In terms of land use and outward growth, City Hall’s policies during this period remained largely unchanged. Developers retained their pragmatic approach in doing business with the City. The most noticeable aspect of land development in Calgary during this period was thus its predictability. Despite several major planning initiatives in the form of general plans, sector plans, design briefs, development control and zoning bylaws, and other policy interventions, the Calgary’s urban form in 1978 was not greatly dissimilar to that of 1954. The outward low density subdivision process that had begun in that year had continued unchecked. As in the 1950s, higher density development was constrained. For example, between 1970 and 1976, the population of the inner city and inner suburbs declined by over 22 percent, or around 20,000 people. On the other hand, population in the outer suburbs increased by 103,000, or 121.8 percent. The role of zoning as a “no growth policy” was reflected in stringent attitudes towards density change. Flexibility was apparent in the density transfer policy, a process which fell to the developers to initiate. Utilitarian notions about the disposition of reserves in subdivisions remained. This paucity of selective green space, as much as the blandness of architecture, gave Calgary subdivisions their internal monotony. Though joint efforts were made to incorporate social, low cost, and affordable housing into new land use and design practices, they were not consolidated. In short, land
use patterns in the city in this period, particularly with respect to zoning and low cost housing, reflected the same dynamic that had characterized City/developer relations in the 1950s.

**General Plans**

General Plans were authorized by the Province. They were essentially guidelines for future growth and were subject to ongoing revision. Calgary’s four General Plans during this period were released in 1963, 1970, 1973, and 1978. Common to all four was an attempt to delineate future land use. The 1963 Plan endorsed a specific growth pattern. The subsequent three Plans were reactive in that they tried to modify this process without changing its intent. In terms of future development, the 1963 Plan was pivotal in that it accepted outward growth as the norm. It stressed an expanded industrial and commercial taxation base and a transportation infrastructure based on increased automobile usage, and furnished a detailed assessment of the utilities needed to accommodate population requirements to 1981.¹ The Plan recognized the pre-eminence of low density housing. The 1970 and 1973 Plans were very similar documents, with the latter being more an update than a new version. They recognized adverse elements in the 1963 Plan by stressing corridor growth and a specific density formula for developing areas, but did not call for a change in direction. Similarly, the 1978 Plan noted the failure of these responses, and advocated a more flexible approach to density. Yet actual implementation was put in a delaying mode.

Calgary’s initial Plan in 1963 was a straightforward document. Its primary focus lay in a provision for industrial growth in order to guarantee population increase. In 1961 John Steel, Commissioner of Works and Utilities, told the Planning Advisory Commission that the City was overly reliant on the residential property tax base and that the commercial/industrial sector was contributing nowhere near the ideal 60 percent of taxation revenues.² Tax contributions from industry in 1961 were less than 4 percent of all revenues.³ Noting that the days of existing for the countryside were over, the Plan proposed to develop large industrial sites in the flat lands of the Bow Valley, along Nose Creek, and to the east where the rail links were concentrated. Recommendations were for the release of 200 acres per year to allow the development of nine industrial parks. To complement this industrial concentration, residential development was recommended in the northeast up to 32nd Avenue. The City’s success in attracting industry to these areas was partly
The General Plan saw commercial development in a new light. Previously, commerce and street use went hand in hand. The 1963 Plan made the two mutually exclusive. Arguing that streets were for moving traffic and “emphatically not to accommodate business,” the Plan discouraged commercial activity along main streets, which were to be designed to enable the free flow of traffic. The way was thus paved for large shopping complexes, controlled access, and most significantly, extensive off-street parking areas. In recognizing the primacy of the automobile both in the General Plan and in the transportation studies that preceded it, the City had given the clear go-ahead for urban sprawl to continue.

With respect to residential development, the Plan tried to provide for future needs by recognizing existing trends and constraints. With surprising honesty, it was admitted that past policy had overly encouraged single family residences; that it was “greedy of land,” and reflected proportionately high servicing costs. Yet the Plan also showed no inclination to change, as the following comment attests: “No consequential changes of policy can be immediately foreseen, and, therefore to be realistic any plan for future development inevitably must recognize these policies, and the land requirements to accommodate Calgary’s forecast future population are based upon the densities currently prevailing.” The discussion on zoning seemed resigned to the inevitable. In acknowledging the “heavy demand for single family homes within every residential subdivision regardless of zoning,” and that “areas zoned for residential use other than single families have not produced increased density,” the authors of the Plan rationalized: “While effective zoning has a contribution to make in the orderly development of a community, to be effective it must work within the terms of reference set by the determined and publicly accepted policies which incline heavily towards the low densities currently prevailing.” The low density profile in suburban areas was further compounded by the General Plan’s visions for high density development. It was believed, naively so, that this would and should occur automatically, and only in the inner city areas: “The extension of new residential development progressively further from the city centre will enhance the propensity of near downtown redevelopment.” Thus, high density residential concentration in outer areas was discouraged.

The Plan emphasized the importance of utilities and how they influenced growth and expenditures. For example, extensive expansion to the north had to wait until the 1970s when connections to the Bears paw...
Dam ensured an additional water supply. Thus, population projections in the Plan showed no development in the northeast until the mid-1970s. In the meantime a large concrete reservoir was required for the Spyhill pressure zone. Similarly, areas to the northwest were stretching the limits of the Bonnybrook sewage treatment plant’s capacity, and a new $2 million plant was projected at Shouldice near Bowness on the Bow River. Population projections reflected this as well. Only 15 percent of the city’s growth between 1966 and 1970 was expected to occur in the northwest. Further large utilities expenditures were anticipated in the new industrial areas in the northeast and southeast. As in the 1950s, utilities issues were dictating the direction and extent of growth.

The revised General Plan of 1970 was a tacit recognition of deficiencies in the 1963 Plan. The dominant issue, however, was not curtailment, but how to pay for transportation infrastructure. In April 1968, Council approved the City Transportation Study (CALTS). This study accepted the growing dependence on the automobile. In noting that few suburbs were presently beyond 20 minutes of driving time from the downtown area, the authors warned that “it was essential that transportation corridors be developed to accommodate increased automobile usage.” So while a desire for restraint was evident in the 1970 Plan, it was obvious that the issue facing civic administrators was not how to control growth but rather how to pay for its continuance. In a remarkably frank statement, City Planners acknowledged that a commitment to maximum growth, an acceptance of continuous outward expansion, and an emphasis on private transport were implicit factors in the City’s development policies. In forecasting a possible revenue deficit of $460 million by 1986, the Plan could only recommend a review of policies and costs and advocate more effective evaluation procedures.

The 1970 Plan also affirmed a density policy in all new residential areas of the city. The acceptance of a uniform density pattern of only 22 persons per acre in all developing areas was proof positive that nothing had changed. An updated Plan released three years later, though couched in the rhetoric of environmental concern, was simply a more detailed version of the 1970 Plan. Like its predecessor it stressed corridor residential development, a need to address housing costs, and the merits of increased densities, while at the same time accepting the fact that “existing forms of growth must be honoured.” Evidence of a lingering mentality was also revealed in the section of the Plan that dealt with Zoning. Though the original R2 zoning was modified to create a mixed residential family zone, it was still designed to continue low densities. Second, all
residential zoning areas save one were described solely in terms of “allowables.” The single family designation, however, was couched in much more specific language: “To protect existing residential areas with low population densities and conventional single detached housing from disruption by the encroachment of unconventional or multiple dwelling units.” This statement of intent plus the reaffirmation of a low 22 persons per acre density policy showed that while the City had recognized the negative implications of outward residential growth, no significant change had taken place.

At first glance the 1978 Plan seemed far more forceful in trying to influence change. The 22 persons per acre policy was abolished in favour of a “more flexible process that permits much more discretion in its application.” In addition to encouraging higher densities throughout the city, the Plan stressed density increase in the inner city and in areas adjacent to transportation routes. A desire to reduce dependence on the automobile was reflected in policies to encourage public transportation and decentralization. In noting its variance with previous policies, the 1978 Plan wanted to encourage greater competition in the development of land by ensuring “that wherever possible, development take place in concentrated rather than scattered form.”

Yet despite its call for more purposeful control over growth, the 1978 Plan in many ways was an overstatement. The “flexibility” to which it referred had always been an option in new areas under Development Control. Moreover, every previous plan had favoured multi-residential development in proximity to main roads and transportation routes. True, the 1978 Plan was in reference to the proposed Light Rail Transit system, which certainly did introduce a new element to the city’s transportation infrastructure. However, the principle adopted as a central policy in 1978 was not new. The contention that past development had been “scattered” is valid to the extent that expansion had always occurred simultaneously in different quadrants of the city. All the 1978 Plan did was focus on growth corridors, a pattern of development that had been observable since the early 1970s and which was still pushing the city outwards in four directions (north, northeast, northwest and southeast). Finally, the Plan was misleading in its policy statements about increasing densities throughout the city. Most of the new developing areas with a potential population of 242,256 were already covered by design briefs under the old 22 persons per acre policy. The City’s intention as stated in the 1978 Plan to allow existing density policies to “guide the consideration of development proposals” in effect meant that the new flexible density
guidelines were applicable only in those areas subject to annexation and
to four land parcels within the city not covered by design briefs, the
combined projected population of which was around 100,000. In short,
the actual issue of flexible density application was for the future.

