



# Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy

Phase 3 What We Heard Report

| **SHARE** YOUR VOICE  
**SHAPE** OUR CITY

**Edmonton**

June 2024 | [edmonton.ca/OldStrathPublicRealm](https://edmonton.ca/OldStrathPublicRealm)

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# INTRODUCTION

## Shaping the Future: Edmontonians' ideas and feedback guide the Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy

Phase 3 of the Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy builds upon the valuable input gathered from Edmontonians during Phases 1 and 2. Phase 1, conducted from August 10 to 28, 2024, invited residents, businesses, and community stakeholders to contribute their insights and ideas regarding public spaces. Phase 2, held from February 13 to March 5, 2023, collected feedback on a series of design concepts representing various improvement options. This feedback was categorized into Guiding Themes: Mobility & Movement, Open Space & Activities, Inclusion & Equity, and Comfort & Safety.

For a full summary, refer to the [Phase 1](#) and [Phase 2](#) "What We Heard" reports available at [edmonton.ca/OldStrathPublicRealm](https://edmonton.ca/OldStrathPublicRealm).

This *What We Heard Report* marks a pivotal point in our journey. It encapsulates the preliminary insights and lessons collected from half a dozen engagement sessions from over 1500 participants. The feedback collected will guide the refinement of the strategy and inform future implementation endeavours.

The objectives of the Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy, having completed its final phase, remain the same. The strategy will:

- + Imagine a new future for parks, plazas, sidewalks, streets, alleys and parking lots
- + Prioritize pedestrians on Whyte Avenue and the addition of mass transit.
- + Add to the vibrant and diverse opportunities for people to live, work and play within Old Strathcona and surrounding neighbourhoods.



IMAGE PROJECT AREA



# **Public Engagement Approach**



# WHO WAS ENGAGED

The City is committed to involving people affected by the decisions it makes, and seeks diverse opinions, experiences and information to represent a wide spectrum of perspectives in the process. The City's GBA+ (Gender-Based Analysis +) framework also guides the project to consider identity factors, reduce barriers to inclusion, and ensure equitable outcomes.

**General Public:** This report summarizes the findings from Phase 3 Public Engagement, which collected feedback from local residents, visitors and patrons.

**Stakeholder Groups:** A Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was established (at the start of the project in 2022) as a diverse and collaborative group of area stakeholders to support the work on the Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy. During Phase 3, representatives were from the:

- + Strathcona Community League and neighbouring leagues
- + Old Strathcona Business Association
- + Old Strathcona Farmers Market
- + Edmonton Fringe Theatre
- + The Yardbird Suite
- + Paths for People

Other organizations who previously participated on the CAC during Phase 1 and Phase 2 were: Youth Empowerment & Support Services (YESS), Senior Citizen Opportunity Neighbourhood Association (SCONA), Old Strathcona Youth Society

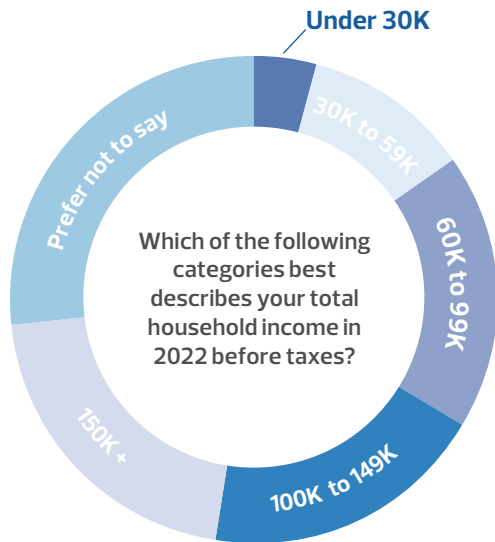
(OSYS), Pride Corner, Garneau Community League, and Queen Alexandra Community League. They continued to receive updates and were welcome to continue participating.

Similar to Phase 1 and Phase 2, the project team did presentations to the Community Advisory Committee to gather feedback. An information kit was also provided to help representatives inform their groups or organizations about the engagement, and how their networks could participate.

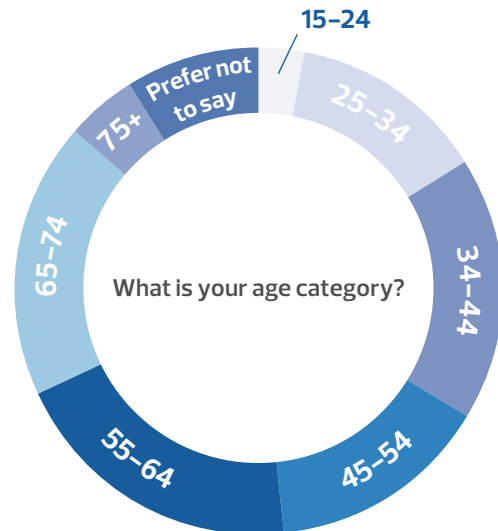
Other inquiries or opportunities provided additional avenues to present to or gather input from different interested parties. Examples included the Strathcona Community League, Ritchie Community League, Old Strathcona Area Community Collaborative (OSACC), Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre and Edmonton's Accessibility Advisory Committee.

## Summary of the Survey Demographics

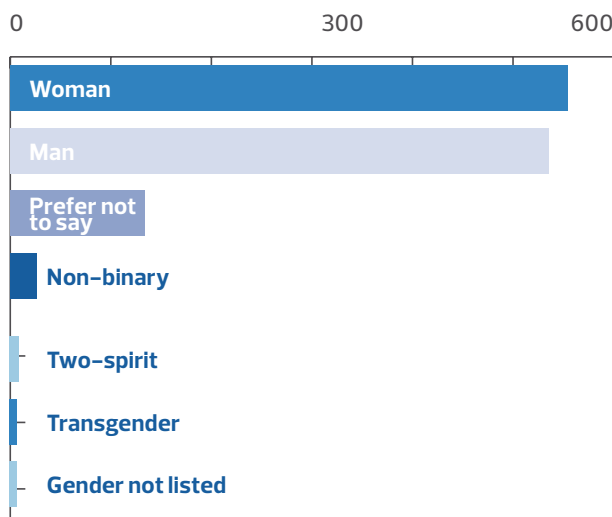
To better understand who is—and is not—participating in the public engagement process, below are the demographics shared by survey participants (n.b. demographic information was collected as part of the survey and only represents survey respondents).



**Income:** 40 percent of respondents reported an income of \$100,000 or more, 15 percent reported less than \$60,000, and 26 percent chose not to respond or selected “other.”

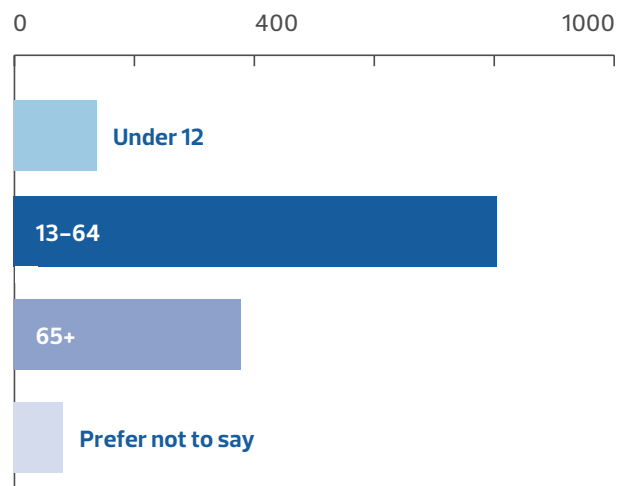


**Age Distribution:** Of the 1212 responses received, the 55–64 age bracket had the most participation at 20 percent followed by the 65–74 and 35–44 age groups. 9 percent preferred not to answer, and 3 percent were under 24.



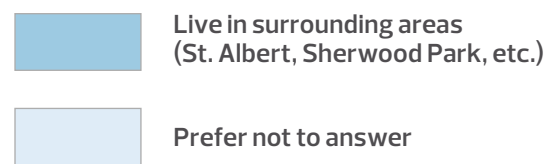
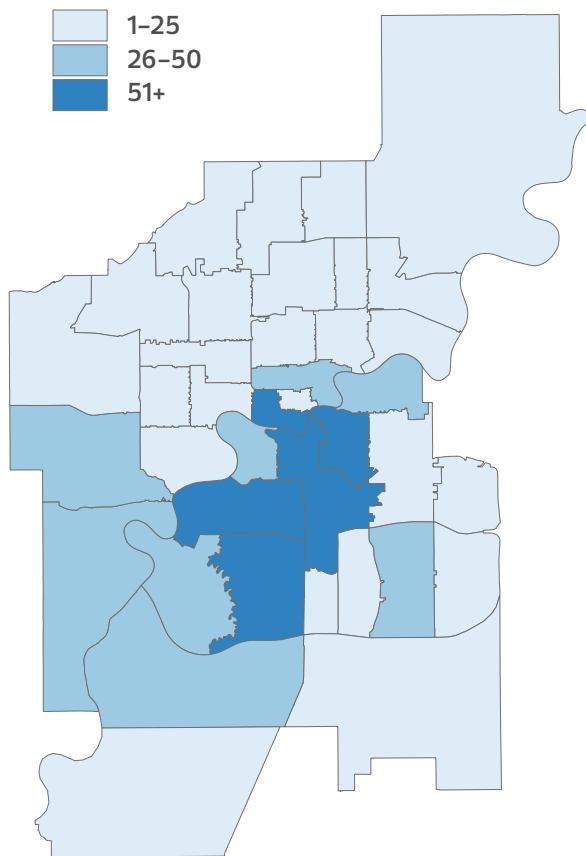
**What gender do you identify as?** Please select all that apply.

**Gender:** Women and men accounted for the highest response rates at 44 percent and 43 percent, respectively. Eleven percent preferred not to indicate their gender, and 5 percent identified as gender diverse.



**Which of the following describes your household?** We have people in our household aged...

**Household Description:** 67 percent of respondents have members aged 13–64, 12 percent have children 12 or younger, 32 percent have members over 65, and 7 percent did not respond.



**What are the first three digits of your postal code?**

**Location of respondents by first three digits of postal code:** 95 percent of respondents indicated that they lived in Edmonton, with 22 percent living in Old Strathcona, 2 percent living in surrounding communities, and 2 percent preferred not to answer.

## Conclusions on Survey Process

Based on the data collected, the highest proportion of respondents were between the ages of 55–64 (twenty percent of survey participants), while only three percent of respondents were under 24 years old. Gender representation is balanced between women and men, though some respondents chose not to disclose their gender, and acknowledgment of gender-diverse groups comprised five percent of respondents. The income distribution of survey respondents ranged from 40 percent of respondents earning \$100K and above, and fifteen percent reported an income of less than \$60K. The majority of respondents reside in Edmonton, particularly in Old Strathcona. Household compositions typically include members between the ages of 13 to 64, but there is also a need to consider families with children and aging populations, which collectively represent 44 percent of households with members under 12 years or over 65 years. These findings highlight the importance of inclusivity, representation, and understanding diverse community needs for effective decision-making and community engagement initiatives.

# HOW WE ENGAGED

Phase 3 Public Engagement was open for feedback from March 18 to April 7, 2024. To reach a wide range of Edmontonians and visitors, a variety of methods and tools were used to generate awareness and encourage participation.

## Communications



### **Social Media & Project Webpage**

Posts and project updates on the City of Edmonton's Website, Facebook and Twitter accounts.



### **Postcards**

Postcards were mailed to 20,000 households and businesses in the area and beyond.



### **Direct Emails**

Direct emails to residents and identified stakeholder organizations.



### **Promotional Cards**

Business cards with the project website were distributed at the drop-in session to encourage at-home participation.



### **CAC Info Kit**

An 'Information Kit' was prepared for the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to help update their organizations and networks about the project and engagement opportunities.



