

Planning Handbook

CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

CHIRP!
CHIRP!

THE NEW
CROSSWALK MADE
IT SO MUCH EASIER
TO GET HERE.

IT'S SO NICE WE
GET TO MEET
HERE.

I AM GLAD I CAN
TAKE THE BUS TO MY
NEW JOB.

IT'S GREAT I
CAN BIKE TO
SCHOOL NOW.

VROOM...



CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

**PLANNING
& DEVELOPMENT**

Acknowledgement

The City of Fort Saskatchewan resides on Treaty 6 territory and Métis Nation of Alberta; the ancestral and traditional territory of the Nehiyawak, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, and Métis. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples whose footsteps have marked these lands for generations. Our recognition of this land is an expression of our gratitude to those whose territory we reside on, or are visiting.

The legislation, plans, policies, regulations, and procedures outlined in this document are representative of the current legal framework of the Province of Alberta. The intent of this document is to provide a general understanding of the current land development process in Alberta and of the planning profession. We recognize that this does not encompass the traditional knowledge held by Indigenous Peoples in Treaty 6 territory or the ways in which land was shared, cared for, and managed in the many hundreds of years before the implementation of the current provincial policies.

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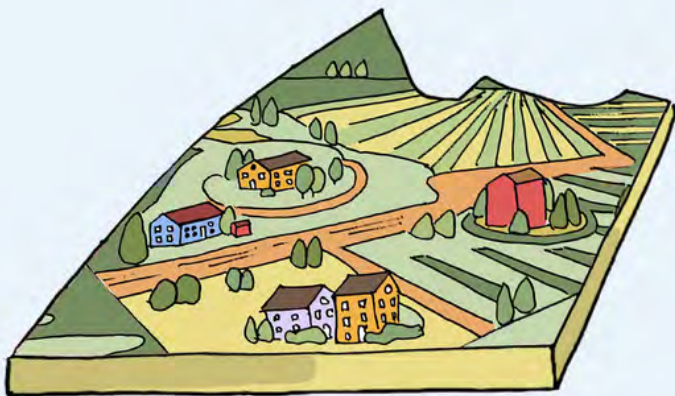
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Story of a Piece of Land's Development

This will take the reader through the process of land in Alberta going from either its natural or settled agricultural state through the urban development process. Land development is regulated by both the Province and the local municipality or other local jurisdiction. This story will cover the legislation, plans, policies, and bylaws, relevant to the land development process. Each right side page has additional information on the topics covered within the story that will proceed on the left side.



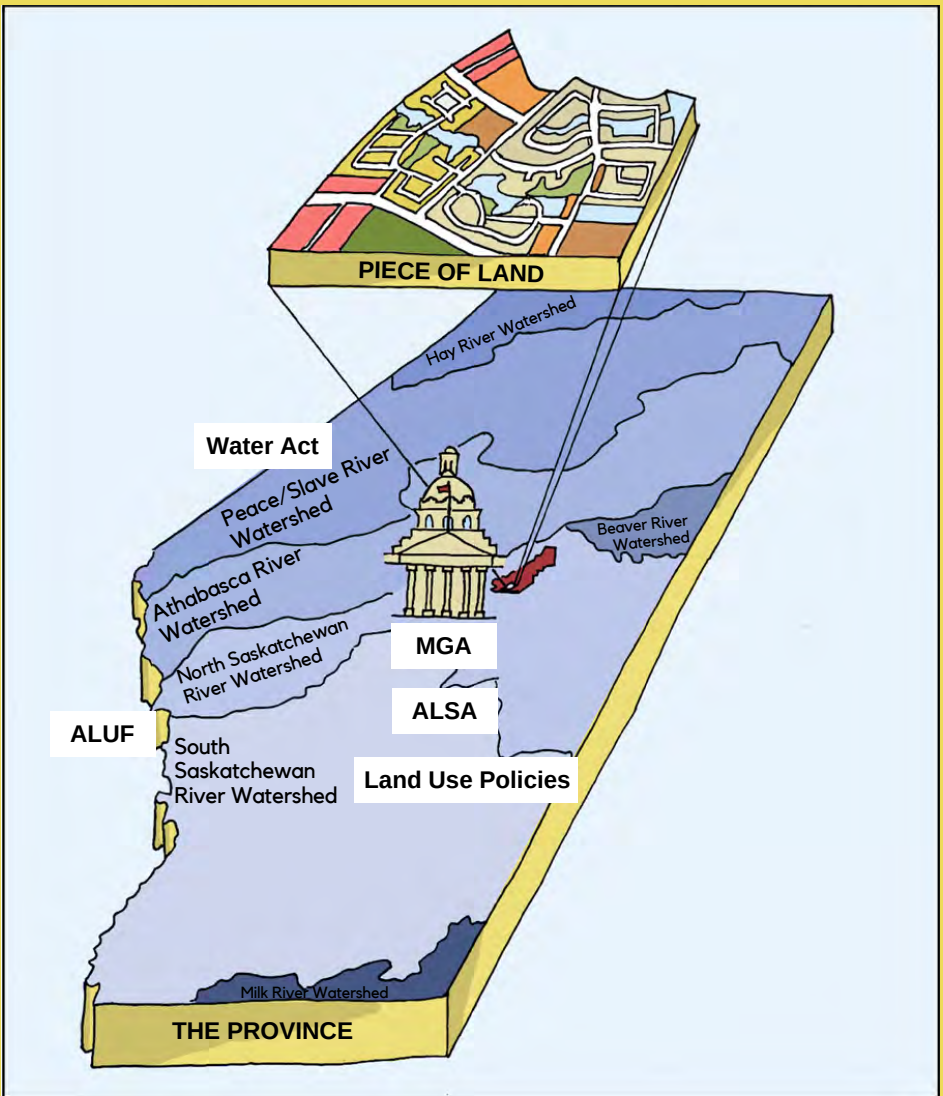
READ PAGES WITH **YELLOW MARGIN** TO
FOLLOW THE STORYLINE



READ PAGES WITH **GREEN MARGIN** TO
REFERENCE AND UNDERSTAND IN DETAIL

1.1 THE PROVINCE

I am a piece of land in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. The Province has a variety of tools that tell municipalities what can be done on me and how it can be done. The Province gives the City of Fort Saskatchewan the authority to regulate what happens on me. The authority to regulate land comes with obligations and responsibilities.



REFERENCES

Municipal Government Act (MGA) – This Act says what municipalities can and cannot do as well as what they have to do. It sets the requirements for how planning is done, the process for how land can be split into smaller parcels, and the process for development on land. This is where my City gets its authority over what happens on land.

Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ALSA) – This is how the Province protects my natural features and tries to manage them responsibly.