Though the sequence of General Plans reinforced patterns of outward
growth, their frequent revisions fostered uncertainty. Since all planning
decisions had to be compatible with the current General Plan, changing
guidelines led to inconsistency and confusion. For example, developers
acquired options on Nose Hill in line with residential projections in the
General Plan of 1963. In the 1970 Plan, the area was placed under policy
review. Three years later it was designated as a park, and in the 1978
Plan, the west portion was slated for residential development. Plans for
the inner city suburb of Victoria Park showed similar variance. As a broad
blueprint for future growth the General Plans exhibited a certain uniform-
ity of purpose. However, their frequent updates also made long-range
planning more uncertain, and explain in part why developers were so
intent on maximizing their landholding options.

Sector Plans and Design Briefs

With respect to land use, the policies outlined in the general plans were
implemented through sector plans and design briefs. Acknowledging the
deficiencies of the neighbourhood concept, the 1963 Plan called for the
development of larger units or sectors each accommodating between
20,000 and 30,000 people. These sector plans were described as a “state-
ment of an overall concept for the development of a geographic area of
the city into an integrated community unit which is usually bounded by
the natural or man-made physical barriers as rivers escarpments railways
and freeways.” Intended as a frame of reference for the developer prior
to the preparation of an individual subdivision design, the sector plan
sought to enable efficiency and control with respect to traffic circulation,
and the location of schools, parks, and shopping facilities.

As they evolved in the late 1960s in conjunction with a review of sector
plans, design briefs became the first stage of sector plan preparation.
After 1973, the term “sector plan” was abandoned and design briefs
became the primary unit for operational planning. Design briefs were
prepared by the City and followed a process involving formulation, cir-
culation, post-circulation review, and public hearing before being adopted
by Council. Design briefs were more prescriptive than the original sector
plans in that they provided clearer and more focused direction for
Chapter 7: Land Use

Source: City of Calgary Archives, Cartographer: Robin Poitras
developers. For example, the Silver Springs Design Brief completed in June 1971 encompassed 835 developable acres and projected a population of 17,900. This multi-page document specified the location of schools, commercial establishments, institutional facilities, roads and streets, pedestrian circulation systems, and open spaces. It was accompanied by maps that showed land use, transit routes, and utilities locations as well as the specific location within the city itself. The design brief also included a discussion of other influencing factors, including physical constraints, existing land use, and possible legal hurdles. It further provided for residential development in four community nodes. However, aside from recommending multi-family densities in all four, the brief was silent as to the scope and type of dwelling to accommodate the 17,900 potential residents. This was entirely up to the developers. It was clear that City planners believed that the combination of design brief specifics and the 22 persons per acre guideline were enough to circumscribe developers.

The sector plans and design briefs were well-intentioned guidelines for efficient land use, and on a broad level it could be argued that they served their purpose. They suffered, however, on several levels. The City's servicing and road layout standards were inflexible, and this often
Chapter 7: Land Use

prevented efficient overall land use integration. Since it took time to build out a design brief, obsolescence became an issue. Often, development had begun before the design brief had been completed. The 1973 General Plan, for example, detailed 39 design brief areas covering all developed and undeveloped land within the city. Yet only eight design briefs had been approved. In 1976, Carma secured approval to proceed with the development of Leaside Park (south Edgemont) even though the design brief for the area had not been completed. The fact that design briefs necessitated public input was a further exacerbating factor. Design briefs in new areas adhered to low density principles. Both the sector plans and design briefs were subject to inconsistent interpretation. Lastly and most significantly were the implications of the developers’ role in implementing them.

The five original sector plans prepared under the first General Plan in 1963 failed to achieve their purpose. First the criteria governing their preparation were very vague. They mirrored the Neighbourhood Plan in that they were built around expected school locations. The fact that sector plans encompassed both developed and undeveloped areas made it more difficult to integrate new development into existing infrastructure. All zoning in undeveloped areas was tentative but relatively fixed elsewhere. The major problem, however, was related to major roads. While their general location was known very early, details respecting their specific placement, alignments with surrounding thoroughfares, size, and timing of construction might remain uncertain for years. In 1968, for instance, Carma complained about the difficulty of aligning subdivision thoroughfares with the sector plans. It was not surprising that by 1968 only one of the original sector plans retained any validity at all and even it was problematic since disposition of over half the area was uncertain. This vagueness in sector plan preparation was reflected by developers who focused their attention primarily on larger land parcels in undeveloped areas.

Density requirements in the design briefs contributed to low density development. The 22 persons per acre standard was too low, imprecise, and difficult to achieve over an entire design brief. Essentially it was reasoned that two children from every single family residence would attend either an elementary or a junior high school within a design brief area. Since the capacity of these schools was limited by the size of the community reserve, which in turn was based on the area of the design brief itself, planners projected the school populations and set them against single family density figures to reach a maximum overall density figure
Part Two: 1963–1978

of 22 persons per acre.\textsuperscript{17} It seemed a strange way of deciding on such an important policy. The method was oblique and imprecise. It failed to deal specifically with the multi-family component. Nor did it take into account the changing household demographics associated with declining birthrates or, children leaving home. In the period 1968–1974 single family occupancy dropped from 3.96 persons to 3.58 persons per dwelling, well below the 4.0 figure upon which the 22 persons per acre was established.\textsuperscript{18}

The density figure of 22 persons per acre was not consistently applied over the entire design brief, with the result that subdivisions maintained their low density profile. Whitehorn was developed at 19.1 persons per acre, Temple at 20 persons per acre, south Edgemont at 20.3, and Braeside at 19.83 to name just a few.\textsuperscript{19} Part of the reason was due to incremental development which might allow a lower density figure in an early subdivision on the assumption that it would be counterbalanced elsewhere in the design brief. Often this did not occur. Kelwood developed its Bonavista subdivision at 13.0 and 14.4 per acre, with the overall 22 persons per acre to be attained on the remaining undeveloped lands only “if feasible.”\textsuperscript{20} Adjacent Lake Bonaventure was developed at 12 persons per acre.\textsuperscript{21} It is highly doubtful whether 22 persons per acre were ultimately distributed over the entire design brief. By 1975, the City Planner considered the problem of achieving overall densities of 22 persons per acre in design briefs serious enough to suggest a forum to find a solution.\textsuperscript{22} Whether it was for upper, middle, or lower income housing, the same pattern developed. A very high percentage of residential space was reserved for single family residences, with the presence of higher density development being purely a numerical exercise to achieve the overall 22 persons per acre. In other words, low density was the norm, and high density an add-on to achieve an overall figure that was too low anyway. A subdivision in the lower income district of Penbrooke Meadows in 1971 provides a typical example. The plan provided for a population of 6,776 people on 308 acres. Two hundred and forty acres were set aside for low density housing (18.5 an acre), and 30 acres for reserve requirements. To attain the required 22 persons per acre the remaining 38 acres were simply given over to multi-family dwellings at 60 persons per acre.\textsuperscript{23}

The 22 persons per acre figure thus emerged more as a contrivance than an articulated plan for effective density control and distribution. Multi-family development was the variable in that it was a response to conditions based on single family development. For example, in 1971 two sites in Dover were developed at 50 and 57 persons per acre; one in Southwood at 68.3 persons per acre, and another in Glenbrook at 60 per
Chapter 7: Land Use

acre. Though no reasons were offered, it is safe to assume that their variation bore a direct relation to what was happening with single family house construction in the area. Sometimes multi-family provision just vanished, replaced by single family houses in the interests of “market demand.” In 1971 Nu-West wanted to reclassify its R2 areas to R1 in Canyon Meadows because of “an unsatisfied demand for R1 lots.” It was not surprising that the 1978 Plan, in abandoning the 22 persons per acre policy, termed it “inflexible and largely ineffective,” and its failure was attributed to “previous decisions relating to relatively low density being permitted.”

Sector plans and design briefs were too loose. First, they had no legal force. In 1973, for example, the Provincial Planning Board allowed BACM to change the Marlborough Design Brief on the grounds that a design brief was “not by nature a zoning bylaw.” Second, they were subject to changes and modifications. The Dalhousie Design Brief provided for a school that was never built. The Marlborough Design Brief put a “Commercial” designation on property intended for residential use. Poor communication lines hindered citizen participation in the Strathcona Design Brief. In referring to sector plans, the General Plan of 1970 noted that “all too often in the past, changes have been made at a late stage and destroyed any confidence that the public might have had.” For example, a subdivision was turned down in Albert Park in 1964 because it violated the sector plan. However, the Planning Department was directed to reassess the sector plan and co-operate with the developer to reach a satisfactory solution. Two years later Engineered Homes succeeded in amending the area sector plan to secure a 35-acre commercial site in Forest Lawn. In 1976 the Planning Commission blocked a move to remove 1.06 acres from golf course lands in Silver Springs for R1 residences on the grounds that it violated the Varsity Acres Design Brief.

