

# RAISING A SMART CITY

WHY CALGARY WILL GROW IN, IN ORDER TO GROW UP



A Smarter Growth Initiative Publication  
[smartergrowth.ca](http://smartergrowth.ca)

This publication was prepared by the Smarter Growth Initiative, a collaboration between the Urban Development Institute - Calgary and the Canadian Home Builders' Association - Calgary Region.

Calgary has been one of the fastest-growing cities in North America for more than four years. That presents both challenges and opportunities. A smart approach to growth will ensure that we continue to be one of the most livable cities in the world.

This is one booklet in a series of seven, each focused on a major factor affecting our region's urban development. The topics within each publication are explored further through articles on [smartergrowth.ca](https://smartergrowth.ca) and with shared information on Facebook and Twitter (@smarter\_growth).

Learn more at [smartergrowth.ca](https://smartergrowth.ca)

*Our goal is simple: engage Calgarians in dialogue on topics affecting planning and development.*

## IT'S YOUR CITY

As the Calgary Region matures, it's inevitable that we need to change. It's all part of coming of age for a city as young as ours, and part of the constant evolution for every older city. Cities are in a state of perpetual planning, adapting to growing populations, and it's our turn. Based on current population projections, we're about to witness a burst of redevelopment in Calgary.

Because we've always had so much space and because we had relatively few people, we haven't thought much about building in – until now. Factors like more seniors, global influence and expanding tastes all impact the way our city develops. We'll see more multi-family and multi-generation homes and innovative ground-level housing solutions throughout Calgary, including in established neighbourhoods.

Housing diversity is a response to our increasing and changing population.

As we surge forward, it's important to understand how and why political leaders and market forces are driving redevelopment. Together with industry and The City of Calgary, we're all responsible for making sure that Calgary's upcoming urban renewal and change is smart, for now and for the future.



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 06 WHY REDEVELOP?
- 08 THE EVOLUTION OF A CITY
- 10 A CITY'S ROAD MAP
- 14 CHALLENGES
- 18 YES, IN MY BACKYARD
- 24 GET INVOLVED

WHY REDEVELOP?

# FINDING ROOM

In explosive bursts or slow and steady – our population will nearly double by 2041.

A growing population requires a growing number of dwellings. It's not sustainable to simply grow outward. We need up, out AND in to keep our city as one of the most livable in the world.

Without redevelopment, neighbourhoods eventually lose their vitality. In 2004, our established areas lost 13,000 residents to new communities. "Established areas" refers to communities that are not in active development mode. Dwindling numbers in these neighbourhoods make it hard to provide facilities and services like schools or transportation.

And it can be more drastic than that. In Brentwood, the original 1968 population of 9,000 fell by 33% to

6,000 by 2012. An effort to revitalize the community has brought the population up to 7,000, and it continues to grow to healthier levels.

We're reversing the trend of declining population. Since 2009, we've added more than 31,000 residents in established neighbourhoods. Welcoming more people creates renewed vibrancy, which benefits all of us.

Calgary is growing up – let's make it smart growth by developing new communities and by redeveloping in established areas. Our city's future strength depends on it.

View the full City of Calgary "Developed Areas Growth and Change 2014" report at [smartergrowth.ca](http://smartergrowth.ca)

## REDEVELOPMENT FOR A GROWING CITY



NEW CONSTRUCTION ON A SITE THAT HAS PRE-EXISTING USES, LIKE QUARRY PARK

[Remington Development Corp.](#)



URBAN INFILL ON VACANT PARCELS OF LAND WITHIN THE CITY, LIKE WEST CAMPUS

[West Campus Development Trust](#)



REHABILITATION OF NEGLECTED AREAS, LIKE VICTORIA PARK

[Victoria Park BRZ](#)



RESIDENTIAL INFILL, MEANING AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF HOMES IN EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOODS, LIKE BRIDGELAND

[Brookfield Residential](#)



ADAPTIVE REUSE, WHERE OLDER STRUCTURES ARE CONVERTED FOR NEW USES, LIKE THE SIMMONS BUILDING IN EAST VILLAGE

[Jody MacPherson](#)



