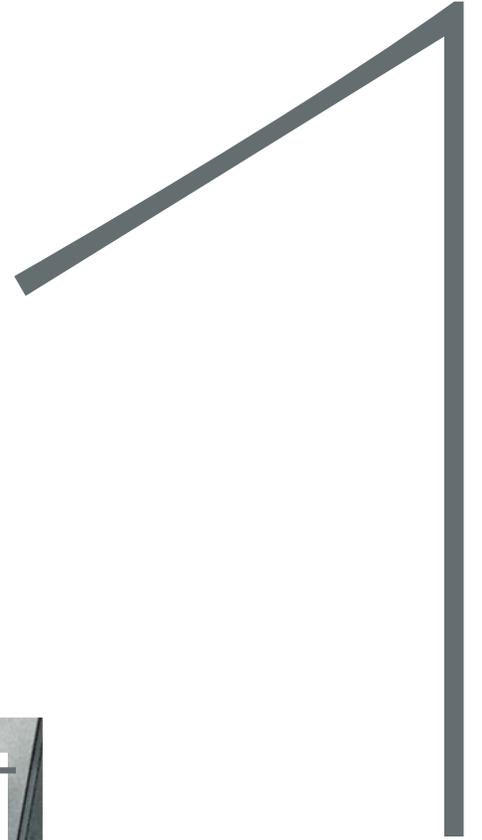


URBAN
DESIGN

FRAMEWORK

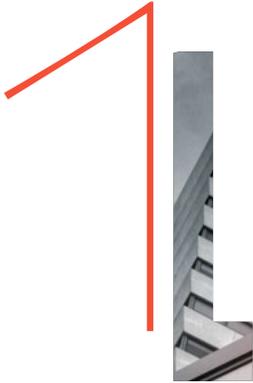


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INTRODUCTION



Some cities evolve organically. Some evolve as an expression of strong visions brought by their leaders. Others do so through strong democratic legislation and implementation. At the intersection of these forces is urban design. Given its proper role in planning, urban design helps shape more graceful physical forms and a greater sense of place.

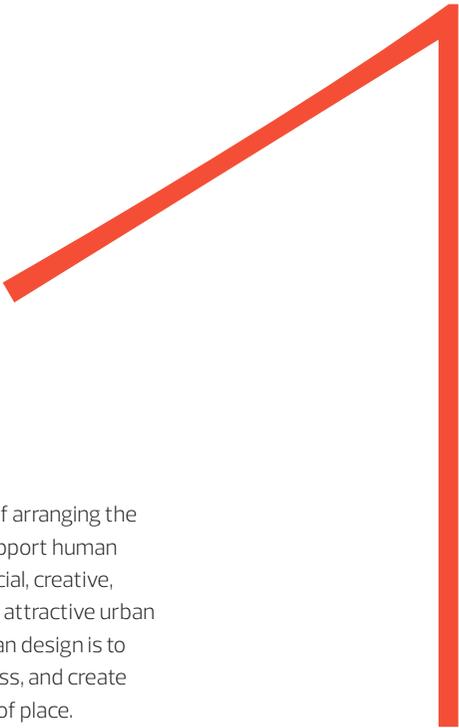
Today, the City of Edmonton has the opportunity to create and leverage robust tools to assist

good urban design policy, practices and techniques in its city building. But a unique convergence of forces—

demographic, political, economic, administrative and developmental—is coming together in Edmonton to

support the idea of a new urban design framework.

The goal of this framework is to elevate the practice of urban design in Edmonton, and to fully leverage collaboration across all civic departments and among city-building partners to build great places.



Urban Design Defined

Urban design is the art of arranging the physical environment and built form to support human activities in the public realm. It weaves social, creative, economic and environmental threads into attractive urban and natural environments. The aim of urban design is to enhance livability, strengthen local business, and create strong communities with a special sense of place.

