



Local Area Planning Program **Lessons Learned**



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

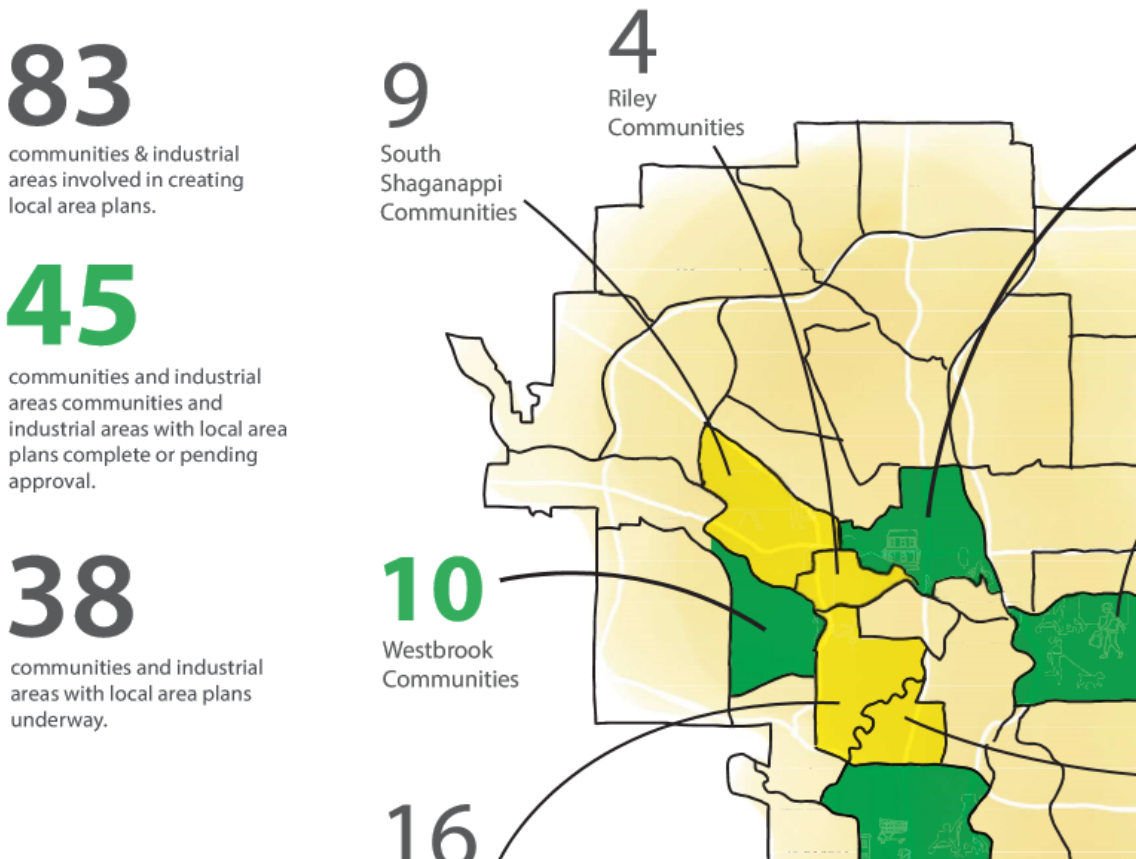
The Local Area Planning Program lessons learned for 2024 high-level strategies and improvements made to the Program, engagement and planning over the past year.



Program History

In 2018, Calgary's first multi-community policy plan, the North Hill Communities Local Area Plan, was a pilot. As of November 2024, four local area plans have been approved or given first reading by Council currently under development. Over the past six 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 through the Local Area Planning Program.

The Local Area Planning Program Lessons Learned 2024 document provides an overview of key highlights of these innovative strategies and improvements, focusing on the Program itself, engagement, policy processes. Additional background on history and learning from the first six years of the Program can be found in the first Local Area Planning Program Lessons Learned document, published in 2023.



Supporting Our Growing Popul

Calgary is changing and it's changing rapidly. Every year we we thousands of new Calgarians to this city and it is imperative tha our communities will change over time.

