

# The Centre City Guidebook

Municipal Development Plan; Volume 2, Part 2



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# The Centre City Guidebook

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# The Centre City Guidebook

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## 1.0 Introduction

### **The Centre City Guidebook**

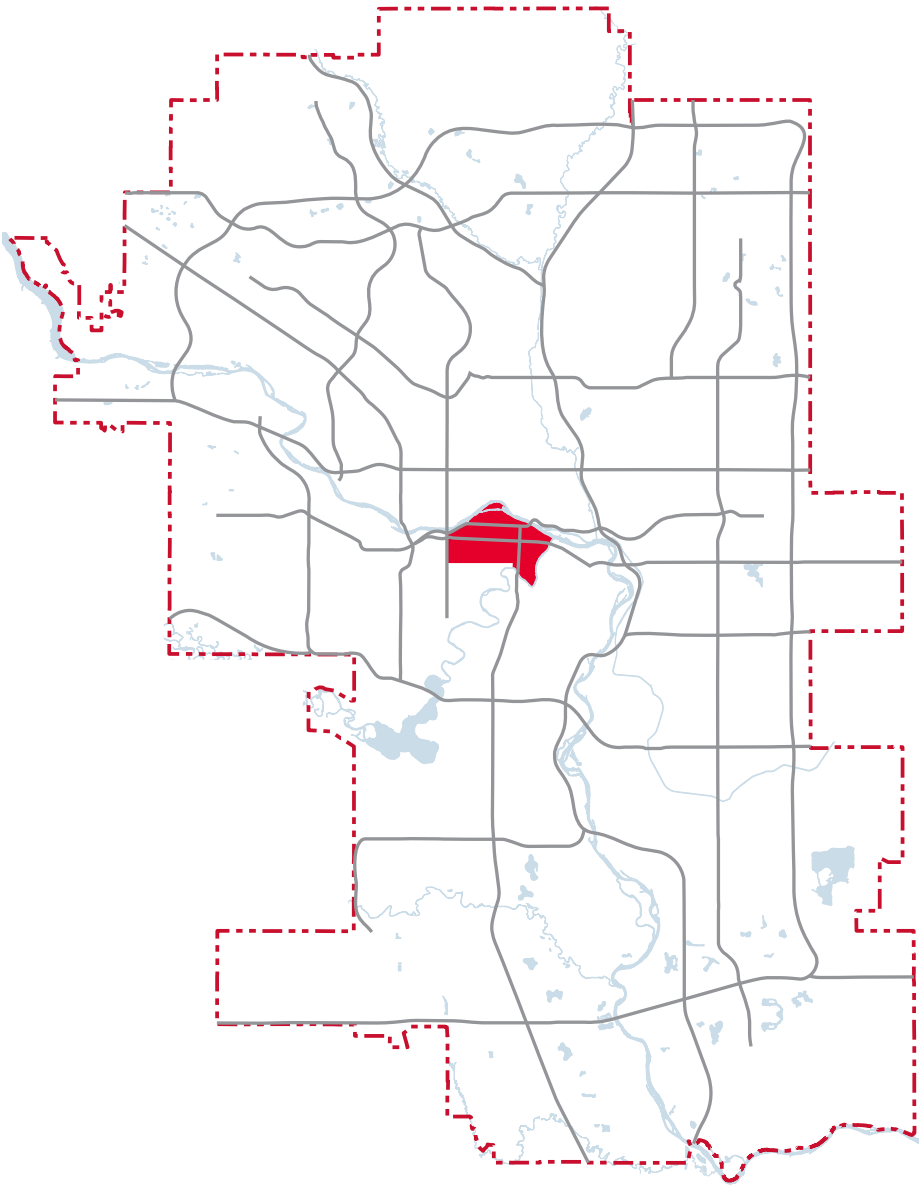
is the foundation for local area plans in the Centre City, outlining building blocks and policies that are used to support the unique aspects of a neighbourhood.

Together, the Centre City Guidebook (CCG, Guidebook) and local area plan provide the core policies for development within the Centre City (see Map 1: Location of the Centre City).

The Guidebook:

- Translates the Municipal Development Plan (MDP), Volume 1 objectives into implementation policy at the community level.
- Provides a common framework for how the Centre City is planned and developed today and into the future.
- Provides general policy to shape a more compact urban form that is well connected and supported by amenities and services to meet daily needs.

Map 1 | Location of the Centre City



## 1.1 Policy Framework

### 1.1.1 Planning Approach

The CCG is one of three guidebooks in the MDP, Volume 2 that sets the stage for streamlined local area plans. Guidebooks provide common goals, building blocks and implementation policies that provide a starting point for new or significantly amended local area plans. These building blocks respect Calgary's diverse community forms, build on the typologies in the MDP and provide clearer implementation direction for the land use bylaw.

This framework facilitates and guides change in the Centre City that reflects good planning practice, MDP core objectives and community interests and values. Containing these policies in one guidebook reduces the need for repetition in local area plans and allows for consistent policy interpretation.

Local area plans will continue to focus on the unique and specific aspects of the community. Together, the Guidebook and local area plans will implement the urban structure and vision established in the MDP, Volume 1 and the **Centre City Plan**, providing direction for redevelopment and community building. This approach is intended to simplify policy implementation and provide predictable, consistent policy direction that can be responsive to changing circumstances.

### 1.1.2 Legislative Framework

The Municipal Government Act (MGA) is the legislative framework in which municipalities operate. It is under this authority that the policy for the Centre City is developed.

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP), Volume 1 and Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP) provide direction for growth and change in Calgary over the next 60 years. The CCG builds on these policies, refining the strategic direction for growth in the Centre City and establishing policies that help to shape a successful Downtown commercial core that transitions to a number of distinct residential mixed-use neighbourhoods.

