

Planning with a Winter Lens

Adapting winter city strategies from large urban centres for mid-sized communities

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What is a Winter City?

“where earth is covered by snow, where water is frozen, and where air temperature is below freezing during a considerable part of the year” (Pressman, 1999)

a winter city is

a city which experiences seasonal winter conditions

a *Winter City* is

“a centre engaged with the international movement to promote a more livable winter environment” (Stout et al., 2018)



Winter Design, Mobility, and Culture

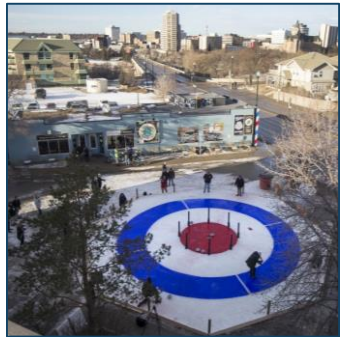
Many of the challenges created by winter conditions in cities have significant effects on mobility and transportation.



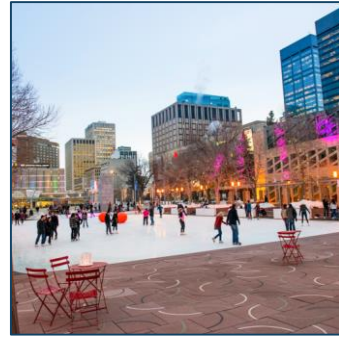


Who's Planning for Winter?

Examples of Canadian cities where research or strategies are linking planning to the winter context



