

GALLAGHER PARK CONCEPT PLAN WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

PHASE 3: DRAFT PREFERRED
CONCEPT PLAN

DECEMBER 2020

Photo Credit: Mack Male, mastermaq.ca

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Project Overview and Purpose

Gallagher Park has always been a cherished and well-used space in Edmonton. This location was traditionally used as a gathering spot and place of commerce by indigenous people and new settlers.



It now provides walking, cycling and commuter access to river valley and ravine trails, as well as the downtown core. As a River Valley Park, its environmental assets are protected and with careful planning, enhanced for the enjoyment of both Edmontonians and visitors. Spectacular views from the park are some of the best the city has to offer.



The purpose of the Gallagher Park Concept Plan project is to ensure a long-term strategic approach for the development and use of Gallagher Park, that takes into account its site partners' attractions and programming, through the development of a 20-year plan. We want to improve the experience for those who visit and enjoy the park. As we build the 20-year concept plan, we will take into consideration existing plans and policies, opportunities and constraints and the preferences of Edmontonians.

Site History

Gallagher Park is at the centre of Edmonton's history:

- Indigenous settlements were common along the North Saskatchewan River.
- The Cloverdale Community League was established in 1920.
- The park has been home to the Edmonton Ski Club since 1922.
- The Muttart Conservatory opened in Gallagher Park in 1976.
- The internationally renowned Edmonton Folk Music Festival has entertained crowds in Gallagher Park since 1981.

Gallagher Park will see another milestone in 2021 when the first LRT station in the river valley opens adjacent to the park, allowing more Edmontonians access to the river valley park system.



Project Engagement Plan

Preparation of the Concept Plan was composed of three phases of investigation and public engagement.

The role of the public in the first two phases of engagement was to work with the City to **Refine** – involving the public to adapt and adjust the approach to the Concept Plan and the resulting services to be provided.

The role of the public in Phase 3 was to work with the City to **Advise** on the further refinement of the draft preferred Concept Plan as we moved towards a final draft Concept Plan.

PHASE 1

Ideal Gathering, Vision and Guiding Principles.

OBJECTIVES

To gather ideas on the breadth of public uses, stakeholder objectives, site opportunities and constraints and to gather feedback on the proposed vision and guiding principles for development to a proposed vision and guiding principles for development of the Concept Plan.

PHASE 2

Concept Plan Development.

OBJECTIVES

To develop Concept Plan options for consideration, including summer and winter overlays, and recommendations for all-season programming and site improvements.

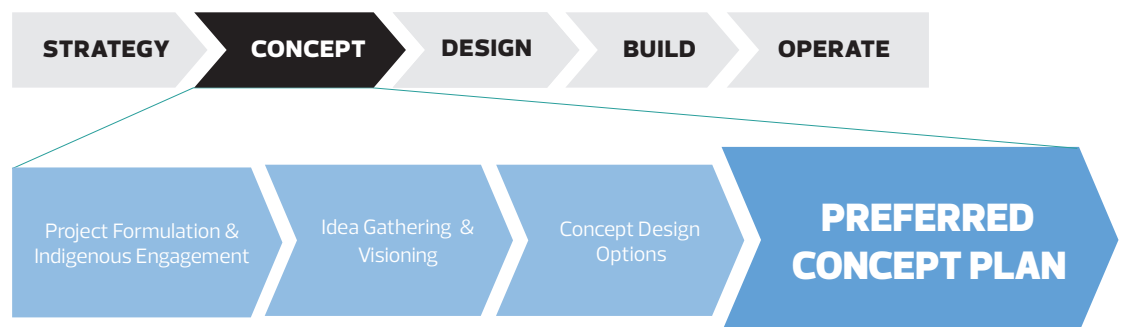
PHASE 3

Draft Preferred Concept Plan.

OBJECTIVES

To present a draft Concept Plan for public review and feedback.

The image below identifies the phase of this project that this report addresses.



Phase 1 – What We Heard and Observed

Phase 1 Engagement: Gathering Ideas and Development of a Vision Statement and Guiding Principles

To engage with citizens in the first phase of development of this concept plan, the City of Edmonton hosted an engagement event on March 6, 2019 at the Cloverdale Community Hall.

