

Downtown **Public Places Plan**

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT
PHASE 3 | FINALIZE

January 2019

Edmonton

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Prepared by
City of Edmonton
O2 Planning + Design Inc.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Edmonton's Downtown is transforming. New investments, including the refurbished Legislature Grounds, Ice District, and LRT Valley Line, are attracting new development and people. This new development includes high-density residential, mixed-use buildings, and office towers. Despite this recent investment and development, the number of public places within the Downtown remains limited. As the public and private sector investment in the Downtown continues, the coordination of investment in public places is needed to support existing and new residents, workers and visitors.

The amount of people living in the Downtown is expected to more than double by 2030. As this population grows, the amount, quality, functionality and accessibility of public places become more important. New strategies to improve public places within the Downtown are required to meet the needs of a growing population, attract families, and support a vibrant Downtown.

The existing Downtown public places offer limited opportunities for recreation, exercise, relaxation, and socialization. Though each individual public place need not offer everything, it is important that all public places within the Downtown work together to provide a range of amenities. In the past, Downtown public place projects focused on one place at a time, concentrating on the immediate area instead of examining each place's role in the broader network. This has resulted in spatial and functional gaps in this network. This is why a Downtown Public Places Plan is needed.

Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy (2017) and the *Capital City Downtown Plan (2010)* both identify the need to develop the Downtown Public Places Plan. **This Plan will provide clear direction for the programming, design, development and acquisition of Downtown public places.** This direction will inform Council decisions, direct Administration priorities, and guide community partnerships, engagement, and collaboration.

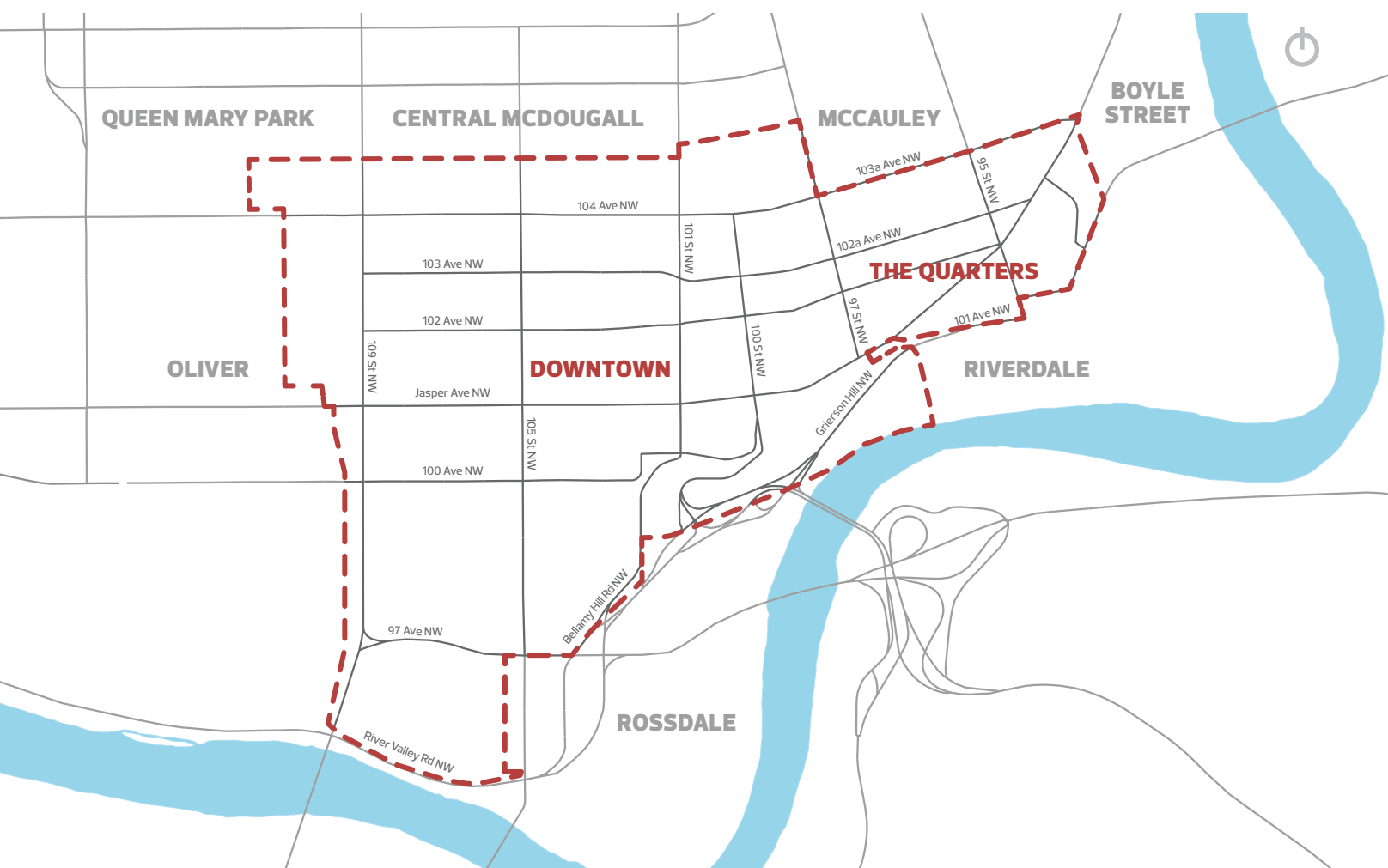
Investing in the Downtown benefits all Edmontonians. Public place improvements are necessary to meet the needs of a growing population, to support families, stimulate business and tourism, support employment and help create a vibrant Downtown. Exceptional Downtown public places help attract new residents, businesses, festivals and events while contributing to civic pride, improving safety, and creating a positive impression of Edmonton. A functional and attractive public place network will support and enhance the health and vitality of Downtown Edmonton.

Downtown public places provide respite, relief, and room to socialize, celebrate, and recharge. Specifically, Downtown public places support Edmonton's civic life, cultural expression, economic development, community wellness, and ecology while functioning as important local parks for residents and workers.

These different interests, functions, and users require a comprehensive engagement program to ensure the Downtown Public Places Plan meets community needs and desires to realize a sustainable, vibrant, well-designed, and accessible Downtown through its public places.

STUDY AREA

The study area includes the parks and other public spaces in the neighbourhoods of Downtown Edmonton and the Quarters Downtown, plus a 400-metre buffer into adjacent communities.



DOWNTOWN VISION STATEMENT

Downtown Edmonton is aiming to become...

Sustainable Environmentally

- Sustainable and a regional hub for green innovation.
- Known for its distinct neighbourhoods and the strong sense of community, diversity, social interaction and engagement that they offer.

Vibrant

- The economic driver for the region and provide a range of housing options for all Edmontonians.
- A regional, national and international centre for arts, culture, festivals, and entertainment.

Well-designed

- Well-designed in all areas of the public and private realm and include a comprehensive network of public places.
- Celebrated in its role as the Capital City of Alberta and as a winter city.

Accessible

- Pedestrian-oriented and will provide transportation options that are multi-modal and accessible to all.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Downtown Public Places Plan objectives are to...

- Create comfortable, memorable, attractive destinations and spaces
- Improve connections between the Downtown and the River Valley
- Guide open space development, design and programming in Downtown
- Focus on the quality, functionality, connectivity and supply of open spaces
- Provide design recommendations for developments impacting open spaces
- Inform and align current and future Downtown projects



ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The City of Edmonton is committed to excellence in public engagement. Building on Edmonton's shift towards an "Open City" system of public participation, the engagement process for Downtown Public Places Plan aims to make the most of stakeholders' and citizens' problem-solving potential, build community, and create advocates for Downtown public places.

