

City- Wide Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy
Landowner Survey Summary

September 27, 2012



Introduction

In June of 2012, a letter including a link to an on-line survey was distributed to all of the landowners in the Urban Growth Areas. Landowners were determined using the City of Edmonton's planning software POSSE which uses information obtained from the City's Assessment and Taxation Branch software system and the Provincial Land Titles Office system. Of the 1358 letters that were mailed out, 282 surveys were completed. This is a response rate of 20%.

The objectives of the survey are two-fold: 1) to understand what is happening currently on the land in the Urban Growth Areas and 2) to understand landowners' intentions for the future of their land(s).

Survey Limitations:

All surveys have limitations and many of these are difficult to quantify and track. This is the case when respondents interpret some questions differently from how the survey was intended, recall information incorrectly, or intentionally change responses to achieve a desired outcome. This survey includes three main limitations:

1. **Sample limitations:** Each question in this survey received a different number of responses. In some cases, a fraction of the total number of respondents responded to a question. Where the results below show percentages, these are percentages of responses for that question only. It should not be assumed that this survey represents the broader population of Urban Growth Area landowners as they all did not participate in the survey.
2. **Self-selection bias:** This survey is not based on a random sample. People who chose to respond to the survey may have different interests and intents than those who did not respond. This may skew the responses in favour of a particular group and the results are therefore not representative of all landowners.
3. **Challenges in reaching all of the landowners:** The only way to connect to land owners is sending letters to the titled addresses that the City of Edmonton has

on file. Approximately 80 letters came back as *return to sender* due to incorrect mailing information.

In spite of these limitations, this survey provides a useful snapshot of current land uses and future landowner intentions.

Survey Highlights:

Key survey results are listed below by question. Graphs and tables summarizing the results are provided where appropriate.¹

- ***Do you own land in the Southwest, Southeast, and/or Northeast areas of Edmonton?*** 85% [n=282]² reported owning land in at least one Urban Growth Area.
- ***In which Urban Growth Area do you own land?*** 57% [n=211] of respondents reported owning land in the Northeast Urban Growth Area, 24% reported owning land in the Southeast Urban Growth Area, and 22% reported owning land in the Southwest Urban Growth Area. Some landowners own more than one lot in more than one Urban Growth Area.³
- ***Do you reside on any of the lots noted above?*** Out of the 262 lots that were identified in response to this question, a majority (55%) of lots are resided on by the owner (see
- Table 1). Looking at the responses based on area, approximately 1,586 acres (29%) are resided upon versus 3,846 acres (71%) which are not.

¹ Note that some landowners own more than one piece of property (and sometimes different pieces are in different Urban Growth Areas). This means that the total number of responses to a particular question is often less than the number of lots identified. In addition, the total of the number of lots listed for each Urban Growth Area may be different than the total number for all Urban Growth Areas due to a small amount of double counting.

² n[] refers to the total number of responses for the question

³ In this survey, a “lot” can refer to a legally created piece of land of any size.

Table 1: Total number, percentage, and area of lands resided on by landowners

	Total Number of Lots Resided On by Respondents	Share of Lots that are Resided On by Respondents	Total area of Lots Identified by Respondents (Acres)	% share (acres) of the overall Urban Growth Area ⁴
Southeast Urban Growth Area (Total area: 5,009 acres)	78	26%	2,183	43%
Southwest Urban Growth Area (Total area: 5,009 acres)	59	56%	1,576	31%
Northeast Urban Growth Area (Total area: 9,465 acres)	136	71%	1,672	17%
All Urban Growth Areas (Total area: 19,483 acres)	273	55%	5,431	28%

- **Do you lease all or part of your land to someone?** Respondents provided information on the form of tenure of their lands (i.e. owned vs. leased). 17% [n=252] of responses indicated that their lots were leased to others. The reported highest share of lots leased by the owner to someone else was in the Southeast Urban Growth Area at 30%.
- **Which one of the following choices most closely describes the primary use of the land(s)?** 200 responses were received to this question, identifying 259 lots and 5,218 acres across the three Urban Growth Areas. 91% of lots [n=259] were reported as having the primary use as either residential (60%), agricultural (16%) or holding for development (17%)⁵. Responses by Urban Growth Area are shown in Table 2 below. 8% of the lots were identified as having “other” primary uses including vacation residential, commercial, industrial or vacant. By area, 1,210 acres (23%) were identified as residential, 1,986 acres (38%) were identified as agricultural, and 1,720 acres (33%) were identified as “holding for future development” as the primary current land use (Table 3 below).