### **Promos at ETS stations**

Digital billboards at the University and McKernan-Belgravia LRT stations promoted the project and engagement.

## Engagement



### **Online Public Survey**

The online survey, hosted on the project and Engaged Edmonton webpages, and distributed to the Edmonton Insight Community was the primary means to collect feedback in Phase 3.



### **Printed Public Survey**

A paper version of the survey was available for pick-up at the Strathcona Public Library and at the in-person session.





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**Engaged  
Edmonton  
Webpage**

Engaged Edmonton included an 'Ask a Question' tool enabling people to pose a question that the project team replied to.

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**Chat with a Project  
Team Member**

Three weeks of appointments were available for the public to schedule one-on-one calls for feedback or questions.

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**Drop-in Session**

On April 4, 2024 the project team set-up displays and hosted conversations with members of the public to gather feedback.

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**Online Sessions**

Online sessions were hosted when requested by stakeholders and committee groups.

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**Project Email**

The project email address, [oldstrathpublicrealm@edmonton.ca](mailto:oldstrathpublicrealm@edmonton.ca), provided an opportunity for the public to provide feedback or inquiries directly to the project team.

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**311 Calls**

Callers to the City of Edmonton's 311 resource were directed to the project website and invited to participate in the survey or connect with the team through the project email.

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# WHAT WAS ASKED

## Public Survey

During Phase 3 of engagement, a public survey was used to gather input on the strategy's considerations, trade-offs and opportunities for each action to help with possible adjustments needed for successful implementation. The survey was open for feedback from March 18 to April 7, 2024 and gathered responses from 1212 participants.

WHAT WE ASKED	WHY WE ASKED
<p><b>Key Actions Selection</b></p> <p><b>Q1:</b> Which key actions would you like to review and provide feedback on? Select all that apply.</p>	Invited participants to choose their preferred actions.
<p><b>Key Actions 1 to 7 (same question asked)</b></p> <p><b>Q2 to Q8</b> Thinking about the key considerations and trade-offs and opportunities, what, if any, suggestions do you have to improve or enhance them? Please include why you think this is important.</p>	Opportunity to suggest adjustments or identify an element or consideration that may have been missed.
<p><b>Additional Open Space Recommendations</b></p> <p><b>Q9:</b> What, if any, suggestions do you have to improve or enhance them? Please include why you think this is important.</p>	
<p><b>Additional Mobility Recommendations</b></p> <p><b>Q10:</b> What, if any, suggestions do you have to improve or enhance them? Please include why you think this is important.</p>	Opportunity to suggest adjustments or identify an element or consideration that may have been missed.
<p><b>Implementation</b></p> <p><b>Q11:</b> Is there anything else you think we need to consider under implementation, and why?</p>	
<p><b>Final Thoughts</b></p> <p><b>Q12:</b> Is there anything else you would like to share about the Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy (key actions, Additional Open Space and Mobility Recommendations, and/or Implementation)?</p>	Gather additional feedback or input on other topics top of mind

## WHAT WE ASKED

## WHY WE ASKED

### Drop-in Session

- + Input on the strategy's key considerations, trade-offs and opportunities.

Identify possible adjustments needed for strategy revisions.

### Engaged Edmonton Webpage

- + Submit a question to the project team or see what others have been asking.

Gather additional feedback or input on other topics top of mind or to clarify information and to provide transparency on what others have been asking.

### Chat with a Planner Sessions

- + What would you like to chat about today...

Gather additional feedback or input on other topics top of mind or to clarify information.

# HOW WE ANALYZED THE INPUT

Participants provided feedback and comments through a variety of engagement methods that are detailed fully on the following pages. This feedback was collected and consolidated based on the engagement method and analyzed as follows:

## **Survey (Online & Printed)**

- + The responses to the open-ended questions underwent a qualitative approach using manual coding, utilizing keywords to organize and analyze feedback according to the strategy's guiding themes. Given the diverse range of responses, a quantitative summary was not feasible. However, this approach effectively captured the breadth of options submitted.

## **Engaged Edmonton Webpage**

- + Responses collected through the "Ask a Question" tool were grouped according to action or section in the draft strategy. They were also coded using keywords to sort and analyze the feedback.

## **Chat with a Project Team Member**

- + The comments and questions gathered through the 1-to-1 telephone or video calls were collected and grouped according to action or section in the draft strategy.

## **Drop-in Session**

- + The comments and discussions from the drop-in session were collected by action.
- + The feedback was consolidated and synthesized to understand what adjustments could be made to the draft strategy.

## **Online Sessions**

- + The comments and discussions from the online session were collected by action.
- + The feedback was consolidated and synthesized to understand what adjustments could be made to the draft strategy.



# **Public Engagement Summary & Results**

# WHAT WE HEARD



**1212**

Survey Participants



**36**

Questions through  
Engaged Edmonton



**7**

Chat with the  
Planner Calls



**100**

Emails to the  
project email



**107**

Drop-in Session  
Participants

## Survey Feedback

The survey was conducted between **March 18 to April 7, 2024**. This survey consisted of 12 questions, with the majority of questions dedicated to gathering input on the key considerations, trade-offs, and opportunities associated with each of the strategy's seven key actions. Questions were also asked about the additional open space recommendations, additional mobility recommendations, the implementation section with a final question inviting participants to provide any additional information.

Following the strategy specific questions, respondents could opt to complete the eight demographic questions. The demographic questions aimed to provide insights into the diverse representation of the respondents.

In total, **1,212** respondents completed the survey, providing **6,770** responses across all open-ended questions. The first question invited people to select which actions they were interested in providing feedback back on. About half of the respondents (628) chose to respond to every question covering all actions. The actions that received the highest level of engagement were:

- + **Action 7: Prioritizing Pedestrians on Whyte Ave (734 responses);**
- + **Action 1: Create a District Park (726 responses), and;**
- + **Action 3: Pedestrianize 83 Avenue (648 responses).**

The lowest level of engagement was for *Action 4: Support Development Next to Connaught Armoury* (488 responses). Additionally, 91 survey respondents opted not to provide feedback.



The survey feedback is summarized below starting with the key actions, with frequent topics grouped according to the project's Guiding Themes: Mobility & Movement, Open Space & Activities, Inclusion & Equity, and Comfort & Safety. In some cases, the feedback was not always specific to the action, its considerations or trade-offs and instead reflected general sentiments about the project or the strategy. This feedback is still very valuable and provides insights to inform refinement of the strategy.

## Summary of Survey Questions 2 to 8

### ACTION 1: CREATE A DISTRICT PARK

**Total responses: 726**

Feedback on the proposed district park ranged from both support and concern, including topics tangentially related to the district park. Respondents generally supported creation of a new green space for enhancing livability and sustainability, with suggestions for amenities like seating areas and recreational facilities. Respondents emphasized the importance of improving public transit options to offset potential parking reductions while acknowledging concerns about feasibility and accessibility. Safety was a major concern with suggestions to increase police presence, add security measures and enhance lighting. Accessibility was also important, with a focus on ensuring equal access to amenities for all community members. Economic impacts, environmental sustainability, and historical preservation were also significant considerations.



IMAGE PROPOSED DISTRICT PARK

## ***Mobility & Movement***

- + **Improved public transit options:** Many respondents shared that enhancing public transit infrastructure and services would be an important part in mitigating the impact of reduced parking. Suggestions include expanding bus routes, increasing frequency, and providing dedicated lanes for buses. There were also mixed opinions on the feasibility of relying solely on public transit to compensate for reduced parking. Some expressed concerns about the effectiveness and accessibility of public transit, especially for those living outside the immediate area.
- + **Parking reductions:** Many respondents indicated they were concerned about how repurposing the existing parking lot leased to the Old Strathcona Farmers' Market would impact the market and local businesses. Concerns were also raised about the impacts to local performing arts organizations and how future changes could limit patrons with mobility considerations from attending shows.
- + **Infrastructure improvements:** Respondents highlighted the importance of infrastructure upgrades to support alternative modes of transportation such as cycling and walking. Suggestions include implementing bike lanes, adding secure bike parking, improving sidewalks, and creating pedestrian-friendly areas to encourage active transportation

## ***Comfort & Safety***

- + **Safety:** Many respondents voiced concerns about maintaining safety, cleanliness, and security. Issues such as vagrancy, vandalism, and homelessness were highlighted as potential risks that need to be addressed alongside park development.

- + **Design improvements:** Respondents offered suggestions for addressing safety concerns, including increasing police presence, implementing security measures, and enhancing lighting in public spaces to improve visibility and deter criminal activities.

## ***Inclusion & Equity***

- + **Accessibility considerations:** Accessibility emerged as a significant concern with respondents emphasizing the importance of ensuring equal access to amenities and services for all community members, including seniors and individuals with disabilities. Suggestions included accessible parking, ramps, and other facilities to accommodate diverse mobility needs.
- + **Transit accessibility:** There are mixed opinions regarding the accessibility of public transit, with some expressing concerns about the availability of transit options especially for individuals living in outlying areas.

## ***Open Space & Activities***

- + **Support for green space:** There was widespread support for creating more green space to enhance neighbourhood livability and promote sustainability. Respondents indicated envisioning parks and green spaces as vital community assets that provide recreation, relaxation, and social interaction opportunities.
- + **Amenities and activities:** Respondents expressed a desire for seating areas, public art installations, playgrounds, and recreational facilities. Incorporating these features into park design was seen as essential for attracting visitors and enhancing the area's overall appeal.

A number of additional topics that were frequently mentioned (beyond easy categorization under the Guiding Themes) and are summarized below.

### ***Economic Impact***

- + **Business concerns:** Many respondents expressed concerns about the potential negative impact of parking reduction on local businesses, particularly the Old Strathcona Farmers' Market. Suggestions for mitigating these concerns include implementing shuttle services, providing alternative parking options, and offering incentives for businesses affected by the changes.
- + **Economic benefits:** On the other hand, some respondents highlighted the economic benefits of creating green spaces and enhancing the area's overall attractiveness. They emphasized the potential for increased pedestrian movement, tourism, and property values.

### ***Environmental Sustainability***

- + **Green infrastructure & Sustainable design:** Respondents mentioned incorporating elements such as rain gardens, native plantings, and sustainable landscaping practices. These features would enhance environmental quality and contribute to climate resilience and biodiversity conservation. Suggestions were made to prioritize sustainable design principles in park development, including eco-friendly materials, energy-efficient lighting, and incorporating renewable energy sources where feasible.

### ***Historical and Cultural Preservation***

- + **Heritage preservation:** Some respondents emphasized the importance of preserving the area's historical and cultural heritage. Suggestions included integrating historical facades, landmarks, and interpretive signage to celebrate the area's rich history and identity.
- + **Cultural programming:** Respondents expressed interest in incorporating cultural programming and events into the park design to celebrate local arts, traditions, and diversity. They highlighted the role of cultural amenities in fostering community engagement and enhancing the overall vibrancy of the area.

*"Love the idea of additional greenspace, but am concerned about losing the largest parking lot in the area."*

—Phase 3 survey respondent



## ACTION 2: CREATE A GATEWAY GREENWAY

**Total responses: 644**

The feedback on the proposed greenway reflects a mix of enthusiasm and constructive concerns. There's widespread support for its role as an active transportation route, with recognition of its potential to connect destinations. Safety and accessibility are top priorities, with calls for improved transportation modes and improved crossings. Suggestions for benches and lighting aim to enhance the experience, while concerns about noise pollution highlight the need for adequate buffering. Equity considerations provided by participants include parking, accessibility, and tree preservation. Efforts to enhance recreational value, including public art and family spaces, are well-received, but there's also a call for improved traffic management and pedestrian infrastructure.

