

RETAIL PROPOSAL FOR 13TH AVENUE AND RETALLACK STREET**SUBMISSION TO CITY COUNCIL****FOR MEETING ON WEDNESDAY MAY 27, 2020, 1:30 PM, HENRY BAKER HALL****Discretionary Use Application PL201900067 - 2824 & 2830 13th Avenue and 2067, 2071 & 2075 Retallack Street**

As a resident of the Cathedral area I would like to present my concerns and ideas about the planning process for developments and in particular the proposed liquor store on 13th Avenue and Retallack Street.

Planning Process:

Citizens of Regina have been consulted on the Official Community Plan, changes to the zoning bylaws and many other city plans. The City Administration and Staff and City Council should be congratulated on their efforts to provide good public consultation. However there seems to be a gap and some problems when we get to the level of approving specific development projects. One of the problems is that proposals are developed to such a detailed level before being presented to the public it is a major cost to the developer for plans that may not go ahead or require substantial modification. The advice of the public is not available to creatively envision at the beginning what a building project could be and how it would impact the neighbourhood and its businesses.

Comments were made at the Regina Planning Commission meeting on May 6, 2020 that the Cathedral neighbourhood is always in opposition to everything, and a couple of projects were cited. Firstly, the Cathedral neighbourhood is a vibrant exciting community that has built itself up over the last several decades to become a destination place in Regina. Secondly there have been many changes to building uses which have been reasonable and have gone ahead without public concern, too many to mention. While others may view them as being simply protests, there have also been cases where Cathedral residents worked to positively preserve buildings and services, such as Connaught Library and the historic Connaught School.

Some projects however have received public concern.

Safeway quietly bought up several houses and developed a detailed expansion plan, then presented the plan to the public. Some modifications were made to the external design of the building. But in the end, there seemed to be an underlying unexpressed threat that if people did not agree to the expansion Safeway would pull out of the neighbourhood. What if the community had been consulted and Safeway used community input and architectural ingenuity to develop a plan on its previous footprint?

The YWCA facility land transfer was done quickly behind the scenes with few if any on City Council made aware of the proposal. The plans for 4 storey living units and the rest of the complex were developed to a substantial level before being made available to the public. This complex would significantly modify its immediate neighbourhood. Based on public input, some changes have been made to the plan, but many people still feel it is a good idea in the wrong

place. What if the initial concept had been floated to the community earlier on so that something more generally acceptable could have been developed?

Similarly, the plan for the liquor store at 13th Avenue and Retallack Street was substantially developed before the public was offered the opportunity to comment, and the final recommendation by City Administration seems to offer no modifications based on the public input received. The City Administration and the Regina Planning Commission have approved the project in spite of the fact that 124 public respondents opposed the proposal with good reasons, 28 wanted changes, and even among the 70 that approved the project, changes were recommended.

An exception to these examples was the proposal for the North West corner of 13th and Elphinstone, where after citizen input especially around parking and loss of a residential house, the City made recommendations for modifications.

It is not about just being resistant to anything new; it is about citizens wanting to have a positive voice in shaping their community.

I suggest the City require developers to present ideas to the public at a much earlier stage in project development, especially with infill developments like this.

Secondly, the Cathedral area, and perhaps other areas in the City, would benefit from a community economic development organization of some sort, or a land trust in affiliation with an organization such as the Cathedral Community Association. This organization could consult local residents and businesses about the needs for commercial enterprises. It could provide an opportunity for local residents to invest in local businesses. It would create dialogue that would lead to better choices and public acceptance of new developments.

The Proposal for 13th Avenue and Retallack Street

With regard to the lot at 13th Avenue and Retallack, a previous proposal for a multi-use building with residences seemed more appropriate. I am not sure what happened with this proposal.

My concerns about the current proposal, also those of many others, are as follows.

- A liquor store is not needed for the neighbourhood, there are several other outlets selling liquor in the area. It does not contribute to a positive family neighbourhood atmosphere.
- There are other beneficial uses, for example a laundromat or a hardware store. A patio to use the green space. Or a community garden. A social enterprise, training youth, newcomers/refugees and other local residents. A two-storey building, with commercial or community space on the second floor, space for the Cathedral Community Association offices or programs, or rental housing.
- Building ownership and use by local businesses and organizations would be ideal.
- The building design is unattractive, and should be more in line with the architecture of the neighbourhood.
- The provisions for parking are inadequate and there will be much additional traffic.

At their meeting on May 6, 2020 several members of the Regina Planning Commission raised several questions, resulting in a request for further information from City Administration. A review of the social impact of the liquor store on harm reduction efforts was requested, including studies done in other cities about whether liquor stores solicit criminal behaviour and determination of the related data available from the Regina Police Service. City Administration was asked to determine what has been done to find out the concerns of groups such as Street Culture Kids, the YWCA and AA and obtain further information on feedback from local businesses. City Administration was also asked to indicate the City's ability to prefer locally owned business over other corporations and describe the kind of control the City has over facades and architecture. This information, to be presented at the May 27 Council meeting, or at a subsequent City Council meeting if additional time is required to collect the information, will be very pertinent to a decision on the liquor store proposal.

Leaving the lot at 13th Avenue and Retallack Street vacant does create a kind of green space, and it would be nice to have that continue, however economic pressures would not likely allow that to happen. Until a good community-supported development proposal is brought forward, the lot could be tidied up and some simple landscaping with low-maintenance perennial vegetation that is native to the province could be installed. Or the area could be used for a community garden.

It is understandable that the current property owners, a local business and Saskatchewan and Montreal based holding companies, would like to see something developed, but I would recommend rejecting this current proposal and engaging in work with the community to develop a community economic development organization and a more suitable proposal for this site. Given today's unfortunate economic atmosphere - will anyone be in a rush to develop? The site has been vacant for awhile – lets take the time to develop it in a good way.