

# Background and Planning Evaluation

## Background and Community Context

The Riley Communities Local Area Plan (the Plan) is comprised of four inner-city communities: Hillhurst, Hounsfield Heights-Briar Hill, Sunnyside and West Hillhurst. While each community has its own individual boundaries, the Riley Communities share common assets, amenities, public and transit infrastructure, natural features and parks and easy access to the Greater Downtown and the Bow River.

The Riley Communities represent some of the oldest developed areas in Calgary and are a network of connected and celebrated communities uniquely positioned just north of the Bow River. Given their location and ample amenities, the Riley Communities experienced continuous growth and development for several decades. The population of the Riley Communities peaked in 2018, with 20,304 people living in the communities. Based on the 2019 civic census, the population of the area was 20,033 people, representing a decrease of 271 people or 0.9 percent from the previous year. The peak population year of individual communities varies across the Plan Area. West Hillhurst's population peaked the earliest relative to other Riley Communities in 1968. Most recently, Hillhurst's population peaked in 2016 and Sunnyside's population peaked in 2019. Of all the Riley Communities, Hounsfield Heights-Briar Hill has experienced the greatest decrease in population with a decline of 15.1 percent since its peak year in 1971.

In certain areas of the Riley Communities, such as West Hillhurst, there has never been a local area plan to strategically guide growth and change. By setting out a future vision and development policies, the communities in the Plan will be able to accommodate growth strategically while providing more certainty and direction for residents, developers, Administration and City Council. The Plan supports new and more diverse housing forms, varied mobility options, distinct commercial and retail areas and improved parks, natural areas and public spaces for Calgarians across the Riley Communities. This strategic direction coupled with outlined investment priorities and implementation options will allow for more Calgarians to choose to live and operate businesses in the Plan Area.

### Community Peak Population Table

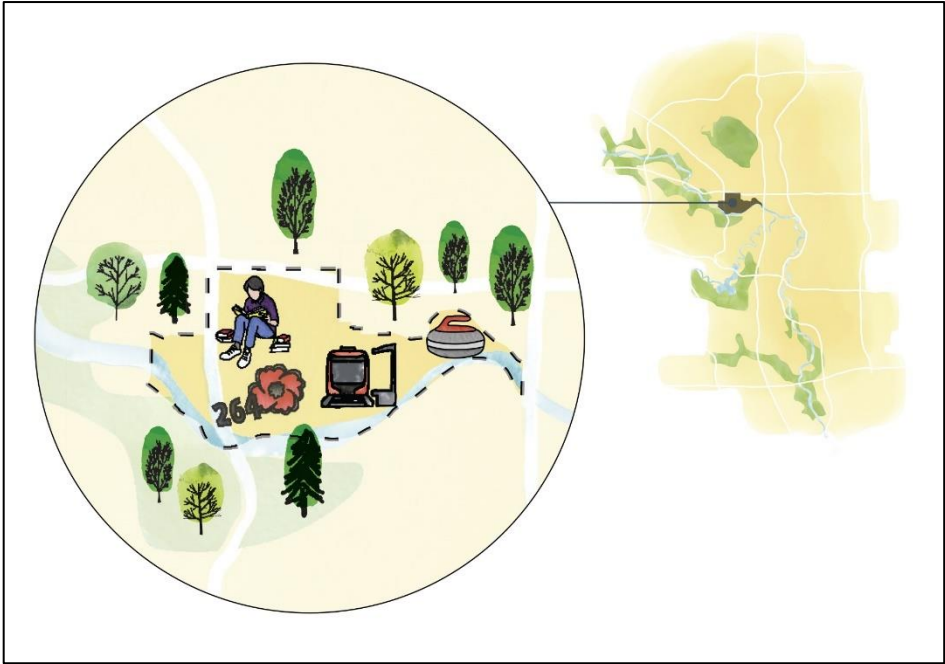
As identified below, the Riley Communities reached the peak population in 2018 and the population slightly decreased in 2019.

