Issue Brief #7 – Suburban connections to immigrant communities

Summary

This Issue Brief examines the role that new neighbourhoods can play in accommodating Edmonton's growing and increasingly diverse population.

Key Questions

- What is the demographic make-up of newly built neighbourhoods, and what factors influence these trends?
- How do newly built communities reflect the needs of immigrant communities?
- Who is moving to Edmonton's new neighbourhoods?

What is the demographic make-up of newly built neighbourhoods and what factors influence these trends?

New Canadians settle throughout Edmonton and the broader region, across both established and newer neighbourhoods. At the same time, new communities can provide opportunities to deliver a broad range of housing choices, services, amenities, and employment spaces that respond to the needs of a growing population. Thoughtful development south of 41st Avenue can be part of Edmonton's broader growth strategy — accommodating future residents, support housing choice, and create complete communities where people from a wide range of backgrounds can build their lives.

Based on current interprovincial and international migration trends, newly built neighbourhoods are often quite diverse from a demographic background perspective. Land use planning direction can create a mix of uses and range of residential densities that provide housing and employment opportunities for a wide range of potential residents. Dimensions of this diversity also include socioeconomic status and cultural background.

A wider breadth of housing options better meets the needs of different households, ranging all the way from multi-generational to single-person households. Older neighbourhoods in Edmonton are becoming better at offering a wider range of housing product types, but newer neighbourhoods can do so from the get-go based on solid land use direction implemented over short-order. The blank slate that a new neighborhood provides allows for greater market accommodation at scale, producing a higher amount of unique housing types and different commercial opportunities. Newer neighbourhoods can be more affordable for homebuyers and renters as well based on efficiencies of scale that infill alone cannot provide.

How do newly built communities reflect the needs of immigrant communities?

Newer neighbourhoods have become places where tight-knit immigrant communities take shape and grow. Research from the University of Alberta highlights how many immigrant communities have made certain Edmonton suburbs their home over the last two decades. Based on research completed in the late 2010s, this trend was especially visible in Edmonton's southeast, which is a part of Edmonton that the City actively planned for and facilitated the development over several decades.

According to Dr. Sandeep Agrawal (2018), immigrants are attracted to these communities due to proximity to existing family and community networks, and culturally important businesses, services, and resources. Many are looking for newly built, affordable homes. The home-building industry responds to this diversification, building housing stock in these neighbourhoods that reflects the needs of these communities, integrating internal features to a house like spice kitchens, multiple separate but connected units, and adequate space to support multi-generational families. All these factors work in concert, creating a positive feedback loop that results in a strong immigrant community presence within many suburbs in Edmonton.

Who is moving to Edmonton's new neighbourhoods?

Major cities in Alberta like Edmonton and Calgary are seeing an increase in this trend as both interprovincial and direct international migration to Canada becomes more distributed beyond the major urban centers of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Alberta's affordability advantage is a major driver of this trend.

Being open to unlocking new communities presents an opportunity for Edmonton. We can continue being a place where new arrivals are welcomed and vital part of Edmonton's community dynamic. By thoughtfully planning for continued urban growth south of 41st Avenue, we can carry forward the strong positive trend of building communities where future Edmontonians from across the world can co-locate and build cultural centers, businesses, and supports.

Sources

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