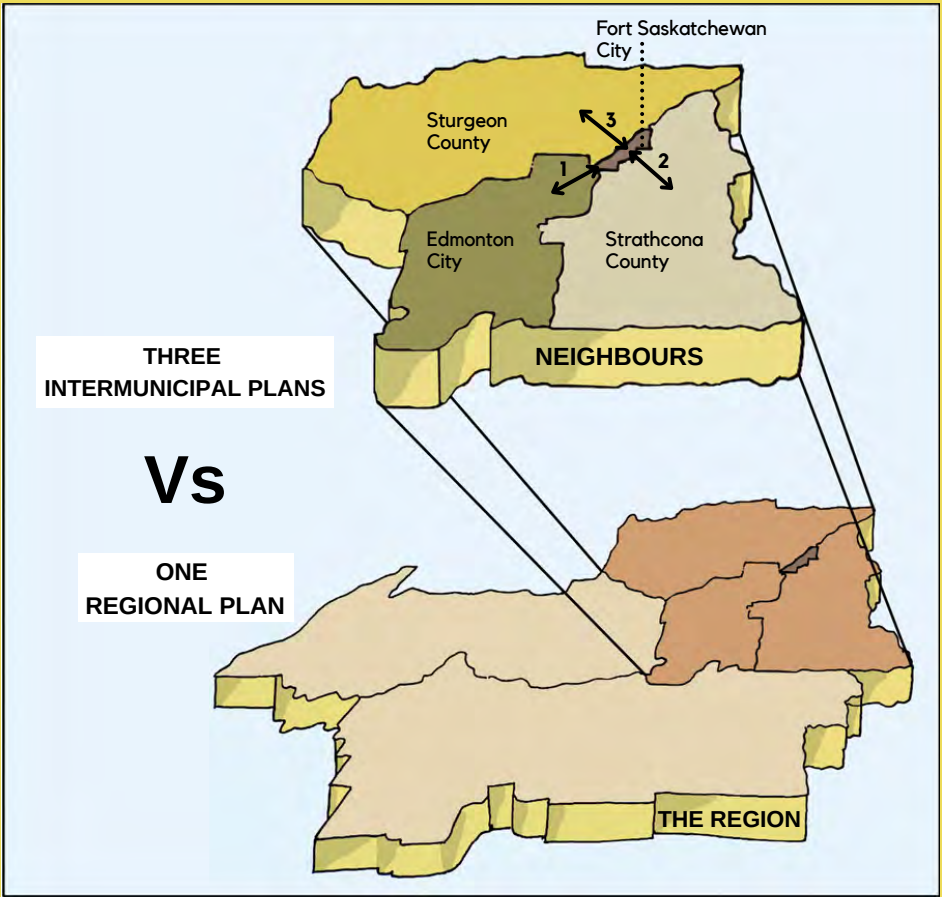
Alberta Land Use Framework (ALUF) – This is how the Province gives direction for the 7 watersheds in the province. We're all connected together when we share the same water. Someone doing something in another City or County could impact the water that flows over and under me. I fall under North Saskatchewan regional planning, the Province is currently developing this Plan.

Water Act – As its name suggests this Act regulates all water resources within the province. It addresses any activities that might impact water flows, wetlands or aquatic environment.

Land Use Policies – These high-level policies set out by the Province are intended to help municipalities align their planning policy with Provincial direction. They cover: the planning process, intermunicipal cooperation, land use patterns, the natural environment, resource conservation, transportation, residential development.

1.2 THE REGION

There are plans my city has to follow and plans they have to create to guide the long-term decisions made about what happens on me. In the middle, there are **Intermunicipal Development Plans**, Plans every municipality has to make with their neighbours to ensure their growth is compatible, responsible, and efficient. Instead of making many different plans with each neighbour, the municipalities in my region came together to form a **Growth Management Board**, the **Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board**, and make the plans together. This means that instead of every municipality having a separate plan with every neighbour, we have the **Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan**. Coming together means we can look at other challenges together too like protecting agriculture and coordinating infrastructure. Everyone looks for opportunities where they can be stronger and more efficient by working together.



REFERENCES

Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board (EMRB) -

13 municipalities in my region came together as a Growth Management Board. As a Growth Management Board, they can efficiently fulfill their obligations of inter-municipal planning under one plan instead of many and resolve other regional issues of their choice together to grow efficiently, sustainably, and competitively.

Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan

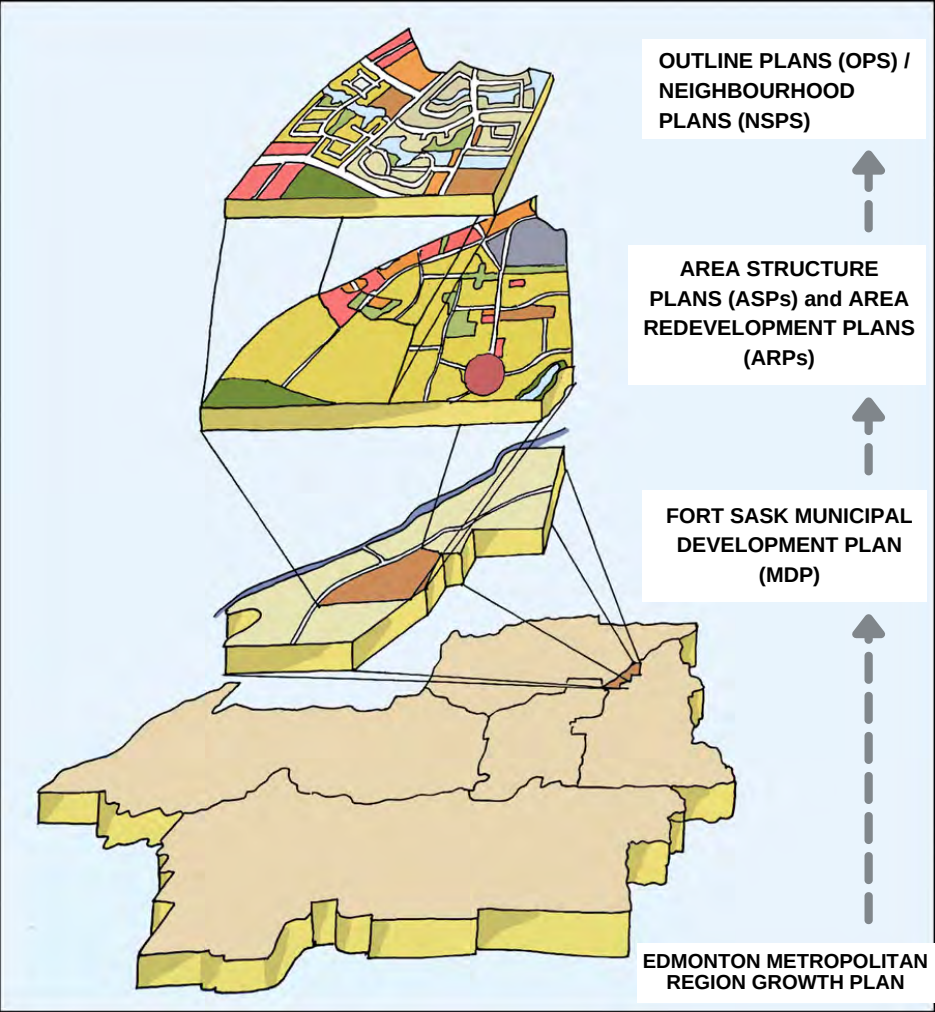
(EMRGP) – a Plan that says how we can all grow responsibly and achieve more together. The plan is approved by the Province and an example of a regional plan my City has to follow. It addresses things that are important to the region so it is sustainable and competitive. This included pieces of infrastructure, like highways, pipelines or airports, major natural areas, and employment areas that are significant to the whole region.

Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs) -

Municipalities that are not part of a Growth Management Board have to create these plans together with their neighbours to coordinate future land uses, future development, transportation systems and environmental issues. They also have to look at coordinating their social and economic development programming.

1.3 THE CITY

My City creates plans on its own starting by looking at the entire City and general concepts in the **Municipal Development Plan**. Further, plans get more detailed and focus on more specific areas of land. My City makes its plans with the goal of improving the quality of life for all residents and pursuing the greater public interest in future decisions. To create plans the City does research, completes studies, and talks to people that live on me, and around me. All the plans are aligned so the Plan for my neighbourhood helps fulfill the goals of the plan for my city that help fulfill the goals of my region.



