

DISTRICT PLANNING - 1.25 MILLION AND 2 MILLION POPULATION MILESTONES

Recommendation

That the December 5, 2023, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01671, 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.	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"> • Implementation of The City Plan • Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative • Growth Management Framework 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 2, 2021, City Planning report, CR_8176 Advancing City Plan - Systems and Networks • August 24, 2021, Urban Planning and Economy report, UPE00684 City Plan Implementation Update: Advancing Edmonton's Systems • April 12, 2022, Urban Planning and Economy report, UPE01052 District Planning Authorization and Engagement Approach • January 17, 2023, Urban Planning and Economy report, UPE01509 District Planning - Project and Engagement Update 		

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Previous Council/Committee Action

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

That Administration provide a report to Committee that includes the revised District Plans and revised District Plan Policy that incorporates applicable engagement feedback including how District Plans can:

- Provide additional policy and map clarity in regards to directing development and investment at the 1.25 million and 2 million population milestones; and
- Provide guidance on process incentives (e.g. streamlined approvals) for developments within the 2 million population areas that are in alignment with the City Plan.

Executive Summary

- District plans will better align Edmonton's planning system with The City Plan.
- Updated draft plans reflect the feedback gathered during public engagement in 2022, and direction from Urban Planning Committee in January 2023.
- The changes to the drafts provide greater clarity in the text, policy and maps.
- The list of plans proposed to be repealed or amended as a result of additional review work.
- The new zoning bylaw and district planning are critical pieces of work that will align the City's planning regulatory and policy framework with The City Plan and contribute to the streamlining of the City's land development processes.
- Administration will provide an update on the rezoning of priority areas project in 2024. This work is focused on reducing barriers and supporting redevelopment in priority nodes and corridors in accordance with The City Plan.
- Administration anticipates bringing district plans and the associated repeals and amendments to Public Hearing in Q2 2024.

REPORT

The City Plan looks to the future and sets the direction for how Edmonton will grow and change as it becomes a city of two million people. District level planning supports the Big City Move "Community of Communities", and moves the city towards achieving its targets - such as established districts that allow people to easily complete their daily needs and where 50 per cent of trips are made by transit and active transportation.

District plans will define nodes and corridors across the city, and provide planning direction in areas that currently have no plan. They 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 current and relevant. District plans will be amended as needed to steer Edmonton towards its goals and will be comprehensively updated as the community approaches 1.25 million residents, initiating the next phase of The City Plan.

Revised Draft Plans

Administration revised the draft documents associated with the District Planning project (Attachments 1-17) and published them online on August 14, 2023. Attachments 1-16 are the

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District Policy and 15 District Plans. Attachment 17 is a revised list of plans to be amended, repealed or kept. These revised drafts reflect the feedback received from community, industry, technical and internal reviewers during the public engagement conducted in 2022, as well as direction received at the January 17, 2023 Urban Planning Committee meeting. Attachment 18 provides specific details on the changes made to the draft documents.

Generally, changes to draft documents include:

- An updated list of existing geographic plans proposed to be retired, changed or retained
- Greater clarity on how to use district plans and the proposed District Policy together, and the relationship with other planning tools
- Corrected errors and omissions in the text, area-specific policy and map content of individual district plans
- Improvements to the representation of heritage and culture in each district
- Improved map readability and navigation (e.g. changes to colour and symbology, more map labels, reducing the number of map features and more consistent map feature names)
- A redesign of the area-specific policy section (text, map and tables) to make it easier to find relevant policy information
- More illustrations to improve interpretation
- Improved formatting to aid document navigation

1.25 Million and 2 Million Population Milestones

Earlier drafts of the District Policy and district plans were focused on planning exclusively for the first stage of The City Plan, or growth to 1.25 million. However, this created uncertainty regarding development opportunities in areas identified for growth beyond the 1.25 million population horizon. The updated drafts still focus on growth to 1.25 million where this represents the best or only information available. The updated drafts also removed Intensification Areas that represented a staged approach for development opportunities.

