

## DISTRICT PLANNING AUTHORIZATION AND ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

### RECOMMENDATION

That Urban Planning Committee recommend to City Council:

That Administration prepare district plans and the district general policy, as outlined in the April 12, 2022, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01052, in alignment with The City Plan Policy 2.3.2.2.

### Report Purpose

#### Council decision.

Administration is seeking authorization to prepare district plans and the district general policy as required by The City Plan Policy 2.3.2.2 - "Require Council authorization prior to the preparation of any new statutory plan". This report also informs Council of how the district planning project engages with Edmontonians to create the foundation for a modernized planning framework.

### Executive Summary

- District Planning, together with an updated zoning bylaw, will contribute to realizing the Big City Move of "community of communities", where a city's residents are able to meet most of their needs within a 15-minute walk, bicycle ride or transit trip from their home.
- A district plan is a new type of land use plan that is more specific than The City Plan, but not as detailed as a neighbourhood plan.
- The content of district plans will come principally from The City Plan, existing policy and guidelines, rather than new direction; issues that cannot be addressed by the initial work of establishing district plans can be addressed through subsequent projects and incorporated through future amendments.
- Council authorization is required to prepare district plans and the associated District General Policy.
- Edmontonians have already begun participating in district planning through information sessions and presentations to civic groups, as well as through The City Plan engagement.
- Major engagement and information sharing work is beginning in June 2022, and will continue to the end of the project in late 2023.

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- Communications and engagement will include methods and content that are relevant to diverse audiences, consider varying interests and knowledge, nurture informed discussions, and manage expectations.

## **REPORT**

### **Context and Background**

To support the Big City Move ‘Community of Communities’, The City Plan directs Administration to “plan for large-scale districts to accommodate growth across the city in a manner that promotes the ability to live more locally” . Currently, the city is covered by a patchwork of local plans, with many neighbourhoods left without any specific direction. Local land use concerns are traditionally addressed through the creation of an Area Redevelopment Plan. These are costly and can take years to prepare, only to be followed by many amendments to respond to changing conditions. As a result, many local plans are out of date and are not well aligned with The City Plan.

The City Plan was the first step in modernizing Edmonton’s planning system. It was followed by the repeal of 76 local plans in 2021 that had completed their purpose. This work continues with the creation of district plans to replace or supplement local plans. Once district plans are created, the City will have a planning system that provides local direction across the entire city in a format that can be consistently maintained and updated to address changing conditions, new possibilities and emerging concerns.

The District Planning project will create a statutory plan for each of the 15 districts, as well as a set of general policies (to be adopted by bylaw) that apply to all districts (i.e. the District General Policy). The City Plan direction 2.3.2.2 requires Council authorization to prepare any new statutory plan in order to manage urban expansion and the overall planning framework.

When the district general policy and 15 district plans are created, they will not contain new vision statements or directions. Instead, they will apply the direction of The City Plan at the district scale, focus on growth to 1.25 million people, and use existing policies, plans and guidelines to provide direction for growth within each district. For example, Administration will draw from The City Plan, the Residential Infill Guidelines, and current plans in effect. The project will also replace local plans and guidelines where possible in an effort to consolidate and streamline planning guidance. The additional clarity district plans offer will help the public, Administration and Council make informed land, infrastructure, facility and development decisions that are aligned with The City Plan.

As Edmonton grows to two million residents, district plans will evolve in how they direct land use, mobility and growth management to respond to emerging opportunities, challenges and Council direction. The City Plan will remain the strategic lens by which district plans successfully deliver The City Plan Big City Move ‘Community of Communities’ and modernize Edmonton’s planning system.

At this time, the objective for district planning is not to address and resolve all land use and mobility planning questions across Edmonton. Instead, it is to work with the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative,

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the Growth Management Program, and other implementation projects of The City Plan to create a modern and accessible system for plans, regulations and programs. Over time, district plans will be amended to address specific issues within their purview, working carefully with the public to set new direction as may be required.

### Communications and Engagement Approach

At the August 24, 2021, Urban Planning Committee meeting Administration presented report UPE00684, City Plan Implementation Update: Advancing Edmonton's Systems, that included an overview of planned engagement for district planning, and was directed to pursue opportunities for additional engagement within the current scope of the project. Administration has since planned for more engagement opportunities in 2022 and 2023 with a greater variety of approaches and materials to connect with Edmontonians. The feedback received from Edmontonians to date has helped Administration identify gaps and opportunities previously not considered, and refine the communications and engagement approach. As an outcome, Administration has also revised its project milestones and schedule. One year has been added to the project timeline to better prepare and provide more opportunities for Edmontonians to meaningfully engage, and additional details are included in the Community Insights section below.

