

Background and Planning Evaluation

Background and Community Context

The West Elbow Communities Local Area Plan (Plan) comprises 16 inner-city and established communities: Altadore, Bankview, Cliff Bungalow, Elbow Park, Erlton, Garrison Woods, Lower Mount Royal, Mission, Rideau Park, Roxboro, Scarboro, South Calgary, Sunalta, Upper Mount Royal, the portion of North Glenmore Park north of Glenmore Trail SW and the portion of Richmond east of Crowchild Trail SW.

Generally bounded by the Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) rail line and 17 Avenue S to the north; Macleod Trail S and the Elbow River to the east; Glenmore Trail S to the south; and Crowchild Trail SW to the west, these communities are collectively known as the West Elbow Communities. The West Elbow Communities share common amenities including six interconnected Main Streets (10 Avenue SW, 17 Avenue SW, 33 Avenue SW, 14 Street SW, 4 Street SW and Macleod Trail S), public and transit infrastructure including the Sunalta LRT Station, Victoria Park LRT Station and Erlton LRT Station, natural areas, and regional and neighbourhood parks. The Plan area contains twenty-four schools (public, private and charter), including five high schools (Western Canada High School, St. Mary's High School, Alternative High School, Lord Shaughnessy High School and Central Memorial High School).

There is a rich history within the West Elbow Communities, with Indigenous foundations and eventually permanent settlement in the late 1800s. These communities were annexed into Calgary incrementally in 1907, 1910 and 1956 and early settlement in the area beginning as early as 1871.

The 16 individual communities that comprise the West Elbow Communities experienced varying population trends over the last several decades. Some communities, such as Mission, have experienced sustained growth over the period. Other communities such as Altadore and Richmond, experienced an earlier decline in the 1970s and 1980s followed by a recovery in growth more recently. Communities including North Glenmore Park and Elbow Park have experienced early population decline followed by a period with little or no recent growth.

By setting out a comprehensive vision and policies for growth and change, the Plan will help stabilize and reverse the declines in population in some of these communities, strengthen existing trends in others and provide more balance for growth between communities, while providing more certainty and direction for population growth and change for residents, developers, Administration and City Council.

The Plan envisions accommodating new and more diverse housing forms, as well as commercial opportunities which will allow more Calgarians to choose where to live and operate businesses in the West Elbow Communities. By enabling additional growth and providing a variety of housing options around nodes, corridors, transit station areas, Main Streets, and the Primary Transit Network, people of all ages can find suitable accommodations that fit their lifestyle and needs.

Community Peak Population Table

As identified below, the West Elbow Communities have experienced decline and then recovery of population from 1968 until recently. The total population saw a gradual decline from 1970 until 1984, from 45,899 people to 38,906 people, followed by relatively low or no population growth until 1994 when the population was 38,927 people, and then gradual growth until today, with a population of 46,821.

Table 1 provides additional information and context around population changes in these communities, particularly as it relates to the number of dwelling units and decreasing household sizes. Occupancy rates per dwelling unit have decreased from a peak of 2.78 people per dwelling in 1968 to 1.93 in 2019. Individual community data is provided in Table 2.

Table 1: West Elbow Communities Local Area Plan Population

	Population	Total Dwellings	Occupied Dwellings	Persons/Unit
Peak	46,821	26,369	24,219	2.78
Peak Year	2019	2019	2019	1968
2019	46,821	26,369	24,219	1.93
Loss Since Peak	0	0	0	-0.86
% change since peak	0	0	0	-30.5%

*note that the communities of Richmond and North Glenmore Park are only partially included in the West Elbow Communities. Population data for those communities has been adjusted in the total to reflect the portion of population within the West Elbow communities as of 2019 which are 61% and 76% respectively.