<b>Riley Communities</b>	
Peak Population Year	2018
Peak Population	20,304
2019 Current Population	20,033
Difference in Population (Number)	-271
Difference in Population (Percent)	-0.9%

Source: *The City of Calgary 2019 Civic Census*

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

Location Maps



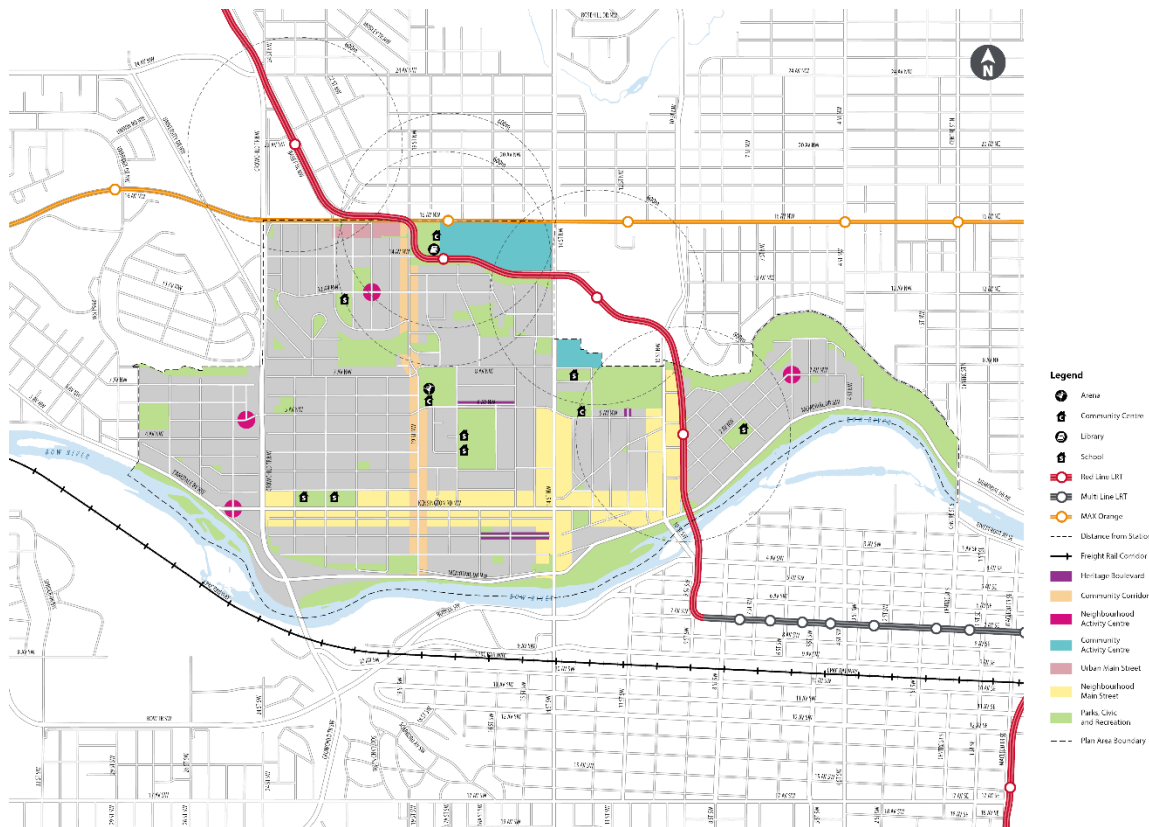
## Planning Evaluation

The Riley Communities Local Area Plan refines and implements the strategic goals and objectives of the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) at the local level. The Plan provides direction for growth and change in four inner city communities. The Plan will provide guidance and greater certainty by outlining policies for new development and public improvements in the area. The Plan sets out a shared vision and understanding of how growth and change may occur, addressing population declines and opportunities for investments within the Plan Area.