REFERENCES

Municipal Development Plan (MDP) – This is a plan every Municipality has to make. It is where the City captures how residents want to see their community in the future. Based on resident input, community data, local context and emerging trends it gives direction on how to grow into the desired future.

Area Structure Plans (ASPs) – This is where the vision for the neighbourhood I will become is set. What kind of neighbourhood will I be? Where will my main streets be? Where will people go to work? Where will kids go to school? Where are the tall buildings? Where are the small buildings? How will people get water to their homes? Where will the water go when it rains? If the City does not get this right, the people living on me may have flooding; various nuisances or residents may end up paying for more pipes and roads than necessary.

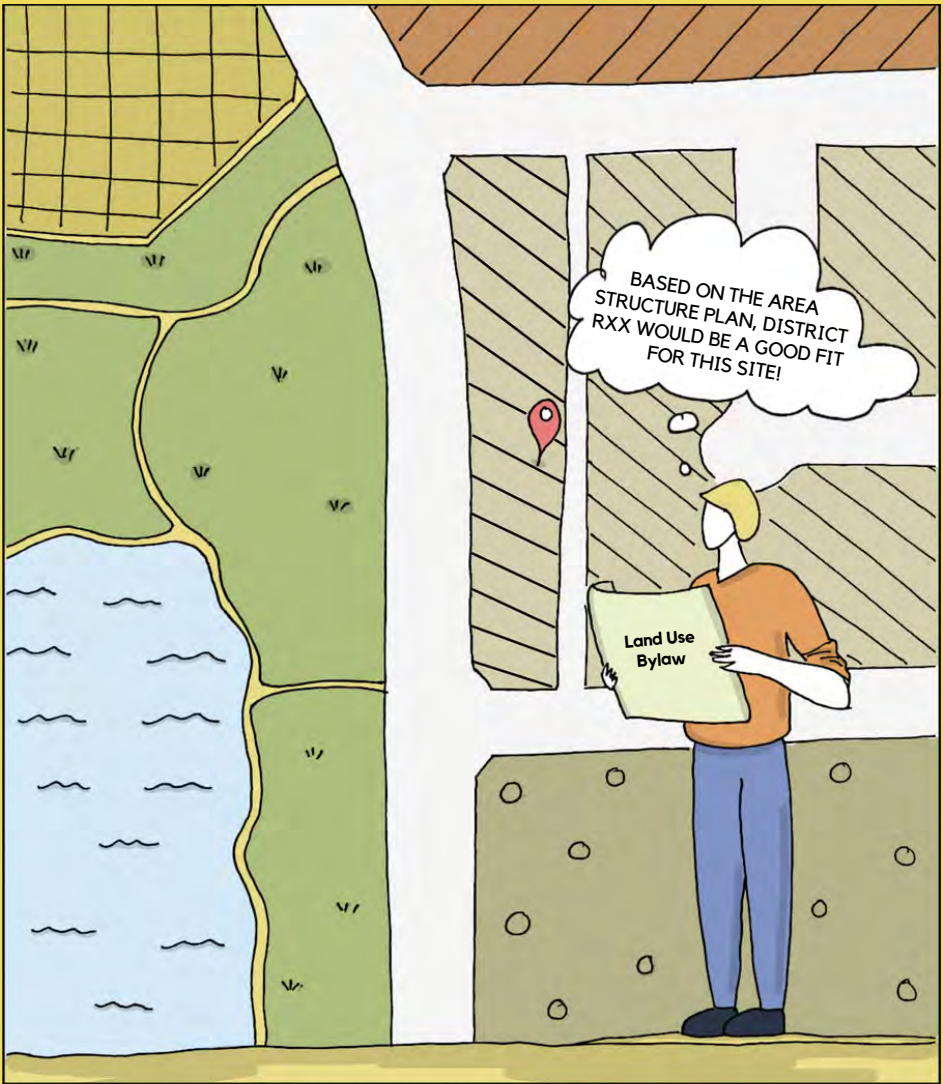
Outline Plans (OPs) / Neighbourhood Structure Plans (NSPs) – These provide more detailed locations than the ASP, this is where local roads and the locations of blocks, parks, school sites and more are identified. The general image laid out in the ASP becomes clearer at this level.

Statutory Plans - MDP, ASP, ARP and NSPs are statutory plans, which means they are adopted by bylaw and are approved by Council. Amendments to these plans require Council approval and Public Hearing needs to be held.

Non-Statutory Plans – These are plans for specific areas of interest, such as what we should do in an emergency, what kind of recreation or cultural facilities we should have, what kind of businesses we should try to attract, or what kinds of things should be in different kinds of parks.

1.4 DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS

Now that the City has approved all of the plans that guide development on me. The people that own different parts of me would like to start developing. After checking the Area Structure Plan, landowners now know what type of use is supposed to be on their parcel. The next thing they need to do is check the **Land Use Bylaw**. That is where they will find different districts that fit the ASP, and regulates development on me.



REFERENCES

Land Use Bylaw (LUB) – This is where the most detailed regulation of development exists. It is a rule book of what can or cannot be done on a parcel of land. It typically has a series of different land use districts and each parcel is assigned a district. Districts set out how the land can be used and what types of buildings can be built. The goal is to make sure all of my lots can get along with their neighbours, have the services they need, and support the goals of the community. Amendment to the Land Use Bylaw requires Council approval and Public Hearing must be held.



DID YOU KNOW?

Most Land Use Bylaws in Alberta use 'Euclidian' zoning; this is where development is regulated by the use of the property. There are many approaches to zoning including 'Form-based zoning', 'Performance-based zoning', 'Intensity-based zoning', 'Contextual zoning' etc. Land use bylaws can employ one approach or a combination of approaches to best fit the desired development outcomes.

1.5 INITIATING THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Now the owner needs to apply for a district that fits in with the Plan. This is called a **redistricting** application. The owner will select a district from the Land Use Bylaw. The City's Planners will analyze how well the district fits the location and whether it aligns with the area Plans. With the analysis from the Planners, Council will decide whether to approve the district. Now the parcel has a district and the owner knows how it can be subdivided and developed.



