



Established Area Growth and Change Strategy

Stakeholder Report Back: What we Heard/Did
February 2020

Project overview

The Established Area Growth and Change Strategy (the “Strategy”) is broadly focused on helping growth in the established area of Calgary that is aligned with policy, supported by the market and financially sustainable. The Strategy also seeks to support communities and local businesses where growth and change are happening. As the Strategy evolves, planning, financial and investment decisions are anticipated to be linked. This will happen through identifying actions and funding solutions for public realm and infrastructure improvements (short-term), and actions to support communities as they experience redevelopment (long-term).

Phase 1 of the Strategy identified areas with current growth pressures and anticipated continued market interest. The Priorities and Finance Committee report, PFC2020-0381, proposes investments and actions that can enable growth while supporting great communities for existing and future residents and businesses. Alignment with the Municipal Development Plan and Calgary Transportation Plan goals, meeting existing market demand, and consideration of financial impacts supported this work. The consideration of redevelopment readiness within existing communities has also been important to the Strategy, as growth within these communities supports efficient use of land and services.

Engagement overview

Engagement for the Strategy consisted of a project Advisory Group, four Working Groups and meetings to connect with community representatives. The purpose of the Strategy Advisory and Working groups was to collaboratively identify and prioritize what actions can be taken to address specific challenges in redeveloping areas, collaboratively develop identified solutions and support their implementation.

The Strategy Advisory Group consisted of representatives from each of the primary stakeholder groups and City of Calgary business unit Directors. This group guided the governance and strategic thinking around the project. It provided high level advice to the project team, helped define the structure and tasks of the working groups, used a consensus model to support project decision making and recommended Working Group members. The Strategy Advisory Group also considered the final Phase 1 program recommendations.

The four Working Groups consisted of community, business and industry members, shallow utility partners and City staff. Each group focused on one of the following areas: Utilities, Public Environment, Financial Planning & Investment, and Planning and Policy Tools. Throughout 2019 each of the working groups met several times. Each group worked on the following:

- Define issues and/or challenges.
- Explore and identify investments or how to activate and support identified investments.
- Prepare and share recommendations with the Strategy Advisory Group.

The project team identified areas within Calgary that are experiencing short-term redevelopment pressures, which included approximately 30 communities and Business Improvement Areas (BIAs). Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinators (NPC's) helped connect the project team with area representatives. Throughout November and December 2019, project team members connected with Community Associations and BIAs to provide them with project information and request feedback. Feedback received from 75 recent



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engagement projects and existing Area Redevelopment Plans were used to support these discussions. This reduced the potential for duplicate engagement and helped the project team move quickly by leveraging existing information.

Summary of what we heard and did

Financial Planning & Investment Working Group

The Financial Planning & Investment Working Group led the identification of funding and financing tools that can support growth and redevelopment. They focused on narrowing down the list of tools and documenting the strengths and weaknesses of each. They also led the analysis of how funding and financing tools can be applied to support utility and public environment investments.

Initial discussions for this working group focused on **exploring existing funding challenges**. This included discussing concerns regarding uncertainty related to and paying for redevelopment.

Most of their discussions focused on **exploring a variety of funding and financing tools** that can be used for utility and public environment investments. They considered cost savings availability, dedicated tax support, tax uplift/tax value capture and establishing a financial reserve as a tool to fund public environment investments. For local-sized water and sanitary upgrades, an offsite levy was discussed. Additional tools were discussed but did not move forward for a variety of reasons.

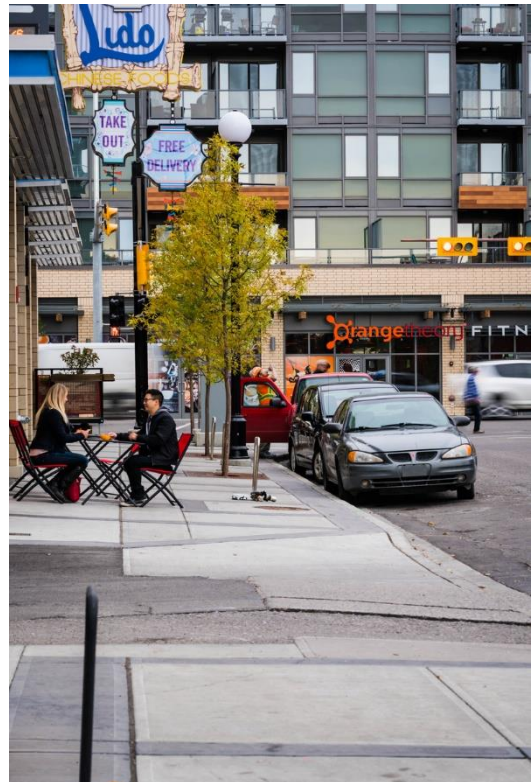
Using this information, the following was done:

- Identified and made recommendations for funding and financing tools to move forward with to support utility and public environment investments.

