

CHARTER BYLAW 24000 - DISTRICT POLICY

Recommendation

That Charter Bylaw 24000 be given third reading.

Purpose

To adopt the District Policy as a statutory plan under the *Municipal Government Act*, as amended by the City of Edmonton Charter 2018 Regulation, to provide guidance for land use, mobility and growth management. The District Policy will be used in conjunction with district plans to implement the District Network described in The City Plan.

Readings

Charter Bylaw 24000 is ready for third reading.

Advertising and Additional Promotion

This Charter Bylaw was advertised in the Edmonton Journal on May 10, 2024, and May 18, 2024. The District Planning public hearing was also promoted through Facebook, Google search and Instagram advertisements, LRT and Ice District digital signage, radio ads, newsletters, posters in recreation centres and Edmonton Public Library branches, as well as the City's media and social media channels from May 1, 2024 to May 27, 2024.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the May 28-30/June 3/25-26, 2024, City Council Public Hearing meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Charter Bylaw 24000, as amended, and Bylaw 24100 be read a second time.

Executive Summary

- The District Policy and district plans provide more detailed guidance on the land use, mobility and growth management direction contained in The City Plan.
- The direction given in The City Plan, existing plans and guidelines are the primary sources used to create the District Policy and district plans.

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- This work also proposes the repeal and amendment of a number of plans and guidelines to better align Edmonton's planning system with The City Plan.
- Edmontonians and stakeholder groups helped inform the structure, form and content of the District Policy and plans through multiple rounds of engagement throughout the project.
- The District Policy and district plans will be amended as needed to reflect development applications, new local planning work and new strategic direction.

REPORT

On August 20, 2024, the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board (EMRB) recommended approval of REF 2024-005, City of Edmonton, District Policy, subject to a 28-day appeal period ending September 17, 2024. As no appeal was submitted, the EMRB approved the REF application and it is now ready for third reading.

The City Plan sets the direction for how Edmonton will grow and change as it becomes a healthy, urban, climate resilient city of two million people. It was the first step towards modernizing the way Edmonton prepares for the future.

Within The City Plan, there are five Big City Moves encompassing the tangible and intentional areas of transformative change for the city. One of these Big City Moves is to become a "Community of Communities", which is about making city life feel more connected, welcoming new residents and improving access to daily amenities and services.

The two targets associated with this Big City Move are having 50 per cent of trips made by transit and active modes, and where Edmontonians can easily access their daily needs within a 15-minute walk, roll or transit trip. Additionally, the Big City Move "Rebuildable City" establishes a target where 50 per cent of new units are added through infill city-wide. These targets represent a shift in the built form and modes of travel, and will contribute to achieving Edmonton's climate goals.

To help get there, The City Plan established Edmonton's District Network - a new planning geography of 15 districts across the city that allows for a new way to plan for the future. The District Planning project fulfills the direction in The City Plan for planning at the district level and provides plans that are aligned with The City Plan for all 15 of Edmonton's districts.

The new Zoning Bylaw helps modernize Edmonton's planning system. District plans further simplify planning in Edmonton by providing land use, mobility and growth management direction at a manageable and efficient scale. An efficient planning system helps reduce barriers to housing and businesses and encourages investment in the city - a key goal of both The City Plan and the Edmonton Economic Action Plan.

At the time of The City Plan adoption, there were more than 200 local plans in effect. Administration reviewed them and found that many had fulfilled their purpose, or were otherwise out of alignment with the City's overall vision for growth. In June 2021, Council repealed 75 local plans in order to streamline and simplify land use planning.

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Through the District Planning project, Administration has reviewed the remaining local plans, guidelines and policies. Through this work, Administration proposes the repeal of an additional 57 planning documents and amendments to five statutory plans. With the adoption of district plans, these repeals and amendments will further align the planning system to The City Plan. Maps of all plans proposed for repeal and amendment as part of the District Planning project are provided as Attachments 2 and 3.

Much of the content of district plans reflects The City Plan's longer time frame of growth to two million people (for example, the areas shown as nodes and corridors). However, other plan content is intended to change prior to two million (for example, the boundaries of the future growth area, the location of planned infrastructure changes, population and employment growth projections). This will be updated as newer information becomes available.

