Introduction

Since January 2006, The City of Calgary has been actively participating with the member municipalities of the Calgary Regional Partnership (CRP) to develop a regional land use plan. This plan, the Calgary Metropolitan Plan (CMP), is the result of a collective effort and approach by the members of the Partnership to address the challenges and opportunities facing the Calgary region in the future. The CMP provides the blueprint for sustainable growth over the next 60 to 70 years as our region moves from 1.2 million people today to over 2.8 million. It balances the need to protect the regional landscape with the need to accommodate growth, by proactively designing a sustainable regional settlement pattern connected to shared infrastructure and services.

The Partnership has taken a proactive approach to regional-level growth and planning issues while recognizing the role of implementation at the local level. The City has been supportive of the Partnership’s commitment to address the very real issues facing the region with respect to future regional planning, growth management, servicing and sustainability. The City supports the CMP and believes it is consistent with the direction the Government of Alberta and the Provincial Land Use Framework.

The CMP was ratified by the General Assembly of the Calgary Regional Partnership on June 19, 2009. A copy of the plan can be found on the Partnership’s website at www.calgaryregion.ca.
Background

The Calgary Regional Partnership’s journey to develop a regional land use plan began in January 2006. At that time, the Partnership’s Executive Committee agreed to develop a framework for regional planning issues. In June 2007, the Partnership adopted the “Terms of Agreement for Working Together: A Commitment to Develop a Regional Land Use Plan for the Calgary Region”, which set out the framework for the development of the regional land use plan.

The Calgary Metropolitan Plan was informed by the collective effort of its members through extensive consultation and participation over the past three years including:

- Over 2,000 participants in a visioning exercise (January – April 2006).
- Over 320 meetings of elected leaders and staff of the member municipalities since January 2006.
- Over 700 experts, elected leaders and staff participated in drafting the plan’s policies and maps for public review in March 2009.
- Over 90 presentations to over 2,000 residents and members of Councils (March to June 2009).
There are three strategic components to managing growth in the Calgary region in an integrated fashion:

1) comprehensive land use planning policies;
2) an effective governance structure, and;
3) regional infrastructure and services.

The CMP is based on these components, which are inextricably linked and form one complete package.

Land Use Policies

The CMP commits the City and other urban municipalities to much more efficient and sustainable growth patterns in the future, and dramatically reduces the extent of the regional development footprint. The land use policies in the plan take a two-pronged approach. First, they encourage the intensification of existing developed areas. Second, they organize future growth into a “Nodes and Corridors” pattern that focuses development away from environmentally-sensitive areas, in a pattern of development that can be efficiently supported by regional infrastructure (transit, water and sewer).

Growth Areas

Growth areas are identified as “Compact Urban Nodes” and designed as locations for higher density, complete communities in order to accommodate the projected population growth in the region as compactly as possible. They are situated in locations designed to ensure regional infrastructure is provided in the most efficient way. This means they are located contiguous to existing developed urban areas, along existing transportation corridors, and around hamlets and towns. The plan also provides for the creation of new urban centres in existing rural areas.

All the identified growth areas (compact communities and employment-based) are the result of a detailed planning process carried out by consultants to the Partnership. The approach taken was to first identify the important regional ecological infrastructure to avoid and protect it from future development (the “Defensive” or “Conservation” Strategy). The important environmental assets include wetlands, riparian areas, regional systems or corridors, ridges and escarpments, and large areas or “patches” of natural vegetation. Second, an “Offensive” or “Development” Strategy was proposed to spatially isolate growth in a compact and efficient way that avoids important environmental features. Through these two strategies, the regional landscape can be protected while a sustainable regional settlement pattern accommodates the region’s expected growth.
Calgary Metropolitan Plan (CMP)

The consultants worked closely with all member municipalities of the Partnership to determine where existing development is located, where their existing municipal plans have identified future development, and where they envisioned future growth. This was done as a “boundary-free” exercise.

Governance

The Partnership has acknowledged that the implementation of the CMP will require the capacity for regional decision-making. While consensus will always be the goal, occasionally consensus will not be reached. Therefore, an alternative decision-making process that democratically represents the population of the region and the membership that comprises the region must be used to ensure effective governance.

The CMP will implement a super majority decision-making model. Under this model, any binding decision requires the support of:

1. A majority of the region’s population, and
2. At least two-thirds of the Partnership’s membership.

This is the decision-making model that the Government of Alberta has accepted for the Capital Region Board in the Edmonton Region to guide the development and implementation of its regional growth management plan.
The CMP outlines principles and objectives to guide the development and implementation of regional infrastructure and services to support the land use policies of the plan. Regional infrastructure is essential to the success of the plan. Infrastructure planning will be closely aligned with the regional settlement pattern which promotes intensification of existing development and directs new development areas that can be supported by the efficient delivery of regional water, wastewater, transportation, transit, solid waste and other services. Given Calgary’s central location and infrastructure capacity, it will be important for The City to continue to work with the Partnership and member municipalities to develop short, medium and long term plans for the funding and staging of regional infrastructure and services.
With ratification of the Calgary Metropolitan Plan, implementation will now begin. There will be a two-year process of further consultation with municipalities to refine the location of the growth areas. During this two-year review process, there will be no extension of regional services.

Each municipality will determine the best approach to implement details of the CMP at the local level and will have three years to align their individual municipal plans with the CMP. The City of Calgary will work with other municipalities and the Partnership to implement regional components of the CMP such as the integration of planning, funding, and staging for regional services including transportation, water and wastewater infrastructure. The City of Calgary will also work with the Government of Alberta and the Partnership throughout the implementation of the CMP to ensure alignment with the Provincial Land Use Framework.