

Section 2

## Development Form

## Development Form Overview

This section describes the development form intended for the downtown that will support the activity and revitalization described by the plan's vision, objectives, and targets. The development form works in concert with downtown functions to create the **urban experience** of the downtown.

The policy areas in this section address elements that are physically built as a part of the downtown. This includes general policies that speak to the overall height, density, and form of buildings and the infrastructure that provides water and wastewater servicing to those buildings as well. This section addresses elements of the downtown that are tied to a specific type of form or place, outlining policies for how to Infill Vehicle-Oriented Sites, or to create Gateways and Civic Development Catalysis. It also speaks to specific sites or locations within the plan area, including our Natural Spaces, Downtown Core, Main Street, Towerlane Centre, and Airdrie Main Street Square.

This section outlines all the elements that are a part of the physical place and form of the downtown, and together with the supporting downtown functions work to create Airdrie's **urban experience**.

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## 2.01 Redevelopment Height, Density, and Form

### Preamble:

In order to realize Council's statements of success and to best support the vision and objectives outlined in [Section 1](#), this Plan pursues redevelopment as a key element of *Downtown Revitalization* and outlines the specific approach, targets, and aspirations in support of the same. This section intends to codify the main elements of that approach into policy, and to outline other general elements that are desired of the built form throughout the downtown.

In setting height and density policies for this plan, it is important to consider that the current development form in the downtown is well below the maximum thresholds that are permissible under the Land Use Bylaw. The Downtown Core Mixed Use District that applies across most of the plan area allows for significant height (up to 8 storeys), coverage (80% of Site Area, with no required setbacks), and density (up to 148 units per hectare). The degree of intensity of use allowed under the current Land Use Bylaw accommodates the development targets and aspirations of this plan.

To this end, there were no specific issues raised with the current development rights during engagement, and no specific comments made regarding height and density thresholds that should be reflected in the land use regulations in order to make redevelopment and intensification viable in the downtown. Instead, landowners and development industry representatives clearly stated that Airdrie needs to set a clear and compelling vision for the downtown and determine its competitive advantages. In turn it needs to market that vision and its competitive advantages in order to accelerate redevelopment and meet the targets and aspirations of this plan.

The maximum building heights and densities set in this section are intended to support the approach to redevelopment set in [Section 1.05](#) and the targets and aspirations for *Downtown Revitalization* in [Section 1.06](#). This section guides the built form for this desired amount of redevelopment. This includes the quality of development, winter city design considerations, elements of public safety and crime prevention, signage, and accommodation of service vehicles and functions. All of these elements come together to improve the built form of the downtown.

### Objective:

Provide comprehensive direction to guide the height, density, and form of redevelopment.

### Principles:

By providing direction for the built form of the downtown, this sets the foundation for [The Right Rules and Processes](#) to support *Downtown Revitalization*. The various aspects of built form addressed here work together to set the downtown as the [Heart of the City](#), and to achieve the targets and aspirations for the intensity of development that will make this [The Place to Be](#). Each of these elements also contributes to making the downtown interesting and inviting for businesses, residents, and visitors alike and shape how people will experience the area, making it a key expression of [Putting People First](#).

### Policies:

1. Maximum building heights and densities shall be as shown in [Figure XX \(Maximum Heights and Densities\)](#).
2. The Development Authority may support proposals for redevelopment, additions, and renovations that are under the maximum heights and densities shown in [Figure XX](#), provided that such proposals still improve the density, viability, and assessed value of the downtown.

3. Redevelopment and intensification above the maximum heights and densities shown in [Figure XX](#) may be supported where:
  - a. The application is sited in the Downtown Core and adheres to all downtown core redevelopment policies outlined in this plan ([Section 2.04](#))
  - b. The application is designed as a landmark within Airdrie's downtown
  - c. The built form and orientation are designed to mitigate, to the satisfaction of the Development Authority, any potential impacts on adjacent properties and roads as a result of the height and density of the development, and
  - d. There are measures provided to minimize the impact of the proposed development on available servicing capacity.
4. Building heights and orientation shall be sensitive to adjoining corridors and boundary features, and adhere to the corridor and boundary policies of this plan, as they may apply. ([Section 2.09](#))
5. Development should be marked by high quality materials, good craftsmanship, and innovative design, recognizing that there is no set architectural character or design theme intended for the downtown.
6. Buildings should be designed to optimize sunlight, views, and access to public spaces.
7. Built form within the downtown should address elements of **winter city design**, and specifically:
  - a. Incorporate design elements to block wind
  - b. Provide more compact and street-oriented development
  - c. Maximize sun exposure through building orientation and massing
  - d. Use colour to enliven the surrounding area
  - e. Create visual interest with lighting, considering intensity, spread, contrast, and colour
  - f. Provide infrastructure that improves comfort and access in cold weather
  - g. Plan for snow storage areas and the relationship of these areas with other considerations, including walkability, aesthetics, and parking.
8. Buildings and sites within the downtown should incorporate considerations for public safety and **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)** principles as a part of their built form, specifically:
  - a. Designing buildings and open spaces around them to create a sense of ownership by the community
  - b. Ensuring that buildings provide natural surveillance through lighting, landscaping, and clear sight-lines
  - c. Enhancing connectivity between the downtown and the rest of Airdrie through programs and city-wide events
  - d. Increasing the intensity and diversity of uses within the area, and
  - e. Integrating visual cues with buildings and open spaces that reinforce the collective responsibility to ensure each other's safety when experiencing that place or building.
9. Buildings on corner lots should front both adjacent streets, feature attractive architecture, and provide opportunities for landmarks and corner entrance features.
10. Signage shall be pedestrian-oriented, using framing/structural materials consistent with the associated building and/or with the adjacent public realm streetscape elements (e.g. light standards or street furnishings).
11. The Development Authority shall have the discretion to locate garbage, loading, and other servicing functions at the side, rear, or from the laneway access as it may deem most appropriate.

**Municipal Actions:**

1. Council shall direct Administration to continue to work with the existing business community, landowners, and prospective developers to identify:
  - a. Changes to height and density thresholds that may be necessary to improve the viability of redevelopment and intensification projects in the downtown and
  - b. Areas where **built form** policies may benefit from more detail and supporting guidelines to best support development proposals in understanding and meeting those policies.

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## 2.02 Downtown Land Uses

### Preamble:

Though the process of drafting the Downtown Plan, specific land uses or business types have not had a major focus; the majority of the work on this plan has concentrated on supporting the broader strategic priority of *Downtown Revitalization*, and detailing policies and actions to address specific issues facing the downtown and overall revitalization efforts. Nonetheless, the *Municipal Government Act* requires that an Area Redevelopment Plan describe the proposed land uses for the redevelopment area, and there are specific features in the current land use framework and from engagement events that provide key considerations for the Plan.

Removing public roads and environmental reserve areas, nearly the entire remaining area of the Downtown Plan is regulated by the Downtown Core Mixed Use District (M3) under Airdrie's 2016 Land Use Bylaw. This district supports a wide range of land uses; no other district in the Bylaw has as many permitted uses (19) or land uses overall (48) that are considered, with Live-Work units, Mixed Use Apartments, Retail Services, Offices, Public Assemblies, Restaurants, and Health and Supportive Services being listed as just some options that are supported in the district.

Even with this range of uses written into the M3 District in 2016, it has also not remained static and City Administration has taken regular updates to include additional uses to support businesses in the downtown, amending the Bylaw to add *Vehicle Sales and Leasing* (B-28/2017), *Commercial Child Care* facilities (B-41/2018), and *Major Educational Institutions* (B-25/2019).

With this ongoing effort to ensure that Land Use Bylaw standards best support development in the downtown, there were also specific elements identified through the Downtown Visioning events and design charrettes. Participants in the visioning exercises wanted to see enhanced shopping, dining and cultural activities downtown, and the report on the Downtown Visioning efforts collected responses on "*Desired Downtown Services*" that included local retail and office, restaurants, parks, indoor recreation, arts galleries, community services, and markets. Likewise, charrettes for the Downtown Plan identified a range of desired land uses that included apartments, affordable housing, entertainment businesses, grocery and retail services, incubator spaces, restaurants, recreation, and specialty stores.

