

**CITY OF LETHBRIDGE**  
**MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**



**Bylaw 5205, Adopted March 10, 2003**

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Informative:

Originally adopted by By-law No. 4678 as General Municipal Plan, May 8, 1995

Amended by By-law No. 4780, June 3, 1996

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Bylaw 4678 was repealed March 10, 2003 and replaced by Bylaw 5205, March 10, 2003

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

# **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

### **What is it?**

The Municipal Development Plan is a long-range land-use plan. It is used to help guide the City's future growth and physical development, and ensure that our community remains a pleasant and attractive place to live. It deals with 1) how land is used in the city 2) the city's physical form and 3) where the City will grow in the future.

The MDP provides the broad land-use planning framework for the entire city. It is general in nature. More detailed plans for specific areas should reflect the policies and overall intent of the MDP.

### **How can it help us?**

The MDP sets out a vision of how and where we want the community to develop over the next 20-30 years. The vision, goals and policies laid out in the plan can guide City Council in making land-use and development decisions.

The MDP deals with issues in a number of different areas, e.g. housing, economy, environment, transportation, parks and open space. The Plan however is cohesive; policies and actions recommended in each chapter are intended to help achieve the overall vision laid out in the plan. The MDP can thus also serve as a coordinating document for all future City initiatives, to ensure that our actions are consistent with our stated vision.

### **Who prepared the Plan?**

The MDP is a joint effort of a staff steering committee and the Municipal Planning Commission. The Plan is based largely on public input. In a Community Values survey and series of public meetings held in May 1992, over 200 people told us what they like and don't like about living in Lethbridge, and what they would change or improve if they could. The Plan attempts to reflect the community's values, and ensure that we retain those things that make Lethbridge a pleasant and attractive place to live as we move into the future.

### **What does the Plan recommend?**

In terms of future growth directions and overall planning philosophy the Plan does not depart radically from our previous planning documents. We must continue to respond to the anticipated growing demand for non-traditional housing types, and help ensure that services are accessible to residents. The MDP also recommends that we adopt more innovative approaches to using our open spaces in future.

Section 1.3 briefly discusses the Plan's major goals.

### **How is the Plan organized?**

The MDP contains three sections. Section A, the Introduction, includes the Executive Summary, a Community Values summary, and a brief history of the city's development. Section B makes population projections to the year 2020, and discusses the demographic changes we should expect and their potential impacts. Section C consists of six chapters. Each outlines planning goals, discusses critical issues, and recommends policies and actions that could help us achieve our goals.

The first three chapters of Section C are Housing, Residential Land and Urban Form; Economy and Employment; and Environment. These chapters lay out most of the major goals of the Plan. The fourth chapter, Directions of Future Growth, outlines where we should direct our future growth to help us achieve these goals. The last two chapters - Transportation, Water and Sewer; and Parks and Open Space, discuss how our physical infrastructure can help us achieve our vision.

### **Limits of the Plan**

The Plan deals with these different areas from a land use and development perspective, and tries to ensure that the policies and recommended actions outlined in each chapter complement each other and work toward a common vision. The MDP is a land-use plan. It is not, and should not be misconstrued as, an economic development plan, a transportation plan, or a parks and open space plan.

### **"Partnering" with the Community**

The MDP is the community's plan. Public input was important in preparing the plan, and the public will continue to be involved in implementing the plan.

The City would like to co-ordinate its activities with those of the many other groups in the community who are trying to achieve the same goals. Examples of areas or ways in which the City and the community can work together are given in the Housing, Environment, and Economy and Employment chapters.

### **What else is required?**

Each chapter recommends a number of actions that could be undertaken to help achieve our planning goals. Certainly not all these actions could be undertaken at once. It is recommended that the City clearly define what roles it wants to play in helping to achieve these goals, and prepare an action priority list. Work on individual projects could then begin in a logical, co-ordinated fashion, within the context of the overall vision and goals articulated in the MDP.

## **1.2 POPULATION PROJECTIONS AND CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS**

We are projecting a population increase of approximately 20,000 over the next 25 years. This would be a slower rate of growth than we experienced over the past 25 years.

Our population will be significantly older in 25 years than it is now. The large Baby Boom generation, now aged 30-48, will be 56-74 in the year 2020. At a population of 85,000 in 2020 we can anticipate roughly the same number of children we have today at our current population of 65,000.

These demographic changes will affect demand for goods and services. For example, as the Baby Boomers age we may see a significant move away from single detached housing to multi-unit, low-maintenance adult-oriented communities, and "lifestyle" communities such as golf course/residential developments. Aging Baby Boomers are likely to switch from active recreation such as skiing and tennis to more passive activities such as walking, golf, birdwatching and enjoying nature. Overall demand for school space will likely not increase. It will likely increase, however, in new areas where there are currently few schools.

## **1.3 PLANNING GOALS**

### **A. Meeting the community's changing housing needs**

Demand for non-traditional housing types is growing rapidly. It is expected to continue to increase as the "Baby Boomers" age and their children leave home. We must continue to work with developers in their efforts to respond to the changing housing market, to ensure that our community offers the wide range of housing types that our residents want.

### **B. Direct future residential growth to those areas that support efficient and balanced growth**

The City is currently growing in a number of directions including North Lethbridge, Southeast Lethbridge and both north and south in West Lethbridge. Additional growth areas should be evaluated in the context of the planning goals presented in this Plan.

### **C. More services for West Lethbridge residents**

To help improve the level of service in West Lethbridge, it is proposed that we designate larger sites for two service centres - one in the Indian Battle Heights/Ridgewood/Heritage Heights area, the other in the Mountain Heights/RiverStone/River Bend area. These service centres could contain retail and office space, "business industrial" and research activity, day cares, and transit terminals. They could help increase the range of services and employment opportunities in West Lethbridge.

### **D. Downtown as a "people place"**

Our downtown has developed into a strong regional commercial centre, but still has a lot of potential to develop as a "people place".

Our downtown area is large and offers numerous redevelopment and tourism development possibilities. In Galt Gardens we have a beautiful, almost untapped resource which could become the "heart" of the entire community.

More housing downtown and promotion of Galt Gardens as a major activity and social area could transform downtown into a unique and interesting, but relaxing people place, which could be enjoyed by residents and tourists. More people spending time and living downtown would also create more business opportunities, which could further enhance downtown's attractiveness.

### **E. New open spaces**

The river valley and coulees and our extensive park and trail systems give the city much of its character, and help make Lethbridge a pleasant and attractive place to live.

We should continue to provide parks, open spaces, trees and water as integral features of our new residential subdivisions. In future more of our park space might be "passive", containing trees and natural

landscaping. This could help reduce water and maintenance requirements and be more responsive to the recreation demands of an aging population.

#### **F. Protecting the river valley**

The river valley is the city's outstanding natural area. We should continue to protect the fragile soils, topography and ecosystems of the river valley by adhering to the policies of the River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan. With its unique topography and variety of birds and animals, the river valley may also have excellent ecotourism potential.

#### **G. Multi-function open space corridors**

Two types of multi-function open space corridors are proposed in the Plan. One would use the wide rights-of-way alongside our new arterial roadways, the other would combine trails with linear stormwater drainage and treatment systems.

We currently have excellent trail systems for recreational walking and cycling. Our trails do not effectively link different areas of the city, however, and thus do not encourage walking and cycling for transportation. Our wide arterial road rights-of-way in newer areas currently serve only as utility corridors and sound buffer zones. It is recommended that they also be used to develop walking and cycling trails which would link residential villages to each other and to different activity areas. Planting rows or clusters of trees in the rights-of-way could also create attractive borders to our residential villages.

We should also consider developing in our future residential areas linear stormwater drainage and treatment systems which use natural treatment processes. These might be combined with trails to form attractive multi-function open space corridors which could link parks, schools and residential areas with the river valley, making the river valley a more central and prominent feature of the community.

## **2. COMMUNITY VALUES - "THE COMMUNITY WE WANT"**

In a series of public meetings and a survey done in the spring of 1992, Lethbridge residents shared their perceptions about living in Lethbridge now, and described "THE COMMUNITY WE WANT" in the future. As could be expected, a wide range of likes, dislikes and suggestions for change were expressed. General consensus seemed to be reached in many areas however. Some of these are outlined below.

People generally feel very positive about living in Lethbridge, and want to continue to work to make the community an even better place to live.

Residents want to ensure that we maintain a strong and diverse local economy, and continue to create new employment opportunities. Many feel that greater emphasis on local independent business development would benefit the community.

Residents want to retain our "small town" atmosphere and features such as friendliness and concern for others, ease of getting around, and relatively low levels of crime. Many would like to preserve some sense of our past, and when possible use existing resources, including buildings, rather than new ones.

Lethbridge residents enjoy our parks, playgrounds, neighborhood green strips and walking/running/cycling trails, as well as the city's cleanliness and wide, tree-lined streets. Residents are also proud of our range of recreation and cultural facilities and activities, as well as the university and college.

Residents want to ensure that we protect our natural environment, especially our clean air and water and the fragile environments of the river valley and coulees. Many residents would like to see greater use of public transit, as well as bicycle transportation and commuting, and feel that these should be made more convenient and safer.

Lethbridge residents want to continue to promote cultural acceptance and work for justice and equality for all. Residents would also like to help create a stronger sense of community identity and pride. Many residents would like to see more festivals and special events, especially downtown.

The opportunity to participate in the long-range planning of the City was appreciated by residents, and citizen involvement will continue to be an integral part of planning for the future of our community.

In planning for the future we are preparing the community for change. In doing so however, it is important that we retain those existing features and characteristics of Lethbridge that residents enjoy and which make Lethbridge an attractive place to live.



### **3. PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY - HISTORICAL SUMMARY**

Lethbridge originally developed as a tiny coal mining settlement in the 1880's. Initial settlement occurred south of the CPR rail line to Seventh Avenue, from the top of the Oldman River valley east to 13th Street. A small area in the river valley and two areas on the north side were also settled in the early years.

By 1900 agriculture had already started to replace coal mining as the dominant economic activity in the area, and Lethbridge developed primarily as a railway and agriculture service centre.

Rapid physical expansion of the City did not take place until after World War II. Rapid population and economic growth, along with growing car use, resulted in suburbanization and expansion of the city east, north and south. Industries began locating in the new industrial park on the east side of the city, and commercial development spread east along Third Avenue and south along Mayor Magrath Drive.

By the early 1960's downtown had become somewhat isolated on the extreme western edge of the city, and its commercial and cultural influence had begun to wane. The decision by the City in the mid-1960's to make land west of the Oldman River the next area for major residential development dramatically changed the city's urban form, and helped put downtown more in the geographic centre of the city. This has helped re-establish downtown as the commercial and cultural heart of the community.

The rapid residential development of West Lethbridge has also effectively brought the large river valley and coulees into the city. Under the Urban Parks program in the 1980's the river valley was developed extensively for recreation. It now contains a paved trail system for running, walking and cycling; parks with picnic facilities; historical features; a nature reserve; and an interpretive centre. The river valley now serves as the City's major passive recreation area, and is a central and integral part of the community.

Lethbridge grew rapidly in the 1970's, due in large part to the opening of the University of Lethbridge, the growth of Lethbridge Community College, and expansion and diversification of our manufacturing base. Extensive recent commercial developments, especially downtown, and upgrading of our health care facilities have helped to further strengthen and diversify the local economy and firmly establish Lethbridge as a regional commercial, health and advanced education centre for Southern Alberta and Southeastern B.C.

The current population of Lethbridge is approximately 65,000. In 1984 the City annexed 22 sections of land, almost doubling its land area. The City now has sufficient land to accommodate future residential, commercial and industrial development for many years.

West and North Lethbridge have been the City's major residential growth areas over the past twenty years, and will likely continue to be so for some time. Development concept plans have already been prepared for large residential areas in both West and North Lethbridge. These areas are intended to accommodate an additional 25,000 people in West Lethbridge, and 17,000 people in North Lethbridge.

## **B. POPULATION**

## POPULATION HIGHLIGHTS

- 1) It is projected that our population will increase from its current level of approximately 65,000 to 85 - 90,000 by the year 2020. This would be an increase of 20 - 25,000, an average of 800 - 1,000 people per year.
- 2) The City's population is aging, as is the North American population in general. In 2020, at a population of 85,000, Lethbridge would have no more children than it does today. Close to 40% of our population would be over age 55.
- 3) An aging population and small families will likely result in slower population growth in future.
- 4) An aging population will change demand for housing, health care, education and recreation.
- 5) Lethbridge has high numbers of young adults (18-24 year olds) and seniors. These trends will likely continue in future.
- 6) The City's population is currently broken down roughly as follows:

North Lethbridge	35%
South	40%
West	25%
- 7) West Lethbridge has accounted for almost all our population growth in the past ten years.
- 8) West Lethbridge has the youngest population in the city, with only 3% over age 65. South Lethbridge has the oldest population, with 20% over 65.

## 1. Past Population Growth

Over the past 30 years the rate of population growth in Alberta has been significantly higher than that of most other provinces and Canada as a whole. During the 1970's, in particular, Alberta grew very rapidly. Population growth rates in Lethbridge have been quite similar to those of Alberta as a whole (**see Chart 1**). Lethbridge experienced fairly rapid population growth in the 1960's (17.0% for the decade), very rapid growth throughout the 1970's (35.1%) and more moderate growth through the 1980's (12.2%).

**CHART 1 POPULATION GROWTH, ALBERTA AND LETHBRIDGE, 1961-92**

<b>ALBERTA</b>				
	<b>1961</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1991</b>
<b>Population</b>	1,331,944	1,627,874	2,237,724	2,525,200
		<b>1961-71</b>	<b>1971-81</b>	<b>1981-91</b>
<b>10 Year %Growth</b>		22.2%	37.5%	12.8%

<b>LETHBRIDGE</b>				
	<b>1962</b>	<b>1972</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>1992</b>
<b>Population</b>	35,722	41,808	56,500	63,390
		<b>1962-72</b>	<b>1972-82</b>	<b>1982-92</b>
<b>10 Year % Growth</b>		17.0%	35.1%	12.2%

## 2. Lethbridge Population Projections

Fertility rates in Canada are expected to continue to remain low (currently at approximately 1.7 children per family). This is projected to lead to declining rates of population growth over the next few decades. Alberta's rates of growth are projected by Statistics Canada to increase again through the 1990's and start to slow down thereafter, but still remain significantly higher than the Canadian average. If Lethbridge's population growth rate continues to remain at about or just below that of the Province, we could expect population growth rates roughly as follows over the next three decades.

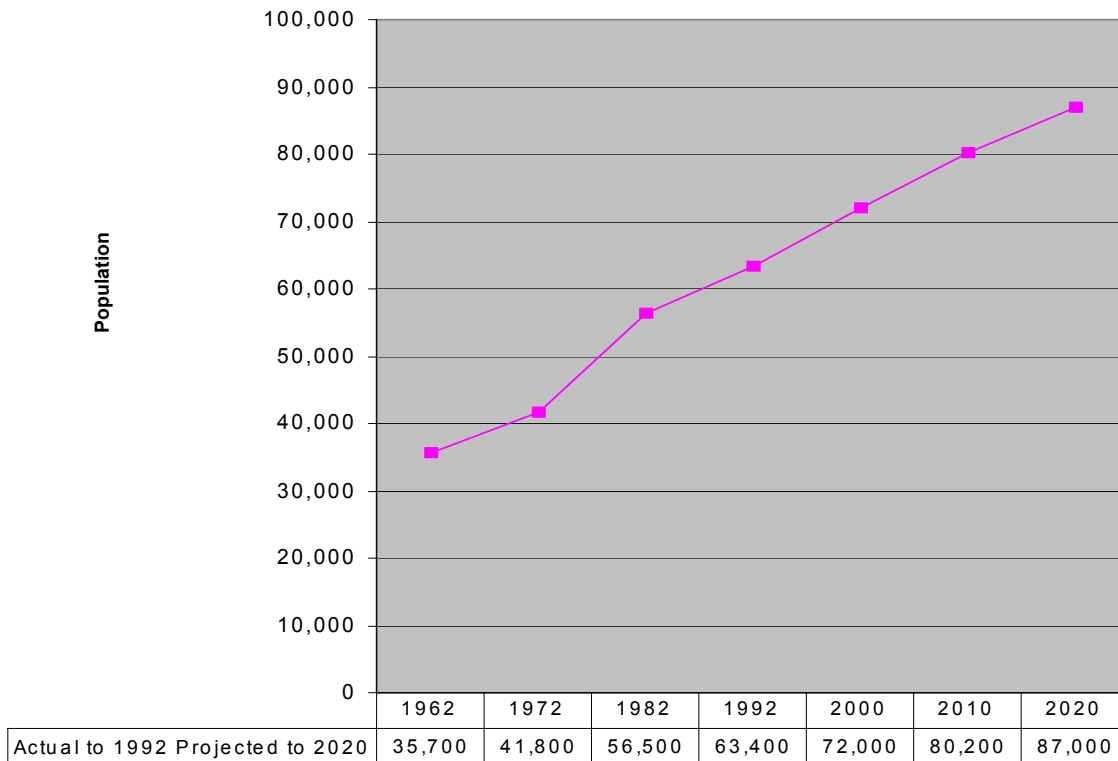
1992-2000	13.5%
2001-2010	11.5%
2011-2020	8.5%

These growth rates would give us the following populations: (**see Graph 1**).

1992	63,390 (actual)
2000	72,000
2010	80,200
2020	87,000

This would be an increase of almost 24,000 people over the next 28 years, or an average growth of approximately 850 people per year. This would represent a total increase of approximately 37% over the total 28 year period, or roughly one-half the rate of growth experienced over the past 30 years. The projected provincial growth rate over the same period would be approximately 40%, the rate for Canada approximately 23%.

**GRAPH 1 Lethbridge Population 1962-2020**



### 3. Impacts of Low Fertility Rates

Fertility rates in Canada peaked in the post World War II 'Baby Boom' years. Approximately one-third of the entire current Canadian population was born between the years 1946 and 1964. These 'boomers' are now aged 27-46.

Following the baby boom fertility rates fell dramatically - to less than 2.0 children per family by 1973, and to 1.7 by the early 1980's. They have remained at about the same level since, and most demographers do not expect to see a dramatic rise in fertility rates in the near future. (The fertility rates in some European countries are as low as 1.33 children per family).

