



RIBBON *of* GREEN

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

February 2019

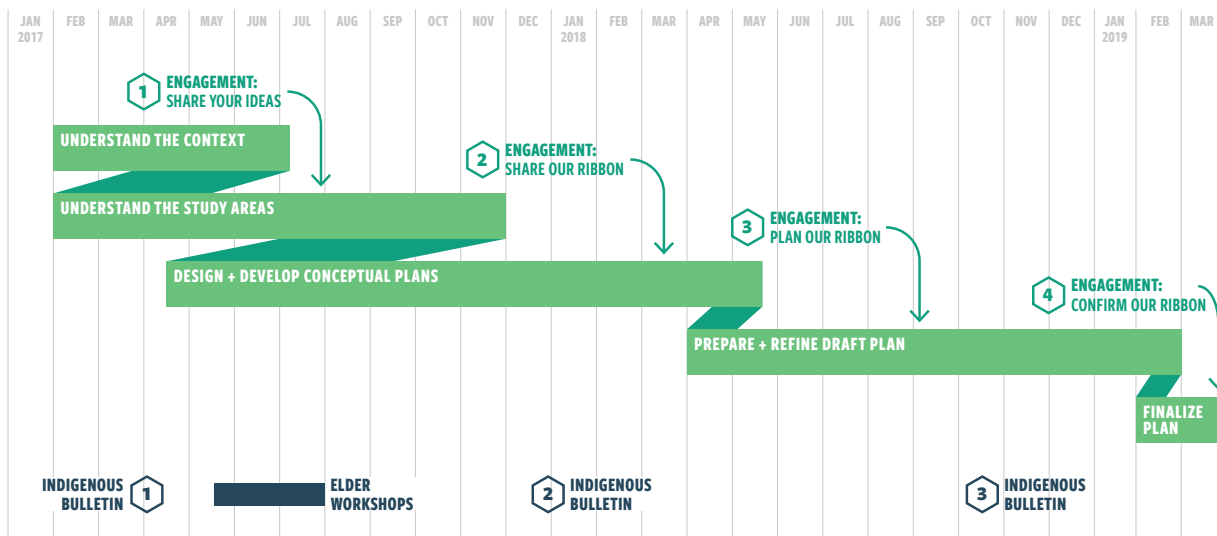
Prepared for	ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW	1
City of Edmonton	INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT	3
	PHASE 1: SHARE YOUR IDEAS	4
	PHASE 2: SHARE YOUR RIBBON	7
Prepared by	PHASE 3: PLAN OUR RIBBON	10
O2 Planning + Design Inc.	PHASE 4: CONFIRM OUR RIBBON	12

ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The City of Edmonton is committed to excellence in public engagement. This document summarizes the public and stakeholder consultation process for the *Ribbon of Green SW + NE*. For detailed information on each phase of engagement, please consult the What We Heard Reports in the Appendix.

Due to the city-wide scale, regional impacts, and multi-year time frame of the *Ribbon of Green SW + NE*, setting up a network of interlinking engagement phases from the project initiation was fundamental to the success of the project. Specifically, there were four audience streams of engagement: stakeholders, public (online and in-person) and Indigenous. These different groups were engaged at various times throughout the four stages of project engagement.

The engagement process for *Ribbon of Green SW + NE* was initiated in 2017 and concluded in 2018. The four engagement stages, and how they related to the overall project are shown below.



CITY OF EDMONTON ENGAGEMENT POLICY

The City of Edmonton's policy on public engagement (C513 - Public Involvement) is a guiding document for the City's approach to public engagement.

The City of Edmonton Engagement Policy is available at edmonton.ca/documents/policiesdirectives/c593.pdf

RIBBON OF GREEN SW + NE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The Ribbon of Green Public Engagement Plan, which outlines the project's approach of how to involve the public, stakeholders and Indigenous communities, and gather their insight and feedback to inform the Plan is available at edmonton.ca/ribbonofgreen

PROJECT VALUES + PRINCIPLES

The following Values and Principles provided a foundation for the Public Engagement Plan and have guided the planning and implementation of the engagement activities with the public, stakeholder groups, and Indigenous Peoples.

ENGAGEMENT VALUES

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

ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

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

INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

WHAT WE DID

The project team identified opportunities to collaborate with Indigenous Communities to understand how issues and concerns could be addressed, and to incorporate input into a clear set of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations.