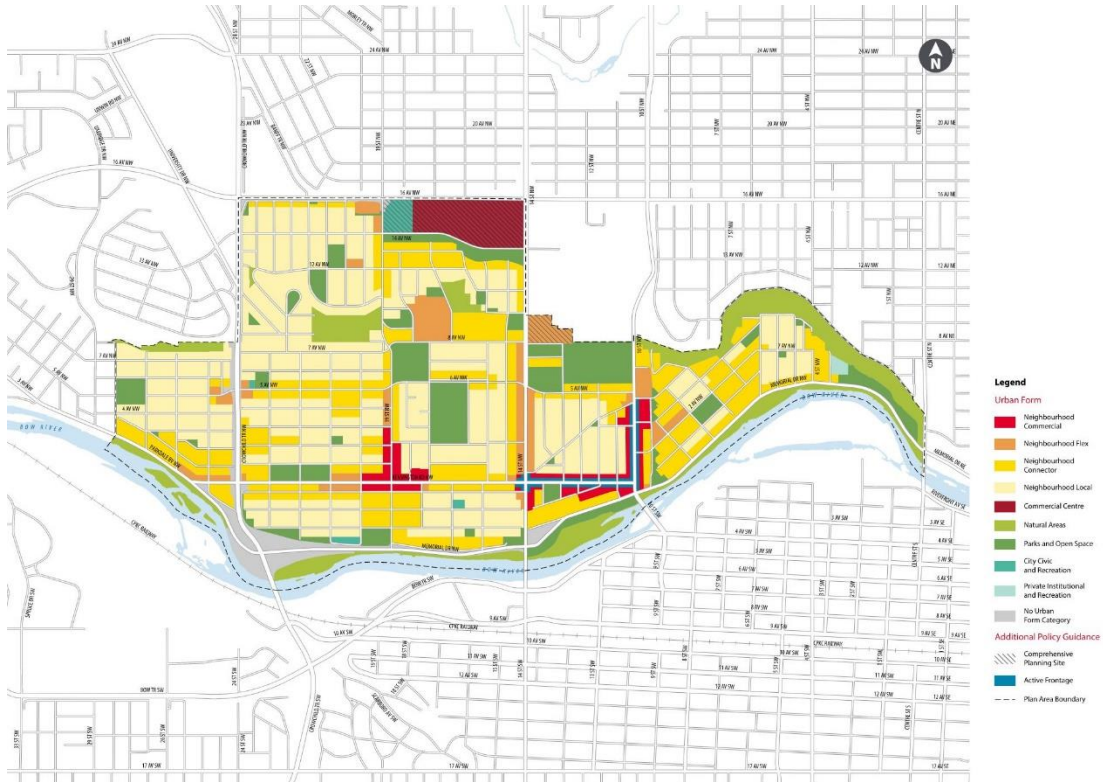
The Plan's future growth concept aligns with the direction from the MDP by identifying policy areas and specific local development policies for the Plan Area's three Neighbourhood Main Streets of Kensington Road NW, 10 Street NW and 14 Street NW, two transit station areas and Activity Centers, which include the North Hill Mall site and portions of 16 Avenue NW. The Plan also supports continued incremental evolution and change within primarily residential areas through increased development along other corridors and locations, such as 19 Street NW, a community corridor, and other streets, such as 5/6 Avenue NW, 2 Avenue NW, Westmount Road NW and Parkdale Boulevard. Memorial Drive NW and Crowchild Trail are also key areas of growth as major arterials in the Plan Area.