Urban design helps create places for people that are attractive, memorable and functional. It is concerned with the arrangement, shape, appearance and functionality of urban public spaces. It deals with the interfaces between buildings and public spaces, wherever buildings are involved in framing and shaping the environment. It is the bond between professional disciplines and technical disciplines. It integrates planning processes in order to achieve great city building.



THE BUILT
QUALITY
ARE EVIDENT
PHYSICAL

- Sinisa Tomic, Urban Designer



**BEST AND WORST
TIES OF CITIES
EXPRESSED IN THEIR
CAL FORM.**

The Benefits of Great Urban Design

Urban design is everywhere—from the details on the Legislative Building to LRT infrastructure. When it's done well, urban design dramatically increases the overall quality of life—communities become vibrant, attractive and easy to navigate. Residents are happier and healthier. Public spaces are engaging and attractive. Citizens and tourists want to visit, and our global stock rises. The economic, environmental and social benefits of good urban design are widespread—and tangible.



CONVERGING FORCES



Edmonton is now in the middle of an intensive transformation that will impact Edmonton's image and reputation for decades to come. As Alberta's capital city, Edmonton has the opportunity to build a reputation for high-quality urban spaces, buildings, streets and natural beauty to instill pride and attachment among residents.

A well-planned and well-designed Edmonton translates into more economic opportunity, prosperity and sustainability—and a stronger sense of place will speak authentically to our community and emanate outward to the rest of the province, country and world.

All around the world, values and priorities about the way we live are shifting—and Edmonton is positioning itself to be a more dynamic, attractive and vibrant place to work, play, live and learn. Heightened public interest and expectations are now coming together with the City's desire to raise the urban design bar. A strong urban design team and future design policy/guidelines are at the intersection of these positive ambitions.

The urban design framework will advance urban design as a leading function within the City of Edmonton's city-building planning operations.





BACKGROUND



The City of Edmonton has always been open to supporting bold design visions like City Hall, Capital Boulevard and Blatchford. That tradition continues today with the design of functional, beautiful civic buildings and walkable residential neighbourhoods. Administration understands that to keep revitalizing our neighbourhoods and building high quality spaces, the City of Edmonton needs stronger urban design policy, guidelines and a development–approval process based on design merit.

The first step in opening new opportunities to build stronger relationships within the City's planning and design realm occurred in January 2014, with the reorganization of the Urban Planning and Environment Branch to create the Planning + Design Section.

A consultant was engaged to evaluate the practice of urban design in Edmonton by looking at Edmonton's urban design history, current policies and best practices. Following that, extensive staff surveys and interviews were conducted with key stakeholders to understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and possible threats for the future of design in Edmonton.

From the key findings a number of principles and tangible recommendations were developed to help improve and create a robust urban design approach.



A NEW URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK EXPOSED



The urban design framework provides a systematic approach to the strategic re-focusing of urban design in Edmonton. The new framework will help clarify objectives, strengthen the design team, create urban design fundamentals, establish integrated planning and urban design best practices, and advance urban design advocacy and education.





Edmonton's Urban Design Objectives:

These objectives provide an aspirational and strategic framework for building a great city.

- 1 Inspire a uniquely designed city that reflects Edmonton's geography, history, climate and culture
- 2 Plan and design a functional and attractive street system seamlessly integrated with the public transit system and other linkages
- 3 Plan and design diverse, adaptable and unique neighbourhoods
- 4 Plan and design special and significant civic spaces
- 5 Plan and design attractive built form in a variety of typologies and scales that reflect climate, geographic context, spirit of our time, and actively connects with surrounding urban context
- 6 Enhance natural systems and enable seamless integration with neighbourhoods through sensitive and sustainable planning and design

Strengthening our Urban Design Mandate:

Four key principles will serve as the mandate for Edmonton's urban design team and design transformation, they are:

1

URBAN DESIGN LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY

- + Provide strong design leadership and guidance, while ensuring the highest standards of collaboration, communication and respect to other subjects
- + Achieve maximum results through early project involvement in the design and review process, and ensure rigorous quality control
- + Advance a culture of urban design excellence across Edmonton

