

# PLAN

NORTH  
WEST

A journal for professional planners of Alberta, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Saskatchewan

Winter 2025 Issue 12



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Professional Planners

## Celebrating Student Works

- Community Building: Journey Before Destination. -14
- Bridging Methods of Public Engagement. -18
- Lighting-Up our Streets: Case Studies from Saskatoon. -22
- A Dutch-design for Broadway Ave, Saskatoon. -27



# PLAN

● *PLAN North West* offers an opportunity for the publication of original works that are both community-based and research orientated, and relevant to Alberta, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Saskatchewan. Types of subscriptions include case studies, analysis of events and/or trends, profiles of notable planners, projects, or programs, overviews of best practices and guidelines, book reviews or excerpts, and opinion pieces. *PLAN North West* is the official publication of APPI, MPPI and SPPI. **All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without the expressed permission of APPI is strictly forbidden.**

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# APPI MESSAGE

Dear esteemed colleagues, members of our planning community, and students.

First, I am thrilled to reach out to you today following the successful conclusion of the national conference CONNECTION 2024, which was co-hosted with the CIP and took place in Edmonton, July 9-11.

With more than 950 delegates, over 120 speakers, exhibitors, and 40 sessions (21 streamed online and recorded for the CPL HUB), the CONNECTION 2024 Conference generated the highest ever conference revenue in CIP's history.

It was an inspiring gathering that brought together brilliant minds and innovative thinkers, fostering engaging dialogues and new collaborations across various fields. I want to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who participated, contributed, and made this event a remarkable success. Your hard work and dedication truly exemplified the spirit of our community.

Second, as we celebrate the conference's achievements, I am pleased to highlight the importance of APPI's Planning Awards Program, which the Institute organizes annually. The Planning Award Program formally recognizes the exceptional achievements of our distinguished community members who contribute to the livability of communities in Alberta, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut.

This year, we celebrated the recipients of the APPI Planning Awards, a testament to their hard work, dedication, and innovation. Although we have received eighteen award submissions of planning work, APPI awarded 3 plans with an Award of Planning Merit and one Award of Planning Excellence.

This recognition is not merely an accolade, it is a celebration of the relentless pursuit of excellence and the remarkable impact that thoughtful research and planning can have on our communities. Our awardees have demonstrated not only outstanding planning prowess but also a commitment to advancing knowledge and addressing real-world challenges through their exceptional projects and studies.

The innovative solutions and insightful research produced by these individuals set a benchmark for others within our Institute and beyond. As we honor their contributions, we encourage others to aspire to similar heights, demonstrating that dedication and creativity can lead to meaningful change.

In addition, APPI also offers additional awards to its members in a special event named the Volunteer Appreciation and Awards Celebration, organized annually. These awards include Council Service Awards, Volunteer Appreciation Certificates, Long Term Service Recognition, Volunteer Recognition Awards, Exceptional Mentor Awards, Volunteer of the Year Awards, and Outstanding Contribution to the Profession Award.

I would like to express my sincere congratulations to each recipient and express my gratitude for their contributions to our community. Your contributions and achievements inspire us all.

Third, I want to seize this opportunity to reflect on the incredible relationship between APPI and the vibrant student communities that form its heart and soul.

The bond we share is a vital part of who we are as an institution. It is built on mutual respect, collaboration, and a shared commitment to fostering an environment that encourages growth, learning, and innovation. Our students are not just participants in our programs; they are partners in our mission to create enriched learning and professional experiences. As such APPI co-hosted three important Networking Events this year. One at the U of C in September 2024, another at the U of A in October 2024, and lastly with U of L in November 2024. All events were a great success and reflected that together, we are not just a community of learners; we are a community of change-makers. By working hand in hand, we can create a supportive environment that empowers everyone to succeed with enriched experiences and tackle challenges, celebrate achievements, and build a community that represents the best of our collective potential.

We recognize that our students are the backbone of our institution and community, and it is our responsibility to support and empower them in their academic and personal journeys.

This year, APPI has proudly offered several awards to outstanding students who have demonstrated exceptional commitment, innovation, and creativity. These awards include Student Education Scholarships, Student Conference Awards, and a Student Essay Award.

These scholarships and awards not only provide the students with financial support but also motivate them to embrace opportunities that will shape their futures and strive for excellence.

I encourage all eligible students to follow APPI's E News closely and apply for these awards and scholarships.

Let us continue to uplift and inspire one another in our collective goal of excellence, pushing the boundaries of knowledge and innovation as we work together to create a brighter future.



## PRESIDENT

Khalid Mohammed, RPP, MCIP



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# MPPI MESSAGE

On behalf of the Registered Professional Planners (RPPs) of Manitoba I would like to offer greetings. I took over as President of the Manitoba Professional Planners Institute (MPPI) in June and would like to thank former president Andrew Mok for his service during his term. A heartfelt thank you is also extended to the outgoing Council members for their service, in particular Dianne Himbeault, who has been a regular presence on Council for many years. And finally, welcome to the new members of Council.

Manitoba has seen a lot of action in the world of Planning. A sizeable delegation of MPPI members made the trip to Edmonton for the national Connection 2024 conference in early July. Several MPPI members presented during the sessions and a University of Manitoba planning student won the student poster competition.

There has been renewed focus on the provision of affordable housing, and with the provision of Housing Accelerator Funds municipal staff and consultants in several Manitoba Municipalities have been working hard to get vital housing units approved and built.

In lieu of a Manitoba Planning Conference in 2024, MPPI has hosted a one-day Housing Summit on November 14th to offer structured CPLs to our members. This event provided an opportunity for planners and other interested professionals to immerse themselves in a day of learning with some of Manitoba's preeminent housing experts. Perspectives were included from all sectors including market-rate greenfield and infill, as well as the affordable and deeply affordable housing sectors. The Manitoba Planning Conference will return in March 2025 in the City of Brandon.

**PRESIDENT**  
Jeff Pratte, RPP, MCIP



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# SPPI MESSAGE

Greetings on behalf of the Saskatchewan Professional Planners Institute (SPPI)

SPPI just wrapped up our annual conference held on October 1 & 2, 2024 at the Dakota Dunes Resort, just a short 20-minute drive from Saskatoon. The resort, located on traditional Whitecap Dakota territory is surrounded by gently rolling sand dunes and gorgeous views of the South Saskatchewan River valley. While the conference location was outstanding so was the program, offering something for everyone, including sessions on sustainability, inter municipal agreements and flood plain modeling, to mobile tours visiting the Beaver Creek Conservation Area and the Ukrainian Museum of Canada. Perhaps the biggest highlight of the conference was presenting two "Excellence in Planning" Awards to two very deserving projects, including Urban Systems for the Lucky Man Cree Nation – Community Infrastructure Study, and Casa Boldt Consulting for the Sturgeon Lake First Nation - Active Transportation Plan. Congratulations again to our winners, you have demonstrated the best in professional planning work being undertaken in Saskatchewan communities.

SPPI held its AGM at the conference where I assumed the role of President from my successor, Maggie Schwab. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Maggie for her leadership and guidance to the organization over the past couple of years, we are very grateful for your contributions and service. I am looking forward to working with the current Council on continuing to implement our Strategic Plan and to providing more great events and services to our members, including Equity, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives and Professional Development opportunities, particularly for planners working in rural and remote areas of the province. As well, we will look forward to hosting everyone again at our annual conference which will be held in Regina in October 2025.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *PLAN North West*.

**PRESIDENT**  
Aimee Bryck, RPP, MCIP



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# The Editorial Board

*PLAN North West* serves as a platform for professionals in the planning realm to share innovative ideas, discuss noteworthy projects, and exchange experiences that contribute to the growth and development of our profession. To ensure the continued relevance and richness of our content, we are actively seeking submissions for our upcoming issues.

If you have a paper or article that explores a pertinent aspect of the planning profession, we encourage you to submit it to [office@albertaplanners.com](mailto:office@albertaplanners.com). Whether it's a case study, research findings, or reflections on your professional journey, your contribution can make a significant impact on the knowledge base of our community.

Your involvement is integral to the success of *PLAN North West*, and we appreciate your commitment to advancing the field of planning in Alberta, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Saskatchewan. By sharing your expertise, you not only contribute to the collective wisdom of our community but also help us maintain the journal's standing as a valuable resource for professionals in the region.

## ***PLAN North West Editorial Board***

*Ariel Lupu, RPP, MCIP, Editorial Board Chair*

*Fabio Coppola, RPP, MCIP*

*Miles Dibble, RPP, MCIP*

*Samantha Mark, RPP, MCIP*

*Yvonne Prusak, RPP, MCIP*

*Lenore Swystun, RPP, MCIP*

*Kyle Whitfield, RPP, MCIP*

*Perry Stein, RPP, MCIP - Guest Editor*

### *Submission Guidelines:*

- *Papers should be relevant to the planning profession.*
- *Submissions may cover a range of topics including but not limited to case studies, research, project highlights, and personal reflections.*
- *Please send your contributions to [office@albertaplanners.com](mailto:office@albertaplanners.com).*

*Thank you for your dedication to the planning profession. We look forward to receiving your submissions and working together to ensure that *PLAN North West* continues to be a source of relevant and insightful information for our community.*



# Volunteer Highlights

Stephen Yu, RPP, MCIP



When Stephen first came across a call to join the Edmonton Events Committee with APPI, he saw an opportunity not just to meet industry peers, but also to contribute meaningfully to the planning community. What began as a way to network quickly turned into a passion for shaping events that resonate with fellow planners. Today, Stephen is co-chair of the 2025 Conference Committee, chair of the City of Beaumont's Urban Design Committee, mentor to a Master of Planning Student at the University of Calgary, and most recently appointed as the incoming chair of the Edmonton Events Committee. Stephen's dedication and passion in creating events and bringing speakers that inspire and inform continues to grow.

Stephen came to Alberta to pursue his Masters of Planning at the University of Calgary. Having completed his undergraduate degree in Ontario, moving to Alberta meant building your network from scratch. This was a challenge as a student who didn't know the ins and outs of the planning world in Alberta.

Now as a member of the Edmonton Events Committee, Stephen was inspired to promote events to students, one of his impactful contributions. Noticing low student participation despite events being held on campus, Stephen spearheaded efforts to connect with The Geography And Planning Students' Society (GAPSS) and its representatives. This outreach has increased student involvement, helping them access invaluable opportunities to network with seasoned professionals, future employers, and future colleagues.

Volunteering has helped Stephen develop strong connections with the next generation of planners. As a mentor to planning students, Stephen has been able to watch as they venture into the workforce. The most rewarding moments come from reconnecting with them in a professional session, at things such as the annual conference, which brings it all full circle. Stephen recently attended the Edmonton Chinatown Food Tour, led by Christine Lee, Stephen's co-chair of the 2025 Conference Committee. This tour was a standout experience of bringing together many of Stephen's passions: exploring the City, getting exercise, and most importantly, food. He enjoyed learning about the rich history behind Edmonton's Chinatown and fun facts, such as tofu is made fresh daily in Edmonton!

Advice for Aspiring Volunteers: Just like Nike's famous slogan, Just Do It. The various organizations that Stephen has volunteered with have started as things that interested him, followed by things where he saw he could bring value. Stephen is always encouraging others to volunteer, whether its through your PTIA, your alma mater, or your local municipality. These opportunities help you meet new people that could grow your career, but also to help drive the direction of your PTIA. There is always a hunt for fresh perspectives that are valuable in improving the way things are being done. But once you start, your value might get recognized and your presence might be requested on other committees or events!

If a colleague or friend were to describe Stephen, they would say he works hard and plays hard. He's always ready to jump into the deep end to get his projects done, while also talking and laughing with those around him. Unfortunately for his colleagues who sit around him, the mute button has become their new best friend.

Outside work, Stephen can be found at the local Goodlife Fitness, exploring Edmonton's culinary scene, or jet setting to the next all-inclusive resort. He also has a love of movies and TV series, and is regularly seen bringing home numerous DVDs from the spaceship we call public library, catching the latest releases. Pro tip: your library often has new releases before the streaming services do.

"Find what you enjoy and lean into it." Whether its the next industry social, mentoring the next generation, or spending three hours watching the next Best Motion Picture, never forget to celebrate the milestones and make the most of every opportunity.

# Volunteer Highlights

Brendan Salakoh, RPP, MCIP



At the suggestion of a colleague, Brendan began volunteering with MPPI in 2012, first participating in the Communications and Events Committee, which is tasked with organizing various events, most notably the MPPI Breakfast Seminars and Planners' Pubs. After a couple of years on the committee, Brendan was elected to MPPI Council, serving as co-chair of Communication and Events from 2014 to 2020. This important role and function have served to develop a close-knit relationship with the University of Manitoba's (U of M) planning program. Brendan has observed that, through these "events such as U of M Mentorship Wine and Cheese, the annual Curling Bonspiel, and Trivia Nights, students get to meet professionals at all stages of their career, from fresh out of grad school to +30-year practitioners". In many cases, informal discussions at MPPI events have led to planning internships for students.

Brendan's fondest memory of volunteering with MPPI is the "camaraderie shared with friends and colleagues". Brendan has met "planners from all walks of life" and spanning a variety of practices, ranging from consulting to the public and non-profit sectors. As Brendan states, "I've met some amazing planners through MPPI events over the years, including many that are now friends and colleagues. In addition to the official learning opportunities, informal mentorship opportunities abound through MPPI". As Brendan states, "I love having the opportunity to help young planners who are considering their career paths". Brendan believes that "us planners can learn just as much from our younger cohorts. After all, those in university or recently graduated have their finger on the pulse of the profession – best practices, new technological advances, and latest studies. MPPI brings us all together and sets a foundation for inter-generational learning".

For those considering volunteering for MPPI, Brendan states, to just "jump right in!" Further, Brendan goes on to state that, "no matter what a planner's interest might be, there are myriad opportunities to support the profession locally, and the Communication and Events Committee is always looking for folks to assist. No matter where your interests lie, there are opportunities at MPPI to get involved in areas suited to your skill set, and make some great friends along the way".

Although Brendan is a self-professed planning nerd (Lego, Sim City, Maps... you get the idea), he does have a few hobbies outside of planning, including basketball, cheering on Winnipeg's sports teams, and enjoys just spending time with friends and family. However, his biggest passion is travel, so you'll often find him exploring cities all across the world.



# Volunteer Highlights

Samantha Mark, RPP, MCIP



Samantha Mark's journey in the planning profession has been nothing short of inspiring. A proud graduate of the University of Saskatchewan's Regional and Urban Planning program in 2010, Samantha has dedicated her career to shaping communities and uplifting others in the field. Her work with the Saskatchewan Professional Planners Institute (SPPI) exemplifies her deep commitment to professional growth, collaboration, and giving back.

Samantha's involvement with SPPI began in 2011 when she attended her first AGM. A call for volunteers to join the Council caught her attention, and with a nudge from a nominator, she raised her hand. That decision kickstarted over a decade of dedicated service, including roles as Education Director, Professional Development Co-chair, Secretary, and eventually a key representative and Chair on the Standards Committee.

When Samantha volunteered to represent SPPI on the Standards Committee. It was a steep learning curve, delving into the committee's extensive responsibilities and tasks.

In 2021, she was asked to chair an upcoming meeting and ended up stepping into the role as Chair. With the PTIA's focus shifting toward Competency Standards, the committee worked through significant changes. It was a collaborative process, and she was grateful for everyone who contributed. This experience underscored the importance of the committee's work for the planning profession across Canada and helped chart a renewed pathway forward for the Standards Committee.

