

# **ANNUAL COMMUNITY REPORT BACK**

## **REACH Edmonton, Neighbourhood Organizing Initiative (NOI) & Safer McCauley**

### **September 2019 to December 2020**

#### **Introduction**

In August 2017, REACH Edmonton Council for Safe Communities hired a McCauley Coordinator to support the neighbourhood in addressing its safety concerns. A McCauley resident was hired for the position, with other community members involved in the hiring process. Safer McCauley soon began convening, connecting, and activating stakeholders to identify and address priority issues.

2020 has been another busy year for Safer McCauley, with a move towards addressing more complex, city-wide issues. REACH is responding to an increasing number of requests for support from other neighbourhoods. And the McCauley Coordinator is now the Program Manager for REACH's Neighbourhood Organizing Initiative.

In the spirit of transparency, Safer McCauley is providing its Annual Community Report Back. Highlights include successful community-driven actions; the strengthening of relationships between neighbours, community organizations and resources; increasing support for Chinatown; and breakthroughs on problem properties, needle debris, and garbage.

#### **Neighbourhood Safety Councils:**

REACH's Neighbourhood Organizing Initiative (NOI) aims to empower communities to promote safety, connectivity and vibrancy. Informed significantly by Safer McCauley, REACH is now supporting local safety initiatives in several Edmonton neighbourhoods. REACH sees potential for a network of neighbourhood safety councils that can share best practices and resources. REACH offers local safety initiatives support with:

- Local neighbourhood organizing
- Recruitment and building of a safety council
- Development of branding and online presence
- Broad, inclusive community engagement to 1) identify priorities and 2) create a shared vision for a safer community
- Connecting community members to one another - and to services and resources
- Co-design and mobilization of local, neighbourhood actions

In 2021, Safer McCauley will prioritize the rebuilding of a McCauley Safety Council that is driven by a broad representation of community members and resources, including neighbours, community organizations, social agencies, businesses, Schools, City services, and Police.

### **Community Directions:**

Community Directions is an expansion of REACH's NOI. It enhances REACH's framework and capacity for supporting neighbourhood safety initiatives and councils. New online tools and resources include a customizable website that supports neighbourhoods to broadly engage with their community members. The website can deploy surveys to identify safety-related priorities and create a shared vision for neighbourhood safety and vibrancy.

REACH is currently partnering with the community of Leefield to pilot Community Directions. It is hoped that results of a neighbourhood safety survey will inform the work of a Leefield Safety Council, which REACH will support. Leefield community members have been directly involved in designing survey questions specific to their neighbourhood. The piloting of Community Directions in Leefield will inform REACH's partnerships with other neighbourhoods.

### **Community Project Guidebooks:**

Another feature of Community Directions is a catalogue of Community Project Guidebooks - stories about initiatives and actions that are responding to community safety concerns. These Guidebooks are being developed through interviews with individuals involved in the design, planning and execution of initiatives and actions.

It is hoped that the Guidebooks will inspire and equip others with tools to address safety concerns in their own neighbourhoods. The first Guidebook story will focus on the McCauley Litter Blitz. Others will examine community walkabouts and addressing problem properties and needle debris.

### **Collaboration in McCauley:**

Safer McCauley has steadily increased its collaborative work with community members and resources to promote safety and vibrancy in McCauley. This involves responding to issues identified by community members, liaising with partners, gathering information, connecting community members to relevant resources, and building collective community capacity. Information about resources is shared with stakeholders via social media, news media, email, and hard copy materials.

Partnerships have been strengthened between neighbours, community organizations, social agencies, police, City departments, and elected representatives. Collaboration has increased to address many issues, including problem properties, needle debris, loose litter, illegally dumped junk, and safety in the Chinatown BIA.

### **Safer McCauley Community Conversations:**

Community meetings build and reinforce relationships, help identify priorities and solutions, and connect community members to resources and information. Conversations have focussed on topics such as Supervised Consumption Services, Gaming and Licencing and Problem Properties. A Fall 2019 meeting hosted the EPS Crime Prevention Unit for a workshop on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). Safer McCauley looks forward to hosting in-

person conversations again when Alberta Health recommendations allow. We will also investigate possibilities for increased virtual engagement.