The following changes are incorporated into the attached revised drafts of the District Policy and District Plans to respond to the feedback and direction received:

- Removed Node and Corridor 1.25 Million Intensification Areas
- Introduced policies on building height and location
- Clarified content on Managing Growth

Removal of Node and Corridor 1.25 Million Intensification Areas

Draft district plans and the District Policy no longer include policy or map direction to stage development within the nodes and corridors. This is replaced with policies that describe development opportunities throughout the nodes and corridors.

This change reduces ambiguity about where buildings of various heights are appropriate and makes it clear that development will be supported throughout the nodes and corridors. The 'Node and Corridor' map in each District Plan has a simpler appearance with a greater focus on the node and corridor boundaries.

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Policies on Building Height and Location

Node and corridor policies now give clear support for smaller buildings (low rise and mid rise, depending on the node or corridor type) throughout the entire node or corridor area, while giving more context specific direction to taller buildings. These are directed to sites along major roadways, near mass transit stations and major intersections. For the tallest buildings, policy support also depends on site size and context, transition to surrounding development and adequate access to the site.

Managing Growth

The 'Managing Growth' section, Section 3.1, in each district plan were updated to describe the anticipated growth in the district and how the City supports that growth through infrastructure investment. For example, the 'Managing Growth to 1.25 Million' map now shows planned parks, bike and transit routes, and other planned infrastructure needed to attract and serve a growing population. The map also shows 'Priority Growth Areas', which are the nodes and corridors expected to experience more residential and commercial development, compared to other locations in the redeveloping area. Administration will continue to work with stakeholders to determine timing and locations to support growth in these priority areas.

Guidance on Process Incentives

Current Recognition

The City is focused on continuous improvements to planning and development approvals processes - including enabling online permit applications, decreasing timelines from time of application to a decision and continuing to review and amend City bylaws to ensure effective and efficient regulations. Administration estimates that improvements save applicants \$5.3 million and 67,600 days each year, which has been recognized by the Government of Alberta and the Canadian Home Builders' Association. In 2022, the City of Edmonton won the Government of Alberta's Municipal Excellence Awards 'Red Tape Reduction' Award¹. In January 2023, The Canadian Home Builders' Association announced that Edmonton had ranked #1 in its 2022 Municipal Benchmarking Study². This study examined how local development processes, approvals and charges affect housing affordability and housing supply in major cities. These awards suggest a growing recognition of Edmonton as a change leader in reducing barriers to development.

Continuous Improvement

Administration supports an efficient and effective planning framework to enable development - this helps Edmonton achieve its City Plan goals. This effort includes fostering a culture of continuous improvement through supporting system and regulatory improvements. Continuous improvement is completed in collaboration with stakeholders. Administration also assesses the cost of service delivery and will update the necessary resourcing accordingly.

¹ Government of Alberta. Ministry of Municipal Affairs. 2022 *Minister's Awards for Municipal and Public Library Excellence*. October 2022.

² Canadian Home Builders' Association. 2022 CHBA Municipal Benchmarking Study. 2022.

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Administration adopts technological improvements to support automated reviews, using data to set service timelines and using input received from applicants to direct improvements to the permitting process. Administration is looking to expand on its automated development permit program in 2024 by focusing on select residential development permits. Industry and Administration will continue to adjust to the new Zoning Bylaw and its associated technological and process improvements for permitting. It is anticipated that there will be a decrease in development permitting timelines. Administration will review and update the published service levels in late 2024, so as to ensure that any improvements made with the new bylaw and its associated processes and tools, are reflected in the published service levels. This holistic approach to continuous improvement allows Edmonton to prioritize improvements based on demand, City Plan goals and Council direction - and to respond to market conditions accordingly.

Zoning Bylaw Renewal

The Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative will result in a simplified and streamlined approach to land use regulation. By reducing the number of standard zones and use definitions, Edmonton will see greater flexibility in building types, reduced rezoning amendment applications and less reliance on Direct Control and Special Area Zones. Simpler regulations will improve development timelines by reducing complexity to support automated Development Permits. Flexible and enabling regulations will result in more development being considered Permitted Development (formerly Class A) and fewer Development Permits will be subject to appeal to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board.