THE EVOLUTION OF A CITY

# CITIES NEVER SLEEP

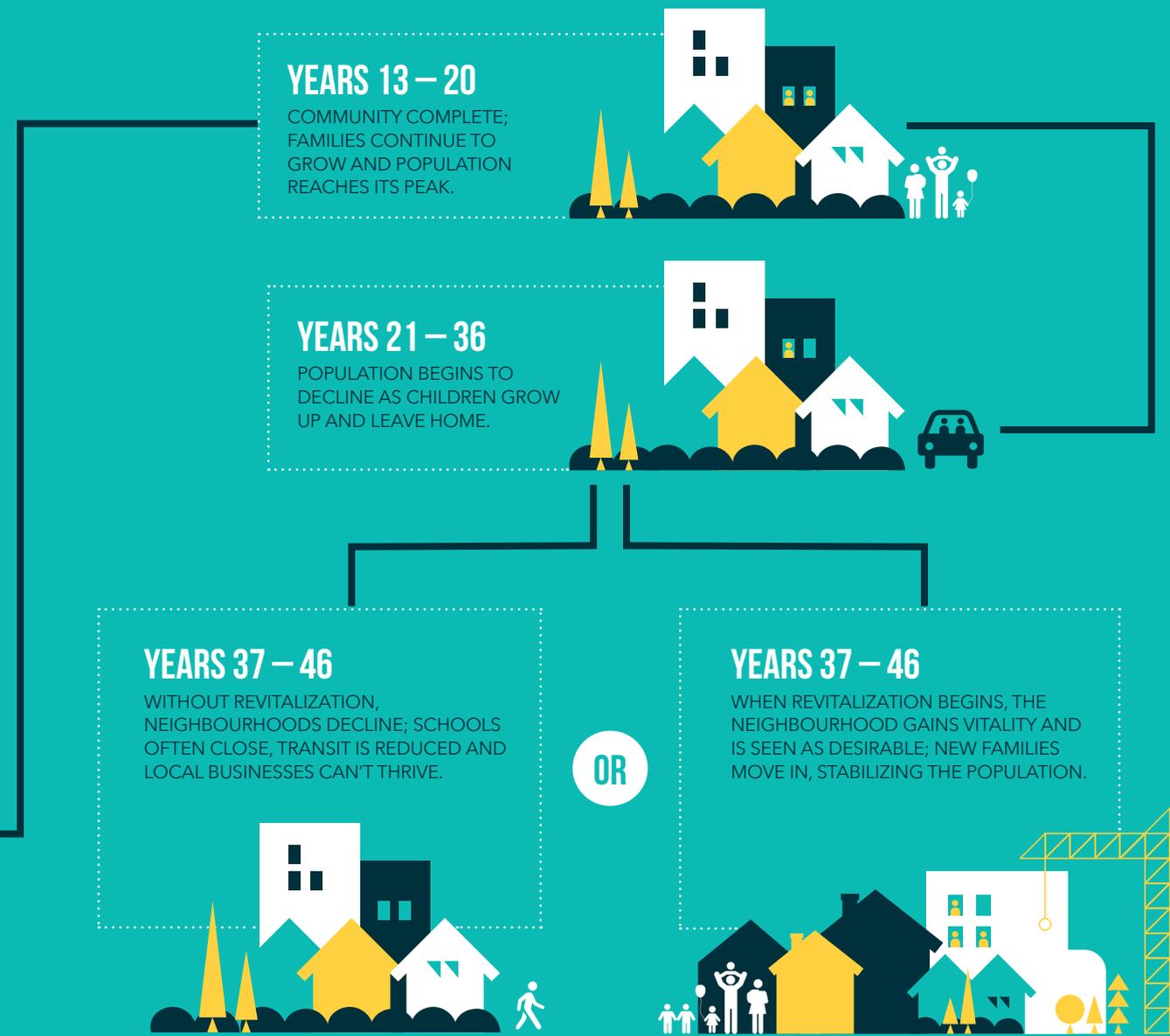
To be a city is to be constantly designed - and redesigned.

