

WE ARE ALL CITY BUILDERS

By Kim Petrin, Kent Snyder, and Jeff Chase

Builders, residents, businesses... no

matter who you are or what you do, you contribute to Edmonton's future. These efforts were amplified and on full display during the pandemic, as the collaboration and fortitude of all Edmontonians helped to rally around solutions to pressing social and economic issues and uncertainty. By working together, we tapped into an abundance of creative solutions to support local businesses, construction, and development — improving how we build and support investments throughout the city. While the pandemic has disrupted much of our lives, our desired destination — walkable, urban, healthy, and connected places and spaces — is the same; but we are at a different starting point with a set of new challenges and opportunities. What will we do differently as we move forward? What changes and pivots will we need to embrace? We believe that responsible and coordinated investments in plans, policies, and programs can help us make sense of the challenges we are faced with today, and guide us through an increasingly uncertain future. Change is going to require all of us.

THE BIG PICTURE

Long before the pandemic seeped into our city streets, our homes, our hearts, and our minds, the City of Edmonton was working hard on its municipal development plan, The City Plan. Municipal plans allow cities to think about the “big picture”. How do we create jobs and accommodate growing populations? How do we attract young people and welcome more homes and people into our neighbourhoods? How do we make our spaces and places accessible to people of all backgrounds, races, ages, and abilities? Most importantly, how do we create cities and the types of communities we want to live in?

The City Plan asked Edmontonians, “How will we create a healthy, urban, and climate-resilient city of two million people?” The answer? Neighbourhoods, nodes, and corridors intensified with more housing, with a goal of 50 per cent of new units added through infill city-wide, and 600,000 new residents welcomed in redevelopment areas. In its prior plan, The Way We Grow, Edmonton set its sights on a concentration of 25 per cent of housing units in core and mature neighbourhoods, a target that was met and exceeded in 2018 (27 per cent).



Achieving The City Plan's ambitious targets will require the collective effort of builders, architects, residents, and more. Over the past few years, they have advocated for significant and positive changes to how we do business and how we plan the city — to our services and processes, and policies and regulations. From their inspired ideas for medium-density housing to sustainable, carbon-neutral design to culturally-sensitive supportive housing to heritage adaptation to mixed-use developments to improving services and processes, Edmontonians have stretched our imaginations of what is possible, demonstrating what can be done to make Edmonton more socially and economically prosperous.

IMPLEMENTING THE CITY PLAN

Cities are planned at a variety of scales: city-level, neighbourhood-level, and parcel-level — each governed by a series of statutory plans or land-use bylaws —

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documents that legislate growth patterns and regulations for how land can be developed.

At the city-level, The City Plan lays the foundation for growth, painting a picture of where Edmonton might be headed over the next 50 years. An Edmonton that plants two million new urban trees; increases trips made by

transit and active transportation to 50 per cent; eliminates chronic and episodic homelessness; creates walkable, rollable, bikeable mixed-use communities; and nurtures vibrant nodes and corridors that support 50 per cent of all employment in Edmonton. An Edmonton that can serve those here today, and support and nurture those who come after us.

Over the next few years, the City of Edmonton is rolling out The City Plan's vision at the neighbourhood and parcel-level, with two important initiatives: district planning and the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative. These efforts aim to complement each other to help simplify and streamline Edmonton's policies, programs, and services — all to enable a better life for Edmontonians.

At the neighbourhood-level, district planning will result in fifteen 15-minute districts, where residents can access an array of services, amenities, and attractions within 15 minutes of where they live. At the parcel-level, the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative will result in a new zoning bylaw and improved technology and services to enable investment and development throughout Edmonton's districts.

15-MINUTE DISTRICTS

Back in 2020, the "15-minute city" became a popular urbanist zeitgeist. Proposed by Mayor Anne Hidalgo, the 15-minute city envisioned a Paris that would ensure its residents had access to amenities, work, and other services, all within 15 minutes of their homes.

In Edmonton, a local version of the 15-minute city is being explored through district planning, housing, recreation, schools, and employment opportunities are envisioned as being able to be accessed within 15 minutes of one's home. Preparing the district plans will take a significant effort, including your participation, but we are confident the effort will result in more livable and equitable neighbourhoods that are investment ready. That is the vision, but how might we advance this aim? The first goal post is planning for growth to 1.25 million people; and the second is to complete district plans in parallel with Edmonton's Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative.

ZONING IS EVERYWHERE

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playgrounds, to garden suites and the downtown core. The purpose of zoning is to determine what can be built where. It sets the rules for where new buildings should go, what types of buildings they can be, and what types of businesses and activities can happen on a property. Zoning guides growth in an orderly way to minimize conflicts between different activities and can improve the safety, public health, and welfare of its citizens and the environment.

