



# What We Heard Report: Jan Reimer Park Restoration

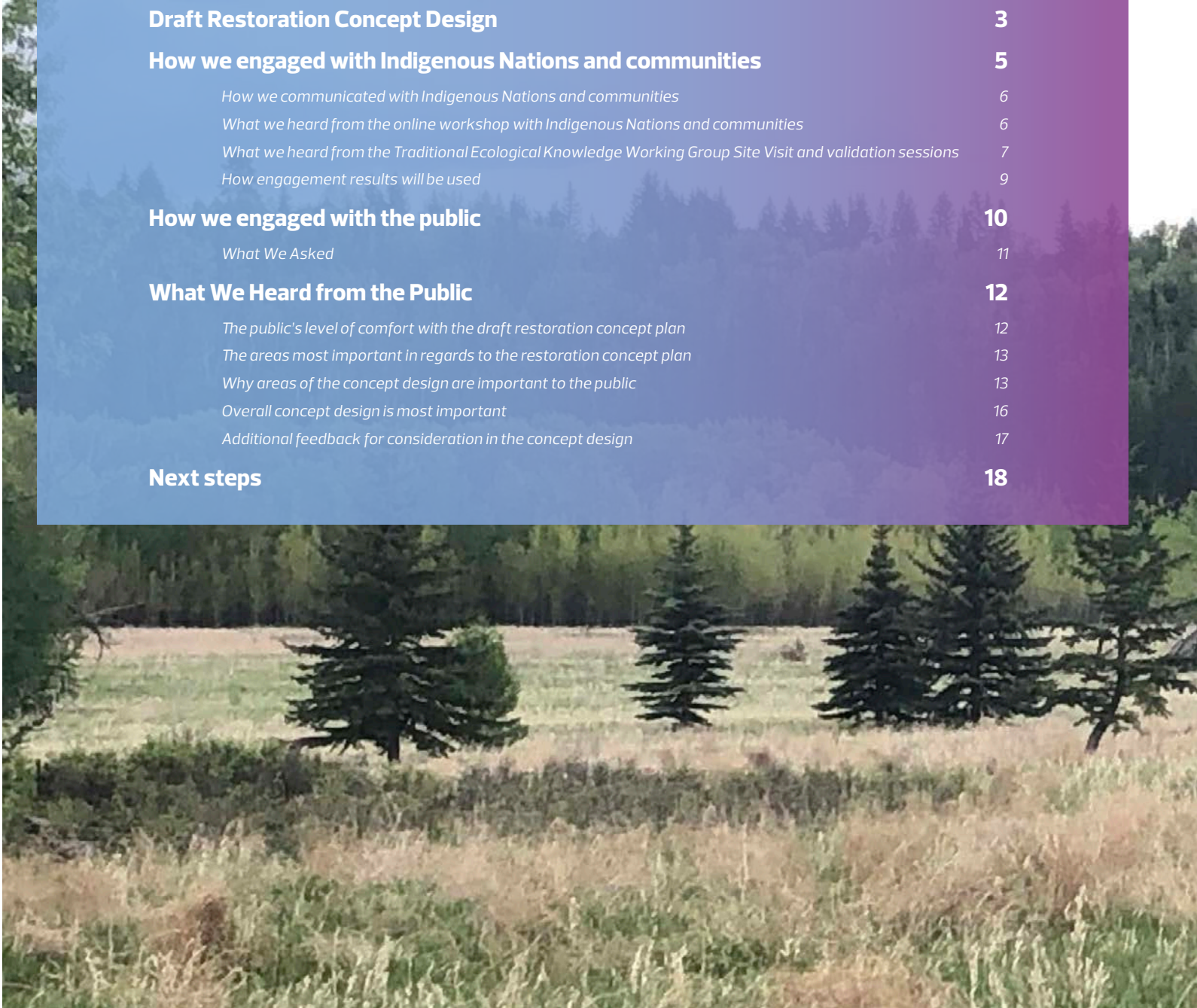
January 28 2025

| **SHARE** YOUR VOICE  
**SHAPE** OUR CITY

**Edmonton**

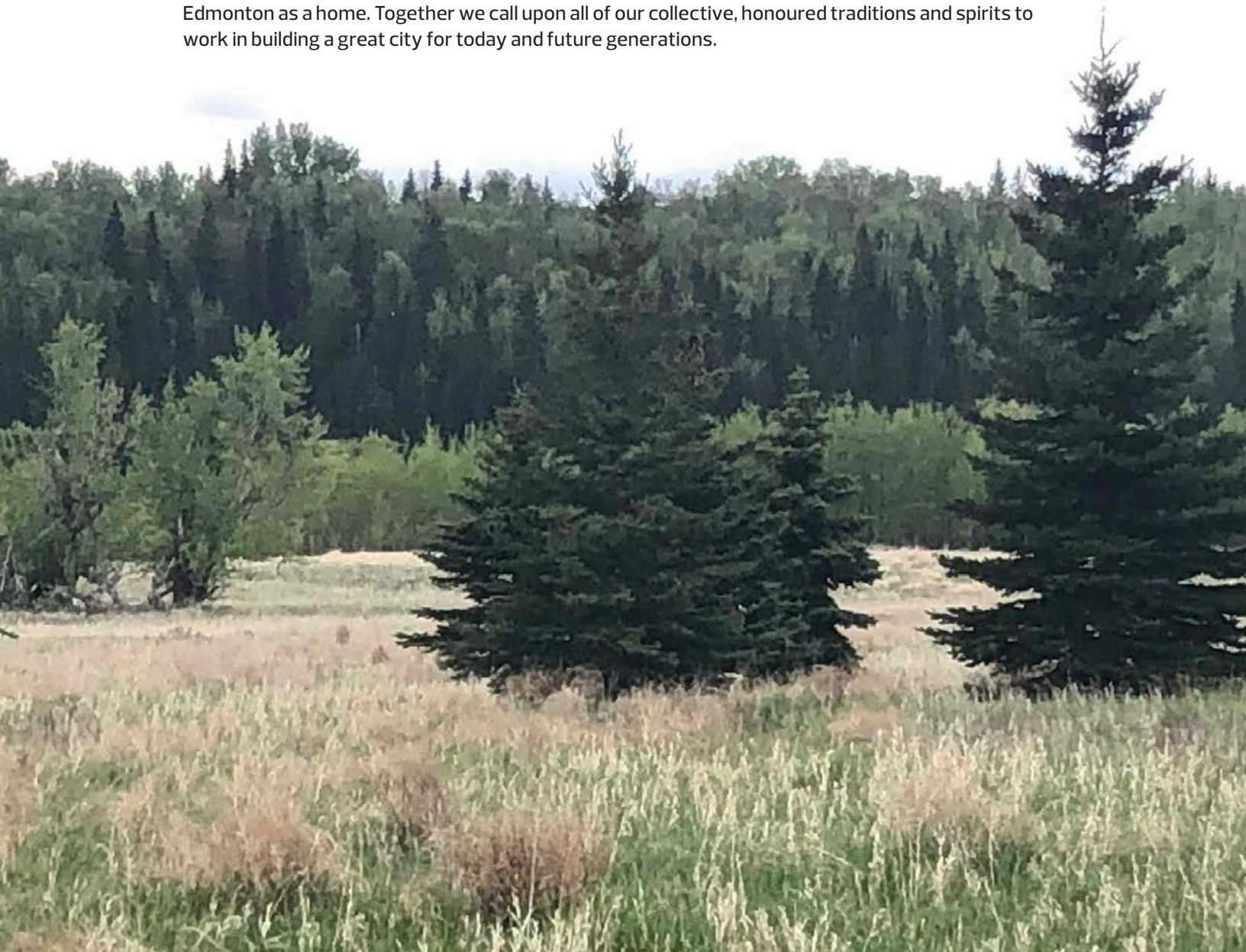
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# Land Acknowledgment

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the traditional land on which we reside, is in Treaty Six Territory. We would like to thank the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries, such as nêhiyaw (Nay-hee-yow) / Cree, Dene (Deh-neyh), Anishinaabe (Ah-nish-in-ah-bay) / Saulteaux (So-toe), Nakota Isga (Na-koh-tah ee-ska) / Nakota Sioux (Na-koh-tah sue), and Niitsitapi (Nit-si-tahp-ee) / Blackfoot peoples. We also acknowledge this as the Métis' (May-tee) homeland and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel. It is a welcoming place for all peoples who come from around the world to share Edmonton as a home. Together we call upon all of our collective, honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.



# Project Overview

A Master Concept Plan for Jan Reimer Park (formerly Oleskiw Park) was published in January 2020. The Master Plan established a 25-year vision and management plan for the park.

The Master Plan has five Project Pillars:

- 1 Park Use and Amenities
- 2 Access and Circulation
- 3 Natural Asset Management
- 4 Maintenance, Safety, and Enforcement
- 5 Atmosphere and Identity

Funding has been approved for development of the concept and implementation plans, related to Project Pillar 3: Natural Asset Management, including landscape restoration.

This involves developing a concept design to restore portions of Jan Reimer Park to reflect the natural state of these areas before the impacts of farming and other development.

At the Concept Design stage, initial concept designs were created. Following recommendations from the Master Plan for the park's re-naturalization, the City of Edmonton involved Indigenous Nations and communities in engagement opportunities at the Create level and the public and community groups at the Advise level on the Public Engagement Spectrum. This report summarizes all information received. The project team will work together to reflect this feedback in the preliminary designs.



# Public Engagement Spectrum

The City of Edmonton sought input from Indigenous Nations and the public to help guide the project. The City's Public Engagement Spectrum, below, shows the four levels of influence the public and Indigenous Nations and communities can have on decisions made by the City throughout the project.

- + The public, along with members of Alberta's Indigenous community, were invited to **ADVISE** the City on the concept design.
- + To reflect the commitments made in the Master Plan, Indigenous Nations and communities were invited to share input to **CREATE** along with the City.

