

# Background and Planning Evaluation

## Background and Site Context

The subject site, currently home to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), is located in the Bridgeland/Riverside community, occupying an entire block bounded by 11A Street NE, Colonel Baker Place NE, 12 Street NE and Memorial Drive NE. This site is in an area known as East Riverside that consists of a variety of subsidized housing units, including affordable seniors' housing. It benefits from excellent public transit access, located just 400 metres (a six-minute walk) from the Bridgeland-Memorial LRT Station. Although the land is owned by The City of Calgary, the CNIB has leased the site for its operations since 1961, with a recent lease extension securing an additional 39 years.

The site is developed with a three-storey building on its western portion, with a parking lot to the south and east. At the northwest corner there is an open space known as the Fragrant Garden, used by the CNIB for training purposes. This area includes tree and flower plantings along with benches for seating.

A comprehensive policy and land use amendment (LOC2023-0408) was approved on 2024 April 9, enabling a higher density, mixed-use, transit-oriented redevelopment of the approximately 1.93 hectare (4.77 acre) site. This development permit covers the first two phases of the overall redevelopment plan. Phases one and two will focus on redeveloping the existing east parking lot and the open field in the southeast corner with a central plaza linking the podiums of both towers. Phase three, which involves redeveloping the CNIB Foundation building and parking lot to expand its services, will be submitted under a separate development permit application. The Fragrant Garden, located in the northwest portion of the site, will be preserved and maintained by CNIB.

Surrounding development consists of a mix of multi-family and institutional developments. North of the subject site are a mix of newer and older seniors' housing apartments which are between four and nine storeys in height. Directly west of the site is a four storey assisted living facility. To the northwest is the Silvera for Seniors complex, which has recently been redesignated to a Mixed Use – General (MU-1) District and Direct Control (DC) District to accommodate buildings 50 metres in height (approximately 16 storeys). The site is directly adjacent to 12 Street NE, which also acts as the on-ramp for Memorial Drive directly south of the site.

The site is located 550 metres (a nine-minute walk) from the shopping area on 9 Street NE and 750 metres from the shopping area on 1 Street NE, which is designated as a Neighbourhood Main Street in the *Municipal Development Plan* (MDP). It is also in close proximity to several open spaces. To the north the site borders a municipal reserve parcel, while to the northwest, across 11A Street NE, a future municipal reserve park will be developed as part of the comprehensive Silvera for Seniors site redevelopment. The site is also 100 metres (a two-minute walk) to Tom Campbell's Hill Natural Park, which is a naturalized open space.

