

Background and Planning Evaluation

Background and Site Context

The subject site is located in the community of Richmond, on 33 Avenue SW between 21 Street SW and 22 Street SW. The site is approximately 105 metres wide by 38 metres deep (350 by 125 feet) for a total area of approximately 0.41 hectares (1.01 acres) and has a rear lane for vehicular access.

The site comprises six properties currently developed with single detached houses, a three-storey apartment building and a sales centre for the six-storey mixed-use building under construction immediately west of the site. This application proposes to extend that same six-storey built form eastward across the remainder of the block.

Surrounding development is characterized by detached and semi-detached housing to the north, a mixed-use multi-residential building under construction to the west, two-storey commercial development to the south, and a vacant property designated for mixed-use development to the east across 21 Street SW.

The site has good connectivity to downtown via Crowchild Trail SW and cycling routes north along 20 Street SW. As the site is within Marda Loop, the community is walkable and has access to local employment, transit and retail amenities.

Community Peak Population Table

The community of Richmond reached its peak population in 1968.

Richmond	
Peak Population Year	1968
Peak Population	5,080
2019 Current Population	4,962
Difference in Population (Number)	-118
Difference in Population (Percent)	-2.3%

Source: *The City of Calgary 2019 Civic Census*

Additional demographic and socio-economic information may be obtained online through the [Richmond Community Profile](#).



Previous Council Direction

The site and its surroundings were redesignated to MU-2f3.0h16 by City Council on 2019 May 27 as part of a City-initiated effort to implement the Main Streets program (LOC2017-0370, CPC2019-0404). The goal of this redesignation was to encourage private-sector redevelopment to be complemented by public investment in streetscape and servicing improvements.

Planning Evaluation

The applicant contends that the approved land use designation does not adequately encourage private-sector redevelopment as the four-storey maximum requires an inefficient and uneconomical building design. The *Marda Loop ARP* supports a mid-rise form in the area to create a walkable Main Street neighbourhood. Mid-rise forms are between four and six storeys, meaning this increase would continue to align with the overall objectives of the plan.

However, there are concerns that an increase from four to six storeys could create an undesirable rear lane interface, particularly when the CY33 building on the west end of the block is used as a template. Because of the unique design of that building featuring an internal courtyard, much of the building mass is forced back against the rear property line, maximizing impact on adjacent properties.

Conversely, the MU-2 District aims to mitigate any increases in height by requiring the building mass to step back proportionally as it rises. A 22-metre building height means that the top of the building would be stepped back 6 metres further than the top of a 16-metre building. This is intended to create additional separation between any additional height and existing development across the lane.

Administration has reviewed the proposed height increase and finds the following reasons to support the application:

- the proposed 22 metre height is approximately proportional to the width of the public right-of-way along 33 Avenue SW, framing the street with a 1:1 ratio to create a sense of enclosure which supports a comfortable pedestrian environment;
- the height of the building would not cast shadow on neighbouring backyards between March and September, yet even a four-storey building would shade the neighbours through the winter months;
- the mid-rise form of four-to-six storeys is deemed acceptable adjacent to low-density residential development, provided the specific building design responds to the transition as per the height regulations of the MU-2 District; and
- the associated development permit features a design with the building pulled as far forward toward the street as possible to create as much separation in the rear as possible, creates a courtyard to further separate the building from the rear property line, and steps back the upper floors more than is required by the Land Use Bylaw.

Land Use

The current land use designation on the site is MU-2f3.0h16 District, which allows for mixed-use buildings along commercial streets. The upper floors may be either residential or commercial, but commercial uses are required at grade in order to animate the public realm. The specific district currently in place allows for a maximum floor area ratio of 3.0 and a maximum height of 16 metres, or approximately four storeys.

