

# District Planning

**District Plan Guide:**  
How to Use District Plans

Edmonton



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## Introduction

[The City Plan](#) looks into the future and tells us what decisions we need to make, so Edmonton can welcome another one million people. It's a long term vision that considers clusters of Edmonton's neighbourhoods as districts which offer vibrant and diverse places for people to live, work and play. It will take some time before we get to two million people.

This District Planning project is about building 15 District Plans for each of The City Plan's districts. The City Plan sets the direction and District Plans clarify where and how each district will grow.

District Planning consists of two main components to guide Edmonton's growth:

1. District Policy - general policies that apply in all districts
2. 15 District Plans - the specific maps and guidance for each of the 15 districts

Each District Plan guides how neighbourhoods will physically change over time and supports Edmontonians' desire to live more locally in a "Community of Communities" — one of The City Plan's Big City Moves. This is where Edmontonians can meet most of their needs within a 15 minute walk, roll, bicycle ride or transit trip from their home.

In this District Plan Guide, we are going to talk about:

- + How District Plans fit into Edmonton's planning system
- + How District Plans benefit Edmonton and help us achieve The City Plan
- + How to use the District Policy and District Plans together
- + How District Plans will change over time

Here are a few definitions to key terms that appear in this Conversation Starter:

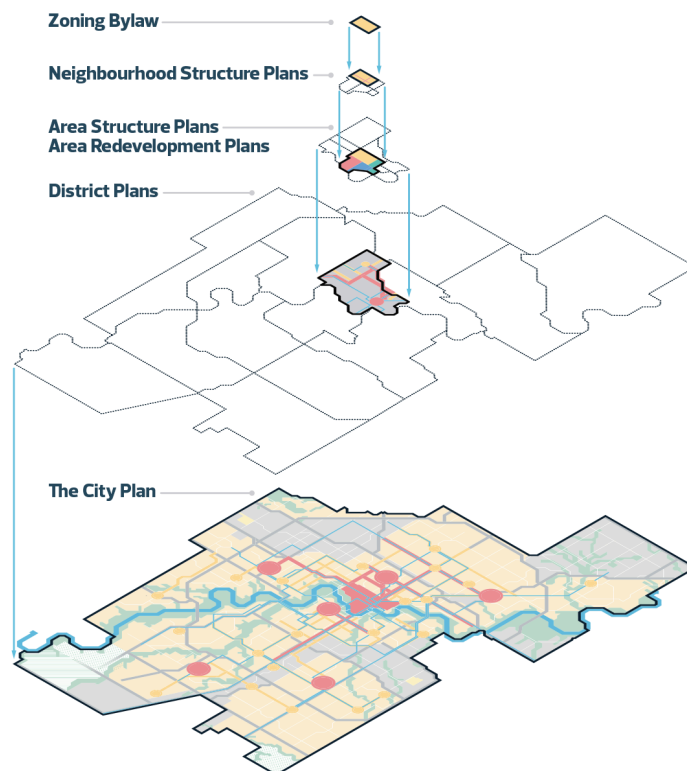
- + **Land use:** refers to different ways land can be used, developed or categorized in our city. For example, residential land uses refer to where people live, commercial land uses where businesses or stores are predominantly located and mixed uses refer to where residential and commercial are combined.
- + **Mobility:** refers to how people and goods move through our city and can refer to our roadways, sidewalks, bike lanes, mass transit routes and infrastructure.
- + **Growth Activation:** refers to initiatives, projects or investments that can support or stimulate the construction of utility or mobility infrastructure or new residential or commercial buildings in targeted locations.



## The Planning System

In Alberta, cities must develop and follow a Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and a Transportation Master Plan (TMP) to guide how their city will grow. These policy documents set the vision and cities need planning tools to help carry out their directions. Cities can develop tools that will guide decisions citywide or for specific areas of the city. Additionally, cities must develop a Zoning Bylaw that sets specific regulatory direction for how land can be physically developed. Together, policies and zoning are two of the fundamental planning tools that shape a city.

