

What We Heard Balwin and Belvedere Parks

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ADVISE

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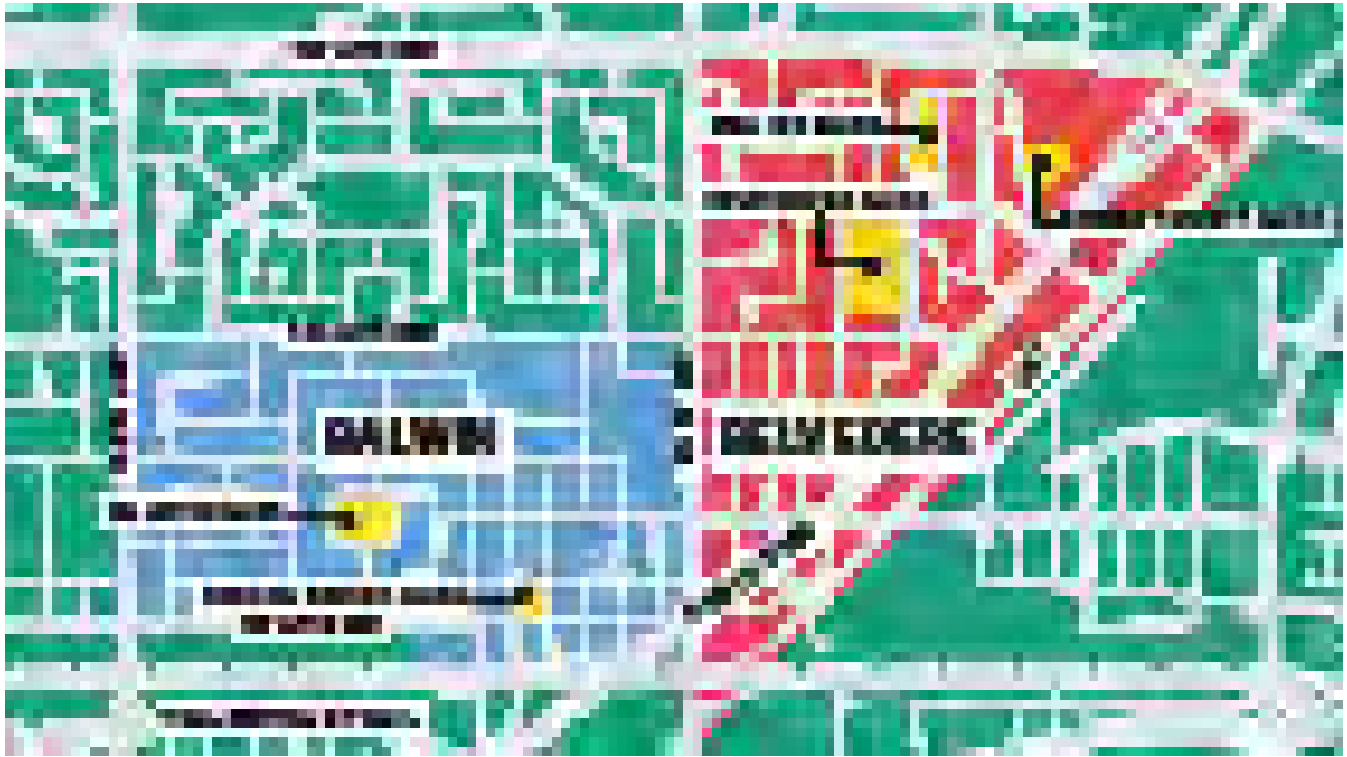


Public Engagement Summary And Results

Project Overview

In June 2018, the Balwin and Belvedere neighbourhoods were approved for the City of Edmonton’s Neighbourhood Revitalization Program. The goal of the Neighbourhood Revitalization Program is to improve the livability of Edmonton’s mature and established neighbourhoods and mobilize community-led action.

The City has worked with Balwin and Belvedere community members through 2018 and 2019 to gather input and identify key components of the [Balwin & Belvedere Revitalization Strategy](#). In 2020 and 2021, residents and stakeholders contributed to a [Community Capital Investment Priorities](#) report which outlined the community’s priorities for Revitalization capital investments. Upgrading particular park spaces was identified as a priority in that report and described in a [What We Decided](#) report.



