

# Edmonton's Exhibition Lands

REDEVELOPMENT

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Phase 1 by the Numbers

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2

open houses

757

online survey  
respondents

80+

open house attendees

6381+

online survey comments

157

open house stickie notes

64

comments on the open  
house maps

at least

830

residents engaged

over

66000

comments received

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# ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

*In June 2017, the City of Edmonton engaged at least 830 residents to provide the groundwork for the future vision of the Exhibition Lands. This engagement produced excellent ideas and feedback to inform the draft redevelopment options that will be produced during Project Phase 2.*

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

After 60 years of operations, the Northlands Park Racetrack & Casino announced that they would be shutting their doors for the last time in 2016. This decision was triggered by the Edmonton Oilers' announcement to move from Rexall Place to the new Rogers Place downtown.

With Edmonton's population projected to double by 2050, these changes provide an opportunity to establish a future vision for the site. In 2017, the City of Edmonton made a decision to prepare a new Redevelopment Plan for the Exhibition Lands. The area includes the Coliseum arena and EXPO Convention Centre, and edges of the surrounding residential communities. The City has brought on an external consulting team led by O2 Planning + Design to support the development of the project.

The new Exhibition Lands Redevelopment Plan will build upon transit oriented development plans in the area to establish a new long term vision for how this important area will evolve over time. The Plan will provide direction to help attract growth and development to areas with limited existing activity by building on City infrastructure investments. This type of plan aims to remove barriers to growth and redevelopment.

There are three project goals:

1. To create a vision, design principles and future development concept that will guide development of the area for the next 20 to 30 years.

2. Recommend areas for new development, open space, urban agriculture, heritage preservation, and urban realm and transportation network improvements.
3. Develop an implementation plan that guides short, medium, and long term priorities.

## ENGAGEMENT

Residents are invited to share insights, feedback and perspectives that will be considered when creating redevelopment scenarios, the draft scenario and plan, and the finalized plan.

### Goals of engagement:

- Provide people with information about the project to build capacity for engagement
- Obtain local knowledge about challenges and opportunities related to the study area
- Obtain feedback from people that supports decision-making for the future vision of the Coliseum Station area
- Provide a strong platform for project decisions through approval and implementation

The three-phase engagement process was launched in Summer 2017, and this report provides a summary of the results from **Phase 1: COLLECT**.

# What We Heard

*Key takeaways from the two public open houses on June 12, and the online survey that was open between June 1 and June 30:*

## 1

### In general...

Respondents' opinions have been influenced by previous proposals in the project area, such as the Hockey Canada Coliseum redevelopment and the Northlands proposal

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More awareness-building is needed about the scope and purpose of an Area Redevelopment Plan, and which existing uses are being considered for redevelopment in the Coliseum Station area

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Many participants agree that redevelopment is better than leaving the City lands to become derelict. Interim uses should encourage active site usage to prevent crime

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There appear to be two groups of opinion about redevelopment: one envisions similar uses to the existing ones with only minor revitalization, while others see a completely new community

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## 2

### Celebrating strengths...

Time and again, participants emphasized the value of green space in general and Borden Park in particular, praising the revitalization efforts already underway and celebrating the park as a "hidden gem" of Edmonton

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People recognize the value of the Coliseum Station area: it boasts good transit and vehicle access, lots of space to accommodate events or future uses, and events and amenities that bring people into the neighbourhood for fun, recreation and entertainment

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## 3

### ... and addressing challenges.

A common theme is the need for overall neighbourhood revitalization, including improved urban design and aesthetic appeal, removing undesirable uses and derelict structures, and addressing crime and safety concerns

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According to engagement participants, two of the greatest challenges facing the area are transportation and connectivity, especially for pedestrians and cyclists

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at least

830

participants said...

4

## Saying goodbye to old land uses...

The removal or repurposing of the Edmonton Coliseum remains a point of contention. While some people are equivocal (i.e. depends on business viability or cost of renovation) other feel strongly for one option or the other

There is general agreement that the Northlands race track and casino should be redeveloped, but there is disagreement about whether this should look more like a renovation or demolition to accommodate new land uses

Many respondents react strongly to the “ugly” and “wasteful” expanses of parking in the area and see them as opportunities for greener, more compact redevelopment

“Industrial-feeling” uses and undesirable commercial uses (e.g. liquor stores, “shabby” storefronts) are commonly cited as the land uses most appropriate for replacement

5

## ... and hello to new ones.

Responses reveal that there is no common vision among the public for area redevelopment, with suggestions ranging from a complete community to a tourist or entertainment hub

Many people think the site should continue to be a hub for major events, but others express a more nuanced desire for smaller-scale concert and cultural venues, and for community-oriented events like weekly farmers’ markets

Even though residential uses are a common suggestion, some people emphasize community-oriented uses like neighbourhood retail, seniors’ housing, and recreational or cultural centres

In addition to major land uses, many respondents cite the importance of green space, improved infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, and general neighbourhood revitalization as critical new amenities

# OPEN HOUSES

Two open houses were held on June 12, 2017 (at City Hall and Bellevue Community League) to introduce the public to the project and to solicit their feedback about the strengths, challenges and future vision for the area. A presentation and poster boards explained important information, and City staff were available to gather comments and answer questions. Between 80 and 100 people participated.

## URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMENTS

An important element of the Exhibition Lands project is examining the potential for urban agriculture or a “food hub” on vacant City lands within the study area. At the open house, participants were asked which recommendations of *fresh: Edmonton’s Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy* should be further explored through the Redevelopment Plan.