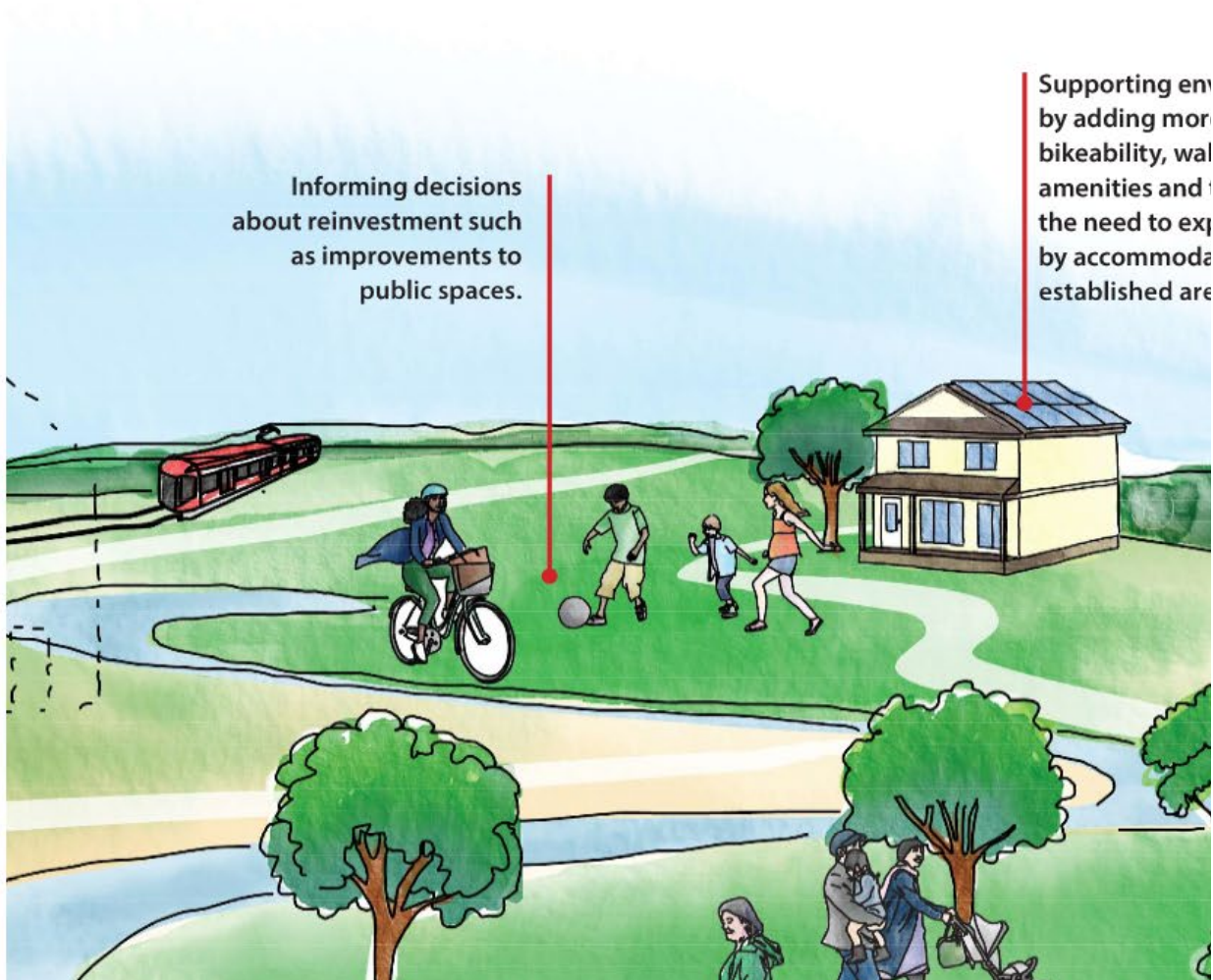
Local area plans support communities as they change by:



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 improvement. Residents, landowners, builders/developers, City Planners and Councilors can commonly refer to what development and investment ideas are proposed. Since the Program's inception, over 300 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 advances, we continue to develop new and innovative strategies and focus on continuous process improvements to support the creation of local area plans.



Program Approach

Foundationally, the Local Area Planning Program's approach is to pilot, test and try new processes and methods of engagement. As we are always looking for ways to evolve and improve, there are some fundamental aspects of the Program that have proven to be successful and have become part of our standard practice.

