

City Planning & Policy

Led by: Director of City & Regional Planning

Service Description

Our goal is to build a resilient city of attractive, inclusive and equitable communities that meet the various lifestyle choices of Calgarians, and employment areas that support diversity in our economy. We engage with Calgarians and the development industry to develop the long-range vision for the city, and multi-community local area plans that reflect the goals of individual communities. While looking to our future, we align equity, growth funding, and investment considerations with the regeneration of our environment and continuing economic prosperity.

Service Updates

Key Service Results

In 2023, the Local Area Plan (LAP) Program received approval and positive feedback from Council on the Westbrook and the Heritage Communities Local Area Plans. A total of three LAPs are now complete, with another six on the horizon.

In September 2023, Council also approved the Home is Here: The City of Calgary's Housing Strategy. One of the actions that this service line has initiated is the proposed citywide rezoning to a base residential district. This change will help increase the supply of housing to meet demand and will be delivered to Council in April 2024. Further planning related actions will progress over 2024. A redesigned evaluation process for new community growth applications was also approved and implemented in August 2023. The service line has also made significant progress on updating its off-site levy, which was approved in January 2024.

The City's downtown office conversion programs enabled 11 approved office conversion projects that will collectively remove approximately 1.46 million square feet of office space downtown. Another four conversion projects are in the pipeline that would see the removal of an additional 680,000 square feet, once completed.

Service Challenges

Calgary continues to face a housing affordability crisis. Despite approving measures like Home is Here: The City of Calgary's Housing Strategy, The City continues to face the challenge of addressing the fear of change and a reluctance to accept more housing diversity in many communities.

The service also continues to be challenged in gaining support on decisions today to tackle issues that many perceive to have little tangible impact to daily lives, such as addressing the climate crisis. The service needs to enhance its ability to demonstrate the value of these decisions to Calgarians. The service line must also manage increased public scrutiny and expectations around public engagement and the demand for simpler, user-friendly policies.

City Planning and Policy continues to be faced with challenges related to staff capacity, resourcing, and turnover during a highly demanding period with multiple priority initiatives.

Trends & Potential Uncertainties

As Calgary continues to grow in population, the associated demand for housing and City services will also grow. This demand may strain our ability to develop policies that respond quickly enough.

Public scrutiny and engagement expectations are expected to increase as The City addresses politically sensitive topics like the climate crisis, environmental resiliency, and housing affordability. The careful coordination of communications and public engagement across initiatives is required to ensure transparency and timely execution of deliverables.

Calgarians are also demanding simpler, user-friendly policies as they become more politically engaged. The integration of Climate, Indigenous, equity, and data-driven considerations will be a priority in policy development.



Measuring Our Performance

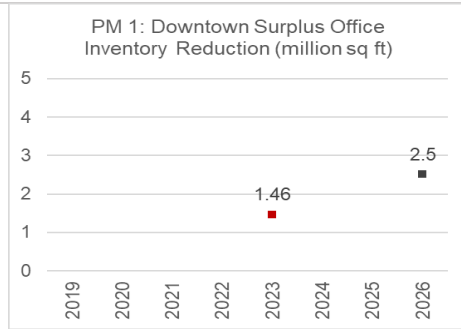
Legend

- Actuals
- Expected Future Performance
- ➔ Progressing as planned
- ⊖ Not progressing as planned

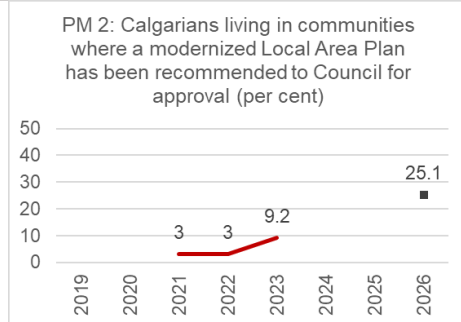
Performance Measures

Story behind the numbers

Status

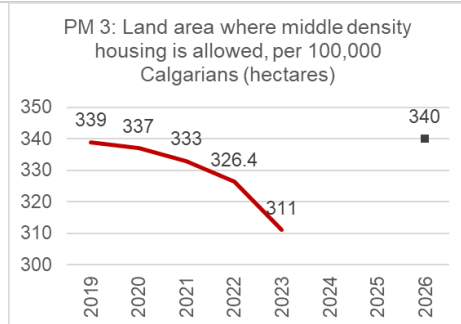


The reported 2023 value is based on the performance of the Downtown Office Conversion Program and reflects the anticipated square feet of vacant office space removed by projects approved through the program. Since the start of the Conversion Program, 11 conversion projects have been approved through the program that are anticipated to remove approximately 1.46 million square feet of vacant office space. These projects diversify and increase housing opportunities and enhance the vibrancy of downtown Calgary.