Among Samantha's many memorable experiences, she highlights the 2015 CIP national conference co-hosted in Saskatoon. Showcasing the city's planning achievements to colleagues from across Canada was a proud moment for Samantha, even with the hours of effort it demanded.

Samantha credits much of her professional growth to the inspiring individuals she's met along the way. Mentors like Lenore Swystun and Kelley Moore have deeply influenced her approach to planning, leadership, and life. Their wisdom—emphasizing resilience, meaningful engagement, and finding opportunities even in challenges—has left a lasting impression on her career.

Now, Samantha embraces the role of mentor herself, guiding students and young professionals as they navigate their planning careers. She finds joy in supporting others, whether it's helping them achieve their RPP designation or encouraging them to consider planning as a profession.

Samantha's colleagues affectionately describe her as a "Swiss army knife," reflecting her adaptability, versatility, and ability to step into various roles seamlessly. In 2023, she received the SPPI Volunteer Award, where she was honored as a "quiet leader"—someone who works diligently behind the scenes without seeking recognition. Both descriptions capture her collaborative nature and unwavering dedication.

Beyond planning, Samantha is someone who cherishes balance and connection. She loves camping, spending time with family and friends, staying active through exercise, and experimenting in the kitchen. A reader, she balances her intellectual pursuits with the occasional indulgence in cheesy reality TV—a guilty pleasure she embraces unapologetically.

Samantha has witnessed SPPI's evolution firsthand— One major change was the transition from APCPS to SPPI. SPPI's rebranding to its growing emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion better reflects SPPI's identity as planners and reinforces its commitment to the profession. She's seen the profession embrace interdisciplinary collaboration and rise to the challenges of climate change, housing affordability, and reconciliation. Through it all, Samantha remains a steadfast advocate for innovation and adaptability in planning.

To planners considering volunteering with SPPI or other organizations, Samantha's advice is simple: "You have something valuable to contribute, even if you don't realize it." She encourages everyone to take the leap, starting small by joining a committee or assisting with an event. "Volunteering is an incredible way to grow your network, learn from others, and develop skills you may not use in your day-to-day work," she shares.

As someone who thrives on building connections and making a difference, Samantha views volunteering as one of the most rewarding aspects of her career. Her dedication, humility, and passion for the profession continue to inspire those around her. To anyone considering volunteering, Samantha offers this heartfelt encouragement: "Take the leap—you won't regret it!"

# 2024 New Registered Professional Planners

Congratulations to the new Registered Professional Planners of 2024! Obtaining a professional designation is a significant achievement and reflects dedication, expertise, and commitment to the planning profession.

For more information on the Road to RPP please contact the Professional Standards Board at [psb-planningcanada.ca/](http://psb-planningcanada.ca/).

**Professional Designations and the Use of RPP Title in the APPI, MPPI and SPPI Jurisdictions** – Fully certified Registered Professional Planner (RPP) members of APPI, MPPI, and SPPI in good standing, have rights and responsibilities defined in legislation and the Provincial and Territorial Institutes and Associations' (PTIAs') Bylaws. Within the APPI, MPPI, and SPPI jurisdictions, the Institutes have the exclusive authority to grant the restricted RPP professional designation and protected title to those members who have completed the certification process and relevant standards for ethical and professional competency. The RPP credential is an assurance of quality for employers and provides confidence to the general public that planners are looking out for their best interests. The RPP credential is also important for employers, who want to attract the most professional, skilled and competent planners, and the Institutes encourage their RPP certified members to proudly display the professional designation alongside their names, in business and email signatures, and on professional social media sites. RPP members of any other PTIAs, do not have the right to use the RPP title in association with their practice in any other PTIAs' jurisdiction, unless they also hold RPP Non-Resident Membership within that other jurisdiction. In Canada, labour is a provincial responsibility, and as such, the provinces are responsible for the regulation of professional planning practice. Accordingly, APPI, MPPI, and SPPI have the exclusive right to the RPP title and the regulation of planning practice, in their jurisdictions. APPI, MPPI and SPPI can only regulate the practice of those that are members of their PTIAs. The penalty for those using the RPP title in a jurisdiction with whom they are not a registered member, either resident or non-resident, varies among the PTIAs, but can be significant. Please contact the Registrar of the applicable PTIA if you require additional information.

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## The *Road* to RPP

Candidate members have seven years to complete the journey to Registered Professional Planner, but the entire process may be completed well in advance, subject to a Candidate members professional opportunities.





# Community Building: Journey Before Destination

Elise Beaton - University of Alberta

## Introduction: What is Community?

University can feel isolating, especially for new and commuter students; you may not have a place on campus to call your own, and you may not know other students well enough to be friends. However, this isolation can end once you specialize, such as when you begin to study Planning. Like the author, you may be lucky enough to join an incredible student community and gain access to private spaces on campus. For instance, the Geography and Planning Student Society club room can quickly become an on-campus home for classmates and new friends: a place to study and work, but also to play, and share meals – a place in which students invest their time and make connections that will last a lifetime. As a student planner, this can lead one to wonder about the necessities for successful community-building. For example, it could be hypothesized that simple time and space are the foundations of community. Upon further inspection, though, creating a community goes far beyond these basic tenets.

Older definitions of urban community refer to it as the realm of public institutions and collective citizen action. Later scholars described community as interpersonal relationships responding to changing conditions. Later still, post-modernists viewed community as a social construct whose existence depends on social choices in response to environmental flux<sup>1</sup>. Considering the evolving connotations of community, there exists no specific preconceived definition of, characteristics belonging to, or expectations from any given community, beyond the basis of association between members. Instead, a community may be defined as having two fundamental attributes: social interaction and a psychological sense of community<sup>2</sup>.

'Social interaction' is an easily understood phrase, but 'sense of community' may be less exact in meaning. 'Sense of community' is an oft-listed goal in neighbourhood plans, yet poor comprehension of the term may prohibit any meaningful achievement<sup>2</sup>. As planners, maintaining a thorough understanding of 'sense of community' allows us to devise applicable and appropriate planning measures. Sense of community can be defined by four parts:

1. Membership, wherein one feels invested and like they belong;
2. Influence, wherein one feels they have influence over their community, including exerting social pressures and validating social norms;
3. Integration and fulfillment of needs, wherein membership to a community feels rewarding and leads to strong neighbourhoods; and

4. Shared emotional connection, wherein a communal history is shared by or relatable to members<sup>3</sup>.

Having now a better understanding of 'community,' it follows to question how we create it. There can be no singular answer to this question, as communities are unique, fractal, and ever-changing. Although describing the single, successful means of community-building would be impossible, three potential methods are explored below, including:

1. Built form (i.e. New Urbanism), which is abundant in planning practice but may fall short of creating a meaningful community;
2. Adhering to tangible goals that are within planners' scope, and
3. Viewing community building as a never-ending process, the latter two of which are explored by Talen<sup>2</sup>.

## Built Form, New Urbanism, and Spatial Determinism

The application of built form to invoke community may be polymorphic, including construction of parks, plazas, and public libraries. A key example of larger-scale applications of built form to create community is New Urbanism (NU), a neo-traditional municipal design style. Pioneered by Duany & Plater-Zyberk<sup>4</sup>, NU is a response to post-World War II suburbs described as "agglomeration[s] of houses, shops, and offices connected to one another by cars, not by the fabric of human life". Public gathering spaces were lacking in many suburbs, their void being filled by quasi-public, predominantly commercial, and car-dependant shopping malls. As such, residents were inadvertently encouraged to stay home and live almost exclusively within private spaces<sup>4</sup>. The suburban municipality divests time spent in public areas, thus minimizing unplanned social connections and extinguishing sparks of community building.

"The traditional American town" is a proposed solution to the suburban dilemma<sup>4</sup>. NU developments mimic traditional town structures and include high density mixed use areas, as opposed to sparse, segregated residential, commercial and professional districts characteristic of modern developments. As opposed to centering construction on collector roads concatenated by cul-de-sacs, NU developments would be serviced by street networks complemented by sidewalks, bike lanes and active transit<sup>4</sup>. In sum, NU seeks to shrink the private realm while integrating expanded public spaces into thoughtfully-designed neighbourhoods<sup>2</sup>. NU aims to build community through propinquity (i.e., residents being physically close). By spending more time in the public realm, residents have a higher potential of interacting, socializing,

and fostering social cohesion. The notion that NU's built form leads to community-building is an example of spatial determinism where "resident interaction and sense of community are cultivated via the organizing power of space"<sup>2</sup>.

Although NU sounds promising, solely relying on built form to create community presents numerous shortfalls. For instance, living in close quarters with one's neighbours increases the probability of social interaction but does not guarantee community building. Residents of a NU development would have to be willing to invest their time and energy in membership before they could feel a sense of community<sup>3</sup>, which, by definition, is required to have a community<sup>2</sup>. Another fault of crediting spatial determinism with community creation is pre-existing residential bias. For instance, Plas & Lewis's study of the NU city Seaside, Florida, suggests a relationship between sense of community and environmental design. Residents claimed that aspects of Seaside's built environment fostered their sense of community<sup>5</sup>. However, over 70 percent of respondents reported that 'sense of community' was an important factor in their decision to live in Seaside. If residents of a New Urbanist town were not interested in fostering community, built form alone may be insufficient to initiate community building.

Further disparagements to spatial determinism are online communities and communities of interest, e.g. hobby groups. Of course, infrastructure must exist to host these communities, like online chat rooms, social media sites, or in-person maker spaces, but the infrastructure is not what creates the community. These communities exist because people of similar interests seek each other out. It is peoples' interests that draw them to one another, not the built form (buildings or websites) that facilitates their interaction. By widening the definition of community to a broader scope than the neighbourhood or civic scale, built form assumes a weaker influence.

Overall, attributing built form as the ultimate means of community building is inaccurate. Despite this, Duany & Plater-Zyberk credit the built form of traditional American towns with creation of meaningful, supportive, interconnected communities<sup>4</sup>. Seaside, Florida, residents seem to agree, yet also point to their desire for a sense of community as their ultimate reason for living there<sup>5</sup>. Spatial determinism applauds built form as the creator of community, yet Seaside residents' own admissions discredit this notion<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, the existence of communities of interest negates spatial determinism all together. As such, it can be surmised that built form alone is not solely responsible for community creation.

### **Striving for Tangible Goals**

Communities' existence is twofold, resulting from social interaction in addition to a psychological sense of community<sup>2</sup>. Several influences co-exist to establish both factors, and, as such, planners should focus on these smaller, more foundational aspects of community creation to be successful. An advantage of this approach is that many foundational community-building actions are already part of good urban planning practice, like placemaking and facilitating. As such, these actions possess their own merit and resist critiques of community-building by those who disavow its worth or fear the exclusionary communities. Some tangible goals include the facilitation of resident interaction and development of high-quality public spaces<sup>2</sup>. These goals are more practical than nebulously aiming to create a community. Planners are urged to focus on smaller, more in-scope goals, and community development is likely to follow in time<sup>2</sup>.

Although built form of a neighbourhood should not be accepted as the sole founder of community, it would be remiss to deny that environmental factors impact peoples' behaviour<sup>2</sup>. Striving for appropriately designed and well-maintained physical environments is part of good planning practice, as high-quality spaces promote public use, which may facilitate community building. Successful public space creation incorporates design principles, safety standards, and most importantly, local consultation. Likely, communities already exist wherever people exist. As such, when planning public spaces, existing communities should be consulted with the goal of meeting their needs, thus fortifying them. An antithesis of this engagement sentiment would be the 1983 events in Exposition Park (EP) in Los Angeles<sup>6</sup>:

EP, the site of the 1984 Olympics, featured a large grass field in front of an entrance. A Hispanic community that resided near EP regularly used the field for informal soccer-playing. In 1983, an "artwork" comprised of several boulders spanning the length of the field was installed; soccer became dangerous, if not impossible. In protest, former players broke bottles on the rocks, gaining a negative reputation. The informal soccer resumed at another site within EP, whereafter another boulder "artwork" was soon installed. EP management routinely removed capacity for informal uses, both through "artwork" installation and parking lot construction. As such, constructive informal uses like soccer no longer occurred, and crime increased in the area due to reduced visitors<sup>6</sup>. By disallowing informal uses, planners antagonized the existing and garnered them a negative reputation. Members lost influence over their community and their needs were actively disregarded, likely degrading their sense of community<sup>3</sup>. Yet, if planners had endorsed the informal uses, the community could have been strengthened by adding, for instance, goal

posts, painted lines, or picnic tables and benches to EP. Perhaps if planners had decided to make the field a high-quality public space instead of an art installation, the Hispanic soccer community would have flourished.

In short, community building is a vague process that should not be plainly prescribed. Instead, planners should focus on initiatives that create good urban environments and meet the needs of existing communities. By reaching for tangible goals like creation of usable public spaces, community building can occur as an indirect result. In the Exposition Park case, planners intervened against community interests, leaving members worse-off<sup>6</sup>. If planners consult with and validate community interests, planning interventions can improve recreational programming and overall quality of life, thus strengthening sense of community<sup>3</sup>. By striving to achieve noble, straightforward planning goals, community building can organically happen afterwards.

### **Never-ending Community Building**

Another technique is to focus on community building as process instead of an end-goal<sup>2</sup>. Community is, of course, a state of existence, but it should not be taken for granted once earned; planners should continually work to strengthen communities against struggles they may face. Acknowledging as such is to admit that community building is an ongoing process, one that constantly adapts to changing social, environmental and political environments. To planners, community building should be synonymous with bolstering communities' group problem-solving abilities<sup>2</sup>.

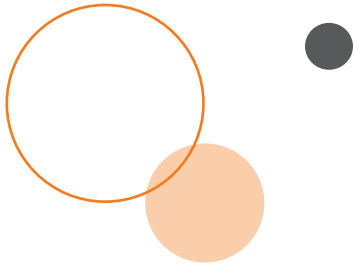
Planners' facilitation of problem-solving is a both a tangible and well-understood goal. For instance, Mattessich & Wilder Research Center describe twenty-eight qualities of successful communities, community building processes, and planners: Successful communities tend to already possess social cohesion<sup>7</sup>. Like a complex ecosystem's food web, the more linkages community members share with each other, the more resilient they can be when faced with changes. Strong groups are also adaptable and flexible, already possessing the means of, or foundations for, effective problem-solving. Successful community strengthening processes incorporate clear understanding of the group's goals and abilities, allocate resident decision-making power, and provide clear benefits to many community members, thus increasing their likelihood to participate. Qualities of successful community builders (i.e., planners) include adaptability, previous experience, a comprehensive understanding of the community and a trustworthy, sincere commitment to community members. Implementing insights from Mattessich & Wilder Research Center into community building efforts simplifies the process by identifying clear targets and resources for planners<sup>7</sup>.

Another strategy to facilitate continuous community building is the establishment of cooperatives. Co-op businesses are owned and controlled by a local community, thus bolstering economic development and employment<sup>8</sup>. Cooperative participants buy in to the business as owners while also patronizing the business, reaping benefits as both a consumer and a sponsor. These "user-owners" exercise governing power within co-ops by voting on bylaws, electing board members, and assessing financial decisions<sup>8</sup>. In addition to injecting more democracy into a community (something that would be applauded by Eric Liu)<sup>9</sup>, involvement in a cooperative strengthens all attributes of sense of place: membership (buying in to the co-op), influence (voting on its governance), needs fulfillment (ensuring access to necessary services), and emotional connections (developing a shared history of the co-op)<sup>3</sup>.

