



Reporting Back

River Valley Ice Strategy Public Engagement

Background	
Name	River Valley Ice Strategy Public Engagement
Dates	Public drop-in sessions: February 22 and 23, 2019 Stakeholder workshop: March 6, 2019
Location	Public drop-in sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria Park Pavilion • Hawrelak Park Pavilion • Rundle Park Family Centre
Contact information	Kari Zral River Valley Coordinator, River Valley Parks and Facilities Community and Recreation Facilities, Citizen Services Kari.Zral@edmonton.ca
Level of public engagement	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 2px solid black; background-color: #f4a460; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">ADVISE</div> <div style="border: 2px solid black; background-color: #a4a4f4; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">REFINE</div> <div style="background-color: #d9d9d9; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">CREATE</div> <div style="background-color: #d9d9d9; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">DECIDE</div> </div>
Description	The City invited the public and stakeholders to REFINE priority objectives for River Valley Ice Surfaces and ADVISE on actions to help achieve each priority objective. In addition, the City asked stakeholder representatives to ADVISE on opportunities to work together on the priority objectives.

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SUMMARY

In November 2018, the City of Edmonton invited the public to help REFINE:

- A 20-year vision for how Edmonton can make the most of its River Valley ice surfaces
- Areas of Focus (i.e., the type of work that we need to focus on) to help achieve our vision

Public input also helped the City develop draft Priority Objectives for each Area of Focus.

In January 2019 a [What We Heard summary](#) was created for Phase 1 of Public Engagement and the input was used to finalize the following Vision and Areas of Focus for the River Valley Ice Strategy:

Vision

Edmonton's River Valley outdoor ice surfaces provide a unique winter experience and destination for people of all ages and abilities to be active.

Areas of Focus

- Services and Programs
- Facilities and Operations
- Sustainability
- Public Information

In February and March 2019, the City presented the draft Priority Objectives to the public and invited them to help REFINE them by indicating support and/or ideas to improve them. The public was also invited to ADVISE on actions to help achieve each Priority Objective. In addition, the City asked a group of key stakeholder representatives to ADVISE on opportunities to work together on the Priority Objectives.

Public feedback showed there is clear support for the draft Priority Objectives with 74% - 100% of participants indicating support. Suggested improvements included emphasizing the City's responsibilities, evaluating the River Valley Ice Strategy with more frequency, and focusing on providing unique experiences at ice surfaces.

Participants provided a number of suggestions for actions that could help to achieve each Priority Objective. Some of the highlights include collaborating with community partners to provide more services, programs and amenities at ice surfaces, ensuring adequate signage, transportation and maintenance, considering ice surfaces in new locations in the River Valley, and ensuring people can easily access information on River Valley ice surfaces.

To review the River Valley Ice Strategy project background please visit: www.edmonton.ca/icestrategy

WHAT WE DID

Drop-in Public Engagement Sessions

Drop-in public engagement sessions were held during three different public skate times and at each of the current River Valley ice surfaces.

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Location	Date and time	Number of participants
Victoria Park Pavilion	Friday, February 22 • 6:00 - 8:30 p.m.	46
Hawrelak Park Pavilion	Saturday, February 23 • 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	19
Rundle Park Family Centre	Saturday, February 23 • 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.	8

The public were asked to review information on River Valley ice surfaces and the strategy's Priority Objectives for each of its four Areas of Focus. They were invited to vote on whether they support each Priority Objective, share any ideas to improve the objective, and ideas for action to achieve them.

Stakeholder Workshop

Stakeholders were invited to attend a workshop with the goal of exploring how they, individually and as a collective, could work with the City to support the use and enjoyment of River Valley ice surfaces.

Location	Date and time	Number of participants
Muttart Conservatory	Wednesday, March 6 • 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.	11

The stakeholders were also invited to provide input on the same questions that were presented during the drop-in public engagement sessions, and then, as potential collaborators and partners for the City, to identify and share potential opportunities to help advance the priority objectives.

WHAT WE HEARD

Level of support for the draft priority objectives is an aggregation of public and stakeholder input.

Area of Focus: Services and Programs		
Draft Priority Objective	Percentage of people who support it	Proposed Actions to help achieve this Priority Objective
Develop and deliver a range of programs and events that align with user interests	95%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct public engagement to learn more about what people want for programs and events • Focus on programs and events for people who might not otherwise use the ice surfaces • Make adjustments to the existing programs so that the ice surfaces are available for public use in the morning

