

Charter Bylaw 19267

Adoption of the Edmonton Exhibition Lands Planning Framework

Purpose

To adopt the Edmonton Exhibition Lands Planning Framework and repeal the Northlands Area Redevelopment Plan.

Readings

Charter Bylaw 19267 is ready for third reading.

Advertising and Signing

This Charter Bylaw has been advertised in the Edmonton Journal on October 16, 2020, and October 24, 2020. The Charter Bylaw can be passed following third reading.

Position of Administration

Administration supports this proposed Charter Bylaw.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 3, 2020 City Council Public Hearing, the following motion was passed:

That Charter Bylaw 19267 and Bylaws 19269, 19270, 19271, 19272 and 19273 be read a second time.

(Third readings of Charter Bylaw 19267 and Bylaws 19269, 19270, 19271, 19272 and 19273 are pending review by the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board)

Report

On February 4, 2021, the EMRB recommended approval of REF 2021-003, City of Edmonton, Edmonton Exhibition Lands Planning Framework Area Redevelopment Plan, subject to a 28 day appeal period ending March 4, 2021. As no appeal was submitted, the EMRB approved the REF application and it is now ready for Third Reading.

The Exhibition Lands site is the city's second largest infill redevelopment opportunity. It is situated on primary transportation links and the Capital Line making it an ideal site to rebuild a community within a community, preserve open space and protect the environment with conscious design and development direction.

The Planning Framework provides a purpose and approach to redevelop these lands over a 25 to 30 year timeframe. It proposes strategic investments against phased land sales and development to help the City achieve transformational impact in the community toward the goal, Urban Places: Edmonton neighbourhoods are more vibrant as density increases.

Project Process

On December 5, 2017, City Council directed Administration to pursue an expanded strategic approach for the Edmonton Exhibition Lands (CR_5234) by delivering a flexible Area Redevelopment Plan. The Plan is intended to guide the transformation of the area over time and demonstrate alignment to city-building principles and City Plan.

To develop the Planning Framework for Exhibition Lands, Administration initiated a planning process that included:

- establishment of a set of Guiding Principles;
- an Ideas Generation Phase including the public call for ideas and proposal call to industry through a Request for Expressions Of Interest;
- a Due Diligence Phase where inputs from market analysis and engagement were integrated into four high level, variable investment and flexible land use concepts for mixed-use redevelopment;
- a Refinement Phase, to complete the plan and prepare policies and a development process for Exhibition Lands; and
- a Finalization Phase, to prepare the Planning Framework for Council's consideration at a Public Hearing.

Development Concept

Exhibition Lands provides the space for a vibrant new urban community to take form, harnessing the area's history of gathering, proximity to nature and transportation connections, creating new and exciting opportunities to live, work and play in the heart of northeast Edmonton.

The overarching theme for Exhibition Lands is "connections". Key elements include concentrating development around two walkable mixed-use transit villages and the introduction of a unique cluster of employment and civic/education opportunities (sometimes referred to as anchors) along the eastern portion of the site. EXPO Centre remains as a valued component of the vibrant new mixed-use community and serves local and regional visitors. The mixed-use villages, anchors and EXPO Centre will provide mutual benefit as the new community will supply the local population to support the anchors and while the anchors will provide an amenity attracting people to the neighbourhood.

At the heart of the concept sits an improved and expanded Borden Park. As the centerpiece of the redevelopment, the park will serve the community, and will also act

as a regional draw with capacity to continue hosting cultural celebrations and trade shows.

To catalyze redevelopment to meet Council's goals and to achieve the purpose in the Planning Framework, various infrastructure investments are proposed, including:

- construction of a new LRT station south of EXPO Centre to increase the private development potential in the southwest;
- relocation of the existing Coliseum LRT Station north to improve access and support private development on the northern portion of the site;
- transformation of Wayne Gretzky Drive from a decoupled arterial road to an urban boulevard;
- re-establishment of road access at 115 Avenue across the LRT right-of-way;
- creation of grade-level roadway and sidewalk crossing at 120 Avenue across the LRT tracks and Wayne Gretzky Drive;
- creation of internal and local connections that prioritize active modes of transportation and transit;
- improvement of connections to the river valley and adjacent communities;
- introduction of new amenities in EXPO Centre, where appropriate, to encourage more everyday use; and
- relocation of the planned Light Rail Vehicle cleaning and storage facility from Cromdale Yard to a site adjacent to Wally Footz Field.

To inform the Planning Framework, a number of technical reports were prepared to evaluate development scenarios. These include: Issues and Opportunities Brief, Existing Mobility Conditions Summary, Economic Analysis, Historical Report, Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments, Neighbourhood Design Report (Drainage Servicing), and Hydraulic Network Analysis (Water Servicing).

