Strategic Planning Brief

Environment
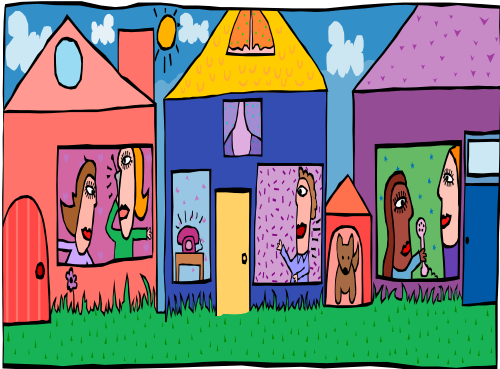
Economic Development

Governance

Social and Cultural

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March 2007

Context for Focus Area Discussion

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing is twofold: (1) identify a set of directional focus areas; and (2) identify priorities to support the whole organization, because a municipal corporation is more than the sum of its parts.

Background

In the past, directional documents and planning have not distinguished between operational issues, which stress continuity, and strategic issues, which emphasize change. As a result, there is a need to improve directional setting in an organized, rather than a piecemeal fashion, to begin the process of integrating the corporate strategic planning directions with Council for all the departments.

Our analysis *does not* present a change in direction, but instead clarifies and consolidates past Council decisions and departmental directional documents (e.g., Plan Edmonton, Building the Capital City etc.) distilling a set of directional priorities to support the planning and implementation efforts of the municipal corporation.

Approach

- Three *existing* sources were used: 74 directional plans, past council directional decisions, and public consultation findings. Each source data was analyzed to identify the focus areas and priorities in terms of its relevancy to each of the core dimensions: social and cultural, economic, environmental, and governance.

- Four key outcome areas, common in a number of local government models, were used to analyze the source data. Key outcome areas that support sustainability include the following: environment; social and cultural; economic; and governance.

- Each of the outcome areas – the environment; the social and cultural; economic; and governance are presented individually and broken down into four sections for easy review: (1) Focus Area; (s) Strategic issues, (3) Priorities and (4) Emerging issues/insights.

    o **Focus Area** is defined as being an area of strategic concentration the organization will use to manage a strategic priority. Out of necessity, Focus Areas are broad enough to represent the consensus of Council and ensures each department is able to *see* its role in contributing to it.

    o Strategic **Priorities** are aimed at addressing key **strategic issues** furthering the achievement of the focus area.

    o **Emerging Issues/Insights** are provided to provide a complete picture of what is happening or impacting the organization. This section reflects recent public consultations and discussions with City councilors. These emerging trends or insights may not be reflected as yet in planning documents or formally approved.

- To ensure that the identification of focus areas and priorities were accurate and comprehensive, the Corporate Business Planning team consulted with key staff from the various departments to gather their input, insights and feedback. Their commitment to this fast-track process and insights proved invaluable; many of their thoughts are incorporated into the final strategic brief.
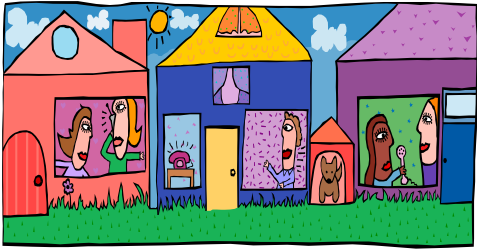
Environment

"Edmonton provides a quality environment through a healthy ecosystem, diverse communities, and balanced infrastructure management."

The City of Edmonton recognizes that a quality natural and built environment is the cornerstone in creating a successful city. Our approach toward the environment focuses on three areas:

Focus Areas:

1. Healthy Ecosystem;
2. Diverse Communities; and
3. Balanced Infrastructure Management

These focus areas are part of an integrated corporate framework that balances social and cultural, economic, environmental, and governance issues in decision-making. The actions associated with the City of Edmonton's other focus areas are supported and enhanced by the provision of a quality natural and built environment.

Each focus area in the framework is underpinned by a set of priorities that were developed to address key strategic issues. Below are the issues and priorities relative to each area of focus for ensuring a quality environment.

Strategic Issues:

1.0 Healthy Ecosystem

As part of the largest chemical and petrochemical-producing region in Canada, Edmonton has always faced challenges in providing citizens with a quality natural environment. The Kyoto Accord and other federal and provincial environmental requirements, combined with the City's new role as one of Canada's fastest growing municipalities, have created additional challenges. The City is under enormous pressure to house more people, move more people and goods, build new infrastructure, and accommodate greater use of existing infrastructure. Concentrating people in ever-larger urban settlements can cause considerable environmental disruption through pollution of air, land and water, consumption of limited resources, loss of natural habitat, and altered drainage patterns if not managed properly.

