

# ZONING BYLAW RENEWAL INITIATIVE

## DISCUSSION PAPER



### OPEN SPACE & CIVIC SERVICES ZONES

Edmonton

October 2020 | [edmonton.ca/ZoningBylawRenewal](https://edmonton.ca/ZoningBylawRenewal)

These papers were created in 2020 to support Phase 1 of engagement. The content of these documents is subject to change as the draft Zoning Bylaw continues to be refined.



## HOW TO USE THE DISCUSSION PAPERS

The discussion papers provide an entry point into the world of zoning by breaking it out into understandable parts and allowing Edmontonians to select topics that interest them. They explore various aspects of zoning and the new Zoning Bylaw, and provide the preliminary thinking and direction for the approach it may take. Please refer to the [Overview and Philosophy of the New Zoning Bylaw](#) for more information.

These papers are a **first attempt** at exploring potential directions for new zoning regulations. All Edmontonians – from developers to residents – are encouraged to explore the topics that interest them and provide feedback through the [Engaged Edmonton](#) platform. Information gathered through the discussion paper conversation will be used to help inform how the new Zoning Bylaw will be written.

## TOPICS



**PHILOSOPHY OF THE  
NEW ZONING BYLAW**



**1 NODES & CORRIDORS**



**7 DIRECT CONTROL  
ZONES**



**2 RESIDENTIAL ZONES**



**8 NOTIFICATIONS &  
VARIANCES**



**3 COMMERCIAL &  
INDUSTRIAL ZONES**



**9 OVERLAYS**



**4 AGRICULTURE &  
RURAL ZONES**



**10 SIGNS**



**5 OPEN SPACE &  
CIVIC SERVICES ZONES**



**11 CLIMATE RESILIENCE &  
ENERGY TRANSITION**



**6 SPECIAL AREA ZONES**



**12 ECONOMY**



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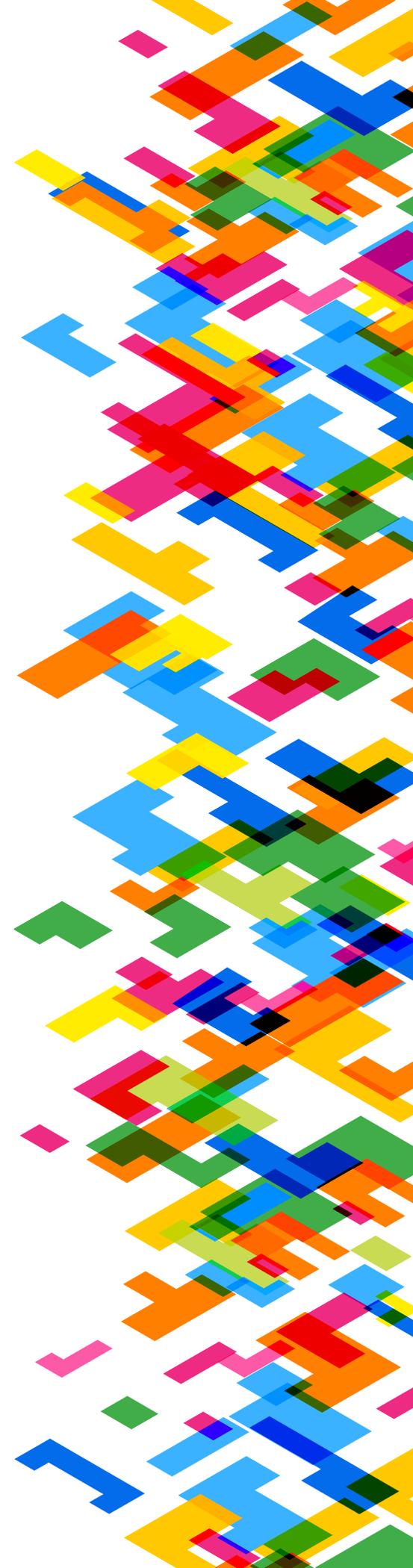
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# CONVERSATION STARTER

## How can the new Zoning Bylaw incorporate streamlined open space and civic services regulations?

This paper shows that the new Zoning Bylaw can incorporate them by

- 1** Aligning zone regulations with **parkland policy and The City Plan**

  - + Municipal Government Act
  - + The City Plan
  - + ConnectEdmonton
  - + Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy
  - + Natural Connections Strategic Plan
  - + Natural Area Management Plans
  - + Ribbon of Green
  - + North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan
  - + Top of Bank Policy (C542)
  - + North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System Protection Overlay
  - + Area Structure Plans
  - + Neighbourhood Structure Plans
  
- 2** Consolidating park regulations into **three zones used to protect and govern development on parkland**

<b>Natural Areas Zone</b>	<b>River Valley Recreation Zone</b>	<b>Urban Parks and Services Zone</b>
To preserve, conserve, and restore identified natural areas	To preserve, and conserve the natural state of the river valley	To regulate development on all parkland in Edmonton
  
- 3** Proposing the **transition of current community services zones** to new standard residential zones

  - **CS1/CS2/CS3/CS4**
  - + In 2006 the Community Services Zones were added to the Zoning Bylaw to make use of approximately 20 surplus school sites for first time home buyers. These sites should be rezoned to the most closely applicable residential zone.
  
- 4** Integrating 'civic services' as a use in new standard zones

  - **Civic Services**
  - + Activities or uses that provide a public service but can have impacts to the surrounding areas.
  - + Contributes to the 15 minute district concept
  - + Examples: Schools, libraries, recreation facilities, fire stations, police stations, transit centre, City Hall.

Please provide us feedback at [engaged.edmonton.ca](http://engaged.edmonton.ca)

# INTRODUCTION

## Edmonton's Open Spaces and Civic Services

In the context of this paper open spaces are defined as parks, natural areas, and the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System that make up Edmonton's Open Space network. **The City of Edmonton contains over 67,000 hectares of open spaces within its municipal boundaries.**<sup>1</sup> These lands have been used as gathering spaces throughout Edmonton's history, serving as areas for communal educational and recreational activities.

Edmontonians identify strongly with the natural and modified network of greenspaces and water bodies that make up these lands, including the lakes, streams, parks, dunes, forests and the North Saskatchewan River. These open spaces give Edmontonians access to nature, recreation and a healthy lifestyle that make Edmonton one of the world's most liveable cities. Even from Edmonton's early days, the protection and preservation of parkland was considered important and policy was developed to ensure these places would be preserved for the benefit of future generations. This sentiment would be the start of a long history of environmental conservation and parks creation within Edmonton.

**Breathe**, the City of Edmonton's Green Network Strategy, notes that "cities everywhere are recognizing the value open spaces add to the urban system – the way green infrastructure provides ecological services, civic squares create sense of place, and recreational amenities support health and wellness." Edmonton's open spaces vary from the small neighbourhood pocket park to the waters of the North Saskatchewan River. The city has a variety of open spaces that draw visitors from across the region, from major district parks, such as Jackie Parker Park and the Kinsmen Park, to major tourist destinations such as Fort Edmonton Park and the Edmonton Valley Zoo. These open spaces house humans, animals, birds, bugs and a wide variety of natural vegetation that support Edmonton's vibrant ecosystem.

In the context of this paper, civic services describe land use and development that serves the broader community. This includes schools, community recreation centres, libraries, police stations, fire stations, and transit centres, among others uses. The renewal of the Zoning Bylaw provides the opportunity for civic services to better integrate within communities by including a broader mix of uses in the new standard zones and using regulations to mitigate impacts to surrounding properties.

The Open Spaces and Civic Services Zones discussion paper provides an overview of how the new Zoning Bylaw fits within The Draft City Plan's Green and Blue Network and discusses the open space policy framework's influence on the proposed direction for the new zones. The intent of the new zones is to ensure development regulations are easy to use, accessible to all and adaptable over time.

1) Excluding the recently annexed Leduc County lands, which have not been added to the City's inventory as of the writing of this paper.

# THE NEW ZONING BYLAW AND THE DRAFT CITY PLAN

Edmonton's first Zoning Bylaw came into effect in 1933. The very first zone in Zoning Bylaw 26 was the Metropolitan Recreation (A) Zone, which was applied to the North Saskatchewan River Valley and its tributaries. **The Metropolitan Recreation Zone laid the foundation for future regulations that would prevent the future development of this valuable portion of parkland within the city.**

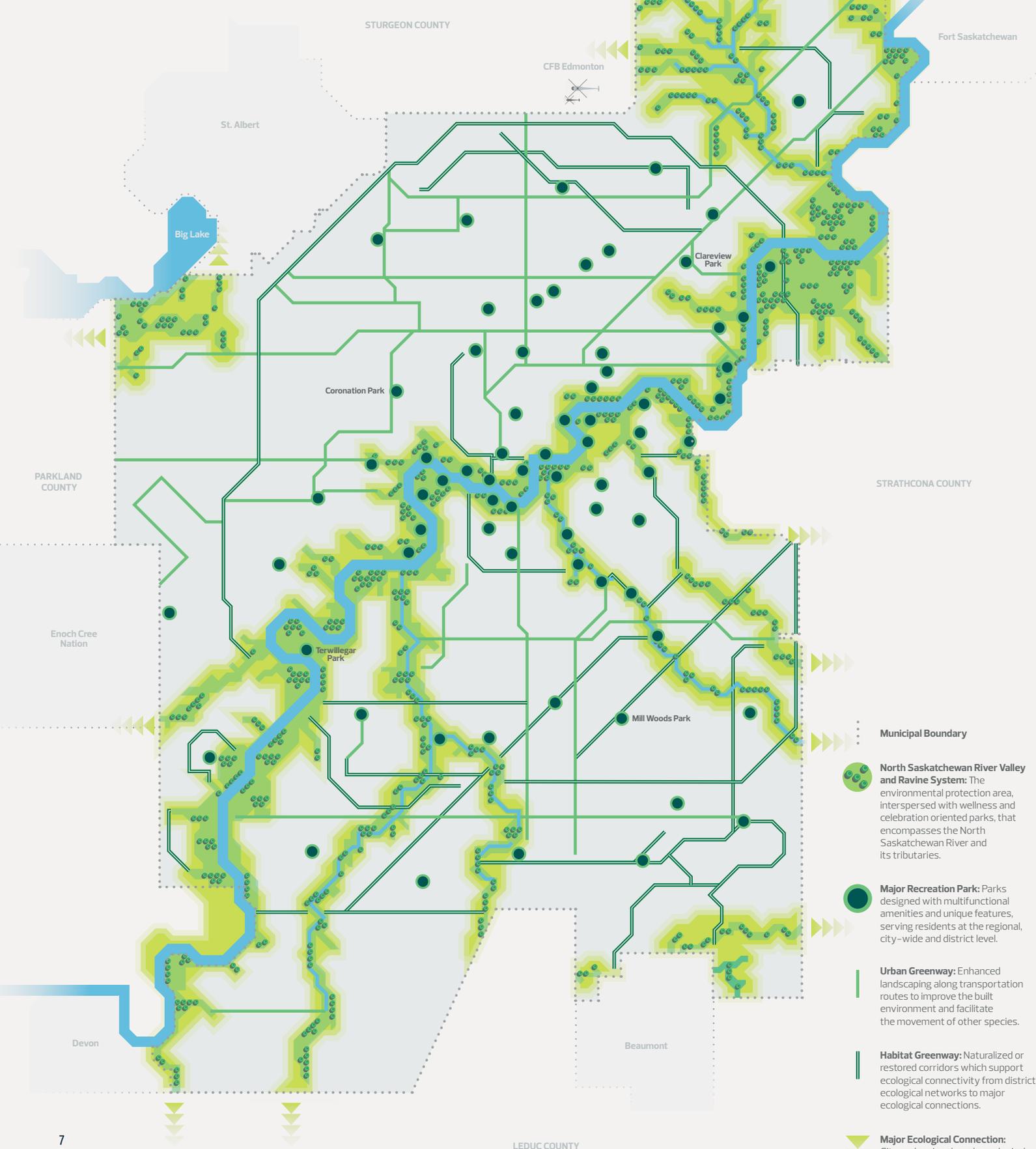
The last rewrite of the Zoning Bylaw was 20 years ago and much of Edmonton's current open space policy was not in place at that time. The new Zoning Bylaw provides the opportunity to rewrite the open space and civic services zones to align with The Draft City Plan and open space policies and **ensure the development and preservation of the green network is done effectively and sustainably.**

## **Open Space and Civic Services in The Draft City Plan Concept**

The Green and Blue Network in The Draft City Plan provides places for recreation, celebration and recharging. It is integrated with the built environment through parks, waterways and water bodies, greenways and urban trees. The Network includes both urban and natural areas. It supports biodiversity and provides physical and mental benefits Edmontonians appreciate and enjoy. The Network also establishes a set of components for Edmonton's parks and the connections between them. These include the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System, Habitat Greenways, Urban Greenways, Major Recreation Parks, and Major Ecological Connections. These are the lands that are currently used for recreation, health and ecological function, and will continue to be into the future.