2

SYSTEM APPROACH TO URBAN DESIGN POLICY

- + Apply a system approach to create unity between planning and urban design policy—a prerequisite for achieving plans and creating locally distinctive places. The approach streamlines planning and design, and provides clarity for the interpretation and implementation of policy
- + Develop policy and design guidelines using a system approach to community planning, place-making, and design guidance that provides clarity to City administration and developers
- + Create context-specific urban design strategies, plans and guidelines
- + Achieve design excellence through strong policy that uses innovation and best practices, and enables rigorous and effective implementation
- + Develop and apply consistent and coherent performance criteria and standards
- + Utilize communication and engagement tools to effectively communicate policies to internal and external stakeholders

3

COLLABORATION

- + Establish a clear management structure for urban design within the City administration
- + Embed urban design collaboration between all City of Edmonton teams through integrated planning and design processes
- + Identify key players and active partners/ supporters early in the design phase

4

CONSULTATION AND FACILITATION

- + Ensure early participation in the vision and conceptual stages of projects—and ensure continuous participation throughout a project's life
- + Arrange early participation in development and approval processes with City administration and development industries
- + Guide internal and external stakeholders through creative design opportunities
- + Foster ongoing conversations about urban design with Edmontonians

To collaborate,
inspire and influence the widest
range of stakeholders to achieve
quality urban design.

COLLABORATE

To advocate
for high-quality urban design
internally and externally, and
to add value to urban planning,
transportation planning and
other policy in relationship
with urban design.

ADVOCATE

LEAD

To lead
city building partners in raising the
bar on urban design in Edmonton
to create vibrant places.

PRACTICE

To practice
highest-quality urban design
across a variety of scales and
projects for the City of Edmonton.

ADVISE

To advise
civic staff on a wide range of urban
design issues based on guiding
principles of "The Way Ahead."



**CITIES HAVE THE CAPABILITY
OF PROVIDING SOMETHING FOR
EVERYBODY, ONLY BECAUSE,
AND ONLY WHEN, THEY ARE
CREATED BY EVERYBODY**

— Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

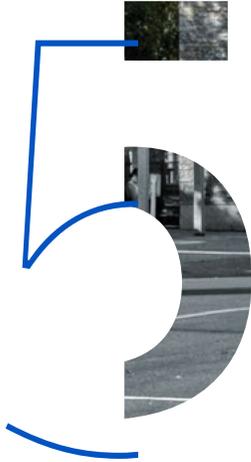
Urban Design Lenses

Urban design lenses are practical elements used during the iterative design process through which designers test the functionality or attractiveness of any project type. The lenses will allow the Urban Design Team to promote the tangible and intangible qualities of a city. They are based on timeless principles that create successful places, regardless of geographic or cultural context.

The urban design lenses include:



THE SHIFT



To fulfill its new mandate, the Urban Design Team must shift from its current emphasis on implementation and construction of public projects, and move towards using strategic-design to influence planning policy, development approvals and design phases of public and private projects.





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Priority 1

Strengthen the Urban Design Team

An enhanced Urban Design Team is required to positively influence and champion better design processes and policy throughout the city. This involves providing appropriate resources, integration and training. The following key actions are recommended:

- + Recruit a Chief Urban Designer, to provide leadership and advocacy at a senior level to elevate the role of urban design for Edmonton
- + Refocus the role of the team from construction support to proactive strategic urban design advocacy and consultation
- + Support design processes through spacial and technical enhancements
- + Build and enhance urban design skill sets within the team and department
- + Strengthen design legitimacy by better integrating it into the planning and development review processes within the corporation

Priority 2

Create Urban Design Fundamentals

Developing appropriate procedures and guidelines that establish basic urban design principles in the planning, design and development review processes comes next. This will involve building a hierarchy of urban design tools to positively guide future development. The following key actions are recommended:

