouse under R-CG zoning, we understand that this would require a new application with a new DP number and new plans. We note the Development Authority has assessed the development permit application as a discretionary use under H-GO rules.

Detailed Review 2 dated March 5, 2026 states on Page 2: *“The subject parcel is within a Residential – Grade-Oriented Infill (R-CG) land use district. This is a Discretionary Use as per Land Use Bylaw 1P2007. However, there is currently a Land Use Amendment application in progress that proposes to change the subject parcel’s land use district from Residential – Grade Oriented Infill (R-CG) District, to Housing – Grade Oriented (HGO) District. As a result, **this application will be reviewed against the H-GO District rules.**”*

Further, we note that the rezoning application is not tied to plans. (This is a process normally reserved for Direct Control rezoning applications.) Therefore, if the H-GO land use is approved, the plans can be amended including an increase in the number of units. We note that the developer has stated publicly there will be no secondary suites, however, there is nothing preventing those from being added at a later date which could add greater intensity of use and parking requirements.

## **Public Engagement**

Detailed Review 2 dated March 5, 2026 states on Page 3 that due to a large number of letters in opposition: *“The applicant is strongly encouraged to engage in meaningful dialogue with the community.”*

Two public meetings have been held on these applications on September 15, 2025 and May 5, 2026. Hundreds of concerned residents attended these meetings (about 500 in September and 240 in May). The residents were consistent and united in their opposition to the proposed rowhouse development for numerous reasons including massing, traffic safety, inadequate parking, loss of mature trees, overlooking, insensitivity to existing homes, etc.

Despite many presentations at the meetings, written letters, and a petition signed by 278 residents, none of the concerns of the community have been addressed by the developer. The only change in the most recent amended plans dated April 14, 2026 was a modification to the driveway pattern as requested by the City. It appears the public meetings were simply a “box to check” and that the residents’ concerns have been ignored by the developer.

In 2.3 Creating Great Communities, under Supports, the MDP states: *“Providing citizens with opportunities to become involved in decision-making processes and effectively engaged in shaping their local communities.”*

Varsity residents are very engaged and care deeply about their community, however, they are not being listened to and there has been no meaningful dialogue between the developer and the community.

## **Municipal Development Plan**

On page 3 of Detailed Review 2 dated March 5, 2026 it states:

*“The following cited policy aligns with the applicant’s proposed land use amendment. **“3.5.3 Established Areas Land Use Policy 3.5.3 a. Encourage modest redevelopment of Established Areas”.**”*

Varsity residents do not believe the proposal is a “modest redevelopment”. They have commented that the building will “stick out like a sore thumb”. Also, we note there are many sections of the MDP that are relevant to this application and must be taken into consideration when determining whether a land use designation is appropriate for a specific property.

### **2.2.4 Complete Communities**

*Complete communities are vibrant, green and safe places, where people of all ages, incomes, interests and lifestyles feel comfortable and can choose between a variety of housing types and locations in which to live.*

Varsity perfectly meets this definition. We have provided more detailed information to support this statement in our previous comments. Varsity currently has a wide range of housing types as can be seen on the attached map (Attachment A).

### Policies

*v. Distinctive, resilient and attractive neighbourhoods that feature architectural and natural elements that contribute to a local identity, a strong sense of place and in community pride.*

The area of Varsity known as Varsity Estates is a very unique and beautiful neighbourhood that meets all of the criteria mentioned above. It is an enclave of large, heavily treed lots with generous front, rear, and side yards (most side yards are at least 8 feet). The overall ambiance is of a country residential neighbourhood. Lot coverage is modest and averages 25-30% resulting in a dense urban tree canopy and extensive soft landscaping. There are no back lanes and the homes have attached front garages. There are several pedestrian pathways behind homes.

The homes were built in the 1970s-1990s and the majority feature traditional architecture. They have been renovated and well-maintained over the years with a few being replaced with new homes that blend well with the existing homes. This area includes 533 single family homes, a 1-2 storey townhouse development called Chateaux on the Green (166 units), two storey townhouse units at 2200 Varsity Estates Drive (16 units), 218 units at Cathedral Manor, a 3 storey subsidized seniors' apartment building, the 2 storey Varsity Execucentre (office space and 3 residential units) and the Silver Springs Golf course and club house. All developments in Varsity Estates have large, landscaped setbacks that serve as buffers for adjacent development.

Nearby is the neighbourhood shopping centre, Crowchild Square, which has been rezoned for 12 storeys of mixed use and the Groves of Varsity which consists of 5 buildings and 508 units (4 storey commercial, 6 storey seniors' residence, and 3 residential towers of 8, 12, and 12 storeys). The existing church and townhouse development to the east are identified for future development of 12-27 storeys. Varsity has significant density located at nodes and corridors. In addition, significant density is being proposed for the LRT parking lot north of Crowchild Trail in Dalhousie.

