

Glendale/Glendale Meadows
Community Association

Glendale & Glendale Meadows Community Association
4500 25 Ave SW
Calgary, AB, T3E 0M1
April 15, 2024

Councillor Richard Pootmans et al
City of Calgary Office of the Councillors
800 Macleod Trail SE
Calgary, AB
T3G 2M3

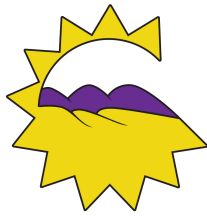
Dear Councillor Pootmans, Mayor Gondek, Ward Councillors and City Clerk

I am writing on behalf of the Glendale & Glendale Meadows Community Association to express our perspective on The City of Calgary's 'Home is Here' housing strategy. Specifically, Glendale is voicing its opposition to the City-wide blanket rezoning policy that includes R-CG, R-G and H-GO land uses. I ask that this letter be included in the public record for debate on this matter.

Make no mistake. Glendale stands firmly in favour of well-planned density growth and vehemently opposed to blanket rezoning of established Calgary neighbourhoods. What proof do we have of our support for density initiatives? Glendale volunteers have been diligent participants in the City's long-term planning processes for much of the past two decades, including plans for the West LRT, Main Street initiatives, and the recent Westbrook Local Area plan. All along the way, Glendale residents offered ideas and expertise to help craft a vision for our community's future. One such example is a density plan that Glendale volunteers created that identified the potential for 2,800 new homes in our community simply by targeting our perimeter streets. Our approach was ignored by City planners.

There was concern that input from residents in each of the 10 community associations who consulted on the Westbrook LAP that their input was not given serious consideration or weight. Ultimately we accepted the fact the new local area plan was in place and we have been watching new development take place at an unprecedented rate — all without a blanket rezoning policy. Approving a blanket rezoning policy would nullify all of the work and good faith put into these planning exercises. Redevelopment approvals would be a top-down dictate that has very little public support and would do nothing for the real issue of creating affordable housing.

Blanket rezoning removes the voice of the people who live in our neighbourhoods from producing the best possible development outcomes. As each major project comes forth, we challenge the developers and the City planning department to ensure that affordable housing, accessible housing, green energy, water conservation, tree preservation, even commercial opportunities are all considered.



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I'm not going to say our efforts have shown much success, but we continue to raise these issues and are still hopeful that City planners are able to exert some influence to help implement some of these community desires, almost all of them that align with broader City goals such as environmental protection.

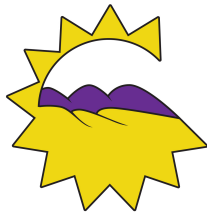
The Number 1 reason given for blanket rezoning is to create more affordable housing. Some consider that a relative term but rest assured there is nothing about blanket zoning that will create affordability. The City has declared a Climate Crisis, yet new projects are approved with no consideration for solar energy, heat pumps, water capture and recycling, loss of trees and water-absorbing ground cover. A big part of the Westbrook LAP focussed on developing walkable communities, yet the fundamental reason people walk is to go somewhere for a specific reason. There must be vibrant green spaces and practical commercial spaces to walk to. In most instances our voices have fallen on deaf ears.

The City reassured Glendale and its neighbouring communities that an LAP would see gradual growth and change over the next 30 years. Developers quickly saw the opportunity the LAP presented and have been building in Glendale at record rates. This is happening without the blunt hammer of blanket rezoning. In our community of 1,100 homes, there are currently almost 200 new units under construction. None of the new homes fall under the affordable housing umbrella and are almost all rental units. With blanket rezoning, we would likely see the same accelerated level of development on every street in the community, with developers picking off lower priced homes at random locales throughout the neighbourhood. Why does this matter?

When a single-family property is rezoned for development, the process is automatically inflationary because up zoning creates wealth potential for the developer, not the original property owner who has spent decades in their neighbourhood. A developer doesn't buy a property for altruistic reasons: they do it to make money. And that's the capitalist system we live in. Developers will not build affordable housing of their own accord.

Blanket zoning will give developers carte-blanche control over how our neighbourhoods and city evolves with no oversight: the checks, balances and restrictions citizens expect and deserve.

