



CITY PLANNING REPORT REZONING & PLAN AMENDMENT QUEEN ALEXANDRA

8019 - 105 Street NW

To allow for a mixed use high density development.



RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION

City Planning is in **SUPPORT** of this application because it:

- allows for the redevelopment of a surface parking lot into a mixed use development;
- integrates with surrounding development and demonstrates a high performance standard for the pedestrian experience; and
- conforms to the PlanWhyte Land Use Study.

THE APPLICATION

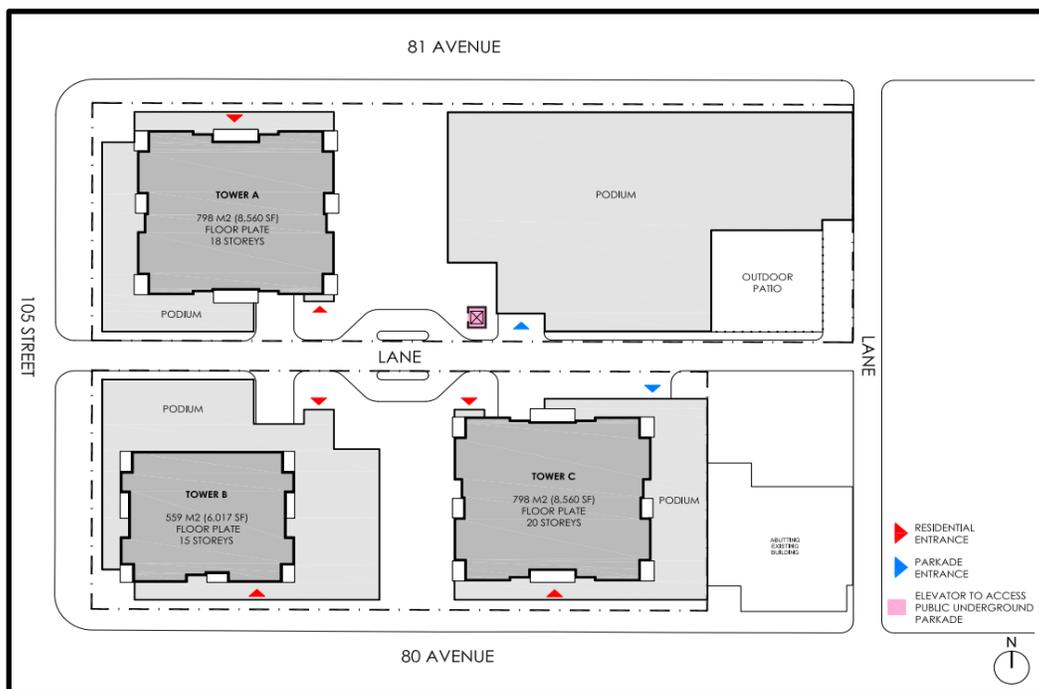
1. BYLAW 18851 to amend the Strathcona Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) to allow for a high density mixed use development.

This proposed amendment would exclude the site from three objectives and two policies. The objectives and policies being amended currently direct residential and commercial development within the area as being low in density, scale and intensity. Additionally, one map is also being amended which provides direction on publicly-owned parking.

2. CHARTER BYLAW 18852 to rezone the site from the (CB2) General Business Zone to a (DC2) Site Specific Development Control Provision to allow for a high density mixed use development.

The proposed DC2 Provision would allow for the development of three high-rise residential towers. Commercial opportunities are provided within the podium space of each tower, as well as one stand alone low scale commercial building. Overall, the development proposes a maximum of 495 dwellings and an increase in Floor Area Ratio from 3.5 to 5.0. The development also introduces a publicly accessible mid-block walkway running north-south through the site. All vehicular parking spaces are provided underground. Proposed maximum building heights are as follows:

- 60 metres for the northwest tower (Tower A);
- 50 metres for the southwest tower (Tower B);
- 66 metres for the southeast tower (Tower C); and
- 12 metres for the northeast building (Commercial Building).



