DIVERSITY

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IN WOOD BUFFALO:
A Community Plan
2017–2022

INTRODUCTION

Several elements make the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo an extremely diverse region: age of residents, from children and youth to seniors; gender; religion; ethno-cultural factors; languages spoken; health and mobility of residents; socio-economic status, and indigenous and rural populations. Creating and encouraging inclusive services, spaces and workplaces is important to a cohesive society where everyone is safe and secure and feels a sense of home and belonging. The benefits of diversity and inclusion are many, including a vibrant culture and greater innovation, retention, productivity, teamwork, and harmony.

As a member of Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and strong supporter of the partnership between AUMA and the Government of Alberta's 'Welcoming and Inclusive Community' Initiative, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo joined UNESCO Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CCMARD) in 2006. As part of the steps taken in joining CCMARD, the Regional Advisory Committee on Inclusion, Diversity, and Equality (RACIDE) was established to engage the community in discussing the principles set forth in the 10 common commitments and develop the regions own unique Plan of Action accordingly as set out by CCMARD. The first Diversity Plan was developed in 2012 and covered 4 goals. This plan culminated in 2015 and the process of developing a new community plan began later that year.

RACIDE worked with municipal staff, social profit agencies, businesses, and residents, conducting research and analysis, public engagement and consultation. This document is intended to help the region continue to be a warm, welcoming and supportive community that celebrates its diversity and is inclusive for all.

Diversity and Inclusion in Wood Buffalo: A Community Plan 2017-2022 sets out the next set of priorities as identified by the community, and possible ways to achieve them. It builds on the Diversity Plan 2012-2015 and other ongoing projects in the community that address inclusion, diversity and equality.

The information included in the plan was collected from the community and implementation will be community-driven. Success depends on a wide range of community stakeholders working together.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Extensive research was conducted to gather input from residents, organizations, and groups, hear their experiences, and learn from their expertise.

DIVERSITY SUMMIT

More than 100 community stakeholders provided initial input and feedback.

RACIDE

Guiding principles and priorities were developed based on the input gathered at the 2015 Diversity Summit.

PROCESS SURVEY

156 surveys were completed offering input into the process of developing a community plan and preferred ways to communicate.

FOCUS GROUPS

19 focus groups were conducted about inclusion, barriers, and iniatives, with approximately 250 people attending.

PUBLIC SURVEY

729 respondents participated in a public survey on diversity, inclusion, identity, barriers, and strategies.

DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY

Inclusion is about everyone. Often race and culture are the focus of diversity and inclusion work; however, individuals have many identities that together make Wood Buffalo a community and diverse region. The following 10 dimensions of diversity, which reflect the different facets of diversity, are specifically considered in the community plan to continue to build a more welcoming and inclusive region.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

