



DRAFT MDP & NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

DEVELOPERS MEETING WHAT WE HEARD REPORT OCTOBER 1, 2019

Intent - Building Great Relationships & Neighbourhoods

The Town values developers' investment in creating desirable neighbourhoods and together, as a partnership, we feel that we can build upon past success. The goal is to bring Okotoks forward as a competitive destination that attracts people from other locales to call our town and neighbourhoods home. With the draft MDP, we want to work together to create feasible policies, reduce red-tape and foster a positive relationship between administration and industry.

The following is the feedback we received from the Developers Workshop held on September 24, 2019.

Summary of Feedback

- The MDP should be outcome-based. The draft document is too prescriptive and some of the regulatory elements (e.g. stripping and grading; signage) need to be removed.
- The draft attempts to provide a level of certainty so all related policy is in one place and red tape is reduced. Developers requested consideration of reducing the level of detail in the document and creating sub-level policies post-implementation instead (e.g. neighbourhood hub checklists).
- Minimum density requirements should be kept at 8 upa with incentives for increasing.
- If R1S and R1E lots are to be removed from the definition of non-traditional housing (now described as multi-unit housing), the housing mix target should remain at 30% as per the current MDP.
- A clear definition of density and how it's calculated is needed.
- Let the market decide on housing mix. Developers will bring on diversity of housing mix based on market demand and what's selling at a given time.
- Define the Area Structure Plan (ASP) boundaries and let the private sector undertake the ASPs. It's recognized that Council will still be responsible to decide where growth will take place.
- Developers are supportive of Neighbourhood Area Structure Plans (NASPs) in place of Outline Plans.
- Town should take another look at the future land use map and consider removal of some of the neighbourhood hub locations.
- If the Town had an innovative, creative way to approach public art and entry features, rather than an optional amenity agreement, developers would be more receptive.

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Discussion Comments

Density

- Density of 10-12 upa will be too high for Okotoks. There is a fear that Okotoks' uniqueness, which encourages people to move here, will disappear.
- Cimarron was 2.5-3 upa in 1994, 5 upa after 1998 MDP adopted.
- Belvedere (Calgary) is at 10 upa and represents a typical 10 upa community. It couldn't be marketed in Okotoks (feel Town should have used communities that have been built in Okotoks as examples instead).
- Need multi-family sites to meet density targets over 8 upa. End up with empty multi-family sites over a long period.
- Suggestions for increasing density:
 - 6 storey stick build and zero lot line
 - Flexible land use bylaw
 - Express a baseline and encourage/incentivize increase
- Currently at 8-10 upa but development is happening at 8. No one is at 10.
- Consensus of developers present is 8 upa should be maintained.

Neighbourhood Hubs

- Trying to achieve more unique commercial hubs than we've seen previously in Okotoks. Could be more prescriptive than necessary.
- Not asking for more than one neighbourhood hub per NASP; remove circle from Lamont Lands. Look at removing some of the circles on other lands.
- List is intended to be a choice from the toolbox. Hard to attract commercial developers.

Diversity/Affordable Housing//Single Family/ Multi-Use

- Housing diversity in new neighbourhoods:
 - a.) 50% is unworkable
 - b.) Currently 77% of homes are single family
 - c.) The others who are looking for the 23% cannot find it
- Removed R1S and R1E and increased from 30 to 50%. Not sustainable for developers. If R1S and R1E are taken out of definition, keep at 30%.
- Amortizing cost of social housing in new residential mortgages doesn't make sense.
- Okotoks was always the single family place people would go when there was no affordable place in Calgary. There is a risk of losing this identity.
- Okotoks doubled because it did a better job of attracting people than Airdrie, Cochrane.
- No one is buying the condos in downtown Calgary so they're being turned into rentals. Calgary's approach has led to loss of markets.
- People will go elsewhere if they can't get the single-family market in Okotoks.
- Cochrane and Turner Valley meet the needs of those who can't afford to live in Calgary or Okotoks.
- Developers will bring on the diversity based on what's selling.
- Minimum and average lot widths in R1S - not able to sell the wider lots, the average makes it hard to sell the wider lots. Need to have less width.
- What does the Town see as the appeal of Okotoks? How do we distinguish from Airdrie or Cochrane? Okotoks should be mixed-use and avoid the cookie-cutter home builds. Focus more on design controls, materials. Will have to consider affordability impacts.
- Multi-residential on natural areas - consider that if it fronts an amenity it won't be affordable.
- Pendulum has swung to the other side, where affordability is key.
- Lifecycle housing is key, providing opportunities for starter homes with the goal being to eventually move into an estate home.

