

INCREASING HOUSING CHOICE

Key Considerations for Limited-Scale Policy Direction

Housing choice is an important topic in the Westbrook Communities Local Area Plan (the Plan). We've heard from the public that this is one of the most significant issues for them, whether they want to see more housing choice in their community, or whether they are concerned with change in their neighbourhood and want to limit that change to certain housing forms, or something in between.

Conversations around increasing housing choice, protecting single-detached housing areas, balancing growth between communities are not just conversations happening in the Westbrook communities, they are happening all throughout Calgary, so we want to provide our reasoning behind our policies.





Clockwise from top left: semi-detached home in Glenbrook, duplex home in Shaganappi, single-detached home in Scarboro/Sunalta West, courtyard rowhouses in Killarney, rowhouses in Richmond, single-detached home in Westgate, bungalow in Glenbrook, semi-detached homes in Rosscarrock, single detached homes in Spruce Cliff, single-detached in Wildwood.

Limited-scale policies apply to all the areas in the the Plan that are identified as neighbourhood local on the Urban Form Map (Map 3) of the Plan and are limited scale (3 stories or less) shown on the Building Scale Map (Map 4). These areas constitute the largest portion of the plan area and make up what most residents think of as the core of the residential areas of their community. The policies guide where single-detached and semi-detached homes and rowhouses, townhouses are supported in the area.



In this document, we provide a detailed rationale as to why we are proposing the policies we are, how those policies reflect public feedback, demographic trends and citywide policies and what those policies mean for residents, developers and other interested parties. Most importantly, we have heard that providing greater certainty and clarity around our policies are important for the public, so we have taken additional steps to clearly detail how these policies apply on the ground by providing a map showing how the policy applies.



What informed our overall approach to our neighbourhood local, limited-scale policies

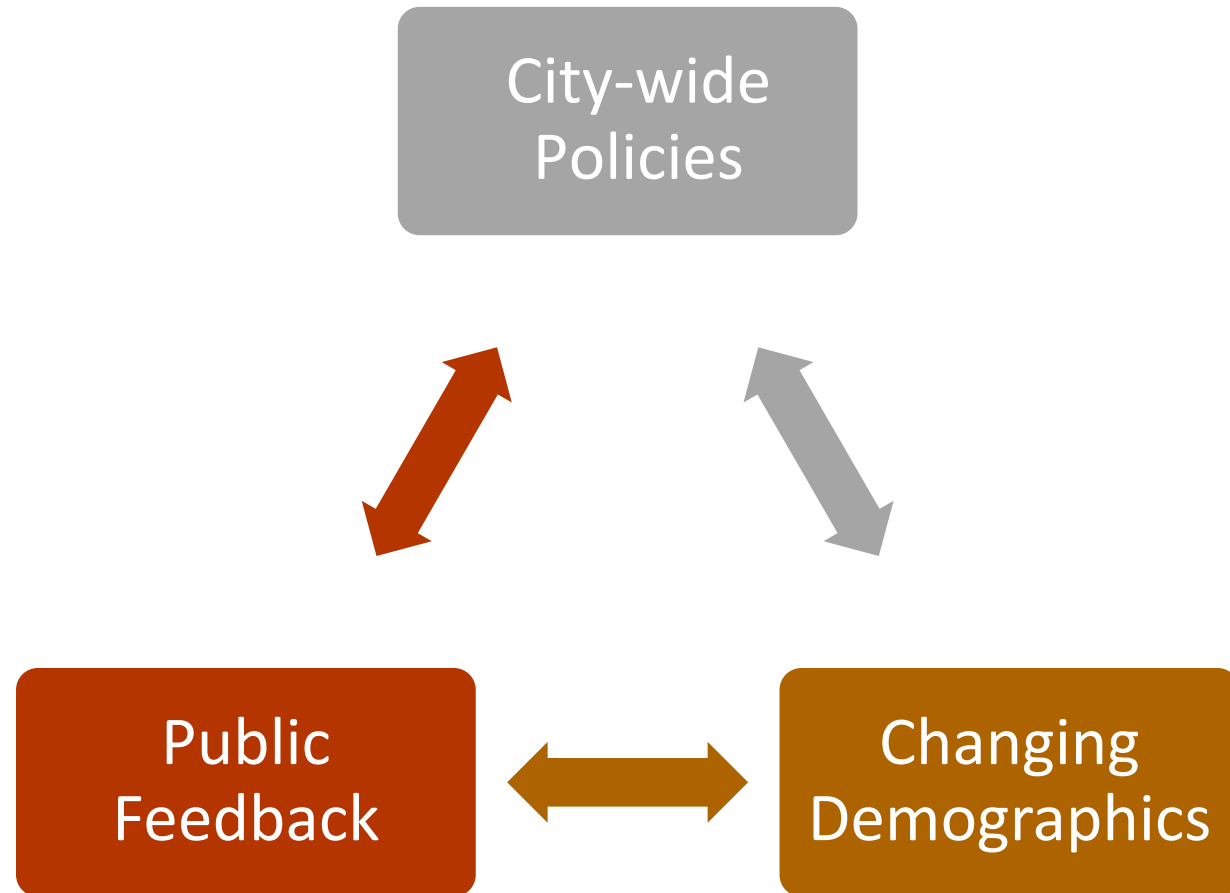
(i.e. policies that address where single-detached, semi-detached, rowhouse and townhouse developments are supported)

When developing policies for limited-scale development (i.e. where single-detached, semi-detached, rowhouse and townhouse developments are supported), three main considerations were taken into account:

- existing **city-wide policies** such as our *Municipal Development Plan*,
- **changing demographics** and population trends, and
- **public feedback** from engagement on this topic.

