### CURRENT EDMONTON TRENDS AND EMERGING DIRECTIONS

THE CITY PLAN

(CR 6408)



There are many factors that influence change as Edmonton grows from one to two million people, not the least of which is work currently underway. There is a lot of positive momentum to build upon as well as key gaps and shortcomings to be addressed. New directions and emerging priorities can be identified through recent City of Edmonton policy directions, initiatives, targets and strategy. They can also be identified within the community by residents and businesses who signal a desire for change and by taking specific action. These trends, whether local or global, organizational or grassroots, support key areas of transformation that The City Plan will address.

This attachment provides a snapshot of the current context for change and highlights areas where there is a an imperative for further attention to affect positive outcomes. An upcoming City Plan research program to be delivered in 2019 will delve further into these high–level trends and and issues to support specific policy development around the implementation opportunities for City Moves.

#### THE CONTEXT PROVIDED BELOW IS REFLECTED AGAINST EACH OF THE CITY PLAN'S FIVE CITY MOVES:

- Greener As We Grow
- A Rebuildable City
- A Community of Communities
- Inclusive and Compassionate
- Catalyze and Converge



### GREENER AS WE GROW

As a community, Edmonton has made important strides to be the architect of a greener city, both in terms of an environmental and human health context. Greener as we grow can take on many forms but with intention and supporting direction established through The City Plan, it will provide clear urban advantages in the areas of health and well being, sustainability, and environmental impacts including climate change.

Greening a growing city requires greater attention to preserving and sustaining the natural environment, ensuring ecosystem functionality and the quality of our open spaces to support biodiversity. As Edmonton doubles in population, expanding an intentional green network that is multi-functional and integrated is critical to ensure continued access for Edmontonians as demand and preferences change over time. Similarly, supporting green development and infrastructure design can set the stage for new construction to make positive contributions to the environment.

With a 2017 baseline of 7.6 ha/1000 people, ensuring our city remains well served with open space as the population doubles will require ongoing commitment, investment and supporting policy. However, this open space is not just a number, The City Plan needs to facilitate the move to ensure an integrated network is complementary to other city-building functions and contributes to livability and community attractiveness.

In 2016 Edmonton joined the international biophilic cities network, and in 2017, Council approved the city's first city-wide Open Space Policy (C594) and Breathe:

Edmonton's Green Network Strategy. Edmonton's Green Network Strategy, Breathe, provides the strategic vision to improve the quality, accessibility and functionality of the city's open space network. According to Breathe, most residential areas in Edmonton (94%) are within a 400-metre walking distance of at least one open space.¹ Open space promotes and creates opportunity for active living, green infrastructure, access to the natural environment and connection to a vibrant, inclusive and caring community that supports individual and collective mental, social and physical health.

A recent internal scan of key opportunities supported by collaborative workshops with civic departments and partners found there are many opportunities to green Edmonton including: improving access to natural areas, providing more River Valley access to residential and non-residential areas, greening the downtown, and repurposing excess road rights-of-way for natural plantings. An update to the Ribbon of Green for the southwest and northeast areas of the river valley and ravine system is currently nearing completion, and will ensure areas of preservation and recreational access are identified as the city grows.

Progress is being made but there is more work to be done to ensure clean air, good water quality and land free of contamination. Council has elevated environmental stewardship by creating the Council Initiative on Energy Transition and Climate Resilience<sup>2</sup> and directing City Administration to undertake further study with regards to open spaces and recreation facilities, district energy, waste reduction strategies, and river valley facilities and partnerships. From this work a series of actionable tactics along with tangible metrics will be created to measure success of our studies, plans and policies.

