

Background and Planning Evaluation

Background and Site Context

The proposed development site is located in the community of Cornerstone. It is bound to the south by Country Hills Boulevard NE, Cornerstone Street NE to the west, Cornerstone Boulevard NE to the east and Cornerstone Grove NE to the north. The development area is approximately 5.05 hectares (12.48 acres). The site is currently stripped and graded.

No development currently exists adjacent to the site. A high school is planned to the south of the site. A Major Activity Centre site, which has not yet been comprehensively planned, is to be located to the west. Lands to the north and east are planned for future low and medium density residential development.

A future LRT station is planned to be located at the intersection of Country Hills Boulevard NE and 60 Street NE. The timing of the station is unknown at this point in time, and currently not funded. Once complete, the station will be an approximately 350 metre walking distance from the western extent of the subject site.

Council approved an outline plan and land use amendment for this area in 2015 (LOC2014-0173). As part of that approval the subject site was designated Commercial – Community 2 (C-C2) District. The site has a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 4.0 and a maximum building height of 30 metres.

Community Peak Population Table

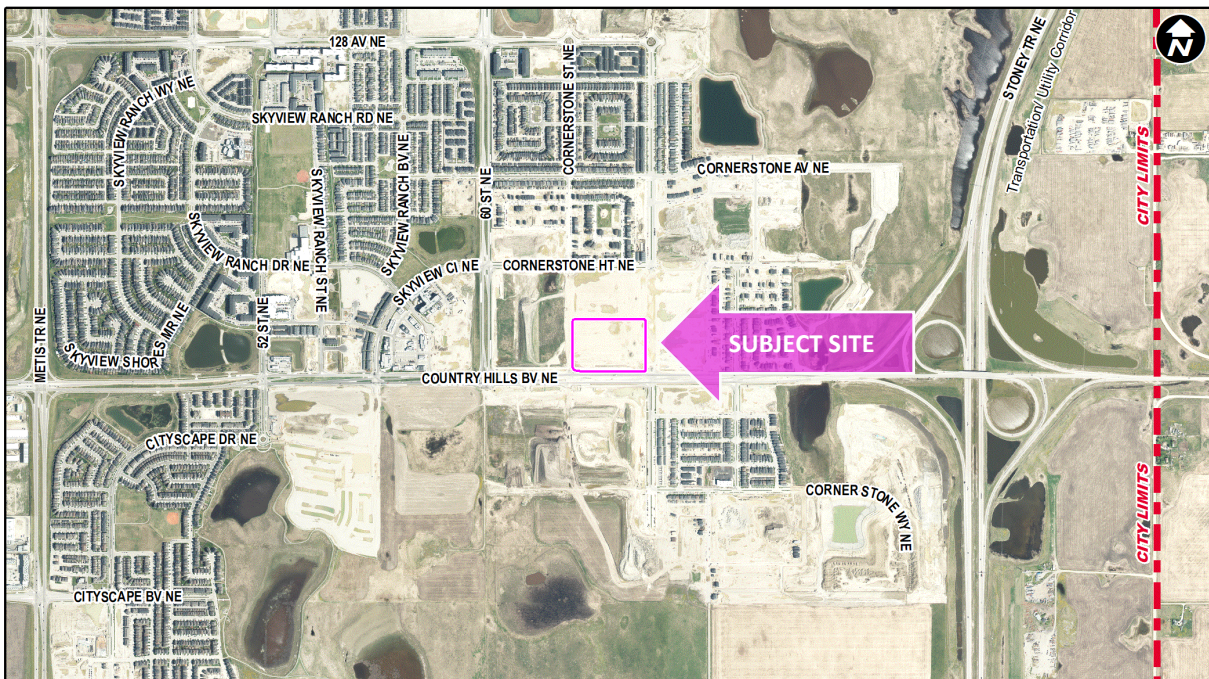
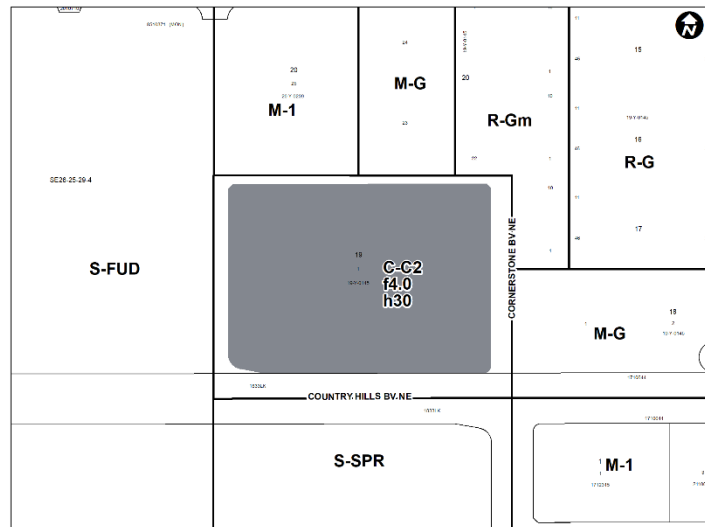
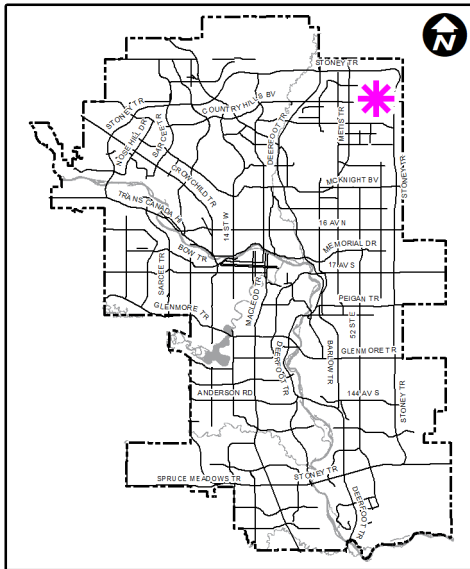
As identified below, the community of Cornerstone reached its peak population in 2019.

