

CURRIE BARRACKS

Calgary, Alberta

A NEIGHBOURHOOD LAND USE PLAN EVALUATION CRITERIA SUMMARY

Innovation and Contribution to the Profession:

Canada Lands Company (CLC) has learned a great deal about implementing vibrant urban master plans since the original approval of the CFB West Master Plan and corresponding Outline Plan/Land Use Redesignation for Currie Barracks. With the success of Currie Barracks being critically important to CLC, the team was challenged with creating ground-breaking, innovative and “out of the box” thinking to ensure a vibrant and unique mixed-use urban community.

CLC’s key learning from past experience was that by increasing the number of people living within a five minute walk of a retail “heart” the neighbourhood will have a greater likelihood of economic success, urban vitality, and diversity. Essentially, CLC determined that with the number of changes that occurred in and around Currie Barracks in recent years, the new neighbourhood needed to generate more “body heat” at the heart of the neighbourhood to be lively and economically sustainable.

A key land use strategy for creating more “body heat” was the introduction of a retail core totalling up to 250,000 square feet of retail and commercial uses located in the physical centre of the site and 750,000 square feet of office and institutional uses located around the historic Parade Square. The inclusion of these non-residential uses was viewed as critical to the plan in that they added goods, services and employment opportunities making Currie a truly complete community.

A complete network of pedestrian mews spaces that parallel the street network is envisioned as a primary option for residents and visitors. The mews network is designed to complement the vehicular network and create smaller urban blocks to provide dedicated pedestrian and bike access to commercial services, offices, schools, amenities, and residential buildings. The smaller blocks are appropriate for Calgary’s climate and provide enhanced connectivity and the establishment of shared underground parking for each block with medium to higher density building forms was the foundation for an urban approach.

Another important aspect of the design for the new neighbourhood was the integration and retention of 11 Historic Resources located on eight Historic Resources sites within the plan. The preservation of these resources provides a connection to the history of the site and unique inspirations for the design of specific elements of the plan moving forward into the implementation stage. An early example of this is provided by the aviation themed playground developed in the summer of 2015 that took its inspiration from the early use of the site as an airbase. The team also worked diligently with City Administration to find solutions for the implementation of revenue-generating re-uses for two provincially protected heritage homes that are sited in a new public park.

Additionally, although the Calgary school boards determined that they can serve the future population by using existing schools in adjacent neighbourhoods, CLC agreed that if needed, they would provide space within an existing building for an urban school—a concept new to Calgary—in proximity to Parade Square, eliminating the need to use public open space for an additional school.



Methodology:

CLC and the team set out to create a Currie Barracks that reflects a change to the approved CFB West Master Plan and corresponding Outline Plan/Land Use that would seek a more sustainable urban future by:

- Improving housing diversity and choice;
- Providing more amenities and day to day services;
- Providing more options to work close to home;
- Creating vibrant public spaces;
- Growing in a compact and efficient way that shows a commitment to sustainability; and
- Promoting a range of mobility choices.

To achieve this, somewhat depended on creating a 'critical mass' of people and jobs that will support a retail and community heart. A key challenge in Calgary is the design of higher density, urban neighbourhoods that respond to the cold-weather and northern latitude environmental challenges of low-angle sunlight in spring, fall and winter months. The design approach for the project was to respond to both this climatic context with a focus on how pedestrians can have a better day-to-day experience through all seasons by carefully considering the urban form, access to amenities, services and the integration of a multiple mode of mobility throughout.

The design team's approach was that the urban design of streets, use adjacency, pedestrian networks, parking resources and services are to work as a flexible and inter-connected system supporting efficient and sustainable mobility options for residents and employees. The intention was to provide an array of access and mobility options that provide high quality choices for people to minimize inefficient and congestion contributing mobility options through convenient, high quality alternatives provided as the backbone infrastructure.

Another important aspect of the design was the integration and retention of heritage buildings and landscapes as core character elements that create a connection to the history of the site and provide unique influences in the design of individual neighbourhoods and parks throughout the site. As part of the master planning process, a parallel process, which included valuable heritage research and refinement of the Currie Barracks Historic Resources, was initiated. The collaboration between CLC and the Province (Alberta Culture) to amend the existing Provincial Historic Resource Designation resulted in the integration of eight Historic Resource sites that contribute to the success of the Currie Barracks vision and its implementation.

Given the significance of the Currie Barracks lands, a project charter was prepared between CLC and The City to ensure key components could be realized. The Charter identified goals and objectives of the redevelopment along with the project risks of a higher density model not being supported by periphery stakeholders; delays in approval of a land use redesignation could shift the timeframe to gain critical mass that would support continued sales momentum in Currie Barracks; and micro- and macro-economic factors could limit the project's ability to gain desired absorption rate and delay the built-out schedule.

Recognizing the risks, CLC worked closely with their joint venture partners Embassy Bosa and commissioned reports such as a market study and a retail strategy. CLC hired an engagement specialist to provide direction for stakeholder engagement and transportation specialists to identify tools for increasing mobility choices through behaviour change to ensure the success of the ultimate master plan.

Implementation:

The success in the implementation of the project is in how well the policy amendment, outline plan and land use redesignations work together to provide the basic tools to execute the development.

