



REF 2021-003, City of Edmonton New Area Redevelopment Plan – Edmonton Exhibition Lands Planning Framework

Recommendation

EMRB Administration recommends that REF application 2021-003 be approved.

Background

On January 18, 2021, the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board (EMRB) received an application from the City of Edmonton (the City) for approval of *Edmonton Exhibition Lands Planning Framework*, a new Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP). The City submitted the new statutory plan pursuant to the following submission criteria in the Regional Evaluation Framework (REF):

4.1 A municipality must refer to the Board any proposed new statutory plan, except for

- a) a new sub-area structure plan that is subordinate to and consistent with its higher order area structure plan or area redevelopment plan;*
- b) when the adoption of a new sub-area structure plan requires an amendment to an existing area structure plan and the amendment to the existing area structure plan does not meet the submission criteria in Section 4.3;*
- c) a new area structure plan for country residential development within the zoned and/or designated country residential areas as depicted on Schedule 2: Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Structure to 2044 in the EMRGP; or,*
- d) a new intermunicipal development plan between non-member municipalities and member municipalities that conforms to the member municipalities' municipal development plan.*

EMRB Administration deemed the application complete on January 21, 2021.

Application

The proposed ARP will provide policy direction for redevelopment of the City of Edmonton's second largest infill opportunity, the Exhibition Lands. The Plan proposes two transit villages, establishing a fine-grain network of streets, expansion of Borden Park, and increasing employment opportunities anchored around existing transit and transportation connections. As part of the overall planning process, the boundaries of five surrounding ARPs will be amended to remove the subject lands and the Northlands ARP will be repealed upon approval.

Evaluation

EMRB Administration obtained the assistance of Scheffer Andrew Planners and Engineers (Scheffer Andrew) to evaluate the application with respect to the REF requirements. The Scheffer



Andrew evaluation (attached) reviewed the proposed ARP in relation to: Part 3 of EMRB Regulation 189/2017; Section 8 of Schedule A of REF Ministerial Order MSL MSD:088/20; and, the Principles and Policies of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan (Growth Plan). The Scheffer Andrew evaluation recommends that the proposed ARP be approved by the EMRB.

EMRB Administration Comments

The Edmonton Exhibition Lands are located wholly within the Metropolitan Core of the Metropolitan Region Structure to 2044 (Schedule 2 of the Growth Plan). Therefore, the application is evaluated for its consistency with the principles and policies pursuant to this Policy Area in the Growth Plan. The Edmonton Exhibition Lands include major transportation and land use components of Wayne Gretzky Drive, Capital Line LRT, Edmonton Coliseum, Edmonton Expo Centre, and Borden Park.

Following the completion of the new Downtown Arena, the City began to evaluate how these lands, including the Coliseum could be reused or redeveloped. The ARP, representing one of the largest infill opportunities in the City, outlines the land use and planning framework for the repurposing and redevelopment of the Coliseum LRT Station area, Northlands site, and adjacent areas while integrating redevelopment with surrounding communities. In reviewing the ARP in the context of Growth Plan Schedule 2 (Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Structure to 2044), the ARP is characterized as Built-Up Urban Area and features regionally significant components including a Major Employment Area, the LRT Corridor, and a Regional Road.

The ARP outlines the vision for the area: *Edmonton Exhibition Lands provides the space for a vibrant new urban community to take form, harnessing the area's history of gathering, proximity to nature, and transportation connections, creating new and exciting opportunities to live, work and play in the heart of northeast Edmonton.* Seven Guiding Principles support the development concept (Figure 1) and inform policies within the five pillars of the Plan; Transit Villages, Fine-grain Internal Network of Local Streets and Alleys, Reconfigured and Expanded Borden Park, Civic / Education and Employment Anchors, and Consolidation of Wayne Gretzky Drive North of 118 Avenue.

