

WHAT WE HEARD

Montrose Newton Shared Use Path

Edmonton

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During our public engagement for Montrose (January 26, 2017) and Newton (March 14, 2017) Neighbourhood Renewal, the City of Edmonton heard comments expressing interest in developing a pathway along the berm that runs beside Yellowhead Trail on the north edge of both neighbourhoods. Resident comments from these meetings supported a formalized asphalt trail and lighting along the berm.

Based on the feedback we received, the City developed a concept plan, which was shared with all Montrose and Newton residents, property owners near the project area, users of the berm, and other stakeholders such as community leagues in fall 2017, to gather additional feedback via an online survey on the concept plan.

BACKGROUND

The location proposed for improvements is the top of the berm adjacent to Yellowhead Trail from 50 Street to 66 Street. Proposed improvements include a 3m asphalt shared use path connecting to the intersections at 50 Street and 66 Street, as well as pedestrian-level lighting.

Letters were mailed to all residents living in Montrose and Newton, and property owners near the project area. Signage was placed on the berm to notify existing users of the berm and project information was emailed to area stakeholders such as community leagues. Project information was provided as well as a survey link.

WHAT WE HEARD

The City received 85 online responses to the survey.

- 71% said they supported the installation of an asphalt path.
- 72% said they supported the installation of lighting.
- 25% said that they did not support either the asphalt path or the lighting.

GENERAL THEMES & RESPONSES

The following is a summary of the main themes that were heard from the survey responses.

How would the addition of an asphalt path affect your use of the space?

The majority of responses indicated that the asphalt path would positively affect the use of the space. The most common themes are outlined below.

Enables After Dark and All Season Use: Respondents indicated they would be more likely to use the area more often in the evenings after dark and during the winter or when there is inclement weather.

Walk Dogs: An asphalt path makes the area more usable for walking dogs after dark. Similar to the general use of the space after dark and all season use, respondents indicated that an asphalt trail would increase the use of the space for dog walking.

Improves Accessibility: Respondents said that the path is currently uneven and hard to navigate and an asphalt trail would make it easier to use as it would be more accessible for walking and bringing their family.

Bike Access: Respondents said that an asphalt trail would provide a new cycling route that could be used to access shops and provide more direct routes. In addition to using the path for commuting, an asphalt trail would be safer and easier to use for recreational cycling by families and children.

New and Increased Use of the Berm: In addition to comments about how respondents would use the space, they said that paving the trail and formalizing a connection would both increase their use of the area and bring new users to the area.

Safety: Most respondents said they would feel safer with a formalized connection.

Some other responses expressed concerns on the addition of the asphalt path and how it relates to the preservation of the natural feel of the area. Those few who opposed the idea felt it would not add value and that funding should be used elsewhere.

How would the addition of lighting affect your use of the space?

Most responses indicated that the addition of lighting would positively affect the use of the space. The most common themes are outlined below.

Feels Safer: Respondents said that lighting on the berm would make them feel safer and increase their comfort and security when using the area and so they would use the area more often. Respondents also felt that the new lighting would bring more users to the area which would increase the feeling of security, as there are more people and therefore eyes on the path.

Use After Dark & Use in Winter: Respondents said the lighting would allow them to use the area more in the early mornings and evening, especially in winter when light hours are fewer.

Crime Prevention: Respondents said that lighting would discourage crime and other unwanted activity on the berm.

New and Increased Activity on the Berm: Respondents said that in addition to feeling safer and using the area more after dark and in the winter, they would generally use the area more often, including incorporating the route in their commute, walking, walking their dogs, cycling and running along the berm.

Some other responses expressed concerns about the addition of lighting on the berm. Those few who opposed the idea felt it would not add value and that funding should be used elsewhere.

How do you currently use the berm?

The most common uses of the berm include walking and walking dogs. Other common uses include cycling, sitting and running. Some respondents indicated that their grandchildren run up and down the hill, the berm is used for sledding, kite flying and it was a place to gather with others.