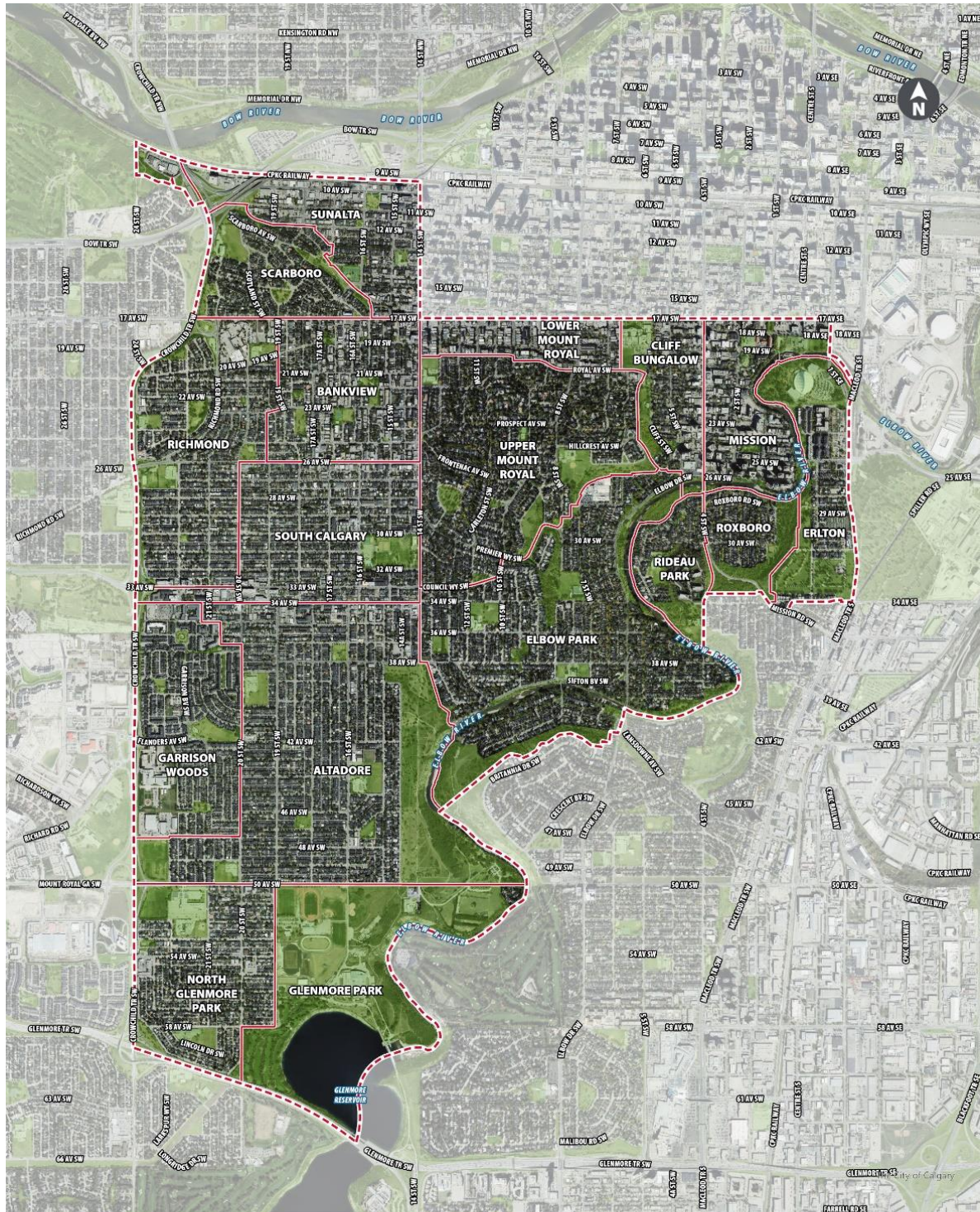
Table 2: West Elbow Communities: Individual Communities Population Tables

<u>Community</u>	<u>Peak Year</u>	<u>Peak Population</u>	<u>2019 Population</u>	<u>% Since Peak</u>	<u>Loss Since Peak</u>
Altadore	2019	6,942	6,942	0	0
Bankview	1981	5,590	5,256	-6.0%	-334
Cliff Bungalow	1982	2,219	1,895	-14.6%	-324
Elbow Park	1968	4,160	3,342	-19.7%	-818
Erlton	2017	1,307	1,270	-2.8%	-37
Garrison Woods	2014	3,195	3,116	-2.5%	-79

