

Jesse Row  
2536 – 32 Ave. SW  
Calgary, AB  
T3E 0V8

20 November 2006

Honourable Council Members:

I have come here today to ask council not to approve the SW Regional Policy Plan. The reason I'm asking you not to approve the plan is because I believe that incremental improvements on the status quo with regard to development within our city are no longer good enough.

Traffic congestion, lack of services and our environmental impact continue to increase in this city while a recent poll has shown that Calgarians feel their quality of life has decreased over the past 3 years. Creating a new 7 to 8 units per acre development in a far off corner of the city is not going improve any of these critical areas, but in fact, make them worse.

In my presentation, I will focus on just two of the negative impacts this new development will have on the city: greenhouse gas emissions and infrastructure costs.

With regard to greenhouse gas emissions, many people have said that climate change or global warming, is quite possibly the greatest threat to modern society. Unchecked, it is projected that 3.5 billion people globally will not have enough fresh water, and with the disappearance of the Columbia Ice Field, Calgarians will almost certainly be among them.

A prominent British economist, Nicholas Stern, recently completed a study indicating that unchecked, the impacts of climate change could cost countries as much as 20% of their GDP, whereas the cost of reducing emissions to avoid dramatic climate change amounts to about 1% of GDP.

Municipalities are on the front line when it comes to combating climate change. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has estimated that approximately 50% of emissions in Canada are directly or in-directly controlled or influenced by municipal governments. This includes how we design our communities. It is the responsibility of each and every city around the world to do what they can to reduce their contribution to climate change. I expect that in time, anything else will be considered wildly irresponsible.

Canada's 2008 to 2012 target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions is 6% below 1990 levels. This is more than a 30% reduction from current emission levels. Many researchers estimate that by 2060, an 80% reduction in greenhouse gases is required to stabilize the concentration of atmospheric greenhouse gases.

With regard to infrastructure, at an average of just over 7 units per acre, the cost of installing and maintaining the infrastructure within communities will be higher than if more compact development were used. The following studies from Canada and the United States show that a city can reduce their infrastructure budget through more compact development, in some cases by 10%.

- Alexander, D. & Tomalty, R. (2002). Smart growth and sustainable development: challenges, solutions and policy directions. *Local Environment*, 7, 397-409.
- Burchell, R. W. (1997). Economic and fiscal costs (and benefits) of sprawl. *Urban Lawyer*, 29, 159-181.
- Burchell, R. W. & Mukherji, S. (2003). Conventional development versus managed growth: The costs of sprawl. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93, 1534-1540.
- Carruthers, J. I. & Gundmundur, F. U. (2004). Urban sprawl and the cost of public services. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 30, 503-522.
- Speir, C. & Stephenson, K. (2002). Does sprawl cost us all? *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 68, 56-70.
- TD Bank Financial Group (2004). *Mind the gap: Finding the money to upgrade Canada's aging public infrastructure*.

It is important to keep in mind that the decision you make today will have a long term impact on the cost of building and maintaining infrastructure, and the community's overall environmental impact for as long as this region exists.

In closing, I know that the decision you have in front of you today may not be an easy one, but I encourage you to think about the long-term implications of the decision you make. What we need right now is a city-wide approach to planning new communities that are able to reduce traffic congestion and environmental impact, and ones that are affordable for both residents and the city.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,



Jesse Row  
imagineCALGARY, Built Environment Working Group  
Director, Sustainable Communities, Pembina Institute