



Local Area Planning Program **Lessons Learned 2023**



Since the establishment of the Local Area Planning Program, we have worked with thousands of participants to develop local area plans in Calgary.

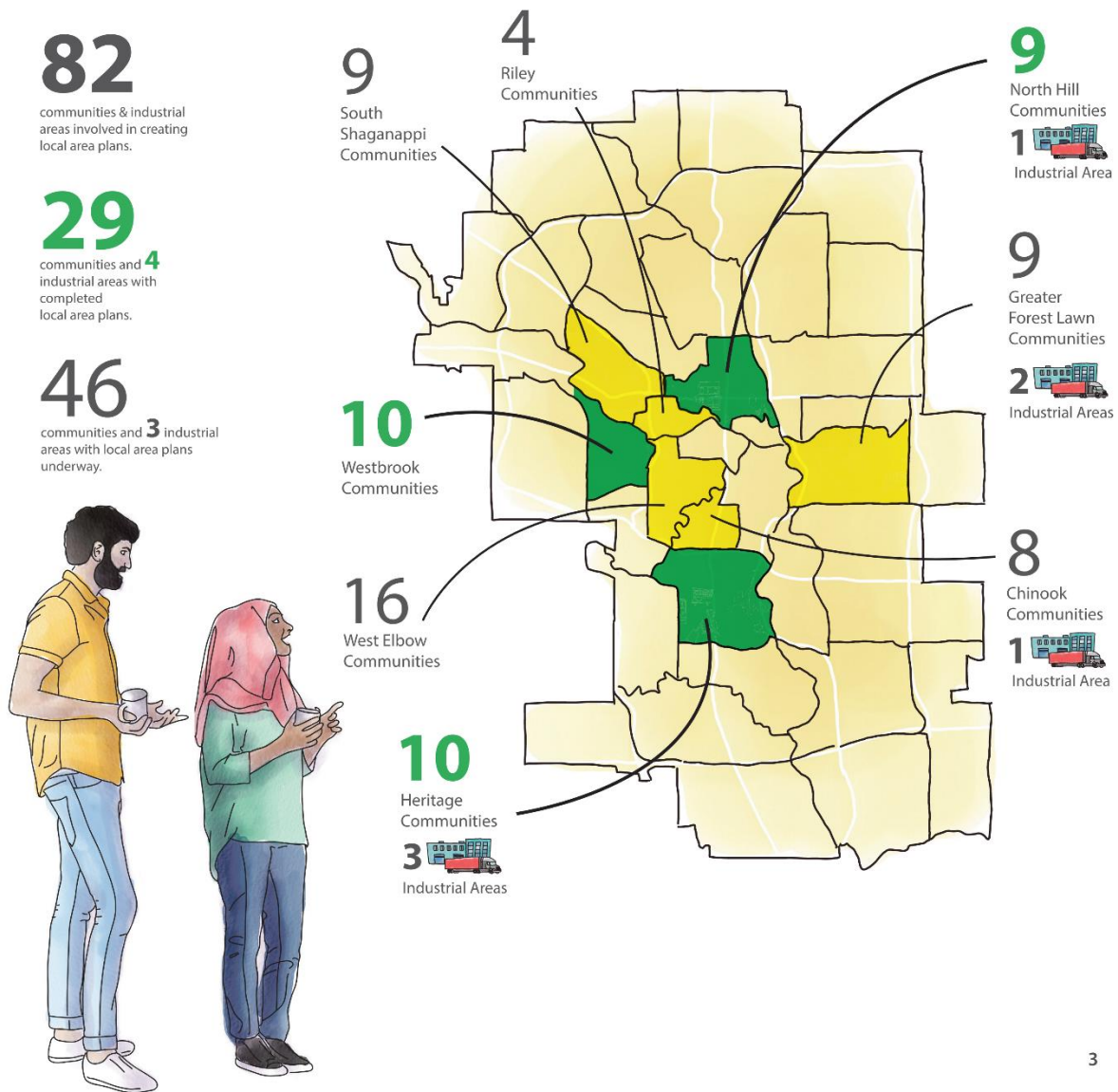
The Local Area Planning Program Lessons Learned for 2023 highlights innovative strategies and improvements made to the Program, engagement and local area planning since the Program was established.



Program History

In 2018, Calgary's first multi-community policy plan, the North Hill Communities Local Area Plan was launched as a pilot. As of 2023, that plan as well as two others have been approved by Council, with five currently under development. Over the past five years, the Local Area Planning team in Community Planning has taken an iterative approach that continues to improve and enhance how local area plans are developed as part of the Local Area Planning Program.