To support the imperative to address climate change, the Edmonton Declaration provides a bold call-to-action for municipalities around the globe to take up the mantle of leadership and amplify the message that rising greenhouse gas emissions severely impact cities and citizens worldwide.3 To date the Edmonton Declaration has been endorsed by organizations representing over 4,700 municipalities globally. Energy generation, buildings efficiency, urban form, and managing our transportation system offer Edmonton the greatest opportunities to decrease future emissions. For example, the City and the Province are incentivizing on-site solar installations and Edmontonians have responded. Annual solar installations have increased from 15 installations in 2010 to 152 in 2018.4 On the road, the number of electric vehicles registered annually in Edmonton has grown 35-fold between 2011 and 2016<sup>5</sup> despite the lack of incentives used to propel electric vehicle adoption in other comparable cities. By comparison, in Calgary the number of registrations grew by 22 times over the same period.6

A targeted and focused approach is required as Edmonton grows to two million people if the City is to meet established targets. Annual emissions have grown in Edmonton by 600,000 tonnes, from 18.3 megatonnes in 2016 to 18.9 megatonnes in 2017.7 That's equivalent to 128,000 cars driven for one year8.

"Although emissions have stabilized in recent years, Edmonton emissions are still nearly 2% higher than the 2005 baseline and therefore well above the 2035 target of 35% reduction below 2005 levels" (Community Energy Transition Strategy: Annual Progress Report 2017).

It's important to note that Edmonton's community emissions are closely tied to the economic conditions that the city is experiencing and is directly related to the how and where the city grows. Automobile-dependent neighbourhoods and poor energy efficiency, by design, must be addressed. We should anticipate that, if current trends persists, as Edmonton grows and continues to prosper that emissions will also continue to increase unless significant action is taken.

Planning for resilience is critical. Edmonton will be facing a changing climate in the future regardless of global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Edmonton's Climate Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan found that even under a strong mitigation scenario, average temperatures in Edmonton are expected to increase 3.5 degrees celcius between 2041 and 2070. As such, Edmontonians should anticipate more frequent and intense extreme weather events, particularly wildfire, low flow in river, rain on snow, freezing rain, high winds, and lightning.9 This will need to be planned for.

City of Edmonton. 2017. Breathe. https://www.edmonton.ca/city\_government/initiatives\_innovation/breathe.aspx

 $City of Edmonton.\ 2017. Terms of Reference: Energy\ Transition\ and\ Climate\ Resilience\ Council\ Initiative.\ https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/PDF/$ Energy Transition and Climate Resilience.pdf

City of Edmonton. 2018. Change for Climate - Edmonton Declaration. https://www.edmonton.ca/city\_government/environmental\_stewardship/change-for-climate-edmonton-declaration.aspx

City of Edmonton. 2018. City Environmental Strategies tableau visualizations. Solar Installations by Month and Year.

IHS Polk Electric Vehicle Registrations, 2011-2016 (battery electric and plug-in hybrid vehicle registrations in Edmonton). 2016. (Supplied to City Environmental Strategies). IHS Polk Electric Vehicle Registrations, 2011-2016 (battery electric and plug-in hybrid vehicle registrations in Calgary). 2016. (Supplied to City Environmental Strategies).

Community Greenhouse Gas Dashboard Community Greenhouse Gas Emissions Historical Data.

Using 600,000 metric tons of CO2 Equivalent and using the US Environmental Protection Agency GHG Equivalencies Calculator City of Edmonton. 2018. www.edmonton.ca/resilientedmonton

## REBUILDABLE CITY

After many decades of low-density, dispersed and predominantly single-use development Edmonton has recently started making progress towards planning and building its existing and developing communities differently. A series of recent policy directions from suburban design guidelines<sup>10</sup> to infill actions<sup>11</sup> have been established to encourage new development that is unique, innovative, inclusive and sustainable. Over time it's important that development in older as well as newer neighbourhoods is purposefully designed to be adaptable to future change and ongoing redevelopment. The current Municipal Development Plan (Way We Grow) identifies a target of achieving 25% infill housing within the portfolio of all new residential housing units added to the city and, to date, Edmonton has consistently fallen short of meeting this goal. Work is underway to improve conditions for success, but much more needs to be done to enable a wider diversity of housing choices and support better density, destinations and design.

