

Land Use Bylaw Renewal: Decoding the Economy

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Introduction

- Lethbridge's Land Use Bylaw (LUB) 6300 directly impacts the local economy by influencing development choices, attracting investment, and managing infrastructure costs.
- Shifts in demographics, technological advancements, and environmental concerns warrant a renewed perspective on the economic implications of land use.
- Achieving a sustainable and equitable economy and community requires engaging with stakeholders.
- The decoding the economy paper highlights critical issues affecting Lethbridge's economic future: housing affordability, crime prevention through environmental design, flexible adaptation to industry and real estate trends to spur productive community engagement.

Background

- The current LUB is based on the original 1986 LUB.
- The original LUB was crafted for a different socioeconomic context and lacked the flexibility to accommodate evolving industry trends. The LUB renewal project addresses these shortcomings by ensuring the regulatory framework is adaptable and responsive to current and future needs.
- The renewal project involves extensive stakeholder engagement, rigorous research, and the integration of best practices.

Objective

Workplace objective: The decoding the economy paper seeks to allow community stakeholders to envision sustainable economic, social, and community growth through better land use management practices.

Academic objective: This applied study aims to critically examine the public engagement process and produce a report interpreting the LUB for the public.



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Results

Streamlining commercial and industrial uses

The LUB renewal project aims to integrate a Community-Based Economic Planning Framework (Jamal, 2022), emphasizing preventative healthcare, equity, accessibility, and sustainable environmental practices in Lethbridge's LUB to address the following economic challenges:

- Housing demand is expected to exceed population growth by 2026 (Urban Systems, 2023).
- Increasing recruitment costs and retention issues in essential industries.
- Efficient land use minimizes urban footprint, conserves resources, and fosters vibrant communities.
- Current LUB challenges include overlap between commercial and industrial districts, requiring clarity.
- Industrial and commercial land efficiency is crucial for long-term economic growth, necessitating densification and redevelopment.
- Automobile-oriented commercial development leads to underutilized land and environmental issues, suggesting a shift to human-centric urban design.
- Climate mitigation through land use planning is essential to protect against challenges like wildfires, proving cost-effective (Muffly & Birchall, 2023).

Fig. 1: Commercial and Industrial Districts Purposes

Zone	Purpose
<i>Commercial Districts (N=6)</i>	
Downtown	Commercial/residential/institutional/cultural/recreational uses following the Heart of Our City Master Plan.
General	Commercial and related uses in areas along roadways which lead to the central of the City.
Highway	Commercial and related uses requiring accessibility to vehicle traffic on major roadways.
Local	Small-scale Uses catering to the needs of residents within the immediate vicinity.
Neighborhood	Commercial and service uses catering to the needs of the neighborhood residents.
Shopping Mall	Retail/personal service/entertainment/office uses serving the surrounding region, with <i>shared parking/parcel access</i> .
<i>Industrial Districts (N=3)</i>	
Business	Industrial/warehouse/commercial Uses with no off-site impacts, compatible with adjacent Districts.
General	Manufacturing/processing/distribution/storage Uses.
Heavy	Intensive manufacturing and high impact Uses.

