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EDMONTON
METRO

About BILD Edmonton Metro

Background

BILD Edmonton Metro (BILD EM) is an advocacy organization that works to ensure more people and businesses choose to live, invest, and thrive in Edmonton and the metro region. Incorporated on May 15, 2024, BILD EM brought together two once separate organizations: the Urban Development Institute – Edmonton Metro and the Canadian Home Builders' Association – Edmonton Region. BILD EM now serves as a strengthened champion for the future of the region's growth and land development industry, dedicated to shaping vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous communities. BILD EM is part of a three-tiered organization with BILD Alberta and CHBA National. This ensures members benefit from organizational advocacy at the municipal, provincial, and national levels.





Impact

BILD EM works hard to facilitate a competitive and sustainable Edmonton Metropolitan Region that is a pillar of Alberta's economy. BILD EM are national leaders, inspiring other regions with how effectively they monitor issues, engage regional stakeholders, and drive effective change for Edmonton and surrounding communities. They work with industry partners to constantly assess the region's position, advocating on behalf of its members for meaningful change. BILD EM provides timely insight and perspectives on a number of municipal issues, both for their own industry stakeholders as well as compiled into position papers, reports, and letters that are presented to councils and administrations.



BILD EM's advocacy is shaped by a number of key stakeholders, through its Board of Directors, committees, and staff. Their top advocacy priorities, outlined throughout this platform, include the following:

- **Collaborating** with industry and policymakers to right-size regulations, streamlining the system to cultivate accelerated development.
- **Expanding** housing and non-residential development in a timely, efficient, and sustainable manner to accommodate a growing population.
- **Ensuring** regional success by collaborating with the 12 municipalities outside of Edmonton to support cooperation, integrated planning, and collective success.
- **Advancing** Edmonton's downtown as a vibrant hub for business, finance, entertainment, education, culture, professional services, and community.
- **Empowering** regional leaders to become stewards of their community by providing them with technical literacy and opportunities to engage with industry experts.
- **Funding** growth and attracting investment to grow the region's profile and ensure a competitive and financially sustainable future. This includes the need for land supply to accommodate people moving to the region.



Addressing the Policy Pile-Up

Thoughtful and effective policy frameworks are the backbone of any functioning system. Policy must set reasonable guidelines to protect public interests, without causing levels of friction that deter investment or limit action. Continuous policy evaluation and adjustment is necessary to maintain flexible and effective systems, as is the case for policy frameworks governing development in the Edmonton region.

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- **Addressing the Cost of Policy**
Robust policy frameworks are necessary to guide development, but extensive policy processes and requirements can deter and inhibit investment. Elected officials have an oversight role to cultivate a healthy balance between the costs and benefits of policy developments. City Councils should evaluate how the current excessive costs of regulating policy can be reduced to pave the way for more cost-effective long-term development. Industry has also noted confusion and delays resulting from Administration's inability to determine trade-offs between competing policies, which adds cost related to time spent on both the public and private side.
- **Ensuring Right-Sized Infrastructure**
One of the most important factors in effective development is ensuring "right-sized infrastructure." Frameworks set by decision-makers need to strike a balance between holding high design and sustainability standards and keeping costs manageable. When standards for infrastructure and development growth are too high, development is disincentivized and growth stagnates as costs go up unnecessarily. Elected officials should work with BILD EM to evaluate this threshold, amending it to balance heightened standards with practical, affordable development.
- **Refine Climate Action Planning**
Targeted climate strategies are essential to protecting the long-term interests of our communities. However, to maximize their effectiveness, we must design them in a manner that balances sustainable thinking with practical, affordable implementation. Overbearing policies disincentivize development, limiting the climate friendly upgrades that are made to our communities. City Councils must work to reduce unnecessary red tape associated with the intersection of their climate and development policies.



Accelerating Housing Development

It is no secret that Canada is currently facing unprecedented housing challenges. While the Edmonton region has been one of the national success stories in this regard, diligence and intentionality are required to maintain momentum. Decision-makers will need to be visionaries while staying grounded in the practical realities of residents and businesses. To be effective stewards of our community and plan for our future, we must design policies that will incentivize and accelerate housing development.

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- **Supporting Development South of 41st Ave**

Development south of 41st Avenue must be approached proactively. Given the current housing pressures and the forecasted growth over the next quarter century, leaders need to support the timely planning and development of the land south of 41st Avenue as a critical growth area in the Edmonton region. Candidates should work collaboratively with one another, and with key development stakeholders, to devise plans and implement policies that will allow this region to come online early enough that future challenges similar to the current housing crisis can be avoided.

