



# The Guidebook for Great Communities

Stakeholder Report Back: What We Heard  
September 18, 2019, Share Back Session

## Project overview

Communities are never static, they are constantly evolving and growing. As communities grow, change, and adapt over time, the choices and opportunities for its existing and new residents should increase. Increasing choice allows residents to age in their community and families to thrive; choice allows people to try different food and shops that suit their individual style and tastes; choice allows people of various abilities, ages, and skills to play, relax and recover in a way that meets their needs. Communities benefit and become more vibrant and resilient by offering choice.

The Guidebook is a set of planning policies based on a set of core values that support a community conversation about how great communities for everyone can be achieved in Calgary. The policies found in this Guidebook direct local area plans, planners, communities, residents and industry members to implement these core values. Great communities for everyone function as cohesive places, often consisting of several traditional neighbourhood areas, where residents and visitors can work, live, recreate, get what they need and want, and feel welcomed.

## Engagement overview

Since the approval of the Guidebook in 2017, Administration has been actively engaging with communities and stakeholders to use the Guidebook through local area planning processes and applications. Collaboration and feedback have given staff a lot of great information that is being used to inform the next-generation Guidebook. Phase 1 included engagement with communities and stakeholders through local area plan engagements, online surveys, and meetings with various groups. Phase 2 engagement includes targeted engagement with representatives from communities, the Federation of Calgary Communities, developers, and other stakeholders to help us refine the tools that were informed by the Phase 1 engagements.

## What we asked

The Multi-Stakeholder Share Back Session was held to provide clarity on:

- New Planning System
- Engagements, Milestones, & Circulations
- Key Themes & Intentional Moves
- Next Steps

Staff shared with stakeholders about the foundation of the new planning system. Engagements, milestones, and circulations outlined the numerous touch-points that we had with stakeholders. Staff went through the various iterations of the draft policy document, how we responded to comments, and who/what informed those iterations. Next steps summarized key messages, what will be included in our reports to Committee and Council, and opportunities for future engagement. Discussions were held with those that attended the event, and this report outlines the question-and-answer discussion.



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## What we heard

**Question:** Will the areas where the Heritage Special Policy Modifiers are applied in the existing ARP be retained when the multi-community plan is done for this area?

- Guidebook provides the framework for LAP's, but context-specific cases will be addressed with specific policy directly in the LAP.
- Depends on the on-going work with the Heritage polices and tools review. Special policy areas in existing ARPs are not the same as the ones proposed in the Guidebook for Great Communities.

**Question:** Will the Heritage SPA be brought back into the Guidebook? What is the Heritage team bringing to Council? Concern with making sure all the work that went into developing those tools doesn't get lost.

- Still determining where is the best place to insert it.
- Engagement session that is coming up in October will answer those questions

**Question:** What is the difference between Comprehensive Development Site (CDS) and Future Planning is still very unclear. At the local area plan stage will the future of this site be addressed? If the CDS is almost always malls, make that clear. What about golf courses? It would be much better to combine the two, many sites are often both. It would allow a more proactive approach on how they will evolve.

- There is a distinction between the two. Comprehensive sites are typically large mall sites that could be re-developed. They will typically have private, internal infrastructure (roadways, etc.) but there is still a need to have an interface of this site to the adjacent public realm. Therefore, the policies for this policy modifier will ensure there is a connection. Most of these sites will be malls but there are some instances it may not be that is why we were not specific on the current use for these areas.
- The future planning modifier are those sites where we are not certain what the appropriate UFC should be on the site and it is unlikely that we will know the appropriate UFC for it in the middle to long term. There will be a need to have additional consultation on the purpose and function of the site, whereas this is known for the comprehensive sites.
- There will be graphics in the Guidebook that will provide more clarity.

**Question:** What will the process be for adapting the document after we learn lessons through testing, for example through North Hill? Is it a statutory stand-alone document or will it still be part of the MDP? Will specific intervals be set up for making adjustments?

- This is a living document, so we know that amendments will be required. The opportunities for incorporating these items into the Guidebook can be through related initiatives, such as the Established Area Growth and Change Strategy. If there is a report back for this project, it could include a bylaw and recommendation to hold a public hearing, so the amendments could be incorporated by this related initiative. In other words, it does not have to be a report on the Guidebook.