Design briefs were also subject to updating, which led to confusion and developer protest. Qualico was impacted negatively by the updated Glamorgan-Glenbrook Design Brief, which changed land use guidelines. Sometimes the provincial government stepped in. The Provincial Planning Board upheld BACM’s appeal in 1973 for reclassification that ran counter to the area design brief. In this context one can find some level of sympathy for Carma in 1975 when it submitted an outline plan to develop 21 acres in Silver Springs even though the area was not covered by a design brief.

For the purposes of this discussion, the sector plan/design brief approach to planning and land use defaulted to the developers. They had
input into the preparation of design briefs, and sometimes initiated their implementation. The changes to the Midnapore Design Brief stands as a good case in point. According to a Planning Department official the Midnapore Design Brief was initiated following pressure from BACM, who wanted to develop its lands south of Fish Creek. Commissioner George Hamilton described the sector plan as “look[ing] to the developer himself to prepare the detailed subdivision design.” This statement was lent authority in the 1973 General Plan, which noted that the onus for development in new areas “was on the builder-developer to submit proposals which are compatible with existing uses.” The following comments taken from a City Planning memorandum in 1969 represent a typical example of this strong developer presence. In reference to the Silver Springs Sector Plan, M.V. Facey noted:

Carma has acquired 800 acres within this area and is beginning to prepare plans for early development…. The first phase of their development will be in the southeast corner, fed by the 40th Avenue extension, south of their golf course subdivision presently being processed. Jim Whitehead has done some initial studies for this area and we are to work with Carma in preparing the sector plan simultaneously with their development of a conceptual plan.37

A similar comment concerned a subdivision owned by Quality Construction in the southeast: “Very little work has been done in this area to date but it is now owned by Quality who is being represented by Dick Newby and who are wanting to start planning the area as soon as possible. We will therefore be largely working with them in preparing the sector plans.”38

Thus it was the developers who gave substance to the various design briefs. They determined the population distribution and prepared the zoning/land use classification and development guidelines. They broke down the reserve and roadway dedications and chose the type of multi-dwelling housing projects. They had input on school locations and commercial nodes. While the City argued that it exercised control by insisting on modifications where necessary, the point is that in terms of developer input, the sector plan/design brief process was essentially no different from the old Neighbourhood concept of the 1950s. In fact developers probably had more control, since sector plans and design briefs covered much larger areas. It seems clear that the pace and pattern of residential development was set by the developers with few limitations beyond density factors, and even they changed prior to a zoning bylaw. Design briefs were altered in the interests of the market. In 1966 Engineered Homes
Chapter 7: Land Use

SILVER SPRINGS DESIGN BRIEF

SC  Sector shopping centre
NC  Neighbourhood shopping centre
PSH Public senior high school
PJH Public junior high school
PE  Public elementary school
SJH Separate junior high school
SE  Separate elementary school
FS  Fire station
MES Major open space
LO Local open space
MR Major road
CR Collector road
PW Pedestrian walkway
R RO Road right of way
RA Residential areas

Part Two: 1963–1978

succeeded in having an area in Palliser reclassified from multi-family to single family. In response to an argument by Premier Land Developments in 1972 that “multi family housing demand was light,” the Calgary Planning Commission recommended that 48 acres in the Marlborough Design Brief be reclassified as single family. Similarly, eight acres in Oakridge were reoriented to single family on the grounds that “economic development on the existing classification was not desirable.”

Zoning

Zoning was the other major vehicle for land use control, but in Calgary it was combined with development control to produce a level of flexibility not experienced in other cities. Zoning is rigid in that it prohibits evolutionary changes in land use. Development control, on the other hand, is more flexible in that it defines steps to be taken before approval, with the onus being on the developer to submit proposals. According to the 1973 General Plan, “it permits the fullest account to be taken of altered circumstances and conditions while allowing for more spontaneity and innovation.” In that it referred specifically to areas in a state of growth or transition and thus permitted extensive modifications in the design brief stage, development control was a potentially powerful change agent. As a design brief unfolded in new and in transition areas, development control gave planners and developers all the leeway necessary to integrate new density balances. However, these options were vastly underutilized, with the result that Calgary’s zoning profile bore little difference to that of Edmonton, which had a zoning bylaw only. According to a paper presented by the Faculty of Environmental Design at the University of Calgary, development control that had the potential to induce innovation in both the private and public sectors was not being applied effectively in Calgary. Instead, there continued to be “too much emphasis on the auto, the sprawling suburbs of single family dwellings....” The failure of the City to capitalize on the flexibility afforded by development control reflects the continuing adherence to traditional views about zoning.

Updated zoning bylaws followed the release of every general plan and provided tight specifications for residential, commercial, and industrial land use. They were prescriptive, and could be amended only by City Council through a bylaw subsequent to citizen notification and involvement. Though developers were constrained by the inflexibilities inherent in zoning bylaws, the fact that the Planning Commission could recommend amendments encouraged them to submit non-compliant proposals.
The vast majority of their applications fell on deaf ears. Carma was accused of setting too much land aside for apartments in Varsity Acres in 1965. In the same year the Planning Commission refused to allow apartments in Acadia because they “would materially affect R1 properties to the east.” An application to rezone for a 25-unit apartment was rejected because it “would be discriminatory against those owners who have developed in good faith in the area.” Rezoning was allowed for town houses and apartments, often over community protest especially if they were seen as a buffer between residential and commercial districts. Yet they also could be rejected simply because there were better sites in the same area or because of current trends in apartment development. In 1976 an 11-unit town house project in Mount Royal was described by the Planning Commission as being of “excellent quality re design, amenity area and parking,” but was rejected because the front yard widths were a few feet below regulation. An apartment in Sunnyside was turned down on the puzzling grounds that apartments only comprised 5 percent of the area. Another apartment development was refused since it would set a premature trend. When Clearwater Construction applied for rezoning for two apartment buildings on the north side of 58th Avenue near the Chinook Shopping centre, it was informed that it would result in “stereotype development with buildings having identical appearance, uniform setback and large areas of open parking at grade.” In turning down an apartment application in Rosedale, the Planning Commission’s main reason was that the “extra traffic would create nuisance value to residential areas.”

In spite of rapidly expanding growth, planners were slow to apply development control to transitional areas. Here the best example was in the subdivision of Manchester, where commercial, industrial, and other related activities had largely replaced small houses built more than a half-century earlier. Applications to rezone the remaining two blocks from residential to commercial were turned down no fewer that six times over an eight year period so as to protect “an enclave of residential development.” Developers consistently brought forward proposals for apartments, duplexes, and town houses in newer and older areas, many of which were already in transition. In refusing an application for apartments in an inner city neighbourhood in 1969, the Planning Commission noted that “although the size of the property would appear to lend itself to an apartment development, the general development of the area is of a lower density use and attractive design. There are many well kept houses in this particular area. The development of apartments therefore would be an intrusion into an older area.”
Often the developers' proposals for rezoning for higher densities were based on sound principles. In applying to rezone an area in Southwood to accommodate apartments, Eagle Investments Ltd. argued that there was definite need for cheaper accommodation in the area and that rents in the projected dwellings would be $140 per month in comparison to the several duplexes in the area that were renting at $200–$250 a month. The application was rejected on the grounds that "the need for cheaper accommodation cannot be used as a criterion for rezoning," and that "any rezoning at this time would be a breach of faith with those developers in the area who have constructed duplexes." In justifying his request for rezoning to allow two duplex developments on Elbow Drive in Britannia, the developer emphasized their location on a major thoroughfare, and stressed the fact that single family lots there were not selling. He further offered to work co-operatively with the City to develop a suitable plan that would make the duplexes look as attractive as single family residences. His rejection was accompanied by the comment that rezoning would be "a breach of faith with single family owners in the area." A rezoning application in Sunalta was rejected because the Planning Commission believed that high density development should not be on the same street as single family residences. In an application to rezone an area in Bowness for apartments in 1969, Lennon Developments Ltd. based its argument on current mortgage preferences and the need to overcome the area's "backward stigma." The application was rejected as it represented "an intrusion into an area which is substantially developed with one or two family dwellings." 

There can be no doubt that the City's reluctance to permit changes under either zoning or development control was due to potential community opposition. In such cases, the Planning Commission, and City Council if need be, were confronted with petitions, angry delegations, and appeals if necessary. Often the threat was a sufficient dissuading factor. In protesting an application for an apartment which was "absolutely incompatible with the surrounding area," the president of the Ogden Millican Community Association simply warned that it would "generate a great deal of protest." 

Thus over the years, in spite of development control options, a plethora of rejections underscored an enduring belief in the sanctity of existing residential patterns. The refusals were all couched in similar language. Whether the applications represented breaches of faith, unwelcome encroachments, or intrusions into privacy, their flat dismissals
showed that in spite of the powers available under development control, the zoning mentality prevailed. A fitting articulation of the City’s philosophy towards zoning can be seen in a 1973 rezoning application for a medical clinic in a transition area on 12th Avenue and 14th Street N.W. In dismissing the applicant’s argument that the land was too valuable to allow residential construction, the Planning Commission observed caustically that “the price of land should be a reflection of zoning not vice versa.”