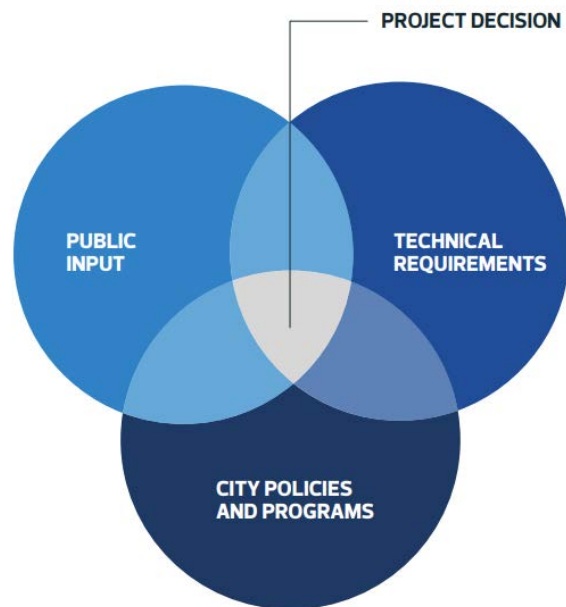
We commit to sharing how input from Indigenous Nations and the public influences decisions according to the Public Engagement Spectrum.



## How decisions are made

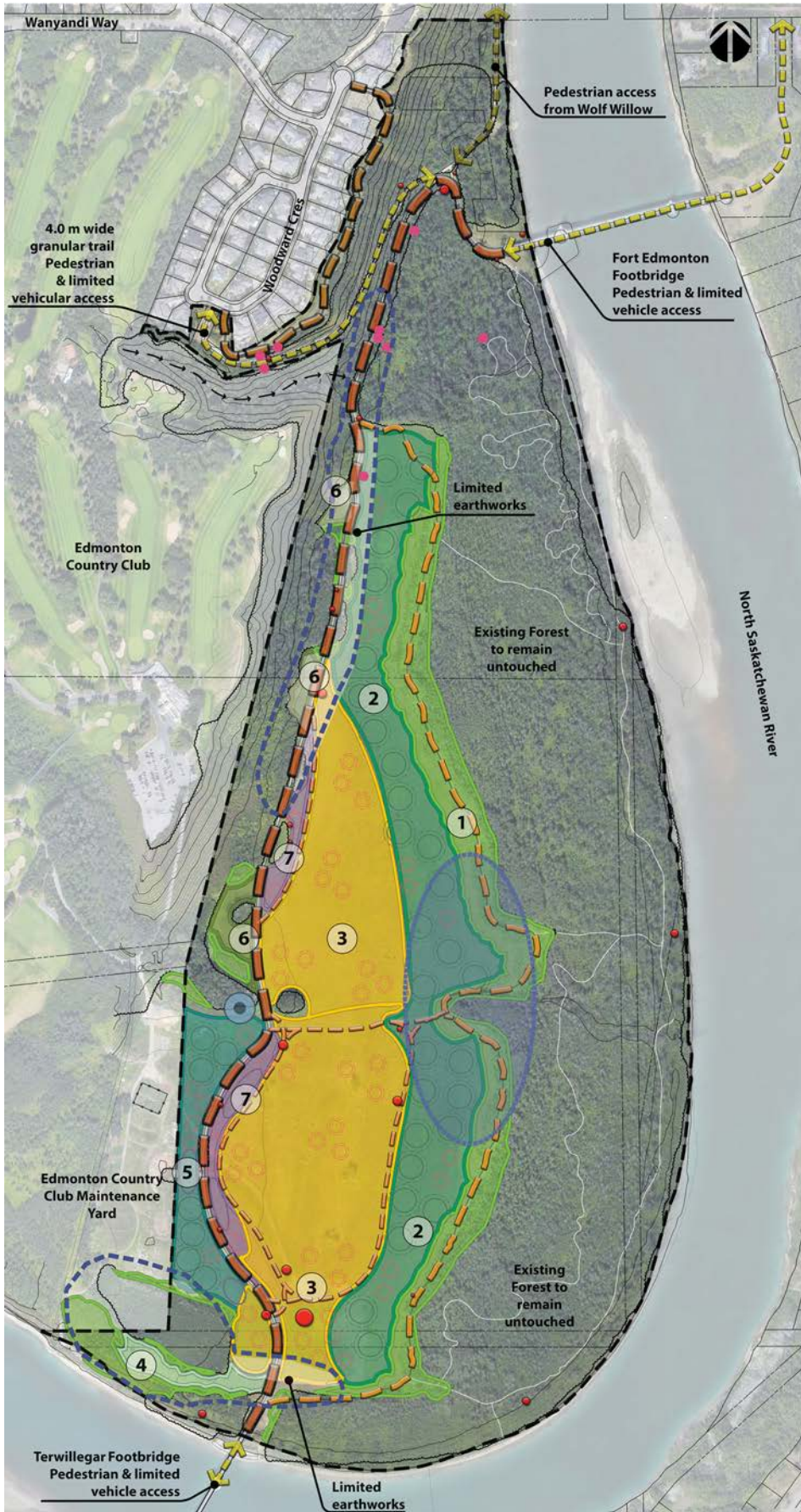
The project's decision-making process balances city policies, Indigenous Nations and public input and technical requirements. City policies set the framework, public feedback identifies community priorities and technical requirements ensure the project is safe and feasible.