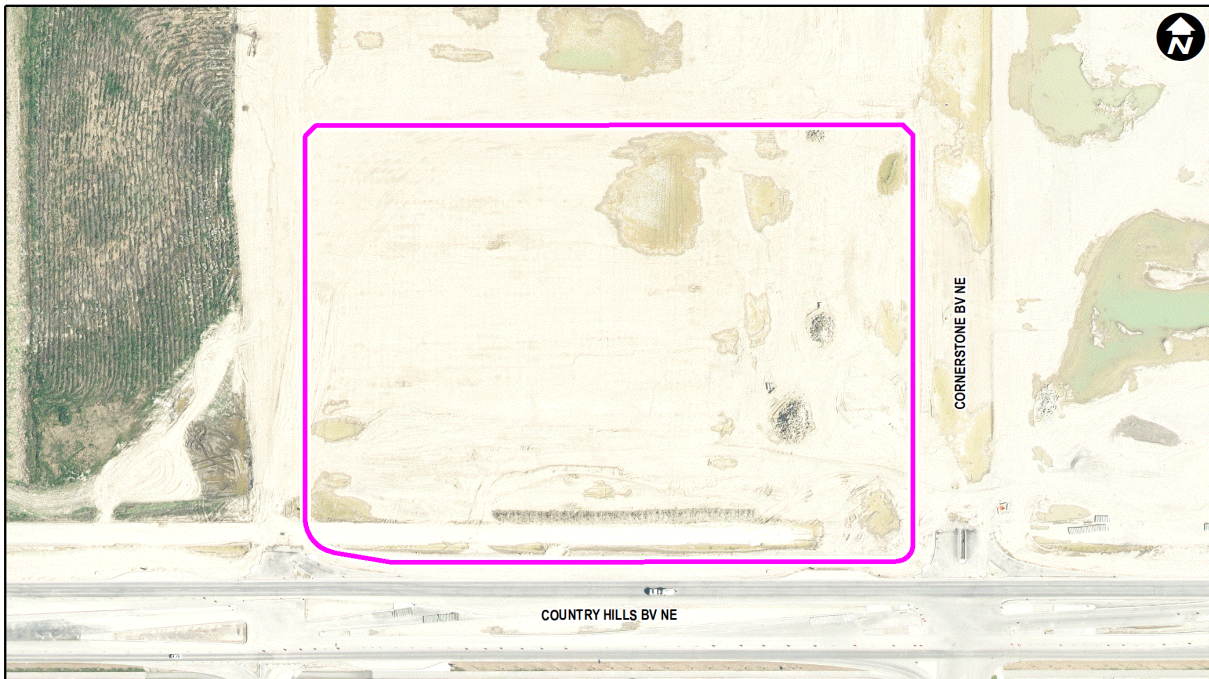
Cornerstone	
Peak Population Year	2019
Peak Population	2,648
2019 Current Population	2,648
Difference in Population (Number)	0
Difference in Population (Percent)	0%