### The recommendations that received the greatest level of support are:

- (2.2) Work with partners such as Northlands to enhance existing capacity for information sharing amongst the many organizations, businesses, agencies, and institutions involved in food and urban agriculture
- (5.3) Strengthen farmers’ markets
- (5.6) Pursue partnerships with non-profits and other agencies (e.g. Community Food Centres Canada) to examine establishing a public sector Edmonton Community Food Hub
- (6.1) Celebrate and promote local food producers, community gardens, and food grown, raised and made in Edmonton
- (6.3) Support a wide range of food retail in new and existing neighbourhoods to promote convenient pedestrian access to healthy food sources
- (8.2) Identify options for providing incentives to new and emerging urban farmers, including the possibility of leasing City-owned land to urban farmers.

## MAP COMMENTS

A large map was available at the open house for participants to place their comments in specific locations using stickie notes. A wide variety of concerns and recommendations were provided, generally referring to the following topics:

- 1. Edmonton Coliseum:** Opinions were mixed on the future of the Coliseum building, with some people preferring redevelopment into residential uses, while others prefer refurbishment into a recreational centre.
- 2. Active transportation:** Many people commented on the poor walkability in the area due to missing sidewalks, fences, poor connectivity, dangerous cycling environment and lack of safety on 118 Ave NW.
- 3. Family and seniors:** Several people suggested adding seniors’ housing or facilities near Borden Park, expanding medical facilities nearby, and ensuring that central locations (near the LRT station) are attractive for families.
- 4. Green space:** Many comments reflect the value Edmontonians place on Borden Park, and would like green space extended further into the study area, with trees and better connection to Kinnaird Ravine and adjacent neighbourhoods.
- 5. Parking lots:** While some people would like the redevelopment of parking lots, others suggest they are useful for festival space, or could be improved with more greenery and better design.
- 6. Northlands race track:** Participants had diverse suggestions for the site, including urban agriculture, artists’ studios, festival space and a hotel.



Figure 1: Open House Comments





## OTHER COMMENTS

Open house participants were also welcomed to leave comments on the various boards that were arranged to provide background information on the project. The following is a summary of the themes we heard.

### EXISTING ISSUES

- › Noise barrier on Wayne Gretzky Drive does not prevent air pollution from affecting Bellevue
- › Crime makes the area unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists. Narrow sidewalks do not offer enough protection from traffic
- › Area currently prioritizes industrial uses (to the detriment of pedestrians and cyclists)
- › Poor quality commercial uses, only restaurant in area recently closed
- › Traffic speed concerns, e.g. 121 Ave at 76 Street

### URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

- › Civic buildings should be adaptable and built to last
- › People-scaled design
- › Should consider eco-friendly development
- › Well planned and aesthetically pleasing development
- › Prioritize beautification to add value to the whole area

### HISTORY AND HERITAGE

- › Heritage and historic values are critical
- › Old Timer's Roost and Bonanza Park could be incorporated into expanded Borden Park
- › People and existing community should be considered part of heritage of area
- › Provide interpretation at the Pioneer Cabin
- › Create policies to incorporate historic or heritage structures into design, restore/reuse structures
- › Promote heritage values in the neighbourhood
- › Partner with City heritage planners, local groups

### NEW USES

- › Build a hotel to support the EXPO Centre
- › Community Police Station
- › Add a 400m indoor running track
- › Mixed-use development
- › Offer existing parking to developers to subsidize development costs and encourage transit use
- › Cluster uses (e.g. community and health uses)

- › Provide workshops for artists and musicians
- › Develop 118 Ave as the main shopping street
- › **Events:** Convert the race track into a festival space. Need the right scale of events for the site. Do not develop into a major outdoor venue - enough exist elsewhere already. Conflict with e.g. horses during K-Days. Family-friendly activities should be retained and avoid encroaching on Borden Park
- › **Residential uses:** Provide a mix of housing for different incomes, including seniors. Supply the "missing middle" of housing types (e.g. mid-rise). Build new residential uses near park, LRT station and commercial areas
- › **TOD:** Opportunity to implement Transit Oriented Development (TOD) successfully, e.g. north of 118 Ave. Consider opportunity cost of not doing good TOD

### EDMONTON COLISEUM

The open houses reveal that, more than any other facility in the study area, the public have conflicting opinions about the future of the Coliseum arena.

- › City has not made enough effort to find uses for the Coliseum, e.g. women's hockey, lacrosse
- › Coliseum has no purpose anymore. Redevelopment would introduce an unnecessary tax burden. It should be demolished for housing or retail uses.
- › The building has not reached the end of its service life and should be preserved. No reason why Edmonton should not have 2 operating arenas (see example of Vancouver Pacific Coliseum)

### GREEN SPACE

- › Borden Park could be improved with wider sidewalks, lower impact maintenance vehicles and better access
- › Protect Borden Park and retain for park uses. Avoid large festivals (which cause nuisance), incorporate "eyes on the park" to prevent crime
- › Make Borden Park a thoroughfare for pedestrians and cyclists

## TRANSPORTATION

Open house comments emphasized the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and transit users.