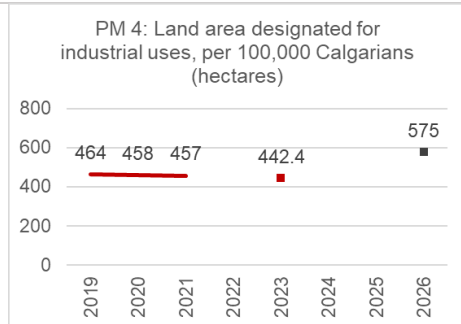
The Westbrook Communities and Heritage Communities Local Area Plans (LAPs) were approved by Council in 2023, adding 29 communities to the total inventory of communities with modernized LAPs. This has been reflected in the 2023 year-end value of this performance measure and the steady growth in the per cent of Calgarians living in communities with an approved modernized LAP.

A total of 82 communities and industrial areas were involved in creating modernized local area plans in 2023. This represents twelve phases of work completed across five active LAPs under development.



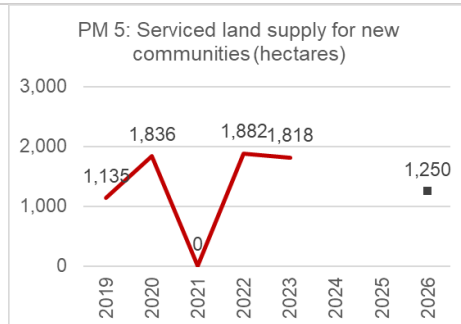
The rate of Calgary's population growth (1.9%) is outpacing the rate of middle density zoning availability. Calgary has seen strong migration (approx. 19,000 people in 2023) and the trend is expected to continue into 2024.

The City continues to explore policy changes that encourage middle density housing, including the new Housing – Grade-Oriented (H-GO) district and the proposal for citywide Residential – Grade-Oriented Infill District (R-CG) zoning. The impact of these changes will require time to be realized, however.



Unfortunately, an error was discovered in the 2022 land use data and a reliable 2022 value could not be provided. All other data points for measure have remained flat since 2019.

Industrial land continues to face conversion pressures from non-industry land. Several initiatives in the Industrial Action Plan will help retain and increase industrial land. Modern Area Structure Plans (ASPs), a new Zoning Bylaw, and the Calgary Plan may also help by offering greater use flexibility, a response to current development trends. Administration continues to evaluate land use applications with an aim to enable growth while retaining industrial land.



Serviceable land is defined by The City as vacant land that has an Area Structure Plan and has infrastructure for transportation, water, sanitary, storm and emergency service that is ready for development.

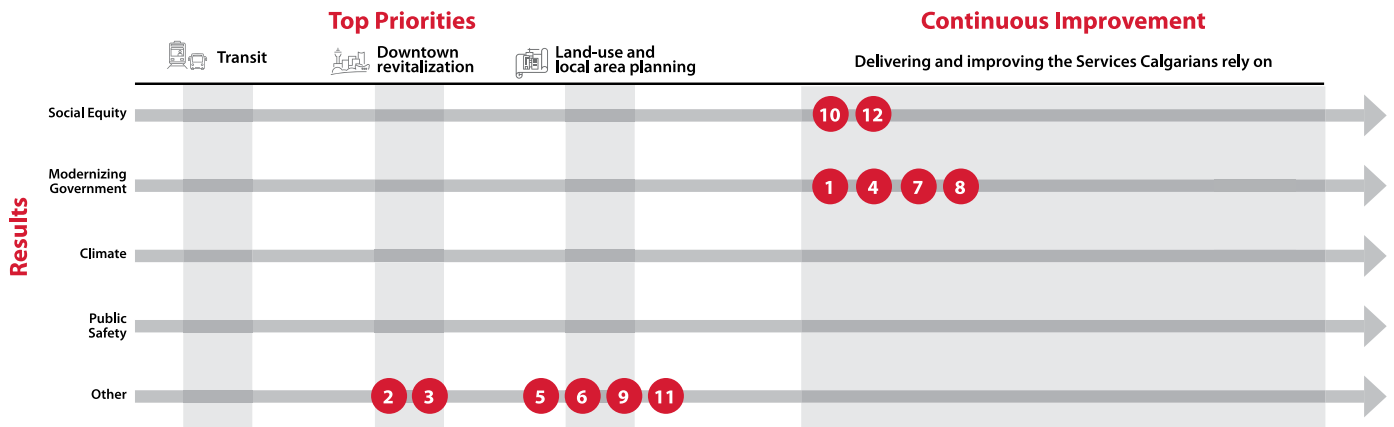
This measure continues to hold steady in 2023 and sits above the Municipal Development Plan's target of 3-5 years of serviced land supply. The current inventory of serviced land represents 10-13 years of land supply, based on current growth expectations. The slight reduction of serviced land supply seen in 2023 is a result of absorption over the year, signifying new development in the city.