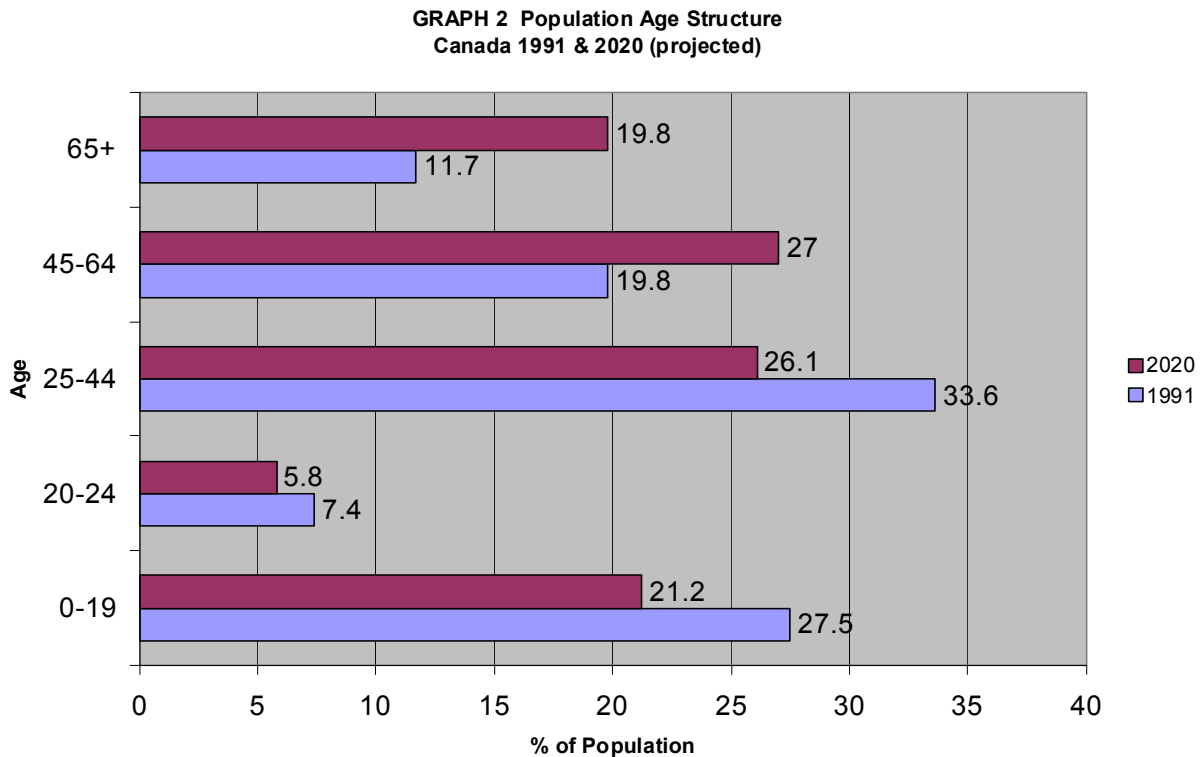
Current fertility levels would lead to a slowdown in population growth in the near future, and eventually, unless immigration to Canada is substantially increased, absolute decreases in Canada's population may occur for the first time in Canada's history.

Absolute decreases will likely not occur within the time frame of this plan (2020), especially in Alberta. However, rates of population growth are expected to start to slow down in Alberta within the next ten years. Slower future growth rates (as shown on the previous page) have been assumed in making future population projections for Lethbridge.

#### 4. Aging of the Canadian Population

Canada's population has started to age, and our current demographic structure indicates that this trend will continue (see **Graph 2**). Demographers project that by 2011 half of Canada's population will be over age forty. (Currently the median age of the Canadian population is approximately 34).

Indeed, as the Baby Boomers grow older our demographic structure will change dramatically. By 2020 the Baby Boomers will be aged 55-74. Canada will have increasingly higher numbers of retirees and a proportionately smaller work force. This will affect supply and demand of employment and labour, housing, schools, health care and various other types of services. Some of the impacts of our aging population will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

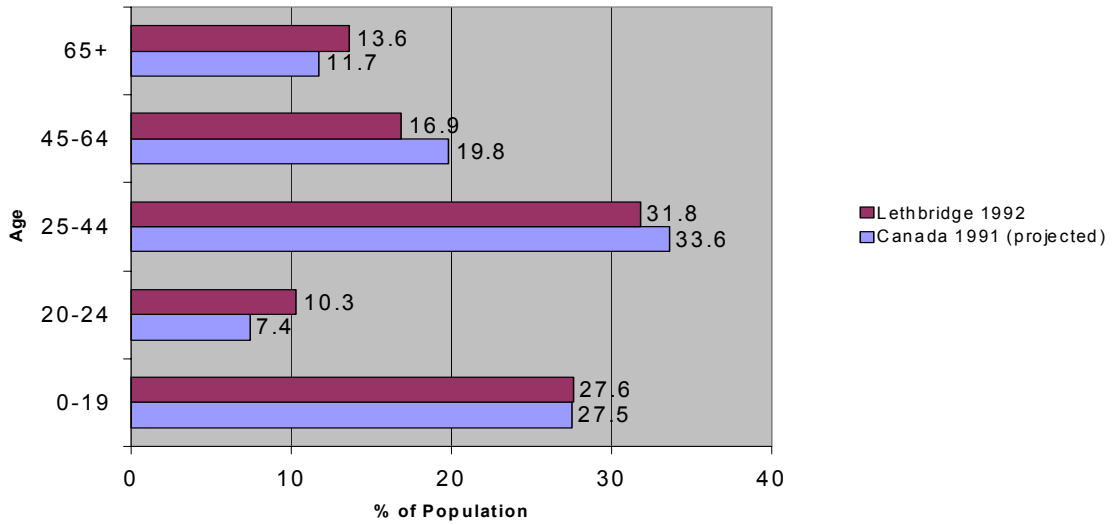


#### 5. Lethbridge Demographic Composition

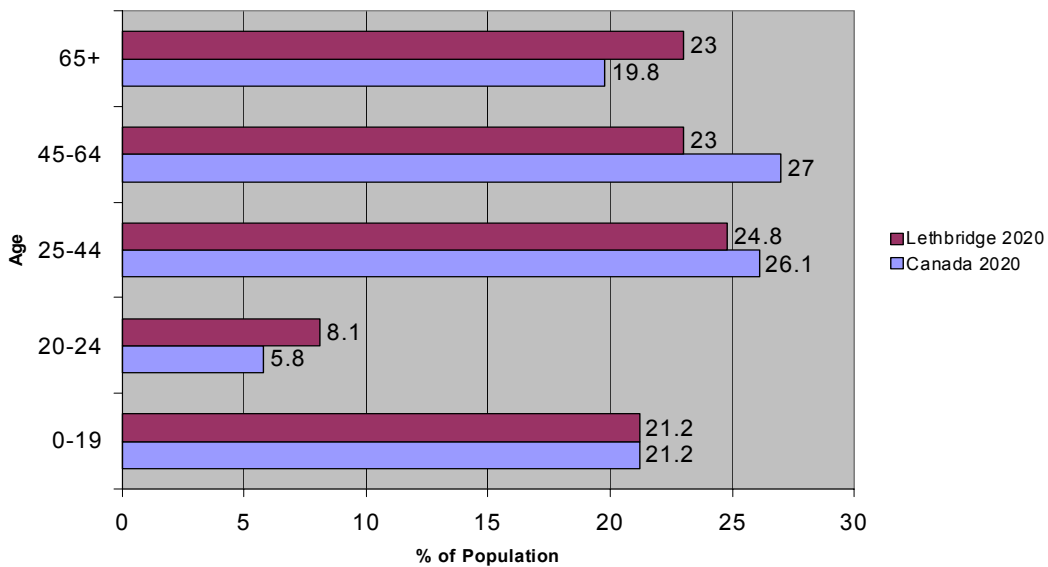
Lethbridge's population age structure has two outstanding features. One is a high percentage of people aged 20-24 (10.3% compared to 7.8% for the Province and 7.4% for Canada). The other is a high percentage of people over 65 (13.6% compared to 9.1% for Alberta and 11.6% for Canada). These percentages are high because Lethbridge functions as both an advanced education centre and a retirement centre, attracting students and seniors from not only Southern Alberta, but also other parts of Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and B.C.

Lethbridge has excellent post-secondary education facilities, as well as excellent services and amenities for seniors, along with a relatively moderate climate. At the same time it retains a pleasant small town atmosphere, with relatively few 'big city' problems. Because of these features Lethbridge will likely continue to function as both an advanced education and retirement centre in the future, which will likely ensure that we continue to have relatively high percentages of people aged 20-24 and over 65. **Graphs 3 and 4** compare Lethbridge population age structure with Canada currently as well as for projected populations to 2020.

**GRAPH 3 Population Age Structure  
Lethbridge 1992/Canada 1991**



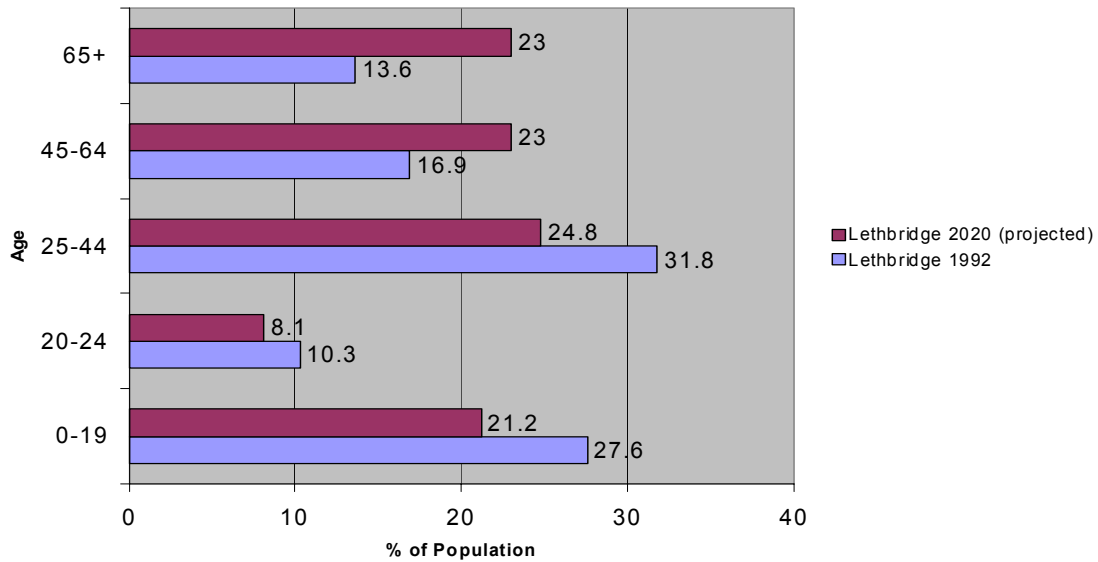
**GRAPH 4 Population Age Structure  
Lethbridge & Canada 2020 (projected)**



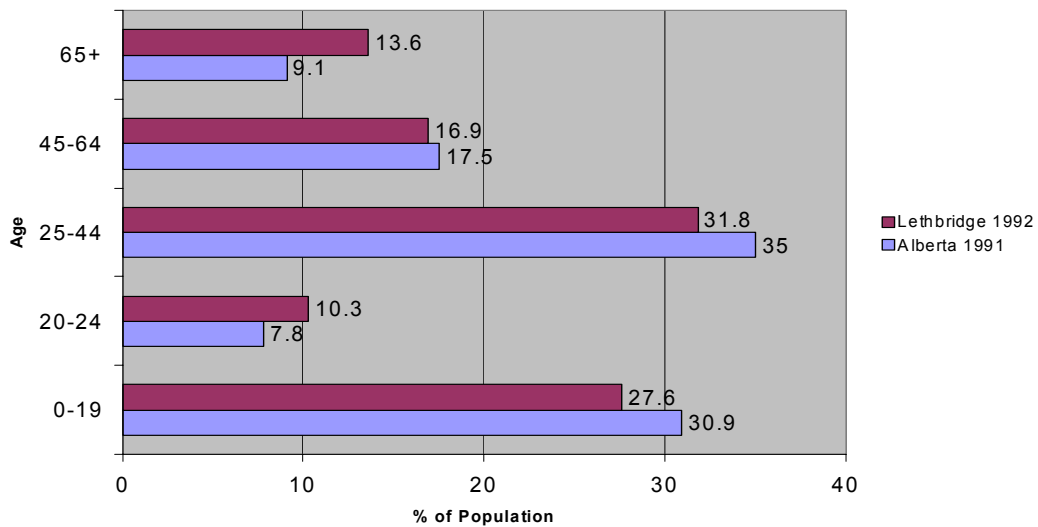
**Graph 5** shows the current age structure of the Lethbridge population compared to what it is projected to be in 2020. It is projected that by 2020 approximately 23% of our population could be over age 65, and another 23% aged 45-64. In other words close to half our population could be over age 45. Currently only 30% of our population is aged 45 or over.

Our local population is currently considerably older than that of the Province as a whole (see **Graph 6**). This may mean that in future Lethbridge will no longer keep pace with the Province's population growth rates. If this is the case, projected populations of 80-85,000 by 2020 may be more realistic than the 87,000 figure shown above.

**GRAPH 5 Population Age Structure  
Lethbridge 1992 & 2020**



**GRAPH 6 Population Age Structure  
Lethbridge 1992/Alberta 1991**



If, on the other hand, higher numbers of the young adults who come to Lethbridge to attend college or university were to remain in the city afterward, we would likely see more babies born here and overall higher rates of population growth. The original projection would then likely be more reasonable. Whether or not young adults choose to stay in Lethbridge will likely depend heavily on the range of job opportunities available to them.

For long-range planning purposes it is probably better to prepare for the higher growth scenario. It is thus recommended that 85-90,000 be adopted as a future population level on which to base our long-range (20-30 year time frame) planning for the city. This population range would be 35-40% greater than our current population level.



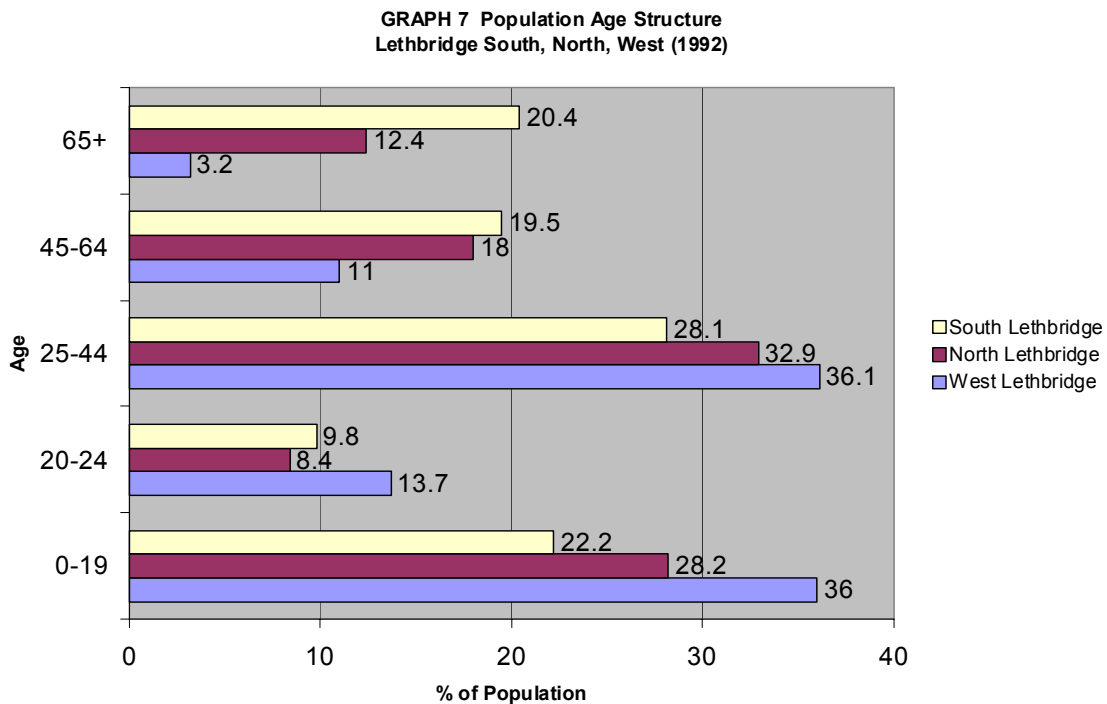
## 6. Geographic Differences in Lethbridge Population

In 1992 the population of Lethbridge was distributed as follows:

North Lethbridge	21,900	
South	26,100	(See MAP 3)
<u>West Lethbridge</u>	<u>15,400</u>	
TOTAL	63,400	

Over the past ten years the City's population has increased by almost 7,000, or about 12%. Almost all of this growth has been absorbed on the West side. Both North and South Lethbridge have experienced almost no population increases over the past decade.

As shown in **Graph 7**, the different areas of Lethbridge have very different population age structures. For example, the population of South Lethbridge is much older than the West Lethbridge population. Currently 20.4% of the people in South Lethbridge are 65 or older, compared to only 3.2% in West Lethbridge.



West Lethbridge has proportionately more people in the 25-44 age group (36.1% compared to 28.1% for the south side), and proportionately more children (19 and under) - 36.0% compared to only 23.2% for South Lethbridge.

The population of North Lethbridge is on the whole older than that of West Lethbridge but younger than that of South Lethbridge. North Lethbridge has proportionately fewer people in the 20-24 age category, likely because the college is located on the south side and the university in West Lethbridge.

Different age groups have different wants and needs and require different types of services. The impacts of geographic differences in the city's population on housing and provision of services will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

**C. GOALS, DISCUSSION, POLICIES  
AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

## **CHAPTER 1            HOUSING, RESIDENTIAL LAND AND URBAN FORM**

### **PLANNING GOALS**

- 1)        Ensure that the community's wide range of housing needs are met.
- 2)        Concentrate, rather than scatter development in new residential areas.
- 3)        More multi-unit housing in central areas of the city.
- 4)        "Balanced" neighborhoods with a mix of housing types and densities.
- 5)        Jobs and services close to residential areas.
- 6)        Affordable home ownership.
- 7)        Adequate and affordable housing for groups with special needs.
- 8)        Clear definition of the roles the City will play in helping to achieve these goals.

## **HOUSING, RESIDENTIAL LAND AND URBAN FORM**

### **1.1 Planning Goal**

**Ensure that the community's wide range of housing needs are met.**

#### **Issue Summary**

A wide variety of housing types and densities are always required by our community to meet the needs of a wide variety of income levels, lifestyles and age groups.

Demand for non-traditional housing is growing very rapidly. We are currently seeing a strong demand for two types of non-traditional housing - "starter" housing on small lots for young families and couples, and adult-oriented multi-unit housing for "empty-nesters". As the "Baby Boom" generation ages, we expect to see a continuing movement from single detached houses to adult-only multi-unit accommodation and other "lifestyle" communities.

We must continue to work with developers to help meet these and other new housing demands, so that residents have access to housing that suits their lifestyles and income levels.

#### **Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Respond to developers' efforts to supply the wide range of housing types and densities that will be required by our community in the future.

## 1.2 Planning Goal

### Concentrate, rather than scatter development in new residential areas.

#### Issue Summary

##### *Directing future growth*

Housing demand will likely slow down in future, as our population ages and rate of population growth decreases. Our large residential land supply will likely accommodate our growth requirements for well over a hundred years. Areas where development has already begun could accommodate an additional 45 - 50,000 people when fully developed. This is at least twice the population increase we are projecting to the year 2020. The challenge facing us now is to direct future growth to these areas to make efficient use of infrastructure and allow these areas to develop into full-fledged neighborhoods.

##### *Scattered development*

West Lethbridge has been our major residential growth area over the past 20 years. Residential development in West Lethbridge to date has been scattered rather than concentrated. For example, all 17,000 residents currently living in West Lethbridge could live within the Varsity and Indian Battle Heights villages. Development however is currently occurring in Indian Battle Heights, Ridgewood, Heritage Heights, Mountain Heights and Paradise Canyon.

##### *Benefits of concentrated development*

This scattered development has resulted in much infrastructure being provided to service relatively few people. On a per capita basis, this infrastructure was expensive to provide and has become expensive to maintain. Concentrating, rather than scattering development, can reduce infrastructure requirements and also help attract the commercial and community services that neighborhoods require.

Concentrated development also makes it easier to provide effective public transit and other alternatives to car use such as walking and cycling trails. This can help reduce driving and thus traffic congestion, air pollution, and road maintenance requirements.

