Edmonton Vital Signs® is the first of an annual check-up conducted by Edmonton Community Foundation, in partnership with the Edmonton Social Planning Council, to measure how our community is doing on a specific issue; this year we are looking at food security. Community Foundations across Canada are reporting on how their communities are doing and how Canada is doing over all.

**What is Edmonton Vital Signs® 2013?**

**Why Food?**
Food is a major intersection where many challenges meet.

**Who we are**

**Edmonton Community Foundation**
Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) works with donors to support the causes important to them through gifts now and/or in their wills. Endowment funds are permanently invested for long-term growth. Over the past 24 years ECF’s assets have grown to almost $350 million and we have granted more than $150 million to charities and in scholarships.

**Edmonton Social Planning Council**
Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC) is an independent social research and analysis organization which has been operating in Edmonton for over 73 years. ESPC focuses on analyzing and responding to policy decisions that impact people living in low-income situations, including issues of homelessness, wage equity, and social supports and benefits. ESPC produces “Tracking the Trends” a report that analyses current social and economic updates on trends over a 25-30 year time frame.

**Legend**
- Edmonton: Red
- Community Kitchen: Blue
- Edmonton Community Foundation: Orange
- Edmonton Social Planning Council: Green

**Eat it Up**
Edmonton Food Map

For a full list of community organizations and how you can get involved see the listing on page 4.
Population (2012)
In 2012 Edmonton had the smallest population of Canada’s six largest metro areas, trailingToronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, and Ottawa.

Metro Edmonton Population
2012 1,230,056
2002 970,800
An increase of 25%
This is the second highest rate of growth among major metro areas trailing only Calgary.

Age
In 2011, 22.7% of Edmonton residents were 17 or younger, while only 21.9% were nationally. 11.4% of residents were 65 or older compared to 14.7% nationally.

65.0% of Metro Edmonton residents are of working age compared to 63.4% of working age nationally.

Aboriginal Peoples
Edmonton has the 2nd largest Aboriginal population of any metro area in Canada after Winnipeg. Aboriginal peoples is defined as First Nations, Metis or Inuit ancestry.

The five largest urban Aboriginal Identity populations in 2011 were Winnipeg (76,415), Edmonton (63,765), Vancouver (52,375), Toronto (36,990), and Calgary (33,375).

Wecan Food Basket
Wecan assists low and fixed-income individuals by arranging for food pickup in the week before their next monthly income arrives. It is essentially a budgeting tool that participants can rely on to ensure they have nutritious food available to them when finances are the tightest.

More than half of the recipients are sponsored by an agency that is helping them move from surviving to thriving. Participation in the program teaches individuals self-reliance and the importance of budgeting, rather than relying on soup kitchens and food banks when things get tight.

By purchasing a basket of food in advance - paid for by the first Friday of the month and delivered to the depot on the third Thursday of the month - participants are guaranteed that they will be able to feed their family to the end of the month.

Wecan works closely with a grocery supply warehouse to provide food for the hamper at a reduced rate. By using only one source for the food, volunteer drivers only have to make one stop before delivering food to the depots to be sorted.

How it works
Participants must become members of the Wecan Food Basket Society at a cost of $5 per year. They then pay the depot coordinator for their order by the first Friday of the month and pick up the order on the third Thursday of the month. Members can then choose from:

• Fresh and vegetable hampers including 3 types of fresh vegetables and 3 types of seasonal fruit at $15.
• Frozen meat hamper including 3 cuts of meat at $15, or
• Both for $25.

Advisory Committee
This report was created in consultation with the following individuals. We thank them for sharing their food security expertise.

Kayla Atkey 
Alberta Agriculture

Marjorie Benzec 
Edmonton’s Food Bank

Debbie Hubbard 
Sowing the Seeds

Laura McGowan 
Tourism Destination

Hani Quan 
Principal Planner

Jessie Radles 
Live Local Alberta

Carol Watson 
CoChair Vital Signs

Elizabeth Bombik

Communication Coordinator

John Kolkmann

Researcher
Diversity
Edmonton is becoming increasingly diverse. In 2011, three in ten residents were a visible minority. That is 254,000 people.

Rental Market
As of April 2013 the average 2 bedroom apartment rented for $1,007/month. This is an increase of 4.2% from April of 2012.
At 1.2% vacancy rate, Edmonton tied Calgary to have the lowest rate of any major Canadian city. 2.7% average of Canada’s 35 largest urban centres.

