

CONCERN #5: LOSS OF COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC POLICIES & CONTEXTUAL DEVELOPMENT



Communities that have existing statutory and non-statutory plans will see these rescinded and replaced by Multi-Community Area Plans, which lack the same granularity. What is in your previous plan can be altered or removed. The Guidelines for Established Communities will also be rescinded when the Guidebook is made statutory.

Comments on Multi-Community Local Area Plans:

- The Local Area Plan is a high level generic planning document with very little context of the actual area and the communities in that area.
- No sense of community character is showing up in Local Area Plans. They give limited insight into what communities value. A developer would get no real sense of the communities and what is important to them.
- The Local Area Plan (LAP) makes it easier for developers to get approvals for spot rezoning (adding more density and multi-use / multi-unit structures). It is anticipated that residents opposing land-use changes would have a tougher time objecting once the LAP is approved. A public hearing of City Council is still required for land use changes, so there is the ability to object, but it is harder to object when City planning documents support the change.
- Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs), on the other hand, provide significant detail to the developer and help communities communicate what is important to their community.
- Communities with ARPs have found that if a developer actually reads their ARPs, they are more likely to propose something that is more compatible with the community. Would one community's design guidelines be appropriate for another in the same local area plan? Each one deserves its own definition of community character.
- A key difference with Local Area Plans is that these new multi-community area plans must be read in conjunction with the Guidebook for Great Communities, which in itself has limitations, e.g. lack of heritage policies.

The North Hill Local Area Plan is the first multi-community area plan to be executed in Calgary. It is a "pilot" project that is meant to go to Council and become statutory at the same time as the Guidebook for Great Communities. It was previously scheduled for Public Hearing on April 27, 2020, but delayed due to COVID-19. The communities in the North Hill Plan include: Highland Park, Mount Pleasant, Tuxedo Park, Winston Heights-Mountview, Crescent Heights, Renfrew, Rosedale, Capitol Hill and Thorncliffe Greenview (south of Mcknight Blvd.).¹

¹ The North Hill Plan is available online at: https://calgary.ca/engage/Documents/North%20Hill%20Local%20Growth/Draft%20Plan/Draft_North_Hill_Local_Area_Plan.pdf

The following comments are specific to the North Hill Plan:

- One page on Community Context (p.14);
- Two pages on Community Characteristics and Attributes (pp.15 -16). A few nice pictures, but no content of real value to the community;
- Maps on page 21 and page 29 are some of the most significant parts of the document;
- Pages 35 and 36 provide high-level content on three main street (not much content);
- Page 44 gives information about heritage, again with little detail. The only point of significance is policy #1: “Land use redesignations for higher density development are discouraged until heritage policy tools have been explored in the Plan area.”
- Appendix A is good, but buried in the back of the document. These kinds of details are integrated into the main texts of ARPs. Notably, the appendices are NOT a statutory portion of the plan (p.53). For example:
 - Preserve Tuxedo School
 - Improve Munro Park
 - Add trees on 8 Avenue NE.
- Map on page 63 for heritage is good, but buried in the back of the document.

What is more, the process outlined in the Guidebook for the creation of Local Area Plans has not been followed in the example of North Hill. Specifically, section 2.29 (formerly section 2.32) outlines what should be in each chapter of a local area plan, but the content introduced on pages 86 to 87 of the Guidebook does not appear in the North Hill plan.

Requests to amend the North Hill plan and/or the Guidebook have been repeatedly ignored.

Table 5.1: Policies in the Guidebook for Great Communities LACKING in the North Hill Plan.