##### *Complete partially developed areas*

The City is currently growing in a number of directions including North Lethbridge, Southeast Lethbridge and both north and south in West Lethbridge. Additional growth areas should be evaluated in the context of the planning goals presented in this Plan. It is normally more efficient to maximize existing infrastructure to delay costs of constructing new infrastructure. More rapid development in growth areas provides the market for support facilities such as schools and convenience commercial, normally expected in residential areas. However, there are

situations when premature development of a new residential area may be warranted to support other policies in this plan.

*North of Indian Battle Heights*

It is recommended that the quarter-section north of Indian Battle Heights be developed as a northerly extension of the Indian Battle Heights village. This area will likely contain a "service centre" along University Drive (see Section 1.5), multi-unit housing, and single detached housing. To encourage continued single detached housing development in the other areas of West Lethbridge listed above, no single detached residential development will be allowed in this area until May 1, 2000.

Future residential growth directions are discussed further in Section 4.2.

**Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Weigh the overall benefits and costs (including the impacts on developments in other areas) of proposals or plans to develop new residential areas that have not been identified in Map 2.
- 2) Monitor our actual population and housing growth rates over time and update future projections to help us plan for future development.
- 3) Monitor our ability to provide infrastructure and protective services to all areas of the city as the city continues to grow.

### 1.3 Planning Goal

#### More multi-unit residential development, for rent or purchase, in central locations.

##### Issue Summary

###### *Demand for downtown housing*

Many people, especially adults with no children, prefer to live in central locations, close to employment opportunities and community amenities. For many years the City has been trying to accommodate these people and also create a more multi-function downtown by encouraging more residential development downtown.

Our downtown has a very large land area, with much potential for higher density residential development. Currently we are seeing a very strong demand for housing downtown, especially adult-oriented condominiums. We are also seeing buildings or parts of buildings that were previously used for other purposes being converted to residential use.

###### *Mixed-use developments "Conversion" possibilities*

Mixed-use developments, with residential units above retail or office space, are becoming much more popular, especially as former second or third storey office space is converted to apartments and condominiums. Land and buildings formerly used for industry or warehousing can often have good conversion potential as well.

Together with efforts by the City and downtown business people, this new housing activity is helping to make downtown more of a "people place". New businesses are also developing which are further contributing to this atmosphere.

###### *Student-oriented housing downtown*

Downtown might also have good potential for student-oriented housing. Downtown is close to U of L and offers convenient public transit service to both U of L and LCC. Students could help downtown become more of a "people place", help create more evening activity, and increase the range of business opportunities downtown.

If significant residential development does occur downtown, in future U of L or LCC might wish to locate off-campus classrooms in the downtown area.

**Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Encourage more housing downtown.
- 2) Encourage student-oriented housing downtown.
- 3) Encourage mixed-use developments combining residential with other uses.
- 4) Encourage "conversion" to residential use of lands and buildings previously used for other purposes.



## 1.4 Planning Goal

**"Balanced" neighborhoods, with a mix of housing types and densities.**

### Issue Summary

#### *"Balanced" neighborhoods*

To avoid the potential social and aesthetic problems that can result from large concentrations of multi-unit housing, we should encourage development of "balanced" neighborhoods with a mix of housing types and densities. Attention to architecture, scale and design can effectively blend different housing types and densities.

Varsity Village is an excellent example of the balanced neighborhood principle applied on a large scale. Higher density housing is dispersed in several clusters throughout the village, with higher concentrations close to the village commercial centre, school sites, and along collector roadways, rather than concentrated in large multi-unit enclaves. This is considered preferable from a social and aesthetic point-of-view.

#### *Integrating higher density housing*

Higher density housing can be effectively integrated with lower density by using similar architectural design and building finish. This calls attention to the similarities between the buildings rather than the differences. Paradise Canyon provides an excellent example of this. Densities can also be increased by adding to a building's depth rather than its width or height, so that it does not dominate the streetscape and dwarf adjacent buildings.

The concept of "transitional density" is used to avoid abrupt changes in density. For example, single detached houses would not normally be located next to a high-rise apartment.

#### *Density bonus system*

A "density bonus" system could be introduced which would allow higher densities to buildings whose architecture and finish would blend into the surrounding neighborhood.

### Policies/Recommended Actions

- 1) Encourage developers to provide and effectively integrate a mix of housing types and densities.
- 2) Create a density bonus system which would allow higher densities to developments whose architecture and finish would effectively blend into the surrounding neighborhood.

## 1.5 Planning Goal

### Jobs and services near residential areas.

#### Issue Summary

In recent years most of our residential growth has occurred in West Lethbridge. This trend is expected to continue over the next twenty-five years.

Development of West Lethbridge has effectively put downtown in the geographic centre of the city, and helped re-establish downtown as the city's commercial and cultural heart. Future development of West Lethbridge should further strengthen downtown, which will benefit the community as a whole.

Most jobs and services in the city, however, are located in South and North Lethbridge. Thus as West Lethbridge grows, more and more people will live further and further from where they work, shop and play. This will result in more driving, which will waste people's time and increase traffic congestion, air pollution, and road maintenance requirements.

Currently we have residential development concept plans in place to accommodate 40-45,000 people in West Lethbridge. None of these however show any commercial sites larger than village-scale, which provide a very basic level of goods and services.

*Proposed West Lethbridge  
"service centres"*

To help ensure that adequate commercial services are available to all West Lethbridge residents it is suggested that we designate larger "service centres" along University Drive in both the north and south ends of West Lethbridge (**see MAP 4**).

These larger service centres proposed for both the north and south ends of West Lethbridge could also contain office space and "business industrial" or research activity. These sites would help to increase the range of goods and services available to West Lethbridge residents and increase employment opportunities on the West side. This could reduce the number of car trips across the river, which could help reduce traffic congestion, air pollution and road maintenance requirements. The proposed locations along University Drive would provide easy access for all West Lethbridge residents.

*"Clean" industries near residential areas*

Demand for industrial land has changed dramatically in recent years, as our economy has become based more on information and services. Many of the new service and information industries do not create noise or odors. As such they do not need to locate in an industrial park, and could possibly be integrated

more closely with new residential areas, in locations such as the service centres proposed above. Heavy industries and those that emit noise, smoke or dust, on the other hand, will continue to be directed to the NE Industrial Area (see Map 5). An employment area has been identified in Southeast Lethbridge that can contain a wide variety of light industrial and commercial uses. **(see MAP 5).**

*Working at home*

Working at home is becoming much more common. It has been made possible in many cases by advanced technology, and necessary in many cases by tough economic conditions. As corporations and governments continue to "downsize", self-employment will likely continue to increase, and more employees and self-employed people will likely work at home.

*Advantages of home employment*

Home employment can have many advantages to both individuals and communities. By reducing operating costs, it can enable more small businesses to start up and survive. It can also create economic opportunities for people with limited mobility. Home employment also reduces driving, especially at rush-hour.

"Cottage industry" home occupations can produce a wide variety of local crafts for sale in farmers' markets or flea markets. Markets specializing in local crafts can be a major tourism generator. Cottage industry home occupations could thus help increase tourism in the city.

*Approving home occupations*

Recognizing the many advantages of home employment, the City generally approves home occupations except in those cases where it is felt there would be significant impacts on the residential neighborhood. It is recommended that the City continue with this policy. It is also recommended that the City continue with the current Land Use Bylaw policy of not allowing any employees from outside the home.

*Signs for home occupations*

Currently our Land Use Bylaw does not allow signs within our low density residential (R-L) areas. It is suggested that professional services operating in the home and Bed and Breakfast operations be allowed to use signs to advertise their businesses. These signs should not be electric, and should have maximum allowable dimensions. They should be a discretionary use, to be approved by the Development Officer.

Most home occupation applications are currently approved by the Development Officer, with the "contentious" ones reviewed by the Municipal Planning Commission. It is recommended that in future all decisions on home occupation applications be made by the Development Officer, with the applicant having the right to appeal the Development Officer's decision to the Development Appeal Board.

### **Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Encourage more residential development in central areas, where many jobs and amenities are located.
- 2) Continue to direct heavy industry with environmental impacts to the NE Industrial Area.
- 3) Designate sites for future development of two West Lethbridge "service centres", which could provide convenience and employment opportunities to West Lethbridge residents.
- 4) Allow "business industrial" or research activity with few environmental impacts to locate in the West Lethbridge service centres.
- 5) Approve home occupations except in cases where they would have significant impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.
- 6) Allow signs to advertise professional services in the home and Bed and Breakfast operations in all our residential districts.
- 7) Signs for home occupations should have maximum allowable dimensions and not be electric. They should be a discretionary use, to be approved by the Development Officer.
- 8) Decisions on all home occupation applications should be made by the Development Officer, with the applicant having the right to appeal the decision to the Development Appeal Board.

## 1.6 Planning Goal

### Affordable home ownership.

#### Issue Summary

##### *Smaller houses on smaller lots*

Not everyone can afford or wants a large house on a large lot. Much of the recent housing activity in Lethbridge has been in small "starter" homes on narrow lots. The narrow lots cut servicing costs, thereby reducing lot prices and making purchase of a new single detached house affordable for more people.

##### *Housing alternatives*

Smaller lots and houses, townhouse units for sale, lower interest rates, and the first-time homebuyers minimum 5% down payment program have recently enabled more people to own their own housing units. Different types of multi-unit condominiums, housing co-operatives, and mobile home parks and subdivisions, could also help to make home ownership more affordable. We should continue to respond to the efforts of developers to provide these alternative housing types in the city.

##### *Integrating multi-unit housing*

We should continue to try to integrate these alternative housing developments into our new residential villages or more central areas. We will also continue to recognize that people who live in multi-unit housing may have particular needs, e.g. for accessible open space and public transit, and try to ensure that these needs are met.

#### Policies/Recommended Actions

- 1) Respond to developers' efforts to provide a variety of affordable housing types in the city.
- 2) Encourage integration of alternative housing types in the community.
- 3) Continue to try to ensure that amenities such as open space and public transit are easily accessible to residents of multi-unit developments.

## 1.7 Planning Goal

### Adequate and affordable housing for groups with special needs.

#### Issue Summary

Groups of people who tend to have lower incomes or special housing needs often have difficulties finding adequate housing in the city. These include students, seniors, natives, and people with mental or physical disabilities.

#### *Many possible solutions*

Many of the potential solutions to the housing problems facing these groups were proposed in the previous section. Smaller houses on smaller lots and construction of townhouse units for sale will help make home ownership possible for more people, which should also help create more rental vacancies. Conversion to residential use of lands and buildings formerly used for other purposes could create more units for both rent and purchase, especially in central areas.

#### *Availability of rental housing*

Availability of rental accommodation in Lethbridge varies dramatically between the summer and the post-secondary school year. We often experience rental housing shortages from September to April, and a small surplus of rental accommodation in the summer months.

#### *Housing for students*

Most students prefer to live close to U of L or LCC. Supply of West Lethbridge housing for students often cannot keep up with demand, and the problem tends to be even worse near LCC, as the areas surrounding LCC are predominantly single family residential.

The college and university are enormous economic generators for Lethbridge, and have been identified in the Economy and Employment discussion paper as potential future growth industries. We should ensure that lack of housing for students not be a constraint to possible future expansion of either institution.

Provision of more student-oriented housing could help solve student housing problems, and also free up other rental accommodation in the city, which could be rented by other groups who traditionally have difficulties finding rental housing in Lethbridge.

#### *Roles the City might play*

It is recommended that the City work with those agencies who provide or find housing for groups with special needs, and identify ways in which the City might help to meet those needs. This could include direct actions by the City, as well as ways to involve the private sector.

**Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Encourage development of more "affordable" housing in the City - both for purchase and rent, especially in central areas.
- 2) Work together with those agencies who provide or find housing for groups with special needs to help meet those needs.
- 3) Encourage provision of student-oriented housing.
- 4) Encourage private sector provision of housing for groups with special needs.

## 1.8 Planning Goal

**Clear understanding of the roles the City will play in helping to achieve the goals outlined in this chapter.**

### **Issue Summary**

*What can the City do?*

There may be a number of ways in which the City can help to achieve the housing and residential land use goals outlined in this chapter. It is recommended that the City clearly define the roles it wants to play, and develop action plans that will help us achieve these goals.

One of the areas that should be discussed is the City's role as a major landowner and residential land developer, and whether or how these roles might be used to help achieve our goals.

### **Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Clearly outline the roles the City will play in helping to achieve the housing and residential land use goals outlined in this chapter.
- 2) Clearly outline the City's future role in residential land development, and how this will help achieve our housing and residential land use goals.



## **CHAPTER 2            ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT**

### **PLANNING GOALS**

- 1)        Downtown as a "people place" as well as a strong commercial and cultural centre.
- 2)        A downtown which helps create community identity and pride.
- 3)        A downtown which attracts tourists.
- 4)        Galt Gardens as the city's major social space and people place.
- 5)        Appropriate uses of prime downtown sites.
- 6)        More commercial services in West Lethbridge.
- 7)        Future highway commercial areas that will help increase tourism in the city.
- 8)        More opportunities for business people to own their own land and buildings.

## ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

### 2.1 Planning Goals

**A multi-function downtown, which is a "people place" as well as a strong commercial and cultural centre.**

**A downtown which helps create community identity and pride.**

**A downtown which attracts tourists.**

**Galt Gardens as the city's major social space and people place.**

#### Issue Summary

##### *Multi-function downtown*

One of the goals of the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan, which was adopted by Council in 1986, is to create a vibrant, multi-function downtown. Downtown has become a strong commercial centre, and through a variety of initiatives undertaken by the City and downtown businesses has started to develop as a "people place". Downtown however, and in particular Galt Gardens, has much more potential to be developed as a unique and attractive people place.

##### *Downtown's tourism potential*

It is also felt that our downtown, with excellent shopping surrounding a beautiful central park (**see MAP 6**) and easy access from outside the city, has excellent tourism potential if developed as a people place. The recent developments in Galt Gardens, the Fifth Street and Sixth Street (Festival Square) streetscaping, and development of coffee houses in the area are all enhancing downtown's tourism potential by helping to make it a relaxing and interesting people place.

##### *More housing downtown*

Another way to develop downtown as a people place would be to encourage residential development downtown. The Housing, Residential Land and Urban Form chapter discusses downtown housing possibilities.

More activities and special events would also bring more people downtown. Certain activities, such as festivals, sporting events, and entertainment, if marketed effectively, can become major tourist attractions as well as sources of community identity and pride.

##### *Creating local identity*

A distinct local physical identity could also be important in future tourism development. As corporate images and architecture increasingly dominate the commercial areas of most North American cities, cities are starting to lose their identity

and look much the same. Those cities or parts of cities that are able to maintain or create a distinct physical identity or local "charm" may have good future tourism development potential. Urban design can help preserve or develop a distinct local flavor. Urban design themes can vary widely in nature and scale, and can include architecture, building fronts and materials, awnings, signs, banners, sidewalks, streetlights, and outdoor public art.

An urban design theme is easy for people to relate and attach themselves to. It can also provide incentive to property owners and tenants to improve their buildings; their work would not be in isolation, but part of a larger, coordinated effort. It is recommended that the City work with the community and downtown BRZ to develop a downtown design theme. Local businesses and chain and franchise operations should be encouraged to blend building design and corporate imagery with selected themes.

Using the community's existing buildings can help retain a distinct local flavor and "sense of place". In the Community Values survey a number of residents felt that we should try to use our existing buildings wherever possible rather than replacing them with new ones. As discussed in the Housing chapter, this could include converting buildings or parts of buildings previously used for other purposes to residential uses.

*Galt Gardens as city's "heart"*

Galt Gardens could function as the heart of the entire city, and be home to a wide variety of activities. It is suggested that the farmers' market be relocated to Galt Gardens. This could bring many more people downtown, encourage a number of other activities in the park, and help transform the park, and in turn downtown, into a bustling, festive people place.

*Calgary as tourist market*

Calgary could represent a huge untapped tourist market for Lethbridge. A relaxing and interesting downtown with a variety of activities could provide a pleasant weekend getaway for Calgary residents.

*Tourism infrastructure needed*

Lack of tourist and convention hosting infrastructure has been identified as a constraint to tourism and convention development in the city, especially in the downtown area. Another full-service hotel with convention facilities downtown would probably help increase convention and special event activity, and help generate more business and social activity overall downtown.

### **Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Encourage residential development downtown.
- 2) Encourage a wide range of social, cultural and economic activities downtown.
- 3) Promote Galt Gardens as the city's major social space and people place.
- 4) Encourage activities and design that will create local identity and community pride.
- 5) Encourage use and "conversion" of existing buildings to preserve local identity.
- 6) Continue to implement the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan.
- 7) Work with the community and downtown BRZ to develop a downtown design theme.
- 8) Encourage local businesses and chain and franchise operations to blend building design and corporate imagery with selected design themes.
- 9) Recognize property owners or tenants who make attractive improvements to their buildings or properties.
- 10) Promote Galt Gardens, downtown, and the activities occurring there as major tourist attractions.
- 11) Encourage development of tourist and convention hosting infrastructure downtown.
- 12) Remove any financial disincentives that might exist to redeveloping or renovating downtown buildings or properties.

## 2.2 Planning Goals

**Appropriate long-term uses of prime downtown sites.**

**Downtown development that will benefit the community in the long run as well as the short term.**

### Issue Summary

#### *Changing retail activity*

Retail activity is changing, with the proliferation of chain and franchise stores and restaurants and low overhead discount warehouse operations. These operations are making it difficult for local independent retailers to compete in traditional product lines.

#### *Locating in central areas*

Normally these new commercial activities locate on busy commercial strips, such as McLeod Trail in Calgary, or in suburban shopping centres. In Lethbridge however, due to easy access from Highway 3, many of these new retail businesses are locating in more central areas.

This is bringing more activity to our central commercial areas, and making shopping more convenient for people coming to Lethbridge from outside the city (who make up most of our local market). In the short term this has benefitted downtown, Park Place, and 2 Avenue 'A', and had negative impacts on Mayor Magrath Drive, especially with the relocation of Zellers and Canadian Tire from Magrath Market Mall and College Mall to Centre Village Mall. It now appears however that new commercial and residential developments in the Highways 4 and 5 area could help rejuvenate commercial activity along Mayor Magrath Drive.

#### *Use of prime downtown sites*

In the long run however some of the new commercial activities may not be the most appropriate uses for certain central sites. "Prime" downtown sites are in short supply, and perhaps should be reserved for uses which will help create the downtown we want, and provide the greatest benefits to the community in the long run. For example, the previous section discussed potential tourism development and the need for another full-service hotel downtown. We should try to ensure that some sites suitable for these types of facilities remain available.

#### *Proposed role for the City*

It is recommended that the City play a role in helping ensure that prime downtown sites are used appropriately. This could involve directing inappropriate uses to other sites, and if necessary, acquiring specific sites for certain purposes. Acquiring downtown land would not be something new for the City; indeed, our largest commercial developments were made possible by land acquisitions by the City.

**Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Identify appropriate uses for prime downtown sites.
- 2) Direct less appropriate uses away from prime downtown sites.
- 3) Investigate the possibility of acquiring downtown sites to facilitate future development.

## 2.3 Planning Goal

### More commercial services for West Lethbridge residents.

#### Issue Summary

Currently we have residential development concept plans in place to accommodate 40-45,000 people in West Lethbridge. None of these however show any commercial sites larger than village-scale, which provide a very basic level of goods and services.

#### *Proposed "service centres"*

To help ensure that adequate commercial services are available to all West Lethbridge residents it is suggested that we designate larger "service centres" along University Drive in both the north and south ends of West Lethbridge (**see MAP 4**).