The Local Area Planning Program Lessons Learned 2023 document provides an overview of key highlights of these innovative strategies and improvements, focusing on the Program itself, engagement, policy and internal processes.



Supporting Our Growing Population

Calgary is changing and it's changing rapidly. Every year we welcome tens of thousands of new Calgarians to this city and it is imperative that we plan for how our communities will change over time.

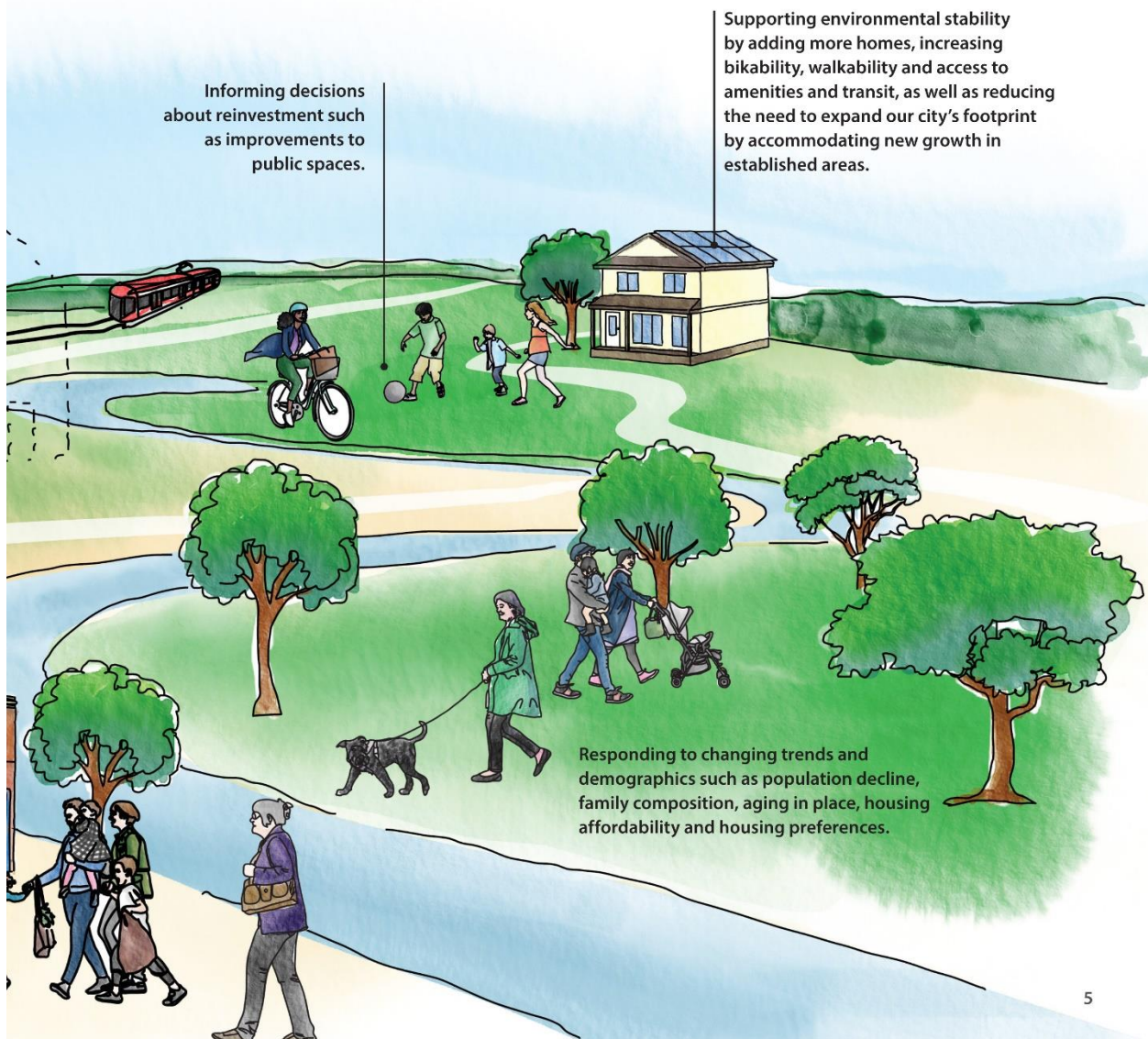
Local area plans support communities as they change by:



Conversations about where, why and how revitalization and redevelopment should happen are essential to ensure there's a plan in place to help guide changes within our communities.