Lower Mount Royal	1970	3,594	3,457	-3.8%	-137
Mission	2018	4,673	4,598	-1.6%	-75
North Glenmore Park	1970	3,776	2,391	-36.7%	-1,385
Richmond	1968	5,080	4,962	-2.3%	-118
Rideau Park	1968	713	594	-16.7%	-119
Roxboro	1969	517	422	-18.4%	-95
Scarboro	1969	1,144	931	-18.6%	-213
South Calgary	2019	4,442	4,442	0	0
Sunalta	2015	3,454	3,239	-6.2%	-215
Upper Mount Royal	1969	3,147	2,478	-21.3%	-669

*note that the communities of Richmond and North Glenmore Park are only partially included in the West Elbow Communities. Population data for those communities in the above table reflects their total population.

Map 1: Location



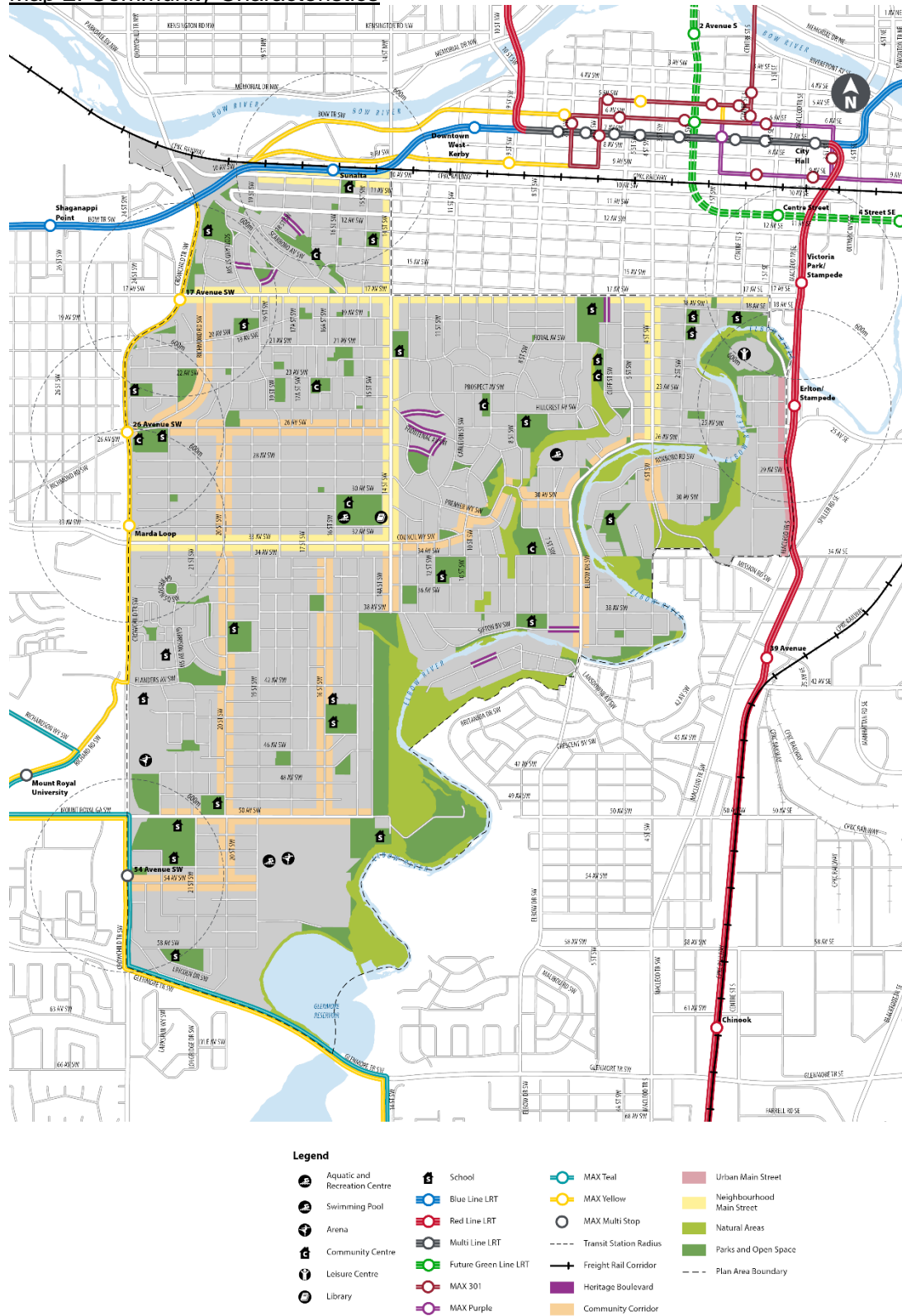
