



Section 1

Introduction & Administration

Council established Downtown Revitalization as a Strategic Priority and defined success as:

A revitalized downtown has more people living, shopping and spending money there. Businesses stay open in our downtown. Residents are proud of downtown Airdrie. It is an important part of Airdrie's brand, identity and economic development.

The Downtown Plan is an Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP), which means that it must address:

- Objectives of the plan and how they are proposed to be achieved;
- Proposed land uses;
- Reasons for imposing a redevelopment levy (if proposed);
- Proposals for the acquisition of land; and ,
- Any other proposals that council considers necessary

The vision that the plan sets is for Downtown Airdrie to be the place that people love. This is an intentional choice of words, as love is the foundation for investment, protection and focus for the item of that affection.

The plan sets an objective to accelerate the pace of development in the downtown. The plan does this by building on background studies to suggest municipal actions and impactful development incentives.

The following statements summarize the approach for achieving the plan objective:

- We will have to attract in order to accelerate redevelopment
 - Marketing competitive advantages will be central to our attraction efforts
 - All results, even incremental ones, from our competitive advantages move the needle
 - Actions and incentives to create competitive advantages must prove successful to be retained; and,
 - Incentives should achieve a positive return on investment for the tax payer.

There are ten principles in support of the vision and achieving the overall plan objective:

- 1. Heart of the City**
Develop downtown as the central core of population, jobs, services and amenities.
- 2. Everyone's Success**
Stimulate private investment and redevelopment in the downtown.

- 3. Reimagine Main Street**
Strengthen Main Street as the central axis of downtown.
- 4. Think Big**
Support large-scale catalysts and anchor projects.
- 5. The Place to Be**
Generate traffic, activity and interest throughout the plan area.
- 6. An Investment in our Future**
Leverage municipal resources to lead and support revitalization efforts.
- 7. Lead by Example**
Demonstrate support for the downtown as part of municipal projects.
- 8. The Right Rules and Processes**
Identify and remove barriers to redevelopment projects.
- 9. Connected and Mobile**
Create an accessible and well-designed urban centre.
- 10. Putting People First**
Design downtown's form, functions, and experiences with people as a first priority.

The plan addresses specific issues facing the downtown and defines actions for the first five to seven years following adoption. The plan sets targets for population, employment, and assessed value within the first ten years, with the ultimate development concept being realized within a 20-30 year horizon.

The plan sets a minimum population and employment target of a combination of 4,000 new residents and jobs within the plan area, with an assessment value of \$65,000,000. The plan aspires to achieve a combination of 7,000 new residents and jobs, with an assessment value of \$130,000,000.

The plan assumes that downtown can achieve an advantage to help accelerate redevelopment by creating an active urban experience. An urban experience is defined as “a feeling of enjoyment coming from one’s physical and social surroundings.” A city creates an urban experience by:

- a) creating active (meaning “interesting”) building frontages; and,
- b) having complete (meaning “all forms of transportation”) streets

Administratively the plan is broken down into four sections:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Introduction & Administration | 3. Downtown Functions |
| 2. Development Form | 4. Key Performance Indicators |

Topic areas covered in Section 2 and Section 3 follow an identical structure for consistency in setting out private and public actions:

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------|---------------------|
| • Preamble | • Principles | • Municipal Actions |
| • Objective | • Policies | |

This executive summary provides an overview of the material in the structure used for each of the sub-sections of the plan.

Section 2

Development Form

The policies in this section address the physical design of downtown. This ranges from the height, density and form of buildings, to policies regarding certain physical spaces – such as parks, gateways or key development parcels. All subsections in Section 2 use the structure described in Section 1.

Section 2.01 – Redevelopment Height, Density and Form

The **preamble** of this subsection notes the intent to conform to the land use concept made by residents and stakeholders during design charrettes. The proposed heights and densities align with the existing Land Use Bylaw and support the population and assessment aspirations of the plan. The **objective** of this subsection is to direct the height, density and form of redevelopment within the plan area.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- The Right Rules and Processes
- Heart of the City
- The Place to Be
- Putting People First

The general intent of the **policies** is to allow for greater intensity of development in the downtown within the rules of the existing Land Use Bylaw. The focus for redevelopment is in the downtown core, with any potential exceptions for height and density limited to that area. Policies in this subsection require all developments to take boundaries and context into account with their designs, along with things like crime prevention and reducing winter impacts (i.e. wind tunnels, etc.). The lone **municipal action** for this subsection requires the municipality to work with property owners, developers and business owners to ensure that the right height, density and built form policies are in place.