Overall, there were two common threads through visioning and engagement on the Downtown Plan that should guide our revitalization efforts:

- Most of the desired land uses are ones where residents would make a choice to go downtown to engage in those uses and activities. This reinforces the approach of the Plan in not relying on market forces, and the importance of attracting new development and marketing competitive advantages in order to bring new development into the downtown.
- There were no clear lines that would pin desired land uses to specific sites or locations within the Downtown Plan. This presented challenges for the plan as there were no clear lines to draw for specific land use clusters (e.g. a Theatre District) within the plan area. However, it also provides an opportunity to market for some of these desired uses and activities with willing partners and without being pinned to a specific site or location within the plan.

The policies in this section reflect the objectives for the downtown overall, the desires of the landowners, and the results of consultation and design charrettes with the public and key stakeholders.

### Objective:

Describe the plan's expectations and aspirations for land uses within the downtown.

### Principles:

Supporting the right mix of land uses within the downtown is a major part of making the downtown the [Heart of the City](#), and reflecting the uses and activities that are desired for the area will make it [The Place to Be](#) for residents and businesses.

### Policies:

1. Land uses within the plan area shall be provided as shown in [Figure XX \(Downtown Land Use Concept\)](#).
2. Support commercial and mixed-use developments throughout the plan area, primarily accommodating a range of retail and service commercial uses along with various forms of residential housing.
3. Support medium density residential intensification and redevelopment of existing apartment sites along the west side of the plan boundary
4. For stand-alone residential developments or mixed-use projects including residential space, a range of housing formats is encouraged to accommodate different income levels, age groups, households, and lifestyles.
5. Stand-alone residential developments are encouraged to design the ground floors of any street-fronting buildings to be able to transition into commercial or mixed use in the future.
6. Developments throughout the plan area are encouraged to provide for innovation/flex spaces which can support a wide range of uses and activities over time. These spaces should accommodate various forms of start-up businesses or entrepreneurial projects, warehouse areas, artist studios, offices, etc.
7. Any innovation/flex spaces must be developed using appropriate construction standards in order to support the intended flexibility of this space and allow for it to accommodate a wide range of uses/occupancies over time.
8. Developments throughout the plan area are encouraged to provide additional supporting land uses as an integrated part of the proposed development (e.g. residential units above ground floor commercial, commercial services at grade or within residential/institutional sites, etc.)
9. Clusters of specialized land uses that would serve as potential draws/destinations are supported within the plan area. The types of land uses that can be considered as potential candidates for this purpose include:
  - a. Entertainment businesses, including theatres, arcades, concert halls, gyms
  - b. Health services and care facilities, offices for medical practices and research
  - c. Restaurants
  - d. Convention centres and hotels
  - e. Post-secondary institutions and supporting facilities
10. Flex spaces are encouraged to support new business incubators and industrial innovation space within the downtown.

**Municipal Actions:**

1. Council shall direct Administration to implement the Development Attraction Strategy, adopted as [Resolution XX/2020](#), to attract the land uses identified in the land use concept and supported by the policies of this section.
2. Council shall direct Administration to prepare amendments to the Land Use Bylaw within 6 months of the adoption of this plan, to support the desired land uses outlined in this section.
3. Council shall direct Administration to report back every two years following the adoption of this plan and identify if there are clusters or emerging land uses supported by this section that can be further marketed and/or enhanced.

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## 2.03 Maximizing Servicing Capacity

### Preamble:

Airdrie is fully integrated with the water and wastewater distribution system originating in the City of Calgary. This provides known opportunities and constraints for the overall water and wastewater system to provide servicing capacity for the growth of the entire community. Servicing capacity is described as a **service population demand**, which is an expression of the combined number of residents and jobs that can be served by the system.

### Service Demand Population Explained

The contribution of residents and jobs to overall service demand population is not equal. It is an industry accepted standard that an employee uses only  $\frac{3}{5}$  of the demand as a resident for water and sanitary use. Hence a location with 6,000 residents and 6,000 jobs would create a service demand population of 9,600 and not 12,000. This is true whether they live and work in the same geographic area or not, the differences in demand are so marginal as not to impact analysis.

Council adopted a Utility Master Plan in February 2016 that identified an anticipated a population of 85,000 in the pre-annexation area and a total service demand population of approximately 99,000.

Subsequent to the Utility Master Plan work, the City of Airdrie and CIMA+ combined in 2018 to review downtown servicing capacity and determine the redevelopment potential available in the downtown core. This work identified eight water/wastewater projects and two stormwater projects that would improve overall servicing to the downtown area, specifically increasing the resilience and connection of the water distribution system and resolving existing issues with wastewater and stormwater infrastructure. With the completion these upgrades, the assessment of service demand capacity concluded that the water system would have no less than a residential population capacity of 25,000 and a capacity 5,300 residents in the sanitary system. Divided equally between residential and non-residential uses, the limiting capacity in the sanitary system would still allow for 2,650 residents and 4,415 jobs and meet the aspirational targets of this plan.

CIMA+ further refined this available servicing capacity into different catchment areas and estimated the service population demand that can be facilitated in each of those geographic areas. [Figure XX \(Servicing Catchment Areas and Capacities\)](#), identifies those areas and respective capacities, which influence land use planning for these areas and the downtown as a whole.

### Objective:

The objective is to achieve the aspirational development thresholds of this plan with the available servicing capacity.

### Principles:

Maximizing the redevelopment value of the servicing capacity available for the downtown is in line with the principle of [Investing in our Future](#). Exercising creativity in the management of the available resources and the review of proposed stormwater and servicing infrastructure for private development speaks to having the [Right Rules and Processes](#) to facilitate redevelopment in the downtown.

### Policies:

1. New developments and intensifications shall improve the density, viability and assessed value of the downtown when taking advantage of the existing servicing capacity.
2. Applicants are encouraged to incorporate servicing infrastructure and connection devices that will reduce demands on existing capacity with their redevelopment and intensification proposals.
3. The Development Authority is encouraged to support downtown redevelopment projects that incorporate low impact designs, use of green infrastructure, or other innovative methods that may

not necessarily meet municipal standards, where they will demonstrably reduce the load on, or be more efficient with, existing water and wastewater networks.

4. Property owners are encouraged to tie into adjacent infrastructure when the upgrades noted in [Figure XX \(Future Infrastructure Upgrades\)](#) are in progress to take advantage of economies of scale and to minimize future surface treatment patches.
5. Properties not currently connected to the stormwater management system may be required to do so where deemed practical and financially viable by the Development Authority.

#### **Municipal Actions:**

1. Council and Administration shall recognize the opportunity to use the existing capacity in the downtown to increase system efficiency and achieve higher assessment value per acre than construction in greenfield environments.
  - a. Administration to prepare a marketing campaign for Council's consideration within 12 months of plan adoption to promote downtown development and take advantage of the efficiencies to be gained by maximizing the use of downtown servicing capacity.
2. Council shall direct Administration to monitor the use of existing capacity in the downtown and calculate the impacts of each proposed and completed redevelopment project in order to provide best available information for other potential development proposals within the downtown.
  - a. Administration to advise Council in public forum when 75% of the available capacity has been dedicated to proposals granted Development Permit approval.
3. Council shall direct Administration to continue identifying servicing constraints in the downtown and offer Council options for capital projects, as part of the annual work planning and budget approval process, to ensure that servicing infrastructure is in place to support new development proposals, or to further raise the serviceable population in the downtown area.
4. Council shall maintain the competitive advantage for the downtown by continuing the practice of not charging redevelopment levies for the projects shown in Figure X and recapturing the value of the municipal investment through future assessment value.
  - a. Administration to provide Council with options to separate revenues gained from assessment increases for placement in capital reserve funds at a frequency desired by Council.
5. Council shall direct Administration to provide Council with recommendations for coordinating the infrastructure upgrades and the surface treatment improvements proposed in this plan, wherever possible.
6. Council shall direct Administration to evaluate the relationship of servicing demand from the downtown on the entire servicing system with each update to the Utility Master Plan or as otherwise deemed appropriate by Council.

## 2.04 Redevelopment of the Downtown Core

### Preamble:

The boundary used for this plan is taken from the outlines of what participants considered to be “downtown” during the visioning exercise. Almost universally, citizens outlined the blocks surrounding the intersections of Centre Avenue and Main Street, as well as First Avenue and Main Street, as part of their definition of “downtown.” This is perhaps not surprising as this particular geographic area has a historical connection as the core of Airdrie’s Downtown. Buildings essential to the history and development of Airdrie are located on these blocks. Long-standing residents recall businesses and developments like the former DuSand’s department store and the “Old Hotel” within these blocks as community icons, and as places of gathering, connection, and commerce.

