

THE *flavour* OF OLD STRATHCONA



The sound of a thousand footsteps rumble along Whyte Avenue, moving from door to door and store to store, exploring, seeking out the next surprise that they might not find anywhere else. Glasses and dishes tinkle as people enjoy good food with good friends. The constant hum and buzz of conversation, as people and their families make an entire day of exploring what the district has to offer.

The roar of the crowds showering performers with applause during the Fringe Festival. The muttered 'oohs' and 'ahhs' of people exploring the work of hundreds of artists during Art Walk. The music, performed by one-person bands on the sidewalk, or by full jazz orchestras in indoor venues. The weekly vibrations of people taking in the city's oldest and largest farmer's market.

The soft sighs of relaxation and indulgence from the various oases of personal services. The thrum of people relying on the expertise and experience of professional services. People showing people how to be good to each other, how to take care of themselves, and how to live their best lives.

The energy of people standing up for each other, with Pride flags, BLM rallies and peaceful protests.

The positivity of an entire community of people who believe in coming together to make our city a better place.

The rumble of thousands of people coming to Old Strathcona, shopping, eating, drinking, wandering, exploring, watching, listening, applauding, and laughing – not just to spend money, but to have an unforgettable experience.

It flows from the businesses and organizations, out into the streets, and back in again. It's the heart-beat of an enormous, benevolent creature. It's waves that connect businesses and people like the land and the sea. It pulses, building on itself, dynamic and energized on the surface, with a depth of history, stories and commitment to deeply-held values.

And through it all, the welcoming presence of the Old Strathcona Business Association, lifting up and supporting the businesses, the people who own them, the people who run them and the people who patronize them. Infusing the places and spaces with energy, activity, vibrancy and community. Bringing together the membership to create a whole that is far greater than the sum of its parts.

Values & Value Statements

The strategic planning was undertaken with Parodos Communications facilitating board members and OSBA staff. The participants were able to identify three core values that are at the heart of Old Strathcona, and are exemplified by the businesses, customers, residents, festivals, tourists, workers and families that make up the area.

These values are at the heart of the district and the BIA, and they should be the basis for any decision, project, advocacy or initiative that the BIA takes on.

OSBA VALUES STATEMENTS

We bring people in with *open arms and open eyes...*

We believe in making spaces accessible and inviting in all ways, so that we can bring diverse people together in respectful ways and spaces. We believe that diversity creates stronger communities. Indeed, we believe that difference requires building understanding through respectful dialogue, and we believe in standing up for inclusivity in all its forms.

We create spaces to share and *champion our stories...*

We believe our past is part of our present. We believe in making spaces to share and celebrate our stories to create a better future. We believe in coming together to support each other fiercely. We believe in expression, creativity, discovery, and standing up for what is right.

We challenge the world with a sense of *entrepreneurial punk.*

We believe that risks are for taking and boundaries are for breaking. We believe that grit, innovation and just a bit of healthy mischief is the best way to make our own path forward. We believe that disruption should be our status quo.



Vision

The vision was developed by looking ten years into the future and determining what an optimal Old Strathcona would look like, as well as an imagining of what the neighbourhood would look like half way there (five years) if the proper steps were underway to realize that vision.

These visualizations led to thematic groupings. The themes for the ten-year vision were:

- *Active and Vibrant Year-Round*
- *Welcoming and Inclusive*
- *Innovation and Inspiration*

The five-year vision had additional themes, which makes perfect sense as a focus for ensuring Old Strathcona is making progress towards the ten year vision:

- *Creative People-Moving*
- *Growth*

The following Vision Statement is an encapsulation of that ten year vision.

OSBA VISION STATEMENT

Throughout the day and throughout the year, Old Strathcona is an active place where people choose to have adventures. Where they can get lost for hours, where they are happily surprised by new experiences. The streets are full of a diversity of people, ideas and businesses, and an energy of community, activism, positivity and possibility.



Mission

The mission statement for OSBA is the overlap between the vision for the neighbourhood and the purview of the BIA. It looks specifically at how the BIA can advance the vision, with an awareness of what a BIA can do and what it cannot.

The words selected to outline the Mission of the BIA were:

- Intentional Spaces
- Activation
- Advocacy
- Communication
- Social Impact/Grace

The following mission statement comes from the ideas and words that the strategic planning committee put forward when looking at the BIA's role in shaping the future of Old Strathcona.

OSBA MISSION STATEMENT

From the thunderous footsteps of excited crowds, to the rumble of a million passionate conversations, OSBA brings spaces to life with compassion and intention, engagement and empowerment, where commerce is a celebration of shared values. We build our community by caring about the impact our actions have.



SWOT

The group performed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Strengths exercise to get a bearing on the current state of Old Strathcona. Strengths and Weaknesses are positive and negative factors that are within the control of OSBA, and Opportunities and Threats are positive and negative factors that are beyond the control of the OSBA.

