



Sharing Local Knowledge through Pictures and Stories

Background

This project will help researchers understand how residents of North Central Edmonton see their community's built environment. This project looked at features in North Central Edmonton that helped or prevented people from being physically active and eating healthy food. All of the pictures for this project were taken in the summer of 2009.

Pictures are Worth a Thousand Words!

How did the researchers do this project? They had residents take photos of their community. Then residents told researchers why those photos helped to describe physical activity and healthy eating in their community. This kind of project is called photovoice.

The Photo-takers

Ten people participated in the project from North Central Edmonton. There were eight female and two male photo-takers. Many of the photo-takers were already involved in community organizations. The researchers tried to make sure that all residents of North Central Edmonton had the chance to be a part of the project. Despite this, the group of photo-takers interviewed represented only a small range of community residents. Therefore, the interviews did not capture the perspectives of visible minority groups, youth, or more transient population.



The trees look beautiful in the area when they come in overhead. When it is hot and sunny, I will vary my usual walking route to walk down this shady street.



This market is another opportunity for a wide selection of food, particularly a wide selection of produce too, at a good price, and it is within walking or biking distance of home. I never drive there, because it is a parking nightmare.



The Photo-takers' Journey

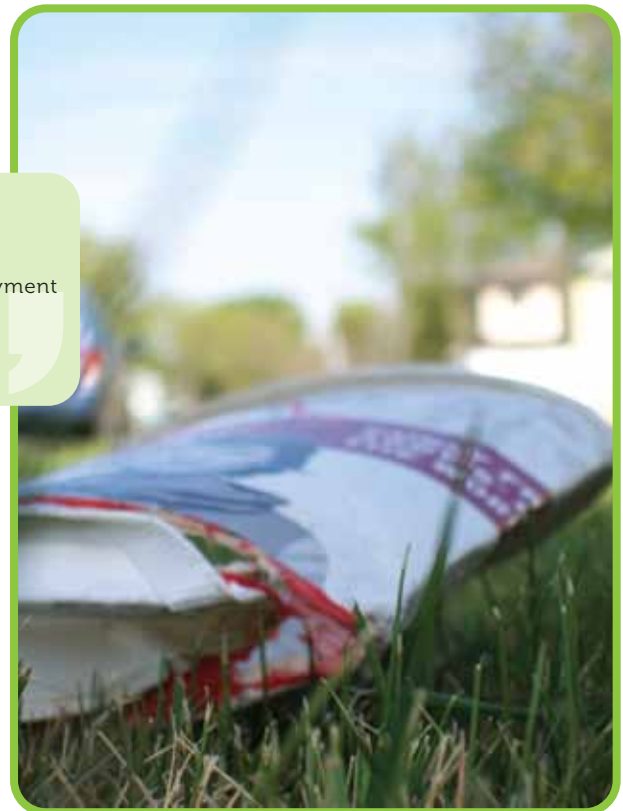
- (1) Each of the photo-takers met with the researcher one-on-one to talk about their community.
- (2) The photo-takers were provided with digital cameras and were shown how to use them.
- (3) The photo-takers were given two weeks to take pictures. The pictures helped them talk about opportunities and barriers to physical activity and healthy eating in their community.
- (4) The pictures were printed.
- (5) Each of the photo-takers met one-on-one with the researcher. During this time, the photo-takers told their stories about each picture.

Bringing it All Together

After photo-takers shared their community stories, summaries were created for the top five pictures from every photo-taker. All of the photo-takers had the chance to review these summaries. These summaries were used to create a presentation and a summary report to share with community members and local decision-makers. Residents and researchers hope that the pictures and stories will help others gain insight into the North Central Edmonton community. Remember, the stories were told by the residents themselves!



This pedestrian bridge helps me cross 97th Street easily. I like not having to stop when I walk so I can keep my heart rate up. The bridge allows me to keep going and also gives me extra exercise on the stairs going up and down.



I don't like seeing litter when I am out and about. Litter is a psychological barrier to me, to my enjoyment of the outdoors and being more physically active.





This is a picture of some graffiti on Norwood Boulevard. The busy streets in this area are full of garbage and crime, and I would not walk there after dark. Graffiti bylaws do little to improve the situation as deeper solutions to social problems are needed.

Overview of the Photo-takers' Stories

North Central Edmonton was described as a vibrant, community-focused area. Photo-takers had pride in their community for a variety of reasons. They valued the central location within the City of Edmonton, which allowed residents to access other areas of the city. Participants liked how it was easy to access services in the community. The large attractive lots with mature trees, the unique architecture, and the heritage homes were also described as positive features of these older neighbourhoods. All photo-takers spoke of close ties to their neighbours, which increased their feelings of safety as well as sense of community.

Overall, photo-takers talked about a number of different things when describing their community. The key topics are highlighted below:

- a culturally rich community;
- interest in improving social problems;
- excited about 118th Avenue revitalization;
- variety of community meeting places;
- a good community to go walking in;
- dogs in the community serve as a supporter and a barrier to walking;
- community trail system provides access to services;
- public transportation options;
- photo-takers' passion for gardening;
- participating in physical activity through yard work;
- parks and green spaces are positive community features;
- the river valley is easily accessible;
- physical activity facilities provide important recreation opportunities;
- community grocery stores a place to access a variety of healthy foods;
- variety of ethnic restaurants;
- varied reaction to fast food restaurants; and,
- local farmers markets provide access to local food.

The full stories are available in the summary report. The summary report can be found on the DVD included with this package.



These A&W signs tell a story. You want to enter and you don't want to enter. It is the choices—you know what I mean?



Thank You!

The researchers and community stakeholders would like to thank all of the photo-takers for sharing their stories. Project participants took all of the pictures in this document and the summary report.



This is a picture of my children walking home from school. Our neighbourhood offers lots of options for schooling within walking distance. My boys can already tell you that walking to school is healthy for them. I find driving to school very stressful, dealing with the busy parking lot and loading three kids into the car. When we walk, we get a bit of fresh air in the mornings and even if our son is super grouchy in the morning, by the time we get to school he is totally happy.

This photo captures the fear that is associated with a woman being out on the street in this neighbourhood. This can be a big detriment to being out and active in this part of the city. Being a younger man I have never felt that personally, but I do know that it is out there and a lot of people talk about it.

