What We Heard Report

53 Avenue Reconstruction from Whitemud Ramps to 141 Street

Contact information
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SHARE YOUR VOICE SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton
SHARE YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

This is your city.
We welcome your input on how we maintain, grow and build Edmonton.
We believe engagement leads to better decision-making.
We are committed to reaching out to our diverse communities in thoughtful and meaningful ways.
We want to understand your perspectives and build trusting relationships with you.
We will show you how you help influence City decisions.
Share your voice with us and shape our city.

Increasing influence of the public

ADVISE
The public is consulted by the City to share feedback and perspectives.

REFINE
The public is involved by the City to adapt and adjust approaches.

CREATE
The public collaborates with the City to develop and build solutions. This can include community initiated engagement.

DETERMINE
The public is empowered to make decisions directly or on behalf of the City.

Communication
Project Management | Decision Making | Relationships | Capacity Building | Leadership Development
PROJECT OVERVIEW

PROJECT/INITIATIVE BACKGROUND

The City of Edmonton’s Transportation Planning and Design (TPD) section is working on the design for the reconstruction of 53 Avenue, between Whitemud Drive and 141 Street. This project is part of the City’s Neighbourhood Renewal Program and aims to maintain the safety and efficiency of 53 Avenue, including the roadway, sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, and also improve the use for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. The need to reconstruct 53 Avenue is due to the poor condition of the pavement and sidewalks.

The 53 Avenue Reconstruction project will include:

- Repaving the road and replacing curbs, sidewalks and streetlights
- Preserving existing trees along the median
- New sidewalk and shared-use path (SUP)
- New sidewalks where there were previously no sidewalks

HOW WILL THIS IMPACT RESIDENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS?

New shared-use paths and sidewalks on City right of way are being considered as part of the reconstruction. Construction of a shared-use path and sidewalk may impact landscaping at homes along 53 Avenue that have landscaping on City right-of-way.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>53 Avenue from Whitemud Ramps to 141 Street</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>October 1—November 26, 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Resident Interviews: On location at residents’ homes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Stakeholder Interviews: Riverbend Community League, Brookside Elementary School, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints</td>
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<td>Public Drop-in: Brookside Community Hall</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Project Engineer</td>
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<td>Transportation Planning &amp; Design</td>
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<td>Integrated Infrastructure Services</td>
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<td>780-944-5552 OFFICE</td>
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<td>City of Edmonton</td>
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<td>12th Floor Edmonton Tower</td>
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<td>10111 104 Avenue NW</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of public engagement</th>
<th>[ADVISE][REFINE][CREATE][DECIDE]</th>
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| Description | The public engagement was held to gather insights and perspectives on the 53 Avenue Reconstruction from the viewpoint of residents and stakeholders. The Project Team used the input to REFINE the initial preliminary plan. |
SUMMARY

53 Avenue from Whitemud Ramps to 142 Street

The purpose of public engagement for the 53 Avenue Reconstruction was to gather input on the reconstruction from the viewpoint of residents and stakeholders. The Project Team recognized that the construction of a sidewalk or shared-use path (SUP) in front of homes and institutions might raise some concerns and questions. They wanted to meet initially with residents and stakeholders who were directly impacted by the proposed changes to discuss the suggested plan and hear their insights and perspectives. The City wanted to explore ways that could minimize any impacts of the design features proposed in the preliminary design.

The Project Team used the input collected from one-on-one meetings with residents and stakeholders along 53 Avenue to REFINE the initial preliminary plan. The refined plan was then presented at a Drop-in session for community members.

The engagement resulted in significant changes made by the project team to the preliminary plan.

WHAT WAS DONE

The public engagement included and encouraged participation that reflects Edmonton's diverse population through discussions with a religious group whose house of worship was along the avenue, discussions with the local school official representing diverse families and children, as well as one-one-conversations with residents along 53 Avenue.

The communications activities used to raise awareness of and promote the public engagement process/activities included:

- Hand delivered letters to stakeholders and property owners to arrange interviews
- Follow up letters outlining changes to the preliminary plan as a result of residents input, and invitation to the drop-in session
- Personal emails to residents
• Project website
• Signage along 53 Avenue and at Riverbend Community League
• Posting the drop-in info session on the Communication and Engagement Calendar on the City’s website from November 13, 2019 to the date of the Drop in session.