## Community Peak Population Table

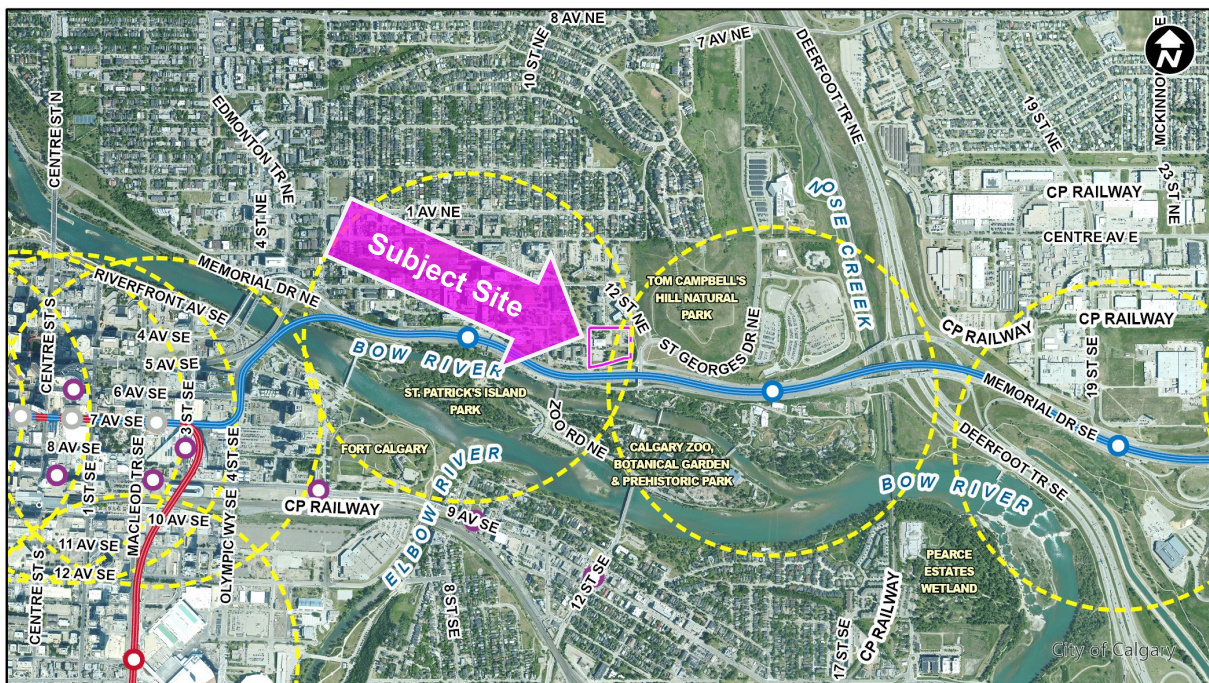
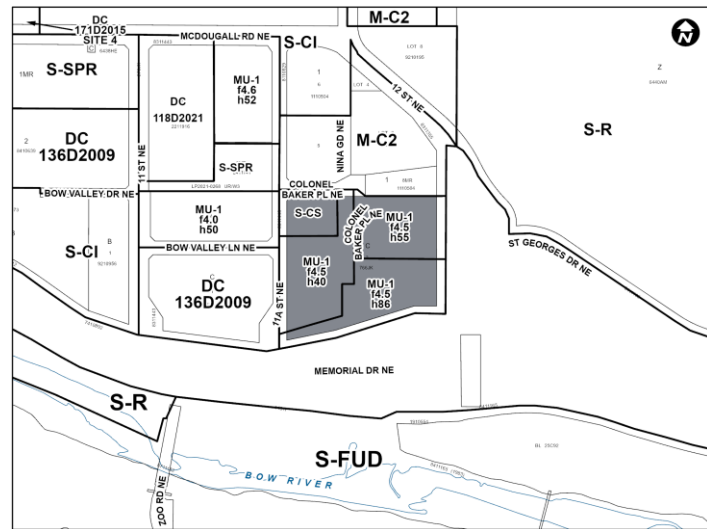
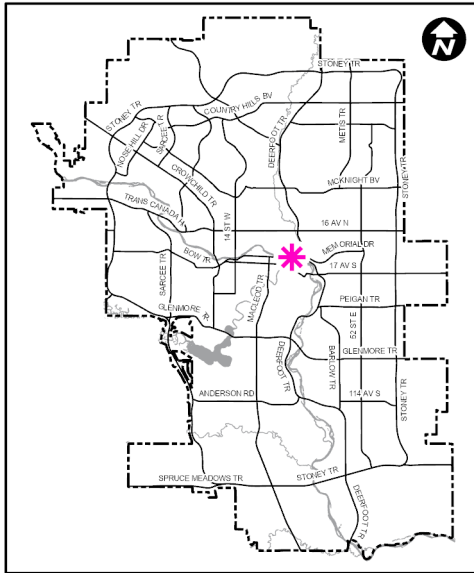
As identified below, the community of Bridgeland/Riverside reached its peak population in 2019.

<b>Bridgeland/Riverside</b>	
Peak Population Year	2019
Peak Population	6,835
2019 Current Population	6,835
Difference in Population (Number)	0
Difference in Population (Percent)	0%

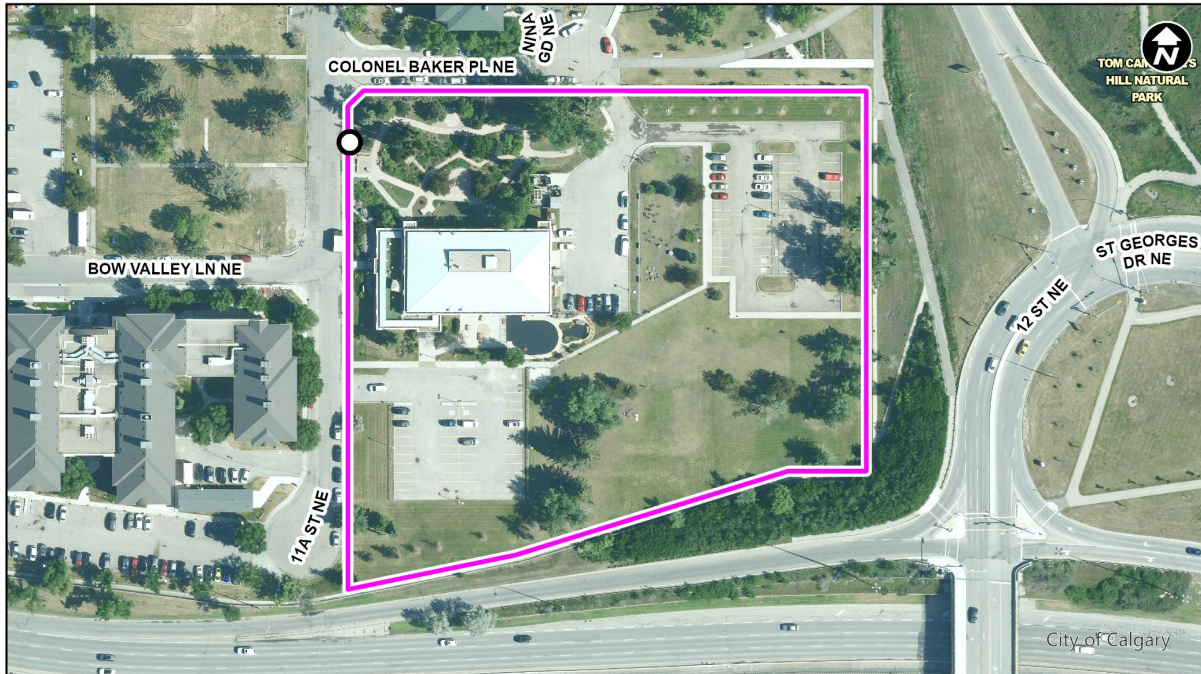
Source: *The City of Calgary 2019 Civic Census*