Table 2: Primary current use of lots identified by landowners⁶

	Northeast	Southeast	Southwest	Grand
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⁴ The total areas for the Urban Growth Areas have been calculated in the Agriculture Inventory and Assessment, City of Edmonton 2012.

⁵ It is acknowledged that “holding for development” is not technically a land use but this was included in the survey as one of the possible responses.

⁶ See note 1

				Total
Residential	61%	59%	54%	60%
Agricultural	19%	15%	7%	16%
Holding for future development⁷	9%	19%	39%	17%
Other (i.e. vacation residential,, commercial, industrial, vacant)	10%	7%	0%	8%
Total	100% [n=130]	100% [n=75]	100% [n=54]	100% [n=259]

Table 3 Area of current primary use of lots identified by landowners⁸

	Northeast (acres)	Southeast (acres)	Southwest (acres)	Grand Total (acres)	Grand Total (%)
Residential	583	78	548	1,210	23%
Agricultural	696	1,070	220	1,986	38%
Holding for future development⁹	565	591	565	1,720	33%
Other (i.e. vacation residential,, commercial, industrial, vacant)	282	10	10	302	6%
Total	2,126 [n=124]	1,749 [n=72]	1,343 [n=51]	5,218 [n=247]	100%

- Over the long-term (5 years or more), what type of use do you envision for your land?** 64% of respondents to this question [n=173] envisioned that their lots will be developed for urban uses. Of the remaining lots, 17% are envisioned to be used for agriculture and 19% for other uses. Many respondents did not specify the area of the lands in question. Of those that did specify an area, 1,345 acres are committed to urban development, 108 acres to agriculture, 621 acres to other (i.e. vacation residential, commercial, industrial, vacant).

⁷ See note 6

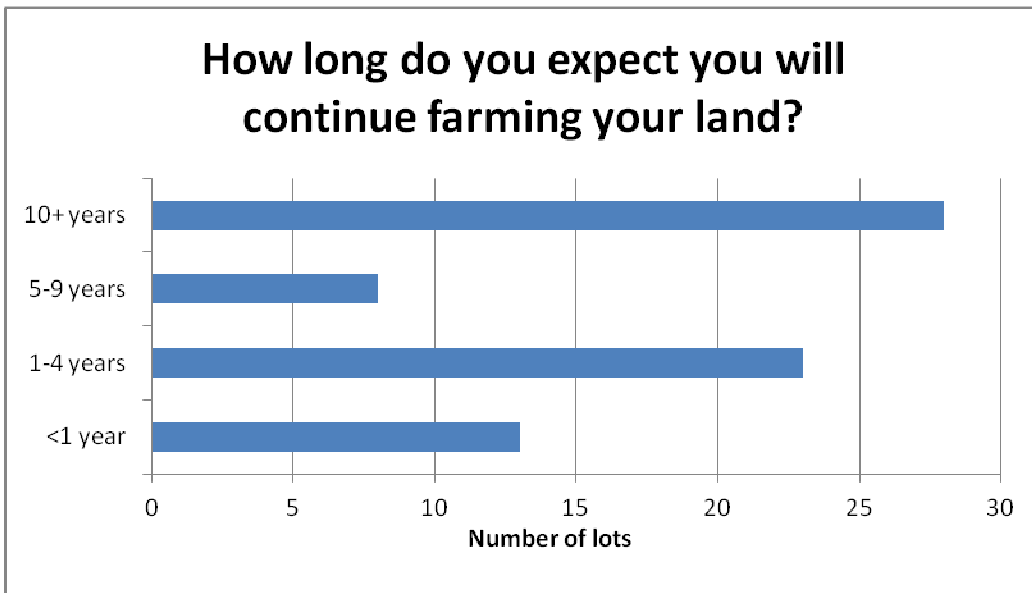
⁸ We have received responses including land areas for 247 lots, which is lower than the number of lots identified in Table 2. This likely reflects that fact that some respondents chose not to specify the area of lands by use.

⁹ See Note 6

- **Is the land currently being farmed?** In total, 28% of the lots [n=242] identified by 196 respondents are currently being farmed.

Those respondents that indicated that they are currently farming at least some of their lands were asked the three additional questions below.

- **Is farming your main livelihood?** In total, 16% [n=62] of respondents reported that farming is their main livelihood.
- **Is your farm commercial or non-commercial?** 56 respondents reported that 60% [n=81] of lots were commercially farmed.
- **How long do you expect you will continue farming your land?** Of the 53 responses to this question it was identified that 18% of the lots [n=72] would no longer be farmed after one year, whereas respondents identified 82% [n=72] of lots where farming will continue after one year.



