

# **Riley Communities Local Area Plan – Draft Chapter 1**

This Draft Local Area Plan (LAP) Chapter 1 has been developed for discussion purposes.

Revised Draft – January 2023

[calgary.ca/riley](https://calgary.ca/riley)

## **Land Acknowledgment**

This plan acknowledges the traditional territories of the Nations that made Treaty 7. These Nations in Southern Alberta are: the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations, who, altogether, form the Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy); the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations, who, altogether form the Îethka Nakoda (Stoney Nakoda) First Nations; and the Tsuut'ina First Nation. The City of Calgary is also homeland to the historic Northwest Métis and to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3. We acknowledge all urban Indigenous Calgarians who have made Calgary their home.

Guided by the White Goose Flying Report, The City's response to the findings and calls to actions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the Indigenous Policy, a Council-approved policy which outlines meaningful ways forward and policy opportunities to grow from and build common ground, The City beginning to explore how to better understand and act on our shared foundations with Indigenous peoples within the traditional territories that Calgary situates within. While discussions continue regarding our own actions and efforts, The City is committed to beginning to actively explore ways to redefine our understandings, our assumptions, our relationships, and our abilities to build a more inclusive and equitable city based on our shared foundations.

## Chapter 1 – Visualizing Growth

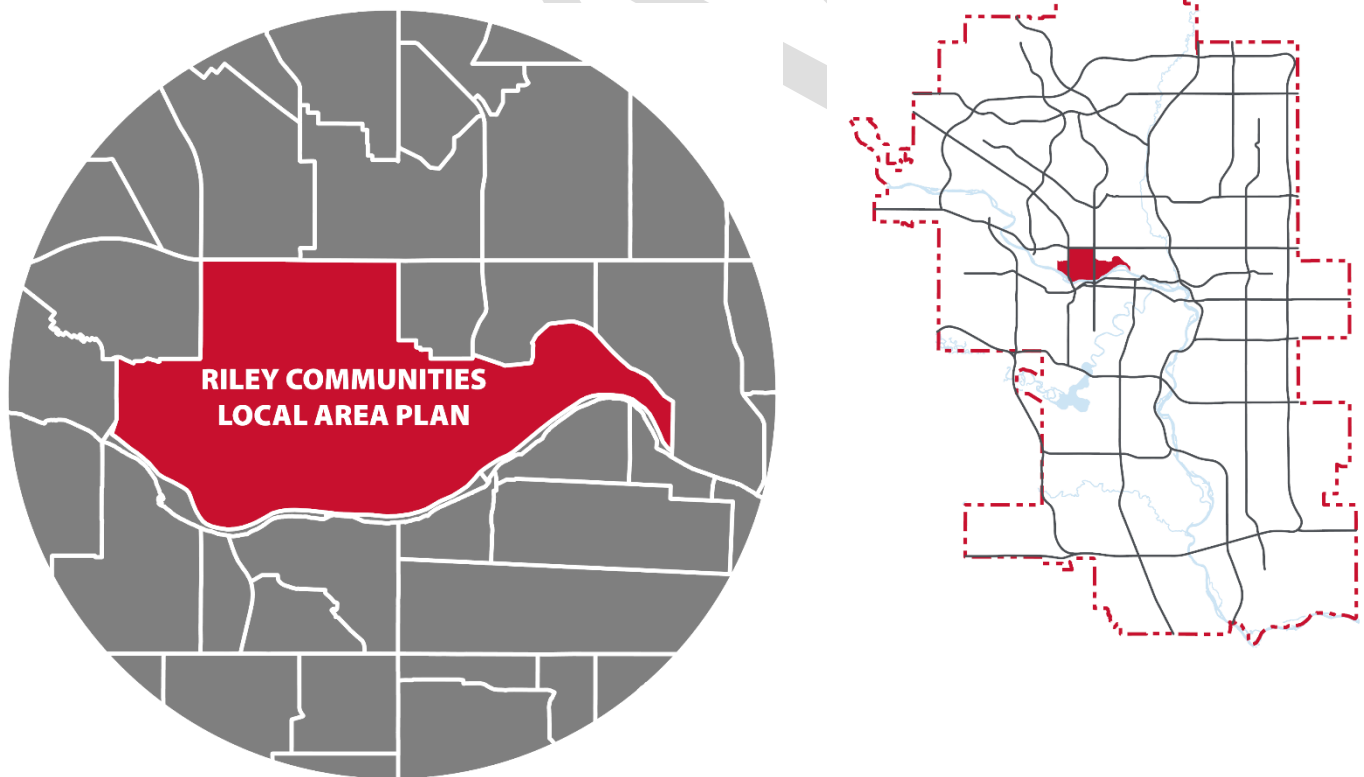
### 1.1 Introduction

The Riley Communities Local Area Plan (Plan) is a statutory policy document that sets out a long-term vision and identifies opportunities to create a framework for growth and change in the plan area. The plan area includes four residential communities bounded by 16 Avenue NW, the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) and the Alberta University of the Arts (AUArts) campuses and the bluff to the north, Centre Street North to the east, the Bow River to the south, McHugh Bluff, and Crowchild Trail NW and 28 Street NW to the west (**Figure 1: Plan Context**).

