

# Background and Planning Evaluation

## Background and Site Context

The subject site is located within the professional/employment quarter of the University District master plan, providing a buffer between residential uses to the north and the Alberta Children's Hospital to the south. The site is approximately 0.79 hectares in size (1.95 acres) and is approximately 100 metres wide by 82 metres at its longest edge. The site, currently functioning as a temporary surface parking lot, fronts onto the University Avenue NW high street and is bounded by roads on all sides.

The site is located within a Major Activity Centre (MAC), with significant institutional presence in the area. Major destinations include The University of Calgary main campus approximately 500 metres (seven-minute walk) to the east, the Alberta Children's Hospital approximately 300 metres (four-minute walk) to the south, University Research Park approximately 1.5 kilometers (20-minute walk) the northeast, and Market Mall – a Community Activity Centre – approximately 1.0 kilometer (14-minute walk) to the northwest.

University of Calgary Properties Group Ltd. (UCPG) was created by the University of Calgary to oversee the development and management of university land projects. The UCPG model is a unique approach to land development in Calgary, as it is focused on optimizing the return on the land for the long term benefit of the University's academic mission. An outline plan (LOC2013-0062) consisting of 74.55 hectares was first approved by Calgary Planning Commission 2014 July 03 and a land use redesignation for the complete University District lands was approved by Council 2014 September 08. The [University District Urban Design Manual](#), which outlines the overall vision and urban design strategy for the community, was accepted for information by Calgary Planning Commission 2016 November 3. The approvals provide a framework for the development of a major mixed-use destination connected to the Primary Transit Network. Subsequent redesignations for the subject parcels were approved by Council in 2016 (LOC2016-0018), 2017 (LOC2016-0050), and 2020 (LOC2020-0033).

The community has been actively developing following these approvals. Development progress includes the construction of the retail high street, numerous public realm elements, three community park spaces and several new residential and mixed use buildings. Measured against The City's policy objectives for a MAC, University District's build out is an exemplary case of transformative neighbourhood design that is currently functioning as an "urban centre" for a sub-region of the city.

With the ongoing residential and commercial development that is being added to University District, self-storage is identified as a key support service to enable the ongoing success of the community. The subject site is intended to be subdivided and the lands redesignated to two Direct Control (DC) Districts: one to accommodate a Self Storage Facility with at-grade commercial opportunities on the south portion of the parcel, and a second to accommodate a mixed use development on the north portion of the parcel that is in keeping with the main street retail environment along University Avenue NW. The DC District proposed for the north portion of the parcel is modelled on an existing DC District that covers large portions of University Avenue NW.

## Community Peak Population Table

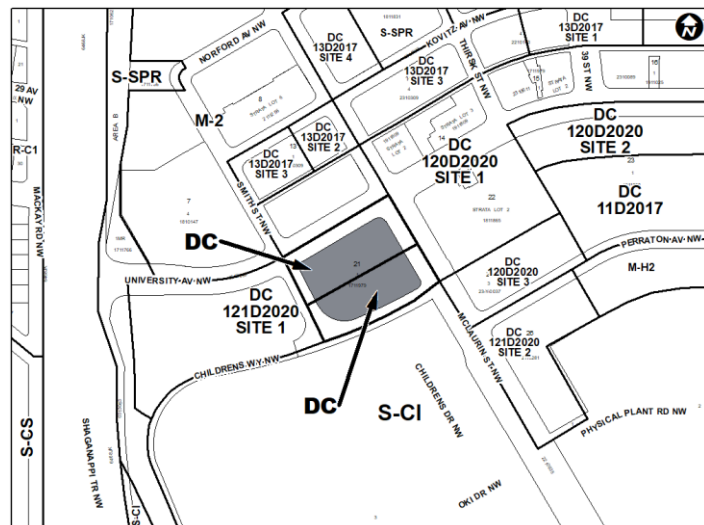
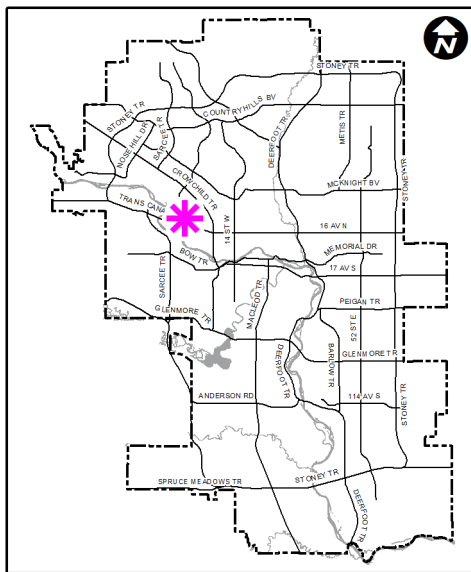
As identified below, the community of University District reached its peak population in 2019.