Saskatoon, SK



Edmonton, AB



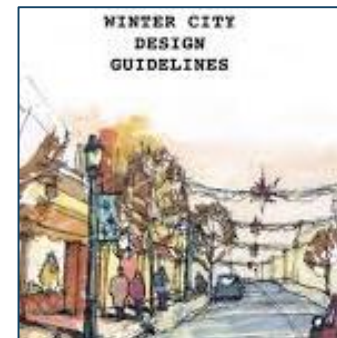
Winnipeg, MB



Calgary, AB



Prince George, BC

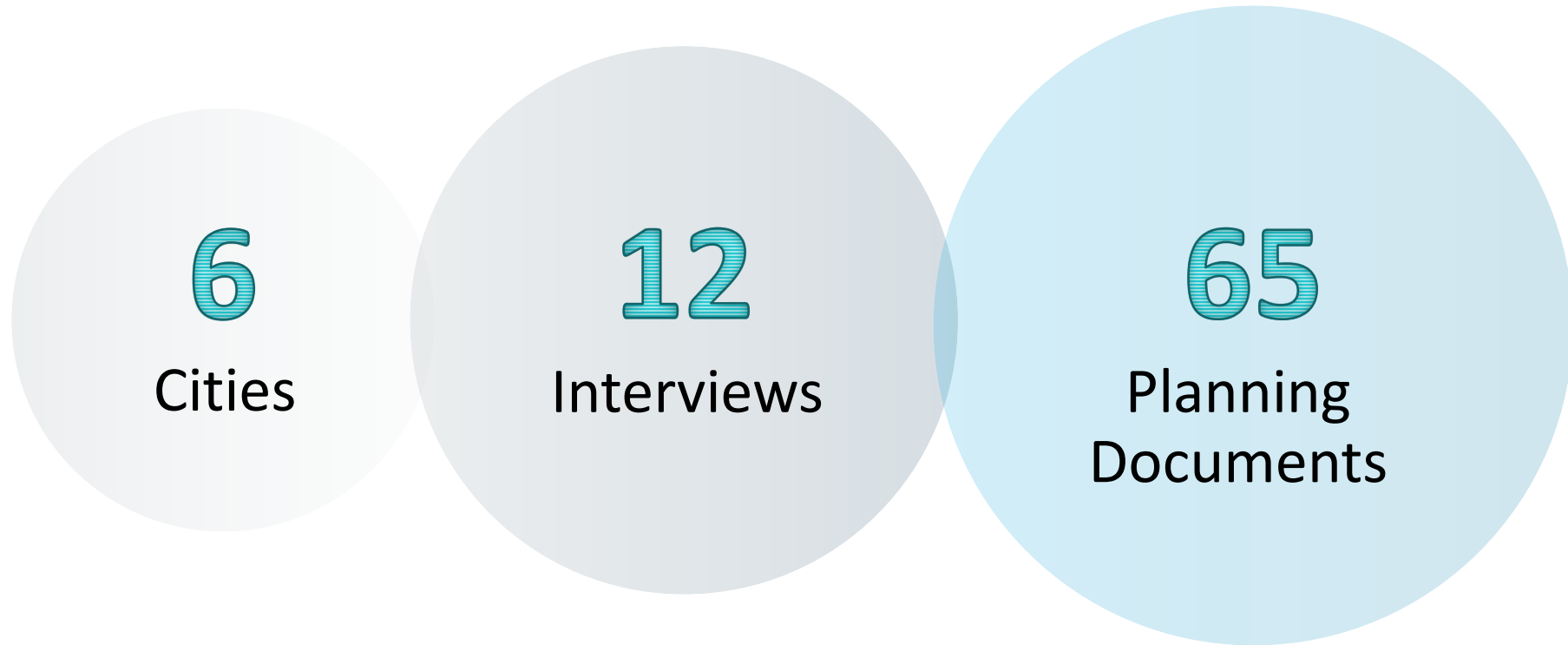


Fort St. John



Research Design

