

# Marquis Village Acres Proposal Community Engagement Report

# Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction.....	page 3
1.1 General Introduction	
1.2 Marquis Neighbourhood Structure Plan	
1.3 Lady Flower Gardens	
1.4 The Acres	
2.0 Community Engagement Process.....	page 8
2.1 Timeline	
2.1.1 Research Teams	
2.1.2 Proposed Future Stakeholders	
2.2 Methodology	
3.0 Community and Stakeholder Engagement Process.....	page 11
3.1 Engagement Plan	
3.1.2 Maps Delivery	
4.0 Key Findings.....	page 14
4.1 Community Partners Meeting	
4.2 Feedback	
4.3 Limitations	
5.0 Next Steps.....	page 29
6.0 Conclusion.....	page 30
References.....	page 31

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 General Introduction

The Acres Proposal Plan is a Lady Flower Garden’s initiative developed in response to the Marquis Neighborhood Land Use Proposal of 2018<sup>1</sup>. As one of the five neighbourhoods in the Horse Hill Area, situated in northeast Edmonton, the Marquis Neighbourhood is set to emerge over the next 5-10 years. Collaborating with several community partners from Lady Flower Gardens as potential stakeholders in the Acres project, we have put together a proposal that will not only address multiple requirements of the Marquis Neighbourhood, but also bridge gaps between social services that work to address the needs of marginalised populations.

## 1.2 Marquis Neighbourhood Structure Plan

### Neighbourhood Vision Statement:

The Marquis neighbourhood is a complete community with a vibrant Town Centre, quality public open spaces, a unique natural landscape, and integrated urban agriculture in a diverse residential setting. The neighbourhood celebrates its agricultural heritage while allowing for innovative incorporation of sustainable food systems. An integrated network of parks and natural areas allows access to outdoor recreational opportunities and connections to the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System. A central transit hub and LRT station provides convenient

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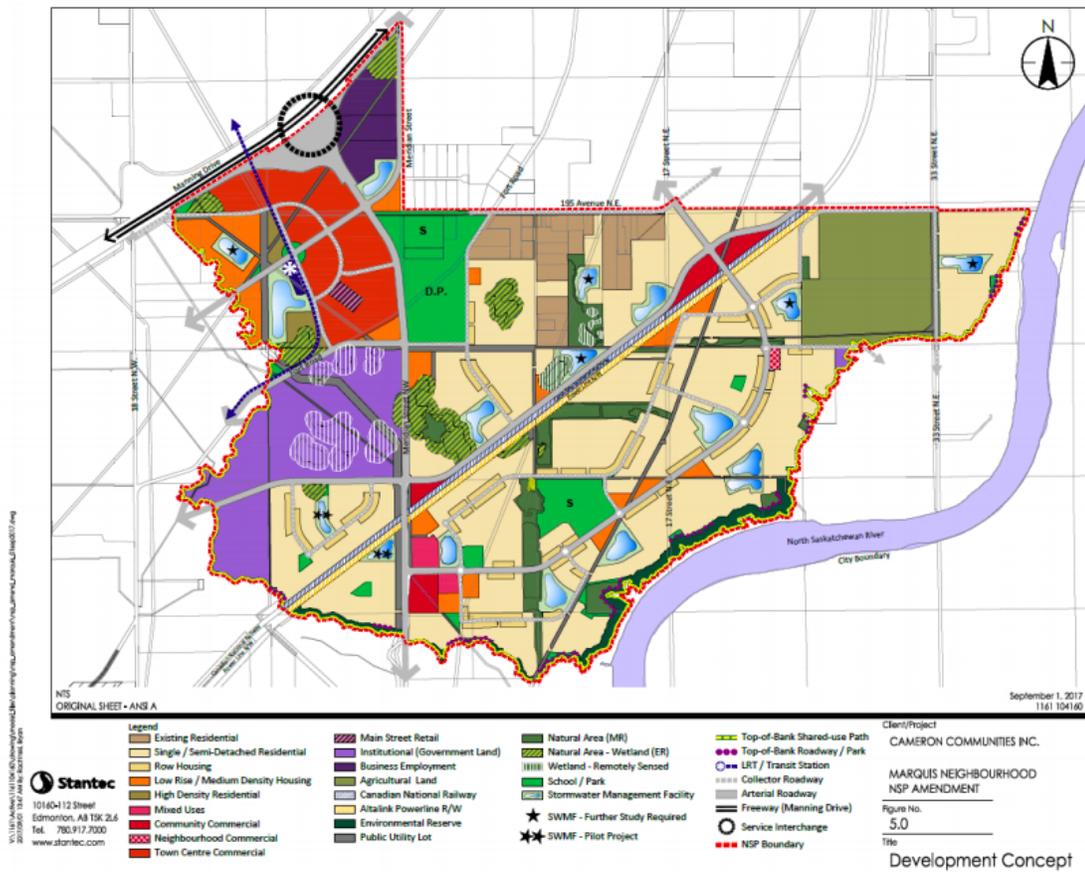
<sup>1</sup> Urban Planning and Environment Branch Sustainable Development City of Edmonton (2018, February). *Marquis Neighbourhood Structure Plan*.

