



Chamber urges City to focus on housing affordability in Plan It Calgary initiative

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Improving housing affordability and establishing greater certainty for the real estate industry should be forefront in Plan It Calgary, the City's new land use and mobility planning framework. The Calgary Chamber of Commerce made seven recommendations in these areas, as part of a formal response to a City consultation paper.

"City expansion and growth management, transportation, fiscal management and the quality of the environment are top municipal priorities for Chamber members," said Heather Douglas, President & CEO of the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. "Members recognize that planning choices made today affect transportation mobility, the environment, housing affordability, and the costs required to service and maintain communities in the future."

Plan It Calgary's emphasis on higher density, mixed-use, transit oriented developments has the potential to improve many of these areas. Chamber members support the need to move to a more sustainable urban form. In a 2008 Leger Marketing survey, Chamber members indicated a preference for higher density (76 per cent support), mixed use of residential, commercial, and retail properties (67 per cent support), and an orientation towards public transit use, cycling, and walking (77 per cent support).

While this is a desired outcome, supported by all Calgarians in imagineCALGARY and reflected in the Chamber's Renaissance Calgary vision (released in October 2007), the Chamber encourages the City to elevate improving housing affordability as the key priority of Plan It Calgary, and work with the real estate industry to develop realistic timeframes for transition and strike the appropriate balance of development in established and greenfield communities. Indeed, the Chamber's first recommendation to City Council is to add the principle of affordability to the 11 Sustainability Principles currently guiding the Plan It Calgary initiative.

The Chamber's Plan It Calgary response draws heavily from its 2008 report titled Municipal Land Development Policies and Regulations and the Impact on Calgary's Housing Affordability. Other important recommendations, which are reiterated in our Plan It Calgary submission, include:

- Council develop city-wide consultation protocols for all major land use applications, and that local community group input be part of broader, citywide consultation and context.
- The City continue its policy of maintaining a 30 year supply of land within its boundaries to encourage land cost affordability.
- Plan It Calgary coordinate with the CRP Regional Land Use Plan to ensure shared land use and mobility objectives, and to develop a regional transportation approach.

"The current discontent over transportation, combined with the City's frequent requests for additional infrastructure funding from the province, raise questions about 'how' Calgary is growing, rather than 'by how much'," said Douglas.

"Indeed, transportation still remains a pressing concern even with Council contemplating double digit property tax increases in the future, combined with a \$3 billion infusion of provincial



infrastructure money over the next 10 years. Clearly, new ways of thinking are needed in the City's land use and mobility planning."

The Chamber initiated its current series of reports and recommendations on municipal governance, financing and development issues with the release of its Renaissance Calgary vision and blueprint document in October 2007. The compilation of proposals and ideas for the upcoming municipal election recognized the need for new ideas and approaches. Key elements of Renaissance Calgary pertaining to development and transportation planning include:

- Encouraging higher density, mixed use development
- Emphasis on walkability and cycling in communities
- Designing communities around public transit
- Expanding high occupancy vehicle lanes
- Increasing rapid bus lines
- Planning regionally and integrating transportation designs with local communities

"Plan It Calgary, the City of Calgary's proposed land use and mobility plan, incorporates many elements of the Chamber's Renaissance Calgary vision, and represents an exciting opportunity to broaden the discussion and incorporate planning and land use best practices from around the world," said Douglas.

It represents an opportunity an opportunity to design the City for the future - one that is more sustainable, accessible to services, and less auto dependent. Change could become imperative as fuel costs rise, rendering extensive auto travel prohibitive.