

# Background and Planning Evaluation

## Background and Site Context

The subject site is located in the community of Varsity, on the corner of Research Road NW and 36 Street NW. The site is approximately 1.11 hectares (2.74 acres) in size and currently contains a 205,376 square foot commercial development commonly known as the SMART Building.

Surrounding development is characterized by a mix of institutional, commercial, residential and open space uses. The surrounding uses generally consist of:

- North – residential development comprised primarily of single detached dwellings;
- South – a two and four-storey development occupied by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Alberta Precision Laboratories;
- West – Dips Bar Athletic Park; and
- East – a vacant site that is designated Special Purpose – University Research Park (S-URP) District.

Vehicular access to the subject site is from Research Road NW which intersects with 36 Street NW to the west. This roadway provides direct access to 40 Avenue NW which then has direct connections to Crowchild Trail NW.

Access to the Primary Transit Network is available from the Brentwood LRT Station which is located less than 200 metres (5-minute walk) to the east of the subject site. The pedestrian pathway network located south of the subject site provides a direct connect for users from the SMART Building to the Brentwood LRT Station.

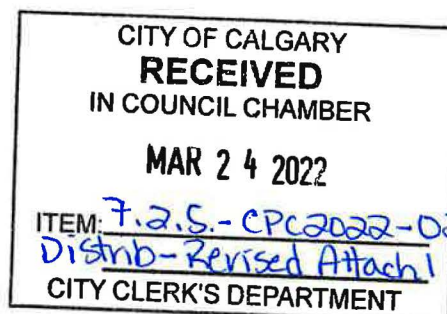
## Community Peak Population Table

As identified below, the community of Varsity reached its peak population in 1981.

