

# Preserve and Protect the Heart of Calgary's Low Density Residential Neighbourhoods

January 2021

**The 2021 Guidebook for Great Communities should be revised to properly address the concerns of many Calgarians over the treatment of our existing homes in our stable low density residential neighbourhoods.**

## 1. Focused Redevelopment

*"The Municipal Development Plan directs growth to typologies such as Main Streets and Activity Centres within communities. Guidebook p iv"*

We agree with and support this key direction. It puts densification where it should be.

The MDP also provides an excellent articulation of the benefit of focused redevelopment around activity centers and along the busier roads.

*Section 2.2.1 Vibrant and Transit-Supportive Mixed-Use, Activity Centres and Main Streets. Objectives:*

*"Focusing most intensification to defined areas provides **more certainty** to the development and building industries and makes redevelopment **more predictable** for existing communities by **lessening the impact on stable, low-density areas.**"*

The ad hoc random redevelopment in areas away from the preferred focused growth typologies should be avoided.

### Neighbourhood Design

We believe that virtually all successful residential neighbourhoods follow the same general design;

- Contiguous areas of one type of low density housing form separate from other contiguous areas of a different housing form.
- They are not designed with higher intensity forms dropped ad hoc into the middle of lower intensity forms, or visa versa.
- Intensification is focused adjacent to busier streets and activity centres.

Virtually all the new subdivisions are also designed along this same model. Look at the layout of some of Calgary's most innovative and successful new communities, Mahogany, Mackenzie Town, Auburn Bay. They all have large separate areas of houses with separate areas of narrow-lot homes, other areas of semi-detached and duplex homes, and higher intensity forms along the busier streets and around the activity centres. They do not mix housing forms.

### Existing Neighbourhood Character

The character of Calgary's existing neighbourhoods started with the original design and then took decades to build. Great cities are characterized by retaining and protecting some neighbourhoods that preserve the City's unique heritage and character.

**We should preserve and protect the existing neighbourhood core of homes against ad hoc higher intensity redevelopment. This would focus the higher intensity to the defined areas where it should be.**

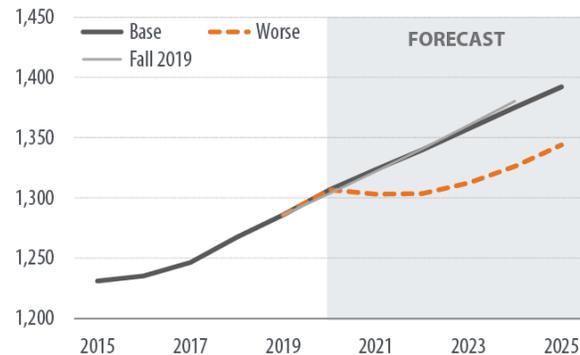
## 2. Future Uncertainty and Cumulative Effects

The impact of the ongoing recession in the energy industry, and the worsening impact of the Covid 19 crisis suggest that Calgary's population growth will be less than expected.

The *Calgary and Region Economic Outlook (Fall 2020)* shows potential lower population and employment forecasts in response to the Covid 19 crisis. With the current higher caseloads, deaths, and lock-down restrictions, these forecasts will only get worse.

### City of Calgary: Total Population

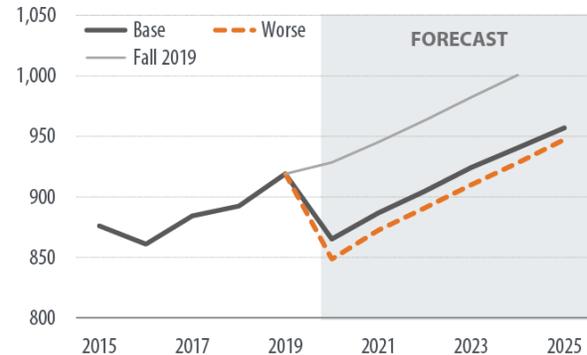
(thousands of persons)



Source: The City of Calgary Civic Census, Corporate Economics

### Calgary Economic Region: Total Employment

(thousands of persons)



Source: Statistics Canada, Corporate Economics

Calgary will not need as much new housing as the previous long-term forecasts suggest.

For any new redevelopment, an existing home and streetscape must be demolished. This is irreversible and cumulative. If redevelopment is ad hoc and random, with time the unique identity of the neighbourhoods will be eroded. With time, all our neighbourhoods will look the same.

There is no need to reduce the unique character of existing neighbourhoods until it is obvious that intensification is required to meet new demand.

Random, ad hoc redevelopment should be avoided to prevent premature destruction of viable homes to make way for densification that will likely not be needed.

**The City should preserve its existing homes and neighbourhoods for as long as possible.**

## 3. We propose the following revisions to the Guidebook.

1. Create a new UFC "Neighbourhood Local Preservation" that retains the existing Land Use Bylaw District districts, rules and uses.
2. Allow the Local Area Plan to identify the appropriate areas in which to focus intensification.
3. All areas NOT identified for intensification should be designated "Neighbourhood Local Preservation".

This simple revision would:

- Provide the needed density increases.
- Retain and preserve existing neighbourhood character that took decades to build.

- Focus redevelopment where it should be around busier streets and activity centres.
- Reflect the design used in Calgary's successful new communities: separate areas of different housing forms.
- Provide more certainty to the development and building industries.
- Provide more predictability and less needless impact to the majority of Calgarians who live in stable, low-density neighbourhoods.

Please consider these proposed revisions. Calgary's future is uncertain for the next few years. Let's take the time to preserve the great city we have. As the future unfolds, and if we do need to increase the population density, we can re-look and re-focus our plans to put the right redevelopment in the right places.

Respectfully,

Michael Read

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