

DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics are changing in Canada which is having, and will continue to have, a growing influence on how our cities grow and how they are designed and managed.

A number of demographic factors are particularly influential:

Aging population – By 2050, 25% of the population will be seniors. In St. Albert, seniors now make up 12% of the population. A preference among seniors to ‘age in place’ along with mobility and independence issues of seniors will greatly impact communities.

Declining population and fertility growth – While population continues to grow, the rate of growth is declining. Fertility rates also continue to remain extremely low. St. Albert is the only city in the Capital Region experiencing a declining growth rate, and has one of the lowest increases in fertility rates in the region.

Postponed adulthood – Young people are taking longer to make the transition to adulthood and economic independence. They are living at home longer, getting married or cohabiting later and having children, if they even have them, at a later age.

Household make-up – Households are growing at a faster rate than the population. This is due to such factors as seniors living longer and healthier, divorce rates remaining high, young people getting married at a later age, and more people choosing to remain single.

Greater cultural diversity – A diverse group of immigrants now makes up 20% of Canada’s population, and it is expected immigration will sustain population growth into the future. St. Albert’s recent growth in visible minority population has been minimal. The aboriginal population, far younger than the rest of Canada, are making up a growing portion of the population, including in St. Albert.

Growing disparities – Economic and demographic trends are resulting in a widening chasm between rich and poor, young and old, those with education and those without, and single and dual earner households. Those most negatively affected by this include recent immigrants, unattached near-elderly (55-64), aboriginals, disabled, young single adults, and female-led single families.

Demographic changes will have far-reaching implications for the economy and labour force, healthcare and education systems, housing, transportation and a variety of other factors in communities.

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Miller, Glen, Harris, Gordon and Ferguson, Ian. *Bracing for the Demographic Tsunami: how will seniors fare in an aging society*. Plan Canada, vol. 47, No. 4. Winter 2007.

Myles, John. *Postponed adulthood: dealing with the new economic inequality*. 2005 Statistics Canada, 2006 various community profile reports.

TO READ:

How Age Friendly Is Halifax - read about Halifax’s Age-Friendly Cities project.

Find it at:

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/seniors/ageFriendly.asp>

TO WATCH:

Universal Design - this video gives an overview of design features in a home that can accommodate children, seniors or people with disabilities. They can make things easier for able-bodied adults, too. Watch the whole video or just parts of it. Length of full video: 12.5 minutes

Find it at: <http://ehe.osu.edu/ud/ud-video.htm>

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PLACES TO SEE:

Hamilton, Ontario developed an Urban Braille System for planning and designing public spaces in the city. By focusing on two textures (smooth and grooved), the city creates up to 10 distinct tactile clues on sidewalks and other horizontal surfaces.

Blind and visually impaired people use the Urban Braille system to recognize directional change, the hierarchy of paths, building entrances, sidewalk/road boundaries, pedestrian crossings, or bus stops, making it much easier for them to independently move around the city.

The articles and videos referenced in the Bulletins do not necessarily reflect the position of the City of St. Albert and are meant to encourage debate and discussion.

SMART GROWTH BRIEF

DEMOGRAPHICS

DEMOGRAPHICS - WHAT IS IT?

Demographics include various numerical characteristics of the population that classify them for statistical purposes. It could include such characteristics as age, race, gender, geographic location, education, income level¹, birth and death rates, or marital status.

This information is widely used by governments, business, marketers, and others trying to identify clear classifications and gain an understanding about markets and population to facilitate planning or marketing in a wide variety of areas.

This brief provides an overview on changing demographics in Canada, the impact of demographics on our built environment and changing demographics in St. Albert.

IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS IN CANADA

In Canada, there are a number of demographic changes occurring that have a significant impact on all facets of society, including municipalities. One of the biggest impacts is the 'baby boom.' In Canada, it is generally considered to comprise those individuals born between 1946 and 1966. A particularly high birth rate during this time resulted in a large bubble of the population. As this 'bubble' moves through its lifetime, it has implications throughout all aspects of society and business.