A Comparative Case Study Between Two Urban Scales in Canada



Large Urban Centres: Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg

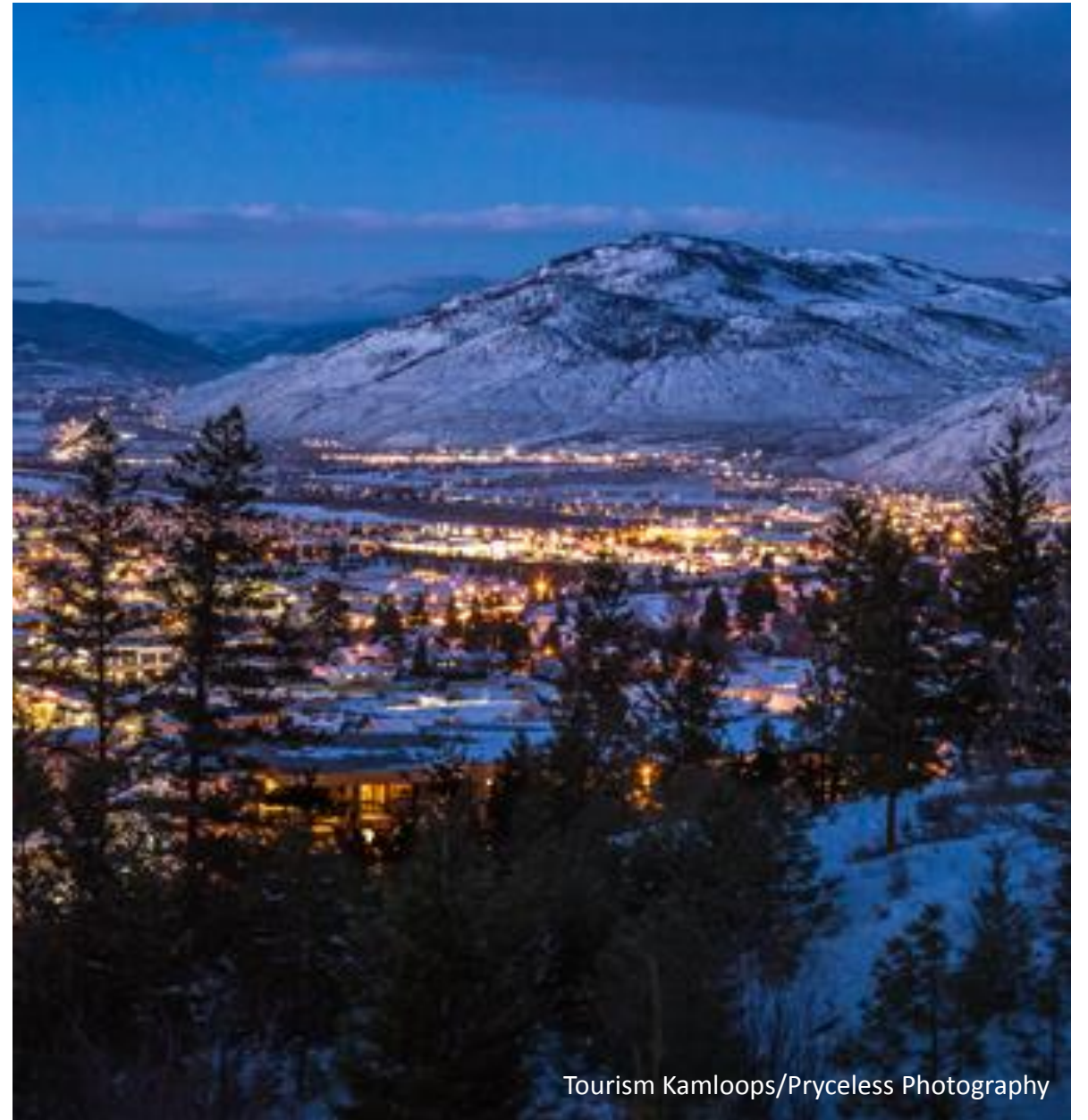
Mid-Sized Communities: Kamloops, Vernon, Kelowna