The focus of this event was to gather input from the public on the proposed draft vision and guiding principles for the project and hear additional ideas that would assist in the development of draft concept plan alternatives.

Input was obtained from site partners including Cloverdale Community League, Edmonton Folk Music Festival, Edmonton Ski Club, Muttart Conservatory and other external stakeholders such as the Bennett Centre, as well as from the public and stakeholders as summarized in the What We Heard Report from Phase 1 of the project.

Vision Statement and Guiding Principles

OUR VISION

Gallagher Park, the only river valley park that will be accessible by LRT, is a hub for distinctive year round recreational experiences and is integrated into the thriving city core and river valley system.

The **Guiding Principles** are to:

- Facilitate enhanced access to both active and passive recreational activities.
- Enhance the ecological values of the park.
- Provide facilities and infrastructure that support and enhance existing recreation and complimentary uses.
- Encourage LRT and active transportation access to the park and its activities.

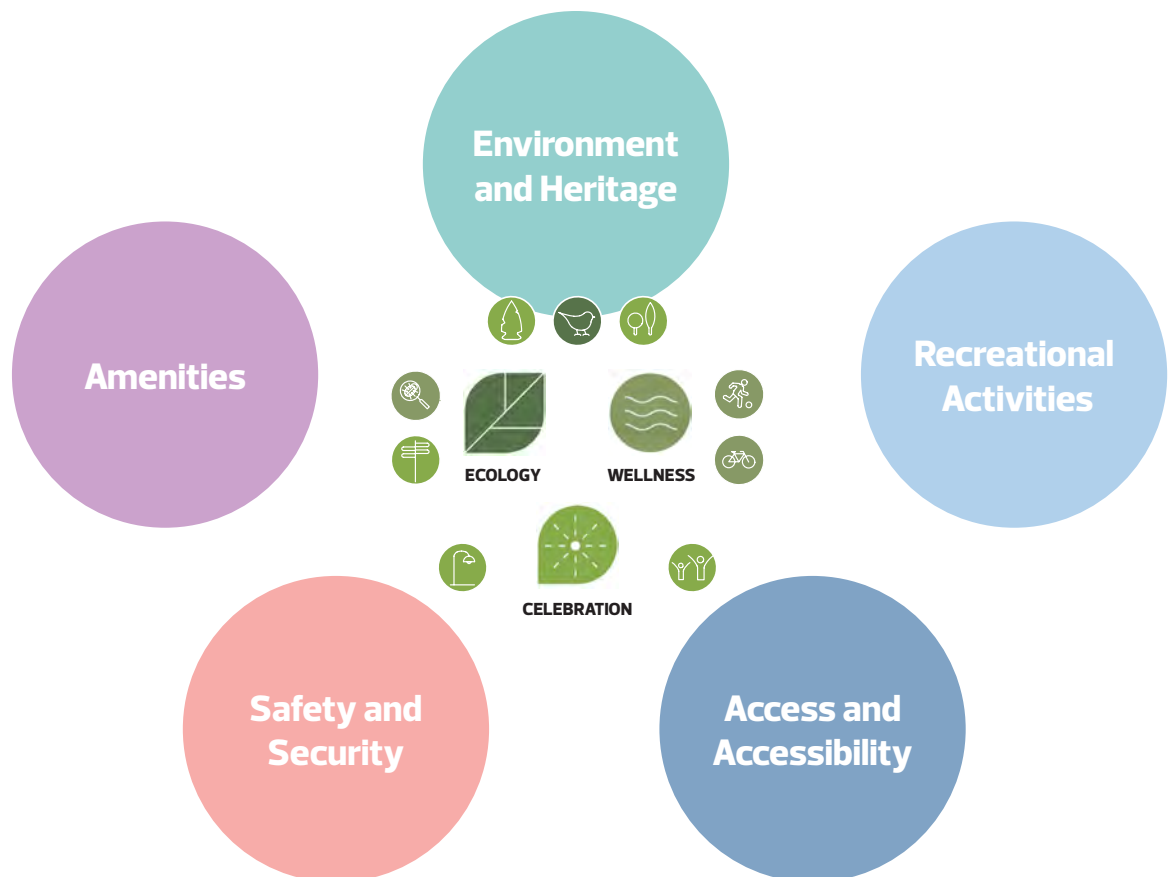
Participants and respondents in the Phase 1 Engagement were very supportive of the proposed vision and guiding principles and in agreement with the various components. There was strong support for access by LRT, encouraging active transportation modes, access for persons with disabilities and support for enhancing the ecological values of the park.

