District Planning

How Were the District Plans and District Policy Drafted?
# Table of Contents

**Introduction**  
2

**How the District Policy Was Drafted**  
4

- Drawing from The City Plan  
  4
- Drawing from the RIGs and the TOD Guidelines  
  5
  - Residential Infill Guidelines (RIGs)  
    5
  - TOD Guidelines  
    5
- Retiring the RIGs and the TOD Guidelines  
  6

**How the District Plans Were Drafted**  
6

- Drafting the District Context, District Systems and Networks and Growth to 2 Million Sections  
  7
- Drafting the Maps in the District Plans  
  7
- Drafting the Area-Specific Policy section in the District Plans  
  9
  - Area-Specific Policy Subareas  
    10
  - Area-Specific Policy Table  
    10
- Repealing Existing Plans  
  11

**Prototype Testing 2021**  
11

**Public Engagement 2022**  
12

**Internal Engagement 2022**  
12

**Get Involved**  
13
Introduction

The District Planning project will help guide how neighbourhoods will physically change as City Council implements the vision outlined in The City Plan (2020) — Edmonton's combined Municipal Development Plan and Transportation Master Plan. One of the first steps is setting the foundation and structure for District Planning by developing two main components: the District Policy and the (fifteen) district plans. Both the District Policy and district plans will be read together and will be used to provide planning direction at the district, area and neighbourhood level.

District Planning is focused on guiding growth to 1.25 million, the first milestone identified in The City Plan as Edmonton grows to two million people. In addition to drawing directions from The City Plan, to draft the District Policy and the district plans, we also included approved and relevant policies from existing plans or strategies that align with The City Plan.

The District Planning project is not creating new ideas or visions, rather it is building on the approved strategic directions contained in The City Plan. What was heard through The City Plan's engagement feedback informed the District Planning project's approach and content of the District Policy and district plans. Input from residents, communities, industry and partners was also used to confirm that the information from The City Plan has been appropriately applied and to catch any information that may have been missed.

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

+ How the District Policy and the district plans were drafted
+ The information sources used
+ How existing plans or strategies were considered and what may happen with them
Before we continue, here are a few definitions of key terms that appear in this Conversation Starter:

- **Geographic Plan**: a document that guides how a neighbourhood or area of the city is to be developed or redeveloped. They are often statutory and the most common examples are Area Structure Plans, Neighbourhood Structure Plans and Area Redevelopment Plans. Also referred to as plans-in-effect.
- **Redeveloping Area**: includes already established residential and non-residential areas that have gone through at least one lifecycle of urban development and are positioned for ongoing adaptation in the future. In The City Plan, this area is generally defined as encompassing lands located within Anthony Henday Drive and will be supported by concentrated development in nodes and along corridors.
- **Residential Infill Guidelines (RIGs)**: provide direction to developers, communities, City staff and City Council on how infill development in mature neighbourhoods should occur. This includes where certain scales and forms of new housing should be located and direction on how buildings and sites should be designed to support compatibility with existing housing and the neighbourhoods.
- **Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines**: set out the City’s expectations for development (housing, shopping, and employment) near current or future LRT stations and Transit Centres.

**How the District Policy Was Drafted**

The District Policy will provide guidance that will apply to all districts at a level under The City Plan. The intention is to provide a common set of policies for all districts and remove redundancies where the same policy is repeated or contained in multiple plans. Consolidating commonly shared policy directions into one document will make it easier for planners, developers and the public to find information they need.

The District Policy is structured around The City Plan’s Planning and Design, Mobility, and Managing Growth systems. The policies in the District Policy are sourced from:

- The City Plan
- The City of Edmonton’s Residential Infill Guidelines (RIGs)
- The City of Edmonton’s Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Guidelines
- Geographic plans that share common and relevant policies among them
Drawing from The City Plan

The City Plan sets the strategic direction for the way Edmonton grows. It recognizes cities are complex and work best when their systems work together towards common goals. The City Plan calls these systems “Planning and Design”, “Mobility” and “Managing Growth”, and describes the role of each of these as Edmonton grows to two million people.

The District Policy is organized into three chapters based on the same systems in The City Plan. Policies for each chapter and section of the District Policy were drafted following a review of The City Plan’s policies for each system. The review focused on which policies guide the physical change of neighbourhoods and if they would benefit from more refined direction to inform local decision making.

The City Plan contains a wide range of guidance, from service provision to civic facilities to the economy. These are examples of things that fall outside the District Planning’s project scope, but are supported through other work the City of Edmonton leads.

Drawing from the RIGs and the TOD Guidelines

The District Policy draws policy direction from the RIGs and TOD Guidelines because these guidelines provide general land use direction for large parts of the city (mature neighbourhoods and near transit stations, respectively). Much of the content in the RIGs and TOD Guidelines aligns with The City Plan, in that they encourage compact mixed use development near transit stations and thoughtful infill across the city. The District Policy combines this direction with the scale of development envisioned by The City Plan to have a more consistent set of policies, and allow these guidelines to be repealed.

