

Background and Planning Evaluation

Background and Site Context

The subject site is located within University Research Park in the community of Varsity, on the corner of Research Road NW and 31 Street NW. The site is approximately 2.36 hectares (5.83 acres) in size and currently contains a commercial office development commonly known as the Alastair Ross Technology Centre.

Surrounding development is characterized by a mix of institutional, commercial, residential and open space uses. The surrounding uses generally consist of surface parking lots to the north and south, apartment buildings and a church to the east, and office buildings to the west. The residential and institutional uses are located east of 31 Street NW and are outside the boundaries of University Research Park.

Vehicular access to the subject site is from 31 Street NW which intersects with 32 Avenue NW to the south. This roadway provides direct access to Crowchild Trail NW.

Access to the Primary Transit Network is available from the Brentwood LRT Station which is located less than 200 metres (2-minute walk) to the north of the subject site. The pedestrian pathway network located north of the subject site provides a direct connection for users from the Alastair Ross Technology Centre to the Brentwood LRT Station.

Community Peak Population Table

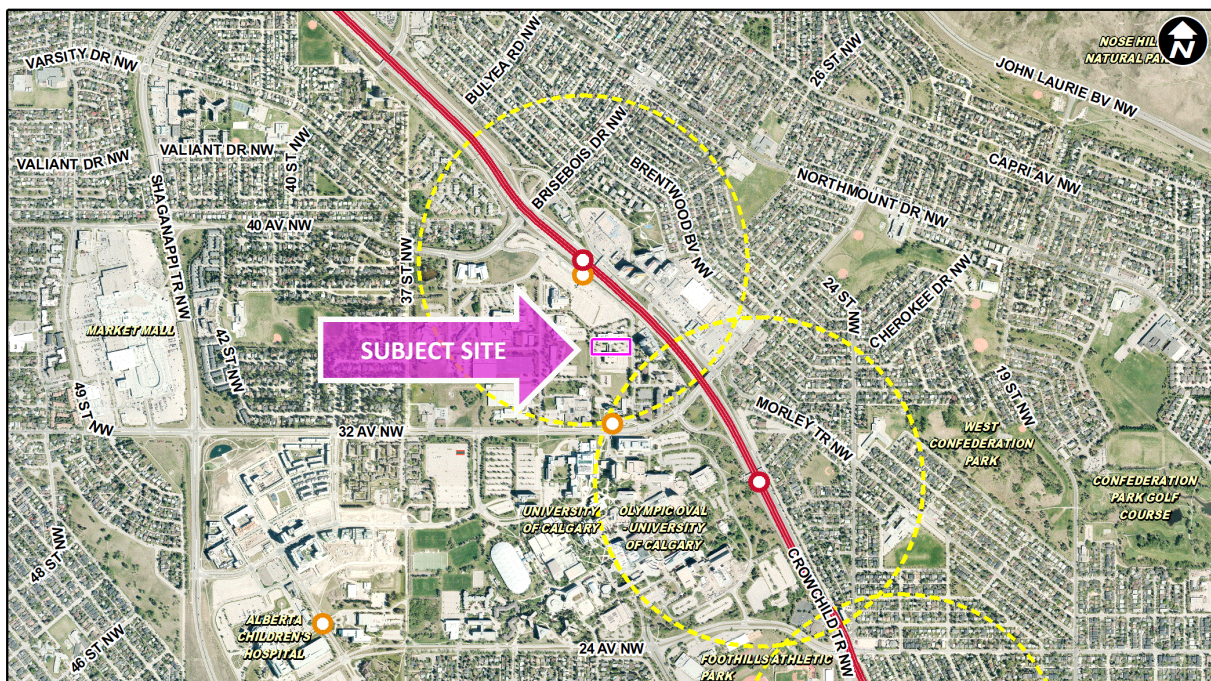
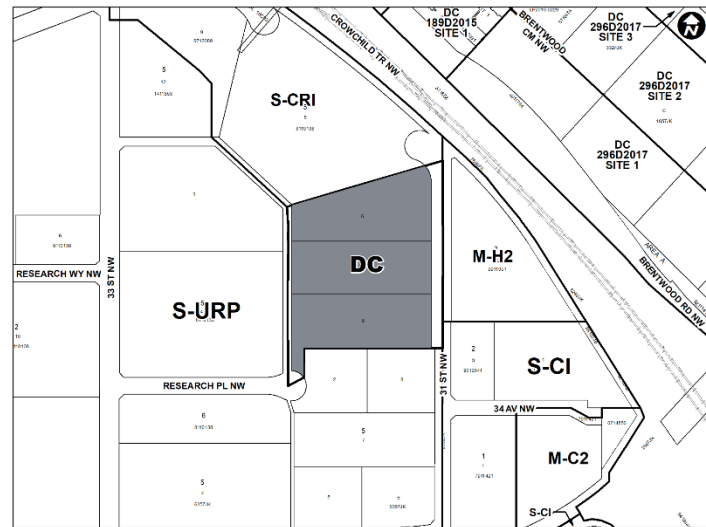
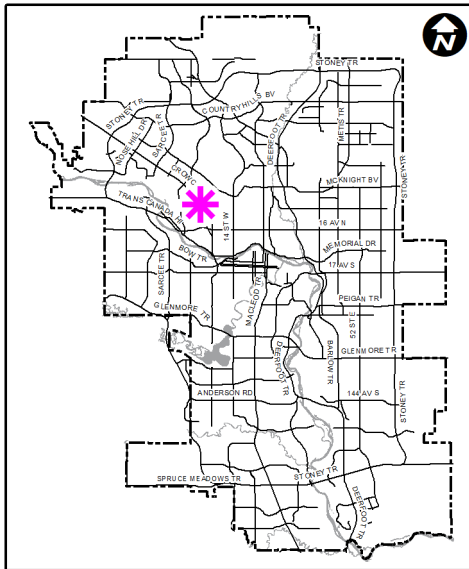
As identified below, the community of Varsity reached its peak population in 1981.

