INTRODUCTION

Why an Urban Design Manual?

Guiding Principles

How to Use the Manual

This draft document is for internal use and review only.
An Urban Design Manual is being developed to elevate the practice of urban design, architecture and landscape architecture in Edmonton.

To this end, the Manual consists primarily of a series of Design Guidelines which set out the City’s expectations regarding the physical design of the city, and in particular, its urban structure, built form and public realm.

The Design Guidelines are intended to focus on the critical elements of urban design, architecture and landscape architecture that are collectively understood to contribute to good city building outcomes. They are not intended to be prescriptive; rather, they reflect the City of Edmonton’s basic expectations for good design.

Urban Design is the design of the built environment with primary consideration given to the experience of the public realm – the network of streets and open spaces, as well as the buildings that enclose and define these spaces – and the creation of a strong sense of place.

Urban design is a human-centred endeavor concerned with vibrant places, healthy lifestyles, thriving economies, engaging spaces and connected communities. The City of Edmonton plays a critical role in this endeavor, and to this end the Manual is intended to:

- Guide strategic land use and transportation planning and policy development;
- Advocate for high quality private development, whether at the scale of new neighbourhoods or small-scale infill;
- Influence well designed City of Edmonton infrastructure projects; and
- Instill a broader understanding and appreciation of good urban design within the larger community.

From increased tourism to the health and wellness of its citizens, a well-designed city provides the building blocks for a community to be successful. Edmonton is undergoing an urban shift – growing from a big small city to a small big city – and requires new tools to help grow and continue to be a great place to live.
The Manual embraces six guiding principles that not only reflect the City of Edmonton’s approach to urban design, but also align with the six guiding values of The City Plan – Belong, Live, Thrive, Access, Preserve and Create.

AUTHENTIC
An authentic city celebrates people, cultures, and natural and built heritage while promoting the evolution of culture for generations to come.

INCLUSIVE
An inclusive city embraces openness and welcomes people of all cultures, incomes, ages, abilities and genders.

WALKABLE
A walkable city creates opportunities to accommodate everyday tasks with less dependence on automobile use.

CONNECTED
A connected city is one that integrates the movement of people within the public realm across a multitude of modes, systems and scales.

HEALTHY
A healthy city reduces its ecological and urban footprint while contributing to human health and wellness.

VIBRANT
A thriving city enables diverse activities, amenities, and uses that contribute to lively, people-focused places.

1 The Guiding Principles have been adapted from a project previously undertaken by B&A Planning Group for the Urban Design Unit.
An authentic city celebrates people, cultures, and natural and built heritage while promoting the evolution of culture for generations to come. Of special consideration is our river valley and prairie setting, the local history of indigenous people, and the variety of cultural traditions that are uniquely associated with Edmonton.

**GOAL**

Buildings and open spaces are designed in a manner that celebrates Edmonton’s unique culture, history, geography and northern climate.

**WHAT THIS COULD LOOK LIKE**

- Streets and blocks that respond to topography, natural features and landmarks, contributing to our overall city image.

- Buildings and open spaces that address winter city design, incorporate indigenous knowledge and reflect Edmonton’s natural and cultural context.

- The preservation of historic buildings and cultural landscapes, and the adaptive re-use of older buildings to accommodate new uses.

**POLICY ALIGNMENT (THE CITY PLAN)**

- Edmonton’s city design fosters a sense of place by celebrating our unique attributes, diversity and opportunities within the region (BELONG).

- Edmonton protects and enhances its image and identity through heritage (PRESERVE).

- Edmontonians acknowledge and celebrate Indigenous heritage while honouring the diverse cultures, perspectives and experiences residents bring from around the world (THRIVE).
An inclusive city is a city for everyone – fostering pride, ownership and self-expression. An inclusive public realm focuses on the human experience and ensures equitable access to infrastructure and spaces. It is one that is embraces openness and welcomes people of all cultures, incomes, ages, abilities, and genders to contribute to a truly vibrant community.

GOAL
The public realm is welcoming and safe for people of all cultures, incomes, ages, abilities and genders.

WHAT THIS COULD LOOK LIKE
- Streets and open spaces that accommodate a multitude of functions and incorporate amenities that are welcoming, convenient and safe, and allow all people to socialize and gather formally and informally.
- Buildings, streets and open spaces that utilize thoughtful design to ensure the safety and accessibility of all users.

