

## BELOW MARKET SALE OF A PORTION OF ATHLONE PARK (AFRICA CENTRE)

### Recommendation

1. That the sale of land in Athlone (1.2 Hectare portion of Plan 2488KS, Block 76, Lot 1) as outlined in Attachment 8 of the April 22, 2026, Financial and Corporate Services report FCS03093, to the Council for the Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta O/A Africa Centre, on the terms and conditions outlined in Attachment 9 of the April 22, 2026, Financial and Corporate Services report FCS03093, be approved, and that the agreement(s) be in form and content acceptable to the City Manager.
2. That Attachment 11 of the April 22, 2026, Financial and Corporate Services report FCS03093 remain private pursuant to sections 29 (advice from officials) and 32 (privileged information) of the *Access to Information Act*.

<b>Requested Action</b>	Committee decision required
<b>ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle</b>	<b>ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals</b>
<b>CONNECTED</b> This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	<b>Healthy City, Urban Places</b>
<b>City Plan Values</b>	BELONG.
<b>Corporate Business Plan</b>	Managing the corporation & Serving Edmontonians
<b>Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● C529A - Migrant Inclusion</li> <li>● C538 - Diversity and Inclusion</li> <li>● City of Edmonton's Anti-Racism Strategy</li> <li>● Community Safety and Well Being Strategy</li> </ul>
<b>Related Council Discussions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● January 31, 2007, Community Services report 2007CSR008, Proposal for City to Lease Wellington Junior High School</li> <li>● February 22, 2012, Sustainable Development report 2012SCO952, New Canadian Multicultural Centre</li> <li>● March 7, 2012, Sustainable Development report 2012SCO721, Land Acquisition</li> <li>● October 9, 2012, Community Services report 2012CSW023, Establishment of Africa Centre - Follow-up Information</li> <li>● March 9, 2015, Citizen Services report CR_1171, Status Update on the New</li> </ul>

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Africa Centre Facility and Strategy for the Involvement of the African Community

- August 8, 2022, Community Services report CS01279, Council for the Advancement of African Canadians - Africa Centre Annual Update
- November 21, 2022, Community Services report CS01445, Potential Relaunch of the Africa Centre Facility Project
- May 14, 2025, Community Services report CS02816, Wellington Park Land Options and Business Case Analysis

### Previous Council/Committee Action

At the May 14, 2025, Executive Committee Meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration negotiate a nominal (\$1.00) value agreement with the Council for the Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta for the sale of the approximately 1.2 hectare portion of Plan 2488KS, Block 76, Lot 1 as outlined in Attachment 7 of the May 14, 2025, Community Services report CS02816, that includes a buy-back option for the City to purchase the land back for nominal (\$1.00) value if construction is not commenced within 5 years, and provide a report to Committee for approval that includes the following additional information to be requested from the Council for the Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta:

- a) an updated operating model that includes contingencies for vacancy of commercial and/or housing units;
- b) letters of support from Black-led organizations that reflect the wide diversity of the African, Caribbean and Black community;
- c) evidence of a plan to implement a governance structure for the African Multicultural Community Centre (AMCC) that reflects the diversity of the African, Caribbean and Black community;
- d) a capital funding strategy, including any letters of intent from potential funders; and
- e) options to replenish the Parkland Purchase Reserve Account (PPRA).

### Executive Summary

- Executive Committee approval is required as the proposed below market value sale is outside of Administration's delegated authority. If the recommendation is approved, Administration will execute the land sale agreement with closing anticipated by May 2028, including a public benefit agreement. This sale is intended to facilitate the development of the African Multicultural Community Centre (AMCC).
- To protect the City's interests, the sales agreement includes a five-year "buy-back" provision. If Africa Centre fails to commence construction within five years of the closing date, the City retains the right to repurchase the land for \$1.00.
- The project targets 90 per cent of capital costs from external government sources. Securing the land title is a critical milestone, as many major funding partners (such as the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) require land ownership before making formal financial commitments. At this time, there are no secured funding commitments.