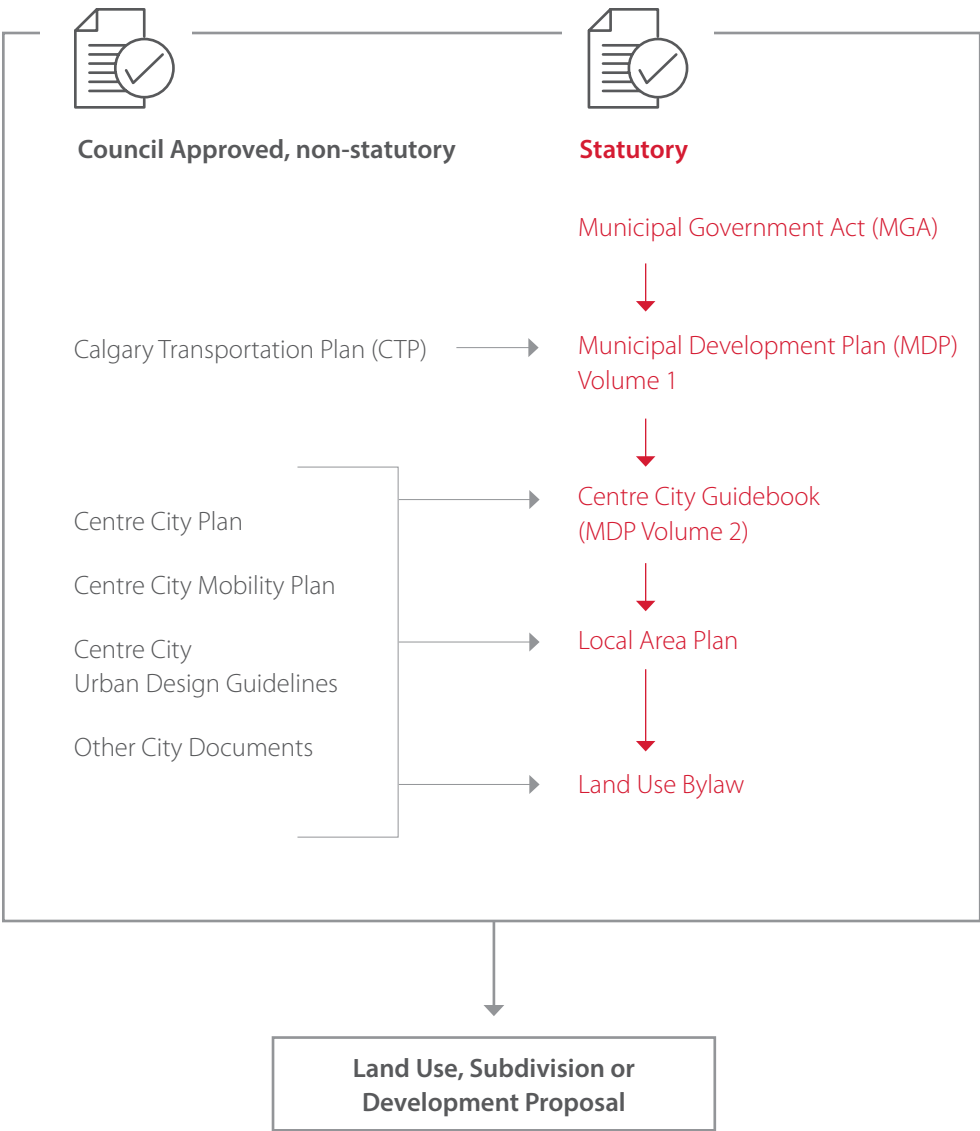
The CCG is Volume 2, Part 2 of the MDP. It provides implementation policy for the Centre City; must be read in conjunction with the MDP, Volume 1, and is the policy foundation for a local area plan (e.g., area redevelopment plan, station area plan). The Land Use Bylaw is a tool for implementing this policy.

The CTP, Centre City Mobility Plan and other City of Calgary documents, including the Centre City Plan and the Centre City Urban Design Guidelines, provide additional guidance for development in the Centre City (see Figure 1: Legislative Framework).

A list of City of Calgary source policy and guiding documents is provided for each section in the Appendix; it represents a selection of key resources only and is not an exhaustive list. Policies and standards relevant to a given site will be determined based on the specific context of the parcel at the time of application.



Figure 1 | Legislative Framework



### 1.1.3 Application of the Guidebook

Policies contained in the CCG are applied in combination with local area plan policies. Guidebook policies provide common goals and a general policy foundation to promote the development of active, vibrant and livable neighbourhoods with amenities and services that meet the daily need of residents, workers and visitors. Local area plan policies build and expand on the Guidebook policies and focus on the unique and specific aspects of a neighbourhood, informed by market analysis, physical site characteristics and public input. Local area plans include area redevelopment plans (ARP) and station area plan (SAP); see MDP Section 1.4.4 for a full description of local area plans.

Implementation of the CCG policies is achieved through both the creation of local area plans and the review of and decision-making on land use and development applications in areas where the CCG applies.

#### **Creating a Local Area Plan**

The CCG sets out best practices and common policies and should be used as a starting point when writing local area plans for any area identified in Map 2: Centre City Neighbourhoods and Downtown Commercial Core. It sets out a framework for development that implements the urban structure for the Centre City typology, and identifies what a local area plan should contain and consider. Its application to an area must be done through the community engagement process for a new or amended local area plan. Local area plans that do not reference this Guidebook will not be subject to it.

#### **Review and Decision-Making on Land Use and Development Applications**

Guidebook policies apply only where a local area plan references the CCG and states that it applies. Where a local area plan states that the CCG applies, the CCG must be read in conjunction with the local area plan to guide the review process. Where there is a discrepancy, the policy of the local area plan takes precedence.

### 1.1.4 Document Structure

The CCG outlines general policies for redevelopment (mixed-use and employment) followed by policies for urban design, open space, mobility, and infrastructure and environment. Policy sections focus on six Centre City goals and mirror those sections found in a local area plan for ease of reference.

## 2.0 Community Framework

### Centre City Goal:

A strong local identity, a sense of community and recognition of the unique attributes of the area.

The Centre City forms a prominent image of Calgary as an energy and business centre, servicing as a focal point for office workers, residents and visitors. This image of the city will be reinforced through ongoing enhancement of the Centre City as a livable, thriving and caring place.

— MDP Vol. 1, Section 2.2.3

The Centre City Guidebook establishes a common framework for development to guide growth and change for the Centre City. To achieve the vision for distinct neighbourhoods, a local area plan builds on this policy foundation, providing an approach for redevelopment that reflects community aspirations and the specific opportunities and constraints of an area.

#### 2.1 Vision

The MDP identifies the Centre City as the business and cultural heart of the city, the pre-eminent mixed-use area and its own typology. The Centre City typology is based on an urban structure which envisions a strong Downtown commercial core surrounded by unique and well-integrated residential and mixed-use neighbourhoods.

Policies in the CCG reflect the aspirations and vision of the Centre City Plan – to make the Centre City a livable, caring and thriving place:

- That is a premier urban living environment.
- That is a national and global centre of business.
- That is a centre for the arts, culture, recreation, tourism and entertainment.
- That welcomes people, in all their diversity, to live, work and visit here.



The Centre City is a vibrant Downtown surrounded by high density neighbourhoods.

## 2.2 Centre City Goals

Policies for the Centre City are focused on the following goals:

- **Plan Context:** A strong local identity, a sense of community and recognition of the unique attributes of the area.
- **Land Use:** A vibrant, mixed-use area with neighbourhoods that transition from Downtown and development that reflects the scale of the area.
- **Urban Design:** Developments that create a high-quality built environment that recognizes the history and character of the area and contributes to a comfortable pedestrian experience at the street level.
- **Open Space:** A network of quality open spaces and community amenities.
- **Mobility:** A well-connected and walkable Centre City.
- **Infrastructure and Environment:** Development that makes efficient use of public infrastructure and demonstrates environmental stewardship.

The Centre City is expected to undergo significant growth in both residential and employment populations, and will serve as a model of how to achieve high-density residential and employment areas while ensuring an attractive environment and high quality of life.

— MDP Vol. 1, Section 2.2.3

\* Residential statistics are from the Civic Census (2016).

\*\* Job statistics are from the Place of Work Survey (2011).



High density mixed-use development.

## 2.3 Community Context

The MDP, Volume 1 identifies typologies for Calgary's future urban structure as well as intensity targets to accommodate long-term growth in jobs and residents. Centre City is one such typology.

Located on the south bank of the Bow River and bounded to the east by the Elbow River, to the south by 17 Avenue S.W. and to the west by 14 Street S.W., the Centre City is made up of a Downtown commercial core that is surrounded by distinct neighbourhoods – the Beltline, Downtown West, Eau Claire, Chinatown and East Village (see Map 2: Centre City Neighbourhoods and Downtown Commercial Core).

