Urban Form Classification System Details

At the July 27, 2020 meeting of Council, Administration was directed to evolve the Urban Form Categories based on feedback received through local area plans using the Guidebook, citizen, stakeholder, and Council feedback, as well as feedback from staff from a variety of business units. Feedback received to date includes:

- The system is too complicated;
- There is a lack of clarity on the differentiation between different categories;
- The level of detail is too vague and subjective, leading to uncertainty around implementation;
- Connection to the Land Use Bylaw is unclear; and,
- There are too many permutations when applying policy modifiers to urban form categories.

Since July, Administration has been advancing the Urban Form Categories (UFC's) in the following ways:

1. Working with staff from various business units to re-design the Urban Form Categories;
2. Targeted stakeholder engagement with citizens, communities, advocates, planners, developers, and builders to get their feedback on the draft new UFC's; and,
3. Testing the draft UFC's with North Hill Communities Local Area Plan and other in-flight local area plans.

Summary of changes

In summary, the key revisions presented with this report have improved the Urban Form Categories by:

- using fewer categories (13 instead of 45 permutations)
- making it more legible for users
- providing more distinction between categories;
- providing clear built form outcomes;
- focusing the Parks categories to be more about the use and function of the park rather than activity level to help provide clarity around programming and to align with other Park's (BU) policies;
- removing the industrial transition category – this has become policy embedded directly into four of the categories and will be an element that is mapped on the local area plan map; and,
- embedding the previous, separate layer of policy modifiers directly into the urban form categories.

Pre-2020 July Guidebook categories

The previous version of the Guidebook used a systems approach that identified and categorized the purpose, general function and activity level of different parts of a community. The Urban Form Classification System was comprised of fourteen categories that direct future built form outcomes. Categories were determined by filtering the information collected during local area

planning exercises, through a series of steps, into categories based on purpose, general function, activity level and scale.

The graphic below outlines the previous version of the Urban Form Categories:

Graphic 1: Pre-2020 July Urban Form Categories
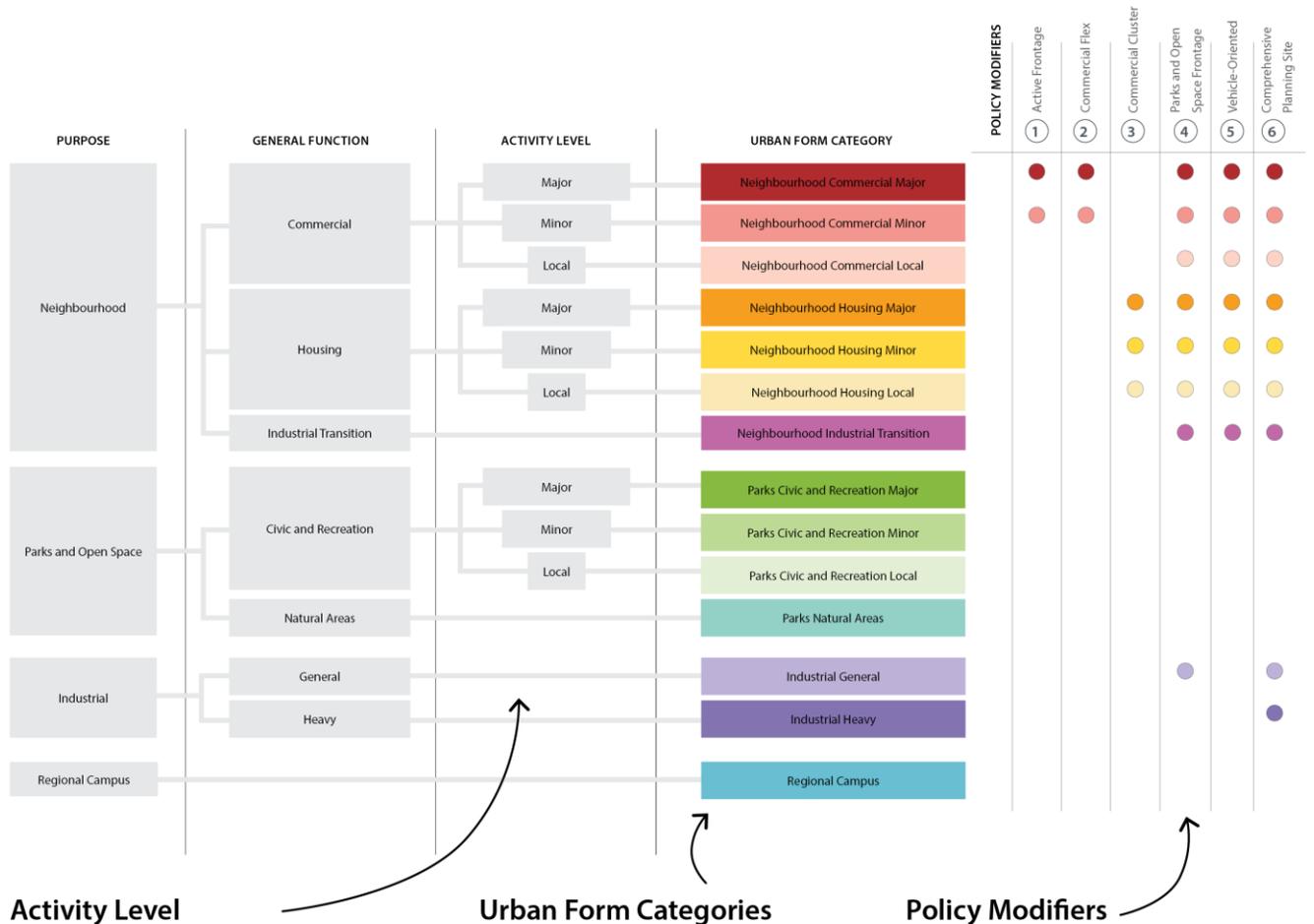
Activity Level