Engagement Values

The following values guided the engagement process:

- Respect
- Honesty
- Openness
- Inclusion
- Cooperation
- Learning

NEW PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT POLICY

The City of Edmonton's policy on public engagement (C593) is a guiding document for The City's approach to public engagement. The Council Initiative on Public Engagement was launched in 2014 with a goal of strengthening The City's public engagement. For more information visit edmonton.ca/programs_services/public_engagement/council-initiative-on-public-engagement.aspx

Engagement Principles

These principles anchored our actions and thinking as we engaged with the public and stakeholders:

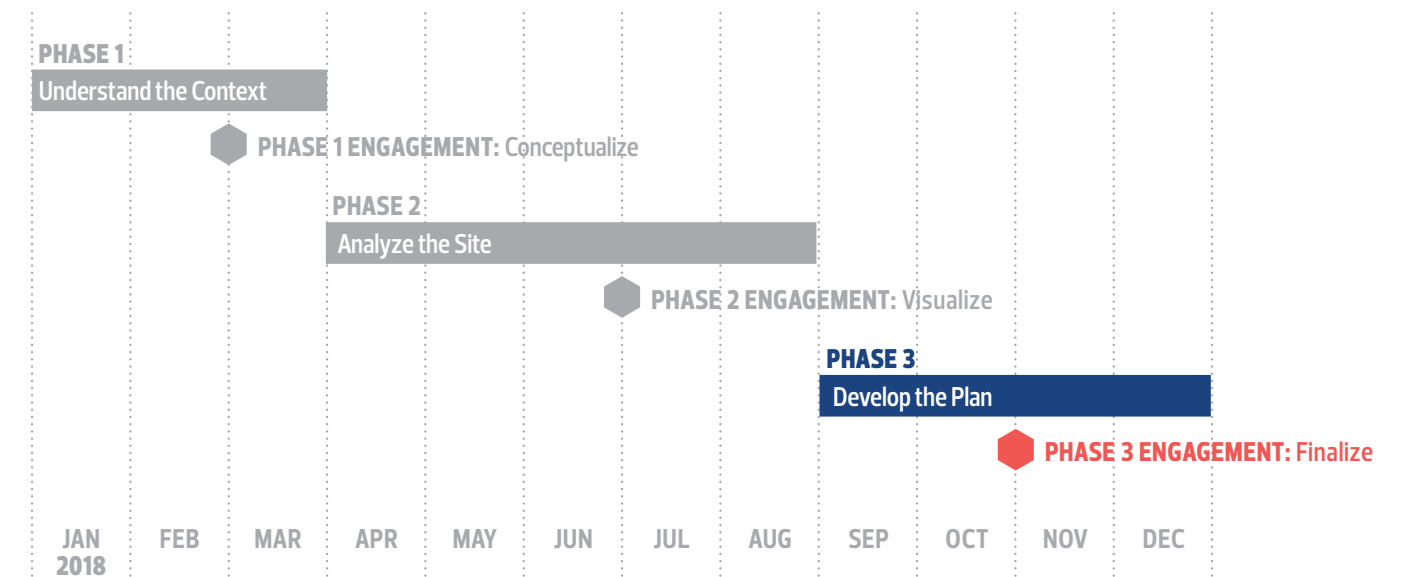
- Be open, timely and responsive.
- Listen and share stories to understand.
- Support informed engagement.
- Follow through on commitments.

THE STAGES OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The City engaged with the public to Advise and Refine the project three times over the span of the project.

- ▶ Phase 1: Conceptualize
- ▶ Phase 2: Visualize
- ▶ Phase 3: Finalize

This What We Heard Report summarizes the results from Phase 3: Finalize of the public engagement, which took place over the months of November and December 2018.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

A robust public engagement process results in stronger, more locally relevant projects. The following goals ensured that the public engagement process was transparent, focused, and accessible.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT GOALS

- Understand the strengths, weaknesses, gaps, issues and opportunities in the Downtown public place network to validate and refine the supply and needs assessment from BREATHE.
- Collect feedback on proposed public-place improvements, recommendations, and their alternatives.
- Hear public and private development perspectives on creatively developing privately-owned public places.
- Develop priorities for public-place improvements to inform the implementation plan.
- Build relationships with stakeholders who will advocate for this Plan.
- Have conversations with a range of stakeholders, including residents, communities of interest, workers, visitors, institutions, organizations, and others.
- Provide opportunities throughout the project for participants to provide meaningful, appropriate, and actionable input that will be used to create the Downtown Public Places Plan.
- Implement an engagement process that is open, transparent, and respectful.
- Provide opportunities for involvement that are convenient and accessible.
- Provide opportunities to engage communities of interest and under-represented communities that may find it difficult to access or participate in engagement processes.
- Creatively engage and communicate with the general public, residents, workers and visitors.
- Clearly communicate the project goals, what the engagement process can and cannot influence, and how public input was used to help shape the Plan.
- Combine engagement events with other projects when possible.
- Implement innovative and place-based tactics.
- Understand the needs of residents and the requirements for public places.
- Support community-led/created initiatives for Downtown Public Places.



THE BIG QUESTIONS

- How can we make a vibrant, well-designed, accessible, and environmentally sustainable Downtown through its public places?
- What investments in the public realm are needed to support new residents, workers, and visitors in the Downtown and Quarters neighbourhoods?
- How can The City strategically coordinate these investments?

AUDIENCE

Effective engagement begins with considering the needs of different audiences and the engagement and communications tactics most appropriate for each group. The engagement streams included place-based, strategic interviews, online surveys, and in-person interactions. The communications tactics were to spread the word and the engagement tactics focused on collecting feedback. This audience ensured that the project offers the variety required to generate broad interest and feedback. These different groups were engaged at various times throughout the engagement process.



	TARGET AUDIENCE	ENGAGEMENT TACTICS	COMMUNICATION TACTICS
STREAM 1: Place-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Downtown Residents ➤ Downtown Workers ➤ Downtown Institutions ➤ Downtown Visitors ➤ Communities of Interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pop-Ups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lobby Displays ➤ Posters
STREAM 2: Strategic Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Development Industry ➤ Downtown Institutions ➤ Communities of Interest ➤ Downtown Organizations ➤ City-wide Organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Interviews 	
STREAM 3: Online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Edmontonians ➤ Downtown Residents ➤ Downtown Workers ➤ Downtown Visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Online Questionnaire ➤ Insight Survey ➤ Online Interactive Map 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Project Website ➤ Project Email ➤ Social Media ➤ Advertisements (print + online) ➤ Press Releases
STREAM 4: In-person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Downtown Residents ➤ Downtown Workers ➤ Downtown Visitors ➤ Communities of Interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Event Attendance ➤ Interviews ➤ Pop-Up Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Direct Contact ➤ 311

PHASE 3: FINALIZE

Objectives:

Gather input and level of support for the Big Moves recommended through the Downtown Public Places Plan.

Information Presented:

- ▶ Strategic Directions + Open Space Measures
- ▶ Downtown Public Places Concept Plan
- ▶ Big Moves

Questions Asked:

- ▶ To what extent do you support or oppose the direction of the Big Moves?
- ▶ Participants were then given an opportunity to explain their answer to the question above in an open-ended comment format.

ENGAGEMENT TACTICS

ONLINE



Online Survey

The online survey link was posted on the Downtown Public Places project website and provided residents with an opportunity to provide feedback on and indicate their level of support for each of the Big Moves of the Plan.

1,391
Participants



PLACE-BASED



Pop-up Events

Two Drop-in Engagement Events were held to share information, encourage people to complete the online survey, and speak to the public in person. These events were held at:

- ▶ Engage Edmonton: Edmonton Tower, Main Floor Lobby (Nov 15, 2018)
- ▶ City Market, City Hall (Nov 17, 2018)

180
Participants



IN-PERSON



Stakeholder Interviews

One-on-one interviews with representatives from a selection of organizations were conducted. Individual stakeholder meetings will continue to take place after this reporting period.

4+
Organizations



PUBLIC INSIGHTS

ONLINE SURVEY

The online survey provided an opportunity to gauge the overall level of support for each of the Big Moves in the Draft Downtown Public Places Plan. Participants were asked to select one of the following options for each of the nine Big Moves: Strongly Support, Somewhat Support, Neither Support nor Oppose, Somewhat Oppose, Strongly Oppose and Don't Know. The survey also provided participants with the opportunity to provide a written explanation for their answer in an open-ended format for each Big Move as well as a final open ended section for comments. The levels of support and the major themes derived from the explanations provided are summarized in this report.