The following **public engagement opportunities** were held:

• One presentation and small group discussion with Riverbend Community League
• Meetings with representatives from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Brookside Elementary School
• One-on-one interviews at the homes/front yards with 15 of the 19 property owners (78%), of residents along 53 Avenue
• A Drop-in session on November 26 for residents, stakeholders and community members. 83 people attended.

The **one-on-one interviews** revealed the following:

• Support for the replacement of existing sidewalks
• Support for a shared-use path from Whitemud ramps to 143 Street
• Concern for the impact that a shared-use path with boulevard feature from 143 Street to 141 Street would have on mature trees, landscaping and hardscaping on residents’ properties
• Strong opposition to constructing a sidewalk on the south side of 53 Avenue where none currently exists. The opposition had three themes:
  o Impact on mature trees and landscaping
  o No need for the ‘sidewalk to nowhere’, therefore a waste of money
  o Construction noise and disturbance

The **Drop-in session** identified the following:

• Some participants felt the entire community should have been engaged at the same time the residents along 53 Avenue were engaged. They thought the drop-in engagement should have been better advertised in the community
• Strong opposition to constructing a sidewalk on the south side of 53 Avenue where none currently exists. Those opposed felt that the addition of a sidewalk was a waste of money.
- Relief from residents living on the north side of 53 Avenue that the previously proposed shared-use path from 143 Street to 141 Street was not going ahead; instead a 2.3 metre sidewalk would be constructed. Most people supported the wider sidewalk while a few were adamantly opposed to the width of the sidewalk.
- The intersection at the 4-way Stop at 143 Street was identified as dangerous, with people supporting changes to increase both pedestrian and driver safety.
- Parking along 53 Avenue approaching the bus stop at the Whitemud ramp is important to the community and should be maintained.
- Some residents felt intimidated by other residents who they viewed as vocal and strident in their approach.

The engagement resulted in significant changes made by the project team to the preliminary plan. More details can be found in the following pages.

ENGAGEMENT RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The project team met with all three stakeholder groups, Brookside School, Jesus Christ Church of Latter-Day Saints (Riverbend Stake) and the Riverbend Community League. They also conducted one-on-one interviews with 15 out of 19 property owners along 53 Avenue.

STAKEHOLDER VIEWPOINTS

Brookside Elementary School expressed strong support for the project. Groups of students walk to the ravine several times a week from the school to participate in nature, science and art programs in the ravine. A shared-use path and sidewalk on the north side of 53 Avenue would prevent students from walking on the roadway, which was highly desirable. A shared-use path would encourage children to ride their bikes and increase walkability for parents with young families.

The school identified that the existing roadway width at the 4-way stop at 53 Avenue and 143 Street presents a safety concern as children frequently cross the street at that location. The current roadway configuration of two travel lanes plus a turning lane means that students cross six lanes of vehicle traffic to cross a roadway. The school respectfully requested that the project team examine alternatives that would make crossing the roadway safer for school children and their families.
The Jesus Christ Church of Latter-Day Saints expressed their support for the project, particularly the reconstruction of sidewalks in the areas. During major church functions, church members often park in the community and walk to the church or temple. Replacing the existing narrow and broken sidewalks with a new wider sidewalk would increase safety and walkability for those with strollers, walkers, and other mobility issues.

The Riverbend Community League hosted a presentation by the project team at one of its regular meetings. Comments indicated agreement with in-person interviews followed by a drop-in session as an engagement plan.

RESIDENTS’ VIEWPOINTS

Most residents were shocked and dismayed to learn that the City right-of-way extended a significant distance into what they had considered their ‘front yard’. Mature trees on residents’ property often extended into the City right-of-way. Over the years, residents also added trees, shrubs, beds and other landscaping features on City right-of-way; this includes infrastructure such as bordered planter beds, brick retaining walls, sprinkler systems and interlocking brick sidewalks.

All residents were concerned about the impact the proposed changes would have on their property. Most were unaware that what they considered ‘their property’ was City of Edmonton right of way.

