

*Planning for Opportunities*

# SMART GROWTH

St. Albert

## ***FINAL SUMMARY REPORT***

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With recommendations to Senior Leadership Team  
January 2010

**CONTENTS**

Introduction..... 4  
    Growth Challenges facing St. Albert ..... 4  
    Meeting St. Albert’s Growth Challenge ..... 4  
    MDP Vision and Guiding principles ..... 5  
    Principles of Smart Growth..... 6  
Project & Process..... 7  
    Smart Growth St. Albert process summary ..... 7  
Research/Policy Development ..... 8  
    Literature Review..... 8  
        Pull-out..... 8  
        Presentation ..... 8  
        Bulletins ..... 8  
        Case Studies..... 8  
        Bibliography ..... 8  
        Website ..... 8  
        Articles ..... 8  
    Technical Review ..... 8  
        Internal Departments ..... 8  
        Regulatory Review..... 8  
        Technical Bulletins and papers ..... 9  
Public Consultation ..... 9  
    Smart Growth Community preference survey/focus groups ..... 9  
    Smart Growth Consultation ..... 9  
        Smart Growth Orientation ..... 9  
        Form-based zoning workshop ..... 10  
    Smart Growth Workshops ..... 10  
    Council Workshops..... 10  
    Public Survey..... 10  
    Non-resident Survey..... 10  
Fiscal Impact Analysis..... 11  
    Socio-economic impact ..... 11  
    Municipal fiscal impact..... 11  
    Developer impact..... 11  
Recommendations ..... 11  
    Smart Growth Principles for St. Albert..... 11  
    Implementing Smart Growth St. Albert..... 12

## **ATTACHMENTS**

### ATTACHMENT A

#### Research

1. Smart Growth presentation
2. Smart Growth pull-out
3. Smart Growth report (bulletins)
4. Case studies
5. Reference list

#### Technical Review Summary

6. Engineering, Public Works, Transit
7. Business Development & Tourism
8. Recreation

#### Regulatory Review

9. Technical Bulletins and papers
10. Summary of technical and regulatory review

### ATTACHMENT B

#### Public consultation/education

11. Terms of Reference
12. Talking with residents about Smart Growth St. Albert (Community Image Survey)
13. Public Consultation Summary
14. Smart Growth Workshop Summary
15. Smart Growth Public Survey Final Report
16. Non-resident Survey Final Report

### ATTACHMENT C

#### Smart Growth Economic Impact Report

17. Final report (draft) – Smart Growth Economic Impact

### ATTACHMENT D

#### Proposed LUB bylaw amendments

18. Proposed amendments to LUB definitions
19. Proposed text amendments to Parts 1-3 of the LUB
20. Proposed new section of LUB on Form-based zoning for annexed lands

# ***SMART GROWTH ST. ALBERT***

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This document summarizes the results of the work that has been completed by the Planning and Development Department on the Smart Growth St. Albert initiative. It includes recommendations to Senior Leadership Team for growth in the annexed lands based on Smart Growth principles.

## **GROWTH CHALLENGES FACING ST. ALBERT**

There are a number of growth-related challenges facing St. Albert that became evident with the annexation of the land in 2007. These include:

- Limited land available adjacent to St. Albert in which it would be suitable to continue to grow as an urban city.
- Demographics of the city have changed dramatically in the last 20 years, and trends suggest further continued changes.
- Congestion and traffic management continues to be a challenge, and an increase in population will only exacerbate that.
- Municipal and development costs for continued services and infrastructure will become unsustainable if the city continues to grow as it has.
- More flexibility is needed in development requirements to allow development, business and the City to effectively respond to changing markets and economy.
- Direction from the Capital Region Board that is guiding changes towards higher densities, more focused urban development in select centres (one of which is St. Albert), regional transit and affordable housing.
- It will become harder to retain the vision and guiding principles of St. Albert if the City continues to grow in the same way.

