

What We Decided Strathcona Back Street

June 2021

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Edmonton

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Overview

Construction for Strathcona's Neighbourhood Renewal began in spring 2019, and is expected to be completed in 2021. As part of the project, the City is renewing the alley north of Whyte Avenue, from Gateway Boulevard to 104 Street.

Purpose

This report shares how the City of Edmonton arrived at final designs for the Strathcona Back Street project. It describes when and how the City used policy and program information, public engagement input and technical requirements to make project decisions. The report also illustrates how the project decisions align with the project goals.

When is an alley more than an alley?

The Neighbourhood Renewal Program includes reconstruction of local and collector streets and sidewalks. Alleys are not usually included in this process, but sometimes an alley is more than an alley. Since there are several commercial units and a residential apartment building with active edges and main entrances facing the alley, it is considered a "back street," and as such, is included within the scope of Strathcona's Neighbourhood Renewal.

Working together to make the most out of your neighbourhood

Great neighbourhoods are the building blocks of a great city and the City of Edmonton is committed to building great neighbourhoods by investing taxpayer dollars in reconstruction to enhance livability and longevity.

The City of Edmonton's Neighbourhood Renewal Program is designed to improve infrastructure and increase vibrancy in Edmonton's mature neighbourhoods. It is a cost-effective, long-term, strategic approach to address infrastructure needs such as rebuilding and renewing roads, sidewalks and street lights. Strathcona Back Street is a project within Strathcona Neighbourhood Renewal, funded in partnership with EPCOR Drainage and community partners.



Plaza design, looking south from 83 Avenue



Project Background

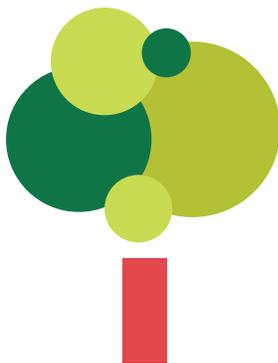
The project will upgrade the alley to a shared street and transform two city-owned parking lots into plaza spaces. In partnership with EPCOR Drainage, low impact development (LID) will be installed in the plaza spaces to reduce flooding risks. Renewal of City and EPCOR funded elements are anticipated to be completed in 2021, which includes:

- + Roadway surface upgrades from asphalt to concrete and pavers
- + Paving of two new plaza spaces
- + Improved drainage through LID features including trees, soil cells and planters
- + Increased lighting along the back street

Design elements that improve the vibrancy of the area are community partner funded, and may be phased in or scaled back depending on fundraising. These elements include:

- + Bench seating
- + Lighting to improve the look and feel of the area including hanging lights above the plaza spaces
- + Centralized waste disposal for businesses
- + Entrance features
- + Other artistic elements

In addition to this, the Old Strathcona Business Association and other community partners have expressed interest in pursuing an honorary name for the back street.



Decision making process

There are many critical aspects in the decision making process for a renewal project. Along with public input, the project team needs to consider technical requirements, funds available and City policies and programs to determine what is ultimately built.

CITY POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

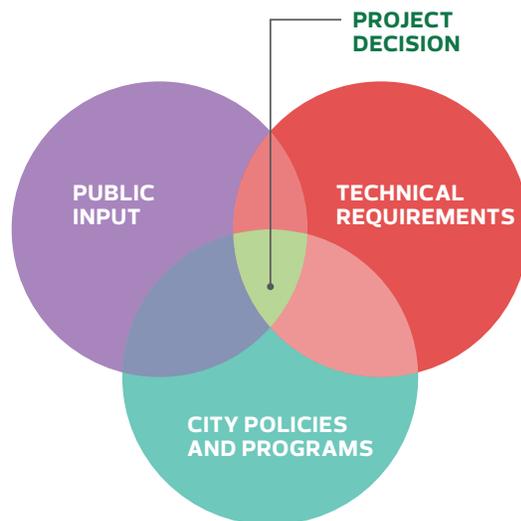
- + The City Plan
- + Edmonton Bike Plan
- + Local Improvement Policy
- + Public Engagement Policy
- + Breathe – Green Network Strategy
- + Winter Design Policy
- + Safe Mobility Strategy
- + Community Traffic Management Policy
- + Snow and Ice Control Policy
- + Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy
- + and more

