Guidebook for Great Communities – Backgrounder

A. Premise of the Existing Guidebooks

In 2017, the Developed Areas Guidebook (Municipal Development Plan: Volume 2, Part 3) was approved as one of three guidebooks intended to help implement the broad visions of the Municipal Development Plan. The purpose of the guidebooks was to standardize and simplify planning processes, facilitating efficiency in the local area planning process by providing a framework of building blocks to be used consistently in local area planning work, allowing the local area plan process to focus on area-specific policies that are unique to communities.

B. Why a new Guidebook for Great Communities versus a revised Developed Areas Guidebook?
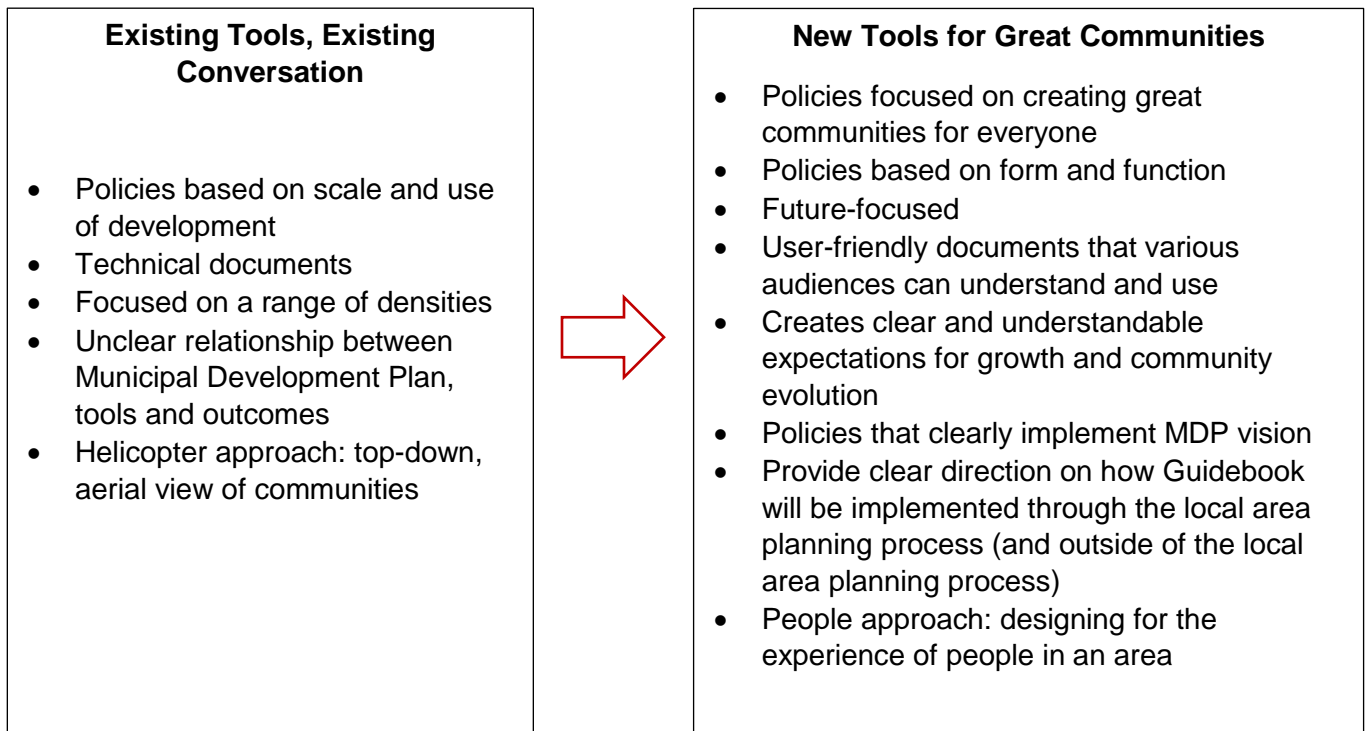
Since adoption in 2017, Administration has been working on revisions to the Developed Areas Guidebook to address outstanding concerns, such as missing or confusing building blocks and gaps in certain policy topics. At the same time, many discussions were being had around issues with existing districts and rules in the Land Use Bylaw, implying that there was a gap between policy and implementation. Addressing the Developed Areas Guidebook and Bylaw separately only created further disparity between the documents resulting in consistent requests for updates, while not addressing the systemic underlying issues.

Upon further review of the Developed Areas Guidebook and based on feedback received from several different engagements (both on this document as well as other ongoing planning initiatives), it became clear that revisions to the existing Developed Areas Guidebook were not the best way to address outstanding concerns.

Through both the Developed Areas Guidebook and Land Use Bylaw projects, it was determined that before Administration would be able to address the issues within the individual tools, a new planning system was needed. Instead of continually updating existing tools, it's about imagining new tools for a different, people-centred outcome-focused conversation.

