

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA POLICY C462B

Recommendation

That Executive Committee recommend to City Council:

That the revised Business Improvement Areas Policy C462C, as set out in Attachment 1 of the Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02533, be approved.

Requested Action	Decision required		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Regional Prosperity		
City Plan Values	THRIVE		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	Catalyze and converge	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Economic Growth
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City Plan: Catalyze and Converge • Economic Action Plan • District Policy 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPE02946 - Business Improvement Areas Bylaw Amendments • UPE02878 - 2024 Business Improvement Area Annual Reports and Audited Financial Statements 		

Executive Summary

- City Policy C462B is being updated to modernize language and procedures for Business Improvement Areas (BIAs).
- Updates aim to improve administrative support and oversight of the 13 BIAs in Edmonton by providing clearer direction and expectations.

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- Changes include a new Administrative Procedure and revisions to BIA bylaws (covered in the separate reports UPE02946 and UPE03064 to UPE03075 at the September 10, 2025, Executive Committee Meeting).
- Policy updates focus on efficiency, governance and compliance for BIA operations and reporting.
- An Administrative Procedure, which can be updated through City Manager authority, will allow Administration to make future updates more efficiently, better serving the needs of City Council, Administration, the BIAs and their members.

REPORT

Policy C462B Business Revitalization Zone Establishment and Operation is being updated and the name revised to reflect requirements in provincial legislation, operational expectations introduced since the last time the Policy was reviewed and alignment with the City's Corporate Policy Framework. Administration is also proposing creation of an Administrative Procedure that better supports the operations of the 13 Business Improvement Areas and their associations.

This update is being proposed along with adjustments to the 13 BIA bylaws presented in UPE02946 and UPE03064 to UPE03075 at the September 10, 2025, Executive Committee meeting.

Policy History

Policy C462 was adopted by City Council in 1992. The Policy outlines the roles, procedures and processes to be followed in establishing, disestablishing and operating the Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) and in amending the bylaws of a BIA association. The Policy was updated in 1996 to C462A. The most recent version, C462B, was approved by City Council in 2007. The current update (C462C, see Attachment 1) will ensure improved efficiency, clearer governance and more consistency in BIA reporting, operating and compliance with Provincial Regulations.

Proposed Updates

The updates to the Policy are listed below; however, the majority of changes will occur through the new Administrative Procedure. The following are the updates and benefits of each change that are being proposed to Policy C462B and the new Administrative Procedure:

- Separate the City Policy and Procedure into a City Policy and Administrative Procedure.
 - City Policy C462C will focus on defining the role of BIAs, their partnership with the City of Edmonton, roles and responsibilities of the City and BIAs and the guiding principles under which BIAs and the City will collaborate.
 - Adopting this change will:
 - Provide Administration (through City Manager approval as part of delegated authority) with the ability to amend the procedures required to support and manage the relationship with BIAs more responsively and efficiently.
 - Preserve Council's ability to provide direction to the BIA reporting relationship as required.
- Update language within the Policy and separate Procedure documents.
 - Replace Business Revitalization Zone (BRZ) with Business Improvement Area (BIA).

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- Remove/Update City department names.
- Edits to reflect current state processes and improvements.
- Adopting these changes will:
 - Provide additional clarity for Administration on its responsibilities.
 - Offer a better understanding of requirements for various process elements for both BIAs and Administration.
- Update procedures and processes for establishing, disestablishing, expanding, contracting and operating the BIAs and for amending the bylaws of a Business Improvement Area.
 - Adopting these changes will:
 - Clarify directions and timelines around process compliance and requirements, which creates efficiencies.
 - Clarify roles in each of the processes, as there are distinct responsibilities of both BIA associations and City Administration.
- Update annual performance reporting and quarterly financial reporting requirements.
 - Adopting these changes will:
 - Clarify minimum reporting requirements for BIA associations.
 - Provide Administration with the ability to adjust reporting requirements based on changing needs and priorities of Administration and City Council.
 - Clarify timelines and deliverables for the BIAs.
 - Bring consistency, alignment and comparability in BIA reporting, thereby providing more transparency for City Council and other partners.
 - Clarify when explanations for budget variances are required to be included as part of the BIA's quarterly financial reports.
- Update governance requirements and board management functions to reflect the changes being proposed with the revisions to the 13 BIA establishment bylaws.
 - Add the stipulation that BIAs must create operating guidelines to direct the operations of the BIA association and the board of directors.
 - Update the BIA board nomination processes to provide the ability to secure board nominations in advance of the Annual General Meeting.
 - Allow the BIA boards to include a midterm board member replacement process in their operating guidelines, should the need arise; this update is covered under the BIA establishment bylaws and the administrative procedure.