The Draft City Plan also places significant importance on preserving the ecological function of natural systems in Edmonton through the Big City Move, Greener As We Grow. This Move states that Edmonton's growth should strengthen natural systems and create a healthy city that protects land, air, water and biodiversity. A target for this Big City Move is to see an additional two million new urban trees planted within city boundaries. The strategic measures for this target include the enhancement of the city's urban forest, identifying new areas for natural protection and supporting more hectares of green area per 100,000 residents.

Fig 1. The Draft City Plan – Green and Blue Network at 2 Million



Municipal Boundary

**North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System:** The environmental protection area, interspersed with wellness and celebration oriented parks, that encompasses the North Saskatchewan River and its tributaries.

**Major Recreation Park:** Parks designed with multifunctional amenities and unique features, serving residents at the regional, city-wide and district level.

**Urban Greenway:** Enhanced landscaping along transportation routes to improve the built environment and facilitate the movement of other species.

**Habitat Greenway:** Naturalized or restored corridors which support ecological connectivity from district ecological networks to major ecological connections.

**Major Ecological Connection:** City and regional-scale ecological network linkages.

## **Draft City Plan Intentions and Directions**

### **Parks and Open Space**

The Draft City Plan Concept ensures that the vision of the Green and Blue Network, and the Big City Moves are achieved in four key ways:

- + Protect and enhance natural systems
- + Ensure open space is welcoming, inclusive and accessible for all
- + Honour Indigenous connections to the river valley and open space
- + Support development that is sensitive to nature

### **Protect and Enhance Natural Systems**

The Draft City Plan policies emphasize the protection and enhancement of the city's natural systems. These policy directions include the substantial addition of trees to the city's urban forest, the protection of ecological function, and the preservation of the river valley by directing the responsible movement of people through it and limiting development within it.

Zoning can support these policy directions through the segregation of land for protection and active use.

### **Open Spaces are Welcoming, Inclusive and Accessible for All**

A key component of the Green and Blue Network is the focus on creating welcoming open spaces that are accessible, inclusive and multi-generational. Edmonton's open space network ranges from large metropolitan and district parks to small community and pocket parks and features places for conservation or gathering spaces for sport, recreation and entertainment. The Draft City Plan contains policy direction that supports and encourages community-led programming, way-finding and placemaking to transform these spaces into year-round places for all Edmontonians and visitors. Part of the philosophy of the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative is to advance the City's commitment to equity and consider the unintended social impacts of regulations while taking thoughtful and decisive action to create an equitable regulatory environment.

### **Honour Indigenous Connections to the River Valley and Open Space**

The Draft City Plan acknowledges that Edmonton has been built on lands previously used as meeting grounds for Indigenous peoples centuries before the first European settlers arrived. The river valley, ravine system and open space areas are located on Treaty 6 Territory and on the Métis homelands and Métis Nation of Alberta Region 4. It is important, as an act of reconciliation, to accommodate Indigenous gathering spaces and event spaces for cultural events, activities, ceremonies and practices, and ways to commemorate Indigenous history. The Draft City Plan supports the development of these spaces within the city's open spaces and natural areas. As part of the protection and enhancement of the open space and natural systems in Edmonton, Administration will recognize the cultural landscapes and Indigenous peoples' traditional use of the land.

Similar to the section above, the new Zoning Bylaw will address this by respecting the rights, cultural practices and activities of Indigenous peoples within natural areas and the river valley and by removing regulations that have had unintended social impacts on Indigenous peoples' rights and cultural practices.

### **Supporting Development that is Sensitive to Nature**

The Draft City Plan seeks to foster the connection between the urban places and natural systems to support healthier lifestyles for Edmontonians while preserving the integrity of natural areas. This concept is illustrated in the Urban and Habitat greenway connections within the Green and Blue Network.

There are a number of policies that specifically support the connection and design of open spaces and natural areas. Some policies direct the preservation of natural landscapes and ecological functions, while others support spaces and places for Edmontonians to gather and for recreation. While areas of the river valley and ravine system will continue to be dedicated for

ecological preservation and conservation, The Draft City Plan calls for enhancing access which may mean more development in select areas. The new Zoning Bylaw has a role in implementing these policies through zones that enable development in select locations and parks, and preservation of the river valley through zones that limit and restrict development.

The Draft City Plan also includes policy to eliminate future intensive resource extraction activities in the river valley and promote the remediation of contaminated sites. This policy is intended to ensure development occurs in an orderly and safe manner to protect public health and the environment. The new Zoning Bylaw has a role in protecting natural areas and the river valley by eliminating the resource development use in the new zones.

## **Civic Services**

The Draft City Plan identifies a number of policy objectives related to civic services and supporting healthy, adaptable communities. Policy themes in The Draft City Plan include enabling diverse communities and supporting economic and community investment and innovation.

### **Enabling Diverse Communities**

The Draft City Plan identifies that supporting diverse communities is important to enhance the quality of life of Edmontonians, to celebrate Edmonton's unique sense of place, to ensure the evolution of neighbourhoods over time, and to support income-diversity, equity and affordability. Zoning's role in implementing these policies is to make the zones more inclusive by allowing a greater mix of uses where appropriate, and supporting innovative built forms and housing types. This includes expanding civic service related uses to the new standard zones so there are more opportunities to integrate services, through various built forms, that support residents and communities.

## **Economic and Community Investment and Innovation**

The Draft City Plan policies recognize the importance of empowering businesses and communities, and enabling them to thrive through initiatives, investment, and innovation. Policies encourage the redevelopment and renewal of residential and non-residential areas to contribute to the livability and adaptability of districts. This is complemented by policies that support access to employment and a broad range of economic opportunities for all communities as well as encouraging innovative city building solutions through partnerships, pilots and prototyping.

The new Zoning Bylaw can support these policies by including a broad range of uses in residential, commercial and mixed-use zones, including expanded opportunities for civic service related uses in these zones. Broadening the uses allowed in residential and commercial areas along with streamlining the bylaw's regulatory processes will also support businesses and social entrepreneurs adapt to changing industries and respond to community needs.

## **Safe Development of Utilities and Infrastructure**

The Draft City Plan policies recognize the importance of ensuring development occurs in an orderly and safe manner to protect public health and the environment. Utilities are an essential component of city building and servicing. Utility corridors and stormwater management facilities also serve as urban and habitat connections, and are a key component of the open space network in Breathe. The close proximity of utilities to residential and environmentally sensitive areas requires regulation to ensure risks and impacts are mitigated. The Draft City Plan includes policy direction related to managing potential risk associated with utilities and utility corridors through the provision of adequate buffers, separation distances, and effective transition zones.

The new Zoning Bylaw has a role in managing risks by ensuring uses listed in zones are compatible and appropriate and integrating regulations to minimize impacts of development on environmentally sensitive areas. As noted earlier, The Draft City Plan recognizes some limited development will be necessary within the Green and Blue network. Where development

is necessary for utilities, zoning regulations will need to align with higher policies to ensure safe development within Edmonton's open spaces and river valley.

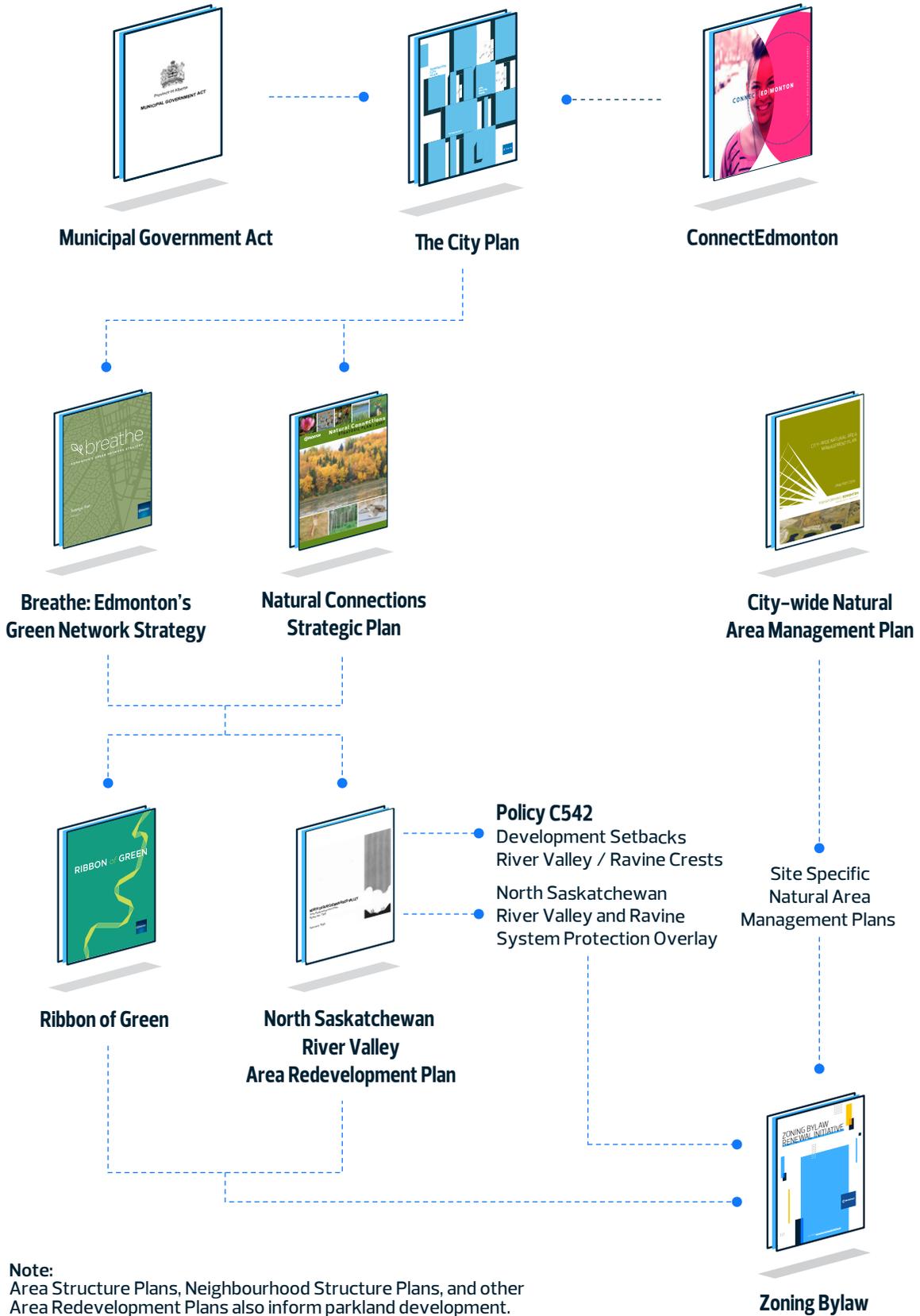
A full list of The Draft City Plan policy objectives related to open space and civic service zones is included in [Appendix 1](#).