- + Create Urban Design Manuals that define principles, typologies and hierarchies related to the urban built form
- + Create design guidelines and briefs for high priority typologies, such as tall buildings
- + Develop and prioritize urban design policies and guideline documents to provide clarity and support for emerging development priorities



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Priority 3

Establish Integrated Planning + Design Best Practices

Excellence comes through practice and best practices. The following key actions are recommended:

- + Identify champions of the integrated planning and design process/approach
- + Define and implement an integrated planning and design approach to enhance collaboration between departments, branches and development industry in relation to urban design
- + Identify existing gaps and potential improvements and synergies between planning and urban design policy
- + Define role of urban design team within the City of Edmonton and Sustainable Development Department to develop more effective processes for collaboration, communication and reporting for various projects
- + Review mandate and possible synergies between Edmonton Design Committee and Urban Design team
- + Advance 3D modelling for analytical and review processes

Priority 4

Advance Urban Design Advocacy + Education

The future is built from one generation to the next. Advocacy and education are the keys to transforming best design, best practices and best policies into the future. The following key actions are recommended:

- + Create an Urban Design Centre of Excellence to promote high quality urban design / best practices in Edmonton
- + Develop communications, social media presence, marketing, and engagement to develop strong links with media, design and development industry
- + Develop educational programs to promote urban design within the administration, the development industry and with educational institutions
- + Develop demonstration projects to promote principles and concepts



PROGRESSION



- + Launch urban design awareness campaign
- + Engagement with city building partners

- + Recruit Chief Urban Designer
- + Build Urban Design Team
- + Open design studio
- + Develop integrated planning and design process
- + Establish urban design typologies
- + Transition from construction support to design and advocacy

- + Establish Internal Urban Design Review Panel

- + Establish expectations for urban design visions, strategy, plans, guidelines, briefs, standards, and projects
- + Establish urban design services for small and medium civic projects
- + Establish charrette process
- + Create urban design principles and typology manual

- + Create city-wide streetscape manual
- + Establish urban design services for large civic projects
- + Create urban design policy and guidelines for high priority areas, such as: sun access protection; public realm interface typologies; downtown; urban block typologies; heritage character areas; mid-rise buildings; tall buildings; corridors
- + Focus on larger civic design projects, policy development, and establishing Edmonton as a leader in urban design in Canada
- + Embed urban design policy in edmonton's regulatory framework
- + Develop urban design review manual for civic staff
- + Expand planning academy's urban design elective

