

Understanding Density Series

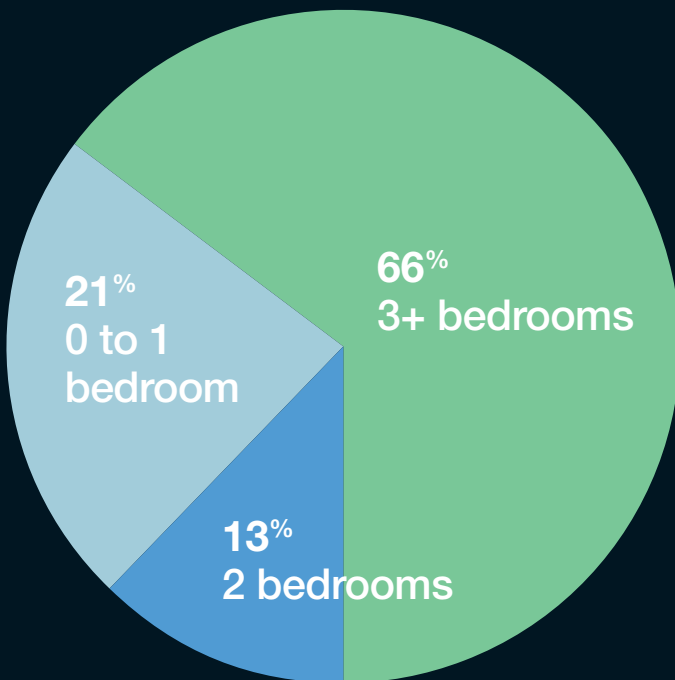
The Urban Development Institute – Edmonton Region (UDI-ER) represents a significant segment of the residential, commercial and industrial land development industry in the capital region and supports regional collaboration and densification of new growth.

The Understanding Density Series assists in highlighting the realities of density. When considering growth, density targets must be appropriate to allow for a variety of housing products that appeal to the market. While we aspire to achieve higher density as community builders, our densification targets need to be thoughtfully considered to fully understand their impacts.

SECTION 1	
Housing Choice & the Market	02
SECTION 2	
A Look at Density	04
SECTION 3	
Density Tour	06
SECTION 4	
Planning for the Future	10

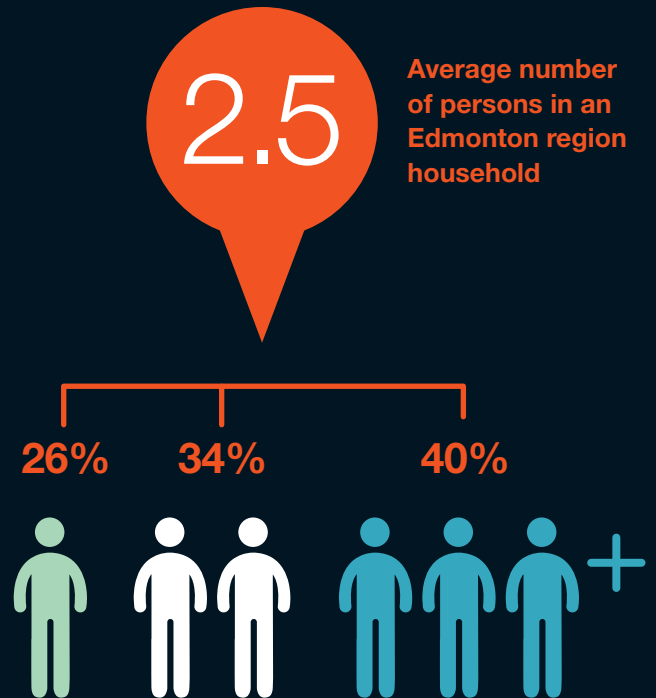
Housing Choice and the Market

Bedrooms per home in the Edmonton region ¹



¹ National Housing Survey – Edmonton CMA. Total population in private households by citizenship 1,139,585