District Planning and the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative work in conjunction to implement The City Plan's land use concept and are both in the process of drafting regulations and policy. Over the next year, District Planning and the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative will coordinate engagement and communications strategies to make it easier and more convenient for Edmontonians, industry and community organizations to participate and provide feedback.

Using the City's public engagement spectrum, the engagement approach for the district planning project will focus on two roles for Edmontonians: Advise and Refine (see Figure 1).



Figure 1 - City of Edmonton Engagement Spectrum

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The iterative engagement approach is presented in three parts below with some details on the planned activities and formats. Additional detail is provided in Attachment 1.

## Part 1 Awareness and Pre-Engagement Communication

- **Purpose:** Inform about the district planning project and build awareness about upcoming engagement opportunities.
- **Public's Role:** Learn about the what and why of district planning, its connection to The City Plan, the main project deliverables and how they are intended to be used.
- **Activities/Formats:** Updated project webpage, inviting the public to sign up for project notifications and the launch of the "Conversation Starters" - mini information packages that introduce key topics about District Planning to build understanding about the project and prepare Edmontonians for engagement.
- **Timeframe:** Spring 2022

## Part 2 Refine Level Engagement

- **Purpose:** Gather input to help refine the first drafts of the District General Policy and district plans.
- **Public's Role:** Provide input towards clarification, missing or incorrect information, review of existing plans in effect, confirm the appropriate level of detail and to ensure alignment with The City Plan.
- **Activities/Formats:** Formats will include a range of virtual and in-person events, including open houses, workshops, pop ups, surveys and workbooks; activities will attempt to gather a range of input from first impressions of the district plans to their general use and their specific application in different scenarios.
- **Timeframe:** Summer to Fall 2022

## Part 3 Advise Level Engagement

- **Purpose:** Share the revised drafts using the input from Part 2
- **Public's Role:** Advise on possible edits to the District General Policy and district plans that may have been missed in Part 2.
- **Activities/Formats:** Formats will include a range virtual and in-person events, including open houses, workshops, pop ups, surveys
- **Timeframe:** Winter 2022/Spring 2023

Create-level engagement remains an important part of land use and mobility planning, and will be required for subsequent work to enhance and expand on the initial district plans. As Administration speaks with Edmontonians about district plans, the City will likely learn of unresolved issues that will require create-level participation from the public to address. Administration will report back to Council on these issues, and they will help shape work plans for projects after district plans are in place.

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## **COMMUNITY INSIGHT**

In spring 2021, Administration engaged a group of core stakeholders who were also engaged as part of ConnectEdmonton and The City Plan. They were consulted as an initial sounding board on the structure, content and level of detail proposed to be contained within district plans as well as to test strategies to effectively communicate concepts to a broader audience.

The core stakeholders are a group of 100 individuals representing more than 90 organizations that reflect and serve a wide cross-section of Edmontonians. Examples of groups that participated include Arts Habitat, the Business Improvement Areas, the Canadian Home Builders Association, the school boards, post secondary institutions, Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, Urban Development Institute, Infill Development in Edmonton Association (IDEA), and Alberta Health Services.

In June and July of 2021, Administration hosted eight public virtual information sessions to share information about District Planning and answer questions. The information sessions were advertised through the City's website and public events calendar, through social media channels and through stakeholder networks such as Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues.

Through these conversations, Administration heard ideas about content to be included in district plans, their function, the relationship to other plans, plan repeals, as well as communication and engagement. These themes have helped influence the materials now under development to build understanding about the project and prepare Edmontonians for additional engagement.

In response to feedback, one year has been added to the project timeline to better prepare and provide more opportunities for Edmontonians to meaningfully engage, and to give the project team time to refine, test and analyze draft content. Administration anticipates that the district plans, District General Policy and proposed repeals will be brought to public hearing for Council's consideration in the latter half of 2023.

## **GBA+**

The development of engagement for the District Planning project will include strategies intended to reach and engage with a diverse range of Edmontonians through open houses (both in person and online), pop ups (i.e. going to where Edmontonians are), workshops, workbooks and surveys. For this project, Administration has completed research on best practices and differential impacts to members of marginalized groups (see Attachment 2).

Learnings from secondary research highlighted the importance of considering all users as part of the engagement activities including children, seniors, women, racialized populations, people with low income, and people with disabilities. Administration identified groups that may be excluded in engagement plans and identified equity measures recommended to mitigate barriers to engagement (Attachment 2).

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Communications and Engagement Details
2. District Planning GBA+ Findings and Recommended Measures