The process of community building is a widely studied and constantly developing field, much like communities themselves. Understanding the qualities of successful communities and builders will help improve planners' abilities and outcomes<sup>7</sup>. Increasing citizen control through cooperatives incentivizes civic engagement and investment, strengthening communities on a daily basis<sup>8,9</sup>. By viewing communities and their development as an on-going process, planners can continually supplement their learning and grow their facilitation abilities, all while helping communities prosper.

### **Conclusion**

Due to their uniqueness, complexity, and constant flux, there is no singular recipe for building community. In light of this, three community building methods were evaluated. Built form and New Urbanism show merit through propinquity, but spatial determinism alone falls short of creating a community. Instead, planners ought to hone in on specific, tangible goals that align with good planning practices as a means of facilitating community. Another tenet of community building is to perceive it as a process and not a destination, thereby accepting the constant flux of forms, preferences and abilities that communities embody. For instance, the emergence of apps like Nextdoor shift historically physical communities online, challenging our understanding of community-building. Removal of face-to-face interaction between neighbours removes accountability, potentially allowing exclusion, bigotry, and racism to flourish in the name of community building<sup>10</sup>. Demonstrably, planners must conquer the ever-emerging challenges of a dynamic society to achieve meaningful and successful community-building.

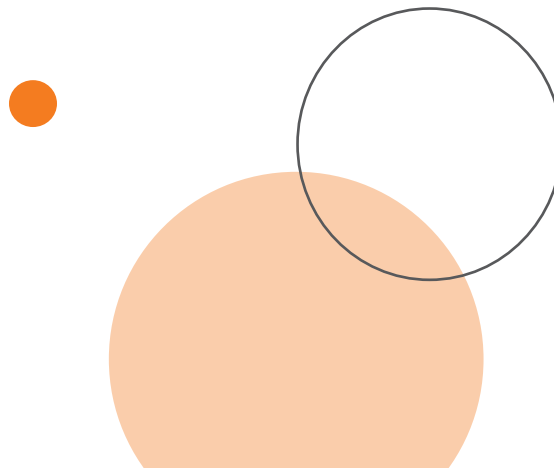


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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*I want to be a planner because it makes me happy. I love learning about the interconnections of people and the places we live. I love studying the context of this Earth and how we plan in harmony with it. I love striving to make a difference in peoples lives through planning – be it through equitable services and policies, decolonization and reconciliation, accessibly designed cities, walkable communities, public transportation, fostering a love of place – I could go on. Planning stands at the intersection of all my professional interests and combines them in an exciting way. I am thrilled to become a planner.*



# Bridging Methods of Public

# Engagement: A Comparison Between the Emerging Social Media Landscape and Traditional Conventional Engagement in Community Planning

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## Introduction

Social media has sparked a level of engagement and networking that was unfathomable a decade ago, allowing individuals to be rapidly informed and connected to the activities occurring in their inner circle and far beyond it. Emerging alongside social media is the increasing demand for public and stakeholder engagement for community development and policy decisions within municipalities. Conventional engagement practices have been the dominant and most common form for decades. This method occurs when individuals meet face-to-face to discuss planning-related issues with an audience-style setup<sup>1</sup>. This style of in-person engagement has sparked discussions on its ability to allow meaningful participation and its inability to prevent extreme conflict. Social media platforms designed to generate feedback may have the potential to counteract the obstacles arising from this frequent engagement tool; however, flaws still exist to some extent. Therefore, this essay asks, is social media beneficial for collecting feedback for planners, and is it a good replacement for conventional in-person public engagement? Exploring case studies and literature will determine if the positives or negatives outweigh each other for the two methods or if some circumstances warrant different approaches. The use of social media may be rising, but its applicability to community engagement must be negotiated.



## Description of the Two Methods

Social media exists across many platforms and is owned and operated by private companies. While these platforms generally output the same content or relative idea through the formula of post, comment, and scroll, their implications and usefulness for public engagement vary. Facebook is credited as a platform structured the most appropriately for open engagement<sup>2</sup> and is deemed quite versatile<sup>3</sup>. Twitter sources direct public opinions<sup>4</sup>, distributes concepts, and allows further commenting on others' ideas<sup>2</sup>. Despite its popularity, Instagram is described as having a low participation rate, but can be meaningfully utilized as a visual tool to promote actual city spaces and event highlights<sup>4</sup>. Comparably, conventional engagement takes place in an audience-style set-up, where decision-makers are separated from the public, and there is typically a time limit for speaking<sup>1</sup>. Instead of varying by platform, different bodies conduct it, such as school boards, city councils, or engagement consultants, where the process remains sufficiently strict. Public comments are welcomed during a set period of generally two to three minutes. This is compared to social media where, unless a post is removed, there is an indefinite period to share the post and leave an opinion.

The remainder of this analysis will focus on four factors to determine if social media is effective for public engagement and could realistically replace conventional engagement. The four factors examined are:

1. Accessibility and bias;
2. Scope and moderation;
3. Unidirectional and bidirectional dialogue; and
4. Resources.

### Factor 1: Accessibility and Bias

Barriers vary between conventional and social media engagement, allowing opposite groups to access the opportunity and form participation bias. Participation bias occurs when most people engaging with a project do not adequately represent the community population demographics or political ideologies<sup>1</sup>. Conventional engagement requires people to be present in a specific place on a particular day and typically attracts older adults<sup>5</sup>. People with different physical abilities, those unable to allocate time that fixed day, which is usually youth, or those who cannot reach the location using private or public transportation have their opinions largely unconsidered. Social media removes



these barriers as content is available anytime and anywhere and is easily accessible, mitigating the need for stricter engagement intervals. Additionally, platforms naturally attract youth and raise general awareness of community issues<sup>6</sup>. However, negatively speaking, it can perpetuate a similar inequality by preventing those with unreliable internet access or technological skill deficits, such as older adults, from participating<sup>2</sup>. Both methods also tend to exclude the homeless population or migrants as their presence is often unnoted<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, both methods of engagement hold barriers for different members of the community, or in some cases similar ones, bringing forth multiple avenues of participation bias.

### **Factor 2: Setting the Scope**

An issue that intersects with both methods is scope, moderation, and ability to maintain control over the conversation. Conventional engagement withholds participants from speaking beyond their allotted time; however, they may utilize their time to speak on any matter regardless of relevance. Additionally, this process tends to encourage extreme positions. Its nature warrants every person to make a declaration rather than fostering a collaborative environment<sup>1</sup>. The repeated declarations from each participant can allow the remaining comments to become out of scope if personal agendas or conflicts are present. Although, social media does not stray from this either, as the pushing of counter-narratives and agendas is evident<sup>7</sup>. Overall, moderation difficulty far surpasses conventional engagement despite face-to-face interactions and the inability to ignore conversations. On the non-radical side, hashtags on Instagram and Twitter can perpetuate generic discussions that do not connect to the original questions given. For example, the #MySydney campaign to increase stakeholder and community engagement rates eventually surpassed its relevance for data collection as users began utilizing it generally for all posts<sup>2</sup>. Likewise, the conversations can become diverted purposefully to address irrelevant issues to the primary project. For example, the transition of a thread on summer events programs abruptly switched to online protests about saving a local church<sup>4</sup>. Public commentary can be placed orderly and hierarchical for conventional engagement; however, on Facebook for example, all messages are accessible to a wider audience. Planners must sift through these uncontrollable threads to find relevant data, increasing time and impatience. The planners conducting public engagement attempt to design their processes to be as productive as possible. However, any method of speaking with the public is ultimately susceptible to becoming positional or out of scope. Overall, social media suffers from moderation difficulties to a greater extent than conventional engagement.

### **Factor 3: One-Way or Two-Way Dialogue**

One-way dialogue encompasses the unidirectional movement of information, where an individual is informed rather than cooperatively consulted<sup>1</sup>. Two-way or bidirectional dialogue instead introduces reciprocity and discussion generation. Both engagement methods have been noted to lack two-way communication by design or purposefully. The limited generation of discussions between planners and citizens occurs when departments lack the time, resources, or expertise to meaningfully respond to comments<sup>2</sup>. For example, the #MySydney campaign was styled as a questions-and-answer forum on many platforms, resulting in generic thank-you messages from staff. The output of conventional engagement is similar, as a speaker finishes their presentation and then the board quickly moves to the next person or sometimes asks limited questions. Since conventional engagement is required by law at minimum for certain policies, the perception that this is a forced process contributes to people feeling a lack of reciprocity and genuine desire from the board to consider opinions. Solution-wise, conventional engagement would fare well with encouraging board members to maintain an open mind and talk to participants directly after speeches more often. However, this increase is difficult because dozens of people may be present at a session that does not have unlimited time. Social media would benefit from seeking influencers or experts who could respond directly to posts and offer continuous feedback<sup>4</sup>. Strategically aligning with key players in the social media realm could enhance community outreach and enact positive social change. Youth especially believe they can be "protagonists of social change" due to the broad reach of each platform<sup>6</sup>. However, this solution can cause issues about privacy, bullying, and difficulty finding a neutral party. If conducted thoughtfully and relatively neutral, it can effectively provide insight into the community and help engage with locals. Therefore, if the goal of engagement is to advise or inform citizens, then the concern of lacking two-way dialogue is not present as collaboration is beyond the state of the project. If planners intend to generate feedback and utilize comments in the project's future, alterations to both these methods would be necessary to give the public additional freedom to express concerns and engage in reciprocity.

### **Factor 4: Resources**

Public engagement has become an emblem of community participation in civic life and is an essential component of project success and sustainability. The challenge with its increasing importance is the ability of planners to balance its prioritization with resources and public satisfaction. Except for internet connection costs, social media may seem completely free to explore for engagement. Other than the cost of materials and booking a space, conventional engagement may seem low cost. Looking beyond face value

reveals that the social, economic, and political costs are widely present. Both methods can become time-consuming, as expertise in data collection and public mediation is low at times<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, they begin with uncertainty regarding what the public opinion will be composed of, and the effort put into engagement can result in no meaningful data collected. This is especially true if the conversation becomes out of scope or people take extreme positions. Acknowledging that dwindling human resources and increasing conflict can affect project momentum is paramount to the engagement's design, as team members can become fatigued quickly. Those conducting both methods need to be tactile to reach success. Overall, both methods can either suffer or thrive from the amount of resources given across the engagement timeline.

### **Discussion**

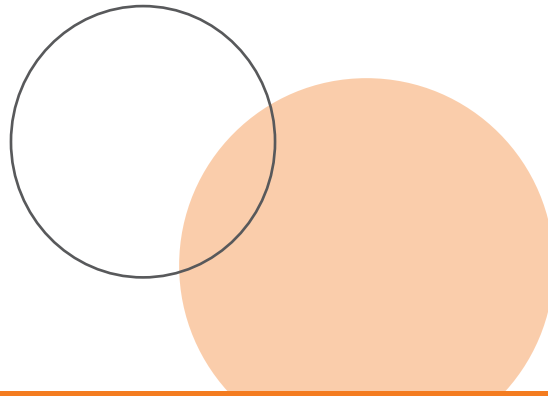
Social media and conventional engagement are catalysts for community participation in different ways and withhold their respective benefits and deficits. Social media platforms bring new and innovative ways to connect with communities and receive project feedback. Its unique premise allows for widespread information sharing to audiences such as youth who are typically in the shadows at conventional events. Its applications such as hashtags, commenting, or liking, can be utilized strategically to kickstart conversations and monitor issues presented by the community. Its effectiveness for public engagement could increase by assigning experts or influencers to collect data and moderate chats. All things considered, it also perpetuates its own inequalities and requires additional development and practice to become more effective. It fairs competitively with or is even better than conventional engagement in informing and advising citizens as its usage is rising and less costly than putting newspaper ads or printing posters. However, it suffers from a lack of two-way communication unless additional resources are provided to sift methodically through possibly hundreds of responses. Positively speaking, the use of social media for public engagement has room to improve and expand, while conventional engagement is generally at its peak due to policy and procedural restrictions. Conventional engagement could only change by facilitating behavioral changes like encouraging learning and sharing expertise rather than incentivizing position-taking<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, social media is effective in generating feedback for planners in its current state, but modifications would improve its ability to be a primary tool for engagement.

Setting aside the legal requirements for conventional engagement, it would still not be beneficial for social media to replace conventional engagement methods. The public not having the opportunity to meet the project team may not allow the development to become fully realized or feel tangible<sup>5</sup>. With the quantity of information on social

media, projects could be missed in the platform's feed, and citizens could quickly become unaware or blindsided if they do not have a well-connected personal network in the neighborhood. Another issue is that speaking during a meeting holds people responsible and accountable for their claims<sup>1</sup>. On social media there is the potential for anonymity or irrelevant responses from those who do not live in the area or are not directly affected. The most adequate solution if given the resources would be to engage in both techniques to some degree. Since the platforms attract different groups, combining the strategies could capture everyone and fill the knowledge and experiences gaps<sup>10</sup>. Diverse engagement means connecting to diverse demographics across various socio-economic boundaries and personal preferences<sup>5</sup>. Adding together the viewpoints and ideas is likely to present more sustainable and holistic solutions<sup>8</sup>. The widespread use and availability of social media can be used to jumpstart an information campaign and then conventional engagement will directly bring people together<sup>5</sup>. Overall, the value of face-to-face interactions despite the strict procedures still cannot be overstated. Physically hearing someone voice their opinion can allow for greater internalization and understanding, especially if they are your neighbor or a hard-working individual in the area. Social media can prevent the realization that comments are directed at a real person, leading to conflict that can harm someone's mental health. The capability of social media to be flexible and harness innovation would coordinate well with the more stringent conventional method to generate usable and holistic feedback for planners.

### **Conclusion**

Through analyzing the outcomes and background of completing conventional or social media engagement, it is clear that they instead benefit from each other in coordination rather than one being subordinate. Even if conventional engagement was not a requirement, there is value in having face-to-face interactions with the community to build invaluable trust and personal connections that may not be as in-depth if they were solely on a screen. Still, the styles of engagement on social media reach diverse audiences, and interesting feedback can be gained that may not be captured from traditional forms. If given the resources, planners should prioritize experimenting with different platforms to analyze which methods are more suitable and applicable for their engagement timeline and resources allocated. Even if detailed campaigns like the #MySydney one is not feasible, using social media as an advertisement tool to inform the public or kick-start conversations about developments, city spaces, or policies could be worthwhile. Overall, public engagement is multifaceted, and connecting with all stakeholders has proven to be difficult. To engage comprehensively with the community, planners should utilize multiple methods and platforms to facilitate a high quantity and quality of feedback.

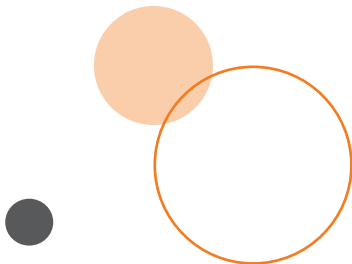


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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*I want to play a role in ensuring communities have the resources and capacity to reach their full potential regarding functionality, involvement, and well-being. Being a planner means I can support and work in diverse environments that contribute to broad societal transformations. This diversity also allows me to explore personal interests that create flourishing places, such as sustainability, reconciliation with Indigenous communities, and housing diversity.*



# Lighting-Up our Streets: Case Studies from Saskatoon

Ava Henderson, Nicholas Zempluk, Robert Patrick\* - University of Saskatchewan

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## Abstract:

Electrification of city infrastructure in the late 19th century transformed the Canadian urban fabric. From streetlights to streetcars, electricity enabled technological innovation that would advance urban livability and promote public safety. The purpose of this paper is to gauge perceptions of public safety based on local case studies of street lighting in three Saskatoon neighbourhoods. Our neighbourhood assessments are based on pre-determined indicators applied to selected street segments in each neighbourhood. Adequate neighbourhood street lighting, we argue, is not only critical for public safety but also helps to promote active transportation and healthy communities, indicators of sustainability supported by the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations SDG #11, 2015).

