

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction</b>	3	<b>7. Challenges faced by Calgary's Community Associations</b>	36
Study Objective	4	Funding	36
Project Co-ordinator	5	Volunteerism, apathy, and the Demands of Modern Life	38
Team Members	6	Communication with Members and Local Residents	38
Financial Support	6	Facilities and Equipment	39
<b>2. Research Methodology</b>	7	<b>8. Criteria for Evaluating Community Plans</b>	41
Issue Identification Survey	7	<b>What Communities are saying about community design</b>	41
Interviews and Site Visits	10	<b>LAYER ONE: The Region</b>	46
Data Compilation	11	<i>GRAMPs and ASPs</i>	
Presidents' Meeting	11	<b>LAYER TWO: The Community</b>	59
Secondary Research	12	<i>Community Plans</i>	
<b>3. Community, Neighbourhood, and Sense of Community</b>	13	<b>LAYER THREE: The Neighbourhood</b>	75
What is a community?	13	<i>Location of the Community Centre</i>	
What is a neighbourhood?	14	<b>LAYER FOUR: The Community Centre</b>	78
What is 'Sense of Community'?	15	<b>9. Concluding Remarks</b>	85
<b>4. The Necessity of Adequate Community Facilities</b>	19	<b>10. Bibliography</b>	87
<b>5. Profile of Calgary Community Associations</b>	22	<b>Appendix A</b> Issue Identification Survey	89
Typical Facilities	23	<b>Appendix B</b> Community Profiles Spreadsheet	90
Participation Rates	25	<b>Appendix C</b> Interviews with 12 Communities	91
<b>6. The Roles of Calgary Community Associations</b>	33		

# LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

<b>Figures</b>		Page
Figure 1	Map of Urban Zones in Calgary	9
Figure 2	Issues Identified as "Important" by Survey Respondents	20
Figure 3	Residential Density and Rate of Home Ownership	26
Figure 4	Community Participation and Rate of Home Ownership	26
Figure 5	Sources of Revenue for Calgary Community Associations	37
Figure 6	Top 3 Issues Reported by Survey Respondents	42

<b>Tables</b>		Page
Table 1	Issue Identification Survey - Number and Spatial Distribution of Surveys	8
Table 2	Communities included in Database - Number and Spatial Distribution of Communities	11
Table 3	Summary Statistics for Community Association Buildings in Calgary	24
Table 4	Community Participation by Urban Zone	25
Table 5	Community Participation and Rate of Home Ownership	28
Table 6	Community Participation and Population of Community	29
Table 7	Community Participation by Community Density	31
Table 8	The Ideal Community	43
Table 9	Average Size of Community Centres in Calgary	79
Table 10	Adequacy of Community Facilities	81

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Community associations (CAs) have a significant impact on social life in Calgary. The sustainability of community associations, then, is an issue that impacts all Calgarians. Community development is the buzzword of the 90's. Senior levels of government have been quick to download the responsibility of services to the "communities." Until now, the volunteer sector has met this challenge. Volunteers, however, are in short supply; the average homeowner moves every few years, often to new areas of the city. Residents, therefore, may not have the time to build commitment to their neighbourhood or their community association. Appropriate community design could encourage long term residency and foster community participation. Unfortunately, new suburbs are generally designed according to marketing needs and engineering standards with little regard to community sustainability or participation. The form of many communities does not acknowledge the importance of civic and community life.

There are communities in Calgary that are fragmented by major arterials and a pedestrian-unfriendly local street system. Many of these communities are overwhelmingly residential and offer few employment opportunities close to where people live. Thus commuting is a daily experience for most Calgarians. In addition, communities with little

variation in types of housing will likely experience problems with community life cycles. As the community ages, certain groups of people such as youth and seniors are forced to live elsewhere because their community does not provide housing in their size or price range. The Federation of Calgary Communities (FCC) believes that new communities can be designed in such a way as to encourage local residents to become involved in their community association. Since community associations draw memberships from all age groups, housing within each community should be able to meet the needs of people of a variety of incomes, age groups, and lifestyles.

### ***Study Objective***

Recognizing that it is difficult to redesign an established community, the FCC tries to address these problems when new communities are proposed.

The objectives of this study are to:

- Investigate barriers to participation in Calgary community associations; and,
- Identify design criteria that will be used to evaluate development proposals and promote the design of communities that foster an active and vibrant civic life.

The project has been carried out in two phases. The first phase (January

to May 1998) involved identifying barriers to community association participation in Calgary communities by surveying community association representatives. In the second phase of the project (May to December 1998):

- the results of this survey were compiled and analyzed;
- a database on Calgary community associations was assembled;
- research was conducted into factors contributing to community participation;
- design criteria was identified and reviewed; and
- the final report was written.

### ***Project Co-ordinator***

Janis Dicks (FCC Community Planner) is a professional planner with a Master's degree from the University of Calgary. She is a provisional member of the Alberta Association, Canadian Institute of Planners and has been employed as the Federation of Calgary Communities (FCC) Community Planner since 1993. In this position Janis has participated on the Joint Use Site Planning Team and the Sustainable Suburbs Round Table. She also consults with community associations regarding development proposals, transportation and environmental issues. Janis has provided direction and guidance to the researchers throughout this project.

### ***Team Members***

Norm Connolly and Graham Daneluz did the research, data analysis, interviews, and created the report. Both are graduate students in planning at the Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary.

### ***Financial Support***

This project was made possible through the generous support of the Alberta Real Estate Foundation, to whom we owe thanks.

## 2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study has made use of both primary and secondary research.

Primary research has been employed to:

- Identify barriers to participation in community associations (CAs) and civic life;
- Understand the challenges faced by communities and how design might aid in overcoming these challenges in new communities; and,
- Identify design criteria that may encourage the creation of healthy and sustainable new communities.

Secondary research has been used to:

- Understand how community associations are organized in other cities;
- Understand current community design concepts; and,
- Gather empirical evidence to support community design criteria.

### Primary Research

#### *The Issue Identification Survey*

In the spring of 1998 an Issue Identification Survey was distributed to board members of 128 Calgary community associations. The purpose of the survey was to assess and quantify the issues that are important to Calgary's communities. Questions concerning land use, transportation,

and social issues were asked, and community association (CA) board members rated the significance of each issue on a sliding scale from one to four. A total of 58 surveys were completed and returned, representing, 45% of all Calgary community associations (see Table 1). The survey questions are included in Appendix A. Survey responses are incorporated into the *Community Profiles Spreadsheet* in Appendix B.

**Table 1: Issue Identification Survey  
Number and Spatial Distribution of Surveys**

<b>Total surveys by quadrant</b>		
		% of total
NE	8	14%
NW	21	36%
SE	8	14%
SW	21	36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Total surveys by zone</b>		
		% of total
Inner City	16	28%
Inner Suburb	19	33%
Outer Suburb	14	24%
New Suburb	9	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100%</b>

[Please remove this page and insert Figure 1: Urban Zones]

### *Interviews and Site Visits*

Using data compiled from the survey, a representative sample of twelve community associations, three from each of Calgary's four urban zones, were selected for an in-depth interview and site analysis. (Figure 1.0 shows a map of the four urban zones<sup>1</sup>, and Table 2 shows a breakdown of the number of community associations within each zone.) These twelve communities represent the wide range of community associations that exist in Calgary.<sup>2</sup> Communities selected for interviews and site analyses are:

<b>Inner City</b>	<b>Inner Suburb</b>	<b>Outer Suburb</b>	<b>New Suburb</b>
Bankview	Chinook	Huntington Hills	Mid -Sun
Sunalta	Park/Kelvin Grove/Eagle Ridge	SilverSprings	Arbour Lake
	Southview	Calgary Marlborough	McKenzie Lake
		Woodcreek	Edgemont

Interviews were conducted with board members or key administrative staff from each of the twelve community associations. Interviewees were questioned on their survey responses, views of community design, and perspective of challenges facing the community association. Interview

---

<sup>1</sup> The four urban zones were designated to generally correspond to the "Calgary Urban Structure" as outlined by the Planning and Building Department of the City of Calgary. In a few cases, however, we applied our own designations. For example, we use the term *outer suburb* where the City used *established suburb*.

<sup>2</sup> Attributes such as the size and value of the community association building, the population of the community, and its geographical location were considered.

questions and notes are included in Appendix C.

### ***Data Compilation***

A comprehensive database of information obtained in the Issue Identification Survey, Civic census, and other sources has been created.<sup>3</sup> The database includes the physical and demographic characteristics of each community (i.e., number dwellings, percent home ownership, population and size of community, etc.), and information regarding the community association (size of facility, types of programs and services offered, membership levels, etc.) This database enabled us to make comparisons between community associations, areas of Calgary, and other variables.

### ***Presidents' Meeting***

A meeting of the presidents of Calgary community associations was held on May 23, 1998. Representatives of 22 community associations attended this meeting. The goal of the meeting and workshop was to facilitate inter-community dialogue, share information, and increase awareness of issues faced by community associations.

The project team attended this meeting as observers and recorded the

<b>Count</b>	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Community Year Est.</b>	<b>Community Assoc. Year Est.</b>
27	<i>Inner City</i>	1885-1955	1930-1960
40	<i>Inner Suburb</i>	1910-1960	1950-1960
32	<i>Outer Suburb</i>	1960-1980	1965-1980
29	<i>New Suburb</i>	1980-Present	1980-Present
<b>128</b>			

<sup>3</sup> Other sources include the municipal census, data from Statistics Canada, as well as financial and community profile information from the Federation of Calgary Communities.

results of the workshop sessions. The meeting provided the project team with important information regarding the roles of Calgary's community associations and their fiscal and operational challenges.

## **Secondary Research**

Secondary research for this project included an analysis of the literature concerning community design (see Bibliography) and a review of current practices in other cities (Edmonton, Vancouver, and Toronto). The following site visits and interviews were conducted:

- Interview with a senior representative of the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues;
- Interview with a Vancouver Parks Board representative and community centre administrator at False Creek Community Centre (Vancouver); and,
- Site visit to the Roundhouse Community Centre and False Creek Community Centre (Vancouver).

# 3

## COMMUNITY, NEIGHBOURHOOD, AND SENSE OF COMMUNITY



Participants at the June 1998 Lilac Festival, 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW.

Words like *community* and *neighbourhood* mean different things to different people. In order to be clear, our uses of these terms are defined below. The definitions are neither exhaustive nor absolute. They are, however, useful parameters for this project.

### *What is a Community?*

A community is a group of individuals linked in various ways through common interests or affections. A community both identifies one with a larger group and differentiates peoples or groups from one another. It is a fundamental unit of social organization and one that is entered into, for the most part, voluntarily.

The organizing principle (or principles) of a community - the reason for its existence, why people voluntarily submit to the organization of a body greater than themselves - may vary greatly. Generally speaking, though, communities may be defined either by space or interest. That is, individuals are compelled to form communities because they share a definable space or place on the planet, *or* because they share a common interest but do not necessarily live in close geographic proximity. This report is concerned with communities that form because people live in

some proximity to one another. Space, therefore, is the primary organizational principle, the impetus, for people to develop both formal (e.g. community association) and informal attachments (e.g. friendships) with people living nearby.

The spatial boundaries of the community, the area that defines the community, may be the result of many things: the initial pattern of urban development, natural features of the landscape, waves of migration and immigration, history and tradition. Communities can also be defined politically; by the City, by the community association (CA), or by the Province through electoral divisions. The land developer, reflecting land ownership boundaries and marketing objectives, usually sketches out the boundaries of new communities in Calgary. The City also has the opportunity to influence community boundaries and achieve its own planning objectives.

### ***What is a Neighbourhood?***

A community is a collection of neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods are smaller, finer units that together make up a community. A neighbourhood may be a couple of blocks, several blocks, or just one street. 'Neighbourhood' is more emotionally defined than 'community.' It is best understood by the area one is more intensely familiar with, where we recognize faces and cars, the dogs on the street, and the

gardens, trees and shrubs in others yards.

### ***What is 'Sense of Community'?***

We define sense of community as the feeling of being connected to the place you live and to the people who live there. One can feel a sense of community centred on one's immediate neighbourhood, community, or even an entire city or region. However, the most meaningful attachments are assumed to form at a smaller geographic scale, the neighbourhood and community, where one has the most intimate knowledge of people and place. On a local scale, sense of community can be described as a sense of neighbourliness, friendship, support, and commonality of interest.

While the term 'sense of community' can be difficult to describe, it seems to be something that we all understand intuitively. In fact, of the 27 issues mentioned in the Issue Identification Survey, developing a sense of community was ranked as important more frequently than any other issue (see Figure 2). In addition, board members from community associations identified sense of community as an issue affecting their membership levels and participation rates on committees as well as other voluntary activities.<sup>4</sup>

The following attributes were identified at the Presidents' Meeting as contributing to a stronger sense of community:

1. ***Stable and diverse population.*** Residents tend to get to know one another, and therefore develop concern for each other, if they live in a place for an extended period of time. A community that has a large number of long-time residents may be a community that fosters greater participation in civic life. It is also a community where you may know your neighbours by name and are more likely to feel motivated to contribute your time and concern.

Interviews with community association board members also indicated that communities with diverse populations are valued for their broad range of ideas, cultures, opinions and perspectives.<sup>5</sup> Diversity is seen as contributing to a community that is interesting and vibrant - qualities that encourage people to engage in civic life.

