

YOURSPACE OURSPACE

Big Dream: All young people in Calgary are seen, heard and respected as citizens of our community. Youth, in all of their diversity, are honoured. Their voice serves as a catalyst for community change. As a result, Calgary is a stronger, more resilient city and a nurturing, exciting place to live.

We talked to over 200 youth and 100 adults over the last two months. We talked to youth on the street, youth in group homes, youth in high schools, youth in junior high schools, youth with disabilities, youth in conflict with the law. We talked to adults who work with youth, care about youth. We talked to the “movers and shakers” in our community.

We were blown away. There is a hunger out there for intergenerational connection. Youth want to connect with adults; adults want to connect with youth. Youth want to belong, to be safe.

We listened, took notes. We mapped what was going on. We rewrote boring documents. We read about engaging youth. We thought. We discussed what to do. We muddled. We had moments of clarity.

What we do know for sure is that the community is excited, we must move forward. We have to focus, build on past success.

Common themes started to emerge. They are: seeking connections, being creative, being active, having places to be, using technology. Here is how we plan to focus:

We hope to create space for connections between youth, especially marginalized, disengaged youth, and adults that changes our community. What if the adult world was less hostile, more approving, assisting young people towards a steady, compassionate integration? We want to use *creativity, activity, place and technology* to do just that.

We'll create four community activity circles – creativity, activity, place, and technology – guided by a facilitation circle. Each community activity circle will be made up of 10 youth and 10 adults who will be partnered together in a buddy system. Each community activity circle will have money to spend on good work. Each will:

- Select an initiative that leads to some kind of social change;
- Concentrate on engaging youth, especially marginalized and disengaged youth;
- Use big picture thinking;
- Build on existing strengths and assets in the community;
- Collaborate with all sectors;
- Build on the interests and ideas of youth;
- Have fun.

Activity Community Action Circle: Being active or moving about – the execution of energy. All about doing something.

Example of an Activity Dream: *Separate and public high schools are open until midnight and "Night Hoops" is available in every school. Night Hoops is a late night basketball program for youth, especially vulnerable youth. Its goal is to use basketball as a vehicle to promote asset development in a supported environment. Neighbourhood adults coach and play with the teams – friendships develop.*

Place Community Action Circle: A particular portion of space – either physical or positional. All about coming together.

Example of a Place Dream: *Business, families, supportive adults and youth come together to create an initiative to encourage adults and youth to have dinner together – marginalized youth are a primary focus. On Thursdays, people leave work early, which is endorsed by employers across the city. Adults and youth prepare and eat a meal together and have a rich conversation about what's going on in their lives and in the world.*

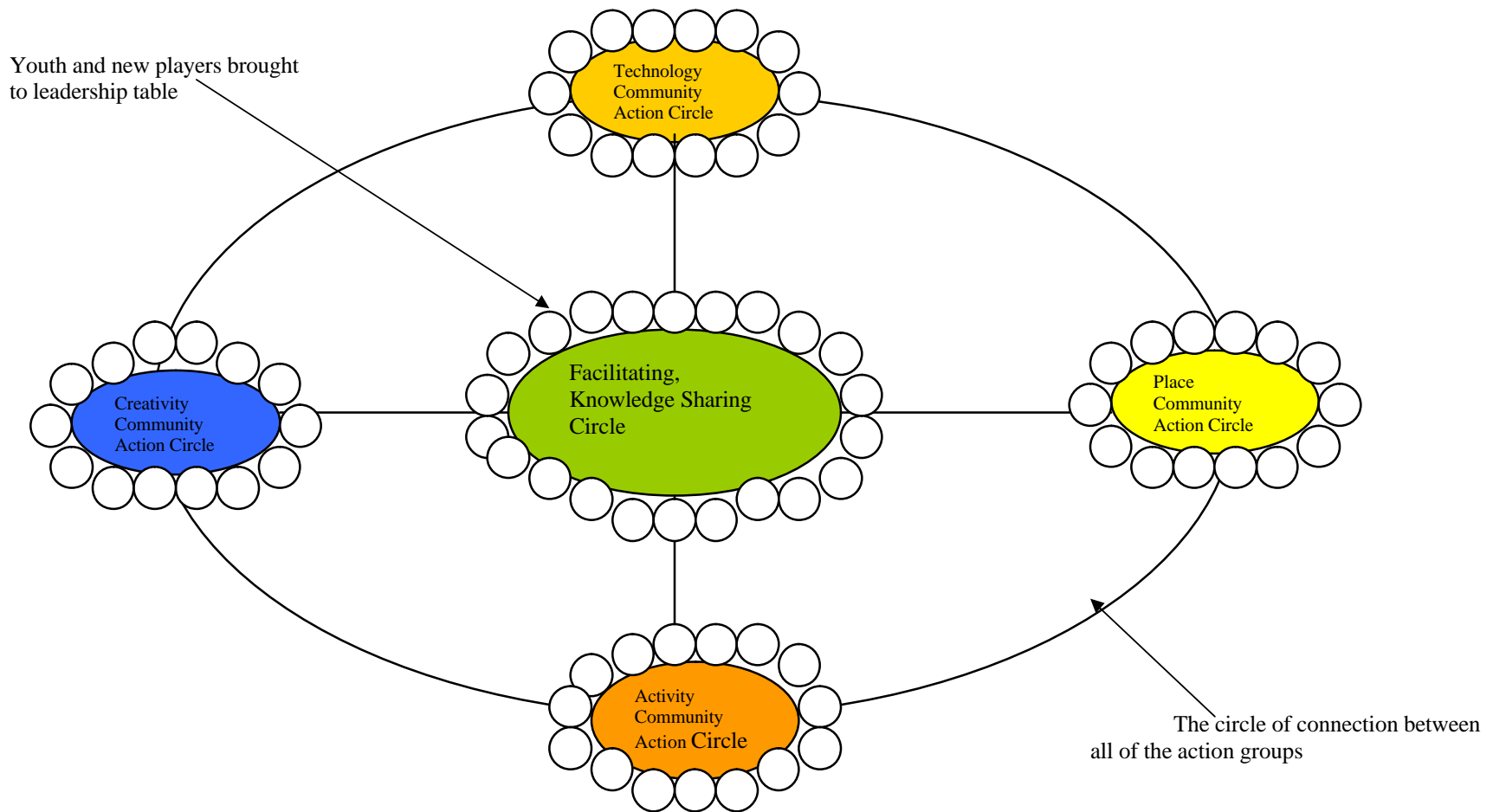
Creativity Community Action Circle: Involving imaginative ways to create something. All about thinking outside the box.

Example of a Creativity Dream: *Urban Youth Worx has a unique, mobile service delivery. It goes to the community in their setting, brainstorms about the concern, and provides resources to help discover new ways to engage youth to be part of the solution. This involves contracting an artist to work with the youth and involved community members*

Technology Community Action Circle: Use of mechanical arts and applied sciences. All about cyber space.

Example of a Technology Dream: *A web portal for youth, Calgary Urban Vibe's primary objectives are to connect youth to youth, connect youth to resources enhance communication and coordination within the youth-serving sector give youth a greater voice in Calgary. It is created, managed and directed by youth.*

How we're going to work¹



¹ Bopp, M. & Bopp, J. (2001) *Recreating the World: A practical Guide to Building Sustainable Communities*. Four Worlds Press, Calgary, Canada