Fig. 2. Commercial and Industrial Uses Map, West Lethbridge

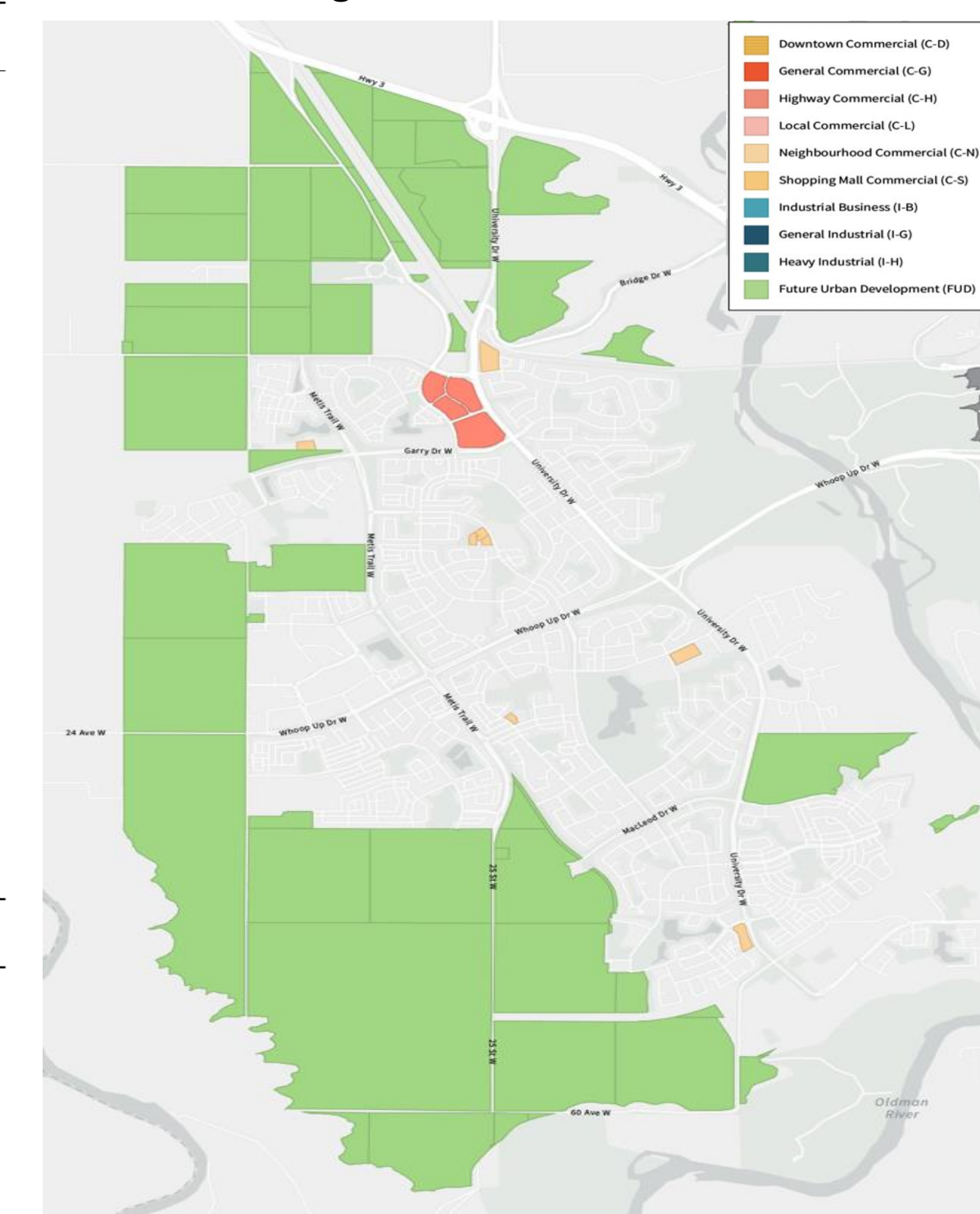


Fig. 3. Commercial