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

## Location Maps







## Previous Council Direction

At the 2024 April 9 Public Hearing of Council, Administration was directed to have any Major Development Permit for this site be reviewed by Calgary Planning Commission for decision as the Development Authority.

## Planning Evaluation

### Land Use

The existing Mixed Use – General (MU-1) Districts are intended to allow for commercial and residential uses in street-oriented buildings with either commercial or residential uses at street level.

Phase one of the development, located to the south, is designated as MU-1f4.5h86. This district allows for a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 4.5 and a building height of up to 86 metres (approximately 27 storeys).

Phase two, situated to the north, is designated as MU-1f4.5h55. This district allows for a maximum FAR of 4.5 and a building height of up to 55 metres (approximately 17 storeys).

### Development and Site Design

#### *Site and Building Design*

The proposed development includes two multi-residential towers, to be built in two phases, connected by a central common plaza. Phase one features a 27 storey building with 256 residential units, while phase two will consist of a 17 storey building with 191 residential units.

Two levels of underground parking will provide both vehicular and secured bicycle stalls, with parkade access at the north and south ends of the site. These access points will be co-located with other back-of-house functions, such as waste and recycling and loading areas.

The building height and massing have been scaled to respond to the surrounding neighborhood context. The taller 27 storey tower is strategically positioned near Memorial Drive, while the shorter 17 storey tower provides a height transition to neighboring properties, helping to mitigate massing and shadow impact.

**Figure 1: Aerial view of the development looking towards downtown**



Both main building entrances face the north-south “shared street”, designed with enhanced paving treatments and traffic-calming measures to accommodate blind and low-vision users. The ground floor of the “shared street” is further activated by individual at-grade entrances and landscaped patios, which are incorporated into the two-storey podium of phase two.

### ***Building Materials***

The tower portions of the buildings incorporate a mix of composite metal panels, spandrel, and glazing in varied colors, adding visual interest and breaking up the uniformity of the massing. Signature lighting features have also been integrated into the window wall system and building parapet, highlighting the site’s gateway location. At the podium level, the design carries over a similar material palette from the towers, enhanced with thin brick veneer to create a warmer, more human-scale aesthetic.

### ***Public Realm and Outdoor Amenity Spaces***

The outdoor amenity space features a central plaza, framed by active ground-floor uses, that connects the two building podiums and provides a safe, pedestrian-friendly area for gathering. The plaza is designed with a variety of elements, including shade structures, flexible seating, a playground, distinctive lighting, landscaped areas and a network of interconnected walkways. These walkways are designed to integrate with surrounding public open spaces, linking to the east and south public pathways as well as the north-south shared street, enhancing connectivity throughout the broader neighborhood.



**Figure 2: Central outdoor plaza**



### ***Urban Design Review Panel***

The proposed development was reviewed by the Office of Urban Design during the Development Application Review Team (DART) process and presented to the Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP) on 2025 February 5. Overall, UDRP endorsed the proposed design, highlighting its strong integration with the surrounding context and expressing appreciation for the simplicity of the building facades.

The panel suggested refinements that generally encompass the following themes as part of their review:

- relocating the centralized parkade access away from the north-south shared street and central plaza;
- refining the shared street design;
- providing rooftop outdoor amenity space; and
- emphasizing the importance of high-quality detailing and materials to ensure the success of the design, given the development's simple aesthetic.

