

THE ACRES: COMMUNITY SAFETY SECTION

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OVERVIEW

Community safety involves a myriad of considerations and is an integral component of community cohesion and sustainable improvements in residents' quality of life. We recognize that *The Acres* community safety strategy will progress with the needs and collective decision-making of *The Acres* residents and stakeholders. Thus, this report does not present the ideal "way forward," but instead, it offers examples of strategies that have worked in other, similarly designed, settings to support further research and decision-making once community planning and development commence.

First, this report will provide a historical overview and discuss key principles of both the traditional model of policing and the more modern, community model of policing. With increasing recognition of the strength that effective community partnership can play in dismantling long-standing barriers to crime reduction and community safety, most police forces have gradually shifted to incorporate more principles of community policing in their law enforcement strategies. The Social Response Unit within the Edmonton Police Services will be presented as an effective example of such a transformation.

The second half of the report will present case studies which have implemented a community oriented approach to policing, key learnings from these models, and the implications for *The Acres*. Suggestions regarding Asset-Based Approaches to community safety, the role of education, harm reduction, and mental health supports are brought forth alongside the integration

of agriculture and gardening in a community. The development of community safety policies should be unique for the neighborhood and highlight community assets, individual strengths, and strive for a holistic model of wellness. Fostering inclusion and social connectedness are discussed as key factors in the role of recovery and the development of an integrated community, such as *The Acres*. Finally, general safety considerations are discussed.

COMMUNITY POLICING VERSUS TRADITIONAL POLICING MODELS

What comes to mind when someone hears the word “police”? It may very well depend on a person’s demographic or the time period one lives in. Are they upper-class or from a disadvantaged inner city neighbourhood? Does one live in the 1980’s Reagan era of *Tough on Crime* or the 2020’s movement of *Defund the Police*? Have they had previous run-ins with law enforcement and, if so, were these experiences negative or positive? Regardless of the preformed notions a person may have about law and order, there are many models of policing, each of which have their own focus and methods of execution. We will be focusing on two distinct approaches to policing which are employed in Canada: traditional policing and community policing, and discuss the benefits of community oriented policing through an example of its successful integration in the Edmonton Police Service.

WHAT IS TRADITIONAL POLICING?

The traditional model of policing focuses on crime control, with police officers’ primary responsibilities being centered upon responding to crimes, conducting investigations, gathering evidence, identifying suspects, and making arrests. This reactive approach emphasizing crime suppression has been used since the early 20th century and is based on the theory of deterrence – that is, the consequences of crime should deter potential offenders from committing the crime. Officers and police organizations tend not to take initiative to target specific problems or areas within their geographical patrol district but rather focus on crime control (making arrests) and maintaining order. Jurisdictions that implement the traditional model tend to place authority in

the hands of law enforcement, invest resources into hiring and training more officers, and believe that faster response times and dedication to arrest and punishment of offenders will reduce crime rates and foster safer neighbourhoods (Nicholl, 1999).

Although there is no doubt that police officers play a major role in the reduction and prevention of crime, the traditional model has been criticized for its narrow focus which ignores the importance of prevention and collaboration. Oftentimes this approach contributes to undesirable outcomes such as a disconnect between police and citizens and an ignorance towards correlates and underlying causes of crime. Beginning in the 1980s, as a result of 30 years of research into crime prevention strategies, a paradigm shift began in police departments globally. The Community Oriented Policing (COP) model was created as a response to the gaps in the traditional model and strived to redefine the relationship between police and the communities they serve (OJJDP, 2010). Today, most law enforcement across Canada employ a mixed model of traditional and community policing to varying degrees.

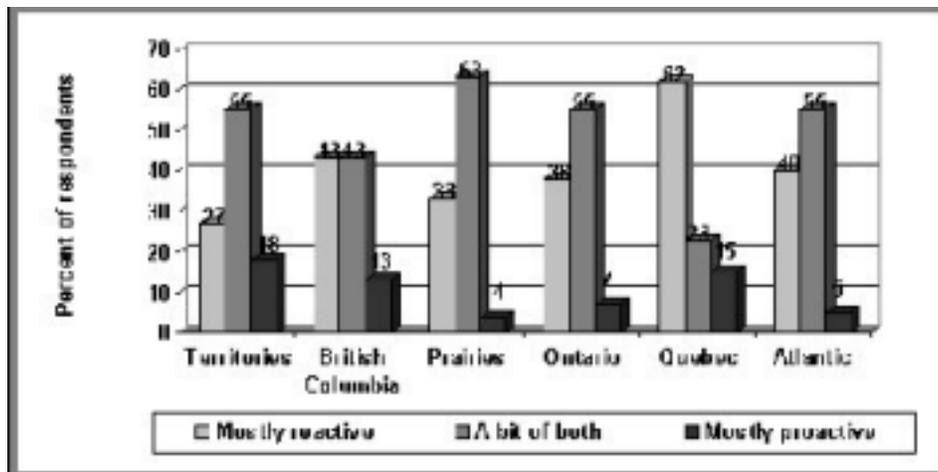


Figure 1. Policing style by location.