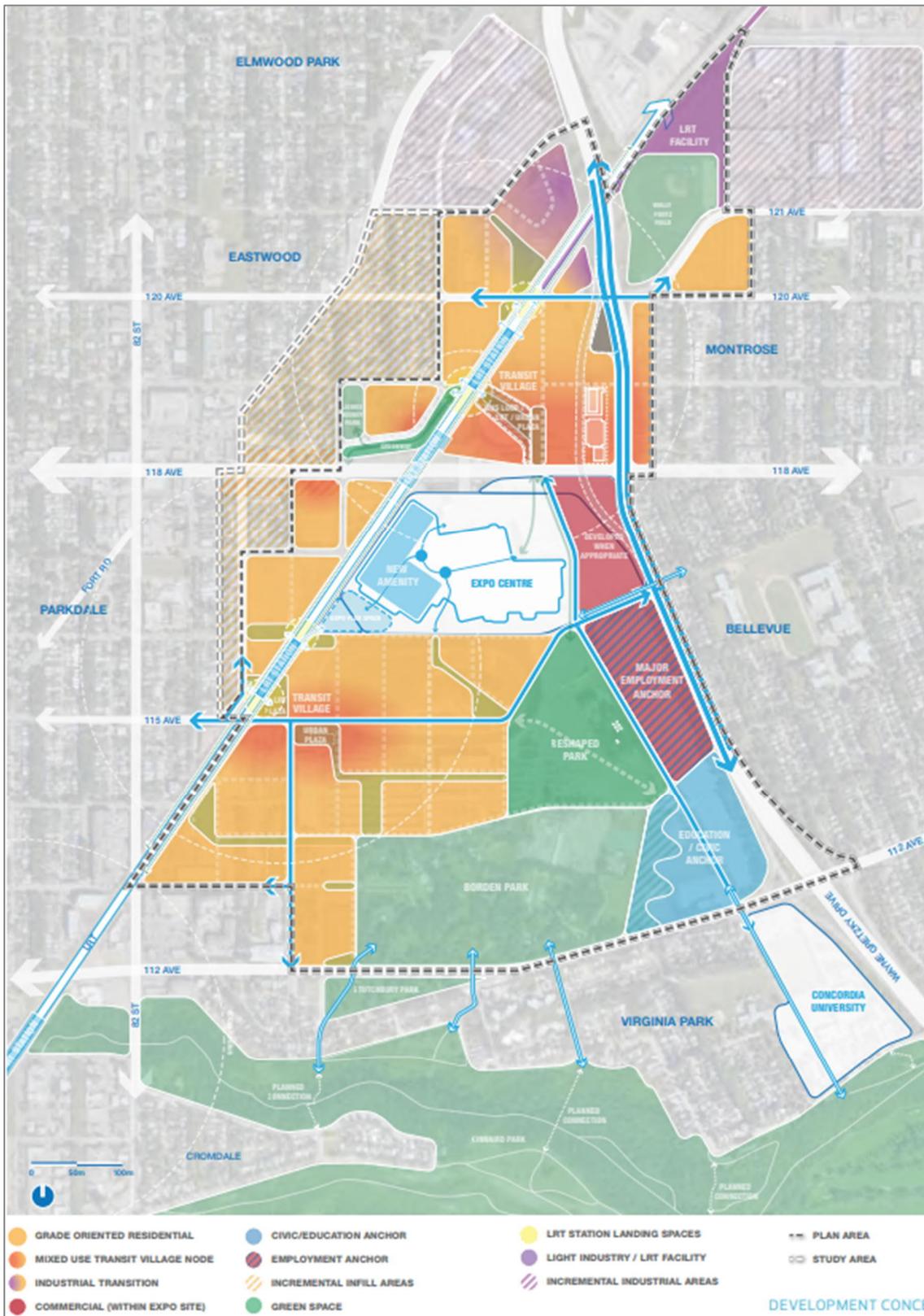


Figure 1: Development Concept



Economic Competitiveness and Employment

The Plan capitalizes on existing employment and tourism opportunities within the area by conserving the Edmonton Expo Centre and proposing the expansion of related commercial and employment uses. The Major Employment Area identified on Schedule 2 of the Growth Plan is integrated with the existing Expo Centre and a proposed new Education/Civic Anchor, which will concentrate economic activities and a high-level of employment opportunities, consistent with the intent of Major Employment Areas. Additional employment uses located within two Transit Villages and the Industrial Transition area are integrated with major transportation infrastructure, promoting the diversification of the City's local economy and employment base.

Natural Living Systems

While the Plan predominantly features built-up areas, there is robust policy direction to protect environmental assets and minimize the impacts of development to natural living systems. Policies ensure that all open spaces are multifunctional and contribute to Ecology, Celebration, and Wellness, as stated in *BREATHE: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy*. Further, the Plan encourages the use of native and/or edible species and establishment of wildlife corridors to the North Saskatchewan River Valley through the configuration of greenway links and naturalized open spaces. Policies encouraging buildings to include on-site alternative energy sources and incorporate low impact development (LID) solutions address impacts of climate change.

Communities and Housing

The Plan recognizes and celebrates the history and cultural diversity of the site to create a complete community for all residents. Policies direct the City to investigate opportunities to partner with Indigenous communities and organizations to develop Indigenous culture and wellness amenities and services specifically in the Civic/Education Anchor. Additional policies direct development within the Plan to incorporate universally accessible and age-friendly design. Finally, a wide range of housing options will be provided through low, medium, and high density forms, including affordable housing integrated throughout the community in accordance with City policies.

Integration of Land Use and Infrastructure

The ARP is a major intensification and infill opportunity for the City and projects over 3,500 new units and a population of over 7,500 people at full build-out. The Plan is a major component of the City's strategy to achieve the Aspirational Intensification Target of 25% as outlined in Growth Plan Schedule 6 (Greenfield Density, Centres and Intensification Targets). The integration of land use with the higher order transit network is a major driver in achieving such a high density to optimize infrastructure investments and minimize the expansion of the City. The Plan strategically proposes the development of two medium to high density, mixed use Transit Villages, anchored by transit plazas and a vibrant public realm, to concentrate people and jobs.

Transportation Systems

The Plan responds to existing circulation constraints into and within the site for vehicles, active modes, and transit by reconfiguring the transportation network and emphasizing accessibility for all modes. The proposed transportation network features eight different road classifications, two LRT stations, a transit centre, greenway links, and shared use paths to create a truly connected multi-



modal transportation network. The improved mobility network is focused around a fine-grain complete street network integrated with greenway links supporting active modes and connecting to higher order transit. The Plan enables the efficient moving of people and goods within the site and the City more broadly by increasing connectivity with adjacent communities through increasing at-grade crossings for active modes and vehicles, specifically across a realigned Wayne Gretzky Drive. Finally, parking maximums throughout the plan area will contribute to a walkable and efficient built form, encouraging a mode shift to transit and active transportation.

Agriculture

Policies within the Plan build off the history of site, which has played an important role in the cultural and agricultural life of the City for 140 years. Policies provide direction for development to accommodate spaces for urban agriculture activities including community gardens, edible landscaping, food infrastructure, and food businesses.

Overall, the ARP is consistent with the principles and policies of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan and Section 8.0 of the REF.

Recommendation

EMRB Administration recommends that REF 2021-003 be approved.

Attachments

Evaluation	Scheffer Andrew Planners and Engineers
REF Documents	1. Cover Letter
	2. Edmonton Exhibition Lands Planning Framework ARP (Bylaw 19267)
	3. Report to Council Bylaw 19267
	4. REF Referral Chart