## OPEN SPACE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Edmonton's open space policies are layered and complex. They ensure decisions about development in open spaces, natural areas, and the river valley balance preserving natural areas and providing access and amenities. **Policy and administrative procedures create a system of checks and balances that give stakeholders, parks users, community groups, Administration, and Council greater oversight on decisions related to proposed parkland development.** Most of the decisions regarding open space planning and development occur outside of the Zoning Bylaw, falling within the land development process or change to parkland process.

It is the new Zoning Bylaw's responsibility to accurately translate the existing open space policy framework – as shown in the illustration on page 9 – into functional zones and regulations. Since there is a high level of oversight for the planning and development of open spaces, zoning considerations can be streamlined and simplified. For an overview of how these policy documents apply to Open Space and Edmonton's River Valley, refer to [Appendix 2](#).

Fig 2. Policy Flow Chart



# CURRENT ISSUES OF OPEN SPACE AND CIVIC SERVICE ZONES

The management of Edmonton's parks and open space **is complex and involves a wide range of municipal departments to develop policy, acquire land, issue permits, and construct and maintain parkland facilities.** City of Edmonton staff who interact and use the Zoning Bylaw have identified a number of issues that can be addressed through the new Zoning Bylaw, including a need for:

- + Clarity required for signage and landscaping requirements
- + Regulations that consider standard building dimensions for sport facilities and utility infrastructure
- + Better alignment between the Zoning Bylaw and open space policy
- + Better guidance for reviewing and approving development within the river valley
- + Limited commercial opportunities in some park zones

## **Clarity Required for Signage and Landscaping Requirements**

Feedback indicated a need to simplify regulations to help clarify for the public what development is allowed within parks and open spaces. Internal stakeholders identified the need to reevaluate the regulations surrounding signage and landscaping requirements for school and parks sites.

Currently, the City does not have a citywide policy for signage. In the absence of policy guidance for signs in parkland areas, there is confusion for how on and off premise signage should be regulated and it is unclear if and where digital signs should be permitted within the park zones. Administration has identified that there is a desire for digital signs for more intensive parkland sites, particularly those with community recreation facilities or sites with community league buildings. However, concerns have been raised on the potential impacts these signs may have on wildlife, adjacent parkland and residential development. These concerns and impacts will be taken into

consideration in the crafting of the sign regulations for parkland areas. For more information about the proposed approach to signs for the new Zoning Bylaw, please refer to the [Signs discussion paper](#).

Administration also identified issues with the current method of calculating landscaping requirements for parks, which is impractical for school sites. Additionally, landscaping on public land is required to comply with the City Design and Construction Standards, which have different landscaping requirements than the Zoning Bylaw. The conflict between the bylaw and the design standards creates tension in determining which standards should apply when the requirements are not consistent. To create better consistency, Administration will explore practical and alternative measurements for landscaping requirements in line with the City's Design and Construction Standards that can be applied to park and school sites.

## Limitations for Public Facilities and Infrastructure

Staff have identified that the building heights of some zones are not meeting the needs of Edmonton’s public facilities, especially schools. Currently, the maximum building height in the Urban Services (US) and the Public Park (AP) Zones is 10 metres; however, in order to meet regulation height for a number of sports, gymnasiums need to be built over 10 metres in height. This generates the need for a height variance for almost every new school building two storeys or higher.

The development officer does have the authority to vary height in these zones, but it comes at a cost – development permits approved with a variance require a 21 day notification period and open up the potential for appeal. This can delay or jeopardize the construction of schools, which often require rapid approvals when provincial funding becomes available. In order to better meet the needs of schools, increased height limits will be considered for the new Zoning Bylaw.

City staff have also identified some challenges related to the maximum height regulations in the Public Utility (PU) Zone when utility towers or structures need to be installed; more flexibility in height will be considered to accommodate these situations as well.

## Misalignment between the Zoning Bylaw and Open Space Policies and Plans

Since the current Zoning Bylaw was adopted, Breathe, the City’s green network strategy has set a new policy approach for open space planning. Better alignment between these policies and the Zoning Bylaw is a key component of implementing the Breathe strategy. The Ribbon of Green also speaks to uses and activities compatible within the river valley and ravine system based on land management classifications. This also requires consideration of how the new zones are structured to ensure alignment with the Ribbon of Green.

Some of the uses in the park zones are outdated and incompatible with parks, such as the Resource Extraction use in the Metropolitan Recreation (A) Zone. The Draft City Plan directs the removal of this type of activity from being permitted in Edmonton’s river valley in order to preserve the ecological value of these lands.

## Limited Commercial Opportunities in Park Zones

The Draft City Plan and Breathe both identify opportunities for limited commercial amenities in select parks and open spaces. External stakeholders have also requested more commercial opportunities in the park zones. For example some community leagues would like to have access to further revenue generating opportunities, such as leasing a small portion of a community league building to a business, like a cafe, that also serves residents in the neighbourhood.

However, much of the parkland in Edmonton is designated as reserve land and enabling commercial opportunities on this land would be in contravention of the Municipal Government Act. Therefore, Administration will consider other potential avenues to permit such requests. In addition, other agreements such as the Tripartite License Agreement (between the City, Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, and individual community leagues) are in effect and may require changes in order to align with any new direction to how these lands can be used.



## MUNICIPAL BEST PRACTICES

Administration conducted a jurisdiction scan to see **how other cities regulate their public open spaces and civic services**. This jurisdiction scan included the cities of Calgary, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Saskatoon, Kamloops, Vancouver and Kelowna. These municipalities were selected due to **their geographical features that include being located next to large natural features such as rivers, lakes, streams or valleys**.

Through this review, Administration found that there is not a consistent approach to regulating parkland and environmentally significant areas, however a few themes emerged. Some municipalities, such as Saskatoon and Vancouver, do not use specific zones for parkland or natural areas; instead, these uses are listed in every zone. Both Saskatoon and Vancouver have agencies at an arm's length from their Council that have control and authority over parkland. Other

municipalities take a similar approach to Edmonton and apply specific zones to different parks based on the intended level of development, activity, or preservation. These zones range from natural area protection to major parkland destinations within the city. In cities that contain a significant natural feature such as Lethbridge (Oldmap River Valley), Grande Prairie (Muskoseepi Creek) and Calgary (Bow River Valley), environmental protection zones are used to preserve natural areas.

## GENERAL APPROACH TO THE NEW ZONES

The current Zoning Bylaw regulates Edmonton's Open Space and Civic Services activities through five parks zones, one public utility zone, four community services zones, and one urban institution zone. The new Zoning Bylaw proposes to simplify this so that there are only **three zones** used to protect and govern development on parkland: a **Natural Areas Zone, River Valley Recreation Zone, and an Urban Parks and Services Zone**.

These three zones will align with the open space classification in Breathe, and the land management classifications established in the City's parkland policy documents. [Table 1](#) outlines the proposed open space and civic services zones and their alignment with Breathe's open space classification system as well as the Ribbon of Green's land management classifications.

Due to the need for some public utility services to be in close proximity to natural features, such as wastewater treatment plants, and in proximity to residential areas, Administration is

proposing to maintain and update the Public Utility Zone. Administration also proposes to maintain the Urban Institutional (UI) Zone for existing institutional developments that fall under this zone, but retire the Community Service (CS1/CS2/CS3/CS4) Zones. New large urban institutional developments are proposed to be candidate sites for the proposed Comprehensive Site Zone (as described in the [Nodes and Corridors discussion paper](#)), and existing sites under Community Service Zones are proposed to be rezoned to the most closely applicable standard residential zones.

Table 1. Alignment of the Proposed Open Space and Civic Services Zones with Breathe and Ribbon of Green

Breathe Open Space Class	Ribbon of Green Land Management Classification	Proposed New Zone	General Purpose of Zone	Equivalent Zone in Current Zoning Bylaw	
+ Ecological Park (e.g., Poplar Lake, Larch Sanctuary)	Preservation (e.g., protected natural areas)	Natural Areas Zone	To preserve, conserve, and restore identified natural areas and preserve parkland in and along wetlands, treestands, prairies, the river, creeks, ravines and other designated areas for environmental protection.	NA	Natural Areas Zone
+ Ecological Park (e.g., Cameron Ravine) + Metropolitan Park (e.g., Terwillegar Park) + Municipal Golf Course (e.g., Victoria Golf Course) + Special Purpose Facilities (e.g., Kinsmen Park)	Preservation (e.g., protected natural areas) Conservation (e.g., natural areas and trails in metropolitan parks) Active/Working Landscapes (e.g., municipal golf courses)	River Valley Recreation Zone	To preserve and conserve natural areas and parkland along the river, creeks, ravines, and other areas designated for environmental protection while allowing for active and passive park uses in designated areas. This zone balances preserving the natural state of the river valley while allowing for more intensive development in accordance with the Ribbon of Green and the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.	A	Metropolitan Recreation Zone
+ Metropolitan Park (e.g., Coronation Park ) + District Parks (e.g., Dermott District Park) + Community Park (e.g., Ermineskin Park) + Pocket Park (e.g., Peace Garden Park) + Squares, Plazas, and Promenades (e.g., Sir Winston Churchill Square) + Special Purpose Facilities (e.g., Edmonton Valley Zoo) + School Sites(e.g., Victoria School) + Municipal Cemetery (e.g., South Haven) + Select Vacant Holdings	Active/Working Landscapes	Urban Parks and Services Zone	To regulate development on all parkland in Edmonton where development is planned for or required to make these spaces operational. They will consist of school sites, community league space, intensive recreation opportunities, open space, sports fields and playgrounds and sites of interest.	US AP AN	Urban Services Zone Public Parks Zone River Valley Activity Node Zone
+ Campus (e.g., MacEwan University grounds)	Active/Working Landscapes	Urban Institutional Zone	To provide for facilities that are educational or institutional nature in the city that may include additional uses that complement the development.	UI	Urban Institutional Zone
+ Connectors + Utility Corridor + Utility Lots	Active/Working Landscapes	Public Utility Zone	To provide for a system or facility that is used to provide a public benefit, convenience or use.	PU	Public Utility Zone

Note: Examples for the Opens Space Classifications are for illustrative purposes. Zoning for these classifications may be applied differently than shown above. Additional parks and open space types are listed in Breathe; however, these include parks and open spaces tend to occur on land that is on road right-of-way and/or lands that are under alternative jurisdiction and therefore are not listed in the table above. For a complete list of the Open Space Classifications identified in Breathe, please refer to [Appendix B in Part 5: From Policy to Action](#).

