

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Faculty of Environmental Design

EVDP 636: Professional Planning Practice II

**The South Macleod Trail Community and
Employment Centre**

Introduction

The City of Calgary has plans for the development of a 3,600 acre site located southwest of 22X and Macleod Trail. The area is expected to have an employment centre with office and retail uses. There will be two assignments related to the planning and design of this new suburban community in Calgary, which will be done as group exercises. Students will be in a different group for each assignment. The main objective of assignment 1 is to prepare guidelines and recommendations for the planning and design of the area. The main objective of assignment 2 is to develop a preliminary Concept Land Use Plan for the new community using the reference material prepared during the first phase. Students are expected to use the results of their community profiles in the development of the recommendations for the Land Use Plan Concept.

While we have tried to make the context for the assignment as real and as current as possible, it is obvious that within this short timeframe you will not be able to deal with all aspects of the planning and development process in great detail. You will be expected to generate plausible recommendations supported by coherent, internally consistent arguments, taking into account a range of city-wide trends. Given this general objective, we expect that you would be able to analyse the development prospects for the study area in the context of Calgary's real estate market trends (housing, office and retail), as well as economic and demographic forecasts. A key component of this study is the analysis of city-wide planning policies, guidelines and standards with critical influence over the future Land Use Plan.

You should be quite conscious of the fact that a comprehensive review of the literature pertinent to the topic is essential for this exercise specifically and for the professional planning practice generally. You should indicate the assumptions that you are making, particularly those based on thin or perhaps even non-existent evidence. There is no right answer for the assignments in this part of the course. The development of a new community is one of the greatest challenges planners face today.

Evaluation

The first component of the assignment is worth 25% of the course mark and the second component – 10%.

Assignment 1

The Planning of the South Macleod Trail Community and Employment Centre

With the population of Calgary projected to reach 1.25 million people by 2020 with 220,000 more jobs than today, major City planning policies have identified the decentralization of employment as an important growth strategy. One of these suburban employment centres is envisioned in the South Macleod Trail area. The site has approximately 3,600 acres and extends beyond the existing City boundaries. With no planning studies for the area, it is assumed that a community of 10,000 – 20,000 persons will emerge in the next 20 years. In this assignment the class will be divided into four different groups. The group tasks are outlined below.

1. Employment generating uses

The general task of this group is to provide the design teams with some quantitative information concerning the amount of land for office, retail, and other service employment in the study area, as well as some qualitative information concerning appropriate locations and configurations for such uses. Two results are considered important.

- a. **Prepare employment targets.** First, it will be necessary to arrive at some general employment targets for the workforce that will live in the new community. Some rough estimates will be necessary to establish what size of workforce we might expect given a population target of 20,000 within a 20-year time horizon for development. While this might provide a desirable employment target, it may not be realistic in view of Calgary's urban development pattern and the general nature of distribution of employment opportunities in the city. It will be necessary, therefore, to develop some modified targets, taking into account the opportunities and constraints of the area. One would not expect the employment centre to duplicate the pattern of employment uses found in downtown Calgary; its location and accessibility might determine its attractiveness for new employment generating activities. As part of this modification process, it will be necessary to allocate employment targets by general type of employment -- manufacturing, office and retail. While this is admittedly crude, it does differentiate uses, which are likely to be lower density from those, which can be accommodated within fairly standard office type settings.
- b. **Provide land estimates.** Because of its importance for community and neighbourhood planning, it will be necessary to develop a separate estimate of the amount of land needed for retail and closely related service activities (convenience stores and dry cleaners, for example). As part of this estimate it will be necessary to get a rough idea of what proportion of retail might reasonably be accommodated in "main street" type of settings, and how much will require the kind of parking typical of malls and plazas. The final output from this group should consist of some general guidelines concerning the amount of land which should be allocated to manufacturing, office, retail and related services, together with qualitative information concerning trends for these kinds of uses in terms of: land consumption, appropriate locations, and design.

Main issues:

- ☐ demographic information concerning the size of the labour force
- ☐ economic trends and distribution of employment in Calgary
- ☐ trends and patterns of office and retail distribution

2. Schools, Community Facilities, Transit, Public Open Space

As the heading suggests, there are four components of the work.

