

**CALGARY
ASSESSMENT REVIEW BOARD
DECISION WITH REASONS**

In the matter of the complaint against the property assessment as provided by the *Municipal Government Act*, Chapter M-26, Section 460, Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000 (the Act).

between:

SREIT (West No. 1) Ltd. (as represented by Altus Group Limited), COMPLAINANT

and

The City Of Calgary, RESPONDENT

before:

K. D. Kelly, PRESIDING OFFICER

J. Massey, MEMBER

E. Bruton, MEMBER

This is a complaint to the Calgary Assessment Review Board in respect of a property assessment prepared by the Assessor of The City of Calgary and entered in the 2012 Assessment Roll as follows:

ROLL NUMBER:	055124903
LOCATION ADDRESS:	2020 Centre AV NE
HEARING NUMBER:	68266
ASSESSMENT:	\$8,600,000

This complaint was heard on 10th day of October, 2012 at the office of the Assessment Review Board located at Floor Number 4, 1212 – 31 Avenue NE, Calgary, Alberta, Board 6.

Appeared on behalf of the Complainant:

- *Ms. C. Van Staden – Altus Group Limited*

Appeared on behalf of the Respondent:

- *Ms. – K. Cody - Assessor – City of Calgary*
- *Ms. – M. Hartmann – Assessor - City of Calgary*

REGARDING BREVITY:

[1] The Composite Assessment Review Board (CARB) reviewed all the evidence submitted by both parties. The extensive nature of the submissions dictated that in some instances certain evidence was found to be more relevant than others. The CARB will restrict its comments to the items it found to be most relevant.

Board's Decision in Respect of Procedural or Jurisdictional Matters:

[2] The following appeals were heard by the Board during the week of October 9 to 12, 2012 inclusive:

File No.	Decision No.	Roll No.	Address
68379	2063-2012-P	024008302	5225 – 8 ST NE
67719	2064-2012-P	054003991	2855T – 10 AV NE
66891	2065-2012-P	054006200	2820 – Centre AV NE
66893	2066-2012-P	054006606	404 Meridian RD NE
66896	2067-2012-P	054006754	315 Moraine RD NE
68215	2068-2012-P	054012505	2916 – 5 AV NE
66897	2069-2012-P	054012604	640 – 28 ST NE
67720	2070-2012-P	054013008	2915 – 10 AV NE
68038	2071-2012-P	054013107	3202 – 12 AV NE
68195	2085-2012-P	054014691	420 – 28 ST NE
68266	2086-2012-P	055124903	2020 Centre AV NE
66899	2087-2012-P	055162200	1880 Centre AV NE
68271	2088-2012-P	070033006	219 – 18 ST SE
68272	2089-2012-P	071043905	115 – 28 ST SE
66651	2090-2012-P	201311156	2820 – Centre AV NE

[3] **Common Issues:** All of the Board members named above attended all of the foregoing hearings throughout the week, and the Parties appearing before the Board during that time were represented by the same individuals noted above. Many of the issues, arguments, questions and responses were common throughout. At the request of the Parties and with the concurrence of the Board, those commonalities were carried forward from the hearing where they were first raised, to subsequent hearings without being restated in full in each hearing or in each written decision. The Parties selected file 68379 to be the “master” file upon which all common evidence and argument would be based and henceforth carried forward to subsequent files in turn.

[4] **S. 299. MGA:** In each of the complaints, the Complainant referenced information related to s. 299 of the Act. In each case – except one (file 66896) – the Complainant confirmed that there was no claim that the Respondent failed to produce the requested disclosures.

Property Description:

[5] The subject is a 1967 two-building single-tenant (IWS) industrial warehouse on 8.8 acres (Ac.) at 2020 Centre AV NE in the Mayland industrial area. It is zoned I-G in the City's Land Use Bylaw. The main building has an 84,895 SF building footprint and 88,675 square feet (SF) of assessable space; 7% finish; 24.12% site coverage, and is assessed using the Sales Comparison Approach to Value at \$93.06 per SF. The second building is a 3,780 SF pre-fabricated 1967 quonset with no finish and assessed at \$189.31 per SF. The total assessment for the two buildings is \$8,600,000 based on \$93.06 per SF.