Although the open space classes identified in [Table 1](#) above are organized to coincide with a zone with a distinct purpose, each of these are part of a larger Green and Blue Network that contributes to the ecological, wellness, and celebration functions of Edmonton’s open space system. While Breathe aims to categorize open space based on intensity of use, functions supported, surrounding context and other factors, Administration proposes the zones above to enable and ensure the conservation, preservation and use of parkland in a streamlined manner.

## Natural Areas Zone

The purpose of the Natural Areas Zone is to preserve, conserve, and restore identified natural areas and preserve parkland in and along wetlands, treestands, prairies, the river, creeks, ravines and other designated areas for environmental protection.

It is proposed that this zone will be applied based on geographical area rather than by property line. This will lead to areas being split-zoned. This is to ensure that the natural area is protected while allowing for the remainder of any parkland surrounding the natural area to be zoned to allow for its intended development.

### Natural Area Management Plans

The Natural Areas Zone would generally apply to any lands with an approved Natural Area Management Plan or identified for preservation in a Council-approved secondary plan such as an Area Structure Plan, which sets out the boundaries of the specific natural feature that requires protection. Areas contained within the City Wide Natural Area Management Plan would also fall within this zone. It would apply to all lands currently zoned Natural Areas (NA) or be applied to those areas under the ownership of the city and identified as an environmentally sensitive area. Proposed rezonings to the Natural Areas zone would trigger the requirement for a Natural Area Management Plan (NAMP). Any development within the Natural Area zone would need to comply with the NAMP.

### Uses

Uses within this zone would be deliberately limited to Natural Areas, Public Parks and to allow for signage for interpretive displays. The most intensive type of development within this zone would include the inclusion of the special events use in this zone. Administration will explore how to ensure the Zoning Bylaw does not create barriers to Indigenous cultural activities and practices within the river valley and natural areas. This will inform how the definition of special events can be more inclusive to the many ways that Indigenous peoples connect with the land, and will inform how these special events may be permitted within natural areas.

### Regulations

No specific development regulations will be included in this zone. However, it is proposed that the placement and location of any development within this zone shall be at the discretion of the development officer in consultation with open space planning and guidance from the Natural Area Management Plan.

## River Valley Recreation Zone – The “A” Zone

The purpose of this zone is to preserve and conserve natural areas and parkland along the river, creeks, ravines, and other areas designated for environmental protection while allowing for active and passive park uses in designated areas. This space requires a delicate balance of preserving the natural state of the river valley while allowing for more intensive development than is permitted within the proposed Natural Areas Zone.

The continuation of the “A” zone within Edmonton’s past and future zoning bylaws illustrates how the North Saskatchewan River Valley is the city’s largest and most valued natural, recreational, and cultural asset.

### Uses

Uses within this zone will remain similar to what is currently reflected in the Metropolitan Recreation (A) Zone. The primary uses within this zone will be natural areas, public parks, and special events.

Uses of a civic service or community gathering space nature will be allowed within this zone, however conditions will be applied to these uses to ensure they are located in appropriate locations based on direction from parkland policy, such as the Ribbon of Green and the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan. The Residential use is included in this zone as a **Conditional use** so that existing developments, such as existing single detached housing already located in the river valley, may be allowed to continue, but they will not be able to expand.

**Conditional Uses** are uses that will be permitted in a given zone provided a certain set of conditions are met. In this way, conditional uses function differently than the discretionary uses of the current Zoning Bylaw. If the conditions are not met, the proposal for the conditional use would either be refused or the Development Officer could consider exercising discretion in granting a variance to the condition. If a variance is granted, the approval would be subject to appeal and notification to surrounding neighbours would be required.

Based on direction from The Draft City Plan, natural resource development activities will not be included in this zone. Edmonton’s river valley will be preserved as a space for conservation, recreation, and cultural activities.

### Development Regulations

A minimum set of development setbacks and building heights will be established for this zone. The development officer will be able to grant variances to building height where deemed appropriate for the use. Development regulations in this zone will need to coincide with protection overlays that apply to the river valley, such as Floodplain Protection Overlay and the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System Protection Overlay. For additional information on the proposed approach for the use of overlays in the new Zoning Bylaw, please refer to the [Overlays discussion paper](#).

## Urban Parks and Services Zone

The Urban Parks and Services Zone is proposed to regulate development on all parkland in Edmonton where a certain level of development is planned for or required to make these spaces operational. They will consist of school sites, community league space, intensive recreation opportunities, open space, sports fields and playgrounds and sites of interest (e.g., Fort Edmonton Park, Edmonton Valley Zoo, Buena Vista/Sir Wilfred Laurier Park). While this zone will be applied primarily to those lands outside of the river valley, lands contained within the existing Activity Node (AN) Zone will also be incorporated into this zone as areas designated for development within the river valley.

### Uses

This zone will be the most intensive for development of all the proposed open space zones. It will primarily be focused on community gathering spaces (schools, libraries, recreation facilities, etc.) but will also focus on facilitating civic service development, public utilities (such as storm ponds), and open spaces. The scale and intensity of use will be dependent on policy direction from the Breathe, Ribbon of Green, and other parkland policy documents including secondary plans.

The current Activity Node (AN) Zone allows for large site-specific developments within the river valley that serve as major destinations within the city. In the new Zoning Bylaw, it is proposed that existing Activity Nodes (i.e. The Valley Zoo, Fort Edmonton Park, Louise McKinney Park) within the zone will be incorporated into the Urban Parks and Services Zone. However, expansions to existing nodes as well as development for future ones will need to be permitted in accordance with policy from secondary plans.

Stakeholders have requested for commercial opportunities to be included in this zone. Some of the lands that would be included in the Urban Parks and Services zone are reserve lands, which are acquired through the subdivision process and are intended to provide parks and services that support the community as a whole. Dedicated reserve lands must be used in accordance with the

Municipal Government Act (MGA), which states the primary uses of reserve land shall be for public parks, recreation, or schools. Administration will explore how to include some commercial activities in this zone while ensuring the use of reserve lands does not contradict the MGA's requirements. This will involve identifying which open space areas carry a reserve dedication and exploring whether the agreements in place may allow for commercial opportunities as either a primary or accessory use.

### Development Regulations

When planning for future open space development, a variety of tools have been used to envision what these spaces will look like when fully developed or redeveloped. They are prepared through extensive analysis of existing policy, in consultation with key stakeholders, and in consideration of the uses of the open space in question. These can include a master plan or a concept plan. While these plans are helpful in identifying the future use and development of an open space, in some instances there is no approved plan for a park. Where there is a plan in place, any new development permit applications will be encouraged to submit an approved site development plan or equivalent for review to ensure that the proposal meets the vision of the park master plan or concept plan.

For new school developments, in order to meet provincial requirements for gymnasiums, the building height in this zone is proposed to increase to 12 to 14 metres. Administration is proposing to carry forward the ability to vary height on a case by case basis to allow for more innovative school design.

In order to streamline landscaping requirements on parkland it is proposed that landscaping will be based on a percentage of the site to be developed or by some other measurement. Regulations in this zone are proposed to align with the City's Design and Construction Standards and also to advance The Draft City Plan's target of planting an additional two million trees in Edmonton. Winter City design requirements for enhanced landscaping are also proposed to be incorporated.

The safety and inclusiveness of park spaces is paramount. Administration will explore and integrate development regulations that ensure universally designed, safe and culturally relevant park spaces are developed.

In the River Valley, the Activity Node (AN) Zone allows for flexible uses and regulations to accommodate one-off facilities like the Valley Zoo and Fort Edmonton Park in a contextually appropriate way. This avoids challenges associated with the use of Direct Control zones (see [Direct Control Zones discussion paper](#)). Special activity areas are defined in relation to regular activity and protection areas, implementing detailed planning from a Park Master Plan or equivalent document. It is proposed that the activity areas will be carried forward in the proposed Urban Parks and Services Zone, and the protection areas will be captured under the proposed Natural Areas and River Valley Recreation zones.

## **Public Utility Zone**

The purpose of this Zone is to provide for a system or facility that is used to provide a necessary service, public benefit or use. This zone would continue to be applied to sites currently zoned as Public Utility (PU) and added to new sites designated for this purpose.

### **Uses**

Uses within this zone will remain similar to what is currently reflected in the existing Public Utility (PU) Zone, but will be updated to the new land use classifications. Administration is also proposing to allow some commercial activities within the Public Utility Zone provided these activities are accessory to civic service related uses, such as transit centres.

### **Development Regulations**

Regulations in this zone will mostly remain similar to what is currently reflected in the existing Public Utility (PU) Zone, but will be streamlined to contain all regulations, such as performance standards, relevant to this zone in order to reduce cross referencing other sections of the new bylaw where possible. It is proposed to maintain flexibility for how height is regulated for development accommodating utilities or a City operated service.

## **Urban Institutional Zone**

The proposed approach for existing sites within the Urban Institutional zone is to update the zoning regulations to align with the structure and format of the new bylaw, but not remove any existing development rights. New developments that would typically fall under the Urban Institutional Zone would be good candidates for the proposed Comprehensive Site Zone (refer to the [Nodes and Corridors discussion paper](#)).

The Urban Institutional (UI) Zone currently includes a variety of site specific institutional developments (primarily post secondary education facilities), and demonstrates a need for a zone for large site institutional development in the new Zoning Bylaw. These sites require a comprehensive set of regulations in a standard zone without deferring to direct control zoning. Integrating these types of development in the proposed Comprehensive Site (CS) Zone will ensure adaptability in that sites that fall under this zone will be able to evolve with the Zoning Bylaw as it is amended. This approach also provides the flexibility needed to manage contextual impacts through an urban design brief, allowing the site to develop and adjust to market conditions as needed.



## Community Services Zones

In 2006 the Community Services Zones (CS1/CS2/CS3/CS4) were added to the Zoning Bylaw to implement the City’s First Place Program to make use of approximately 20 surplus school sites for housing accessible to first time home buyers. The differences between the four zones is based on the initial zoning of the reserve sites, some were originally zoned Urban Service (US), Public Parks (AP), Urban Reserve (AGU), and Agriculture (AG). Each Community Service Zone was created to maintain existing development rights from the base zones and combine these rights with additional provisions to enable row housing development. As such, the following table shows the base zone corresponding with each Community Service Zone.

**Table 2.** Corresponding Base Zone for Each Community Service Zone

Base Zone	Corresponding Community Services Zone
Urban Service (US) Zone	CS1
Public Parks (AP) Zone	CS2
Urban Reserve (AGU) Zone	CS3
Agriculture (AG) Zone	CS4

Coinciding with the creation of these zones, the Government of Alberta approved a planning exemption in the Municipal Government Act (MGA) for designated surplus sites, including the requirement for a public hearing to rezone the sites to the Community Services Zones. The intent of the exemptions was to provide the City the necessary planning approvals and mechanisms to develop housing for eligible first time home buyers on the lands with compressed timelines and without the normal input from external stakeholders. Since the adoption of the Community Services Zones, twelve sites have been completed, three sites are near completion, and four are designated for future development.