2. ***Opportunities to meet other residents.*** A strong sense of community will be fostered in communities that provide opportunities for residents to come together and interact. Community associations are typically involved in the organization of

---

<sup>4</sup> Presidents Meeting, May 23,1998 at McDougall Centre, Calgary

<sup>5</sup> Presidents' Meeting, May 23,1998 at McDougall Centre, Calgary, and interviews with

programs, services, and events that bring people together in both formal and informal settings. Organized events or meetings are opportunities for people to interact in a structured and formal setting where an agenda, in the case of a meeting, must be met or a goal accomplished. Informal occasions are equally important to provide a setting for chance encounters, spontaneous conversations, and more personal exchanges. Community associations may facilitate this by functioning as a “drop-in” centre. Exchanges between people - of greetings, goods, thoughts and ideas, support, and of course, arguments - are the things that gratify human existence. Exchange is the basis of society and community. Formal and informal exchanges often lead to awareness that there are people nearby who share a concern for the well being of others and go a long way towards establishing a strong sense of community.

3. ***Unique natural landscape and/or manmade features.*** A strong sense of community is fostered when natural and man-made features are used to define the community as a place. Examples of physical characteristics that may build a sense of community include:
  - Unique architecture and prominent buildings - may reflect a local or regional vernacular and give the community distinctness and identity that residents can feel a part of

- Recreational amenities such as parks, sports facilities and recreation centres, and bicycle pathways
- Public squares and markets - enable people to shop in their own community, provide opportunities for exchange, and help establish community identity, particularly when prominent buildings or natural features are present
- Unique natural features of the local landscape such as river valleys, escarpments, and regional parks - Fish Creek Park and Nose Hill define the bordering communities.

‘Sense of community’, therefore, is strongly influenced by the design of the community. If we want to foster a sense of community in the neighbourhoods and communities that we build, then we must consider how the design of new developments facilitates social exchanges. When we design and build our communities in Calgary, the elements that contribute to a sense of community should be given priority and importance.

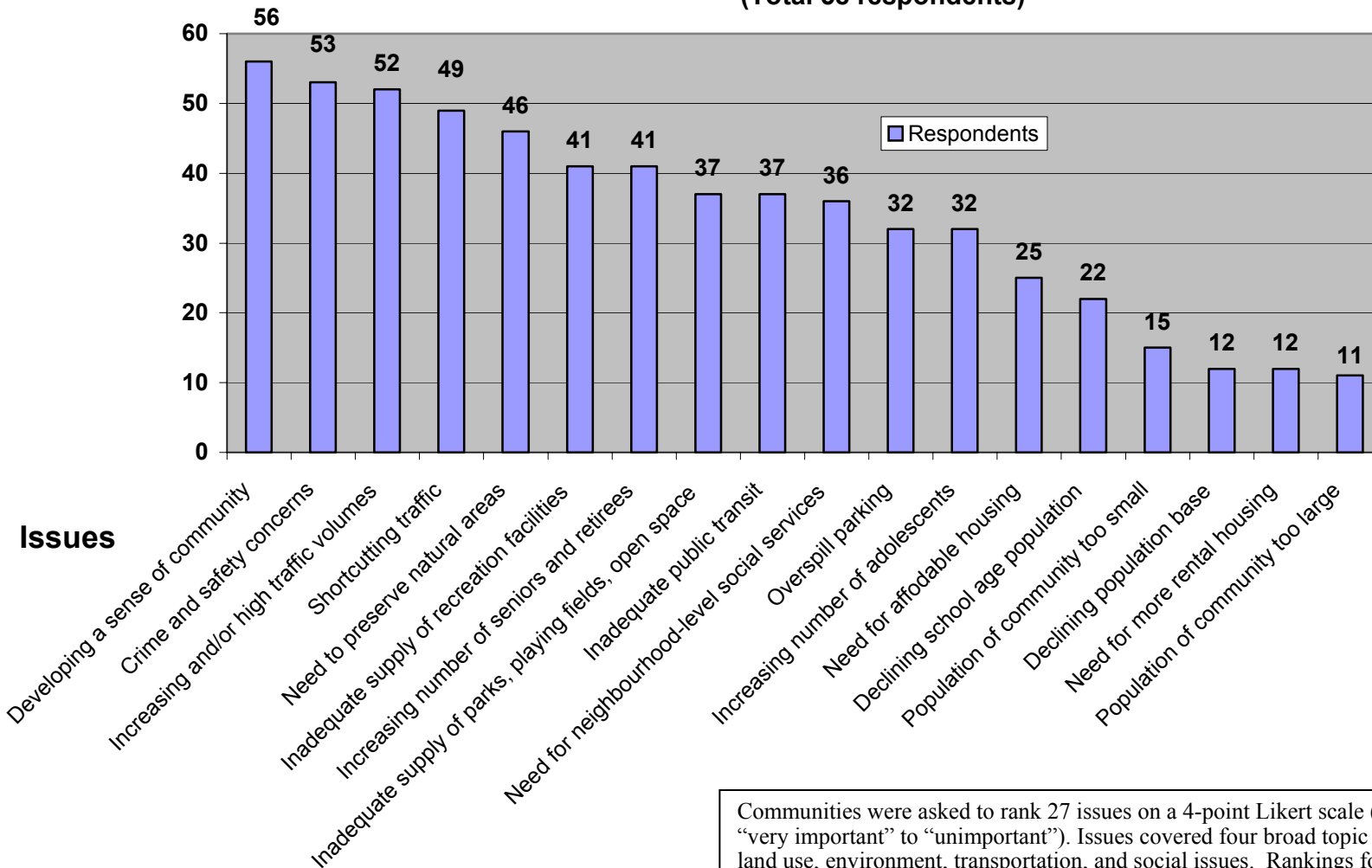
## 4 THE NECESSITY OF ADEQUATE COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### **What is a *community centre*?**

We define a community centre as the building that houses the community association. It is often referred to as a “community hall.” The community centre provides space for the majority of programs and services offered by the community association, or by organizations that rent space in the building.

The necessity of having playgrounds for children, skating rinks, parks, and tennis courts in one’s community is generally considered self-evident. In order to be healthy, happy citizens, both children and adults must have places to play and recreate, exercise, or just sit on the grass. This is supported by the results of our survey. Approximately 70% (41 out of 58) of respondents to the Issue Identification Survey reported an inadequate supply of recreation facilities as an important issue. Residents in the outer ring of suburbs (those built after 1970) felt the strongest on this issue (see Figure 2). In all, 63% of respondents identified parks, playing fields, and open space as an important issue in their community (see Appendix A for an example of survey questions). While the role of community facilities as places to exercise and recreate is generally considered evident, less obvious is the role that community facilities (community halls, sports and recreation facilities) play in community development and the civic and political life of residents. This, however, is changing; the connection between community development and the services provided by community associations is increasingly recognized.

**Figure 2: Issues Identified as "Important" by Survey Respondents  
(Total 58 respondents)**



Communities were asked to rank 27 issues on a 4-point Likert scale (from “very important” to “unimportant”). Issues covered four broad topic areas: land use, environment, transportation, and social issues. Rankings for 18 of the issues pertinent to this report are shown here.

Community development:

*Focuses on the process of getting people involved, identifying their own issues and concerns, and working together for change. This process strengthens both the individuals involved and the communities.<sup>6</sup>*

Involvement in a community association (CA) gives individuals an opportunity to effect local governance and administration. A community centre provides a central place where residents can socialise and discuss issues that impact their community. It is a forum for meeting other residents and developing social bonds. Community associations also provide a local venue for a diverse range of personal development programs. For this to happen, adequate space must be available to allow these activities, programs and services to operate.

---

<sup>6</sup> Peggy Hutchison, "Community Development in Recreation Services: Why not?" *Plan Canada*, Jan. 1998. p.5

# 5 PROFILE OF CALGARY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

Calgary's community associations (CAs) are diverse yet many commonalities exist:

- They are **inclusive not exclusive organizations**. Although membership is mainly from the local community, all Calgarians, regardless of their social status, race, creed or income, are eligible for membership in their local community association.
- They are 'place-based' or **spatial entities** tied to a distinct geographic area.
- All community associations in Calgary are provincially registered **not-for-profit** organizations.
- They are mainly **run by volunteers**, although it is also common for community associations to employ full or part time staff, particularly in fund-raising, administrative, and maintenance positions.
- They **organize recreational activities** and provide facilities for their members.
- **Membership costs are minimal**, with annual fees ranging from \$5 to \$30 per family. This is a relative bargain compared to the range of services and activities they provide.
- The greatest sources of revenue for community associations are

community hall rentals (includes arenas) and gaming funds (e.g. casinos and bingo).

These defining characteristics of community associations have not changed much during the past decade. In 1993, a graduate student in geography at the University of Calgary completed his MA Thesis on Calgary community associations. Our research confirmed many of the conclusions of this study. These conclusions form the following profile of community associations in Calgary:

### ***Typical Facilities***

Community centres in Calgary typically contain a large hall (average capacity of 270 seats), several meeting rooms and a kitchen.

Approximately 95% of the 52 community associations we surveyed have a community hall, and about 85% have one or more meeting rooms in the community centre. The larger community centres (those averaging around 18,000 ft<sup>2</sup>) tend to also have gymnasiums, indoor arenas and fitness centres. Outdoor facilities such as tennis courts, swimming pools and hockey rinks are also common in community associations of all sizes. Tables 3-5 show the full range of building sizes, insured values, hall capacities, as well as typical facilities within or near community centres.

**Table 3: Summary Statistics for Community Association Buildings in Calgary**

**City-wide Average (52 Buildings)**

	Community Association	Number of buildings	Number of members	CA Participation (%)	CA Building Floor Area (sq ft)	Insured Building Value (\$)	Hall Capacity (sq ft)	Hall	Meeting	Gymnasium(s)	Indoor	Tennis	Outdoor	Outdoor Rink
<b>Average</b>	7,138	426	16.7%	8,508	\$1,320,670	271								
<b>Median</b>	6,209	294	13.2%	3,572	\$942,500	225								
<b>Minimum</b>	894	16	1.2%	744	\$155,000	40								
<b>Maximum</b>	19,063	1,612	57.5%	85,000	\$5,216,000	1,000								
<b>Count of facilities</b>							50	44	13	7	21	8	24	
<b>% of total (52 buildings)</b>							96%	85%	25%	13%	40%	15%	46%	

**20 Largest Buildings by Floor Area**

<b>Average</b>	10,281	655	16.6%	17,735	\$2,321,785	423								
<b>Median</b>	10,328	482	14.1%	9,995	\$1,511,350	355								
<b>Minimum</b>	2,531	137	2.8%	6,458	\$684,000	220								
<b>Maximum</b>	19,063	1,612	31.5%	85,000	\$5,216,000	1,000								
<b>Count of facilities</b>							19	20	12	6	3	4	7	
<b>% of 20 largest</b>							95%	100%	60%	30%	15%	20%	35%	

**20 Smallest Buildings by Floor Area**

<b>Average</b>	5,014	268	18.1%	1,816	\$381,333	123								
<b>Median</b>	4,019	200	12.4%	1,920	\$352,500	112								
<b>Minimum</b>	894	16	1.2%	744	\$165,000	40								
<b>Maximum</b>	17,780	1,050	57.5%	2,500	\$930,000	234								
<b>Count of facilities</b>							19	14	0	0	10	2	11	
<b>% of 20 smallest</b>							95%	70%	0%	0%	50%	10%	55%	

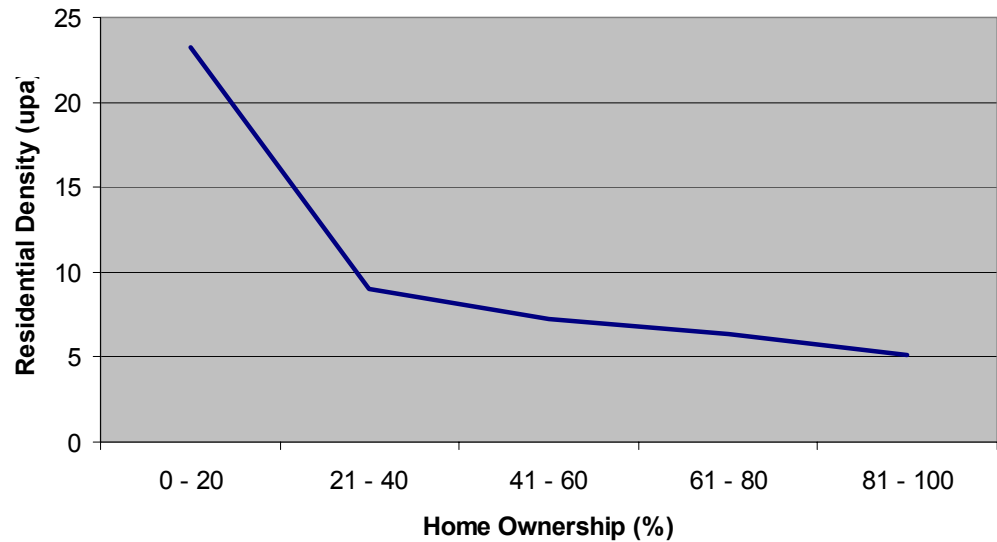
### *Community Association Participation Rates*

In 1998, on average 19% of Calgary households held a membership and participated in a community association. This figure is consistent with the findings of the Davies-Townsend (1993) study. Our research found only slight variability in average membership rates in the inner city, the inner suburb, and the outer suburb. Each of these zones have averages near 19%. A higher participation rate, however, is found in the new suburbs: on average 24% of households in new suburbs hold memberships in community associations (see Table 4).

