

Rundle Area Master Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rundle Area Master Plan is a comprehensive new planning document and a step towards realizing transit-oriented development within the Rundle station area (the “plan area”). The plan area has significant potential to accommodate transit-oriented development, but is constrained. The Master Plan outlines a collaboratively developed vision for the future of this important northeast destination and policies intended to facilitate the realization of this vision.

The core ideas of the Master Plan are to:

- Promote mixed use development and activation of streets in key corridors
- Improve opportunities for pedestrian crossings of 36 Street NE and to better link the Rundle community to the Sunridge commercial area
- Improve pedestrian and cycling connections in the plan area in general
- Provide the foundation for transit-oriented development that better takes advantage of the area’s key location around a Light Rail Transit (LRT) station
- Leverage the significant regional destinations, including the Peter Lougheed Centre and Sunridge Mall, by further establishing the area as a health/wellness and retail destination
- Beautify the area with landscaping, public art, and a new public plaza space

The Master Plan (Attachment 1 to this report) aligns to The City’s planning policy direction provided in the Developed Areas Guidebook and applies the city-wide policies outlined in the Guidebook at the local scale. The Master Plan provides a non-statutory policy framework to guide future redevelopment in the plan area.

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ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development recommends that Council:

1. Receive the Master Plan for information.
2. Direct Administration to use the Master Plan to evaluate development applications in the study area and to consider the goals of the Master Plan when making future infrastructure decisions pertaining to the plan area; and
3. Direct Administration to report back to Council, through the Special Policy Committee on Transportation and Transit, by 2018 May with a scope of work to further evaluate and develop an implementation plan for multi-modal transportation infrastructure needed to further support realization of the Master Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SPC ON PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, DATED 2017 DECEMBER 13

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3. Direct Administration to report back to Council, through the SPC on Transportation and Transit, by 2018 May, with a scope of work to further evaluate and develop an implementation plan for multi-modal transportation infrastructure needed to further support realization of the Master Plan; **and**
4. **Direct Administration to consider making this a statutory Station Area Plan or ARP in conjunction with the upcoming report on plans for 2018 local area plan work.**

Excerpt from the Minutes of the 2017 December 13 Regular Meeting of the SPC on Planning and Urban Development:

“And further, that the letters of support distributed at today's Meeting be attached to the Report prior to being forwarded to Council.

MOTION CARRIED”

NOTE: At the request of GM Dalglish and with the concurrence of the Mayor, this Report has been forwarded to the 2017 December 18 Regular Meeting of Council, as an item of Urgent Business.

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PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

At its 2017 February 08 meeting, Council adopted report PUD2017-0100, which included the following: “That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development recommends that Council defer this item to return to the Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development, no later than the end of Q4 2017”.

At its 2016 September 12 meeting, Council adopted report C2016-0672, which included the following: “That Council direct Administration to carry out a master planning process, including a charrette, for Rundle Station as outlined in the project Scope of Work (Attachment 1) and to bring the Master Plan to the Special Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development no later than Q2 2017”.

As its 2016 April 11 meeting, Council adopted the following Motion Arising: “MOTION ARISING, AS AMENDED, Moved by Councillor Carra, Seconded by Councillor Colley-Urquhart, that with respect to Report CPC2016-083 and when LOC2014-0063 returns to Council, following the May meeting with the community, that Administration, in consultation with the applicant and the community, bring forward a scoping report for Council that includes (but is not limited to) a charrette or charrette style master planning process, for this site as well as, for the entire Transit Orientated Development (TOD) Area with resourcing agreements between the applicant, The City and other possible stakeholders, and timelines and workflow to Calgary Planning Commission for Development Permit Applications”.

BACKGROUND

The preparation of the Master Plan resulted from a land use amendment application for a key site within the Rundle neighbourhood, which was a potential catalyst application for future redevelopment along the 36 Street NE corridor. As part of the approval of that land use amendment (LOC2014-0063/CPC2016-083), Council directed Administration to undertake a charrette-style planning process for the Rundle station area to guide future development applications and to facilitate transit-oriented development. The land around the Rundle LRT station could be characterized as underutilized, given its proximity to the Rundle LRT station and its potential as a future transit-oriented community and destination.