### **Mobility & Movement**

#### **+ Greenway as an Active Transportation**

**Route:** Many respondents liked the proposed greenway and the prospect of a new or improved active transportation route, connecting key destinations such as the River Valley, Saskatchewan Drive, Whyte Avenue, and businesses. Respondents highlighted benefits for both leisurely strolls and daily commutes, catering to existing pedestrians and cyclists while potentially encouraging more residents to adopt these modes of transport. This included respondents who already walk or cycle, as well as those who foresee themselves using the greenway in the future.

#### LEGEND

- Key Actions
- Landmarks
- Dedicated Mass Transit Lanes



IMAGE PROPOSED GATEWAY GREENWAY

- + **Safety and Accessibility:** Many respondents mentioned the importance of ensuring safe passage for all users, necessitating clear delineation between different modes of transportation and sufficient width to accommodate pedestrian, cyclist, and e-scooter traffic. Suggestions for improved connections and crossings of Gateway Boulevard underscore the need to address traffic safety with existing infrastructure.

### **Comfort & Safety**

- + **Comfortable Environment:** Proposed amenities suggested, including benches, lighting, and water filling stations, aim to enhance people's experience and promote active lifestyles. Buffering the greenway from the noise and traffic along Gateway Boulevard was also identified by respondents.
- + **Transforming End of Steel Park:** Respondents supported the proposed transformation of End of Steel Park into a vibrant destination. Providing opportunities for recreation and community engagement through park improvements together with the proposed mixed-market development (see Action 4) would enhance safety and foster a sense of place.

### **Inclusion & Equity**

- + **Parking Considerations:** Some respondents expressed apprehension about the loss of parking spaces and how it could be a barrier for seniors and individuals with mobility considerations to visit the area.
- + **Accessibility Concerns:** Respondents highlighted the need for adequate accessible parking and drop-off/pick-up options for those with mobility considerations to foster inclusivity and belonging within the community.

### **Open Space & Activities**

- + **Natural Elements:** Feedback highlighted a desire to preserve trees along the greenway. Respondents provided suggestions on keeping existing trees and using native tree species and ensuring considerations for climate resilience and maintenance.
- + **Recreational Value:** Proposed amenities aimed at enhancing the recreational and social value of the greenway include public art and spaces for families and children. However, to ensure its usability and attractiveness as a recreational corridor respondents mentioned the need to improve traffic management and pedestrian infrastructure along and across Gateway Boulevard.

*"The area will benefit from more north-south pedestrian friendly connections. End of Steel park gets almost no use, but it's a nice area. This would hopefully open that up to greater use."*

–Phase 3 survey respondent



### ACTION 3: CREATE AN URBAN PLAZA

**Total responses: 614**

Overall, respondents liked the idea of the urban plaza underscoring a desire for communal gathering places that foster social interaction and community engagement. Suggestions for the plaza design included incorporating the public washroom, adding seating, adding historical elements and environmental considerations.

Much of the feedback touched on topics beyond the urban plaza such as considerations for future implementation, concerns about parking, improving transit access and alternative transportation modes. Safety concerns, alongside a commitment to inclusivity and equity, were highlights by respondents who noted the importance of creating secure and inclusive environments that cater to the needs of all community members.

### Mobility & Movement

- + **Parking Concerns:** Respondents expressed concerns about the potential negative impacts on the Old Strathcona Farmers' Market, businesses and on accessibility due to parking spaces being reduced or removed. Suggestions such as maintaining parking availability and creating underground solutions reflect a desire to preserve convenience and accessibility for all.
- + **Transit and Alternative Transportation:** Feedback highlighted a desire to improve transit and promote alternative transportation modes to provide more travel options beyond personal vehicle usage. Calls for enhancing bike parking, shuttle services, and transit connectivity were identified as important steps to support the broader goal of reducing reliance on cars to address congestion and environmental concerns.

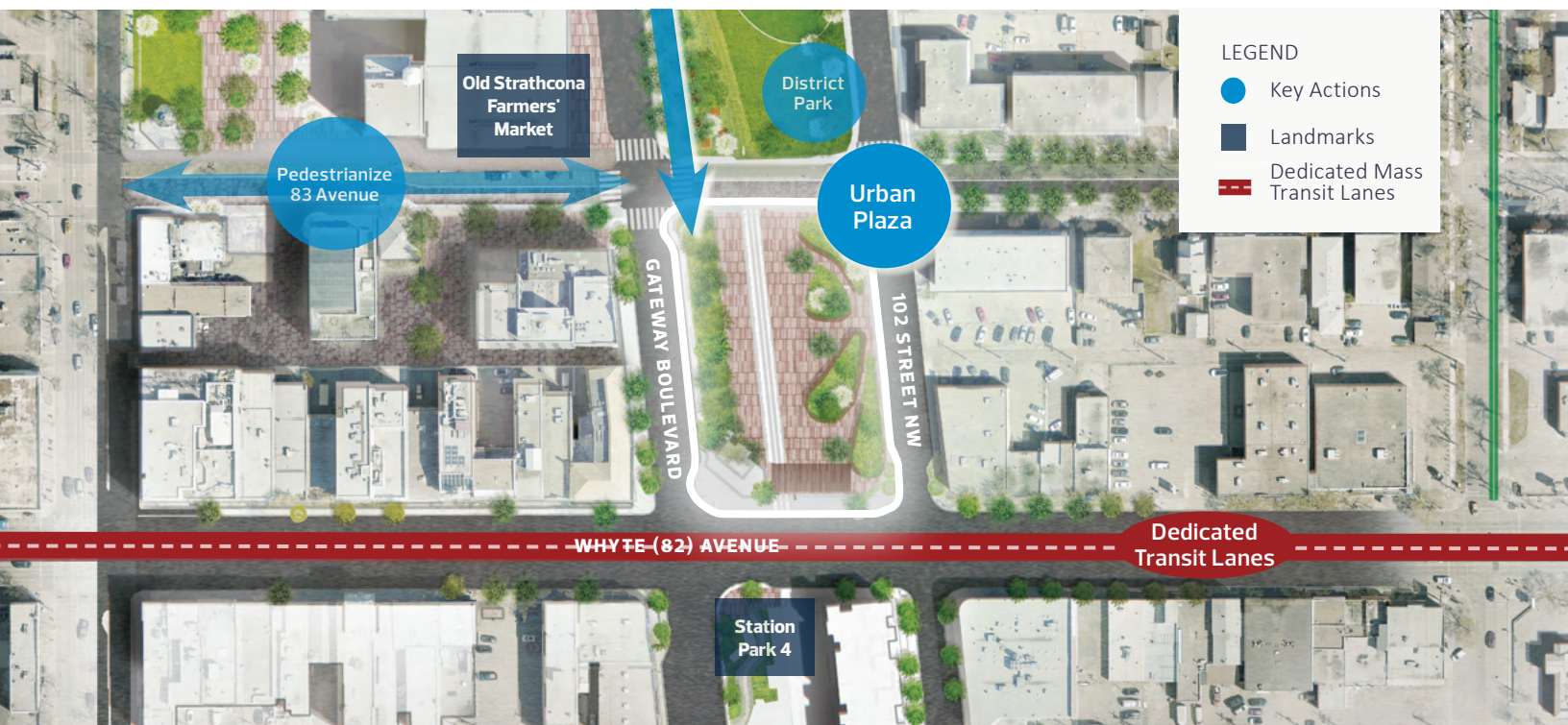


IMAGE PROPOSED URBAN PLAZA



## **Inclusion & Equity**

- + **Support for the plaza:** Despite concerns around safety (noted above), respondents like the idea of an urban plaza. There was a shared desire for communal gathering places that facilitate social interaction and community gathering. Respondents also highlighted the importance to include amenities such as public restrooms, seating areas, and performance spaces to promote connectivity and well-being.
- + **Accessibility:** Suggestions to add or enhance accessibility with barrier-free design, public washrooms, seating areas, and infrastructure for seniors and people with disabilities were important for respondents to ensure public spaces are accessible to all members of the community.
- + **Historical and Architectural Preservation:** A few respondents mentioned integrating historical elements and aesthetics to preserve the area's cultural heritage.
- + **Environmental Considerations:** Many responses also referenced environmental considerations, such as using native species and reducing light pollution, highlighting a commitment to sustainability.

## **Comfort & Safety**

- + **Safety and Social Challenges:** Concerns were raised about safety, including vandalism and unhoused Edmontonians. Many respondents commented on the need to improve security measures and provide support for vulnerable populations. Respondents noted that safety issues are important for fostering a sense of comfort and well-being among residents and visitors. Concerns about gentrification focused on the importance of ensuring that safety measures do not lead to the displacement of marginalized groups to ensure a sense of equity and inclusivity.
- + **Nighttime Safety and Lighting:** There were suggestions to enhance lighting and implement security patrols indicating a recognition of the need to address safety concerns after dark. Improving nighttime safety not only fosters a sense of comfort for residents and visitors but also encourages nighttime activities, contributing to the vibrancy and livability of the city.

*"The parking trade-off is probably worth it in this location due to the close proximity of the plaza to Whyte Ave. Having a parking lot right on the main street isn't ideal from a usability or aesthetics perspective. The plaza would be a better use of the space."*

–Phase 3 survey respondent

#### ACTION4: IMPROVE END OF STEEL PARK AND SUPPORT MIXED MARKET DEVELOPMENT OF PARKING LOT

**Total responses: 639**

The feedback collected on this action included many positive comments regarding the proposed redevelopment, particularly the introduction of affordable housing options, as well as family-friendly and barrier-free units. Respondents were generally positive about the inclusion of ground floor commercial, retail, community, or childcare spaces that could help activate End of Steel Park. However, there were concerns about how the City will ensure affordability of housing units in the development.

There were apprehensions about potential impacts on sightlines and views due to new tower construction, as well as concerns about parking loss and its effects on local businesses, particularly Ritchie Mill. Opinions on the fate of End of Steel Park vary, with a need for buffering and heritage preservation highlighted.

Many expressed concerns about tree loss and advocated for preserving existing trees. Respondents highlighted social issues related to park space utilization by the unhoused underscore the importance of addressing social challenges for community safety and well-being. Concerns about transit options, safety, accessibility, and winter conditions indicate the importance of addressing transportation needs comprehensively. Lastly, respondents raised questions about the City's financial situation, funding sources, and budgeting practices.