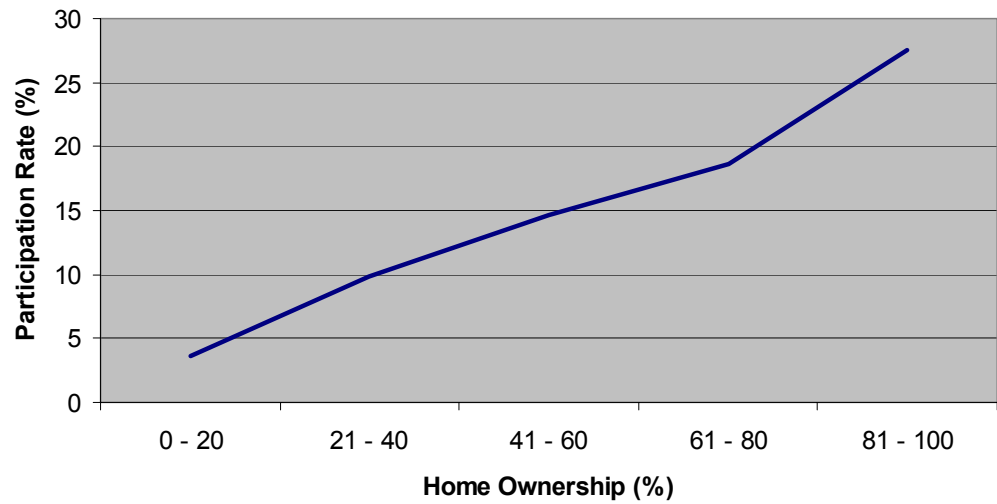
**Table 4: Community Participation by Urban Zone  
(105 communities reporting)**

Urban Zone		Home Ownership Proportion	Community Population	Density (u.p.a.)	CA Participation Rate
Inner City	<i>Average</i>	47.4%	3,871	10.4	15.5%
	<i>Median</i>	46.2%	3,831	7.9	10.3%
Inner Suburb	<i>Average</i>	59.5%	5,259	6.5	19.6%
	<i>Median</i>	59.5%	4,348	6.2	12.1%
Outer Suburb	<i>Average</i>	73.3%	8,998	6.4	16.7%
	<i>Median</i>	76.1%	9,096	6.1	14.2%
New Suburb	<i>Average</i>	89.8%	7,304	5.3	24.1%
	<i>Median</i>	93.6%	6,602	5.0	20.4%

**Figure 3: Residential Density and Rate of Home Ownership**



**Figure 4: CA Participation and Rate of Home Ownership**



It is unclear why the average rate of participation in community associations in new suburbs is higher than in other zones of the city. Demographics offers a partial explanation. New suburbs tend to have a higher number of families with children. Community associations generally require that families hold CA memberships in order for their children to play community sports (or to be involved in other CA program). This is a strong incentive to join the CA. The greater number of households with children in the new suburbs, then, may account for the higher participation levels there.

**Motivation of Volunteers is Key to CA Membership Levels**

The Davies-Townsend study found that the “*initiatives, vibrancy, and motivation of local residents is the key factor in explaining the differences in membership levels and activity levels between Calgary community associations.*”

**CA's vary greatly; simple conclusions are hard to draw**

The Davies-Townsend study concluded, “*there is only a weak correlation between the contextual characteristics of various communities and the differences in membership participation levels between communities*” (Davies & Townsend, p. 1739-61). This means that characteristics such as population size and age of community do not explain differences in membership and participation levels. The results of our research confirm this. What we did find was that as home ownership increases so does the participation rate<sup>7</sup>. Areas with low levels of home ownership (below 20%) have the lowest participation rates. Communities with the highest participation rates in Calgary are those where home ownership rates approach 90%. These results indicate that propensity to become a member of a

community association is strongly correlated to owning a home (see Figures 3 and 4). People with a long-term stake in their community are more likely to participate in their community association and community life (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Community Participation & Rate of Home Ownership (105 communities reporting)**

Home Ownership		Home Ownership Proportion	Community Population	Density (u.p.a.)	CA Participation Rate
0 - 20 %	<b>Average</b>	15.9%	4,780.3	23.2	3.6%
	<b>Median</b>	15.7%	5,236.5	23.8	3.4%
21 - 40 %	<b>Average</b>	34.2%	4,315.2	9.0	9.8%
	<b>Median</b>	34.2%	3,831	8.2	9.3%
41 - 60 %	<b>Average</b>	52.9%	5,655.2	7.2	14.7%
	<b>Median</b>	54.9%	5,235	6.9	10.6%
61 - 80 %	<b>Average</b>	71.1%	7,453.1	6.4	18.6%
	<b>Median</b>	71.2%	6,710	6.3	14.0%
81 - 100 %	<b>Average</b>	90.7%	6,629.7	5.1	27.5%
	<b>Median</b>	91.5%	5,900	4.8	24.3%

Many inner city communities have below average participation rates. These areas have a relatively higher number of renters, higher residential densities, as well as fewer households with children.

<sup>7</sup> Figures 3 and 4 show participation rate plotted against residential density and home ownership

Does this mean that communities that discourage rental housing and higher densities will have higher participation rates in their community associations? No. Home ownership alone does not explain why communities with high levels of home ownership such as Martindale, Strathcona-Christie Park, Monterey Park and Queensland all have below 10% participation in their community association. Nor does it explain why Eau Claire, St. Andrews Heights, and Parkdale have above average participation rates of at least 24% with home ownership levels averaging only 50%. Clearly there are other factors that influence participation rates.

**Table 6: Community Participation and Population of Community (105 communities reporting)**

Population Range		Home Ownership Proportion	Community Population	Density (u.p.a.)	CA Participation Rate
0-2,999 residents	Average	71.3%	1,747	6.0	35.8%
	Median	68.9%	1,743	5.5	27.8%
3,000-5,999 residents	Average	54.4%	4,499	9.3	13.4%
	Median	54.7%	4,546	7.4	11.1%
6,000-8,999 residents	Average	69.2%	7,223	6.8	11.7%
	Median	72.6%	6,918	6.0	10.8%
9,000-11,999 residents	Average	74.1%	10,438	5.7	16.1%
	Median	71.1%	10,420	5.5	14.2%
above 12,000 residents	Average	74.0%	14,960	5.7	16.8%
	Median	78.0%	14,695	5.5	18.5%

The Davies-Townsend study discovered that “the highest membership levels (i.e. over 50%) are a mixed group of communities that are not necessarily the most affluent.”<sup>8</sup> So economic status is not a major determiner of CA participation rates. There are several factors that determine community participation, not the least of which is having a dedicated core group of volunteers at the community association.

The population of the community is also not a significant factor in CA participation rates. When comparing community population ranges with participation rates survey results are inconclusive. As Table 6 demonstrates, communities with the fewest residents (less than 3,000) have the highest average levels of participation (36% on average). In communities with populations between 3,000 and 9,000 residents, participation rates drop to 12-13%. The rate of CA participation in communities with populations above 9,000 rises to 16-17%. It is interesting to note that both average home ownership levels (70%) and average residential density (6 unit/acre) are relatively consistent regardless of the population of the community (see Table 7). The exceptions are communities with 3,000-6,000 residents that have, on average, a lower rate of home ownership (54%) and an average density of around 9 units per gross acre.

---

<sup>8</sup> Wayne K. Davies, and Ivan J. Townsend, *How Do Community Associations Vary? The Structure of Community Associations in Calgary*. Urban Studies, Vol. 31, No. 10, 1994, pp. 1739-1761.

Since the population size (and area) of communities tends to increase with distance from the city core, communities with low populations are generally in the inner city and inner suburbs, while communities with greater than 9,000 residents are found in the outer and new suburban zones. This reflects the pattern of development in Calgary: since 1970 larger communities have been developed in the outer ring of suburbs. Participation rates, as Table 4 shows, are higher, though not dramatically, in the inner suburb and new suburbs. We conclude, then, that CA participation rates are only moderately influenced by the age of community.

**Table 7: Community Participation by Community Density  
(105 communities reporting)**

Residential Density (gross units / acre)		Home Ownership Proportion	Community Population	Density (u.p.a.)	CA Participation Rate
4 - 4.9 u.p.a.	<i>Average</i>	84.5%	7,877	4.4	29.4%
	<i>Median</i>	88.6%	7,146	4.5	24.3%
5 - 5.9 u.p.a.	<i>Average</i>	71.7%	6,238	5.4	19.9%
	<i>Median</i>	74.5%	6,455	5.5	14.0%
6 - 6.9 u.p.a.	<i>Average</i>	70.6%	6,324	6.3	19.5%
	<i>Median</i>	69.9%	6,079	6.3	13.9%
7 - 7.9 u.p.a.	<i>Average</i>	65.0%	6,020	7.3	16.3%
	<i>Median</i>	70.0%	5,295	7.3	13.2%
above 8 u.p.a.	<i>Average</i>	39.3%	5,410	12.5	8.5%
	<i>Median</i>	35.6%	5,057	9.7	6.3%

The concept of lifecycle is more meaningful when trying to understand variations in rates of CA participation in Calgary's four urban zones. Lifecycle refers to the stages of life that people go through. While lifestyles and preferences naturally vary, most people progress through these stages: childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, marriage or common law, raising a family, retirement, and old age. At each of these stages of one's lifecycle, what one requires of the community changes<sup>9</sup>. We think that the changes in needs as people progress through their lifecycle influences rates of participation in community associations greatly. In new suburbs where there are a lot of families with children, participation rates are higher, we presume, because of demand for youth sports and programs. As these children grow up and leave home, demand for community services will reduce and participation in community associations will drop. How the design of communities can take lifecycle into account is discussed in detail later in this report.

---

<sup>9</sup> Obviously people require shelter, safety and security, support - access to the basic requirements of life - throughout their lifecycle, but their need for recreation, social, health, and community facilities will change. So will their values.

# 6 THE ROLE OF CALGARY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

## Community Associations Contribute Significantly to Calgary Life

Community associations, “*contribute significantly to the overall social life of the city, perhaps disproportionately so in relation to their membership levels.* (Davies-Townsend)

Calgary community associations offer a broad range of programs and services to local residents. These programs and services can be grouped into five categories: Fitness and Sports, Social Activities, Public Events, Social Services and Community Planning. Some community associations offer programs and services from each of the five categories. However, other community associations are limited by available space and the number of volunteers, which restricts the types of programs and services they can offer. The following is not an exhaustive list but it gives an idea of the range of programs and services offered by community associations.

### *Fitness, sports and recreation*

- Martial arts, jazzercise, dance, yoga, tai chi,
- Slo-pitch, baseball, minor soccer and hockey, swimming, tennis and basketball courts, skateboard facilities, weight room, fitness centre

### *Social activities*

- Bingo nights, *Jelly Bean* and teen dances, dart club, cribbage for seniors, *Ladies Night Out*

**Community Associations are Involved in Planning Decisions**

Community associations are given the opportunity to comment on proposals for development in their area. The Federation of Calgary Communities provides training in how to evaluate development proposals.

***Public events***

- Stampede breakfast, flea markets, annual garage sales, farmers markets, bake sales, civic celebrations

***Social services***

- *Moms & Tots* program, after school child care, day-care and nursery school, *Time Out for Parents*
- Crisis counselling, employment counselling, family services, drug awareness, *Block Watch*, crime & safety seminars

***Community planning***

- Community associations are actively involved in reviewing and commenting on new development proposals. They also provide valuable input on planning studies (e.g. traffic studies, area redevelopment plans) conducted by the City's Planning & Building Department.

Some of these programs and services are organized and offered solely by the community association but it is also common that programs and services are offered by independent organizations renting space in the community centre. Community associations will often donate space in their facilities to groups that supply beneficial services to local residents.

Thus, community associations not only provide programs and services, but they also provide space for charitable and volunteer organizations to conduct their activities. This is a key benefit to the community and the city as a whole as it enables groups to operate that would otherwise be financially unable to do so.

**Community Associations Provide a Forum for Local Politics and Debate**

Ward alderman frequently attend community board meetings to relay important information about the City's initiatives, bring community members up to date on issues, and keep themselves informed of concerns and viewpoints in the community.

Calgary community associations also play another very important role - a role less quantifiable but equally important to the long term sustainability and health of society. Community associations provide a forum for people to interact, to exert influence over their lives, to form voluntary attachments, and to share ideas. They provide space for people to meet, talk, observe, and learn about one another. They are a counter to the centrifugal forces in society (i.e., television, mass advertising, consumerism, the automobile, longer workdays). Community associations work against isolation and alienation and support democratic expression. By providing a forum for people to meet one another, they encourage honest and open views of others and ourselves, as well as an understanding of our humanity.<sup>10</sup> This is essential.

---

<sup>10</sup> Humanity is understood to have two meanings: (1) human beings as a group, and (2) the act of being humane, kind, understanding, and merciful.

