

Community Parks Framework What We Heard report

ADVISORY
COMMISSION

edmonton.ca/CommunityParksFramework

SHARE YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Community parks are important elements of Edmonton's open space network. Community parks are intended to meet the social, well-being and recreation needs of all Edmontonians. The current program for the development and renewal of community park assets is the Neighbourhood Park Development Program (NPDP). This program was originally intended to leverage community resources and funding to keep pace with demands for park development. Challenges with the program stem from the significant demand that NPDP places on the community. All NPDP projects require community initiation, substantial fundraising and volunteer effort. The program also has the unintended consequence of creating inequity as park assets are developed and renewed based on community capacity. Due to the requirement for partnerships, the City is not renewing and building park amenities where they are needed most.

The Community Parks Framework (CPF) proposes to replace NPDP with a new approach. The goal of the new framework is to improve equity, align with City policies, optimise investments and ensure that a data driven approach is taken to community park development.

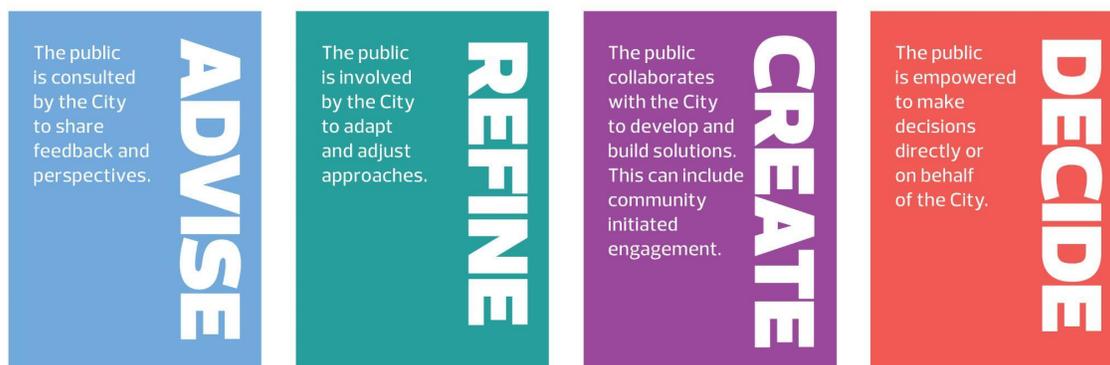
Under the new framework, the City would be responsible for undertaking park amenity projects including identifying the need for a project and funding the project. Projects will be prioritised using a model that considers level of service, age and condition of existing amenities, demographics, population density and other factors. The City will be able to prioritise amenities in a way that promotes equity.

2. ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

In the CPF project, engagement was conducted to gather feedback from community partners to help inform and refine the framework. Engagement occurred between May and July of 2022. Opportunities to provide feedback included workshops, meetings, community league survey, online comment form, as well as follow up emails and correspondence.

Level of Influence

The level of influence for this project was at the ADVISE level of the City's [Public Engagement Spectrum](#).



Engagement opportunities

The following opportunities were provided for community partners and organisations and the general public to learn more about the project, ask questions and provide feedback:

Event	Audience	Date	Participants
Workshop	Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL)	May 25, 2022 at 4 PM	EFCL administration and board members
Workshop	Community Leagues	June 8, 2022 at 7 PM	Argyll Community League Baturyn Community League Windsor Park Community League Delwood Community League Belgravia Community League Westmount Community League Avonmore Community League Forest Terrace Heights Community League Londonderry Community League The Ridge Community League Oliver Community League Lendrum Community League

			Goldbar Community League Southwood Community League Capilano Community League Empire Park Community League 1 not identified
Workshop	Community Leagues	June 9, 2022 At 7 PM	Burnewood Community League Millhurst Community League Alberta Avenue Community League Allendale Community League Riverbend Community League Carlisle Community League Pleasantview Community League Kensington Community League 2 not identified
Meeting	School Boards	June 8, 2022 at 10 AM	Edmonton Catholic School District (ECSD) Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) Centre-Nord School Board
Meeting	Community Services Advisory Board (CSAB)	June 28, 2022 at 5:30 PM	Community Services Advisory Board members and Councillor Wright
Survey	Community Leagues	June 17, 2022 to July 3, 2022	3 responses Oliver Community League Southwood Community League (2)
Online Comment Form	General Public	June 23, 2022 to July 31, 2022	2 responses

Workshop and Meeting Process

The EFCL Workshop, School Boards Meeting, Community Services Advisory Board Meeting, and Community Leagues Workshop were held virtually over Google Meet. The events consisted of a presentation with a history of NPDP, the need for change, and an overview of the proposed approach followed by a question and answer session and then a guided discussion to collect feedback from participants. Participants were asked questions about the proposed vision, amenity categories, the new approach and criteria, and how they see collaboration between the community and the City.