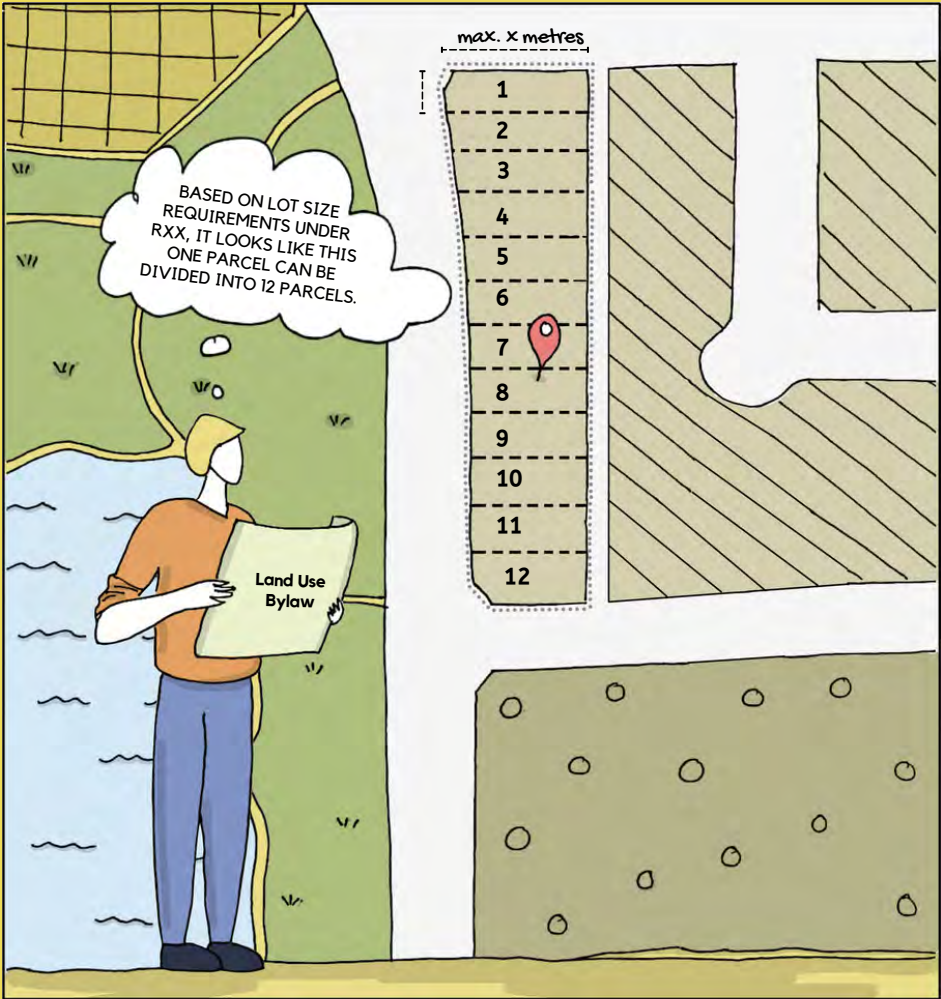
REDISTRICTING

Redistricting, also known as rezoning is the most common type of Land Use Bylaw amendment. Sometimes an owner wants to develop something different than their land use district allows. To do so, they need to apply for a different district. Depending on how different the district they want is they may have to apply to amend area plans too. The bigger the change the more important it is to consider the decision carefully. The Planners give information to Council to help them decide if the new district or amendment is appropriate. Will my neighbours still get along and have the services they need? Does it fit the vision for my neighbourhood?



1.6 One Parcel becomes Many

A land-use district not only says how the land can be used and what can be built on it, but how big a piece of land has to be. **Subdivision** is the process of making one parcel of land into multiple parcels. Like land use districts, a property owner applies for a **subdivision**, but instead of Council, the **Subdivision Authority** makes this decision. A **Subdivision Authority** can be a City Council, but because these are more straightforward decisions, with their do's and don'ts spelt out in the land use district and provincial **subdivision regulations**, Council often delegates this authority.



REFERENCES

Subdivision and Development Regulations – provide more detail on subdivision application processes. The regulations itemize what subdivision applications must contain, where subdivision applications must be referred to, the timelines for a decision on subdivision applications and what must be considered when making a decision on subdivision applications.

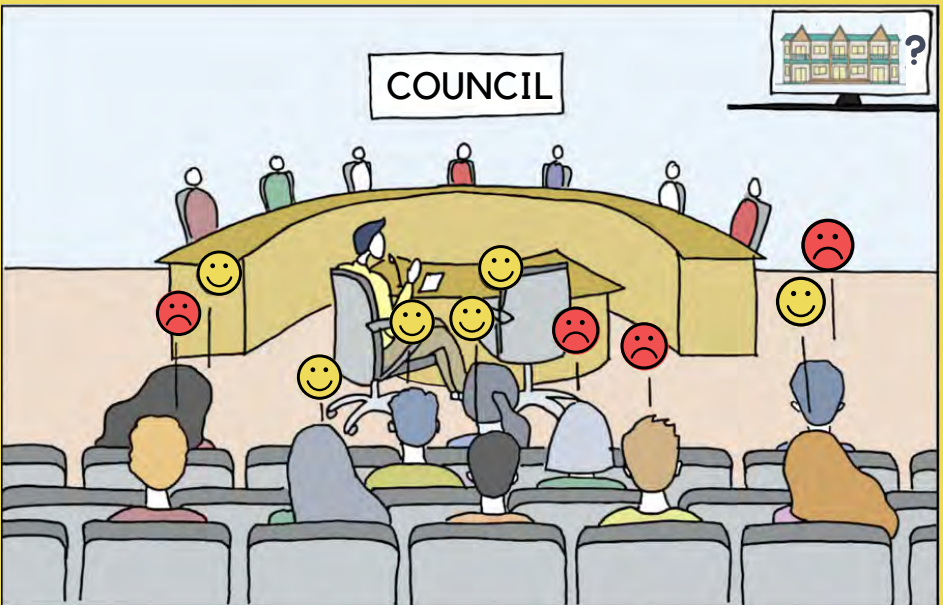
Subdivision Authority – makes subdivision decisions. In Fort Saskatchewan, Council has delegated this authority to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The CAO has further delegated this authority to the Director of Planning and Development. The Planning and Development Department receives subdivision applications and approves subdivisions through subdivision agreements.

DID YOU KNOW?

The City posts notice of its public engagements, including public hearings for redistricting applications, statutory plan adoptions or amendments on the 'public engagement' page of the website at www.fortsask.ca/publicengagement. Public hearings are advertised in the paper by law for 2 weeks in advance and in some cases notice is mailed to surrounding property owners. Public Hearings occur during Council meetings where members of the public can come speak to Council directly about a specific bylaw before them. Public hearings happen late in the process, they are like the final public engagement. The City does different public engagements early and throughout developing plans and policies. These include workshops and surveys that are used to build the plans and policies of the City. Sometimes these are specific to a project and other times they are general so they can inform a variety of projects.

1.7 EVERYONE HAS A SAY

I was planned to create efficiency and minimize negative impacts. Sometimes neighbouring owners like the idea of a change and sometimes they think it will have negative impacts. This is why my City has processes to make sure everyone has an opportunity to be heard. The process is open and consistent so that even if not all my residents like the outcome, they all get the same opportunity to be heard..



REFERENCES

Public Hearing: When Council is considering a planning decision, people can come to tell Council what they think. Planners will present their analysis, if it's an application the applicant will present their case, and if they like any member of the public can tell Council what they think. The public has this opportunity when plans and bylaws are originally adopted and if changes are proposed. When the land use district of a specific parcel is being changed, the neighbours are notified, and they can tell Council if and how they think this change would impact them. This can help Council in making their decision.

Subdivision and Development Appeals: If someone thinks a decision made about land is wrong, like an incorrect subdivision or an approved development that doesn't fit the land use district, and it will negatively impact them they can appeal that decision. Subdivisions and development permit decisions do not have public hearings so instead, they have an appeal process.

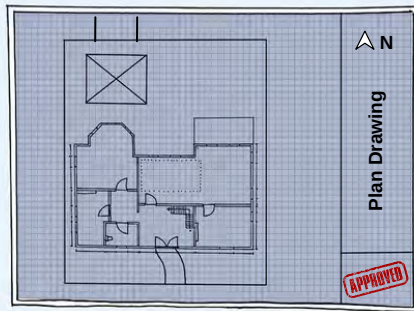
Subdivision and Development Appeal Board: Appeals go to the SDAB, a group of people separate from the Council and Administration. They must be fair with specific criteria for their decisions. They cannot just decide they do or do not like the decision, they have to determine if it was correct and fair. Whoever appealed a decision must show the SDAB why the decision was incorrect based on the Plans of the City, Acts of the Province, or because of a negative impact, it will have. If someone opposes the decision of the SDAB the next step is Court.

