

ONE YEAR REVIEW OF CHILD CARE SERVICES

Recommendation

That the June 3, 2025, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02700, 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

BELONG. LIVE. THRIVE. ACCESS.

City Plan Big City Moves

A community of
communities

Inclusive and
compassionate

Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities

Community safety and
well-being

15-minute districts

Corporate Business Plan

Transforming for the future

Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships

- Zoning Bylaw 20001
- The City Plan (Policy 1.2.2.3)
- Edmonton's Economic Action Plan (Action 17)

Related Council Discussions

- October 16, 2023, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02036, Charter Bylaw 20001, To adopt a new Zoning Bylaw for the City of Edmonton and repeal Bylaw 12800
- June 3, 2025, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02698, Zoning Bylaw 20001 One Year Review

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Executive Summary

- Zoning Bylaw 20001 introduced changes to child care service regulations to support more opportunities for child care city-wide in alignment with The City Plan.
- To gain insight into child care development trends since the new Zoning Bylaw came into effect, Administration reviewed development permit and variance data for child care services in 2024.
- To gain insight into the traffic and parking impacts of child care services in small scale residential neighbourhoods, Administration hired a transportation engineering consultant to undertake a parking and traffic study.
- In 2024, the number of development permits issued for child care services increased in comparison to the past five years. There was also a significant increase in child care services approved as a permitted development as opposed to a discretionary development. A variety of factors influenced the number of applications received, including new location options provided through the new Zoning Bylaw, population growth and availability of government funding for child care service providers and families.
- Child care service development permit approvals also increased in the small scale residential zones in 2024. These permit applications experienced a higher proportion of variances, refusals and appeals than in other zones.
- The minimum on-site pick-up and drop-off space requirement for child care services is the most commonly varied regulation and the most common reason for refusal in the small scale residential zones.
- Administration will explore reducing the minimum pick-up and drop-off space requirements for child care services and changing child care services to a permitted use in special area zones, where appropriate.
- Administration will conduct further engagement and return to a future City Council Public Hearing with draft amendments.

REPORT

Zoning Bylaw 20001 introduced changes to child care service regulations to support more opportunities for child care city-wide in alignment with The City Plan goal of enabling accessible child care facilities in a variety of locations throughout the city. Key changes included making child care services a permitted use in most zones, simplifying specific development regulations for child care services and removing the pick up and drop off space requirement for child care services located on school sites.

In response to the October 16, 2023, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02036, Charter Bylaw 20001, To adopt a new Zoning Bylaw for the City of Edmonton and repeal Bylaw 12800 (the current Edmonton Zoning Bylaw), Administration was directed to conduct analysis on the child care services provision since enactment of Charter Bylaw 20001 and provide options for amendments to further expand opportunities for child care services, if required.

Under Zoning Bylaw 20001, facility-based early learning programs that provide temporary care and supervision of children, such as daycares, out-of-school care programs and preschools are categorized under the Child Care Service Use. This use does not include home based child care

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facilities with less than 7 children, which are categorized under the Home Based Business Use. Home based child care was not included in the analysis for this report.

Since the enactment of Zoning Bylaw 20001, Administration evaluated patterns of child care service development, tracked variances and refusals for child care development permit applications, conducted an analysis of the traffic and parking characteristics of child care services in residential areas and explored options to further expand opportunities for child care services.

General Child Care Regulations

Child Care Services is a listed use in 17 of the 23 standard zones in the Zoning Bylaw. It is listed as a permitted use in 16 zones and is a discretionary use in the A - River Valley Zone. Specific requirements intended to minimize risk and impacts between land uses apply to all child care service developments such as:

- Location requirements: Child care services must not be located beside industrial or major utility uses
- Outdoor playspace requirements
- Minimum on-site pick-up and drop-off space requirements

Child Care Services in Small Scale Residential Zones

Additional requirements intended to minimize land use impacts to surrounding residential uses apply to child care services when located in the RS - Small Scale Residential Zone, RSF - Small Scale Flex Residential Zone and RSM - Small-Medium Scale Transition Residential Zone. These include:

- Size restrictions: Maximum floor area of 300 sq. m. for child care services
- Locational restrictions - Child care services are only permitted:
 - On corner sites that abut a collector or arterial road
 - On any corner site where proposed in a former single detached house
 - In an existing non-residential building
 - On a site beside a non-residential zone

Child care services are limited to a maximum floor area of 300 sq. m. to keep development to an appropriate scale within a small scale residential neighbourhood while allowing space for viable child care operations.

Child care services are generally limited to corner sites because corner lots typically have larger street frontages, providing more on-street parking/drop off opportunities than the average interior lot. Corner lots are also typically larger, located at the edge of the block and share fewer lot lines with their neighbours, providing a larger buffer to surrounding residential properties that could minimize potential land use impacts.

Child Care Services in Special Area Zones

Special area zones are used to create or preserve a unique character in a specific area typically defined by neighbourhood plans. When the new Zoning Bylaw was approved, special area zones were carried forward mostly unchanged from what existed under Zoning Bylaw 12800. This means that 17 special area zones continue to list Child Care Services as a discretionary use, even

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though similar standard zones list Child Care Services as a permitted use. For a discretionary use, development permit approval is subject to notification of adjacent properties and potential appeal to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB). For a permitted use, the development permit must be approved if the proposed development meets all the regulations of the Zoning Bylaw and notifications to adjacent properties is not required.

Data Analysis Summary

To gain insights into development permit trends and potential challenges that new child care developments are facing, Administration reviewed city-wide development permit and variance data for child care services in 2024.