We worked to strike a balance between these considerations, and the policy that was developed is a reflection of that balance.

In the next few pages, we detail how each of these factors was taken into consideration in developing the policy.



Citywide Policies & Objectives

The City of Calgary is growing. Over the last 10 years, the City of Calgary has grown by an average of over 20,000 people per year. All these new people need homes, and everyone has different needs, preferences and wants when it comes to choosing a home. Some people want a home in a new suburb, others want to live closer to the centre of the city, and others want something in between. Accommodating all these new people means allowing new homes to be built both on the edges of the city and in our established neighbourhoods.

The City of Calgary's *Municipal Development Plan* (MDP) seeks to balance growth between our developed and developing areas of the city and has a goal to achieve 50% of cumulative growth from 2006 to 2066 within our established neighbourhoods.

This means we need to allow new homes in our communities, and the Westbrook Communities need to do their part in accommodating these new homes and new Calgarians.

Some policies in the *Municipal Development Plan* that speak to fostering more diversity in housing choice, and encouraging these types of developments are as follows:

2.2.5(a) Encourage growth and change in low-density neighbourhoods through development and redevelopment that is similar in scale and built form and increases the mix of housing types such as accessory suites, semi-detached, townhouses, cottage housing, row or other ground-oriented housing.

2.2.5(b) Support development and redevelopment that provides a broader range of housing choice in local communities to help stabilize population declines and support the demographic needs of communities.

2.3.1 (a) Provide a wide range of housing types, tenures (rental and ownership) and densities to create diverse neighbourhoods that include:

(i) A mix of housing types and tenures, including single-detached, ground oriented (e.g. duplexes, row houses, attached housing, accessory dwelling units and secondary suites), medium- and higher-density and mixed-use residential developments; and

(b) A range of housing choices, in terms of the mix of housing sizes and types to meet affordability, accessibility, life cycle and lifestyle needs of different groups.

The Changing Demographics of Households

In addition to continued growth in our city, we are also seeing dramatic changes in the nature and make-up of households in Calgary. In 1969, the average number of people living in a home in Calgary was 3.55 people. Today that number is 2.71. The demographic changes in the Westbrook Communities are no different. The average household in 1969 in Westbrook had 3.65 people living in it, while today that number is 2.30. Despite there being over 5,500 more homes in the area today than in 1969, the population of the area has in fact declined by nearly 1600 people.

There are fewer people living in the Westbrook Communities today than there were in 1969.

However, during that same time, the City of Calgary has grown from a city of just over 360,000 people to over 1.3 million today. In contrast, nearly every community in the Westbrook area has less population today than it did in 1969, except for Spruce Cliff and Killarney. Some communities have declined significantly and have far fewer people today than they did in the past. Wildwood has nearly 1600 people less today than it did 50 years ago, a decline of 37%. Westgate has over 1000 less people today than in 1969, a decline of nearly 25%. Glendale has 30% less people than 50 years ago. Upper Scarboro/Sunalta West has 35% less people. Even those communities that have seen growth recently are still below their peaks 50 years ago. Shaganappi has 24% less people, Rosscarrock 6%, Richmond 2% and Glenbrook 3%. Killarney, which has seen to most recent growth, only has 14 more people today than it did in 1968 (Spruce Cliff has nearly 2000 more people than it did in 2001, when it reached its lowest population).

Allowing gradual growth in the Westbrook Communities can start to address these declines in population in our communities and the disparity between growth on the outside of the city and within established neighbourhoods. But we need to do so in a thoughtful and balanced way.



Public Engagement and Feedback on the Westbrook Communities Local Area Plan

During Phase 3 of our engagement, which took place in late May until late June of 2022, we asked participants about small-scale homes. We wanted to understand where people felt different housing forms were most appropriate, and what people saw as concerns and benefits of different housing forms. From this engagement, three main themes emerged from the comments we received about this topic.

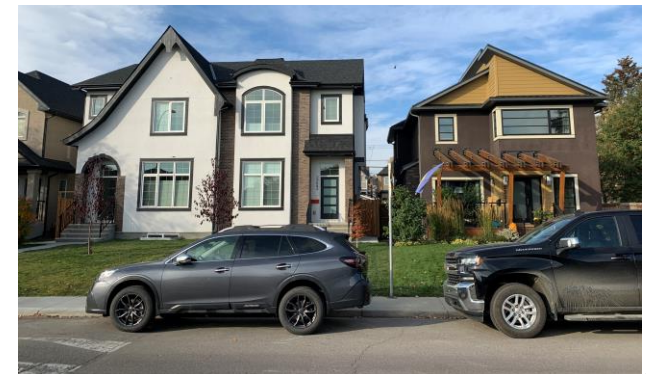
Find Balance: We've heard a wide range of opinions on housing, from those who want to protect single-detached areas to those who want to see all forms of small scale homes everywhere. Many understand the need to increase housing choice and expressed a desire to move forward incrementally.

