Land Use Policy Changes and Citizen Engagement as Drivers for an Edmonton City-Wide Food and Agriculture Strategy

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Outline

• Changing land use patterns and land use planning in Alberta;
• Edmonton and the peri-urban agricultural areas;
• Process of citizen engagement in the 2010 MDP; and,
• Resulting 2012 Food and Agriculture Strategy
• Lessons learned
Changing Land Use Patterns in Alberta

- 31.5% of Canada’s farmland
- Double the growth rate of Canada; 83% in urban centers
- Loss of 3.1% (1.6 million acres) farmland; 12.5% decline in # farms
- Farmland fragmentation – escalating land prices
Land Use Planning in Alberta

• Alberta Municipal Govt Act (1994) transferred authority over agricultural land to municipalities

• Provincial Land Use Policies (1996):
  1. Identify areas (with AARD) where agriculture should be the primary land use;
  2. Limit fragmentation of farmland (especially in areas designated);
  3. Direct non-agricultural development to areas that will not constrain agricultural activities.
Extent of Agricultural Lands in Canada

Approx. 10% of Canada’s Total Land Base

>80% of farmland
~50% of farms

Arable Lands (able to be cultivated) <5% total land base
Prime Agricultural Lands (CLI Class 1-3) <2.5% total land base

Source: The Health of Our Soils, 1995
Alberta Land Use Framework

Draft vision (2006):

The people of Alberta respect the land and work together to care for, make the best use of and sustain the land. Alberta’s lands are well managed in a way that acknowledges the diversity of its people and balances the needs of present and future generations.
Edmonton’s Urban Growth Areas (UGAs): NE, SE, SW
# Frost Free Days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Ave date of First fall frost</th>
<th>Ave date of Last spring frost</th>
<th>Frost-free (days)</th>
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<td>Sept 24</td>
<td>May 4</td>
<td>143</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taber</td>
<td>Sept 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Millarville</td>
<td>Aug 19</td>
<td>June 22</td>
<td>58</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
Climate

- Alberta’s climate is classified as a semi-arid, continental climate regime in the southerly regions [below 50 degrees latitude] and as a boreal [taiga] climate in regions north of 50 degrees latitude.

- Moisture in the Edmonton region is adequate; many parts are in deficit.
Farming Trends in the UGAs

• 57% decrease in number of farms: 170 to 73 (13% provincial rate)
• Land owned by operators steadily decreased to 43%
• Leased and rented land predominant form of land tenure (owned by developers and investors)
• Average age of farmers: 58 (55 prov. average)
The Way We Grow: 2010 MDP

Citizen engagement:

• 2008, 1st draft: GEA mobilizes over 500 citizens
  – 700 families pledge 40% of food $ to local food

• 2009, 2\textsuperscript{nd} draft: over 500 citizens and GEA presents The Way We Eat
  – 15,000 people at Great Potato Give Away

• 2010, MDP amended and passed: over 600 citizens present
Amendments to **Section 3.1: Land Use**

Future Area Structural Plans (e.g., UGAs) must align with the following:

• Growth Coordination Strategy
• Integrated Infrastructure Strategy
• Food and Agriculture Strategy
Edmonton has a resilient food and agriculture system that contributes to the local economy and the overall cultural, financial, social and environmental sustainability of the city.
Edmonton City Wide Food and Agriculture Strategy (2011 – 2012)

• Food and Agriculture Advisory Committee;
• City planning and policy staff;
• Lenarc consultants;
• Technical advisors;
• Public consultation: citizen panel, stakeholder survey, public opinion survey, landowner survey, Food in the City conference, social media, open houses.
EDMONTON’S FOOD & URBAN AGRICULTURE STRATEGY

GOALS

A stronger, more vibrant local economy
A healthier, more food secure community
More vibrant, attractive, and unique places
Less energy emissions and waste
Healthier ecosystems
5.1 Establish the Edmonton Food Council
5.2 Provide Food Skill Education and Information
5.3 Expand Urban Agriculture
5.4 Develop Local Food Infrastructure Capacity
5.5 Grow Local Food Supply and Demand
5.6 Enliven the Public Realm Through a Diversity of Food Activities
5.7 Treat Food Waste as a Resource
5.8 Support Urban Farmers and Ecological Approaches to Farming
5.9 Integrate Land for Agriculture
Lessons Learned

• Communities need to develop a vision for a sustainable food system and put plans in place to make that vision a reality;

• Municipal governments are responsible for agricultural land protection and preservation;

• Need for training in agricultural and food system planning at municipal/regional levels;
Lessons Learned

• Agri-food system development requires a long-term plan (MDPs 10 years);

• Time required for research and data analysis – good policy requires good data;

• Citizen and stakeholder input critical to entire process;

• All levels of government must support and commit to protection and preservation of farmland as a crucial resource; need for coordination of policy and planning.
“No community, no civilization, can be sustained without adequate and reliable sources of food and water for its citizens” (Gord Hume, 2010).

“Of all the underlying forces working toward emancipation of the city dweller, the most important is the gradual reawakening of the primitive instincts of the agrarian.”  
Frank Lloyd Wright

Special thanks to: Candace Vanin, Jim Hiley, Debbie Hubbard
References


• City of Edmonton
  – Agricultural Inventory and Assessment, 2012.

• Great Edmonton Alliance. 2009. The Way We Eat: Creating A Vibrant and Sustainable Local Food Economy.