General Feedback

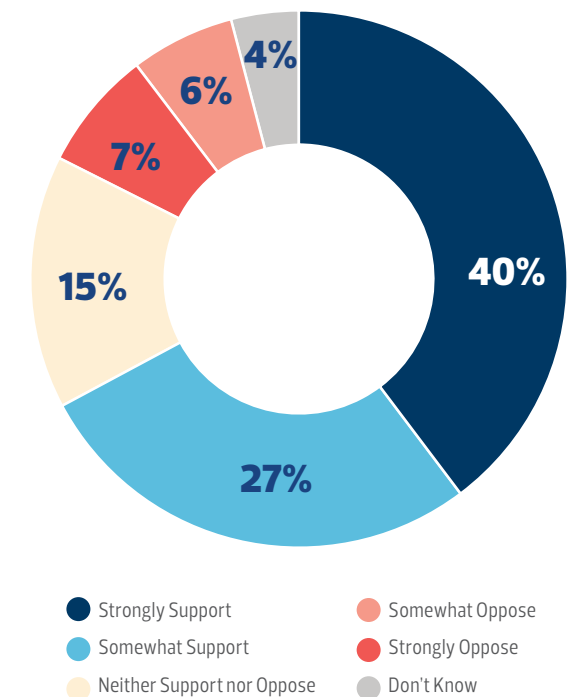
Overall, the Big Moves received 67% of public support. The following themes emerged from the general open-ended responses:

- » Appreciation for additional, connected open space for Downtown residents and visitors.
- » Concerns about traffic and parking impacts.
- » Desire for safe and inclusive design of public places.
- » Desire for accessible design and parking as well as winter design of public spaces.
- » Concerns about costs and phasing of Big Moves.

Most people were excited with the Big Moves overall, believing that the new connections, public places, and improvements would increase the attractiveness and vibrancy of Downtown. The highlights for these respondents were the Draft Plan's focus on enhancing pedestrian and bike networks, removing surface parking lots, and the greening of Downtown.

Some people felt the Big Moves lacked consideration for traffic and parking impacts. Several people suggested replacing any parking spaces lost for those who have to drive or park Downtown. Others called for accessible parking for those who cannot walk to the new public places. Many people mentioned that the City needs to focus on social issues and homelessness prior to constructing more public places.

Both those that agreed with the recommendations and those who were opposed were curious or concerned about the costs and phasing of the Big Moves in relation to other City projects.



WAREHOUSE CAMPUS PARK

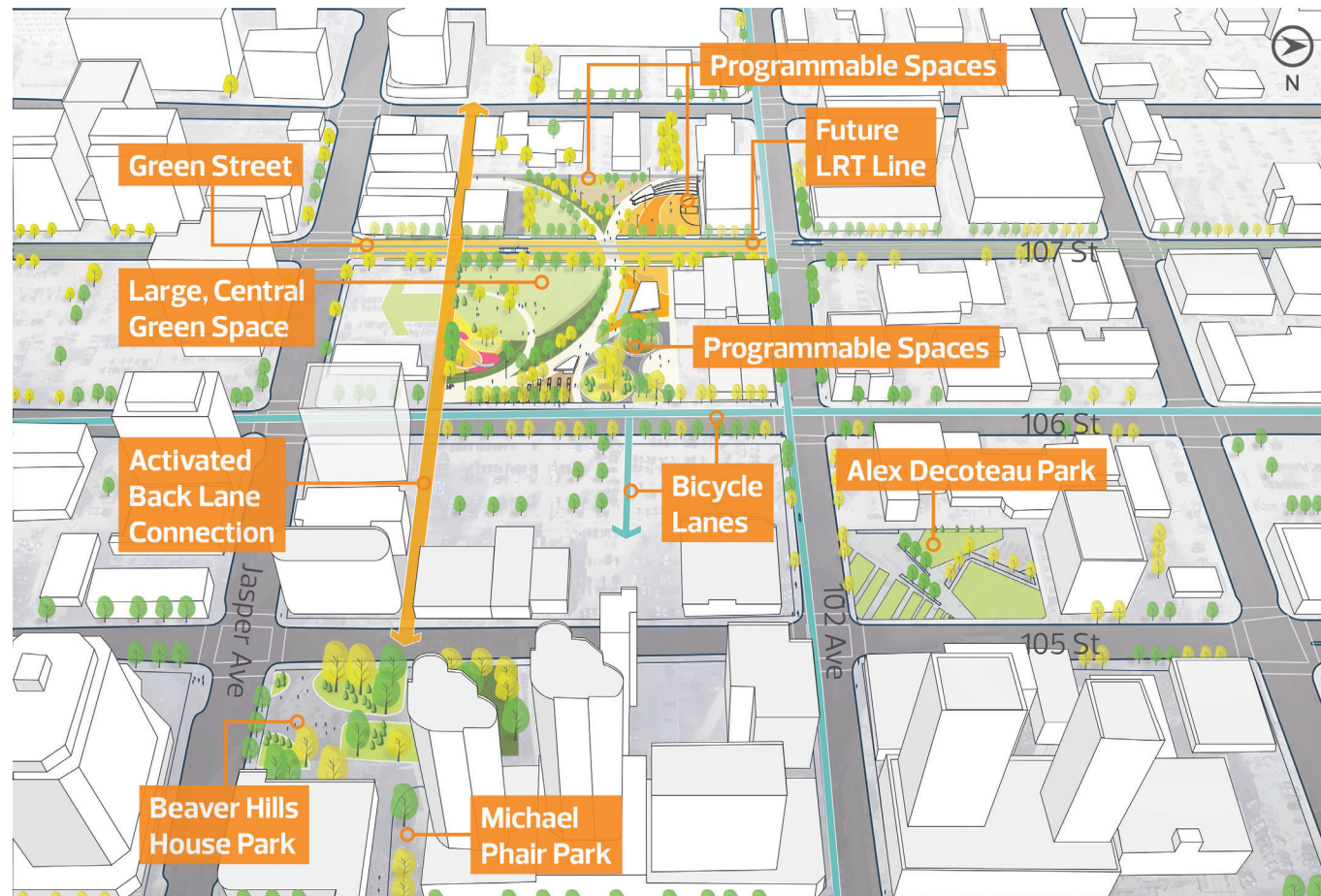
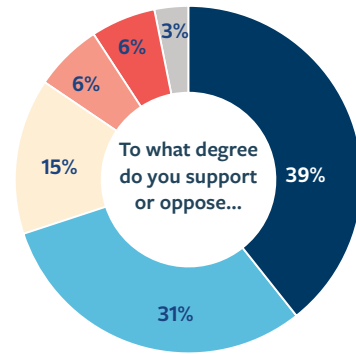
Create a large central green space in the heart of the Warehouse District.

The Warehouse Campus Park concept received 70% support from the participants of the online survey.

Common Themes

Common themes that arose from the open-ended feedback include:

- » Excitement about additional family-oriented green space in the area and removal of surface parking.
- » Desire to ensure winter design, safety, and accessibility are factored into the design of the park.
- » Some conflicting opinions on closing 107 to traffic. Some believe it is a great idea to pedestrianize this section of the street while others were concerned about impacts on traffic.
- » Some concern about safety, security, and lack of parking.



