

NEW PROPOSED PRINCIPLES OF URBAN DESIGN

Recommendation

That the March 4, 2025, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02412, 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.		Healthy City Urban Places Climate Resilience	
City Plan Values	BELONG. LIVE. THRIVE. ACCESS. PRESERVE. CREATE.		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	A community of communities Greener as we grow Inclusive and compassionate	Relationship to Council’s Strategic Priorities	Mobility Network Community safety and well-being 15-minute districts Arts and culture Economic Growth Climate adaptation and energy transition
Corporate Business Plan	Transforming for the future		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● C450B - Policy to Encourage the Designation and Rehabilitation of Municipal Historic Resources in Edmonton● C588 - Winter Design Policy● C602 - Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy● Charter Bylaw 24000 - District Policy● Climate Resilient Edmonton - Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan● Edmonton’s Community Energy Transition Strategy and Action Plan		

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Related Council Discussions

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the March 5, 2024, City Council - Non-Regular meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration and the Edmonton Design Committee provide a report outlining the new proposed principles of urban design, and return to Committee.

Executive Summary

- The Edmonton Design Committee, with the assistance of Administration, is proposing six new principles of urban design to guide their evaluation of development approvals and urban design policies and principles: authentic and meaningful; healthy and inclusive; attractive and human-scaled; connected and walkable; resilient and sustainable; and vibrant and thriving.
- These principles have been developed with the input of internal and external stakeholders and reflect current best practice while aligning with Council policy as embodied in ConnectEdmonton and The City Plan.

REPORT

Background

As described in The City Plan, urban design “contributes to welcoming and attractive places that connect buildings, sidewalks, streets and local areas that build on authentic cultural and historical spaces and places.”

The mandate of the Edmonton Design Committee (EDC) as established in Bylaw 20673 - Edmonton Design Committee Bylaw is to "improve the quality of the city's urban design by providing recommendations regarding development applications, and advice regarding urban design policies and principles." The EDC includes representation from the Alberta Professional Planners Institute, Alberta Association of Landscape Architects, Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta, and the Edmonton Arts Council. The Committee also includes public members including Architects and representatives of post-secondary institutions and the development industry. Recommendations made by the EDC are based on, and informed by, principles of urban design originally developed when the committee was established in 2005 (Attachment 1).

In March 2024, Council approved the 2024-25 EDC work plan, which included three tasks: reviewing and updating the EDC standards and procedures, proposing new principles of urban design, and identifying potential changes to the scope of EDC review (including the EDC's geographic boundary). An update on the work plan will be provided in the EDC 2024 Annual Report, which is scheduled to be presented to Council on March 10, 2025. The work plan is scheduled to be completed by April 30, 2025. As directed by the Council Motion, this report only addresses the new proposed principles of urban design.

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The delivery of the 2024-25 work plan, and the preparation of this report, is being undertaken by Administration at the direction of, and with the input and support of, the EDC. With the completion of the 2024-25 EDC work plan, updated EDC standards and procedures and new urban design principles will be put into use by the committee. Potential geographic/boundary changes will be available for further consideration in the 2025-26 EDC work plan.

Process and Recommendations

The need to update the principles of urban design was first identified through previous engagement with the design and development industry. The 2024-25 EDC work plan, which includes the development of new principles of urban design, provides EDC the opportunity to align these principles with Council policy, and in particular, ConnectEdmonton and The City Plan.

The new principles of urban design are a collaborative effort between the EDC and Administration, and build on previous work undertaken by Urban Planning and Economy. These new principles are intended to advance The City Plan and foster a built environment of buildings, streetscapes and open spaces that is:

Authentic and meaningful, celebrating people and place, cultures, and natural and built heritage while promoting the evolution of culture for generations to come; e.g. designing public spaces that embrace winter city design, restoring and adapting historic buildings to new uses and commissioning public art designed by Indigenous artists.

Healthy and inclusive, creating safe and welcoming places for people of all cultures, incomes, ages, abilities and genders; e.g. planning and designing private developments and public spaces that are safe and accessible and welcome all users, particularly under-represented and vulnerable populations.