Finding the balance between these perspectives meant allowing more housing choices throughout communities, but also limiting certain forms (such as rowhouses and townhouses) in some areas. This will allow some level of growth in all communities but would restrict some of the more intense forms of growth from occurring everywhere.

Ensuring Equity: People have raised concerns about equitable treatment across communities. For example, why should some communities be expected to take on additional density rather than others?

Many participants raised the issue that if the Plan pursued a policy of protecting single-detached homes in some areas, but allowed all other forms of limited-scale development (i.e. rowhouses and townhouses) on every property in other areas, it would create a considerable disparity between communities and different areas in terms of growth and change. While some areas would be expected to accommodate a significant amount of change, other areas would see no change in terms of growth.

The policy that was created brings these two extremes closer together. This way, each community will allow for some growth, but there will be some variation on the type of that growth based on the community's characteristics and location (whether it has a transit station or main street, how many lots are corner lots, how many and how large its parks are), which is explained in greater detail later in this document.



Public Engagement and Feedback on the Westbrook Communities Local Area Plan

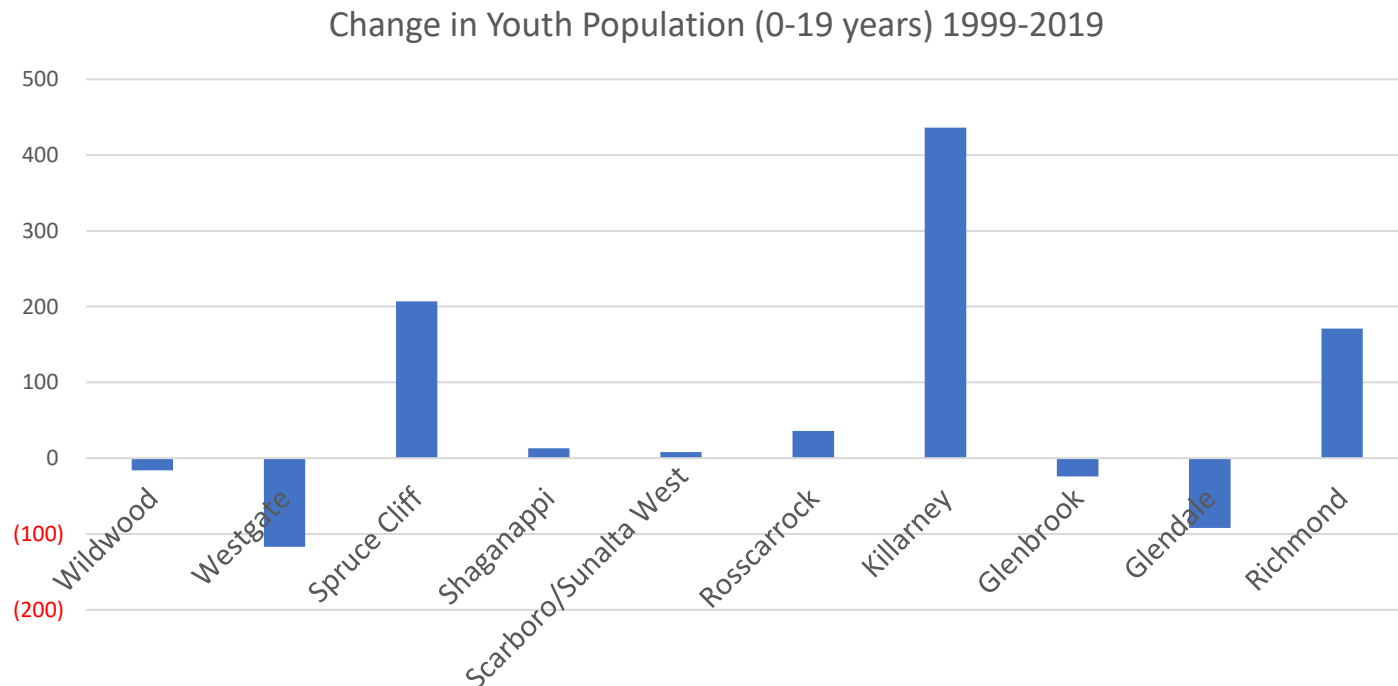
Amenities and Services:

School closures are frequently raised as a key concern. Data shows a decline in the number of school-aged children in communities that are primarily single-detached and the highest number of school-aged children in communities with greater housing choice.

Early in our engagement on the Plan, long before we started discussing small-scale growth, we heard from participants that a key concern was supporting local amenities and services in the area, especially school utilization and closures. Understanding this was a key concern, we looked into the data on youth (aged 0-19 years) to understand how this population group was changing in the Westbrook Communities.

What we found was that in fact the youth population of these communities had grown in the last 20 years, with 622 more youth aged 0-19 living in the Westbrook Communities.