109 STREET CONNECTION

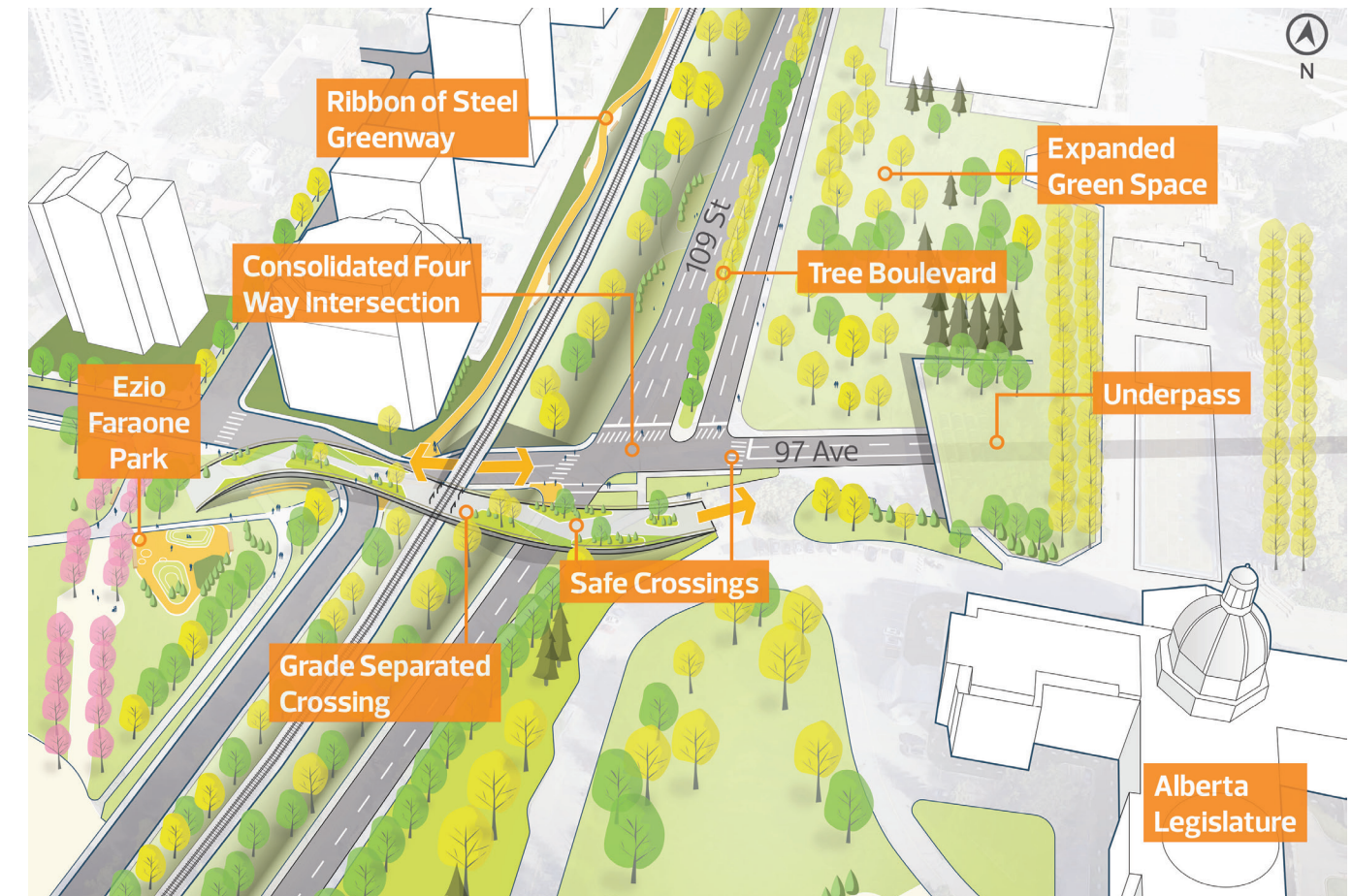
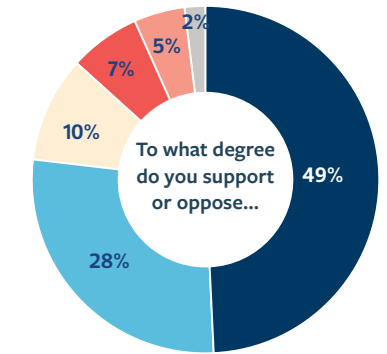
Enhance north-south and east-west pedestrian and cycle connections between Ezio Faraone Park and the Alberta Legislature at 109 Street at 97 Avenue.

The 109 Street Connection concept received 77% support from the participants of the online survey. This concept had the highest level of support between the nine Big Moves from the online participants.

Common Themes

Common themes that arose from the open-ended feedback include:

- » High level of support for a grade-separated crossing to connect Ezio Faraone Park and the Legislature Grounds.
- » Some participants expressed support for the reorganization of the intersection, while others were concerned this would impede traffic flow.
- » Desire to connect to the Ribbon of Steel and High Level Line idea.



104 STREET STAIRCASE

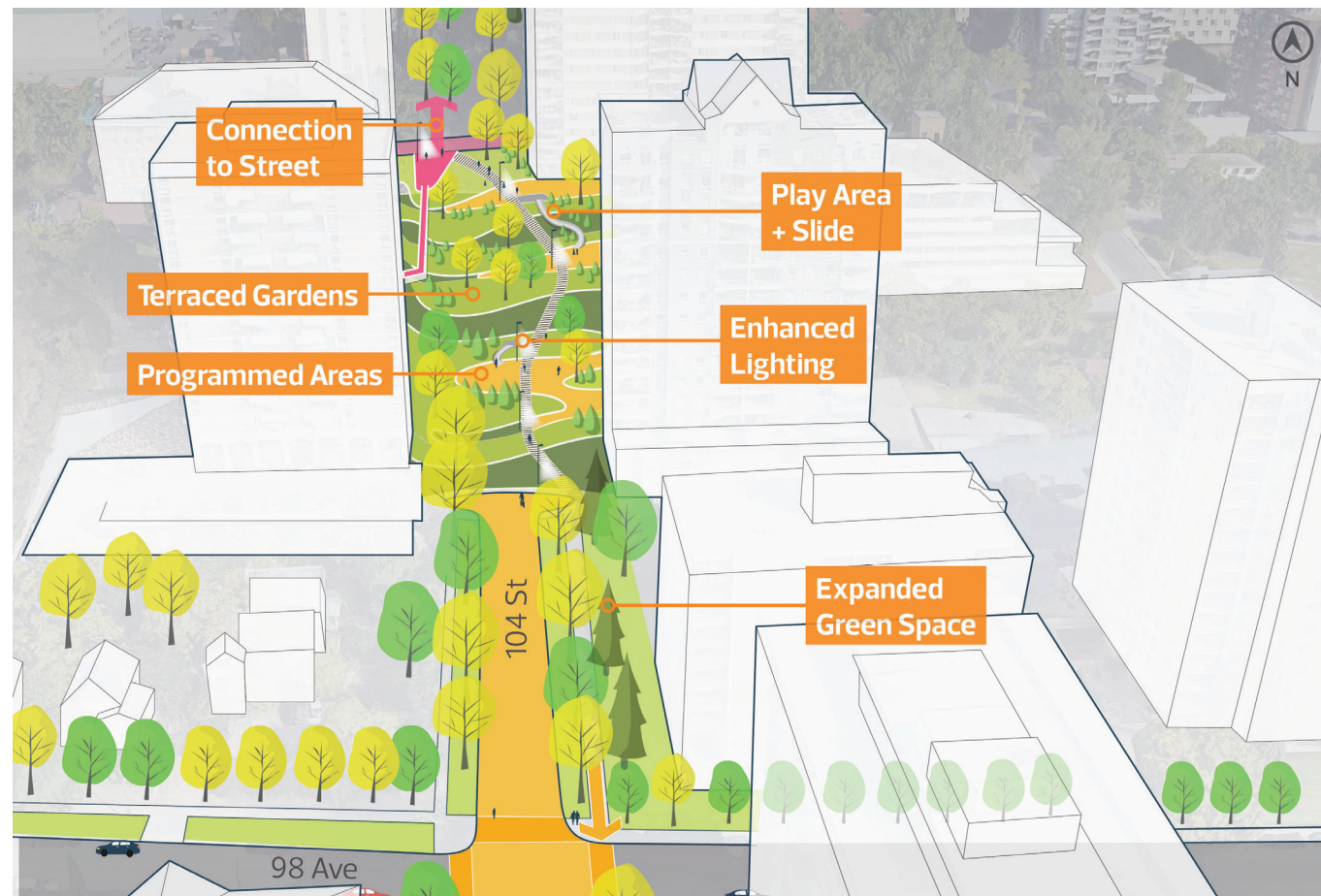
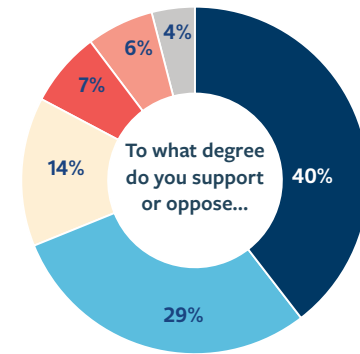
Develop a grand staircase with cascading tiers to provide an enhanced connection to the River Valley and a playful public place.