In Edmonton, the MDP and TMP are housed in a single document called: [The City Plan](#). The City Plan was approved by Edmonton City Council in 2020. It provides strategic direction for how Edmonton will grow and redevelop over-time, guiding the city to an eventual population of two million people. Since all planning tools need to align with The City Plan, this means The City Plan tells us what information Edmonton's first District Plans need to cover to get to two million people. The City Plan gives us lots of wide-ranging policy direction for Edmonton's various systems and networks, however we also need additional detailed guidance at smaller scales to help us make planning decisions now and in the years to come.







Like all cities, Edmonton’s planning system is made up of policies and regulations that guide how we use land, where and what we build, and how we move and grow. The types of planning tools in Edmonton are summarized in the table below:

**Table 1: Edmonton’s Planning Tools**

Planning Tool	Where it Applies	Legal Status
The City Plan	Citywide	Statutory
Strategies & Guidelines	Citywide	Non-Statutory
<b>Geographic Plans</b>		
District Plans – <i>NEW</i>	District-scale in the Redeveloping Areas and Developing Areas	Statutory
Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs)	Specific neighbourhoods in the Redeveloping Area*	Statutory
Area Structure Plans (ASPs)	Multiple Neighbourhoods in the Developing Area*	Statutory
Neighbourhood Area Structure Plans (NASPs)	Specific Neighbourhoods in the Developing Areas	Statutory
Neighbourhood Structure Plans (NSPs)	One Neighbourhood in the Developing Area	Statutory
<b>Regulatory Tools</b>		
Zoning Bylaw**	Applies citywide with site-level detail	Statutory

\* The Redeveloping Area and Developing Area are two of the three broad development pattern areas identified in The City Plan (See [The City Plan Map 9](#)).

\*\* Subdividing land or getting a building permit, while outside the scope of the District Planning project, are also part of the planning system. Learn more [here](#).



### **What Does Statutory Mean?**

A statutory planning tool must be passed by bylaw which can only be created or changed by City Council decision after a public hearing. These plans contain policies that guide or direct how the area should change over time and regulatory tools set the rules for what types of buildings or uses can happen on a property.

## **District Planning – A New Way to Plan**

District Plans and the District Policy are new statutory planning tools that must be used together to inform planning decisions at a district level. They follow the direction of The City Plan. District Plans are similar to our neighbourhood or area level plans, but they are at a larger geographic scale.

District Plans use broad land use categories to provide more flexible planning direction. Many existing plans can be very prescriptive, and residents feel discouraged when their plans are changed. District Plans still provide clear direction, but they allow for more varied development outcomes without requiring frequent changes (amendments) to the plans. District Plans play a key role in ensuring Edmonton’s planning system stays up-to-date. These plans will become the primary planning tool, making the planning process easier to use and understand.

The planning system works when older plans are retired after they have served their purpose and current plans stay up-to-date. A simplified planning system creates a more accessible and transparent system to navigate, so more people can share their voice and ideas on how Edmonton and their communities may change over-time.

Having a simplified and streamlined process will also help ensure the City makes consistent and informed development decisions. As time passes, District Plans will replace older geographic plans and house newer geographic plans. District Plans will guide changes to the Zoning Bylaw and inform how development should look and feel.

### **Why Districts**

Providing more detailed direction at a neighbourhood scale (as we may have in the past) isn’t feasible as Edmonton has over 400 neighbourhoods. The City Plan introduced districts as a new planning geography and laid out Edmonton’s district boundaries so we can plan for the future in a new way.

[“Planning Districts: Philosophy and Boundary Rationale”](#) was one of many different studies that helped to inform the [Making of the The City Plan](#).



## District Policy and District Plans

District Plans and the District Policy guide the physical change of districts, in order for Edmonton to achieve The City Plan vision. Together, they say what planning and design, mobility and growth management outcomes the City expects from projects and what decisions need to be made on:

- + Where we build, what we build, and how we move and grow
- + Where and what type of future planning work is needed (e.g., studies, strategies or policy support)
- + Where the City needs to spend money so growth happens

### Connection Between the District Policy and District Plans

The District Policy and District Plans must be used together. The District Policy guides change across the city by setting policy objectives for growth and change. District Plans point to where policies apply and how these policies connect to one another through maps and area-specific policy.