## **MEETING ST. ALBERT'S GROWTH CHALLENGE**

To meet the growth challenges facing St. Albert, increasing density is a key component. There are many benefits to be gained through increased densities:

- Land conservation and environmental protection
- Access to and support for transit and alternative transportation choices
- Support for housing choice and affordability
- Improvement to walkability and access to services
- Supporting the community's fiscal health
- Improving safety and security

However, there are tremendous challenges in implementing density so that it works. Higher densities have been proven to work when design is made paramount. The following elements are part of the design measures that ensure a successful increase in density:

- Connected street system for multiple users
- Densities located appropriately
- Design of the public realm
- Mix of uses
- Parking placed in alternate locations
- Scale, massing and orientation of buildings is carefully considered

After significant research and public consultation, the Planning and Development Department recommends that a planning approach based on the principles of Smart Growth is the key to effectively achieving the increased densities and other changes needed related to planning and development to meet the growth challenges facing St. Albert.

MDP VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

St. Albert's current vision and guiding principles	Smart Growth – how it meets these
<i>Vision</i>	
<p>St. Albert is an inclusive, family-oriented community that values its natural, cultural, historical and recreational amenities. Our community secures the safety and well-being of its people through controlled growth, innovation and dynamic leadership.</p>	<p>Smart Growth is an innovative approach to controlling growth that requires a dynamic leadership to see it through.</p> <p>With opportunities for housing and transportation choices and different lifestyle and employment opportunities, St. Albert can once again attract more family-oriented households.</p>
<i>Guiding principles</i>	
<p>Our small-town atmosphere and our quality of community life are St. Albert's strengths. Preserve our unique character and integrity in the region by maintaining independence, controlling and managing future growth.</p>	<p>As the City grows, it loses the small-town atmosphere. This can be retained at the neighbourhood level. Smart Growth focuses on the neighbourhood and creating a sense of community at that scale.</p>
<p>We are a community of families. Give our children and parents the opportunity to stay close by. Create different options for places to live and work in St. Albert.</p>	<p>Housing options are fairly limited in St. Albert and young people and families as well as seniors are choosing other regional communities. Smart Growth provides more options to encourage these groups to stay or choose St. Albert.</p>
<p>St. Albert citizens live full and active lives. Promote a variety of cultural and recreational activities and facilities to meet diverse, multi-generational needs.</p>	<p>Greater opportunity for walkability and alternate transportation, bringing amenities and services closer together to facilitate 'living' by families, seniors, people with disabilities, during winter, etc.</p>
<p>St. Albert's local government continues to be responsive, approachable and an accountable steward of public funds and trusts. Ensure that St. Albert is a dynamic leader regarding regional cooperation in business and volunteerism.</p>	<p>Smart Growth is a more cost effective approach to growth.</p>
<p>The downtown is the traditional heart of our community. Make it a people place – where people of all ages and walks of life come together to celebrate special events, for commerce, and to nourish their spirits with arts, culture, learning and St. Albert's heritage.</p>	<p>Smart Growth recognizes the importance of downtown. A design charrette recognized how the annexed lands could be effectively connected with downtown.</p>
<p>The beauty of nature feeds people's soul, from natural areas such as Big Lake, Sturgeon River and river valley, our parks and trails, to the tree-lined streets and boulevards. Cherish and protect them for future generations. Support conservation efforts to minimize negative human impact on the environment and enhance environmental sustainability.</p>	<p>There are limited natural areas in annexed lands so smart Growth proposes various Civic spaces, increases proximity of civic spaces, maintains tree-lined streets and boulevards, and maximizes use of land.</p>
<p>Red Willow Park is the community's gift to future generations and as such continues to grow and unify our neighbourhoods. Treat it with care and respect.</p>	<p>Smart Growth ensures that Red Willow Park will continue along Carrot Creek, with opportunities for greater connections to the adjacent neighbourhoods.</p>
<p>St. Albert needs a safe, efficient flow of traffic while maintaining the serenity and safety of our neighbourhoods. Pursue innovative approaches for the movement of people and goods through and within the community.</p>	<p>With increased density comes more traffic. Smart Growth helps reduce VMT and trips per household by providing alternative transportation options and disbursement of traffic through more connected street design.</p>
<p>St. Albert seeks the development of light industry, appropriately location, and the development of commercial enterprises to meet regional and local needs.</p>	<p>Smart Growth provides more options, more flexibility for changing future demands in business.</p>