In May 2022, the City initiated Concept & Design planning for the Revitalization capital investments. This report focuses on the open space projects with the focus on safety, accessibility, improved and expanded amenities for social connection and passive use, and improved recreation, play and cultural activities for diverse users. The parks included in the scope of the Revitalization capital investments are:

- + Balwin Park (12904 - 74 Street NW)
- + Zoie Gardner Park (12710 - 70 Street NW)
- + Belvedere Park (13223 - 60 Street NW)
- + Braids Park (13415 - 60 Street NW)
- + Robert Brett Park (13413 - 57 Street NW)



In June and July of 2022, community members engaged with the City to gather input on the park revitalization projects. Project information was made available to the public through the City of Edmonton website and Engaged Edmonton (the City’s online engagement platform). Public engagement was advertised using social media, lawn signs, postcards and letters to residents. Residents were engaged through online public engagement events, in-person pop-up engagement events, door knocking and an online survey. In total, the Project Team received feedback from 209 people.

Public engagement feedback was conducted at an “advise” level on the City’s public engagement spectrum (shown below), meaning that “the public is consulted by the City to share feedback and perspectives that are considered for policies, programs, projects or services.”

Engagement discussions focused on how to upgrade these parks in a way that reflects the values and interests of community members. The Project Team shared the type of upgrades being considered and requested feedback on how to improve safety, accessibility and cultural inclusion in the park spaces.

Overall there were two themes that emerged from engagement activities: 1) safety concerns and 2) support for park upgrades. In addition to these general themes, many comments were received which provided feedback specific to individual parks. We have summarized the main themes, and park specific feedback in the next section (“What We Heard”).

What We Heard

KEY THEMES

Overall there were two themes that emerged from engagement activities: safety concerns, and support for park upgrades.

Theme #1: Safety

The largest theme the Project Team heard was around safety.

There was overwhelming support for lighting and tree pruning to improve visibility and address safety concerns expressed by residents and park users. Respondents shared their concerns and experiences with encampments, and drug use in the five park spaces. Respondents expressed that the existing trees limited sightlines and resulted in them feeling unsafe.

Trees and shrubs raised another issue for those supervising children and youth using the parks. It was shared that it was difficult to see children in areas of the parks because sightlines were blocked by overgrown trees and shrubs. Those who lived adjacent to the parks expressed that they would like to be able to check on their kids out their window, but that they couldn't because of the trees. Many people stated that the basketball courts are well-used and games often go late into the evening. People felt that adding lighting at the courts would be appreciated by those using the courts so they could continue their games after dark.

When asked if they felt adding lighting and pruning trees would improve visibility and alleviate their safety concerns, respondents strongly agreed. In addition, many respondents stated that safety would be improved if regular patrols were done by Edmonton Police Service, bylaw enforcement and if parks would provide daytime programming for children to bring activity and supervision into park spaces. A few respondents recommended that security cameras should be added to parks to improve security and perceptions of safety due to the amount of crime they have experienced in their neighbourhood.

Feedback from vulnerable Edmontonians who used the five park spaces also expressed the desire for parks to be safe for themselves and the children who used them. Feedback included their need for shelter, safe places to 'do their thing,' and safe disposal locations for drug paraphernalia.



Theme #2: Support for park upgrades

The proposed park upgrades were strongly supported by those who participated in engagement activities. This includes support for:

- + New pathways and lighting
- + Playground redevelopment
- + Basketball court upgrades and a possible addition of multi-use courts
- + Improved sightlines through tree pruning/removal
- + New seating, tables, and waste receptacles
- + Upgrades to park signs and park entrances
- + New amenities for youth, adults and seniors (fitness equipment, chess, etc.)

In addition, many comments were received which provided feedback specific to individual parks. We have summarized this feedback in the next section (“Park Specific Feedback”)

PARK SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

Balwin Park

Balwin Park is bordered by 128a Avenue NW to the south, 77 Street to the west, 74 Street to the east, and 129a Avenue to the north. Currently, the park has a playground, multi-use courts and the Balwin Community Hall.

There were a total 51 survey responses for Balwin Park, 27 online and 24 in-person. We heard that the most common current uses of the park are activities, such as using the playground, and community events and gatherings. When asked how they would like to use the park, respondents often focused on enhancing current uses by improving the playground and the facilities available for community events and picnic areas. The most common suggestion was to provide additional space for seating, gathering or picnic areas. Some specific suggestions for how the park could be made more inviting or welcoming included improving lighting and seating, improved accessibility for wheelchairs and strollers and improved public safety around the playground.