Presently, these blocks are somewhat typified by low-rise buildings on smaller parcels which are brought up to the property lines along Main Street and the intersecting avenues, with parking areas located to the side and rear. Many of the buildings in this area are reaching the end of their life cycles and there are a handful of vacant properties within this core area that have consolidation and/or redevelopment potential. From that perspective, there is a tremendous opportunity to increase the intensity of development, activity, and energy within this specific area.

Many development issues addressed in this plan intersect in this key geographic area. Key civic institutions, general parking constraints, pedestrian connections, placemaking opportunities and façade considerations are all present here. The **downtown core** contains the shortest, but widest block of Main Street – and the only portion with dedicated on-street parking. It has a different “feel” than the rest of the downtown area identified during the visioning exercise; one that is more typical of a traditional “High Street<sup>1</sup>” character and, with enough development intensity and activity on the street, is most often associated with an active and successful downtown. With effective resolution of the issues present in this core area, this particular “feel” can be leveraged to make it the place of greatest activity, energy, and development intensity.

### Objectives:

Leverage the existing character and development potential of the downtown core into the area of greatest activity, energy, and development intensity within the downtown.

### Principles:

Identifying this core area for prominence follows from making downtown the **Heart of the City**. Focusing energy and activity in the core exemplifies the effort to make the downtown as a whole the **Place to Be** in Airdrie, with a particular focus on the historic significance and central location of this area. Leveraging the development potential of the existing state to its fullest potential is all about **Thinking Big** when it comes to our downtown and what it can be within the region.

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to a specific form of development characterized by smaller parcels, buildings facing toward the sidewalk, and a vibrant and pedestrian-focused area along the street. This kind of environment is typical of the primary retail and business streets in older cities. Throughout Canada, the terms “Main Street” and “High Street” are both used to describe this character. We are using the latter in this Plan so that it does not create any confusion with the proper name for Main Street.

## Policies:

1. Identify the area shown in [Figure XX](#) as the **Downtown Core** and prioritize for public and private investment efforts that create activity, energy, and redevelopment in downtown.
2. Leverage the value of such investments, as well as the existing servicing, public and private parking stalls, as well as transportation infrastructure, to maximize the redevelopment potential of the lots within the **Downtown Core**, specifically:
  - a. Encouraging the highest degree of development intensification possible from vacant lots and buildings nearing end of life cycle, but allowing for:
    - i. Adaptive reuse of existing buildings where adequate lifespan of the building remains in the opinion of the Development Authority, and where such reuse does not preclude future redevelopment opportunities.
3. Support parcel consolidation and comprehensive redevelopment proposals, provided that any such redevelopment:
  - a. Maintains or enhances the existing **high street character** of the area and
  - b. Does not conflict with any other policies in this section.
4. Encourage the location, and relocation, of businesses and activities that can act as a destination, or draw, for residents and visitors, and:
  - a. Allow for development anchors where they provide key retail offerings or services with spin-off effects for other complementary businesses; and,
  - b. Ensure that larger format developments (>2,500m<sup>2</sup>) demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Development Authority, that such size is necessary and valuable to establish it as a destination or anchor and to create spin-off or multiplier effects. In making such a determination:
    - i. The Development Authority may reference the Downtown Retail Study or any other economic indicator or information deemed appropriate; and,
    - ii. The Development Authority may require opportunities for smaller format bays and retail opportunities to complement the larger format developments.
5. Development in the **downtown core** shall achieve the following to the satisfaction of the Development Authority:
  - a. Building character and façade development that is complementary to the development(s) on the surrounding sites and the downtown overall; unless deemed acceptably unique, eclectic, or bold;
  - b. An **active frontage** between building façades and adjacent streets, pathways, and amenity areas, and in addition shall have:
    - i. Development form that is constructed directly to the property line boundary adjacent to public streets with at-grade entries, unless sufficient rationale for an alternate distance and/or means of access is provided;
    - ii. Pedestrian oriented street wall heights and cornice lines as part of building massing, setbacks or other architectural detailing; and,
    - iii. High quality building materials, good craftsmanship, and innovative design details;
    - iv. Spill out space provision for incorporated land uses, etc.
    - v. Methods for interaction within adjacent public road rights-of-way, including patios, sidewalk sales, etc.

- c. Connection of the private pedestrian areas (i.e. sidewalks and crosswalks) associated with infill development to existing and proposed private and public pedestrian systems;
  - d. Incorporation of adequate **urban experience** elements in any application for redevelopment or improvement; and,
  - e. A mix of land uses that reflect the emerging needs of the knowledge economy, with a particular focus on:
    - i. Live-work developments;
    - ii. Shared working spaces; and,
    - iii. Business incubator developments
6. Encourage all parties to think creatively when applying the [event and programming policies](#) found in [Section 3.03](#) for the potential placement of events and programming within this area, and to this end:
- a. All parties are encouraged to choose this location for conducting special events first, where all other circumstances and factors are considered equal, and may:
    - i. Apply to close portions of the public road right-of-way for Main Street to host events in keeping with the [event and programming policies](#) in this plan as well as the policies for [reimagining Main Street](#).
7. Adhere to the [Parking policies](#) found in [Section 3.06](#), removing minimum parking thresholds and providing specific incentives for structured parkade development within the **downtown core**.

#### **Municipal Actions:**

1. Council shall adopt [Resolution XX](#) concurrent with the final readings of this plan to compensate landowners for insurance costs associated with encroachments into public rights-of-way in the **downtown core** that create enhanced public interactions (patios, sidewalk sales, etc.).
2. Council shall direct Administration to support the development of a Business Improvement Association (BIA) and shall seek a recommendation from Administration for the adequate amount of seed funding for such a private organization within 12 months of plan adoption.
3. Council shall direct Administration to present strategic land purchases and/or partnerships to facilitate redevelopment, as such opportunities arise.
4. Council shall direct Administration to seek potential tenants for vacant and redeveloping properties to the extent desired by those landowners, and provide funds to Administration for such purposes as part of each Annual Operating Budget.
5. Council shall direct Administration to prepare a recommendation for a grant program to improve existing building facades in the **downtown core** within 24 months of the adoption of this plan.
6. Council shall direct Administration to develop a marketing campaign for investment attraction within the **downtown core** specifically, within 24 months of plan adoption.
7. Council shall direct Administration to develop an annual marketing campaign, in conjunction with an incorporated Business Improvement Association, for scheduled programs and events within the **downtown core**, within 12 months of such incorporation.
8. Council shall direct Administration to proactively review shared parking opportunities between parcels in the **downtown core**, and to register any such agreements at municipal cost, to the extent desired by landowners, providing an annual budget for such purposes as part of the Annual Operating Budget.

9. Council shall direct Administration to evaluate financial incentives for private, structured on-site parking within 12 months of plan adoption. Such incentives are to consider:
  - a. Maximum parking stall count or municipal investment limitations;
  - b. Conditions for receiving such financial incentives; including, but not limited to, concurrent development approval requirements and/or design requirements for future conversion from structured parking to building expansion(s).
10. Council shall direct Administration to provide an annual report on opportunities for street improvements, to enhance the character of **high streets** within the **downtown core**, as shown in [Figure XX](#). This report shall include, but not be limited to, a review of the following character elements:
  - a. Landscaped boulevards
  - b. Protection of existing street trees
  - c. Opportunities for new street trees
  - d. Street light standards, including pedestrian scale lighting
  - e. Street furniture designs and locations
  - f. Pavement marking and crosswalk designs
  - g. Signage and branding standards for placemaking, marketing, and wayfinding.
11. Council shall direct Administration to report on opportunities to include public art on public and private locations within the **downtown core** within 36 months of plan adoption as a form of additional public investment.

## 2.05 Reimagining Main Street

### Preamble:

Main Street is a 1,100m stretch of road that bisects the downtown and which represents almost 8% of the total plan area. It is the primary north-south transportation corridor in the downtown, carrying approximately 12,000 vehicles per day. However, transportation volumes decrease substantially outside of weekday AM/PM peaks, and the Transportation Master Plan (2020) confirmed that it does not have to be a major north-south corridor within the entire system to accommodate total demand. Effective use of other north-south arterial corridors, such as Edmonton Trail and 8 ST, allow for the possibility for Main Street to carry less traffic, and to be reimagined and redesigned accordingly.