Tell us where you currently access the berm?

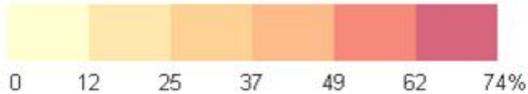
The image below captures the responses. The orange dots indicate where respondents clicked on the interactive map and the green dots indicate where respondents told us they access the berm.



Tell us the parts of the berm you currently use?

For those who chose to use the highlighter tool, the results are captured in the image below. For those who chose to tell us where they used the berm, the majority said they used the entire length from 50-66 Street, some said they use the area behind their home and one indicated that they do not use the berm.

Total: 27 participants



Is there anything else you want us to know about the proposed pathway and lighting along the berm or the project area?

Many respondents provided feedback to this question and said they support the addition of an asphalt pathway and lighting in the area, as it is used by many people and the area would be respected more. There were mixed feelings about whether the development of the path and lighting would increase vandalism and crime in the area, or if the additional use of the area would deter vandalism and crime. Few respondents said that the addition of a pathway and lighting along the berm would not add value to the area.

In addition, some respondents had additional ideas on how to further enhance the berm from 50-66 Street:

Theme	Suggestion	City's Response
Off Leash Boundaries	Respondents indicated that they would like to see the existing off leash area in Montrose more defined and extended the entire length to 50 Street, as it is very popular.	The off-leash program team will be gathering public feedback to gauge interest in expanding the current off leash boundaries to include the east half of the berm to 50 Street. The survey is available online at www.edmonton.ca/offleashupdates until February 21, 2018. In addition, City representatives will be at the Newton Reconstruction meeting on February 8, 2018.
Dog Amenities Many respondents said that many use the area to walk their dogs and that owners picking up after their pets is an issue along the entire stretch of the berm from 50-66 Street.	They felt that additional garbage cans, dog bag stations and signage would be helpful and would encourage pet owners to pick up after their dogs.	The City will look to add amenities such as bag stations and garbage cans to the current off leash area. If the off leash area was expanded, pending the results of the off leash area expansion consultation, additional amenities would also be included in the area.

Landscaping	Add more landscaping such as trees and bushes along the berm	Through the City's Roots for Trees program, the north side of the berm was naturalized a couple of years ago. It will take some time for the seedlings to grow.
Additional Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Replace chain link fence ● Add benches along the berm ● Create additional access points 	The project team will connect with our City Operations to look at the condition of the chain link fence and make repairs where required. At this time, additional formal access points and benches are not being considered.
Connectivity	<p>Connect or extend path to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Main parks ● 50 Street to use as bike route ● Westward to follow Yellowhead Trail to 109 Street ● Eastward towards Rundle Park and river valley trails 	The path will connect from 50 Street to 66 Street adjacent to both Montrose and Newton neighbourhoods. Extension of the pathway beyond these limits can be considered alongside future City Projects. For example, when the Bergman Neighbourhood is up for renewal, we can consider extending the pathway and lighting eastward.

Some respondents had some questions about the project.

- *Do adjacent property owners need to pay for the addition of the pathway and lighting as a local improvement on our property taxes?*

The pathway and lighting along the berm is not assessed as a local improvement tax. It is funded through an approved program that makes improvements in neighbourhoods while neighbourhood renewal is in the area.

- *Can we put the pathway on the top of the berm, instead of the north or south side of the berm as it would help make an even surface that is easier to walk on?*
- *Can there be consideration to building the path at the bottom of the berm instead of the top?*

The project will be aligning the asphalt trail along the top of the berm as this is the area that gets used most often. There are utility conflicts at the bottom of the berm, as well as a swale that prevents the bottom of the berm from being a feasible location.

- *What are the projected costs for this project and the expected time frame?*

The pathway and lighting is expected to be constructed in 2019. The costs of the project are being refined through the design phase. The project is funded through the Great Neighbourhoods Capital Program, which is approved to enhance amenities in neighbourhoods that are undergoing Neighbourhood Renewal.

