

## RESEARCH PARK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES - NEXT STEPS

### Recommendation

That the June 19, 2024, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01837, be received for information.

<b>Requested Action</b>	Information Only		
<b>ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle</b>	<b>ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals</b>		
<b>CONNECTED</b> This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	<b>Regional Prosperity</b>		
<b>City Plan Values</b>	THRIVE		
<b>City Plan Big City Move(s)</b>	Catalyze and Converge	<b>Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities</b>	Economic Growth
<b>Corporate Business Plan</b>	Transforming for the Future		
<b>Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The City Plan</li> <li>• Economic Action Plan</li> <li>• Industrial Investment Action Plan Refresh</li> </ul>		
<b>Related Council Discussions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• July 5, 2021, Financial and Corporate Services report FCS00541, Future Use of Research Park Buildings</li> <li>• March 23, 2022, Financial and Corporate Services report FCS00886, Edmonton Research Park Overview</li> <li>• March 23, 2022, Financial and Corporate Services report FCS00737, City-Owned Research Park Buildings Competitive Public Offering Update</li> <li>• March 22, 2023, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01185, Research Park Economic Development Opportunities - Options and Actions</li> </ul>		

## RESEARCH PARK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES - NEXT STEPS

### Previous Council/Committee Action

At the March 22, 2023 Executive Committee meeting the following motion was passed:

That Administration work with the Advisory Group and other relevant stakeholders to determine the most impactful actions for the Advisory Group to focus on, as identified in the March 22, 2023, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01185, and return to Committee with a report providing a summary of next steps for each recommended action including a detailed cost analysis where relevant.

### Executive Summary

- The Edmonton Research Park (ERP) Advisory Group is a body established to guide future business retention and expansion in the ERP by prioritizing ideas developed through previous engagement with ERP community members. The Advisory Group assessed and prioritized recommendations originally identified by City Administration through engagement, that could be implemented to enhance the ERP's economic growth and resiliency.
- The Advisory Group agreed upon an implementation sequence for six recommendations identified as the most impactful, beginning with the designation of an ERP Steward. The Steward will be responsible for leading planning, sequencing and implementation of the other five recommendations.
- Applied Pharmaceutical Innovation (API) created a half-time ERP Steward position, with the potential to scale it to a full-time position. This role will serve as a primary ERP point of contact for internal community members and external stakeholders.
- There is no request for funding at this time to support mobilizing the ERP Steward role, or to support the other five prioritized actions.

## REPORT

The Edmonton Research Park (ERP) is a 104 hectare site located south of 23 Avenue between 91 Street and Parsons Road. The ERP has a history of research and development companies creating made-in-Edmonton products and services. Businesses located in the ERP are advancing research and development in many sectors, including medicine, biotechnology, software, life sciences, engineering, manufacturing, nanotechnology and clean energy. A restrictive covenant registered on ERP properties includes regulations that control the planning, construction, maintenance and use of land and buildings within the park.

Upon the reprofiling of the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC) in 2020 (which eventually became Explore Edmonton and, what is now, Edmonton Unlimited) the City became the Park Authority. Up until then, on-site programming had been delivered by EEDC, which included within its portfolio Startup Edmonton and TEC Edmonton. This programming ceased at the start of the pandemic, after which EEDC was dissolved in December, 2020.

In 2022, and through discussions which contributed to UPE01185, Research Park Economic Development Opportunities - Options and Actions (Executive Committee March 22, 2023), ERP stakeholders expressed interest in seeing the park become more of an economic development focus of the City and its partners.

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### ERP Advisory Group

In May 2023, Administration invited businesses and organizations based in the ERP to form an Advisory Group through an open Invitation to Participate process. Administration received 13 applications and all were accepted, making up the voting members of the Advisory Group. One member each from Edmonton Unlimited and Edmonton Global were also invited to participate as non-voting members. The membership list is in Attachment 1. The Advisory Group was co-chaired by Administration and Applied Pharmaceutical Innovation (API).

The Advisory Group was tasked with two primary objectives: develop a vision that can guide future business retention and expansion in the ERP; and using this vision, assess and prioritize recommendations that could be implemented to enhance economic growth and resiliency in the ERP. The Advisory Group's work was based on a pre-existing list of options and actions developed as part of UPE01185 (Attachment 2).

Through the development of UPE01185, Administration determined that pursuing amendments to the restrictive covenant would require a substantial amount of resourcing and may not be legally possible if existing property owners do not agree to the amendments. Therefore, making changes to the restrictive covenant was out of scope for the Advisory Group's objectives.

### ERP Advisory Group Actions

The Advisory Group met monthly from June to November 2023. The following vision statement was established:

*The Edmonton Research Park is an interconnected destination for infrastructure-intensive innovation and supporting businesses to establish, create, develop and grow - locally and globally.*

Using this vision statement to guide its evaluation, the group began the prioritization of the list of actions from UPE01185 (Attachment 2). The group recommended six actions, grouped in themes:

#### Communications

- Create a communication strategy that raises the profile of the ERP locally and globally. The strategy could leverage the City's Place Brand work focused on entrepreneurs and could support investment attraction by advertising the strengths and investment opportunities of the ERP.
- Re-evaluate and communicate the vision for the ERP.

#### Programs and Services

- Designate an ERP Steward whose function is responsible for implementing programming and supports for ERP businesses.
- Create opportunities for economic development organizations to have an on site presence in the ERP to provide services directly to businesses.

#### Infrastructure and Development

- Introduce additional incentives or programming tailored to businesses and landowners within the ERP, or to attract potential investors. Incentives could include reduced property taxes, reduced rents, deferred tax payments, grants, business support programs, etc.

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- Create opportunities for further development and redevelopment in the ERP.