Residential Infill Guidelines (RIGs)

The RIGs, adopted by Council in 2009, provide direction on how infill development in the redeveloping area should occur. However, the conversation around infill has evolved following the ‘Evolving Infill’ project and the Infill Roadmaps of 2014 and 2018. This work set the course to shift many of the policies contained in the RIGs into regulations of the Zoning Bylaw (in some cases advancing further than the RIGs and making some content no longer relevant). The City Plan advances the infill conversation further still.

However, the guidance for compatibility and scale contained in the RIGs are examples that would be beneficial to incorporate into the District Policy to continue to support infill in redeveloping areas. For example, support for small-scale infill housing in the interior of residential neighbourhoods; and transitioning the scale and massing of new built forms down to adjacent development using setbacks, stepbacks and human scaled street walls to mitigate negative environmental and human impacts.
Policies contained in this section incorporate relevant planning guidance from the Transit Oriented Development and Residential Infill Guidelines. They provide specific direction for what needs to be included in a Primary Corridor to support both neighbourhood and district. They address building height and location.

TOD Guidelines

The TOD Guidelines, adopted in 2012, set out the City's expectations for development near current or future transit stations. However, The City Plan has expanded on Edmonton's previous policies regarding transit-oriented development. It calls for growth to occur at nodes and corridors which are dense, mixed-use areas accessible by a wide range of mobility options (i.e., walk, cycle, transit, drive).

The TOD Guidelines on their own do not provide the guidance needed for nodes and corridors and including that guidance in the District Policy while keeping the TOD Guidelines would only duplicate policy directions. Instead, the District Policy incorporates and adapts the policies from the TOD Guidelines, eliminating redundancy and better reflecting the shift towards the nodes and corridors concept contained in The City Plan.
Retiring the RIGs and the TOD Guidelines

With the District Policy incorporating the most relevant and applicable guidance from the RIGs and the TOD Guidelines, they can both be recommended for repeal. This will ensure the most up-to-date directions are followed and avoid duplications.

Opportunities to provide input on the recommendation to repeal the RIGs and the TOD Guidelines will be available when engagement begins in October and November 2023.

How the District Plans Were Drafted

Each district plan will show and guide how a given district is intended to change following the vision in The City Plan. The district plans are intended to be read together with the District Policy.

Since district plans will focus on the 1.25 million population horizon, they'll incorporate direction from The City Plan and some existing plans or policies that align with The City Plan, but will not create new visions.

The City Plan was the starting point for drafting all district plans. Other sources of information included:

- Direction from other City-led projects contributing to The City Plan’s implementation such as the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative
- Other city strategies such as (but not limited to) Breathe - Edmonton's Green Network Strategy, Edmonton Bike Plan, River Valley Planning Modernization, and the Community Energy Transition Strategy to include consistent information since district plans will exist alongside them
- Data from the City’s Open Data and maps.edmonton.ca sites, EPCOR, as well as the Government of Alberta

Drafting the District Context, District Systems and Networks and Growth to 2 Million Sections

How a district plan's “District Context”, “District Systems and Networks“ and “Growth to 2 Million” sections were prepared is included in the table below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Plan Section</th>
<th>Section’s Purpose</th>
<th>How Sections were Prepared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Context</strong></td>
<td>Describes the physical, historical and development context for the district.</td>
<td>Drawing from existing geographic plans, historic planning tools, Open Data and research done by the project team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Systems and Networks</strong></td>
<td>Describes where and how the district is intended to grow from now to when there are 1.25 million Edmontonians.</td>
<td>Based on The City Plan’s Maps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Growth to 2 Million</strong></td>
<td>Describes where and how the district is intended to grow from now to when there are two million Edmontonians.</td>
<td>Based on The City Plan’s Maps.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Drafting the Maps in the District Plans**

Each district plan contains 11 maps. The maps highlight the range of networks (e.g. land use or mobility), show the district's current context and show the aspirations for that district following The City Plan.

The City Plan’s maps were the starting point for all district plan maps, but since The City Plan shows Edmonton at a population of two million, that content needed to be adjusted for the district plan's 1.25 million horizon. For example, “Map 3 - Nodes and Corridors” from The City Plan was used for the district plan’s ‘Nodes and Corridors’ Map while “Map 6 - Active Transportation Network” and “Map 7 - Mass Transit Network” from The City Plan were used for the district plan's corresponding “Active Transportation” and “Transit” Maps, respectively.
Information from other projects contributing to The City Plan’s implementation included:

+ mass transit routes, from the work on mass transit planning for 1.25 million people, added to the district plans’ “Transit Map”; and
+ Priority Growth Areas as identified by the Growth Management Framework project and included on the district plan’s “Managing Growth” Map.

Other City strategies (see list above) provided information for applicable district plan maps.