The 104 Street Staircase concept received 69% support from the participants of the online survey.

Common Themes

Common themes that arose from the open-ended feedback include:

- » Excitement about turning the stairs into a destination, like Lombard Street in San Francisco.
- » Desire to ensure the stairs lead to somewhere, ensuring a better connection to the River and surrounding neighbourhoods.
- » Some concern about cost, maintenance, and security of the space.
- » Desire to ensure an accessible route is provided.



CENTRAL CORE CONNECTIONS

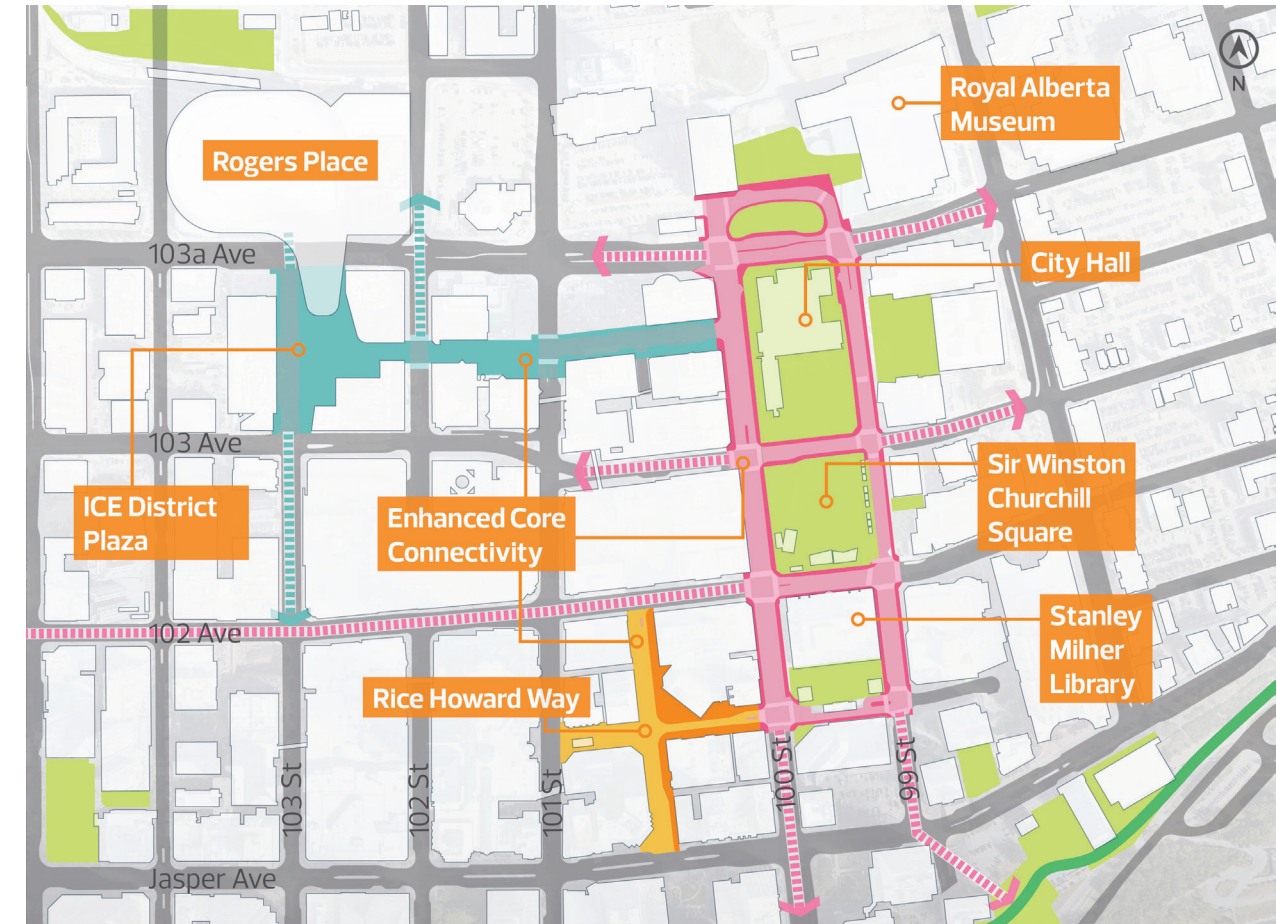
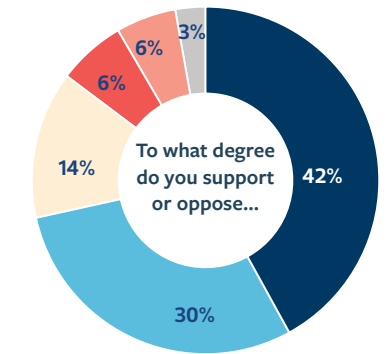
Enhance the connections between major civic and entertainment spaces in the Core of Downtown.

The Central Core Connections concept received 72% support from the participants of the online survey. This concept had the third highest level of support between the nine Big Moves from the online participants.

Common Themes

Common themes that arose from the open-ended feedback include:

- » Appreciation for additional cohesiveness and attractiveness of the Downtown core and focus on pedestrians.
- » Desire to close Rice Howard Way to vehicular traffic.
- » Some concern about impacts on traffic and parking.
- » Some concern about use of public fund to tie in the ICE District and additional funds going into Churchill Square which has recently been redeveloped.



97 STREET BRIDGE

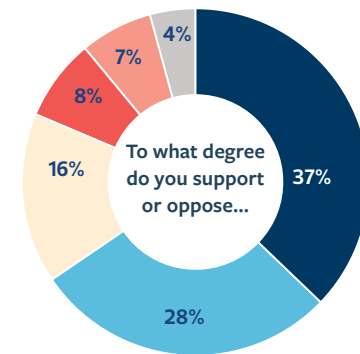
Renew 97 Street Bridge as active transportation linkage.

The 97 Street Bridge concept received 65% support from the participants of the online survey.

Common Themes

Common themes that arose from the open-ended feedback include:

- » Desire to ensure that people experiencing homelessness who currently use Marie Burle Park are not displaced and are included in the design of any improvements.
- » Agreement with addressing the existing bridge. Desire to see the bridge redeveloped instead of fully replaced due to cost.
- » Suggestion that this move be coordinated with plans for redeveloping the old Remand Centre.
- » Concern for safety and security of the area. Suggestion to time development of the pathway with future development of the area for eyes on the park/pathway.