Planners' Level of Awareness

“I had never really heard of ‘winter city’ [before]. So, it’s a new buzz word to me.”

Interview participant from Kamloops





Snow Clearing

“Snow clearing is a big [challenge]. That obviously impacts design of roads. That’s a big budget cost... to the city and again its hard to manage the expectations of citizens.”

Interview participant from Kelowna





Edmonton Ski Club

Winter Recreation

“Some people look forward to the first snowfall because they get to finally pull out their cross-country skis and do all of these things you can’t do in the summer...”

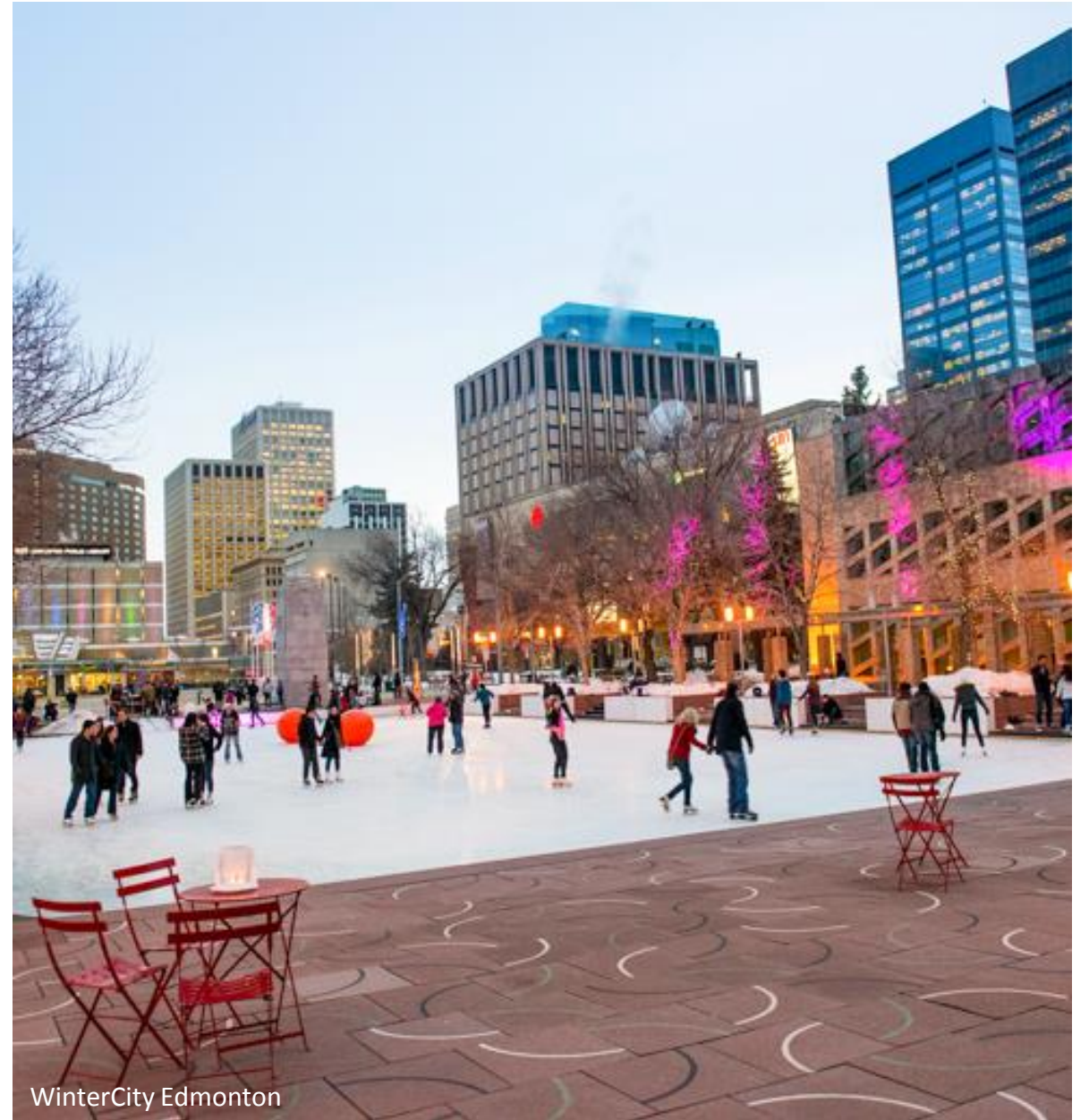
Interview participant from
Edmonton



Allocation of Resources

“We’ve challenged [staff] to think of winter, and to use the winter design guidelines but they’re also under pressure to think about twenty other things all at the same time.”

