

Local Area Plans Approach – Summary

1. Introduction – The Guidebooks and a new era for local area planning in Calgary

The three new Guidebooks in Calgary’s Municipal Development Plan (MDP) have ushered in a new era for preparing local area growth plans. This district-based approach describes a 10-year path to reducing 200+ local planning documents not aligned with the MDP to about 50 local area growth plans that advance the vision of the MDP and the Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP) and more efficiently realize development.

In 2017, there are 200+ existing local planning documents that have been adopted over the past 45 years. These plans describe greenfield development or redevelopment goals of developed areas using seven different statutory or non-statutory formats. The number and variety of plans often creates confusion regarding implementation, and not enough are updated in a timely manner.

The MDP Guidebooks and recent engagement success with multi-community land use consultations provide an opportunity to do local area planning differently. New, local area growth plans should include entire catchment areas for a Main Street or Primary Transit station/route. This also allows alignment with community service areas, local and federal census tracts, and transportation planning zones. That will improve the effectiveness of recommendations in local area growth plans.

Table 1 categorizes existing local area plans by key MDP/CTP principles. It forecasts what a streamlined roster of plans could be in 2027 when the MDP Guidebooks are fully integrated into The City’s local area growth plans. The streamlined roster of plans would more holistically plan for success around desired Main Streets and Primary Transit Routes. They also would better reflect how multiple communities interact with each other and where new growth could be located to build great communities and use existing infrastructure efficiently.

Table 1: Local Area Growth Plans - 2017 Existing vs 2027 forecast

	Plan Category (based on MDP/CTP Principles)	2017 Plans – Existing	2027 Plans – Forecast
1	Main Streets Growth Plans	26	14
2	Primary Transit Growth Plans	40	20
3	Other Nodes and Corridors Growth Plans	45	8
4	Greenfield Plans	45	Incorporated into categories 2&3
5	Plans to Rescind or Consolidate	104	0
	Total	260	42

2. Defining the End Goal for Local Area Growth Plans

Identifying an end goal for the number and scope of local area growth plans offers many benefits. It provides greater certainty for communities, as well as City departments. It allows establishment of baseline data to measure changes in the communities and gauge financial benefits from new growth in developed areas. It also enables the establishment of a 10-year plan to complete and then subsequently review local area growth plans, which would align with the requirement to update the MDP every 10 years. To date, no clearly stated end goal exists for completing local area plans. Up until now, local area planning boundaries were created on an ad-hoc basis by administration or as directed by Council.

In Vancouver, the entire city is covered by 22 pre-defined local planning boundaries. The City undertakes planning in these pre-defined areas based on various criteria or Council direction. Local examples of plans similar in size to Vancouver's local plan areas include the South Shaganappi Communities Area Plan and the regional context studies for greenfield development. Key benefits to Calgary of this approach include:

- Establishes certainty for the geographic scope of future local area growth plans;
- Allows development of baseline statistics so that local area planning returns on investment can be developed and measured to inform regular updates;
- Encourages a broader analysis of how communities, including their physical and social infrastructure, interact with each other, instead of looking at single community's in isolation;
- Identifying and planning high potential redevelopment opportunities that are often located on the edges of multiple, adjacent communities; and
- Provides greater certainty for citizens, communities, developers, and other City departments.

For Calgary, typical boundaries that most clearly delineate communities that do or do not interact with each other include:

- Significant natural areas including: Bow River, Fish Creek Park, Nose Hill Park, Glenmore Reservoir/Elbow River, West Nose Creek
- Skeletal/Major Arterial Streets including: Stoney Trail, Deerfoot Trail, Glenmore Trail, Crowchild Trail

Once those boundaries are drawn, subsequent boundary lines should emphasize the catchment areas for key MDP/CTP growth areas, particularly Main Streets and LRT stations. Further, these boundaries can align with local or federal census tracts. This will assist in providing objective information to support potential recommendations in a local area growth plan.