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- The AMCC serves to realize the community voices and recommendations outlined in the Edmonton Anti-Black Racism Action Plan<sup>1</sup>. The AMCC anticipates providing a dedicated foundation for delivering services and programs that are relevant, culturally appropriate and responsive to the community's needs.
- The AMCC will utilize a revenue-generating model featuring commercial leases, a community daycare, event spaces and eight housing units. The AMCC's updated projections estimate an annual revenue of approximately \$1.46 million, which is expected to cover the \$1.45 million in annual operating expenses.
- Preliminary analysis of the updated operating model suggests there are risks to the project's financial viability and sustainability.
- Project oversight will evolve in two stages: initially managed by the Africa Centre Board and an AMCC Committee during development, transitioning to an AMCC Governance Committee once the facility is operational.
- Options to replenish the Parkland Purchase Reserve Account are limited. Council can consider a one-time tax levy increase to replenish the PPRA.

## REPORT

Africa Centre, formally known as the Council for the Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta, is the largest pan-African non-profit organization in Western Canada. Incorporated in 2006, it serves as a central hub for African, Caribbean and Black people<sup>2</sup>, providing resources and services aimed at improving social, cultural, educational and economic outcomes.

The proposed African Multicultural Community Centre (AMCC), to be built on the land outlined in the motion, responds to a critical need identified by African, Caribbean, and Black communities for a centralized hub. The facility will consolidate cultural preservation, economic development and social services that are fragmented across the city. By consolidating these services, Africa Centre expects to scale its impact from 20,000 to over 45,000 unique interactions annually within the first three years of operation.

In the last five years, Africa Centre has grown significantly, with its reach and impact increasing each year. From youth programming to advocacy and economic development, Africa Centre has expanded its services to address emerging community needs. An overview of Africa Centre's growing services and partnerships is provided in Attachment 1.

The City of Edmonton has played a significant role in Africa Centre's growth, providing support at various levels, including liaison roles, political advocacy, and funding. Recent funding is outlined in Attachment 2.

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<sup>1</sup> Edmonton Anti-Black Racism Action Plan:

<https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/EdmontonAnti-BlackRacismActionPlan.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Africa Centre and the City acknowledge that identity and belonging is complex and varied. In this report, 'African, Caribbean and Black people' is used as an umbrella term to refer to all peoples whose current or historical identities originate from the continent of Africa. This is not intended to diminish the importance of specific cultural identities.

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The effort to establish a dedicated cultural space for African, Caribbean, and Black people in Edmonton has been a continuous partnership between Africa Centre and the City of Edmonton since 2007.

A detailed account of the partnership history, including specific Council decisions, is provided in Attachment 3. Key milestones include:

- In 2007, the City facilitated a lease agreement with the Edmonton Public School Board, enabling Africa Centre to operate from the former Wellington Junior High School. Under this lease agreement, the City was responsible for capital renewal costs<sup>3</sup>.
- In 2012, Administration acquired the Wellington School and the land with the intention of working towards future development of the parcel, including the Africa Centre. Municipal needs identified for the site included relocating the Calder library, building a future fire station and developing sports fields.
- In 2015, using Council approved capital funding, Administration and Africa Centre completed a functional program, site analysis and cost estimates in pursuit of a new facility<sup>4</sup>.
- In November 2022, during the 2023-2026 budget deliberations, City Council approved \$300,000, on a one-time basis, for a refresh of the project, including a new business case and community engagement<sup>5</sup>.

### Updated Operating Model and Vacancy Contingencies

To ensure financial viability and community alignment, Administration analyzed three development scenarios in the original April 2024 Business Case (Attachment 4). The recommended path (Scenario 2) uses the 1.2-hectare site to balance community programming with revenue-generating components:

- Commercial/Tenant Leases: Anchor tenants are anticipated to provide a steady base of rental income.
- Community Daycare: Culturally specific daycare spaces are a core programmed feature, intended to generate recurring revenue.
- Event and Cultural Spaces: Multi-purpose and event spaces will be rented for community and private gatherings. Rates have been based on comparable venues, including those operated by the City.
- Housing: The building will include four two-bedroom and four three-bedroom affordable housing units.