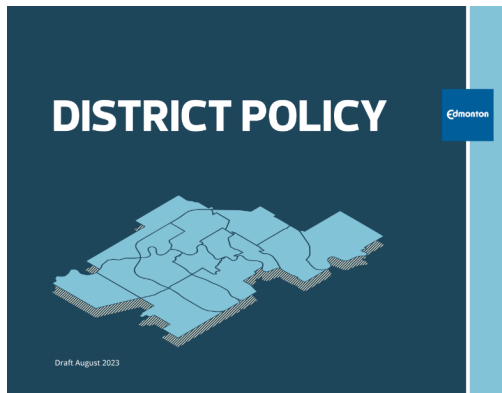
While the District Policy sets the foundation, the District Plans tell us what is currently in the district and how it will change. The District Plans also demonstrate *where* policies in the District Policy apply. Each district will grow in its own way as to where and what we build, and how we move.

Separating the District Policy from the District Plans allows us to adapt and adjust to changing policy practices or developments. We can respond to change in different parts of the city more easily when an amendment required in one District Plan or District Policy does not require the City to amend all District Plans. This supports a consistent and efficient approach to keeping the plans contemporary over-time.

### Who Are the District Plans for?

Similar to The City Plan, District Planning serves to benefit all Edmontonians:

- + **Residents**, District Plans show where redevelopment is encouraged and how their district is anticipated to change based on The City Plan.
- + **Industry and the business community**, District Plans are that policy link between The City Plan and the Zoning Bylaw, and where investment and development will be encouraged.
- + **Institutions and partners**, District Plans will help with their own planning and investment efforts, creating more opportunities for alignment with the City Plan.
- + **Administration and Council**, District Plans provide a consolidated source of policies to inform land use, mobility and infrastructure recommendations and decisions.



## District Policy

We have a District Policy so we make the same decisions in similar parts of the city, but in a phased approach to change the way The City Plan envisions. This means you can reference the District Policy to know what The City Plan expects from development and new infrastructure projects. You can find policy statements, illustrations and a glossary in the District Policy to help you understand the District Plan concepts and know what changes to expect. The District Policy helps us achieve the outcomes in The City Plan at the district-level.



## District Plans

District Plans share the District Policy, but reflect their unique geography, history, constraints, opportunities and policy directions. All policy and map information in a District Plan reflects The City Plan vision. In a District Plan, you can learn what currently exists in the district, what to expect as Edmonton grows and any unique policy direction that will impact its physical change.

Each District Plan includes the following information:

- + **District Context:** describes and uses maps to show where the district is located within the city, how the district came to be and what is located within the district at the time of District Plan adoption.
- + **District Maps:** shows the district's planned systems and networks including land use, nodes and corridors, open space and natural area, mobility and growth management for these networks as Edmonton's population grows.
- + **Area-Specific Policy:** identifies and describes any area-specific policies or geographic plans that apply to smaller areas within the district. These policies are unique to the district and may be additional or exceptional to the District Policy.





## How to Use the District Policy and District Plans

District Plans and the District Policy guide how new development can happen in communities, what kind of buildings get built and where. This guidance is contained in both the District Policy and the District Plans. Whether you are a developer or resident, both documents show how neighbourhoods are encouraged to physically change.

The District Policy and District Plans:

- + Guide development alongside geographic plans like Area Structure Plans (ASPs), Neighbourhood Structure Plans (NSPs), Neighbourhood Area Structure Plans (NASPs) and Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs)
- + Guide the creation and future changes (amendments) to geographic plans
- + Inform application and changes to the Zoning Bylaw
- + Guide City staff on rezoning recommendations and development permit applications

In the sections below, we will walk you through how the District Plans and District Policy are intended to be used.