District plans benefit a range of audiences in different ways. For Edmontonians, developers and investors, they will show how Edmonton will grow and change over time and where development will be encouraged. For Administration and Council, it will provide a consolidated source of information and policies to help evaluate development proposals - such as rezonings, subdivisions and development permits - and inform infrastructure investment and design decisions - such as for roadways, parks and transit.

Edmonton is experiencing a high rate of population growth. District plans ensure ample opportunity to accommodate growth to two million and beyond - primarily in nodes, corridors and developing areas, and to a lesser extent in residential neighbourhoods in all parts of the city. Planning for growth in this way helps add vibrancy to the city, make the best use of existing infrastructure and keep the City moving towards The City Plan's targets.

District Planning Components

There are two main components of district planning to guide Edmonton's growth: the District Policy and 15 district plans. These are statutory plans that will guide decision making about land use, mobility and growth management. The District Policy provides a consistent set of policies that apply across the city. District plans provide specific information and direction for districts. While they are separate documents, the District Policy and the district plans must be used together.

District Policy - What It Does

The District Policy provides general policy direction for planning and design, mobility and growth management for all districts. It includes policy statements, illustrations and a glossary of terms that defines key features shown in the district plan maps.

The District Policy allows for a consistent policy framework, enabling an efficient and equitable approach wherein policy updates will apply citywide, and growth in all areas of the city will share a common foundation. For example, the District Policy provides guidance for the scale of

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development appropriate within nodes and corridors - and this guidance applies everywhere those nodes and corridors exist.

The District Policy provides clear support for more intensive development in nodes and corridors and near mass transit stations. Since the final round of public engagement, Administration has added a policy that describes other characteristics that make a site a good candidate for more height, including being on an arterial or collector road, a corner lot, or adjacent to an existing tall building or a park. This new policy allows additional height in suitable locations, including outside of nodes and corridors. This helps the District Policy better align with The City Plan's direction to "enable ongoing residential infill to occur at a variety of scales, densities and designs within all parts of the residential area."

District Policy - How It Was Made

Administration drafted the District Policy by drawing upon existing sources of policy and planning guidance, consulting with Edmontonians and stakeholders, and receiving direction from Council.

The City Plan and other approved and aligned guidelines and strategies, including the Residential Infill Guidelines¹ and Transit Oriented Development Guidelines², are major sources for District Policy content. Other strategies which informed the development of the District Policy include, but are not limited to, *Breathe* - Edmonton's Green Network Strategy³, Edmonton Bike Plan⁴, River Valley Planning Modernization⁵, and the Community Energy Transition Strategy⁶.

Administration also found some policies in existing local plans that ought to apply generally, and were therefore included in the District Policy, rather than as area-specific policy for a particular district. Examples of this include guidance on preserving land for industrial uses and creating pedestrian priority areas.

Edmontonians and stakeholder groups helped determine the structure, form and content of the District Policy through multiple rounds of engagement (described below in the Community Insights section). Input was incorporated into the District Policy when it was:

- Aligned with The City Plan,
- Relevant to land use, urban design, mobility or growth management, and
- Within the City's authority and capacity to implement.

District Plans - What They Do

District plans provide information on the unique geography, history and policy directions of each individual district. The main function of the plans is to show what type of development is

¹ edmonton.ca/city_government/urban_planning_and_design/residential-infill-guidelines

² edmonton.ca/city_government/urban_planning_and_design/tod-guidelines

³ edmonton.ca/city_government/initiatives_innovation/breathe

⁴ edmonton.ca/transportation/cycling_walking/bicycle-transportation-plan

⁵ edmonton.ca/city_government/initiatives_innovation/ribbon-of-green

⁶ edmonton.ca/city_government/city_vision_and_strategic_plan/energy-transition

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appropriate and what public infrastructure is planned in all parts of the district. Readers will connect information from the maps in the district plans to policies in the District Policy.

Each plan has been designed with a consistent structure for all 15 districts, which is organized into the following four sections:

1. Introduction to District Plans: Describes how to use the plan, its authority and relationship to other plans and the Zoning Bylaw, and instruction on amendments.
2. District Context: Describes the physical, historical and development context for the district.
3. District Systems and Networks: Describes where and how the district, and the systems and networks within it, are intended to grow and change. This section is broken out into the networks identified in The City Plan: Planning and Design, Mobility and Managing Growth.
4. Area-Specific Policy: Lists additional or exceptional policies as well as other geographic plans and tools to consider when making land use decisions for specific areas.