[https://www.edmonton.ca/residential\\_neighbourhoods/plans\\_in\\_effect/Marquis\\_NSP\\_Consolidation.pdf](https://www.edmonton.ca/residential_neighbourhoods/plans_in_effect/Marquis_NSP_Consolidation.pdf)

access to commercial and employment areas, while enhancing walkability and encouraging active transportation.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1.1 is taken from the Marquis NSP Consolidation outlining the development concept.

**Figure 1.1**



<sup>2</sup> Marquis Neighbourhood Structure Plan. p. 17

Key Objectives<sup>3</sup> and Goals from the NSP Consolidation that the Acres proposal addresses include:

2. Use natural areas and notable locations such as the Town Centre, to create focal points and gathering places.
12. Promote the use of natural landscaping using native tree and plant species.
13. Promote the use of edible landscaping in suitable locations within the NSP area.
17. Provide residents with convenient pedestrian access to commercial development so that residents have the opportunity to walk to commercial services.
18. Provide a variety of residential housing types in different built forms, for a range of household types, income levels, ages and needs
21. Establish affordable housing opportunities within the NSP.
22. Provide opportunities for conservation (cluster) developments which allow for the integration of residential or mixed uses with urban agriculture uses
27. Encourage a variety of mixed use developments which may include different housing forms, residential and institutional uses, residential and commercial uses or a combination of the above in appropriate locations, to create complete communities.
60. Create identifiable focal points that are integrated with the open space system of the neighbourhood.
61. Encourage naturalised and/or edible landscaping on public and private lands and low impact development principles in public spaces
64. Provide opportunities to promote urban agriculture in the Marquis neighbourhood.
65. Support the development of local food infrastructure.

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<sup>3</sup> *Marquis Neighbourhood Structure Plan*. pg 23-27

### **1.3 Lady Flower Gardens**

Lady Flower Gardens is a registered Not-For-Profit located roughly 5 kilometres north of the proposed Marquis neighbourhood. Situated on roughly 93 acres of land, for over a decade LFG has dedicated 2-3 acres to communal gardens that have been used in collaboration with partnering agencies in an effort to support mental health and wellness and food sovereignty through access to wilderness and agricultural lands. Through experiential learning, community building and collaboration, LFG has worked to support community members with a diverse set of needs and come to recognize the gaps in social services that often lead to marginalised peoples falling through the cracks. With this, LFG and participating community organisations have identified an important opportunity for a more cohesive system of community to be created within the Marquis neighbourhood.

### **1.4 The Acres**

The Acres is a proposed sectioning off of 5 acres of Marquis land to be held in a land trust by the City of Edmonton. It is the hope of the Acres working group that 3 acres will be used to address the needs of marginalised populations through affordable housing, social services such as mental health resources, a detox centre and vocational training services, and community development spaces such as an open access kitchen, recreation centre and library. The other two acres are proposed to be designated as a collective urban agricultural space for community members living with substance/opioid-use disorders and the larger Marquis neighbourhood. The design of the garden space is based on Lady Flower Gardens'

experiences with land use agreements<sup>4</sup> and draws from external research on urban agriculture.

The prospective community includes a mixed-income model of housing. The Acres community will be geared towards providing the wrap-around support that is needed by populations that have lived with mental health, addictions and other marginalising experiences. Potential populations may include individuals having recently been released from psychiatric treatment, incarceration, rehab or have been houseless. It is an intentionally designed, integrated community wherein residents can benefit from the support that they need to thrive through a holistic approach of wellness that works to address all social determinants of health.

