

District Planning Information Session Recap

Introduction

The District Planning team hosted eight virtual information sessions in June and July of 2021 to introduce the District Planning project. These sessions were open to all Edmontonians, community league representatives and interested organizations. This *Information Session Recap* provides a summary of the eight sessions and includes highlights on the format, common themes heard and next steps.

Background on District Planning

[The City Plan](#) sets the strategic direction for how Edmonton will change to accommodate two million residents. Through [The City Plan's](#) engagement, we heard Edmontonians want to:

- live in a community where they can easily get groceries for dinner, where their kids can safely ride their bike to school, and where they can take a short transit ride to work.
- ensure that all neighbourhoods continue to be desirable places to live by planning and preparing for increasing density in key areas.
- have fun and recharge in the river valley and local parks which support biodiversity and provide physical and mental benefits.
- have a choice about how they get around - it might be more pleasant to travel by foot, bike or transit to get to work, pick up groceries, go to the park, run errands or pick up a coffee.

District Planning is building off of The City Plan's public engagement. Districts are collections of neighbourhoods that together provide a range of destinations, services and amenities Edmontonians desire and rely on. District plans will help translate The City Plan's policies to nurture what's already desirable for existing residents while considering how to accommodate new residents as Edmonton grows.

With the strategic direction set in The City Plan, district plans won't introduce new guidance but will communicate and illustrate how each district is intended to change according to The City Plan. They

will highlight the key features, current district conditions and future opportunities based on The City Plan that are important to residents, communities and businesses.

Information Session Purpose and Format

The purpose of the Information Sessions was to introduce the District Planning project, how it contributes to The City Plan's implementation and gather questions and initial impressions. The sessions were intended to generate awareness about the project's launch. The questions and comments shared at these sessions will help to inform the project before future engagement in 2022.

Eight (8) one hour sessions were hosted online between June 23 to July 7. The sessions were added to the City's Communications and Engagement Calendar, promoted through [@PlanEdmonton](https://www.edmonton.ca/plan-edmonton) and shared with various organizations (e.g. EFCL) to promote among their networks. Everyone who signed up was sent a reminder and links to materials on the District Planning webpage.

The format included a brief presentation by 1-2 members from the project team, a check in and check out ice-breaker, and opportunities for questions or comments. During each session, all questions and comments were captured on a "Jamboard" with "post-it notes" either by a facilitator or the participants themselves. Following the session, participants were provided a survey to provide feedback on the session's format.

Figure 1: District Planning Information Session Jamboard Example

Sticky Note Colour Legend

- Add a comment (Pink)
- Add a question (Yellow)
- Answered Questions (Blue)