There are lots of different reasons to use the District Policy and District Plans. Some of these reasons are described below:

- + You are submitting an application to rezone a property
- + You want to amend an existing geographic plan
- + You want to learn more about how a property on your street might redevelop
- + The street you take to work is being renewed and you want learn what policies may be guiding the changes
- + A land use study is being done on a nearby node or corridor and you want to participate in upcoming engagement



## Step-by-Step 'How to Use' Guide



Step 1: Read Section 1.0: Introduction to District Plans

Step 2: Review the District Context (Section 2)

Step 3: Review the planning direction for the district (Section 3)

Step 4: Review the Area-Specific Policy (Section 4)

Step 5: Consult the District Policy


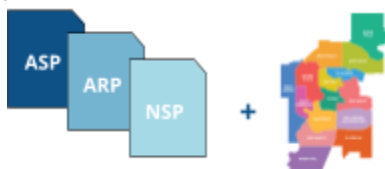
The steps above, and detailed below, outline how we recommend you use the District Plans and the District Policy. To ensure you find the complete direction and guidance in the plans, it is important that you do the following:

- + Read the District Policy and the District Plan together (the District Plan identifies the 'where' and the District Policy identifies the 'what, why and how')
- + Read and consider all of the policies in the District Policy together as they apply to your needs

### **Step 1: Read Introduction to District Plans (Section 1 of the District Plan)**

District Plans work with other planning tools to provide land use, land development, mobility and growth management direction. Section 1.2: 'Authority and Relationship to Other Plans' in the District Plans and District Policy describe the relationship between District Plans, the District Policy and other statutory geographic plans.

The relationship is summarized below:

	Relationship
<p>Areas with <b>only</b> a District Plan</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The District Plan and the District Policy will guide rezoning, subdivision and development permit decisions.</li> </ul>
<p>Areas with an existing statutory plan <b>and</b> a District Plan</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The other statutory plan will guide rezoning, subdivision and development permit decisions.</li> <li>+ Amendments to the other statutory plan will be guided by direction in the District Plan and District Policy.</li> <li>+ The planned density targets established in the other statutory plan will be maintained to ensure consistency with the <a href="#">Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan</a>.</li> </ul>



**Note:** The creation of new statutory plans will be guided by the District Policy and the District Plan in effect.

If you are interested in an area that is guided by both a District Plan and another statutory plan, make sure to read the direction in that other statutory plan for all rezoning, subdivision and development permit decisions. Consider both the policies in the District Policy and the policies in the geographic plan for complete direction. If there is a contradiction or conflict between the other statutory plan and District Policy or the District Plan, then follow the direction in the existing statutory plan.

The examples below communicate the relationship between District Plans and existing statutory plans (as noted in [Table 1: Edmonton's Planning Tools](#)) in areas with both types of plans:

- + Rezoning must follow the direction in the existing statutory plan. If the geographic plan limits height to Mid Rise (5-8 storey buildings) when the District Plan and District Policy calls for High Rise (9-20 storey buildings), then the geographic plan overrules.
- + If a developer wants to amend (change) a geographic plan, then the amendment must be consistent with the direction in the District Plan.

In summary, you need to consider all of the policy directions together.

### **What about The City Plan's Developing Areas or Future Growth Areas?**

Future growth areas and developing areas will continue to be planned with ASPs, NSPs or NASPs. These types of geographic plans provide more detailed, technical direction than District Plans, like where sewer lines should go. Once new ASPs, NSPs or NASPs are adopted, the District Plan will be updated so the District Plan communicates where these new geographic plans are located.

As future planning work happens, any new geographic plan or changes to existing geographic plans need to follow the direction in the District Policy and relevant District Plan.

### ***Step 2: Review the District Context (Section 2 of the District Plan)***

Now you will need to learn about the different opportunities and constraints that exist in your area of interest. Section 2: District Context describes and uses Map 1: Heritage and Culture to show where the district is located within the city, how the district came to be and what is located within the district at the time of District Plan adoption.