### Policy Areas

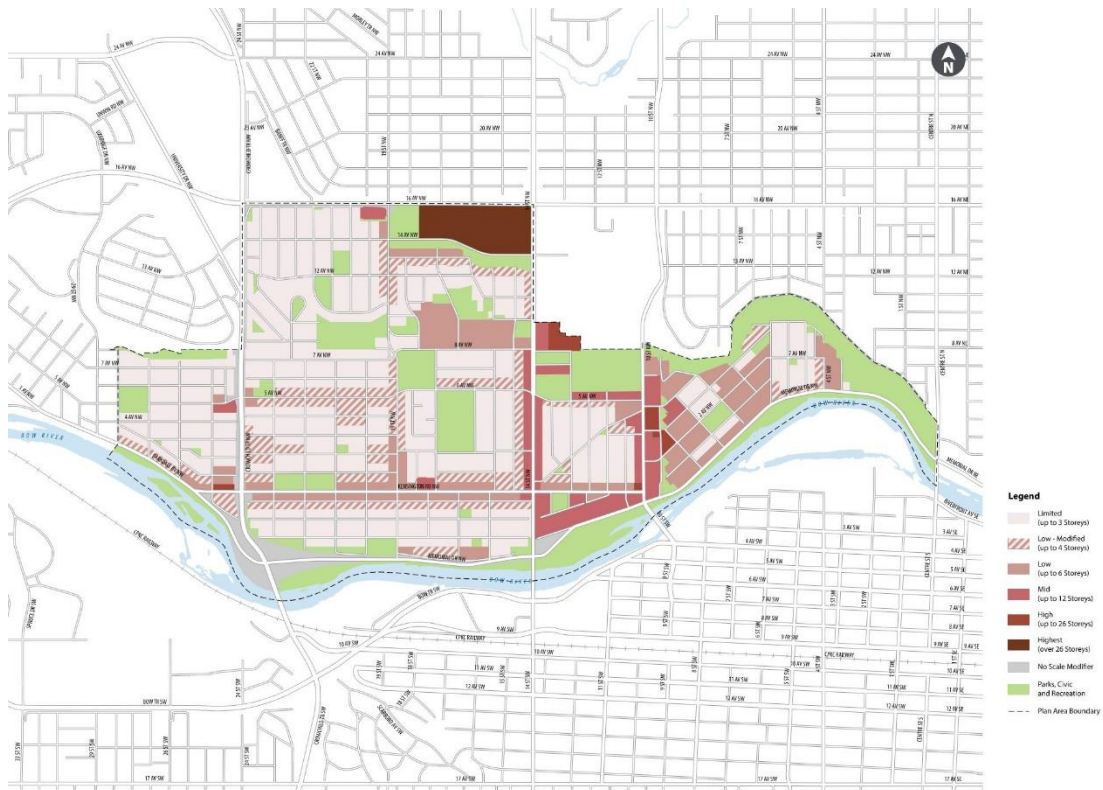
Figure 1: Community Characteristics



Map 1: Urban Form



Map 2: Building Scale



## Main Streets

The MDP identifies Kensington Road NW, 10 Street NW and 14 Street NW as Neighbourhood Main Streets. Portions of 16 Avenue NW, in the northernmost part of the Plan Area, forms an Urban Main Street. The Plan refines direction from the MDP by providing area specific policies for each identified Main Street. An analysis of future anticipated population projections demonstrates that the Plan will align the objectives of the MDP.

### *Kensington Road NW*

Kensington Road NW is an important east-west connection, serving as a pedestrian, transit and vehicular route with a mix of residential developments and commercial destinations. Kensington Road NW is envisioned as a Main Street that serves both vehicular and sustainable modes of transportation with cohesive and improved public spaces that make walking and wheeling comfortable and safe. The Plan purposely addresses Kensington Road NW east and west of 14 Street NW differently. East of 14 Street, the Plan applies Neighbourhood Commercial with active frontage modifiers along this Main Street to build on the retail and commercial success and livability of this area. The building scales in this area vary with application of the Low Scale (up to six storeys) along the north side of Kensington Road NW with some higher building scales on key gateway corners and largely the Mid-Scale (up to twelve storeys) applied to the south side to accommodate growth and provide flexibility in design of future built forms.

West of 14 Street, the Plan applies Neighbourhood Connector for portions of this Main Street with Neighbourhood Flex and Neighbourhood Connector near 19 Street NW to enable additional mixed-use development to extend onto Kensington Road NW given constraints along 19 Street NW north of 2 Avenue NW. Building scales west of 14 Street NW on Kensington Road NW are largely Mid Scale (up to six storeys) with transitions to the Low-Modified Scale (up to four storeys) for certain streets adjacent to this Main Street to allow for flexibility and moderate forms of density. Additional area specific policies are provided in the plan to enable built form transitions, improve built forms and public spaces along Kensington Road NW, particularly along southern portions of the Main Street west of 14 Street NW that are currently defined by narrow sidewalks, privacy fences and varying boulevards.

### *10 Street NW*

Recognized throughout all phases of the Plan as a defining Neighbourhood Main Street, 10 Street NW is a dynamic and vibrant commercial and mixed-use destination just north of the Bow River. Kensington Road NW is envisioned as a pedestrian-friendly Main Street anchored by cohesive and comfortable public spaces with strong connections to the nearby Sunnyside Light Rail Transit (LRT) station. The Plan applies Neighbourhood Commercial with an active frontage modifier for the majority of 10 Street NW with Neighbourhood Flex and Connector north of 4 Avenue NW. The Plan provides for varying building scales that range from a modified Mid Scale (up to eight storeys) on the east side of 10 Street NW, in an area with a high concentration of commercial heritage assets, to a modified High Scale (up to fifteen storeys) on sites in and around the Sunnyside LRT station. Higher building scales are focused around transit stations and key gateway sites to ensure development opportunities complement existing retail activity and key areas see further intensification. Additional area specific policies focus on modifying building scales, enhancing public spaces, prioritizing the retention or incorporation of heritage assets and ensuring that high-quality building designs are provided.