Most of the accommodations are permanent. While not explicitly a recovery community<sup>5</sup>, the Acres draws upon the therapeutic community model of community as method<sup>6</sup>, wherein relationships to the land and community help promote health and healing.

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<sup>4</sup> LFG develops unique land use agreements with member agencies and are contingent upon whatever the partners negotiate and the resources and supports they can integrate

<sup>5</sup> Fedor, T. (2020, July 18). *Red Deer, Alta. chosen as a 'recovery community to offer treatment for people with addiction*. CTV News.

<https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/red-deer-alta-chosen-as-a-recovery-community-to-offer-treatment-for-people-with-addiction-1.5029843>

<sup>6</sup> Avery, J. and Kast, K. (2019). *The Opioid Epidemic and the Therapeutic Community Model*. Springer. p. 5.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-26273-0f>

## 2.0 Community Engagement Process

The Acres engagement process is an ongoing partnership between Lady Flower Gardens, staff from the Mustard Seed, Boyle Street, Edmonton Police Services, Alberta Health Services and students from the University of Alberta.

### 2.1 Timeline

The Acres began in earnest in June 2020, with initial meetings, research and community outreach. Figure 1.2 summarises the completed phases of the project.

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<b>Phase 1 (September 2020)</b>	Background research on existing urban agricultural social services
<b>Phase 2 (November 2020)</b>	Outreach to community partners regarding interest in participation; Exploration of future options for the Acres & Marquis neighbourhood; Put together working groups for different sections of proposal
<b>Phase 3 (November - December 2020)</b>	Community workshops providing detailed community input; Analysis of results and defining emerging shared vision Translating identified ideas from community into identified stakeholder needs and desires

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### 2.1.1 Research Teams

Current working groups include:

- Why Agriculture
- Relapse, Acceptance and Recovery
- Community Engagement
- Community Safety
- Cost-Benefit Report
- The Built Environment
- The Acres as the Middle Ground
- International Examples of Agricultural Therapeutic Communities

### 2.1.2 Proposed Future Stakeholders

It is our hope that we are able to work with the municipal government of the City of Edmonton in order to acquire the Acres land through land trusts and/or a municipal reserve<sup>7</sup>. The City of Edmonton has made a goal of developing over 900 supportive housing units beyond the central core of the city over the next six years<sup>8</sup>. We believe that the Acres will provide a unique opportunity to help Edmonton to end homelessness through supporting the housing first initiative with supportive housing units, but also by going beyond the initial needs of shelter and working to create a community that encourages social inclusion and wellbeing. This will in turn help to ensure higher rates of successful housing placements,

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<sup>7</sup> Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA). (n.d.). *Municipal Reserve*.  
<https://www.auma.ca/advocacy-services/resolutions/resolutions-index/municipal-reserve>

<sup>8</sup> City of Edmonton.(n.d.). *Supportive Housing*.  
[https://www.edmonton.ca/programs\\_services/housing/permanent-supportive-housing.aspx#:~:text=Supportive%20housing%20is%20a%20proven,and%20300%20more%20by%202024.](https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/housing/permanent-supportive-housing.aspx#:~:text=Supportive%20housing%20is%20a%20proven,and%20300%20more%20by%202024.)

rather than continuing the cycle of homelessness through evictions and displacement.

The other important stakeholders will be the two private development groups that own the Marquis land. With the final proposal, it is our hope that we are able to effectively translate the identified needs of the community into an economic framework that appeals to the private sector. By providing the Acres with 2 acres of land as a municipal reserve, the developers will be alleviated from some of the burden of putting money and resources into planning and implementing a space that they are by law required to have. Furthermore, it is proposed that the Acres will be a localised economy, with various opportunities for community run shops, restaurants and other services. High density housing will also increase revenue through higher commercial tax rates and lower infrastructure costs<sup>9</sup>.

## **2.2 Methodology**

The Acres process was predominantly designed using a scenario planning methodology. The methodology to collect and analyse the data from the community engagement surveys is outlined in the following sections.