POLICY ALIGNMENT (THE CITY PLAN)
- Edmonton fosters wellness and mental health by providing opportunities for all people to engage in community life and supporting those who are isolated or marginalized (BELONG).
- Edmontonians feel safe and secure in their communities and benefit from public spaces and infrastructure that support health and wellbeing (LIVE).
A walkable city creates opportunities for everyday life without the need for automobile use through compact, mixed use development combined with a comfortable, attractive and human-scaled public realm.

GOAL
A more sustainable, attractive, comfortable, human scaled city containing high-quality, compact, mixed-use environments that support increased densities to help reduce the need to travel long distances by car for everyday tasks.

WHAT THIS COULD LOOK LIKE
- Patterns of streets, blocks, lanes and shared spaces that are fine grained and improve connectivity.
- Thoughtful design and planning of compact, mixed use and higher density developments, including amenity areas and open spaces that fulfill the everyday needs of residents.
- Buildings and streetscapes that are human scaled, attractive and active.

POLICY ALIGNMENT (THE CITY PLAN)
- Edmontonians have the ability to live locally, with access to diverse and affordable housing options in communities that support their daily needs (LIVE).
- Edmontonians live closer to what they need and are supported by walkable communities, active transportation networks and greater connectivity across all travel modes (ACCESS).

Walkability is the ease in which the daily life of a city can be accommodated on foot. Making cities more walkable has positive impacts on economics, physical and mental health, equity and sustainability. Walkable places have a mix of uses and are safe, comfortable and interesting - streets and open spaces are human scaled, with generous landscaping and urban tree canopy, active edges and lively, animated storefronts (Speck).

Human scale is informed by the psychological, sensory and cognitive needs of human beings. The concept of human scale can be seen in open spaces with a sense of enclosure and comfort, groupings of benches that promote social interaction, and building facades rich in detail with signage that is easy to understand at walking speed.
A connected city is one that integrates the movement of people within the public realm across a multitude of modes, systems and scales. Here, the design of the public realm plays a vital role in humanizing our networks to ensure they are well integrated and designed for people of all ages and abilities, are legible with good planning and wayfinding, and are people-focused to ensure walkability, comfort, safety, and convenience.

**GOAL**

The public realm seamlessly integrates a choice of transport options that are comfortable, convenient, efficient, affordable and safe, and which make moving around and through our city easy and enjoyable for people all ages and abilities.

**WHAT THIS COULD LOOK LIKE**

- Networks of streets, blocks, shared spaces and other connections that are easily navigable and accommodate efficient connections for all users with particular emphasis on active modes (walking and wheeling).

- Streets and open spaces with well integrated facilities, and an adequate provision of bicycle racks, storage and similar amenities.

**POLICY ALIGNMENT (THE CITY PLAN)**

- Edmonton advances equity through access to barrier-free spaces, services, facilities and transportation networks (ACCESS).

- Edmontonians live closer to what they need and are supported by walkable communities, active transportation networks and greater connectivity across all travel modes (ACCESS).
A healthy city reduces its ecological and urban footprint while contributing to human health and wellness in support of the city’s social, economic and environmental well-being. The public realm contributes to a functional, efficient, and compact urban fabric that seamlessly integrates with ecological networks and built infrastructure.

GOAL

Buildings, streets, neighbourhoods, parks and other spaces within our public realm integrate nature and natural systems, and embrace sustainable urbanism and green building technologies.

WHAT THIS COULD LOOK LIKE

- Patterns of streets and blocks that preserve and / or integrate natural areas to promote ecological function.

- Buildings, streetscapes and open spaces that incorporate energy efficient and green building technologies, Low Impact Development (LID) and similar sustainable site practices, and at the same time contribute to human health and wellness by providing access to fresh air, sunlight and nature (e.g. biophilic design).

POLICY ALIGNMENT (CITY PLAN)

- Edmonton is a leader in efficient, sustainable and resilient community design, development and living (LIVE).

- Edmonton protects, expands and improves access to its natural systems and open spaces in support of biodiversity and the health and enjoyment of all Edmontonians (PRESERVE).

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Low Impact Development (LID) is an approach to planning and design using stormwater management techniques to both mimic the pre-development regime of infiltration and runoff while improving water quality.

Biophilic design strives to incorporate nature and natural systems into the design of buildings and open spaces. The approach is based on the idea that humans have a natural affinity for nature (biophilia) and research that contact with nature and natural systems is critical to human health and well-being.
A vibrant city enables diverse activities, amenities, and uses that contribute to lively, people-focused places, and at the same time provide for tranquil spaces that allow people to relax. Through placemaking, the public realm should create a unique sense of place, enhance livability, accelerate and catalyze investment, and draw higher intensities and mix of use, economic development and arts and culture 24/7.