# 7

## CHALLENGES FACED BY CALGARY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

### **There is Need for Sustainable Funding**

An arrangement between Carma, the land developer, and the Edgemont Community Association in which the developer makes a financial contribution to the community association for each lot sold, has provided the CA with the funds to support a variety of programs and services. Edgemont still has about three years of growth until all lots are sold and this source of funding ceases. The loss of this funding once the community is built-out is a serious concern for the CA. (Edgemont Just Keeps on Growing, Frank King, Calgary Herald, 12/12/98, p. G3)

Most community associations (CAs) desire to offer a broad range of programs and services to their members. However, they are constrained in what they can offer for the following reasons:<sup>11</sup>

- lack of sustainable funding;
- low volunteerism, apathy, and the demands of modern life;
- difficulty keeping residents and members informed of programs, services, and opportunities; and,
- lack of facilities and equipment.

### *Funding*

At the Calgary Community Association's Presidents' Meeting of May 23, 1998, a lack of stable, reliable funding was identified as the single greatest challenge for community associations.<sup>12</sup> The proceedings from this meeting state:

*'Financial stability is a prime consideration for many community association board members. Insecure funding and the threat of a deficit force community associations to operate like businesses. Directed by the*

<sup>11</sup> These four factors were overwhelmingly identified as the most significant challenges faced by Calgary community associations at the annual Presidents' Meeting, as well as in survey and interview responses.

<sup>12</sup> Federation of Calgary Community Associations, Notes from the Presidents' Meeting, May 28, 1998.

*bottom line, only profitable programs can be retained. Facility rentals are needed to cover operating costs limiting access to community residents and diminishing the social role of the community association. Funding shortages contribute to discouraged volunteers who become apathetic, or stressed out, and eventually burned out. Programming is consequently impacted”*

The Davies-Townsend study identified that older communities are more dependent upon rental revenue for operating income. Our interviews with community board members, as well as comments from the Presidents’ Meeting, back up this conclusion.

<b>CA Revenue Sources</b> (average 1997-98)	
<b>Membership</b>	<b>\$6,778</b>
<b>Facility Rental</b>	<b>\$95,514</b>
<b>Gaming</b>	<b>\$72,704</b>
<b>User Fees</b>	<b>\$17,635</b>
<b>Grants</b>	<b>\$453</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$197,161</b>

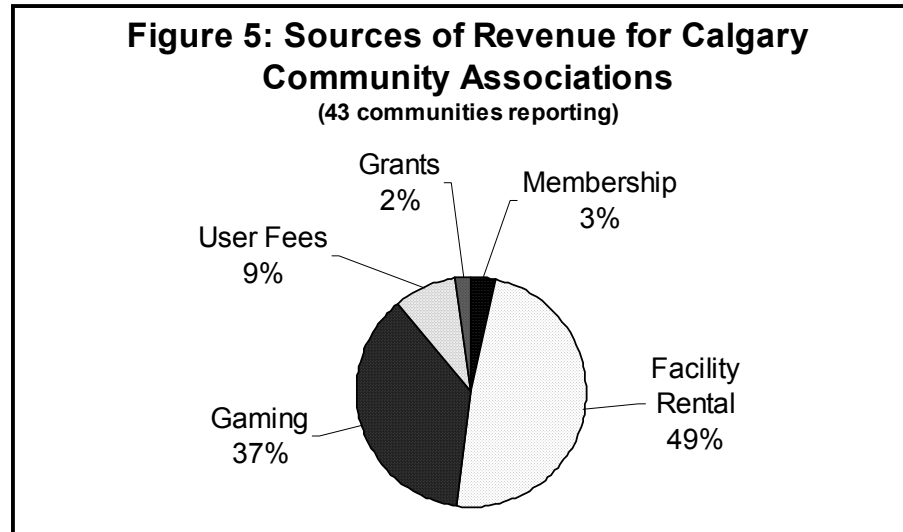


Figure 5 shows the proportion of various revenue sources for Calgary community associations. Note that most community associations are heavily dependent on facility rentals and gaming proceeds. Gaming

revenues and facility rentals together make up 86% total CA income. User fees make up only a small percentage of total revenue for community associations because most CA's want to keep programs and services accessible to all residents and keep charges to users at cost-recovery levels. Program user fees and membership dues only contribute, on average, about 12% of total revenue.

### ***Volunteerism, Apathy, and the Demands of Modern Life***

Attracting, retaining, and training volunteers is a serious challenge facing community associations; a lack of volunteers restricts the programs and services that can be offered. Increasingly people have less time and energy to devote to volunteering. Some are too busy. Some are apathetic. Improved community design can help facilitate volunteerism by eliminating barriers to participation and fostering a stronger sense of community. Improved community design may help to encourage volunteerism by eliminating physical barriers to participation (such as busy arterial roads) and by situating the community centre centrally within the community. This is discussed in greater detail in Section 8 of this report.

### ***Communication with Members and Local Residents***

Attracting volunteers is often more difficult in areas with a high

**Community board members in Silver Springs, Edgemont, and Woodcreek mentioned that work demands and individualistic lifestyles tend to work against community involvement.**

concentration of apartment blocks. Community association representatives simply cannot get access to these homes to deliver newsletters or carry out membership drives. The Bankview community, with a high proportion of rental apartments and condominiums, has this problem. But they are not alone; several community associations identified the challenge of getting word out to local residents about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities as significant barriers to participation. The ability to communicate efficiently with residents, it seems, is a key determinant of the number and type of programs community associations are able to offer.

### ***Facilities and Equipment***

The maintenance of facilities and equipment is problematic for community associations, in part because of the structure of the provincial grant system. Provincial government grants are a source of revenue for community associations, but there are restrictions placed on the ways in which grants may be spent. Generally, grant revenues can only fund capital investments. The ongoing costs of maintenance and repair cannot be funded through grants, and must be paid for with revenues from other sources.

When interviewed, several community association board members indicated that their existing facilities are inadequate to serve the

population of the community. Rentable space and storage were commonly cited as not meeting present needs.

Community facilities are more thoroughly explored in Section 8 of this report.



Silver Springs Community Centre in northwest Calgary. The building is 8,000 ft<sup>2</sup> in area, and has meeting rooms, full-service kitchen, lounge, and gymnasium. The centre also contains an outdoor rink and outdoor pool.

# 8 CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING NEW COMMUNITY PLANS

## What communities are saying about community design

The Issue Identification Survey we distributed asked Calgary community association (CA) board members to identify the top three planning issues within their community. We organized the responses into ten categories and ranked them for frequency. The results are shown in Figure 6. In general, there is a broad range of issues relating to how we design our communities affecting Calgary CA's. Community members are concerned most about land use planning, the impact of new development, traffic and transportation issues, and the lack of social services, social activities, and schools.

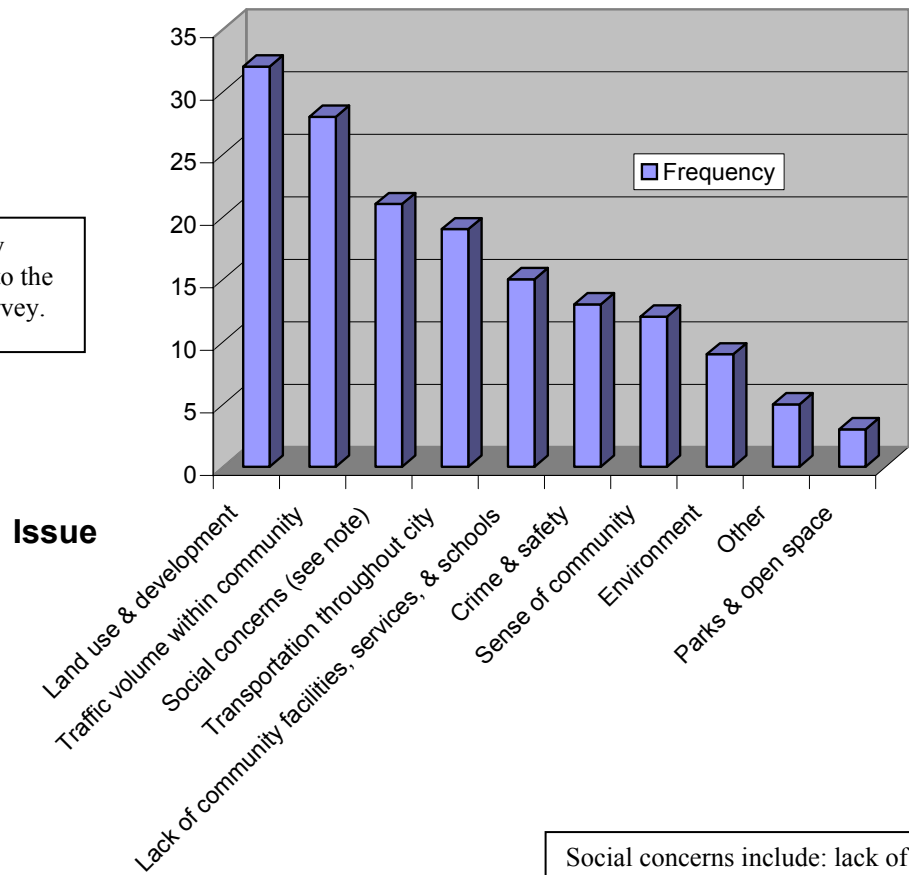
To get a better idea of how to improve the design of new communities in Calgary, the following questions were asked during interviews with community association board members:

- *What planning issues are of concern to residents in your area?*
- *What would your ideal community look like?*

The answers have been summarized by zone and are listed in Table 8. Complete comments from each community are listed in Appendix B.

**Figure 6: Top Three Issues Reported by Survey Respondents**

A total of 58 community associations responded to the Issues Identification Survey.



Social concerns include: lack of activities for teens and seniors, lack of affordable housing, lack of social services, and low community

**Table 8: The Ideal Community**

	<i>Ideal Community</i>	<i>Planning Issues</i>
<b>Inner City</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Close proximity to services and amenities</li> <li>▪ Living close to where you work</li> <li>▪ Pedestrian-oriented</li> <li>▪ Access to several transit links</li> <li>▪ Traffic-calmed</li> <li>▪ Mature homes and trees, unique character</li> <li>▪ Neighbourly</li> <li>▪ Diversity of ages, lifestyles, cultures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Traffic short-cutting through community</li> <li>▪ Lack of city-funded services</li> <li>▪ Density too high in some parts of community</li> </ul>

	<i>Ideal Community</i>	<i>Planning Issues</i>
<b>Inner Suburb</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Live within walking distance of community centre</li> <li>▪ Close proximity to services and amenities</li> <li>▪ Living close to where you work</li> <li>▪ Good internal traffic circulation</li> <li>▪ No traffic short-cutting through community</li> <li>▪ Several entry points into the community</li> <li>▪ A large number of long-time residents</li> <li>▪ Peaceful, well-established, safe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Traffic congestion along major arterial roads</li> <li>▪ Some resistance to infill housing</li> </ul>

**Table 8: The Ideal Community (continued)**

	<i>Ideal Community</i>	<i>Planning Issues</i>
<b>Outer Suburb</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Close proximity to services and amenities</li> <li>▪ Living close to where you work</li> <li>▪ Good system of pedestrian bicycle paths</li> <li>▪ Access to LRT and transit links</li> <li>▪ Lots of opens space and parks</li> <li>▪ A large number of long-time residents</li> <li>▪ Opportunities to move within community</li> <li>▪ Diversity of housing types blended into community</li> <li>▪ Diversity of ages and cultures, no ethnic tensions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Traffic congestion along major roads</li> <li>▪ Speed of traffic along collector streets</li> <li>▪ Completion of regional pathway system</li> </ul>

	<i>Ideal Community</i>	<i>Planning Issues</i>
<b>New Suburb</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Large communities (10,000 or more residents) organized into several smaller neighbourhoods</li> <li>▪ Activities for youths and seniors</li> <li>▪ Recreational amenities (i.e. a manmade lake)</li> <li>▪ A large number of long-time residents</li> <li>▪ Opportunities to move within community</li> <li>▪ Quiet, scenic, lots of walking trails</li> <li>▪ Close proximity to regional park system</li> <li>▪ Natural areas and wildlife within community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Traffic congestion at large commercial centres</li> <li>▪ Lack of public schools; students must take buses</li> <li>▪ Speed of traffic along collector streets</li> <li>▪ Lack of social and recreational opportunities for teens</li> <li>▪ Lack of commercial services nearby</li> </ul>

When designing new communities, we need to decide *where* to locate civic places and *what* adjacent land uses are compatible with them. In Calgary these decisions are made at the community and outline plan stage. At the community plan stage the location of the community core, joint-use sites, and neighbourhood nodes are decided. A generalized land use pattern and the layout of the arterials and collector streets is determined. Following the community plan, a series of outline plans will be created for each phase of the new development. Outline plans contain decisions about land use zoning, the size of land parcels, and what land uses are compatible enough to be adjacent to one another. Under Calgary's Land Use Bylaw, zoning determines the types of uses that are permitted on a given parcel of land.

The next section presents a framework for the evaluation of new community plans. The evaluation criteria incorporates the results from these three sources:

1. The Issues Identification Survey;
2. In-depth interviews with 12 Calgary communities; and,
3. A broad range of published materials on community design.

This set of criteria for the design of strong communities is intended to provide community associations, developers, and community planners a means to evaluate plans for new communities in Calgary. The criteria have been divided into four "layers" which correspond to the different scales, from the sub-regional level to the community association site, of plans used.