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<sup>9</sup> *Pros and Cons of High Density Housing*. (2017, April 24). Metrotex Blog.  
<http://mymetrotexblog.com/almanac/2017/4/24/pros-and-cons-of-high-density-housing>

## 3.0 Community Engagement Process

For initial engagement, Lady Flower Gardens focused on communities of interest<sup>10</sup> and plans to take our findings from this consultation to communities further down the road.

### 3.1 Engagement Plan

Enabling the participation of marginalised populations requires an understanding of the diverse, multifaceted needs and experiences of the groups we are working with. Designing an engagement plan that strives to go beyond collaboration, with the aim of being empowering was made possible through years of relationship building both with partnering organisations and participants. Engaging in relationally ethical ways<sup>11</sup> posed new challenges with COVID-19 limiting in-person interaction and potential opportunities for narrative inquiry. At this point in time, engagement with the community is limited to Zoom. This has stunted the ability to ensure collaboration and understanding of the Acres vision is being effectively translated. Currently, our engagement strategy involves distributing the map template in Figure 1.3 to participating organisations wherein a staff member who has built relationships with both LFG and community members through time at the garden explains the activity to individuals interested in participating. The

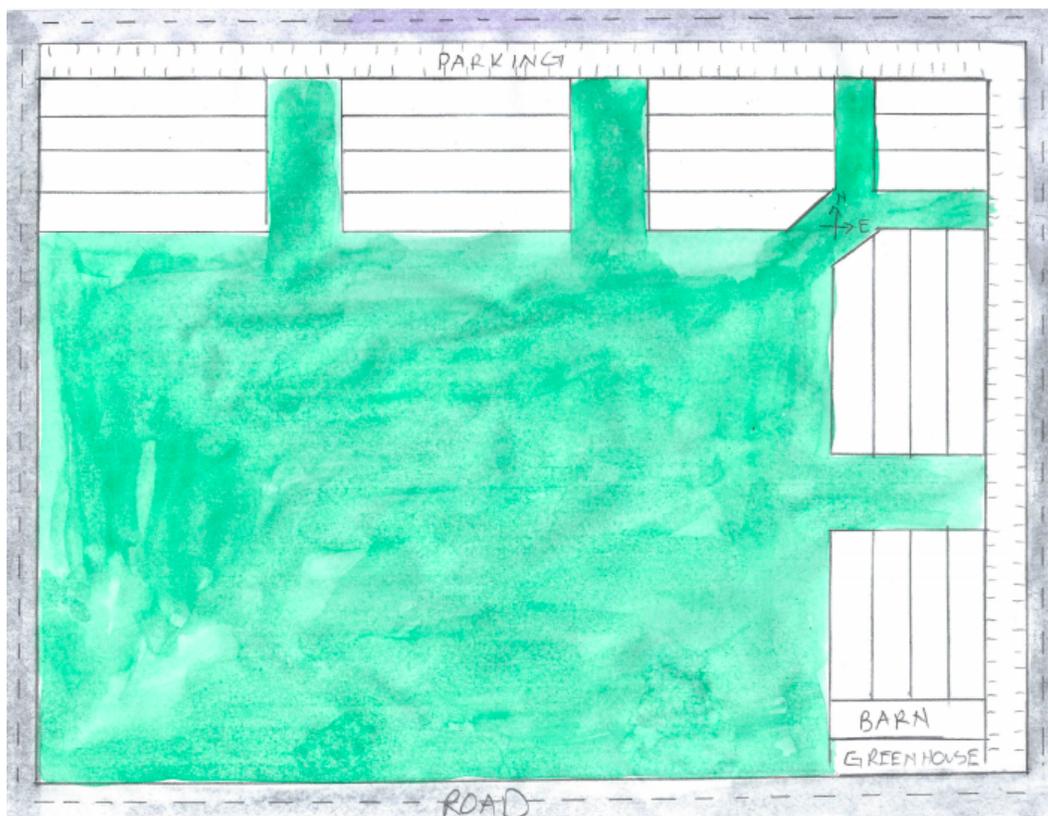
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<sup>10</sup> Queensland Government. (2017, August). *Community Engagement Toolkit*. p. 7. <https://dilgpprd.blob.core.windows.net/general/Communityengagementtoolkit.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> (1) the necessity of engaging with imagination/improvisation/playfulness/world-traveling; (2) the necessity of moving slowly in ways that allow for listening and living; (3) the necessity of ethical understandings as always in process, in the making with wide awareness to ongoingness of experience; (4) the necessity of always engaging with a sense of uncertainty and not knowing that acknowledges living ethically as living within liminal spaces that position us in places of dis/ease; (5) the necessity of understanding that ethical relations are always lived embodiments, that ask us to be still and to attend carefully to, and with, silence and with contemplation. - ethical considerations when negotiating entry

prompt roughly follows the line of, “if you were to design an inclusive and accessible urban agriculture community, what services and supports would you want?” Each box represents a building with roughly 3-4 stories. The green space represents the 2 acres of garden, but participants are encouraged to add in other outdoor facilities that they would like to include.