Engagement feedback is balanced with policies such as the City of Edmonton Indigenous Framework, Ribbon of Green, fiscal and technical constraints as preliminary designs are developed and the City makes decisions.



# Draft Restoration Concept Design

The following graphic showcases the draft restoration concept design. It is divided into seven separate areas of focus. The areas are explored in greater detail in the legend.



## Legend

- Park Boundary
- Existing Shared Use Paths
- Existing Natural/ Gravel Trails
- Future Meadow Trails (Master Plan)
- Future Amenity Locations (Master Plan)
- Existing Forest Natural Trails
- Location of Rare Plants  
Sweet Cicely found within restoration area.
- Approximate location of known Archaeological Sites
- Plants of Interest: Yellow Lady Slipper / Wood Lily  
Unique plants have been noted in this area & will be preserved. A Plant Survey will identify their locations and the planted will be protected by fencing to limit ground disturbance.
- Forest Planting Bed  
Planting bed consisting mainly of trees but will include shrubs and wildflowers.
- Wildflower Planting Bed  
Planting bed consisting mainly wildflowers plugs.
- Shrub Planting Module  
Planting bed consisting mainly of shrubs.
- Areas of Limited Earthworks (white overlay)  
Site preparation within the known archaeological site boundaries will limit ground disturbance. No intensive site preparation will take place to aide with the preservation of cultural artifacts located in these areas.

- 1** **AREA 1: Existing Natural Forest Regeneration (4.2ha)**  
Area just east of the Existing Forest is currently naturally regenerating. Minimal intervention (noxious weed management) and let it continue to naturally regenerate.
- 2** **AREA 2: East Forest Restoration (10.1ha)**  
The ultimate goal of this area is forest restoration. Intensive site preparation and weed management will be employed to allow establishment of native plant communities. A complete forest community will be established including wildflowers, shrubs & trees.
- 3** **AREA 3 North & South: Restoration of Prairie Meadow (11.1ha)**  
The ultimate goal for this area is to restore native prairie vegetation in the open meadow. Intensive site preparation and weed management will be undertaken to aide with the prairie establishment. The area will be seeded with native grasses supplemented by wildflower planting modules.
- 4** **AREA 4: South West Forest Regeneration (10.1ha)**  
This small meadow is currently regenerating with shrubs and trees. Minimal intervention (weed removal) is proposed, to allow it to continue to naturally regenerate into native forest.
- 5** **Area 5: West Forest Restoration (2.3ha)**  
Area along the west property line and golf course storage area is an open disturbed landscape. Intensive site preparation will be employed to aid with native plant establishment. Forest restoration is the ultimate goal & a complete forest community consisting of some grasses, wildflowers, shrubs & tree will be planted.
- 6** **Area 6: North West Forest Restoration (.7ha)**  
Restoration efforts in this area will concentrate on the disturbed open flat areas. Alternative site preparation techniques and weed management will be employed in this area. Forest restoration is the ultimate goal with a concentration on shrubs and wildflowers.
- 7** **Area 7: Shrub Transition Area (6440m2)**  
Restoration efforts in this area will concentrate on creating a shrub transitional zone between the Aspen tree stand and the native prairie meadow.

# How we engaged with Indigenous Nations and communities

Indigenous Nations and communities, including First Nations, The Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations and the Otipemisewak Métis Government, were invited to share input to **CREATE** along with the City. At this level of the engagement spectrum, participants collaborate with the City to develop and build solutions regarding policies, programs, projects, or services. The following includes the different engagement activities that took place with Indigenous Nations and communities.

## Online workshop with Indigenous Nations and communities

- + One online meeting with representatives from Indigenous Nations and communities on June 13, 2024
- + Project information and a draft concept design for the restoration of Jan Reimer Park was shared
- + The project team sought feedback on the draft concept design, planting considerations, uses of the space and ways Indigenous Nations and community representatives would like to participate in the project
- + Nine Indigenous Nations and communities participated, with 18 representatives

## Traditional ecological knowledge working group and site visit

- A Traditional Ecological Knowledge Working Group was formed to provide participating Elders, Knowledge Holders and other Indigenous representatives with an opportunity to:
- + Participate in a site visit, on September 6, 2024, to observe areas undergoing restoration, learn about the project concept design, provide input and guidance with the park's restoration, identify plants and provide input on ways that the restoration of the park might reflect Indigenous perspectives
  - + Seven Indigenous Nations and communities participated in the site visit, with 11 Knowledge Holders, Elders and Helpers
  - + Validate that what was heard from the group is accurately and appropriately reflected in the restoration design and plan
  - + Five Indigenous Nations and communities participated in online, one-on-one validation sessions, with eight Knowledge Holders and Elders



## How we communicated with Indigenous Nations and communities

- + Over 100 email invitations and follow ups to consultation office representatives from 30 Indigenous Nations and communities with traditional territory or connection to the Edmonton river valley.
- + Over 50 phone calls and texts with consultation office representatives, Elders and Knowledge Holders to follow up on invitations to participate, coordinate participation and respond to question
- + Two email invitations and follow ups to Indigenous leaders from kihcihkaw askî (Sacred Land) to support collaboration and potential Indigenous stewardship opportunities
- + One site visit summary to consultation office representatives and participating Knowledge Holders from the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Working Group

