

Edmonton Design
Committee

The logo for the City of Edmonton, featuring the word "Edmonton" in white text on a dark blue rectangular background.

Edmonton

DRAFT Principles of Urban Design

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Notes to the Reader

These draft Principles of Urban Design have been prepared by the Edmonton Design Committee (EDC), with the assistance of City of Edmonton Administration, to provide a more current and robust framework for the submission and evaluation of EDC submissions. This work is being undertaken as part of the 2024-25 EDC Work Plan and represents an **initial draft** which is intended to generate ideas, comments and other feedback which will be used by the Committee as the Principles are continually refined through late 2024 and early 2025.

For more information on the 2024-25 EDC Work Plan please visit www.edmonton.ca/edc

1.0 Introduction

The Edmonton Design Committee (EDC) is committed to working with proponents in presenting their proposed projects to the Committee. We regard this process as a collaborative one, where we endeavour to work together with a continued commitment to designing projects to enhance city urban form and function; strengthen our neighbourhoods and local character; shape new districts; protect and leverage the value of our built environment; and create vibrant, dynamic, and appealing places to live and work.

The EDC principles of urban design reflect best practice in urban design and site planning, and align with ConnectEdmonton and the policy intentions of The City Plan. Furthermore, the thoughtful application of the principles ensures the proposed development and its public realm fully responds to the context of the project site.

The design vision of a proposed development shall be communicated through the EDC design brief, which is the basis for review by the Edmonton Design Committee. Whereas the principles address the “why”, the EDC design brief addresses “how” good urban design, architecture and landscape architecture is employed through the application of four key planning and design considerations- project overview, neighbourhood and site analyses, and design narrative.

The EDC design brief requirements allow EDC to work with proponents to assess and seek common ground with respect to the unique qualities of each project and how they support good urban design, architecture, and landscape architecture.

1.1 Applicability

An EDC design brief will generally be required as part of rezoning submissions for transit-oriented development (nodes), development along major arterials (corridors), large-site infill projects, and new greenfield development. All projects requiring EDC review (including Development Permit and Rezoning submissions) shall require an EDC design brief.

EDC design briefs are to be submitted in conjunction with basic design documentation including:

- Site plan, landscape plan and building elevations (for development permits);
- Proposed regulations and appendices (for rezoning applications); and
- Any other technical studies (e.g., shadow, wind, transportation, etc.).

The EDC design brief shall be prepared by a qualified design professional such as a Registered Architect, Registered Landscape Architect, Accredited Planner or Professional Engineer.

1.2 Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles not only reflect current best practice in urban design, placemaking and city-building, but also align with ConnectEdmonton while translating the policy intentions of The City Plan (Belong, Live, Thrive, Access, Preserve and Create) into more specific urban design objectives:

- **Authenticity** - Celebrating people, cultures, and natural and built heritage while promoting the evolution of culture for generations to come.
- **Inclusivity** - Embracing openness and welcoming people of all cultures, incomes, ages, abilities and genders.
- **Walkability** - Creating opportunities to accommodate everyday tasks with less dependence on automobile use.
- **Connectivity** - Integrating the movement of people within the public realm across a multitude of modes, systems and scales.
- **Health** - Reducing our ecological and urban footprint while contributing to human health and wellness.
- **Vibrancy** - Enabling diverse activities, amenities, and uses that contribute to lively, people-focused places.

2.0 Submission Requirements

The urban design brief is composed of two parts - a **project design analysis** and a **project design narrative**.

2.1 Project Design Analysis

Project Overview

The project overview is to provide a high-level overview of the key planning and design project components and how these components reflect and enhance the surrounding area and contribute to the economic, social, and environmental vitality of the city. The overview should include all relative project information, such as:

- Description of the project, including major statistics (including but limited to height, density and parking), address, size, current zoning and planning history (e.g., previous approvals) - with copies of relevant documents;
- Location map, aerial views, and site photos that illustrate the site location and surrounding site context;
- Compliance with relevant statutory plans and / or zoning, clearly identify areas of non-compliance and rationale;
- The engagement process and any key feedback; and
- A summary of your opinion as to how your project is good urban design.