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 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 are 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



Engagement Booklets

- One of our most successful strategies for education and engagement are our Engagement Booklet booklets are 16-20 page magazine-style booklets that are mailed to all addresses during each phase 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 Youth Engagement Booklet allows The City to know what is important to youth; how they move around their communities, what they love about their communities (and the city), and what they wish they had more of in their community.
- Working internally with social programming, Youth Engagement Booklets are distributed in all of LAP areas through the engagement stations. We are also distributing these to kids across the city through 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.

Inclusive Process

- As local area plans are developed, the needs of participants are considered throughout the process. Planning teams work to remove as many barriers to participation as possible. Effort is made to ensure public participation is accessible to all, despite potential limitations 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 available for engagement by request via 311 and local area planning project pages on the Engagement Station. Materials are available in ten languages.



Engagement Highlights

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



Age-Friendly Conversations

- We attended several events to engage specifically with seniors about their lived experiences within their communities. Their feedback highlighted concerns about mobility and safety, helping the team validate the plan's core values and identify community improvements. The local area planning team will continue to seek opportunities to engage seniors as a specific target audience.

Cultural Connections Engagement

- As part of the East Calgary International Avenue Communities Local Area Plan process, we launched *Creating Cultural Connections*, targeted engagement to support cultural planning and equity. Through this process, we co-hosted sessions with cultural leaders and organizations, reviewing content and gathering advice to ensure cultural relevance and participation from their communities. These efforts aimed to build trust between the Local Area Planning Team and cultural communities.
- Through this initiative, we engaged over 700 community members and co-hosted sessions with seven different cultural groups, including Vietnamese, Filipino, South Sudanese and Indigenous communities, Ethiopian and Eritrean business owners, Alex Community Food Centre and Eastview Basketball Association.

Educational Materials Development

- The calgary.ca/LAP webpage now features educational videos, an interactive map and additional educational information at the Area Planning Program.
- We created six educational videos to support the Program, participation opportunities, the importance of housing choice and the phases of engagement. These videos are available on calgary.ca/LAP.
- A comic-book style piece was also developed to illustrate the need for local area planning. This engaging visual tool has been translated into Calgary's top ten languages.

Professional Knowledge Transfer

- Members of the Local Area Planning Team presented at the Canadian Institute of Urban Affairs national conference in July 2024. This was an excellent opportunity to promote the City of Calgary, showcase the Local Area Planning Program's successes and share lessons learned with other municipalities. It also allowed the team to learn from other municipalities and identify best practices from across the country.
- We continued to build relationships with other municipalities at the City of Edmonton by sharing our experiences in developing local area planning policies.
- The team also presented to students at the University of Alberta and the University of Saskatchewan as well as planning staff at the City of



2. Improvements

Engagement Booklets Refined

- Key takeaways from 2023 focus groups were incorporated into our Engagement Booklets. Participants emphasized the need for clearer calls to action on the cover and first few pages, immediate clarity on what is being asked and upfront details of engagement opportunities, including dates, times and locations. They also suggested adding a QR code linking to the online engagement page.
- Participants appreciated the overall design of the Booklets, especially the diverse visuals, detailed maps and illustrations. Moving forward, a continued focus will be to make information more visual, and less text based wherever possible.

Language Translation Enhanced

- For the East Calgary International Avenue Communities Local Area Plan specifically, the project team undertook a number of language translation initiatives to remove barriers to participation throughout the planning process. This included print advertising in multiple languages, advertising on local ethnic radios, specific outreach to cultural groups with local language interpreters on-site and interpretation services available to community members at the City Council public hearing.

LAP Reconnect

- In 2024, we returned to approved local area plan areas for the first time to reconnect with people about their local area plan and to update the plans to align with direction from *Rezoning for Housing* and *Home is Here – The City of Calgary’s Housing Strategy*, as directed by Council. Through these initial LAP Reconnect sessions, the Local Area Planning team has gained insight into additional



Phase 3



Policy Highlights

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



1. Innovative Strategies

Accessibility and Clarity

- We launched legacy webpages for approved local area plans to provide a summary of the local area plan by chapter, information on projects being implemented from Chapter 3/Appendix A and a summary of engagement that was undertaken as the local area plan was developed. These pages will be maintained over time and could be expanded to provide additional information on how the local area plan is being implemented.
- Based on feedback from community members, in the Riley Communities Local Area Plan, we tested the creation of a colour-blind accessible version of the Building Scale map.
- We created a one-page summary of the Urban Form and Building Scale categories to provide an easy-to-read overview for participants.

