



CITY POLICY

POLICY NUMBER: C594

REFERENCE:

The Way Ahead
The Way We Grow
The Way We Move
The Way We Green
The Way We Live
The Way We Prosper

ADOPTED BY:

City Council
August 29, 2017

SUPERSEDES:

New

PREPARED BY: Urban Form & Corporate Strategic
Development

DATE: August 29, 2017

TITLE: Open Space Policy

Policy Statement:

Edmonton's green network is a living system of interconnected public parks and open spaces, which together deliver a broad range of ecological services and community benefits. These spaces connect and sustain us, invigorate and inspire us. They contribute to Edmonton's ecological function, operational capacity, recreational potential, community cohesion and to our health and wellbeing. They shape the city's landscape and communities in profound and practical ways.

The multiple benefits provided by the green network can be summarized within three mutually supportive themes:

- **ECOLOGY:** Open spaces support healthy and resilient ecosystems, sustaining and enhancing ecological function.
- **CELEBRATION:** Open spaces connect people by providing places for communities to gather and thrive.
- **WELLNESS:** Open spaces promote healthy living and foster well-being through diverse recreation and transportation options.

Within these three themes, 15 essential functions of open space capture and measure the valuable services that open space provides to Edmontonians and to the environment:

- **ECOLOGY:**

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- Biodiversity
 - Climate Regulation
 - Food Production
 - Risk Mitigation
 - Waste Management
 - Water Management
 - **CELEBRATION:**
 - Aesthetic Value
 - Community Building
 - Destination and Tourism
 - Heritage
 - Public Safety
 - **WELLNESS:**
 - Active Transportation
 - Learn and Play
 - Mental Health and Wellbeing
 - Recreation

Edmonton's green network is comprised of a rich, diverse landscape of public open spaces: natural and constructed, animated and serene, core and connective. The component parts include:

- Parks, including metropolitan, district, community and pocket parks
- Natural areas, including the river valley and ravines, wetlands, tree stands, remnant grasslands and other naturally vegetated corridors
- Naturalized, restored and ecologically designed spaces
- Plazas, squares and promenades
- Greenways, trails, roadway greens, street trees, utility corridors, wildlife passages and other connective landscapes
- Pedestrian-oriented and priority streets, including main streets
- Outdoor festival and event sites, both permanent and temporary
- Community gardens and edible landscapes
- Municipal cemeteries and golf courses
- School sites
- Stormwater infrastructure, including constructed wetlands and low-impact development features
- Other jurisdictional parkland, including campuses and provincial and federal parkland
- Green roofs and living walls

As Edmonton's population grows and diversifies, neighbourhoods evolve and environmental conditions change, the City commits to maintaining a sustainable, inclusive, connected, multifunctional open space network that supports other city building objectives and responds to diverse needs.

The following elements are foundational to the green network approach:

1. A Connected Landscape

The green network is more than a collection of parks and open spaces. Every open space, from the River Valley to a roadway green, is part of a system of nodes and corridors providing multiple services. The configuration of open spaces - their relationship and connection to each other, to the surrounding built environment, across neighbourhoods and to the wider region - is integral to their function and accessibility. To maximize its value, vibrancy and resilience, the green network must be planned and managed at multiple scales, from the site to the neighbourhood to the city to the region.

2. A Multifunctional Network

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Each open space in the city is characterized by a unique set of functions, and interconnected through the overlapping networks that support Ecology, Wellness and Celebration. As Edmonton's population increases, communities densify and demands on public lands grow, the ability of Edmonton's open spaces to support multiple functions simultaneously (e.g. stormwater management, habitat, recreational and aesthetic functions) becomes increasingly important. Administration commits to managing the green network as a multifunctional resource.

3. An Evidence-Based Approach

Informed by a holistic understanding of our landscape, Administration commits to an evidence-based approach to open space planning. Supported by sound data and community input, this approach will enable informed decision-making about the acquisition, design, management and programming of Edmonton's open spaces. It will ensure that planning interventions are targeted to the communities and natural systems where they are most needed. It will support synergies and mitigate conflicts between open space and other urban networks to realize an integrated, multifunctional green network.

4. Equitable Open Space Provision

In the provision of open space, including both acquisition of new areas and enhancement and responsive management of existing spaces, Administration will consider and seek to balance the following:

- **Distribution/Access:** The arrangement of open spaces across the landscape.
- **Quality:** The functionality of an open space, considering the condition of its infrastructure/amenities and the value of the functions it provides.
- **Diversity:** The range of different open space types and functions within the landscape.
- **Supply:** The physical amount of open space.

5. A Collaborative Effort

This approach to open space planning requires strong relationships and innovative ways of working together. The City commits to planning collaboratively - across departments, with community partners, with Indigenous communities and with other jurisdictions - and to empowering Edmontonians to become active participants in the creation and stewardship of Edmonton's open spaces.

Administration is dedicated to creating open spaces that contribute to a vibrant, high-functioning and high quality public realm. Open spaces will evoke interest and beauty, reflect local cultures, and create a sense of place. Open spaces will contribute to our health and well-being, help create vibrant neighbourhoods and give residents opportunities to celebrate our community spirit and identity.

To accommodate growing and changing demand, and to ensure that open spaces are inclusive and accessible for our diverse population, Administration will design flexibility into open spaces and manage them adaptively to respond to challenges in a productive way. These activities will be supported by a sustainable funding model that responds to operational requirements, community capacity and local needs.

The purpose of this policy is to:

Inform the planning, design and management of Edmonton's open space to achieve the outcomes and realize the vision of an integrated, sustainable, vibrant and multifunctional green network.