Site and Neighbourhood Analysis

The site and neighbourhood analysis is to provide an illustrative overview of the key project analysis and how the analysis relates to the project and surrounding context; has been used to establish meaningful planning and design responses and decision-making; optimizes form and function; acknowledges, capitalizes, and integrates site networks and the complex relationships between people, built form, and the site; and aligns with the guiding principles of **authenticity, inclusivity, walkability, connectivity, health** and **vibrancy**. The overview should include all key relative analysis, which should include:

- **Essence & Character** – An illustrative overview of the key essences (e.g., the predominant colours, textures, patterns, materials, forms, sounds and activities that occur in the surrounding natural and built environment) and authentic character components (e.g., direct or indirect design approaches that establish relevance, meaning, originality, vitality and positive sense of place).
- **Design Framework** – An illustrative overview of key components that enhance the visual quality or legibility of the project within the surrounding neighbourhood context, and how the design intent and key principles support the relationships and interface with the surrounding context and enhance sense of place. The design framework should address key aspects of **district** (how does the project relate to the block, neighbourhood, community, or city with respect to existing and future zoning and planning, and integrating areas of recognizable and common character), **landmarks** (how does the project relate and enhance surrounding reference points, destinations, and wayfinding), **nodes** (how does the project interface with the public realm and enhance surrounding focal points, key intersections, etc.), **edges** (how does the project interface with the public realm and enhance the surrounding natural and built boundaries) and **connectivity** (how does the project interface with the public realm and existing/future forms of movement (e.g., roads, walkways, public transit, bicycle routes, etc.) and promote connectivity, walkability, vibrancy, accessibility and inclusivity. Other design framework considerations include:
 - **Sensory** – The visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory aspects of the site and surrounding context (type, duration, intensity, and quality (+ or -)) that have been identified and addressed in the project.
 - **Human & Cultural** – The cultural, psychological, behavioral, and sociological aspects related to well-being and human experience; activities, human relationships, patterns of human characteristics (+ or -); indigenous or cultural/heritage engagement and application; human-centric/human scaled aspects related to the neighbourhood, street, built form and site; and CPTED considerations and applications that have been identified and addressed in the project.
 - **Adaptation and Resiliency** – The processes or actions applied to support the project and surrounding context and/or design

components incorporated to anticipate and mitigate variation in climate and changes to the surrounding context. For example, built form orientation and features (courtyards, forecourts, canopies, etc.); low energy/low impact/durable building features and materials; hardscape applications; site design (e.g., low impact development applications); project staging and future potential changes to the surrounding context; etc.

2.2 Project Design Narrative

Applying the project design analysis, describe and illustrate the key project design principles that evoke a sense of place and enhance the surrounding context and urban experience. The narrative must clearly communicate the design concept and building program; how the design reflects key statutory plan and / or zoning requirements; how the design responds to the project's architectural, historical, cultural, and social context; how the project addresses the guiding principles; and how, in your opinion, the project reflects good urban planning and design.

The narrative must address and describe the key design concepts below, **using plans, elevations, 3-d views, renderings and/or diagrams** (preferably annotated) as needed:

- **Scale** - Built form and massing in relation to the surrounding context and design framework.
- **Connectivity** - Accessibility, inclusivity, and active modes of transportation at the site level (circulation).
- **Sustainability** - Key environmental, social, and economic principles (e.g., energy performance, materials, climate resilience, and energy transition) applied to building and site development.
- **Site development** - Key components (hardscape, softscape, gathering spaces, amenity areas, site furniture, amenities, and features (e.g., fencing, lighting, public art, etc.)) and their form, seasonal (e.g., winter considerations/variation, materials, textures, and colours incorporating design essences and character, and analysis and assessment. Proposed off-site improvements (administered through Servicing Agreements or Municipal Improvement Agreements) should also be noted.

- **Public realm interface** -The building/public realm interface with a focus on establishing a human-scaled environment that promotes animation, social interaction, vibrancy, walkability, and various forms of defined and mixed-use ground floor experiences; and supports essence, character, and sense of place.
- **Materiality** - Built form components, materials, cladding, finishes, colours, signing, and lighting incorporating design essences/character, analysis, and assessment.
- **Lighting** - The general design intent relating to building and site lighting, with a focus on the public realm and the public realm interface. *The submission should include annotated site plans and building elevations, product cut sheets and/or nighttime renderings.*
- **Signage** - The general design intent relating to building and site signage, with a focus on the public realm and the public realm interface. *The submission should indicate the general location, size, type (e.g., business identification vs. on-premise advertising), and construction (e.g., materials, illumination, etc.)*
- **Futureproofing** - Staged development and futureproofing of potential issues or opportunities that affect either the project development or surrounding context.

3.0 Format

The EDC design brief shall be prepared in 11 x 17" landscape format and provided in PDF format. The file size should not exceed 50 MB. For projects requiring Edmonton Design Committee review, the EDC design brief fulfills the requirement for a formal submission / presentation package.

4.0 Evaluation

The EDC design brief will form part of the application submission and will be reviewed by the Development Officer or Rezoning Planner to determine conformance with statutory plans and / or zoning requirements. For Direct Control Rezoning applications, the EDC design brief will inform the ongoing refinement of the proposed Direct Control prior to review by City Council.