

Rezoning Rationale - 9222, 9230, 9240, and 9244 - 116 Street NW - Windsor Park (RS to RM h23.0)

1. Purpose and Policy Question

This revised planning rationale supports the proposed rezoning of 9222, 9230, 9240, and 9244 - 116 Street NW from RS - Small Scale Residential Zone to RM h23.0 - Medium Scale Residential Zone. The purpose is to explain why a medium-scale residential form of up to 23.0 m is appropriate at this location, having regard to the City Plan, the Scona District Plan, the District Policy, the current RM Zone regulations, and the site's specific edge-of-node context.

The central policy question is whether this particular site has sufficient contextual support for medium-scale residential development, given its immediate adjacency to the University-Garneau Major Node, frontage on 116 Street NW, consolidated site area, rear-lane access, proximity to active transportation and open space networks, and transitional position between small-scale residential development and large-scale institutional development.

2. Site and Application Summary

The application comprises four lots on the west side of 116 Street NW between Edinboro Road NW and 92 Avenue NW. It is located directly across 116 Street NW from the University of Alberta North Campus, which forms part of the University-Garneau Major Node in the Scona District Plan. The lands to the north, west, and south are primarily small-scale residential, while the lands to the east contain large-format institutional buildings and university-related uses.

The proposed RM h23.0 zoning would allow medium-scale multi-unit residential development. Under the RM Zone, the h23.0 modifier establishes a maximum height of 23.0 m, a maximum Floor Area Ratio of 3.0, and a minimum density of 75 dwellings per hectare. The zone establishes a minimum density but does not prescribe a maximum unit density; the eventual unit count will be a function of achievable floor area, unit mix, building design, parking strategy, and Development Permit-stage requirements.

The proposal should therefore be understood as a request for a medium-scale built-form envelope, not as a request for unlimited density. The controlling regulations are height, Floor Area Ratio, setbacks, facade length, transition setbacks, and building design requirements. These regulations provide a predictable zoning framework for managing the interface with adjacent small-scale residential sites.

3. City Administration Land Use Comments

City Administration's land use comments identify several important points that support the policy basis for RM h23.0 at this location:

- The site is designated Urban Mix under the Scona District Plan.
- The site is adjacent to the University campus, which is designated as a Major Node.
- The University edge along 116 Street NW is defined by large-scale institutional buildings that generally correspond to the District Policy's High Rise scale category.
- A 6-storey building at this location can provide an appropriate transition from the Major Node.
- The RM h23.0 Zone includes transition-oriented regulations, including interior side setbacks, increased setbacks above 16.0 m, rear setbacks adjacent to the lane, maximum facade length, and maximum FAR.

These comments are important because they frame the site as an edge condition, not as a conventional interior neighbourhood infill site. The subject lands sit at the point where the University's scale must transition to the small-scale residential fabric of Windsor Park. RM h23.0 is an appropriate intermediate zoning tool for that transition.

4. City Plan Context

The City Plan directs a substantial share of Edmonton's future growth to nodes, corridors, and other locations with existing or planned infrastructure, services, employment, and mobility options. Major Nodes are intended to support compact urban development, increased housing choice, and intensified land use in proximity to major employment, education, institutional, and transit destinations.

The University of Alberta is one of Edmonton's most significant public institutions and employment anchors. Although university lands are not regulated through municipal zoning in the same manner as privately owned parcels, their physical scale, public function, and daily travel demand form part of the actual planning context along 116 Street NW. The proposed rezoning responds to that context by locating additional housing immediately adjacent to a major institutional destination rather than dispersing equivalent growth to less central locations.

A medium-scale residential building under RM h23.0 advances City Plan objectives by supporting additional housing near a Major Node, reinforcing compact growth in an established area, and using existing infrastructure and mobility networks more efficiently.

5. Scona District Plan and District Policy

The Scona District Plan designates the site as Urban Mix. This designation encompasses a range of housing forms and is particularly relevant when redevelopment must mediate among different scales, functions, and movement patterns.

