

WARD BOUNDARY DESIGN CRITERIA

Recommendation

That the December 8, 2023, Office of the City Clerk report OCC02196, be received for information.

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| Requested Action | | Information Only | |
| ConnectEdmonton’s Guiding Principle | | ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals | |
| CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals. | | N/A | |
| City Plan Values | BELONG | | |
| City Plan Big City Move(s) | N/A | Relationship to Council’s Strategic Priorities | N/A |
| Corporate Business Plan | N/A | | |
| Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• C469B - Ward Boundary Design• Ward Boundary Commission Final Report | | |
| Related Council Discussions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May 2020, CR_8263, Ward Boundary Commission Final Report and Recommendations• June 16, 2020, CR_8349, Amendment to Bylaw 15142 - City of Edmonton Ward Boundaries• October 12, 2022, Office of the City Clerk report CR_8350, Ward Boundary Policy Review• January 31, 2023, Office of the City Clerk report OCC01350rev, Bylaw 20304, City of Edmonton Ward Boundaries and Council Composition Bylaw (Amendment No. 4)• June 13, 2023, Office of the City Clerk Report OCC01350rev2 Bylaw 20304 - City of Edmonton Ward Boundaries and Council Composition Bylaw (Amendment No. 4)• September 15, 2023, Office of the City Clerk Report OCC01933 - Office Of The Councillors Budget Review Task Force: Final Report | | |

WARD BOUNDARY DESIGN CRITERIA

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the September 15, 2023, Council Services Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

- That Attachment 2 be added to the July 4, 2023, Office of the City Clerk report OCC01933.
- That the actions in Attachment 2 of the July 4, 2023, Office of the City Clerk report OCC01933 be approved.
- That the July 4, 2023, Office of the City Clerk report OCC01933 and its attachments remain private pursuant to sections 17 (disclosure harmful to personal privacy), 24 (advice from officials) and 27 (privileged information) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Attachment 2

Part 2: That Administration present previous work regarding the ward boundary review at the next Council Services Committee meeting.

Executive Summary

- The design of Edmonton's Municipal Ward boundaries, and the frequency and scope of reviews of those boundaries, is guided by Council Policy C469B Ward Boundary Design.
- The guiding principle of Policy C469B is the maintenance of effective representation. Effective representation involves balancing the concerns of individuals with the collective interests of groups.
- Policy C469B contains criteria that Ward boundary design must adhere to. The application of these criteria support the maintenance of effective representation.

REPORT

Ward boundaries are an essential component of Edmonton's municipal electoral system. Municipal Ward boundaries are designed, reviewed and adjusted in accordance with the process outlined in Council Policy C469B Ward Boundary Design (Attachment 1). Ward boundary reviews take place following each municipal general election.

Approved at the October 12, 2022 meeting of Council, Policy C469B directs the frequency and scale of Ward boundary reviews, indicating whether major or minor adjustments to boundary design are to be contemplated. The policy provides a set of criteria that Ward boundaries must adhere to. Largely focused on measurable aspects of a Ward's population, the application of policy criteria supports the achievement of effective representation. Maintaining effective representation, which refers to the balance of individual and group concerns, is the policy's guiding principle.

The most recent major adjustments to the city's municipal Ward boundaries, which came into effect on October 18, 2021, were aligned with the recommendations provided to Council by the Ward Boundary Commission (the Commission) in their final report (Attachment 2) of May 25, 2020.

Made up of seven Council-appointed members of the public, the Commission was tasked with a review of Edmonton's municipal Ward boundary composition and Policy C469A Ward Boundary

WARD BOUNDARY DESIGN CRITERIA

Design, with a view to providing Council with proposed amendments. Policy C469B closely incorporates the Commission's recommendations.

As noted in the final report, the Commission's work was influenced by an extensive consultation process with named stakeholders and direct engagement with the public, and an analysis of judicial precedent and the equivalent policies in place in comparable Canadian municipalities.