District Plans - How They Were Made

The City Plan, which outlines the Node and Corridor, Mobility, Open Space and Growth Activation Networks, was the starting point for drafting all district plans. Map content is drawn from various City strategies, the City's Open Data catalogue, and data made available by EPCOR and the Government of Alberta.

Area-specific policies were drawn from existing plans and guidelines in effect through a detailed review of each of these documents. This review determined which policies needed to be retained, which policies did not align with The City Plan, and the general level of completion of each plan.

Administration also used the results of engagement with the public and stakeholders to make changes to district plans. Some examples of changes to plans as a result of engagement include:

- Added details to the history of the district,
- Usability changes to improve document readability and navigation,
- Removing content that caused confusion, and
- Refining boundaries of map layers.

District Plans - Maps

Each district plan contains maps to convey the area's planning context and the district's planned systems and networks including land use, nodes and corridors, open space and natural areas and growth activation direction for these networks.

District plan maps provide more detail for the Nodes and Corridors Network introduced by The City Plan by clearly identifying node and corridor areas. They also elaborate on the Open Space and Mobility Networks, which have been refined to the district-level based on an analysis of existing conditions and approved policy direction. Additionally, the maps show where certain policies in the District Policy apply (e.g. Commercial Frontage, Pedestrian Priority Areas), based on an analysis of existing conditions and the review of existing plans.

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District Plans - Land Use Approach

District plans use broad land use categories to allow for more varied development outcomes without requiring frequent changes (amendments) to the plans. For example, commercial uses are not a land use category. Instead, where and how commercial uses should be developed is outlined in the District Policy and could fall under different land use categories, such as 'Urban Mix' or 'Commercial/Industrial Employment'.

In all cases, the land use category and the maps must be read in conjunction with the District Policy, which will guide where certain uses and building heights are supported.

Implementation

District Policy and plans will be implemented through the land development application process and through the development permit process. Administration's recommendations to Council on rezonings, amendments to other statutory plans, and the creation of new statutory plans will be guided by the District Policy and plans. When development planners must exercise discretion to consider a development permit, they will also consult the relevant district plan and associated District Policy direction as needed. District plans will facilitate a more efficient review process by reducing the number of plans that Administration must review in order to make planning decisions.

The District Policy and plans will also be implemented through City initiatives and capital projects. For example, the Rezoning of Priority Areas project will propose the rezoning of a selection of priority growth areas following the direction of the relevant District Plan. The outcome will be the alignment of zoning and development heights and densities in accordance with the District Plan to activate and strengthen City Plan nodes and corridors. This work is part of the City's Housing Accelerator Action Plan.

The District Plans identify many City infrastructure projects that have been planned through previous or concurrent work, including the active transportation network, mass transit routes, parks, and district energy opportunities. The District Policy also provides context and informs requirements for infrastructure and public spaces such as pedestrian priority areas, mass transit stations and green spaces. This will help City projects align with the objectives of The City Plan.

Plan Maintenance

The District Policy and plans will be monitored to ensure they continue to be relevant, efficient and effective. There are two primary categories of change that are expected to occur throughout the life of district plans:

- Strategic and administrative changes, which may include:
 - Administrative updates to reflect data updates (e.g. new roads or facilities),
 - Administrative updates to propose additional repeals where remaining planning tools have served their purpose, and

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- Strategic planning updates: policy or map updates required when an existing strategy is updated, a new strategy or planning study is created, or at significant population milestones.
- Changes initiated by applicants, such as for:
 - New statutory plans,
 - Certain statutory plan amendments, and
 - Where a rezoning requires an amendment to a district plan.

District plans are designed to be flexible and require fewer amendments than typical statutory plans. However, some development proposals may require a district plan amendment. All amendments will be initiated through land development applications, include public engagement (aligned with the Planning Coordination Public Engagement Charter⁷) and be considered by Council at a public hearing.