Feel free to add your Questions/Comments Here

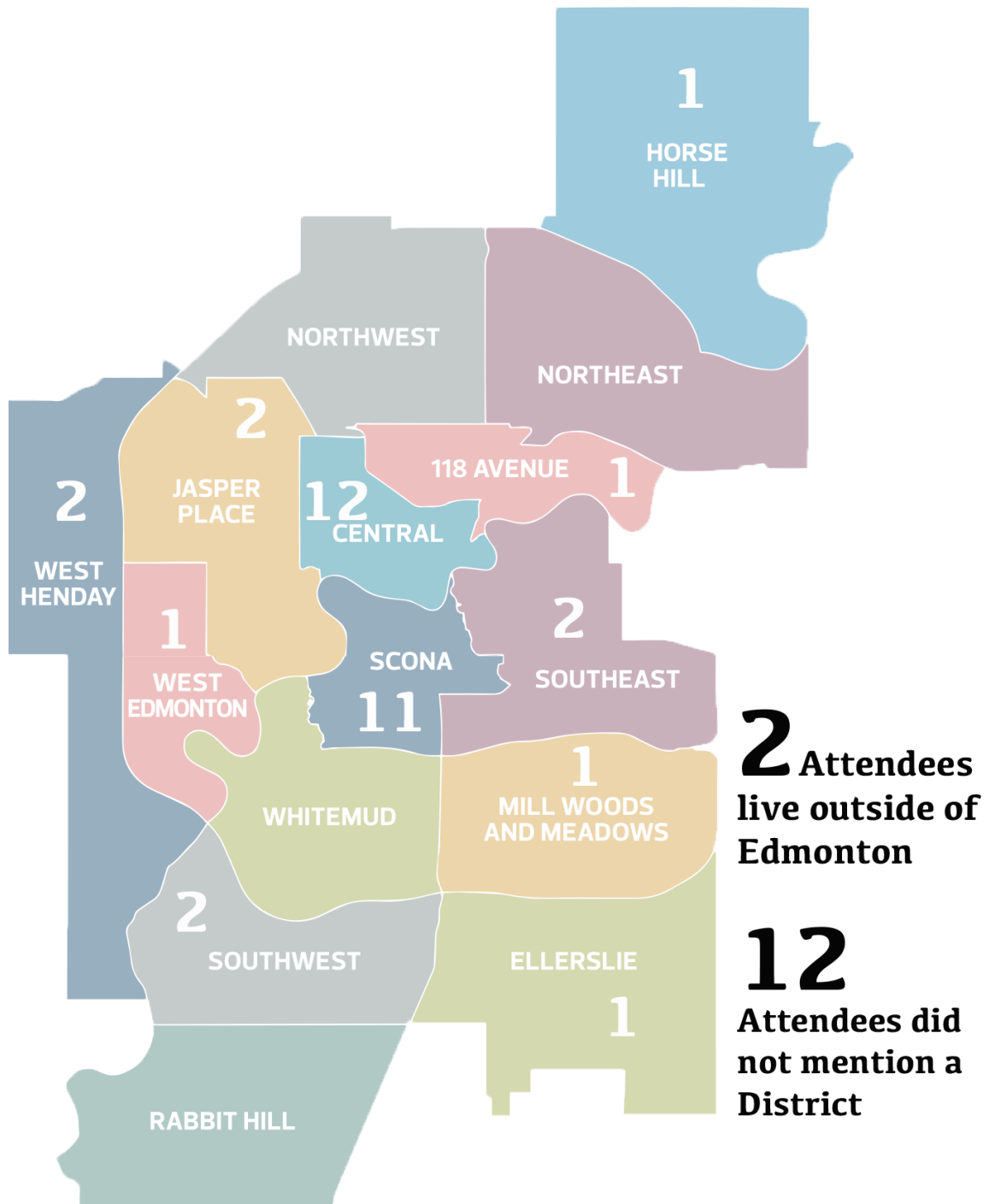
Questions:

- How will district plans incorporate/reflect non-residential development within a district? Too often, commercial and other non-residential development is left to the periphery of neighbourhoods or segregated into the "place across the arterial". How will district plans encourage better mixed uses?
- How will district plans distribute non-residential development. Too often commercial uses are allowed in interior neighbourhoods instead of peripheral locations where access and similar services should be, especially as the new ZB very liberally allows commercial uses virtually anywhere?
- The original District Planning concept (Bylaw 6000) established a requirement for organized public engagement development simultaneously for very start-up. City will address potential for additional engagement on Aug 24th with Council. Why is the excluded at (the most place) and until fundamental policies have already been set in consultation with the Development industry?
- Is there a near future plan to review the Joint Use Plan for Land and Facilities between the City and school boards?
- How will district plans incorporate/reflect non-residential development within a district? Too often, commercial and other non-residential development is left to the periphery of neighbourhoods or segregated into the "place across the arterial". How will district plans encourage better mixed uses?
- Decisions regarding school boards take a long time, this issue is important. Loss opportunity. Unclear how DP will address this.
- Will District Plans specifically address undeveloped school sites in built out areas? Sounds ill defined?
- existing school buildings as community hubs.
- What legal status will District Plans be? If non-statutory they are useless. Will they be "chapters" of the City Plan?
- re young adult learning and education. Families make decisions an establishing families based on long term projections and stability, but if schools have not maintained enough enrollment, then vital infrastructure is lost over years and can take decades to recover in mature neighborhoods.
- Community Engagement with previous plans and their retainment in District Plans? How will we deal with these.
- If the long term goal is 15 min neighbourhoods (which I think is really great), is the interim goal more like a 30 min to get us to 15M and maybe 20 min to 1.5M, etc.
- School planning is already part of local ARPs (zoning requirements and priorities for child-oriented housing) but rezoning planners routinely ignore them. District Plans need to include a requirement for family oriented housing near schools (or it may not happen). ensure if local zoning policies are not being considered at LDA stage. New Zoning Bylaw does not consider child-oriented development. How can we protect/maintain this in our planning processes
- I see that the Draft District General Policy document includes planning for some services and amenities for children (such as K-12 education for the three Edmonton school boards), but not other key services mentioned in the City Plan (such as early learning and child care). How can District Planning meet the basic needs of families with children in all 15-minute districts?
- As a non-statutory plan, will the plan bind future elected officials to the contents of the plan?
- Each District is to be a 15-minute district. Does that include access to City Hall services - ie District City Hall offices for development planners, tax payments, social services, permits, Public Hearings etc?

