

# What We Heard Report: Oliver Neighbourhood Renewal

Starting the Conversation,  
Building a Project Vision Together  
and Exploring Opportunities

Fall 2023

CREATE & REFINE

SHARE YOUR VOICE  
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

# What We Heard Report:

## Oliver Neighbourhood

### Renewal

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Truth and reconciliation is important to the City of Edmonton, and we recognize the neighbourhood name Oliver is difficult for some residents. In February 2024, Edmonton's City Council voted to approve the Oliver Community League's recommendation to change the neighbourhood name to *Wihkwêntôwin* *ᐃᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ*. This Neighbourhood Renewal Project report was created before the name change took effect and looked at elements of the neighbourhood before it was known as *Wihkwêntôwin* *ᐃᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ* (**pronounced [We-Kwen-To-Win](#)**). For that reason, the neighbourhood will be referred to as Oliver in this report.

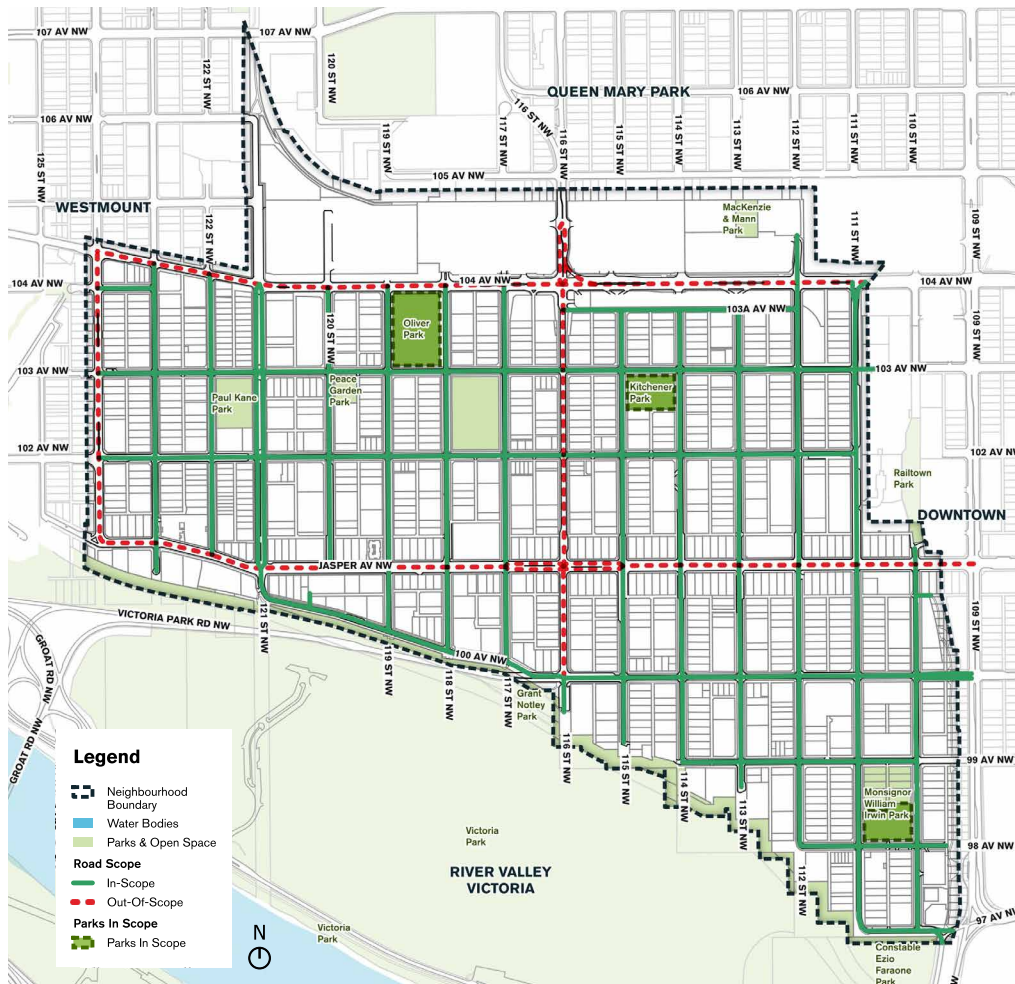
# Project overview

Neighbourhood Renewal planning for Oliver is underway. Through the City of Edmonton's Neighbourhood Renewal program, we will rehabilitate roads, replace street lights, curb and gutters, repair sidewalks and connect missing sidewalk links where possible.