Utility Working Group

The Utility Working Group focused on water, sanitary, storm and ENMAX utilities. For each of these areas the working group discussed challenges, explored opportunities to better support redevelopment, reviewed data and analyses, identified the types of infrastructure that requires funding, and provided recommendations for improvement.

Specifically, this working group discussed the **cost predictability of local-sized water and sanitary upgrades**. They identified that the unpredictability of water and sanitary upgrades and their varying costs create a significant financial risk for developers. The need for an upgrade is challenging to identify in the early stages of a project as servicing needs depend on the specifics of the development, which can impact project funding and viability. Also, the first development to trigger an upgrade to local-sized water and sanitary pipes pays for the work.



Using this challenge as a starting point, the Utility Working Group:

- Researched how often this happens, the scale of the challenge and what the impacts are.
- Defined a method to initially estimate potential future costs related to developer-sized utility upgrades.
- Worked with the Financial Planning & Investment Working Group to recommend the consideration and exploration of adding local-sized water and sanitary pipe upgrades to the Established Areas Off-Site Levy to improve cost predictability and equity for development.

Information sharing is another challenge that was identified by the Utility Working Group. Industry would like to understand more about the utility servicing needs for their projects earlier in the development process. However, utility systems are dynamic, and tied to development needs, making it difficult to map specific capacity within the utility system. This is also made difficult because redevelopment patterns that impact utility systems are dynamic too.

Growth impacts on each utility system is unique and complex. Specific site development details are required to assess water, sanitary and electrical servicing needs, which are not always available at the time investment decisions are made. Site servicing needs are determined by project details and the utility system functions best when tailored to the built form and use.

Using this challenge as a starting point, the Utility Working Group:

- Incorporated a Water Utility focused pre-application discussion into the existing pre-application process to enable conversations about water, sanitary and stormwater earlier in the development process.
- Shared initial results of the water and sanitary analysis for the North Hill Communities Local Area Plan to reflect on and discuss potential improvements for future local area plans.
- Shared tools available for improved information sharing with ENMAX related to electrical system needs.
- Identified other site development restraints, such as stormwater management and overhead electrical power, and committed to further exploration of these challenges in Phase 2.



Stormwater management in the established area is a significant challenge for developers and The City. Many of the public stormwater management systems in the established area were built to earlier standards and have lower capacity. Combined with changing weather patterns, and increased impermeability as a result of redevelopment, flood risks are increased in these areas.

Land permeability is decreasing due to redevelopment, adding increased stormwater demand on the existing system. Industry has mentioned that, meeting on-site stormwater management requirements is costly and can limit site development. Solutions must balance the needs of protecting existing and future



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customers, sustaining affordable utility rates, supporting redevelopment and meeting regulatory requirements.

Using this information, the following was done:

- Explored and documented the challenges related to stormwater management.
- Leveraged momentum of the working group discussions through facilitated exploration of these challenges with other City initiatives, like the Stormwater Management Strategy.
- Identified areas to explore further in Strategy Phase 2.

Public Environment Working Group

The Public Environment Working Group focused on identifying what public realm infrastructure is desired to support the quality of life in growing established communities, examples include upgraded parks, upgraded pedestrian realm and traffic calming. They also worked with the Financial Planning & Investment Working Group to develop a decision framework to support investments in public amenities and surface infrastructure.

Discussion regarding **public amenity projects** considered different perspectives when identifying opportunities for growth-related investments in amenities in the identified Phase 1 growth areas. This work included gathering and reviewing public amenity requests from approved Local Area Plans and previous public engagement within the Phase 1 growth areas. Feedback was also gathered from the North Hill Communities Local Area Plan working group.

Using this information, the following was done:

- Created a list of types of public amenity improvements that communities identified as priorities.
- Met with each community association and BIA within Phase 1 growth areas to gather public amenity improvements that met the project criteria.
- Met with area Councillors to gather public amenity improvements that met the project criteria.



This working group developed a decision framework to **prioritize growth-related public amenities**. This was done through connecting projects to actual growth and identifying criteria that will help prioritize projects in line with Phase 1 project goals. The working group also considered impacts such as operating costs of amenities, feasibility to construct, alignment with existing City infrastructure programs, and the opportunity to partner with community stakeholders when prioritizing projects.

