



Public Realm Guiding Principles

SCCL Board Approved v2

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SCCL Civics Committee, Maureen Duguay Chair

1. Land Acknowledgement

The lands on which Edmonton sits and the North Saskatchewan River that runs through it have been the sites of natural abundance, ceremony and culture, travel and rest, relationship building, making and trading for Indigenous peoples since time immemorial.

Edmonton is located within Treaty 6 Territory and within the Métis homelands and Métis Nation of Alberta Region 4. We acknowledge this land as the traditional territories of many First Nations such as the Nehiyaw (Cree), Denesuliné (Dene), Nak Sioux (Stoney), Anishinaabe (Saulteaux) and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot).

The city of Edmonton owes its strength and vibrancy to these lands and the diverse Indigenous peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory as well as settlers from around the world who continue to be welcomed here and call Edmonton home.

Together, we call upon all our collective honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.

2. Historical Context

The lands within the Scona District are within the traditional territory of many First Nations, including the Nehiyaw (Cree), Denesuliné (Dene), Nak Sioux (Stoney), Anishinaabe (Saulteaux) and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot). First Nations people lived on and used these lands for all their needs long before European settlers headed west. The area is also part of the Métis homeland. Despite the long and complex relationship of Indigenous peoples with the area, little tangible evidence is visible on the landscape. More recent colonial land uses erased most of the physical evidence of historic Indigenous land use from the area.

The southern portion of Scona District includes land originally reserved for the Papaschase Cree Band following the signing of Treaty 6 in 1876. In response to settler demands for land access and resources, federal politicians and land agents forced the surrender of the Papaschase Indian Reserve lands in 1888. Remaining First Nation families were forced to relocate to other reserves or given land titles for private land ownership.

This Euro-Canadian settlement of the Scona District accelerated with the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1891, and the community grew around the rail station, incorporating as the Town of Strathcona in 1899 and then the City of Strathcona in 1907. In 1902 the Strathcona Town Council passed a fire prevention bylaw that required the use of brick in new developments, instead of wood frame. Several of the impressive brick buildings and local icons that remain in the area today, such as the Garneau Lamp, were built during this era.

Formerly Edmonton's rival community, Strathcona was amalgamated with Edmonton in 1912, due in large part to the construction of the High Level Bridge, which was completed shortly afterwards in 1913. Originally, the bridge served four different modes of transportation: train, streetcar, automobiles and pedestrians. Following amalgamation, Strathcona experienced an economic slowdown as development activity concentrated north of the river, which allowed the preservation of much of the area's pre-World War I buildings and architecture.

The arrival of the CPR had a significant impact on surrounding development. The railway and 35 hectare rail yard continued to have an impact on Scona District's built form throughout the 20th century. Surrounding the yard, large lots were created for rail facilities and rail-related industries. Due to the rail line, connections between east and west were limited, meaning that Whyte Avenue was the primary east-west corridor, with the addition of 63 and 51 Avenues as the city expanded south.

Scona District is also home to the University of Alberta, which was founded in 1908 on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River. The University has grown consistently since then into one of Canada's largest universities. Its primary North Campus has grown to around 150 buildings across 125 hectares. The University has also impacted development far beyond the boundaries of its campus. There are many shops and cafes, houses and apartment towers that all exist primarily to serve the students and staff at the University. In addition to its North Campus, Scona District also contains the University's South Campus, a large tract of undeveloped land originally purchased by the University in 1920 for use by the Faculty of Agriculture.

3. Old Strathcona

The physical environment of Strathcona both natural and historical, is intrinsically valuable and vital to the life of the community. The important qualities of the community include its proximity to the North Saskatchewan River and Mill Creek Ravine, the abundance of historically significant residential and commercial structures, the vibrant cultural events and festivals, the attractive streetscapes and diversity of housing types, the diverse commercial area, the bike infrastructure and walkable nature of the community. They all are valued and contribute to an active lifestyle.