Strategic Alignment

Current Plans in Effect and Other Planning Tools

The District Planning project will better align planning tools with The City Plan through proposed plan repeals and amendments, and by adopting elements from them as area specific policy. This will ensure Edmonton's entire planning system operates efficiently and in alignment with The City Plan. The District Policy and plans will operate as the sole land use plan under The City Plan for most parts of the city and they also work with other statutory plans (e.g. Area and Neighbourhood Structure Plans) where these exist. This creates a simpler and more consistent planning system without disrupting ongoing development activity.

Edmonton Zoning Bylaw

Zoning sets out the rules for development of a site, whereas district planning provides the vision for the kind of change and growth the City encourages over time. The District Policy and plans will be used to evaluate land development applications to help inform decisions about which zones are appropriate in different contexts. The District Planning project and the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative worked collaboratively to ensure alignment between the 'rule book' (Zoning Bylaw) and broad land use categories (district plans).

Community Insights

District Planning is a complex project with a broad and ambitious engagement mandate, first at the 'Refine' level, and then at the 'Advise' level of the City's public engagement spectrum. To help the public get involved, Administration simplified concepts and activities in an inclusive way to support people who may not have the technical knowledge and understanding of the subject

⁷ City of Edmonton. Urban Planning and Economy Department. *Planning Coordination Public Engagement Charter*. 2019.

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matter. Opportunities to share feedback were designed to maximize participation from the broadest possible audience.

Administration listened to and learned from Edmontonians in a variety of ways to prepare the District Policy and district plans:

- In 2018, Edmontonians shared their desire to live more locally during The City Plan's 'Create' level, two-year-long engagement.
- In 2021, Edmontonians were involved in testing the initial district plan and District Policy prototypes.
- In 2022, Edmontonians helped refine the draft policies over four months through workshops, surveys, pop-ups, open houses and more. The drafts were then revised based on feedback received from community members, industry and technical and internal City reviewers during this time.
- In August 2023, the revised district plans and proposed geographic plan changes were shared to give Edmontonians time to review materials prior to the October 2023 public engagement period.
- From October to November 2023, Edmontonians provided feedback on the revisions through virtual and in-person engagement sessions, online surveys and more.
- From December 2023 to March 2024, Administration made further revisions based on the feedback received.

GBA+

Throughout the District Planning project, Administration applied a GBA+ lens to communications and engagement:

- In 2022, a GBA+ analysis was completed to support a communications and engagement design that mitigated barriers for Edmontonians who may have varying interests and abilities, experience inequalities or may be underrepresented in engagement opportunities.
- In early 2023, Administration contacted 23 organizations that represent a variety of identities listed in the District Planning GBA+ analysis to invite their feedback. Administration delivered presentations to four of these organizations, at their request.
- In October 2023, Administration contacted 54 organizations (the 23 emailed in early 2023 plus another 31) to further solicit feedback. Administration shared communication materials with four of these organizations, at their request.

Over the life of the District Planning project, Administration hosted more than 40 in-person or online events, attended over 160 meetings with external stakeholders including community and district leagues, published five online surveys, received more than 36,800 Engaged Edmonton webpage visits and received more than 8,500 comments. For a more detailed summary of engagement activities and an overview of communications and engagement for the entire District Planning project, refer to the "Engagement and Communications Summary" (Attachment 4).

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For the detailed engagement approach and results from public engagement activities that took place in October to early December 2023, refer to the “Phase 3 What We Heard/What We Did Report” (Attachment 5).

Legal Implications

District plans and the District Policy are additional statutory plans, as described under Section 635.1 of the *Municipal Government Act*, as amended by the City of Edmonton Charter 2018 Regulation, and have been prepared in accordance with Section 636 of the *Municipal Government Act*. “Additional statutory plans” are a unique tool provided to the City of Edmonton by the Government of Alberta through the City of Edmonton Charter and the *Municipal Government Act*.

District plans meet the City’s obligations under the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan and were reviewed in accordance with the Regional Evaluation Framework process. District plans will support Edmonton’s efforts to achieve and exceed the density requirements and aspirational density targets in the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan.

Attachments

1. Charter Bylaw 24000 - A Bylaw to adopt the District Policy
 - Schedule A - District Policy
2. Plans to be Repealed Citywide Map
3. Plans to be Amended Citywide Map
4. Engagement and Communications Summary
5. Phase 3 What We Heard/What We Did Report

Others Reviewing the Report

- M. Plouffe, Chief People Officer and City Solicitor