**Figure 1.3**



### **3.1.2 Maps Delivery**

Lady Flower Garden participants, staff and interested stakeholders were invited to complete the map activity by one of two means. First, respondents were able to manually fill out a print version of the survey, or staff of the participating organisation would print out maps and distribute to interested community members. Second, participants were able to draw up their own maps without using the model. As of December 8 2020, we have had over 15 participants submit maps. All maps were anonymous and opportunity for engagement was decided and communicated through staff of partnering organisations.

## 4.0 Key Findings

Figure 1.4 represents an example of a completed map. Analysis of results was done by grouping identified services by theme and then looking at the commonalities within each grouping.

Figure 1.4



Figure 1.5



The word cloud above represents the nine key themes participants identified as being most important in developing the Acres. Employment, housing, food security, medical and community themes were consistently named by almost all participants, with transportation, youth services, justice and land use identified by some as being essential services.

**Figure 1.6**



Under the theme of *housing*, family housing was mentioned the most, with condos lease-to-own, subsidised housing and housing co-ops following close behind. Housing support, supportive housing and general housing were included several times. Housing for veterans, seniors, and staff were mentioned by at least one participant.

For next steps, it is important to explore what participants envision when they describe housing co-ops, as well as the design for the various housing opportunities in terms of conditions of lease (e.g. sober living) and whether integrated housing is preferable to distinct buildings for family housing etc.

Figure 1.7



Under the theme of *community*, community centre, community kitchen and library were identified as being the three most important services to have within the Acres. Foodbanks, a centre for mentorship, an arts and crafts facility were also included. A centre for newcomers, a community church, volunteering and the SPCA were both mentioned once.

Further exploration is required on how to ensure that spaces of social capital and inclusion are turned into actual opportunities for community development.

**Figure 1.8**

childcare  
family housing  
greenshack  
playground  
school

Under *youth services*, family housing was identified as being an asset to the Acres design. Furthermore, a playground and childcare centre were consistently mentioned across the different participating organisations. Schooling was also mentioned twice.

Considering that a majority of the aforementioned services will already be implemented into the design plan for the Marquis neighbourhood, it is important to consider whether additional youth services are needed when the Acres is proposed to be only 5 acres of space.

Figure 1.9



A word cloud visualization showing the frequency of terms mentioned in a study. The largest words are 'restorative justice' and 'community justice patrols'. Other visible words include 'legal aid', 'social work', 'security', and 'mentors'.

Under the category of *justice*, community patrols and restorative justice were mentioned the most. Legal aid, social work services, security and mentorship were all mentioned at least once.

Going forward, it is important to explore what participants envision when they think of restorative justice and community justice patrols. Both terms are often used in discussion of moving beyond the carceral state and punitive systems, but what that actually entails varies from person to person. Additionally, the question of whether these justice systems would exist within the Acres or expand beyond into the Marquis community remains.

Figure 2.0



Under the *employment* category, vocational training and a labour office were overwhelmingly identified as being the most important services to have within the Acres. Given the target population for the community, ensuring both services are included is vital for the success of both the initiative and those living there. Other employment opportunities that were mentioned included a grocery store, gift shop/information centre, an art gallery with local artists from the community on display, a bank, post office and garage.

While these spaces provide opportunities for employment, places such as chain stores may not be as important to have within the one acre as they are more focused on supporting the economic success of larger corporations and limit the development of a localised economy and community.

