

# The South Macleod Trail Community and Employment Centre

## Community and Neighbourhood Planning Module



### Context

During the 1950s, the movement of people away from urban centres led to the evolution of the suburban residential neighbourhood, and ultimately to strip commercial and office development. Continuing demand for lower density housing resulted in consumption of large tracts of land at the expense of the environment and the increasing economic and social costs. In recent years, there have been concerted efforts in North America to deal with the urban sprawl that

resulted from unchecked development and laissez-faire attitudes. The challenge of the 1990s, and in the future, is to accommodate growth through development that is marketable and economically feasible; development that is guided by the principles of 'smart growth'; development that creates a sense of community and identity through effective planning and design solutions.

### Objectives

The overall objective of the 'neighbourhood and community planning module' is to introduce students to land use planning and development issues in the suburban context.

Specific objectives are:

- To provide a step-by-step introduction to the community planning process and essential planning policies;
- To provide an opportunity to apply community planning and design approaches to the development of a concept land use plan of a suburban community;
- To enhance learning through a framework for efficient collaboration among student teams dealing with sector specific issues – housing, employment, transportation, community facilities, infrastructure.

The module incorporates a variety of teaching techniques -- lectures, seminar presentations, lab sessions, project work, design charette and field visits. Students have

explored different aspects of the community planning process through census data analysis, research and evaluation of different development scenarios for a study area, as well as the design of a concept land use plan. Depending on specific interests, students have worked in teams addressing planning and conceptualization challenges related to *The South Macleod Trail Community and Employment Centre*. The final outcome of this studio project is presented in the report.

### **Introduction to the case study**

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 65,000 – 60,000 persons will emerge in the next 20-30 years.

### **Objectives and methodology**

The development of a new community is one of the greatest challenges planners face today. In this context, the research explores the opportunities and alternative scenarios for the planning and development of *The South Macleod Trail Community and Employment Centre*. It analyses the impact of demographic, economic, social, and spatial trends in suburban Calgary. In addition, it evaluates the effect of legal, institutional and policy planning frameworks on the future pattern of development.

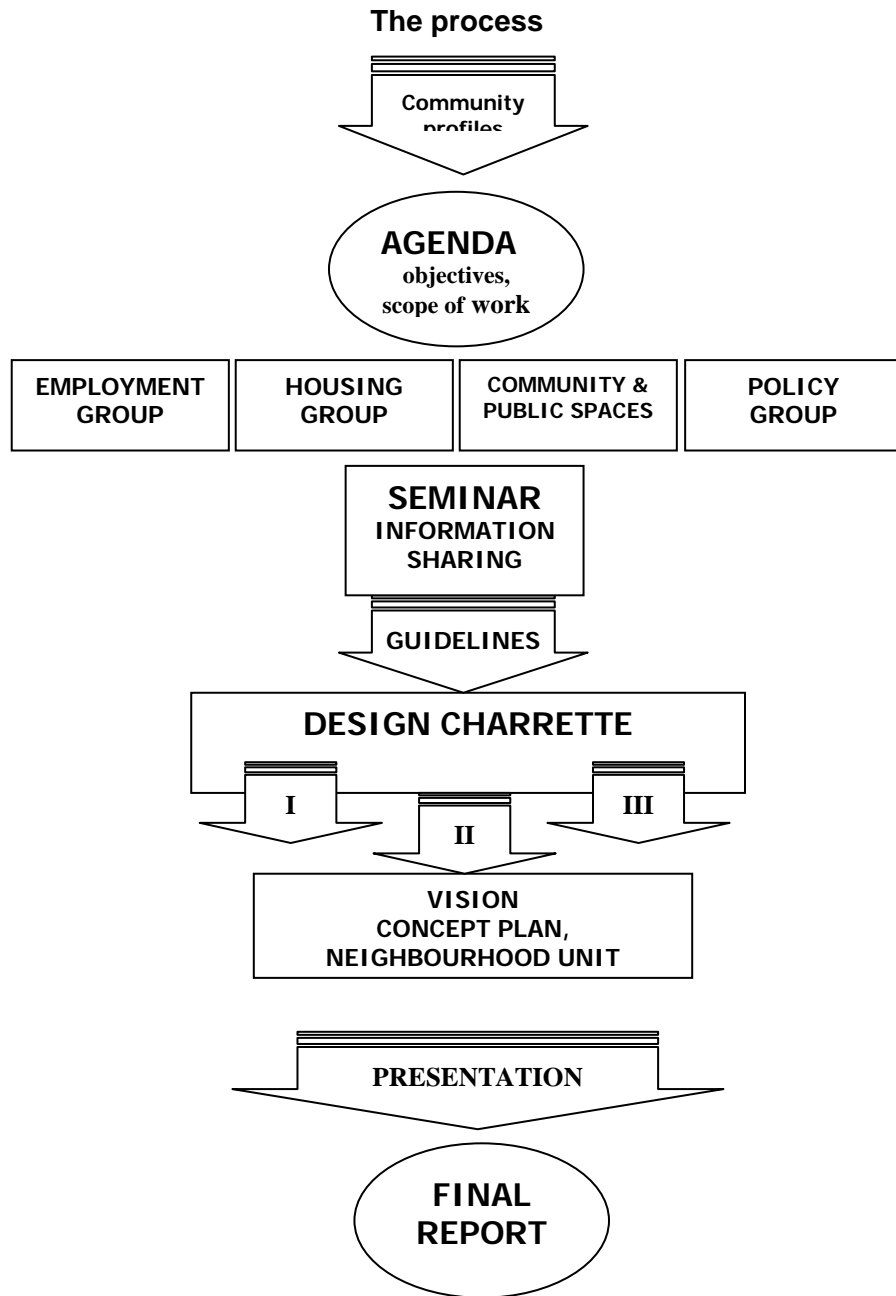
The analytical framework of the report integrates principles of neighbourhood planning as well as policy and real estate market evaluation. The methodology applies qualitative and quantitative methods of planning research and data analysis. Information is collected through literature review, analysis of city planning documents and policies, key-person interviews and focus group meetings. The work was carried out by a group of planning students from January 28th to March 12th, 2003 under the supervision of professor Tsenkova.