**Keywords:** Street lighting; Saskatoon; public safety; sustainable development goals

## Lighting-Up our Streets: Case Studies from Saskatoon

### Introduction

Electrification of city infrastructure in the late 19th century transformed the Canadian urban fabric. From streetlights to streetcars, electricity enabled technological innovation that would advance urban livability and promote public safety. The purpose of this study, conducted during October 2023, was to gauge perceptions of public safety based on local case studies of street lighting in three Saskatoon neighbourhoods. Adequate neighbourhood street lighting, we argue, is not only critical for public safety but also helps to promote active transportation and healthy communities, indicators of sustainability supported by the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations SDG #11, 2015). This study is the product of an undergraduate experiential learning project in the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Saskatchewan.

### Research Methods

We applied a multi-methods, case study approach using three Saskatoon residential neighbourhoods: Pleasant Hill, Silverwood Heights and Brighton (see Figure 1). These neighbourhoods were selected for their substantial variation in terms of demographics, household income, housing age, housing rental rates and vehicle ownership using the Saskatoon Neighbourhood Profile report (2021) (see Table 1).

The methodologies for this study included field-based assessments and citizen surveys. Field assessments were conducted during multiple evenings in October 2023 over a sample road segment of 550 metres in each neighbourhood. The road segments were selected in each neighbourhood based on similar physical characteristics across all three neighbourhoods including non-arterial, neighbourhood roads serving single family dwellings with front yard and sidewalk configurations. The road segments that were selected were representative of road conditions, and neighbourhood characteristics in the respective neighbourhood. In the time constraints of this project, it was not possible to make an assessment of lighting conditions in each entire neighbourhood. In addition, fifteen daytime interviews were conducted with local residents living in the immediate area across all three neighbourhoods. The interviewees were pedestrians that regularly walk on sidewalks in their respective neighbourhoods.



Study locations in Saskatoon – Adapted from: (City of Saskatoon, 2021)

	Pleasant Hill	Silverwood H.	Brighton
Population	4,820	10,624	2,231
Median Income (\$)	21,590	48,820	63,270
Home Ownership/Rental (%)	31/69	76/24	n/a
Vehicles per person	0.3	0.7	1.2
Dwelling Age	76% pre-2000	99% pre-2000	0% pre-2000
Housing Affordability*	2.05	4.71	4.95
Average SFD sales	169,291	408,874	417,344
Percent SFD housing (%)	30	75	59

\*3.0 is considered the max value for housing affordability (housing cost as proportion of household total income)

Table 1: Neighbourhood Profile (City of Saskatoon, 2021)

We developed five indicators to measure the sustainability of local area street lighting (see Table 2). For the purposes of this experiential learning assignment, and given our time limitations for this assignment, we chose indicators that were measurable and observable based on fieldwork. The selected indicators were also comparable between neighbourhoods to provide a useful measure of lighting quality at the street-level.

Indicator #	Description of Indicator
1	Percent of lights installed with LEDs
2	Average distance between streetlights
3	Standard Deviation of distance between streetlights
4	Number of streetlights no longer functioning
5	Number of lighting non-uniformities

Table 2: Indicators for Lighting Analysis

To produce values for each of these indicators we measured the distance between light posts using a surveyor’s wheel and conducted field observations of street lighting type and condition. Lighting non-uniformities refer to lighting that is not consistent with the standard of luminescence for that street (intermittent light, flickering, dim lighting).

The purpose of the citizen survey was to obtain first-hand qualitative information on the lighting conditions in each neighbourhood as perceived by area residents. Only a small sample of interviews (fifteen in total) was possible given the timeframe set for this study. The survey questionnaire is shown in Table 3.

Question #	Survey Questions
1.	On a scale of 1 to 10, one indicating not feeling safe and 10 indicating you feel totally safe, how safe do you feel walking alone at night in your neighbourhood?
2.	How often do you go for leisurely walks in your neighbourhood at night? Do you think a change in lighting would influence this number?
3.	If you could change one thing in relation to the walkability of your neighbourhood at night due to lighting, what would it be?

Table 3: Lighting Survey for Neighbourhood Residents

### Results

Application of the five sustainability indicators produced quantitative data allowing for cross-neighbourhood analysis (see Table 4).

Indicator	Neighbourhoods		
	Pleasant Hill	Silverwood Heights	Brighton
Percent of lights that are installed with LEDs	100%	100%	100%
Average distance between streetlights	41	55	45
Standard deviation of distance between streetlights	19	5	6
Number of streetlights no longer functioning	0	0	0
Number of non-uniformities	2	1	0

Table 4: Lighting Analysis Results

### Field Observations

Photographs were taken of the streetscape to gain qualitative evidence to further assess the lighting conditions in each neighbourhood. Our street observations reveal that Brighton and Silverwood Heights have more secondary lighting from residential homes and front yard garages in comparison to Pleasant Hill, a possible result of newer housing in the former neighbourhoods, newer street infrastructure. It was further noted that both Brighton and Silverwood Heights are more affluent neighbourhoods than Pleasant Hill based on sale price of homes, median personal income, percent of home ownership, and gross rental rates. Additional research may show a relationship between secondary lighting and age of a neighbourhood, maturity of tree canopy cover, median income of residents and other socio-economic conditions.



Figure 2: Streetscape in Pleasant Hill - Photo Credit: Ava Henderson



Figure 3: Streetscape in Silverwood Heights - Photo Credit: Ava Henderson



Figure 4: Streetscape in Brighton - Photo Credit: Ava Henderson



### Interview Data

Five residents in each of the three neighbourhoods were interviewed. The results from these street surveys are shown in Table 5.

		Survey Question and Response		
Area	Participant	Safety Perception (1=low; 10=high)	Night walk frequency; would better lighting increase walking habit	Desired night lighting improvement
Pleasant Hill	#1	7	Often walk at night; yes better lighting would increase walking	More lighting on main road and in alleys
	#2	8	Often walk at night; Yes, more lighting would improve walking	More lights on main roads and uniformity
	#3	7	Do not walk at night; increased lighting would slightly change walking habit	Better lighting on curbs on both sides of the street.
	#4	10	Often walk at night; more lights would increase walking habit	More lights in general
	#5	2 or 3	Not walking often, more lights would increase walking habit	Increased lighting for summer nights
Silverwood Heights	#1	8	Walk always at night; more lights would benefit walking	More lights and for Meewasin Trail to be lit
	#2	7	Never walk at night; more lighting would not change habit	Better Sidewalks
	#3	8	Do not walk often at night; the lighting is sufficient	Nothing really
	#4	7	Do not walk often at night; don't know if more lighting would change walking habit	More lighting in parks
	#5	10	Don't walk at night; won't change walking habit	More lighting on Meewasin Trail
Brighton	#1	8 to 9	Walk at night a few times a week; more lighting will not change walking habit	Would not change anything
	#2	6	Avoid walking at night; more lighting will not change habit	Increased brightness of lights
	#3	10	Walk at night a few times a month; more lighting will not change walking habit	Would not change the lighting due to environmental concern
	#4	9	Walk at night once a month; more lighting would improve walking habit	Better lighting in areas under construction
	#5	8	Often walk at night; more lighting would increase walking habit	More light in the park and dark spots under trees

Table 5: Survey Results from Field Work

### **Discussion - Pleasant Hill**

At 41 meters, Pleasant Hill, based on our sample survey, had the closest average distance between streetlights of the three neighbourhoods in this study. This metric is promising as according to the City of Saskatoon Neighbourhood Profiles, 1.5% of the residents in Pleasant Hill walk to work (2021). As well, the profile stated that there were 0.3 registered vehicles per person in Pleasant Hill in 2021, this number sits much lower than the city's average at 0.7 (2021). Furthermore, we found that 60% of survey participants frequently walk alone at night. According to Peña-García et al. (2015), well-lit streets with uniformity of streetlights makes people feel safer and more comfortable. Although Pleasant Hill had a closest average distance between street lights, the neighbourhood has the highest standard deviation (variance between street lights) at 19 meters. Indicating that the even though the distance between streetlights is low on average, the streetlight positioning on this street is very inconsistent, a condition creating "dark spots".

The Pleasant Hill survey has lamp post separation variance ranging from 21 meters to 81 meters as shown in Table 4. The non-uniformities noticed in this neighbourhood leads to "dark spots" decreasing real and perceived safety levels among pedestrians. According to Unwin and Fotios (2011), although lighting cannot mitigate factors that contribute to a fear of crime, the increase of light to a poorly lit area will improve feelings of security. Unwin and Fotios (2011) found that even a small increase in illuminance amplified resident safety in areas of low illuminance. Based on citizen survey responses, Pleasant Hill rated the lowest for perceived pedestrian safety with a score of 6.8 out of 10. When prompted with the possibility of increased lighting, all participants said they would increase their walk frequency at night. Economic and social activity is also enhanced with improvements in night lighting. Prihatiningrum et al. (2021), report that increased safety and comfortability resulting from artificial lighting can increase livability and sense of community.

Lastly, when we asked survey participants in Pleasant Hill what aspect of lighting and walkability they would change, the most common answer was more lighting on main roads. We concluded that increasing the uniformity of light with supplemental lighting between existing gaps in street lighting would increase perceived safety among pedestrians leading to an increase in active transportation in Pleasant Hill.

### **Discussion - Silverwood Heights**

Silverwood Heights had the greatest average distance between streetlights at 55 meters. The standard deviation of these lamps was only 6 meters. Indicating that the spacing between streetlights was relatively consistent. The case study street was sufficiently bright in comparison to our case study street in Pleasant Hill. We hypothesized that increased

secondary lighting such as personal garage lights and porch lights, improved consistency of distance between light posts, and the use of light coloured pavement may have contributed to the appearance of more illumination.

Based on citizen survey responses, Silverwood Heights has scored 8 out of 10 for perceived pedestrian safety. Silverwood Heights is a newer subdivision, characterized by predominantly single family dwelling. According to the City of Saskatoon Neighbourhood Profiles, 1.08% of residents walk to work. Furthermore, there are 0.7 registered vehicles per person, which is 40% higher than in Pleasant Hill (2021). These findings suggest that the residents of Silverwood Heights drive more frequently and walk less often than residents of Pleasant Hill. This is consistent with our survey results reporting that 20% of participants frequently walk at night, and 20% of participants would change their frequency in conjunction with an increase in street lighting.

### **Discussion - Brighton**

The Brighton neighbourhood sample survey had the most consistently well-lit street in the study, and also the newest subdivision in this study. The average distance between street lights was 45 meters. The standard deviation was just 6 meters. However, when omitting one outlier, the deviation is only 2 meters. The lighter colour of road pavement was similar in comparison with Silverwood Heights which further demonstrates the non-reflective and thus dimming effect of dark pavement as seen in the much older neighbourhood of Pleasant Hill. Based on citizen survey responses, Brighton rated the highest for perceived pedestrian safety with a score of 8.4 out of 10. The census data for percentage of residents who walk to work is unavailable. Although, according to the City of Saskatoon Neighbourhood Profiles, we know that there are 1.2 registered vehicles per person which is 4 times higher than in Pleasant Hill and 1.7 times higher than in Silverwood (2021). This gradient of vehicle ownership is likely a byproduct of the relatively high median income of each of the newer neighbourhoods.

Survey results indicate that 60% of participants frequently walk their neighbourhood at night and 40% would increase their frequency in conjunction with improved lighting. We found that the lighting is sufficient in Silverwood Heights and Brighton based on our combined interviews and streetlight assessment. Although this could be improved, we found that resources should first be put towards improving the lighting infrastructure of Pleasant Hill as this neighbourhood has the highest walking rates and yet the poorest street lighting infrastructure.

## Conclusion

Lighting infrastructure is a critical feature for sustainable cities and communities. In Saskatoon's northern climate, darkness shrouds many months of the year. This further emphasizes the need for safe and positive pedestrian experiences, particularly at nighttime. In the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood we found street lighting illumination was of inconsistent and often poor quality based on our sustainability indicators. In Silverwood Heights, we found the lighting was sufficient but improvements could increase walking rates. Lastly, in Brighton we found the lighting to be of the highest standard. A conclusion is that newer and more affluent neighbourhoods enjoy the best street lighting conditions. These newer neighbourhoods are located on the fringe of the city requiring higher rates of car ownership to address automobile mobility. Regarding future research, we recommend the City of Saskatoon conduct a city-wide full neighbourhood street

lighting assessment and make the appropriate repairs and improvements to streetlighting conditions. Furthermore, we implore Planners and city officials to account for the effects of quality street lighting on active transportation including transit ridership and public safety. These impacts can further push the City of Saskatoon towards the goals of sustainable development consistent with the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to ensure safe development in the city. In addition, safety is embedded as an important community value in the Official Community Plan for Saskatoon. The pursuit of more consistent, improved street lighting infrastructure, particularly in the older inner city neighbourhoods will serve the dual roles of enhancing active transportation while improving real and perceived neighbourhood safety.

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# A Dutch-design for Broadway Avenue, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

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This paper is the product of a University of Saskatchewan Study Abroad planning course, Urban Design and Active Transportation, held in Amsterdam, Netherlands, in May 2024. During this Study Abroad experience, students witnessed the enormous differences between the design and function of urban streets in the Netherlands compared to Canadian streets. On busy streets in Amsterdam, street design decisions have been made that make pedestrians and cyclists feel safe, street design decisions that remind car drivers that they are the guests, not the owners of the street. Here we will discuss how this philosophy is manifested through road design and what design modifications may be transferable to North America, particularly in Saskatoon, to enhance active transportation and thus create more complete streets.



Google (2024). Plantage Middenlaan, facing west. Note the separated tram, car, and bike lanes (bike lanes closed due to COVID-19), and median pedestrian islands to make crossing the street more comfortable.

Plantage Middenlaan is an excellent example of Dutch street design and was chosen for this comparative study with Broadway Avenue in Saskatoon for a number of reasons. First, both streets are popular retail areas forming a commercial corridor in their respective cities. Second, both streets boast a high number of pedestrians in addition to public transit service and private automobile mobility. Last, both streets share a similar 4-lane, elongated configuration. In our Dutch case study, Plantage Middenlaan, all modes of transport are given dedicated right-of-way, and cyclists are given physical separation from cars by means of parking and trees. As Middenlaan is completely straight for 700m,

care is taken to artificially slow private vehicle traffic. It uses bus-friendly speed bumps and elevated crosswalks, the latter of which signal to drivers that they are entering a space for pedestrians and must yield to them. Tall trees are placed close to the traffic lanes, and where island platforms are not present, there are slight bumps separating traffic from the trams. Finally, the vehicle lanes bend slightly around the island platforms, which counteracts the long, straight stretches between intersections. Other streets in Amsterdam employ chicanes, or roadway design curves, and speed tables, an elongated speed bump, in combination with and center islands to slow traffic. These last three features are already present across Saskatoon, particularly in school zones. To our surprise, rather than being narrower, the traffic lanes on Middenlaan actually align with the “practical upper limit” of travel lane width (four meters) as recommended by the City of Saskatoon, (City of Saskatoon, n.d., p. 8). However, the roadway design features listed above have the combined effect of creating a psychological (and physical) deterrent to unsafe travel speeds.