Figure 1 illustrates how local plan areas could appear once the boundary criteria are applied. The 42 plan areas mostly focus around Main Streets and areas surrounding LRT stations or BRT routes. Multiple communities that are the primary catchment for these MDP/CTP priority areas are included in a planning area.

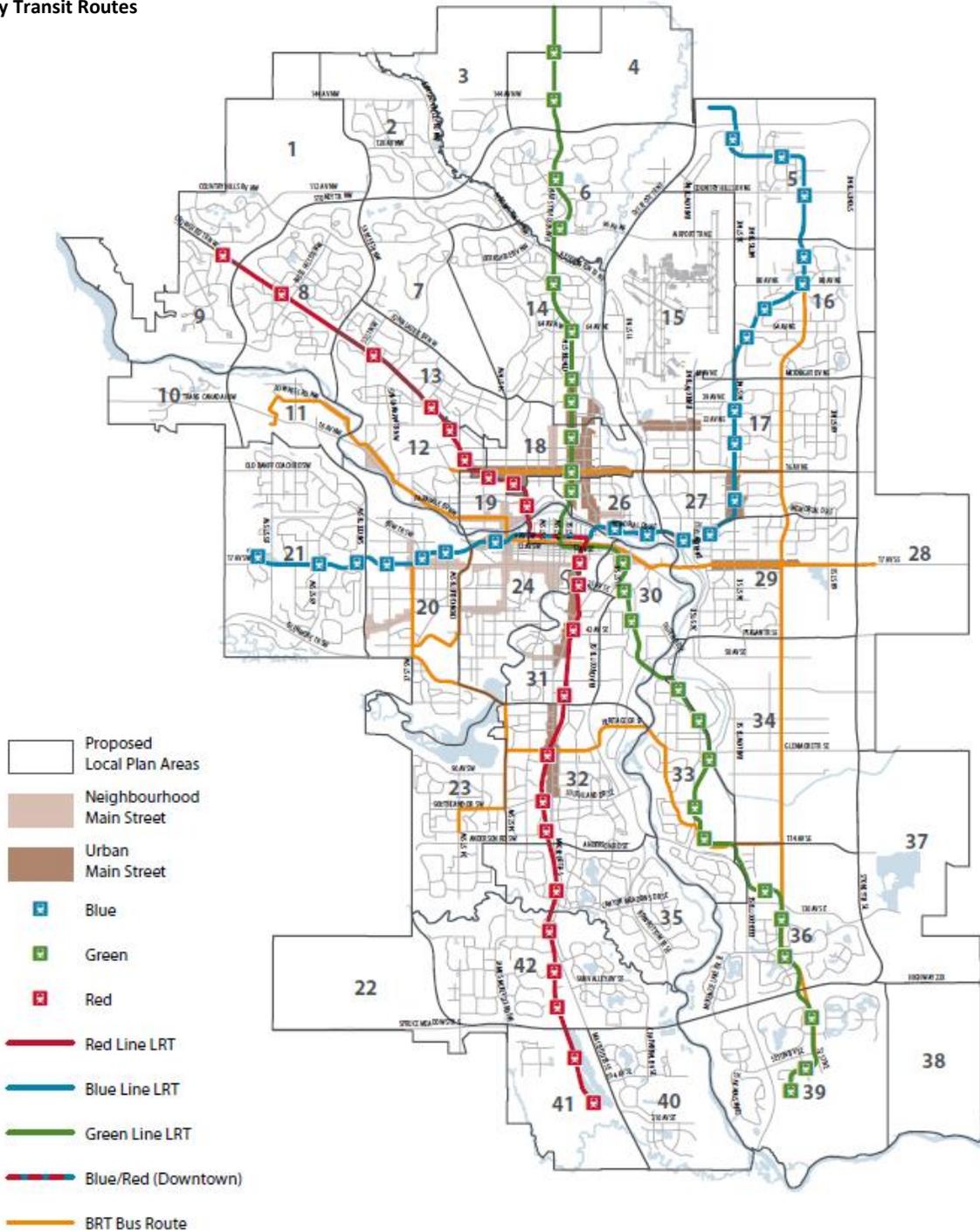
Establishing these boundaries does not preclude individual communities from having their own land use maps and policies, however, it does encourage more consideration of how adjoining communities should relate to one another and how they fit into a larger context.