- **Better access and connectivity.** Improve river valley access and connections across 112 Ave, especially to 113 Ave bike route. Provide a pedway to connect the EXPO Centre and Northlands site. Provide a green route across 118 Ave. Add a shared-use pathway from 115 Ave (at the closed railway crossing) through the site to Eastglen High School. Add a pedestrian bridge over Wayne Gretzky Drive. Improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure between the LRT Station and residential areas. Connect the road network to/ through the study area
- **Transit:** Safety and design issues in the Coliseum LRT Station. Leverage ticket sales to encourage LRT usage. Improve wayfinding, especially on in transit system
- **Active modes:** Need to make area much more walkable and cyclist-friendly. Provide access to amenities and parks for people who do not drive. Address cyclist safety through bike lanes and routes. Add more smaller bike racks similar to those on Whyte
- **112 Ave:** Safety and design issues. Should provide a shared-use pathway. Intersection at Wayne Gretzky Drive is unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists. Suggest converting the sidewalk on the north side of 112 Ave to shared-use pathway and distancing from the road

## PARKING

- Reduce residential parking requirements
- Provide (free) parking for Coliseum LRT riders
- Parking lots are wasteful uses of space
- May become a concern as activity increases on site

## PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY

- Need to consider marginalized community members and potential for displacement
- Retain family-oriented, affordable opportunities
- More people will make the neighbourhood safer

## URBAN AGRICULTURE

- An urban farm can attract tourism, research and development, and international exposure
- A vertical farm would connect to the area's agricultural past
- Allow food gardens in front yards
- Preserve the farm and increase agricultural activity
- Support urban agriculture through policy changes
- Reestablish the agricultural character of the area

## DEVELOPMENT MODEL

- Non-profit development could place community benefit first
- Implementation important to demonstrate commitment to the community
- Need a transition plan for interim uses. Inaction is worse than redevelopment
- Need consistent source of funding to implement
- Should be willing to raise taxes to cover costs

## PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE

- Public consultation must be transparent and meaningful to build trusting relationships
- Coordinate with the Station Station ARP and Commonwealth ARP
- Focus on local needs
- Ensure that public good is placed before profit

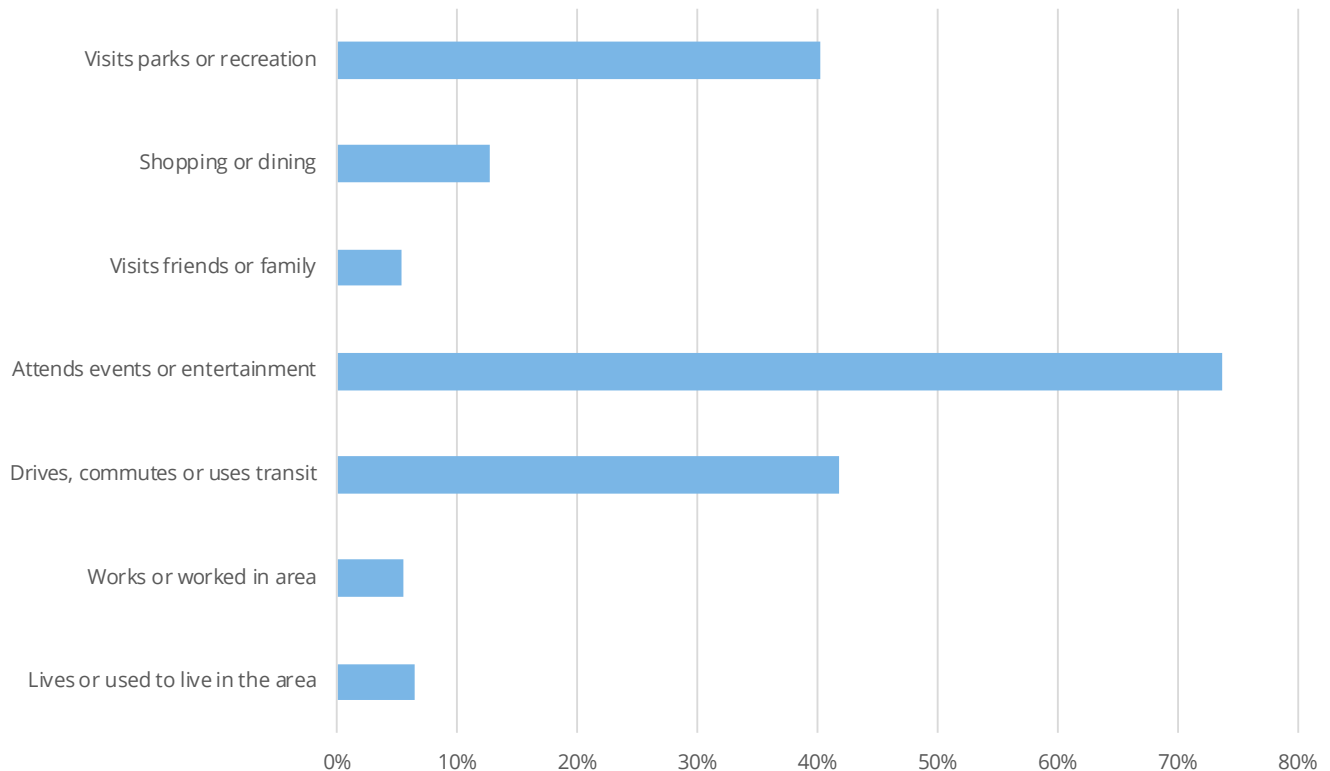
# ONLINE SURVEY

In order to open the engagement process to as many participants as possible, an online survey was made available through the project website and the City online engagement portal, and distributed to the Insight Community of engagement respondents. The survey was open from June 1 to June 30, and included a map component that enabled respondents to place comments in specific locations. 737 people participated.

