



Edmonton

CHILD FRIENDLY EDMONTON WORKING PLAN

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Overview

In Edmonton, there are currently over 150,000 children aged 18 and under, representing approximately 22% of the municipality's total population (City of Edmonton, 2016). Children are the future of Edmonton, and as a city, we strive to support children, which in turn benefits all citizens. This vision provides rationale and supports the importance of the Child Friendly Edmonton City Council Initiative, sponsored by Councillor Bev Esslinger.

"Edmonton is a great place to live, work and play. The work of Child Friendly Edmonton plays a vital role in building a city for all of our citizens. This work enhances playability, which increases livability, and makes for a vibrant city."

– Councillor Bev Esslinger

Child Friendly Edmonton is based upon the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Child Friendly Edmonton, in the spirit of cooperation and collaboration, works with citizens, community groups and orders of government to create the best possible results for children and their families.

Child friendly cities, such as Edmonton, are committed to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and recognize that children are active citizens, capable of providing input on, and participating in, matters in which they are impacted.

"And even though we're young, we've still got ideas and in the end of the day, if we want a better place, all these ideas put together will make the right one, not just listening to certain people. If you talk about freedom of speech, everyone should get a say, I think it's beneficial for people to listen to other people, respect what they have to say and people's opinions. Like we respect their opinion, the elders' opinion, and we look at them, and we respect them and think they know right all the time, we don't question it, whereas they should do the same for us"

– Interview with a group of children (Davey C., T. Burke and C. Shaw, Children's Participation in Decision Making: A Children's Views Report, National Participation Forum, 2010)

Research supports that there are numerous and significant benefits with involving children and supporting a child friendly city for children, families/caregivers, municipality and the community at large. These benefits include:

- Participation encourages a child to develop new skills, self-confidence and self-esteem. All important factors that support the development of a successful leader of tomorrow.
- Children develop a sense of 'WE' rather than 'I' and gain an understanding about seeing multiple viewpoints.
- Municipal governments gain insightful information about children as citizens.
- Children are the primary consumer for many programs and services. They are positioned to be the content experts in these areas and are often able to provide insight into barriers and procedures that adults may be unaware of over time. This can result in simpler, cost effective solutions (MacNaughton 2003).
- Benefits to the community include the development of a more vibrant democracy and a stronger sense of community cohesion and empowerment (Davey 2010).

Previous foundational work with the Child Friendly Edmonton Initiative began in 2006 with stakeholder interviews; children, youth and external organizations tested the values of UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative and their relevance for Edmonton. Based on the supportive feedback gathered from these stakeholder interviews, it was determined the initiative of a child friendly city was important and achievable for Edmonton (Community Services 2006).

Initially, the initiative focused on three main goals:

1. Advocacy and awareness to become the voice for Edmonton's children and build awareness on issues faced by children in Edmonton
2. Addressing barriers to participation and implementing pilot projects
3. Services "fit" for children including training and research to assist program and service providers in creating quality experiences for children

Over the past several years and under the leadership of Councillor Bev Esslinger, many significant accomplishments have been achieved by the Child Friendly Edmonton Council Initiative such as:

- Development of a network of partners committed to the Child Friendly Edmonton Initiative;
- Leading practice research and training related to child friendly practices, programs and resources within Edmonton and throughout the world;
- Events highlighting child-directed play throughout Edmonton;
- Engagement of children;
- Collaboration with CITYlab to research child care in Downtown Edmonton;
- Establishment of a Early Learning and Care Steering Committee to support EndPoverty Edmonton.

Vision and Values

Child Friendly Edmonton's vision describes the desired outcomes of the working plan.

Child Friendly Edmonton is a welcoming city where young Edmontonians thrive because they live in a safe, accessible, well-designed community. Edmonton's children and youth are listened to, treated with respect, and valued for their individual contributions. Families are defined in broad terms, so that children and youth, and their parents/guardians; are welcomed and included.

The values that guide Child Friendly Edmonton include a place where children and youth:

- Have voice and influence within their city;
- Are protected from violence and abuse;
- Feel safe;
- Play and have fun;
- Join in and participate freely;
- Create friendships and relationships;
- Feel welcome and have a sense of belonging;
- Have opportunity and choice for lifelong learning and building skills;
- Feel respected ;
- Understand responsibility to themselves and others.

Goals

The Child Friendly Edmonton revised working plan focuses on four key goals each with different strategies:

1. **Engagement**
2. **Accessible Spaces**
3. **Inclusive City**
4. **Downtown Demonstration Project**

The goals are all related and progress must be made on each one to achieve the outcome of the working plan. Central to Child Friendly Edmonton are the concepts of collaboration and co-operation to achieve the best possible outcome.

Engagement

Children's voices are actively pursued, heard and incorporated into programs, services and planning that impacts them.