New Area Specific Policies

- In the South Shaganappi Communities Local Area Plan, the first local area plan to have a significant area of existing curvilinear street patterns, we developed a new cul-de-sac policy which requires redevelopment to occur comprehensively in cul-de-sacs. This policy will also be used in the Chinook Communities Local Area Plan.
- In the Chinook Communities Local Area Plan, we heard through public engagement that there was a desire for portions of the Manchester Industrial area to continue to evolve and welcome additional uses beyond industrial uses. In response, we developed the Manchester Special Policy Area, to provide additional policy guidance to encourage complementary non-industrial uses that will serve a new residential population in close proximity to existing and potential future LRT stations.

2. Improvements

Policy Consistency

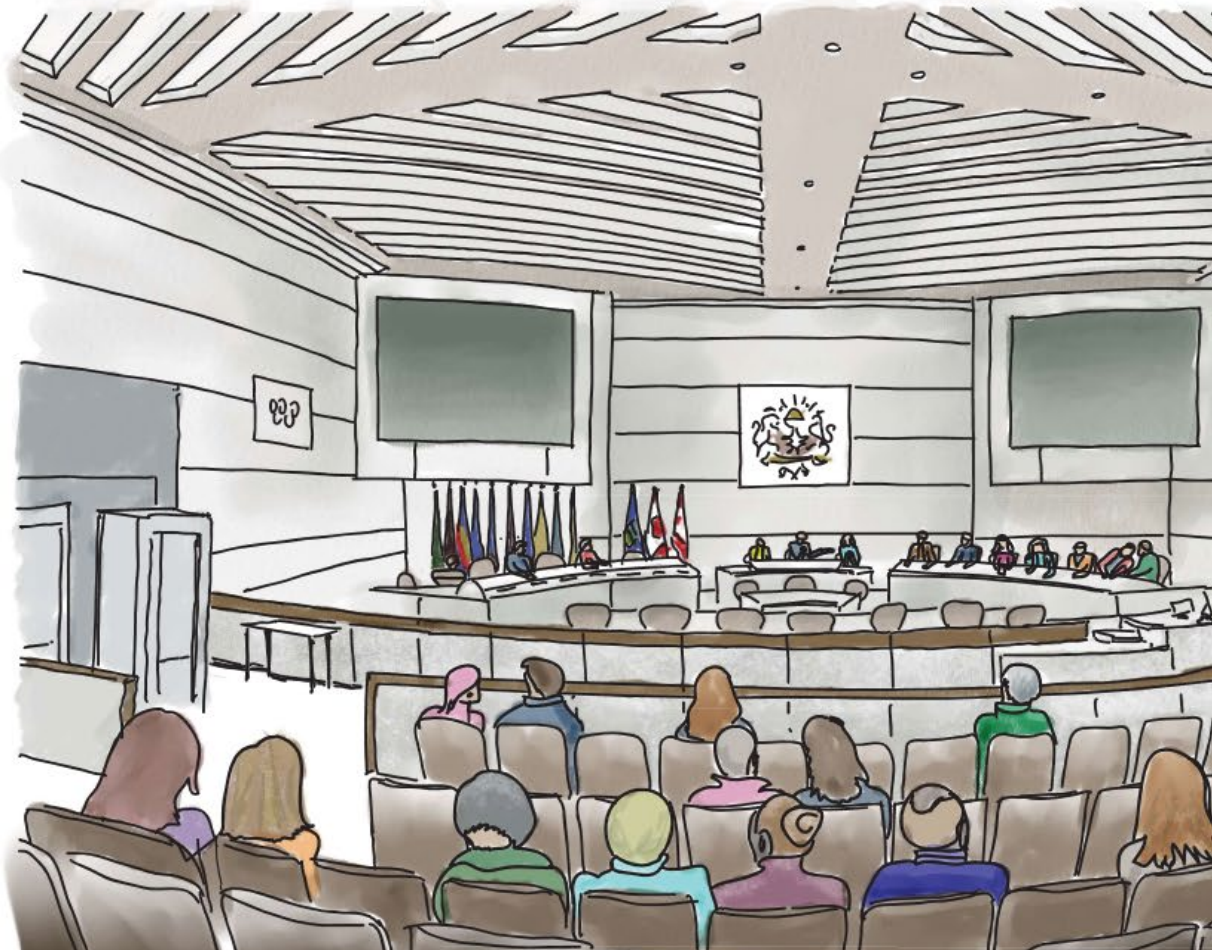
- The Local Area Planning team continue to improve consistency and alignment in plans through regularly scheduled, collaborative 'Consistency Meetings', in which plan each team review, compare and update the most up-to-date language and best options. Consistency across plans matters for planners, industry and the public to interpret LAP policies when dealing with different areas throughout the city.
- The Local Area Planning team also started where policies in approved local area plans need to be updated in future to align with best practice.

