

# What We Heard Report

## Castle Down Park- Concept Plan Update (Phase 2)

July 2024

[edmonton.ca/CastleDownsParkConcept  
Plan](https://edmonton.ca/CastleDownsParkConceptPlan)

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## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY AND RESULTS

### Project overview

The objective of this project is to develop an updated Concept Plan for Castle Downs Park that includes input from the public and community groups, while aligning with strategic objectives, plans and policies of the City of Edmonton.



*Figure 1: Aerial View of Castle Downs Park*

A new Concept Plan will ensure a long-term strategic approach for the development, management, programming and use of Castle Downs Park. It will also better serve the needs of existing site community groups/partners, residents of adjacent neighbourhoods and City residents at large. The updated Concept Plan will articulate a vision for future open spaces and amenities, with a particular focus on shared or enhanced facilities.

Currently, there is no funding available for designing, building and operating the preferred concept plan. Having a well thought out updated plan outlines future potential opportunities for partnerships, community-led projects and programming. Some active mode components that relate to improved sidewalk, pathway and bike connections will be considered as part of the [Dunluce Neighbourhood and Alley Renewal project](#).

The scope of this project includes preparation of an updated Concept Plan for the park. The project is being completed in three phases as listed below:

- Phase 1: Idea gathering and visioning
- Phase 2: Concept design options
- Phase 3: Preferred concept plan

The first phase of the project [was completed in November 2023](#). The engagement described in this summary was related to the second phase of the project from March to June 2024, design options were shared with community groups and the public.

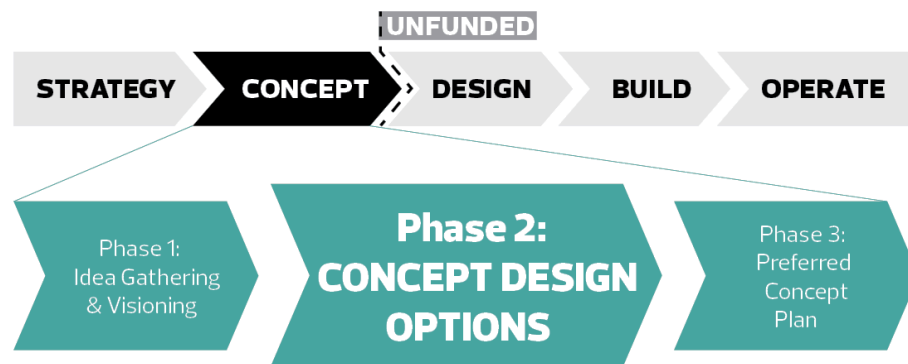


Figure 2: Current Project Phase

### What we heard

In this phase of engagement one public engagement event, two community meetings, one classroom session, and one pop up event were held to engage the public and community groups. Participants were either sent a follow up email for additional feedback or directed the survey depending on the event. All engagement events in phase two were designed with similar questions in order to allow for consistent results. This allowed the project team to have the most complete data in order to develop a preferred concept plan for Phase three. The following are the concept plan options that were discussed during phase two engagement activities:

**Legend**

- Enhanced Pedestrian Crossing
- Existing Parking Lot
- Expanded Parking Lot
- Future Possible Parking Lot/ Bus Lanes
- Existing Shared Use Path
- Expanded Shared Use Path with Seating Nodes
- Future LRT Path
- Existing Trees
- Proposed Trees
- Future LRT Proposed Trees
- Bike Rack
- Picnic Gathering Areas
- Existing Castle Downs Park Sign
- Relocated Waste Bins



**Key Changes**

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>① New Reoriented Small Baseball Diamond with Long Jump besides it</li> <li>② Relocated Cricked Field</li> <li>③ Artificial Turf Field with Asphalt Apron &amp; Fencing, Bleachers &amp; Spotters Box</li> <li>④ Maintenance Yard, Building &amp; Storage</li> <li>⑤ Upgrade Existing Baseball Diamond</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⑥ Central Gathering Area - Enhanced Shared Use Path with Seating</li> <li>⑦ New Plaza/Event Space</li> <li>⑧ CDRS Exercise Equipment Area : New Fitness Pod</li> <li>⑨ Pickleball Courts</li> <li>⑩ Tennis Courts</li> <li>⑪ New Shared Facilities Building, Sports Field Storage/</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⑫ Irrigated Turf &amp; 4 Lane Track</li> <li>⑬ Future LRT Utility Complex</li> <li>⑭ New Intersection Lighting &amp; Pedestrian Cross Walk</li> <li>⑮ West Edge of Park to be Naturalized including Existing Swale</li> <li>⑯ Remove Portion of Hill &amp; Keep Sledding on North Side</li> </ul> |
|---|--|--|

Figure 3: Concept Plan Option 1

**Legend**

- Enhanced Pedestrian Crossing
- Existing Parking Lot
- Expanded Parking Lot
- Future Possible Parking Lot/ Bus Lanes
- Existing Shared Use Path
- Expanded Shared Use Path with Seating Nodes
- Existing Trees
- Proposed Trees
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|---|---|---|

Figure 4: Concept Plan Option 2

## Community and interest group meetings

The project team held two community group meetings in March and May 2024 and a follow up survey similar to the public survey was sent to the community group register for further input. At these meetings, the project team presented a project update, revisions made as a result of feedback from Phase 1 and the concept plan options. An overview of each concept plan option was provided and the group was then asked to evaluate and discuss the options through the lens of each guiding principle.