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- Question:** Parking reform is good. Are you looking at maximums for parking instead of minimums?
- We have not yet had that conversation, and there are a number of ways that this could be addressed, including the use of maximums.
- Statement:** Potential unintended consequence with parking: problems may be created by lower requirements for the inner city where there's lots of transit. However many financial institutions look at how much parking is provided in order to give financing for businesses.
- Agreed. Will be exploring this as we build the new districts.
- Statement:** You need to dialogue with Calgary Parking Authority, since they don't seem to align their strategy with what they're doing. Street is still being treated as something that residents own. Multi-developments may not have access to street parking. Commercial businesses are at a disadvantage to the residential permitting system as well
- We have been collaborating with transportation. We will have the opportunity and time to influence this change.
- Question:** Right now, you're not tied to implementing the low-density district through multi-community plans? You will ask Council how they would like to implement it?
- Correct. Similar as the heritage policy. City-wide approach as a way to address it to respond in a balanced and even way.
  - The intent of the new district is to reduce the disparity between communities that have a LAP comparative to those that do not have an LAP, through the new planning system. As it stands now, we have it on a site-by-site basis.
  - This new district should be applied to all communities, what we are asking Council is the how, not where. We do not want to presuppose Council's decision. The new district will be done in Q2 2021 and will apply everywhere. But first we need the direction for the new district.
  - This will have different options for implementation. Question is how to apply to all the built-out areas.
- Statement:** There are inconsistencies in how R-CG is being dealt with or applied.
- In most cases, Council has been supportive of R-CG but there can be inconsistencies. This is under the control of Council. The existing R-CG district has its own limitations, so our recommendation is not to utilize this district as it is currently written. We need Council's direction as we have not yet drafted a new district and this new district will be done over the next year with stakeholders.
- Statement:** Bad idea to come forward with this before an election. Concern that this will be a politicized decision with it being so close to the election.
- The discussion on having city-wide will come in October and November of this year. Only how it gets applied will be addressed in 2021.
- Question:** Is the new low-density district to serve all of the Neighbourhood Urban Form Categories?
- No. It will serve the Neighbourhood Urban Form Categories that are at a Limited scale only. All other scales will not be included in this district.



- Question:** What will then happen to North Hill? Not sure it's appropriate to add the extra pressure in North Hill with this district.
- An Urban Form Category will still go into the local area plan outlining what is appropriate there. The district to implement that category will come later. There is no additional pressure added to North Hill in this regard.
- Question:** How do you make decisions at the multi-community plan stage on applying the urban form categories if you don't have the district yet? The categories themselves are so grey, how will the district work from that? What is the difference if both the housing and the commercial urban forms support commercial? Will the district be able to encompass these differences?
- Policy must inform regulation, we outline the vision and principles through policy, and then provide the detailed regulation through the districts.
  - It may not have to be one district to do everything. But the policy will support those several districts.
- Statement:** Concern about timing for developing heritage tools. It may not come forth before a year from now, this risks exposing development with no guiding policies at the expense of heritage buildings.
- We acknowledge this risk. We want to ensure that we get the policies right, and are considering a city-wide approach rather than a local area plan by local area plan approach.
  - We will be working with applications through Community Planning to address this.
- Statement:** How do we bring people along by having such aggressive timelines? Warning about communities being unhappy with how fast things are moving... be prepared.
- We acknowledge the aggressive timelines. We are working to establish new ways of having conversations with stakeholders. This means that some stakeholders may have concerns with doing things differently, however, administration feels that this will reduce stakeholder fatigue in the long run and will allow stakeholders to have the right conversations at the right time. Change management has been an identified risk, and must be done along with engagement and education.
- Statement:** There is no acknowledgement of the topography of our city. This Guidebook is missing elements of guidance to address slope. Not realistic to expect universal accessibility everywhere. We need to be more aware of the impacts it has on the cost of housing. Especially for commercial ground-level mixed-use that don't have the dividing wall. Some language could be borrowed from Vancouver.
- We received that comment before, and it has been addressed within the document. We were very clear when we used the words "accessible", "universally accessible", and "barrier free" so that it is clear when we are talking about "access to a site" versus being "universally accessible" or "barrier free". We could explore putting a definition in the glossary.



- Question:** Challenge to engagement this summer. Feeling of not having been engaged on Chapter 3. Real input on the Guidebook will be done when it is being approved for North Hill. Specific concerns about the policy in the Guidebook should be addressed before it goes on October 2<sup>nd</sup> and Nov 18<sup>th</sup>. Would like more clarity on how amendments to the Guidebook will be done if they are necessary.
- We recognize that amendments will be necessary. We are linked with the N. Hill Plan so we will know what may need to be amended in the GB to align them. We are also working with other related projects, and will identify amendments as they arise. We won't have a concrete report-back timeline, but will be flexible with needs as they come up.
  - We looked at the comments from NAIOP and BILD when revising Chapter 3. Chapter 3 contains policies that are sound planning principles and are within existing plans.
- Question:** How will the feedback loop work with amendments to the Guidebook? Would the ability to track and make publicly available all "parking lot" items to ensure they are addressed?
- Making a list that is publicly available may be hard to do, but we are exploring new opportunities for how to collaborate with stakeholders and to remain transparent with future work.
- Question:** Will something change in terms of what the Community Associations (CA) gets when there is an application? How would the CA know to look into using the Guidebook policies (chapter 3) when they use the checklist?
- We'll need to update our Partners in Planning courses, and there may be different opportunities as well.
  - Checklist may not be the right approach, but we will be working with our staff to ensure that information is out there.
- Statement:** Document is still a little long and complex, but is good. Chapter 3 is well done, and any good applicant should already be doing these things. They are good planning principles.
- Agreed
- Question:** Concern that the new district will be up-zoning low-density properties. How will this impact existing R-C1 and R-C2 properties?
- Chapter 3 addresses the development on these parcels. Land Use redesignations will continue to happen and these policies address how the buildings should be built.
- Statement:** It is difficult to differentiate between the colors in the Urban Forms and the Scale map.
- We have worked very closely with our mapping team to select colours that will work. As we are testing with North Hill and future local area plans, if an issue is identified, we will explore how to address it at that time.