



District Planning

Edmonton

Conversation Starter #1

**What is the
District Planning Project?**



How to Use the Conversation Starters

The **Conversation Starters** are mini information packages that introduce Edmontonians to District Planning and explore key topics. There are six Conversation Starters. Each is dedicated to a different aspect of the project. We encourage Edmontonians to explore all topics to learn more about District Planning and help prepare them for upcoming public engagement.

Conversation Starter Topics

- + **What is the District Planning Project?**
 - + What are the District General Policy and the District Plans?
 - + How are the District General Policy and the District Plans being Drafted?
 - + How will Edmontonians Provide Input?
 - + How are the District General Policy and District Plans Intended to be Used?
 - + How will the District General Policy and District Plans be Monitored and Updated?
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Introduction

[The City Plan](#) looks into the future and tells us what decisions we need to make so Edmonton can welcome another one million people. It's a long term vision that considers Edmonton's neighbourhoods as districts which offer vibrant and diverse places for people to live, work and play. Before we get to two million people, we need to set up District Planning in Edmonton.

This District Planning project is about building 15 district plans for each of The City Plan's districts and focuses on welcoming the first 250,000 people. The City Plan sets the direction and district plans will help clarify where and how each district will grow. This means we need to look at the existing area plans we have and how they fit within The City Plan's vision.

Each district plan will guide how neighbourhoods will physically change over time and will help to support Edmontonians' desire to live more locally in a "Community of Communities" — one of The City Plan's Big City Moves. This is where Edmontonians can meet most of their needs within a 15 minute walk, roll, bicycle ride or transit trip from their home.

In this Conversation Starter, we are going to talk about:

- + Edmonton's planning system
- + What The City Plan is
- + How District Planning will help us achieve The City Plan
- + What this District Planning project will do

Why Introduce a New Planning Tool?

All tools need to align with The City Plan. The City Plan is our new Municipal Development Plan and Transportation Master Plan approved by Edmonton City Council in 2020 that provides strategic direction for how Edmonton will grow and redevelop to 2 million people. This means The City Plan tells us what information Edmonton's first district plans need to cover to get to 1.25 million people.



Before we continue, here are a few definitions to key terms that appear in this Conversation Starter:

- **Land use:** refers to different ways land can be used, developed or categorized in our city. For example, residential land uses refer to where people live, commercial land uses where businesses or stores are predominantly located and mixed uses refer to where residential and commercial are combined.
- **Mobility:** refers to how people and goods move through our city and can refer to our roadways, sidewalks, bike lanes, mass transit routes and infrastructure.
- **Growth Activation:** refers to initiatives, projects or investments that can support or stimulate the construction of utility or mobility infrastructure or new residential or commercial buildings in targeted locations.

The Planning System

Fundamentals of the Planning System

In Alberta, cities must develop and follow a Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and a Transportation Master Plan (TMP) to guide how their city will grow. These documents set the vision and cities need planning tools to help carry out their directions. Cities can develop tools that will guide decisions citywide or for specific areas of the city. Policies and zoning are two of the fundamental tools that shape a city.





Types of Planning Tools:

| Planning Tool | Where it Applies | Legal Status |
|--|---|---------------|
| The City Plan | Citywide | Statutory |
| Strategies & Guidelines | Citywide | Non-Statutory |
| Geographic Plans Category | | |
| Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs) | Specific neighbourhoods in the Redeveloping Area* | Statutory |
| Area Structure Plans (ASPs) | Multiple Neighbourhoods in Developing Area* | Statutory |
| Neighbourhood Area Structure Plans (NASPs) | Specific neighbourhoods in Developing Areas | Statutory |
| Neighbourhood Structure Plans (NSPs) | One Neighbourhood in the Developing Area | Statutory |
| Regulatory Tools | | |
| Zoning Bylaw | Site Level | Statutory |

* The Redeveloping Area and Developing Area are two of the three broad development pattern areas identified in The City Plan (See [The City Plan Map 9](#)).

What Does Statutory Mean?