Half of Calgarians recently surveyed expressed they'd like to see their neighbourhoods "stay the same." The truth is, neighbourhoods are always evolving and even have a life cycle. Redevelopment is a natural part of city life, and critical to your neighbourhood's health.

See the full ThinkHQ "YYC Growth Benchmark 2015" report at [smartergrowth.ca](http://smartergrowth.ca)



## THE LIFE CYCLE OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD



A CITY'S ROAD MAP

# A BALANCED APPROACH

Meeting our goals means growing up, out and in.

Leading and responding to a fast-growing city requires a vision and a plan. The City of Calgary's award-winning Municipal Development Plan (MDP) formalized in 2009 is just that; it contains hundreds of policies that will shape how Calgary grows and develops over the next 60 years.

A major goal of the MDP is to create a more compact and efficient city through higher population density and more mixed-use buildings, both for brand-new

communities and for established neighbourhoods. More people living and working in an area make the best use of infrastructure and support a widening range of housing choices for all Calgarians.

Our newest neighbourhoods are currently achieving the aggressive population growth goals of the MDP, and we're striking a better balance by accommodating a greater share of the new residents within our already developed areas.

CUMULATIVE POPULATION GROWTH TO BE ACCOMMODATED IN DEVELOPED AREAS THROUGH REDEVELOPMENT.

IN 25 YEARS → 33%  
IN 60 YEARS → 50%

## POPULATION GROWTH TARGETS IN DEVELOPED AREAS



Learn more about the Municipal Development Plan at [smartergrowth.ca](http://smartergrowth.ca)

# MAKING IT WORK

We can't always know precisely where we will see a large influx of residents, or in what kinds of homes. Sometimes, the goals of the MDP, our population growth, market preferences and specific community readiness don't all match up. It's a huge puzzle that The City, industry and Calgarians are piecing together.

Meanwhile, new density targets for new communities have already been implemented. Our outward growth often has higher population densities than many established neighbourhoods. Our consumption of new land has dropped dramatically over the past 15 years. Innovative approaches to new developments and redevelopment make the most of Calgary's urban footprint.

See the full City of Calgary report "Calgary Snapshots 2015" at [smartergrowth.ca](http://smartergrowth.ca)



## HOW ARE WE DOING?

In some areas of the city, we're making unexpected progress. If the Centre City continues to grow at its current rate, we'll reach that area's population target about 6 years ahead of schedule.

The City of Calgary Department of Geodemographics

Our population is now growing at a faster rate than our urban footprint.



Smarter Growth commissioned a survey asking Calgarians about topics related to growth.

It turns out that most of us are aligned with the goals of our Municipal Development Plan (MDP).

**5 GREAT COMMUNITIES**  
76% rated their community as having a good quality of life overall



## 7 GOALS OF THE MDP

**1 GOOD URBAN DESIGN**  
A legacy of quality public and private developments



**3 PROSPEROUS ECONOMY**  
66% felt The City of Calgary is creating a positive environment for businesses to grow



**6 MANAGED GROWTH & CHANGE**  
59% agreed that The City of Calgary has done a good job managing the city's growth



**2 CONNECTED CITY**  
64% stated they use public transit regularly or occasionally



**4 COMPACT CITY**  
56% of Calgarians surveyed approved of City Council's direction on redevelopment



**7 GREENER CITY**  
78% of Calgarians surveyed felt they have good access to green spaces



Learn more about the MDP and the ThinkHQ "YYC Growth Benchmark 2015" report at [smartergrowth.ca](http://smartergrowth.ca)

CHALLENGES

# IT'S NOT SO EASY

Redevelopment is a complex process, sometimes full of surprises.

It may seem that the new condo building down the street just popped up, but it was years in the making before the first shovel hit the earth. Redevelopment can be extremely complex, and is more challenging than building homes in new communities.

