

Neighbourhood Nodes: Priority Setting, Economic Factors & Best Practices Review

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Report Summary

Sustainable development practices have become important within urban contexts, and the City of Edmonton is increasingly taking steps that ensure the City's economic, environmental and social well-being. This report looks at evaluating the selection criteria and priority setting of the City's Corner Store Program, which is an initiative underway to renew commercial development in Edmonton's mature neighbourhoods.

The Nodes and Corridors Planning priority within The Way Ahead Implementation Plan intends to focus the City's redevelopment planning efforts on areas where redevelopment efforts may have the most impact, including transit station areas and other key activity centres, or nodes. This scale of 'node' within these neighbourhoods can also be considered the smallest form of nodal development found within Edmonton. A focus on nodes is intended to help harness growth, change and investment and create great neighbourhood hubs increasing the walkability, livability, safety, density and vibrancy of Edmonton's neighbourhoods.

The review of literature indicates there are some strategies that can help revitalize neighbourhood commercial nodes but sustainable success ultimately needs to be a blend of physical improvements, financial investment and community driven activities. Some strategies that are applicable to larger commercial zones, such as business improvement districts (BIAs) can be applied to the neighbourhood scale and include increasing the amount of foot traffic in these commercial areas. At the neighbourhood scale increasing foot traffic can be accomplished through residential densification within a two kilometer radius of the commercial node in a form that is suitable for the neighbourhood, improved street/sidewalk connectivity that supports walkability, and consideration of the proximity of suitable/complementary businesses within the area.

The development of a local merchant association with ongoing governmental support that provides local business owners with guidance and access to resources is key to ensure the benefits of any capital investments (streetscaping, façade improvements) are fully realized. Supportive relationships that develop from these opportunities to socially interact can influence residents to shop at their local retailers ultimately meeting the goals of sustainability that revitalizing these commercial nodes intends. The report highlights eight key recommendations to increase the success and sustainability of the Corner Store's commercial revitalization efforts.