There is a significant wealth transfer going on with each new development. Properties are purchased for basically the price of land and row housing or block buildings are erected. When the first of these units were being built, you would see one-third of a triple-row house selling for about \$750,000, hardly affordable but still a property that a homeowner could build equity in. But with market rents soaring in Calgary, developers have stopped selling off these homes, instead putting them into the rental pool where cash flow soars and the developers build the equity. As an example, a 22-unit complex being built today is expected to generate more than \$500,000 rental cash each year, enough to carry a \$10 million mortgage. A 40-unit H-Go development in Glendale will generate almost a million dollars a year. A 100-unit, 6-storey apartment block will generate about \$2 million rent cash a year. These are all projects with shovels in the ground in Glendale that will produce significant income to pay commercial mortgage debt. I'm sure there is a significant profit margin in these projects as well. The wealth generated will stay with developers as tenants are faced with the reality of soaring market rents.



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This is a City and even a country that has depended on home ownership to help families develop the housing security they need and the nest egg that will help sustain them into the future. Transferring Calgary's real estate wealth from home owners to developers will dim that future.

A common refrain is that all neighbourhoods should be accessible to all people. I could not agree more and would argue that there are a variety of homes in every Calgary neighbourhood that fit most people's needs. Whether one can afford what is being offered on the market is the real problem.

The Westbrook Local Area Plan defined urban form categories as Neighbourhood Commercial, Neighbourhood Flex, Neighbourhood Connector and Neighbourhood Local, classifications that reflect the characteristics of each community, including a range of housing types, established development patterns and access to amenities such as parks and open spaces. We believe that the application of the R-CG, R-G and H-GO land uses do not take these differences into account and could lead to development that is not in line with the vision outlined in the Westbrook Plan. Blanket zoning will fracture neighbourhoods and create conflict where none needs to exist.

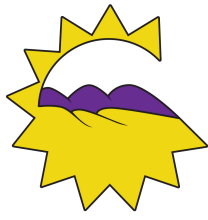
Most of the Glendale community is classified as Neighbourhood Local in the Westbrook LAP. When compared with the new housing strategy, this would be closest to the R-CG land use being proposed. But there are differences between the proposed blanket zoning strategy and the Westbrook LAP.

1. Purpose and Allowed Uses:

- R-CG is primarily focused on providing a variety of housing forms, including single-detached, semi-detached, secondary suites and row houses. It is designed to accommodate higher-density, with up to four units on a typical 50 foot lot with each of those units having a secondary suite (see appendix).
- Neighbourhood Local areas also allow for a mix of housing types and home-based business; however it considers the existing developments to allow for one or two unit housings. Additional units can be developed considering the proximity to collector and transit, a responsible consideration for additional density. Secondary suites are also permitted (see appendix).

2. Density and Building Forms:

- R-CG is capped at 75 units per hectare and buildings can be up to 11 metres tall. This district allows for a mix of housing types and is designed to accommodate higher-density development.
- Neighbourhood Local supports one or two residential units up to 3 storeys, with additional units being added depending on the proximity to main streets and transit while still complementing the existing forms.



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3. Parking Requirements:

- R-CG parking requirements are 0.5 parking stalls per unit, with a minimum of 0.5 stalls per suite.
- Neighbourhood Local parking requirements vary; however the aim is to provide access to off-street parking. Parking requirements can be reduced or relaxed if the development is considered 'affordable housing' by The City.

The differences between a blanket zoning policy and the Westbrook plan highlight the importance of a collaborative approach that considers the unique desires, characteristics, and aspirations of the community. We believe that a coordinated effort is essential to align the goals of communities such as Glendale with the City's housing strategy goals.

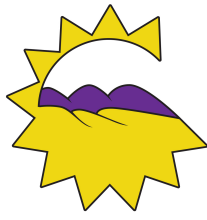
The Westbrook LAP is a testament to the importance of collaboration and community engagement in shaping neighbourhoods. This plan was approved by City Council on April 25, 2023 after extensive engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders. The plan sets a strategic framework to guide future growth in our community. The plan was arrived at with great compromise by Glendale and the nine other communities that helped develop this plan.

Allowing blanket rezoning, would undo years of engagement, show extremely bad faith in the process and invalidate the work done that affects thousands of citizens in Calgary. Communities currently working on Local Area Plans might as well stop their process now as blanket zoning overrides all their work.

Furthermore, we are concerned that the R-CG zoning may not adequately address the need for affordable housing in our community. While we recognize the importance of providing a variety of housing options, we believe that any new development should be done in a way that respects the existing character of Glendale and contributes positively to our community.