Since 2006, additional reserve sites have been identified as being surplus, some of which are planned for future housing initiatives. However, these sites have not been rezoned to the Community Services Zones, nor have they been granted the same exemptions by the Province as the initial surplus sites. Due to limitations of the Community Services Zones for housing initiatives (which are primarily limited to row housing developments), it is anticipated that the newer surplus lands will be rezoned to new standard residential zones when the housing initiatives are ready to proceed.

With the majority of first time home buyer sites nearing completion, future application of the Community Service Zones (CS1/CS2/CS3/CS4) on reserve lands will not be required. With most of the first place sites having been built out as residential, these sites should be rezoned to the most closely applicable residential zone. As such, Administration is proposing to retire the Community Service Zones. For additional information on the proposed directions for residential zones, please refer to the [Residential Zones discussion paper](#).

## **Civic Services Use Classification**

A new Zoning Bylaw offers the opportunity to rethink how existing urban service related uses fit within the zoning framework. As part of the approach to reduce complexity in the new Zoning Bylaw, uses are proposed to be simplified by consolidating those in the current bylaw that have similar land use impacts. Community recreation services, schools, and libraries tend to be zoned similarly and generate similar land use impacts. These uses are proposed to fit under one use called 'Civic Services'.

To enable neighbourhoods to adapt over time to changing community needs, it is proposed that the new Civic Services use be allowed in the new standard residential, commercial, and mixed-use zones, with conditions to ensure development is contextually appropriate with other development within the zone. Conditions may be used to minimize impacts of Civic Service activities, such as additional landscaping to buffer parking lots facing residential development.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Further conversation with both City staff and external stakeholders is needed to determine how cultural uses and activities interact with natural areas in Edmonton. **Zoning is not intended to regulate the user.** However, in consideration of the relationship Indigenous peoples have with the land, Administration is examining ways **the Zoning Bylaw will not inadvertently create barriers to Indigenous peoples' rights and cultural practices and activities within natural areas and the river valley.**

As climate resilience is an important strategic goal of ConnectEdmonton, the City's Strategic Plan, and informs a number of policies in The Draft City Plan, Administration is also considering ways to integrate regulations to help meet the City's energy transition and climate adaptation goals through the new Zoning Bylaw. These zones will feature regulations that make development in Edmonton more climate-resilient. Possible zoning actions and approaches to integrate climate resilience in the new Zoning Bylaw are addressed in the [Climate Resilience and Energy Transition discussion paper](#).

Signs in Edmonton's parks and open spaces are generally associated with development such as schools, community league buildings, and city-owned and operated facilities. It is proposed that signs for these uses will need to meet certain conditions in order to be approved. This approach will allow for increased flexibility to achieve City objectives, for example, prohibiting the development of digital signage in or near natural areas like parks or ravines. For more information about the proposed approach to signs for the new Zoning Bylaw, please refer to the [Signs discussion paper](#).

# ZONE SUMMARIES

The following is a high-level overview of the proposed Open Space and Civic Services zones. A description of uses listed within the zones is included in [Appendix 4](#) of this paper.

## Natural Areas Zone

### General Purpose

To preserve, conserve, and restore identified natural areas and preserve parkland in and along wetlands, treestands, prairies, the river, creeks, ravines and other designated areas for environmental protection.

### Permitted Uses

- + Protected Natural Area

### Conditional Uses

- + Signs
- + Special Events

### Conditional Use Regulations

- + No development whatsoever will be permitted where the Protected Natural Area use is applied unless the location of potential future development (i.e. footpaths, interpretive signage) has been identified within an approved Natural Area Management Plan.
- + Signs will only be permitted if they are identified and potential future locations have been identified in an approved Natural Area Management Plan.
- + Special Events will be limited to a maximum number of people and/or another intensity as a means to cap the level of impact any special event may have on the protected natural area.
- + Any structures erected within this zone shall be in accordance with an approved Natural Area Management Plan for the purpose of serving the natural area.

### Site Regulations

- + The boundary of the zone is proposed to include the extent of the Natural Area and any necessary buffers in accordance with an approved Natural Area Management Plan.

### Development Regulations

- + There will be no specific development regulations, in the sense that there will be no prescribed setbacks, building height, etc.

### Performance Criteria

- + There will be no specific performance criteria for this zone.

**Conditional Uses** are uses that will be permitted in a given zone provided a certain set of conditions are met. In this way, conditional uses function differently than the discretionary uses of the current Zoning Bylaw. If the conditions are not met, the proposal for the conditional use would either be refused or the Development Officer could consider exercising discretion in granting a variance to the condition. If a variance is granted, the approval would be subject to appeal and notification to surrounding neighbours would be required.

## River Valley Recreation Zone – The A Zone

### General Purpose

The purpose of this zone is to preserve and conserve natural areas and parkland along the river, creeks, ravines, and other areas designated for environmental protection while allowing for active and passive park uses in designated areas. This zone balances preserving the natural state of the river valley while allowing for more intensive development in accordance with the Ribbon of Green and the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.

### Permitted Uses

- + Recreation
- + Protected Natural Area

### Conditional Uses

- + Residential, existing as of Month, Date, 2022
- + Agricultural Uses, existing as of Month, Date, 2022
- + Special Event
- + Signs

### Conditional Use Regulations

- + Conditions related to the location, extent and duration of any special events located within this zone will be applied.
- + While not listed uses, existing residential uses within this zone will be allowed to continue.
- + Any existing agricultural and residential development within the zone will be allowed to continue, but not redevelop or expand beyond what currently exists without prior approval from Administration and/or Council. Any future residential development is prohibited either in the general purpose statement or as a regulation.
- + Specific conditions will be applied to signs to ensure their development will not impact the river valley and their natural systems.

### Site Regulations

- + N/A

### Development Regulations

- + Minimum development setbacks will be established.
- + A maximum height limit will be proposed for all physical structures within the zone.
- + Landscaping requirements will be included to protect, conserve, restore, and enhance the river valley's natural features and systems.

### Performance Criteria

- + Any proposed structures within the A Zone shall be developed in a way that enhances its natural surroundings and does not detract from the natural setting of the river valley.
- + All development within the river valley shall be assessed whether the ground is geotechnically sound and will not contribute to erosion or slumping of the river valley.
- + Developments to be reviewed for alignment with the Ribbon of Green and site specific park master plans.
- + The submission of an environmental review for all major facilities (in accordance with the North Saskatchewan River Valley ARP) within the river valley is required.

## **Urban Parks and Services Zone**

### **General Purpose**

The purpose of this Zone is to regulate development on all parkland in Edmonton where development is planned for or required to make these spaces operational. They will consist of school sites, community league space, intensive recreation opportunities, open space, sports fields and playgrounds and sites of interest.

### **Permitted Uses**

- + Agricultural Uses
- + Special Events
- + Recreation

### **Conditional Uses**

- + Indoor Sales and Services
- + Civic Services
- + Food, Culture, and Entertainment
- + Protected Natural Area
- + Public Utility
- + Signs

### **Conditional Use Regulations**

- + Indoor Sales and Services and Food, Culture, and Entertainment uses are proposed to only be allowed as accessory development in conjunction with a community recreation centre or an existing or future activity node within the river valley, provided the use and activity does not contradict the uses permitted for reserve lands.
- + Public Utility uses are to be limited to services that have minimal or no impact on surrounding natural systems or are required to manage some aspect of the development on site, such as storm ponds for drainage.
- + Civic Services must have direction from a Council-approved policy or secondary plan when development is proposed on land designated for parkland. Where no approved policy or secondary plan exists, the Development Officer may use their discretion in consultation with Open Space Planning.

### **Site Regulations**

- + Schools, libraries, community facilities and recreation facilities will be the primary development forms within this zone. Sites will be limited to the area identified in a secondary plan or joint use agreement.

### **Development Regulations**

- + Minimum development setbacks:
  - Front Setback – 6.0 metres
  - Rear Setback – 7.5 metres
  - Side Setback – 4.5 metres
- + Height limits in the range of 12 to 14 metres; Development Officers to exercise discretion for development greater than 12 to 14 metres.
- + Landscaping requirements will be required to protect, conserve, restore, and enhance Edmonton's natural features and systems, move towards The Draft City Plan target of 2 million more trees planted, and to incorporate winter city design elements.
- + Surface parking area maximums to be determined.
- + Signs will carry additional development requirements.
- + Approved site development plan or equivalent may be submitted as part of a development permit application.

### **Performance Criteria**

- + Developments in the river valley to be reviewed for alignment with the Ribbon of Green or an approved master plan, concept plan or equivalent (if applicable).
- + All development within the river valley shall be assessed whether the ground is geotechnically sound and will not contribute to erosion or slumping of the river valley and ravine system.
- + The submission of an environmental impact assessment for all major facilities (in accordance with the North Saskatchewan River Valley ARP) within the river valley is required.
- + Development regulations to incorporate culturally relevant, universally designed park spaces to be determined.

## Public Utility Zone

### General Purpose

The purpose of this Zone is to provide for a system or facility that is used to provide a public benefit, convenience or use.

### Permitted Uses

- + Agriculture
- + Public Utility
- + Recreation
- + Special Events

### Conditional Uses

- + Civic Services
- + Indoor Sales and Services
- + Minor Industrial
- + Major Industrial
- + Signs

### Conditional Use Regulations

- + Civic Services are proposed to be limited to transit centres
- + Indoor Sales and Services are proposed to be limited to those accessory to Civic Services

### Site Regulations

- + N/A

### Development Regulations

- + Height limits in the range of 12 to 14 metres, except height may increase to 18 metres if the site is 0.75 ha or greater. The Development Officer may vary height to accommodate industrial activities related to a utility or City operated service.
- + Minimum development setbacks:
  - Front Setback – 6.0 metres
  - Rear Setback – 7.5 metres
  - Side Setback – 4.5 metres

### Performance Criteria

- + The submission of an environmental review for all major facilities (in accordance with the North Saskatchewan River Valley ARP) within the river valley is required.
- + General performance standard regulations to apply based on the location of where this zone is applied. Regulations would require development to be designed to improve the outward appearance to any adjacent zone and mitigate/reduce any off-site impacts. Enhanced landscaping may be included.
- + Where this Zone is next to a Natural Area (NA) or River Valley Recreation (A) Zone, the Development Officer may require an Environmental Impact Assessment for new development and apply conditions to ensure environmental impacts to these zones are mitigated.

## NEXT STEPS

The proposed open space and civic services zones are intended **to align with new and revised parks policy and The Draft City Plan**. These zones will support the preservation of natural areas, allow for the responsible stewardship and sensitive development of the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System and address tableland development through the proposed Urban Parks and Services Zone.

These proposed zones and regulations are a first attempt at creating a new Zoning Bylaw and are based on **best practices and the policy direction in The Draft City Plan**. Administration is seeking feedback on the proposed application, direction and viability of these proposed zones. This project will require input from **residents, businesses, and many others to help refine and improve these ideas** to ensure the final regulations will achieve the goals of developing zoning regulations to support sensitive development of Edmonton's parks and open spaces.