Source: *The City of Calgary 2019 Civic Census*

There currently is no [Community Profile](#) for Cornerstone.

Location Maps





Previous Council Direction

None.

Planning Evaluation

Land Use

The subject parcel is designated as C-C2 District, with a maximum FAR of 4.0 and a maximum building height of 30 metres. The application aligns with the purpose of the land use district by providing a large commercial development with a wide range of uses on the boundary of the community.

Development and Site Design

The application proposes 13 single-storey buildings to support a variety of commercial uses. The maximum building height proposed is 7.4 metres.

Site and Building Design

The site design is developed as a grid pattern that allows for effective vehicle and pedestrian circulation throughout. Buildings have been located around the perimeter of the site with two buildings running north-south through the centre to break up the site. The area between these two buildings has been designed to be an internal street that emphasizes pedestrian activity. On the northeast portion of the site is a supermarket that will serve as the anchor of the development and to provide an important commercial amenity to the community. There are currently no large-format grocery stores in Cornerstone or adjacent communities, with the closest large-format grocer currently being a 10-minute drive from the subject site. As such, the provision of a supermarket in this location is a key step in meeting the daily needs of area residents.

The supermarket has been located on the northeast portion of the site to allow an east-west pedestrian connection to be made at the front of the building while accommodating for loading and back-of-house activities behind the pedestrian area with minimal impacts on the site. The east-west pedestrian walkway includes a plaza space and also serves as the north terminus of the internal street.

The internal street includes unique design elements to increase the pedestrian feel of the area. These elements include raised crosswalks on each side of the internal street, low rolled curbs, feature paving, plazas and angled parking. The internal street also features double-fronted buildings, which will allow for improved activation of the buildings, as well as increased pedestrian movement around the site.

Particular attention has been paid to pedestrian circulation through the site, ensuring that pedestrian routes are well landscaped and that there are ample outdoor amenity spaces for people to use and enjoy. This includes several south-facing plazas that have complementary uses wherever possible. Two north-south raised boardwalks allow for pedestrian movement through the parking areas that have minimized the need to cross drive aisles. The raised boardwalks have vegetated raingardens below, which will create for a unique and inviting pedestrian experience. East-west pedestrian routes are created in front of buildings as well as via painted crossings in parking areas. There are also numerous pedestrian access points to the site, reducing barriers to access the site on foot. Pedestrian routes are generally a minimum of 2.4 metres in width and expand to be wider in areas with higher amounts of pedestrian activity.

