Planning Definitions and Jargon

It can be confusing reading through development documents since they tend to use a lot of planning jargon! Below are some of the terms commonly used in City of Calgary websites and documents.
(Source: The Community Guide to the Planning Process)

**Administration** - A term often used to refer to departments of the City of Calgary. For example, “City Council referred the report back to Administration.”

**Affected Person** - In the case of the Subdivision & Development Appeal Board, examples of affected persons are those who own property, carry on a business or reside in the vicinity of a proposed development. The Board determines this on a case-by-case basis. A person who merely visits the area probably would not qualify as an affected person.

**Alberta Building Code (ABC)** - Minimum regulations and standards for public health, fire, safety and structural sufficiency.

**Amended Drawings** - Required for changes to a development permit application during the review process prior to decision. Not to be confused with Revised Plans.

**Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP)** - A statutory plan as defined by the Municipal Government Act, that directs the redevelopment, preservation or rehabilitation of existing lands and buildings, generally within existing areas of the city.

**Bonus** - A means of allowing an increase in density of development in return for providing certain public amenities or benefits.

**Building Envelope** - The three-dimensional space within which a building may be built.

**Building Inspector** - See Safety Codes Officer.

**Business Licence** - A permit issued by The City to operate a business.

**Building Permit (BP)** - A permit issued by The City to erect a new building or structure or to demolish, relocate, repair, alter or make additions to an existing building or structure.

**Built Form** - The layout (structure and setting on a site), density (height, storeys, and mass) and appearance (materials and details) of a development.

**Bulk** - See Mass

**Bylaw Enforcement** - See Development Inspection Services.

**Calgary Planning Commission (CPC)** - A body enabled by the Municipal Government Act to make Development Permit and subdivision decisions and recommendations on other planning matters.

**Cash-in-Lieu for Parking** - Council approved policies for specific areas that allow cash payment towards a parking fund instead of providing the required parking spaces.
Change of Use - A type of Development Permit required when the use in a building is changing.

Charrette - A design exercise where community members, planners, architects, designers or artists work together to develop visual solutions for a planning problem or concept.

Community Association (CA) - A Community Association is a voluntary organization of residents in a geographic area, registered as a society and recognized by the Federation of Calgary Communities and The City of Calgary. Community associations typically provide local social and recreational activities, may develop and maintain a community centre on municipal reserve land, and represent community interests to The City in planning issues and other issues.

Complete Street - As defined in the MDP, a street designed and operated to enable safe, attractive and comfortable access and travel for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists and public transit and private vehicle users. A complete street incorporates green infrastructure and optimize public space and aesthetics wherever possible. The degree to which any one street supports different modes of transportation, green infrastructure or public space varies depending on surrounding context and role of the street.

Conditions of Approval - The rules that are applied to a Development Permit specific to that site.

Context - The setting or surroundings of a site or area; including traffic, use, built form, landscaping, etc.

Corporate Planning Applications Group (CPAG) - City staff from various business units who review and process planning applications.

Density - As a general term, it is one measure of the intensity of development. In residential development it is usually measured by units/area. In large multi-residential, commercial or mixed-use development it may be measured by Floor Area Ratio.

Density Transfer - See Bonus.

Detailed Team Review (DTR) - Is the communications document issued to an applicant that outlines CPAG’s recommendation or position on a proposed application.

Developed Area - Defined by Land Use Bylaw 1P2007. It includes the area of the city that had completed initial residential development when Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 was adopted. This area is subject to different LUB provisions than the Developing Area (e.g. contextual rules).

Development Authority - The Development Authority is responsible for rendering decisions on development permits. The Development Authority at The City of Calgary may be a designated officer (including lead planners, principal planners, and chief development officers) or the Calgary Planning Commission (CPC)

Discretion - The term that describes the application of professional judgement by The City in reviewing applications. It is also the term used when the Development Authority varies any of the rules of the Land Use Bylaw. See also Relaxation.

Discretionary Uses - Are considered to be generally appropriate for the land use district. They are evaluated on merits and may not be allowed if the use is considered by the Development Authority to be inappropriate in a particular location.

Elevation Plan - A drawing of the front, side or rear of a building.
**Enforcement Order** - Issued by a Development Authority, requiring compliance with the Land Use Bylaw.

**Environmental Reserve (ER)** - Land considered, in accordance with the Municipal Government Act, to be undevelopable because of its natural features or location (e.g. unstable slopes or floodways) that a developer may be required to dedicate at the time of subdivision. Not to be confused with Municipal Reserve.

**Established Communities** - Communities identified in the Low Density Housing Guidelines for Established Communities where the guidelines apply for discretionary development permit applications.

**Existing Building and Property Standards Notice** - Issued by a Safety Codes Officer, requiring compliance with the Existing Building and Property Standards Bylaw. This Bylaw deals with minimum standards of repair and maintenance of existing buildings, fences, retaining walls and land.

**File Manager** - The CPAG team generalist from Planning who oversees the management of an application through the application and review process.

**Floor Area Ratio (FAR)** - The quotient of the total gross floor area of a building on a parcel divided by the gross site area of the parcel. FAR is one of the measures to direct the size and massing of a building in relation to the area of the parcel of land it occupies.

**Geodetic Datum** - Land surveyor’s term for the height above sea level and the latitude and longitude of a particular point on the ground, also known as coordinates.

**Home Business** - See Home Occupation - Class 1 & 2, Land Use Bylaw.

**In camera** - This is a legal term that means “in private”.

**Infill** - Development (or redevelopment) that occurs on a site after completion of the initial development of the area.