PROPOSED SITE PLAN

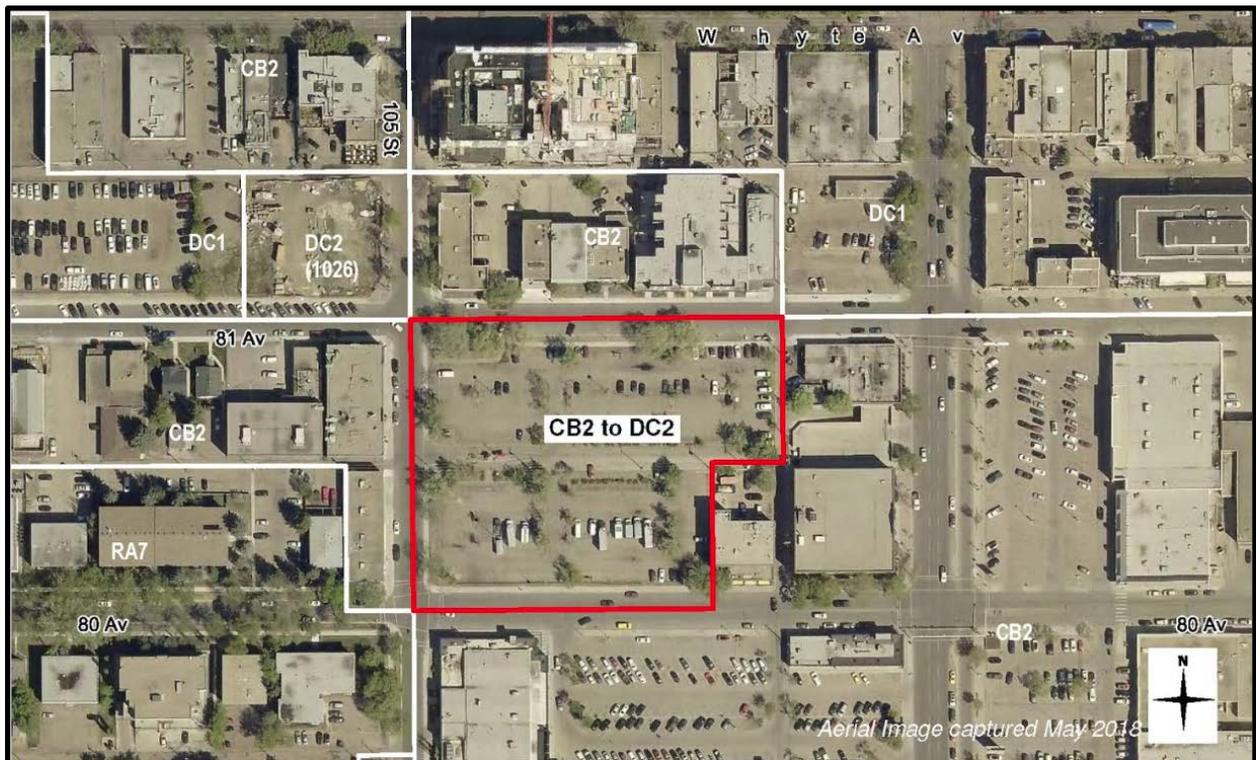
REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS (EDMONTON METROPOLITAN REGION)

As the application proposes to amend the Strathcona Area Redevelopment Plan and is less than 800 metres from the planned Centre LRT, the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board (EMRB) must review and approve the application before Council can give third reading of the bylaws, pursuant to Regional Evaluation Framework (REF) 2.0 Ministerial Order NO MSL: 111/17.

SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

The 0.87 hectare site is currently being used as a surface parking lot and is surrounded by predominantly low rise commercial buildings, with the exception of a few residential and mixed use buildings of a similar scale.

The site is one block south of Whyte Avenue which is comprised of pedestrian oriented retail and commercial uses. Whyte Avenue is defined as a Transit Avenue (and a Frequent Bus Route under the Bus Network Redesign) due to its high frequency of bus service. Planning is also underway for the Centre LRT which is expected to run along Whyte Avenue.



AERIAL VIEW OF APPLICATION AREA

	EXISTING ZONING	CURRENT USE
SUBJECT SITE	(CB2) General Business Zone	Surface parking lot
CONTEXT		
North	(CB2) General Business Zone (DC2.1026) Site Specific Development Control Provision	Low rise mixed use buildings Vacant lot zoned for a mixed-use tower
East	(CB2) General Business Zone	Low rise commercial buildings
South	(CB2) General Business Zone (RA7) Low Rise Apartment Zone	Single storey commercial buildings Low rise apartment building
West	(CB2) General Business Zone	Low rise commercial buildings



LOOKING NORTHWEST FROM WITHIN THE SITE



LOOKING WEST FROM WITHIN THE SITE, ALONG THE EXISTING LANE

PLANNING ANALYSIS

LAND USE COMPATIBILITY

The DC2 Provision proposes a mix of commercial and residential uses. The commercial space is located at ground level and maintains the pedestrian oriented shopping experience that is characteristic of the area. Most of the proposed commercial uses within the DC2 Provision are considered low intensity, meaning that they do not produce excess noise or other nuisances that would be considered incompatible with residential uses.