C. What do "New Tools for a Different Conversation" Look Like?

The *Guidebook for Great Communities* (*Guidebook*) is a new tool in the planning system, helping to create great communities for everyone and encouraging the evolution of communities in a resilient and sustainable way. The following illustration outlines the main changes between the current and future approaches to planning:

Existing Tools, Existing Conversation	New Tools for Great Communities
 • Policies based on scale and use of development • Technical documents • Focused on a range of densities • Unclear relationship between Municipal Development Plan, tools and outcomes • Helicopter approach: top-down, aerial view of communities	• Policies focused on creating great communities for everyone • Policies based on form and function • Future-focused • User-friendly documents that various audiences can understand and use • Creates clear and understandable expectations for growth and community evolution • Policies that clearly implement MDP vision • Provide clear direction on how Guidebook will be implemented through the local area planning process (and outside of the local area planning process) • People approach: designing for the experience of people in an area

D. How does the *Guidebook* Deliver Great Communities for Everyone?

The *Guidebook* is the first step of implementing a new, people-centred outcome-based, planning system. It provides a refreshed approach to guiding local area planning by establishing a new way of categorizing the different elements of a community, common to all built-out areas in Calgary. The *Guidebook* provides a shift in perspective aligned with a new planning system geared to enabling great communities for everyone. With inclusivity and equitable opportunities at the core of the *Guidebook*, policies should help to make life better for everyone as they go about their daily journeys.

Guidebook Structure and Function
The *Guidebook* has been structured in a way that clearly outlines what each section is used for, who uses each section, how each section is applied and when each section should be used. By doing this, Administration was able to divide the Guidebook into four chapters:
> 1. Introduction – establishes the need for a new approach to planning based on the principles and goals for great communities.
> 2. Planning Great Communities for Everyone – establishes a consistent urban form classification system to be used consistently in all new local area plans that will guide future growth and change.
> 3. Building Great Communities for Everyone – establishes policies to help development realize the principles and goals for great communities.
> 4. Tools for Great Communities for Everyone – establishes the legal framework for the document as well as optional policy tools for local area plans.

Goals

To align with the vision of the Municipal Development Plan, the foundation of the *Guidebook* is based on eight goals for great communities. The goals are:

1   Promote varied, inclusive and equitable housing options.

2   Provide opportunities to access goods, services and amenities close by.

3   Offer opportunities to gather and participate in civic, arts, cultural and entertainment activities, in both public and private spaces

4   Provide varied and inclusive spaces and facilities for recreation, play and outdoor activities, close by.

5   Ensure spaces are designed for everyone, foster a sense of place and are connected together - however a person moves.

6   Ensure natural areas, biodiversity and ecological functions are protected, restored, created, and enjoyed.

7   Enable and support prosperity through diverse economic opportunities at a variety of scales.

8   Support the use of existing streets, services and buildings to reduce the need for new infrastructure.

Urban Classification System

One of the biggest differences between the existing Developed Areas Guidebook and the new *Guidebook for Great Communities*, is the shift from using building blocks to a new classification system. This system was created to capture how people experience their communities versus a system focused around different built form categories and classifying communities by uses, built form and densities without necessarily a clear understanding of what that might mean.

Administration has created an urban form classification system, providing communities with a different way to talk about how they experience their community. The way a community is built out and evolves should support the activity of the people who are there and will be there in the future. The urban classification system is designed around how people experience their community and what that means for how their communities evolve.

By using this system, the areas of a community are categorized by identifying the purpose, general function and activity level of different parts of a community, and understanding how they relate to and support each other. The classification system is comprised of sixteen categories, which are meant to be flexible and adaptable to multiple community contexts by enabling local area plans to mix-and-match categories to reflect broader policy direction and the future growth outcomes of the local area planning exercise.

E. Ongoing Initiatives

While the adoption of the *Guidebook* is a major milestone in changing the approach to planning, it will be an iterative process, accepting that the conversation about how communities evolve is ongoing. As Administration works through a number of other initiatives, there are many touchpoints where the *Guidebook* can, and will, evolve.

The Guidebook for a Renewed Land Use Bylaw

The *Guidebook* provides a different perspective, allowing for a renewal of the Land Use Bylaw based on the principles and goals of this outcome-focused system. This will create clear links and a clear line of sight between policy and regulation, and will provide a common understanding around expectations for how a community grows and evolves. The Bylaw will be supported by visual 'How-To Guides" that will help illustrate the intent of the rules, making it clear why design elements should be considered and how.

Local Area Planning

Administration is currently piloting the multi-community planning process using the new conversation provided for in the *Guidebook*. This experience will inform future local area planning as well as any needed updates to the *Guidebook*. Future multi-community planning processes will also inform updates to the *Guidebook* as well as the creation of new land use districts.