Activity level refers to the current or anticipated activity generated by people in an area. This activity happens when people move in and out of buildings and interact along a street. In the current urban form classification system, three different activity levels are incorporated into the Neighbourhood and the Parks urban form categories: major, minor and local.

Urban Form Categories

An urban form category is a built-form outcome that is made up of the general function (the use people experience on the ground) and the activity level on the street. The Guidebook's urban form classification system is comprised of 14 categories that direct desired urban form outcomes for the different areas of a local area plan.

Policy Modifiers

Policy modifiers are optional policy components that are used to tailor urban form categories to address specific situations that are commonly found within each plan area. There are currently 6 policy modifiers in the Guidebook, that can modify different urban form categories.

2021 January Urban Form Categories

The new proposed UFC's are more clear, distinct, and descriptive with clear built form outcomes. Most of the policy created in the pre-2020 July UFC System remains and are re-organized in the 2021 January UFC's. This has resulted in more understandable, easier to use categories, and simplifies the mapping of categories within a local area plan. This results in a more legible and understandable map (as shown in the North Hill Communities Local Area Plan). Scale has not changed from the pre-2020 July System and remains applicable to the Neighbourhood and Vehicle-Oriented Commercial categories only.

Graphic 2: 2021 January Urban Form Categories
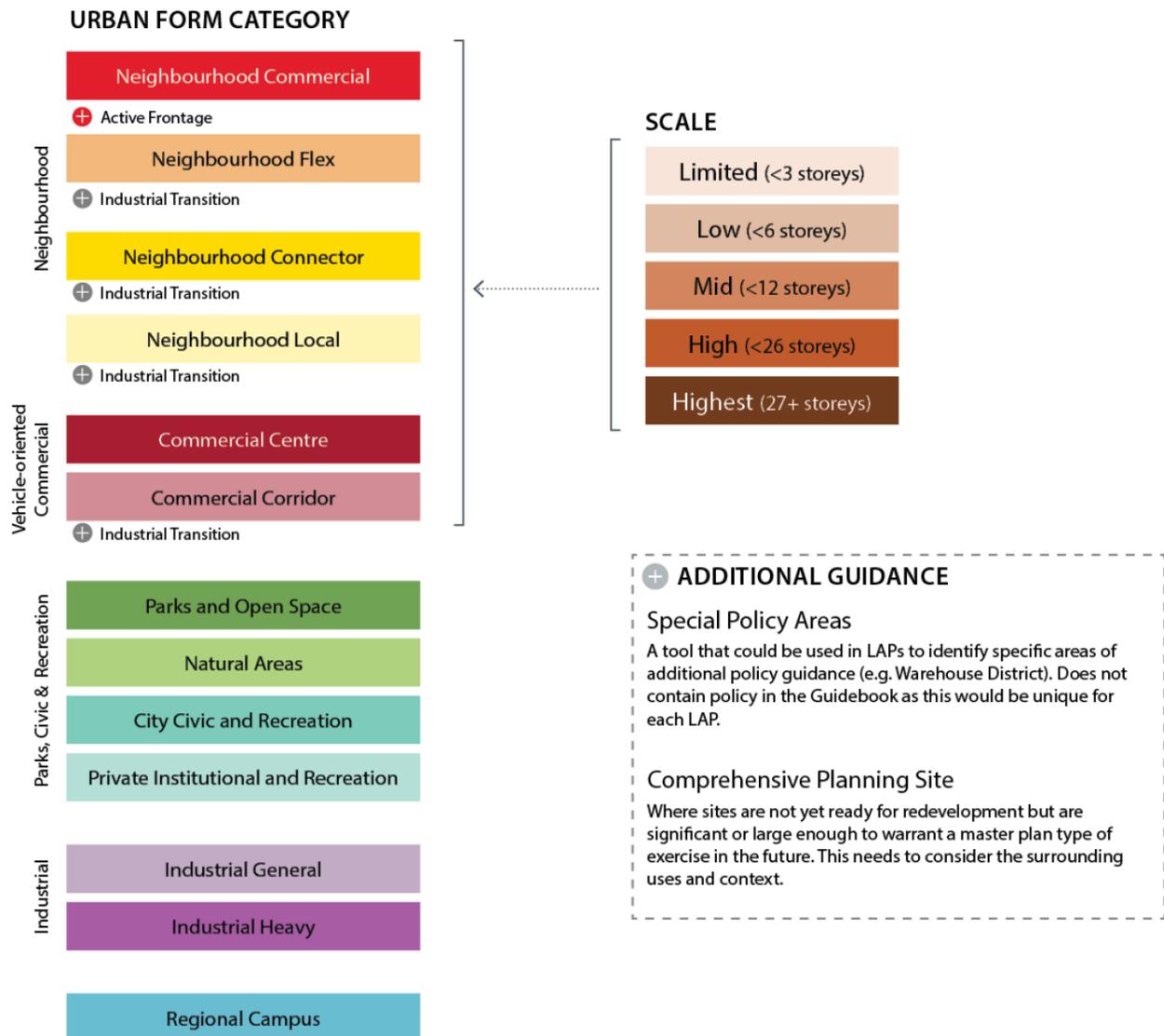
There are five groups of categories:

1. Neighbourhood
2. Vehicle-oriented Commercial
3. Parks, Civic & Recreation
4. Industrial
5. Regional Campus

	Neighbourhood Commercial	Neighbourhood Flex	Neighbourhood Connector	Neighbourhood Local
General Purpose	Characterized by smaller blocks in a predominantly grid pattern, where buildings are typically oriented to the street. The pedestrian experience is supported by primarily commercial uses on the ground floor and a public realm with features to support high levels of activity.		Residential Areas are characterized by smaller blocks with primarily residential developments oriented to the street. These blocks have a strong delineation between the private and public realm through setbacks, landscaping and private amenity spaces.	
Key Character	A range of commercial uses in buildings that are oriented to the street.	A mix of commercial and residential uses in buildings that are oriented to the street.	A broad range of housing types and some opportunities for small to moderate commercial uses.	A broad range of housing types and home-based businesses with a strong public-private separation.
Example Areas	17 Ave SW (from 2 St SW to 14 St SW) 22 Ave SW (from 22 St SW to 19 St SW)	17 Ave SW (from 1 St SW to Macleod Tr) Edmonton Tr NW (from 24 Ave NW to 28 Av NW)	20 Ave NW (from 14 St NW to Centre St N) 26 Ave SW (from 14 St SW to 37 St SW)	Majority of residential communities