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Regulatory Requirements

- Art/entry feature – optional amenity agreements are restrictive. If Town had an innovative, creative way to approach it that's not an optional amenity agreement, developers would be more receptive.
- Stripping and grading – leave out of MDP. Or change wording to make it less absolute. Also need to start having conversations with communities rather than turning to regulation.
- Some of the more regulatory pieces should be included in LUB, not MDP. We need to go back and explore.
- Developers are asking for details to be in separate policies.
- Town tried to provide the level of certainty in MDP so all policy is in one place and red tape is reduced. Too much detail such as signage and architectural controls, that belong elsewhere.
- What is the rationale behind having Town prepare ASPs?
 - Larger context
 - Cost to ratepayers due to review
- Suggestion that the Town create the ASP boundaries and let private sector undertake the ASPs.
- Council still has to decide where growth will take place.
- Presentation suggested the Town won't approve any more ASPs in the next 25 years; developers don't agree with the 25-year horizon.
- Rather than establishing a temporary residential growth boundary, the Town is considering an overlay approach. Lands in the overlay area could be expedited subject to demonstrating innovation at NASP level.
 - Some feel this is not fair to suggest and question if the MDP is the right tool for this? Overlays and growth boundaries become restrictive, hard to remove, not the right place. Others feel the MDP is the right place for it but level of detail is the question.
 - Ensure implementation is figured out before including it in the MDP.

Investment/Innovation/Okotoks' Character

- Fear that the MDP changes will scare away investors.
- Okotoks has always been up-front with innovation and sustainability; the fear is that the MDP will discourage innovation. How will we entice people to come here? Where is that market coming from? Traditionally it's been from Calgary or acreage owners. The main purpose was to maintain lifestyle, have more room, small town feel.
- Ability to create the look and feel we want will disappear.
- Hope is to protect the unique culture and identify of Okotoks and build on what we have today.

Other Comments

- How does Council fit in, do they understand how this might work? Is it outcome based or prescriptive – would prefer to see outcome-based.
- Hope is that MDP will be rewritten as the feeling is that the current document is not a guiding document, it is too prescriptive. Eg. social housing – prescriptive grading shouldn't be in an MDP.
- Hope is that staff will highlight how concerns raised previously have been addressed.
- Feel the MDP is prescriptive and not market-driven and suggests non-local consultants know more about the market than local developers.
- Unless policy will radically change, needs to be scrapped and start over.
- Hope was that post-annexation, we have a solution to water and will continue to build what Okotoks is and what everyone wants to live here for.
- Calgary MDP – a lot of the detail is in MDP where it should be in other plans, not in the MDP. Example is the transportation standards of the Calgary MDP.



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Next Steps

- Town will produce a 'What We Heard Report' to share with the developers to ensure feedback is accurately captured.
- Town Administration and Council will review MDP with feedback to ensure alignment with policy objectives.
- The Town will continue dialogue with developers and by October 31 will provide written updates on the proposed MDP objectives.
- The next contact the Town has with Developers will provide: policies in question – what it said, what it says now, how and why it was or wasn't addressed.
- The Town will ensure that all items laid out in the developers' letter are addressed.
- Understanding the financial implications of MDP for both the development community and the Town will form the basis of future funding and financing conversations in association with MDP and Offsite Levies policy.
- The Town will create a high-level policy framework which addresses what is in the MDP, LUB, ASP and NASP and why. The current MDP will be adjusted based on this.
- The Town commits that the MDP will not be presented for first reading in 2019.