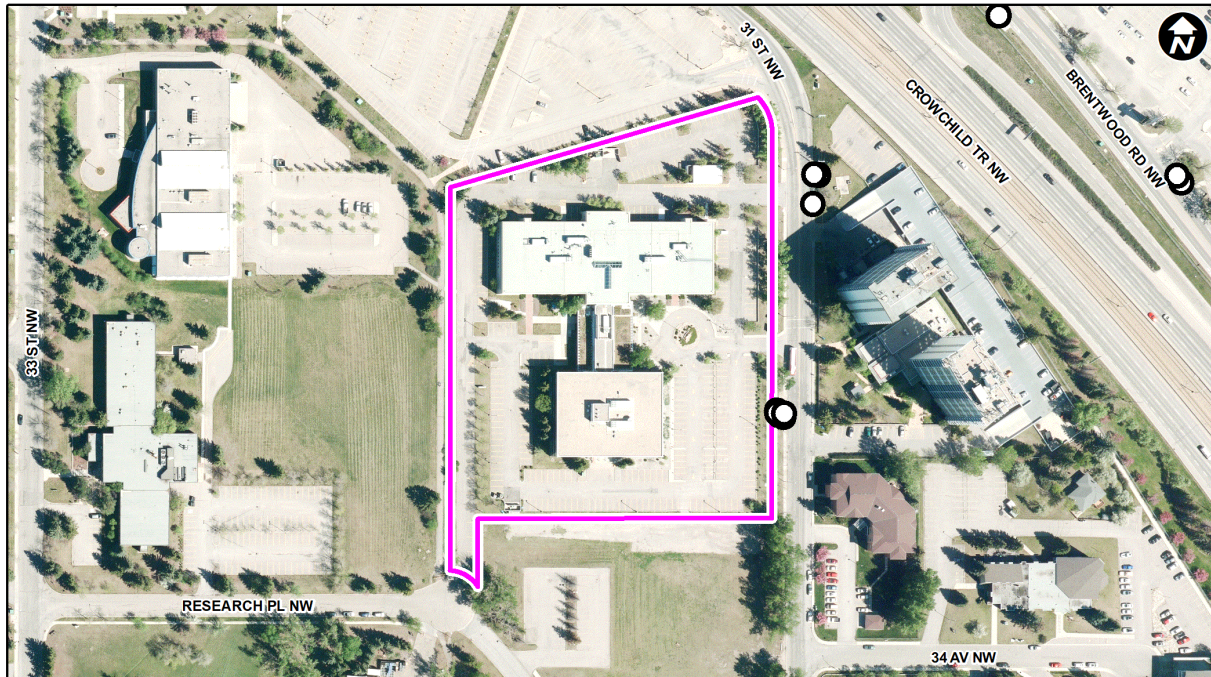
Varsity	
Peak Population Year	1981
Peak Population	13,645
2019 Population	12,874
Difference in Population (Number)	-771
Difference in Population (Percent)	-5.7%

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 Government 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 discretionary 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 allow 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. This proposal allows for the reuse of the existing Alastair Ross 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. A development permit application is required to allow for the additional uses to repurpose vacant space within the Alastair Ross Building and assess what, if any, changes are needed to the existing layout and configuration of the building and site.

Transportation

Pedestrian access to the site is available via 31 Street NW and Research Road NW. The collector roadway of 31 Street NW provides direct access to 32 Avenue NW and subsequently Crowchild Trail NW. 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 31 Street NW. Street parking is available along the eastern edge of 31 Street NW.

The area is served by several Calgary Transit bus routes that originate from Brentwood LRT Station located 200 metres (2-minute walk) northwest 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 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 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 a high vacancy rate.

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 be primarily conducted by public transit, therefore not increasing carbon emissions used for transportation. 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 150) 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.