HEALTHY PLACES

Designing for Health in Alberta

WHAT THAT MEANS, WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE & HOW PUBLIC POLICY CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

**A project of
Sustainable Calgary's
Active Neighbourhoods
Canada program**

WHAT IS A HEALTHY PLACE?

An environment that promotes healthy behaviour like walking, cycling, socializing, playing and healthy eating for those of all ages, incomes, genders and cultural backgrounds.

Changing the built environment could significantly influence people's daily physical activity.

— DR. THERESA TAM, CHIEF PUBLIC OFFICER OF HEALTH

Are we building communities for health?
Chief Public Health Officer of Canada Dr. Theresa Tam devoted her first publication in office to designing healthy communities. It recognizes that the way we build cities and communities contributes to disturbing health trends, and to the leading causes of death faced by Canadians today.

Throughout history, we have adapted our cities to respond to our most pressing health concerns – think sanitation, public parks, emissions regulation. Health trends suggest we are facing a new health crisis. While our medical system has responded expertly, we haven't taken sufficient strides to reverse the root causes of these issues, which lie outside the scope of medicine and within the realm of the built environment and its effect on human behaviour.

Rates of diabetes and obesity are on the rise. We are increasingly sedentary. We spend too much time in vehicles. Our cities reflect this car dependency, with most urban growth occurring in low-density suburbs. We know these trends – health, urban form, vehicle use – are related. They are also at odds with what we hear about the aspirations of Albertans, who value physical activity in daily life, recreation and tourism. We want human connection. We want places where our kids can be active and safe, and places where our seniors can age happily.

Adapting the built environment can improve health. Many people have been involved in research, community action, government programs and policy, and private investments to make change happen. As you'll see in this booklet, the solutions to this health crisis look and feel great! Consider communities that are safe for children and seniors, that create places to bump into neighbours, where amenities and transportation options are accessible and available to all.

Healthy places have multiple benefits across sectors, levels of government, ministries and departments. Healthy places are climate-friendly. They contribute to better air quality. Transportation options help people get to work on time and reduce employee turnover. Healthy places increase productivity and reduce health care costs. Healthy places are attractive to tourists and prospective workers alike.

It is time to scale up. Cities and communities have been taking action, creating policies and projects to make their places healthier. For five years, we have engaged communities in Alberta in a participatory planning and co-design process towards that same goal. We can leverage all of this work for greater impact. In this booklet, we share our research and co-design work, and put forward policy recommendations that emerged from community conversations, subject matter experts and our own design explorations. We want to start a conversation about healthy places in Alberta, and the role of policy in making them happen. The overarching goal we propose: that all new provincial infrastructure projects demonstrate how they support healthy and equitable built environments. A comprehensive approach will allow Alberta to scale up, invest, and commit to building a province of healthy places.

Celia R. Lee, Program Director
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How can the design of communities contribute to public health and health equity?

This question inspired the development of Active Neighbourhoods Canada (ANC), a partnership of the Montreal Urban Ecology Centre, the Centre for Active Transportation, and Sustainable Calgary. Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, we work with communities to design walkable, bikeable and liveable places. We have developed a co-design approach that brings citizens, design professionals and decision-makers together to identify and work toward changes in their neighbourhoods. Our approach makes urban planning accessible, community-driven and fun. We believe that blending local and expert knowledge leads to strong outcomes.

We have used this approach in 12 communities, with each organization working with four communities in their province. In Alberta, we work with three urban and one rural community.

We focus on communities experiencing lower than average incomes or those with higher proportions of new Canadians, because these places are often underserved when it comes to active transportation infrastructure, and as a result experience health inequities. Our approach is uniquely founded on the connection between health equity, community participation, and built environments that support active transportation.

Through this program, Sustainable Calgary has worked with over 1200 community members, collaborated with more than 20 governmental and non-profit organizations, and 75+ professionals in design and planning — and we've been taking notes! Now in Phase 3 of our work, we are scaling up. We continue our core work in communities, while also sharing what we've learned to inform policy, professional practice and curriculum.

The Participatory Planning Process

1. LAUNCH
Establish a partnership with local stakeholders and lay out an action plan.

2. UNDERSTAND
Create a portrait of the use of public space.

3. EXPLORE
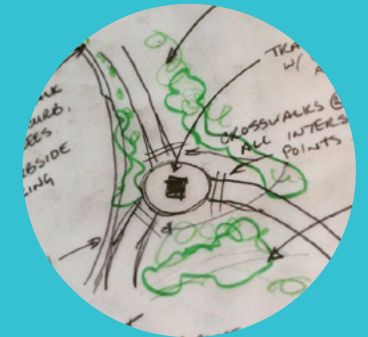Identify design scenarios that will meet needs and resolve issues.

4. DECIDE
With the various stakeholders, validate and improve upon the developed solutions.

5. ACT
Implement the design solutions and advocate for citizen visions.

6. CELEBRATE

Participatory planning is an approach to designing active, liveable cities, which makes urban planning accessible, community-driven, and fun. It is grounded in the belief that blending local and expert knowledge leads to strong outcomes. We work on the neighbourhood scale, and take an integrated view of planning. Since land use, urban design, architecture, transportation infrastructure, and placemaking all inform residents' experiences of their neighbourhoods, we involve professionals across these disciplines.

Healthy Places in the Making —
Adapting cities for health since 3000BC

1960s

Places for People
Jane Jacobs and Jan Gehl focus on building 'places for people', where people can walk, enjoy each others' company, and frequent local businesses. Their analysis and tools contribute to the field of Planning.