Local area plans provide direction on future development, investment and community improvements that residents, landowners, builders/developers, City Planners and Councillors can commonly refer to when new development and investment ideas are proposed. Since the Program's inception, over 200 events (including open houses, public sessions, working group sessions, community association sessions, industry sessions and community walks) have been held with thousands of participants to discuss growth and change in our communities.

As our Program continues, we continue to develop new and innovative strategies and focus on continuous process improvements to support the creation of local area plans.



Engagement Highlights

A robust engagement process is at the heart of the Local Area Planning Program. Continuous process improvements through lessons learned will continue to enhance our Program as new plans are developed across Calgary.

1. Innovative Strategies

Engagement Booklets

- One of our most successful innovative strategies for education and engagement are our Engagement Booklets. These booklets are 16-20 page magazine-style booklets that are mailed to all addresses during each phase of the process. Over half of all feedback we receive from public participants now comes from our engagement booklets, which have a pre-paid postage feedback component.
- We know planning for the future is crucial and our new youth engagement booklet, allows The City to understand what is important to youth; how they move around their communities, what they love about their communities (and the city), what they wish they had more of in their community.
- Working internally with social programming, youth engagement booklets will be distributed in all of the active LAP areas through the engagement stations. We are also distributing these to kids across the city at the social programming park and play events, and summer camps that focus on community building.
- Engagement booklets are unique to the Local Area Planning Program at The City.

Iterative Approach

- We share local area plans in a format that better tells the story of the local area plan from policy to implementation.
- We release draft plans chapter by chapter, instead of releasing one draft near the end of the process. Our participants can now provide feedback for each chapter as the local area plan is developed and see how the draft plan is updated based on their feedback throughout each phase of engagement.

Storytelling and Meaningful Graphics

- The Local Area Planning Program develops engagement and education materials focused on storytelling; we've created graphics that better tell the story of local area planning as a plan is developed.
- Illustrative maps were developed to highlight what's special about where residents live in each plan area.
- Our materials reflect the diversity of Calgarians so people can see themselves in our document.
- We've incorporated more storytelling including why local area plans are beneficial for communities, how population changes impact communities and what is required for community populations to recover to support local shops, amenities and schools.



2. Improvements

More touchpoints with Community Associations (CAs)

- We have more touchpoints with CAs including going on community walks, attending community association meetings and board meetings.
- We meet with community associations in each plan area before each phase of engagement to gather feedback, refine content and provide more detailed information to CA representatives.

Time to review the Plan

- We have added additional time between Committee and Council to provide people more time to review the final draft plan.

Inclusive Process

- As local area plans are developed, needs of participants are considered through the process and project teams work to remove as many barriers to participation as possible. Effort is made to ensure public engagement is accessible to all, despite potential limitation that might prevent them from being included in the process. A key objective is to ensure that at the very least, people within the area are aware of the opportunity to participate and understand that we are interested in hearing from them. Accessibility accommodations are also available for engagement by request via 311 and local area planning project pages on the Engage Portal are now translatable into ten languages.



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Policy Highlights

Policies in local area plans guide future growth and change. As the Local Area Planning Program continues to evolve, additional policy considerations and enhancements are being introduced into local area plans.



1. Innovative Strategies

Linking Policy and Implementation

- Through our engagement creating local area plans, we heard about the importance of supporting communities as they experience growth and change. As people move to communities and open or expand businesses within them, local area plans can help identify community improvements needed to support new and existing residents and businesses. Planning policies within local area plans identify and provide guidance on implementation options that can be realized through City investment programs including the Established Area Growth and Change Strategy, Public Spaces Delivery and Local Area Investment Fund .
- In identifying community improvements and implementation options, we work with interested parties through our engagement process as well as City departments to ensure that we're aligning with the future vision for communities as well as corporate initiatives to better support communities as they experience growth and change.

2. Improvements

History

- We heard from Calgarians the need to have discussions on heritage policies and historical context during the local area planning process rather than after approval stages as occurred for the North Hill Communities Local Area Plan. We now have these conversations during our engagement process. For heritage-rich areas, these conversations include creating and refining heritage guidelines that will ensure that new development is contextually sensitive to the historic character of these areas.
- We have also worked with a local historian to provide a more in-depth history of each plan area, providing a detailed context and understanding of the lands on which each plan is situated

Land Acknowledgement

- In consultation with the Indigenous Relations Office, the Local Area Planning Program developed an updated land acknowledgement to better recognize the complexities of the traditional and treaty territories the city situates within. The updated land acknowledgement 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.
- This land acknowledgement can be seen as an interim land acknowledgement as once specific efforts and projects are carried out across Community Planning and Planning & Development Services, in line with the actions identified in the City's White Goose Flying Calls to Action Report, 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 are situated in.

Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Policies

- Based on lessons learned from the North Hill Communities LAP, more robust climate mitigation and adaptation strategies were introduced in the Westbrook and Heritage Communities LAPs. These new policies aim to provide guidance and implementation options for achieving The City's climate goals in addressing the Climate Emergency.
- Climate policies are now being integrated throughout the General Policies sections of local area plans, providing a streamlined approach for policy interpretation.

Internal Processes

1. Innovative Strategies

Realignment and Efficiencies

- As part of the Corporate Realignment, the Local Area Planning division was created in Community Planning to provide dedicated internal resources for supporting and delivering the Program more effectively and efficiently.
- Base budget for the Local Area Planning Program has also allowed us to have dedicated Communications and Engage staff that are integral to our work.
- Sister plans such as the Chinook Communities LAP and South Shaganappi Communities LAP are being run concurrently. Plans that are at similar stages in the process allows for greater efficiencies, cross-team collaboration, and the ability to learn from each other as plans are developed.

Learning Opportunities

- In an effort to increase awareness and understanding of the local area planning process beyond those participating in the process directly, a series of learning sessions have been held for those who are interested. A session for Council members and their office staff was held in May 2022 and a Local Area Planning session was held in May 2023 for Community Associations, students and general community members as part of the Partners in Planning course delivered in partnership with the Federation of Calgary Communities.

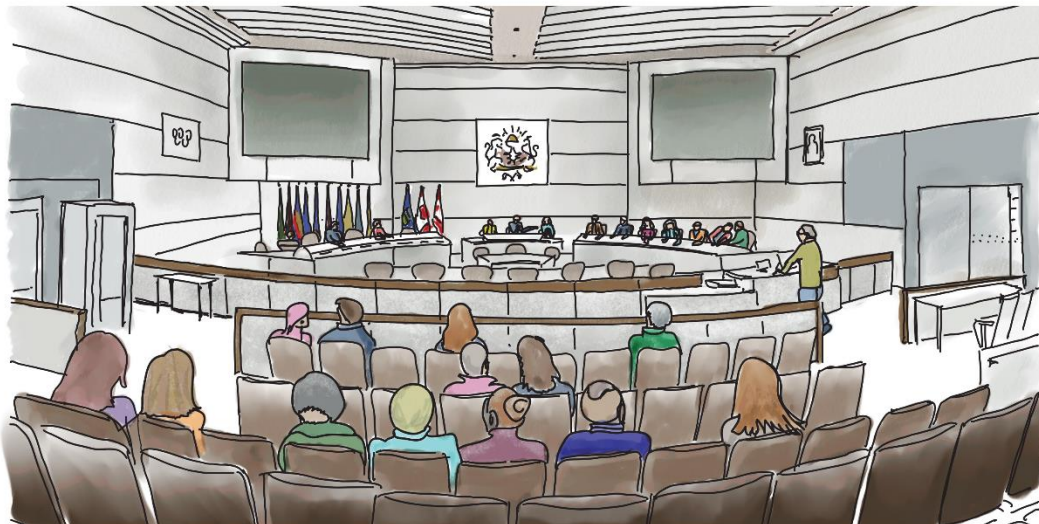
2. Improvements

New Technology

- Utilization of ArcGIS software for project teams allowed for identification of key growth areas and other mapping exercises in an easily accessible and efficient way.

Internal Coordination

- Local Area Planning teams connected with Growth and Planning Infrastructure teams earlier on in the process to identify key infrastructure constraints.



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What's Next?

As the Local Area Planning Program advances, we will continue to gather feedback and lessons learned from the next generation of local area plans under development. Processes within the program will continuously improve and evolve over time as more plans are developed.

This year, three new local area planning projects have started in the established areas in 2023, covering an additional 37 communities. These LAPs will learn from previous approved plans and continue to improve the program. In 2024, we will utilize similar approaches from the established area plans to embark on local area planning in greenfield areas. Upcoming established area plans will have additional benefits including a supporting educational video, engagement opportunities for older youth and in-depth insights from a focus group that will provide feedback on core education and engagement materials.

Monitoring and sustainment of the Local Area Planning Program is currently under development. This work will focus on systematically monitoring and reporting on key local area planning metrics and indicators with the goal of improving local area plan implementation, policy development and informing updates to approved local area plans. Sustainment and monitoring will also ensure there is continuous improvement to the Local Area Planning Program by evaluating the success of policies and implementation options. Outcomes from this work will inform our lessons learned for LAPs that have been approved and are in the process of being implemented.