## HOW DO PEOPLE SPEND TIME IN THE AREA?

The majority of survey respondents spend time in the study area by attending events or taking advantage of entertainment opportunities, including K-Days, the casino or race track, trade shows, concerts, festivals and other events. The study area is also well-used by people visiting Borden Park, and traveling through on transit (including the Coliseum LRT station and transit hub) or by vehicle (on busy Wayne Gretzky Drive, 118 Avenue, Fort Road or 112 Avenue).

**Figure 2:** Reasons participants spend time in study area

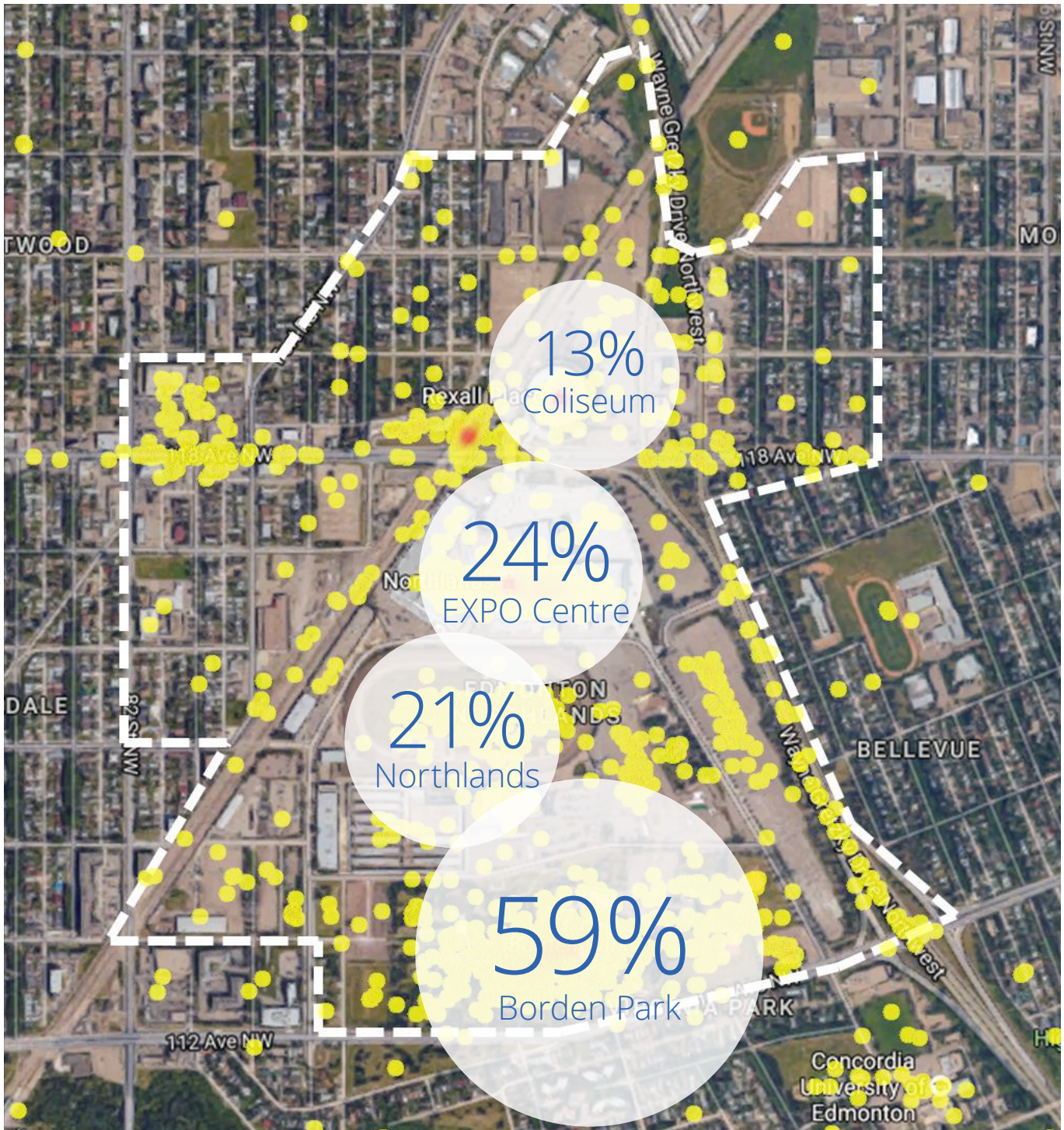




### WHAT ARE THE TOP STRENGTHS IN THE AREA?

Survey respondents feel that Borden Park is the most valuable amenity in the area, followed by the EXPO Centre and the Northlands facilities. Reasons commonly cited for these places being important places include their capacity to provide for good events and entertainment (85% of respondents), green space and recreational opportunities (69%), and the area's ease of access and central location (50%).

Figure 3: Places most frequently listed as top strengths in study area (by percentage of respondents)



## WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST ISSUES IN THE AREA?

Survey respondents expressed concern about a wide variety of issues in the study area. The most prominent challenge identified is the need to decide on the future of the Edmonton Coliseum, and to a lesser extent, the Northlands race track and casino. Another major theme was the general need for revitalization, such as addressing undesirable businesses, vacancy, run-down structures and safety. Respondents also felt that transportation could be greatly improved, particularly for non-vehicular road users (pedestrians, cyclists and transit).

