



The Municipal Development Plan (2009) defined a strategy to add density in activity centres (nodes) and main transportation routes (corridors), which are located throughout the city and adequate to accommodate long-term growth and density targets. The proposed policies of the Guidebook for Great Communities and the Bylaw for 'local housing' would reallocate that growth to spread density more widely throughout ALL communities.

A Cautionary Tale: Depopulation in Calgary (1960s-70s)

The Guidebook and the impending Bylaw, allows a range of intensification in established neighbourhoods, which may create the exact opposite effect to what is being promised (increased population and diversity of building forms), if recent history repeats itself.

Calgary, in the 1960s and 1970s, along with other Canadian cities, experienced the depopulation of many of its established neighbourhoods. Schools were closing, houses fell into disrepair and nearby local businesses suffered. Sporadic spot rezoning for new buildings eroded people's confidence in how their neighbourhood was changing. The federal government introduced a package of programs to help cities reverse this trend of dis-investment and departure. The keys of the program were to firstly, stabilize land uses in these deteriorating neighbourhoods through development of local planning studies and secondly, to develop planning studies with robust public engagement and partnership with residents.

Calgary introduced the Design Brief (the precursor to the Area Redevelopment Plan), which included massive down-zonings and strategies to re-energize the neighbourhood. The engagement, more like a partnership, co-determined what areas would redevelop, where capital funds for public benefit would be spent and for what purpose. Calgary saw residents returning to the established areas, fixing up small bungalows, and perhaps adding on to the back or adding a second story. By the early 1980s, some of the original homes were demolished and new homes replaced them, while sometimes, depending on the zoning, skinny infills appeared. Schools started filling up and local business areas rejuvenated with Business Improvement Areas.

The City, in reallocating growth via the Guidebook, will weaken its original strategy if it allows for density to be spread more widely throughout communities. There is only so much development that can occur and the last thing the City wants to create is "free range development."

If the Guidebook and the new Bylaw get approved, developers could buy land in the middle of an established community, choosing lots that would offer the highest returns because single dwellings are torn down to build apartment buildings. In so doing, developers would forgo intensifying nodes and corridors, where the MDP of 2009 intended for density to be added.

The addition of density everywhere would lessen the likelihood that nodes and corridors get intensified.