



The Baron  
LDA20-0216

Edmonton

# WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

## Online Public Engagement Feedback Summary LDA20-0216 - The Baron

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**PROJECT ADDRESS:** 8207 - 105 Street NW

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Proposed rezoning from the Historical Commercial (DC1) Direct Development Control Provision to a Site Specific Development Control Provision (DC2) that would allow for a mid-rise mixed use building with the following characteristics:

- A maximum height of 34.0 m (approximately 9 - 11 storeys);
- A maximum floor area ratio of 5.5;
- Up to 473 square metres of commercial space at ground level; and
- Up to 65 residential dwellings.

There is also an associated application to amend the Strathcona Area Redevelopment plan, which currently does not allow a building of this scale at this location.

**ENGAGEMENT** Online engagement webpage - Engaged Edmonton:

**FORMAT:** <https://engaged.edmonton.ca/thebaron>

**ENGAGEMENT DATES:** December 7 - 21, 2020

**NUMBER OF VISITORS:**

- Engaged: 345
- Informed: 469
- Aware: 1,794

See "Web Page Visitor Definitions" at the end of this report for explanations of the above categories.

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## **ABOUT THIS REPORT**

The information in this report includes feedback gathered through the online engagement web page on the Engaged Edmonton platform from December 7 - 21, 2020.

Input from Edmontonians will be used to ensure the review of the application takes local context into consideration and is as complete as possible. It will also be used to inform conversations with the applicant about potential revisions to the proposal to address concerns or opportunities raised. Feedback will also be summarized in the report to City Council when the proposed rezoning goes to a future City Council Public Hearing for a decision.

This report is shared with all web page visitors who provided their email address. This summary will also be shared with the applicant and the Ward Councillor.

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## **ENGAGEMENT FORMAT**

The Engaged Edmonton webpage included an overview of the proposed development, information on the development and rezoning process and contact information for the file planner. Two tools were available for participants: one to ask questions and one to leave feedback.

The comments are summarized by the main themes below with the number of times a similar comment was made by participants recorded in brackets following that comment. The questions asked and their answers are also included in this report.

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## **WHAT WE HEARD**

Support: 111

Neutral/Mixed/Unclear/Questions Only: 14

Opposed: 220

## Comments

### General/Other

- This project itself is not a problem, but the location is. There are plenty of properties elsewhere nearby where it would fit (surface parking lots, low density, not heritage properties) (x28).
- Not good/destructive/stop/shocked/horrible/short-sighted, etc. (x22)
  - *This bullet and count captures short, brief comments in opposition to the proposal that were provided with little or no additional context.*
- Wonderful/awesome/good/innovative/great/no-brainer, etc. (x20)
  - *This bullet and count captures short, brief comments in support of the proposal that were provided with little or no additional context.*
- Don't engage when you don't listen (x2).
- Conversation should shift to influencing the design of a new building rather than focusing on keeping an old building just because it is old.
- Whyte Avenue needs to be refreshed and more inclusive to all of Edmonton, not just Strathcona elitists who feel that keeping Whyte avenue the same as it has been for decades is acceptable.

### Economic

- More residential/commercial units would bring many benefits including safety, affordability/student housing options, vibrancy, and a positive vibe (x26).
- This will help revitalize/recover the area/economic benefits/jobs (x25).
- Will grow the population density and businesses along Whyte Avenue which are struggling (x18).
- Not enough demand for more residential/Edmonton not experiencing population boom anymore/many new residential projects already approved and not happening (x9).
- New buildings are not friendly for small businesses who cannot afford higher rents or get displaced by demolitions (x7).
- Not enough demand for more commercial space/lots of vacancies (like in Wexford's Raymond Block across the street), especially due to COVID (x7).
- The city's interest is financial only. More taxes to collect.
- Height restrictions make money by allowing friendliness and shopping to increase and crime decrease.

- We need to recognize the social and economic opportunity that comes with a balanced approach to preservation and development.
- Would decrease property values of nearby properties.

#### Archibald Block (current building)

- Please don't redevelop/demolish. We need to protect and preserve our older buildings. This building has heritage/cultural value (x39).
- Historical significance/architecture of the Archibald Block is not enough to justify preservation, especially compared to more important buildings nearby (x20).
- The building should be a designated municipal historic resource (x15).
- Existing building has outlived its time/reached the end of its life, time to move on (x9)
- A building need not be grand to be worthy of preservation (x3).
- If the building is not a historic site then the City should not interfere with new development of this site (x2).
- This building has important history associated with it related to Fred Assad Morie and the early Arab immigrant community and needs to be retained (x2).
- We are losing our architectural heritage. Ugly as it is, the Archibald Block is ours and should be kept.

