

Richmond/Knob Hill Community Association

Residential Development Design Guidelines

May 2010

The City of Calgary has recently approved a new integrated Municipal Development Plan and Transportation Plan, known as Plan-It Calgary (“Plan-It”), which sets out the City’s vision for accommodating future growth in a sustainable fashion. One of Plan-It’s primary strategies in this regard is to increase the density of existing inner-city residential communities. Richmond/Knob Hill is one of the residential inner-city communities that the City has targeted for densification through redevelopment of its aging housing stock. The Richmond/Knob Hill Community Association (the “Association”) welcomes this redevelopment and looks forward to working together with both the City’s Building & Development group and developers to ensure that this redevelopment takes place in a coordinated and sustainable fashion that is both respectful of the community’s existing residents and further enhances Richmond/Knob Hill as one of Calgary’s most desirable family-oriented residential communities. With this in mind, the Association’s Development Committee has prepared the following residential development design guidelines to assist developers, residents and others interested in participating in this exciting transformation of Richmond/Knob Hill. These guidelines are not intended to be “written in stone”, but rather are expected to evolve over time to address changes to the City’s residential development bylaws and guidelines, and to continue to reflect the current priorities of, and issues of concern to, the Association.

Notable Features of Richmond/Knob Hill

Richmond/Knob Hill has many features that make it a highly desirable community to call home, and in which to build homes. Some of its more notable features include the following:

1. Location, location, location! Richmond/Knob Hill, which comprises the area from 17th Avenue SW south to 33rd Avenue SW and from 19th/20th Street SW west to 25A Street SW, is ideally located:
 - (a) minutes from downtown by transit or car, even during rush hour;
 - (b) adjacent to the Marda Loop shopping district and within easy walking distance of the 17th Avenue SW shopping district;
 - (c) along Crowchild Trail South, which bisects the community and gives residents easy access to other parts of the City
 - (d) adjacent to the neighbouring communities of Killarney/Glengarry, Bankview, South Calgary and Garrison Woods.
2. Portions of Richmond/Knob Hill, particularly around 29th Avenue SW, are elevated, resulting in sloped lots and potential views of downtown to the northeast, Nose Hill Park to the north, the foothills to the south and the mountains to the west.
3. Richmond/Knob Hill is blessed with a large number of majestic spruce, elm and other mature trees, which create an urban forest canopy that provides numerous benefits including summer shade, purified air, muffled traffic noise and a home for birds, animals and insects, to name a few.
4. Richmond/Knob Hill is primarily zoned as an R-C2 land use district, making it possible for its existing older bungalows on 50+ foot lots to be redeveloped into two new infill homes on subdivided 25+ foot lots.

Development Guidelines

In addition to Plan-It, development in Richmond/ Knob Hill is governed by the following City of Calgary implementation and policy documents:

1. The current Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 (the “LUB”);
2. The Richmond Area Redevelopment Plan, originally published in 1986; and
3. The current Low Density Residential Housing Guidelines for Established Communities (the “Infill Guidelines”).

Generally speaking, the Association supports the rules, policies, principles and guidelines laid out in the above documents and wishes to see them followed in any development that takes place in Richmond/ Knob Hill. In addition, the Association has a particular interest in the following issues when reviewing applications for development permits for proposed developments in Richmond/ Knob Hill:

Land Use

As noted above, most of Richmond/ Knob Hill has been assigned an R-C2 land use designation. Exceptions include the southwest corner of the community, which has been designated R-C1, and certain parcels along 17th, 26th, and 33rd Avenues which have been designated for either higher-density residential or commercial use. The Association’s general position is that the current land use designations are appropriate and allow for sufficient densification. Accordingly, with the possible exception of parcels that border any of the corridors referred to above, the Association will generally oppose any application to redesignate a parcel to a higher-density or commercial land use.

Overall Size/Mass

The Association encourages diversity in the redevelopment of the community’s existing housing stock, including single detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings and duplex dwellings. However, the Association also supports the following excerpts from the Infill Guidelines:

A massive home that ignores the fact that it is an infill project in an older inner city neighbourhood, comprised primarily of small homes, does not respect its context.