These larger service centres proposed for both the north and south ends of West Lethbridge could also contain office space and "business industrial" or research activity. These centres would help to increase the range of goods and services available to West Lethbridge residents and increase employment opportunities on the West side. This could reduce the number of car trips across the river, which could help reduce traffic congestion, air pollution and road maintenance requirements. The proposed locations along University Drive would provide easy access for all West Lethbridge residents.

#### Policies/Recommended Actions

- 1) Designate sites for future development of two West Lethbridge "service centres."
- 2) Allow "business industrial" or research activity with few environmental impacts to locate in the West Lethbridge service centres.

## 2.4 Planning Goal

**Future highway commercial areas that will help increase tourism in the city.**

### Issue Summary

The Municipal Development Plan was originally adopted by City Council as the General Municipal Plan in 1995. Section 2.4 of the General Municipal Plan discussed the shortage of highway commercial land in the city. MAP 7 identified potential future highway commercial areas and recommended that the City undertake a cost-benefit analysis of these areas.

*May 2000 amendment*

Section 2.4 of the Municipal Development Plan and MAP 7 were amended in May 2000 to designate the Costco site along Highway 5 and land south of Costco (22 hectares in total) as highway commercial land. These lands became developable, primarily for "big box retail," through acquisition of some of the area's limited sanitary sewer allocation.

*January 2003 amendment*

Pressure for additional commercial lands, the locational advantages of Highways 4 & 5, and the ability to supply support infrastructure have lead to increasing the amount of designated commercial land both south and east of Fairmont Park.

*Possible future highway commercial areas*

Development of the Highway 5 lands may delay development of some of the other potential highway commercial lands shown on MAP 7. These areas, however, may still have good long-term highway commercial development potential.

### Policy/Recommended Actions

- 1) Continue to monitor the city's highway commercial land supply as the city develops.



## 2.5 Planning Goal

### More business ownership options in the city.

#### Issue Summary

Commercial site locations and sizes in new residential areas have been limited to minimize impacts on residential neighborhoods. The limited number of commercial sites may however limit business opportunities in the city. Normally each site is purchased by one landowner. While sites could be subdivided and sold to different business people, they tend to be developed as one plaza, with commercial space rented out to different tenants. This provides no opportunity for a business person to own his land or building, which may affect long-term business profitability.

It is suggested that the City consider offering for sale within the proposed Mountain Heights/RiverStone/River Bend service centre site (see **MAP 4**) a number of commercial and business industrial parcels of different sizes, which could accommodate a number of uses. This would still allow developers to rent building space to businesses, but also allow individual businesses wanting to locate in West Lethbridge a chance to own their own land and buildings. This would help increase business ownership options, but still confine these uses to one designated area, which would minimize impacts on residential neighborhoods.

#### Policies/Recommended Actions

- 1) Consider offering for sale in the proposed Mountain Heights/RiverStone/River Bend service centre site a number of commercial and "business industrial" parcels of different sizes, which could accommodate a variety of uses.

## 2.6 Planning Goal

**Clear definition of the roles the City will play in helping to achieve the goals outlined in this chapter.**

### **Issue Summary**

*What can the City do?*

Several roles that could be played by the City are suggested throughout this chapter, particularly with respect to developing our downtown. The City could lead the way in creating the vision of the downtown we want, and in developing action plans to help us achieve that vision. For example, the City could spearhead a joint effort with the downtown BRZ and the community to develop a downtown design theme. The City could also acquire sites for specific uses to help achieve our development goals.

It is recommended that the City clearly define the roles it wants to play in developing downtown and our other commercial areas, and develop action plans that will help us achieve the goals outlined in this chapter.

### **Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Clearly outline the roles the City will play in helping to achieve the goals outlined in this chapter.
- 2) Develop action plans to help achieve these goals.

## **CHAPTER 3 ENVIRONMENT**

### **PLANNING GOALS**

- 1) A clean, healthy and safe environment.
- 2) Jobs and services close to residential areas.
- 3) Subdivision designs that effectively use the sun's light and heat, and reduce the impacts of the wind.
- 4) Walking and cycling trail systems that people will use for transportation as well as recreation.
- 5) Protect the fragile soils, topography and ecosystems of the river valley and coulees.
- 6) The river valley to be enjoyed by residents as a unique natural environment.
- 7) Ensure that existing trees in our parks, open spaces and boulevards continue to be maintained.
- 8) More trees in new residential areas.
- 9) Water as a feature in our new residential areas.
- 10) Improve our river water quality.
- 11) Ecological stability and biological diversity.
- 12) Reduced water and maintenance requirements in our parks and open spaces.
- 13) Greater participation in our community recycling program.

## ENVIRONMENT

### 3.1 Planning Goal

#### A clean, healthy and safe environment.

#### Issue Summary

*Residents value our environment*

Lethbridge residents place a high value on our physical environment, including the river valley and coulees, our parks and trail systems, clean air and water, and clean tree-lined streets.

*"Quality of life" as an economic development tool*

In addition to creating a pleasant place to live, a community's livability or "quality of life" is one of its most important economic development tools. Maintaining our healthy and attractive environment will be critical in helping us continue to attract people, business and jobs to the community.

*Following provincial recommendations*

The Province of Alberta, in its recent Planning Act Review Proposal, has recognized the importance of clean, healthy and safe municipal environments, and how these have contributed to the "Alberta Advantage". The Province has outlined five areas that municipalities should pay particular attention to in reviewing subdivision and development proposals.

- i) Hazardous Lands
- ii) Contaminated Sites
- iii) Environmentally Sensitive Lands
- iv) Environmental Impacts and Land Use Compatibility
- v) Intermunicipal Impacts

Our River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan limits land uses in our hazardous lands and environmentally sensitive lands. We will continue to protect the fragile environments and ecosystems of the river valley and coulees by adhering to the policies of the River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.

The other three areas of concern are addressed in our subdivision, rezoning and development review processes. The zoning bylaw attempts to ensure that adjacent land uses are compatible. All subdivision and rezoning proposals are circulated for review by City of Lethbridge departments and outside agencies, such as the school boards, Lethbridge Health Unit and the Oldman River Regional Planning Commission.

*Working with community groups*

The City should continue to support the efforts of community groups involved in keeping our city clean, healthy and safe. For example, some City sports fields are currently maintained by the primary user groups. The City's tree nursery is currently maintained by the South Country Community Association, which in turn is allowed to use City land and buildings to provide public garden space and environmental education.

These groups provide important services to the community while helping to reduce the City's operating costs. Coulee clean-up campaigns and maintenance of neighborhood parks are other examples of activities that groups might undertake to help keep our city clean, healthy and safe.

**Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Continue to address the five areas of concern identified by the Province of Alberta in reviewing all subdivision, rezoning and development proposals.
- 2) Ensure that parks, trails, open spaces, trees and water continue to be provided as major features of our new residential areas.
- 3) Continue to protect the fragile environments and ecosystems of the river valley and coulees by adhering to the policies of the River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.
- 4) Continue to direct heavy industry with environmental impacts to the NE Industrial Area.
- 5) Continue to encourage the activities of community groups involved in environmental enhancement.

## 3.2 Planning Goal

### Jobs and services close to residential areas.

#### Issue Summary

##### *Reducing driving*

Jobs and services in or near residential areas would enable more people to live closer to where they work, shop and play. This could reduce driving, and thus help reduce energy use, the emissions that contribute to smog formation and global warming, and traffic congestion and noise.

In recent years most of our residential growth has occurred in West Lethbridge. This trend is expected to continue over the next twenty-five years. Most jobs and services in the city however are located in North and South Lethbridge. Currently we have residential development concept plans in place to accommodate 40-45,000 people in West Lethbridge. None of these designate any sites for multi-village commercial activity or "business industrial" activity. Thus as West Lethbridge continues to develop, more and more residents will live farther from where they work, shop and play. This will result in more driving, and thus more traffic congestion and noise, air quality problems, and road maintenance requirements.

##### *Proposed West Lethbridge "service centres"*

The previous two chapters propose that sites for "service centres" be designated in both the north and south parts of West Lethbridge. These service centres would be considerably larger than the West Village Mall site in Varsity Village, and could help provide a broader range of goods and services to West Lethbridge residents. They could also contain some office space and business industrial or research activity. These service centres would enable more West Lethbridge residents to shop and work on the West side, which could help reduce driving in the city.

##### *"Clean" industries near residential areas*

Demand for industrial land has changed dramatically in recent years, as our economy has become based more on information and services. Many of the new service and information businesses do not create noise or odors. As such they do not need to locate in an industrial park, and could possibly locate in the proposed service centres discussed above. Heavy industries that emit noise, smoke or dust, on the other hand, will continue to be directed to the NE Industrial Area.

##### *Working at home*

Working at home is becoming much more common. Home employment can help to create economic opportunities, and also reduce driving, especially at rush-hour.

It is recommended that we continue to approve home occupations except in cases where they would have significant impacts on residential neighborhoods. The Housing, Residential Land and Urban Form chapter outlines policies for dealing with home occupations.

**Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Encourage more residential development in central areas, where many jobs and services are located.
- 2) Continue to direct heavy industry with environmental impacts to the NE Industrial Area.
- 3) Designate sites for future development of two West Lethbridge "service centres", which could provide convenience and employment opportunities to West Lethbridge residents.
- 4) Allow "business industrial" or research activity with few environmental impacts to locate in the West Lethbridge service centres.
- 5) Approve home occupations except in cases where they will have significant impacts on the residential neighborhood.

### 3.3 Planning Goal

#### **Residential subdivision and house designs that use the sun's light and heat, and reduce the impacts of the wind.**

##### **Issue Summary**

Ensuring easy access to commercial and community services can help to reduce the amount of energy used for transportation. Changes in subdivision and house designs could also reduce the energy required to light and heat our homes.

##### *Lot and house orientation*

Subdivisions and houses which use the sun's light and heat could reduce home lighting and heating requirements and make outdoor amenity areas usable for a greater portion of the year. Mitigating the effects of our strong west winds could reduce noise and home heating requirements. Lot and house orientation can play major roles in maximizing solar access and mitigating the effects of the wind.

Southern exposure provides maximum access to the sun's heat and light. Using the sun for passive solar heating normally involves maximizing window space on the south wall of the house. Minimizing west wall windows, on the other hand, can help protect houses from our strong west winds, and reduce both noise and heating requirements.

##### *East-west streets the best*

Lots that are oriented north-south offer the best opportunities to maximize solar access, through either back or front windows, and to reduce wind impacts by having a solid west side wall with no windows. North-south lots are usually located on streets which run east-west. On north-south streets, on the other hand, the lots run east-west. Normally along north-south streets the south walls of the houses are side walls (with few windows), and the fronts or backs of the houses face west, exposed to our prevailing west winds.

##### *Working with developers*

We should encourage developers to increase solar access by orienting more of their streets east-west. This is possible even in subdivisions with curvilinear streets. We should also encourage building design that takes advantage of the sun and tries to minimize heat loss and the impacts of the wind. Solar access and energy efficiency could be marketed by developers as features of their subdivisions.



**Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Encourage subdivision and building design that will maximize solar access and reduce wind impacts.
- 2) Encourage passive solar heating of new houses.

### 3.4 Planning Goals

**Trail systems that will encourage people to walk and cycle for transportation as well as recreation.**

**Attractive borders around villages in newer residential areas.**

**Visual buffers between arterial roadways and adjacent houses.**

#### Issue Summary

##### *Trails for transportation*

Encouraging walking and cycling as alternatives to driving will require provision of effective trail systems. Currently our trail systems are designed primarily for recreation rather than for transportation. Our trails do not effectively connect residential villages, or different activity areas throughout the city.

##### *Multi-function open space corridors*

It is proposed that our wide arterial road rights-of-way in new residential areas be developed as multi-function open space corridors. Normally these rights-of-way have sound buffer zones at least 26 metres wide on each side of the roadway itself. These buffer zones could contain inter-village bicycle and pedestrian pathway systems and drought-tolerant grasses, shrubs and trees. This vegetation could provide attractive borders to our residential villages and a visual buffer for the adjacent residents. It could also absorb some of the carbon dioxide generated along the arterial roadway.

##### *Bicycle lanes*

Most existing areas do not have such large road rights-of-way. Where separate bike paths could not be developed, specific lanes or parts of lanes on roadways that link different community destinations could be designated for bicycles only.

##### *Bike parking racks*

To help prevent bicycle theft we could also encourage provision of bicycle parking racks as integral parts of new major commercial, industrial and recreation developments.

#### Policies/Recommended Actions

- 1) Develop arterial road rights-of-way in newer residential areas as multi-function open space corridors containing inter-village walking and cycling trails and drought-tolerant grasses, shrubs and trees.
- 2) Designate bicycle paths or lanes on or adjacent to existing arterial or collector roadways that link different community destinations.

### 3.5 Planning Goals

**Protect the fragile soils, topography and ecosystems of the river valley and coulees.**

**Protect the public from the hazards associated with developing in the river valley.**

**The river valley to be enjoyed by residents and visitors as a unique and outstanding natural environment.**

**River valley parks and trail systems that will meet current and future community needs.**

#### **Issue Summary**

In the public values survey conducted for this Plan, the river valley and coulees and our parks and trail systems were among the things cited most often as making Lethbridge a pleasant place to live.

#### *River valley plans*

The River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (see **MAP 8**) and the Urban Parks Master Plan for the river valley parks system and Coal Banks Trail (see **MAP 9**) were prepared after much public consultation. As requested by residents, these plans help to provide recreation and educational opportunities in the river valley, while also enabling residents to enjoy much of the valley in its natural state. The River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan helps to protect and preserve the river valley's fragile topography and ecosystems, and also protect the public from the hazards associated with developing in the river valley. The Plan designates as "Hazard Lands" almost all the coulee slopes and much of the floodplain area within the City limits.

The River Valley ARP also established a "Top of Bank Setback Line" to help ensure that any development at the top of the river valley will be set back far enough from the edge so as to not cause any damage to the valley banks or coulees.

#### *Trail and park systems*

It would appear that overall these plans still reflect what residents want and don't want to occur in the river valley. In the public values survey conducted for this Plan, however, residents did express dissatisfaction about the current gap in the trail system near Lethbridge Country Club. It is suggested that a review of the trail system be undertaken, to try to determine overall future trail needs and identify appropriate ways of meeting these needs. Issues to be discussed could include reconnecting the trail or redirecting it elsewhere, establishing a link between the Nature Reserve and Peenaquim Park, and linking existing trails to future West Lethbridge trails.

Future population growth will likely result in heavier use of the river valley parks and trails, especially in parks that to date have been used less frequently, e.g. Popson Park. It is suggested that a review of the river valley parks system to determine future needs also be undertaken, paying particular attention to Popson, Pavan and Peenaquim Parks.

**Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Limit land uses in the river valley to those allowed in the River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.
- 2) Adhere to the top-of-bank development setback line policies outlined in the River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.
- 3) Maintain river valley parks and trails to enable residents to enjoy the valley now and in future.
- 4) Review current and anticipated future river valley park and trail system needs.

### **3.6 Planning Goal**

**Protect residents from potential dangers of mining subsidence.**

#### **Issue Summary**

Much of the river valley and top-of-bank was mined for coal in the past (**see MAP 10**). Many of these areas have been developed for residential use. Fortunately mining subsidence (sudden sinking of land due to collapse of mine roadways or rooms or collapse of strata into mine voids) has not been a problem in these areas; with the "room and pillar" mining methods used here, most subsidence occurred within two or three years after mining operations ceased. However, as subsidence can potentially occur many years later, mining subsidence studies are still required before any development is allowed on previously mined areas.

#### **Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Ensure that development proposals or plans for previously undermined lands be accompanied by mining subsidence studies, which identify potential dangers and engineering practices that would be required to mitigate these dangers.

### 3.7 Planning Goals

**Maintain the existing tree stock in our parks, open spaces and boulevards.**

**More trees in new residential areas.**

#### **Issue Summary**

##### *Maintaining existing trees*

Trees provide numerous benefits to our community - aesthetic, environmental, economic and psychological, and are highly valued by Lethbridge residents. The City is attempting to maintain the 30,000 trees in our parks, buffer zones, and boulevards through systematic pruning and maintenance.

##### *More trees in new residential areas*

Despite the benefits that trees have provided to our city and our neighborhoods, fewer trees are being planted along residential streets in new areas than in our older neighborhoods. Streets in newer subdivisions, including some collector roadways, do not have boulevards between the road and sidewalk. Often front yards are covered mainly by front driveways, leaving little room for trees along new residential streets. Developers and residents should be encouraged to plant trees in front yards. In addition, new residential collector roadways should provide sufficient space for trees to be planted when the subdivision is developed.

#### **Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Continue to use a systematic pruning and maintenance program to maintain the trees in our parks, open spaces, buffer zones and boulevards.
- 2) Replace dying trees in existing public spaces.
- 3) Encourage tree planting in new parks and open spaces.
- 4) Encourage homeowners to plant trees in their front yards.
- 5) Ensure that residential collector roadways provide sufficient space for trees to be planted when the area is developed.

### 3.8 Planning Goals

#### Water as a feature in our new residential areas.

#### Improve our river water quality.

##### Issue Summary

Water can be a very attractive feature of new residential areas, as a recreation, aesthetic and educational amenity. Irrigation canals in or near new residential areas can sometimes provide opportunities to create attractive water-based amenities, e.g. Nicholas Sheran Lake in West Lethbridge. It is recommended that we continue to use irrigation water where it is easily accessible to create these types of amenities. It is also recommended that we continue to ensure public access to bodies of water developed for these purposes.

*Linear stormwater systems*  
*Open space corridors*

We could improve our river water quality by treating stormwater from new areas before it is released to the river. Linear stormwater systems of brooks, ponds and marshes could transport stormwater and treat it by natural processes. Such linear systems could also be the central features of multi-function open space corridors, which could be used for recreation, education, and to create more visually interesting and attractive new subdivisions. They could also link our new residential areas, parks and schools to the river valley.

Corridors such as these could potentially serve large areas. Planning for these corridors would have to be done long before development. As such it is recommended that the potential for developing such corridors in the south part of West Lethbridge and the Legacy Ridge/Uplands area of North Lethbridge be investigated in the near future.

##### Policies/Recommended Actions

- 1) Continue to use irrigation water, where easily accessible, to create amenity areas in new residential areas.
- 2) Ensure that the public has access to these amenity areas.
- 3) Investigate the potential in our new residential areas for developing open space corridors containing stormwater drainage and natural treatment systems.

### 3.9 Planning Goals

**Ecological stability and biological diversity.**

**Reduced water and maintenance requirements in our parks and open spaces.**

#### Issue Summary

*City's "naturalization" program*

The City has recently implemented a "naturalization" landscaping program alongside selected major roadways. Under this program maintenance of existing landscapes is reduced and nature left to return the vegetation to its natural state.

*Advantages of naturalization*

The growing interest in naturalization has been stimulated by the increasing economic and environmental costs of creating and maintaining traditional landscapes, especially in a dry climate such as ours. Use of native materials helps to maintain or restore natural ecosystems and biological diversity, resulting in more interesting and healthier landscapes and natural habitats for wildlife. It can also help to stabilize soil and reduce erosion. Use of drought-resistant species can reduce water and maintenance requirements, saving water, energy, time and money. Naturalized landscapes can be more interesting for walks and study of the local ecology.

*Community acceptance*

"Passive" naturalization is less expensive than actively replacing turf with native plants or grasses. Some areas however can take over five years to rehabilitate on their own. In the meantime the public may react negatively to watching lands that were formerly mowed become untidy grasslands. It is expected however that time and increasing environmental awareness will result in a growing community acceptance of both the concept and the practice.