In response to the specific improvements proposed, there was widespread approval for the lighting, pathways, seating, and playground while some liked the multi-use court. Tennis, basketball and ball hockey were the most preferred uses for the multi-use court. Suggestions for improving the concept plan also indicate support for the proposed features. Specific suggestions included using sand or rubber for the playground surfacing, additional trees, bathroom access, a community garden and additional playground equipment, specifically Say and Play boards for non-speaking autistic children. A gazebo, plaza or gathering place with a fire pit was the most suggested, and multiple people said they would like to be able to have picnics, community events or other events such as birthday parties or barbeques.

There was widespread agreement that the proposed design is inclusive for all people and that tree pruning and additional lighting would improve sightlines and visibility around the playground. Some said tree pruning and lighting would also improve safety.



Zoie Gardner Park

Zoie Gardner Park is located in the south of the Baldwin neighborhood. It is bordered by 127 Avenue and 128 Avenue to the east and west, and 70 Street and 71 Street to the north and south. The park includes two playgrounds and a splash park.

For Zoie Gardner Park, there were a total of 42 survey respondents, 24 online and 18 in person. Activities, such as using the spray park and playground, were found to be the most common uses of the park. These activities make the park a destination for most users. Some indicated they already use the park for gatherings and community events but many others said they would like improved facilities that would better enable them to use the park for gatherings and community events.

In response to proposed improvements, there was widespread approval for the lighting, pathways, multi-use court and fence along 127 Avenue. Suggestions for improving the concept plan included additional swings and other playground upgrades, additional planting, more seating and picnic areas, improved wheelchair access and a changing shelter for spray park users. Basketball was the most popular preferred activity for the multi-use court, followed by tennis, ball hockey, pickleball, and soccer. One person stated they would like to see the court fenced.

Many felt that a fence along 127th Avenue would improve traffic safety. Some asked for speed limits to be lowered. Some additional concerns community members had about the park were regarding a lack of parking, bathrooms, park programming, and public safety. In addition to issues of drug use and encampments, a public safety concern discussed by one community member in Zoie Gardner Park was the increasing prevalence of coyotes. Overall, people felt the proposed designs were inclusive.

Opinions on the proposed playground relocation and modified sliding hill were mixed and there was not substantial approval. When asked if they liked the concept plan option #1 (playground relocation) or concept plan option #2 (modified sliding hill) opinions were evenly divided. Both options were the least liked elements of the concept plan amongst online respondents. When asked to choose which they preferred, opinion was divided with a slight advantage to option #2 (modified sliding hill). Some declined to state a preference. It is important to note that the survey and proposal visualizations use the term “playground relocation” and the visualizations state “existing playground - to be relocated”. Whether the intent is to build a new playground in a different location or to relocate the existing playground may not have been clear. This also seems to have led people to state a preference for option #2 (modified sliding hill) as they did not understand the purpose of relocating an existing playground.



Belvedere Park

Belvedere Park is bounded by 66 Street to the west, 137 Avenue to the north, and the Capital Light Rail Transit (LRT) line to the south. Currently, the park is home to the Belvedere Community Hall, a playground, basketball courts and a soccer field.

There were a total of 51 responses to the survey for Belvedere Park, 33 online and 18 people in-person. The park is a destination that is most often used for activities such as playing on the playground and also for gatherings such as community events. When asked how they would like to use the park, people suggested additional facilities for sports, gatherings and playground equipment.

When asked how the park could be made more inviting or welcoming, respondents stated that better defining the children's play area within the larger park would improve the park as it would make the park safer for children and limit the number of dogs in the playground area. Young park users climbing the community league building and using the park during early morning hours was perceived as making the park less welcoming. A new water fountain and spray park was suggested, as well as additional lighting and police presence to improve safety. Improved cleanliness in the alleyway adjacent to the south side of the park was also suggested to make the park more inviting. When asked what could be done to make the park more inclusive, respondents said the park was currently used by a range of cultural groups and that any improvements to the park would make the park more inclusive for kids.

There was widespread approval for the concept plan. In response to specific improvements proposed, the lighting was most popular, while all other improvements were also supported.

There was also widespread agreement that proposed changes to the pathways and lighting would improve sightlines and visibility. Nearly all respondents viewed the proposed design to be inclusive.

Specific suggestions for additions to the concept plan included additional garbage cans, pruning trees more regularly, having activities for people of all ages and making sure the new pathways follow the worn trails through the grass where people choose to walk instead of following sidewalks or paths. When asked what types of gatherings people would like to have, most people said picnics with community events being a popular option as well. For the multi-use court, basketball followed by ball hockey, then tennis were the preferred uses.



Robert Brett Park

Robert Brett Park is primarily an open area and is situated in the northeastern corner of the Belvedere neighbourhood.

