

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 and the District Planning project focuses on welcoming the first 250,000 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 help Edmonton reach 1.25 million people:

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:

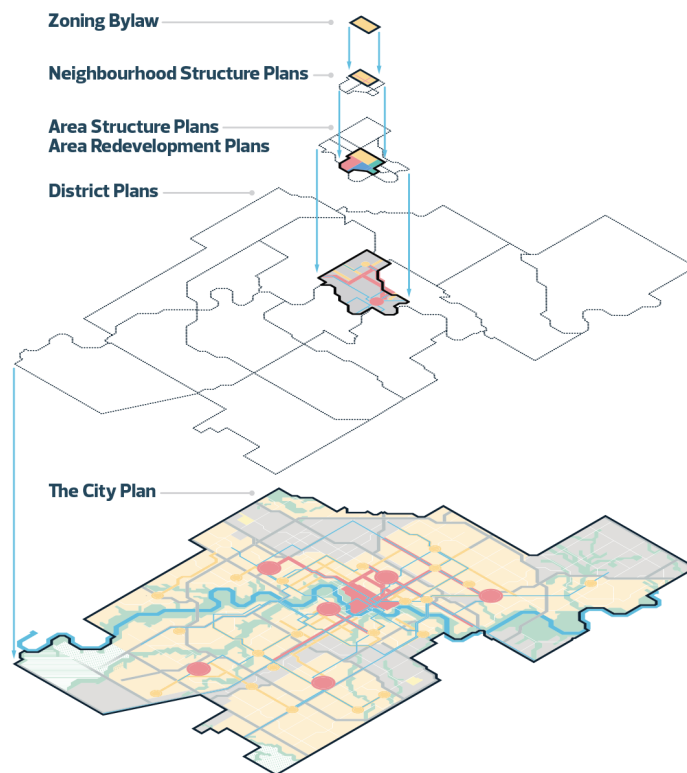
- + **Land use:** refers to different ways land can be used, developed or categorized in our city. For example, residential land uses refer to where people live, commercial land uses where businesses or stores are predominantly located and mixed uses refer to where residential and commercial are combined.
- + **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 1.25 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
Geographic Plans		
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
Regulatory Tools		
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 can only be created or changed by City Council decision. 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. Over time, 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 guides the physical change of districts so Edmonton achieves 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 tells 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 allow 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 as we reach 1.25 million people in Edmonton. 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 is there now in the district, what to expect as Edmonton reaches 1.25 million and any unique policy direction that will impact its physical change.

Each district plan includes the following information:

- + **District Context:** describes and shows with maps 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 reaches 1.25 million people.
- + **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.



Read [How were the District Policy and District Plans drafted?](#) to learn more about how The City Plan and existing planning documents were used to draft the district plans.

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

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 plans
- + 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

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

Step by Step 'How to Use' Guide







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

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 shows with maps 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 maps in this section include:

- + Map 1: Citywide Context
- + Map 2: Heritage and Culture



- + Map 3: District Context – Assets
- + Map 4: District Context – Development Considerations

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 2: 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 systems and networks including land use, nodes and corridors, open space and natural area, mobility and growth management for these networks as Edmonton reaches 1.25 million people. The maps in this section include:

- + Map 5: Managing Growth to 1.25 Million
- + Map 6: Land Use Concept to 1.25 Million
- + Map 7: Nodes and Corridors
- + Map 8: Open Space and Natural Areas to 1.25 Million
- + Map 9: Active Spaces Transportation to 1.25 Million
- + Map 10: Transit to 1.25 Million

These maps show the major changes to be expected for this district between now and when Edmonton reaches 1.25 million people. Use the legend in the map to help you understand what the features mean and what you need to consider.