There is a delicate balance to be struck for reimagining the design of Main Street. It is imperative to retain the capacity necessary to ensure traffic flow and the liveliness of the downtown. Traffic attraction and accommodation is still important to create interest and customers for businesses along Main Street. The overall system, especially in the **downtown core** will be relied on to pick up the slack and ensure that the downtown can act as a draw without creating unintended problems. However, to be successful, a redesign must provide a different feel for the entire stretch, or at least critical sections within the **downtown core**.

Residents and stakeholders have expressed interest for reimagining Main Street with this balance in mind. During the visioning exercise in 2017, participants noted that Downtown is centred on Main Street and that there is a lack of connectivity because of the absence of intersections along this corridor. Participants also noted that Main Street takes travelers directly to retail competition areas outside of the plan boundary, notably in the form of major big-box commercial centres.

In the design charrettes undertaken to develop this plan, participants universally supported the development of Main Street as a **complete street**, capable of accommodating alternate forms of transportation within the existing right-of-way. They indicated that an alternate design for Main Street could provide a distinct feel within the downtown, and create a competitive advantage over other commercial formats found on similar road standards.

Discussions with redevelopment experts and key stakeholders regarding Main Street and the downtown identified the absence of two major items as obstacles for redevelopment:

- lack of parking in key places at key times in the downtown core (economic deficiency); and,
- lack of events and programming to generate activity in downtown (social deficiency)

These stakeholders identified the potential to leverage the design of Main Street to provide a combination of economic and social supports for redevelopment throughout the downtown, but in the **downtown core** in particular.

To exercise this opportunity, any redesign needs to evaluate enhanced on-street parking and/or amenity space options within the existing right-of-way. In this way, the size, length and location of Main Street present a unique opportunity to address both issues, while the street itself can be viewed in two distinct parts. Per [Figure XX](#), Main Street is generally characterized by four lanes of vehicular traffic and large spaces between intersections for which a redesign standard could be applied almost universally. However, there is a portion of Main Street between Centre and First Avenue that is only 130m long and which has dedicated lay-by parallel parking and minimal building setbacks. There is a wholly different feel created by its configuration and associated development, potentially warranting a different approach.

In making decisions on a redesign of Main Street, Council should consider the impact that this corridor has overall for generating development and activity. Carefully balancing economic supports through on-street parking and social supports by reducing dedicated vehicular travel lanes and enhancing amenity areas is critical for accelerating redevelopment, especially within the **downtown core**.

### Objective:

To reimagine the physical design of Main Street as an economic and social support for the acceleration of redevelopment in the downtown.

### Principles:

**Reimagining Main Street** is a principle that is foundational to achieving of *Downtown Revitalization*. Considering alternate formats and connections for this key corridor also tie directly to the principles of making downtown **Connected and Mobile**, as well as the **Place to Be**.

### Policies:

1. Main Street shall be recognized as the primary transportation corridor within the downtown, and in so doing shall be considered first for:
  - a. Developing an aspirational design for surface treatment improvements and implementing those improvements;
  - b. Considering new or alternate intersections with east-west connections; and,
  - c. Locating public and private events
2. An aspirational design for the surface treatment of Main Street shall be developed and communicated, which considers:
  - a. Means to attract and accommodate all modes of transportation, including emergency and large transportation vehicles, as part of a true “complete street corridor”;
  - b. Anticipated traffic volume in the corridor for the 110,000 and 160,000 population thresholds, as identified in the adopted Transportation Master Plan (2020);
  - c. Techniques to provide universal accessibility;
  - d. The reduced intersection lengths and current design standard for the portion within the **downtown core** relative to the remainder within the Downtown Plan;
  - e. Required elements to ensure adherence to the balance set by Council for:
    - i. Social incentives for redevelopment via increased pedestrian amenity areas;
    - ii. Economic incentives for redevelopment via increased on-street parking; or
    - iii. A combination of such social and economic incentives
  - f. The overall potential to create a distinct feature within the downtown that can:
    - i. Create a competitive advantage for redevelopment over other areas in Airdrie and the region, and be marketed as such; and,
    - ii. Represent a component of a visitor attraction strategy for tourism in Airdrie
  - g. The development and placement of unique elements and features, including:
    - i. Gateway treatments at appropriate boundary points and intersections;
    - ii. Installations of public art; and,
    - iii. Wayfinding signage and standards
  - h. The policies of small town feel, placemaking, and social inclusion in this plan; and,
  - i. Any other policies deemed relevant to its role as the primary transportation corridor within the downtown, as deemed applicable by Council.



3. Improved connectivity to and from Main Street shall be prioritized to facilitate improved movement and to accelerate redevelopment, relying on:
  - a. Review by Administration and/or consulting firms to evaluate existing intersection designs with east-west connections and access points for potential improvement, and;
  - b. Communication between the municipality and private landowners to enhance intersections and access points connecting from private property to Main Street;
4. The Main Street right-of-way shall be considered a potential location for public and private events, and adhere to the [events and programming policies \(Section 3.03\)](#) when acting in that capacity. In addition to such policies, events to take place on Main Street shall consider
  - a. The volume of traffic anticipated on Main Street during the proposed road closure period against the ability of the adjacent system to accept such redirected traffic and still meet acceptable transportation standards;
  - b. The opportunity for a business improvement association (BIA) to host or participate in such events;
  - c. The opportunity for adjacent land uses to extend into the public right-of-way to provide enhanced retail or interaction opportunities;
  - d. The balance between economic benefits for, adjacent businesses and the community as a whole, with the potential impacts on adjacent land uses, from potential events and programming;

#### **Municipal Actions:**

1. Concurrent with plan adoption, Council shall establish the desired balance between economic and social supports to be incorporated into the **aspirational design for Main Street**.
2. Council shall establish an **aspirational design for Main Street** within 18 months of plan adoption, and may choose to engage stakeholders and residents on its development, if desired.
3. Council shall direct Administration to conduct a detailed review of existing intersections with public roads accessing Main Street within 36 months of plan adoption, including recommendations for immediate capacity improvement, and/or for alterations to be incorporated into an **ultimate conceptual design for Main Street**, and in so doing:
  - a. Administration shall undertake efforts to coordinate with private landowners to develop or enhanced east-west transportation connections or align development access points to increase flow on Main Street and throughout the downtown as part of the review
4. Council to direct Administration to prepare a **detailed design for Main Street**, reflective of the adopted balance of social and economic supports, as well as the intersection and access reviews listed above, within 48 months of plan adoption for consideration by Council.
5. Council shall direct Administration to prepare a capital project request for surface treatment improvements on Main Street within the **downtown core** within 72 months of plan adoption, allowing for the following to be considered as part of the capital project implementation(s):
  - a. Piloting with temporary surface treatment measures to gauge impacts before installing permanent surface treatment improvements, where appropriate.
  - b. Coordinating surface improvements with the sub-surface improvements identified in [Section 2.02 \(Servicing Capacity\)](#), where possible, or with surface treatment lifecycle replacements if this is not possible.

- c. Effective impact mitigation, consisting of;
  - i. Avoidance of full street closures for surface treatment capital projects;
  - ii. Reduction of impacts for surface treatment capital projects, through construction hours, techniques, or other measures in consultation with affected stakeholders; and,
  - iii. Communication, liaison, and advertising support for landowners, business owners, and other key stakeholders subject to surface treatment improvement impacts.
- 6. Council shall direct Administration to seek all possible provincial and federal grant opportunities to fund part, or all, of the detailed design adopted by Council, and present these to Council for consideration.
- 7. Council shall direct Administration to develop a campaign to market the competitive advantages of the corridor for redevelopment and tourism attraction, concurrent with the implementation of the **aspirational design for Main Street**.
- 8. Council shall direct Administration to provide recommendations, within 36 months of plan adoption, on the times and portions of Main Street that can be closed on a temporary basis to support road closures for public or private events.

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## 2.06 Infilling Vehicular-Orientated Development Areas

### Preamble:

Existing commercial plazas have large areas taken up by surface parking and buildings that are set back from the street, typically oriented toward internal parking areas. This occurs primarily in the south half of the plan area along Main Street South, as well as pockets on Centre Avenue West and Main Street North.