Number of people per Edmonton region household ²



Edmonton region families with children ³

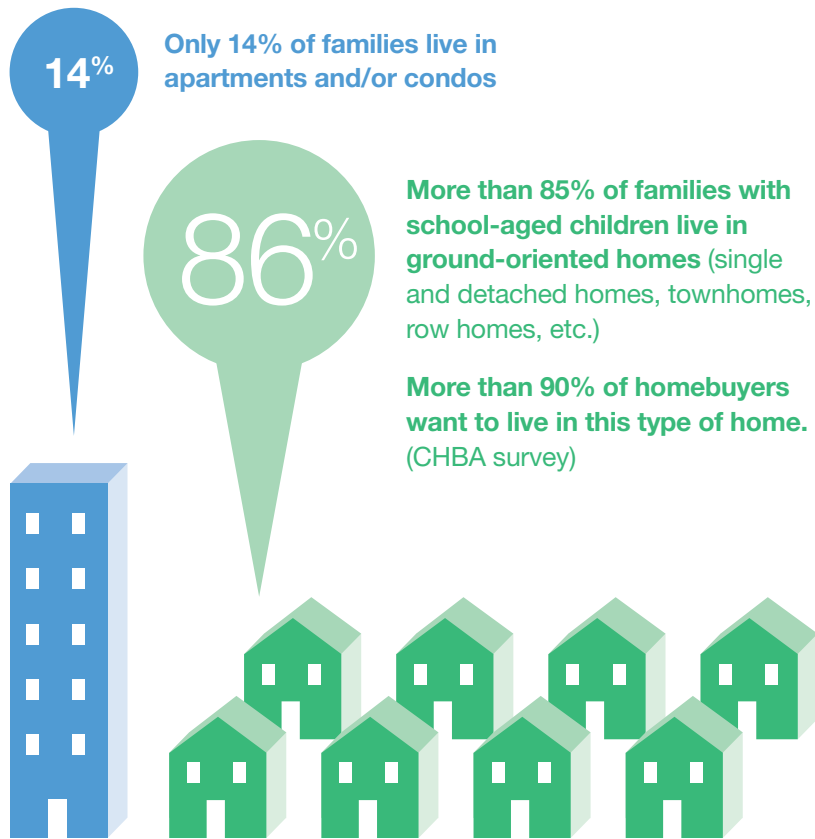


57% of families in the Edmonton region that have 2 children or more.

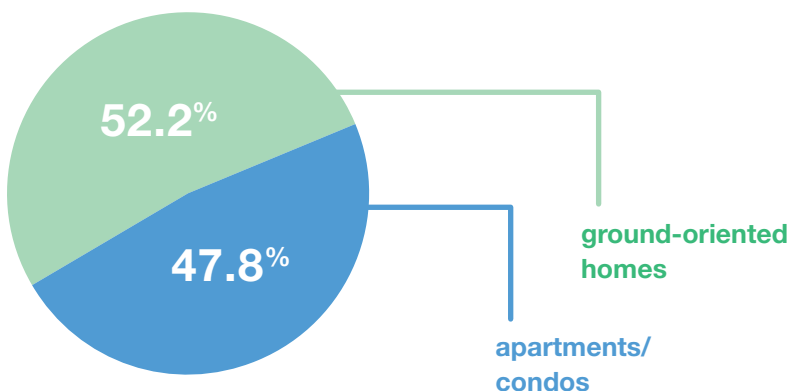
² Household size, by census metropolitan area (2011 Census) (Edmonton)

³ Census families by number of children at home, by province and territory (2011 Census) (Alberta)

Will policy allow your home to be built? Canada-wide statistics ⁴



What's being built across Canada?



⁴ CHBA National

Why are only about half of the homes built today ground-oriented?

- › Government policies set rules and regulations for residential development through planning, zoning, and development-charge taxes, all of which affect new home prices and what gets built where.
- › In most cities that leads to higher density and taller apartment and condos.
- › If over 90% of homebuyers want ground-oriented homes, but half of what is being built is apartments and condos, government policies are driving the market away from what people want.
- › Policies need to support housing supply diversity, affordability and choice.

CHBA National

Edmonton Region Context:

If the policies on growth in the Edmonton region were to change, family-oriented homes would become scarcer, and their price would be pushed up – potentially beyond the reach of many young families.

A Look at Density

SECTION 1: HOUSING CHOICE & THE MARKET outlined demographics and housing preferences. If regulations enforce increases to density, families in the Edmonton region won't be able to get the housing they need and want.

Residential Housing Types: Percentage by Unit



Institutional Density

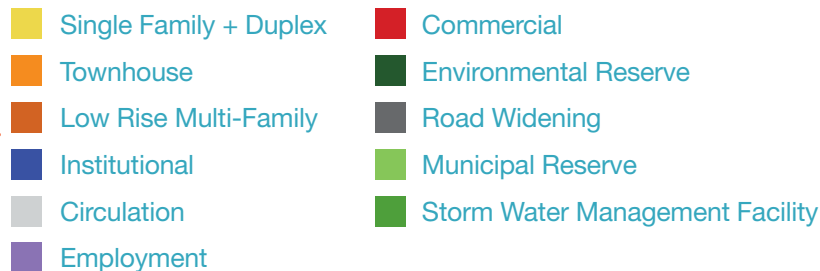
In the Model Area Structure Plan, residential housing makes up only 47% of the developable area.

Municipalities must commit to reductions in public infrastructure that is highly consumptive of land. Efficiency and intensity of use are themes that must span all of our considerations.