Major Themes from Phase 1

In addition to support for the proposed guiding principles, participants in Phase 1 engagement also identified the following as important considerations in the development of the concept plan alternatives for Gallagher Park:

- Amenities (e.g. washrooms, seating).
- Safety and security (e.g. park lighting, control of vehicle access).
- Access and accessibility (e.g. pathways, enhanced pedestrian entrances).
- Recreational activities (e.g. walkways, picnicking).
- Environment and heritage (e.g. planting).

The image below shows how these five major themes related to the three categories of Ecology, Wellness and Celebration as outlined in the City's open space strategy – Breathe.



Phase 2 – What We Heard and Observed

Phase 2 Engagement: Concept Plan Development

To engage citizens in the second phase of development of this Concept Plan, the City of Edmonton hosted an engagement event on September 18, 2019 at the Cloverdale Community Hall from 4:30–7:30 PM.

The focus of this event was to gather input from the public on a series of proposed enhancements to the park addressing access, amenities, safety, activities, environment and partner opportunities and some optional enhancements in relation to landscaping, pathways, vehicle access and winter sports.

Input was obtained from site partners including Cloverdale Community League, Edmonton Folk Music Festival, Edmonton Ski Club, Muttart Conservatory and other external stakeholders such as the Bennett Centre, as well as from the public as summarized in the What We Heard Report from Phase 2 of the project.

A total of 686 participants attended the event in-person and/or completed the online survey. Almost 90% of participants had previously visited the park and identified that visiting the Muttart Conservatory was the most common reason they visited the park.

A series of enhancements were proposed for summer and winter uses. These included both enhancements that the City could fund and others that could be funded by the site partners. Overall, the proposed enhancements that received the greatest average rating with high support were:

- **Public washrooms.**
- **Additional park lighting.**
- **More pathways for walking, running and cycling.**
- **Better access and signage for walking trails.**
- **Enhanced entrances to the park with seating, bike racks and lighting.**
- **Vehicle barriers and vehicle access controls.**

Design options were presented to gather feedback on public preference for four enhancements related to:

- Landscaping.
- Pathway alignment near the community league area.
- Vehicle access.
- Ski hill upgrades versus a larger sledding area and staircase.

The participants preferred:

- Naturalized landscaping.
- A shared-use pathway through the park.
- A staircase and larger sledding area.
- Vehicle access from the west through the park.

Although the shared-use path was the preferred option, this is constrained by current drainage problems that need to be addressed before the path can be constructed. The staircase and larger sledding area was also preferred; however, this is constrained by the Ski Club's lease area and cannot currently be accommodated. There was equal support to retain the existing vehicular access point through the community and support for the proposed west access: the latter was only stronger by 1%.

Phase 3 Engagement – Draft Preferred Concept Plan

The goal for this phase of the project was to present the draft preferred concept plan for review.

What We Did

To engage citizens in the third phase of the draft preferred Concept Plan, the City of Edmonton hosted an online engagement event from August 17, 2020 to September 15, 2020 through engaged.edmonton.ca.

The focus of this event was to secure final input from the public on the draft preferred Concept Plan. The public engagement plan originally intended this event to be an in-person public open house in April 2020, similar to the event held in Phase 2. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the guidelines around physical distancing, the City postponed all in-person events. As a result, Phase 3 Engagement for Gallagher Park was completed online using the engaged.edmonton platform and the following information was provided:

- Background information for the project and the project stages, including public engagement progress through to Phase 3.
- A pre-recorded presentation included: background information, current project status, draft Concept Plan, downloadable presentation slides and transcript.
- The draft preferred Concept Plan, zoom-in key features the recommended historical signage plan, and previous engagement materials and feedback from Phases 1 and 2.

Participants who visited the webpage were invited to review the materials listed above and share their feedback through a comment box.

Participants were notified of the online engagement event via postcards delivered to Cloverdale community residents, onsite signage and e-invites to the City of Edmonton's Insight Community.