In response to the motion's request for an updated operating model that accounts for potential vacancy risks, Africa Centre has revised its financial projections for the AMCC. The updated information from Africa Centre is available in Attachment 5. A summary of some of the key revisions include:

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<sup>3</sup> Community Services report 2007CSR008, Proposal for City to Lease Wellington Junior High School (January 31, 2007)

<sup>4</sup> Citizen Services report CR\_1171, Status Update on the New Africa Centre Facility and Strategy for the Involvement of the African Community (March 9, 2015)

<sup>5</sup> City Council - Budget, November 30, 2022 - Operating Budget maintenance, Amendment 25

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- Revised usage rates for the various revenue generating spaces, to account for potential periods of vacancy.
- Introduction of an ongoing income stream from an endowment fund established at the Edmonton Community Foundation.
- Confirmation of anticipated lease rates through Africa Centre's independent consultant.
- An increase in administrative office space and a reduction in day care space, with Africa Centre as the primary occupant of the AMCC.
- Expenses now include anticipated debt servicing costs and a funding allocation for repair and maintenance.

Attachment 6 provides a comparison of the original 2024 Business Case and the revised operating model.

The updated model shows that Africa Centre may remain financially solvent under this facility operating model. Potential risks on the revenue side of the operational model include:

- The projected commercial rental rates are relatively high for this location.
- The projected fundraising targets may be optimistic, considering historical fundraising results.
- Reductions in operating grants may have a flow-through impact on whether Africa Centre can pay the identified internal rental contributions for administrative and daycare spaces as the primary occupant in the facility.
- Non-commercial space rental rates fluctuate from comparable to exceeding posted rates at other facilities (libraries, other cultural centres).

Africa Centre has identified the following revenue mitigation strategies:

- The introduction of the endowment fund will leverage investment returns and provide operational stability during revenue fluctuations. The endowment fund needs to grow substantially to generate the estimated returns in the revenue model.
- Engaging relevant marketing firms, rental specialists and social media will drive the AMCC's tenant acquisition strategy.
- Using Africa Centre's core operations as the primary occupant will ensure stable rental revenues on the Administrative office and daycare space.
- Continuing to apply for multi-year operating funding commitments can help reduce potential annual volatility.
- Known high community demand for culturally responsive programming and event space can mitigate rental rate risk, including strategic partnerships with community organizations that regularly require venue space.
- Continued diversification of revenue through administrative fees, facility rentals and event/cultural programming is anticipated to reduce reliance on grant revenue.

In addition, expense mitigation strategies include:

- The AMCC project will not initially be charged administrative costs by the Africa Centre to ensure the operating budget is more flexible during the ramp-up period.
- The building will employ a phased staffing approach scaled to the operational demand of the AMCC.

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- During the commissioning phase, the facility will leverage shared administrative capacity with the Africa Centre to ramp up staffing once it is more stabilized.

### **Letters of Support**

Africa Centre has provided 56 letters of support and signatures from a wide and diverse array of community parties. These range from country-specific associations, including Caribbean and Somali communities, to non-profit organizations working across sectors such as health, youth empowerment, the arts, education, event coordination and food services. In addition, there are statements of support from small businesses and numerous individuals who represent grassroots voices and community leaders alike. Attachment 7 contains a detailed list.

### **Governance Structure**

Africa Centre has advised that the AMCC, once complete, will operate under a hybrid governance model where Africa Centre retains legal ownership, while day-to-day management is delegated to a joint Africa Centre and community Governance Committee. The City liaison continues to be a representative to the Africa Centre Board in this model. More information can be found in Attachment 5. Africa Centre has provided the following information regarding its proposed governance structure:

- Rationale for Structure: Establishing a separate legal entity for the ownership of the AMCC was reviewed but not pursued to avoid significant delays associated with incorporation and obtaining charitable status. As Africa Centre will hold the legal land title and bears the ultimate fiduciary liability for capital funding and construction, it must retain legal oversight.
- Balance of Power: To balance this liability with the need for broader community stewardship, the model creates operational independence rather than legal independence. The Africa Centre Board retains the risk, while the Governance Committee is empowered to make operational decisions for the AMCC facility.