Reactive = traditional, proactive = community oriented.

Taken from: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/yj-jj/discre/org/styles.html>

WHAT IS COMMUNITY POLICING?

In contrast to the traditional model, community policing (or *community oriented policing*) emphasizes the inclusion of citizen input when developing policies and problem-solving

strategies to prevent crime and promote public safety. There is attention paid to ‘quality of life’ issues, such as: increasing feelings of safety/reducing fear, breaking the cycle of recidivism, and including input from the communities which the decisions affect. While implementation and execution of the community policing model can vary vastly, there are three key components which build the foundation for the model: community partnerships, organizational transformation, and problem solving.



Figure 2. Primary Components of Community Policing.

At the core of the community policing model is an organizational transformation which focuses upon meaningful collaborative relationships between police and the community to identify, counter, and resolve the causes of crime. This entails community-based crime prevention, reorientation of patrol activities to emphasize non-emergency servicing, increased police accountability to their communities, and the decentralization of command (Skolnick & Bayley, 1988). Common manifestations of the COP model are increased foot/bike patrols, geographic assignment of officers, storefront police stations, and neighborhood-based crime prevention activities (OJJDP, 2010).

Community Partnerships – *“Nothing about us without us”*

There can be no community policing without community involvement. In order to develop solutions to problems and increase trust in police, partnerships between police agencies and the individuals and organizations they serve are established. Relevant stakeholders, such as other government agencies, community groups,

nonprofits and service providers are examples of those consulted to develop strategies for problem-solving and prioritizing the key issues in public safety. This is a reciprocal relationship whereby community members have a voice at the table on identifying and addressing local crime and disorder problems, and shaping the policy and practice to resolve them (COPS Office, 2012; Leighton, 1991).

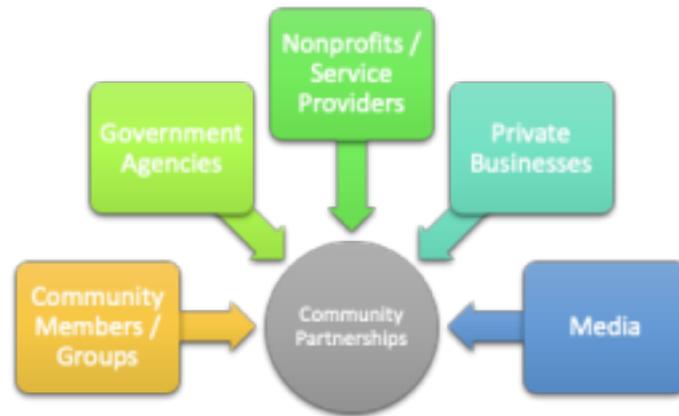


Figure 3. Key partnerships formed by police with a variety of agencies.

Example partnerships include:

- Government Agencies: prosecutors, probation and parole, healthcare partners, social workers, child and family services, neighboring law enforcement agencies, schools.
- Community Members/Groups: individuals with investment in the community (ex. live or work there – volunteers, residents, community leaders, tourists or visitors) are valuable to identifying the most pressing community concerns.
- Nonprofits / Service Providers: support groups, advocacy groups, community development corporations, faith-based groups; may have specialized skills or knowledge that could benefit police.
- Private Businesses: bring in resources to the community and often hold a stake in the success of the neighbourhood. They can help identify problems and provide resources and may have specialized skills/knowledge that could benefit police.
 - Media: living in the 21st century, media has become a powerful tool to communicate with and about the community. This could involve correspondence of both concerns and solutions while also impacting

perceptions of police and crime.

Organizational Transformation

The organizational structure and transformation of police agencies is a complex and multifactorial topic, best left to researchers and experts on criminal justice and reform. However, it is important to note that for problem solving and change to occur in communities, there needs to be an alignment of management, structure, personnel, training, and information systems that support the philosophy and goals of COP. In comparison to traditional policing, the emphasis shifts from a bureaucratic process to concrete results, and power shifts from complete police authority to a shared power with the community. It is now the responsibility of every officer to build community relations and the requirement of law enforcement agencies to form policies, training, and practices that align with individualized community needs.