Figure 4: Biggest issues in the study area (by percentage of respondents)

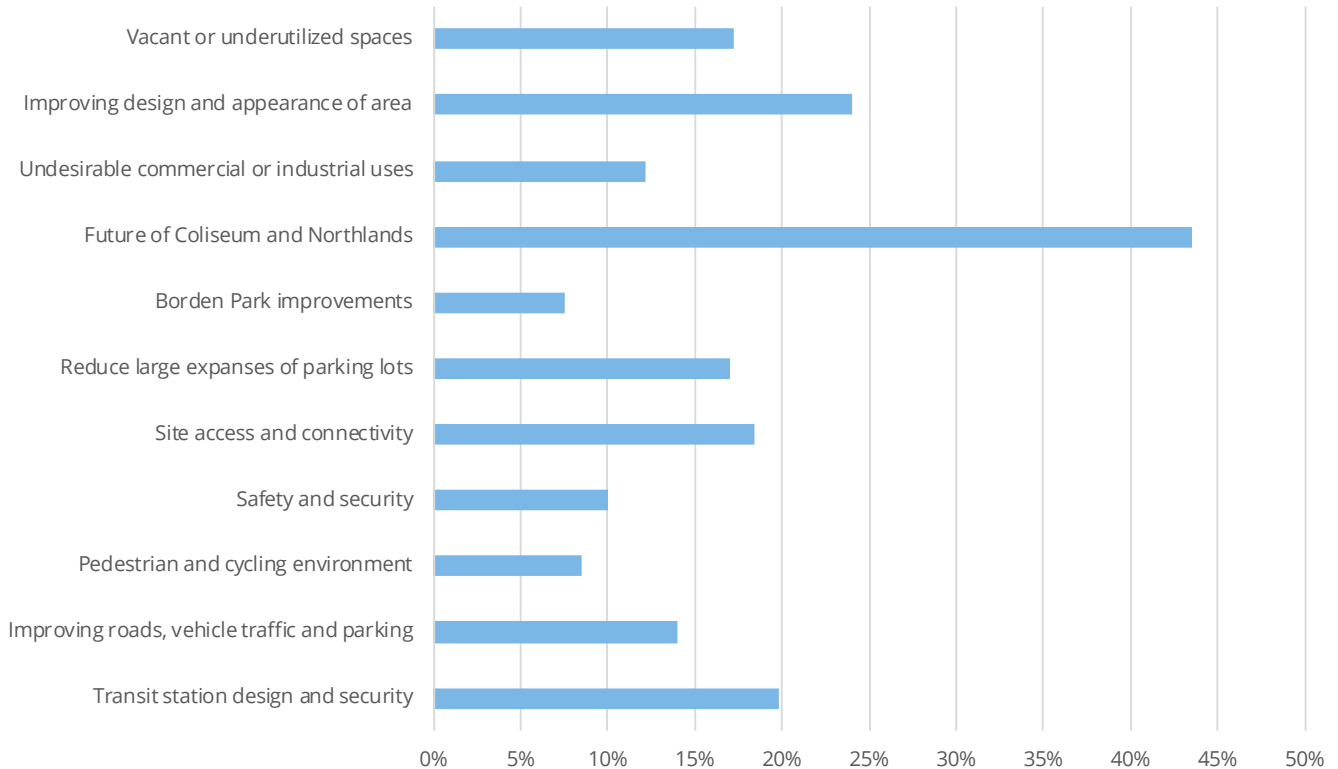
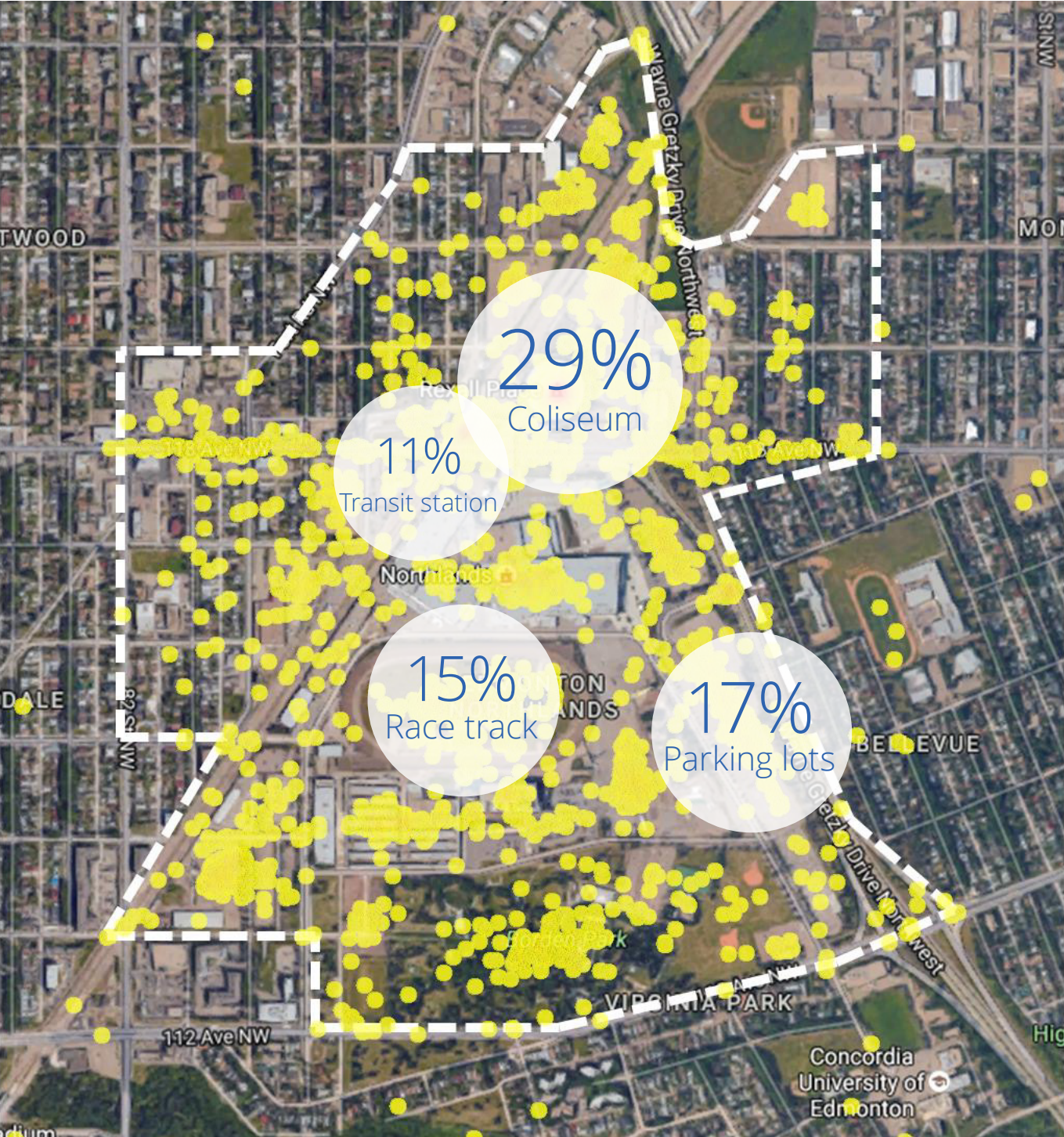