Residents outlined that this was a highly desirable neighborhood; many have lived in the community for over 15 years. Residents reported pride of ownership which was especially noticeable through landscaping and well-maintained trees.

Shared-use path on the north side of 53 Avenue

Most people understood the need for a shared-use path to link into the Bike Plan. Some supported a shared-use path in front of their home, as long as the City did not include a boulevard, which would result in the shared-use path extending a few metres into the area that was adjacent to their property line. An SUP without the boulevard would extend less than a metre into the City right-of-way and where the residents previously considered their front lawn. This was preferable to the shared use path with the boulevard. Residents liked the idea that the City would be responsible for shoveling the shared-use path in winter, although some did not trust the City’s ability to maintain the shared use path, citing other examples of poor maintenance in the community. Others did not support the idea of a shared use path, indicating that cyclists would speed by, making it unsafe for pedestrians.
They also felt a shared use path, even without the boulevard, would take up too much of the city-right-of-way, and impact the look and feel of their front yard.

I don't mind the shared use path if the boulevard is NOT included.

My whole yard and driveway would disappear.

I support this if the City maintains it. It would be nice to have a wider area for kids to ride bikes on.

Sidewalk Replacement

All respondents supported the construction of new sidewalks and outlined that the current condition of the sidewalks presented tripping hazards, were dangerous and in several instances, unusable. In some cases, homeowners were concerned about the impact that a wider sidewalk would have on their trees and landscaping. They suggested that the City consider building the wider sidewalk into the roadway rather than on City right-of-way adjacent to residents’ property.

I understand and appreciate that the city wishes to improve the sidewalk along the south side of 53 Avenue but moving the sidewalk and road closer to my property needs to be reviewed.

My driveway would be too steep to be useable and I would lose my hedge. The road is wide enough for the sidewalk to be built into the roadway rather than towards our house.

New sidewalks are long overdue! They are a safety hazard.

Missing link sidewalks:
Constructing sidewalks where none currently exist was not well received by residents who at present do not have a sidewalk in front of their homes. They thought the proposed sidewalks were a waste of money, and totally unnecessary particularly in tough economic times.

I am appalled that the city is considering wasting tax dollars building an unnecessary sidewalk across my property. A sidewalk that ends at 141 Street will be of no use to anyone.

I feel 100% AGAINST having the dead end/cul de sac part of 53 Ave proposed sidewalk reconstruction. I would like this area to be left alone.
There currently are NO sidewalks and it should be left as is. There is no need. No one would use them.

Residents were particularly concerned about the impact on mature trees and landscaping if a sidewalk were to be constructed.

“Sidewalk to nowhere” was a term frequently used to express the residents view that:

- Pedestrian traffic was almost nonexistent, therefore no sidewalk was necessary
- Currently, if people want to walk on the sidewalk, they simply cross the road and use the existing sidewalk on the north side of the street.
- The street ends in a cul-de-sac and is not well traveled by car or foot traffic. The sidewalk would not connect to anything but the few houses along the avenue.
- The area that becomes leads into a cul-de-sac from 142 Street is distinct from the rest of the road and should be treated as a separate part of the road.

Residents along 53 Avenue did not accept that new standards and guidelines provide a reasonable explanation for installing sidewalks where none currently exist.

Your justification seems to be that most streets have sidewalks. But our Avenue is special precisely because it dead ends with no outlet to the south.

Universal standards are not applicable in every situation. This block does not warrant the standards that may apply to a busier street, or one with heavy pedestrian traffic. The standards don’t apply.

Traffic through the Area

Residents reported that although there was not a great deal of traffic along 53 Avenue, there were distinct incidences of running the stop sign, speeding and stunting in the cul-de-sac. They explained that drivers who are backed up in traffic on Whitemud freeway mistakenly think that 53 Avenue is a through road and speed as a shortcut route, only to find themselves at a dead end. Two cars at high speed went over the embankment and required extensive towing operations.