Cost-sharing opportunities will be made available through the Local Improvement process for sidewalk reconstruction and decorative streetlight upgrades in the neighbourhood. Other opportunities to improve City-owned parks and public spaces will also be explored.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Project Team is coordinating with the Valley Line West, Imagine Jasper Avenue and High Level Bridge projects.

## Oliver Neighbourhood Renewal Scope Map



# Neighbourhood Renewal Road Map

The Neighbourhood Renewal program follows the road map below. At each step, the Project Team shares with you how your input will inform the decisions being made.

This report highlights the input received during the **Starting the Conversation, Building a Project Vision Together** and **Exploring Opportunities** stage during October and November 2023.



## LEGEND

Public Engagement and Communications Opportunities

Concept Phase

Design Phase

Build Phase

Operate Phase

# Public Engagement Spectrum

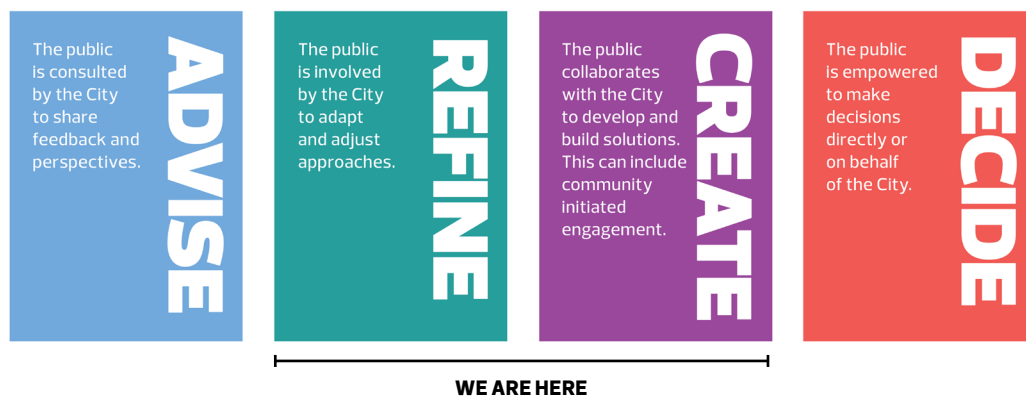
The City of Edmonton seeks input from citizens to help guide the project. The City's Public Engagement Spectrum below shows the four levels of influence the public can have on decisions made by the City throughout the project.

At this stage, the public was invited to provide input at both the **REFINE** and **CREATE** levels.

- + **REFINE:** Input will be considered to **REFINE** the Project Team's approach to design
- + **CREATE:** Input shared will be used to **CREATE** a Neighbourhood Renewal Vision and Guiding Principles which the Project Team will use to guide decision making

We commit to telling you how public input influences decisions according to the Public Engagement Spectrum.

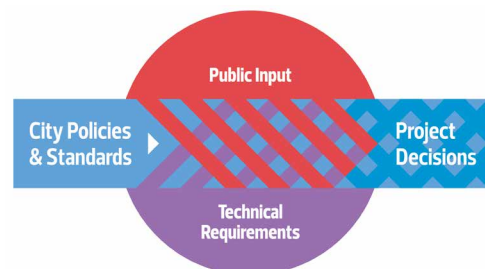
Increasing influence of the public →



## Decision making process

City policies and programs such as The City Plan, Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards, Safe Mobility Strategy and Winter City Strategy provide the overall direction for Neighbourhood Renewal designs. As each neighbourhood is unique, the Project Team asks for input from residents who live, work and play in the neighbourhood and considers technical aspects such as roadway widths and conflicts with utilities and trees to determine what will fit in the neighbourhood.

This process helps to ensure that the decisions we make are fiscally responsible, align with best practices, consider the existing public and private infrastructure, land uses and activities in the neighbourhood and result in the best outcomes for our city.



# What we asked and how we asked

The Oliver Neighbourhood Renewal Project Team organized a number of engagement opportunities during the combined **Starting the Conversation, Building a Project Vision Together** and **Exploring Opportunities** stage. Stakeholders and residents shared important insights to understand the community's challenges and desires, identify enhancement opportunities and shape the project's Vision.

