



Calgarians are generally not aware of the significant changes that will impact their communities because engagement was limited and it failed to properly inform the public. Community Associations and residents who have asked to be part of the dialogue to create policies that will impact their communities have not been included in the process.

Alberta’s Municipal Government Act requires that every city and township have an engagement policy that defines how citizens will be involved in municipal decision-making. Calgary defines engagement as: “Purposeful dialogue between The City and citizens and stakeholders to gather information to influence decision making.”¹

The Guidebook for Great Communities was released on August 30th, 2019. Prior to that, the Developed Areas Guidebook (DAG) was approved in 2017 and then Council directed City Administration to consult with “pilot communities” to make amendments. The engagement activities for the Developed Areas Guidebook are listed below. All of these events were attended by “invitation only.” A stakeholder group was formed in February 2019, composed of members from only ten communities. They continued to meet until September 2019. Other communities who asked to join these meetings were denied access. Members of the working group were told that they were giving input to create an updated version of the “Developed Areas Guidebook,” but instead “The Guidebook for Great Communities” was released at the end of August 2019, with a revised scope, stripped of its heritage special policy areas, meant to become statutory and provide the foundation for a revised Land Use Bylaw.

At the SPC for Planning and Urban Development on Feb.6th 2019, Administration discussed this change in direction:

This group of initiatives is about more than incremental amendments to the land use bylaw. Its goal is **a system change** to a renewed land use bylaw that is outcome-oriented, has a clear line of sight between our policies and the implementing tool, so between our Municipal Development Plan, the Community Plans and the implementing tool in the Land Use Bylaw . . . achieving effective policies that can be effectively implemented on the ground.²

¹ Calgary’s “Engage Policy”: <https://www.calgary.ca/CA/city-clerks/Documents/Council-policy-library/CS009-engage.pdf>.

² PUD meeting February 6, 2019. <https://pub-calgary.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=2a0108a0-b068-4e2d-9f0c-aaf63a33920b&Agenda=PostMinutes&lang=English&Item=16>. Item 7.1, video 7:30-8:40.

Table 2.1: Engagement RE: amendments to the Developed Areas Guidebook from February to September 2019.³ By summer 2019, following three in-camera sessions with the Calgary Planning Commission, the DAG morphed into the Guidebook for Great Communities.

Date	Event	Audience	City Message	Changes discussed?
Feb 15, 2019	DAG Stakeholder Heritage workshop	INVITE ONLY with subject matter experts & advocates	Concept of heritage overlay district; how the guidebook could lay a framework for heritage policies	Yes
Feb 20, 2019	DAG Stakeholder – Building “Blocks” Workshop	Exact numbers not given; 5-7 maybe; Community and Industry; FCC & heritage	Concept of Great Neighbourhoods for Everyone; use of draft building blocks; discussion about the tools and what does/doesn't work	Yes
March 20, 2019	DAG Multi-stakeholder workshop	Only 5 feedback forms! 1-Haysboro, 1-Inglewood, 2 Industry; 1 interested citizen who works for City. INVITE ONLY	Workshops on the Great Neighbourhoods for Everyone with a focus on five topic areas including: the new draft Building Blocks, draft Special Policy Areas, draft Scale and Transition, draft Implementation, and draft Common Policies	Yes
June 24, 2019	DAG Stakeholder Workshop, What we Heard, DAG Share back session	Targeted feedback with reps from communities (who?), FCC, Developers, other stakeholders. INVITE ONLY	Staff shared with stakeholders details about the system change, the new Guidebook structure, Guidebook content and policy, and the next steps for a renewed Land Use Bylaw.	Yes
September 18, 2019	GGC Stakeholder Report Back – share back session	Representatives from communities, FCC, Developers, other stakeholders. INVITE ONLY	Staff provided info on: the new planning system; engagements, milestones, circulations; key themes & intentional moves; next steps. Q&A reported.	Yes

³ PUD2019-1015 Attachment 8: What We Heard Report, pp. 3-4.