### **Community-Driven Actions:**

A 2019 Safer McCauley meeting gathered stakeholders to participate in the co-design of community-driven actions that promote safety, connectivity, and vibrancy in McCauley. This led to several low-cost, sustainable initiatives, including McCauley Litter Blitzes, McCauley Dog Walkabouts, McCauley Coffee with a Cop – and many ideas for activities to increase neighbourhood vibrancy. A schedule of recurring events was developed for 2020, with many being postponed due to COVID. Safer McCauley looks forward to resuming a schedule of in-person events when Alberta Health recommendations allow.

### **McCauley Litter Blitzes:**

Despite COVID, three McCauley Litter Blitzes took place in April, August, and September 2020. This activity brings community volunteers together to address loose litter. Whenever possible, the events align with community-wide McCauley Clean Ups. The past six events have brought out 120 people and collected 98 bags of litter. Neighbours have been joined in the events by MLA Irwin, Councillor McKeen, and members of faith and environmental groups. Logistical and material support is provided by McCauley Apartments, Capital City Clean Up, McCauley Revitalization, E4C, Boyle Street Ventures, and Safer McCauley.

Throughout 2020, Safer McCauley also supported Capital City Clean Up with the distribution of 100 Litter Kits in McCauley. Any household or business wanting a free Litter Kit and/ or sharps container can contact Safer McCauley directly.

### **McCauley Clean Ups:**

Three McCauley Clean Ups took place in June, August, and September 2020, offering free pick up of illegally dumped junk and unwanted large items from households and businesses. These events saw McCauley Revitalization, McCauley Apartments, E4C, Boyle Street Ventures, McCauley Community League, and Safer McCauley partner to remove 42 oversize truck loads of junk from the neighbourhood.

### **McCauley Dog Walkabout:**

This event brings community members together for an evening walk in different areas of McCauley. Walkabouts in late 2019 attracted approximately 30 individuals. Dog Walkabouts are a fun way to get exercise, explore the community, and meet neighbours! As soon as Alberta Health recommendations allow, walkabouts will resume, with a vision to making them monthly events.

### **McCauley Alley Activation:**

A 2019 Safer McCauley Community Conversation investigated ways to increase neighbourhood vibrancy. Community members presented many ideas, including Back Alley Parties. In September 2019, the McCauley Community League, McCauley Revitalization, and Safer

McCauley partnered with the City of Edmonton's RECOVER to activate a McCauley alleyway. Neighbours brought tables, chairs, and children. Lights were strung. Music was played. Snacks were shared. And conversation took place. Neighbours seeking support for an alley or street party can reach out to any of the groups involved – and be connected to the relevant resources.

### **McCauley Building Parties:**

Community members also discussed building parties to support the creation of garden boxes, garbage bins and little free libraries. Safer McCauley, McCauley Revitalization, and McCauley Community League's plans to move this fun (and free) activity forward were interrupted by COVID. The idea will be revisited for Spring or Summer 2021!

### **McCauley COVID-19 Support:**

Throughout the pandemic, online channels, including Facebook @ Safer McCauley, Facebook @McCauley Connect & Share, and reachedmonton.ca have supported the regular distribution of information related to COVID-19. Facebook @McCauley Connect & Share was set up as an online space to connect community members who are seeking or offering support. The group is administered by two McCauley community members.

### **Collaboration in Chinatown; Chinatown Safety Meetings:**

In March 2020, the Chinatown and Area Business Association, City of Edmonton (McCauley Revitalization, BIA Infrastructure, Local Economy, Capital City Clean Up), #YEGAmbassadors, and Safer McCauley came together for a walkabout of the Chinatown BIA. Safety-related issues were identified and discussed. A process began to support the BIA in addressing its safety challenges.

REACH Edmonton is now supporting Chinatown BIA stakeholders to come together to address their safety concerns. Two meetings have taken place, involving approx. 30 individuals from the Chinese and Chinatown communities, social agencies, community leagues, EPS, City of Edmonton, the Ward 6 Councillor's Office, MLAs and REACH. Safety priorities - and easy first steps to address them have been identified. REACH is now collaborating with all stakeholders to establish a Chinatown Safety Council.