## How we engaged



### Pop-up events

The Project Team popped up at six locations throughout Oliver between October 28 and November 7, 2023. Locations included the Oliver Exchange Building, Safeway Jasper Avenue, Oliver Park/off-leash dog park, Rosedale Seniors' Living, Coffee Outside Meetup Group (Ezio Faraone Park) and Stopgap Coffee.

These pop ups introduced the project to residents and visitors, provided an opportunity for participants to share likes and dislikes about Oliver and encouraged participation in the Community Walk and Workshop and online survey.

### 150+ participants



### Stakeholder meetings

Meetings were held with interested and affected stakeholder groups and property owners to introduce the project and gather input to inform design options.

- + Oliver Community League – November 20, 2023
- + 124 Street & Area Business Association – November 24, 2023
- + St. Joseph's Basilica – November 27, 2023
- + Bike Edmonton – November 27, 2023
- + Anglican Parish of Christ Church – November 28, 2023
- + Oliver School / Edmonton Public School Board – December 1, 2023
- + Paths for People – December 4, 2023
- + Robertson–Wesley United Church – December 4, 2023
- + Brewery District / First Capital Property Management – December 7, 2023
- + Oliver Exchange Building / Beljan Development – December 8, 2023
- + Unity Square & Longstreet Centre / BentallGreenOak (BGO) – December 8, 2023
- + Connelly–McKinley Downtown Funeral Home – December 11, 2023
- + Holy Child Catholic Elementary School / Edmonton Catholic School Division – December 11, 2023

Thirteen stakeholder meetings were held. Additional meetings are scheduled for 2024.



## Community Walk & Workshop

On Saturday November 4, 2023, people who live, work and play in Oliver joined the Project Team for the community walk through the neighbourhood to identify and discuss issues and opportunities that can be addressed by Neighbourhood Renewal. The walk was followed by a workshop where participants were led through activities to brainstorm a project Vision and explore ideas for the renewal.

**94 participants**



## Survey

An online survey was available on the project website for the public to complete from October 23 to November 17, 2023. The survey asked participants what they enjoy most about Oliver, challenges faced, improvements they would like to see and the most important elements for the City to consider. In addition, participants were asked about their satisfaction with driving, biking, walking and rolling, and parks and public gathering places within Oliver. A paper survey was available by request and completed by a few residents.

**1,361 respondents submitted a survey; however, not every question was completed by each respondent.**



## How we communicated

We asked residents to visit the project web page (4,466 views) to access information about the project and the engagement opportunities. Other tools to promote the project engagement opportunities included:

- + 19,581 newsletters delivered
- + 19,581 postcards delivered
- + 6 road signs
- + 40 yard signs
- + 20 pole signs
- + 50+ posters
- + 12 A-frame signs
- + Project Team members responded to email and phone inquiries

It is estimated more than 1,600 people participated in this stage of engagement.





## How we will use public input in decision making

City Policies are responsible for providing the Project Team with overall design direction which includes things like standardizing widths for roads and sidewalks and prioritizing where and when to add active transportation infrastructure. The Project Team also refers to technical requirements to reveal if and where in the neighbourhood new infrastructure is physically possible to install and where challenges may arise.

The public input received from residents and stakeholders at this stage of the process helps to identify concerns, challenges and opportunities to inform the development of design options. While public engagement is not considered a statistical representation of all residents who live in the neighbourhood, it does provide the Project Team with local knowledge, helping to understand how people are using the area and how they can use neighbourhood design to address what is important to those living, working and playing in Oliver.

## What we heard

### Reporting back on public engagement

During public engagement, the Project Team held conversations with residents and stakeholders to identify what they deem important for the future of the neighbourhood and where challenges, concerns and opportunities lie that can be addressed by Neighbourhood Renewal.

The input received is summarized in this report and will be considered in determining the neighbourhood design options and ideas that will be shared for feedback during the next stage of engagement.

Below is a summary of what we heard, developed to reflect the relevancy, frequency and diversity of the responses received based on the questions asked.

### Not in scope

It is important to note that Neighbourhood Renewal aims to address public concerns including safety through infrastructure elements such as upgraded lighting, renewed and new active transportation connections, enhanced crosswalks and traffic calming measures.

Other concerns we heard about including arterial road issues, private properties with poor maintenance or snow removal and complex social issues such as homelessness, housing insecurity and criminal activity cannot be directly addressed through Neighbourhood Renewal.



