

Communication sent Nov. 22, 2020 to Airdrie Council, BZP Steering Committee and all participants associated with the Airdrie Blue Zones Project.

Good Afternoon Airdrie Blue Zones Project Participants,

Touching everyone, our families, our communities, and all corners of the world, COVID-19 has dramatically impacted our lives this year, leaving the future shrouded in uncertainty. There is little it hasn't touched and, going forward, this now includes the Airdrie Blue Zones Project.

While we continue to believe in the difference it will make, we are disappointed to announce that the Airdrie Blue Zones Project, as we have known it, will be not be moving forward in the community.

In this current environment, many organizations, schools, workplaces, restaurants, and community groups have urgent other priorities, including their own continuity and long-term sustainability. Within our health care system itself, there are significant other, un-related changes and modifications being announced. Much of the Blue Zones model depends on public engagements and events. With this it is impossible to proceed to test and measure systemic changes such as those related to Blue Zones implementation.

At the local level we have also heard from many of our larger businesses, school boards, community not-for-profits, local restaurants and local government, that they just do not have the capacity to add any new programming to their workloads as they deal with challenges within their own organizations.

The Airdrie Blue Zones Project is a community-wide, evidence-based approach to improve health and wellbeing in making the healthier choice the easier choice easier for everyone. The Airdrie Blue Zones Project was to engage with the community to create an even better place to live, work, play and worship using the Power9 principles learned from the longest-lived populations in the world. When the entire community participates – from worksites and schools to restaurants and grocery stores – small changes contribute to huge benefits for all of us, lowered healthcare costs, improved productivity, and ultimately a higher quality of life.

One of the positive outcomes for the ABZP is that COVID has changed many of our habits that align with the outcomes that are associated with what the Airdrie Blue Zones Project was trying to achieve. Due to the pandemic people are choosing to walk more, eat better; we have seen many people grow their own gardens for the first time; family and friend connections have been even more important to us now than they have ever been, and people are taking the time to downshift and think about what their purpose is and what is really important to them. All positive things that we need to continue to do to lead healthy and happy lives.

All of the work to “Canadianize” the BZP framework and to build the specific plan for implementation in Airdrie was completed. Over 400 residents, leaders, and business owners were engaged prior to the COVID shutdown. Much of the input, conclusions, and recommendations could be used by the City of Airdrie, community groups, and health care partners so that they can continue with their goal to create Canada's Healthiest City.

Completed Blueprint Report (Business Plan)

- From December 2019 through February 2020, the Blues Zones Project Airdrie team, along with experts in built environment, food and tobacco policy, came together in Airdrie to understand the community's unique strengths, challenges and opportunities in undertaking the first BZP initiative in Canada. During the Foundation and Planning Phase, key leaders and groups within the community expressed unanimous support for BZP in Airdrie by participating in focus groups, one-on-one stakeholder meetings, and community tours. While the majority of engagement during the Foundation and Planning Phase was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the project team remained committed to ensure the project continues in a way that aligns with the community reality post pandemic.
- 214 community leaders met with the ABZP team and committed to make Airdrie a better place to live, work and play. They worked to create community-wide health and well-being improvement. This group included community members, leaders in the school system, business community, government, faith-based organizations and civic groups.

Completed Summit reports:

- Built Environment
- Food Environment
- Tobacco

Canadianized Blue Zones Projects Pledge forms:

- Workplace Pledges
- School Pledges
- Grocery Stores Pledges
- Restaurants Pledges
- Organizational Checklist

Canadianized Blue Zones Projects Policy menus

- Built Environment Menu
- Food Environment Menu
- Tobacco Menu

Developed an Albertan Blue Zones Project Playbook that is the road map for Airdrie and other Alberta communities to implement the project in better times.

Worked with Alberta Blue Cross in developing a Canadianized Well-Being Measurement Tool

We would like to thank our donors, funders, partners and each and every one of you who helped championed the project from its inception. While the Blue Zones Project is not moving forward we encourage you, as leaders in the community, to continue to ensure that you, your family, friends and employees work on leading healthier lives during these times and for the communities well-being.

THANK YOU from the entire Airdrie Blue Zones Team for all your efforts and supporting us through this incredible journey.

Stay Healthy,

Kent Rupert

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