In response to the UDRP's comments and Administration's detailed review of the application, the applicant revised the design to relocate the central parkade access to two entries at the southwest and southeast corners of the development, co-locating them with other service uses. The applicant made further refinements to the design and provided additional rationale where they did not.

## **Transportation**

### ***Site Access and Traffic***

Pedestrian access to the site is provided by sidewalks and pathways along Memorial Drive, 11A Street NE, Colonel Baker Place NE, and the eastern boundary of the site. The Always Available for All Ages and Abilities (5A) Network in this area includes a mix of existing and future recommended pathways and on-street bikeways. Proposed improvements consist of new 3 metre pathways replacing the existing pathways along the east and south sides of the site as

well as new 2 metre wide sidewalks and curb extensions on 11A Street NE and Colonel Baker Place NE to enhance accessibility for all users. These upgrades will connect to both existing and future networks that generally link Bow Valley Drive NE to Colonel Baker Place NE and the existing pathway along the southern edge of the property, which leads to the Bridgeland/Memorial LRT Station.

Vehicular access to the site is currently provided from 11A Street NE and Colonel Baker Place NE. Vehicular access for phase one is proposed at the south end of 11A Street NE, while phase two access is positioned at the north end of the site, along Colonel Baker Place NE. Both access points are strategically placed to minimize disruptions to the public sidewalk and reduce potential conflicts between vehicles and non-motorists.

### ***Bicycle Parking Facilities***

The first level of the underground parkade includes 224 bicycle parking stalls - class 1, provided at a rate of 0.5 stalls per dwelling unit, along with bicycle repair stations. Located near the main building entrances are 46 bicycle parking stalls – class 2.

### ***Transit***

The subject site is well served by Calgary Transit bus and LRT service. It is located approximately 400 meters (a six-minute walk) from the Bridgeland/Memorial LRT Station and directly adjacent to Route 90 (Bridgeland/University of Calgary) along 11A Street NE. As part of the development, upgrades will be made to enhance connections to both the LRT Station and the bus stop on 11A Street NE, as illustrated on page 45 of the development permit plan set.

### ***Motor Vehicle Parking***

The proposed development includes 410 resident parking stalls in two levels of underground parking, at a rate of 0.92 stalls per dwelling unit. This exceeds the 336 stalls required at a rate of 0.75 stalls per unit, which is further adjusted by a 25 percent reduction for Transit Supportive Development. The development also includes 46 visitor parking stalls, meeting the minimum bylaw requirements.

### ***Curbside Management***

The site is located within the Residential Parking Permit Zone G. On-street parking adjacent to the site is currently restricted to two-hour parking along 11A Street NE.

### ***Transportation Impact Assessment***

A Transportation Impact Assessment (TIA) was submitted in 2023 in support of the comprehensive policy and land use amendment (LOC2023-0408) application for the CNIB redevelopment. The TIA identified several transportation improvements necessary to support the proposed development, including new 3.0 metre pathways along the east and south site frontages, 2.0 metre sidewalks along the west and north site frontages, upgrades to curb extensions on the east leg of 11A Street and Colonel Baker Place NE, and potential curb extensions for site access at 11A Street NE (to be confirmed at the Development Permit stage). In 2024, an updated TIA was prepared as part of the Council-approved Silvera for Seniors land use amendment (LOC2024-0074) application, which accounted for cumulative traffic in the area, including the CNIB redevelopment. This updated TIA identified offsite intersection improvements at 12 Street NE and McDougall Road NE, as well as at St. Georges Drive NE. The City of Calgary and developers in the area will cost-share the intersection improvements at McDougall Road and 12 Street NE, as conditioned through the development permit process. These improvements, along with those planned for the Silvera site directly northwest, will significantly enhance pedestrian and cycling connectivity in the area.

### **Environmental Site Considerations**

No environmental concerns were identified.

### **Utilities and Servicing**

Water, sanitary and storm sewer mains are available and exist adjacent to the site. Servicing requirements will be assessed as part of the Development Site Servicing Plan (DSSP) and Sanitary Servicing Study, which are required conditions of approval.

## **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.

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

The subject site is located in the Residential – Developed – Inner City area as identified on Map 1: Urban Structure of the [Municipal Development Plan](#) (MDP). The site is also within 400 metres of the Bridgeland/Memorial LRT Station. The MDP (Section 2.2.1) encourages locating a portion of new housing and jobs within higher intensity, mixed use areas that are well connected to the Primary Transit Network. Section 2.2.2 (b) looks to increase development densities near the Primary Transit Network by targeting residential and employment intensities within 400 metres of transit stations and stops.