### *14 Street NW*

The Plan recognizes the ongoing evolution of 14 Street NW from largely a vehicular thoroughfare to a street that also prioritizes the pedestrian experience through better connections and public spaces. In particular, the Plan provides flexibility to support this gradual change in the application of Neighbourhood Flex and a modified building scale of up to ten storeys for the majority of this north-south Neighbourhood Main Street. The intersection of Kensington Road NW and 14 Street NW is addressed differently through use of Neighbourhood Commercial with active frontage modifiers in response to the need to enhance the public realm and pedestrian experience at this key intersection. Policies focus on modifying building scales, enhancing public spaces, ensuring high-quality building design and enabling pedestrian-focused improvements to this evolving Main Street. The intent is to ensure new development contributes to enhanced and pedestrian-friendly public spaces to enable more individuals to feel safe walking and wheeling along and across this Main Street in addition to its ongoing function as a key north-south vehicular and transit route.

### *16 Avenue NW*

In the northernmost part of the Plan Area, 16 Avenue NW, which forms part of the Trans-Canada Highway, is identified in the MDP as an Urban Main Street. With a mix of residential along a sound barrier in Hounsfeld Heights-Briar Hill and commercial areas, including North Hill Mall, a range of urban forms and building scales have been applied. Neighbourhood Connector is applied along the edge of Hounsfeld Heights-Briar Hill to allow for a range of residential forms near several LRT and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stations, then transitions to Neighbourhood Flex on a smaller commercial node at 19 Street NW and 16 Avenue NW and then Commercial Centre on the North Hill Mall site. Building scale varies from the Lowest Scale (up to three storeys) along the sound barrier to the Highest Scale (up to twenty-seven storeys or more) on the North Hill Mall site. Additional policy direction in the form of a Comprehensive Planning Site and the Lions Park LRT transit station area are applied to the North Hill Mall Site and discussed further in this report. The Plan envisions this area to accommodate improved public spaces, with better connections to BRT and LRT stations and a greater diversity of forms and uses along 16 Avenue NW over the next 30 years.

### Transit Station Areas

Sunnyside and Lions Park LRT stations are the two Red Line LRT transit station areas within the Plan Area. Additionally, there are two MAX Orange BRT transit stations along 16 Avenue NW. Over the next 30 years, it is anticipated that these areas of major transit infrastructure will accommodate the greatest amount of growth, diversity of uses and tallest buildings. The Plan provides policies for transit station areas that intend to improve access and movement in and around stations, enhance surrounding public spaces and ensure more Calgarians can live and work in these areas. With better access and safety in and around both transit stations, these areas are intended to be integrated into their surrounding contexts and ensure enhanced walking and wheeling to and from stations promoting transit ridership. Future population projections demonstrate that the Plan will align with the objectives of the MDP.

Specific to transit station areas, the Plan applies the urban form categories of Neighbourhood Commercial, Neighbourhood Flex and Neighbourhood Connector in the Sunnyside LRT transit station area and a range of building scales to support mixed-use developments. Within the Lions Park LRT transit station area, the Plan applies a forward-thinking vision to the area through identifying Commercial Centre on the North Hill Mall Site, Neighbourhood Connector

south of the LRT station and Lions Park and Neighbourhood Flex to the west of the Louis Riley Library site. A range of building scales are applied with the Highest Scale (up to twenty-seven storeys or more) on the North Hill Mall site. Scales transition south of the North Hill Mall site and Lions Park with the Low Scale (up to six storeys) north of 13 Avenue NW, a Low-Modified scale (up to four storeys) on the south side 13 Avenue NW and south of Lions Park. The remainder of the transit station area transitions to the Lowest Scale (up to three storeys). Additional policies are provided in these transit station areas that respond to each station's unique context, enhance public spaces around stations and ensure better integration into surrounding communities.