We’d like it if you could slow speeds on this road. The winter is crazy—people use this cul-de-sac for spinning donuts and just crazy driving.
Impact on Parking along 53 Avenue

Some residents were concerned that parking along 53 Avenue approaching the Whitemud exit ramp would be impacted by the changes. They reported that residents in the area use that stretch of roadway as in informal ‘Park and Ride’ as they catch the bus at the bus stop at 53 Avenue and Whitemud ramp. Residents predict that the new Bus Network Redesign, which removes bus service into the community will result in more cars parking along the roadway. While most people support parking on the street in front of the park, one resident was concerned that an increased parking demand would result in people parking on the road in front of their home.

DROP IN SESSION

Once the Project Team revised the plans based on the interviews with stakeholders and property owners along 53 Avenue, a drop-in session was held for members of the community. Over 80 people attended the drop-in session to review project boards, note their comments on roll out maps, and offer their feedback to notetakers.

The Engagement Process

While most people were appreciative of the opportunity to offer their input into the revised plans, several people disagreed with the engagement process. They felt that the entire community should have been engaged on the original design and at the same time as the individual residents and stakeholders were consulted.

*We were not consulted. Just because people who live on the route were consulted, it doesn’t mean others won’t be impacted.*

*Others in the community were not asked for their opinions.*

Others agreed with the two-step approach of doing detailed consultation with residents directly impacted by road reconstruction, followed by a general consultation with the community showing the revised plan that was a result of residents input.
I’d be very nervous if entire community was asked about what is going on in front of my house. Road reconstruction will not change the traffic patterns of people who don’t live on 53 Avenue. Everything will be exactly the same for them.

We’re the ones impacted. (living along 53 Avenue)
We really appreciate how much work the City did in taking the time to really talk with us.

The way this was done makes perfect sense. Make the changes that impact the residents first and then talk to the rest of us about more general changes.

A few people also thought that there needed to be more signage and larger signage for the meeting. They suggested that a mailbox drop should have been done for the entire Brookside community.

Some people that were against changes were seen as very vocal and strident in their viewpoints by others attending the drop-in. This created discomfort among those who agreed with many aspects of the project but were reluctant to share their opinions on sticky notes on maps.

I came early to avoid the noisy ones. They don’t speak for the community.
We welcome a new sidewalk on north side

Negative forces showed up and dominated the meeting. The people who live on 53 Avenue were consulted because we will have the most impact to our properties. Other issues such as losing transit and lot splitting made the negative forces take out their anger on 53 Ave. I thought the City made good changes and suggestions based on the meetings they had with us who live on 53 Ave. It was tough to agree with the good work the city did because we would get yelled at by our neighbors.

I live on the north side of 53 Avenue. We like the idea of a wider sidewalk.
Thank you for listening re shared use path impact on property.

I have no trouble with wider sidewalk if it doesn’t impact my property.
I don’t like to wade in with everyone.
Construction and Project Fatigue

Residents acknowledged they were frustrated by the amount of construction that had impacted their community in the last few years. EPCOR projects, Telus fibre optic installation, Fox Drive construction, bridge replacement, ravine bridge upgrades and Trans Mountain work, etc. all created upheaval in the neighbourhood. In addition, many of the projects used the area east of 141 Street as a staging area, with trucks and construction materials being stored in the cul-de-sac.

There were other projects being discussed or recently approved that caused concern and uncertainty among residents. Bus Network Redesign, lot splitting, and the potential pedestrian bridge from 142 Street to Brookview created concern among residents. Residents wondered when the pedestrian bridge would be introduced to the community, and where Neighbourhood Renewal fit into the overall picture. Residents explained that their response to the 53 Avenue Reconstruction discussions were influenced by other forces and factors at play in the community.

Replacing Existing Sidewalks with Wider Sidewalks

The story boards and project team outlined the changes that had been made to the preliminary design as a result of the discussions with residents along the route.

Two primary changes were made in areas that currently have existing sidewalks.

- Existing sidewalks would be replaced with 1.5 metre sidewalks. In some instances, the sidewalks would be built into the road right of way to avoid impacts on residents’ properties.

- The shared use path was adjusted because the original design would have significant impact on the look and feel of residents’ properties. The shared-use path was substituted for a new 2.3 metre sidewalk.

A few people thought that any replacement of existing sidewalks was a ‘frivolous use of taxpayers' money’. These residents suggested that the sidewalks were seldom used because ‘we are a car community.’ They felt that the roadway in its current condition was acceptable and any construction would be a waste of money.

