

April 8th, 2021

Nikolas Marsall-Moritz
Chair of Board of Directors, Heritage Calgary
319 10 Ave SW #304 / Calgary, AB T2R 0A5
By email via: tarra.drevet@gmail.com

Re: Heritage Conservation Designation for Scarboro neighbourhood, Calgary AB

Dear Mr. Marsall-Moritz,

On behalf of the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects (CSLA), we are writing to confirm our endorsement of the proposed designation of the Scarboro Subdivision (originally called Sunalta Addition) in Calgary, Alberta as a significant cultural heritage landscape.

The research and analysis of the Scarboro Community Association is applauded by our professional organization. It substantiates the value of this important project leading to the appropriate designation as an “area or district” requiring cultural landscape protection and management through the local policy and regulatory system.

The CSLA is a professional organization with 2,348 landscape architect members, 615 associate (or intern) members and 669 student of landscape architecture members. As the voice of the profession in Canada, the CSLA is an advocate for its members on issues such as urban design, urban renewal, sustainable development, human health and well-being, climate change and cultural heritage. Since it was founded in 1934, the CSLA has increased awareness and appreciation of landscape architecture and the vitality of the profession in Canada and throughout the world.

The CSLA and its *Cultural Landscapes Legacy Committee*, which is comprised of landscape architectural practitioners and specialists in cultural landscape from across Canada, concurs that this neighbourhood should be accorded a heritage conservation designation.

The CSLA has reviewed the background research and justification for the significance of this “cultural heritage landscape” and concurs with the community research team and respected CSLA colleagues Ron Williams and Nancy Pollock-Ellwand. This neighbourhood project, as designed by talented landscape architect and town planner John Charles Olmsted (1850-1920), not only established an extraordinary neighbourhood within its landscape setting of Pre-post World War I Calgary but marked a precedent setting community created as one of the new “Garden Suburbs” in North American growing cities. This avant-garde development movement heralded a healthier environ to live in the 1890’s and early 1900s, respected natural features and picturesque views, created landscaped lots and gardens for beauty, as well as architectural buildings set to consistency in size and scale within a larger green landscape footprint. The skillful attention to designing with the topography and ultimately creating a picturesque journey through the community is not seen in modern development today.

We recommend, as the process of designation unfolds, that the community/public agency develop detailed guidelines specifying the landscape attributes which were identified as a base in Ron Williams’ recent correspondence (dated January 13, 2021). It is our experience from other “heritage district” and “cultural landscape” designations in other

provinces that this analysis conducted by a qualified landscape architect establishes clear benchmarking for any future redevelopment and specific parameters for policy protection and approvals within private and public spaces. Key landscape characteristics noted below from Ron Williams letter (January 13, 2021) include:

Scarboro was laid out and built out in full accordance with J.C. Olmsted's original neighbourhood plan, and this plan (unlike that of a number of its contemporary garden suburbs) has been strictly retained up to the present day. The district has always maintained a distinct identity, owing partially to its location on a hill (like many of the great garden suburbs) and its unique pattern of flowing and curving roads, their contours well-integrated to the natural topography of the site (a J.C. Olmsted specialty), and their verges often lined with major trees. The site is conveniently circumscribed by important circulation arteries but has no through traffic and few sidewalks. This provides a peaceful and safe environment, while maintaining openness and accessibility. The district is in no way an impassable enclave isolated from the normal life of the city. The neighbourhood is bounded on the west by Crowchild Trail, an urban freeway; but one is almost unaware of this major thoroughfare when within the site.

The neighbourhood has a full panoply of parks and green spaces, as found in all Olmsted districts: a "parkway" combining a major interior road and a green linear park; a large naturalistic park at the top of the hill (related to the neighbourhood school); a block-sized recreational park surrounded by residences; and several "parklets" – small green triangles or ovals located at intersections of curving streets. The latter are Olmsted signature features, found in the firm's residential districts from 1869 to 1930.

Scarboro's houses are all detached single-family dwellings, not uniform in style but sharing a consistency in size and scale that establishes coherence and continuity throughout. Long established restrictive covenants contribute to this continuity through limits on the type of housing, setbacks, and various physical elements; these have never included socially restrictive clauses. Scarboro has remained a middle-class suburb for over a century, somehow resisting the relentless tendency towards over-building and up-scaling that afflicts many such Garden Suburb districts across the country. The achievement of heritage recognition will, in my opinion, help to reinforce this resistance and to maintain the neighbourhood's continuity.

This is an exciting cultural heritage landscape proposal celebrating an iconic suburban community within Calgary and the nation, and the outstanding landscape architectural talent of the famous Olmsted Brothers firm (Brookline, Mass.) in its realization. Above all, the CSLA applauds the grassroots neighbourhood advocacy and political efforts put forward to preserve the attributes of this landscape treasure and the value of a unique landscape architectural driven design response – their home and their landscape.

Yours truly,



Hope Parnham, APALA, CSLA
President, CSLA

c.c. John Zvonar, Chair, CSLA Cultural Landscapes and Legacy Committee