Google (2024). Four traffic calming mechanisms in one image. Placing tall trees close to traffic both protects cyclists from errant motorists and gives the impression of a narrower lane, as does the slight change in elevation between the traffic and tram lanes. The curve in the station platform forces drivers to slow down, counteracting the street's long stretches between intersections. Further ahead, we see a “Busvriendelijke drempel” or bus-friendly bump, a speed bump designed to slow cars while letting buses and emergency vehicles go unimpeded (Struyk Verwo Infra).



For pedestrians, Middenlaan has a number of features to make crossing the street a safer and less uncertain experience. Rather than requiring pedestrians to cross a full 20m wide street at once, the placement of median islands between the traffic and tram lanes provide a rest area while dividing the total crossing length into two segments, arguably a more human scale experience for pedestrians. As a result of this design, during periods of high traffic, pedestrians only have to look one way before crossing each roadway segment.



*Broadway, Saskatoon in its current state (Google, 2021).*

In Saskatoon, the commercial strip of Broadway Street has the greatest potential for a “Dutch-style” transformation. Broadway has largely retained its early 20th-century narrow, street-facing storefronts, which according to Jan Gehl (2010), is ideal for the pedestrian walking pace, and “provides the best opportunities for buyers and sellers to interact, and the numerous doors provide many exchange points between inside and out” (pp. 77-78). However, Broadway sacrifices these human-scale attributes by maximizing vehicle traffic, with only 7.8m of its 30.2m width devoted to pedestrian activity. For this reason, Broadway is an ideal candidate roadway for re-design following the Dutch-model.



*Our vision for Broadway Ave using lessons in traffic calming and prioritization of active and public transportation. Note the buses driving against the flow of traffic (Street Sketch).*

Broadway is considerably wider than Middenlaan, giving us greater flexibility in re-design options. On Broadway, the space between storefronts is 30.2m wide (HDR Corporation, p. 2), whereas, on Middenlaan it is only 22.5m, meaning that Broadway’s roadway (22.4m) is almost wide enough to fit all of Middenlaan. We would begin by removing the median islands and installing a wider, four meter wide center platform with opposing counterflow lanes. Here we differ from the Plantage Middenlaan model for three reasons. First, to avoid the crowding we experienced on Amsterdam’s 1.6m wide platforms. Second, to accommodate heated bus shelters for Saskatoon’s cold winter weather, and third, to accommodate Saskatoon’s bus fleet with doors on the right. For these reasons, we will adhere to Saskatoon’s proposed 36m x 4m platform dimensions (City of Saskatoon, 2019). Moving outwards, we have 3.3m wide bus lanes, 3m vehicle lanes, and 2m wide cycling lanes with metal bollards separating each. On streets without bus stops, we would remove the center island entirely and use parking on the west (southbound) side of the street to separate the bike lanes from traffic. This would leave 4m for sidewalks where platforms are present, and 4.5m where they are not present. For reference, Broadway’s sidewalks currently measure 3.6m-3.9m wide. Parking-protected bike lanes would give cyclists easier access to shops, enabling the kind of quick, impulsive stops that help make Amsterdam’s shops so vibrant.

Research into dedicated transit lanes has consistently shown that they dramatically reduce travel times for transit users while increasing travel times for motorists. One study that looked at their application on Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Avenue in Dhaka, Bangladesh, found that the addition of dedicated bus lanes reduced bus travel times by 37.6%, but that for other vehicles, travel times increased by 20.18%. Average speeds for buses increased dramatically, from 13.4 km/h to 25.9 km/h in the North-South direction and 20.7 km/h to 28.4 km/h in the South-North direction, while cars saw smaller reductions in speed of roughly 3.25km/h in both directions (Junaed et al., 2022). The impacts of dedicated bus lanes on transit mode share have been generally positive (Kim, 2003; Witheridge et al., 2014; Choi, D. & Choi, W., 1995, cited by Ben-Dor et al., 2018). We anticipate that the many mid-density developments proposed for the Broadway Avenue corridor have the potential to instill a strong culture of active transportation usage, provided that the aforementioned design modifications are prioritized in Broadway’s street design.

Our proposal would necessitate the elimination of all on-street parking on blocks where bus stops are present. Proposals such as this are often met with opposition from motorists and business owners concerned that a reduction in parking will result in reduced patronage. Volker & Handy



(2021) conducted a review of 15 studies on the economic impacts of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in cities across Canada and the U.S. Of the 35 bicycle facilities studied, at least 12 involved the removal of on-street parking, and at least 19 involved the removal or narrowing of at least one lane of private automobile traffic. Of the 35 bicycle facilities studied, 20 were found to have positive economic effects, 10 were found to have unclear or no significant economic effects, and five were found to have negative effects. However, none of the studies that found negative impacts used statistical testing, and “all of them had additional limitations that prevent statistically supported conclusions about the economic effect” (Volker & Handy, 2021, pp. 411-419).

Change does not happen immediately. The addition of any of the design modifications listed above, such as parking-protected bike lanes, bus-friendly speed bumps, wider sidewalks, curb extensions, speed tables, and median pedestrian islands, can broadly be applied to almost any commercial corridor street in Saskatoon and elsewhere. As has been demonstrated across Saskatoon, there are feasible ways of making a street more hospitable to non-motorists. Plantage Middenlaan offers a compromise option, demonstrating how to make a street more inviting to non-motorists without entirely shutting out private automobiles.

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# Urban Planning and Work-Integrated Learning: A tool for education and engagement

*Perry Stein, RPP, MCIP, Sydney Whiting, Parisa Boroumand, Taylor Manns - University of Lethbridge*

## Summary

Lethbridge faces challenges in retaining skilled graduates, despite hosting two major post-secondary institutions. To close the gap, the City of Lethbridge has invested in work-integrated learning (WIL), offering hands-on experience in a range of fields, including urban planning, which support retention, enhance student skills and foster community integration. With research supported by a Mitacs Accelerate grant, our project explores WIL's role as a planning tool to increase student retention, community engagement, and economic development. Overall, the integration of students within urban planning highlights the need to support youth within cities and the insights they bring.

## Introduction

The retention of skilled graduates is a shared challenge faced by small and mid-size cities, as students are often interested in returning to their home communities or are drawn to job prospects in larger centers. Lethbridge, Alberta is one such campus community. As the home to two major post-secondary institutions, attracting students to the city of just over 100,000 people is relatively easy, but retaining and embedding them in the community during their studies and after graduation has proven to be far more difficult.

The City of Lethbridge—both in its role as a municipality and a major employer—has in recent years directed its attention to this issue and invested in students through innovative work-integrated learning (WIL) and experiential learning partnerships. City Scholars as one such program, has been a multi-year partnership between the City, the University of Lethbridge, and Lethbridge Polytechnic (formerly Lethbridge College). City Scholars supports students in gaining hands-on experience across many diverse fields, including urban planning and design, heritage management, policymaking, human resources, and others through a blend of co-ops, applied studies, research internships, and innovative experiential learning opportunities like design charrettes and policy bootcamps.<sup>1</sup>

For the majority of projects, students are jointly supervised by one or more City employee (many of whom are Registered Professional Planners) and a post-secondary faculty. Over the course of their projects, students learn about how cities work, how decisions get made, how communities are engaged, and how research informs municipal programs, plans, policies, and services, all within a cohort structure that acts as an informal community of practice.

In the Fall of 2023, the City initiated a year-long research project in partnership with the Prentice Institute for Global Population and Economy at the University of Lethbridge. Supported by a Mitacs Accelerate grant, the objective was to expand on the success of the City Scholars Program and research the potential role of WIL in supporting broader outcomes like student retention, skills and talent development, and student engagement. The project also looked at the role that enhanced relationships between the City and post-secondary institutions could play in managing the risks of labour market gaps and competition (i.e., creating more formal talent pipelines), in response to perceived low rates of graduate retention.

Our research draws upon extensive literature and scoping reviews, results of an alumni survey (with 611 responses from University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge Polytechnic graduates), focus groups with WIL practitioners from across Alberta, and focus groups with local employers. This article is based on the results of this research project and a poster presented at the 2024 CIP National Conference.

Next, we explore how WIL can be seen as a planning tool to shape the future of work within municipalities and contribute to broader planning and community development outcomes.

## Skill Development, Awareness, & Engagement

One key benefit of WIL is that it provides students with an opportunity to engage in career exploration before formally entering the workforce.<sup>2</sup> In the age of hyper-competitive labour, this is increasingly important, with emergent data highlighting the role of WIL in helping students develop, transfer, and apply in-demand, transferable skills.

As one alumnus put it, a co-op “is a really good tool to see if you actually like the stuff you're learning. It's one thing to learn it in school and just do the tests... it's another to... practice and do the work.” Students also spoke about critical thinking skills, opportunities to apply their academic knowledge, and technical skill development.

Our survey data from Lethbridge alumni reinforced this notion. A high number of students who completed a WIL placement (n=229) reported learning about professionalism (83%), communication skills (77%), critical thinking skills (70%), adaptability (68%), and interpersonal skills (66%).

Not only are skilled graduates important to engage and retain, but as we will explore further, WIL placements have also exposed students to the role of municipal governments in community development initiatives and empowered them to engage in work that is meaningful and relevant to their education.

### **Impact on Graduate Retention**

As Gen Z begins to enter the professional workforce, the historical emphasis of WIL to merely prepare students for a job, rather than embed them within a vibrant and growing community, is insufficient if WIL is to be used as a tool for retention.

The reasons people stay in Lethbridge are diverse. In our alumni survey, social networks were reported as the most prevalent reason for remaining in Lethbridge after graduation, with 23.1% (n=211) of respondents saying that was at least one reason for staying, followed by employment opportunities at 18.3% (n=167). However, other reasons for staying, including desired lifestyle and housing options, are also important to consider and can be targeted through urban policy and planning. In follow-up interviews with alumni, they also expressed a strong desire to feel a sense of belonging in their community. Despite this, some individuals shared that the Lethbridge community was dismissive of student culture and activities. As they shared, “there was always...an active push...from anyone outside of the school, they weren't really interested in...young people and... young, activities downtown...” or, as another alumni notes, Lethbridge is “just not a very vibrant place to be as a young adult.” Evidently, there is still more work to do to ensure students feel that they are reflected in the priorities and culture of their city, and as has been the experience in Lethbridge, WIL can be a viable tool to work on those same issues through student-led urban design and placemaking projects.

In addition to skills development for students, student inclusion in planning and other municipal projects provides valuable insights that can lead to tailored and relevant interventions. This helps in supporting young adults to feel connected and develop a stronger sense of belonging in the community where they work.<sup>3</sup>

### **Community and Economic Development**

As we have explored, WIL in the planning context provides a chance for greater connection and engagement with students and post-secondaries. In both aspects of retention and education, WIL can be a principal driver for economic and community development within cities. At the City of Lethbridge specifically, working with students has resulted in increased knowledge of and interest in planning, leading to projects that engage students and the community alike. It has also resulted in several students transitioning into

full-time employment at the end of their studies after having participated in WIL experiences. In the same vein, WIL and experiential learning in the public sector increases the capacity for students to consider political, social, and economic problems, engaging as *homo civitas*—civically engaged citizens—within and beyond their work placement.<sup>4</sup>

The inclusion of students within their work can help planners to tackle complex problems thoughtfully, providing additional expert knowledge and research capacity within the profession. In Lethbridge, post-secondary students account for approximately 15% of the total population. Creating stronger pathways for their engagement within planning and community development projects enhances planners' ability to ensure the student lens is meaningfully applied and considered. Increased student collaboration on planning projects thereby assists City of Lethbridge staff in providing quality services to the public that are supported by research, data, and lived insight.

### **City Scholars in Action**

Recent work on Lethbridge's Land Use Bylaw (LUB) Renewal project is an example of the increased research capacity that students can bring to planning initiatives. In this project, students conducted research and report writing to “decode” the city's LUB, supporting planners by providing evidence-informed insights from academic literature and applied best practice. Other projects have focused on the City's needs both as an employer and as community, including the use of Artificial Intelligence with community engagement and communications, feasibility studies for placemaking initiatives, the application of intersectionality within heritage management, and municipal policy responses to local food insecurity.

Another WIL project completed between the City of Lethbridge and the Lethbridge Polytechnic in the spring of 2024 utilized student expertise to create a feasibility study for converting shipping containers into seasonal store frontages for small businesses. In this collaborative project, the students brought innovative ideas through their business cases and research. Evidently, students can both aid in the research surrounding economic development in planning and act as economic, social, and cultural contributors themselves.

### **Conclusion**

As we consider how the City of Lethbridge brings students into planning work, connecting students and youth with planning has been an effective way of heralding community and economic development. Moving forward, projects that advance these goals can help support the livability of the community, and increased participation in WIL may help boost student retention.

Overall, by first acknowledging and then harnessing the expertise of students, supporting their inquisitiveness and research skills, and providing opportunities for them to contribute to community, WIL within urban planning can help to drive innovation and create a rich civic life for the residents of Lethbridge and other campus communities.

### Acknowledgements

This paper is the result of a collaborative research project between the City of Lethbridge and the Prentice Institute for Global Population and Economy, with funding support from Mitacs. The authors wish to thank those organizations for their support, and in particular Dr. Lars K. Hallström, Director of the Prentice Institute.

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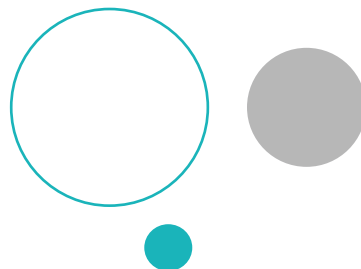
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# Suburban Native Pollinator Gardens. A market opportunity

*Ana Karinna Hidalgo, PhD and Oscar Zapata, PhD - University of Saskatchewan*

## Urban pollinator gardens and ecosystem services

Producing ecosystem services is essential for prairie cities to adapt to climate change. Practices that reduce water consumption, control extreme temperatures, protect urban wildlife, and promote physical and mental health are essential to preserve individual and community well-being. One of the activities potentially producing these ecosystem services is gardening. However, what specific gardening practices contribute most to the production of ecosystem services? Growing evidence suggests that native pollinator gardens produce a wide range of environmental, economic, social and health benefits to city residents. Native pollinator gardens in the prairies grow native species (i.e., grasses, perennials, bushes), provide refuge and corridors to urban wildlife, host pollinators, include edible fruits and herbs, provide aesthetic services, and are climate resilient.<sup>3</sup> These gardens also generate environmental services, such as water runoff and temperature control, air quality cleaning, pollination, water savings, and urban wildlife restoration and preservation.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, they produce health services, including physical (i.e., increased walkability), social (i.e., increased interaction among neighbours) and mental health (i.e., stress relief and mental fatigue reduction) benefits.<sup>5</sup>

While cities typically turn to public spaces to create green spaces and produce urban ecosystem services, an increasing interest in engaging residents to enhance their gardening practices and become ecosystem service providers is occurring in cities across North America and Europe. Despite this interest, the potential of suburbs to produce local and global benefits has been generally overlooked.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps one of the reasons is that suburban developments are considered inefficient and costly residential areas.<sup>7,8</sup> However, suburbs can potentially become nature-based assets that produce ecosystem services that benefit their residents and society.<sup>9,10</sup> The morphological characteristics, available green spaces and lawn culture determine the potential of suburban areas as producers of ecosystem services.<sup>11,12</sup> From a policy perspective, understanding the opportunities and challenges for homeowners to adopt native pollinator gardening practices is essential. Similarly, determining whether residents appreciate and value urban ecosystem services provides support to any active policy seeking to promote these gardening practices in the city. The role of policy support in this context is crucial and urgent, as it can significantly accelerate the adoption of these beneficial practices.