**Multi-Density Options**

In addition to the protection of property values, zoning policies served to ingrain the concept that multi-density development in developing areas was to be isolated and predicated on specific factors. The City remained opposed on principle to large-scale, high density development on the periphery of suburban areas, arguing that “it is considered that the setting aside of substantial tracts of raw land for speculative development of high density apartments can only serve to drain the potential of redeveloping the central and other developed areas.” In defending the new R2 zoning bylaw in 1972, City Planner George Steber stressed the need “to restrict multi family densities in suburban areas in order to maintain a strong residential component in the downtown area.” Density limits in inner city zones were 290 persons per acre. In the suburbs it was 150. Furthermore, even after narrower lot widths were allowed in 1975, the 22 persons per acre policy prevented higher density patterns. High density zoning belonged in proximity to commercial complexes or shopping centres. Thus, they emerged as concentrated nodes, their actual density determined entirely by the market demand that governed the extent of single family homes in the sector plan or design briefs. In short, while in theory all subdivisions in residential areas were built to fixed low densities, the rigidity of zoning policies resulted in very wide density distribution, and fractured neighbourhoods.

The City’s multi-density guidelines prepared in 1966 reflected this narrow view. Based on a checklist, the guidelines measured proposals against transportation factors, open space, proximity to schools, and land use relationships. Admittedly, their application bore some positive results. A good example was Village Green in Acadia, described as “one of Calgary’s first examples of luxurious suburban living.” Set on 4.5 acres, the $1.6 million complex included 17 six-unit apartment buildings and
13 town houses designed to “stress landscaping and lighting to create a park like effect,” albeit in an isolated environment.66

Being far too sketchy, however, the guidelines were generally of little value either to the City or the developers. They ignored design factors, the practicality of multi-age groupings and were very community-selective. One has only to note an example in 1972, when an application to develop a 16-storey commercial and apartment building in Glamorgan was flatly rejected. In observing that “the applicant is proposing to develop a whole site without regard for any amenity other than suite balance,” the Planning Commission, in obvious reference to outdated guidelines, concluded that “this practice while acceptable to some degree in the past is certainly not in keeping with present trends.”67 It appears that the real impact of the guidelines was to lend substance to the belief that multi-family dwellings were to remain isolated from the rest of the community. For example the protection of low density environments is reflected in the specification that multi-family dwellings had to be under 28 feet in height if they were within 100 yards of an R1 or R2 house. More significantly, they were self-identifying.

Though the developers’ interest in higher density development was predicated on market demand, it was also dependent on the willingness of the City to allow them to take risks. Often this did not happen. In spite of Carma’s pleas for more apartment construction in suburban areas, the City turned down an application to develop a comprehensive 1,200-suite complex in the Varsity Acres area in 1965 on the grounds that “the parcel was too large for high density zoning in an essentially suburban area.”68 An application for a proposed subdivision on the eastern end of Dover showed the willingness of a developer to test new ideas while meeting market demand. In 1976, Devco Properties Ltd proposed a 20-acre 441-unit multi-family rental townhouse development catering to a mix of young families and seniors and supervised by a full-time manager and resident caretakers. The project which envisaged suites with access to central courtyards was described as “a planned unit development providing an excellent landscaped residential environment and offering some of the finest housing in the city at moderate rental rates.”69 Though the increased population would not violate the 22 persons per acre in the Dover Design Brief, the project was refused partly on the grounds that the area was already built to high densities.70

The Dover project is illuminative for other reasons. Its refusal was also linked to site unsuitability through proximity to light industrial zoning. Yet this flew in the face of the C.M.H.C’s current interest in providing
money for residential development in areas close to industrial zoning, sites that were normally considered as “not totally suited to housing use.” Shortly after the Dover rental project was refused, the City allowed Conforce Products Ltd., a cement manufacturing company, to move its operations from Inglewood to Dover. Despite community outrage far greater than that directed towards the rental project, the Genstar subsidiary was allowed to relocate in Dover even though its new site was designated urban reserve, which according to the General Plan “was to protect land for urban development from premature subdivision which may prejudice future intended use or which may be a disruptive influence on present and future communities.” The chief reason given for this highly contentious decision was that it would cost the company $700,000 more to buy available land in Foothills Industrial Park.

Community opposition to multi-family densities in low density areas was ongoing and doubtless was a major contributing factor in maintaining existing patterns. In 1976 the Huntington Hills Community Association complained bitterly over the construction of a 120-unit condo town house complex on the grounds that the additional children “would be a catastrophe.” In appealing a 141-unit complex in Palliser by Abacus Cities in 1976, four surrounding communities offered this comment: “Abacus Cities has another development in our area and maintenance has been poor resulting in an eyesore for the rest of the community. They admit this and we don’t want another. One per community is enough.”

An excellent example of the power of community pressure concerned the new R2 Zoning classification approved under the General Plan of 1970. It was intended to encourage redevelopment on larger city lots in older R2 areas by allowing threeplex and fourplex development. Difficulties soon arose and several appeals were upheld by the Development Appeal Board. On the grounds that “these units will detract from congruous development and devalue our properties,” a community petition asked Council to change the bylaw to its original form and allow duplexes only. Despite a Planning Department recommendation that it would be “a retrograde step,” Council amended the bylaw to satisfy the petitioners.

The developers’ solution to the limitations to high density development in suburban areas imposed by general plans, sector plans, design briefs, and zoning lay in two interrelated directions. The first was to try to maximize commercial zoning as much as possible. The second was to build up densities around these commercial nodes, and in particular the emerging regional shopping centres, through the novel use of what was known as density transfer.
Developers continued their efforts to secure as much commercial zoning as they could. In 1968, Carma accused the City of obstructing free enterprise by denying the corporation additional commercial space in Huntington Hills. Developers often submitted too many commercial sites. Kelwood, for instance, had a commercial site deleted from its Willow Park subdivision. In 1966 the Planning Commission resisted a developer by ruling that there was no justification for commercial development to intrude into a residential area that is bordered by late model homes. Kelwood was upset in 1972 over the Bonavista Design Brief, which allocated residential zoning right up to Macleod Trail. With prophetic accuracy Bob Kimoff described the zoning as “unrealistic” in light of the demonstrated demand for property in the “most successful commercial area in the city.” Daon’s successful solution to potential community opposition to Sunridge Mall was to provide amenities. According to the President of Rundle Community Association in 1974: “We are confident that Daon Development Corporation which has been a very strong motivating force in establishing this area will continue with such innovative ideas as the wonderful and unique community center, the planting of trees, tennis courts play areas etc.”

However, despite the sector plans and design briefs, commercial zoning seemed subject to flexibility and inconsistency. In the 1960s tentative plans for shopping centres were often non-specific with respect to parking requirements. Sometimes, as with Carma in Varsity Acres, the responsibility of the developer respecting adjacent roads was unclear. A lack of guidelines resulted in the proliferation of service stations. Disputes occurred over commercial areas intruding into residential districts. Braeside residents, for example, were upset over the location of a commercial centre which they maintained was inconsistent with the design brief. Richfield Properties was discouraged on these grounds in its early efforts to promote a regional shopping centre on Memorial Drive and 36th Street S.E. in 1975. Another good example was the battle with Mayfair and Kelvin Grove residents over the location of a commercial complex on Elbow Drive south of Glenmore Trail. Strange things happened. Stadium Shopping Centre agreed to relocate provided freedom from competition could be assured.

Zoning practices linked commercial and residential development, in that higher densities were encouraged close to shopping centres. However, the extent to which the presence of commercial nodes could be used as a focal point for increased residential density was limited by the 22 persons per acre policy. In this context Carma tried to change the rules when it
used the City’s density transfer policy to achieve higher densities. The Market Mall example is a classic case of a developer using a City policy to promote a new concept in suburban residential development.

**Density Transfer**

The density transfer policy as stipulated in the 1970 General Plan was intended to compensate developers for undevelopable land. Originally it concerned the loss of land required by the City for freeway or interchange purposes. Instead of the City purchasing the required land from the developer, the latter was granted density transfer on the property in question at a specified rate. In 1970, when the City needed 9.7 acres for construction of Shaganappi Trail, it allowed Western Realty a density transfer at 22 persons per acre, which translated into an allowable addition of 213 people (9.7 × 22) on the developer’s subdivision in Brentwood Heights.

In the same year Quality Construction gave up 21 acres in Bonavista Downs for the Anderson Road right of way. In this case the density was differentiated according to single and multi-family guidelines and was applied to the developer’s adjacent subdivision in Queensland Downs. Later, as was seen in Fish Creek and Nose Hill, density transfer was a way for the City to acquire recreational space. Technically the City had the power to freeze such land. However, by granting density transfer at a lower rate, the City secured title to the land while the developer received some compensation. For example, had residential development on Nose Hill gone ahead, the density transfer against the steep slopes was to be 11 persons per acre. In east Marlborough BACM set aside more than the required 10 percent reserve to create an extensive green space area on the assumption that density transfer would be granted against the excess. However, it was Carma’s actions in Varsity Acres with respect to a golf course and the Market Mall shopping centre that showed how the potential value of density transfer was thwarted by poor planning.

