

COUNCIL – AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date: 16 April 2024

Subject: Development Permit PL2302234 - 81 Midtown Boulevard

Boards Routed Through: Municipal Planning Commission

Date: 28 March 2024

Issue:

Council is being asked to make a decision on Development Permit Application PL2302234, being an application for the construction of Townhouse development (49 units) in Midtown along 8th Street SW. The site has a Direct Control (DC) District Designation (DC-52). As per the DC District rules, Council is the Development Authority for any applications for multi-family uses (including Townhouse development) on the subject site.

Background:

The applicant, Norr Architects Engineers Planners, on behalf of the landowner, 1908151 Alberta Ltd. (Shane Homes) applied for a development permit for development of townhouses as indicated above. The subject site, 0.96 ha (2.36 ac), is undeveloped and districted as DC-52. It is located in the Midtown Neighbourhood Structure Plan (NSP) area. It is bounded to the west by 8th Street SW, to the north by a C1, Neighbourhood Commercial District parcel (Midtown Plaza), to the east by Midtown Boulevard SW, and to the south by DC-41 parcels with townhouse developments.

The proposed Dwelling, Townhouse use is a Discretionary Use under DC-52 District. The development density under DC-52 District ranges from 112 units/ha up to 136 units/ha. The townhouse development proposes a total of 49 dwelling units, which results in a density of 51 units/ha. Therefore, a variance to the development density (54.5%) in this development is required.

Development Density

Initially, the applicant was interested in two separate four-storey apartment-style buildings with underground parking facilities on the site that would have been within the density range required by the DC District. However, the findings of a geotechnical investigation conducted by JASA Engineering Inc. on behalf of the developer found that the soil and groundwater conditions of the site are not suitable for the construction of multi-story apartment-style building with underground parking facilities (Attachment D).

The site is more suitable for typical slab on grade townhouse development with foundations placed above the groundwater; avoiding the issues of dewatering, constructing on wet/weak bearing soils, and potential shoring.

The site is not large enough to provide the parking spaces required at the ground level for a development meeting the district density requirement. Further, space is required for amenity spaces and landscaping.

The proposed 49 dwelling units represent the maximum number of units that the developer can achieve given the site's conditions and the requirements of the land use bylaw. Although the proposed density doesn't meet the district density requirement, it is consistent with the development density range (49-74 Units/Ha) under the original R4, Mid-Rise Multifamily Residential District.

When the subject site was redistricted from R4, Mid-Rise Multifamily Residential District to Direct Control Bylaw 52 (DC-52) District, the intended building form was a four-storey apartment-style building. Based on the building form, the development density can go up to 136 units/ha on the site. At that time Council acknowledged the specifics on density would be finalized at development permit application stage. After a review, Administration has determined the proposed variance will not unduly interfere with the amenities of the neighbourhood nor materially interfere with or affect the use, enjoyment, or value of neighbouring properties. Therefore, Administration supports this density variance. Apart from the variance requested for not meeting the minimum density requirements of the DC-52 District, no other variances are being requested as part of this application.

