Town of Okotoks

Our Plan for Downtown

The Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan

MAY 2025

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- Bluerock Planning Inc.
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- Skyline Partners Ltd.
- Associated Engineering Alberta Ltd.
- Bunt & Associates Engineering Ltd.

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Land Acknowledgement

The Town of Okotoks acknowledges the original stewards of this land that we know and call Treaty 7 Territory, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy First Nations, the Kainai, Siksika and Piikani. The Stoney Nakoda First Nations, which includes the Bearspaw, Chiniki and Goodstoney, the Dene First Nation of Tsuut'ina and the Métis Nation of Alberta. We vow to continue honouring and respecting the Indigenous Peoples Sacred and Traditional ways of life and will carry on this special relationship with the land so that generations to come can enjoy, use and live off the land as their ancestors did. We honour and respect this space, the water, the animals and all the beings who have a spirit and have been here long before us.

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How to Use this Plan

Citizens, business owners, and Council members:

- Begin with the Vision and Guiding Principles then read through the document to understand how the different character areas and associated policies fulfil the Vision to create an amazing Downtown.

For developers and development applicants:

1. Read and understand "**Downtown-Wide Land Use Policies**" in Section 4.1 and "**Downtown-Wide Design Guidelines**" in Section 4.2 as these will be applicable to your proposed development.
    - If your property is in a Gateway area, please also see **Section 4.3**.
    - If you have a Heritage property, please also see **Section 4.4**.
2. Find which character area your property is located in on **MAP 1 | PLAN BOUNDARY & CHARACTER AREAS**.
3. Find the applicable Character Area policies in **SECTION 5**.
4. Create your development application to align with these policies, the Municipal Development Plan, and Land Use Bylaw.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

0 Executive Summary

Our Plan for Downtown is the vision and direction for the future of Downtown Okotoks.

VISION:

Downtown is the social, cultural, and economic heart of the community;

through the continued evolution of a unique walkable area that attracts people and investment.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following Guiding Principles are integrated throughout the Plan in policies and maps.

- Vibrant Economy and Active Spaces
- Connected & Walkable
- Celebrate Unique Character
- Create A Green Oasis
- A Place to Live

VIBRANT ECONOMY AND ACTIVE SPACES: The Downtown economy is active with people walking, shopping, mingling, eating, and enjoying the many things to do in the Downtown. Public and private sites are designed to create lively and engaging spaces where people can gather and move around safely and easily using all modes of transportation, with special emphasis on pedestrians.

CONNECTED AND WALKABLE: The Downtown is physically connected with ease of movement for people with all levels and types of mobility – walking, rolling, riding, and driving. A multi-modal network of sidewalks, pathways, and roads connects people throughout the Downtown.

CELEBRATE UNIQUE CHARACTER: The unique urban character of each Downtown area is celebrated and maintained through flexible and adaptable design guidelines and policy.

ENHANCED NATURAL SPACES: Places, buildings, and streets are designed with natural spaces and local vegetation in mind, providing an opportunity to engage with nature and reduce climate change impacts through a strong tree canopy, access to the river and numerous connections to parks, plazas, and recreation areas.

A PLACE TO LIVE: Downtown is a desired place to live for people of all ages with amenities, gathering areas, and a diversity of housing creating a strong sense of community.

3D Visual of Downtown

1 | INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

As a distinct district, our Downtown will continue to reflect our unique culture and history. We will create a mix of uses in the downtown core to support business success and a vibrant public realm for the enjoyment of all residents and visitors.

Okotoks Municipal Development Plan

Downtown Okotoks forms the core social, cultural, and economic heart of the community!

It provides public spaces for social gathering as well as a variety of local businesses serving as places for residents to shop, gather and connect with one another.

The Downtown helps provide a sense of community and belonging, fostering relationships and a strong social fabric. Residents can come together for community events held in the Downtown, creating a shared experience and a sense of pride in the community.

Downtown also acts as a cultural centre, showcasing the Town's artistic expressions, heritage, and local talent. It is home to the Okotoks Art Gallery, the Old Church Theatre, private galleries, and historical buildings that contribute to the cultural identity of the community.

Downtown is also a thriving commercial hub that supports local businesses and drives economic growth. The presence of local businesses creates employment opportunities, encourages entrepreneurship, and generates economic activity, benefiting the entire community. Additionally, the Downtown contains smaller lots and more individual buildings than are typical in contemporary commercial centres, which provides a more diverse tax base and more owner/operator businesses.

The historical legacy and architectural heritage of Okotoks is best understood in the Downtown. The protection and enhancement of a number of historic buildings, such as Stockton Block and homes on Elma Street, serves as a reminder of Okotoks' past and contributes to its distinctive character.

Downtown is walkable. The pedestrian-friendly environment of Downtown encourages people to explore the area on foot, but is also becoming more accessible for all active transportation modes, promoting physical activity and reducing reliance on cars.

1.1 Purpose

Our Plan for Downtown is the vision and direction for the future of the Okotoks Downtown.

The Plan has **legal (i.e. statutory) authority** to be implemented and enforced through Town decisions. For example, Council decisions on Downtown street upgrades, or Development Authority decisions on development applications.

The Plan has **social power** to evoke change, as it comes from years of community engagement with citizens, business owners, Town administration and Council (see **Appendix 2**). Many policies and initiatives in the Plan can be completed by citizens and business owners who wish to implement this vision.

Although this Plan has clear and concise policies, it is also designed to be dynamic. The Plan integrates changing socioeconomic, cultural and economic trends into its overall implementation.

The Plan will guide development over the next decades so that the Downtown continues to evolve in a manner that reflects the community's aspirations and ideas, and truly becomes a welcoming and inclusive place for residents and visitors.

This Plan should be read in the context of the Land Use Bylaw (**LUB**) and the Municipal Development Plan (**MDP**).

1.2 Authority of the Plan

Our Plan for Downtown is an Area Redevelopment Plan in the context of section 634 of the *Municipal Government Act (*hereby "the Act"). In accordance with the Act, an area redevelopment plan may be initiated to preserve or improve land and buildings in the area; rehabilitate buildings in the area; remove buildings from the area; construct or replace buildings in the area; establish, improve or relocate roads, public utilities or other services in the area; or facilitate any other development in the area.

An area redevelopment plan must describe

- the objectives of the plan and how they are proposed to be achieved,
- the proposed land uses for the redevelopment area,
- if a redevelopment levy is to be imposed, the reasons for imposing it, and
- any proposals for the acquisition of land for any municipal use, school facilities, parks and recreation facilities or any other purposes the council considers necessary.

The plan may contain any other proposals that the council considers necessary and must be consistent with higher level statutory plans, including the municipal development plan, inter-municipal development plan, and regional plans.

1.3 INTERPRETATION

Policy Interpretation

The following details how to interpret policies in this Plan:

- Policies that contain the words “must” or "will" outline mandatory compliance with a given statement.
- Policy statements that include the word “should” indicate that compliance is expected, unless unique circumstances dictate an exception may be permitted. However, “should” statements may not be practical in some circumstances and flexibility is provided. “Should” statements will be applied unless it can be clearly identified to the satisfaction of the decision-making authority the policy is not reasonable, practical, or feasible in a given situation.
- Where “may” is used in policy statements, there is no obligation to undertake what is proposed, but implies that the decision-making authority must give due consideration to the policy and has some discretion on the application of the policy in decision-making processes.

Map Interpretation

The following points detail how to interpret Maps and Figures in this Plan:

- Where a map line appears to follow a natural feature (e.g. river), road, or property line it is intended to follow that feature. The precise location of boundaries and areas will be determined by the Town or decision-making authority.
- No amendments to the figures within the Plan are required as a result of further delineation at the detailed design of public infrastructure and Development Permit at the redevelopment stage, as long as the intent of the applicable polices is maintained.
- The locations of features illustrated on all maps, including but not limited to utilities, natural asses, property lines, and building footprints are approximate and may be varied with any proposed development.

1.4 Context

Our Plan for Downtown encompasses the area shown on **Map 1 | Plan Boundary**, which includes land south of Crescent Road and the escarpment, north of the shoreline of the Sheep River, west of Poplar Avenue and east of the commercial development along Northridge Drive. Within Downtown, there are four unique sub-areas that have been shaped by the urban character of each area. These character areas include:

- Elma Street West historical area,
- Maple residential area,
- Main Street (Elizabeth, McRae and North Railway Streets), and the
- Riverfront adjacent to the Sheep River.

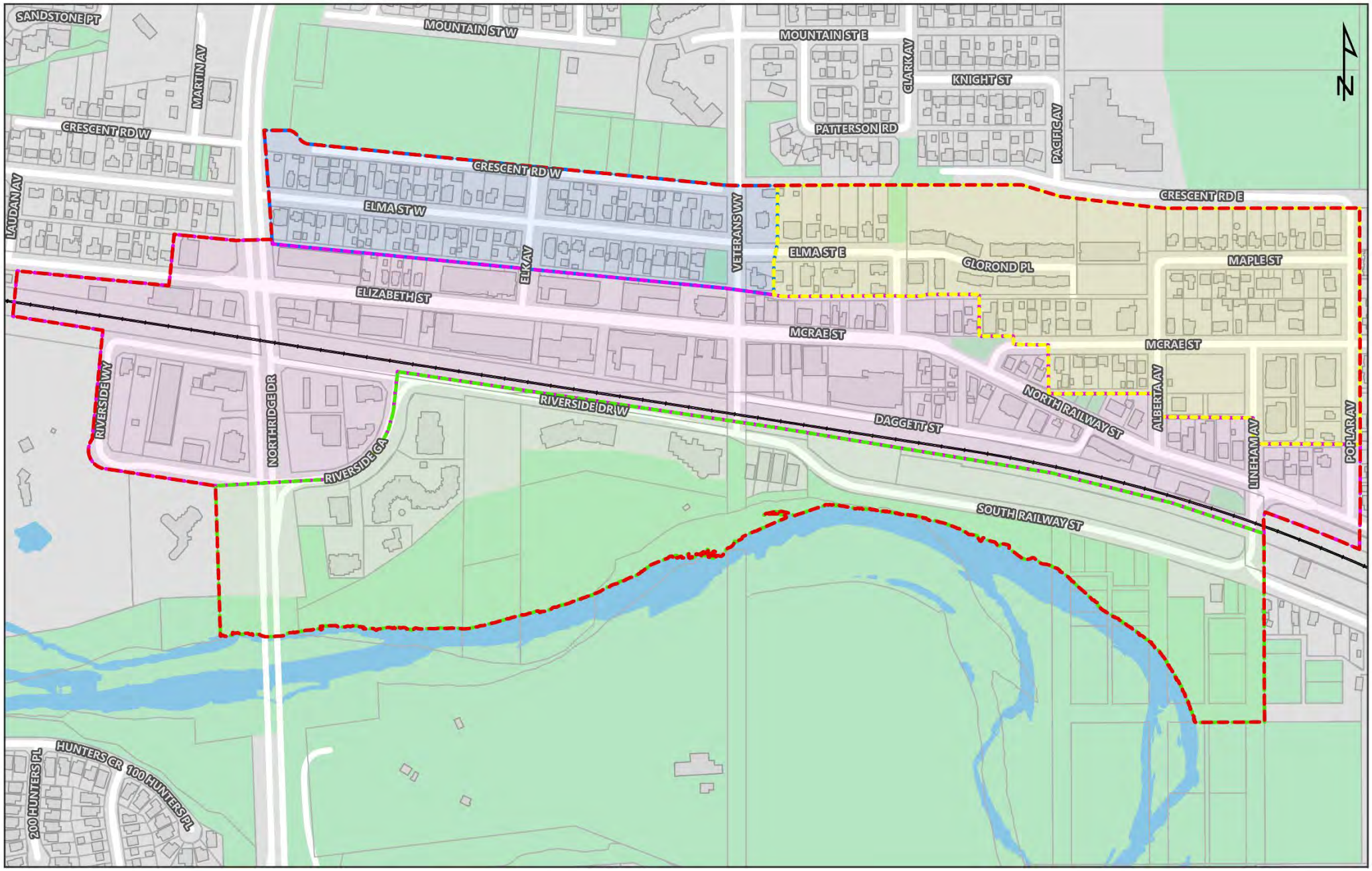
Context North: To the north of Downtown is the escarpment, a steep hill that is an obvious visual separation between the lower-density residential communities that sit atop this natural feature and the Downtown. Connections from the north to Downtown include multi-modal access on Veterans Way or through open space connections for cycling or pedestrians.

Context East: To the east are residential areas with a mix of single-detached and multi-unit residential buildings, providing a diverse range of housing options. This residential area supports the Downtown due to its walkable proximity for those who work or access it for their daily needs.

Context West: To the west of the Plan Area is mainly low density residential, which has significant opportunity for infill and intensification over the coming decades.

Context South: To the south, the Plan Area is bounded by the Sheep River and the wider Sheep River Valley. Rather than turn its back to this important natural spine of the Town, the overall Downtown Plan is designed to engage with this important natural area and build its natural flows and features into the overall look, feel, and urban design of the Downtown area.

Overall, although the Downtown Plan Area is constrained to the north and south by natural features, these are not dividing lines or hard edges, but rather natural features that weave into the overall design and provide opportunities for the Downtown to maintain connections to nature, while also building out as a vibrant, urban space for people to feel comfortable within. The adjacent residential neighbourhoods further provide opportunities for additional vibrancy in the future as additional people live close to Downtown and support its prosperity.



Okotoks

Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan

Map 1 | Plan Boundary & Character Areas

Legend

Character Areas

- Elma Street West Area
- Main Street Area
- Riverfront Area
- Maple Area
- Park Spaces
- DARP Boundary
- CP Railway

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Information Technology

Created Date:
2025-02-14

Scale: 1:5,400

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Meters

1.5 Constraints & Assets

Map 2 | Constraints identifies the existing constraints within the Downtown. Key constraints include: flood hazard areas, arterial roads, and the railway corridor.

Flood Hazard Area

The flood risk is due to the Downtown being nestled between the escarpment and the Sheep River. The Town has undertaken extensive work to mitigate the impact of flooding, but the changing nature of the climate may result in more variable impact to flood hazard areas. That is, floods may be higher or more severe, and occur at unexpected times of the year due to climate change.

The *Sheep River Flood Hazard Study* being currently completed by the Government of Alberta will provide a better understanding of the flood hazards impacting the Downtown. As shown on **Map 2 | Constraints**, the **Floodway** is the portion of the flood hazard area where flows are deepest, fastest and most destructive. The **floodway** typically includes the main channel of a stream and a portion of the adjacent overbank area. **Flood fringe** is the portion of the flood hazard area outside of the floodway.

Policy direction of the **MDP** and the requirements of the **LUB** will direct considerations for development within the areas affected by the flood hazard area.

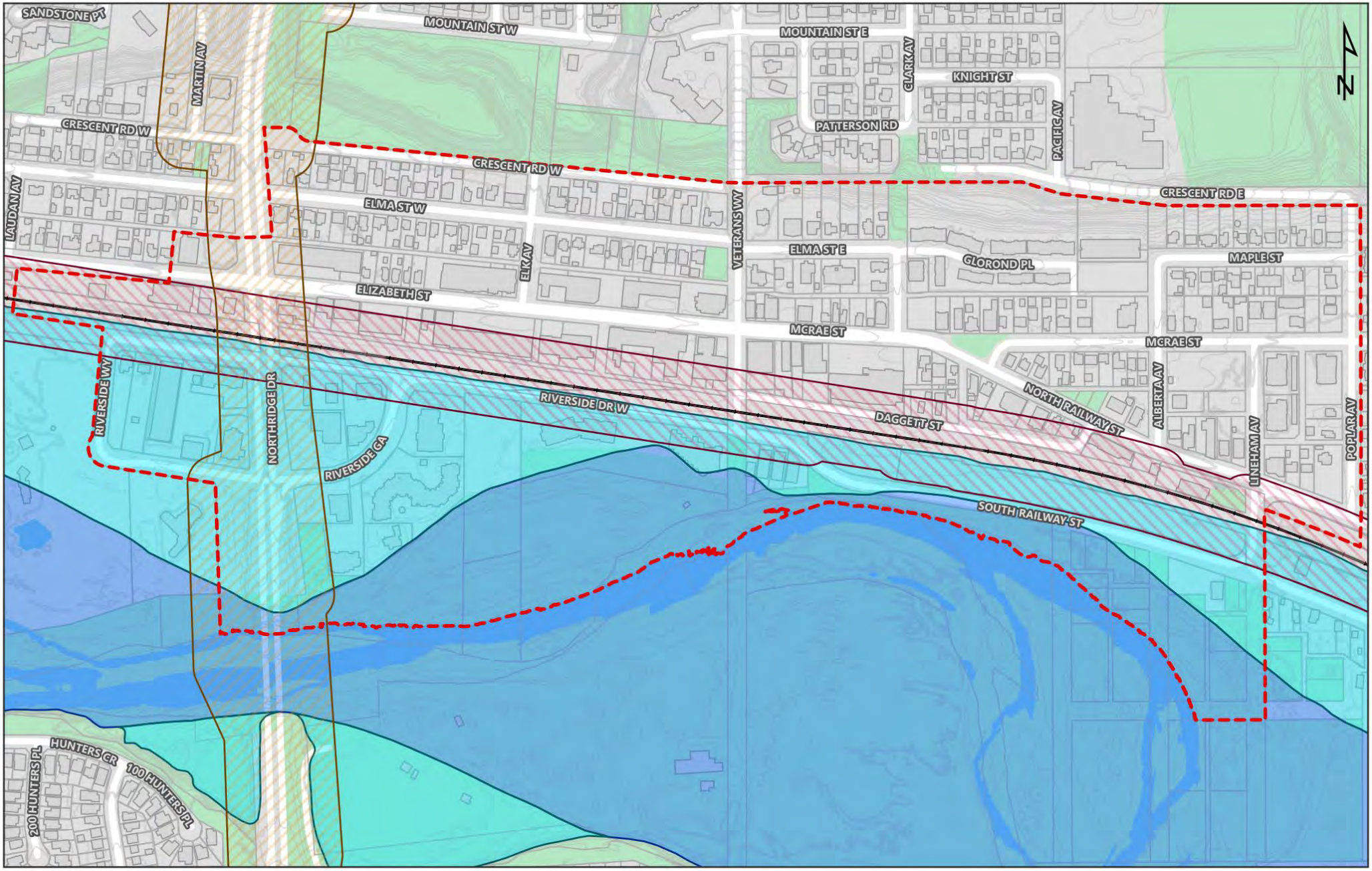
Railway Corridor

A secondary main line for **CPKC** (Canadian Pacific Kansas City Rail) runs through downtown, providing a critical goods route for rail transportation. The line also provides a potential opportunity for heavy rail passenger transportation, if regional passenger rail is introduced in the Calgary Region. However, the railway also provides a challenge for noise, vibration, and safety to the community from the transport of dangerous goods and moving trains. The railway also provides a barrier through the Downtown limiting access to only a few key crossing points. Policy direction of the **MDP** and the regulations of the **LUB** will guide development considerations within 75 m of the railway corridor.

Natural Assets

Map 3 | Natural Assets identifies the existing natural assets in the Downtown. Natural assets are the naturally occurring features of an area, such as trees, soil, and wetlands, that provide important services to citizens. For example, wetlands store water, improve water quality, and moderate climate through carbon storage. Vegetation such as trees, regulates local microclimates and reduces urban heat island effects, thereby improving physical health and human comfort.

The Downtown contains riparian areas of the Sheep River, natural escarpments, and numerous mature trees that should be protected and enhanced to the extent possible as directed under the **MDP**.



Okotoks

Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan

Map 2 | Constraints

Legend

- Arterial Roads (30m Affected Area)
- Railway (30m Affected Area)
- Flood Fringe
- Floodway
- DARP Boundary
- Park Spaces
- CP Railway

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Information Technology

Created Date:
2025-02-13

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Meters

Okotoks

Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan

Map 3 | Natural Assets

Legend

Natural Asset Inventory

- Woodland
- Low Vegetation
- Watercourse
- Canopy Cover
- DARP Boundary
- Park Spaces
- CP Railway

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Information Technology

Created Date:
2025-02-13

Scale: 1:5,400

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Meters

Parking

There are more than 2,000 on-street and off-street parking spaces in the Downtown, with additional opportunities for parking being looked at through public realm improvements in Downtown, such the new formalized parking that was constructed along Daggett Street in 2024.

MDP Policy 8.3.4.a directs that parking in the Downtown should be carefully managed to provide enough parking supply to entice people to shop in the area and support local businesses, while avoiding onerous parking standards that dominate the **PUBLIC REALM** and discourage new development. The recently adopted Land Use Bylaw removed the requirement for minimum parking standards for individual uses, but allowed for the consideration of parking studies and contains standards on how parking is configured, if it is provided on-site.