Progress on Service Delivery





Alignment with Council Refined Priorities and Result Areas



- Legend**
- ✔ Completed
 - ➡ Progressing as planned
 - ⊖ Not progressing as planned
 - ⏻ Not started
 - 1 Initiative number

Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
1 Continue to rank as one of the most livable, attractive, and successful cities in the world, by aligning and combining the Municipal Development Plan and the Calgary Transportation Plan into one user-friendly document, The Calgary Plan. This new policy will enable us to effectively address the climate emergency, social equity, diversity, inclusion, belonging, anti-racism, and Truth and Reconciliation.	In 2023, the City Building Program successfully engaged a consulting firm to support with communications, engagement, mobility & transportation planning. The team also established a collaboration space at The Edison, enabling City staff and consultants to collaborate as one team. Finally, broad city-wide public engagement kicked off in October 2023 engaging over 1300 people at 17 pop-up events, over 4800 website visits, and nearly 1,230 responses provided by 500 people. Engagement with Indigenous communities, industry, and equity deserving groups is underway and will continue through spring.	➡
2 Revitalize Calgary's downtown by investing in (1) major civic projects to support trade, tourism, job creation and building strong regional economies; and (2) priority public infrastructure projects to provide necessary public amenity for a thriving community and that complement developer investment.	In September, the Century Gardens Basketball Court officially opened, representing a crucial initiative to activate and bring vibrancy back to the Downtown West community. This significant milestone was achieved through a partnership with Parks Foundation Calgary, The City of Calgary, and the Calgary Surge. Downtown Strategy also directed 30 grants and approximately \$15,000 to local art groups to activate the downtown with performances and events, including supporting a 9-month inclusive, free arts amenity to residents and visitors through the Alcove Centre for the Arts.	➡
3 Diversify the mix of uses and increase housing opportunities in the downtown core to attract new residents and increase vibrancy in the heart of our city by implementing the Downtown Calgary Development Incentive Program, which, offers financial incentives to building owners to convert surplus office space into non-office uses and homes for Calgarians.	The City's downtown office conversion programs have been instrumental in achieving the vision and goals dedicated to creating a vibrant and thriving downtown. Downtown Strategy's work has resulted in the approval of 11 office conversion projects, that will collectively eliminate approximately 1.46 million square feet of office space in downtown Calgary. Additionally, two City-supported office conversion projects are actively underway. Moreover, there are four conversion projects in the pipeline, poised to remove an additional 680,000 square feet of vacant office space from the Downtown market.	➡