Legend

- Community Boundary
- Plan Area Boundary

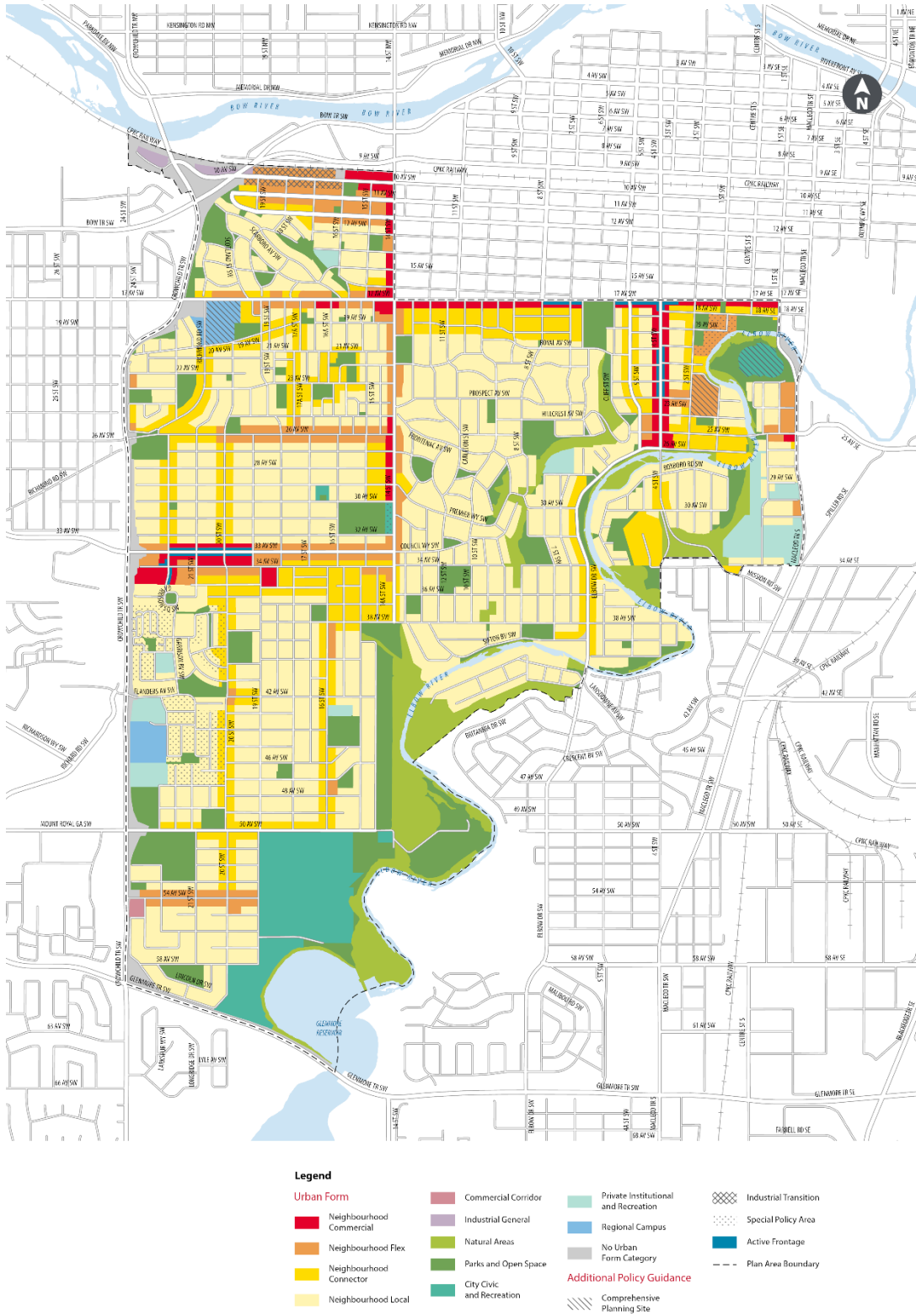
Planning Evaluation

The Plan implements the strategic goals and objectives of The City's municipal development plan at the local level. The Plan's future growth concept aligns with direction from the municipal development plan by supporting intensification around Main Streets and in transit station areas. The Plan also supports continued incremental evolution and change within primarily residential areas including the potential for increased development intensities along community corridors, nodes and the Primary Transit Network.