Next Steps

The BIA Toolkit and the City's BIA support website will be updated through Q3 and Q4 of 2025, with appropriate best practices, modernized language and information and advice for BIAs to enhance governance and operations. The BIA Toolkit is an online resource that offers best practices and information/resources for BIA executive directors and board members and supports business members, interested citizens and volunteers to understand what BIAs do and how they work.

Due to BIA associations being separate statutory corporations under the *Municipal Government Act*, section 51(2), operational directions must be carefully considered. The proposed changes adhere to the most up-to-date provincial requirements while still allowing autonomy for the Boards of the BIAs to provide direction and operational support.

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Further policy and bylaw updates may be required as a result of the Province of Alberta currently undertaking a review of the BIA regulation. Any changes required as a result of this review will be brought back to Council. This review is currently slated to be completed in late 2025, with implementation of the new regulation targeted to take effect in early 2027.

Budget/Financial Implications

The proposed policy updates do not have budget implications; however, the changes will improve Administration's effectiveness in reviewing the audited financial statements, quarterly financial reports and annual budget to assess proper financial management and compliance with the BIA Policy.

Community Insight

Many of the updates proposed to this Policy are informed by the experience of Administration and the BIAs, allowing for identification of improvements and opportunities to modernize. Additionally, engagement with the BIA Executive Directors (EDs) was completed to gather insights on specific edits being proposed and to consider new insights from the BIAs. These sessions occurred on August 13, 2024 and August 24, 2024 with a volunteer group of EDs. Additional one-on-one conversations were had with the remaining BIAs to socialize changes being proposed and to discuss implications. The EDs were also asked to share the proposed changes with their boards to gather any insights and feedback from their perspectives. On May 16, 2025, a draft Policy was shared with the BIAs along with the updated bylaws that are also being presented to City Council for update under the BIA Bylaw update reports (UPE02946 and reports UPE03064 to UPE03075). BIAs were provided with the proposed Policy, Procedures and Bylaw with the opportunity to review and provide feedback along with their boards. Their feedback was taken into consideration as part of the finalized documents.

Since the focus of this review was primarily on administrative processes and BIA association responsibilities, further engagement with individual BIA members wasn't conducted. Research was also conducted on the operations of BIAs in 11 major Canadian metropolitan centers to inform the proposed changes. A summary of this engagement and research can be found in Attachment 3.

Should Council approve the Business Improvement Areas Policy C462C, Administration can better respond to changing requirements for BIA operations. In addition, procedural changes would be through City Manager approval (as part of delegated authority) instead of Council approval, enabling Administration to make updates more efficiently, better serving the needs of City Council, Administration, the BIAs and their members.

GBA+

The Policy and Procedure updates were conducted to help improve efficiency and effectiveness. Improvements and clarifications made in this revision are meant to further understanding of the processes for the BIAs, their members and for Administration.

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The BIAs offer their business members a strong, collective voice in advocacy to the City. Through their collective efforts with their many and often diverse entrepreneurial members, BIAs provide a way to help champion equity seeking business owners and provide access to services and benefits that these business owners might not be able to access alone. Providing ways to offer enhanced governance understanding and clarity, through the Policy and bylaw amendments, BIAs will be able to devote more focus and resources to support their members and therefore business owners from equity seeking groups.

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. Business Improvement Areas Policy C462C
2. Business Improvement Area Establishment and Operation Administrative Procedure
3. 2024 BIA Policy & Procedures Review Environmental Scan