## GET INVOLVED!

- Submit your feedback about this discussion paper at [engaged.edmonton.ca](https://engaged.edmonton.ca)
- Visit [edmonton.ca/zoningbylawrenewal](https://edmonton.ca/zoningbylawrenewal)
- For all other ideas and feedback regarding Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative, please use the [General Feedback Form](#)
- Subscribe to our [newsletter](#)
- Contact us at [zoningbylawrenewal@edmonton.ca](mailto:zoningbylawrenewal@edmonton.ca)



## Appendix 11 The Draft City Plan Policies Applicable to Open Space and Civic Service Zones

I want to BELONG and contribute		
Intention	1.1.1	Promote personal and community wellness and connection through inclusive and welcoming places.
Direction	1.1.1.2	Design new and retrofit existing open spaces networks to encompass wellness, celebration and ecology at the district level.
Direction	1.1.1.3	Collaborate with school boards to deliver educational spaces and community facilities that provide additional recreation and gathering opportunities.
Direction	1.1.1.4	Encourage healthy and active living by supporting community-focused recreational, leisure, social and cultural programs.
Direction	1.1.1.5	Develop, enable and animate community hubs for intergenerational gathering.
Intention	1.2.1	Promote active communities through the design of diverse, welcoming and playful public places.
Direction	1.2.1.1	Enable publicly accessible spaces that invite exploration and support interaction and learning for people of all ages.
Direction	1.2.1.3	Encourage and support the use of public space in formal and informal ways throughout the year.
Direction	1.2.1.4	Design public spaces that are safe and easy to navigate for people with disabilities.
Direction	1.2.2.2	Design open space and play space to accommodate intergenerational use.
Direction	1.2.3.1	Acknowledge Treaty Six and recognize the First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples and their connection to this land.
Intention	1.3.1	Support and celebrate the distinct communities that contribute to Edmonton, its quality of life and unique sense of place.
Direction	1.3.1.2	Provide opportunities for people to easily connect to and experience open space and features within districts.
Direction	1.3.1.3	Provide diverse design and development in all neighbourhoods so communities can continue to evolve over time.
Direction	1.3.2.4	Improve and integrate winter city design through the development of buildings, the public realm and open spaces.
Intention	1.3.3	Support the elimination of poverty, its root causes and disparity in Edmonton's communities.
Direction	1.3.3.4	Enable all districts to achieve more income-diverse neighbourhoods and a greater mix of land uses.

I want to BELONG and contribute		
Intention	1.4.2	Ensure Edmonton's air, land and water is safe and clean.
Direction	1.4.2.1	Protect, restore, maintain and enhance a system of conserved natural areas within a functioning and interconnected ecological network.
Direction	1.4.2.3	Expand and enhance a healthy and sustainable urban forest.

I want to LIVE in a place that feels like home		
Intention	2.1.1	Ensure that publicly accessible spaces and facilities are designed and maintained for the year-round safety, security and comfort of all users.
Direction	2.1.1.1	Improve access to the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine system.
Direction	2.1.1.3	Design public spaces that are easy to navigate and explore for Edmontonians and visitors.
Direction	2.1.1.5	Develop and retrofit publicly accessible spaces and facilities to incorporate safe access for all Edmontonians.
Direction	2.1.2.3	Manage the impact of environmental stressors on people and natural systems including excessive noise, air and light pollution.
Direction	2.1.2.4	Incorporate nature and natural systems into the built environment.
Intention	2.1.3	Ensure that development occurs in an orderly and safe manner to protect public health and the environment.
Direction	2.1.3.1	Require investigation of potentially contaminated sites and where appropriate require remediation to ensure site suitability.
Intention	2.2.1	Promote compact, mixed use development within districts that supports equitable access to employment, education and amenities.
Direction	2.2.1.2	Improve local open space and public amenities to support density increases.
Direction	2.2.1.4	Use full City authority in the provision of municipal reserve, school reserve, or municipal and school reserve, or cash-in-lieu in accordance with the Municipal Government Act.
Intention	2.2.2	Ensure affordable housing and local food options to support social equity and meet the needs of all Edmontonians.
Direction	2.2.2.1	Streamline provision of affordable housing in all neighbourhoods through continual regulatory and procedural review and improvement.
Direction	2.2.2.5	Facilitate local urban agricultural opportunities through education, supportive programming and regulation.
Direction	2.2.3.2	Preserve and strengthen the role of Centre City as Edmonton's principal employment and residential node, regional economic and mobility hub, urban and traditional meeting place and celebration space.

I want to LIVE in a place that feels like home		
Direction	2.2.3.5	Prioritize the building, activation and maintenance of beautiful, comfortable public spaces at nodes and corridors.
Intention	2.3.1	Promote opportunities to accommodate growth through the compact development of new and existing neighbourhoods.
Direction	2.3.1.3	Encourage residential and non-residential redevelopment that contributes to the livability and adaptability of districts (see map 5 - Non-Residential Opportunities Network).
Intention	2.3.3	Promote gathering spaces for culture, sports, recreation and entertainment opportunities to support both formal and informal uses.
Direction	2.3.3.2	Collaborate with adjacent municipalities and Enoch Cree Nation to identify opportunities for shared investment in recreation and cultural facilities.
Direction	2.3.3.3	Provide gathering and event spaces for hosting Indigenous cultural and ceremonial practices.
Direction	2.3.3.4	Animate open spaces at all scales through programming, activities and events that encourage daily and all-season use.
Direction	2.4.1.2	Conserve, restore and reconnect natural areas and ecological networks within the built environment for human and ecosystem health.
Direction	2.4.2.7	Efficiently use public land and develop multifunctional and multipurpose facilities in new and redeveloping neighbourhoods.

I want opportunities to THRIVE		
Intention	3.1.1	Support the ability of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples to celebrate, grow and flourish.
Direction	3.1.1.1	Commemorate and celebrate Indigenous history and culture through the planning and design of civic spaces.
Intention	3.1.3	Support access to employment and a broad range of economic opportunities for all of Edmonton's diverse communities.
Direction	3.1.3.5	Develop regulations and processes that are efficient, streamlined and easily understood in order to enhance Edmonton's competitiveness for investors and entrepreneurs.
Direction	3.1.3.7	Encourage social enterprise opportunities and community development initiatives.
Intention	3.3.1	Support opportunity for local economic and community resilience through development, revitalization and renewal.
Direction	3.3.1.3	Encourage entrepreneurial opportunities through support for emerging and non-traditional workplace locations.

**I want opportunities to THRIVE**

Intention	3.3.2	Promote the continuous improvement, evolution and intensification of Edmonton's non-residential lands.
Direction	3.3.2.6	Increase ecological function within non-residential areas.

**I want ACCESS within my city**

Direction	4.1.3.1	Deliver welcoming public facilities and services that are friendly for all ages and abilities, as well as universally accessible.
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**I want to PRESERVE what matters most**

Intention	5.1.1	Ensure protection, enhancement and opportunities for access to open space and the river valley and ravine system.
Direction	5.1.1.1	Provide opportunities for people to access, enjoy and connect to open space and the river valley and ravine system.
Direction	5.1.1.2	Facilitate the recreational use of the North Saskatchewan River as a regional water corridor.
Direction	5.1.1.3	Expand and enhance Urban Greenways as part of the Green and Blue Network to improve the built and natural environment.
Direction	5.1.1.4	Provide wayfinding support and improved connections within and between open spaces and natural areas.
Direction	5.1.1.5	Maintain the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine system's key role as an environmental protection area and for open space, cultural and recreational uses.
Direction	5.1.1.6	Acquire lands within the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine system for natural areas protection, open space connectivity and use.
Direction	5.1.1.7	Enhance Edmonton's open space network to be inclusive and equitably accessible through planning and infrastructure improvements in consideration of the surrounding environment.
Intention	5.1.2	Promote the conservation and restoration of natural systems to improve ecological connectivity and reduce habitat fragmentation.
Direction	5.1.2.1	Improve the quality and function of habitat greenways and ecological connections within the Green and Blue Network.
Direction	5.1.2.2	Expand and diversify Edmonton's urban tree canopy and native vegetation.
Direction	5.1.2.3	Pursue the protection, management and integration of wetlands into new and existing developments.

I want to PRESERVE what matters most		
Direction	5.1.2.4	Use environmental reserve to protect land and water bodies that meet the definition of environmental reserve but are not claimed by the Province in a manner that balances interests and enables contiguous and efficient urban development.
Direction	5.1.2.5	Coordinate protection, restoration and enhancement of the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine system and ecological networks through outreach, education and partnerships.
Direction	5.1.2.6	Steward ecological networks and systems to ensure ongoing function, long-term sustainability and ecological connectivity within Edmonton and the region.
Direction	5.2.1.5	Collaborate with Indigenous communities to understand and recognize cultural landscapes and traditional land use areas.
Direction	5.3.2.3	Prevent resource extraction within the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine system in order to preserve its ecological value.
Direction	5.3.3.1	Expand and enhance regional ecological connectivity as development and redevelopment occurs.
Intention	5.4.1	Ensure the safety and security of Edmonton's water supply, food systems, infrastructure and natural systems to support long term resilience to flooding, droughts and extreme weather events.
Direction	5.4.1.1	Manage stormwater runoff and improve water quality through the design and development of the built environment.
Direction	5.4.1.4	Adapt management practices in response to changes in native and invasive species.
Direction	5.4.1.6	Prevent, mitigate and respond to environmentally harmful events to minimize the impact to the urban environment.

I want to be able to CREATE and innovate		
Intention	6.1.1	Promote city building solutions with communities through prototyping, partnerships and piloting.
Direction	6.1.1.5	Expand programming and encourage flexible use of open spaces and public facilities year round.
Intention	6.1.2	Promote community-based placemaking to retrofit and redevelop open spaces and public facilities.
Direction	6.1.2.1	Encourage community led park redevelopment through coordination, planning and design.
Direction	6.1.2.3	Consider commercial opportunities and amenities within limited areas of the Green and Blue Network.

I want to be able to CREATE and innovate		
Direction	6.1.2.4	Encourage activation of underutilized public space through urban design and programming.
Intention	6.2.1	Promote the integration of art, design and culture into the fabric of the city and its communities.
Direction	6.2.1.4	Integrate public art as a means of activating open space and public facilities throughout the city.
Intention	6.3.1	Promote health and academic institutions as anchors for innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity.
Direction	6.3.2	Support an increasingly diverse and entrepreneurial knowledge economy.
Direction	6.3.2.2	Facilitate opportunities for short term and temporary creative use of commercial spaces through programs and incentives, and regulatory flexibility.

## Appendix 2 | Open Space Policy Framework

The policies listed below work together to create a comprehensive framework that provides direction for all development happening within Edmonton's open spaces.

### Municipal Government Act

Through the Municipal Government Act, municipalities are granted the authority to acquire reserve land as part of the subdivision process. Reserve land can be acquired and dedicated as Environmental Reserve, Municipal Reserve, or School Reserve for the purpose of preserving natural areas and for the development of public parks, recreation areas and schools. Conservation Reserve and Community Services Reserve may also be used but are dedicated through a separate municipal bylaw process. Reserve land is then appropriately zoned to ensure that development rights align with the requirements of the Municipal Government Act.

This is the framework all existing park policy and future development regulations in the new Zoning Bylaw must work within for reserve land, as prescribed by the Province. For more details on Municipal and Environmental Reserves, refer to [Appendix 3](#).