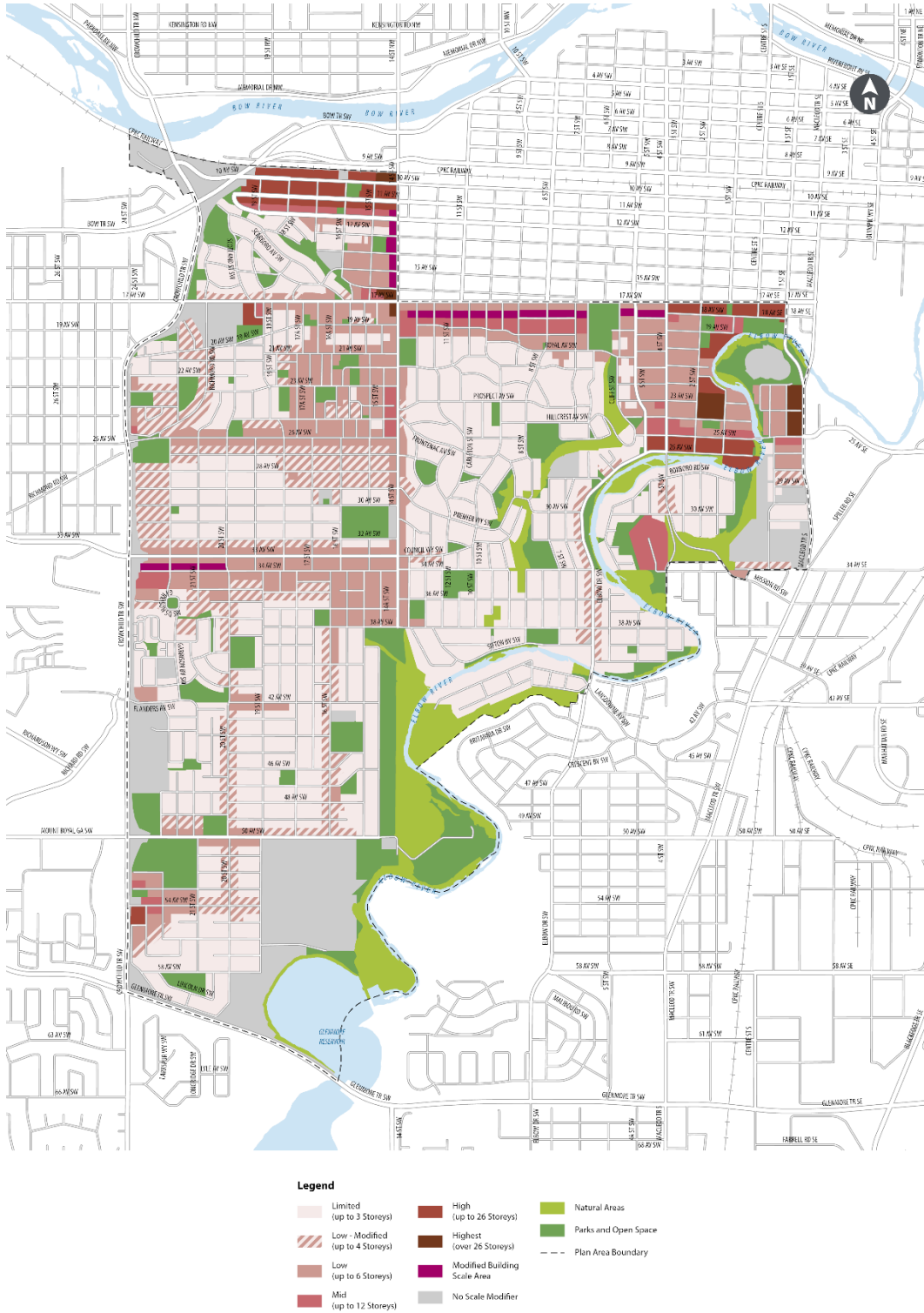
Map 2: Community Characteristics



Map 3: Urban Form



Map 4: Building Scale



Policy Areas

Main Streets

The Plan includes six Main Streets: 10 Avenue SW, 17 Avenue SW, 33 Avenue SW, 14 Street SW and 4 Street SW are identified as Neighbourhood Main Streets and Macleod Trail S is identified as an Urban Main Street. All of these Main Streets form an interconnected network of active commercial streets, supporting high levels of pedestrian activity and connection between these areas, and are all located along the Primary Transit Network. Each of these Main Streets, and individual sections of each street, have a unique character and function. The urban form categories, building scale modifiers and policies applied to each of the Main Streets reflect their unique character.

Common policies that apply to all Main Streets are found in Section 2.5.1. Main Street policies which include improving public space, ensuring good urban design to support the increased pedestrian activity and ensuring compatibility with heritage assets in these areas. Additionally, there are common shadow policies to minimize and mitigate the impact of shadows on the pedestrian environment, with a more specific shadow policy for portions of the 17 Avenue SW and 33 Avenue SW Main Streets.

Generally, Low Scale (up to 6 storeys) has been applied to the majority of Main Streets to allow for future growth while ensuring a pedestrian-scaled environment. Taller buildings are supported in strategic locations including transit station areas and in close proximity to Main Streets, to allow for higher scale growth along nodes and corridors while reducing negative impacts of tall buildings on the public sidewalk. Low-Modified (up to 4 storeys) and Limited Scale (up to 3 storeys) have been applied in areas with access constraints and constraints due to lot depth or irregular lot configurations.

The Neighbourhood Commercial urban form category is applied to areas with existing commercial concentrations along Main Streets, to reinforce areas of high pedestrian activity, with areas of the highest activity having Active Frontage modifiers applied. Neighbourhood Flex is generally applied to areas of Main Streets without existing commercial concentrations to allow for flexibility in ground floor use and allow the market to determine the mix of uses, given the changing nature of retail, online shopping and other factors that will influence the provision of street-fronting retail in the future. Neighbourhood Connector is applied to areas of Main Streets with access constraints, such as flanking lots.