To help increase public awareness and enjoyment of natural areas, the City has developed the Father van Tighem School natural area in West Lethbridge. The City is also currently involved in a joint research project and a landscaping project involving low-maintenance grasses.

The City should also continue to track work being done in western Canada by research institutions, including the agriculture research station.



### **Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Encourage planting of drought-tolerant grasses, trees and shrubs as an alternative to irrigated turf in some of our new parks, open spaces, buffer zones and boulevards.
- 2) Develop a master plan and implementation strategies to integrate the concept of naturalization into the public open space system.
- 3) Continue to research and support experimental work related to drought-tolerant vegetation.
- 4) Develop and maintain naturalization information for public use and education.
- 5) Eradicate weeds and noxious plants in the city that are causing problems to agricultural operations within and outside the city.
- 6) Check with the County to ensure that the plants in our parks, boulevards and open spaces are not destructive to agriculture.

### **3.10 Planning Goal**

**Greater participation in our community recycling program.**

#### **Issue Summary**

The City has recently implemented a community recycling program. Recycling drop-off centres have been established at five commercial centre locations throughout the city.

As the city continues to grow it will be necessary to provide additional recycling drop-off centres in our new residential areas. These centres should be easily accessible to area residents. It is recommended that drop-off centres be established in the proposed West Lethbridge service centres and the Legacy Ridge/Uplands village commercial centre.

#### **Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Ensure that the proposed West Lethbridge service centres and the Legacy Ridge/Uplands village commercial centre contain recycling drop-off facilities.

## **CHAPTER 4            DIRECTIONS OF FUTURE GROWTH**

### **PLANNING GOALS**

- 1)     A balanced city with downtown in the "centre".
- 2)     Complete our partially developed residential areas.
- 3)     Preserve land for future urban development.

## DIRECTIONS OF FUTURE GROWTH

### 4.1 Planning Goal

**A balanced city with downtown in the "centre".**

#### Issue Summary

##### *The importance of West Lethbridge*

One of the main reasons for creating West Lethbridge was the opportunity to put downtown more in the geographic centre of the city. The suburban development of the 1950's and 1960's moved people farther from downtown, leaving downtown isolated on the extreme western edge of the community. As commercial development followed residential development to the suburbs, downtown started to decay and its commercial influence began to wane. In the 1960's, for the first time in its history, the city did not have a strong downtown core.

The development of West Lethbridge has helped to "balance" the City's physical form and make downtown the geographic "centre" of the city. Residents in all areas of the city now have easy access to downtown. This has helped to re-establish downtown as the commercial and cultural heart of the community. It has also effectively brought the river valley into the community, rather than leaving it isolated beyond the edge of the city.

West Lethbridge now contains over 25% of the City's population, and is expected to be the city's major residential growth area over the next 20 or 30 years. Further development of West Lethbridge should continue to balance our physical form and benefit downtown.

We are projecting a population growth of approximately 20,000 over the next 25 years. These 20,000 people could easily be accommodated in those areas in West Lethbridge where residential development has already begun, i.e. Indian Battle Heights, Heritage Heights, and the Mountain Heights/RiverStone/River Bend areas (see MAP 2). In the longer term West Lethbridge could accommodate over 80,000 people.

#### Policies/Recommended Actions

- 1) Encourage the continued residential development of West Lethbridge.

## 4.2 Planning Goal

### Complete our partially developed residential areas.

#### Issue Summary

##### *Directing future growth*

We have a huge residential land supply in Lethbridge, sufficient to meet our growth requirements for the next 100 years. The areas for which development concept plans have already been prepared i.e. Fairmont Park in SE Lethbridge, the Stafford Village and Legacy Ridge/Uplands areas of North Lethbridge, and the Indian Battle Heights, Heritage Heights and Mountain Heights/RiverStone/River Bend areas of West Lethbridge (see **MAP 2**) could accommodate our future growth over the next forty or fifty years. Section 1.2 recommends that we direct our future residential development to these areas, rather than opening up additional lands for new large-scale residential development.

Additional development in these areas would help them to attract commercial and community services and become full-fledged neighborhoods or villages. It would also make more efficient use of the infrastructure that has been provided to service these areas. As these new areas continue to grow, however, the need to provide additional protective services will have to be reviewed.

##### *West Lethbridge*

West Lethbridge will likely continue to be the city's major residential growth area. It currently contains 17,000 people, and has residential development concept plans in place to accommodate an additional 25,000 people. West Lethbridge has a large land base which on its own could accommodate our future growth for at least the next fifty years. West Lethbridge also has the potential future sewer and water servicing capability to accommodate 80-90,000 people.

West Lethbridge already has many amenities, including the university, a fully developed village commercial centre, five schools, recreation facilities, a fire hall, the Paradise Canyon golf course/residential development, and Nicholas Sheran Park. The proposed future West Lethbridge service centres would increase the range of services and employment opportunities available in West Lethbridge, which would likely make living in West Lethbridge even more attractive. As discussed in the previous section, the future growth of West Lethbridge should continue to strengthen downtown and benefit the community as a whole.

##### *North Lethbridge*

North Lethbridge north of 26 Avenue has been developing slowly but steadily. The Uplands area currently contains approximately 1,500 people. When fully developed the Legacy Ridge/Uplands and Stafford Village areas could accommodate an additional 17,000 people. The area north of 26 Avenue has

the sewer and water servicing capability to accommodate approximately 50,000 people. This area offers an opportunity for people to live close to the NE Industrial Area, a major employment centre.

*SE Lethbridge*

Southeast Lethbridge has been growing with both residential and commercial land uses. Currently, 2,000 persons can be accommodated in Fairmont Park and the remaining land base can likely accommodate another 12,000 persons. The area has good access to regional highways and is expected to continue to attract regional commercial facilities

**Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Weigh the overall benefits and costs (including the impacts on developments in other areas) of proposals or plans to develop any new lands for which development concept plans have not yet been identified in Map 2.
- 2) Monitor our ability to provide infrastructure and protective services to all areas of the city as the city continues to grow.

### 4.3 Planning Goal

#### Preserve land for future urban development.

##### Issue Summary

###### *Future growth requirements*

The lands shaded on **MAP 2** could accommodate approximately 45,000 people when fully developed. These lands could probably meet our additional housing needs for the next 50 years. The two sections north of the existing NE Industrial Area (**see MAP 5**) should accommodate our industrial expansion for many years.

###### *Urban Reserve lands*

Lands within the City limits which are not shaded will probably not be required to meet our development needs before the year 2020, and as such have not been designated for any particular uses in this plan. These lands may however be required for development at some point. Currently most of this land is zoned Urban Reserve (U-R), which limits subdivision and development to preserve land for future urban development. It is recommended that these lands retain their Urban Reserve zoning so that we don't jeopardize our future urban expansion potential.

If in future however, demand for residential land shows signs of slowing significantly over the long term, this policy could be reviewed to help create some subdivision and development options in these areas.

##### Policies/Recommended Actions

- 1) Lands which are currently zoned Urban Reserve (U-R) should retain this zoning.

## **CHAPTER 5            TRANSPORTATION, WATER AND SEWER**

### **PLANNING GOALS**

- 1)        Effective future links to new residential areas.
- 2)        Providing alternative transportation systems.
- 3)        Efficient use of water and sewer infrastructure.



## TRANSPORTATION, WATER AND SEWER

### 5.1 Planning Goal

#### Effective future links to new residential areas.

##### Issue Summary

Three major roadway infrastructure projects will be required to provide a transportation network that will support our future residential growth.

Our two existing bridges to West Lethbridge should support another 5,000 people in West Lethbridge, or a total West Lethbridge population of 23,000.

##### *Crowsnest Trail bridge*

West Lethbridge population growth beyond this level will require adding two lanes to the Crowsnest Trail bridge. This, together with the new University Drive overpass, will facilitate traffic movement across the river to and from the north part of West Lethbridge, and facilitate full development of Indian Battle Heights and Heritage Heights. By diverting some traffic from Whoop-Up Bridge, it should also allow for more development in the south part of West Lethbridge.

Upgrading of the Crowsnest Trail bridge in this way should provide us with a transportation network that could support a total West Lethbridge population of 30-33,000. **MAP 12** shows where a future West Lethbridge population of 30,000 would likely live. It is anticipated that the Crowsnest Trail bridge project will be undertaken in about seven years (approximately 2002).

##### *Third bridge to West Lethbridge*

West Lethbridge population beyond the 30-33,000 range will require construction of a third bridge, to the south part of West Lethbridge (**see MAP 13**). It is anticipated that this bridge may be required around the year 2015.

The bridge improvements that will be needed to accommodate future West Lethbridge growth are shown in the table below, along with the population levels at which they will likely be required, and approximately when they might be built.

**BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED FOR FUTURE WEST LETHBRIDGE GROWTH**

Infrastructure	When Required	
	West Lethbridge Population	Estimated Year
Crownsnest Trail bridge (add two lanes)	23,000	2002
Third bridge (two lanes) (see MAP 13)	30-33,000	2015
Third bridge (four lanes)	38-40,000	2025

*North Lethbridge*

Continued residential development in the Stafford Village and Valleyview/Uplands areas of North Lethbridge will eventually require extension of Scenic Drive northward to link these areas with downtown (see MAP 13). When this link will be built will depend on rates of residential growth in these areas. Recent growth rates in North and West Lethbridge would lead us to believe at this point that the third bridge to West Lethbridge might be built before the North Scenic Drive extension.

**Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Continue to provide the transportation infrastructure necessary to effectively link our new residential areas with other areas of the city.
- 2) Prepare a plan to pay for the future transportation infrastructure required as identified in the City's Strategic Roadway Improvement Study.

## 5.2 Planning Goal

### Providing alternative transportation systems.

#### Issue Summary

Previous chapters discussed how increasing jobs and services in West Lethbridge could reduce car use. Car use can also be reduced by providing and promoting more effective walking and cycling trails and public transit.

#### *Walking and cycling trails*

As discussed in the Environment chapter, our walking and cycling trail systems have been designed primarily for recreation, rather than transportation. To be useful for transportation, trail systems must effectively link residential villages to each other and to different activity areas throughout the city.

#### *Using arterial rights-of-way*

It is recommended that the wide rights-of-way in our new arterial roadways, which currently serve only as utility corridors and sound buffer zones, be developed as multi-function open space corridors. These corridors could include inter-village walking and cycling trails.

#### *Designating bike lanes*

Most existing areas do not have such large road rights-of-way. Where separate bike paths could not be developed, specific lanes or parts of lanes on roadways that link different community destinations could be designated for bicycles only.

#### *A better river crossing*

The awkward, indirect pedestrian and cycle river crossing from South to West Lethbridge probably deters many people from walking or cycling to and from the west side. It is recommended that a more direct pedestrian and cycle crossing be built.

#### *Bike parking racks*

High incidence of bicycle theft can deter bicycle use. To help prevent bicycle theft we should encourage provision of bicycle parking racks as integral parts of new major commercial, industrial, institutional and recreation developments.

#### *Promoting public transit*

While public transit is heavily used by groups such as students and seniors, it has not caught on as an attractive "mainstream" alternative to the car. It would appear that increasing transit ridership would require making bus travel more competitive with the car. This might be achieved in a number of ways, e.g. using express buses or designating "bus-only" lanes to reduce bus travel time, developing a system of incentives to increase use, and reducing parking subsidies downtown.

It is recommended that the City identify and select ways of making transit more competitive with the car, and prepare a strategy for implementing them.

It is also recommended that the proposed West Lethbridge service centres contain transit terminals from which express buses could run downtown.

*Combining cycling and public transit*

Combining cycling with public transit might also help create more commuting possibilities. For example, bicycle hooks on buses might enable more West Lethbridge residents to cycle east of the river, and be especially useful on rainy or windy days. We should investigate possible ways of combining bike travel with public transit.

*Planning for transit*

Future area structure plans should outline transit routes that will facilitate provision of accessible and convenient transit service. Outline plans should show locations of bus stops and how their impacts on adjacent residences will be minimized.

**Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Develop arterial road rights-of-way in newer residential areas as multi-function open space corridors containing inter-village walking and cycling trails.
- 2) Designate bicycle paths or lanes on or adjacent to existing arterial or collector roadways that link different community destinations.
- 3) Provide a more direct pedestrian and cycle crossing from South to West Lethbridge.
- 4) Investigate ways to make public transit more competitive with the car.
- 5) The future West Lethbridge service centres should contain transit terminals from which express buses could run downtown.
- 6) Investigate ways to combine bicycles with public transit.
- 7) Future area structure plans should outline transit routes that will facilitate provision of accessible and convenient public transit. Outline plans should show bus stop locations and try to minimize their impacts on adjacent residences.

### 5.3 Planning Goal

#### Efficient use of water and sewer infrastructure.

##### Issue Summary

###### *Water Distribution*

As the City grows into the identified growth areas, the existing high level of service provided by the water distribution system will be maintained. The piping network will be expanded in a traditional fashion and additional treated water storage will be constructed, as demand requires.

In West Lethbridge, a new water storage reservoir will be required in the southern area of Mountain Heights in order to support growth on the south end of the West Lethbridge peninsula. It is expected that this facility will be required as the City approaches 80,000 persons.

In North Lethbridge, an additional water storage cell will be required as the City approaches 85,000 persons.

In South Lethbridge, a new water storage reservoir is required in the near future to improve the level of service for the existing urban area south of 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. This new reservoir will also be sufficient to support long-term growth in the Southeast area.

###### *Sanitary Sewer*

In West Lethbridge, the existing sanitary sewer trunks in the north and south possess sufficient residual capacity to service the growth areas identified on Map 2. Falling topography in the southern area of West Lethbridge will require the construction of a lift station in the River Bend area. Any possibility for new growth west of Benton Drive will be severely limited until a new trunk is extended westward along Whoop-Up Drive.

In North Lethbridge, future growth will make use of the substantial infrastructure (deep sewer trunks with high flow capacities) that was installed in the early 1980's. Industrial growth north of 26<sup>th</sup>

Avenue will require a sewage lift station to overcome topographic constraints.

The deep sewer trunk under the southern portions of Mayor Magrath Drive (constructed in 2002) has sufficient capacity to service the equivalent of another 7,000 persons to the south and east of Fairmont Park. There may also be opportunity to include lands to the northeast of Fairmont Park in this initial servicing basin. Any further development beyond the 7,000 persons equivalent will be dependent upon a significant investment in new forcemains and lift-stations in order to direct sewage to the north.

*Stormwater*

Throughout Lethbridge, all future growth areas will be impacted by a lack of capacity for direct discharge into the existing storm system and increasing expectations for water quality treatment prior to discharge. Stormwater is now viewed as a resource rather than an inconvenience, thereby creating the need to develop a stormwater system that is substantially different from the current system.

In all areas of the City, strategic storage of stormwater will be required so as not to overload existing systems or trigger the construction of new outfalls. Wet ponds, artificial lakes and man-made wetlands will become more common as quantity and quality targets are achieved.

**Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Growth in new areas should not cause any adverse impacts to residents in existing areas.
- 2) Techniques that optimize the capacity of exiting infrastructure should be utilized where feasible.
- 3) Encourage growth patterns that maximize the use of existing infrastructure in order to avoid or delay construction of new infrastructure.

## **CHAPTER 6            PARKS AND OPEN SPACE**

### **PLANNING GOALS**

- 1)        A mix of parks and open spaces that will reflect our changing demographics.
- 2)        Reduce water and maintenance requirements in our parks and open spaces.
- 3)        Multi-function parks and open spaces.
- 4)        Multi-function open space corridors.
- 5)        Trail systems that encourage walking and cycling for transportation and recreation.
- 6)        Recognize the river valley as the city's primary open space system.
- 7)        Protect the fragile soils, topography and ecosystems of the river valley and coulees.
- 8)        Connect the river valley with our residential areas.
- 9)        Improve public access to the river valley.
- 10)      More pet exercise areas in the city.

## **PARKS AND OPEN SPACE**

### **6.1 Planning Goal**

**A mix of parks and open spaces that will reflect the community's changing demographics.**

#### **Issue Summary**

As discussed in the Population chapter, changing demographics will change demand for many goods and services. The aging of the Baby Boomers is expected to result in a major shift from active recreation such as skiing and tennis to passive recreation activities such as walking, birdwatching and visiting natural areas.

This will likely result in more people using areas like the river valley, and demand for more natural areas in our parks. More of our park space could be developed for passive recreation, and contain trees, water and natural landscaping. This could include converting some irrigated turf in our existing parks to passive park area with trees and natural landscaping.

#### **Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Encourage planting of drought-tolerant grasses, trees and shrubs as an alternative to irrigated turf in some of our new parks, open spaces, buffer zones and boulevards.
- 2) Develop a master plan and implementation strategies to integrate the concept of naturalization into the public open space system.
- 3) Continue to research and support experimental work related to drought-tolerant vegetation.
- 4) Develop and maintain naturalization information for public use and education.



## 6.2 Planning Goal

### Reduced water and maintenance requirements in our parks and open spaces.

#### Issue Summary

*How can we reduce park maintenance costs?*

Our extensive park and open space system has become expensive to maintain. The City is currently investigating a number of ways in which water and maintenance costs can be reduced while continuing to provide a high standard of parks and open spaces to our residents.

*Reduce new park space*

One of the ways to cut costs is to reduce the amounts of land used for park space. It is now felt that 7-8% of gross residential area can provide sufficient park space if used efficiently. Some of our existing villages have considerably more park space than this. Approximately 13% of the Indian Battle Heights village, for example, is designated as park space. This would appear to be excessive, especially when residents of Indian Battle Heights have easy access to Nicholas Sheran Park, the major open space area for all of West Lethbridge.

*Larger, more functional parks*

Reducing the number of narrow, turfed greenstrips and small parks, especially ornamental parks, and concentrating on fewer but larger parks or open spaces that are easier to maintain can also reduce maintenance costs. Other possibilities are to have residents or neighborhood associations maintain smaller residential parks, or have developers fund park development as well as maintenance for a specified time period. (Currently developers provide the land for parks and the City landscapes and maintains them). Sports groups can also maintain their own playing fields.

*Other groups could maintain parks*

*Natural landscaping*

More natural landscapes can also reduce park and open space development and maintenance costs. The City has recently implemented a passive naturalization concept along selected major roadways. Under this concept maintenance of existing landscapes is reduced and nature left to return the vegetation to its original state. In some cases traditional turf has been replaced by attractive self-perpetuating grasses.

*Environmental benefits*

In addition to cutting maintenance costs, natural landscapes can have many environmental benefits. Native materials help to maintain or restore natural ecosystems and biological diversity, resulting in healthier and more interesting landscapes and natural habitats for wildlife. They can also help to stabilize soil and reduce erosion. Natural landscapes can also be more interesting for walks and study of the local ecology.

*Low-maintenance corridors*

Future open space corridors within residential villages should also use materials that are easier to maintain. Greenstrips with irrigated turf, such as the trail network through the old part of Varsity Village, can be very attractive, but also very expensive to maintain.

**Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Locate and design parks and open spaces in new residential areas to maximize use, accessibility and aesthetic appeal while reducing overall land requirements.
- 2) Reduce the number of small ornamental parks and greenstrips in new residential areas.
- 3) Concentrate resources on fewer, but larger parks that are functional and easy to maintain.
- 4) Encourage maintenance of parks and playing fields by residents and sports groups.
- 5) Encourage planting of drought-tolerant grasses, trees and shrubs as an alternative to irrigated turf in some of our new parks, open spaces, buffer zones and boulevards.
- 6) Develop a master plan and implementation strategies to integrate the concept of naturalization into the public open space system.