All proposed uses within the DC2 Provision are either permitted or discretionary under the current CB2 zone.

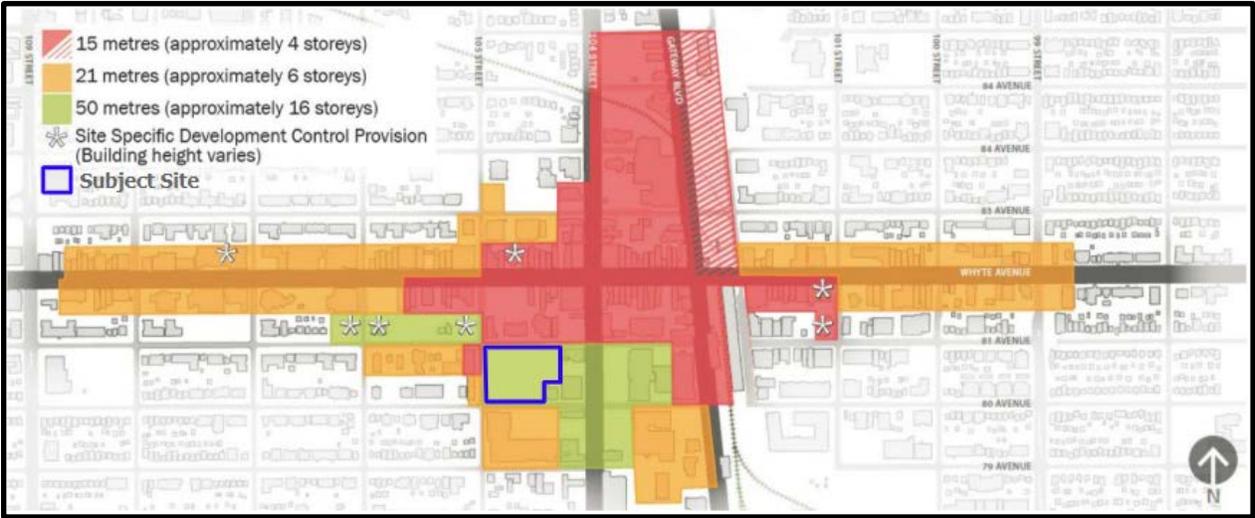
STRATHCONA AREA REDEVELOPMENT PLAN (ARP)

The Strathcona ARP is in effect as the statutory planning document approved by City Council for land use in this area. However, the planWhyte land use study provides more recent direction for land use and future development so this was the main planning document used during the review of this application.

PLANWHYTE LAND USE STUDY

Following several proposals for large-scale redevelopments in the area, the planWhyte land use study was initiated in recognition of ongoing development pressures and need for sensitive integration with the area's heritage character. The study applies to sub-area 5 of the Strathcona Area Redevelopment Plan, referred to as the Whyte Avenue Commercial Area. The planWhyte land use study was accepted by the Urban Planning Committee on August 28, 2018 and will be considered by City Council for incorporation into the Strathcona ARP at a future Public Hearing.

One of the guiding principles of the study was ensuring that new development be appropriately located and scaled in an effort to maintain the existing character of the area, specifically the heritage commercial area of Whyte Avenue. As such, the study employs a height strategy which locates higher and more intense uses on the south side of Whyte Avenue. The subject site is identified within the study's "Urbanization District" which suggests heights of up to 50 metres (approximately 16 storeys).



PLANWHYTE HEIGHT STRATEGY

However, the study also identifies the need for flexibility in the maximum height in the Urbanization District and suggests that heights could be increased, in consideration of the following:

- development is able to respond to its site size and context;
- design measures mitigate shadowing (especially of the Whyte Avenue corridor), wind impacts and massing;
- there is a higher performance standard for the pedestrian experience;
- a significant commitment to principles of good urban design and winter city design;
- a higher quality of active-at-grade frontage; and
- more significant contributions to community amenities.