## What we heard from the online workshop with Indigenous Nations and communities

- + **Feedback on plant species selection and invasive species control:** Participants provided feedback on plant species and invasive species control, with questions about the removal of invasive plants like caragana and the use of weed control measures. There was appreciation for the inclusion of berry species such as chokecherry and saskatoon in the plan. More site visits were suggested to observe different species and determine what needs to be considered for restoration.
- + **Identifying and Respecting Indigenous Stewardship and Use:** Participants emphasized the importance of preserving locations of historical use that are now identified as archaeological sites and sharing Indigenous histories. Interpretive signage was suggested as a way to educate both Indigenous and non-Indigenous visitors. Concerns were raised about the potential impact of restoration plans at these locations, as these histories hold significant importance for Indigenous peoples.
- + **Park access, use, and human interventions:** Participants provided feedback on park access and use, raising questions about how people access the park. The park is used by the Otipemisiwak Métis Government for nature walks. Anecdotal feedback mentioned human intervention, such as decorating trees, in the current use of the site.

## What we heard from the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Working Group Site Visit and validation sessions

- + **Plant selection:** The group suggested plants for Jan Reimer Park restoration, including high and low bush cranberry, wild rose, red dogwood, willow, chokecherry, saskatoon, prairie grass and juniper. One representative noted fruit-bearing plants may attract wildlife. During validation sessions, sage, sweetgrass and gooseberries were also suggested for inclusion.

**Our response to what we heard:** *Fruit bearing plants are part of the project planting lists. Follow-up with Knowledge Holders is needed to confirm appropriate plant species and recommend plants to support slope stability if caragana is removed.*

- + **Indigenous perspectives on planting and land restoration:** Traditional burn practices were shared as a way to prepare the land for restoration. Participants cautioned that managed fire use should be validated for further guidance. Seed collection and dispersal methods, including harvesting, airborne dispersal (e.g., drones) and the importance of seed sources were also discussed. Participants recommended that Knowledge Holders be involved in these processes and should validate seed vendors. Some plants were noted to only arise naturally. Some of the group shared feedback that the site should be restored to a fully natural state.

**Our response to what we heard:** *As part of the development of the City's Wildfire Resilience Strategy, there will be engagement with Indigenous peoples on traditional burn practices. Although we may not use them on this project they will be considered for other locations within the city.*

*Although the City cannot specify who contractors purchase their plant stock from, we could seek to provide a list of vendors.*

*The City hopes that only native species will regenerate within the naturalized areas.*

*Restoring the site to a fully natural state would require the removal of several species that may not be native to Edmonton, but do grow here due to imported stock and seeds that grew through airborne seed dispersal, such as Manitoba Maple and Colorado Blue Spruce. The project would not introduce any non-native plantings but we would not remove healthy and mature trees that are existing in the meadow areas.*

- + **Presence, condition and use of plants:** The group shared input on the presence and condition of certain plant species. Concerns were raised about the presence of caragana, suggesting its removal. Disease was noted in some species, like aspen and poplar. Some Indigenous perspectives on plant uses were shared; we also heard that some Indigenous plant uses cannot be shared.

**Our response to what we heard:** *Caragana growing on the western slopes are currently preventing erosion and slumping and will not be removed at this time. Future removal would be dependent on City Council priorities and funding. Caragana growing on the lower plateau would be removed as part of the mulching and solarization process within this project.*

*Where disease is present, Natural Areas would review areas of major concern and evaluate on a case by case basis.*

- + **Traditional and current uses and impacts:** Traditional and current uses of the park area were shared, along with observed impacts of recreational users and surrounding operations, including the visual condition of the fenced golf course area. The presence of wildlife was noted. A concern was raised that restoration may disrupt the homes of houseless individuals living in the park. During validation sessions, some participants noted the location of any medicinal plants should be away from regular use areas, to minimize impacts of dog waste.

***Our response to what we heard:** Infrastructure that encourages more recreational use of the park will not be added as part of this project. Larger caliper trees will be planted to screen the fenced maintenance yard. No work will occur in the existing forested areas.*

- + **Opportunities for Indigenous inclusion:** The importance of Indigenous inclusion throughout the project, including opportunities for ceremony at different times, such as during ground disturbance, tree removal and burning were shared by the group. Indigenous inclusion in planting opportunities was also shared, with the importance of involving Knowledge Holders, Indigenous youth and communities noted. Opportunities to include interpretive elements on Indigenous histories, traditional uses and locations identified as having archaeological significance, were also suggested for future phases of the project, as a way to teach and educate. During validation sessions, it was suggested an additional site visit or online update occur.

***Our response to what we heard:** We acknowledge the input given and will incorporate it into our approach going forward, by selecting project milestones to invite Indigenous Nations and communities to participate, such as project start up or tree planting, etc.*

- + **Bridging Indigenous and Western perspectives in environmental restoration:** Indigenous histories and perspectives offer valuable insights into understanding the land. We heard the presence of wildlife, including deer, moose and bear, are indicators of restoration success. We also heard the history of the landscape, including locations that are now considered archaeological sites where traditional practices like a bison kill site took place, can offer clues about historical vegetation.