#### Proposed Building (The Baron) - Massing, Building & Site Design

- Too tall/the height of the building should be no higher than surrounding buildings/current height restrictions should not be changed (x34)
- Podium design is compatible with the heritage character/fits in with the architectural vernacular of Whyte Ave (x33).
- Height and density will not have a negative impact on the street or neighbourhood/this is keeping in scale with the Raymond Block and Met Hotel building (x15).
- Would like to see more effort to preserve the historical façade/fit into the Old Strathcona character, if the project is to go forward (x14).
- This tall of a building will have too much shadow impact (x13)
- The stepback for the tower is very important so that it does not unduly impact the streetscape (x8).

- Proportions and details of the proposed replacement are not in keeping with the surrounding character/design of Whyte Avenue, ie. boomtown or Edwardian style (x8).
- Worried about the creation of a wind tunnel on all the patios (x6).
- Good addition to an intersection on Whyte in need of rejuvenation (x4).
- Shadow impacts are not a concern since it is to the north of the Avenue (x4).
- I support more density and height (x4).
- Should go ahead but should recognize the building site as a place of significance in the form of a plaque, or possible architectural style (x2).

### Mass Timber Building Construction/Sustainable Building Design

**NOTE: While several comments were received on this topic, construction method is not regulated by zoning. As a result, this cannot be taken into consideration as part of the City's review of the proposal and recommendation to City Council. The current landowner has publicly shared their intent to build the development in this way and it is assumed these comments are based on that information. The proposed zone does not mandate this and, if approved, there would be no obligation for the building to be built this way should the current landowner's intent change, or should ownership of the site change.**

- Mass Timber is progressive, sustainable, reduces carbon footprint/green (x30).
- Will show leadership in sustainability and to have something creative along Whyte Ave (x12).
- The use of mass timber is an idea with merit/innovative (x8).
- Building a new eco-friendly building is more important than keeping the old building (x5).
- I like the mass timber concept but not here (x2).
- First kind of this type of building will get international attention, which would be some good economic news when most is negative in Alberta right now (x3).
- The timber construction will in itself provide an old building feel to fit in the area by using wood.
- Zoning doesn't speak to materials, so shouldn't be given "credit" for their suggested use of mass timber.

## Character of area

- Historic areas/buildings contribute to a vibrant community and is one of Edmonton's tourist attractions/an important social, historical and cultural area (x43).
- Too many exceptions and historic buildings being lost/very close to losing remaining historic character/historic character dwindling (x42).
- Larger buildings outside of the heritage core are OK, but it is a problem when it threatens Whyte Avenue's unique and historic character by being built on small lots in the historical character district (x21).
- It will no longer be "Old" Strathcona if we keep losing the historical resources/Architectural history is slowly being wiped out and once it is gone. It is gone (x20).
- Already too many other large developments on Whyte Ave that have changed the character, feel, sun exposure, and ambiance of Whyte Ave for the worse (x10)
- Successful cities across North America/Europe preserve their historic buildings and are special because of the emphasis on historic buildings (x8).
- Proposal does very little to preserve the historical character of the Provincial Historical Area (x4).
- Old Strathcona must balance the new and old, and allowing this development would tip the balance too far towards the new.
- This could be the beginning of the much needed upgrade to Whyte Ave.
- This building would add more to the character of the neighbourhood than take away from it.
- Buildings don't characterize Whyte Ave - people do.

## Area Redevelopment Plan/Policy Context

- Violates recent work done to amend the plan, negating the work and consultation that went into plan Whyte (x23).
- Proposed height is double what the plan allows and the plan should be followed (x15).
- Would carve out of the historic DC1 instead of mostly conforming with it as a sub-area the way other recent projects have/keep the DC1 (x8).
- It seems almost every project violates existing rules and is allowed to proceed. Planning not being followed (x7).