**Market Mall**

The development of Market Mall as Calgary’s first regional shopping centre in the northwest is illustrative on a variety of levels. Aside from being the most significant example of density transfer in that it involved residential, commercial and recreational land, the debate over Market Mall evinced the intense competition between developers. In Carma’s
case it also demonstrated the advantages of combining residential with commercial development. Finally, it showed the difficulties inherent in general plans. Without the specificity of design briefs they were unhelpful in helping City officials make solid long-range decisions, especially involving complex and high cost projects like major shopping centres.

The issue of Market Mall cannot be separated from a companion shopping centre a short distance to the east. The possibility of a major shopping complex on Crowchild Trail at 37th Street had been promoted as early as 1962. Led by long-time Calgary businessmen Harry Cohen, M.T. Riback and Norm Green, and buttressed by the promise of two “anchor” retail stores, Northland Village seemed destined by early 1966 to become the city's first regional shopping centre in the northwest.\textsuperscript{90} However, Carma too had been interested in developing commercial property farther to the west for the same reason. But as with Northland Village, the City Planning Commission deemed the project too premature.

Matters changed dramatically in the late summer of 1966 following a planning study which unexpectedly determined that not only was a regional shopping centre viable in the northwest but that more than one could survive. Much to the displeasure of the applicants, the City Planning Commission recommended that both proposals should proceed to the rezoning stage.\textsuperscript{91} The two enabling bylaws were discussed together at a public hearing in January 1967. Both applicants pressed their case, arguing consistency with the General Plan and enlisting support from surrounding citizen groups. City Council, however, ruled in favour of Carma and Bylaw 6917 passed third reading on January 30, 1967. Bylaw 6918 to rezone land for Northland Village was abandoned, albeit temporarily.\textsuperscript{92} The reasons for this unexpected decision are conjectural. Possibly it had something to do with the fact that there were more citizen dissentients to the Northland proposal than to Carma’s. More revealing, however, is the fact that just before Council’s decision, Carma offered to put down a $25,000 bond and construct a golf course in the area.\textsuperscript{93}

Impetus for the Market Mall proposal came in the middle of 1969 when Carma brought forward its ambitious plan. Three separate but interrelated proposals were involved. First was a plan to develop the subdivision of Varsity Village (now Varsity Estates). The second involved the construction of a private golf course to enhance the appeal of the subdivision. The third was the development of a nearby regional shopping centre. Carma’s idea was to transfer density from the proposed golf course to multi-family complexes adjacent to the shopping centre. The plan was received favourably, being described as “an exciting planning philosophy.”\textsuperscript{94}
Problems, however, soon arose over the 10 percent community reserve. Quoting the Willow Park golf course as a precedent, Carma wanted the golf course acreage excluded from the computational formula, arguing that much of it was not suited to development, and that it (Carma) had provided extensive green space, albeit undevelopable elsewhere in the subdivision. The City dismissed the Willow Park golf course example, noting that density transfer had not been a factor there. On the other hand, density transfer had been granted in this instance against the entire golf course, which thus made it de facto developable land. 95 Though the City's case was the stronger, Carma prevailed, but only after it agreed to a timeline for completion of the golf course and to a stipulation that it would be open to the public. 96 The City justified its decision to defer community reserve requirements with the rationale that the golf course contributed to open space and thus “became in effect its own reserve providing public use was allowed.” 97 The fact that this “public use” was not free to the public did not seem an issue. Also, soon after his appointment as Commissioner, Denis Cole rightly questioned the wisdom of allowing a developer to operate a revenue-producing facility after receiving density transfer against it. 98

The Market Mall agreement was signed on November 19, 1969, under which, in addition to the density transfer, the City agreed to construct Shaganappi Trail from the Trans-Canada Highway to Valiant Drive just beyond the shopping centre, and to share with the developer the costs of widening and extending 40th Avenue. The developer agreed to construct an overpass across Shaganappi Trail to connect east Varsity Acres to the shopping centre, to pay the disputed acreage assessment on the golf course lands which in some situations amounted to $951 per acre, and to build the required service road to the shopping centre. 99 The end result was the construction of Silver Springs Golf Course, and Market Mall, Calgary's first regional shopping centre in the suburban northwest.

The City's rationale was difficult to follow. Why even entertain the concept of two regional shopping centres within blocks of each other? Though Northland Village ultimately went ahead, a poorly conceived agreement ultimately cost the City a million dollars in a payout to the developers when extensive modifications to projected high rise developments on the west side of Shaganappi Trail forced a reduction in densities from 5,279 to 2,200 people. 100 Clearly, zoning problems, the projected interchange at Shaganappi and Crowchild Trails, and the sentiments of the Dalhousie community had not been taken into consideration. Not that the community of Varsity Acres was entirely happy with Carma and
Market Mall: Residents argued that the City had capitulated to developer pressure in agreeing to construct a major arterial thoroughfare solely to serve what they perceived was a poorly located shopping centre. Some felt betrayed on both sides, claiming that the City had caved in by allowing 40th Avenue to bisect the community as well as accusing Carma of misleading tactics and downright lying over the specific location of the golf course.101

However, it was the issue of density transfer that is most puzzling. Much of Varsity Acres was already being developed at less than 22 persons per acre. This meant that density transfer from a large area such as a golf course to the relatively small multi-family sites adjacent to Market Mall shopping centre would result in densities of over 300 an acre. This far exceeded City maximums even in inner areas and was almost double the allowable density in suburban areas per acre. It also foreordained an extremely inequitable distribution over the design brief area.102 However, not only was the transfer density to Market Mall ineligible under the City’s density guidelines, it also violated existing policy with respect to the shopping centre itself. Under existing policy, if a large site under a single ownership was slated for both commercial and multi-family density, its residential component could not exceed 22 persons per acre over the whole site.

It seems inconceivable that the City should have been unaware of these two existing policies. In any case, realization plus citizen pressure prevailed during the preparation of the subsequent design brief. The Varsity Acres Design Brief, released in March 1974, recommended an overall density of 22 persons per acre over the whole Market Mall site including the multi-family areas.103 In terms of overall density this meant that the optimum 22 persons per acre was not achieved in the suburb of Varsity Acres since the Market Mall agreement did very little to compensate for lost density due to the golf course. Moreover, the benefits of density transfer had not been demonstrated.

The Market mall project thus invites speculation. In defence of the City it seems that the customary pragmatic factors were at work. For example, the agreement to build Shaganappi Trail was not the capitulation it seemed, since the City and the Province had already agreed on its alignment, and to build it on a cost-sharing basis. As for site, any choice would have been challenged by affected residents, or as Planner Mike Facey wryly noted on one occasion: “We are damned if we do and damned if we don’t.” Also, once the need for a regional shopping centre in the northwest was accepted, the choice of site was predicated on several
factors that went beyond engineering feasibility and potential merit. Here, Carma's offer of a golf course was not easy to ignore. Finally, the fact that development often ran ahead of detailed planning information was a recurring reason for ill-informed decisions. Existing sector plans were obsolete by 1967 and were subject to revision in the late 1960s, while design briefs were not yet available. The density transfer issue, however, remains problematic and beyond explanation.

Possibly the fiasco over density transfer to Market Mall diminished the potential for this seemingly viable tool for density adjustment generally. In that sense it is a pity that its principles were not applied differently. Rather than simply accentuate higher densities in designated areas, it would have been much better to use development control to apply it more widely throughout subdivisions. A strict application would have maintained the 22 persons per acre standard while adding green space. Was it due to market demands and the maximization of space for residential construction, to unwillingness by developers to reconfigure design briefs to accommodate small green areas, or to awareness by the City of the implications for maintenance costs? Whatever the case, it appears that density transfer represented a lost opportunity for the City and the developer to secure more widely dispersed higher densities and more open space.

By the end of this period it was obvious that multi-family development in Calgary had a long way to go with respect to consistency and long-range planning. Part of the problem had to do with the market. Planners agreed that since the developers were forced to cater to consumer demand, it was virtually impossible to predict, let alone control, the ratio and timing of construction of low as opposed to high density housing. For instance, demand for apartments escalated in the late 1960s. By the early 1970s it had swung back to single family residences, and by the end of the period, consistently rising prices had brought the market for multi-family construction back into play.

Green Space

It is undeniable that Calgary's topography, with its several ravines, coulees, and watercourse valleys lends itself to the preservation of large open spaces. An examination of a current map of the city makes that point abundantly clear. Several subdivisions built in this period, such as Edgemont, Varsity Acres, Charleswood, Lakeview, Deer Ridge, and even older suburbs like Pleasant Heights and Altadore, have easy access to
large open spaces. However, some of these spaces represent undevelopable land. Others were tied into a broad green belt network pursued as a result of civic policy. A couple resulted from private bequests. In many other areas, green or open space was confined to school sites and to isolated small places where a swing or some form of constructed playground equipment stands isolated and devoid of any contextual integration with the surrounding built environment. In the 1950s it was clear that community reserves in developing subdivisions meant school sites and little else. Unfortunately, even given a growing awareness of the stifling elements of the built urban form in the late 1960s and 1970s, this perception did not change. Despite the presence of beautiful large parks and man-made lakes, it is this jarring lack of small but aesthetically pleasing open spaces in Calgary’s subdivisions as much as monotony of house construction or duplication in subdivision design that imparts blandness and lack of identity to the city’s built suburban form.