Interview participant from Edmonton



Winter Considerations

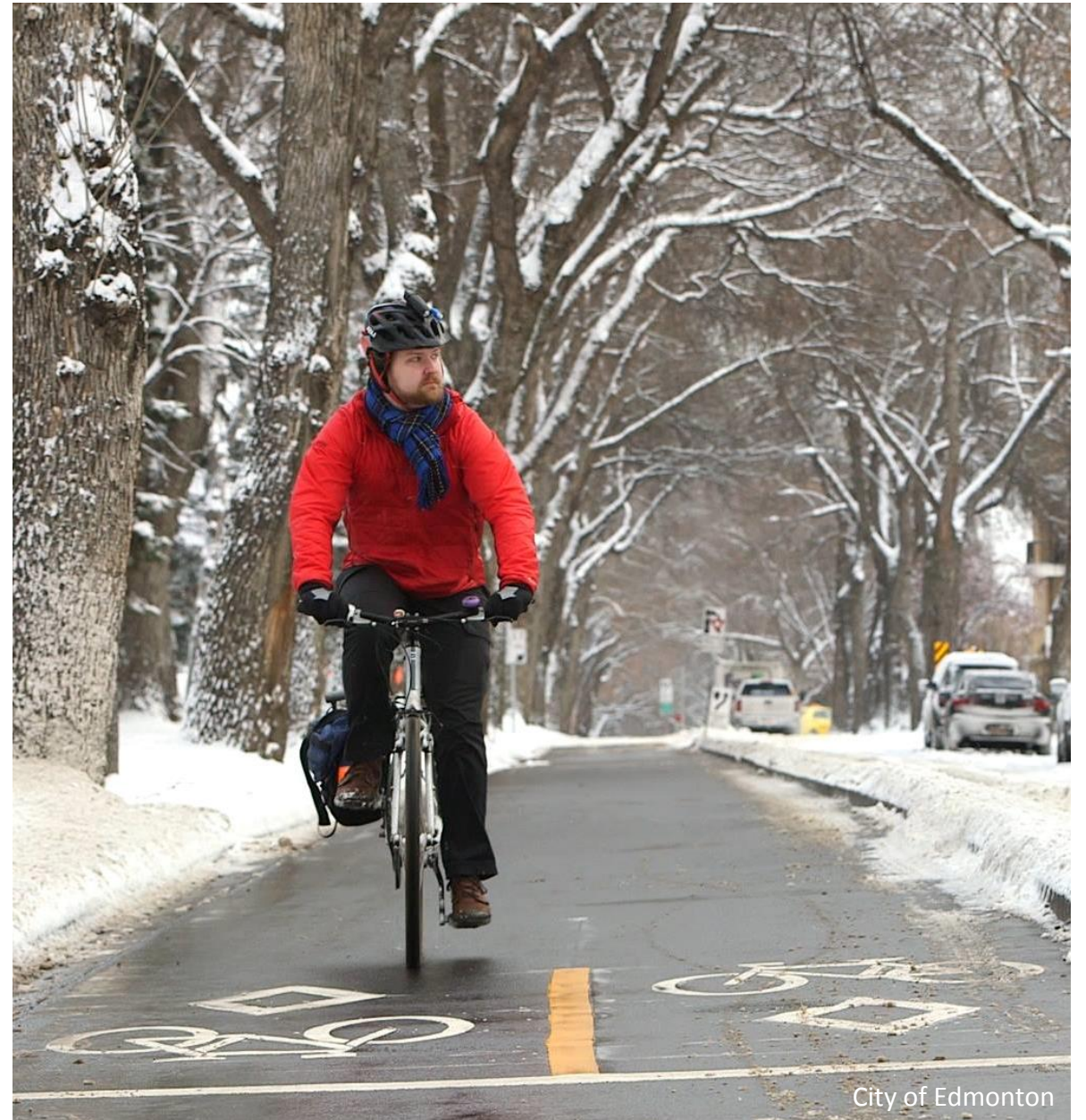




Winter Cycling

“I would say over the last ten years there’s been a definite transition from the thinking from how we provide a meaningful network of bike facilities to support biking in the summer to year-round. We’ve come to recognize the importance of the separated network.”

Interview participant from
Winnipeg





City of Vernon

Snow Clearing Strategy

“A couple of years ago we piloted something amazingly high-tech, it was a box filled with grit and sand, placed at key intersections in the downtown... where we have a lot of seniors.”

Interview participant from Vernon



Tourism Saskatoon

Most Important Strategies

“I begrudgingly admit that programming is probably very important early on because it’s a short-term easy win.”