Newcomers
The number of New Canadians settling in Edmonton is increasing. We trail only Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Calgary. 2011 - 11,806 immigrants and refugees settled here. 2002 - 4,225 made Edmonton their permanent home.

The number of temporary foreign workers moving to Edmonton has been going up even faster, from 2,349 in 2002 to 7,699 in 2012.

Low Income Rates for All Persons, Children (LIM After-Tax)
In 2011, 123,000 persons (10.6%) in metro Edmonton lived in low income compared to the national rate of 12.6%, 39,000 children under 18 (15.4%) lived in low income.

Living in low income
2011: 10.6% of metro Edmonton - 123,000 people and 15.4% (39,000) were children under 18.
2001: 9.1% of metro Edmonton - 87,000 people and 12.9% (30,000) were children under 18.

The John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights received support from ECF for #FEBigDads, a human rights program delivered in local schools. ($9,990)

Mill Woods Bread Run
You may not have heard of a Bread Run but there are three of these food distribution centres in Edmonton.

A Bread Run, as the name suggests, is a place to get bread, but also vegetables, dairy and when really lucky, eggs. It is food assistance for low-income individuals as the offerings are free of charge.

Organized by volunteers like Don Grabinsky and Carla Janzen from the Millwoods Bread Run (located in Richfield Church), the food provided comes from local grocery stores and bakeries and is no longer saleable but still edible. Grabinsky and Janzen contact the stores looking for items they are about to throw out and pick them up for distribution at the church.

At the Millwoods Bread Run, serving an average of 20 families each Saturday (but has seen many as 40 families), distribution is on a first-come first-served basis. Recipients arrive early, add their name to the list and wait their turn – no additional information is collected. The waiting area is often a buzz of activity as the neighbours connect.

Volunteers, with the exception of Janzen and Grabinsky who are members of the organizing church, are also recipients. They arrive early and organize the groceries into categories; bread, dairy, fruits and vegetables, dry goods and on the rare occasion eggs or meat. As a thank you to the volunteers who assist, they get to “shop” first. Volunteers welcome the opportunity to give back for what they receive.

No money is charged for the items, but a donation tin is put out. The donations are then used to purchase a community BBQ or pancake breakfast.

The families have come to rely on the weekly supply of food. One participating family stated as he started coming to the Bread Run when he was laid off and had no income, but continues to come because it has allowed him to afford “luxury” items like a phone. Another participant stated that it is more convenient than taking the bus to the grocery store and makes a difference of $50 or more in her monthly budget.

The bread run serves mostly immigrants and those who need a continuous supplement to their income.

Janzen says that it is never known if there will be enough food to go around or if there will be extra left over. Left-overs are taken to the Youth Emergency Shelter. Organizers are confident that only those who need it are using it. Grabinsky tells us, “It is a matter of pride, no one will come unless they have to.”

Bread Run locations in Edmonton
Millwoods Bread Run 3715 86 Street
Garneau United Church Bread Run 11148 84 Ave
Freedom Centre Bread Run 4925-134 Ave
According to the most recent Canadian Community Health Survey, 12.3% (or 172,300) Alberta households experienced food insecurity in 2011. For Canada’s wealthiest province, this is a decidedly average performance and identical to the national average.

Food insecurity levels in Alberta (12.3%) 2.5% severely, 6.0% moderately, 3.7% marginally.

According to a recent Leger poll, “Half of Edmontonians (48%) agree that food security is a significant problem in Edmonton. They feel that solving this problem should be a combined effort between individuals and governments.”

Fruits and Vegetables Consumption Declines

In 2012, only 36% of residents in the Edmonton Zone of Alberta Health Services consumed fruits and vegetables the recommended five servings per day, compared to 40% of Canadians.

Edmonton’s Food Bank

Edmonton’s Food Bank is a central warehouse and referral centre, which distributes donated or surplus food to more than 200 agencies, churches and food depots that provide food services to people in need.

Edmonton’s Food Bank used a grant from ECO to buy new electric pallet jacks for their warehouse. ($26,000)

Food services can be in the form of food hamper, meals and/or snacks. In March, 2013, 12,677 individuals per month receive donated food through the hamper program alone. 40% of clients are children. The Food Bank distributed 3.2 million kilograms of food in 2012. The approximate value of this food is over $17,000,000.

Children disproportionately live in food insecure households. In 2011, 17.9% of children in live in food insecure household slightly above the national average. Over one in three (35.1%) of lone parent households experience food insecurity.