The District Policy should be read as a set of related directions rather than as a single isolated test. For this application, three policy concepts are most relevant:

- transition at the edges of Nodes and Corridors;
- the role of supportive contextual factors in considering additional scale; and
- **the distinction between transportation/mobility performance and urban design preferences such as corner-site visibility or two-frontage expression.**

5.1 Policy 2.5.2.4 - Low Rise Development Outside Node and Corridor Areas

District Policy 2.5.2.4 supports Low Rise development outside Node and Corridor Areas at sites along Arterial Roadways where at least one additional criterion is met, including being within 400 m of a Mass Transit Station or being a corner site.

This policy is relevant background, but it should not be treated as the complete policy basis for this application for three reasons.

First: the application is not being advanced as a low-rise development along an Arterial Roadway. It is an RM h23.0 medium-scale residential application on 116 Street NW, which functions as a collector roadway in the local network.

Second: the site is not a corner site and is not within 400 m of University Station. This should be acknowledged plainly rather than overextended. However, the absence of those two locational attributes does not, by itself, preclude consideration of additional scale where other District Policy provisions and contextual factors support it.

Third: Policy 2.5.2.5 expressly provides for additional scale to be considered where supportive contextual factors are present. That is the more directly applicable policy lens for this site, especially given its immediate edge relationship to the University-Garneau Major Node.

The policy interpretation should therefore avoid converting Policy 2.5.2.4 into a de facto prohibition on medium-scale edge-of-node development. The appropriate analysis is whether the site-specific conditions identified in Policy 2.5.2.5 support the requested scale.

5.2 Policy 2.5.2.5 - Supportive Contextual Factors for Additional Scale

Policy 2.5.2.5 directs consideration of additional scale in locations with supportive contextual factors. The proposed rezoning responds to each factor as follows:

a. Appropriate site size to support the additional scale: The consolidated site area is approximately 3,481.887 m² (0.35 ha). This is a meaningful assembly in a mature neighbourhood context and is sufficient to accommodate a medium-scale residential building while allowing Development Permit-stage review of setbacks, massing, landscaping, access, and building articulation. **The site area also allows the RM h23.0 transition regulations to function more effectively than they would on a smaller or fragmented site.**

b. Location and orientation of the site on the block: The site is located mid-block on the west side of 116 Street NW. While a corner site can offer urban design advantages in some cases, the mid-block condition is not inherently unsuitable. Here, the site has a clear primary frontage on 116 Street NW and vehicular access from the rear lane. This configuration concentrates access, maintains continuity along the residential block face, and allows the building to address the collector street **rather than turning a corner condition into the organizing rationale for scale.**

c. Location in or proximity to a Node or Corridor Area: The site is immediately west of the University-Garneau Major Node boundary, across 116 Street NW from the University of Alberta. Its functional relationship to the Major Node is stronger than the mapped boundary alone suggests:

residents would be within direct walking and cycling distance of the University, employment, institutional services, open spaces, and transit connections associated with the node.

d. Proximity to and frequency of transit service: The site is approximately 600 m walking distance from conventional bus service on 87 Avenue NW and approximately 900 m walking distance from University LRT Station. Bus stops on 116 Street NW currently serve school special and On-Demand Transit service. The site is therefore not being characterized as immediately adjacent to mass transit; rather, **it is located within a broader multimodal environment associated with the University area and future mass transit planning to the University.**

e. Design and function of adjacent roadways: The site fronts 116 Street NW, a collector roadway that connects to Saskatchewan Drive/Emily Murphy Drive and 87 Avenue NW. Vehicular access is offered from the rear lane, consistent with zoning expectations and the accepted transportation approach. The Mobility Assessment confirms that the surrounding street network, lane access, and nearby intersections can accommodate the proposed rezoning **without identifying a transportation-based reason to prefer a corner site.**

f. Proximity to park or open space: The site is near several significant open space assets, including the University of Alberta campus open spaces, the River Valley lookout and trail system, Edinboro Park, Emily Murphy Park, Windsor Park, and William Hawrelak Park. These amenities support medium-scale residential intensification by providing access to recreation, landscape, and active transportation opportunities within walking distance.

g. Proximity to active transportation networks: The site is near active transportation connections on 116 Street NW, Saskatchewan Drive, and the River Valley trail network. This context supports a residential form that can rely on a broader set of mobility options than auto-oriented greenfield locations.

