

Swingers told to park it elsewhere

City hides behind regulations to prevent sexy couples from swapping partners



BRIAN GOULD

A swingers' club proposed for St Albert Trail and 118 Avenue was shot down this week when the Subdivision and Development Board claimed that although the fire code limits occupation to 149, the club needs 324 parking stalls. Apparently swingers need at least two cars each—presumably for the crazy multi-car backseat sex.

I'm not sure how those wacky swingers would manage to get all those extra cars there. Maybe they'll duct-tape a dozen cars together into a raft or have some form of reverse clown-car routine worked out. Unfortunately, thanks to this Board, the answers to this question will be lost forever.

Now maybe I'm crazy, but isn't the whole point of swinging that it's for couples? So a significant portion should be showing up in groups of two to four. And even if the neighbourhood doesn't want to admit it, some are going to walk from their nearby homes. Taken together, this makes the requirement for a massive parking lot seem ludicrous.

The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that swingers clubs can't be outlawed on moral grounds, so the Board used the city's insane parking regulations as a substitute. Like most

cities in North America, Edmonton requires businesses to provide a certain number of free parking spots. The usual ratio requires an area of parking equal to the area of the building. The incentive to build more than a single story, then, simply isn't there, and the accompanying sprawl makes extra parking a self-fulfilling prophecy. But these unnecessary spots aren't actually free, and this cost inevitably shows up on the price stickers in the store, while also creating huge driving incentives.

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In reality, they know that they're requiring a completely ridiculous amount that's well in excess of the usual. If they actually added all that parking to the site, they'd have to build a five-storey parkade which would dwarf the single-storey mall. The average ratio would only require 52 spots, and amazingly enough that's almost exactly what's already there. If it worked as a bowling alley, then why can't it work as a club?

They can't even claim that a swingers' club doesn't really jive with the neighbourhood, because Source Adult Video is just across the street. But then again, thousands of porn movies for

every taste are harmless, whereas the very thought of old married people getting it on will have little kids scrambling to have unprotected sex. Won't somebody please think of the children?

Nearby, the Children's Dental Centre proudly advertises its phone number as 428-KIDS: fully translated it becomes the family friendly message "HAV-KIDS." By the same logic, the whole neighbourhood is only a single digit away from "GAY-KIDS." And nobody wants that. Except the swingers.

Maybe it's not the best place for a swingers club—it's probably not the best place for a porn shop either—but moving it will only shift the problem somewhere else, and nothing can stop determined kids from getting their hands on porn. Still, it all comes back to horrible zoning laws, and it's not just controversial uses either.

You can put bedrooms next to stores and restaurants if it's a hotel, and if you've ever been to Las Vegas, Whistler, or any other tourist resort for that matter, you'll agree that this formula works incredibly well. But try to do the same thing in an Edmonton suburb, and they'll demand that you walk on water first.

In this case, there's no acceptable zoning option for keeping these clubs and stores away from the little kiddies, and because the city's zoning laws are so inept, they're forced to use the equally inept parking regulations instead. Not only is that unfair and stupid, it's also causing massive urban sprawl. Can't we just admit that there's a problem and fix it?

Election signs, not yard sales, make city look bad



KELSEY TANASIUK

every nook and cranny of the city.

While election signs are customarily posted every few feet, signs for real estate and garage sales are never posted that enthusiastically, and definitely not that obnoxiously. While we all understand that it's important to vote, let's face the facts: there are still more people that care about lost pets and buying their neighbour's junk than the municipal elections, and no amount of signs will ever change that. In fact, few things short of having two Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles run for each ward and winning your votes via hand-to-hand combat would be capable of altering this sad truth. These signs and posters are nothing but a waste of resources.

However, it's not only their frequency that makes election signs so utterly vexatious—even the appearance of one sign alone is enough to make most sensible people cringe, and design work worse than a kindergarten macaroni painting is enough to make even the bravest constituents shut their eyes and whimper.

Real estate signs generally don't have this problem. They stick to a recognizable colour scheme and provide simple and clear information. Garage sale signs are usually your standard blue and white combo, perhaps with some balloons tied to the side for good measure. One could argue that this makes them just as flashy, but then again, people only post yard sale signs every few blocks instead of every two feet.

So let the super-mom post her bake sale signs alongside the School Board Trustee hopefuls, but make sure that everyone follows the same rules.

This past May, something changed in our fair city—a change that, while drastic for some, went largely unnoticed. During the spring, Edmonton set in place a new bylaw that left many of our neighbours and realtors out in the cold.

Traffic Bylaw #5590 states that \$110 fines will be given out for any sign posted on public property for events such as garage sales. Unfortunately for some Edmontonians, the ban includes some signs for real estate, and the real estate signs that are allowed must follow a strict set of guidelines. The bylaw was put into place in order to curb the accumulation of trash around the city and to make it look cleaner. But personally, I think that's a load of garbage.

It's hard for a city to look clean when every open inch of grass is covered with election signs. Though election candidates have guidelines for their sign usage, the rules that campaigners must follow are certainly not as strict as the ones imposed on an old lady who's trying to sell her cat-themed tea cozies on her front lawn. Public property is fair game for these glad-handing baby-kissers, and while they aren't allowed to wallpaper fences, benches, or trees, they still manage to have their grinning faces peeking out at us from

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