In collaboration with residents, the development industry and business community, Edmonton is currently undertaking major flagship redevelopment projects like Blatchford, The Quarters, River Crossing and Exhibition Lands to support new commercial, residential and recreational opportunities at key underutilized sites. At a smaller scale, opportunities to re-imagine and re-build our communities are emerging. Ritchie Market<sup>13</sup> boasts a new community commercial center and the Orange Hub<sup>14</sup> located in the west of the city is an example of a facility repurposed from the former MacEwan University arts and communications campus to a centre for non-profit groups that offer programs and services in the arts, recreation, wellness and learning. An internal scan of key opportunities to explore over the next 10 years uncovered

similar ideas for rethinking areas such as LRT stations, major corridors and other underutilized potential hubs of activity. The recent Evolving Infill market study also identified the potential for rethinking shopping mall sites as key opportunities for infill.<sup>15</sup>

Citizen and business groups in Edmonton have recognized the need for change as demonstrated through the formation of organizations like Infill Development in Edmonton Association (IDEA)<sup>16</sup> and YEGarden Suites<sup>17</sup> who are dedicated to rebuilding our communities in a sustainable way. This complements efforts being made by the traditional development and building industries. Coalitions of residents and business associations are advancing forward–looking visions of an Edmonton that is vibrant, walkable, and people–centred. Continued energy and focus in this area can and should be leveraged, in partnership with diverse interests.

<sup>10</sup> City of Edmonton. 2013. Designing New Neighbourhoods. https://www.edmonton.ca/city\_government/urban\_planning\_and\_design/designing-new-neighbourhoods.aspx

<sup>11</sup> City of Edmonton. 2018. Infill Roadmap. http://sirepub.edmonton.ca/sirepub/mtgviewer.aspx?meetid=2028&doctype=MINUTES

<sup>12</sup> City of Edmonton. 2010. The Way We Grow. https://www.edmonton.ca/city\_government/documents/PDF/MDP\_Bylaw\_15100.pdf

<sup>13</sup> Ritchie Market. 2016. https://ritchiemarket.ca/

<sup>14</sup> City of Edmonton. 2018. The Orange Hub. https://www.edmonton.ca/activities\_parks\_recreation/the-orange-hub.aspx

<sup>15</sup> City of Edmonton. 2018. Evolving Infill Market Housing and Affordability Study. https://www.cityofedmontoninfill.ca/public/download/documents/46806#referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cityofedmontoninfill.ca%2Fabout%2Fevolving-infill

<sup>16</sup> IDEA. 2018. What is IDEA. https://www.infilledmonton.com/what-is-idea/

<sup>17</sup> Edmonton laneway Housing Association. 2018. YEGarden Suites.

# COMMUNITY COMMUNITIES

Fostering a community of communities was one of five main public engagement themes identified through the Vision 2050 process (2018). Edmontonians repeatedly said that Edmonton is driven by its community feel and spirit and indicated that they wanted to maintain and improve this condition over time. Within this context, feedback from the public was primarily about creating human connections, increasing social interactions, supporting local activity centres, volunteering, neighborliness.

Similarly, Council's recent initiatives on active transportation, community hubs, and transportation innovation indicate community interest in increasing connections and diversifying transit mode choice so that neighbourhoods are easier to navigate. City staff and civic partners through an internal scan identified many opportunities for increasing physical and social connection within Edmonton, including supporting inclusive amenities and accessible gathering spaces, improving multimodal transportation and connectivity planning, and further supporting local commercial and recreational nodes as well as improved wayfinding.

"A community is a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings" (American Journal of Public Health, 2001)

"A community is a network of social and economic relationships and the places where those relationships interact"

(Grassroots Economic Organizing, 2018)

In addition to being social and relational spaces, communities are also physical places. Edmonton is a young community that features many dispersed employment and residential areas. In 2017, 68% of Edmontonians agreed that they have access to amenities and services that improve their quality of life, but only 47% reported feeling connected to their community. 18 In line with Edmonton's outward growth, the average car trip length has increased and car mode share sits unchanged over the past two decades with 78% of trips made by car.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly Edmonton's transit mode share also remained unchanged despite the tremendous growth in Edmonton's developing areas. Given prevailing travel behaviours, it is a testament to the City's investment in transit infrastructure and services over the past decade that Edmonton has maintained its current share of transit ridership even as the city has physically increased its developed footprint outwards. It also reveals a desire on the part of Edmontonians to connect physically to other communities in their city.