A key consideration of the site design involves responding to the commercial considerations of present day while remaining adaptable to a future state where the site is in close proximity to a LRT station. In general, the grid pattern design of the site would enable easier redevelopment and intensification of the site over time. To show how the site would evolve to become increasingly transit oriented, the applicant has included a schematic plan that depicts greater density and street orientation of select buildings. This is to be achieved by intensifying the buildings on the eastern and western extents of the subject site (Buildings A, E, F and I), which are expected to be redeveloped into four-storey mixed-use buildings with street-oriented retail at grade. Additionally, Buildings A, E and F, which are on the western extent of the plan area, have been carefully designed to convert to street-oriented commercial frontages in the short term, when deemed economically viable. The buildings have been designed so that cementitious panels can be swapped with glazing to reorient the building toward the street. No structural changes to the building would be required with this change, making it a relatively simple transition.

Building Materials

A similar quality of materials on all four sides of buildings, which helps to achieve high-quality building design. Waste and recycling enclosures have also been wrapped in the same materials as that of adjoining buildings to seamlessly blend the facilities into the site. The design utilizes brick features to highlight primary building entrances. A mix of metal cladding and cementitious panels with a range of colours is also proposed to provide a contemporary look to the buildings. The buildings are consistent in design to present as a unified group of buildings.

Public Realm and Outdoor Amenity Spaces

There are two large plazas located on the southwest and southeast corners of the site. These plazas provide pedestrian access to the site from the south, include seating areas, rain gardens to provide sustainable stormwater management and landscape buffering between the roadway

and seating areas. The southwest plaza includes building frontage onto the plaza with café seating for adjacent uses.

Several other plazas and spaces for socialization are provided throughout the site, particularly around the internal street. Two plaza areas are provided to the south of the internal street, which will provide amenity areas/seating for restaurants and cafes that front onto the plaza. Another plaza is located to the west of Building C, which will also provide seating for the restaurant fronting onto the plaza.

The development includes widened pedestrian and gathering areas in key locations. Sidewalks are generally a minimum width of 2.4 metres and extend to over 7.0 metres in high traffic areas. Feature paving is utilized in pedestrian focused areas to emphasize and attract pedestrian movement through the site.

Landscaping

Emphasis has been placed on using landscaping to beautify the site, provide screening, and soften parking areas. The proposal includes over 200 trees, 900 shrubs and 1,100 ornamental grasses. The plant list provided also includes numerous native species.

There are a series of rain gardens and natural landscape features throughout the site, which are shown prominently in the southeast and southwest plazas, north-south elevated boardwalks and northwest open space. In addition to providing amenity and screening, the rain gardens function as low impact development that helps to treat stormwater before entering City infrastructure. The site's two north-south elevated boardwalks are built over rain gardens. These will create a unique user experience while also helping to manage and clean stormwater draining from adjacent parking areas. The rain gardens and related plantings are provided in addition to the landscaping requirements of *Land Use Bylaw 1P2007* – the plant types, sizes and planting locations are different than outlined in the Bylaw. As such, some relaxations to the landscaping rules of the Bylaw are proposed as part of this approval. As a whole, the proposed landscaping plan exceeds that required in the Bylaw while simultaneously providing valuable ecological function.

Commercial Frontage

Commercial frontages generally face into the site as there is currently minimal adjacent development to support pedestrian-oriented retail along public streets. Buildings have been designed with varying frontages, which aims to keep the frontages human-scale. Significant glazing is provided to increase visibility and permeability between the interior and exterior of the building. Most plazas have commercial frontage onto them to activate these spaces and support pedestrian-oriented uses. The buildings along the internal street have also been designed as double-fronted retail to increase options for visiting the stores and fostering improved pedestrian movement across the site. As noted above, the applicant has included concepts of how buildings along the east and west edge of the site can evolve to become street oriented over time.

The viability of providing street-fronting commercial uses is limited along Country Hills Boulevard NE due to the size and character of the roadway. As such, buildings facing into Country Hills Boulevard NE have entrances that face inward to the site. Buildings adjacent to the road have been detailed with the same architectural elements around the entirety of the building and provide well-considered landscaping along Country Hills Boulevard NE, which will create an attractive interface between the road and development.