The population of Varsity has been very stable and has not dropped below the population that was achieved in the 1980s but has steadily increased. The City encourages increased density in established communities to reverse population decline but this is not Varsity's experience. The community is thriving and growing.

The City also encourages redevelopment in established communities as a way to increase the diversity of housing and increase affordability. Varsity has all types of housing at all price points including affordable housing, subsidized seniors housing, and attainable housing. 55% of dwelling units are multi-family while 45% are single family. We want to protect the integrity and uniqueness of our single family areas while at the

same time supporting increased density in close proximity to LRT stations and Market Mall. The developer has stated these units will sell for 1.2 million each. This does not add affordable units to the community and risks reducing the property values of adjacent homes through damage to their quality of life. This proposal would be more appropriate in another location.

### 2.2.5 Strong Residential Neighbourhoods

*Intensification should be accommodated within existing communities in a sensitive manner.*

*The City promotes infilling that is sensitive, compatible and complementary to the existing physical patterns and character of neighbourhoods.*

*Encourage growth and change in low-density neighbourhoods through development and redevelopment that is similar in scale and built form...*

The proposed land use and development is NOT sensitive, compatible or complementary to the existing physical pattern or to the character of the neighbourhood. This development is not similar in scale or built form. It towers over adjacent homes and fills the lot removing several mature trees which cannot be replaced. There is no buffer between the building and adjacent homes. For the home to the west, a 1.2 metre side yard replaces a heavily treed spacious back yard. The height is 12 metres which is more than twice as high. It extends far in front of both adjacent homes. The combination of lot coverage and 12 metres in height with cantilevers creates a very blocky, industrial looking building. Many residents have expressed the view that the proposal is very unattractive and top-heavy.

This is the crux of the issue. Varsity residents highly value the qualities of the neighbourhood and they will be the ones affected by this development. They believe this development will be very negative for the neighbourhood and in particular the adjacent homes. Varsity residents are the ones who will be living with the consequences of this development while the developer moves on to other communities. The affected residents are the best judge of compatibility and they resoundingly oppose this development.

### 2.3.2 Respecting and Enhancing Neighbourhood Character

#### Objective

*Respect and enhance neighbourhood character and vitality.*

*The identity and character of a neighbourhood is a function of how people interact with the history, built form, landscape, and visual qualities. This interaction defines how people feel about a neighbourhood as a place.*

*Attention must be paid to ensuring that appropriate local context is considered when planning for intensification and redevelopment.*

Varsity residents believe the proposal will detract from neighbourhood character and vitality. They do not believe the developer has shown respect for Varsity Estates and in particular for the immediately impacted neighbours. Other communities may welcome a development of this type but Varsity residents believe it is very inappropriate in this location.

### Policies

*Ensure infill development complements the established character of the area and does not create dramatic contrasts in the physical development pattern.*

Varsity residents do not agree that this development complements the established character of the area. There definitely is a dramatic contrast between the H-GO land use and rowhouse buildings and the existing streetscape on the cul-de-sacs of Varsity Estates Place and Varsity Estates Court and the homes on Varsity Estates Drive.

*Ensure that the preparation of local area plans includes community engagement early in the decision making process that identifies and addresses local character, community needs and appropriate development transitions with existing neighbourhoods.*

We will discuss the LAP in more detail below but in our opinion the engagement process was seriously flawed and did not respect the community's perspective. This has been confirmed by the recent KPMG report that was critical of the City's engagement processes. This cul-de-sac should have been identified as Neighbourhood Local.

H-GO is not a gentle transition in this location and it will destabilize the immediate area due to the negative impact on nearby homes.

### 2.3.7 Foster Community Dialogue and Participation in Community Planning

Varsity residents feel their concerns are being ignored by the developer and that this property is not an appropriate location for H-GO. There has been no collaboration.

The MDP encourages increased density in established communities but only if it is sensitive to the existing context.

We request that the Development Authority use their discretion and recommend refusal for both the land use and development permit applications.

### 2.2.2 Transit Supportive Land Use Framework

### Objective

*Establish a land use framework that optimizes population and job growth within walking distance of transit.*

This is being accomplished through redevelopment and increased density at the parcels of land that were identified in the Varsity Land Use Study and later the SSLAP. The dividing line between the mixed use, high density development and the single family residential area is 53 Street and Varsity Estates Drive as illustrated on the attached map. Any encroachment of higher intensity development is disruptive to the integrity of the single family community.