The engagement event was initially scheduled to close on September 7, 2020; but was extended by one week to September 15, 2020 due to the amount of feedback received. Postcards were delivered to Cloverdale community residents advising them of the extension.

Participation

The following is a summary of the number of participants who viewed the online engagement event as reported by engaged.edmonton.ca. There were a total of 494 page views as described below:

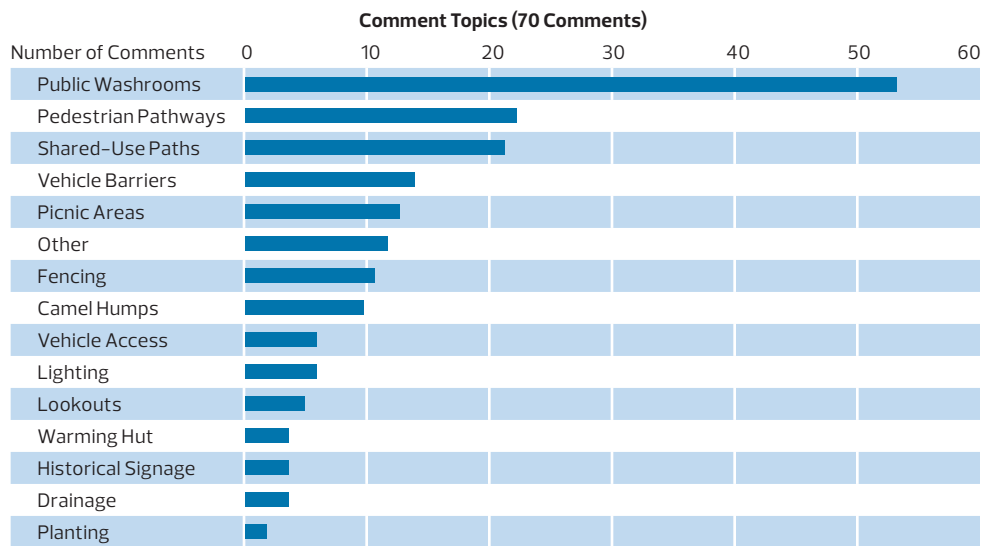
- 223 navigated the page including viewing a video, downloading a document, visiting the FAQ page or posting a comment (this includes 63 viewers who left at least one comment).
- 271 participants chose to view the page only without reviewing the attachments or commenting.
- Feedback was collected through comments; therefore, the opinions of those who viewed the page but did not leave a comment, is unknown.

A total of 70 comments were received.

The Overall Draft Concept was the most downloaded at 123 downloads, followed by the Presentation Slides at 43 and Presentation Script at 18.

Feedback

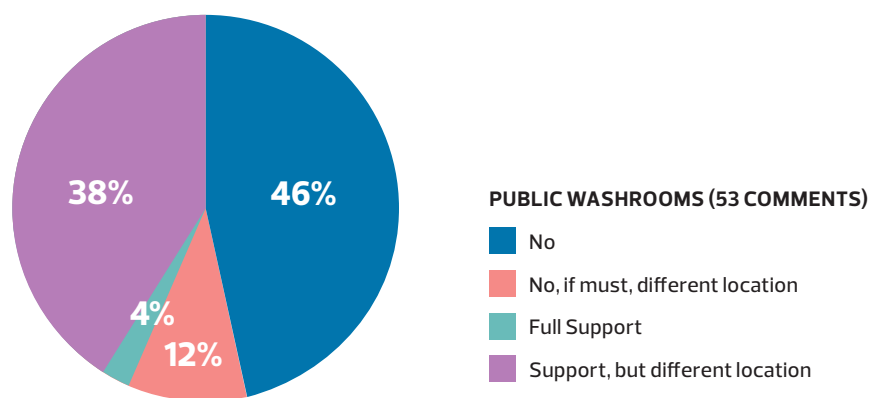
The 70 comments covered approximately 15 topics, with nine comments generally supportive of the plan. The 15 topics covered in the comments are shown in the chart below:



Most comments received were about the proposed public washrooms and their location. Of the 53 comments on the public washrooms:

- 46% (or 24 comments) were completely opposed to them.
- 38% (or 20 comments) were supportive of the idea, but suggested other locations.
- 12% (six comments) preferred no washrooms at all, but acknowledged that, if they are required, other locations in the park were preferred.
- 4% (two comments) fully supported the public washrooms in their proposed location.

