June 18, 2025

Mayor and Council
City of Edmonton
1 Sir Winston Churchill Square
Edmonton, AB T5J 2R7

Re: Item 3.1 "Bylaw 21158 – To Amend Bylaw 16521, Capital City Downtown Community Revitalization Levy Bylaw, Amendment No. 2"

Dear Mayor Sohi and members of Edmonton City Council:

BILD Edmonton Metro is a non-profit organization representing over 500 companies in the building and development industry, committed to shaping our region to ensure more people and businesses live, invest, and thrive here.

Downtown prosperity is a central priority for our association, and we are pleased to reaffirm our strong support for extending the Capital City Downtown Community Revitalization Levy (CRL). We voiced our support before Executive Committee on March 6 and endorsed the Administration's Downtown Action Plan on May 13. Our position on the CRL extension remains firmly in place.

Since these Council discussions began, the Province of Alberta — through the Lieutenant Governor in Council — has approved an amendment to the CRL regulation, extending its expiry to December 31, 2044. This presents a unique opportunity for Council to align its investments with provincial partners and take advantage of recent changes that support the development of attainable housing — one of Council's stated priorities.

Edmonton's downtown has faced significant challenges in recent years—challenges that have directly impacted the city's broader economic health. More than just the heart of our city's culture and identity, downtown plays a critical role in our long-term financial sustainability. When downtown falters, the entire city feels the impact.

Consider this: at its peak, downtown Edmonton contributed 10% of the city's tax base, despite covering less than 1% of the land area. Today, that figure has declined to just 5.2%, largely due to persistently high office vacancy rates — now sitting at 21.6%. This sharp drop is a direct consequence of pandemic-era shifts to remote work, a trend that shows little sign of reversing to pre-2020 levels. While growth is accelerating across the city and region Edmonton's downtown is failing to capture a meaningful share of this new growth and investment.

The traditional model of a downtown driven primarily by office towers is no longer viable. The City's own analysis makes this clear: closing the current tax gap through office-focused development alone would require building the equivalent of 23 new EPCOR Towers — an implausible solution.

Instead, we must reimagine downtown Edmonton as a resilient, diversified, revenue-generating urban core.

The City's Downtown Action Plan, which aligns closely with our industry-led Downtown Investment Plan, identifies key catalysts to unlock this potential: the Arts District, ICE District, and Entertainment District. These hubs are already drawing private sector interest and collaboration. The City now has a critical opportunity to align public infrastructure investment with this momentum to accelerate revitalization.

The CRL is the financial tool that can help make this vision a reality. Extending the CRL and approving the proposed list of transformative projects could unlock close to $1 billion in new revenue over the next decade.

This funding would support tangible, people-focused city-building initiatives, including:

- Enhancements to LRT stations and public transit access
- Expanded green and open spaces
- Infrastructure to support an event park
- Increased support for the arts and cultural institutions
- Diverse housing options for students, seniors, and families of all sizes

These are priorities broadly shared by industry, public agencies, and community organizations alike.

Without meaningful and ambitious investment by the public and private sectors, together, downtown will be unable to reach its full potential as a dynamic, inclusive, and vibrant urban centre. While funding for existing capital projects is essential, it must be paired with new initiatives that enhance livability and a measurable economic Return on Investment (ROI).

The partnership formula works, and we can build upon past successes. Since 2015, downtown Edmonton has seen nearly $5 billion in combined investment—$1.5 billion from the City, $2.5 billion from the private sector, and $1 billion from other public sources. This represents an impressive 160% return on public investment, underscoring the value of strong public-private collaboration. Beyond the numbers, this momentum has spurred the development of three new office towers—the largest

expansion since the 1980s—and over 3,500 residential units that are either completed or currently under construction.

Downtown Edmonton functions as the regional hub for commerce, higher education, healthcare, and culture across northern Alberta. Investing here means investing in the economic and social success of the entire region — not just a few city blocks.

We urge City Council to continue this momentum by extending the CRL and approving the transformative initiatives outlined in the Downtown Action Plan. Let's build a downtown that works — for everyone.

Sincerely,

Kalen Anderson, CEO
BILD Edmonton Metro

Copy: Office of the City Clerk, City of Edmonton
Eddie Robar, City Manager
Kim Petrin, Deputy City Manager, Urban Planning & Economy
Alisa Laliberte, Branch Manager, Economic Investment Services
Travis Pawlyk, Branch Manager, Development Services
Kent Snyder, Branch Manager, Planning and Environment Services
Jason Syvixay, VP, Strategy & Operations, BILD Edmonton Metro
Lindsey Butterfield, VP, Government Relations & Policy, BILD Edmonton Metro