## **Layer One - The Region**

### ***Growth Area Management Plans (GRAMPs) and Area Structure Plans (ASPs)***

In Calgary, regional or sub-regional scale plans are typically represented in Area Structure Plans (ASPs) and Growth Area Management Plans (GRAMPs). ASPs and GRAMPs typically involve several proposed communities in one plan. The South Calgary GRAMP, for example, involves the communities of Mid-Sun, Chaparral, Shawnee Slopes, Evergreen Estates, Millrise, Shaughnessy, Bridlewood and several yet-to-be-built communities.

The following principles can be used to evaluate regional and sub-regional level ASPs and GRAMP to determine whether they lay the groundwork for new communities that foster participation in civic life, sense of community, and a strong community association:

#### ***1. New Communities should be built for populations of 12,000 to 23,000 people***

##### **Discussion**

We recommend that new communities be developed for a population of about 12,000 to 23,000 people. Community populations within this range:

- support a community and commercial core with a variety of shops and

services including a full-service grocery store<sup>13</sup>;

- support commercial enterprises that provide varied employment opportunities for residents at the community/commercial core;
- facilitate opportunities for cultural, social and economic exchanges;
- provide a balanced population with residents of all life stages; and,
- enable CA's to operate efficiently and provide a diverse array of facilities and services by ensuring a sufficient base of both volunteers with useful skills and a population base, or demand, to support programs/services.

**Small Community Association Can  
"Reach Out" to Members**

Southview board members stated that because their community is small in size and population, it is easier for the community association to "reach out" to local residents. It also means that the association has a better idea of the needs of residents.

**Southview statistics:** 253 acres, 2,263 residents, 7.1 units per acre density, 60% home ownership, and participation rate of 19.6%.

Yet we caution that communities with populations at the upper end of this range sacrifice certain things as well:

- the number of people and processes and the level of bureaucracy required to run a large community association will often decrease its ability to respond to individuals, or single families, in need in the way that small community associations are able to (see text box on this page);
- large community associations may have an institutional rather than a community feel; and,
- a person's psychological need for identification with something at a smaller, neighbourhood scale may not be satisfied by a large community association.

While we support an ideal community population of 12,000 to 23,000,

---

<sup>13</sup> City of Calgary, *Sustainable Suburbs Study*

communities as small as 3,000 people are able to sustain active and vibrant community associations. Calgary's smallest community associations have the greatest participation rates, provide a neighbourhood or 'family' atmosphere, and are able to monitor and respond quickly to residents needs, particularly when a family is in some kind of trouble. However, they often are unable to offer the range of facilities and services of community associations that serve larger communities.

### **What to look for**

- Communities should be developed for populations of 12,000 to 23,000 people.
- Communities with populations at the upper end of this range (say 18,000 to 23,000) should be divided into smaller, identifiable neighbourhoods. This approach has is being used in McKenzie Towne where neighbourhood councils have been created with the intention of representing the interests of the neighbourhood at the community level. However, additional research will be needed to assess the effectiveness of this system.
- In communities with populations at the upper end of this range, satellite community facilities (tennis courts, outdoor rinks, etc.) may need to be integrated into the different neighbours. In this case the community centre should still be centrally located at the community core.
- More land should be set aside for community association sites in larger

communities. It may be desirable, even necessary, that reserve land designated for the community association be divided into two or more separate parcels. The community centre should be located at the community core but satellite facilities may be integrated into the neighbourhoods.

- Even where large community associations are able to provide a variety of facilities and services, regional recreation facilities will need to be provided through a partnership of local government and community associations.

**Natural Features Provide a Sense of Place**

Residents of Mid-Sun (Calgary's largest community with a population of 19,000) report that the natural feature of Fish Creek Provincial Park has contributed significantly to a strong sense of place in the community. The park focuses people inward and defines the community.

**2. Major natural features contribute to a regional identity and improved quality of life.**

**Discussion**

Our survey revealed that large parks encompassing distinct natural features (major escarpments, river and creek valleys) help develop a sense of community for nearby residents. Nose Hill Park, for example, draws residents from communities in the north and northwest parts of the city to its large open spaces, scenic views, and abundant plant and animal life. Nose Hill Park is a key aspect of the quality of life of residents in this part of the city. In the south, Fish Creek Park plays a similar role in the communities adjacent to it.

Communities south of Fish Creek Provincial Park report that they feel a

**The Preservation of Natural Areas is Important to Communities**

The need to preserve natural areas in Calgary is one of the top five issues that were reported in the

sense of community because the park makes their community distinct from others. Residents of these communities like the fact that the park physically separates them from the rest of the city and defines the spatial boundaries of the community in a way that makes intuitive sense. Natural features that act as physical barriers between communities are viewed in a positive way, whereas man-made barriers such as arterials and utility corridors are more often seen in a negative light.

**Cranston is a Community Crossing a Natural Barrier**

According to the community plan, an escarpment of the Bow River floodplain will bisect the new community of Cranston. This barrier will separate one third (6,000) of the residents from the rest of the community. For people living below the escarpment the only link to the rest of the community, the community centre, and the commercial core will be a single collector road. The escarpment, in effect, may create a physical and psychological barrier signalling that the people living below it are not a part of the greater Cranston community.

The City, through its growth management plans, should preserve large, contiguous stretches of natural areas before urban development occurs in these areas. There are two reasons for this:

1. to preserve the natural environment particularly along streams, rivers, escarpments and wetlands; and,
2. to acknowledge the key role that these areas play in improving the quality of life and building a sense of place and community for Calgarians.

**What to look for:**

- Ensure that regional parks, water bodies, floodplains, slopes, and environmentally sensitive areas form a community edge.

Environmentally sensitive areas in the Calgary region are defined in The Calgary Parks Plan and the Inter-municipal plans of M.D. Foothills (1998) and M.D. Rockyview (1998).

***3. Community boundaries should not cross natural or manmade barriers.***

**Busy Roads Can be Barriers to Participation in the CA**

Elbow Drive SW is an example of a man-made barrier to participation in community associations. The communities of Canyon Meadows, Southwood, Haysboro, Elbow Park, and Windsor Park are bisected by Elbow Drive. The traffic volume on Elbow Drive makes the street difficult to cross, particularly at rush hour. Elbow Drive may be a barrier that hinders some residents from using and participating in their community association.

Huntington Hills residents feel that 4<sup>th</sup> and Centre Streets tend to “unfocus” the community. Both streets are busy arterial roads that divide the community. Residents reveal that people on the east side of 4<sup>th</sup> Street feel isolated and excluded from the civic life of the community.

**Discussion**

Communities that are bisected by natural or manmade features may find that some of their residents feel spatially isolated from the rest of the community.

The following are examples of both manmade and natural barriers:

<b>Manmade Barriers</b>	<b>Natural Barriers</b>
Major arterial roads	Rivers and creeks
Utility corridors	Escarpmets
Railway ROW's	Regional parks
Golf courses	Large lakes and reservoirs
Industrial areas	
Airports	
Irrigation canals	

Barriers, in and of themselves, are not necessarily detrimental to community involvement. A barrier may form a logical boundary to a community if it is located on the edge. Conversely, barriers are detrimental to community cohesion when they bisect the community. Where a barrier bisects a community, the community association may find it difficult to involve residents from the opposite side of the barrier. Residents who feel isolated from the broader community will often be disinclined to join the association. Barriers can discourage pedestrian movement within the community unless they are permeated by frequent crossing points.

### **The Shape of the Community is a Barrier in McKenzie Lake**

Residents in McKenzie Lake feel that the geographic shape of their community (it is 3 times longer north to south than it is wide) acts as a barrier to participation in the community association. Some outlying residents have to travel 2 kilometers to reach the community centre. This is much more of a problem for residents who do not have a vehicle. They feel that their community centre should have been located on the north side of the manmade lake, near the geographic center of their community.

### **Barriers Can Be Turned into Community Resources**

*Silver Springs Blvd. divides the community into north and south sections. Some residents would like to “soften” the hard edges of this over-designed collector road by reducing the number of lanes from four to two. This would free up space for a pedestrian promenade*  
(Gary Leadbetter, President of the Silver Springs Community Association).

Most barriers in Calgary tend to define the edges of communities rather than bisect them. There are, however, recently approved plans where a barrier (see text box in margin) bisects the proposed community. At the GRAMP level it is particularly important to identify both natural and manmade barriers and to designate these barriers as community edges. The GRAMP must also define the location of major routes for pedestrian/bicycle paths.

#### **What to look for:**

- Natural and man-made barriers should not bisect the community. Barriers may be a utility corridor, major arterial, expressway, freeway, escarpment, creek or river.
- Where a barrier bisects a proposed community, it may make more sense to have two separate communities.
- Land uses that form a barrier should not be made to divide a community. Uses such as country residential, industrial parks, or golf courses should be located at the edge of the new community and there should be an adequate transition from one land use to the next.
- Major streets and arterials should not bisect the community or divide the residential area from the commercial node.
- The community core should form a transit node and be designed to encourage access to it by means other than the automobile.

***4. In some cases, adjacent communities may share a community core.***

**Community of at Least 12,000 is Needed to Support a Grocery Store**

The City of Calgary's Sustainable Suburbs Study recommends that new communities be planned for a population of around 12,000 residents. This number of people will ensure a market base sufficient to sustain a commercial core that includes a grocery store and a broad range of shops and services.

**Community Cores Provide a Focal Point**

Both Mid-Sun and Woodcreek community associations were formed by the amalgamation of two smaller communities. Mid-Sun includes the communities of Midnapore and Sundance. Woodcreek was formed when Woodlands and Woodbine were combined. Unfortunately, both Mid-Sun and Woodcreek were planned without community cores that would have provided a focal point for these communities.

**Discussion**

The community core should function as the commercial, social and cultural heart of a community. It not only provides a convenient, central place to obtain goods and services, it also shapes community identity and helps build a sense of place for local residents.

Calgary provides excellent examples of commercial areas that play a key role in establishing the character of the surrounding community. The Kensington District in Hillhurst-Sunnyside, 9th Avenue SE in Inglewood, and Marda Loop in South Calgary are examples of vibrant commercial cores that have shaped the community identity for residents.

It is preferable that there is a community core in the centre of each community. In some cases, particularly where a small parcel of land is being developed, a new community will be planned for a relatively small number of residents. In this case two or more communities may share a commercial and social core.

The issue of adequate population size becomes important when the minimum population required to support a large grocery store is considered.

A population of at least 12,000 people is required to support a large grocery store in the community.<sup>14</sup> In cases where this size population is not possible, two (or three) communities may share a commercial core to ensure its economic viability.

### **Through-Traffic Frustrates Communities**

Residents from Woodcreek are frustrated by the speed of traffic along major collector roads in their community. Photo radar, speed traps, and 3-way stop signs have all proved unsuccessful in eliminating this problem.

The site for the community centre should also be located in the core. By clustering private and public services in a core area, there are opportunities to share facilities. This may be particularly applicable where services are complimentary such as schools, community associations, libraries, medical and social services. The clustering of community facilities in the commercial core adds dynamism, interest, and vitality to the core area.

### **What to look for:**

- If the proposed community has less than 10,000 people, it may be sensible, from a commercial perspective, that a core is shared with another community.
- Ideally, the community centre should be located at the core to allow sharing of facilities, maximize access by all forms of transportation, and create an integrated social/cultural and commercial core.
- The commercial area should be centrally located within the community, or, where two or more communities share a core, the core should be centrally located between the communities.

---

<sup>14</sup> City of Calgary. Sustainable Suburbs Study.

- The street network and pedestrian circulation system in each community should be designed to focus on the common community core.
- The street network should be designed to avoid non-local traffic short cutting through neighbourhoods to reach the core area.
- The community core should be connected to a rapid transit corridor (i.e., LRT or express bus line).
- Opportunities for sharing public facilities such as schools, libraries, and regional recreation centres will strengthen the community core.
- It is desirable for the commercial component of the community core to function as an employment centre for the surrounding communities.

**Jobs Should be located at Transit Nodes**

The suburbanization of jobs in Calgary has resulted in a proportional decline of jobs in the downtown since 1982. However, new suburban jobs have not typically been located in proximity to transit facilities or residential growth corridors. As a result, the pattern of increasing car dependence for the daily work trip has meant commuters are going across town to jobs in the east side of the city instead of downtown.

(City Vision Special Edition: Calgary Transportation Plan Report Card, City of Calgary, Spring 1998, p. 7.)

***5. New communities should provide opportunities to work close to home.***

**Discussion**

One of the key strategies established by the Calgary Transportation Plan (1995) and the Sustainable Suburbs Study (1995) is to locate jobs closer to where people live. This strategy has two benefits: first, it encourages commuters to use public transit, or walk or cycle to work if they live close enough; and secondly, it decreases transportation infrastructure costs by reducing the need for arterial roads and river crossings. The key to achieving this objective is to allow the development of a large employment centres outside of downtown Calgary and away from the established industrial areas

on the east side of the city. The City is attempting to achieve this by clustering commercial (office and retail) activity in Town Centres and Secondary Employment Centres:

**McKenzie Towne Centre will be A Regional Employment Centre**

McKenzie Towne Centre (currently under construction) is substantially larger than the community core envisioned in the Sustainable Suburbs Study. It has been designed to serve a community population of 32,000 residents. It will have 28,000 m<sup>2</sup> (300,000 ft<sup>2</sup>) of retail space and the same amount of office space.  
 (Fish Creek Growth Area Management Plan, City of Calgary, December 1996, p. 61.)