Heritage Guidelines and Workin

- In previous LAPs, heritage guidelines developed after the plan was approved. In the Riley Communities Local Area Plan was the development of heritage guidelines concurrent with the plan was developed. This process has been followed in the West Elbow Communities, which covers approximately 80 percent of Calgary's heritage guideline areas.
- In the Riley Communities, heritage guidelines include the creation of a heritage density transfer policy.

Internal Process Highlights

Continuous process improvements are integral to the Local Area Planning Program. We consistently seek opportunities to enhance methods, workflows and ways we work together to create and local area plans.



1. Innovative Strategies

Sustainment and Monitoring Capacity

- In 2024, resources were hired to support monitoring, sustainment, implementation and continuous improvement of the Local Area Planning Program. This is a notable advancement in the Local Area Planning team's capacity.
- 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 ensure continuous improvement to the Local Area Planning Program by evaluating the success of policies, implementation options and community improvements identified in local area plans, as well as providing education and support to communities.

Local Area Planning in Greenfield Communities

- In 2024, we began work on four area structure plan (ASP) projects in greenfield communities, adapting the phased approach and processes developed for local area plans in the established areas.
- The West Macleod Area Structure Plan, Nose Creek Area Structure Plan and Aurora Business Park Area Structure Plan are currently underway, and the Prairie Economic Gateway Initiative is pending approval. These new and amended plans will provide planning guidance and direction to approximately 1,869 ha (4,600 acres) of lands that are either within the city limits or identified within Calgary's Intermunicipal Development Plan.
- As an evolving business practice, First Nations Traditional Knowledge Keepers have offered their experiences and knowledge through guided walk-

2. Improvements

Internal Coordination and Efficiency

- We established a cross-corporate team developed program governance for the Investment Fund. In 2024, the first seven receive funding were selected.
- The Local Area Planning team continued approach of "sister" LAPs that follow a timeline, finding it to be a highly efficient and collaborative way to develop local plans concurrently.
- In the Riley Communities Local Area Plan established a monthly project coordination meeting that brought together groups across the corporation on projects within plan area, from planned maintenance community improvement projects. Through our coordination of public engagement collaboration on the development of investment opportunities.
- We continued to innovate our coordination our Creative team, using weekly meeting Teams channels to provide quicker and proactive coordination between area planning project teams.

Calgary Planning Commission

- Calgary Planning Commission now has closed session meeting for reviewing plans, instead of scheduling them at the regular agenda. This reduces staff and provides efficiency for Calgary Planning Commission members.
- Local area plans now go to Calgary Planning Commission earlier in the process for session workshop, to ensure that fees Calgary Planning Commission can be into the draft plan prior to Phase 3: RE

What's Next?

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

In 2025, we expect to bring the Riley Communities Local Area Plan, South Shaganappi Communities Plan, Chinook Communities Local Area Plan and West Elbow Communities Local Area Plan forward for Updates to the North Hill Communities Local Area Plan, Westbrook Communities Local Area Plan and Communities Local Area Plan will also be brought forward to align with *Rezoning for Housing* and *How The City of Calgary's Housing Strategy*.

Over the next year the Program will continue to build out sustainment and monitoring efforts to ensure success of the Program and identify continuous improvements. Started in 2023, internal engagement of Calgary staff who use and implement local area plans, will be expanded. Other work planned for 2024 includes the development of a Planning Liaison program, continued coordination and alignment with the future Plan and Zoning Bylaw and planning for an enhanced education session on the Local Area Planning Program for members of Council following the 2025 municipal election.