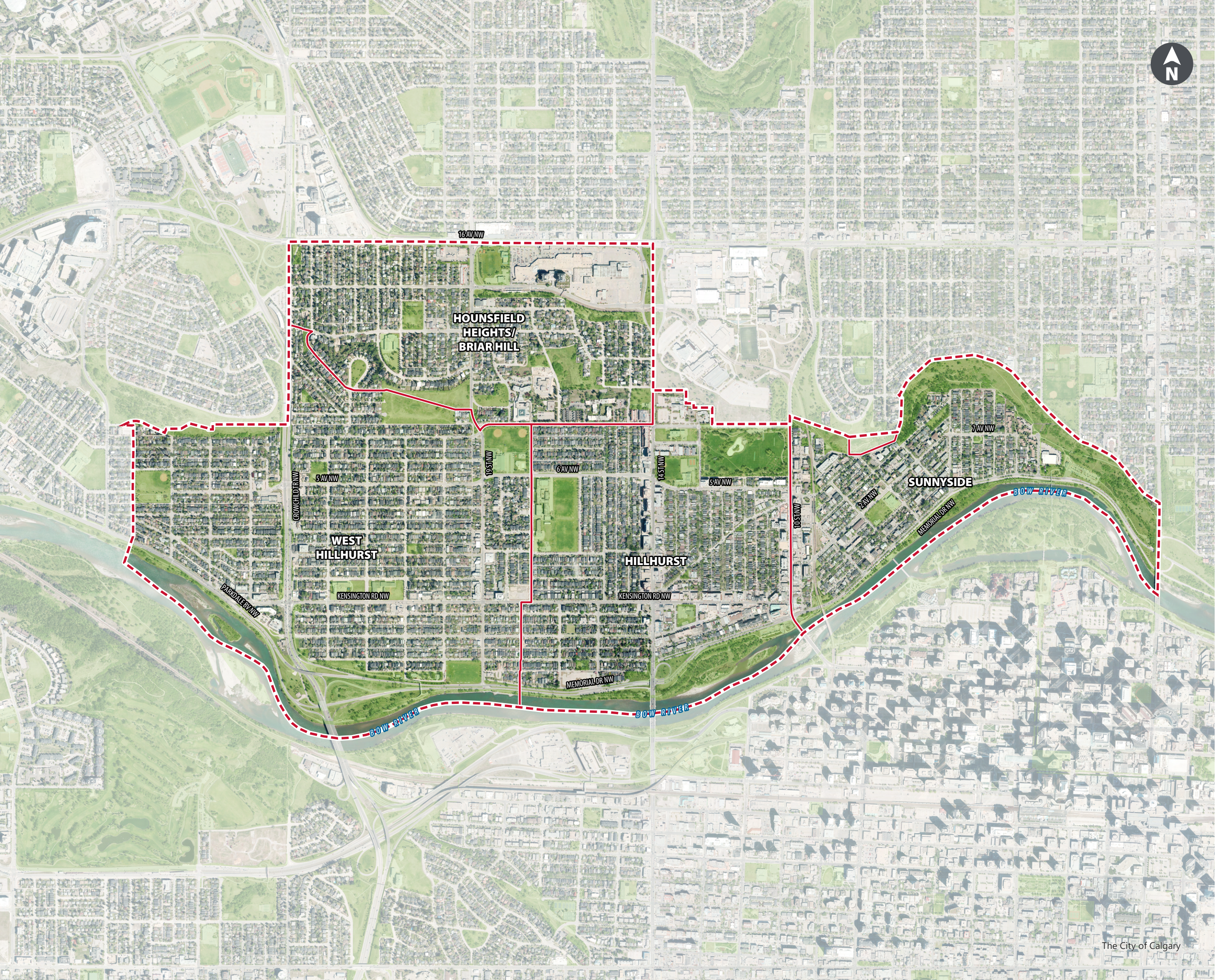
The plan area is comprised of the communities of Hillhurst, Hounsfield Heights-Briar Hill, Sunnyside, and West Hillhurst (**Map 1: Community Context**). These four communities each have their own unique history.