## What we heard: summary

Participants value Oliver for its abundance of local and diverse businesses which offer goods and services readily accessible on foot or by bike. There is a desire for the City to support and incentivize additional local businesses to locate in the neighbourhood.

Oliver is also noted for its location—the proximity to downtown, the river valley and where residents go to work. The neighbourhood is valued for being walkable, bikeable, diverse and welcoming of all.

Engagement participants expressed frustration with the poor condition of their streets and sidewalks. They support Neighbourhood Renewal, which will bring much-needed repairs as it is felt new improved streets and sidewalk surfaces will generally improve the neighbourhood experience and enhance safety for all ages and abilities.

Participants indicated improved and additional lighting to illuminate streets, sidewalks and parks is also required to enhance their personal safety.

There are also significant concerns about the social issues that exist in the neighbourhood and a call for the City to address homelessness, drug use and crime. A greater police presence is desired with some suggesting foot and bike patrols. Respondents emphasized the importance of safety to enhance their ability to enjoy and move freely in the neighbourhood.

Relating to the value of Oliver as a walkable neighbourhood, there is a desire to enhance the walking experience. In addition to sidewalk repair and improved lighting as noted above, respondents also wish for wider sidewalks, intersection crossing improvements and measures to minimize driver shortcutting and speeding.

The neighbourhood's mature trees are of significant importance. Participants urge the City to protect the existing trees, add to the tree canopy and plant additional greenery, where possible.

The lack of parking was shared as a concern. There is a desire to maintain existing and add additional parking, where possible. A form of a resident parking program is desired by some participants.

With the vast majority of residents living in multi-family buildings, participants consider the neighbourhood's public open spaces as their backyard. There is therefore a desire for additional green and gathering spaces for this highly dense neighbourhood.

Park activation and additional amenities are desired. There is support for a permanent dog park and additional community gardens. More seating is desired in parks and throughout the neighbourhood.

We heard that getting around Oliver has challenges, no matter how you travel. Drivers note issues with traffic flow due to active transportation lanes and construction (roadway, LRT and development), as well as confusion and safety concerns at intersections with bike infrastructure. People who bike shared pinch and conflict points, as well as where missing connections and improved crossings are desired. Protected active transportation lanes are preferred. Transit users call on the City to improve access to transit and transit service in general. Changes for people walking are noted in this section above.

There is a desire to prioritize active transportation over vehicles.

Generally, respondents are eager to see improved upkeep and maintenance, additional waste bins and better snow/ice removal from sidewalks. It's important to note that while Neighbourhood Renewal can improve the condition of the sidewalks, better snow and ice removal cannot be achieved by this program. Given the density of the neighbourhood, property owners play a significant role in the clearing of snow and ice.

## What we heard: in-person events

This section summarizes the input received during the pop ups, stakeholder meetings and Community Walk and Workshop. The details are recorded in four categories: Walking and rolling, Driving, Biking, and Parks and Public Spaces.

### Walking and rolling

Participants noted the poor condition of sidewalks in the neighbourhood and the need to repair and widen them, and to improve and add new connections to key destinations. Crossing safety is a key theme throughout the neighbourhood, specifically in the school zones. Several intersections and mid-block areas were identified as needing improved sightlines, slower vehicles and reduced user conflicts. Pedestrian-oriented lighting is desired. To improve the walking experience overall, participants suggest traffic calming, additional plazas and gathering spaces and additional seating.

### Driving

Generally, participants feel active transportation should be prioritized over vehicular traffic. With safety a key concern, participants suggested changes to enhance safety such as improving intersections/crossings, calming traffic and minimizing shortcutting. Additional signage and ways to improve visibility are suggested at key conflict, obstructed and poorly lit locations.

Strategically placed parking and loading zones are desired. Most of the stakeholders who own a business or provide a service in the neighbourhood noted the importance of parking to those they serve.

### Biking

Participants provided suggestions to improve bikeability in the neighbourhood through better integration of active transportation lanes, enhancing safety at conflict points and crossings, widening active transportation lanes where possible and making bike oriented signage more visible. There is a preference for active transportation lanes to be separated from vehicle traffic and raised lanes are noted as being preferred. Raised, continuous crossings are also suggested for safety. Participants also noted additional secure, highly visible bike parking hubs are desired throughout the neighbourhood.