More Child Care Everywhere

In 2024, 204 development permits were approved for child care services, which is approximately double the number approved in each of the previous five years (2019-2023). A variety of factors influenced application volumes, including new location options provided through the new Zoning Bylaw, population growth and more government funding for child care service providers.

The analysis revealed that the Zoning Bylaw is providing a variety of opportunities for child care services development throughout Edmonton. In 2024, child care services developed under many zones and in different areas of the city, including commercial and residential areas, main streets, school sites and industrial areas.

The path to development permit approval for child care services has also been simplified. In 2024, the proportion of permitted development approvals for child care services increased to 75 per cent, which is a significant increase from an average of 39 per cent across the previous five years. More permitted development approvals means shorter review times and reduced likelihood of appeal when a proposed child care services development meets the regulations of the Zoning Bylaw. See Attachment 1, Child Care Services Development Permit Data Analysis, for detailed development permit data analysis.

Challenges to Development of Child Care Services in Small Scale Residential Zones

Development permit approvals for child care also increased in the small scale residential zones in 2024. Applications in small scale residential zones experienced a higher proportion of variances, refusals and appeals than in other zones. The minimum on-site pick-up and drop-off space requirement was the most commonly varied regulation and the most common reason for refusal. This suggests that applicants experience greater challenges fitting the required pick-up and drop-off spaces on smaller residential lots. See Attachment 1, Child Care Services Development Permit Data Analysis, for detailed development permit data analysis.

Child Care Services Parking and Traffic Study

Traffic and parking impacts of child care services were the most frequently cited concern from residents during engagement and in SDAB hearings. To gain further insights into the traffic and parking impacts, Administration hired a transportation engineering consultant to undertake a parking and traffic study of child care services operating in small scale residential

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neighbourhoods. See Attachment 2, Child Care Services Parking and Traffic Study, for the full report.

The study reviewed parking and traffic counts for 10 child care facilities in the RS and RSF Zones. Key findings from the study include:

- **Lower demand for pick-up and drop-off spaces:** The observed pick-up and drop-off space demand was about 20 per cent lower than the Zoning Bylaw's requirements, suggesting that a reduction in the minimum on-site pick up and drop off space requirement would be appropriate.
- **Underutilization of on-site pick-up and drop-off spaces:** On average, less than half of the on-site pick-up and drop-off spaces were used during peak periods, indicating that available on-street parking is more convenient. On-street parking was observed to be high-turnover and low-duration and was not observed to significantly impact or interfere with adjacent land uses.
- **Active transportation:** Approximately 17 per cent of trips to and from the child care facilities were made by walking or cycling.
- **Higher traffic generation:** Child care facilities generate more peak hour vehicle traffic than small scale residential buildings. This finding was expected and is part of the reason why corner sites are considered the most appropriate location for child care services in the small scale residential zones.

Opportunities for Future Work

Administration has identified opportunities to further reduce barriers to child care services, particularly in the small scale residential zones. Based on a review of variance data, parking and traffic data and special area zones, Administration proposes reducing the minimum pick-up and drop-off space requirements for child care services and changing child care services to a permitted use in special area zones, where appropriate.

Administration will conduct further engagement and return to a future City Council Public Hearing with draft amendments in Q1 2026.

Data analysis and engagement did not identify maximum floor area and locational restrictions in the RS, RSF and RSM Zones as a major barrier to development of child care services. As a result, Administration does not recommend exploring amendments to those regulations at this time.

A more detailed explanation of opportunities for future work can be found in Attachment 3, Opportunities for Future Work.

Community Insight

To gain a comprehensive understanding of regulatory barriers to child care services development, Administration conducted targeted engagement with child care services providers and groups that could provide insight into child care needs in Edmonton. Engagement tactics included interviews, a targeted online survey and presentations followed by discussions. Feedback was collected from 26 external participants. External participants included:

- Small-scale child care providers
- The Early Learning and Care Steering Committee

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- The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL)
- The Women's Advisory Voice of Edmonton Committee (WAVE)

In general, participant sentiment about child care services development under Zoning Bylaw 20001 was neutral or positive; however, there were some concerns and opportunities raised about child care services in residential neighbourhoods. Although some participants had concerns about traffic and parking impacts of child care services, the majority of participants were supportive of increasing opportunities for child care in residential areas to increase choice, walkability and access to child care facilities closer to homes and schools and away from busy streets. A detailed summary of engagement is provided in Attachment 4, What We Heard Report: One Year Review of Child Care Services.

GBA+

Child care is an essential service for Edmontonians. Allowing opportunities for child care development city-wide brings essential services closer to where people live and work, making it more convenient to walk, cycle or use transit.

As women provide the majority of paid and unpaid child care in Canada,¹ Administration engaged directly with the Women's Advisory Voice of Edmonton (WAVE) Committee for their perspectives on access to child care services and where the City should be encouraging more child care development in Edmonton. Overall, participants indicated a desire to see more child care opportunities located closer to homes, work, schools and transit.

To address this feedback, Administration proposes to explore reducing the minimum pick-up and drop-off requirement for child care services to reduce barriers to development of small-scale child care services in neighbourhoods.

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. Child Care Services Development Permit Data Analysis
2. Child Care Services Parking and Traffic Study
3. Opportunities for Future Work
4. What We Heard Report: One Year Review of Child Care Services

¹ Statistics Canada "Gender differences in sociodemographic and economic characteristics of early learning child care workers" (Jan 26, 2022) <<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2022001/article/00001-eng.htm>>
Statistics Canada "More than half of women provide care to children and care-dependent adults in Canada, 2022" (Nov 8, 2022) <<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221108/dq221108b-eng.htm>>