- *How would this project be impacted by the future upgrading of Yellowhead Trail and the 66 Street intersection?*

Planning and public engagement related to the Yellowhead Trail / 66 Street intersection will begin in 2018. The impacts at this location will be unknown until the concept plan is developed. The creation of the concept plan will outline the changes needed for surrounding roadways to support the freeway vision for Yellowhead Trail. The pathway and lighting are not anticipated to be impacted by the future upgrading of Yellowhead Trail. However, the north-south connection across Yellowhead Trail at 66 Street is anticipated to close as part of the Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion Program.

- *Will the addition of the pathway and lighting affect the use of the area as an off leash park?*

There are many locations in Edmonton where an area is off leash and has a formalized pathway and lighting. The addition of a pathway and lighting in the area is intended to be multi use, which includes off leash dog amenities in the formal off leash park.

Due to the number of comments received about expanding the off leash boundaries, the off leash program team will be gathering public feedback to gauge interest in expanding the current off leash boundaries to include the east side of the berm to 50 Street. The survey is available online at www.edmonton.ca/offleashupdates and will be available until February 21, 2018.

- *There is so much construction occurring in our neighbourhood and in front of our homes, when will we get a break?*

Utility Companies such as ATCO and EPCOR schedule their work and any upgrades to their infrastructure before Neighbourhood Renewal comes in to replace the roads, sidewalks and streetlights. This is to ensure good coordination between the projects and to reduce the instances of cutting into the road after it has been replaced.

- *In some places, the fence is in need of repair. How does this get repaired?*

The project team will take note of this comment and connect with our City Operations group for repair of the fence. If you notice infrastructure in need of repair, another avenue you can use to contact the City is to call 311.

- *Can the pathway width be reduced to less than 3m?*

Where possible, we will design a minimum of 3 metres to be able to accommodate multiple uses of the area at one time. This 3 metre width is a standard width for a shared use path.

- *Will the mature trees be cut down?*

The City will minimize impacts to trees when installing the pathway and lighting in the area. In a few instances, where trees are impacted or removed, the value will be re-invested in the area by planting additional trees to replace them.

- *Will the addition of an asphalt trail increase the noise and vibration in the area?*

The asphalt trail will be used by people walking, cycling, walking their dogs and other passive activities, and so the addition of the path is not expected to have any impact on noise and vibration in the area.

- *Are there any plans to consider noise mitigation with the project?*

A noise study was completed as part of the Yellowhead Trail Freeway Conversion Program. The results found that the existing berm on the south side of Yellowhead Trail provides noise buffering for existing traffic today, as well as for future traffic projections. In accordance with the City's Urban Traffic Noise Policy, the noise levels fall under the threshold and no additional noise mitigation strategies are being considered as part of the freeway conversion program.

- *Where would users park?*

The area would be primarily used by local residents within the neighbourhood and by cyclists using it as a commuter route. For any users that are driving to this site, it is expected that parking would be along the adjacent neighbourhood streets.

- *Will the lighting on the berm shine on the adjacent properties?*

Pedestrian level lighting is proposed along the top of the berm. The light will be designed to illuminate the pathway. The pedestrian light poles do not have an arm and they direct light downwards.

- *What can be done to prevent ATV's, skidoos and people driving onto the berm?*

At the access points by 50 Street and 66 Street, we will use landscaping and bollards to ensure the path is not accessible for vehicles. If there are other locations where this is happening, please let the project team know. In addition, if you notice this activity happening, please report it by calling the City at 311.

Next Steps:

Given the overall support for both elements of the project, the City will proceed with the detailed design of the asphalt shared use path and lighting, while taking into consideration the design suggestions outlined above. Once completed, the final design will be shared on the Montrose and Newton Building Great Neighbourhoods webpages at edmonton.ca/buildingMontrose or edmonton.ca/buildingNewton. The project will be constructed in 2019 as part of the Newton neighbourhood renewal project.