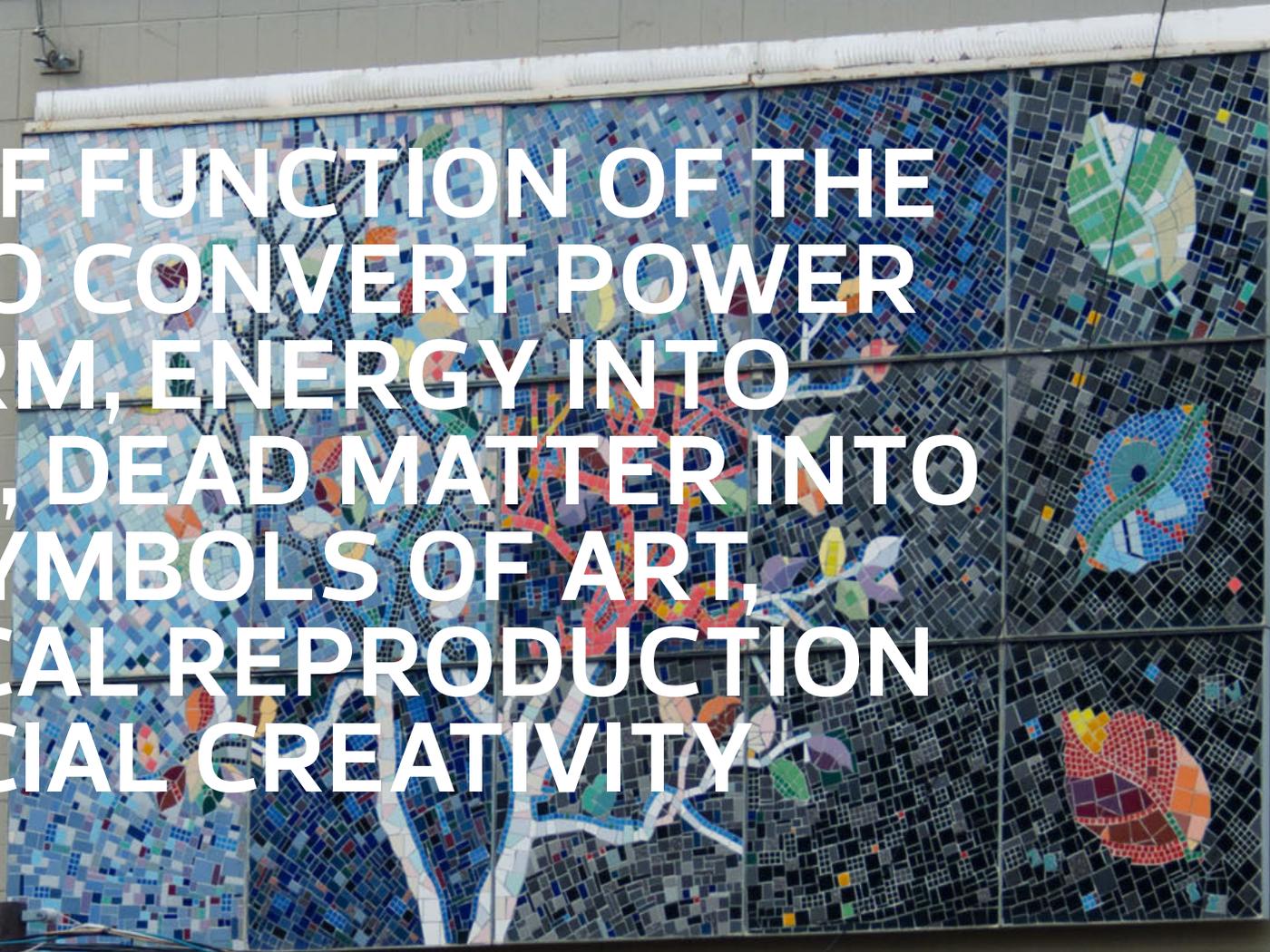
- + Integrate 3D technology and analysis methodologies
- + 2017 Edmonton Urban Design Awards



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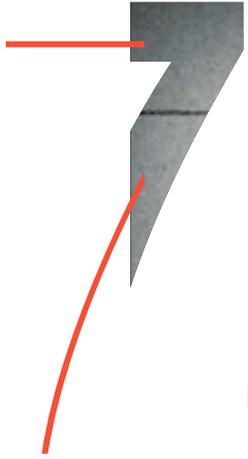
- Lewis Mumford

CHIEF FUNCTION OF THE
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FORM, ENERGY INTO
URE, DEAD MATTER INTO
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OGICAL REPRODUCTION
SOCIAL CREATIVITY