The features shown on these maps may influence how policies in the District Policy are interpreted. For example, say you are building next to a Designated Municipal Heritage Resource (as shown on Map 1: Heritage and Culture of the District Plan). There are policies in the District Policy that direct how new development should happen next to this heritage resource.

### Step 3: Review the Planning Direction for the District (Section 3 of the District Plan)

Section 3: District Systems and Networks describes and shows the district's planned housing systems and networks including land use, nodes and corridors, open space and natural area, mobility and growth management for these networks as Edmonton's population grow. The maps in this section include:

- + Map 2: Activating and Phasing Growth to 1.25 Million
- + Map 3: Nodes and Corridors
- + Map 4: Land Use Concept to 1.25 Million
- + Map 5: Open Space and Natural Areas to 1.25 Million
- + Map 6: Active Transportation to 1.25 Million
- + Map 7: Transit to 1.25 Million

These maps show the major changes to be expected for each district. Use the legend in the map to help you understand what the features mean and what you need to consider.

The features shown on these maps correspond to specific District Policy sections so make note of the following as it relates to the area you're interested in:

- + What map features do you see?
- + What map features overlap?
- + What map features are nearby?
- + Is there another geographic plan you need to reference?

District Plan   District Policy		April 2024 Draft	
<p><b>Low Impact Development (LID)</b> A land development and stormwater management approach that works with nature to manage stormwater as close to the source as possible. LID focuses on maintaining and restoring the natural hydrological processes of a site. LID examples include rain gardens, green roofs and rainwater harvesting for reuse.</p> <p><b>Low Rise</b> Buildings four stories in height.</p> <p><b>Major Ecological Connection</b> Regionally important linkages that support wildlife and biodiversity in Edmonton and the region. They contribute to a healthy natural environment and provide stewardship opportunities for Edmontonians to reconnect with the land and themselves. This includes the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System. See District Policy Section 2.6 See District Plan Map 5 →</p> <p><b>Major Node</b> Major Nodes are large-scale urban centres anchored by large public institutions and employment centres that serve multiple Districts. Major Nodes offer a wide mix of land uses and higher density development connected by mass transit. These areas provide residents a diverse mix of housing and employment opportunities, and transportation options to connect to other Nodes. See District Policy Section 2.4 See District Plan Map 3</p> <p><b>Mass Transit</b> A large scale network of public transportation serving an urban area, which is able to transport large numbers of people using buses, trains and other technologies.</p>	<p><b>Mass Transit Station</b> A transit facility for accessing Mass Transit routes. This is where Mass Transit and Local Transit routes connect and allow transit customers to transfer between routes. • <b>Current</b> Generally includes Light Rail Transit stations/stops and/or transit centres. ◻ <b>Planned</b> See District Policy Section 3.2 See District Plan Maps 6 or Map 7</p> <p><b>Mid Rise</b> Buildings from five to eight stories in height.</p> <p><b>Mobility Hub</b> A place for trip origins, destinations and transfer points to allow people to seamlessly move from one travel option to another as needed. Mobility Hubs are typically located in Nodes and centred at the intersection of Mass Transit routes to create connections within Edmonton and the region. See District Policy Section 3.2 See District Plan Maps 6 or Map 7 ★</p> <p><b>Municipal Historic Resource</b> A site that has been designated as a historic resource by City Council through the Historical Resources Act. See District Policy Section 2.3 See District Plan Map 1 ●</p> <p><b>Natural Area</b> An area of land or water that is dominated by native vegetation in naturally occurring patterns. Such areas could include grasslands, forests, wetlands, meadows or riparian areas. Tabular natural areas are Natural Areas that exist outside of the River Valley. Areas such as groomed parks, sports fields and schoolyards are not Natural Areas. Natural Areas are classified as Ecological Parks in Breathe - Edmonton's Green Network Strategy. See District Policy Section 2.6</p>	<p><b>Node or Corridor Area</b> The extent of the City Plan Map 3: "Nodes and Corridors Network" at the full build out of the City Plan. Development will be focused within this network during each phase of the City Plan. See District Policy Section 2.4 See District Plan Maps 4 to 7</p> <p><b>Nodes</b> Centres of activity of different shapes and sizes that feature a variety of housing types, gathering places, and land uses. There are three types: Major Nodes, District Nodes and Local Nodes. Centre City is also a Type of Node.</p> <p><b>Non-Residential Intensification Area</b> Where the City encourages land use changes, including re-zoning, to support additional employment activity in existing Commercial/Industrial Employment areas. Generally suitable for business commercial uses or industrial uses where no nuisance is created or apparent outside an enclosed building. See District Policy Section 2.5 See District Plan Map 4 □</p> <p><b>North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System</b> A policy area and a land use type, to be guided by the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, the Ribbon of Green Strategic plan and future amendments to these for areas in the Future Growth Area. See District Policy Section 2.6 See District Plan Maps 1 to 7 ▨</p> <p><b>Open Space - Current</b> All open space and park categories as shown in Map 4 - Open Space map, not including Urban Service sites and River Valley parks. See District Plan Map 4 ▨</p>	