The following was heard during meetings with interest groups and community members:

- 68.75 per cent of participants preferred Concept Plan Option 2
- Generally, community groups indicated both concepts reflected the project's vision, guiding principles and incorporated the activities and amenities their group members desire

Participants liked:

- The improved pedestrian connectivity through the park; Concept Plan Option 2 was preferred
- The potential for both winter and summer use of the redesigned hill
- The net positive tree inventory in both concept plans

Participants identified:

- The need for shade (trees or structures) for event spaces and gathering
- Alternative field layouts and modifications to advance community-led projects. Adjusting field layouts over time was also suggested
- Design features at intersections within the park for safer pedestrian crossings
- Lighting as a crucial aspect for park safety

Participants were concerned with:

- The distance between the pavilion and artificial turf field in Option 2

- Safety in low visibility areas in the concept plan
- Sufficient parking to support the proposed features

### Classroom session

The following are comments recorded during the classroom session held at Mary Butterworth Junior High School on May 27, 2024. Seventeen students participated in the session.

### Concept Option 1

- Track is in a good location for both schools
- Participants supported retaining the multi-use field in the northeast corner so that it can be used as a larger open space for events, skating rink, etc.
- Supported the design's connecting pathways

### Concept Option 2

- Prefer the central gathering area in this option
- The baseball diamonds are too far from the schools
- Open space opportunities should be increased
- Move plaza space next to hill further from the turf field
- Switching the baseball diamond and multi-use field was preferred
- Pathways in this option are more practical

### General comments

Participants liked:

- The additional pedestrian entrances to the park
- The proposed tennis courts
- The LRT
- The potential of more events being held at the park, saying more events make the park more safe
- The park's transformation into a space to be proud of

Participants identified:

- The skatepark and basketball courts need upgrading
- Both concept plans need more bike racks
- The playground needs to be more accessible
- A midblock crossing on Castle Downs Road to the park is needed



- Additional water fountains, waste bins and washrooms throughout
- More tree planting around the cricket field and along pathways

Participants were concerned about:

- Four baseball diamonds may be too many, could use the space for other things
- Balls being kicked or hit onto the track or outside of sport fields
- The loss of the outdoor skating due to the planned public high school
- Safety and social disorder where visual barriers exist between the Castle Downs Recreation Centre and the future public high school

#### **Pop-up event**

On May 30, 2024, the project team set up display boards at Castle Downs Family YMCA from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Approximately 35-40 individuals interacted with the boards and asked questions of the project team.

Comments received during the pop-up event:

- 79 per cent of participants favoured Option 2 because of the additional pathway connections
- Participants favoured the centrally located artificial turf field in Option 1
- Concerns with parking availability if everything proposed in the plans is built
- Participants were concerned with the impacts to accessing the park once the proposed LRT line is built

#### **Public engagement survey**

An online survey was available May 22 - June 5, 2024. Some initial findings from the online survey included:

- 199 participants (75 per cent) of respondents are residents of adjacent neighbourhoods
- 113 participants (51 per cent) preferred Concept Option 2 whereas 35 per cent preferred Conception Option 1

- 159 participants (60 per cent) of respondents have a child/grandchildren 18 or under living at home
- 16 participants under the age of 18 participated in this Phase 2 engagement, a 500 per cent increase from Phase 1 engagement

Q: To what extent do you agree Concept Plan Option 1 accurately reflects Castle Downs Park vision and guiding principles listed below?

Overall, respondents felt Concept Plan Option 1 successfully reflected the Park’s vision and four guiding principles.