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INPUT

- + Advise on project goals and the draft design

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- + Infrastructure assessments
- + Access Design Guide
- + Winter Design Guidelines
- + Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)
- + Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards
- + Existing underground and above ground utilities

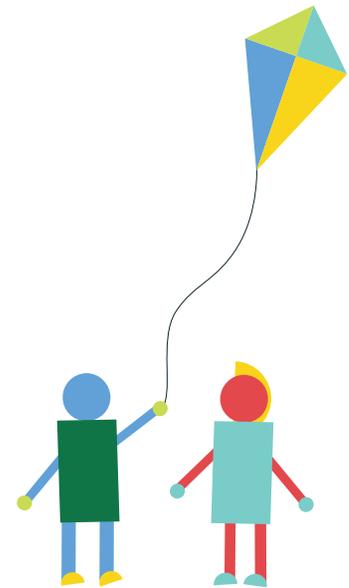


Engagement Summary

The Strathcona Back Street renewal public engagement input opportunities included:

Timeline	Goal of Engagement	Type of Engagement	Number of participants
November – December 2019	Community Feedback on Draft Design Share information about the project and invite public input on the project goals and Draft Design	Pop-up event at the Old Strathcona Farmers' Market on December 14, 2019 Online survey between December 13–31, 2019	130
June 2019 – October 2020	Feedback from Community Partners on Planning and Design Share project updates and invite feedback on planning and design decisions throughout the project	11 meetings with Community Partners	32

Public engagement also includes input that the City of Edmonton project coordinator received through emails and phone calls.



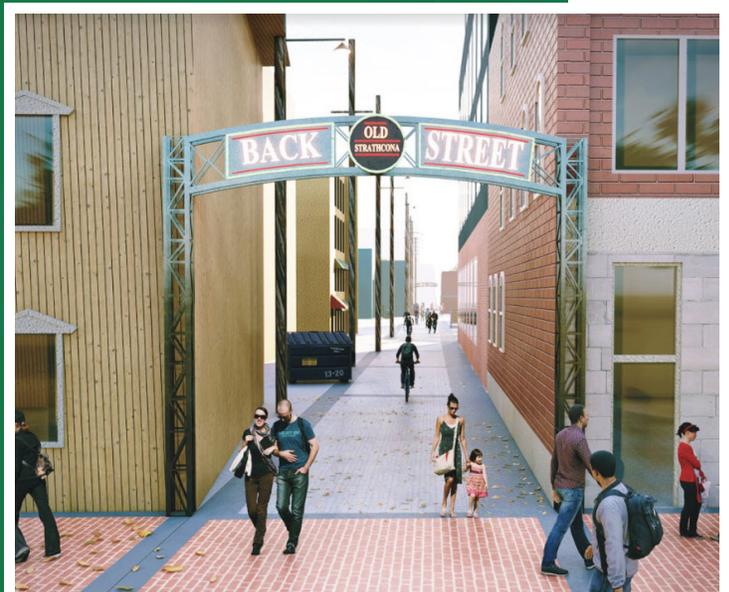
Project goals

The project goals were designed to align with the Vision and Guiding Principles of Strathcona Neighbourhood Renewal, which can be found at edmonton.ca/BuildingStrathcona.

Goals of the Strathcona Back Street project include:

- + Create a safe, welcoming, inviting space for gathering and visiting area businesses
- + Create a greener, cleaner public space that promotes health, happiness and well-being
- + Design a functional, fully accessible space, considering the needs of all users
- + Create a more beautiful, all-season space with flexibility in the design for festivals and other events
- + Retain and reflect the character and history of Old Strathcona

The project goals were refined with community partners and shared as a reference for the public when sharing feedback on the designs.



Alley entrance, looking west from Gateway Boulevard. *Entrance features are community partner funded and the designs shown are at concept level only.



What we heard along the way

The Strathcona Back Street project team developed a What We Heard report following public engagement from November – December 2019. This report is available online at edmonton.ca/StrathconaBackStreet.