MCKAY AVENUE GATHERING SPACE

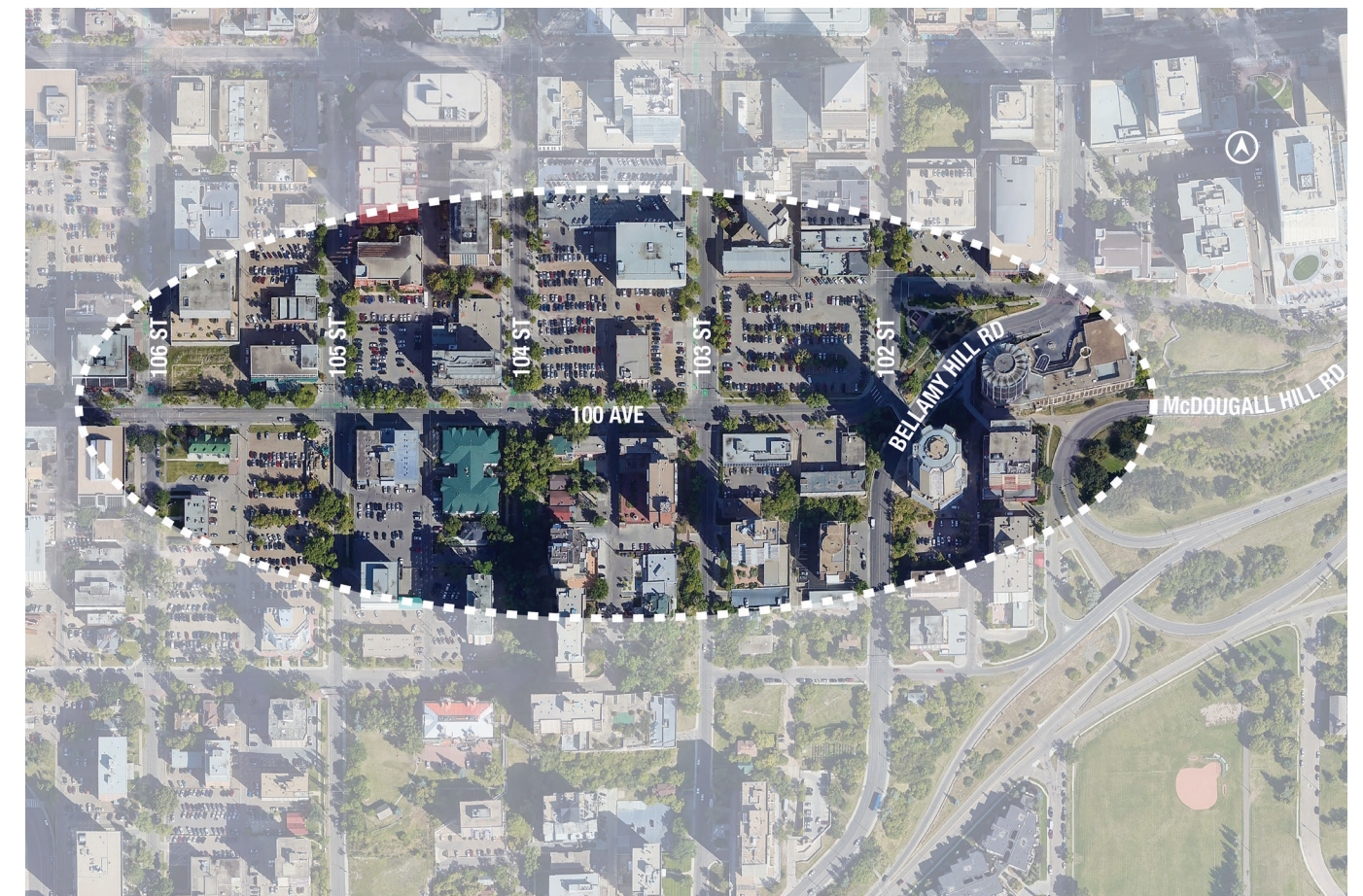
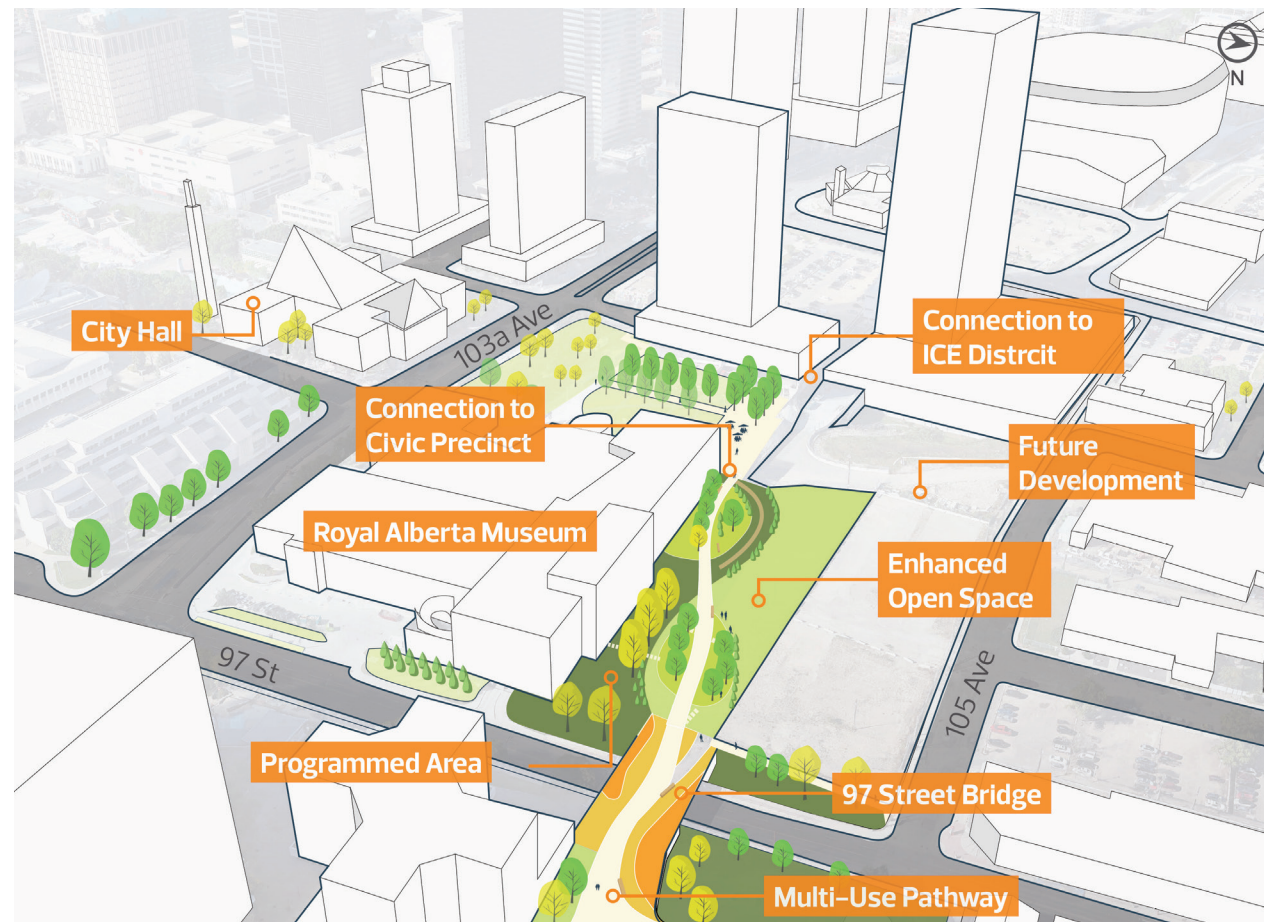
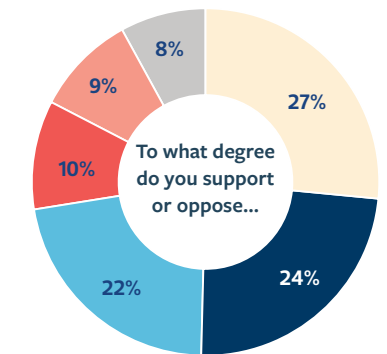
Develop a community gathering space for the McKay Avenue neighbourhood.

The McKay Avenue Gathering Space concept received 46% support from the participants of the online survey, the lowest level of support received between the nine Big Moves. Neither support nor oppose was the highest response for this Big move at 27% of the votes, primarily due to a lack of information on the concept.

Common Themes

Common themes that arose from the open-ended feedback include:

- » Confusion over the idea presented and requests for more information on the concept.
- » Desire for the space to be green and not a hardscaped plaza.
- » Concern about potential road closures, parking loss, and that people may be displaced from buildings.
- » Desire for gathering space to only be developed only if residents in the area want it.



RAILTOWN PARK CROSSING + EXPANSION

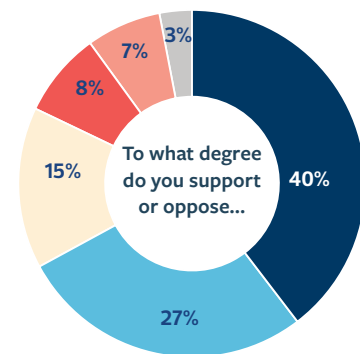
Enhance the connection and function of Railtown Park as part of a green corridor.

The Railtown Park Crossing + Expansion concept received 67% support from the participants of the online survey.

Common Themes

Common themes that arose from the open-ended feedback include:

- » Appreciation for improving the safety of the intersection with Jasper Avenue for pedestrians and cyclists and linking the green corridor.
- » Some indication that a grade separated crossing is unnecessary and that an improved at-grade crossing would be more suitable.
- » Excitement for increased child programming and activation in the corridor.
- » Excitement for expansion of green space.