The majority of situations within the city’s established communities require a reduced building mass (including height) in order to respect the adjacent homes and streetscape. Homes built to the maximum bylaw standards are often incompatible and visually disruptive to the street. Reductions in the height, depth, and width of a new development may be required in order to make the project compatible with its context and to reduce substantial loss to adjacent buildings of privacy and sunlight.

Excessively large homes are wasteful, unsustainable and do nothing to further the densification objectives of Plan-It. Accordingly, proposed developments involving the construction of single family homes on larger lots should be modest in scale and should not attempt to “max out” the building envelope. The Association encourages proposed developments that involve the construction of well-designed single family, semi-detached and duplex homes which make efficient and effective use of available interior space.

Overall Height/Third Storeys

Due to the view potential of many lots in Richmond/Knob Hill, there can be considerable incentive to build as high as possible to maximize those views. However, this can result in a home that does not respect its context. The Association accordingly wishes to ensure that proposed developments comply with all applicable height restrictions and are consistent with, and fit within the context of, the existing streetscape. Manipulation of the grade of the lot and one or more of its building contextual reference points to artificially achieve compliance with applicable height restrictions will not be tolerated, and relaxations of height restrictions will be strongly opposed except in extraordinary circumstances.

Any proposed third storey will not be supported unless it:

1. Complies with applicable height restrictions;
2. Is sufficiently set back from the front, side and rear facades of the home to minimize overshadowing and massing issues;
3. Does not allow overlooking of adjacent properties; and
4. Serves a valid and useful purpose (ie. more than merely a marketing feature).

Rooftop Terraces/Balconies/Decks

The LUB currently classifies rooftop terraces and balconies as either “recessed balconies”, which are subject to a maximum size limit, or as “open balconies”, which are subject to a maximum depth limit. Oversized rooftop terraces and balconies have greater potential to create overshadowing, massing, overlooking and noise issues for neighbouring properties. Accordingly, any proposed rooftop terrace or balcony will not be supported unless it:

1. Complies with applicable size and/or depth restrictions;
2. Is sufficiently set back from the front, side and rear facades of the home to minimize overshadowing and massing issues; and
3. Does not allow overlooking of adjacent properties.

Above-grade decks should also be designed to prevent overlooking of adjacent properties.

Front and Side Setbacks

The Association wishes to ensure that proposed developments comply with all applicable front and side yard setback restrictions and are consistent with, and fit within the context of, the existing streetscape. Relaxations of any of these restrictions will be strongly opposed except in extraordinary circumstances, such as to allow for the preservation of existing trees. With respect to side setbacks on larger lots, the Association supports the following excerpt from the Infill Guidelines:

For larger lots (e.g., greater than 12 m (39.4 ft.) in width), side yards greater than the bylaw minimum are often more appropriate in order to respect the context of the street. Projections into a side yard on a larger lot are not encouraged, unless the street context dictates otherwise.

Building Depth

The Association also wishes to ensure that proposed developments comply with all applicable maximum building depth guidelines to minimize any adverse impact on adjacent properties' back yard amenity space and to provide sufficient room behind the home for both a rear drive garage and enough back yard amenity space to allow for the preservation of as many existing trees as possible, or at least room to plant new trees.

Exterior Facades / Front Drive Garages

The Association has a strong interest in preserving and enhancing the safety, walkability and the friendly, street-oriented nature of our community. To this end, the Association encourages proposed developments to include:

1. Architecturally-interesting front facades finished in high-quality materials;
2. Side facades finished in high-quality non-combustible materials;
3. Welcoming front entries;
4. "Sittable" front porches or verandas at the main floor level; and
5. Principal rooms oriented towards the street,

and will strongly oppose any proposed front drive garage unless it is satisfied that a rear drive garage is not feasible. Furthermore, where a front drive garage is the only option, its adverse impact on the streetscape must be minimized. Triple front drive garages and double front drive garages with oversized doors will be strongly opposed.