Valuing and seeking children's input as engaged contributors by Edmontonians will support a child friendly environment where all children will be heard, supported and included. This will ensure all aspects of the city reflect the needs and interests of children and are planned with, rather than for, children. Strategies to ensure this goal is met include providing leading practice knowledge to organizations throughout Edmonton about how to obtain effective meaningful input from children and developing and raising support for a Child Friendly Engagement Policy to ensure that there is ongoing input and engagement with children as fellow citizens.

Accessible Spaces

There is a diversity of welcoming and accessible spaces for children and their families/caregivers throughout all areas of Edmonton.

Children and their families/caregivers are provided with places within their community where they feel welcomed and accepted and have high quality, affordable and accessible child friendly opportunities to learn, play and live. The goal will focus on permanent spaces and infrastructure through all seasons. It will include a vision of what a Child Friendly Edmonton could look like from a urban design and planning perspective, working with stakeholders to address housing access, affordability and design issues faced by children and caregivers. Collaborating with the Winter City Initiative to encourage and support a child friendly focus with relation to design and infrastructure throughout all seasons will be strategies used to accomplish the goal.

Inclusive City

Creating opportunities for removal of barriers for children and their families in programs, services and opportunities as well as temporary spaces during all four seasons.

Facilitate a diverse range of opportunities for children of all ages. Inclusive cities are welcoming to children and families through elements such as physical space, quality leadership, language, affordability and location. The goal will focus on programs, services and opportunities as well as temporary spaces during all four seasons. Child Friendly Edmonton

will promote inclusive activities and spaces within the city, work with stakeholders to support businesses in becoming child friendly, support the child friendly focus within the Winterscape Program and facilitate child friendly programming for children such as intergenerational activities, nature play and child-directed play.

Downtown Demonstration Project

Creating opportunities and addressing barriers to make Downtown Edmonton more child friendly.

Downtown Edmonton will act as a demonstration site to explore and showcase an urban area which is welcoming and supportive to children and their families/caregivers. The demonstration project, focusing on urban design, programs and services, will serve as a model to encourage other areas to adopt these practices through exploring and determining barriers and opportunities for child friendly public spaces and facilitating child friendly accessible downtown programming for children such as intergenerational activities, nature play and child-directed play.

How are we making a difference in the lives of children?

The Child Friendly Edmonton working plan has been created to achieve the desired outcomes identified in the vision statement and values.

Through the four goals of the working plan – Engagement, Accessible Space, Inclusive City and Downtown Demonstration Project – outcomes will be monitored and measured to ensure Child Friendly Edmonton is making a difference in the lives of children.



Roles and Responsibilities

It is important that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined for effective implementation of the working plan. City Council, the City of Edmonton and its departments, and partners support Child Friendly Edmonton. A Terms of Reference for the Child Friendly Committee has been developed and reviewed annually. The Committee terms of reference will define its purpose, key responsibilities, composition, decision-making process, resources and reporting requirements.

City Council

Child Friendly Edmonton is a Council Initiative sponsored by Councillor Bev Esslinger. City Council's support of Child Friendly Edmonton demonstrates its ongoing commitment to making Edmonton a child friendly city.

Steering Committee

The City of Edmonton cannot achieve the vision of a Child Friendly City by itself and recognizes the critical role that community-based organizations, orders of government, and School Boards play. These members assist in identifying emerging opportunities within Edmonton related to the goals of Child Friendly Edmonton. They will also provide information and advice from their diverse perspectives and facilitate actions within their organizations to promote child friendly practices.

