

# Accessibility of Information on Approved Neighbourhood Plans for Prospective Home Purchasers

## Recommendation:

That the February 3, 2015, Sustainable Development report CR\_1655, be received for information.

## Report Summary

This report highlights actions in progress to improve the accessibility and understandability of relevant information contained within Neighbourhood Structure Plans. These actions will improve the way information is made available to better inform the public of potential future development in new and developing neighbourhoods.

## Previous Council/Committee Action

At the September 2, 2014, Executive Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide a report with an update on work with Urban Development Institute, Canadian Home Builders Association, and the Edmonton Real Estate Board to inform prospective home purchasers on approved plans, and an update on efforts to improve the accessibility of the information to all citizens.

## Report

At the September 2, 2014, Executive Committee meeting, Sustainable Development report CR\_1386, New Development Consultation and Disclosure of Plans was presented. That report summarized the relevance of information contained within approved neighbourhood plans for homeowners and potential home buyers. Consultation with industry partners was summarized, as were resources available to the public to help seek information regarding the development of new neighbourhoods. The Urban Development Institute - Edmonton Region, Canadian Home Builders' Association - Edmonton Region, and the REALTORS Association of Edmonton identified opportunities to improve clarity and transparency in the planning process, and communication of information in approved plans, with emphasis on the availability and understanding of relevant land use information contained in approved plans. Administration, in continued consultation with industry, has developed a project plan that addresses the actions set out in that that report.

There are currently a number of sources for planning documents and information. It was recognized that an improved single platform for this information would be beneficial

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to make the information more complete and easier to locate. This single platform will provide the opportunity to improve clarity and transparency in the planning process, as well as provide tools and organize information so that it is easy to understand.

Administration is working toward organizing the information and resources to develop a new centralized webpage. This new site will link to the following existing resources:

- Edmonton Maps - allows users to locate new neighbourhood information and access planning documents and zoning information. Administration is exploring minor changes to the site to make it easier for the user to open the map viewer
- Plans in Effect - this allows users to access all the approved Plans for the city. The documents are large and detailed, containing terms and definitions that may be unclear. An improvement to this resource is to create a simplified search for the plan and make concept maps more prominent in the documents
- Planner Area Contact Map - direct contact information to access planners working in the geographic area of inquiry.

Administration is in the process of developing supplemental tools for this new webpage to make the information easier to understand. These include:

- “Cheat sheet” to communicate why neighbourhood plans are important to know about and provide an understanding of what can be developed within broader land use categories
- Glossary of terms to explain planning jargon, help define acronyms and definition of planning terminology in land use concept legends
- Interactive neighbourhood map where the user can click on a neighbourhood and the applicable plans in effect will be available
- Video tutorials to supplement available information to show how to review plans and understand the information contained with them, including how a homebuyer may be affected by future planned land uses.

The new webpage will be promoted through an integrated marketing campaign, in continued collaboration with industry. This strategic campaign will target prospective homebuyers, focusing first on new neighbourhoods, and will include advertising, public relations, direct marketing, social media and additional tactics, such as show home promotions. With the improvements to web presence in progress, it is anticipated that the campaign will launch in March 2015. Additional educational opportunities are in development with a focus on how to read and interpret plans in an industry-specific Planning Academy course.

### **Policy**

*The Way We Grow*, Edmonton's Municipal Development Plan:

- Policy Section 3.2, Accommodating Growth
- Policy Section 4.1, Developing and Planned Neighbourhoods