

Background

This report addresses the following question: “Does McKenzie Towne or Garrison Woods best exemplify the principles of New Urbanism?” This question will be answered by comparing the neighbourhoods to one another, using an evaluation framework, developed for the U.S. National Governors Association (NGA). The proposed and existing phases of each neighbourhood will also be compared to one another.

The principles of New Urbanism encourage mixed use communities with higher residential densities than conventional suburban neighbourhoods. They also promote highly-connected streets with a focus on the pedestrian realm. The automobile is accommodated, but is not the central focus of the development. Instead, transportation options are accessible and convenient. Public transit is a viable option, and active transportation is encouraged. Due to a mix of uses, including employment, shopping and housing, pedestrian transport becomes a practical option. The social goals of New Urbanism aim for social equity, community and a desire for a common good.

Case Study Neighbourhoods

McKenzie Towne is located in the far southeast quadrant of the city, just east of Deerfoot Trail, Calgary’s main north-south artery. Garrison Woods is located relatively centrally, just southwest of the city’s downtown core (see figure 1).

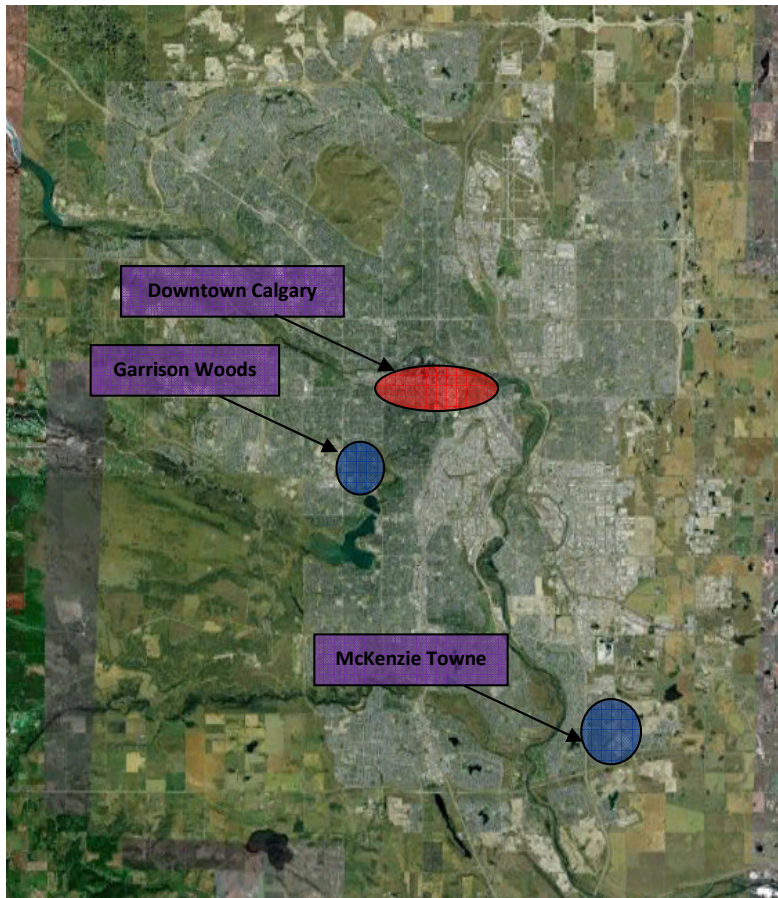


Figure 1: Location of McKenzie Towne and Garrison Woods in relation to downtown Calgary. Credit: Google Maps, 2010.

McKenzie Towne was planned as one of the earliest New Urbanist communities in Canada. The developer, Carma Developers, hired Duany-Plater Zyberk to design a transit-oriented development (TOD). The site was slated by the City of Calgary to be the terminus of a new north-south leg of the light rail transit system (the C-Train). Unfortunately, plans changed, and this leg of the LRT has been postponed indefinitely. McKenzie Towne was planned as a community of ‘villages’, each surrounding a public square. There was a limited amount of commercial use mixed into the residential area, with a substantial commercial core (see figure 2).

Public transit ridership in the area is below the Calgary average. This is mostly due to inadequate service to the neighbourhood and its location, far from the central business district. The first phases of McKenzie Towne were constructed following New Urbanist principles. These phases included the villages of: “Inverness”, “Prestwick,” “Elgin” and “High Street” (the commercial district). Carma experienced slow sales, though, and market pressure pushed the development towards more conventional suburban design. Later phases of the development have seen a marked shift away from New Urbanist principles.

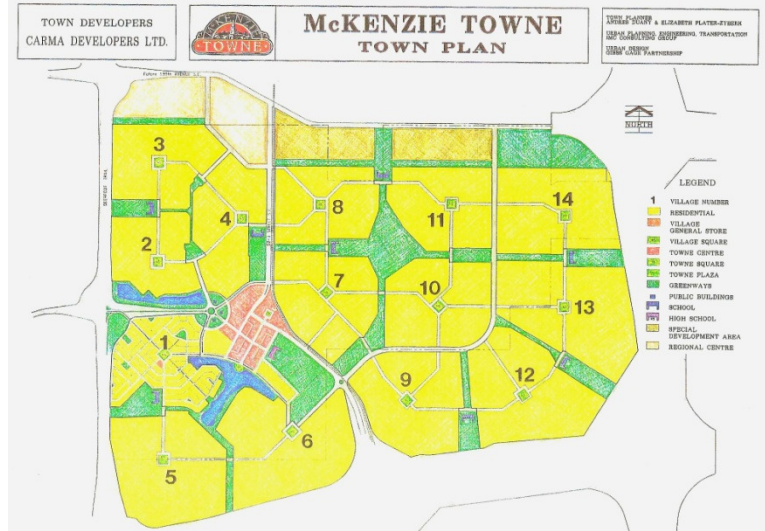


Figure 2: Plan of McKenzie Towne. Credit, DPZ, 1995

Garrison Woods (also known as CFB Calgary East) is a residential intensification project that began in 1998. It is on the east side of Crowchild Trail, south of 33rd Avenue. The project is built on the former site of the Canadian Forces Base Calgary military housing area. The developer, Canada Lands Company, took advantage of the site's central location and developed a neighbourhood in the New Urbanist style. The site features a commercial main street, numerous housing types and ample open green space (see figure 3).



