

Opportunities to Improve Zoning Bylaw Regulations to Increase Resilient Landscaping

Circulation Summary

Edmonton

Executive Summary

- In 2024, Council approved the Climate Resilience Planning and Development (CRPD) Action Plan, with Action 4 focusing on increasing resilient landscaping on private property.
- 16 actions are proposed to improve zoning regulations to increase plant survival, advance the City's tree canopy goals, build climate resilience, and support more livable urban environments.
- A two-phased approach is proposed to implement the actions. Phase 1 includes 10 less complex actions to be implemented in Q2 2027. Phase 2 includes six actions requiring further analysis and scenario testing.
- A report detailing the proposed recommendations, background research, engagement feedback, and a private tree bylaw update (timelines for engagement and reporting) is tentatively scheduled to be presented to Urban Planning Committee on December 1, 2026.

Background

In 2024, Council approved the Climate Resilience Planning and Development (CRPD) Action Plan with 15 priority actions to incorporate climate resilience into the planning and development continuum. Action 4 in the plan, to pursue options to increase resilient landscaping on private property, was partly in response to a previous Council motion passed at the October 16 - 23, 2026, Public Hearing that directed Administration to provide an analysis on the landscaping provisions as part of the Zoning Bylaw's one-year review report and provide amendment options to further implement the work of climate resilience in planning and development, if necessary.

Action 4 Overview

Action 4 of the CRPD Action Plan includes two approaches to increase resilient landscaping on private property. The first includes assessing current landscaping, programming, processes and resources to identify:

- Opportunities to increase Zoning Bylaw compliance levels of new developments.
- Public education, partnerships, capacity building and other initiatives to increase resilient landscaping on private properties.

The second approach includes assessing landscaping regulations and identifying opportunities to increase resilient landscaping including:

- Increased use of drought-resistant and native species.
- Increased use of low impact development (LID).
- Increased tree count and canopy coverage.
- Increased naturalization and permeable area.

- Increased topsoil depth.
- Expanded requirements for minimum soft landscaping area into other zones.
- Improved landscaping in parking lots.

Programs, Processes and Resources

Administration has improved processes and zoning rules to increase landscaping compliance for new developments. This includes Zoning Bylaw amendments in 2025 to adjust landscape security requirements for [larger scale residential and non-residential development](#) to ensure developers install and maintain the minimum landscaping required by collecting the full landscape security amount before construction begins. It also includes recent amendments made in May 2026 to implement the first phase of expanding the landscape security program to [small scale residential developments](#) in redeveloping areas that will go into effect on January 1, 2027.

Administration is launching an educational campaign to support new landscaping requirements and promote resilient landscaping on private property. Resources and training for City staff, city-building partners, and the public will highlight best practices and emphasize how green infrastructure improves Edmonton's livability and health. Additional tools and resources being developed to support builders, residents and businesses include:

- Checklists and tip sheets incorporating landscaping best practices.
- A self-assessment web application to help residents make informed landscaping choices tailored to their property's site conditions.
- Educational videos focused on tree planting, maintenance, pruning, and preservation, featuring dedicated guidance on caring for elm trees on private property.
- A master Edmonton plant list consolidating data across City sources with plant specific information to assist staff, applicants, contractors, business operators and residents in selecting suitable, locally available plants.

Action 15 of the City's updated Climate Implementation Priorities will continue and expand the promotion of resilient landscaping practices through education programming and outreach.

Improving Zoning Bylaw Regulations

Administration analyzed current landscaping regulations and approaches that other jurisdictions implement, reviewed landscaping variances issued since implementing Zoning Bylaw 20001, and undertook both targeted and public engagement to identify opportunities for improving zoning regulations to increase resilient landscaping on private property. Based on the analysis and engagement feedback, Administration proposes to implement 16 actions to improve landscaping practices to increase plant survival rates, advance the City's tree canopy goals, build climate resilience and support more livable environments for Edmontonians. Highlights of the proposed actions include:

- Introducing a minimum percentage of required landscaping to be drought-resistant, native or climate adaptive.
- Improving flexible plant diversity requirements to go above the 50:50 ratio of deciduous to coniferous plants.
- Clarifying sufficient soil requirements by embedding minimum topsoil depths and volumes in the Zoning Bylaw that align with the City's Design and Construction Standards.

- Improving the soft landscaping definition and regulations for greater clarity and expanding minimum soft landscape area requirements to more intensive residential and non-residential development and zones.
- Incentivizing tree preservation and low impact development (LID) by allowing mature trees and corresponding existing soil and LID features to count towards a higher amount of soft landscaping.
- Shifting tree planting requirements from focusing primarily on minimum counts to canopy coverage.
- Allowing larger, consolidated landscaped parking islands in place of smaller islands to provide more access to soil and space for trees and shrubs.

Further details on the opportunities to improve Zoning Bylaw regulations to increase resilient landscaping are included in Attachment 1.

Proposed Phasing and Implementation of Zoning Actions

A two-phased approach is proposed to implement the 16 recommendations.

- **Phase 1** includes 10 actions where Administration will conduct further targeted engagement and return to a future City Council Public Hearing with draft amendments in Q2 2027.
- **Phase 2** includes six actions that require further analysis, scenario testing and targeted engagement with city-building partners and EPCOR to determine their feasibility and impact on intended outcomes in consideration of development types and complexity to implement.

Further details on the proposed phasing of the actions and implementation considerations can be found in Attachment 2.

Community Insights

A variety of engagement activities were conducted to gather feedback from the public and interested parties about resilient landscaping on private property, including:

- Public survey and questionnaire that ran from July 15 to August 5, 2026
- An industry-focused workshop on July 8, 2026, with city-building partners including a mix of builders, developers and landscape professionals from local industry associations.
- Targeted interviews with community organizations from July 23 to August 14, 2026.

A high-level summary of the feedback received is included in Attachment 3. A comprehensive What We Heard Report of the engagement feedback will be included in the report presented to Urban Planning Committee (tentatively scheduled for December 1, 2026).