The Riley Communities Local Area Plan introduces heritage density transfer policy in transit station areas. This is a policy framework that is intended to support additional building heights above identified building scales shown within the Building Scales Map within transit station areas. This unique element of the Plan enables proponents to provide heritage resource conservation for additional height. Enabling heritage density transfers in transit station areas through use of direct control bylaws as outlined in the Plan will support the designation of additional unprotected heritage resources as Municipal Historic Resources, while enabling additional height for receiving sites in Core Zones or Transition Zones.

The Riley Communities Local Area Plan also provides policy to incentivize the development of non-market and mixed-market housing in transit station areas, which would be done by identifying and encouraging the use of direct control bylaws to exclude floor areas of a new development that provide non-market housing from calculations at time of application.

### Community Activity Centres

There are two Community Activity Centres in the Riley Communities. The first is the North Hill Mall site, which is bounded by 16 Avenue NW to the north, 14 Street NW to the east, 14 Avenue NW to the south and 19 Street NW to the west. The second Community Activity Centre includes the former Grace Hospital site alongside the nearby institutional amenities outside the boundaries of the Plan Area and covered by the North Hill Communities Local Area Plan, including the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) and the Alberta University of the Arts (AUArts) campuses. Both Community Activity Centres have a Comprehensive Planning Site modifier and are described in further detail under this section of the report.

### Neighbourhood Activity Centres (NACs)

In accordance with the MDP, NACs should have a range of ground-oriented and Low Scale apartment housing and a mix of uses including retail services, to create public gathering spaces while discouraging vehicle-oriented uses.

The proposed plan identifies four NACs located at Parkdale Boulevard NW and 25 Street NW, 5 Avenue NW and 24A Street NW, 12 Avenue NW and 20A Street NW and 2 Avenue NW and 5A Street NW. Each NAC has a unique mix of building scales combined with Neighbourhood Flex and Neighbourhood Connector, that enable small walkable mixed-use areas that provide opportunities for local job and population growth.

### Community Corridor

Community corridors are pedestrian-focused streets that connect communities and are intended to support low to moderate growth in the form of primarily residential and small-scale mixed-use

and commercial building forms. In the Plan Area, 19 Street NW has been identified as a community corridor. 19 Street NW provides a key north-south corridor for various modes of travel through the Plan Area that connects to key streets and destinations, including Memorial Drive NW, Kensington Road NW, Lions Park LRT Station and the Max Orange BRT stations along 16 Avenue NW. Portions of 19 Street NW in West Hillhurst between 6 Avenue NW and Kensington Road NW have been a key destination for the community and will continue to experience redevelopment incrementally in the form of both residential and mixed-use developments that will contribute to an enhanced pedestrian experience.

A range of urban forms have been applied north of 6 Avenue NW towards and into Hounsfield Heights-Briar Hill reflecting the transition of 19 Street NW from largely residential to commercial along 16 Avenue NW. South of 6 Avenue NW in West Hillhurst, urban forms that enable flexibility and a diversity of both commercial and multi-residential have been applied in recognition of an increasingly diverse range of mixed-use, commercial and multi-residential developments along this section of the corridor. Building scales also vary along this community corridor with the highest scales of up to Mid Scale (up to twelve storeys) along the north and south boundaries of 19 Street NW in Plan Area near 16 Avenue NW and Memorial Drive NW. Additional area specific policies are provided for 19 Street NW to facilitate enhanced public spaces, prevent additional vehicle accesses onto the lane north of 2 Avenue NW and between 19 Street NW and 18A Street NW and ensure new development and vehicle accesses do not impact the integrity of the walking and wheeling experience along portions of 19 Street NW between 6 Avenue NW and Kensington Road NW.

### Comprehensive Planning Sites

Comprehensive Planning Sites provide additional site-specific policy guidance for future development and address items such as land use, building scale, mobility connections, opportunities to improve climate resiliency, unique site conditions such as interfaces with adjacent sites and open spaces, provision of publicly accessible open space, transit infrastructure and utility and servicing. The Plan identifies two Comprehensive Planning sites - the North Hill Mall site and the Riley Park Village site (the former Grace Hospital site).

The North Hill Mall site is envisioned as a vibrant, mixed-use area, providing current and future residents with more housing choice and a variety of amenities while expanding upon its current commercial uses. By improving the public space around the station area and encouraging intensification on the mall site, this area is anticipated to incrementally evolve through retaining existing amenities and adding new development that meet the needs of an evolving city. Additional policies encourage non-market and mixed-market housing, enhance pedestrian and wheeling infrastructure connections to adjacent destinations and between buildings and enhanced interface and site design between the mall and the Louise Riley Public Library.