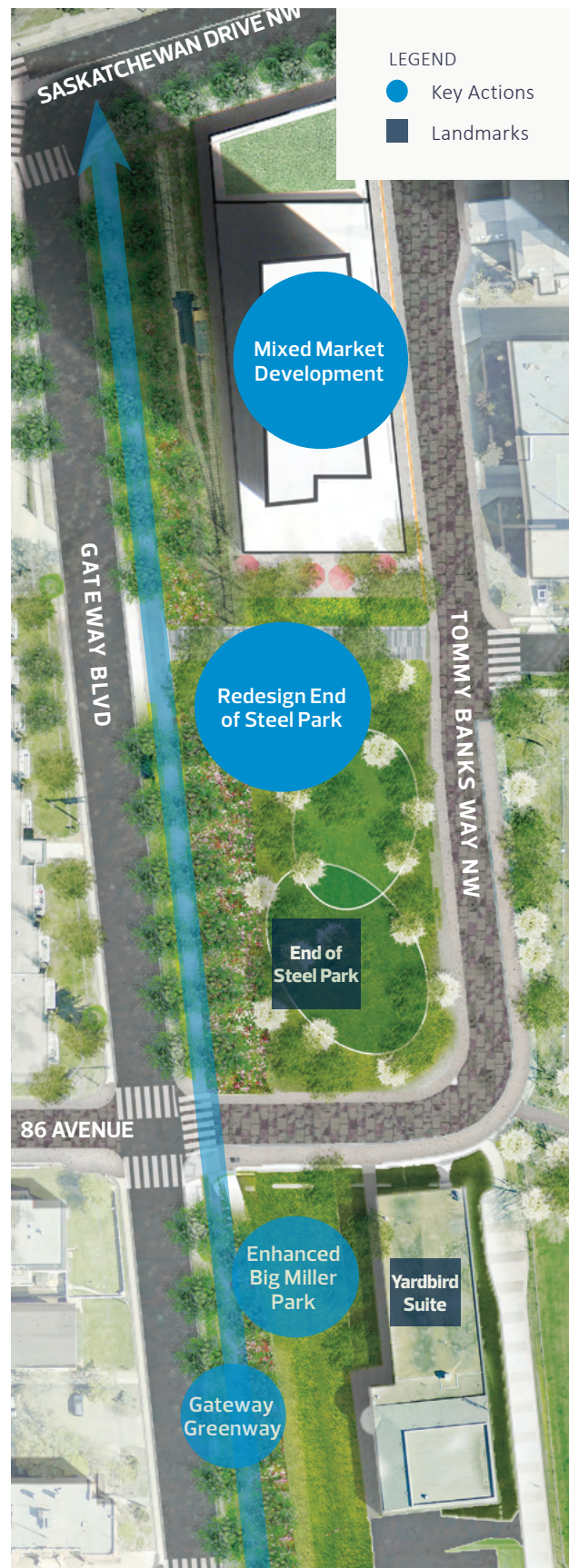


IMAGE PROPOSED END OF STEEL PARK + DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

### **Mobility & Movement**

- + **Parking:** Concerns about parking loss and its potential impacts on various entities operating in the Ritchie Mill, nearby arts/theatres venues, and businesses were prevalent. While some respondents liked the idea of an underground parking structure as part of the development, others doubt its feasibility and worry about increased traffic/congestion.
- + **Transit and Alternative Transportation:** Respondents expressed concerns about transit options, safety, and accessibility, particularly regarding distance from key destinations and winter conditions.

### **Comfort & Safety**

- + **Social Issues:** Respondents expressed concerns for the utilization of parks space by the unhoused including encampments and unsafe behaviors. Respondents indicated a need to address social challenges to ensure community safety and well-being with development that is welcoming to all.

### **Inclusion & Equity**

- + **Affordable Housing:** Many respondents recognized the need for affordable housing to add density and cater to diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. However, there were questions about how the City defines affordability, how it will ensure affordability, what levers and mechanisms the City can use to guarantee it, and the number of units or form affordable projects will take. There were concerns based on comparison to other previous City projects (e.g. Blatchford) and if affordability will be realized.
- + **Ground floor spaces:** There was excitement for the inclusion of ground floor commercial, retail, community or childcare spaces that could help activate End of Steel Park. However, respondents were also skeptical about the City's ability to guarantee these spaces citing previous City projects.

### **Open Space & Activities**

- + **End of Steel Park:** Opinions vary regarding the fate of End of Steel Park, ranging from maintaining it as-is to transforming the parking lot into open space. Concerns were raised about the need for buffering from roads and residents, with considerations for preserving rail/train heritage/history.
- + **Trees:** Many expressed concerns for tree loss and ask for preservation of existing trees, emphasizing worries about replacing them with young trees.
- + **Sightlines and Views:** Respondents expressed concerns about the potential impacts on sightlines and views of the river valley and downtown due to new tower construction.
- + **Cost Concerns:** Respondents raised questions about the construction and maintenance costs for a new park, the City's financial situation, funding sources for the project, and the optimal use of tax dollars. These responses highlighted the importance of fiscal responsibility and transparent budgeting as part of implementation.

*"Underground parking is a must in the area with the proposed removal of 350 parking spots in your plans."*

–Phase 3 survey respondent



## ACTION 5: SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT NEXT TO CONNAUGHT ARMOURY

**Total responses: 488**

Regarding the proposed development next to the Connaught Armoury, preservation of heritage values, integration with existing historical structures, and compatibility with the surrounding architecture emerged as vital considerations. Overall, the feedback was positive about the recommendations for housing, prioritizing affordable housing, and incorporating underground parking. Many favoured the inclusion of ground-level commercial spaces, such as retail shops, cafes, or restaurants, to create an inviting streetscape, enhance the adjacent park, and support local businesses.

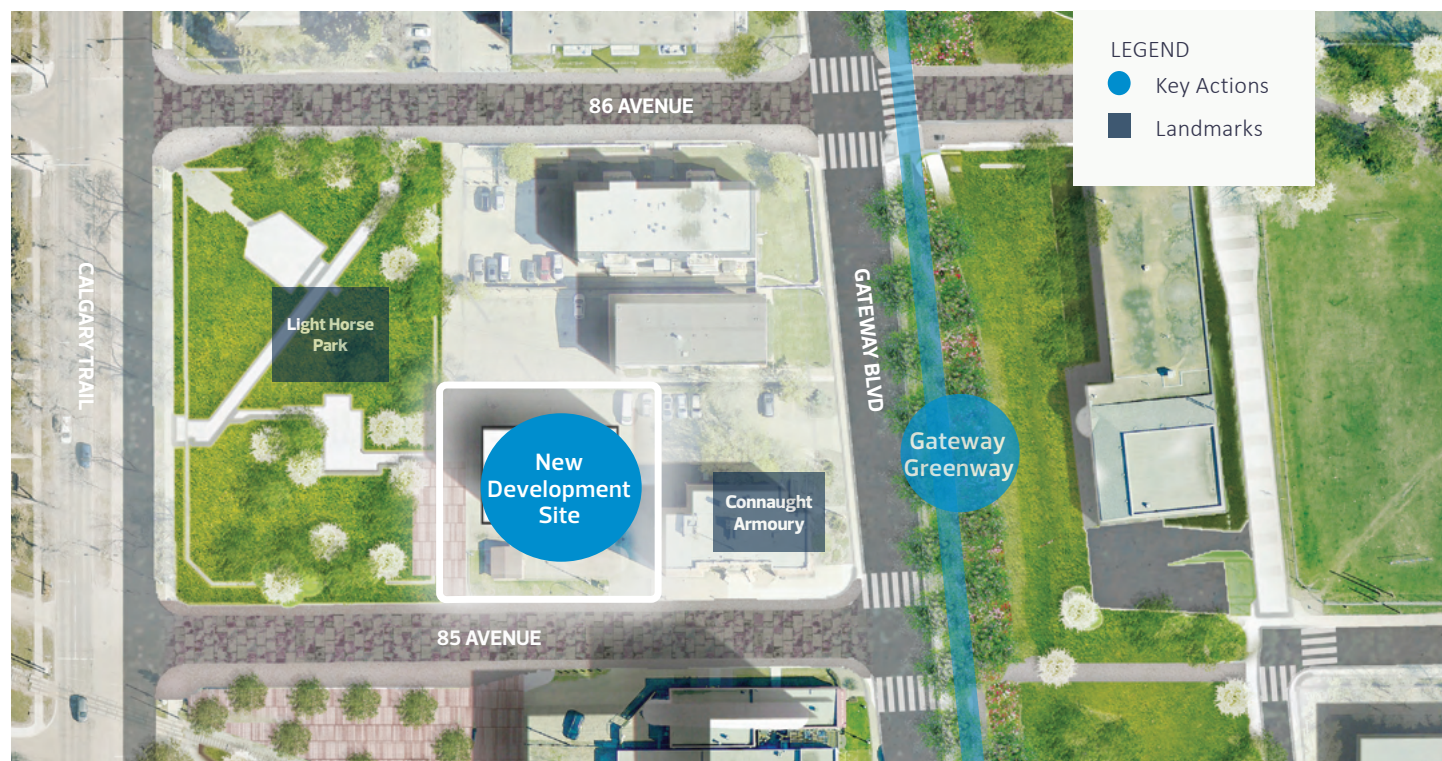
Similar to other questions, many expressed apprehension about the potential loss of parking. Questions arose about the feasibility of relying solely on public transit, particularly

in a winter city like Edmonton, with concerns expressed about timing, reliability, and safety. Safety and security were other concerns, especially regarding underground parking and social issues.

### **Mobility & Movement**

- + **Transit Accessibility:** Respondents agreed the lot next to the Connaught Armoury had good transit options but highlighted concerns related to transit timing, reliability, and safety. Suggestions include positive feedback for the improvement of transit infrastructure and accessibility.

IMAGE PROPOSED CONNAUGHT ARMOURY + DEVELOPMENT FOCUS



- + **Parking:** There were numerous concerns about the potential loss of parking and its impact on accessibility and traffic congestion (n.b. concerns were in reference to the parking lot next to the Connaught as well as the City-owned lot leased to the farmers' market). Some suggested adding underground parking as part of the proposed development or encouraging transit. However, there was skepticism about relying solely on public transit, especially in a winter city like Edmonton. A few respondents noted that parking for the proposed development was unnecessary and, however they were in favour of the removal of parking.

### **Comfort & Safety**

- + **Safety and Security:** Potential safety concerns regarding underground parking were mentioned, however, including security measures to help address concerns were suggested.
- + **Social Issues:** Concerns were raised about the current use of Light Horse Park by the unhoused, including potential for encampments and unsafe behaviours.

### **Inclusion & Equity**

- + **Affordable Housing Prioritization:** There were a few respondents that questioned the feasibility and impact of the proposed redevelopment, with some supporting the idea of densification and others expressing skepticism about the potential negative consequences. However, respondents liked the recommendations to prioritize affordable housing. Suggestions included rent-controlled housing or other housing models like public or cooperative ownership suitable for artists, to ensure affordability and accessibility and alignment with The City Plan's "15-minute city" objective.

- + **Accessibility:** Respondents mentioned the importance of accessibility features like public washrooms, seating areas, and infrastructure for seniors and people who live with disabilities. There were suggestions that the redevelopment include ground floor commercial that caters to the needs of all community members.
- + **Historical Preservation:** Comments highlighted the importance of heritage values, meeting pedestrian needs, and integrating new developments with existing historical structures. Concerns were raised about maintaining the aesthetic integrity of the area and ensuring compatibility with the surrounding architecture.

### **Open Space & Activities**

- + **Commercial Development:** Many comments focused on the addition of ground-level commercial development as it could enhance the link and vibrancy to Light Horse Park and support local businesses. Suggestions included retail spaces, cafes, and restaurants to create a dynamic and inviting streetscape.

*"Let's put commercial space at the base of this building to draw people up the greenway and keep it bustling and safe."*

–Phase 3 survey respondent



## ACTION 6: PEDESTRIANIZE 83 AVENUE

**Total responses: 648**

The feedback on the closure of 83 Avenue to vehicles ranged from support for a permanent vehicle closure to suggestions for occasional or seasonal closures. Overall, respondents liked the idea. There was support for the safety and community benefits and concerns about access for businesses, residents and services. Safety considerations for pedestrians and cyclists, along with suggestions for enhancing public spaces were highlighted. There is willingness to explore solutions for inclusivity and activation balanced with traffic management considerations.