The Advisory Group agreed upon a specific implementation sequence, beginning with the ERP Steward recommendation. An ERP Steward would be tasked with leading the planning, sequencing and implementation of the other five recommendations, and any other recommendations that were not initially prioritized. Subsequently, a role for the ERP Steward was defined by the Advisory Group with support from City Administration.

In November 2023, an Expression of Interest was drafted and shared with the ERP community through the Advisory Group, seeking proposals for providing the ERP Steward function. Two proposals were received, and upon evaluation, the Advisory Group selected a proposal submitted by API. While API is a life sciences-focused organization, it has also demonstrated commitment to the ERP and has expertise working collaboratively across disciplines, which aligns with the business make-up of the ERP.

### Enhanced Relationships

There are some companies and organizations based in the ERP that are closely integrated, which allows cross-pollination of ideas and relationship building through regular self-organized gatherings and events. The work of the Advisory Group has led to stronger relationships between the ERP community of businesses and organizations, and Edmonton's economic development partners. These include Edmonton Unlimited, Edmonton Global and Administration. Events organized by ERP stakeholders have been attended and promoted more broadly by these partners, with the intent to increase awareness and appreciation of the activities happening in the ERP.

A research park is considered an asset to market in the work of attracting foreign direct investment, which in the Edmonton region, is led by Edmonton Global. Everyday working contacts and relationships have allowed for better information sharing and facilitation of discussions. Edmonton Unlimited's participation as a non-voting member has allowed it to listen to ERP business needs and expectations, and has provided Edmonton Unlimited with new avenues for sharing its programming and supports with the ERP community.

Overall, economic development partners have increased awareness of the type of work that happens in the ERP and how it contributes to economic growth, while businesses and organizations based in the ERP are better equipped to navigate supports available to them.

### Next Steps

#### Steward Role Implementation

API has begun to implement this action by creating a part-time ERP Steward position, with the potential to scale it to a full-time position. This role will serve as a primary ERP point of contact for internal community members and external stakeholders. While this role will be housed within API, role definition, priority setting and monitoring will involve the Edmonton Research Park Business Consortium (ERPBC), an incorporated not-for-profit society made up of 57 of the companies operating in the ERP.

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Expectations of the ERP Steward role include leveraging API's existing communications, finance, programs and government relations staff to:

- Build stronger relationships with partners in Edmonton's economic development ecosystem (e.g. Edmonton Unlimited, Edmonton Global, Technology Alberta, Alberta Women Entrepreneurs, Health Cities and all levels of government), and prioritize and plan for executing the other Advisory Group recommendations,
- Relaunch an updated Edmonton Research Park webpage as a standalone site with branding that reflects the broader ERP business community,
- Launch an ERP-specific intranet or portal for community members,
- Update and execute an ERP communications plan, and
- Explore on-site business support programming and strengthening connections to programming provided in other Edmonton locations.

Concurrent to initiating the ERP Steward function, the Advisory Group is considering how to receive feedback on its findings, as well as the plan to implement the ERP Steward for the broader ERP community. As of April 19, 2024 no date or mechanism for further engagement has been scheduled.

### Ongoing Supports Available to Edmonton Businesses

One of the topics discussed by the Advisory Group was the availability of support for the businesses operating in the ERP. With an ERP Steward being established, awareness and familiarity with business needs and the resources available will help this function to identify and coordinate access to the most relevant programs and services. The City's Business Friendly Edmonton team can assist the ERP Steward in identifying and making connections with the most appropriate services available.

### **Budget/Financial Implications**

There is no request for funding to support mobilizing the ERP Steward role, nor to support the other five prioritized actions. Should a funding request be received in the future, Administration would conduct a cost analysis and return to Executive Committee to validate the request and seek direction on a funding source, if needed. Current support of ERP businesses and organizations (e.g. Business Friendly Edmonton), as well as nurturing the relationships developed through the Advisory Group, will continue with existing resources.

### **Community Insight**

The options and actions list (Attachment 2) that the Advisory Group was responsible for prioritizing was developed based on input from the wider ERP community, conducted through three phases of engagement held in 2022. Inclusivity and diversity of experience was an objective of this initial community engagement.

The Advisory Group itself represented a cross section of organizations based in the ERP, including established companies, a technology-focused not-for-profit, the ERPBC, provincial and federal innovation agencies, a church based in the ERP that offers a gathering space for community, Edmonton Unlimited and Edmonton Global, as well as API serving as one of the two Co-Chairs of

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the group. These members have established networks in the ERP community, and an understanding of challenges and opportunities unique to the ERP.

### GBA+

Administration took steps to allow and encourage diverse representation in ERP Advisory Group. During the formation of the Advisory Group the invitation to participate was widely shared across the ERP community (e.g. emails through established distribution lists, online, posters in ERP buildings) to ensure that eligible candidates had the opportunity to apply to participate. The inclusion of GBA+ analysis in report UPE01185 established inclusive principles in establishing the membership of the Advisory Group.

Information gathered through the invitation to participate included number of years of experience working in the field of life science, research and development and/or innovation; unique experience and knowledge that can be brought to the Advisory Group; experience with, and knowledge of, diversity and inclusion in a work and/or team environment; and related to this, experience with diversity and inclusion, including staff, clients or supply chain. No barriers to participate were identified, and meetings were held on site in the ERP to make them more accessible to ERP stakeholders.

### Environment and Climate Review

This report was reviewed for environment and climate risks. Based on the review completed no significant interactions with the City's environmental and climate goals were identified within the scope of this report.

### Attachments

1. Edmonton Research Park Advisory Group Membership List
2. Options and Actions in Scope for the Advisory Group (Identified Through Prior Engagement)