

# ZONING BYLAW RENEWAL INITIATIVE

## CITY PLAN ENGAGEMENT DATA ANALYSIS: ZONING

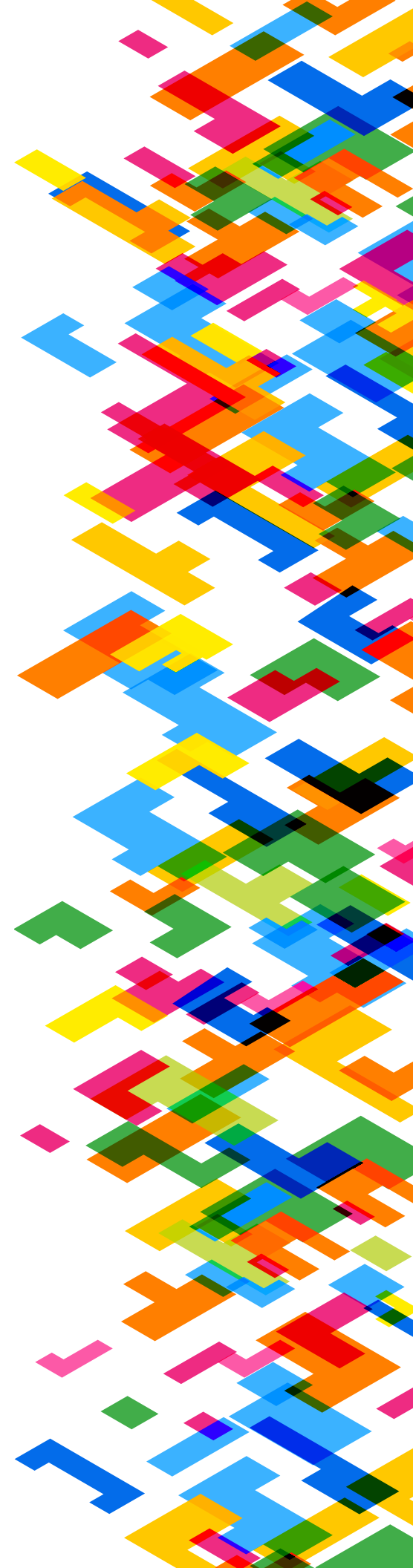
Edmonton

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# INTRODUCTION

**The City Plan** guides Edmonton's growth to a healthy, urban, and climate resilient city of two million people that supports a prosperous region. It combines a Municipal Development Plan and Transportation Master Plan, and includes strategic direction in environmental planning, social planning and economic development.

The City Plan was formed based on the input of thousands of Edmontonians from 2018–2020, and sets new directions for Edmonton's long term growth and planning. The comprehensive nature of the plan and its engagement means that it can inform at a fundamental level the city-building outcomes of other planning work, including the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative.

The City Plan's public engagement data was re-analyzed through a zoning lens, in support of the development of Edmonton's new Zoning Bylaw. This document provides a high-level summary of the relevant themes of that analysis. Selected quotes have been included for illustrative purposes.

In reviewing the existing City Plan Engagement Data, the following work was completed:

- + Review of roughly 2000 previously coded, written comments from pop-up events including City Plan HQ (Phase 2), Coffee Chats (Phase 3B), Community Meetings (Phase 3B), October 2019 Pop-Ups (Phase 4); and
- + Review of workshop materials from Core Stakeholder Workshops, and Public Workshops.

Comments are organized by theme and relevance to the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative.

# EMERGING THEMES

## Land Use

Land use topics were the most common theme found in the City Plan engagement data. Participants provided a range of inputs on the topic of land use including: the scale of new geographic districts, the importance of community planning, fairness in planning, and seeking slow growth in the fringes of the city.

**Lot by Lot Rezoning** – Participants in public engagement sessions were concerned that individual zoning changes are often contentious when done on a lot by lot basis. In contrast, participants also continued to raise concerns about past rezoning amendments that allowed major changes like lot splitting to occur.

**Planning Not Understood** – Public participants indicated that they did feel they had a good understanding of the planning process or of the Zoning Bylaw. Some comments also indicated that there was a lack of trust in the transparency of the process with one comment stating that it “feels like a secret society and [they] only hear about things after they happen.”

*Zoning currently has poor public engagement. Hard to understand much of the materials. Too much to review in a short amount of time. We need criteria to evaluate the intended result of the plan/process.*

**Compatible Uses** – When it comes to identifying compatible uses, public comments supported neighbourhood commercial spaces that were easily accessible in their neighbourhoods.