Factors of Organization Transformation:

- Agency Management
 - Climate and culture
 - Leadership
 - Labor relations
 - Decision making
 - Strategic planning
 - Policies
 - Organizational evaluations
- Organizational Structure
 - Geographic assignment of officers
 - Despecialization
 - Resources and finances
- Personnel
 - Recruitment, hiring, and selection
 - Personnel supervision/evaluations

- Training
- Information Systems (Technology)
 - Communication/access to data
 - Quality and accuracy of data

For further information and descriptions of the above, please access the original source of this list: Community Policing Defined, by the U.S. Department of Justice (Community Oriented Policing Services), pages 4-9.

Problem Solving

Community policing, compared to traditional, highlights a proactive approach to solving problems and attempts to do so in a systematic and routine manner. Rather than being solely responsive, agencies and police are encouraged to collaborate in developing solutions to underlying conditions contributing to crime and public safety issues. In this idea, law enforcement agencies and partner organizations are challenged to reconsider response to crime and acknowledge that making arrests is one of many potential responses.

One suggested model for helping officers and agencies think in a structured and objective way is the SARA (scanning, analysis, response, and assessment) problem solving model.



Figure 4. SARA problem-solving model in community policing.

In this model, related incidents can be grouped and analyzed to learn why and how the crimes have occurred repeatedly, and how they could have been prevented. Specific crime problems are identified and comprehensive, directed strategies are implemented to prevent future crime. Solutions to problems rely more on developing long-term methods of reducing offences, making crime hotspots less appealing, and protecting likely victims compared to traditional policing.

For further interest and more information regarding the SARA Model please see:

Problem-Solving Tips: A Guide to Reducing Crime and Disorder Through Problem Solving Partnerships (COPS U.S. Department of Justice, 1998) which can be downloaded from:

<https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=688281>

Other Considerations

It should be noted that in addition to the three core elements of community policing, there are also three key dimensions required for the program's success. In a *philosophical* sense, it requires citizen contribution. This may involve town meetings, forums, advisory boards, and

surveys and requires police to take on a broader role in resolving conflicts, solving problems, and adapting new methods for the benefit of the community. This incorporates both the problem-solving and community partnership components of COP. Second, there is a *strategic* dimension, where police interaction with citizens should be increased, which involves the organizational transformation as previously described. Department response to calls, permeance of geographical assignments, and a proactive social welfare orientation are important strategic changes required in this model. Lastly, the *tactical* dimension, whereby police are expected to build rapport with communities through repeated positive interactions. Police are expected to take the time to identify the underlying causes and predisposing conditions for a crime, instead of the traditional method of rushing and handling a call, then rushing to the next call. In this problem-solving technique, alternatives to arrest may be considered (Roberg et al., 2009). These three dimensions can be seen in the Edmonton Police Service’s HELP Unit, which will be discussed later in this section.

Table 1. A comparison between approaches used in traditional policing and community policing (Healy, 2014; Normandeau & Leighton, 1990; Leighton, 1991).

Traditional Policing	Community Policing
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role of officers is limited to incident response - Reactive in nature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited relationship with the community and social agencies - Patrols by police are random and response to calls are undifferentiated (ex. rapid response to all calls) - Priorities and focus of internal resources set by police chief - Organization is authoritative in style or control-oriented - Crime reduction strategy focused on deterrence and punishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Police officers act as “peace” officers - Community consultation and interagency cooperation - Interactive, proactive approach to policing - flexible tactics tailored to the community - Problem-oriented strategy - Crime prevention activities - Development of police officers as generalists - Decentralized police management – development of flatter organizational structures and accountability to the community
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WHY COMMUNITY POLICING?

Since the 1980’s, there has been a fair amount of data collected and research conducted on the effectiveness of community policing. Many studies have shown promising results in subjective improvement of neighborhood quality of life, reduction in problems as identified by community members, and increase in public perception of safety; however, it is difficult to definitively operationalize the efficacy of the community policing model due to its diverse methods of implementation across the world. One study, conducted by Skogan and Hartnett (1997), showed that citizens residing in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods in Chicago reported a noticeable reduction in problems such as drug sales and abandoned buildings. In Austin, another socioeconomically disadvantaged Chicago neighborhood, similar findings were reported. Both neighborhoods employed community policing strategies, such as long term geographical assignment of patrol officers, training based on problem-solving strategies, and input from

committees of citizens. These findings suggest that positive outcomes in disadvantaged neighborhoods may be attributed to community policing efforts. In another study by Sadd and Grinc (1996), perceived impact of community policing on crime and quality of life were surveyed. The findings were mixed, but cities such as Portland and Tempe found that communities believed there to be a significant reduction in drug trafficking following implementation of the COP model. In the Iris Court neighborhood in Portland, residents perceived there to be dramatic decreases in gang activity, violent crime, robberies, and burglaries. Even in the cities (Houston, New York) that thought the COP model had minimal effect on drugs, crime, and fear, respondents reported an improved relation between police and the community (Sadd & Grinc, 1996).