The underlying reasons for a lack of interest in incorporating meaningful open space into subdivisions had to do with basic assumptions about reserve requirements. They were seen as the basis for density calculations though their relationship with school capacities. By the end of this period it was not uncommon to find three schools and a recreational facility located on large, consolidated reserve parcels. After allocating reserves for schools in Silver Springs, only 4.7 acres were left over for ornamental parks and tot lots over 835 developable acres. As a Planning Report noted in 1973: “In the City of Calgary at the present time the total 10 percent dedication is being completely absorbed within the subdivision for school sites and tot lots.” Second, the concept of the 10 percent reserve was viewed purely in utilitarian terms. It was simply an obligation that had to be fulfilled. One indication for lost potential could be seen in the provincial Planning Act of 1970, which changed the 10 percent from a minimum to a maximum. As a result reserves became subject to negotiations that arguably begged their intent. Since reserves were applied over an entire design brief, equitability was sacrificed in certain subdivisions. The first phase in Midnapore received only half of its reserve entitlement. The City and developers argued over whether or not the green buffer strips often used near interchanges, thoroughfares, or between different land use areas should be used to calculate reserve requirements. In fact a suggestion was made to transfer industrial reserves to main thoroughfares to make them look more attractive. A similar debate occurred over the 60-foot strip on the top of escarpments. Generally the developers lost the former battle but won the latter. Finally, since reserve
entitlement only covered land that had been subdivided, this presented problems in multi-density redevelopments not subject to subdivision.

Negotiations between the City and developers also resulted in under-dedication of reserves. In spite of the fact that Calgary Suburban Developments was below its reserve requirement by 7.85 percent in North Haven, the Planning Commission gave its approval, noting that the developer was well over the 30 percent required for streets and roads.\(^{108}\) Three Southwood developers in 1967 secured permission to reduce their reserve allocations and to apply the land to interchange requirements.\(^ {109}\) Developers used density changes to plead for reserve reductions. For example, in 1972 BACM requested that its reserve commitment be lowered, arguing that its actions in changing uncommitted land in Oakridge from 30.1 to 18.3 persons per acre were “consistent with this company's objectives and with the prevailing trends in the Calgary housing market.”\(^ {110}\)

A major factor impacting the deficiency of open space in residential areas was the policy of allowing what was called in lieu payments instead of reserves. The practice began in 1964 when the Provincial Planning Board ruled that the City could accept payment in place of reserves under certain conditions, with the intent being that the City would use the money to buy the balance, ostensibly within the subdivision.\(^ {111}\) Quality Construction agreed to pay cash in lieu of reserves on a town house project on Richmond Road.\(^ {112}\) The City secured land from Burns Ranches free of charge to build the Fish Creek sewage treatment plant on the condition that the land would be used to offset reserve requirements in subsequent industrial subdivisions.\(^ {113}\) Instead of working out where additional reserves might be placed on 780 acres in Willow Park, Kelwood and the City simply exchanged cash for an over-dedication of roads and an under-dedication of reserves.\(^ {114}\) By 1971 reserve allocations in 19 communities had been impacted by in lieu payments.\(^ {115}\)

The problem was that as late as 1972 no compensatory expenditure from these in lieu payments had occurred. By the end of 1971 the City had accumulated over $300,000 from residential subdivisions and a lot more if payments from industrial areas were considered. To quote Commissioner Denis Cole: “It is conceivable that there is over $1 million allocated for parkland acquisition but in respect of which no action has been taken.” The negative effects of failing to honour the intent of the in lieu policy were reflected in the two communities most penalized.\(^ {116}\) Both Southwood and Acadia had earlier registered their displeasure with their plight. In 1968, the Southwood Community Association complained to the City about what it perceived as “a complete lack of green areas.”\(^ {117}\)
The under-dedication of reserves in Acadia and Fairview had also been noted a few months earlier by the Acadia Community Association in a strong letter to City Council. Furthermore, the relevant departments seemed indifferent. According to a 1972 interdepartmental correspondence from recently appointed Commissioner Denis Cole, he had had no success in securing the information he needed to address the issue. Furthermore, remediation did not solve the problems of green spaces within subdivisions. In spite of the subsequent inquiry, policy changes and expenditures, the affected communities, being largely built-up, stood little chance of benefiting unless the City had set aside land for a school, which still meant a predominantly built-form site. The bulk of the money went towards land purchases for major park purposes throughout the city generally.

These above points are not to suggest that in lieu payments and reserve deficiencies were the norm for Calgary subdivisions. They were not. Nor can developers be accused of consistently trying to evade their obligations. Indeed, over-dedication did occur, as witness BACM in Marlborough East and Kelwood in Parkland and Canyon Meadows. The point here concerns the place of small open spaces in new subdivisions. In this context, the statement by E. Rashleigh seems particularly apt. In general reference to the monotony of suburban design, he noted: “This low line of houses is occasionally broken by a square of park but rarely by more imaginatively planned open space designed to contrast with the street.” In short, intent to vary subdivisions through the judicious placement of open space was not a consideration either by the City or the developers.

On a final note, there is the matter of unused but developable open space generally. As was demonstrated in the issue over Nose Hill, the City had little abiding interest in preserving open space in its natural state, and even less if it was deemed developable. An excellent example was the tangled open space area between Glenmore Lake and the 14th Street expressway. Efforts to rezone the area for commercial activity had dated from the early 1960s. All had failed. When the area was designated for potential residential development in the Glenmore Design Brief (1973), the way was cleared for a more concerted effort to develop the area. In June 1976, Campeau Corporation proposed a comprehensive medium density development on 38 acres consisting of two apartment towers containing 72 suites each and 509 town houses. Not dissuaded by City Council’s rejection on July 5, Campeau waited the obligatory six months and, after negotiating some areas of contention with the City, reapplied on February 23, 1977. In the meantime seven surrounding communities
formed the Grant MacEwan Park Association and campaigned to have the City buy the area for a natural park.

For the purposes of this discussion the point is not so much that the Planning Commission approved the project on the grounds that it met the requisite guidelines for multi-density development, or that it dismissed community objections with the curious and indefensible statement that “these same arguments are offered to every multi-family development proposal in the city.” It was rather the absence of any official sense of obligation to preserve lakeshore property on the city’s only publicly owned body of water. The Parks and Recreation Department had no objection, stating that “there is a large amount of park around the Glenmore Reservoir.” In fact in 1967 it had argued that the area’s contribution to the Glenmore Parks system “must be of the lowest priority.” Even the original intent had been to satisfy reserve requirements through in lieu payments. As for the Planning Department, it behaved politically and sought refuge behind the General Plan of 1973, which had not included the site in its parks system projections. It also deferred to the design brief as though it were an act of God. Fortunately, sustained citizen opposition ultimately doomed the project. Instead, the commercial centre of Glenmore Landing was located a short distance to the south, leaving a still-existing wild natural area where the apartments would have been.

Environmental matters were not treated with the sensitivity they warranted. In 1976 the Planning Commission gave its approval to a BACM proposal to raise the Bow River flood plain to enable the development of a subdivision in the Queensland Downs area. Though reviews found that the river channel and flow would not be affected, a 1974 report had recommended that future development within the reaches of the river should take the form of open recreational space. It is to be noted that in approving the project the Planning Commission stressed that it “would not constitute a precedent for similar developments.” Yet at the same time the Planning Commission approved an outline plan that also required some elevation for the development of 24 large lots near the Bow River in Bowness. In recommending that the 15 acres be retained as a natural park, J.D. Hodges, president of the Bowness Community Association, referred to the findings of three earlier reports, and further noted that the proposal was an example of “uninformed, inappropriate and unsound planning practices.” That the ecological integrity of unused land was of low priority was also exemplified in 1973 when the Planning Commission recommended against spending an additional $132,000 so that utilities installations could bypass what was admitted
to be an ecologically sensitive area. In spite of a strong recommendation to spend $48,000 to replace the trees cut down to widen MacLeod Trail in 1974, nothing was done.

The Developers and Low Cost Housing

As in the late 1950s, the City’s approach to the growing problem of low cost housing was tentative and linked primarily to the availability of higher government funding. When these monies became available in the early 1970s, the developers and the City worked co-operatively to address the problem. By the end of the period, however, a change in tactics was evident. In attempting to force low cost housing requirements into the developer agreements, the City reverted to a tried and tested method. Not surprisingly, it was strenuously resisted.

