

District Planning

How Were the District Policy and
Plans Drafted?

Edmonton



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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: 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 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 and recent rezoning decisions. 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.



DISTRICT POLICY

Example policies inspired by the Residential Infill Guidelines and Transit Oriented Development Guidelines

2.4.6 Primary Corridors

Primary Corridors are dense and vibrant urban areas along prominent streets that serve residents from multiple **Districts**. They connect to **Nodes**, feature diverse travel modes and may evolve as more commercial or residential. Over time, they should redevelop and grow along their entire length.

Primary Corridors are shown on Map 3: Nodes and Corridors of the district plans.

Map colour: 

2.4.6.1 Support **Low Rise** and **Mid Rise** development throughout **Primary Corridors**.

2.4.6.2 Support **High Rise** development within **Primary Corridors** where both of the following criteria are met:

- The site is along an **Arterial Roadway**, and
- The site is within 200 metres of a **Mass Transit Station** or an intersection of two **Arterial Roadways**.

2.4.6.3 Support **Tall High Rise** development within **Primary Corridors** where all of the following criteria are met:

- The site is along an **Arterial Roadway**,
- The site is within 200 metres of a **Mass Transit Station** or an intersection of two **Arterial Roadways**, and
- The site size and context allow for appropriate transition to surrounding development.

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.



Drawing Direction from Rezoning Recommendations and Decisions

Recent rezoning recommendations and decisions at public hearings have informed policy development so that the District Policy better aligns with the application of The City Plan direction. This resulted in a recent policy addition (2.5.2.6 in the District Policy) to consider additional height throughout the lands designated Urban Mix (including all residential areas and most nodes and corridors) where development meets certain criteria, such as proximity to a node or corridor, proximity to transit, being adjacent to a park or being on a corner site. This provides parameters to further expand development opportunities in line with recommendations from Administration and Council decisions since the adoption of The City Plan.

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.

District Plans 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 and District Systems and Networks Sections

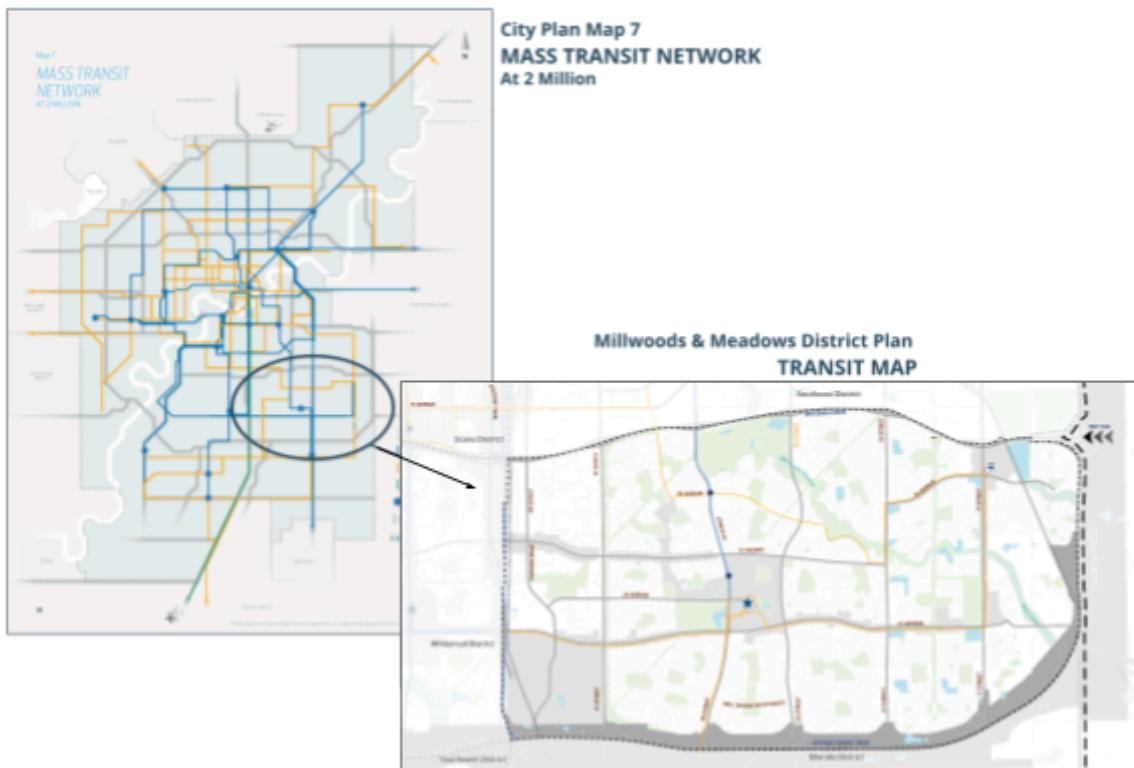
How a District Plan’s “District Context” and “District Systems and Networks” were prepared is included in the table below:

District Plan Section	Section’s Purpose	How Sections were Prepared
District Context	Describes the physical, historical and development context for the district.	Drawing from existing geographic plans, historic planning tools, Open Data and research done by the project team.
District Systems and Networks	Describes where and how the district is intended to grow.	Based on The City Plan’s Maps.

