

Harvest Hills/96 Development

What We Heard Report

July 5, 2024

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Executive Summary

Proposed Project

Real Estate & Development Services (RE&DS) is collaborating with Calgary Transit to develop a piece of City-owned land initially considered for a park and ride. The new plan aims to blend housing with transit services, making it easier for residents to get around while living in the area.

Public Engagement

Before submitting our application to Planning and Development, we engaged with residents, neighbours, community organizations, and public officials with ties to Harvest Hills. We met with the community associations and Ward 3 Councillor Jasmine Mian and held a well-publicized open house on Monday, June 11, with about seventy attendees.

RE&DS developed a project email list and website for those who prefer to engage online.

What We Heard

Participants at the open house were most concerned about existing vehicle traffic levels and patterns in the immediate community. Residents at an adjacent condominium complex are deeply concerned about vehicular access to their complex, and residents from various locations have expressed frustration with traffic cutting through the community already.

Far less was heard about the proposed development's potential height or density. Immediate neighbours have expressed some preference for open space or limiting the height of the development to the height of other surrounding communities.

Further details are included later in this report. Remarks in *italics* indicate verbatim feedback.

Engagement Process

Professional Services

RE&DS used Britt Radius, a stakeholder engagement firm, to conduct a series of public engagement sessions with public officials, community organizations and the public. This team includes professionals with formal training and experience in public engagement.

Engagement Activities

RE&DS started the engagement process by meeting with public officials and community organizations to discuss the proposed development. We met with

- Harvest Hills Alliance Church:
 - November 21, 2023
 - January 24, 2024
 - June 25, 2024
- Northern Hills Community Association
 - March 13, 2024
- Office of Ward 3 Councillor Jasmine Mian
 - March 15, 2024
 - Correspondence the week of June 24th to support meeting with The Sierras of Country Hills condo corporation meeting.

Open House

The public was invited to participate in an open house from 4:30 pm to 7:30 pm.

RE&DS extended public invitations to the open house via social media and the community's website. Bold signs were also posted around the intersection of Country Hills Road NW and Harvest Hills Boulevard.

Britt Radius collaborated with RE&DS and the prime consultant Situated, to create a simple set of presentation boards about the proposed development. Representatives from the following agencies and organizations were in attendance.

- RE&DS
- Calgary Transit
- Situated and its consulting team (Scheffer Andrew, Britt Radius)
- City of Calgary Housing Solutions
- The Development Applications Review Team
- The Ward 3 office
- Calgary Planning Department

The team sought to ensure that participants received ample time for questions and feedback. The open house hosts also asked residents to complete a brief feedback form after they viewed the materials and had an opportunity to answer questions.

Attendance

The door count indicated 72 people attended, but only 59 signed the meeting register. We received 22 handwritten comment cards at the event and 13 online submissions afterwards.

Access

RE&DS selected Harvest Hills Alliance Church for its location adjacent to the development, convenient parking, and handicap access for those who required it. The open house started at the end of the workday and continued into the early evening.

What We Heard

Concern about traffic, parking and safety

By far, the most feedback was about concern or frustration with traffic. Many pointed to how many vehicles now cut through the community to access 96 Avenue and its connection to Deerfoot and the Calgary International Airport.

There is concern that this development will generate even more traffic and parking issues despite the intended Transit integration. A few felt community safety may be compromised.

- *My concern... is the number of vehicles "short-cutting" through the neighbourhood on Country Hills Rd, to/from Country Hills Drive who are going to/from Country Hills Blvd.*
- *My concern is the traffic flow on Country Hills Road to Country Hills Drive, and subsequently to Country Hills Blvd.*
- *Not a good idea to cram more housing in an area that is not conducive for higher traffic congestion.*
- *I am extremely opposed to this development. I live at Sierras and the traffic just now is dangerous and scary.*
- *The traffic here is already bad, and I defy anyone to say that this project will have minimal effect on traffic. Come and live here for a while!*

A few are worried that the new complexes will not have enough parking, which will create more parking problems at the adjacent churches and shopping malls.

