

What We Heard Report Northeast River Valley Park

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Edmonton

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Introduction

Purpose

This What We Heard report summarizes feedback and key themes received during initial public engagement for Northeast River Valley Park. Members of the public were invited to provide feedback on how they currently use Northeast River Valley Park and their ideas about a future vision for the park. The feedback, in conjunction with other City of Edmonton policies such as the Ribbon of Green, will guide the development of a Strategic Plan.

Project Overview

The City of Edmonton is developing a Strategic Plan for the future of Northeast River Valley Park. The park is located along the northeast portion of Edmonton's North Saskatchewan River (17 Street NE and 153 Avenue NE). The 77 hectare (190-acre) property was previously known as Our Lady Queen of Peace Ranch and joined the City of Edmonton's River Valley Park system in fall 2023. The park will be unique and informed by local context.

Engagement Overview

The initial engagement occurred between **December 14, 2023, and February 29, 2024**. The section below provides details on who and how the project team engaged to gather input during this phase of the project.

Who we engaged

The opportunities listed below were provided for interested parties to learn more about the project and provide feedback throughout the engagement period.

Engagement Opportunity	Audience	Format and Location	Participation
Engaged Edmonton page	General public and community groups	Online format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12,813 visitors • 1,003 reviewed information • 168 respondents • 253 ideas • 715 idea likes
Information	General	Information Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 53 comment

boards with comment cards	public and park users	located at four different locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gold Bar Park • Laurier Park • Northeast River Valley Park • Victoria Park 	cards relevant to project were received
Direct correspondence to project email and traditional mail address	General public and community groups	Emails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five emails

How we engaged

The following engagement methods were used to invite the public, park users and community groups to participate in discussions about the Northeast River Valley Park project.

Digital methods - Engaged Edmonton

Using the Ideas tool on Engaged Edmonton, the public and community groups were invited to offer their comments and ideas in response to statements focused on:

- Their current thoughts about the park
- What the park could be in the future
- Activities they hope to see at the park in the future

The Ideas tool also allows participants to “like” the comments of other participants.

Onsite methods - information boards and comment cards

Information boards with comment cards were located onsite at Northeast River Valley Park and three other City parks (Gold Bar, Victoria, and Rundle). The boards provided information about the project and invited park users to complete comment cards with their ideas in response to statements focused on:

- Their current thoughts about the park
- What the park could be in the future
- Activities they hope to see at the park in the future

This method allowed participants who prefer to engage using more traditional methods and others without access to technology to learn about the project and contribute their ideas. The information boards also promoted the Engaged

Edmonton page. Examples of the information boards and a list of their locations are shown in the appendix.

The Engaged Edmonton page and information boards included the park's location, email and traditional mail addresses for direct correspondence with the project team.

How we communicated and shared engagement opportunities

The communication tactics outlined below were used to inform Edmontonians about the engagement opportunities.

Format	Description	Audience
Engaged Edmonton	engagement.edmonton.ca/NortheastRiverValleyPark	General public
Digital media (Google and social media ads)	Ad posts on Instagram and Facebook. Google ads through the advertising platform	General public
A-frame advertising signs	A-frame signs promoting the Engaged Edmonton website were located at 14 parks and recreation centres throughout the city. See Appendix for locations.	General public, park and recreation centre users
Information boards and comment cards	Information boards promoted the Engaged Edmonton website and were located at four parks throughout the city.	Park users

What we heard

Key themes

A diversity of perspectives, priorities, interests and concerns regarding the park were shared. Overall, there was excitement about the possibilities for what Northeast River Valley Park could offer. A detailed breakdown of key themes that consistently emerged during the initial engagement is provided in this section.

Desired recreational activities

A diverse array of active and passive outdoor activities were suggested as important experiences to include at Northeast River Valley Park. Many comments identified the desire for water-related activities including paddle boards, canoes, kayaks and non-motorized sports. Opportunities for biking, walking trails and fishing were also supported. Winter activities including cross-country skiing, ice fishing, skating and tobogganing were also strong themes. Less frequent comments included sport-related activities including facilities for baseball, tennis, pickleball, football, archery and an outdoor fitness gym.

Desired programming

Using Northeast River Valley Park as a social gathering space was identified as a priority in many of the responses. This included hosting concerts, events, festivals, farmers markets, local food vendors and art areas. Another frequent idea was allowing rentals in parks. Respondents suggested nature and wildlife teaching, including teaching led by Indigenous peoples. Rental ideas supported people's recreational desires including aquatic, non-motorized watercraft rentals, skate rentals and disc golf rentals.

Naturalization

Opportunities to contribute to conservation goals and provide opportunities for people to experience nature and green spaces were a priority in many of the responses. The most frequent ideas related to naturalization included planting more trees, re-naturalizing the park by following ecological principles and introducing native plants with interpretive signage. Additional comments noted how a naturalized park could be less expensive for the City to maintain, particularly compared to manicured grass and the pond feature.

Desired amenities

Within this theme, some of the most popular amenities for Northeast River Valley Park included a boat launch or dock, walking and biking trails with connections to the River Valley trail system, off-leash dog park or area, concession stands, public washrooms, water bottle refill stations, fire pits, shaded structures, picnic areas, playgrounds and a beach.

Indigenous connection

This initial phase of engagement did not focus on Indigenous engagement (please note future phases will include focused Indigenous Engagement), many of the engagement comments included the Indigenous connection to the park. Respondents suggested creating a place for others to learn about the land, medicine and healing plants, displaying Indigenous art and murals, a circle seating for Elders and the need to focus on Truth and Reconciliation by integrating Indigenous ways of storytelling and local knowledge of the park.

Access

The ability to travel to and within Northeast River Valley Park using multiple modes of transportation was highlighted as an important need. Participants identified a desire for public transit access to the park and trails that support active modes of transportation including walking and cycling. Personal vehicle use was also identified as necessary to access the park. Participants identified better roads within the park, increased parking and improved park signage to help improve access. There was a strong preference to ensure the park is accessible for those using wheelchairs, mobility devices and strollers through paved trails and adequate seating.

Safety

Maintaining safety at Northeast River Valley Park was a strong theme. Comments discussed increased lighting at night, closing gates after park hours, park safety and water training on non-motorized watercraft and life jackets.

What happens next?

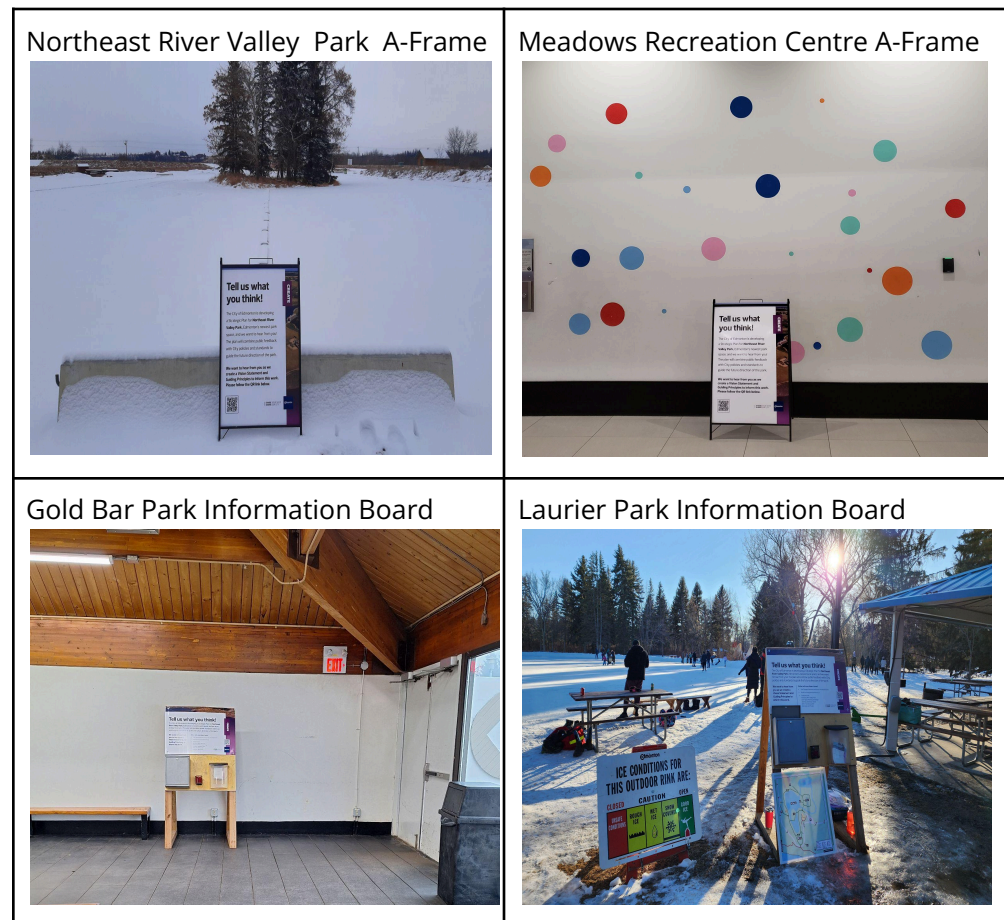
Feedback collected through this initial public engagement will inform the development of the Strategic Plan for the park. Further public engagement will occur in the fall of 2024.

Appendix - Examples of on-site methods

A-frame advertising signs and information boards were located at parks recreation centers around the City. These locations included:

- Clareview Recreation Centre
- Meadows Recreation Centre
- Terwillegar Recreation Centre
- Callingwood Arena
- Castle Downs Arena
- Alfred H. Savage Centre
- Kinsmen Recreation Centre
- Commonwealth Recreation Centre
- Tawatinaw Bridge
- Gold Bar Park
- Rundle Park
- Laurier Park
- Northeast River Valley Park
- Victoria Park

The images below show examples of the information boards, comment cards and A-frames.



Northeast River Valley Park
Comment Card



When I think of the Northeast River Valley Park now, I think of:

Picturesque + serene
It's ^{of} that it's not overrun w/ people. It is refreshing + relaxing like not even being in the city.

When I think of what the Northeast River Valley Park can be in the future, I think:

An ecological legacy for future generations. Wildlife corridor.
Like an Elk Island but inside the city.

I hope Northeast River Valley Park is a place for me to take part in these activities:

Relax. Dark sky preserve - see stars
Walk on different trail loops + not have to run into anyone.
Watch birds year round. Connect with nature.

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CREATE

Northeast River Valley Park Comment Card



When I think of the Northeast River Valley Park now, I think of:

A fun place to hold family functions / get together.
A nice area to walk my dog or trails to bike in summer.

When I think of what the Northeast River Valley Park can be in the future, I think:

Busy park where people come year-round to have fires, picnics + dog walks.

I hope Northeast River Valley Park is a place for me to take part in these activities:

Festivals / events (indoor + outdoor) family / friends gatherings / childrens summer camp.

LIVER