In Calgary currently, there is capacity to build more than 440,000 units in established neighbourhoods and greenfield sites without rezoning a single property. The City should be working with developers to build on that land. A prime example is the Westbrook Mall LRT station site that has been vacant for more than a decade since Ernest Manning High School was torn down and the train line opened. The City also failed to take advantage of 13 acres of prime transit area development on Bow Trail west of Scarboro, where thousands of high-rise units were passed over in favour of multi-million dollar townhomes. The site is across the street from the Shaganappi LRT station and when we inquired about why more units — more affordable units — were not built on that site, the answer was that road infrastructure would not handle the car traffic. With an LRT at your front door why was car traffic a consideration? Car traffic is not given consideration for any developments earmarked for our neighbourhoods.

Residents already feel like we are shouting into the wind at these hearings, but at least we have a chance to have our say. This blanket zoning policy, if approved, will silence public voices on development in Calgary for ever more. And when things start going terribly wrong, it will be impossible to put the genie back in the bottle.



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Here's what we would like:

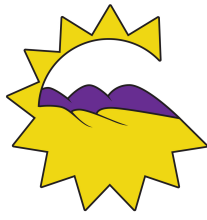
1. We respectfully request that The City rejects the application of the R-CG, R-G and H-GO city-wide blanket zoning policy and work with all established communities in Calgary to ensure that new development is in line with each community's vision.
2. Focus density development on thousands of available properties that are ready for development today.
3. Encourage the City to develop real housing affordability solutions, including the establishment of a Community Land Trust that could deliver below market value ownership and rental opportunities for Calgarians.
4. Encourage speedy approval of legal secondary suites and lane house projects and ensure that such accommodations are included in the City's density calculations.
5. Do not turn over the keys to the city to the development industry.
6. Ensure Calgarians have a say in how our communities evolve. Do not silence our voices.

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to continuing to work with you and They City to ensure Glendale remains a vibrant community for all residents.

Sincerely,

Chris Welner

President, Glendale & Glendale Meadows Community Association



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Appendix:

R-CG Zoning:

What is Residential – Grade-Oriented (R-CG)?

R-CG is a land use district/zone used in the developed areas. It allows for a variety of housing forms such as single-detached, semi-detached, secondary suites, and rowhouses. This district has contextual rules that take into account the existing styles of developments around the redevelopment site. An R-CG parcel could have a maximum of four units on a typical 50 ft. lot, with the potential for each unit to have a secondary suite. R-CG can be located on corner lots and mid-block lots.



What could be built next to me?

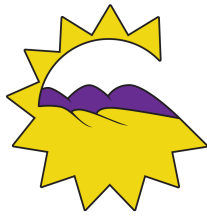
There are many factors that influence a landowner's decision to redevelop a property. Once that decision has been made, they may submit an application for a development permit. A development permit is always required for new homes being built in R-CG.

The development permit process includes a full internal review, including ensuring servicing is in place for new units, as well as ensuring the application is in line with policy and/or Land Use Bylaw rules. Elements of the review include parking, landscaping, unit count etc. Public comments are reviewed during this process to determine if the development could be modified to accommodate public concerns. Some applications must be approved if they meet the rules of the bylaw. Not all concerns warrant changes, and some applications are only required to meet the rules of the bylaw.

What are the specific rules in R-CG?

- **Height:** 11 metres
- **Uses:** single-detached, semi-detached, rowhouse, townhome, fourplex
- **Density:** 75 units per hectare
- **Parking:** 0.5 stalls/unit and 0.5 stalls/suite minimum

Learn more about citywide rezoning at calgary.ca/rezoningforhousing.



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Westbrook LAP Neighbourhood Local Urban Form Description: [Westbrook Communities local area plan \(calgary.ca\)](#) Page 30



2.2.1.6 Neighbourhood Local

Neighbourhood Local areas are characterized by a range of housing types and home-based businesses. Neighbourhood Local areas have developed in a variety of ways with characteristics that shape how these areas change and grow, including when the community was built, existing **heritage assets**, established development pattern and access to parks, open space and other amenities. The **public realm** may include features such as landscaped boulevards and public street trees.

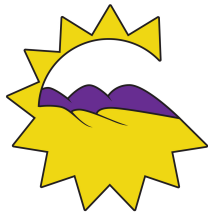
The Neighbourhood Local category is the most common category and is applied to the primarily residential areas of the Westbrook Communities.