### **Chinatown and McCauley Safety & Cleanliness Resource Guide ("Who to Call?"):**

Increased collaboration in Chinatown and McCauley has produced new services that address safety and cleanliness. A new public resource will soon be available, connecting community members to up to date "who to call" information addressing issues such as Problem Properties, Needle Debris, Garbage, and Illegally Dumped Junk. Rotating, scheduled posts highlighting new resources are being developed for Facebook @ Safer McCauley.

### **Problem Properties:**

A 2019 Safer McCauley meeting triggered events that led to the creation of the new Problem Property Initiative (PPI) – and its more aggressive action plan. REACH's NOI and Safer McCauley

continue to influence developments that address the city-wide issue. Positive outcomes are increasingly evident in McCauley and other neighbourhoods. These include a new confidential online reporting tool; the creation of a Community Oversight Committee; the closing of several notorious properties; and the identification of properties for purchase and redevelopment.

**Highlights and Timeline (re. REACH & Safer McCauley involvement with Problem Properties):**

- **Feb 12, 2018:** Safer McCauley meeting brings community members' together to begin identifying and prioritizing safety concerns. Process continues through subsequent meetings and online and door to door engagement. Problem Properties are consistently identified as top concern
- **May 15, 2018:** At Safer McCauley meeting regarding Supervised Consumption Services, community members are equally interested in discussing Problem Properties. Safer McCauley commits to hosting meeting on the topic, and begins building connections with Residential Living Governance Committee (RLGC)
- **May 14, 2019:** Safer McCauley meeting hosts RLGC to speak to about its work. Attendees include MLA Janis Irwin, Ward 6 City Councillor Scott McKeen, McCauley Community League President, McCauley Revitalization Coordinator, and REACH Executive Director. Attendees disappointed by RLGC's presentation
- **July 09, 2019:** City Council passes Clr. McKeen motion for Administration report to Council's Urban Planning Committee (UPC) about RLGC's work (efficacy, performance measures, reporting structure, Bylaw and legislative gaps and impediments)
- **Oct 2019:** Council receives RLGC report. Safer McCauley mobilizes community members to speak about lived experience with problem properties at Oct 29 UPC meeting
- **Oct 29, 2019:** UPC addresses RLGC report. Several community members, including Safer McCauley Coordinator and McCauley Community League President speak at meeting. Members of UPC express alignment with community members and criticism of RLGC report. Report is called "vague, opaque, passive, and impossible to understand." Action on problem properties is called "long time fail." UPC passes stronger motion, instructing RLGC to develop more aggressive action plan in consultation with housing organizations and community members affected by problem properties
- **Nov 13 to 20, 2019:** City Administration (Community Standards Branch Manager) instructs Neighbourhood Resource Coordinator (NRC) and McCauley Revitalization Coordinator to meet with community members who spoke at Oct 29 UPC meeting. Community members continue to share stories regarding problem properties – and are asked for input regarding improving RLGC's response to problem properties and City engagement with affected communities
- **Nov 22, 2019:** NRC and Revitalization Coordinator submit report to Administration that captures community members' lived experiences
- **Nov 2019:** Safer McCauley begins compiling inventory of McCauley problem properties, and shares with Community Standards. The inventory:
  - contributes to improved PPI responses to issues