The developers continued to promote low cost housing with more enthusiasm than forethought. Carma’s proposal for a low cost subdivision in 1967 is an excellent case in point. In October 1967, the City received an application from Carma for what it termed a “no frills” subdivision in north Vista Heights. The proposal involved smaller lots, increased densities, and some consideration for reduced amenities. The application

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<td>Total</td>
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Source: Planning and Building Department, Social Housing Policy
was rejected on the grounds that it undermined a belief in the protection of property values and was “a step in producing a retrograde residential area.”127 It was a lost opportunity in which both Carma and the City shared the blame. Had Carma chosen a different location, it might have been more successful. North Vista Heights, being too close to the airport, was scarcely a site with which to woo the sceptics at City Hall. The City’s predictable and dismissive response translated into a lost opportunity to work co-operatively with an innovative and buyer-sensitive developer to address the issue of affordable housing in another area of the city. In fact the City was as uncomfortable in 1967 as it was in the late 1950s with any suggestion to reduce home costs by relaxing standards.128

So why did the City change its attitude in 1969 towards developers and low cost housing? Three reasons seem probable. The availability of federal monies for public housing was one. The second was the formation of the Alberta Housing Corporation (A.H.C.) in 1967 and its interest in promoting low cost housing through a policy of relaxed building standards. The third was a pending specific federal initiative which set aside $200 million for experimental housing projects. The result was the first example of civic leadership and developer involvement in the provision of low cost housing.

Relaxation in standards took several forms and variations, including reduced street and right of way widths and bases, modified sidewalks and curbs, narrower boulevards, shallower sanitary sewer slopes, and single service sewer connections. The most significant and enduring modification, however, was the reduced lot frontage. The developers were quick to take advantage. Typical was BACM, which argued in 1970 that while it was already supplying the cheapest serviced land in the city at $73 per frontage foot in Marlborough, it could not go lower and still build to City standards. In asking for lot frontage reductions from 50 to 40 feet, BACM claimed that it would result in a 900-square-foot home at a savings of $1,900. Mortgage qualifications would be $82 less and monthly payments reduced by $26.50.129 The provision for reduced frontages within certain areas of subdivisions marked the first integration of higher densities in detached housing since the 1930s when R2 zoning usually meant basement suites. It also encouraged the developers, who soon saw the attendant advantage in reducing lot frontages in more expensive areas. Not surprisingly, lots with 40-foot frontages became standard in late 1975. In this context it could be argued that the measures taken to reduce lot frontages to enable lower cost housing in the early 1970s sealed the fate of the suburban bungalow.
Though the developers had long clamoured for the right to develop cheaper traditional detached housing as opposed to apartment or public complexes, it was the City that provided the leadership in innovation through a pilot project in West Dover. In July 1969 several officials visited Winnipeg to see the subdivision of Wildwood Park, one of the few adaptations of Clarence Stein and Henry Wright's 1928 innovative suburb of Radburn in Fair Lawn, New Jersey. They were impressed by elements of the Radburn design that saw blocks of houses facing each other across a common walkway connected by paths to recreation areas and accessed by vehicles through road-width lanes at the rear. The walkway spine was strongly recommended to Council, and after assembling and servicing land in a subdivision in West Dover, the City sold lots on a 40-foot frontage to interested developers at cost. The new design afforded significant cost savings as well as allowing more seclusion and safety for young children.

The innovative housing concept became a reality in 1970 when the federal government set aside $200 million for experimental housing. Under an amendment to the Provincial Planning Act, a municipality could apply to have land within the city designated as an experimental housing area for low cost housing in order to qualify for long-term subsidized interest financing from both the federal and provincial governments. By April 1970, nine developers had submitted applications for over a dozen experimental areas designed for annual income earners of less than $5,000 a year. Many more were at the processing stage. However, despite this great optimism, only four projects were approved, and in September 1970, the C.M.H.C. informed the City that no further monies were available.

Yet by most yardsticks the experimental housing projects were highly successful. Of the 1,033 units constructed, the majority went to owners, not renters. Developers had some freedom of design but were still subject to the usual monitoring in the form of specific agreements so that no development “may differ substantially from that on which the City's request for an order was based and in which reasonable standards for the protection of the public are not maintained.” Nu-West was commended for its project in Dover which, according to Planning Director, Mike Rogers, “appears to succeed in lowering costs without sacrificing any standards.” In early 1976, a City review found that residents in the experimental housing areas were saving $20-25 per month in mortgage payments and that with proper design the projects could be incorporated into design briefs without jeopardizing the 22 persons per acre guideline.
Earlier, a panel consisting of City officials, developers, and the C.M.H.C. conducted an evaluation of the four experimental housing projects. Panel members stressed their overall satisfaction with their integrity, and legitimatized their evaluation by arguing that their criteria could be applied to any development in the City. They liked the walkways, the single service utilities connections, and the dished pavements. Significantly, the panel noted the high level of resident satisfaction. In one project this figure was an astounding 95 percent.

However, the panel was also critical in certain areas. Some projects were too isolated and unrelated to the overall community plan. Green space provisions were inadequate. The panel believed that the developers were too tightly constrained both in terms of time and the range of design they were allowed. It had a point. Nu-West, for example, was very upset over the fact that it could not deal with the City until the C.M.H.C. had approved its application. According to president Ralph Scurfield, “it is absolutely necessary that a developer be able to work with the city departments prior to making application as there is no way he can finalize design or costs for submission to C.M.H.C. without doing so.” Though the City encouraged him to do so anyway, the fact remained that developers were forced to deal with uncertainties and possible changes. After describing a project in south Ogden as “one of the best we have received,” the Planning Department could not understand why City Council had demanded time-consuming and expense-added modifications. In calling for less City interference, Planning Director Mike Rogers observed that “the developer will more clearly identify the characteristics of the development he will be associated with for a number of years and will therefore be encouraged to seek innovations which are less likely to incur him future expenditures.”

The failure of the City to encourage more of these subdivisions is surprising given their reputation for resident satisfaction and resale value. Indeed, in Calgary’s highly lucrative housing industry, innovation might have been an expected market response, especially from the more daring developers. Yet what happened in Calgary mirrored the North American experience, where the Radburn design exerted minimal influence. Allusion to privacy factors does not explain fully why Calgary followed the rest of North America in rejecting these innovative open space design elements. Perhaps a simple explanation lies in the fact that in Calgary, like everywhere else, the land development industry was too inherently cautious and mistrustful of change to do anything that would challenge the existing demand formula for new housing.
Aside from the experimental housing projects, the developers were involved in both the building and design of public housing projects in the period 1970–1973. However, as the most proactive of all the developers, Carma set its sights on capitalizing on available government money in other ways. Soon after the federal government announced its $200 million experimental housing program, Carma presented a proposal to the City for an entire low cost substandard subdivision north of Nose Hill outside the city limits. Innovation was to be achieved via the walkway system adopted by the City in West Dover. It was an interesting ploy geared towards securing annexation and a low cost subdivision financed in part by the federal government. In responding to the proposal, Planning Director Mike Rogers criticized Carma for violating the intent of the Experimental Housing Programme, which in his words was not “to provide an excuse for developers to abandon standards and pressure the city to waive the needs for such items as paved roads....” Rogers was also highly critical of Carma’s cost estimates, which he believed were no lower than those for Nu-West in Marlborough, where a standard subdivision was envisaged. Like its “no frills” initiative in 1967, this unsuccessful proposal by Carma evinced the “nothing ventured, nothing gained” philosophy characteristic of the land development industry during this period.

Carma took matters a step further in 1975 when it bypassed the City altogether and tried to deal directly with the Province. The corporation’s aim was to promote a low cost housing scheme in order to take advantage of the provincial government’s $300 million Starter Home program, which provided mortgage financing and preferred low interest loans for modestly priced houses up to $42,000. In May 1975 Carma President Roy Wilson wrote directly to Bill Yurko, provincial Minister of Housing and Public Works, with a proposal that “would provide the government with the advantages of ‘public land banking’ without the usual weaknesses and liabilities associated with these programs.” Essentially in return for guaranteeing the annexation of Carma’s lands in both MacEwan Glens and Scenic Acres, Wilson offered to freeze 2,000 lots a year for ten years at a discounted market value. Under a formal agreement, Carma would commit to financing, developing, and marketing the serviced lots to home builders according to a pricing formula approved by the government. Yurko’s department, however, evinced little interest, not even advising the City of the proposal. It was September before the City heard of it through a copy given to Denis Cole by Roy Wilson. Cole duly noted “the undisguised efforts to buy annexation,” and felt that involving the provincial government in municipal regulatory functions was “quite
unacceptable.” However, Cole also believed that the proposal suggested a “germ of an idea,” and passed it on to the Planning, Land, and Engineering departments for their comments. In a joint report dated October 1975, the three departments saw merit in “the notion of providing special consideration to a developer who will voluntarily make provision for housing for lower income ranges.” However, they were not so positive about the proposal itself. It was too non-specific with respect to crucial financial details. Transportation and utilities presented prohibitive problems. The report questioned Carma’s ability to provide land cheaply enough. It also noted the fact that Carma was taking very little risk. The report concluded that while the proposal had merit, “there was not sufficient substance to make the offer irresistible.”