Being that two out of the three proposed towers exceed 50 metres in height (at heights of 60 and 66 metres, respectively), the subsequent sections provide an analysis on how this proposal meets the considerations outlined above as a trade-off for additional height.

SITE SIZE AND CONTEXT

At 0.87 hectares, the site is approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of a city block in size. It is bounded on all sides by collector roadways, with the exception of its east side, which is bounded by a lane. In general, a site of this size is appropriate for multi-tower development, provided that it is able to adequately respond to its surrounding context and implement best practices in tower design and site layout. The site layout takes advantage of the large site size to provide adequate tower separation, setbacks and stepbacks to address pedestrian comfort around the adjacent public roadways and through the site's internal corridors. Further details on how the scale and form of this development integrates with the area is provided in subsequent sections below.

SUN SHADOWING, WIND IMPACTS AND MASSING

Tower Height

The DC2 Provision proposes tower heights between 50 and 66 metres. A sun shadow study was submitted as part of this application and is attached to this report as Appendix 2. The study confirms that there will be no new shadows added on the north sidewalk of Whyte Avenue between the spring and autumn equinoxes (March 21 to September 21) in conformance with the direction of the planWhyte land use study. Another sun shadow study will be required at the Development Permit stage to reconfirm these findings and ensure even mechanical equipment and other minor projections like antennas also meet this shadow restriction.

Tower Floor Plate & Floor Area Ratio

The massing of the towers are generally in line with expectations for high-rise towers, in an effort to mitigate bulky massing and support slimmer towers that produce narrower shadows that move quickly across surrounding properties. A comparison of maximum floor plate area is provided below showing that the two taller towers appropriately fit between what is suggested by the Residential Infill Guidelines (RIGs) and a comparable zone, the (RA9) High Rise Apartment Zone. The shortest tower is much slimmer than both of these comparables.

Floor Area Ratio can also be used as a high level measure of the intensity of a development. In this case, a proposed increase in Floor Area Ratio of 1.5 from the current CB2 Zone is relatively minimal and the proposed overall maximum of 5.0 is only slightly higher than the (RA9) High Rise Apartment Zone for a site of this size.

Building Massing Comparison Chart					
	Comparable: Residential Infill Guidelines	Comparable: RA9 Zone	Proposed: Tower A	Proposed: Tower B	Proposed: Tower C
Max. Floor Plate (m²)	750	850	800	575	800
Floor Area Ratio	N/A	4.3	5.0		

With the towers being essentially square in shape, the facade lengths on all towers are also less than 30 metres, below the recommendation in the Residential Infill Guidelines of 36 metres.

Tower Separation

Each of the towers is appropriately separated from one another by a distance of at least 25 metres. As shown on the comparison chart below, the proposed tower separation distance appropriately fits between what is suggested by the RIGs and the RA9 Zone, in an effort to increase sunlight penetration and maintain views of the sky for the surrounding public realm and private properties.

Tower Separation Comparison Chart			
	Comparable: Residential Infill Guidelines	Comparable: RA9 Zone	Proposed: DC2 Provision
Min. Separation Distance (m)	30-35	20	25

Wind Impacts and Winter City Design

A Pedestrian Wind Analysis was submitted and reviewed as part of this application. The results showed no concerns about wind impacts on pedestrian safety. There were some areas identified on the site where wind is anticipated to exceed pedestrian comfort levels for the intended use of the space. To address these concerns, the proposed DC2 Provision requires the submission of a more detailed Wind Impact Study at the Development Permit stage combined with a requirement to incorporate features that limit the negative impacts consistent with the recommendations of the study.

The proposed DC2 Provision also includes a regulation requiring built form, public realm interfaces, streetscape elements and pedestrian connections to consider the City of Edmonton's Winter Design Guidelines in their design and implementation. A report outlining how each building conforms to these guidelines must be submitted with each Development Permit.

URBAN DESIGN AND THE PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

Podium/Tower Design

The development employs podium/tower configurations which ensures the massing of the towers are kept away from the adjacent public realm, as referenced as an important design element in the planWhyte land use study. Each tower facade that faces a public roadway is set back a minimum of 3 metres from the podium edge, which itself is setback a minimum of 1 metre from the property line to create a more comfortable pedestrian experience at the human scale. Balconies are not allowed to project into the setbacks.