- assists in development of plan to address properties in ten most affected neighbourhoods
- assists Edmonton Community Development Company (ECDC) with identification of properties for purchase and re-development
- assists with investigation of relationships between problem properties and crime statistics
- **Dec 13, 2019:** Community members consulted by Community Standards are invited to discuss “how best to integrate the community in strategies moving forward.” Administration announces RLGC is re-branded as Problem Property Initiative (PPI). This date marks launch of Community Oversight Committee that can inform work of PPI and development of its action plan. Safer McCauley Coordinator and McCauley Community League President confirm ongoing participation in committee. Committee suggests creation of confidential online reporting tool
- **Jan 30, 2020:** Administration presents draft action plan to Oversight Committee and invites feedback
- **Feb 2020:** Administration engages Oversight Committee for feedback regarding draft of new confidential online problem property reporting tool
- **Feb 19, 2020:** Community Standards informs Oversight Committee it will present new PPI Action Plan to UPC on March 16. Committee members invited to view latest draft and are pleased it reflects their input. They are invited to attend March 16 to provide impressions of action plan - and role they played in its development. ECDC announces it is seeking to identify problem properties for purchase and redevelopment. Safer McCauley provides ECDC access to McCauley Problem Property Inventory. Property identified by Safer McCauley is first to be purchased by ECDC
- **Mar 2020:** PPI online reporting tool goes live. Safer McCauley begins campaign to share information with partners and community members about PPI, action plan, and new reporting tool
- **Mar 16, 2020:** In-person City Council meetings suspended due to COVID. UPC meeting scheduled for this day postponed to June
- **Apr 2020:** ECDC purchases first McCauley property for redevelopment, at 10741-93 St. Also purchases 10727-93 St soon after
- **Jun 29, 2020:** City Council passes motion to support PPI Action Plan – as well as \$1.5 million grant program to convert four problem properties into affordable housing
- **Oct 29, 2020:** Oversight Committee reconvenes to discuss successful implementation of PPI Action Plan, as well as ongoing functioning of Committee
- **Nov 2020:** ECDC announces Project 10, which aims to add eight more properties to those purchased in spring. Intent is to turn former problem properties into community assets

### **Needle Debris:**

REACH and Safer McCauley are supporting collaboration to build a more robust and coordinated response to needle debris in Edmonton. Meetings convened by REACH in November and December 2019 brought together 16 organizations to discuss the topic, including McCauley Community League, McCauley Revitalization, social agencies, Capital City Clean Up, Supervised Consumption Services, EPS, and the Ward 6 Councillor's Office. Relationships were built; a common understanding of each group's role in the distribution and/or clean up of needles emerged; partnerships were developed; and services have improved, with social enterprises playing central roles. Recent outcomes include:

- Boyle Street Ventures (BSV) announced it would provide the unprecedented service of needle clean up on private property in Edmonton
- Capital City Clean Up arranged for 311 to adjust its script to reflect the service provided by BSV. Calls to 311 for private property clean up are referred to BSV. BSV has reported an increase in calls regarding private property clean up, and no challenges in addressing the increased demand
- A new partnership involving McCauley Revitalization, Capital City Clean Up, Chinatown and Area Business Association, and Mustard Seed now supports SeedWorks to provide 42 hours per week of proactive needle and litter clean up in McCauley
- Safer McCauley continues to share information about improved responses to needle debris via email, social media, and print media

### **Needle Collection Data Integration Project:**

REACH, City of Edmonton, Boyle Street Ventures and Mustard Seed are collaborating to adopt a common data collection tool called Epicollect 5. The aim is to track stray needles, share data, create a common operating picture, and improve efficiency in the deployment of needle clean up resources.

### **Bridging Community & Enforcement (EPS and Community Standards):**

REACH is engaged with EPS and Community Standards to investigate possibilities for strengthening relationships between enforcement and members of the communities to which REACH is providing support. This includes inviting participation of EPS and Community Standards in local safety councils supported by REACH.

In a summer 2019 door to door survey, many McCauley community members indicated that they value relationships with police. Safer McCauley responded by hosting a workshop with EPS Crime Prevention, and supporting an EPS Stand Up Parade in Giovanni Caboto Park. Safer McCauley maintains regular contact with McCauley Beat Officers, who have allowed Safer McCauley to share their direct contacts with community members.

### **Resource Connect:**

Resource Connect 2020 took place on February 28 at Santa Maria Goretti Centre in McCauley. This year's theme was "Strengthening Collaborations." 93 organizations participated as

Exhibitors, representing 24 distinct service sectors. Over 550 individuals visited throughout the day. An effort was made to attract students and potential volunteers and employees to the event. MLA Janis Irwin was a registered Exhibitor. She addressed the gathering in the afternoon and took the time to visit with all Exhibitors. Councillor Scott McKeen visited, addressed the gathering in the morning and took the time to visit with all Exhibitors.

Responding to feedback from the Resource Connect community, REACH is planning: 1) the creation of an accessible database of community supporting agencies; 2) the establishment of meetup groups to discuss specific areas of interest within the community of practice.