***Our response to what we heard:** We hope that after the restoration project is complete, the forested areas offer successful habitat for wildlife to flourish. The archeological sites confirm that the lower plateau of the park was historically used as a camp area for Indigenous peoples, likely after a bison kill. The proposed plan maintains a meadow area.*

- + **Consideration of additional amenities for future park phases:** The group shared suggestions for additional amenities, including space for ceremony, access for transporting tipi poles, washrooms, garbage cans and future interpretive elements, possibly near bridges. Footpaths were also shared as a way to enhance visitor experiences.

***Our response to what we heard:** Space for ceremony and interpretive elements that explain but do not specifically identify exact locations of archaeological sites, in order to protect them, will be considered.*

- + **Strengthening relationships:** Feedback was shared that the City and its partners should continue to develop collective awareness and understanding of Indigenous cultural contexts, relationship agreements and commitments to rights-holders. This awareness and understanding should be upheld through actions. Feedback was also shared that the City should ensure input sought aligns with the level of influence on the engagement spectrum.

**Our response to what we heard:** *The City, working with our Indigenous Relations Office, looks to continue our journey with Indigenous Peoples to share and learn from their perspectives in shaping our City. As feasible, the City will incorporate the input received in upcoming restoration plans. The City will inform and invite Indigenous peoples to participate at key milestones within the current project. Future phases of the project are unknown at this time.*

## How engagement results will be used

Based on the input from Indigenous Nations and communities, we will look for opportunities to integrate guidance into the selection of plant species and the protection of historical resources at Jan Reimer Park. We will also prioritize the protection and recognition of locations or traditional use, which are now referred to as archaeological sites, ensuring these culturally significant areas are respected and preserved throughout the restoration process. These insights will shape our landscape restoration approach, helping us create a park that honors Indigenous perspectives and histories.



# How we engaged with the public

The public and Indigenous communities were invited to **ADVISE** the City on the concept design. At this level of the spectrum, the public is consulted by the City to share feedback and perspectives that are considered for policies, programs, projects, or services.

The following include the different ways we engaged with the public. This is distinct from the additional Indigenous engagement approach. That approach involved rights-holders, Indigenous Nations and communities the City has chosen to engage with because of their interests in and connections to the Edmonton River Valley area.

## SURVEY

- + An online survey was available to the public, including members of Edmonton's Indigenous community, from June 4 to June 23, 2024
- + **251 survey participants**

## HOW WE COMMUNICATED WITH THE PUBLIC

- + Five park signs
- + **140,000** social media impressions
- + **7,174** postcards were delivered
- + **1,613** page views on the project web page

## IN-PERSON OPEN HOUSE

- + One in-person open house occurred on June 18, 2024, at the Westridge Wolf Willow Community League Hall
- + Project information was shared and participants were asked:
  - How Jan Reimer Park is currently being used
  - How often people visit Jan Reimer Park
  - What aspects of the draft concept design are most important
- + Participants were encouraged to ask questions and provide feedback through interactive posters and maps
- + **16 participants attended the event**



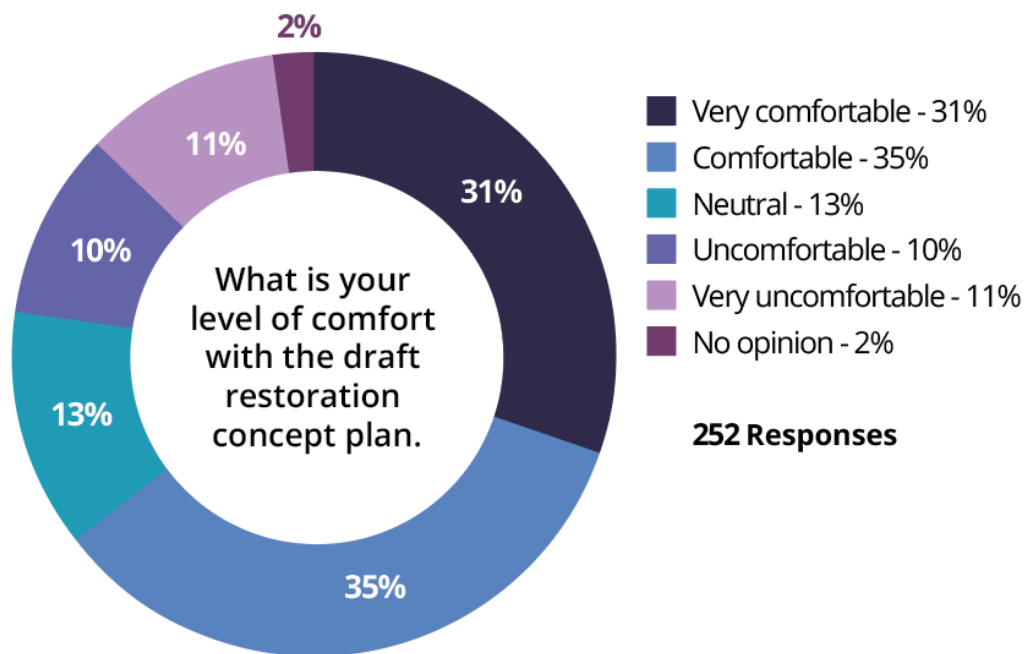
## What We Asked

- 1 Please indicate your level of comfort with the draft restoration concept plan.
- 2 From concept plan design, select the area most important to you.
- 3 Do you have other feedback you want the Project Team to consider as the restoration concept design is finalized?
- 4 How often have you used Jan Reimer Park (formerly Oleskiw Park) in the past year?
- 5 How do you currently use Jan Reimer Park (formerly Oleskiw Park)?