Figure 1 presents the major stages in this process.

### **Location**

The development site is located southwest of Highway 22X and Macleod Trail. The western boundary is 14<sup>th</sup> Street SW, the southern boundary is defined by Pine Creek valley. *The South Macleod Trail Community* is expected to have an employment centre with office and retail uses. The planning area includes approximately 458.38 hectares (1132.66 acres) bounded on the north by Spruce Meadows Trail (Highway 22X), on the east by Macleod Trail, on the west by Spruce Meadows Equestrian Centre and Spruce Meadows Way (14 Street). This section is expected to accommodate the first phases of

Figure 1: The Planning of the South Macleod Trail Community and Employment Centre



### Milestones

Assignment 2: Presentations of key research findings; information sharing – March 3, 2004

Group report – planning guidelines & recommendations – March 12, 2003

Assignment 3: Design charette: development of a Concept Land Use Plan – March 10, 2004,

Summary report – vision, objectives and planning targets – March 12, 2004

development. Other parts of the area are included in the comprehensive annexation request currently under negotiation with the MD of Foothills.

### **Policy Framework**

The broad policy framework is contained in The City of Calgary Municipal Development Plan (The Calgary Plan). It identifies both Employment Concentrations and Future General Urban Uses (predominantly residential) as the main land use components. The Employment Concentration is situated in the eastern portion of the site. The MD of Foothills and City of Calgary Intermunicipal Development Plan provide additional joint policies for the area and identify the land as a primary urban growth corridor and Agricultural/Future Urban Development Policy Area.

The interface with Spruce Meadows is particularly sensitive. It may be prudent to develop a separate planning exercise involving an Area Structure Plan for the Spruce Meadows Equestrian Centre.

### **Existing Land Uses**

Existing land uses - mostly vacant - agricultural land with some country residential along 190 Avenue SW.

Surrounding land uses - Communities of Bridlewood, Somerset and Shawnessy are located north of the study area, with community of Chaparral located to the east. While these are predominantly residential developments, the Shawnessy community incorporates some commercial/business development, with the commercial/business node located at the north east corner of Spruce Meadows Trail (Highway 22X) and Macleod Trail.

### **Natural Features**

Wetlands are situated along the west side of the planning area as well as immediately south of Highway 22X (Priddis Wetland). The Priddis Slough is a significant natural feature with Calgary with approximately 12 ha (30 acres) of permanently wet surface area. Both systems likely tie into the Pine Creek watershed located south of the planning area in the MD of Foothills. The Intermunicipal Development Plan suggests that wildlife corridors may exist within the wetland systems. There may be an opportunity to acquire the wetland systems as ER upon subdivision and development of the land.

