

Edmonton Is Designing a City That Thrives in Winter

BY JEN KINNEY | DECEMBER 13, 2016



Edmonton, Canada (Photo by Mack Male via Flickr)

For colder cities facing dropping temperatures, every aspect of the built environment that can trap heat and sun or soften the blow of icy wind goes a long way toward keeping the city vibrant year-round. In Edmonton, Canada, City Council approved a set of [winter design recommendations](#) Tuesday that codifies some of these best practices for chilly city planning.

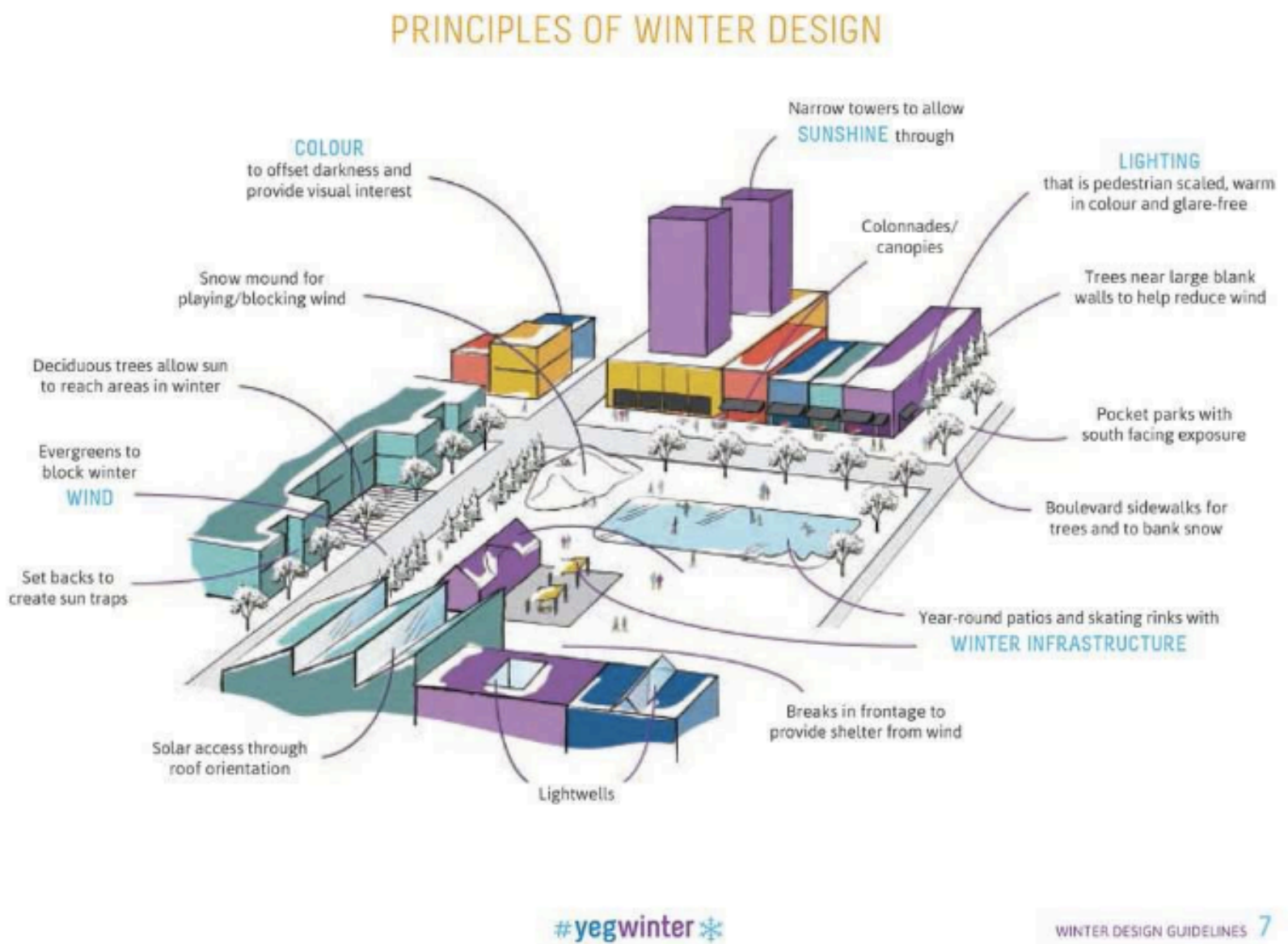
[According to the *Edmonton Journal*](#), those recommendations include adding balconies, trees and podiums to tall buildings to slow and redirect wind; installing push-button heaters at popular transit stops; raising crosswalks in pedestrian areas to keep them out of the snow; planting evergreen trees to slow wind in parks and on walking trails; and designing seating areas that are protected from the wind and face south to catch the sun. These all point to the guidelines' five core goals: using design to block wind, maximize sun exposure, enliven the winter landscape with color, create visual interest with light and provide infrastructure that supports winter living.