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		<p>(before work) and late afternoon (right after work)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the types of activities conducted on the ice surfaces (e.g., curling) and supported by current and future infrastructure Offer themed public skating and events to attract different audiences (e.g., popular music for teen skate, “date night” skate)
Establish community partnerships to increase and enhance programs and services at ice surfaces	98%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an inventory of community groups and their interests Work with specialized organizations (e.g., culinary arts, disability sports groups, schools) to identify unique events, services and programs to engage people who might not otherwise use the ice Work with established ice users (e.g., hockey organizations) to increase their use of and support (e.g., maintenance) for River Valley ice surfaces Capitalize on partnerships to meet people’s needs (e.g., vending machines with healthy snacks, jukebox for music, hot beverages at Victoria Park)
Explore vendor relationships to increase and enhance programs and services at ice surfaces	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an inventory of vendor opportunities Create opportunities (e.g., winter-friendly playground, places to cook and eat) to attract people to and keep them at the surfaces Provide programs and services that facilitate “day excursions” (e.g., firewood sales, equipment rentals)

Ideas to Improve Priority Objectives

- There is a strong emphasis on programs within Services and Programs. At least one of the objectives should focus on services. Services, such as skate rentals and skate sharpening, make it possible for people to use the ice surfaces. Programs can be high cost and, if there is too much programming, restrict the number of people who have access to skate on River Valley ice surfaces.

Area of Focus: Facilities and Operations

Draft Priority Objective	Percentage of people who support it	Proposed Actions to help achieve this Priority Objective
Ensure surfaces and facilities are accessible and safe for all users	94%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide public transportation where possible to reach River Valley ice surfaces and effective parking solutions (i.e., to ensure availability of parking for participants) Provide hard surface, well-maintained and well-lit



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		<p>pathways between public transportation and parking locations to the on-site facilities, from the facilities to the ice surfaces and from facilities to local amenities (e.g., fire pits, picnic tables)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define “accessible” (i.e., access to transportation to reach the sites or providing universal access to people of all ages and abilities) and invite people with “lived experience” to provide input on how to improve accessibility • Employ on-site volunteers and establish emergency phones at ice surfaces to increase safety and security • Add safety and etiquette signage at locations • Provide skating assists and adaptive equipment on-site for people of all ages and abilities
Establish community partnerships for the development and maintenance of ice surfaces	92%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with partners (e.g., Edmonton Speed Skating Association) on collaborative efforts to develop facilities, procure equipment and maintain the ice • Crowdfund solutions that bring out volunteers to clear the ice • Hire private contractors to clear the ice
Create an inviting and unique environment at each ice surface	85%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider universal design principles to reimagine ice surfaces and how to use them • Add games rooms, more lockers and air conditioning in the pavilions • Provide better lighting and more warming shelters and fire pits at all locations • Use Victoria Park as the standard to achieve at Hawrelak Park and Rundle Park • Add more ice paths at Victoria Park • Separate hockey (i.e., stick and puck) activities from public skating and family activities
Critically assess operations to support high-quality ice surfaces and amenities	98%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procure and use lighter equipment at Hawrelak Park to ensure that the lake ice can be cleared and maintained earlier in the skating season • Use the expertise of the people conducting maintenance at Victoria Park to open the ice earlier and get better quality ice at other ice surface locations • Procure a Zamboni for all three ice locations to support better quality ice • Review and adopt historical best practices for maintenance (i.e., before heavy equipment was used) • Begin ice clearing and flooding earlier in the season

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the return on investment for the ice paths • Adopt priorities and performance measures specifically focused on extending the amount of time that people can use the ice
Ideas to Improve Priority Objectives		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For priority objective two (i.e., Establish community partnerships), there is mixed support for “community partnerships.” Some people believe the City should be fully responsible for ice and facility maintenance, and other people support this objective and want the City to engage private contractors, community groups or public volunteers. • In priority objective three (i.e., Creating an inviting and unique environment), separate “inviting environment” from “unique environment.” An inviting location with high-quality amenities and services will attract people to use River Valley ice surfaces ongoing. The City can offer unique experiences rather than unique environments. • In priority objective four (i.e., Critically assess operations), emphasize cost-effective operations that achieve high-quality ice surfaces and amenities. 		

Area of Focus: Sustainability		
Draft Priority Objective	Percentage of people who support it	Proposed Actions to help achieve this Priority Objective
Analyze environmental trends to mitigate impacts to ice surfaces	86%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the opening and closing dates for River Valley ice surfaces, as well as the number of operational days and the seasonal temperatures
Assess the River Valley to explore the feasibility of future ice surface locations	88%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider new River Valley surfaces in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Millcreek, near the Argyll Velodrome and new LRT station ○ Gold Bar Park, near the duck pond ○ Sir Wilfrid Laurier Park, near Edmonton Valley Zoo ○ Gallagher Park, as part of the Gallagher Park Master Plan and near the new Muttart LRT station • Allow open skating on the North Saskatchewan River • Create more Olympic-sized ice surfaces to support speed skating and figure skating
Ensure that the implementation of the River Valley Ice Strategy is fiscally responsible	98%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement paid parking in the three parks* <p><i>*This idea came from two participants; six participants responded to this input indicating preference for free parking</i></p>