Places for "Superhighways"
Highway 401, the Don Valley Parkway and Autoroute Metropolitaine are built. Interestingly, Calgary shelves the proposed "Downtown Penetrator". Parallel proposals to pedestrianize 8th Avenue and turn 7th Avenue into a transit-only street move forward, and exist today.

1990s

Vision Zero
Vision Zero is approved by the Swedish Parliament. Fatalities decrease 30.7% 1980-2016, and Sweden has the lowest rate of fatalities at 27/million inhabitants. The Vision Zero movement spreads across the world.

Air Quality
New and numerous air quality regulations in Canada lead to substantial air quality improvements.

1996 - "City Repair" group is born in Portland, in response to a fatal collision with a child. They focus on what will become known as tactical urbanism.

1998 - Healthy Cities initiative (1998) launched by the WHO. Calgary joins in early 2000s.

2010s

A boom of research, dissemination and action
Writing on the links between active transportation, health and the built environment surges. The Canadian Institute of Health Research identifies healthy cities as one of their priority areas, and the Centre for Healthy Communities is founded at the University of Alberta. In Alberta, traffic safety strategies focus on the relationship between street design, behaviour and safety. Communities experiment with tactical urbanism, cycling infrastructure, "road diets" and new speed policies.

2011 - Obesity rates triple among Canadians, 1985-2011.

2014 - Rates of diabetes increase by 39% in Alberta, 2003-2014.

2014 - SOx emissions in Canada have decreased 71%, 1990-2014.

Hours spent driving is correlated with obesity, according to University of Calgary research published in 2014.

2015

The Cycle Track is built in Calgary, following the Peace Bridge in 2012. Cycling sees a 50% increase for work trips 2012-2018.

The City of Edmonton adopts Vision Zero.

2017

East Village in Calgary is designed with a commercial street dedicated to pedestrians and the first parking-less building.

Edmonton's first dedicated bike lanes lead to an 81% increase in cyclists from 2017-2018.

3000 BC

Skara Brae, Scotland
Earliest record of separate fresh and waste-water systems.

400s BC

Hippocrates: On Airs, Waters & Places
A warning against swamp-living.

1850s – 1890s

The Lungs of the City
Frederick Law Olmsted frames parks as the "lungs of the city" and as an important opportunity for recreation and exercise for all.

1890s - "Water Closet Ames" (Herbert Brown Ames) leads a campaign against "pit privies" in Montreal.

1910s – 1920s

The Rise of the Personal Vehicle
Personal vehicle use increases. Collisions increase, and are met with backlash from concerned parents and citizens. The concept of "jaywalking" is born.

1850s

The "Sanitary Idea"
John Snow traces a cholera outbreak to a polluted well, leading to changes in urban waste and water systems across Europe and later in Canada.

1760s – 1840s

The Industrial Revolution
The growth of cities in Europe leads to poor sanitation, air pollution and disease outbreaks.

1885 - While not the only Canadian city to experience outbreaks of smallpox, Montreal sees the highest mortality rates in North America in the 19th century.

1850–1920

The rise of Canadian cities.
By 1921, 50% of Canadians live in cities. Public transport services suburbs by horsecar, then electric streetcar. Streetcars appear in Edmonton and Calgary in 1908 and 1909.

In 1952, The Great Smog of London causes 4,000 deaths over five days due to smog.

1920s & 1930s

Rural Conservation
Campaigns to protect rural environments take shape in Britain. Green belts and urban growth boundaries aim to control urban sprawl and protect agricultural land, forests, and natural, recreational spaces. Similar policies are adopted in the U.S. in the 1950s, in France in the 1960s, in South Africa in the 1970s, and in Canada and Australia in the 2000s.

1978 - Edmonton Light Rail Transit (LRT) is born. As of 2016, Edmonton has one of the busiest LRT systems in North America.

1979 - ¼ Canadian children are overweight or obese. → **2006** - ⅓ Canadian children are obese.

1970s

Suburban sprawl begins in earnest.

Stop de Kindermoord
With over 500 child fatalities in one year, Dutch citizens protest. Combined with oil shortages this shifts Dutch cities to design for travel on foot and by bike. Cycling is now the most commonly used transportation mode for 36% of the population.

Airdrie, Alberta changes speed limit on most residential roads to 30km per hour.

1981 - The Calgary Light Rail Transit is born.

1980s

The World Health Organization World Charter
Access to health, including a healthy environment, is acknowledged as a human right.

2003 - London congestion charge is introduced.

2006 - Diabetes identified as "global threat" by the UN.

2000s

Physical activity, health and the built environment
The U.S.Centre for Disease Control focuses on the relationships between built environment and physical and mental health, and funds the Healthy Design Initiative. In Alberta, municipal policies curb suburban sprawl. Federal and municipal governments invest in housing developments designed for walkability and a vibrant local economy.

2009 - Edmonton passes its Active Transportation Policy.

2009- Calgary's Municipal Development Plan aims to limit urban sprawl.

2009 - Active Neighbourhoods Canada is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

2016

Calgary introduces new off-site levy bylaw to reduce financial incentives for low-density development.


2018

Research out of the University of Calgary reveals that as Walk-Score™ increases, socio-economic status increases, and weights decrease.

The World Health Organization's Healthy Cities initiative turns 30 (2018), with 57 publications on urban health.

The City of Edmonton releases Winter Design Guidelines.

The Canadian Institute of Planners releases their Healthy Communities Policy.