Public Washrooms



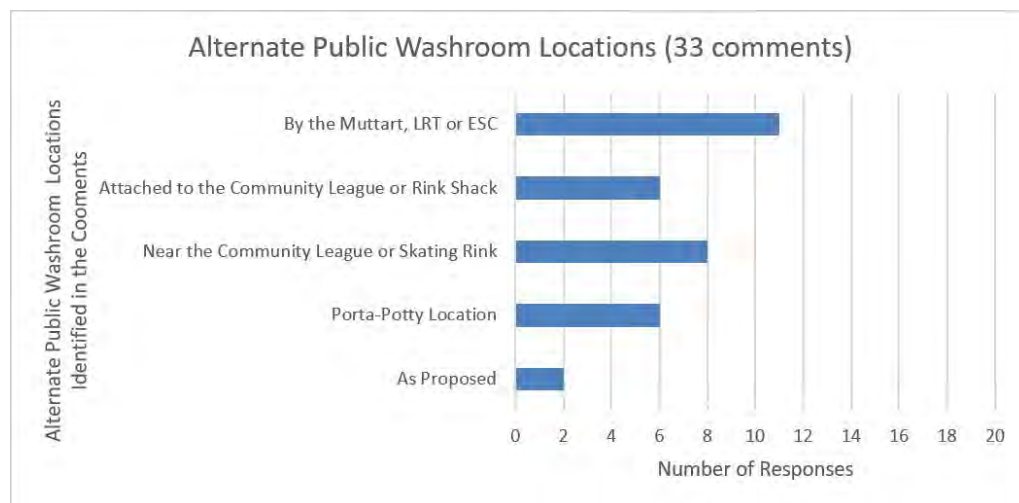
The majority of responses did not support the proposed location of the public washrooms along 95 Street as it would affect the views of residents who live on 95 Street. These comments came from people identifying as Cloverdale residents, residents of 95 Street or non-residents of Cloverdale.

There was concern that the public washrooms would attract more crime, vandalism or illicit activities to the park. A couple of notable comments suggested:

1. It was not the lack of public washrooms available in the area, but the lack of access to public washrooms. There are washroom facilities in the Bennett Centre, the Cloverdale Community League building, the rink shack, the Muttart Conservatory and likely to be in the future LRT Station, once open. The respondent suggested working together with these facilities to enable public access to the washroom facilities.
2. They were not opposed to public washrooms in theory, the concern is how the level of maintenance and security of them will be enforced.

Out of the 53 comments on the proposed public washrooms, 33 suggested alternate locations. The alternate locations proposed by the respondents included:

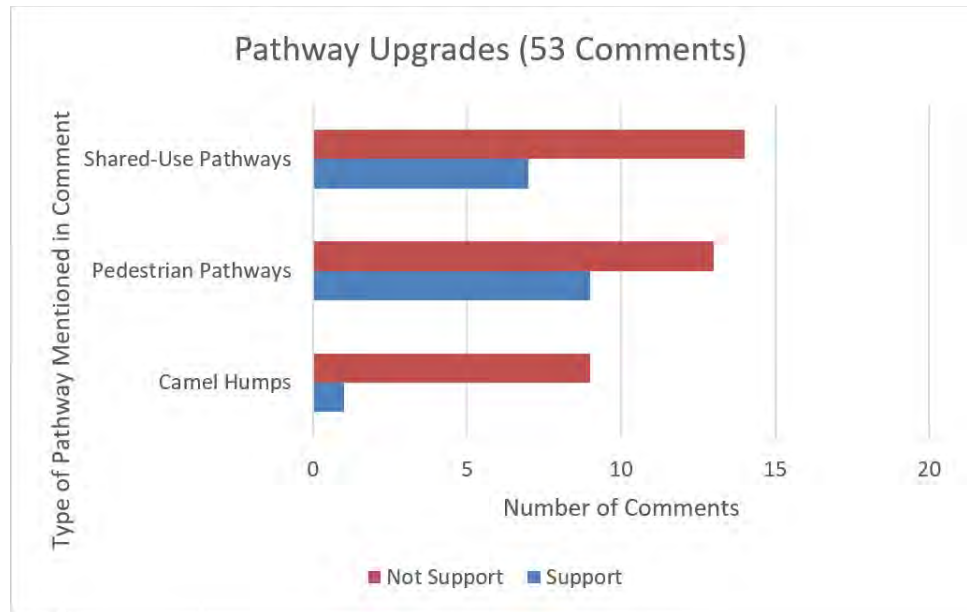
1. In the west area of the park, closer to the Edmonton Ski Club (ESC), Muttart Conservatory, and the LRT.
2. Attaching them to the Cloverdale Community League building or the rink shack.
3. Locating the public washroom building nearer to the community league building or the skating rink.
4. Where the porta-potties are currently located (which is similar to the above location, north of the community league building and near the rink shack).