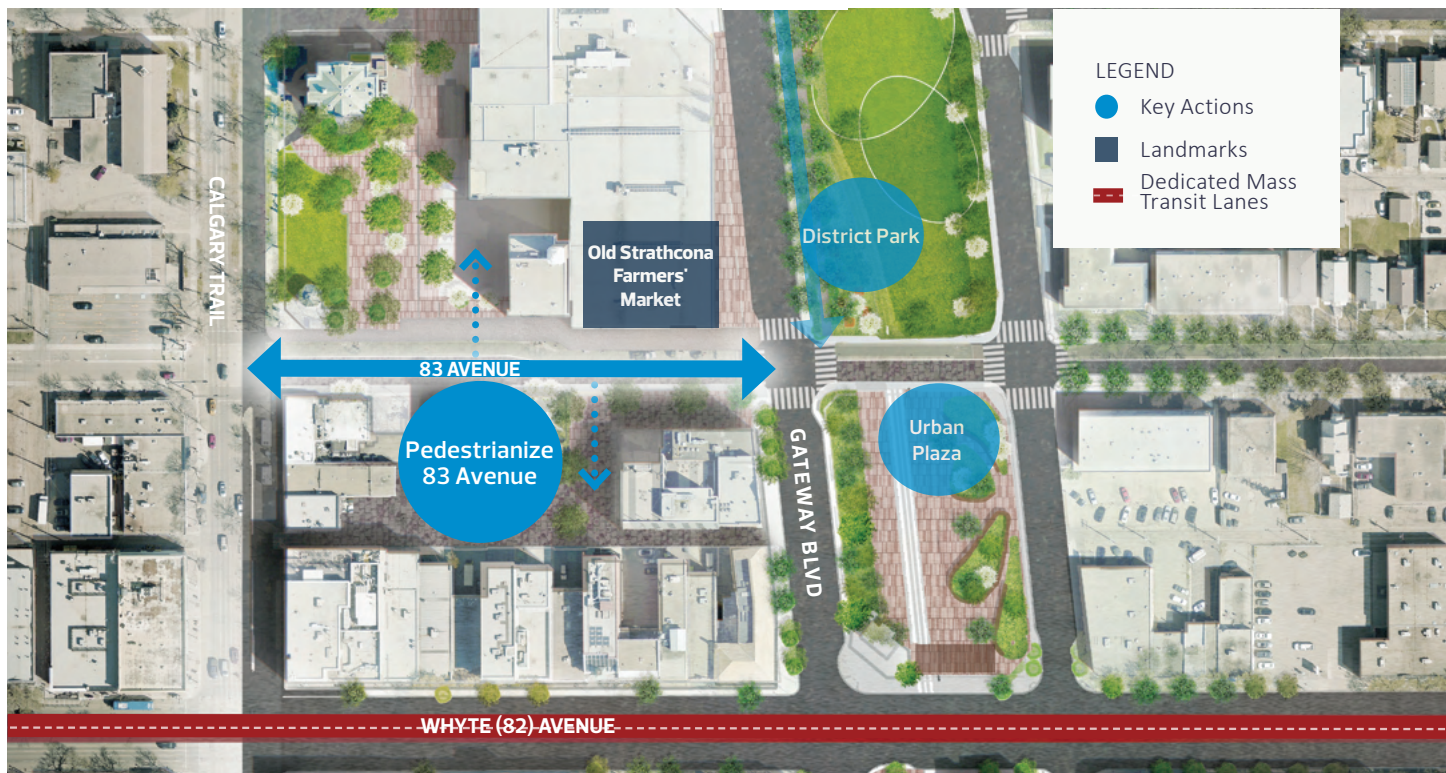
### Mobility & Movement

- + **Street closure:** The feedback favouring permanent closure included safety benefits and potential for enhanced community activities. Occasional closures were preferred by some to accommodate varying traffic

patterns throughout the week and seasons. Others suggested interim or pilot closures to assess impacts comprehensively before implementing permanent changes.

- + **Access for businesses and residents:** Concerns centred around maintaining access for deliveries, waste collection, and emergency services to support local businesses and residents. Feedback emphasized the need for careful planning and stakeholder engagement to address potential disruptions to business operations and accessibility to theatres and residents, particularly for people with mobility challenges.

**IMAGE** SECTION OF 83 AVENUE PROPOSED FOR VEHICULAR CLOSURE – SUBJECT TO CHANGE





### Comfort & Safety

- + **Design considerations:** Enhancing the avenue with seating, lighting, and greenery were proposed to promote social interaction and community engagement. Suggestions for enhanced lighting and security measures were also proposed to address safety concerns, particularly during winter months and at night.
- + **Pedestrian and cyclist safety:** Feedback emphasized the need for dedicated infrastructure and signage to ensure safe interactions between pedestrians and cyclists. Suggestions also included incorporating measures to ensure clear separation between pedestrians and cyclists and addressing concerns about detours or requiring cyclists to dismount during events.
- + **Traffic movement:** Respondents raised concerns about traffic management related to crossing Gateway Boulevard and wanting a comprehensive plan during implementation to address these issues. A few respondents noted that closing 83 Avenue to 102 Street could reduce traffic cutting into the residential areas.

### Inclusion & Equity

- + **Accessible parking:** Respondents highlighted the importance of maintaining accessible parking and drop-off/pick-up spots along 83 Avenue for local businesses and theatres especially for people with mobility challenges to ensure equitable access for all community members.
- + **Equitable access to amenities:** Some respondents raised concerns regarding the unhoused population in the space and perception of undesirable behaviour. Suggestions by respondents included provisions for the vulnerable community members, inclusive design features, and barrier free design.

### Open Space & Activities

- + **Enhancement of public spaces:** Respondents suggested enhancing outdoor activities and amenities to create vibrant and inclusive spaces for community members to connect and engage. Ideas included providing power and water connections for temporary vendors and allowing alcohol licenses along the avenue. Feedback also includes respondents that favour a piloted approach to activation in order to see the closure happen in a shorter time frame.

*"This area of 83 Avenue should always be a pedestrian/bike only corridor, there are too many people and too much activity for this space to be safely shared with vehicle traffic."*

–Phase 3 survey respondent

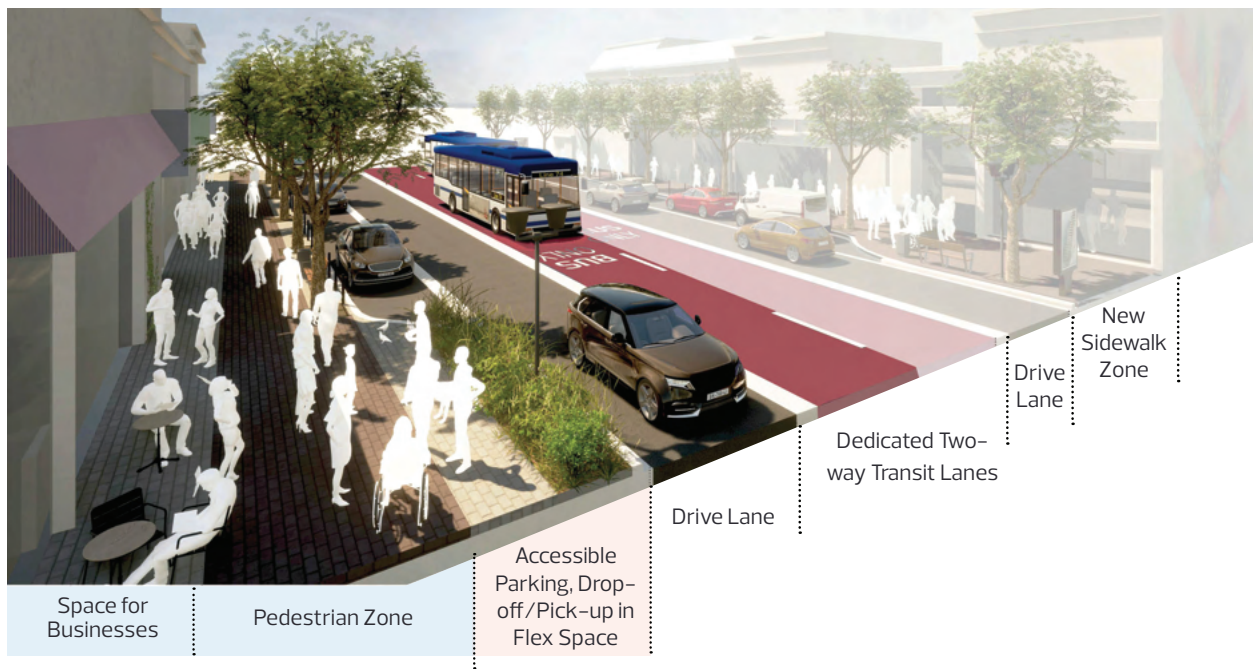
## ACTION 7: PRIORITIZE PEDESTRIANS ON WHYTE AVENUE

**Total responses: 734**

The feedback on Action 7 reflects diverse perspectives on transit, pedestrian initiatives, and safety concerns. While respondents provided supportive responses for bus-based mass transit development and pedestrian-friendly measures, concerns regarding traffic congestion, parking reductions, and accessibility were common topics. Respondents stressed the need for careful planning to balance pedestrian needs and transit improvements while ensuring business viability. Safety and inclusivity were highlighted, alongside suggestions for green elements, a tourism impact analysis, and historical preservation.

### **Mobility & Movement**

- + **Support for mass transit:** Feedback collected indicated respondents like the development of mass transit lanes and reducing drive lanes to increase and improve public transit use. The feedback was mixed on the placement of transit lanes and stops with concerns about safety for pedestrians and the efficiency of bus routes.
- + **Prioritizing pedestrians:** A great many of respondents noted they supported the creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment year-round, with a strong preference for prioritizing pedestrians and transit over cars on Whyte Avenue.



### **NEW SIDEWALK ZONE**

Sidewalk Width Increases  
From ~4.0 m to 4.7 m

**IMAGE** PROPOSED WIDENED PUBLIC SPACES  
ALONG WHYTE AVENUE  
CONFIGURATIONS YET TO BE DETERMINED

- + **Traffic management and alternative routes:** Respondents raised concerns about increased traffic congestion and the need for alternative routes for commuters if traffic lanes are reduced on Whyte Avenue. Suggestions included redesigning other routes (e.g. 76 Avenue) to accommodate increased traffic flow and to ensure no barriers are created for emergency vehicles to travel on Whyte Avenue. Feedback also highlighted concerns about the lack of bike infrastructure, such as dedicated lanes, to support alternative modes of transportation.
- + **Parking and accessibility:** There were a mix of perspectives relating to the removal of parking on Whyte Avenue. Respondents indicated they want wider sidewalks, emphasizing the need for improved transit options and drop-off points over vehicle parking. However, some voiced concerns about losing parking, citing a perceived shortage with worries about the potential negative impact to visitors and businesses. Suggestions included preserving some parking for businesses, widening sidewalks for accessibility, improving transit infrastructure, and addressing concerns about extended patios obstructing pedestrian pathways.
- + **New sidewalks and patios:** Several respondents highlighted concerns regarding the impact to patios after sidewalk reconstruction. Existing challenges were noted for business owners seeking to install patios that meet their business needs but face obstacles trying to comply with City guidelines.

### **Comfort & Safety**

- + **Accessibility and safety:** Feedback highlighted an emphasis on ensuring accessibility for all users, including those with disabilities, relating to comments noted under

"Mobility and Movement". Mainly, concerns were about people safely crossing traffic lanes to get to transit stops or access for those who need to drive.

- + **Pedestrian experience:** Respondents generally liked the proposed wider sidewalks and enhanced pedestrian spaces, with many respondents suggesting the need to prioritize pedestrian safety and comfort over vehicular traffic. Concerns about noise from traffic and the need for better enforcement of pedestrian crossings were also noted.
- + **Public health:** A few respondents raised questions on how anticipated densities might affect the physical and mental health of residents and visitors. This could include considerations of air quality, access to green spaces, opportunities for physical activity, and mental health outcomes associated with changes in urban design and transportation patterns.

### **Inclusion & Equity**

- + **Parking limitations:** Respondents raised concerns about the impact of reduced parking on businesses and accessibility, especially for those with mobility considerations. Suggestions included investing in better use of existing parking lots through wayfinding, developing a parkade structure nearby, and providing ample parking for disabled/wheelchair-requiring patrons. Support for improved bike parking facilities were also mentioned.
- + **Cultural diversity and inclusivity:** Addressing the needs and perspectives of diverse communities and cultural groups in the area. This could involve ensuring that public spaces, amenities, and services are accessible and welcoming to people from different backgrounds, ethnicities, and socio-economic statuses.

