

Lessons Learned

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 West Elbow Communities project team has continued to incorporate lessons learned from the previous seven local area plans, resulting in additional innovative strategies and improvements to engagement, policy, and internal processes.

Engagement Highlights

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

Innovative Strategies

Refined Growth Concept Map

- The West Elbow Communities have mix of housing forms, ranging from single-detached homes to residential towers. As growth in the West Elbow Communities area was anticipated to include a range of building scales a refined growth concept map was developed for Phase 2 of engagement, based on lessons learned from previous local area planning projects. Rather than only including a category for development four storeys or more, the growth concept map for Phase 2 included three categories of future growth (4-6 storeys, 7-12 storeys and greater than 12 storeys). This allowed the team to gather more detailed feedback in Phase 2 of the project to inform refinements to the draft Building Scale map shared in Phase 3.

Heritage Working Group

- The West Elbow Communities include the greatest concentration of Heritage Guideline Areas of any local area plan, containing the majority of Calgary's Heritage Guideline Areas. For many members of communities with concentrations of heritage assets, the historic character of the area is an important value for them. The West Elbow Communities Local Area Plan created a Heritage Working Group comprised of area residents, industry members and heritage advocates to help create and refine the Heritage Guideline Area policies for the Plan.
- Based on analysis of historic development trends and styles, and feedback from the Heritage Working Group, the Plan created four different Heritage Guideline Area precincts in the plan, with slightly different policies to reflect differing architectural styles of the various communities, which is different from previous plans with Heritage Guidelines which did not have separate precinct policies.

Improvements

Conversational Video Presentations

- Building on lessons learned from Phases 1 and 2 of the project, we shortened the length of online video presentations for Phases 3 and 4 to be more conversational and consumable for the public. The new video presentation formats are approximately three to five minutes, highlighting the key ideas and topics for each phase of the project, with a greater focus on graphics to explain our work and what feedback we are collecting.

Enhanced Engagement Booklets

- Several enhancements have been made to the phase engagement booklets to improve user experience and readability. The cover page now includes a QR code that links to the project webpage, the phase's engagement timeline, and a larger font to identify the booklet as an important City of Calgary engagement booklet. Additionally, the booklet content has been further refined to include more effective graphics and project-specific FAQs.

New Engagement Activities

- Building on relationships with students at the University of Calgary developed through the South Shaganappi Communities Local Area Planning Project, we hosted several engagement activities at the University of Calgary and Mount Royal University including workshops, pop-ups, and open houses. In Phase 3 we held in-person workshops to gather feedback on the Urban Form and Building Scale maps. Pop-up events were held at the University of Calgary and Mount Royal University to solicit feedback during Phase 3, particularly around community improvements in the area.

Policy Highlights

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

Innovative Strategies

New Executive Summary

- As a result of the discussion when the Riley Communities Local Area Plan was presented at the Infrastructure and Planning Committee in 2024 October, an Executive

Summary was added to the West Elbow Communities Local Area Plan (Plan) to provide an overview of the Plan in an easy to understand, visually appealing way. The executive summary speaks to the current context and future evolution of the West Elbow Communities and highlights the key moves of the Plan, linking to the community investment priorities in Chapter 3. The section also provides readers with information on how to read the Plan, which enables better interpretation of policy.

Shadow Policies for Main Streets

- The West Elbow Communities contain six Main Streets, some of which, including 17 Avenue SW, 4 Street SW and 33 Avenue SW, are some of Calgary's most desirable and highest pedestrian activity areas in Calgary, with high concentrations of patios, outdoor seating and street activity. These are also areas of high demand for growth. Balancing the desire for growth in these areas with continuing to provide a high-quality pedestrian environment resulted in the creation of shadowing policies for Main Streets in order to mitigate the effects of shadows from taller buildings on the streetscape. Shadow policies were developed for all Main Streets to minimize shadows through design options such as tower separation, floor plate restrictions or tower orientation. The portion of 17 Avenue SW between 4 Street SW and 14 Street SW, which contains the greatest concentration of pedestrian activity in the area, and the portion of 33 Avenue SW west of 20 Street SW, have more restrictive shadow policies, limiting any shadowing on the north sidewalk during Spring and Summer.

Improvements

Plan Specific Community Improvements

- Investment opportunities/community improvements found in Chapter 3 of the Plan provide high-level direction for future community improvement projects but allows for flexibility when specific improvements are implemented.
- These changes allow for better alignment with projects chosen to be funded through the Local Area Implementation Fund.

Garrison Woods Special Policy Area

- Through engagement, many members of the public highlighted the importance of Garrison Woods and its military history. While this area would not meet the criteria for a Heritage Guideline Area, many felt that new development should reflect the military history and architectural style of the community. A special policy area was applied to blocks in the community that contain former PMQ (Private Married Quarters) housing, requiring that new development reflects the historic character of the area.

Internal Processes

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

Innovative Strategies

Simultaneous Projects

- The West Elbow Communities Local Area Planning Project I ran approximately one phase behind the South Shaganappi Communities and Chinook Communities Local Area Planning Projects. This allowed lessons from those two plans to inform changes to processes and tactics for in the development of the Plan.

Cross-departmental Coordination

- Mobility and Parks representatives attended our in-person open houses to provide support on answering questions related to mobility and parks, which were key topics throughout all phases of the project. Representatives from the Marda Loop Main Streets project were also present at public open houses given the public's interest in the project.

Improvements

Calgary Planning Commission (CPC) Workshop

- The project team held a CPC Closed Session Workshop earlier in the process than previous generation of local area plans. By having this session prior to finalizing materials for the Phase 3 launch, the project team was able to incorporate Commissioners' input into the draft Plan prior to it being publicly released.

Project Alignment and Consistency

- The West Elbow, South Shaganappi Communities and Chinook Communities local area planning projects continued to improve consistency and alignment in policies through meeting and collaborating regularly. Achieving greater consistency across local area plans allows planners, industry, and the public to interpret policies more easily.