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Review, evaluate and adjust, as needed, the strategy at year 10	84%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the review every five years and make it a priority objective to keep the plan current, relevant and focused on the vision
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Ideas to Improve Priority Objectives

- Replace the first priority objective (i.e., Analyze environment trends...) with an objective to establish the City as a leader by adopting artificial ice surfaces.
- Adjust the second objective (i.e., Assess the River Valley...) to focus on improving the quality of existing ice surfaces, ensuring they are available and reliable for people to use.
- Adjust the second objective to focus on moving or developing River Valley ice surfaces outside of the downtown core.
- Adjust the third objective (i.e., Ensure the implementation...) to reflect the City's investment in a healthy population (i.e., supporting healthy lifestyles is fiscally responsible).
- Adjust the fourth objective (i.e., Review, evaluate, and adjust...) so that the City will update the River Valley Ice Strategy every five years.
- Add an objective to connect the existing ice surfaces to create a River Valley transportation corridor, and tie this into the City's River Access Strategy.
- Refocus the objectives on environmental sustainability and add actions to adopt environmentally-friendly practices and amenities (e.g., compostable toilets).

Area of Focus: Public Information

Draft Priority Objective	Percentage of people who support it	Proposed Actions to help achieve this Priority Objective
Increase citizen awareness by ensuring easy access to information and providing education	92%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide online and social media information and on-site wayfinding signage about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ice locations ○ Ice conditions (i.e., quality of ice, including if an ice surface is closed due to poor conditions) ○ Hours of operation for ice surfaces, on-site amenities and on-site services ○ Schedule of programs ○ Available services, including where to find them and pricing ○ On-site amenities ○ Rules of use ○ On-site and nearby parking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public transportation options • Ensure City website/311 have up-to-date information

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop communication materials in highly visual and plain language formats that consider people with visual impairments • Adopt a City of Edmonton recreation-focused mobile app
Market River Valley ice surfaces to entice new users and create a wider (i.e., national and international) awareness	86%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively promote speed skating events • Partner with hockey and sledge hockey organizations to promote the use of and events at ice surfaces • Market the surfaces locally and internationally as a “unique, outdoor experience in an urban centre” to actively position Edmonton as a premier winter destination • Promote the surfaces to local populations (e.g., newcomers, children at schools, disability community), and align programs to meet their needs • Continue to use design competitions to build awareness and interest in River Valley ice surfaces • Use social media to reach new users
Establish community partnerships to communicate and market ice surfaces to a larger audience	74%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host sponsored events that actively promote local businesses while attracting people to River Valley ice surfaces
Develop processes to receive and analyze public input to assist in the creation of innovative ice surfaces ideas	92%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post information about public engagement activities at River Valley ice surfaces

Ideas to Improve Priority Objectives

- Remove the second objective (i.e., Market River Valley ice surfaces...); the ice surfaces are already very busy and funding can be allocated elsewhere.
- Rewrite the third objective (i.e., Establish community partnerships...) to keep the intent and make it easier to understand.
- Adjust the third objective to establish the City as a leader in promoting its River Valley ice surfaces; other organizations will follow suit.
- Adjust the third objective to focus on community and business partnerships; business can build brand awareness by sponsoring local events.

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Collaboration Opportunities

As part of the stakeholder workshop, representatives recommended actions to help the City achieve its priority objectives. These actions fit into four themes:

Themes	Recommended Actions
Ancillary support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adopt sustainable and green utilities (e.g., water and sewer, electrical, heating)• Develop public transportation and active transportation (e.g., snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, winter biking) strategies to support access to the River Valley ice surfaces
Collaborative marketing, communication, and special events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner with local organizations (e.g., Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, Edmonton Sports Council) to create highly visible, community-endorsed signature events• Partner with organizations with a mandate to promote Edmonton (e.g., Edmonton Tourism)• Engage credible, community partners (e.g., River Valley Alliance) to help:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Share information about River Valley ice surfaces and related programs, services and events through their established communications channels◦ Tell and promote stories about Edmontonians and their achievements
Funding models	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner with community organizations (e.g., Edmonton Speed Skating Association) to access grant funding• Create cooperatives to increase equipment buying power and options for easily accessible storage• Adopt all-season partnerships and facilities• Use business cases to evaluate options for programs and services
Subject matter expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult and involve experts to provide input into achieving quality ice, accessible locations and well-used facilities and ice surfaces

WHAT'S NEXT

The City is reviewing the detailed input from the public drop-in sessions and stakeholder workshop. The River Valley Ice Strategy project team will make updates to the priority objectives, where required, and identify multi-year actions to help achieve them. Public input, as well as, City policy, procedures, and technical requirements will become the foundation of the River Valley Ice Strategy. The Project Team will draft the strategy and once approved by the Project Sponsor it will be posted on the project's website for public access.

Citizens can access information about the River Valley Ice Strategy by visiting: edmonton.ca/icestrategy