Community policing creates a partnership between police and citizens to prevent crimes and address problems deemed important by the community they occur in. Citizen involvement and improved relationships with law enforcement have been shown to improve quality of life, reduce fear, and increase trust in the police. With community involvement, police have access to more resources and support to address the various determinants of crime activities. Through earning the trust of community members, officers are more likely to obtain valuable insights into crimes, concerns, and the best suited solution for problems. Community policing is proactive in nature and flexible in its execution, meaning that it is capable of change and adaptation to the specific needs of each community. If a policy or strategy is found not to work, there is room to continuously rethink, revise, and tailor it until a successful outcome can be found. If community policing can lead to decreased rates of crime, additional police resources can then be reallocated to different areas and services to further increase public safety and quality of life.

While there are many benefits of a community-oriented approach, limitations and challenges must also be considered. For the COP model to work effectively, citizens must actively participate in addressing gaps in policies, share responsibility for public safety and welfare, and have faith in the police's ability to follow through. Policy changes and developing relationships take time and effort, and both police and citizens must allow time to build rapport and ensure clear communication in order to address the specific concerns and goals of their community. To ensure fairness and that all voices are acknowledged,

diverse agencies must be included in the conversations and agendas for improvement. Due to the myriad of forms that community policing exists in, further research needs to be conducted to address the gaps in knowledge. While trust, community relations, and perceived reduction in crime have been recorded, absolute reduction in crime rates is still unclear (Segrave & Ratcliffe, 2004).

Community Policing in Edmonton – The HELP Unit

In January 2021, the Edmonton Police Service piloted an initiative based on a person centered and community-based model of policing called the Human-centered Engagement and Liaison Partnership (HELP Unit). This initiative is a collaboration between the EPS and Boyle Street Community Services, which partners police officers with frontline workers equipped with de-escalation techniques, knowledge of community resources, and experience with case-management.

Although its initial launch was in January, the EPS HELP Unit spent much of 2020 advocating for the program and building relationships with external organizations that would provide valuable knowledge and resources to reach the program's overarching goal. This extensive outreach is a crucial aspect of community policing initiatives and fosters familiarity and trust between the EPS and the community. Currently over 15 partner agencies, most having frontline experience and expertise in areas of social justice, social determinants of health, and addressing the underlying causes of crime, support the unit.

The HELP Unit's purpose is as follows: "The Unit navigates individuals to the appropriate service providers before the community members get entrenched or caught up in one of our complex judicial systems. HELP focuses on those individuals at greatest risk for victimization and offending, and at greatest risk and harm to themselves, others, and the community as a whole."

Ultimately, the ability to identify those most at risk of reoffending for minor/social disorder offences (such as trespassing, public intoxication, panhandling, lack of payment for LRT) and addressing the root causes of these issues will reduce the demand on police and the justice system. By providing support to those from vulnerable, marginalized, and at-risk populations in

our city, the HELP Unit aims to connect individuals with social services which are better equipped to manage their needs and improve their quality of life in the long term. Oftentimes the minor crimes committed are a result of a deeper-rooted issue, such as the individual's history or present situation. Matters of mental health, substance use disorders, houselessness, intergenerational trauma, unemployment, or a combination of these are almost always better addressed by a partner organization than a redundant cycle through the criminal justice system. Some examples of support provided are: providing monthly bus passes so that transportation is not a barrier, assistance completing medical forms, obtaining housing or pension, or even reconnecting community members with their family who live across the country.

While the HELP Unit has only been active for a few months, it is a hopeful and innovative solution to address underlying needs and stop the traditional cycle of “arrest, charge, repeat.” (Edmonton Police Service, 2021; Junker, 2021)

Case Study 1: Community Policing in Hawkhill, Scotland (Jack et al., 2020)

Setting. The Hawkhill Housing scheme in central Scotland is a great example of using components of community policing coupled with an asset-based approach to build community resilience and confidence. For years the community was one of the most statistically deprived neighbourhoods, characterized by poverty, unemployment, poor health and well-being, lower educational attainment, and higher levels of anti-social behaviour. The police regularly tried to engage with the community using traditional policing methods but were met with limited success and resistance from residents. Through one-on-one conversations, the research team learned that residents were deeply proud of the area and wanted to improve its present conditions and create a more positive environment.