However, the change in youth population was significantly varied by community, with Killarney, Richmond and Spruce Cliff together adding more than 600 youth, while communities such as Glendale and Westgate have each see declines of around 100 youth in their communities.



Public Engagement and Feedback on the Westbrook Communities Local Area Plan

Amenities and Services (continued):

To help understand why these changes were occurring, we also looked into the average number of youth in different housing types. We heard from some participants a perspective that rowhouses, townhouses, apartments and even semi-detached dwellings would not attract households with children, and households with children would only choose to live in a single detached home. We wanted to look into this and when we did the data told us a different story:

We also see that apartments and secondary suites do attract households with children, albeit at a lower rate than single-detached, semi-detached, rowhouses and townhouses. In fact, over half of the growth in youth population in the Westbrook Communities is from children living in apartments (331 more children living in apartments today than in 1999). Understanding these changes, we knew that in order to address the concerns over school closures and utilization, supporting more semi-detached homes and rowhouses would help put us on that path.

Housing Type	Average number of children (0-19 years old)
Single-detached home	0.54
Semi-detached home	0.58
Townhouse/ Rowhouse	0.61
Secondary Suite	0.28
Apartment	0.21

There are more children living in the average rowhouse or semi-detached home than in the average single-detached home.



What are the policies?

The policies below apply to anywhere in the Plan that is identified as limited scale and is in the neighbourhood local urban form category (see Limited Scale Map on page 11). These areas make up the majority of the residential areas and cover what many residents think of the residential core of their communities. These policies help guide what types of housing (i.e. single-detached homes, semi-detached homes, rowhouses and townhouses) are supported within those areas, and where. The policies are as follows:

- a. Secondary suites are permitted where already allowed by the existing land use designation and are not considered a unit in the following policies.
- b. Building forms that contains one or two residential units are supported in the Neighbourhood Local, Limited Scale area.
- c. Building forms that contain three or more residential units should be supported throughout the plan area where they have a similar building envelope as building forms that contain one or two residential units.
- d. Building forms that contain three or more residential units should be supported on parcels with rear lanes in the following areas:
 - i. Within transit station area Core Zones and Transition Zones;
 - ii. Along a street identified as a Main Street or separated by a lane from a parcel along a Main Street;
 - iii. On corner parcels;
 - iv. Adjacent to or separated by a road or lane from a school, park or open space greater than 0.4 hectares.



Rowhouses on corner lots, like this one in Glenbrook, would be supported throughout the area.



Semi-detached homes, like these in Killarney, would be supported throughout the area

What different housing forms look like

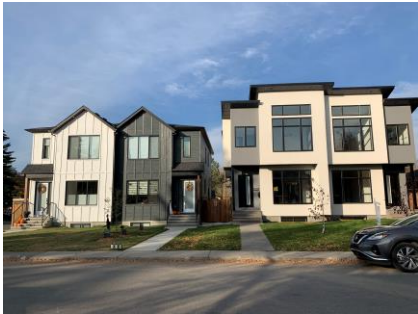
Single dwelling homes

(single detached)



Two dwelling homes

(semi detached)



3+ dwelling homes

(rowhouses and townhomes)



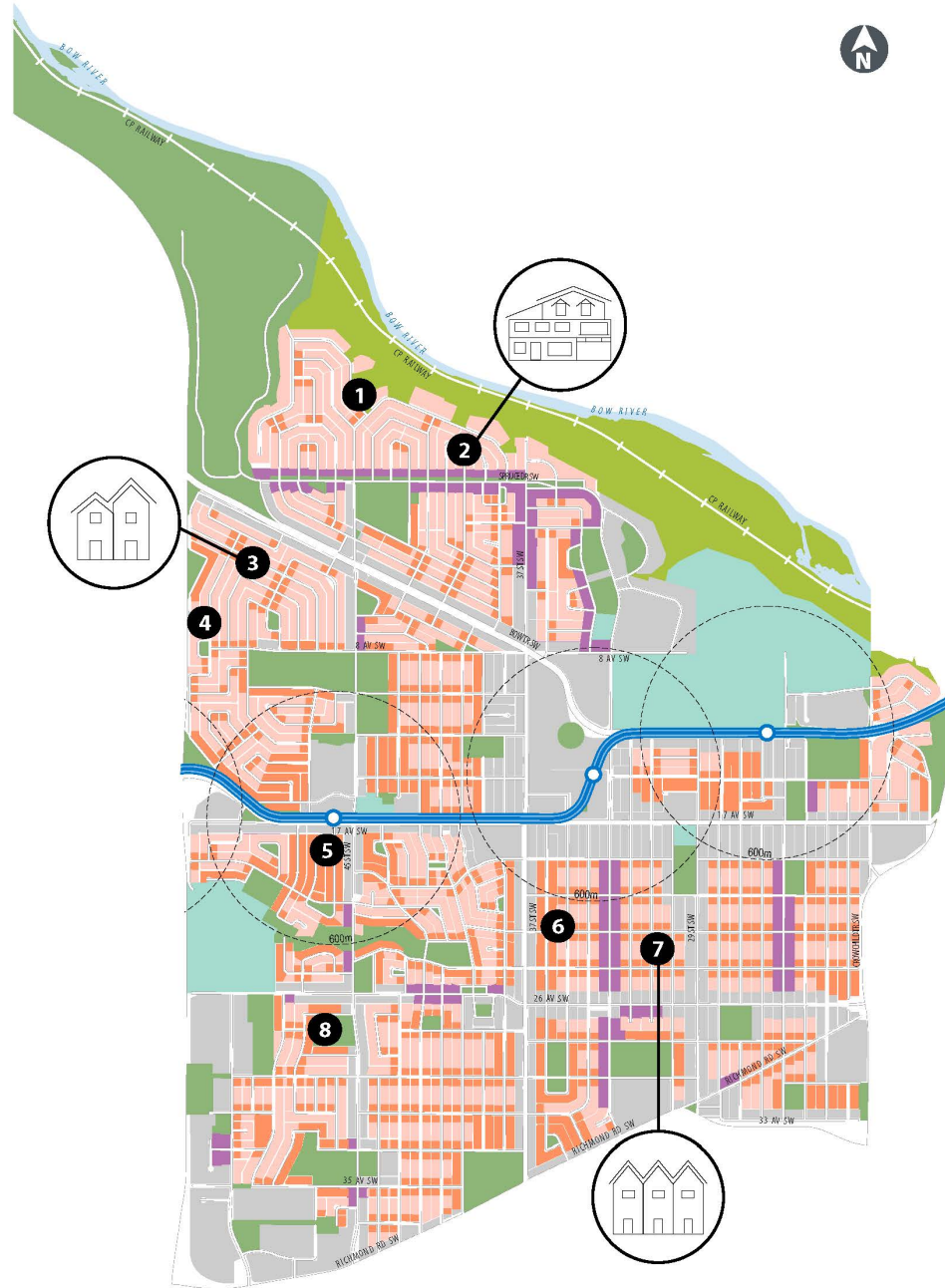
How do the policies apply on the ground?