Section 2.02 – Redevelopment Height, Density and Form

The **preamble** of this subsection notes that most of the downtown falls under the Downtown Mixed Use (M3) land use district, which has the highest number of permitted and discretionary uses of any district in Airdrie. As such, the Land Use Bylaw does not present a hindrance to development and the aim is to attract the best and most successful uses. The preamble points out that the design charrette participants did not indicate a specific purpose for specific areas in the downtown (i.e. entertainment district). The **objective** of this subsection is to describe the desired land uses within the downtown.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Heart of the City
- The Place to Be

The general intent of the **policies** is to allow for a range of land uses, including residential uses. Proposed policies allow for clusters of uses (i.e. Entertainment District) to occur organically, if they occur at all. The key with land uses is to generate success and activity. The proposed **municipal actions** for this subsection see the municipality developing a strategy to attract land uses with the best chance for success and which will bring the most consistent activity to the downtown.

Section 2.03 – Maximizing Servicing Capacity

The **preamble** confirms that the downtown has capacity for either: 5,300 new residents, 8,830 jobs, or a combination in between. The **objective** of this subsection is to achieve the aspirational development targets of this plan with the available servicing capacity.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Investing in our Future
- The Right Rules and Processes

Policies in this subsection encourage efficient use of available servicing and coordinating connections with redeveloping properties. Developments are to use low impact design methods where possible. The municipality proposes **actions** to promote the available capacity and to continue the practice of not charging redevelopment levies to help leverage available capacity into future assessment value.

Section 2.04 – Redevelopment of the Downtown Core

The plan describes the downtown core as having a different feel in the **preamble** and the best opportunity for intensive redevelopment. The plan describes the downtown core as the area immediately surrounding the intersections of Centre Avenue and Main Street as well as First Avenue and Main Street. The **objective** is to leverage the character and potential of this area for the highest possible activity, energy, and development intensity in the downtown.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Heart of the City
- Thinking Big
- The Place to Be

Policies in this subsection encourage high-density redevelopment and the attraction of uses of businesses that provide a regional draw. The plan sees the downtown core as the place for events and programming and for removing the parking restrictions of the Land Use Bylaw in favour of a parkade subsidy where the structure can convert to useable space in the future. The list of **municipal actions** is long in this subsection, suggesting mechanisms such as façade grants, funds to pay insurance premiums for sidewalk sales and patios on municipal rights-of-way, and seed funding for a Business Improvement Association (BIA).

Section 2.05 – Reimagining Main Street

The **preamble** of this subsection notes that residents wanted Main Street to become a “complete street” during the design charrettes, meaning that it had room for all forms of transportation (walking, cycling, transit, driving, etc.). The Main Street right-of-way also makes up a good portion of the downtown and presents an opportunity for either more parking or more amenity (i.e. plaza) space to the downtown. As such, the **objective** is to reimagine the physical design of Main Street to accelerate redevelopment in the downtown.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Reimagining Main Street
- The Place to Be
- Connected and Mobile

Two aims of the **policies** in this subsection are: 1) to see Main Street as a distinct feature in the downtown, and 2) to consider it as a location for events to attract people and spending. Council starts the **municipal actions** for this subsection by selecting the balance between economic supports (i.e. more on-street parking) and amenity supports (i.e. more plaza space) for Main Street and then working, over time, toward an aspirational design with a special focus on the block between Centre Avenue and First Avenue. As complementary actions, Administration will determine the best possible times for road closures that would allow for successful events without impacting transportation in the area.

Section 2.06 – Infilling Vehicular-Oriented Development Areas

Downtown Airdrie has several lots with large parking areas, as stated in the **preamble**. Within this subsection, the **objective** is to fill in the larger parking areas in commercial lots.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principle**:

- The Place to Be

The general intent of the **policies** is to fill in parking areas with new developments where possible. When this is not possible right away in a redevelopment plan, the applicants will be required to create an internal grid network for traffic flow and to preserve development cells. Policies in this subsection restrict drive-throughs and major automotive uses. The **municipal actions** this section have the municipality working with property owners to review their redevelopment plans and ensuring that constraints are not put on potential redevelopment parcels by accident.