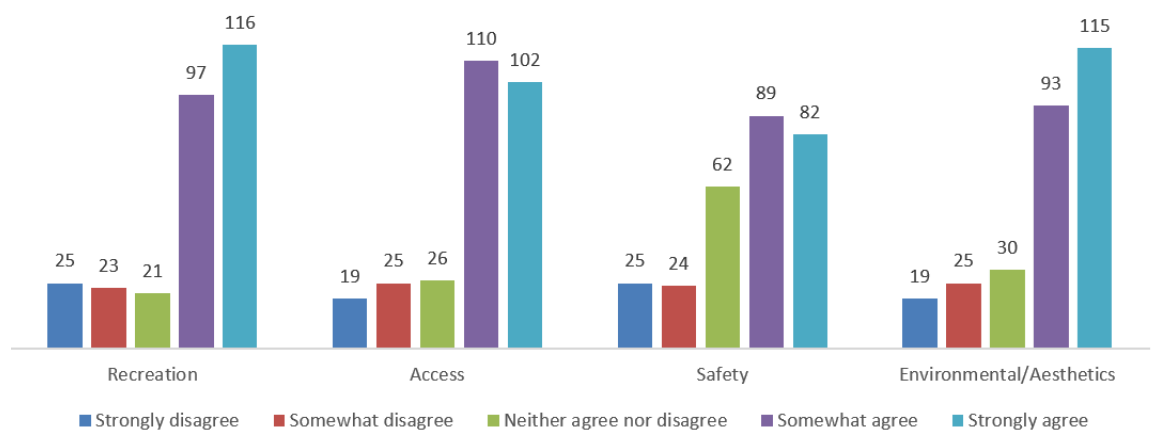


Figure 5: Number of Respondent Rating for Concept Plan Option 1 vs Guiding Principles

Respondents liked:

- The variety of activities that can be held at the park
- The potential of redesigning the hill for tobogganing, gathering and event hosting
- The retention of the multi-use field in the northeast corner for open space and event hosting
- The additional parking and proposed turnarounds for vehicles

Respondents were concerned about:

- The LRT impacts to park access and safety
- The loss of open space for non-organized sports
- How accessible the fenced field will be to the public
- The loss of outdoor skating rink
- Safety from sports balls with fields being situated so close to pathways and roads

Q: To what extent do you agree Concept Plan Option 2 accurately reflects Castle Downs Park vision and guiding principles listed below?

Respondents had positive responses for Concept Plan Option 2 recreation and access, but felt safety and environmental/aesthetic needed improvement compared to Concept Plan Option 1.

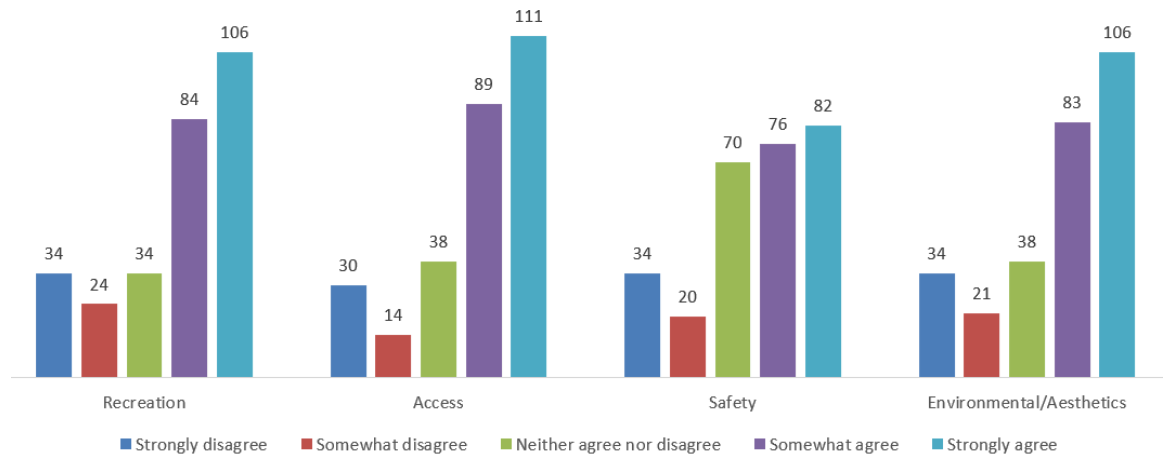


Figure 6: Number of Respondents Rating Concept Plan Option 2 vs Guiding Principles

Respondents liked:

- The placement of proposed trees
- Locating all the baseball diamonds along the northern edge
- The pathway networks through the park
- Moving the baseball field away from the playground

Respondents were concerned with:

- The loss in open space for play
- Balls being projected towards the street
- The loss of the outdoor skating rink
- The shared facility not being centrally located for access from all the fields
- The future LRT impact on access to the park

Q: To what extent do you agree with the statement:

“Concept Plan Option 1/Option 2 incorporates the activities and amenities I want to see at Castle Downs Park.”