### Breathe and Edmonton's Open Space Policy (C594)

Situated under The Draft City Plan, Breathe – Edmonton's Green Network Strategy was created to set the direction for the sustainable care and expansion of Edmonton's open spaces. It acknowledges the interconnected nature of open spaces across the city and considers the amount, function and configuration of all publicly accessible open spaces to form a comprehensive picture of the entire green network. Policy C594, Edmonton's Open Space Policy, was adopted with the approval of Breathe. The policy commits the City to supporting a connected landscape, a multifunctional network and the equitable provision of open space.

This network is categorized according to three broad functions, Ecology, Celebration, and Wellness, that the open space network performs.

**Ecology** supports and enhances the environment by sustaining healthy, resilient ecosystems.

**Celebration** connects people to one another and builds a sense of place by providing places for communities to thrive, gather and celebrate.

**Wellness** promotes healthy living and fosters wellbeing through diverse kinds of recreation, mobility and environments.

These open space functions set the framework for Breathe to structure its strategic directions and policy actions. Breathe's approach to the provision of open space moves beyond the concept of total supply of open space and considers the measures of quality, diversity and distribution of parkland.

Breathe establishes an open space classification system which categorizes all existing open space and park types within the wider green network to determine what uses and activities are appropriate (or can be accommodated) in a particular type of space.

Breathe – Open Space Classification System				
Municipal Parks	Civic Space	Corridors	Other Jurisdictional Parkland	Other Public Open Spaces
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Metropolitan Park</li> <li>+ District Park</li> <li>+ Community Park</li> <li>+ Pocket Park</li> <li>+ Greenway</li> <li>+ Ecological Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Squares, plazas and promenades</li> <li>+ Main Streets</li> <li>+ Pedestrian-priority streets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Connectors</li> <li>+ Roadway greens</li> <li>+ Utility corridors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Provincial Parkland</li> <li>+ Federal Parkland</li> <li>+ Campus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Special purpose facility</li> <li>+ School sites</li> <li>+ Municipal cemetery</li> <li>+ Municipal golf course</li> <li>+ Select vacant City holdings</li> <li>+ Utility lots</li> </ul>

### The Natural Connections Strategic Plan

Adopted in 2007, the [Natural Connections Strategic Plan](#) identifies Edmonton’s natural areas and articulates a strategic conservation planning approach for the City. Through Natural Connections, Edmonton has adopted an ecological network approach to conservation by maintaining a system of conserved and protected core natural areas that are ecologically connected by both natural and semi-natural linkages and, to the extent possible, surrounded by compatible land uses.

### Ribbon of Green

The [Ribbon of Green Master Plan \(1992\)](#) provides policy guidance for the planning, management, and prioritization of park development within the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System. The [Ribbon of Green SW + NE \(2020\)](#) provides strategic direction to guide the protection and responsible use of the southwest and northeast portions of the river valley and ravine system – areas that previously lacked strategic direction. Completion of this plan was the first step in renewing and preparing one comprehensive Ribbon of Green for the whole river valley system.

Ribbon of Green identifies three land management classifications to inform appropriate activities and development within Edmonton’s river valley and ravine system. These include active working landscapes, conservation, and preservation.



#### **Preservation**

(highest level of ecological protection):  
Protect the integrity of the natural environment and restore natural functioning with limited access and recreational opportunities.



#### **Conservation**

(trail-based recreation/natural recreation):  
Connect people to nature by allowing people to enjoy and appreciate the System while minimizing environmental impact and restoring ecological functioning, when possible.



#### **Active/Working Landscapes**

(intensive recreation, agriculture, horticulture urban services and city-wide attractions):  
Facilitate gathering and recreation within the System, recognize existing uses and encourage restoration.

## **North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP)**

The [North Saskatchewan River Valley ARP](#) is a statutory plan approved by Council in 1985 with the purpose to protect Edmonton's river valley and ravine system. The major goals of the North Saskatchewan River Valley ARP are:

- + To ensure preservation of the natural character and environment of the North Saskatchewan River Valley and its Ravine System.
- + To establish a public metropolitan recreation area.
- + To provide the opportunity for recreational, aesthetic and cultural activities in the Plan area for the benefit of Edmontonians and visitors of Edmonton.
- + To ensure the retention and enhancement of the Rosedale and Cloverdale communities in the River Valley.

Work is underway to review the City's planning framework for the river valley and update policy documents to align with The Draft City Plan and Breathe.

## **Policy C542A Development Setbacks from River Valley/Ravine Crests**

[Policy C542A](#) was created to protect the integrity of the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System by requiring all new and redeveloping areas at the top of bank to be set back as a means to protect the integrity of the valley and its slope. This policy requires a minimum 10 metre public upland setback area from the top of bank of the river

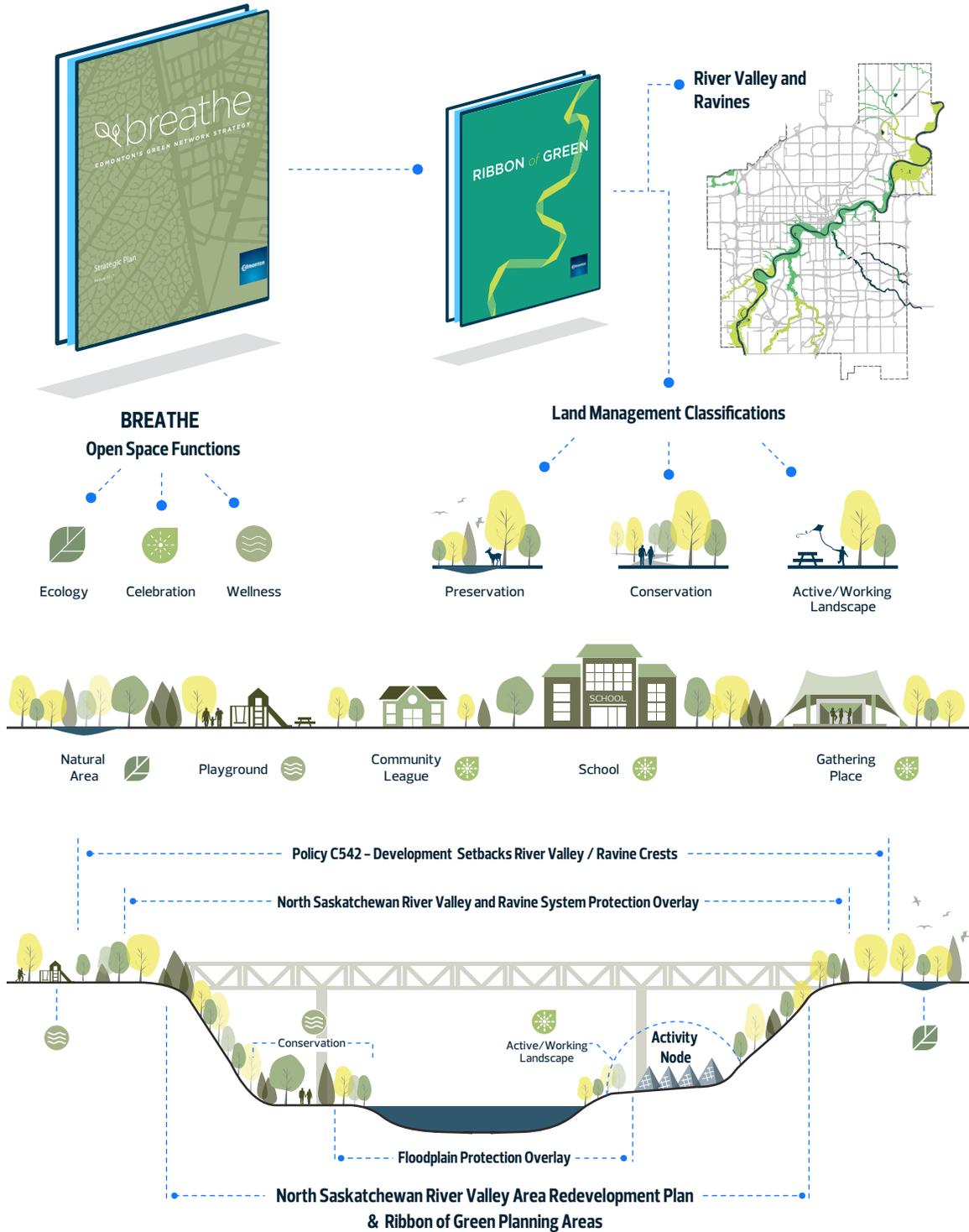
valley and ravine system with increased setbacks required to ensure slope stability. Coinciding with the original version of Policy C542A, the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System Protection Overlay was introduced to the Zoning Bylaw in 1985. This overlay requires all private development next to the river valley and ravine system to be set back 7.5 metres from the top of bank and requires applicants to provide geotechnical reports or studies to the City to ensure the integrity of the river valley is maintained.

## **City Wide Natural Areas Management Plan**

Sets out objectives and strategies for managing and restoring natural areas owned by the City. [The City Wide Natural Areas Management Plan](#) is informed by municipal, provincial, and federal requirements related to natural area management.

For a high level summary of the City's open space policy framework, please see the Open Space Policy Overview Summary on the next page.

## Open Space Policy Overview Summary

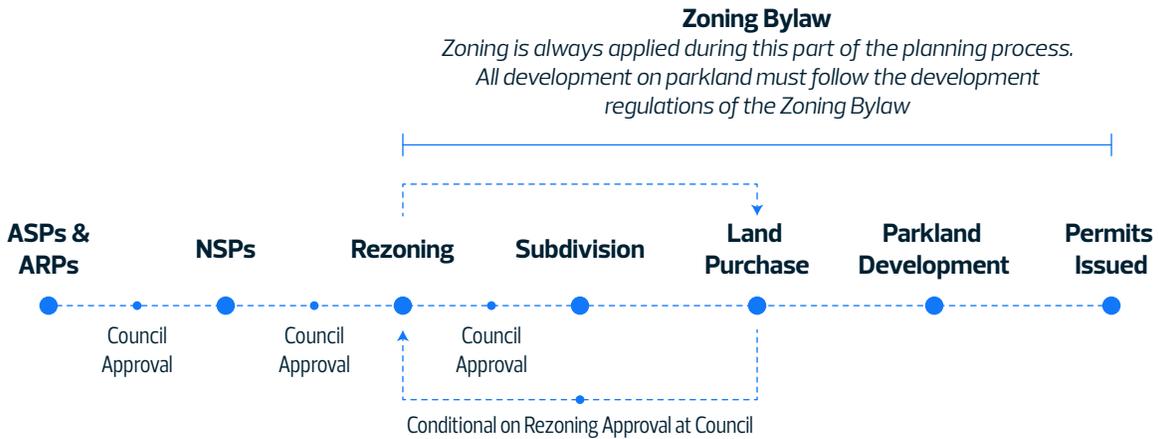


Note: This diagram is for illustrative purposes only. A core principle of Breathe is to provide multifunctional open spaces where possible and appropriate.

## Planning Processes For Open Spaces

The decision making process involving all the above policy documents include neighbourhood planning, rezoning, subdivision, the dedication of reserve land and the purchase or acquisition of parkland is illustrated below.

