

GBA+ REPORTING

PROJECT/INITIATIVE NAME: Neighbourhood Revitalization Program

Branch Community Standards and Neighbourhoods **Department** Community Services

Completed by: Anna Vesala and Julie Elford **Date:** January 13, 2022

1. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT OR INITIATIVE

Administration provides revitalization coordinators in selected neighbourhoods with high social vulnerability to work in partnership with Edmontonians to strengthen and enhance their neighbourhoods. The goal of Neighbourhood Revitalization is to mobilize community-led action to improve the livability of Edmonton's mature and established neighbourhoods. This community development component is complemented with capital funding available for the community to identify its priorities to enhance neighbourhood vibrancy, safety and aesthetics. Opportunities to leverage revitalization capital funding with other capital projects occurring in the neighbourhood are explored.

2. OVERVIEW OF GBA+ IMPACT

The model used to select neighbourhoods for revitalization uses a combination of Social Vulnerability Index score and opportunities to leverage current or planned capital investments to enhance neighbourhood liveability, safety, beautification and vibrancy.

The Social Vulnerability Index is a composite score generated from nine Federal Census indicators:

- Unemployment Rate
- % Low Income
- % without certificate/diploma
- % with single parent house
- % who speak neither English/French
- % immigrated within five years
- % of residents who moved within last year
- % rent vs own
- % receiving governmental transfer payments

One objective of the Neighbourhood Revitalization program is to increase equity between communities by providing additional resources to enhance physical, social, recreational, and local economic opportunities to:

- Enhance beauty, safety, security
- Enhance thriving local economy investment
- Mobilize and strengthen local leadership capacity

Neighbourhood revitalization also increases equity by reducing barriers to engagement by providing support to navigate City processes and building stronger connections between the community groups and City subject matter experts. In addition, program funding supports individuals and groups to provide activities, events and initiatives to enhance community life.

Staff made efforts to increase inclusion, including having persons with lived experience of homelessness, addictions and mental health challenges participate in community project teams, holding an interdenominational/smudging ceremony in the community, providing capital project surveys in the seven most common languages in the neighbourhoods, and using a variety of meeting locations. We acknowledge, though, that more needs to be done and the current structure of the revitalization program creates some barriers to participation in Revitalization including:

- language barriers - resources are currently in English and at high school or higher levels of writing, typically in small print with few images
- unpaid time commitment - volunteerism and emotional labour of sharing lived experience and perspectives
- lack of awareness of the revitalization program and its components
- access to technology hardware and the internet
- formality of gathering and meeting processes
- complexity of online application systems for funding (in English and written format only)

At this time, Administration tries to ensure that participants in the program are representative of the neighbourhood demographics; however, some demographics continue to be missing. Resources and funding are to benefit the neighbourhood as a whole rather than a select population who may experience the following privileges:

- Fluency in English above high school or higher levels
- Ability to read small print materials
- Financial stability to commit to unpaid volunteer time
 - do not need to take time off work to attend meetings and committees
 - may not require additional support or financial reimbursement for child care, transportation, and technology as supports exist due to full time employment and benefits
 - double income households
 - access to a reliable vehicle
 - ability to afford vehicle maintenance, fuel, and insurance
 - not concerned with paying bills and putting food on the table
- Access to consistent and reliable technology hardware and internet access to gain awareness of the program and opportunities related to the program, and knowledge, skills and experience to navigate complex online application systems for funding, in English and written formats
- Understanding of and comfort with formal gathering and meeting processes
- Inability to meet the matching requirement of revitalization grants. Revitalization neighbourhoods are selected on the basis of relatively high socioeconomic vulnerability and, in comparison to more affluent neighbourhoods, they face a significant challenge in providing cash contributions, volunteer labour and in-kind contributions. This inhibits the timely use of program funds.
- Individuals, organizations, and businesses are faced with meeting their basic needs and do not have the time or social capacity to participate on committees or in engagement sessions, or to go through the application process for funding. Over the last 18 months, this effect was compounded as the

COVID-19 pandemic caused people's priorities to shift.

A tactical program review will identify additional opportunities to increase equity. Through the program review, Administration, community partners, and stakeholders will work together to continue to identify ways that the current program structure, rules and processes could be improved to further enhance the equity building impacts of the Neighbourhood Revitalization Program and work together to mitigate these barriers.

GBA+ PROCESS

3. REFLECT

The project team for this GBA+ report consists of revitalization coordinators who work as full time, permanent employees of the City of Edmonton. The team has reflected on the privileges of working for the City that may not be the experience of all people, especially those who are marginalized, in the neighbourhoods they work with.

Some of these privileges include:

- Fluent in English, written and verbal formats
- Holding a degree and/or additional post-secondary education
- Consistent work and consistent bi-weekly pay
- Working in an office environment with the ability to work from home during COVID-19
 - Some revitalization coordinators did experience temporary layoffs but were afforded the privilege to either re-deploy at a full regular wage or access federal/provincial financial support.
- Access to technology (hardware, internet, phone)
- Medical and dental benefits
- Access to a vehicle and the ability to pay car maintenance and insurance
- Some may or may not provide child and family care, but have access to employment support, resources and financial abilities to enable these tasks
- Four out of five revitalization coordinators experience white privilege

The revitalization team frequently and openly discuss these privileges and understand that working with communities who do not always afford these privileges need to be considered. Conversations include volunteering versus pay or honorarium, access to transportation and child care, and emotional labour, among other topics of privilege. A GBA+ review enables these conversations to transition into mitigations and actions.