The Centre City is envisioned to accommodate the highest density of residents and jobs in Calgary. Over the past 10 years, the number of residents in the Centre City has grown by 7,900 people\*, with the number of jobs growing by over 4,500\*\* between 2006 and 2011. The area is expected to continue to experience significant residential and employment growth. To support this growth and to encourage development in the Centre City, CCG policies focus on facilitating mixed-use neighbourhood development, attracting residents and jobs to the area, and continuing to support the predominantly employment role of Downtown. The distribution of jobs and residents will continue to be determined through a local area plan.

## 3.0 Land Use

### Centre City Goal:

A vibrant mixed-use area with neighbourhoods that transition from Downtown and development that reflects the scale of the area.

**The Centre City Plan promotes the Downtown as the strong commercial core well-served by transit, supported and connected by walkable, mixed-use neighbourhoods, and Stampede Park. This plan supports the vision of meeting the needs of a series of unique neighbourhoods while continuing to retain and enhance the vital role that the Downtown and its surrounding neighbourhoods play in the entire city.**

— MDP Vol. 1, Section 2.2.3

Centre City is the business and cultural heart of the city, the pre-eminent mixed-use area. It is composed of a strong commercial Downtown surrounded by mixed-use neighbourhoods and special areas including the Stampede grounds.

#### 3.1 Land Use Categories and Building Blocks

Land use in Calgary's Developed Areas, including the Centre City, is guided by a framework for development containing three land use categories: mixed-use, neighbourhood and employment (see Figure 2: Land Use Building Blocks). Each land use category includes multiple building blocks that vary according to a range of uses, scale, density and built form characteristics, and Figure 2 is an example of the variation that can occur.

The urban structure for the Centre City typology can be distilled into two distinct areas – Mixed-Use – High Density neighbourhoods and an employment-intensive Downtown commercial core (see Map 2: Centre City Neighbourhoods and Downtown Commercial Core). These two areas are implemented using building blocks established through a common framework for development.

The Guidebook identifies the following building blocks to implement the vision for the Centre City:

- Mixed-Use – High Density
- Employment-Intensive

Map 2 | Centre City Neighbourhoods and Downtown Commercial Core

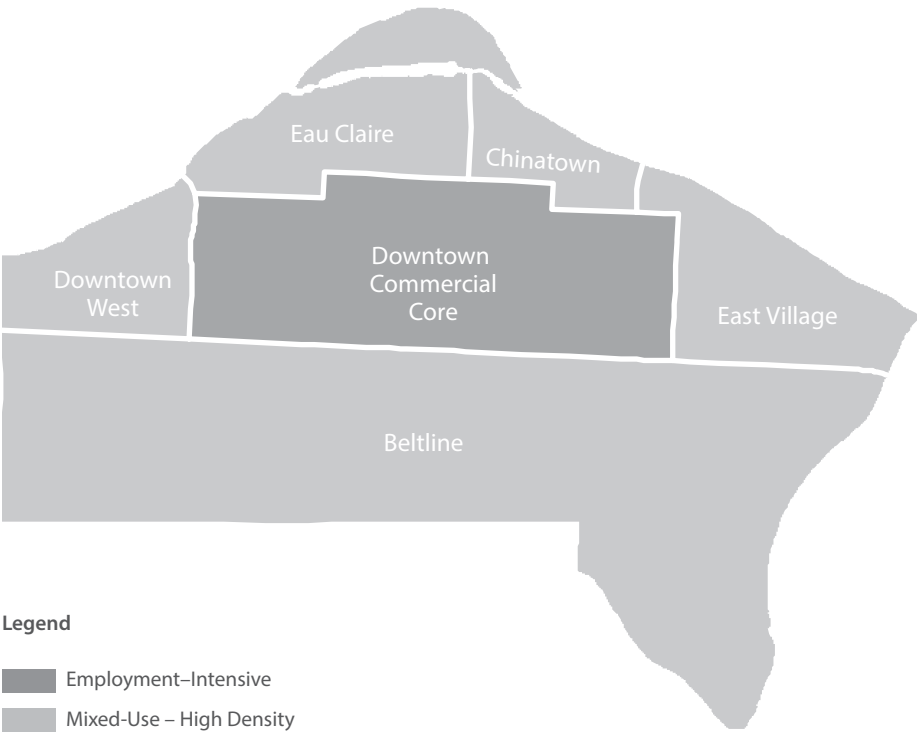


Figure 2 | Land Use Building Blocks







Residential and commercial mixed-use in East Village.

### 3.1.1 Mixed-Use – High Density

Mixed-use areas are lively places where a concentration of activity (working, shopping and living) will occur. They contain a wide range and mix of residential and employment uses that may be arranged vertically within a building or horizontally within a neighbourhood. These locations are typically high-quality living environments, where transit, amenities, services and infrastructure capacity can support future residential and employment populations.

In the Centre City, the Mixed-Use – High Density building block is applied in a local area plan where concentrations of large-scale residential and non-residential uses exist. The distribution of residential and non-residential uses will vary according to the local area plan. This building block accommodates some of the highest density in Calgary and has the greatest flexibility to provide significant office, institutional and residential uses.

#### Policies

- a. Development within an area defined as Mixed-Use – High Density should meet the following policies:
  - i. Generate activity throughout the day and evening.
  - ii. Support a broad mix of higher-density residential and non-residential uses.
  - iii. Provide a transition in scale, density and intensity of commercial and residential uses between the Downtown commercial core and surrounding Centre City neighbourhoods.
  - iv. Incorporate a range of unit sizes to support different retail uses and other neighbourhood services.
  - v. Provide for a mix of unit sizes and/or types to support diversity in housing choice within residential developments.
  - vi. Encourage the incorporation of schools, daycares, places of worship, civic facilities and other community functions within the community.
  - vii. Provide amenity spaces that allow for social and communal activities.



Pedestrian friendly sidewalk in the Downtown commercial core.

### 3.1.2 Employment–Intensive

Employment–Intensive areas are intended to be mixed-use with high employment concentrations that benefit from being located next to the primary transit network. These areas promote the transformation of developed, vacant or underutilized industrial, office and commercial properties to a more intensive, active and pedestrian-oriented mixed-use area.

In the Centre City, the Employment–Intensive building block includes a mix of office and commercial uses at a high density. This building block is applicable to Downtown; however, no policies have been identified at this time. The objectives for Downtown are implemented through the existing land use district and its bonusing system.

Creating and sustaining healthy communities requires promoting active living through the provision of a wide range of accessible recreational programs, services, facilities and amenities. Many types of recreation are provided to serve all age groups and interests. The need for new types of parks may be more critical in some areas of the city due to denser development patterns.

— MDP Vol. 1, Section 2.3.4



The Kerby Centre is a community facility that is directly accessible to the LRT station in Downtown West.

### 3.2 Community Amenities and Facilities

Community amenities and facilities provide care, culture, education, recreation and protection to people who live, work and play in the community. The private sector, public sector, non-profit agencies, charities and partnerships can all play a role in the ownership and operation of community facilities and services. As a network of neighbourhoods, there is an opportunity to locate amenities throughout the Centre City that together provide the amenities needed for each neighbourhood. Opportunities may be available to increase the level of public amenities within an area through a bonus system. The following policies apply to any location in the Centre City.

#### Community Services and Facilities

Community services and facilities are encouraged throughout the Centre City.

##### Policies

- a. Requirements for community services and facilities will be determined through a local area plan.
- b. Outdoor amenity spaces, playing fields and other similar uses may co-locate on sites or in buildings shared with other uses to make efficient use of parking.
- c. Community facilities should be designed as multi-purpose with a wide range of uses that respond to diverse needs and provide opportunities for buildings to be flexible and converted to other uses in the future.
- d. Civic buildings should be located and designed to reinforce the open space network and create space for community gathering.
- e. Emergency response stations should be co-located and integrated within a multi-use facility or development.