What we decided

This section presents the final project decisions for the Strathcona Back Street project, including the key City policies and programs, public engagement input and technical requirements that informed the City's decisions related to each topic. Note that community partner funded elements may be scaled back or phased in as funds become available. To view the final designs and updates on construction, please visit edmonton.ca/StrathconaBackStreet.

Overall the majority of the feedback we received for this project was positive. People were supportive of the proposed improvements to the area and particularly appreciated elements of the design like the lighting, greenery and seating.

What we decided (CONT)

Design element	What we decided	What we accounted for to make our decisions*
Pavement material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Majority of the roadway surface will be renewed in concrete, with a limited number of pavers used to tie the plazas into the existing streetscape treatment on 83 Avenue + The concrete will be sandblasted and sawcut to create a unique visual identity for the shared street 	<p> What we heard</p> <p>In addition to the project goals, we heard feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Retaining the historical character of Old Strathcona in the space + Ensuring the space is accessible for wheelchairs, strollers and people with mobility challenges + Concerns that the alley has appropriate winter maintenance and snow clearing <p> Technical requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Concrete paving is preferred over pavers for snow clearing and maintenance + Alleys are designed to be compatible with snow clearing equipment + The westernmost north–south alley will be designed to limit potential of overland drainage + Working around existing underground and above ground utilities <p> City policies and programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards on designing shared alleyways + Access Design Guide to support access and use for people of all ages and abilities + Snow and Ice Control Policy to ensure the back street is designed to be compatible with snow clearing equipment + Winter Design Guidelines promote transforming Edmonton into a Great Winter City by using appropriate materials, lighting, and colour

*Legend

The City used policies and programs, public engagement input and technical requirements to make project decisions. This report uses three coloured icons to illustrate which decision-making criteria is a policy or program, public engagement input, or a technical requirement. You will see these icons in the "What we accounted for to make our decisions" column in each table.

The decision making criteria are:

 Public engagement input / what we heard

 Technical requirements

 City policies and programs

Design element	What we decided	What we accounted for to make our decisions
Lighting	<p>Lighting upgrades from an alley to a back street include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Cantilevered luminaire lighting on utility poles + Additional lighting to improve visibility for people walking and rolling <p>Community partner funded* lighting includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Overhead lighting strung on bronze poles across the plaza spaces to support use in all seasons + Tree lighting <p>Additional lighting opportunities that can be explored by community partners in the future include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Lighting features on building facades, suspended artwork or murals lit with wash lighting 	<p> What we heard</p> <p>In addition to the project goals, we heard feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Ensuring people feel safe in the space + Considering winter design features such as bright colours, lighting and warm seating <p> Technical requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Due to regulations, no lighting other than cantilevered luminaries can be attached to wooden utility poles + Working around existing underground and above ground utilities and power poles + Principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design <p> City policies and programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards on designing shared alleyways + City of Edmonton Light Efficient Community Policy for direction on lighting levels + Residential Neighbourhood Street Lighting Renewal Policy for direction on lighting levels + Winter Design Guidelines promote transforming Edmonton into a Great Winter City by using appropriate materials, lighting, and colour

*Community partner funded elements may be phased in over time or scaled back depending on fundraising



Design element	What we decided	What we accounted for to make our decisions
Seating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Five custom benches* will be installed (three in the west plaza and two in the east plaza) + Benches will be wood to provide a warmer seating surface in winter + The majority of benches will have backs and armrests to ensure accessibility, with some armrests being removed for spillover seating 	<p> What we heard</p> <p>In addition to the project goals, we heard feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Keeping the spaces flexible for future programming, patios and festivals + Ensuring the space is accessible for people using wheelchairs, strollers and people with mobility challenges + Designing the benches to better suit all ages and abilities + Considering winter design features such as bright colours, lighting and warm seating <p> Technical requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Designed with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design lenses to provide clear sightlines + The benches are designed to integrate with LID facilities (concrete planter boxes) + Underlit benches have been removed from the design due to maintenance concerns and impacts on people with visual impairments <p> City policies and programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Access Design Guide to support access and use for people of all ages and abilities + Winter Design Guidelines promote transforming Edmonton into a Great Winter City by using appropriate materials, lighting, and colour + PlanWhyte promotes an activated alley network and public realm through the core heritage commercial area