From Fall 2016 to Summer 2017, the City reached out to Indigenous communities for initial engagement and to share information about the Ribbon of Green project. Over the Summer of 2017, First Nations and Métis Elder Workshops were held, gathering valuable information to shape the direction of the *Ribbon of Green SW + NE*. In January 2018, bulletins summarizing the results of these workshops were sent to all participating and non-participating Indigenous communities. This information was also distributed to organizations and interested attendees at Edmonton's Indigenous Peoples Festival in June 2018. The project team continued to provide opportunities throughout the project to collaborate on how issues and concerns could be addressed, and sought to incorporate input into the Plan's policies and recommendations. Another bulletin outlining policies relevant to seven Indigenous themes (see below) was sent out to communities in Fall 2018.

WHAT WE HEARD

The following 7 themes emerged from the Indigenous engagement and have been influential in the creation, revision, and refinement of the Ribbon of Green SW + NE:

- 1. Recognition of Indigenous Peoples:** First Nations and Métis history, culture and traditional knowledge contributes to the diversity of Edmonton and helps improve the quality of life for all Edmontonians.
- 2. Significant Cultural/Historical Sites:** Future park development and construction should plan for the possibility of finding cultural sites, such as burial sites, archaeological remains, and modified/marked trees.
- 3. Gathering Places:** Edmonton needs Indigenous gathering places to practice ceremonies, celebrate, teach and promote culture.
- 4. Protection of Natural Areas:** Rivers, streams, wetlands and natural areas are environmentally/ culturally significant to Indigenous people.
- 5. Environmental Stewardship:** Care of the environment (e.g. monitoring, management, restoration, environmental awareness and education) is important and should involve Indigenous peoples.
- 6. Traditional Plants:** There are many natural and undeveloped areas throughout Edmonton that contain traditional plants that are important and sacred to Indigenous peoples and should be protected.
- 7. Engagement:** Indigenous communities are interested in early, meaningful in-person and on-site engagement, to share traditional knowledge, identify issues and concerns and collaborate on possible recommendations.

The City of Edmonton is committed to keeping Indigenous communities informed and engaged when projects intersect with Indigenous interests and concerns.

PHASE 1: SHARE YOUR IDEAS



2356
TOTAL
PARTICIPANTS



3 OPEN HOUSES
261 Participants



1 ONLINE SURVEY
2020 Participants



**1 EXTERNAL
STAKEHOLDER
WORKSHOP**
26 Participants

**STAKEHOLDER
MEETINGS**
49 Participants

WHAT WE DID

The primary goal of the first engagement phase was to gain a greater understanding of the *Ribbon of Green SW + NE* study areas, and the opportunities and challenges in each. This was an information gathering phase in which a variety of engagement methods were used to provide participants with convenient ways to “share their ideas.”

Participants were provided with background on the project and the opportunity to share their ideas and insights about the River Valley and Ravine System through three questions (outlined below), and identify points of significance on maps at the open houses or via interactive maps online.

Feedback gathered at this phase informed the draft vision, program statements, and priorities for the two study areas. Public insight informed the Ecological Resources Overview, Historical Resources Overview, and Recreation Assessment, and helped to define areas for future preservation, conservation, and use.

Phase 1 was organized into three key questions that built upon the overall theme of the engagement, “Share Your Ideas:”

SHARE YOUR INSIGHTS

- > Where have you been? (in each study area)
- > What is significant in each study area?

This input informed the recreational, cultural and ecological analyses, and the draft program statement for each study area – what should occur in terms of the use, management, and conservation. Input also helped define areas for preservation, conservation and use.

SHARE YOUR INTERESTS

- > What would you like to do/ see in the two study areas?

This input informed the draft policies and concept plans for each study area.

GOALS

- > Introduce the project
- > Create awareness about the project and opportunities to engage
- > Identify any initial concerns, issues, and opportunities
- > Incorporate feedback to inform the vision, program statement and priorities
- > Learn about history, recreational opportunities, environment, cultural sites and traditional use areas

SHARE YOUR VISION

- > Write your vision or priority for one or both of the study areas.
- > What do you value? Rank the values that should be prioritized in the study areas; ecology, wellness and/or celebration.

This input informed the draft vision statement and priorities for each study area, which helped guide the development of policy and conceptual designs for each study area, and served as a check for future planning and implementation.

WHAT WE HEARD

SHARE YOUR INSIGHTS

ECOLOGY

Frequent Responses:

- › Protect the connectivity and integrity of wildlife corridors.
- › Protect sensitive habitats and ensure integrity of habitats to sustain a bounty of life.
- › Consider erosion mitigation strategies.
- › Maintain the area as naturalized as possible.

