

DISTRICT PLANNING - PROJECT AND ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

That the January 17, 2023, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01509, be received for information.

Requested Council Action	Information Only		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Urban Places		
City Plan Values	LIVE		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	A Community of Communities	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	15-Minute Districts
Corporate Business Plan	Transforming for the Future		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative • Growth Management Framework 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CR_8176 Advancing City Plan - Systems and Networks, Urban Planning Committee, February 2, 2021 • UPE00684 City Plan Implementation Update: Advancing Edmonton's Systems, Urban Planning Committee, August 24, 2021 • UPE01052 District Planning Authorization and Engagement Approach, Urban Planning Committee, April 12, 2022 		

Executive Summary

- District plans are a key component to implementing The City Plan and modernizing Edmonton's planning system. They will provide land use, mobility and growth management direction as we grow to a population of 1.25 million. District Plans will reduce policy conflicts and be periodically updated to steer towards City goals.

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- This report provides an update on the district planning project and how engagement activities will inform changes to draft documents and future follow-up work.
- Administration published the draft District General Policy in June 2022 as well as 15 district plans and list of plans proposed to be amended or repealed in the summer of 2023.
- Administration organized a wide range of online and in-person events and activities to engage with Edmontonians from June through November 2022.
- Members of the public provided extensive feedback, which will be used to make changes to the draft documents.
- Four themes emerged from the feedback: heritage and culture, directing growth, document usability and additional guidance for specific areas.
- Revised documents will be released in the spring of 2023 followed by additional engagement.
- Proposed district plan bylaws will be brought to City Council Public Hearing for Council consideration in the summer of 2023.

REPORT

Administration is working to implement the City Plan and modernize Edmonton's planning system through a number of complementary initiatives including District Planning, Zoning Bylaw Renewal and Growth Management. District plans will provide planning direction to reflect the direction of The City Plan for each of the 15 districts as the city grows to 1.25 million residents. They will guide decisions about land use, mobility and investment to support growth toward City Plan targets at a population of 2 million and reduce the current policy conflicts between The City Plan and area plans that have served their purpose. District Plans will provide a link between high level policy within The City Plan at 2 million, the land use regulations at the parcel level of the Zoning Bylaw and the geographic representation of priority areas of the future growth management program.

Creating district plans will provide planning direction in areas that currently have no plan and will replace or supplement local plans to align with the City Plan. By modernizing Edmonton's planning system, it will result in a simpler planning system that will help Administration keep plans up to date and relevant. District plans will be amended as needed to steer the City towards its goals and will be comprehensively updated as we approach 1.25 million residents to plan for the next phase of The City Plan.

Project Update

In April 2022, Administration provided the Urban Planning Committee with an overview of a robust engagement approach to connect with Edmontonians about district plans (UPE01052 District Planning Authorization and Engagement Approach). Since then, the project team has engaged with Edmontonians on three components of the district planning project:

1. District General Policy and 15 District Plans
2. List of plans proposed to be amended or repealed

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3. A prioritized future work plan to address additional planning guidance for specific areas

The draft District General Policy was released on the public project website and Engaged Edmonton, the City's digital engagement platform, in June 2022, followed by 15 draft district plans and the list of plans proposed to be amended or repealed in the summer of 2023.

Administration is refining the District General Policy and each of the 15 district plans based on public engagement feedback and technical analyses completed. In spring 2023, revised documents will be shared publicly in preparation for the final phase of public engagement.

Communication and Engagement Activities

Administration implemented a comprehensive communications and engagement program that began in 2021 and continued in early 2022 for Phase 1 of the project. Following this, further engagement was conducted from June to November 2022 to gather feedback on the draft documents. Administration used multiple engagement approaches, including:

- Fourteen in-person open house events in 14 of the 15 districts (200+ attendees) — one engagement opportunity (Horse Hill) was canceled as the City was determining how to respect the period of mourning for Queen Elizabeth II
- Ten pop-up events at malls, markets, festivals and recreation centres
- Thirteen online workshops with members of the public and varied stakeholder groups (223 attendees)
- Two online surveys available to Edmonton Insight Community members and to the general public via an open link (1,688 respondents)
- Engaged Edmonton (6,800+ visitors)
- Direct emails and marketing packages to community leagues and industry partners containing social media and newsletter content to use and share with their members

These approaches were promoted through a wide range of communication and marketing tools, including:

- Project websites
- Postcards
- Road and neighbourhood signs
- Newspaper advertisements
- Social media advertisements
- LRT digital screens
- Direct emails and phone calls
- A taxation notice insert
- Newsletters
- Presentations

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Prior to public engagement, Administration created and shared educational materials to help Edmontonians understand high-level district planning concepts and their connection to The City Plan. Examples include the Making Space podcast, Conversation Starters and The City Building video series, which supported Edmontonians to prepare for more meaningful engagement and build project and public awareness.

Administration integrated district planning engagement events and communication materials with the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative and other City Plan implementations projects, wherever possible, to build a shared understanding of related project objectives and reduce engagement fatigue.

Administration engaged with Indigenous Nations and communities in alignment with the Indigenous Framework as a Listener and Connector and in the spirit of wahigicobi (kinship relationships) to sustain relationships developed through The City Plan, build project awareness and openly discuss how to welcome Indigenous heritage and culture into district plans. In addition to two full-day in-person meetings with Indigenous Nations and communities, Administration invited 14 Indigenous community organizations to participate in public engagement activities between September and November 2022. Administration also circulated the draft documents and met with planning staff from Enoch Cree Nation about the district planning project, and in particular, about the West Henday District Plan.

Usability testing on the draft policies was conducted with University of Alberta planning students and members of the public. A total of 37 individual student assignments and 12 in-person interviews with members of the public were completed.

The draft documents were also circulated among technical experts at the City and agencies such as EPCOR for review and feedback to inform refinements in the revision process. This circulation also included staff from surrounding municipalities and agencies within the provincial government.

Attachment 1 provides additional detail on the communications and engagement activities. Informed by the learnings from engagement activities, Administration will make final updates to all documents and prepare the associated bylaws. The District Plans and District General Policy will be presented to City Council Public Hearing in August 2023.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Themes

Analysis of the feedback gathered from Edmontonians and technical experts revealed a number of themes to inform revisions to the draft documents. Attachment 1 provides additional details on the feedback received through the various engagement channels.

Overall, there is understanding and support for how the district plans 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.

However, themes emerged that will influence revisions to the draft documents summarized below:

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- **Heritage and Culture**

The Heritage and Culture map for each district identifies places that have formal heritage designation. Administration heard there is a strong desire for an expanded view of the unique heritage and culture of each district. The future heritage planning work may provide directions and priorities to identify, preserve and celebrate the unique heritage and culture of each district. As this work progresses, there will be opportunities for new directions to be incorporated into district plans.

- **Directing Growth**

District plans identify nodes and corridors, and areas within them, to prioritize for development and investment as the city grows to 1.25 million people. While participants felt this direction was important, there was confusion with the maps and policy related to growth to 1.25 million and 2 million. Administration heard that the draft documents are not clear how taller and more dense development will be evaluated based on their proposed location, and what it means to be within a node or corridor, but not within the area identified for higher growth to 1.25 million people.

In response, Administration will revise the draft documents to provide greater clarity in language, policy and mapping. In making revisions, Administration will mitigate the tension between providing certainty for Edmontonians and industry while meeting the objective of providing flexibility within our land use policy in order to adapt to ongoing change.

- **Document Usability**

Each district plan has 10 maps, and each map includes multiple layers of data. Feedback gathered identified corrections and missing information, requested updates in map information, greater consistency across maps in each district and across each district plan and improvements in overall readability.

The maps are being improved to address these concerns. However, it is clear from the feedback received that an online platform is needed. An online platform would serve as the primary tool where users can interact with each district plan and easily navigate between maps and policies to help improve the user experience and accessibility. Administration is evaluating how this can be included as part of the City's larger land development mapping update.

- **Additional Guidance for Specific Areas**

In general, respondents liked the idea of a general policy to guide development decisions in a consistent way. However, it was raised that this approach could ignore specific conditions at certain locations. The Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy, currently underway, is an example of a project needed to provide specific direction for open space, land use, mobility and infrastructure investments for a smaller area within a district that has unique conditions. The outcomes of these exercises will not only provide land use direction, they will also inform future work across the corporation such as concept planning and capital infrastructure improvements.

Addressing these local concerns will require thoughtful planning through future project-based work, and more detailed land use planning in some instances. The areas and issues identified

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for additional guidance will inform the prioritized future work plan to address those issues through integrated project work is a deliverable of this project.

Rezoning Applications at Public Hearings

With the adoption of The City Plan in 2020 and its new priorities for growth citywide, some Plans in Effect have become outdated. In these cases, plans are not guides for the future as they have not evolved to reflect the vision of The City Plan. As such, these plans no longer provide certainty to what Edmontonians can expect as their communities grow. This misalignment between some Plans in Effect with more current policy direction contributes to frustration and a lack of trust between Administration, Council and Edmontonians. This is a sentiment that has been expressed at recent public hearings, more often in areas subject to an Area Redevelopment Plan. The transformational change required to achieve the vision and goals in the City Plan requires new approaches in how neighbourhoods are planned. These new approaches create uncertainty for Edmontonians especially through the transition from plans that are perceived to offer a high level of certainty to new tools that facilitate the flexibility required to welcome an additional one million Edmontonians.

To be able to achieve a rebuildable city and maintain trust through the decision making process, the City's planning tools need to continue to evolve to ensure alignment with The City Plan and reflect the lifecycle of development. To apply what has been heard at public hearings, Administration has reviewed the draft list of plans to be amended or repealed released in August 2022 to ensure that plans in effect are in closer alignment with the direction of The City Plan. The outcome of that review is provided in UPE01520 District Planning Process - Review of Area Redevelopment Plans.

GBA+

In preparation for communication and engagement activities, Administration conducted research on GBA+ best practices and differential impacts on members of marginalized groups or voices that may not often be heard. This research highlighted the importance of considering all users as part of the engagement activities including children, youth, seniors, women, racialized populations, newcomers, people with low income, people experiencing houselessness and people with disabilities.

Administration identified several equity measures to reach people where they are and made efforts to mitigate barriers to inclusive engagement, which are summarized in Attachment 1. Examples include conducting in-person events at easily accessible locations for people with technology or income barriers, a children's table at each open house with a colouring station and toys to support families or lone parents who may attend these events, ensuring engagement activities and facilitation promoted equitable conversation and employed tactics to ensure all participant voices were heard.

In addition, the project team reached out directly to organizations representing marginalized groups and organizations that Administration typically does not hear from on land use matters, to offer and provide information about the project, opportunities to participate in engagement

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activities and to meet upon request. As a result of the direct outreach, meetings are being planned in the coming months with the following groups:

- Advisory committees such as the City of Edmonton Youth Council and Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton Committee
- Organizations addressing food security issues including Edmonton Food Bank and WECAN
- Organizations that are meeting on development and affordable housing direction such as the Shovel Ready Working Group

The project team will continue their outreach efforts to various groups throughout the lifecycle of the project.

ATTACHMENTS

1. What We Heard Report