- *People will park their extra cars in the church parking lot.*
- *Where will people park?*

A couple of participants were skeptical of the proposed traffic circle's impact and asked for an opportunity to consult further with the City of Calgary concerning the traffic situation.

- *Your traffic circle will not help us in the slightest.*

Residents of the adjoining condominium, The Sierras of Country Hills, were particularly concerned about their ability to access their complex from Country Hills Boulevard and asked whether the City would provide assistance to address this.

- *No clear planning for safe entrance/exit/parking for the complex – and resulting congestion on the roadway*

Concerns about and support for Transit

The participants' opinions on how the development should integrate Transit varied widely. Some raised questions about how current and future Transit routes work, while others liked how Transit will be integrated into the development. Yet others had questions about how the Greenline will ultimately be accommodated.

- *Any money gained from selling this land needs to go 100% towards getting the route Green Line ready for coming north!*
- *We feel that the best Transit option would be a properly designed BRT, no LRT line is needed.*
- *With a legally blind member of our household who uses public transit, accessibility is the biggest concern.*
- *I hope the city increases transit to the neighbourhood as, and before, the new growth.*
- *Greenline station has not been designed. How do you know this area is not required for north/south and airport connection?*

Concern about a lack of amenities

A few said the community suffers a dire lack of amenities required to support new residents.

- *The space might be better used to establish rec facilities or other facilities that can be used by the community.*
- *There is a critical lack of social, medical and school infrastructure up here, that hasn't been addressed by any levels of government. (Regarding a recently opened high school) With only Grades 9-11, it's already over capacity and there's no room for Grade 12.*
- *Also consider putting more amenities into the area – Aurora area would be great for some park/ice rink/community garden spaces.*
- *Lack of medical/urgent care and school capacity in the community could be an issue*

Support for more affordable housing

Some participants supported the project's affordable housing, citing the need for more housing to fill the missing middle.

- *I like that the city is using these unused land parcels for housing.*
- *Looks reasonable compared to the exaggerated rumours and provides needed "missing middle" sized housing that is appropriate for the area (Max 6 stories).*
- *I can't understand why in 2024, our city doesn't have a policy of all development needing to have non-market at *at least* 15% of the build out. Especially in the current climate.*
- *Affordable housing is good. Traffic concern.*

Concerns about height

A few participants cited concerns about the proposed six stories and requested that it be reduced to three or four stories to fit in with the surrounding developments.

- *It will block other properties views, home values will likely sink with this jammed in condo housing.*
- *A 6-story condo unit does not belong there.*
- *The development MUST fit in with the existing buildings. It SHOULD NOT be a high-rise development, three or four stories as a maximum.*

Additional Comments

Participants shared other feedback on comment cards, including

- *I worry about "silos" at city hall and want to make sure planning is done with the upcoming revised aurora ASP in mind, even though this proposal is "outside the scope"...I hope the various planners are talking to each other!*
- *Surely the time has come to outline options for an integrated plan for Country Hills, Panorama Hills and Harvest Hills.*
- *Ensuring there is no visual differentiation between the market vs affordable developments would encourage diversity and inclusion... I would request that planners think better when it comes to the types of designs that they receive... how are they doing their part to be sustainable (water, solar powered, ease of walking and cycling in the space... Ensure that the development includes community gathering spaces and multi-use.*
- *That plot of land was designated for a Park and Ride/LRT Station for LRT users.*
- *I would suggest that you leave it as a park and develop it with benches, etc. In order to get to a green space from The Sierras of Country Hills we need to drive so this would cut down on emissions. Not interested in more building.*
- *I'm sure that you will receive much nimbyism as feedback, but I will certainly be happy to see the development as a neighbour within 300m of the location.*
- *An opportunity for community space would be great. Integrate the development into the area.*