Types of businesses included small local shops, neighbourhood groceries but not liquor or cannabis stores. Participants were also interested in seeing commercial spaces better integrated into neighbourhoods.

*There aren't local shops within neighbourhoods – they are all on busy corners.*

**Compatible Density** – Participants had differing opinions about what kinds of areas would be appropriate for additional density to be developed. Some would like to see more density in all neighbourhoods, while others felt that it would only be appropriate along certain corridors, or along arterial roads, or within certain development areas like the core neighbourhoods or only in Downtown.

**Types of Units** – Some participants were interested in seeing the City take a more active role in managing the types of units found in Edmonton, particularly promoting or requiring family oriented rentals (3+ bedroom units), multi-generational housing and low income housing opportunities.

**Lot Splitting** – Lot splitting continues to be a point of contention among residents in mature neighbourhoods who feel that skinny homes do not meet the local context of their neighbourhoods.

## Transportation/Mobility

Transportation and mobility were also common topics raised in meetings and pop-ups. Throughout the engagement data, there was a desire to see transit service improved for riders, improve accessibility, consider winter conditions, and generally expand opportunities for different modes of transportation. Opinions were divided about how changes to the transportation network should impact drivers.

**Driving City** – Participants indicated that there are significant parts of the city where driving a car is needed to get around. It was identified that this is because housing is too far from commercial areas, transit is not reliable or active transportation is not seen as a viable option. Without major changes to mobility and land use, these areas will continue to be car-dependent into the future. Specific areas that were identified included most mature suburbs like Mill Woods as well as new suburbs in the south of Edmonton.

**Develop along Green Transportation Corridors** – It is important to co-locate new medium, high-density, and mixed-use developments alongside major green transportation corridors, like frequent bus transit, LRT, and bike routes. Participants also felt that developing higher density facilities like seniors-oriented housing along transit corridors would be positive.

**Parking Requirements** – In general, there were mixed concerns around parking and parking requirements. Comments indicated that new uses in existing buildings were challenged by off-street

parking requirements. In contrast, there were also concerns about how popular neighbourhood destinations cause parking issues for neighbours. Some participants also noted that there is an emerging need to require electric vehicle charging in new developments.

*We need to loosen up parking requirements. Especially for arts and culture. The Aviary struggles with parking.*

**Emerging Mobility Trends** – There was continued attention to providing additional storage/parking facilities for bicycles in new developments. Participants also identified ongoing concerns about scooters blocking sidewalks or ride-hailing services waiting in traffic because they do not have access to taxi parking spaces. These kinds of mobility should be considered when designing new developments. This might include providing designated scooter parking locations or taxi/Uber pick-up locations in busy locations.

**Density and Transit** – There was a clear message that increased density and commercial areas should be used to support higher quality transit services throughout the City and especially along important transportation corridors.

*I wish transit centres had more commercial development & residential development around them.*

## Environment

For additional recent engagement focused on Environmental impacts and climate change see the engagement documents associated with the Energy Transition Strategy Update at [https://www.edmonton.ca/city\\_government/city\\_vision\\_and\\_strategic\\_plan/energy-transition-strategy-update.aspx](https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/city_vision_and_strategic_plan/energy-transition-strategy-update.aspx).

**Importance of Environment** – Participants commonly identified the importance of including environmental planning considerations in all planning decisions. This included a range of key environmental considerations including river water quality, wildlife areas, and impacts of pollution.

| *Our environment is the most important thing.*

| *Keep nature natural, plant more native plants, low maintenance.*

**River Valley and Ravines** – The most common natural area discussed by participants was the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System. This was identified as an important natural feature that serves as a biodiversity hotspot, recreation area and an escape from the city. Overall, comments were most interested in seeing these areas preserved in the long term. In addition, there continues to be differing opinions about the inclusion of business opportunities in the River Valley. Some participants indicated that they felt the City should not allow any commercial operations in the River Valley or on the river. In contrast, others indicated that additional operations should be explored in the

River Valley, especially in areas that have already been disturbed from their natural state like Louise McKinney Park or Hawrelak Park.

**Relationship to Built Spaces** – Participants raised the idea that the city should have a series of natural corridors that provide both natural space for wildlife and transportation connections.

**Public Spaces** – Comments were clear that private developments should not be allowed to modify public park spaces and especially the river valley and ravine system. In addition, participants were commonly concerned about public and private developments that removed trees and did not replace them on-site.