- Following data aggregation (combined number of agree and strongly agree respondents), 195 participants (71 per cent) respondents felt

Concept Plan Option 1 incorporates the desired activities and amenities

- Following data aggregation (the combined number of “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” respondents), 172 participants (63 per cent) felt Concept Plan Option 2 incorporates the desired activities and amenities

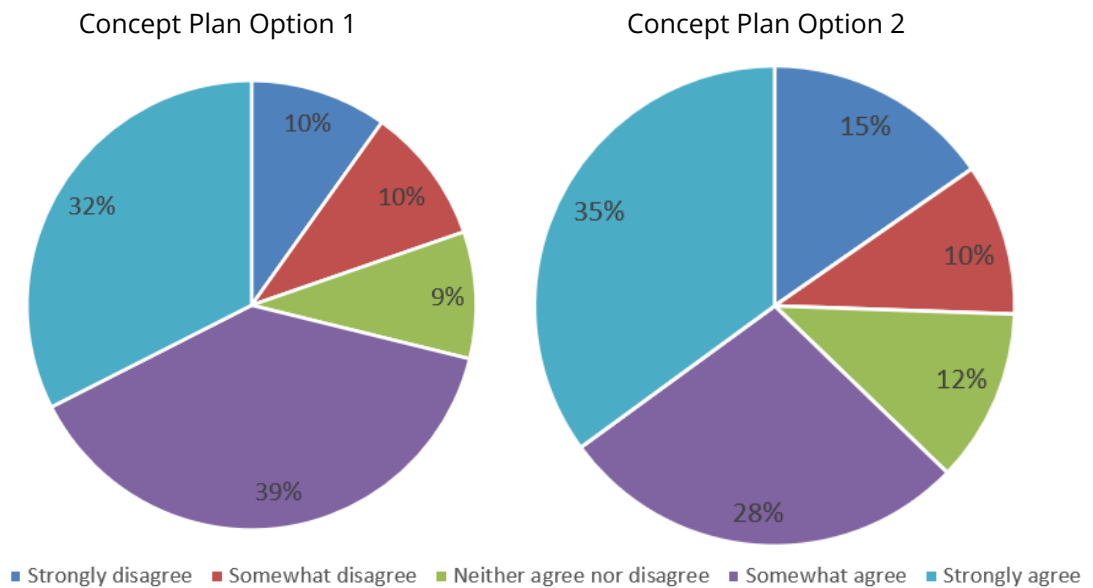


Figure 7: Respondents perception of how well both concept plan options incorporates the activities and amenities they wanted to see at Castle Downs Park

Respondents liked:

- The additional pathways and pedestrian entrances to the park
- The concept addressed different stages of life
- The sports field available for the schools
- The proposed shared facility building
- The hills being retained for tobogganing
- The additional picnic areas

Respondent were concerned with:

- The loss of outdoor skating
- Sufficient parking
- Impact to community events being held at the park
- Dedicated space of sports fields and loss of open space
- The lack of a pedestrian crosswalk on 153 Avenue
- Park activation during the winter months

Q: Looking at both Concept Plan Options, what are your three favourite elements within the options?

The top three favourite elements present to respondents are:

1. Internal shared-use path loops
2. Multi-sport field (soccer/baseball)
3. Expanded picnic area

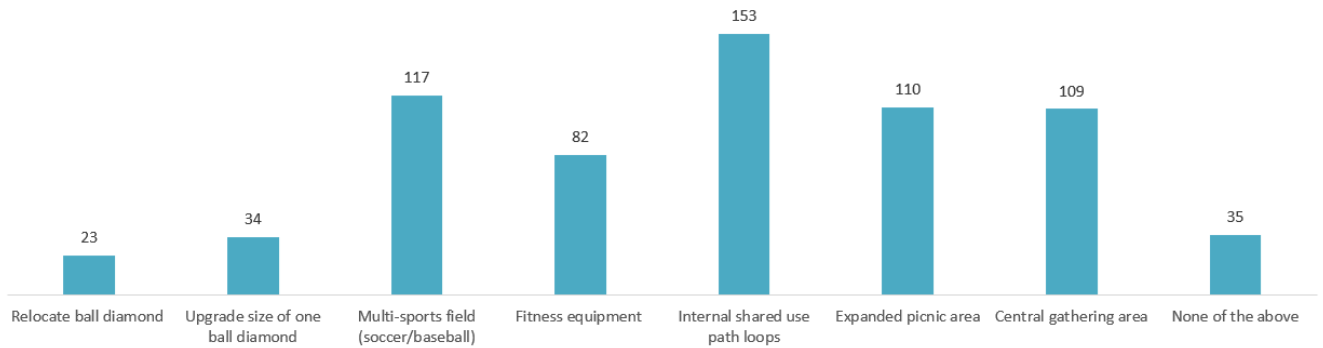


Figure 8: Participants' top three unique elements

Respondents who favoured the central gathering area were given an additional question regarding the element's possible design. Forty-seven per cent of respondents preferred the enhanced shared-use path and walkway and 40 per cent preferred a plaza space.