The application also meets the policies contained in:

- Section 2.1.1(c) - Creating a City Attractive to People - provide greater housing choices in locations close to job markets and in areas well served by the Primary Transit Network;
- Section 2.2.2(e) - a Transit Supportive Land Use Framework - looks to ensure that the design and mix of land uses surrounding transit stops and stations support transit and emphasize a pedestrian oriented environment;
- Section 2.2.5(c) - Strong Residential Neighbourhoods - encourages higher residential densities in areas of the community that are more extensively served by existing infrastructure, public facilities and transit, appropriate to the specific conditions and character of the neighbourhood; and
- Section 2.3.1(f.ii) - Housing - calls for affordable housing to locate in all areas of the city, with a focus on locations served by the Primary Transit Network and appropriate services, while avoiding an over-concentration of affordable housing in any one area.

The proposed development permit is well-aligned with MDP policy.

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

The application proposes increased density near primary transit and includes 24 electric vehicle parking stalls, with 10 percent of vehicle parking stalls designed to be electric vehicle-capable. These measures support Program F and Program G of the [Calgary Climate Strategy – Pathways to 2050](#).



### Transit Oriented Development Policy Guidelines (Non-Statutory – 2004)

The [Transit Oriented Development Policy Guidelines](#) (Guidelines) provide direction for the development of areas typically within 600 metres of a Transit Station. The Guidelines encourage higher density, walkable, mixed-use developments within station areas to support high frequency, rapid transit service and provide for a variety of housing, employment, services, and amenities that benefit local communities and transit users alike. The proposed development meets key policy objectives of the Guidelines, specifically that of increasing density around transit stations with active ground floor uses and pedestrian-oriented design.

### Bridgeland-Riverside Area Redevelopment Plan (Statutory – 1980)

The subject site is located within the Urban Neighbourhood area of the [Bridgeland-Riverside Area Redevelopment Plan](#) (ARP), which was amended by Council in 2024 to specifically guide future development for this site. The Urban Neighbourhood area is intended for higher density development to accommodate primarily residential uses as well as a revitalized facility and offices for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). The policy allows for building heights of up to 27 storeys, tapering down to a maximum of 17 storeys along the northern edge of the site. It also provides guidance on building massing, at-grade building interfaces, mobility connections and interface with adjacent open spaces. The proposal aligns with the relevant ARP policies and supports the transit-oriented development vision for the site.

### East Riverside Master Plan (Non-Statutory – 2017)

The [East Riverside Master Plan](#) provides a vision, core ideas, and urban design principles to guide developments in the East Riverside portion of the larger Bridgeland-Riverside Neighbourhood. The proposal aligns with the Master Plan vision, as the 2024 amendments to the *Bridgeland-Riverside ARP* were adopted to incorporate its core ideas and urban design principles.

### Land Use Bylaw 1P2007

Administration highlights the following relaxations to the Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 in the table below. Administration has reviewed each relaxation individually and considers each relaxation to be acceptable for the reasons outlined in the table below.

Bylaw Relaxations			
Regulation	Standard	Provided	Administration Rationale Supporting a Relaxation
1374 Setback Areas	(3) For the storey closest to grade, the maximum building setback from a property line shared with a street is 4.5m for 60% of the length of the building façade that faces the street.	Plans indicate the proposed buildings are setback greater than 4.50m from the East and South streets.	A 7.0m Utility Right-of-Way is located along the east property line. A greater setback along the south and east property line also provides a more open public pathway connection with greater visibility and public benefit.

1338 Street Wall Stepback	Where the height of a building is greater than 23.0m measured from grade, the façade of the building within 6.0m of a property line shared with a street must have a horizontal separation from the portion of the façade closest to grade where: (a) the horizontal separation has a minimum depth of 2.0m; and (b) the horizontal separation occurs between a minimum of 7.5m and a maximum of 23.0m measured from grade.	Plans indicate building 1 does not provide the minimum required horizontal separation along the south elevation.	Building 1 has an increased ground floor setback from the street (Memorial Drive NE), allowing for a more open public pathway connection. The tower is setback approximately 0.5m from the podium level and provides greater passive surveillance of the south pathway area.
1346 Planting Requirements	(3) Coniferous trees min. height of 2.0m, at least 50.0% of the provided trees must have a min. height of 3.0m	Plans indicate 11 (-1) large coniferous trees.	The relaxation is minor (-1 coniferous tree) and will not negatively impact the quality of the outdoor amenity or public amenity adjacent to the site.