### Step 4: Review for Area-Specific Policy (Section 4 of the District Plan)

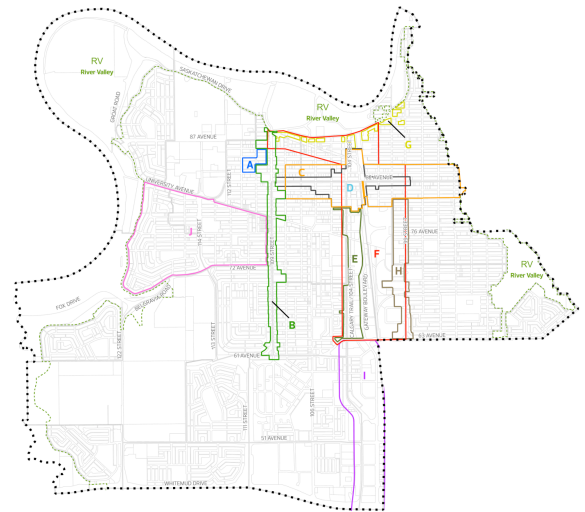
Section 4: Area-Specific Policy of the District Plan lists any extra policies to consider for specific areas of the district. These policies are unique to each District Plan. Policies in this section may include:

- + Planning guidance that must be considered in addition to that found in the District Policy, or
- + Planning guidance that is an exception to policies found in the District Policy

To use Section 4: Area-Specific Policy, you want to find your area of interest on Map 8: Area-Specific Policy Subareas.

Map 8: Area-Specific Policy Subareas identifies the geographic areas where additional or exceptional policies apply in the district. Each area is given a letter or number code which matches those codes listed in Table 2.

**Where no specific policy applies or a particular location on Map 8, refer to the District Plan maps and District Policy for planning guidance.**



If your area of interest is located within a subarea in Map 8, note the subarea code. Find the subarea code in Table 2: Area-Specific Policy. Read the policy direction given in Table 2, note that there may be extra maps to consider.

Table 2 provides the detailed policy direction where you can find information about:

- + Whether you need to consider another geographic plan(s) in addition to your District Plan and the District Policy
- + Other policy documents to consider like land use studies
- + Policies that may overrule the District Policy

District Plan | Scona PE3 Draft

**Table 2: Area-Specific Policy Table**

Subarea	Additional or Exceptional Policy
A	<p><b>A-1 Garneau Special Character Residential Area</b>            For development between 111 Street and 110 Street and 83 Avenue and 85 Avenue and a portion of the area between 110 Street and 109 Street and 84 Avenue and 86 Avenue, refer to the DCI Garneau Special Character Residential Area, which focuses on the rehabilitation or redevelopment of individual structures or properties for residential uses that contribute to the streetscape and retain the massing of existing developments.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Garneau Special Character Residential Area            Scale 1:500</p>

36 Section 4: Area-Specific Policy Table



**Remember to always look at the District Policy to get the full picture on what is expected from development and infrastructure projects.**