*Community partner funded elements may be phased in over time or scaled back depending on fundraising



Design element	What we decided	What we accounted for to make our decisions
Plaza layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Plazas have been designed to maximize flexibility around use of the space for temporary furnishings such as tents, tables and chairs + The number of bollards (short posts used to prevent vehicles from entering an area) have been decreased from earlier versions of the design to ensure flexibility of the space and reduce maintenance concerns 	<p>What we heard</p> <p>In addition to the project goals, we heard feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Keeping the spaces flexible for future programming, patios and festivals + Ensuring the space is accessible for wheelchairs, strollers and people with mobility challenges + Some stakeholders expressed preference for increased separation between the plazas and private lots <p>Technical requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Complete Streets Design and Construction – Roadways 2018 + Designed with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design lenses to provide clear sightlines + Working around existing underground and above ground utilities + Lit bollards have been removed from the design to reduce maintenance concerns <p>City policies and programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Access Design Guide to support access and use for people of all ages and abilities + Snow and Ice Control Policy to ensure the back street is designed to be compatible with snow clearing equipment + Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards calls for shared alleyways to use textured or pervious pavements that are flush with the curb to reinforce to users that the roadway is shared + PlanWhyte promotes an activated alley network and public realm through the core heritage commercial area



Design element	What we decided	What we accounted for to make our decisions
Greenery and Drainage (LID)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Structural soil cells underneath the east and west plazas to collect run-off and improve water quality + Nine new trees will be planted (seven in the west plaza and two in the east plaza) + Two existing trees will remain in the east plaza next to Gateway Boulevard + Three shrubs in concrete benches will be installed to provide screening between lots + Two shrub planters will be installed along 83 Avenue + The Old Strathcona Youth Society parking lot will be paved in asphalt to ensure adequate drainage into the LID facilities 	<p>What we heard</p> <p>In addition to the project goals, we heard feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Improving drainage in the alley <p>Technical requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + City of Edmonton Design and Construction Standards – Volume 3 Drainage + City of Edmonton Landscaping Design and Construction Standards + New landscaping considers sightlines and maintaining visibility + Working around existing underground and above ground utilities <p>City policies and programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + BREATHE – Green Network Strategy promotes an adequate supply, quality and distribution of open space, that is accessible and inclusive for all + The City of Edmonton's 2020 Corporate Tree Policy supports the orderly development and growth of the City's tree inventory and the protection of the tree canopy + The City Plan promotes providing green spaces and plantings for low impact development to manage stormwater runoff + Winter Design Guidelines promote transforming Edmonton into a Great Winter City through appropriate plant selection



Design element	What we decided	What we accounted for to make our decisions
Centralized garbage disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Space for waste bins has been designed to be compact and in line with the portion of the lot that is used for waste currently + Space is anticipated to include three in-ground garbage bins and one in-ground grease bin* + A screening fence is provided on the north and west sides of the waste bins to separate them from the Old Strathcona Youth Society lot 	<p> What we heard</p> <p>In addition to the project goals, we heard feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Creating a space for centralized garbage to help clean up the alley + Retaining parking and flexibility of the Old Strathcona Youth Society parking lot for events and programming <p> Technical requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Working around existing underground and above ground utilities + Appropriate offsets from buildings and other features and between units to allow for waste collection + Appropriate clearance and accessibility for waste collection vehicles + Providing electricity for grease molok <p> City policies and programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + PlanWhyte promotes an activated alley network and public realm through the core heritage commercial area
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Parallel parking stalls will be provided along 83 Avenue, including two accessible stalls and one loading zone + Parking stalls will be separated by raised planters and a small number of bollards (short poles) will be used to delineate the parking stalls from the east plaza + The parking is designed to be an extension of the plaza spaces when the area is closed down for festivals or events 	<p> What we heard</p> <p>In addition to the project goals, we heard feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Concerns about damage to trees from people driving vehicles + Concerns about reducing parking and access for deliveries and loading for surrounding businesses and the Farmers' Market <p> Technical requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Two parking stalls will be designated accessible to align with the Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy + Planters are raised to protect shrubs from sand and salt + Parking stall dimensions as per the Edmonton Zoning Bylaw 12800 + Working around existing underground and above ground utilities <p> City policies and programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy for direction on applying an accessibility lens to infrastructure projects + Access Design Design Guide for guidance on accessible parking dimensions

*Community partner funded elements may be phased in over time or scaled back depending on fundraising

Design element	What we decided	What we accounted for to make our decisions
Bike Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Additional bike parking will be installed on the corner of 83 Avenue and Gateway Boulevard + The existing bike repair station at the corner of 83 Avenue and Gateway Boulevard will remain 	<p> What we heard</p> <p>In addition to the project goals, we heard feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Adding more bike parking into the area <p> Technical requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Zoning Bylaw requirements for size and location of bike parking facilities + Parking is placed in an accessible and visible area <p> City policies and programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The Edmonton Bike Plan recommends bike parking as part of a high quality bike network
Entrance Features	<p>Note: Entrance features are community partner funded* and the designs shown are at concept level only.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Primary entrances to the back street on Gateway Boulevard and Calgary Trail will have freestanding industrial style entry features with lit signage + Secondary entrance features will be placed next to the Varscona Theatre and at the east plaza 	<p> What we heard</p> <p>In addition to the project goals, we heard feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Considering wayfinding to major destinations in the area + Retaining the historical character of Old Strathcona in the space <p> Technical requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Working around existing underground and above ground utilities + Primary entry features to be lit with underground conduits and cabling in the future + Secondary entrance feature in the west alley can only be lit from nearby buildings <p> City policies and programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + PlanWhyte promotes an activated alley network and public realm through the core heritage commercial area
Traffic flow	<p>The following alleys will be converted to one-way operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The east-west alley will be converted into a one-way eastbound + The westernmost north-south alley will be converted to a one-way southbound + The easternmost north-south alley will be converted to a one-way northbound 	<p> What we heard</p> <p>In addition to the project goals, we heard feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Ensuring people feel safe in the space + Concerns for enforcing one-way roads within the alley <p> Technical requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + One-way signage will be installed <p> City policies and programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards on designing shared alleyways

*Community partner funded elements may be phased in over time or scaled back depending on fundraising

Preparing for Construction

Construction of City and EPCOR funded elements of the Strathcona Back Street project is scheduled for 2021. Community partner funded elements may be phased in over time or scaled back depending on fundraising.

You may have seen a few activities in the area prior to construction, including:

- + Utility assessments and repairs/relocations/replacements
- + Topographical survey and layout to support design and construction (including flags and paint markings)
- + Coring small holes in the alley to verify design assumptions for pavement structures

Ways the City will communicate with you

Before construction starts in your neighbourhood, construction bulletins will be distributed to property owners, residents and businesses in the area. A second construction bulletin will be provided by the contractor identifying more detailed dates, closer to the start of construction.

The City's Delivery Project Manager will be your point of contact during construction and their contact information can be found at edmonton.ca/StrathconaBackStreet, or by calling 311. If you have special access requirements, such as DATS, please advise your Delivery Project Manager during construction.



For more information about the project:

Web: edmonton.ca/StrathconaBackStreet

Email: buildinggreatneighbourhoods@edmonton.ca

Call: 311

For more information about Strathcona Neighbourhood Renewal:

edmonton.ca/BuildingStrathcona



Working together to make the most out of your neighbourhood.

This is your city and your neighbourhood. We want to understand how you experience your neighbourhood and ask for your input on what we might do to make it better. We will engage and work with you on the renewal of streets, sidewalks, street lights, and park spaces, and promote other community opportunities to enhance how people live and interact in your neighbourhood. We commit to being open and transparent about how your input is used. Let's make the most out of your neighbourhood.

edmonton.ca/BuildingStrathcona

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