Ease and comfort of walking is an essential attribute of community-based mobility. But today, walking for basic trips like getting groceries or going to school is uncommon in Edmonton and in many cases, nearly impossible. Several neighbourhoods in Edmonton can be considered "food deserts," where residents have poor access to supermarkets and healthy food options. In particular, some areas with high proportions of senior residents have inadequate access to fresh foods.<sup>20</sup> As car, bike, and transit trip lengths increase, Edmontonians may experience lower levels of community connectedness in part due to people spending less time in their communities as they commute further and longer to meet basic needs. Efforts to build and improve community-level infrastructure and promote better accessibility are underway, but more needs to be done

<sup>18</sup> City of Edmonton. 2018. Perception Survey - Overall Quality of Life. Retrieved from https://dashboard.edmonton.ca/Surveys/Edmontonians-Perception-Survey-Overall-Quality-Of-/fguc-rs4p

<sup>19</sup> City of Edmonton. 2015. Edmonton and Region Household Travel Survey (HTS). https://www.edmonton.ca/transportation/traffic\_reports/travel-surveys.aspx

<sup>20</sup> Wan, H., Qiu, F., Swallow, B. 2014. Can community gardens and farmers' markets relieve food desert problems? A study of Edmonton, Canada. Applied Geography, 55, 127-137.

### INCLUSIVE AND COMPASSIONATE

Over one third of current Council Initiatives include a focus on social issues and safety in our city, which underscores the importance of this priority area. Designing a compassionate city with equity and inclusion in mind will contribute to a healthy city and support a transformational shift for Edmonton as the population doubles.

Edmonton has demonstrated leadership in addressing issues of equity and inclusion and advancing creative approaches through initiatives like RECOVER:
Edmonton's Urban Wellness Plan. Other key initiatives like the EndPovertyEdmonton Road Map created through the Mayor's Task Force to Eliminate Poverty, advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions "Calls to Action," and committing to using Gender–Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) as a tool to looking at how different genders and diverse people experience policies demonstrate a desire to build a more compassionate city. These programs and initiatives are also examples of how Edmonton is recognizing and addressing issues of real inequality and seeking to pragmatically address systemic barriers.

"Programmatic interventions help people beat the odds. Systemic interventions can help change their odds"

(Karen Pittman, CEO of the Forum on Youth Investment, 2015)

This is an area where much more work needs to be done. Edmonton's growing income inequality over the past three decades makes the city one of the top 5 Canadian cities with widest income disparities<sup>21</sup>. By the numbers, Edmonton's poverty rate (nearly 10%)<sup>22</sup>, sexual assault rate (increasing)<sup>23</sup>, and crime rates and severity (some of the highest in the country)<sup>24</sup> indicate that there is still a long way to go to create a truly safe and equitable city. Further attention also needs to be paid to support inclusion and specifically to address hate and racism. In a 2017 Leger Poll, a majority (54%) of Edmontonians agree that racism is a problem which affects Indigenous people, newcomers and refugees, while a high majority (72%) agree that Indigenous people in particular in Edmonton often face discrimination<sup>25</sup>.

Housing affordability has been a key issue for Council demonstrated through the creation of the Housing Council Initiative which leverages Edmonton's Affordable Housing Strategy to increase the supply of affordable housing in Edmonton.

In 2016, according to federal census data, 48,550 low income renter households in Edmonton spent more than 30 percent of their annual before-tax income on housing costs, meaning they were experiencing significant housing affordability challenges. Of these households, 22,350 spent more than 50 percent of their household income on housing. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation describes households in this category as experiencing severe core housing need. With housing costs consuming such a large share of their income, households in severe housing need have little remaining income for other household costs, including food, clothing, educational supplies, and other basic needs. These households are also often at risk of housing instability or homelessness. The number of households living in core housing need in Edmonton has also increased from 40,615 households in 2001 to 48.550 households in 2016. As of November 2018. the Edmonton Homeless Count estimates found 1,898 people in Edmonton do not have a home of their own.26 Of this population 57% identified as Indigenous, 42% identified as women, and 13% identified as youth.

Most recently, Council unanimously approved and fully funded an Affordable Housing Plan, which allocates \$132 million for affordable housing over the next four years<sup>27</sup>. Ongoing efforts to eliminate homelessness are underway and require continuous support.

