

Agenda: Industrial Stakeholder Sessions

May 20 and June 9, 2009

May 20, 2009

Introductions

Goals of Review

- Improve consistency and flexibility
- Better accommodate industrial support uses
- Better align text of the bylaw with the original framework
- Better align industrial districts with current industry form and use

Managing Expectations

- Expand on the frameworks intent to have more fine grain industrial districts to help us better plan the industrial areas
 - Control the location of office buildings and commercial uses within the industrial areas
 - Preserve general industrial land for industrial uses
 - Recognize older industrial areas and their unique development characteristics
 - Improve the interface between residential and industrial areas
- Better plan for the location of higher intensity uses such as office or retail
- Build within existing industrial districts
- Avoid City initiated re-designations

“We are hoping that some of you are interested in taking ownership of some of these issues, so that we have someone to discuss issues with and further clarify items that are brought up prior to the next stakeholder meeting.”

Review of the Districts

Explain LUB, permitted discretionary

Explain the purpose of the industrial districts

“All industrial land was transitioned to one of the new land use districts as part of the implementation of 1P2007. Moving buildings that were designed for ultimate flexibility to much more prescriptive land use districts have brought many of these issues to light.”

Background and discussion of known issues

Review chart below

June 9, 2009

Finish Background and discussion of known issues

Introduction and discussion of additional issues

Add to chart below

Future involvement

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Office

Background: Industrial areas often provide the cheapest and most available land to build offices. This is not always the appropriate place for office as there may not be adequate roads, transportation or infrastructure for these intensive employment generating uses. In some industrial areas office should function to support the more intensive industrial uses on the parcel. The expectations of pure office users versus industrial users may also be very different.

The I-G district only allows 10% of a building to be independent office, the I-R district does not allow for office. The I-B district was intended to be the district for stand alone office. An office greater than 10% of a building would be allowed if it was associated with an industrial use occurring in the same building.

Issue: What is the role of stand alone office in Industrial areas, specifically I-G and I-R districts? Do R & D offices function differently than the more traditional “professional” style office? How can the role of office as a support use be strengthened in these districts?

Notes:

- Office space needs to be increased (some buildings require as much as a 50% build-out).
- Rigid bylaw requires that developers know the specific type of tenant prior to the construction of the site. When the users change, subleasing is very difficult and often results in excessive warehouse space. The change of use also requires a Development Permit, which takes too long.
- Many offices leave after 3 or 5 years, when they are large enough to afford commercial land and also require the exposure of high-traffic areas.
- Typical office uses in industrial areas: telecommunications, sales offices, office related to industrial use (lawyers, accountants, etc.), data centres, oil services, other small businesses.
- No existing building to date has been at or under the 10% rule for independent office.
- We should not define different kinds of office (e.g. R&D office, Sales Office, Professional office etc...) – this would remove even more flexibility

Retail and Display Areas

Background: The mix of uses allowed in industrial areas has changed significantly over the past 20 years. The wholesale store model has become more popular and there has been a shift in some industrial areas to include more retail type uses. Traditionally the sale of large bulky goods has taken place in industrial areas, however in recent years the popularity of furniture and hot-tub stores in industrial areas has increased.

Issue: What is the importance of showrooms and ancillary commercial uses in industrial areas? Other than office and ancillary commercial uses, what other uses do we see in industrial flex buildings?

Summary of Discussion:

- The display area should be defined in the bylaw. There is currently no rule that can be used to restrict the amount of showroom provided.
- Many warehouses need a showroom at the front of the store. Edmonton currently allows for 33% display area in warehouses.
- 5000 square foot bays are standard; the allowable display area should be between 30 and 50% as 10% of 5000 sq.ft is marginal.
- Several industrial uses do not include a showroom possibility in their definition, even though they often need it (i.e.: Auto Service – Minor).
- Furniture stores have similar needs as warehouses, but they are considered retail uses.
- Industrial uses that are quasi-commercial prefer to locate along major arteries and at intersections. These buildings want high-exposure but technically require outdoor storage and display.
- Retail uses should not be allowed within industrial areas – too much potential for conflict.
- Wholesale users should be allowed as they do not rely on walk-in sales and mostly warehouse.

Flex Buildings

Background: A concern that was expressed during the original stakeholder engagement was the miss use of industrial land, or worse, the conversion of industrial land to commercial type usage.

Issue: How do we keep industrial flex buildings from transitioning to commercial buildings? How can we ensure industrial flex buildings stay close to major roads and intersections?

Summary of Discussion:

- Perhaps flex buildings should be prohibited to locate along arterial roads because of the risk of these buildings converting to commercial space.
- No common understanding of what a flex building is – would be referred to in some cases as a spec building or multi-tenant building.
- If the market demands more commercial uses in that particular location, then we should let the market decide.

Building Dependent Non-Industrial Uses

Background: There are some uses that locate in industrial areas based on the building size requirements.

