

The background of the cover page is a photograph of two young children, a girl and a boy, both wearing glasses and smiling. They are outdoors, with a bright, sunlit background showing out-of-focus trees. A large, semi-transparent green rectangle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title and logo. A large, diagonal, semi-transparent watermark with the word "DRAFT" is visible across the entire page.

# City of Edmonton Owned Buildings: Early Learning & Child Care Physical Environment Guidelines

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*The City supports playing an active role in exploring the feasibility and expansion of the number of child care options.*



## BACKGROUND

High quality, affordable and accessible early learning and child care services are widely viewed as a necessity to support working families to “close the gender wage gap, spur economic growth, ease the burden on struggling parents and support healthy child development”<sup>1</sup>.

In Alberta the responsibility of regulating child care programs falls under Provincial jurisdiction. However, to strengthen the quantity and quality of support for our citizens with young children, the City of Edmonton has a variety of opportunities to support the development of additional early learning and child care opportunities, such as:

- Funding for Family and Community Support Services;
- Participating in Child Friendly Edmonton Council initiatives;
- Supporting the Edmonton Early Years Coalitions;
- Supporting the 100 Voices Pre-Kindergarten Outreach program; and
- Providing recreational summer camps and preschool programming offered through City recreation facilities, libraries and communities.

City Administration also includes consideration for early learning and child care space in the program development stage of the City's public facing facilities, with exceptions for buildings like fire stations, where the intended use and zoning does not complement early learning and child care programming.

As a progressive employer, the City recognizes the need for “employee access to quality, affordable and dependable child care and that securing such care plays an integral part in an employee's overall effectiveness and wellbeing”<sup>2</sup>. The City supports playing an active role in exploring the feasibility and expansion of the number of child care options available to employees. To reinforce this, in 2016, City Council adopted [Policy C584, Employee Child Care Policy](#).

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Child Care Deserts in Canada, page 4

<sup>2</sup> City of Edmonton Policy C584, Employee Child Care Policy

## PURPOSE

The *City of Edmonton Owned Buildings: Early Learning and Child Care Physical Environment Guidelines* provide the criteria for Administration to evaluate the feasibility of including early learning and child care programs within City of Edmonton-owned buildings when they are planned, constructed or retrofitted, or in spaces where leases with external providers are scheduled to expire.

The Guidelines outline the measures used to assess the feasibility of incorporating early learning and child care space in City-owned buildings and ensure that Administration's understanding of child care space best practices and market needs are commonly understood.

These Guidelines are applicable to early learning and child care programs (as defined in *Alberta Child Care Licensing Act*).



*The Guidelines provide a roadmap for Administration to support the creation of safe child care facilities that support children.*

## DEFINITION

The City defines an early learning and child care program as providing care, educational activities and supervision for groups of seven or more children under 13 years of age during the day or evening, and generally does not include overnight accommodation.

This definition includes:

- Daycare centres;
- Out-of-school care centres;
- Preschools; and
- Dayhomes/group family care providing child care to seven or more children within the care provider's residence.

This definition does not apply to:

- Education programs provided under the *School Act*;
- Day camps, vacation camps or other recreational programs that operate for less than 12 consecutive weeks;
- Supervision of children at a recreational facility, retail centre or other commercial establishments where the parents of the children remain on the premises and are available;
- Private babysitting for six children or less, not including the caregiver's own children; or
- Approved family day homes, which are monitored by a family day home agency

## HEALTHY CITY

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. 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.

The Guidelines support the creation of safe child care facilities that promote harmony, happiness and health of children. Administration sought feedback from the Edmonton Council of Early Learning and Care, Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton, Child

*The development process is dynamic, zoning shapes how our city changes and grows as an attractive place to live.*



Friendly Edmonton, Edmonton NextGen and the Government of Alberta on the development of the Guidelines, which are founded upon Provincial standards and regulations related to child care, specifically zoning, physical space and operational requirements and building code requirements.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Depending on the circumstances, Administration may undertake a feasibility analysis, cost-benefit study and/or invite an Expression of Interest to better gauge interest of Early Learning and/or child care providers and assess the viability of providing an early learning and child care program within City of Edmonton-owned buildings. Additionally, Administration may also review:

- Market considerations
  - Determine whether there is market demand for child care services in the area.
  - Review the competitive landscape for existing child care facilities in the area.
- Neighborhood demographics
  - Determine the population of children in the area.
  - Determine whether there are existing community supports for early learning and child care services in the area.
- Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) assessment
  - Determine whether any City of Edmonton-owned buildings can be safely accessed by all residents.
  - Determine whether the infrastructure surrounding City of Edmonton-owned buildings is suitable for encouraging access using multiple modes of transportation.
  - Determine whether there are social, cultural, financial or other factors that may hinder or prevent residents from accessing early learning and child care programs located in City of Edmonton-owned buildings.
  - Determine whether early learning and child care providers conduct business in a manner that supports diversity, inclusion, equity and dignity for all residents.



