

UPDATE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING, COMMUNICATION AND REPORTING

Recommendation

That the September 19, 2023, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01669, be received for information.

Requested Action	Information Only		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Climate Resilience		
City Plan Values	PRESERVE		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	Greener as We Grow	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Climate Adaptation and Energy Transition
Corporate Business Plan	Transforming for the Future and Managing the Corporation		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bylaw 16620 - City Administration Bylaw • Policy C512 - Environmental Policy • Policy C505 - Edmonton's Environmental Management System Policy • Policy C627 - Climate Resilience Policy • Policy C531 - Natural Area Systems Policy • Policy C594 - Open Space Policy • Policy C501A - Integrated Pest Management Policy • Policy C542A - Development Setbacks from River Valley/Ravine Crests • City Plan Implementation • Envisio, the City of Edmonton's ISO14001 Environmental Management System 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPE01463, Environmental Review of City-Led Projects, Urban Planning Committee, January 17, 2023 		

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Previous Council/Committee Action

At the January 17, 2023, Urban Planning Committee, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide a report to Committee on progress made in improving environmental planning, communication and reporting at the City of Edmonton; and any organizational structures that may be required to streamline and provide accountability for ongoing environmental actions and review processes.

Executive Summary

- It is a critical time to address challenges facing the environment and climate in Edmonton and globally.
- Administration has undertaken organizational structure changes, including the creation of a Chief Climate Officer role and establishing an internal Climate Task Force to develop long-term recommendations to enhance environment and climate governance and accountability.
- Administration has added an Environment and Climate Review section to select Council reports, starting in Q2 2023.
- Administration will include an Environment and Climate Review section in all applicable reports beginning in Q2 2024.
- Administration will continue identifying additional options to improve environmental reviews and update Council in an upcoming report planned for Q2 2024.

REPORT

Administration has been building and continually improving environmental practices for more than a decade and is committed to continuing efforts to improve environmental planning, communication and reporting at the City of Edmonton. ConnectEdmonton, Edmonton's strategic plan, sets the direction for Edmonton's future and outlines where changes are necessary today in order to realize the vision for Edmonton in 2050. ConnectEdmonton's goal of Climate Resilience includes a city that is transitioning to a low-carbon future, has clean air and water and is adapting to a changing climate. The City Plan's Big City Move Greener As We Grow puts Edmontonians at the forefront of two important trends for the region. The first is continuing to develop a healthy city and second is to pay attention to what will be one of the great challenges of the future: to protect and enhance land, air, water and biodiversity. Municipalities have a critical role to play in environmental stewardship.

Given the growing urgency to address environment and climate issues, Administration is progressing work on environment and climate reviews, governance and reporting that will provide Council with improved access to additional environmental information to support their decision making.

Organizational Structures Update

Administration has initiated organizational structure changes, including the creation of a new Chief Climate Officer position, to better align resources with priorities and ensure that climate

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implications are included within corporate decision making. In addition, a Climate Task Force, comprised of staff within Administration, has been established to complete a governance review and provide recommendations for changes to enhance environmental and climate governance, decision making, roles and responsibilities, performance, and accountability throughout the corporation.

Planning, Communication and Reporting

Administration continually improves and evolves environmental practices in order to address changing environmental and climate considerations. The implementation of a Carbon Accounting Framework in the 2023-2026 budget process was an important step to integrate climate considerations in decision making. The carbon budget process continues to evolve and updates on this work will be brought forward formally every fall during the supplemental budget process. Other examples of existing City processes to integrate environment and climate into projects and services were provided to the Urban Planning Committee on January 17, 2023, in UPE01463, Environmental Review of City-led Projects. Examples of these processes include strategic environment or climate reviews to identify leading practices and innovation opportunities, broad environment or climate reviews to understand environmental impacts, opportunities or alternatives and local impact-focussed environmental reviews that are often required under legislation or policy.

As Administration establishes enhanced systems to guide decision making and assesses additional options to coordinate environmental reviews of City plans and projects, a key step is incorporating a new environment and climate review section into the standard Council report template. In Q2 2023, Administration started testing the type of information to be included in an environment and climate review Council report section. A number of Council reports in Q2 and Q3 2023, included this new section.

- By default, Council reports that use the standard Council report template (i.e., not external or bylaw Council reports) will include a short environment and climate section such as June 1, 2023, Financial and Corporate Services report FCS01568 - City-owned RF5 Site - Timelines and Development. This is scheduled to begin corporate wide in Q2 2024.
- Administration completes a screening level assessment for each Council report to determine whether it will require environment and climate content or whether a report will require a more in-depth review and analysis to assess the environment and climate risks and opportunities, including identifying climate action opportunities. For example, the June 20, 2023, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01636 - Zoning Bylaw Renewal Report #6 - Draft Zoning Bylaw

Administration has engaged with City Council's Energy Transition and Climate Resilience Committee, as well as the Environmental Advisory Committee, who provide advice to Administration on environmental and sustainability issues, on this initiative. Feedback from this engagement is being considered in the design of processes to support this change and both committees expressed their interest in continuing to contribute to the project.

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This is a complex initiative that requires development of new tools and resources, capacity building, engagement and training in new processes. Administration will continue to refine and finalize the process as additional Council reports are included. Broad inclusion of the new section in Council reports will take place in Q2 2024. While this new process is being implemented, Administration will continue to consider additional options to enhance environmental planning and reviews.

Administration is assessing the approach of including a dedicated section for environment and climate in the Council reports associated with land use developments and plans that are attached to the Bylaws presented at statutory public hearings. Administration will return to Urban Planning Committee in Q2 2024, with an update on this potential change along with other identified opportunities to improve environmental planning and stakeholder consultation from the onset of projects and plans. The work of the Climate Task Force will support this important shift in how the environment and climate is integrated into decision-making processes.

Community Insight

Environment themes often factor into city-building engagement conversations. During The City Plan engagement, Edmontonians were asked how they want to experience their future city, and based on this engagement, one of The City Plan's guiding values is "I want to Preserve what matters most," which includes Edmonton's environmental systems.

Through The City Plan engagement, many responses directly addressed ideas related to climate change; however, more often, Edmontonians were focused on local and tangible impacts on the natural environment including air pollution, habitat degradation and waste management.

Edmontonians who provided input on ConnectEdmonton, Edmonton's Strategic Plan for 2019-2028, overwhelmingly described a desire to have Edmonton be a global leader in environmental sustainability. Through The City Plan engagement, Indigenous communities recommended that they be involved in City projects earlier to share perspectives about the environment and the impacts they are experiencing in their home communities surrounding Edmonton, as Edmonton regional projects impact rivers, air and wildlife in their communities. Administration will engage Council's Energy Transition and Climate Resilience Committee and Administration's Environmental Advisory Committee on this process and implementation.

GBA+

Administration is committed to incorporating GBA+ into all projects and initiatives within the City's two climate resilience strategies, as well as into other environment and climate-related work such as the proposed environmental review of City plans and projects. To support equality of outcomes with the proposed environmental reviews, the following equity measures are being incorporated:

- Contributors to the development of the process change for environmental reviews have been diverse to ensure the inclusion of more perspectives.
- The team completing the environmental reviews is using a variety of sources for gathering information to support diversity.