Tensions:

- › Erosion mitigation strategies should be considered.
- › Ensure connectivity of wildlife corridors.
- › Recreation should not hinder or strain ecological integrity.

Opportunities:

- › There are many unique landscapes for preservation.
- › There are also many areas that could benefit from habitat rehabilitation.

RECREATION

Frequent Responses:

- › The need for the careful development of a comprehensive and connected trail network within the River Valley and Ravine System that does not interfere with sensitive natural areas and habitats.

Tensions:

- › Restrictions should be considered for off-road activities, and the locations of different uses, including off-leash dog areas.
- › Prioritizing ecological integrity versus recreational use.

Opportunities:

- › Locations were identified for various features including viewpoints and boardwalks.
- › Locations were identified for various activities including fishing, boat launches and beaches for swimming.

CULTURE

Frequent Responses:

- › Comments identified historical significant areas and the need to consult with Indigenous communities.

Tensions:

- › The public identified sites within the study areas that may conflict with Indigenous interests.

Opportunities:

- › Areas of Indigenous, historical, and individual personal significance at various locations within the Study Areas.
- › Ensure that everyone, of all backgrounds and abilities, are welcomed, and that all voices are heard in the process.

SHARE YOUR INTERESTS

Frequent Responses:

- › The use of trails for activities such as walking, running, and cycling and the enjoyment of nature.

Tensions:

- › The balance between natural protection and recreational use will be a key consideration to the planning and design of site-specific locations.
- › There were conflicting views about whether people, cyclists, and dogs should have access to areas, and to what degree.

Opportunities:

- › Additional recreational activities and spaces including concession facilities, amenities, and activities such as star gazing, ice skating, berry picking, orienteering, gardening, space for traditional Indigenous uses, and quiet reflection.

SHARE YOUR VISION

Frequent Responses:

- › The need to accommodate different recreational uses in the River Valley and Ravine System, with an emphasis on both the protection and enjoyment of nature.
- › Respecting Indigenous relationships was identified as a vital cultural component.

Tensions:

- › The desire to balance ecological protection and remediation of previously disturbed sites with recreational use in a respectful manner was identified as a challenge for the Plan to address.

Opportunities:

- › Many visions were identified, including; visions of the protection and remediation of the natural environment, the creation of a place that is therapeutic and universally accessible, and the perpetuation of the unique natural and cultural heritage this area holds through storytelling.

PHASE 1 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Phase 1: Share Your Ideas revealed interesting, thoughtful comments from both the public and stakeholders. These comments exposed a combination of themes including the desire for:

- › Increased ecological preservation;
- › Increased access to, and enjoyment of nature;
- › Increased recreational opportunities;
- › The development of places to gather and celebrate in the System;
- › Increased connection between neighbourhoods and the System;
- › Consideration of accessibility and additional supporting infrastructure, such as washrooms.

Overall, the comments indicated that incorporating both ecological protection and remediation, and recreational uses will be a core challenge facing the Plan.

The feedback gathered over this engagement stage informed the draft vision, priorities, and preliminary policies and Reach concept plans for the Ribbon of Green SW+NE. Feedback was also used to inform both the desktop Historical Resources Overview, Recreation Assessment, and the Ecological Resources Overview.



PHASE 2: SHARE YOUR RIBBON

WHAT WE DID

Phase 2: Shape Our Ribbon, took place during November 2017 to gain further insight into the requirements for each study area, including initial policy directions, managing future land use, and proposed amenity nodes and trail network locations. Feedback gathered at this phase informed the System-wide policy development and preliminary visions for amenity nodes and primary trailheads, as well as the Land Management Classifications.

The Phase 2 public and stakeholder engagement events and activities were structured into four topics to share information about completed work to date, and collect feedback to inform the next phase of the *Ribbon of Green SW+NE* process:

- › Vision + Priorities
- › Policy Direction
- › Land Management Classifications
- › Amenity Nodes + Trail Connections

WHAT WE HEARD

VISION + PRIORITIES

Informed from the previous engagement, this engagement topic outlined a draft vision statement and list of priorities for each study area.

Participants were presented with the top vision themes for the two study areas that arose from the previous phase of engagement and were asked to provide their thoughts and feedback. This input confirmed the direction of the proposed vision and priorities, and identified any missing information.

The majority of participants strongly supported the draft visions and priorities.

