Low Density Residential – Alternative Options

At the 2020 March 4 SPC on Planning and Urban Development, the committee discussed low density residential area policies. While the committee acknowledged the need for all communities to have a diversity of housing types, questions arose regarding the preservation of areas of communities that are made up predominantly or exclusively of Single Detached Dwellings. As a result, Council directed Administration to explore options to address the concerns that Councillors and some community members had raised.

Below, Administration has considered four options that acknowledge the aspects of equitable communities, choices for housing, and supporting the goals of the Municipal Development Plan, while ensuring that growth and change does not negatively impact community vibrancy. Option four is Administration's recommended option.

1. Policy for All-Inclusive Low Density Residential Areas (2020 March 4 Guidebook Proposal)

The Guidebook guides the planning of communities so that they meet the needs of all Calgarians by offering people choices in terms of types of housing, mobility, recreation, education and employment. Its guiding policies ensure that people have many housing options within their existing community for all wants and stages of their lives, which requires all communities to accommodate a range of dwelling types, sizes and forms.

As such, Administration's original recommendation to the SPC on Planning and Urban Development in 2020 March was that all forms of low density housing are appropriate everywhere low density housing is appropriate. These forms include Suites, Single Detached Dwellings, Semi-detached Dwellings, Rowhouses, and Cottage Housing. This approach aligns with current approved policy within the Municipal Development Plan. Deviating from this approach may limit some Calgarians' ability to access housing that meets their needs in their community of choice, and it may constrain the ability for the market to meet development demand.

This option supports all forms of low density development in low density areas. Questions of appropriate building and site design, access and other considerations would be considered during the review of the development permit application.

2. Policy to Identify Areas for Single Detached Dwellings Only

In response to discussion and direction from Council, the second option considered providing policy in the Guidebook that would enable a local area plan to restrict development in specific areas of a community to only allow Single Detached Dwellings. Local area plans would not be able to use this policy tool widely to simply prevent other forms of housing. The policy would instead only be applied in limited areas that met a set list of criteria and the identified areas would be a mapped element of the local area plan. The criteria would provide consistency and the ability to consider site-specific limitations, while allowing redevelopment and investment in the balance of the community.

This option may pose a risk to the success of the multi-community plan approach as it may shift the focus from common assets and priority growth opportunities (such as Main Streets and Transit Station Areas) back to neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood discussions about low-density

infill. This option may also jeopardize efforts to advance social equity by reinforcing exclusive and stratified areas of a neighbourhood.

3. Policy to Guide the Location of Rowhouses

The third option considered policy in the Guidebook that would outline where rowhouses are most appropriate. Criteria provided in the Guidebook would be applied during the development of a local area plan to determine appropriate locations for rowhouse development. By establishing the criteria in the Guidebook, consistent application would be achieved across Calgary's communities. The risk of this option is that general city-wide criteria is not consistent for all communities and creating such policy was determined to be arbitrary and limiting; criteria for one community may not be appropriate for another community and may negatively impact the ability to develop desired forms in desired locations.

An alternative that was also considered was to add a policy to the Guidebook that allowed local area plans to identify specific areas and criteria for rowhouse units within their local plan. The risk of this, however, is that each local area plan could have different criteria creating uncertainty or different building situations in different communities, furthering inequity between communities and limiting housing choice.

Administration's concern from Option 2 is also reflected in this option. It may risk the success of multi-community plan approach by shifting the focus from common assets and priority growth opportunities (such as Main Streets and Transit Station Areas) back to neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood discussions about where rowhouses are or are not appropriate.

4. Policy Based on Community Lifecycle Zones

The fourth option is Administration's recommended approach and is based on Municipal Development Plan typologies, the age of a community, and its location in the city. This approach also balances areas with higher infill market demand closer to inner city, with the desire for more stability in newer communities, farther away from the inner city, with unique design features or street layouts, or fewer transportation options.

All forms of low density residential development are generally encouraged in all Neighbourhood Local areas (areas of a community which through the local area plan, have this category applied) at a limited scale; however, given the age (building lifecycle), layout, and physical characteristics of communities, the extent to which various low density housing forms are most appropriate may vary.