Most people understood the need for new sidewalks, citing several examples of areas that were dangerous for walking or riding bikes.
Currently kids cannot ride on the sidewalk – too rough!

New design standards have been implemented since the construction of the existing sidewalks which are narrow and no longer meet today’s requirements. The width of the sidewalks, particularly the recommended 2.3 metre sidewalk on the north side of 53 Avenue, drew a great deal of discussion.

Some people were strongly opposed to the wider sidewalk, citing the need for increased snow shoveling, and no pedestrian need for a wide sidewalk. They felt that the new design standards should be overturned.

Make me happy – ignore design standards and replace sidewalks to the same width as it is now.

Sidewalk is too wide. Keep as is.

There is no one who uses a walker or wheelchair on this street. No need for this width.

Don’t think foot traffic needs wider sidewalks. Vehicle traffic is a priority.

The majority of people supported the wider sidewalk and disagreed with those who felt the sidewalk was too wide.

Disagree with this (above) comment (on sticky note). Like the wider sidewalk. Can push a stroller and walk with another child. Currently too narrow

I could walk with my mother and her walker if sidewalk is wider. Now she walks on the sidewalk, I walk on the road.

Can’t walk on current sidewalk with dog and husband. Too narrow. Like the wider sidewalk.

I agree with changes except for new sidewalks with people who don’t have them now.

Others were happy that the original design of the shared-use path that would have significant impact on their properties was modified.
Parking along 53 Avenue leading to Bus Stop

Participants identified that parking along 53 Avenue would increase as transit users lost bus stops in the community. People wanted to ensure that the parking was maintained along 53 Avenue for those who used transit to commute.

Maintain parking at side of road to facilitate transit use

Buses are leaving our neighbourhood.

Parking on 53rd Avenue will be even more important to keep.

Participants were concerned that the proposed roadway design would reduce traffic to one lane approaching the Whitemud ramp. They thought that this would increase congestion as well as impact parking along the avenue.

Narrowing the road will make it too slow and congested especially going to the Whitemud. When people park this will really be down to one lane.

Not sufficient, it will cause traffic backlog. Can’t lose this parking.

Because we’re using it as parking, widen the road (approaching the ramp for bus).

Proposed approach meets the standard for City guidelines but not common sense.

Remove Turning Lane at Four Way Stop

The intersection at 143 Street and 53 Avenue was identified as dangerous by most participants.

This is a dangerous intersection. People run 4-way stop all the time. Stop sign visibility is an issue today. Will changes help with this?

A few people wanted to increase driver’s ability to turn left by putting in signal lights, believing that ‘car traffic should have priority’.
Leave as is. Just add signal lights

The majority of participants were interested in increasing the safety of the intersection and thought that removing the turning lane would contribute to that goal. They offered additional suggestions to increase the visibility of the intersection and safety of pedestrians.

Stop sign is not big enough. Add red reflectors

People – drivers, cyclists need to actually stop at the 4 way.
Elevated crosswalk like Greenfield?

Add rumble strips and flashing lights.

Can we put a flasher on the stop sign to make it more eye-catching?

Shared-Use Path

Some people assumed that the shared-use path was separated cycling infrastructure with barriers to divide cyclists from the roadway. They were relieved to learn a shared-use path was a 3-metre-wide shared-use path with boulevard green space from 143 Street to Whitemud Drive, adjacent to Brookside Park and would not interfere with the roadway. While they liked a shared-use path in this location, they doubted whether serious cyclists would use it or that the City would maintain it.

While some liked the idea, most residents who lived along 53 Avenue that included the shared-use path in the original design were grateful that the design was changed based on their feedback.

Shared use path—like this idea. Wish it went to ravine

Thx for eliminating SUP in front of house. I support the idea of the wider sidewalk

I feel heard on shared use path.
New Sidewalks for Missing Links

Most participants were not in favour of new sidewalks in areas that currently had no sidewalks.

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You plan on thievery. We see the practicality.

A sidewalk is not necessary based on current use.