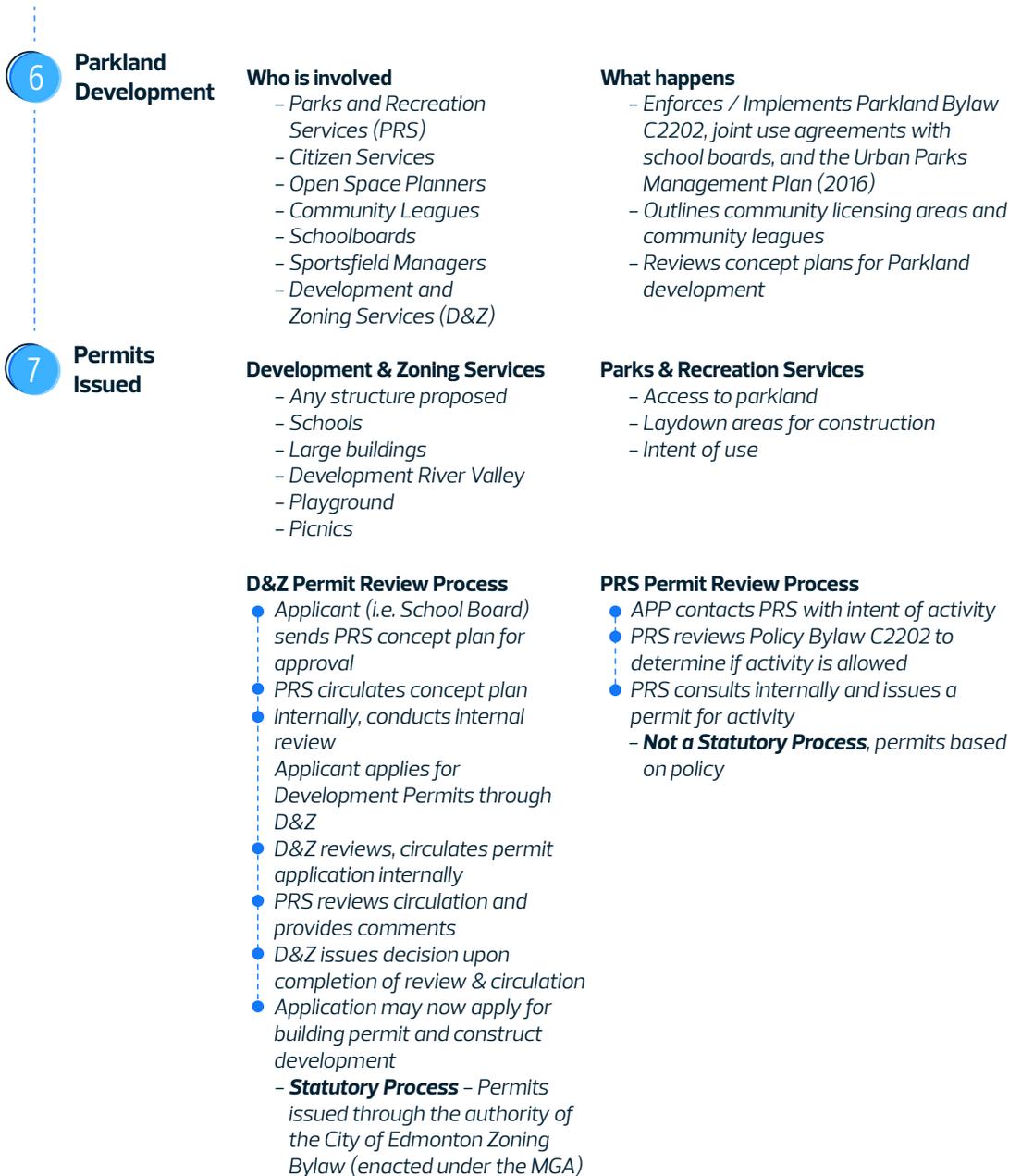
### Planning Processes For Open Spaces – Pt 1



<p><b>1</b></p> <p>● Council Approval</p>	<p><b>ASPs &amp; ARPs</b></p>	<p><b>Who is involved</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning Coordination</li> <li>- City Admin – Policy</li> <li>- School Boards</li> <li>- Open Space Planners</li> </ul>	<p><b>What happens</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifies types of open space needed and their location</li> <li>- School locations</li> <li>- Identifies Natural Areas</li> <li>- Technical studies</li> <li>- Environmentally Sensitive Areas identified</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b></p> <p>● Council Approval</p>	<p><b>NSPs</b></p>	<p><b>Who is involved</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning Coordination</li> <li>- School Boards</li> <li>- Open Space Planners</li> </ul>	<p><b>What happens</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Refined ASP content to the neighbourhood level</li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b></p> <p>● Council Approval</p>	<p><b>Rezoning</b></p>	<p><b>Who is involved</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning Coordination</li> <li>- School Boards</li> <li>- Open Space Planners</li> <li>- Parkland Managers</li> </ul>	<p><b>What happens</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Designates land as Parkland, Natural Areas, or ER (Site specific NAMP created for new NAs)</li> </ul>
<p><b>4</b></p> <p>● Conditional approval of engineering drawings and servicing agreements</p> <p>● Approval of Subdivision</p>	<p><b>Subdivision</b></p>	<p><b>Who is involved</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Subdivision Officers</li> <li>- Open Space Planners</li> </ul>	<p><b>What happens</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dedicates land as Reserve, registered on title balanced at ASP</li> <li>- Reserve can be deferred by caveat or by cash in lieu, or transferred (after certain steps are taken pursuant to the MGA)</li> <li>- Lots registered at land titles</li> <li>- Top-of-bank and ER further delineated</li> <li>- Triggers the purchasing process to transfer from private to public land</li> </ul>
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Land Purchase</b></p>	<p><b>Who is involved</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open Space Planners</li> <li>- Parkland Managers</li> </ul>	<p><b>What happens</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Manage reserve accounts</li> <li>- Purchase land for park development</li> <li>- Manage land and transfer to PRS and FILR</li> <li>- Report to council on money required for purchase</li> </ul>

Conditional on Rezoning Approval at Council

## Planning Processes For Open Spaces – Pt 2



### Additional comments

- MR/SR/ER land can only be used for specific purposes as outlined in the MGA
- MR/SR/ER can only be owned by the City (and in some cases a school board)
- Outside of the dedication process, the City is also able to obtain MR/SR/ER through bylaw (so long as it owns the land in question or is in the process of obtaining in)

## Appendix 3 | Municipal Government Act Powers Related to the Dedication of Reserve Lands

The Municipal Government Act (MGA) outlines the powers municipalities have when it comes to dedicating land within their boundaries as open space. This is done through the dedication of Reserve Land. The MGA states that the subdivision authority may require the owner of a parcel of land to provide to a municipality land for Environmental Reserve, Municipal, School or Municipal and School Reserve, or pay cash-in-lieu (for Municipal, School or Municipal and School Reserve) of what is owed when the land is subject to a proposal for subdivision.

The MGA lists what constitutes an Environmental Reserve:

- + A swamp, gully, ravine, coulee or natural drainage course;
- + Land that is subject to flooding or unstable; or
- + A strip of land, 6 metres wide or greater, abutting the bed and shore of a water body.  
(s. 664(1) of MGA)

Environment Reserve land dedication can only be required by a subdivision authority for one of the following purposes:

- + to protect the environmentally sensitive lands from future development;
- + to prevent pollution of the land or of the bed and shore of an adjacent water body;
- + to ensure public access to the bed and shore of a body of water located on the land or adjacent to the land; or
- + where development of the land would present a significant risk of personal injury or property damage due to the natural features of the land.  
(s. 664(1.1) of MGA)

Tools employed to protect this reserve land include transferring ownership of the reserve to the municipality or, if the municipality agrees, the use of Environmental Reserve Easements, which are registered on title. Conservation Reserve is a tool similar to Environmental Reserve except it is used for land that is considered sensitive and requires protection but cannot be acquired as an Environmental Reserve. In order to acquire land for conservation, the MGA (Section 665.2(2)) requires the municipality to pay compensation to

the landowner in an amount equal to the market value of the land. The taking of Conservation Reserve must be consistent with the municipality's municipal development plan or any area structure plans in effect. (S. 664.2(1) of the MGA).

Municipal Reserve (MR), School Reserve (SR) and Municipal and School Reserve (MSR), on the other hand, are lands taken by the municipality for the sole purpose of providing public open space and areas for schools to be developed. The Municipal Development Plan has the authority to require that, at the time of subdivision, the municipality may take up to maximum of 10% of the land as MR, SR, or MSR, less all land required to be provided as conservation reserve or environmental reserve (or made subject to an environmental easement) or be provided cash-in-lieu by the landowner. This Reserve land may only be used as:

- + A public park;
- + A public recreation area;
- + For school board purposes;
- + To separate areas of land that are used for different purposes; or
- + A purpose provided for under a joint use planning agreement.  
(S. 671(2) of the MGA)

Community Services Reserve (CSR) dedicates land by way of bylaw to provide municipal services and may be used for the purposes of :

- + A public library;
- + A police station, a fire station or an ambulance services facility, or a combination of them;
- + A non-profit day care facility;
- + A non-profit senior citizens facility;
- + A non-profit special needs facility;
- + A municipal facility providing service directly to the public;
- + Affordable housing  
(S. 671(2.1) of the MGA)

This is the framework in which all existing park policy and future development regulations in the new Zoning Bylaw must work within, as prescribed by the province.

## Appendix 4 | Proposed Uses and General Descriptions for Reference in the Open Space and Civic Services Zones

Below is a draft list of uses to identify the activities that would be permitted and conditional in the proposed zones noted in this discussion paper. These uses will be continued to be refined and are subject to change.

Use	Description	Some Examples
<b>Protected Natural Area</b>	Land is not developed and left in its natural state.	forests, natural wetlands, grasslands, and unique natural features (i.e., sand dunes, archaeological sites, unique geological formations, etc.)
<b>Indoor Sales and Services</b>	Any activity occurring in a building; generates no off-site impacts; on-site impacts contained within the building	Retail stores, offices, salons, doctors clinics, makerspaces, etc.
<b>Food, Cultural, and Entertainment</b>	Spaces where people come together for entertainment, food and drink, or recreational purposes.  Occurs at a variety of scales and requires regulations to minimize impacts appropriate to the zones.	Restaurants, pubs, cafes, nightclubs, theatres, concert halls, church, stadium, etc.
<b>Recreation</b>	Activities that require open spaces that may have some minor development for active or passive recreation, gathering, or to support ecological functions.	Parks, plazas, pocket parks, publicly accessible open space etc.
<b>Civic Services</b>	Activities or uses that provide a public service but can have impacts to the surrounding areas.	Schools, libraries, recreation facilities, fire stations, police stations, transit centre, City Hall
<b>Special Events Temporary Uses</b>	Temporary activities that occur in a space.  Require regulations to minimize impacts appropriate to the zone.	Festivals, pop-up shops, business/customer appreciation events
<b>Agriculture</b> (For more information on this use, please refer to the <a href="#">Agriculture &amp; Rural Zones discussion paper</a> )	Any activity associated with raising animals or growing plants, except for Cannabis. Allows the sale of agricultural products raised or growing on site; Accessory products permitted to be sold.	Produce farms, hobby farms, animal breeding facilities, or animal boarding facilities.
<b>Public Utility</b>	Spaces, buildings, structures, or facilities that provide common utilities to neighbourhoods and the city overall.	Utility corridors and substation, solar facilities, stormwater ponds.
<b>Signs</b>	May be part of a structure or devices, freestanding or on a building, and is used to convey information or to advertise	Freestanding signs, or signs on buildings.

# ZONING BYLAW RENEWAL INITIATIVE

Edmonton