PRINCIPLES OF SMART GROWTH

Smart Growth principles	St. Albert MDP Smart Growth policy directions	St. Albert Smart Growth principles			
		Walkability	Livability	Connectivity	Sustainability
1. Housing choices	Housing choices		✓		✓
2. Transportation choices	Transportation choices	✓		✓	✓
3. Walkable neighbourhoods	Modified grid street pattern	✓		✓	
4. Mix of uses	Mixed use pedestrian-oriented neighbourhood activity centre as focus of neighbourhood	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Pedestrian orientation and connectivity within and between neighbourhoods	✓	✓	✓	
5. Compact building design	Efficient use of infrastructure and land		✓		✓
6. Build on existing communities	Energy efficient housing and neighbourhood design		✓		✓
7. Preserve natural/open space	Preservation of open space and natural areas		✓		✓
8. Unique, sense of place	<i>Included in vision, guiding principles – city-wide</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
9. Community involvement	<i>Covered through City-wide policies eg. Public Consultation Policy</i>				
10. Fair, open development decisions	<i>Covered through City-wide and provincially defined processes eg. Public Consultation Policy, ASP requirements, Subdivision Regulations, MGA</i>				

## ***PROJECT & PROCESS***

In 2007, the City of St. Albert annexed 1,337 hectares of land. With the MDP amendment to incorporate this additional land, Council provided direction to look at Smart Growth Guidelines to guide development in these annexed lands. Smart Growth St. Albert is the approach proposed to meet this direction.

### SMART GROWTH ST. ALBERT PROCESS SUMMARY

	Direction	Research/policy development			Public Consultation/ education		
2007 (July)	MDP Amendment						
		Literature review <sup>1</sup>			Community image survey/focus groups <sup>2</sup>		
2008			Technical Review – Engineering, Public Works, Transit <sup>3</sup>	Draft form-based zoning regulations; develop presentation			
2009					Orientation sessions (6) <sup>4</sup>		
					Form-based zoning workshop/open house <sup>3</sup>		
	Conduct further consultation/ education and fiscal analysis						
		Fiscal Impact Analysis <sup>5</sup>	Technical Review – Business Dev't & Tourism, and Recreation		Council workshops (5)	Glattig Jackson workshops/presentations <sup>6</sup>	Smart Growth Bulletins
					Public Survey <sup>7</sup>	Non-resident survey <sup>8</sup>	
2010	SLT to move project forward						

<sup>1</sup> Outcome: Smart Growth presentation, Pull-out, Bulletins, draft form-based zoning regulations

<sup>2</sup> Outcome: *Talking with residents about Smart Growth – Community Image survey*

<sup>3</sup> Outcome: Draft form-based zoning regulations, Smart Growth street standards, *St. Albert Trail arterial access guidelines, North arterial functional alignment study*

<sup>4</sup> Outcome: *Public Consultation Summary*

<sup>5</sup> Outcome: *Smart Growth Economic Impact Analysis Report*

<sup>6</sup> Outcome: *Smart Growth Workshop Summary*

<sup>7</sup> Outcome: *Smart Growth Public Survey Final Report*

<sup>8</sup> Outcome: *Smart Growth Non-resident Survey Final Report*

## **RESEARCH/POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

### LITERATURE REVIEW/RESEARCH

#### Pull-out

A four-page educational pull-out was developed for distribution in the local paper outlining the concept of Smart Growth for St. Albert.

#### Presentation

Information on Smart Growth and the implications for St. Albert was developed into a comprehensive and engaging presentation. This presentation was used in the orientation session of the public consultation to provide an introduction to Smart Growth St. Albert and stimulate discussion and questions. This presentation was given seven times as part of the Orientation process.

Variations on this presentation were also made to three outside groups: Alberta Municipal Lawyers Association conference, U of A City Region Studies Centre speaker series and the Alberta Association of the Canadian Institute of Planners conference.

#### Bulletins

Researched information on various Smart Growth topics was presented in 14 weekly Smart Growth Bulletins. These were distributed to a mailing list of over 150 people.

#### Case Studies

Some case studies were developed of other Smart Growth communities.

#### Bibliography

A bibliography of over 500 documents, reports, plans and articles that were reviewed throughout this process was developed.