#### Care Facilities

A broad range of specialized accommodation and care needs should be provided as needed throughout the neighbourhood in a form that fits with the local context.

##### Policies

- f. Child care needs should be accommodated in each community to ensure convenient access to care and programs.
- g. The needs of an aging population should be accommodated in a manner that provides for social inclusion and convenient access to services and amenities.
- h. Different types of care facilities should be allowed throughout neighbourhoods, evaluated on a site-by-site basis and well integrated into the neighbourhood.

Preserve existing public lands in the Centre City for civic and cultural facilities such as parks, museums, libraries and any other creative venues that will enliven it as a destination for residents, employees and visitors.

— MDP Vol. 1, Section 3.2.c



University of Calgary, Downtown Campus.



Chinese Cultural Centre in Chinatown.

## Cultural and Educational Facilities

Cultural and educational facilities, including places of worship and community support facilities, are an integral part of complete communities.

### Policies

- i. Each neighbourhood should allow for the development of places of worship and other cultural facilities.
- j. Schools and institutional uses are encouraged to explore innovative ways to locate in denser mixed-use neighbourhoods, including integration with other uses as part of a comprehensive mixed-use development.

## Recreation Facilities

To meet the objectives of the MDP, the Centre City should be serviced by recreation facilities and associated support amenities.

### Policies

- k. Requirements for recreation facilities will be determined through a local area plan.

## Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is an important consideration for the Centre City.

### Policies

- l. Opportunities for partnerships between public, private and non-profit organizations should be encouraged to facilitate the integration of affordable housing in locations supported by mobility choices, public amenities and access to services.

## 4.0 Urban Design

### **Centre City Goal :**

Developments that create a high-quality built environment that recognizes the history and character of the area and contributes to a comfortable pedestrian experience at the street level.

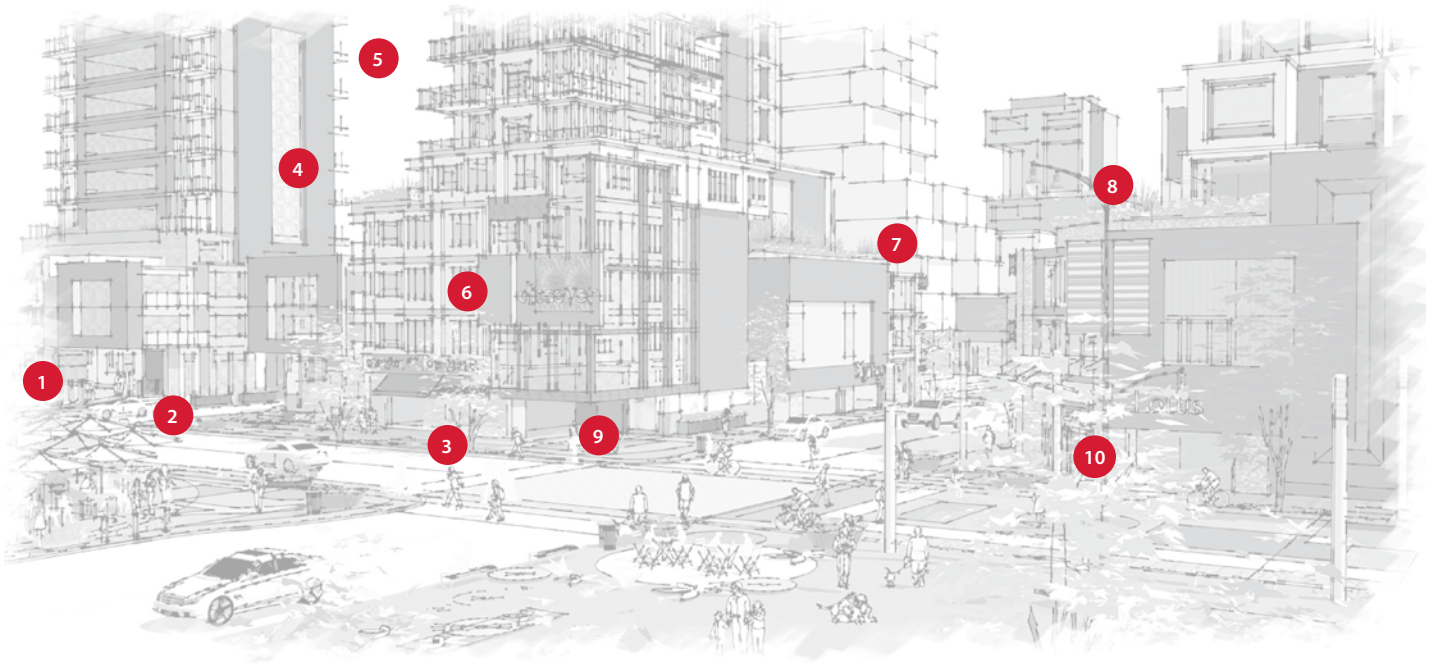
Development in the Centre City should include high-quality buildings that frame adjacent streets and open spaces, ensure pedestrian comfort in all seasons, and accommodate a wide variety of public amenities and services. Buildings help to define the character and scale of streets. Regardless of height, buildings should be designed to provide adequate daylight to occupants, street walls should be well-defined and oriented to the sidewalk, and building frontages should provide active and attractive spaces for pedestrians.

Policies in this section are intended to support creativity and encourage innovation. They establish a general framework for building and site design in Centre City neighbourhoods and accommodate a variety of building forms. Figure 3: Design Elements identifies 10 urban design elements that are organized into three areas – site design, building design and building frontage.

Additionally, the Centre City Urban Design Guidelines can be used as a supplementary planning and design document to provide guidance on how design objectives may be achieved.



**Figure 3 | Design Elements**



#### **Site Design**

1. Landscaped and/or grade-separated setbacks for residential units.
2. Consolidated site access.
3. Uses oriented to the street with wide sidewalks, trees and street furniture.

#### **Building Design**

4. Neighbourhood scaled setbacks and transitions.
5. Setbacks and building separation minimizing wind, sun and privacy impacts.
6. Use of texture, materials, façade articulation and setbacks.
7. Street wall height proportionate to the street.
8. Amenity spaces for building occupants.

#### **Building Frontage**

9. Well-designed, legible building entrances and building corners.
10. Active uses with tall ground floor heights, transparent façades and frequent entrances at-grade on key frontages.



Residential units with at-grade setbacks in East Village.



Buildings oriented to the street.

## 4.1 Site Design

This section outlines a set of general site design policies that applies to any parcels located in a Centre City neighbourhood.

### Policies

- a. A mix of uses may be organized vertically within a building.
- b. Buildings should be oriented to the street and be designed with frequent entries, transparent and unobscured glazing, and minimal setbacks facing the street to create a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment.
- c. Where developments are proposed on large parcels (greater than 1.0 hectare or 2.5 acres), buildings should be grouped together to allow for easy pedestrian access between buildings and to frame pedestrian spaces and more legible pedestrian routes.
- d. Meaningful on-site gathering spaces should be located on the ground level and on mid-rise and podium rooftops (e.g., rooftop gardens and common amenity spaces that incorporate opportunities for local food production).