Drainage

As Richmond / Knob Hill transitions to smaller lots with larger homes and garages, in many cases semi-detached, drainage can become a problem. Larger roofs generate more runoff that in turn has less exposed ground capable of absorbing it, and fewer available pathways to reach the street or alley. The City's Lot Grading Bylaw is not a complete solution in this regard, as it focuses on ensuring that surface water drains away from new structures and assumes that adjacent properties will be graded in a similar fashion, which is not a reasonable assumption in communities such as Richmond / Knob Hill where adjacent properties may have been developed more than 50 years ago. The Association therefore encourages the use of permeable surfaces for patios and sideyard walkways and requests that each proposed development provide a comprehensive grade plan that not only complies with the City's Lot Grading Bylaw, but will also prevent runoff from flowing onto adjacent properties.

Air Conditioners, Vents, etc.

As Richmond / Knob Hill densifies, with more people living in closer quarters, the noise and other emissions generated by air conditioners, air exchangers, furnace, dryer and vacuum system vents, etc. can become a major source of irritation for adjacent properties. The Association therefore encourages proposed developments to:

1. avoid the use of traditional air conditioners, and instead use other, less obtrusive and less energy-intensive means of preventing heat buildup such as passive solar design, geothermal systems, whole house fans, green roofs, etc.; and
2. position vents and other sources of noise or other emissions well away from adjacent properties' windows and outdoor amenity spaces.

Trees

Unlike some other older inner-city residential communities in Calgary, Richmond / Knob Hill has relatively few mature public trees. As a result, the vast majority of mature trees in Richmond / Knob Hill are located on private property, and the ongoing redevelopment and densification activities are resulting in the loss of many of these mature trees, and the many benefits that they provide. The Association has a strong interest in protecting and enhancing our community's urban forest canopy, and therefore strongly encourages proposed developments to go to extraordinary lengths to avoid the removal of any existing healthy tree unless absolutely necessary. Reasonable relaxations that would make it possible to preserve

one or more existing trees are likely to be supported by the Association. Where it is impossible to preserve an existing tree in its current location, the possibility of using the services of a tree mover to relocate the tree to a new location should be explored. If it is impossible to either preserve or relocate an existing tree, or where no trees currently exist, proposed developments should provide for new trees to be planted to contribute to our community's urban forest canopy. Although columnar deciduous trees, such as Swedish poplars, are often considered to be ideal for smaller lots, the Association encourages residents and developers to preserve and enhance the diversity of our urban forest canopy by planting other varieties of trees as well, including evergreens, for their year-round beauty, elms and other shade trees, for their wide canopies, and flowering trees, for their spring blossoms and scents.

Sustainable Features

The Association encourages proposed developments to incorporate sustainable design features and technology. Some examples include:

Passive solar design	Rainwater re-use	Solar hot water – potable use
Photovoltaics	Grey water re-use	Solar hot water – space heating
Daylighting	Green roof	High reflectance “cool roof”
Xeriscaping	Cogen systems	Renewable/ recycled materials
Permeable surfaces	Solar thermal air preheat	Geothermal space heating/cooling

Development Plans

To facilitate the Association's review of proposed developments, all plans submitted should clearly and accurately portray all relevant information, including:

1. The location and nature of all exterior features of adjacent homes, including windows, doors, walls, eaves, cantilevers, patios, porches, decks, balconies, etc.
2. The existing grade and building contextual reference points, as well as the proposed grade and building contextual reference points, if different;
3. The proposed location of air conditioner units and all furnace, dryer and vacuum system vents.
4. On each side elevation plan, the maximum building height envelope; and
5. The location, caliper size and canopy of all existing and recently removed trees.

If a proposed development includes a third storey or requests a relaxation of any applicable height restrictions, the plans submitted should be supplemented with:

1. Perspective views that accurately show how the proposed development would appear to a person walking by on the street; and
2. A shadow study that accurately shows the extent to which the proposed development will cast shadows onto adjacent properties, sidewalks, streets and alleys at representative times of the day during each season.

If you have any questions regarding the above guidelines, or if you are interested in redeveloping a property in Richmond / Knob Hill, please contact the Association. Our Development Committee would be happy to meet with you to discuss your proposed development.