There are opportunities to intensify these existing surface parking areas through infill development. However, such infill development will need to balance the current vehicle-oriented plaza layouts while building to support an active pedestrian environment and a high quality public realm for the future. In some instances, this could also mean re-introducing a street pattern into these vehicle-oriented areas.

### Objective:

The objective is to facilitate infill development of parking lot areas in commercial lots downtown.

### Principles:

Infilling vehicular oriented areas operates under the principle of making Downtown Airdrie the [Place to Be](#) by creating a greater concentration of people, places and activities.

### Policies:

1. New buildings and expansions to existing buildings should replace existing surface parking and increase the floor area ratio for development on the vehicular-oriented infill site.
2. Vehicular oriented infill development in Downtown Airdrie shall achieve the following to the satisfaction of the Development Authority:
  - a. Building character and façade development that is complementary to the development(s) on the existing site and the downtown overall.
  - b. Successful execution of **active frontage** elements between building façades and adjacent streets, pathways, and amenity areas, where applicable.
  - c. Connection of the private pedestrian areas (i.e. sidewalks and crosswalks) associated with infill development to existing and proposed private and public pedestrian systems.
  - d. Adherence to the [corridor and boundary policies](#) of this plan to the extent that the development falls within the **railway boundary condition area**, the **residential boundary interface area**, or the **Nose Creek boundary condition area**, as identified in [Figure XX](#).
3. The Development Authority may exercise discretion by approving infill development where the main entry of the building faces into an existing surface parking lot rather than an **active frontage** on a temporary basis only. Such temporary permits shall be re-evaluated at the end of a 3-year term. Once deemed appropriate by the Development Authority, an approval granted for main building entry toward existing surface parking lots shall be transitioned to a street-oriented frontage.
4. Plaza infill development should be designed to provide opportunities for small-scale boutique stores and restaurants.
5. No new drive-thru facilities shall be allowed as part of infill development for vehicular-oriented development sites.
6. Other than fully enclosed retail and accessory services (e.g., indoor automotive sales centre), no new automotive uses shall be allowed.
7. Parking lot reconfiguration shall be supported, with or without a redevelopment trigger, on vehicular-oriented infill sites that improve connectivity, accessibility or amenity spaces.

8. Where parking lot reconfigurations occur without a development trigger, they should delineate the envelopes for future buildings or building expansions between the proposed drive aisles and landscaped areas.
9. Events and temporary uses shall be supported within established parking areas, or reconfigured parking areas that:
  - a. Do not conflict with appropriate connectivity and accessibility for all modes of transportation within the infill site;
  - b. Are sited prominently and visually accessible to public corridors, such as roads and pathways.

**Municipal Actions:**

1. Council shall direct Administration to maintain and enhance lines of communication with infill development site owners to ensure that constraints are not inadvertently placed on these properties.
2. Council shall direct Administration to review connectivity and amenity area plans associated with infill development applications to ensure logical connections and interfaces within the adjacent public lands.
3. Council shall direct Administration to approach Council for funding of logical connections and interface improvements on public lands where opportunities for such connections are triggered by adjacent infill developments.
4. Council shall direct Administration to prepare updated templates for Development Agreements, within 18 months of plan adoption, for applicable infill developments to allow for reductions in security where public space improvements have been triggered and for which they have been funded as capital projects.

## 2.07 Civic Development Catalysts

### Preamble:

Leveraging public investment to incite broader private investment can be an important part of community building. Major civic developments function as generators, creating a synergy with private retail, entertainment and employment land uses by bringing people and activities to central locations.

Airdrie has a history of leveraging public investments into key pieces of community building and achieving an even greater public good as a result. Downtown Airdrie is presently home to several major civic and quasi-civic developments, including City Hall, the Provincial Courthouse, the Airdrie Public Library, the Bow Valley College site and the Rocky View Education Centre. These generate thousands of visits and interactions per day and are home to hundreds of employees who support downtown businesses.

Further public investments, with the potential for substantially more interactions, are intended. In June 2019, Airdrie City Council selected the former fire hall site as the location for the new civic library. Presently, the library welcomes an average of 512 patrons per day, and this could see a substantial increase with a new facility.

### ***Gateway Site Selection for New Library***

Council selected the former Fire Hall, a gateway site, as the location for the new civic library in June 2019 under the guidance of the following mission statements:

- A library is a community hub and landmark destination that provides residents a sense of ownership and civic pride; and,
- A library can spark synergies, ignite the surrounding community and provide connections.

The location is within the southern portion of the downtown plan, and the vision statements for the library are as follows:

- A library that is multi-functional and sized to adapt to meet current and future needs;
- A library that is flexible to accommodate changing demographics and their evolving needs; and,
- A library that benefits from being adjacent to other community facilities and retail centres, and vice versa.

### ***Additional Considerations for Library Development***

Recognizing the separate process to develop the functional requirements for the new library, participants engaged in the development of the downtown plan noted the opportunity to:

- Co-locate civic uses at the selected library site; and,
- Connect the library and any other facility, or facilities, located there with the adjacent natural greenspace along Nose Creek.

But this type of decision is not done in isolation. Other civic and quasi-civic institutions, such as Bow Valley College, Rocky View School Division and the Airdrie Health Cooperative (AHC) have each looked at the current level of civic activity and centralization in the downtown and noted the potential for development or expansion to take advantage of that activity and to create additional synergies.

Participants in the plan development events also saw the opportunity to leverage civic investments as potential private redevelopment catalysts in the downtown. During the design charrettes, participants placed major civic institutions (municipal buildings, libraries, post-secondary institutions and plazas) in locations with the greatest possible opportunity to support private redevelopment. They sought to create a public-private development synergy in the downtown for years to come.

### Objective:

To leverage investment in civic and quasi-civic developments to generate activity and promote private investment in the downtown.

### Principles for Change:

Making investments in key civic developments is the ultimate example of how the municipality and other institutions can **Lead by Example**, and it expresses how we can **Think Big** about the downtown. Concentrating major public and quasi-public institutions to drive activity to this core area complements the principle of recognizing and enhancing downtown as the **Heart of the City**.

### Policies:

1. Downtown shall be considered the primary location for major civic and quasi-civic development investments in Airdrie.
2. Civic development investments shall be located and designed with the intent to promote private investment on adjacent properties, and shall:
  - a. Coordinate with adjacent owners to determine opportunities to integrate developments and land use types, where appropriate;
  - b. Adhere to **gateway development** and **corridor and boundary area policies**, where applicable; and,
  - c. Connect such developments with nearby municipal holdings, including roads, lanes, paths, amenities, defined activity areas, and any municipal or environmental reserves
3. The orientation of the civic building(s) and other site improvements shall be designed with consideration of the role of that particular civic development(s) as part of overall investment in the downtown, and as an aspect of the comprehensive redevelopment strategy for the downtown.
4. Civic development investments shall make all possible efforts to generate social interactions and activity, and may:
  - a. Create formal and informal areas for social congregation as part of their design;
  - b. Alter or augment hours of operation to extend opportunities for social interaction; and,
  - c. Coordinate land use types to create synergies that will increase interactions and activity.
5. Civic development investments shall reflect the intent of making downtown a regionally recognizable location as part of their design and function(s).

### Municipal Actions:

1. Council shall consider the downtown first for making civic development investments and shall direct Administration to provide rationale for any civic development project recommended for a location other than the downtown as part of any request to Council Budget Committee.
2. Council shall support investments from other civic and quasi-civic institutions in the downtown and shall direct Administration:
  - a. To retain open communication with all other civic and quasi-civic institutions on needs and potential location opportunities; and,
  - b. To provide in-kind support or studies, as deemed necessary by Council, to assist other civic and quasi-civic institutions that are considering a development investment in the downtown.
3. Council shall direct Administration to develop a plan, within 36 months of plan adoption, to market the scale and scope of civic development investments made in the downtown to attract private development(s) and retail spending.

## 2.08 Gateways

### Preamble:

Gateways serve to delineate one planned area, or neighbourhood, from another. They announce a sense of arrival and declare the degree of intention and prominence for that area; providing the first indication of the experience that a user can expect to have there.

For Downtown Airdrie, there are **gateway areas** in each of the four cardinal directions.

To the west, these are found along Centre Avenue and First Avenue abutting the CP rail line. In the north, the gateway area stretches along Main Street between Second Avenue and Jensen Drive. Coming from the east, the gateway area is again on Centre Avenue and First Avenue, running for the length of the property boundaries to the east of Main Street. And from the south, the gateway is the southern boundary line of the commercial and municipal property lines just north of the intersection of Main Street with Ridgeway Way and Elk Hill. These are shown on [Figure XX \(Gateway Areas\)](#).