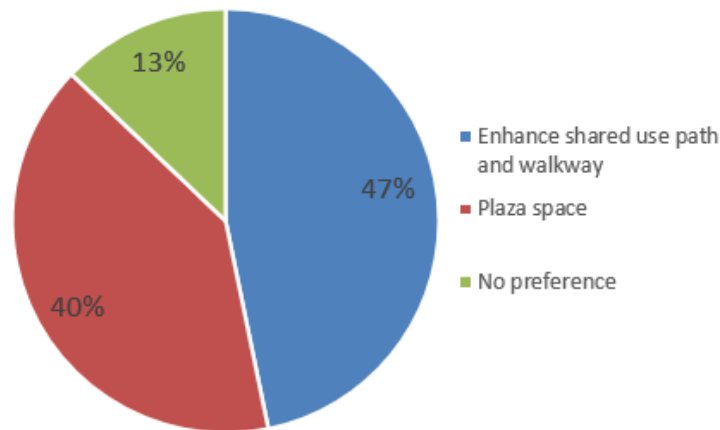


Figure 9: Participants' preference for central gathering area

Q: Which Concept Option do you prefer?

- 103 participants (31 per cent) preferred Concept Option 1
- 140 participants (43 per cent) preferred Concept Option 2
- 51 participants (16 per cent) liked both options

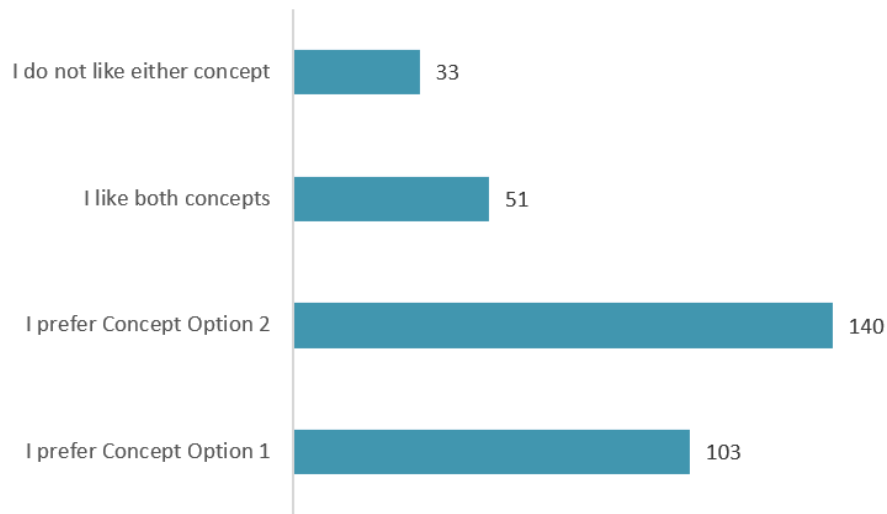


Figure 10: Participants/ preference of concept plan option

#### Comments

- Improve safety measures for the park
- Both concepts need additional water fountains and washrooms
- Find a way to retain the outdoor skating rink
- Either option ensures sports is available for all ages

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

### How we engaged

The primary goal of the first round of engagement was for the project team to consider park users' current experiences in order to develop and present well-informed design options for the next round of engagement. The public engagement strategy utilized a hybrid approach; both in-person and online components were available to community groups and the public.

Building on the feedback in phase I, this second round of public engagement for the project followed the Refine level on the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum. More information on the City's public engagement spectrum can be [found here](#).



Figure 11: City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum

### Decision making

Decision making is established by a strong commitment to the project's goals and objectives from the beginning. By using these goals and objectives to assess different design options, decision making can occur. Public engagement is one of many factors considered by the project team. City policies, technical requirements and costs will also play a role in future project design and development.

The involvement of diverse community groups offered the project team valuable perspectives and insights on how the park is used and what to consider as the park continues to develop, leading to a more informed and comprehensive decision making.

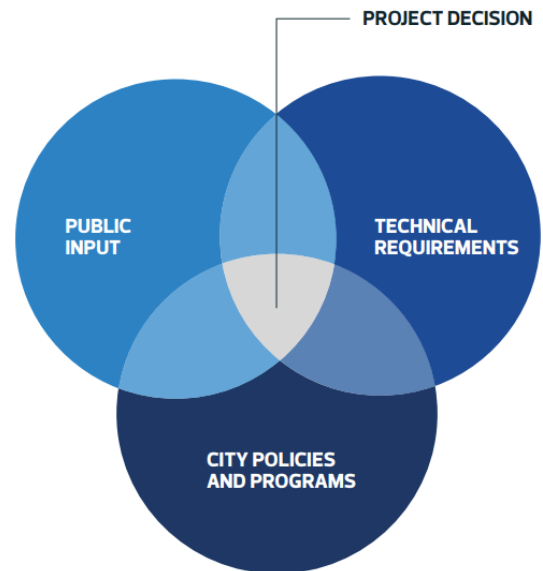


Figure 12: Decision-making matrix

### Communication

Advertising for the public events included posters distributed digitally and displayed at community facilities in the area as well as social media posts. A direct invitation to participate in the engagement was sent to community groups with an interest in the park and other community organizations.