Issue:

[6] What is the correct assessment for the subject when its 2012 assessed value is tested against selected valuation approaches and/or techniques?

Complainant's Requested Value:

[7] The Complainant requested the assessment be reduced to \$6,730,000 based on the Income Approach to Value at \$82 per SF.

Board's Decision in Respect of Each Matter or Issue:

1. Equity Approach:

[8] The Complainant provided seven assessment equity comparable properties and compared their individual characteristics to the subject. The Complainant argued that she had made several land area, site cover, and age "adjustments" to the seven comparables and provided the Board and Respondent with verbal explanations but no written details of those calculations. She argued that she had conducted a "paired assessment analysis" of them. She also clarified that she had "backed out" and later "added back in" the land portion of the properties to help refine her calculations. The Complainant argued that based on her analysis, an equitable value for the subject is \$86 per SF (\$7,996,129) and not the \$93.06 per SF assessed.

[9] The Respondent provided four assessment equity comparables which were selected on the basis of land area; assessable building area; age; site coverage; and assessed rate per SF. She argued that the characteristics of these four properties closely match the subject and support the assessment. She also argued that the Complainant's analysis of the Complainant's seven equity comparables is flawed since the Complainant has not provided written documentation of how she adjusted her comparables. In addition the Respondent argued that the Complainant's technique of "backing out" the land value is not an acceptable practice under the legislated Mass Appraisal process used by the City to value properties for assessment purposes.

[10] The Respondent clarified that for assessment purposes the City has adjusted the useable site area to 8.8 Ac. instead of the titled 10.7 Ac. because of a large unusable berm on the property, which is a positive benefit to it. She further advised that because of the two buildings on the property, the subject also receives the additional benefit of a multi-building discount. The Respondent also argued that two of the Complainant's comparables (1616 Meridian RD NE and 1939 Centre AV SE) are "special-purpose" buildings, assessed using the Cost Approach to Value and are not comparable to the subject. She also argued that the Complainant has combined the floor space of several of her comparables and compared them to others, as if the two buildings were one building, and this is erroneous. She argued that previous Board Decisions have confirmed this point.

[11] In reviewing the issue of equity, the Board found that the Complainant failed to provide documented information to either the Board or the Respondent as to the Complainant's adjustments, which, in concert with an unsupported land value ("extraction/insertion") calculation, meant that the Board placed little weight on the Complainant's calculations of value using this methodology. The Board noted that the Complainant also attempted to analyze multi-building sites as if they were one building by combining floor areas. Previous Boards have not accepted this technique, and neither does this Board. The Board also noted that the Complainant's equity comparables created a range of values from \$47 to \$116 per SF, and the Respondent's comparables created a range of values from \$90.69 to \$114.66 per SF respectively. Given that the subject is assessed at \$93.06 per SF, these ranges support the assessment.

2. Sales Comparison Approach:

[12] The Complainant argued that the subject is improperly assessed as a two-building site because the second building is merely an unheated fabric Quonset on a temporary foundation. She argued it should be assessed using the typical \$10 per SF applied to such buildings. She also argued that the main building has a large, open, unheated loading/storage area that should also be assessed at a nominal value. She argued that she had calculated an area reduction to the main building for this anomaly, based on her measurements using "Google Earth" technology.

[13] The Complainant provided six sales comparables and argued that her "best" comparable to the subject is located at 1939 Centre AV SE. This site is also a two-building IWS facility and is a "special purpose" building assessed using the Cost Approach to Value, unlike the subject. She argued that she had made several "adjustments" to the six sales and provided the Board and Respondent with verbal explanations but no written details of those calculations. She clarified that she had "backed out" and later "added back in" the land portion of the properties to help refine her calculations since "land value is the biggest factor in overall value". She argued that by adjusting the "key factors" for each of her six market sales comparables, this led her to conclude that an indicated value of \$6,848,442 or \$6,840,000 (rounded) at \$74 per SF is warranted for the subject.

[14] The Respondent provided four market sales, each of which closely matched the subject's individual site characteristics of parcel size; assessable building area; age; and site coverage. These time-adjusted sales demonstrated a range of values from \$96.95 to \$149.39 per SF. Since the subject is assessed at \$93.06 based on the City's analysis of 164 property sales, and site-specific reductions for topographic issues and being a two-building site, these four sales provide a range of values that support the assessment. The Respondent argued that the Complainant's methodologies of adjusting certain key factors, including assessed values, and factoring "out" land values, is unsupported and skews the results of the latter's value analysis such that it is unreliable as an indicator of value.