Aging Population

Due to lower fertility rates, increasing life expectancies and the aging demographic baby boom bubble, there is a significant shift in the proportion of older people.

The impact of an aging population will be greater in Canada than in most developed countries, as it will experience the 6th largest increase among countries in elderly dependency ratio, which is the number of working aged people to seniors. (BTC Senate Committee, 2006)

This will have significant implications for the labour market and economic growth, the healthcare and education systems, and it will have significant implications on our cities as well.

By 2050, 25% of the population will be seniors. Initially there will be a high proportion of 'young' male seniors but as time goes by there will be a predominance of older female seniors. What will also have an impact is that the baby boomer retiree is different from previous generations; they have more disposable income, will experience a longer retirement period, and have a higher level of education. (Tompkins, 2008)

Declining Population and Fertility rate

The rate of population growth continues to decline in Canada. By 2024, it is expected that deaths will exceed births in Canada and that immigration will sustain growth until about 2040. From 1996 – 2005, Canada recorded its lowest growth rate ever, falling behind the United States for the first time in 100 years. (BTC Senate Committee, 2006)

¹ A separate brief will deal with income, employment density and jobs/housing balance.

Contributing to the aging population is the declining fertility rate. In fact, according to the BTC Senate Committee (2006), "Canada is in the process of becoming one of the least fertile countries."

The fertility rate in Canada peaked in 1959 when the average number of children a woman was likely to bear in her lifetime was 3.94 children. It has steadily fallen since that time and reached 1.59 in 2006. Despite a very slight increase over 2005, the fertility rates are still far lower than the rate of 2.1 which is needed to replace a population from generation to generation. (MFE, nd)

Postponed Adulthood

Young people are taking longer to make the transition to adulthood and economic independence. People under 30 have less job experience than earlier cohorts due to greater needs for education, and therefore have lower wage levels and acquired wealth than previous generations. This education is costing more and there are fewer funding supports such as government loans (Myles, 2005).

The younger generation of consumers has also embraced debt more than any previous generation, living well beyond their means and almost totally eliminating any net worth of those under 25 (Gulli, 2006).

Young people are living at home with their parents much longer and are more likely to move back home after having moved out (Statistics Canada, 2002). In addition, they are delaying marriage or cohabitation, delaying having children and having fewer children (Myles, 2005). In 2006, the fertility rate for woman aged 30-34 exceeded that of women aged 25-29 for the first time. (CBC News, 2008)

Household make-up

The number of households is growing faster than the population and the make up of these households is changing significantly from the traditional two parents with children household. In 2006, only 28% of Canadian households included a couple with children.

Single person households made up 26% of households in Canada in 2006, an increase from 20% only five years earlier (Statistics Canada, 2006), and one of the fastest growing household types.

Divorce rates continue to be high; some suggest 1 in 3 while others suggest 1 in 4 marriages in Canada will end in divorce, which contributes to the growth in smaller households of singles and single-parents.

Greater Cultural Diversity

Immigrants currently make up 20 percent of the Canadian population, and the immigrant population is becoming one of greater heterogeneity, which increases the challenge of providing suitable supports for such a diverse group (Cooper, 2006). As mentioned earlier, population growth is expected to be braced by the influx and integration of immigrants.

However, this is not a guaranteed measure because as other countries become more developed encouraging people to stay or even return.

The aboriginal population in urban centres is also growing at a great rate, and the Edmonton area is behind only Winnipeg for the increase in aboriginal residents. From 1996 to 2006, the aboriginal population increased by 45%, compared to the 8% rate of the non-aboriginal population during the same time. Some of this may be accounted for by an increase in self-identity by aboriginal people.

In addition, the median age of First Nations people is 25, for Inuit is 22 and for Metis is 30. This is significantly younger than the national median age of 39.5.

Growing Disparities

Economic and demographic trends are contributing to new and growing divisions between groups related to income, housing, education, health care, public safety and access to power. These divisions are particularly noticeable between:

- Young and old;
- Canadian-born and immigrants;
- Highly and poorly educated; and
- Single and dual earner households.