Edmonton has also recognized the role that mobility and access to our transportation system play in fostering a healthy and safe community. The Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) encourages equitable transit use by offering low–floor access, audio and visual transit stop notifications on its entire fleet. ETS also provides free monthly transit passes to individuals who are experiencing homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness, and recently a decision was made to provide free transit to accompanied children who are 12 and under.

<sup>21 2017</sup> Edmonton Poverty Profile, Edmonton Social Planning Council; Income Inequality: the urban gap, Chartered Professional Accountant of Canada, 2017

<sup>22</sup> EndPovertyEdmonton. 2017. https://www.endpovertyedmonton.ca/statistics

<sup>23</sup> In 2017 there was a "13 per cent spike in sexual assualts in Edmonton over 2016." https://www.ecfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-ECF-Women-in-Edmonton.pdf

<sup>4</sup> Edmonton Crime Severity Index, Edmonton's Citizen Dashboard. "CSI in 2017 was an estimated 124.2 points, a 5.6 percent increase from 2016. From 2004 to 2012, Edmonton's CSI experienced annual reductions, falling 46 percent during that period. Since then, CSI has experienced persistent increases."

<sup>25 2017</sup> Vital Signs Report, Edmonton Social Planning Council, https://www.ecfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/009786-Vital-Signs\_2017\_10.34x20.5\_WEB.pdf

<sup>26</sup> Core Housing Need, 2016 Census- Statistics Canada

<sup>27</sup> City of Edmonton. Updated Affordable Housing Investment Plan 2019 - 2022.

<sup>28</sup> Homeward Trust "Ending Homelessness." http://homewardtrust.ca/



### CATALYZE AND CONVERGE

Developing and fostering multiple economies within a city can profoundly influence the overall prosperity of the region, but it can also influence its urban form, sense of community and identity. Catalyzing and converging the knowledge, creative, cultural and emerging economies can attract industry, talent and entrepreneurship to enhance Edmonton's liveability, competitiveness and attractiveness.

The creation of Edmonton Global, the region's new economic development corporation, is an example of how the City is partnering with 14 other municipal shareholders, to work across municipal boundaries to attract new investment to our city and region. Edmonton Global demonstrates a commitment to a new collaborative paradigm, one based on shared investment for shared benefit, and on an understanding that the economic success of our own individual municipalities is bound up in the success of our neighbours. Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, owned and funded by the City of Edmonton, operates two divisions that support economic development and innovation. Enterprise Edmonton and Innovate Edmonton work to secure international investment, grow business export and trade capacities and champion start up and innovation with programs that include TEC Edmonton, Edmonton Made and Make Something Edmonton.

Edmonton also shines bright globally as the host of international events such as the 2014 ITU Triathlon Series Grand Final, the FIFA Women's World Cup Canada 2015 and the 2017 FORD World Men's Curling Championship. One hundred and seventy six thousand visitors came to our city and the events deliver a combined economic impact of \$38,700,500<sup>28</sup>.

At a local level, programs to support economic development and reinvestment in commercial areas continue to grow in popularity and demand and influence of our urban landscape. Recent community–level examples include investment in the Corner Store Program<sup>29</sup> that aims to re–establish neighbourhood shopping centres as community hubs in mature neighbourhoods, ongoing investment in the Facade Improvement Program that encourages commercial building owners to invest in storefront improvements, and stewardship of the Development Incentive program that supports property owners in Business Improvement Areas to invest in their properties. These grants for local

business improvement have demonstrated increased and sustained popularity. In 2018 all of the funds available through the Facade Improvement Program were awarded within the first three months of the year. In addition, the City conducts industrial business visitations and assists companies as they navigate through regulatory municipal processes through it's Business Retention and Expansion program.

Edmonton is one of the youngest big cities in the country and presents an opportunity for the city in the 'talent war' to support new and emerging economies. Talent and demographics are not sticky in the economic sense and we can lose this edge if opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship and creativity are not available and do not stay relevant in a changing global world. This is the motivation driving Arts Habitat, a non-profit whose mandate is to create affordable live/work space for artists and enhance the development of creative communities.