Through provincial legislation and their own bylaws and policies, municipal governments have considerable influence over the way natural resources are used and managed and communities are developed.

The City of Edmonton is a world-class 'green' leader and is pursuing an agenda—including investment in the Edmonton Waste Management Centre of Excellence, Edmonton's Waste Gasification Project, working with EPCOR on the proposed Centre of Excellence for Water Research, and the Carbon Dioxide Reduction Edmonton strategy—that will make it North America's most environmentally innovative city

Our priorities for ensuring our ecosystem continues to be healthy are:

Priorities:
- To minimize the impact of activities on our air, land, and water systems;
- To use our natural resources prudently; and
- To maintain biodiversity.

2.0 Diverse Communities

In cities around the world, there is a growing concern that traditional development patterns—dominated by ongoing growth on the urban perimeter—are not always in the long-term interest of the cities, existing suburbs, small towns and rural communities, or wilderness areas. Many communities question the economic sense of building new infrastructure in outlying areas rather than optimizing infrastructure existing in the core. As one of Canada's fastest growing cities, Edmonton has similar concerns. These concerns combined with rising house prices and the growing socio-economic diversity of its population has prompted the City to adopt new patterns of development.

The City of Edmonton is committed to developing healthy communities that offer citizens choices in housing, transportation, employment opportunities, shopping, and lifestyle amenities. Our priorities for ensuring we provide diverse communities are:

Priorities:
- To provide affordable housing and transportation;
- To encourage smart growth through transit oriented development, improved walkability, reinvestment in mature neighbourhoods, small scale and medium density residential infill, redevelopment of underutilized commercial and industrial lands, and improved planning and development consultation processes;
- To provide adequate land and infrastructure for residential and economic development; and
- To revitalize the downtown into an economic, social and cultural showpiece.

3.0 Balanced Infrastructure Management

Infrastructure is all the physical assets developed and used by the City to support the community's social, economic, and environmental activities. It includes roads, sewer lines, transit, emergency response vehicles, swimming pools, parks, waste management facilities, affordable housing, civic buildings, information technology and more.

The job of building and maintaining these infrastructure assets is becoming increasingly difficult. The majority of Edmonton's infrastructure is in the latter half of its life expectancy. Rapid growth has created significant demand for new infrastructure. Substantial inflationary increases in the construction sector have diminished purchasing

power. A substantial gap has developed between necessary infrastructure investment and available funding. These issues, along with other social and political factors, make infrastructure management a difficult task. Edmonton recognizes that it faces a delicate balancing act. It must maintain and replace existing infrastructure while dealing with increased demands to support growth.

The City of Edmonton is committed to handling its infrastructure assets in a manner that balances its needs to manage growth, encourage economic development, and protect public safety. Our priorities for ensuring our infrastructure is managed appropriately are:

Priorities:

- To balance available resources between rehabilitation and growth across four asset groups: transportation, environment and safety, social infrastructure, and corporate infrastructure; and
- To establish and increase funding for operations and maintenance, rehabilitation and replacement as new assets are added.

Emerging Issues/Insights: Recent Stakeholder Consultations

- *Integrated mobility* – develop a range of accessible, interconnected transportation options that promote the health of the environment as well as the health of individuals;
- *Healthy citizens* – support the health of individuals through the provision of community-level social activities, public safety, active recreation opportunities, access to green spaces, and the development of environments where walking, cycling and public transit are practical options;
- *Beauty* – preserve the beauty of Edmonton's river valley as a dominant and internationally notable characteristic of the city;
- *Environmental stewardship* – improve current practices through decisions that acknowledge our contribution to the global environment and the importance of the environment for future generations;
- *Quality* – set high standards for public and private development; and
- *Sustainability* – make decisions that focus on long-term viability.

Social and Cultural

"Edmonton promotes vibrant, inclusive and safe communities."

The City of Edmonton recognizes that vibrant, inclusive and safe communities are major contributors to the quality of community life. Creating a social atmosphere that is responsive to lifestyle preferences, diversity, and the needs of its residents, while providing a safe and secure environment, impacts both the attractiveness of our city and the well-being of our residents. Our approach toward social and cultural development focuses on three areas:

Focus Areas

1. Vibrant Communities;
2. Inclusive Communities; and
3. Safe Communities.

These focus areas are part of an integrated corporate framework that balances social and cultural, economic, environmental, and governance issues in decision-making. Actions associated with the City of Edmonton's other focus areas are supported and enhanced by promoting a quality social and cultural environment.

