

Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Board Regional Ag Master Plan - Update

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Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Board (EMRB)'s [Regional Ag Master Plan](#) (RAMP), initiated in 2018, is nearing the finish line. Completion, which was originally slated for June 2020 (but delayed due to COVID), is now estimated to be by June 2021.

The three key objectives for the RAMP identified in the Growth Plan are:

1. Identify and conserve an adequate supply of prime agricultural lands to provide a secure local food source for future generations.
 - Status: An initial Agriculture Boundary has been proposed, and is being further refined according to defined policy areas, which will recognize the specific needs of the agriculture activity occurring within them.
2. Minimize the fragmentation and conversion of prime agricultural lands for non-agricultural uses.
 - Status: to be addressed through refined policy direction within each policy area.
3. Promote diversification and value-added agriculture production and plan infrastructure to support the agriculture sector and regional food system.
 - Status: This focuses on the economic imperative component of this plan. Work on this objective has focused on understanding the value-add component of agriculture and the clarity of roles and responsibilities of the various levels of government with respect to value added, and what the RAMP can accomplish. Work is ongoing. The province's Ag Sector Strategy is in alignment with this outcome in the RAMP.

The RAMP has three main deliverables:

1. Develop a regional agricultural profile of the region (see RAMP [Situation Report](#)), which compiles and compares agricultural studies, strategies, and master plans along with regional economic development plans, prepared in the region.
2. The plan itself - which will include Vision, Guiding Principles, Strategies, Policies, and Implementation Plan, along with tools and key performance indicators to measure the objectives in the Growth Plan.
3. A land evaluation and site assessment (LESA) tool – This is an objective, points-based tool to rate agricultural lands according to its productivity (Land Evaluation) and its economic and social factors (Site Assessment). The primary purpose is to guide land use decisions about which agricultural lands should remain in agriculture and which lands should be allowed to transition to other uses. Its development, which was temporarily put on hold until agreement on policy direction could be reached to establish assessment weightings, has now resumed.

RAMP Vision, Guiding Principles, Strategic Intent and Policy Area Framework have been established and endorsed by the Task Force. Detailed work on policies for each of the four identified policy areas and the Implementation Plan is ongoing.

- Policy areas endorsed by the RAMP Task Force are:
 - Rural agriculture area
 - Agriculture complementary to other uses
 - Agriculture within future transition lands
 - Urban agriculture

The Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Board (EMRB) engaged on the RAMP through October and November 2020 via on-line, virtual sessions as well as limited in-person sessions with key stakeholder groups, followed by a validation of “what we heard” with the same stakeholders. The “What We Heard” report can be found [here](#).

- The latest EMRB bulletin can be found [here](#) for additional detail.

On Common Ground – Messages from the Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta – Issue #33, March 2021