

North Hill Communities Local Area Plan Lessons Learned

The North Hill Communities Local Area Plan was approved by Council in September 2021. Prior to approval, Administration had already started incorporating lessons learned from the three pilot local area plans: North Hill Communities and the early phases of the Westbrook Communities and Heritage Communities local area plans into practice.

Since then, the Riley Communities and Greater Forest Lawn Communities have also been launched. Beginning in 2023, an annual report will be presented at the Infrastructure and Planning Committee for information with lessons learned as the Local Area Planning Program continues to be implemented.

Deeper conversations

We heard that we needed time for deeper conversations with our Working Group, communities, and other stakeholders. We are now bringing our work to our communities earlier and with less structure to capture the thoughts and ideas of a wider group of Calgarians as we develop both the engagement plan and the content.

More touchpoints with Community Associations

We heard that Community Associations wanted to meet with us more frequently throughout the development of the local area plan. During each phase of public engagement, we meet with Community Association boards to provide an opportunity to see what we are planning to share and a chance for them to provide feedback on the content and how we can better connect with their residents in our engagement. This also gives the Community Associations an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of what we are engaging on prior to public launch so they are better informed to support their residents.

We continue to offer in-person and online opportunities throughout the process to connect with people in a way that works for them.

Engagement Booklets

We heard that some citizens weren't aware of the local area planning work that was underway and that people wanted a variety of methods to provide us with feedback. So now we've created Engagement Booklets for each phase of the local area planning process. These Engagement Booklets are mailed to every home and business in the plan area to ensure information reaches people directly. These booklets provide opportunities to provide feedback through an easy tear-out and mailable sheet along with background to education people so they can provide a more informed response to our questions.

We also provide these booklets at other locations such as "My Idea Stations" located in communities, seniors' homes, libraries, and recreation centres to reach more Calgarians. Approximately 50 per cent of the feedback we received for Phase 3 of the Westbrook Communities engagement was from these booklets.

Meaningful Graphics

We realized that storytelling is a crucial component to bringing people along in the local area planning process. Since North Hill Communities, our engagement is focused on storytelling, and we've created graphics that better tell the story of local area planning as the plan is developed. Illustrative interactive maps for example, are shown as a means to gather information and demonstrate what's special about where residents live, in a more illustrative and less corporate format. We are also ensuring that our materials reflect the diversity of Calgarians so people can see themselves in our documents.

Iterative Approach

We understood that sharing a final draft plan late in the process was cumbersome for the public to digest. We are now sharing the plans in a format that better tells the story of the local area plan from policy to implementation and allows for more opportunities for feedback in more manageable, smaller pieces

throughout the process. Starting with Westbrook Communities and Heritage Communities, we released the draft local area plan, chapter by chapter, instead of releasing one draft near the end of the process. Our stakeholders can then provide feedback for each chapter as the local area plan is developed and see how the draft plan is updated based on their feedback as the updated chapter is released.

Our new approach aligns with the plain language policy and key information is translated with opportunities to provide feedback in-language (where community demographics indicate a need). Content is provided in a format to provide feedback without a large time commitment while still offering the full detailed draft plan for those that want to dive deeper.

History Section

Subsequent to North Hill Communities, we have worked with a local historian to provide a more in-depth history of each plan area that will be included in the local area plan. This provides more context as to the history and the people that helped develop the Calgary we know today.

Land Acknowledgement

The Local Area Planning Team developed an updated land acknowledgement in consultation with the Indigenous Relations Office following a recognition of the complexities of the traditional and treaty territories the city situates within. It also emerged from a recognition that there are people and perspectives missing from broader planning discussions and that there are larger moves we can make as an organization to build a more inclusive and equitable city based on our shared foundations.

Our everyday actions can create a ripple and change, and the land acknowledgement – specifically the second paragraph – the ‘so what’ is intended to recognize our collective commitment to change and new ways forward as guided by the Indigenous Policy and White Goose Flying. While discussions continue regarding our own actions and efforts as a department, this land acknowledgement makes a break with standard wording to acknowledge the limitations of our understandings, assumptions, relationships, and abilities to build a more inclusive and equitable city based on our shared foundations and how there are opportunities to redefine them.

This land acknowledgement can be seen as in interim land acknowledgement as once specific efforts and projects are carried out across Community Planning and Planning & Development Services it can be continually updated to speak to the changes and commitments, we are making to redefine our worldviews and approaches by learning directly from diverse and distinct Indigenous peoples within the traditional territory we situate within.

Heritage Guideline Areas

We understand the need for discussions on heritage to occur during the local area planning process, and not after, as was the case with North Hill Communities. These conversations are being had through a sub-working group in the Riley Communities as that local area plan is developed.

Climate Implementation

Modernized local area plans are required to implement climate mitigation and adaptation strategies. Without updated plans, we cannot achieve climate goals previously set and new goals needed to address the Climate Emergency. Local area plans provide the policy guidance and implementation options that will propel this work. To supplement policy from The Guide for Local Area Planning, new local area plans will have additional policy that speaks to net zero homes and buildings, zero carbon energy transition and natural infrastructure.

We will continue to enhance, innovate, and adjust our process as the program moves forward. Changes have already been implemented to the Westbrook, Heritage, Riley, and Greater Forest Lawn processes based on lessons learned in North Hill Communities.