District Planning

The successful adoption of the proposed District Policy, 15 District Plans and the associated bylaws is critical to modernizing Edmonton's planning system. In particular, two outcomes of the adoption of the District Policy and District Plans will contribute to a streamlined process, significantly reducing the need for plan amendments.

- The repeal of 45 geographic plans, five guidelines and two Council policies that have served their purpose with the adoption of District Plans, will provide clarity to Edmontonians, applicants, Administration and Council.
- The less prescriptive land use categories and policy direction will accommodate a greater range of development, providing greater flexibility in built form to achieve city building outcomes.

The District Planning project, in combination with the new zoning bylaw and continued efforts to improve land development processes, will streamline approvals for development to achieve the development concept of The City Plan.

Rezoning Priority Areas (Future Work)

Proactively rezoning for increased density in some areas where the existing zoning does not reflect the direction of the District Plans will reduce barriers to development. This is expected to accelerate redevelopment and contribute to establishing The City Plan's network of nodes and corridors.

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The selection of areas for rezoning will be based on anticipated growth by the 1.25 million population horizon, City Plan's growth activation treatments and the infrastructure capacity analysis work undertaken as part of the Infill Roadmap (2018). Coordinating rezoning with infrastructure capacity analysis ensures that essential services like water, sewage, transportation and utilities can adequately support increased density. Administration is scheduled to provide an update on the rezoning initiative to Urban Planning Committee in Q1 2024.

Advancing to Public Hearing

Administration is scheduled to bring forward relevant bylaws for the proposed District Policy, district plans and list of plans to be amended or repealed to City Council Public Hearing in Q2 2024. A robust communications plan will be implemented to inform Edmontonians of the proposed bylaws and invite them to participate in the public hearing. A range of traditional and digital marketing tactics will be used to build awareness beyond the legislative notice requirements for new and amending statutory plans.

Key milestones leading up to the public hearing include the review, assessment and incorporation of changes to draft documents as an outcome of the feedback received through both the public engagement (October 23, 2023 to December 1, 2023), and technical circulation across the corporation and external agencies (e.g. EPCOR). Initial feedback from the technical review recommends the need for more focused and intentional policies related to climate resilience, which will be included in final draft documents.

Future Priorities

District plans will continue to evolve after they are formally adopted as new planning work happens across Edmonton. The district plans will set the foundation for planning and engagement work in the future. More planning direction for certain issues and specific areas will be required to achieve the targets in The City Plan.

Through public and internal engagement, the District Planning project is also identifying areas for future work the City should undertake following the project's completion. For example, future work may include initiatives such as incorporating outcomes from the planned Climate Resilience Planning and Development Framework into district plans, or identifying more heritage and cultural places in a district. This list of prioritized future work opportunities will be presented to City Council in 2024.

Community Insight

Administration implemented a comprehensive communications and engagement program that began in 2021 and continued in 2022. Outcomes of these phases of engagement were reported to Urban Planning Committee in January 2023, and the What We Heard Reports available on the City of Edmonton project website.

Revised district planning documents were publicly released August 14, 2023. The third and final phase of engagement prior to the anticipated public hearing in 2024 occurred from October 23, 2023 - December 1, 2023. Administration sought Edmontonians' perspectives on the updated draft documents, and on potential future work plan priorities. This phase engagement fell into the "Advise" level of the City's Public Engagement Spectrum, where Edmontonians are consulted

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by the City to share feedback and perspectives that are considered for policies, programs, projects or services. “Create” level engagement occurred in the development of The City Plan, which was approved in 2020. “Refine” level engagement was part of the first and second phases of public engagement for District Planning where Edmontonians had the opportunity to work with the City to adapt and adjust approaches to the project.

Engagement in 2023 included surveys, online engagement sessions, one-on-one meetings with a project planner (by phone, online or in-person by appointment), and five in-person engagement sessions. Administration also responded to ad-hoc requests for online and in-person meetings with stakeholders. At the time of writing, Administration was able to meet with every stakeholder group (11) who made a request to do so.