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Cost of Nutritious Food Basket

The cost of a nutritious food basket for a family of four in metro Edmonton averaged $220 per week for the first half of 2013. The cost of a nutritious food basket is based on requirements for an adequate and healthy diet based on supermarket food purchases.

In 2003, the cost of a nutritious food basket for the same family was $133 per week. The increase in food costs is more than double the increase in overall inflation over the same time period.

Youth Obesity Increases

In 2012, of those aged 12-17, 29.9% of those in the Edmonton area are considered overweight or obese in comparison to the national average of 21.8%. Moreover, data on Edmonton youth considered overweight or obese become available starting in 2005.

In 2005, when data first became available, the rate was 18.6%. So it trending up.

Food insecurity is closely linked to a lack of household income. One-third of households below the Low Income Measure poverty line experience food insecurity.

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How You Can Get Involved

Agriculture for Life
www.agricultureforlife.ca
Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development
www.Lգ6h.gov.ca/Departments/depdocs/cat/AC/403.3179
City of Edmonton - FRESH Strategy
www.edmonton.ca/city_government/food/2012/freshstrategy.html
Edmonton’s Food Bank
www.edmontonsfoodbank.com
Fruits of Sherbrook
fruitsofsherbrook.ca
Greater Edmonton Alliance/Local Food Team
www.localfoodteam.org
Growing Food Security in Alberta
www.foodsecurityalberta.org
Live Local Alberta
www.livelocal.ca
Operation Fruit Rescue
www.operationfruitrescue.org
Team Food Edmonton
www.teemfoodedmonton.org
WECAN Food Basket Society
www.wecanfood.com
Edmonton Organic Growers Guild
www.ogg.org
Localize: The Story of Where Your Food Comes From
www.localizeyourfood.com
Slow Food Edmonton
www.slowfoodedmonton.com
Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association (AFFPA)
www.affpa.org
E4C Community Garden Project
www.e4c.ca/programmes/services/nutrition-community/community-garden
Community Supported Agriculture in Alberta
www.csalexport.com
On Borrowed Ground
www.onborrowedground.ca
The Local Good
www.thelocalgood.ca
Alberta Food Bank Network Association
www.abfna.ca
The Alberta Farmers Market Association
www.albertamarkets.ca
Sustainable Food Edmonton
www.sustainablefoodedmonton.org
Edmonton Permaculture
www.edmontonpermaculture.ca
Breakfast for learning
www.breakfastforlearning.ca/services/info/regions/alberta/APPLE Schools - Alberta Project Promoting active Living & healthy Eating
www.appleedmonton.ca
University Food Bank
www.universityfoodbank.com
Grant MacEwan Food Bank
www.facebook.com/GrantMacEwanFoodBank
Community Kitchens - Coming Together to Plan and Cook Meals
Diane Thumby, Alberta Health Services Collective Kitchens Coordinator 780-735-3044
Hope Mission
www.hopemission.com
LIVINGbridge
www.livingbridgeedm.com

Food Security

Food Insecurity Grows

Food security in this report means all people at all times have physical and economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods. - World Health Organization

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www.albertamarkets.ca
Sustainable Food Edmonton
www.sustainablefoodedmonton.org
Edmonton Permaculture
www.edmontonpermaculture.ca
Breakfast for learning
www.breakfastforlearning.ca/services/info/regions/alberta/APPLE Schools - Alberta Project Promoting active Living & healthy Eating
www.appleedmonton.ca
University Food Bank
www.universityfoodbank.com
Grant MacEwan Food Bank
www.facebook.com/GrantMacEwanFoodBank
Community Kitchens - Coming Together to Plan and Cook Meals
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Hope Mission
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LIVINGbridge
www.livingbridgeedm.com
Growing Locally

Farmer’s Market
As of the summer of 2013, there are 12 farmers’ markets within the City of Edmonton and 13 farmers’ markets in surrounding communities within the metro area. An estimated $724 million of total sales took place in Alberta farmers’ market in 2012 (about a third is from Edmonton markets based on relative population share).

Community Gardens
There are over 80 community garden sites in metro Edmonton. Many of the gardens are located in higher density areas where residents do not have access to land on their own property. The gardens vary widely in terms of number of plots, growing medium (raised beds or in-ground), and growing techniques.