The Province became actively involved in December when the Alberta Housing Corporation met with City officials to discuss the matter. It was clear that the issue was not the proposal itself as much as the areas involved. The City was adamant that it would not be pushed into annexation and that transportation and utilities installations made the proposal non-viable economically. While Housing Corporation officials liked the proposal and promised co-operation, they made it quite clear that the City should not feel bound. The comment was interesting since Commissioner George Cornish immediately made allusions to the greater suitability of Carma lands within the city in the northeast currently under a freeze because of sour gas issues. The meeting ended with a decision to prepare an official joint response to Carma’s proposal.

The joint report went to Carma on January 20, 1976. Couched in terse and mildly critical language, it categorically rejected Carma’s proposal primarily on the grounds detailed above. However, the report did not close the door completely. Carma was offered the opportunity to go elsewhere: “It is understood that Carma owns lands in north-east Calgary which are presently affected by the sour gas problem. The City of Calgary and the Alberta Housing Corporation would be pleased to work with Carma and other developers in this area … to initiate a starter home project and to help remedy the sour gas problem.” It was a brilliant strategy by the City, one that reaped two benefits. Developers like Carma were induced to provide the type of affordable housing suggested by the proposal but in a location of the City’s choice. They were also enjoined to work together with the Province to redress the sour gas issue that was holding up development.

In January 1978, four developers, including Carma and Daon, agreed to assume the costs of relocating the gas well that was holding up development.
development in the northeast. Soon after, in return for receiving approval to develop Falconridge Phase II, Carma had to agree to construct 50 percent of all homes to conform to the Starter Home Programme. Similarly, Daon was allowed to develop part of Temple provided that 50 percent of the dwellings were marketed at below the maximum price allowed by provincial or federal assisted housing programs. A result of co-operation between the City, the Alberta Housing Corporation, and the developers, these arrangements for affordable housing were due originally to Carma’s bold proposal to the provincial government, and to the City capitalizing on its potential.

The issue of affordable housing pitted the City against the developers in late 1975. There were two dimensions to this controversy. First was a renewal of a familiar pattern by the City to force developers to assume more responsibility for the costs of development. Second, while this period saw a growing consciousness of design as a response to the ugliness and stigmatization associated with most public or social housing projects, the debate between the City and the developers in 1976 considered for the first time its potential for integrating lower cost housing in subdivisions.

As early as 1971, the importance of design had been raised by the Planning Department. In reference to the Experimental Housing Programme, City Planner Stuart Round questioned its guiding premise when he commented that “the experimental programme has relied on houses which could have been built conventionally as far as compliance with the building code is concerned. Waivers have been almost entirely confined to subdivision and city servicing standards. In other words experimentation has been on land development rather than on building form.” In 1975, the evaluative panel reached the same conclusion when it said that the appearance of over crowding was due to poor design and not high density. The huge controversy over a high density 116-unit town house complex in Huntington Hills is a case in point. Alderman Pat Donnelly called the proposed structures “boxes that no one in their right minds would accept,” and argued that “it is the poor design and not the number of town houses and apartments that has created a running battle in City Hall between developers and the Huntington Hills community.” Yet this nascent interest in design was accompanied by more uncertainty than conviction. Design innovation was approached cautiously. One developer accused City Planners of wanting “far out” designs that were too expensive and which allowed no scope for expansion or modification. A spokesman for H.U.D.A.C. offered the opinion that “to try innovative
design simply increases the length of the development process thereby falling further behind the housing demand. A 1976 C.M.H.C. study on low income multiple housing projects in Alberta headed by a University of Alberta sociologist concluded that while design in housing was important, it was not a panacea. The study found that residents were more concerned about what the design offered in practical terms rather than the design itself. Yet it was this growing awareness of the practical value of the aesthetics of design that led the City and developers to consider other and better ways by which the contentious issue of affordable housing could be approached. The release of a report on social housing provided that opportunity.

The civic report on social housing was a response to the problems of affordable housing in the mid-1970s. Released in October 1975, the Report noted the lack of activity in non-profit, rental, co-op, and public housing despite available financing from higher government levels, and attributed it in large part to the costs of land assembly. Accordingly, the Report recommended that developers be required to set aside 10 percent of their net developable land for social housing programs. Fearing the repercussions, Council ordered further consultation with the developers. Not surprisingly the U.D.I. and H.U.D.A.C. registered their strong opposition. Instead, they stressed co-operation. They recommended the use of higher government financing to integrate public housing units into subdivisions. Their inclusion should be on a random basis and their design such as to make them indistinguishable from adjacent housing. The Commissioners accepted the developers' argument, and on March 22, 1976 City Council adopted a motion to take the matter forward by approaching the Alberta Housing Corporation and the C.M.H.C. “requesting their support for public housing on a random basis in new developments.”

Unfortunately the initiative did not go ahead as planned. Both the A.H.P and C.M.H.C. were wary of the idea and were loath to accept proposals. Only four were approved in two rounds of proposals in the fall of 1976. The A.H.P. especially did not like the idea, preferring instead to lease City-owned land and assume total responsibility for projects. Also the fact that 206 Starter Home Programme units were built in 1976, plus another 371 under the formerly little-used non-profit incentives, likely dulled the City's will to pursue the matter further. In November 1976, City Council renewed its interest in the Social Housing Report's initial recommendation. Over the strong objections of the U.D.I, a clause compelling developers to set aside 10 percent of their net lands for social housing was inserted into the first draft of the 1977–1978 Development Agreement.
The U.D.I. refused to back down, and following a series of meetings, the City's Operations and Development Committee recommended the deletion of the clause. City Council agreed and the offending clause disappeared. The issue vanished from official interest, as evidenced in the 1979 and 1980 Development Agreements. Yet it also seems that U.D.I. pressure alone may not have been pivotal. The City did not have the legal right to compel developers to give up the 10 percent. However, according to the City Solicitor, there was nothing to prevent the City from dealing with individual developers on issues related to social housing within subdivisions. Clearly this was something the City was not prepared to do.

Discussion

The mechanisms to control growth did not function as well as intended during this period. The need to revise general plans so frequently created a state of constant flux. This situation was compounded by the length of
time involved in the preparation of design briefs and sector plans, which required extensive coordination via several departments as well as public participation. Sometimes they were virtually obsolete before they were built out. It seemed too that especially in the 1970s the increasing role of the provincial government made long-range planning a more protracted and complicated process. The developers were constrained by delays occasioned by these planning considerations and wanted speedy decisions where none was really possible given the way the City operated. In short, planning controls did little to curb the patterns of urban growth defined in the early period.

It appears also that both the City and the developers had begun to realize the merits of increasing and dispersing densities within subdivisions. It was feasible, given flexible options through development control and density transfer plus the willingness of developers to become involved. Yet nothing was done and the zoning inflexibility typical of the 1950s remained. Certainly one reason was an abiding belief in protecting property values. Another was linked to federal and provincial financing and to the difficulties with the A.H.C and the C.M.H.C. However, the popular association of increased densities with the “evils” of social housing was probably a greater factor. Aldermen especially were not prepared to disagree with their constituents who equated increased densities with a diminished quality of community life. The hybrid solution of continuing low suburban densities and complementing them with very high concentrations in peripheral areas led to bifurcation and a lack of community cohesiveness. Over a year after the integrated public housing initiative fell through, Alderman Stan Nelson, in referring to high density concentrations in Beddington, remarked that “we need to find ways of blending multi family sites into the community.”162 Two years later a Planning Department official referred to mixed density neighbourhoods as appearing to be “the type of thing we need.”163 The trouble was that in 1979, no one was really listening.

The City’s failure to further promote the experimental street and walkway alignment developed in West Dover is puzzling given its implications. According to one of the officials who saw the Winnipeg prototypes in 1969 the design had tremendous potential:

It is noteworthy that although both developments were originally designed for purchase by families with modest means, they are now largely owned by professional people including a professional planner. Furthermore the subsequent adjoining development of high priced houses on large lots were
Part Two: 1963–1978

deliberately located in close proximity to the previously built walkways which are regarded as value-enhancing factors in each neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{164}

It seems that the above comment might have helped the City to persuade developers to popularize the concept in all socio-economic housing areas within the city. The failure to capitalize on this interesting design principle seems a double shame today, when a summer stroll down one of these walkways is a delightful experience and a major testament to what might have been elsewhere.

The concept of green open space was as limited in this period as it was in the 1950s. It usually meant undevelopable land converted where possible into large parks. Within subdivisions it was associated with playing fields, usually on school grounds and with the occasional tot lot. The City’s refusal to apply density transfer to secure more green space or to offer other incentives for the developers must also be measured against the latter’s general reluctance to contribute more than the requisite 10 percent. Both were culpable. This failure to integrate public green spaces more fully into subdivisions reflected an attitude born of the times. Homeowners had their own private green space.
Ironically, in demonstrating an affinity with green open space, the proliferation of strips of manicured front and back lawns probably made a greater statement about the private domain and urban sprawl than the houses they surrounded.