

Growing Together

A Conversation on Growth in the Capital Region

June 2014 | VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 2

Thank you to all the landowners who participated in the small group meetings in April. The opportunity to meet with you face to face and have more time to hear and discuss your comments while sharing information on the proposed annexation is very important to the City of Edmonton.

We have expanded this summer newsletter edition to share and report back on the questions raised during the meetings. We welcome your suggestions and feedback for future issues. Have a safe and happy summer.

Edmonton's Negotiation Team

The annexation proposal to acquire land in Leduc County and the Town of Beaumont is governed by the *Municipal Government Act*, and is administered by the provincial Municipal Government Board.

A key step in the annexation process is the appointment of negotiating committees by the municipalities involved. The negotiation committees typically consist of three to four members of a council, including the mayor. The goal of the committees is to negotiate an agreement to be reviewed by the Municipal Government Board and approved by the Province.

The representatives for the City of Edmonton are: Mayor Don Iveson and Councillors Bryan Anderson, Ed Gibbons, and Michael Walters.



Mayor Don Iveson



Bryan Anderson



Ed Gibbons



Michael Walters

Report on Land Need Released

As a result of Edmonton's ongoing high population and employment growth, and to ensure an economically stable region, more land is needed to accommodate residential and business employment development over the next 50 years. The city's population is anticipated to surpass the two million mark by 2064.

A report titled "The Case for Annexation" (*The Case*) has been prepared and is now available online at edmonton.ca/annexation or call 780-442-2294 for a printed copy. The report provides analysis and statistics about our growing population and the need for land so that the City can continue to provide the range of housing

and services that are expected by the tens of thousands of people moving to the city every year.

Long term planning to address growth has been a goal of the region and the Province. This has resulted in the provincially approved Capital Region Growth Plan. It designates most of the proposed annexation lands as priority growth areas and specifies that they must be developed to an urban standard.

For more details on the Capital Region Growth Plan please check out the Capital Region Board website.

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April 2014 Small Group Meetings: You Asked.

Small Group Landowner Meetings

The City of Edmonton invited landowners in the proposed annexation area to meet with City staff in April 2014. Five meetings took place during April with over 125 people in attendance. The meetings were held at the Nisku Recreation Centre and at the Rabbit Hill Baptist Church in Leduc County.



The meetings were led by a facilitator hired by the City to provide a neutral third party perspective. The facilitator supported the meetings and ensured that landowners' questions were written down, grouped by theme, and discussed. The City of Edmonton staff listened, noted, and responded to the questions where they could and identified the need to discuss issues further one-on-one or to come back to the group when research on a specific item was completed.

The questions and concerns expressed by landowners were generally related to lifestyle changes, loss of good quality agricultural land, concerns around trust in the annexation process, and how landowner interests would be addressed, including:

- farming operations and services,
- assessment, taxes, and City debt,
- municipal services and potential changes
- emergency services,
- bylaw and land use impacts that may impact farming operations or the rural lifestyle,
- impacts on seniors' housing,
- municipal and provincial roads – upgrades and maintenance,
- the Edmonton International Airport,
- impacts on students and schools,
- the transitional process should annexation be approved,
- who advocates on behalf of the landowners,
- landowner benefits resulting from annexation.

We would like to thank those landowners who took time out of their busy day to join the conversation. This newsletter considers these interests by providing samples of the concerns raised and questions asked, what we said, and what we have found out or what we are doing as part of our work program.

Need for Land

You asked, “Why so much?”

As the major provider of housing and employment for the region, the City's land supply is constantly being developed and re-developed. Edmonton's land supply is becoming



critically low, especially in south Edmonton. To address this land supply shortage, Edmonton needs to proactively plan now for the 1.2 million people that are coming to Edmonton in the next 50 years.

For further detailed information on the proposal, we refer you to “The Case for Annexation” *The Case* which was released May 14, 2014. *The Case* provides a lot of data clarifying the growth challenges faced by the City. Land shortages or the inability to supply enough serviced land to meet demand can have significant impacts on land costs and ultimately on housing affordability and the provision of jobs.

You asked, “Why not build up?”



The City is building “UP”. Edmonton houses 70% of the region's population in 6% of the region's geographical area. Development and infill are occurring constantly. For instance, there are 15 residential towers that have been approved or under construction with an approximate total of 2,422 units coming online in the future in addition to other infill, commercial and retail projects submitted to the City for approval.