### 4.1.1 Building Setbacks and Grade Separation

#### Policies

- a. Main building entrances should be oriented to the street and provide a seamless at-grade transition to the public sidewalk, where possible.
- b. Residential units with direct access to the public sidewalk are encouraged at ground level to help generate pedestrian activity along residential street frontages. Horizontal setbacks may be appropriate to ensure adequate privacy.
- c. Where minimum sidewalk widths are not provided, building setbacks are encouraged at-grade to accommodate features that help to activate the building frontage (e.g., outdoor patios, outdoor retail sale space), particularly along an active frontage.
- d. Alternative design treatments may be considered where there are grade separation requirements and where site conditions allow (e.g., the use of interior steps, ramped floors).

### 4.1.2 Site Access and Loading

#### Policies

- a. Surface parking should not be located between a building and a street.
- b. Street-front retail should be supported by locating parking nearby on-street or on-site above, beneath or at the rear of buildings.
- c. Access to parking areas should be located and designed to maintain the pedestrian-oriented character of the sidewalk and pathway network. Street access points should be consolidated where possible.
- d. Where parking structures have exhaust vents, such vents shall be directed away from any public street frontage, adjacent residential uses, parks and open spaces.
- e. Site servicing should be located away from pedestrian areas and conducted during off-peak hours to minimize conflicts in the lane and congestion in the road network.

Cities are made up of collections of great buildings and memorable spaces within and/or between the buildings where people live, work, play and visit. It is this collection – the built environment and its architecture and public spaces – that influences each individual's image of the city.

— MDP Vol. 1, Section 2.4.1



Variation in building massing in East Village.



Street walls emphasize the building base and provide a sense of enclosure on the street.

## 4.2 Building Design

### 4.2.1 Building Massing

In the Centre City, tall buildings and larger building footprints may occur throughout a neighbourhood. Density can be achieved through a variety of built forms. Particular attention should be paid to how large buildings are integrated with the public sidewalk and how a building's design can improve the experience for pedestrians at street level (e.g., articulation, setbacks).

This section outlines a set of general building massing policies that applies to parcels located in a Centre City neighbourhood.

#### Policies

- a. Variation in building heights and massing is encouraged to reduce building bulk, avoid long expanses of walls and create architectural interest.
- b. Buildings should be designed to enhance the pedestrian experience, complement the overall scale and massing of the neighbourhood, and contribute to an attractive skyline.
- c. Buildings should be designed to reduce the impacts of wind at ground level and to optimize daylight and sunlight access to streets and open spaces (e.g., tower separation, building setbacks).
- d. The impact of sheer towers on the pedestrian environment should be minimized (e.g., setbacks).
- e. Direct views into residential units should be minimized.
- f. Buildings should be designed to reduce bird-window collisions (e.g., non-reflective glazing).

### 4.2.2 Street Wall

A well-defined street wall helps to establish a more human scale in the massing and design of buildings. It creates a sense of enclosure where buildings frame the sidewalk and the street, and results in greater pedestrian comfort. Street wall heights are determined with consideration to the desired building form and public realm objectives for the area, and in proportion to the width of the road right-of-way. Street wall height and definition requirements may vary depending on the neighbourhood context.

This section outlines a set of general street wall policies that applies to parcels located in a Centre City neighbourhood.

#### Policies

- a. The base of a building or street wall should be oriented to the street. As a guideline, the height of the street wall should be proportionate to the width of the road right-of-way, ranging from 1:1 to 1:2 (street wall : road right-of-way).
- b. Buildings designed with a street wall height that exceeds the width of the road right-of-way they face should demonstrate greater façade articulation to reduce the perception of bulk and create a comfortable pedestrian environment at street level (e.g., building massing, textures, building materials, façade articulation, setbacks).



Stephen Avenue pedestrian mall.

- c. Where large commercial and retail uses are proposed, the development should be designed to:
  - i. Enhance the pedestrian experience and demonstrate a strong relationship to the human scale.
  - ii. Create a defined street wall through façade articulation or building massing to integrate with the scale of surrounding buildings.
  - iii. Promote activity and natural surveillance through frequent entries and glazed storefronts along the majority of the façade.
  - iv. Activate large ground floor uses by lining smaller uses that are directly accessible from the street.
- d. Primary entrances and building corners should be clearly articulated within a building's street wall (e.g., canopies, architectural features).

#### 4.3 Building Frontages

The quality and character of a street are influenced by the design of the first storey of a building and how the space is used between the building façade and the public sidewalk. To create great streets for pedestrians and support mixed-use areas, streets should be designed to promote walking and community gathering. Building frontages should be designed for pedestrians, generate activity, provide natural surveillance and create a sense of rhythm along the street.

This section outlines a set of general building frontage policies that applies to all parcels located in a Centre City neighbourhood.

##### Policies

- a. Buildings located in areas of high pedestrian activity or identified as a key frontage should be designed with a ground floor that accommodates future retail uses and allows for change of use over time (e.g., minimum ground floor height).
- b. Uses that generate pedestrian activity are encouraged on all ground-level frontages, particularly along active frontages, open space frontages and LRT stations.
- c. Where structured above-grade parking faces a street, the frontage at ground level should be lined with intermediate uses. Building frontages above ground level should give the appearance of a use other than parking (e.g., by integrating sculptural façade elements or using innovative screening).





Frequent entries activate a frontage in Downtown West.

#### 4.3.1 Active Frontages

Active frontages may be identified in a local area plan. They are defined as the portions of a building where the ground floor uses must be commercial to create a more vibrant and safer pedestrian environment and contribute to activity on the streets throughout the day and evening.

##### Policies

- a. Areas identified as active frontages should provide active uses at grade, including but not limited to retail, personal services, consumer services, supermarkets and restaurants, and community service uses, including daycares.
- b. Building frontages that face a high street or abut a public open space should be lined with multiple uses to create a finer-grained building frontage.
- c. The width of individual entrance lobbies whose function is to provide access to upper and lower level uses should be minimized to allow for more permeable and pedestrian-scaled building frontages.
- d. Street frontages should be designed to minimize interruptions to the pedestrian environment.

#### 4.3.2 Open Space Frontages

Open space frontages may be identified in a local area plan where developments face or abut an open space. Special consideration is given to animating the open space.

##### Policies

- a. Developments abutting open space should be designed to animate the open space and provide uses that are accessible and well integrated with the sidewalk or public pathway (e.g., active ground floor uses).
- b. Buildings should be designed to provide a strong sense of enclosure for open spaces.
- c. Developments facing open space should be designed to provide natural surveillance for these areas (e.g., openings or façades with transparent glazing, building entrances or balconies).

#### 4.3.3 Residential Street Frontages

Residential streets may be identified in a local area plan. These streets are primarily composed of residential uses with supporting commercial uses.

##### Policies

- a. Areas identified as residential frontages should consider locating residential uses at ground level with front entrances facing a street.
- b. A limited variety of compatible non-residential uses, including opportunities for home-based and small businesses, may be considered provided the impacts (e.g., noise, servicing, parking) from the proposed use can be mitigated to the satisfaction of the Approving Authority.



Accessible sidewalks in the Centre City.

#### 4.4 Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Design that enhances the safety and security of public spaces should be a consideration in the design of buildings, open spaces, walkways or pathways, and parking areas.

##### Policies

- a. New development should incorporate CPTED principles. A CPTED assessment may be requested for a development application.
- b. Site and building design should provide for natural surveillance of streets, lanes and public spaces.
- c. Pedestrian-oriented site and building lighting with appropriate illumination levels should be provided to increase the sense of safety and security.