The map on the next page shows how these policies apply to areas with the neighbourhood local urban form category with a limited-scale modifier.

We have also shown where the neighbourhood connector with a limited scale is applied. This area allows three or more unit homes wherever it is applied, and does not fall under the limited-scale policies. This area is where the new Housing – Grade-Oriented (H-GO) district would apply.

Limited Scale Map

- 1 In communities such as Wildwood, due to longer blocks and different road patterns, there are few corner lots, and therefore fewer places that allow 3 or more unit developments.
- 2 Current zoning allows up to three storey buildings in all these communities. New semi-detached homes are allowed to be no larger than new single-detached homes.
- 3 The majority of areas with a neighbourhood local urban form and limited scale modifier allow for up to two dwellings on a parcel (plus secondary suites). These areas will see gradual growth of semi-detached dwellings, but also new single-detached dwellings.
- 4 Park spaces smaller than 0.4 hectares (1.0 acres) do not allow for 3 or more unit dwellings, but there may be corner parcels nearby that do.
- 5 Areas around transit stations allow for three or more unit homes on the ground level, such as rowhouses. Maps for each station can be found in section 2.5.2 of the Plan.
- 6 Streets backing onto a Main Street (such as 36 street between 19 avenue to 26 avenue) allow for 3 or more unit development.
- 7 Three or more unit homes are also allowed on corner lots. In communities like Killarney, where corner lots face the avenues, this creates streets with a consistent character of rowhouses.
- 8 Parks greater than 0.4 hectares (1.0 acres) also allow 3 or more unit homes.



Legend

- Areas that support development up to two ground-oriented homes (single-detached homes, semi-detached homes and secondary suites) (R-C2).
- Areas that support development of three or more ground-oriented homes. Buildings in the rear yard may be up to 2 storeys, but may not include secondary suites (single-detached homes, semi-detached homes, rowhouses, townhouses and secondary suites) (R-CG).
- Areas that support development of three or more ground-oriented homes. Buildings in the rear yard may be up to 3 storeys (single-detached homes, semi-detached homes, rowhouses, townhouses and secondary suites may be up to 3 storeys) (H-GO).
- Areas that support development that is four storeys or greater (see building scale map for allowable building heights).
- Natural Areas
- Parks and Open Space
- City Civic and Recreation Natural Areas

This map is intended to help visually explain the Limited-Scale Policy direction included within the Westbrook Communities Local Area Plan, but is not an official map included within the Plan itself.

It is important to keep in mind that this visually represents the visionary direction outlined within the Plan. **The current land use designation or zoning that exists will remain as it is today.** The designation or zoning on a parcel (outlined within the Land Use Bylaw) can only be changed if a formal Land Use Redesignation (rezoning) or Land Use Bylaw amendment is proposed (by a landowner or The City) and approved by Council - both of which require public notification and opportunities for public involvement.

A Local Area Plan can be updated or amended over time as local conditions or circumstances change, in alignment with Council approved amendments or in alignment with future strategic policy updates.

Policy Rationale: Why we are supporting semi-detached dwellings throughout the Plan Area (i.e. why we are not implementing a Single-Detached Special Policy Area)

Semi-detached dwellings share a similar form to single-detached dwellings.