Edmonton is building “IN” as well. The City of Edmonton's overarching development policies set targets for accommodating growth through adding density in and around employment areas as well as in established neighbourhoods. These established neighbourhoods are adding density through infill development.

New infill housing in established neighbourhoods is accomplished by landowner application and sometimes land consolidation. “Building In and Up” requires patience and community support. To meet the needs of the projected population growth, however, the City has to also build out by expanding its urban boundaries.

You asked, “Why does growth belong to the City of Edmonton?”

Edmonton has to plan for its share of the region’s growth. The City provides approximately 70% of the region’s housing including 80% of the region’s medium and high density housing. *The Case* points out that the position of Edmonton as a strong central city is critical for the success of the region as well as for the City of Edmonton. Edmonton leads in the provision of key services such as cultural, recreational, and health services, a comprehensive transportation network including an efficient and well-coordinated public transit system to support a strong region. Maintaining a proportionate share of the region’s growth will allow Edmonton to sustain the continued delivery of important social services and regional attractions.



Agriculture

You said, “You can’t eat houses!”

Loss of agricultural lands is a challenging question for one municipality to address. The Capital Region Growth Plan was developed, in part, to reduce the overall consumption of farm land. By setting priority growth areas with defined residential density targets, the total consumption and premature fragmentation of agriculture land will slow.

Development doesn’t happen unless it is initiated by the landowners. Farmers still control their option to continue farming. We heard your concerns about conflicts with neighbours and increasing operational costs as urban development gets closer to farm operations. We will continue to work on these concerns until we have more answers.

By already having agricultural land within Edmonton’s boundaries, the City supports making the best use of agricultural lands. *FRESH*, the City’s food and agriculture strategy is a policy document developed to support agricultural operations in a variety of ways (addressing regulatory barriers, bolstering education and training, encouraging more urban farming, and assisting with business development to sustain long term commitments to farming).

You asked, “Is City and County definition of agricultural land the same?”

The *Agricultural Operation Practices Act*, that regulates agricultural practices in Alberta, has defined agricultural land as land that used for agriculture that is either permitted or discretionary under a land use bylaw. In Edmonton’s current land use bylaw, there is an Agricultural Zone that would generally accommodate most existing uses in Leduc County. Amendments to the City’s land use bylaw may be required to accommodate any additional uses.



April 2014 Small Group Meetings: You Asked.

Assessment, Taxes and Finances

You asked, “Will the City tax my farm buildings?”

All property in Alberta is assessed for taxation according to Provincial legislation which ensures consistency across the province. Municipalities are responsible for setting tax rates, calculating, and collecting municipal taxes.

Farm buildings are assessed and taxed differently depending upon the municipality. In rural municipalities, farm buildings are not assessed or taxed. In urban municipalities they are assessed, but they are exempt from property tax calculations up to 50%.

Residences on farm land are also taxed differently depending upon the municipality. In urban municipalities there is no available exemption from taxation in the legislation. The Province can include such an exemption should annexation be approved. A negotiated tax transition agreement may mitigate changes in property taxes by allowing residences and farm buildings in the proposed annexation area to remain assessed and taxed according to County standards and rates for a specified number of years.

For example, in Edmonton’s last annexation in 1982, a farm building exemption was mandated and set to expire in 1986; however, the exemption continued until 2013 through support by Edmonton’s Council and the Province



You asked, “How will my taxes change?”

Rules and rates for property assessment and taxation differ in some instances between the County and the City. It is quite common to provide special consideration to annexed property owners so their tax rates are not immediately impacted. As noted in the previous question, a negotiated tax transition plan may mitigate tax impacts through a period of time with triggers in place for new development. The City of Edmonton is looking for amicable solutions for all parties involved.

You said, “You are taking land because of City debt.”

City debt is not the reason for the annexation proposal. The land is needed to accommodate the projected growth and to ensure that this growth is managed in a proactive, fiscally balanced, and sustainable manner. Along with growth, residents expect a certain level and selection of services.

If approved, the additional land would be needed to maintain a mixture of business employment and residential land to support the future population that is projected to be over 2 million people by 2064.