Even those who aren't that into walking will do it more in accessible environments, with measurable health benefits.
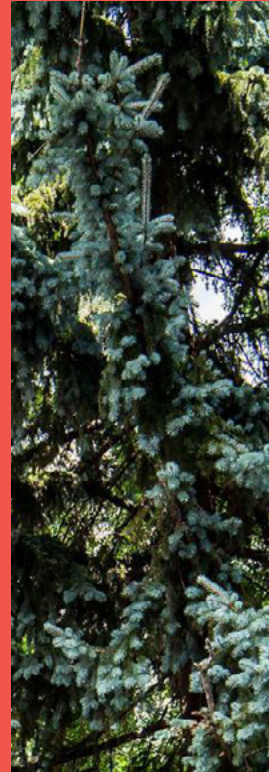
We know Albertans love to walk and be active, and that physical activity helps prevent and manage diabetes, obesity, cancer, and heart disease. Yet, too many Albertans are sedentary for more than 10 hours every day, so we have to ask: why? Is our built environment safe and welcoming enough? Research tells us that some Albertans do not have access to places that encourage them to be active. On the other hand, when there are accessible pathways and destinations, people walk more. Even those who report "not being that into walking" will walk more in walkable environments, simply because it is convenient, with measurable health benefits. In addition, people who have access to green space, recreation centres, parks, or bike paths are much more likely to get the physical activity they need.

Health Equity

The more affluent are 3-5x more active.

Households in Alberta with an annual income between $125,000 and $149,999 were 3.5 times more likely to be physically active than households with an income of less than $20,000.

In Calgary, neighbourhoods with lower household incomes are correlated with more pedestrian collisions.

See map on the pages 16-17.

Not every Albertan has access to opportunities that improve their health, and this is impacted by their income.

Communities experiencing low-incomes are more likely to have poor infrastructure: less green space, fewer sidewalks and pathways, and less connection to other communities and destinations. They experience more traffic and pedestrian collisions. As a result, they disproportionately experience poor health. When it comes to consultation and engagement on city development, lower-income communities are also often left out of the conversation.

In 2018, Sustainable Calgary and Active Neighbourhoods Canada conducted research on the relationship between neighbourhood income and the frequency of collisions in Calgary. A relationship does exist: in lower income neighbourhoods, collisions are more frequent. The cause of this requires further investigation, but it suggests that low-income neighbourhoods would benefit from quality and effective infrastructure.

Age Inclusion

Not everyone can drive. Children, seniors, and people with mobility issues rely on other modes of transportation. Our cities, designed for cars and drivers, isolate a huge portion of the population. By 2031, 1 in 5 Albertans will be a senior. Research tells us that community design plays a role in how socially connected these seniors will be. Poor pedestrian infrastructure or ice and snow can cause less mobile seniors to become isolated. This social isolation comes with an economic cost.

Children, like seniors, are affected by neighbourhood design. Research has shown a connection between increased physical activity (such as walking or biking to school) and benefits in the classroom. When children are physically active, they have better academic achievement, concentration, classroom behaviour, and more focused learning. Even children's ability to manage stress and develop a healthy self-concept improves with more physical activity.

Physically active children are better students.

They have better academic achievement, concentration, and classroom behaviour. Even their ability to manage stress and self-concept is improved.

Seniors provide 1 billion volunteer hours nationally

with an estimated value of $23 billion annually. Without access to their city and community, seniors simply cannot make these contributions.

$10 Billion

estimated amount inactivity costs Canada annually

DID YOU KNOW?

Transit users are healthier simply from walking to and from transit stops

In 2016, pedestrian collisions and fatalities cost Calgary an estimated $120 million

Decreasing residential speed limits from 45 to 30 km/hr can increase survival in pedestrian collisions from 50-90%

Cycling 20 minutes per day can reduce risk of heart disease by 50%

IN OUR PROVINCE

55%
of Albertans are overweight or obese

37%
Albertans sedentary 10+ hours per day

39%
increase in diabetes 2003-2014

TRENDS ON THE RISE

↑ Sedentary behaviour
↑ Diabetes
↑ Obesity and child obesity
↑ Suburban development
↑ Hours spent driving

"Shifting from sedentary behaviour to low levels of activity" results in a significant reduction of all-cause mortality

The Environment

2/3

of household greenhouse gas emissions in Canada come from personal transportation

1/10th

A commuting cyclist has 1/10th the environmental footprint of someone who drives to work

Trends on the rise

↟ Greenhouse gases
↟ Global temperatures
↟ Car ownership

14,400

premature deaths per year are linked to air pollution in Canada

3.6 million

motorized vehicles in Alberta

Alberta is the #1 producer of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada

274 megatonnes

Alberta's greenhouse gas emissions in 2015

Alberta produces the largest volume of greenhouse gas in the country, more than the second leading producer, Ontario. Community design can help reverse these trends. In fact, creating walkable and transit-oriented communities is the most effective way to reduce household greenhouse gas - more effective than having energy-efficient vehicles or houses. Of course, both are best!

Approximately 3.6 million motorized vehicles travel on Alberta roads, and the air pollution they create poses a major health risk to Albertans. Not only does poor air quality affect breathing and lung conditions like asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), it also increases the risk of stroke. Building healthier places would decrease these adverse health effects. The choice to bus, walk, or bike means people pollute less: a decision that is good for their health and their neighbours.