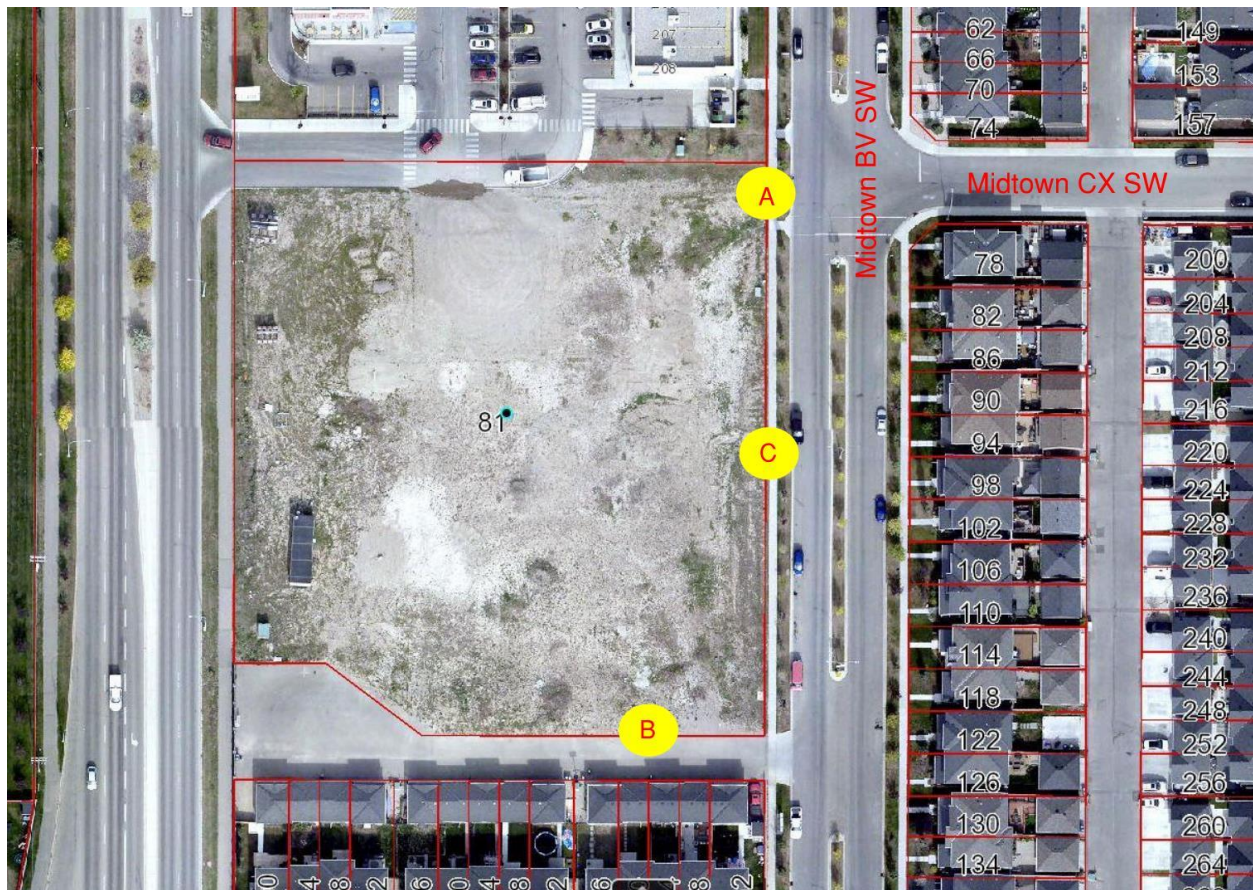
Traffic Circulation

In approving the DC-52 District, Administration was satisfied that traffic within the density range could be accommodated. The proposed townhouse development means less traffic will be generated than previously studied. During the land use amendment stage, concerns were discussed by Council about the ability for traffic to head south on 8th Street out of the site, considering the potential higher density development scenario on the site.

The addition of an all-turns access to 8th Street from the proposed development was not supported by Administration. The 8th Street corridor is the highest volume north-south arterial road with an average daily traffic volume count of 18,752 trips in 2023. This is expected to grow to 28,000 trips by 2028 and 33,000 trips by 2039. This future volume is similar to the current traffic levels on portions of Veterans BV and Yankee Valley BV currently.

With the high levels of current and future traffic, the addition of an all-turns access would require a signal light. The additional signal light on 8th Street would increase delays along the corridor and would further exacerbate difficulties in maintaining acceptable levels of service and coordination of signal lights along the 8th Street corridor. The addition of a signal light would also not meet minimum intersection spacing requirements.

The application presented at the Municipal Planning Commission (MPC) meeting proposed to utilize the existing joint access with the Midtown Plaza commercial development for vehicular access. Additionally, an emergency access point was also proposed off Midtown Boulevard SW on the northeast side of the subject site. Following the MPC Meeting, Administration had further discussions with the applicant to explore the possibility of establishing a second access point off Midtown Boulevard SW. The following locations were evaluated for the second access along Midtown Boulevard SW: A. The emergency access location on the northeast of the site; B. The public lane to the south of the site; C. The mid-block of the site.



A. The emergency access location on the northeast of the site

Converting the proposed emergency access at the T- intersection of Midtown Boulevard and Midtown Crossing to an all-turns access to the site was not supported by Administration. This decision was made because it would create a short-cut route through the proposed development to/from 8th Street. An all-turns access at this location would attract westbound traffic from Midtown Crossing to use the access as a short-cut route to reach 8th Street. It could also attract the traffic from the commercial parking lot to access Midtown BV southbound. Drivers generally choose the most direct and/or quickest route from one point to another while commuting and having a short and direct route to 8th Street would likely generate more trips through the site than the site itself generates. A high number of trips through a private parking lot would create unsafe conditions with high probability of conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles.