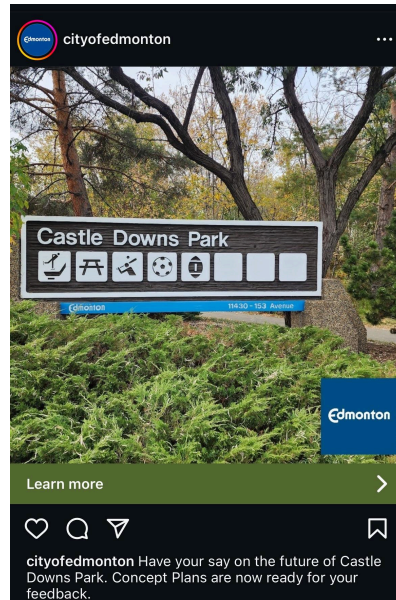
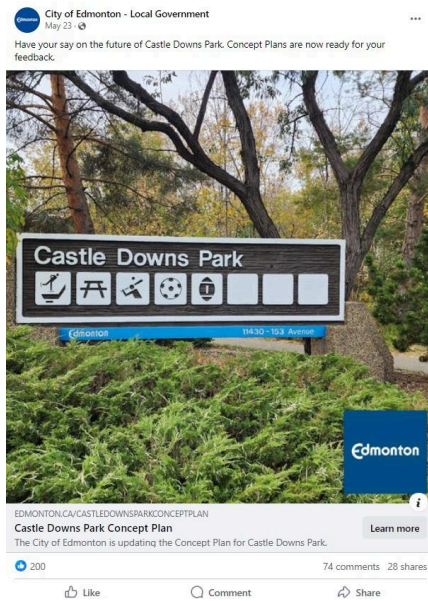


Figure 13: Project social media ads and poster

This social media campaign archived the following results:

- Overall, this campaign surpassed both click target and click-through rate benchmarks. The campaign was successful in generating engagement (shares, comments, reactions).
- In total, there were 378,000 impressions generated and over 8,300 clicks to the website

### What we did

The events listed below were held to engage with the various community groups and the public for Phase 2 of the public engagement. Supplementary to these events, the project web page included a description of the project, outline of the project phases, a project timeline and a link to the display boards. An online survey invited participants to share their feedback.

### Internal engagement

City staff and departments involved with Castle Downs Park were engaged initially, including Community Services, Integrated Infrastructure Services, Urban Planning and Environment and City Operations. Edmonton Public



Schools and Edmonton Catholic School Division were included in this engagement as well.

### Community group meetings

Community groups and interested parties were invited to meet with the project team to provide input on the concept plan options for Castle Downs Park. The following lists the community and stakeholder groups that engaged through this phase and the dates of the events:

Date	Community groups and interested parties	Format
March 24, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dunluce Community League</li> <li>● Football Alberta</li> <li>● Community Park Little League</li> <li>● North Edmonton Minor Football - Seahawks</li> <li>● Edmonton Public Schools</li> <li>● Edmonton Catholic School Division</li> <li>● Edmonton Public Library</li> <li>● YMCA</li> <li>● Castle Downs Recreation Society</li> <li>● Edmonton Flag Football Association</li> <li>● Baturyn Community League</li> </ul>	In-person group presentation and question and answer
May 9, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Edmonton Public Schools</li> <li>● Edmonton Catholic School Division</li> <li>● YMCA</li> <li>● Dunluce Community League</li> <li>● Castle Downs Recreation Society</li> </ul>	In-person group presentation and question and answer
May 23, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Edmonton &amp; District Cricket League</li> </ul>	Individual discussion, and question and answer
May 16, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community Park Little League</li> </ul>	Individual discussion, and question and answer

May 15, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seahawks Football</li> </ul>	Individual discussion, and question and answer
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**Open house event**

Public engagement included a public open house held on May 22, 2024 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at St. Lucy Catholic Elementary School. A total of five people attended the event. The Project Team and City Staff were available to share project information and answer questions, as well as encourage attendees to engage with the display board activities.

**Classroom session**

The project team held an engagement session on May 27, 2024 from 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m at Mary Butterworth Junior High School. Seventeen students participated in the session where the project team presented the concept options, recorded feedback and asked questions presented in the online survey.

**Pop-up event**

One pop-up event was conducted to engage users of the park and a diverse range of demographics. The project team interacted with attendees in person and discussed the project, addressed inquiries and sought feedback on the concept plan option using display boards and directed participants to the online survey.

In total, 35-40 Edmontonians were actively engaged at the pop-up event.

Date	Location
May 31, 2024	Castle Downs Family YMCA   5:00 -7:30 pm

**Online survey**

A public survey was hosted on the City’s project web page from May 22 - June 5, 2024. Information on how to participate in the online survey was communicated to the community leagues, community groups and user

groups. Physical copies and submissions of the survey were also available upon request.