Using this information, the following was done:

- Created a decision framework to identify a prioritized list of public amenity projects.

The working group discussed how **improving the public environment benefits growth** in the established area. The relationship between growth in a community and the benefits and challenges it offers is important



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to understand. Projects that respond directly to a growth-related issue connects growth and investment in the established area.

Using this information, the following was done:

- Prioritized and grouped projects that respond directly to growth-related issues.

Planning and Policy Tools Working Group

The Planning and Policy Tools Working Group explored existing and potential planning and policy tools that are available to support redevelopment in the established area. This included the Next Generation Planning projects and policies, which are connected to the Strategy (see Report PFC2020-0381, Attachment 6).

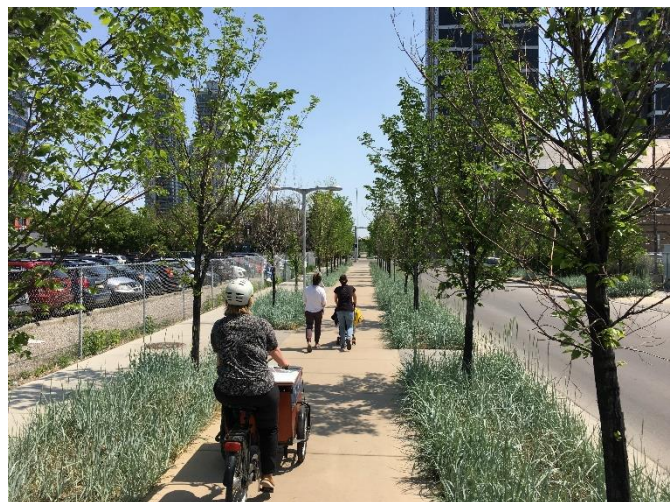
This working group explored the challenges and potential solutions to support redeveloping communities. The working group used this information to identify low and high value work and projects with low and high value effort. They focused short-term, Phase 1 work on projects with a low amount of effort and high value. The working group reinforced that projects like the Guidebook for Great Communities, Heritage Conservation Policy Tools and Financial Incentives Review and the Main Streets program are important and already working on supporting redeveloping communities.

Using this information, the following was done:

- Identified work not being done that fits the low effort/high value criteria and can be done quickly.
- Defined what projects would move forward.

Input from Community Associations and Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) for Public Realm Projects

Members of Community Associations and BIAs within the project area were asked to provide feedback and input into the public realm projects being identified by the Public Environment Working Group. Initial projects were identified through the analysis of more than 75 recent engagement reports, meeting minutes, feedback documents and letters dating back to 2015. The data gathered provided information on citizen's and stakeholder's opinions on redevelopment within communities, the things they value, the tools we use, the issues that arise and the outcomes they envision. A summary of feedback relevant to the Strategy is provided below.



Recent Engagement Feedback Relevant to the Strategy

A City That Moves

- Established area communities, particularly in priority growth areas, have Calgary’s highest reported travel mode share of walking, cycling and transit but often feel they lack public realm that supports this reality.
- Transportation infrastructure should focus on addressing issues with walkable and accessible infrastructure, including connectivity improvements, missing links and sidewalk expansions.
- Communities should have a walking and cycling network that is easy to navigate and safe.
- Vehicle traffic and speed are safety concerns in established areas. Traffic volumes and speeds should be reduced through public realm improvements such as narrowing intersections, decreasing the width of streets by increasing sidewalk widths, improving lighting and adding additional traffic controls.
- Additional density causes impacts to traffic and should be addressed as needed.

A Healthy and Green City

- Established area communities should preserve open spaces and parks, which includes space for gardens, landscaping, amenities and pathways.
- Where additional open space is not feasible, but growth is occurring, the quality of open space should increase with higher levels of amenities.



A Prosperous City

- Improving attractiveness of the public realm supports community investment.
- Growth is acknowledged as a factor that supports local retail and business sustainability.

A City of Inspiring Neighbourhoods

- Developments and public realm infrastructure projects should enhance the quality of life in communities.
- Communities desire places to gather and interact with their neighbours that are well designed, safe, open, vibrant, accessible, and reflect the identity of the community.



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- Communities identified that better sidewalk and pathway connections, improved parks and recreation amenities and programming are all key elements to create inspiring neighbourhoods.

Using this information, the following was done:

- The Public Environment Working Group used this feedback to help:
 - identify what public realm amenities are desired by communities;
 - identify public realm amenity projects within the identified Phase 1 growth areas; and
 - prioritized public realm amenity projects within the identified Phase 1 growth areas.