Section 2.07 – Civic Development Catalysts

Future civic and quasi-civic uses are seen as opportunities to spur new activity and investment in **preamble**. The opening of this subsection notes also that Council selected the former fire hall site for the new library and that the combination of its design, uses, and connections to adjacent Nose Creek provide opportunities to increase the activity and prominence of Downtown Airdrie. The **objective** of this subsection is to leverage civic investments for activity and private investment in the downtown.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Lead by Example
- Heart of the City
- Think Big

Policies for this issue suggest that civic investments should help make Downtown Airdrie regionally recognizable and they highlight the importance of coordinating civic investments with private investments for maximum effect. **Municipal actions** for this issue require Council to view downtown as a first option for locating civic projects and to market such investments to attract private investors.

Section 2.08 – Gateways

The **preamble** speaks to the importance that the design charrette participants placed on gateway treatments for the downtown. As such, the **objective** is to ensure that public and private investments create a sense of arrival into the downtown and its importance to the community.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Heart of the City
- Place to Be

- Think Big

The **policies** in this subsection require development on a gateway parcel to be prominent within Airdrie and the region, while being careful not to have impacts on properties or neighbourhoods next to them. **Municipal actions** for this issue see Council considering these policies for any civic development catalyst on a gateway parcel. The plan indicates that the municipality may prepare a gateway entry feature plan within five years of adopting the downtown plan.

Section 2.09 – Corridor and Boundary Areas

The **preamble** considers rail lines, adjacent neighbourhoods and Nose Creek as corridors and boundaries requiring attention when redeveloping the downtown. Therefore, the **objective** of this subsection is to ensure that development responds well to adjacent corridors and boundaries.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- The Right Rules and Processes

Policies in this subsection require 30m distances between rail lines and new buildings, avoiding large height differences, shadows and major traffic impacts with adjacent neighbourhoods, and having developments and activity areas face Nose Creek – not loading bays and garbage enclosures. Proposed **municipal actions** involve amending the Land Use Bylaw to restrict loading bays and garbage enclosures adjacent to Nose Creek and attracting uses not affected by railway lines for parcels adjacent to that corridor. Plans for integrating development with Nose Creek to come within 4 years of plan adoption.

Section 2.10 – Natural Spaces

The **preamble** for this subsection outlines the need to highlight Nose Creek as the primary environmental feature in the downtown. Thus, the **objective** is to ensure that redevelopment respects existing natural areas and that we open up Nose Creek overall for pedestrians, cyclists and visitors.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- The Place to Be
- Connected and Mobile
- Leading by Example

This subsection has **policies** that require adherence to the provincial flood area mapping and the policies of the Nose Creek Watershed Management Plan (NCWMP). Creating public access from private and public areas represents a key **municipal action**, as does respecting appropriate flood and watershed management policies.

Section 2.11 – Urban Parks

The **preamble** for this subsection notes that there are major public parks just outside the plan boundary, but limited public parks within the plan area. The preamble outlines the preference from design charrette participants to have more public and quasi-public open spaces. Accordingly, the **objective** of this subsection is to develop a range of connected parks and to enhance public areas (i.e. grounds in front of City Hall, etc.).

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- The Place to Be
- Reimagine Main Street

Policies for this issue allow private developments to receive credit for creating quasi-public spaces and connecting to any adjacent public spaces. The plan encourages community gardens and other quasi-public activity generators. **Actions** for this issue have the municipality exploring year-round programming opportunities and working with redevelopment applicants to create quasi-public spaces.

Section 2.12 – Airdrie Main Street Square Complex

The **preamble** states the preference of the public to have the AMSQ site used for civic and quasi-civic development during the design charrettes. The **objective** of this subsection is for the AMSQ site to contribute to the overall development of the downtown.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Everyone’s Success
- Think Big

Policies for this issue require only retaining communication with the AMSQ Board and adhering to the civic development catalyst (Section 2.07) policies, if applicable. Administration takes on only the **actions** of providing information on development trends to the AMSQ Board and on development regulation for Council as a Development Authority, if ever applicable.