Figure 3: Garrison Woods Plan.
Credit: Ontario, 2009

The site is well connected internally as well as with adjacent communities. The area is well serviced by public transit since it is close to downtown and within an already-developed area. Plans for “CFB West” are also approved. This development, also by Canada Lands Company, is on the west side of Crowchild Trail and redevelops the remainder of the military lands that were vacated in 1998. These communities (named Garrison Green and Currie Barracks) are currently under construction. These phases include employment centres and a major institutional use – Mount Royal University.

Methodology

This report uses Hirschhorn and Souza's 24 evaluation criteria, as provided in *New Community Design to the Rescue* (2001) for the National Governors Association (NGA). The evaluation framework addresses the principles of New Urbanism and allows communities to be assessed based on how well they meet the criteria. For each criterion, the case study neighbourhoods were assessed to *Adhere*, *Partially Adhere* or *Not Adhere* (see table 1).

Analysis	Calgary Case Study Neighbourhoods			
	McKenzie Towne		CFB Calgary Redevelopment	
	Existing	Proposed	Garrison Woods	Phase II and III
Land and Mixed Uses Criteria				
Mix of Uses?	●	○	●	●
Mix of housing types, tenures and prices?	●	○	●	●
Transportation Criteria				
Convenient access to public transit?	○	○	●	●
Multiple access points and paths for travel?	●	○	●	●
Teleworking facilitated through broadband?	●	●	●	●
Design promotes real neighbourhoods?	●	●	●	●
Designed for easy and safe walking?	●	●	●	●
Sense of Place Criteria				
Distinctive style?	●	○	●	●
Uses older and historic buildings?	○	○	●	●
Environmental Criteria				
Avoid fragmenting working lands?	○	○	●	●
Avoid fragmenting green space?	●	●	●	●
Project design protects the local watershed?	●	●	●	●
Avoids increasing risk of natural disasters?	●	●	●	●
Minimize amount of land per dwelling unit?	●	●	●	●
Maintain or create green spaces?	●	●	●	●
Energy efficient design and building methods?	●	○	●	●
Regional Planning Criteria				
Already developed area?	○	○	●	●
Blend with surrounding area?	●	●	●	●
Brownfield or greyfield site?	○	○	●	●
Implementation Criteria				
Stakeholder engagement?	○	●	●	●
Government codes support mixed use?	○	○	●	●
Prevention of delays for developers?	●	●	●	●
High quality phasing plan?	●	●	●	●
Infrastructure funding uncertainty?	●	●	●	●

● = Adheres to Criterion; ● = Partially Adheres to Criterion; ○ = Does Not Adhere to Criterion

Table 1: Case Study Analysis. Note that full criteria questions are provided in Chapter 4-Analysis.

Conclusions

Land and Mixed Uses Criteria

Garrison Woods fares better than McKenzie Towne in this section. Phases II and III of the project feature not only retail and restaurant uses, but a substantial amount of office space and the large institutional use at Mount Royal University. McKenzie Towne does have a commercial component, but there is limited office space, and later phases are developed in a conventional suburban style.

Transportation Criteria

Garrison Woods fares better than McKenzie Towne in terms of transportation. Lower density development surrounding McKenzie Towne, combined with its location, make viable public transportation difficult. The development is, however, well connected to the city's regional pathway system. Garrison Woods is well serviced by public transit, due to its location in an already-developed area. The street network is also well integrated with surrounding communities.

Sense of Place Criteria

Again, Garrison Woods rates better in this section than McKenzie Towne. This can be attributed to the fact that later phases of McKenzie Towne have abandoned New Urbanist principles, which makes the neighbourhood somewhat disjointed. Garrison Woods does especially well because of its preservation and respect for the historical nature of the site.

Environmental Criteria

McKenzie Towne fares relatively well in this section. McKenzie Towne respects green spaces, natural habitats and watersheds within the neighbourhood. Garrison Woods fares well because of its high density development that reduces the amount of land required per dwelling unit.

Regional Planning Criteria

McKenzie Towne fares poorly in this section because it is a greenfield development. The community replaced working farmland and most likely disturbed existing ecosystems in the area. Garrison Woods performs excellently in this section because it is both a greyfield and a brownfield site.

Implementation Criteria

Both neighbourhoods faced challenges in this section. The implementation of New Urbanist features (ie. mixed uses, high density development) required lengthy approvals and increased costs due to delays.

Overall Conclusion: Garrison Woods more closely conforms to the principles of New Urbanism

Recommendations

- *City of Calgary departments should find ways to reduce delays and related costs to developers looking to build mixed-use, higher-density, pedestrian-oriented developments.*
- *Transportation options should be a top priority to developers of Transit Oriented Developments in Calgary.*
- *Detailed phasing plans should be in place and followed in order to attract residents and businesses to mixed use developments in Calgary.*
- *Meaningful public consultation should be implemented into the design of communities in Calgary.*
- *Wherever possible, developers in Calgary should look to secure land within the existing urban fabric, instead of developing on greenfield sites.*