[15] The Respondent argued that the subject benefits from being a two-building site that receives a multi-building discount, although she was unable to confirm the amount. She also presented a sample calculation of a revised assessment based on the Complainant's request that the subject's second building be assessed at \$10 per SF as an outbuilding. She clarified that under the Complainant's requested scenario, and using the same assessment techniques, the assessment actually increases from \$8,600,000 to \$8,890,000 because site coverage decreases, and it loses the benefit of the two-building discount. She also reminded the Board that the site already receives a land area discount of 1.9 Ac. as well.

[16] The Respondent argued that the Complainant confirmed that she did not physically measure the subject inside and out to determine precisely what square foot areas of the main building on the subject are unheated and should be excluded or "adjusted" in the assessment calculation as she claims. She argued therefore that the Complainant's measurements using "Google Earth" are not reliable.

[17] In its review of this issue, the Board found that because the Complainant had not informed either the Board or the Respondent as to the details of the Complainant's market sales adjustments, this meant that neither the Respondent nor the Board were able to verify the accuracy of the resulting values. In addition, the Board found that the Complainant did not physically measure the interior of the subject and its components but instead relied on "Google Earth" remote sensing technology for exterior measurements only. Therefore the Board placed little weight on the Complainant's calculations of value using these two methodologies. However, the Board did note that the subject is in fact a one-building site with an unheated Quonset, and the Board will elect to correct the assessment of the Quonset accordingly.

3. Assessment to Sale Ratio:

[18] The Complainant provided a critique of the City's assessment model, arguing that the "key factors" in it "do not work" and "do not explain what is going on with these properties" and hence it provides erroneous assessment values. She noted she had analyzed the City's list of 164 sales of industrial warehouse properties used in the model, to arrive at this conclusion. She provided the results of the analysis and calculations, illustrating the minimum, maximum, median and mean time-adjusted assessment to sales ratios. She identified the coefficients of dispersion and variation of these ratios. She argued that it is the position of the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) that the overall ratios should not be greater than 5% but the City's model has exceeded that value.

[19] The Respondent noted that the Complainant had not provided the list of properties used in her analysis, nor had she provided the analysis itself, and therefore it was not possible to verify the Complainant's methodology or conclusions.

[20] The Board found that the Board in CARB 1825/2012-P, faced with a highly similar if not identical issue, concluded in paragraphs [10], [11], and [12] that:

[10]....."Without the analysis that supports the Complainant's conclusions, it is not possible to form an opinion on the results.

[11] In any event, it is not the Board's role to rule on the validity of the Respondent's asset range. *Matters Relating to Assessment and Taxation Regulation AR 220/2004 MRAT*, s.10 in particular, governs the quality standards and procedures established through the Alberta Assessment Quality Minister's Guidelines and s. 293 of the Act.

[12] The Complainant's position on the assessment to sales ratio carried little weight in the Board's deliberations on the merits of the Complaint."

[21] The Board also finds on the face of the evidence in this hearing that it places little weight on the Complainant's arguments regarding the alleged inaccuracy of the City's model, and the assessment to sale ratios derived therefrom.

4. Cost Approach:

[22] The Complainant provided a "Summary Report" for the subject using Marshall and Swift (M&S). She also provided a chart which both synthesized her M&S calculations, and used \$800,000 per Ac. for the land. When combined with the calculations for the onsite improvement, the results indicated an overall value for the subject of \$8,039,859. She suggested that an M&S value usually determines the higher end of a valuation range using a variety of valuation methodologies and such is the case with this analysis of the subject.

[23] The Complainant argued that she had estimated the "effective age" of the improvement at 44 years (as of July 1, 2011) because of its 1967 construction, and therefore she depreciated the subject's main building by 78% based on a potential lifespan of 40 to 50 years. The Complainant advised that she had used other M&S valuation inputs for wall heights, HVAC, etc. based on typical components for a Storage Warehouse of the subject's era. She also provided a second M&S Summary Report for the Quonset building and also depreciated it by 80% to arrive at a depreciated value. The detail of the inputs and calculations were not provided.

