



Neighbourhood Life

Your experience in your local community and the wider city

CITY SERVICE AREAS

Affordable housing

Making sure all Calgarians have access to good housing is important not just for shelter, but also because housing conditions have big impacts on other factors of life such as employment, income, physical and mental health, wellbeing, and even friendships and community building.

Currently neither the Alberta government, nor the Federal government recognizes housing as a right protected by any law, however it is recognized that the housing market lacks access to affordable housing for a large portion of the population. The state of housing also needs to be thought about to have a meaningful impact on the quality of life of residents.

Neighbourhood support

Neighbourhood services covers a wide range of service areas in The City of Calgary that are designed to help create different neighbourhoods, and provide quality services. Neighbourhood services run locally with offices across the different city neighbourhoods. These offices act as hubs where community needs are addressed. This allows each community to look and ask for development, services and recreation that they most want and need.

Areas managed: Community Liaison, Assessment And Evaluation, Social Development, Recreation Development, Youth Development, and Special Events.

Transit

Public transit provides a network of train and bus transportation for citizens and visitors to around the city in a safe, reliable and affordable way. Calgary has a rapid transit service by bus and C-Train, local bus routes and a system that keeps customers safe, comfortable and informed. The system provides options that are accessible to a different ages and abilities, and is affordable to access. Customer service and information can be accessed by phone, online, text and app.

Public transit includes: Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Calgary Transit App, Careers, Fares and Passes, Green Line – Map, Plan a Trip, and Schedules and Maps.

Citizen Information

Citizen Information and Services provides two-way information and services for Calgarians, business and visitors through 311 and calgary.ca. This service receives your feedback and helps The City prioritize, develop and change services to meet your needs. As such it is one of the most important services as it makes sure citizens and the City of Calgary can talk to one another.



Things that make your neighbourhood life positive:

- Access to everything you need to live and be healthy in your community
- Access to everything you need to be healthy in your community
- Ability to take part in your local community
- Things you need outside of your community are easy to get to.



Things that your neighbourhood life is closely connected to:

- Transit: poor transit links can limit access to get to employment or recreation
- Information: limited access can mean people can't or don't access programs and services
- Housing: good housing can make you feel safe and has a positive effect on your wellbeing

Neighbourhood supports try to provide all neighbourhoods with the resources they need. All neighbourhoods are quite unique in ways such as income and employment levels, ethnic makeup, and accessibility to public and private services. Eight themes have emerged through research into City of Calgary service areas. These highlight the systemic and interconnected nature of racism across municipal services, and the need for a strategy that tackles these themes while also highlighting specific policy, service, and practice areas. A summary of themes and examples and how they connect to neighbourhoods can be found below.

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ACCESS

Includes a wide range of factors that limit access. The search for affordable housing often pushes Indigenous and racialized community members further out of the city centre, leading to limited public transit options.

SAFETY

Includes experience of racism from police/bylaw/security. Over policing of certain groups. Under-policing and lack of safety funding in certain neighbourhoods. There is evidence to suggest that 311 and other complainant systems can be used against racialized or Indigenous communities. Research shows gentrification may increase complaints to 311 and 911, increasing police presence and potential harassment. Poor housing can also lead to unsafe conditions and more chronic health problems.

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LACK OF REPRESENTATION

Lack of racialized community members on boards, committees, and in leadership positions in areas like transit and housing limits the perspectives and understanding of of racialized community members.

ZONING

Zoning that favours single family homes in certain neighbourhoods can be used to limit diversity and close off access to parts of the city for marginalized groups.

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PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

Includes projects such as allowing citizens to get involved in budgeting and planning. Community Associations (CA) play a much bigger role in municipal affairs compared to other Canadian cities. Municipalities work closely with CA's to understand and share community needs. This means people must be paid members of CAs but also find space to voice their concerns. CA fees are set by their boards and can vary significantly community to community. This system of "buying into" social life (that the city uses by default) leaves some unable to participate.