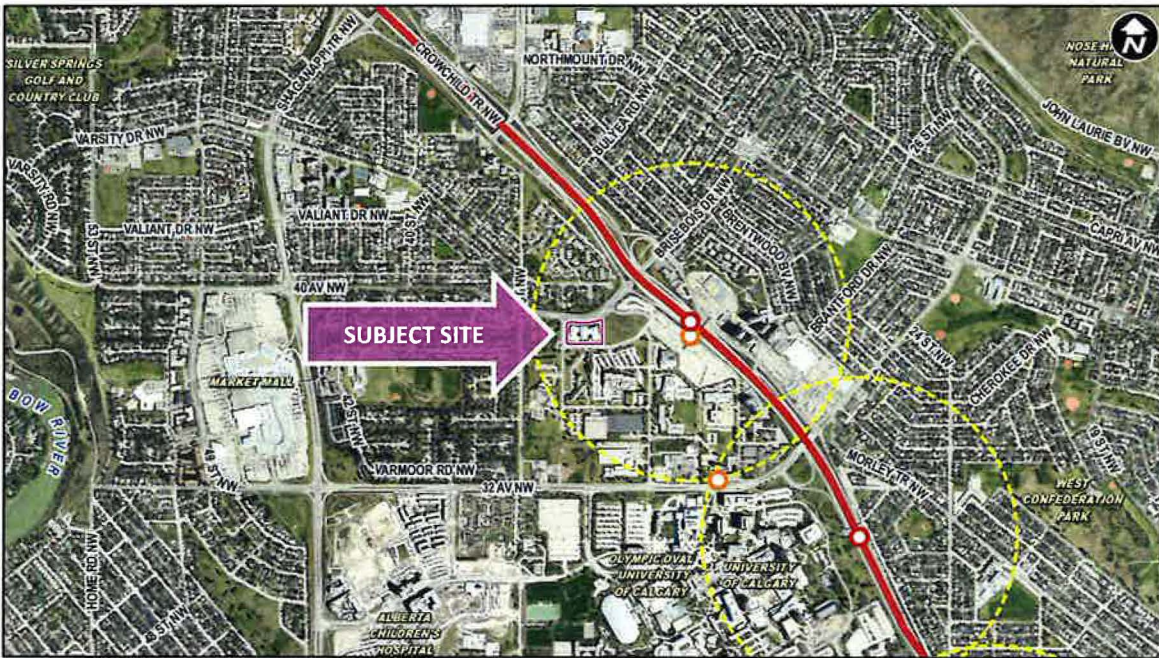
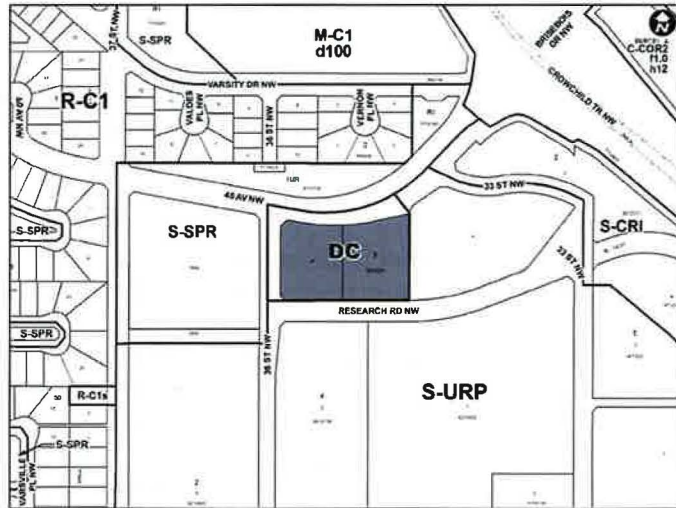
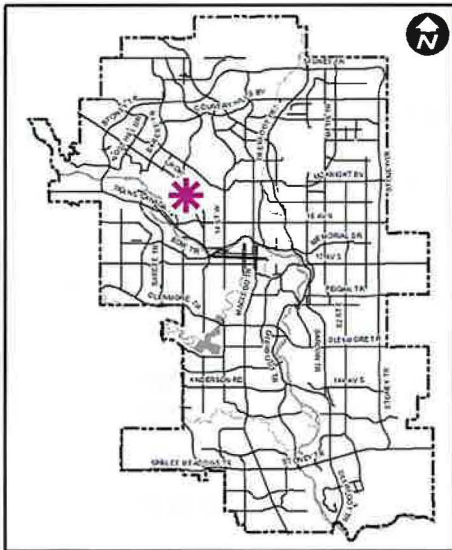
Varsity	
Peak Population Year	1981
Peak Population	13,645
2019 Population	12,874
Difference in Population (Number)	-771
Difference in Population (Percent)	-5.7%

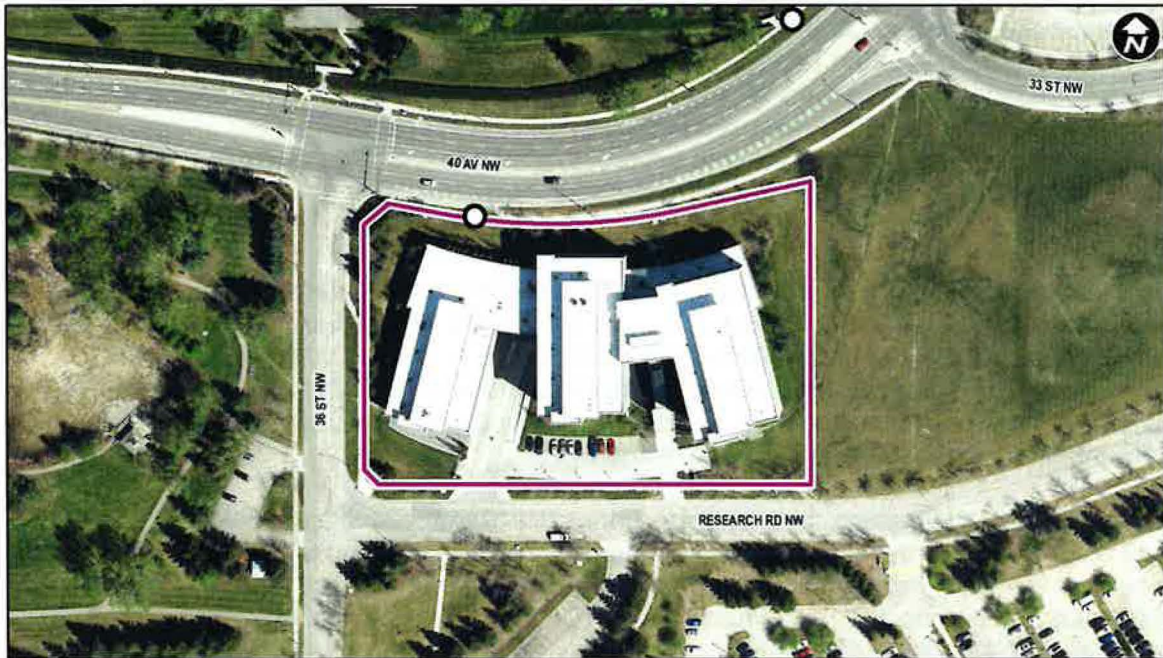
Source: The City of Calgary 2019 Civic Census