- **Facilitating Pathways Towards Effective Infill Development**

Infill development must continue to be accepted as a core component of the region's urban planning strategy moving forward. To achieve the necessary trajectory, leaders need to help generate buy-in for the strategy and remove barriers to its success. Facilitating infill education, addressing infrastructure challenges, and ensuring policy alignment are essential measures to make infill a viable component of the region's strategy. City Councillors have key roles in publicly shifting the discourse, knowledge level, and policy environment forward.

- **Streamlining Permitting, Inspections, and Planning Applications**

Efficient permitting, inspections, and planning processes are essential to cultivating growth and development. The current system creates excessive back-and-forth delays that, if reduced, could save both municipalities and developers time and money and speed up development. This translates directly into the cost of housing for homebuyers and renters. Elected officials can help lead and facilitate high-level improvements to permitting and inspection systems by escalating resourcing to prioritize ongoing work with AI and automation.

- **Identifying Future Priorities**

Future planning is at the heart of effective leadership. Initiatives like upzoning and refinement of the technical requirements of District Plans, ASPs, ARPs and NSPs are all advancements that will drive effective development in our municipalities. Leaders have a role to help establish a shared vision for our region, helping to generate buy-in and allowing shared teams of stakeholders to take meaningful steps towards keeping costs low and fostering development. Continuous, scheduled updates to Municipal Development Plans and other statutory documents are required for an agile and responsive planning system that enables development.



Ensuring Regional Impact

BILD EM's advocacy is focused on supporting its stakeholders throughout the Edmonton metropolitan region. It is essential to maximize results by having BILD EM work with local governments to facilitate collaboration, develop shared frameworks, and present unified solutions. The presence and enrichment of Edmonton and surrounding communities will be amplified if decision-makers can identify common ground and work together to achieve better results. BILD EM is committed to tireless advocacy to facilitate this cooperation.

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- **Navigating Changes to the Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Board (EMRB)**
Given the recent dissolution of the EMRB, there will be a significant need for leadership in the Edmonton region to ensure a coordinated planning and development approach. BILD EM's leadership can help fill this gap, but there will still need to be significant consideration from elected leaders as to how cooperation and unity can be facilitated. Councillors should come in as visionaries, bringing optimistic solutions and being ready to work with leaders in other jurisdictions toward shared solutions.
- **Ensuring Consistency in Bylaws**
Disparity among regional bylaws governing development and other initiatives creates friction, discourages investment, and slows down development. By harmonizing regional regulatory frameworks, we can create an environment that is conducive to rapid, efficient, sustainable development, resulting in more projects being built, both faster and more affordably. This will require leadership and buy-in from elected officials, who can benefit their constituents through accelerated, simplified development.
- **Celebrating Regional Leaders**
As a regional advocacy organization, part of BILD EM's role is to celebrate success among its stakeholders. Through regional report cards and reports for municipalities, BILD EM can highlight best practices, growth statistics, and innovations in municipalities around the region. This provides elected officials with clear metrics to strive for and rewards effective leaders who are driving their communities in the right direction. BILD EM will collaborate with regional stakeholders to identify targets for municipalities.



Doubling Down on Downtown

The success of Edmonton's downtown core is vital for the success of the entire metropolitan region. Downtown has faced particular challenges since the pandemic and requires intentional investments in order to fully bounce back. BILD EM continuously engages industry stakeholders to refresh its understanding of the barriers inhibiting investment. This knowledge of the grassroots factors at play, synthesized with an understanding of the regulatory environment and pressures decision-makers face, shapes the advocacy items below that BILD EM believes would generate positive outcomes for all involved.

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- **Extending the Downtown Community Revitalization Levy**
Downtown's vibrancy relies on development, infrastructure, and upkeep. Extending the Community Revitalization Levy (CRL) will help ensure downtown infrastructure can be maintained, and further development and investment can be attracted. Downtown's position has been significantly bolstered since the introduction of the CRL, and future improvements depend on its framework. City Councillors and their constituents will all benefit from an empowered downtown; one made possible by supporting the extension of the CRL and implementing the catalyst projects identified within it.
- **Incentivize Downtown Housing Development**
The current climate downtown provides extremely limited potential for developers. The market does not provide developers with the required return on investment, thus limiting incentives for them to pursue downtown projects. Effectively, the current systems stagnate both growth and housing development, given that they are structured in a manner unattractive to potential developers. City Council needs to collaborate with industry and government to design effective incentives to catalyze downtown housing development, whether via office tower conversions, housing grants for the construction of new units, or otherwise. This will create a symbiotic environment, supporting Edmontonians seeking housing, the downtown business community seeking economic stimulation, and developers looking for a profitable framework to enter the market.
- **Create a Downtown Action Plan**
Revitalizing our downtown requires commitment, coordination, and planning. City Council needs to structure and facilitate the creation of a downtown action plan, following the lead of the business community's Downtown Investment Plan (DIP) and integrating its priorities. If done well, this plan will bring stakeholders together to prioritize downtown investments, secure funding, and implement competitive strategies. A strong downtown makes for a strong Edmonton and a strong Edmonton metropolitan region. The plan for downtown should be visionary and long-term in its outlook.
- **Ground Floor Commercial Rezoning**
Zoning bylaw amendments to reduce the mandatory ground floor commercial spaces for residential towers need consideration. The Zoning Bylaw requirements have introduced an oversupply of commercial spaces with no corresponding demand. The impact is vacant ground floor commercial space without enough of a market to fill every space. City Council should amend the zoning bylaw to ease these requirements, which will help create more efficient housing spaces, foster development, and improve downtown vibrancy in the long-term.