There were a total of 24 respondents, 12 online and 12 in-person. The park is not seen as a destination as most people said they either pass through or avoid the park. Those that do use the park indicate they do so primarily for activities. People said they would like to use the park for kids, so a playground is needed or a dog park. When asked how the park could be made more inviting or welcoming, the most common responses were additional lighting and pruning the trees more regularly to improve visibility. Two park users said that sometimes they are forced out of the park which they don't believe to be fair as they are always respectful of public space and parks are for all Edmontonians. A place to safely dispose of used needles and a nursing station was also suggested. To make the park more inclusive, improved wheelchair accessibility was suggested.

There was widespread approval for the proposed improvements, particularly the lighting. Suggestions for improving the concept plan included additional playground equipment including some aimed at older children, pruning trees, adding water fountains, additional walking paths, benches designed to prevent sleeping and removing sand from the playground. A suggestion received from Emmanuel Home, the seniors' home adjacent to the park, was to move seating areas and the multi-use court away from the north fence line adjacent to the seniors home to minimize disruption to their residents. Respondents said they would like to be able to use the park for picnics and community events. For the multi-use court, basketball was the preferred use for the majority of respondents.

There was widespread agreement that new pathways and lighting were an effective way to improve sightlines and visibility. Lack of visibility and poor sightlines were seen as contributing to the problem of needles being found in the park. Every respondent said that the proposed design was inclusive.



Braids Park

Braids Park is in the Belvedere neighborhood. The park is bounded by 134a Avenue and 136 Avenue to the south and north, and 59 Street and 60 Street to the west and east. The park currently consists of green space, pathways and some seating areas.

There were a total of 51 responses to the survey for Braids Park, 26 online and 25 in-person. The park is a destination that is currently used primarily for activities such as walking, tobogganing and dog walking. Gatherings, such as picnics, are another common use of the park. People also said they would like to use the park as an off-leash dog park and have better facilities for gatherings and pathways.

When asked how the park could be made more inviting or welcoming, people suggested more lighting, more trees and shade, additional tables, better walking paths, additional activities and equipment for both children and the elderly, more frequent maintenance, making the park more dog-

friendly and clarity of the rules regarding dogs in the park. When asked how the park can be made more inclusive, people suggested more activities and equipment for kids, programming for a range of park users and said that drug use and encampments deter people from using the park currently.

There was widespread approval for the proposed concept plan. In response to the proposed improvements, respondents liked the lighting the most, as well as the pathways and new signage and planting improvements. All but one person said they prefer asphalt surfacing for the new pathways. Suggested improvements to the concept plan included additional trees along the pathways, additional seating, a skatepark, a playground and fitness equipment. Most respondents said picnics would be a type of gathering they would plan in the park. Most said the proposed improvements would improve sightlines and visibility, and felt the design was inclusive.



What We Did

The project team received a variety of perspectives during the mix of online/virtual and in-person public engagement activities implemented in the initial concept phase of this project. The team will be taking the information and direction provided by survey respondents and implementing it in the next phase of the concept design. Further public engagement opportunities will be provided in Fall 2022, to determine specific features for each of the five parks.



Balwin Community Garage Sale and Big Bin Event

Public Engagement Approach

How We Engaged

We carried out a series of engagement events to provide opportunities for residents to contribute to the development of the five park concepts. In total, 209 people provided engagement feedback, and many more were made aware of the project and how to participate in engagement through advertising and conversations with the project team. Four methods of engagement were used during concept development: pop-ups, public online meetings, online survey, door knocking and in-person surveys.

Certain communication strategies were employed to promote the engagement activities and increase public knowledge of the project. Some of these activities included:

- + City of Edmonton Website: Information on the public open houses and the survey was provided on a publicly accessible platform.
- + Postcards: 7,054 postcards were mailed to residents in areas surrounding the Balwin and Belvedere neighbourhoods on June 16.
- + Signs: Two lawn signs advertising the online public engagement events and project website were placed at each park from June 18 to July 17.
- + Emails to Stakeholder Groups: Emails were sent to stakeholder groups in May to make them aware that the project was underway, and again two weeks prior to the online engagement events to encourage participation.
- + Social Media: Messages to promote the public events and survey were shared from June 27 to July 13.
- + Project Letters: 183 letters were delivered to residents in Balwin and Belvedere neighbourhoods on July 13 and 14.



POP-UP ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

During pop-up events, facilitators shared the draft concepts and posed the survey questions to generate conversation and feedback on the parks project. The public were asked which park(s) they use, and given the option of only providing input on those parks to shortlist the questions. This allowed participants to focus on the parks they wished to provide input on. Responses were documented by engagement staff on feedback sheets.