The Province limits the debt load of a municipality by legislation and a municipality is not allowed to exceed that debt load unless ministerial approval is given. Further, the City of Edmonton, on its own accord has set a lower debt ceiling than the Province allows. As a comparison, Calgary and Edmonton have similar long term debt loads when measured on a per capita basis. The annexation proposal anticipates a range of uses to ensure reasonable taxes. The likelihood that the City would make a profit from annexation is low.

Edmonton International Airport

You asked, “If the City needs land to grow – why annex the airport and surrounding land?”

The proposed area enables the appropriate mix of land uses (residential and employment) that will achieve the balanced growth necessary for Edmonton to remain a strong central city for the region. The Edmonton International Airport (EIA) is a key transportation node for the region. Infrastructure, along with support services such as rapid transit, are likely best provided by the City of Edmonton.

[Select here to view the Annexation Process Flowchart](#)

April 2014 Small Group Meetings: You Asked.

There are lots of questions about the EIA. You asked about: how the airport operates with respect to revenue split, services supplied, taxation, Highway 19 realignment, third runway, the concept of Port Alberta, the EIA corporate entity, development and noise contours, and the effects/process of expropriation should it occur.

We will provide these questions to the EIA as part of our consultation process with stakeholders.



City and County Services

You asked questions about roads and road maintenance.

The questions and concerns included repair, grading, snow clearing, and dust and weed control. You said that travelling into Edmonton from Leduc County was challenging and that the roads in this area were in need of improvement. Especially noted by many attendees at our meetings was 170th and 50th streets as they cross 41st avenue into the County.

Roads will improve as the land is developed and improved infrastructure is installed. New development must be strategically managed so that taxpayers are not covering the expense of installing new infrastructure (i.e. water, sewer, and roads) prior to land development. This would result in an unfair burden on taxpayers.

The policies of the City of Edmonton and Leduc County regarding snow clearance on rural roads are similar. It should be noted that the negotiations will also deal with this and other servicing issues including the transitioning of services.

The provision of other road maintenance issues like dust and weed control will be examined. We will bring you further information on dust and weed control once a comprehensive comparison of service provision has been completed. Our aim will be to match or possibly exceed the level of service that County residents already enjoy.



You asked, “What happens to seniors and where can they retire?”

Edmonton’s Community Services Department offers a range of support services and information for seniors. On the City’s website are seniors’ guides, links to housing options, and information about aging-in-place. Edmonton also has recently launched a Seniors Information Line. By calling 211, Edmontonians can access information about senior’s programs and services.

Both the City of Edmonton and Leduc County have foundations that provide housing for seniors. Edmonton offers many private housing options that support senior lifestyles. Finally, Edmonton has also designated eight sites around the city where seniors housing will be built in mature neighbourhoods as part of the “Building In” approach.



[Select here to view the Annexation Process Flowchart](#)

Land Use and Lifestyle Impacts

You asked, “Where will the children go to school? How long will they have to commute?”

We have begun to talk to the school boards but more work is needed to fully understand the implications of annexation on school choice and commuting times. We know that these questions are important to you, and we are working with our school board counterparts to develop a plan for transition of educational services. We will let you know what we find out.



You asked, “What’s in it for the landowner?”

This is a challenging question. If the annexation were to be approved, there will be a number of values and perspectives involved.

As individuals, your values will impact your choices. It will be your choice to stay or move. Some of you may wish to sell your land for urban uses when it is appropriate for you. Some of you may choose to continue to farm or remain on your acreage.

The lands are identified for urban development in the Capital Region Growth Plan and sale or development of the lands will likely benefit you financially should you choose to sell. The City will support your efforts to continue to farm and the lifestyle that it provides to your family.

What we will do is provide a transition plan that will account for service implementation, tax implications, land use and development information. We will work with other agencies to understand impacts to you and your family. Our objective is to try to provide municipal services to you that are equal to or better than you receive now.



You asked, “what about livestock? Use of ATVs? Weed and Pest control? Second homes?”

The keeping of **LIVESTOCK** within urban boundaries will depend on the zoning of the land. If zoned agricultural, livestock is permitted subject to certain regulations (provincial and municipal). If the zoning changes to residential and the primary purpose of the community is no longer agricultural in nature, then consideration on how to address the livestock will take place at that time.

ATV's on private property are fine. Any time they enter onto a city street or roadway, they are subject to the Rules and Regulations of the *Traffic Safety Act*.