Section 2.13 – Towerlane Centre Development Area

The **preamble** defines the Towerlane Centre as a specific vehicular-oriented development under a single owner. The preamble discusses the intent to coordinate development on this site with the future library as a civic development catalyst. The **objective** is to coordinate the redevelopment potential of this site with adjacent development sites (i.e. future library) and public infrastructure.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Place to Be
- Right Rules and Processes
- Everyone’s Success

Policies for this issue have the site conforming with the land use concept from the design charrettes and connecting with the future library site. Opportunities for pop-up uses and temporary events are encouraged under policies in this subsection. **Municipal actions** for this issue require Administration to collaborate with the owner (First Capital Realty) to integrate the new library site, investigate event opportunities, review public road and pedestrian connections to and from the site, and develop the best possible development regulations to facilitate redevelopment.

Section 3

Downtown Functions

Section 3.01 – Temporary Land Uses and Activities

Food trucks, retail spaces and markets are just some of the temporary activities that can create activity in an area, as outlined in the **preamble** for this subsection. So, the **objective** here is to support temporary land uses and activities that will add to the vibrancy of downtown.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Place to Be
- Right Rules and Processes
- Everyone's Success

Policies for this subsection call out the downtown as the primary location for temporary uses and activities in Airdrie. They require new buildings to consider opportunities for temporary indoor or outdoor spaces and activities to add life to their confines and the downtown overall. **Municipal actions** here mainly involve establishing an easy application process for temporary uses and marketing this opportunity within the region.

Section 3.02 – Affordable Housing

The **preamble** for this subsection acknowledges a lack of supportive housing stock in Airdrie. This opening notes that downtown has a greater concentration of amenities required by tenants of affordable housing and that it presents a better opportunity than existing municipal housing asset locations. The **objective** on this issue is to place affordable housing units in appropriate forms and strategic locations within the downtown.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Putting People First
- Leading by Example

Policies for this subsection suggest that the downtown should be the primary location for affordable housing and that the plan area as a whole should have a wide range of housing options. The policies encourage private developments to integrate supportive housing forms and to employ low energy demand facilities to keep operational costs low for tenants. **Municipal actions** here including refunding development and building application fees for mixed-use supportive housing developments and investigating a strategy to transfer the value of other housing assets into the downtown.

Section 3.03 – Events and Programming

The **preamble** for this subsection discusses Airdrie's community development approach to events, which relies on the community coming together for event organization and delivery. However, the opening notes that a trend is emerging to create or stimulate an *experience economy*, which has festivals, events and activities that encourage people to participate. In light of this, the **objective** in this subsection is to make the downtown the primary location for the events and programming.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Heart of the City of Airdrie
- Putting People First
- The Place to Be

Policies for this subsection point to downtown as the primary location for events, with an aim to attract all ages and to market these opportunities broadly. However, the proposed policies acknowledge the potential impacts of events on nearby property owners and seek to avoid or mitigate them. **Municipal actions** here involve fiscal and organizational support to create and assist community groups in undertaking special events. The plan also proposes that funds be available for covering insurance costs for private groups running events.

Section 3.04 – Supporting Multi-Modal Transportation

The **preamble** for this subsection acknowledges that there are lots of ways to get around, but that we have been thinking about the automobile first in our downtown. So, the **objective** here is to achieve a transportation system within the Downtown that caters to all forms of transportation and which favours walking as the highest priority.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Connected and Mobile
- Reimagining Main Street

Policies for this subsection support multiple forms of transportation existing in the same right-of-way. A higher priority is placed on walking and cycling than private automobiles, in particular. Among the proposed **municipal actions**, the City will work with redeveloping properties to ensure adequate connectivity to the main thoroughfares and space for transit, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure (i.e. transit shelters, bike lanes and racks, benches and clear, practical paving surfaces).

Section 3.05 – Pedestrian Mobility

The **preamble** for this subsection states that there are good connections available, but that more east-west connections are needed across corridors and barriers. The **objective** then is to enhance the pedestrian network with thoughtful design, good coordination with private development and strategic municipal investments.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Putting People First
- The Place to Be

Policies in this subsection speak to the strategic locations and specific design standards for pedestrian paths and crossings. The **municipal actions** require the City to develop a pedestrian connectivity plan and to review paths and crossings in the downtown every two years for opportunities for improvement.