#### Website

All information was made available on the Smart Growth section of the City's website. Between June and December, the website received over 1,500 hits.

#### Articles

Two articles were published in the AACIP Planning Digest related to the Smart Growth St. Albert initiative. The first was on the Community Image Survey as a useful public consultation tool and the second on form-based zoning as a tool for implementing Smart Growth principles.

### TECHNICAL REVIEW

#### Internal Departments

Because Smart Growth has implications for a number of City departments, efforts were made to work with these different groups to provide them with information on the Smart Growth initiative and to determine potential challenges and benefits for the different departments. The most extensive review was with Engineering, Public Works and Transit as the physical, standard and service level implications were greatest. Review was also conducted with Business Development and Tourism, and Recreation.

#### Regulatory Review

Various regulations were reviewed related to conventional and form-based zoning and overlays, design guidelines and bonus matrices. Form-based zoning is considered a best practice for implementing Smart Growth. Draft form-based zoning regulations were prepared that combined a mix of conventional elements of zoning along with this new regulatory method to provide a tool that adapted the form-based approach to the singular local requirements of St. Albert. A thorough review of the technical and regulatory details was undertaken.

### Technical Bulletins and papers

A series of nine Technical Bulletins was prepared detailing the various elements of the form-based zoning approach. A few technical papers were also prepared on select topics.

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

Extensive public consultation was conducted throughout the process, involving about 1,200 people.

### SMART GROWTH COMMUNITY PREFERENCE SURVEY/FOCUS GROUPS

A Community Image survey was conducted at the beginning of the process to assess resident's preferences for different types of development and Smart Growth principles, and determine the feasibility of proceeding further. A total of 163 people took part in the survey either online, using a workbook or in the focus groups.

Overall, respondents supported the four Smart Growth principles presented and preferred active, vibrant public spaces and streets enclosed and defined by buildings. They liked mixed-use areas, were open to a variety of housing types and good connections between activities and destinations. A desire for well thought-out and well-designed developments and urban environments, the Public Realm, was evident throughout.

### SMART GROWTH CONSULTATION

A two-phased approach was used to present the ideas and concepts on Smart Growth as they applied to St. Albert and secondly to look at the proposed means to implement Smart Growth concepts through the use of Form-based Zoning regulations. Over 150 people took part, representing 17 stakeholder groups and members of the public. Stakeholder groups included:

- Landowners in annexed lands
- Urban Development Institute
- Canadian Home Builders' Association
- St. Albert Economic Development Advisory Committee
- Environmental Advisory Committee
- St. Albert Chamber of Commerce
- St. Albert Protestant Schools
- Greater North Central Francophone School District
- St. Albert Catholic School District
- Northern Alberta Business Incubator
- Subdivision and Development Appeal Board
- St. Albert Library Board
- St. Albert Housing Society
- Community Services Advisory Board
- Transitional Residential Services
- St. Albert Youth Community Centre
- Alberta Health Services (Capital Health)

### Smart Growth Orientation

The orientation sessions consisted of a presentation on Smart Growth St. Albert and an overview of Form-based Zoning regulations. Following the presentation, participants had the opportunity to ask questions and gain clarity about the concept.

Opportunities participants found with the Smart Growth concept included: creating a strong community; transit, walkability & density; housing opportunities; and opportunities for flexibility and diversity. Questions they raised included: cost of Smart Growth vs conventional; support for and potential success of commercial development; market acceptance of this type of development; ensure industrial development; feasibility in winter.

### Form-based zoning workshop

A workshop was held with planning and engineering consultants, the people most likely to work closely with the regulations once they are in place. The intent was to work through and test the regulations with them. This enabled them to get a better understanding of the regulations and their intent, and then to practically use the regulations to create neighbourhoods. This was a unique approach to public consultation, working with stakeholders to gain meaningful input to improve and strengthen the document prior to taking it to Council.

Participants were positive about the approach and made some suggestions for improvement in: clarifying how various civic spaces would work and relate to municipal and school reserves and stormwater management requirements; encouraging more back lanes; clarifying the process for ASP development; clarifying transitions.