For comparison, the Main Streets Overlay (which currently applies to the existing CB2 Zone) requires a 4.5 metre setback, but also allows balconies to project into this setback 1.5 metres, making the effective setback 3.0 metres; the same as proposed in the DC2 Provision. As a result, the interfaces between the public realm and the development are defined by the podium facades for a comfortable scale at the pedestrian level. The corners of podiums located at prominent locations provide chamfers for additional enhanced sidewalk space for pedestrian comfort.

There are two areas within the mid-block walkway where the towers extend to the ground with no podium or setback. This is a concern, primarily because of the potential wind impact of downwash with no podium to deflect it from the public realm. However, the lack of podiums at these locations allows for other positive design features, such as keeping the mid-block walkway wider and ensuring proper tower separation, including from adjacent properties and the public walkways around the exterior of the site. Also, the DC2 Provision still requires wind mitigation strategies to be implemented here which will help improve the pedestrian experience in these areas.

Pedestrian Connections

Breaks along the podium walls are appropriately provided at the midpoint of each blockface. This results in a more modest site layout which lends itself to a higher quality pedestrian experience by way of greater site permeability and connectivity through the site. The site also introduces a publicly accessible mid-block walkway designed to carry pedestrians through the site. This area is intended as a high quality pedestrian space that is to include hard landscaping, seating areas, bicycle facilities, public art, as well as the main entrance to the underground public parking. Overall, the site is designed with a pedestrian focus, in an effort to elevate to the pedestrian and shopping-oriented experience that is characteristic of the area.

360 Degree Activation

The podium edges facing 81 Avenue NW, 80 Avenue NW, 105 Street NW and portions of the publicly accessible mid-block walkway, employ active commercial frontages to promote activity

and permeability within the proposed development. The residential lobbies of each tower face the internal mid-block walkway and the access to the 250 stall secure indoor bicycle garage is accessed from the east-west lane. Combined, these features ensure activation of these buildings on nearly all facades, which is rare but highly desired for tower developments, especially in pedestrian oriented areas like Whyte Avenue.

Materiality

The exterior materials used along the podium facades facing the adjacent public roadways is to consist of predominantly brick cladding. Other allowable cladding materials that are to be subordinate to the brick cladding are stone and pressed metal. Each of these podium facades are to have an architectural expression that is complementary to, but distinct from, the other podium facades, in an effort to lend further visual interest to the public realm. Overall, the architectural composition, including distinct vertical and horizontal banding and other design details and features, are meant to generally reflect the urban fabric of the Old Strathcona heritage area and provide an enhanced pedestrian experience.

The towers are also to be finished with high quality materials such as metal and glass. The materiality of the towers are meant to contrast with the materiality of the podiums, in an effort to bring attention to the portion of the development that is meant to reflect the historical nature of the area.

COMMUNITY AMENITY CONTRIBUTIONS

The DC2 Provision is in general alignment with City Policy C582 Developer Sponsored Affordable Housing which requires that the City be provided the option to purchase 5% of the units at 85% of their market value or receive the equivalent as cash-in-lieu. However, this option will expire 5 years after occupancy if the buildings are operated as rental buildings and units are not made available for sale by that time. If this expiry occurs, in order to ensure a contribution to affordable housing happens as a result of this project, funds will be transferred to the City's Housing and Homelessness Section from the funds received through the sale of the land by the City to the developer.

City Policy C599 requires that the owner provide contributions towards public amenities based on the uplift in developable floor area proposed through a DC2 Provision. In this case, the owner is required to provide a minimum contribution of \$491,325.

The applicant is proposing the following contributions towards community amenities, at an estimated value of approximately four times this basic contribution requirement:

- a publicly accessible mid-block pedestrian Walkway with amenity space and enhanced landscaping;
- a minimum of 20 dwellings that are family-oriented (three bedrooms or more, with direct access to a private amenity area of at least 10 m², dedicated and enhanced bulk storage and a minimum of 2 bicycle parking spaces);
- public realm improvements along 81 Avenue NW, 105 Street NW and 80 Avenue NW, including 13 new boulevard trees in enhanced growing mediums;
- public art; and

- off-site amenity contributions within the neighborhood, in consultation with the Queen Alexandra Community League.