This means that from the perspective of a BIA, Strengths can be acted on, Weaknesses should be overcome, Opportunities may be leveraged and Threats should be mitigated.

| STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cherie and team• OSBA assets and resources• Shared values within BIA and board• Network and partnerships for informal advocacy• Growing membership/community engagement• Information gathering• Public art/beautification strategy• Strong relationship with the City of Edmonton• Collaboration with other BIAs and festivals — building capacity, relationships and influence• Agency over OSBA’s budget• Resourceful — finding resources and budget• Strong volunteer board — diverse ideas and functional• Willingness to be agile, proactive and efficient operationally• Lots of stories — can do more• Sustainable operations plan and succession plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OSBA brand isn’t widely recognized or defined• OSBA work not recognized as being from OSBA• Challenging to get provincial buy-in — currently few relationships• Small budget• No relationship with property owners• Bi-directional communications challenge with members• Not taking ownership of great work• Unfocused strategy for long-term planning• Consistency of board and leadership |



OPPORTUNITIES



- 24-hour economy
- Sponsored marketing and earned media
- Favourite district in Edmonton
- Shared values in community
- History of neighbourhood and historical buildings
- Brand recognition beyond the city
- Changing legislation around who pays the levy
- Revitalization and strong planning
- Activation of empty spaces
- Changing perceptions around parking
- Transportation infrastructure — bike lanes
- University neighbours
- River valley and green spaces
- Employing platform for social impact
- Residential density
- Could strengthen brand and voice for more public engagement

THREATS



- Business closures
- People don't understand what BIAs are
- What about me-isms
- Tunnel focus on "my" problems
- Imbalance between expectations of members and realities of budget
- Property owners don't pay the levy — inconsistent funding model
- Vacancies — perception and budget inconsistencies, vacant anchors, Army & Navy building
- Properties not being fully utilized (Farmers' Market)
- Perception about lack of parking for vehicles and bikes
- Car culture
- Bylaws not enforced
- Social disorder
- Lack of family-oriented affordable housing
- No control over major outcomes



Pillars — from Current State to Vision

Using the assessment of current state from the SWOT, and looking to the ideal future of the Vision, the committee used the Mission as a guideline for developing Strategic Pillars. These Pillars are 'buckets' of actions that come from the Mission, which will best take OSBA from its current state towards the future vision.

The following Pillars are the overarching categories of the tactics that will advance OSBA from its current state towards the vision, in terms that are within the purview of a BIA.

- *Relationship building*
- *Place management*
- *Cultivating experiences*
- *Rallying the collective*



Goals

The following are the goals that were determined for the various pillars. Beneath them — the second level of bullets — are the ways that progress towards those goals can be measured.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

- Create and maintain relationships with all levels of government
 - Meetings
 - Connected outcomes
- Build and grow positive relationships with property owners
 - Touchpoints
 - Connected outcomes
- OSBA Members recognize the OSBA brand as the organization behind the Old Strathcona place brand, and have an awareness of OSBA's involvement in OSBA activities.
 - Number of members aware of OSBA activities/involvement.
- Increased public awareness about the OSBA brand as the Old Strathcona place brand, and OSBA's involvement in OSBA activities.
 - Tracking through social media
 - Tracking through public newsletter
- Grow partnerships with diverse groups/associations to support inclusivity
 - Touchpoints
 - First contacts
 - Projects/initiatives (partnered or facilitated)

- Positive media — good news stories
- Strategy for negative feedback
 - Build social media policy
- Increased member engagement
 - Click through, SGM and AGM attendance
 - First time attendance/engagement with outreach

PLACE MANAGEMENT

- Learn from other BIA projects/accumulate best practices
 - Research/Implementation
 - Improvement on
- Cleanliness
 - Garbage bag & paraphernalia count
 - Open data from 311
- Beautification
 - Aesthetically pleasing (perceptions)
 - City report
 - Survey
 - Research
- Low vacancy perception
 - Tracking actual rates
 - Earned media about vacancy rates

CULTIVATING EXPERIENCES

- Support events based around diverse groups, which already exist in the area
 - Types and amount of support:
 - Financial
 - In-kind
 - Bums in seats (tickets sold, attendance, participants)
 - Social media
- Invite/create events that attract new demographics/groups
 - Number of people who come to Old Strathcona
 - Bums in seats (tickets sold, attendance, participants)
 - Number of events
 - Social media
- Create a guide for how spaces might be used — 'Placemaking Toolkit'
 - Guide/Toolkit made
- Increase access (information) to regular and special events in the neighbourhood
 - Measuring traffic to info sources
 - Measuring marketing impact
 - Surveys
 - Attendance
- Age-specific experiences
 - More of them
- Year-round/monthly programming
 - Amount of programs (hosted/produced/partnered/facilitated)

RALLYING THE COLLECTIVE WITH RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP

- Upward trend of membership mobilization opportunities in government advocacy
- Number of opportunities for member signatures on letters
- Number of opportunities in general to get involved - make it easy for members
- Increase general meeting attendance
- Attendance
- First time attendance of meetings
- More/sustained use of social enterprise
- number/length/scope of contracts