As directed by the Bike Plan, 100 Avenue/Victoria Promenade and 121 Street will receive an active transportation lane suitable for all ages and abilities as part of Neighbourhood Renewal. To support the design for this future active transportation lane, participants shared conflict and pinch points, alignment preferences and the desire to improve crossings for the safety of all users. The idea of a linear park along 121 Street is also desired.

Additional active transportation lanes were suggested along 103 Avenue, 113 Street, 117 Street and Jasper Avenue and Victoria Park Road.

## **Parks and public spaces**

Overall, there is a desire for improvements that will bring people together, build community and simply elevate the experience of being in Oliver. Suggested enhancements include the addition of trees and greenery, bike and scooter parking, trash bins and seating throughout the neighbourhood, as well as additional amenities to encourage both active and passive recreation. An off-leash dog park is desired in both the east and south parts of the neighbourhood. Improved lighting and the addition of public art were also mentioned.

Mature trees and existing green spaces are of high value and preservation and enhancement of the parks and tree canopy are desired. Participants noted the desire for additional green and gathering spaces in the neighbourhood suggesting this could be achieved by closing specific roadways to vehicle traffic to create plazas and parklets, where possible. The idea of a linear park on 121 Street was mentioned, emphasizing what participants suggested when discussing biking. Activation and additional amenities at the parks are desired.

Specifically, participants also suggested making the temporary off-leash dog park at Oliver Park into a permanent part of the neighbourhood.

## **What we heard: online engagement**

The following provides a summary of the input received from the public survey.

### **Favourite things**

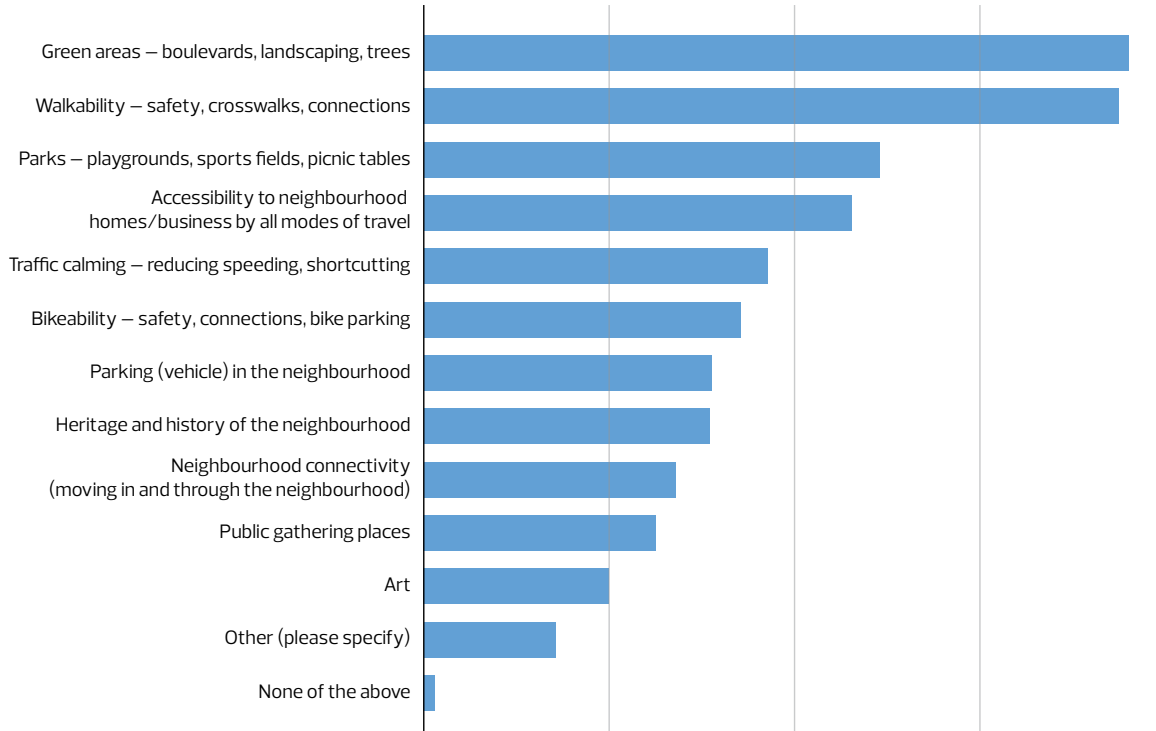
When asked what their favourite things are about living, working, playing and moving in and around the neighbourhood today, respondents provided a wide range of responses. Most often mentioned are that amenities such as cafés, restaurants, shops and services are available in the neighbourhood. Respondents value that shops are local, offer variety and can be accessed by walking and biking. This was followed closely by location—the proximity of the neighbourhood to key destinations—including the river valley and downtown. Residents also highly value the walkability and bikeability of the neighbourhood, as well as access to transit.