#### 4.5 Universal Design

Universal design ensures that built environments can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. Creating a built environment that is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use benefits all people through the creation of a more inclusive society.

##### 4.5.1 Public Realm and Site Design

Development sites and the public realm should be designed in a manner that is accessible to different levels of mobility, as well as visual, hearing and cognitive abilities. This is achieved through the implementation of Universal Design and Barrier Free principles.

##### Policies

- a. Require pedestrian thoroughfares within the public realm to be free and clear of obstructions.
- b. Encourage transitions between surface areas on pedestrian thoroughfares to be as seamless as possible.
- c. Support building entrances with highly legible access points and provide seamless, at-grade access where possible.
- d. Integrate wheelchair ramps into the overall design of the public realm, where applicable.
- e. Consider the following special design features:
  - i. Crosswalk and curb cut designs that improve mobility and provide cues to the visually impaired.
  - ii. Audible signals at pedestrian crosswalks.
  - iii. Provision of rest areas through the appropriate placement of street benches.
  - iv. Appropriate placement of utilities and utility designs that do not impede accessibility.
- f. Provide appropriate lighting for the public realm and building entrances.

##### 4.5.2 Accessible Housing and Building Design

The inclusion of people with varying abilities is an integral part of a complete community. This includes providing suitable housing and designing buildings that accommodate a range of accessibility needs.



Simmons building in East Village.



St. Louis Hotel in East Village.

#### Policies

- a. Encourage City Administration to work with communities, agencies, organizations and the development industry to provide incentives for the development of barrier-free and adaptable units.
- b. Require civic and civic partnership developments to comply with the City's Access Design Standards.
- c. Encourage private developments to explore opportunities to enhance accessibility beyond the Alberta Building Code requirements, including consulting the Access Design Standards, which is applied as a guideline document to private developments.

#### 4.6 Historic Resources

Historic resources, such as heritage buildings, are a defining characteristic of communities and should be preserved, or protected, where appropriate. The City of Calgary recognizes that there are resources other than buildings, including archaeological and culturally significant areas, which are important to citizens and the future of the city; however, direction and policies regarding those areas are contained in or guided by other City-approved documents (see the Appendix). New development within a community with a heritage context should be respectful of that relationship. The following policies support these objectives and provide different tools that can be applied in a community for retaining heritage quality and resources, where appropriate and desired.

#### Policies

- a. Encourage the conservation of heritage buildings, including the incorporation of heritage buildings within new developments, to align with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (2010).
- b. Acknowledge that the heritage value and historic resources of an area include, but are not limited to, properties currently listed on Calgary's Inventory of Evaluated Historic Resources (Inventory).
- c. Encourage the adaptive re-use of historic resources in order to retain and conserve those resources, and where appropriate, support land-use redesignations that enable this conservation.
- d. Discourage land use changes which would reduce the viability to retain a heritage resource(s).
- e. Encourage developers to incorporate interpretative or commemorative features of historic resource(s) listed on the Inventory that are replaced by new development, and obtain photo documentation of the historic resource.
- f. Discourage new development from copying or mimicking the design of heritage buildings in the area to create a false sense of heritage character.
- g. Ensure new development is contextual with adjacent heritage buildings and the existing heritage character of the block through the use of setbacks, massing, street wall height and landscaping, allowing relaxations to occur where necessary.
- h. Encourage contemporary interpretations to the area's traditional design, detail and materials in new developments adjacent to historic resources. Special consideration of new developments that demonstrate exceptional architectural merit, in the opinion of the Development Authority, with highly original and innovative design, and high-quality materials, will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- i. Support Land Use Bylaw relaxations that increase the viability of retention, conservation or adaptive re-use of a historic resource (e.g., relaxations for parking stall requirements).

## 5.0 Open Space

### Centre City Goal:

A network of quality open spaces and community amenities.

Recognize the role of complete streets and the sidewalk system as another means to provide amenity and recreation opportunities, particularly in dense neighbourhoods such as the Centre City, Activity Centres and Corridors, where additional land for traditional park space is more difficult to assemble.

— MDP Vol. 1, Section 2.4.1

The open space network within each area should promote, conserve and enhance an interconnected ecological and recreation system. The network is composed of parks, schools, public plazas, natural areas and other open spaces that support a variety of active and passive pursuits.

#### 5.1 Open Space

Opportunities to enhance the streets and sidewalks as extensions to an accessible and inclusive open space network are encouraged.

##### Policies

- a. Public open spaces should be designed in a manner that is accessible for all Calgarians, accommodates people of all abilities and contributes to the overall open space network, reinforcing pedestrian connections, complementing adjacent land uses and providing for use year-round.
- b. The open space network should provide for a variety of experiences, including opportunities for active recreation, passive enjoyment and community gathering.
- c. Additional open space acquisition may occur through voluntary dedication, land purchase or other means.
- d. Road or lane closures may also be contemplated where there is an opportunity to reconfigure, enlarge or improve the functionality of an existing open space or publicly accessible open space.
- e. Space for community gardens may be considered on remnant parcels and within the road right-of-way.



Central Memorial park in the Beltline.



Comprehensive park and pathway system  
along the Bow River.

#### 5.1.1 Riverfront Areas

Special consideration should be given for development of the riverfront park and pathway system.

##### Policies

- a. The riverfront should be designed as a comprehensive park and pathway system and promoted as an area for pedestrians and cyclists.
- b. Public plazas, seating and landscape features along the riverbank should be designed in a manner sensitive to, and respectful of, the existing natural habitat and riparian areas.



## 6.0 Mobility

### Centre City Goal:

A well-connected and walkable Centre City.

Bringing jobs, housing services and amenities closer together encourages non-automobile modes of travel, providing more choice to Calgarians. In most cases, it will not be practical to accommodate all modes of travel equally in every part of Calgary. More sustainable modes of transportation should be emphasized where they can provide convenient and realistic travel choices.

— MDP Vol. 1, Section 2.5.1



Multi-use pathway along the Bow River.

The mobility system should encourage sustainable modes of transportation and provide a highly connected network of paths, streets and transit routes. Local area plans should reflect best practices in integrating land use and transportation planning, with development and public spaces designed to balance all modes.

#### 6.1 Pedestrian Circulation

Regional and local pedestrian routes should provide direct and convenient circulation within and through all neighbourhoods.

- a. Safe, continuous and clearly defined pedestrian access will be provided from public sidewalks and transit stops to building entrances and exits.
- b. Development context and street type (e.g., high street) should be considered in the design of the streetscape and building form to enhance the pedestrian experience and reinforce the character of the street, (e.g., integrating weather protection on a development site or over public sidewalks).
- c. The local pathway, multi-use pathway, sidewalk and walkway system should:
  - i. Link origin and destination points.
  - ii. Achieve short, convenient and direct connections to and within community focal points, facilities and transit stops.
  - iii. Connect to the regional pathway system and green corridors.
- d. The design of the streetscape (see Figure: 4 Streetscape Zones), should accommodate elements based on identified travel mode priorities (e.g., public sidewalks, transit facilities, bicycle facilities, furniture, street trees, signage, lighting, public art and utilities).
- e. Sidewalks should be provided on both sides of every street and should adhere to or exceed the minimum width as identified by the Centre City Urban Design Guidelines and Design Guidelines for Subdivision Servicing.
- f. When right-of-way space is limited and minimum sidewalk widths cannot be achieved, consideration should be given to the following alternatives:
  - i. Through the local area planning process, public improvement projects should be identified for sidewalk widening within the right-of-way (e.g., through bylaw setback areas, removing or

### Figure 4 | Streetscape Zones



- ii. Private developments should consider building setbacks and provision of high-quality, on-site pedestrian amenities.
    - iii. Relaxations for existing conditions may be considered when preservation of historic buildings is being prioritized.
  - g. Installation of temporary open spaces within the street right-of-way may be supported on streets or lanes with low traffic volumes.
- h. Large development sites should provide attractive, well-lit and safe pedestrian routes between streets to support a fine-grain pedestrian network and to link significant public open spaces. These routes should be connected or directed to points where marked or signalized pedestrian crossings exist or are safe and suitable locations for new crossings.
- i. Laneways should provide the opportunity for alternative pedestrian entrances and additional landscaping. Given the narrow lane rights-of-way in some areas of the Centre City, this may include providing the landscaping or pedestrian paths or sidewalks on private lands when adjacent lands redevelop.



