

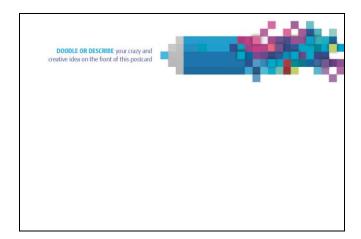
# **The Postcard Project**

## The Opportunity:

CITYlab was totally new, and we needed a way to introduce ourselves to Edmonton and to kick-start our little unit. But what to do? We wanted to be creative, surprising, and invite Edmontonians to participate in order to set the tone for our unit's future work. Thus, the Postcard Project was born.

### What We Did:

Between March 7 and March 15, CITYlab hid or handed out over 5,000 postcards all around Edmonton that asked people to "doodle or describe your crazy and creative idea to brighten up a public space." From Churchill Square to Terwillegar, we hit all sorts of locations and neighbourhoods around Edmonton – and made sure to get postcards to people who asked specifically for them. We asked people to send them back by March 31 because we were using them to make some public art!





The display was up between April 13-30th in the windows of Enterprise Square (103 St and Jasper Ave).

### **Project Results:**

Of the over 5,000 postcards distributed around Edmonton, we received 574 back – that's about a 10% return rate! During the postcard distribution period there were 2,147 unique visits to the CITYlab website, and the media attention and social media chatter all demonstrated that Edmontonians were taking notice.

There were many great ideas written on the postcards. Some common ones included:

- Adding colour including painting downtown, sidewalk chalk, murals, and more flower planters
- Many postcards filled out by children talked about their love for playgrounds especially slides!
- Adding more lights came up frequently, especially art installations involving projections
- Churchill Square was consistently nominated as a space for placemaking one person even referred to it as "the heart of our city"





This wordle shows the popular themes and ideas we heard - the bigger the words, the more frequently that idea was suggested.



#### Some Lessons Learned:

- Old fashioned postcards and a scavenger hunt can be fun. We think people appreciated the fresh way to connect!
- Edmontonians are creative and passionate about their city and when given the opportunity, all sorts of interesting ideas pop up.
- Distributing 5,000 postcards takes time, but doing it ourselves was more cost effective than hiring an agency and the on-the-street discussions about the postcards and CITYlab were invaluable.
- Connecting to diverse communities was key, and we tried to visit as many neighbourhoods and communities as we could!
- Postage costs! Instead of buying 5,000 stamps we registered for a Canada Post indicia it took time, but having an indicia mark meant we only paid the postage for the postcards that were returned.
- Responses were aspirational and generally positive in tone. The themes may reflect the urban planning topics under discussion at the time, including bike lanes, open pianos, and the Freezeway.
- As for the art installation material that sticks is important! We tried string and binder clips but found that tape works best.

# CITYlab and the postcards in the media:

Edmonton proposes to let residents play urban planner with new CITYlab project - Metro News, March 6
Edmontonians encouraged to submit planning ideas with CITYlab project - 630 CHED March 7
CITYlab initiative encourages Edmontonians to become amateur urban planners - Global News, March 8
CITYlab on Edmonton residents to taking part in urban planning - Global News, March 11
Edmonton planners flooded with ideas after launching CITYlab project - Metro News, April 1
CITYlab launches postcard campaign to brighten Edmonton - Metro News, April 1
Postcard campaign solicits next bright idea - Edmonton Journal, April 20

...thanks, Edmonton, for sharing your creative and crazy ideas with us!