The community 'feel' of this unique area of Edmonton was mentioned often. Green spaces, parks and trees are well regarded. Less often mentioned but notable are the diversity of residents and the views the neighbourhood offers.

## Elements

The elements more than half of respondents would like the City to consider for Oliver's Neighbourhood Renewal are green areas. These include boulevards, landscaping and trees and elements to improve walkability including safety, crosswalks and connections. Just under half of the respondents would like consideration given to parks, playgrounds, sports fields, picnic tables and accessibility by all methods of travel.

### Elements most important for the City to consider for Oliver renewal



## DRIVING

How satisfied are you with DRIVING in Oliver (including getting in and out of the neighbourhood)?

961 respondents



■ Extremely satisfied ■ Somewhat satisfied ■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  
■ Somewhat dissatisfied ■ Extremely dissatisfied ■ No opinion

### Driving challenges

While over half of respondents are generally satisfied with driving in Oliver, there are some specific areas noted as challenges. The construction detours, bike lanes and one-way roads present an ongoing barrier and frustration for drivers wanting to move freely through the neighbourhood.

Respondents often indicated parking in the neighbourhood is limited, some suggest active transportation lanes are responsible for reducing parking further. Some participants believe existing active transportation lanes are underused and should be reduced. Others indicate high traffic volumes/congestion, shortcutting and speeding related to safety concerns and traffic noise are key challenges and active transportation should be prioritized more. Poor driver behaviour and deteriorating road conditions were also mentioned.

Respondents brought attention to specific locations where user conflict points, crosswalk challenges and the need for intersection or other improvements including turn signals, visibility and speed control are needed.

In the area that includes 100 Avenue/Victoria Promenade, respondents note a high frequency of conflicts between vehicles and active transportation users. Specific locations mentioned are 116 Street, 110 Street and Jasper Avenue. Some respondents do not support active transportation lanes along Victoria Promenade as they feel they impact both driving and parking. Also noted is a desire to remove the existing green poles and curbs that delineate the temporary active transportation lane along Victoria Promenade in an effort to improve the aesthetics of the area.



## BIKING

### How satisfied are you with BIKING in Oliver?

942 respondents



■ Extremely satisfied ■ Somewhat satisfied ■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  
■ Somewhat dissatisfied ■ Extremely dissatisfied ■ No opinion

### Biking challenges

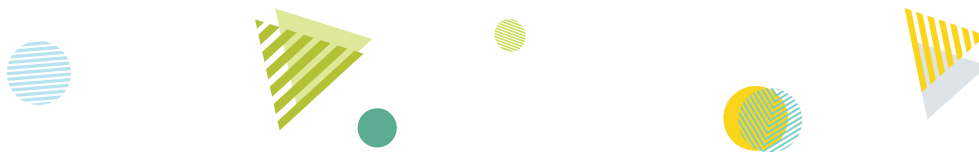
Some respondents feel the existing active transportation lanes are underused and their impacts to traffic flow and parking causes frustration. However, there is a corresponding sentiment that additional active transportation lanes are needed as they are a useful enhancement in the neighbourhood. Respondents encourage the City to add north-south routes, complete missing connections and to provide safe active transportation infrastructure to connect to key destinations both in and outside the neighbourhood.

Respondents encourage the City to enhance the safety of all users by considering conflict points such as intersections and improving signals and signage. Protected active transportation lanes are desired.

Respondents feel the green poles/markers that currently exist on some active transportation lanes are visually unappealing and should be replaced. There is a desire for additional bike parking, secure lock-ups and a bike repair stand/area to be added to the neighbourhood.

People who bike and fail to comply with bylaws was noted as a concern.

Specifically referring to 100 Avenue/Victoria Promenade, there is a desire to improve the biking experience along 100 Avenue including Victoria Promenade with safety noted as the primary factor, specifically regarding bike/vehicle conflicts. Again, protected active transportation lanes are preferred.