High Quality Soils
The City of Edmonton is located on some of the best agricultural soils in the country. The highest concentration of Class 1 farmland in the province is located within the Edmonton region. Most of these soils have high levels of organic matter, drain well, and are of sufficient depth to pose no significant limitations for agricultural production.

Number of Farms
There are 3,591 farms in metro Edmonton with 5,270 farm operators. 73 of those farms are with 95 operators within the City of Edmonton.

Edmonton’s growing urban footprint led to a dramatic reduction in the number of city farms (from 570 in 2006) as well as an 80% decline in area farmed. Some of the reduction may be due to farms moving their headquarters outside City boundaries in advance of urban development.

Types of Farms
Due to their proximity to a large urban market, a larger proportion of farms in metro Edmonton are involved with potato, vegetable and fruit production, greenhouse and tree nursery production, and specialty animal breeding compared to the provincial average. These types of farms also require a smaller land base compared to grain, oilseed or cattle ranching to generate a comparable level of income.

Lady Flower Gardens
More than 20 km from city centre on the north eastern edge of the City, lies Lady Flower Gardens. It is one of the few farms within Edmonton city limits and despite the name the garden is home to vegetables not flowers.

For the past two years, the garden, which is entirely volunteer run, has invited volunteers from Hope Mission, The Mustard Seed, Bissell Centre and others to farm their own plot of land. This five acre garden is more than a source for fresh food; it is a place where individuals can make a connection to others. In fact, some volunteer to garden just for the opportunity to find peace away from the inner-city. Kelly Mills, one of the two organizers behind the garden says, “This has become a space for people to rejuvenate and find solace and peace in the earth and nature.

When Mills met Doug Visser, of nearby Riverbend Gardens, she told him about her dream to have a space where organizations feeding vulnerable individuals can grow fresh vegetables. Doug knew just how to make this happen.

Visser, retired from farming, provides the expertise to the volunteers. Mills, a dental hygienist by trade, donates her time at the garden every Wednesday - rain or shine.

Neither receives compensation for their work at the garden and in addition Mills also spends many hours communicating with the groups and helping them coordinate volunteers. “They do it because they want to bring the community together.”

In addition to nutritional benefit the garden brings to the organizations’ food programs, some have been able to sell produce for additional revenue. Hope Mission’s Youth Shift Program raised over $1300 selling sweet corn at the Edmonton Valley Zoo on Saturdays throughout the month of August, and Bissell Centre is looking into using their plot to make a soup they can sell with the vegetables that have been tended by community members.

In a traditional way that seems foreign to the Canadian gardeners. Appreciatively Visser feels we have a lot to learn from others.

Mills says, “It’s very cool to see them using gardening techniques from their countries of origin.”
Composting with Mark Stumpf-Allen

According to Mark there are six easy things you can do to increase your food security and reduce your waste:

1. Leave grass clippings.
   Rather than bagging the clippings and putting them out for waste pick up, leave them in the grass. This is known as ‘grasscycling’ and it keeps the moisture in the soil and quickly decomposes to naturally fertilize your lawn. “We can reduce our waste by 20% by doing this and it is less work for you.”

2. Plant food in place of grass.
   Even a small garden will yield a fair amount of food and reduce your grocery costs. If you live in an apartment or condo, then plant food in pots on your balcony.

3. Return food to the soil, close the loop on food.
   Don’t throw your organic waste in the trash, compost it. A bucket of scraps will become nutrients for the soil. Anyone can compost, the only science to it is to keep it moist and stir it occasionally. Composting can be done in a pile, but most often is done in a container. Even individuals in apartments can compost with a water tight container on their balcony.

4. Improve your waste education.
   Visit the local waste centre to learn where your waste goes. Edmonton has a world class recycling facility - the largest in North America. Since we pay for it, we should know what it does and see the waste we create. The Edmonton Waste Management Centre offers tours to individuals on Friday afternoons. The tour is two hours long and not recommended for children under nine. Call 780-496-6879 to make a reservation to attend a tour.

5. Keep it simple.
   You are more likely to continue if it is easy to do. Keep your composter near the door, rather than at the back of the yard so it is accessible regardless of weather. Try planting just one kind of vegetable and enjoy the harvest. Do what works for you. Even on a small scale you can help reduce waste and improve your food security; the key is to keep composting.

6. Find out more.
   There is several workshops on composting you can attend in the spring. There are also many organizations that will assist you either with planting or composting or both. If you don’t have access to a garden, consider looking into a community garden.

Mark offers that if you want more information on composting to contact him at compost@edmonton.ca.