$2.3-$3.7 billion

Congestion cost to the 9 largest Canadian municipalities in 2006

$2 billion

lost to San Francisco businesses annually through employees stuck in traffic

$255

Average money spent by cycling tourists in Alberta, according to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport (2018). That is $84 more than the average visitor at $171

$700-$3000

U.S. dollar increase in home values alongside a 1 point increase in WalkScore™

The Economy

Commercial districts benefit from great pedestrian and cycling infrastructure through increased property values and sales, and decreased pedestrian collisions.

In 2018, the City of Calgary set aside $5.5 million for active transportation in the Manchester area, also home to the city's booming beer industry - the Barley Belt. This funding will have wide ranging benefits. For example, there is evidence that a thriving beer culture brings economic benefits. Breweries in the state of Maine added $228 million to the state's economy and employed more than 1,600 people. The community of Manchester, where the Barley Belt is located, is underserved when it comes to quality pedestrian infrastructure. Funding in Manchester to improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure will make the community safer, encourage physical activity, and offer more transportation options.

According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, "Recreation, active living and sport are integral to the culture of Alberta". According to the Alberta Recreation Survey (2017), 96% of Alberta households participated in an activity that year, with walking, gardening, bicycling, aerobics, and jogging being the most popular.
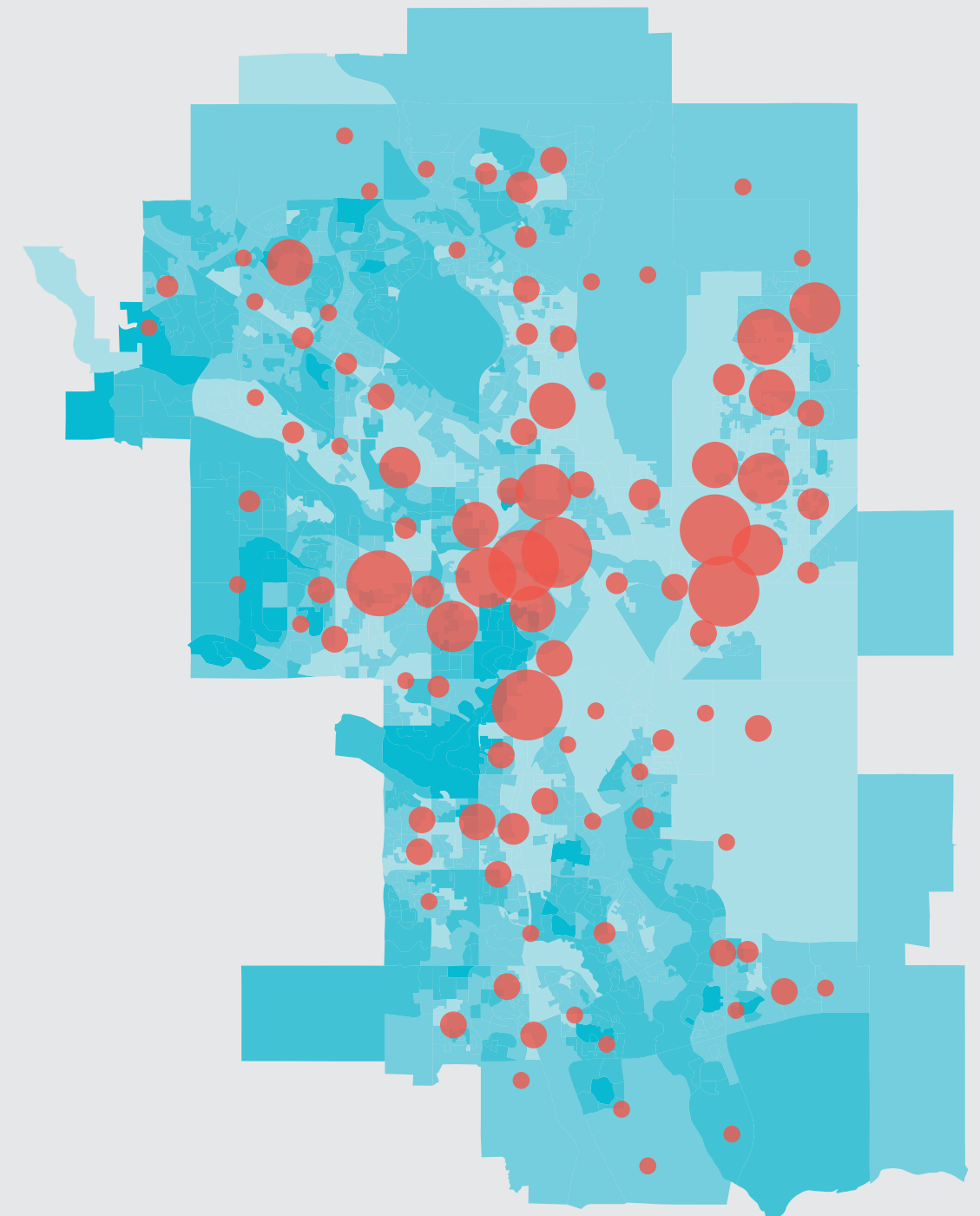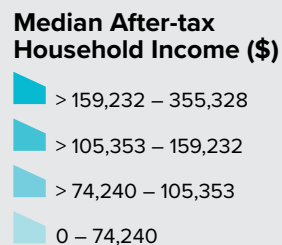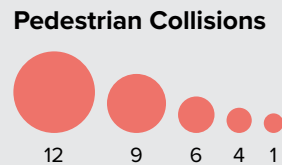
This attraction to recreation extends beyond Alberta residents to tourists from around the world. Calgary was listed on the New York Times 52 places to visit in 2019. Why? The architecture of the new Central Library and the development in East Village. When we invest in healthy places, it not only benefits Albertans, it can also have an impact on the tourism industry with economic benefits. In 2016, the tourism industry brought in $8.5 billion and currently supports 127,000 jobs in Alberta.