47%

Model Area Structure Plan

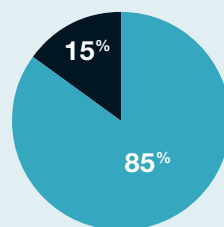
The images below display a model Area Structure Plan at 30, 40 and 50 du/nrha. Each square represents 10 ha of land for a gross area of 1000 hectares. The images show a fundamental shift in housing type from ground oriented homes, to condominium and apartment style housing as densities increase to 50 du/nrha.



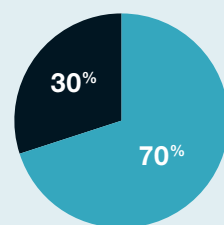
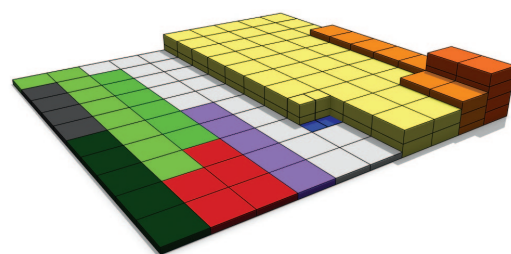
Home ownership vs. Condo ownership



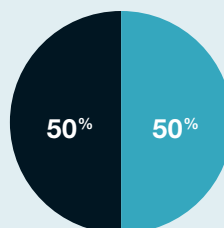
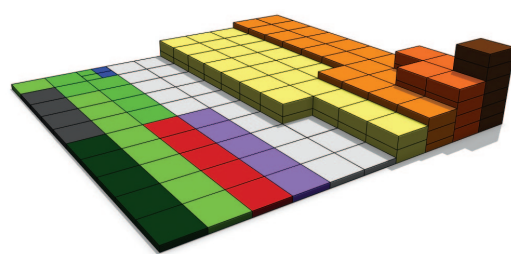
Increasing density to 50 du/nrha changes the housing stock to 50% condo ownership



