

Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy

Recommendation:

That Urban Planning Committee recommend to City Council:

1. That the Open Space Policy C594, as set out in Attachment 1 of the June 23, 2017, Sustainable Development report CR_4551, be approved.
2. That Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy, as outlined in Attachment 2 of the June 23, 2017, Sustainable Development report CR_4551, be approved.

Report Summary

This report provides an overview of the proposed Open Space Policy C594 and Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy. The Policy provides the vision of an integrated, sustainable, vibrant, and multifunctional green network in Edmonton, and the Strategy will help guide actions toward the vision.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the June 23, 2017, Urban Planning Committee meeting, the June 23, 2017, Sustainable Development report CR_4551, was postponed to the August 23, 2017, Urban Planning Committee meeting.

Report

Introduction

Edmonton is experiencing rapid and significant change. Edmonton's build out population as outlined in Council approved statutory plans and policies is 1,800,000 people in new and established areas. Build out within the current city boundaries could be realized by 2050. To ensure Edmonton remains on track to become increasingly vibrant, livable, and diverse, it is necessary to shift how we conceive how the essential city-building networks of Edmonton are planned, integrated, and delivered.

The proposed Open Space Policy (C594) addresses this important urban shift, by recognizing Edmonton's green network as a living system of interconnected public parks and open spaces, which together deliver a broad range of services and community benefits. The Open Space Policy signals a new direction for open space network planning that supports multifunctionality, recognizes open spaces as part of a connected landscape, and values public land as an important resource that must be thought of holistically. The proposed policy aligns with and supports other similar shifts

in corporate thinking such as enhancing the management of City land as a corporate asset.

Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy ("Breathe") operationalizes the Open Space Policy by outlining how all areas of the city will be supported by an integrated, multifunctional, green network as Edmonton continues to grow. Breathe is one of 23 City priority projects, as identified in *The Way Ahead Implementation Plan (2016-2018)*, and advances the directions provided by the City Vision and *The Way Ahead*. It is intended to replace and build upon the Urban Parks Management Plan (2006-2016).

As the green network is one of several interconnected networks within the city, strategic alignment with other key initiatives and systems has been incorporated into the Open Space Policy and strategic directions of Breathe. These include:

- recreation trends and new concepts of facilities
- drainage, flood mitigation, and climate change
- urban biodiversity goals
- transit and active transportation
- infill, and nodes and corridor growth

Together, the Open Space Policy and Breathe provide a foundation that will act as a strong catalyst for further city-building and placemaking work, and will support Administration in more holistic and integrated planning and service delivery to improve the quality, accessibility, and diversity of places and spaces that are most important for Edmontonians.

Open Space Policy: A New Approach

The Policy recognizes the interconnected nature of open spaces across the city, and the ways that many different urban networks (ecological, drainage, transportation, and recreation) interact at multiple scales — from the neighbourhood, to the city, to the region — to shape Edmonton's urban landscape. This is reflected in the recognition that Edmonton's green network is comprised of a rich, diverse landscape of publicly-accessible open spaces. These spaces include:

- parks and greenways
- natural areas, and restored or ecologically-designed spaces
- plazas and squares
- outdoor festival and event space
- pedestrian-oriented streets
- provincially-owned plazas and parkland
- community gardens and edible landscapes
- municipal golf courses
- municipal cemeteries
- constructed wetlands, bioswales, and low-impact development

Edmonton's green network of open spaces preserves and enhances the integrity of our urban ecosystems, and provides measurable benefits to Edmontonians. These benefits are summarized and organized by three overarching themes:

- Ecology
- Celebration
- Wellness

Within these three themes, the Open Space Policy identifies 15 essential functions of open space that capture the values and services open space can provide and should be provided in Edmonton (Attachment 3). The philosophical shift in the Open Space Policy is that the City must get more from the public land base than it does currently.