<b>1. Town Centres</b>
Located in long-term growth corridors in the City's north and south.
Well-served by LRT and freeways
Target employment: 10,000-25,000 jobs
Examples: Shawnessy Centre, North Employment Centre (Stoney Trail and Deerfoot Trail N.E.).

<b>2. Secondary Suburban Employment and Mixed Use Centres</b>
Located in long-term growth corridors in the City's north and south.
Well-served by public transit (bus or LRT) and major arterial roads (freeways and expressways)
Target employment: 2,000-6,000 jobs
Examples: East McKenzie (Deerfoot Trail and 130 <sup>th</sup> Avenue SE), Southeast Employment Centre (Marquis of Lorne and Deerfoot Trail), Crowfoot Centre NW.

**What to look for**

- In large communities (above 18,000 residents), the community core area can have a variety of commercial and mixed commercial-residential development. It may function like a small-scale employment centre. In this case, a moderate amount of retail and office space can be developed. The community core may also contain a community centre, medical clinic, and/or daycare facilities.

***6. Regional recreation facilities should be provided in all sectors of Calgary.***

**Discussion**

Some recreational facilities such as indoor pools, fitness centres, gymnasiums, and indoor rinks, cannot be funded at the community level. Their cost, the land required to build them, and the population-base required to make them economical, is too great for individual communities to bear. Regional recreation facilities, constructed by the City of Calgary and operated by the community association, are necessary to fill this gap. The City has constructed several regional recreation centres over the past two decades. Examples of these are Lindsay Park Sports Centre, Southland Leisure Centre, Village Square Leisure Centre. Other large recreation facilities are run by community associations (e.g., Acadia Recreation Complex and the Family Leisure Centre).

In the absence of regional recreation facilities, community associations have taken the responsibility of providing these facilities. The significant capital and operating costs of this puts a significant financial burden on the community associations. Regional recreation facilities also attract more traffic than a community centre and residents living adjacent to a community centre that expands to a regional-scale facility may resent the additional vehicle traffic on local streets.

**A Site has been Identified for a New Recreation Centre South of Fish Creek**

Calgary Parks & Recreation has identified a site for a regional recreation facility south of Fish Creek Park. It is located within the Shawnessy Centre area, on the west side of Macleod Trail.

([Fish Creek Growth Area Management Plan](#), City of Calgary, December 1996, p. 56-57.)

**What to look for:**

- Land for regional recreation facilities should be reserved at the GRAMP or ASP stage
- The accessibility of all residents should be of primary concern in the location of regional facilities
- Regional recreation facilities should be located adjacent to major arterial roads and be readily serviced by public transit.
- Regional facilities should provide facilities and services that require the support of a large population base, or are too costly for community associations to supply
- The capital cost of regional recreation facilities should be funded by government
- Regional recreation centres are compatible with large commercial centres. This means that they should be located in “town centres” or “suburban employment and mixed-use centres.” (Principle #5 provides a definition of these types of commercial areas.)

## **Layer Two - The Community Area Structure and Community Plans**

### **10% of Developable Area in New Communities is Designated as Municipal Reserve**

10% of gross developable land in all new communities is set aside as “municipal reserve.” Reserve dedication is prioritized as follows:

1. **Neighborhood needs** (elementary schools, neighborhood parks)
2. **Community needs** (junior high schools, community associations, open space linkages, environmentally significant lands)
3. **Regional needs** (high schools, pools, arenas, and athletic parks, libraries, leisure centres)

NOTE: Reserve land is rarely set aside for regional needs. The entire 10% is usually required for neighborhood and community needs. Land for regional facilities is usually purchased using money collected “in lieu” of land from new industrial or commercial subdivisions.

The following are principles that can be used to evaluate Area Structure Plans or Community Plans to determine if the design of the proposed community supports an active civic life and a strong community association:

1. ***Land provided for a community association should not be less than 2 acres (0.8 hectares) per 5,000 residents.***

### **Discussion**

Current provisions for a community centre generally provide that a 4-acre (1.6-hectare) site will be reserved for a community association on a joint use site in new suburban developments. The City of Calgary negotiates this allocation annually with the Urban Development Institute. Currently, it is assumed that a 4-acre site will be sufficient for a community of 10-12,000 people (new suburban communities in Calgary are being planned between 6,000 and 22,000 people).

While it is difficult to forecast the facility and servicing needs of future residents, we can make some assumptions based on the typical uses found on existing community association land allotments. In Calgary, the community association building and related parking must be on a joint-use site. The City provides the community association a portion of a joint use site, as part of a

“license of occupation.” If there are hockey rinks, tennis courts and/or basketball courts near the community centre, land for these facilities also falls under the jurisdiction of the community association. However, The City of Calgary Parks and Recreation Department administers baseball diamonds as well as football and soccer fields. These uses are not included in the joint-use land allocated to the community association.

The average profile of the facilities at the **20 smallest** community centres in Calgary is as follows:

Median community population	4,000 residents
Median number of community memberships	200 memberships
Median building size (hall, meeting rooms)	1,920 ft <sup>2</sup>
Outdoor hockey rink (one rink)	17,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
Outdoor tennis court (two courts)	12,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
Parking stalls (25 spaces + driveway)	3,600 ft <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total footprint (facilities only)</b>	<b>34,520 ft<sup>2</sup></b>

Thus, one acre (0.4 hectares) of land is required for the facilities listed here (one acre = 43,200 ft<sup>2</sup>). This does not include land for building expansion, landscaping, and setbacks from the roadway. Land may also be required for such things as community gardens or children’s playground. If we take these into consideration, a 2-acre (0.8-hectare) site will provide a small community of 5,000 residents with the minimum amount of land required for a community centre.

**Land Requirements for  
Community/Recreation Centres in  
Vancouver**

Planners in Vancouver estimate that 2.75 acres of active recreation space (sports fields and recreation center) are necessary for every 1,000 residents. This figure includes space for community facilities (e.g. meeting rooms, halls, pre-school and day-care facilities); recreation facilities (e.g. gymnasium, change rooms, indoor pool, squash courts, hockey rink(s) and/or fitness center); as well as sports fields (e.g. baseball, soccer, rugby, and/or tennis courts). Playgrounds and water parks are included in this figure. This means that a 20,000-person community requires 55 acres of active recreation space.

In Vancouver community centres are blended with recreation facilities. There are 23 of these facilities in Vancouver, meaning there is one centre per 20,000 residents and one indoor pool per 50,000 residents. Parks planners estimate that 2.29 ft<sup>2</sup> of this type of facility are required for every resident in a given community. According to this measurement, a 20,000-person community requires a 46,000 sq. ft recreation/community centre (this figure does not include land for parking or outdoor recreation facilities).

From interview with John Grant, South Area Manager, and Hanna Maron, Co-ordinator False Creek Community Centre, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, 6/19/98.

If we look at the **20 largest** community centres, the typical facilities are as follows:

Median community population	10, 300 residents
Median number of community memberships	480 memberships
Median building size (hall seating capacity 350, kitchen, two meeting rooms, one gymnasium)	10,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
Indoor hockey rink (one rink)	17,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
Outdoor hockey rink (one rink)	17,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
Outdoor tennis court (four courts)	24,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
Parking stalls (120 spaces + driveway)	17,280 ft <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total footprint (facilities only)</b>	<b>85,280 ft<sup>2</sup></b>

For a large community centre, at least two acres (0.8 hectares) of land are needed for the facilities listed here (one acre = 43,200 ft<sup>2</sup>). Again, this does not include land for expansion, landscaping, and setbacks from roadway. Applying the same rationale used for communities of 5,000 residents, a 4-acre (1.6-hectare) site provides just enough land for a large community centre to service 10,000 residents.

To provide for possible future expansion of the community centre and associated parking, an adequate site area needs to be set aside. The question is whether a 4-acre site provides adequate space for a community association that will serve a community with a population over 12,000. Huntington Hills Community Association has a community centre that includes a curling rink,

three outdoor rinks, a 172 person-capacity hall, a lounge that seats 156 people, meeting rooms, and an office. The community building alone has approximately 51,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of floor space, not including the outdoor rinks and adjoining parking lot. The community association site is 5.72 acres and serves a population of 14,700 residents. Applying the rule that 2 acres of land be provided for every 5,000 residents, a community of 15,000 residents should have 6-acres (2.4-hectares) of land set aside for a community centre.

One must remember that this “rule” provides only a rough guideline, a minimum standard in other words. Six acres of land may, in fact, be too small for a community the size of Huntington Hills. Community Board members claim that the current site is not adequate as there is insufficient parking and little area left over for green space. They would also like to expand the current facility to include a gymnasium and a larger hall.

**What to look for:**

- Land dedicated for community association use should not be less than 2 acres (0.8 hectares) acres per 5,000 residents. For communities below 5,000 residents, the minimum site size should be 2 acres (0.8 hectares).
- Communities with a population greater than 12,000 should consider dividing the community site to allow for outdoor facilities (hockey rink, tennis courts) to be provided within a reasonable distance of residents.

***2. Housing choice within the new community should reflect the needs of a diverse society and accommodate people at all lifecycle stages.***

**Discussion**

We generally accept that a town, or city, functions best when there is a diversity of ages, lifestyles, income levels, and ethnic backgrounds. This is also true for communities. Communities that do not have a mix of housing types and sizes (detached homes, semi-detached houses, condos, and townhouses) are generally not open and inclusive. A community that consists solely of homes over 2,500 ft<sup>2</sup> is only accessible to those who can afford to purchase homes of this size. This economic hurdle may act as method of segregation based on income, and possibly age and lifestyle.

Lifecycle is a term that refers to the broad stages that define people's lives. In each life stage one's needs, desires, lifestyle, interests and capabilities change and so does what one requires from the community. There are distinct advantages to building communities that accommodate people's needs through out their lifecycle. We have grouped these benefits into two categories: (1) efficient service provision, and (2) social benefits.

**Efficient Service Provision.** Government and community associations are better able to plan for the provision of services if the demographic make-up

**“The dearth of housing options is a serious threat to the mature suburb’s sense of community.”<sup>1</sup>**

**A Stable Community Population Has Many Benefits**

In Southview, having a large number of long-term residents has contributed to a stronger sense of community. Board members stated that Southview residents are concerned about their neighbour's welfare. In addition, local volunteers are committed to their tasks and remain involved from year to year.

**People's Needs Change with Lifecycle**

*Young families have flocked to Calgary for decades, creating a doughnut of residential development ringing the centre. But those families have grown older, leaving vast empty nest residential areas that have little use for the schools and other amenities originally built for families*

*(Prairies Feel the Cost of Urban Sprawl, Vancouver Sun, 12/12/98, p. B1, B3).*

of the community remains relatively stable and demands for different services remain similarly static. An example of the demand for schools illustrates this point. Communities with homogeneous forms of housing typically go through successive demographic changes. For example, detached single family homes are marketed towards families with young children. When the community is young, there is a high demand for elementary schools and activity programs for children. As children advance into their teens, demand for these programs declines and the community associations struggles to meet changing needs. As a community matures, there may not be enough children to make kid's programs viable. On the other hand, developing new programs for teens, adults, and seniors requires volunteer time and energy. Similarly, facility needs change over time. For some programs, all that needs changing is equipment or furniture. However, other programs may require a significant expenditure of funds to redesign or upgrade the community centre.

Developing communities that offer a range of housing types and sizes will accommodate residents at various stages of life. Ideally, new communities should accommodate the changing housing and service needs of residents over time. Demand for services thus remains relatively stable and services can be provided efficiently and predictably. This means that schools, medical clinics, and community centres can be used longer, particularly if they are designed to be adaptable and flexible and programming of services can be

fine-tuned to local needs and made increasingly effective over time.

Designing communities with a broad mix of housing types that accommodate residents at different stages of life also benefits community associations by providing a more reliable base of members and volunteers. Interviews with community association leaders indicated that a significant motivation for families with children to maintain a community association membership is the fact that CA's require that a membership be held in order for children to take part in programs. For this reason families with children or teens often constitute a significant proportion of total memberships. It is advantageous for the community association to have a reasonable number of families with children living in the community. Yet it is also desirable to have other demographic groups in the community. The Presidents' Meeting revealed that community associations give high priority to attracting committed volunteers. Retired people and seniors often have the time and skills to volunteer in community associations. And young adults often get involved in coaching. Thus, it is in the interest of community associations to operate within a community that provides housing for a variety of ages, income levels, and lifestyles.

**Social Benefits.** It is advantageous for people to have regular contact and interaction with people of different ages. This type of social contact provides a basis for understanding between generations, creates awareness in the

**The Possibilities: A Re-design of Edgemont**

A design exercise done at the Faculty of Environmental Design (U. of Calgary) shows how communities can be designed to offer housing types that accommodate people of various life-stages, ages and incomes. *Sustainable Edgemont* is the name they gave to their re-designed community.