<p>City Entrance Strategic entry point locations along Edmonton’s border that serve as a welcome to visitors through the provision of a high-quality Public Realm. See District Plan, Map 1</p> <p>Citywide Mass Transit - Current Current mass transit service that provides fast, reliable citywide mobility through investment in segregated or dedicated transit runningways, river crossings and/or priority measures. See District Policy, Section 3.2 See District Plan, Map 10</p> <p>Citywide Mass Transit - Planned to 1.25 Million Mass transit service that provides fast, reliable citywide mobility through investment in segregated or dedicated transit runningways, river crossings and/or priority measures. These routes are planned for implementation during the first phase of the City Plan (growth to 1.25 million). Routes are conceptual and subject to change through more detailed planning and design. See District Policy, Section 3.2 See District Plan, Map 10</p> <p>Citywide Mass Transit - Identified Opportunities Citywide mass transit routes that are not yet built, but are identified or planned in previously approved plans, or that have a level of design completed. They have been included to record previously recommended routes beyond the 1.25 million population planning horizon. See District Policy, Section 3.2 See District Plan, Map 10</p>	<p>Civic Spaces and Squares A Breache open space classification that refers to publicly owned open space that provides a gathering space for people and may provide commercial or entertainment options. See District Policy, Section 2.6 See District Plan, Map 8</p> <p>Collector Roadways A road that provides neighborhood travel between local and Arterial Roadways and direct access to adjacent land. See District Policy, Section 3.3</p> <p>Commercial/Industrial Employment Areas dedicated for employment uses. Except in specific circumstances, these exclude residential uses. See District Policy, Section 2.4 See District Plan, Map 6</p> <p>Commercial Frontage Areas within Nodes and Corridors where new development will include street-level commercial uses oriented toward the street. See District Policy, Section 2.5 See District Plan, Map 6</p> <p>Community Hall Community-level facilities such as community league buildings, residents association buildings or small cultural facilities that function as a community gathering space. See District Plan, Map 3</p> <p>Corridor A place for movement, living and commerce that is anchored by the mobility system and well</p>	<p>Commercial and Industrial Corridors Commercial and industrial corridors are of two types: Primary and Secondary Corridors.</p> <p>Cultural Area A geographic area with special significance for a specific cultural community. The boundaries of the Cultural Areas as identified by district plans reflect the formal boundaries established through previous engagement with the City of Edmonton. See District Policy, Section 2.3 See District Plan, Map 2</p> <p>Current Heavy Industry Areas that allow for heavy industrial developments that may have the potential to create nuisance conditions that extend beyond the boundaries of the site. See District Policy, Section 2.4 See District Plan, Map 3</p> <p>Designated Municipal Historic Resource 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 2</p> <p>Designated Provincial Historic Resource A site that has been designated as a historic resource by the Government of Alberta through the Historical Resources Act. See District Policy, Section 2.3 See District Plan, Map 2</p> <p>Developing Area Areas primarily outside Anthony Henday Drive within city limits that have an approved statutory plan. See District Plan, Map 1</p>
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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?

Check out the Glossary in the District Policy if you want to understand what each map feature means and its definition.



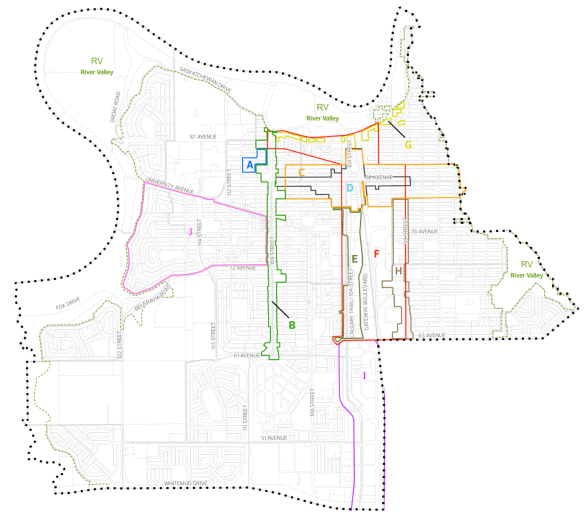
Step 4: Review for Area-Specific Policy (Section 4 of the district plan)

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 11: Area-Specific Policy Subareas.

Map 11: 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



Where no specific policy applies or a particular location on Map 11, refer to the district plan maps and District Policy for planning guidance.