# What We Heard from the Public

The following sections provide a summary of what we heard at the in-person drop-in event and the online survey. The summary reflects the relevancy, frequency and diversity of the responses received to the questions that we asked participants.

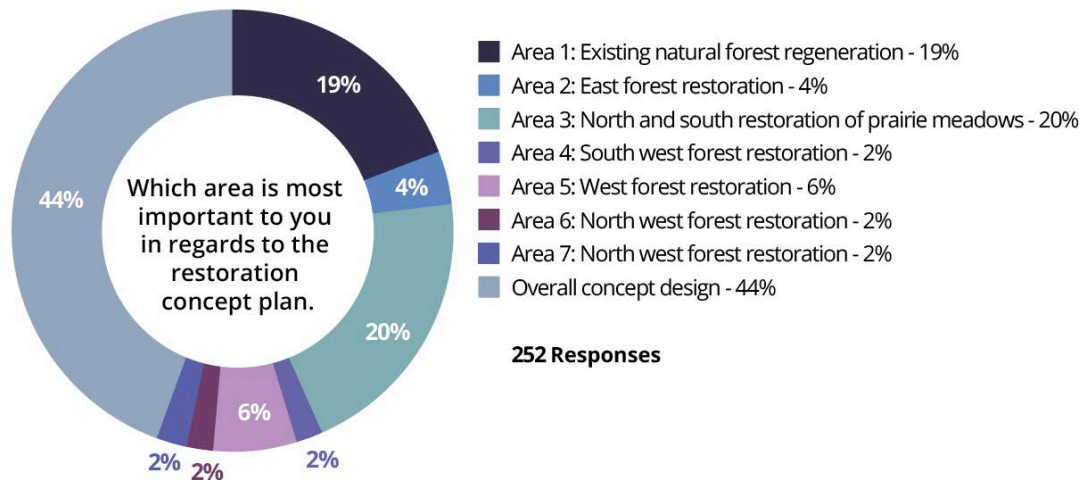
## The public's level of comfort with the draft restoration concept plan



## The areas most important in regards to the restoration concept plan

(To reference the concept plan, please revisit Page 4)

To help the project team understand which parts of the concept design need the most consideration, the public was asked to choose which section of the concept design was most important to them and share their reasons why.



## Why areas of the concept design are important to the public

### AREA 1: EXISTING NATURAL FOREST REGENERATION

**Area description:** This area east of the existing forest is currently naturally regenerating. Minimal intervention (noxious weed management) is needed. It will be left to naturally regenerate.

#### Feedback from respondents:

- + **Enhancing Area 1 trails for recreational use and accessibility:** Respondents who selected Area 1 to be the most important for the restoration plan consider it to be popular among regular trail users who engage in mountain biking, walking, hiking, running and cycling activities. As a result, many respondents suggest expanding the trail to accommodate and encourage more users.
- + **Minimal intervention suggested for remote Area 1:** Respondents who selected Area 1 to be the most important suggest leaving the area as it is. Some believe that Area 1 is remote and does not require any restoration work.





### AREA 2: EAST FOREST RESTORATION

**Area description:** The ultimate goal of this area is forest restoration. A complete forest community will be established from native grasses, wildflowers, shrubs and trees.

#### Feedback from respondents:

- + **Keeping trail access open in Area 2 during restoration:** Respondents who selected Area 2 to be the most important believe many people regularly use the trails in the area for cycling and mountain biking. As a result, they advocate for trail access after the restoration plan.

### AREA 3: RESTORATION OF PRAIRIE MEADOW

**Area description:** The restoration goal for this area is to recreate an open meadow typically found within the Aspen Parkland ecoregion. Native grasses and wildflowers will be planted.

#### Feedback from respondents:

- + **Prioritizing natural methods for restoring Area 3:** Respondents who selected Area 3 to be the most important believe its forest and meadow are in the greatest need of restoration. They recommend using natural methods to return the area to its natural state.
- + **Restoring open fields in Area 3 to bring back vitality:** Respondents who selected Area 3 to be the most important think the area contains many open fields that appear empty and lack activity from park users.
- + **Enhancing Area 3 to attract more trail users:** Respondents who selected Area 3 to be the most important believe it is popular to many regular trail users who engage in mountain biking, walking, hiking, running, and cycling activities. These respondents suggested the restoration project will encourage more people to use the area.
- + **Improving Area 3 for its unique meadow and visual appeal:** Respondents who selected Area 3 to be the most important because of its unique meadow context and visual appeal.
- + **Minimizing intervention to restore Area 3's natural state:** Respondents who selected Area 3 to be the most important believe it has been significantly disturbed by human activities and developments. They recommended the restoration plan involve minimal human intervention to allow the area to restore to its natural state.