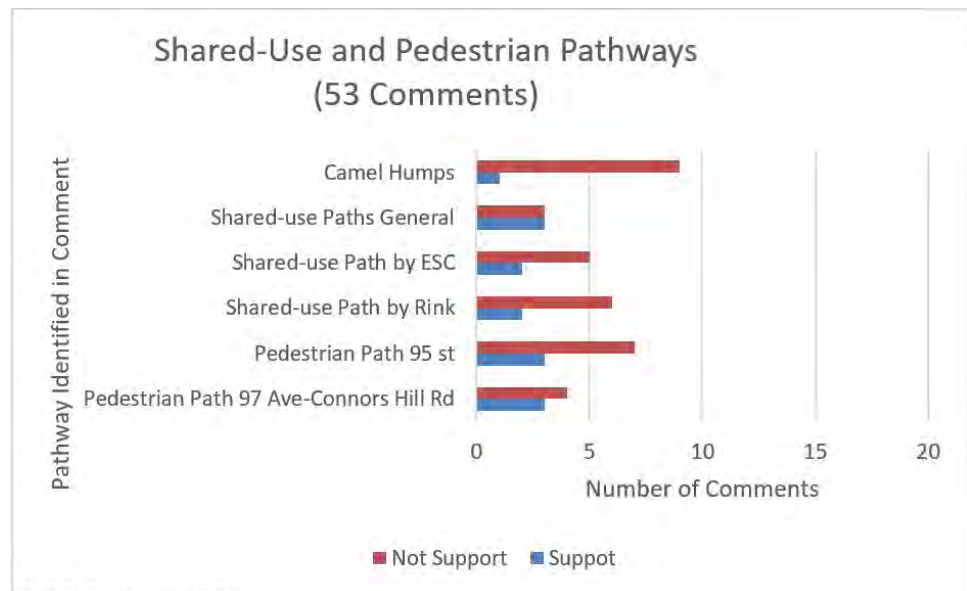
Pedestrian Pathways, Shared-Use Pathways and the Camel Humps

The next most common comments were related to the proposed pedestrian pathways (22 comments) and shared-use pathways (21 comments), including 10 comments specific to the Camel Humps, totalling 53 comments on this topic. Those who commented on the pathways did not support the upgrades saying the existing pathways were sufficient and paved pathways through the park would cause obstruction to cyclists, skiers or tobogganers coming down the hill at speed. There was notable commentary on the Camel Humps pathway upgrades. Respondents did not want a pathway paved or the wildlife disturbed, even though the pathways were not proposed to be paved.

Respondents in support of the proposed pedestrian and shared-use pathways acknowledged these connections would make the park more accessible to those with reduced mobility and families with strollers. Supporters of upgrades to the Camel Humps pathway agreed that it could be difficult to traverse at times.



The general commentary on the shared-use and pedestrian pathways was captured in the above summary and graph. The graph below identifies which specific pathways were most referred to.



Ten comments focused on the pedestrian path on 95 Street, which is covered in detail in the following section.

A total of seven comments referred to the proposed pedestrian pathway connecting 97 Avenue and Connors Hill Road, with three in support and four opposed. The supportive comments acknowledge the park would be more accessible for people with reduced mobility with upgraded pathways, while those opposed felt paved pathways were not necessary, not worth the cost and over-developing the park.

There were six comments referring to “the shared-use paths” without identifying one specifically. Three comments were in favour and three were not.