If your area of interest is located within a subarea in Map 11, note the subarea code. Find the subarea code in Table 2: Area-Specific Policy table. 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 Scania		PE3 Draft
		Table 2: Area-Specific Policy Table
Subarea Additional or Exceptional Policy		
A	<p>A-1 Garneau Special Character Residential Area 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 DC1 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>Garneau Special Character Residential Area</p> <p>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.

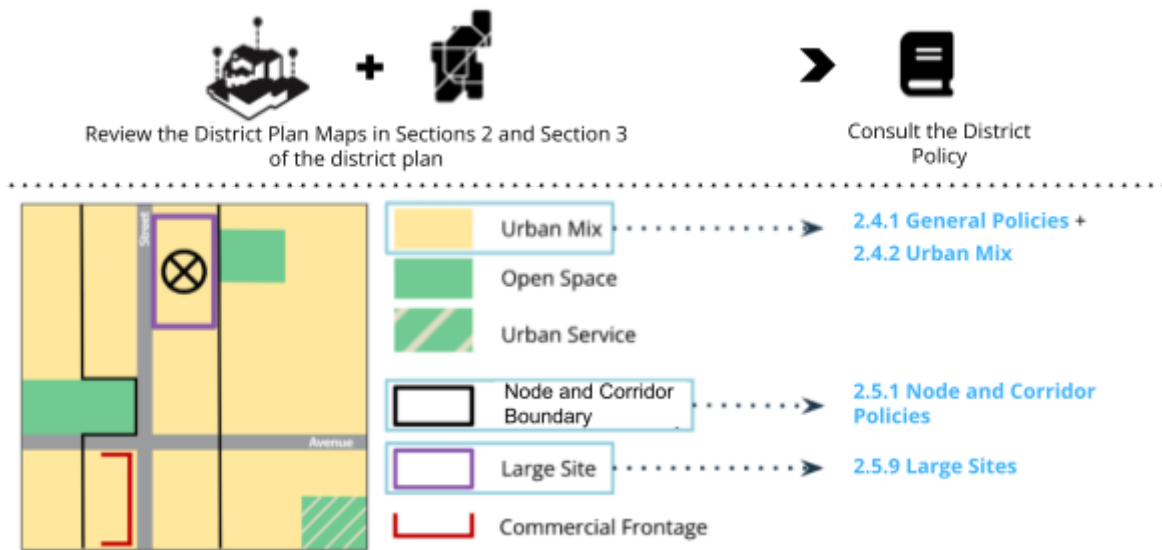
Step 5: Consult the District Policy

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 10)
- + General policies for all development or infrastructure projects
- + Additional planning direction for areas 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, 2.4.1 '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.

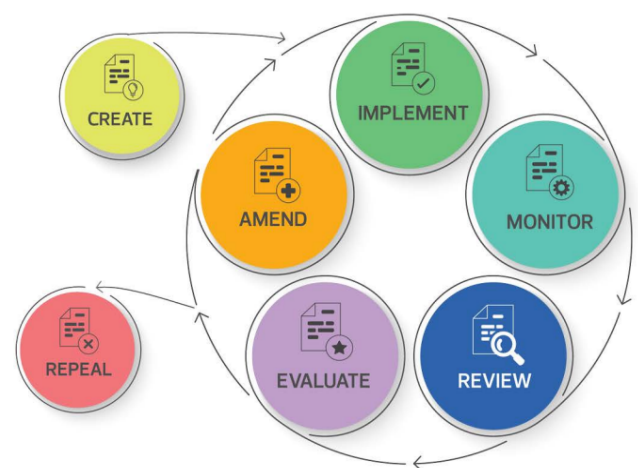
Keeping District Plans Current

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 be 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 to a population of 1.25 million people. 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. For example, if a change to [Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy](#) were made, administrative changes to the open space policies and mapping in district plans may be required.
- **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.

- As Edmonton approaches the 1.25 million population horizon, significant changes to the plans will likely be required to plan for the next 250,000 people to guide us to 1.5 million.

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.