Figure 5: Places most frequently listed as biggest issues in study area (by percentage of respondents)



## WHAT TYPE OF CHANGE DO YOU ENVISION FOR THE AREA?

Respondents provided a wide variety of ideas for a future Coliseum Station area, ranging from a low-density residential estate development to a new amusement park. The most commonly expressed themes include:

- 1. More parkland, landscaping and greening** (38% of respondents). These recommendations include improvements or extensions of Borden Park, the construction of new parks, and a general desire to reduce the amount of “grey” in favour of trees and vegetation.
- 2. New businesses and commercial uses** (29% of respondents). Not only do these recommendations address the “seedy” nature of some existing businesses (e.g. massage parlours, liquor stores) and structures, but also a desire for land uses that can activate the area with shopping, dining and retail.
- 3. New residential uses** (16% of respondents). The majority of those respondents recommending new housing advocate for higher density forms (e.g. mid-rise or high-rise condominiums). Attention to mixed uses and incomes, transit-oriented development and forming a complete community were also prevalent.

- 4. Address the Edmonton Coliseum** (15% of respondents). Opinions about the future of the Coliseum were mixed, and many had been influenced by the proposal to convert the arena to a community recreational facility or national hockey academy. The majority of people would prefer to preserve or refurbish the structure for recreational or event uses, while others (30 people) feel it should be demolished to avoid inefficient spending and make way for redevelopment. Some of those advocating for preservation support this option only if a feasible use can be found for an acceptable cost.

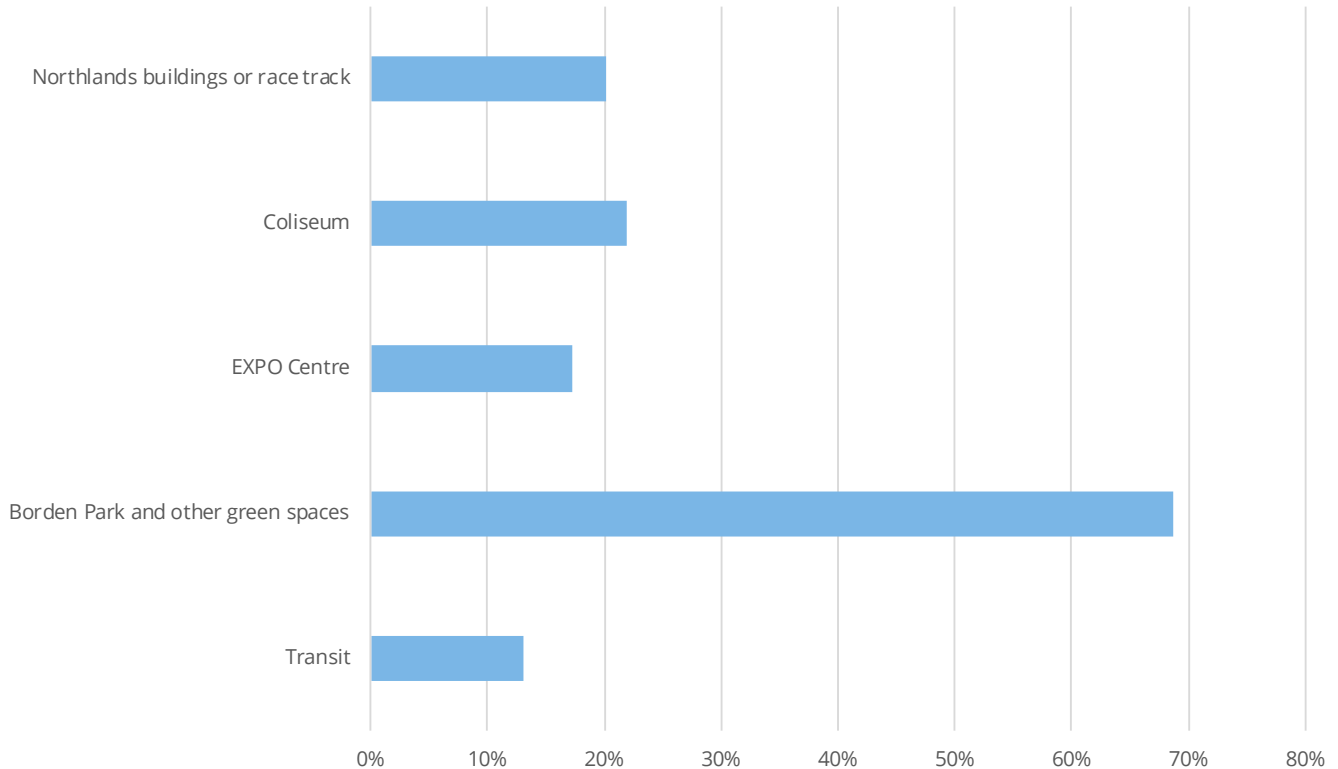
Other significant recommendations include:

- Improved conditions (infrastructure, environment) for pedestrians and cyclists
- Improved safety and aesthetic appeal throughout the area
- Addressing parking concerns (e.g. reducing the area of parking, reducing the cost, constructing a parkade, etc)
- New, renovated or well-designed buildings
- New recreation or sports facility
- Better site access, connectivity and integration with surrounding communities

## WHICH AREAS OR USES SHOULD BE PRESERVED OR ENHANCED?

Reflecting the value they placed on green space as a strength of the area, the great majority of respondents expressed that Borden Park should be preserved and protected from redevelopment. Additionally, the area should be enhanced with other green spaces and landscaping. A significant proportion of people want the Coliseum arena preserved or repurposed, along with the EXPO Centre, which is seen as an important event and economic development amenity. Surprisingly, over 20% of respondents believe the Northlands race track, casino and associated structures should be preserved. While some of these people suggest the buildings should be retained as exhibition grounds or event spaces, or repurposed for another use, others want horse racing to remain in the study area (even though Horse Racing Alberta has already agreed to relocate to a new facility in Leduc County).

**Figure 6:** Most important features to be preserved or enhanced in the study area (by percentage of respondents)

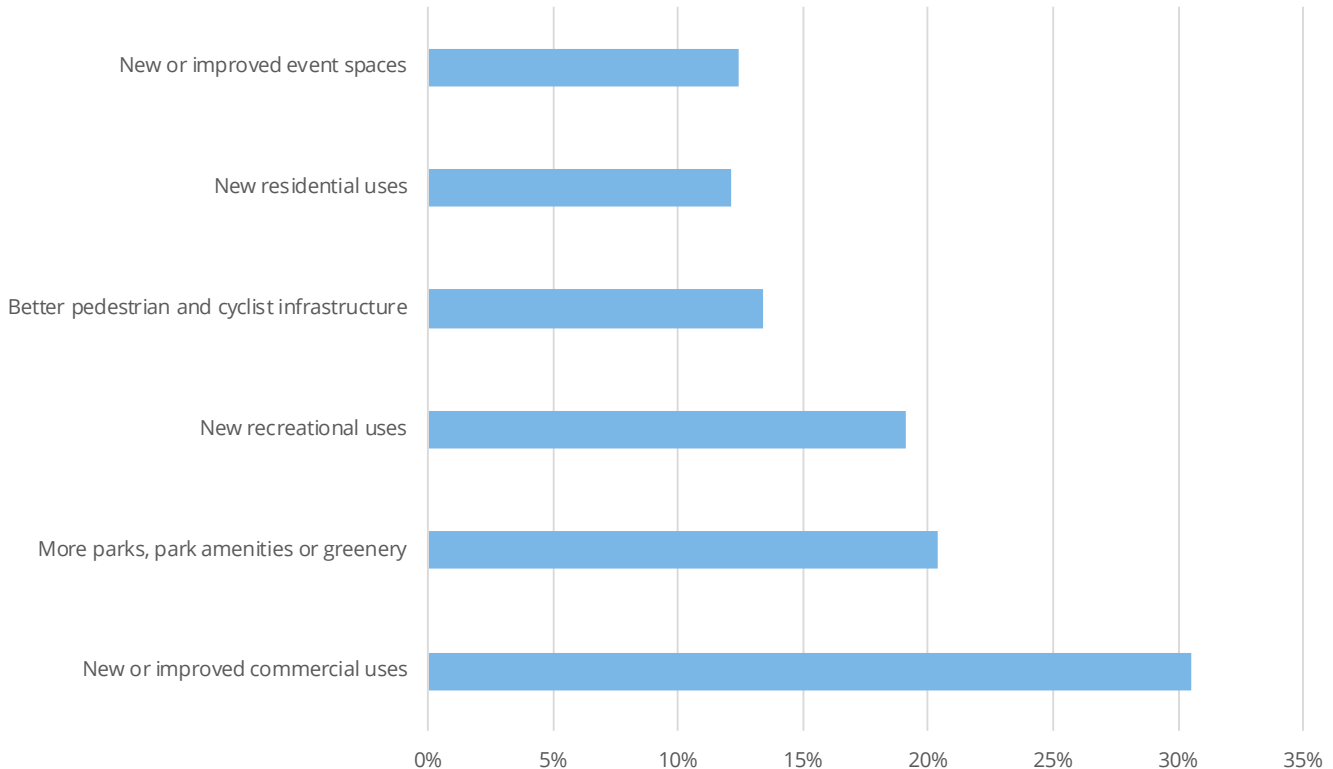


## WHAT NEW USES AND AMENITIES COULD MAKE THE AREA MORE INTERESTING, INCLUSIVE AND ATTRACTIVE?