[24] The Respondent argued that the Cost Approach To Value is generally used to assess "special purpose" buildings, and not typical warehouse and/or "outbuilding" properties such as the subject. She noted that the Complainant, while using Marshall and Swift, had identified the subject's main building as "100% Storage Warehouse". In addition, the Respondent argued that the Complainant's inputs and detailed calculations for M&S, which appear to be incorrectly applied, are not available and therefore they cannot be evaluated by either the Respondent or the Board.

[25] The Board found that notwithstanding the potentially flawed methodology used by the Complainant in this approach, it is not relevant to the subject which is a typical industrial warehouse and not a special purpose building. Therefore the Board placed little weight on this approach.

5. Capitalization Rate:

[26] The Complainant produced a cap rate study of industrial properties "over 100,000 SF- New Construction" and provided a table containing four market sales to support the results. She argued that Altus had used actual rents from leases in the four sites at time of sale, and a 4% vacancy (rounded down from average 4.6%) taken from third-party industry publications, to calculate median cap rates of 7.66% (stabilized NOI) and 7.47% (market NOI). She clarified that in certain instances where rents were unavailable, rents from other properties such as Calgary International Airport were used. She argued that Altus had concluded that 7.5% appeared to be a "reasonable cap rate for new, over 100,000 SF buildings."

[27] The Respondent argued that the Complainant's methodology is flawed because rents from Calgary International Airport Federal Government properties are significantly different than rents elsewhere in Calgary and should not be intermixed to arrive at valuation conclusions. In addition, in the Complainant's cap rate analysis, there is no allowance for expenses to be deducted which skews the results. She also argued that it is incorrect to analyze four new buildings of 302,135 SF; 146,135 SF; 178,009 SF; and 118,402 SF and then compare the results to the subject's 84,895 SF (main building assessable area).

[28] The Respondent provided four market sales of industrial properties and argued that their individual characteristics of parcel size; assessable area; age; site cover; and time-adjusted sales values very closely matched the subject. She also provided four assessment equity comparables and argued that their individual site characteristics also closely match the subject and provide a range of values that support the assessment as fair and equitable. She argued that this evidence supports the assessment.

[29] In its review of the evidence on this issue, the Board found that it is not appropriate to compare rents from Calgary International Airport leased sites to other "freehold" property leases from off-airport sites. More significantly however, the Board found that comparisons of properties of well over 100,000 SF, and indeed in one instance over 300,000 SF, to the subject at 84,895 SF are, in the Board's view, unreliable. Therefore the Board placed little weight on the Complainant's evidence and argument on this issue.

6. Income Approach:

[30] The Complainant provided an Income Approach to Value calculation for the subject using an actual \$4.69 per SF net rent based on leases in the subject; a 5% vacancy rate, and a 7.75% Capitalization Rate. She clarified that while several third-party industry publications showed a 4.6% typical vacancy, and Altus was generally using 4%, nevertheless, she had "rounded it up" to 5%. She asserted that the ultimate value difference between 4% and 5% is immaterial. The Complainant argued that her Income calculations indicate an alternate value for the subject of \$6,737,110 or \$73 per SF.

[31] The Respondent argued that there are 164 valid market sales which have been shared with the Complainant and therefore there is no need to value the subject using this methodology. She reminded the Board that the subject has been assessed using the Sales Comparison Approach and not the Income Approach. In addition, she argued that while the Complainant has relied on third-party reports for her vacancy rate, and Altus is generally using 4%, the third party-vacancy rate is 4.6% and not 5%. She argued that contrary to the assertions of the Complainant, a small difference in vacancy rates does indeed matter when calculating assessments, particularly on higher value sites.

[32] In its review of this issue, the Board found that there was no documented support for the 5% vacancy rate used in the Complainant's calculation of alternate value using this methodology. Moreover, the Complainant relies on a 7.75% cap rate which has already been called into question. When the elevated cap and vacancy rates are combined, this casts doubt on the resulting values generated by these inputs. The Board placed little weight on the Complainant's evidence/argument in this approach.

Board's Findings with Reasons:

[33] The Board finds that with respect to equity, the Complainant was unable to document and support the several adjustments made to her comparable properties which raised considerable doubt as to their comparability to the subject. The Respondent's equity comparables each displayed individual characteristics which when compared to the subject, support the assessment.