## ZONING REQUIREMENTS

The Edmonton Zoning Bylaw 12800 contains the rules and regulations for the development of land in Edmonton. The development process is dynamic and zoning shapes how our city changes and grows as an attractive place to live and do business. Refer to the [Zoning Bylaw](#) to determine:

- Whether current land-use zoning allows for the [child care services](#)<sup>3</sup> use on that parcel of land and any specific location criteria within the zone. If the current zoning does not allow for child care services use, determine whether the site can be rezoned<sup>4</sup> to accommodate the primary function of the site and a child care use. This may require checking [plans in effect](#), such as an Area Structure Plan or Area Redevelopment Plan, for policies that may inform the outcome of a rezoning;
- If the property location and facility amenities can meet the minimum requirements to be compliant ("[Section 80 - Child Care Services](#)"); and
- the requirements for dedicated employee parking areas and passenger drop-off/loading zones for child care services ([Section 54 - Parking, Loading and Passenger Drop-off](#)").

*The Building Code establishes design and construction standards.*

## PHYSICAL SPACE AND OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Refer to the [Alberta Child Care Licensing Regulation](#) for specifications governing the layout of program and premises, required floor area ratios per child for play space, and requirements for furnishing and equipment.

- Determine how many children can be accommodated based on the minimum area per child.

Refer to the [Alberta Health Services - Health and Safety Guidelines for Child Care Facilities](#) for guidance about physical space, operational requirements, crib safety, cleaning and sanitization. This includes determining whether

- combining the primary function of the site and child care service is conducive to providing a safe, accessible, and healthy environment for children;
- there is land or building space available to accommodate an indoor child care space;

<sup>3</sup> As defined by the City of Edmonton Zoning Bylaw 12800.

<sup>4</sup> Rezoning is changing the legal land use designation that applies to a piece of land. Rezoning is needed to develop property in a way that is not allowed by the current zoning.



- there is sufficient land area available to accommodate a private, enclosed child care outdoor play space adjacent to or within a safe walking distance from an indoor child care area; and
- there is sufficient land area to accommodate the required dedicated employee parking areas and passenger drop off/ loading zones for child care services

## BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS

Refer to the current version of the [National Building Code - Alberta Edition](#) for detailed building design requirements to accommodate early learning and child care services use.

The National Building Code - Alberta Edition establishes design and construction standards for new construction, alterations and changes of uses existing buildings. Since there may be additional requirements not covered within this guideline, plans should be submitted as early as possible to the City of Edmonton, Development Services. If child care services are to be incorporated within a facility:

- Determine whether the Alberta Building Code allows a Daycare<sup>5</sup> (Group A, Div 2), Childcare without treatment (Group B, Div 3), or a Family day Home<sup>3</sup> (Group C) (A-3.1.2.1.(1)).
- If the early learning and child care program is located within an existing facility, determine whether the primary major Occupancy Classification can be combined. If yes, determine whether it is possible to separate the occupancies (3.1.3.1).
- If the daycare has occupant load over 40 persons, determine if the building has a fire alarm system or the ability to add one (3.2.4.1.4(f)).
- Determine whether the daycare<sup>3</sup>, childcare or family dayhome<sup>3</sup> can be located on the first or second floor of a City-owned building or be designed to meet the requirements of the Alberta Building Code to ensure safe evacuation for the daycare facility from other floors.
- Determine whether the facility can accommodate the number of water closets and additional lavatories required specifically for daycare centres occupancies (3.7.2.2 - 3.7.2.3).
- Refer to [Standata 06-BCB-003](#) - February 2010 as a reference for other potential Building Requirements.

*Administration will assess the viability of providing early learning and child care programs within City of Edmonton owned Buildings.*



<sup>5</sup> As defined in the Child Care Licensing Regulation made pursuant to the Child Care Licensing Act.



## RELEVANT REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS

- City of Edmonton Zoning Bylaw 12800
- Alberta Child Care Licensing Act
- Alberta Child Care Licensing Regulation
- Alberta Health Services- Health and Safety Guidelines for Child Care Facilities
- Alberta Healthcare Services Day Home Guidelines
- National Building Code - Alberta Edition
- Alberta Safety Codes Act