The implementation of this governance model is divided into two distinct phases:

Phase 1: Capital Campaign and Development (Current):

- During the development phase, the Africa Centre Board retains ultimate accountability but delegates responsibility to the AMCC Committee.
- This Committee is chaired by an Africa Centre Board member.
- As defined by its Terms of Reference, this Committee has independent decision-making authority for expenditures under \$10,000 to ensure project agility. Larger financial approvals remain with the Africa Centre Board.
- The Committee will establish interim working groups composed of subject-matter experts and community members interested in and affected by the matter. These working groups will support fundraising and outreach.
- This interim structure will dissolve once specific milestones are met, including securing 50 per cent of project funding and a final long-term governance framework.

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Phase 2 (Future):

- Once the facility is operational, governance transitions to the AMCC Governance Committee. While Africa Centre retains land ownership and liability, this committee is granted the mandate to manage day-to-day operations, tenant relations and programming.
- The Governance Committee's composition is specifically designed to prevent insular decision-making and ensure the facility serves the broader community:
  - 51 per cent Representation from the Africa Centre Board: Ensures alignment with the organization's legal and fiduciary obligations.
  - Athlone Community Representatives: Dedicates seats for neighbourhood residents to ensure local integration.
  - Tenant Representatives: Involves the organizations renting space within the hub.
  - Members at Large: Includes representatives from diverse cultural associations and equity-seeking groups to ensure the facility remains a pan-African asset.

### Capital Funding Strategy

In alignment with the 2024 Business Case, Africa Centre continues to target the construction of a roughly 45,000 square foot facility based on an estimated capital cost of \$54.2 million. The AMCC capital campaign strategy identifies key success factors to provide strategic direction. The plan follows a disciplined two-phase approach.

Phase 1: The Quiet Phase (Momentum Building) The initial phase prioritizes those closest to the mission to build a foundation of support before going public.

- Africa Centre intends to ask all board and leadership team members to make a personal financial commitment. This demonstrates unity and builds confidence with future external funders.
- The campaign will focus on high-net-worth individuals, community champions and philanthropic allies. These donors will be approached one-on-one with a personalized case for support to secure early, significant pledges.

Phase 2: The Public Phase (Broad Engagement) Once early momentum is secured, the campaign will launch broadly to the public, guided by transparency and high engagement. This phase aims to transition one-time donors into ongoing supporters through:

- Launching a campaign website, social media drives and peer-to-peer fundraising initiatives to encourage grassroots contributions.
- Hosting community events to mobilize local supporters and actively seeking corporate sponsorships with businesses aligned with Africa Centre's mission.
- A robust recognition program, including impact reports and exclusive events, will be implemented to retain donors beyond the construction phase.

To ensure a well-resourced process, the strategy includes funding for a full-time Campaign Development Manager within the first six months. Additionally, Africa Centre will expand existing administrative roles to support the AMCC Committee, minimizing operational strain on the organization.

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The project aims for a target where 90 per cent of capital costs are funded by stackable external government sources, such as the Government of Alberta Community Facility Enhancement Program, the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund, the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program, the National Housing Co-Investment Fund and the City of Edmonton Affordable Housing Investment Program. Additionally, Africa Centre has already initiated dialogue with major potential partners, including:

- RBC Foundation
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- Definity Insurance Foundation
- Foundation for Black Communities
- Oilers Entertainment Group
- Stollery Charitable Foundation.

The Africa Centre Board has provided Administration with evidence of several preliminary conversations regarding funding. However, since formal funding commitments are contingent upon the project securing land title, no formal commitments have yet been shared with Administration. Securing the external capital is a complex process; consequently, Administration anticipates a period of time between the land transfer and the commencement of physical construction. According to Africa Centre's capital fundraising strategy, the projected timeline for fundraising and construction is estimated at 36 months. Should capital funding not be secured and construction does not commence within five years, as stipulated in the sales agreement, the City will be able to buy the property back at a nominal rate.

### **Options to Replenish the Parkland Purchase Reserve Account (PPRA)**

Council approved funding to support the acquisition of the former Wellington School site as part of the 2012-2014 Capital Budget, with a combination of Pay-As-You-Go and the PPRA being used as funding sources. The land intended for Africa Centre's construction was purchased with \$1.5 million in funding from the PPRA. Administration is recommending that \$2.7 million be returned to the PPRA funding reserve to replenish it, accounting for the original \$1.5 million drawn from the reserve in 2015 plus accrued interest to the end of 2025 as outlined in private Attachment 11.