## Developer Intent

- Concerned there will be one version of interesting concept art, and then the developer switches it to something generic/lower quality after rezoning approval (x5).
- A well established builder like Wexford Developments can be trusted to build a high quality building that looks good and goes up smoothly (x3).
- This is redevelopment to make a developer money only, not taking into account history and community (x2).
- It is problematic that the developer would flout the plan to preserve historic resources.
- Do not approve of a Calgary development company going against previously laid out guidelines.
- The Developer plans to benefit from a prime location without giving anything back.
- They are taking advantage of economic instability in the region to try to override our community plan and make a profit.

## Transportation

- Vehicle parking should be required for residential units, otherwise it will negatively impact on-street parking, noise and traffic in the area (x6).
- Support for no parking (x3).

## Uses

- I like that the building would be mixed-use (x6)
  - Whyte Avenue is not a suitable location for housing with noise and traffic. Should be retail only (x2).
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## Questions & Answers

NOTE: In some cases, similar questions are grouped together with one set of bullets to answer them all following the list of similar questions.

1. Why keep an old & visually ugly building?
  - Broadly speaking, it is well understood that one of the features that makes Old Strathcona attractive, contributes to the success of the area, and the reason why there is an Old Strathcona Provincial Historic Area, is the architectural richness and integrity of its historic buildings.
  - To help better inform future decisions about the building, on November 13, 2020, the Provincial Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women issued notice to the property owner of the requirement to conduct a Historic Resource Impact Assessment (HRIA) prior to any changes being made to the property (including demolition). The HRIA process will look at physical elements of the building, and include a condition and integrity assessment as well as an analysis of how the Archibald Block could be retained or incorporated into future redevelopment proposals for the property. It will also help to understand if it is feasible to restore the building to its original appearance, recognizing that the building has been impacted over time by unsympathetic alterations.
  
2. - Why spend so much time on producing guidelines for developing the area and not follow them?
  - Why are development plans even created if the City doesn't have the guts to adhere to them?
  - What is the point of having a Heritage Character District just to allow any opportunistic property developer to come in and tear down historic buildings only to put up another crackerbox full of nondescript condos that no one can afford?
  - The community just went through the work of developing a new plan. What is the point of that exercise if exceptions are to be granted without a compelling reason?
  - Do the protections offered by the CoE DC1 zoning mean anything?
  - If this plan can be undone so easily, it begs the question - why bother to plan?
  - What exactly is the point of a land use plan at all?
  - Why bother with heritage plans if you allow for so many exemptions?
  - I would assume the guidelines were put in place using time and resources of the city and community, so what was the point if it can be changed so fast?

- What was the point of creating a heritage area if we keep allowing the heritage buildings to be demolished?
- What good are plans and rules if deep pocketed developers get to rewrite them?
- Why bother with ARPs and other similar plans, if they are going to be routinely overturned?
- What is the point of the Strathcona ARP if the city is just going to make exceptions to it at every turn?
- What is the point of developing such a plan if a developer chooses to ignore it and the city allows it?

- The City understands that some residents have concerns about the potential impact of the proposed rezoning on the heritage character of the surrounding area.
  - However, landowners and developers have the right to rezoning or plan amendment applications, regardless of how recently direction for land use was given by City Council. The City is obligated under the Zoning Bylaw and Municipal Government Act (MGA) to process these applications and advance them to City Council for a decision.
  - Administration's overall recommendation to City Council will factor in the deviation from the recent amendments to the Strathcona Area Redevelopment Plan.
  - Generally speaking, there is an expectation that when new planning work is done (like the recent amendments to the Strathcona ARP as a result of the planWhyte Land Use Study), that it is followed for a reasonable amount of time. The goal of the study was to understand how the area's heritage, character and livability could be further strengthened while exploring opportunities for additional development over the next 20-25 years. That does not mean that no amendments should be expected for that entire period of time, but any proposed amendments of significance would normally not be expected until there were notable changes to the conditions and assumptions that were the basis of the study.
3. Taking away the need for residential buildings to provide any parking for their tenants puts undue stress on communities where parking and traffic is already stretched thin. With the snow removal parking bans, where are all of these tenants and their vehicles going to go?