Land and Property Rights Tribunal: A quasi-judicial provincial body. Subdivision and development appeals go to the tribunal instead of the SDAB when there is a provincial interest involved. Provincial interests include things like bodies of water, highways, and waste facilities.

1.8 TIME TO BUILD

Now that all the Redistricting and Subdivision applications are approved by the City, my owners would like to start building on me. First, they'll need a **development permit**, so the City can make sure their specific development fits. Then they'll need a **Building Permit** so the City can make sure the structure will be safe. If someone does not get these permits or does not follow them, they may receive a **Stop Order**.

Development Permits



Building Permits



Stop Order



REFERENCES

Development Permits: When someone wants to develop something they need to get a development permit. The City has done the background work of making sure there is access and services for what is supposed to be built. Permits are how the City makes sure what someone wants to build or how they want to use land or a building meets the criteria of the Land Use Bylaw, City Plans and Standards. The City may require adjacent landowners to be notified by mail if the proposed development is considered discretionary or it occurs in a Direct Control District.

Development Authority: The development authority issues development permits in accordance with the Land Use Bylaw. In Fort Saskatchewan Council has delegated this authority to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The CAO has further delegated this authority to the Director of Planning and Development. The Planning and Development Departments receive development applications and issues development permits with the conditions for development.

Building Permits: After the City makes sure that what someone wants to build is okay, they have to make sure that how they build it is safe. They do that by making sure it follows the Safety Codes Act and Building Code. This is one way the City helps make sure the people that live on me are safe.

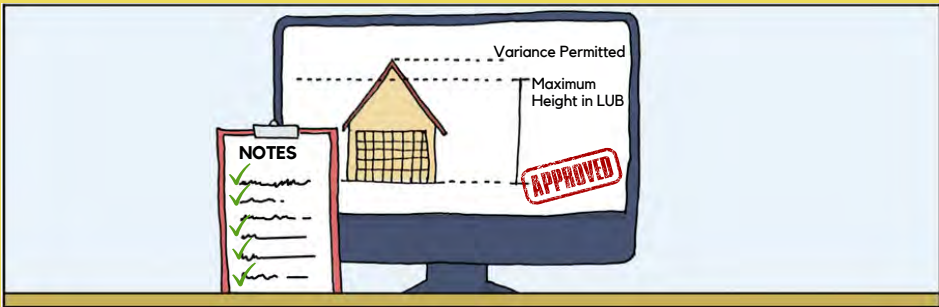
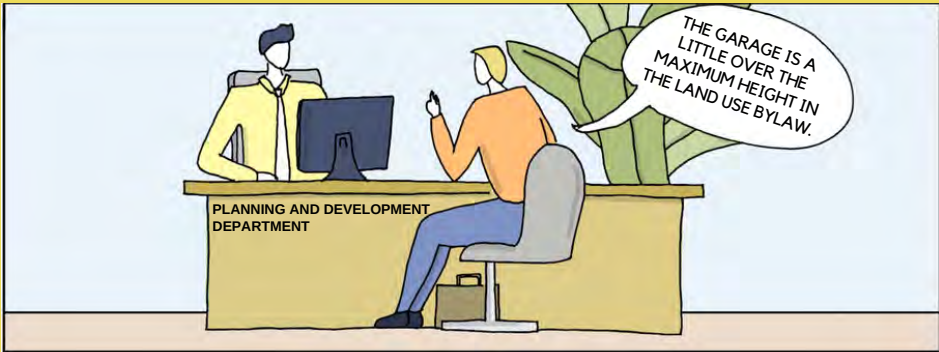
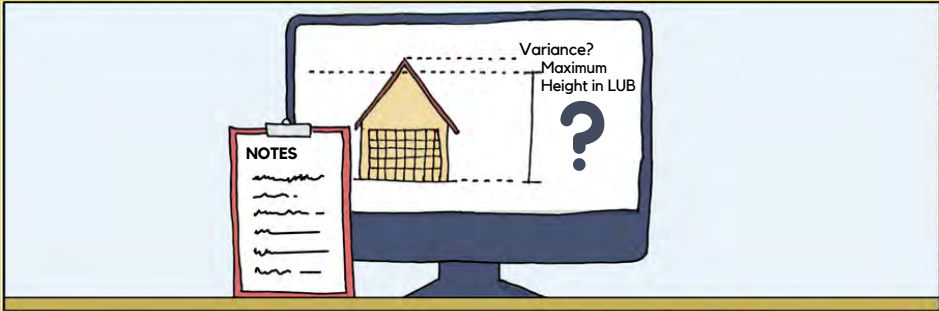
Stop Orders: If someone doesn't get a permit, tries to build something they are not supposed to, build something different than was approved, or use a property in an unapproved way the City can tell them to stop, undo what they have done, and or pay fines.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Safety Codes Act says how buildings can be constructed to ensure their plumbing, electrical, heating, and sewage systems are safe. It sets standards for various aspects of buildings so they are structurally sound, functional, and fire safe. It also regulates how buildings are permitted and inspected in Alberta. The City employs Safety Codes Officers who ensure development is consistent with the Act

VARIANCE

Sometimes landowners want to develop something that is different from what is currently allowed. If the owner of one of my lots wants to do something different than the Land Use Bylaw would allow, they can ask the City. If it is only a little bit different and they provide a reasonable rationale, they might get a **variance**. A **variance** is the City saying they are close enough that the difference will not change the outcome and will not have any negative impact on others. Variances are not ideal but every application is unique and cannot be perfectly predicted by the Land Use Bylaw. This way the Development Authority has the discretion to adapt to the unique needs of a specific application.



REFERENCES

Variance: a variance is something that can be granted to a development that relaxes, 'varies', or waives, a land use regulation. These are typically small differences, often a matter of centimeters not metres. They can only apply to the building size, shape, or placement, not what it is used for.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Land Use Bylaw limits how much its regulations can be varied. The Development Authority uses its discretion to approve variances, but they cannot approve any variance that exceeds the pre-set limit. Many factors are taken into consideration when making a variance decision. Once granted, the City notifies adjacent landowners/affected parties, and they can choose to appeal the decision to the SDAB.

1.9 THE FUTURE

I am a functional place for people to live, work, and play. Unlike me, the buildings and infrastructure on me will not last forever. The change is slow, but always happening. Some of my residents leave and new ones arrive, some of them update their buildings and others do not. As the people living on me change and the infrastructure ages, the needs and priorities of my community can change too. When enough change has taken place, the City needs to plan for my next lifecycle to help me adapt to a new world.