| Guidebook Content | North Hill Plan Content |
|--|--|
| <i>Chapter 1: Visualizing Growth, a. Identificaion of Attributes</i> | |
| Community demographics and trends | <i>Not included either by individual community, nor for the district (the entire local area)</i> |
| Ecological assets | <i>Park spaces are shown, without descriptors (such as school, playing fields, natural area, playground, etc.)</i> |
| Heritage or Cultural assets | <i>No identifications associated with Map 2</i> |
| Recreation and Community Facilities | <i>Not identified, nor their current or potential capacities</i> |
| Special view corridors | <i>Not identified</i> |
| Mobility infrastructure | <i>Roads are shown, no alleys, no pathways or bike routes</i> |

| <i>Chapter 1: Visualizing Growth, b. The Plan should support...</i> | |
|--|--|
| Protection and enhancement of natural areas and ecological functions | <i>Not addressed in any meaningful way</i> |
| Recreation, civic, arts and cultural opportunities | <i>Not identified in the plan, therefore, not supported</i> |
| Architectural, urban and natural features that contribute to a feeling of local identity and sense of place | <i>Not identified in the Plan, therefore, not supported</i> |
| <i>Chapter 2: Enabling Growth</i> | |
| A local area plan shall contain strategies for achieving the vision of the plan, including, but not limited to, community-specific policies for urban form categories, mobility, or amenities that supplement those contained within the Guidebook as necessary | <i>No community-specific policies – the appendix contains some community-specific targets, but this is not statutory</i> |
| Existing or new landmark sites or gateway sites and key view corridors should be identified, if applicable, and community-specific policy should be included to guide future development in these areas | <i>No identification or community-specific policies</i> |
| Local Area Plans are encouraged to conduct water and sanitary analyses to understand the impact of projected growth on the utility network | <i>No clause or requirement for this analysis has been included in the plan</i> |
| <i>Chapter 3: Supporting Growth</i> | |
| <p>We do not see agreement between the Guidebook’s direction in this chapter and the North Hill Plan. Policies for current and future amenities and infrastructure, as well as strategies for their funding are not included in the plan. Implementation actions have been identified in an Appendix (not made statutory). There is no identification of a priority of investments, identification of roles, identification of what tools (planning or financial) could be used, or the identification of a complete community through the creation of an “Asset Map and List.”</p> <p>k. Local area plans should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. identify the elements of a complete community (as referenced in the Municipal Development Plan) over a time horizon of growth and change in the plan area, through the creation of an “Asset Map and List” reflective of continual growth and change as described in Chapter 4 of the Guidebook; ii. provide guidance to The City for future service plan and budget considerations and recommendations; iii. identify the priority of investments for the community, taking into account the current status of the infrastructure and amenities and the plan for future growth and change; iv. acknowledge that the timing of investment may be guided by external factors including service and activity levels, priorities identified in the plan, and the state of existing assets; v. identify the roles for different city builders in supporting implementation (the City, developers, residents and businesses); vi. identify and recognize the range of planning and financial tools that could support implementation; and, vii. be reviewed at a regular frequency as investment and actions are made towards plan goals. | |

Table 5.2: Further Concerns about Local Area Planning²

| Concerns in Letters submitted March 4 th 2020 | Communities |
|---|--|
| The unique character of each community is not represented in the Local Area Plan. The rich history of individual communities is missing; no community demographics or trends. No policies to address unique character, heritage, and attributes that should be “celebrated and cared for.” No tools to address specific community objectives, to define unique characteristics and/or protect them. A general lack of community-specific details and community-specific policies. | Crescent Heights, Mount Pleasant, Rosedale |
| Lack of design guidelines to encourage references to a community’s existing structures. Lack of tools to encourage maintaining scale, detailing, and massing that helps a community retain a significant expression of its character. | Crescent Heights, Renfrew, Rosedale, Brentwood, Elboya Heights-Britannia |
| A new urban form category needs to be created for single-detached dwellings with a maximum height of 2 storeys. This would reflect the existing scale and density of much of Calgary’s historic architecture. Established areas should be protected and maintained in terms of height and density. The definition of the urban form “Limited Scale” is too broad and does not align with some communities’ vision. | Mount Pleasant, Brentwood, Crescent Heights, Elboya Heights-Britannia |
| A new scale modifier needs to be added between “Limited” and “Low” to help with transitions between these 3-storey and 6-storey building forms. Concern for “too steep” of transitions between higher-density corridors and lower density areas. Also, the Guidebook refers to “storeys,” but the height of a commercial storey is substantially higher than a residential storey (15ft ceilings vs. 8-9ft ceilings for residential). | Brentwood, Renfrew |
| Need for more clarity around the commercial uses that would be allowed in residential areas. A possible solution is to add modifiers like “Commercial Cluster” or “Commercial Flex” to the Plan; adding how much flexibility is possible in each urban form category that gets used in the plan. | Renfrew |
| The Guidebook is an incomplete document. Implementation of local area planning is “out of sync” with the finalization of heritage tools and the new bylaw for low density residential. Until these items are fleshed out, it is impossible to gauge how these plans will effectively be put in place. Communities are experiencing a great deal of uncertainty. | Crescent Heights, Renfrew |
| Lacking tools to direct density in particular areas. Once the local area plan is made statutory, then existing land uses would be largely insignificant. Intensified development would be made acceptable in all parts of the community. This gives citizens a lack of certainty about what will be built next to them. | Brentwood, West Hillhurst, Crescent Heights |