Communications

To share project information and create awareness for the engagement activities, the following communications tools and tactics were used:

- Project webpage
 - The project webpage (edmonton.ca/CommunityParksFramework) was updated including a video that provided details on the project and a response form for visitors to submit questions or comments.
 - Webpage views (June 12 - July 26): 795 views
 - Video views: 50 views
 - Comments received: Two comments
- Social media
 - Used to drive traffic to the project webpage
 - Twitter
 - 3742 impressions
 - 28 engagements
 - 10 link clicks
 - Facebook
 - 6405 people reached
 - 23 engagements (likes, comments or shares)
 - 47 link clicks
- Media coverage
 - The City's weekly PSA linked to the project webpage throughout June and July.
 - CTV Edmonton aired a story on July 7, 2022, discussing the development of the framework.
- Stakeholder communications
 - Invitation emails were sent to all Edmonton community leagues (157) and the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues to participate in the workshops.
 - Three Edmonton school boards were invited to a meeting.
 - The EFCL included the engagement opportunities in the Living Local Newsletter on June 2 and July 13.
 - Stakeholders were encouraged to share the project information and website through their channels.

GBA+ Considerations

As an equity-seeking project, engagement focused on gathering feedback to ensure the new approach in the CPF will improve equity, ensure policy alignment with The City Plan and other associated City strategic directions, policies and plans to optimise our park investments, and ensure a more strategic approach is taken to community park development.

In planning engagement for this project, City Administration focused on engaging directly with organisations and community partners who currently use NPDP and will be impacted by a change to the program, in addition to recognizing that a change to this program will impact Edmontonians of all ages, abilities, etc.

Invitations were sent to all (157) of Edmonton's community leagues for the workshops to encourage open dialogue and to hear from the diverse needs of Edmonton's neighbourhoods. Recognizing that not all community leagues have the capacity to engage with the City during an event, a video with closed captioning was created of the presentation that was shared at the workshop, which was also sent to all community leagues. To create an additional opportunity to provide feedback, a survey was sent out to the community leagues with the same questions that were asked during the workshop, as not all community leagues were able to attend the workshops and some noted that they required additional time with the material to provide additional feedback. Assistive technologies were used to support accessibility during the workshops, such as closed captioning, chat, raising the hand, and phone-in options.

Of the 24 community leagues that participated in the workshops, four (4) represent neighbourhoods that are classified as high Social Vulnerability Indicators (SVI) according to the Alberta Social Vulnerability Indicators (CSD) 2016. This dataset includes commonly used socio-economic indicators including age, sex, core housing needs, dwelling types, education, labour force, immigration, income, knowledge of languages, lone parents families, mobility, housing tenure and visible minorities. Nine (9) community leagues represented neighbourhoods classified as medium SVI and eleven (11) as low SVI.

In understanding that although community leagues are the primary initiators of the current NPDP process, they do not represent all park users, so information was shared on the project website for the general public. The workshop presentation was recorded and made available on the website along with a copy of the presentation slides. A comment form on the website also provided an opportunity for the general public to submit questions or

comments. The website was shared on social media and the project was featured on a television news story.

3. OVERALL KEY THEMES

The following is a summary of key themes that emerged throughout all engagement opportunities available for this project.

Proposed Vision

- There is support for improving equity and the distribution of community park amenities across the City
- Ensuring that amenities are safe should be a priority

Amenity Categories

- Categorization should consider that parks are for all ages and abilities

New Approach and Criteria

- The importance of accessibility and inclusion in community parks
- Recognition that communities are diverse and dynamic
- There is a desire for transparency on how decisions will be made

Community Collaboration

- Park projects are important opportunities for community development
- Community Leagues are valuable resources for engagement and collaboration
- Recognition that not all communities have the capacity to participate in park projects. This should not prevent those areas from having access to quality amenities
- Opportunities to leverage partnerships and access funding sources should be explored

4. KEY THEMES BY ACTIVITY

There were several different opportunities to provide feedback on this project which included targeted meetings and workshops along with public opportunities. The following section summarises the themes heard through each activity and represents both the frequency and diversity of feedback heard.

Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues Workshop

The EFCL is an umbrella group supporting the City of Edmonton's Community Leagues since 1921. EFCL is a not-for-profit organisation of which all Community Leagues are members. This workshop was attended by a total of 9 representatives from EFCL, including staff and volunteer board members.

The following themes emerged from the EFCL Workshop:

- General support for improving equity in the distribution of amenities across communities in Edmonton, particularly as some leagues have experienced challenges in resourcing and fundraising under NPDP
- Engagement with communities will be important to ensure new and renewed amenities are unique to and meet the needs of communities, and are not generic
- Projects are important for community building as they bring community members together, but some communities may have the capacity to be more involved in projects than others
- Decision making criteria should include an assessment of amenity usage
- There may be opportunities for cross-community partnerships for the special amenity category in the new approach
- Suggestion for the term "data driven approach" be changed to "intentional approach"
- The City and EFCL could work together to explore options for accessing grants

School Boards Meeting

School boards were invited to attend a meeting to share information and gather feedback as community parks are often co-located with school sites, with both schools and communities being users of community park amenities. The workshop was attended by representatives from EPSB, ECSD and the Conseil Scolaire Centre-Nord. One follow-up correspondence was received.