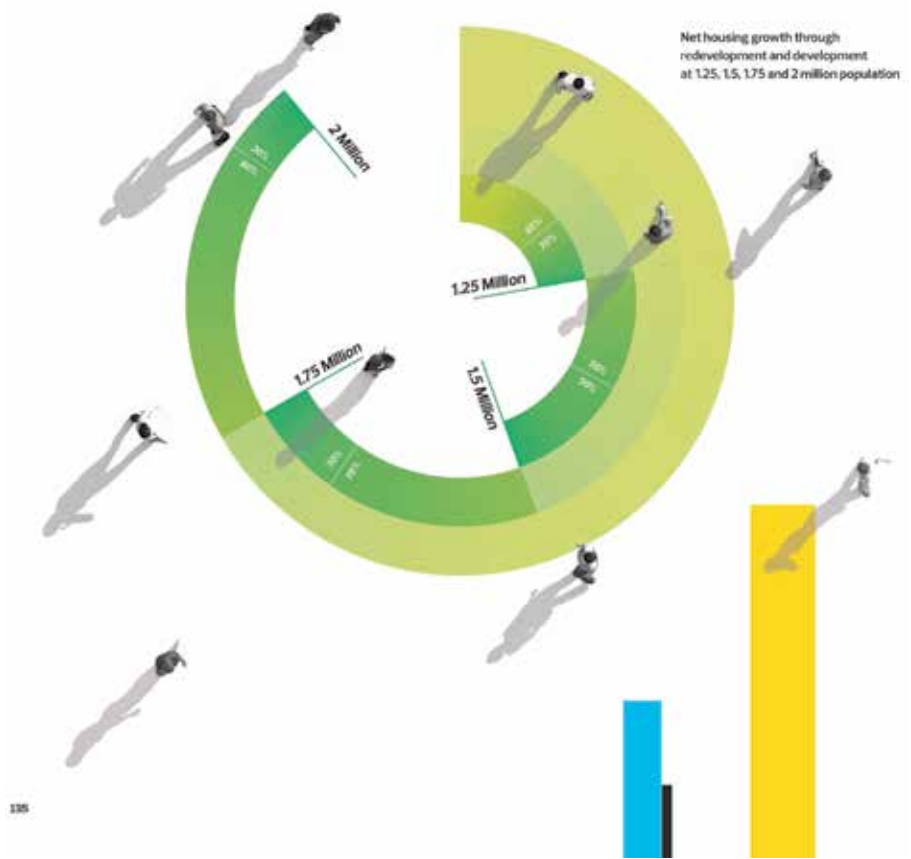
The Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative asks, “How will Edmonton welcome new people, developments, and investments?” The answer is in a strategic, simplified, and streamlined zoning bylaw. Working towards this will help Edmonton enable people, places, and businesses to thrive and prosper.

The Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative will culminate in a new zoning bylaw, new technology and services for Edmontonians to more easily engage, and a city-wide rezoning process to align with the corresponding regulatory changes. This is all to support development investment, flexibility, and accessibility. Reducing regulatory complexity will make it easier to build and do business in Edmonton, and opens the door for innovative and sustainable designs. This work is underway and expected to be discussed at city council in the third quarter of 2022.

OUR CITY-BUILDING TOOLBOX

The City of Edmonton is in the process of developing a series of tools, from a Growth Management Framework to a City Planning Framework to an Economic Action Plan, to support The City Plan and initiatives like district planning and the Zoning Bylaw Renewal. Tools premised on prioritizing investment, resources, and infrastructure in more efficient, transparent, and impactful ways.

The City Planning Framework project will create clear roles and descriptions for all planning tools, and implement an internal process to retire, update, and maintain plans. This work will ensure our planning tools are adaptive and



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responsive to our city-building goals to navigate change as communities move through their lifecycle. The City Planning Framework will help to streamline the city's land development process and make timelines more predictable. To this end, there will be more clarity for business and industry around land-use intensities and priorities, creating a planning landscape of predictability.

The Growth Management Framework will use a suite of tools to help us shift the growth pattern in Edmonton to be in line with The City Plan's vision of higher anticipated residential growth and density development happening in the redeveloping area and at the nodes and corridors. The framework considers where infrastructure, growth, and financing should be structured to support this vision, based on population increments of 250,000 people up to two million people. District Plans and the Growth Management Framework will be coordinated to reflect these priorities and areas of focus. Businesses will be interested in which districts are slated for more investment and when, providing greater clarity on their development decisions. Existing grant programs (e.g. those that focus on water infrastructure and fire protection) could potentially be scaled up and used as a financing/incentive tool.

The City's Edmonton Economic Action Plan (EAP) aims to support job creation along with the growth and diversification of Edmonton's economy over the next 10 years. The Economic Action Plan is a roadmap for building a resilient, inclusive economy and outlines opportunities to grow and diversify the economy. This includes a need to consider economic development in a range of City initiatives that promote job growth in support of 121,000 net new jobs in 10 years, as identified in The City Plan. Much of the work in the Economic Action Plan will rely on the coordination and collaboration with industry partners like you.

THE FUTURE EDMONTON

The future is ours if we want it. Are we ready to draw from the range of planning tools we have collectively established to realize an urban, healthy, climate-resilient city that supports a prosperous region? There are many policies, actions, and initiatives currently underway that seek to transform the way the City provides development and planning services, and how you — as city builders — can engage.

We are raising the bar; adapting and improving services and innovating and evolving to support the business community. We are changing the way we work; changing the way we provide

planning and development services and improving customer service (some might call it 'reducing red tape')! We are focused on speed to market with the ultimate goal of building a vibrant Edmonton. Our path is clear and together, with you, we are moving forward with a focus to position our city for the future. Over the coming months and years, we look forward to seeing you get involved, in sharing your ideas and insights, and joining us in this goal.

Kim Petrin is the branch manager for Development Services. The Development Services Branch implements strategic growth and private sector investment through zoning, subdivision, servicing agreements, permitting, licencing, inspections, and compliance.

Kent Snyder is the branch manager for Planning and Environment Services. The branch works to prepare strategic city building policies to support the implementation of The City Plan. Strategies include growth management, open space, transportation planning, environment, and climate resilience.

Jeff Chase is the branch manager of Economic Investment Services. The Economic Investment Services Branch leads the City's economic development, business services, and regional planning portfolios. ♦

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