<https://pub-calgary.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=112010>

About two months after its release, on November 6th 2019, the 'Guidebook for Great Communities' was considered at the Standing Policy Committee for Planning & Urban Development (a subgroup of Council). About 20 Community Associations objected to the lack of engagement on the new Guidebook. A motion was passed to:

- a. **Build awareness** among Calgarians about the changes being proposed and to allow Calgarians to participate in the community conversation on long-term planning and supporting growth with infrastructure and amenities;
- b. **Communicate the vision & intent of the document** within Calgary communities, in partnership with stakeholder groups, before the document becomes statutory. This communication should include examples from pilot communities;
- c. **Prepare a clear engagement process** for statutory planning work going forward, making expectations clear to all stakeholders about when to engage, what type of engagement is required, and what the outcomes of the work will be;
- d. **Provide further clarity** on the relationship between this work and the City's shift to larger local area plans.⁴

The City Planning Department worked with the Federation of Calgary Communities (FCC) to provide five 'Guidebook sessions' from January to February 2020, effectively reaching out to about 56 Community Associations. (There are 150+ Community Associations in Calgary.)

Engagement with the general public took the form of installations at the Central Public Library and the Home & Garden Show, as well as three Renovation Shows. Notably, the presentation of materials related to the Guidebook was very different with the public than it was in the FCC sessions. Raising awareness amongst the public was reduced to presenting "themes" from the Guidebook, such as housing choice, recreational amenities, and statistics about households. There was no mention of changes to policies, strategy, area planning or the land use bylaw. When residents asked about "local area planning" in North Hill, the pilot for multi-community area planning, they were told that there are no effective land use changes were being made to districts in area plans, implying that the policies in the Guidebook were somewhat innocuous and that zoning would not change. Although, we know that **once the Guidebook is made statutory it will be considered in planning decisions for all new development applications.**

On March 4th 2020, the Committee for Planning & Urban Development reconvened and discussed both the Guidebook and the North Hill Plan. Calgary newspapers ran a couple of stories about the Guidebook. There was online engagement through the City of Calgary's website and social media for the North Hill plan. Outside of communities currently involved in local area plans, awareness and understanding of the massive changes in other developed communities remains limited. The number of residents made aware of the new planning system remains relatively small.

⁴ PUD meeting November 6, 2019. <https://pub-calgary.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=40ffe504-2752-4f32-a276-b009dc356b30&Agenda=PostMinutes&lang=English>.

Table 2.2: Public Engagement RE: the Guidebook for Great Communities from November 2019 to March 2020.

Date	Event	Audience	City Message	Changes discussed?
Jan & Feb 2020	Public library installation	Public	Display with posters, questions with cards available for the public to post answers. A copy of the Guidebook was placed on a table.	Minimal
Jan & Feb 2020	Mobile Installations at Reno Show x 3; Home & Garden Show	Public	Similar to library display; basic information for people to engage with planning 'themes.' e.g. "Would you like to be able to walk to a grocery store in your community?"	Minimal
Feb 2020 onwards	Guidebook 101 online video (<i>not promoted</i>)	Public	Guidebook for Great Communities – Guidebook 101 presentation ⁵	Minimal

The week before the March 4th PUD meeting, City Administration released a revised version of the Guidebook, a revised draft of the North Hill plan, as well as extensive amendments to the Municipal Development Plan. The latter statutory document sits above the Guidebook in terms of Municipal Planning Law. It sets the strategy and vision for policies and tools beneath it.

Aggressive timelines were put in place that have placed unsustainable pressure on volunteers working in Community Associations to respond to these items. The general public in North Hill was given the ability to see the draft North Hill Plan from February 24th to 25th and they were required to submit letters to PUD by February 26th. The new edition of the Guidebook was released February 28th. On February 20th, changes proposed to the MDP were announced and the last feedback session was scheduled on March 3rd, the day before the PUD meeting. These timelines do not allow Community Associations and residents to work together to create meaningful feedback and to achieve a desired result.

More than 30 communities signed and/or presented letters at the March 4th PUD meeting. Several community representatives explained that their residents do not fully understand how the policies in the plan will substantively change their neighbourhoods. Consultation was inadequate, they said. Residents asked for suitable timeframes and mechanisms for communities to comment on the Guidebook revisions.⁶ To this day, there is still no clear mechanism to provide informed and constructive comments on these planning documents.

The amendments proposed to Calgary's Municipal Development Plan are disturbing. City Administration seems to be doing away with the role of Community Associations and that of

⁵ See: <https://www.calgary.ca/PDA/pd/Pages/Current-studies-and-ongoing-activities/Guidebook-for-Great-Communities.aspx?redirect=%2Fguidebook>.