POLICY DIRECTION

Using feedback from the first phase of engagement, general policies were established to direct the protection and use of the System by establishing a framework for decision making, further planning, design, programming, and management. Phase 2 participants were asked to provide feedback on these initial policy directions which were categorized into five overarching themes: Access + Trails, Visitor Experience + Recreation, Ecology, Heritage + Culture, and Management + Monitoring. This input was used to further define the policy directions and identify additional considerations to include in the *Ribbon of Green SW + NE* policies.

Overall, the general policy direction was highly supported by participants, however, tensions arose between maintaining and protecting the ecological integrity of the River Valley and Ravine System, and the desire for access and recreation. Ensuring the establishment of synergy between ecology and recreation, was identified as an essential component of the *Ribbon of Green SW + NE* moving forward.

GOALS

- › To gain feedback from stakeholders and the public about the location of the Land Management Classifications and proposed policy directions to support a dialogue about how to shape the draft concept plan for each study area
- › To spatially understand the culture, history, environment, form, character, use, recreational needs, transportation and movement needs and ecological considerations of each study area



625
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS



3 OPEN HOUSES
146 Participants

2 ENGAGE EDMONTON OPEN HOUSES
35 Participants



1 ONLINE SURVEYS
358 Participants



1 EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP
28 Participants

3 COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST WORKSHOPS
58 Participants

LAND MANAGEMENT CLASSIFICATIONS

Land Management Classifications were developed to define the physical site conditions, operations, activities, and amenities within the River Valley and Ravine System, and their level of required protection and permitted development.

In this phase of engagement, participants were asked to provide feedback on the proposed intent statement, high level policy direction, compatible uses, and appropriate facilities and infrastructure for each Land Management Classification. Overall, the classifications were highly supported, with some concerns that focused around the level of impact the proposed uses and facilities would have on the natural environment.

PRESERVATION

Most people were concerned with the ecological health of the System as a whole.

Many participants wanted to limit the number of trails throughout the Southwest Study Area, however others thought that low-impact recreation activities (such as walking and hiking) would be appropriate.

CONSERVATION

Trail Based:

In general, participants supported the direction of the Conservation Land Management Classification, however, comments identified a need for greater distinction between Preservation and Conservation. There was support for the increased provision of natural surface trails and nature-based recreation.

Natural Recreation:

Participants indicated that they would like to see additional protection of natural areas. Other comments indicated a need for more opportunities for recreation.

ACTIVE/WORKING LANDSCAPES

Intensive Recreation:

The supported recreational uses included trail use, water access (fishing, beaches, swimming), skating opportunities, and off-leash dog areas. There was also a desire to limit the creation of active recreation opportunities to specific, localized areas.

Agriculture + Horticulture:

Comments identified that future development in these areas should be minimal, and that previously disturbed sites should be restored. Other comments noted the need to conserve and protect agricultural land.

Urban Services + City-wide Attractions:

Participants were most concerned with the impacts of development and new infrastructure/attractions would have on the River Valley and Ravine System.

AMENITY NODES + TRAIL CONNECTIONS

Building on previous engagement, a high-level trail network and amenity sites that present opportunities for a higher level of use and concentration of amenities and programming were identified and presented.

Participants were provided with draft amenity node locations, site facts, and initial amenity node vision statements to help spark ideas for the appropriate experience of each area. Participants also provided general input on potential trail connections throughout both the SW and NE study areas.

TRAIL CONNECTIONS

Participants were asked to provide feedback on a proposed high-level trail network and the connections they would like to see throughout the River Valley and Ravine System, and identify specific locations for connection points into adjacent neighbourhoods. Participants also expressed their overall desire for a continuous trail network throughout the System that provides accessible trail routes, connects public transit and parking, and increases safe access to the North Saskatchewan River.

AMENITY NODES + TRAILHEADS

The information and ideas gathered in this phase of engagement for each amenity node was used to help define the vision for each amenity node and identify the appropriate types of experiences that could be considered for each area.

PHASE 2 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Overall, Phase 2: Shape Our Ribbon, collected valuable information that was incorporated into the further development of program and ecological guidance for the *Ribbon of Green SW + NE* reaches as well as system-wide policies. The main messages heard through this phase of engagement were:

- › Maintaining ecological integrity is a high priority throughout the System;
- › Increased trail access, low-impact recreation, and educational opportunities are highly desired, however they should be implemented in an ecologically sensitive way.