Transit Station Areas

There are two LRT transit station areas within the Plan area: Sunalta LRT Station on the Blue Line and Erlton LRT Station on the Red Line. The Victoria Park/Stampede LRT Station on the Red Line lies just outside the plan boundary. There are four MAX BRT transit station areas within the Plan area: 17 Avenue SW Station, 26 Avenue SW Station and Marda Loop Station are all located on Crowchild Trail SW for the MAX Yellow BRT and 54 Avenue SW Station for the MAX Yellow and MAX Teal BRTs, located on Crowchild Trail SW.

Section 2.5.4 outlines common policies for all transit station areas, which are delineated into Core Zones and Transition Zones. Transit station area policies include encouraging improved public space adjacent to transit stations, providing incentives for non-market housing, specifying parking locations, vehicular access and loading and servicing, discouraging vehicle-oriented uses and allowing for additional building scale where various public benefits are provided. Additional policies specific to BRT transit station areas are included in Section 2.5.4.4 such as facilitating lane closures or reconfigurations where pedestrian access to the station can be improved, public space design and vehicular circulation and safety.

Building scales in transit station areas are some of the highest building scales in the Plan, particularly around the Sunalta, Victoria Park/Stampede and Erlton LRT Stations. Generally, the highest building scales are found closest to transit stations and decreases further away from the stations. Urban form categories in transit station areas generally support higher activity, applying the Neighbourhood Commercial, Neighbourhood Flex or Neighbourhood Connector urban form categories in close proximity to the station. Lower building scales and Neighbourhood Local are applied where lot configurations, limited access or other constraints make higher scale development more difficult.

