

City hopes to tackle downtown daycare deficit ^[1]

Author: CBC News

Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 23 Feb 2016

AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

Strict parking and traffic requirements have stalled growth in Edmonton's child-care sector, according to a city report that proposes a number of regulatory changes for service providers.

"We started on this journey because we're talking about provisions of daycare in downtown," said Coun. Bev Esslinger. "I still hear concerns about lack of child care."

At Tuesday's executive committee meeting, council approved recommendations to make a number of bylaw changes for daycares in select downtown neighbourhoods.

The proposed amendments include a 70-per-cent reduction in the number of required parking spots for service providers in the Oliver neighbourhood, around Whyte Avenue, within 400 metres of an LRT station or transit centre, or within 120 metres of a public parkade.

If approved, the changes would also allow more flexibility on the location of pick-up/drop-off zones, and remove the requirement that child-care centres, within residential areas, be located in stand-alone buildings.

"We want kids downtown," said Coun. Scott McKeen. "People who live downtown need these services, as well as the parks we're building."

Included in the changes for downtown daycares, administration has also recommended that child-care services be reclassified as "discretionary developments" in business and light-industrial zones across the city.

"Adding child-care services as a discretionary use in these zones will expand opportunities for employees to access child-care services in close proximity to their place of work," according to the report.

"In these zones, child-care services will only be allowed in office park developments and commercial strip malls to ensure that the use is compatible with surrounding development."

Coun. Bryan Anderson said providers are keen to see the changes implemented.

"I received two emails and a phone call from private companies wanting to move daycares into an industrial area. It's not just in the downtown where parking is an issue, but in industrial areas to make it available."

Council will debate proposed changes during a public hearing.

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