Two drive throughs are proposed as part of the development. The location of the drive throughs has been carefully considered to minimize impacts on adjacent uses and pedestrian circulation. The drive through on the eastern portion of the subject site works to minimize its impacts on the pedestrian realm and plaza to the south. Through reviews with Administration, the footprint of the building has been reduced and robust landscaping has been utilized to screen the drive through. On the eastern edge of the building, a mass of trees, shrubs and ornamental grasses are proposed – this will create a dense planting area to screen the drive through. The plant selection around the drive through utilizes plant types and strategic planting locations that will work to screen the drive through throughout the year. Additionally, the menu boards and pick up windows have been located so that the potential of vehicle stacking adjacent to the plaza is reduced. The drive through adjacent to Country Hills Boulevard NE is located behind the building to not cause vehicle stacking onto pedestrian areas. The area around the drive through has also been densely landscaped to provide a screen between the drive through and adjacent areas throughout the year.

The eastern drive through has been identified as a location for future densification and site evolution when economically feasible. This means that a drive through can be operated in this location in the short-medium term, but as the site evolves and becomes more transit-oriented, it is expected that the drive through be replaced with a development of higher intensity that is better able to support transit. This approach addresses the current conditions around the subject site, which are highly vehicle-oriented, while anticipating for an eventuality where the site is in close proximity to an LRT station.

The location of the drive throughs has been considered so to minimize their impacts on pedestrian-oriented parts of the site, particularly on the western portion of the subject site. The southwest plaza has commercial frontage onto it, while the buildings on the western extent of the site have been designed to easily convert to street-oriented buildings when viable. As these parts of the plan area are closest to the future LRT station, Major Activity centre and high school to the south, the drive through locations and designs have been selected to not interfere with the function of these pedestrian-oriented elements.

City Wide Urban Design

The application was circulated to the City Wide Urban Design Team. Their comments focused on pedestrian circulation, framing of plazas, scale of retail frontages, and thoughtful location of drive throughs. The applicant's rationale for design choices and revisions to the site and building design elements were deemed appropriate.

Urban Design Review Panel

The applicant presented this application to the Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP) on 2021 March 17. The project was also taken to UDRP during at the pre-application stage of the project. The comments from UDRP are noted in Attachment 5. UDRP was happy to see improvements to the pedestrian circulation from what was presented during the pre-application review. UDRP also provided comments on vehicle circulation and improving the public street edge. Administration worked with the applicant to refine this development permit in response to UDRP comments. To address UDRP comments, the applicant has worked to improve the pedestrian character of the internal street through the implementation of items such as rolled curbs and raised crosswalks. The applicant also improved the condition around Building I with regards to the east drive through and responded to comments regarding vehicular circulation. The application was deemed to generally meet the expectations of the Panel.

Transportation

A Transportation Impact Assessment was not required as part of this application.

There are four vehicular access points to the site. All turns accesses are provided from Cornerstone Street NE, Cornerstone Grove NE and Cornerstone Boulevard NE while a right-in, right-out access is provided from Country Hills Boulevard NE.

Transit

At present time, the community of Cornerstone is still in its initial stages of development and as such, the site is not well served by Calgary Transit. The closest transit service is currently located approximately 700 metres to the west, at the intersection of Skyview Circle NE Country Hills Boulevard NE – Route 128 (Cornerstone / Redstone).

Transit service will improve greatly in the future, including transit stops immediately adjacent to the site at the intersection of Country Hills Boulevard NE and Cornerstone Boulevard NE. The site is also located approximately 350 metres from the future Blue Line LRT station at Country Hills Boulevard NE and 60 Street NE.

Bicycle Parking Facilities

The development provides 52 Class 2 bicycle parking stalls (bike racks), which will help to promote active transportation to the site. The racks are distributed throughout the site and exceed the requirements of the Land Use Bylaw.

Environmental Site Considerations

No environmental concerns were identified, and no Environmental Site Assessment was required.

Utilities and Servicing

Public water, sanitary and storm sewer mains exist or are currently under construction in the adjacent public rights-of-way for development servicing purposes. Development servicing will be determined at the Development Site Servicing Plan stage.

