

Discussion of Current Challenges

Calgary's planning system is based on a sequence of policy plans and legislative tools. Beginning with Imagine Calgary and the Municipal Development Plan (MDP)/Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP) each policy plan in the sequence provides more specific guidance and detail. The Land Use Bylaw is the final tool with which these policies are implemented.

Over the 60-year timeframe of the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) there will be situations, emerging technologies and social and economic changes that may need to be addressed through Plan amendments or through specific policy initiatives. While all seven goals of the MDP remain equally important, situations and trends may arise that require a more urgent focus on some of the goals more than others. From Administration's perspective, the current situation in Calgary presents The City with one of those situations.

Economic Downturn and Diversification

The ongoing economic downturn has brought enhanced awareness to the need for a strong focus on planning policies that support economic diversification, enable industrial, commercial and agricultural business growth and that enhance Calgary as a location of choice for outside business investment – from the international scale to small entrepreneurs.

Although the MDP contains some guidance, discreet policies may be required to address gaps and ensure Calgary is creating an enabling environment.

Obsolete and Missing Policy

The economy has also had a serious effect on market demand, viable building typologies and the locations where new developments are still successful propositions. However, development in locations where there is still market interest is at times hindered by aging local area plans, the absence of policies or land use bylaw regulations that do not enable the desired development. Revisions to the growth management strategies and tools of the MDP may also be required to serve the demand while continuing to balance the growth opportunities between the developing and the developed area.

Administration is constrained in its ability to address these policy planning needs in these key areas by the volume of policy work that has been requested by communities and already been directed by Council.

Policy Staff Resources

Providing staff resources to the required policy project work is also a growing challenge. The majority of Planning & Development staff are employed in front line customer service areas and in the direct support of customer applications in the form of Development Permits and Land Use Redesignations. Subsequently, of Planning & Development's current complement of approximately 600 full time staff equivalents, only 48 staff are available for policy work. The corporate response to the economic situation may also affect Administration's ability to assign staff resources to the policy work it has already been directed to undertake. This may have impacts on project timelines and the number of policy initiatives that can be completed per year.

The allocation of policy staff resources should be prioritized to projects that are the most effective to addressing the current economic challenge and which are most relevant towards supporting healthy community development.

New Legislative Requirements

New provincial legislation adds to the unique situation Calgary currently finds itself in. The updated Municipal Government Act and new City Charter will present The City with new tools and new obligations. One example is the new requirement to establish a Regional Growth Management Board with our regional partners. In terms of new tools, The City will be able to develop statutory local area plans that are based on a theme as opposed to a geographically defined area, i.e. a community boundary.

The City must also develop new tools based on new provincial legislation, for example regarding flood mitigation and the legalization of cannabis.