⁶ Letters from Crescent Heights, Brentwood and a resident of Renfrew. PUD attachments, March 4, 2020.

‘Community’ in directing planning and development.⁷ This is substantiated by the noticeable lack of ‘Community’ identification and character in the local area plans (see Concern #4, below).

Communities presenting formal letters to Councillors and City Administration have been repeating this and other concerns, but so far, eight months later, there has still been no reply. One of the most frustrating elements of public engagement on the Guidebook has been the lack of two-way conversation. As one representative from Crescent Heights explained, who also a member of the Working Team for the North Hill plan: “Our Community was engaged, but in our opinion the engagement process was steered entirely to accommodate growth and did not provide an opportunity to identify our local character, or community needs.”

When asked why the City wouldn’t do a mail-out campaign with flyers about Next Generation Planning to residents of Calgary, the response was that there is no budget for this.

As shown in the “What We Heard” DAG stakeholder from June 24, 2019: these ideas and concepts “may get resistance from the general public. We will need to build up a case for change, since at the moment the benefit isn’t there . . . the timelines are ambitious.” Administration also noted: “Need to be mindful that the timeline bumps up to an election year...”⁸

Table 2.3: Changes underway for Calgary Municipal Planning.

Timeline	Legislation / Policy	What is New	Change / Intent
2018	City of Calgary Charter	NEW legislation	Allows the Guidebook & Local Area Plans to be made statutory.
Q2 2020	Citywide Local Areas Map	NEW map of Calgary with 42 Local Areas ⁹	The map of 42 districts is intended to draw the boundaries between ‘multi-community’ area plans.
Q1 2019 -	Local Area Map (for each area)	Area Map for Multi-Community Local Area Plan	The area boundaries are defined for the Multi-Community Area Plan

⁷ On page 149, section 5.2.1 of the MDP amendments, this section is deleted: *Continue to consult and work with other stakeholders (including community associations and citizens’ and industry business groups) regarding matters of municipal process and policy to ensure mutual understanding and to support shared goals and objectives.* <https://www.calgary.ca/engage/Documents/Next20/Summary-of-Proposed-Revisions.pdf>

⁸ Stakeholder Report Back: What We Heard. June 24, 2019. <https://www.calgary.ca/ layouts/cocis/DirectDownload.aspx?target=http%3a%2f%2fwww.calgary.ca%2fPDA%2fpd%2fDocuments%2fCurrent-studies-and-ongoing-activities%2fguidebook%2fdeveloped-areas-guidebook-WWH-June24.pdf>

⁹ See: <https://www.calgary.ca/PDA/pd/Pages/Current-studies-and-ongoing-activities/Local-Area-Planning-in-Calgary.aspx>.

Q2 2020	Established Areas Growth & Change Strategy	NEW - prioritization of planning & investment, as well as financial tools for Local Area Planning	Investments that are directly linked to growth & redevelopment appear in Chapter 3 of the Local Area Plan.
Q3 2020?	Municipal Development Plan & Calgary Transportation Plan	UPDATE to current plans made statutory in 2009	Density is no longer focused on busy roadways, activity centres & transportation hubs. Density added everywhere.
Oct.7 2020	Heritage Policies & Incentives	NEW - tools & incentives for heritage protection meant to be integrated within the Guidebook for Great Communities	Introduces 'clusters' of heritage sites with protections assigned by block-face (street face on a block) and associated financial incentives.
Q4 2020	Guidebook for Great Communities	NEW legislation to be made statutory	Tool to implement the strategy of the MDP. Set of policies used for the creation of Local Area Plans. (Multi-Community Area Plans.)
TBD	Low Density Residential Guidelines for Established Communities	To be rescinded after Guidebook is made statutory	No more guidelines for 'contextual' development in established neighbourhoods according to these guidelines.
Q4 2020 or Q1 2021?	New Bylaw for 'Low Density' Residential	UPDATE to Land Use Bylaw 1P2007	Combining districts / zoning previously separate (with respective definitions of permitted and discretionary uses) to allow new development.
Q4 2020	North Hill Plan	Multi-Community Area Plan (*pilot)	Replaces 7 policy documents
Q2 2021	Westbrook Plan	Multi-Community Area Plan	Replaces 6 policy documents
Q2 2021	Heritage Plan	Multi-Community Area Plan	Replaces 5 policy documents