Section 3.06 – Private Vehicle Parking

The **preamble** for this part of the plan speaks to the ample amount of parking that Downtown Airdrie has overall at 2,450 stalls. However, it also acknowledges the imbalance with less than 10% of those stalls within the core and less than 10% overall in public parking formats. As such, the **objective** is to harmonize the amount, and placement, of parking with the redevelopment aspirations of this plan.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Right Rules and Processes
- The Place to Be
- Everyone's Success

The **policies** for this subsection encourage maximum use of every available stall and support shared parking opportunities wherever possible. The policies anticipate autonomous vehicle technologies and transportation as a service, suggesting that long-term parking demands may decline steadily. Supports for this approach are provided through **municipal actions** in favour of investments in more on-street parking, paying to register shared private parking agreements, and complementing structured parking subsidies to enhance parking availability in the core.

Section 3.07 – Health Promotion

The **preamble** cites the relationship between a healthy built environment (especially in the downtown) and a healthy citizen. The **objective** is to develop a built environment in the downtown that facilitates increased health and wellness.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Lead by Example
- Think Big
- Putting People First

Policies in this subsection reference the policies in many other sections (i.e. social well-being, affordable housing, civic development catalysts) and the way that they have to come together to create a healthy environment for all. The policies also note that the individual citizen is just as responsible for contributing to a healthy environment as local government and other key institutions. **Actions** here include maintaining a relationship with key health experts to ensure that the City creates and maintains a downtown that promotes social and physical health for all.

Section 3.08 – Experiencing Small Town Feel

The **preamble** for this subsection includes a story that typifies small town feel in Airdrie along with a definition of the term as a related series of feelings of trust, safety, belonging, comfort and pride. The ten placemaking principles accepted for information by Council are provided as reference for the plan reader. The **objective** in this part of the plan is to retain and enhance the small town feel cherished by the community as redevelopment occurs downtown.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- The Place to Be
- Lead by Example

Policies in this subsection allow for placemaking opportunities (activities and social opportunities) on private and public properties. **Actions** here propose funding and other means to support activities and social opportunities, with a specified review schedule.

Section 3.09 – Strengthening Social Well-Being

The **preamble** for this subsection includes the definition of social well-being adopted by Council in April 2020. The plan acknowledges the five elements of this term, which include: social acceptance; social contribution; social inclusion; social support; and, social capital. The **objective** in this part of the plan

is to ensure that the social well-being of residents is enhanced through the type and scale of redevelopment and revitalization contemplated by this plan.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- Putting People First
- The Place to Be
- Leading by Example

Policies in this subsection encourage a diversity of people and activities in the downtown, further requiring that developments are open and inclusive by way of designing for public interactions. **Actions** include extending municipal service opportunities and coordinating with institutional partners to extend service opportunities and hours. The plan also contemplates the City creating an inclusionary zoning bylaw within 3 years of plan adoption.

Section 4

Implementation

Section 4.01 – A Collective Approach to Removing Redevelopment Barriers

The **preamble** for this subsection describes the intent of the City to work with property owners and potential investors to establish processes that would facilitate redevelopment and provide increased development certainty. Therefore, the **objective** in this part of the plan is to establish processes for development applications in the downtown that remove barriers while ensuring continuing to protect the public interest and prevent negative impacts.

The policies and actions of this subsection tie to the following **principles**:

- The Right Rules and Processes
- Everyone's Success

Policies in this subsection support approval of redevelopment applications unless they are contrary to the aims of this plan. **Actions** include removal of parking requirements and requesting resources to expedite application reviews in the downtown. In collaboration with the development industry and property owners, the City may be able to provide further development certainty by paying for the completion of environmental site assessments for all downtown properties. This removes a barrier for outside investment by removing unknown considerations.

Section 4.02 – TBD: Resource Requirements, Redevelopment Benefits, Timelines, Grant Opportunities

On completion of public consultation on this draft plan, Administration will be reviewing the resource requirements for the proposed actions against the anticipated redevelopment assessment revenues.

Accordingly, there will be subsequent sections describing all of the actions and the timelines for implementation. In October 2020, Council authorized Administration to send a letter to Municipal Affairs to request consideration for a Community Revitalization Levy (CRL) that could fund some of the proposed actions and/or capital projects in the downtown. This, and other available grant opportunities, will be described in the forthcoming implementation subsections.