The Pine Creek valley is a significant feature of the planning area, dropping by 30 to 40 meters along the creek. A significant portion of the valley has a slope greater than 15%. Lands adjacent to the valley might be considered part of a 50 m buffer. Another major topographical feature is the hill along the western boundary rising over 60 meters. A former channel of the Bow River runs north to south through the study area immediately west of Macleod Trail with adjacent lands gently sloping down.

## **Land Ownership**

Some 32 parcels of land are located in the area currently within City boundaries. The City owns some large parcels in and around the Priddis Slough acquired for land consolidation purposes for a future employment centre. Major land owners include Hartel Holdings Ltd., Walton Development, Ulster Development Ltd., Macleod Farming and Ranching, Halls Feed and Grain Ltd., City of Calgary and the Southern family (Spruce Meadows Equestrian Centre).

## **Transportation**

The site has the following major transportation links:

Spruce Meadows Trail (Highway 22X)

Macleod Trail - Primary north-south transportation link and part of the Highway #2 corridor; flanks the easterly boundary of the subject area.

Spruce Meadows Way (14 Street) - North-south link flanking westerly boundary of subject site and forms a road boundary between planning area and Spruce Meadows Equestrian Centre.

Sheriff King Street (4 Street) - North-south internal road providing access to country residential development in the central portion of the site

190 Avenue SE - Internal east-west cul-de-sac extending easterly and perpendicular from Sheriff King Street S (4 Street), provides local road access for country residential lots.

Sheriff King Road SE - Internal road running easterly from Sheriff King Street S (4 Street) parallel to Spruce Meadows Trail and then bending south easterly parallel to Macleod Trail and terminating at a cul-de-sac (mostly contained within the Transportation Utility Corridor).

Sheriff King Place SE - Located between Priddis Slough and Sheriff King Road SE, extends from Sheriff King Road SE southeasterly to a dead end.

Canadian Pacific Railway - Runs northwest - southeast, located immediately west of Priddis Wetland. It could provide a corridor for the LRT extension to this area and could be beneficial for the Employment Centre area. Provision for extension of the LRT to the planning area is identified in the Calgary Municipal Development Plan and the Intermunicipal Development plan. The extension is proposed to be parallel to Macleod Trail through the eastern portion of the area.

## **Utility Services**

Water Works - Water services could come from existing systems to the north.

Sanitary Sewer - Eventually a new sewage treatment plant will be required downstream at Bow River with all development south of the 22X draining to this plant.

Storm Sewers - Lands drain into the Bow River through the Pine Creek watershed.

Shallow Utilities - Input from shallow utilities will be required - gas, electric, telecommunications.

### **Organization of the study**

This study is intended to provide guidelines and planning policy recommendations for the development of *The South Macleod Trail Community*. The chapters that follow present a systematic exploration of real-life problems and policy outcomes in a simple, practical manner. Chapter 1 identifies a range of planning policies that will affect employment, housing, and transportation land use patterns. It highlights the importance of environmentally sensitive intervention. Chapter 2 deals with employment generating land uses – office and retail. The analysis in Chapter 3 explores the possibilities for the development of schools, open spaces, community facilities and transportation. Chapter 4 reviews major factors affecting the suburban housing market and the implications for this community. Finally, two design alternatives for the study area are presented with a reference to community vision, design principles and a draft Land Use Concept Plan. These design solutions are the outcome of a one-day design charrette process.

The study is available at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/faculties/EV/>

### **Acknowledgements**

A number of planning professionals have assisted us in this research, sharing information, working papers and reports. In particular, we would like to thank the owners of Spruce Meadows and Randy Fedorak for their hospitality during our field trip to the site. A review panel consisting of Richard Parker, Cathy Ascroft, Don Schultz, Mike Marco, Don Merlo, Tim Creelman and Paul Cochrane provided helpful and constructive comments during student presentations and made this research professionally rewarding. We thank them all for their cooperation and professional assistance. Our special thanks to Professor Brian Sinclair and Professor Tom Harper for their participation in the final charrette review panel. Finally, we specifically acknowledge the assistance of Nelson Medeiros, who worked endless hours to organize individual contributions to this report in a coherent and accessible document.



Dr. Sasha Tsenkova, University of Calgary