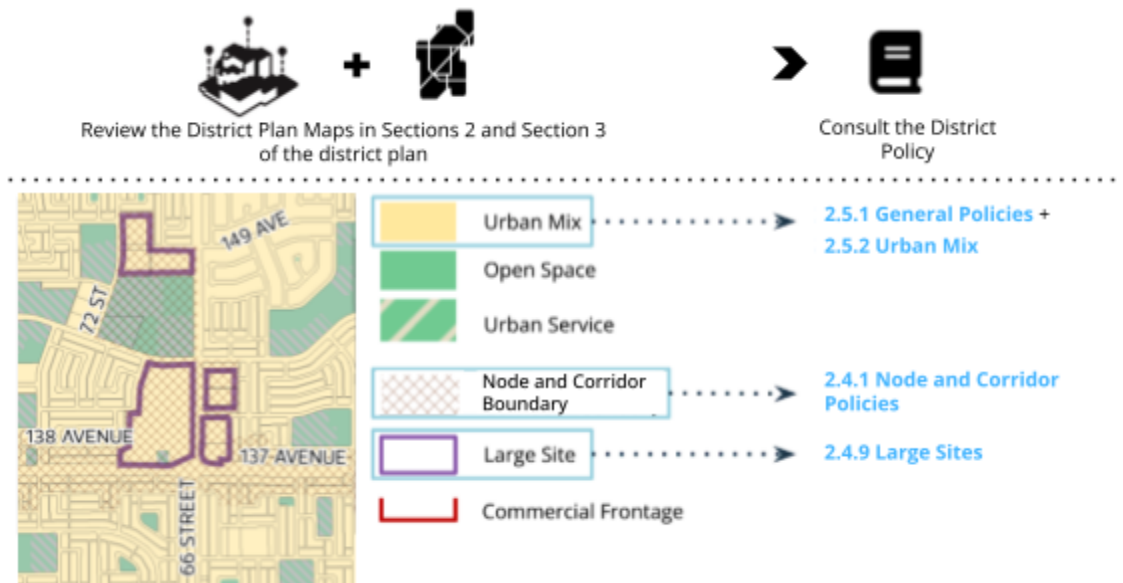
### **Step 5: Consult the District Policy**

Now that you have reviewed all the maps and policies, it is time to consult the District Policy to find the applicable policies using information identified through steps above. The District Policy provides policy direction on:

- + Features shown on the District Plan Maps (Map 1 to 7)
- + General policies for all development or infrastructure projects
- + Additional planning direction for subareas identified in Section 4: Area-Specific Policy of the District Plan

### **Connecting District Plan Maps to District Policy**

The image below shows that most of the map features have their own dedicated section in the District Policy. You will need to find and review those sections in the District Policy that match the map features you noted in Step 2 and 3 above.



Read each applicable section from the District Policy and consider all of the policies together to get the full picture on what type of development is encouraged. Some policies may not apply depending on whether it is a land use or mobility project.



Most chapters in the District Policy include policies that are general to the topic. For example, 2.5.1 'General Policies' under land use or 2.6.1 'Open Space and Natural Area Policies'. Make sure to look at these policies in addition to the sections you found on the District Plan maps.

### What about the District Policy sections that are not shown on the maps?

Depending on the type of planning work, there are extra sections in the District Policy you will need to consider.

- + Section 2.1: District Urban Design – this is for rezonings, building design and roadway renewal projects. It also guides how districts, neighbourhoods, blocks and properties are organized.
- + Section 2.2: Energy and Climate – this section is about helping Edmonton become more sustainable by embracing design and technology solutions that reduce emissions and increase resiliency.
- + Chapter 4.0: Growth Management and Growth Activation – this chapter is all about managing how we grow, prioritizing targeted locations for City investment and making sure we consider risk factors like flooding or rail lines.