Limited Scale Policies

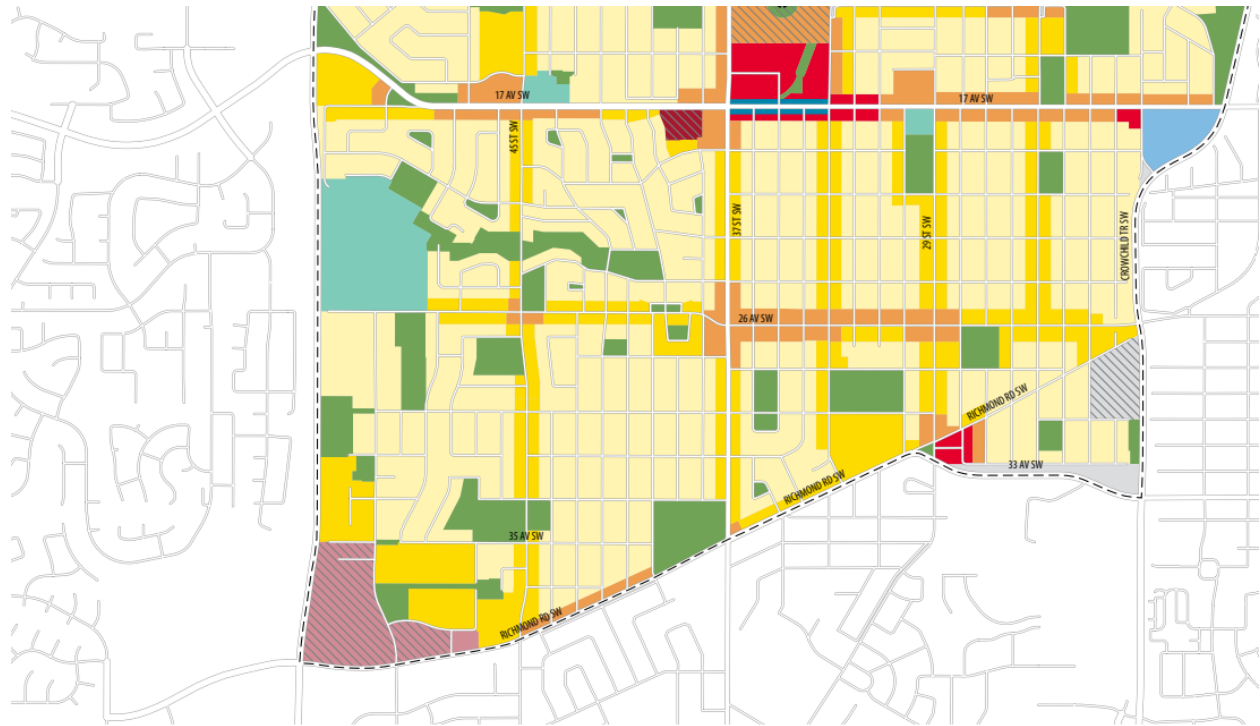
The policies in this section only apply to Neighbourhood Local Areas that have the Limited Scale modifier. Limited Scale policies recognize that single-detached housing is, and will continue to be, a desirable housing form and may be developed anywhere within Neighbourhood Local, Limited Scale areas. Secondary suites will continue to be allowed where they are currently permitted by the **Land Use Bylaw** and do not form part of the unit count when considering the following policies.

Policy

- a. Secondary suites are supported where already allowed by the existing land use designation and are not considered a unit in the following policies.
- b. Building forms that contain one or two residential units are supported in Neighbourhood Local, Limited Scale.
- c. 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**;
- d. Building forms that contain three or more residential units in Neighbourhood Local, Limited Scale should be designed to complement the surrounding context and consider the impacts of massing, lot coverage and setbacks on the following:
 - i. access to sunlight and shade on adjacent parcels; and,
 - ii. protection of existing, healthy trees or landscaping on the parcel, where appropriate.
- e. along a street identified as a **Main Street** or separated by a lane from a parcel along a **Main Street**;
- f. on corner parcels; or,
- g. adjacent to or separated by a road or lane from a school, park or open space greater than 0.4 hectares.



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Map 3: Urban Form

Legend

Urban Form

- Neighbourhood Commercial
- Neighbourhood Flex
- Neighbourhood Connector
- Commercial Centre
- Commercial Corridor
- Natural Areas

- Neighbourhood Local
- Parks and Open Space
- City Civic and Recreation
- Regional Campus
- No Urban Form Category

Additional Policy Guidance

- Active Frontage
- Comprehensive Planning Site
- Plan Area Boundary