

Plan to encourage more density and variety **New blueprint promotes Beltline**

Say goodbye to Connaught, so long to Victoria Park. These venerable inner-city communities are being amalgamated into one, to be called the Beltline.

Stretching from 14 St. on the west to the Elbow River in the east, bounded on the north by the CPR tracks and on the south by trendy 17 Ave., the Beltline is currently home to about 17,000 people, a number that is expected to double in the next 10 to 15 years.

A report tabled to city council entitled The Blueprint for the Beltline, says the increased population will promote investment and support a broader range of activities, services and amenities in the area.

Don Schultz, a planner with the downtown and inner-city section of the Calgary Planning Commission, says the vision for the Beltline is best summed up in the purpose statement from the Connaught and Victoria Park communities — to promote quality, variety and density.

A thriving inner-city core is vital to the economic and cultural health of every city and as Calgary grows and diversifies, the Beltline will become a focal point of the maturation process.

“By promoting a population increase in the area, we anticipate more retail and commercial services, which in turn justifies retaining more public services such as parks, recreation facilities and schools,” says Schultz, noting the Calgary Board of Education’s recent decision to remove Connaught School from a list of schools to be closed.

“One of the reasons is anticipated growth in the area.”

Part of the vision is to fine tune the eclectic nature of the area.

“The notion of variety is very important in the community,” says Schultz.

“We’re not taking a blanket zoning approach where you see one size fits all. The policies will support retention of heritage-style buildings as well as promote a wide variety of (new) architectural styles.”

The Blueprint for The Beltline report — which runs in excess of 80 pages — will be reviewed by council in June and will quite likely get the seal of approval, which is good news for people living in the area and those wanting to move to the inner city.

Schultz is optimistic the Beltline will become a model community for inner-city development.

“It’s just amazing what you can do in planning a project where everyone is headed in the same direction,” he says. “All of the energy is being directed in a very positive way.”

by **Myke Thomas**
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— File photo

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