



MARLBOROUGH

Citizen participation as a tool for integration

Marlborough is a vibrant neighbourhood in Calgary's northeast, boasting a strong community association, a variety of recreational programs, proximity to downtown, and ample green space. Surveys by Sustainable Calgary (SC) reveal that residents have a strong sense of belonging to the area. Historically, Marlborough has faced a higher than average crime rate, but substantial work has been done over the years to make the neighbourhood safer for all.



There are several current issues related to urban design. For example, there is inadequate lighting in some parts of the neighbourhood, which undermines some residents' sense of safety. Other urban design challenges include:

- Road safety and pedestrian traffic around the light-rail station and mall
- Under-used green spaces
- Number and quality of community gathering places

VALUING PEDESTRIAN SPACES

In Marlborough, the City of Calgary's *This is My Neighbourhood* project has already played a significant role by documenting residents' priorities for the neighbourhood, including back lane safety improvements, adding more trash cans, and commissioning public art. Some of these measures have already been implemented.

During preliminary discussions with residents and the city, it was determined that SC could contribute to the work that was already underway by developing a better understanding of residents' priorities spatially - where were common walking routes? Gathering spaces? Where should interventions focus? SC was also asked to work with the hardest-to-reach groups, such as recent immigrants.

One of the priority issues identified in the neighbourhood was related to its "catwalks", a network of pedestrian pathways connecting parks and schools. Pedestrian networks such as these are rare gems in Calgary. However, concerned

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about safety, some residents choose not to use them at night. The pathways are unlit, and receive variable levels of maintenance. There is also a major obstacle to improving lighting: a citizens' group must submit a joint request to electricity suppliers and pay the monthly bills. In the winter, residents adjacent to the catwalks are responsible for snow removal.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION TO REACH ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

SC has drawn attention to a diversity of "hot spots" in the neighbourhood reflecting feedback from residents, businesses, commuters, and schoolchildren. These hotspots highlight the good and the bad: vibrant gathering spaces at the local mall, which some have frequented for decades, but missing bus shelters and pedestrian connections; ample green spaces, but underused and lacking in programming for people of all ages.

Sustainable Calgary has also made exciting headway in citizen engagement in Marlborough, building off of previous work in other communities. As in other communities, efforts were made to meet people where they congregate, which respect their limited time and increases SC's chances of connecting with them. SC has had wonderful opportunities in Marlborough to collaborate with new immigrants, particularly those with English as a second (or third, or fourth!) language. New tools were developed, in collaboration with English teachers and students, to work around language barriers, and work with the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association led to a better understanding of the realities of immigrant life in the neighbourhood.

As a member of the organizing committee for the Walk 21 conference, SC has suggested a design competition be held to rethink the area's catwalks and start a conversation on how they are managed. Fellow collaborators have expressed interest, but there is still work to be done before the initiative can come to fruition.

The example of Marlborough shows us that involving residents in the design of their neighbourhood not only strengthens feelings of belonging, but also highlights issues that may not have been obvious before.



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Marlborough

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