Work on the Master Plan began in 2016 September. A comprehensive communication and engagement strategy was developed, and Administration determined that prior to engaging with stakeholders in the area about the actual content of the Master Plan, the first large-scale engagement event needed to focus on determining how stakeholders wanted to be engaged (rather than beginning a discussion about planning for the area). Given that the Rundle community has not experienced comprehensive redevelopment or participated in a large-scale planning exercise, Administration felt that the needs of the community and its communication preferences were not well understood. As such the first open house focused on gathering information about how stakeholders wanted to be engaged. This created a delay for the project, as the first event was not used to gather comprehensive feedback regarding the actual eventual Master Plan. Administration then took a deferral request to Council in 2017 February, which was approved, and gave an extension to the project such that it was to return to Council no later than Q4 2018 (rather than Q2 2018).

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INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Between 2016 September and 2017 November, Administration worked collaboratively with community members, landowners, and other stakeholders to identify opportunities and constraints to shape the content of the Master Plan. The Master Plan is now complete, and it recommends further actions to ensure the vision presented in the Master Plan comes to life.

Early in the process professional analysis and engagement with stakeholders indicated that the plan area is positioned to accommodate transit-oriented development over the long term. Given its strategic location, ample land development opportunities, established regional destinations, and diverse population, there is significant potential for higher-intensity development. However, the configuration of the LRT right-of-way and its position at grade in the middle of 36 Street NE was identified as a structural constraint to transformational redevelopment. During early engagement sessions, residents and area users suggested that the LRT should be elevated along or buried below 36 Street NE to eliminate any potential conflicts with cars, pedestrians, etc.

Administration reviewed this feedback and determined that the potential costs associated with raising or burying the LRT line in this location were too significant to seriously consider at this stage. With competing other transit projects in the queue, it was determined to be out of scope to consider any major changes to the LRT alignment or location. Therefore, the Master Plan needed to envision the area's future with the assumption that the LRT track and station location were fixed in place for the long term.

Early feedback received at public events also indicated that the Sunridge Mall site was thought to be an ideal candidate for a complete transformation. Many residents envisioned the total removal of the mall and replacement with a new neighbourhood or a different type of urban environment, similar to what residents had observed at Deerfoot City or had heard of happening in other places (e.g., Don Mills in Toronto). With changing trends in the retail market, which are theorized by some to bring about the end of stand-alone shopping malls, Administration considered the creation of a detailed section in the Master Plan that would envision a total transformation ("de-malling") of the Sunridge Mall site. However, engagement with the landowner revealed that there are no plans to change the structure of the mall and that the landowner was not comfortable envisioning "de-malling" at this time. Therefore, the Master Plan needed to envision smaller-scale changes to the mall site to facilitate TOD in this location.

After these initial engagement sessions, Administration worked with stakeholders to develop a vision for the area that acknowledged existing constraints with respect to 36 Street NE and the need for Sunridge Mall to continue operating in its current capacity for the life of the Master Plan. The vision that was established for the plan area includes:

1. Updating design elements of 36 Street NE to align with Complete Streets Policy, in conjunction with development and lifecycle opportunities.
2. Linking the Sunridge area and Rundle community, both key northeast destinations, via an activity corridor that incorporates high density uses, a comfortable public realm and new plaza space.
3. Incorporating active frontage along 36 Street NE and improving connections to the LRT station, with the LRT station positioned in the middle of the plan area as a celebrated central node.

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The vision outlined in the Master Plan includes high density development not just adjacent to 36 Street NE but also within the Sunridge Mall site parking areas and the surrounding retail areas, and for some modest intensification within the Rundle community near the LRT station and within other key sites in the Rundle community. Other aspects of the vision include general beautification and greening of the plan area (particularly west of 36 Street NE) to support higher density residential, commercial, and mixed-use development.