The options for Council consideration are as follows:

- Proceeds from the Sale of Land: Due to the proposal being a nominal value transaction, this option would not replenish the PPRA.
- Financial Stabilization Reserve (FSR): The FSR is below its minimum required balance as of December 31, 2025, and using FSR funds for the PPRA would be contrary to the reserve's intended purpose and would further reduce the FSR below its minimum balance.
- Pay-As-You-Go (PAYGO): PAYGO capital funding is required for the City's capital priorities in the 2027-2030 capital budget cycle. Using this funding to replenish the PPRA would create additional pressure on capital investment funding.

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- Other Reserves: Administration advises against diverting funds from other City reserves, as such funds are committed or designated for purposes aligned with those reserves' objectives.
- Tax Levy: Council may consider a one-time tax levy increase to replenish the PPRA. The one-time funding to replenish the PPRA is estimated at \$2.7 million, approximately a 0.1 per cent tax levy increase.

Declining PPRA reserves are creating a gap between available funding and the strategic need for river valley conservation and land securement. The loss of funding from the PPRA, or a decision made not to replenish the PPRA, will impact Administration's ability to respond to land acquisition opportunities within the river valley.

The current balance in the PPRA reserve is \$11.9 million and is projected to be \$4.5 million by the end of 2026 based on the budgeted PPRA collection from developers and the corresponding budgeted capital expenditure for parkland purchases.

### Sales Agreement and Risk Assessment

As directed by the May 14, 2025, Executive Committee motion, Administration has worked with Africa Centre to negotiate a sales and development agreement for City Council's consideration. The site is outlined in Attachment 8.

There are risks associated with the project's preliminary status, specifically:

- Africa Centre has informed Administration that major funders are unable to consider capital requests until Africa Centre holds a legal land title, creating a barrier to entry. Considering this unique situation, a condition of the Land Sale Agreement will require Africa Centre to obtain seven per cent equity, or roughly \$3.8 million of the total project cost, prior to land transfer to reduce project risk.
- The preliminary expected cost accuracy range is -30 per cent to +50 per cent, which is typical for projects in the initial planning phases.

To balance these risks with the City's commitment to the project, the sales agreement terms and conditions (Attachment 9) include the following mitigations:

- Five Year Buy-Back Clause: This is the primary tool to address funding uncertainty. It allows the City to transfer the title now (unlocking the potential for further donor funding) while retaining the right to re-acquire the site for nominal value if construction does not commence within five years, as outlined in the Council motion.
- Performance Conditions: The sales agreement includes conditions that ensure the land remains a community asset by requiring Africa Centre to enter into a public benefit agreement, thereby mitigating, but not eliminating, the risk that the project will fail to meet its intended social outcomes.

### Next Steps

Africa Centre has executed a sale and development agreement based on the terms outlined in Attachment 9. If the recommendation is approved, Administration will execute the sale and

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development agreement. Once executed, the City and Africa Centre will work toward fulfilling the conditions precedent, including executing the public benefit agreement and closing the transaction in May 2028. Africa Centre will be required to commence construction within five years of closing (by 2033) as outlined in the May 15, 2025, Executive Committee motion.

The sale and development agreement is conditional on the execution of a public benefit agreement for the AMCC, the term of which is anticipated to be beyond Administration's delegated authority of 10 years. In the future, as negotiations progress, Administration will bring forward a report outlining the terms and conditions of the Public Benefit Agreement before its execution.

### **Legal Implications**

As per section 70(2) of the *Municipal Government Act*, a disposition of land for below market value or the disposition of a public park or portion thereof does not need to be advertised if it is to be used by a non-profit organization as defined in section 241(f) of the *Municipal Government Act*. As the proposed approval is for the disposition of the land to a non-profit organization, advertising is not required.

Section 35 of Bylaw 16620 - City Administration Bylaw enables the City Manager to approve agreements for disposition of a fee simple interest in land for fair market value or more, up to certain monetary limits. Approval is needed as this disposition will be below fair market value.