Intervention. Using an asset-based approach, a collaboration was formed between the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (SVRU/Scotland Police) and the Hawkhill community. The specific aims of the initiative were to:

- Address health inequalities
- Improve people's feelings of well-being
- Support and encourage residents in empowering themselves

- Connect residents to one another and the wider community
- Develop meaningful respectful partnerships
- Build confidence, self-esteem and respect
- Support people in developing a sense of control over their lives
- Support communities in developing a sustainable and continual development of their community through personal development and in doing so reduce crime and antisocial behaviour.

In contrast to the often-used deficit models, an asset-based approach (ABA) focuses on positives and recognizes people as assets. Individuals and communities spearhead the development process themselves through identifying and mobilizing existing – albeit unrecognized – assets. External agencies, such as the police, which have extensive networks and connections with policy makers and services providers should utilize this social capital to help the community achieve their goals. ABAs are powerful and useful because they offer opportunities for people to develop connections, thus gaining social capital through collective experiences. As well, individuals actively build resilience, knowledge, self-esteem, and confidence by being active participants and planners in the change process rather than change being done “to” them or for them.

In the case of Hawkhill, this involved a two-pronged approach. First was the creation of processes, such as working groups and town halls, where residents could voice their concerns and opinions about the community’s priorities. Second was the establishment of a Police Inspector as a ‘community resource’. The Inspector was there to help create change and engage with the community. However, if the need arose, he could step in and enforce the law, his more traditional role. He sought to always remain embedded within the community to engage directly with residents and volunteered to do a diverse array of tasks to show his commitment to the community.

Outcomes. Many positive changes were implemented in the Hawkhill community, including the revitalization of a community centre which, along with a community garden, became key hubs of connection and socialization. Some residents established support groups amongst themselves which met regularly and expanded to include external guest speakers, trips/visits to

places of interest, and projects that involved work opportunities. To engage young children in physical activity while ensuring their safety, a ‘walking bus’ was established. Through these and many additional initiatives the Hawkhill community was able to:

- Increase community cohesion
- Lower community tension and decrease volatility amongst residents ●
- Create genuine, democratic community engagement
- Build confidence among the residents and in turn the community
- Increase community assets, such as the community centre and garden ●
- Improve relationship between the police and the community
- Considerably reduce crime and anti-social behaviour

The Hawkhill experience highlights a myriad of positive outcomes related to ABAs when they are applied in an effective manner. However, it is important to consider that this approach is not a quick fix. It requires community and external agency leaders with a vision and willingness to “think outside the box” instead of going with the status quo. Most importantly, the community must decide this is the approach they would like to use, it cannot be imposed or enforced on them. Finally, there is no endpoint. In the case of Hawkhill, priorities were always changing as new issues arose, therefore this requires a long-term commitment of personnel and resources.

Connection to the Acres. This case study was included to highlight one way to incorporate the values of community policing while offering the community autonomy to lead the decision-making and problem-solving processes. This can be applicable to *The Acres* community in two-ways:

1. An ABA is already at the center of *The Acres* community. Lady Flower Gardens (LFG) has successfully initiated the foundational work to engage future residents in seeking their input into the services they would like to see in the community (*see Community Engagement section*). From the responses, it is evident that the residents are enthusiastic about being active participants in envisioning the space. As well, LFG has proposed several different types of democratic governance structures to help engage residents in establishing priorities and making communal decisions once *The Acres* becomes a home for residents (*see Governance Structure section*).

2. The Social Response Unit within the EPS is uniquely positioned to engage in the ABA process. With their extensive outreach work, the HELP navigators are well on their way to establishing trusting relationships with future residents. They also have an extensive network of connections with the city's social agencies. This would be a strong referral base to provide most of the health, wellness, life skills, and financial support services that are considered the cornerstones of a permanent supportive community. Having a few HELP navigators permanently established at *The Acres* would offer the additional benefit of becoming the direct points of contact for any concerns by residents, as became the case with the Inspector at Hawkhill.

Ultimately, a close collaboration between *The Acres* and HELP Navigators would be beneficial in ensuring community safety.

SUPPORTING RESIDENTS WITH A HISTORY OF SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

It is well-established that we are amid an opioid crisis and are failing to adequately support individuals struggling with substance use disorders. COVID-19 has created additional barriers to accessing supports and services. This can be seen in the significant rise in deaths due to opioid poisonings since March 2020 (Government of Alberta, 2020). In 2020, there were 1,316 drug poisoning related deaths, with 485 occurring in the Edmonton Zone. This is the highest number of deaths since the surveillance program began in 2016 (Government of Alberta, 2021).