GOAL
Streets and open spaces are lively, support the economy, promote community animation and contribute to a unique sense of place.

WHAT THIS COULD LOOK LIKE
- Streets and open spaces that are flexible and able to accommodate various scales and intensities of community gathering, animation and celebration.
- Streetscapes that utilize thoughtful design and management to encourage and support economic development.
- **Creative placemaking** and public art is used to animate the public realm.

POLICY ALIGNMENT (CITY PLAN)
- Edmontonians can connect, be active in their community and celebrate Edmonton’s heritage, diversity and unique identity (BELONG).
- Edmonton fosters citizen leadership, capacity building and co-creation. Edmonton is where creative spaces emerge and arts, design and culture flourish. (CREATE).

*Creative Placemaking* is an approach which embeds artists, arts and culture in all aspects of the design process – from more meaningful and creative engagement to the inclusion of arts and culture in the development and redevelopment of public spaces – ranging from public art projects to the creation of arts and cultural districts (Smart Growth America).
The Urban Design Manual has been designed to clearly communicate the City of Edmonton's expectations for good urban design to designers, owners, City administration and the public alike.

In addition to this introductory volume, the Manual contains:

**Volume 2  Design Guidelines**
Design guidelines addressing urban structure, built form, public realm, signage and design details (see below).

**Volume 3  Technical Studies**
Requirements for Urban Design Briefs, Sun / Shadow Studies and Wind Studies – that may be required as part of rezoning and development permit application processes.

The guidelines have been structured as described below:

**URBAN STRUCTURE GUIDELINES**
Urban Structure guidelines are primarily concerned with the layout and pattern of streets, blocks, lanes, mews, and open spaces. These guidelines would be most applicable to the planning and design of new, and the retrofit of existing, neighbourhoods.

**BUILT FORM GUIDELINES**
Built Form guidelines are primarily concerned with the form and massing of buildings, and the general distribution and interrelationship of uses on a site. These guidelines would be most applicable to rezoning and development permit submissions.
PUBLIC REALM GUIDELINES

Public Realm guidelines are primarily concerned with the more detailed design of plazas, amenity and other open spaces, as well as building interfaces (e.g., entries, facade treatment, etc.). These guidelines would be most applicable to rezoning and development permit submissions, as well as City of Edmonton open space and streetscape projects.

SIGNAGE GUIDELINES

Signage guidelines provide direction to all manner of signage within the public realm, encouraging design excellence through clear, legible, respectful and well-integrated signage contributing positively to a human-scaled, walkable and vibrant public realm. These guidelines would be applicable primarily to the preparation of Comprehensive Signage Plans required as part of the Zoning Bylaw.

DESIGN DETAIL GUIDELINES

Design Detail Guidelines represent the finest scale of architecture and landscape architecture, and promote design excellence through materials, furnishings and architectural elements that contribute positively to buildings and open spaces. These guidelines would be most applicable to the Development Permit Process, as well as City open space and streetscape projects, complementing other policies and standards (e.g., Complete Streets) as appropriate.
**APPLICATION**

The Manual is intended to be used for the following applications:

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<th>Application</th>
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<th>VOL 2</th>
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<td>Node + Corridor Plan Development</td>
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The Manual is intended to be used by the following groups and individuals:

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TOWER TOPS

Encourage the design of tower tops – through architectural form and detailing – which are complementary to the overall tower design and contribute positively to the city's skyline.

DESIGN EXPECTATIONS

Screen rooftop mechanical and / or telecommunication equipment to not be visible from adjacent streets and open spaces. Strategies to achieve this include:

- **Parapets** of a height no less than the mechanical and telecommunication equipment being screened.
- **Screens or penthouses** of a height no less than the mechanical and telecommunication equipment being screened. Screens and penthouses are to be located within an envelope created by a 45 degree plane measured from the building face. Refer to Building Mechanical + Utilities for more information on screening requirements.
- **Wrapping** mechanical units with useable floor space, and / or integrating with a signature tower top.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Because of their visibility, the design of tower tops should be considered holistically with that of the tower in order to create a unified architectural composition and visually terminate the tower with a simple, elegant gesture.
- Tower top design can be used in conjunction with tower stepbacks and articulation to improve sky view and sunlight penetration, while reducing the perceived visual mass of the tower.
- Lighting and signage is often a key element of tower top design and therefore requires additional design attention. Refer to Building Lighting and Building Signage for more information.

Note: The guidelines are not intended to prescribe a particular approach to tower top design. Instead, they are intended to encourage design excellence and contribute to good urban design outcomes.