During the public engagement for the downtown plan, participants noted the importance of gateway developments at the entrances to establish the importance of this geographic area to the community. Participants also commonly placed entrance feature tiles on the road rights-of-way in each of these four directions to announce arrival, provide wayfinding, and complement private and public gateway developments. There was a clear desire to have these areas stand out and, in so doing, instill a sense of pride about the downtown.

### Objective:

To ensure that public and private investments in the gateway areas convey arrival into downtown and the importance of this central area.

### Principles:

Creating prominence at the entrances identifies the downtown as the **Heart of the City**. Giving a high degree of thought and treatment to the entrances through showcase developments and complementary features helps make downtown the **Place to Be**. The degree of public and private investments to create these types of showcase developments and to announce a sense of arrival shows that we **Think Big** when it comes to our downtown.

### Policies:

1. Development on a gateway parcel shall be designed as a landmark within Airdrie's downtown.
2. Development on a gateway parcel shall consider the potential for buildings on such sites to be prominent within Airdrie and the region.
3. The design for any development on a gateway parcel shall consider the youthful population, rapid growth, and prominent position of Airdrie within the region and the province.
4. Development on a gateway parcel shall feature prominently in the redevelopment of downtown through its design aspects; and,
  - a. Be welcoming, instill a sense of civic ownership and pride for residents, and adhere to the **civic development catalyst policies**, in the case of a municipal development;
  - b. Denote a sense of arrival to the downtown through site design and orientation;
  - c. Ensure visibility to and from the site development(s) in all directions;
  - d. Ensure that the design and orientation of site development(s) retains sightlines to and from amenity areas and other public locations;
  - e. Consider the relationship with adjacent streets and ensure that the site design and orientation enhance the streetscape and create a positive environment for pedestrians;

- f. Adhere to the [boundary and corridor policies](#) of this plan where they apply; and,
- g. Mitigate, to the satisfaction of the Development Authority, any potential impacts on adjacent properties and roads as a result of the uses, design characteristics, and the orientation of the site and/or building(s), even where the [boundary and corridor policies](#) do not specifically apply.

**Municipal Actions:**

- 1. Council shall consider these policies as part of the design of any **civic development catalyst** project.
- 2. Council shall direct Administration to prepare a gateway entrance feature plan for the road right-of-way areas identified in [Figure XX](#) within 60 months of the adoption of this plan, and may:
  - a. Direct Administration to coordinate with private development in the construction of gateway entrance features to achieve an economy of scale, but may also:
  - b. Direct Administration to prepare a gateway feature design for a road right-of-way at a **gateway area** in order to complement an approved development, and/or achieve an economy of scale with that development, within 12 months of the applicable development approval.

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## 2.09 Corridor and Boundary Areas

### Preamble:

The boundary drawn by participants in the Downtown Visioning exercise sees the Canadian Pacific (CP) rail line as the western limit of what is considered to be downtown. To the north, south, and east, the boundary generally follows the rear property lines of commercial lots facing major roads such as Main Street and First Avenue. Approaching the western limit of the downtown boundary, Nose Creek is a corridor to be considered for transportation and utility crossings, as well as development transition.

Accordingly, the downtown faces two major types of interface conditions: external boundary conditions and internal corridors. The external boundary conditions include the Canadian Pacific rail line and the survey delineations with adjacent neighbourhoods, while Nose Creek makes up the internal corridor.

Given the type and extent of redevelopment contemplated in this plan, it is important to pay attention to the relationships between development and these corridor and boundary features. Several development guidelines influence the thinking on these relationships:

- For development adjacent to active rail lines, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) released the Guidelines for New Development in Proximity to Railway Operations in 2013 and continues to update this important document. The intent of these guidelines is to ensure an appropriate relationship between the operation of the rail line and nearby land uses, so as to reduce the risk to human life and safety.
- Legislation for development in Alberta under the *Municipal Government Act* does not specifically protect the “right to a view”. However, it does provide the opportunity for a municipality to consider certain uses as *discretionary*, and to then weigh the particular impacts on use, enjoyment, amenity and value from those developments on adjacent properties.
- The City of Airdrie is an active member in the Nose Creek Watershed Partnership (NCWP), and endeavours to protect, preserve, and enhance the watershed – especially in terms of water quality.

Managing the relationship of development with these corridors and boundaries is a delicate balance under these legislative conditions and advocacy positions. The City must act carefully in order to sensitively mitigate potential impacts on the proposed developments, the existing owners/uses, and the corridors themselves.

### Objective:

To ensure that development responds appropriately to any adjacent corridor and boundary conditions.

### Principles:

Addressing corridor and boundary conditions is an element of creating [The Right Rules and Processes](#) to guide redevelopment in the downtown.

### Policies:

1. Policies in this section apply to the **corridor and boundary areas** identified in [Figure XX](#) and apply to the full property area abutting the defined corridor and boundary areas.
2. Non-residential land uses with lesser intensity, operational risks, and exposure for life safety issues are uses that are encouraged within the **railway boundary condition area**.
3. Residential land uses and land uses with intense interactions, such as daycares or health facilities, are not specifically encouraged within the **railway boundary condition area**. However:
  - a. These land uses are not prohibited, unless already specifically called out as such by the Land Use Bylaw, as adopted at the time of development application; and,

- b. May be permitted by the Development Authority where the risks and impacts can be appropriately mitigated in accordance with the policies of this plan.
4. Any development within the **railway boundary condition area** must conform to all requirements of the City at the time of application, and mitigate the risks and impacts associated with railway operations to the satisfaction of the Development Authority, and to this end:
  - a. The Development Authority shall have regard for the current version of the Guidelines for New Development in Proximity to Railway Operations when considering development adjacent to the CP rail line and right-of-way, including but not limited to:
    - i. A 30m setback along a rail line measured from the mutual property line to the building face of the principal building; and,
    - ii. Noise attenuation features: including setbacks, noise attenuation barriers, earthen berms, and fences.
5. Development in the **residential boundary interface area** shall be sensitive to the existing forms of adjacent development, especially adjacent low-density residential uses.
6. The Development Authority shall consider the transition to adjacent residential neighbourhoods in reviewing any development application in the **residential boundary interface area** and:
  - a. Require applications to address the potential impacts on the use, enjoyment, amenity and value of adjacent properties as a result of the proposed development, including, but not limited to:
    - i. Abrupt changes in height with existing development;
    - ii. The creation of shadows;
    - iii. Changes in traffic and activity generation; and,
  - b. May request special studies as part of an application submission in order to address these potential impacts on the use, enjoyment, amenity and value of adjacent properties; and,
  - c. For *discretionary uses*, may request measures to reduce the potential impact on use, enjoyment, amenity and value for existing development(s), including, but not limited to:
    - i. additional setback distances; and/or,
    - ii. reductions in upper floor areas; and/or,
    - iii. additional landscaping
7. Development in the **Nose Creek boundary condition area** shall be designed to address the Floodway and Floodplain Regulations of the Land Use Bylaw to the extent that they apply to the respective property, or properties.
8. Development in the **Nose Creek boundary condition area** shall consider best practices for stormwater and watershed management, including any applicable policies in the Nose Creek Watershed Management Plan.
9. Development in the **Nose Creek boundary condition area** shall have its principal entrances and pedestrian connections oriented toward pathways and other connections forming part of the Nose Creek Naturalized Open Space area, and in addition:
  - a. Walls, fences and berms shall not be permitted between the development footprint and the **Nose Creek Naturalized Open Space area** for properties in the **Nose Creek boundary condition area**; and
  - b. Loading bays, waste enclosures, mechanical equipment, utilities or any other aspect of development deemed impactful by the Development Authority shall not be permitted between the development footprint and the **Nose Creek Naturalized Open Space area** for properties in the **Nose Creek boundary condition area**.

