

## **Speaking Notes on District Plans, Urban Planning Committee Dec 5, 2023**

Chair: Anne Stevenson

Vice Chair: Keren Tang

Members: Tim Cartmell, Erin Rutherford

Good afternoon Councillors and thank you for this opportunity.

### **The Need for a Pause**

I am adding my voice, with others from Glenora, with an impassioned plea of City Council, that the community engagement on the District Plans be **extended**. And that during the extension, Administration be directed to work with community to **co-develop** details for the 4 corridors in and around our community.

### **Inadequate Engagement to Date**

With the District Planning process so far, many in our community are feeling disenfranchised and demoralized. We have no ownership of the plan. It feels like it has been a top down process with minimal grass roots/community involvement. We believe, at the end of the day, the plan will do more harm than good. In attempting to take the same City-wide approach, there is great risk that unique neighbourhood characteristics, those things that make a community thriving, vibrant, walkable and enjoyable will be lost -- for current and future generations.

While the Administration has communicated to Council that the community has been heavily consulted during work on the District Plans, many in our community do not share that sentiment. Much of the process flew under the radar. Many of us were not aware of the major impact of these plans. As we get to a more detailed level of planning in the District Plans, there is **'devil in the details'** that should include neighbourhood based process that is more than the inputs from 2022 or the recent city wide zoom meetings, open houses and 'meet with a planner' sessions. The take-away for many of us is that

the process is very much an '**us vs them**', '**winners and losers**' situation. This process has not worked for our community whereby we could work collaboratively to develop strong District Plans where we are all on board. **Collaborative co-creation** is essential. This process to date has not resulted in a community that feels engaged, listened to, or respected. We are confident that there is a way to build a much greater sense of consensus.

Now, I am no Polly-Anna here. I fully recognize that we'll never achieve 100% unanimity, but the good community process we believe we can build broad ownership of the District Plan.

### **Building Community Ownership of the District Plan**

During this pause we would work with Administration on a process that builds community and citizen ownership, and as cliché as it sounds, work to a win-win for the District Plans where Administration, Council, industry and community take pride and ownership of the plan.

Community working sessions, ideally facilitated by a 3rd party, could be held to work on the details of corridors of the District Plan. We fully recognize we are **not starting from scratch**. City Plan and the new Zoning Bylaw are solid plans that provide a strong foundation and future for our City. With these 2 plans in place, we see no need to rush to approve the District Plans.

### **COE Best Practice**

I reflect on the collaborative co-creation work the City has done with the community on initiatives such as Recover; the JP ARP and other ARPs; Building Great Neighbourhoods; work on Neighbourhood Revitalization; and work on Community Safety and Wellbeing, to name a few. Although not universal, broad consensus among all parties brought this work to positive outcomes. Can a similar approach be actioned with the District Plans?

## **Impact of the Proposed Corridors Thru Glenora**

Where many community members get very concerned is with the proposed corridors through Glenora that will potentially allow for very large-scale projects that, over time, will have a very adverse impact on our community. The RS Zone (small scale residential) in the Zoning Bylaw will certainly change the character of the neighbourhood, but the development possibilities in the corridors thru Glenora will be dire.

Administration has taken a **'one size fits all'** to potential development possibilities in the proposed corridors. The maps and accompanying text apply the same criteria for density; width of corridor; and height of buildings etc for the entire length of the corridor.

The proposed Primary Corridor that bisects Glenora is over 50 blocks long. What is most concerning, is that the draft policies do not take into account the unique characteristics of the neighbourhoods the corridor passes through. So there is no variation in what will be encouraged in different neighbourhoods along the corridor.

The corridor thru Glenora and the Gateway Blvd corridor are both Primary Corridors. As per the plans, the same type of development will be encouraged along both corridors. This should be revisited - these 2 primary corridors have nothing in common. We do not want a district planning approach that homogenizes corridors to the detriment of community character. What makes Edmonton interesting is that it is a collection of distinct neighbourhoods.

## **Other Cities Take a Different Approach**

The limited fact-finding I have been able to do from other cities, shows a very different approach to corridor planning. The Cambie St Corridor Plan in Vancouver, the Corridor Strategy in Hamilton and the work in Saskatoon all show an approach that considers the context and character of different neighbourhoods and recognizes that a "one size fits all" approach is not appropriate. Plans for corridors in these cities build on the existing

character and context in each neighbourhood, strengthening and enhancing the neighbourhood identities while providing a unified corridor concept.

Our ideal outcome is that with a pause in the process, we can work toward a District Plan that we can all support and champion.

-----Given the 5 minutes allowance, likely stop here-----

### **A Few Other Observations**

In my remaining time I'd like to share with Committee, some of the observations and concerns that have emerged about the draft district plans:

1. How can the vision of City Plan for a more densely populated city be realized in Glenora and other neighbourhoods, while retaining the quality of life of these mature areas?
2. Does it make sense to have the Central District Plan encompass our downtown as well as a number of residential neighbourhoods? As we get to this more detailed level of planning would it make more sense to develop a plan for the downtown urban core and a unique separate plan for the primarily residential/neighbourhood parts of the Central District?
3. Can the 'Primary Corridor' designation of Stony Plain Rd be refined to ensure Glenora neighbourhood continues to be a healthy vibrant neighbourhood?
4. How can the impact of 2 major thoroughfares thru Glenora (102 Ave and Stony Plain) be addressed to ensure the whole of the community is integrated and the barriers of these thoroughfares is minimized.
5. How can the impact of new development in Glenora be effectively managed to retain the important character of the neighbourhood.
6. Can the metrics of the Primary Corridor thru Glenora be modified?

Rob Smyth, Glenora Community League