

INVISIBLE CITY: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF URBAN IDENTITY FORMATION IN EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA

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ABSTRACT

The Canadian city of Edmonton, Alberta suffers from an underdeveloped sense of place and identity that results in its relative anonymity, especially when compared to its otherwise-similar southern neighbour Calgary. Research has shown that a strong sense of identity can have positive social and economic benefits for a city. This paper provides a critical analysis of the city's strategic approach to the development of an urban identity through the lens of its built form and its holistic brand and narrative. The analysis is supported by research from the fields of urban planning, human psychology, behavioural economics and marketing as well as the use of Austin, Texas and Chicago, Illinois as illustrative case studies. Finally, it provides evidence-based recommendations on how to approach fostering an urban identity in the city and the benefits of seeing its role as a facilitator and curator of organic potential.

Key Words: Brand; place; identity; Edmonton; Canada