### Municipal Actions:

1. Council shall direct Administration to include proactive measures to attract non-residential uses with lesser intensity and interactions for properties in the **railway boundary condition area** as part of the [Development Attraction Strategy](#) adopted concurrently with this plan as [Resolution XX/2020](#).
2. Council shall direct Administration to develop guidelines for properties adjacent to railways, including those in the **railway boundary condition area**, within 60 months of plan adoption.
3. Council shall direct Administration to undertake a shadowing study for both existing downtown development, as well as the maximum development envelopes allowed under the Land Use Bylaw, within 60 months of plan adoption.
4. Council shall amend the Land Use Bylaw concurrent with plan adoption, to prohibit walls, fences and berms in the **Nose Creek boundary condition area**, as [Bylaw XX/2020](#).
5. Council shall direct Administration to develop a master plan for the municipal reserve and environmental reserve to connect the **Nose Creek Naturalized Open Space area** with the **Nose Creek boundary condition area** within 48 months of plan adoption.

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## 2.10 Natural Spaces

### Preamble:

The Municipal Development Plan identifies the naturalized area surrounding Nose Creek as Airdrie's most significant natural asset and a feature that must be protected and enhanced as the community continues to grow. This is reinforced at a non-statutory level in the Great Places Plan which identifies the area as a green corridor in the Open Space Concept. Participants in the visioning exercise and design charrettes spoke further to desires to support, enhance, and celebrate this naturalized corridor, defined in this plan within [Figure XX \(Natural Spaces\)](#).

It is important that the downtown plan properly reinforces this relationship with the natural environment. This can be achieved through properly designing the frontage and interface of developments along the Nose Creek corridor, and by protecting this area and its surroundings that are intended to remain as natural open space while the downtown area continues to redevelop. There are opportunities to front commercial uses onto Nose Creek and provide better access to this Naturalized Open Space. Framing this area and allowing for active uses near Nose Creek can highlight the natural space and facilitate activity and pedestrian traffic moving between the corridor and uses within the downtown, allowing each to support and enhance the other.

In addition to addressing the interface between uses and the Nose Creek corridor, developments in the downtown should protect and enhance this area by ensuring that buildings and hard surfacing are not placed within the corridor or in conflict with provincial Floodway and Floodplain Regulations, respecting proper stormwater management practices and The Nose Creek Watershed Management Plan. There is a fine balance that needs to be struck where development can support and celebrate the surrounding natural spaces, and also protect them from invasive development, activities, stormwater runoff, and other impacts that can impact the natural systems therein.

### Objective:

The objective is to ensure that redevelopment in the Downtown respects existing natural areas and recognizes them as key amenities that attract pedestrians, cyclists, and visitors.

### Principles:

Natural areas that are accessible and suitable for year-round activities help make Downtown [The Place to Be](#). Appropriate building orientation and site design maximizes views and access to the Creek and helps to foster a [Connected and Mobile](#) Downtown. Maintaining the integrity of Nose Creek and its riparian environs protects the area and is a part of the City [Leading By Example](#) with the ecological and open space objectives of the MDP.

### Policies:

1. Development within the Naturalized Open Space shall include public access to the regional pathway system.
2. The provisions of the Land Use Bylaw with respect to Floodway and Floodplain Regulations are to be adhered to for any new development in the areas shown on [Figure XX \(Floodway and Floodplain\)](#) in the Naturalized Open Space.
3. Development within the Naturalized Area shall adhere to the management practices of The Nose Creek Watershed Management Plan (NCWMP) for protecting the Nose Creek corridor, and in this regard:
  - a. Development of permanent structures in the riparian area of the creek shall not be permitted, and;

- b. Minimum development setback distances established in *The Nose Creek Watershed Management Plan* and the *Land Use Bylaw* shall apply.
- 4. All development shall incorporate appropriate built form elements to achieve an appropriate interface with the Nose Creek corridor, including **CPTED** and **Winter City Design**, and shall adhere to other applicable policy areas of this document, including specifically:
  - a. the [Redevelopment Height, Density, and Form](#) policies;
  - b. the [Corridors and Boundaries](#) policies.

**Municipal Actions:**

- 1. Council shall direct Administration to coordinate with NCWP to ensure:
  - a. that impacts on Nose Creek from any proposed and completed redevelopment project are properly reviewed, mitigated, and monitored, and;
  - b. that redevelopment in the downtown overall remains consistent with the principles and guidelines of the NCWMP.

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## 2.11 Urban Parks

### Preamble:

The downtown plan area is bookended by significant park spaces in Nose Creek and Fletcher Parks, but within the plan boundary itself, there are limited areas that are developed as urban parks and open spaces. Where these spaces are provided (such as the plaza at the front of City Hall or on various private sites), there is little additional amenity developed or direct programming provided.

As part of *Downtown Revitalization*, the downtown plan envisions a network of open spaces, squares, and plazas that can be used for public gatherings, events, and activities and add to the **urban experience**. These should be distributed throughout the downtown to be accessible by foot traffic and to draw additional attention and activity along the Main Street Corridor. This includes defined spaces on public lands like City Hall and the site of the new civic library, as well as potential improvements on privately held properties that are currently vacant or underutilized and which could accommodate pop-up parks or other urban gathering spaces that could complement and enhance public realm improvements as the sites redevelop in the future.

[Figure XX \(Open Space Concept\)](#) identifies three types of urban open space nodes: Gateway Plazas are strategically located to draw people into the Downtown, and are intended to animate the area through their uses and activities. An Outdoor Gathering Space located in the Nose Creek naturalized open space is intended to support smaller functions and passive recreation activities. Finally, Temporary Outdoor Gathering Spaces are identified on vacant and underutilized sites throughout the Downtown, and are intended to enhance the public realm by filling in gaps in the streetscape, creating a more visually appealing walking environment.

### Objective:

The objective is to develop a range of connected urban parks to enhance the public realm of the Downtown.

### Principles:

Developing a range of connected urban park spaces operates under the principal of making Downtown Airdrie [The Place to Be](#) and adds to the quality of the public realm. Strategically locating these areas to create gathering spaces and activities throughout the downtown can support the activities and character desired through our efforts to [Reimagine Main Street](#).

### Policies:

1. Encourage new development proposals on private properties to provide open spaces and corridors in keeping with [Figure XX \(Downtown Land Use Concept\)](#) and [Figure XX \(Open Space Concept\)](#) to enhance and activate the public realm.
2. The locations of the open space nodes are conceptual at the ARP stage and the design and programming will be detailed at the development stage.
3. Permanent open spaces on private properties will be developed comprehensively through submission of a Master Site Plan with appropriate landscaping considerations incorporated.
4. Adhere to the [Gateway policies](#), [Small Town Feel and Place Making policies](#) and the [Pop-Up Land Uses policies](#) of this plan where they apply.
5. All open space development should incorporate Winter City Design and CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles.
6. All new public open spaces should be designed and constructed in accordance with the current edition of The City of Calgary's "Development Guidelines and Standard Specifications for Landscape Construction" as well as The City of Airdrie's Standard Landscape & Specifications.

7. Space for community gardens should be a consideration in all public and private urban parks.
8. All public and private urban parks shall be connected to the surrounding land uses and amenities through pedestrian connections and appropriate edge conditions.

**Municipal Actions:**

1. Council shall direct Administration to explore year-round programming opportunities for recreation and cultural activities within the public open space network, and outline potential programming opportunities within 24 months of the adoption of this plan.
2. Council shall direct Administration to explore and provide a report and draft of recommended mechanisms for achieving a connected network of open space plazas through the built environment within 60 months of the adoption of this plan. Examples could include the provision of public realm improvements in exchange for increased development rights.
3. Council shall direct Administration to work with proponents in defining and supporting new open spaces as part of redevelopment process in the Downtown.

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## 2.12 Airdrie Main Street Square Complex

### Preamble:

The Main Street Square Complex is a 5.0 acre parcel on the east side of Main Street that is owned and operated by Airdrie Main Street Square Real Estate Inc. (AMSQ), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the City of Airdrie.

The City of Airdrie purchased the property in 2002 to meet the municipal administration capacity needs of a growing community and thereby relocate the Municipal Administration Building (City Hall). The purchase included commercial bays and land holdings for future commercial tenancies in order to finance the relocation and reconstruction costs associated with the move and expansion. The commercial tenancies include two major banks (Scotiabank and ATB Financial) and the overall tenancies create a revenue source to offset municipal taxes.

As a wholly-owned subsidiary, AMSQ has a governance structure made up of a board comprised of City Councilors and volunteer members of the public-at-large. This board provides advice and recommendations for the operation of the complex to all of City Council, as the overarching board of directors for the subsidiary.