## WALKING AND ROLLING

How satisfied are you with WALKING and ROLLING in Oliver?

933 respondents



Extremely satisfied   Somewhat satisfied   Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  
Somewhat dissatisfied   Extremely dissatisfied   No opinion

### Walking and rolling challenges

Overwhelmingly, respondents are eager for repairs to the neighbourhood's aging sidewalks and walking paths, as well as the addition of missing connections. An improved walking experience throughout the neighbourhood is desired with a focus on safety. Most commonly mentioned are the removal (enforcement) of scooters and bikes from sidewalks, a desire for widened sidewalks, improving accessibility for those who are mobility challenged, improved street and pedestrian lighting and the timely removal of snow and ice from sidewalks. Intersection crossing safety is also a key priority with suggestions for reducing wait times, increased crossing times and the addition of pedestrian signals. Traffic calming is also desired.

Similar to the rest of Oliver, but specifically referring to the 100 Avenue/Victoria Promenade area, respondents suggest improvements such as repairing and widening the sidewalks, slowing cars, ensuring snow removal and removing scooters and bikes from the sidewalks. Most commonly noted is a desire for improvements to crosswalks to enhance safety for people walking.





## PARKS AND PUBLIC GATHERING PLACES

How satisfied are you with PARKS and PUBLIC GATHERING SPACES in Oliver?

942 respondents



■ Extremely satisfied ■ Somewhat satisfied ■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  
■ Somewhat dissatisfied ■ Extremely dissatisfied ■ No opinion

Respondents most often expressed a desire for more green and public gathering spaces in the neighbourhood. There is also a desire for additional amenities in the parks including public washrooms, seating, playground equipment (improve and add), a community hall/plaza, community gardens and courts for racket sports. Activation of the park spaces was also mentioned, specifically, public events and winter programming.

The desire for one or more permanent off-leash dog parks in the neighbourhood was mentioned by some.

Many respondents mention general satisfaction with the current park and open spaces with specific mention of passive recreation, public gathering, picnics and walking.

There is concern about personal safety, citing downtown social issues and a significant desire for additional police presence. Respondents also noted a need to improve general upkeep and maintenance in the neighbourhood's public spaces.



## Additional comments

Not surprisingly, the areas respondents feel require improvements generally relate to the concerns they shared.

Overwhelmingly, respondents are eager for infrastructure improvements, noting the poor condition of the sidewalks in the neighbourhood. There are desires to widen sidewalks and improve lighting to enhance safety and make the walking experience more enjoyable. Other desires shared by respondents are to protect the existing trees and add to and improve green spaces, parking and active transportation lanes.

Other key mentions include adding traffic calming, general maintenance, clean-up and litter removal, adding a community hall, repairing roads that are in poor condition, and adding a dog park and more trees.

Addressing homelessness, adding affordable housing, providing a recreation/multi-use facility and adding to and improving the businesses offerings were expressed by respondents. As well, respondents indicated properties in poor condition are an eyesore and reflect poorly on the neighbourhood. The Neighbourhood Renewal program can not directly address these complex desires.

In addition, some respondents noted their support for the Neighbourhood Renewal public engagement process.



## Next steps

Thank you to all who shared their input during the **Starting the Conversation, Building a Project Vision** and **Exploring Opportunities** stage of engagement. Your feedback will be considered along with City policies, programs and technical requirements in creating design options for the neighbourhood.

In 2024, the public will be invited to the **Exploring Options and Tradeoffs** stage of engagement for Oliver Neighbourhood Renewal. The Project Team will share ideas and design options for the renewal and invite you to provide feedback that will be used to help REFINE the designs. A draft project Vision, created from what we heard during this stage of engagement will also be shared for your feedback.

For more information regarding the Oliver Neighbourhood Renewal, upcoming public engagement activities and to subscribe for project updates, please visit [edmonton.ca/BuildingOliver](https://edmonton.ca/BuildingOliver).

## Working together to make the most out of your neighbourhood.

This is your city and your neighbourhood. We want to understand how you experience your neighbourhood and ask for your input on what we might do to make it better. We will engage and work with you on the renewal of roads, sidewalks, street lights and park spaces. We will also promote other community opportunities to enhance how people live and interact in your neighbourhood. We commit to being open and transparent about how your input is used. Let's make the most out of your neighbourhood.

[edmonton.ca/BuildingOliver](https://edmonton.ca/BuildingOliver)

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