Figure 2.1

tipi  
medicine garden  
Indigenous cultural centre  
sweat lodge  
smudging

Although the Acres is a space for all peoples, with the gardens being open access to everyone, it should first and foremost be a space for Indigenous peoples. While Indigenous spaces and initiatives were only mentioned seven times in total within the mapping activity, it is suggested that a dedicated committee is organised to ensure that Indigenous voices and visions are put at the forefront of the Acres project. Furthermore, although this is not explicitly a food sovereignty proposal, the occupation of the land for purposes of farming and harvesting within a colonial context that espouses resistance to the greater capitalist setting requires us to move beyond challenging the dominance of private property relations<sup>12</sup>.

Given that Indigenous peoples are disproportionately represented in incarcerated, homeless, and lower income populations<sup>13</sup>, it can be surmised that a significant

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<sup>12</sup> Kepkiewicz, L. & Dale, B. (2019). Keeping ‘our’ land: property, agriculture and tensions between Indigenous and settler visions of food sovereignty in Canada. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*. 46(5). 983-1002.  
<https://www-tandfonline-com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/doi/epub/10.1080/03066150.2018.1439929?needAccess=true>

<sup>13</sup> Bell, J. (2020, January 22). Indigenous incarceration rate “a travesty” Canada’s prison watchdog says. *Nunatsiaq News*.  
<https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/indigenous-incarceration-rate-a-travesty-canadas-prison-watchdog-says/>

proportion of the Acres target community will be FNMI peoples. Therefore, it is the responsibility of developers to create a space for and by Indigenous peoples. Referring to resources on page 32 will be of use for ethical engagement going forward.

Figure 2.2

convenience store  
community kitchen  
seasonal restaurant communal cafeteria

community food centre  
grocery store

Under the category of *food security*, a community kitchen was identified as being the most important space for social capital to be built. As well, several of the other mentioned community spaces could coexist. The community kitchen could also be a food hub and cafeteria. Other ideas included a grocery store, convenience store, and seasonal restaurant.

One question that may be worth exploring is what model of “community food centre” is this to be based off of - should the Foodbank help to run the space? Or is there a more inclusive and ground-up method of running the space?

Figure 2.3



For *land use*, a variety of suggestions were put forth, including a picnic area, playground, park and pond. Permaculture was mentioned several times, and may be useful in designing the actual garden space. Indigenous outdoor spaces such as a dedicated space for Indigenous medicines, a sweat lodge and a tipi were vocalised as important land uses.

Going forward, it is important that the team agrees on how much land will be available after the garden and buildings are considered. While 5 acres may seem like a lot, it has yet to be determined whether or not the entire 2 acres are strictly for farming. Same goes for the 3 acres designated for housing and services.

Figure 2.4



A word cloud of healthcare services in pink text. The largest words are 'pharmacy' and 'medical centre'. Other words include 'dental', 'detox', 'addiction counselling', and 'counselling'.

Under medical, nearly every map included a medical centre and pharmacy. Given the target population for the Acres, a pharmacy, medical centre, detox, addiction counselling, general counselling and a dental clinic are all essential services. The next course of action should be looking at how to reduce potential barriers to accessing needed services. Collaboration with organisations such as Boyle McCauley Health Centre and University of Alberta Medical and Dental students may be of use going forward.

## 4.1 Community Partners Meeting

After receiving the maps, an open discussion was had on Zoom with available staff from participating agencies. Prior to the meeting, a set of questions designed by the LFG board were sent out via email that were posed as ongoing areas of importance requiring more in depth discussion.

1. When envisioning the Acres model, should a framework around substance use be included? For instance, should the housing have a zero-tolerance policy, in effect making it a sober space? And if this is the case, how would these rules be enforced? Why would this be the best way to support and uplift all community members? Or would a harm reduction framework be a better route, wherein the prevention of harm is the goal, rather than the prevention of drug/alcohol use. This could be modelled after the Healing Hearts for Sobriety<sup>14</sup>. Is it possible to have both harm reduction based housing and a sober space within such a small area?
2. Why is the agricultural component important to their clients? In what ways is food and land accessibility and sovereignty integral to this proposal? Potentially draw from yours and your clients experiences at Lady Flower Gardens
3. Should the garden be similar to community gardens, wherein different groups occupy separate, private areas? Or would communal agriculture with a hired supervisor like LFG be better? What system comes to mind when you envision a communal garden that works to include diverse populations with varying needs? Should there be an economic piece within the gardens, as in should produce be sold? If so, who would be selling and running operations? Should the gardens be a site for job training?
4. Other than the agricultural piece, what are other branches of support and service that are vital for the neighbourhood? What gaps have you noticed within Edmonton's social services that we can be proactive about?
5. At LFG, other than a few combined events, our agencies had the garden all to themselves. The agencies are very different from each other, serving people with diverse needs and backgrounds. Should the pilot village focus on supporting one type of population, with the expectation that other tailored villages could be built afterwards for unique groups, or should the pilot have a number of different populations in one area? Why?