<b>University District</b>	
Peak Population Year	2019
Peak Population	705
2019 Current Population	705
Difference in Population (Number)	0
Difference in Population (Percent)	0

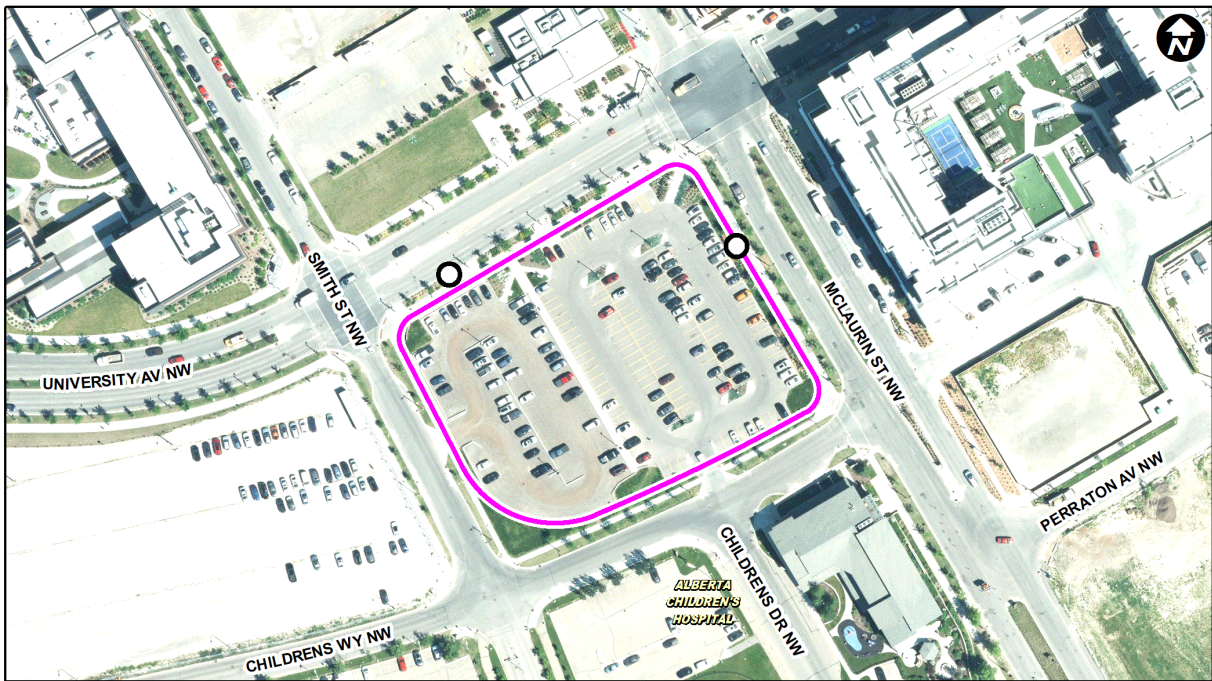
Source: *The City of Calgary 2019 Civic Census*