Poverty is becoming more concentrated in specific groups:

- Recent immigrants, accounted for almost all poverty increase in 1980s and 1990s;
- Unattached near-elderly (55-64);
- Aboriginals;
- Disabled;
- Single young adults; and
- Female-led single parent families.

Those at the opposite end of the scale have found their wealth has risen significantly.

Homogamy compounds this issue, as well-educated men and women are more likely to marry and form families, while less affluent, lower-educated couples have a greater risk of unemployment or working poor wages. Canada is seeing a growing disparity between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' with fewer people and households in between.

Women in the workplace

Since the 1960s women have become a more significant part of the workforce in Canada, which is critical to the country's future social and economic well-being (Scott, 2004). The number of women in the workforce doubled between 1967 and 1993, and during that time working wives earning more than their husbands grew from 11% of working women to 25%. A significant rise was seen in the recession of 1990-92, when women became the primary wage earner by default. Generally female primary wage earners earn less than male primary wage earners. (Crompton & Gearn, 1995)

During the same time, single-earner couples where the wife was the breadwinner rose from 2% to 20%. (Crompton & Gearn, 1995) Most of these women had older husbands past retirement age, which could have implications as the baby boomer men begin to retire.

More recent work suggests increased pressure is being placed on women as wage earners, as 71% of the unemployment victims of the recent recession have been men (Hennessy & Yalnizyan, 2009).

A growing workforce issue is the increase in workers, predominantly female, providing care to elderly relatives. Maxwell (2006) suggests 43 percent of 45-49 year olds care for family members. With the delay in having children, this also suggests more of them are balancing child and elder care at the same time.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

These demographic changes have significant implications for cities and the built environment.

Seniors

The growing number of seniors will pose significant challenges for cities. Miller, et. al. (2007) suggest "suburbia is no place to grow old." Sixty percent of seniors are in metropolitan areas, almost half of those in the suburbs. Hodge (2008) suggests

municipalities will need to address seniors' needs for housing, transportation, home support, recreation, personal safety and physical infrastructure.

Seniors prefer to age in place, they're 80% less mobile than younger people and the majority that do move, prefer to stay within the same community (Hodge, 2008). They're most likely to move if a person leaves or joins the household, are widowed or separated, are a renter or live in an apartment. (Lin, 2005) Seniors over 85, who are also subject to more disabilities, mobility limitations and require more services, are more likely to be in apartments.

Mobility will be a critical issue in car-oriented suburban communities like St. Albert. "Identity and self-worth are tied inextricably to our cars - decision-makers in other places have figured out that quality of life for an aging population is closely tied to preserving mobility – this in turn, is largely determined by the characteristics of the built environment" (Miller, et. al., 2007).

The City of Richmond (Tompkins, 2008) has been planning for seniors and has found seniors prefer to have services clustered together; they are not as interested in stand-alone seniors' centres. Therefore more compact development is more likely to appeal to seniors.

Calgary is suggesting "older Calgarians may seek other forms of accommodation, including seniors' residential complexes and higher-density housing closer to the city centre and to C-train stops. This may spark a gradual exodus from the new suburbs, just as they have been fully built out, and spur redevelopment of communities closer the centre of the city." This may be true if suburban areas aren't able to provide compact, service-rich areas that will better serve the growing demand from seniors.

Changing housing markets

New immigrants tend to make up a higher proportion of those living in lower income rental housing, but increasingly more are living in a home owned by relative. Anecdotal evidence suggests new home purchases in many of the outer areas of Edmonton and Calgary are increasingly being made by visible minority, extended families.

While still small, there is a growing trend of young families settling in urban centres in downtowns (Cohen, 2006, Slobodzian, 2007).

With the widening chasm between the poor and the wealthy, greater demands for affordable housing and housing supports will likely increase. This could be tied to increased demand for more compact developments with increased access to transit and other forms of transportation, a key component in improving affordability.