There were a total of 266 online participants. This is an increase of 90 participants from Phase 1.

## **What happens next?**

Information received from this phase of engagement will be analyzed by the project team and a preferred design option will be developed as part of Phase 3 - Preferred Concept Plan. The project team will present the preferred concept option for feedback in fall 2024.

The project team thanks all who participated in this round of engagement.

Project updates can be found on the project website at:

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

## Appendix A: Survey Respondents

The following is the breakdown of survey respondent demographic information.

### How old are you?

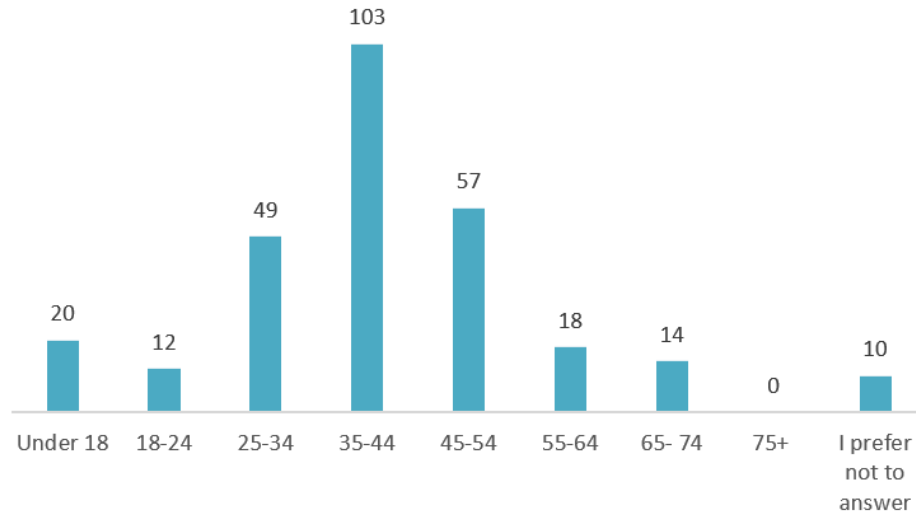


Figure 14: Survey Respondents by age groups

### What gender do you identify as?

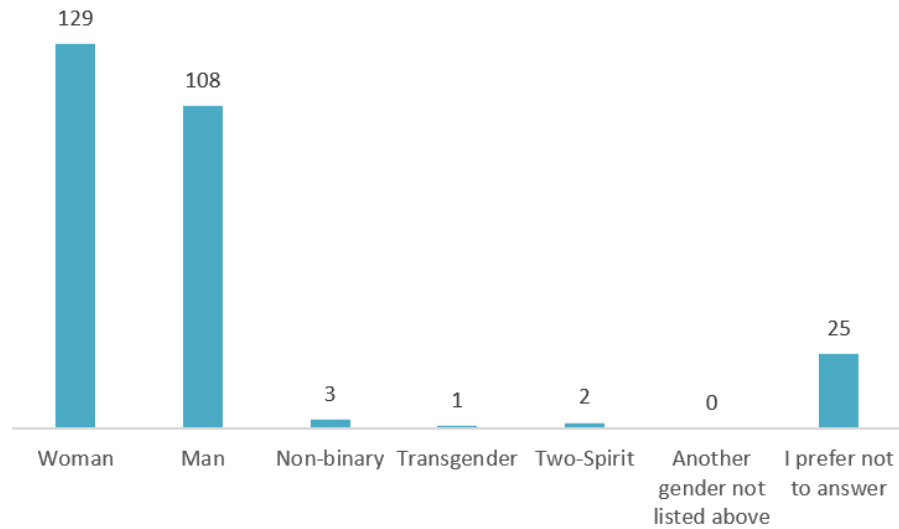


Figure 15: Respondents by gender

**Do you identify with any of the following?**

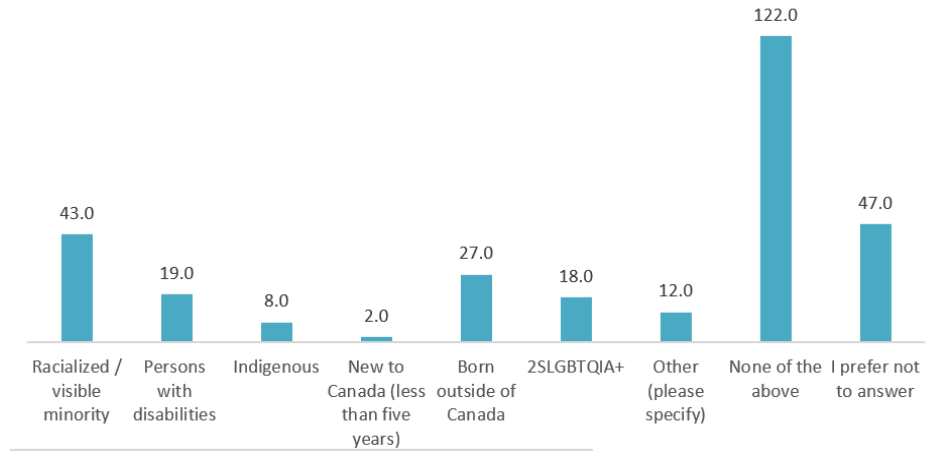


Figure 16: Respondents by minority groups

**Do you have children/grandchildren 18 or under living at home?  
many children/grandchildren 18 or under living at home do you have?**