This overall vision is generally supported by community members, landowners, and other stakeholders. However, analysis and engagement has suggested that realization of this vision will take time, investment, and a concerted effort by both public and private stakeholders to coordinate efforts to transform this area. Existing constraints requiring further consideration include the:

- Plan area's location within the Airport Vicinity Protection Area, and in some portions of the plan area, within Noise Exposure Forecast contours that prohibit residential development
- Existence of underground utilities and pipelines adjacent to 36 Street NE
- Existence of long-term leases and related commitments pertaining to parking requirements, signage, and visibility with respect to Sunridge Mall
- Existing design of 36 Street NE and the competing demands for multiple modes of travel on the street, including The City's objective to minimize traffic congestion and queuing, manage LRT pre-emption, accommodate truck traffic, accommodate high frequency and high-quality bus service, and accommodate pedestrians
- A lack of green space and recreational opportunities to support residential development within the Sunridge area

The Master Plan recognizes these existing constraints and attempts to provide a realistic expectation for future redevelopment. Overcoming many of these constraints will require time and a concentrated effort by The City to recommend how best to balance the competing demands for 36 Street NE. There is also a need for additional technical studies, potential funding allocations for improvements, and coordination with the private sector and area landowners to guide development applications both in the short and medium term to ensure they align to the ultimate vision.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

Over the course of a three-phase engagement program, Administration engaged with residents of Rundle and the surrounding communities at five in-person public events (including open houses, a design workshop, and a comprehensive charrette) and through three separate online opportunities. Face-to-face meetings and workshops were also conducted with landowners and other key stakeholders impacted by the Master Plan.

There was a high level of interest in the Master Plan and a wide range of input was received from the community throughout the engagement program. Engagement for the Master Plan broke new ground with respect to reaching out to diverse populations and to a community that has not been engaged in the planning or policy development process in recent times. More information regarding the comprehensive engagement and communication strategy used to

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develop the Master Plan, including strategies used to communicate with diverse populations, is outlined in Attachment 2 to this report. Letters received from stakeholders are included in Attachment 3 to this report.

Overall, engagement with residents indicated that the Rundle community appreciated the opportunity to participate in the planning process and were eager to see results in a part of the city they generally thought had been overlooked for improvements and redevelopment. In addition, the top themes that emerged from stakeholder engagement included that:

1. Area users would like to see improved pedestrian amenities in the plan area, specifically in relation to crossing 36 Street NE.
2. Residents of the Rundle community are generally supportive of redevelopment in the plan area and noted that it is an ideal location for additional residents and jobs.
3. Area users are excited about the prospect of additional health and wellness related development occurring in the plan area and are generally supportive of reinforcing the idea of the plan area as a health destination.
4. There are concerns about the potential negative impacts of higher density redevelopment, including increased traffic, shadowing impacts, and transitions to lower density areas.
5. Area users would like to see general improvements and beautification in the plan area.

Administration explored ways to address these themes in the Master Plan. They were addressed as follows:

- Pedestrian Amenities: The Master Plan acknowledges the need for improved pedestrian connections and suggests some strategies to address the concerns raised by stakeholders. The recommendations in this report also suggest the need for further work to scope out potential improvements to pedestrian connections.
- Expansion of Health-related Development: The Master Plan includes policies that encourage future development of additional health and wellness related facilities, and proposes some strategies to better connect the existing and future health care destinations within the plan area.
- Impacts of Higher Density Development: The Master Plan reinforces the need for sensitive transitions to be provided between developments of different heights and densities. For example, the maximum building heights assigned to the areas adjacent to the east side of 36 Street NE require a transition from taller buildings directly adjacent to 36 Street (maximum 36 metres tall) to lower-scale buildings adjacent to 38 Street NE (maximum 16 metres tall). The Master Plan also generally encourages underground parking and proposes transportation demand measures to mitigate potential increases in traffic congestion and parking issues.
- General Improvements: The Master Plan encourages beautification in the plan area, including enhanced landscaping, a new plaza, wayfinding, public art, etc..