### SMART GROWTH WORKSHOPS

Consultants from the internationally recognized firm Glatting Jackson Anglin and Kercher spent three days in St. Albert working with the public, staff, landowners and Council. The purpose of this week was to conduct a series of workshops and 'audits' over the three days to explore smart growth principles for transportation and design and how it could be applied in the City of St. Albert.

Activities included: walkability audit, public presentation on walkability and livable transportation, design charrette with landowners and developers from the annexed lands, walking workshop on form-based zoning and a workshop with Council and senior leadership team. The goal of the activities was to empower staff, Council and residents to move forward on Smart Growth with more knowledge. Over 110 people took part in the week's activities.

### COUNCIL WORKSHOPS

Five workshops were held with Council and Senior Leadership Team to provide more in-depth information and education on various topics related to the Smart Growth process.

### PUBLIC SURVEY

Over 600 people took part in a comprehensive survey to assess people's preferences for development, their preferences should they be in a position to move to a new neighbourhood and their preferences for future development in St. Albert.

The survey showed there is a preference for Smart Growth development both for the neighbourhood/shopping areas people would prefer if they were to move and that they would prefer to see for future development in St. Albert. For future development in St. Albert, two-thirds or more of respondents would prefer Smart Growth street design, three-quarters prefer Smart Growth approaches to park development, and 70% would prefer Smart Growth approaches to shopping area design. On average nearly 50% preferred Smart Growth housing options, although the number strongly preferring them was considerably lower than the other categories.

When asked about the type of neighbourhoods and shopping areas they would want to find in a new neighbourhood if they were to move, responses were about 10% lower for street design, park development and housing, but still significant in showing a preference for Smart Growth development. Preferences for shopping areas were the same.

### NON-RESIDENT SURVEY

There were two versions of this survey made available and a total of 124 people completed one or the other. People are most likely to move away from St. Albert for reasons related to housing and lifestyle. Non-residents are most likely to choose other communities for housing-related reasons, but not as predominantly as the former residents. Lifestyle plays a greater role in the decision-making by non-residents.

## **FISCAL IMPACT ANALYSIS**

This report includes three key elements: a socio-economic impact analysis, a municipal fiscal impact analysis and a developer impact analysis.

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT**

The Socio-economic impact assessment suggests Smart Growth provides benefits in decreased automobile use and increases in other forms of transportation, increased economic competitiveness in the region, reduced negative environmental impacts of development, more opportunities for active living and improved health, land conservation, and improved community cohesion.

### **MUNICIPAL FISCAL IMPACT**

The Municipal Fiscal impact analysis suggests, among other things, that the city would generate net positive impacts two times higher under the Smart Growth scenario.

### **DEVELOPER IMPACT**

For developers, who cover much of the infrastructure costs of new development, costs under Smart Growth would be about 22% higher, but looked at on a per dwelling unit basis would be 24% lower.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