REFERENCES

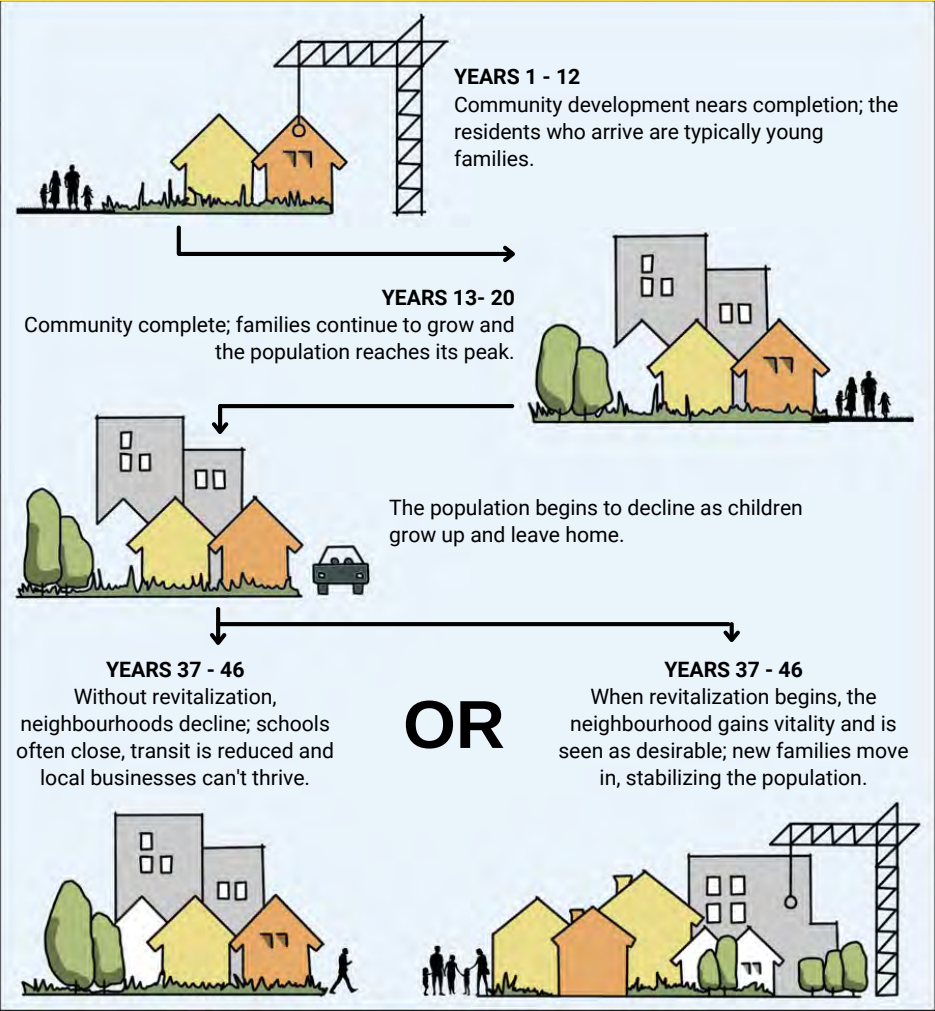
Area Redevelopment Plans/ARP: The new vision for my neighbourhood is set here. It is a little more complicated than the first time when my ASP was made. There are many more buildings and people already on me. My City will talk with my residents and look at all the available data. What do they need or want now that I didn't have originally? What has changed in the world since my buildings were built? What have I lost or gained over time? Am I still efficient in this future world? I know plots of land that developed before their residents had electricity and others that developed before the internet. The only thing we know for certain is that the future will bring change.

DID YOU KNOW?

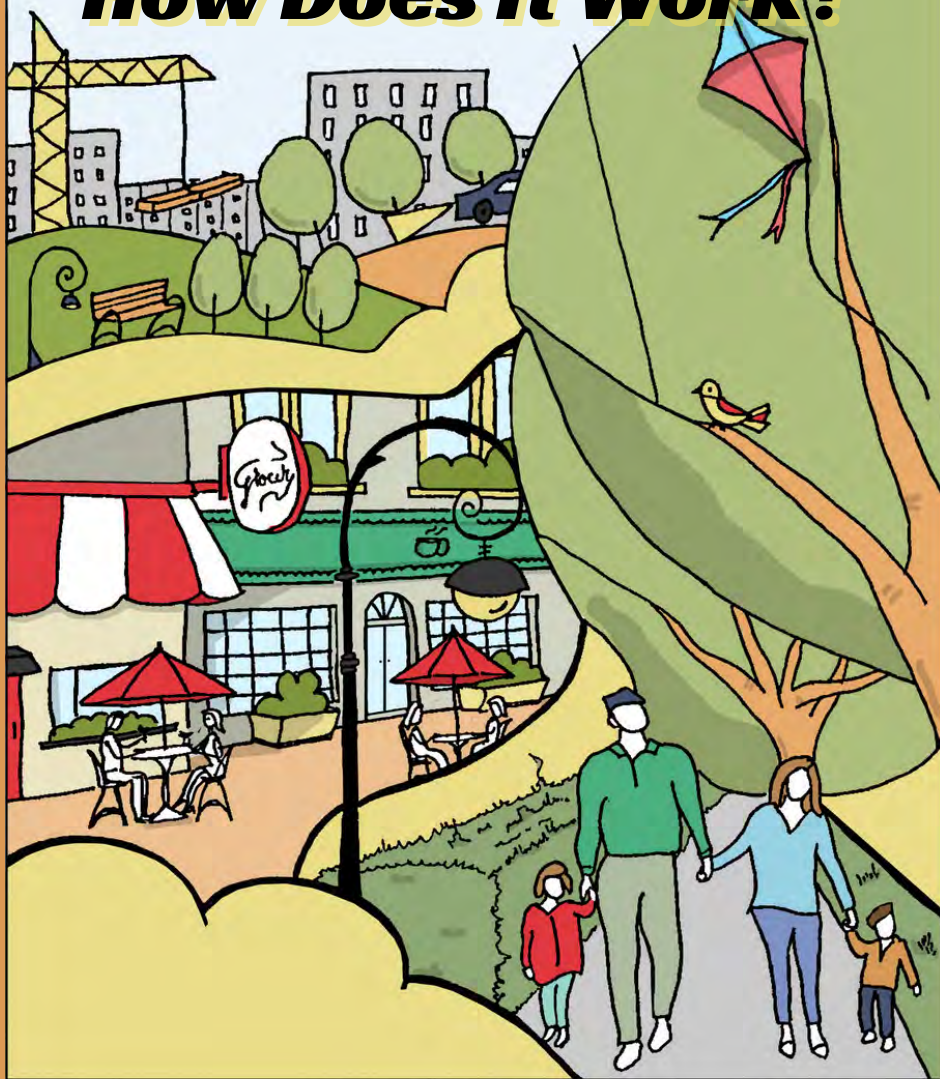
Planning is a regulated profession. Registered Professional Planners obtain their credentials through education and examination, and are obligated to act in the public interest under the Professional and Occupational Associations Registration Act. For more information on the planning profession in Alberta visit albertaplanners.com/

1.10 LIFECYCLE OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD

Many people don't realize that neighbourhoods have a lifecycle because the change is slow, occurring gradually over many years. Sometimes people don't notice because they may not live in the same neighbourhood long enough to see it. Sometimes they don't notice the **neighbourhood lifecycle** because it aligns with changes in their own life over time. The exact length of time between different steps can vary depending on how fast or slow a neighbourhood develops but the general patterns hold true across communities.