Having defined plan areas also provides a chance to identify common features of next generation local area plans. This includes the use of plain language and more consistent terminology, layouts and maps. The benefit is a greater understanding of community-building opportunities and more consistent policy interpretation. The potential common features of next generation local area growth plans include:

- Plans that are in the range of 1,500-hectares. This is consistent with the South Shaganappi Communities Area Plan.
- All plans should include statutory components but may also include non-statutory components. A clear division between statutory and non-statutory policies will be made.
- Plan names should reflect the key growth node(s) since multiple communities will be included in each of the future local area growth plans.
- The table of contents for new plans is now established by the Developed Areas Guidebook.
- All plans will comply with the current MDP/CTP and should not duplicate policies from the MDP/CTP and accompanying guidebooks.
- If substantial community-specific maps/policies are required to achieve the outcomes, a dedicated section or chapter of the plan would be allocated for those purposes.
- A plan's language, location references, etc., should be written and illustrated such that readers not familiar with Calgary can understand the features and growth opportunities available in the plan area. Local area growth plans should assist in diversifying Calgary's economy by communicating the benefits of investing in or moving to Calgary to live.
- References to an Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) should be limited to the minimum necessary. Read as plain language, especially when used in the title for a plan or on public information materials. Area Redevelopment Plan conveys ambiguity about where redevelopment is intended within a plan area. This is especially true when prefaced by a community name, rather than the key growth area(s) e.g., a Main Street or LRT station(s).

Local area growth plans would still be approved by City Council under the same statutory provisions of either Area Structure Plans (ASP) or Area Redevelopment Plans (ARP). The approach described herein would not add another layer of plans between the MDP and a development permit. Instead it is a re-drawing of plan area boundaries to more quickly realize development that achieves the MDP and CTP goals.

Figure 1: Sample Layout of 42 Local Growth Plan Areas that are organized around Main Streets and Primary Transit Routes



3. Prioritizing Local Area Growth Plans – 2018-2027

Instead of a static prioritization list that may not stay relevant, an iterative and predictable process for prioritizing local area growth plans is needed. According to the main criteria established in the Policy Implementation Prioritization Strategy as requests come in to The City regarding a need for local area planning, the request would be evaluated in relation to all outstanding requests for policy work. To aid in an iterative and predictable process, a pre-planning assessment process would be established.

The pre-planning assessment process would be organized around these primary criteria which include:

1. **MDP/CTP Alignment** – *How well does the area's land uses and policies comply with MDP/CTP goals?*
2. **Infrastructure Investment** – *What growth capacity is available based on existing or planned infrastructure improvements?*
3. **Market Readiness** – *What are community and industry expectations about growth potential in the area?*
4. **Planning & Development's Service Plan Alignment** – *Will the work best achieve P&D's Service Plan goals?*

The criteria would each have a defined list of measures that can consistently illustrate the benefits to be gained from local area planning. Taking only 30- 60 days to complete, a standardized pre-planning assessment would:

- outline the local area land use issues;
- provide a summary of relevant objective and subjective information from internal and external groups; and
- recommend a scope of work, project timeline, and a priority for undertaking the project relative to other projects underway or under consideration.

The assessment would review the entire local planning area to estimate the returns to The City from investing in local area planning for a particular plan area.

As pre-planning assessments are completed, the information could be used to re-prioritize local area policy work, and potentially displace work already underway if a high enough priority. Reprioritization could occur bi-annually through management review and implemented when resources permit.

4. Implementing the Local Area Planning Framework

This long-term approach for local area planning outlines how to consolidate and bundle 200+ plans to fewer than 50 plans that expound the MDP and CTP vision for Calgary.