The AMSQ Board publicized a redevelopment proposal in Fall 2016. Council elected not to pursue the proposal further and passed a motion to conduct a visioning exercise for the downtown overall.

During the Downtown Visioning exercise in early 2017, the public expressed a general preference for key institutional developments on the parcel. Participants in the design charrettes conducted in 2019 provided the same general recommendation for incorporation into the general land use concept for the Downtown Plan (see [Figure XX](#)).

Municipal Administration presented the results of the design charrettes to the AMSQ Board in early 2020 and maintained open communication with the Board throughout the development of the Downtown Plan. The AMSQ Board has the same rights and opportunities to develop, or redevelop, in conjunction with the general land use concept and development policies of this plan as any other landowner within the downtown.

### Objective:

The objective for the Airdrie Main Street Square Complex is to contribute to the overall development of the downtown to the satisfaction of Council as both the board of directors for the subsidiary and as the municipal Development Authority.

### Principles:

Potential redevelopment of this site operates under the principle of [Everyone's Success](#) in the downtown. With a fertile ground established throughout the downtown via policies, municipal actions, and complementary incentives, this site will have an equal opportunity to support the overall social and economic success of this core development area.

As a holding of a wholly-owned municipal subsidiary, redevelopment of this site – whenever it may occur – has the opportunity to [Think Big](#). Resident and stakeholder input to date has encouraged this big picture thinking to reflect their preference for key institutional uses on this site.



**Policies:**

1. Maintain open communication between the AMSQ Board and municipal administration to identify any redevelopment proposal(s) for the site and to describe the progress of the downtown plan, respectively.
2. Any redevelopment proposal for the Main Street Square Complex shall recognize the current public preference for major civic uses, and:
  - a. Adhere to the [civic development catalyst policies](#), if applicable; and,
  - b. Shall consider public outreach for any potential redevelopment proposals.
3. Consideration of a specialized land use district may be given in order to prescribe the vision of Council as the Development Authority for any site redevelopment.

**Municipal Actions:**

1. Council shall direct Administration to provide information relevant to economic development trends and the management of commercial properties as deemed necessary for its role as the AMSQ Board of Directors.
2. Council shall direct Administration to provide advice, as deemed necessary, to assist in the review of any potential redevelopment proposals in its role as a municipal Development Authority.

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## 2.13 Towerlane Centre Development Area

### Preamble:

The Towerlane Centre is a private retail development area located in the southwest portion of downtown, representing almost 25% of the total plan area. Constructed primarily between 1981 and 1983, this site comprises primary grocery, retail, and professional services to meet daily needs.

Over time, the Towerlane Centre has transitioned from an interior facing shopping mall to that of an external facing retail centre, with a select number of new standalone commercial retail units. The centre is a **vehicular-oriented development** centre sandwiched between Nose Creek and Main Street, with private ownership of all roads and driving aisles. On-site parking is abundant, with over 800 stalls on the combined property holdings. This single site contains nearly 1/3 of the total parking in the downtown.

During the downtown visioning exercise, residents expressed a desire to have greater integration of the Towerlane Centre with the rest of the downtown, with a particular reference to east-west connections from Main Street. The design charrette respondents specifically laid transportation and greenspace corridors across the Towerlane Centre site to improve the connection between Main Street and the Nose Creek corridor. They also placed new retail and professional development areas along a potential internal grid to frame and connect this site within itself, and to the remainder of downtown.

However, there are key challenges to overcome in terms of redevelopment and connectivity. Certain leasehold provisions and/or other registered instruments are in place which provide retail exclusivity, or other forms of constraint that could make redevelopment more challenging. The remaining lifespan of existing building footprints, combined with land development and construction costs further hamper redevelopment and public connection opportunities.

Bearing this in mind, Council selected the adjacent former fire hall site to the south as the site for the future municipal library in June 2019. The new library is expected to open within the next five years and this is anticipated to change the nature of development and activity in the southwest portion of the plan area dramatically, including the Towerlane Centre site. It provides a potential impetus for redevelopment and an opportunity to coordinate connections and footprints between the two sites, even if redevelopment at the Towerlane Centre is not necessarily expected to occur at the same pace as the adjacent civic gateway development.

City Administration and First Capital Realty have kept an open line of communication for aspirational redevelopment designs. The preferred aspirational concept is included in this plan for reference, recognizing that development may not necessarily occur in precise keeping with such plans ([Figure XX](#)).

### Objective:

The objective is to coordinate the redevelopment potential of the Towerlane Centre with the adjacent development sites and public infrastructure.

### Principles:

Coordinating the redevelopment of the Towerlane Centre with the adjacent sites, infrastructure, and amenities helps to make downtown the **Place to Be**. The effort to ensure that all development opportunity sites are explored operates under the principle of **Everyone's Success**, and requires the **Right Rules and Processes** to achieve the best possible results.

### Policies:

1. Redevelopment of the Towerlane Centre shall generally conform to the land use concept for the Downtown Plan ([Figure XX](#)), and:
  - a. Shall have due regard for the specific concept for this site shown in [Figure XX](#), to the satisfaction of the Development Authority;
  - b. Shall integrate with the adjacent properties and the downtown generally, to the satisfaction of the Development Authority;
  - c. Shall prioritize integration with Main Street and the surrounding properties to incorporate the desired economic and social supports set by Council in this plan; and,
    - i. Shall conform to the site access locations prescribed by the aspirational design for the [reimagining of Main Street](#); or,
    - ii. Adhere the policies for [reimagining Main Street](#), should the Development Authority accept a redevelopment proposal or deem a new site access required prior to the adoption of the aspirational design
  - d. Is encouraged to provide a variety of retail, professional and entertainment services, as well as other commercial and office land uses deemed acceptable to the Development Authority; and,
  - e. May consider a Direct Control district to recognize the unique development context and to provide the greatest possible certainty for the owner(s) and the municipality.
2. Redevelopment of the Towerlane Centre site shall adhere to the [vehicular oriented infill development policies](#) to the satisfaction of the Development Authority and in addition to those policies, shall:
  - a. Establish a grid road network in conjunction with redevelopment phases, to the satisfaction of the Development Authority, even where private ownership of such roads and aisles is maintained; and,
  - b. Ensure that such an internal road network provides connections from public road rights-of-way to the Nose Creek Corridor
3. Redevelopment on the Towerlane Centre site shall coordinate with the development of the new library on the gateway parcel to the south, and specifically:
  - a. Prioritize pedestrian movement and safety;
  - b. Provide opportunities for plaza spaces and other destinations for pedestrians;
  - c. Limit retail offering conflicts, to the extent that they are proposed as ancillary or complementary uses in the new library; and,
  - d. Acknowledge that the future library site shall be subject to the [gateway development policies](#) found in the Downtown Plan, which may impact coordination opportunities.
4. The Towerlane Centre site is encouraged to provide opportunities for pop-up land uses and/or private events and programming, adhering to the [pop-up land use policies](#) and the [events and programming policies](#) to the extent that such land uses, events and programming transpire.

### Municipal Actions:

1. Council shall direct Administration to collaborate with First Capital Realty, and any future owner(s), for the integration of the new library site with the existing development at the Towerlane Centre site, bearing in mind the aspirational design shown in [Figure XX](#) for the Towerlane Centre site.
2. Council shall direct Administration to engage with First Capital Realty, within 18 months of the adoption of this plan, to propose shared parking opportunities between the three properties under common ownership in this area (City Hall, future library site and Towerlane Mall) to facilitate greater overall development density.

3. Council shall direct Administration to coordinate with First Capital Realty, within 24 months of the adoption of this plan, for the provision of community events and support enhanced retail opportunities (sidewalk sales, etc.) on the Towerlane Mall site in association with such events.
4. Council shall direct Administration to identify, within 36 months of the adoption of this plan, any external pedestrian or vehicular access changes that may impact the Towerlane Centre site to First Capital Realty, or future owners, for appropriate coordination of efforts and accesses.
5. Council shall direct Administration to identify, within 48 months of the adoption of this plan, any potential capital improvements adjacent to the Towerlane Mall site to First Capital Realty, or future owners, to facilitate the best possible integration between the capital improvement and the Towerlane Centre site.
6. Council shall direct Administration to collaborate with First Capital Realty, within 60 months of the adoption of this plan, to develop the best possible development regulation mechanism(s) to implement the ultimate redevelopment plan(s) for this portion of the Downtown Plan.

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