SOCIO-ECONOMIC

ETHNO-CULTURAL

INDIGENOUS & RURAL

RELIGION

GENDER

SENIORS

HEALTH & MOBILITY

LANGUAGE

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

DESIGN THINKING MATRIX

A design thinking matrix model was used to determine which initiatives should be included and prioritized in the Diversity Plan 2017-2022 in order to best address the goals of the Plan. Each initiative was considered through a priority analysis based on the Design Thinking Matrix . The initiatives identified by the community which scored the highest on the matrix were included in the Plan.
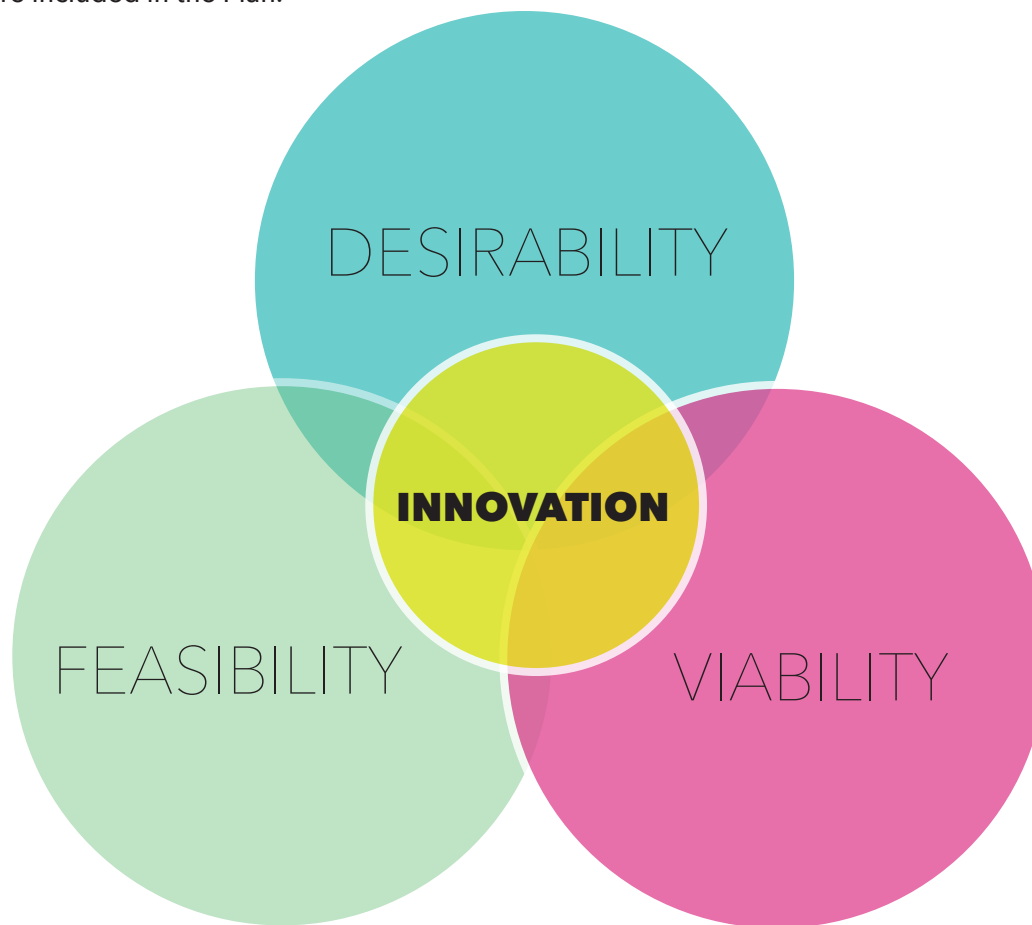
DESIRABILITY	**FEASIBILITY**	**VIABILITY**
What are the needs, aspirations, and priorities of support agencies and residents?	What initiatives are feasible considering cost, time, and capacity?	What initiatives are viable considering existing research, identified barriers, and Municipal mandate?

[1]Adapted from "Human Centered Design Toolkit: An Open-Source Toolkit to Inspire New Solutions in the Developing World". IDEO, 2011.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Development of the plan included establishing clear priorities based on extensive community consultation, data collection, and feedback at every stage.

Measuring success was considered from the outset; each priority and action aligns with strategies to monitor progress and assess results.

To get feedback during the development phase, focus groups received a summary of the initial input from the 2015 Diversity Summit, and a draft copy of potential initiatives to gather feedback.

Transparency underpins the plan, and there will be annual progress updates sharing success stories, achievements, and lessons learned.

ACCOUNTABILITY

TRANSPARENCY

SUPPORT

RACIDE will provide strategic support and help build capacity in the community to undertake the plan.

RACIDE in partnership with social profit organizations, businesses, and residents will work together to implement the actions.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Residents, community organizations, government, business and other key stakeholders will base their diversity and inclusion work on six priorities that they have identified. They are numbered for the purposes of reference and not order of urgency or importance. RACIDE will facilitate implementation and will provide annual progress updates and measurement results through Council presentations.

1. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION TO AND WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

INCLUDING:
- Awareness of diversity and inclusion initiatives
- Awareness of existing programs and services
- Inclusive communication

2. DIVERSE VOICES ARE IDENTIFIED, INVOLVED AND ENGAGED

INCLUDING:
- Decisions informed by consultation
- Engagement and consideration of diverse perspectives

3. PROMOTE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY BY RECOGNIZING AND CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

INCLUDING:
- Opportunities for socializing, gathering
- Promotion of the region's diversity
- Recognition of those who adopt inclusive practices

4. INCREASE UNDERSTANDING THROUGH EDUCATION

INCLUDING:
- Employer/employee diversity and inclusion competency training and resources
- Knowledge about safety, human rights and individual responsibilities
- Public education and awareness