It is not realistic to envision *The Acres* to provide all things for all people. Each resident will have their own unique experiences and needs, and be in different areas in their recovery. Through continuing consultations with stakeholders, including the city, developers, and future residents, we envision *The Acres* to offer some basic supports and programming (Figure 5). However, *The Acres* will be one piece of an overarching citywide mental health and addictions strategy. The ultimate goal is to have people's basic needs met through a number of different programs that are adequately and sustainably resourced. For example, *The Acres* can be a safe, sober, supportive

community for individuals transitioning out of residential treatment facilities, such as Recovery Acres, Henwood Treatment Centre or Poundmaker’s Lodge. Conversely, these programs and facilities could act as referrals for the residents of *The Acres* if they wished to seek treatment again. This would prevent the division of funds between replicative services. Instead, the money could be used to strengthen existing services, so they could support more clients. Communication and connections between the agencies are key in creating a cohesive, integrated network of addictions and mental health supports across the city.

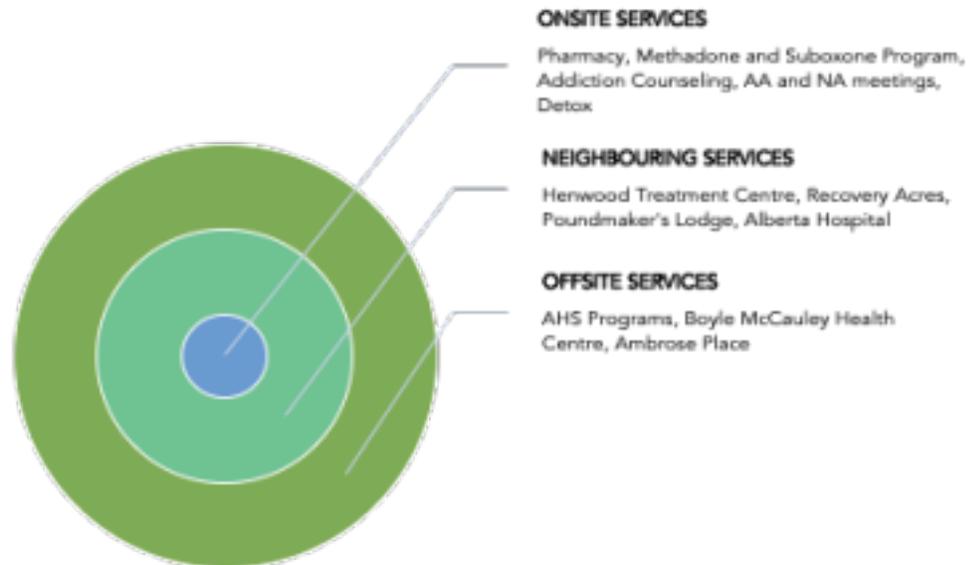


Figure 5. Proposed model for harm reduction services at three levels – onsite, neighbouring facilities/hospitals, and formal relationships with community centres and services in central Edmonton.

It is also important to acknowledge that relapse may be expected on someone’s journey to sobriety. Ideally, if someone indicates they are using substances within *The Acres*, they would have the option to go to an offsite detox facility and return to *The Acres* once they are sober. If they would like to continue to use without going to detox, then *The Acres* would find them housing within a harm reduction community. The option to return to *The Acres* when/if they are ready would always remain available. With this approach the key is to meet people where they are at, and create a safe, non-judgmental space for one to disclose their use so they can be connected to the appropriate supports. Again, for this to be successful, there needs to be “cross-talk” between agencies, such that each is familiar with the scope and services provided by the others and can make the appropriate referrals.

In his TedTalk on addiction, Johann Hari poignantly says “the opposite of addiction is not sobriety. The opposite of addiction is connection.” To holistically support individuals struggling with substance use, we need to tackle the societal stigma around substance use disorders. There are often misconceptions around the misuse of substances – we think of them as willful choices or lapses in moral, self-control, self determination, or personal responsibility (Juba, 2020). Substance use disorder is a chronic and complex condition and individuals may struggle with substance use for a myriad of reasons, often stemming from trauma, marginalization, and isolation. Through the creation of a communal garden, *The Acres* provides an opportunity to enhance social connection and integration among the residents of *The Acres* and the broader Marquis neighbourhood, like the model used in Recovery Villages in the United Kingdom.

Case Study 2: The River Garden at the Auchincruive Estate in Ayrshire, Scotland (Whyte, 2019)

Setting. In March 2018 the rehabilitation centre, created based on models used in Italy, Sweden, and the USA, was opened to residents recovering from substance use disorders.

