

Calgary Planning Commission Summary

On 2020 October 1, Administration held an in-camera workshop with members of Calgary Planning Commission to review the updated Urban Form Categories and to answer any questions. Administration reviewed the previous version of the categories in comparison to the new categories provided in the updated draft. Discussions were mainly on the new system and feedback was generally positive, identifying no “red flags” and expressing the thought that Administration was on the right track. Naming of the categories continued to be a top workshop, with some modifications coming from the discussion. Commission indicated the new system was generally easier to understand and offered clearer distinction between categories, making it easier to apply and interpret for a local area plan.

Below is a summary for the individual questions posed to Calgary Planning Commission.

Question 1: We have re-worked the Neighbourhood urban form categories into a new set of commercial & residential categories. We recognized the need to distinguish between Transition commercial and Urban commercial areas in order to allow for the best built-form outcomes in both these areas, recognizing the limitations of historic block and subdivision patterns.

a) Do you think these categories address the issues specific to different commercial areas in the city?

- Naming needs to be more thoughtful to ensure areas are going where we envision them over time.
- Language within the categories needs to be further refined and clarified.
- Should think of commercial categories in terms of MU-1 and MU2 – would provide the easiest direction to go in in terms of use.
- Active frontage modifier is good in if needed in just that one category.
- Could we further refine the commercial categories and collapse them with an active frontage modifier?
- Recommendation to remove the term Retail Ready.
- Simplify the Urban Commercial categories and address baggage around the Retail Ready term.
- Further need for simplicity and clarity in those Urban commercial categories and how the Active Frontage modifier is applied.

b) Are these categories innovative and forward-thinking enough to promote a positive evolution in built form?

- Overall, we're pointing in the right direction in terms of being flexible enough.
- Comment on scale categories: scale as a measure of height doesn't speak to full implications in terms of built form. Typology & built form implications are more informative than boiling scale down to height ranges (ex. 12-26 storeys).
- There is an effort in recognizing that the experience someone has of a building scale can be driven by design considerations.
- Scale ranges are so vast that it pushes down the conversation to zoning - for example, 12-26 range is so large that it doesn't inform the final built form. Zoning is what would give a much better idea of what that built form looks like in terms of shadowing, stepbacks, setbacks, etc. what does this scale category try to achieve?

- (On subject of scale): Important to find a balance in the level of specificity.

Question 2: The intent of the Mixed category is to allow for a horizontal mix of retail, commercial and residential developments in response to market demand. By limiting retail required areas, thus not over-saturating retail markets, and by adding housing and population, the Mixed category should support the success of the retail-focused (Retail Ready) portions of our high streets. What benefits and challenges do you see with this level of flexibility in a category?

- Good to provide more thought to where retail should go given limitations.
- Nice to have a tool that allows us to require retail only when necessary.

Question 3: What are the benefits and challenges of having 2 residential UFC's?

- Question of clarification around main difference between these 2 residential categories.
- Simplification of the residential categories is positive. What is the threshold where the residential community would become mixed? - caution: small local commercial can have a large reach and draw in a lot of people: it's not because it has a small footprint that it doesn't have the potential to draw a lot of activity & people.
- Are people comfortable with these opportunities for one-off commercial integrated into residential areas?

Question 4: With this revision of the Guidebook, we need to address concerns from Council regarding protecting single-detached areas. What risks and impacts should we consider?

- This is a very political decision!
- Concern with growth and evolution, could prevent growth or community evolution from occurring.
- Seems like we're being protectionist when we should encourage more.
- Could create have/have-not communities.
- Political decision - admin needs to make their best recommendation, continue to advocate for the sustainable city. Timing is everything.
- There are so many redevelopment opportunities, worrying about communities further from the centre isn't a problem.
- If our goal is to de-risk, to create a market for the market, we need to move forward.
- Need a framework where this change can happen.
- Bowness had potential, but there wasn't the political will to allow anything to happen.
- Detriment, community with great location and could have redeveloped, but was limited by politics.
- Let the market lead, but don't put up additional barriers.
- The ultimate outcome is getting communities to compete for density and link it to investment - when you take on density, we will come in and invest. If you don't want anything, there is a trade-off for that.
- Housing affordability - we don't always hear from people in unstable housing situations. If this is important to us in general, then more flexibility could become more important to get to that objective.
- R-cg in Killarney - homeowners concerned about value in their homes. Feedback that property value went up. Lost home value is a myth.

- In Ward 5 there are higher population densities, more acceptance to having higher density, but we are not seeing investment come in after. People survive on mortgage helpers.

Question 5:

To address transitions from industrial areas to commercial, residential, parks and civic areas, we have integrated industrial transition policies into the Industrial General category where appropriate. This approach allows us to address more types of Industrial interfaces than in the previous urban form categories, providing more nuance while also simplifying the application.

a) Do you think these industrial transition areas should be mapped in the local area plan?

- They should absolutely be mapped.
- By having these transition policies embedded into the Industrial General category, there is a risk for community members or people in the adjacent areas being unaware that they have to look at the General category. Industrial transition areas are amazing, and they should be mapped. It needs to be upfront and completely transparent for people to see them and understand how these transition areas get applied.
- People tend to gravitate to maps versus cross-referencing policy statements. The nice thing about a map is that it cohesively communicates an intent. The spatial component it allows is valuable.

b) Does this approach to integrating industrial transition policies capture the intent of having “industrial flex” areas such as the ones envisioned in the Chinook or Historic East Calgary areas?

- Yes, policy is still there, and mapping will identify it well.

Question 6:

The Parks categories have been re-organized to address the primary function of the park or open space rather than activity levels.

Do you think these categories sufficiently capture the different roles parks and open spaces play within our communities? Do you think that private recreation needs to be separated from public recreation and put into its own category?

- Any opportunity to integrate function into open space is very important. This level of resolution is fine and is an improvement from what is currently in the Guidebook.
- Question: where do golf courses fit in?
- Separating these private rec facilities is probably a good idea. Important for the public to understand that these uses can change more easily. It still serves a public function, but it is private. Probably worth delineating.