The Plan guides growth and change and identifies amenities and infrastructure required to support growth in these communities to achieve the Plan's vision. The Plan takes a multi-community approach that recognizes and builds upon the shared assets, amenities and natural features that go beyond the boundaries of a single community and benefit the broader area. The Plan is meant to be updated periodically as development and change occur.

**Figure 1: Plan Context**







Map 1:  
Community Context

- Legend**
- Plan Area Boundary
  - Community Boundary



## **1.2 Vision and Core Values**

### **Vision**

Situated near the Bow River and the Downtown Core, the Riley Communities of Hillhurst, Hounsfield Heights-Briar Hill, Sunnyside, and West Hillhurst will continue to grow and build upon the unique assets and histories of the area. The variety of housing, amenities, attractions and mobility options will form a foundation to further the area as one of the most vibrant parts of the city. The area will see continued improvements and investments that enhance the diverse experiences and quality of life of those that live and visit.

### **Core Values**

#### **Housing Choice**

Expand the range of housing options in the Riley Communities to meet the evolving needs, life stages and household compositions of Calgarians. Ensure that as new housing is developed, it suits the evolving context of each of Riley's individual communities.

#### **Moving to and through the Riley Communities**

Support and provide increased ways to move to and through the Riley Communities that emphasize safe, accessible and efficient movement. Prioritize walking, transit and active modes as keyways to move around the Riley Communities and to surrounding destinations by building upon existing infrastructure such as the Red Line LRT system, Regional Pathway system and pedestrian network.

#### **Parks, Recreation and Public Space**

Expand and enhance the inventory of parks, recreation facilities, natural areas and public spaces throughout the Riley Communities, including the McHugh Bluff and spaces along the Bow River. Focus on providing a range of parks and recreation spaces in close proximity to all living in the Riley Communities.

#### **Climate Resilience**

Improve long-term climate resiliency and reduce vulnerability to localized climate-related hazards such as flooding along the Bow River, heavy rainfall and extreme heat. Achieve this through supporting low-carbon lifestyles and area specific improvements that mitigate the impacts of severe weather events and expand the urban tree canopy.

#### **Aligning Improvements to Growth**

Enable continued mixed-use development along Main Streets and corridors such as 10 Street NW, 14 Street NW, Kensington Road and 19 Street NW as well as transit-oriented development around the Sunnyside and Lions Park LRT stations. Facilitate the creation of public amenities that support growth and change and further enhance the sense of place within these communities.

#### **Safe and Accessible Communities**

Promote community safety and accessibility for all. Ensure that safety and accessibility are key considerations in public realm improvements, new building design, and in considering improved transportation options.



### **1.3 Community Context**

#### **History**

Calgary was originally centered at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers, which was an important site for Indigenous peoples for thousands of years. With its sheltering river flats, plentiful wood and water and warm Chinook winds in the winter, the confluence area was a preferred seasonal campsite. This area was part of Indigenous life for at least 10,000 years, dating back to the end of the last ice age. Rivers functioned as natural navigational landmarks, and the area includes at least two trails that were used by Indigenous people before the making of Treaty 7 in 1877. Since then, much of the physical evidence of Indigenous life has been disturbed, mostly through agricultural use and subdivision development, which preceded the passage of the Alberta Historical Resources Act in 1972. However, some areas still have potential for undiscovered heritage resources relating to Indigenous ways of life.

Calgary emerged in 1875 as a North-West Mounted Police post. The fort was built on unceded land two years before the making of Treaty 7 occurred in 1877. By the time the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) arrived in 1883, Calgary had developed as an unincorporated settlement on the land that would eventually become the community of Inglewood. The CPR laid out a new townsite on its own property east of the Elbow River and south of the Bow River, and the settlement moved west at the beginning of 1884. Calgary was incorporated as a town later that year, and in 1894 it became a city.

The Bow River functioned as Calgary's northern boundary until around 1907. Around that time, federal government land grants were issued to homestead farmers and to the Canadian Pacific Railway, the latter receiving 25-million acres of land in western Canada as part of a government incentive to build the transcontinental railway. Early landowners in the Riley area included—most notably—the family of English-born Thomas E. Riley (1842–1909) and his wife, Georgiana Jane (née Hounsfield, 1843–1907). The Rileys had initially settled in Quebec before homesteading north of Calgary in 1888.

Besides farming and ranching, activity in the Riley Communities area included sandstone quarrying in what is now the community of Sunnyside and construction of an irrigation ditch through what is now the communities of Hillhurst and West Hillhurst. The Bow Marsh Bridge (precursor to the Louise Bridge) was built in 1888 and named for the river and for its primary advocate, George C. Marsh, providing an important link to the rest of Calgary. The location of the bridge is the same river crossing location that had long been used by Indigenous peoples.