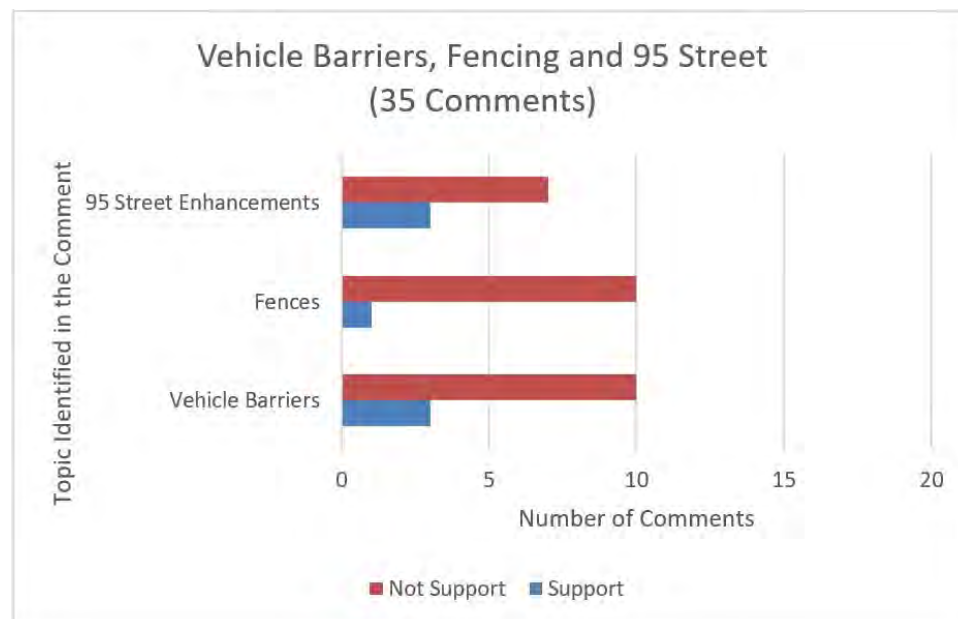
Seven comments specifically referred to the shared-use path by the ESC, two in support and five opposed.

Eight comments on the shared-use path by the rink, two in support and six opposed to it.

Vehicle Barriers, Fencing and 95 Street Proposed Enhancements

Comments on the proposed vehicle barriers (14 comments) asserted that they were not necessary. A similar sentiment was expressed on fencing (11 comments). As one resident claimed the fence would cut off the Cloverdale Community from the park, when referring to the fencing and vehicle barriers on 95 Street (10 comments).

Comments did not support the proposed sidewalk, fence and vehicle barriers proposed on 95 Street mostly claiming it was an unnecessary expense to enhance this area.

