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Mayor Naheed Nenshi
City Hall, P.O. Box 2100, Station "M"
Calgary, Alberta T2P 2M5

July 26, 2013

Dear Madam:

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Re: Land use - a "Misunderstanding"

Further to my earlier correspondence concerning redevelopment of the "Mission" lands located on the corner of Mission Road and 33th Avenue S.W., Calgary, I provide the following opinion or observation:

Many months ago (before the flood) a "charette" exercise was undertaken by the City of Calgary at considerable cost ostensibly aimed at identifying options for redevelopment of this site. Residents had until then resisted vast increases in density. The charette resulted in a land use hearing before City Council that involved debate on one or two different proposed land use by-law amendments, each linked ostensibly to one, two, three or more actual proposals from land owners of what would be built under one or both of the proposed by-laws, complete with site plans and drawings. The promise was for a comprehensive, architectural rich, mixed use development.

The land use hearing itself was remarkable in its complexity. I was there. The demands for higher density were clouded by the promise of attractive architectural and mixed use options. In the end, Council passed a by-law that contains the usual mumbo-jumbo. Residents were left with the impression that one of the development options arising through the 'charette' would be forthcoming; namely that the entire Mission block development would be comprehensive, attractive, and reflect mixed uses. Instead, what is currently under consideration is a project which covers only a fraction of the site and reflects none of the mixed uses that were debated, and instead is simply another large, massive, ugly, densely populated apartment-style complex with no appealing architectural components except very high rear-yard housing whose deck views encroach dangerously on existing neighbours.

In a non-related newspaper article this week, you are quoted as inferring that complaints from residents concerning density are based on a 'misunderstanding' of the planning process. You may be correct. You might consider, however, the extent to which such misunderstandings are an intended consequence of the planning process. The Mission Road 'charette' process resulted in nothing but increased density for the developer. Now there is a 'misunderstanding' about how that occurred.

Yours truly,

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William E. (Bill) Gagnon