4. SCCL Guiding Principles for A Public Realm Strategy

The Strathcona Community is part of a vibrant and active region that includes many public spaces. We want our public spaces to be accessible, inclusive, safe, comfortable, support an active lifestyle and honour the historic significance of our buildings and lands. The following guiding principles have been established by the SCCL to frame our approach to the public realm within which we live.

4.1. Connections with Community

In order for community and public members to come together and engage within Strathcona's common spaces, the following principles should be applied:

- Residents must be involved in the design and planning of public realm spaces
- Public spaces must be safe, comfortable and accessible
- Public spaces must promote inclusivity and diversity and support a healthy lifestyle
- A variety of outdoor gathering spaces, at multiple scales, are needed
- Parklets, plazas, community gardens and open green spaces are needed
- Quality seating, lighting, rest stops and warming stations are needed
- The environment must be welcoming for socializing
- People need to be able to move freely and easily during all four seasons
- Active transportation is needed
- Public realm spaces need to include adequate and accessible bike /stroller lock up features
- Clear wayfaring should identify parking, walking routes and linkages to park area
- Clear wayfaring should also identify significant historical and cultural points in Strathcona

4.2. Historic Significance

To enhance and highlight the historic significance and distinctive character of the Strathcona community, the following principles must be part of the public realm strategy:

- Historic buildings need to be protected and rehabilitated
- Prominent views, familiar landmarks, and historic architecture should be maintained
- Historic building and features associated with Strathcona should not be obscured from view or shaded by new development improvements
- Stakeholders should collaborate to protect and manage Strathcona's heritage in the public realm
- Elders and members of the Indigenous community are primary stakeholders to share their history

4.3. Safety

The public realm must be safe in order to invite community and public members to use it. The principles identified below promote a safe and welcoming Strathcona community:

- Public spaces must be mixed and diverse so that they are vibrant and busy
- Spaces need to be well lit and safe for all users, at all times, day and night
- Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles should be followed
- All spaces for all community members needs to drive the design process

4.4. Inclusive and Equitable Public Spaces

Public spaces with the Strathcona community must accommodate all community members and users. The following principles should be applied to ensure inclusive and equitable public spaces:

- Community members and users need to be part of the public realm design process
- Marginalized or underrepresented communities need to be represented in the design process
- Spaces should accommodate the values and preferences of different groups, ages and abilities
- A comprehensive needs assessment should be undertaken to identify opportunities for improved participation by all members of the community
- Spaces should be safe
- Efficient and affordable transit is critical to any redesign of the Strathcona public realm
- Public and civic engagement should be supported and encouraged. This will empower the community, ensuring inclusion and a sense of ownership of public spaces.

4.5. Strathcona is a Destination

People come from all over the city to experience the unique makeup and experiences that the Strathcona community offers. Strathcona is not just a place with spaces. Events that take place in Strathcona contribute to the unique character and economy of the community. To promote this fact, the following guidelines are proposed:

- The historic and city-wide importance of Strathcona must be recognized
- Strathcona must be recognized as a focal point for historic, cultural and entertainment activities
- Cultural and festival events need to be central and co-planned as part of the public realm strategy

4.6. Winter City

The following principles will sustain the Strathcona community as part of a thriving winter city:

- A public realm strategy should be designed to encourage activities for four seasons
- Spaces such as street patios and public plazas should be flexible in design to have equal use in non-summer seasons

4.7. Ecology

The Strathcona community consists of green spaces, parklands and the river valley. Emphasis of the importance of these spaces is encouraged by the following guiding principles:

- All public realm planning should be done to ensure a positive impact on the ecology of the area
- Efficient affordable public transit will lessen emissions by reducing the need for automobiles
- Green spaces and landscape architecture should be created and maintained
- Clear wayfaring should link public spaces and natural environments such as the river valley
- Trees should be planted and protected along all the neighborhood's boulevards and avenues