and Industrial Uses Map, South Lethbridge

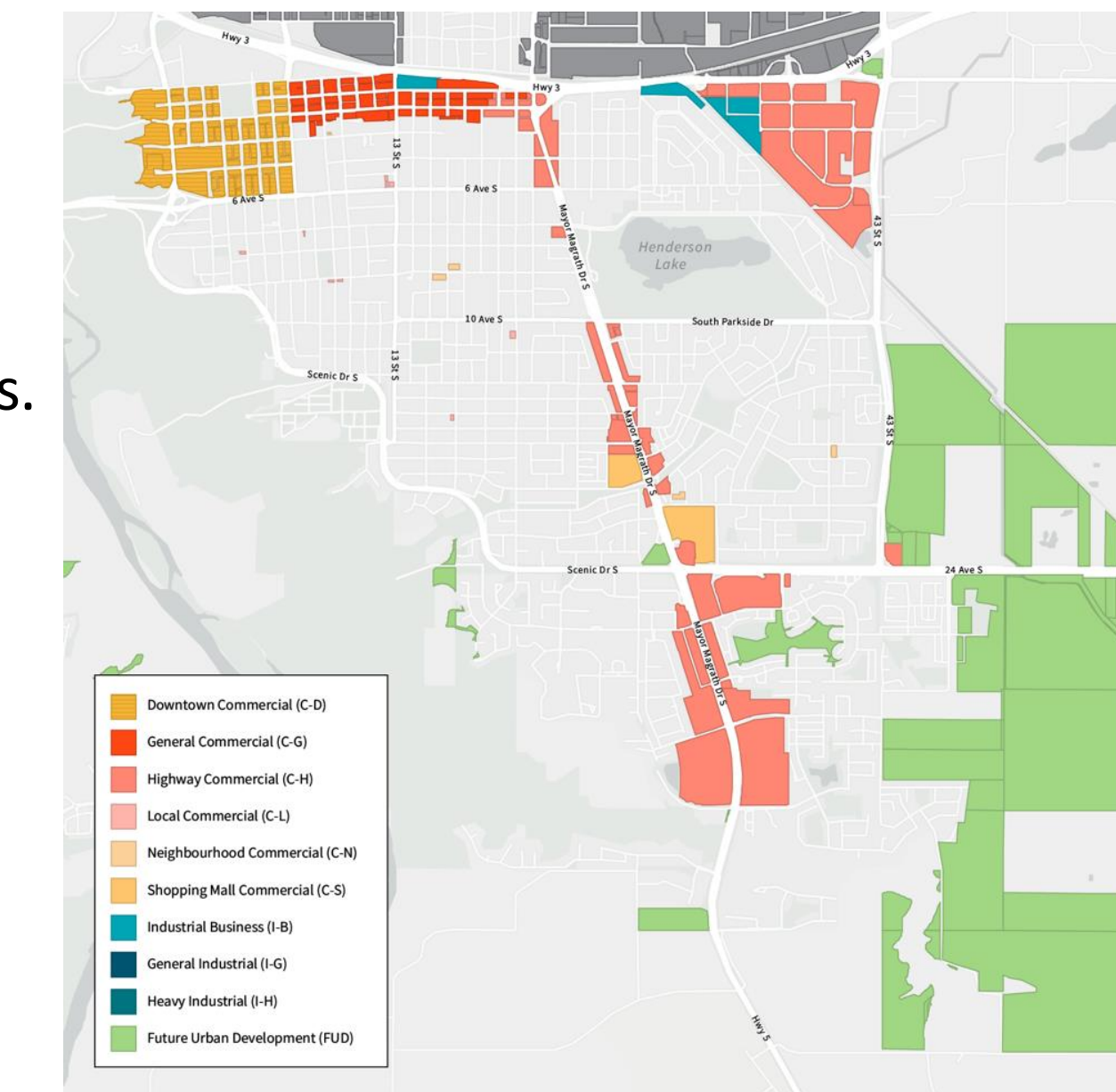
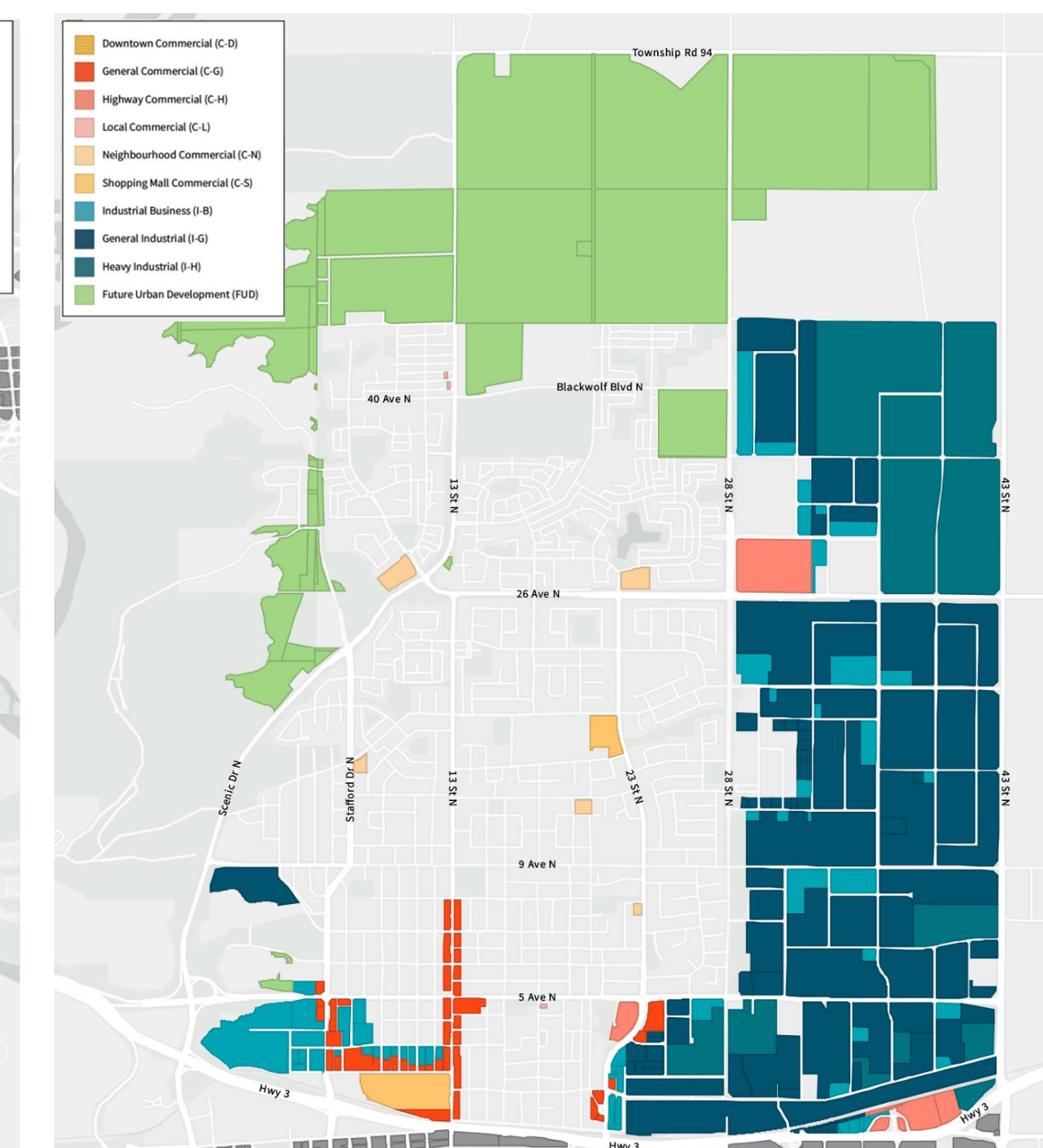