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

## Location Maps









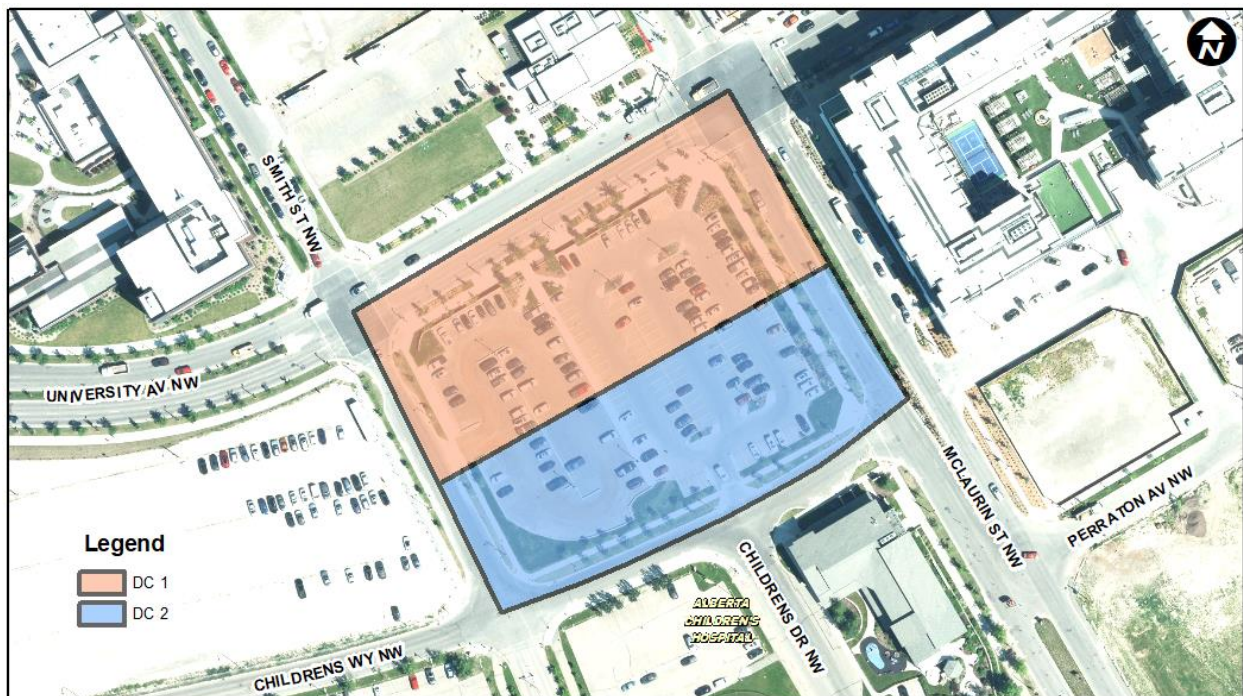
## Previous Council Direction

None.

## Planning Evaluation

### Land Use

The existing DC District ([Bylaw 121D2020](#)), which is based on the Commercial – Office (C-O) District, accommodates primarily office buildings. Additional DC District regulations include rules for setback areas that list street names to avoid issues of interpretation for lots with multiple street frontages and restricting the size of ground floor uses to 1900 square metres, with no maximum floor area for uses on upper floors. The existing DC District allows for a maximum building height of 34.0 metres, with the maximum building height reduced to 18.0 metres when the building is within the flight path of the Alberta Children’s Hospital. There is no maximum floor area ratio (FAR) included in the DC District.



### **Proposed Direct Control (DC) District 1**

The proposed DC District 1, which is based on the Commercial – Corridor 1 (C-COR1) District, accommodates primarily commercial or mixed use development that must include commercial storefronts and may include residential units on upper floors of buildings. The proposed DC District 1 is modelled on the DC District covering a large portion of University Avenue NW that includes specific rules around setbacks, restricts the location of motor vehicle parking stalls, modifies use rules, and broadens the allowable uses on the commercial high street. Changes to this existing DC District covering a large portion of University Avenue NW are proposed which are considered housekeeping in nature and include updating language to current DC District standards, removing redundancies, and including a relaxation clause.