What We Heard

It was beneficial to meet with people directly and hear their questions, provide answers or clarifications where possible and collect what was shared. A total of 68 people signed up and 50 attended. The average attendance was seven which allowed for more conversation during each session and a chance for everyone to contribute.

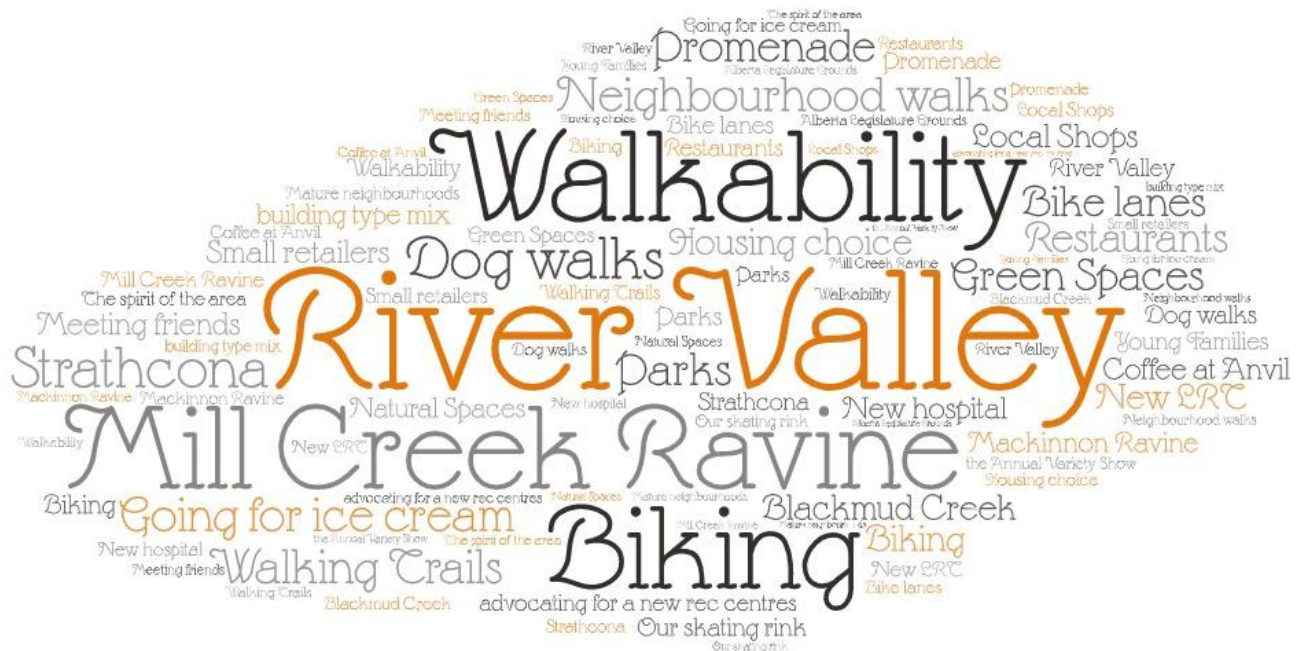
Figure 2: Summary of Information Session Attendees by District



Check in Question

The check in question served as a way for attendees to introduce themselves and learn a little about each other. Attendees were asked to share their name, their community (or organization) and share a favourite feature about their district or their favourite activity to do in their district. This was useful for us to hear about what matters to people. The responses are summarized in Figure 3.