City Support

Survey respondents were asked one qualitative question at the end of the survey: **Please describe how you feel the City of Edmonton can best support the current uses and or future aspirations for your land.** Table 3 below shows ten categories that were used to code the written responses. Each response was weighted equally. In cases where the response contained two or more sentiments, they were weighted proportionally. For example if someone responded both that they want to see urban

development continue and that they wanted to protect some farmland, then those would each be weighted at 0.5.

Based on the 139 written responses, respondents described how they felt the City of Edmonton could best support current and future land use by:

- **Continuing urban development:** In the SE Urban Growth Area, 49% [n=29] of respondents indicated that the City should continue with and support urban development. This compares to 20% [n=84] for properties in the NE and 15% [n=26] in the SW.
- **Preserving agricultural land:** In the NE, 25% [n=84] of respondents indicated that some form of agricultural land preservation is needed. This compares with 6% in the SE and 13% in the SW who said that agricultural land should be preserved.
- **Grouping Responses:** On a total basis, the results from Table 4 could be aggregated in the following way:
 - 36% of respondents expressed support for urban development (categories 1,4, and 7)
 - 33% expressed support for agriculture and or/environmental conservation (categories 2,5,6,8,9)
 - 14% expressed responses that were ambiguous and fall into the ‘other’ category. (category 10)

This represents a nearly even split between groupings. The results are displayed in more detail in Table 4.

Table 4: Qualitative analysis for Responses as to How the City can support future land uses¹⁰

	NE n=84	SE n=29	SW n= 26	Grand Total
1. Continue with (and support) urban development	20%	49%	15%	25%

¹⁰ Note that because some landowners own more than one piece of property and/or property in more than one Urban Growth Area, the total number of responses to a particular question is often different from the number of lots and the number of lots by Urban Growth Area may be different than the total number for all Urban Growth Areas.

Table 4: Qualitative analysis for Responses as to How the City can support future land uses¹⁰

	NE n=84	SE n=29	SW n= 26	Grand Total
2. Preserve agricultural land	25%	6%	13%	19%
3. Ensure landowners are informed have a say in decision-making	11%	7%	0%	8%
4. Improve services and infrastructure such as roads, water, sewer, fire and police services	3%	5%	23%	7%
5. Maintain and build on natural connections	3%	1%	15%	5%
6. Re-evaluate land assessment to ensure agricultural and park uses are supported	4%	7%	2%	4%
7. Proceed with proposed ASP	6%	0%	0%	4%
8. Limit the amount of future urban development	3%	3%	0%	3%
9. Protect environmentally sensitive areas	1%	2%	7%	2%
10. Other (i.e. vacation residential, holding in anticipation of development, commercial, industrial)	13%	11%	21%	14%

Additional Themes

Additional themes from the qualitative responses are presented below. Amongst the responses noted above:

- There is a perception that a vocal minority of farmers is reducing landowner rights while others (including farmers and non farmers) noted they feel that farming is being squeezed out.
- Comments reflected a desire to see both urban development and agriculture in the Urban Growth Areas. These comments are weighted 50/50 in the analysis in Table 4.
- The understanding of “maintain” varied depending on the view of the respondent i.e. maintain residential and maintain agriculture and was therefore deleted from the above table.
- It was indicated that there is a range of understanding regarding the type of urban development that is envisioned for the Urban Growth Areas. Some

responses noted high-density neighbourhoods while others noted single family dwellings with backyards.

- It was indicated that there is a perception that the taxing structure is unfair and that there is a lack of infrastructure (i.e. community servicing) in some areas.
- It was indicated that there is a desire for predictability and certainty with regard to future City decisions in the Urban Growth Areas. These responses were included in category 4: “ensure landowners have a say...’.

Conclusion

In spite of the limitations described above, the landowner survey has provided some valuable information. Land owner survey respondents were nearly equal in their overall feedback and support for either urban development or agriculture. The majority of landowner respondents indicated a desire for the City to continue with urban development in the Urban Growth Areas. However, there remain a smaller number of landowners who intend to keep their land in agriculture use for the future, and they indicated a desire for the City to support this direction. Many respondents may have primarily supported either agriculture or urban development but also seemed to recognize the potential to integrate the two. Regardless of future land use in the Urban Growth Areas, landowners want to be informed and to be part of the decision making process.