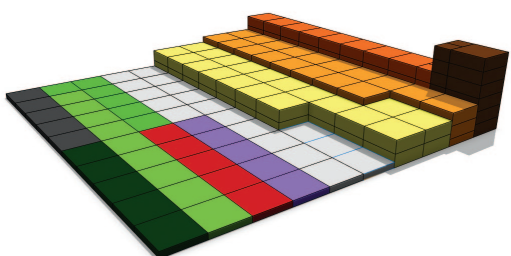
30 DU/NRHA



40 DU/NRHA



50 DU/NRHA



50%

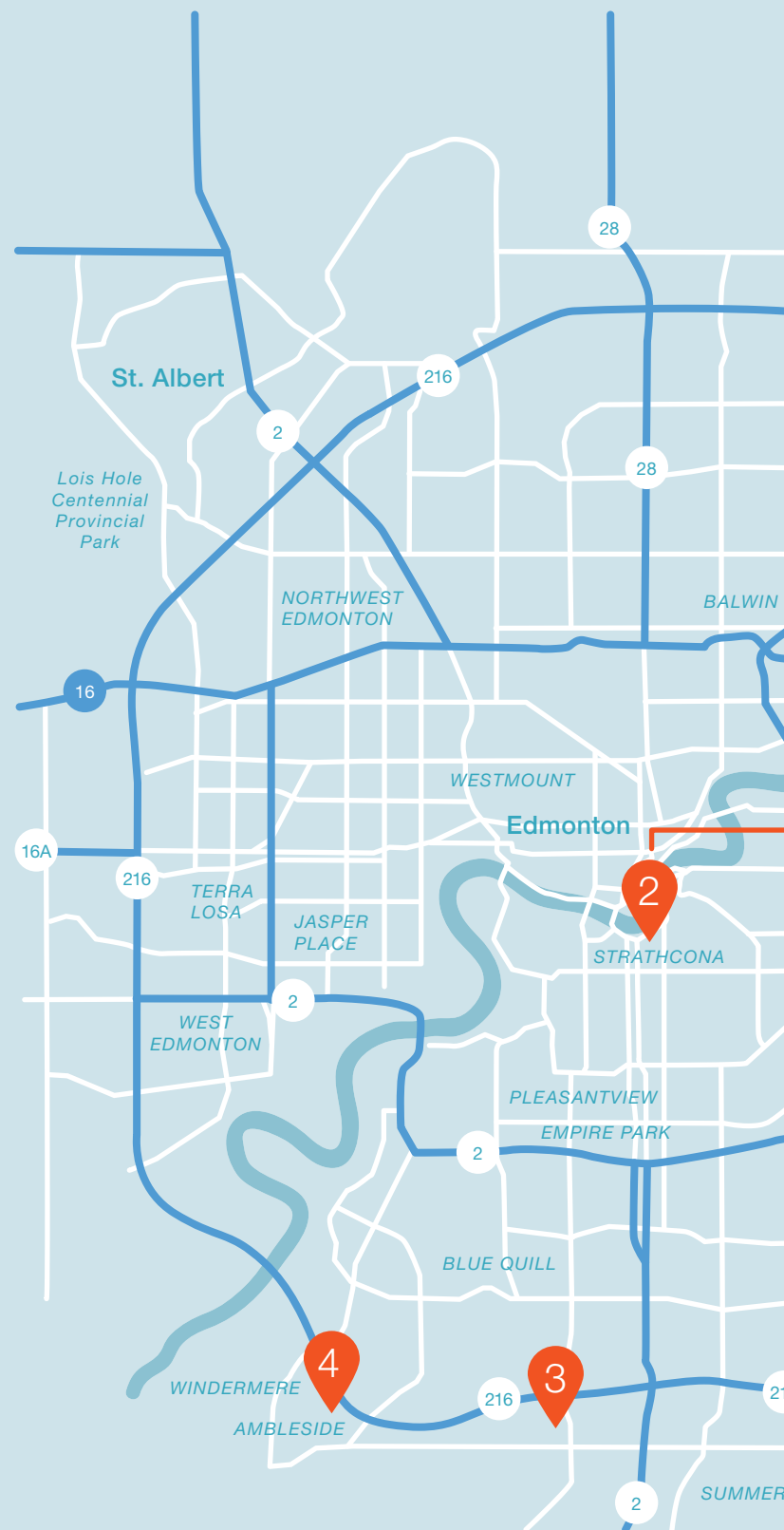
du/nrha

: dwelling units per net residential hectare

Density Tour

Increasing density can change the look and feel of a neighbourhood. This comprehensive map is a guide to experiencing neighbourhoods at different densities around the region. These neighbourhoods were chosen to highlight differences in density and the amenities, transit and housing types that are required to achieve these densities.

Clareview Town Centre 1
Strathcona 2
MacEwan 3
Ambleside 4
Southfort 5
Summerwood 6



du/nrha

: dwelling units per net residential hectare



Urban Development Institute
EDMONTON REGION



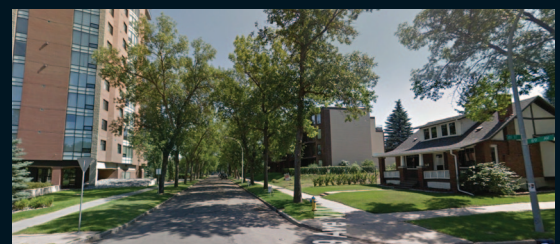
1 Clareview Town Centre – 67 du/nrha (planned)

Clareview Town Centre is a mass transit supported area which features a mixture of residential, commercial, and institutional land uses concentrated in a higher density around the Clareview LRT Station, transit centre and commuter parking lot and major arterial roadways. This neighbourhood is an example of a density gradient whereby the more intensive land uses are located around the transit centre which then transition into low densities and single family housing in the surrounding areas.



2 Strathcona - 77 du/nrha

The well-served transit and roadway network, exceptional amenities and proximity to the University of Alberta support the Strathcona neighbourhood's higher density. However it's also important to consider that these amenities are supported by the City of Edmonton and regional visitors-at-large. These regional visitors use "Gateway Boulevard", one of the key entrances to the City of Edmonton to visit Whyte Avenue for shopping, entertainment and nightlife; the Strathcona Farmer's Market; local theatres; and the numerous festivals in this area throughout the year.