Open Data, maps.edmonton.ca, EPCOR and provincial sources provided built heritage sites, fireflow capacity, community hall and recreation amenity locations.

Last but not least, some map content was adapted from geographic plans, especially where multiple plans addressed similar content. In some cases, this planning guidance was adopted into district plan maps as a way to maintain previous input in cases where the plan itself will be repealed (as noted below).
The “Vision at 2 Million” Map represents an aspirational illustration of the district when Edmonton reaches two million. Illustrating this map followed a slightly different process. We used The City Plan and then scaled the concepts to the district level to visualize how it might play out. It is intended to highlight that the district plan, while it guides growth to 1.25 Million, is only the first part of the evolution for each district.
Drafting the Area-Specific Policy section in the District Plans

Each district plan includes an “Area-Specific Policy” section (Section 4 for the district plans). These policies are considered unique to the district and “Exceptional” or “Additional” to what is included in the District Policy. This section includes a “Area-Specific Policy Subareas” map and a “Area-Specific Policy” table to identify where and which specific policy applies for that district.

Area-Specific Policy Subareas
This map functions like a “key” map. To do this, we segmented the district into subareas where there are area-specific policies or plans in effect.

Area-Specific Policy Table
This table lists the subareas that have an exceptional or additional policy. The content in this table was populated following a review of existing Area Redevelopment Plans, Area Structure Plans, Neighbourhood Structure Plans or other geographic plans and studies for each district. This review determined if the policy direction aligned with The City Plan and or whether the District Policy and district plan could carry forward the direction.

Repealing Existing Plans
With district plans containing the most current directions from The City Plan and incorporating the most relevant and applicable guidance from an existing plan, those other geographic plans can be repealed. This will ensure the most up-to-date directions are followed, and redundancies will be avoided while contributing to the updated planning system The City Plan calls for.

Refer to the 2023 List of Geographic Plans Proposed to Keep, Change or Retire for a complete list of proposed plans to be kept, changed and retired and a summary of the plan review process.
Prototype Testing 2021

In 2021, the project team shared a draft of the District Policy and three sample district plans with a group of core stakeholders (who were also engaged as part of ConnectEdmonton and The City Plan). They were consulted as an initial sounding board on the structure, content and level of detail proposed to be contained within district plans.

These core stakeholders included a group of 100 individuals representing more than 90 organizations that represent a lot of different communities across Edmonton like residents, community leagues, business owners, advocacy groups and industry. We reached out to them because they had been a part of the creation of The City Plan since the beginning and this project is a continuation of that work.

Examples of groups that participated include:

- Arts Habitat
- Alberta Health Services
- Business Improvement Areas
- Canadian Home Builders Association
- Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues
- Urban Development Institute
- Infill Development in Edmonton Association
- the school boards and post secondary institutions

The input helped to improve the sample plans and that feedback was incorporated in the drafting of all remaining district plans. This testing was conducted as a precursor to wider public engagement.

Public Engagement 2022

After initial engagement in 2021, the project team conducted comprehensive engagement from June to November 2022. Edmontonians were offered a mix of in-person and digital engagement opportunities to ensure as many voices as possible were heard. A Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) process was also followed to help better understand the experiences and needs of diverse people and communities who are not often heard from.

The engagement process was supported by extensive communications tactics to enhance public awareness, education, inclusion and participation by people city-wide.

Refer to the project’s What We Heard Report for a complete summary of the project’s communication and engagement approach.
Internal Engagement 2022

Internal staff stakeholders at the City completed a technical review of all 15 district plans and the District Policy to identify errors in text and mapping content, as well as provide input on the clarity of policy content and usability. Staff also undertook a technical review of all geographic plans proposed to be retained, repealed or amended to identify any policy gaps in content transferred to the district plans and to provide feedback on the project's proposal to retire or change plans.

Refer to the project's Overview of Changes document for a complete summary of the changes made to the draft district plans and District Policy in response to public and internal engagement feedback received in 2022.

Get Involved

Edmontonians have played a critical role in shaping the draft district plans since 2021. District Planning's last chapter of its multi-phase public engagement is scheduled from October 23 until December 1, 2023.

Engagement will be conducted at the ADVISE-level, meaning the public is consulted by the City to share feedback and perspectives that are considered for policies. Feedback will be used to make minor changes to the draft plans and inform future work priorities, content and project communications.

Feedback will primarily be collected through:

- An online survey and interactive mapping tool available on engaged.edmonton.ca/districtplanning
- One-on-one Chat With a Planner meetings
- Online public information sessions — Register Now!
- Virtual information sessions will be offered to stakeholders affected by changes to the 2023 List of Geographic Plans Proposed to Keep, Change or Retire

Edmontonians will also be able to share feedback with City Councillors at the Urban Planning Committee meeting tentatively scheduled on December 5, 2023, and when the final plans are shared at the City Council public hearing in 2024.

Visit edmonton.ca/districtplanning to learn more or contact us at districtplanning@edmonton.ca or through 311.