



January 2007 Newsletter

Alderman Diane Colley-Urquhart

As of January 1st, Calgary is now Smoke Free - this will contribute significantly to achieving our goal of improved health for all Calgarians in 2007!

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

We are into the second year of the 3 year Operating and Capital Budget so things ran much smoother last November during our most recent budget discussions. The priority is to provide a strategic and sustainable plan for municipal services and infrastructure, and to ensure greater transparency and accountability to Calgarians.

The Bank of Canada reported the rate of inflation is 4.25%. This year, the City of Calgary's Capital Budget has been approved at \$2.2 billion; and the approved Operating Budget is \$2.1 billion.

With Calgary's incredible economic boom and the exploding construction in this city, infrastructure projects are swiftly eating up the \$100 million cushion that City Council built into the Capital Budget, thus leaving no room for the City to add new projects to the schedule. While not every job came back higher than originally estimated, some were as much as 20% higher.

Some of the Operating Budget approvals are for:

- 25 new full time Paramedics
- 74 new full time Firefighters
- 128 new full time Police Officers
- 30,000 hours for Calgary Transit
- Calgary Arts Development Authority
- Calgary Public Library
- Calgary Sports Council
- Calgary Economic Development
- EPCOR Centre for the Performing Arts, and
- Heritage Park

Some of the Capital Budget projects include:

- 40 new C-Train cars (the first of these have arrived and are in service; and as you read this, the remainder are on their way and will be in service by the end of 2008)
- 43 regular buses
- 24 community shuttles
- 60 ft articulated buses
- Downtown LRT station upgrades

- LRT extensions to the northeast and the northwest
- Six additional fire stations and Emergency Operation Centers
- Two Police district office buildings (Downtown and Saddleridge)
- Four interchanges and the completion of the Glenmore/Elbow/5th Street project
 - Glenmore Trail/Elbow Drive SW Interchange
 - McKnight Boulevard/36th Street NE Interchange
 - Crowchild Trail/Sarcee Trail NW Interchange
 - Crowchild Trail/Nose Hill Drive NW Interchange
- The widening of the Glenmore Causeway
- Completion of the 16th Avenue (Trans Canada) corridor, and
- Continued work on the Pine Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant and upgrades at the Bearspaw and Glenmore plants

There remains a long list of unfunded capital projects over the next five years. Some of these are:

- Additional fire stations
- Downtown Police Headquarters
- The West LRT line and more LRT vehicles
- Major interchanges needed to improve mobility around the city
- Regional recreational facilities, and
- Maintenance of aging infrastructure to protect the asset value of City investments

For further information, the Executive Summary is available online at www.calgary.ca.

CARPOOLING

With the population of Calgary steadily growing, the demand on our roads and public transportation is increasing along with traffic congestion. Over 125,000 trips are made into the downtown core on a daily basis. 80% of car trips to the core are made with only one person in the vehicle. One way to address this increase, and to effectively reduce the volume and congestion on our City streets, is to carpool to work with friends and neighbors heading in the same direction as you. The website www.carpool.ca is an excellent matching service to help you find others in your community who would like to carpool.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Recently, City Council directed Administration to start the planning process for the development known as Providence. This is the parcel of land located to the west of Bridlewood and bordering with Spruce Meadows. By asking Administration to begin looking at this area now, we are being proactive in ensuring that proper, well thought out planning is in place, along with infrastructure – both roads and sewage.

ASSESSMENT

As part of our 2007 Assessment campaign, the City mailed out in early December, a "Straight Talk" information brochure entitled "Will the increase in Calgary real estate values affect my property taxes?"

The "Straight Talk" information brochure responds to questions received from Calgarians regarding the impact of rising real estate values on property taxes. Although property values have risen significantly during the last year, property owners will not see equal increase in their property taxes.

For additional information, you can access the brochure online at www.calgary.ca/assessment.