h. Scale and uses permitted on adjacent sites: The adjacent context includes small-scale residential zoning to the north, west, and south, and large-scale institutional development associated with the University of Alberta to the east. RM h23.0 provides an intermediate scale between these conditions. It is higher than small-scale residential forms but materially below the scale and institutional intensity of the University edge. **The zone's transition setbacks, maximum facade length, building articulation requirements, and FAR control provide a regulatory framework for managing this interface.**

6. Mid-Block Location and Policy Fit

The site's mid-block location should be addressed directly because District Policy 2.5.2.4 identifies corner sites as one factor for Low Rise development outside Node and Corridor Areas. **In this application, however, the absence of a corner condition does not create a land use or mobility constraint that would make RM h23.0 inappropriate.**

A corner location may be preferable where two-frontage activation, gateway expression, or enhanced visibility are central urban design objectives. Those considerations are relevant in some contexts, but they are not determinative here. The policy question is whether the subject site can accommodate medium-scale residential development in a way that is compatible with the surrounding context and infrastructure.

The mid-block condition has practical advantages in this case:

- it concentrates vehicular access through the rear lane rather than distributing access across multiple street frontages;
- it avoids additional turning conflicts near intersections;
- it maintains a clear residential block face along 116 Street NW; and
- it allows the proposed building to function as an edge-of-node transition rather than as a corner landmark or gateway building.

For these reasons, **the site's mid-block location should be understood as a contextual condition to be managed through design, setbacks, access, and massing, not as a policy deficiency that prevents consideration of additional scale.**

7. Height, FAR, and Density

The RM h23.0 Zone establishes a maximum height of 23.0 m, a maximum FAR of 3.0, and a minimum density of 75 dwellings per hectare. The zone does not establish a maximum dwelling density. This distinction matters for the policy analysis. Density is not an independent cap in the RM h23.0 Zone; it is an outcome of the permitted building envelope, unit mix, building design, parking approach, and applicable regulations.

A future Development Permit may yield a unit count that differs from early concept assumptions. That does not alter the rezoning question. The rezoning establishes whether the RM h23.0 built-form envelope is appropriate at this location. Transportation and servicing impacts are addressed through technical review, while final building configuration, unit mix, setbacks, articulation, landscaping, waste management, and access details will be reviewed through the Development Permit process.

The proposed zoning is therefore appropriately evaluated as a medium-scale form controlled by height, FAR, and transition regulations, rather than as an application seeking a fixed or unlimited number of dwellings.

8. Transition and Development Permit Controls

RM h23.0 includes several built-in mechanisms that help manage the transition to adjacent small-scale residential sites. These include minimum setbacks from abutting residential sites, increased setbacks for portions of buildings above 16.0 m, rear setback requirements adjacent to the lane, maximum building length, FAR limits, and building design regulations requiring articulation to reduce perceived massing and avoid large blank walls.

These regulations are particularly important because the site is not being rezoned to a direct control zone. A standard RM h23.0 zone provides predictability for Administration, Council, the applicant, and the public. It also ensures that detailed design questions are assessed through the normal Development Permit process within a known regulatory framework.

9. Conclusion

The proposed rezoning from RS to RM h23.0 represents a reasonable and policy-supported response to the subject site's edge-of-node context. The site is designated Urban Mix, directly abuts the University-Garneau Major Node, fronts a collector roadway, benefits from nearby active transportation and open space networks, and sits between small-scale residential development and large-scale institutional development.

Policy 2.5.2.4 should not be read as a prohibition on additional scale at this location. The stronger and more complete policy analysis is provided through Policy 2.5.2.5, which allows additional scale to be considered where supportive contextual factors are present. On balance, those factors support RM h23.0.

The proposed zoning provides a defensible transition in scale: more intensive than the surrounding small-scale residential fabric, but clearly below the scale and institutional intensity of the University of Alberta. It advances City Plan growth objectives, aligns with the Urban Mix designation of the Scona District Plan, and can be implemented through a standard zoning framework with Development Permit-stage controls for detailed design and interface conditions.