**Household Structure**

	Edgemont	Sustainable Edgemont
Married	84%	68%
Lone-Parent	6%	12%
Non-family	10%	20%

**Household Income Distribution**

	Edgemont	Sustainable Edgemont
> \$10,000	2%	5%
\$10-19,999	3%	8%
\$20-29,999	4%	11%
\$30-39,999	4%	13%
\$40-49,999	7%	13%
\$50-59,999	7%	12%
\$60-69,999	10%	10%
< \$70,000	63%	29%
Ave. Income	\$98,703	\$58,211

**Age Distribution**

	Edgemont	Sustainable Edgemont
0 – 4	9%	8%
5 – 14	19%	14%
15 – 19	8%	6%
20 – 24	5%	8%
25 – 44	40%	40%
45 – 54	12%	10%
55 – 64	4%	6%
65+	3%	8%

Source: Perks et al, *Edgemont II: A Study in Sustainable Community Form*. University of Calgary, Centre for Livable Communities, 1994.

young of what it means to be older, and interjects youthful optimism and vigour into the lives of the elderly. Intergenerational discourse is a key ingredient for a just and healthy society. The same may also be said for interaction between people of different socio-economic groups. We benefit from communities that facilitate this interaction.

The availability of a range of housing types within a community gives family members the ability to maintain separate residences (based on housing needs and lifecycle) but still live close to one another. Thus, while elders and their adult children (possibly with their own offspring) may have very different housing needs, they can still live within the same community. Families can then retain tight support networks and assist one another with childcare and health care. This may be particularly important in light of the current trend of government cutbacks in health and social services. It is also efficient from a funding perspective since families would be able to provide for more of their daily needs than if separated by greater distances.

The community of Edgemont has been designed to take lifecycle into account. It provides, “rental apartments, a retirement lodge and multi-family housing that allow residents to stay in the community as their housing needs change.”<sup>15</sup> Yet, as a study by Perks, Kirby and Witton-Clark demonstrates, Edgemont could have been designed more sustainably to house a more

equitable distribution of ages and incomes while still maintaining its residential character.

Perks et al's design achieves this distribution of ages and incomes using a relatively even distribution of housing types. Their design is an excellent example of what can be achieved by accommodating a variety of housing needs within one community and we refer to it here as an example of how communities can be designed around the concept of lifecycles. However, we recognize that the City of Calgary's *Sustainable Suburbs Study* provides reasonable design guidelines that accommodate the preference toward single-family housing in Calgary.

### **What to look for**

The *Sustainable Suburbs Study* provides the following guidelines to encourage a wider choice of housing types:

- 20 percent of all dwelling units in a community should be other than single family
- The percentage of multi-family units in a neighbourhood should be limited to a maximum of approximately 60 percent
- Architectural styles and finishes of residential buildings on a street should be compatible with those nearby
- Buildings should be predominantly oriented toward the street.

---

<sup>15</sup> Calgary Herald, December 12, 1998



To these we add:

- Multi-family residential development should not be placed solely in the least attractive areas of the site, adjacent to the major arterials and freeways for example, although multi-family developments are often used effectively for screening street noise from the community or providing a sympathetic transition between incompatible land uses.

### ***3. Affordable housing should be provided in all communities.***

#### **Discussion**

Ideally, each new community should have a full range of housing types that allow people the option of staying within the community through out their lifecycle. This means that, as one's housing needs change, suitable accommodation can still be found within the community one lives in. Board members from Silver Springs and Edgemont community associations stated that residents of these communities have a wider range of housing types to choose from when their housing needs change. However, one board member claimed that Edgemont still needs more rental apartments to accommodate people who cannot afford a home but want to live in the community.

Our study found that home ownership seems to be positively correlated to

participation in the community association. Residents who own homes are likely to remain in the community for the long term because they have made a significant financial investment in the community. Longevity of tenure within a community may allow residents to form stronger emotional attachments to it. Our study also discovered that you don't need a community with 90% home ownership to have a strong community association. There are communities in Calgary with 50-70% home ownership that have above average (greater than 20%) participation rates.

**What to look for:**

- There should be some provision of affordable housing in all communities.
- Lower-cost housing should not be clustered or isolated within the community but distributed throughout it.
- Affordable housing (equity and rental) should be compatible, both in appearance and form, with other housing in the community. It should not take the form of a mega-residential development. Developments of this size tend to evoke NIMBY attitudes and community opposition.

#### *4. The community plan should create a unique sense of place for local residents.*

##### **Discussion**

Community plans should reflect the vital role that public space plays in building a sense of community. Public space is defined broadly in this report and includes land held by municipalities (municipal, school and environmental reserve) and Crown land. As such, public space includes the following:

- parks and environmental reserves;
- joint-use sites;
- pedestrian-bicycle circulation system;
- the community association site;<sup>16</sup>
- hockey rinks, playing fields, tennis courts, recreation centres;
- public libraries,
- plazas or open-air markets, community gardens

A critical function of public space is to help create a local sense of place and identity. Public space can help accomplish this by providing places for people to relax and socialize on a regular basis. Opportunities for this type

---

<sup>16</sup> Land held by a residents association represents an interesting challenge in terms of defining whether or not this land can be considered public space. Technically, land owned by a residents association is private land that can only be used by member of the residents association. However, in some communities, public “greenways” and tot lots are available for public use.



**Public Space must be an Organizing Principle for Community Design**

*“It is not enough to make attractive streets and places for pedestrian. Public space must be an organizing principle for the city, for its urban design, architecture and planning.”*  
(Crowhurst & Leonard, p.28-47)

**Space for Informal Activities is Vital**

Toronto’s CityPlan recommends that *“all future City-initiated centres should consider the need for flexible community-controlled space and make some space available to local groups and agencies at nominal rent. Making space available to residents for informal community activities is critical to enabling people to identify and meet many of their own needs.”*  
(City of Toronto, CityPlan p.310-311)

of activity should be possible close to where people live. Meaningful public space should be part of every Calgary community. Calgarians should not have to commute to enjoy the simple pleasures of city life such as having a cup of coffee and reading the paper, watching a group of children play, or relaxing on a shaded park bench.

**What to look for:**

- Priority should be given to public space in the community plan. The layout of civic spaces (recreational parks, joint-use sites, natural areas, and community core) should be unified and understandable. The layout of the community should incorporate the surrounding natural assets.
- Public space should be ***formative not ancillary:***
  - Community plans should begin with the layout of public space.
  - Public space should not be assembled using left over pieces of land once the road network, residential and commercial land uses are defined.
- Public space should be ***central not peripheral:***
  - Public space should form the heart of the community. When the majority of public space is devoted to functional needs only, such as noise buffers along major arterials and sports fields at joint-use sites, 'placelessness' and anonymity may result.
- Public space should be ***integrated not segregated:***
  - Public space should be a vital part of the fabric of the community.

- A network of public space, in the form of natural corridors and a pedestrian circulation system, should occur throughout the development.
- The street pattern should respect the topography of the site and any environmentally sensitive areas. Steps should be taken to minimize ravine and creek crossings.
- Neighbourhood nodes and community core should be linked to the pedestrian/bicycle circulation system.

### ***5. Residents should have easy access the community centre***

#### **Discussion**

The community association building, or the “community centre”, can be a key element in a vibrant, integrated community core. It represents civic virtues and provides opportunities to recreate or socialize while one is out on the other errands of life. One could drop in to the community centre before getting groceries if both the grocery store and the community centre are at the community core. So, to maximize opportunities for residents to use and participate in the community association, the community centre should be centrally located and strategically placed within the new community.

Wherever possible, the community centre should be located in the core area so that the majority of residents are within walking distance of the centre, or are close enough to transit routes that converge on the core area. The

**CA Should Be Centrally Located and Strategically Placed**

The community centre should be located at the community core whenever possible. The community centre, then, will be located where residents gather to shop, work, recreate, or catch public transit and will be most accessible. The community core acts as the focal point and is the place where the public and private lives of residents come together. In its highest form, the community core blends private uses (retail, office, residential) with civic uses (libraries, schools, churches, community centre, parks and open space). It also provides residents with opportunities for public democratic expression, recreation, and interaction.

community centre should be located in an area where elderly people and people with disabilities can gain access to it. People who do not own a vehicle as well as the elderly and disabled do not want to be segregated from others, nor do they want to live far from the services located at the neighbourhood nodes or community core. Proximity to local businesses, public and volunteer services will be particularly important for these people.

Where natural features divide a large community, or where it is difficult to assemble enough land for a community centre (generally four or more acres of Municipal Reserve land), it may be preferable to distribute community facilities throughout the community on smaller parcels of land. For example, the community hall could be located at the core area on a smaller portion of Municipal Reserve land, and the remaining community facilities such as hockey rinks, tennis courts, swimming pools, or community gardens, could be located at other joint-use sites throughout the community.

**What to look for:**

- A significant portion of the total population of the community should reside within 500 meters, or a reasonable walk, of the community centre.
- The community centre should be connected to the pedestrian and cycling routes that are proposed for the new community. The pedestrian circulation system should facilitate access to transit. Since

both pedestrian and transit routes will converge on the community core, the community centre will be ideally located for pedestrians and cyclists.<sup>17</sup>

- The community centre should be placed on a transit route, preferably at the terminus or confluence of more than one transit line. The community centre should be near where people typically change their mode of transportation.
- The road network in the community core should allow a variety of entry points into the community core from adjacent residential areas (e.g., modified grid). Road access to the core area should not be limited to collector streets only. This would provide a finer grained circulation pattern in the core area and enable more on-street parking stalls to be accommodated, thus reducing the need for and cost of off-street parking.

---

<sup>17</sup> Both the Calgary Sustainable Suburbs Study and the Transit Friendly Design Guide encourage the design of new suburban developments where 85% of residents would live within 300 meters of a transit stop.

## Layer Three - The Neighbourhood

### *Location of the Community Centre*

#### **Building community through associations**

We take inspiration from the three types of “associations” identified by John McKnight, in *The Careless Society*. *Formal associations* include community associations, church groups, and sports teams. *Informal associations* include interest groups, volunteer projects, and groups of friends. *Places of interaction and exchange* include coffee shops, pubs, cafes, and farmer’s markets.

(J.McKnight, *The Careless Society*, Harper Collins, 1995, pp. 115-123)

The following principles can be used to evaluate the location of the community centre in relation to Outline, Context and Density Phasing Plans:

#### ***1. The community centre should be surrounded by compatible land uses***

#### **Discussion**

Building a sense of place within a new community requires that certain manmade institutions and natural features are present.<sup>18</sup> The following are examples of institutions and features that figure prominently in the civic life of Calgarians:

<b>Institutional</b>	<b>Commercial</b>	<b>The Environment</b>
Churches and places of worship	Grocery store and/or farmer’s market	Community gardens
Community association centre	Coffee shop	Prominent landscape features: e.g. river valley, escarpment, lakes, rivers
Educational institutions	Book store	
Public library	Theatre	
Public recreation centre	Ice cream shop	
Public square and/or festival space	Exhibition space	

<sup>18</sup> William R. Morrish, and Catherine R. Brown, *Planning to Stay: Learning to see the physical features of your neighbourhood*, Milkweek Editions, 1994, p. 67.

### **Flexible Zoning Helps Create Dynamic Communities**

Direct Control zoning can be used to facilitate the development of unique and sensitively planned community nodes. *“All or part of the community area, neighbourhood nodes, and other sensitive land use area may be designated [a DC district] in order that land use requirements can be customized to the specific needs of the community plan.”*

(City of Calgary, East Springbank II Community Plan, p. 29)

Each one of these used provides an opportunity for residents to gather and socialize. Each use provides a forum for potential contact with other residents. While interactions can occur anywhere in the community, they are more likely to happen at places designed to facilitate public gathering and exchange. Therefore, if the goal is to build a sense of community through the interaction of local residents, it is necessary to design our communities so that there are places for this to happen. These places provide *reasons* for people to gather. They are particularly effective when clustered together so residents have an identifiable area where they can go to participate in the life of their community.

#### **What to look for:**

- The following land uses are preferred adjacent to or near a community centre:
  - **Natural amenities** such as escarpments, rivers, creeks, and wooded areas can contribute to a local identity and are compatible adjacent to the community centre. In some cases, natural landscapes can be carefully integrated into a community core (e.g. a small wetland or riparian area, a stand of trees, or a small lake). Natural areas are compatible with human settlements as long as development is done in such a way as to preserve these natural features.
  - **Public space and amenities** like public plazas, squares, playgrounds, promenades, as well as reservoirs and storm catchment

basins.

- **Commercial and mixed residential-commercial** development. Appropriate commercial development includes retail & service, food & beverage, office, and light industrial.
  - **Higher density housing** such as semi-detached, townhouses, condominiums, retirement homes. The objective is to have residential densities increasing as you move toward the community core and neighbourhood nodes.
  - **Joint-use sites** allow a community association to share parking, playing fields, and/or recreational facilities with a local school. Opportunities also exist for a community centre to share parking space if the building is located next to commercial development.
- If the community centre is located in a neighbourhood node, the surrounding land uses should be supportive of the community centre. At the very least, the neighbourhood node should include a joint-use site, provision for higher residential density, and some commercial activity.

## Layer Four - The Community Centre

### *1. The design of a community centre should be flexible, adaptable, and allow for future expansion.*

#### **Adaptability, Access, and Functionality Figure in Community Centre Design**

Residents of Arbour Lake were very involved with Melcor (the developer) in the planning and design of their community centre. The centre houses both the resident's association and the community association. Three broad objectives guided the design of the centre:

1. **adaptability** over time,
2. **handicapped access**, and
3. **functionality** for a variety of programs and services.