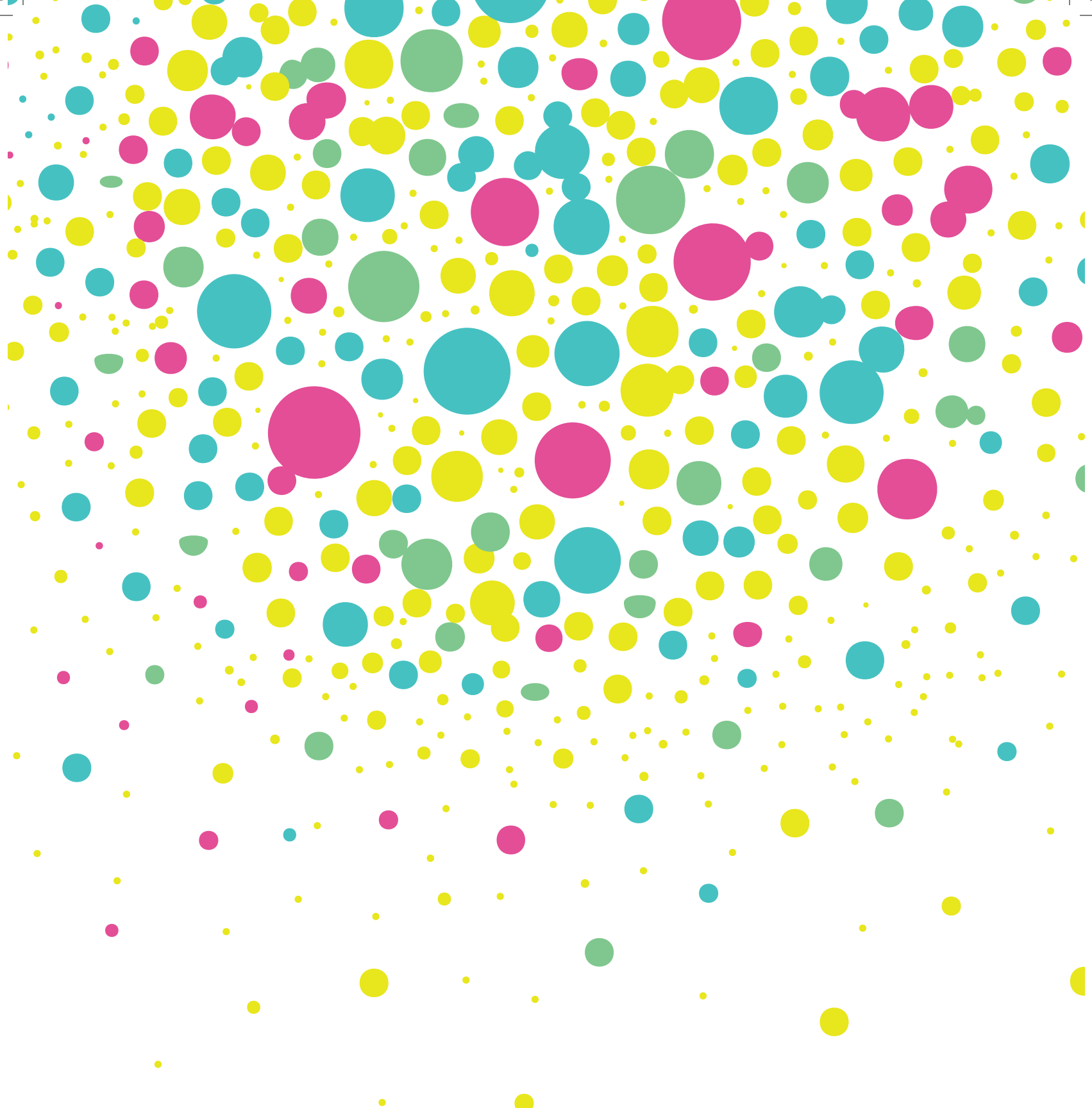## 5. FOSTER TRUST AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

INCLUDING:
- Strong relationships between residents, community organizations, government and businesses
- Awareness and recognition of collaborative efforts
- Opportunities for cross-group interaction

6. REDUCE BARRIERS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES

INCLUDING:
- Accessible job, language, healthcare, recreation, and transportation services
- Physically accessible infrastructure
- Inclusive spaces and services