A Downtown parking study undertaken by Bunt and Associates in 2024, identified the following conditions:

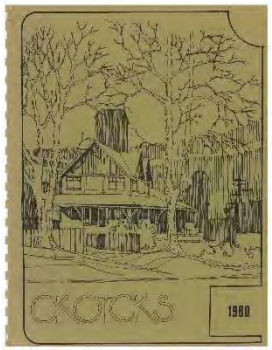
- **No significant parking shortfall** – There is no current significant parking shortfall in the downtown area. Up to 524 (weekday) to 566 (weekend) on-street spaces and 536 (weekday) to 834 (weekend) off-street spaces are available during the peak parking periods.
- **There are high demand parking locations** – Although the current parking demands do not exceed the available parking supply, there are a few areas that are experiencing high-use

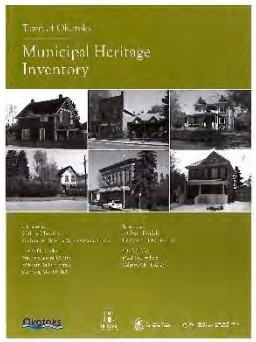
Parking is available within 2-block walking distance during the peak periods. Substantial redevelopment of downtown properties can occur before any significant parking issues are anticipated to occur, but the current and future parking situation should be reviewed periodically to determine if any further requirements should be implemented, including:

- Changes to time period restrictions for parking;
- Introduction of market pricing for parking spaces;
- Review of parking requirements in the LUB for the downtown districts; and
- Sufficiency of access to transit and active transportation networks
- Addition of bicycle and scooter parking stands, including bike shelters for winter cycling.
- Additional Town investment in centralized public parking opportunities

1.6 History

The history of Okotoks began prior to the 20th Century, with establishment of an early settlement along the Sheep River on the Macleod Trail that provided a stop on the stagecoach route linking Calgary to Fort Macleod. In 1904, the village of Okotoks became a town, consisting of an area not much larger than the current downtown. The town continued to grow and in 1980, the first plan for downtown was adopted, the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan (DARP). The Plan anticipated the town would grow from 3,000 to 34,000 by the year 2000 and responded with policies targeting commercial needs and denser residential uses. In 1997, the Town rescinded the DARP with the introduction of a new Municipal Development Plan "the Legacy Plan" based on the carrying capacity of the Sheep River. In 2018, the Town adopted the Okotoks Downtown Urban Design Master Plan (DUDMP), which embodies ideas of contemporary sustainability and presents a vision, goals and a set of guiding principles to guide the downtown forward. See **Appendix 3: History & Background**.





Downtown Planning History

Indigenous groups used the area as an important gathering area.	Village of Okotoks becomes a Town	1st Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan adopted	Town adopts a new Municipal Development Plan "the Legacy Plan" and rescinds the DARP.	Town adopts Downtown Urban Design Master Plan	New Municipal Development Plan adopted	New Land Use Bylaw adopted	Our Plan for Downtown (Area Redevelopment Plan)
Pre-Settlement	**1904**	**1980**	**1997**	**2018**	**2021**	**2021**	**2024**

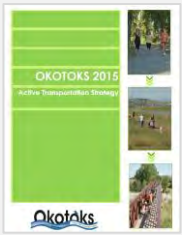
1.7 Planning Context

The Downtown has been supported by the completion of many plans and studies. The following is an overview of the current applicable plans and reports for the Downtown. All of these plans and reports have impacted the creation of this Plan, and a full summary of relevant documents is provided in **Appendix 3: History & Background**.

Downtown Community Assessment (2014)

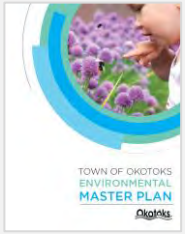
Okotoks Branding, Development, & Marketing Action Plan (2016)

Downtown Parking Studies (2014 & 2024)

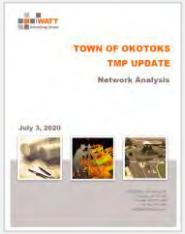


Active Transportation Strategy (2015)

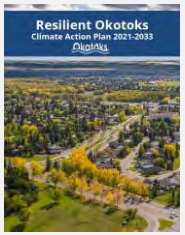
Downtown Urban Design Master Plan (2018)



Environmental Master Plan (2018)



Transportation Master Plan (2020)



Climate Action Plan Plan (2021)

Commercial and Industrial Growth Study (2021)

Municipal Development Plan (2021)

Land Use Bylaw (2021)

2 | VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2 Vision and Guiding Principles

2.1 Vision

Downtown is the social, cultural, and economic heart of the community; through the continued evolution of a unique walkable district that attracts people and investment.

2.2 Guiding Principles

VIBRANT ECONOMY AND ACTIVE SPACES

The Downtown economy is active with people walking, shopping, mingling, eating, and enjoying the many things to do in the Downtown. Public and private sites are designed to create lively and engaging spaces where people can gather and move around safely and easily using all modes of transportation, with special emphasis on pedestrians.

CELEBRATE UNIQUE CHARACTER

The unique urban character of each Downtown area is celebrated and maintained through flexible and adaptable design guidelines and policy.

CONNECTED AND WALKABLE

The Downtown is physically connected with ease of movement for people with all levels and types of mobility – walking, rolling, riding, and driving. A multi-modal network of sidewalks, pathways, and roads connects people throughout the Downtown.

ENHANCED NATURAL SPACES

Places, buildings, and streets are designed with natural spaces and local vegetation in mind, providing an opportunity to engage with nature and reduce climate change impacts through a strong tree canopy, access to the river and numerous connections to parks, plazas, and recreation areas.

A PLACE TO LIVE

Downtown is a desired place to live for people of all ages with amenities, gathering areas, and a diversity of housing creating a strong sense of community.

2.3 Illustrative Concept

An illustrative concept has been created to provide a visual representation of how the Downtown could look in the future based on the policies in this Plan. However, it is understood that actual development will vary to some extent from what is shown in the illustrative concept.

Figure 1 | Illustrative Master Plan

3 | CREATING GREAT PUBLIC SPACES

3 Creating Great Public Spaces

Great public spaces are vital to a flourishing and prosperous Downtown. Public spaces, also known as the **PUBLIC REALM**, includes: pathways, sidewalks, plazas, parking areas, park space and any other accessible or beneficial public land, such as boulevards. Creating great public spaces requires significant planning and investment from the Town. For example, transforming an old road into a complete street with the addition of wider sidewalks, benches, street trees for shade, encouraging canopies from businesses, and creating small urban plazas at corners for gathering. The return on this public investment in the **PUBLIC REALM** can be substantial, as private investors often follow when they see the Town creating these engaging active spaces. They also provide "third places" - places outside of the home or work for people to gather, build social connections and strengthen community ties and bonds between people from different backgrounds and demographics.

The following policies apply to the public spaces within the Downtown. Investments in these public spaces will be primarily led by the Town, but may include investment, agreements or partnerships with private developers.

3.1 Public Streets

3.1.1 **Safety:** Streets should be designed to be safe and comfortable for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists and individuals of all ages and abilities.

3.1.2 **Walkable:** Complete the pedestrian network to create a fully connected system of sidewalks, pathways and crossings that facilitate easy, safe, and comfortable movement for those walking and rolling.

3.1.3 **Accessible:** Improve safety, comfort, and accessibility for all people walking, cycling, and rolling throughout Downtown, regardless of age or mobility.

3.1.4 **Manage Parking:** Continue to allow on-street parking to support a parking supply to entice people to shop in the area and support local businesses, while allowing flexible use for temporary seating areas and pop-up businesses.

3.1.5 **Green Streets:** Create green streets that signal Okotoks' sustainability focus. Green streets should include infrastructure that incorporates elements, such as:

a) enhanced stormwater management,
b) biodiversity,
c) renewable energy,
d) water reuse, or
e) other sustainable features.

3.1.6 Require, at the discretion of the Development Authority and in alignment with other Town statutory policies and design standards, private landowners and developers to contribute to the Town's green streets as described above in 3.1.5**.**

3.1.7 **Street Trees:** Enhance the urban forest Downtown by adding tree coverage along all streets, where practical.

3.1.8 **Activate Lanes:** Allow businesses the opportunity to activate back lanes and underused streets like Daggett Street with storefronts, spill-out cafes and patios. This encourages more pedestrians on the side streets, increases safety, creating activity and providing eyes-on-the-street.

3.1.9 **Design Kit of Parts:** Public realm improvements by the Town shall align with the approved Public Realm Kit of Parts as explained in Section 3.3 in this Plan.

3.1.10 All downtown streets should be signed using the kit of parts street name design (e.g. black background with white lettering).

3.1.11 Over time the Town should implement the **Public Realm Kit of Parts** across all downtown streets.

3.2 Climate Change Adaptation

Climate change is resulting in more severe weather, including sustained heat waves that put people at risk of serious health concerns, including heat stroke. The **Climate Atlas of Canada** projects that very hot days (above 30 Celsius) could almost double in the Okotoks area, from a mean of 13 days at present to 25 days by the year 2050. In addition to climate change, the built environment results in hotter temperatures in urban areas. Urban features such as pavement, concrete, and buildings create what is called the **URBAN HEAT ISLAND EFFECT**. The resulting temperatures can be 5 - 10 degrees Celsius hotter than surrounding non-urban areas.

However, the Town can mitigate these effects through the design of public spaces and buildings in the Downtown. For example, water fountains, canopies and overhangs on buildings, green roofs, green spaces, street trees, and public spaces for cooling can all assist people with handling extreme weather. The Town also has a great asset with the nearby Sheep River, which can continue to act as a source of cooling for people on hot days.

Policies

3.2.1 Continue to provide water fountains throughout the Downtown for people and pets and monitor if expansion of the program is necessary.

3.2.2 Require buildings be designed with canopies, roof overhangs and other shade features to mitigate the heat.

3.2.3 Monitor the need for the Town to provide cooling or warming spaces in the Downtown.

3.2.4 Investigate how to provide easier, but safe access to the Sheep River for vulnerable populations (e.g. seniors) and people with limited mobility.

3.2.5 Investigate changes to urban infrastructure to reduce the urban heat island effect (e.g. alternative surfacing materials).

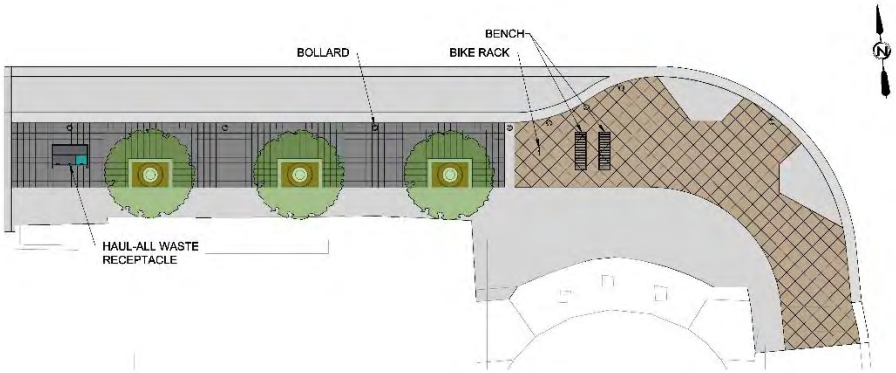
3.3 Public Realm Kit of Parts

The Town has established a public realm kit of parts to create a distinctive brand for public features in the Downtown, including street signs, light posts and benches. The following graphics display this kit. These visual clues provide a reminder of that Downtown is a distinct area of the Town, one with a unique history, design and attention.

(above) Distinctive black street lights with banners and street furniture.

(above) Distinctive street signs with black background and white lettering, as well as a poppy symbol for Veterans Way.

Paris Site Furnishings
Premier Bench



Reliance Foundry
Boulevard Tree Grate

Paris Site Furnishings
Decorative Bollard and Pedestal Bike Rack

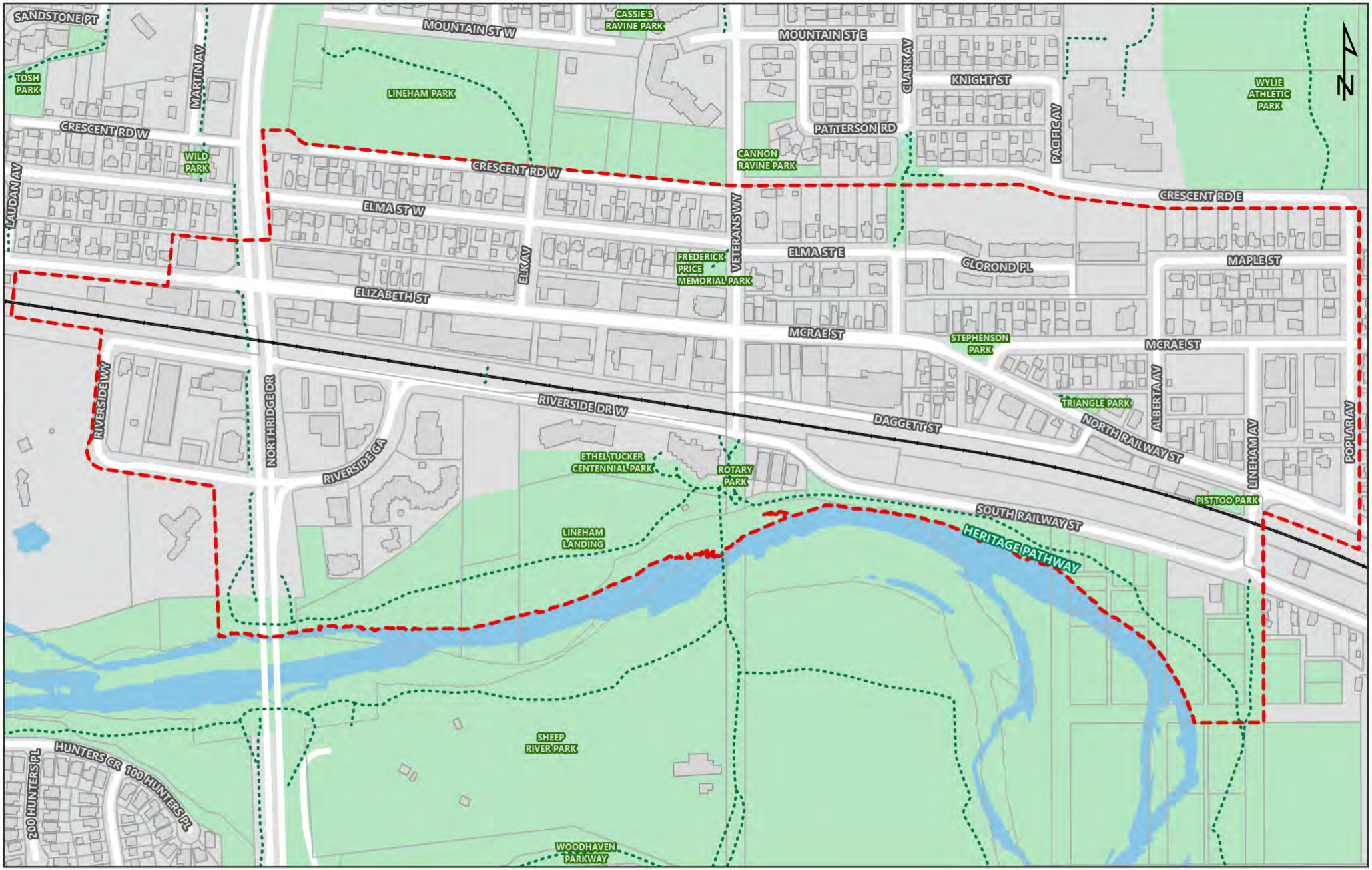
Paris Site Furnishings
Premier Picnic Table

Haul-all - 3-Stream Waste Receptacle

Decorative Light Standard

Kit of Parts
Multi-Year Downtown Enhancement
Town of Okotoks
January 2025

Figure 2 | Kit of Parts



Okotoks

Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan

Map 4 | Parks, Plazas, and Pathways

Legend

- Pathways
- CP Railway
- Park Spaces
- DARP Boundary

Created By:
Information Technology

Created Date:
2025-02-13

Scale: 1:5,400

0 50 100 200
Meters

3.4 Parks and Plazas

Parks and plazas enliven the Downtown! They act as critical gathering and play spaces during all seasons - for casual gatherings and organized events these spaces offer opportunities to socialize, relax, exercise and play. This network of parks and plazas also makes it possible to host the many Downtown events and activities that occur throughout the year. **Map 4 | Parks, Plazas** identifies the existing parks and plazas in the Downtown.

Policies

3.4.1 Ensure parks and plazas are accessible to all active transportation modes and people of all ages and abilities, including accessible infrastructure to get people to or from these spaces.

3.4.2 Ensure there is accessible infrastructure (sidewalks, pathways) within 100 metres of any park or plaza for people to get safely to and from the site.

3.4.3 Look for opportunities to add pathways, park or plaza spaces in the Downtown as redevelopment occurs. For example, full parks or plazas on larger parcels, or 'pocket plazas' on small sites.

3.4.4 Optimize park and plaza space by combining land with right-of-ways.

3.4.5 Review the park and plaza needs in the Downtown every 5-10 years to ensure sufficient provision of these spaces as redevelopment occurs

4 | HOW WE USE AND DEVELOP DOWNTOWN

4 How We Use and Develop Downtown

4.1 Downtown-Wide Land Use Policies

The following policies apply to the entire Downtown area as shown on **Map 1 | Plan Boundary & Character Areas**. These policies are general in nature and intended to create a cohesive land use pattern and urban design throughout the Downtown.

4.1.1 Overall, the Downtown should be focused on land uses that are compatible with an active pedestrian environment. Appropriate land uses include:

a) Parks and natural areas;

b) Commercial and mixed-use developments;

c) Residential, with a strong focus on attached housing; and

d) Institutional uses.

4.1.2 Traditional industrial land uses (e.g. heavy manufacturing, storage yards, contractors) are not appropriate in the Downtown.

a) Notwithstanding the above, craft manufacturing (e.g. craft brewing) and local artisan creators are encouraged to operate and create unique goods in the Downtown.

4.1.3 New drive-through uses shall not be permitted in the Downtown.

4.1.4 New auto-oriented land uses, such as car dealerships, car washes, auto-services, and gas stations shall not be permitted in the Downtown.

4.1.5 Development should be pedestrian-focused and designed using pedestrian-scale site planning.

4.2 Downtown-Wide Design Guidelines

High-quality design of sites and buildings benefits everyone! A well-designed building can offer shade to people walking by, provide interest and curiosity through architectural features, and add a sense of pride to the Downtown. Design guidelines act to ensure that buildings and sites interact with their surroundings in a beneficial and compatible way. Given the variety of architectural styles and eras in the Downtown, it is important to ensure new developments are done in a compatible way that add to the area's sense of character.

The following policies apply to all developments in the Downtown, unless otherwise specified. Visual illustrations are provided to assist with understanding the written policies; however, the written policies prevail.

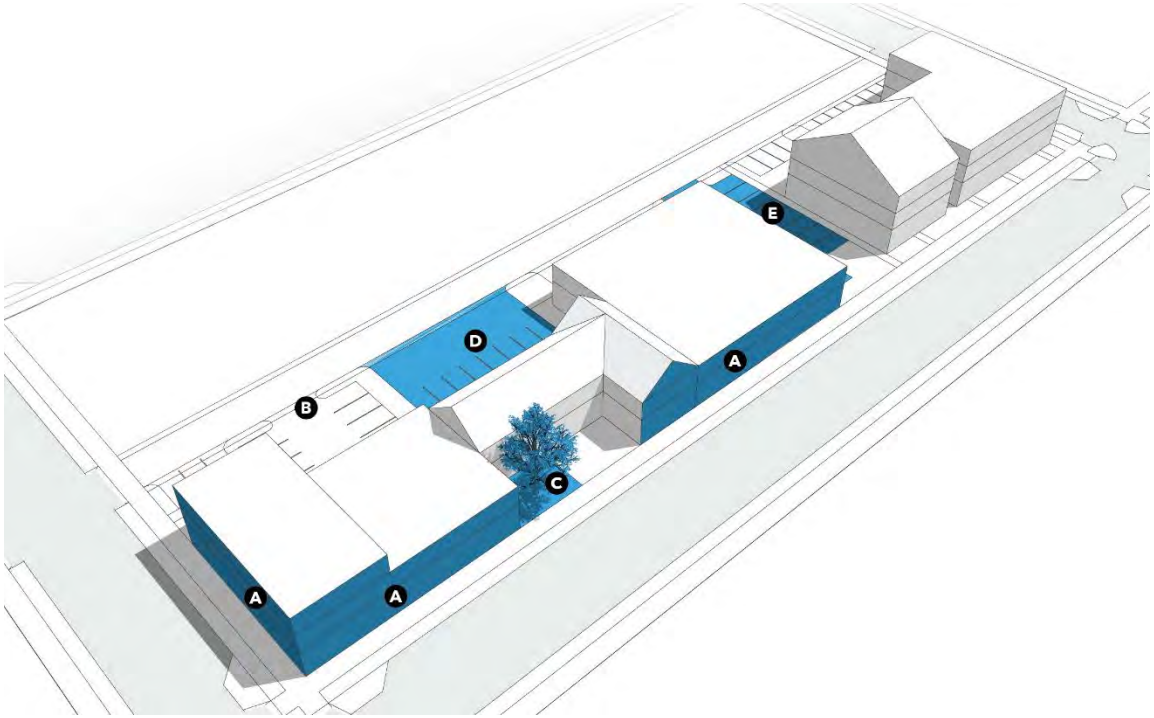


Figure 3 | General Building Placement Guidelines

Label & Name	Policy #
A – Street Wall	4.3.1
B – Shadows	4.3.2
C – Trees	4.3.3
D – Parking	4.3.4

All development applications should show compliance with the following policies in their drawings and application submissions.

Building Placement & Massing

4.2.1 Buildings should be aligned parallel to the street edge, forming a "street wall" to enhance the public realm and frame public streets and sidewalks.

4.2.2 Development should consider impacts on views and shadowing from adjacent buildings and streets and the overall compatibility with surrounding buildings and the landscape.

a) The Approving Authority may request a **SHADOW STUDY** as part of any development application within the Downtown to assist with decision-making that considers the overall compatibility of a development with the surrounding area.

4.2.3 Development projects should retain mature trees, where practical. Where retention of mature trees is not possible, replacement of trees at a minimum ratio of 1:1 is required for all sites and at a minimum ratio of 2:1 for any development site over 0.25 hectares.