Non-agricultural settlement began north of the Bow River late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and spread further east. Ottawa built the Langevin Bridge in 1888 (later renamed the Reconciliation Bridge in 2017) to facilitate transportation along the Edmonton Trail, and, by 1900, Calgarians began building homes in what later became the community of Bridgeland-Riverside. Before long, landowners and speculators began to subdivide their properties in the area to allow for potential residential developments. The most notable of the area's founders are various members of the Riley family including Ezra Hounsfield Riley (1866–1937) and Georgina, who were responsible for the initial subdivisions in 1907 of the southern portion of current-day Hillhurst as well as the northern portion of current-day West Hillhurst. In addition, they provided significant endowments to the area including the Riley Park and its cricket facilities, as well as Saint Barnabas Church.

In 1907, Arthur Bennett (1865–1946), in partnership with William Ross (1858–1914), subdivided Sunnyside as well as land to the east (which was named New Edinburgh) and land to the west



of 14 Street (which was named Broadview). All the subdivision plans included roads and blocks aligned with the compass directions as well as areas positioned on an oblique angle following a curve in the riverbank. Construction of the Louise Bridge in 1906, the annexation of this area to Calgary in 1907, and the inauguration of the Calgary Municipal Railway in 1909 (and its extension to Sunnyside by 1912) provide the context for the neighborhood's establishment and development as thriving mixed-use commercial and residential area with a strong and well-connected mass transit system.

In 1911, William Ross also built two historically significant buildings in the area. The Ross Block remained a significant landmark until it was destroyed by a fire in 1988. The Sunnyside Grocery, which his son William Ferguson Ross owned until 1939, remained a local landmark until it was demolished in 2018.

Most of present-day West Hillhurst was initially granted by the Crown to the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) as an incentive to construct a transcontinental railway. Subdivision development began in 1906, creating many of the smaller communities that were eventually amalgamated in to the West Hillhurst community area of today, namely Upper Hillhurst (between 14 Street and 19 Street NW), Grand Trunk (from 19 Street to 24 Street, now Crowchild Trail), Westmont (south of Westmount Road), Happy Land (west of Crowchild Trail), and a portion Parkdale (north of Happy Land). Extension of the streetcar network into the area in the early 1900s helped to create the connected community we know of today.

The growth of Hounsfield Heights started when The City annexed the land in 1910. Two of the Riley brothers owned this land and honored their late mother by using her birth name when naming this new subdivision: Hounsfield Heights. The land was promoted as an exclusive neighbourhood with a commanding view, but residential growth was slowed to a halt by the Great Depression and two world wars. An exception to this stagnation that occurred just outside of the plan area was the construction of the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art (PITA) campus, which later became the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT). Civilian use of this facility was superseded between 1940 to 1945 as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan to train radio operators that would support the war effort.

After the end of the Second World War, growth in Hounsfield Heights increased and the western portion, Briar Hill, began growing in the early 1950s. Growth consisted exclusively of single-detached housing except for the 16 Avenue commercial area that was designated in alignment with the development of the Trans-Canada Highway, which was completed in 1962.

Throughout the 1950s, many of the larger institutions and amenities that the plan area and directly adjacent areas are known for were constructed, including Calgary's first purpose-built indoor shopping centre known today as North Hill Shopping Centre and the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium as well as Lions Park and the Senator Burns Memorial Garden.

Historically, Memorial Drive had several names as it passed through the Riley Communities area, including Broadview Boulevard, Calgary Boulevard, Sunnyside Boulevard, and Westmount Boulevard; further east, it was known as Riverside Boulevard. In 1922, Riverside Boulevard was renamed to honour those who served and died in the First World War, and trees were planted along the boulevard in memory of individual soldiers. In 1963, the road was unified under the common name of Memorial Drive east of present-day Crowchild Trail.



The flats along the Bow River were vulnerable to catastrophic flooding, which occurred periodically, until the construction of the Bearspaw Dam in 1953. However, floods in 2005 and 2013 caused extensive damage.

A further account of the history for each of the neighborhoods that make up the Riley Communities is available online in a separate PDF.

## **Community Characteristics and Attributes**

The plan area and surrounding land contain characteristics and attributes that were considered as part of the development of the Plan's foundations in **Chapter 1**. Key features are shown on **Map 2: Community Characteristics and Attributes**. These characteristics and attributes should be considered throughout all subsequent phases of planning and development.

### **Topography**

The Riley Communities are historically characterized by valley side slopes and wide lower terraces in the valley bottom. Within certain areas, including where 10 Street NW and 17A Street NW traverse up the hill, coulees that cut into the valley slopes likely existed at one time. Over the years, these features were slowly altered through land development activities to reduce the slope for new roads. Although the valley bottom lands across the plan area appear uniform and flat, historical documents and archival accounts, including oral histories, indicate lower lands were characterized by greater variability. There are indications of at least three or more terrace levels that were further divided by smaller erosional gullies and wetlands. The impact of gradual development and change has impacted the complexities of the topography of the plan area as former terrace levels now appear as a single, uniform area from the Bow River's edge to the base of the valley side slopes.