It can take decades to review and make necessary adjustments to current policies, like land use bylaws and area plans. And, depending on the designated land use, obtaining a development permit can take months or even years.

Redevelopment in an established community usually requires considerable consultation with residents on

proposed land use and design, and it's impossible to gauge how long that process will take. And a huge amount of work has to be done to discover and mitigate the impact a project will have on existing infrastructure such as underground pipes, traffic flow and transit needs.

Continued investment in infrastructure is just part of city life. Redevelopment projects – which are essentially an investment in our city's future – often cover some of these costs.

**85% OF CALGARIANS SURVEYED SAID THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR WHEN CHOOSING A NEIGHBOURHOOD IS AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS.**



Remington Development Corp., Quarry Park

# UNDERSTANDING THE HURDLES IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD CREATING THE BEST ENVIRONMENT FOR SMART REDEVELOPMENT

## ALIGNING GOALS WITH REALITY

### THE DOTS DON'T ALWAYS CONNECT



To meet MDP goals through redevelopment, several things must align: prepared infrastructure, accurate market assessment of demographic needs, and community readiness. And before that, we need land use bylaws and local area plans aligned with MDP goals. The process of altering policies and bylaws, and preparing the community, can be prohibitive to near-term construction.

## EVERY PROJECT STANDS ALONE

### ONE BY ONE MEANS REDUCED EFFICIENCY



Each project is assessed individually. There are two kinds of permits for redevelopment. "Permitted use" means that if a new project fits a narrow category, there are few hurdles to jump; that's relatively rare. Typically, land is categorized as "discretionary use," requiring review and potential relaxation of policies and bylaws, a check-in with MDP targets, and complete assessment of the impacts on the neighbourhood and the infrastructure.

**63% OF CALGARIANS SURVEYED FEEL THAT MORE PRE-APPROVED BUILDING TYPES ("PERMITTED USE") WOULD HELP THE REDEVELOPMENT PROCESS.**

*ThinkHQ "YYC Growth Benchmark 2015"*

## MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

### IT TAKES TIME TO HEAR IT ALL



Beyond the developers, homebuilders and departments of City administration, there are individual neighbours, community groups, local business associations and elected officials who influence the shape of Calgary. Hearing everyone's voice is imperative to redevelopment success, but it's expensive and slow, and can be fraught with conflicting priorities.

## WHAT WILL THE NEIGHBOURS THINK?

### A LATE VOICE CREATES EXPENSE



Developers and builders usually consult the public prior to construction and then respond to concerns. Even after the engagement process and City approval, individuals and local associations can appeal decisions. Delays add to the final price of a home because of the increased costs of financing and redesign.

## INVISIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE

### BIG RISKS FOR THE BOTTOM LINE



Nobody knows exactly what's underground, and the onus is on each builder to fund engineering studies. Currently, there is no way for developers to know what will be required of them until long after the land is bought and plans are made. That lack of knowledge can create unexpected costs, even up to millions of dollars. The risk is daunting for many local builders, and can result in unexpectedly steep home prices.

## WHAT ELSE?

### PAYING FOR MORE THAN A HOME



Beyond water pipes and storm sewers, decisions are made around all kinds of other infrastructure. The City's process of assessment can bring surprise costs related to off-site infrastructure like bus shelters, streetlights and sidewalks. These costs are ultimately passed along to homebuyers.

YES, IN MY BACKYARD

# FROM NIMBY TO YIMBY

Why should we welcome redevelopment?

Living beside a redevelopment project can definitely be bothersome. Although we understand that additional construction is necessary, we may still be saying “Not in my backyard!”

The positive effects of redevelopment reach far beyond the new buildings. According to the YYC Growth Benchmark 2015 survey, 48% of Calgarians said that redevelopment benefits the entire community.

And twice as many believe that property values increase, rather than decrease, when the community

sees redevelopment. In fact, between 2000 and 2015, the median property value in Altadore went up by 260%, versus 149% in a nearby community where little redevelopment took place.