Essential to accomplishing the shift to the green network approach are the following elements:

- A connected landscape - every open space is part of a connected network that provides multiple services and benefits.
- A multifunctional network - as the City grows, so does the demand on public open space, and the ability for the green network to support multiple functions at the same time becomes increasingly important.
- An evidence-based approach - Administration commits to an evidence-based approach to open space planning, supported by the best available data and community input.
- Appropriate open space provision - open space will be provided based upon evidence of need throughout the city by considering the following:
 - Distribution (Access): The arrangement of, and access to, open spaces across the landscape.
 - Quality (Functionality): The functionality of an open space, considering the condition of its infrastructure/amenities and the value of the functions it provides.
 - Diversity: The range of different open space types and functions within the landscape.
 - Supply: The physical amount of open space provided.
- A collaborative effort - The City commits to planning collaboratively within Administration, and with community and Joint Use partners, industry, Indigenous communities, and other jurisdictions.

Breathe - Strategy Development

Breathe was developed in response to the need identified by Administration, community, and industry stakeholders to shift to a new strategic vision using a network approach to address Edmonton's current and projected open space needs.

The Strategy was developed between Fall 2015 and Spring 2017 through a rigorous, evidence-based approach, using research, data and geospatial analysis, public engagement with 3,750 individuals and 94 organizations, and consultation within

Administration across four Departments via steering, advisory, and technical working committees. The work resulted in a comprehensive understanding of Edmonton's current and projected future green network. Breathe was developed over five project stages that:

- examined policy context and best practices
- analyzed current open space supply
- projected future open space demand and forecasted demographic changes
- established strategic priorities
- developed final deliverables

The Strategy is intended to be a living document with updates being advanced to City Council for review and approval as necessary. Even the most current and comprehensive information — the information used to build the Strategy — can become outdated as conditions change. Administration is committed to keeping the document current with the latest available data, analytical methods, and ideas for addressing green network issues as they evolve, as well as providing City Council with regular progress updates.

Understanding Edmonton's Green Network

The green network supports ecological functions, and connects people with year-round opportunities to learn, recharge, recreate, gather, and celebrate. Understanding and measuring the value of these benefits depends on multiple factors, including how open spaces are used, the benefits they provide, and their distribution throughout the city.

The quality, distribution, and diversity of open spaces provided are as important as the quantity of land available for use. Breathe considers the function, configuration, and amount of not only municipal parks, but all publicly-accessible open spaces to form a more comprehensive assessment of how the entire green network performs and the services it provides. The Strategy uses these measures to understand and examine Edmonton's current and projected green network in all areas of the city in order to set strategic directions for the sustainable care and improvement of Edmonton's open spaces.

This data-driven approach was used to better inform, prioritize, and address specific gaps and issues in the green network, which, in turn, promotes more effective and efficient use of City land and resources. Over 75 existing datasets were compiled and integrated to create an open space inventory dataset containing 1,889 polygons and 124 data attributes. The development of the comprehensive inventory of all open spaces in Edmonton, and accompanying information about function and connectivity, provides Administration with a tool to better inform land planning and management decisions.

Strategic Directions

Breathe provides ten strategic directions, with accompanying policies, that guide open

space planning, design, (re)development, management, and use as the city grows and changes.

Strategic Direction	Intent
Safe and Inclusive	Ensure that the green network is safe, accessible and inclusive.
Vibrant Spaces	Make open spaces vibrant, sustainable and functional to support community identity and needs.
Community Engagement	Empower people to become active participants and stewards in planning, sustaining, and using the green network.
Education and Awareness	Improve awareness of open space opportunities and appropriate use.
Distribution and Supply	Ensure an adequate quality, diversity, distribution, and supply of open space throughout Edmonton.
Public Access and Connectivity	Improve open space access for residents and visitors.
Ecological Integrity	Preserve and enhance the ecological quality and connectivity of the green network.
Adaptive Management and Flexible Spaces	Adaptively manage changing trends in growth, demographics, and preferences.
Collaborative Planning	Improve collaborative open space planning among City stakeholders, community partners, and other jurisdictions.
Sustainable Funding	Develop a sustainable funding model that responds to operational requirements, community capacity, and local needs.

Implementation

The Strategy is supported by an Implementation Plan that identifies specific actions, projects, and plans recommended to achieve Breathe’s strategic directions, as well as a Technical Report that explains the methodologies that were used to analyze the green network. The recommendations of the Implementation Plan include:

- Detailed strategies, plans, and guidelines, organized by strategic direction.
- Development of green network planning targets, based on the measures of distribution/access, quality/functionality, diversity, and supply.
- Site-specific projects that will target improvements to the green network, based on the aforementioned measures.
- Updating existing open space planning, design, and management procedures, with focused stakeholder engagement (e.g. industry, community organizations, and school boards).