### 6.3 Planning Goal

#### Multi-function parks and open spaces.

##### Issue Summary

<i>Combining active and passive park space</i>	Fewer parks and less overall park area in new residential subdivisions may mean that in future more parks have to be multi-purpose, perhaps combining active recreation facilities with passive recreation areas or open spaces.
<i>Multi-function school yards</i>	School yards tend to provide most of the playing fields and open space in many new residential areas. This is an effective way of meeting the active recreation needs of both school children and the community as a whole. School yards however tend to lack trees and passive open spaces. As a result, many new residential areas are left with few attractive passive recreation areas and open spaces.
<i>Including trees and water</i>	<p>Perhaps the exterior areas of some of our school yards could be developed as passive recreation areas. Natural landscapes and trees in these areas could also provide attractive buffers between the school yard and adjacent residences. Possibly stormwater retention ponds could be developed in these areas. These could be used for recreation as well as aesthetics. If developed as stormwater cleansing ponds or marshes they could also be used for environmental education.</p> <p>Nicholas Sheran Park is an excellent example of how a school and active recreation areas can be surrounded by trees and water in a passive recreation setting. While future developments would be much smaller than Nicholas Sheran Park, the park provides a good example of how these uses can be successfully integrated.</p>
<i>Better use of cemeteries</i>	It is suggested that cemeteries might also be developed differently than in the past. For example, cemeteries or parts of cemeteries could include quiet, pleasant places to walk or relax, and more trees, bushes and natural landscaping along with grass.

##### Policies/Recommended Actions

- 1) Some parks in new areas should be multi-functional, combining active recreation areas and aesthetic open spaces.
- 2) Selected new school sites could include not only playing fields, but also passive open space which could contain trees and water.
- 3) More trees, bushes, natural landscaping and walking trails could be included in our cemeteries.

- 4) The aggregate amount of reserve land, money in place of reserve land, or combination of reserve land and money, which the City subdivision authority requires pursuant to Section 666 of the Municipal Government Act, shall be 10% for residential subdivisions and 5% for industrial and commercial subdivisions.

The identification of the school requirements shall be done in consultation with the school authorities.

All money paid shall be deposited in the Municipal Reserve Fund for the development of parks and open spaces.

## 6.4 Planning Goal

### Multi-function open space corridors.

#### Issue Summary

##### *Using arterial rights-of-way*

The Environment chapter has proposed that the wide arterial road rights-of-way which separate our residential villages be developed as multi-function open space corridors. These could contain pedestrian and cycling trails which connect residential villages to each other and to different activity areas, along with drought-tolerant grasses, shrubs and rows or clusters of trees. The trees could shade the pathways in summer, provide attractive borders to our residential villages, and provide a buffer between the roadway and adjacent houses. They could also absorb some of the carbon dioxide generated along the arterial roadway.

Another type of multi-function open space corridor, which would combine trails with linear stormwater drainage systems and extend from the river valley through new residential areas, is discussed in Section 6.6.

#### Policies/Recommended Actions

- 1) Develop our newer arterial road rights-of-way as multi-function open space corridors containing inter-village walking and cycling trails and drought-tolerant grasses, shrubs and trees.

## 6.5 Planning Goal

**Trail systems that encourage walking and cycling for recreation and transportation.**

### **Issue Summary**

We have excellent trail systems for recreation, especially in the river valley. Some notable gaps do exist in the river valley trail system, however, e.g. by the Lethbridge Country Club, and between the nature reserve and Peenaquim Park (**see MAP 9**). A more direct trail crossing to West Lethbridge would also give West Lethbridge residents better access to the rest of the city and to the river valley trail system.

### *Trail system review*

It is recommended that an overall review of our trail systems be undertaken, to try to determine future trail needs and how these needs might be met. The review should also look at links to possible regional trails that might be built in the future.

### **Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Undertake a review of our trail systems to try to determine current and future needs and how we might meet them.
- 2) Try to find ways to overcome the gaps in our current river valley trail system.
- 3) Provide a more direct trail crossing to West Lethbridge.

## 6.6 Planning Goals

**Recognize the river valley as the City's primary open space system.**

**Protect the fragile soils, topography and ecosystems of the river valley and coulees.**

**River valley parks and trail systems that meet current and future community needs.**

**Multi-function open space linkages between the river valley and residential areas.**

**Greater public access to the river valley.**

### Issue Summary

The deep, wide river valley is the City's outstanding natural area, with unique and fragile environments and ecosystems. The extensive park and trail systems developed under the Urban Parks project (see **MAP 9**) also provide a good portion of the city's passive recreation area, as well as some active recreation areas.

#### *River valley plans*

The River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (see **MAP 8**) and the Urban Parks Master Plan were prepared in the 1980's after much public consultation. We should assume that they still reflect what residents want and don't want to occur in the river valley.

As requested by residents, land uses in the valley are limited primarily to low-impact recreation uses, which allow residents to enjoy the valley in a fairly natural state. The River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan helps to protect and preserve the river valley's fragile topography and ecosystems, and also protect the public from the hazards associated with developing in the river valley. The plan designates as "Hazard Lands" almost all the coulee slopes and much of the floodplain area within the City limits.

The River Valley ARP also established a "Top of Bank Setback Line" to help ensure that any development at the top of the river valley will be set back far enough from the edge so as not to cause any damage to the valley banks or coulees.

#### *River valley parks system review*

Future population growth will likely result in heavier use of the river valley parks and trails, especially Pavan and Peenaquim Parks in North Lethbridge and Popson Park in the south part of West Lethbridge. It is suggested that a review of the river valley parks system be undertaken to try to determine future demands on these parks and how these demands might be met.

*Linking the river valley to residential areas* We could make the river valley a more central and prominent feature of the community by developing open space linkage systems between the valley and our new residential areas. It is suggested in Section 3.8 that multi-function open space corridors containing stormwater drainage and treatment systems could be developed from the valley through the south part of West Lethbridge and the Legacy Ridge/Uplands area of North Lethbridge. Such systems might provide functional, aesthetic and cost-effective ways of draining and treating stormwater before it is released to the river, and of linking parks, schools and residential areas to the river valley. They could also be a unique and attractive residential amenity.

Open space systems of this nature need to be planned in advance on a large scale. It is recommended that the potential for developing such corridors in the south part of West Lethbridge and the Legacy Ridge/Uplands area of North Lethbridge be investigated in the near future.

*Improving public access to the river valley* The river valley is public open space which should be enjoyed by all residents of the community. Continuous trails along the top of the river valley should be major features of new residential developments overlooking the valley. No residential lots should be developed between the river valley and the trail, as these would reduce the public's opportunity to walk or cycle directly adjacent to the river valley. Access to the trails from public roadways should also be ensured.

*Preserving wildlife habitat* Wildlife habitat has been affected by the changing land uses in the river valley over the past decade. The City has prepared a wildlife management plan to identify impacts and ensure that wildlife habitat is maintained in the river valley. Providing this protection may require some amendments to the River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.

*Ecotourism potential* In addition to being the City's major natural and passive recreation area, the river valley could have significant tourism development potential. Ecotourism is a growing field, and expected to become more popular as the Baby Boomers age. The unique topography and wide variety of animal and bird life in the river valley could provide excellent ecotourism opportunities in the future. It is recommended that the City examine these potential opportunities in preparing its economic development strategy.



### **Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Limit land uses in the river valley to those allowed in the River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.
- 2) Adhere to the top-of-bank development setback line policies outlined in the River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.
- 3) Maintain river valley parks and trails to enable residents to enjoy the valley now and in the future.
- 4) Review current and anticipated future river valley park and trail systems needs and how we might meet those needs.
- 5) Provide continuous trails along the top of the river valley in new residential subdivisions overlooking the valley. Prohibit any residential development between the valley and these trails.
- 6) Ensure that access points are provided to these trails from public roadways and other trails.
- 7) Investigate the potential in our new residential areas for developing open space corridors containing stormwater drainage and natural treatment systems.
- 8) Protect significant wildlife habitat areas in the river valley.
- 9) Examine the river valley's ecotourism potential.

## **6.7 Planning Goal**

### **More pet exercise areas in the City.**

#### **Issue Summary**

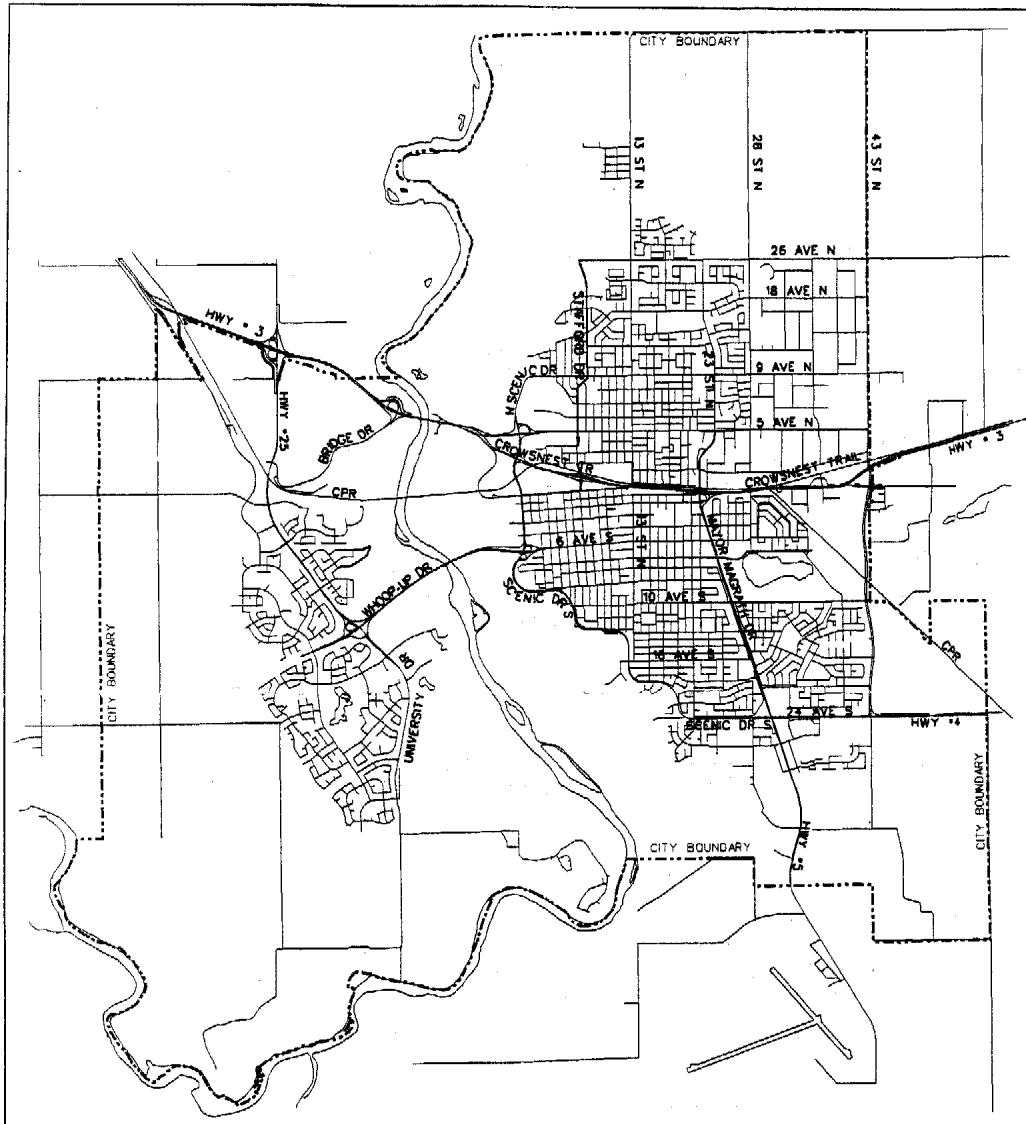
We could benefit from more pet exercise areas in the city. Currently there is only one dog run in the city, off Scenic Drive in South Lethbridge. This is not convenient for dog owners in West and North Lethbridge. As a result some dog owners let their dogs run loose in areas such as Nicholas Sheran Park, which can cause problems and deter people from using our parks.

We should encourage development of pet exercise areas in the city. Pet exercise areas could be provided by the private sector as allowed under our land use by-law. More areas within our public open space system could also be used for pet exercise. For example, sections of some parks could be designated as pet exercise areas during specified hours.

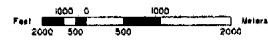
#### **Policies/Recommended Actions**

- 1) Designate pet exercise areas in selected open spaces throughout the city.

## **D. MAPS**

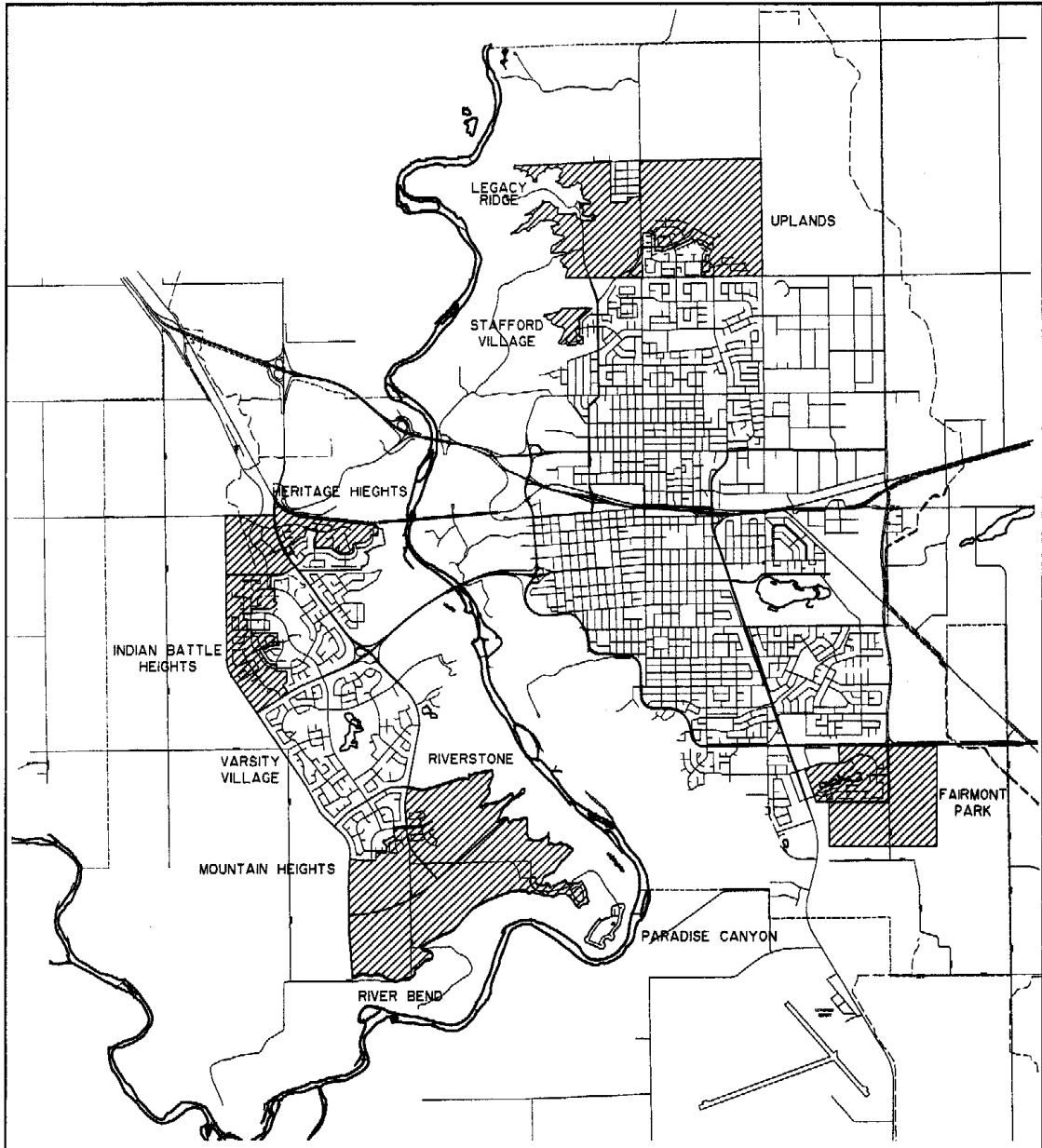


MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

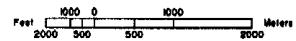


Map #1 Municipal Development Plan Area



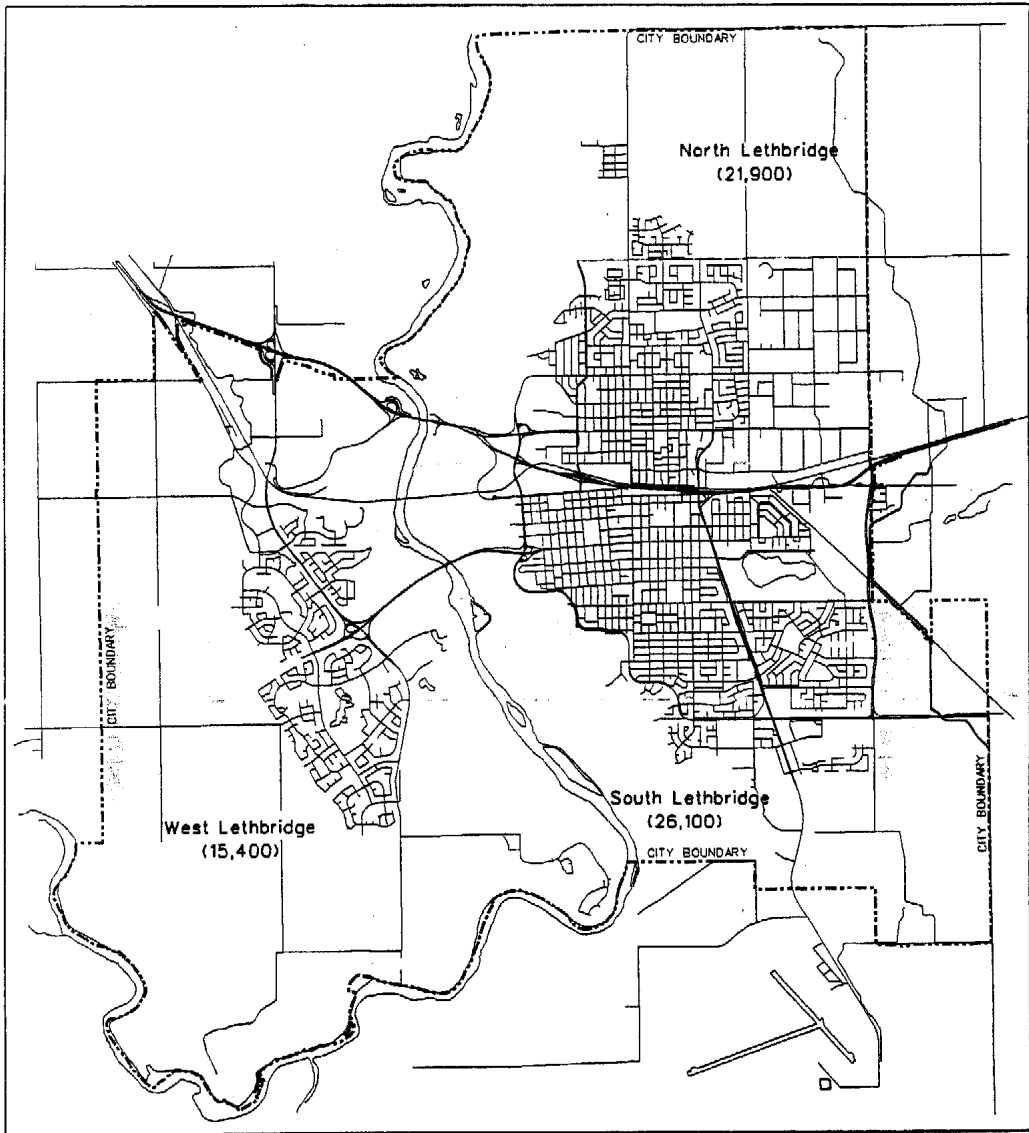


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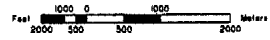