## Our research findings

We conducted research to establish the feasibility of a 'market' for suburban ecosystem services in Saskatoon, SK, and Calgary, AB. We surveyed homeowners and residents in both cities. Homeowners participated in a choice experiment to elicit their preferences over attributes of native pollinator gardens. Residents participated in a survey experiment and were randomly assigned to respond to one of four versions of a survey. Each version presented different information levels about the benefits of ecosystem services from native pollinator gardens. We adopted the conceptual notion of a market to support the design and implementation of specific policy interventions to motivate homeowners to adopt native pollinator gardening practices. As long as providing ecosystem services is feasible for homeowners (i.e., supply side) and valuable to enjoy for residents (i.e., demand side), there is ground to enhance the overall well-being in cities.

From the homeowner's perspective, gardening in front yards is associated with maintaining a green and healthy lawn while socializing with neighbours and residents. Due to the prevalence of lawns in suburban areas, the main challenge for homeowners is paying the up-front cost of switching to a native pollinator garden (Figure 1). Our survey shows that homeowners appreciate the complexity and biodiversity of native pollinator gardens, and their annual maintenance cost, which is cheaper than maintaining the lawn. Interestingly, the maintenance cost of native pollinator gardens decreases as plant species increase or the garden becomes more biodiverse. Consequently, the complexity of the gardens, the associated level of ecosystem service production, and the lower maintenance cost motivate homeowners to adopt native pollinator gardens.

From the residents' perspective, valuing suburban ecosystem services depends on their knowledge and understanding of the associated benefits. From a policy point of view, knowing the benefits residents enjoy the most can inform the design of policies aimed at increasing the social acceptance of such interventions. Grouping the benefits of native pollinator gardens into economic, environmental and social/health, we identified the most valuable category for residents. Although residents exhibited a generally high appreciation for suburban ecosystem services, we found that the environmental and social/health benefits increased residents' support notably. Informing residents about the direct and indirect contributions of suburban ecosystem services to well-being in the city can be an effective policy instrument to gain their support.



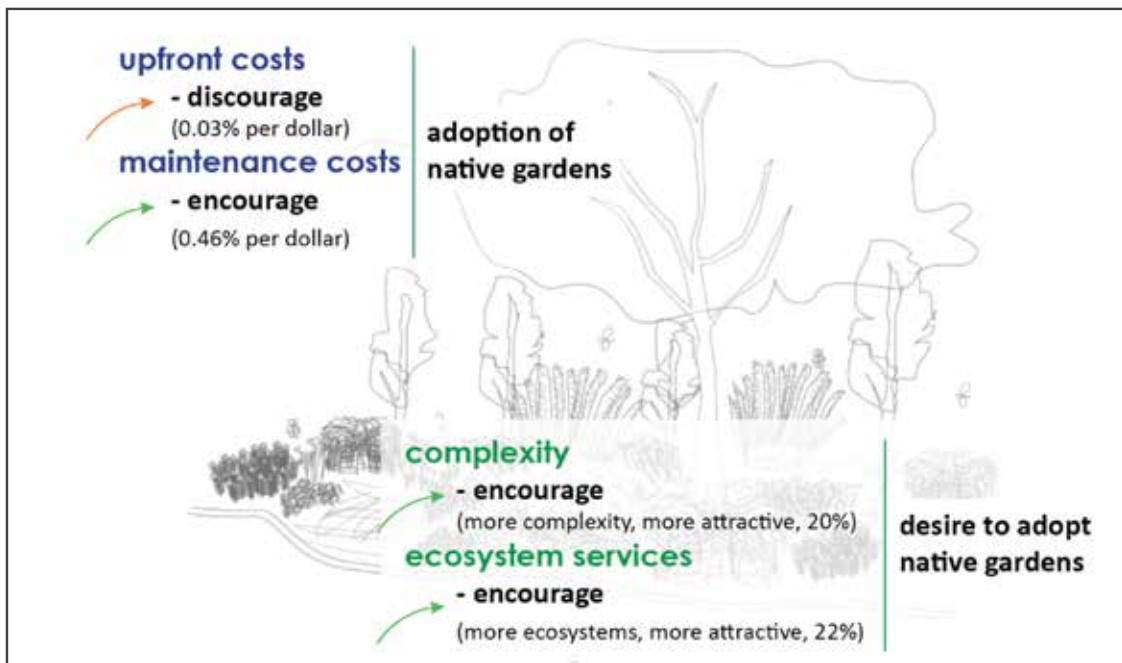


Figure 1. Summary of opportunities and challenges to adopt native pollinator gardens.

The impacts of climate change in urban areas are occurring more frequently and with more intensity, which demands city planners and designers to conceive the city differently and adopt innovative approaches. Nature-based solutions are increasingly being proposed and implemented in cities to reduce the impacts of climate change on the built environment and residents' well-being. Several cities actively promote climate-resistant gardening practices with native plants, especially to reduce water consumption. Financial incentives for homeowners to remove their lawns and plant native vegetation, restrictions on water use, environmental certifications, educational programs, and even the ban on lawns and other water-demanding species are some measures cities are putting in place to enhance gardening practices. For example, some existing programs in North America include the Water Conservation Rebate Program in Okotoks, Alberta, the SoCal WaterSmart program in Southern California, the Landscape Conversion Rebate program in Tempe, Arizona, the Landscaping for Water in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, among others.

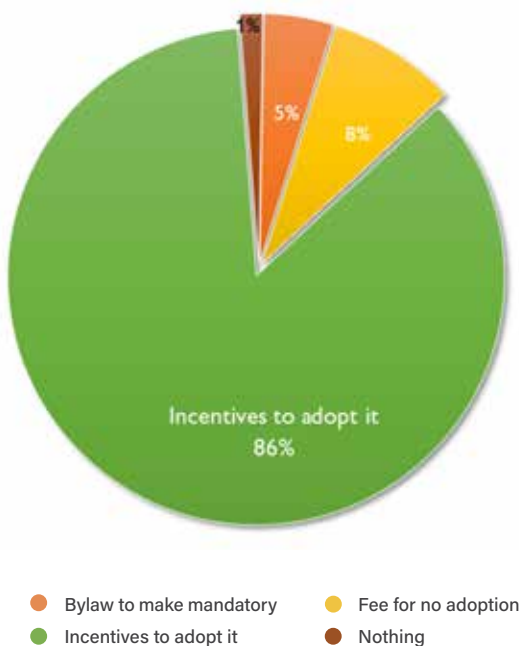


Figure 2. Homeowners' policy preferences to adopt pollinator gardens

Our findings suggest that a market for urban ecosystem services in prairie cities is feasible, with homeowners willing to adopt native pollinator garden practices and residents valuing sizable benefits of ecosystem services from these gardening practices. However, a fundamental barrier to adoption is the cost of switching from the lawn to native pollinator gardens. Therefore, financial incentives can encourage homeowners to transition towards water-saving gardening more rapidly. The sooner cities do this, the less expensive this transition will be for residents, taxpayers and the environment. With appropriate interventions, the prairie cities can become the world's garden, climate resilient and pollinator cities.



## Acknowledgement

This research has been funded by the Alberta Land Institute, University of Alberta.

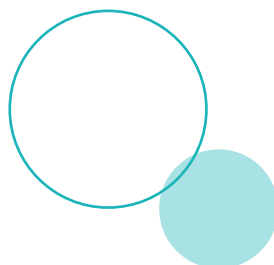
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# APPI Planning Award Recipients 2024

The APPI Planning Awards annually acknowledges exceptional plans and projects, undertaken in whole or in part by members of the Institute, that significantly contribute to the livability of communities in Alberta, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Applications for plans and projects specific to rural and indigenous planning are encouraged. A Certificate of Planning Excellence or a Certificate of Planning Merit may be awarded.

**The 2024 APPI Planning Awards were presented at the Planning Awards Celebration at the 2024 National Conference on July 10th, in Edmonton, Alberta.**

View the award recipients' project videos here:  
*APPI Planning Awards | Alberta Professional Planners Institute*



# The Halal Housing Lab: Lessons for Planners

2024 APPI Award of Planning Merit: Special Study

Intelligent Futures, IslamicFamily, Another Way, SAS Architecture and Ask for a Better World



*Imagine Mira\*, a mother living in an abusive situation who cares for both her kids & her parents. She wants to leave domestic violence, but she has nowhere else to go, and shelters won't accept her with her parents. The choice she's given is to leave her parents, abandon her kids, or stay in an abusive situation. This is not a choice.*

As urban populations become increasingly diverse, professional planners are called upon to design housing solutions that are inclusive, sustainable, and culturally responsive. The Halal Housing Lab, initiated by the Islamic Family Social Services Association (IslamicFamily) with support from Intelligent Futures, Another Way, SAS Architecture, and Ask for a Better World, with financial support from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), offers a wealth of lessons for planners striving to meet the complex needs of multicultural, multigenerational communities. Focusing on affordable housing for Muslim families in Canada, the Halal Housing Lab provides a replicable model for integrating cultural values, innovative financing, and community engagement into housing design. This article distills key insights from the Halal Housing Lab that can inform professional planning practice.

## 1. Culture as a Cornerstone of Housing Design

One of the most profound lessons from the Halal Housing Lab is the importance of cultural understanding in housing design. For planners, this means moving beyond the one-size-fits-all approach to housing and considering the specific needs and values of diverse communities. In the case of Muslim families, the design requirements extend beyond just providing a roof over people's heads. The Lab's designs were centered around family values, privacy, and community connection. For instance, multigenerational living is common

in Muslim households, so the designs prioritized larger units with a mix of private and communal spaces, like prayer rooms and shared courtyards.

*Key takeaway for planners:* Understanding the cultural and social dynamics of the populations you are designing for is critical. Engaging with communities to understand their needs—whether it's privacy for women, communal living areas, or spaces for religious practices—ensures that housing developments foster a sense of belonging and dignity.



## 2. Multigenerational Living as a Design Driver

A central design principle of the Halal Housing Lab was accommodating multigenerational families. This focus presents unique challenges for planners, especially in the context of affordable housing. In Canada, housing policy and funding frameworks typically emphasize smaller units, which cater to individuals or nuclear families. However, larger units—such as three- and four-bedroom apartments—are necessary to meet the needs of extended families. The Halal Housing Lab demonstrates that designing for multigenerational households requires a variety of unit sizes and flexible layouts that allow families to adapt their living spaces as needs change over time.

*Key takeaway for planners:* Planning for diverse family structures is crucial. Incorporating flexible design elements that can accommodate families as they grow or change will enhance the long-term sustainability and functionality of housing projects. Furthermore, advocating for policy shifts that recognize the importance of larger units in affordable housing projects is vital for addressing the needs of multigenerational families.

### 3. Shariah-Compliant Financing as an Innovative Tool

One of the most significant innovations from the Halal Housing Lab is the development of Shariah-compliant financial models. For Muslim families, traditional mortgage structures that involve interest are not permissible under Islamic law. The Halal Housing Lab introduced alternatives such as equity models and rent-to-own structures that align with Islamic financial principles. These models are culturally appropriate and offer ethical, community-centric solutions that can be adapted for other populations seeking interest-free financing.

*Key takeaway for planners:* Understanding and incorporating diverse financial models is an essential skill in today's planning environment. Shariah-compliant financing highlights the need for planners to consider ethical and cultural nuances in financial structures. Planners should explore alternative financing mechanisms that can serve broader populations, particularly those who may be excluded from conventional financial systems.

### 4. Partnerships and Cross-Sector Collaboration

The Halal Housing Lab exemplifies the power of partnerships in achieving complex planning objectives. IslamicFamily partnered with Cvida, a local housing provider, to acquire land and navigate the complexities of housing development. These partnerships brought together the cultural insights of a faith-based organization with the technical expertise of housing professionals. Collaboration extended beyond just the development stage; it included working with architects, financial experts, and community interest holders to ensure the project's success.

*Key takeaway for planners:* Collaboration is key to addressing the complex challenges of modern urban planning. Planners should actively seek partnerships that bring diverse skills and perspectives to the table, particularly when working on culturally sensitive or innovative projects. By leveraging the strengths of different sectors—nonprofits, private developers, community organizations—planners can create housing solutions that are not only feasible but deeply resonant with the communities they serve.



### 5. Policy Advocacy for Systemic Change

A recurring challenge highlighted by the Halal Housing Lab was the misalignment between existing housing policies and the needs of diverse communities. Current Canadian affordable housing policies often favor smaller units and overlook the complexities of multigenerational households. The Lab's experience underscores the need for planners to work within existing frameworks and advocate for systemic changes that reflect the realities of the communities they serve.

*Key takeaway for planners:* Planners must proactively advocate for and lead policy changes that support more inclusive and flexible housing models. Whether it's lobbying for changes in zoning laws to allow for larger units or pushing for the adoption of alternative financing models, planners play a critical role in shaping the policy landscape to better serve diverse populations.

### 6. Transferability and Scalability of Innovative Models

The Halal Housing Lab's open-source guide is designed to be replicable, offering a blueprint for other organizations and communities interested in developing culturally informed housing solutions. The lessons from this Lab can be applied to other faith-based or culturally specific housing initiatives, making it a valuable resource for planners working in diverse urban contexts.

*Key takeaway for planners:* Innovation in housing design and financing must be scalable and transferable to other contexts. Planners should consider how the principles of a project like the Halal Housing Lab can be adapted to serve different communities, enhancing the inclusivity and diversity of housing solutions across cities.

### Conclusion

The Halal Housing Lab provides planners with many lessons on how to create culturally responsive, inclusive, and innovative housing solutions. From multigenerational living to Shariah-compliant financing, the Lab's approach offers a holistic model for addressing the complex housing needs of diverse communities. For planners, the key takeaways are clear: embrace cultural sensitivity, prioritize flexibility in design, foster partnerships, advocate for systemic policy change, and ensure that innovative models are scalable and transferable. By applying these insights, planners can play a pivotal role in creating more equitable and inclusive cities for all.

*For more information, go to: [halalhousinglab.ca](http://halalhousinglab.ca)*



# The Beaumont Urban Agriculture Plan

## 2024 APPI Award of Planning Merit: Comprehensive & Policy Plan

*Intelligent Futures and the City of Beaumont*

The City of Beaumont's Urban Agriculture Plan (UAP) is a forward-thinking initiative that seeks to integrate agriculture into the urban fabric, recognizing the importance of food security, community health, and sustainability. Developed by Intelligent Futures in partnership with the City of Beaumont, the plan was developed through a two-phase planning process from 2022 to 2023, aiming to foster a culture of support for urban agriculture while addressing environmental, social, and economic needs.