PHASE 3: PLAN OUR RIBBON



548
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS



3 OPEN HOUSES
245 Participants



1 ONLINE SURVEYS
286 Participants



1 EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP
17 Groups

WHAT WE DID

Phase 3: Plan Our Ribbon enabled the public and stakeholders to review and provide feedback on the Draft Plan’s Vision + Priorities, System-wide Policies, Land Management Classifications, and nine reaches. Feedback gathered during this phase informed revisions to the Draft Plan’s System-wide policies, and the Site Direction: Program Guidance section of the Plan.

The Phase 3 public and stakeholder engagement events and activities were structured into the five Draft Plan Sections for ease of information distribution and feedback collection:

- › Vision + Priorities
- › System-wide Policies
- › Land Management Classifications
- › Program Guidance
- › Implementation

WHAT WE HEARD

VISION + PRINCIPLES

Participants were presented with the overarching vision and principle statements for the River Valley and Ravine System. They were asked to provide their thoughts and feedback, which helped to clarify the statements and guide the revision of the Draft Plan.

Support:

The majority of the participants strongly supported the vision and principles. Particularly, the protection of ecological system received extremely strong support.

Tensions:

Tensions arose between those who wished to see some development in the River Valley and Ravine System for recreational opportunities and activities, and those who preferred the System to remain as natural as possible with minimal or no development.

Opportunities:

The opportunity to establish principles that complement each other and support a shared, clear vision.



GOALS

- › To present the draft plan and policies to stakeholders and the public
- › To obtain feedback to guide plan revisions, including river access opportunities, uses for amenity nodes, infrastructure and site requirements, multi-modal travel, and ecological protection

LAND MANAGEMENT CLASSIFICATIONS

Participants were asked to provide feedback on the policies outlined within each Land Management Classification and sub-classification. In general, people agreed with the direction of the Classifications, however, most people identified that protecting and preserving the ecology of the System should be the number one priority of the *Ribbon of Green SW + NE*. Opinions differed in that some suggested that no intensive recreation should be permitted in the System, whereas others were agreeable to some activities if other areas were set aside as protected ecologically sensitive areas.

PROGRAM GUIDANCE

Phase 3 participants had the opportunity to provide further direction on program guidance for each Reach within the two *Ribbon of Green SW + NE* study areas, including design ideas, trail connections, and areas for activities.

Participants left location-based comments on a series of maps to show their level of agreement on the proposed amenities and infrastructure within each reach. Comments in support of, and in disagreement with the proposed plans were split, with more supporting comments in the NE study area, and more disagreeing comments in the SW study area.

PHASE 3 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Overall, Phase 3: Plan Our Ribbon, received broad support on the direction of the Draft Plan and collected information which was used to help refine the existing policies. Feedback resulted in the addition of several new policies and adjustments to site-specific programming direction throughout the Plan.

Participants expressed that river access and water activities were highly desired, and that the trail network should be accessible, safe, and well connected to the surrounding neighbourhoods. While increased access to the *Ribbon of Green SW + NE* was desired, similar to previous engagements, a recurring message received throughout this phase of engagement identified ecological integrity as a top overall priority for the System.



PHASE 4: CONFIRM OUR RIBBON



400
TOTAL
PARTICIPANTS



3 OPEN HOUSES
237 Participants



1 ONLINE SURVEYS
138 Participants



**1 EXTERNAL
STAKEHOLDER
EVENT**
25 Participants

WHAT WE DID

Phase 4: Confirm Our Ribbon, took place in November 2018 to provide the public and stakeholders with a final opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Plan. During this fourth and final phase of engagement the public and stakeholders provided feedback on the System-wide Policies, Land Management Classifications, Program Guidance, and Implementation sections of the Draft *Ribbon of Green SW + NE*. Feedback gathered in this phase informed revisions prior to the finalization of the Plan.

The Phase 4 public and stakeholder engagement events and activities were structured into the five Plan Sections for ease of information distribution and feedback collection:

- › Vision + Priorities
- › System-wide Policies
- › Land Management Classifications
- › Program Guidance
- › Implementation

WHAT WE HEARD

VISION + PRINCIPLES

The majority of the comments received related to this section were supportive. In particular, participants approved of the Plan's Vision and Principles.

