

State of Immigration and Settlement in Edmonton

Annual Report

Recommendation

That the June 30, 2021, Citizen Services report CR_7720, be received for information.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the October 16, 2019, Community and Public Services Committee, the following motions was passed:

2. That Administration provide an annual report on the State of Immigration and Settlement in Edmonton.
3. That Administration work with the Multicultural Health Brokers and other relevant stakeholders to identify a piece of land for development, appropriate as housing for newcomer/refugee communities, that could serve as a model for future needed projects, and include an update in the next annual report.

Executive Summary

Belonging: Stories of the Dignity and Resilience of Immigrants (The State of Immigration and Settlement in Edmonton - Annual Report 2021) is the first of a series of reports that will highlight specific themes within immigration and settlement. The reports will discuss various federal, provincial and municipal policies, and their impacts on the lives of newcomers and immigrants in the Edmonton region. The main themes of the 2021 State of Immigration and Settlement in Edmonton report are Housing, Health and Civic Participation.

Administration also continues to work with a coalition of partners that submitted a proposal to develop housing appropriate for newcomer/refugee communities. The group has identified Blatchford as the desired neighbourhood for the project. Efforts continue to assist the group with refinement of their proposal and to explore options for a suitable site location.

Report

Belonging: Stories of the Dignity and Resilience of Immigrants (Attachment 1) was led by two co-chairs, one from the community and one from Administration, supported by

a diverse steering committee composed of individuals from 10 local, immigrant-serving agencies. The group helped to review and provide input to produce the inaugural report.

Twelve community-based researchers interviewed 22 immigrants and engaged with a panel of 14 thought leaders living in Edmonton. The participants were all migrants from different regions of the world and represented a broad spectrum of age, race and gender identities. The researchers also conducted a review of more than 40 policies that affect immigrants. These interviews and reviews lead to the development of the annual report. Highlights of the report include:

- While immigration, housing and health are mainly within federal and provincial jurisdiction, the report looks at the important role that the City has in creating opportunities for immigrants to fully participate in all aspects of civic life, as well as ensuring that immigrants have opportunities to connect and contribute to their new communities.
- The report shares stories of five composite characters Yusef, Neo, Merla, Marina and Anton. While their stories are semi-fictionalized, their experiences and perspectives are drawn from the stories, strengths and struggles of 22 Edmontonians with lived experience.
- The narratives illuminate the interactions of these characters with key City of Edmonton policies/programs including
 - Emerging Immigrant and Refugee Community Grant
 - Art of Inclusion: Diversity and Inclusion Framework
 - Affordable Housing Strategy 2016 - 2025
 - Housing Investment Plan
 - Access Without Fear
 - ConnectEdmonton
 - The City Plan
- One of the objectives of the annual report is to provide new mental models and lenses of seeing and thinking about immigrants. The report is framed within the context of two specific theoretical models:
 - Multidimensional Immigrant Model: The report introduces the idea that communities start to consider immigrants beyond just the traditional one-dimensional measure of immigrants' abilities to either contribute to or take from the economy; but to recognize multiple dimensions such as education, experience of resilience, and unique world views that immigrants add to our local knowledge base and spur innovation.
 - Cultural Wealth Model: The report proposes that beyond economic measures of wealth, most immigrants come to Canada with the potential to offer new forms of wealth, which are important for business,

community building and dealing with the adversities of life. Some of these forms of social capital include

- Aspirational Capital: The strength and persistence of hope, and the inspirational pursuit in the face of barriers and adversity.
- Navigational Capital: The skills of navigating systemic challenges, which are frequently faced and overcome by newcomers and migrants.
- Resistant Capital: The strength, knowledge and skills that come from consistently challenging inequalities, both in their countries of origin and here.

In addition to the annual report, a group of stakeholders developed a proposal through their complementary work to advance issues of housing for newcomers and refugees (Attachment 2). The Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative, Right At Home Housing Society and the New Canadians' Health Centre teamed up to lead the project which aspires to develop land in the new Blatchford neighbourhood. Highlights from the proposal include:

- A number of human-centered design elements focused on the unique needs of newcomers and refugees.
 - The design process for developing the housing project for newcomers will be framed by the needs, sentiments and aspirations of people impacted by housing insecurity.
 - Built environments should support social connection among households and with the larger community; a community space and commercial spaces for a variety of services on the ground floor.
 - The location should be close to amenities such as schools, English language learning services, grocery stores, and daycares.
- Integration of various supports for newcomers and refugees.
 - On-site health services and other resources built where newcomers live, making them easier to access both in physical proximity and cultural responsiveness.
 - The vision includes a medical clinic staffed by physicians and a licensed practical nurse and space for allied community professionals that include mental health therapists, settlement counsellors aided by community support workers, cultural brokers, social workers, and cultural/language interpreters.

Next Steps

The steering committee and project team continue to build communications tools to support the ongoing work identified in the annual report. These communications tools will include things such as a website and social media accounts to house the research

materials and help to build the ongoing dialogue for future annual reports. Administration will continue to engage with stakeholders within the immigration and settlement sector in Edmonton to inform future reports.

Administration will continue to work with the coalition of partners on their newcomer/refugee housing proposal. Next steps include developing a conceptual design and pro forma to confirm the site requirements. Administration will also work to identify a suitable site location in the Blachford neighbourhood or another neighbourhood that meets the requirements of the proposal.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmontonians are connected to the city in which they live, work and play			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Social Inclusion: Removal of systemic barriers, building reciprocal relationships with and enhancing social capital of newcomers to achieve full participation in all aspects of society.	Number of immigrants, refugees and newcomers with lived experience engaged in the production of the annual report.	2021: 50	2022: 15% increase from previous year
	Number of Immigrant serving agencies involved in the production of the report.	2021: 10	2022: 25% increase from previous year
Increased supply of affordable housing in all areas of the City	Number of new affordable housing units supported (by all affordable housing programs)	2021: 159 2020: 286 2019: 648 2018: 189 TOTAL: 1264	2,500 from 2019-2024

Attachments

1. Belonging: Stories of the Dignity and Resilience of Immigrants - The State of Immigration and Settlement in Edmonton - Annual Report & Executive Summary 2021
2. A Safe and Stable Housing for Edmonton's Newcomers Facing Housing Precarity - A Proposal

Others Reviewing this Report

- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- M. Persson, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- A. Laughlin, Deputy City Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services
- K. Fallis-Howell, Acting City Solicitor