B. The public lane to the south of the site

Using the south public lane to access Midtown BV was also not supported by Administration because the second access through the lane didn't meet the emergency access requirement. Additionally, there were safety concerns raised by the residents about opening up the lane to provide site access. Furthermore, because the City does not do snow removal on the public lane, the service level of the public lane doesn't support increasing the traffic by opening up the lane for the development.

C. The mid-block of the site

The proposal of having a mid-block southbound right-in/right-out access is supported by Administration, because it is believed to have minimal impact on the adjacent properties while providing an access from/to the proposed development. However, to provide enough space

for emergency vehicle access, two dwelling units must be removed from the development, which reduces the number of units from 51 to 49. (Attachment A)

Administration is in support of the development permit application as it complies with policies established in the Airdrie City Plan, Midtown NSP, and the regulations in the Land Use Bylaw No. B-01/2016. While variance to the development density is required for approval, Administration believes the proposal meets the overall intent of the Land Use Bylaw for appropriately developing the townhouse dwelling at the subject site. Further details of the Administration's review are available in Attachment B - Planning Analysis.

Alignment with South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and AirdrieONE:

Administration has reviewed this Development Permit Application against the relevant policies within the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and the AirdrieONE Sustainability Plan, and Administration believes the proposed development complies with the policy directions in those policy documents. A detailed policy alignment analysis can be viewed in Attachment B – Planning Analysis.

Boards Routed Through:

The Municipal Planning Commission (MPC) reviewed the application version with 51 units and supporting documents at their meeting on March 7, 2024. MPC expressed concerns and disappointment at the substantial development density variance from the minimum density required in the DC-52, Direct Control District. MPC believes the subject site is a good location for higher density development. However, they did acknowledge the challenges presented by the geotechnical findings completed by the developer. A recommendation to Council to approve the development permit application was lost on a tie vote. The MPC comments are documented in Attachment E.

Administration Recommendation:

Administration recommends approval of the proposed development permit application for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development is in alignment with policies and directions related to City's Growth Strategy and associated policy plans that apply to the subject site, including the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan, AirdrieONE Sustainability Plan, Airdrie City Plan, and Midtown Neighbourhood Structure Plan (NSP).
2. The proposed townhouse development concept is consistent with the purpose and uses listed in the DC-52 District as well as the associated regulations to ensure a compatible fit with the surrounding neighbourhood and provide an opportunity for a medium density development.

The subject property is the only vacant property along 8th Street SW in the Midtown NSP area. It is adjacent an existing commercial development (Midtown Plaza) and along 8th Street SW which is an important transit corridor. Turning a vacant residential lot into a townhouse development not only meets the immediate housing needs, but also serves as a catalyst to be beneficial to support transit and the nearby commercial site.

Therefore, Administration recommends that Council approves Development Permit Application PL2302224 with the requested variance, subject to the recommended conditions of approval provided in Attachment C.

Alternatives/Implications:

In addition to the recommendation above, Council has two further alternatives with respect to the proposed Development Permit Application.

Alternative One: That Council tables Development Permit Application PL2302234.

Tabling a decision on this application would allow Council to request additional information, or request changes to the application prior to a decision being rendered. A tabling motion would also delay construction on the site of much-needed housing units for the city.

Alternative Two: That Council refuses Development Permit Application PL2302234.

Refusing PL2302234 would not allow the proposed development to proceed. The subject parcel would remain vacant and undeveloped.

Communications Plan:

Following the Council's decision and in keeping with the *Municipal Government Act* and the City of Airdrie Public Notification Bylaw, the decision of the Council will be advertised online for twenty-one days and in the local newspaper.

Recommendation:

That Council approves Development Permit Application PL2302234 with the requested variance, subject to the recommended conditions of approval as outlined in Attachment C.

Shengxu Li, RPP, MCIP
Planner 1

Presenter:	Shengxu Li
Department:	Planning & Development
Reviewed by:	Stephen Utz, Director, Strategic Growth and Investment
Attachments:	Attachment A – Drawings Attachment B – Planning Analysis Attachment C – Recommended Conditions of Approval Attachment D – Geotech Development Consideration Attachment E – MPC Comments
Appointment:	N/A