4.2.4 Off-street parking lots shall not be located in front of buildings. Off-street parking areas should be provided at the rear or underneath buildings.

4.2.5 Parking located at the side of buildings may be considered provided:

a) The building is located outside the Main Street Character Area; and

b) The parking is not adjacent to the **SECONDARY FRONT** of a building on a corner lot.

c) Parking structures shall be screened and beautified through the use of plantings, landscaping and decorative walls.

GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES –BUILDING FORM

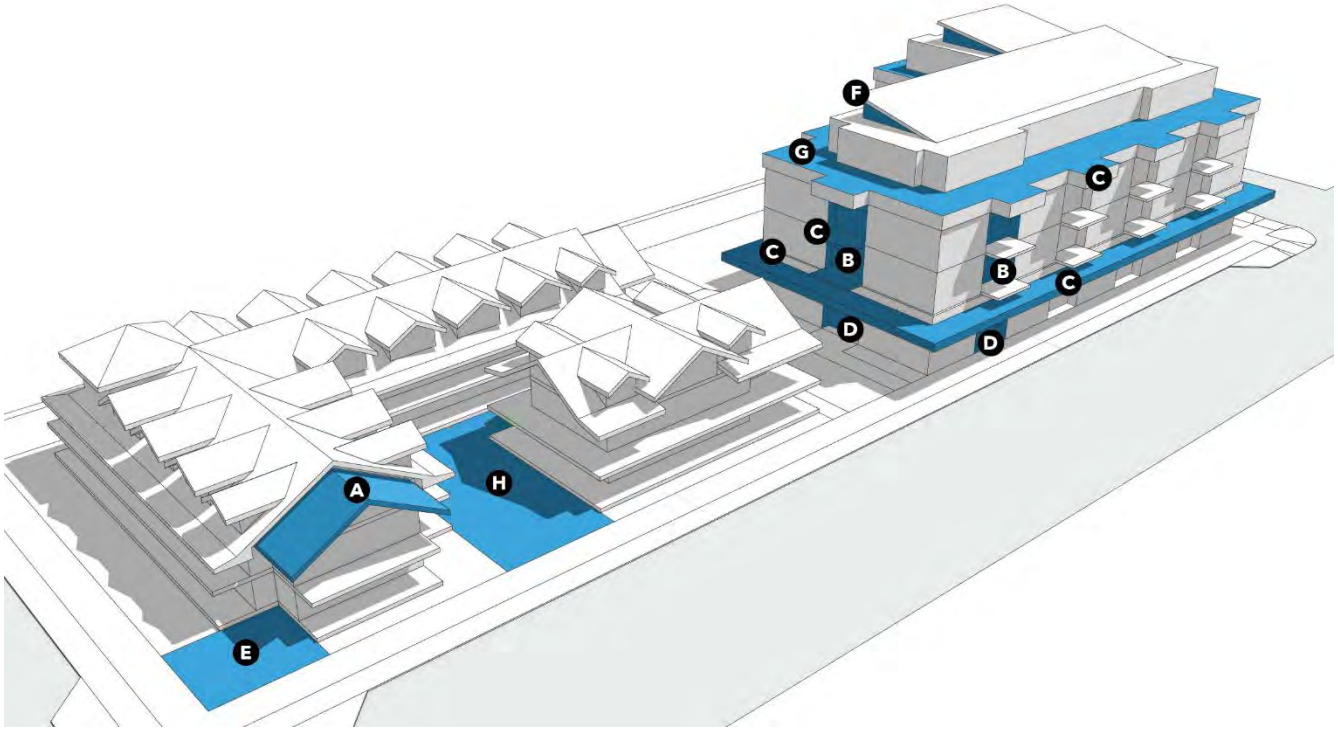


Figure 4 | General Design Guidelines Building Form

Label & Name	Policy #	Label & Name	Policy #
A – Width & Roof Shape Street	4.2.6	E – Corner Lots	4.2.10
B – Articulation	4.2.7	F – Green Roofs	4.2.11
C – Depth Features	4.2.8	G – Livable Spaces	4.2.12
D – Entrances	4.2.9	H – Courtyards	4.2.14

Building Form

4.2.6 Building width and roof shape should be sensitive to the overall pattern of the surrounding buildings and neighbourhood.

4.2.7 Buildings should use **ARCHITECTURAL ARTICULATION** and secondary architectural features to reduce the perceived mass of larger buildings.

4.2.8 Buildings should add depth to facades by incorporating **ARCHITECTURAL ARTICULATION,** balconies, bay windows, porches, canopies, awnings, decks or other elements into the facade design.

4.2.9 Buildings entries should be obvious, oriented parallel to the street, and prominent through the design of recesses or indentations in the building envelope, or the use secondary elements.

4.2.10 Buildings on corner lots should have high-quality design on both frontages, including avoiding large blank walls on either side, and providing windows, gables, and **ARCHITECTURAL ARTICULATION** on both frontages.

4.2.11 Green roofs and roof gardens are encouraged to provide open spaces away from the street, support biodiversity, and reduce solar heat gain on buildings.

4.2.12 Developments are encouraged to provide opportunities to create livable and engaging spaces, such as rooftop and ground floor patios, porches, urban plazas and gathering areas, and customer seating near sidewalks and parks.

4.2.13 Developments are encouraged to create courtyards on larger mixed-use or multi-unit developments to offer gathering space. Courtyards should:

a) Have an entrance that is visually clear from the street;
b) Offer green space and/or landscaping and space for activities;
c) Be visible from adjacent dwellings (for visual safety – 'eyes on the park');
d) Be spaced at a maximum 2:1 ratio, and minimum 3:1 ratio to building height that also considers shadow impacts and useability; and
e) Not be used for parking.

GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES –BUILDING FAÇADE ELEMENTS

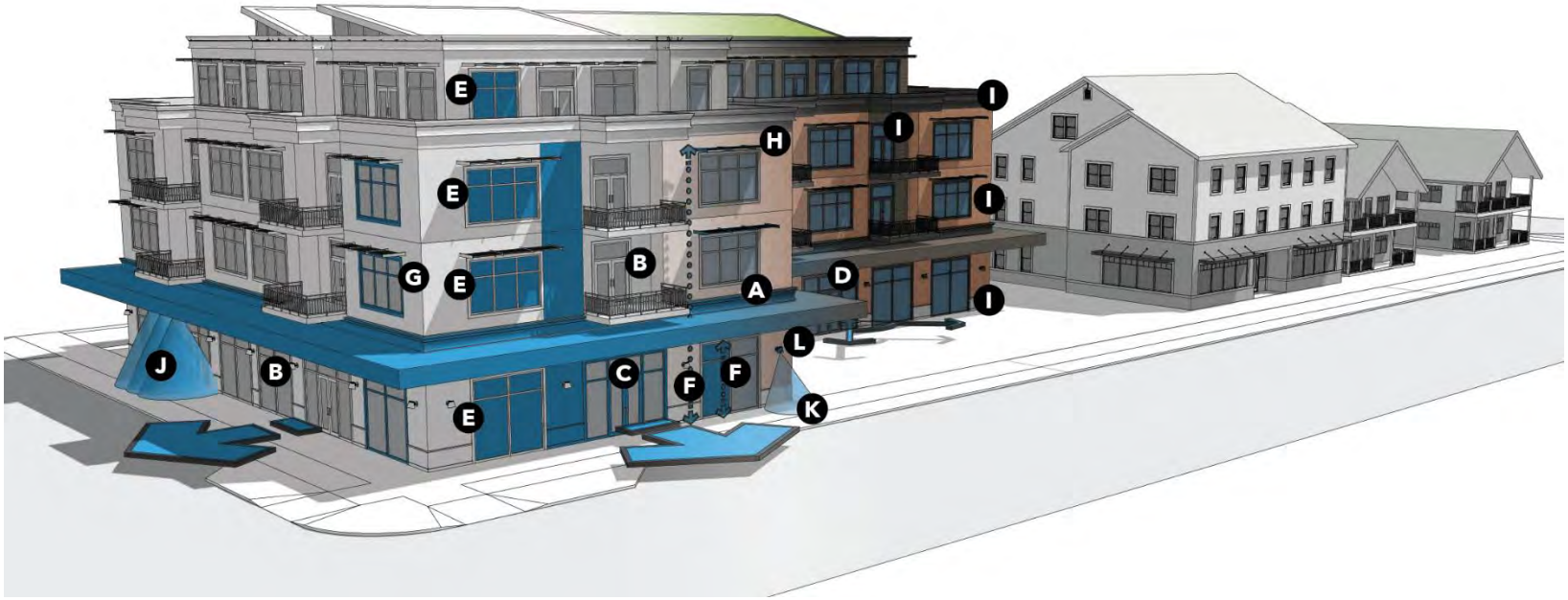


Figure 5 | General Building & Façade Design Guidelines

Label & Name	Policy #	Label & Name	Policy #
A – Horizontal Features	4.2.14	G – Window Pattern	4.2.18
B – Facing Street	4.2.15	H – Shading Window	4.2.20
C – Entries	4.2.16	I – Building Materials	4.2.21
D –		J – Top Lighting	4.2.23
E – Large Windows	4.2.17	K – Side Lighting	4.2.24
F – Window Orientation	4.2.18	L – Amenity Areas	4.2.25

Building & Façade Design Elements

4.2.14 Buildings should differentiate between commercial spaces and residential in mixed use buildings, or between first and second floors of a residential building through the use of horizontal decorative cladding, awnings, canopies, or different materials.

4.2.15 For properties that front onto multiple streets, the building design should front both streets.

4.2.16 Building entries must:

a) be visible from the street,

b) should be emphasized with trim detailing and variation in colour; and

c) include differentiated ground surfaces, special paving, landscaping, lighting and integrated signage.

4.2.17 Large windows are encouraged to be broken up into smaller glass areas using **MULLIONS** and **MUNTINS.**

4.2.18 Windows along a street wall should have a similar orientation to the building form (i.e. vertical building = vertical windows, and horizontal building = horizontal windows).

4.2.19 Windows on the upper storeys along a street wall should be:

a) The same shape and size as each other;
b) Placed in a symmetrical pattern; and
c) Reflect building structural elements established on the first storey (e.g. a window on upper storeys should not be placed above a column on the first storey).

4.2.20 Buildings should incorporate shading strategies for windows, such as **BRISE SOLEILS**, automated blinds, or eggcrate shading to reduce overheating in the summer, and allow solar gain in the other seasons.

4.2.21 Preferred building materials should be resilient to hail and storms and include: architecturally finished stone, brick, glass, steel, wood and complementary composite materials that are similar to these core materials. Vinyl siding is not a preferred building material.

4.2.22 Lighting should be **DARK SKY** compliant and used to increase safety and to highlight architectural or landscape details/features such as entries, signs, canopies, plantings and art.

4.2.23 Buildings should consider top lighting to allow natural light such as, north-, and east-facing clerestory windows, monitor skylights, and north-angled skylights.

4.2.24 Side lights and transom lights should be used to allow for light and views to the outside.

4.2.25 Indoor amenity areas should be combined with lobbies to activate the space.

GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES – PUBLIC SPACE

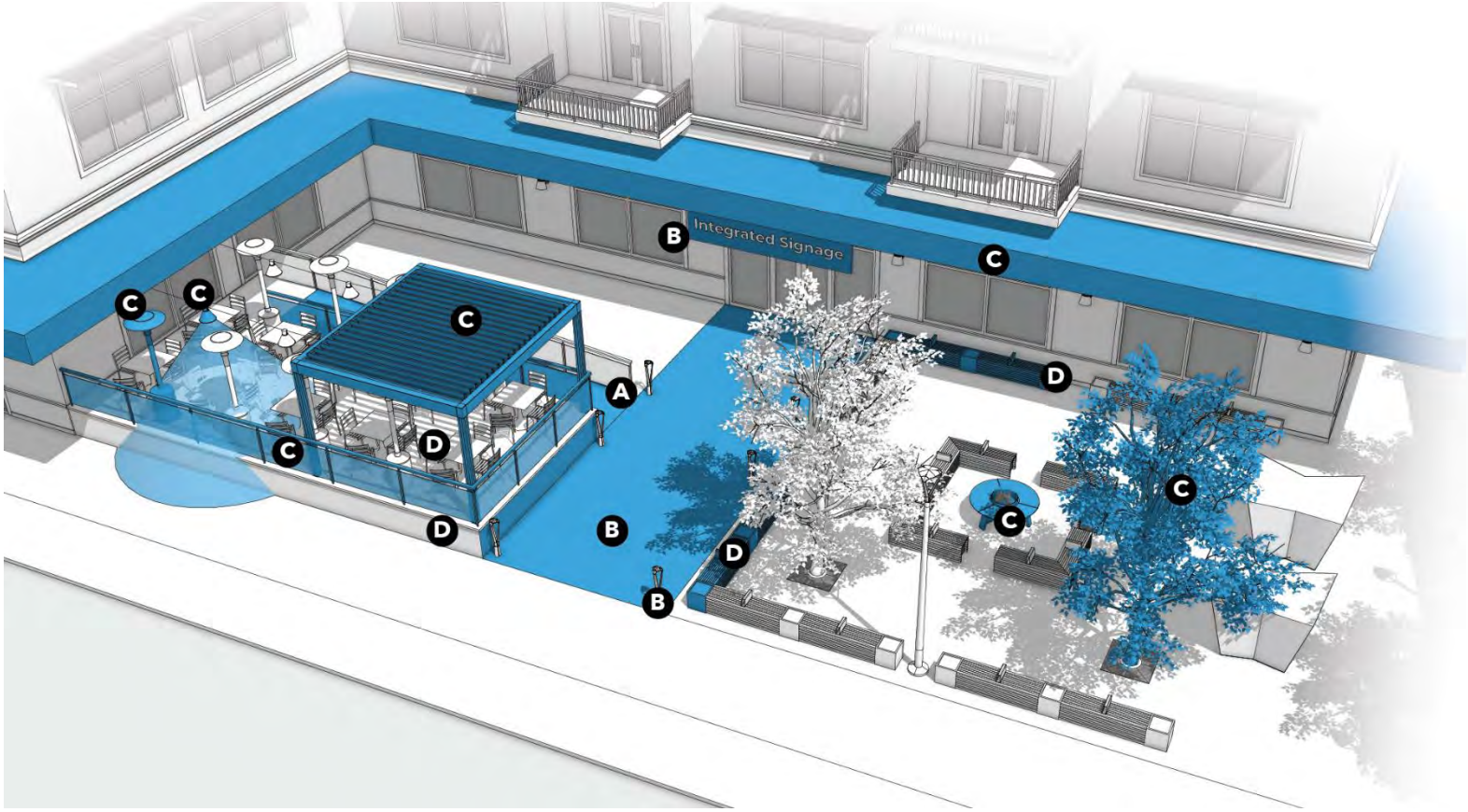


Figure 6 | General Design Guidelines Public Space

Label & Name	Policy #	Label & Name	Policy #
A – Accessibility	4.2.26	C – Four Season Design	4.2.28
B – Entrance Integration	4.2.27(a)	D – Outdoor Seating	4.2.27(b)

Connecting Public Spaces

4.2.26 All public spaces, commercial and public buildings should be designed to be fully accessible for those with mobility or sensory challenges.

4.2.27 Outdoor seating on private land, or managed by a private business on public land should:

a) Be integrated with the entrance pathway to a building;
b) Integrate seating into the entrance design using seating walls;
c) Not be completely enclosed, but should be viewable from the adjacent sidewalks and streets; and
d) Ground floor enclosed patios are permitted a maximum of 1.1 m above the sidewalk.

4.2.28 Outdoor spaces, including patios, decks, porches, courtyards and plazas should incorporate interventions to make outdoor space more useable throughout the year. Effective strategies should be included in site and building design, including:

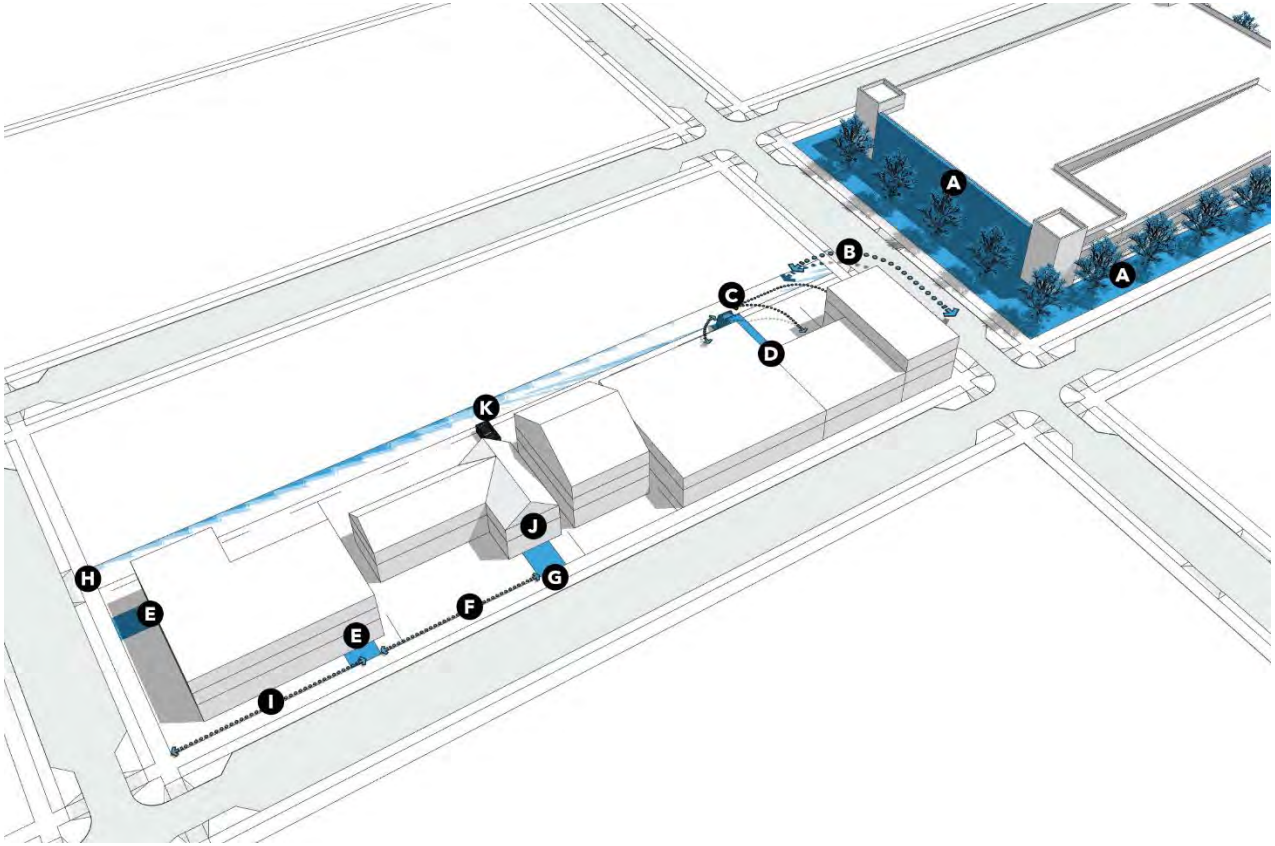
a) Shelter from the rain, sun and wind (e.g. wind breaks);
b) Outdoor heating;
c) Lighting; and
d) Air movement.

4.2.29 Outdoor patios should not be completely enclosed but should be viewable from the adjacent sidewalks and streets.

4.2.30 Buildings should be designed to take advantage of passive solar gain.

4.2.31 Refuse containers (garbage, compost, recycling) shall be screened.

GENERAL DESIGN GUIDELINES PARKING AREAS



Label & Name	Policy #
A – Screening	4.2.32
B – Parking Location	4.2.33 & 4.2.34
C – Parking & Loading	4.2.34 & 4.2.35
D – Sharing Loading	4.2.36
E – Integrated Loading	4.2.37
F – Max Driveways	4.2.38
G – Width	4.2.39
H – Shared Use	4.2.40
I – Driveway Separation	4.2.41
J – Front Driveways	4.2.42

Figure 7 | General Parking Design Guidelines

Parking Lots & Structures

4.2.32 Parking structures shall be screened and beautified through the use of plantings, landscaping and decorative walls.

4.2.33 Off-street parking lots shall not be located in front of buildings. Off-street parking areas should be provided at the rear or underneath buildings.

4.2.34 Parking located at the side of buildings may be considered, provided:

a) The building is located outside the Main Street Character Area; and

b) The parking is not adjacent to the Secondary Front of a building on a corner lot.

Loading

4.2.35 Service and loading access to a building should be from a secondary street or backlane, where access exists.

4.2.36 Businesses are encouraged to share service, loading and utility areas to ensure efficient use of land.

4.2.37 Service and loading areas should be integrated into the architecture of the site.

Driveways

4.2.38 The maximum number of driveways and curb cuts per lot is two (2).

4.2.39 The maximum width of driveways and curb cuts shall be 6.0m.

4.2.40 Shared use of driveways is encouraged to reduce the interruption of the streetscape, sidewalks and increase pedestrian safety.

4.2.41 Driveways should be located as far from the nearest intersection as possible.

4.2.42 Where front driveways are permitted within active frontage areas, they should be located within the building massing with additional floors built above the driveway. These driveways should be integrated with the design of the streetscape and building.