Drafting the Maps in the District Plans

Each District Plan contains 8 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. 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 "Activating and Phasing 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).



Drafting the Area-Specific Policy section in the District Plans

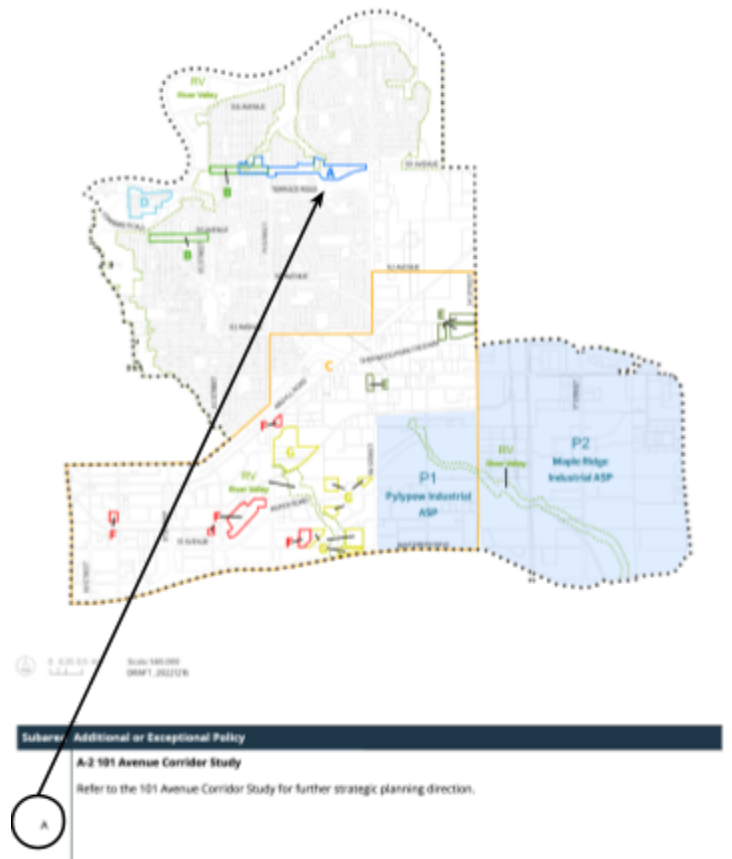
Each District Plan includes an “Area-Specific Policy” section (Section 4 for the District Plans). These policies are considered unique to the district and “Exceptional” or “Additional” to what is included in the District Policy. This section includes a “Area-Specific Policy Subareas” map and a “Area-Specific 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.

Visit edmonton.ca/districtplanning for the list of proposed geographic plans to be kept, changed and retired and a summary of the project’s plan review process.



Public Engagement

Edmontonians have shaped the District Planning project over the last five years through:

- + Sharing their desire to live more locally during The City Plan's creation.
- + Providing input during the initial District Plan prototype testing in 2021.
- + Helping refine the first policy drafts over a four-month period in 2022 through workshops, surveys, open houses and more.
- + Giving final feedback in November 2023 on the updated draft District Plans, existing geographic plans to keep, change or retire and what the City should work on following the project.

An overview of all public engagement resources, activities and processes through the different project phases can be found at edmonton.ca/districtplanning.

Phase 1: 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.



Phase 2: Refine-Level 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.

Phase 3: Advise-Level Public Engagement 2022

Phase 3 sought feedback and perspectives on the changes made to the draft District Policy, District Plans and list of geographic plans proposed to keep, change or retire since the Phase 2 engagement in 2022. This phase was about validating the revisions made and confirming what was heard through our previous rounds of engagement before bringing the draft plans and geographic plan recommendations to a public hearing.

Feedback was also sought on the future work ideas collected in Phase 2 engagement to understand which ideas were most and least important for the City to initiate as a project. This phase was also about collecting additional ideas for future work items from the public.

Internal Engagement

Internal staff stakeholders at the City completed three technical reviews 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. These technical review periods happened concurrently with public engagement Phases 1 to 3.

Stay Informed

Sign up for the [City Building Newsletter](#) to stay on top of the latest project and public engagement updates and learn about other city building initiatives.

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