Community Corridors

Ten community corridors are identified in the Plan: 4 Street SW (south of the Elbow River), 14 Street SW (south of 33 Avenue SW), 16 Street SW (south of 34 Avenue SW), 20 Street SW (between 26 Avenue SW and 54 Avenue SW), Elbow Drive SW, Richmond Road SW, 26 Avenue SW (west of 14 Street SW), 50 Avenue SW, 54 Avenue SW and the corridor formed by Council Way, Premier Way and 30 Avenue SW. Community Corridors are pedestrian-focused streets that are intended to support low- to moderate-growth in a range of primarily residential and small-scale mixed-use and commercial building forms. These corridors serve as important links connecting services, amenities and communities to one another.

Community Corridors are primarily identified as Neighbourhood Connector with portions of Neighbourhood Flex in strategic locations or where commercial uses already exist and Neighbourhood Local in primarily residential areas. Building scales along the Community Corridors vary based on the local context and existing streetscape, ranging from Limited Scale (up to 3 storeys) to Low Scale (up to 6 storeys), other than the 54 Avenue SW community corridor which has higher building scales close to the 54 Avenue MAX Yellow and Teal Station.

Heritage Guideline Areas

The West Elbow Communities contain the largest concentration of heritage assets in Calgary (approximately 46% of all heritage assets in the city). Heritage assets are residential buildings built prior to 1945 that significantly retain their original form and architectural details of the building. The Heritage Guidelines (Guidelines) included in the Plan 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. Public feedback on the Guidelines was generally supportive, with some members of the public wishing for more prescriptive regulations, and others wanting more flexibility in design. The guidelines strike a balance between these perspectives.

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 West Elbow Communities while not prescribing design or architectural styles for new development. The 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. Guidelines for multi-residential buildings have also been developed for the Plan considering several Heritage Guideline Areas exist within areas that support higher building scales.

Comprehensive Planning Sites

Three Comprehensive Planning Sites are identified in the Plan: the Richmond Road Diagnostic and Treatment Centre (former Children's Hospital), The MNP Community and Sport Centre and the former Holy Cross Hospital site.

Comprehensive Planning Sites provide direction for one or more parcels where additional planning or supplementary site design will be needed to support future planning applications. These sites may have private infrastructure, such as internal publicly accessible private streets that service the site and are envisioned to redevelop over time in a way that integrates well with the surrounding community.

Special Policy Areas

There are three Special Policy Areas within the West Elbow Communities: the Cathedral District, the Giuffre Family Library/Fire Station No. 5 and Garrison Woods.

The Cathedral District Special Policy Area contains policies that require new development to be sensitive to existing historic resources in the area including St. Mary's Cathedral, Rectory and Parish Office, the Sacred Heart Convent and the C.N.R Station (former St. Mary's Parish Hall). The building scale in this area is reduced unless associated historic resources are designated and protected. This Special Policy Area was largely adapted from the existing Mission Area Redevelopment Plan but also reflects public desire for retention of important historic resources in the Mission community.

The Giuffre Family Library/Fire Station No. 5 Special Policy Area contains policies that guide the future redevelopment of the site, encouraging the creation of an integrated civic facility, along with the potential for non-market housing.

Finally, the Garrison Woods Special Policy Area provides policies to ensure new development in this area reflects the historic nature and history of the former military base, particularly the renovated PMQ (private married quarters) housing. This Special Policy Area was added after receiving public feedback that requested policy that reflected the unique military history and design of the community.

Addressing Housing Needs

The West Elbow Communities has a unique cluster of amenities and services including six Main Streets, two regional recreation facilities (Glenmore Athletic Park and MNP Community and Sport Centre) and the Elbow River pathway system. The area is also adjacent to the greater downtown. These factors lead to the West Elbow Communities being highly desirable, resulting in both strong demand for new housing and high prices for various housing types.