Yet 52% of those surveyed still oppose an increase in housing density in their neighbourhood. It takes a few deep breaths and some reminders about the good things that renewal brings to the entire community to get to “Yes, in my backyard.”

See the full ThinkHQ “YYC Growth Benchmark 2015” report at [smartergrowth.ca](http://smartergrowth.ca)



## POSITIVE EFFECTS OF REDEVELOPMENT



HIGHER ACTIVITY  
FOR RESIDENTS



MORE NEW  
INVESTMENT



WIDER RANGE OF  
NEARBY JOBS



BETTER  
SHOPPING AND  
ENTERTAINMENT



IMPROVED  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
AND AMENITIES



INCREASED  
PROPERTY  
VALUES

“I SUPPORT SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN HOUSING DENSITY IN MY NEIGHBOURHOOD.”

LIVING IN INNER CITY — 63%

MULTI-FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS — 59%

UNDER 35 YEARS OF AGE — 55%

UNDER 5 YEARS IN CALGARY — 54%

# HOW WILL IT LOOK?

What kinds of housing will we see? All kinds. And more mixed-use construction in all neighbourhoods, so residents can live, work and play in a compact area.

As these changes unfold, you'll notice The City and industry working more closely together to align the funding for neighbourhood amenities with the timing of redevelopment. So, as new housing goes up, so do better sidewalks, signals, transit and vehicle infrastructure, and even green spaces. These costs are shared by The City and builders, and should be coordinated. Hopefully, as Calgarians see the benefits of redevelopment while it happens, there will be more "Yes!" than "No!".

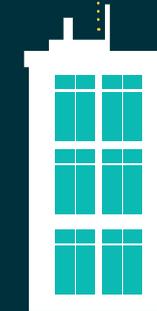
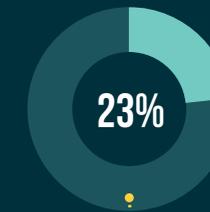
See the full ThinkHQ "YYC Growth Benchmark 2015" report at [smartergrowth.ca](http://smartergrowth.ca)

Redevelopment typically brings greater dwelling diversity, meaning residents can change home styles as their needs evolve but can remain strongly connected to their community.

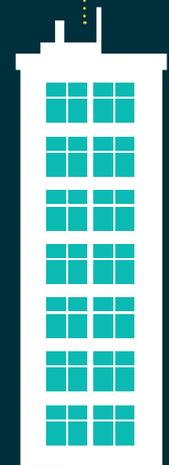
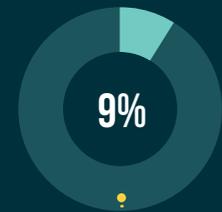
## WHAT DO WE WANT?\*



SINGLE-FAMILY HOME, DETACHED OR SEMI-DETACHED



MULTI-FAMILY HOME, UNDER 6 STOREYS



MULTI-FAMILY, ABOVE 7 STOREYS

\*5% of those surveyed responded "other."



### IS OUR DEFINITION OF HOME CHANGING?

As we diversify, so do our dwelling choices. A home is more than a typical single-family house - it could be a condo, a townhome, a duplex or something built in a laneway. We talk about dwellings and units and housing, but they are all homes. They just don't all look alike.

"I CAN SEE MYSELF LIVING IN AN INNER CITY CONDO IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS."