The completion of the Recreation Facility Master Plan and the accompanying city-wide sports field needs assessment are integral to the development of green network planning targets. To date, the development of Breathe and the Recreation Facility Master Plan have been coordinated and, together, these will direct the planning of open space and recreational facilities and amenities. This will be undertaken in alignment with the ongoing processes for the effective management of land as a corporate asset, and decisions with respect to competing priorities for the use of land.

Approval of the Strategy and the strategic vision for Edmonton's green network will allow Administration to advance the development of high-priority implementation items.

Policy

This report is supported by the following policies:

- City Policy C512 - Environmental Policy
- City Policy C513 - Public Involvement
- City Policy C531 - Natural Area Systems
- City Policy C544 - Active Transportation
- City Policy C586 - River Access Guiding Principles
- City Policy C588 - Winter Design Policy

Corporate Outcomes

This report supports the following corporate outcomes:

- “Edmonton is attractive and compact” by outlining strategic support for well-designed, strategically-located open spaces that help build vibrant communities and facilitate a high quality of life for residents, especially as neighbourhood density increases across the City.
- “Edmontonians use public transit and active modes of transportation” by identifying strategic directions for improving active transportation connectivity throughout the city, and aligning green network accessibility with transit.
- “The City of Edmonton has sustainable and accessible infrastructure” by identifying strategic directions for improving access to, and increasing the multifunctionality of, Edmonton's green network.
- “Edmontonians are connected to the city in which they live, work and play” by illustrating strategic support for embracing the many festivals and events

that occur in open spaces, and for empowering people to become active participants and stewards in planning, sustaining, and using the green network.

- “Edmontonians use facilities and services that promote healthy living” by identifying Wellness as one of three overarching themes of the green network, and outlines strategic support for improving the functionality of open spaces that promote healthy living.
- “Edmonton is an environmentally sustainable and resilient city” by outlining how open spaces encompass the urban ecosystems that are essential to environmental sustainability, and identifies strategic directions to ensure continued and improved ecological function and resiliency of Edmonton’s green network.

Risk Assessment

Risk Element	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Current Mitigations	Potential Future Mitigations
Corporate Governance	Strategic directions and vision of Breathe are not consistently supported or implemented throughout Administration	3	4	12	Significant engagement within Administration across multiple Departments has been completed since Fall 2015.	Continued engagement with Administration, stakeholders and public to present the strategic directions of Breathe, and to coordinate delivery of implementation actions.
Political Influence	Breathe and Open Space City Policy not approved and adopted.	2	4	8	The project team and City Planning branch management have engaged City Councillors, the Mayor's	It is proposed that updates at regular intervals be provided to Urban Planning Committee

					Office, and Sustainable Development Leadership Team at key touch points throughout the development of the Strategy.	and City Council regarding the Breathe Strategy and implementation progress.
Finance	Adequate resources not available or approved for implementation of the Strategy	2	3	6	City Council approved Strategy service package, which includes funding to begin immediate, short-term implementation.	Future open space Operating and Capital budget profiles will align with the Breathe Implementation Plan.
Project Management	Scope of the Strategy is exceeded, implementation is not carried out or delivered	2	3	6	Scope of Strategy is defined in communications and engagement materials. Implementation Plan developed to accompany the Strategy.	Update and revise Implementation Plan at consistent regular intervals.

Public Engagement

The public engagement process for Breathe was strengthened by incorporating local knowledge and community values in the planning of the green network. Public engagement was structured across three phases to inform project development. A comprehensive communications program (online, print, social and news media) supported and promoted the various engagement activities.

The public engagement process was informed by the Council Initiative on Public Engagement. Administration engaged residents and stakeholders early in the development of the Strategy, and provided opportunities for people to participate close to where they live, work, and recreate. Diverse opportunities were provided, including a speaker series event, “pop-up” and intercept engagement sessions at public festivals and events, formal open houses, online surveys, an interactive mapping tool, a stakeholder discussion guide, as well as community meetings and workshops. Engagement opportunities were also tailored to some groups (such as newcomers, seniors, and youth) to ensure their voices were heard.