Semi-detached dwellings and single-detached dwellings have many of the same rules under the Land Use Bylaw and have similar forms. They have the same allowable height, the same allowable lot coverage and have the same rules for setbacks. The only difference between the two types of homes is the number of dwellings within them. We heard from many participants that because of these similarities, many of their concerns about semi-detached dwellings were addressed, or at least reduced. When looking at a new single-detached or semi-detached home, it is often hard to tell them apart, other than a second door.



Left: These skinny single detached homes (Spruce Cliff), semi-detached homes (Rosscarrock) and single-detached home (Wildwood) have very similar forms and character.

Those communities that are predominantly single-detached zoning (R-C1) (Glendale, Scarborough/Sunalta West, Westgate and Wildwood) are already seeing change in their communities. People are replacing older, smaller homes (typically bungalows) with newer, larger homes. Over the last 20 years, Wildwood has 64 new single detached homes, Westgate has 21, Upper Scarborough/Sunalta West has 16 and Glendale has 40. Similar to new semi-detached homes that are found in communities like Killarney, Richmond, Rosscarrock, Spruce Cliff, Shaganappi and Glenbrook, these homes tend to be more storeys and greater lot coverage than existing bungalows.

The photos to the right show some new single-detached homes in the communities of Glendale, Westgate and Wildwood.



New single-detached home in Glendale



New single-detached home in Westgate



New single-detached home in Wildwood

Policy Rationale: Why we are supporting semi-detached dwellings throughout the Plan Area

(i.e. why we are not implementing a Single-Detached Special Policy Area)

Semi-detached dwellings facilitate gradual growth within communities.

Many people have expressed concerns that supporting semi-detached dwellings will result in rapid growth in their community. That if semi-detached homes were allowed, there would be a sudden doubling of population, or that the roads would be congested with new traffic. However, this isn't the case. First of all, as mentioned above, the population of many of the communities in the Westbrook area have fewer people living in them today than they did in 1969. For these communities, an increase in population is just a return to how things were 50 years ago!



It has taken Killarney 40 years of developing semi-detached homes, such as these, just to recover its previous population loss.

Second, we know that growth from semi-detached infill housing is gradual. Communities that allow semi-detached dwellings (i.e. the zoning is predominantly R-C2) such as Mount Pleasant, West Hillhurst, Killarney or Renfrew, grow at a very gradual rate. Over the last 10 years, these R-C2 communities have grown at an average of 1.1% per year, and that includes growth from apartments and other larger developments!

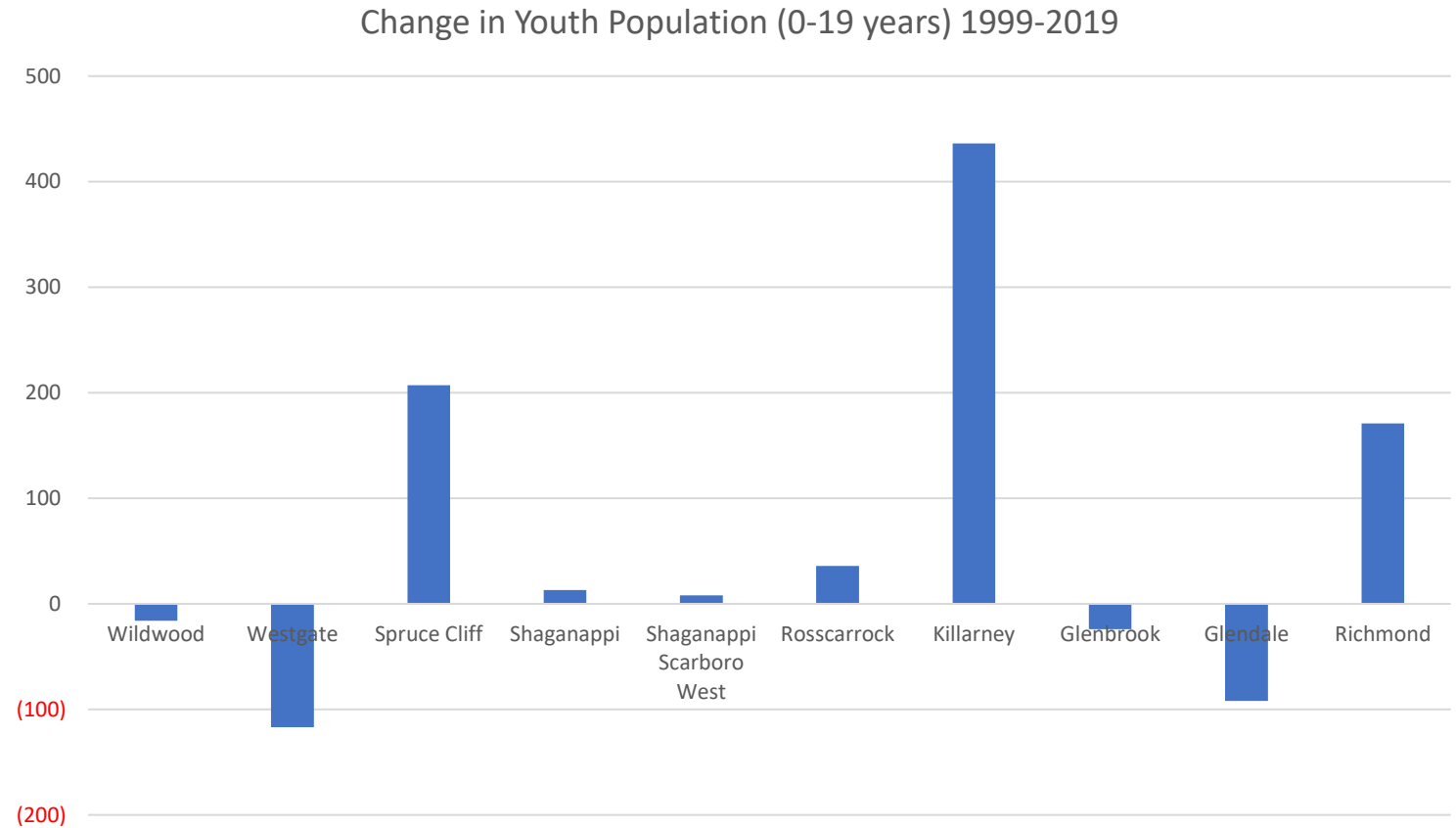
Allowing semi-detached dwellings throughout the Westbrook Communities would allow for very gradual growth to occur. Neighbourhoods won't change overnight. ***If Westgate, for example, started growing today at the same rate as R-C2 communities had over the last 10 years, it will take 28 years just to return to the peak population the community had in 1969.*** For Wildwood, it would take 46 years to reach its previous peak, 37 years for Glendale and 45 years for Upper Scarboro/Sunalta West.