- On June 23, 2020, City Council approved [Open Option Parking](#), which provides developers' flexibility to choose the amount of on-site parking that they feel is appropriate for their projects, including visitor parking.
- Given the current applicant's intent to not provide any parking and the limited amount of free on-street parking in the area, it is likely that the people who decide to live in this building, if approved, would not own a car or have a need to park it nearby.
- The City recognizes that residents living in vibrant, high-demand areas have concerns about on-street parking congestion. Some level of parking congestion is to be expected in these high demand areas and is an indicator of their success and popularity among Edmontonians.
- This pressure is not new. Even under the old rules, there were instances where parking for a new development was not sufficient or certain areas experienced a high rate of redevelopment that led to an increase in curbside parking pressure.
- The City will continue to work with neighbourhoods as we do now to apply on-street parking management tools, such as paid parking and restricted parking, to manage on-street parking where needed in these instances.
- The City's current approach to managing parking within a specific area is to first gather information related to parking congestion before installing any type of restrictions. This is to balance the supply of parking spaces with the demands of the community.
- Residents that have any questions or concerns about on-street parking in their neighbourhood can email [trafficops@edmonton.ca](mailto:trafficops@edmonton.ca) with the subject line "Proactive Parking" and the name of the neighbourhood that they reside in.
- In alignment with the Open Option Parking project, the City has embarked on a parallel project to review and modernize the City's public parking management approach. This Public Parking Action Plan is targeted to be presented to Urban Planning Committee in the third quarter of 2022.

#### 4. Why isn't the developer even attempting to keep the facade?

##### From the Applicant:

- The building condition assessment we completed showed that the building is at the end of its life. The original façade has been modified and covered and very little still remains of the original structure to preserve and to keep the original façade would be to recreate it from scratch. However, the province has required that a Historic Resource Impact Assessment be completed

which will further explore this option.

From the City:

- It has not been concluded that the building is at the end of its life. A Historic Resource Impact Assessment (HRIA) is currently underway, prior to any changes being made to the property (including demolition). The HRIA process will look at physical elements of the building, and include a condition and integrity assessment as well as an analysis of how the Archibald Block could be retained or incorporated into future redevelopment proposals for the property. It will also help to understand if it is feasible to restore the building to its original appearance, recognizing that the building has been impacted over time by unsympathetic alterations.
5. - When are we going to stop tearing down historic buildings in the city?  
- Why must every vestige of our built history be destroyed?  
- What is with this city and it's determination to demolish every single historical building to make room for towers and new buildings no one wants?
- While the City has the authority to designate and protect historic resources under the provisions of the Historical Resources Act against a property owners wishes, the Act requires that the City compensate the affected property owner for any reduction in property value arising from the designation. The resulting compensation can be significant and is simply not economically sustainable for the City to pursue this approach.
  - Rather, the City has pursued an approach that encourages voluntary designation through the provision of incentives. In approximately the last decade, there have been 7 historic commercial/institutional buildings in the greater Old Strathcona and surrounding area designated and protected from demolition through cooperative efforts between the City and landowners:
    - [Strathcona Fire Hall #1](#)
    - [Knox Church](#)
    - [Crawford Block](#)
    - [Hulbert Block](#)
    - [Tipton Investment Building](#)
    - [Richards Block](#)
    - [Strathcona Garage](#)
  - In that same timeframe, there have also unfortunately been 6 historic buildings that have been demolished when the City's efforts to encourage landowners to preserve them have been unsuccessful:
    - [Shragg Brothers Building](#)
    - [Tipton Building](#)
    - [Strathcona Presbyterian Church](#)

- [Knox Metropolitan Church](#)
- [Warnock-Hersey Limited Building](#)
- [Minchau Blacksmith](#)
- The reality is that the City does not have the ability or resources to save all historically significant buildings, but strong efforts are made, and there has been success when it comes to many of the most prominent and historically significant buildings in the area.

6. - What is the reason for not sticking to the current height limitations?
- Given the availability of other lots within a few blocks of Whyte and other existing towers over 4 stories in those neighbourhoods, why is it necessary to put one in the historic area?
  - Why can't they build a 4 storey mixed use building?
  - This complex can be built either north or south of the avenue. Why is building right on Whyte a priority?
  - There seem to be better locations stepped away from 82nd Ave, even a few blocks over, that would be superior?
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From the Applicant:

- We believe that engaging Whyte Avenue is important to sustain the future of the avenue. By building at this location we are directly bringing more foot traffic to this intersection and more residents to the Ave, which increases customers for Whyte avenue retailers, increased numbers in safety, and increased vibrancy to the area. Further, we believe in building high quality, innovative buildings and this project will be the first mixed use mass timber building in Alberta. This project is not feasible at a height of four stories. We want this project to be the new cornerstone of Whyte Avenue and it will bring international attention to Whyte Avenue making it an even more notable destination.