Issue: Are Dance Schools and Fitness Centres appropriate for industrial areas? Is there a large demand for these uses in industrial areas?

Summary of Discussion:

- Gyms are large and have similar space needs as industrial uses. Busy gyms require higher parking rates, but appointment-only fitness centres (i.e. personal training uses) are more appropriate on industrial sites. Parking requirement should be used to determine which types of commercial uses can locate in industrial areas.
- One possible solution is to create two uses for fitness centre (e.g. fitness – major and fitness – minor). It could be based on size or the amount of public contact. The minor use could be allowed in industrial and the major use would not be.

Use Definitions

Background: Uses are defined in the Bylaw in order to ensure that that people understand what is involved with each use.

Issue: Are there any uses in the Bylaw that are too specific or too general and have lead to issues?

Summary of Discussion:

- Fitness Centre
- Distribution/Warehouse (major warehouse, minor warehouse). Why are there two uses for what is the same activity? Based on size due to differences between warehousing versus distribution-focused.
- Food Manufacturing versus specialty food store. The parking requirements are too high for a specialty food store and small-scale food manufacturers are being penalized as a result.

Use Mix

Background: Uses were listed in the Bylaw as permitted or discretionary (or not listed at all) in order to achieve the purpose of each district.

Issue: Is the use mix in the bylaw achieving the goals of each district?
Are there inconsistencies in the application of listed uses across the various industrial districts?

Summary of Discussion:

- Warehouses should be in the I-C district.
- The bylaw currently accommodates showroom space, but this space is too small. The display size should be 30-40% (although no greater than 50%).
- Parking is not an issue since customer traffic is low.
- Ancillary storage should be allowed for uses provided you can't see the storage from the road.
- 80% of the buildings in industrial areas are not built with a tenant in mind – this can be difficult with the land use amendment stage and then the possibility you have a building where key uses can't be accommodated (e.g. warehousing in I-C, or wholesaling in I-G).
- Places of worship should be allowed in industrial.
- Some uses such as computer software development, designers, surveillance companies that like to locate in industrial areas don't seem to be accommodated.

Permitted and Discretionary Uses

Background: To streamline the approval process there are many permitted uses (not subject to appeal) listed in the Industrial districts. This has created issues along the City's major roads and thoroughfares as there is no longer the ability to exercise discretion. Discretion is used to ensure a higher quality of development in visible areas, or areas where uses and buildings have a relationship with adjacent parcels.

Issue: Should there be the ability to exercise discretion along Major roads or even throughout a district?

Summary of Discussion:

- The discretionary system creates consistency problems for land owners.
- The definition of Warehouse (and especially Warehouse/Distribution) should be broadened to solve issues with the rigidity of the bylaw.
- Permitted uses are essentially a discretionary use. The high level of relaxations is creating the perception that there is no real 'permitted' use.
- Concern over the processing times for permitted uses and uncertainty for decision making.
- Concern over making all buildings discretionary with respect to architectural elements: planners shouldn't be designing buildings.
- Is it possible to put architectural guidelines in the permitted use rules?
- Discretion is ok if there are rules that provide for some certainty.

Visual Guidelines

Background: Uses that have outside operations or outside storage tend to have more visual impact in industrial areas, leading to more discretion being needed for these uses

Issue: Should we introduce more rules concerning visual guidelines to allow for more discretionary uses to become permitted?

Summary of Discussion:

- Specific visual guidelines could be used to increase the number of permitted uses, and therefore decreasing the number of discretionary uses. These specific rules would help developers know exactly what and how to build something. However, fewer visual guidelines allow for creativity in the building and landscaping design.
- There needs to be consistency in the application of discretion with regards to architectural control and design. Every planner will interpret these visual screening rules differently.
- New buildings should make an effort to protect the streetscape and orient the building to the street.
- Permitted uses should not have discretion over the design of the building. If it did, these permitted uses would become discretionary.
- Difficult to write rules that capture all scenarios – leading to relaxations and then the application of discretion.
- Would be very difficult to implement.

Change of Use

Background: The number of new uses in the bylaw translates into more changes of use applications being needed.

Issue: Difficulties with processing time, application requirements

Summary of Discussion:

- Uses should be less specific so that a change of use is not required for any minor change on the site.
- Existing buildings rarely qualify as a permitted use and are therefore almost always a discretionary use.
- Concern over processing time and inconsistent information from counter staff.
- Biggest frustration is that people don't know whether a DP or tenancy change will be required or whether a DP will take one week or 6 months.
- The Application requirements are too onerous.
- Process issues aren't outlined in the Bylaw. Current project by Customer Advisory Services to look at streamlining application requirements

Parking

Background:

Issue: Parking

Notes:

- There is a difference between administrative offices associated with industrial uses and stand alone offices in terms of its parking requirements.
- Developers generally over-providing parking spaces and a parking cap may be appropriate on some sites.
- Fewer parking spaces should be required in areas adjacent to or near LRT or bus hubs.
- We should not park display areas differently than the rate for the main use.