

SHARE YOUR VOICE  
SHAPE OUR CITY

# What We Heard (and What We Did) Report Riverdale Public Engagement



*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.*

## Acknowledgement

We'd like to acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of Treaty 6 Territory and the Traditional Metis homeland Region IV.

We acknowledge the diverse Indigenous peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries from First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and now settlers from around the world.

Together we call upon all of our collective honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.

We would also like to thank the Edmontonians from the community of Riverdale who participated in the engagement sessions. Contributions from the Riverdale residents are greatly appreciated. It is our intent that you see your values and ideas reflected in these pages.

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## Riverdale Five City-owned Lots Public Engagement Public Engagement Process March 2019

### Background

On April 30, 2018 Executive Committee directed City Administration to:  
“provide a report on options and feasibility for affordable housing, in consultation with the community and affordable housing providers, on the Riverdale City-owned site outlined in the April 30, 2018, Financial and Corporate Services report CR\_5600.”

This report relates only to surplus, City-owned land in Riverdale located at 92 Street and 102 Avenue. As part of report preparation, Administration consulted with Riverdale residents. The Riverdale community is very engaged, with multiple stakeholder groups representing a variety of opinions about affordable housing feasibility and options.

<b>Name</b> <b>Date</b> <b>Location</b>	Riverdale Five City-owned Lots Public Engagement Process January 26–Information Session, Riverdale Community League building February 2–Public Engagement Session, Riverdale Community League building February 2 to 9–Online Survey
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<b>Category on the public engagement spectrum</b>	<div> <div>ADVISE</div> <div>REFINE</div> <div>CREATE</div> <div>DECIDE</div> </div>
<b>Description</b>	Public engagement was held to advise specific areas of an Expression of Interest that asks market and non-market developers if affordable housing is feasible for this surplus land, if so, what affordable housing options exist.

## Summary

The public engagement process consisted of three activities:

1. Public Information Session

On January 26, 2019, an information session was held at the Riverdale Community League. The purpose was to ensure residents were prepared for the February 2 engagement session; were well equipped and prepared to provide input on the Expression of Interest; adequately understood the topic and to dispel myths and misinformation. Techniques included a gallery walk of poster boards with information, a support team and City subject matter experts available to answer questions and opportunities to provide comments and feedback.



2. Public Engagement Session

On February 2, 2019, an in-person, facilitated full day public engagement session was held at the Riverdale Community League. The purpose was to gather input from the residents of Riverdale on specific aspects of an Expression of Interest. Techniques included facilitated conversations, brainstorming and a consensus workshop.



3. Online Survey: A six-question survey was created to ensure that residents who could not attend the February 2 public engagement session had the opportunity to provide their input. This survey was live from February 2, 2019 to February 9, 2019 and was accessed through an open link on the City's website.

**Online Survey**  
**February 2-9, 2019**

**152**  **Participants**

Input received was used to advise the following aspects of the Expression of Interest:

1. Welcome to Riverdale/Community Endorsement Letter – a letter from the community to potential non-profit housing providers, builders and developers inviting them to consider building in Riverdale.
2. Profile of Riverdale – a description of the community which includes history, present day description, future vision and highlight community amenities..
3. List of Builders to receive the Expression of Interest. Residents suggested 24 housing providers and developers to receive the Expression of Interest.

It is important to note that public engagement on the sale of City-owned land is not a regular practice, as provincial legislation provides the City the same property rights as a private land owner to dispose of land as they deem necessary.



## Public Engagement Preparation

In the fall of 2018, the City retained an external public engagement consultant to support the planned public engagement process outlined in the April 2018 Executive Committee motion. Following Administration's public engagement strategy for the project, the consultant drafted and implemented a Public Engagement Plan.

### Connecting with the Community - The Informal Planning Group

City staff orientated the consultant to the planned public engagement process. Through this orientation, the City provided a list of stakeholders. This information, combined with the public engagement consultants research, identified both formal and informal community leadership.

The public engagement consultant's first contact was through the formal and informal community leadership. Community leaders were asked to provide the names of people who might be interested in participating in an informal planning group. It was requested that these individuals refrain from promoting their personal perspective and focus on providing the following:

1. Assist in introducing the public engagement process to the Riverdale community and help ensure that all interested parties, groups and perspectives had the opportunity to participate;
2. Input for consideration in the design of engagement activities; and
3. Assist the project team's understanding of what residents communicated over the course of the public engagement process.