Bicycle Parking

4.2.43 Bicycle parking should be provided near building entrances without interrupting pedestrian flow.

4.2.44 Bicycle parking shelters should be provided and located in convenient and safe locations on the site.

4.3 GATEWAYS

Gateways are the first visual cue for people entering the Downtown and quickly portray important information to those entering the area, including: Is this an interesting place? Is it safe? Are there other people moving the way I am (e.g. driving, walking, riding)? Is it unique and different than other places? Can I park my bike, vehicle, or stroller? This information is evident to a person within the first few seconds. Veterans Way is an example of a thematic gateway with numerous historical and art installations to recognize the sacrifices of Canadian veterans. This gateway portrays to those entering the Downtown that the Town celebrates its veterans, takes pride in its streets and sidewalks, and that there's space for anyone wishing to drive, walk or roll. As shown on **MAP 5 | GATEWAYS** the Downtown has both roadway and pathway gateways, each providing a unique perspective entering the Downtown.

(above left) Southridge at the Sheep River Bridge looking south

(above right) Northridge looking south

A. Elizabeth Street at Northridge / Southridge Drive	This is the primary vehicular gateway to Downtown and likely the one most frequently used by visitors. It does have sidewalks, but due to the high volume of vehicular traffic and limited pedestrian infrastructure it can be unfriendly to pedestrians. A pedestrian crosswalk at Elma Street and Northridge Drive provides

a northwest gateway for pedestrians to the Downtown and a bridge across the Sheep River provides for pedestrian access from the south.

B. Veterans Way (above)

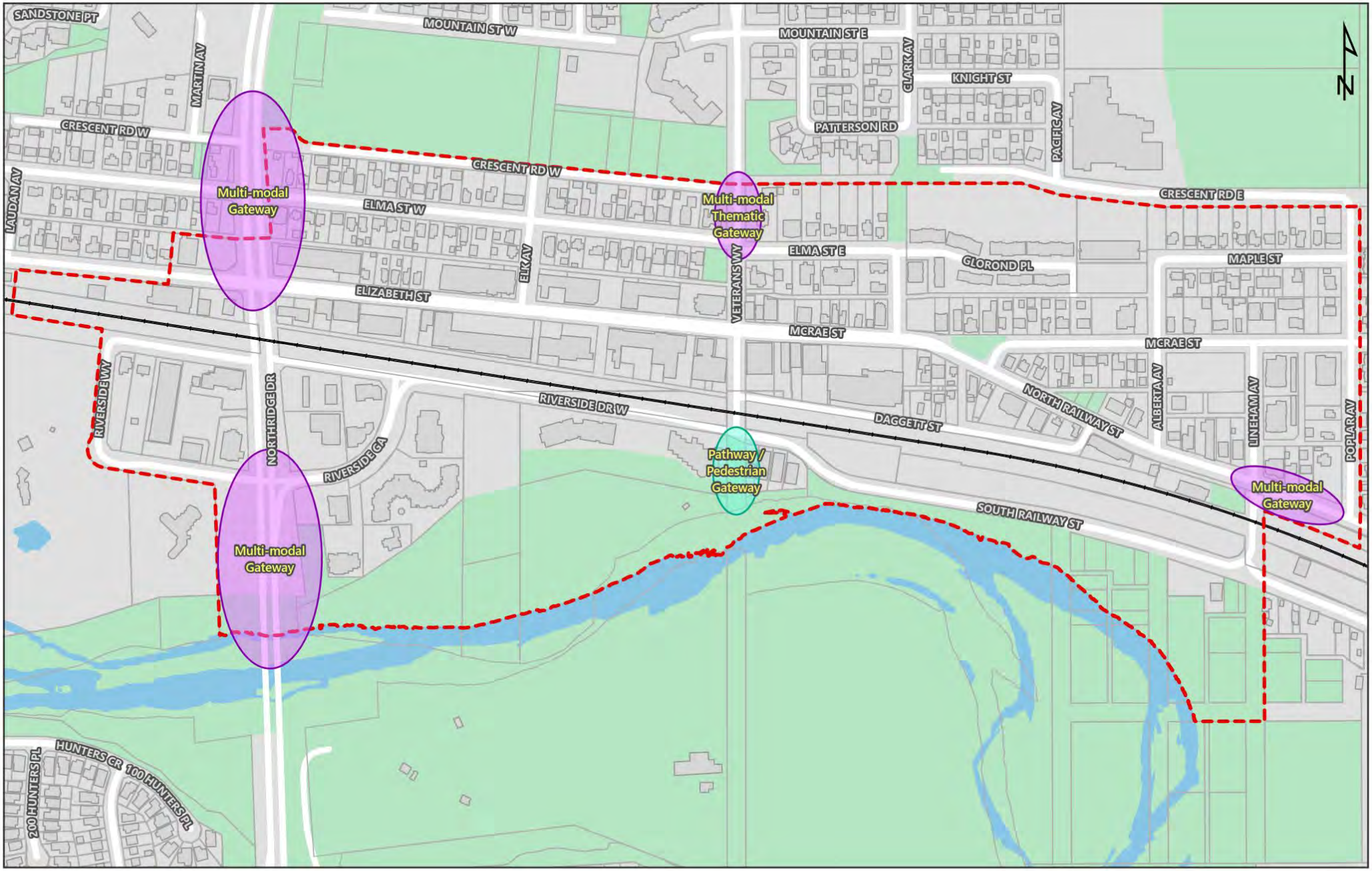
This multi-modal gateway is more likely to be used by locals living north of Downtown than visitors. Driving, walking or rolling are all options at this gateway that remembers the sacrifices of Canadian veterans. However, the steep hill is a barrier to people with less mobility or when winter conditions result in ice and snow challenges.

C. North Railway Street at Lineham Avenue (above)

This is the primary vehicular gateway from the east with some multi-modal access for those walking and rolling from nearby residential areas. Sidewalks are predominately on the north side of the street due to the undeveloped nature of the land and railway on the south side. The Okotoks Art Gallery and Pisttoo

Park on the southwest corner of this intersection provides green space and gathering areas, and forms part of the visual gateway to Downtown from the east.

D. Laurie Boyd Bridge This pedestrian bridge provides a pathway gateway for those entering Downtown from the residential neighbourhoods and park spaces to the south. The gateway provides a lot to offer, with an art installation of peace polls, Lineham Landing Park, Ethel Tucker Centennial Park, Rotary Park, play structures, the Sheep River and small treed gathering spaces.



Okotoks

Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan

Map 5 | Gateways

Legend

Gateways

- Multi-modal
- Pedestrian
- DARP Boundary
- Park Spaces
- CP Railway

Created By:
Information Technology

Created Date:
2025-02-13

Scale: 1:5,400

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Meters

4.3.1 Gateways to the Downtown should:

a) Be safe for those traveling by vehicle, walking, biking or rolling, including sidewalks on all sides of the street;
b) Contain sufficient vehicular and pedestrian lighting for night-time safety in all four seasons;
c) Express pride in the Downtown through high-quality landscaping and artwork;
d) Contain easy-to-read and use wayfinding and signage that identifies how to enter the Downtown;
e) Be a priority for snow clearing and street cleaning on roads and sidewalks for the safety of all modes of transportation;
f) Feature artwork that celebrates Okotoks and area.

4.3.2 The Town endeavours to strengthen, beautify, and improve the gateways to Downtown over time through:

a) Enhancements to the publicly-owned land (i.e., public realm), including: lighting, safety, landscaping, sidewalks/pathways, artwork, and wayfinding; and
b) Encouraging private land developments to contribute to beautification of gateways through high-quality landscaping and architecture that complements the gateway improvements on public land.

4.3.3 Private developments adjacent to a gateway areas should:

a) Locate buildings to complement and interact with the gateway (e.g., building near the front property line with entrance near a sidewalk);
b) Ensure that all building sides that face a gateway are architecturally interesting, (e.g., contain building entrances, windows, doors, or gables) and avoid large blank walls;
c) Add art or other visual design features near gateways; and
d) Place private signage so it complements and does not compete with public wayfinding signage.

4.3.4 Private developments adjacent to a gateway area should *not* have:

a) Refuse bins (garbage, recycling, compost) between the building and the adjacent gateway road, sidewalk or pathway;
b) Large blank walls facing an adjacent gateway road, sidewalk or pathway;
c) Loading areas facing an adjacent gateway road, sidewalk or pathway;
d) Parking areas with no or minimal landscaping adjacent to a gateway road, sidewalk or pathway;

4.4 Heritage Conservation

The Town of Okotoks recognizes that its heritage resources are of value to the character and sense of community that historically built and continues to build the town. (Municipal Heritage Designation Program, 2018)

Downtown includes the majority of historical buildings in Okotoks, but also historical sites, such as the old Macleod Trail. The Town has taken steps to preserve and protect this heritage through the Municipal Heritage Designation Program, Municipal Development Plan policy and Town investment in its historical areas and buildings. The following policies apply to all designated historical properties and are shown on **Map 6 | Designated Historical Properties (**as of 2024).

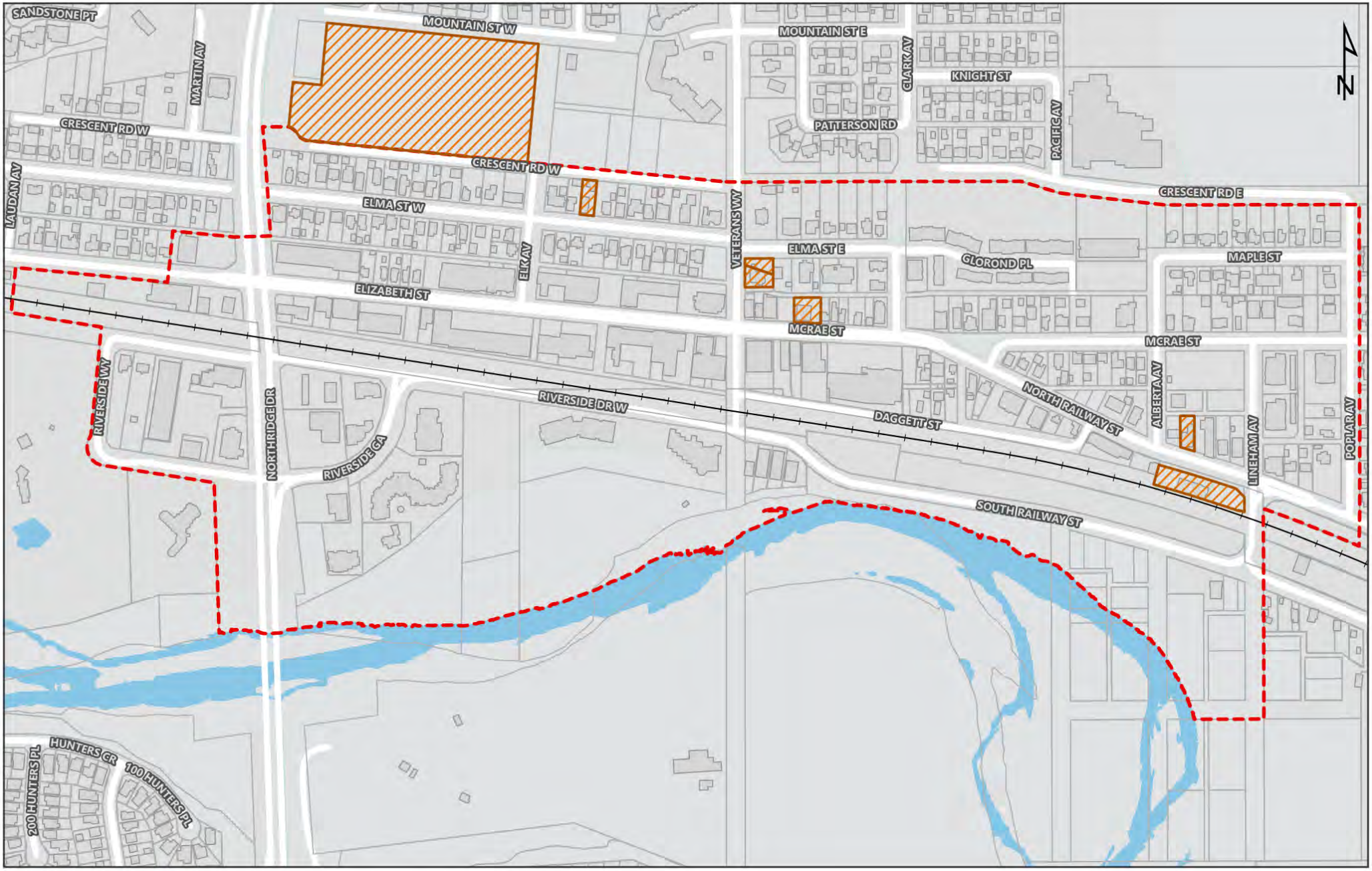
4.4.1 The policies in this section apply to any property officially designated by the Town as a historical property. If a property is designated as a historical property after the adoption of this Plan the policies of this section apply.

4.4.2 Conserve, celebrate and integrate heritage buildings and other historical elements, including natural heritage elements, into Downtown development by:

a) Not removing, replacing or substantially altering any intact or repairable **CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS** of historical sites to the extent possible, including not moving part of an historic place if its current location is a character defining element;

b) Conserving changes to an historical place that, over time, have become **CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS** in their own right;

c) Not creating a false sense of historical development by adding elements from other historic places or other properties, or by combining features of the same property that never coexisted.



Okotoks

Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan

Map 6 | Designated Historical Properties

Legend

- CP Railway
- DARP Boundary
- Municipally Designated Resources

Created By:
Information Technology

Created Date:
2025-03-05

Scale: 1:5,400

0 50 100 200
Meters

4.4.3 Downtown development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they have addressed any on-site heritage components, through:

a) Documenting and assessing the function, condition, materials and surroundings of built features and the relationship of those features to each other and to the historic place, before beginning project work;
b) Design and land use that requires minimal or no change to a historical place **CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS**;
c) Preserves **CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS** physically and visually compatible with the historic place;
d) Conserving the heritage value and **CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS** when creating any new additions to an historic place or any related new construction. The additions should be physically and visually compatible with subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic place where possible;
e) Adding new features to meet sustainability requirements, such as solar panels or a green roof, in a manner that respects the exterior form and minimizes impact on **CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS**;
f) Designing and installing new windows, doors or storefronts required by a new use or non-character-defining elevations in a manner that is compatible with the building's style, era and character, while also considering sustainability and energy efficiency;
g) Modifying, replacing or designing a new entrance, porch or balcony required by a new use or applicable codes and regulations, in a manner that is compatible with the building's style, era and character.

5 | ENHANCING OUR UNIQUE CHARACTER AREAS

5 Enhancing Our Unique Character Areas

The beauty and enjoyment of Downtown stems from its composition of unique streets, architecture, plazas and natural features. Where these various components are relatively similar, they are called *character areas*. A *character area* simply means an area of the Downtown with its own unique characteristics, such as similar building or road design, or proximity to a natural feature, such as the Sheep River. For the purposes of this Plan, Downtown Okotoks is divided into the following four character areas as shown on **Map 1 | Plan Boundary & Character Areas**. These character areas are: Main Street, Elma Street West, Maple Area, and Riverfront.

Main Street: The Main Street area is the spine of Downtown, connecting together Elizabeth Street, McRae Street and North Railway Street. Main Street is also the location of many local special events and festivals with street closures that enable thousands of people to attend these events. This area receives the most economic activity and traffic in the Downtown. However, activity typically diminishes during evenings and weekends without special events. To assist local businesses, more activity during evenings and weekends will be encouraged through this Plan.

The architectural pattern is varied with heritage buildings mixed with more modern design. Historically the buildings were close to the street with parking in the rear. However, more modern construction in the 1980s and 1990s veered away from that design. The desire is to bring back the classic Downtown feel, with buildings close to the sidewalk and street, and parking on-street to encourage more pedestrian activity and safety.

Elma Street West: Elma Street West is the historic District of Okotoks. This area showcases the Town's heritage, predominantly through Queen Anne Revival style houses constructed in the early 1900s. The streets are beautifully tree-lined with a large canopy of ash and other deciduous trees that shield pedestrians from the natural elements. Sidewalks with boulevards are present on the south side of Elma Street West but absent on the north. While historically a residential area, this area has transitioned to accommodate commercial uses, home-businesses, and live-work properties. Infill and redevelopment of this area will need to be sensitive to this historical and architectural context.

Maple Area: The Maple area is a mainly residential area in the northeast portion of the Downtown that has a variety of attached and detached residential units from a mixture of architectural eras. The area provides Downtown with a growing population base to support businesses. Properties closest to Main Street have seen growth of home-businesses, which is likely to continue and expand. This area will continue to redevelop as midrise residential buildings, which will add to the economic and social activity in the Downtown. As this happens, it will be important to improve pedestrian and active-transportation linkages from this area to Main Street.

Riverfront: The Riverfront is the most natural of the four character areas, with the Sheep River as the southern border. The connection between Main Street and the Sheep River has always been important to the Town and its residents. As the Riverfront area evolves, it should maintain and improve the connectivity between these two key Downtown areas. Residents and visitors should be able to easily combine an ice cream and a walk along the river. The Riverfront has seen continued public investment over the years from the former library to the recently built Arts & Learning Campus. Private businesses on the west end provide a transition to commercially focused Northridge Drive.

5.1 Main Street Area

Description

The central spine of the Downtown runs along what is often known as "Main Street", providing the main area of commerce in Downtown and the one that has incrementally evolved the most over time. The primary road in this area has three names, as it goes from Elizabeth Street on the west boundary, to McRae Street at the intersection of Veterans Way, and transitioning to North Railway Street at the east end. The area has an eclectic mix of buildings from different eras that creates a quirky and interesting feel.

However, many buildings along the Main Street are strip malls that are separated from the street by surface parking lots and lack pedestrian features. This site design detracts from the small-town feel of Downtown and discourages pedestrian movement. It will be important to transition these sites to the historic design of the Downtown, where buildings are located at the street.

Main Street Vision

Main Street is envisioned as the primary economic and social activity spine of the Downtown, with buildings that front the street, abundant trees and landscaping, and plenty of sidewalks and pathways that encourage people to walk, bike and roll.

Buildings along the Main Street should face the street and be a mix of uses, with multiple storeys of residential and retail at the ground floor. Parking should be located behind buildings. This format ensures efficient use of land and maximizes daily customers and opportunities for economic activity.

Figure 8 | Main Street Character Area

The following policies apply to the Main Street Character area as shown on **MAP 1 | PLAN BOUNDARY & CHARACTER AREAS.**

GENERAL POLICIES

5.1.2 The Main Street Character Area should be primarily for commercial and mixed-use land uses, with a focus on retail uses at the ground level.

5.1.3 Primary buildings should be programmed with **STREET ACTIVATING LAND USES** on the ground floor. **STREET ACTIVATING LAND USES** include those uses that have short stays and a high-level of human-to-human interaction that is publicly visible. This includes, but is not limited to: retail stores, pubs, hair stylists, cafes, and restaurants.

5.1.4 Buildings should be mixed-use with **STREET ACTIVATING LAND USES** on the ground floor and other land uses (i.e. residential, office and institutional uses) above ground-level.

5.1.5 Office uses should be located above or behind ground floor **STREET ACTIVATING LAND USES.**

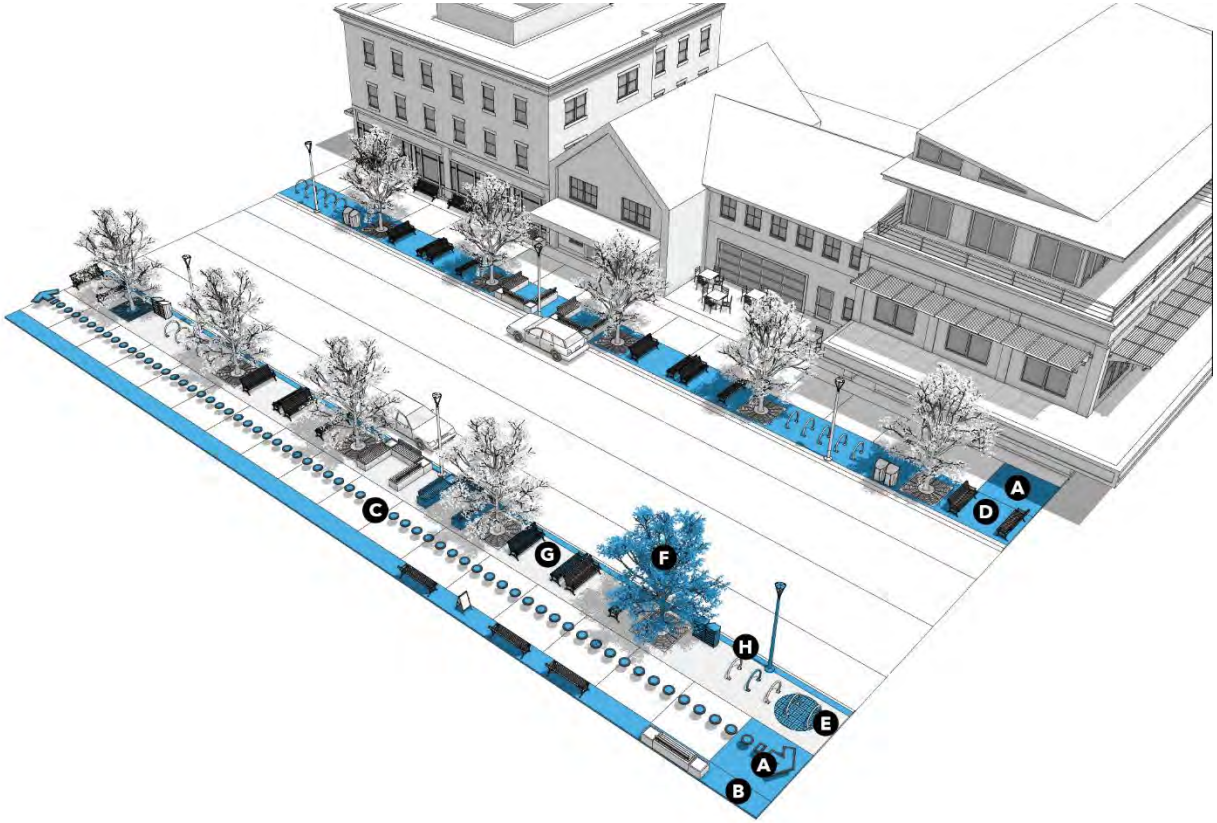
5.1.6 Residential uses should be located above or behind ground floor **STREET ACTIVATING LAND USES.**

5.1.7 Developments are encouraged to incorporate rooftop patios and other urban elements as a way of providing residents and businesses with livable spaces on their property.