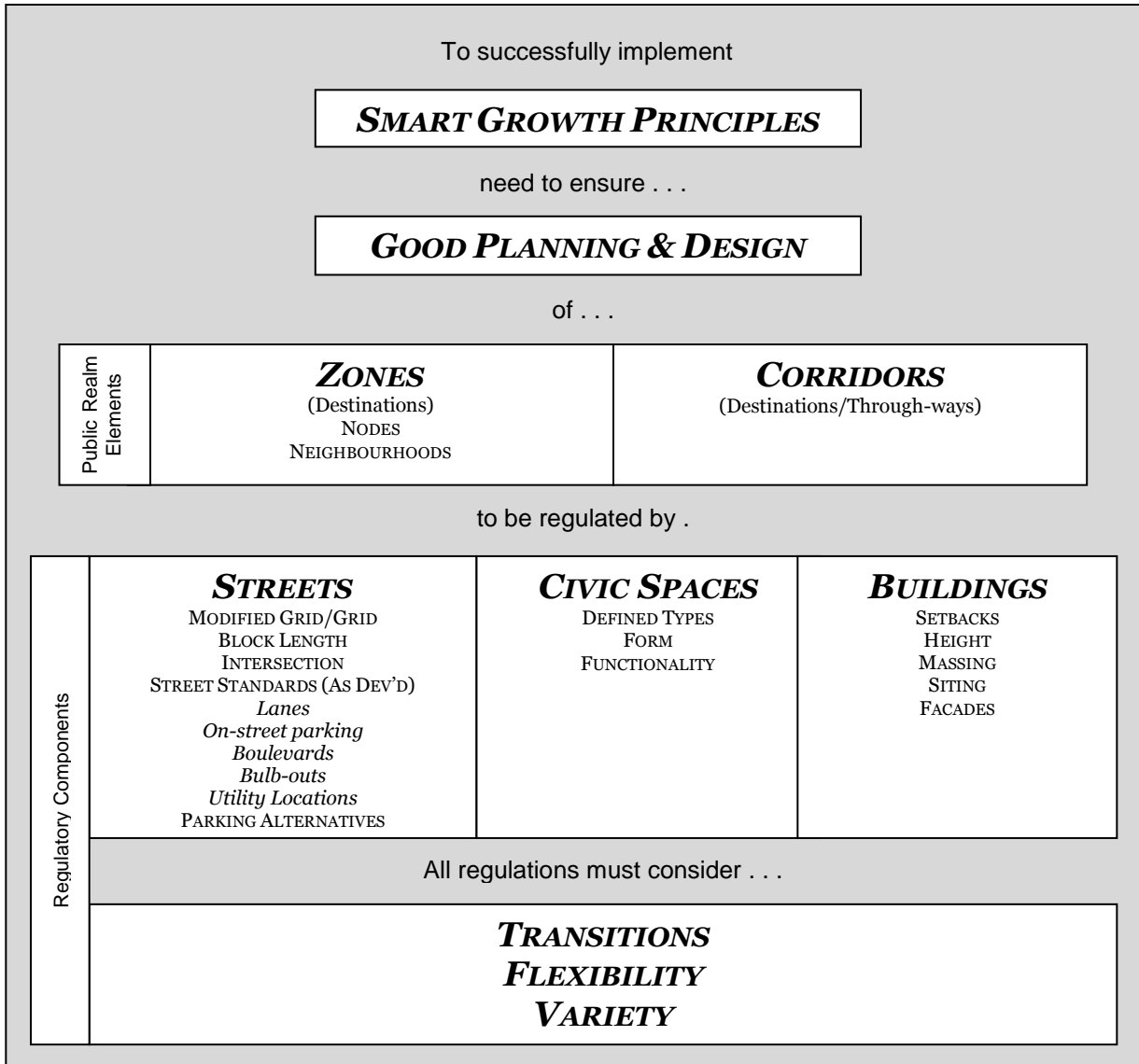
### **SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES FOR ST. ALBERT**

The Planning & Development Department recommends that the following Smart Growth principles guide development in the annexed lands:

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Walkability</b>    | Development that provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Buildings that define and create strong, pedestrian-friendly public spaces and streets</li><li>• Dense, mixed-use centres and corridors defining and linking neighbourhoods</li><li>• Safe and comfortable pedestrian experiences in all seasons</li></ul> |
| <b>Livability</b>     | Development that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing choices for a variety of lifestyles, incomes and needs within each neighbourhood</li><li>• Visitable places for people of all abilities</li><li>• Active, vibrant streets and public spaces</li></ul>  |
| <b>Connectivity</b>   | Development that provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Various modes of transportation that are balanced with the needs of pedestrians</li><li>• Direct linkages between and within neighbourhoods</li><li>• A modified grid street system</li></ul>  |
| <b>Sustainability</b> | Development that provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Combining the built environment with existing natural systems and features</li><li>• Energy efficient housing and neighbourhood design and construction</li></ul>  |

IMPLEMENTING SMART GROWTH ST. ALBERT

The following chart shows an overview of the essential elements and components that are necessary for the actual implementation of Smart Growth principles.



The Planning and Development Department recommends that the regulatory tool for implementing Smart Growth St. Albert be Form-based Zoning as part of the Land Use Bylaw:

- Parts 1-5 of the Land Use Bylaw would continue to apply for both Conventional and Form-based zoning and there are some text changes required in these sections for clarification.
- Parts 6-10 of the Land Use Bylaw would continue to apply to all lands in St. Albert except those in the annexed lands, and no changes are required to these.
- A new section would be added to the Land Use Bylaw that would include all of the Form-based Zoning regulations that would apply to the annexed lands.