After considering the people put forward, six residents were invited to volunteer on the short-term, limited focus informal planning group. This informal planning group helped the public engagement consultant understand where residents were missing information, confused about City policy and unclear about terms and definitions.

### Securing a Neutral Location for Engagement

Identifying and securing an appropriate venue for the information and public engagement sessions in Riverdale was a significant challenge. It was important the City demonstrate neutrality in this engagement process and show that all voices held equal weight. After a protracted attempt to access a venue that was not linked to any particular stakeholder group, it was decided to hold the meetings at the Riverdale Community League.

### Getting the Word Out - Communication Activities

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

- Save the Date Poster
- Save the Date Insert in the Riverdalian Newsletter
- Community e-Newsletter



- Social Media posts
- Road Signs
- Letter of Invitation – Canada Post addressed mail out to every Riverdale resident
- Saturday January 26, 2019 Poster Board Invitation to Public Engagement Session on February 2, 2019
- City of Edmonton website [https://www.edmonton.ca/projects\\_plans/riverdale-surplus-site.aspx](https://www.edmonton.ca/projects_plans/riverdale-surplus-site.aspx)
- City of Edmonton Engagement Calendar

## Getting the Community Ready to Engage - January 26, 2019 Public Information Session

On Saturday January 26, a public information session was held in order to prepare the community for the February 2 2019 public engagement session. Two sessions were held; one in the morning and one in the afternoon, with overlap to allow residents to connect with their neighbours, build relationships and share perspectives.

The aims of this session were to:

- Provide relevant information to the residents of Riverdale on the surplus City-owned Lots at 92 Street and 102 Avenue;
- Provide an opportunity for the residents of Riverdale to indicate where more information may be required; and
- Provide an opportunity for the residents of Riverdale to connect with their neighbours and City staff.

Upon entering the meeting room, residents were welcomed by a member of the public engagement team and provided with an overview of the four topic areas: Terms & Definitions, City Processes & Constraints, The Lots and Housing Options as well as the public engagement process. City staff and the facilitation team were available at each topic area to provide support as residents moved through the information. At each of the four topic areas, residents were invited to write down their comments and make additional requests for information.

A site tour of the five City-owned lots was offered to those who attended the information sessions. No residents attending the session took this opportunity.

The January 26 information sessions were overlapped to allow residents time to connect with each other. The intent of this element was to assist residents in developing a shared understanding of the context on the sites and the next steps. An area was provided for residents to converse with their neighbours and City staff over beverages and food. This area provided an environment conducive to a civil discourse between residents and City staff. As one resident commented, "The setting/staging by Facilitation Team – facilitator is excellent – creating a warm, inviting, comfortable space to be in, to stay for awhile. Really smart and helpful. And food 'breaking bread' together creates a kind of relaxation that allows for less tension in a setting with an issue which is divisive."

A family-friendly area with activities was provided to encourage families with young children to attend. The event was catered by the neighbourhood eating establishment Little Brick Café and General Store.

A poster board was presented to inform residents of the February 2 public engagement session and of the specific elements of the Expression of Interest they would be asked for input on.

At the end of the information sessions, residents were provided an opportunity to reflect individually on what

they read, heard and experienced during their gallery walk. They were provided post-it notes and markers to jot down their responses to questions.

## Requests for Additional Information

All residents' comments and requests for additional information were recorded, compiled and presented to the City, with the only changes made to correct spelling for clarity. Administration provided responses to some of the key requests for information during the February 2 public engagement session.

## Securing Community Input - February 2, 2019 Public Engagement Session

The second activity was a public engagement session held on February 2, 2019 at the Riverdale Community League. At this session, residents of Riverdale provided input on specific elements of the Expression of Interest with the knowledge that their feedback would be used by the City to shape the document.

The format of this public engagement session consisted of facilitated individual, small and large group brainstorming, a consensus workshop and focused conversations.

### Opening

The public engagement session was opened with an Acknowledgment of Traditional Lands. A City representative welcomed residents to the session and invited their input. The external public engagement consultant led the residents through the agenda.

### Working Together: Rules of Engagement

The first agenda item focused on how those in the room – residents, City staff and the public engagement team – would work together. Rules of Engagement were co-created. This trust-building activity created a neutral space to explore the agenda items and a sense of shared ownership of the outcomes.

### Expression of Interest

City staff presented an overview of the Expression of Interest and what it should accomplish. Residents were able to see how their input would advise the Expression of Interest. Administration provided responses to a few of the key issues for information requested during the January 26, 2019 Information Session.

### Perspective Group Brainstorming

A perspectives group brainstorming session was facilitated to encourage residents to see the issue from a perspective other than their own. A debriefing of the event provided residents with the opportunity for insights about themselves and their community.

### Welcome to Riverdale/Community Endorsement Letter

The Welcome to Riverdale/Community Endorsement Letter is the first item in the Expression of Interest and invites potential housing providers, builders and developers to consider building on the five City-owned lots in

Riverdale. This letter highlights the best of Riverdale from residents' perspectives, why people would want to live here, what the community has to offer residents, why a builder would want to consider a project in the community and some key aspects of what the community might like to see in a project, as well as some insights into how the builder might engage. In a workshop format, Riverdale residents were invited to provide input on what they would like to see in this Welcome to Riverdale letter. In the conversation closing off this workshop, residents were asked to identify three Riverdale features that a potential housing providers, builders and developers should consider promoting and enhancing.

At the February 2 session, those present were asked if they agreed that the public engagement consultant would draft the Welcome to Riverdale letter based on what was heard in the in-person engagement session and the online survey. Residents present answered in the affirmative.

A family-friendly area with activities was provided to reduce barriers to participation and to encourage families to attend. The event was catered by the neighbourhood eating establishment Little Brick Café and General Store.

## Profile of Riverdale

Residents were offered the opportunity to provide input on the Expression of Interest - Profile of Riverdale. This profile is a description of Riverdale that would include history, present day description, future vision, and highlight community amenities. .

## Suggested Housing Providers, Builders and Developers

Residents were invited to provide the names of housing providers, builders and developers that the City could invite to respond to the Expression of Interest.

## Pictures and/or Images to Illustrate Riverdale

The City sought input from residents on potential pictures of Riverdale that could be used in the Expression of Interest.

## Participant Feedback

After a conversation to debrief the day, residents were invited to complete the City's Public Engagement Participant Survey.

## Documenting Residents' Advice

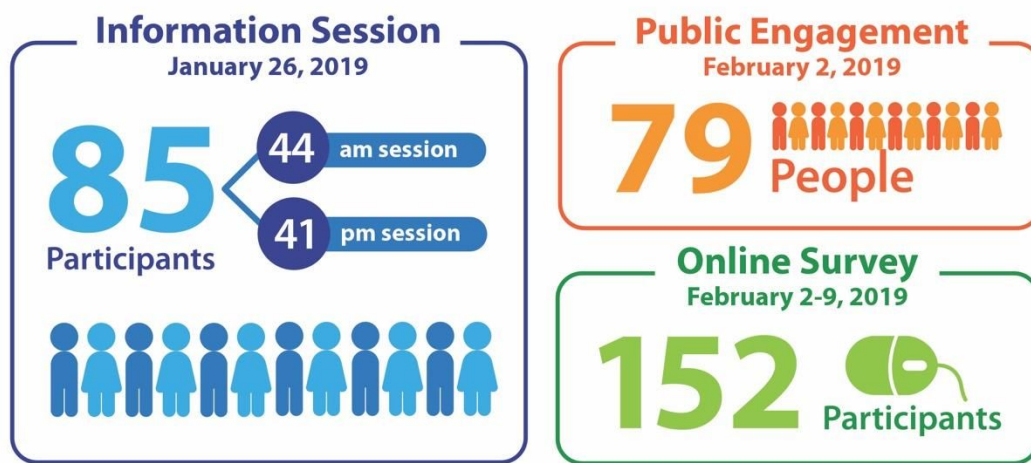
All of the input provided by the community that were recorded during this session were compiled into a document and provided to the City, with the only changes made to correct spelling for clarity.

## Reducing Barriers to Participation - Online Survey

An online survey was the third public engagement activity on the surplus City-owned land. An online survey was offered in order to reduce potential barriers to participation and provide an opportunity for as many residents of Riverdale as possible to provide input. The open link survey was developed by the public engagement consultant and the City's Corporate Research team, and hosted on the City's website. The survey was created following the agenda of the February 2, 2019 in-person session.

## Findings

**Participant results:** According to the federal census, Riverdale's total population is 2,040. Some participation statistics are highlighted below.



### What we heard...

An analysis by the public engagement consultant of the resident comments from the public information session, the public engagement session and the online survey revealed the following themes:

## Diverse Perspectives on Housing Options

- Among those who participated, three **diverse perspectives** on the fate of the City-owned lots were evident:
  - the land should be sold at market rates;
  - affordable housing should be developed on the land; and
  - a combination of market value and affordable housing should be developed.

### Synopsis of Participant Comments:

- "When individually titled they (affordable housing) can provide a path to ownership to low income folks which have a material impact on poverty."
- "Fewer and fewer people will be able to find places to live in Riverdale or a lower and lower percentage of the population will be able to afford to live in Riverdale. We need to have a diversity of (market value) housing and affordable housing to maintain a healthy community." "Potentially greater acceptance by community ("compromise")."



- *"Market value sale would result in quick construction. This section of the neighborhood is in desperate need of repair. Need some new life boutique builders could bring in."*

## Design is Important

- Where residents who participated in the public engagement do agree is having a built form with **design** consistent with the Community streetscape where safety and security informs development. There is agreement that high density is not desirable, with no development being over 2.5 storeys.

## Synopsis of Participant Comments:

- *"Enemy in the room – four-story apartment – how can we prevent that together?"*
- *"We do not need more "repeat" designs in our housing as there is more than enough of that already."*
- *"Natural design elements (not a concrete box), environmentally-conscious design strategies, medium-density."*

## Community Dynamics

- Riverdadians are passionate and highly engaged with a profound commitment to community and expect to have substantial involvement in local affairs. They are collaborative and courageous in community conversations.

## Synopsis of Participant Comments:

- *"We need to have a diversity of housing and affordable housing to maintain a healthy community."*
- *"Whatever is built should enhance the community feel of the neighbourhood - something the community can be proud of and come together and support."*
- *"This is a big waste of taxpayer money for a couple of small lots. This process seems very biased to get approvals for affordable housing."*

## Public Engagement Process

- Most of the residents who participated in the Riverdale public engagement activities indicated their appreciation for the opportunity to provide advice to the City on the disposition of the lots.

## Synopsis of Participant Comments:

- *"This is a good process! I am hopeful that this will be kept below market value rate."*
- *"I have never seen such thoughtful and genuine preparations made to follow-through on making a formal, business-like event "family friendly"."*
- *"Glad the greenspace use was clarified. Not up for redevelopment."*
- *"Having more information about who are potential users of affordable housing would be helpful to framing community conversations about how we view affordable housing."*

- *"City staff concise answers. Approachable. Quick to document questions and concerns to take away from this session".*
- *"As a community we know each other better."*
- *"I learned what other Riverdalianians thought about the issue"*
- *"Gaining greater understanding of how info collected will be used/weighted by COE"*

## Engagement Session Findings

*What was said...*

### Public Engagement Session of February 2, 2019

Findings from the facilitated riverdale public engagement session are provided below.

#### Welcome to Riverdale/Community Endorsement Letter

Residents suggested ten themes to be included in the letter. This was provided in response to the following question: "What are all the pieces of information we could include in the Welcome to Riverdale Letter?"

- Walkable urban village
- We are proud of our unique eclectic people and places
- River Valley lifestyle with easy access to amenities
- Community welcomes, encourages and supports diversity
- Close to nature, valuing nature
- Community committed to well-being of all its members, build on history of riverdale
- History of commitment to community & individual well being
- Design consistent with community streetscape
- Community that values collaboration, engagement and consultation
- Safety & security must inform development

Residents identified three themes that a potential housing providers, builders and developers should consider promoting and enhancing.

- Community committed to well-being of all its members, build on history of Riverdale
- Community that values collaboration, engagement and consultation
- Safety & security must inform development

In response to the question "What words and/or phrases could you suggest being used to describe the Community of Riverdale?" in the Welcome to Riverdale/Community Endorsement Letter, residents provided the following suggestions:

Theme - number of responses

- Culture – 9
- Character – 6
- Community pride – 4
- Shared values - 2
- Opportunities for active living – 2
- Inclusive – 1
- Diversity - 1

- Interaction among community members - 1
- Location - 1

## Profile of Riverdale

Residents provided the suggestions below to the question: "What concrete and tangible information about our community could be included in the Riverdale profile?"

Theme - number of responses

- Community facilities and amenities – 13
- Present-day description – 7
- Opportunities for active living – 4
- History – 3
- Socio-economic – 3
- Green space – 2
- Access to services – 1
- Transportation- 1

## Pictures and/or Images

Those attending the February 2, 2019 session offered 14 suggestions for pictures and or images to illustrate Riverdale in the Expression of Interest.

## Suggested Housing Providers, Builders and Developers

When asked "What Developers/Designers/Builders would you suggest the City send the Expression of Interest to?", residents provided 24 responses.



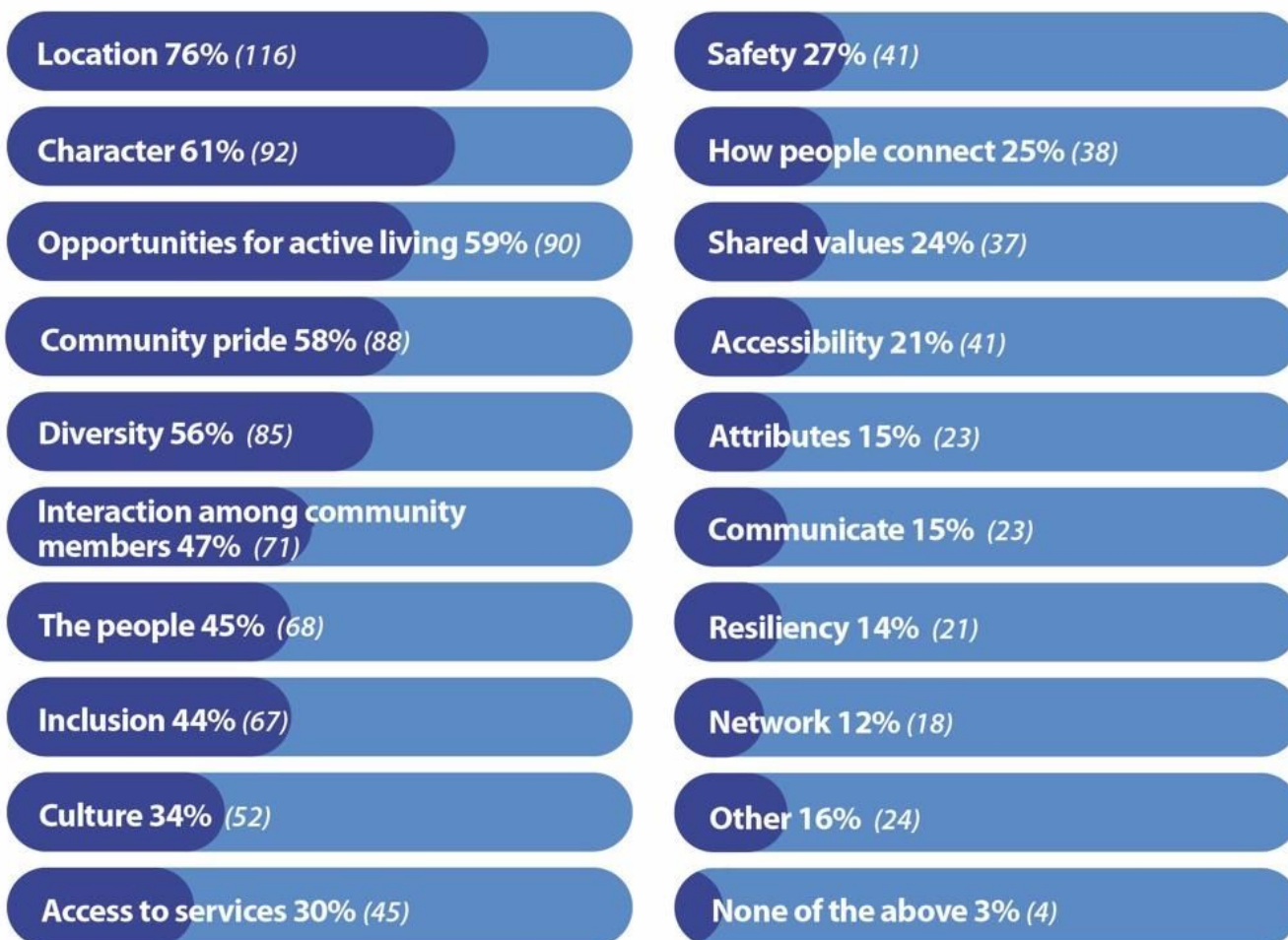
## Online Survey

A total of 152 people completed the online survey. Findings from this survey are a combination of qualitative and quantitative responses.

Question 1: What words and/or phrases do you feel describe Riverdale community?

Number of People Responded 152 (see [Appendices](#) to view responses).

Question 2: What pieces of information do you feel we could include in the “Welcome to Riverdale” letter to potential housing providers and builders?



Question 3: What concrete and tangible information about our Community could be included in the Profile of Riverdale?



Question 4: In your words, what Riverdale features should a potential builder consider promoting and enhancing?  
Number of People Responded 152 (see [Appendices](#) to view responses).

Question 5: Would you like to share any photos or images that can be used to illustrate Riverdale? Y/N  
Responses

- Yes 9% (14)
- No 91% (138)

Question 6: [If Yes Q5] Please upload photo or image that best reflects your Neighbourhood here or email us at [riverdaleland@edmonton.ca](mailto:riverdaleland@edmonton.ca).

No photos or image were uploaded.



## Summary of Participant Comments:

### *What we heard...*

At the public engagement session, Riverdale residents shared their perspectives on what should be developed on the surplus City-owned lots at 92 Street and 102 Avenue. This information was reviewed by the public engagement team and themed as follows:

### Residents who support Market Value Housing (MVH) told us:

- The use of profits from the sale of the City-owned lots could go towards building affordable housing in other areas of the City that have not met the affordable housing quota.
- Developers offer diverse housing typologies and architectural designs.
- Developers are faster than other options which will involve longer processes and possible delays.
- Developers offer diverse, creative housing options such as a Riverdale seniors 'Aging in Place'.



### Residents who support a combination of MVH and Affordable Housing (AH) told us:

- It allows for greater flexibility as the community changes.
- Residents supported diversity of income levels and stated that the community will benefit.
- A combination of both MVH and AH will provide greater building options on the property.
- Residents who supported a combination of MVH and AH stated this is a fair compromise.

### Residents who support AH told us:

- Affordable housing protects the multigenerational diversity of the community: first-time homebuyers, families, young adults and parents with adult children.
- That higher density housing is both good for the community and good for the city.
- Affordable housing is already a precedent in Riverdale and contributes to continuity and stability.
- This is an opportunity to respond to a trend of seniors leaving the community as they downsize or as they can no longer afford to live here.





## As a Result of the Public Engagement, what has Changed in the Project?

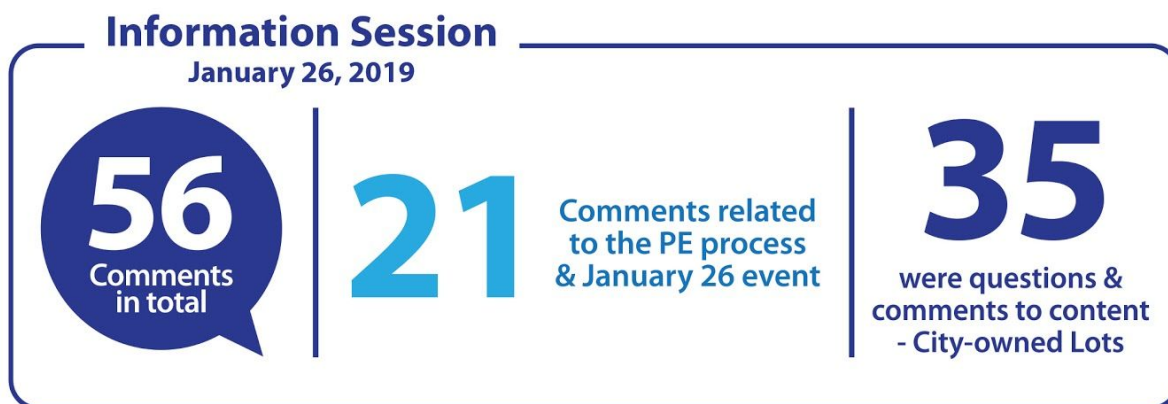
- A list of topics requiring definitions, clarification and more information related to the disposition of the City-owned lots was identified through the public engagement process. This list of topics was themed into four areas which formed the basis of the January 26, 2019 public information session. Poster boards and information sheets were created based on these four topic areas. After the information session, many residents indicated they developed a better understanding of the facts involved with the disposition of the City-owned Lots.
- Resident input from the February 2, 2019 public engagement session and the online survey formed the basis for the Welcome to Riverdale/Community Endorsement Letter.
- Input from the February 2, 2019 public engagement session and the online survey was themed and included in the Profile of Riverdale section of the Expression of Interest.
- Riverdale Residents input enhanced and expanded the City's list of builders to invite to respond to the Expression of Interest. A total of 24 housing providers and developers were suggested by residents.
- Three pictures were provided by community members for inclusion in the Expression of Interest. Unfortunately, the resolution of these pictures was insufficient for both a printed and digital document.