5.1.8 Main Street should continue to be designed as the primary thoroughfare for pedestrians and vehicles in the Downtown. Design priority is to promote commercial activity and for safe pedestrian movement through strong multi-modal infrastructure.

5.1.9 Street trees should be maintained and enhanced, if possible, to provide refuge from the heat and weather

MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES – PUBLIC SPACE



Label & Name	Policy #
A - Sidewalks	5.1.10
B – Frontage Zone	5.1.11(a)
C – Pedestrian through Zone	5.1.11(b)
D – Amenity Zone	5.1.11(c)
E – Paving	5.1.12(a)
F – Trees	5.1.12(b)
G – Benches	5.1.12(c)
H – Garbage bins / Light Poles	5.1.12(d)

Figure 9 | Main Street Design Guidelines Public Space

MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES - PUBLIC SPACE

5.1.10 Streets in the Main Street area should have sidewalks on both sides of the street.

5.1.11 Each sidewalk should be comprised of:

a) A **FRONTAGE ZONE** of 0.3 m (minimum) to 1.0 m (maximum) between buildings and the "pedestrian through zone";

b) A **PEDESTRIAN THROUGH ZONE** of 1.5m (minimum) to 3.0m (maximum), where no obstructions are permitted.

c) An **AMENITY ZONE** of 1.5 m (minimum) to 3.0 m (maximum) between the street and **PEDESTRIAN THROUGH ZONE**; and

5.1.12 **AMENITY ZONES** should include trees, benches, bike racks, lighting, and garbage and recycling bins in accordance with the following:

a) **AMENITY ZONES** should be comprised of a different surface material than the **PEDESTRIAN THROUGH ZONE** (see approved **KIT OF PARTS** in for options)

b) Trees should be:

i) Placed in a silva / soil cell that is a minimum of 1.5;

ii) Spaced suitably apart (recommended 10.0m separation);

iii) Be a deciduous species that is round, in a shape that provides shade (v.s. columnar); and

iv) Covered by a CSA-compliant tree grate or located within a protected stormwater feature.

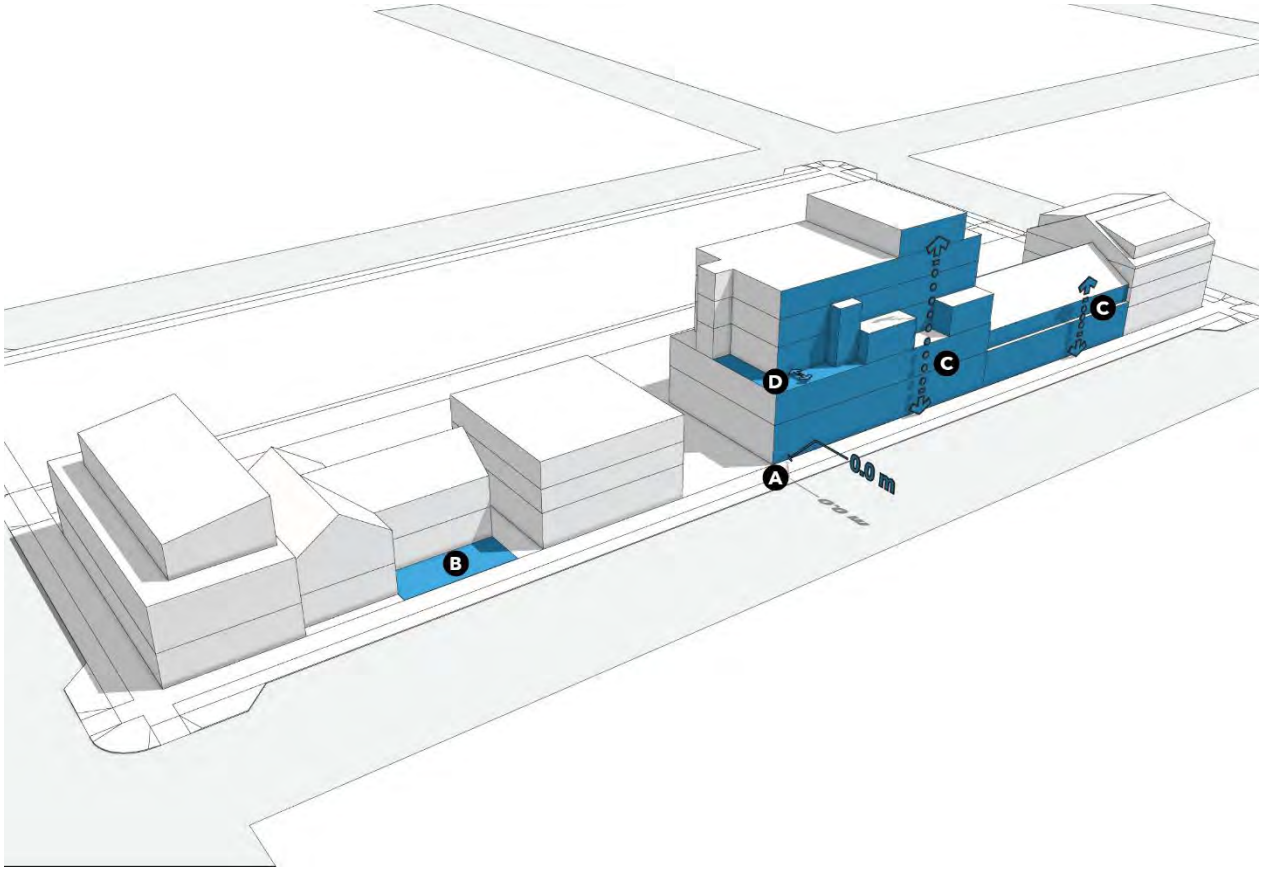
c) Benches should be:

(i) Placed perpendicular to the sidewalk; and

(ii) In facing pairs spaced approximately 2.0m apart.

d) Garbage bins, recycling bins, and light poles should be located 0.15m to 0.3m from the edge of the curb.

MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES – PRIVATE SPACE – BUILDING PLACEMENT & MASSING



Label & Name	Policy #
A - Setbacks	5.1.14
B – Setback Exceptions	5.1.15
C – Building Height	5.1.16
D – Building Step-back	5.1.17

Figure 10 | Main Street Design Guidelines Building Placement

MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES – PRIVATE LAND

5.1.13 All buildings in the Main Street area are subject to the Downtown-Wide Design Guidelines in **SECTION 4.2**. If there is a conflict between the Downtown-Wide and Main Street Design Guidelines, the Main Street Design Guidelines prevail.

Building Placement & Massing

5.1.14 Building front and secondary front setbacks from the street should be 0m.

5.1.15 Notwithstanding the above, building setbacks greater than 0m from the street may be permitted where:

a) The space will be used for private active uses, such as entry alcoves, sidewalk vendors, patios, seating and restaurant dining up to a maximum of 8.0m; or

b) The space will be used for a courtyard with a no maximum setback, and provided that part of the building is within 2.0m of the front property line.

5.1.16 New buildings should have a minimum of two storeys and be a maximum of six storeys.

5.1.17 Buildings greater than two storeys should step-back the building above the second storey a minimum distance of 3.0 m.

Building Form

5.1.18 Buildings should face Elizabeth / McCrae / North Railway Streets.

5.1.19 For corner sites, buildings should face both Elizabeth / McCrae / North Railway Streets and adjacent side streets and be placed as close to the intersection as possible to anchor the corner.

5.1.20 Buildings with ground floor commercial uses should support a high-quality pedestrian environment by creating smaller commercial frontages, with individual storefronts not exceeding 6.0m to 10.0m wide. Consideration of wider frontages will be considered if the majority of the Building & Façade Design Guidelines (below) are met.

MAIN STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES – PRIVATE SPACE – BUILDING FORM & FACADES

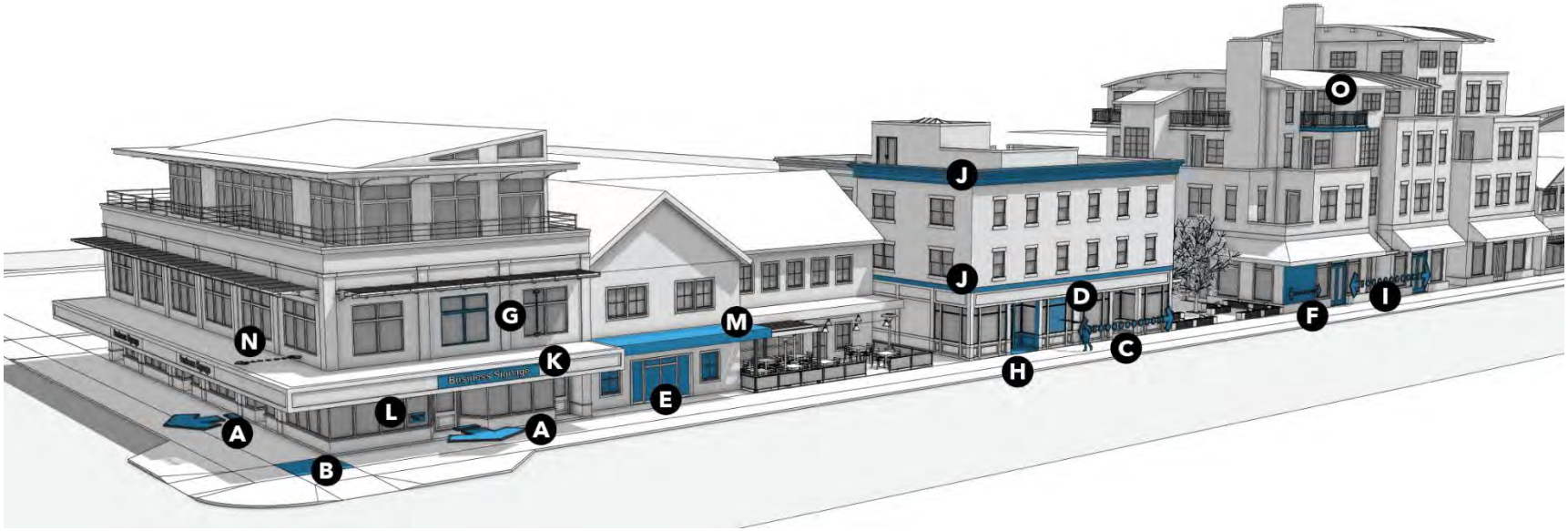


Figure 11 | Main Street Design Guidelines Building Form

Label & Name	Policy #	Label & Name	Policy #
A – Facing Street	5.1.18	F – Blank Walls	5.1.23
B – Corner Placement	5.1.19	G – Windows & Doors	5.1.24
C – Smaller Frontages	5.1.20	H – Entries	5.1.25
D – Permeable Edge	5.1.21	I – Entrance Separation	5.1.26
E – Glazing	5.1.22	J – Cornices & Parapets	5.1.27

Building & Façade Design Elements

5.1.21 Active building frontage should engage passing pedestrians with a "**PERMEABLE EDGE**" between the building and street, as appropriate to building uses.

5.1.22 Street-facing ground floors should have a minimum of 50 percent glazing with windows and doors that give pedestrians a clear view into the ground floor use.

5.1.23 Blank walls along streets should be no more than 4.0 m in length divided by glazing.

5.1.24 Windows and doors in new buildings should have vertical proportions (i.e. taller than they are wide), and where windows and door openings along a street wall are wider than they are taller, they should be broken up with vertical elements such as **MULLIONS** or **MUNTINS**, in a minimum 1:1 height to width ratio.

5.1.25 Building entries should be obvious, identifiable and distinctive with clear lines of sight and lobbies visibly connected to the street.

5.1.26 Building entrances on any individual building should not be more than 15 m apart along any building.

5.1.27 Cornices and parapets can provide a distinctive upper edge to the building's façade, but their design must be carefully considered. Cornices should only be used to define the horizontal demarcation of the top floor of the façade (upper cornice) and/or the top of the first floor (intermediate or lower cornice).

Signage

5.1.28 Signs should respect the building form and style and be scaled to fit its purpose and context.

5.1.29 Window signage must not cover more than 20% of each glazing area, except if required due to licensing conditions. (e.g. Cannabis Retail).

5.1.30 Freestanding signs are not permitted in the Main Street Area.

Climatic Conditions

5.1.31 **ACTIVE FRONTAGE AREAS** should include overhangs or glazed canopies to provide shelter for pedestrians from wind, rain and sun.

5.1.32 Canopies and awnings should be a minimum of 2.0 m measured from the building face to the outer edge.

Balconies

5.1.33 **PROJECTING BALCONIES** should not be located on the first two storeys of the front facade. Between three to four storeys balconies are encouraged and should be recessed behind the street wall. **JULIETTE BALCONIES** provide interaction with the street while maintaining a consistent street wall.

5.2 Elma Street West

Description

Elma Street is the historic district of Okotoks. This area showcases the town's heritage, predominantly through Queen Anne Revival style houses constructed in the early 1900s. Through the engagement process, residents strongly expressed the desire to protect these heritage assets.

The following guidelines recommend the preservation of the building stock while allowing for sensitive infill development to improve the functionality and sustainability of the streets. Sensitive infill refers to new additions and renovations to historic structures that are subordinate to, distinguishable from and compatible with the existing building. These adjustments will improve the mixed-use function of the buildings while maintaining the heritage image of the community.

Elma Street West Area Vision

The future of Elma Street West is an area that blends old and new, with retention and conservation of heritage assets while new buildings are added or renovated in a way that blends in seamlessly. Local small businesses and residents both flourish, while the area provides a unique location where people can still live and work on the same property. The streetscape provides for all modes of transportation, with sidewalks on both sides of streets and a continuous tree canopy.

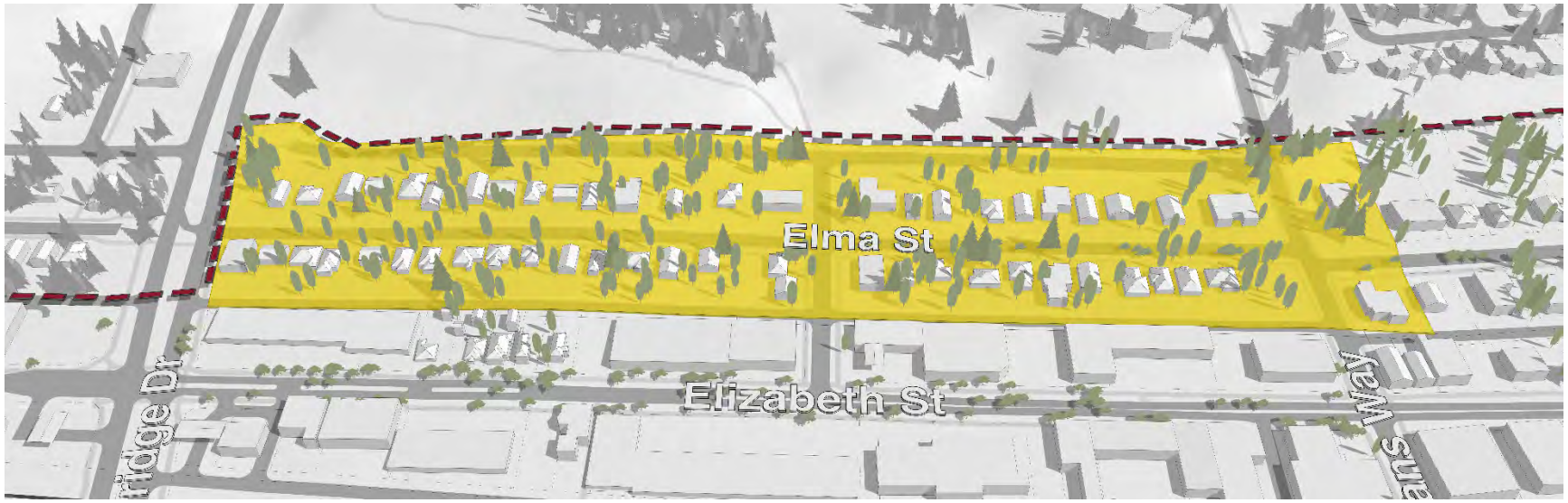


Figure 12 | Elma Street West Character Area

GENERAL POLICIES

5.2.1 Appropriate land uses for the Historic Elma Street include live-work, mixed-use (residential and commercial), commercial, institutional and residential.

5.2.2 New developments should provide a Design Brief (including visuals) identifying how the architecture and site design considers the historical context of Elma Street, including detailing the project's use of materials, colours, scale, setbacks, roof lines, and general building architecture.

5.2.3 The Elma Street West area should accommodate sensitive infill and redevelopment while conserving the unique heritage qualities of Elma Street, including:

a) Tree-lined streets with boulevards and on-street parking;
b) One to three-storey buildings with a residential character and appearance (e.g. peaked roofs, single front door, gables and overhangs);
c) Low profile front fences;
d) Front porches; and
e) Traditional front yard setbacks, including not varying minimum front yard setbacks.

ELMA STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES – PUBLIC SPACE

5.2.4 Public realm features should reflect the historic qualities of Elma Street area and architecture, including signage, lighting, wayfinding, banners, benches and pavement.

5.2.5 On-street parking and/or dedicated bike lanes are encouraged. New front driveways are discouraged.

5.2.6 Elma Street should have sidewalks on both sides of the street. Each sidewalk should be comprised of:

a) A **PEDESTRIAN THROUGH ZONE** of 1.5m (minimum) to 2.4m (maximum), where no obstructions are permitted;

b) A **LANDSCAPED BOULEVARD** of 1.5 m (minimum) to 3.0 m (maximum) between the street and **PEDESTRIAN THROUGH ZONE**.

5.2.7 **LANDSCAPED BOULEVARDS** should include trees, lighting, and stormwater features accordance with the following:

a) Trees should be:

(i) Placed in a structural soil trench that is a minimum of 1.5m wide;

(ii) Spaced suitably apart (recommended 10.0m separation); and

(iii) Be a deciduous species that is round, in a shape that provides shade (v.s. columnar).

b) Lighting should be:

(i) Placed 0.3m from the curb edge; and

(ii) Include banners specific to the area.

ELMA STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES – PUBLIC SPACE

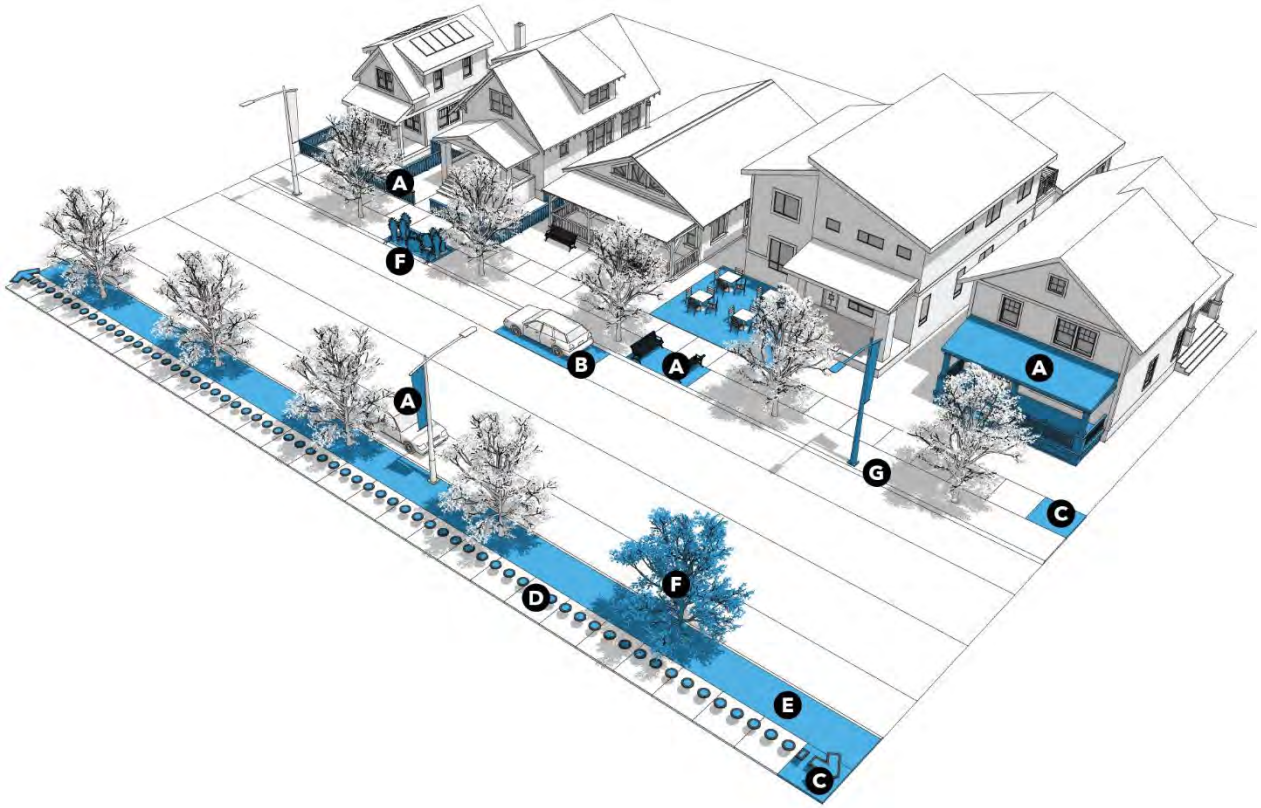


Figure 13 | Elma Design Guidelines Public Space

Label & Name	Policy #
A – Historic Features	5.2.4
B – Parking	5.2.5
C – Sidewalks	5.2.6
D – Pedestrian Zone	5.2.6(a)
E – Landscaped Boulevard	5.2.6(b)

ELMA STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES – PRIVATE LAND

5.2.8 All buildings in the Elma Street area are subject to the Downtown-Wide Design Guidelines in **SECTION 4.2**. If there is a conflict between the Downtown-Wide and Elma Street Design Guidelines, the Elma Street Design Guidelines prevail.