Health Inequity — Pedestrian collisions tied to neighbourhoods experiencing low incomes

Are we designing our cities for health equity?

In 2016, 1691 pedestrians and cyclists were injured in collisions in Alberta, 3 of which were fatalities. Several North American cities have correlated pedestrian collisions with socio-economic factors such as income, age, gender and ethnicity, as well as with the quality of the built environment. We wanted to know if the same held true in Calgary, and commissioned new research to explore this. Preliminary results tell us there is a correlation between collision frequency and nearby household incomes. Research is underway to explore additional contributing factors. Of particular interest is analysis of collisions as a rate of total pedestrians or of local population density. Research in other cities suggests that serious pedestrian collisions are more likely in areas that experience both lower incomes and lower pedestrian flows.

City of Calgary : Pedestrian Collisions 2016

Pedestrian Collisions

12   9   6   4   1

Median After-tax Household Income ($)

> 159,232 – 355,328

> 105,353 – 159,232

> 74,240 – 105,353

0 – 74,240

See this interactive map for yourself at:
https://bit.ly/2ufFalX

"I love the Farmers' Market, it has changed my lifestyle. Many other seniors do too."

What Encourages Active Transportation?

Quotes from residents

People will walk if there are destinations to walk to and great pathways to get them there.

Density

Public transit stop nearby

Dedicated infrastructure for walking and cycling

"The road is wide enough for cycling but cars go by at high speeds. I still use the sidewalk when I'm with my son."

Connected streets

Attractive spaces

Nearby amenities

Green spaces

"The railway is a barrier."

Feelings of safety

Public art and cultural spaces

We've heard from experts and non-experts that what makes a healthy place will vary based on the context of the place itself. Asking who are we designing for? Urban or rural? What budget do we have?

We do know that some aspects of the built environment lend themselves to more physical activity and liveable communities. "Generally, areas with higher population density, a mix of residential, commercial, educational and employment areas, connected streets, good access to destinations, bike paths, good sidewalks, good public transit, green spaces and attractiveness have been linked to more active transportation or reduced driving (Tam, 2017)." Low-density development, on the other hand, means less access to transit, more driving and higher rates of obesity.

Tools and resources exist to help communities develop healthy places, including the National

Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) and Complete Streets design guidelines. In Alberta, we have Alberta Health Services' WalkABle program, which engaged communities to create healthy urban and rural environments. We can learn from Edmonton's Winter City Guidelines, Calgary's StepForward Pedestrian Strategy, Safer Calgary's "Safe and Smooth" program – and more.

In the following pages, we share what healthy places could look like based on our research and co-design experiences. These designs reflect community priorities. They respond to the needs of seniors, children and new Canadians; they address local economic development and tourism, traffic safety, public health, transit investments, climate-friendly design, health facilities and schools. This work represents a community-based mandate to work towards Healthy Places in Alberta, and inspires us to consider what policy change can *look like*.

A door every 6 metres increases walkability – particularly in commercial districts. This can have a positive impact on local business, because it means smaller and more commercial bays – which are more affordable for small business. How many doors per block do you have in your town centre?

"If we created access to the new car dealership across the nearby highway, it would create walk-to-work opportunities for us."

Affordable recreational facilities

Gathering places

Urban Form — A case study of Calgary

"Patchiness" in Calgary's density makes public services and utilities more expensive, and doesn't promote active transportation, but the updated Municipal Government Act provides an incentive to start filling the gaps.
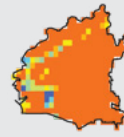
NUMBER OF INHABITANTS PER KM²

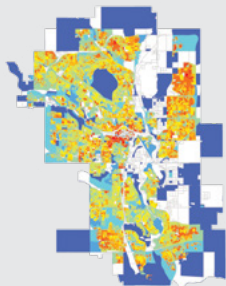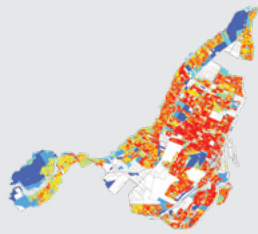|		
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1 - 250	2001 - 3000	>10,000
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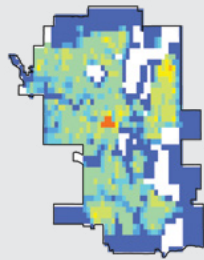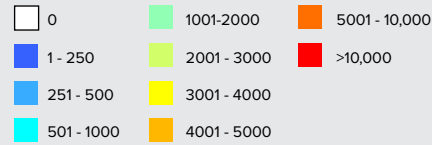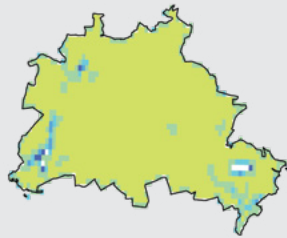
Calgary

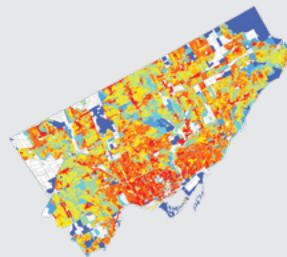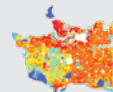Berlin, Germany

Madrid, Spain

Osaka, Japan

Calgary

Montreal

Toronto

Vancouver

How can we design healthy places in Alberta? New research suggests we can begin by filling in low-density areas in our cities and communities.