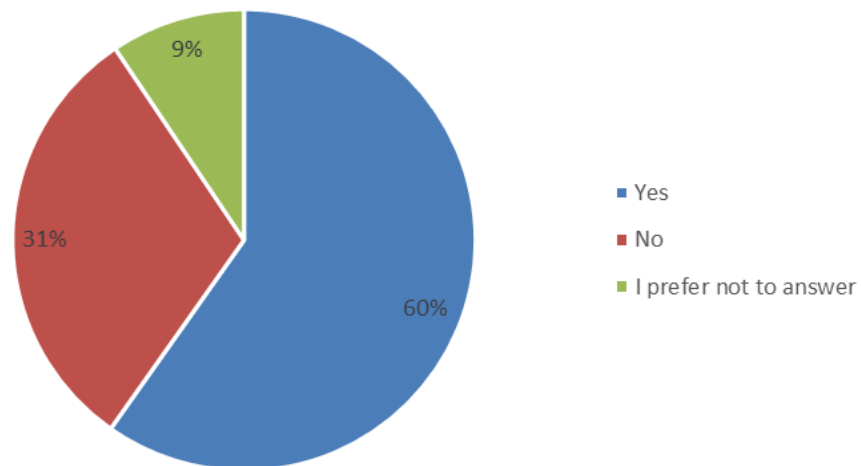


Figure 17: Child/grandchild residing in respondents' home

**Do you have children/grandchildren 18 or under living at home?**

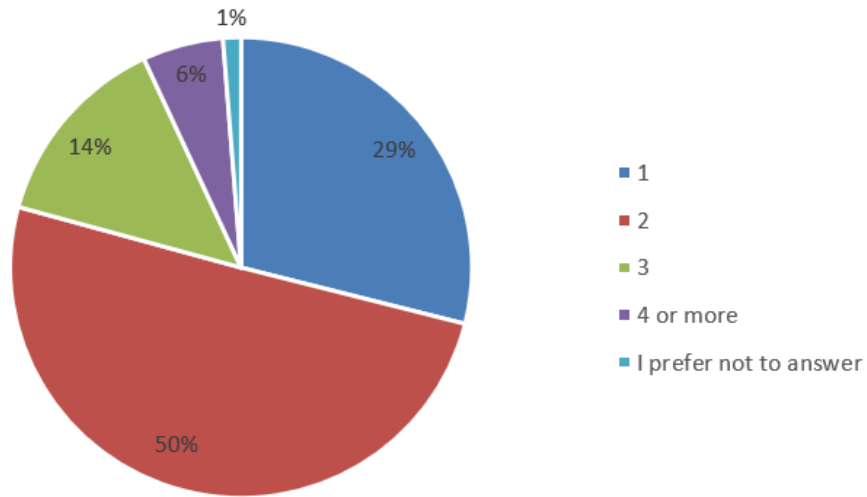


Figure 18: Amount of children/grandchildren 18 or under living in a respondents home

**Which of the following categories best describes your total household income in 2022 before taxes?**

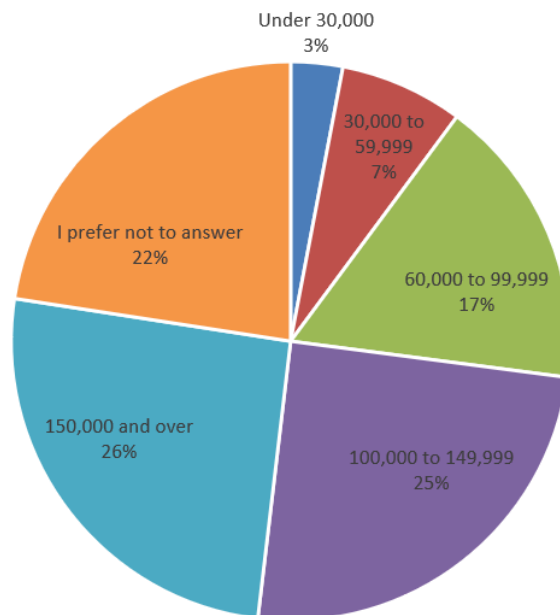


Figure 19: Annual household income of survey respondents