The following themes emerged from the School Board Workshop:

- Decision making criteria should include: population density, consideration of surrounding developments, community needs
- Suggestion for coordination with EPSB for data analysis
- Impact on and transition of current NPDP projects
- Challenges with sitting playgrounds when there are multiple schools on a park or other features that impact access
- Uncertainty around access to funding sources such as Community Facility Enhancement Program (CFEP)
- Challenges with determining which playground to renew when there are multiple playgrounds in a neighbourhood
- Consideration of water usage at spray parks and the environmental impact

Community Services Advisory Board Meeting

The CSAB was invited to attend a meeting with the project team to share project information and gather feedback.

The following themes emerged from the CSAB meeting:

- It is important that new and renewed amenities honour the unique history and characteristics of neighbourhoods
- It is important to keep communities involved in community development
- Criteria could include: neighbourhood density and quality of existing amenities
- Question topics included: definition of equity, character and quality of the new and renewed amenities, the funding model and number of new amenities per year, the engagement process

Community League Workshops

Edmonton's Community Leagues were invited to participate in one of two virtual workshops. Although 44 community leagues registered for the event, representatives from 24 community leagues attended the sessions, plus 3 unidentified participants. Participants had a range of experience with the current NPDP process, some had completed NPDP projects, some were currently working on NPDP projects and some had never used NPDP before.

The following themes emerged from the community league workshops:

- General support of increasing equity across Edmonton, particularly as some neighbourhoods do not have the time or resources to undertake projects through NPDP, or have struggled with it in the past

- Some concern about the impacts to existing projects going through NPDP and the transition to the new framework
- Some concern about the quality and character of new amenities and worry that the design of amenities will be generic or identical across the city
 - Would like to see the unique characteristics and history of a community be reflected in the new and renewed amenities
- Criteria to consider include: accessibility of all ages and abilities, how people get to parks, neighbourhood characteristics and lifecycle, and culture
- Concerns were raised about the framework not applying to land owned by School Boards, which could lead to amenities that are used by communities not being renewed
- Clarity is needed between the roles and responsibilities of the City vs communities
- Some representatives expressed that they would like to have an opportunity to provide follow-up comments at a later date
- Question topics included: timing of new and renewed amenities, community involvement, transition of existing NPDP projects, and the funding model and distribution of funds per project

Community League Survey

During the community league workshops, we heard that some leagues wanted to have more time with the information about the change and to consult with their boards. After the community league workshops were complete, a follow-up survey was sent to all Edmonton community leagues. The survey included a video of the presentation as well as the same questions which were asked at the workshop. The survey was open from June 17 to July 3, 2022. Three (3) responses were received. The leagues that responded to the survey had also participated in the workshops.

The following themes emerged from the Community League Survey:

- General support for improving equity in the distribution of amenities in communities across Edmonton, not only the communities who have the capacity to complete NPDP, and support that the City is taking the responsibility of fundraising off of community leagues
- Concern about the impact to current NPDP projects
- Support that the amenity categories will ensure there is a standard minimum for all neighbourhoods but that there is flexibility for more unique options through the special amenity category
- Criteria should include: density, the current and desired use of a park space
- It is important for continued opportunity for community collaboration

Public Online Form and Digital Correspondence

To inform the general public of the proposed Community Parks Framework a project website was created. Along with general project information, the website contained a frequently asked question section that was expanded based on questions that were asked during engagement. Following the workshops, a video recording of the presentation was posted, as well as a copy of the presentation slides. A comment form was added to provide an opportunity for the general public to give feedback or ask questions. The form was open from June 23 and remained open at the time that this report was published. As of July 31, 2022, two (2) responses were received through the form and four (4) were received through email. The majority of responses were from people who had previously attended the community league workshops. The low level of feedback from the general public was not unexpected. While community park amenities are used by a large number of Edmontonians, only a small percentage of people have been involved in projects to develop those amenities. Community leagues are the primary participants in community park projects that use NPDP, and community leagues members provided the majority of the feedback in this engagement process.

The following themes emerged from the Public Online Form and Digital Correspondence:

- Engagement timelines
- The need for accessible engagement opportunities that respect the diversity of park users
- Consideration for projects that are currently using NPDP
- Acknowledgement that community park amenities are also located on school board owned land
- Types and sources of data to be used for decision making

5. NEXT STEPS

Feedback from this engagement will be used to help inform and refine the framework and the implementation plan of the Community Parks Framework. The framework will be advanced as part of the 2023-2026 capital budget process in the Fall of 2022, Projects that are currently underway through the NPDP process will be reviewed and city teams will work with each of those community partners directly.

The website and other public and stakeholder information will be updated accordingly as the implementation of the community parks framework is built out.