4. RESEARCH

Information and data was collected to compare various demographic characteristics of marginalized groups to gain insights into barriers to participation in engagement:

- "We know that many individuals, particularly those from marginalized groups, face systemic barriers to participating in these sorts of civic processes..." ~ [Auricle, a RECOVER prototype](#).
- "Limited knowledge about City of Edmonton services and programs can be a significant barrier to using them, especially for those who have limited literacy or English language skills. Many Edmontonians have difficulty applying for subsidized programs because the programs are each administered separately and the application process seems cumbersome and tedious. These are barriers to

participation in City programs, initiatives, events and community engagement processes.” ~ [End Poverty Edmonton: Year 2 Progress - Remove barriers to City committee participation.](#)

- “POVERTY IS TIME-CONSUMING. For individuals to obtain assistance they constantly need to prove they are poor. Balancing that with having to seek out food, shelter, or other necessities can be overwhelming.” [Vital Signs \(Making Ends Meet\) 2021.](#) *People trying to survive may be working multiple jobs and need to take time off work to attend volunteer commitments such as a Revitalization Guiding Team or Steering Committee or engagement events.*
- Based on 2016 federal census data Balwin and Belvedere both have:
 - Higher than City average of marginalized individuals: lone parents, low income, population who identifies as Indigenous and per cent of individuals who do not speak either official language.
 - Lower per cent of population over 15 who have earned a certificate, diploma or degree.

Balwin and Belvedere Demographics (Federal Census Data up to 2016) by area of City:
<https://mapsab.ca/demographic-resource-maps/north-central/>

Demographics	Balwin	Belvedere	Edmonton (Mean)
Prevalence of Lone Parents	26.1% - 33.1%	21.4% - 26.0%	16.8%
Prevalence of Low Income After Tax	16.6% - 23.4%	16.6% - 23.4%	10.9%
Population who identify as Indigenous	341 - 570	575 - 1000	265
Individuals Who Do Not Speak Either Official Language (English or French)	2.3% - 3.5%	2.3% - 3.5%	2.2%
Population Who Have Not Earned a Certificate, Diploma or Degree	29.1% - 37.9%	22.2% - 29.0%	15.4%
Tenant Households in Subsidized Housing	17.5% - 27.5%	17.5% - 27.5%	10.6%

5. ENGAGE

There is not currently GBA+ specific engagement in the revitalization program; however, staff engage with and work alongside any individual or group in the neighbourhood. We recognize that there are barriers to participation, more for some than others, and more specific GBA+ focused engagement will be part of the recently-initiated tactical program review.

6. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6a) Finding statement(s):

- Marginalized individuals disproportionately live in poverty, therefore there may be barriers to access to information on City programs,

6b) Equity Measure Recommendation(s):

- Outreach through internal and external partners so as to not overburden people who are already stretched thin.

including the revitalization program, and barriers to voluntary participation in the program and projects associated with the program.

- Build relationships with no agenda.
- Conduct primary research through working with internal and external partners and people impacted, to identify barriers and possible mitigation. Review secondary partner research to address and mitigate these barriers.
- Conduct GBA+ community engagement and work with local community partners to share data and resources as it relates to a neighbourhood.
- Outreach and co-development of capacity strengthening opportunities with internal and external partners who already hold relationships with the community. Explore capacity strengthening opportunities with partners to mitigate some barriers:
 - Basic civic education sessions such as drop-in Revitalization 101 and coffee chats.
 - Small business or social enterprise bootcamps to support thriving local economies.
 - Fund development workshops
- Review the way we gather and provide recommendations for change.
- Review how program decisions are made and provide recommendations for change.
- Review opportunities and internal examples such as RECOVER prototypes and multicultural community animators, to provide financial reimbursement that recognizes a person's time and technical experience as well as their lived experience and perspectives, family dynamics such as child care, and other financial burdens such as transportation, meals, or technology.
- Review accessibility of print and online materials (eg. plain language, font size, images and colour contrasts, funding applications, steering committee applications).
- Anti-racism workshop series customized for revitalization committees.
- Review revitalization funding framework to ensure enhancement of equity in access and distribution of funds (i.e. minimum and

	maximum funding dollars available, matching component, application platforms and process, etc).
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7. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of these measures will be guided by the results of the tactical program review to be completed in 2022. The main implementation of equity measures listed above will be part of the Neighbourhood Revitalization program review taking place in 2022.

The revitalization program has employee resources in the form of:

- One managing supervisor/planner and one community Planner leading the review
- Five revitalization coordinators supporting the tactical review
- Budget for engagement consultants supporting external and internal engagement for the review
 - More than 25 hours is currently allocated internally for communications
 - If external consultants for engagement are required, GBA+ training will be provided and consideration for their lived experience will be prioritized
- Community stakeholders will be engaged at several points throughout the process

8. EVALUATION

The evaluation will be a part of the program review in 2022. In addition, Administration can gather disaggregated demographic data of current revitalization area participants (eg. committee members, project teams, engagement respondents) to understand who is and is not participating. Consideration during data gathering will include data ethics, education on use of the data, how Administration will share back to the community to inform revitalization projects and evaluation to determine whether gathering the data impacted participation, project types and outcomes. Shift engagement methods to further reduce barriers for underrepresented demographics.

ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY:

Reviewed by:	CS Centre of Excellence (TG)	Date:	January 13, 2022
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