Did you know that Edmonton is home to the first Mosque in Canada, and the birthplace of the North American Fringe theatre festival model, The Running Room, and BioWare.

A strong culture of innovation is embodied across the city, as Edmonton challenges traditional workplace arrangements through an influx of co-working spaces, and is a finalist in notable national competitions such as the Smart Cities Challenge<sup>30</sup> and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research Building Healthy Cities grant, 31 positioning Edmonton as a living laboratory to study how municipal initiatives impact health and health equity. Edmonton is also establishing itself as a leader in artificial intelligence through a recent partnership between the University of

Alberta and Google DeepMind, a "unique hybrid of startup culture and academia".32 This is DeepMind's first non-UK research lab, highlighting the University of Alberta's world-renowned faculty leading innovation in machine learning. On the smart mobility front, Edmonton is the test site for ACTIVE-AURORA, Canada's first connected vehicle test bed in partnership with the University of Alberta, the Province, and the private sector<sup>33</sup>.

The City is being challenged to consider where best to focus its efforts and invest in order to strengthen the innovation environment and entrepreneurs, local business owners, and start ups that have recently been weighing in. This conversation is critical given the important role that the local economy plays in economic diversification and helping Edmonton to weather the booms and busts that characterize Alberta's economic landscape.

First announced in the Mayor's 2016 State of the City address, the Health City Initiative is one example of how Edmonton is recognizing its strengths in the health sector and looking for ways to leverage them for economic development. Health City<sup>34</sup>, a wholly owned subsidiary of the City of Edmonton, is taking the lead on being the central connection point for Edmonton's health innovation sector. Knowing that Edmonton is home to world-class researchers, medical facilities, and post secondary systems reveals a tremendous opportunity for health care innovation.

Local educational institutions are also recognizing an opportunity to support entrepreneurs, social enterprises, and economic development. For example the Mawji Centre<sup>35</sup> and the Roundhouse<sup>36</sup> at NAIT and MacEwan University respectively provide a venue for business mentorship, guest speakers, competitions, workshops and networking in order to inspire entrepreneurial thinking amongst their students. Finally, to support the economic development ecosystem Edmonton has been successful at leveraging the strengths of the many not-for-profit organizations that support the local economy, businesses and entrepreneurs in Edmonton, including 13 business improvement areas.

 $City of Edmonton.\ 2018.\ Facade \ Improvement \ Program.\ https://www.edmonton.ca/business\_economy/business\_resources/facade-storefront-improvement-program.aspx$ 

City of Edmonton. 2018. Smart Cities Challenge. https://www.edmonton.ca/city\_government/initiatives\_innovation/smart-cities-challenge.aspx

Government of Canada. 2018. Canadian Institutes of Health Research Funding Decisions Database. http://webapps.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/decisions/p/project\_details.html?applId=378454&lang=en

DeepMind. 2017. DeepMind expands to Canada with new research office in Edmonton, Alberta. https://deepmind.com/blog/deepmind-office-canada-edmonton/
Centre for Smart Transportation, University of Alberta. https://www.ualberta.ca/engineering/research/groups/smart-transportation/research/projects/connected-vehicles

https://edmontonhealthcity.ca/

http://www.nait.ca/102033.htm

https://roundhouse.net/

### INSUMMARY: MATCHING OPPORTUNITY WITH MOMENTUM

It is clear that Edmonton faces challenges and in many ways has a lot of catching up to do when it comes to creating a city that is Healthy, Climate Resilient and supports Urban Places in a Prosperous Region (four goals of Council's Strategic Plan, 2018). It is also abundantly clear that our community is committed to leadership and Edmontonians are proactively seeking solutions and working together to create our future city.

Matching these areas of opportunity with existing momentum and additional concerted effort demonstrates the possibility of achieving the City Moves, which are significant, measurable, achievable, and draw on actions already underway within our city. Taking the pulse of our community in this way, based on current research and an identification of areas where civil society is responding to the real–world issues and impacts, is the right place to anchor change. On this basis The City Plan will identify priorities and policies that help move Edmonton in an intentional and shared direction in the future.