A statutory planning tool can only be created or changed by City Council decision. These plans contain policies to guide or direct how the area should change over time or sets the rules for what types of buildings or uses can happen on a property.



Participating in the Planning System

The planning system works when everyone can participate in sharing their voice and ideas. There are many different and overlapping ways Edmontonians can participate in the planning system. When different City departments start new policy or infrastructure projects, Edmontonians can help shape these projects so they are successful and we can achieve our city-building goals.

Check out **Conversation Starter #4: How will Edmontonians Provide Input?** to learn more about how you can provide input into the District Planning project.

Updating Edmonton's Planning System

[The City Plan](#) describes the choices we need to make to become a healthy, urban and climate-resilient city of two million people that supports a prosperous region. This vision will take Edmonton several decades to achieve, but groundwork starts now.

As a first step, The City reviewed all of its area plans and strategies and repealed those that had served their purpose or contained out-of-date directions. A total of 75 area plans and strategies have been repealed so far, reducing the total number from 200 to 125.

Next, the City will implement a process for creating, updating and repealing land use plans to ensure our planning system stays up to date. District plans will play a key role in this work. They will become the primary planning tool, making the planning process easier to use and understand. Having a simplified and streamlined process will also help ensure the City makes consistent and informed development decisions. Over time, District plans will replace older area plans and house newer area plans. District plans will guide how the zoning bylaw will change and how development should look and feel.

The City Plan has also prompted a chance to update our zoning bylaw. Learn more about the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative [here](#).



Subdividing land or getting a building permit, while outside the scope of the District Planning project, are also part of the planning system. Learn more [here](#).

The City Plan & District Planning

Why Districts

The City Plan gives us lots of wide-ranging direction for Edmonton's long-term future. But we need more detailed guidance to help us make planning decisions now and the years to come. Providing that direction at a neighbourhood scale (as we may have in the past) isn't feasible as Edmonton has over 400 neighbourhoods. The City Plan introduced districts as a new planning geography and laid out Edmonton's district boundaries so we can plan for the future in a new way.

["Planning Districts: Philosophy and Boundary Rationale"](#) was one of many different studies that helped to inform the [Making of the The City Plan](#).

District boundaries are different than the City's [ward boundaries](#). To learn what district you're in check out [Districts at A Glance](#).

Edmontonians shared during The City Plan's engagement about how they want to live in their "community" and District Planning is all about achieving this aspiration. Here's what we heard Edmontonians want:

- + To live in a community where they can easily get groceries for dinner, where their kids can safely ride their bike to school, and where they can take a short transit ride to work.
- + To ensure that all neighbourhoods continue to be desirable places to live by planning and preparing for increasing density in key areas.



+ **15 district plans**

- Each district plan will apply information and direction from The City Plan at the district level. This will be shown through a series of maps depicting the interdependent elements of the city such as land use, mobility and open space.
- District plans are to be read together with the District General Policy and may contain additional specific policy guidance necessary to further guide that district.

Growth and redevelopment take time and neighbourhood change can be both welcoming and challenging. The City Plan provides direction on how Edmonton should grow from 1 million to 2 million Edmontonians. To support this goal, it highlights four population milestones to stage and phase growth. District plans will guide change to the first population horizon of 1.25 million.

Since district plans will focus on the 1.25 million milestone, they'll incorporate direction from The City Plan (and in some cases existing plans that align with it) and will not create new policy directions. As a result, they'll reflect city building outcomes -- more infill, active transportation infrastructure, access to open space -- that Council and Edmontonians have been advocating for a number of years.

District plans will use broad land use categories to provide more flexible planning direction. Many existing plans can be very prescriptive, and residents feel let down when their plans are changed to allow for development that doesn't exactly match the plan. District plans will still provide clear direction, but will allow for more varied development outcomes without requiring frequent changes.

Considering All Edmontonians

Similar to The City Plan, District Planning will matter to and serve to benefit all Edmontonians:

- + For **residents**, district plans will show where redevelopment is encouraged and how their district is anticipated to change based on The City Plan.