Federal and municipal projects have already done this by developing decommissioned military bases or land previously considered undevelopable: East Village, Garrison Woods, the Bridges and Village at Giesbrach. Recent changes to the province's Municipal Government Act (MGA) make this kind of development more attractive, by providing tax breaks for "brownfield" re-development.

These maps show that Calgary has unevenly distributed density compared to other Canadian cities, and even more so when compared to Madrid, Berlin and Osaka. This isn't the most financially efficient use of land when it comes to services and infrastructure. It also does not promote healthy behaviours, which improve with increased density and increased access to transportation options. A population density of 1160 people/km is correlated with less driving.

WHAT DO HEALTHY PLACES LOOK LIKE?

Sustainable Calgary's Active Neighbourhoods Canada program has been developing design schemes based on community feedback for the past six years. These aim to promote more liveable, walkable and vibrant communities. What do healthy places look like? Here are some of our ideas!

DESIGN SCHEME: LANEWAY + PARKWAY, MARLBOROUGH, CALGARY

Green walking networks, parkside living and gentle density make walking/cycling safe and attractive, and increase use of local parks.

A prototype brought the pop-up plaza to life.

Collaborators: Sustainable Calgary, the Acadia Community Association, O2 Planning + Design, the bench project, Kilometre Design, the City of Calgary, Arusha, n+1 design, local volunteers, and the Acadia Art and Garden Society. Funded by The Alberta Traffic Safety Fund.

MORE AT SUSTAINABLECALGARY.ORG

A neighbourhood gathering space is also a traffic calming strategy.

Speed on residential roads has been a concern for local residents for many years. They have also said they would like more local hangouts – places to run into neighbours, sit, chat, drink and eat. The pop-up plaza turns unused parking stalls into a flexible neighbourhood plaza in the heart of Acadia. If you put chairs out, will people come? Can a coffee truck become a sustainable business? This project offers a playful space to ask questions about life in Acadia's public spaces**.**

A new plaza and commercial district at a major transit hub makes travel convenient, attractive and safe.

MORE AT SUSTAINABLECALGARY.ORG

Behind many commercial streets in Calgary sits another street that does the 'dirty work': loading, shipping, and dividing commercial from residential. What if it became a walkable main street?

The green bridge creates an oasis above city traffic and helps connect three popular communities that each have missing amenities.

MORE AT SUSTAINABLECALGARY.ORG

A north-south pedestrian link across the river connects residents to each other and to local businesses.

How can we take advantage of great existing infrastructure?

Catwalks: Pedestrian pathways that provide shortcuts to schools, parks, stores and bus stops
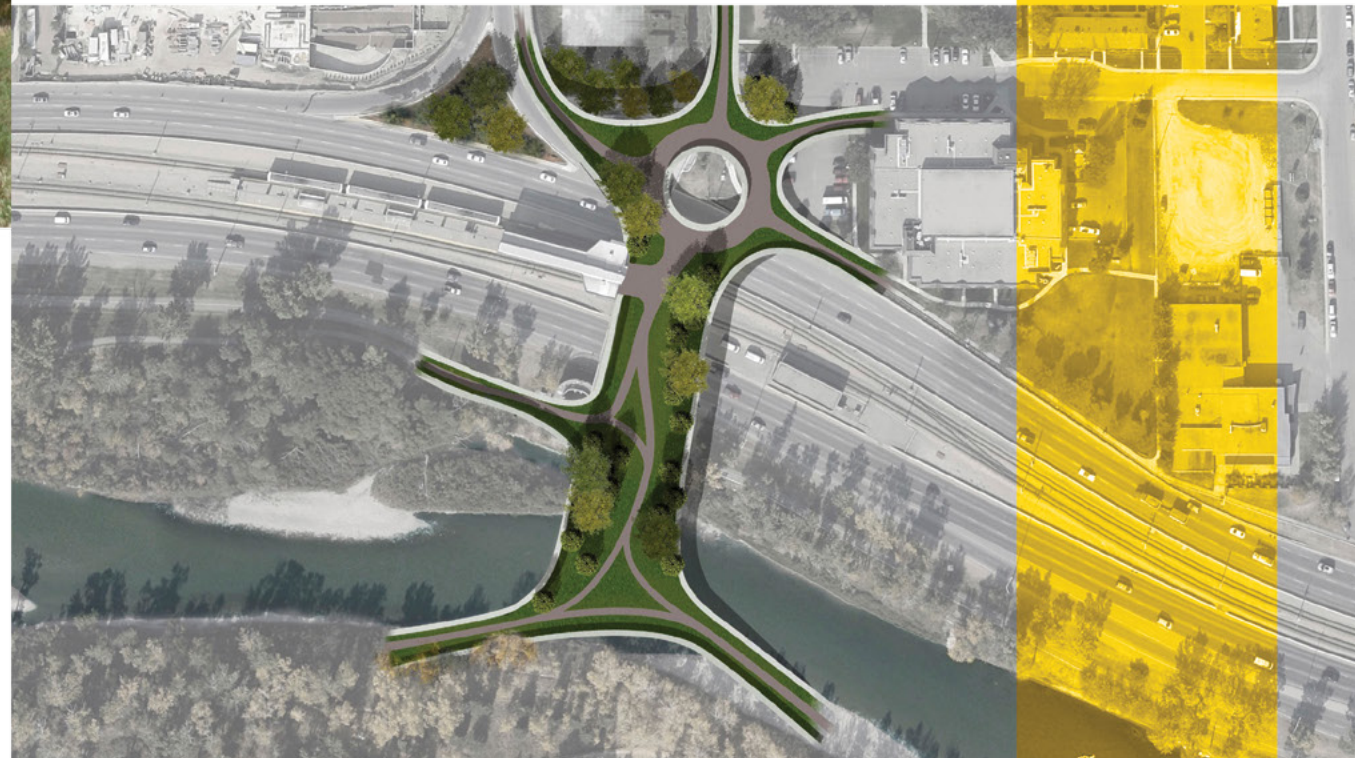
How can health facilities improve health beyond their walls?