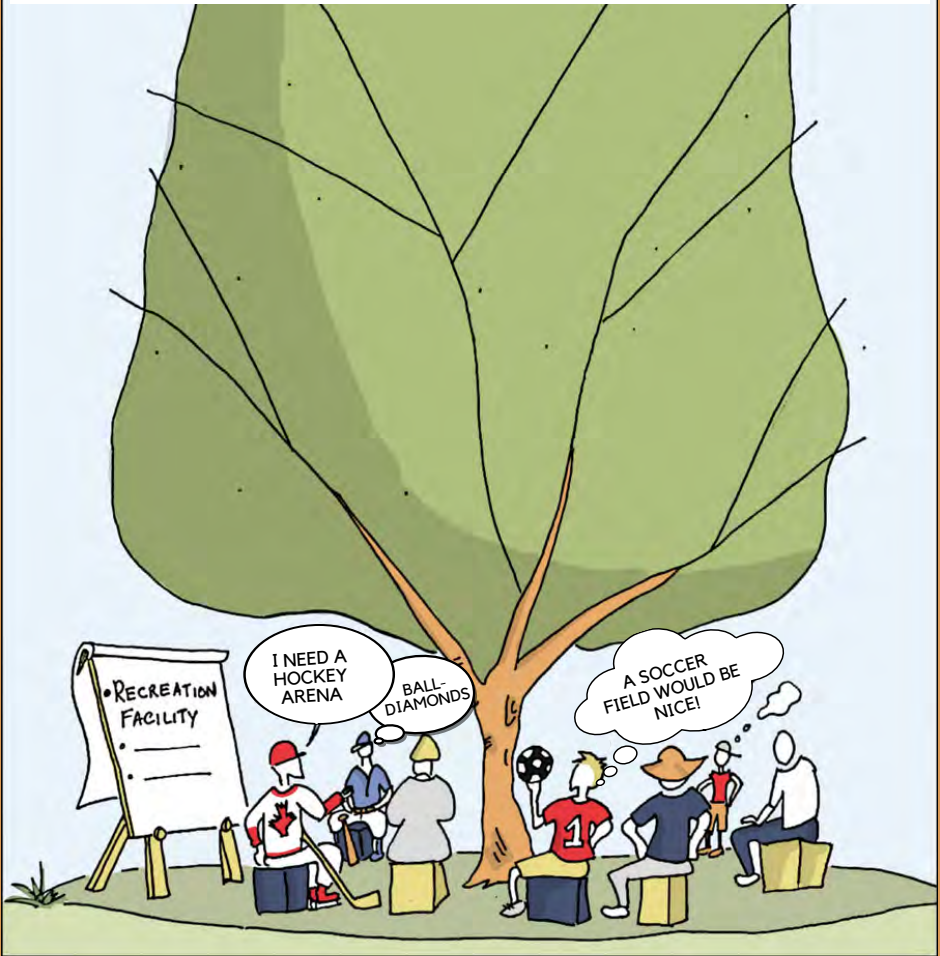


Planning: How Does It Work?



2.1 WHAT IS PLANNING?

Planning is how we prepare our communities to be successful in the future. This means analyzing a broad range of factors impacting the organization of the physical environment with the focus of improving the quality of life for those who live, work, and play in the community today and in the future. It is the process of regulating land use and development to balance individual property rights and interests with the overarching public good. Our communities are made of many individual landowners and many special interests as well as many shared and collective interests.



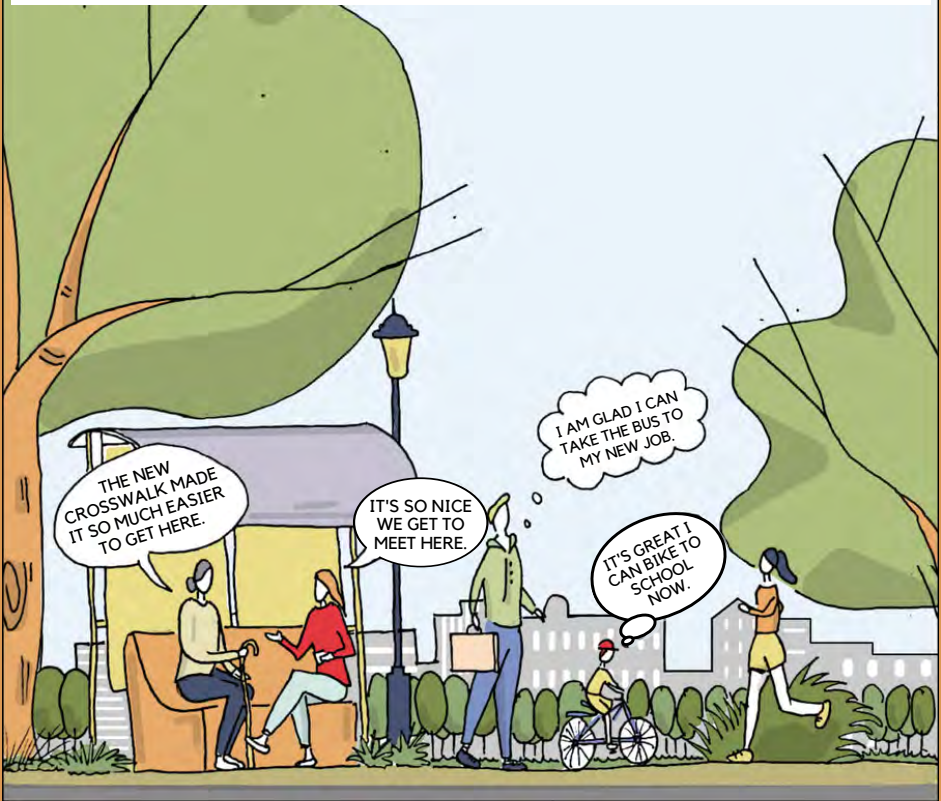
2.2 IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENTS

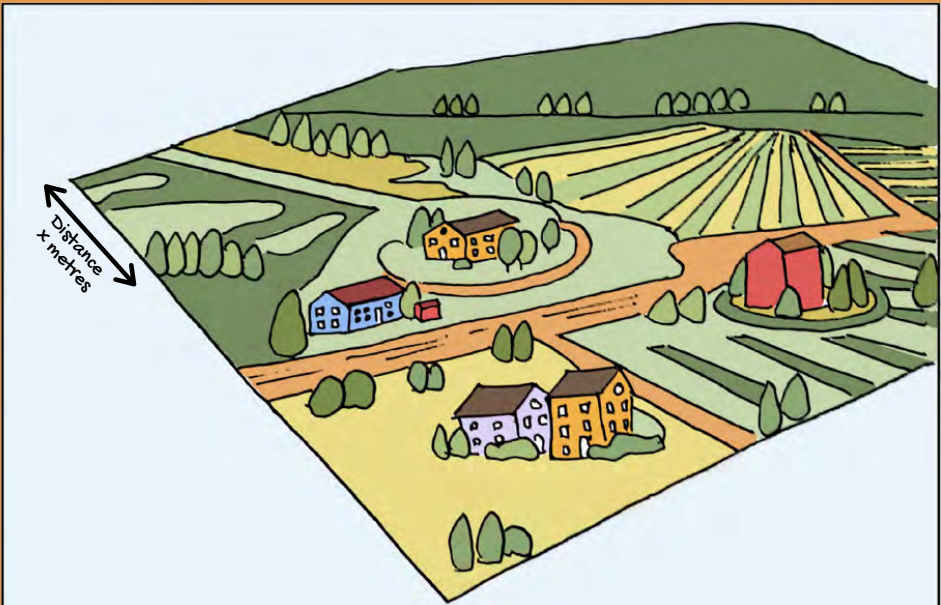
The impacts of development on air and water quality, noise, smells, waste, taxes, and more are not confined to a single property. Ensuring compatible developments occur near one another and have appropriate transitions from incompatible developments helps ensure everyone can enjoy their property to the greatest extent possible. For example, road systems are a public good that enables access to private properties. The compatibility of roads and land use impacts the function of both. This is why we do not see home driveways fronting the Highways and why we do not have large factories beside apartment buildings.