Each focus area in the framework is underpinned by a set of priorities that were developed to address key strategic issues. Below are the issues and priorities for ensuring a vibrant, inclusive, and safe environment.

Strategic Issues:

1.0 Vibrant Communities

An important social element of successful cities is providing focal points to bring people together. Areas can be designated and beautified to provide opportunities for social interaction, sports, entertainment, and arts and culture. Other features can include retail facilities, libraries, childcare, fitness and wellness facilities. Edmonton currently has vibrant communities. However, Edmonton is growing rapidly. As a "big city" Edmonton will need to ensure that opportunities for people to come together in new areas are provided along with maintaining the vibrancy that exists in mature neighbourhoods.

The City of Edmonton is committed to providing opportunities for vibrant and rich social interaction. Our priorities are:

Priorities:

- Facilitate the revitalization of neighbourhoods in need;
- Promote Edmonton as an arts and cultural center; and
- Encourage recreational, cultural, artistic, and entertainment opportunities for all residents.

2.0 Inclusive Communities

Edmonton recognizes that social fragmentation is a destructive force. Successful cities continually adjust their social architecture and programming to include all residents in community life. This means ensuring that people of all ages, ethnicity, gender, and income-level are able to meet their basic needs, have access to decent and affordable housing as well as opportunities to participate in the social, cultural, and recreational opportunities that the community has to offer. The City knows that certain segments of our population are not well-positioned to participate in all that Edmonton has to offer, and is working toward solutions. With the rapid influx of newcomers, inclusion continues to be an important area of focus.

The City of Edmonton is committed to fostering inclusive communities where residents are equally valued and respected. Our priorities are:

Priorities:
- Ensure accessible and culturally sensitive services;
- Continue to target programs and services to segments of the community; and
- Provide affordable housing and transportation.

3.0 Safe Communities

Edmonton promotes safe communities where residents feel a sense security, care about each other and respect each others' rights and differences. Safe communities ensure residents receive support in event of an emergency and provide a physical setting structured to reduce the dangers of crime. As Edmonton grows, the City will continue to build safe communities where residents feel secure and are confident that their emergency needs will be met.

The City of Edmonton is committed to developing and maintaining communities where residents feel safe and secure. Our priorities for ensuring community safety are:

Priorities:

- Promote physical environments where people of all ages can safely participate in normal daily activities;
- Facilitate community based partnerships to promote safety and security issues and encourage prevention;
- Continue to set standards for delivery of emergency services; and

- Continue to focus on community-based policing.

Emerging Issues/Insights: Recent Stakeholder Consultations

- *Healthy citizens* – support the health of individuals through the provision of community-level social activities, public safety, active recreation opportunities, access to green spaces, and the development of environments, where walking, cycling, and public transit are practical options.

Economic Development

"Edmonton secures a prosperous future through the development and maintenance of its economic vitality, diversity and sustainability"

The City of Edmonton recognizes that an economically successful city features widespread employment which generates the wealth that supports the overall standard of living and quality of life. Our approach to achieving this through Economic Development is focused in these two areas:

Focus Areas:

1. Build a business positive sustainable urban environment; and
2. Promote the urban environment to target business sectors and workers, while building the appropriate partnerships to succeed.

These focus areas are part of an integrated corporate framework that balances social and cultural, economic, environmental and governance issues in decision-making. The City of Edmonton's other focus areas rely on a strong economic foundation which will generate the wealth that enables all these efforts.

Each focus area in the framework is driven by a set of priorities that were developed to address strategic issues.

Strategic Issues

1.0 Build a Business Positive Sustainable Urban Environment

Edmonton recognizes that like all cities, it is in competition with other municipalities in attracting and retaining business. Competition is especially tight for knowledge-based businesses which require little infrastructure investment to generate wealth in the community. Edmonton must also manage growth pressures to maintain and enhance its competitive position.

Priorities
- Ensure Edmonton is able to:
    a. Compete favorably with other municipalities for site location
    b. Encourage population and workforce diversity, attraction and retention.
    c. Plan adequate service and infrastructure development, provision and maintenance
    d. Maintain a reserve of serviced land for economic use
- Expand and diversify the economic base through business and workforce attraction; and
- Maintain our advantages by managing the impact of growth.