Allowing semi-detached dwellings means that existing homes are slowly replaced by both new single-detached and semi-detached homes, instead of just new single-detached homes. As this change is gradual, the character of a community changes slowly as well, and single-detached homes often remain the predominant housing form in the community. Take for example, Killarney, which has seen the most change with infill development in the Westbrook Communities. Killarney started experiencing infill development starting in the 1980s, and has over 40 years of community change. ***Yet, Killarney is still mostly single-detached homes.*** There are approximately 1320 single detached homes in the community, 870 semi-detached homes and 740 townhouses and rowhouses (there is a large townhouse complex along Richmond Road). In terms of area, this works out to roughly 68% of the residential parcels being single detached homes, 22% semi-detached homes and 10% being rowhouses and townhouses. A significant majority of space in the community is occupied by single detached homes, even after 40 years of redevelopment!

Policy Rationale: Why we are supporting semi-detached dwellings throughout the Plan Area (i.e. why we are not implementing a Single-Detached Special Policy Area)

Infill development helps populations recover, particularly youth population

We also know that allowing more semi-detached homes within communities means that the population of youth also gradually increases. We heard that school closures and utilization were an important concern for many residents of the Westbrook Communities. When we looked at the data, we saw that the gradual population growth in communities that allow semi-detached dwellings (as well as apartments) is also reflected in changes in youth population. Those communities that allow new semi-detached homes (especially Killarney and Richmond) have seen increases in the population of 0-19 year olds, while those communities that do not have seen their youth populations decline, especially in Westgate and Glendale.



Policy Rationale: Why we are supporting 3+ dwellings (i.e. rowhouses and townhouses) in certain areas, but restricting them in others? What informed our approach to this policy?

As described in the policy above, homes with three or more units are supported on parcels that have a lane that are either: along a main street, or separated by a lane from a main street; within a transit station area; on a corner lot; across from a park 0.4 hectares or larger or have a similar building envelope than single-detached and semi-detached homes. We choose these criteria several reasons:

Rear lanes should be a requirement.

We heard from participants that where properties don't have a rear lane, allowing three or more units (i.e. rowhouses and townhouses) often results in numerous driveways having to cross the sidewalk, creating conflicts with pedestrians and a ground floor design that becomes dominated by garages. Due to this, we are only supporting rowhouses and townhouses in these areas if they have a rear lane.

Public feedback supported 3+ unit dwellings in many locations, specifically main streets, transit stations, parks and corner lots.

When we asked residents and other participants in the community where 3+ unit dwellings were most appropriate, we received a spectrum of responses. Some people thought they should not go anywhere, others thought they should go everywhere, and most people were somewhere in between. However, most people supported 3+ unit developments in areas around main streets and transit station areas. Additionally, we have policies in our *Municipal Development Plan* that establish minimum intensity targets for these areas. We included transit station areas and main streets as areas where 3+ units could go.



Townhouses in Killarney close to Westbrook station



Rowhouses in Killarney along the 37 Street Main Street

Policy Rationale: Why we are supporting 3+ dwellings (i.e. rowhouses and townhouses) in certain areas, but restricting them in others? What informed our approach to this policy?