	Vehicle-oriented Commercial Centre	Vehicle-oriented Commercial Corridor
General Purpose	Characterized by a range of block sizes and parcels typically arranged in a non-grid pattern. They may accommodate a range of commercial and institutional uses, recreation facilities, offices, and light industrial uses that may be oriented to the public street or publicly-accessible private streets.	
Key Character	Hubs that support regional commercial activity, typically oriented to private parking or pedestrian routes	Nodes and corridors that support primarily commercial uses, may be oriented to private parking or pedestrian routes on larger blocks.
Example Areas	Deerfoot Meadows, Crowfoot Crossing, Deerfoot City	Macleod Trail (from Mission Road SW to 42 Ave SW), 36 St NE (from Memorial Drive E to 32 Av NE)

	Parks & Open Space	Natural Areas	City Civic & Recreation	Private Institutional & Recreation
General Purpose	These areas provide a range of opportunities for people to play, relax, recreate and connect. These areas may also support efforts to address climate change and enhance resiliency.			
Key Character	Publicly-accessible open space, such as parks, playgrounds and off-leash areas.	Natural areas that support a range of ecological functions and supporting amenities.	Indoor and outdoor facilities located on public land such as urban plazas, libraries and recreation facilities.	Indoor and outdoor facilities located in private land such as golf courses and recreation facilities
Example Areas	Confederation Park, Western Canada High School	Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, South Glenmore Park, Edworthy Park, Ralph Klein Park	Repsol Centre, Seton YMCA, Optimist Arena, Renfrew Aquatic Centre	Golf courses, indoor tennis courts, St Mary's University

	Industrial Heavy	Industrial General		Regional Campus
General Purpose	Primarily include a range of industrial uses such as manufacturing, servicing, and research. These areas may also support limited office and commercial uses. Industrial areas are critical to supporting economic diversity and decisions regarding encroachment of other uses into these areas must be carefully considered to minimize impacts on the operational requirements of industrial areas.			These areas are characterized by large sites that are used for regional institutional or transportation functions regulated by other jurisdictions such as the provincial or federal government.
Key Character	A range of heavy industrial uses.	A range of light and medium industrial uses.		Regional, institutional or transportation uses regulated by the provincial or federal government

There are five additional policy tools that support the Urban Form Categories:

1. Active Frontage
    a. Identifies through a local area plan where development must provide active uses (e.g. restaurant, retail) on the ground floor.
    b. To be applied in a limited and strategic way, and used with the Neighbourhood Commercial category.
2. Industrial Transition
    a. May be applied when near the Industrial General categories when in
        i. Neighbourhood Flex,
        ii. Neighbourhood Connector,
        iii. Neighbourhood Local, and
        iv. Vehicle-oriented Commercial Corridor.

    b. Adds low-impact, light industrial uses within a building and can be mixed horizontally or vertically with commercial or residential uses. It may also consider opportunities for sales or large or bulky items or vehicles within Neighbourhood Flex or Vehicle-oriented Commercial Corridor.

3. Industrial General Special Policy Area
   a. May identify limited portions of Industrial General areas that include areas already impacted by encroaching commercial or residential uses.
   b. A local area plan may provide additional policy direction to guide land use and development in this area.
4. Special Policy Area
   a. A local area plan may identify a Special Policy Area where additional policy direction is required.
   b. Additional policy may guide future development, modify an UFC to fit an existing context or direct site, building or landscape design.
5. Comprehensive Planning Site
   a. A local area plan may identify Comprehensive Planning Sites for parcels larger than one hectare, where the future development plans of the site are not yet determined.