Map #2 Future Residential Growth Areas



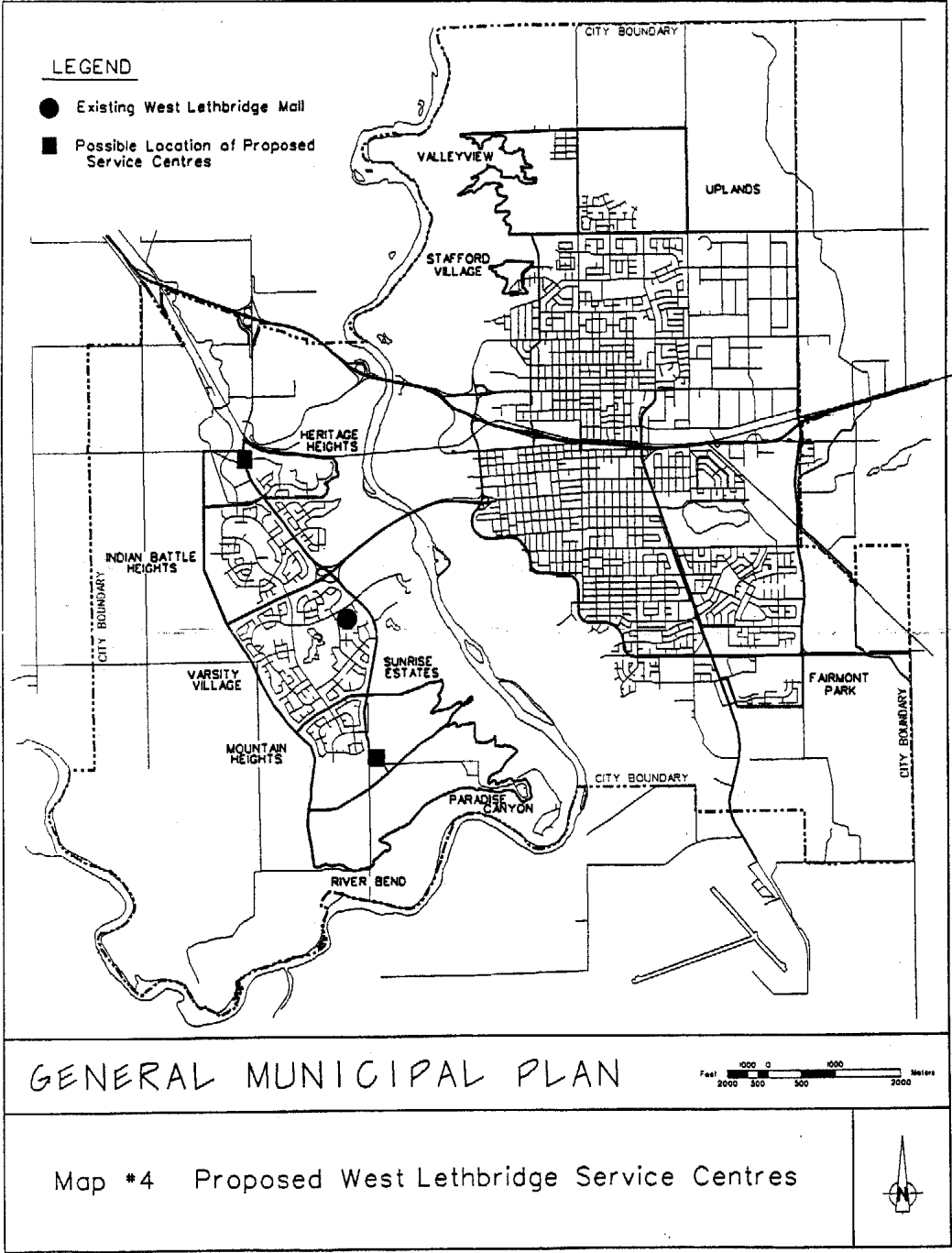


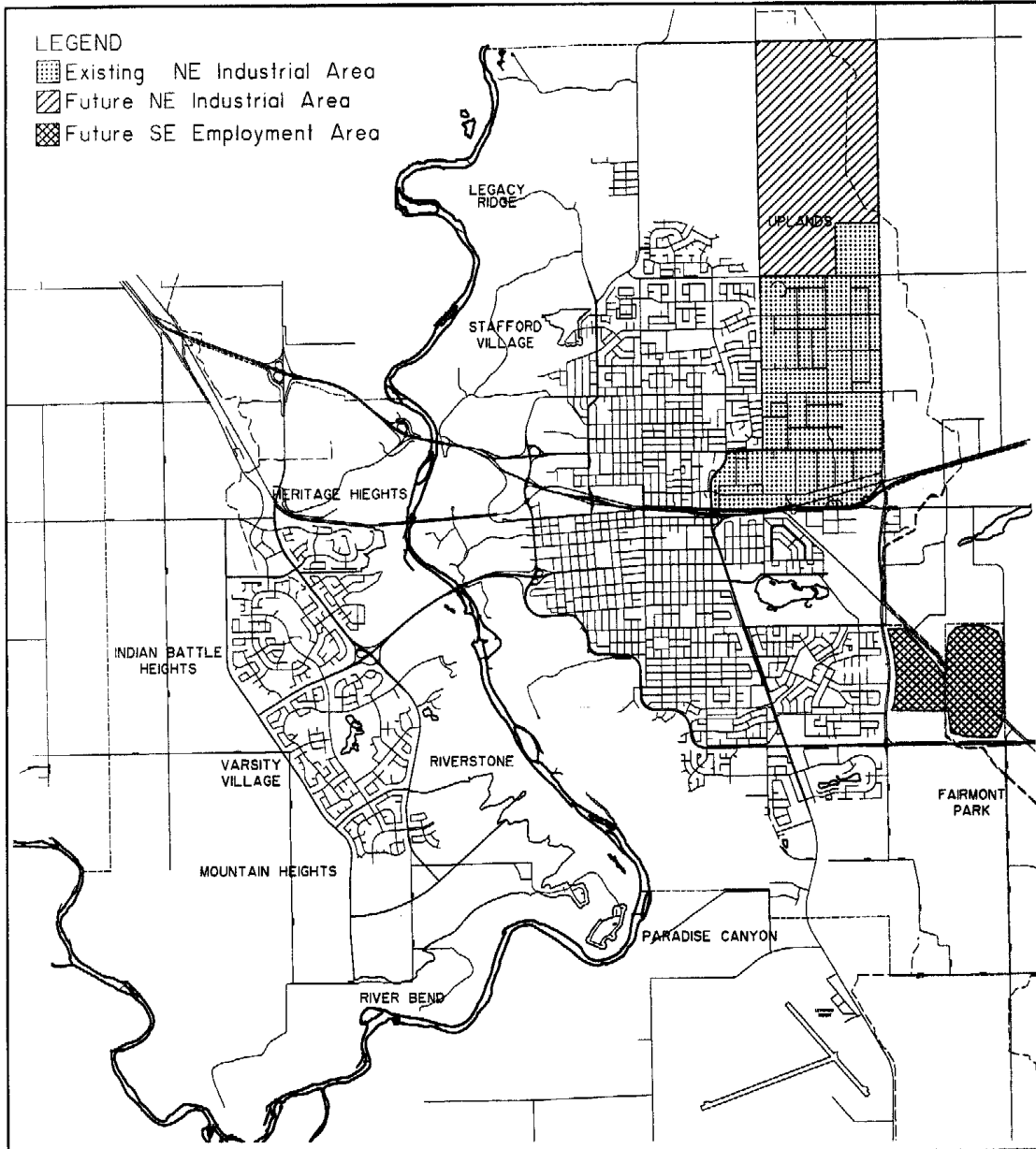
GENERAL MUNICIPAL PLAN



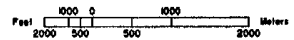
Map #3 Lethbridge Population Distribution (1992)







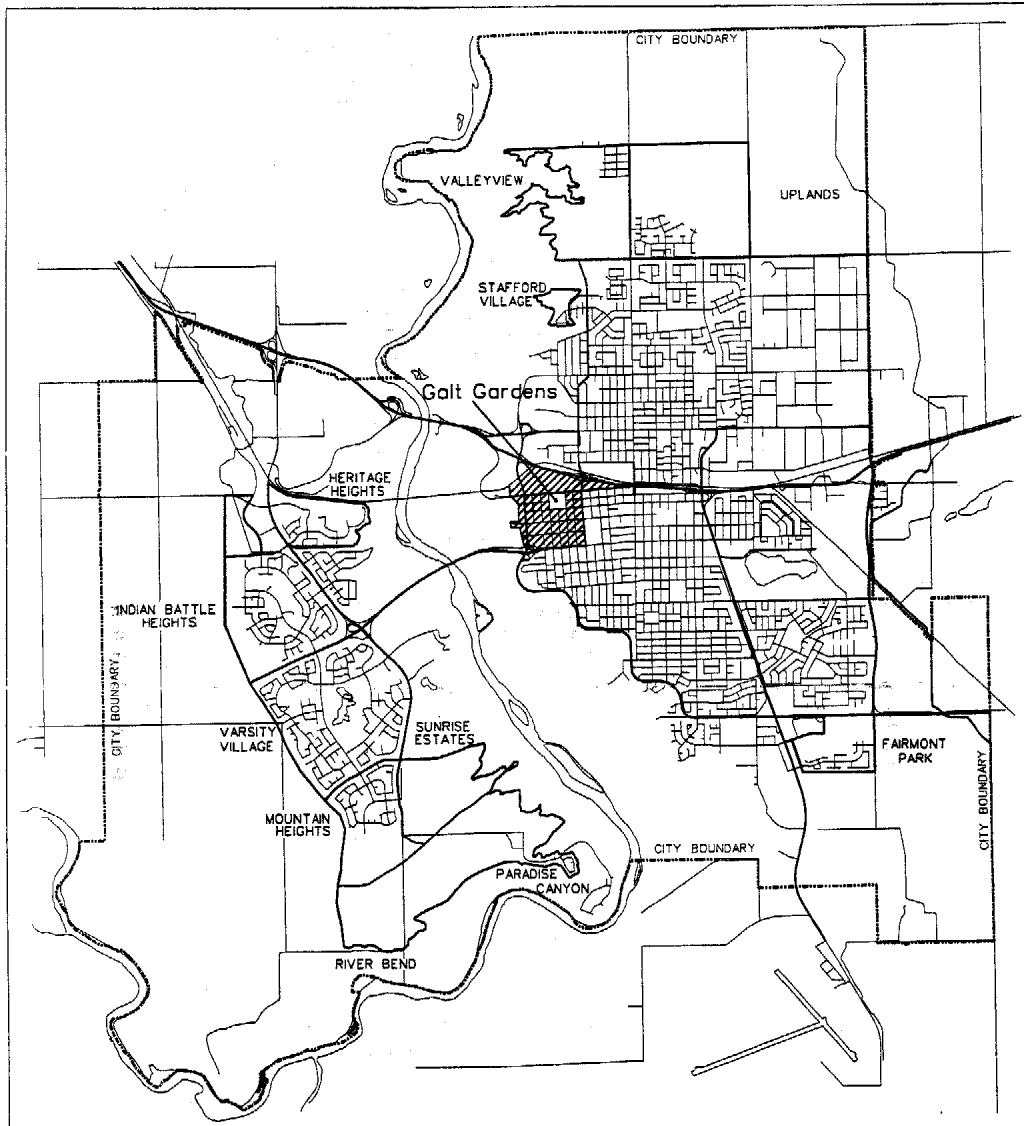
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Map #5 Northeast Industrial Area





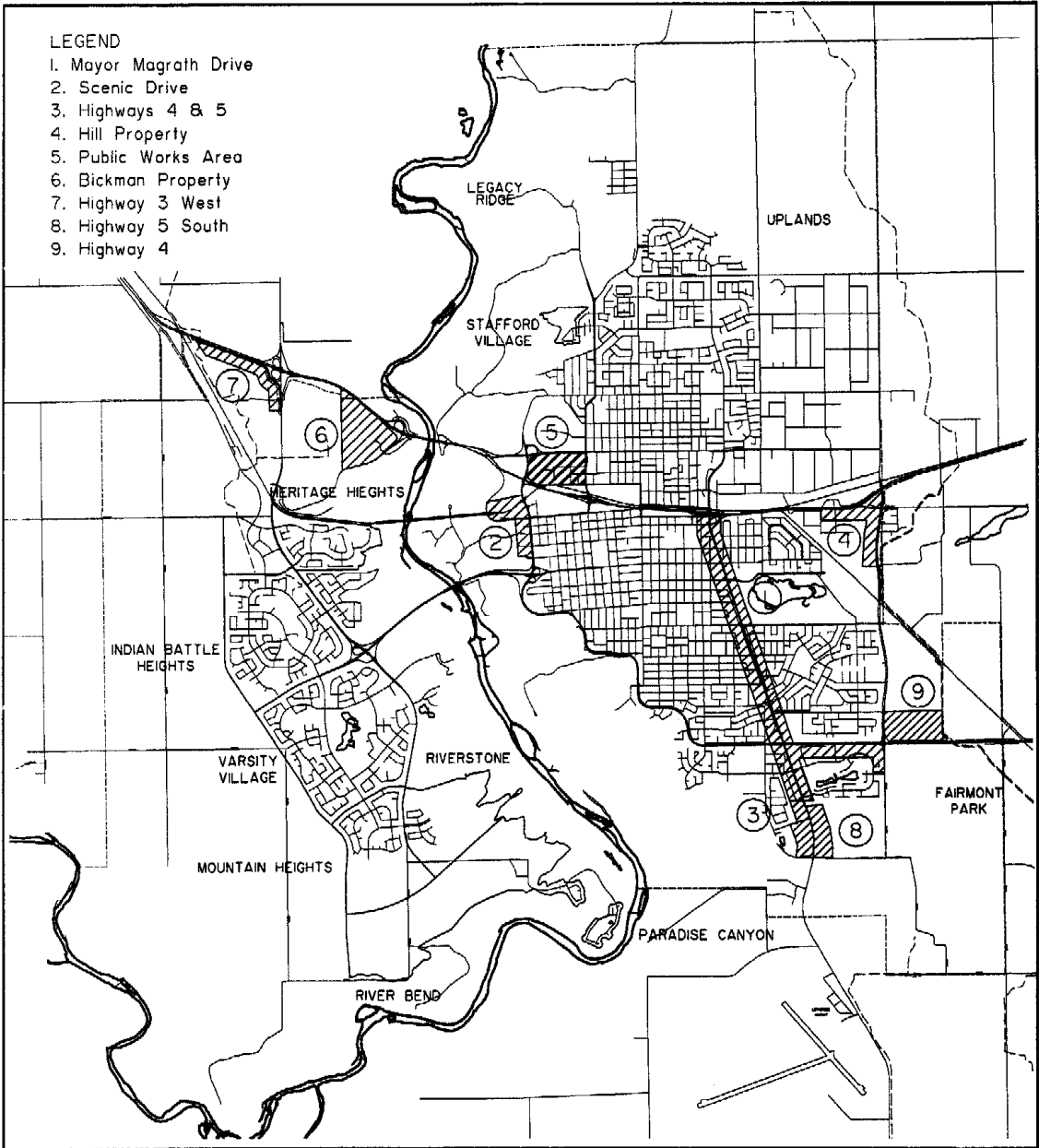


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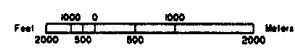


Map #6 - Downtown Lethbridge



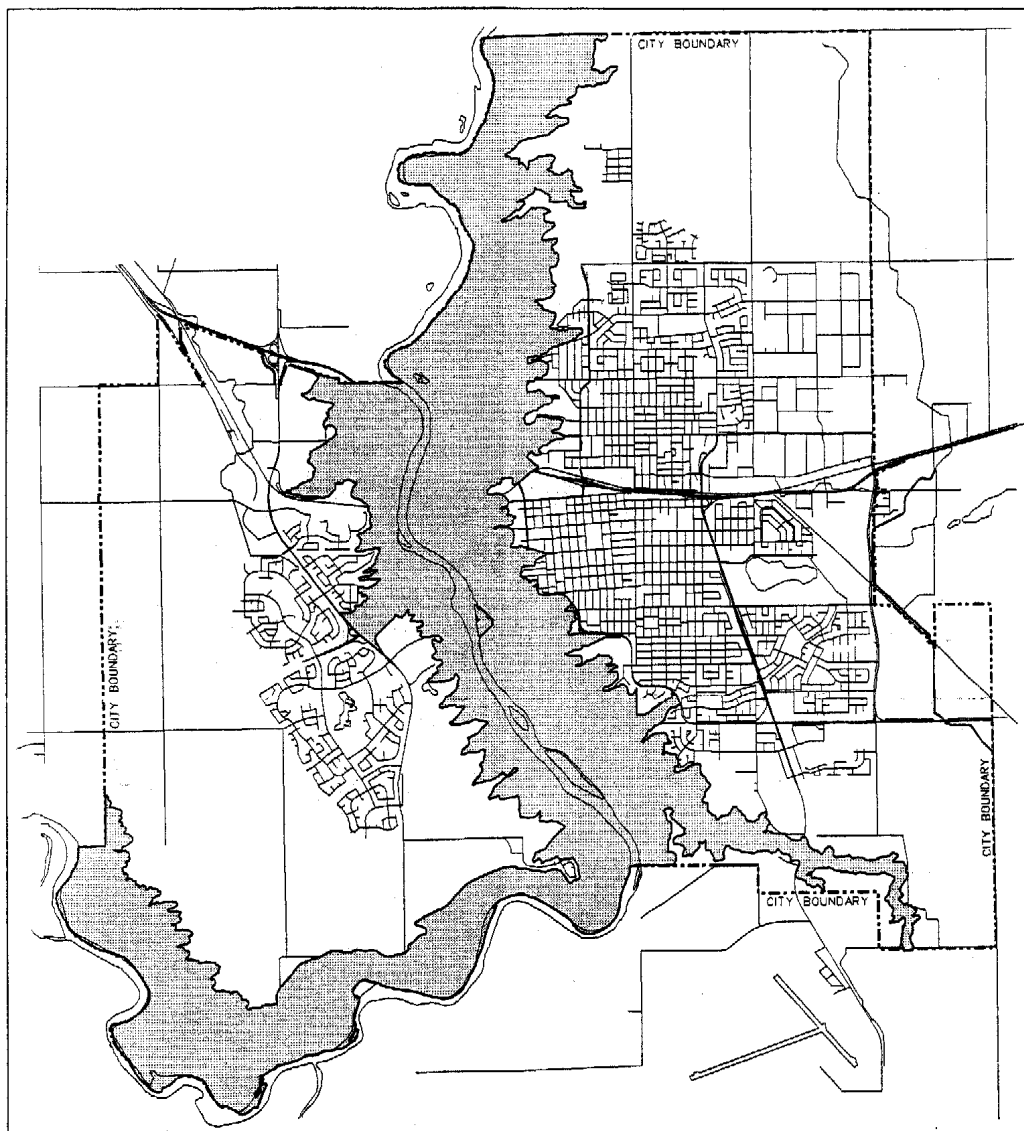


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Map #7 Existing and Potential Future Highway Commercial Areas