A map has been created and inserted into the Guidebook that identifies two zones in Calgary that reflect these considerations. The two zones support residential infill development at various intensities. These two zones represent greater opportunities for residential infill development than other areas of the city because they have generally experienced some, or a prolonged history of, infill redevelopment and are either nearing the end of their first lifecycle (approximately 50 years) or have already gone through one or more community life-cycles. These areas are important to meeting the objectives of the Municipal Development Plan.

Accompanying policies guide where various housing forms are supported by zone. In addition, an appendix in the Guidebook identifies the land use districts from Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 that

relate to the intensity of each type of development. This provides clarity and consistency and should make applications for redesignations more streamlined in an area where a local area plan identifies more intensity.

Zone A on the map is aligned with the Inner-City area identified in the Municipal Development Plan, whereas Zone B represents communities outside of the Inner City that were generally built-out prior to 1970 and are at the end of at least their first lifecycle. The table below provides a summary of the zones and the description of the different types of areas.

Table 1: Neighbourhood Local Residential Intensity Policies - Summary

Zone	**General Policy Direction**	**Higher-intensity Residential Areas**	**Moderate-intensity Residential Areas**	**Lowest-intensity Residential Areas**
Zone A- Inner City (MDP, pre-1945) Characteristics: • At least one complete life-cycle, often more. • Longer history of redevelopment. • Closest to Centre City, and most appropriate to meet MDP intensification targets.	Support the incremental intensification of existing low-density neighbourhoods. Generally, support all low-density residential areas throughout the area but allow for limited areas where development is restricted to low-intensity residential development based on consistent criteria contained in the Guidebook.	Generally allowed in all areas. Notwithstanding policies for lowest- and moderate-intensity in the columns to the right, higher-intensity residential forms should always be encouraged in the following areas: • Neighbourhood Connector or Neighbourhood Flex areas in a **local area plan**. • In proximity to **Main Streets, Transit Station Areas** and other **Activity Centres** as defined by a **local area plan.**	These areas must meet at least one (1) of the following criteria: • No lane access; • Prohibitive parcel sizes or shapes; • No-through, dead-end or cul-de-sac roads; • Top-of-slope escarpment parcels; or, • No transit service within 600 metres.	These areas must meet at least two (2) of the following criteria: • No lane access; • Prohibitive parcel sizes or shapes; • No-through, dead-end or cul-de-sac roads; • Top-of-slope escarpment parcels; or, • No transit service within 600 metres.
Zone B - Pre-1970 Established Area Characteristics: • Entering end of first life-cycle. • Some limited history of redevelopment. • Good access to Centre City and transit network.	Support the incremental intensification of existing low-density neighbourhoods. Generally, support all low-density residential areas throughout the area but allow for limited areas where development is restricted to low-intensity residential development based on consistent criteria contained in the Guidebook.	Generally supported in all areas. Notwithstanding policies for lowest and moderate intensity in the columns to the right, higher-intensity residential forms should always be encouraged in the following areas: • Neighbourhood Connector or Neighbourhood Flex areas in a **local area plan**. • In proximity to **Main Streets, Transit Station Areas** and other **Activity**	Generally supported in all areas.	These areas must meet at least two (2) of the following criteria: • No lane access; • Prohibitive parcel sizes or shapes; • No-through, dead-end or cul-de-sac roads; • Top-of-slope escarpment parcels; or, • No transit service within 600 metres.

		Centres as defined by a **local area plan.**		
Remaining Established Areas Characteristics: • Still in first life-cycle. • Very limited history of redevelopment.	Governed by *Land Use Bylaw* and existing policy.	Higher-intensity development should be encouraged in the following areas: • Neighbourhood Connector or Flex areas in a **local area plan**. • In proximity **to Main Streets, Transit Station Areas** and other **Activity Centres.**	N/A at this time.	N/A at this time.
Applicable LUB Districts (1P2007) *Non-stat Appendix		R-C1L, R-C1, R-C1N, R-C2, R-CG	R-C1L, R-C1, R-C1N, R-C2	R-C1L, R-C1, R-C1N