Bicycle racks located on the RiverWalk.



Transit service should provide direct and convenient connections.

## 6.2 Cyclist Circulation

Regional and local bicycle routes should provide direct and convenient circulation within and through all neighbourhoods.

### Policies

- a. Continuity of on- and off-street bicycle routes should be maintained where possible to enable ease of movement for all modes of transportation.
- b. Bicycle routes and amenities (e.g., additional bicycle parking stalls, covered bicycle racks and tuning stations) to support the city-wide cycling strategy should be identified through the local area planning process, including off-street cycling or on-street bike lanes.
- c. Bicycle facilities should be incorporated into parks, open spaces, transit hubs and other key locations to promote cycling as an alternative mode of transportation and a form of recreation, and to support the regional cycling network.
- d. The integration of bicycle routes and facilities should be considered for all scales of development.

## 6.3 Transit Network

Transit service should provide direct and convenient connections, with developments accommodating direct pedestrian access to transit stops.

### Policies

- a. Bus stops should be located to meet the following criteria:
  - i. Serve significant destination points and residential populations.
  - ii. Provide comfortable and safe passenger waiting areas and bicycle parking.
  - iii. Provide direct, efficient, safe and convenient transit service.
- b. Buildings located in close proximity to transit stops are encouraged to provide on-site transit amenities and/or shelter.
- c. Developments located adjacent to Light Rail Transit and/or Bus Rapid Transit stations should seamlessly integrate with these facilities (e.g., orient entrances to the station, provide shelter, include additional setbacks).
- d. Access to parking and loading areas should not be located across bus zones.





Multi-modal street in the Centre City.



On-street parking.

## 6.4 Road and Street Network

The road and street network should link areas and be functional, safe and efficient for all modes of travel. The street network within each local area plan shall accommodate walking, cycling and the efficient provision of public transit.

### Policies

- a. The street network should accommodate walking, cycling and the efficient provision of public transit in a manner that is accessible to all Calgarians.
- b. Any new streets or lanes should be designed to improve connectivity and promote walking, cycling and a sense of place.
- c. In the context of large redevelopment parcels (greater than 1.0 hectare or 2.5 acres), new streets and pedestrian routes should be created to integrate large development parcels into the surrounding block pattern, reinforcing the mobility network.
- d. Connectivity should be maximized for emergency vehicles and accommodate the ability of emergency services to provide protection and response.
- e. Appropriate transportation system management and intelligent transportation system measures should be considered to better manage competing demands for right-of-way space between different users.
- f. Transportation demand management measures should be integrated into developments to promote more sustainable travel choices. Their expected benefits will be taken into account when determining what other transportation improvements are required.

## 6.5 Parking

On-street and on-site parking should support the level of services and amenities for the neighbourhood.

### Policies

- a. Employing strategies that qualify for parking requirement reductions is encouraged.
- b. Shared off-street parking solutions may be considered within comprehensive mixed-use developments or nearby sites where the peak parking demands for such developments are substantially different from each other (e.g., movie theatres with evening peaks compared to offices with daytime peaks).
- c. Developments located within the Restricted Parking Area will follow the Council-approved Downtown Parking Strategy.

## 7.0 Infrastructure and Environment

### **Centre City Goal:**

Development that makes efficient use of public infrastructure and demonstrates environmental stewardship.

The flood of 2013 affected the Centre City and demonstrated the scale of disruption and loss that is possible from severe weather events which will continue to increase with climate change. Taking measures to prepare and adapt to become more resilient are infrastructure and environmental challenges that can be addressed through more efficient, renewable or low-carbon energy systems, at both the building and neighbourhood scales.

These policies ensure that utility infrastructure will adequately, safely and efficiently service development activity in each neighbourhood.



River's edge near St. Patrick's Bridge.

## 7.1 Water and Sanitary Servicing

Development within a neighbourhood will be assessed to ensure that water and sanitary sewer needs can be met.

### Policies

- a. Development in each neighbourhood must be serviced with municipal water, sanitary sewer and stormwater infrastructure, as well as shallow utilities (e.g., gas, cable, electricity and telephone) as determined necessary by utility providers.
- b. The provision, alignment and capacity of water distribution mains and water mains, sanitary sewer mains and trunks, and stormwater mains and trunks within a development must be in accordance with City standards and confirmed through utility servicing studies and/or analysis.
- c. The location of all utilities and the provision of rights-of-way, easements and related line assignments should be addressed to the mutual satisfaction of the City and the utility companies.
- d. Utility rights-of-way, easements and public utility lots must be provided as required to accommodate the development or the extension of municipal utilities necessary for development.
- e. The City must identify any off-site water distribution mains and/or transmission water mains required to be installed to provide municipal water to a development site.
- f. As part of an application, a Sanitary Sewer Servicing Study and/or analysis may be required to demonstrate that the subject site can be serviced in accordance with the overall design of the sanitary sewer.



Stormwater pond in East Village.

## 7.2 Stormwater Management

The stormwater management system should be designed to adequately and efficiently service redevelopment and adopt low-impact development strategies where appropriate.

### Policies

- a. The stormwater management system for each neighbourhood must be designed to adequately and efficiently serve development within each local area plan while preserving riparian and wetland areas, where possible, and adhering to all relevant City policies.
- b. Design of utilities, transportation and other infrastructure features must address flood conditions, if applicable.
- c. Requirements for stormwater outfall discharge locations, maximum allowable release rates, unit area release rates, runoff volume control targets and stormwater treatment should be consistent with the approved drainage plans for the local area plan.
- d. Developments should employ low-impact development strategies to reduce stormwater runoff volume and peak flow. Such strategies may include, but are not limited to,
  - i. source control practices;
  - ii. rain water harvesting/reuse for irrigation;
  - iii. measures that reduce stormwater impermeability; and
  - iv. stormwater reuse.
- e. Stormwater should be treated as a resource rather than a waste product. Water harvesting and reuse features should be incorporated into various landscape designs and be used for landscape irrigation and other suitable uses. Depending on specific conditions throughout the site, harvested water may also be used for replenishing ground water.



District energy plant in East Village

### 7.3 Energy and Environmental Impacts

The Centre City represents one of Calgary's best opportunities for initiatives delivering energy efficiency, renewable and low-carbon energy. Deployment of these initiatives at both the building and neighbourhood scale will assist in meeting Calgary's greenhouse gas reduction objectives, contribute to economic development, and ensure citizens and businesses are resilient to future energy changes.