"Healthy Places: A Precedent Review of Integrated Health Care Facilities" is a publication highlighting examples of innovative design in healthcare facilities: community-integrated, inviting, walkable, and mixed-use. We commissioned this work in response to a new facility slated for Bridgeland-Riverside, where residents – primarily seniors in seniors' housing – wanted amenities, vibrancy and walkability. We held the 2018 Healthy Places event to share this work and start a local conversation. This brought experts and leaders to the table, shed light on local challenges and showcased local capacity. Conversation revealed shared enthusiasm and a will to create 'healthy places'. It stressed the need to do so collaboratively in complex health care developments, leveraging different jurisdictions and stakeholder groups. Participants mentioned a need to build on this work by developing guidelines and best practices – in healthy design and in collaborative processes - and engaging in pilot projects.

Marlborough residents told us that catwalks were essential to pedestrians, but that they were unsafe and not accessible for everyone. In 2018, we started to change that by working alongside the community to reimagine what the catwalks could be. Partnerships with two local schools, Marlborough Elementary and Bob Edwards Junior High, created lessons on equity and inclusion, introduced children to urban planning, and allowed youth to contribute to their communities. Students used this knowledge to make temporary changes to the catwalks. They painted, gardened, and added lighting and play materials. They also drew plans for the catwalks, made a snow-clearing game, created affordable housing, and installed community food pantries. In the weeks following the redesign, we heard and saw that the catwalks were being used - and not only to pass from street to street. Hula hoops leaned against the fence, and chalk drawings scattered the pavement. One neighbour told us that she used the garden to get salad greens and tomatoes. Another neighbour told us the catwalks were cared for and respected. "It goes to show," she said, "that people really feel pride for their neighbourhood".

Building on our Successes

Learning From Others

3

Step Forward

a pedestrian strategy in Calgary created to make walking safer, comfortable, and interesting. Six measurable targets to be completed by 2025 include more children walking to school, better winter walking conditions, and 15% of trips made on foot.

4

Winter City Edmonton

a strategy that wants Edmontonians to "fall in love with winter". Developed with a local spin, it is based on best practices from winter cities around the world. The strategy considers social, cultural, and economic factors, and focuses on planning and design changes that make active transportation and physical activity possible year-round.

1

WalkABle

an Alberta Health Services program that aims to make communities more walkable. Working with 16 cities, towns, and communities, the program creates local strategies based on international best practices.

2

Edmonton Vision Zero

Edmonton was the first city in Canada to adopt this policy that makes infrastructure and traffic safety changes. Vision Zero is based on the principle that no deaths are acceptable. Since 2015, collisions with motorcyclists have decreased by 26%, pedestrians by 14.6%, and cyclists by 19.6%

5

Canadian Institute of Planners' (CIP) Healthy Communities Policy

recognizes the role of planners to create healthy built environments that promote active lifestyles and protect the health of Canadians. This policy commits to designing streets for all users, creating a human-scale and inclusive public realm, and ensuring adequate, accessible, and affordable options for housing, transport, and health services.

6

Grande Prairie Active Transportation Strategy

embraces its northern, winter city status and makes active and public transportation the easy and first choice. The focus of change is the built environment, transit, and active transportation for school, commutes, and leisure. Funding changes, including an increase in snow removal funds, are recommended.

7

Walkable Camrose - Snow Removal Campaign

recognizes that older adults, people with limited mobility, and parents with strollers struggle to remove snow from their sidewalks and get around the city after a heavy snowfall. The campaign personalized the need for snow removal, showing community members who needed help clearing their walkways and asking the question: "will you shovel for my family, my friend, or my mother?"

3

Ontario Cycling Strategy

promotes cycling and cycling safety in the province. This collaborative, 20 year vision is guided by five areas: healthy and active communities, safer streets and highways, cycling awareness and behaviour change, quality cycling infrastructure, and cycling tourism.

1

Bike BC

a Province of BC initiative that contributes half the funds for cycling projects in towns and cities. The focus is to create transportation networks, reduce traffic congestion, and promote cycling for commuting and tourism.

4

Quebec's Sustainable Mobility Policy

responds to the challenges faced by public transport users, including public health, public safety, and vulnerable persons with mobility issues and disabilities. The policy aims to reduce motorized trips and traveling distances through better integration of land use and transportation; increase low-energy consumption options such as public transit and active transportation; and improve vehicle efficiency.

2

The Greater Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt Plan

provides a plan for Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe area, including future growth and protection of the area's agricultural and natural features. It provides a wide range of opportunities for rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses, and works against climate change.