The Riley Park Village site draws largely from the recent amendments to the Hillhurst/Sunnyside Area Redevelopment Plan. The site is envisioned as a vibrant sustainable urban village within an attractive, walkable inner-city community; a community allowing different age groups and lifestyles to live, work, play, heal and closely interact with each other in a setting that provides a range of community services. Various market and non-market housing options will provide community residents with housing alternatives that allow them to stay in the community throughout their lives. Additional policies and modified building scales, direct public space improvements, encourage high-quality neighbourhood-friendly streetscapes and enhance site interface and building design.



## Heritage Guideline Areas

Heritage Guidelines will ensure that new residential development within identified Heritage Guideline Areas is contextually sensitive and consistent with existing heritage assets. The Guidelines encourage new residential development to draw design reference from nearby residential heritage assets in ways that complement the unique and historic qualities of the Heritage Guideline Areas while still allowing for modern designs. The Guidelines address general characteristics of buildings rather than enforcing strict architectural rules and are divided into four general sections: Site and Landscape Design; Roofs and Massing; Front Facades; and Windows, Materials and Details. The Guidelines reference key building elements common among residential heritage assets in the Riley Communities while not prescribing design or architectural styles for new development. The Heritage Guidelines do not limit the specific number of dwelling units or housing type nor prevent the development of a variety of housing types in the Heritage Guideline Areas.

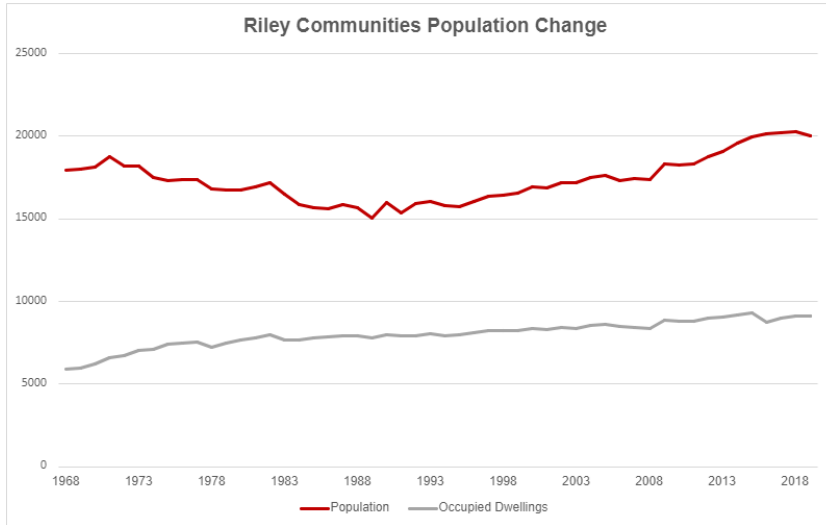
## **Population and Demographics**

Demographic trends were an important consideration in developing the Plan. As outlined in Table 1, communities within the Plan Area have seen a population decline of 271 people or 0.9 percent since the peak in 2018. During the same period, Calgary's population grew by over 5 percent. Over this period, total occupied dwellings decreased from 9,290 to 9,119 homes. In addition, there is a decline in the occupancy rates per dwelling unit from the peak of 3.12 persons per unit in 1968 to 2.27 persons per unit in 2019.

Population decline is more pronounced in some of the Riley Communities as outlined in Table 2. The population in West Hillhurst peaked in 1968 and the population in Hounsfield Heights-Briar Hill peaked in 1971. Currently, West Hillhurst is 6.17 percent below its peak population, while Hounsfield Heights-Briar Hill is roughly 15.1 percent below its peak population. In contrast, Hillhurst has experienced a slight decline of approximately 2.66 percent since its peak year of 2016 and Sunnyside has experienced continued population growth more recently with their peak year being 2019. Hillhurst and Sunnyside's relatively recent peak population compared to West Hillhurst and Hounsfield Heights-Briar Hill can be attributed to several factors, including sustained redevelopment and demand within the Sunnyside LRT transit station area where two defining Neighbourhood Main Streets meet.