## Feedback on the Public Information and Engagement Sessions

The majority of people who attended the information session and/or the public engagement session reported that it was a positive experience, they were pleased with the process and the content. Below are some highlights of the feedback.

### Information Sessions – Saturday, January 26, 2019

Of the 56 comments provided by those who attended the January 26, 2019 information session and responded to the “Final Words”, 36 comments were related to the City-owned lots and 20 were in relation to information session process.



- “Very helpful in clarifying the situation.”
- “This is a good process.”
- “Good that City staff were here answer questions thank you.”



## Public Engagement Session - Saturday February 2, 2019

Thirty-two of the 79 people who registered as attending the public engagement session completed the City of Edmonton Participant Survey.

*"This surely sets a new standard of community engagement in Edmonton. Everybody is talking!"* Feedback from one participant of the Saturday February 2, 2019

The majority of those in attendance acknowledged the City's effort to involve the residents in Riverdale in a very complex, well thought out process.

What people liked:

- *"The positive and open approach to way the event was conducted to bring people with different opinions together."*
- *"Talking with our neighbors and hearing other points of view."*
- *"Sense of working together and common goals."*
- *"Facilitators and City staff created a collaborative environment."*
- *"Thank-you very much City staff for taking a day out of your weekend to guide us through this process. Much appreciated."*
- *"It was well facilitated, and I especially want to commend the graphic recording."*

Where we could improve:

- *"More and better communication of style of event."*
- *"More advance notice of events."*
- *"More opportunities for inclusion of seniors and people with families in community conversation."*
- *"More overview throughout the day of activities yet to come to prompt people to stay the duration."*

Some people expressed skepticism that the City will actually use the results of the public engagement session:

- *"I am not sure about this at all."*
- *"Not sure."*
- *"Remains to be seen."*
- *"Not sure."*
- *"I have no clearer sense of on the outcome of the EOI. The building form factor is of most concern."*
- *"The proof will be in the pudding. Some good folks working on this for sure."*



## What's Next

At the time of the writing of this Report, the City of Edmonton has no plans for any further public engagement events regarding the surplus City-owned lots at 92 Street and 102 Avenue. The formal public engagement process on these lots is complete.

The Expression of Interest was circulated to housing providers and developers and closed on y Thursday March 28, 2019. Once Expressions of Interest have been received administration will complete an internal review. The criteria to determine feasibility will include a financial review; a technical review, the Housing providers overall response and fit with input received from residents of Riverdale during the public engagement process.

Administration will prepare a report on the options and feasibility for Executive Committee's consideration. The Final Report in response to the Executive Committee Motion is expected to be received by the Executive Committee in 2019.

Administration is committed to keeping residents informed of the Expression of Interest review process, the results of meeting(s) with Council, and development next steps,

Residents of Riverdale and City of Edmonton citizens can continue to follow the disposition of the City-owned lots by:

- Reviewing the updates provided by the City on the Riverdale Land website [edmonton.ca/RiverdaleLand](http://edmonton.ca/RiverdaleLand)
- Participating in the open democratic process by attending or speaking at the Executive Committee meeting when the council report is presented The meeting date, once set, will be available on the website.

***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)