Dedicated Team: A dedicated team of City Administration was established to coordinate the revitalization efforts for Currie Barracks and guide the implementation of the CFB West Master Plan. This group was empowered by City Council to make decisions, enter into special development agreements and to act regarding Currie Barracks. This team assisted in the timely process whereby the Land Use and CFB West Master Plan amendments were unanimously approved by both Calgary Planning Commission and City of Calgary Council.

Engagement: Through community consultation the increase in density, height, and built form were continued topics of conversation. To ensure creative thoughtful development, controls were established to provide certainty to both community residents and The City of the ultimate build out.

Policy, Regulations & Standards: Revisions to the CFB West Master Plan, the Outline Plan, the Land Use, and the Customized Design Criteria were made to achieve the ultimate goals of The City of Calgary's Municipal Development Plan and the CFB West Master Plan. With an emphasis on the planning and regulatory framework, capital improvements, as well as other strategic approaches, the planning documents address the current conditions of Currie Barracks in defining the necessary actions that will advance the long- term vision presented in the revised Master Plan.



A modified form-based zone approach through the use of block development plans was undertaken in order to align with The City's regulatory processes. These block plans define the setback, frontage, block statistics, and development program for each block within Currie Barracks. The land use and CFB West Master Plan amendments were shaped to work together to inform the appropriate character of each district and provide direction on building placement, height, form, shadowing as well as the character of building facades and public spaces. Precinct and block-based density regulations and tools for the ongoing monitoring of density, parking and transportation impacts were also developed.

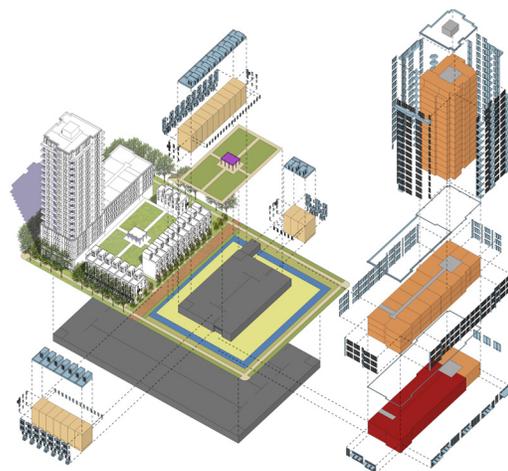
Seven specialized land use districts were structured to align closely with the policy areas and urban design guidelines contained in the amended CFB West Master Plan to ensure that basic land use and form of development support the intent set out in the policy for the neighbourhood. Each district provides development controls that are adaptable to the dynamic nature and unique character of land uses in Currie Barracks; and, incorporates tools and mechanisms to encourage desired land use and built form responses that meet the Master Plan objectives.

As part of the original Outline Plan/Land Use Redesignation application, City Council approved a set of Customized Design Criteria for Currie Barracks. This document includes a process and customized design criteria for how all aspects of the public infrastructure are to be designed to meet the requirements of specific conditions throughout Currie Barracks. As part of CLC's re-visioning, improvement to the criteria were made; such as stormwater management practices on municipal reserve.

Street cross-sections were revised to suit local conditions and CLC's aspirations. The design team modified The City's residential street cross-section for streets that are adjacent to parks; modified The City's collector street standard to allow parking on both sides of the street, a multi-use pathway for a cycling connection through the site, and a generous hard surface area to accommodate both street furniture and sidewalks where appropriate. And finally, a new street cross-section for a mews was created to accommodate both pedestrians and vehicular traffic.

Special Development Agreement: Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures were also included as part of the application process. These TDM measures were tied to a Special Development Agreement between CLC and The City to ensure they are implemented.

Design Guidelines for Builders: Currie Design Guidelines were prepared to provide clear direction to builders on development. The Currie Design Guidelines supplement the detailed regulations and standards administered by The City of Calgary and focus on neighbourhood, building and landscape character. The Guidelines will be monitored by CLC prior to builders approaching The City for a development/building permit to ensure development is consistent with the vision.



Overall Presentation:

The overall presentation of the Currie Barracks plan was a combination of master plans, 3-D illustrations and City of Calgary written application requirements. The submitted Currie Barracks Neighbourhood Land Use Plan was initially prepared for The City to form part of the Land Use Redesignation, Outline Plan, Road Closure and CFB West Master Plan Amendment application requirements for Calgary Planning Commission and City Council approvals.

The document is divided into three parts:

- Historic Resources, Engagement, and Regulatory Background Information;
- Vision, Principles and details of the Plan (Outline Plan and Land Use); and
- Growth Management and the Plan's Implementation.

It is clearly written and visually illustrated through photos, diagrams, concepts and illustrations— all of which were used to present the words and visual information on the plan's components for the various City departments, Calgary Planning Commission, City Council and the public to understand the existing scenario and new vision for the site.

Through the various planning processes, the Outline Plan, land use, illustrations and concepts were frequently updated to resolve comments from The City and public. Various plans, statistics and illustrations were created through the process be it for a meeting discussion or public open house and ultimately for Calgary Planning Commission and City Council presentations. The document provided with this submission was submitted to The City initially; however, includes amendments to the text and illustrations to reflect the changes made through the application process for City Administration's recommendation for approval to Calgary Planning Commission and City Council.