### **Natural Features and Areas**

The plan area falls within the Bow River Basin Watershed. Development occurring adjacent to the Bow River may be subject to flooding as these areas are identified as part of the floodway and flood fringe. **Chapter 2: Enabling Growth** will include policies to strengthen resiliency and minimize development impact on the river while supporting intended growth and change. The floodway and flood fringe boundaries are outlined in **Appendix A: Plan Constraints**.

The Riley Communities includes a range of natural areas and open spaces, including the McHugh Bluff, Riley Park, Hillhurst Sunnyside Park, West Hillhurst Park, Broadview Park, Grasshopper Hill, and Hounsfield Heights Park. The Bow River also features several natural and programmed open spaces along its edge, including the Poppy Plaza and Field of Crosses at the Sunnyside Bank Park that anchor the Memorial Drive – Landscape of Memory project that ensures the corridors' legacy as a living memorial.

### **Urban Forest**

The Riley Communities have a mature tree canopy that consists of trees on public and private lands. Healthy tree canopies are critical to climate change mitigation and enhance community wellbeing. Tree canopies also contribute to sense of place and collective histories of the plan area.



Trees along Memorial Drive NW hold significance not only to the plan area, but also to the City's collective history as part of a larger living memorial. Beginning in May 1922, The City and various stakeholders came together to plant a tree for each fallen soldier of the First World War. The first tree was planted along the former Sunnyside Boulevard (now Memorial Drive NW) and planting continued until 1928 when a total of 3,278 trees were planted. The ongoing regeneration and revitalization of the corridor continues along with the introduction of new trees as part of ongoing work along Memorial Drive NW.

### **Main Streets**

There are four Main Streets in the plan area as identified by the Municipal Development Plan (MDP). The MDP includes general policies and development intensity targets for Main Streets that vary depending on whether they are identified as **Urban Main Streets** or **Neighbourhood Main Streets**. Kensington Road NW, 14 Street NW, and 10 Street NW are identified as **Neighbourhood Main Streets** while 16 Avenue N is an **Urban Main Street**.

### **Community Activity Centres**

The MDP identifies two **Community Activity Centres** within the plan area. The first **Community Activity Centre** is the North Hill Mall site, which is bounded by 16 Avenue NW to the north, 14 Street NW to the east, 14 Avenue NW to the south and 19 Street NW to the west. The second **Community Activity Centre** includes the Grace Hospital site alongside the adjacent institutional, and entertainment amenities outside the boundaries of plan area, including the SAIT and the AUArts campuses.

### **Public Transit Infrastructure**

The Riley Communities are served by a range of transit services, including local bus service, Light Rail Transit (LRT) and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The Red Line LRT system has two stations in the plan area: Lions Park Station and Sunnyside Station. Lions Park Station is a key transit hub connecting LRT with BRT and local bus services.

The plan area is also served by bus rapid transit (BRT) with MAX Orange along 16 Avenue NW. Route 305, which runs along part of Kensington Road NW and Parkdale Boulevard NW, is listed as a BRT, but is currently operating only during peak times. Local bus routes also provide connections within, to and from the plan area. Kensington Road NW, Crowchild Trail NW, 14 Street NW, 10 Street NW and 16 Avenue NW are all part of the **Primary Transit Network**.

### **Pedestrian and Cycling Infrastructure**

The Riley Communities are well served by a range of pathways and bikeways, which are interconnected with the city-wide **Always Available for All Ages and Abilities (5A) Network**, providing safe, accessible, affordable, year-round options for transportation and recreation for all Calgarians. These connections include regional pathways along the Bow River, through Lion's Park, adjacent to west portions of Crowchild Trail NW, along McHugh Bluff and Sunnyside Bank Park. Local pathways and engineered walkways provide some additional connectivity across communities. Shared on-street bikeways are located along collectors and residential streets, including portions of 14 Avenue NW, 5 Avenue NW, 7 Avenue NW, 6 Avenue NW, 4 Avenue NW, 3 Avenue NW, 2 Avenue NW, 21 Street NW, 19 Street NW, 17A Street NW, 10 Street NW, 9A Street NW, Juniper Road NW, 12 Avenue NW, Broadview Road NW and 7 Street NW among other identified streets.

