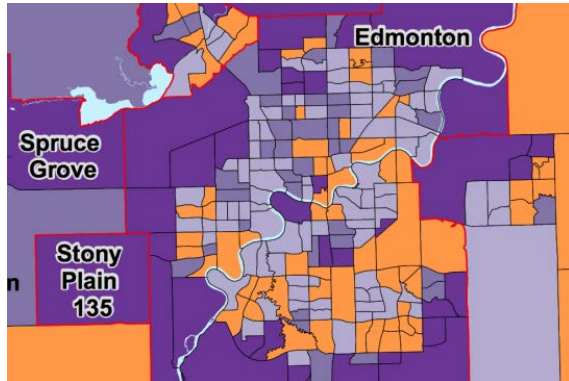


Update: New census data spurs debate on Edmonton's density plans

According to newly released census data, the area's suburbs are also seeing increased population growth

By: Jeremy Simes Metro Published on Wed Feb 08 2017



Edmonton saw massive growth, according to Statistic Canada's new census data.

As new census data underlines Edmonton's exploding suburbs and shrinking mature neighbourhoods, infill proponents say it's clear the city must find ways to build more and denser housing inside the ring road.

Statistics Canada numbers released Wednesday show that the population of the Edmonton-area — which includes Lakeview, Leduc and Fort Saskatchewan — grew by 13.9 per cent from 2011 to 2016. That follows the 12.6 per cent growth rate the area saw from 2006 to 2011.

The national average was just 5 per cent.

But dive deeper into the data and you'll find most inner-city neighbourhoods are growing slowly and some are even shrinking.

Boyle Street and parts of Spruce Avenue populations saw no growth.

Louis Pereira, policy director with advocacy group Infill Development in Edmonton Association, said the culprit are "restrictive" city regulations that inhibit growth in the inner city.

Developers currently can't build denser neighbourhoods, he said, noting land can't be divided to allow for three houses and homes can't be built as tall as 10 metres.

"These are neighbourhoods that should be thriving," Pereira said. "We can't keep placing such regulations on neighbourhoods closest to the core."

While population growth is marginal or non-existent in the core, the census shows Edmonton's suburb and bedroom communities are mushrooming.

For example, the communities of Heritage Valley Area and Ambleside grew by more than 10 per cent.

And drive out to Beaumont and Leduc and you'll find those communities swelled by 30 per cent and 30.2 per cent, respectively.

Planning experts argue the trend is being pushed by city policy and North American ways of thinking.

Sandeep Agrawal, urban planning professor at the University of Alberta, said city regulations allow developers to build denser outskirt communities.

"They are designed in a way that they are much more conducive to young families," he said. "They're also cheaper than infill."

On top of that, Kurt Borth, a researcher at the U of A who specializes in housing location, said it's still standard for Edmontonians to want the "North American dream" — a big house and front yard.

"We build our city on that dream and become dependent on cars," he said. "You just keep driving until you qualify for a mortgage."

One solution is building infill that's affordable and accessible, Borth said, noting Mayor Don Iveson's recent push for increasing density in targeted neighbourhoods.

"Changing laneway housing regulations was a good start," he said. "But there are many other ideas."

Census Takeaways

Kalen Anderson, a city planner with sustainable development

Skinny homes alone won't increase density

"Turning one house into two isn't going to be a paradigm shift for us," said Kalen Anderson, a planning director with the city. She said density will come in allowing the build of different types of housing, like apartments and row homes, that are strategically located.

Kurt Borth, University of Alberta researcher on home location

Cottage courtyards could help

Kurt Borth said Edmonton could benefit from development known as cottage courtyards. "Essentially, three lots can make way for eight cottages that all back on to a central mini-courtyard."

He said it's denser than two skinny homes and promotes community engagement.

Source: **Metro News**

URL: <http://www.metronews.ca/news/edmonton/2017/02/08/edmonton-area-sees-explosive-growth-stats-can.html>