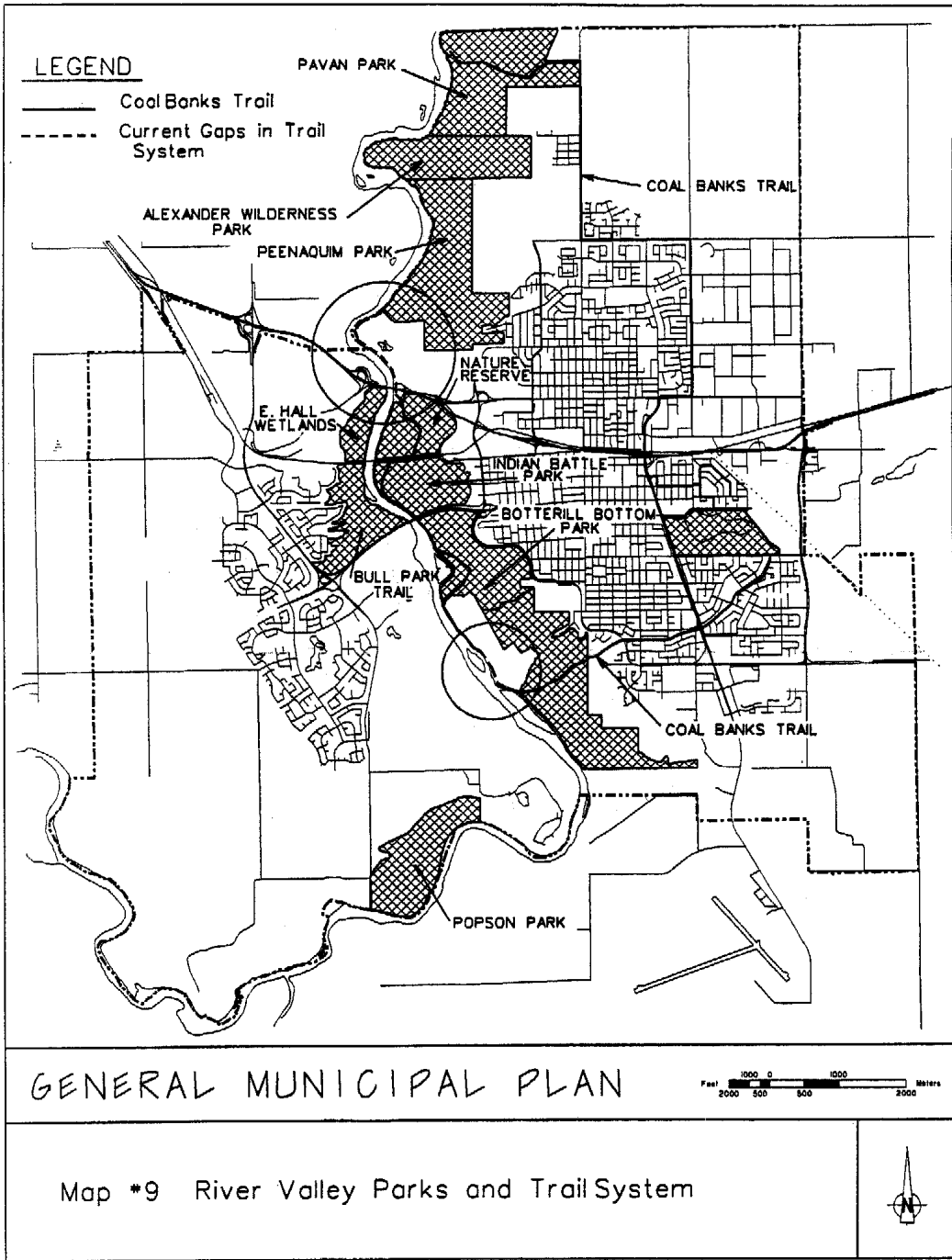


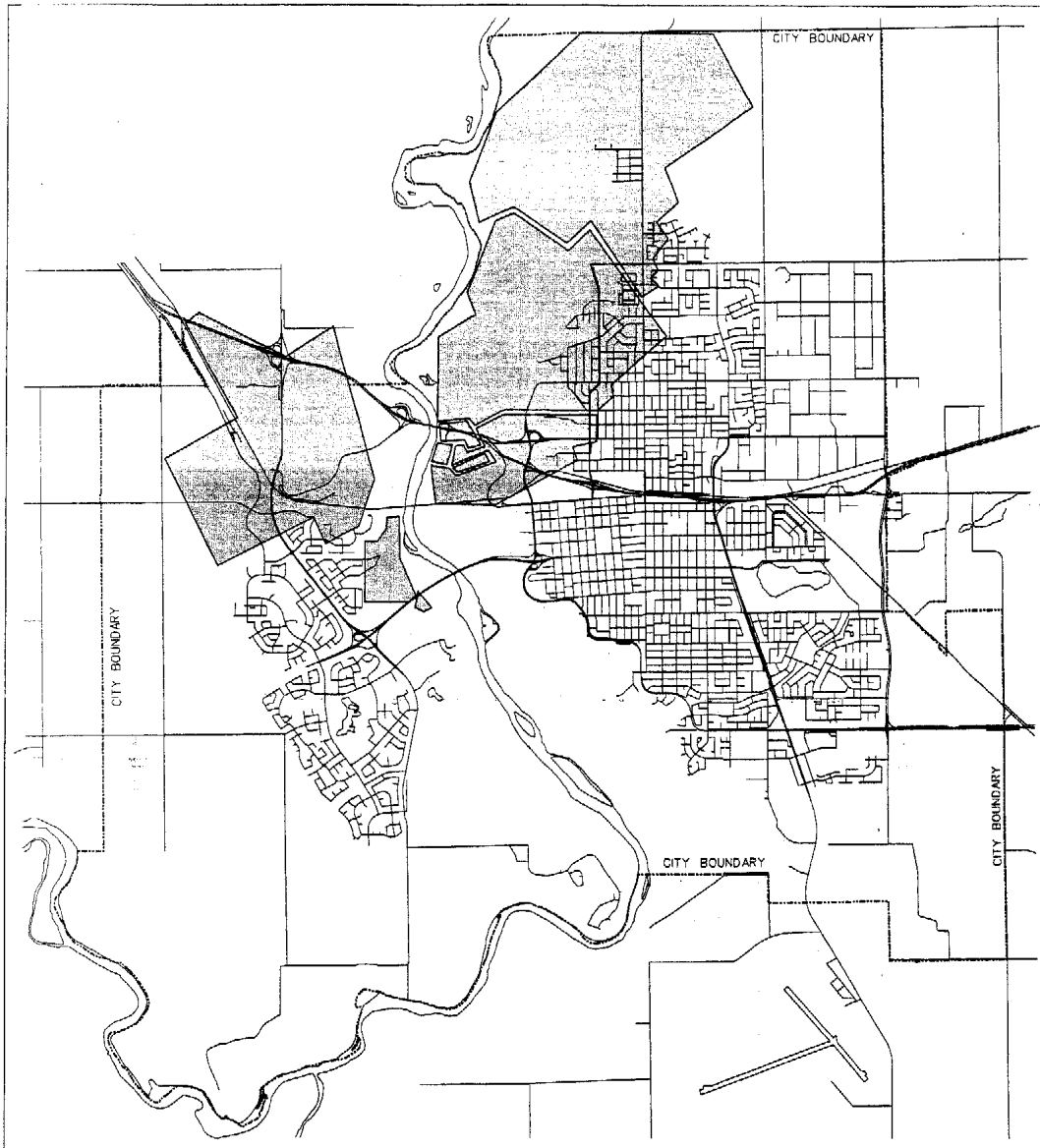
MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



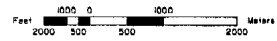
Map #8 River Valley Area Redevelopment  
Planning Area





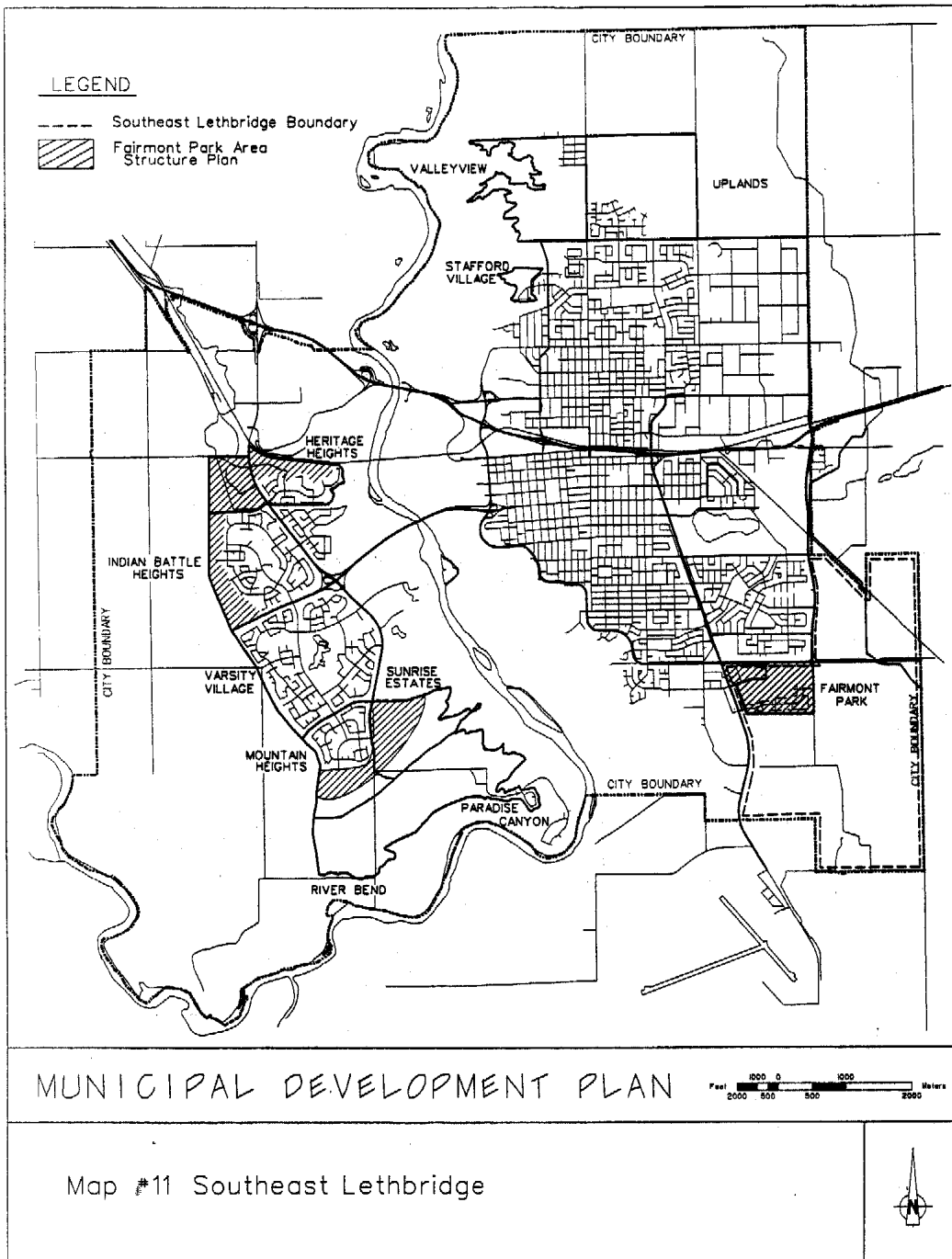


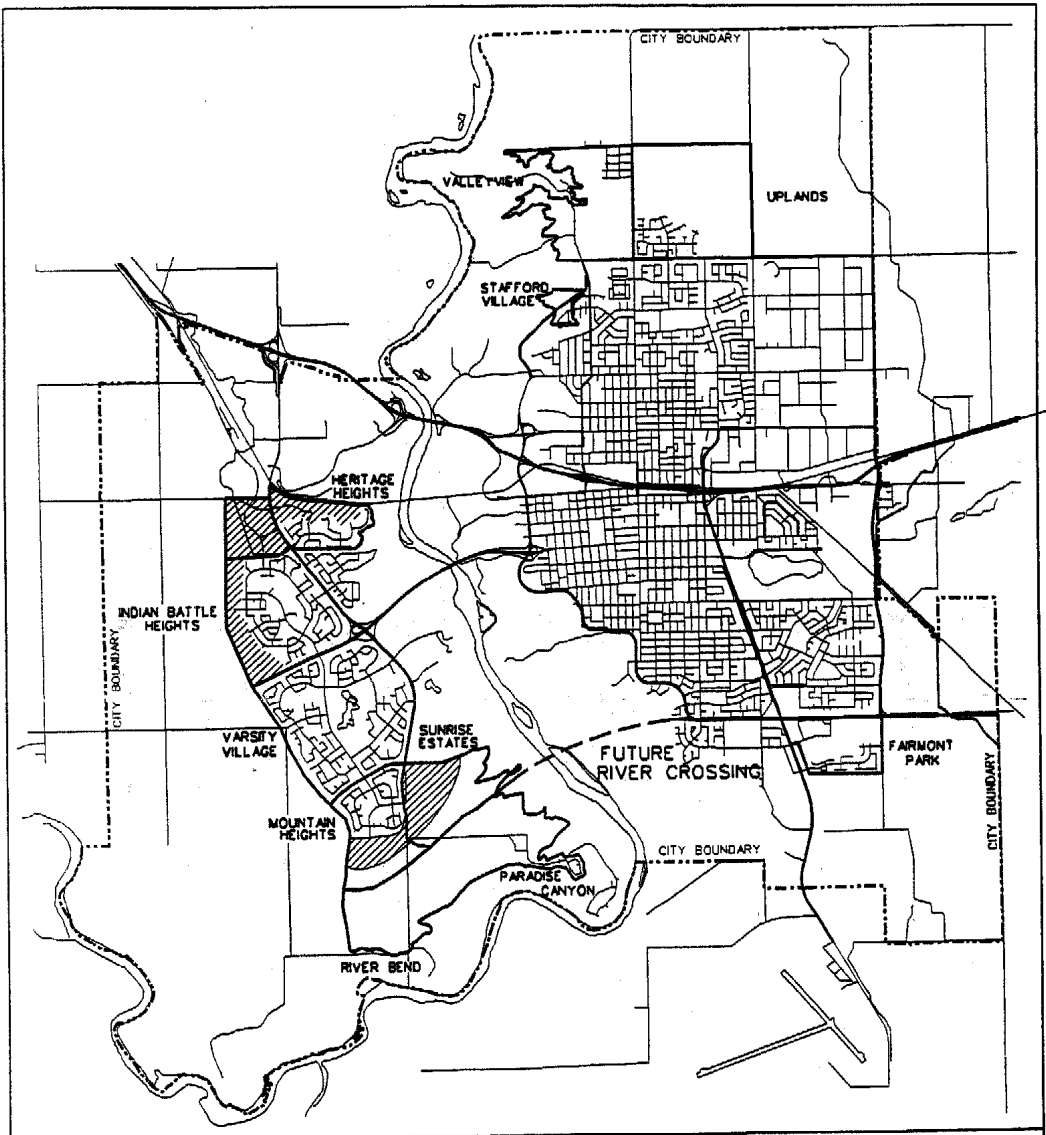
MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



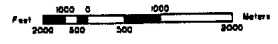
Map #10 Former Coal Mining Areas





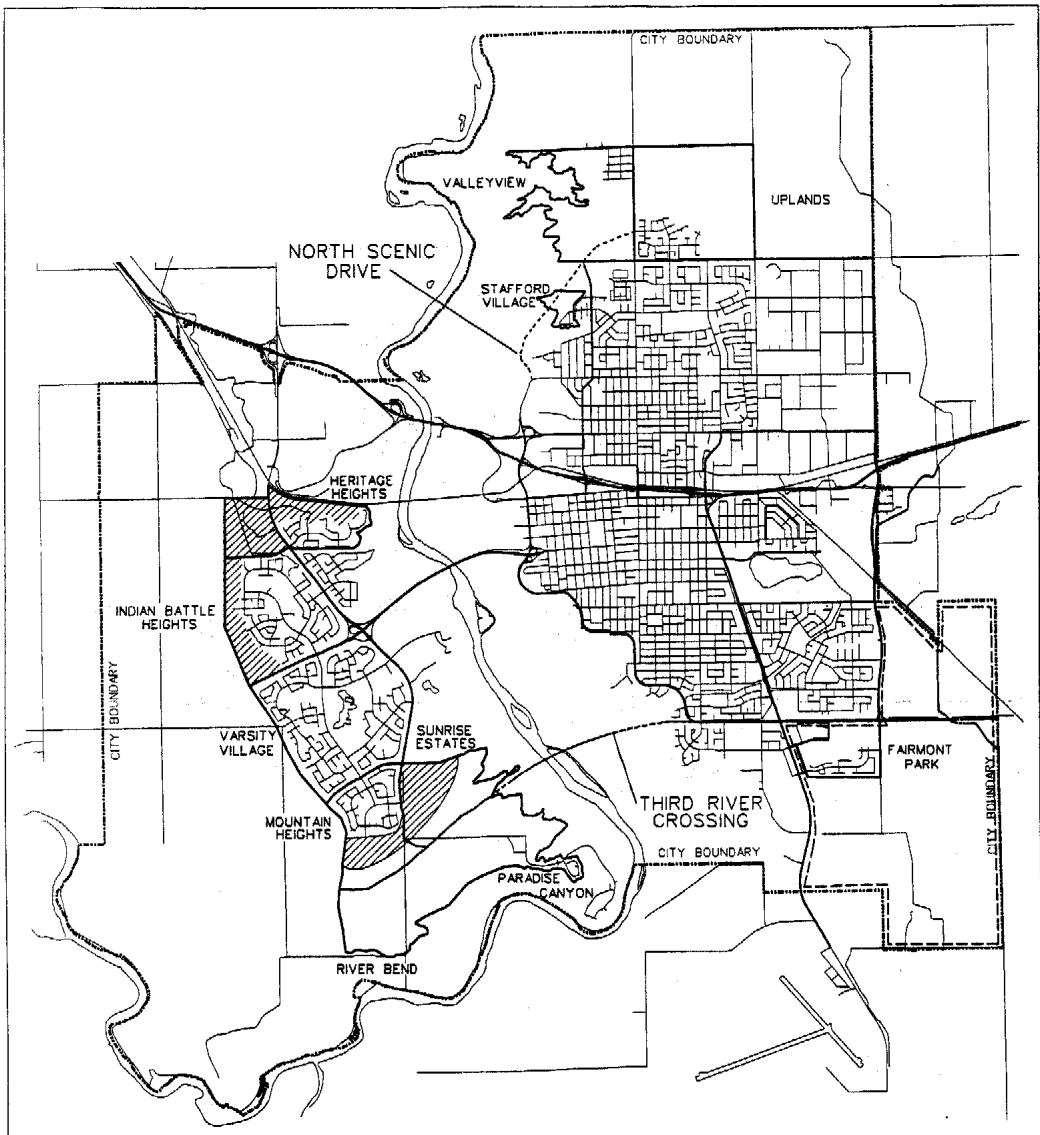


GENERAL MUNICIPAL PLAN



Map \*12 West Lethbridge at a Population of 30,000





MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Map #13 Proposed Future Arterial Roadways to North and West Lethbridge