The proposed land use district is the same base district, but with different modifiers. The proposed MU-2f4.0h22 District will support the same mix of uses and achieves the same purpose but enables up to six storeys to be constructed. Both land use districts restrict the maximum height of the buildings as they relate to neighbouring residential buildings across the lane. The proposed district would allow for a maximum floor area ratio of 4.0 and a maximum height of 22 metres.

Development and Site Design

If approved by Council, the rules of the proposed MU-2f4.0h22 District will provide guidance for the development of the site, including appropriate uses, building height and massing, landscaping, parcel coverage and parking. Other key factors that are being considered during the review of the development permit application include the following:

- interface with the lane and adjacent developments, including planting locations, building materiality, balcony and window treatments, and parkade access;
- public realm enhancements in alignment with the Master Design for Marda Loop's Main Street improvements; and
- opportunities for public art and a public plaza as noted in the ARP.

Transportation

The site is well connected to the rest of the city. Express bus service is available along Crowchild Trail SW with connections north to Greater Downtown and south to Mount Royal University and Foothills Hospital. Local bus service is available within 100 metres with connections east to Greater Downtown and west to Westbrook. The site is one block from cycling routes along 20 Street SW and 34 Avenue SW, and is 700 metres (a three-minute bike ride) away from a major east-west cycling route along 26 Avenue SW.

The site is located along 33 Avenue SW, a Neighbourhood Boulevard-class roadway that sees approximately 13,000 vehicle trips per day. As with all of Calgary's Main Streets, on-street

parking is in high demand and traffic can become congested at rush hour. The surrounding grid street network provides multiple routes through the community, allowing for dispersal of traffic and parking demand away from 33 Avenue SW. On-street parking near the site is uncontrolled on the north side of the street and limited to two hours on the south side of the street.

A Transportation Impact Assessment was provided which demonstrated that the expected traffic generated by the redesignated site can be accommodated without issue.

Environmental Site Considerations

No environmental concerns were identified.

Utilities and Servicing

Water mains are available for connection along both 33 Avenue SW and 21 Street SW, providing flow from the West Calgary pressure zone. Sanitary sewer connections are also available beneath both roads and drain to the Inner City Glenmore catchment, which has spare capacity at this time. A storm sewer connection is available in 21 Street SW.

Fire flow calculations and a Sanitary Servicing Study are to be provided through the Development Permit application which will determine if any local upgrades are needed.

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 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 – 2020)

The site falls within the Neighbourhood Main Street area as identified on Map 1: Urban Structure of the [Municipal Development Plan](#) (MDP). These areas are key to achieving Calgary's goals of a more compact urban form by providing suitable places to increase density and retail vitality. These corridors are envisioned to become even more oriented around the pedestrian and transit user experience as they grow and develop into true urban villages.

Climate Resilience Strategy (2018)

This application does not include any specific actions that address objectives of the [Climate Resilience Strategy](#), and no actions have been identified in the development permit currently under review.

Marda Loop Area Redevelopment Plan (Statutory – 2014)

The site falls within the Commercial Mixed-Use Area as identified on Map 3.1 of the [Marda Loop Area Redevelopment Plan](#) (ARP). Policy for this area supports a mix of uses, a range of housing types and styles, retail and live/work units helping to create an active street environment. Policies in section 4.0 related to Building Design define architectural features necessary to support a pleasant pedestrian environment, as well as setting out height limitations in Map 4.2. This map requires an amendment to allow for the increase in height.

The ARP was amended in 2019 to coordinate its land use plan and maximum heights with new Mixed-Use districts created to support the Main Streets program. Several policies lay out conditions under which a maximum height above four storeys may be considered, including where sites serve as gateways or feature public plazas. These policies were used to support the CY33 height of six storeys, but do not apply to this application site. The proposed amendment to the ARP would exempt this site from the current height rules.

West Elbow Communities Local Area Plan

Administration is currently working on the [West Elbow Communities Local Area Plan](#) project which includes Richmond and surrounding communities. Planning applications are being accepted for processing during the area plan process.