



ACADIA

Slowing automobile traffic for a safer environment

Sports hub, shopping destination, educational nexus, urban forest; home to two LRT stations and several major arteries: Acadia is a neighbourhood of about 10,000 residents in southeast Calgary, Alberta tucked between the Bow River and the Glenmore Reservoir. While this provides proximity to two gorgeous amenities, it also creates a bottleneck effect for north-south traffic in the city. As a result, many drivers cut through the residential neighbourhood at high speeds - a significant safety hazard for the area's pedestrians and cyclists.



RETHINKING THE CITY FOR ITS MOST VULNERABLE USERS

There is a long history of citizen and community action aimed at reducing vehicle speeds in the area. Since 2006, residents' associations have called for traffic calming, citing collisions caused by excessive speed. With nine schools, Acadia has the city's largest concentration of educational institutions. It also has several retirement homes and a high proportion of seniors. Many residents are thus less likely to be drivers, and are considered vulnerable users of the road network. Nonetheless, local infrastructure limits safe pedestrian and bicycle access to amenities, and - due to features such as wide vehicle lanes - encourages speeding and unsafe behaviour in drivers.

MORE ROOM FOR PEDESTRIANS, BETTER SAFETY FOR ALL

Sustainable Calgary launched several initiatives to draw attention to the neighbourhood's issues. A survey of residents provided interesting observations:

- A majority of those polled said it is easy or very easy to walk in the neighbourhood with the current infrastructure

- However, high automobile speeds reduce feelings of safety and discourage use of that infrastructure

- Better planning of streets is the favoured solution to improve safety and encourage active transportation.

The Acadia Community Association (ACA) organized a neighbourhood party in 2016, where Sustainable Calgary displayed design concepts for resident feedback and voting. The event was deliberately held on one of the neighbourhood's busiest streets, with the aim of showing that a livelier street with better accessibility for pedestrians is a safer street. The effect took hold immediately. Throughout the day, motorists were slowing down as they approached the temporary arrangement.

In 2016, as part of Safer Calgary's Safe and Smooth Symposium, the City of Calgary adopted the idea of implementing pop-up traffic-calming measures. Average speeds dropped by 15 km/h. Given the success of these temporary initiatives, the ACA, Sustainable Calgary and their partners are now pursuing further short- and medium-term projects in the neighbourhood.

A significant portion of the Acadia's residents are considered vulnerable and non-motorized road users. However, there are few pedestrian and cycling facilities in the neighbourhood.

These initiatives demonstrated that Acadia residents want slower traffic, and that design changes improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists in their neighbourhood. The public activities provided concrete examples of solutions that work. All the pieces are now in place to make Acadia a safer neighbourhood for every road user.



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Acadia

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