**Private Yards** – Participants commonly raised ideas that the City should be encouraging the use of private front yards to enhance the environment and local systems by promoting naturalized gardens and vegetable gardens.

**Low Impact Development** – In general, participants who brought up Low Impact Development (LID) principles were very supportive of them as a way to reduce strain on the environment and infrastructure systems.

**Relationship to Built Spaces** – Participants raised the idea that the city should have a series of natural corridors that provide both natural space for wildlife and transportation connections.

## Climate Change and Resilience

For additional detailed descriptions of public engagement results directly related to the topic of Climate Change and Resilience please also see the following resources:

- + [Climate Resilience and Our Future City – City Plan September 2018 – June 2019](#)
- + [Energy Transition Strategy – Phase 1 What We Heard Report – September 2019 – May 2020](#)

**Climate Lens** – In general, participants were quick to identify the importance of including climate considerations in all planning decisions. The importance of including the climate lens was emphasized to that point that there are comments requesting that the City use Climate to replace “Connect” as the overarching theme of ConnectEdmonton.

**Zero Emissions Transportation** – Participants commonly identified that being able to move around their neighbourhoods without the use of a car, either by transit, bike or walking would help them lower the carbon emissions.

**Renewable Energy** – Participants were interested in seeing renewable energy sources designed into new developments both at an individual building level and for an entire community. Participants also indicated that the City should explore opportunities to implement renewables including using a tax levy or requiring it in new developments. Despite the overall support for renewable energy, participants were generally not supportive of existing plans to use portions of the River Valley for renewable energy generation.

*Make developers include solar/renewable energy on all new development.*

### Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions –

Edmontonians felt that greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced. This included generating more energy through solar and geothermal. It also includes developing district energy systems and using larger tracts of land for solar energy production. Despite this, comments also indicated that certain places like the River Valley should not be used for solar farms.

### Renovate and Retrofit Heritage Buildings –

Vacant and heritage buildings should be able to be renovated and retrofitted to preserve Edmonton’s historic areas. It is possible to renovate the interior of buildings and maintain the façade: green retrofits.

### Electric Vehicle Parking –

Although it was not a common comment, some participants indicated that the City should require electric vehicle charging stations in mid- to long-term parking spaces like park-and-ride and the airport to support the viability of electric vehicles.

**Green Incentives** – Incentives and rebates to undertake green renovations in Edmonton are desirable but are more applicable for the Building Code than for the Zoning Bylaw.

**Green Energy** – Participants also indicated that they supported implementing renewable energy systems into new and existing buildings in Edmonton. The Zoning Bylaw should fully support the use of renewables by removing limits on height or encroachment by solar panels.

## Urban Design

Engagement participants commonly associate zoning with recent community conversations and engagement on heritage preservation and infill development, particularly lot splitting.

**Heritage Buildings** – The City should do more to support retaining and revitalizing heritage buildings.

**Scale of Lots** – In general, people felt that older, wider lots were more desirable. Several negative comments about lot splitting and its impacts on mature Neighbourhoods were also received.

**Market Forces** – There was some concern from stakeholders and members of the public who felt that Edmonton's housing market is not in a place that supports the development of missing middle or mid-rise developments despite opportunities from zoning and policy.

*Density or built form desired at the policy level is misaligned with what the market is ready for yet or wants.*

## Housing

Housing is many people's most immediate interaction with the Zoning Bylaw. Issues of housing affordability and housing options were front of mind throughout the engagement process. Similar to urban design, opinions on neighbourhood character and housing density were commonly shared.

**Affordability** – Housing should be affordable throughout the city. This includes affordable housing for targeted groups including seniors, people with disabilities and low-income groups. Edmonton's affordability is seen as a major advantage compared to other cities in Canada, but others felt that the cost of housing has increased too much in recent years. Some people were concerned that there were existing areas that have seen too much investment in affordable housing that is causing significant negative impacts to the surrounding community.

**Connected Housing** – New housing should be well connected to employment, schools, and amenities. It was common to see comments seeking housing that was within walking distance of these amenities as well as parks and other destinations. Some participants also highlighted that this was especially important for people living in affordable housing who might not be able to afford the cost of owning a car.

**Need more options for housing** – The city should support more housing types between single detached houses and apartments in all neighbourhoods including mature areas.

**Neighbourhood character** – New housing should fit the character of the neighbourhood. There is a sense that new buildings are not as attractive as older buildings and do not necessarily fit with neighbourhood character.