Building Form

5.2.9 Roofs should be peaked or sloped to align with the historical design of the area. Roofs of new buildings should respect their heritage neighbours. Roof forms should complement the roof lines of surrounding buildings. Rooftops can include open space balconies and/or roof-terrace green roofs.

5.2.10 Mixed-use (residential & business) or live-work buildings should have:

a) the business portion of the building facing the street on the ground floor,
b) a separate business entrance, and
c) business signage for customers.

5.2.11 Residential entrances to a mixed-use building should be separated from the business entrance and be screened to provide security and privacy.

Building & Façade Design Elements

5.2.12 Design the first floor of the building to engage the pedestrian and enable an active and vibrant street front.

5.2.13 Facades should remain consistent with the existing **ARCHITECTURAL ARTICULATION** found within the heritage buildings. This includes maintaining a rhythm of openings, recesses, projections and vertical and horizontal demarcations.

5.2.14 Buildings should incorporate human-scaled architectural elements and details into the building facades, entries, retaining walls, courtyards and exterior spaces.

5.2.15 Materials of the building exteriors should be high-quality, durable and maintainable. The following building materials are preferred for the Elma Street area:

a) Brick,
b) Wood,
c) Stone, and
d) Modern composite materials that mimic brick, wood and stone.

5.2.16 Vinyl siding should not be used as a building material.

Landscaping

5.2.17 The portion of a front yard that is not a driveway should be covered by a minimum of 50% soft impervious landscaping.

ELMA STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES – BUILDING FORM & FACADES

Figure 14 | Elma Design Guidelines Building Form

Label & Name	Policy #	Label & Name	Policy #	Label & Name	Policy #
A – Roofs	5.2.9	E – Residential Entrance	5.2.11	H – Elements	5.2.14
B – Mixed-Use	5.2.10(a)	F – First Floor Elements	5.2.12	I - Materials	5.2.15
C – Residential Entrance	5.1.10(b)	G – Facades	5.2.13	J – Landscaping	5.2.17
D – Signage	5.2.10(c)				

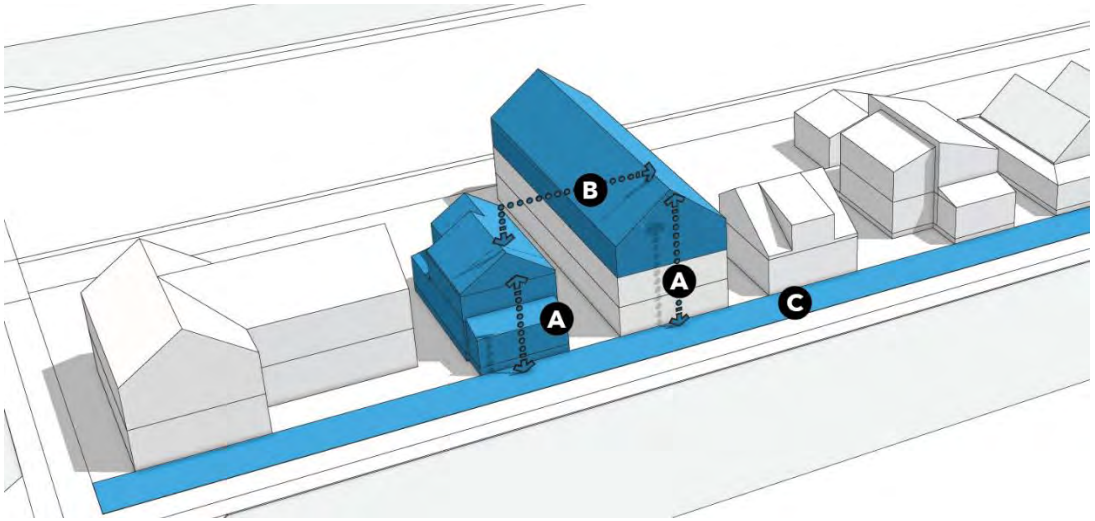
Building Placement & Massing

5.2.18 Buildings should be two to three storeys in height, with a 3-storey maximum unless otherwise permitted in the Land Use Bylaw.

5.2.19 New buildings adjacent to a recognized heritage building should not be more than one storey greater than its heritage neighbour.

5.2.20 Buildings should be setback from the street a similar distance to adjacent buildings on the same side of the street. Front yard building setbacks should not be varied.

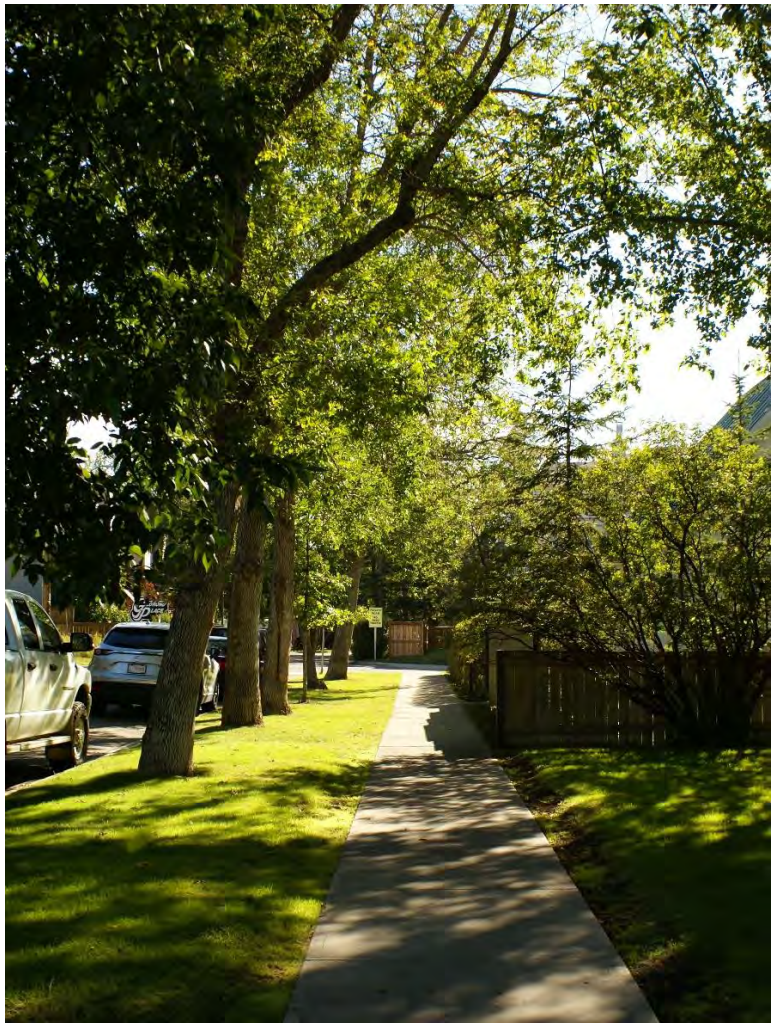
ELMA STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES – PUBLIC SPACE – BUILDING PLACEMENT



Label & Name	Policy #
A – Height	5.2.18
B – Adjacent Height	5.2.19
C – Setbacks	5.2.20

Figure 15 | Elma Design Guidelines Building Placement

5.3 Maple Area



Description

The Maple area is a mainly residential area in the northeast portion of the Downtown that has a variety of attached and detached residential units from a mixture of architectural eras. The area provides Downtown with a growing population base to support businesses. Properties closest to Main Street have seen an increase of home-businesses, which is likely to continue. This area will likely continue to redevelop as midrise residential buildings, which will add to the economic and social activity in the Downtown. As this happens, it will be important to improve pedestrian and active-transportation linkages from this area to Main Street.

Maple Area Vision

The Maple Area is envisioned as a mainly residential area with a growing presence of mid-rise residential buildings. Home-businesses and live-work properties are supported to add to the unique business offerings in the Downtown. Pedestrian and multi-modal connections to Downtown (e.g. sidewalks, pathways) are strong and provide for plenty of ways for locals to move around. The streetscape provides for all modes of transportation with sidewalks on both sides of streets, boulevards and a healthy tree cover.

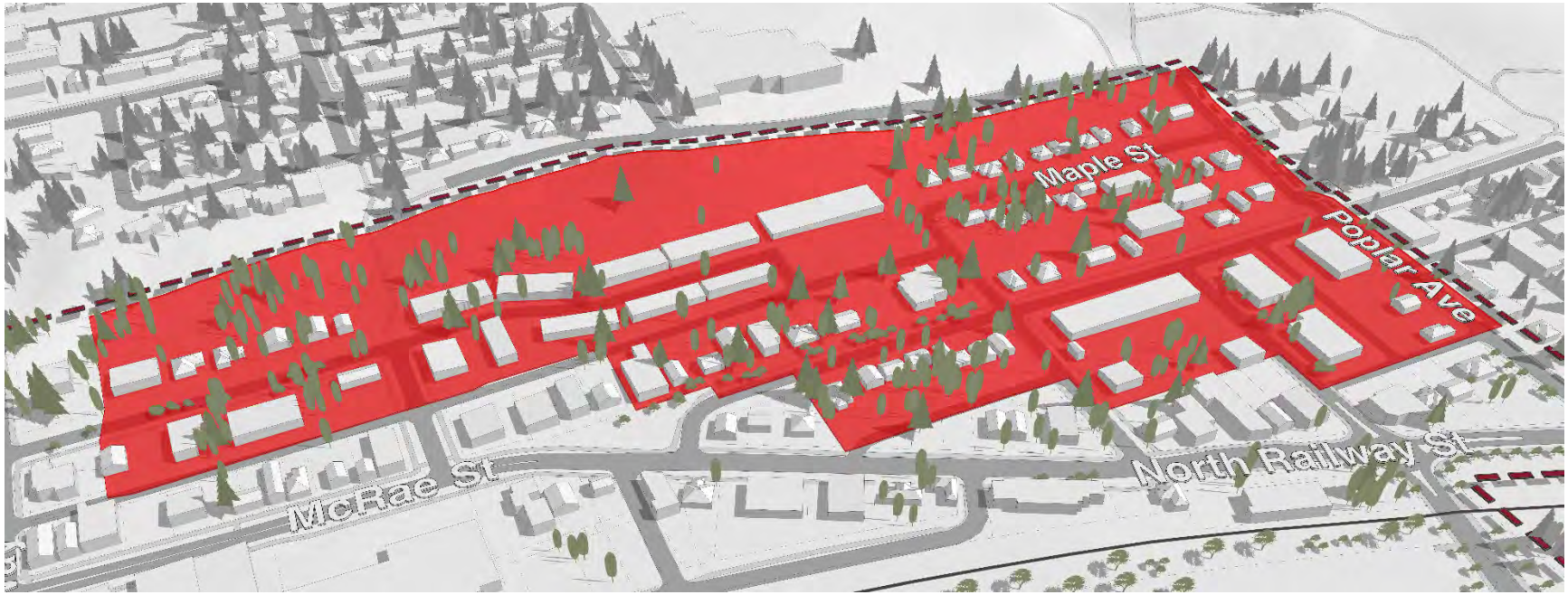


Figure 16 | Maple Character Area

The following policies apply to the Maple character area as shown on **MAP 1 | PLAN BOUNDARY & CHARACTER AREAS**.

GENERAL POLICIES

5.3.1 The Maple Area should be primarily for residential land uses, with a focus on midrise multi-unit residential buildings. Mixed-use buildings, home-businesses, and live-work properties are also supported. Dedicated commercial properties are encouraged to locate in other character areas, but will be supported where they adhere to the policies of the Downtown Plan.

5.3.2 Increased residential density is encouraged in the Maple Area to provide a diversity of housing and add to the population that supports Downtown businesses.

MAPLE AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES – PUBLIC SPACE

5.3.3 Maple Street should have sidewalks on both sides of the street. Each sidewalk should be comprised of:

a) A **PEDESTRIAN THROUGH ZONE** of 1.5m (minimum) to 2.4 m (maximum), where no obstructions are permitted;
b) A **LANDSCAPED BOULEVARD** is not required on the north side of Maple Street due to topographical limitations.
c) Sidewalks on the south side of Maple Street should have A **LANDSCAPED BOULEVARD** of 1.5 m (minimum) to 3.0 m (maximum).

5.3.4 Other streets in the Maple Area should have sidewalks on both sides of the street. Each sidewalk should be comprised of:

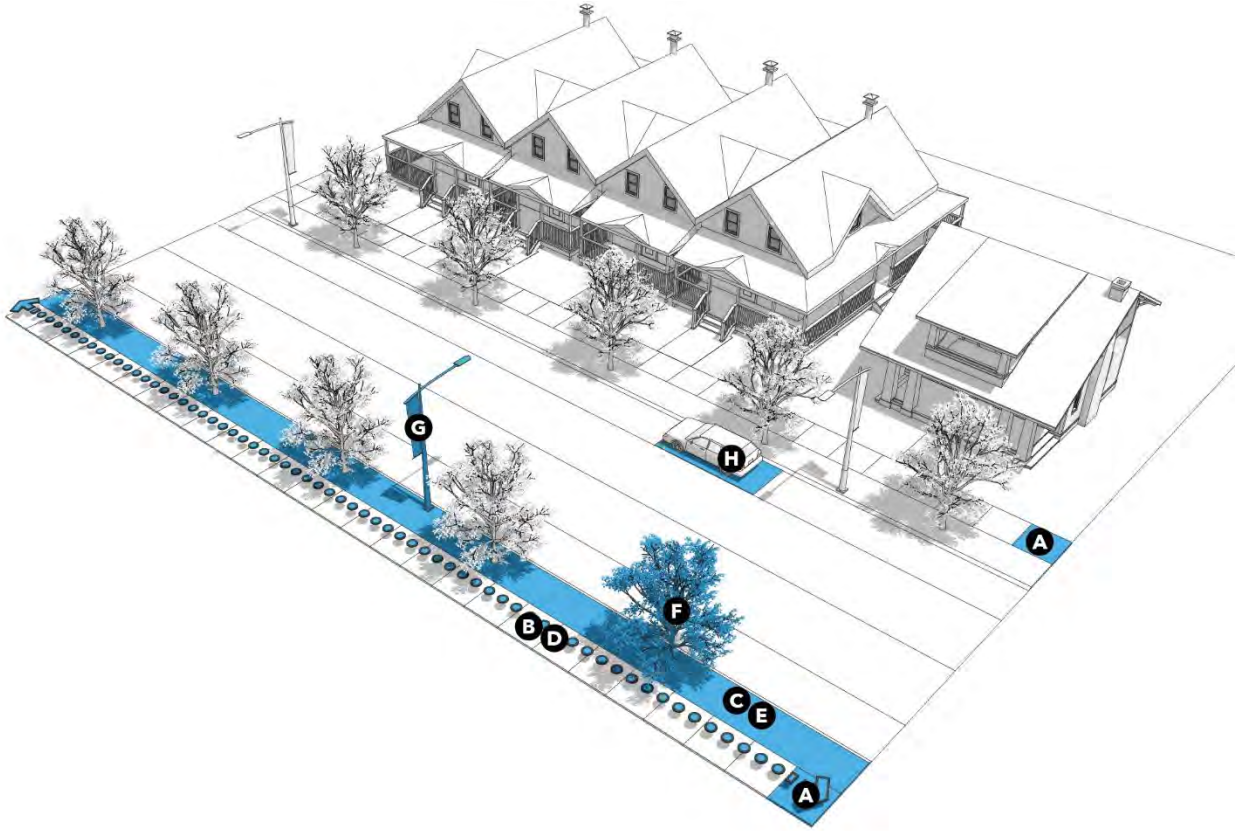
a) A **PEDESTRIAN THROUGH ZONE** of 1.5m (minimum) to 2.4m (maximum), where no obstructions are permitted;
b) A **LANDSCAPED BOULEVARD** of 1.5 m (minimum) to 3.0 m (maximum) between the street and **PEDESTRIAN THROUGH ZONE**.

5.3.5 **LANDSCAPED BOULEVARDS** should include trees, lighting, and stormwater features accordance with the following:

a) Trees should be:
   (i) Placed in a structural soil trench that is a minimum of 1.5m wide;
   (ii) Spaced suitably apart (recommended 10.0m separation); and
   (iii) Be a deciduous species that is round, in a shape that provides shade (v.s. columnar).
b) Lighting should be:
   (i) Placed 0.3m from the curb edge; and
   (ii) Include banners specific to the area.

5.3.6 On-street parking is encouraged.

MAPLE AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES – PUBLIC SPACE

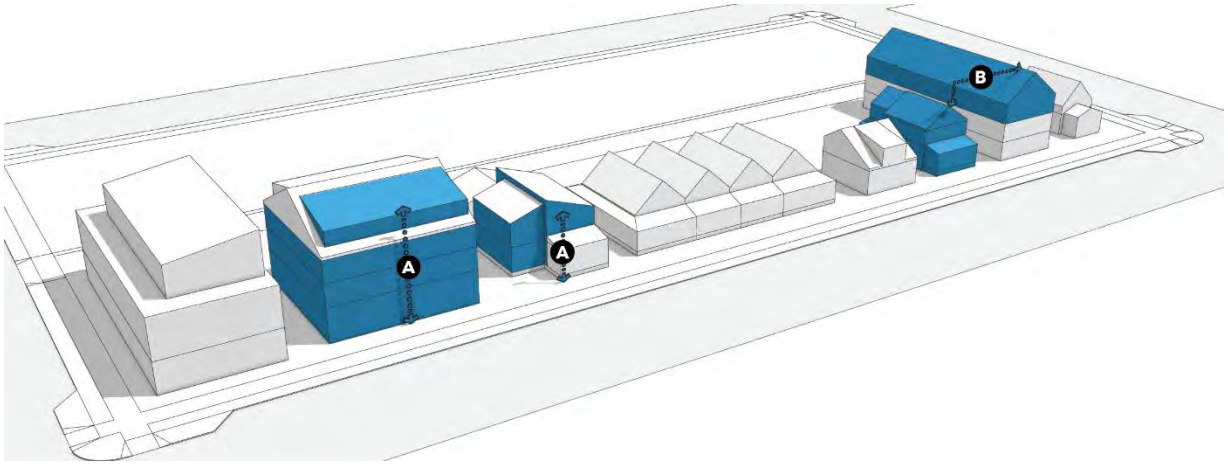


Label & Name	Policy #
A – Pedestrian Zone	5.3.3(a)
B – Boulevard North	5.3.3(b)
C – Boulevard South	5.3.3(c)
D – Pedestrian through Zone	5.3.4(a)
E – Amenity Zone	5.3.4(b)
F – Trees	5.3.5(a)
G – Lighting	5.3.5(b)
H – Parking	5.3.6

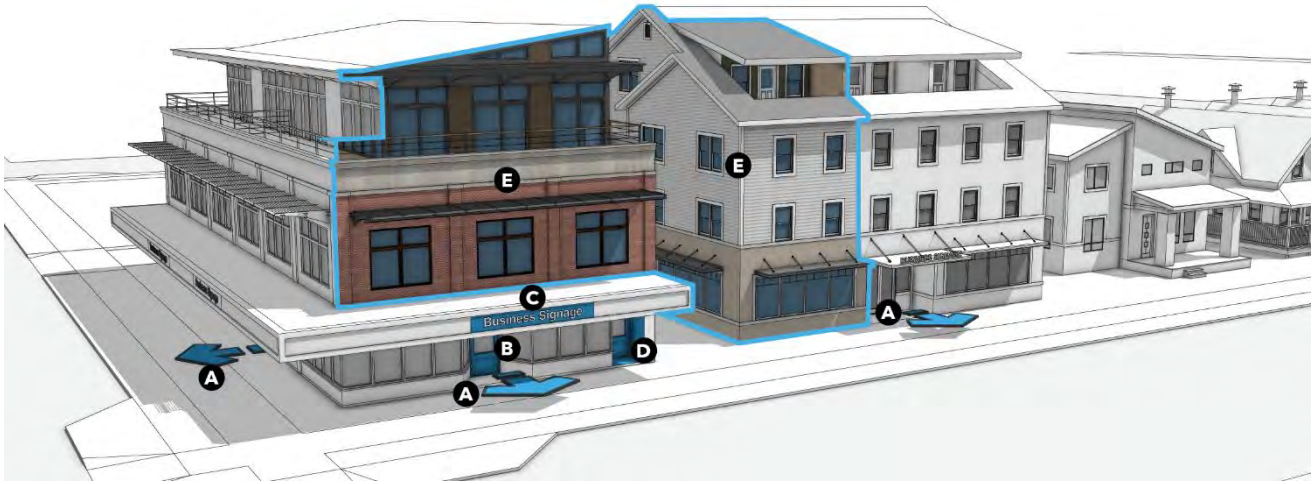
Figure 17 | Maple Design Guidelines Public Space

MAPLE AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES – PRIVATE SPACE

Figure 18 | Maple Design Guidelines Building Placement



Label & Name	Policy #
A – Height	5.3.8
B – Heritage Heights	5.3.9



Label & Name	Policy #
A – Mixed Uses	5.3.10(a)
B – Entrances	5.3.10(b)
C – Signage	5.3.10(c)
D – Residential Entrance	5.3.11
E – Materials	5.3.12

Figure 19 | Maple Design Guidelines Building Form

MAPLE AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES – PRIVATE LAND

5.3.7 All buildings in the Maple Area are subject to the Downtown-Wide Design Guidelines in **SECTION 4.2**. If there is a conflict between the Downtown-Wide and Maple Area Design Guidelines, the Maple Area Design Guidelines prevail.