CONCLUSION



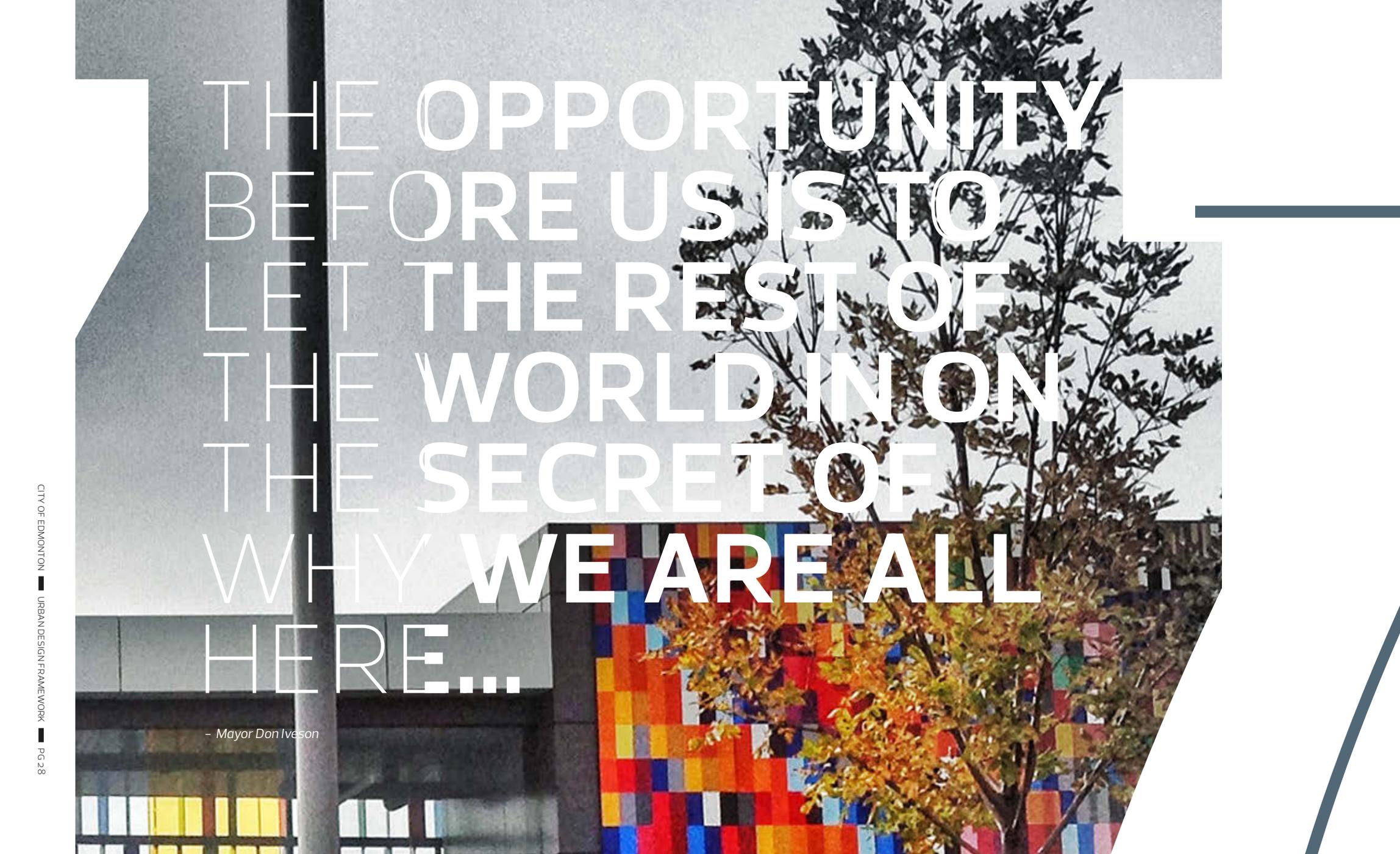
An expectation for better design standards and leadership is emerging as the City is witnessing strong political leadership, positive demographic trends, and an urban planning renaissance.

Best urban design practices around the world show that good urban design isn't random—it needs to be championed, invested in and continuously nurtured. A shared understanding of the principles and importance of good design is essential for long-term success.

This framework can inspire city-builders and Edmontonians to continue uncovering a tradition of bold design, and to continue elevating discussions on urban design in Edmonton. By working together we can continue to raise Edmonton's status as one of Canada's premier cities.







THE OPPORTUNITY
BEFORE US IS TO
LET THE REST OF
THE WORLD IN ON
THE SECRET OF
WHY WE ARE ALL
HERE...

- Mayor Don Iveson



