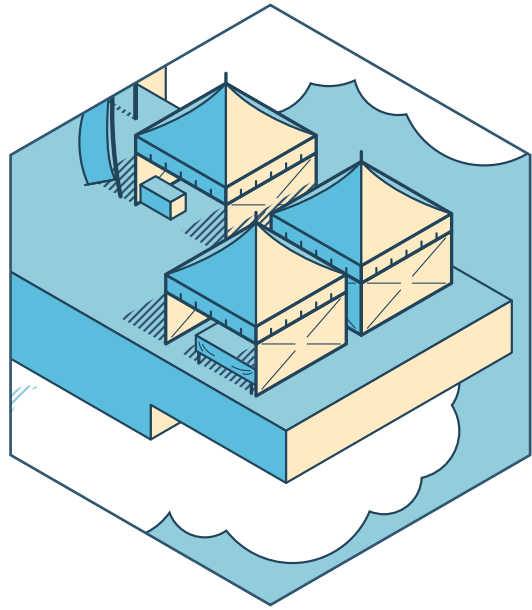


# Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative Youth Engagement Report

In collaboration with Edmonton Public Schools and City Hall School

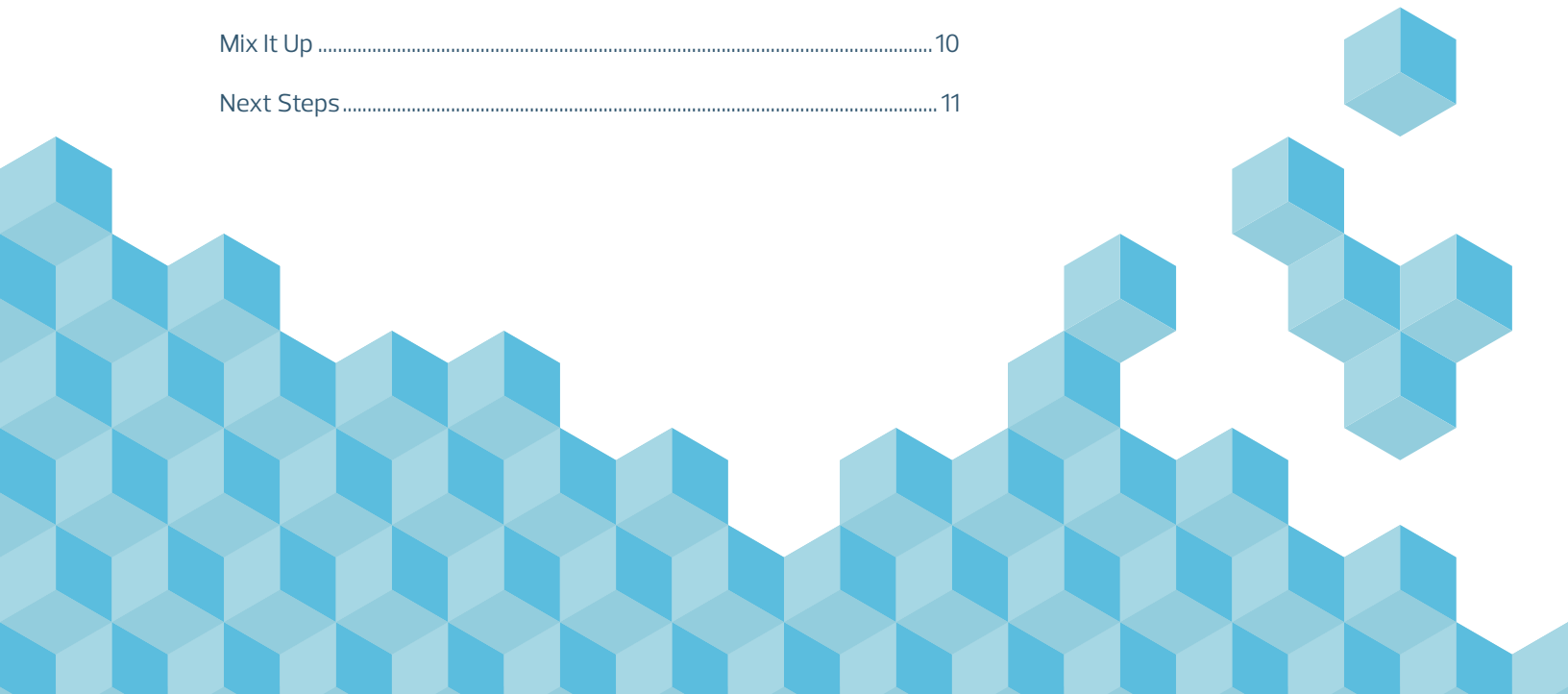
Kids Say The Smartest Things:  
What Edmonton Youth Want in  
Their Neighbourhoods