Edmonton’s Community Standards Branch conducts between four and five thousand **WEED** related investigations annually on both public and private land. The *Weed Control Act* allows for the City to conduct investigations related to noxious/prohibited weeds. If weeds are found, the landowner will be notified to remove or control the weeds. If the weed problem is not addressed within a certain period of time, the City has the authority under *The Act* to enter onto the property in question to conduct remedial weed control measures. Weeds found on City of Edmonton property are controlled without the application of pesticides.

The City does not regulate the use of **PESTICIDES** on private property. Health Canada determines what pesticides are acceptable for sale by retailers and farmers are allowed to use pesticides to control weeds on farmland. Farmers may be allowed to apply certain chemicals, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development carries out the regulatory aspects over the use of these chemicals

Farmers are allowed to control **PESTS** (nuisances) on their property under the *Alberta Agricultural Pests Act and Regulation*. If at some point after annexation there is a need for the use of a gun on farmland for pest control, residents would be encouraged to let Edmonton Police Services know and provide the reason. Guns are regulated under the Criminal Code and in Edmonton under the Public Places Bylaw. Gun use must comply with the *Criminal Code of Canada*, and according to the City of Edmonton’s bylaw, guns cannot be fired in any public place.

If a **SECOND HOME** on your property has received County development permit approval prior to annexation it will be considered non-conforming if the home does not meet the requirements in the City of Edmonton Zoning Bylaw. The development permit will continue in effect. This means that as long as the second home continues to be lived in and is not seriously damaged, the home can continue to be used. The Province’s *Municipal Government Act* sets out the regulations pertaining to non-conforming buildings and uses.

Have we
heard what
was said
correctly?

Are there
additional
concerns?

Our contact
information
is on the last
page!

April 2014 Small Group Meetings: You Asked.

This Summer and Our Next Steps

What you said about communicating with you, “Knock on our door!”

As a result of your feedback at the small group landowner meetings, we are offering to do just that. If you are a member of an organization with a particular interest in annexation, or even if you can get a group of neighbours together to talk about one or two specific concerns, please give us a call. We are hoping to meet with as many landowners as we can before the end of the year to learn more about your interests and concerns, and to share more information about City resources and services.

Other Stakeholders

We will meet with a number of stakeholders and service providers to further our understanding about what can and cannot be done with respect to service provisions upon annexation should it be approved. We plan to talk to:

- School boards
- Edmonton Police Services
- Edmonton Fire Services
- Regional Services Commissions
- Economic Development agencies
- Agriculture – Provincial and County Services,
- Edmonton International Airport
- Bylaw writers and compliance officers
- Seniors’ housing providers
- Alberta Transportation
- Local Municipalities

Links To Documents

The following are web links to documents or websites referenced in this newsletter

CITY OF EDMONTON

The Case for Annexation - edmonton.ca/city-government/documents/The_Case_for_Annexation.pdf

Age-Friendly Initiative - http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/initiatives_innovation/age-friendly-edmonton.aspx

Fresh - edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/FRESH_October_2012.pdf

Infill - http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/urban_planning_and_design/residential-infill.aspx

Public Places Bylaw 14614 - http://www.edmonton.ca/bylaws_licences/C14614.pdf

Seniors’ Housing - http://www.edmonton.ca/for_residents/programs/housing-support-for-seniors.aspx

OTHER

Aging in Place report (Provincial Chief Medical Officer) - <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/CMOH-Aging-In-Alberta-Report-2013.pdf>

Capital Region Board – www.capitalregionboard.ab.ca

Capital Region Board’s Growth Plan - <http://capitalregionboard.ab.ca/priorities/land-use>

If you would like printed copies of any of City of Edmonton website information or reports, please contact us at 780-442-2294.

Would you like to be added to our electronic mailing list?

Please provide us with your contact information if you would like to receive updates and news releases by email. Call us at 780-442-2294.



Are you a business owner paying property taxes in the proposed annexation area?

City of Edmonton will be contacting business organizations in the proposed annexation area. Do you have a particular interest or concern about annexation as it relates to your business?

We would be happy to discuss your ideas over the phone, in person, or by email. Please see the contact information below.

Want to contact us?

Mail: Annexation Proposal, Regional Planning Section, 10250 - 101 Street NW, 6th Floor, HSBC Bank Place, Edmonton, AB T5J 3P4
Email: annexation@edmonton.ca | Telephone: 780-442-2294 | Fax: 780-401-7065



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