

Scoping Review of "Better" Land Development Practices

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Introduction:

Land development is an on-going practice of a growing city. Measuring the efficacy of land development is an extensive task which needs to consider multiple factors. Therefore, the creation of a tool or a toolkit, which considers the many facets of land development, can benefit not only the public but also the designers who will serve as its users.

The purpose of this project is to create a tool that can guide land development practices for industry professionals to utilize, contextualize, and implement in their projects.

The City of Lethbridge Municipal Development Plan (2021) outline six outcomes. The MDP outcomes were used to guide out research as different points of entries and are listed as the following:

- Economically Prosperous City
- Healthy and Diverse City
- Culturally Vibrant City
- Well-Designed City
- Environmentally Responsible City
- A City that Supports the Region

Research Questions:

- What are considered to be "better practices" in land development in relation to each MDP outcome?
- How can we synthesize all the information gathered to be a usable tool?

Methods:

The six outcomes from the Lethbridge MDP were divided up so that each author focused on two outcomes that aligned with their academic research interests. Annotated bibliographies were completed to review key themes surrounding better practices. The review was divided into two components:

1. Industry source review
 - Provides and understand of what municipalities and other relevant bodies are putting forward.
2. Academic source review
 - In order to research specific practices.

Key Findings:

Economically Prosperous City:

- A primary focus in literature surrounding this lens involves the creation of a knowledge-based economy to attract investment
- Additionally, a focus on the support of local business development and emphasis on local production and consumption patterns was a key argument of better practices.

Healthy and Diverse City

- Research suggests that health should be a focus starting in the early stages of planning.
- An emphasis on sense of safety is recognized as important for a community's wellbeing.
- Additionally, promotion of active transportation and ease of access to healthy food should be incorporated into community plans.

Culturally Vibrant City

- Struggles in bridging culture and spatial design rooted in organizational (ex. departmental separation) and regulatory (ex. legislation) barriers.
- Integrating culture in land development must have temporal considerations, grounding plans in current cultural experiences and the places' heritage and history while following the trends of cultural changes—most notably the move towards inclusive practices that accounts for *all identities*.

Well-Designed City

- Politicizing the role of designers (planners, architects, etc.) reveals the disconnect between the perceptions of professional and non-professional users when using public spaces.
- The utopic dream of creating a well-designed city is the movement away from vehicle-dependency towards pedestrian-centered design. Integrating current realities and the utopic dream can produce hybridized land development plans that respect nuanced vehicle-dependencies (ex. access for the disabled community) while promoting alternative ways of user movement through the space

Environmentally Responsible City:

- Emphasis on net-zero emission cities through green infrastructure projects.
- Increased protection of local biodiversity by constructing more green spaces and human constructed wetlands.
- Implement more recycling projects to divert waste entering the landfill.

A City that Supports the Region:

- Coalesce strong communication between various stakeholders to promote advocacy among community members.
- Revitalize the city core to create more opportunities in diverse land development practices.
- Integration of collaborative public spaces to engage more people within the city and the region.

Conclusion:

It is important to understand that each MDP outcome must correlate with each other in its overarching purpose to guide land development practices. The tool must be grounded on current land development practices and issues as well as having a futurity lens embedded within it. Reviewing key findings for each MDP outcome, central themes suggest that human-centered and locally contextualized land development practices are necessary to sustain the six MDP outcomes and better land development practices.

Next Steps:

Following the scoping review, the overarching goal of the project for the following four months is to produce a draft of the tool titled "Tool Draft Version I". It is important to stress that the tool should be a "live tool" which conform according to changes in land development practices.

Interviews will be conducted with industry professionals to ground what "better practices" in land development entails to reflect what is currently ongoing in their respective fields. Each individual interview will take approximately an hour and a half, and the focus group made up of the City of Lethbridge staff may take up to two to three hours. After interviews have taken place, data will be transcribed using NVIVO software and manually reviewed by team members.

Through the transcription of the interviews and corresponding research, key themes will be drawn out in order to draft a land development tool. Possible formats of the tool could be a scorecard or checklist.

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