



Calgary

Jyoti Gondek, Mayor

June 2, 2022

Patricia Jones, co-chair, Calgary Homeless Foundation
Dale McFee, co-chair, Edmonton Police Services
Coordinated Community Response to Homelessness Task Force
c/o Ministry of Community and Social Services

Delivered via email to: patriciaj@calgaryhomeless.com

Re: Meeting with Coordinated Community Response to Homelessness Task Force

Dear Ms. Jones and Chief McFee,

Recent tragic events, along with growing and complex challenges related to homelessness, mental health, the opioid crisis, and violence, have elevated public safety to the top of mind for many Calgarians. Thank you for your leadership of the Coordinated Community Response to Homelessness Task Force and your service to Albertans. As the task force continues its work, I am writing on behalf of key stakeholders impacted by these issues to request an opportunity to meet with you, together with our development and investor partners, to share urgent concerns. While our priority is to meet with the Task Force representatives, we may also seek to include Ministers Luan, Ellis, and Schweitzer in this important conversation.

Enduring solutions to these wicked problems require commitment and collaboration from community agencies, enforcement partners, the private sector, as well as all orders of government. The City of Calgary continues to bring additional resources to bear, including new investment to enable a Coordinated Cold Weather Response for people experiencing homelessness; increased attention to transit safety through enhanced enforcement and adjustments to station access; and, scaled-up response to the growing numbers of encampments. Additionally, The City has opened the Stephen Avenue Safety Hub to enable police, bylaw, transit, and community service partners to collaborate on front-line responses in new ways. Planning and build out of a second safety hub, to be located in the East Village, is well underway. Lastly, Council recently directed the \$4M, we were grateful to receive through Alberta Budget 2022, toward initiatives and partnerships that promote public safety and enhance the activation of spaces downtown. The City's work has been undertaken in collaboration with our partners; however, they too are increasingly challenged to respond to the scale and severity of challenges related to

safety, security and homelessness, particularly in Calgary's greater downtown including the East Village.

Our partners at Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC) have been working to advance the master plan for East Village for the past 14 years and have invested more than \$400M in the community through the Community Revitalization Levy (CRL) which has, in turn, seen the attraction of more than \$3 Billion in planned, private investment. The CMLC team has augmented community supports through contracted private security 7 days per week; a dedicated events and programming team that last year hosted more than 700 program events throughout the community; and, a dedicated maintenance team to help maintain public spaces, needle pick-up and cleaning. CMLC has been focused on ensuring the community continues to attract private developers and residents to realize full build out. Recent increases in social disorder and crime have placed the community in a precarious position that risks the current and future investments in this area.

For example, RioCan, one of Canada's largest real estate investment trusts, and a key member of Calgary's business community, has made a substantial capital investment in East Village. The 5th and Third property and its tenant base serve residents and visitors of the East Village and downtown Calgary, providing day-to-day necessities and a central destination for the community. The site – directly adjacent to the Calgary Drop-In and Rehabilitation Centre and within a 10-minute walk of five other homelessness service providers – continues to be severely impacted. Concerns related to violence, substance use, overdoses, and vandalism place a tremendous burden on RioCan, with contracted security costs almost eight times initially anticipated and budgeted for. Similarly, BOSA Developments has been a major investor in East Village since 2012, having completed three mixed-use high-rise projects with a combined value in excess of \$350 Million, with another \$200 Million tower (Arris) under construction above the RioCan development, and a development pipeline of future projects worth approximately \$400 Million. Staff and residents at the Arris East tower have experienced threats and assaults, security staff have attended many events of violence, drug use and intoxication at the front entrance to the property and BOSA is losing prospective tenants due to safety concerns. Rents in the building are now 15 per cent lower than BOSA's comparative building in lower Mount Royal and they are spending \$34,000/month on security which is not sustainable. BOSA is a collaborative and invested partner and views the Drop-In Centre as an example of important social infrastructure however, these challenges are having a profound impact and make the economics of new development in East Village increasingly harder to justify.

This issue has strong ties to The City's Greater Downtown Plan and the recent Calgary Office Revitalization and Expansion (CORE) working group report produced under Alberta's Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation. The report outlines actions for the Government of Alberta to support the revitalization of Calgary's downtown core and "return it to a healthy and energetic

place to live and work". I agree with the CORE assessment that failure to provide safety and security in a meaningful manner, means other actions will be less effective. The CORE report notes that resources are needed to address healthcare, homelessness, addiction, and mental health issues and outlines several actions to address these issues. I encourage you to review and connect these actions to the work of the Task Force.

Growing and complex challenges related to homelessness, mental health, the opioid crisis, and violence impact Calgarians as a whole. These issues require both immediate and longer-term actions. A vibrant Calgary hinges on successful outcomes for our most vulnerable citizens.

My office would be pleased to coordinate a meeting that would include representatives from RioCan, CMLC, and BOSA developments to speak with you, share our concerns, and identify necessary solutions. We look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,



Jyoti Gondek
Mayor
City of Calgary

cc Jason Luan, Minister Community and Social Services
Mike Ellis, Associate Minister Mental Health and Addictions
Doug Schweitzer, Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation
Sharon Blackwell, Homeless Supports and Housing Stability Branch, CSS
Stuart Craig, Vice President, Development, RioCan
Ryan Bosa, President, Bosa Development
Kate Thompson, President & CEO, Calgary Municipal Land Corporation
David Duckworth, City Manager, City of Calgary
Members of Calgary City Council