PLANWHYTE CONFORMANCE

Given the above analysis, it is City Planning's conclusion that the proposed DC2 Provision is in conformance with the planWhyte land use study. Though two of the three towers exceed the suggested height limit, the proposed DC2 Provision meets the criteria laid out in planWhyte for flexibility on this suggested maximum height by providing the following elements:

- the development responds to its large site size by providing adequate tower separation, setbacks and stepbacks to address pedestrian comfort around the adjacent public roadways and through the site's internal corridors;
- the development does not create any new shadowing on the north sidewalk of Whyte Avenue between the spring and autumn equinoxes (March 21 to September 21) and wind impacts are mitigated within and around the site;
- the development provides a higher standard for the pedestrian experience by providing a site layout that focuses on site connectivity and permeability within enhanced public spaces;
- the development commits itself to good urban design principles through the implementation of 360 degree design that provides multiple active at grade frontages and with facade designs reflective of the area's heritage character; and
- contributions to community amenities are well in excess of the minimum contribution requirement.

EDMONTON DESIGN COMMITTEE (EDC)

The EDC reviewed this application on October 2, 2018 and provided support with the following condition in relation to the text of the DC2 Provision:

- Ensure stepbacks identified in the DC2 text more closely align with those illustrated in the Appendices. The Committee recommends a minimum 3.0 m stepback where the tower structures interface the podium, as shown in the Appendices.

The DC2 requires the tower portions step back at least 3.0 m from the podium adjacent to the public road rights-of way. This has been clarified in the appendices attached to the DC2 Provision.

TECHNICAL REVIEW

All comments from affected City Departments and utility agencies have been addressed.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments were provided as part of this application and indicated concentrations of contaminants in certain areas of the site. As a result, an Environmental Risk Remediation Management Plan is required to be submitted at the

Development Permit stage, with further conditions potentially being imposed at this stage to ensure the site is suitable for the full range of uses.

PARKING, LOADING AND VEHICULAR ACCESS

A Traffic Impact Assessment for the application noted the strong multi-modal nature of this area of Queen Alexandra, including ready access to transit, protected bicycle routes, and a strong pedestrian network. Accordingly, there is an anticipated reduced vehicular impact from this proposal. The development includes improvements to further shift travel modes by improving the public realm on 81 Avenue NW, 105 Street NW and 80 Avenue NW, including a new pedestrian crossing of 80 Avenue NW. The provision of secure bicycle parking at a rate higher than the Zoning Bylaw, further facilitates this modal shift. Pedestrian crossings at the intersection of 105 Street NW and 81 Avenue NW will also be reviewed and improved as part of the first stage of development.

Vehicular access is provided from the existing east-west and north-south lanes, which will be improved as part of the development. A vehicle drop-off zone will be provided within the east-west lane, within the area that bisects each half of the mid-block walkway.

On-site parking for residential uses are provided as per the applicable rates in the Zoning Bylaw. In addition to the required on-site parking stalls for residential uses, 150 parking stalls for public use are also provided. No on-site parking is required for commercial uses. A minimum of 250 secure bicycle spaces for residents, and an additional 20 short-term spaces for visitors will be provided at ground level for easy access.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

<p>PRE-APPLICATION NOTICE April 23, 2018</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of recipients: 363 As reported by the applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of responses with request for more information: 3 ● No other responses
<p>ADVANCE NOTICE August 15, 2018</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of recipients: 364 ● Number of responses with concerns: 1
<p>PUBLIC MEETING October 9, 2018</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of attendees: 13 ● Three feedback forms and two emails were received with comments in addition to the comments on the "Graffiti Wall"
<p>WEBPAGE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● edmonton.ca/queenalexandra

General concerns heard through the rezoning process, notably from the drop-in engagement session, were around design, tower heights and community amenity contributions. Conversely, others expressed support for the design related elements. More information about the feedback received is found in the "What We Heard" Public Engagement Report attached as Appendix 1.

City Planning also received a letter from the Old Strathcona Business Association (OSBA) who provided supportive comments for the following elements of the project:

- the redevelopment of a surface parking lot with additional density for the area;
- the exterior materials and overall design being complementary to the historic nature of the area; and
- the public realm improvements and underground parking.

However, the OSBA also noted strong concern for the proposed heights of two of the three towers not conforming to the suggested planWhyte height limit of 50 metres.

CONCLUSION

City Planning recommends that City Council **APPROVE** this application.

APPENDICES

- 1 "What We Heard" Public Engagement Report
- 2 Sun Shadow Study
- 3 Application Summary