### Vision and Principles

A vision of Beaumont guides the UAP as a "nimble agricultural innovator" that empowers the community to engage in sustainable and inclusive urban agriculture. The plan is structured around five key principles: food security, community health, sustainable food systems, climate change adaptation, and reconciliation. These principles emphasize the importance of accessible, affordable, and nutritious food, fostering community connections, and integrating urban agriculture with environmental sustainability efforts.

### Key Goals

To realize this vision, the UAP sets out eight goals that address different aspects of urban agriculture in Beaumont. These goals include:

- Food security: Beaumont strives to be a food-secure community where all residents and commercial food retailers have equal opportunities to access, grow, sell, and purchase affordable and nutritious food.
- Awareness: Beaumont is a community knowledgeable about local food.
- Community: Beaumont is a connected community of producers, distributors, and consumers.
- Innovation: Beaumont fosters a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in urban agriculture.
- Ecology: Beaumont is built upon a resilient ecological system, which leverages food production to support biodiversity and mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- Economy: Beaumont has a growing food economy that supports local businesses and value-added agriculture.
- Agriculture: Beaumont supports the retention and continued presence of agriculture in the community, including but not limited to the protection of agricultural lands until necessary for future population or employment needs to expand.
- Regulation: Beaumont has a supportive and equitable regulatory context for urban agriculture.

### Community Involvement and Partnerships

*"The food system is a community,  
and it takes many hands to make it work."  
- Michael Pollan*

The success of the UAP is highly dependent on the active involvement of the Beaumont community. The plan outlines key actions to build partnerships between the city, community groups, and regional partners to deliver educational programs and increase awareness around urban agriculture. Beaumont residents, businesses, and schools are expected to play a pivotal role in the implementation of these initiatives, ensuring that urban agriculture remains a grassroots, community-driven effort.

### Implementation Framework

*"If you have a plan for your garden, you will harvest  
abundance in both food and knowledge."  
- Unknown*

The UAP is designed to be flexible and adaptable, with a 10-year implementation framework that includes regular assessment and adjustment phases. The city will report annually on progress and make necessary adjustments to stay aligned with the overarching goals of the plan. Key actions include the hiring of an Interdisciplinary Plan Coordinator, establishing an Urban Agriculture Committee, and investigating the feasibility of urban bee and hen programs.





### Opportunities and Challenges

*"Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil,  
and you're a thousand miles from the corn field."  
- Dwight D. Eisenhower*

The UAP highlights several opportunities for urban agriculture in Beaumont, including leveraging public lands for agriculture, supporting local food businesses, and using technology to enhance urban agriculture initiatives. However, it also recognizes challenges such as public perception issues around raising animals, the limited accessibility of existing community gardens, and the need for coordination across various agricultural initiatives in the city.

### Commitment to Reconciliation

*"The Earth does not belong to us; we belong to the Earth."  
- Chief Seattle*

One of the most innovative aspects of the UAP is its commitment to reconciliation through food sovereignty. The plan acknowledges the traditional knowledge of Indigenous communities and the importance of restoring access to traditional foods and medicines. This emphasis on reconciliation ensures that urban agriculture in Beaumont is not only a modern, innovative practice but also deeply rooted in respect for the land and its history.

### Conclusion

*"If we do not permit the earth to produce beauty and joy, it  
will in the end not produce food, either."  
- Joseph Wood Krutch*

The Beaumont Urban Agriculture Plan offers a comprehensive roadmap for integrating agriculture into the city's urban spaces. By fostering collaboration, innovation, and sustainability, the plan positions Beaumont as a leader in urban agriculture, with the potential to serve as a model for other municipalities. Through a combination of strategic partnerships, community involvement, and adaptive planning, Beaumont is set to create a resilient and sustainable food system that benefits both people and the planet.

For more information, go to: <https://www.beaumont.ab.ca/projects-plans/planning-strategies/urban-agricultural-plan/>



# Strengthen Your Planning Framework Using a “Living Document” Approach: Lacombe County’s Annual Planning Review

*APPI 2024 Award of Planning Merit: Implementation Success*

*Lacombe County*

## Introduction

The fundamental essence of being a planner is planning for the future. Resultingly, planners continue to reminisce on the philosophical debate of how we keep plans alive, ensuring their successful implementation. This is indeed an age-old problem that is difficult to address. Plans are made in the present-day by planners, using information available to us from the past, and are adopted by decision-makers for future decision-making. However, in an age of rapid technological, scientific, natural, social, and economic shifts, is the traditional approach of plan-making really sufficient to address the needs of our community? In this article, we challenge the status quo approach of plan-making and shed light on a method we have found beneficial, with the hopes it will help other communities explore similar approaches to keep their plans alive.

## Background

Often, plans become instantly outdated the moment they are published. Data we use in the plans change, provincial department names change, public perceptions change, new information may be published, and development pressures may shift based on economic trends.

The traditional approach of adopting plans and updating them on X-time interval increments can effectively inhibit plans from evolving and being synchronized with changing realities. Plans that become outdated are shelved, become obsolete, and can even lead to problematic policy inconsistencies.

Planners have long realized that plan stagnation is a critical problem in the profession and have introduced the term “living document” to create an image of plans being responsive and adjustable. However, rarely is any action taken to ensure that the plans remain up-to-date and in-sync after their adoption. Often, bureaucratic processes get in the way of planners being able to adjust their plans to continue functioning as originally envisioned. Further, there are usually no systematic or tangible mechanisms in place to ensure regular reviews and updates of planning documents. Planner recommendations to change policy may be seen as abrupt, unnecessary, or politically motivated.

## Lacombe County’s Approach

Lacombe County has introduced a systematic, rigorous, and data-driven approach to conducting annual plan reviews that enables our Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw to self-improve each year based on metrics collected and feedback obtained from the community.

In 2016 and 2017, the County conducted a major review of our Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw, using innovative methods to engage our community that were recognized provincially (2018 APPI Award of Planning Merit and 2018 Minister’s Award of Municipal Excellence). At that time, County Council and Administration saw the immense dialogue that was generated by these engagements and committed to keeping the momentum. In the Municipal Development Plan, the County committed to open and transparent decision-making and being a leader in the community with all decisions that it makes.



*Lacombe County’s Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw engagements, 2016-17*

To realize this commitment, the County imbedded an annual review requirement into the Municipal Development Plan. Here’s how it works:

- The Municipal Development Plan includes a table of quantitative and qualitative metrics to evaluate whether each and every single policy of the Plan is meeting its original intended objective. Using these metrics, we review the plan each year and generate a report card that tells us how the Plan is performing. This is published in a public report with robust and verifiable information that can be used by the community, Council, and other agencies for their own analysis and interpretation.
- Through this assessment, the County flags policies that are not performing by marking them as “needing work”.
- Throughout each year, the County encourages and tracks requests from the community to reconsider certain policies. These public requests are presented to Council at the time of the annual review.
- With the annual review results, where a policy is identified as needing work, Council can decide to (1) leave the policy as is; (2) change the policy; or (3) instruct Administration to conduct further engagement on the topic.
- Each year, the County reviews the Plan to see whether terms, statistics, or names used in the Plan are outdated and recommends adjustments as required.

### The Process

While the traditional Plan-making process is linear, the annual review process is reiterative, cyclic, and always self-improving.



### Benefits of the Annual Review Approach

## 7 BENEFITS of the ANNUAL REVIEW APPROACH



The annual review process provides a commitment of accountability, transparent decision-making, and self-improving governance to its community. The process inherently ensures that our Municipal Development Plan is held to the highest standard, and when it is not, improvements are made accordingly.



The annual review process incorporates a verifiable research method, with metrics that are published publicly and can be used by the community, other municipalities, academics, and others for research purposes.



The annual review process increases Council's understanding of their role in the planmaking process and ensures they are able to have their constituents' priorities reflected in the County's planning framework.



The annual review process empowers the community to be actively involved in the planning process. The process focuses educating the community on the County's planning policies and seeking input directly from the community and imbedding the feedback into the County's planning framework.



The annual review process has led to further engagement on hot policy topics. For example, the Five-Year Review in 2023 led to a separate, County-wide engagement on dwellings in the agricultural area. This engagement sought to obtain community insight on how the County balance the protection of agricultural lands and providing adequate housing.



The annual review process reduces the need for large-scale, costly, and high-risk plan updates at given time increments by keeping the documents in line with the present-day reality. This is a true realization of the concept of a "living document."



The annual review process has tracked the County's progress on various initiatives that were advocated for in the Municipal Development Plan. For instance, the County has a land donation policy that has led to 468 acres of land being donated to the County.





*Lacombe County boasts a vast and expansive public park and trail network resulting from our Municipal Development Plan's strategic direction.*

### Community Impact

The annual review enhances service delivery from a planning and development perspective and has directly benefited the community in tangible ways. The process requires the County to collect metrics to ensure we are meeting the expectations our community asked of us and are efficient in this service delivery.

Examples include:

- Municipal Development Plan Policy ENV&REC 4.7.2 encourages the County to expand our trail network. This was identified as an important priority for our community in 2017. The County now has 42.14 kilometers (26.33 miles) of trails that weave through important landmarks. Our trail inventory has increased by 24% since we started monitoring this metric through the annual review process.
- Municipal Development Plan Policy ENV&REC 4.8.2 encourages the County to install interpretive signage at its parks and natural areas to increase public appreciation of nature. The County now has 36 signs, a 71% increase since we started monitoring this metric.
- Municipal Development Plan Policy ENV&REC 4.6.16 encourages agricultural landowners to protect important ecosystem services on their land. This is monitored by enrolment into the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program. In 2017, there were 5 projects enrolled

in the program representing 39.25 hectares (97 acres) of land. Today, that number has increased to 93 projects representing 285.54 hectares (705.58 acres) of land.

- Municipal Development Plan Policy ECON 5.3.2 promotes economic development in rural parts of the County. The County uses the number of applications for new tourism, supplemental farm business activities, agricultural support services and/or Indigenous enterprise developments as an indicator to assess if the County's policies are performing well. Since this policy has been monitored, the County has seen nearly a doubling of this type of application.
- In 2022, the County added Policies MUNI 8.6.1-8.6.3, reinforcing the County's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. As a result of this policy and the annual monitoring, the County has begun hosting annual seminars and information sessions on Truth and Reconciliation and several staff members have taken courses, read books, and attended meetings that have contributed to reconciliation. In 2023, we added Indigenous information, as well as a land and people acknowledgement, to interpretive signage in our newest nature park. Our goal is to use the annual review process as a log to assess how we are continuing to advance in our reconciliation journey.



### **Feasibility and Applicability to Other Municipalities**

We strongly believe that an annual review, or similar approaches, can be used by municipalities of any size to ensure their plans remain fresh and aligned with their community's vision.

At Lacombe County, the annual review is done internally, and is supervised by the Director of Planning Services, managed by the County's Senior Planner, and supported by two planners, an economic development officer, and two administrative staff. The annual review is done in addition to the normal day-to-day duties of these individuals. We believe the approach can be downscaled or upscaled based on a municipality's size and resources; for example, a municipality with less staff resources will likely have less policies or data to analyze and therefore, can conduct a simpler version of this review.

In Lacombe County's case, the staff resources, time, and advertising costs required for the annual review have been far outweighed by the benefits of (1) fostering a positive relationship between Council and Administration in the plan-making process; (2) keeping the community engaged in the decision-making process; and (3) reducing the need for large-scale costly updates in the future due to the continuous ongoing review.

### **Conclusion**

In 2017, the method of annual plan reviews was a previously unknown, untested, and seemingly risky approach. Lacombe County took the initiative and made the bold move to test whether this approach can be used as a successful implementation tool of the Municipal Development Plan. It has now been seven years since we implemented the approach and we can attest to its success in ensuring our planning framework remains up-to-date, fresh, and aligned with our community's vision and ongoing trends in planning and development.

For this reason, our project has been recognized by the Alberta Professional Planners Institute with the 2024 Planning Award of Merit in Implementation Success and by the Minister of Municipal Affairs with the 2024 Municipal Excellence Award in Red Tape Reduction.

By sharing our story, we encourage other communities across western and northern Canada to explore similar innovative approaches to breathe life into their local plans.

### **About Lacombe County**

*Lacombe County is a thriving rural municipality situated on Treaty 6 Territory, in the heart of central Alberta. Our municipality is located on the QEII Highway transportation corridor between Edmonton and Calgary. Our County is predominantly agricultural with highly productive lands. Our agricultural industry is diverse and includes cropland, pasture, specialty/specialized horticultural operations, greenhouses, and agri-tourism. Due to its strategic location, the County has attracted high-quality industrial and commercial development along our major transportation routes. Lacombe County is also blessed with a picturesque natural environment, with a landscape dotted with majestic lakes, rivers, forests, wetlands, and hills. The County is home to three of Central Alberta's major iconic recreational lakes. All this combined makes Lacombe County an amazing place to live, work, and play.*

### **About the Authors**

*Cajun Paradis is a proud rural planner with 11 years of experience in land use planning and 15 years of experience in municipal government. Cajun is currently the Senior Planner at Lacombe County, and a Candidate Member of the APPI. Cajun is passionate about protecting agricultural land and helping rural communities thrive. Her passion stems from her upbringing and experience on a mixed family farm in rural Alberta. With a background spanning planning and development, environmental services, and the agricultural sectors, Cajun has been involved in various roles in the municipal landscape. Throughout her career, she has spearheaded policy development on different scales, utilizing a wide range of community engagement strategies to ensure plans align with community expectations, future visions, and ongoing development trends.*

*Nick Baran is a young and emerging planner with over 2 years of experience. Nick is passionate about rural planning, rural economic development, and finding innovative ways that planning policy can be used to help communities thrive. Nick is currently a Planner/Development Officer at Lacombe County, and a Candidate Member of the APPI. Upon joining Lacombe County via Alberta's municipal internship program, Nick developed a passion for rural Alberta and is committed to showcasing rural planning excellence. Nick's work covers a wide range of municipal planning tasks, such as handling development and subdivision applications of different complexities, revising and implementing new statutory plans, contributing to the yearly policy assessment, and collaborating with neighboring municipalities on intermunicipal development plans and annexation applications.*

# North Saskatchewan River (kisiskâciwani-sîpiy) Heritage River Designation Document

**APPI 2024 Award of Planning Excellence - Special Study**

*O2 Planning & Design Inc., Smoky Lake County and North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance*

*"The North Saskatchewan River has always been an integral part of our heritage since time immemorial and continues to be an integral part of our Treaty No. 6. At Fort Pitt when Commissioner Morris indicated "as long as yonder river flows" he was pointing to the North Saskatchewan River. Water is life to the Indigenous Peoples of Treaty No. 6 Territory, as a matter of fact our word for water literally means life; "Nipi" derived from "Niya" My "Pimatisiwin" Life." - Vernon Watchmaker, (former) Okimaw Grand Chief, Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations*

*The River is the thread that binds the land and its people together*

## **The North Saskatchewan River (Kisiskâciwani-sîpiy)**

From time immemorial, the North Saskatchewan River has been an essential conduit for travel, economic, and cultural exchanges among Indigenous peoples and more recent settlers from around the world. Known by many names, including kisiskâciwani-sîpiy ('swift-flowing river') in Cree, and Omaka-ty ('the big river') in Blackfoot, this river has shaped the landscape and cultures of central Alberta, playing a significant roll in Canadian heritage. Flowing through the lands of Treaty 6 and holding significance for the nations of Treaty 7 and 8, this river and its watershed have played a significant part in the shaping of Alberta, and of the establishment of Canada. Flowing approximately 1,287km from the Columbia Icefields in Banff National Park to where it meets its sister the South Saskatchewan.