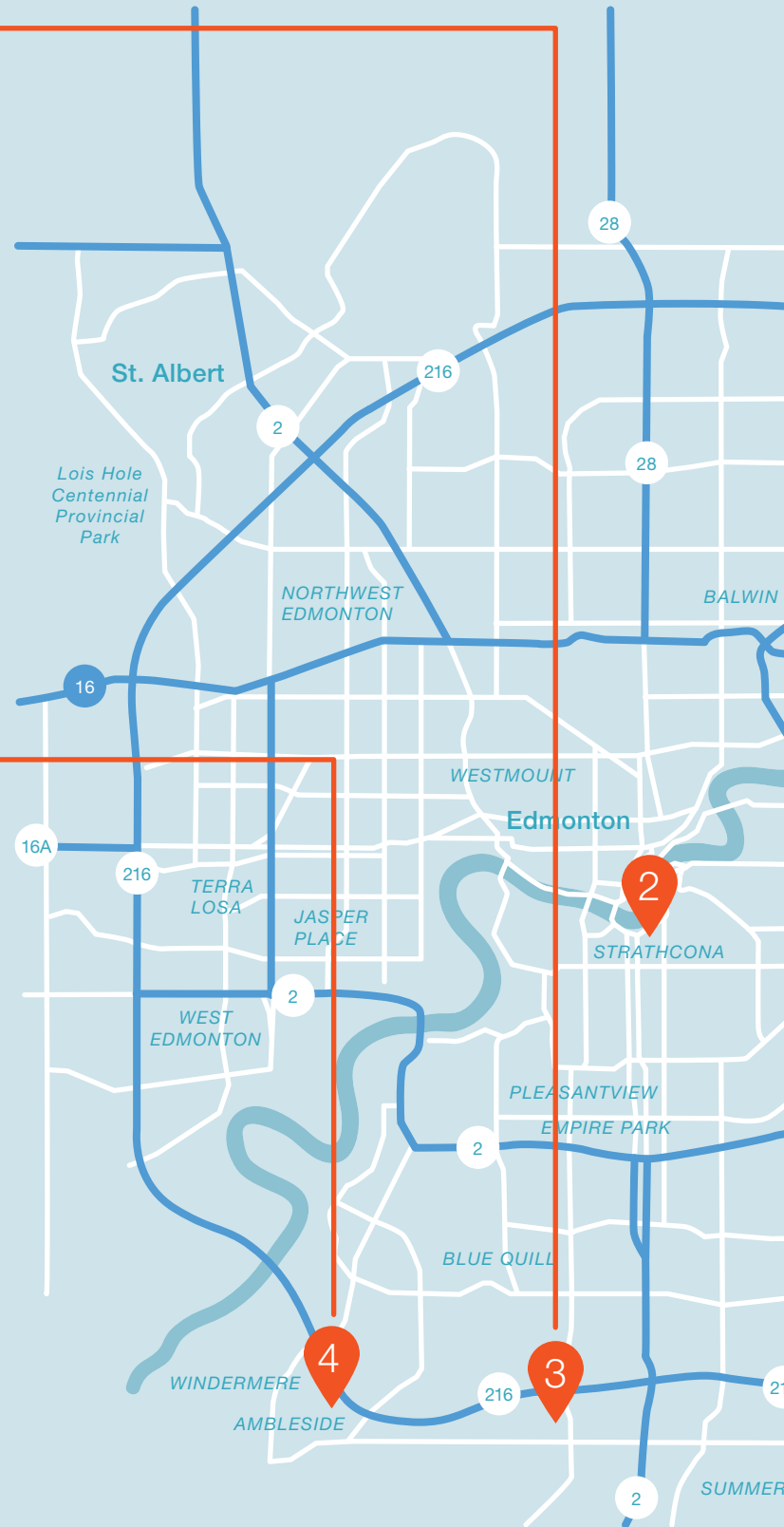
3 MacEwan – 38 du/nrha

MacEwan accommodates higher-density housing next to commercial development at Ellerslie Road SW and 111 Street, as well as along the 111th Street transit corridor planned for future LRT extension from Century Park at 23 Avenue. Strategically located open spaces provide additional amenities within the community. Single family, duplex, and townhomes add to a compact feel.



4 Ambleside – 35 du/nrha (planned)

The Ambleside Neighbourhood is an example of a newer community that was conceived as a master planned area with a mix of shopping, residential, employment uses and recreational amenities. Ambleside marks one of Edmonton's few developing neighbourhoods with high density residential towers. Zoned RA9 during its initial ASP stage 12 years ago, two towers began development in the last two years and two additional RA9 sites still sit vacant. Sites zoned for high density will not develop without adequate market demand, resulting in oversized infrastructure to accommodate the overestimated populations in those areas.



du/nrha

: dwelling units per net residential hectare



Urban Development Institute
EDMONTON REGION



EDMONTON REGION MAP

5 Southfort - 22 du/nrha

The Southfort ASP offers an assortment of residential housing types and densities; from neighbourhoods like Southfort Ridge offering apartment buildings and affordable starter options for new homebuyers, to Southfort Meadows offering larger single family lots. The full spectrum of housing options are available to the market, which allows people to purchase within the community and move-up housing options as their family grows. Despite the concentration of population and adjacent major recreation center, commercial development surrounding has been slow. Several large Medium & High Density Multi-Family sites remain undeveloped despite in some cases being serviced for over 10 years.



6 Summerwood, Strathcona County – 28 du/nrha

Summerwood is a predominantly residential neighbourhood located in northeast Sherwood Park. The residential portion of the original neighbourhood is approximately 128.79 ha in size, and has a broad range of housing types that cater to families with mixed income levels and in various stages of their lives. The final stage of development was completed in 2015 and there are 2197 residential units on 78.24 net hectares for a unit density of 28.08 net units/ha.



Planning for the Future

Established planning principles can help achieve higher densities.



1 Listen to the needs of residents

Developers engage and listen to the market to determine the appropriate product types, prices, lifestyle requirements and types of communities residents want. Developers also research housing innovations and try to introduce them to fit changing trends and demographics. Planning documents help plan growth but cannot manipulate the market.