#### Policies

- a. Developments are encouraged to incorporate green building features that:
  - i. reduce energy;
  - ii. reduce water consumption;
  - iii. reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
  - iv. support alternative modes of transportation.
- b. Developments should strive to reduce potable water consumption in order to achieve water efficiency targets.
- c. Local area plans should identify renewable and low-carbon energy opportunities available at the district or neighbourhood scale.
- d. Local area plans should encourage feasibility assessments of neighbourhood or district scale renewable and low-carbon energy opportunities to determine their economic and greenhouse gas reduction potential. These studies are envisioned to be undertaken by the City in collaboration with industry stakeholders.

## 8.0 Implementation

This section contains information regarding plan implementation.

### 8.1 Authority of the Plan

The Guidebook is a statutory document, adopted by City Council in accordance with Section 632 of the Municipal Government Act. The Guidebook sets comprehensive long-term policies to guide redevelopment for the Centre City. A local area plan may also identify implementation work that needs to be undertaken to realize these policies.

#### 8.1.1 Non-Statutory Components of the Plan

The Appendix attached to the Guidebook is to be used as supporting information only and does not form part of the statutory document.

#### 8.1.2 Interpretation of the Map Boundaries

Unless otherwise specified in this Guidebook, the boundaries or locations of any symbols or areas shown on a map are intended to be conceptual only, not absolute, and will be interpreted as such. The precise location of these boundaries, for the purpose of evaluating development proposals, will be determined and/or confirmed by City Administration at the time of application.

No measurements of distances or areas should be taken from the maps in this Guidebook.

#### 8.1.3 Policy Interpretation

The Plan uses language that is both general and specific. Where general direction is given, flexibility should be used in the interpretation of the policy. Where specific language is used, it is meant to give clear and unambiguous direction to both the Development Authority and the applicant.

Where an outcome statement or objective accompanies a policy, it is provided as information only to illustrate the intent and enhance the understanding of the policy. If an inconsistency arises between the intent statement and a policy, the policy will take precedence.

Policies that use the word “should” are to be applied in all situations, unless it can be clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Development Authority that the policy is not reasonable, practical or feasible in a given situation. Proposed alternatives must be to the satisfaction of the Development Authority with regards to design and performance standards and should support the policy intent.

Policies that use the words “shall,” “will,” “must” or “require” apply to all situations without exception, usually in relation to a statement of action, legislative direction or situations where a desired result is required.

#### 8.1.4 Illustration and

##### Photo Interpretation

All illustrations and photos are intended to illustrate concepts included in the Guidebook and are not an exact representation of any actual intended development. They are included solely as examples of what might occur after implementation of the Guidebook's policies and guidelines.

#### 8.1.5 Plan Limitations

Policies and guidelines in this Guidebook are not to be interpreted as an approval for a use on a specific site. No representation is made herein that any particular site is suitable for a particular purpose as detailed site conditions or constraints, including environmental constraints, must be assessed on a case-by-case basis as part of an application for land use amendment, subdivision or development permit.

#### 8.1.6 Amendments to the Plan

The Guidebook should have the flexibility to support innovative ideas, respond to prevailing market conditions and reflect community aspirations. As a statutory document, any changes to the policies require an amendment to the Guidebook. Minor variances may be considered by Council or the Development Authority, without requiring an amendment to the Guidebook, provided that the intent of the policy is met. Major changes, however, will require an amendment to the Guidebook.

## 8.2 Implementation of the Policies

#### 8.2.1 Relationship to the Municipal Development Plan

The Centre City Guidebook is developed as the MDP, Volume 2, Part 2. It is a statutory policy document that establishes a framework for great neighbourhoods and provides consistent policy direction to guide mixed-use development within Centre City neighbourhoods over the next 20 years. Provisions in the Guidebook are intended to implement the policy direction established by Volume 1 of the MDP.

#### 8.2.2 Relationship to Local Area Plans

Policies within the Guidebook will apply to Centre City neighbourhoods only where a local area plan for that neighbourhood states that it applies. The Guidebook must be read in conjunction with the applicable local area plan.

##### a. Relation to Municipal Development Plan, Volume 1

The Guidebook (Volume 2, Part 2 of the MDP) contains provisions that are intended to implement the policy direction established by Volume 1 of the MDP. If there is a conflict between the provisions herein and the provisions of Volume 1 of the MDP, Volume 1 takes precedence. Opportunity to amend Volume 1 to reflect lessons learned through the implementation process should be taken, as soon as possible. For guidebook definitions, refer to MDP, Volume 1, Part 6 – Glossary.

##### b. Relation to local area plans

The policies of this Guidebook (MDP, Volume 2, Part 2) establish policies to be applied in combination with local area plans.

- i. The Guidebook applies only when a local area plan states that it does.
- ii. A local area plan may exempt itself from specific Guidebook provisions (and identify different standards) by describing the exemption in policy. Local area plans outline a finer level of detailed policy than what is provided in the Guidebook, and the exemption would be maintained as the Guidebook is amended from time to time. In the event of any conflict between a local area plan and the Guidebook, the local area plan takes precedence.

# Appendix

## Other Relevant City Policies

Sections in the Guidebook build on the policies and directions from the following documents, as amended from time to time. Should these policies or plans be rescinded, they will cease to apply to this Guidebook.

### 1. Land Use

- Access Design Standards
- Affordable Housing and Development Guidelines
- Alberta Building Code Standards on Adaptable Dwellings
- Bird-friendly Urban Design Guidelines
- Calgary Heritage Strategy
- Centre City Illumination Guidelines
- Centre City Urban Design Guidelines
- Child Care Service Policy and Development Guidelines
- Civic Arts Policy
- Cultural Plan
- Fair Calgary Policy
- Inner City Recreation Program Amenity and Market Assessment
- Planning Principles for the Location of Care Facilities and Shelters
- Public Art Master Plan
- Recreation Amenity Gap Analysis
- Recreation Facility Development and Enhancement Study
- Recreation Master Plan
- Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy
- Triple Bottom Line Policy Framework
- Universal Design Handbook

### 2. Open Space

- Access Design Standards
- Calgary Wetland Conservation Plan
- Calgary... A City of Trees: Parks Urban Forest Strategic Plan
- Cultural Landscape Strategic Plan
- imagineParks: A Long-Term Vision of Calgary's Public Parks and Open Space
- Living a Creative Life – An Arts Development Strategy for Calgary
- Open Space Plan



- Our BiodiverCity: Calgary's 10-Year Biodiversity Strategic Plan
- Pathway and Bikeway Plan
- Riparian Strategy: Sustaining Healthy Rivers and Communities
- Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy
- Urban Park Master Plan

### **3. Mobility**

- Access Design Standards
- Calgary Transportation Plan
- Centre City Mobility Plan
- Complete Streets Policy
- Cycling Strategy
- Downtown Underpass Urban Design Guidelines
- Inner City Transportation System Management Strategy
- Investing in Mobility: Transportation Infrastructure Investment Plan
- A Parking Policy Framework for Calgary
- Pathway and Bikeway Plan
- The Route Ahead
- Seniors Age-Friendly Strategy
- Step Forward: A master plan for improving walking in Calgary
- Transit Friendly Design Guide
- Transit Oriented Development Policy Guidelines

### **4. Infrastructure and Environment**

- Stormwater Management Design Manual
- Stormwater Management Strategy
- Stormwater Source Control Practices Handbook
- Total Loading Management Plan
- Water Efficiency Plan
- Watershed Water Management Plans
- Wind Energy Conversion System Policy

