

Jan Waterous

Address to Banff Town Council

First Reading: Banff Railway Lands Area Redevelopment Plan

December 11, 2023

Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity to be here today.

I would like to begin by offering our sincerest gratitude to Town Administration for their commitment and partnership in preparation of this ARP. Together, we have worked hand in glove and created a coordinated and thoughtful plan that we are very proud of.

We followed 4 core principles when designing the ARP:

- 1) Supported Town of Banff and Parks Canada Policies: The ARP is a foundational planning document that supports the 2010 and 2022 Banff Management Plans, the Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act, the Banff Community Plan, the 10 Year Vision for Tourism in Banff and Lake Louise Plan, and recommendations put forth in the Expert Advisory Panel on Moving People Sustainably in Banff National Park. Importantly, the vision outlined in the ARP is not new. It simply builds upon plans set forth by the Town and others 30 plus years ago to create an arrival centre in our community.
- 2) Utilized Science and Leading Experts: Over the last 4 years, we've consulted with countless environmental, wildlife, and transportation teams at the Misstakis Institute, University of Alberta, University of Calgary, Mount Royal University, Dialogue, WSP, Golder and others to ensure the plan that you have before you today is robust and worthy of our community's consideration. In fact, the ARP represents the largest private investment in the history of the Park to enhance wildlife corridors and reduce the impact of personal vehicles. It has been designed over years in consultations with leading experts using science, research, and data, with feedback from the Town of Banff and Parks Canada.
- 3) Incorporated Feedback from the Community: Over the last 4 years, we have listened to our community and changed the ARP accordingly including reducing the number of intercept parking stalls on the North Side of the rail tracks by close to 2,000 stalls. This change will allow us to restore previously and currently disturbed land into 5.4 hectares of enhanced wildlife habitat. In doing so, the ARP will improve the existing Fenlands Wildlife corridor --- a long sought objective of Parks Canada and Wildlife experts. The "What we Heard Report" is extensive and includes work we did with national research firms like Advanis, where a 2023 survey of 800 Banffites showed 80 per cent of community members agree Banff Town Council should support this plan, 10 per cent oppose the plan and 10 percent had no opinion. Put another way, by an 8 to 1 margin, members of our community support the ARP.
- 4) Ensured the Site was Economically Sustainable: We created an integrated plan that provides for free intercept parking utilizing a revenue model from aerial transit. This is

necessary since the commercial component of the ARP is very small – 2,500 square metres of new space or less than 2/3 of 1 % of the Town of Banff’s commercial footprint. This model does not rely on community tax dollars or Town of Banff financial support to reduce the impact of personal vehicles. This integrated and supportive financial model is akin to the ARP put forth by Banff Centre in 2003 where additional classrooms and art spaces were financially supported by building more overnight accommodation spaces. At the time, some opposed this economic model, but in the end, it was seen as necessary to provide a revenue stream to support the Centre’s curriculum.

What I ask today is that Council evaluate the ARP for what it is ---a visionary and integrated planning document that is a first step aimed at guiding land use policies and development decisions over time. Since it is simply a plan and not a request for any project approvals municipally, provincially or federally, we ask that you view the ARP for what it is. Needless to say, there will be plenty of time to assess the projects detailed in the plan down the road. In fact, many of the components outlined in the ARP – components like the passenger train and aerial transit and possibly environmental assessments of any projects—require approvals far beyond the jurisdiction of the municipality.

We are proud of this ARP - a plan that is right for the railway lands, the Town and Banff National Park and brings us all “back to the future” by reimagining the historic railway lands as the gateway to the national park. As longtime residents of Banff, my family and I have tried to do our part to make Banff function better. This ARP represents this effort and we hope you will join us in celebrating its completion.

Thank you.