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Strategic Alignment

The Master Plan aligns to The City's most recent policy direction for redeveloping areas, including Developed Areas Guidebook and The City's Complete Streets Policy & Guide. It also contributes to meeting the following key result areas of the Planning & Development department:

- The Municipal Development Plan and Calgary Transportation Plan vision is advanced. The Master Plan outlines a vision and policies to transform the plan area into a complete community with multi-modal transportation options, centered around a vibrant transit-oriented development node, with increased housing choices, inviting open spaces, and high quality urban design. The Major Activity Centre designation of the plan area is further realized through increased density, expanded retail opportunities, and new employment in the plan area.
- Development is realized. The Master Plan presents ambitious but implementable policies that will guide redevelopment. The design outcomes prescribed by the plan should be achievable, and they set the groundwork for successful transit-oriented development and reinvestment in the plan area.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Social

The social benefits of the master planning work are significant. Through the process of developing the plan, The City engaged with hundreds of community members and stakeholders that had not participated in a planning process before. This has built capacity in the Rundle community such that it can more meaningfully participate in future planning exercises and better respond to development applications. In addition, the Master Plan envisions a more complete community with improved access to services and new housing choices, improved mobility options, all contributing to the goals of creating a more livable city.

Environmental

The potential environmental benefits realized by implementing the Master Plan could be significant. Realizing transit-oriented development in this location will allow more Calgarians to live, work, shop, access services, and enjoy recreational opportunities within a smaller geographic area. This has the potential to make every-day life more convenient and reduce commute times and the overall need for vehicle ownership.

Economic (External)

Many economic benefits for the city could come from realizing the Master Plan vision. Further capitalizing on the regional assets of the LRT station, the Peter Lougheed Centre, and Sunridge Mall could further establish this area as a regional health/wellness and shopping destination, with the added benefit of additional residential units, jobs, and the associated increased tax base for The City. Redevelopment in the plan area could be a catalyst for significant redevelopment along the 36 Street NE corridor, providing an opportunity for economic development in the inner northeast. The type of development envisioned in the Master Plan would also make better use of the already significant financial investment recently made in the plan area, such as the LRT station's recent refurbishments and the upcoming Bus Rapid Transit network that will serve the Rundle LRT station.

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Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

The completion of the Master Plan has no operating budget implications. However, should Council approve the recommendations included in this report, additional staff time (and potential consultant costs) to undertake transportation-related analysis for the area could have operating budget implications.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

The completion of the Master Plan has no immediate capital budget implications. However, should it be determined that realizing the vision outlined in the Master Plan is a priority for Council, it is likely that capital budget implications will result from a need to invest in transportation-related and public realm improvements to support transit-oriented development (to be determined with further study).

Risk Assessment

The risk of not using the Master Plan to evaluate future development applications is that redevelopment within the plan area will continue to be evaluated and implemented on an individual basis without regard for a comprehensive redevelopment plan for the area. It also comes with the risk of not taking full advantage of the efforts made by the Rundle community, which has invested significant time and effort into participating in the master planning process and is interested in seeing positive outcomes as a result of their efforts for a community they care deeply about.

The risk of not pursuing the transportation-related recommendations included in this report is that although the Master Plan establishes a broadly-supported vision for the area, this vision will not be realized without meaningful changes to the transportation network such that it becomes more pedestrian-friendly and accommodating of higher-density development, which tends to generate greater amounts of pedestrian traffic and transit use.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Master Plan fulfills Council's direction to create a Master Plan that sets the stage for transit-oriented development around Rundle Station. This new planning document will guide future development applications to ensure they embody best practices in transit-oriented development and align to a strategic vision for the area. The Master Plan aligns to The City's recent planning policy direction, including the Developed Areas Guidebook and Complete Streets Policy & Guide. It is a step towards transforming this key location into an even more attractive community and regional destination.

Through the process of creating the Master Plan, Administration had the opportunity to engage stakeholders in an area that has generally been under-engaged in planning processes. The engagement process used to create the Master Plan was inclusive and comprehensive.

Although the Master Plan has stand-alone value for the guiding role it will provide for redevelopment in the area, this report recommends that future study be undertaken to determine what specific transportation-related improvements can be further studied and considered to support the full realization of the plan's vision.

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ATTACHMENT(S)

1. **Revised** Rundle Area Master Plan
2. Engagement Summary Report
3. Letters