MACDONALD PROMENADE

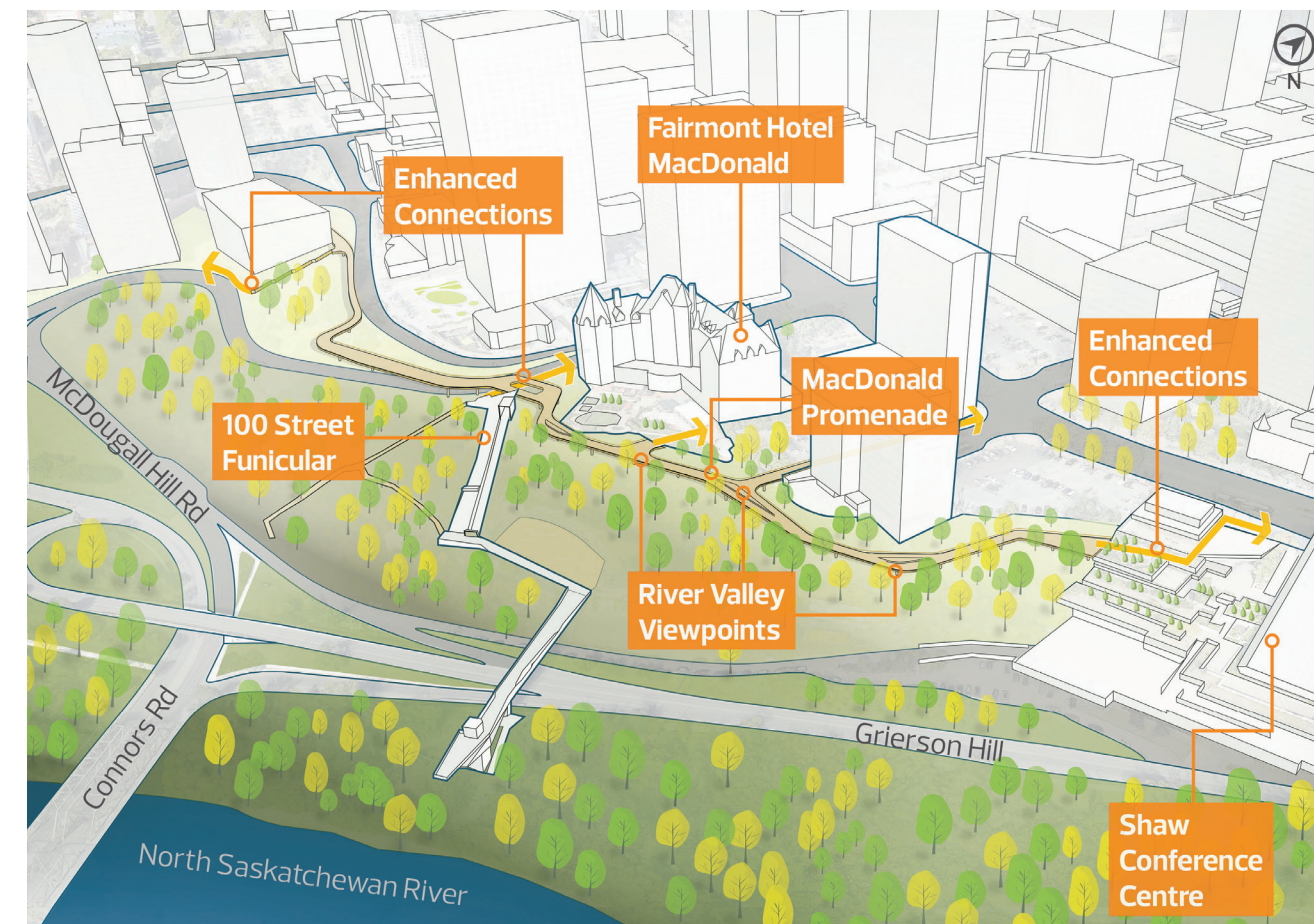
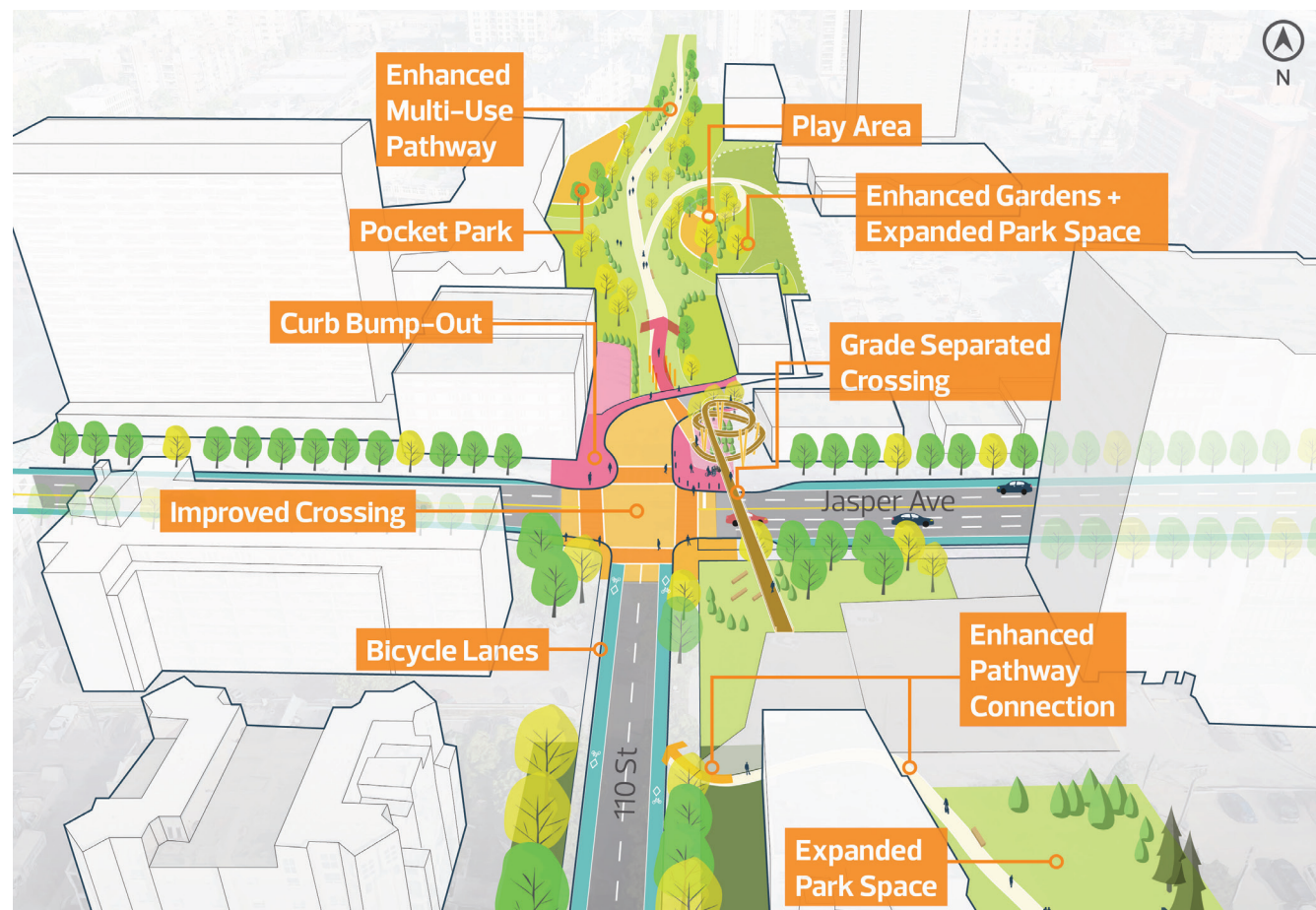
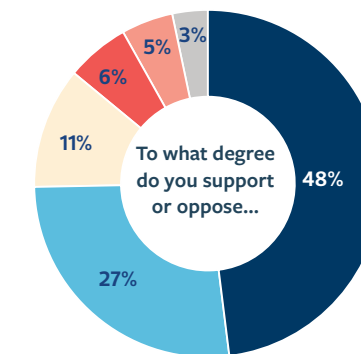
Create the balcony of Downtown Edmonton.

The MacDonald Promenade concept received 75% support from the participants of the online survey. This concept has the second highest level of support between the nine Big Moves from the online participants.