The Planning Framework is based on an approach to position land for achieving public and private investment results while providing for substantial flexibility in site configuration, form and development mix. This allows the development to adjust to changing market trends and demand over time. The result will be an exciting, redeveloped urban place that provides space for economic prosperity, enhances the use of public transit and transportation choice, ensures financial and environmental resilience and improves neighbourhood health and liveability. A development summary is provided as Attachment 2.

Policy

The Planning Framework guides Land Use, Mobility, and Open Space policies for Exhibition Lands that are aligned to the project's Guiding Principles. The Guiding Principles reflect the ConnectEdmonton goals of Healthy City, Urban Places, Regional Prosperity, and Climate Resilience.

Land Use policy sets the stage for achieving the Exhibition Lands development concept. Land Use objectives include:

- developing compact, mixed use transit villages that foster healthy, sustainable, urban communities;
- leveraging investment in transit infrastructure by supporting higher densities of housing and employment uses adjacent to LRT stations;
- providing a range of housing tenure and unit types to meet the diverse needs of Edmontonians;
- providing opportunity for the development of institutional and employment uses that will serve to diversify Edmonton's economy;
- integrating the function of the EXPO Centre through development of complementary uses and amenities; and
- ensuring that the expansion of institutional uses is integrated with new civic uses.

Mobility refers to how people navigate into, through, and out of the Exhibition Lands. The proposed mobility network prioritizes transit and active transportation modes by establishing two new LRT stations and a fine-grained network of streets, alleys, and shared use pathways. Objectives include:

- connecting the Exhibition Lands to surrounding communities through new and improved streets, pathways, and transit;
- establishing a walkable network of local streets, alleys, and pathways; and
- supporting all modes of transportation by designing complete streets that prioritize pedestrian, public transit and cyclist movement in addition to accommodating vehicle movement.

Open space in the Exhibition Lands is proposed as a network where vibrant plazas serve as welcoming entrances to the community and linear parks weave through ground-oriented residential neighbourhoods connecting to a reconfigured and expanded Borden Park. Open Space policy objectives include:

- framing all development around a vibrant network of interconnected public streets and open space;
- providing a range of local gathering, wellness, and recreation opportunities for existing and future residents;
- ensuring open space serves as part of the mobility and active modes network and enhances the connection of Exhibition Lands to the river valley; and
- celebrating history, culture, and diversity through the design and programming of open space.

The alignment of the Exhibition Lands Planning Framework to the Guiding Principles and ConnectEdmonton is reviewed in Attachment 3.

Timing and Implementation

With an estimated redevelopment timeline of 30 years, Administration anticipates a phased approach to balance short term goals with a longer-term purpose for the site. Select large, multi-block parcels may be strategically sold according to the anticipated market demand for their flexible collection of desired uses. This approach ensures that the development of civic anchors and infrastructure improvements can have transformative effects on land sold in later phases, resulting in higher overall development yields and higher land values. A phasing and investment strategy is illustrated in Attachment 4. Administration will return to City Council with a proposed implementation plan.

Next Steps

Administration is completing an implementation strategy. This Charter Bylaw is accompanied by additional Bylaws to adjust the boundaries of adjacent Plans.

Public Engagement

Public Engagement was undertaken during each phase of the project. Engagement included stakeholder meetings (both community and business/industry), public meetings and Insight Community surveys. Engagement opportunities were promoted through an online newsletter, media ads and on-street signage, and postcards sent to neighbouring residents. Findings from each phase of public engagement are provided as Attachment 5. Engagement themes included: open space, transit orientation and connectivity, the mix of uses as an opportunity to enhance lifestyle, density and housing mix, Indigenous interests, the future of K-Days and other events, as well as the cost and capacity to implement the plan. Following a presentation to Edmonton Design Committee on August 17, 2019, the Committee passed a recommendation of “support with conditions” for Exhibition Lands.

Budget/Financial Update

Project office and ongoing operational costs are currently funded by the existing operating budget. Administration will bring forward the appropriate capital profiles and operating service package requests, including those costs associated with investments supporting the addition of a second LRT station, based upon future direction on implementation. At this concept phase of the planning process, a high level pro forma and cash flow analysis has been completed, balancing infrastructure investment with a return on land sales while meeting the guiding principles and Council’s goals.

Attachments

1. Charter Bylaw 19267
2. Development Concept and Statistics
3. Policy Alignment
4. Exhibition Lands Phasing and Investment Summary
5. What We Heard Reports
6. Administration Report