### **Open Space & Activities**

- + **Infrastructure design and greenery:** Suggestions included bioswales, rain gardens, and more greenery along Whyte Avenue. Concerns about the impact of additional planters on pedestrian space and traffic flow were also noted.
- + **Tourism and recreation:** Some respondents were interested in the potential impact on tourism, recreation, and leisure activities. Feedback noted how the suggested changes could further enhance tourist attractions, support local arts and culture initiatives, and promote outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors alike.
- + **Environmental sustainability:** Respondents liked recommendations to include green elements, water collection systems and noise reducing features into the design to enhance the comfort and minimize environmental impacts. Examining the environmental implications of the proposed changes such as their carbon footprint, energy consumption, and impact on local ecosystems was also suggested. Other suggestions included assessing renewable energy integration, waste reduction initiatives, and sustainable materials use. Concerns about the feasibility of the strategy in a winter city and the need for all-season considerations.

A number of additional topics were frequently mentioned (beyond easy categorization under the Guiding Themes) and are summarized below.

### **Economic Impact**

- + There were both positive and negative comments related to the economic effects of the proposed changes to Whyte Avenue on businesses, property values, and tourism in the area. Concerns included the anticipation of higher rents and insurance rates resulting in revenue changes and job loss. While other respondents noted that the changes would improve the overall economic vibrancy of the area which would help local businesses.

### **Historical Preservation**

- + Some respondents noted the historical significance of Whyte Avenue and wondered how the proposed changes might impact heritage sites, buildings, or cultural landmarks. Feedback included preservation efforts and strategies to maintain the area's historical character.

### **Technological Integration**

- + Respondents mentioned how emerging technologies and digital innovations could be integrated into the urban design and transportation infrastructure of Whyte Avenue. This could involve exploring options for smart city solutions, digital signage, mobile applications for wayfinding and transit information, and other tech-driven initiatives to improve the overall urban experience.

*"Wider sidewalks are necessary on Whyte Avenue as it is one of the busiest areas in the city for walking traffic. The flexibility in what the extra space can be used for is very important and reducing street width will make it a safer place to be as a pedestrian."*

–Phase 3 survey respondent

## Summary of Survey Questions 9 to 12

In addition to the questions regarding the seven key actions, the survey also collected feedback on the additional open space recommendations, additional mobility recommendations, the implementation section and final thoughts. Feedback collected through these questions varied greatly. In many cases, the feedback did not respond to the additional recommendation or implementation question but reflected general sentiments or considerations. This feedback is still very valuable and provides insights to inform refinement of these sections in the strategy. The following summarizes the common and frequent topics shared.

### FEEDBACK ON THE ADDITIONAL OPEN SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed improvements to West Ritchie (the area south of Whyte Avenue, between the rail corridor and 99 Street) such as the community park and greenway generated a lot of positive comments. This was seen as providing needed green space where it is currently lacking as well as creating more connections north and south of Whyte. With the rail yards south of Whyte Avenue seen as a barrier, additional future connections (at various points between 80 & 76 Avenues) for pedestrians and cyclists were also mentioned.

There was also excitement for the Rail Trail Greenway and the connections it provides from the north, the river valley and eventually south of Whyte Avenue. Feedback included considering improved streets crossings (e.g. 106 Street and the Rail Trail) and ensuring the street car is considered and integrated. The improvements to McIntyre Park itself, its connections to Light Horse Park as well as activations for Spur Line Alley and retaining Strathcona Park 4 were also mentioned as positives. Adding more benches, tables, vegetation, waste bins, signage/wayfinding (e.g. about destinations), interactive installations, heritage interpretation and secure

bike parking to these spaces were recurring elements mentioned. Consideration for event and festival use, how the spaces will be used in winter, ongoing maintenance and how to ensure safety (e.g. whether through design, park attendants, or more police) were also mentioned.

Some people questioned the need for these additional spaces and improvements. They felt there already are enough open spaces, it is difficult to maintain or keep them clean, it is too costly (to build and maintain) or that the loss of (free) parking will prevent people from coming to the area. Instead of creating new open spaces, others mentioned that the City should be addressing the housing crisis or providing support to vulnerable or unhoused Edmontonians first.

### FEEDBACK ON THE ADDITIONAL MOBILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Many respondents liked the proposed alleyway renewal and activation initiatives, recognizing these spaces as opportunities to enhance economic and cultural vibrancy in the area. There was widespread appreciation



for recommendations aimed at improving pedestrian infrastructure, such as enhanced lighting and accessibility features, which are seen as crucial for creating safe and inviting public spaces. Additionally, feedback highlighted the importance of shared streets and active transportation routes in fostering community connectivity and vibrancy. There was also interest in innovative solutions like a parking wayfinding strategy. Emphasis on community engagement and appreciation for offering numerous opportunities for engagement was highlighted, indicating a desire for ongoing inclusive decision-making and collaboration.

Despite the overall positivity, concerns included the potential loss of parking spaces and its adverse impact on businesses and visitors to the area. Skepticism persists regarding the effectiveness and safety of shared streets, particularly in managing issues like traffic congestion and panhandling, which could potentially detract from the area's appeal. Some respondents noted they were unclear about wayfinding terminology leading to confusion among some respondents about the intended outcomes. Additionally, there were comments noting concerns about removing parking prior to the improvement of mass transit. Some respondents questioned the need to undertake a strategy when they feel essential services across the city are compromised.

Respondents expressed uncertainty regarding the need for a parking wayfinding strategy, with some viewing it as beneficial for enhancing accessibility while others questioned its necessity and effectiveness. There were varied opinions on underground parking, with some support for including it as a recommendation while others expressed concerns about cost and safety.

## FEEDBACK ON IMPLEMENTATION

Feedback specific to implementation included the need to improve clarity of timelines, future project phasing, funding sources, and how proposed changes will affect existing infrastructure and maintenance needs. There were calls for more community engagement and consultation as implementation begins.

Feedback shared that did not directly relate to implementation included: Many respondents noted a need for more green spaces and trees, the importance of year-round safety initiatives, considering community gardens, and leveraging heritage to enhance the area's appeal, infrastructure improvements that support festivals and events and fully realizing and replicating the success of the Strathcona Back Street project.

Concerns included the perception of tax increases, skepticism regarding the affordability of housing (proposed in Action 4 and Action 5), the effectiveness of proposed mass transit initiatives, and worries about negative impacts on local businesses due to reduced parking availability. There were also criticisms regarding perceived wasteful spending, transparency issues, concerns about the potential displacement of lower-income residents, and concerns about accessibility for seniors and individuals with mobility considerations. Safety concerns related to homelessness, drug use, and aggressive panhandling were highlighted as significant issues that need to be addressed before implementing further changes.



## FINAL THOUGHTS

The final survey question provided people with an opportunity to share any remaining input on the draft strategy. Concerns mentioned as part of other questions were echoed here. Examples included the impact of parking reductions, traffic impacts, costs (to taxpayers) to build or maintain the new spaces, safety and the need to support vulnerable or unhoused Edmontonians first. The excitement was also echoed for the draft strategy in general, what this sets up for decades of future growth in Edmonton and a desire to see the proposed changes happen soon.

A number of considerations (for implementation) were reiterated such as phasing changes (e.g. improve transit along Whyte Avenue and the rest of the city first); providing alternatives (e.g. replacing surface parking with an above or underground parkade; providing more secure bike parking) or incentivizing travel behaviour changes (e.g. subsidized shuttle from transit stations or taxis to get to the area).

Other considerations included designing for a winter city; preserving history and heritage and seeing buildings like Ritchie Mill continue to thrive; limiting impacts during future construction on businesses or people traveling to the area; and monitoring implementation to assess the strategy's success. There were also a number of comments serving as a reminder to consider all Edmontonians of all abilities and ages as part of this strategy and to ensure future implementation considers inclusivity, barrier-free and universal design.

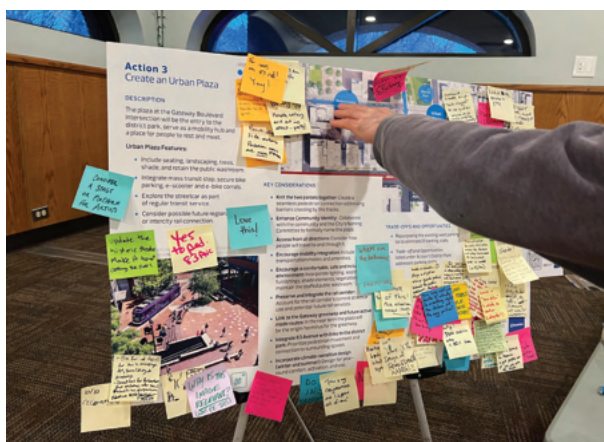
*"It would be nice to see more pedestrianization of the entire area in order to make people feel safer when walking through the area and enjoying the patios and theatres. Reducing car traffic /access and improving pedestrian and active transportation go hand in hand to achieve this goal."*

–Phase 3 survey respondent

## Drop-In Session Feedback

The drop in session, hosted at the Strathcona Community League Hall, included display boards for people to review and comment on with staff present for questions. Attendees were invited to review the key considerations or trade-offs and opportunities for each of the seven key actions and asked “what, if any, suggestions do you have to improve or enhance them?” using post-it notes.

While the comments on the post-it notes did not always directly respond to the above question as intended, the feedback received was still valuable and highlights what people are excited or concerned about along with many insights to help inform revisions to the draft strategy. Reviewing the feedback the project team identified common topics and grouped those topics according to the project’s four guiding themes. The dominant topics are summarized by action below.



**ABOVE LEFT** PARTICIPANTS AT THE DROP-IN SESSION HELD ON APRIL 4, 2024 **BELOW LEFT** DISPLAY BOARD DURING THE DROP IN SESSION **RIGHT** AN EXAMPLE OF OPPOSING VIEWS ON THE STRATEGY HEARD THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

## ACTION 1: CREATE A DISTRICT PARK

### Mobility and Movement

- + Parking loss and impact to businesses, the farmers market and theatres
- + Ensuring accessible parking needs

### Open Space and Activities

- + Excitement for park and possibilities for new features like sidewalks, recreation items, heritage interpretation, opportunities for food trucks, vendors and programming (by festivals and arts groups)
- + Concerns: already enough parks, costs to fund the project and maintain the spaces; preference to see existing parks improved

### Comfort and Safety

- + Safety concerns e.g. crime and drug use, not enough eyes on the park, need for security to make spaces feel safe at night; Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is key
- + Seasonal considerations (e.g. design for winter and all year use)

- + Amenities (e.g. retain public washroom)

### Inclusion and Equity

- + Reconciliation
  - Incorporate Indigenous perspectives
- + Consider accessibility including for seniors'

## ACTION 2: CREATE A GATEWAY GREENWAY

### Mobility and Movement

- + Provides new connections for pedestrians and cyclists
- + Parking removal will impact nearby theatres and businesses

### Open Space and Activities

- + Landscaping, new trees, plants (e.g. edible), greenery, climate sensitive design
- + Needs amenities and resting places (benches, tables, etc) for comfort