Lived here for 30 years. No sidewalk needed. Waste of taxpayers $$$

The road is perfectly fine to walk on. Case of the tail wagging the dog. These homeowners do NOT want sidewalks in front of their property. Waste of $$$

Frivolous use of tax money to build an unnecessary sidewalk which residents + City will need to maintain in future

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While many continued to express concerns about the sidewalk, a few were also supportive of it and appreciated how it could improve walkability and safety in the neighborhood.

AS A RESULT, WHAT HAS CHANGED IN THE PROJECT?

When this reconstruction project was initiated earlier this year, the City’s project team identified the opportunity to consider minor modifications to the roadway to improve the safety and efficiency for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. The City’s Neighbourhood Renewal program, approved every four years by Edmonton’s City Council, provides funding through property taxes for the reconstruction of roadways in the City and for minor upgrades to improve livability, connectivity and walkability. There would be no additional costs to the residents along 53 Avenue resulting from the recommended road changes.

During the development of the refined plan shared at the drop in on November 26, the project team considered the feedback shared by residents and stakeholders in October and worked to balance this input with the City’s policies and technical requirements. There were several significant changes made to the original design.
## WHAT CHANGED AS A RESULT?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initially Proposed: Shared-Use Path (SUP) with boulevard from Whitemud Ramps to 141 Street</th>
<th>What We Heard</th>
<th>What We Did</th>
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| A 2-metre-wide boulevard green space and 3-metre wide shared-use path was shown on the north side of the avenue from 141 Street to Whitemud Drive | This would have a significant impact on existing landscaping, particularly mature trees and some hardscaping like sidewalks, driveways and a retaining wall | The plan has been refined to completely avoid any residential front landscaping. The refined plan proposes:  
- A 2.3-metre-wide sidewalk on the north side of 53 Avenue between 141 Street and 143 Street,  
- A 3-metre-wide shared-use path with boulevard green space from 143 Street to Whitemud Drive, adjacent to Brookside Park |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initially Proposed: Missing sidewalk connection (south side of 53 Avenue, east of 142 Street):</th>
<th>What We Heard</th>
<th>What We Did</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 2.3 metre-wide sidewalk</td>
<td>While many residents shared that they do not think a sidewalk is necessary, if constructed, it should be designed in a way that has limited impact on front yard landscaping.</td>
<td>The design has been adjusted to a 1.5-metre-wide sidewalk, having minimal impact on the adjacent properties. Although narrower, the proposed sidewalk will still enhance walkability and accessibility of the area and will improve safety for pedestrians travelling along the corridor</td>
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<th>Initially Proposed: New Sidewalks to Replace existing Sidewalks</th>
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<tr>
<td>Replace existing sidewalks by 1.8 metre sidewalks.</td>
<td>In some instances, the design caused disruption to private landscaping and driveways on public right of way in residents' front yards.</td>
<td>The design was adjusted to move further into the road allowance to avoid the impact to landscaping.</td>
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<td>Initially Proposed: Narrow the width of the roadway</td>
<td>What We Heard</td>
<td>What We Did</td>
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<td>Narrow the width of 53 Avenue to meet current City standards</td>
<td>Motorists use 53 Avenue as a short-cut; often speeding to the end of the avenue. Drivers performing unsafe maneuvers at the cul-de-sac Traffic volumes are very low.</td>
<td>New design proposes to maintain a narrower roadway and extends the existing median east of 141 Street to discourage speeding along the road. Removed the left turning lane at the 4 way stop on 143 Street. There will still be a through lane for motorists who are not turning left.</td>
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NEXT STEPS

Citizens can continue to be involved with the 53 Avenue Reconstruction Project by following the website at [edmonton.ca/53AvenueReconstruction](http://edmonton.ca/53AvenueReconstruction).

Prior to construction, the Construction Manager will be in contact with residents to discuss construction preferences and approaches.

**Residents can also contact the project manager:**
Alejandro Quijano M.Sc., P.Eng.
Project Engineer
Transportation Planning & Design
Integrated Infrastructure Services  |  Infrastructure Planning & Design

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_Thank you for participating in sharing your voice and shaping our city._
For more information on City of Edmonton public engagement, please visit [www.edmonton.ca/publicengagement](http://www.edmonton.ca/publicengagement)