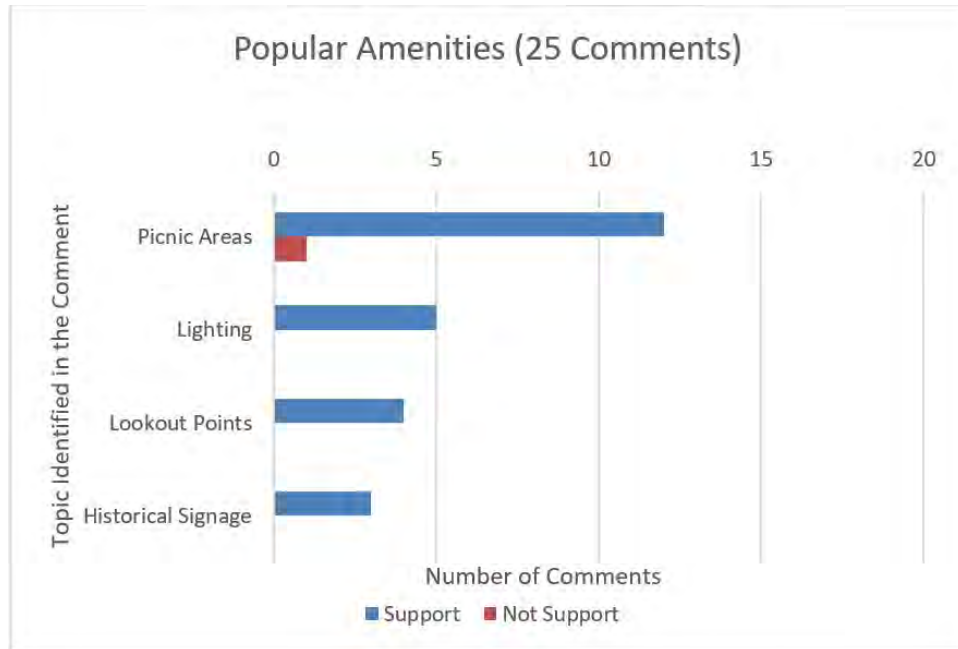


Popular Amenities

Key features that received almost total positive feedback included:

- Picnic areas (13 comments).
- Pathway lighting (5 comments).
- Lookout points (4 comments).
- Historical signage (3 comments).

One comment on the picnic area noted they were proposed to be located within a tree stand and that they preferred to save the trees than locate a picnic area there. Another respondent cautioned that the pathway lighting brightness be controlled so not to affect the nearby homes in Cloverdale.



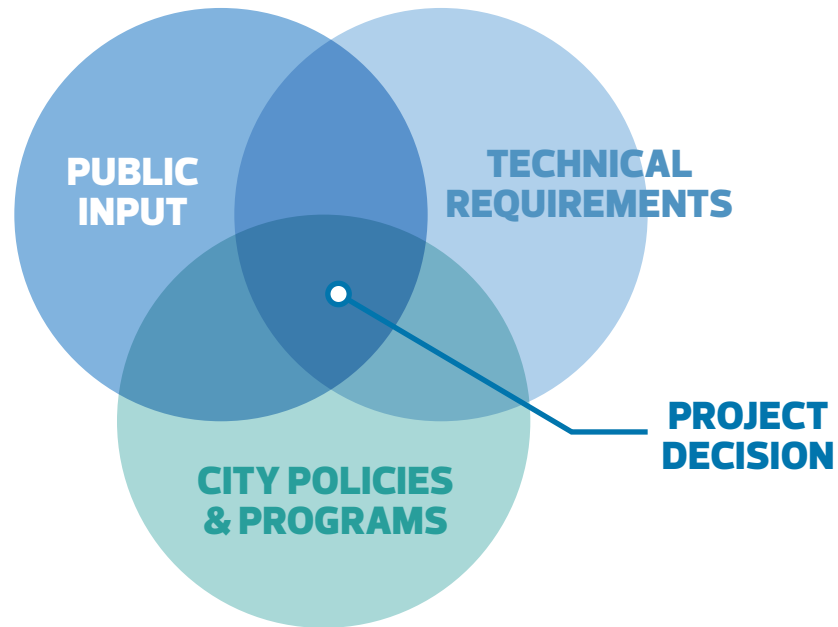
Other Comments

The less common topics in the comments included:

- Drainage**
 There were three comments that focused on the drainage issues within the park and asserted that this issue should be a priority. This topic was also followed by general comments of drainage issues within the community during snow melt and a question related to the age and capacity of the sewer system.
- Vehicle Access**
 Five comments addressed the proposed vehicle access to the ESC with four supporting the enhancement, and one not.
- Planting/Landscaping**
 Two comments were in favour of the naturalized planting but one wondered if it would add any value to the experience of the park.
- Warming Hut**
 Of the two comments addressing the proposed warming hut, one was in favour in theory but was concerned about the monitoring, maintenance and security of it; and one suggested it would be a magnet for vandalism or transient people seeking shelter.
- General Comments**
 There were a total of 12 other comments that fell outside of the engagement or project scope.

Going Forward

Phase 3 Engagement concludes the public engagement for this project. The feedback gathered during Phase 3 will be further considered alongside feedback from other stakeholders, technical analysis and City policies as the Concept Plan is finalized.



Once the concept plan is finalized, the concept plan and supporting documents will be approved by the City of Edmonton project team for implementation. This will require securing funding. Currently, funding is not available for implementation of the concept plan. Should funding become available through partnerships or future City capital budgets, the concept plan will guide development of the park.

Please visit the Gallagher Park Concept Plan project website for future updates on the project: https://www.edmonton.ca/projects_plans/parks_recreation/gallagher-park-master-plan.aspx