Building Placement & Massing

5.3.8 Residential infill and redevelopment should be a minimum of two storeys in height and a maximum of four storeys unless otherwise permitted in the Land Use Bylaw.

5.3.9 New buildings adjacent to a recognized heritage building should not be more than one storey greater than its heritage neighbour.

Building Form

5.3.10 Mixed-use (residential & business) or live-work buildings should have:

a) the business portion of the building facing the street on the ground floor,
b) a separate business entrance, and
c) business signage for customers.

5.3.11 Residential entrances to a mixed-use building should be separated from the business entrance and be screened to provide security and privacy.

Building & Façade Design Elements

5.3.12 Materials of the building exteriors should be high-quality, durable and maintainable. The following building materials are preferred for the Maple area:

a) Brick,
b) Wood,
c) Stone, and
d) Modern composite materials that mimic brick, wood and stone.

5.3.13 Vinyl siding should not be used as a building material.

5.4 Riverfront Area

The Riverfront is the most natural of the four character areas, with the Sheep River as the southern border. The connection between Main Street and the Sheep River has always been important to the Town and its residents. As the Riverfront area evolves, it should maintain and improve the connectivity between these two key Downtown areas. Residents and visitors should be able to easily combine an ice cream and a walk along the river. The Riverfront has seen continued public investment over the years from the former library (now Bow Valley College) to the recently built Arts & Learning Campus. Private businesses on the west end provide a transition to the commercially focused area at Northridge Drive.

Riverfront Area Vision

The Riverfront is envisioned as a transition area from the Main Street area to the river. The area should remain mostly natural with contextually sensitive development where flood mitigation can be implemented.

The Riverfront is home to key institutional uses, such as the Arts & Learning Campus and Bow Valley College, adding to the opportunities in the Downtown. Additional institutional uses are encouraged to complement downtown businesses. Pathways, play areas, and art pieces are strong in the Riverfront to further enrich the experience. Safe passage across the railway tracks is provided to ensure this area always feels seamlessly connected to Downtown. Institutional, commercial and mixed-use developments may grow where appropriate to complement the area's natural beauty.

Figure 20 | Riverfront Character Area

The following policies apply to the Riverfront Character area as shown on **MAP 1 | PLAN BOUNDARY & CHARACTER AREAS**.

GENERAL POLICIES

The Riverfront area should remain mostly in its natural state, with strategic pockets of development. The Sheep River should be protected from impacts from development, such as pollution from untreated stormwater, garbage/litter, and erosion to riparian areas.

Development in the Riverfront area should be limited to areas that will not negatively impact the natural areas along the Sheep River, including the riparian areas. Land uses that are supported include: institutional, commercial, residential, and mixed-use.

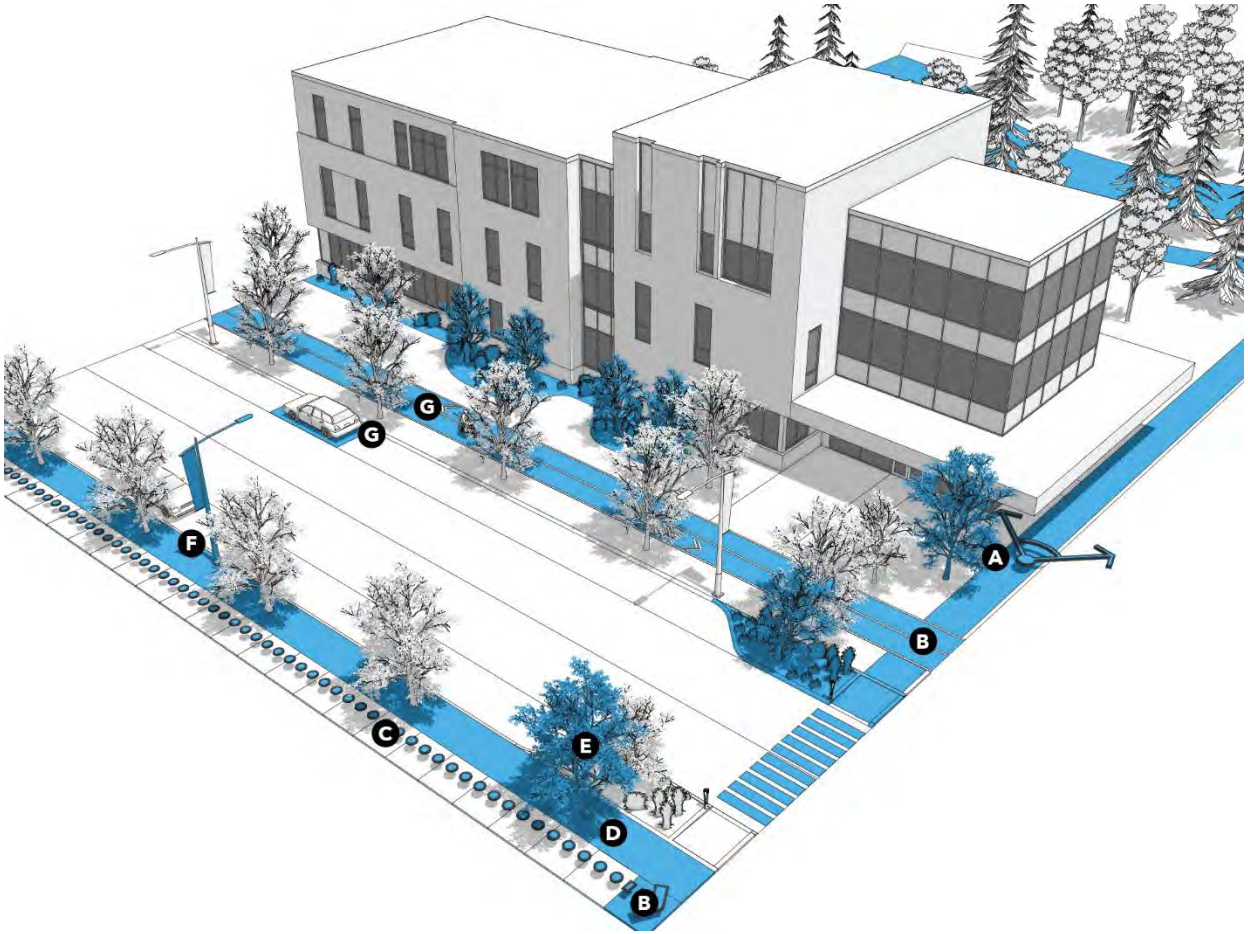
5.4.1 Auto-oriented land uses (e.g. service stations) should be transitioned out of the Riverfront area.

5.4.2 All development within the Riverfront area should comply with municipal bylaws and provincial flood regulations pertaining to flood protection and mitigation.

5.4.3 The Town should re-align South Railway Street to create a more logical road pattern and allow for better utilization of land near the river as part of the necessary deep-utility infrastructure to support long-term growth and development.

5.4.4 The Laurie Boyd Bridge is recognized as a key gateway to Downtown and should be considered part of the any gateway strategy to the Downtown.

RIVERFRONT DESIGN GUIDELINES – PUBLIC SPACE



Label & Name	Policy #
A – Green Street	5.4.8
B – Sidewalks	5.4.9
C – Pedestrian Zone	5.4.10(a)
D – Boulevard	5.4.10(b)
E – Trees	5.4.11(a)
F – Lighting	5.4.11(b)
G – Parking	5.4.12

Figure 21 | Riverfront Design Guidelines Public Space

RIVERFRONT DESIGN GUIDELINES – PUBLIC SPACE

Riverside Drive / South Railway Street should be designed as a green street, with additional tree coverage while maintaining views and connection to the river.

5.4.5 Streets in the Riverfront area should have sidewalks or pathways on both sides of the street.

5.4.6 Each sidewalk should be comprised of:

a) A **PEDESTRIAN THROUGH ZONE** of 1.5m (minimum) to 3.0m (maximum), where no obstructions are permitted;

b) An **LANDSCAPED BOULEVARD** of 1.5 m (minimum).

5.4.7 **LANDSCAPED BOULEVARDS** should include trees, lighting, and stormwater features accordance with the following:

a) Trees should be:

(i) Placed in a structural soil trench that is a minimum of 1.5m wide;

(ii) Spaced suitably apart (recommended 10.0m separation); and

(iii) Be a deciduous species that is round, in a shape that provides shade (vs. columnar).

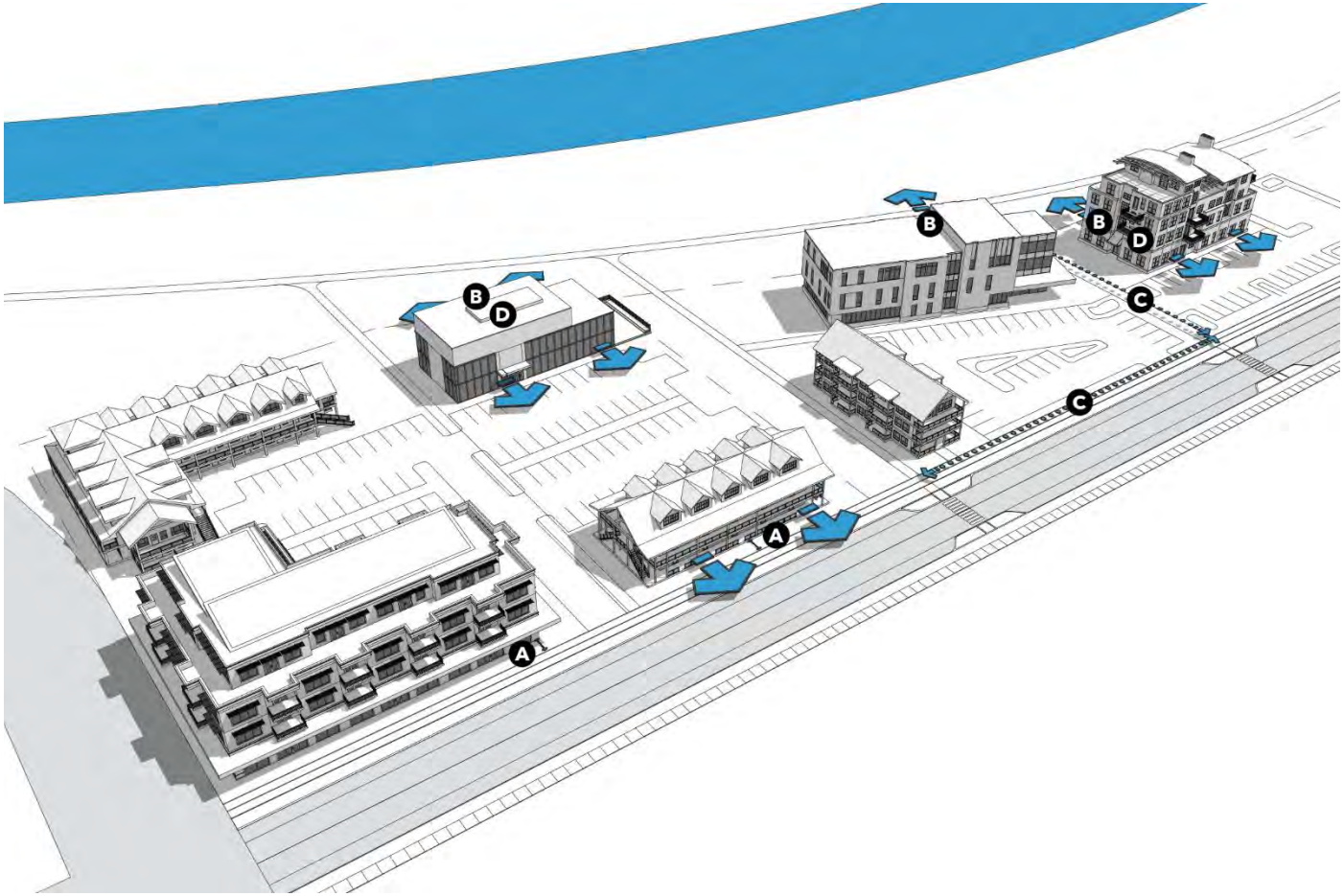
b) Lighting should be:

(i) Placed 0.3m from the curb edge; and

(ii) Include banners specific to the area.

5.4.8 On-street parking and/or dedicated bike lanes are encouraged.

RIVERFRONT DESIGN GUIDELINES – PRIVATE LAND



Label & Name	Policy #
A – Setbacks	5.4.14
B – River Setback	5.4.15
C – Pedestrian Access	5.4.16
D – Double-facing	5.4.17

Figure 22 | Riverfront Design Guidelines Building Placement

RIVERFRONT DESIGN GUIDELINES – PRIVATE LAND

5.4.9 All buildings in the Riverfront are subject to the Downtown-Wide Design Guidelines in **SECTION 4.2**. If there is a conflict between the Downtown-Wide and Riverfront Design Guidelines, the Riverfront Design Guidelines prevail.

Building Placement & Massing

5.4.10 New buildings should be placed along the street edge with minimal front setbacks.

5.4.11 Buildings that are within 10 m of the property line closest to the river should embrace the riverfront through active interfaces on both the street side and the river side of the building.

5.4.12 Public pedestrian access from streets through the property to Riverfront public space (trails and parks, etc.) should be provided on all development projects greater than 1.0 ha or every 150 m along a public street.

Building & Façade Design Elements

5.4.13 Double-facing buildings must include architectural details that relate to both the nearest street and the river. This includes having well-designed features on both sides of the building, such as doorways/openings, plazas, windows, canopies, gables and overhangs.

5.4.14 Large blank walls are not acceptable on either the road side or river side of buildings.

Building & Façade Design Elements

5.4.15 Materials of the building exteriors should be focused on natural materials that are high-quality, durable and maintainable. The following building materials are preferred for the Riverfront area:

a) Brick,
b) Wood,
c) Stone, and
d) Modern composite materials that mimic brick, wood and stone.

5.4.16 Vinyl siding should not be used as a building material.

RIVERFRONT DESIGN GUIDELINES – PARKING

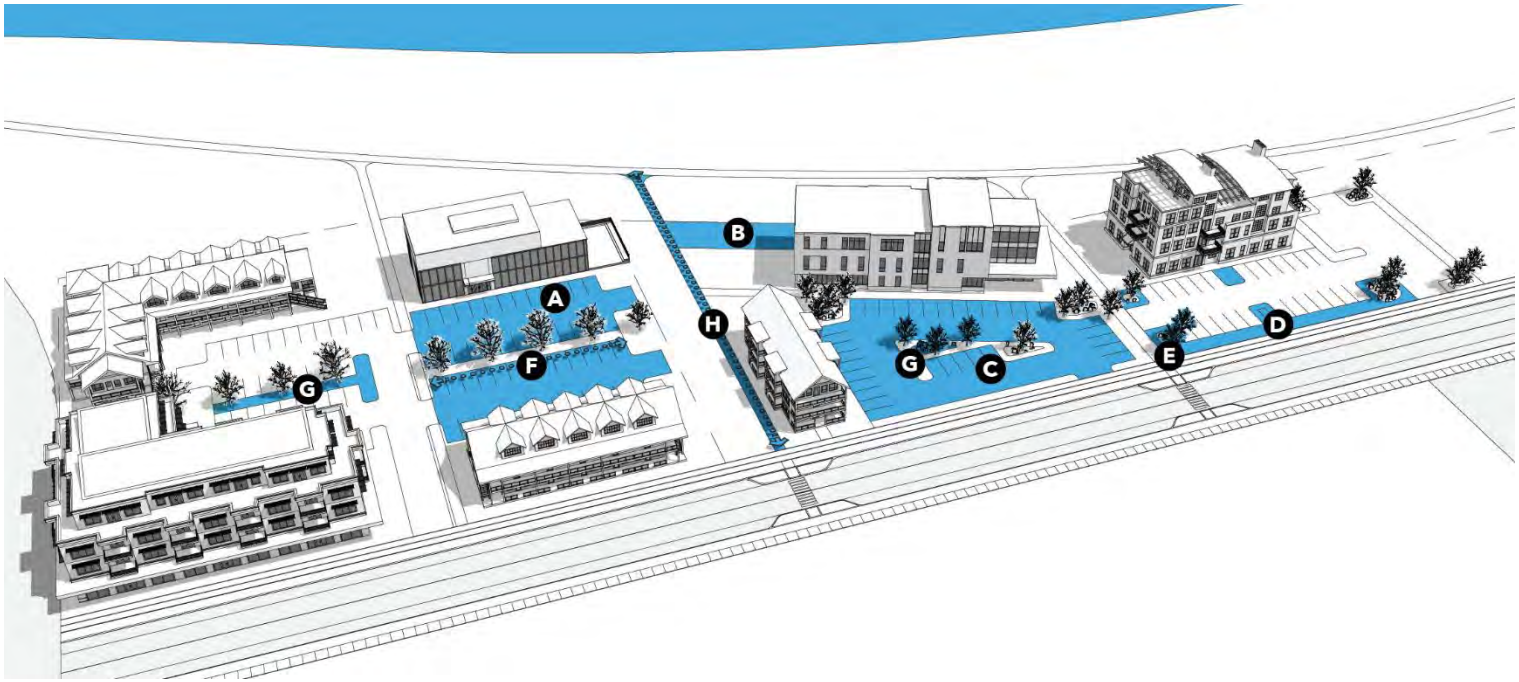


Figure 23 | Riverfront Design Guidelines Parking

Label & Name	Policy #	Label & Name	Policy #	Label & Name	Policy #
A – Interior	5.4.19	D – Landscape Buffer	5.4.21(a)	G – Vegetated Buffer	5.4.21(d)
B – River Setback	5.4.20	E – Vegetated Buffer	5.4.21(b)	H- Pedestrian Route	5.4.21(e)
C – Streetside Parking	5.4.21	F – Parking Separation	5.4.21(c)		

Parking, Loading, & Servicing

5.4.17 Parking lots are encouraged to be located in the interior of lots with buildings facing both the street and the river where lot size permits.

5.4.18 Parking lots are not permitted within the 10 m closest to the riverfront property line.

5.4.19 Nothwithstanding 5.4.17, where lot size doesn't permit interior lots, parking lots should be placed along the street with the following design considerations:

a) A landscape buffer must separate parking areas from sidewalks and streets and be a minimum of 2.0 m wide;

b) The landscape buffer must include trees, shrubs, and grasses that provide a vegetated visual buffer between public space and parking areas;

c) Up to 20 consecutive parking spaces located side by side are permitted before a green / stormwater buffer is required to break up large paving areas;

d) Vegetated and stormwater buffers between adjacent parallel parking areas is encouraged; and

e) Parking areas must prioritize a direct, buffered pedestrian route from the public street to the building.

6 | SERVICING

6 Servicing

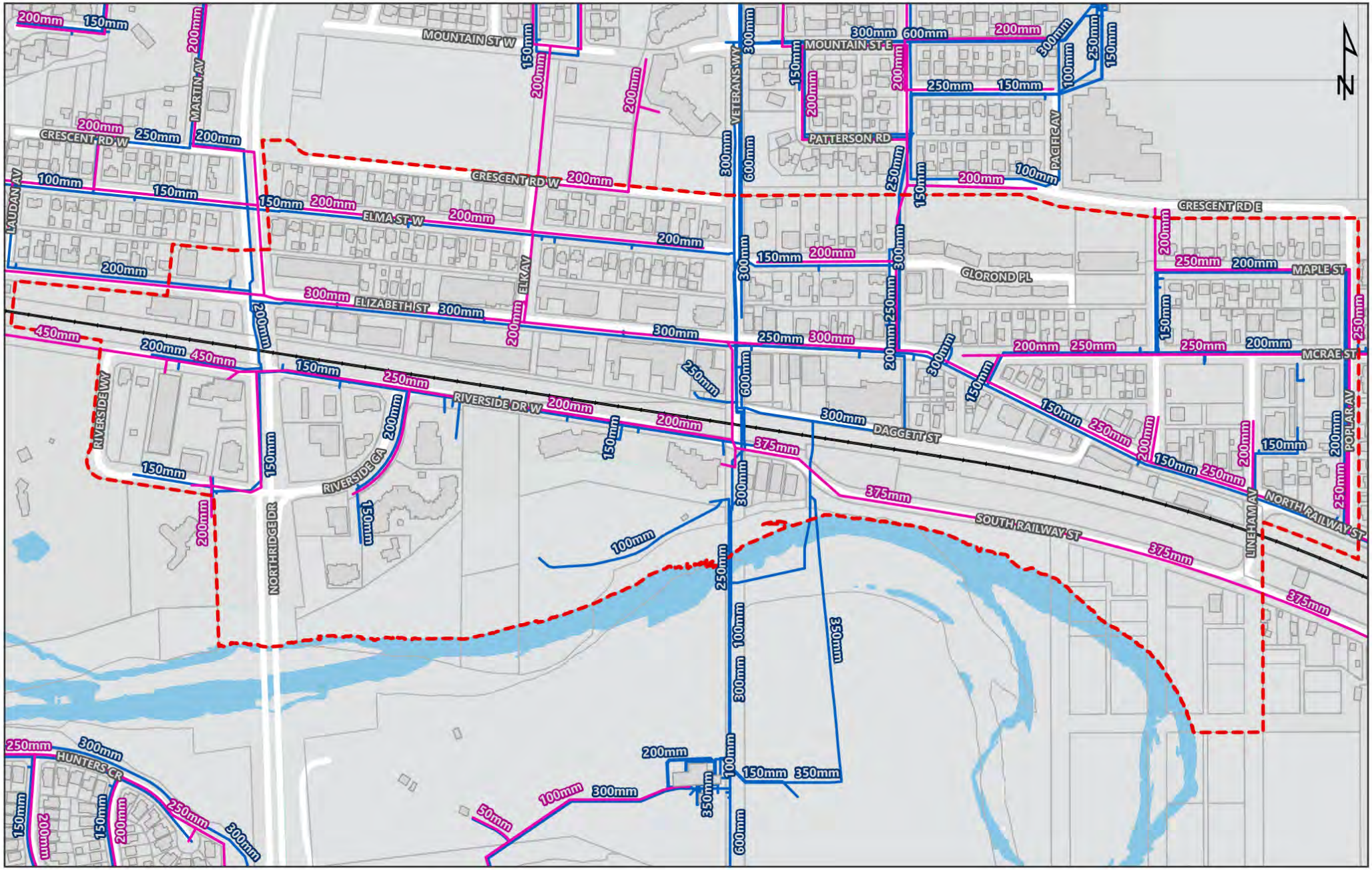
Okotoks Downtown is over 100 years old and its infrastructure (i.e. roads, water, sewer) has continuously evolved and been upgraded throughout its history. Today, the Downtown continues to undergo infrastructure improvements to ensure its ready for future growth and redevelopment and can retain its identity as the heart of Okotoks.