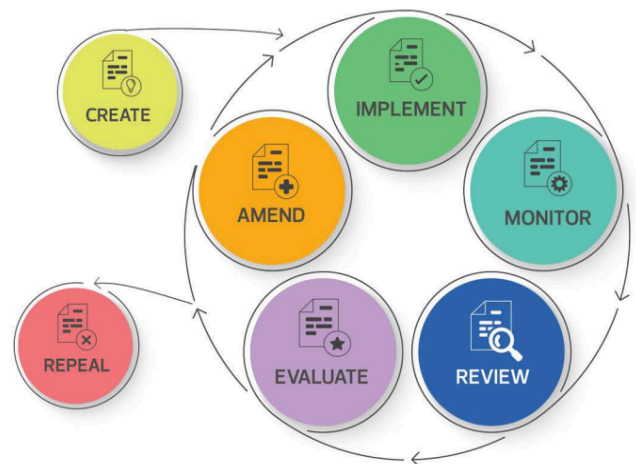
## Keeping District Plans Current

District Plans will continue to change as future planning work happens across Edmonton. The District Plans today set the foundation for that future planning work and engagement to build on by using what's working from existing planning directions and repackaging it all in one place.

### The Planning Tool Lifecycle

All planning tools contained in the City's planning system are intended to change over time to ensure they remain efficient, effective and relevant in the planning direction they provide. Accordingly, there is a predictable life cycle that each planning tool is expected to proceed through, from creation to completion and where applicable, retirement.

Though the policies and maps contained in District Plans have been crafted in a way to be comprehensive while flexible and adaptive, District Plans are expected to be changed and updated over time.





## Evolution of District Plans

District Plans have been crafted to provide planning policy direction to facilitate and guide the growth of the city. Over the course of this journey, District Plans will be monitored to ensure they continue to be relevant, efficient and effective. We can build off of the District Plans through district or topic-specific engagement. District Planning is an ongoing process and does not stop with this first edition of Edmonton's District Plans.

There are two primary categories of change that are expected to occur throughout the life of District Plans:

1. City of Edmonton initiated changes (i.e. strategic planning updates, administrative changes, etc.) and
2. Responsive changes initiated by the development industry, community groups and the public

### City of Edmonton Initiated Changes

District Plans will be continuously monitored to ensure they remain effective, efficient and relevant over time. As a result there may be necessary short-term and long-term changes.

### Maintenance and Administrative Changes

- **Data and Map Maintenance:** Over time, features on District Plans' maps may change. For example, landmarks may have name changes, new parks or schools may be created, roads may be realigned and infrastructure projects may be initiated and completed. These types of updates may be made on a regular review schedule.

### Strategic and Evolutionary Changes

- **Strategic and Related Policy Change:** District Plans will be one of many planning tools used to inform planning decisions. Over time, new planning tools will be created and others will be retired (consistent with the Planning Tool Lifecycle). As a result, updates to District Plans may be required to consider and accommodate changes to related planning tools and ensure consistency and efficiency between the tools.
- **Evolution of The City Plan:** The City Plan's implementation will be monitored over time to ensure the goals and policy objectives are met. Through monitoring of The City Plan, particularly the Big City Moves, changes may be needed to accommodate market and societal disruption, geopolitical contexts and other external factors. Since District Plans were carefully crafted to reflect and facilitate the policy direction in The City Plan, changes to The City Plan may





necessitate amendments to District Plans. For example, if City Council passes a capital budget in the future with specific city-building projects identified, it may require updates to policies and maps within The City Plan and District Plans.

### Responsive Changes by Edmontonians and the Development Industry

When new, undeveloped areas of the city are planned, other statutory plans (i.e. Area Structure Plans, Neighbourhood Structure Plans, etc.) will still be used to inform development decisions. As these documents are created and approved by City Council, amendments to District Plans may be necessary to ensure consistency and alignment with the new statutory plans.

Balancing equity, flexibility and recognizing that some areas may present unique circumstances, City Council may determine a local area planning exercise and engagement is required to guide development in a specific area. This may result in identifying more detailed planning direction to be added to Section 4: Area-Specific Policy of the District Plans.