- a. **Schools.** Ultimately we need a reasonable forecast of the amount of space that needs to be set aside for school purposes, and the general location criteria, which should apply. It will be necessary to consult the School Board to find out standards that are likely to be applied in the study area. The amount of land for schools depends on the number of students to be accommodated as well as the standards for facilities. The number of children, in turn, will depend on the demographic profile of the community correlated to the type of housing that will be provided. The School Board normally has some rules of thumb used for estimating the number of children "produced" by different kinds of housing types; this can provide a link between housing and school planning.
- b. **Community facilities.** For our purposes this category includes standard municipal services, such as recreation, libraries, as well as a variety of social services, which may be provided under a variety of auspices (day care, community centres, various counselling services, etc.). With respect to social services, the total land use devoted to these uses will not be very large, so at the scale of our Land Use Plan these uses will tend to get lost in the general service category of uses. For the purposes of designing the initial neighbourhood in South Macleod Trail Community, however, it would be important to know what kinds of social services we might expect to find in many, if not all, neighbourhood units, and the locations appropriate for them. It would also be useful to have a sense of what kinds of services one might expect in the employment centre or main street.
- c. **Transit.** For the purpose of this exercise we will not be undertaking any real transportation planning, but public transit will be considered a community service. It will be the task of this group to estimate the type of transit service available at earlier and later stages of the development of the area, and what might be the possible alternatives in terms of routes within the community. The design teams will need to know whether they should all accept some common guidelines concerning route location, LRT access, or whether each team is free to make its own assumptions in this regard. The location of major non-residential uses within the new community may have a bearing on appropriate transit routes, so the community facilities team may have to do a bit of liaison work with the employment group.
- d. **Public open space** can represent a substantial land use, and thus it will be necessary to make some estimate of the amount of land and its distribution. In the typical suburbs in Calgary much of the open space is devoted to active recreation uses of various kinds--baseball, hockey, soccer, etc. The move towards New Urbanism gives more emphasis to public open space, which enhances the public realm. This may be space for celebration or display near significant community buildings and/or a smaller space to provide a central focus for a neighbourhood. This planning approach, therefore, may affect the amount of space set aside for public open space, and/or the way it is distributed within the community. An additional factor to be considered is the amount of land set aside for environmental purposes, including trails and passive recreation uses. Consultation with the policy group on environmental issues will be appropriate.

Main issues:

- ☐ libraries, open space, and community facilities
- ☐ schools
- ☐ transit routes, transportation planning.

3. Housing

The Housing Group will have a number of tasks.

- a. **Prepare a general demographic forecast** of the households, which are likely to locate in South Macleod Trail community during the first five years of development, and after full development in 20 years time. This should be accompanied by a brief discussion on the possibility to market housing to a somewhat different demographic mix. It is probably best to keep the main categories quite simple -- families, non-senior & non-family households, and senior households. Further distinctions in terms of household type can be made in the discussion, where appropriate. The group is advised to draw on the results of the community profiles.
- b. **Provide a set of guidelines concerning the income mix** that would be appropriate for the new community. For our purposes it will probably be adequate to identify three general income ranges: assisted housing (0-20th percentile), affordable housing (30th to 60th percentile), and general market housing (over 60th percentile.) This information will assist in determining an appropriate mix of housing types and densities for the new community.
- c. **Prepare an inventory of housing types**, particularly in the low medium to high medium density range appropriate for particular household types and income groups, ranging from semi's and townhouses to grouped housing and garden apartments to medium density apartments. For the presentation it is requested that the housing group prepares some illustrations of these housing types, indicating their main features and the particular way in which they occupy the land. Each housing type should be accompanied by some basic statistics indicating typical/possible lot and building sizes, and typical net densities (or ranges of densities).
- d. **Present summary information on minimum residential densities and street layouts.** The housing group should indicate the range of street widths, which might be appropriate within neighbourhoods (streets which are not collectors or arterials) and indicate gross and net densities related to types of housing needed to support public transit.

The overall objective of the housing group is to provide guidance to the design teams in determining appropriate densities for residential areas in the Land Use Concept Plan.

Main issues:

- ☐ housing development standards
- ☐ affordability guidelines (prices & rents appropriate to various income groups)
- ☐ demographic trends and forecasts for Calgary
- ☐ examples of recent medium density housing developments in the suburbs
- ☐ trends in housing prices in suburban Calgary.

4. Planning Policies

The task of the policy group is to prepare a report that will focus on three main areas:

- ❑ policies that encourage the establishment of a viable employment centre in the community
- ❑ policies that relate to infrastructure provision & transportation service
- ❑ policies that facilitate environmental preservation.

It is important that the design teams understand current the policy environment and the nature of planning policy process in order to determine location of development, different densities, and phasing.

Potential Research Questions:

1. Typically, retail development follows residential development, but the timing of the market for office development / non-retail employment usually occurs later and is less predictable. One of the big challenges associated with implementing the *Employment Centres Strategy* is identifying measures that encourage office development / non-retail employment to develop in earlier phases of development. What measures and/or incentives would be effective?
2. The South Macleod Trail Community and Employment Centre site is large (~3,600 acres, 20,000 people at built-out). One of the key challenges is how to service the area with Light Rail Transit, water, sewer, storm water drainage and other utilities in a coordinated and effective manner. Another related challenge is the creation of a pedestrian-oriented/ human scale in the community. What are the requirements for the provision of municipal services and how would that affect the design of the area? What design strategies to create pedestrian-friendly communities used elsewhere may prove helpful?
2. Developing more sustainable communities is a City objective, however, beyond the Sustainable Suburbs Study, we lack tools (policy, regulations, etc.) to assist implementation process. If planners were to advocate for innovation in these areas, which measures, initiatives, and/or changes would provide the most benefit?
3. The City is undergoing a review of the Land Use Bylaw. What innovations in land use designation (e.g., examples from other cities, performance criteria, enterprise zones, etc.) may assist with implementing the vision for this area?
4. The area has a number of environmentally sensitive features, such as Priddis wetland, Pine Creek Valley, etc. In addition, existing land uses – farming, CPR rail lines, the Spruce Meadows facility and country residences need to be considered as potential constraints for development. What could be the appropriate planning policies that will enhance the quality of existing environmental features, preserve the uniqueness of the area and allow market sensitive development?

Groups will receive further direction regarding reference sources, research strategy and key informant interviews.

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