² Information taken from letters submitted to the March 4th 2020 PUD meeting, Items 7.4 and 7.5. <https://pub-calgary.escrimemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=28a93abb-38ca-4eb1-8e2d-3a47588898b5&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English&Item=24>

Rescinding existing Statutory and Non-Statutory Plans:

As of PUD March 4, 2020 we know the recommendations for the North Hill Plan. This is the clearest evidence of what is happening to existing ARPs and also non-statutory plans. Councillors at the Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development (PUD) on March 4, 2020 recommended to:

2a. RESCIND, by resolution, the Centre Street North Special Study, the Highland Village Green Design Guidelines, and the North Bow Special Study; and

2b. REPEAL, by bylaw, the North Hill Area Redevelopment Plan, Crescent Heights Area Redevelopment Plan, Winston Heights-Mountview Area Redevelopment Plan, and 16 Avenue North Urban Corridor Area Redevelopment Plan.

The report surmises that: “Updating, consolidating or rescinding policies in the above plans will provide a more comprehensive picture of where growth should occur in the future.”³

Five multi-community area plans were actively worked on in 2020. Each area has several policy documents that would be rescinded or repealed:

- North Hill <https://engage.calgary.ca/NorthHill> (7 policy documents)
- Westbrook <https://engage.calgary.ca/Westbrook> (6 policy documents)
- Heritage <https://engage.calgary.ca/heritage> (5 policy documents)
- West Elbow <https://engage.calgary.ca/WestElbow> (11 policy documents)
- Riley <https://engage.calgary.ca/Riley> (2 policy documents)

Final Words on ARPs

In some instances, communities have asked that the detailed Area Redevelopment Plan should take precedence over the broad strokes outlined in Local Area Plans because the ARPs are much more detailed for each particular community. Perhaps the City can consider integrating community-specific details from existing ARPs into the higher level multi-community area plans. Certainly, a more detailed approach to community character and guidelines is needed above and beyond what is seen in the North Hill plan.

Guidelines for Established Communities to be rescinded

For established communities, an important document that will be rescinded (once the Guidebook for Great Communities is made statutory) is the “Infill Guidelines,” also known as: “Low Density Residential Housing Guidelines for Established Communities” (2010). The principle behind the guidelines for established communities is that:

New development should be designed in a manner which is responsive to local context.⁴

³ REFERENCE: Planning & Development Report to ISC: UNRESTRICTED SPC on Planning and Urban Development PUD2020-0164 2020 March 04, p.11.

⁴ Infill Guidelines, p.15: <https://media1-production.mightybell.com/asset/737949/InfillGuidelines2010.pdf>.

The Guidelines deal with building mass, privacy, landscaping, and parcel layout. They are meant to supplement the Land Use Bylaw and any relevant ARPs. For example, a new development should have a front setback that is consistent with that of other properties on a streetscape. Often, in older neighbourhoods, the setbacks are greater than the minimum stipulated by the LUB. The character of the streetscape is protected by appealing to “context.” The setback of a building from the rear property line is also contextually defined. There should not be significant shadowing or privacy issues created by new buildings that protrude into the rear outdoor space of a neighbour’s yard. The height and massing of a new development should be sensitive to its immediate surroundings, and so forth.