Issue Brief #5 – Future Growth

Summary

This Issue Brief examines the potential for future growth in the area south of 41st Avenue SW.

Key Questions

- What is the potential for residential development in the Future Growth Area?
- What is the potential for commercial and industrial development in the Future Growth Area?
- What does this area offer, in sum?

What is the potential for residential development in the Future Growth Area?

It is helpful to assess the previous planning direction for these lands prior to them being annexed by the City of Edmonton to understand the potential of the Future Growth Area (FGA) moving forward. The Leduc County Municipal Development Plan and North Major Area Structure Plan (ASP) served as the primary land use and development plan for much of the FGA before the land was annexed by the City of Edmonton. The ASP envisioned continued growth of the county's industrial base, particularly in Nisku, alongside the development of new residential communities. By comparison, the City of Edmonton's City Plan and District Plans envision a significantly denser and more mixed-use form of development in these same areas, with a somewhat greater proportion of land allocated to industrial and commercial uses.

An approximate total population for the FGA under each planning framework is provided below, based on the statistics, population projections, and proportions of residential development identified in each plan. As the comparison demonstrates, the City of Edmonton's plan envisions substantially greater population growth within the same geographic area, reflecting a significantly higher overall development density.

	Under the former Leduc County North Major ASP	**Under the current City of Edmonton District Plans at full build-out** (exclusively for lands located south of 41st Ave)
Total population of Ellerslie District	22,000	38,500
Total population of Rabbit Hill District	33,000	54,000
Combined total additional population south of 41st Avenue SW	55,000	92,500

Reader's Note: The Ellerslie District population at 2 million is projected to be 186,000 people. Within this district, approximately 147,500 people are projected to reside north of 41st Avenue SW in the Ellerslie, Decoteau, and Southeast areas as per approved Area Structure Plans population statistics tables, which leaves a remainder of approximately 38,500 people to be accommodated within the District south of 41st Avenue SW.

The former regional Growth Plan, developed by the now-decommissioned Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Board (EMRB) in 2017 projected that the region's population would reach between 1.9 million and 2.2 million by 2044. Over the same period, the City of Edmonton was projected to grow to between 1.4 million and 1.5 million residents. However, only 9 years into the Growth Plan's envisioned 27-year timeline, the City and Region's population is closing in on targets well ahead of what was originally anticipated. According to the Government of Alberta, as of 2025 the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) reached 1.7 million and Edmonton's population reached 1.25 million. The accelerating population of the region greatly outpaces planning assumptions

The EMRB's Growth Plan provided higher-level planning direction that informed the planning principles for the FGA. Because population growth in the region is tracking ahead of the projections underpinning the plan, there is an increasing need to revisit assumptions about the scale and timing of future growth.

What is the potential for commercial/industrial development in the Future Growth Area?

There are four quarter sections south of 41st Avenue SW east of Highway 2 currently designated for non-residential uses, providing opportunities for extending the Ellerslie Industrial development along the Nisku Spine Road over the coming years. West of Highway 2, the Rabbit Hill District Plan identifies the area between 73rd Avenue and Highway 19 as predominantly intended for non-residential uses. The southeastern edge of Rabbit Hill is already home to Crossroads, an industrial park approved by Leduc County in 2012, when the area remained under the County's jurisdiction.

At the two-million population horizon, the City of Edmonton projects approximately 64,000 employment positions in the Rabbit Hill District and 46,000 in the Ellerslie District (which covers an area both inside and outside the FGA). While Ellerslie is considerably further along in its development, Rabbit Hill's projected employment numbers are tied to its future potential development and proximity to major employment centers, including the Edmonton International Airport, Nisku Business Park, and the future Whitemud Landing industrial area.

The City of Edmonton has already identified Rabbit Hill as an important area for future non-residential development. On January 27, 2026, City Council approved the Highway 19 Neighbourhood Structure Plan (NSP) Council Authorization, an important step toward preparing a future NSP for the area. The FGA represents a significant long-term opportunity to accommodate Edmonton's growth toward a population of two million. By planning for both greenfield residential and industrial development, the area can help provide the land, jobs, and infrastructure needed to support Edmonton's next chapter of growth.

What does this area offer, in sum?

Taken together, the residential and non-residential impact of these areas is enormous. The Ellerslie and Rabbit Hill Districts will accommodate 240,000 people and 110,000 more jobs. This is equivalent to a stand-alone city the size of Regina, the provincial capital of Saskatchewan. Edmonton added 250,000 people between 2020 and 2025 alone, underscoring the urgency and reality of planning to accommodate this level of urban growth.

Summary of approved Ellerslie and Rabbit Hill District Plans at full City Plan build-out (2 million residents)

	Ellerslie District Plan	Rabbit Hill District Plan	Total Impact
District Population	186,000	54,000	240,000 residents
District Employment	46,000	64,000	110,000 jobs

Sources

- City of Edmonton. (2026). "Rabbit Hill District Plan."
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