The application also includes a series of rain gardens, which will help to manage runoff before entering into the stormwater system. These elements will act to clean stormwater runoff on-site while also reducing the amount of runoff that is required to be handled via public infrastructure.

Legislation and Policy

South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (2014)

The recommendation by Administration in this report has considered and is aligned with the policy direction of the [South Saskatchewan Regional Plan](#) which directs population growth in the region to cities and towns and promotes the efficient use of land.

Interim Growth Plan (2018)

The recommendation aligns with the policy direction of the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board's [Interim Growth Plan](#) (IGP). The proposed development permit application builds on the principles of the IGP by promoting efficient use of land and regional infrastructure, and establishing strong, sustainable communities.

Municipal Development Plan (Statutory – 2009)

The subject site is located in the Future Greenfield area as identified on Map 1: Urban Structure in the [Municipal Development Plan](#) (MDP). The proposed development is consistent with the MDP as it proposes local retail and a built form that allows for adaption and evolution over time. The site is outside the Major Activity Centre, which is focused around the intersection of Country Hills Boulevard NE and 60 Street NE. These lands provide a transition between the Major Activity Centre and residential areas. This is achieved by stepping down building heights and reducing the density as it transitions into the neighbourhood.

Climate Resilience Strategy (2018)

Administration has reviewed this application against the applicable policies in the [Climate Resilience Strategy](#). The applicant has included conduit to allow to future electric vehicle charging stations in two separate locations. The charging stations will be located in the large parking areas, adjacent to each of the elevated boardwalks. Conduit is also being incorporated into buildings to allow solar panels to be easily installed in the future. These actions advance the following program areas of the Climate Mitigation Plan: Program Area 4: Support and Enable the Uptake of Electric Vehicles, and Program Area 3: Enable the Implementation of Onsite Renewable and Low-Carbon Energy Systems.

Cornerstone Area Structure Plan (Statutory – 2014)

Transit Station Planning Area

As the site is located within 600 metres of a future LRT station, it has been designated as a Transit Station Planning Area (TSPA). As a whole, the TSPA is to achieve a minimum intensity of 100 people and jobs per hectare. The proposal includes methods of how the site can intensify over time to exceed the intensity threshold, which are desired to be achieved in a similar same timeframe as the LRT station development. Development within the TSPA is to be in a gridded network, which the proposal aligns with.

Corridor Planning Area

The eastern edge of the site is within a Corridor Planning Area, which is intended to provide a high-quality streetscape for pedestrians and cyclists. Extra attention has been paid to landscaping this area to create a positive interface with the street. As the site evolves, future buildings on the east side of the site will also provide improved orientation and frontage to the street.

Land Use Bylaw 1P2007

The development permit requires the following relaxations to the Land Use Bylaw. Administration has reviewed each relaxation individually and considers each relaxation to be acceptable for the reasons outlined below.

Bylaw Relaxations			
Regulation	Standard	Provided	Administration Rationale Supporting a Relaxation
185 Drive Through	(e) must not have any drive through aisles in a setback area;	Plans indicate the east and south Drive Throughs as being within the 6.0m setback areas.	Thoughtful landscaping with groupings of shrubs and ornamental grasses have been provided that will provide screening of