Throughout the Plan's engagement process, we heard a large amount of feedback from various members of the public on the need for more affordable housing, a greater variety of housing options, while also respecting the character of existing communities, particularly areas with concentrations of heritage assets. By providing a variety of housing options including single-detached, semi-detached, row homes, townhomes, and multi-residential, people of all ages can find suitable accommodations that fit their lifestyle and needs. The Plan takes a balanced approach by applying low-scale growth (such as single-detached, semi-detached, rowhouses and secondary suites) throughout the Plan area and focusing moderate- to large-scale growth in key locations including transit station areas, Main Streets, and the Primary Transit Network.

The West Elbow Communities are incredibly diverse in terms of their respective housing forms, densities, and demographics. These differences amongst the West Elbow Communities create unique challenges and opportunities in addressing housing needs for the future. The approach taken in the Plan was to balance a consideration of technical and spatial factors (such as proximity to transit, lot configurations, topography and servicing), policy considerations (such as direction from The City's municipal development plan and housing affordability strategy), market factors (such as growth rates, development trends and demographic changes), equity considerations (equitable access to housing, services and amenities) and public feedback provided throughout the process. The various building scales and urban form categories shown in Maps 3 and 4 of the Plan are a result of this balancing of factors.

To better accommodate the evolving needs of residents in the Plan area, providing opportunities for a wider variety of housing options, including single-detached homes, semi-detached homes, rowhouses/townhouses and apartments, is essential. It is acknowledged that different communities have different considerations, but with the overall view towards providing increased and more diverse housing choices for the future while respecting heritage character in areas with concentrations of heritage assets. This will enable the community to adapt to their own changing needs over time by providing flexible living options that cater to various demographics and life stages, while ensuring that all residents can find suitable accommodation as their circumstances and lifestyles evolve.

The City's municipal development plan supports development of a greater range of housing options to support changing household needs and trends of all Calgarians. By providing a variety of housing types including single-detached, semi-detached, row homes, townhomes, and multi-residential, residents can stay in their communities throughout their lives and communities can attract people from all ages and stages of life. It can also support aging in place, allowing residents who want to down-size or find alternative accommodations to continue living in their community.

Engagement

The West Elbow Communities Local Area Planning Project spanned more than two years and included four phases of public participation and 66 public engagement events. A working group comprised of community association representatives, residents, Business Improvement Area representatives and industry members provided feedback throughout the engagement process.

A separate heritage working group comprised of community association representatives, residents, industry members and heritage advocacy organizations provided feedback specifically on the creation of the Heritage Guideline Areas policy. Engagement sessions were also conducted with specific groups, including community associations, University of Calgary students and Mount Royal University students.

Public input is one of the five key considerations when developing a local area plan. Through each phase, public feedback was gathered, reviewed and considered, resulting in refinements to the Plan. The project team heard a variety of feedback and balanced the feedback through refinements to policies and maps within the Plan. In addition to public input, there are four other key considerations including context and trends, city policies such as The City's municipal development plan, and other higher-order policies, professional expertise on best practices, technical feasibility, and equity. As the local area planning process is iterative, all five key considerations are incorporated in developing the Plan over time. What We Did and What We Heard Reports were shared for each phase of the project and are included as links in Attachment 4.

Changes to the Plan resulting from public feedback included revisions to the Urban Form and Building Scale maps. Throughout all phases of the project, feedback about location-specific comments on future moderate- to large-scale growth were received. The [Summary of Map Changes](#) illustrates the key changes made to the maps between each phase of the project. Policies throughout the Plan were also refined and added based on public feedback such as concerns related to levels of transit service, community context, topographical challenges, compatibility with heritage homes, pedestrian safety, and shadowing on Main Streets. Generally, changes to the Building Scale maps based on public feedback resulted in decreases to intensity with some exceptions of increases to intensity, particularly around transit stations.

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.

Municipal Development Plan (2009)

The City's Municipal Development Plan (MDP) establishes overall goals and directions for decision making about growth, future land use, mobility networks, servicing, and investment for all of Calgary. The Plan aligns with policies found in the MDP and further supports growth and change at a local level. The Plan envisions accommodating growth and change in key areas such as in close proximity to transit, Main Streets, and to increase housing diversity throughout the West Elbow Communities.