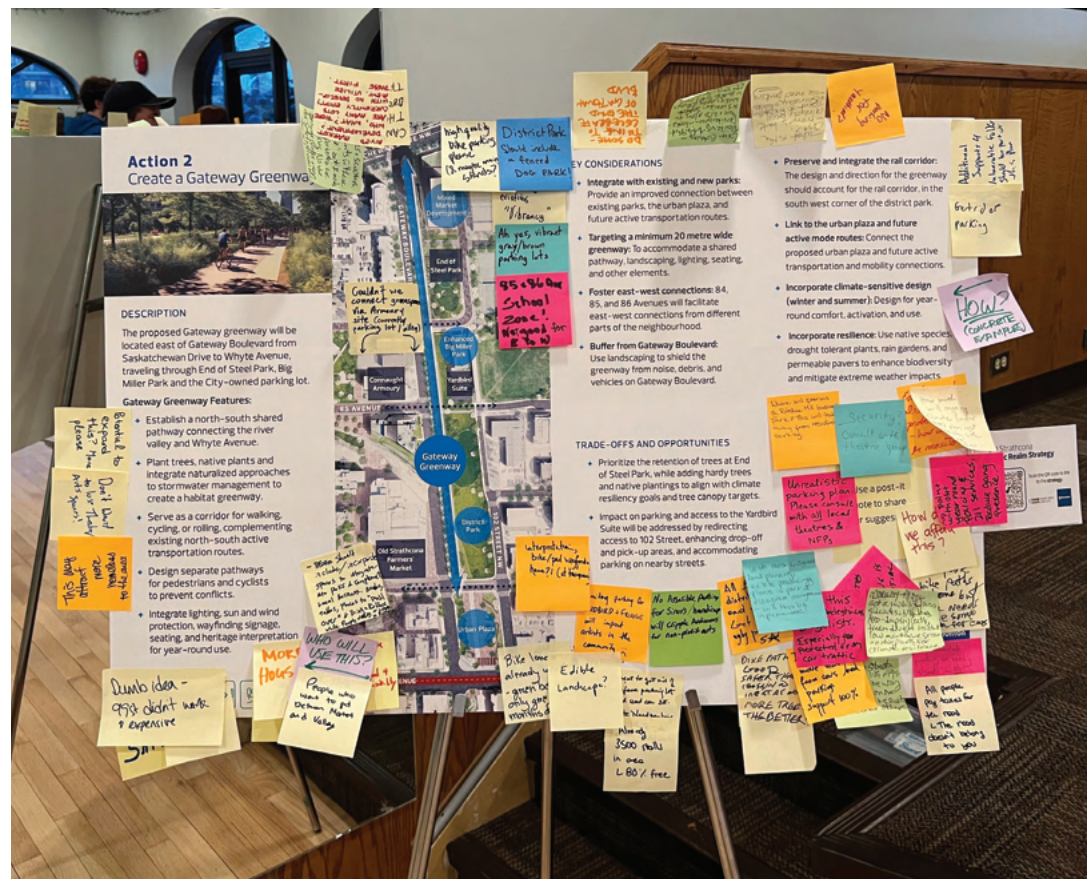
### Comfort and Safety

- + Conflict between modes, e.g. ebikes/ scooters and pedestrians and cyclists
- + Policing & security needed

### Inclusion and Equity

- + Consider elements and amenities (e.g. inclusive design) that serve community, including vulnerable Edmontonians

IMAGE ACTION 2 DISPLAY BOARD AT THE DROP IN SESSION





### **ACTION 3: CREATE AN URBAN PLAZA**

#### ***Mobility and Movement***

- + Integrate streetcar line/station into surroundings; expand or make it part of ETS

#### ***Open Space and Activities***

- + Shade/trees will make the plaza more welcoming/comfortable; bathrooms
- + Add art or outdoor stage, outdoor piano; skateboard friendly design

#### ***Comfort and Safety***

- + Security needed; concerns about rail crossing

#### ***Inclusion and Equity***

- + Reconciliation – Give an Indigenous name for plaza
- + Ensure universal/barrier-free design

### **ACTION 4: IMPROVE END OF STEEL PARK AND SUPPORT MIXED MARKET DEVELOPMENT**

#### ***Mobility and Movement***

- + Concerns about parking loss and its impact on the owner, tenants, and visitors of Ritchie Mill
- + Support for recommending public parking in the new development
  - + Concerns about how to enforce this requirement

#### ***Open Space and Activities***

- + Positive feedback on the idea of improved park design
- + Concerns about the residential tower's impact on open space and obstructed views

#### ***Comfort and Safety***

- + Concerns about tall buildings near the park
- + Considerations related to Edmonton being a winter city and the reliance on cars

#### ***Inclusion and Equity***

- + Many commented in favour of affordable housing but concerns about implementation and actual affordability
- + Mixed views on renaming the park and its historical significance
- + Comments on the need for family-focused housing and childcare spaces

### **ACTION 5 : SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT NEXT TO CONNAUGHT ARMOURY**

#### ***Mobility and Movement***

- + Concern for parking loss
  - + Parking is needed in the area. Other vacant or underused sites should be considered instead for affordable housing
- + People will not be able to access the area

#### ***Open Space and Activities***

- + Consider the connection between Armoury and Light Horse Park
- + New uses for the armoury

#### ***Comfort and Safety***

- + n/a

#### ***Inclusion and Equity***

- + Consideration for different people and groups
  - + Indigenous ceremonial space, possibly linked to river valley
  - + Spaces for youth
  - + Consideration for Dutch-Canadian history, links to Light Horse Park
- + In favour of affordable housing
- + Amenities or businesses serving different groups
  - + small commercial or non-profit spaces

## Action 7

### Prioritize Pedestrians on Whyte Ave

**DESCRIPTION**

Transit and pedestrian improvements are proposed from 99 Street to 109 Street – the commercial and cultural heart of the city. The wider sidewalks will provide more space for people to walk or wheel and improve the overall experience on Whyte Avenue with additional space for businesses, vegetation, street furniture and other amenities.

**ADDITIONAL SPACES TO SUPPORT BUS AND TRANSIT**

Repurposing space from on-street curbside parking will increase space to support transit riders. Bus lane configuration (e.g., curb-running, centre-running, or side-running) will be determined for Whyte Avenue through the Mass Transit Implementing for 125th Street project.

**Key Considerations**

- Maximize walkway space: Maintain public realm and add barriers between sidewalks and transit lanes.
- Improve pedestrian crossings: Reduce general vehicle lanes to provide shorter and safer pedestrian crossing distances.
- Integrate transit stops with the sidewalk: Transit stops will be designed and integrated with the sidewalk to be safe, comfortable, attractive and share public realm amenities like seating.

**INCORPORATE SPACES FOR DROP-OFF, PICK UP AND ACCESSIBLE PARKING**

Drop-off / pick-up and / or accessible parking can be accommodated without compromising the objective of a more pedestrian environment.

**Key Considerations**

- Target strategic locations: Further analysis with the Curbside Management Strategy, will help refine which portions of blocks to designate for drop-off, pick-up and accessible parking spaces.
- Provide the maximum walkway space: Ensure the maximum space possible for pedestrian zones on blocks that include such designated zones.

## Engaged Edmonton “Ask a Question” Feedback

The Engaged Edmonton webpage was a hub of information listing all the ways people could provide feedback during Phase 3. It also hosted an ‘Ask a Question’ tool enabling people to pose questions or comment that the project team replied to for all visitors to the site to see. During the Phase 3 engagement period, 36 comments or questions were posted representing a diverse range of concerns and perspectives. The posts covered various aspects of the draft strategy, including parking, traffic, transportation, safety, security, impacts on local businesses, and community events. The dominant topics are summarized below.

### ***Traffic and Transportation Challenges:***

- + One major theme revolves around the anticipated impact of proposed changes on traffic flow and transportation accessibility in the area. Residents were particularly concerned about alterations to major arterials like Whyte Avenue, Calgary Trail, and Gateway Boulevard. They questioned how the proposed modifications will accommodate the needs of both vehicular traffic and pedestrians, especially during and after construction phases. Parking availability emerged as a significant concern, particularly for residents who rely on personal vehicles for transportation. There was skepticism about the feasibility of alternative modes of transportation, such as public transit and cycling, in Edmonton's colder climate.

### ***Potential Parking Impacts on Businesses and Events:***

- + Respondents expressed apprehension about the potential adverse effects of proposed parking reductions on local businesses and community events. Of particular concern is the perceived impact on the Old Strathcona Farmers' Market, with worries that reduced parking availability will deter

both patrons and vendors. People feared that events like the Fringe Festival would suffer from decreased attendance and revenue if parking options are limited. There was a broader concern about the economic vitality of the area and the potential closure of businesses due to reduced accessibility.

- + They questioned the necessity of converting parking lots into green spaces and the need for bus-based mass transit lanes. There are concerns about the perceived lack of consideration for access locations without parking, especially for seniors and individuals with mobility considerations.

### ***Public Engagement and Evaluation Mechanisms:***

- + There was also dissatisfaction with the public engagement process and the evaluation mechanisms in place for assessing the success of proposed changes. They felt that their concerns had not been adequately addressed and that the engagement process lacked transparency and inclusivity. They advocated for monitoring and evaluation to assess the impacts of proposed changes on businesses, traffic flow, and public safety.

### ***Safety and Security Issues:***

- + Another significant topic included safety and security within the Old Strathcona area. Residents worried about incidents of crime, drug-related activities and interactions with homeless populations. They questioned the City's plans to address these issues along with the protection of businesses from theft and vandalism. Concerns were also raised about the safety of public transit, with reports of incidents ranging from fights to drug use on buses and LRT trains.

The feedback through the Engaged Edmonton "Ask a Question" tool reflected a range of perspectives, concerns, and questions. Amidst the various critiques, several positive themes emerged. Firstly, there is a recognition for having spaces that work for everyone. Secondly, while many felt parking was needed to support local businesses, events, and attractions like the Old Strathcona Farmers' Market, people acknowledged that fostering more vibrancy and activity in Old Strathcona requires some trade-offs on parking. Additionally, respondents highlighted the positive outcomes of enhancing the pedestrian experience and creating more green spaces.



## Project Email Feedback

In addition to the input options available through the project's Engaged Edmonton page, people were also able to email the project team at [oldstrathpublicrealm@edmonton.ca](mailto:oldstrathpublicrealm@edmonton.ca). About 100 emails were received. Almost all emails touched on more than one topic. While many shared concerns or critical feedback they also highlighted elements of the draft strategy that they liked, for example, the greenway, more housing or the new and improved parks. There were common perspectives from people who work or shop at the Old Strathcona Farmers' Market, attend or work at the theatres/arts organizations, tenants of the Ritchie Mill office building, and area residents. The dominant topics are summarized below.

### **Parking**

- + The most consistent topic was parking. Many felt that the loss or reduction of parking could prevent or deter people from traveling to the area, especially from other parts of the city or region, for seniors or people with mobility considerations (e.g. who can't travel far between their parking spot and destination or require accessible parking), people who cannot take transit (e.g. limited service, distance, safety concerns, preference) or taxis/rideshares. People shared this would impact the viability of the theatres, the Old Strathcona Farmers' Market and businesses. Some respondents worried about the impact to residential streets as people try to find alternative parking locations.
- + The loss of parking on Whyte Avenue seemed less worrisome than the loss of the City-owned parking lots leased to the farmers' market. Many people suggested keeping some parking, ensuring accessible parking as well as encouraging underground parking. In contrast, a few people highlighted that repurposing the parking lots would be a better use of a City asset that could contribute to sustainability, vibrant public spaces and stimulate economic growth.
- + Throughout the engagement process, the owner and tenants of the Ritchie Mill building expressed concerns regarding the proposed repurposing of the parking lot next to End of Steel Park. The Ritchie Mill is a small office building located at Saskatchewan Drive and Tommy Banks Way, which lacks onsite parking. The parking lot next to End of Steel Park is owned by the city and currently leased to the Ritchie Mill to serve its office tenants. The project team received letters from approximately 25 individuals, including the owner and tenants of the Ritchie Mill, sharing their concerns over the loss of parking, potential impacts on their businesses, and difficulties for tenants or their clientele. The project team met with the owner, who highlighted worries about the future viability of the mill should the parking lot space be redeveloped.

### **Transit**

- + Transit was another consistent topic referenced with comments ranging from travel time (compared to a car), service and frequency (depends on where one lives, if they travel during the day vs night), seasonal considerations (more appealing in summer than winter) and concerns about safety. While many expressed they couldn't (e.g. mobility considerations) or wouldn't (e.g. preference, convenience) take transit,

some shared that improvements to transit (e.g. type, frequency, safety) would make them more amenable to taking transit to Old Strathcona as an alternative to driving.