Additional demographic and socio-economic information may be obtained online through the [Varsity](#) community profile.



## Location Maps





## Previous Council Direction

None.

## Planning Evaluation

### Land Use

The existing S-URP District is intended to accommodate a limited range of uses engaged in scientific research, research and development, and technology commercialization in association with The University of Calgary, The Province of Alberta or The Government of Canada. A limited range of complementary support uses are also allowed.

The proposed DC District is based on the existing S-URP District and proposes the additional uses of School Authority – School and School – Private. The application does not propose any changes to the existing rules of the base district or remove any existing uses from the District.

The proposed DC District includes rules (Section 7) that allows the Development Authority to relax Section 6 of the DC. Section 6 incorporates the rules of the base district in Bylaw 1P2007 where the DC does not provide for specific regulation. In a standard district, many of these rules can be relaxed if they meet the test for relaxation of Bylaw 1P2007. The intent of this DC rule is to ensure that rules regulating aspects of development that are not specifically regulated by the DC can also be relaxed in the same way that they would be in a standard district.

Pursuant to Section 20 of the Land Use Bylaw 1P2007, the application for a DC District has been reviewed by Administration, and the use of a Direct Control District is necessary to provide for the applicant's proposed development due to innovative ideas as the proposal allows for the re-use of an existing SMART Building with educational uses not previously allowed, the same result could not be achieved through the use of a standard land use district in the Land Use Bylaw.

### **Development and Site Design**

If the application is approved by Council, the rules of the proposed DC District and S-URP base district will allow for the opening of a new public charter school specializing in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). A development permit application is required to allow for the additional uses to repurpose vacant space within the SMART Building. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure no changes are being made to the existing building and site plan that is presently approved for the subject site.

### **Transportation**

Pedestrian access to the site is available via 36 Street NW and Research Road NW. The collector roadway of 36 Street NW provides direct access to 40 Avenue NW and subsequently Crowchild Trail. The latter two roadways are classified as an arterial street and a skeletal highway respectively as per the *Calgary Transportation Plan*. Vehicular access to the site is exclusively from Research Road NW. Paid Street parking is available along Research Road NW and is monitored by the Calgary Parking Authority.

A total of 263 on-site parking stalls are provided in the SMART Building parkade. A parking study provided by the applicant indicated a total of 125 stalls will be used by the STEM Innovation Academy, leaving the remaining 138 stalls for other building uses. The parking supply rate of 1.2 stalls per 1000 square feet will be maintained. A total of 12 visitor stalls will also be available on the surface parking lot which is located at the front of the building. A total of 30 Class 1 and Class 2 bicycle stalls are also provided on site for future use by students. There are no minimum required motor vehicle parking stalls for commercial or institutional uses within the current S-URP District or proposed DC District.