The approach incorporates successes from recent City of Calgary work including the Main Streets multi-community consultations, the Green Line station area charrettes, the 16 Avenue North ARP streamlining and Calgary Transportation's Investing in Mobility document. Elements of this Calgary-specific approach are being used in cities across North America including Vancouver, Seattle, Minneapolis/St. Paul and Toronto.

Instead of plans spanning one to 45-years-old, the new generation of local area growth plans would span 10 years, better advance the entire MDP/CTP vision, reduce red tape and realize development more quickly.

This approach requires a broader scope for each local area planning exercise than typically undertaken in the past. However, The City, via the MDP Guidebooks and other efficiencies, has developed tools to manage a larger scope including:

- **Document Layout** – Managed by The City’s Brand Group / *reduces time spent determining document layout*
- **Table of Contents** – Developed Areas Guidebook (DAG) outlines a Table of Contents for Local Area Growth Plans / *reduces time spent debating what the Plan’s headings will include;*
- **Land Uses** – Apply the DAG building blocks and write exceptions where necessary / *reduces time spent negotiating the number/scope of land uses applied in a plan area*
- **Design Guidelines** – to be reduced to context specific only design guidelines as Guidebooks become widely incorporated / *reduces time spent negotiating number/scope of design guidelines*
- **Community Engagement** – To be coordinated by and reported on by the Communications / Engage Groups / *reduces time spent on event logistics*

This approach also would incorporate successes from The City of Calgary and other municipalities noted below:

Local Area Planning Topic	New Approach	Examples (City of Calgary or other cities)
Plan Area Size	Increase from single community to multiple community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. South Shaganappi Communities Area Plan: (1500 ha / 3706 ac) – has engaged a multi-community stakeholder group for 20 years that meets monthly to discuss things happening in the Plan Area 2. Glacier Ridge ASP: (1294 ha / 3200 ac) 3. Vancouver: Pre-identified Local Area Planning Areas; now writing / updating their 22 Local Area Plans involving multiple communities 4. Toronto: Eglinton Connects LRT - Single Plan approach to outline Street/Development impacts for entire LRT route (19 kms 25 stops) “Eglinton Connects” won a 2015 Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) Award of Excellence for City and Regional Planning”
Level of Detail	Streamline citywide aspirations/policies; Increase context specific policies; Broader identification of existing & potential Neighbourhood Activity Centres or Corridors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developed Areas Guidebook – Standardized Table of Contents and Policies 2. 16 Ave ARP – 130 page reduction, clearer emphasis on context specific development aspirations/policies, 3. Green Line South Plans – first local area plans fully incorporating Developed Area Guidebook policies

Engagement	More transparent and accessible engagement; Broader engagement to reach interested citizens including context specific opportunities Additional staff resources available	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Main Streets 2015 Consultation: Successful Initial consultation covered 24 Main Streets to assist in prioritizing first 3 focus areas. Similar approach could be used to integrate several communities into a single local area plan process. 2. Green Line Charettes: Although very concentrated, the 1 week charettes brought together multiple communities to discuss Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities.
Enabling Communities	Community led planning could become sections or chapters of new plans	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Federation of Calgary Communities (FCC) – Visioning Package: FCC is working to develop a do-it-yourself community visioning exercise that would produce a short (4-5 pgs) community vision that could include DAG land uses 2. Minneapolis / Seattle – successful programs in place, involving seed money for projects
Pre-Planning Assessments	Standardized assessments using objective and subjective information to inform ongoing prioritization of local area planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Main Streets: Initial Market Readiness Assessments – assisted in prioritizing which Main Streets to undertake first for detailed planning.

In conclusion, the District-based Local Area Plans will simplify the existing framework of local area plans, make use of the MDP Guidebooks, and really modernize the planning environment so that all communities have a current and high-quality document that is easy to understand and identifies routes towards achieving the growth objectives of the MDP and CTP.