From the City:

- Please note that the construction method is not something that is regulated by zoning and the proposed zone does not mandate a mass timber building. As a result, construction method cannot be taken into consideration as part of the City's review of the proposal and recommendation to City Council. If the rezoning is approved, there would be no obligation for the building to be

built this way should the current landowner's intent change, or should ownership of the site change.

7. - Can the city employ some building design restrictions?  
- Why doesn't the city just force developers to build in a historical style in historical areas?

- The existing zone, the [Historical Commercial \(DC1\) Direct Development Control Provision](#), does contain considerable regulations that help ensure new buildings are generally following a "historical style".
- There is an ongoing debate in heritage circles about whether it is more appropriate to force new buildings to mimic old buildings, or whether new buildings should be obviously new when integrated with old buildings to allow for the actual historic building to be recognized.
- More information and discussion on this topic can be found in the [Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada](#).
- The proposed DC2 Provision is being reviewed for its compatibility in design with the heritage character of the historic area and this will factor into Administration's overall recommendation to City Council on this rezoning.

8. If this building was so historically significant, why wasn't it placed on a list?

- The current building on the site, the Archibald Block, is on a list - the Inventory of Historic Places in Edmonton. It's inclusion on this list means that the City has determined that it is historically significant and merits conservation, but it is not legally protected from demolition.
- If designated and protected, a building is moved to a different but related list, The Register of Historic Places in Edmonton.
- [Inventory and Register](#)

9. While car-free lifestyle is certainly gaining traction, are there really enough people to fill this building, especially with other attractive rental buildings going up on Whyte Avenue itself and in the downtown core?

From the Applicant:

- We had a parking assessment completed that supports zero parking for this project. In addition, no parking is required for buildings on Whyte Avenue. It

is ideally situated near public transportation and existing bicycle infrastructure and we will have a large bicycle room for tenants. The project will be advertised with zero parking, and along with its other sustainable features (including the building method of mass timber), will appeal specifically to tenants who do not want to own a car. As a rental project (not a for-sale condo), should a tenant wish to own a car, it is much less onerous to simply move to a location that provides parking vs having to sell a condo unit.

From the City:

- Please note that the building method is not something that is regulated by zoning and the proposed zone does not mandate a “mass timber” method. As a result, construction method cannot be taken into consideration as part of the City’s review of the proposal and recommendation to City Council. If the rezoning is approved, there would be no obligation for the building to be built this way should the current landowner’s intent change, or should ownership of the site change.
- Please note that tenure (whether a building is a rental or a for-sale condo) is not something that is regulated by zoning and the proposed zone does not mandate a “rental project”. If the rezoning is approved, there would be no obligation for the building to be a rental building should the current landowner’s intent change, or should ownership of the site change.

10. Will The Baron site end up as another empty lot with a hole in the ground?

From the Applicant:

- Yes, the building is in terrible condition and will eventually need to be demolished. However, if a successful rezoning is achieved, our intent is to proceed quickly through the development permit and building permit stages and begin construction upon all City approvals.

From the City:

- It has not been concluded that the building is in “terrible condition”. A Historic Resource Impact Assessment (HRIA) is currently underway, prior to any changes being made to the property (including demolition). The HRIA process will look at physical elements of the building, and include a condition and integrity assessment as well as an analysis of how the Archibald Block could be retained or incorporated into future redevelopment proposals for the property. It will also help to understand if it is feasible to restore the

building to its original appearance, recognizing that the building has been impacted over time by unsympathetic alterations.

- The City cannot compel landowners to develop or redevelop their properties, even after a rezoning is approved. However, the Community Standards Bylaw and Safety Codes Act does give the City some authority to promote [minimum property and safety standards](#).
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## **Web Page Visitor Definitions**

### Aware

An aware visitor, or a visitor that we consider to be 'aware', has made one single visit to the page, but not clicked any further than the main page.

### Informed

An informed visitor has taken the 'next step' from being aware and clicked on something. We now consider the visitor to be informed about the project. This is done because a click suggests interest in the project.

### Engaged

Every visitor that contributes on the page, either by asking questions or leaving a comment, is considered to be 'engaged'.

Engaged and informed are subsets of aware. That means that every engaged visitor is also always informed AND aware. In other words, a visitor cannot be engaged without also being informed AND aware. At the same time, an informed visitor is also always aware.

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If you have questions about this application please contact:

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