

Space for Early Learning and Care Services - Opportunities in City-Owned Buildings

Recommendation

That the September 30, 2019, Financial and Corporate Services report CR_5867, be received for information.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the April 5, 2018, Executive Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

2. That Administration use the physical environment guidelines for child care in City-owned buildings to evaluate opportunities to provide additional early learning and care space in City-owned buildings that were built before and have not been significantly renovated since the adoption of City Policy on Employee Child Care C584 and provide a report in the second quarter 2019.

Executive Summary

Affordable and quality child care supports ConnectEdmonton's strategic goal of Healthy City by supporting Poverty Elimination, one of the Strategic Actions identified in the Corporate Business Plan 2019-2022. Administration has developed the City of Edmonton-Owned Buildings: Early Learning and Child Care Physical Environment Guidelines. The guidelines provide criteria for Administration to use when evaluating the feasibility of including early learning and child care programs within City of Edmonton owned buildings when they are being planned, constructed, or retrofitted, or where the City has leased space to external providers and leases are scheduled to expire.

Based on these criteria, Administration conducted a review of existing City-owned buildings that have not been significantly renovated since the adoption of the City Policy on Employee Child Care C584. There are 27 properties that have an opportunity for child care services under the current Zoning Bylaw and that could possibly include/support an early learning and child care program.

Report

Background

High quality, affordable and accessible early learning and child care services are widely viewed as necessary to support working families. According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, access to early learning and child care services contributes to closing the gender wage gap, spurring economic growth, easing the burden on struggling parents, and supporting healthy child development.

Since Council approved Policy C584 Employee Child Care in May 2016, Administration has assessed the feasibility of including child care spaces within renovated or newly constructed City buildings on a case-by-case basis by evaluating space availability and market interest from not-for-profit, for-profit and cooperative child care service providers.

In Alberta, the provincial government is responsible for regulating child care programs. However, as presented in the April 5, 2018, Executive Committee report CR_5195 Space for Early Learning and Care Services, the City supports the development of a variety of additional early learning and child care opportunities. These include Family and Community Support Services funding, the Child Friendly Edmonton Council initiative, the Edmonton Early Years Coalitions, and the 100 Voices Pre-kindergarten Outreach program. The City also offers recreational summer camps and preschool programming through City recreation facilities, libraries and communities.

Employee Services report CR_6130 Employee Child Care - Needs Assessment and Implementation, presented to Executive Committee on March 18, 2019, provided an update on Administration's work in relation to Employee Child Care Policy C584. This included evaluating child care options in City-owned/leased buildings, employee child care needs and assessing the current market supply.

The Child Care Services zoning bylaw use definition permits the development of facilities that accommodate early learning and care services. Child Care Services is a permitted use in 30 zones and a discretionary use in 52 zones. Administration completed a full review of potential opportunities and constraints around Child Care Services use in May of 2016. The review resulted in adding Child Care Services use to several zones and eliminating unnecessary restrictions from the special land use provisions for Child Care Services in Section 80 of the Edmonton Zoning Bylaw 12800.

Physical Environment Guidelines

Administration sought feedback from the Edmonton Council of Early Learning and Care (formerly the Early Learning and Care Steering Committee), the Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton, Child Friendly Edmonton, Edmonton NextGen and the Government of Alberta, Ministry of Children's Services to develop the City of Edmonton Owned Buildings: Early Learning and Child Care Physical Environment Guidelines (Attachment 1). Some stakeholders were not able to provide feedback prior to completing this Council report; however, consultations are ongoing.

Administration will continue to engage with these and other stakeholders to ensure the Guidelines continue to reflect best practices and position the City to optimize the use of corporate real estate holdings to best address evolving early learning and child care needs.

The Guidelines provide criteria for Administration to evaluate the feasibility of including early learning and child care programs within City of Edmonton owned buildings when they are being planned, constructed or retrofitted, or where the City has leased space to external providers and leases are scheduled to expire.

The Guidelines outline four factors for Administration to evaluate:

- **Needs Assessment:** Market conditions and neighbourhood demographics
- **Zoning:** Child care services use land-use zoning
- **Physical Space and Operational Requirements:** Alberta Child Care Licensing Regulation and the Alberta Health Services - Health and Safety Guidelines for Child Care Facilities
- **Building Code Requirements:** National Building Code - Alberta Edition

Affordable and quality child care is one of six key "game changers" in the City of Edmonton's EndPovertyEdmonton Strategy, identified as an opportunity to make a significant difference to people living in poverty. The Guidelines advance the City's commitment to providing a safe and accessible environment that fosters healthy child development.

Opportunities

Administration used the evaluation criteria listed above to conduct a review of existing City-owned buildings that have not been significantly renovated since the adoption of the Employee Child Care Policy (C584).

Zoning was initially evaluated to identify properties in zones that permit child care services on site. However, while the land may be correctly zoned, buildings located on these properties may not be suitable for an early learning and child care program

because they are restaurants, outdoor pools, LRT stations or are purpose-built facilities such as theatres or club houses. Other buildings are either in the process of being transferred to the Edmonton Community Development Corporation, designated for a specific capital project such as LRT, purpose-built to support other City initiatives such as affordable housing or libraries, or already include an early learning and child care program.

Administration determined that 27 buildings, as listed in Attachment 2, may be complementary to an early learning and child care program:

- Twenty-two buildings are either indoor swimming pools, senior centres, recreation centres or other types of purpose-built community buildings that do not currently have sufficient space available to accommodate an early learning and care program
- Two are office buildings located downtown
- Two are located within the Edmonton Research Park
- One is City Hall

Further detailed analysis of the 27 buildings would be required to determine whether they meet the outdoor play space requirements and assess the feasibility of including an early learning and child care program. Administration would need to:

- verify the feasibility and cost of creating space to accommodate an early learning and child care program within these buildings;
- determine the practicality of renovating the building to meet the requirements outlined in the Alberta Child Care Licencing Act, Alberta Health Services - Health and Safety Guidelines for Child Care Facilities and Alberta Building Code; and
- determine whether there is market interest from early learning and child care providers.

Next Steps

Administration will continue to pursue opportunities to include early learning and child care programs at the program development stage for newly planned City buildings, as spaces leased to non-City occupants are due for renewal, and as City buildings are being renovated. The review and analysis of future opportunities will be conducted within current staffing levels and operating budgets. If additional financial resources are required for a specific site as a result of this analysis, Administration will bring forward a funding request to Council.

At the appropriate stage of each project, Administration may invite an Expression of Interest to better gauge and evaluate market interest from early learning and child care providers.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmontonians use facilities and services that promote healthy living.			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Edmontonians use facilities and services that promote healthy living	Edmontonians' assessment: Access to amenities and services that improve quality of life (positive survey responses)	2016: 67% 2017: 68% 2018: TBD	2019: TBD

Attachments

1. City of Edmonton Owned Buildings: Early Learning and Child Care Physical Environment Guidelines
2. City-owned Buildings under consideration for early learning and child care programming

Others Reviewing this Report

- J. Meliefste, Acting Deputy City Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services
- S. McCabe, Deputy City Manager, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development
- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services
- B. Andriachuk, City Solicitor
- K. Armstrong, Deputy City Manager, Employee Services
- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement