

RIVER VALLEY PLANNING MODERNIZATION

Ribbon of Green & River Valley ARP

Phase 1 What We Heard Report
October 2021

The Edmonton logo, featuring the word "Edmonton" in white text on a dark blue square background. A decorative green ribbon graphic runs diagonally across the right side of the page, starting from the top right and ending at the bottom left.

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Project Overview | 1 |
| PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT APPROACH | 3 |
| How We Engaged | 4 |
| Who We Engaged | 5 |
| What We Asked | 6 |
| WHAT WE HEARD | 7 |
| Previous Project Awareness | 8 |
| Vision & Principles | 9 |
| Values & Challenges | 10 |
| River Valley Uses & Land Management Classifications | 16 |
| Planning Implementation | 18 |
| NEXT STEPS | 19 |
| How Input Will Be Used | 20 |
| Thank You | 21 |
| APPENDIX: MAPS | 22 |

Project Overview

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Edmonton's North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System ("River Valley") is a vital and highly-valued ecological, recreational and active transportation corridor; a place of incredible cultural significance and a draw for visitors throughout the region. As the residential population of Edmonton's core neighbourhoods grows, as Edmontonians increasingly seek out opportunities for natural recreation, and as a range of River Valley development projects are proposed, planned and implemented, pressure on the River Valley is increasing. With demands on the system becoming increasingly complex, there is a need for clear policy, sound planning guidance and a strong regulatory framework.

This River Valley Planning Modernization project will create an integrated planning and regulatory framework for Edmonton's River Valley to ensure that it remains a protected, vibrant and resilient open space network as the city grows.

FRAMEWORK

This project includes two streams of work that will be developed in coordination with one another:

RIBBON OF GREEN – COMPLETION:

The Ribbon of Green provides the strategic direction: our overall vision for the future of the River Valley, our high-level plans for the connected open spaces within it, and the policy that guides our decisions about what happens in that space.

NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER VALLEY ARP – MODERNIZATION:

The North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (Bylaw 7188, also known as the River Valley Bylaw) provides the regulatory framework: the standards and rules that guide our evaluation of individual projects and development that are proposed for the River Valley.

ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The following principles will anchor our actions and thinking as we engage with the public and stakeholders.

- + Be open, timely and responsive
- + Listen and share stories to understand
- + Support informed engagement
- + Follow through on commitments

OVERALL ENGAGEMENT GOALS

While each project, and each phase, will have its own specific aims, there are several overarching goals that all public engagement processes will aim to achieve.

- + Provide opportunities throughout the project for participants to provide meaningful, appropriate and actionable input that will be used to complete the Ribbon of Green plan and update the River Valley regulatory framework
- + Implement an engagement process that is open, transparent and respectful
- + Provide opportunities for involvement that are convenient and accessible
- + Creatively engage and communicate with the general public, stakeholders, and communities, including adjacent municipalities
- + Provide opportunities to engage vulnerable populations and equity seeking groups
- + Clearly communicate the project goals, what the engagement process can and cannot influence, and how public input was used to help shape the plan

PROJECT TIMELINE

The Ribbon of Green and the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (NRSVARP) will be updated together from 2021-2022.

1 SHARE YOUR IDEAS

Spring 2021

2 SHAPE OUR RIBBON

Fall 2021

3 PLAN OUR RIBBON

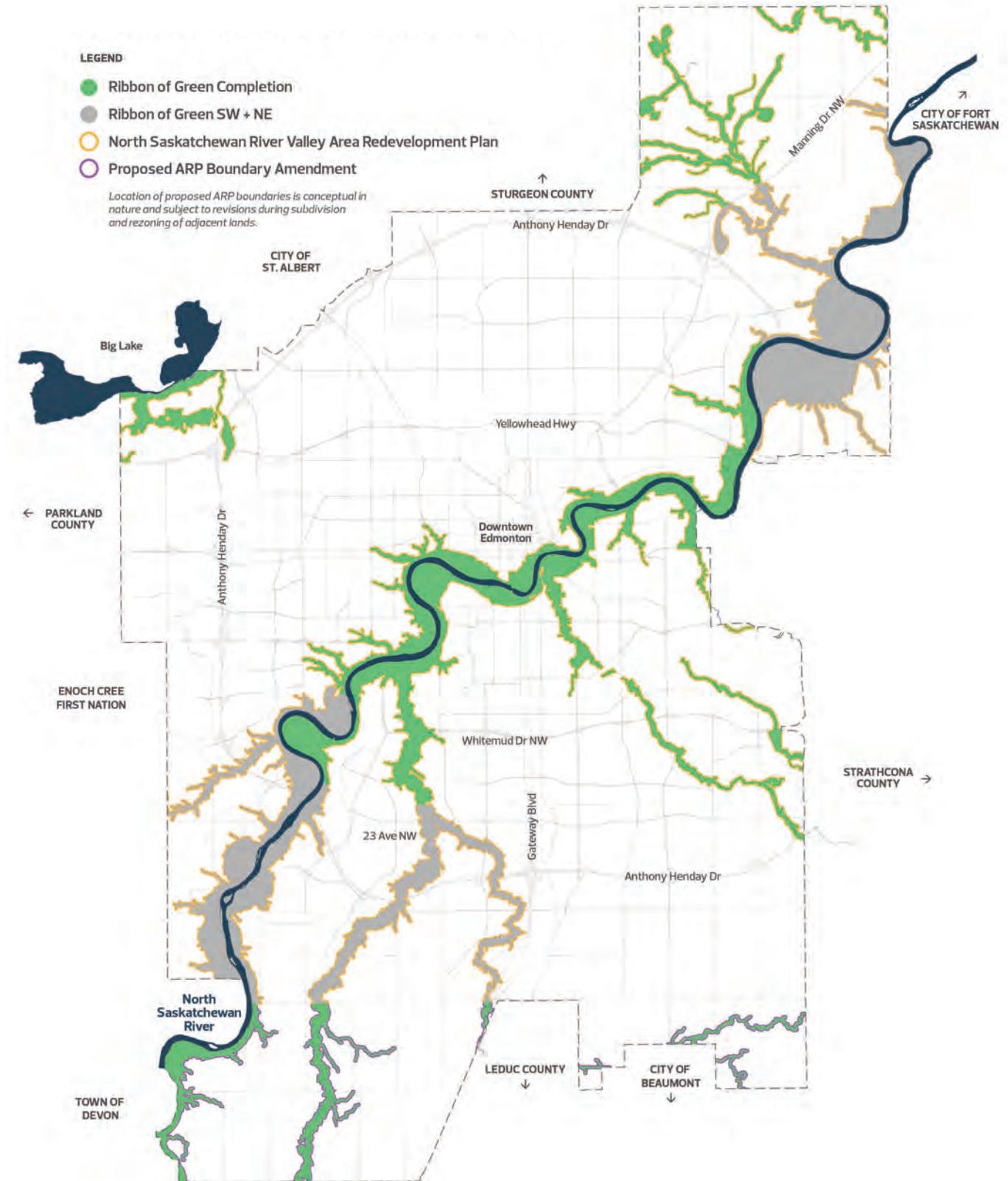
Spring 2022 (Tentative)

4 CONFIRM OUR RIBBON

Fall 2022 (Tentative)

PROJECT STUDY AREA BOUNDARIES













The boundary of the study area follows the boundary of the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System within the city of Edmonton. It also extends above the top-of-bank to consider the transportation network, as well as adjacent land and uses associated with the study area that may be used for ecological or human connectivity, access or parking.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

How We Engaged

To reach a wide range of Edmontonians and River Valley users, a variety of engagement methods and tools were used, ensuring there were multiple avenues to choose from to participate. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Phase 1 did not include any in-person engagement opportunities.

| Resources | Description | Inform/Engage | Audience | Format |
|---|---|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
|  Project Webpage | The online hub for all project information. edmonton.ca/ribbonofgreen | Inform | Public | Online |
|  Engage Edmonton Site | A hub to access all engagement opportunities to participate. engaged.edmonton.ca/rivervalleyplanningmodernization | Inform | Public | Online |
|  Intro Video | Short video introducing the plans, project purpose, and the engagement opportunities. | Inform | Public | Online |
|  Virtual Info Session | Recorded video presentation from the project team to provide a supplementary format to learn about the project. | Inform | Public | Online |
|  Interactive Portal / Survey | The primary means to share information and collect feedback during Phase 1. This website included background information, integrated survey questions, and an interactive map to collect site-specific input. | Inform/Engage | Public | Online |
|  Public Workshop | Registered online workshop sessions with facilitated small-group discussions. | Inform/Engage | Public | Online |
|  Public Discussion Guide | Paper copy of online survey for those unable to access online engagement opportunities. | Inform/Engage | Public | Print |
|  Stakeholder Workshop | Registered online workshop sessions with facilitated small-group discussions. | Inform/Engage | Stakeholder Groups | Online |
|  Stakeholder Meetings | Meetings with individual stakeholder organizations, organized upon request to discuss organization-specific issues/concerns. | Engage | Stakeholder Groups | Online |
|  Stakeholder Discussion Guide | PDF booklet with key project material and interactive form fields to provide feedback as an organization. | Inform/Engage | Stakeholder Groups | Online/Print |
|  Project Email | Emails sent to the project team. ribbonofgreen@edmonton.ca | Engage | Public | Online |
|  Project Signage | Signage posted at high-traffic locations within the river valley to inform users about the project and promote engagement. | Inform | Public | Print/On Site |

Who We Engaged

The City is committed to involving the people affected by the decisions it makes, and seeks diverse opinions, experiences and information so that a wide spectrum of information is available to decision makers.

GENERAL PUBLIC:

Engagement opportunities were open to all Edmontonians who live, work, and play in and around the River Valley.

STAKEHOLDERS:

Groups with a vested interest in the River Valley were invited to participate, including representatives from:

- + **Stakeholder organizations** representing a variety of existing and potential users and uses, such as:
 - + ecological conservation and nature appreciation
 - + recreational activities
 - + active transportation
 - + festivals, events, and tourism
 - + cultural/historic resources
 - + residential/commercial development
 - + accessibility and inclusivity
- + **Partner facilities** that work with the City to develop, operate and program open spaces and facilities in the River Valley.
- + **Business owners** that currently operate or seek to operate commercial activity within the River Valley.
- + **Private landowners** who own land within the River Valley.
- + **Community leagues** of neighbourhoods adjacent to the River Valley.

For the full list of organizations that participated, see Appendix A.

INDIGENOUS NATIONS & COMMUNITIES:

Indigenous Nations and Communities have significant historical and cultural connections to the river valley. In order to respect the unique engagement interests, cultural context and capacity of Indigenous Nations and Communities, Indigenous engagement was carried out through a separate engagement stream.

350
Public Survey
Participants

100
Registered Public
Workshop
Participants

70
Registered Stakeholder
Participants

What We Asked

While each engagement tactic varied slightly due to format or audience, the questions remained consistent. Below is a summary of the types of questions asked throughout Phase 1.

Previous Project Awareness

- + Did you participate in the past Ribbon of Green SW+NE engagement opportunities?
- + How familiar are you with the existing North Saskatchewan River Valley ARP?

Vision & Principles

- + Do the vision and principles capture the future you envision for Edmonton's entire River Valley and Ravine System?
- + If not, why? What do you think is missing?

Values & Challenges

- + What is most important to you in the River Valley?
- + What do you value most about the Ecology/Celebration/Wellness of the River Valley?
- + What are your concerns?

Land Management Classifications

- + Do you feel the Land Management Classifications capture the different uses that should be permitted in specific locations throughout the River Valley?
- + If not, why? What do you think is missing?
- + Are there any uses or developments in the River Valley that should never be permitted?

Planning Implementation *(Public and Stakeholders Workshops Only)*

- + **Existing River Valley ARP:** If you are familiar with the existing River Valley ARP, what do you think works well? What needs to be improved?
- + **Engagement/Stewardship:** How can the public and stakeholders be better involved in River Valley projects and initiatives?
- + **Knowledge/Data:** What information is required to enable informed decisions about what is and is not appropriate for the River Valley?
- + **Process/Decisions:** What checks and balances are required for you to have confidence in the decisions made within the River Valley?

WHAT WE HEARD

Indigenous Engagement

Indigenous Engagement

The City of Edmonton is committed to keeping Indigenous Nations and Communities informed and engaged when projects intersect with Indigenous interests and concerns. The project team will look for opportunities to collaborate, understand how issues and concerns can be addressed, and seek to incorporate input into a clear set of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations.

In June and July 2021 the City reached out to Indigenous communities for initial engagement and to share information on the River Valley Planning Modernization project. The City has identified the following themes based on the input gathered. Communities have been invited to review these topics for feedback and identify if additional topics should be considered.

KEY THEMES, LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

| THEME | LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS |
|---|---|
| Environmental | Indigenous communities are interested in site monitoring, ecological management, research opportunities and archeological preservation. |
| Environmental (Medicinal Plants) | Riverbanks are home to rare, medicinal and native plants. Keep as many of these plants as possible so that people can continue to harvest within the area. |
| Historical Sites & Uses | Historical sites and uses should be identified, marked and shared through Indigenous art and monuments to pass cultural information from one generation to the next. |
| Homelessness | Consider the population of people affected by homelessness that currently reside in the river valley and how they may be impacted by the planning, design and construction of projects, as well as how the increased focus of recreation may affect and displace this marginalized group. |
| Implementation | Indigenous communities need to be engaged throughout the implementation process and provided with opportunities to share their knowledge to ensure sensitive sites are not disturbed and traditional plants are replanted. |
| Indigenous Awareness (Place Naming & Recognition) | Identify and promote opportunities for Indigenous awareness, showcasing the rich Indigenous culture, languages, art and traditions. Place naming should be considered as an opportunity to honour and recognize Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, heroes and history. |
| Traditional Use | Provide opportunities for Indigenous people to share their knowledge of traditional land uses, historical sites and medicinal plants. |
| Engagement (Ongoing & Elder Engagement) | Involving Elders creates opportunities for integrated and intergenerational learning. Indigenous engagement should be ongoing throughout the life of the project. It is important to provide opportunities for Indigenous people to share their knowledge through committees, boards and commissions. |
| Communication | Photos and maps were accessible and user-friendly, which was helpful in understanding the planning process and offering input and suggestions. |
| Engagement (Protocol) | It is essential to show respect to Indigenous communities. Engagement sessions included an opportunity for an opening and closing prayer, as well as an offering of tobacco. Future sessions should continue this approach. |

WHAT WE HEARD

Summaries by Question

Previous Project Awareness

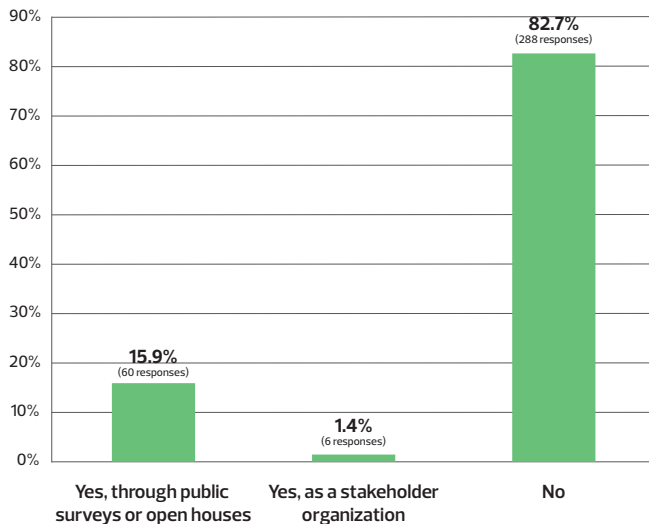
Many of the participants of the public survey were engaging on the Ribbon of Green for the first time. Approximately 83 percent of survey respondents said that they had not participated in the previous engagement processes for the Ribbon of Green NE and SW. This means that only about 17 percent had participated in the previous project, as a member of the public or as a stakeholder.

Participants were also asked about their level of familiarity with the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP). Of those who completed the

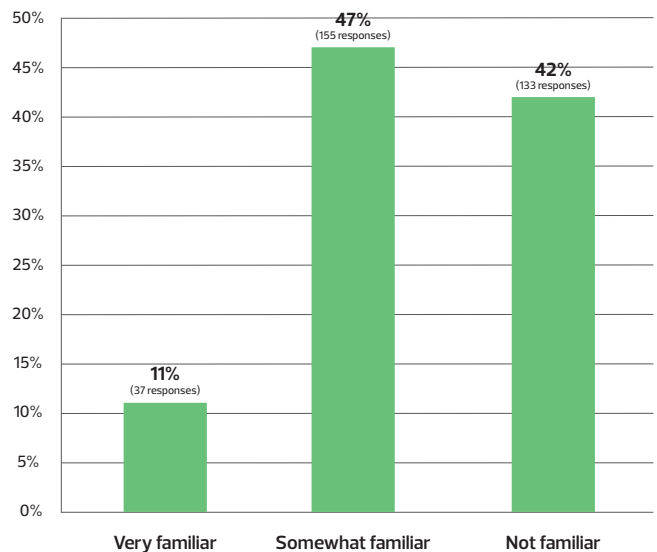
online survey, the majority of participants indicated they were not familiar or somewhat familiar with the plan, with only 11 percent indicating that they were very familiar with the plan.

However, some of the comments from both the public survey and discussions at the workshops indicated that some people who thought they were familiar with the plan were at times confusing the River Valley ARP and the Ribbon of Green SW+NE documents. Some workshop participants expressed that the City's current policy structure is confusing and suggested that clear background information about how the various plans fit together would be helpful for public audiences.

Did you participate in the past Ribbon of Green SW+NE engagement opportunities?



How familiar are you with the existing North Saskatchewan River Valley ARP?



Vision & Principles

In general, participants agreed with the proposed Vision and Principles (Appendix B). Approximately half of survey participants somewhat agreed and 39 percent strongly agreed. Only 11 percent of respondents disagreed with the vision and principles presented. Though there was a general level of agreement, some participants expressed concerns or ideas to revise the Vision and Principles.

The main concerns highlighted two opposing viewpoints about protection and access:

- + Too focused on the protection of natural systems at the cost of recreational activities and access
- + Statements are not strong enough to protect natural systems in the River Valley from other activities

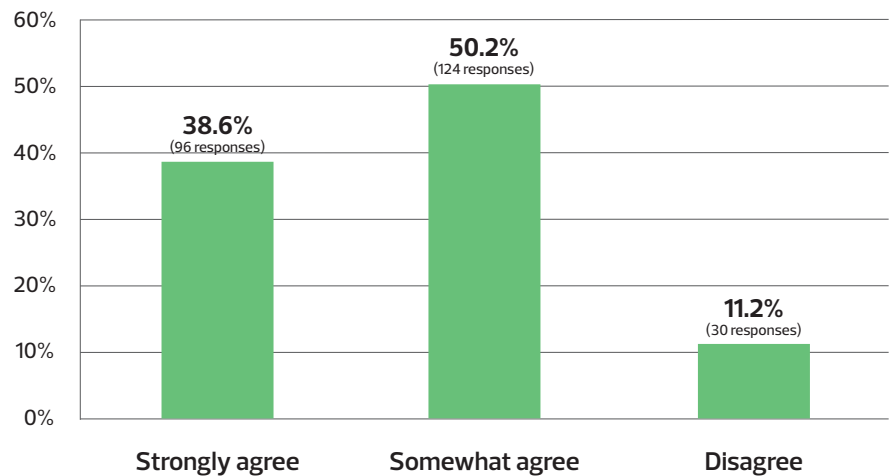
In addition to these opposing viewpoints, many participants indicated they wanted to see a greater balance between protection and access.

Some participants expressed a desire to see stronger approval/disapproval of certain activities in the River Valley. Some specific mentions included prohibiting private commercial and industrial activities, solar farms, and gondolas. On the other hand, a few comments suggested including a broader range of allowable uses, including residential and commercial, in the vision for the River Valley.

Several participants wanted to see respect, equity, and inclusion better reflected in the vision. This included acknowledgment of those experiencing homelessness in the River Valley. Further to this, people emphasized the value of the River Valley as a cultural and natural resource and the value it holds for Indigenous Peoples. Participants wanted to see the vision reflect protection of the River Valley for future generations.

Additionally, some participants felt that there should be more specific language about trails and access. Specifically, some participants felt that the City should be more inclusive of all

Does the vision and principles capture the future you envision for Edmonton's entire River Valley and Ravine System?



forms of trail-based recreation (including mountain biking) and all types of trails (from natural-tread or single track to more accessible paved pathways). Some participants also wanted to see more direct language about universal accessibility of trails and creating more access points into the River Valley. Finally, there were several comments that wildlife connectivity should be planned for in addition to trail connectivity.

"The primary purpose of the river valley should be for the sustainable enjoyment of the people of the city. No group or activity should have priority over another."

"The primary focus should be nature. As the city grows, there will be more pressure on this space. Edmonton can develop in areas outside the river valley; we should not have solar farms or gondolas. Wildlife need this as a corridor and habitat."

"The preservation of river valley space, flora, and fauna as well as its use for recreational activity and transport will help support a healthy environment and healthy people."

"The 'continuous trail system' must include all users."

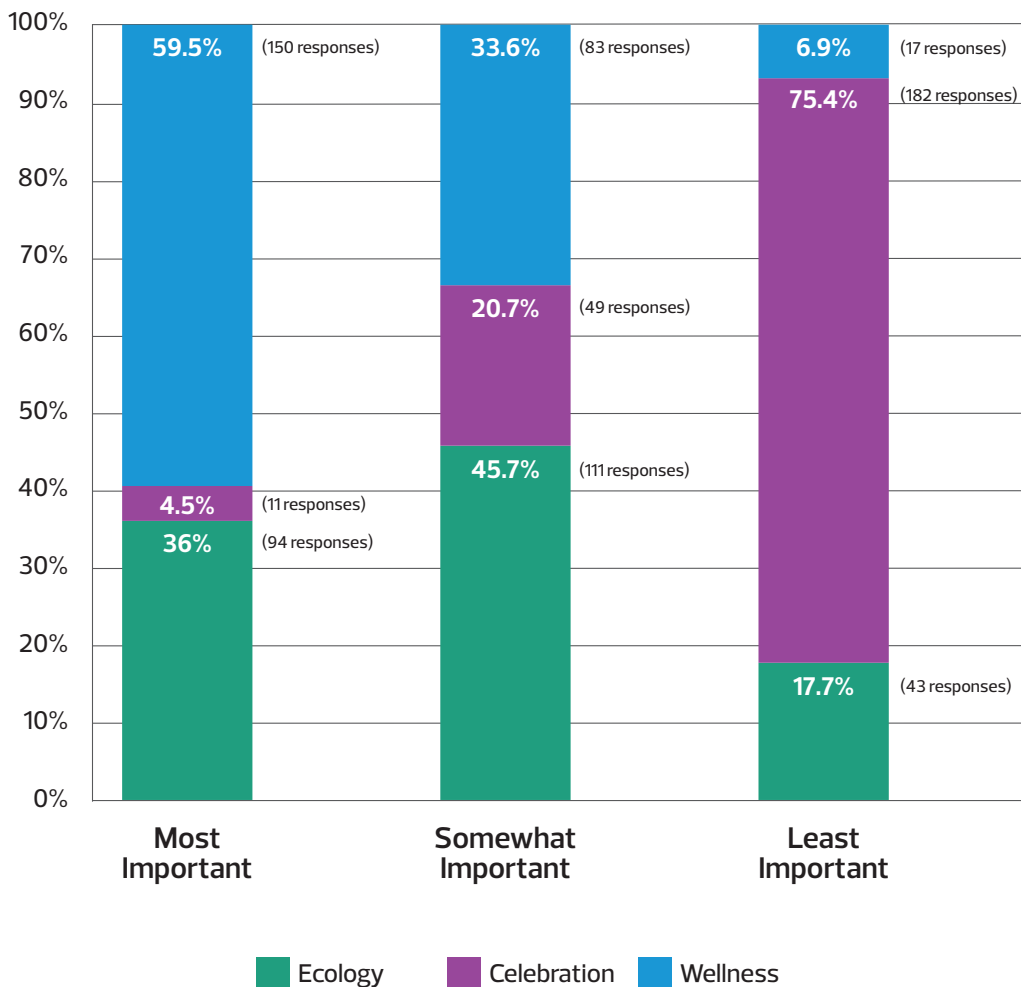
Values & Challenges

When asked to rank the three themes from most to least important, Wellness was most often selected as the top priority, followed by Ecology, then Celebration. The comments about values also supported Wellness as a top priority, with many people citing various recreational activities that they like to do in the River Valley to access nature. It should be noted that there was a high level of participation by the mountain biking community in the Phase 1 workshops. Many of these participants emphasized the value of the "Wellness" theme in connection with a desire for ongoing access to mountain biking opportunities and associated physical and mental health benefits.

Some participants commented that the three themes should be more integrated and better balanced within the City's plans for the River Valley. Some suggested that separating the themes within the online survey made them feel like they were conflicting or competing, rather than coexisting together or supporting each other, as both Wellness and Celebration uses would not be possible in the River Valley without Ecology.

Overall, the main challenges facing the City in planning for the River Valley were clear: balancing the impacts of access and use while protecting the ecological features, views, and nature experiences that Edmontonians love about their city.

What is most important to you in the River Valley?



Ecology & Wellness

Comments related to Ecology were closely connected to Wellness comments. What is clear and consistent among participants is that both Wellness and Ecology are highly valued and intrinsically connected. The importance of 'getting into nature' for personal wellbeing was noted by many – and only heightened due to the previous year of the Covid-19 pandemic. There is a desire to both protect nature and connect people with it.

This link was also highlighted through concerns about the impacts of recreation/development on ecological integrity and, conversely, concerns that an ecological focus would restrict access for recreation, such as mountain biking. Those who use the River Valley for recreational pursuits noted they value the unique natural experience and sense of immersion in nature provided by the River Valley.

Celebration

With Wellness and Ecology functions so highly valued, Celebration was the lowest priority for most participants. This lower ranking may in part be due to confusion around the definition of what "celebration" includes. Even so, several participants provided comments on what they valued about Celebration in the River Valley and related concerns. Many appreciate the opportunity to gather with friends and family in the River Valley and take part in events there. Many also had concerns about the impacts of large events and gatherings on both the nature experience of the River Valley and its ecological integrity.

The following pages provide additional detail summarizing the general themes collected through comments and map pins. For the online map, participants were asked to provide comments attached to particular locations in the River Valley. Comments described either a value or a challenge relating to the three themes of Ecology, Celebration, and Wellness.

For full theme descriptions, see Appendix B



Ecology



| | VALUES | CHALLENGES |
|--|---|---|
| Connecting to Nature | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Immersion in nature / feeling of removal from the city + Recreation opportunities in nature + Beautiful views | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Overdevelopment, overuse, and encroachment of development impacting ecological connectivity and integrity (exacerbated by increase in use during COVID-19 pandemic) + Lack of maintenance compounds overuse issues and impacts, such as erosion + Concerns that mountain biking and horseback riding will be excluded from the river valley / considered detrimental to ecology + Should be more education/awareness of ecology + Some think there is too much of a focus on ecology, others think not enough focus |
| Ecosystem Function and Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Ecosystem services the area provides (climate mitigation, biodiversity, urban forest, stormwater management) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Impacts of climate change (fires, floods, etc) + Litter/garbage impacting ecosystems in the river valley + Lack of formalization of trails and activities leading to informal ones, which are causing more damage and erosion + Lack of planning for overall wildlife connectivity, many pinch points + Should daylight creeks (un-bury and renaturalize creeks that have been covered and culverted) |
| Ecotourism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Ecotourism opportunities + Unique natural amenity that sets Edmonton apart from other cities | |

Celebration



| | VALUES | CHALLENGES |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Gathering and Events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Places to gather with friends/family + Events that take place in the River Valley (e.g. Folk Fest) + Celebrating nature and recreating in it | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Could conflict with other ecology and wellness functions (e.g. event closures, parking) + Ecological impacts of events (e.g. garbage, noise, overcrowding) + Need for greater enforcement and/or education about proper waste disposal, environmental impacts, and permitted behaviour/activities in the River Valley. |
| Inclusivity | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Need to elevate Indigenous stories and celebrations + Need to contribute tangible actions towards reconciliation + Need to create inclusive places for celebration (e.g. multicultural, accessible, all ages) |
| Development and Amenities | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Don't want river valley to be overdeveloped + Not enough resources to support large events (e.g. space, washrooms, water) + Keep events in existing event spaces instead of building more |



| | VALUES | CHALLENGES |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Active Recreation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Love recreating in nature, and the experience of 'getting away' + River Valley is important for physical and mental health, especially during COVID-19 pandemic + World class recreational opportunities (mountain biking, kayaking/canoeing) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Overcrowding and overuse + Golf courses do not belong in the river valley / should be repurposed for other uses + Wish all users of the river valley would be better stewards of it + Favouritism against certain recreation uses versus others + Need to balance preservation of the environment with ensuring continued enjoyment and recreation in the river valley + Need more research/data on impacts of activities on the natural environment + Suggested amenities such as bike park, dog park, washrooms, water fountains, seating, lighting to support recreation activities + Improved river access (non-motorized) |
| Trail-based Recreation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Easy access to trail networks, including rugged single-track/nature trails for hiking and mountain biking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + User conflicts on trails or between other uses should be managed better (dog walking/off-leash areas, bikes, hikers, scooters/e-bikes, etc) + Lack of information available about trail locations and proper use/stewardship, need more signage and enforcement + Issues regarding informal single-track trail building. Some want to see illegal trails stopped because they believe they are harming the environment or are a nuisance, while others want to see formalization/designation of these trails by the City. Related issues include challenges with getting permission to maintain/build trails, a lack of City willingness to formalize/maintain these trails, and a lack of enforcement regarding informal trail building. + Don't want to see all paths paved + Mountain biking seems to be left out of the plans for the river valley |
| Inclusivity | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Use of the river valley by those experiencing homelessness, safety concerns / need to solve homelessness + Accessibility for those with mobility challenges |

MAP COMMENTS BY REACH

The table below summarizes map comments by the reach they were located in. See Appendix C to view comment maps. Reaches not listed below indicate that not pins were received for those areas.

| REACH | VALUES | CHALLENGES |
|---|---|--|
| North Saskatchewan Central | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Winter use of Hawrelak Park + Wild/beautiful scenic quality of the River Valley + Accidental beach used to enjoy the river and downtown views + Existing cross-country trails, skating ovals, and iceway provide opportunity for winter sport and recreation + Very important active transportation connection through the central River Valley + Funicular is an accessible entry point to the River Valley and very important for those with different abilities + Existing mountain bike trails of varying degrees of difficulty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Golf courses seen as taking too much space, compromising riparian habitat, restricting access through the River Valley, and preventing use for general public. Some suggestions to turn these into cross-country ski areas in the winter. + Demand to repurpose the Victoria and Riverside golf courses to provide more public open space and trail connections + Calls for increased garbage and washroom facilities in heavily used gathering spaces + Concerns around motorized watercraft (noise and habitat degradation) + Support for daylighting of Groat Creek, Rat Creek, Mill Creek + Wildlife connectivity concerns, highlighting the need to manage pinchpoints + Manicured grass areas too extensive and should be naturalized to provide habitat and ecosystem services + Concerns about user conflicts which impact the safety of children, seniors, and those with other mobility needs – Touch the Water recommended good solutions to resolve these conflicts. + User conflicts with scooters + Challenges connecting trail network north of Mill Creek into Mill Creek Ravine + Regular grooming of cross-country trails required + Steep riverbanks are an access/safety concern + Improvements to singletrack trail connections throughout both sides of River Valley + Bike access into River Valley from downtown is challenging |

| REACH | VALUES | CHALLENGES |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| North Saskatchewan West | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Buena Vista dog park important place for animals and humans to connect + Potential for mountain bike skills terrain area in Cameron Heights Ravine Park, above the water treatment plant + Terwillegar Park as important recreation area, particularly for mountain biking, swimming, and dogs + Many local organizations, clubs and non-profits use Terwillegar as a location to run community events + Zoo provides a children's play area that helps link cultural and natural history of the River Valley | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Improved trail connection required from the University of Alberta (U of A) South Campus into the River Valley + Parking facilities needed near Cameron Heights Ravine Park + More adequate washroom facilities + User conflicts in Terwillegar Park off-leash areas + Drinking water fountains needed for humans and dogs + Better signage needed to foster trail etiquette between mountain bikers, runners, and dog owners + Better public transit access needed in Terwillegar Park + Concerns with accessibility due to narrow trails in Whitemud Park + Existing Wilfred Laurier Park river access is small and constrained – better river access would support ecotourism + Rogue trail building and unsafe jumps in Cameron Heights Ravine Park + Mountain bike trails need better signage indicating length, direction and difficulty + Parking facilities near Fort Edmonton may be inadequate + Concerns about equitable access to the zoo due to its admission cost + Trail restrictions for bikes on certain paths in Wilfred Laurier Park creates congestion on the paved path |
| North Saskatchewan East | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Natural-tread trails through this area for mountain biking and hiking + Goldstick and Goldbar Ravines provide examples of cross-country skiing, mountain biking and hiking co-existing in a respectful manner | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Rundle mini golf course in disrepair – replace with art park, basketball courts, skate park, garden, etc. + Connect Fulton Ravine and the developing Fulton Ravine South Park (along with Capilano Library, Capilano Mall, and surrounding communities) with the River Valley + Connect the trail along 106 Avenue over Wayne Gretzky Drive + Improve access to Capilano Bridge by removing stair connections and creating non-stair paths instead + Better signage and wayfinding required + New active use bridge to better connect to Strathcona Country via the Great Trail along Aurum Road + User conflicts between trail users and off leash dogs in Hermitage Park – separation required + Manicured grass areas too extensive and should be naturalized to provide habitat and ecosystem services + Regular grooming of cross-country trails required + Goldstick facility outdated and needs to be upgraded for public use + Increased number of washrooms required + Capilano boat launch does not allow for adequate large vehicle turning. |

| REACH | VALUES | CHALLENGES |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Whitemud North | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Important path system to connect the south–north and east–west + Important and sensitive geological outcroppings and natural habitat need to be preserved, including Tufa Springs and fish habitat. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Concerns about mountain bike use in Whitemud Park Nature reserve (some want to see it permitted and others want better enforcement of existing rules prohibiting it) + Concerns about horseback riding in the nature reserve (some want to see this allowed and others want it prohibited) + Need for updated signage and/or enforcement to mitigate mountain biking uses through this preservation area + City should work with existing partners to create collaboratively designed and maintained trails + Trail connections to Grandview are inadequate + Trails below Grandview should be managed to maintain their condition, routing and ensure no more additions, jumps or shortcuts are added to the trails + The city needs to take an active role in trail management for all users, walkers and mountain bikers |
| Mill Creek North | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Pedestrian connection from east Whyte Ave. neighbourhoods to downtown + Mill Creek Ravine Park, and the entire connected river valley park system, is important to people's mental health and physical wellness + Running and biking on paved paths and single-track trails provide access to nature for surrounding areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Need to daylight, renaturalize, and reconnect Mill Creek + Serious erosion issues along the Creek shoreline + Access through this area a frequent challenge due to construction |
| North Saskatchewan Rabbit Hill | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Opportunity for summer biking trails and skills development courses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Trail connections with the rest of the city required |
| Big Lake | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Valuable ecological area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Improved trail network is desired + Limit encroachment as surrounding neighbourhoods are further developed + Need better definition around the intent of these lands |



River Valley Uses & Land Management Classifications

When asked about their level of agreement with the three Land Management Classifications (Preservation, Conservation, and Active Working Landscapes – building from the Ribbon of Green SW+NE), most people indicated that they strongly agree or somewhat agree with the direction provided. About 25% of survey participants indicated that they disagree with the proposed classifications.

When asked why they agree or disagree, some people stated that they did not think they had enough information to answer the question. Some comments spoke to the need to be able to see how much of each Classification would be present in each River Valley reach. A few people said they could not support the Classifications unless they knew which areas would be designated as each classification.

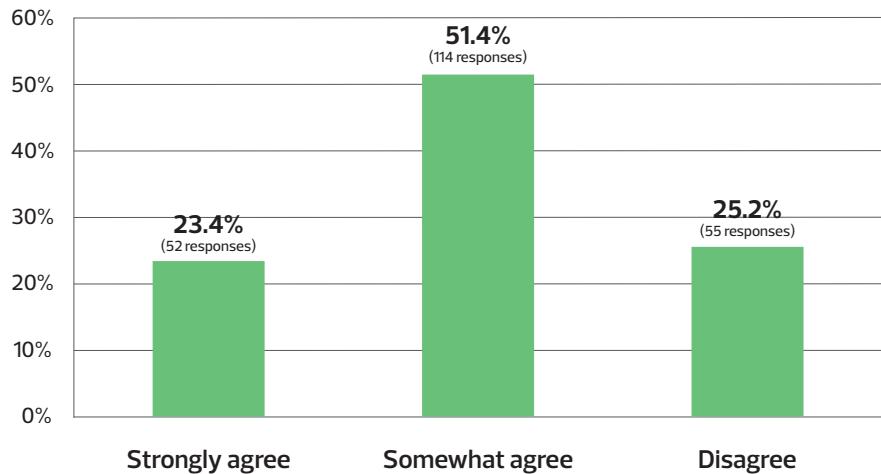
Preservation/Conservation Clarity

It was clear that there was some confusion about the intent of the Land Management Classifications. Most commonly, people did not understand the difference between the proposed Preservation and Conservation classifications. Sometimes concerns about limits on recreational activities were more applicable to the Preservation class than the Conservation class that was noted.

Permitted Uses in Preservation Areas

Generally, participants expressed a desire to balance recreational use with ecological protection. However, some felt that the Land Management Classifications themselves leaned too heavily towards ecological protection. These respondents usually wanted to see greater allowance for recreational uses, particularly trail-based recreation like mountain biking, within the Preservation class. Often, the

Do you feel these Land Management Classifications capture the different uses that should be permitted in specific locations throughout the River Valley?



suggested rationale for this perspective was that responsible mountain biking on well-maintained trails is no more ecologically impactful than hiking on single track trails, which is allowed in the proposed Preservation class. On the other hand, there were some respondents who felt that the proposed Land Management Classifications did not go far enough in protecting sensitive natural environments. Several of these comments suggested prohibiting any recreation within the Preservation zone, including walking and hiking.

Prohibiting Activity

Similar differences presented themselves when people were asked if some uses should never be allowed in the River Valley. Some people said that they did not think any uses should be outright excluded, and said instead that a clear process should be established to make decisions on specific applications for uses in the River Valley, based on their level of impact. Most people however felt that there were at least a few uses that should be outright prohibited such as resource extraction and industrial development.

Overdevelopment

A general theme that arose from comments on prohibiting uses was that it was important not to overdevelop the River Valley. As many participants indicated that they value nature experiences and recreation, they want to keep the River Valley as natural as possible while still enabling inclusive access.

Industrial, Commercial, and Residential Use

The most commonly cited use that participants felt should be prohibited were industrial development and resource extraction. Some people also felt that no new residential development should be permitted in the River Valley, and that the City should seek to acquire some of the existing residential areas to enable more public access and protection of natural features. Opinions were more mixed on whether commercial development should be allowed. Some people did not want any commercialization of the River Valley. Others wanted to see commercial development that is supportive of River Valley activities, such as restaurants or equipment rentals. Golf courses were mentioned many times as areas that should be converted to uses that better suit the River Valley. Solar farms and gondolas were other specific uses mentioned by a few participants who felt these should not be permitted. Touch the Water received a mix of support and concern. Some people felt that the project does not belong in the River Valley because it will interfere with existing natural habitat. Others liked that the project would be daylighting Groat Creek and felt it was a good use of the area given previous disturbance. One comment suggested that Touch the Water was a good opportunity to integrate priorities such as interpretation and education on Indigenous history and culture.

Recreational Use

There were some differences of opinion regarding certain recreational uses being allowed in the River Valley. Many people wanted to see more mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding opportunities, while others wanted to see less of these uses. The main conflict between these comments was usually tied to informal single-track trails and whether these should be formally recognized and maintained by the City for use or removed/closures enforced. One area of agreement was that there should not be motorized recreational vehicles allowed in the River Valley, including ATVs, bikes, and boats.

Inclusivity & Equity

Several stated that the City should take a more meaningful approach to working with Indigenous peoples to support traditional use, access, and decolonized stewardship of the River Valley. Others felt that more attention should be paid to solving homelessness and including unhoused Edmontonians who often camp in the River Valley within the planning process. There were additional comments suggesting greater accessibility for those with limited mobility and making recreation more inclusive of all ages and backgrounds.

Planning Implementation

Participants were asked about ideas for implementing the River Valley Planning Framework, including what works well in the existing River Valley ARP, how stakeholders and the public can be better involved in decision making, what information is needed to inform decision making, and what checks and balances are needed for confidence in decisions. The most resounding theme within the comments was support for a fair and transparent decision-making process. Participants commented that this decision-making process should be based on studied impacts of uses and development and informed by community and stakeholder feedback.

Specifically, participants asked for:

- + More studies and data to assess ecological impact and current state
- + A clear and consistent engagement process
- + A clear decision-making process and definitions
- + More education about City policies (simplified for public audience) and public access to documents
- + Timely decision making, especially to enable small, low-impact projects and maintenance by community organizations (decision from the City within one season, not several)
- + Establishing a River Valley Committee that contributes to decision making and has members across a variety of interests/activities
- + Creating a Trails Master Plan, based on a full trail inventory, to formalize, plan, and maintain trails in the River Valley and provide better wayfinding/signage

Several comments also indicated that there is a need to decolonize the approach to managing the natural environment and to meaningfully include Indigenous peoples as decision makers and stewards.

Related to these ideas were concerns about the engagement process and fairness. Suggested improvements to the engagement process included:

- + Reporting back on feedback and how it is used
- + In-person engagement in the River Valley
- + Dedicated City staff that engage and collaborate with community and user groups

Several participants also wanted to see more formal partnerships with other levels of government, community organizations like the Edmonton Mountain Biking Association (EMBA), and conservation organizations in addition to engagement.

Some participants questioned who is represented or not represented in the current decision-making process and engagement. A few participants felt that the City has a bias towards or against certain user groups, particularly the mountain biking community. There were a few additional concerns that the Ribbon of Green NE + SW did not go through statutory planning process with an advertised public hearing (Note: due to the impact of COVID restrictions on standing Committee meeting schedules the plan was shared with Urban Planning Committee via memo in August 2020 so that the remainder of the project could advance). These comments indicated a desire for the updated Ribbon of Green to go through the statutory process.

In addition to more engagement, some participants also wanted to see more public education about safe use of the River Valley and how to steward its ecological integrity and for the City to encourage community stewardship programs. Another suggestion was to have the City take a more active role in facilitating conflict resolution and collaboration between user groups.

NEXT STEPS

How Input Will Be Used

The following table provides an overview of how the feedback contained in this report will be used to inform the next phases of the project.

| PLAN ELEMENT | NEXT STEPS |
|---|---|
| Vision and Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Ensure that the vision and principles adequately protect natural systems while promoting and accommodating access to, and enjoyment of, the River Valley. + Integrate environmental protection and access goals and the three Breathe functional themes, rather than having them separate or in opposition. |
| Land Management Classifications and Allowable Uses in the River Valley | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Refine the Land Management Classifications based on feedback and propose where these will be located on mapping of the River Valley. + Re-engage on the Classifications and their locations in Phase 2. + Establish a transparent process for updating Land Management Classifications. + Establish a transparent decision-making process for how trails are managed/added/removed within the Land Management Classifications. + Consider including a trail inventory and Trail Master Plan for the River Valley as an implementation item. |
| Definitions within the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Clarify and ensure transparency in the decision-making process for determining if something is 'essential' in the River Valley. Define who makes this decision and what checks and balances are used. + Review the current Environmental Impact Assessment and processes to ensure it adequately considers cumulative impacts of any proposed development and is appropriately tied to the Land Management Classifications. + Consider scaling of the Environmental Impact Assessment tool to distinguish between the impact assessment of small or low impact projects (such as trail modifications) versus large scale or impact infrastructure or facility projects. |
| Ongoing Engagement and Relationship Building | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Consider additional forms of active and passive engagement, including in-person methods, both within the next three Phases of the River Valley Planning Modernization project and as part of the ongoing stewardship of the River Valley and implementation of the plan (Note: engagement was constrained to online mediums due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in Phase 1). + Consider on-site engagement (within the River Valley) in Phase 2 and 3. + Ensure that all City policies and documents are available online and provide more simplified/plain language information for those interested in participating. + Consider the creation of a River Valley Committee, made up of different stakeholder interests (recreation, conservation, infrastructure, etc) |
| Indigenous Engagement and Stewardship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Ensure that feedback collected through the Indigenous engagement stream is incorporated in the plans. + Work to decolonize approach to land management and support Indigenous stewardship. |
| Data and Monitoring | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Investigate mechanisms for monitoring baseline data for the River Valley and ongoing monitoring and studies of cumulative impacts of River Valley activities and development to inform decision making. |

Thank you for your participation!

Your input has been essential to inform and guide the next stages of work in the development of the Ribbon of Green and River Valley ARP.

To receive project updates, please sign up at edmonton.ca/ribbonofgreen

We hope to see you again in Phase 2.

APPENDIX A: STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders

A total of 42 stakeholders attended the stakeholder workshops. These stakeholders represented the following list of 30 organizations (The number in brackets indicates how many individual representatives from each organization attended if there was more than one).

- + Alberta Bicycle Association
- + Alberta Health Services
- + Argyll Community League
- + Belgravia Community League (2)
- + Bike Edmonton
- + E4C
- + Edmonton and Area Land Trust (3)
- + Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues
- + Edmonton Mountain Bike Alliance (7)
- + Edmonton Public Schools (2)
- + Edmonton Riverboat
- + Edmonton Ski Club
- + Edmonton Sport Council
- + EPCOR Water Services Inc.
- + Edmonton River Valley Conservation Coalition
- + Inclusion Edmonton
- + Laurier Heights Community League
- + North Saskatchewan River Valley Conservation Society
- + NSR Canadian Heritage River Project
- + Oliver Community League (2)
- + Paths for People
- + Revolution Cycle
- + RiverWatch Institute of Alberta (2)
- + Rossdale Community League
- + Rubberside.ca Cycling Skills
- + Sierra Club Canada Foundation (Edmonton)
- + The River Valley Alliance
- + Travel Alberta
- + Urban River Adventures
- + Voice of Albertans with Disabilities

APPENDIX B: VISION, PRINCIPLES, & THEMES

Vision & Themes

The vision statement and principles below were developed through multiple phases of public input through the earlier Ribbon of Green SW+NE project work.

Moving forward, the vision and principles will be critical foundational statements to guide all steps in the River Valley planning process.

VISION:

The North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System is a protected, connected landscape that supports ecological resilience and promotes healthy living through opportunities for recreation, active transportation, learning, and gathering in the tranquility of nature.

PRINCIPLES:

- + The ecological system will be protected, connected, restored, and managed to preserve its integrity and resiliency and to minimize the impact of human use.
- + Where required to support opportunities for people to gather and recreate in nature, or to provide essential urban services, new and/or expanded facilities will be located and designed to minimize environmental impact.
- + A continuous trail system and access points will connect neighbourhoods, the city, and the region to the River Valley and Ravine System, and provide safe and accessible opportunities for recreation and active transportation.
- + Through engagement and partnerships, meaningful opportunities will be provided to contribute to the planning, design, and management of the River Valley and Ravine System.
- + The natural and cultural heritage of the River Valley and Ravine System will shape the places, experiences, and connections within it. Natural and historical sites, features, and landscapes will be protected and, where appropriate, interpreted.
- + Indigenous traditional uses will be recognized and supported throughout the River Valley and Ravine System, and Indigenous communities will be meaningfully engaged in the planning, management, and use of the System.

RIVER VALLEY THEMES

Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy provides a useful lens to describe and plan for the wide variety of values and functions provided by open space. Three key themes are used to describe how open spaces benefit the City and its residents.

ECOLOGY:

Supports and enhances the environment by sustaining healthy and resilient ecosystems.

Ecology comprises the natural functions and ecosystem services that open spaces provide. Ecology values reflect often irreplaceable natural aspects of the river valley, and are at the heart of what makes the North Saskatchewan such an iconic and treasured part of Edmonton.



CELEBRATION:

Connects people to one another and builds a sense of place by providing places for communities to thrive, gather and celebrate.

Celebration reflects the contributions open spaces make towards community building. Celebration spaces provide the opportunity for interpersonal connections, host large scale events and public gatherings, and provide the opportunity to increase awareness of the unique historical and present-day cultures that make up Edmonton.



WELLNESS:

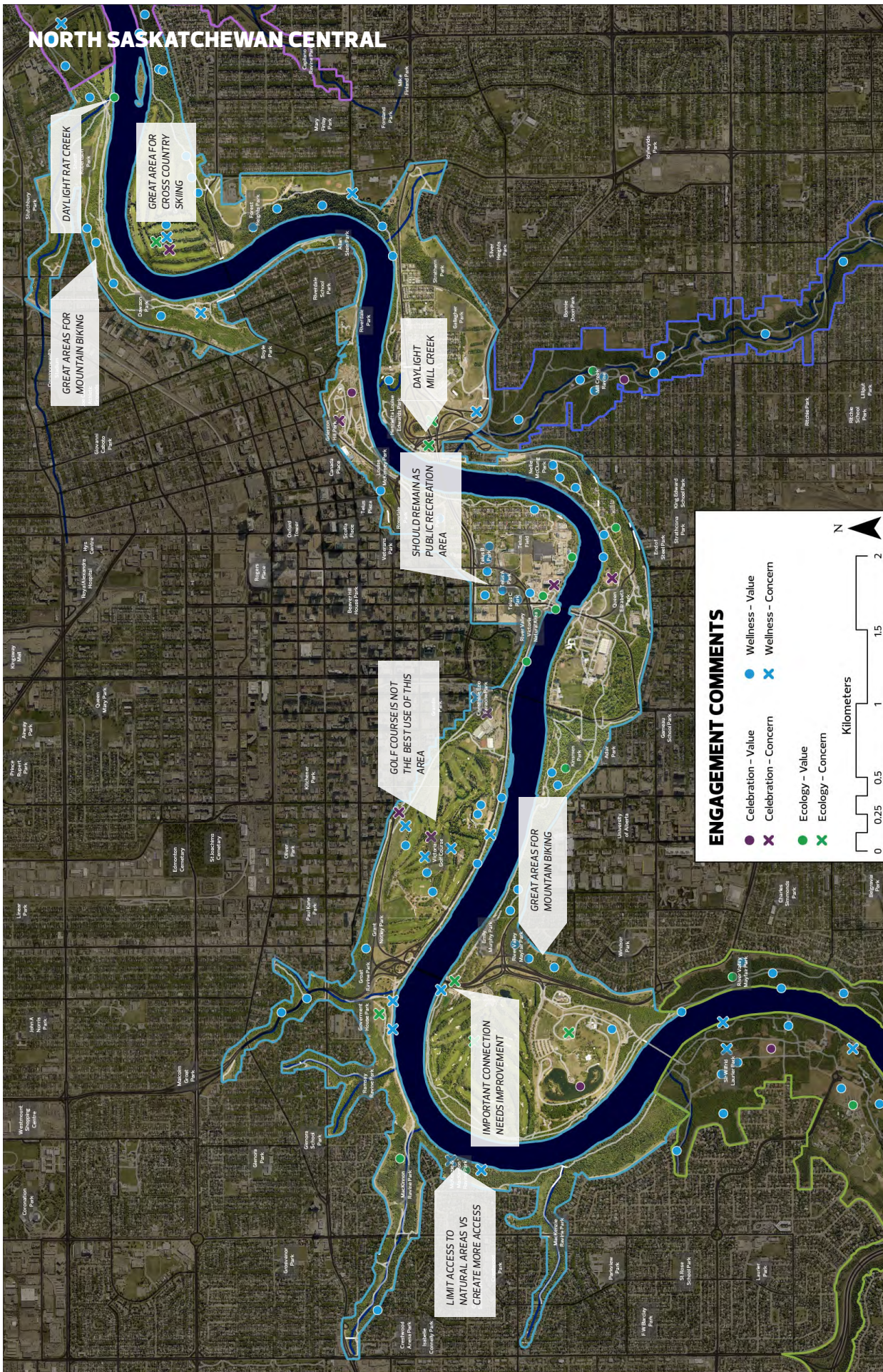
Promotes healthy living and fosters wellbeing through diverse kinds of recreation, mobility and environments.

Wellness focuses on the personal benefits that open spaces provide to health and well-being. Wellness functions are provided by trails and pathways, playgrounds, sports fields and courts, and serene spaces where people can relax and recharge. These areas provide a break from the hustle and bustle of urban living, encouraging healthy, active lifestyles, and the chance to learn about themselves and their environment.



APPENDIX C: MAPS

NORTH SASKATCHEWAN CENTRAL



GREAT AREAS FOR MOUNTAIN BIKING

DAYLIGHT CREEK

GREAT AREA FOR CROSS COUNTRY SKIING

DAYLIGHT MILL CREEK

SHOULD REMAIN AS PUBLIC RECREATION AREA

GOLF COURSE IS NOT THE BEST USE OF THIS AREA

GREAT AREAS FOR MOUNTAIN BIKING

IMPORTANT CONNECTION NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

LIMIT ACCESS TO NATURAL AREAS VS CREATE MORE ACCESS

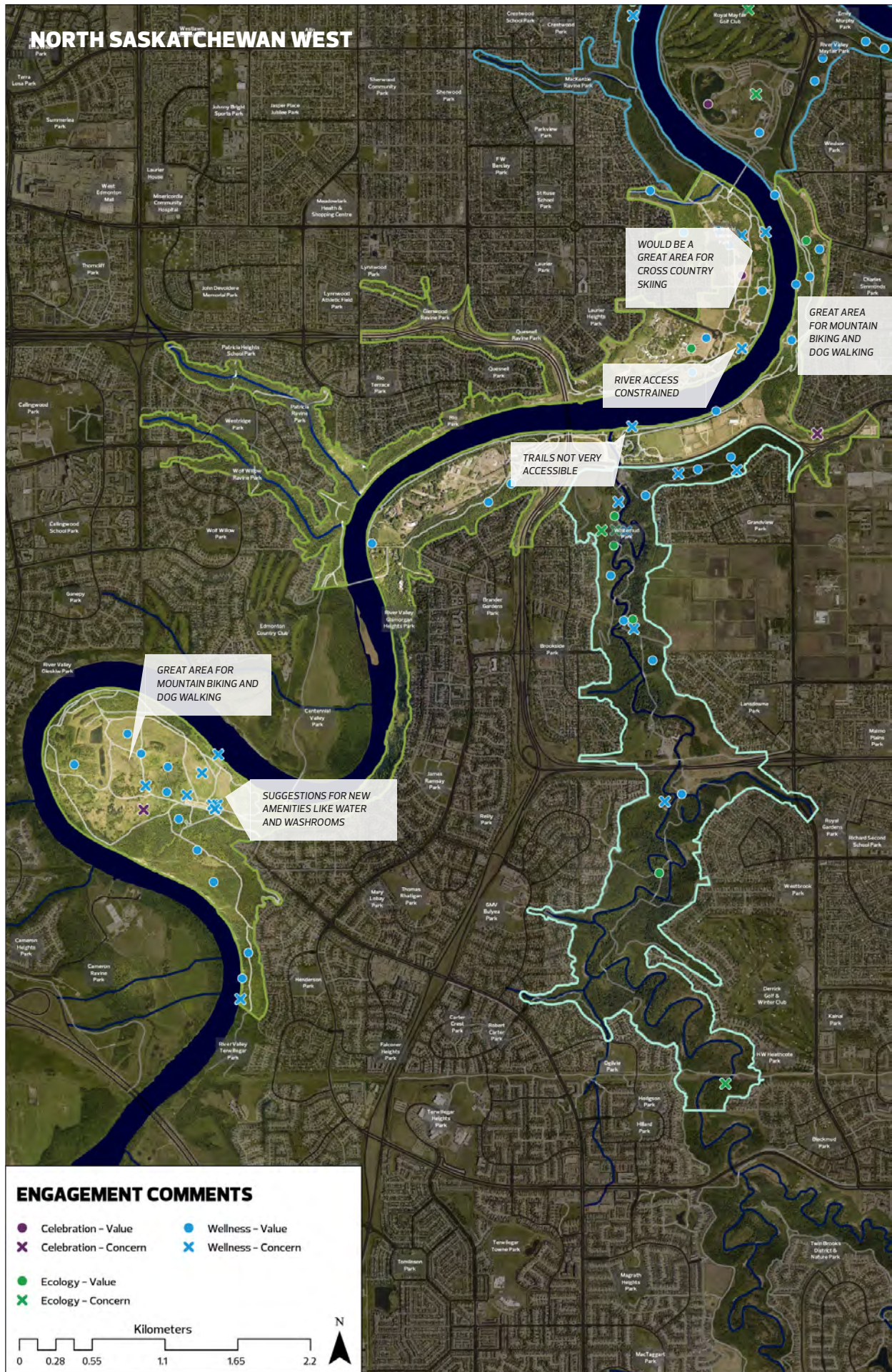
ENGAGEMENT COMMENTS

- Celebration - Value
- Wellness - Value
- ✕ Celebration - Concern
- ✕ Wellness - Concern
- Ecology - Value
- ✕ Ecology - Concern

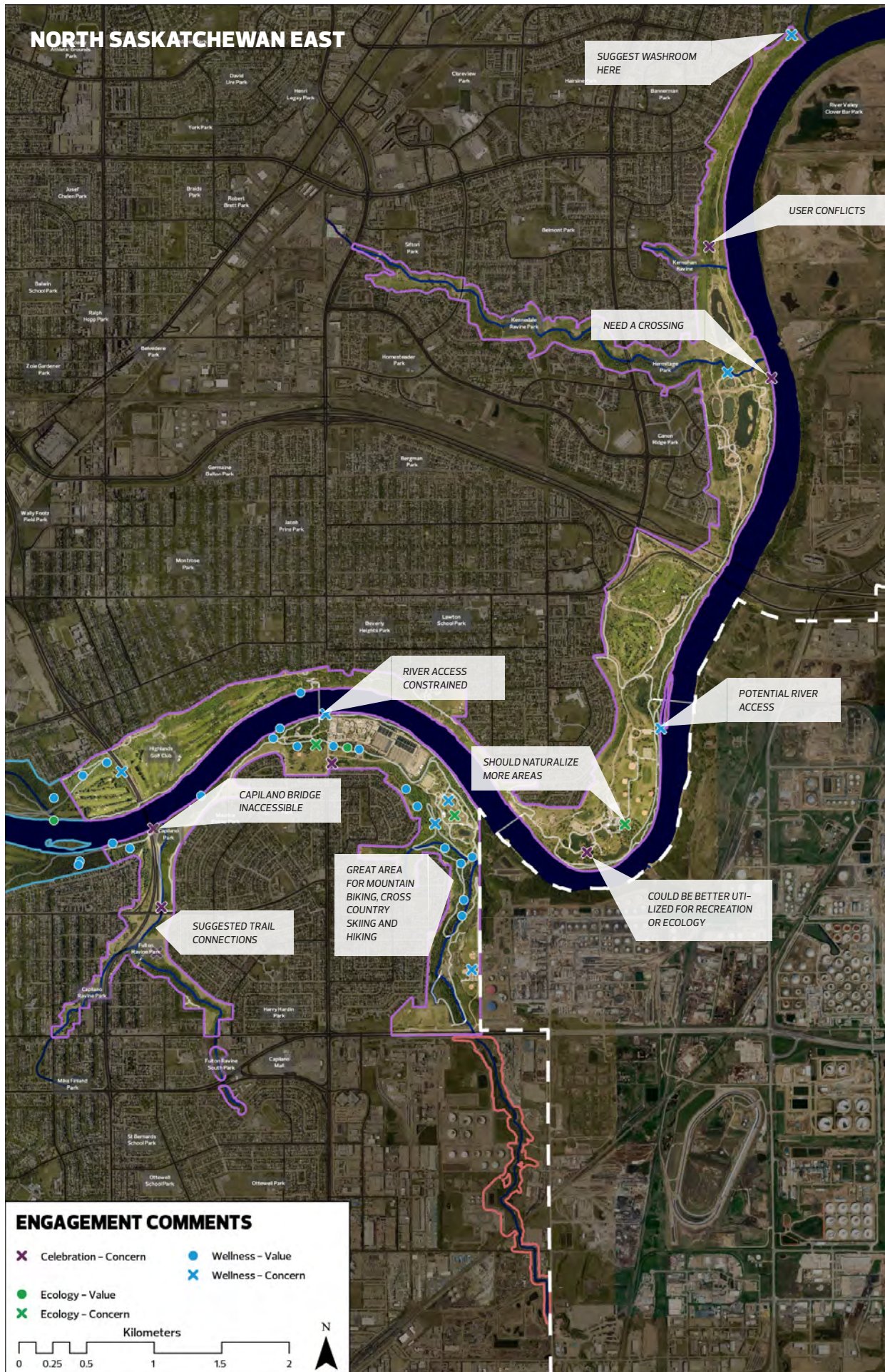
0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2
Kilometers

N

NORTH SASKATCHEWAN WEST



NORTH SASKATCHEWAN EAST



WHITEMUD NORTH



MILL CREEK NORTH



EROSION ISSUES ALONG MILL CREEK

VALUE TRAILS AND CONNECTION TO NATURE

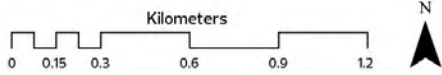
FLYING CANOE FESTIVAL GREAT EXAMPLE OF EVENT THAT BELONGS IN THE RV

GREAT AREA FOR MOUNTAIN BIKING AND HIKING

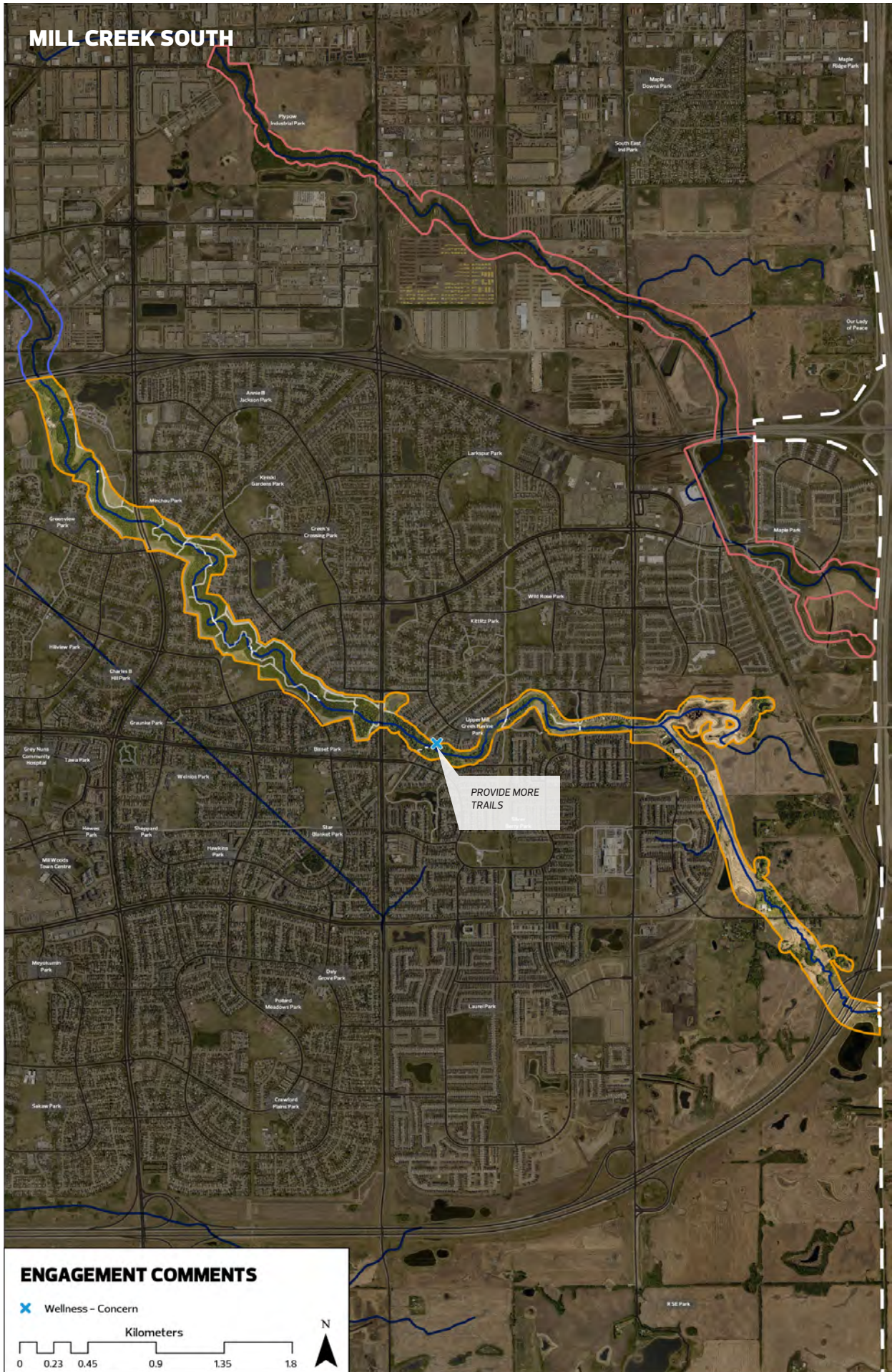
DAYLIGHT MILL CREEK

ENGAGEMENT COMMENTS


- Celebration - Value
- Wellness - Value
- Ecology - Value
- ✕ Ecology - Concern
- Wellness - Concern



MILL CREEK SOUTH



ENGAGEMENT COMMENTS

 Wellness - Concern

Kilometers

0 0.23 0.45 0.9 1.35 1.8



NORTH SASKATHEWAN RABBIT HILL



ENGAGEMENT COMMENTS

- ✕ Celebration - Concern
- Wellness - Value
- ✕ Wellness - Concern