CULTURAL RELEVANCE / APPROPRIATENESS

Lack of multigenerational / multi-bedroom affordable housing impacts Indigenous and racialized communities more than others. The lack of culturally appropriate housing can lead to physical and mental health issues due to being disconnected with culture and heritage, and general lack of housing suitability.

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UNDER / OVER INVESTMENT

Under funding certain neighbourhoods or services, in particular more diverse and lower household income areas. A lack of transit development in neighbourhoods where residents are mostly members of racialized communities is a common theme in Canadian municipalities. Underinvestment in transit in communities affected by poverty, where a larger proportion of residents may not have access to a vehicle, and are already underserved with recreational programs or services makes access issues harder, and leads to further challenges such as employment, education, and access to health services.

LACK OF DATA

This includes data that has been broken down by detailed sub-categories, e.g. by gender, region, or level of education etc. Detailed data is key for understanding who may not be being served well or at all when it comes to transit. It also is key to understanding how systemic racism may be happening on transit. For example, data collection in Toronto revealed black transit riders were more impacted by transit fare checks than other groups. However these incidents of racial profiling were difficult to prove without access to detailed data from transit fare officers.

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EXAMPLES OF ACTIONS TAKEN IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS

This section gives a number of examples from other jurisdictions in North America who are working on addressing systemic racism and inequity in areas related to neighbourhood life.

The City of Toronto: Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)

The Toronto Transit Commission is working with the Confronting Anti Black Racism unit to create a system wide strategy that works with the City's action plan to confront anti black racism. The TTC will create its own anti racism policy with riders and staff. The strategy will include training, and hiring practices, and a review of data collection, particularly the need for race based data collected by fee inspectors. The strategy will link to the overall city plan but have its own policies and budget for implementation.

More information: TTC Status Update - Anti-Racism Strategy and Ombudsman Recommendations TTC Board Report (002) (toronto.ca).

Minneapolis, MN: The Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan

Minneapolis has recently eliminated single-family zoning policies city-wide. This drastic shift has focused on promoting racial and economic equity in the city, which had until that point, given 70% of its residential land for single-family homes.

More information: King, Regina (2020). Scoping review: Municipal anti-racist practices that might work. Produced with support by the City of Calgary through its partnership with the Urban Alliance of the University of Calgary, and the Faculty of Social Work.

Vancouver Island, BC: Nuuchahnulth and Ecotrust Canada

In partnership with Ecotrust Canada, the Nuuchahnulth communities living on the west coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, undertook the Green & Culturally Appropriate Building Design Project, which aimed to build culturally appropriate homes for their First Nations communities.¹⁵⁹ These homes account for the traditional longhouse design, use of local materials, recognition of climate and geography, and the demographics and desires of the community (e.g., multigenerational families)."

More information: King, Regina (2020). Scoping review: Municipal anti-racist practices that might work. Produced with support by the City of Calgary through its partnership with the Urban Alliance of the University of Calgary, and the Faculty of Social Work.

POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Improved participatory governance

Many of the issues raised under Neighbourhood Life involve whether residents feel a sense of belonging, or not to their community and city. This includes when they move through their community, and as they live and work in their community. It also includes how people feel when they access the wider city as a whole.

Do the services and systems they connect with on a daily basis meet their needs? Can they move freely around to access what they need for wellbeing? Can they get the information they need to support their wellbeing? Do they feel they have a voice in what their city looks like?

Meaningful participatory governance is a key to shaping these parts of neighbourhood life. We need to make sure that the right processes are in place so that racialized and Indigenous community members have a voice in policy making and planning decisions. This helps to have neighbourhoods reflect residents' needs, and make sure that they are able to adapt to changing priorities, pressures, and ways of life.

While the City of Calgary has begun working with communities on budgeting and planning, more still needs to be done to address systemic racism and power imbalances are addressed so that racialized and Indigenous voices are heard. Having detailed and broken down data (disaggregated data) will with this issue, as until we know whose voices we are and are not hearing, we won't know what voices are being missed.

More information: Dr. Regine King's Scoping Review: Municipal Anti-Racist Practices that Might Work (2020) provides a starting point of examples where anti-racist approaches have been included in approaches to participatory governance.