Figure 3: "Favourite feature about your district or your favourite activity to do in your district "



Common Themes

Sessions served as an introduction to the project and included a wide range of comments and questions. Some were clarifications that could be provided during the session, like on terms (e.g. *What does NSP mean?* Neighbourhood Structure Plan) or process (e.g. *Will district plans be statutory?* Yes). For other topics raised, the information available was provided (e.g. engagement is targeted for 2022 but the timing of specific activities is still to be determined). Overall, about 150 different responses were collected during the sessions. As we reviewed the responses a few recurring themes were present and are highlighted below:

- **Content and Function of District Plans**
 - About a third of the responses related to the content and function of district plans.

- Responses about content included the type of information that would be included in district plans (e.g. services, infrastructure constraints, green spaces, schools, active transportation), how land use would be designated and distributed (e.g. residential intensification, commercial areas) and the level of detail within the plans.
- Regarding function, participants asked how district plans would serve built out and mature neighbourhoods, guide redevelopment, encourage mixed uses or services that meet community needs and how it would connect to zoning.
- *Communication and Engagement*
 - Communication and engagement were another third of the responses.
 - Responses included who would be engaged, the timing, level and expectations for engagement and what content would be engaged on or could be contributed to (e.g. district context, existing local plans like ARPs, local knowledge, community qualities and attributes).
 - Participants expressed a range of excitement and anxiety about the project; some hoping for visioning opportunities with others seeing this as a technical consolidation exercise.
 - Suggestions on communicating early, providing information and materials to help residents with input and leveraging existing networks (e.g. community leagues) to generate awareness will all be helpful in preparation for future engagement.
- *Existing Plans and Repeals*
 - The relationship to existing plans like Neighbourhood Structure Plans (NSPs) and Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs) was another common theme.
 - Some responses recognized the need to consolidate, simplify or remove older or no longer relevant planning direction while others worried about the loss of plans that were new, included prior consultation or maintained what mattered to residents. Participants would like to provide input into the process to consider if a local plan should be kept or repealed.
 - For plans that may be kept, clarity on how district plans will reference existing plans, their hierarchy and when a district plan or local plan should be consulted was also mentioned.

- *Equity*
 - A number of responses referenced equity from a range of perspectives: from a desire to see density increase throughout the city not just concentrated in the same areas, to a reminder that redevelopment has impacts, forcing out those who live in an area, to the application of a Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lense (similar to the Zoning Bylaw Renewal project).
- *Maintenance and Amendments*
 - Responses included how district plans will be monitored and maintained once approved, the timeline and process for amendments, the nature of the updates (e.g. developer driven or responding to community need) and how adaptive they would be for innovation.
- *Using District Plans*
 - Responses included a desire that district plans will serve residents as well as the development industry, that they be easier to read and understand (compared with some ARPs) and that online mapping tools could be used to support readability and interactivity.
- *Other Topics*
 - 15 minute district definition, district boundaries, adjusting to a new planning tool, restrictive covenants, climate resilience, open space, schools and nearby development, undeveloped school sites and active transportation.

Check out Question

The check out question was used to close the session and hear what participants are looking forward to as their district changes.

Figure 4: “What are you excited to see happen in your district as Edmonton grows to 1.25 Million people? ”



Next Steps

The conversation through the Information Sessions provided a valuable start for the project. We are grateful to everyone who attended. Everyone who signed up has been added to a stakeholder list to receive updates as the project progresses.

The project [webpage](#) has been updated with a series of topic papers about District Planning to provide additional background and context. The webpage also includes a resource to help you locate your neighbourhood and your district. Check the website for the latest updates to the project including updates to Council and opportunities to provide input.

We look forward to working with you as the District Planning project progresses and we prepare for engagement in 2022. If you have any questions or need additional information you can contact us at districtplanning@edmonton.ca