- a total of 3,750 individuals and 94 stakeholder and community organizations were engaged across 47 events and two public online surveys
- What We Heard summary reports for each phase of public engagement are available online at www.edmonton.ca/breathe

Indigenous Engagement

Meetings were convened with Indigenous communities with connections to Edmonton. Administration reached out to First Nations communities in Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8, the Métis Nation of Alberta, Indigenous communities with traditional territories in the Edmonton region, Indigenous organizations, and urban Indigenous peoples. Meetings were held to share project information, gather input, and continue to engage in an open dialogue. Input shared from Indigenous engagement is incorporated throughout Breathe (e.g. acknowledge and include Indigenous communities, heritage, and culture in placemaking initiatives).

Budget/Financial Implications

The necessary resources are available to Administration to begin short-term implementation of Breathe, within the approved 2015 Operating Budget service package. In 2017-2018, this will include:

- updated open space standards and guidelines, as currently referenced in the Urban Parks Management Plan
- working with industry to model green network options for new growth areas; applying the Breathe approach for land assembly
- develop a Downtown Open Space Master Plan.

Longer-term funding requirements will be identified to support the ongoing implementation of Breathe. Funding requests for implementing projects and plans will be brought forward to City Council for consideration in the 2019-2021 Operating Budget and 2019-2022 Capital Budget.

Metrics, Targets, and Outcomes

Administration will consider distribution/access, quality/functionality, diversity, and

supply of open space in order to achieve a multifunctional, integrated, and accessible green network. The development of planning and performance targets will be a high-priority implementation item following approval of the Open Space Policy and the Strategy.

Metrics	Targets	Outcomes	
<p>Current amount of publicly accessible open space per 1,000 residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Citywide Average - 7.6 Hectares ● Central Core - 7.0 Hectares ● Mature Areas - 8.0 Hectares ● Established Areas - 7.5 Hectares ● Developing Areas - 10.8 Hectares ● Urban Growth Areas - 423.7 Hectares ● Industrial Areas - 215.9 Hectares 	<p>To be determined through Breathe Implementation, pending City Policy and Strategy approval</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Edmonton's green network (e.g. parks, squares, natural areas, promenades, river valley) is available and accessible to residents 	
<p>Percentage of population with walkable access to at least one open space (within 400 metres, or a 5-10 minute walk):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 94% 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Every neighbourhood is supported by an integrated, multifunctional, and high-quality network of open space
<p>Percentage of population with walkable access to open space with high wellness function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central Core - 30.2% ● Mature Areas - 38.0% ● Established Areas - 26.2% ● Developing Areas - 2.7% ● Urban Growth Areas - 0% ● Industrial Areas - 0.5% 			
<p>Percentage of population with walkable access to open space with high celebration function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central Core - 81.9% ● Mature Areas - 33.6% ● Established Areas - 16.0% ● Developing Areas - 4.5% ● Urban Growth Areas - 6.6% ● Industrial Areas - 2.7% 			
<p>Percentage of population with walkable access to open space with high ecology function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central Core - 55.3% ● Mature Areas - 32.4% 			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Established Areas - 28.2% ● Developing Areas - 32.5% ● Urban Growth Areas - 30.7% ● Industrial Areas - 11.2% 		
<p>Multifunctionality - number of open spaces that support multiple functions among one or more themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Highly diverse (high scoring for all three themes) - 21 ● Diverse (high scoring for two themes) - 92 ● Functional (high scoring for one theme) - 468 		

Justification of Recommendation:

1. Approval of the Open Space Policy C594 will ensure that all open space related strategies, plans, projects, programs, and operations align with and advance the new direction set out for Edmonton's green network.
2. Approval of Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy is required to enable Administration to begin implementing this new strategic approach.

Attachments

1. Open Space Policy C594
2. Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy
3. Conceptual Framework

Others Reviewing this Report

- T. Burge, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- A. Laughlin, Deputy City Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services
- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services
- C. Campbell, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- D. Jones, Deputy City Manager, City Operations