Fig. 4. Commercial and Industrial Uses Map, North Lethbridge



Complete neighbourhoods

'Complete neighbourhoods' integrate education, *economic opportunities*, accessible healthcare, groceries, cultural and recreational amenities, affordable transportation and housing (Allison, 2012). Some important aspects of complete neighbourhoods are:

- Mixed-use zoning:** Allows for the coexistence of residential, commercial, recreational, and essential service uses within the same neighbourhood.
- Form-based coding:** Emphasizes the physical characteristics of buildings and public spaces, focusing on how development relates to the context of the neighbourhoods, including building and street frontage, pedestrians safety and modality, and integrating public and private spaces, rather than implementing stricter land-use regulations (Form-Based Codes Institute, 2024).
- Multimodality:** Integrating multiple modes of transportation, such as walking, cycling, public transit, and private vehicles to create a comprehensive transportation network.
- Increased density:** Urban areas embrace increased density to accommodate growing populations and promote sustainable development. Higher density promotes efficient land use, reduces urban sprawl, and preserves green spaces. Innovative growth strategies prioritize density around transit hubs and existing infrastructure, minimizing environmental impact and improving overall urban resilience.



Analysis

Boundary Critique theory states that urban planning values are subject to change as societal norms evolve. Planners need to be cognizant of these dynamics, recognizing that the values underpinning planning decisions are not fixed but adaptable to the changing needs and expectations of the community (Ulrich, 2002, p. 41).

Seltzer & Mahmoudi (2012) recommends the following process to optimize public engagement:

- Identifying and collecting data:** Open innovation, inspired by business strategy and technology development, resembles citizen participation in seeking solutions beyond organizational boundaries.
- Establishing legitimacy among the electorate:** Discuss how open government initiatives, such as open data portals and public consultation processes, can enhance transparency and foster citizen engagement. Discuss the role of civic education programs in promoting civic awareness, political literacy, and active citizenship among the electorate.
- Addressing planners' moral and ethical commitment to advocate for those impacted by governmental decisions:** Planners must be cognizant of power imbalances within society and advocate for policies and practices that challenge systemic inequalities and discrimination. This may involve actively dismantling barriers to participation and representation for marginalized groups, advocating for redistributive policies that promote economic and social justice, and challenging entrenched structures of privilege and oppression within governmental institutions.
- Synthesizing multiple viewpoints to promote robustness:** Crowdsourcing, a key technique in open innovation, involves challenging diverse groups to find robust solutions. Collaborative planning emphasizes the social construction of knowledge and power dynamics among participants.

Next steps

1

Research trends in Canadian bylaw renewals: Other Canadian municipalities, like Edmonton and Calgary, are integrating the tenets of complete neighbourhoods into their LUBs, such as multimodality, mixed-use zoning, form-based zoning, and densified commercial and industrial areas.

2

Public engagement and data analysis: The decoding paper series will guide a series of public engagement sessions in Spring 2024.

3

Recommendations to Council: City planners will collate the public engagement results and research to guide formal recommendations to the Council for the new LUB, which is planned to be completed in 2026.