ONLINE PUBLIC MEETINGS

Online engagement sessions for the Balwin and Belvedere parks in 2022 were held on June 22 and June 23., respectively. The Project Team presented the various development concepts to the public during these meetings, asked them about their ideas and what they would want to see in each park. Discussion focused on how to upgrade the parks in a way that reflects the values and interests of local community members. The team shared the type of upgrades being considered, and requested feedback and perspectives on how to improve safety, accessibility, and cultural inclusion in the park spaces. The project team provided an overview and shared the proposed upgrades for each park, followed by a facilitated discussion about each park. Feedback was collected interactively marked up using a Google Jamboard . The meetings closed with the City sharing next steps and future engagement opportunities.

ENGAGED EDMONTON

The Engaged Edmonton platform was used to collect public feedback for the project from June 18 to July 17, 2022. The platform contained images of the draft concept design for each park along with a legend of the proposed changes. An online survey captured feedback specific to each park. The survey was divided into five different sections (one for each park). Respondents only provided feedback on the parks they selected 'yes' to being a user or visitor of. There were 57 online survey respondents. Another 320 people were informed of the project as they visited multiple pages or interacted with the project page in some way. These results are incorporated into the What We Heard section of this report.

DOOR KNOCKING AND IN-PERSON SURVEYS

The Project Team visited each of the five park sites and delivered letters to homes adjacent to each park. During this time, we connected with homeowners adjacent to the parks and to park users to inform them about the project. Residents and park users that were available and receptive were asked to do an in-person survey. The team delivered 182 letters and conducted 103 in-person surveys on July 13 and 14, 2022.

A snapshot of the engagement activities the project team undertook is summarized in the following table.



Door Knocking and Park User Surveys

Snapshot of Engagement Activities

METHOD	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	DATES	LOCATION
3 Pop-up Engagement Events	10 participants	June 4, 2022 10:00 am - 12:00 pm Balwin Community Garage Sale and Big Bin Event	Balwin Community League 12904 74 St NW
	14 participants	June 18, 2022 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm Belvedere Neighbour Day	Belvedere Community Hall 13223 62 St NW
	13 participants	July 27, 2022 10:30 am - 12:30 pm Mustard Seed Coffee Connect	Mosaic Centre 6504 132 Ave NW
Online Public Meetings	7 participants	June 22, 2022 Balwin Parks Online Public Meeting	Online using Zoom
	5 participants	June 23, 2022 Belvedere Parks Online Public Meeting	Online using Zoom
Engaged Edmonton	57 responses to Online survey and Stories tool	June 18, 2022 - July 17, 2022	Online
	320 visits to the site		
Door Knocking and Park User Surveys	103 in-person surveys 182 letters delivered to doors	July 13, 2022 - July 14, 2022	Homes adjacent to each park

Who Was Engaged

We engaged residents of the Balwin and Belvedere communities, users of the parks, vulnerable Edmontonians in the area and stakeholders such as the community league and schools.

We held two online public meetings, which were open to the general public. The meetings were attended by community members and stakeholders such as Community League board members and school staff.

The Engagement Edmonton online survey similarly provided an opportunity for the public and community members with interest in the project to provide input.

The pop-up engagement events at the Balwin Community Hall and Belvedere Community League were held in conjunction with other local events,

which enabled us to engage a range of people who live in the community, including those who still may not have been aware of the project or do not regularly participate in engagement events. A third pop-up event was held at the Mosaic Centre (The Mustard Seed) to ensure the perspectives of vulnerable Edmontonians were included. This was critical as Balwin and Belvedere have a higher than City-average of marginalized individuals including single parents, low income residents and a large population who identify as Indigenous.

Letter delivery, door knocking and in-person surveys focused on providing information and collecting survey responses from residents immediately adjacent to park sites and park users.



Belvedere Neighbour Day

What Happens Next?

Feedback from engagement will be considered during the development of the concept designs over the summer of 2022.

The Project Team will share the concept designs for each park in the Fall of 2022 for further public engagement. The feedback, along with City of Edmonton policies and technical requirements will be used to finalize the design plans, which are anticipated for completion between November - December 2022.

The final designs will be put forward to City Council and a budget request will be made for construction. If approved, the Build phase of the project may occur in the 2023 - 2027 budget cycle.





ADP

Balwin & Belvedere Park Revitalization

Online Public Engagement Events
June 22 and 23, 2022

Learn more at:
edmonton.ca/balwinbelvedererevitalization

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