**Density** – There was more acceptance for greater density in the central parts of the city. In general, it is not clear that residents are aware that new suburban areas are more dense than older suburbs. There is generally not agreement about where new density should be located. Comments contained a range of perspectives about where density should be located within the city and in individual neighbourhoods.

**Redevelopment Sites** – Some participants identified opportunities for seniors oriented or affordable housing to be developed within existing neighbourhoods specifically on surplus school sites, or other vacant parcels. Participants were especially excited because this would allow them to continue to live in their own neighbourhoods in the long term. Despite these comments, there were also some participants who continued to be concerned about using green space for housing.

*They should use surplus school sites for seniors and low-income housing. When I get old, I want to stay in my neighbourhood.*



## Economic and Community Development

Economic development, including economic diversification, support for local business, and the creation of new business opportunities were raised by public and stakeholder participants throughout the engagement period.

**Local Districts** – Comments indicated a desire to “live locally” with access to food that has been grown locally and supports small business all within walking distance or a short bike/transit ride. In addition, this also meant having a local population that was dense enough to support those local businesses in a sustainable manner.

*I have access to all of the services & amenities I need within 25–30 minutes of travel via bike or transit, and I don't have to risk my safety to do that.*

**Economic Development** – Participants often noted that the City should be taking action to make doing business easier in the city. This included notes like reducing restrictions around starting businesses and also lowering taxes and directly supporting local entrepreneurs through grants and incentives.

**Business Opportunities** – Some comments raised concerns that the business environment contained too much risk for local entrepreneurs and that the City should do what it can to expand the spaces where local businesses can be established and operate from.

**Negative Business Clusters** – Some participants felt some business clustering should not be supported. This was primarily around businesses that some felt have negative impacts like pawn shops, liquor stores and pharmacies in areas with existing social issues.

## Parks

Edmontonians consider the river valley as the heart or “jewel” of Edmonton. Responses were split in terms of how to best approach this asset – focusing on preservation, or recreation and/or useability.

**River Valley Uses** – Participants provided a mix of responses related to how the River Valley should be used. For many participants, the River Valley is a unique asset in Edmonton and there are a wide range of uses including recreation and natural system services. Some participants felt that the current uses in the River Valley should not be changed moving forward but others indicated that the City should consider a wider range of acceptable activities in the River Valley and ravine system.

*I would use the river valley if there were places to eat with a view.*

**Vacant Parcels** – The City should actively pursue converting vacant, derelict, or contaminated parcels into park space throughout the city.

*City should put pressure on derelict sites or brownfield so that it's not unsightly. Turn them into gardens or parks.*

## Community Amenities

Most frequently, participants discussed a desire for grocery stores and cafes within walking distance of their homes.

**Community Vibrancy** – Some participants would like to see more focus on having a greater mix of land uses and amenities located within neighbourhoods and within walking distance from more people’s homes and offices.

**Neighbourhood Grocery Stores** – Participants wanted to have access to local grocery stores in their neighbourhoods.

**Location of Amenities** – Some people were concerned that the City was not making good decisions around the location of some public services like libraries when it located them near certain businesses like bars.

## Disruption and Resilience

In planning for a city of two million people, it was acknowledged that the next period of growth will come with unknown disruptions and thus a need for civic resilience.

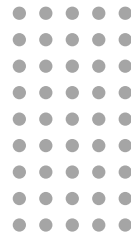
**Flexibility and Adaptation** – Business stakeholders were most interested in seeing zoning regulations that provide opportunities to be adapted to meet changing needs in the market and emerging technologies.

**New Development** – Participants proposed ideas including requiring all new homes to be built to net zero standards and incorporate low impact stormwater management systems and clean energy production in all new developments.

**Online Presence** – Some participants felt that the City’s website was one of the best in North America. They were particularly impressed by the Open Data portal and what was available there. Continuing to make planning and zoning information available transparently online will serve to make the planning process more transparent for residents and non-planners.

## HOW THIS DATA WILL BE USED

The emerging themes from The City Plan Public Engagement Data will be used to inform the drafting of the new Zoning Bylaw. It will be considered alongside data collected on the discussion papers and through further engagement activities for the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative. Engagement will continue to seek to understand a balance between public, industry, municipal, and stakeholder needs.



# GET INVOLVED!

- Visit [edmonton.ca/zoningbylawrenewal](https://edmonton.ca/zoningbylawrenewal)
- For ideas and feedback regarding Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative, please use the [General Feedback Form](#)
- Subscribe to our [newsletter](#)
- Contact us at [zoningbylawrenewal@edmonton.ca](mailto:zoningbylawrenewal@edmonton.ca)



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