

## Questions (with clarification)

To continue the edmontonian's look at Edmonton's food economy I hope you can answer a few questions:

1. In the MDP, why did the protection of agricultural land change?

I was referring to something I found in a document from the Greater Edmonton Alliance: "The Planning Department has gone the other direction and divorced food security from land use. They are suggesting that food security and land use are not mutually dependent. In amendments released to the public on June 4th, Planning has removed the notion of creating a secure land supply from their section on food security in order to "reduce the expectation that food security demands agricultural land preservation within Edmonton".

Is this factually accurate? If so, why were the amendments they refer to made?

2. With the new approach to community-based gardening, what about people who can't garden, whether because they live in apartments, they are physically incapable, or they just don't have time?

Again referring to GEA document: "The sum total of their [MDP-City] food security strategy is community gardens. This leaves the door open to paving over prime agricultural land without consideration of our food needs in the future. Their words are: ensure access to local food through neighbourhood level approaches to local food, gardening and smaller scale food production"...suggesting that each of us will be responsible on our own for figuring out how we might access local food.

If the above document is correct, and amendments were made removing "creating a secure land supply" from the draft MDP, does that shift the onus of local food security to individual citizens and community gardening organizations? More specifically, how would that translate into food security for people who don't have the means or capacity to participate?

3. Can you just re-zone the specific agricultural land to which the MDP refers to? What would prompt the re-zoning of that land (I assume the answer is that landowners want to develop it)? Also, by what process would that (or any) land be re-zoned? Would it be a matter of landowners lobbying the administration or the council? (I'm a City Hall newbie, so some of the basics needs to be spelled out for me!)

4. Could the city just buy the land back and deem it for agricultural use only? Can you/would you buy other land for such a use?

Any other information you think may be of interest is also welcome.

## Answers

### Background

The MDP continues to be a work in progress. It has not yet received final Council approval. So it is still in the “draft” stage.

Extensive public consultation led to the initial draft which was first presented to City Council at a Public Hearing in November 2008. After hearing from many interested Edmontonians, City Council directed the MDP project team to provide further information in response to what was heard. Some amendments were proposed as a result of the issues that were raised, and those were considered at the continuation of the Public Hearing at the end of June 2009. City Council will discuss and vote on those amendments in September 2009, including those you raise about agricultural land. Then the amended MDP will be reviewed at another Public Hearing in November 2009.

The draft Municipal Development Plan is available for viewing on-line along with the draft Transportation Master Plan, as well as the City’s Vision / Ten Year Strategic Plan at [www.edmonton.ca/transformingedmonton](http://www.edmonton.ca/transformingedmonton).

The latest City Council minutes for the June 23/29 Public Hearing on this matter can be viewed at [http://www.edmonton.ca/city\\_government/city\\_organization/city-council-public-hearing-minutes.aspx](http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/city_organization/city-council-public-hearing-minutes.aspx).

1. The future status of the agricultural lands in northeast Edmonton is still to be determined. At a policy level the current MDP, known as Plan Edmonton, designates the lands as agricultural, with policy that directs that the lands be preserved as agricultural land until needed for urban development. Currently, at the zoning level, most of these lands are zoned as AG (Agricultural Zone). The draft MDP, at the policy level, proposes that the lands be designated as Urban Growth Area and that an Area Structure Plan (ASP) can be prepared that integrates urban agricultural uses into plans for the area. The draft MDP does not propose the AG land use zoning be changed at this time. The exact policy designation for the draft MDP remains up for discussion when Council reconvenes on September 4, 2009.

2. The related issue of food security is discussed in a background report that accompanied the latest round of MDP hearings titled: “Agricultural Lands and Food Security Background Paper.” (available with the minutes from the June23/29 meeting).

Community gardens is only one aspect of the draft MDP’s objectives for local food security and access to healthy food. The draft MDP also proposes that Edmonton develop a local food security strategy and support a provincial and regional approach to food security. Council will be debating retaining reference to a secure land supply on September 4, 2009.

3. As noted in response 1, above, most of the current zoning is agricultural and is not proposed for change at this time. The proposed MDP designation indicate the direction the City wishes to go with regard to those lands.

The MDP is at the top of the city planning hierarchy. The MDP can be amended by City Council, but any amendments must go through a public hearing so that those affected can comment. All land development plans must conform to the policies of the MDP. Any development or plan that does not comply will not be supported by the Administration.

Large areas and entire neighbourhoods are classified for certain kinds of development, going through a similar public meeting process as the MDP. Even small parcels of land are classified and zoned for certain uses. To re-zone land, the landowner or majority landowner need to go through an extensive application process, which includes involving the public to make sure all those affected have a say before development proceeds. City Council makes the final decision on zoning or redevelopment changes.

4. The city does buy land for parkland or for public facilities but has not purchased land to retain it in agricultural use. The land in the northeast amounts to 10,000 acres of land which could be beyond the city's ability to buy. The Provincial Land Use Framework and a recently approved Bill 36 might provide tools for retaining agricultural land. City Council would make the final decision on purchasing land.