Interview participant from Saskatoon



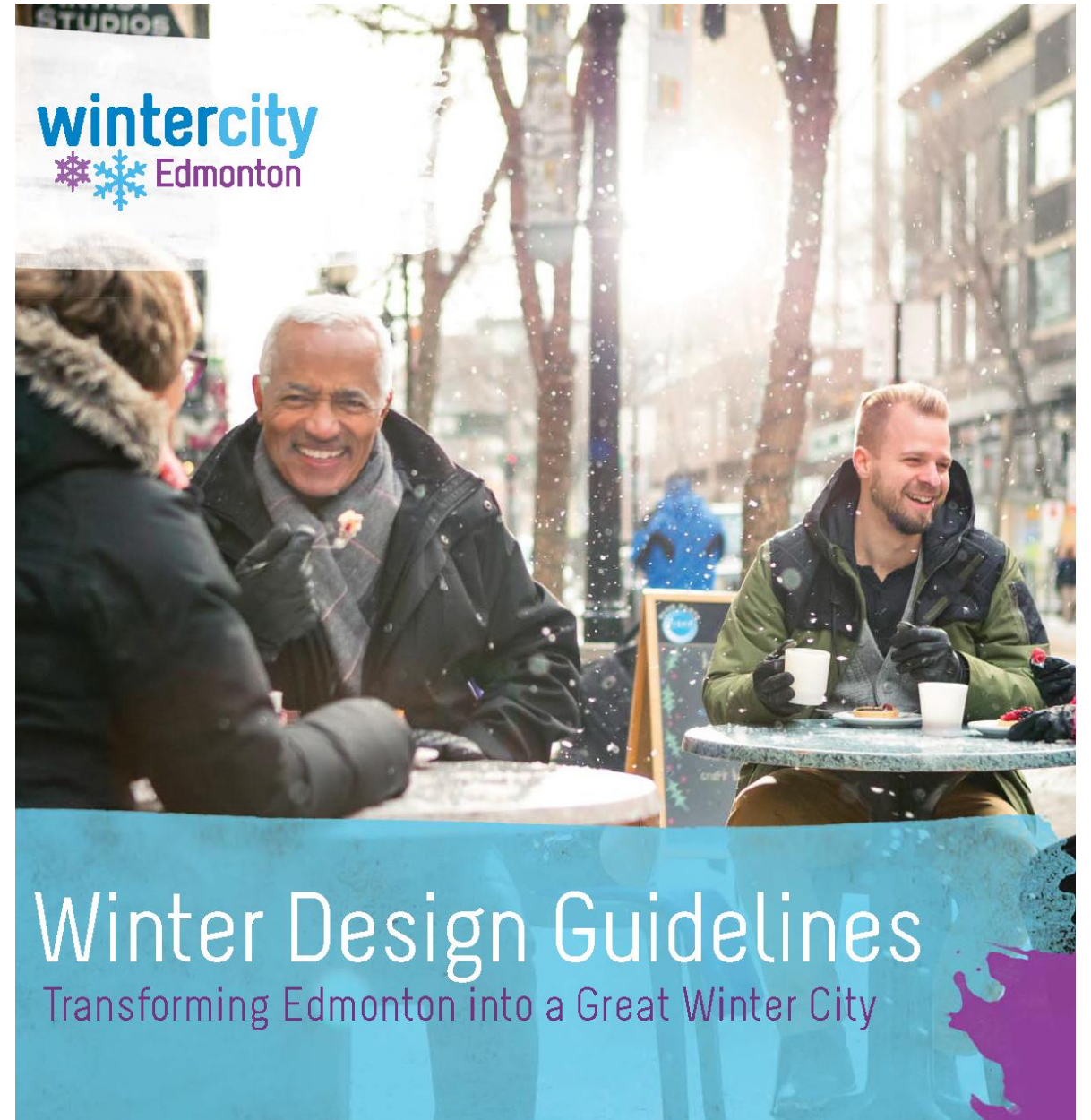
Putting it all Together

- ❄️ Policy Review
- ❄️ Promote Winter Positively
- ❄️ Comfortable, Year-Round, Public Spaces
- ❄️ Snow Management
- ❄️ Focus on Winter Design