Working Groups

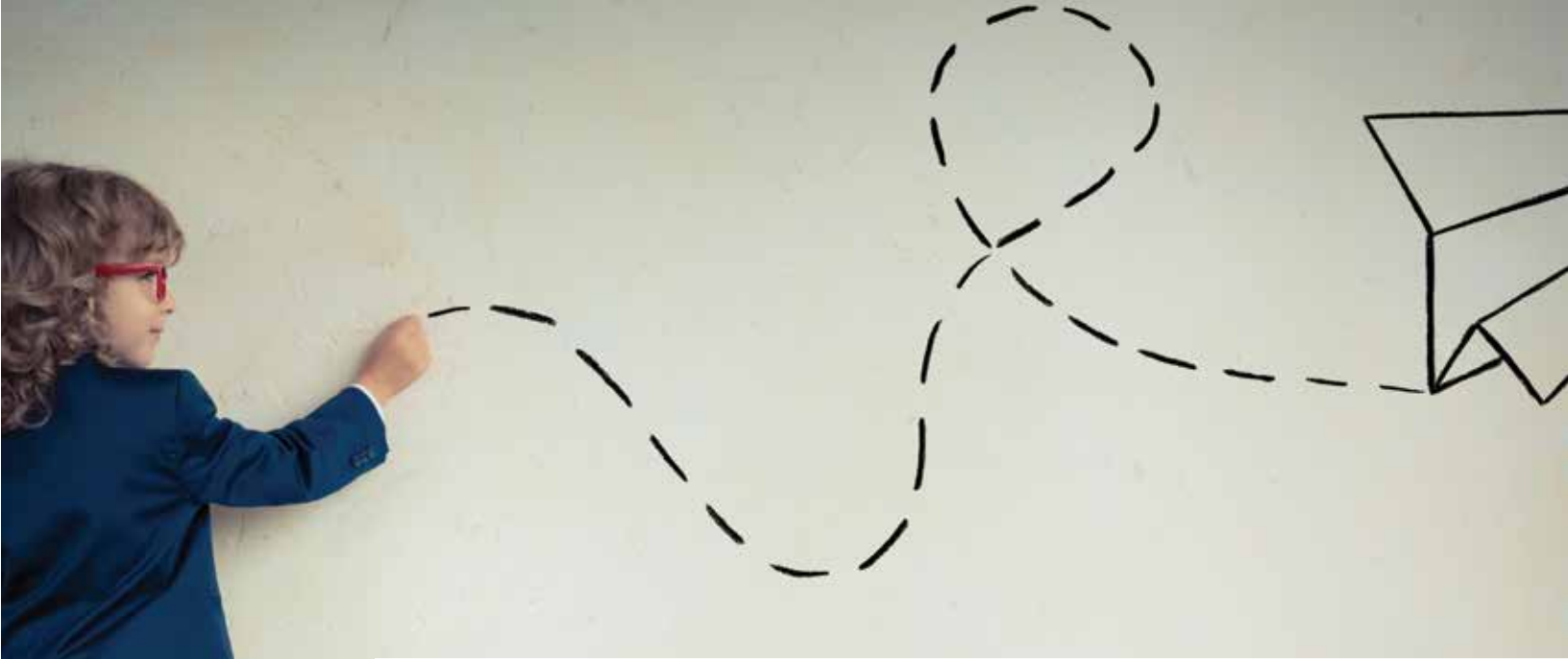
Involved directly in implementing each of the four goals, community partners, orders of government and schoolboards will be invited to participate as members of the working groups. These members will provide a community perspective, support each goal of the Child Friendly Edmonton working plan, and collaborate toward achieving outcomes and metrics. They will provide information and advice from their diverse perspectives and facilitate actions to make Edmonton more child friendly.

Project Team

This team will coordinate the implementation of the working plan and support the Champion, Steering Committee and Working Groups. . The Project Team will be the internal City of Edmonton stewards for the Child Friendly Edmonton working plan and bring partners together regularly to ensure communication and implementation of the working plan.

Child Friendly Edmonton Network

A network will be established to engage the community at large, either individually or as representatives of an association or organization. This network could include parents, parent groups or councils, schools, associations, citizens, businesses, coaches, youth group leaders, community leagues and others. The network will be involved in Child Friendly Edmonton activities when and where appropriate.



Future Directions

Implementation Objectives

- Implement the Child Friendly Edmonton goals to support change within Edmonton;
- Annually identify specific actions and budget requirements to advance the Child Friendly Edmonton working plan as part of the business planning cycle;
- Measure the effectiveness of the working plan through a performance measurement system;
- Monitor and update the working plan as required.

Monitoring, Measuring and Evaluating Performance

The effectiveness of the Child Friendly Edmonton working plan will be monitored over time. Monitoring and evaluation is necessary to track progress and make adjustments to ensure desired outcomes.

Performance Measures

Performance measures are quantifiable measure of outcomes, outputs, efficiencies and effectiveness. These measures are connected with Child Friendly Edmonton's vision and values and assess progress towards these outcomes. The following outcomes will be measured from the child's perception:

- Have opportunities to join in and participate;
- Involved in decision-making and planning that impact them;
- Treated with respect;
- Feel safe;
- Have fun.

Performance will also be measured on a few key outputs of the working plan including:

- Number of training opportunities provided on Child Friendly Edmonton;
- Number of participants in PlayYEG events;
- Number of volunteer hours for working group and Steering committee meetings;
- Success of individual actions and/or projects.

These measures will indicate the outcomes of the Child Friendly Edmonton working plan and progress toward the goals that is being achieved. Information from the performance measurements will be provided to City Council as required.

Conclusion

Child Friendly Cities are developing all over the world, including:

- Calgary, Alberta
- West Vancouver, British Columbia
- London, England
- Rome, Italy
- Christchurch, New Zealand
- and many more cities

Each city's dedication to being child friendly speaks to the commitment of governments and communities devoted to respecting and exercising children's rights. Through building blocks that include necessary structures and activities, Child Friendly Cities engage children's active involvement, ensure a children's rights perspective in all relevant decision-making and actively promotes equal rights of access to services.

Canada is involved in the child friendly movement. The emphasis may differ from province to province, however the common denominator is to make cities, communities and neighbourhoods better for children, youth and their families/caregivers. The City of Edmonton, through a Council Initiative, is taking action in Edmonton to make our city a more child friendly place that recognizes and reflects the needs of children and young people. The process of building a Child Friendly City demands political commitment and a local system of good governance devoted to fulfilling children's rights. City Council is leading this initiative with the goal of improving the future of Edmonton's children and youth.

Child Friendly Edmonton's working plan is intended to be a framework and guiding tool to give life to the creation of a child friendly city here in our own community.



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