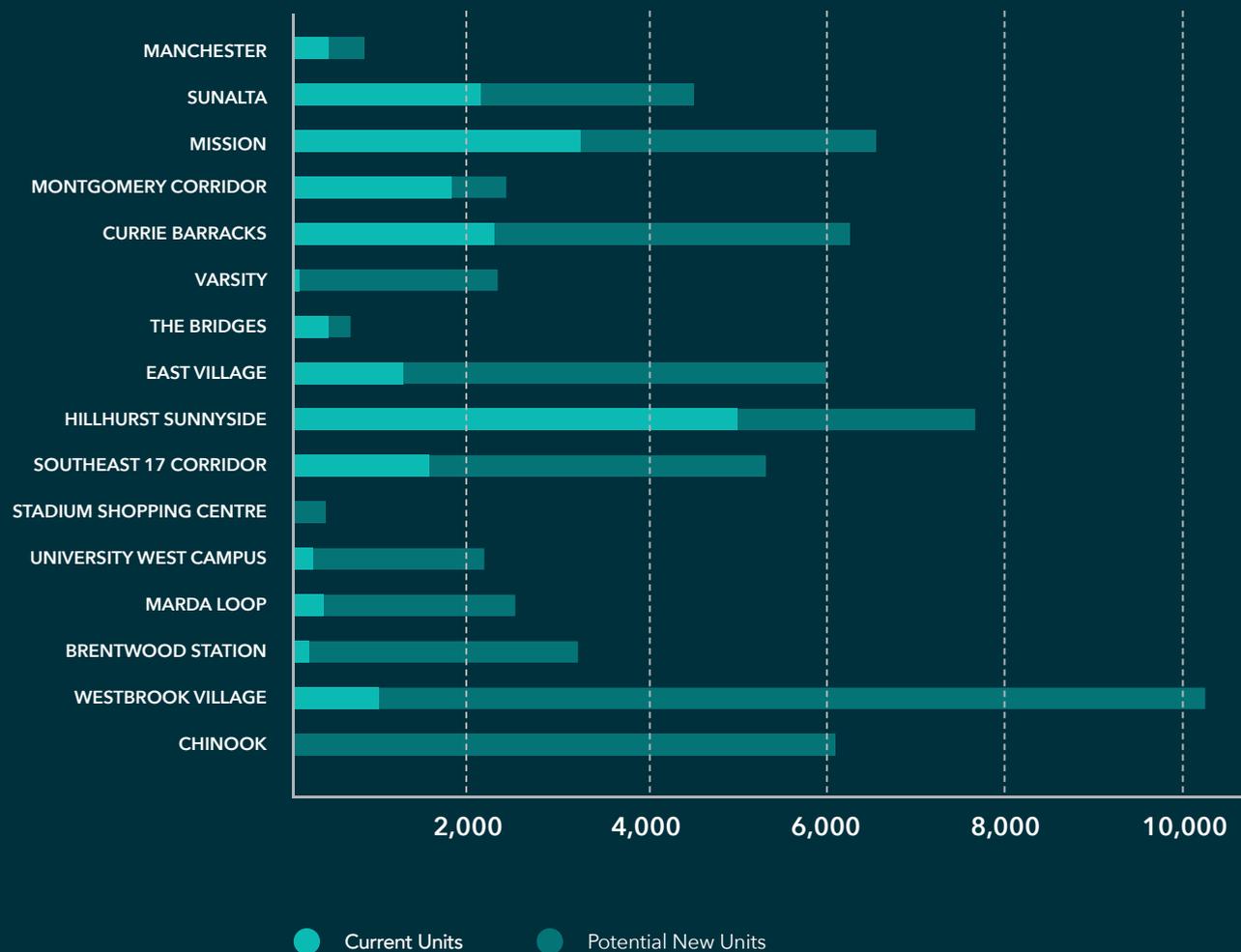
UNDER 35 YEARS OF AGE — 39%

SINGLE — 46%

MARRIED WITH KIDS — 16%

UNDER 5 YEARS IN CALGARY — 42%

## EXISTING AND POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN RECENT LOCAL PLAN AREAS



## YES, IN YOUR BACKYARD

How many new homes are we talking about adding to our developed areas? We need to add around 80,000 units in the next 25 years to reach MDP targets, and yet we only have the immediate potential to build fewer than 50,000.

Many established communities have plenty of room to accommodate new infill development. For example, there are 15 Calgary communities that have fulfilled only 28 – 45% of their population density capacity. Surprisingly, it is not always neighbourhoods far from the core that have low density. For example, Glamorgan and Tuxedo Park both have plenty of space for new residents.

Other communities, such as Sunnyside and Crescent Heights, have achieved 75% of maximum density.