Common Themes

Common themes that arose from the open-ended feedback include:

- » Support for improving pedestrian and cycling connections to the funicular and encouraging its use.
- » Support for a better crossing of 100 Street.
- » Appreciation for the opportunity to capitalize on the beautiful river valley views, create a safe, accessible, and connected promenade that emphasizes one of Edmonton's crown jewels.



QUARTERS CONNECTION TO LOUISE MCKINNEY

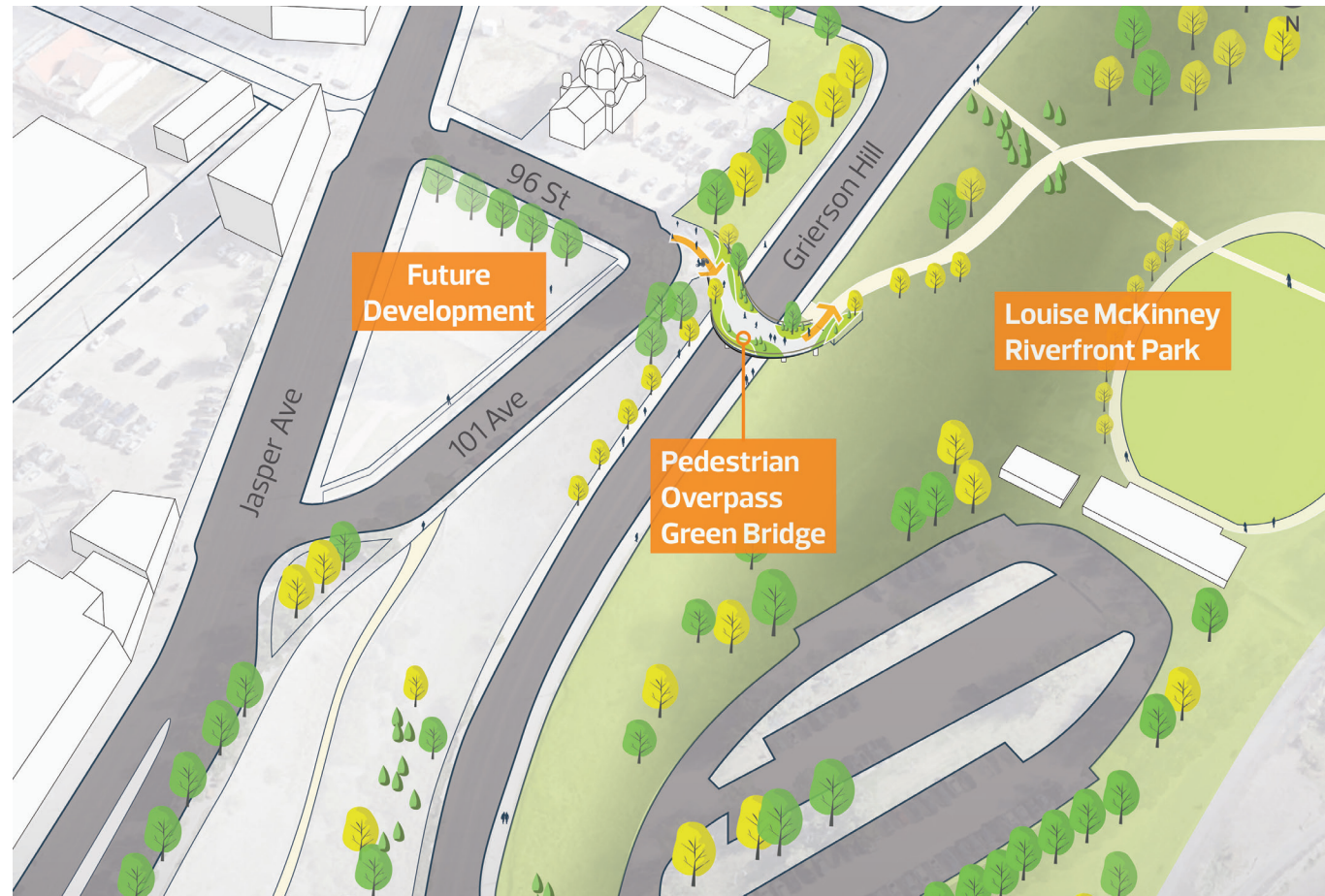
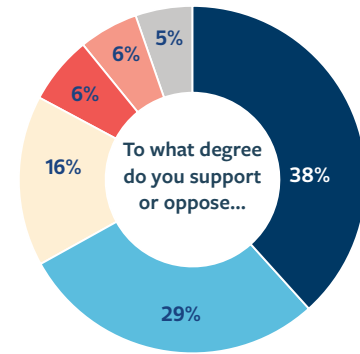
Connect the Quarters to the River Valley.

The Quarters Connection to Louise McKinney concept received 67% support from the participants of the online survey.

Common Themes

Common themes that arose from the open-ended feedback include:

- » Support for an overhead pedestrian walkway to improve pedestrian safety without restricting traffic flow.
- » Appreciation for increased access to the River Valley and Louise McKinney park.
- » Desire to coordinate this move with future development for efficiency and potential public-private partnership.
- » Indication that this connection will be increasingly important with the increased density and development in the Quarters.



STAKEHOLDER INSIGHTS

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The City of Edmonton has met with several stakeholder groups since the Phase 1: Conceptualize public engagement. Representatives from diverse organizations were invited to discuss issues and opportunities in Downtown Public Places. Organizations approached included community organizations, businesses, communities of interest, developers, service agencies, institutions, and the government.

For Phase 4: Finalize public engagement, four stakeholders were approached to provide their final feedback on the Big Moves outlined in the plan. While much of the information gathered supports the perspectives gained from the public, some additional key points that emerged from stakeholder conversations are noted below.

General Feedback

Overall, stakeholders were supportive of the Big Moves presented. Stakeholders provided comments on the 109 Street Connection, Railtown Park Crossing + Expansion, MacDonald Promenade, and the Quarters Connection to Louise McKinney, these comments were supportive of the direction of these Big Moves and are summarized on the following page.

Some additional considerations were discussed including:

- ▶ The exploration of additional indoor play spaces.
- ▶ Additional provision of community gardens.
- ▶ Increased focus on improving human safety in the downtown.
- ▶ Appreciation for small pocket park acquisitions.
- ▶ Reminders to consider access to parking.

It is important to note that ongoing stakeholder engagement will occur after this reporting period.



109 Street Connection

Stakeholders expressed a desire for additional consideration of the connection between Ezio Faraone Park and the Ribbon of Steel, as the drawing indicates that the grade separated crossing may reduce access from the Ribbon of Steel Greenway.

Railtown Park Crossing + Expansion

Stakeholders expressed general support this Big Move, particularly improved north-south pedestrian and bicycle connections across Jasper Avenue along 110 Street, and child play amenities in the park. Stakeholders would like to see increased focus on safety measures for the park, especially at night. They also asked for clarification on how this Big Move will coordinate with future redevelopment of the area. Stakeholders suggested that the grade separated crossing should directly connect with the pathway on either side of Jasper Avenue, and suggested rerouting the pathway in Railtown Park further east, to increase the uninterrupted area of open space.

MacDonald Promenade

Stakeholders would like to see increased attention given to bicycle connections from 100 Avenue. Additionally, stakeholders suggested that the open space surrounding the Shaw Conference Centre would benefit from increased wayfinding and improved sightlines. Consideration for these specific areas will be incorporated into the MacDonald Promenade design.

Quarters Connection to Louise McKinney

General support for this connection was expressed by Stakeholders. They would like to see this connection and its corresponding network prioritize accessibility and safety, especially through an improved lighting strategy. In the interim, stakeholders discussed measures to improve the safety of the dangerous intersection at 95 Street and Grierson Hill.



NEXT STEPS

NEXT STEPS

The feedback from Phase 3: Finalize will inform the final version of the Edmonton Downtown Public Places Plan. The input will be used to refine the Big Moves and inform the implementation strategy of the Plan.

The final Plan will be presented to Council in 2019 and shared with stakeholders and the public prior to adoption.

Stay up to date with the project at: edmonton.ca/downtownpublicplaces