Bylaw Relaxations			
Regulation	Standard	Provided	Administration Rationale Supporting a Relaxation
			the Drive Throughs throughout the year.
766 Front Setback Area (max.)	The front setback area must have a min. depth of 6.0m	Plans indicate Building A as being 5.74m (-0.26m), Building E and F as being 5.78m (-0.22m).	Supported to allow additional articulation to the building.
768 Side Setback Area (min.)	(2) Where the parcel shares a side property line with a lane, LRT corridor or street, the side setback area must have a min. depth of 6.0m	Plans indicate the north setback to Building D as being 5.85m (-0.15m). Plans indicate the south setback to Building J as being 5.84m (-0.16m), Building L as being 5.78m (-0.22m), and Building M as being 5.71m (-0.29m)	Supported to allow additional articulation to the building.
693 Additional Landscaping Requirements	(2) All areas of a parcel must be a soft surfaced landscaped area unless specifically allowed by the Development Authority.	Plans indicate portions of the proposed buildings, drive throughs, and parking stalls within the areas required to be soft landscaping.	Landscaping has been viewed comprehensively, and planting has been provided in other parts of the plan area not covered in the Bylaw to improve the user experience of the development. The plan complies with the intent of this portion of the Bylaw when viewed as a whole.
769 Landscaping in Setback Areas	(1) Where a setback area shares a property line with an LRT corridor or street, the setback area must: (a) be a soft surfaced landscaped area;	Plans indicate portions of the north, south and west buildings as being within the required landscaped area. Plans indicate the proposed east and south drive throughs as being within the required landscaped areas. Plans indicate the north parking stalls as being within the required landscaped area.	Landscaping has been viewed comprehensively, and planting has been provided in other parts of the plan area not covered in the Bylaw to improve the user experience of the development.
769 Landscaping in Setback Areas	(1) Where a setback area shares a property line with an LRT corridor or	Plans indicate 19 (-12) trees within the south setback area.	Infrastructure in the boulevard limits the amount of trees that can be planted in the south setback.

Bylaw Relaxations			
Regulation	Standard	Provided	Administration Rationale Supporting a Relaxation
	street, the setback area must: (b) 1.0 trees / 2.0 shrubs: (ii) per 50.0m2 of Req. L.S. low H2O.	Plans indicate 16 (-7) trees within the east setback area.	Additional planting of shrubs and ornamental grasses have been provided in the setbacks areas as well as adjacent plazas in lieu of this deficiency.

694 Large Parking Landscaping	(3) Islands provided in the parking area must: (c) be a minimum area of 12.0m ² with at least one side of the island being a minimum length of 2.0m;	Plans indicate 20 of the 35 islands as being less than 12.0m ² in area.	The intent of this rule is to break up large parking areas to make parking areas more human-scaled. Due to the design of the islands in this application, the bylaw has viewed large islands as two separate islands. Combined, the islands are generally over the Bylaw dimensions. Additionally, significant landscaping has been provided in other areas that work to break up the parking areas such as the elevated boardwalk, plazas and adjacent planting beds.
694 Large Parking Landscaping	(3) Islands provided in the parking area must: (d) provide a minimum of 1.0 trees and 2.0 shrubs;	Plans indicate 31 (-4) trees and 66 (-4) shrubs within the islands.	Double trees have been planted in islands wherever possible. Islands with single trees and fewer shrubs than Bylaw requirements are due to obstructions - light standards, fire hydrants, etc. Additional shrubs and ornamental grasses have been planted elsewhere in the plan area, which far exceed the noted Bylaw deficiency.
691 Planting Requirements	(3) Deciduous trees min. calliper of 50mm, 50.0% of the provided trees must have min. calliper of 75mm	Plans indicate 77(-11) deciduous trees as being 75mm calliper.	This calliper of tree has been planted around the perimeter of the site and in any location where there is suitable space to plant a larger root ball. Trembling Aspen masses have been planted in rain garden and plaza areas – these trees are not available in 75 mm calliper, however the amount of this type of tree has been provided in excess of Bylaw requirements.

Total Shrubs and Trees		Plans indicate 143 (-9) trees within the setbacks, islands, and strips.	Additional shrubs and ornamental grasses have been planted elsewhere in the plan area, which far exceed the noted Bylaw deficiency. Ornamental grasses also do not contribute to the overall landscape count – these have been used extensively in setbacks and islands.
696 Mechanical Screening	Mechanical systems or equipment that are located outside of a building must be screened.	Plans do not indicate screening for the proposed RTU units for the proposed buildings.	The original intent of the building design was to screen RTUs through the use of parapets. This has been determined to be unsatisfactory. Improved mechanical screening has been asked for as a Prior to Release item.