However, the historic nature of Downtown poses numerous infrastructure challenges as pipes and other components continue to age and require replacement, which can be disruptive to businesses and street life. The Town will continue to upgrade Downtown infrastructure as needed; however, major developments may require significant upgrades to existing servicing capacity. Smaller, incremental developments can be accommodated within existing capacities.

The Town recognizes the importance of Downtown development and will work with private developers to resolve servicing challenges to promote growth and redevelopment in this important area. Unlike greenfield areas, Downtown requires additional municipal leadership on servicing to ensure proper development can be accommodated.

6.1 Water, Sanitary, and Shallow Utility Servicing

Map 7 | Water and Sewer Servicing identifies the existing infrastructure for the Town's water and sewer services in the Downtown. Utility infrastructure within the Downtown has evolved over time to meet the needs of the current built form. However, depending on future land use changes, there may be associated local upgrades required. Local servicing capacity would be evaluated through the development application process.



Okotoks

Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan

Map 8 | Water and Sewer Servicing

Legend

- CP Railway
- DARP Boundary
- Sanitary Mains
- Water Mains

Created By:
Information Technology

Created Date:
2025-02-14

Scale: 1:5,400

0 50 100 200
Meters

The following policies are proposed to help facilitate orderly and efficient water, sanitary and shallow utility servicing for the Downtown into the future.

Policies

6.1.1 The Town will strive to maintain and upgrade water and sewer servicing in the Downtown to meet the continued demand for infill and redevelopment.

6.1.2 Developers shall work with the Town to determine the servicing capacity for each development. Major developments may be required to pay for, or cost-share, servicing capacity studies.

6.1.3 Municipal service connections for all development will be at the cost of the developer.

6.1.4 The Town may require that utilities to serve a development be located underground. The Town will determine the feasibility of placing utilities underground based on: site context, cost, and development form. Utilities include: transmission lines, power cables, cable service lines, and phone service lines.

6.1.5 Where water and sewer upgrades or maintenance require digging up streets, the Town will investigate the opportunity for streetscaping upgrades to improve the public realm.

6.2 Stormwater Management

Stormwater management of the Downtown is challenging due to the high percentage of unnatural surfaces that are impervious to water, such as concrete, pavement, and paving stones. This results in a significant portion of rainwater moving across the surface of the Downtown area, unless it is collected within a stormwater management system. Given the proximity of the nearby Sheep River, the high percentage of impervious surfaces, increasing intensification, and climate change, a well-designed stormwater management is extremely important in the Downtown.

The stormwater management system should be designed to adequately and efficiently service redevelopment and adopt Low-Impact Development (LID) strategies where appropriate.

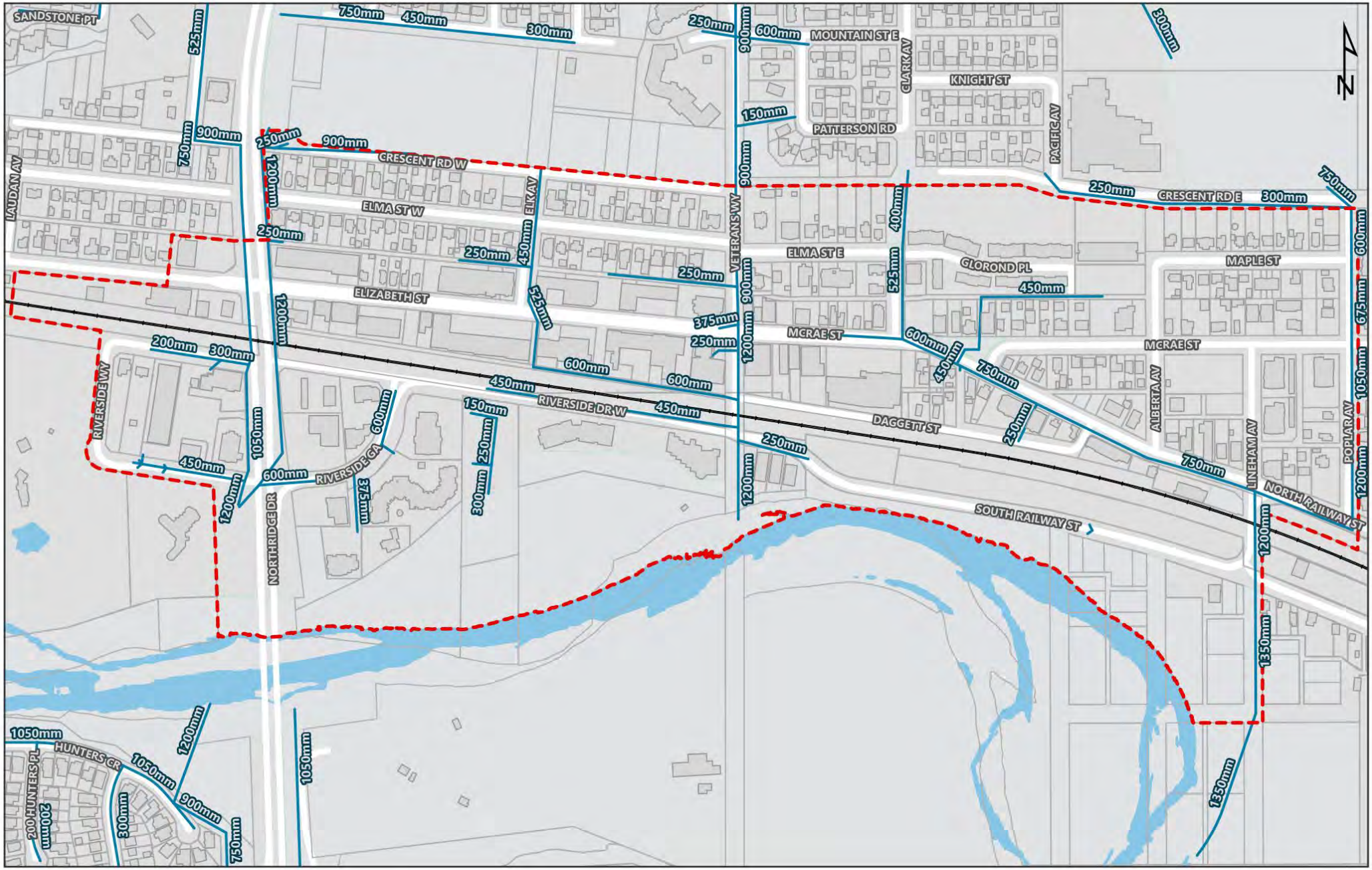
Map 8 | Stormwater Servicing identifies the existing stormwater management system in the Downtown.

Policies

6.2.1 The Town shall monitor changes to the imperious surfaces in the Downtown as well as climate changes to determine the need for adaptation to the stormwater management system.

6.2.2 The Town should use low-impact development strategies as part of its Downtown stormwater management.

6.2.3 Existing municipal stormwater infrastructure shall be extended to the site of any new development at the cost of the developer. Onsite stormwater detention may be required based on the land use to reduce impacts on pipe capacity.



Okotoks

Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan

Map 9 | Stormwater Servicing

Legend

CP Railway

Storm Mains

DARP Boundary

Created By:
Information Technology

Created Date:
2025-02-14

Scale: 1:5,400

0 50 100 200
Meters

8 | IMPLEMENTATION

7 IMPLEMENTATION

Our Plan for Downtown is intended to guide incremental redevelopment of the Downtown area over the years to come.

Implementation of the policies within this Plan will require actions from various Town departments, Council decisions and collaboration with citizens, organizations and private developers.

To ensure continued alignment with the Plan's vision, goals, and guiding principles, a strong reporting and monitoring system should be established by Town staff. Monitoring should be systematic and measurable, where possible, to ensure accountability for the success of the Plan over time.

Policies

7.1.1 The Town shall establish a reporting and monitoring system for this Plan. Town administration shall prepare an annual report to Council with a summary of the reporting and monitoring.

7.1.2 The Town shall undertake a review this Plan every five (5) years. A comprehensive update to this Plan shall take place every ten (10) years.

7.1.3 The Land Use Bylaw should be reviewed, and amended as necessary, to ensure alignment with this Plan.

8 Acronyms & Definitions

8.1 Acronyms

MDP	Municipal Development Plan
ARP	Area Redevelopment Plan
MGA / The Act	Municipal Government Act
LUB	Land Use Bylaw
CPKC	Canadian Pacific Kansas City Rail

8.2 Definitions

Active frontage areas	Active building frontages that engage passing pedestrians with a “permeable edge” between the building and the street. This ensures a physical and visual connection from the sidewalk to the commercial spaces in the building.
Amenity Zone	The portion of a sidewalk where trees, plantings, and furniture, such as benches and bicycle ranks are located.
Architectural Articulation	refers to the way a building's design is broken up into distinct elements to create visual interest, depth, and character. It involves variations in materials, colors, shapes, and structural components—such as windows, balconies, recesses, and projections—to avoid flat, monotonous facades. Effective articulation enhances aesthetics, improves human scale, and contributes to a more engaging built environment.
Brise soleils	are architectural elements designed to reduce heat gain and glare from the sun while allowing natural light and ventilation. They can take various forms, such as fixed or adjustable louvers, perforated screens, overhangs, or shading fins, and are commonly used on building facades to improve energy efficiency and comfort.
Character-defining elements	means the materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses and cultural associations or meanings that contribute to the heritage value of an historic place, which must be retained in order to preserve its heritage value.
Courtyard	Courtyards are defined by buildings and walls on at least three sides, thus provide quiet, private open spaces within building blocks.

Dark Sky	Dark Sky refers to the treatment of outdoor lighting so that it meets the International Dark Sky Associations (IDA) requirements for reducing waste of ambient light.
Flood Fringe	The portion of the flood hazard area outside of the floodway. Water in the flood fringe is generally shallower and flows more slowly than in the floodway.
Flood Hazard Area	The flood hazard area is typically divided into floodway and flood fringe zones and may also include areas of overland flow. The current design standard in Alberta for this area is the one percent flood, defined as a flood whose magnitude has a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any year.
Floodway	The portion of the flood hazard area where water flows are deepest, fastest and most destructive. The floodway typically includes the main channel of a stream and a portion of the adjacent overbank area.
Frontage Zone	The portion of the sidewalk between a building and the pedestrian through zone where a specific business may provide seating, tables, or temporary display materials.
Heritage valve	means the aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social or spiritual importance or significance for past, present or future generations. The heritage value of an historic place is embodied in its character-defining materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses and cultural associations or meanings.
Historic building	means a building identified as a historical building under Map 6 | Designated Historical Properties due to formal or informal recognition of heritage valve.

Historic place	A historic place can be a structure, building, group of buildings, district, landscape, archaeological site or other place in Okotoks that has been recognized for its heritage value.
Juliette balconies	is a shallow, decorative railing or balustrade placed in front of a full-height window or glass door, typically on an upper floor. Unlike a traditional balcony, it does not extend outward significantly but allows for ventilation, light, and a sense of openness while maintaining safety.
Kit of Parts	refers to a modular approach where buildings or spaces are designed using a set of pre-defined, interchangeable components. These elements can be assembled in different configurations throughout the public streetscape but allow for unifying design language to the area.
Mullions	are vertical or horizontal bars that divide and support panes of glass within a window, door, or curtain wall. Traditionally made of wood, stone, metal, or other materials, mullions provide structural support, enhance aesthetics, and can influence the architectural style of a building. They are often used to create a grid pattern in windows or to separate large glass panels
Muntins	are the thin strips of material, usually wood or metal, that divide individual panes of glass within a single window sash or door. Traditionally, they were necessary for structural support when large glass panes were not feasible. In modern windows, muntins are often decorative, mimicking historic styles while using a single pane of glass. They are sometimes confused with mullions, which are larger structural elements separating entire window units.
Pedestrian through zone	The portion of a sidewalk where pedestrians and other active transportation users have a clear space to navigate the public realm.

Permeable Edge	See Active frontage areas
Projecting balconies	are balconies that extend outward from a building's facade without support from the ground below. They are typically supported by cantilevers, brackets, or columns and provide outdoor space for occupants
Public Realm	The public realm is the space that is shared communally by the public. It is the area around, between and within buildings that are publicly accessible, such as streets, squares, parks and open spaces. These are the everyday spaces that we move through and linger within—the places where we live, work and play
Secondary Front	Means a location where a building has frontage onto a second street from the main frontage, such as in the case of a corner site.
Shadow Study	An analysis used to assess how a building or structure will cast shadows at different times of the day and year. It helps evaluate the potential impact on surrounding properties, public spaces, and natural light access.
Street Activating Land Uses	Street activating land uses include those uses that have short stays and a high-level of human-to-human interaction that is publicly visible. This includes, but is not limited to: retail stores, pubs, hair stylists, cafes, and restaurants.
Urban Heat Island Effect	refers to the phenomenon where urban areas experience higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas due to human activities and built environments. This occurs because materials like asphalt, concrete, and buildings absorb and retain heat, while a lack of vegetation reduces cooling from shade and evaporation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: CITATIONS

Sheep River Flood Hazard Study (DRAFT)	Flood Hazard Identification Program | Alberta.ca
Climate Atlas of Canada	https://climateatlas.ca/
The Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (Second edition, 2010)	https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/pages/standards-normes.aspx

APPENDIX 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

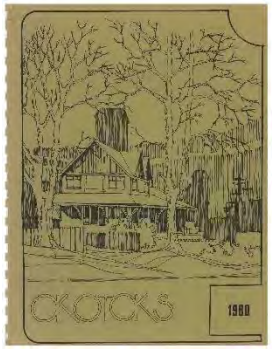
The community engagement for Our Plan for Downtown was not undertaken in isolation. The starting point for development and engagement on this plan began from building off the existing work undertaken on the Municipal Development Plan and the Land Use Bylaw as well as previous plans developed for the downtown, such as the Downtown Urban Design Master Plan, as well as visioning workshops, industry roundtable discussions, and technical studies. These past studies and engagement was the starting point for engaging with the community.

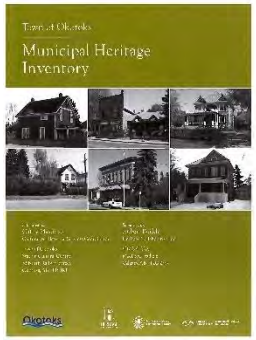
Drawing from the Urban Design Master Plan for the vision and guiding principles in the development of the plan framework, the Town consulted with the community in conjunction with infrastructure renewal projects that moving forward within the downtown to tell a wholistic story of the importance and ongoing work within the downtown. This comprehensive engagement strategy was called Downtown's Next Chapter.

The combined engagement included two distinct phases, which are fully detailed in the What We Learned Reports available on the Downtown's Next Chapter Webpage at https://shapeourtown.okotoks.ca/downtown.

- Phase 1 was held in from June to July 2024 with an open house and online survey, with mailed as well as social media notification to the community. There were 106 people that attended the open house and 100 online surveys were completed.
- Phase 2 was held in November 2024 with an open house (held in the morning and evening) and online engagement opportunity. There were 72 people that attended the open house and 21 that provided feedback online. Additional information on the plan and infrastructure projects were added to the website.

APPENDIX 3: HISTORY & BACKGROUND





Pre-1885	The Okotoks region has been the heartland of southern Alberta First Nations' territory for more than 10,000 years and the land still bears the marks of its cultural, historical and economic importance. Prior to arrival of the early settles, the First Nation's utilized the area in which Okotoks is situated as an important gathering space for a variety of cultural and environmental reasons.
1885	Establishment of early settlement along the Sheep River on the Macleod Trail that provided a stop on the stagecoach route linking Calgary to Macleod.
1904	The Village of Okotoks becomes the Town of Okotoks; consisting of an area not much larger than the lands that are home to the current downtown.
1966	The first General Plan for the orderly, economic, and convenient development of the Town is adopted by Council. Town itself would not have included much more than the contemporary downtown area.
1970s	The population of Okotoks begins to grow substantially as the Town becomes a home to an increasing population of commuters that work within the growing Calgary region. As a result of this growth, additional lands are annexed into the Town. A new General Municipal Plan is adopted by Council in 1977 in order to "conserve local natural amenities and achieve orderly growth of the Town's population to between 5,000 and 10,000 persons". The plan identifies the value and importance

	of the downtown area as the core commercial area with encouragement of redevelopment and growth of the central commercial area.
1980s	On October 7, 1980, a Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan was adopted by Council for the downtown area. At that time, Okotoks had an approximate population of 3,000 people but was anticipated to grow to over 34,000 by the year 2000 based on the sustained economic activity of the Calgary region at the time. The plan was intended to respond to 20 years of growth by maintaining the downtown area in its current location and target the needs for commercial and denser residential uses in the historic core area of Okotoks. Growth in 1980 was expected to continue at an average of 15% per year for most of the life based on the 1977 Calgary Regional Growth Study. The 1980 Area Redevelopment Plan did not prescribe a long-term vision for the downtown area and was principally focused on a functional response to expected growth pressures. This largely speaks to utility upgrade requirements, expected downtown parking needs, and accommodating additional commercial development. Some new possible park locations were identified as well as preservation of four historical "landmark" buildings and new locations for parking lots. The plan also introduced a parking redevelopment levy, which was repealed by Council in 1989.
1990s	A number of new downtown initiatives are undertaken throughout the 1990s including the establishment of Downtown Revitalization Committee, the Centre Avenue / Sheep River Park Pedestrian Walkway and Streetscape Improvement Project and construction of the Centre Avenue (now Veterans Way) plaza adjacent to the old library building, and the adoption of the Railway Area Analysis and Policy Report to review the lands along the south of the railway corridor. In 1997, the 1980 Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan was rescinded by Council and the following year a new Municipal Development Plan "the Legacy Plan" was adopted. The Legacy Plan established a new direction for growth in Okotoks based on finite boundaries and the carrying capacity of the Sheep River, but also provided significant direction for the downtown.
2000s	In 2000, Council approves the Downtown Vitalization Project and members to the Downtown Vitalize Task Team leading to the development of the Downtown Vitalization Public Space Design Guidelines. These guidelines form the basis of the downtown street vitalization projects that are commenced in 2001 and put on hold after the second phase is completed in 2008. In June 2007, a Municipal Heritage Inventory is completed by Heritage Collaborative Inc. with funding through federal and provincial funding programs to document the historical properties within the downtown area. In 2008, the Okotoks Towne Plaza space at the intersection of McRae Street and North Railway Street is completed.

2010s	In 2014/2015, Roger Brooks, an expert in the fields of tourism, community branding, downtown development, and destination marketing was hired by the Town for visioning and identity work in the Downtown. The meetings and engagement that resulted sparked ideas and visioning on how to move the Downtown forward. Much of this engagement work has helped shape this plan. In 2018, the Town adopted the Okotoks Downtown Urban Design Master Plan (DUDMP). The Downtown Okotoks Urban Design Master Plan (UDMP) embodies ideas of contemporary sustainability and presents a vision, goals and a set of guiding principles to guide the downtown forward. The ideas, engagement and consultation that occurred during this project has also been incorporated this plan.
2020's	In 2020-2021, initial work on Vitalization and infrastructure upgrades required in the Downtown was undertaken. Due to the pandemic and economic sensitivities over business re-openings, this work was delayed and incorporated into the overall Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) process. During this period, the Town also updated its Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and Land Use Bylaw (LUB). The MDP provided direction to develop an ARP for the Downtown and the Land Use Bylaw changes provided the flexibility in zoning to help make much of the policy outcomes of this document a more attainable reality. In 2021, the Town opened the Arts & Learning Campus, which would fall within the River District of this plan. It encompasses a mix of institutional and office-related uses as well as a new Plaza space in the downtown. In 2022, a new, revamped Ethel Tucker Park was opened in the ALC area that encompasses a buffalo play structure. 15 peace poles, made primarily using wooden beams from the 1897 Lineham Lumber Company barn, also known as the Creamery building, were also installed in a homage to historic uses and the Indigenous history of the area.