Attractive and human-scaled, creating comfortable, well-scaled public spaces that support walkability and create a memorable city image; e.g. planning and designing mixed-use and higher density developments with comfortable amenity areas and civic spaces that fulfill the everyday needs of residents, year round.

Connected and walkable, integrating the movement of people within sites and public spaces across a multitude of modes, systems and scales, with a focus on walking and wheeling; e.g. integrating active transportation facilities into the planning and design of private developments and public spaces.

Resilient and sustainable, facilitating urbanization that supports energy transition and climate resilience and reduces our ecological footprint e.g. planning and designing private developments and public spaces that retain and enhance tree cover, incorporate Low Impact Development (LID) and employ drought tolerant landscaping and water conservation practices.

Vibrant and thriving, enabling diverse activities, amenities and uses that contribute to lively, people-focused places e.g. planning and designing public spaces that can host various scales and

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intensities of community gatherings and celebration as well as emerging and established commercial activities.

These principles provide important benchmarks for the evaluation of projects by EDC. To this end, applicants will be required to provide a **design narrative** as part of their EDC submission that describes how these design principles have been applied to their project.

To ensure committee members are able to evaluate a design narrative against these new principles, Administration will work with the EDC to identify training and onboarding (e.g. GBA+ training) needs.

Community Insight

The development of new principles of urban design reflects the insights and feedback of external parties from the design and development industry, internal business partners and the committee itself.

The 2024-25 EDC work plan, which includes the new principles of urban design, involves two phases of industry engagement. From May to July, 2024, 35 individuals engaged through a combination of an online survey and one-on-one interviews. Attachment 2 provides a full summary of the What We Heard feedback.

Administration prepared a What We Did Report (Attachment 3), including draft principles of urban design, for engagement with the design and development industry through January 2025. Feedback on these draft principles will be used by the committee and Administration to finalize the new principles of urban design and conclude the 2024-25 EDC work plan prior to the end of the 2024-25 EDC term on April 30, 2025.

GBA+

As a Council committee, it is critical the new principles of urban design are aligned with Council's strategic priorities, and in particular, its desire to create a city with community and personal wellness that embodies equity for all Edmontonians (ConnectEdmonton).

This work is applying a GBA+ process both in engagement and in the development of the principles themselves.

In terms of engagement, the design and development industry does not typically include representation from marginalized or underrepresented groups; however, Administration and the committee have made a concerted effort to develop and deliver an engagement program that eliminates as many barriers to participation as possible. Feedback received through this engagement program was included in the What We Heard report (Attachment 2) and was considered by Administration and the EDC in the development and refinement of the principles.

In terms of the principles themselves, Administration and the EDC have sought to create general alignment with Council's strategic priorities and policies and directed particular focus to the development of the **healthy and inclusive** principle. This principle promotes community and

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personal wellness as well as equity and inclusion (as prioritized in ConnectEdmonton) and provides the EDC the licence and imperative to encourage the design of private developments and public spaces to be safe and welcoming places for people of all cultures, incomes, ages abilities and genders.

Environment and Climate Review

The design of the built environment presents a dual opportunity of mitigating global climate risks while fostering sustainable, low-carbon futures. The new EDC principles of urban design align with the City Plan's Greener as We Grow directive and supports the City's climate resilience goals. In particular, the principles incorporate two key areas:

- **Climate resilience:** Should the proposed principles be implemented, they will facilitate climate adaptation while reducing greenhouse gas emissions for the corporation and the community.
- **Urban design with health co-benefits:** The *healthy and inclusive* EDC principle could promote Edmontonians' health as the climate changes by ensuring design narratives incorporate health co-benefits.

Attachment 4 provides more detail about how the proposed EDC principles of urban design can support these two key areas through climate mitigation and adaptation measures.

Next Steps

Feedback on the draft principles of urban design, as identified in the What We Did Report (Attachment 3), will be used by the committee and Administration to finalize the new principles of urban design and conclude the 2024-25 EDC work plan prior to the end of the 2024-25 EDC term on April 30, 2025.

Attachments

1. Edmonton Design Committee - Principles of Urban Design
2. What We Heard Report - Edmonton Design Committee 2024-25 Work Plan - Phase 1
3. What We Did Report - Edmonton Design Committee 2024-25 Work Plan - Phase 1
4. Environment and Climate Review