## Heritage Resources

Some of the plan area's heritage resources have been formally identified on The City of Calgary's *Inventory of Evaluated Historic Resources*, while others have heritage value and may merit future inclusion on the Inventory. The Inventory does not prevent a heritage resource from being altered or demolished, but properties listed on the Inventory that request legal protection may be eligible for development and/or financial incentives through The City and the Province of Alberta.

Only two archaeological resources have been recorded within the plan area to date, both of which are historical in nature reflecting early settlement activities. However, there have been many accounts of bison bones and Indigenous artifacts found in the neighborhood and there is still potential for undiscovered heritage resources in some areas. These resources must be considered as redevelopment occurs in accordance with the *Historical Resources Act* and may impact/influence future development.

The plan area also includes three Historic Landscaped Boulevards. All three are lilac medians that are planted with regular spacing of purple flowering lilacs. The Historic Landscaped Boulevards are as follows: 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.W. medians, from 16<sup>th</sup> St. to 18<sup>th</sup> St. N.W., planted in 1929; 11<sup>th</sup> St. N.W. median, from 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.W. to Riley Park, planted in 1919; and Bowness Road N.W. medians, from 14<sup>th</sup> St. to 17<sup>th</sup> St. N.W., planted in 1932.

## Civic Facilities

The plan area has a range of civic and recreation facilities, including the Calgary Curling Club, the Bowview outdoor pool, the Riley Park outdoor wading pool and the Louise Riley library. Other amenities and facilities include community association buildings, and schools.














The following illustration (**Figure 2: Riley Communities Illustration**) was created to highlight the key assets, features and amenities that define the plan area for citizens. As part of Phase 1 engagement, additional icons may be added to the illustration based on public insight.





**Map 2:**  
**Community Characteristics**  
**and Attributes**

**Legend**

-  Arena
-  Community Centre
-  EMS Station
-  Library
-  School
-  Red Line LRT
-  MAX Orange
-  Distance From Station
-  Freight Rail Corridor
-  Neighbourhood Main Street
-  Urban Main Street
-  Community Activity Centre
-  Plan Area Boundary