Additional Legal Implications are in Private Attachment 11.

### **Community Insight**

The AMCC Business Case and Community Engagement Report, Attachment 10, highlights the community's strong belief that this facility will drive positive outcomes, including access to recreation for Black youth, support for local entrepreneurs and a physical space symbolizing inclusion. This sentiment is validated by the 56 letters of support received from a diverse cross-section of organizations and individuals.

Administration acknowledges that the African, Caribbean and Black communities are highly diverse, and no single organization can fully represent every distinct perspective. This creates a risk that some groups may feel excluded. To address this, Africa Centre has formally structured the future AMCC Governance Committee to be inclusive beyond its own board. As detailed in Attachment 5, the Committee will legally mandate seats for Athlone neighbourhood residents, tenant representatives, and members at large from diverse ethnocultural groups. This structure ensures that decision-making power is shared and remains responsive to the broader community's evolving needs.

The AMCC project strongly aligns with the City's Anti-Racism Strategy and aims to foster a cultural landscape that honours the diverse heritage of African, Caribbean and Black communities. Administration and Executive Committee must carefully balance these outcomes with the City's Truth and Reconciliation commitments, recognizing that this sale may prompt inquiries from Indigenous and other community groups regarding land provision within Treaty 6 territory. To clarify this approach, Administration notes that this sale is a unique reflection of a long-standing

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commitment rather than a precedent-setting land subsidy. The City originally acquired this land specifically for the AMCC, and this sale represents a shift to a community-led project delivery model, allowing Africa Centre to directly realize the original vision for the site.

### GBA+

Edmonton is home to a growing population of communities from African descent, accounting for 5.8 per cent (80,570 of 1,397,750) of residents in 2021, with projections indicating a rise to approximately 10 per cent by 2041. Notably diverse, Edmonton's African, Caribbean and Black population originates from various nations, including Somalia, Nigeria, Jamaica, Ghana and Ethiopia and collectively form the third largest visible minority group in the province (17.5 per cent).<sup>6</sup> The African, Caribbean and Black communities face barriers to accessing culturally relevant services and spaces—including a lack of tailored programs and a central community hub—which hinders social inclusion, community development and cultural preservation. Addressing these barriers and prioritizing the needs of Edmontonians of African descent ensures that Africa Centre and subsequent work are more inclusive and effective.

To reflect these opportunities, consultations for the Africa Centre included a broad range of community members to ensure a comprehensive understanding of community needs and aspirations. These consultations involved a wide range of community members, including diverse African, Caribbean and Black people, other racialized groups, Athlone residents, community leagues, schools and City representatives, reflecting varied ages, cultures and affiliations.

Diverse engagement methods, such as digital surveys, focus groups, town halls and interviews, were used in accessible formats and locations to ensure broad participation and incorporate diverse perspectives into the project.

### Environment and Climate Review

The environmental impacts of future development depend on the new owner's practices and will be considered as part of the planning and permitting process. As a term of the sale agreement, the buyer will be required to build a development that uses 25 per cent less energy than the 2020 National Energy Code for Buildings (NECB) or to obtain another environmental certification acceptable to the City.

This area of the Athlone neighbourhood is known to have contamination due to previous land uses. It is possible that there will be additional costs associated with remediating the site prior to development. As the land is being sold as is where is, the City has included a Soils Condition within the purchase agreement to allow Africa Centre to complete their due diligence prior to closing on the land transaction.

### Attachments

1. Africa Centre Overview
2. City of Edmonton Funding to Africa Centre

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<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada. (2022). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population (Edmonton CMA and Alberta). Projected growth figures are derived from Statistics Canada's Population Projections on Immigration and Diversity for Canada and its Regions (2041).

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3. City of Edmonton and Africa Centre Partnership History
4. 2024 Africa Centre AMCC Business Case
5. Revised Operating, Capital and Governance Information
6. Comparison of Original Business Case and Revised Operating Model
7. Community Support Letters
8. Site Plan - 13160 - 127 Street NW
9. Africa Centre - Sales Agreement Terms and Conditions
10. AMCC Community Engagement Report
11. Legal Implications and Advice From Officials (PRIVATE)