### **Other Topics**

- + Other comments related to the proposed district park with questions about its need (given the existing parks close by), its location (next to a roadway like Gateway) and how it would be used. The impact to vehicle traffic, circulation through the area and on Whyte Avenue was another. There were also questions about the communication and engagement process, as people shared they had not heard or participated in the first two phases.

### **Chat with a Project Team Member Feedback**

For Phase 3, the introduction of the 'Chat with a Project Team Member' offered a new platform for engaging with the community about the project. This initiative allowed individuals to schedule one-to-one, 15-minute telephone or video calls with a team member, facilitated through a calendar link on the Engaged Edmonton page. During Phase 3 engagement, six days were designated with morning, noon, and afternoon time slots for participants to select from. Seven individuals, including local residents and business operators, took advantage of this opportunity to participate.

All participants touched on more than one topic that ranged from very specific concerns to clarifying questions to general support for the draft strategy. The biggest concern was the reduction or loss of parking and the potential impacts. A few shared that Old Strathcona is a regional destination and if

the "mental math" (the time or cost it takes to get to the area and park one's car) is a barrier for people especially from suburban parts of Edmonton or the region they will choose somewhere else to visit, shop and dine. That loss of customers could hurt the livelihoods of businesses, individual vendors, the farmers market itself and theatres. Another concern was related to patios on Whyte Avenue and the need to ensure that the City supports businesses (with patios) as sidewalks are widened and improved.

Participants' questions included background on the project, integration of the current streetcar and future intercity passenger rail, the definition of "affordable housing", how the City ensures units in a development are affordable and previous engagement feedback.

There was also general support for draft strategy or specific elements especially from area residents. This included the addition of and enhancements to parks, the addition of dedicated transit lanes, proposed addition of raised (continuous) crossings (at Gateway Boulevard and 86 Ave) to support safety, and creation of more housing, especially the need for affordable housing. Suggestions to pilot parking reductions, more space for patios and monitoring traffic impacts first should be considered before permanent changes are made. Suggestions to introduce faster and more frequent transit first before making parking reductions would serve as a positive incentive and help alleviate some of the parking concerns.

## Online and In-Person Sessions Feedback

Online sessions were hosted when requested by stakeholders. The sessions typically included a brief presentation with project background, previous engagement, an overview of the draft strategy, the key actions and next steps followed by questions or an interactive component to gather feedback. Sessions were organized with Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre, the Old Strathcona Business Association, Edmonton's Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Strathcona Community League and Ritchie Community League. The project team also presented at the Old Strathcona Area Community Collaborative (OSACC) April meeting. A brief summary of what was heard at each session is provided below.

### WORKSHOP WEST PLAYWRIGHTS' THEATRE

This session was set up after hearing from staff and board members of Workshop West who had not known about the Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy's engagement opportunities or felt left out of the process. Frequent topics included:

#### ***Concerns for loss of parking***

- + While there is support for the strategy's promotion for alternative modes of transportation and addressing our city's climate objectives, the City-owned parking lot along Gateway Boulevard is seen as an essential piece of infrastructure allowing people to attend artistic events.
- + For many theatre performers, staff and especially patrons transit is not a practical option due to distance, limited service, their age and ability (e.g. seniors, individuals with mobility considerations) and winter.
- + Introducing improvements to transit first (before any parking reductions) is necessary, but retention of many parking stalls is still needed.

#### ***Post-Pandemic challenges for theatres***

- + Post-pandemic, theatre organizations are struggling and in some cases failing due to low audience numbers and funding shortages. The loss of parking is seen as another threat to viability and survival.

### BUSINESSES AND THE OLD STRATHCONA BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (OSBA)

With the assistance of OSBA staff, a session was offered to businesses in the area similar to Phase 2 engagement. The OSBA shared the invitation to all businesses within their Business Improvement Area (BIA) boundary. Seven people signed up and five attended representing a mix of restaurants, shops and theatres. After the project team's presentation, feedback was gathered for each of the draft strategy's actions. A quick summary of frequent topics is summarized below:

- + Action 1 Create a District Park generated the most comments with concerns about the loss of parking and excitement for the new district park. Unlike downtown, which is better served by bus and LRT and includes a number of parking structures, attendees said parking is needed in Old Strathcona for customers or (theatre) patrons who drive. Accessible parking -- the number but also the location and proximity to destinations -- was important too for seniors or individuals with mobility considerations.
- + Others felt that there is enough parking or were less concerned about the reduction. These participants also felt that the new district park would be a better use of the site. It would provide more space for festivals (that are in need of it), attract new events or programming for people to experience and

that the district park could serve as a draw for people to come to and explore the area.

- + Action 2 Create a Gateway greenway was supported for the new pathway and how it would allow more people (including seniors) to cycle. The need for secure bike parking was a frequent topic.
- + Action 3 Create an Urban Plaza had all positive comments. Beautifying this space would improve the connection between the east and west (of Gateway Boulevard) parts of Whyte Avenue and could include a tourist or info pavilion.
- + Action 4 and Action 5 did not generate a lot of comments but the benefits of more housing (including affordable housing) and concerns for parking were shared.
- + Action 6 Pedestrianize 83 Avenue had the second highest comments. There was some support for the proposal as a natural place to expand and provide more space for people. Cycling-related topics were the most frequent including 83 Avenue's importance for cycling, ensuring separation from pedestrians, proper detour options when the avenue is in use by festivals, and winter maintenance. Adding and maintaining accessible parking was another point of discussion with suggestions to dedicate the lots adjacent to the Walterdale or behind the former OSYS building to accessible parking. Changes to 83 Avenue could also impact the alleys that are already busy with delivery and waste vehicles.
- + Action 7 Prioritize Pedestrians on Whyte Avenue also generated a lot of comments. Patios were a frequent topic including their location next to buildings (which is easier

for servers and feels safer for customers) or next to the curb and calming or slowing car traffic to improve the experience. The reduction in loading zones would have an impact on deliveries as well as pick-up and drop-off by taxis or ride shares, but piloting loading zones on cross streets could help inform alternatives.

## EDMONTON'S ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) provides advice and recommendations to Edmonton City Council about facilities, infrastructure, programs, services, activities and policies with the aim to improve the City's livability, inclusiveness and accessibility for individuals with disabilities. The AAC is made up of citizens (n.b. members from the AAC have participated in the Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy's Community Advisory Committee). The AAC invited the project team to present at their April hybrid (online & in person) meeting to share feedback on the draft strategy.

The discussion focused on the diverse mobility needs of Edmontonians, emphasizing the need to consider perspectives beyond those of able-bodied individuals. Recommendations included revising the draft strategy to incorporate more barrier-free language and assessing the impacts of proposed actions. For instance, reducing parking could pose challenges for wheelchair users who cannot rely on transit and need to drive, potentially limiting their mobility and desire to venture out.

There were also questions about the affordable housing proposed in Action 4 and Action 5 including the definition of affordable, how the City would ensure affordability



and if barrier free housing design was also being considered. Feedback on transit, the greenway, adding edible plants, incorporating Indigenous perspectives, keeping in mind operation and maintenance costs of new spaces and continued engagement with the disability community were also shared.

The committee also recommended that the City's Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy (C602) and the City's Access Design Guidelines should be consulted to inform revisions to the draft strategy.

## COMMUNITY LEAGUES

Representatives from the community leagues have been heavily involved in the public realm strategy as regular participants on the project's Community Advisory Committee.

The Strathcona Community League has been the most active, through regular conversations between the project team and the league's liaison, given that the key actions are all located in the Strathcona neighbourhood. A session was set up with six representatives from the league to collect feedback on the draft.

One of the dominant topics was the concern among the community, theatres and some businesses about the loss of parking. There was a sense that the parking reductions are being rushed. To help calm worries, the strategy should better outline the years and phasing it will take to make the proposed changes. The introduction of parking wayfinding before any changes would also be beneficial.

The closure of 83 Avenue to vehicles was another concern as it is one of the few remaining east-west routes for residents, especially if Whyte Avenue becomes more

congested. It was felt that there are not enough people or retail opportunities to have a permanent year round closure. Instead an occasional seasonal closure for festivals continues to make the most sense.

Other comments included winter city considerations, incorporating the replica train station in the plaza and replacing lost plaques honouring Gerry Wright (a city councillor, a founding member of the former Old Strathcona Foundation and advocate for the area) closer to Whyte Avenue.

A session was also set up with a representative from the Ritchie Community League. While the public realm strategy scope only includes a few blocks of the Ritchie neighbourhood, the league representative shared their enthusiasm for the dedicated bus lanes and the open space improvements (e.g. new park, greenway) outlined in the Additional Open Space Recommendations of the draft strategy.

A presentation was also made to the Old Strathcona Area Community Collaborative (OSACC), attended by organizations such as community leagues, the local library, churches, the Edmonton Radial Railway Society, and the Old Strathcona Business Association. Feedback included concerns about parking loss, population growth impacts on schools, and clarity on implementation timelines.

The background is a solid dark blue color. It is covered with a complex, organic pattern of lighter blue lines. These lines form a series of concentric circles, some of which are complete, while others are partial or wavy, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is reminiscent of a topographical map or a microscopic view of a textured surface.

# **What Happens Next?**

# Thank you for your participation!

We are grateful for the time and energy everyone has contributed throughout the engagement process. The feedback received from Phase 3, along with a technical analysis and alignment with policy objectives, will be used to refine the strategy. As the strategy undergoes final revisions, we will explore the following refinements.

## On Parking

- + Provide direction on how parking reductions will be phased and aligned with the roll out of bus-rapid transit.
- + Provide more detail on the proposed parking wayfinding strategy to develop a system that guides drivers to available parking within in the area.
- + Add secure bike parking at key locations throughout the area.
- + Add references to conduct additional parking analysis in the future.
- + Review direction encouraging underground parking, as part of the new developments, be available for public use.

## On Implementation

- + Provide detail on projected timelines and phasing regarding the design and construction of actions and recommended improvements.
- + Provide references to other City guidelines or strategies that will be consulted as part of implementation e.g. Access Design Guidelines.
- + Highlight City guidelines or operating practices that may need to be updated (as part of or after implementation) to reduce challenges to using the spaces as proposed by the strategy (e.g. updating guidelines to ensure wider sidewalks continue to accommodate patios).

## On terminology

- + Provide definitions for frequently used terms such as “affordable housing”, “accessibility”, “wayfinding”, “pedestrian” and others.
- + Review and update language to be more inclusive and less able-bodied centric.

## On Action 3 Urban Plaza

- + Enhance clarity regarding accessibility.
- + Provide additional direction on aspects such as lighting, security and safety.

### On Action 4 Improve End of Steel Park and Support Mixed Market Development

- + Review direction encouraging underground parking, as part of the new developments, be available for public use.
- + Retain existing trees and add new plantings to support improved tree canopy.

### On Action 6 Pedestrianize 83 Avenue

- + Include a phased approach, starting with occasional and seasonal closures, before a permanent closure.

### On Action 7 Prioritize Pedestrians on Whyte Avenue

- + Include reference to how emergency vehicles will continue to travel down Whyte Avenue

*Please note: Additional refinements not listed above are also likely. We will summarize how we used the input, the changes made, and changes that could not be made.*

## Next Steps

Once the strategy has been revised it will be posted to the project web page and shared with residents, businesses, and community stakeholders. The strategy will then be presented to Council's Urban Planning Community (targeted for summer 2024). Depending on Council's direction, the process to implement can begin. To stay up-to-date with the project visit [edmonton.ca/OldStrathPublicRealm](https://edmonton.ca/OldStrathPublicRealm).



IMAGE PROJECT TIMELINE-UPDATED MAY 2024



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