[34] The Board finds with respect to sales comparison, the Complainant's adjustments to her property comparables were not documented, which raised doubt about their comparability to the subject. The individual characteristics of the Respondent's sales evidence, and the relevant sales values, supported the assessment.

[35] The Board finds that the Complainant was unable to convince the Board on the basis of the evidence and argument presented that the key variables in the City's assessment model are flawed.

[36] The Board finds that while certain documentary evidence as to the source of the inputs used by the Complainant to calculate the Cost Approach for the subject is lacking, nevertheless it recognizes that this approach is generally applied to "special purpose" buildings and not to typical multi-purpose warehouse properties like the subject. Therefore the Board finds that it gives very little weight to the Complainant's position on this issue.

[37] The Board finds that the Capitalization rate calculated by the Complainant on the basis of four relatively new buildings (as compared to the subject – a 1977 building) over 100,000 SF, to be flawed. The Complainant did not deduct any expense items, and used rents from Calgary International Airport instead of from off-airport properties to deduce values. Had expenses been deducted for example, one would expect the cap rate to be lower. In this regard, the following extract from *Westcoast Transmission Company Limited v. Assessor for Area 9 (Vancouver) 1987 BCSC 235* is relevant:

"I stated above that the concepts used, in developing capitalization rates for application to the subject, should be used consistently. Thus it makes no sense to develop a capitalization rate on

one set of assumptions about long-term vacancy rates, long-term rents, and long-term expenses, and then apply that rate to the income of the subject property that is not derived in the same way.

The choice of a vacancy rate goes directly into the calculation of gross income, from which the appraiser then deducts expenses to arrive at an estimate of net income. All of these factors, for consistency, should be used in the same manner as they were used in the study of comparables which resulted in the development of the capitalization rate. To do otherwise is to offend appraisal theory, and is likely to produce a mistaken result."

[38] The Board finds that the Complainant's income approach is unreliable in part because the vacancy rate of 5% is elevated and unsupported. The Complainant's own evidence demonstrates a 4.6% vacancy rate via third-party industry reports, with Altus using 4% as a "typical" value. The Board also notes that the Complainant uses a 7.75% cap rate based on the sale of properties many times larger than the subject. The use of these elevated values therefore casts doubt on the reliability of the alternate assessment value the Complainant seeks for the subject.

[39] The Board found however that based on the photographic and related evidence that the second building on the site is a fabric-based outbuilding on a temporary foundation, and not a permanent structure. Therefore the Board opts to correct the assessment by changing the calculated value of the 3,780 SF quonset to the typical \$10 per SF applied to such structures ($3,780 \times \$10 = \$37,800$). When combined with the value of the main structure, this produces a value for the site of \$7,920,000.

Board's Decision:

[40] The assessment is reduced to \$7,920,000.

DATED AT THE CITY OF CALGARY THIS 12 DAY OF November 2012.


K. D. Kelly
Presiding Officer

APPENDIX "A"

**DOCUMENTS PRESENTED AT THE HEARING
AND CONSIDERED BY THE BOARD:**

NO.	ITEM
1. C-1	Complainant Disclosure
2. C-2	Complainant Disclosure – Rebuttal
3. C-3	Complainant Disclosure – Rebuttal
4. R-1	Respondent Disclosure

An appeal may be made to the Court of Queen's Bench on a question of law or jurisdiction with respect to a decision of an assessment review board.

Any of the following may appeal the decision of an assessment review board:

- (a) the complainant;*
- (b) an assessed person, other than the complainant, who is affected by the decision;*
- (c) the municipality, if the decision being appealed relates to property that is within the boundaries of that municipality;*
- (d) the assessor for a municipality referred to in clause (c).*

An application for leave to appeal must be filed with the Court of Queen's Bench within 30 days after the persons notified of the hearing receive the decision, and notice of the application for leave to appeal must be given to

- (a) the assessment review board, and*
- (b) any other persons as the judge directs.*

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Appeal Type	Property Type	Property Sub-type	Issue	Sub-Issue
CARB	industrial	Single-tenant warehouse	Market value	Equity; sales; cost approach; income; cap rate; correction