#### **Hall Rentals Directed At User Groups**

Some community associations have made a concerted effort to rent out their facilities to groups that require large, flexible spaces like martial arts or dance groups. Hall rentals are a significant source of revenue for these associations. Other communities focus on users that require both a hall and a well-equipped kitchen for such things as weddings, banquets, annual general meetings, etc

#### **Discussion**

Of the 12 community associations (CA's) interviewed, eight (75%) communities indicated that their building would need to be either expanded or modified internally to meet the current demand for programs and services (see Table 10). Some CA's operate in buildings that are over 20 years old and are no longer able to meet the present needs within their community. Several communities expressed frustration with the lack of storage space. Other communities are seeking to redesign the internal floor layout of their current facilities to accommodate the changing needs of local residents and groups that rent space in their community centre. For example, Calgary Marlborough Community Association is planning a major redesign of their building. They intend to convert their gymnasium into a two-floor structure that will increase the floor area of their building by 60%. The existing gymnasium will be converted to a pre-school facility, conference room, expanded kitchen, and a multi-purpose recreation room. This project is being done to better serve the needs of their membership.

We recommend that the community centre be well designed in terms of

legibility and functionality so that the space inside the building can be programmed for a variety of uses and events. A well-designed building will continue to be highly utilized by local residents, as needs change over time. Our research has shown that building design is a key determinant of the range of programs that can be offered at a community centre. In addition, the site for the community centre should be large enough so that the building can be expanded in future years, perhaps in planned stages.

The average size of Calgary community centres is shown in Table 9.

**Table 9: Average Size of Community Centres in Calgary  
(52 communities reporting)**

Location	Population	Total Dwellings	CA Memberships	Building Size (ft <sup>2</sup> ) *	Size per resident (ft <sup>2</sup> )	Size per household (ft <sup>2</sup> )
Inner City	4,239	2,243	242	4,420	1.1	2.2
Inner Suburb	5,564	2,356	305	11,266	2.0	4.7
Outer Suburb	9,850	3,358	630	9,475	0.9	2.7
New Suburb	12,190	3,748	787	8,845	0.8	2.4
<b>City-wide</b>	<b>7,138</b>	<b>2,765</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>8,508</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>3.1</b>

\* NOTE: Building size includes internal usable space (usually referred to as net leasable area). Gross floor area (building envelope) is typically 25% larger than net leasable area.

Based on a survey of 52 community associations, the average size of a community centre in Calgary is approximately 8,500 ft<sup>2</sup>. Generally, a

**Dance Studios Increase the Rentability of Community Centres**

Community centres that have a dance studio are very popular. A dance studio can be used for a variety of activities such as yoga, martial arts, jazz dance, aerobics, and popular dance. A dance studio is also easily adapted to demographic changes in the community – a key concern in communities that are predominantly composed of single-detached homes.

community centre of this size should be adequate for just over 7,000 residents (approximately 2,800 households). To help communicate the relationship between the size of a community centre and the community population it serves we have presented the floor area of the building on a per-resident and a per-household basis. The city-wide averages indicate that a community centre should have 1.2 ft<sup>2</sup> per local resident. This figure can also be expressed as 3.1 ft<sup>2</sup> per household. Thus, a community association with 1,000 household memberships would require a community centre with 20,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of internal useable floor space. A community of 19,000 residents requires a community centre of just under 23,000 ft<sup>2</sup>, and a community of 4,500 dwelling units requires a community centre of 14,000 ft<sup>2</sup>.

To derive the gross floor area of the community centre, these figures need to be multiplied by 1.33 (a 25% increase). This will give us gross floor area that includes such things as hallways, elevators, as well as the space taken up by internal and perimeter walls (non-useable space). A generally accepted figure in the building industry is that the net useable area of a building is about 75% of the gross floor area. Thus, 14,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of net useable floor space represents 18,620 ft<sup>2</sup> of gross floor area.

### An Example: Community Centres in Seattle

In Seattle, five new community centres have been built since 1992. These buildings average 19,000 ft<sup>2</sup> and include:

- a full-size gymnasium
- space for daycare or playschool
- several multipurpose and activity rooms
- a kitchen, and
- a lobby, which may be programmed for art exhibitions or receptions.

(Cascadia Forum: A Regional Journal of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Washington, Vol. 1, #2, May 1994.)

**Table 10: Adequacy of Community Facilities  
(12 communities interviewed)**

Community Association	<i>Do you have enough space to accommodate existing programs?</i>	<i>Do you rent out space in the community centre to other organizations?</i>	Building Size (ft <sup>2</sup> )
Bankview	Yes, but hall needs renovations and larger parking lot	Yes	3,544
Sunalta	Yes, but renovations required	Yes	1,920
Chinook Park-Kelvin Grove-Eagle Ridge	No, need facility about at least twice as large	Yes	3,000
Southview	Yes, facility meets current needs	Yes	2,760
Woodcreek	No, current facilities too small	Yes, but small size restricts marketability	800
Silver Springs	No, would like to expand facility as it is booked 7 days per week	Yes	7,945
Calgary Marlborough	No, they are planning to expand the facility to 20,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	Yes	13,684
Huntington Hills	No, hall needs to be expanded and would like a gymnasium	Yes	50,868
Mid-Sun	No, would like to expand gymn and storage space	Yes	13,800
Mckenzie Lake	No, expansion and renovation is required	Yes	8,780
Arbour Lake	Yes, but facility can easily be expanded by 3,500 sq. ft.	Yes	3,150
Edgemont	No, facility fully booked evenings & weekends, general use room needs expansion	Yes	7,945

### **Vancouver Case Study: Rentability and Community Centre Design**

In 1996, the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation commissioned a study of community recreation centres in the city. They discovered that well-designed spaces are more heavily booked than other spaces. According to the study, spaces that are the most popular have a clean appearance and offer good lighting and acoustics. Gymnasiums are heavily booked and average around 5,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. Multipurpose rooms are very popular if they are between 800 and 2,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. The availability of kitchens in the community centre will make multipurpose rooms more attractive for social events. Meeting rooms are popular if they range between 250-800 ft<sup>2</sup>. Meeting rooms are important because they free up valuable space in larger rooms. In Vancouver, music rooms (100-150 ft<sup>2</sup>) have become very popular as well.

(Measuring Performance: Recreation Facilities in Vancouver (1996), City of Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, pp. 7-22.)

Our research also revealed that some community centres are large enough to offer facilities found in regional recreation centres. A community centre equipped with indoor arenas, curling rinks and large gymnasiums may serve a population base that extends beyond the boundaries of the community. On the other hand, community centres that are too small for the population base (e.g. Woodcreek), or are too limited in the facilities they offer (e.g. Chinook Park), may not be meeting the programming and servicing needs of local residents. While community centres in Calgary vary according to appearance, building size and internal layout, our research revealed that most community centres have a hall, one or more meeting rooms, and a kitchen.

The design of community centres should be adaptable over time and respond to the changing needs of community members as well as groups that rent space in the centre. Meeting rooms and the community hall should be flexible enough to accommodate a variety of uses. According to our research, the marketability of a community centre is increased if it has the following facilities:

- A large hall that can seat at least 200 people (city-wide median is 225);
- At least one meeting room that can be programmed for a variety of uses;
- A multipurpose space of that can be used as a dance studio;
- Change rooms and shower;
- A well-equipped kitchen able to cater large gatherings; and,
- Adequate parking nearby.

**What to look for:**

- The community centre should be designed and located on the site to facilitate future expansions
- The design of the community centre should maximize flexibility of use and adaptability to changing needs over time. Community lifecycle should be considered in the design process.
- The design of the community centre should consider the significance of rental revenue in community association finances. Revenues from facility rentals (halls and arenas), on average, make up 50% of total community association revenue. If rental revenue is expected to make a significant contribution to community association finances, the design of the building should include facilities that can be rented.
- Buildings should be designed to minimize ongoing costs of maintenance and upkeep. This is particularly important due to restrictions placed on the use of government grants to community associations. Community associations are generally only able to apply grants to capital expenditures like building construction. They are not able to use grant money for operational costs. For this reason, building designs that minimize ongoing maintenance and operating costs are desirable, even if they necessitate greater initial capital expenditures at the time of construction.
- Shared use of facilities should be explored.

***2. The Architecture of the community centre should reflect its civic importance and enhance the sense of place and identity of the community.***



Roundhouse Community Centre, Vancouver: An excellent example of adaptive re-use of an historic building. The building contributes significantly to residents' sense of place and community and reflects the civic importance of the community centre.

While we recognize the funding limitations Calgary community associations face, in an ideal community the architecture of the community centre building would reflect its status as an important building in the community. Also, the community centre is a place for social interaction, democratic expression and grassroots governance. The architecture of the centre should represent these civic virtues, enhance sense of place and identity of the community and, in and of itself, attract people to the centre.

The adaptive re-use of existing structures, particularly structures of heritage value, can be an effective and attractive way to accomplish these objectives. In Calgary, barns, grain elevators, warehouses, or other industrial or agricultural buildings, may represent opportunities of this kind in new communities.

## 9 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this report we identify community design criteria that will minimize barriers to participation in community associations (CAs), in particular, and civic life, in general. The report will be used predominantly by the Federation of Calgary Communities to evaluate new community development proposals in Calgary. We hope it will also be of use to city planners, developers, community association board members, and our patrons, the Alberta Real Estate Foundation.

The criteria we put forth comes from primary data collected through:

- an 'Issue Identification Survey' distributed to Calgary CA board members;
- interviews with board members;
- site visits to community centres; and,
- proceedings from the Presidents Meeting in May, 1998.

Sometimes the criteria we present flows directly from recommendations made by community association board members. Other times, board members only spoke of the issues and challenges facing their communities and we then had to synthesise what we know of Calgary, its community associations, and the body of literature and ideas concerning community

design, to develop design criteria that helps mitigate these issues in new communities.

Community design that facilitates walking in neighbourhoods, discussions over fences, relationships between shopkeepers and patrons, and exchanges of all kinds between people - all elements of civic life - will benefit not only community associations but also any groups that rely on volunteers.

# 10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

## *Secondary Sources*

- Bruin, C. & Cook, C.. "Understanding Constraints and Residential Satisfaction among Low-Income Single Parent Families." *Environment and Behaviour*, Vol.29, No.4, July 1998, pp.532-553.
- Crowhurst-Lennard, Suzzane H. & Lennard, Henry L.. *Liveable Cities Observed: A Source Book of Images and Ideas*. Gondolier Press, 1995
- Davies, WKD & Townsend, IJ. *How do Community Associations Vary? The Structure of Community Associations in Calgary, Alberta*. Urban Studies, Vol. 31, No. 10, 1994, pp. 1739-1761
- Engwicht, David. *Reclaiming our Cities and Towns: Better Living with Less Traffic*. New Society Publishers: Gabriola Island, BC, 1993
- Friedman, A., J.Steffel, & J.Frechette. Planning for Suburban Evolution. *Plan Canada*, July 1998, pp. 35-44
- Hutchinson, Peggy. "Community Development in Recreation Services: Why Not." *Plan Canada*, January 1998, pp.5-7
- Langdon, Philip. *A Better Place to Live: Reshaping the American Suburb*, The University of Massachusetts Press, 1994.
- Levine & Kuo-Sullivan. "Where does the Community Grow? The Social Context Created by nature in Urban Public Housing." *Environment and Behaviour*, Vol. 29, No.4, July 1997, pp.468-494.
- McKnight, John. *The Careless Society*, Harper Collins Publishers, 1995
- McIllory, A. & McMarland, Bryan, A.. "Creating Safer Communities: Is Intensification the Answer?" *Plan Canada*, March 1996, pp.20-24.
- William R. Morrish, and Catherine R. Brown, *Planning to Stay: Learning to see the physical features of your neighbourhood*, Milkweek Editions, 1994
- Nassar, J. & Julian, D. "The Psychological Sense of Community in the Neighbourhood" *APA Journal*, Spring, 1995, pp.178-185.
- Nelson, J. & Faulkner, D. "Socially Responsible Neighbourhood Design: Meeting the Human Needs in the Community", *Plan Canada*, March 1996, pp.12-13.

Sparrow, Kate. "Leisure Seizure." *Plan Canada*, January 1998, pp. 8-13.

Van der Ryn, Sim & Calthorpe, Peter. *Sustainable Communities: A New Design Synthesis for Cities, Suburbs, and Towns*. Sierra Club Books: San Francisco, 1986.

Wilson, G. & Baldassare, M. "Overall 'Sense of Community' in a Suburban Region: The Effects of Localism, Privacy, and Urbanization." *Environment and Behaviour*, Vol.28, No.1 Jan. 1996, pp.27-43.

*Calgary Community Associations: Social and Functional Differentiation (1992)*, a Master's project at Department of Geography, University of Calgary

## **Planning Documents**

*Calgary Sustainable Suburbs Plan (1985)*

*Edmonton Suburban Neighbourhood Design Principles*

*Toronto CityPlan (1991)*

*Calgary Transit Friendly Design Guide*

Community Plans for Midnapore III (1997), Cranston (1998), and East Springbank II (1998)

*Community Greenways Plan for British Columbia*

A variety of CMHC reports concerning the development of sustainable communities

*Edgemont II: A Study in Sustainable Community Form (1994)*, a Master's project at Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary

## **Appendix A: Issue Identification Survey**

## **Appendix B Community Profiles Spreadsheet**

[A digital copy of this spreadsheet is available from the Federation of Calgary Communities upon request. It is not included in this report because of size constraints.]

## **Appendix C Interviews with 12 Community Associations**