Policy criteria development and application

The Commission determined that the effective representation of an individual's concerns is most appropriately operationalised through the application of measurable, quantitative population data from consistent and reliable sources. Establishing voter parity, whereby the vote of each resident carries equal weight, is maintained by ensuring that the population of each Ward remains substantially equal, within an allowable variance. Similarly, the Commission recommended that the estimated number of electors in each Ward should also be substantially equal. These recommendations were incorporated into Policy C469B as the principal criteria for all Ward boundary reviews, regardless of whether minor or major adjustments to boundary design are to be considered.

The Commission recommended that the effective representation of group concerns are reflected by the application of criteria regarding Communities of Interest. The Commission found the representation of collective interests to be challenging to incorporate into policy. Using language from the Commission's final report, a Community of Interest is defined in Policy C469B as "typically considered as those groups of people within a geographic area that share a common set of attributes, goals, or pursuits."

The Commission's public engagement process revealed a lack of consensus in how Communities of Interest should be considered. Some stakeholders felt that group interests were more effectively represented when a Ward is made up of residents with largely similar concerns, whereas others indicated that a diversity of those interests was more desirable. The Commission's recommendation, as reflected in Policy C469B, is that Ward boundary design should acknowledge both perspectives: a variety of Communities of Interest should be apparent within a Ward but collective interests are to be preserved by ensuring that neighbourhood and community leagues boundaries are not dissected by Ward boundaries, where possible.

Communities of Interest are not extensively discussed in the Ward boundary design policies, or equivalent, of Canadian municipalities with a Ward system and of comparable size to Edmonton: Calgary, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg. In each case, Ward boundary reviews must consider Communities of Interest but only the City of Calgary's policy provides direction on whether a consistency or diversity of shared concerns is the desired outcome.

Equity in Ward boundary design policy

Equity in Policy C469B is reflected in criteria that supports the effective representation of individual and collective interests. This is measured through an analysis and application of population data and other measurable inputs, such as the geographic boundaries of neighbourhoods and the catchment areas of Community Leagues.

WARD BOUNDARY DESIGN CRITERIA

Policy C469B calls for a mix of zones to be considered when major reviews of Ward boundaries, where adjustments with a geographic scope or that affects a large number of residents are anticipated, occur. Based on the Commission's recommendation, the policy indicates that a Ward should not be dominated by a particular land use zone, whether residential, commercial or industrial, and that such features should be distributed among several Wards.

Equity in other contexts is not reflected in the policies of comparable Canadian municipalities. The prevalence of a unique social issue within a Ward, for example, has not been contemplated by historical Ward boundary design policies in Edmonton and was not a recommendation by the Commission in their final report.

Community Insight

Community engagement has historically formed a critical component in the development of Council's Ward Boundary Design policies and the reviews that encompassed major boundary adjustments.

The current policy closely reflects the recommendations of the Ward Boundary Commission, made up of seven Council appointed residents. The Commission's work was guided in part by the input of a number of community stakeholders, including Edmonton Public School Division and Edmonton Catholic Separate School Division and the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, as well as the general public.

Policy C469B requires that major reviews of Ward boundary design, which occur every three election cycles or at Council's discretion, are conducted by a Commission of residents. Furthermore, the policy requires that all reviews of Ward boundary design will include public engagement, specifically consultation with the General Public (through a public hearing), Edmonton School Division, Edmonton Catholic Separate School Division, Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, all individual Community Leagues, and Communities of Interest.

GBA+

Equity measures are to be embedded in public engagement activities related to the development of Ward boundary policies and Ward boundary reviews. Ward Boundary Commissions are to be made up of residents who reflect a cross section of the City's population. Stakeholder consultation activities are designed to mitigate barriers to participation so that the outcome of each Ward boundary review considers the potential impact of boundary adjustments on all residents.

Attachments

1. Council Policy C469B Ward Boundary Design
2. Toward More Effective Representation: The Final Report of the Ward Boundary Commission