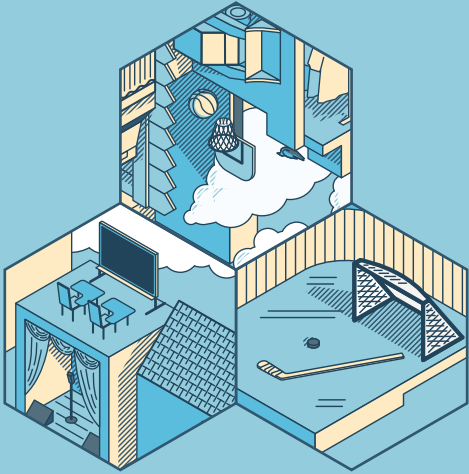
**Edmonton**



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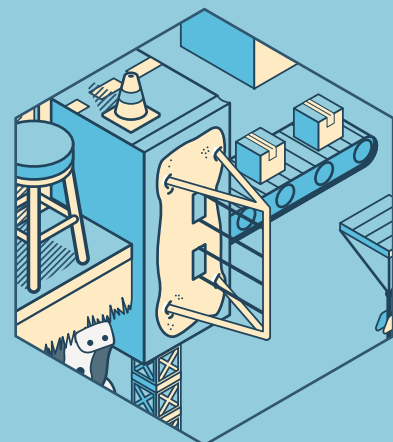


## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Kids and kids-at-heart often have the very best ideas for their city. As the City of Edmonton builds its new Zoning Bylaw, it's important that we listen to young people and their ideas. We're building a city to support those here today, and those who come after us. Part of city building is making sure that children have access to city processes, and that they feel engaged and empowered to participate.

The City of Edmonton is thankful and appreciative of its collaboration with the Edmonton Public Schools, City Hall School, and the many students

who participated in the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative youth engagement activities. They say that a "picture is worth a thousand words," and in this case, drawings, illustrations and images provided the City with a wealth of information and a deeper understanding on how to build a more inclusive, sustainable, connected, and diverse community with different types of homes, buildings, businesses, amenities and spaces.



# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the traditional land on which we reside is in Treaty Six Territory. We would like to thank the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries, such as nēhiyaw (Cree), Dené, Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Nakota Isga (Nakota Sioux), and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) peoples. We also acknowledge this as the Métis' homeland and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel. It is a welcoming place for all peoples who come from around the world to share Edmonton as a home. Together we call upon all of our collective,

honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.

Edmontonians inhabit, share and steward this land. The City's vitality and very existence is owed to the land itself, as well as the people that helped build the city. City planning and zoning are all about land. Land is used for many things, and is tied to the practice of culture. The City hopes the new Zoning Bylaw will address and reconcile regulations that may create inequities for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in Edmonton and Treaty 6.

## BACKGROUND

Building on the work of The City Plan, the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative engaged with Edmonton youth, inviting them to collectively imagine Edmonton's future built environment, thinking through concepts like housing, open space, mobility, and neighbourhood amenities. And while The City Plan's kids engagement asked students to take a big-picture look at what they want from their future city, the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative team zoomed in by asking students to consider the types of neighbourhoods they'd like to live in. This work helped take the visionary, future-focused perspective of The City Plan and translate those same aspirations into specific locations — namely, residential neighbourhoods.

Collaborating with Edmonton Public Schools and City Hall School, the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative held engagement activities with kids from grades 1 to 6. The submissions and ideas will result in the creation of a comic book, in addition to a public exhibition.

Comic books are a way to show words and images. They often show superheroes in different urban settings. Think about your favourite comic books — how do they show the city? What happens during the morning and evening? What kinds of people, businesses, and restaurants are drawn? While comic books give us fantasy and whimsy, they highlight how the author views the city. This meaningful collaboration between the City of Edmonton and Edmonton Public Schools invited Edmonton youth to think about their city and the different people who live here. This provided an opportunity for kids to learn more about how a home or a building comes to be, and the planning and regulations that go into making them great places and accessible spaces.

# ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

To solicit ideas around land use from students of all ages and abilities, engagement activities were tailored by Edmonton Public Schools and City Hall School. Participating schools, teachers and students approached this challenge through design thinking (e.g. empathize, understand, idea, prototype and test). In their submissions, students considered their own neighbourhoods, their neighbours, and the communities in which they are situated. Hundreds of ideas were shared through text, images and illustrations.

Students in grades 1 to 3 were invited to develop superhero characters. In these storyboards, students drew or described what their superheroes looked like, where they lived and what they lived in.

Students in grades 4 to 6 took these superheroes and further developed comic book storylines, exploring the defining elements of their cityscape or neighbourhood.



# WHAT WE HEARD

The students brought their own unique perspectives to the exercise. Guided by teachers and school administrators, youth shared the types of things they want to see in their neighbourhoods and the types of superheroes who call those places home. The submissions were varied in terms

of superhero abilities (from flying to delivering mail) and the types of homes they lived in (from high rise towers to caves in the wilderness). One thing was clear, though – youth want housing options and neighbourhoods that reflect the diversity of the people who call Edmonton their home.

## 1. The Everyday Hero

Almost every hero submission had some form of cape or mask, but the majority also had everyday jobs. Multiple submissions featured public servants who engage with Edmontonians everyday, including doctors, police officers, teachers, mail carriers, steelworkers, garbage collectors, dads, moms, veterinarians and even newly elected Mayor Sohi! Students considered these heroes "super" because they used their powers to help others, making Edmonton a great place to call home.

Interestingly, the majority of submissions had a woman as a superhero. Perhaps students were inspired by Edmonton's record eight women city council and are now seeing how women have a role to play in both elections and in saving-the-day?

*Zoning Lessons: everyone is a city builder!*



## 2. Come Together

No person is an island and no home or hero exists on their own. Student submissions demonstrated a keen understanding of peoples' need for connection – both with each other and with their city in general. Some heroes got around using skateboards or by walking, and others relied on flying (a nod to future technological disruption?). One superhero had access to an electrical generator, allowing him to use alternative energy to travel throughout Edmonton! No matter how a hero travelled from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, each understood the importance of being compassionate to one another. Many superpowers focused on spreading kindness and helping others, underscoring the importance of creating connections between people as well as between homes.

*Zoning Lessons: access and walkability; active modes of transportation; social connection; density and welcoming more people.*



### 3. Home Sweet Home

Students showed how their superheroes live in all sorts of housing, from small buildings to skyscrapers. Some homes were ornate, with windows and brightly-coloured facades to fairytale-like turret roofs. Some students described homes as being close to City Hall and downtown. Superheroes and their families were diverse, with members aging-in-place and unique in-household composition. Some homes were drawn close to other homes, illustrating the need for dense and compact communities.

*Zoning Lessons: housing diversity and choice; density and welcoming more people; design is subjective; range of building heights; opportunities for multi-generational living; household and family compositions are ever-evolving.*





#### 4. Making Space

Submissions were bursting with colour and lush green space, and text descriptions that spoke of the importance of trees, parks and access to sunlight. Students marked a priority for open and inviting spaces, with dog parks, playful playgrounds and an abundance of flowers.

*Zoning Lessons: multiple uses/activities on open spaces; landscaping requirements; design elements; public space activation; urban agriculture.*



## 5. Mix It Up

Though students focused on heroes and their homes, their submissions also considered other aspects of city living. Their superheroes used nearby fire hydrants to douse out-of-control house fires. They'd take their dogs and cats for walks at the parks beside their homes. They played with their kids or friends at their schools' playgrounds. And, they'd take the injured to the local hospital near their homes, making sure every Edmontonian has access to the help they need.

*Zoning Lessons: mixed use and diversity of land uses; community infrastructure; business attraction; importance of amenities and services to live locally.*



# THE BUILDERS COMIC BOOK

The themes, ideals and illustrations students shared inspired the plot and characters of The Builders — a one-of-a-kind comic book created by the City of Edmonton in partnership with Edmonton Public School Board. The comic book traces the fictional adventures of Lily, Aadi and Chip as they search for their superpowers high and low across the city. Along the way, they reimagine how their city could be built, touching on concepts like housing, mobility and neighbourhood amenities. To read the comic book online, visit [edmonton.ca/thebuilders](https://edmonton.ca/thebuilders).

## NEXT STEPS

Printed comic book copies will be distributed across schools and libraries in Edmonton in the spring of 2022. To learn more, visit [edmonton.ca/zoningbylawrenewal](https://edmonton.ca/zoningbylawrenewal).