5

The Metro Vancouver Translink Regional Transportation Strategy

responds to a growing region that requires affordable, accessible, and sustainable transportation choices. It aims to have half of all trips made by walking, cycling or transit, and reduce the distance people drive by one third. With 407 million transit boardings in 2017, transit ridership grew more in Metro Vancouver than anywhere else in Canada and the United States.

Scaling Up — Our policy recommendations

We want to start a conversation about healthy places in Alberta with a set of provincial policy recommendations that emerged from what we heard from community conversations, subject matter experts, and from our explorations in co-design.

All new provincial infrastructure projects demonstrate how they support healthy and equitable built environments, as determined by new guidelines. Guidelines for healthy built environments are developed through a collaborative, inter-ministerial process that builds on best practices. Assessment tools for healthy built environments are identified and adapted.

Guidelines for multi-stakeholder collaboration are developed, to help major infrastructure projects respond to the needs of the local community, and best leverage the roles, responsibilities and strengths of stakeholders.

Health

The Province supports and grows the role of Alberta Health Services' public health professionals, such as public health inspectors, health promoters and medical officers of health, who already work collaboratively in local communities providing expertise on healthy built environments. They and public health academics are engaged in developing inter-ministerial policy guidelines and tools for designing and evaluating healthy built environments.

Infrastructure

New healthcare facilities, schools, roads, bridges, and seniors' and affordable housing investments demonstrate how they support a healthy and equitable built environment.

Tourism

The Province invests in regional active transportation infrastructure that meet the needs of local communities and tourists alike. Clusters of communities have expressed the benefits of investing in regional active transportation for tourism and economic development, as well as mobility and accessibility for local residents.

Education

(a) The Province invests in walking school buses and bike-to-school programs, and

(b) incorporates healthy place-making into curriculum. Curriculum helps children evaluate the built environment around their schools and propose changes. We know from experience that kids are observant, perceptive, and empathetic. They come up with the best ideas!

(c) The Ministries of Education and Transportation collaborate with municipalities and towns to create active transportation infrastructure around schools, and contribute to healthy behaviour and successful learning environments.

Environment

The Province demonstrates how Land Use Frameworks support public health using identified assessment tools, and enhances support for brownfield re-development.

Transportation

(a) Roads and bridge projects demonstrate how they support healthy and equitable built environments. Attention is paid to the role of highways in rural and indigenous communities: how they are used by vulnerable users and how they impact local mobility. Projects respond to community needs, regional tourism strategies, especially those focused on walking and cycling, and use a Vision Zero lens.

(b) An Active Transportation group is created to advise the Ministry of Transportation and local communities on infrastructure projects, and liaise with other ministries.

(c) A fund for active transportation projects is created in partnership with the Ministry of Environment. The Alberta Traffic Safety Fund continues to provide learning and prototyping opportunities for communities.

Seniors' Housing

New seniors' housing projects are in healthy and age-friendly places. Projects funded by the Province demonstrate how their design and site selection support healthy and age-friendly built environments. As our population ages, we need to consider not just housing, but the suitability of neighbourhoods for seniors; create age-friendly places that provide social connection, transportation options, safety, and access to services, amenities and recreation.

Affordable Housing

New affordable housing projects funded by the province are sited in healthy and affordable places. Projects must demonstrate how their design and site selection support healthy, affordable and equitable built environments. Affordable housing locations are often based on land costs, which does not always coincide with overall suitability. The surrounding built environment can play a big role in determining household expenses, particularly transportation. It can also affect which economic opportunities and social supports are accessible. Affordable housing should emphasize affordable and healthy neighbourhoods, which incorporate: accessible transportation options, amenities, schools, services, food, jobs and affordable recreation options.

CONCLUSION

Humans have been designing their cities for health for thousands of years, from the original wastewater systems in 3000 BC Scotland to dedicated bike lanes in 2017 Edmonton.

Albertans have been a part of this continuous progression towards health through research, community action, private investments, and government programs and policies. Edmonton was the first city to adopt a Vision Zero strategy, dedicating itself to the vision that no loss of life is acceptable. Alberta Health Services created a program committed to making communities in our province more walkable. The City of Grand Prairie's Active Transportation Strategy embraces its winter city status and strives to make public transit and active transportation the first and easy choice for residents. We know that Albertans value health, recreation, and the safety of their communities. We also know that our province enjoys a vast and booming tourism industry that is influenced by these shared values.

The evidence is clear that it is time for the next evolution in city-building. The question is: how do we scale up? How do we make our infrastructure accountable to the health of Albertans, and prioritize those projects that promote health? It is clear that we have the knowledge and tools to do so. Our design work shows what new policy can look like when it is implemented – communi-

ties that are healthy, climate-friendly and economically resilient. Communities that create connections, more convenient trips, and happier people. Communities that are built for everyone.

When we build these communities, not only do we embrace the future, we also reclaim the past. For many years, we viewed personal vehicles, highways and overpasses as vital to our daily lives. Now, we have the awareness that transit options and complete communities create more liveable cities, and positively impact our health, our seniors, and our children.

When we build these communities, we all have a role to play. That's what we heard repeatedly in our conversations with Albertans – that we need to think strategically about the skills we bring to the table and how best to work together to leverage those skills. The recommendations provided in this document were created from these conversations and we hope they can be a starting point for collaboration between experts, decision makers, and citizens. This collaboration and the policies that occur as a result will ensure that we design for health in Alberta and, ultimately, make this a "healthy places" province.

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What is a Healthy Place?

An environment that promotes healthy behaviour like walking, cycling, socializing, playing and healthy eating for those of all ages, incomes, genders and cultural backgrounds