The area is served by many Calgary Transit bus routes that originate from Brentwood LRT Station located 200 metres (5-minute walk) east of the subject site. These routes provide feeder service from adjacent residential communities (Brentwood, Charleswood and Varsity) to Brentwood LRT Station. The Max Orange BRT (Route 303) also originates from Brentwood LRT Station providing rapid service to Saddleridge LRT Station and other major NW employment hubs (Alberta Children's Hospital, Foothills Hospital) via 16 Avenue N.

### **Environmental Site Considerations**

There are no environmental concerns with the redevelopment of this site. An Environmental Site Assessment is not required.

### **Utilities and Servicing**

Water, sanitary and storm sewer mains are available and can accommodate the proposed land use redesignation without the need for network upgrades at this time. Specific details of the servicing and stormwater management will be reviewed in detail at the development permit stage.

## **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 Interim Growth Plan (IGP). The proposed land use amendment builds on the principles of the IGP by promoting efficient use of land, regional infrastructure, and establishing strong, sustainable communities.

**Municipal Development Plan (Statutory – 2009)**

The subject site is located on University of Calgary lands within a Major Activity Centre typology as identified on Map 1: Urban Structure in the Municipal Development Plan (MDP). Major Activity Centres are areas of high job and population growth, located in strategic areas central to larger residential catchment areas and linked city-wide by the Primary Transit Network.

The MDP's City-wide policies in directly speak to this application. Section 2.22: Shaping a More Compact Urban Form, provides direction to encourage transit use, make optimal use of transit infrastructure and improve the quality of the environment in communities throughout the city. The intent of these policies is to direct future population growth and density in the city in a way that fosters a more compact and efficient use of land, creates complete communities, allows for greater mobility choices and enhances vitality and character in local neighbourhoods.

The proposed DC District is ideal for this site due to its close proximity to Brentwood LRT Station, the grades of the proposed students (Grade 10 and above) and the greater Primary Transit Network. Furthermore, the proposed school uses would help reoccupy a building that has been largely vacant since SMART Technologies downgraded its operations in 2013.

**Climate Resilience Strategy (2018)**

There are a number of aspects of this proposal which help fulfill the objectives of the Climate Resilience Strategy. For instance, the proximity to the Brentwood LRT Station and overall Primary Transit Network will ensure that transportation to and from STEM Innovation Academy will primarily be conducted by public transit, therefore not increasing carbon emissions used for transportation. Furthermore, the SMART Building is already a certified a LEED Gold building with efficient building and design systems. Repurposing an office to a school is an innovative use of vacant space, and by doing so will ensure that carbon emissions / embedded carbon impacts associated with new construction will be mitigated. Further opportunities to further align future development on this site with applicable climate resilience strategies may be explored and/or implemented at the development permit and building permit stages.

**Brentwood Station Area Redevelopment Plan (Statutory – 2009)**

The subject parcel is located within the area of influence of the Brentwood Station Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP). Although the ARP does not directly speak to this application, educational institutions are encouraged to be located within the station area. Furthermore, the proposed charter school will provide an additional use in an area that is currently redeveloping and will require new institutional spaces as the population of the area grows over the foreseeable future.

**The proposal supports the objectives of the ARP.** The proposed charter school is located near the Primary Transit Network and the applicant has indicated that the majority of students (approximately 1,000) will travel to and from the school via Red Line NW segment of the LRT Network. As a result, this aligns with the ARP's objective of limiting vehicular traffic, surface parking and promoting additional uses to an area that has been redeveloping over recent years.

***South Shaganappi Communities Area Plan (Non-Statutory – 2011)***

The subject parcel is located within the Major Activity Centre land-use typology as shown on Map 3: Development Strategy and Urban Structure in the [South Shaganappi Communities Area Plan](#) (SSCAP). The applicable SSCAP policies encourage the development of academic, institutional, and business research facilities in appropriate areas of the plan area, specifically University Research Park.

The proposal is in keeping with relevant SSCAP policies as the proposed charter school aligns with the policy objectives for Major Activity Centres within the plan area.