Heritage

The preservation and retention of heritage assets is a key consideration in over 20 communities throughout Calgary. Initially, the *Guidebook* contained new draft policy to create overlay areas to support heritage conservation, known as Heritage Special Policy Areas. The intent of the overlay was to establish better economic and physical equivalency between existing heritage development and new development. Both positive and negative stakeholder feedback was received during the creation and review of the policy. Through testing of this policy, unexpected and significant consequences were raised regarding its application within the new planning system, especially when applying it at a community-level rather than at a city-wide level. While this tool provided individual communities with a way to consider heritage conservation at the local area plan creation stage, it did not provide The City with a holistic approach for retaining heritage assets.

As such, Administration determined that the *Guidebook* was not the right venue for this type of planning tool. Instead, on 2019 December 4, Administration will bring forward a report to Planning and Urban Development Committee of Council, regarding heritage incentives and tools, which will provide a holistic approach to heritage conservation, including both financial and policy options. The report will allow the proposed overlay concept to be considered in association with other proposed heritage conservation tools and incentives. If Council is supportive of the heritage overlay concept, Administration can determine the appropriate city-wide approach for how to use the overlay fairly and appropriately. This direction would also benefit from the anticipated direction of creating a new land use district for our local neighbourhood areas, that can also help to implement rules and processes, where appropriate, to aide with the retention of heritage assets.
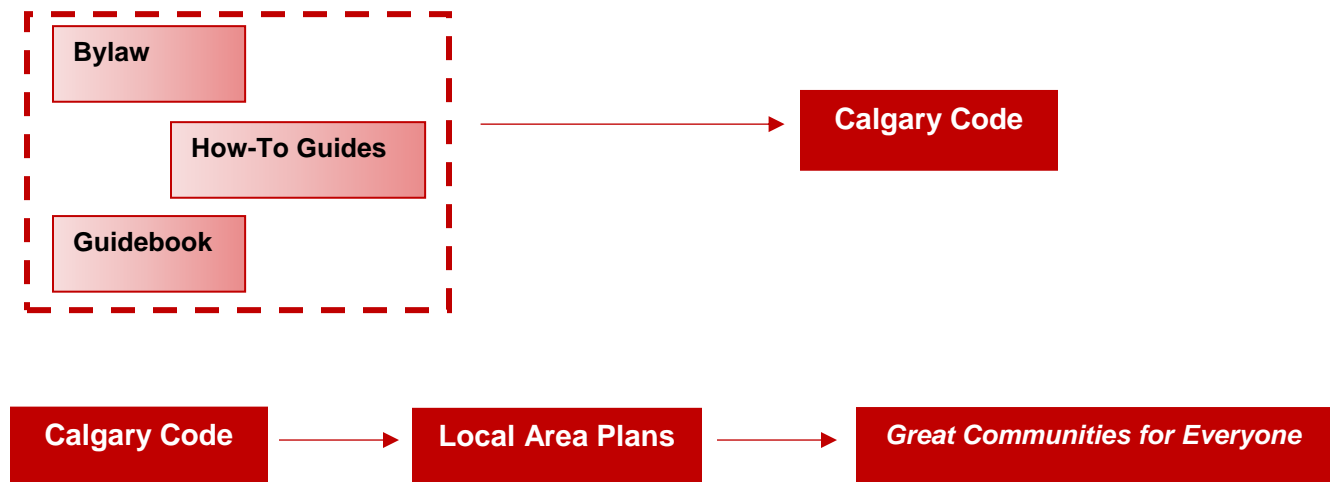
Funding and Financing

The *Guidebook* includes high-level direction around the new conversations to be had with communities; however, more detailed policy direction around investment such as suggested funding

and financing tools are not included in this version of the *Guidebook*. Administration is currently reviewing funding and financing tools to support change in established areas and it is intended that the *Guidebook* will be updated to allow for implementation of these tools as appropriate. Including these tools within the *Guidebook* will create a consistent method for future local area plans. Future funding and financing tools outlined in the *Guidebook* will also provide policy guidance ahead of local area plan work, which may not be needed if recently built-out areas of the city are not experiencing redevelopment pressure.

Towards a Calgary Code

Over time, as the *Guidebook* evolves and progress is made on the renewal of the Land Use Bylaw, there will be an opportunity to assess the structure of the system of planning policies and regulations, combining policy and regulation into one document, potentially creating a made-in-Calgary hybrid code (Calgary Code). This Calgary Code would provide a unified policy approach for the entire city in a manner that is ultimately focused on creating great communities for everyone. As shown in the graphic below, this new approach will not only allow the local area plans to be the vessel to creating the outcomes for communities, it will allow Administration to contemplate different application processes better aligned with the new planning system. This approach will combine policy, the How-to Guides and the regulation in one consistent document – the Calgary Code.

Different conversations with New tools to successfully achieve outcomes