“We’ve done a really good job of creating hostile micro-climates,” said Council Member Ben Henderson, referring to downtown wind tunnels and north-facing patios.

Some winter design policies are already in place. Guidelines for tree planting — evergreens to block and disperse wind, deciduous trees to allow in light once their leaves are lost — have already been worked into the 2016 Design and Construction Standards.

Development officers can also ask for wind studies for some tall buildings under the current rules. But the *Edmonton Journal* notes there is little guidance about what degree of wind tunnel effect is acceptable, and no direct connection between a developer’s right to build a higher structure and a responsibility to soften the wind impact for pedestrians.

The newly adopted guidelines also consider beauty. Buildings should be colorfully painted and creatively lit, and trails should feature soft, glare-free lighting that preserves a “sense of mystery.”



(Credit: City of Edmonton)

Before the council approved the recommendations, Sue Holdsworth, Edmonton’s winter city coordinator, noted it would still be a challenge to turn them into bylaws and enforce them in private practice.

“They’re meaningless if they just sit on the shelf,” she said.

Rick Preston, executive director of Edmonton’s Urban Development Institute, suggested the city create a point of contact for developers who want to experiment with creative ways to meet the guidelines.

Holdsworth also said the upcoming Winter Cities conference, being hosted in Edmonton in February, may help public and private planners navigate the new design elements.

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City Trash “Archaeologists” Head to the Beach in Australia

BY ALAN GRABINKSY | DECEMBER 13, 2016



Tres Art Collective's 2011 installation at the Mexico City Museum used 300,000 cigarette butts. (Credit: Tres Art Collective)

In San Diego, 325,000 tons of household trash **will be collected** this year. **According to New York City**, its residents generate 12,000 tons of waste each day. In 2012, the World Bank **reported that** “world cities generate about 1.3 billion tons of solid waste per year,” and estimated that figure would be 2.2 billion tons by 2025.

While cities around the world set goals regarding **recycling** and **improving collection services**, one group of artists in Mexico City looks at trash as an important agent in public space, and examines how it behaves and what it communicates. Driven by an archeologist’s lust for preservation and a collector’s passion for rare items, Tres Art Collective has spent seven years tracking, preserving, categorizing and exhibiting trash. Their work has allowed them to tap into the hidden logic of consumption and disposal in cities from Manchester, England, to Hong Kong, and with their latest project, the artists are following urban disposal all the way to the coastline.

For **“Ubiquitous Trash,”** the group is scavenging Western Australian beaches on a fellowship from Harvard’s Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. The project is based on the idea that trash has no clear border.

“Soda bottles made in China may wash up on a beach in Mexico or Australia,” according to an artists’ statement on the Tres website, “or, medical waste from New York may be found on the beaches of Brazil or Iceland.”

The insight came during a project in Manchester, England, in 2015, where they engaged with trash found in the Manchester and Pennine waterways. It was the first time the group worked with a body of water.

“Every object we find is produced in at least five different countries and distributed in many others,” says Ilana Boltvinik, a co-founder of Tres. “And then, when it is disposed, it travels again, through sea.”

There has always been an element of shock in Tres’ exhibitions. For “Chicle y Pega,” they dressed in orange jumpsuits and worked on a stretch of sidewalk in downtown Mexico City to scrape up discarded chewing gum; the pieces were later shown in an art gallery. In “Huella Latente,” museum walls were covered with hundreds of thousands of cigarette butts. In “Transurification,” they displayed the distillation process of 80 different samples of urine, collected from plastic bottles around the city.

Since Boltvinik and co-founder Rodrigo Viñas established Tres in 2009, they’ve also produced games, dances and books related to trash.

The work is highly political, says Boltvinik: “By bringing what is socially deemed as waste to public view, we are training citizens to look at these objects, and the social relations behind them, as valuable.”

In other words, by seeing the way trash functions in the urban world, one also notices the human work needed to keep it out of view. There is a performative aspect of “scavenging” in a city center, Viñas thinks.

“In every city, trash collectors have a particular uniform and style, and the fact that we are the ones picking the items up, dressed in a different way, makes some people curious,” he says. “It changes our role and perception of the street.”

For the past few months, Tres members have been living in a camper and visiting Australia’s beaches, often under a blistering sun.



Tres Art Collective works on “Chicle y Pega.” (Credit: Tres Art Collective)

Their travel has allowed them to gain a glimpse into cultural differences, not only about how trash is managed, but also the perception of what is no longer deemed worthy of keeping.

“First-world countries are more wasteful,” Viñas says. “Here in Australia I’ve seen a drum set, computers and televisions in the garbage. This would never happen in Mexico.”

When asked if there are also commonalities, Boltvinik replies, “yes” immediately. “Plastic,” she says. “It is everywhere.”

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Alan Grabinsky is a journalist and consultant based in Mexico City covering globalization, media and urban issues.

TAGS: ARTS AND CULTURE, TRASH, RECYCLING