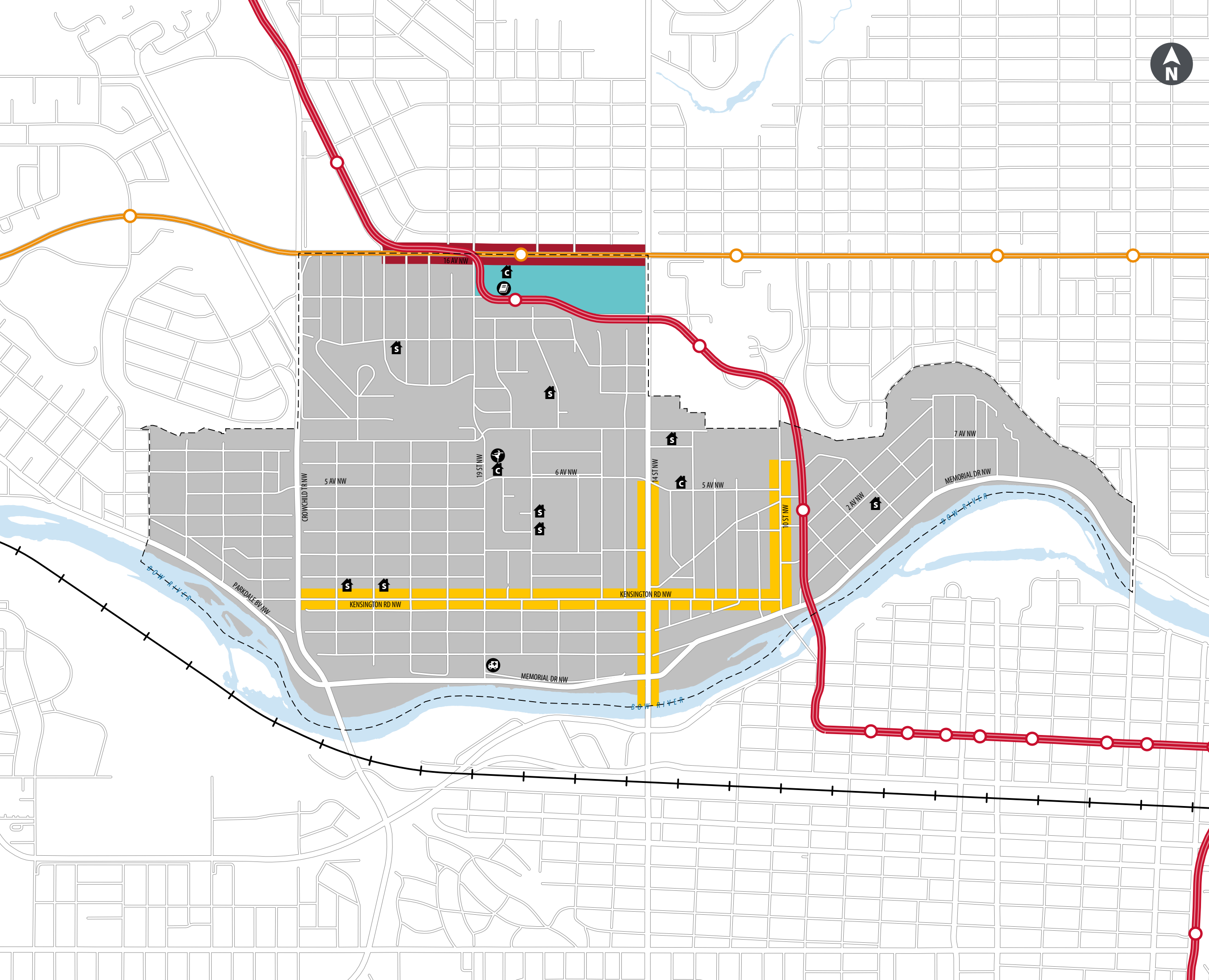
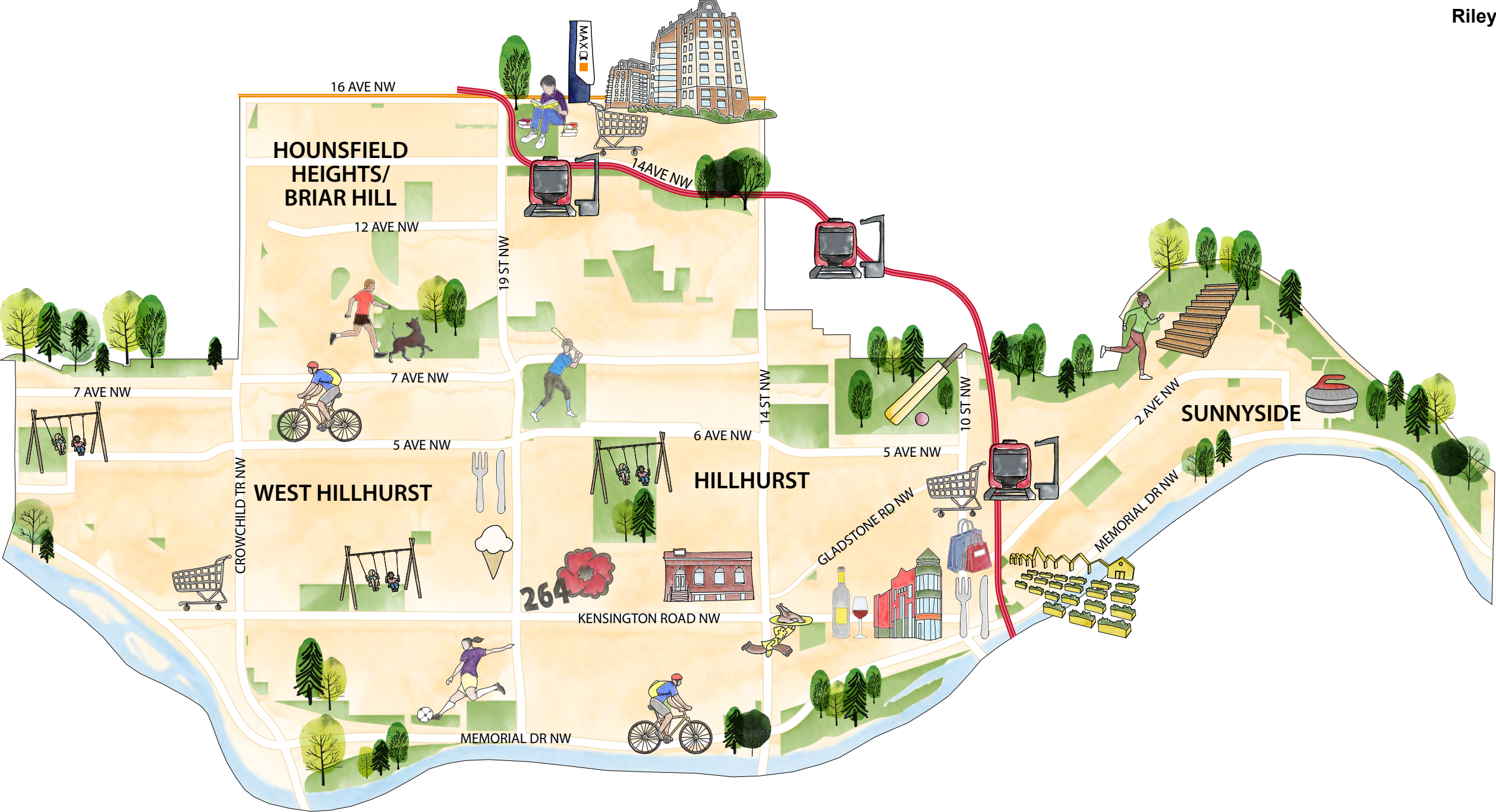
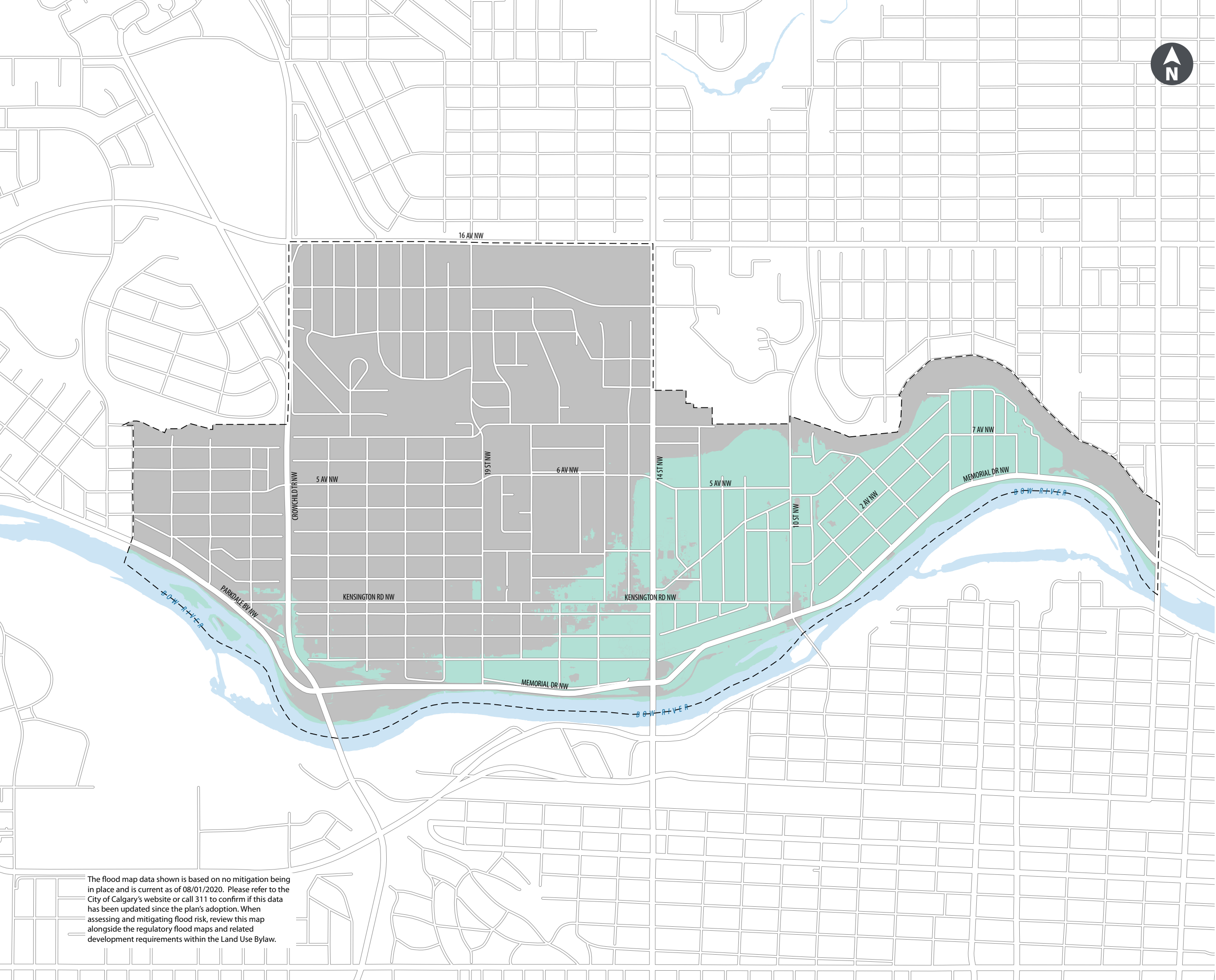


Figure 2:  
Riley Communities Illustration





Appendix A:  
Plan Constraints



The flood map data shown is based on no mitigation being in place and is current as of 08/01/2020. Please refer to the City of Calgary's website or call 311 to confirm if this data has been updated since the plan's adoption. When assessing and mitigating flood risk, review this map alongside the regulatory flood maps and related development requirements within the Land Use Bylaw.

- Legend**
- 1% Chance of River Flooding in any Year
  - Plan Area Boundary