Intervention. Clients live and work on the estate while they complete a three-year rehabilitation program. Work includes repairing old buildings, gardening, and growing food. As well, there is a social enterprise cafe open to the public on weekends. Halfway through the program, the clients can become staff members, where they can start being paid for their work and help mentor others.

Outcomes. Clients have commented on the remarkable ability to relate to the other residents as they share common experiences. They noted that the gardens, greenhouses, and connections made with the staff and other residents, were the most beneficial components of their experience. The process is based on peer-to-peer learning and teaching; and at the end of the program clients leave with newly acquired skills and lifelong connections. In a similar setting, the San Patrignano community in Italy, 80% of people who completed the program did not relapse.

Connection to the Acres. The case study was included to highlight the benefits of creating a space for individuals with lived experience to come together and support each other. It is

relevant to the vision for *The Acres* in a couple of ways:

1. The community garden will be key in fostering connections within the community. Like the River Garden's approach, the community garden within *The Acres* will offer residents the opportunity to garden and grow their own produce (*see Community Agriculture section for more details*). The idea is to foster a community 'hub' through this space, where residents can exchange produce or gardening tips, as well as have a safe, and vibrant space to spend some time with their families and friends. There will also be various opportunities to form connections, supports, and mentorship opportunities between residents with similar lived experiences. Through initial consultations, there is interest in creating a library, which could be a key space for community support groups and a hub for various social programming.
2. The communal garden can serve as an opportunity to engage with the broader Marquis neighbourhood. There is also the possibility of opening the community garden to residents within the broader Marquis neighbourhood during certain times (such as the weekends similar to the Social Enterprise Cafe). This will offer an opportunity for the public to learn about gardening and broader community initiatives within *The Acres* directly from the residents themselves. Based on LFG's experience with their own community gardening, clients quickly become experts on techniques and the local produce. This could serve as an important educational opportunity for the public to help combat social stigmas and misconceptions about substance use disorder and recovery.

Similar to the concept of Recovery Villages in Europe and the US, *The Acres* Community can serve as an important space to foster connections among both people with lived experience of substance use disorder and the general public. With its various supports, mentorship, community involvement opportunities, we firmly believe that *The Acres* can offer to fill the void of social connections in a safe and sober space that many people with substance use disorders often struggle to fill. Ultimately, this could help many individuals finally overcome their substance use disorder and break the cycle of relapse.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY GARDENS IN ENHANCING COMMUNITY SAFETY

Community gardens are being increasingly incorporated into many intentionally designed, permanent supportive communities. They serve as active places that people make for themselves and their community, and use for work and socializing. In fact, social engagement, community building, and neighbourhood revitalization are often identified as the top strengths of communal gardens by residents (Hou, 2017).

In the book, *Greening Cities: Forms and Functions*, Jeffrey Hou further parses out the social roles that community gardens can play (Figure 6). These include community gardens as:

- Convivial spaces
 - Everyday gardening activities themselves are forms of social activity and facilitate social interaction.
 - Occasional community-wide social events strengthen social ties and facilitate interactions among gardeners and non-gardeners. Thus, a garden functions more as a social space rather than just a garden plot.
 - Inclusive, cultural spaces.
 - Particularly for newcomers, the garden can provide opportunities to continue traditional cultural practices and can be sites for ethnic social events.
 - Through gardening together and joint social events, there is also great potential to bring socially and culturally diverse individuals together in the same way that other formal activities, such as sports, often do. Ultimately this builds a greater sense of social awareness and strengthens neighbourhood relationships.
- Restorative spaces*
 - At the individual-level, working in the gardens has been found to benefit: ■
 - Physical health: gardening is an accessible form of physical activity and increases participants' food and nutrition knowledge (Malberg Dyg et al., 2019).
 - Mental health and wellness: planning, growing, and working within the

garden helps participants develop self-esteem, self-worth, independence, and a sense of personal control (Malberg Dyg et al., 2019).

- At a relational and social level: gardening enhances the sense of being embedded within a network of positive and supportive relationships by promoting social processes such as collective decision-making, civic engagement, reciprocity, mutual trust.
- Democratic spaces
 - Community gardens involve collective decision-making and sharing of responsibilities internally to allocate resources and plan green space. Residents are often motivated to use their newly formed social capital within their own communities to build partnerships across groups and other communities to support broader social and environmental initiatives.
- Resilient spaces
 - Community gardens can become social safety nets and provide a network of people to turn to during times of crises.
 - Production of fresh produce can help alleviate some financial constraints faced by many residents.