Common Findings:

- › *Variety of Trails + Connectivity*: The most frequent comments discussed the proposed trail system, focusing on the variety of trail types the system would include, and the increased connectivity they would provide to surrounding communities.
- › *Naturalize + Preserve Ecological Integrity*: The second common finding focused on the need for the preservation of the ecological integrity of the River Valley and Ravine System, maintaining natural biodiversity, and naturalization of the landscape as much as possible. Participants expressed that the maintenance of the *Ribbon of Green SW + NE* as a natural system should be a top priority for the Plan.
- › *River Access + "River as a Trail"*: The third common finding highlighted the desire to increase river access and use. Many participants wanted an increased focus to be placed on the potential "river as a trail," for both recreational purposes and as a means of improving connectivity in the North Saskatchewan River Valley.

Tensions:

- › Some stakeholders and the public prefer ecological preservation to be the highest priority of the Plan with little or no new recreational development, while others view the SW+NE areas of the System as an opportunity to expand recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

GOALS

- › To present the Draft Ribbon of Green SW + NE to stakeholders and the public
- › To gather feedback from stakeholders and the public to guide the final revisions made to the Draft Plan

SYSTEM-WIDE POLICIES

Participants were asked to provide feedback on the ten System-wide Policy sub-sections. Overall, participants agreed with the intent of the policies.

Common findings:

- › Naturalization and preservation of ecological integrity as a top priority.
- › Promote accessibility and connectivity, including the provision and clarity of wayfinding.
- › Include a variety of recreational uses.
- › Ensure Indigenous cultural representation through engagement and educational opportunities.
- › Increase the provision of public washroom facilities.

LAND MANAGEMENT CLASSIFICATIONS

Participants were asked to provide feedback on each of the three Land Management Classifications. The majority of comments received for the Land Management Classifications section were in response to the “I support this because...” prompt.

Common findings for each classification included:

- › The need for preservation of natural integrity and natural rehabilitation of disturbed areas as a high priority.
- › The requirement for improved access to and throughout the System.
- › The desire for intentional placement of large facilities and amenities.
- › The wish for increased recreational uses, including using the river as a trail.
- › Concerns highlighted a desire to increase the promotion and/or support of other City of Edmonton plans and established sustainability targets.

PROGRAM GUIDANCE

Phase 4 engagement participants were asked to provide feedback on the following reaches:

- › Cameron-Oleskiw River Valley Reach
- › Wedgewood Ravine Reach
- › Big Island + Woodbend Reach
- › The Confluence Reach
- › Whitemud Ravine Reach
- › Blackmud Ravine Reach
- › Marquis River Valley Reach
- › Horsehills Creek Ravine Reach
- › Edmonton East Reach

Overall, the majority of comments indicated support for the Program Guidance outlined in the Draft Plan.

Common Findings:

- › Naturalize and preserve ecological integrity, including the protection of wildlife.
- › Establish a connected and accessible trail network, that is comprised of a variety of trail types.
- › Establish and/or maintain river access and use
- › Improve existing infrastructure.
- › Caution towards over development or commercialization

IMPLEMENTATION

Participants were asked to provide feedback to help refine the Implementation section for the final *Ribbon of Green SW + NE*.

Participants appreciated the long-term timeline of the Implementation actions, as well as the incorporation of monitoring and evaluation actions. Concerns from participants tended to focus on clarifying the land acquisition strategy and establishing a realistic and firm implementation timeline. Overall, participants were supportive of the direction of this section.

Common Findings:

- › *Overall Support:* Comments of general support included “Covers all areas of implementation I can think of,” and “I am glad to see there is a plan and that the *Ribbon of Green [SW + NE]* is not just some vision to do someday.”
- › *Develop a Specific Timeline:* The development of a specific, realistic, and carefully considered timeline was the second most common finding.
- › *Confirm Land Acquisition Strategy:* Comments indicated that participants would like to see the establishment of a clear land acquisition for the *Ribbon of Green SW + NE Plan*.
- › *Monitoring + Evaluation:* Participants also expressed their support for the monitoring and evaluation policies outlined in this section.

PHASE 4 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

The feedback and comments provided for the Daft Plan sections and sub-sections were used to inform the final version of the *Ribbon of Green SW + NE*. Recurring findings that arose throughout every section included:

- › Participants expressed that low-impact recreational uses, river access, and water activities, along with supporting amenities are highly desired.
- › There is overwhelming support for a trail network that is well connected to surrounding neighbourhoods, accessible whenever feasible, and comprised of a variety of trail types (from natural to paved trails).
- › Similar to previous phases of engagement, the number one recurring message received from the public and stakeholders indicated that while access to the System is important and desired, the preservation of ecological integrity should be a priority for future planning and management within the River Valley and Ravine System.