A study from Virginia Tech (Ewing, 2007) found that baby boomers becoming empty nesters and retirees are drawn to compact, walkable neighbourhoods but so are single adults and married couples without children. All these household types are becoming predominant in St. Albert.

In the same study, projections suggest the demand for attached and small-lot housing will exceed the current supply by 71% while there will be insufficient demand for the amount of large-lot housing available.

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS IN ST. ALBERT

St. Albert has seen a significant shift in its demographic make-up in the past 20 years.

Still a community of choice?

St. Albert considers itself a 'community of choice,' but the demographics suggest fewer people are choosing St. Albert as a place to live. The city once led the region in population growth but it has since become one of very few communities in the province, and the only urban one in the region, to experience a declining rate of growth. While the

City is still growing, it continues to be at a slower rate than in previous years. This suggests people are more likely to choose other communities over St. Albert.

St. Albert has a higher percentage of visible minorities, behind only Edmonton and tied with Strathcona County at 4.4% of the population. However, since 2001, St. Albert has only increased the actual numbers of visible minorities by 12%, the lowest increase in the region, while Strathcona County (with many similarities to St. Albert) saw an increase of over 80%. The regional average increase was around 30%. Visible minority families do not appear to be choosing St. Albert, a growing segment of the home-buying market.

There has also been a significant decline in people aged 25-39 as a proportion of the community. They make up almost half of the proportion they used to. This is the typical age when people may decide to start a family, but they don't appear to be choosing St. Albert.

On the other hand, aboriginal residents do appear to be choosing St. Albert. Since 2001, the actual number of aboriginal residents increased by 34%, higher than most other urban communities in the region except Stony Plain, Edmonton and Strathcona County. There has been a tendency for more aboriginal people to self-report on the census, so that increase may somewhat reflect that.

Still a family community?

St. Albert's elderly dependency ratio, which is the number of working age adults to seniors, was 28 to 1 in 1985. In 2006, that had dropped to 7.4 to 1. In actual numbers, the number of residents aged 65 and over increased by over 500% since 1985.

In stark contrast to that, the child dependency ratio, the number of working age adults to children aged 0-14, was 2.5 to 1 in 1985, rising to 3.6 to 1 in 2006. What is particularly interesting is that the actual number of children aged 0-14 only increased by 17%, and in fact declined between 2001 and 2006. Overall, there are still significantly more children than seniors, but the changes are dramatic.

Between 2001 and 2006, the number of births in St. Albert increased less than 20%. Other than Stony Plain at 23%, all other urban centres saw increases in the actual number of births by anywhere from 25 – 50%. Leduc and Morinville have had more than a 50% increase in live births and Strathcona County saw a 43% increase.

As a comparison, the total population of St. Albert increased by 63% from 1985 until 2006.

The median age in St. Albert is the highest of the urban centres in the region, at 38.2. And St. Albert residents aged 45-64 account for nearly 30% of the population, compared to an average of 25% throughout the region.

Twenty years ago, couples with children made up 60% of St. Albert's households. Now they only account for 40% of St. Albert households.

St. Albert is no longer a community of traditional families, nor is it the community of young children and families it once was.

SMART GROWTH ST. ALBERT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Smart Growth St. Albert is a response to a coming demand for a variety of housing and transportation choices that are currently not available in St. Albert, and will make St. Albert more competitive within the region.

The Smart Growth approach would provide a variety of housing and transportation choices that would enable people to live more independently as they age, which is particularly important for people. It would also provide options for a variety of different households.

Within each Smart Growth neighbourhood, there is more flexibility for providing different housing types, so developers would be better able to react to changes in market demand and demographics.

The improved connectivity and mixed use developments will allow for more accessible services for the changing population such as seniors, young people, or households seeking affordable housing and transportation.

CONCLUSION

Nearly half of the households in St. Albert still include children; however, the balance is changing in the community, more significantly than in other communities in the region. St. Albert does not appear to be keeping pace with these other communities, as it faces an overall decline in population growth. This will have implications for future demands for housing, transportation, access to services, recreation and leisure facilities and the future development and growth.

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