Infill redevelopment doesn't always mean an influx of people in your neighbourhood. Communities experiencing redevelopment are often also losing population as children grow up and move out. For example, in Mount Pleasant, there were 314 building permits for new single-family or duplex homes between 2001 and 2011, resulting in 104 net new units. Yet in that time, the population increase has been modest, with just 91 people added.



## WHERE WILL THE FIRST 50,000 NEW HOMES APPEAR?

**26,035**

INNER CITY AND CENTRE CITY  
Residential areas built before the 1950s, like Hillhurst Sunnyside.

**10,228**

ESTABLISHED COMMUNITIES  
Residential areas built between the 1950s and the 1990s, like Brentwood.

**3,385**

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTRES  
Local destinations for multiple communities, usually retail, like Aspen Landing.

**7,103**

URBAN CORRIDORS  
A primary transit street, like 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue North.

**4,699**

NEIGHBOURHOOD CORRIDORS  
Main streets, like 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.E., for one or more communities.

GET INVOLVED

# BE PART OF AN EXCITING FUTURE

Stay informed and lend your voice to the dialogue.

As redevelopment becomes increasingly urgent to meet our population demands, The City, industry and community members are working together to determine a comprehensive, smart plan and process for a more compact city. We're collaborating to promote an environment where the right investments in infrastructure and a focus on processes will foster more innovation and choice, better neighbourhood amenities, mobility options and a thriving city.

Stay informed on issues facing the Calgary Region. Get to know your elected officials, talk to your friends, and attend open forums and public consultations – it's your city to build.

The Smarter Growth Initiative is here to provide balanced information on issues and planning trends in the Calgary Region. Join the conversation at [smartergrowth.ca](http://smartergrowth.ca) and be part of a bigger, smarter tomorrow.

VISIT US AT [SMARTERGROWTH.CA](http://SMARTERGROWTH.CA) 

## UPCOMING PUBLICATIONS

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

### FROM DIRT TO DOOR

Creating dynamic communities where Calgarians can thrive is a complex process. You may see a great house in a great neighbourhood, but what don't you see? Discover what it really took to catch your eye.

LAND SUPPLY

### DRIVEN BY DEMAND

More people means more housing. How much more? And where? Researchers are working full time to make forecasts and create a land supply strategy. Here's what they know. Find out what they're saying.

PAYING FOR GROWTH

### WHO PAYS FOR WHAT AND WHY?

Understanding exactly who pays for our city's growth is critical for all of us. See the balance sheet for yourself and learn where you fit in – you might be surprised.

COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

### LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE

Intelligent urbanization leads to better health, stronger economies, more safety, less pollution, and improved social and family ties. Learn more about complete communities and how they are catching on in Calgary.

## PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS

AN OVERVIEW

### HOW TO BUILD A GREAT CITY

Calgary is one of the fastest-growing cities in North America. That can be both good and bad. A smart approach to growth will ensure that we continue to be one of the most livable cities in the world.

MARKET DEMAND

### THE CHANGING FACE OF CALGARY

Our population is not only growing – it's also changing. Naturally, not everybody wants the same thing when it comes to housing. Learn how demographics are promoting versatility in Calgary's dwellings, and what it means to stay affordable.

Order publications at [smartergrowth.ca](http://smartergrowth.ca) 

## RESOURCES

*Calgary Snapshots 2015*, The City of Calgary, 2015

*Developed Areas Growth and Change 2014*, The City of Calgary, 2014

*Municipal Development Plan*, The City of Calgary, 2009

*Population Projection: Alberta 2014 – 2041*, Alberta Treasury Board and Finance, July 2014

*Rethinking Sprawl*, Neptis Foundation, 2014

*YYC Growth Benchmark 2015*, ThinkHQ Public Affairs, 2015



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OF A BIGGER, SMARTER TOMORROW.

THE SMARTER GROWTH INITIATIVE IS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN  
THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE - CALGARY AND  
THE CANADIAN HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION - CALGARY REGION.

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Canadian  
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Association



*Calgary Region*



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