2.0 Promote the urban environment to target business sectors and workers, building the appropriate partnerships to succeed.

Edmonton is committed to providing a quality urban environment that is attractive to and therefore retain workers as a choice community to live, work and thrive. By promoting this strength, Edmonton positions itself to attract diverse businesses including high-value knowledge-based industries to diversify and expand its economy.

Additionally, Edmonton as the home of several leading post-secondary institutions including a leading research university is capable of deploying the highly skilled and educated work force required by business. Many businesses while highly portable are dependent on a supply of qualified workers to both establish themselves and thrive, and therefore locate in areas where these workers choose to live.

The competitive environment requires that Edmonton market its advantages and strengths to targeted audiences both businesses and the types of workers required by them. Edmonton must also promote itself to key city-building and community partners, regional partners and other levels of government to build a competitive regional economy.

Priorities
- Promote and expand Edmonton's image as a smart and vibrant city with a young and educated workforce nationally and internationally;
- Build effective relationships with key city-building partners to develop a welcoming and compelling business environment;
- Partner with regional municipalities to build a stronger and more diverse regional economy; and
- Partner with provincial and federal governments, agencies and boards to make the necessary investments to capitalize in times of high growth and level out in slower economic conditions.

Emerging Issues/Insights: Recent Stakeholder Consultations

- *Integrated mobility* – develop a range of accessible, interconnected transportation options that promote the health of the environment as well as the health of individuals
- *Quality* – set high standards for public and private development
- *Sustainability* – make decisions that focus on long-term viability.

Governance

"Edmonton promotes effective governance structures and processes to achieve its economic, social, cultural and environmental success."

The City of Edmonton is the Capital City of the Province of Alberta and is Canada's fastest growing municipality. Given the size and significance of the City and today's environment, the issue of governance has taken on new importance and visibility. How power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders are involved in decision-making are all critical to have in place, as it is the quality of governance that ultimately determines a City's prosperity.

Our approach toward governance focuses on two areas; each focus area in the framework is underpinned by a set of priorities that were developed to address key strategic issues.

Focus Areas:

1. Capitalize on *regional growth and development* with neighboring municipalities; and
2. Build *organizational capacity* by promoting effective decision making and management.

Strategic Issues

Key strategic issues and priorities for governance effectives are as follows:

1.0 Capitalize on regional growth and development…

The absence of any regional planning structure is placing enormous pressures on the current structure of local government relationships in Alberta, but more importantly for the Capital City because of its unique geographic location. Surrounded by twenty-two municipalities, often with competing needs and priorities, Edmonton often finds itself dealing with differing land-use policies and fiscal inequity among the local governments. What is more, no systematic regional approach to sharing costs and revenue currently exists in the region.

To capitalize on the potential of the region, improvement in existing governance structures and processes are required to meet today's challenges. To address cross-regional issues and manage municipal relationship issues, regional governance structures require an effective mandate. Clear rules must be expressed to govern relationships.

Priorities

- Explore innovative regional governance framework to optimize the potential of the region;
- Advocate and influence policy and decision-making to promote good urban governance;
- Improve services by supporting the development of strong and effective regional services delivery mechanisms; and
- Build partnerships with all orders of government, as well as key City building partners to help address and mitigate the impact of modern municipal pressures (i.e. growth on Edmonton's residents).

2.0 Build Organizational Capacity…

Improving governance in municipalities is not just about reforming institutions and finance; it is also about changing attitudes and the culture of governance. Achieving change in the culture of governance requires opening up the process to citizens and other stakeholders, as both have legitimate concerns and interests in the decision-making process. Today, more "inclusive" and effective participation in formal decision-making processes of governance are needed.

To further build an organization's capacity, good governance requires local governments to set a clear direction for the future and provide sound management practices (i.e. effective and efficient services; sound fiscal management; and strong training and development).

Priorities

- Involve and engage the public, local government, private, key City partners, and community stakeholders in decision-making process;
- Set a common strategic direction for the City and align resources appropriately; and
- Improve decision-making capacity in the organization by employing sound management practices.

Emerging Issues/Insights: Recent Stakeholder Consultations

- Longwood's public consultation findings indicate that the public would prefer a new level of regional government that deals with area-wide issues (i.e. transit, roads, waste management, emergency services, revenue and cost-sharing, leaving community issues to local councils; and

- The Minister's Council on Sustainability Relationship Working Group has forwarded a recommendation on the preferred regional governance model to the Minister. (Decision is pending.)