

September 16, 2025 (via email)

Dear Calgary City Council,

Re: River Run homes were taken for private greed, not public need

No public need to take River Run

When Council approved Green Line Stage 1, on **June 16, 2020**, the cost of the proposed downtown tunnels was unknown. As such, no one knew if such tunnels would be built or whether River Run (a downtown community of 23 family homes between Eau Claire Market and the Bow River, adjacent to the heart of Prince’s Island Park) would need to be taken for public transit. When Stage 1 was approved, experts correctly warned that Stage 1 would be billions over budget.

For years, the provincial government and independent experts consistently voiced concerns regarding the cost and risk associated with the proposed downtown tunnels. By **January 2022**, even the City’s own Green Line Board and CEO indicated the project would need more money or a new project scope. On **January 25, 2022**, the Green Line Board Chair stated publicly: “we have a low level of confidence in our ability to deliver all of stage one within available funding”.

On **September 12, 2023**, not knowing if River Run would be needed for public transit, Council voted to expropriate. The City then forced families out on **June 1, 2024**. The next month, on **July 30, 2024**, the City finally disclosed the billions in cost overruns. A City press release identified River Run was demolished, not for public transit, but instead “to fulfill contractual obligations”.

Clear private benefit from taking River Run

The private benefit was always certain. As set out on Harvard’s website (below), when marketing its planned Eau Claire development, River Run is literally front and centre. Indeed, only the last letter of “Eau Claire Market” below is on land owned by Harvard.



Demolishing River Run transformed Harvard’s planned multi-tower project into a more valuable waterfront development – likely a nine-figure windfall.

For context, in 1993, the City limited density at River Run to just 23 townhomes, locking in enormous future redevelopment value. After the City-planned Eau Claire Market failed, it sold the market to Harvard. Ever since, these two powerful entities have wanted to extract River Run’s redevelopment value, without paying fair market value to the families.

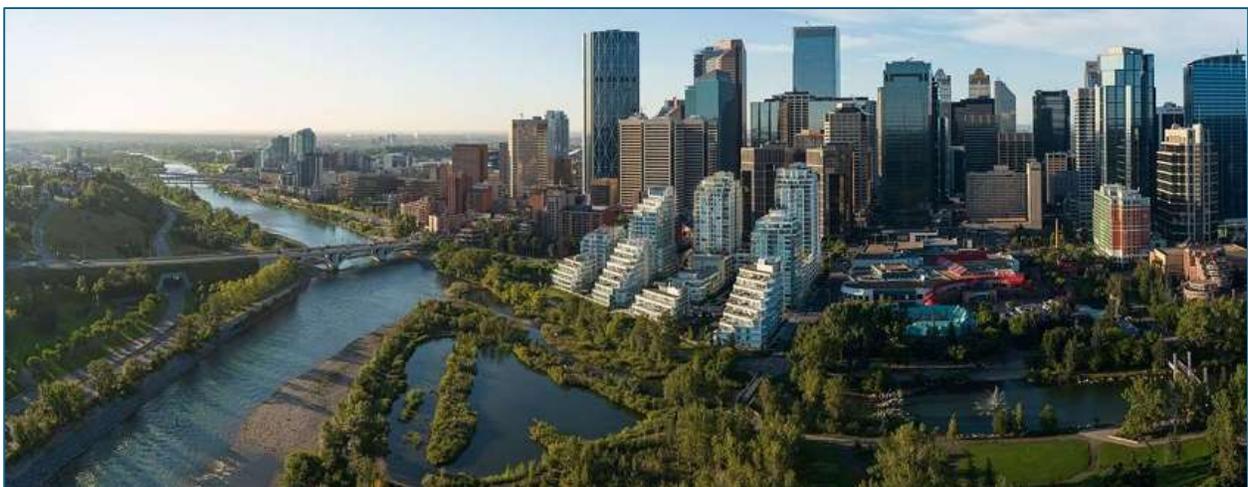


As an example, the City took away an easement, that protected the families’ right to access their property through their front entrance (*the roadway, parking and sidewalks between the market and River Run, set out above*), for no consideration. This led to litigation regarding whether Harvard could put a tower on this roadway, a dispute that was ongoing when expropriation started.

The City has unnecessarily caused taxpayers to pay for Harvard’s profit

The City initially planned for a Green Line that did not involve destroying River Run. However, starting on **March 4, 2020**, after private meetings with Harvard, the City started to depict the train veering off 2nd Street into our homes, creating a pretext for expropriation.

Had the City allowed the open market to function, Harvard would have paid a fair market price (*based on the obvious value unlocked from integrating River Run into Harvard’s planned project*), or the families would still live in their homes. Instead, the City (mis)used its expropriation power, unnecessarily creating an obligation for taxpayers to pay fair market value for our unique property.



A call for leadership that restores trust and respects the law

Our current City leadership has treated ownership of private property, not as a fundamental right, but as a privilege that can arbitrarily be revoked to benefit powerful private interests.

Under the *Expropriation Act*, the City is obligated to act fairly and compensate the families to make them whole. Instead of respecting this obligation, City leadership avoids direct engagement with us and directs staff to use the City's position of power to try to avoid paying fair compensation – an approach that falls well short of the ethical standards Calgarians expect and deserve.

The destruction of our homes for an improper purpose cannot be undone. But City leaders still have the opportunity – *and the obligation* – to correct this injustice through fair compensation. The families have waited for that conversation, for the better part of a decade, only to be met with silence and abuse from those in power.

With a municipal election approaching, Calgarians face a choice: will we continue with City leaders who avoid transparency, engagement and accountability? Or will we vote for leaders who engage openly, respect the law, and restore trust in City Hall?

If anyone within City leadership finally becomes willing to discuss fair compensation, we remain available. We invite everyone to learn more at riverruncalgary.ca.

It's time for City Hall to stop taking from citizens – and start serving them.

– *Patrick and Jane Lindsay*