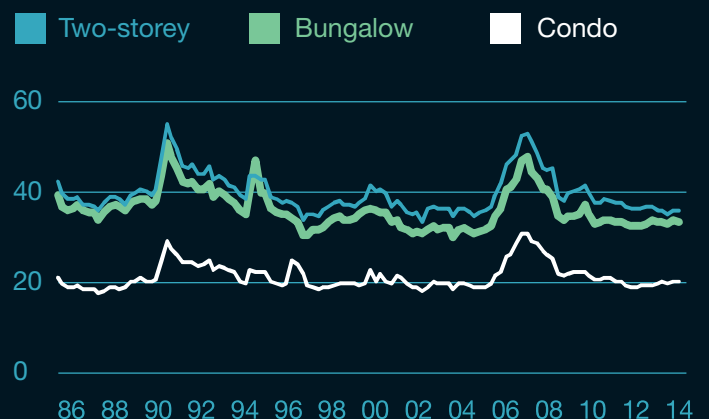
2 Provide for housing choice and variety within each new neighbourhood

Inclusive neighbourhoods provide housing diversity where people of a wide variety of backgrounds, ages and abilities can live and access basic daily needs, creating a strong community. Strong communities are essential to a livable and sustainable city. New neighbourhoods should provide a range of housing and access to a mix of services and amenities to support a diverse population, so that people can stay in the same community over the life cycle of their family. This could include single family, semi-detached homes, street-oriented townhomes and apartments.

3 Maintain the Edmonton Region's Affordability Advantage

The Edmonton region is one of few in Canada which has maintained a housing supply rich with an array of housing types. This supply and demand balance, coupled with a strong economy, has led to one of the most affordable home-ownership markets in Canada. This continues to allow the Edmonton region to be competitive for in-migration.

Alberta Ownership costs as % of household income



Source: Statistics Canada, Royal LePage, RBC Economics Research

4 Encourage density in a logical manner

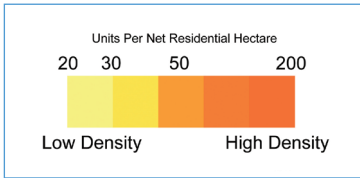
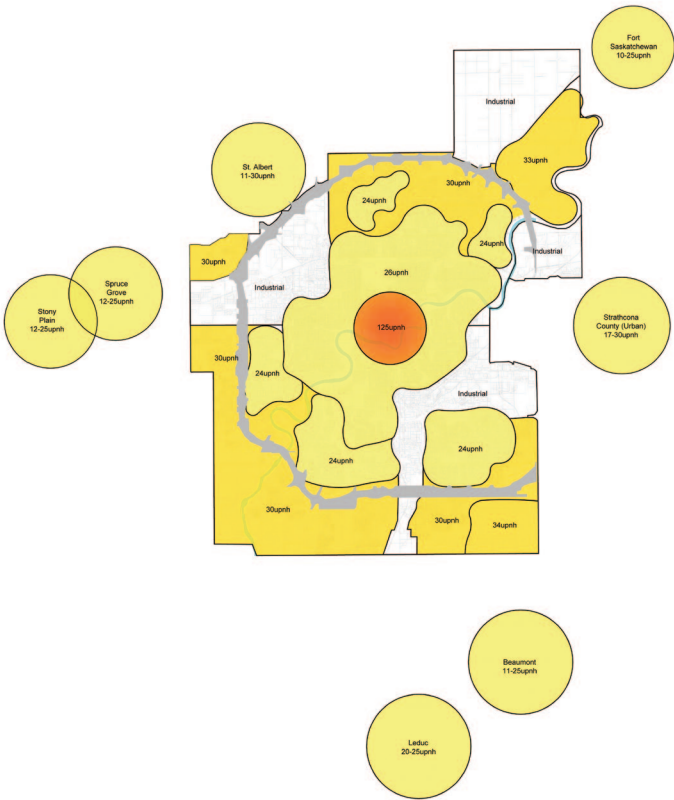
Land use, housing typology, price, amenities and transportation options work together to influence consumer choice. Municipalities have a large part to play in these factors and should encourage transit-oriented development in areas with clearly planned near term investments in high quality transit infrastructure. Increased density in greenfield could have significant impacts on infill and inhibit growth in the core neighbourhoods. Intensification needs to be focused on infill in existing areas, as these have a much lower density than new neighbourhoods and often excess capacity. Infrastructure supports growth; not the other way around.