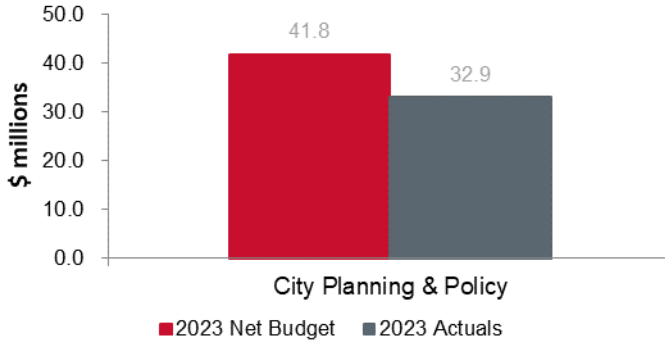
Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
<p>4 Deliver the residential, commercial and industrial opportunities that will continue to make Calgary one of the world's most livable and attractive cities by renewing the Land Use Bylaw to implement the vision of the Municipal Development Plan more effectively, while removing barriers from desired development and business activities.</p>	<p>The new Zoning Bylaw, currently called the Land Use Bylaw, will simplify the rules that govern the use of land and the form of buildings in the city.</p> <p>In September 2023, Council approved The City of Calgary's Housing Strategy with amendments and directed Administration to take actions to address the housing crisis. This includes proposing changes to residential zoning to allow for diverse housing choices for Calgarians. Various actions to increase the supply of market and non-market homes will be delivered through the City Building Program, including through the new Zoning Bylaw.</p>	
<p>5 Attract further investment, create jobs and support climate mitigation efforts, while supporting growing communities and business areas, by refining and improving our Citywide Growth Strategy to achieve compact, strategic and sustainable growth through targeted and balanced investments.</p>	<p>In new communities, the redesigned evaluation process was approved by Council and implemented as of August 2023. In established areas, new public space investments were completed, and progress was made on financial tools for enabling greater investment. Main Streets and Transit-Oriented Development continue to enable growth in priority locations using Council approved funding and support from external partners. In industrial areas, the 2023 Action Plan was approved by Council, leading to work starting on modernizing local area policy and evaluating incentives.</p>	
<p>6 Enable industrial growth through the modernization of Calgary's industrial policy and regulation and incentivize strategic short and long-term sector growth by pursuing growth-focused land use policy, regulatory and development initiatives to streamline city planning processes for industrial development and increase development flexibility and competitiveness.</p>	<p>In June 2023, Council approved the 2023 Industrial Action Plan. Since then, local policy amendments to six industrial Area Structure Plans have been initiated and work on exploring development incentives has begun. Administration also continues to evaluate capital infrastructure investments that would increase development capacity, ahead of The City's mid cycle budget adjustments.</p>	
<p>7 Enable The City to make transparent, informed, and sustainable investment decisions by evolving The City's understanding of the full financial impacts of a fast-growing city.</p>	<p>Improvements were made to the evaluation criteria of the New Community Growth Applications and the Operating Cost Model for better transparency and decision-making. These include improvements to financial considerations and overall refinements to inputs and assumptions.</p> <p>Financial contextual information was updated on Calgary.ca, including the new Funding Approval Status of Growth-Related Capital Requests report. An update on Financial Tools to Fund Growth Related Investments in the Established Area, including results from the North Hill Property Tax Uplift Pilot, went to Council in June 2023.</p>	
<p>8 Provide a consistent approach to funding new infrastructure, that supports growth and development, increases awareness of the impacts of growth decisions; provides a more sustainable funding source for complete communities; and improves timing between levy collection and infrastructure investment by refining, implementing and continuously improving Calgary's Off-site Levy Program.</p>	<p>Since 2022, the team has engaged and consulted with industry working groups on the financial formulas and rates for the new Levy Bylaw. Additional broader consultation with the building and development industry, along with interested parties and the public was completed in Q4 2023.</p> <p>The 2024 Off-site Levy Bylaw and corresponding Levy rates have been completed and approved by the Infrastructure Planning Committee in December 2023 and at Public Hearing by Council on January 15, 2024.</p>	

Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
<p>9 Support efforts in planning for up-to-date, livable, equitable and diverse communities by updating, replacing, and implementing over 250 outdated policy documents with approximately 40 new multi-community local area plans.</p>	<p>In 2023, the Local Area Plan (LAP) team engaged a total of 82 communities and industrial areas. Two LAPs, representing 29 communities and four industrial areas, received positive feedback and approval from Council. Council also approved the equivalent of four Area Structure Plans (ASPs) to be initiated during the 2023-2026 business cycle. The team has begun reviewing the ASPs that will provide new planning guidance and direction to approx. 1869 hectares of lands. The Local Area Investment Fund was also established and project ideas for approved LAPs were reviewed and identified in 2023.</p>	
<p>10 Build and maintain a respectful, inclusive and equitable workplace that is representative of the community by ensuring our policies and services support The City's commitment to (our employees).</p>	<p>Planning & Development Services (PDS) introduced a new People Committee in 2023. The committee and its upcoming working groups will support actions in celebration & recognition, health & wellness, and equity, diversity, inclusion & belonging (EDIB). PDS also launched an Indigenous educational series, Seasons for Reconciliation, and continues work on the Indigenous Cultural Heat Map project.</p> <p>City Planning & Policy will also be inviting representatives for EDIB and anti-racism to join 2024 service committee meetings, to encourage integration of these considerations into policy development.</p>	
<p>11 Increase supply of industrial and residential lands within Calgary to meet increasing demands on market supply by implementing Council-directed annexations in Rocky View County and Foothills County.</p>	<p>In July 2023, Council directed Administration to explore alternative ways to engage regional partners and the Foothills County Annexation and the Rocky View County Annexation projects were halted. The City and Rocky View County have instead agreed to explore a mutually beneficial joint planning opportunity to spur economic growth for residents and simplify things for businesses across municipal boundaries. Work on this venture, named the Prairie Economic Gateway Initiative, kicked off in September 2023.</p> <p>The City also continues to work with regional partners on responding to servicing requests</p>	
<p>12 Cultivate a food system that works with partners to ensure food is consistently available, accessible, appropriate, and healthy for all Calgarians by developing a Council-approved Food Resilience Plan.</p>	<p>The Food Resilience Plan will support food security for Calgarians by mitigating acute crises and addressing chronic inequities. Implementation includes identifying strategies, policies, and legislation to bolster vulnerable elements of the food system and leveraging ongoing cross-corporate work, such as the City Building Program. Two strategists were hired in 2023 to complete this work.</p> <p>As the team and budget have been transferred to the Climate & Environmental Management (CEM) service line through mid-year adjustments, this initiative will transfer to CEM in future reporting periods.</p>	



Service Updates on Financial Performance

Net Operating Budget and Actuals as of December 31, 2023



Operating Budget Updates - 2023 net operating budget vs actuals:

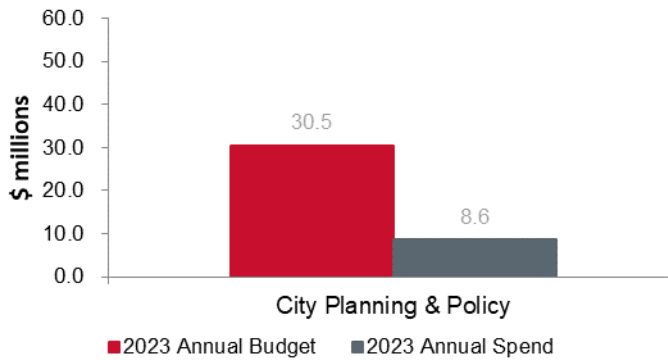
City Planning & Policy has a favourable operating variance of \$8.9 million, mainly due to underspending in salary and wages, communications, and consulting budgets.

The variance in salary and wages is mostly due to vacancies and positions that were unfilled for the majority of 2023. Many new programs that initiated in 2023 were not able to hire until later in the year.

The favourable operating budget was also impacted by underspent communications and consulting budgets which were a result of the timing of initiatives, programs, and contract services.

A portion of this favourable variance has already been relinquished through 2024 budget adjustments.

Capital Budget and Spend as of December 31, 2023



Capital Budget Updates - 2023 total capital budget vs 2023 spend:

City Planning & Policy has spent 28.0 per cent of its 2023 approved capital budget.

In 2023, the capital expenditures have been used to deliver the following:

- Priority capital projects in downtown Calgary proceeded through various stages of design, with several project designs revealed in the fall. Active projects are focused on areas that will improve downtown vibrancy and include Olympic Plaza, Stephen Avenue, 8 ST SW, 1 AV SE, Riverwalk West, and Eau Claire Public Realm Improvements.
- The Local Area Planning (LAP) completed two LAPs this year, contributing towards the modernization of city-building in Calgary.
- The Transit Oriented Development program progressed through planning and onboarding stages in 2023 and enables The City to achieve its strategic growth goals.

Due to the large scale of these projects, capital budget is expected to be deployed as initiatives progress and/or construction advances.