In addition to engagement activities, a number of tools were developed to help Edmontonians learn about the changes made to the draft documents, and the project overall. These include:

- Overview of Changes document and video
- District Plan Guide
- How Were the District Plans and District Policy Drafted?

Feedback gathered will help inform final edits before the documents are presented to City Council Public Hearing in 2024. Results of this phase of engagement will be captured in a What We Heard report, and will be made available through the project website.

Communications Approach

Throughout all phases of the project, Administration has used a variety of traditional and digital marketing and communications tactics to create awareness about the District Planning project and provide a diverse range of stakeholders opportunities to meaningfully participate in engagement. These include:

- Social media campaigns (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)
- Digital media advertising (Facebook, Instagram, Google ads)
- Monthly newsletters (City Building Newsletter, Building Edmonton Newsletter)
- District Planning’s Engaged Edmonton and edmonton.ca websites
- A print insert in the 2022 property assessment notice
- Post card drops
- Road signs and digital signs in LRT stations and Ice District area
- Radio and newspaper ads
- Marketing packages with sample social media and newsletter content for stakeholders to share with their networks
- Direct emails and letters to stakeholders, Community Leagues and organizations

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

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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. Examples include conducting in-person and online opportunities, events offered at a variety of times, weekdays and weekends.

Following the Urban Planning Committee feedback to the District Planning update in January 2023, the project team continued to reach 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 activities and to meet upon request. The project team will continue their outreach efforts to various marginalized groups throughout the lifecycle of the project.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT REVIEW

This is a critical time for environmental and climate action. Decisions made today about how the city is planned, designed and built will significantly influence Edmonton's climate resilience in the future.

Edmonton's Community Energy Transition Strategy and Action Plan identifies the goal that Edmonton is planned, designed and built to be a vibrant carbon neutral city including sustainable urban planning practices and development of low carbon districts with complete and compact communities. The Climate Resilient Edmonton: Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan, includes a goal that Edmonton is planned, designed, developed and built to be climate resilient today and for future Edmontonians. The location, form, design and timing of development can all have a significant impact on energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, in addition to climate risk exposure.

The following environment and climate considerations were identified based on the environment and climate review of the District Policy - Draft August 2023:

- Administration is reviewing the current draft documents to determine where focused and intentional policies related to climate resilience can be included in the final draft District Policy. Changes could include but may not be limited to reflecting opportunity to advance the Big City Move of *Greener as we Grow*, revisions to policies to identify actions with environment and climate as a co-benefit (e.g., active transportation network that is accessible, age-friendly, convenient and supports transition to a low-carbon future, landscaping that is resilient to changing climate) and revisions to policies to strengthen the relationship between district planning and climate action.
- Administration has initiated a project to develop a Climate Resilience Planning and Development Framework to identify the processes and tools required to integrate climate change into all aspects of the land use planning and development continuum. As part of this work, there will be opportunities to review alignment of the policies related to climate resilience with District Plans, which will support decision making that enables the transformation needed to achieve the City's climate goals.

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Attachments

1. District Policy - Draft August 2023
2. 118 Avenue District Plan - Draft 2023
3. Central District District Plan - Draft 2023
4. Ellerslie District Plan - Draft 2023
5. Horse Hill District Plan - Draft 2023
6. Jasper Place District Plan - Draft 2023
7. Mill Woods and Meadows District Plan - Draft 2023
8. Northeast District Plan - Draft 2023
9. Northwest District Plan - Draft 2023
10. Rabbit Hill District Plan - Draft 2023
11. Scona District Plan - Draft 2023
12. Southeast District Plan - Draft 2023
13. Southwest District Plan - Draft 2023
14. West Edmonton District Plan - Draft 2023
15. West Henday District Plan - Draft 2023
16. Whitemud District Plan - Draft 2023
17. 2023 List of Geographic Plans Proposed to Keep, Change or Retire
18. Overview of Changes - August 2023