Rowhouses along Confederation Park in Capitol Hill



Corner lot rowhouses in Glenbrook

We heard feedback from participants early in our engagement that development around parks was desirable. People said that multi-family development around parks would have many benefits including more activation of park spaces, more accessible green spaces for residents of multi-family homes (who often do not have large personal outdoor space to enjoy) and more safety around the parks, as their would be more “eyes on the park.” When we proposed the concept of 4-storey or higher development around parks, however, many participants felt that the proposed density was too high, so we decreased that building scale around most community parks. However, many people commented that three-storey rowhouses and townhouses would be more appropriate in these areas. Others continued to emphasize that units with less private amenity space would benefit from being close to a public open space. Finally, some have pointed out that too often we locate multi-family buildings in places that are less desirable, such as by busy roads. Allowing these types of homes close to park spaces will result in more equitable access to community amenities.

Finally, we received moderate support for 3+ units on corner lots. These types of development are becoming more common and are starting to become more familiar to people. Additionally, we have seen more support for these types of development by City Council, who has approved the vast majority of applications for corner lot development of this type. In communities like Killarney, Richmond, Rosscarrock and Glenbrook, these types of developments are already happening. For communities like Glendale, Westgate and Wildwood, due to their neighbourhood structure, these developments will not be as prevalent, simply because there are less corner lots in these communities. Given all these factors, we decided to support 3+ units on corner lots.

Policy Rationale: Why we are supporting 3+ dwellings (i.e. rowhouses and townhouses) in certain areas, but restricting them in others? What informed our approach to this policy?

Public feedback was not as supportive of 3+ unit dwellings mid-block

The area that participants had the greatest concern for 3+ unit dwellings was within the middle of a residential block. Whether it was due to the increased massing, issues of privacy and shadowing, or simply the buildings feeling “out of place” in the middle of a block, many participants took issue with this location for 3+ unit homes. For this reason, the Plan does not support rowhouses and townhouses in these locations, unless they meet the other criteria (on or adjacent to a main street, in a transit station area, across from a park).



Courtyard style rowhouses, such as these in Killarney would be supported only in transit station areas, adjacent to main streets and adjacent to parks.

The public wanted to have clarity on where these were supported and where they were not

One message we heard from participants was that clarity on where the policies apply was important as participants were concerned that using terms such as “close to” or “in proximity to” main streets or transit stations was not entirely clear, and they didn’t know how far from a transit station or main street these policies would apply. In order to provide this clarity, we ensured all of our policies were clear and simple to interpret, and in place of using terms like “in proximity to” for transit stations, we used maps to define which areas the policies would apply to (these maps are found in section 2.5.2 of the Plan). For parks, we clarified that adjacent means across a street or lane or directly abutting a park, and that those parks had to be 0.4 hectares (1.0 acres) or larger.

In order to provide greater clarity, we have created the map on page 11 to clearly indicate where different forms of limited-scale development are supported.



Policy Rationale: Why we are supporting 3+ dwellings (i.e. rowhouses and townhouses) in certain areas, but restricting them in others? What informed our approach to this policy?

The policies, when applied to different communities, result in different outcomes, as different communities have different characteristics.

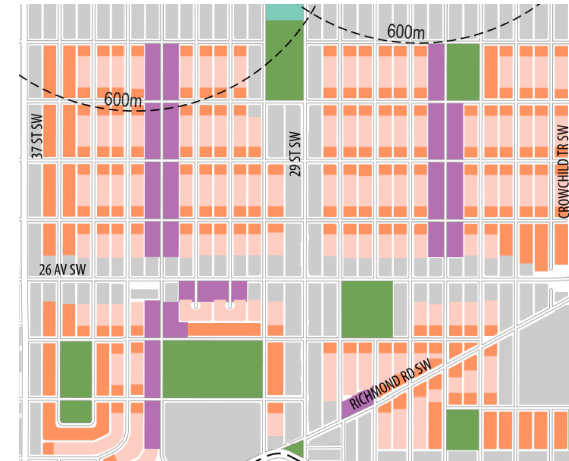
As can be seen on the map(s) above, when the policies for 3+ unit development are applied to different communities, there are different results. That is because these communities have different characteristics, contexts and structures. Killarney, Richmond, Shaganappi, Rosscarrock and most of Glenbrook have a grid street pattern and shorter blocks, so there are more corner lots that would support this development. Wildwood, Glendale and Westgate have very long blocks with few interruptions, so have fewer corner lots. Killarney and Glendale have parcels that back onto a main street. Shaganappi, Glendale and Westgate (and to a limited extent Richmond, Rosscarrock, Killarney and Glenbrook) have transit station areas that allow more 3+ unit development. Some communities have a single large park, others have several smaller parks, some of which are not larger than an acre. Taken together, these different characteristics result in a different result when the policies are applied.



Wildwood has longer blocks (fewer corner lots) and one large park space.



Transit stations, such as 45 Street Station, allow for more rowhouse and townhouse development.



Killarney and Richmond have short blocks (more corner lots), smaller parks and are adjacent to main streets and transit stations.



Some areas, such as portions of Scarboro/Sunalta West do not have lanes and would limit these developments.

Summary: Limited-Scale Policies



The limited-scale policies in the Westbrook Communities Local Area Plan achieve to strike a balance between differing perspectives on these housing forms while addressing demographic changes in these communities while implementing city-wide policies. The approach we have taken with these policies attempts to facilitate gradual growth in these communities, recognizing that some communities will take on a greater amount of change, but that all communities should do their part to contribute to a growing and changing Calgary.