

Update: Urban Isolation / Mental Health Initiative

Initiative Title: Urban Isolation / Mental Health
City Council Lead(s): Councillor S. McKeen
Department Lead(s): Citizen Services, L. Brenneis / J. Kain

Recommendation - Renew for 2017-2021 Council Term

Objective

The Urban Isolation/Mental Health Initiative acknowledges the strong link between social connectedness and wellbeing. When people feel connected to a supportive community, when they know their neighbours and when their neighbours know them, people are less likely to experience stress, depression, loneliness and isolation.

The Initiative also aims to work with community and provincial partners to support Edmontonians at multiple points on the mental health continuum from prevention and early intervention, to treatment and recovery. The Initiative recognizes the importance of prevention and education for long term health outcomes, but also supports utilizing harm-reduction approaches for those who may already be struggling with addiction and mental health issues.

Key outcomes, projects or activities and their status as of May 2017

1. Increase awareness and understanding about urban isolation and mental health
 - A communication plan and social media strategy continue to support the “Hello How Are You?” campaign including an edmonton.ca webpage (ongoing).
 - Monthly blog published on Transforming Edmonton (ongoing since January 2017).
 - Partnership with Edmonton Public Library to host Conversation Circles and “Hello, How Are You?” Speaker Series (ongoing).
 - Supporting NorQuest in a research project on isolation among immigrant and Indigenous populations (three-year project ongoing).
2. Accelerate innovative ideas to address urban isolation
 - YEG Sidewalk Talk (complete).
 - Support Let’s Talk Health panel discussion on the association between our built environment and our health (complete).
 - Working with CityLab in conjunction with the Seniors Initiative on a Buddy Bench pilot project to encourage Edmontonians to connect (ongoing - target launch end of May).

3. Build a more connected and engaged community
 - Work underway to begin a Men's Sheds project in Edmonton, to provide opportunities for men to socialize, and support each other (planning underway).
 - Supporting Sustainable Development in the planning of the Open Streets project to optimize social inclusion (planning underway; event for summer 2018).
4. Build on, and increase awareness of, existing initiatives that align with the desired outcomes of the Initiative
 - Conducting a pre/post sense of community survey among new Abundant Community Edmonton neighbourhoods to assess sense of belonging (ongoing).
 - Work with the Corporate Safety and Health Services Section to promote Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace (ongoing).
 - Partnering with Edmonton Neighbourhood Watch to support block parties (ongoing).
5. Develop programs that promote mental health, prevent mental illness, and utilize harm reduction approaches
 - Participate in the Community Mental Health Action Plan to promote a continuum of mental health supports in Edmonton (ongoing).
 - Work with community partners and other orders of government to develop an Edmonton Suicide Prevention Strategy (complete).
 - Develop an implementation plan for the Edmonton Suicide Prevention Strategy (completion by December 2017).
 - Increase opportunities for Mental Health First Aid and Psychological First Aid training (ongoing).

Future Steps

1. Begin to work intentionally with post-secondary student associations to advance student-led initiatives on mental health.
2. Integrate public health and social inclusion lenses into relevant City of Edmonton departments.
3. Enhance efforts in Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace to establish the City of Edmonton as a leader.
4. Increase education and awareness efforts on harm reduction.

Evaluation

The Initiative is well aligned with other work in the City of Edmonton, in Alberta, and nationally, the City is well positioned to leverage those relationships to advance the work of this Initiative.

Continue to build on accomplishments and work to date to create a city where mental health is seen as a key driver to our overall wellness.