#### AREA 4: SOUTHWEST FOREST RESTORATION

**Area description:** This small meadow has existing native plants that are growing and spreading. Minimal intervention (weed removal) is needed. It will continue to naturally regenerate into native forest.

##### Feedback from respondents:

- + **Preserving trail access in Area 4 for cyclists and mountain bikers:** Respondents who selected Area 4 to be the most important did so because there is regular use of the area's trail system for cycling and mountain biking. They ask that access to the bike trail system remain as is after the restoration plan.

#### AREA 5: WEST FOREST RESTORATION

**Area description:** The area along the west property line and golf course storage area is an open, disturbed landscape. Forest restoration is the ultimate goal, including planting grasses, wildflowers, shrubs and trees.

##### Feedback from respondents:

- + **Addressing human impact in Area 5:** Respondents who selected Area 5 believe the area requires the most attention because it has been significantly disturbed by human activities, especially the golf course.

#### AREA 6: NORTHWEST FOREST RESTORATION

**Area description:** Restoration efforts in this area will concentrate on the disturbed open flat areas. Forest restoration is the ultimate goal with a concentration on shrubs and wildflowers.

##### Feedback from respondents:

- + **Mitigating the visual impact of golf course facilities in Area 6:** Respondents who selected Area 6 to be the most important believe it has been significantly disturbed by the golf course storage and maintenance area, and these facilities take away from the beauty of the rest of the natural environment.

#### AREA 7: SHRUB TRANSITION AREA

**Area description:** Restoration efforts in this area will concentrate on creating a transition zone composed primarily of shrubs between the Aspen tree stand and the native plant meadow.

##### Feedback from respondents:

- + **Using restoration in Area 7 to separate nature from human activities:** Respondents who selected Area 7 to be the most important think that area can help separate nature and human activities clearly.



## OVERALL CONCEPT DESIGN IS MOST IMPORTANT

The following feedback is from respondents who feel like the overall concept design and not just one section of the concept design is the most important.

- + **Restoring things to their natural state:** These respondents indicated returning the overall area to its natural state is essential and should be done using natural methods. They also stated it is critical to bring back wildlife that has been displaced due to human development and activities.
- + **Restoring native plant communities and promoting biodiversity for sustainability:** Respondents think it is important to restore the overall area with native plant communities that are critical to the environment, especially in areas known to have traditional Indigenous use and archaeological significance. They believed this would help achieve biodiversity, and contribute to overall environmental sustainability.
- + **Enhancing accessibility and amenities in popular park areas to encourage use:** Respondents believe the overall design is important to the restoration plan because the park is a very popular area among residents. Many people use the trails in the area for cycling, mountain biking, walking and running. Therefore, the plan should include adding more street furniture and shelters to encourage more people to visit the park. Additionally, the plan should ensure the improvements will not obstruct people from accessing the trail and that the trails are accessible for people with disabilities.
- + **Benefits to the community through education, volunteering, and mental health:** Respondents believe the improvement of the overall area is vital to the community as it benefits community members by offering volunteer and educational opportunities regarding the natural environment and that contact with nature improves their mental health.
- + **Balancing restoration and human impact in areas damaged by development:** Respondents believe the overall area requires the most attention because it has been significantly disturbed by human activities, leading to damage, erosion and the removal of plants and wildlife. These respondents recommend the restoration plan strive to achieve a balance between human development with minimal intervention and impact on nature.



## Additional feedback for consideration in the concept design

The following section outlines additional feedback from respondents for consideration in the concept design of the project.

- + **Concerns over project costs and suggestions for budget management:** Respondents are concerned the large scale of the project could make it very expensive. They felt the project team should carefully budget the plan to keep costs low.
- + **Enhancing park amenities and expanding trails with educational features:** These respondents recommended enhancing the park by adding more amenities to support pedestrians and cyclists year round. They also wish to expand the trail network for better access throughout the park. They also suggested adding interpretive signs along the trail to educate visitors about the park's history and natural habitats.
- + **Ensuring future development and consultation with experts and Indigenous communities:** Respondents want to ensure that the plan has thoughtful input by consulting with environmental experts and Indigenous communities. They recommended keeping these groups informed and involved throughout the process.
- + **Balancing human activity and environmental preservation in the park:** Respondents are aware that improvements to the park's access and trail system would increase human use causing further erosion to the natural environment. These respondents believe the restoration plan should balance human use and the natural environment.

# Next steps

The Jan Reimer Park Restoration Project will advance into the next phases of the design process. The information gathered from the public and Indigenous engagement sessions in 2024, along with City policies and programs and technical requirements for the project, have provided the project with the direction to advance the project.

The project team will update the Jan Reimer Park Restoration web page as the project advances and will work with Indigenous Nations and communities to identify opportunities for ceremony and planting at different times throughout the project, including during implementation.