Strengthening Edmonton Through Responsible Leadership and Informed Stewardship

A strong Edmonton metro region requires strong leadership, and strong leadership takes work. For our municipal leaders to be effective, they must be well-informed and willing to open their minds to new ideas. This includes taking the necessary training to elevate their financial literacy, understanding of fiduciary responsibility, and familiarizing themselves with the many perspectives and intricate details that should be shaping their decision-making.

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- **Attaining Baseline Financial Literacy and Understanding of Development**
Councillors will be responsible for making the ultimate decisions that govern the allocation of immense and complex sums of money—both in terms of the City's investments and the impact these decisions have on investments of the private sector. Understanding that everyone enters the role with a different level of macro-financial literacy, Councillors should strive to obtain a baseline level of understanding regarding municipal finances and the basics of land development. This should include learning who pays for what, how to evaluate long-term considerations like amortization and return on investment, and what Council's fiduciary role entails.
- **Remaining Open to Learning and Cooperation**
Councillors are not only decision-making leaders, but they also have a significant role as ambassadors for their community. This comes with their vision for how to help their community grow, but also requires an openness to explore the many pathways that can improve their community's standing. Councillors should meet with a broad range of stakeholders to diversify their opinions and expand their understanding of complex issues across their community. Councillors who remain open to their constituents' ideas of how to move their community forward will be much better equipped to advocate for their community and overcome obstacles to success.
- **Leveraging Industry Expertise**
BILD EM and other stakeholders bring a significant, targeted understanding of their sector and how it can be improved to better serve all constituents. Councillors' roles as decision-makers will be enhanced if they are willing to cooperate with industry stakeholders to better understand the complexities of the challenges they face and the contributions they make. By cooperating with and utilizing the intricate knowledge of sector experts, Councillors can equip themselves with a baseline technical understanding, which they can synthesize with their own understanding of the complex array of challenges their community faces, allowing them to ultimately make the decisions that are best for their constituents.



Acquiring Investment and Future-Building Momentum

Taking action now to set our municipalities up for success in the future is crucial. A key component of this is ensuring development charges are implemented transparently and fairly. Additionally, we must place a heavy emphasis on attracting talent and capital investments to the region to bolster our momentum. Many of these efforts require innovation, open-mindedness, and bold leadership from our elected decision-makers.

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- **Urban Growth Case Study**

Research and education are vital precursors to successful urban planning and city building. Not only do they uncover and promote learning on the most effective planning tactics, but they also generate public buy-in to support municipalities' desired growth trajectories. BILD Edmonton Metro will release its Urban Growth Case Study in June to demonstrate the costs and revenues associated with the growth of new neighbourhoods. The study will also examine the ways new areas contribute to the sense of community, local vibrancy, and economic prosperity that make Edmonton a great place.

- **Attracting Non-Residential and Industrial Investment**

While residential growth remains a cornerstone of municipal development, attracting non-residential and industrial investment plays an equally important role in ensuring long-term fiscal health. These investments drive job creation, develop talent attraction, and generate the revenue necessary to support sustainable infrastructure and community growth. By cultivating a favourable environment for industrial and commercial developments—through carefully considered incentives and policies—municipalities can diversify their economic base, strengthen community resilience, and enhance competitiveness in an ever-evolving marketplace.

- **Refining Development Charges**

Off-site levies and other development charges are allowed under the Municipal Government Act under specific circumstances to support community building across the region. Like any policy, they must be set at a balanced level that generates enough for municipalities to sustainably build critical infrastructure while not being set too high, such that they deter investment from developers. Further, there are stringent rules in terms of how they must be applied, and these rules need to be followed. The region's off-site levy bylaws and surrounding policies should take this into account and be reviewed to ensure financial fairness across infrastructure projects. Edmonton specifically has an opportunity to revisit the various development charge policies in its future growth area to ensure sustainable growth is enabled for residential and non-residential opportunities. Examining the success and challenges of the SSSF, PAC, ARA, and off-site levy policies and processes can ensure sustainable infrastructure is provided without undue financial burden to any one party.