### Distance

*People are most likely to use public transit if it is accessible and convenient for their travel needs. Higher-density development should be focused closest to transit, within a distance that a rider is most likely to walk. This is typically a five minute walk, focused within a 400-metre distance. A compact urban form focused around transit promotes greater mobility choices. Local area plans will determine areas appropriate for intensification*

According to Google Maps 132 Varsity Estates Place is 700 metres walking distance from the Dalhousie LRT Station and takes 9 minutes. This is outside the goal of a 5 minute walk. There are a large number of dwelling units closer to the LRT station including 508 at the Groves of Varsity, 39 in the Silvera townhouses, and many more to be developed in the future on both the Varsity and Dalhousie sides of the LRT station..

### 3.5.3 Established Areas

*The Established Area comprises residential communities that were planned and developed between the 1950s and 1990s. They are primarily residential communities containing a mix of low and medium-density housing with support retail in relatively close proximity. The road network is a blend of modified-grid and curvilinear. These are stable residential communities with limited redevelopment potential over the next 30 years. Populations have declined from their peak and housing stock is generally in good condition.*

Varsity Estates was built from the 1970s to the 1990s. The area contains a mix of commercial, multi-family, and single family development with density concentrated in close proximity to the Dalhousie LRT station. The single family area is a very stable, well-defined pocket of country residential estate style homes in excellent condition. The road network is curvilinear with many cul-de-sacs and crescents. There are no back lanes but some areas have pedestrian pathways behind homes. Many houses back onto the Silver Springs Golf Course including 100 Varsity Estates Place and Varsity Estates Drive.

### Land Use Policies

*a. Encourage modest redevelopment of Established Areas.*

See our response on Page 2 above.

*b. Redevelopment opportunities should be focused on the Neighbourhood Activity Centres, though changes to other sites may provide opportunities for redevelopment over time.*

Redevelopment and increased density has focussed on the Neighbourhood Activity Centre immediately northwest of this parcel which is closer to the LRT station.

*c. New developments in Established Areas should incorporate appropriate densities, a mix of land uses and a pedestrian-friendly environment to support an enhanced Base or Primary Transit Network.*

Increasing a parcel from one single family home to H-GO with an FAR of 1.5 is not appropriate and will have a very negative impact on nearby homes. The developer can find many parcels more suited to H-GO development but adjacent neighbours cannot easily move and would likely find it hard to sell their homes for their current value.

Higher densities and a mix of land uses that are transit supportive are provided at the Neighbourhood Activity Centre across 53 Street from this site.

### **Land Use Bylaw 1P2007**

#### ***Discretionary Use Development Permit Application***

**35** When making a decision on a **development permit** for a **discretionary use** the **Development Authority** must take into account:

- a. any plans and policies affecting the **parcel**;
- a.1. **climate mitigation** and **climate adaptation**;
- b. the purpose statements in the applicable land use district;
- c. the appropriateness of the location and **parcel** for the proposed **development**;
- d. the compatibility and impact of the proposed **development** with respect to **adjacent development** and the neighbourhood;
- e. the merits of the proposed **development**;
- f. the servicing requirements;
- g. access, parking and transportation requirements;
- h. vehicle and pedestrian circulation within the **parcel**;
- i. the impact on the public transit system; and
- j. sound planning principles.

The Varsity Community Association believes the proposal is not supported by:  
Section 35 (a.1) due to loss of tree canopy and increase in impervious surfaces;  
Section 35 (c) due to its location on a cul-de-sac of single family homes;  
Section 35 (d) due to its extremely large building envelope and massing; increase in intensity of use and parking; top-heavy, modern architecture lacking articulation and

unattractive building design; lack of buffer between the building and the two adjacent single family homes (1.2 metres); overlooking; the lack of soft landscaping and trees; Section 35 (e) due to the fact the development does not add value to the neighbourhood;

Section 35 (f) due to increased congestion for waste management and potential impact on infrastructure;

Section 35 (g) due to inadequate parking, lack of a back lane, the addition of 4 driveways accessing a busy street close to a very busy intersection that will get busier with future redevelopment of Crowchild Square, the negative impact on safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists;

Section 35 (h) due to the fact using the driveway for parking will create tandem parking which is inconvenient for residents and will increase the use of the driveways for access across a busy sidewalk;

Section 35 (j) due to the fact that the proposed development will have a very negative impact on adjacent homes and does not respect the principles of the Municipal Development Plan and other policy documents.

We understand the Planning Department often has a different view of what is appropriate on a particular parcel, however, the residents who are affected have been very clear that they believe this development is uncharacteristic of Varsity Estates and will have a negative impact on their quality of life.

These planning documents guide redevelopment. A landowner does not have an automatic right to rezone their land or to build a rowhouse. Context matters and discretion must be used.

