

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

# Revised Plan It may be new, but certainly **not** improved



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**EDITOR**

The revised Plan It Calgary document has been released by the City of Calgary and while it might be considered new, it is hardly improved.

Plan It is an integration of the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP) and says the city in the executive summary "sets out a long-term direction for sustainable growth to accommodate the 1.3 million people expected to make Calgary their home in the next 60 to 70 years."

That's an additional 1.3 million people on top of the one million or so who currently call Calgary home, and the authors of Plan It plan to have at least 50% of the newcomers live in existing communities.

Succinctly, Plan It's growth direction is up and favours multi-family, high-density, high-rise buildings over single-family homes and will eventually restrict the availability of single-family homes, driving up prices.

And driving up the price of single-family homes is a great way to get Calgarians to choose multi-family housing, not as a lifestyle choice, but because it is less expensive (not to be confused with affordable).

Let's be clear — right now most high-rise, high-

density buildings are in the downtown core — but under Plan It's direction, those buildings will show up in every community in the city that has an LRT station.

Plans are already in place to turn the Westbrook shopping centre into a high-rise jungle as a major hub of the west end LRT and don't be surprised if the proposed terminus of that line, the West Side Recreation Centre, becomes targeted for high rises.

The same will be true for LRT stations along the southeast line when it's built, so look for high rises in communities between Inglewood and Mahogany.

The CTP portion of Plan It is even more interesting, with a focus on public transportation, walking and cycling, while reducing the construction of new roads.

No doubt the thinking is by creating more congestion on city streets — and that is the plan — Calgarians will rush out to buy bikes and walking shoes to get them where they're going, mindless of winter's fury.

By the estimate of Plan It's people, 78% of trips in Calgary everyday are by automobile, 8% on public transit and 14% by bike or hike.

By the time the population reaches 2.3 million, they want to change those figures to 55% to 65% automobile, 15% to 20% public transit and 20% to 25% bike/hike.

But reducing the percentage of automobile trips does not reduce the number of automobile trips — the number currently is 2,730,000, which at a future rate of 55% to 60%, will become 4,400,000 to 5,200,000.



<b>The Calgary Sun (Calgary, AB)</b>			Order/Commande
			<b>134628</b>
Date <b>09.05.2009</b>	Circ. <b>54947</b>	Page <b>H2</b>	<b>2 / 2</b>

With the transportation focus on public transit development and away from developing new road systems, it is easy to see traffic problems will only get worse and, apparently, by design.

Driving up the cost of single-family homes to make multi-family homes more attractive financially and creating chaos on the roadways is social engineering — Plan It is a behavioural modification tool with inconveniences built in to get you to do what they want you to do.

Worse, Plan It does not take in account market reality — the force that drives the economy and keeps Calgary an attractive city in which to live and do business.

Plan It was originally dreamed up without the need to figure out what the entire vision would cost, although after some prodding — OK, pushing — an independent firm was hired to determine dollars.

That report said the Plan It growth plan would cost \$11.2 billion less than allowing the city to grow naturally, but was based on so many assumptions and unknowns, it's hard to take it seriously.

And interestingly enough, an event took place this week that really puts the cost study into jeopardy.

The city's finance committee met this past week to determine how to cut \$82 million from this year's capital budget.

On the chopping block, among other things, is \$32 million to city transit that includes future transit buildings and stations, as well as pedestrian and cycle mobility plans.

The reason for the cuts is very little money is flowing into the city's coffers from new developments, because the development industry has been hit hard by the economic slowdown.

Is there some irony in the fact Plan It wants to restrict outward growth and build train tracks and bike paths, but they need new developments to help pay for them?

In the future, with a lower number of new developments, where will the money come from to pay for Plan It Calgary's Utopia?

I don't think I'm off base by suggesting it will come from you in the form of increased property taxes.

The original Plan It document was 352 pages in length — much too long, wordy and technical for the average Calgarian to want to spend time with — the revised proposal is 129 pages, still probably too long, wordy and technical for the average Calgarian to want to spend time with.

Regardless, Plan It in its present form will have a detrimental effect on future growth of the city and you need to get involved by reading the document and providing your input at [www.calgary.ca/planit](http://www.calgary.ca/planit)

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