Figure

6. An overview of how community gardens serve as multimodal social spaces anchored around their role in increasing social connectedness and capital.

Taken together, the community garden's strength in enhancing community safety lies in its ability to offer social cohesion and capital amongst community members. Social capital can be viewed as the connections among individuals or social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from those connections (Firth et al., 2011). Research has shown that there is a significant association between neighbourhood social ties and residents' sense of safety and adjustment to living in the neighbourhood (Kuo et al., 1998). Furthermore, formation of neighbourhood social connections may depend on informal social contact which often occurs in neighbourhood common spaces, such as communal gardens (Kuo et al., 1998).

**LFG has partnered with Alberta Health Services to assess their own clients personal and interpersonal wellness while they participate in Addictions and Mental Health Community Recreation Therapy program. Many of their findings align with the themes presented by the above mentioned researchers. Please see the AHS-LFG 2019 report as well as the 'Community Agriculture' section of this report for additional details.*

GENERAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to recognize that some of the residents within *The Acres* community may be in vulnerable positions and thus may be taken advantage of by a fellow resident or staff member. We often hear of such instances in other avenues of society, often involving a vulnerable individual and significant power imbalance. To prevent this from happening, the community requires transparent systems in place to keep all residents safe. As with all community safety discussions, this will require ongoing input from stakeholders. However, through its intentional design and wraparound support structure, *The Acres* is well-positioned to foster a transparent, safe, and trusting environment. At *The Acres*, each resident will be a part of agency building, and there will be other opportunities in the community for the residents to build trusting relationships outside of the building - such as with the community police liaison officer or staff members of day programs. These would aim to offer alternatives for someone if they were experiencing

abuse but struggling to speak to staff or residents within their own building. Additionally, the community aims to empower residents themselves through leadership opportunities where they have involvement in the governance processes, agriculture, or facilitated community activities such as collective kitchens, feasts, and harvest festivals. Again, these opportunities further build connections but also help establish an individual's own voice and faith in themselves.

It is challenging to find literature on how to address this sensitive topic as it is very context specific. As well, most approaches to dealing with these issues are reactive, and action is most often taken once the instance comes to light. For *The Acres* to take a proactive approach, ongoing engagement must be done with future residents. They will be directly impacted by the processes, thus it is imperative that they are involved in establishing them rather than having rules and stipulations imposed on them. Many individuals may have lived experience with such events, so the key would be to create safe spaces for them to share their experiences and ideas on how this can be prevented. Irrespective of the selected response, it must be adequately and appropriately resourced and continuously monitored to ensure residents of *The Acres* continue to be safe.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this report is to provide a foundation regarding the complexities of community safety and navigate its solutions in an integrated community, specifically *The Acres*. Based upon community policing research and case studies of pre-existing neighbourhoods with comparable populations and concerns, this report provides recommendations for the development of strategies to address potential concerns. This report is not intended to be an exhaustive list of suggestions, but rather lay the groundwork for a larger structure - one that maintains the citizens and community at its very core.

Key takeaways include:

- Continued use of an ABA to empower community members to define their own unique priorities for the community safety strategy. External organizations, such as the HELP Navigators are well-positioned to be the community police liaisons. Having the same few

members of the HELP team continuously embedded within *The Acres* will normalize police presence in the community in a positive way and allow for trust and rapport to be built between law enforcement and the residents. This could lead the way for the HELP Navigators to act as important community representatives who will listen and address any safety concerns raised by residents.

- Although *The Acres* will be a sober space, it will have supports embedded within the community to assist residents on their recovery journey's from substance use disorders. The main priority in this area will be to establish long-lasting relationships with neighbouring rehabilitation facilities and agencies in central Edmonton, which will act as two-way referral systems. This will help minimize duplication of services and assist in sustainably funding existing services, so they are better equipped to meet the needs of a diverse group of people.
- The community garden will serve as a key hub of socialization through daily gardening activities and occasional community-wide social events. Through LFG's own work, this type of model has shown to have a profound, positive impact on an individual's physical and mental health. Interpersonal relationships have also been shown to flourish in this model. A sense of safety will stem from increased integration, trust, and sense of belonging between and among residents. Further, by inviting residents from the broader Marquis neighbourhood to the garden, stigma around addiction can be combated by offering an opportunity for the general public to learn about the community, agricultural practices, and the residents' journeys in their own voices.

The development of community safety policies should be unique for the neighborhood and highlight community assets, individual strengths, and strive for a holistic model of wellness. Fostering inclusion and social connectedness are key factors in the role of recovery and the development of an integrated community, such as *The Acres*.

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