### **South Shaganappi Communities Local Area Plan**

The South Shaganappi Communities Local Area Plan (SSLAP) was approved on March 4, 2025. Bob Benson, President of the Varsity Community Association (VCA) and JoAnne Atkins, Director of Civic Affairs for the VCA were members of the Working Group. We have direct knowledge of the discussions and decision making process for the LAP. We have consistently remained opposed throughout the process to the designation of 100 Varsity Estates Place and Varsity Estates Court as Neighbourhood Flex. There was no compelling rationale for this designation and we believed it should remain part of the single family neighbourhood. The dividing line between the commercial/mixed use area is 53 Street at the 3 way stop.

The intention of the planners who were involved with the SSLAP as explained to us was that this designation would allow a mixed use development to occur many years down the road once the housing stock had aged by replacing all the homes on the cul-de-sac with an apartment building that would have underground parking and one access point onto Varsity Estates Drive.

It was never intended to use the Neighbourhood Flex designation for patchwork rowhouse development. Neighbourhood Connector was the designation generally used for H-GO development and Neighbourhood Local was the designation generally used

for R-CG which included single family to rowhouse development (blanket rezoning was in effect during this process).

Council has expressed their intention to amend the recently approved local area plans to take into account the repeal of blanket rezoning. We will be requesting a change to the designation of this cul-de-sac at that time.

Detailed Review 2 dated March 5, 2026 states on Pages 3 & 4:

***South Shaganappi Communities Local Area Plan (Statutory – 2011)***

*According to the South Shaganappi Communities Local Area Plan's Urban Form Map (Map 3), the subject parcel is located within the Urban Form category Neighbourhood Flex. Urban form categories direct land use and built form in the South Shaganappi Communities. The Housing- Grade Oriented (H-GO) District can be designated on parcels located within a Neighbourhood Flex Urban Form category.*

*The **Low Building Scale Modifier** applies to the subject parcel and accommodates developments that are six stories or less.*

*The subject parcel is located within the Dalhousie Transition Zone. The LAP envisions this area will provide diverse housing types and choices for residents of different ages and lifestyles.*

We note this is a policy document that provides guidance but does not confer a guarantee of development when other policies and the specifics of the proposal are taken into account. It states the H-GO District “can” be designated – not “should” be designated in Neighbourhood Flex.

**2.5.4.4 Dalhousie Station Area**

*The subject parcel is also located within a cul-de-sac (100 Varsity Estates Place NW). The following cited policy provides direction for developments located within a cul-de-sac.*

**2.5.4 Transit Station Areas**

*Transit Station Areas Policy 2.5.4 q.*

*Development located within a cul-de-sac that is not grade-oriented and greater than three storeys should:*

- i. be comprehensively planned and consolidate parcels within the cul-de-sac for greater development potential;*
- ii. incorporate road closure of the cul-de-sac;*

*iii. provide building setback at the third storey or below along the shared property line or lane with Limited Scale modifier; and,*

*iv. explore opportunities to provide publicly accessible open space that integrates with the existing community*

This further clarification of policy in the SSLAP shows that redevelopment of cul-de-sacs was intended to happen as a comprehensive development including ALL parcels.

Approving H-GO on one parcel on this cul-de-sac essentially **prevents** a higher level of mixed use density from occurring in the future.

### **Parking Requirements**

In this location there is very little available on-street parking. There is no parking close to the 3-way stop sign at the intersection of 53 Street and Varsity Estates Drive. There are three existing driveways between this property and the 3-way stop. Across Varsity Estates Drive is a bus stop. There is very little parking available in between driveways on the cul-de-sac.

During the repeal of blanket rezoning, Administration submitted a parking policy that recommended 1 stall per unit for homes built after 1960. That would include this area. The Development Authority has the discretion to make 1 stall per unit a condition of approval. This would preclude the possibility of secondary suites on this parcel which would worsen parking congestion. There is insufficient on-street parking in the area to support this development.

### **Conclusion**

There was recognition during the election that the majority of Calgarians did not believe rowhouses were compatible with single family homes and that they needed to be evaluated on a case by case basis. Context matters. In response to public opinion and the negative impact on nearby property owners, Council is adjusting the rules for rowhouses by reducing height and lot coverage, etc.

The right of a landowner to make a profit through redevelopment does not outweigh the rights of nearby landowners to quality of life and preserving their own property values. Priority should be given to the protection of established residential neighbourhood character.

This project does not deserve a rubber stamp of approval. **Given all relevant factors, we request that this land use redesignation application be recommended for refusal and that the development permit be refused as well.**

## **ATTACHMENT A – LAND USE MAP OF VARSITY ESTATES**