

## **Representation and Decision-making in Edmonton's Community Leagues: A Comparative Case Study**

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Edmonton, Alberta's community leagues provide a unique and informative example of a city-wide system of neighbourhood associations with a formally recognized role in municipal planning and governance. Numerous studies examine the democratic functions of neighbourhood associations, with a particular focus on participation and representation. This study seeks to understand how community leagues execute their role as neighbourhood representatives. This paper examines two community leagues' decision-making processes as they responded to developments which faced community opposition — in one case by supporting the development, in the other by serving as a neutral site of discussion. The cases examined are the Ritchie Community League's supportive response to a temporary homeless shelter that was appealed by residents in 2020, and the Evansdale Community League's neutral response to a proposed tiny homes village for homeless veterans in 2019-2020. The study finds that both community leagues were conscious of their expected role as neighbourhood representatives and viewed community engagement as an essential tool for understanding neighbourhood interests before acting on that role. In one case, volunteer capacity limited the league's ability to conduct community engagement and determine a representative position. In the other case, organizational and personal values, observed community needs, and an inclusive definition of community motivated the league to engage with the community and take a supportive position on the development. The study demonstrates the potential and challenges faced by neighbourhood associations as sites of local democracy and planning.