The proposed DC District 1 includes the following rules that broadly address the intent for greater flexibility:

- language regarding permitted uses has been changed to include uses as permitted in 'approved buildings' rather than 'approved and existing buildings', allowing for a streamlined review process and greater certainty as tenants are signed by the UCPG;
- several uses have been added to the list of discretionary uses including but not limited to Amusement Arcade, Community Recreation Facility, and Performance Arts Centre;
- several uses have been added to the list of permitted uses including but not limited to Artist's Studio, Outdoor Café, Restaurant: Licensed, and Restaurant: Food Service Only; and
- a new provision for use area is proposed that would restrict the size of ground floor uses to 1900 square metres, with no maximum floor area for uses on upper floors.

There is no proposed regulation of maximum FAR, however, the maximum proposed building height is increased by one metre to 35.0 metres from the existing DC District. Rules in the existing DC District concerning building height within the flight path of the Alberta Children's Hospital have been addressed with the relocation of the flight path away from the subject parcel. The proposed DC District 1 includes a rule that allows the Development Authority to relax Section 6 of the Bylaw. 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 District rule is to ensure that rules regulating aspects of development that are not specifically regulated can also be relaxed in the same way that they would be in a standard district. Sections 8, 9, 11, and 12 that include provisions for building height, use area, and setback areas, may also be relaxed. The intent is to allow the Development Authority to consider minor relaxations for unique building design, architectural elements, and distribution of uses throughout the building that would not have significant impacts on adjacent lands.

### ***Proposed Direct Control (DC) District 2***

The proposed DC District 2 retains the base C-O District with the additional discretionary use of Self Storage Facility. To ensure the subject site continues to support the pedestrian-oriented urban design strategy for the community, additional rules have been included to ensure the Self Storage Facility use integrates well into an urban context. The rules have been designed to ensure that active uses remain at-grade and the visual appearance of the building, including external façade selections and massing, appear no different than a typical six storey office building. They specifically require:

- at least 10 per cent of the ground floor gross floor area (GFA) of the building must be dedicated to commercial uses that do not include the Self Storage Facility use;
- individual self storage units must be accessed through internal hallways, with no direct exterior access allowed;
- street facing building façades require a minimum percentage of unobscured windows; and
- the majority of motor vehicle parking stalls are to be located within parking structures, with only five stalls allowed between a building and a street along the western site boundary, away from more heavily trafficked pedestrian areas.

There is no proposed regulation of maximum FAR, however, the maximum proposed building height is reduced to 25.0 metres from the current 34.0 metres. Rules in the existing DC District

concerning building height within the flight path of the Alberta Children's Hospital have been addressed with the relocation of the flight path away from the subject parcel. Rules regarding setbacks have also been customized to reflect the specific site context and intended use.

The proposed DC District 2 includes a rule that allows the Development Authority to relax Section 6 of the Bylaw. 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 District rule is to ensure that rules regulating aspects of development that are not specifically regulated can also be relaxed in the same way that they would be in a standard district. Sections 8 through 12 and 15 through 16 that include provisions for building height, use area, setback areas, building façades and Self Storage Facility rules may also be relaxed. The intent is to allow the Development Authority to consider minor relaxations for unique building design, architectural elements, and distribution of uses throughout the building that would not have significant impacts on adjacent lands.

### ***Use of Direct Control (DC) District***

Pursuant to Section 20 of the Land Use Bylaw 1P2007, the application for DC District 1 has been reviewed by Administration and the use of a DC District is necessary due to innovative ideas. At 300,000 square feet of leasable commercial space along the high street at full build-out, flexibility is crucial to the continued success and vitality of the University District community. The proposed DC District introduces additional uses while maintaining the C-COR1 District base to accommodate a broad range of complimentary and compatible uses fitting with the high street character. The same result could not be achieved through the use of a standard land use district in the Land Use Bylaw.

Pursuant to Section 20 of the Land Use Bylaw 1P2007, the application for DC District 2 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 and the site having unique characteristics. The only standard districts in the Land Use Bylaw that allow for a Self Storage Facility are industrial districts, which are not a suitable option for an urban context; therefore, a DC District has been proposed. The additional discretionary use of Kennel has also been proposed, as it is a potentially well-suited complementary commercial use to self storage in this location and meets an emerging need of residents .