A Quick Policy Win

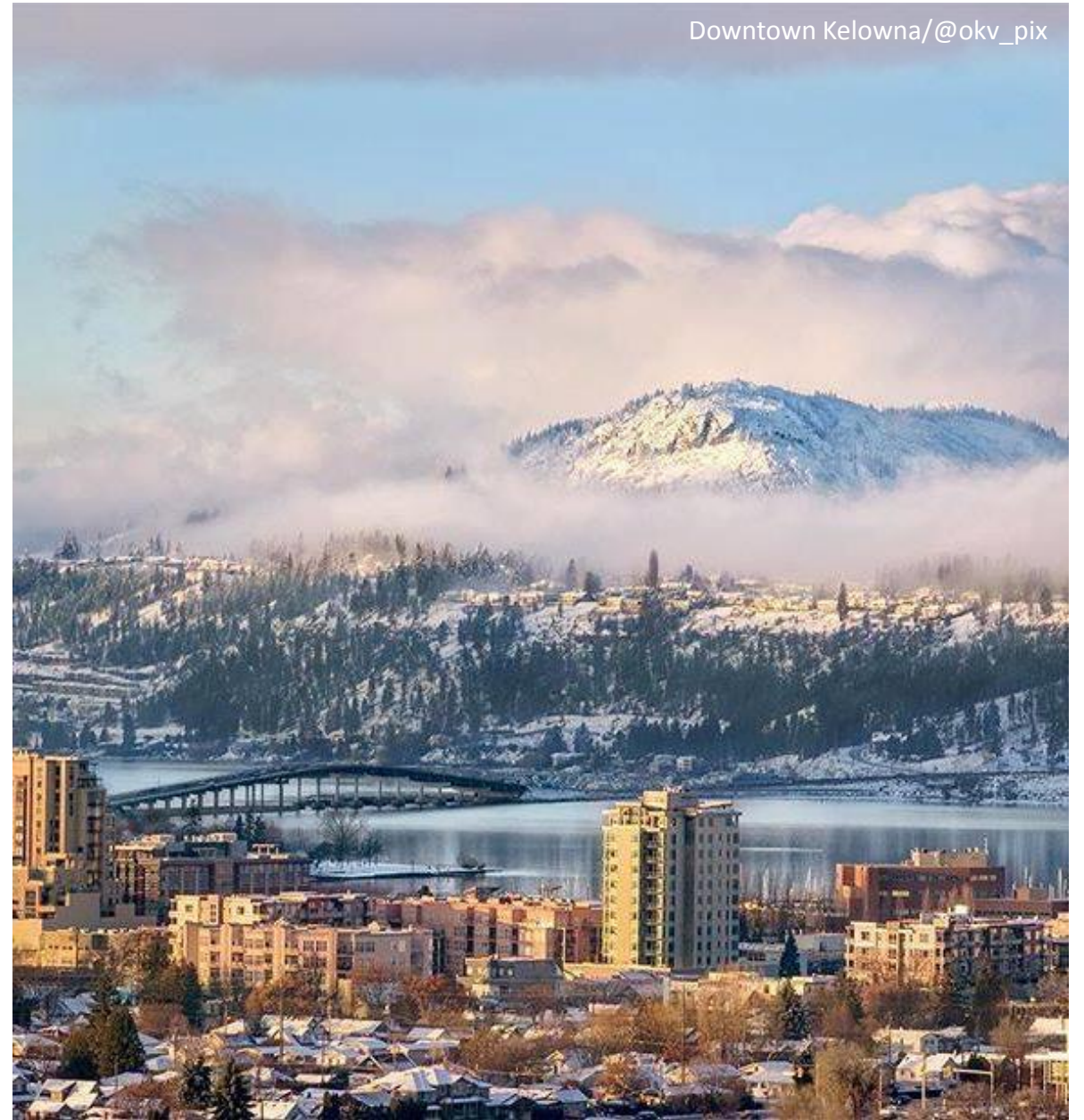
The research findings from this study identified that one of the most important considerations for planners working in winter cities is addressing winter and winter conditions in their design guidelines.





Focus on Winter Design

Cities need to incorporate winter design principles such as compact urban form, orientation of the built environment and developing an “Aesthetic for The North”, while testing innovative winter design ideas.





Guiding Policy

Key planning documents should both acknowledge the climate and four-season conditions while providing clear guidance for planners who must apply a winter lens when working on projects or new plans.





More Similar than Different

Overall the considerations and strategies that participants felt winter cities needed to be addressing were similar.



Tourism Vernon/Shelbi-Anne Arnold

Concluding Thoughts

Cities located in northern climates must address the unique seasonal conditions that they experience and begin applying a winter lens into their community planning policies and practices.

An aerial photograph of a winter forest. The trees are covered in snow, and a path or road is visible in the center. The lighting is soft, suggesting a low sun.

Thank you!

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