MAP //

Existing Regional Density

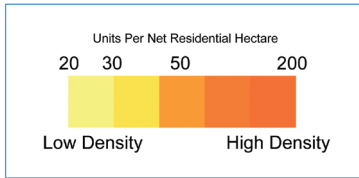
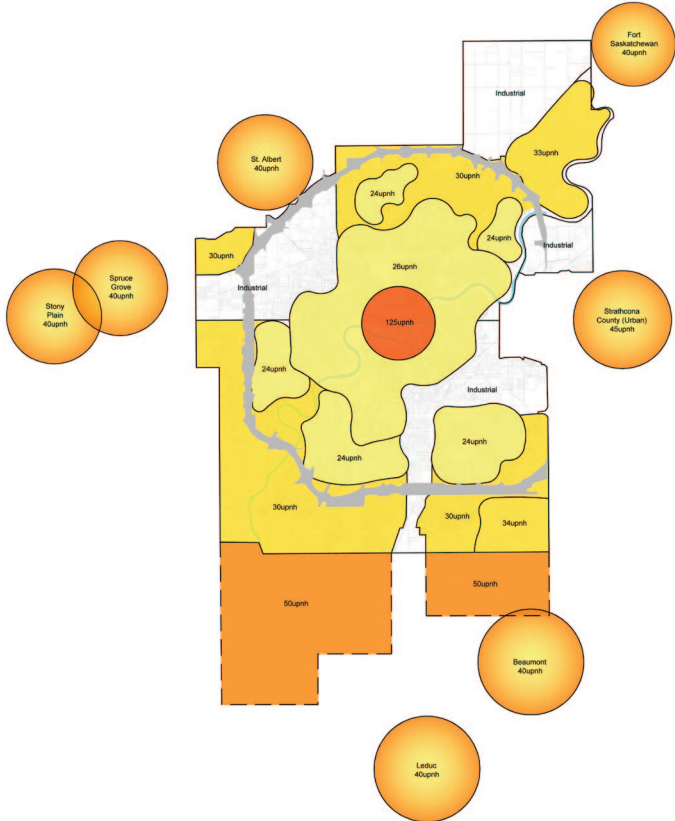
Neighbourhoods built today, and planned for the near future, provide a mix of housing types and reach densities that can be supported by the market. These neighbourhoods are built out at a higher density than those built between 1960-1990. While UDI-ER supports increased density, these increases must be logical and well planned.



MAP //

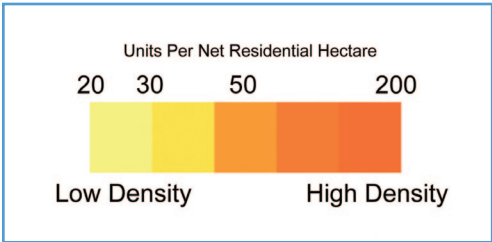
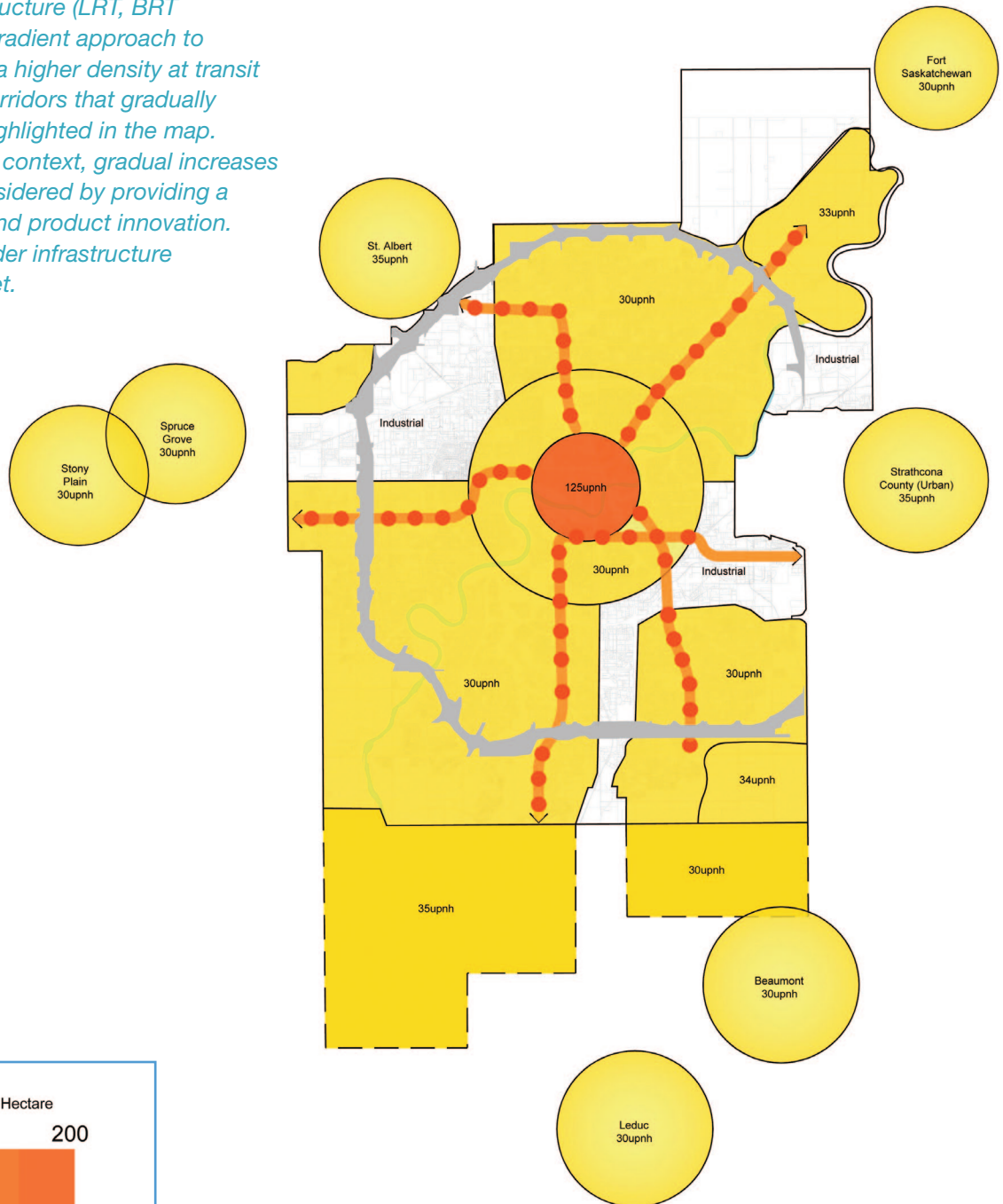
Regulatory Proposed Density