### **Development and Site Design**

Any future developments for this site would be guided by the rules of the proposed DC Districts and the applicable rules of the C-COR1 District and C-O District. Items that will be considered for future development include, but are not limited to building frontage, building heights, setbacks, landscaping, parking and use compatibility. The previously approved [University District Urban Design Manual](#) will be used in reviews of future development permit applications to ensure that proposed developments fit in with the overall vision and urban design strategy for the community.

### **Transportation**

Pedestrian access to the site is available from existing sidewalks on University Avenue NW, McLaurin Street NW, Children's Way NW, and Smith Street NW. Both Children's Way NW and the adjacent section of University Avenue NW are recommended on-street bikeway priority routes and future Always Available for All Ages and Abilities (5A) Network, supporting access to and from the site by alternative transportation modes.

Calgary Transit currently operates four routes with the area with additional routes surrounding the site providing a high level of service. In addition, the MAX Orange provides east-west connectivity across the city and provides service to major destinations like Foothills Medical Centre, Alberta Children's Hospital, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT), University of Calgary, McMahon Stadium, and the North Hill Centre.

Vehicular access to the site will be provided from a future private lane accessed off Smith Street NW midblock between University Avenue NW and Children's Way NW. There is no street parking adjacent to the site.

A Transportation Impact Assessment (TIA) was not required as part of this application. A TIA submitted by Watt Consulting Group was accepted by Administration in 2014 in support of the initial land use application for the area and is still applicable to this proposal. Recommended improvements to the transportation network within the report will be implemented as required during future construction phases.

### **Environmental Site Considerations**

There are no environmental concerns with the proposed land use.

### **Utilities and Servicing**

Water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer mains are available and can accommodate potential redevelopment of the subject site without the need for off-site improvements. Individual servicing connections, as well as appropriate stormwater management will be considered and reviewed at the development permit stage.

## **Legislation and Policy**

### **South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (2014)**

Administration's recommendation aligns 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.

### **Growth Plan (2022)**

Administration's recommendation aligns with the policy direction of the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board's [Growth Plan](#) (GP). The proposed land use amendment builds on the principles of the GP by promoting efficient use of land and regional infrastructure, and establishing strong, sustainable communities.

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

The subject lands are identified on Map 1: Urban Structure of the [Municipal Development Plan](#) (MDP) as a Major Activity Centre (MAC). MACs are defined as areas of high job and population concentrations located in strategic areas central to larger residential catchments and linked by the primary transit network. Key uses in these areas include at least one major institution; business and employment; high and medium density residential; and retail and supporting services.

The relatively minor changes proposed within this application continue to meet the policies of the MDP as they allow for a wide variety of uses within a MAC, continue to achieve the community/built form design objectives originally envisioned, and maintain the intensities as anticipated in the existing DC Districts.

### **Calgary Climate Strategy (2022)**

The applicant has indicated that they plan to pursue roof top garden plots and solar panels as part of a future development permit which will align with the [Calgary Climate Strategy – Pathways to 2050](#) (Mitigation Program D - Renewable Energy, and Adaptation Focus Area A – Climate Resilient Communities). The University District neighbourhood development as a whole will achieve a higher standard of environmental performance by pursuing a LEED ND (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighbourhood Development) Platinum certification. Further opportunities to align development of this site with applicable climate strategies will be explored and encouraged at subsequent development approval stages.

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

The [South Shaganappi Communities Area Plan](#) (SSCAP) provides the local area plan policy for the subject lands. This non-statutory plan provides a detailed vision and policy framework for development in the area. The SSCAP recognizes and supports the development of the University District lands as a Major Activity Centre. It outlines policies related to urban design, transit connectivity, minimum intensity thresholds, mixture of land uses, consultation with adjacent communities, compatibility and transitioning with surrounding neighbourhoods and environmental design and sustainability considerations. The proposal aligns with the relevant policies of the SSCAP.

### **South Shaganappi Communities Local Area Planning Project**

Administration is currently working on the [South Shaganappi Communities Local Area Planning project](#) which includes University District and the surrounding communities. Planning applications are being accepted for processing during the local area planning process and are reviewed using existing legislation and Council approved policy.