

CASE STUDY #14



EVOLVING INFILL: Building In. Let's Talk. City of Edmonton

“Allowed time for reflection and time to fine tune my opinion, rather than the typical time limited knee-jerk reactions most public consultation formats impose.” —Project Participant

Dialogue Partners was retained by the City of Edmonton to plan and implement an engagement process about residential infill and neighbourhood change. The desired result was to create a commitment and shared understanding among city-builders, residents, the City and other stakeholders of what is needed to establish positive change strategies and plans for new housing in established neighbourhoods. The City's long-term goal is to advance residential infill in established neighbourhoods while addressing the needs and elements that bring vibrancy to these areas.

Creating positive change through new housing in established neighbourhoods that reflect our values and contributes to a vibrant Edmonton.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Evolving Infill invited all interested stakeholders to come together to collaboratively identify and prioritize actions to 1) create positive change through new housing in established neighbourhoods 2) share information and 3) build Edmonton's infill story. The key deliverable of the project, the Infill Action Plan, aimed to provide certainty and clarity related to what the City can and will do with its citizens and city-building partners to support infill growth.

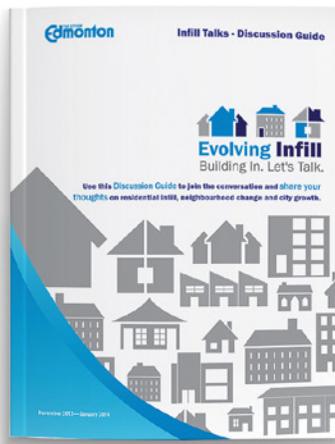
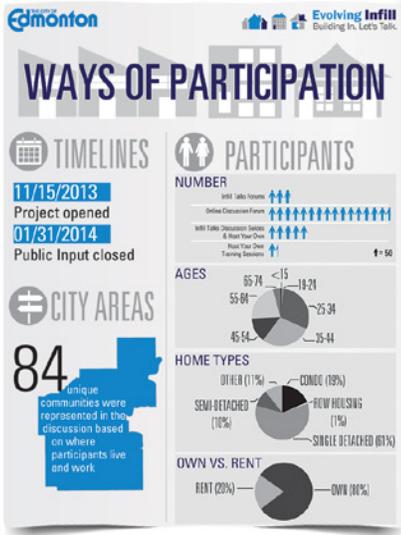
Dialogue Partners' role was to provide expert engagement support and guidance in involving Edmontonians in the identification of key actions that enable more infill opportunities, share information and create an ongoing dialogue about urban transformation. Using a variety of engagement techniques such as story-telling, “Infill Talks” forums, “Host Your Own Infill Talks” training, online discussion forum and an easy to use discussion guide, we engaged approximately 1000 internal and external individual stakeholders and organizations in this important conversation. This project also provided numerous opportunities to use creative and innovative engagement tools and tactics such as the use of a graphic recorder and a photobooth to express input and feedback visually.

THINGS WE LEARNED ALONG THE WAY:

All of DP's engagement processes are grounded in a values-based approach, meaning we aim to understand and uncover not just positions and interests but what's important to participants and why. This requires unique engagement methods and tools to dig below the surface of participant responses to uncover data that is usable in sustainable decision-making. Story telling is one of these methods that connects with the personal experiences of participants.

In the Evolving Infill project, story telling effectively generated interest, encouraged diverse participation and made residential infill and neighbourhood change relatable and relevant for Edmontonians. In the process of telling their “infill story” participants explored their own experiences thereby bringing personal wisdom to the discussion and ultimately informing the final Infill Action Plan. Additionally, stories and experiences were helpful in turning a conceptual discussion about policy and process into something that was meaningful in everyday life for all our stakeholders.





Story telling provides a human face to challenging and complex issues.

Story telling brings forth individual experiences to be woven together to collect a larger common story.

Story telling allows for participants to share diverse and unique responses, uncovering individual or collective concerns, hopes, fears and aspirations. It accesses experiences from the past to help consider the future.

Story telling supports the building of trust and relationships between participants and decision-makers because of the sharing of relatable experiences that are critical to the success of any collaborative approach.

“Stories can accomplish what no other form of communication can – they can get through to our hearts with a message. In our world of information transfer, data exchange and media impressions, where we have become callused by so much communication, stories have the power to speak to us about what truly matters.”
 —Will Rogers, The Story Handbook



UPDATE

After approval of the Infill Action Plan by City Council, we continued to work with the City to implement actions to make change real. Check out the Evolving Infill Conversation Toolkit http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/2015_Infill_Action_Conversation_Toolkit.pdf - created so communities, groups and neighbours can have important conversations with each other.

AWARD WINNING

Evolving Infill received an award for leadership in innovation and planning at the Alberta Professional Planners Institute (APPI) awards in September 2015. To read more please visit: <https://www.mailoutinteractive.com/Industry/View.aspx?id=719021&p=bf92%3E%20%5B1%5D>.