Creating a high density ring around the existing growth areas is contradictory to logical planning principles of locating density to maximize the use of infrastructure. These areas are further away from infrastructure (transit, roads and pipes) that would support these densities. UDI-ER does not support this approach.



Aspirational Gradient Density

Infill and Transit Oriented Development have the ability to support large density increases with existing or planned infrastructure (LRT, BRT etc.). UDI-ER supports a gradient approach to intensification by creating a higher density at transit nodes and along transit corridors that gradually decreases outwards, as highlighted in the map. From an Edmonton region context, gradual increases in densities should be considered by providing a variety of housing types, and product innovation. This approach must consider infrastructure implications and the market.



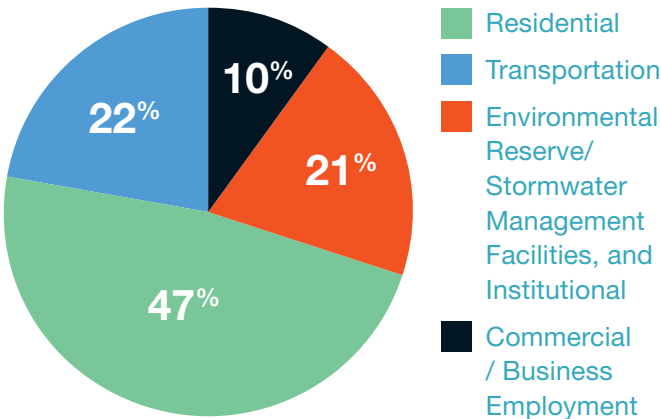
5 Achieve contiguous neighbourhood growth

When planned multi-family sites cannot be sold, they often sit vacant for years, and are typically some of the last parcels of land to be built out in a neighbourhood. Over the course of this time, Developers continue with the build out of other portions of the neighbourhood including community amenities such as parks, shopping, and lower density products. Raising density targets can result in an over-supply of multi-family sites that remain undeveloped, which will create vacant spaces that prevent the completion of communities and could result in a lower functional built density. A better solution is to invest in ways to make suburban multi-family housing forms more attractive to buyers, such as, transit, amenities and affordability.

6 Consider “Institutional density”

For example, in the model Area Structure Plan, residential housing *makes up only 47% of the land area*. Municipalities must commit to reductions in underutilized public infrastructure that is highly consumptive of land. Efficiency and intensity of use are themes that must span all of our considerations. For example, a number of the new schools recently built in Alberta are only one storey, if they were two stories, they would take up less land.

Common Land Use Breakdown



7 Implement plans carefully, clearly and over time

While we understand the need for long term aspirational goals, we believe some important considerations are overlooked when developing regulation. Unrealistic density targets may cause restrictive growth measures that discourage investment in new areas in the short term, as the density goals are challenging to achieve today.

Understanding Density is crucial for implementing regulations and developing strong sustainable communities.

Let’s continue the conversation:



info@udiedmonton.com



780.428.6146



Urban Development Institute
EDMONTON REGION