The ancestral kisiskâciwani-sîpiy or North Saskatchewan is Canada's 12th longest river, and forms part of Canada's 2nd longest river system. It remains a critical ecological corridor connecting the Canadian Rockies with Hudson's Bay and the Canadian Shield. The designation area (including the 718km length of the river through Alberta, including a 5km corridor on either side of its banks) flows through 17 urban and rural municipal jurisdictions (most of which partnered on

and supported this initiative). To better frame and present the varied conditions that exist across the river, as it flows from the headwaters, through the foothills, and on into the parkland natural subregion, the river has been subdivided into 8 reaches, each a 2 to 3-day journey along the river, allowing for more detailed descriptions of the character and history each contains.

## **The Canadian Heritage Rivers System (chrs)**

From coast to coast to coast, Canadian Heritage Rivers offer visitors a chance to experience great waterways, learn about their rich history, and share in their stewardship. The CHRS helps recognize and conserve these outstanding rivers that are an enduring part of our national heritage and identity. Established in 1984, the commemorative (i.e., non-statutory) CHRS program has grown to recognize 40 Heritage Rivers for their outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational heritage. In 1989, approximately 50 kilometers of the North Saskatchewan River within Banff National Park were designated. The 2024 designation of the Alberta portion marks the first addition since the Ottawa River was designated in 2016, and only the second ever in Alberta outside a National Park.



The Canadian Heritage Rivers System is a unique national program that empowers local groups to collaborate on goals beyond the scope of any single jurisdiction, club, or stewardship group. This designation recognizes and supports the ongoing stewardship efforts of local communities along the river corridor. It helps municipalities and businesses promote the region's natural beauty, rich cultural history, and diverse recreation and tourism opportunities. To that end, the Designation document addresses a diverse range of audiences, providing guidance to numerous stewardship efforts across the river basin, supporting collaborations and partnerships that help to celebrate this irreplaceable entity.

### Working towards designation

In Fall 2019, Smoky Lake County resumed efforts begun in the mid-2000s to formally recognize the river's many contributions to the nation's heritage. The Designation Concept Plan builds on the earlier Background Study (2005) and Nomination Document (2022), drawing from archival collections, First Nations perspectives, and diverse community input. Together, these elements illustrate how the river has shaped the lands and nations it connects.

In 2022, O2 Planning and Design Inc. (O2) began developing the Designation Plan document, compiling a compelling narrative of the values and opportunities afforded by this important river system. This plan was supported by effective engagement, rigorous spatial analysis, and a recognition of the diverse planning jurisdictions found throughout the river's watershed. Outreach provided an important opportunity to bring together municipalities, first nations, recreational user groups, and watershed planning organizations to foster increased knowledge and stewardship of this important river system.

The document builds enthusiasm, broadens knowledge, and fosters support for both the designation and the long-term sustainable stewardship of the river. Strong support for the designation continues among Indigenous communities, the provincial government, municipalities, industry, landowners, and the public. Their collective efforts—guided by this strategic blueprint—will strengthen and sustain the river's heritage values over time. This integrated, action-oriented approach aims to achieve the vision: *kisiskâciwani-sîpiy*'s diverse heritage values are recognized and stewarded, strengthening thriving communities connected by the river's landscapes and history.

This work formed a key next step towards the preservation of *kisiskâciwani-sîpiy*, and the communities it continues to support. By better recognizing the contributions this river system makes to the people of central Alberta, it fosters more effective coordination between other plans and policies to ensure sustainable use, wise development, and meaningful conservation efforts.

To support the designation process, the project team actively sought input from Indigenous communities who know and cherish the river. The Indigenous-owned, Indigenous-led, and majority-staffed engagement agency *pipikwan pêhtâkwan* implemented *keeoukaywin* ('The Visiting Way'), a practice identified by Indigenous scholar Cindy Gaudet. Gaudet explains that *keeoukaywin*, with relationality at its core, re-centers Métis and Cree ways of being and fosters *miyopimatisiwin*: 'living and being well in relation.'

*pipikwan pêhtâkwan* gathered stories from across *kisiskâciwan-sîpiy* to understand how Indigenous peoples have connected with the river through the past, present, and future. These conversations also explored Indigenous perspectives on governance and co-governance, fostering relationships with Indigenous stakeholders. Invitations to engage were extended to more than 40 Nations across Treaties 6, 7, and 8, and beyond. In total, 15 communities welcomed initial visits, 10 participated in further dialogue, and 68 community members shared their stories and recommendations for the project.

To understand the tourism opportunities afforded by the river, O2 partnered with Expedition Management Consulting to undertake an analysis of tourism products, strengths and gaps, visitor markets, and opportunities along the river corridor, and identify actions to support tourism in the study area overall, as well as within smaller individual segments/reaches. To this end, Expedition captured 22 online survey responses, hosted 3 workshops with feedback from 9 organizations, and undertook 13 one-on-one interviews. This work helped to understand how tourism currently plays a role in the economic well-being of the watershed, highlighting key existing infrastructure which enables access to the river, and significant infrastructure and amenity needs to support recreation and tourism enterprises across each river reach.





O2 undertook a comprehensive public engagement approach (consistent with IAP2 principles), aiming to inform interested and affected groups of the designation process, provide relevant information thereto, and to gather meaningful input from a wide range of interests, areas, and partnerships to inform the final document. A variety of channels and modes were utilized including a project website, direct emails, online survey and mapping tool, workshops, a discussion guide, and stakeholder roundtables. Historical and archival research Know History Inc. provided invaluable input into how the river has shaped river communities, informed through provincial and university archival research. These images and stories helped to highlight the diverse economies, arts, and interactions that have shaped Alberta.

### **Ongoing stewardship of a cherished river**

As the first newly designated heritage river system of this decade, this plan significantly expands the scope and rigor of the assessment process. It incorporates newer approaches to engagement, spatial analysis, and jurisdictional coordination, setting a precedent for future watershed planning. To support this effort, O2 used anonymous location-based cellular datasets as an initial scoping tool. This analysis identified key activity centers along the river, highlighted recreational use, and pinpointed gaps in river access to guide future investments in infrastructure and amenities.

The plan also takes a conscious step toward reconciliation by explicitly recognizing the varied names by which the river is known. This approach frames contemporary conventions within the river's longer history, bridging traditional cultural expressions with the broader national context. Additionally, this designation report incorporates significantly more direct input from First Nations elders and community members than previous nomination efforts. It better reflects the diverse perspectives of the communities that hold the river sacred.

The planning process behind this plan has been recognized by the Canadian Heritage River Board for its effective Indigenous engagement, holistic perspective, technical rigor, and evocative vision. This approach sets a precedent for future Heritage River designations and comprehensive watershed planning more broadly. The designation report is designed to reach a wide variety of audiences, including municipal planners, local river stewards, and the broader Canadian public. To achieve this, the document combines evocative storytelling, a compelling vision, and clear strategic direction. Its goal is to capture the imagination, foster appreciation, and inspire a sense of long-term responsibility for the care of this vital river.

The Designation Document was approved by the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board on October 25, 2023, officially supported by the Province of Alberta on December 5, 2023, and *kisiskâciwani-sîpiy* was formally designated on February 2, 2024. Since its designation, the project has been recognized with numerous awards, including:

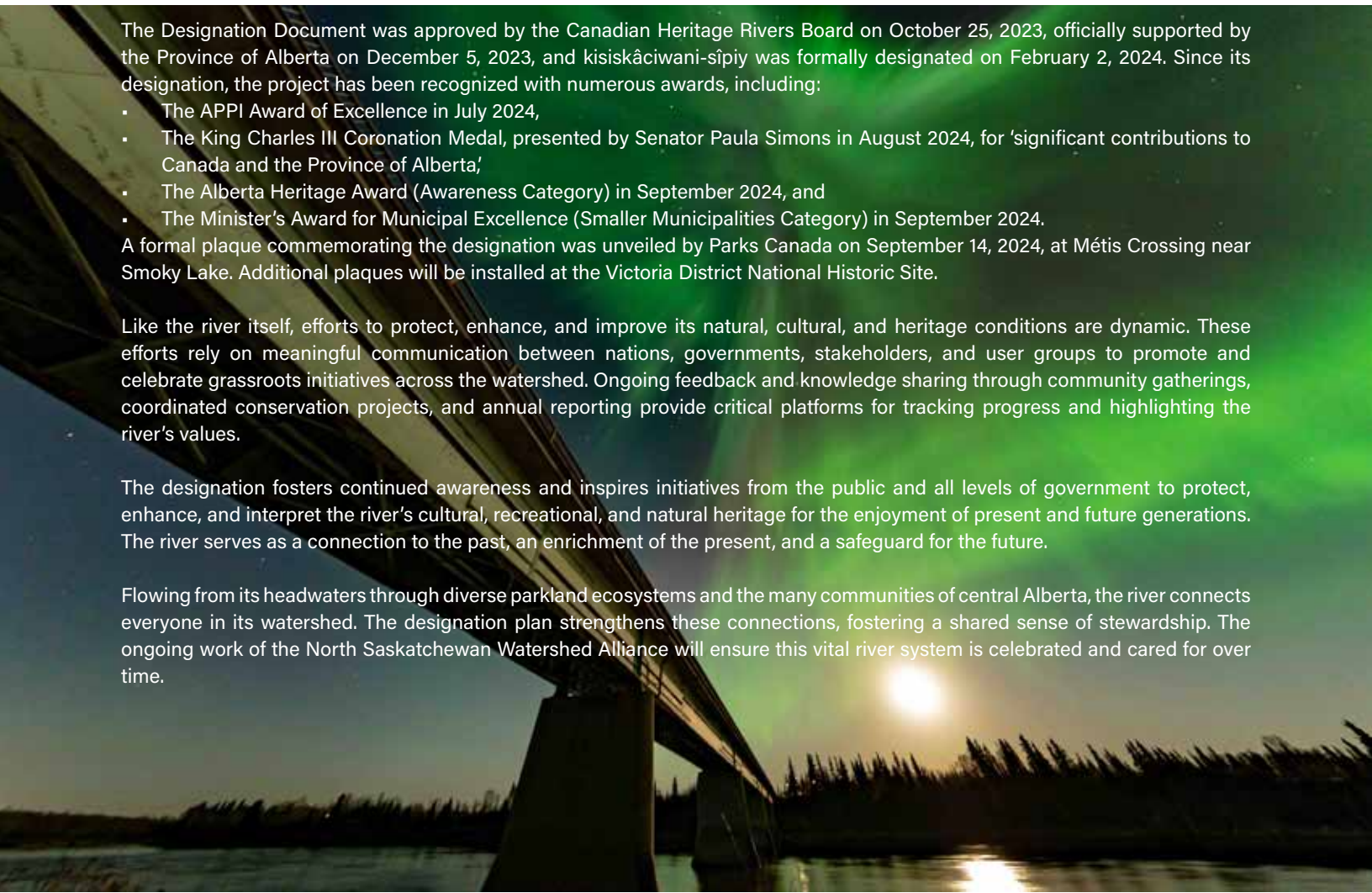
- The APPI Award of Excellence in July 2024,
- The King Charles III Coronation Medal, presented by Senator Paula Simons in August 2024, for 'significant contributions to Canada and the Province of Alberta,'
- The Alberta Heritage Award (Awareness Category) in September 2024, and
- The Minister's Award for Municipal Excellence (Smaller Municipalities Category) in September 2024.

A formal plaque commemorating the designation was unveiled by Parks Canada on September 14, 2024, at Métis Crossing near Smoky Lake. Additional plaques will be installed at the Victoria District National Historic Site.

Like the river itself, efforts to protect, enhance, and improve its natural, cultural, and heritage conditions are dynamic. These efforts rely on meaningful communication between nations, governments, stakeholders, and user groups to promote and celebrate grassroots initiatives across the watershed. Ongoing feedback and knowledge sharing through community gatherings, coordinated conservation projects, and annual reporting provide critical platforms for tracking progress and highlighting the river's values.

The designation fosters continued awareness and inspires initiatives from the public and all levels of government to protect, enhance, and interpret the river's cultural, recreational, and natural heritage for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The river serves as a connection to the past, an enrichment of the present, and a safeguard for the future.

Flowing from its headwaters through diverse parkland ecosystems and the many communities of central Alberta, the river connects everyone in its watershed. The designation plan strengthens these connections, fostering a shared sense of stewardship. The ongoing work of the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance will ensure this vital river system is celebrated and cared for over time.



# In Memory of Martin Darcy Frigo, RPP, MCIP



*Martin Frigo passed unexpectedly at his home in St. Albert on October 27, 2024.*

There is no shortage of amazing things that can be said about Martin Frigo and the impact that he had on the planning profession – and everyone who knew him.

Martin was born the third child of John and Irene Frigo in Winnipeg, Manitoba on May 29, 1977. A graduate of the University of Manitoba with undergraduate and master's degrees in urban planning, Martin established his career with the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) in Fort McMurray, Alberta in 2005.

As a policy planner with the RMWB, Martin managed or worked on several major policy plans, including the Municipal Development Plan and the Growth Strategy. While with the RMWB, Martin co-authored an article in the APPI Journal about the rapid growth in Fort McMurray, and sat as a host committee member and sponsorship solicitor for the 2009 APPI Conference.

Martin met the love of his life, Beth, in Fort McMurray and they moved to St. Albert, marrying in Jasper in 2011. Establishing a home and roots in St. Albert, Martin proceeded to work in the Edmonton region for the rest of his career with the City of St. Albert, Parkland County, and the City of Edmonton.

Well-known throughout the region, Martin was a frequent contributor to intermunicipal plans and a desired participant in regional and intermunicipal planning and political meetings. Colleagues frequently expressed excitement about attending meetings with him and the cheerful disposition he brought to all issues, no matter how challenging.

Always looking to give back to the profession, Martin sat as an APPI Councillor and as a member of the Registration Committee. Over nearly 20 years in Alberta, Martin sponsored scores of new planners with their logbooks and submissions for professional accreditation with APPI and CIP. He co-chaired the 2013 APPI Conference in Jasper, having had a major influence on the participation of Michael "Pinball" Clemons as the keynote speaker.

Martin valued contribution to community, and he held a prominent membership with his local Kinsmen Club in St. Albert, starting in 2017. Always a connector, Martin was honoured as the club's "Rookie of the Year" in 2018 and the "Member of the Year" in 2023.

People naturally gravitated to Martin, owing to his natural enthusiasm and genuine care for others. No one emoted as much genuine care for another human as him; he had a special way of delivering the standard greeting of "How are you doing?" that made you feel like the most important person in the world.

Martin cherished his wife and daughters – Julia and Amy. An incredible family man, Martin provided a loving home and life experiences for Beth and his girls. Summer weekends would find them camping at lakes in northern and central Alberta, with additional frequent trips to visit his family in Manitoba and Beth's family in Ontario.

A born survivor, Martin met life's challenges head on, including the loss of his first child, Jeremy, and the passing of his mother, and father-in-law, Ron. Likewise, diagnosis of multiple sclerosis as he approached 40 never deterred him from having a life enriched with love, travel, and activity. Enjoyment of time with friends and family so often provided the source of his infectious enthusiasm.

The planning profession was richer with Martin being a part of it. A prince among men, Martin was honoured by his family, friends, and dozens of planning colleagues at the Holy Family Catholic Church in St. Albert on November 15.

Martin will be missed dearly by all who knew him.



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