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<sup>14</sup> Healing Hearts for Sobriety. (n.d.) *Harm Reduction Housing*.  
<https://healingheartforsobriety.com/harm-reduction-housing>

## **4.2 Feedback**

The greatest challenges unanimously faced amongst the three participating organisations at the meeting was conceptualising the layout and size of the 5 acres. With the map used for the engagement activity being a preliminary sketch, little work was done to ensure scaling accuracy. Furthermore, visualising what an acre looks like poses challenges that need to be addressed in order for participants to be able to complete the activity with full understanding of the capacity of the space. Another big challenge was navigating the engagement piece during COVID. Staff had difficulty doing outreach and recruiting participants who have had experience at Lady Flower Gardens given the restrictions in place on social programs and outreach facilities.

## **4.3 Limitations**

There are several limitations with the map activity. First of all, data collected may skew the identification of needs of the target population, as a significant number of maps submitted were done by Multicultural Healthbrokers (MCHB). While their insight is useful, the experiences and required support may differ significantly from our target population - individuals having recently left AHS psychiatric, Henwood, or are houseless etc. This is reflected in the word clouds, with family and youth targeted services being represented more in the codings than they may otherwise have been.

Another limitation was that there was no direct engagement with participants. While ethically having staff be the intermediary between us was the preferable route, it made it difficult to ensure that the Acres vision was being fully explained. Furthermore, there had been confusion among staff as well regarding what the Acres was, even after dispersing the maps.

A final limitation that is important to note is that our Indigenous community partners were unable to participate in the process due to COVID outbreaks. Given the land on which the Acres is to be developed and the target populations, it is critical moving forward that more steps be taken to ensure that Indigenous voices, values and needs are being heard and met.

## 5.0 Next Steps

This community engagement activity has been a precursor to the development of an official proposal being formulated by nine working groups.

Next steps include synthesis of research from the aforementioned groups, as well as further outreach with community organisations who may be interested in collaborating with LFG on the Acres proposal. Additionally, a dedicated working group focused on Indigenous health and wellness needs to be formulated to ensure that we are pushing ourselves to go beyond a land acknowledgement<sup>15</sup>. While Indigenous representation and voices need to be elevated and included within the proposal, it is important that all group members are doing the work of educating themselves on Indigenous health and wellness and its intersections with food and land sovereignty. This is particularly important as the target populations for the space are disproportionately Indigenous peoples<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup>apihtawikosisan. (2016, September 23). *Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements*.

<https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>

<sup>16</sup> Homeless Hub (n.d.) *Indigenous Peoples*.

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/population-specific/indigenous-peoples>

## 6.0 Conclusion

There is a plethora of evidence that social and health policies for assisting inclusion health populations should be based on personalisation and deinstitutionalization, as well as through providing suitable and stable housing in ordinary community settings<sup>17</sup>. Using this evidence and localising it to Edmonton by collaborating with various social service agencies, academics and community members will ensure that the final proposal will be. This brief engagement proposal is concluded with a quote from an essay by Georgina Reid, which encapsulates the essential value of the Acres and the unique potential for community growth it offers.

Gardening is not just a set of tasks. It's not restricted to backyards, courtyards, balconies. It can and should happen anywhere, everywhere. Gardening is simply a framework for engagement with our world, grounded in care and action. To garden is to care deeply, inclusively, and audaciously for the world outside our homes and our heads. It's a way of being that is intimately interwoven with the real truths of existence - not the things we're told to value (money, status, ownership) but the things that actually matter (sustenance, perspective, beauty, connection, growth).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Luchenski, S. et. al. (2017). What works in inclusion health: overview of effective interventions for marginalised and excluded populations. *Centre for Public Health Data*. p. 274. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(17\)31959-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)31959-1)

<sup>18</sup> Reid, G. (2019, May 6). *Beyond the Breakers*. Powell's Books. <https://www.powells.com/post/original-essays/beyond-the-breakers>

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