2.3 SHAPING THE WORLD AROUND US

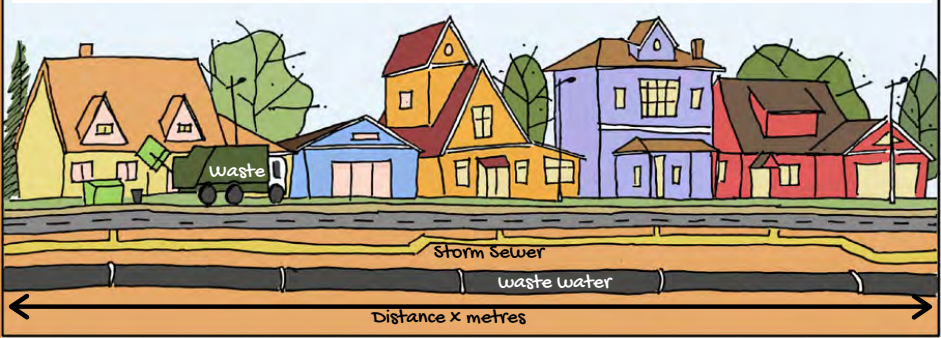
Our surroundings have two components, manmade and natural. Buildings, roads, sports fields, and parks are manmade features whereas the river valley, creeks, swamps, and tree stands are natural areas. Both have impacts on our behaviour and how we feel. For example, studies find access to natural features reduces our levels of stress. Our built environment impacts many aspects of our behaviour throughout our lifetimes. It shapes how easily we can access different things in our community like types of recreation, services, and opportunities. It shapes how conveniently children, adults, older adults, and people with mobility challenges can navigate our community. It impacts how safe we feel and how effectively emergency services can be delivered. It also shapes the tax base which in turn provides municipal services, maintains and replaces infrastructure. It also shapes how resilient our infrastructure is, how efficient it is and in turn how efficient service delivery can be.





2.4 LOCATION MATTERS

In cities, there are typically more services provided, services that cannot be reasonably supported in a rural community. The distance between residences in a city means services like waste pick up can be delivered. In rural areas where residences are far apart the taxes/fees needed to provide these services would be too burdensome. It also requires different rules. In a city, burning waste would negatively impact many neighbours, whereas it might be acceptable in a rural community. This is a simple example of how development patterns shape service levels and regulation. What works in one area may not be suitable for another.



2.5 LONG-TERM THINKING

Decisions about the build and natural environments are important. They have a broad range of impacts that can persist for generations. Development decisions are in many cases the longest-term decisions that local governments make. Houses often outlive their initial residents and street networks, once established, rarely change at all. There are natural features that, if lost, cannot be reclaimed. There are also opportunities that are only available to, or within, a community if development occurs in specific and efficient patterns. A simple example of this idea is that if a neighbourhood is built without any parks, the people that live there will not have access to recreation space. Similarly, if it were built with only small parks, then certain types of recreation would be possible, while others would not.



2.6 PLANNERS AT WORK

Planning recommendations aim to balance the individual interests with the overarching public interest, fulfilling a community's aspirations through the application of planning principles. They are made through giving consideration to many diverse factors that inform what kinds of developments are suitable together, the diverse needs of residents, the legal implications, and the potential long term impacts of a decision. Recommendations are unique to each community because they reflect that community's unique character and desired future. The following steps are involved in review and decision making process of a development proposal.



Information Gathering



Planners ask questions like:
What are the legislative requirements?
What is the location and surrounding context?
What did previous Plans say on the topic?
What community priorities have public engagement identified?
What needs exist in the community?
Who will this impact and how?
What opportunities are created or lost?
What special interests are involved?
Are there similar situations that were successes or failures we can learn from?



Analysis



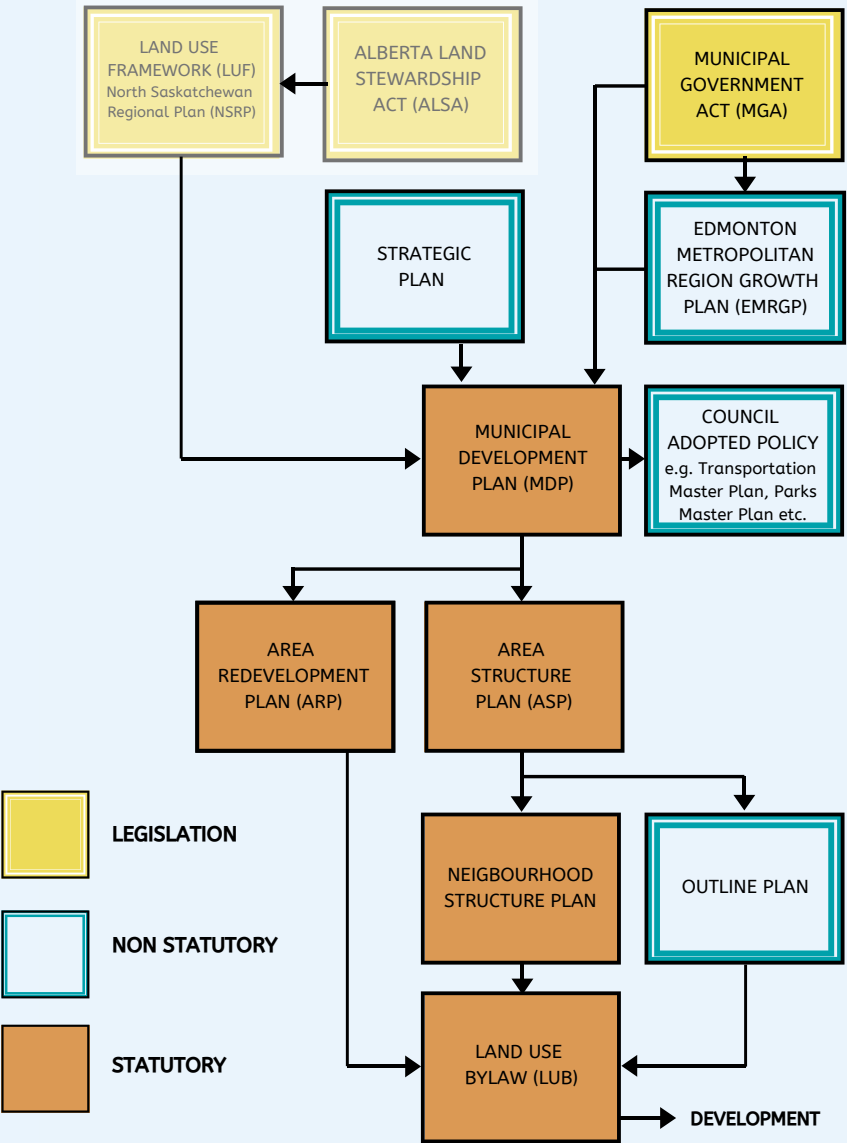
Once all the relevant information is collected, Planners seek to determine the best approach for each unique situation. This varies based on each community's needs and priorities, the features of each location, and its relationship to surrounding development.



Plan/Recommendation

Once all the information has been collected and analyzed based on the unique community context, Planners will provide their recommendation to decision-makers or present their recommended Plan.

2.7 THE HIERARCHY OF PLANS





CITY OF
FORT SASKATCHEWAN

fortsask.ca/planninghandbook