**Infill Guidelines** - The Low Density Housing Guidelines for Established Communities

**Infrastructure** - The foundation and facilities that are needed to service communities (e.g., roads, utilities).

**Land Use Amendment (LUA)** - A change of land use designation, approved at a public hearing of City Council.

**Land Use Bylaw 1P2007 (LUB)** - The Bylaw that establishes procedures to process and decide upon land use and development applications and divides the city into land use districts. It sets out rules that affect how each piece of land in the city may be used and developed. It also includes the actual land use maps.

**Land Use Designation** - The legal control on the use and intensity of development on a parcel of land (not on the design of a project). Also sometimes referred to as zoning.

**Land Use District** - An area of the city designated for particular uses contained in the Land Use Bylaw.

**Licence of Occupation (LOC)** - A rental agreement with The City of Calgary to use City-owned land. For example, community associations have LOCs to operate community facilities.
Local Area Plan (LAP) - The LAP is an important implementation tool for applying the MDP and CTP’s policies and direction on land use, urban form and transportation to a locally defined geographic area. Local Area Plans include Regional Context Studies (RCS), for either green field or developed areas, Area Structure Plans (ASP), Area Redevelopment Plans (ARP), and Non-statutory land use studies.

Location Plan - “Birds-eye” drawing of the general location of a site in a community or a bay in a shopping centre, for example, usually accompanied by a more detailed plan, of the site or bay, with dimensions, etc.

Mass/Massing - The combined effect of the arrangement, size and shape of a building or group of buildings on a site and its visual impact in relation to adjacent buildings. Also called bulk.

Municipal Development Plan (MDP) - The senior strategic planning document guiding growth and development in Calgary. It has policies relating to transportation, housing, economic activity, recreation, environment and social issues. It also provides the strategic framework for more detailed and specific plan, policies and programs.

Non-Conforming Use - A use that does not meet the current rules of the Land Use District for that site; however it met the rules when the use commenced.

Notice Posting - Placing a notice on the site where an application is being processed.
- Development (blue notice) - Gives notice of a Development Permit application.
- Land Use Redesignation (yellow notice) - Gives notice of an application to change the zoning.

Permitted Use - Uses that are well suited to a particular land use district. Applications relating to permitted uses that fully comply with the Land Use Bylaw must be approved.

Public Notice Advertisement - The ad placed in local newspapers to notify the public of Land Use Amendments, Road Closures, Subdivision and Development Appeal Board appeals and Development Permit approvals.

Property Line - A legal boundary of an area of land.

Real Property Report (RPR) - A legal document that shows the location of all visible public and private improvements relative to property boundaries. A RPR is submitted for a Certificate of Compliance or a subdivision where existing structures will remain.

Redesignation or Rezoning - See Land Use Amendment.

Relaxation - The term used when a change of one of the rules of the Land Use Bylaw is applied in an individual application, a residential side setback less than four feet, for example. See also discretion. All relaxations can be appealed.

Restrictive Covenant (RC) - A restriction that is registered on the title of a parcel of land (for example - the properties next to a golf course may be restricted to having green chain link fences only).

Revised Plans - Drawings submitted for minor revisions to a Development Permit after it has been released. Not to be confused with Amended Plans.

Rules - The requirements (standards) of the Land Use Bylaw that describe such things as height maximums, side setback requirements, etc.
Secondary Suite – A legal accessory dwelling unit (consisting of a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen) developed within, or on the same property as a single detached dwelling.

Setback - The distance a building must be from a property line. See Front, Rear and Side Setback in the Land Use Bylaw.

Single-Detached Dwelling - A residential building that has one dwelling unit only (not including a mobile home) – i.e. a “single family house” on one parcel.

Site Plan - “Bird’s-eye” drawing of the land on which an application is being made. The site plan should include the yards, existing trees, proposed buildings, etc.

Standing Policy Committee (SPC) – Committees in the following areas:
SPC CPS Standing Policy Committee on Community & Protective Services
SPC PUD Standing Policy Committee on Planning & Urban Development
SPC T&T Standing Policy Committee on Transportation & Transit
SPC UCS Standing Policy Committee on Utilities & Corporate Services

Statutory Plan - A plan that is required by the Municipal Government Act, Part 17, Planning & Development, passed by bylaw and must be adhered to by subordinate plans and planning approvals. These plans can only be changed by amending the bylaw. Examples are ARPs and ASPs.

Streetscape - All the elements that make up the physical environment of a street and define its character. This includes paving, trees and vegetation, lighting, building type, style setback, pedestrian, cycle and transit amenities, street furniture, etc.

Streetscape Plan - Drawing of the front view (elevation) of two or three buildings either side of the proposed building, required for some Development Permits.

Subdivision & Development Appeal Board (SDAB) - A body appointed annually by City Council, to hear appeals against decisions of the Calgary Planning Commission, the Development Authority, an Enforcement Order, or the Subdivision Authority.

Transit Oriented Design (TOD) - Areas such as around the Brentwood LRT station.

Upzoning - A Land Use Amendment that increases the allowed density or intensity of use.

Urban Design - Urban design involves the relationship between buildings in a neighborhood, and the relationship between the buildings and the streets, parks and other spaces that make up the public domain.

Utility Right-of-Way (URW) - Land that is used for utilities. These right-of-ways are usually shown on the legal plan and registered on the title.

Variance - See Relaxation.

Zoning - See Land Use Designation.