Table 1: Riley Communities Local Area Plan Population

	<b>Population</b>	<b>Total Dwellings</b>	<b>Occupied Dwellings</b>	<b>Persons per Unit</b>
<b>Peak</b>	20,304	10,371	9,290	3.12
<b>Peak Year</b>	2018	2015	2015	1968
<b>2019</b>	20,033	9,831	9,119	2.27
<b>Loss since Peak</b>	-271	-540	-171	-0.85
<b>% change since Peak</b>	-0.9%	-5.21%	-1%	-27.2%



**Table 2: Riley Individual Communities Population Tables**

Community	Peak Year	Peak Population	2019 Population	% Change since Peak	Loss Since Peak
Hillhurst	2016	6,737	6,558	-2.66%	-179
Hounsfeld Heights - Briar Hill	1971	3,294	2,798	-15.1%	-496
Sunnyside	2019	4,230	4,230	0%	0
West Hillhurst	1968	6,871	6,447	-6.17%	-424

**Mobility Study**

The Mobility Study is a non-statutory document that was initially identified in the Hillhurst / Sunnyside Area Redevelopment Plan in response to growth and change around the Sunnyside LRT transit station area. The Mobility Study was intended to only address issues within the limited geographical area of a single transit station area. Undertaking the Mobility Study in tandem with the Riley Communities Local Area Plan, the scope expanded to the entire Plan Area. The Mobility Study informs the policy and implementation options of the Plan, including investment priorities that account for all the major mobility moves required to support ongoing growth and demand in these connected communities north of the Bow River. The Mobility Study is a long-term roadmap to guide transportation projects and investments in the Riley Communities on a broader level to ensure a complete and connected mobility network. The Mobility Study is a shift from typical assessments that focus primarily on driving, to one that considers the needs of all travel options and travelers. It supports the shift to more sustainable travel options, opportunities for travel demand management and the integration of mobility and land use planning. Development of the Mobility Study was based on a review of existing mobility travel patterns and data, built infrastructure and anticipated mobility issues and opportunities in the Plan Area. The final draft of the Mobility Study was completed in May 2024 and shared with Community Associations before it was shared with the broader public. Additional details are found in Attachment 5.

## Legislation and Policy

### South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (2014)

The Plan and recommendations in this report have considered, and are 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.

### Growth Plan (2022)

The Plan and recommendations in this report align with the policy direction of the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board's [Growth Plan](#) (GP). The Plan 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 MDP on Map 1: Urban Structure identifies four Land Use Typologies that apply to the Riley Communities, including the Urban Main Street typology, the Neighbourhood Main Street typology, the Community Activity Centre typology and the Developed Residential – Inner City typology. The Riley Communities Local Area Plan locates the highest built forms and scales near major transit infrastructure, within Activity Centres and along Main Streets to ensure increases in densities are near existing amenities and infrastructure and can support continued investments in public spaces to improve walking and wheeling experiences of Calgarians.

In addition to the policy areas listed above, the MDP contains policies that guide the development of local area plans. These include policies around community engagement, watershed planning, identifying tree canopy targets and coordinating sustainable energy planning at all scales of development. Development of the Riley Communities Local Area Plan considered and is aligned with these MDP policies as summarized below.

Extensive community engagement was undertaken as part of the Plan, details of which can be found in Attachment 4. Community engagement was a significant component of the Plan, with public feedback helping to shape each chapter of the Plan through the engagement process.

An analysis of stormwater, water and sanitary infrastructure was undertaken for the Plan once the final urban form category and building scale maps were developed. In addition to this analysis, the Plan contains policies to address stormwater retention and mitigation.

The current urban tree canopy coverage is 17.6 percent in the Plan Area. The City's urban tree canopy target for this area is 18.5 percent by 2030, 19.6 percent by 2040 and 19.9 percent by 2050. The Plan identifies implementation options to protect and expand the urban tree canopy, particularly along key Main Streets and corridors and in public parks and open spaces.

In alignment with MDP objectives, the Plan also focuses on climate resilience and provides direction to minimize the adverse effects of climate change on people, businesses, homes and the environment. It promotes development and building designs that reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, lower risk and improve adaptability to climate change to minimize damage to buildings, infrastructure and natural ecosystems. Additionally, policies in the Plan support the preservation and restoration of riparian areas using natural infrastructure to enhance resilience to river flooding to ensure the ecological health of the Plan Area.