The importance of quality commercial uses for creating vibrant, welcoming spaces is evident in respondents' comments on this question: over 30% of people recommend that new or improved businesses could help improve the area. Also popular are recreational uses; many comments suggest a community recreational facility that includes hockey rinks, while some people envision a comprehensive sports and recreation district. Other recreational uses suggested include a fitness centre, skating rink, outdoor recreation (e.g. pathways) and sports fields or courts. Other significant recommendations include:

- › Community or cultural spaces
- › Family-oriented spaces
- › Other major attraction (e.g. amusement park), museum
- › Improved landscaping or streetscaping
- › Hotel

Figure 7: Top new amenities or uses recommended for the study area (by percentage of respondents)

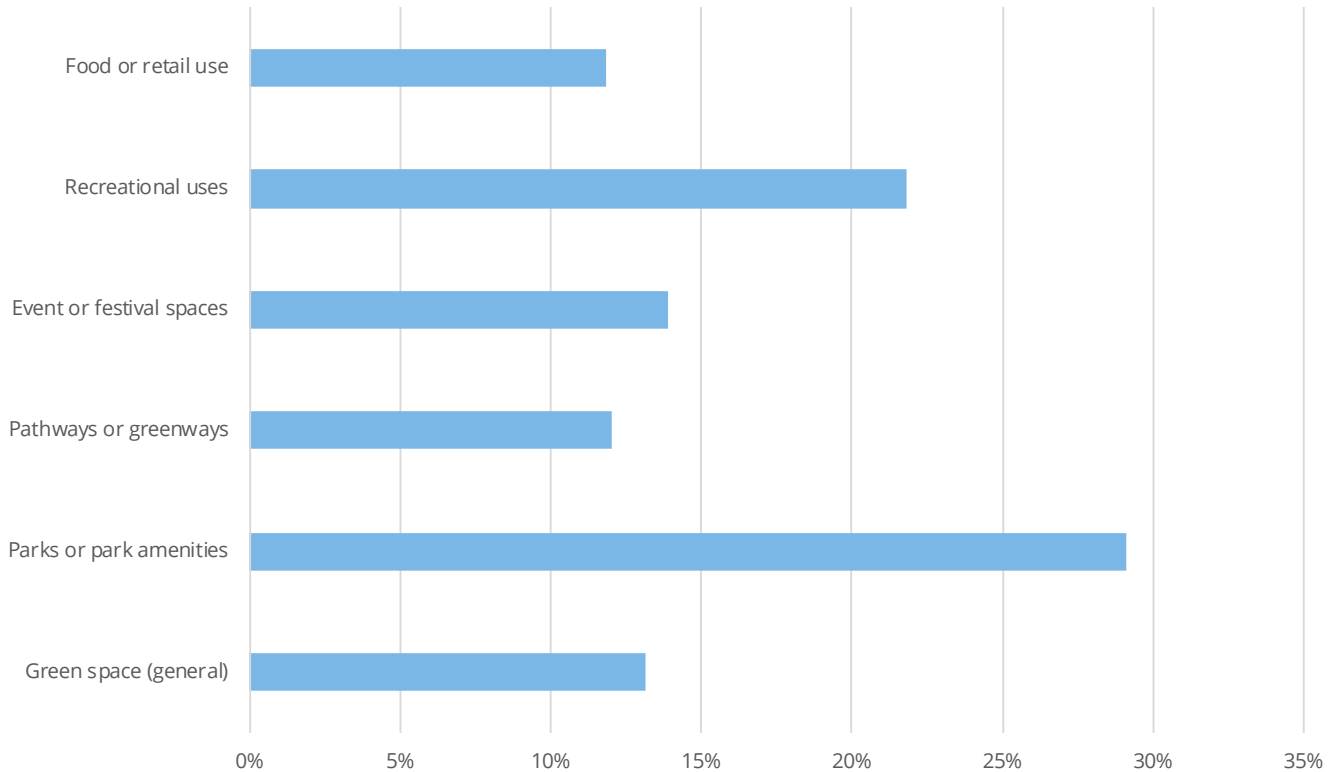


## WHAT KINDS OF PUBLIC SPACES, GATHERING SPACES AND PARKS COULD ENHANCE LIVEABILITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS?

Parks and park amenities are once again revealed to be highly valuable to respondents, with almost 30% identifying them as important public spaces. This includes the creation of new parks or expansion of existing parks; improvement of existing amenities (e.g. pathways); and installation of new park amenities (e.g. gardens, washrooms, public art, lighting, benches). Recreational uses are also identified as highly desirable amenities, including both indoor and outdoor facilities. Some other significant recommendations include:

- Agricultural uses (e.g. community gardens)
- Plazas
- Picnic or barbecue areas
- Play spaces

**Figure 8:** Top new public spaces recommended for the study area (by percentage of respondents)





## WHAT TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS COULD BE MADE IN AND AROUND THE STUDY AREA?

Survey respondents provided many recommendations to improve transportation for drivers, transit users and active modes of transportation.

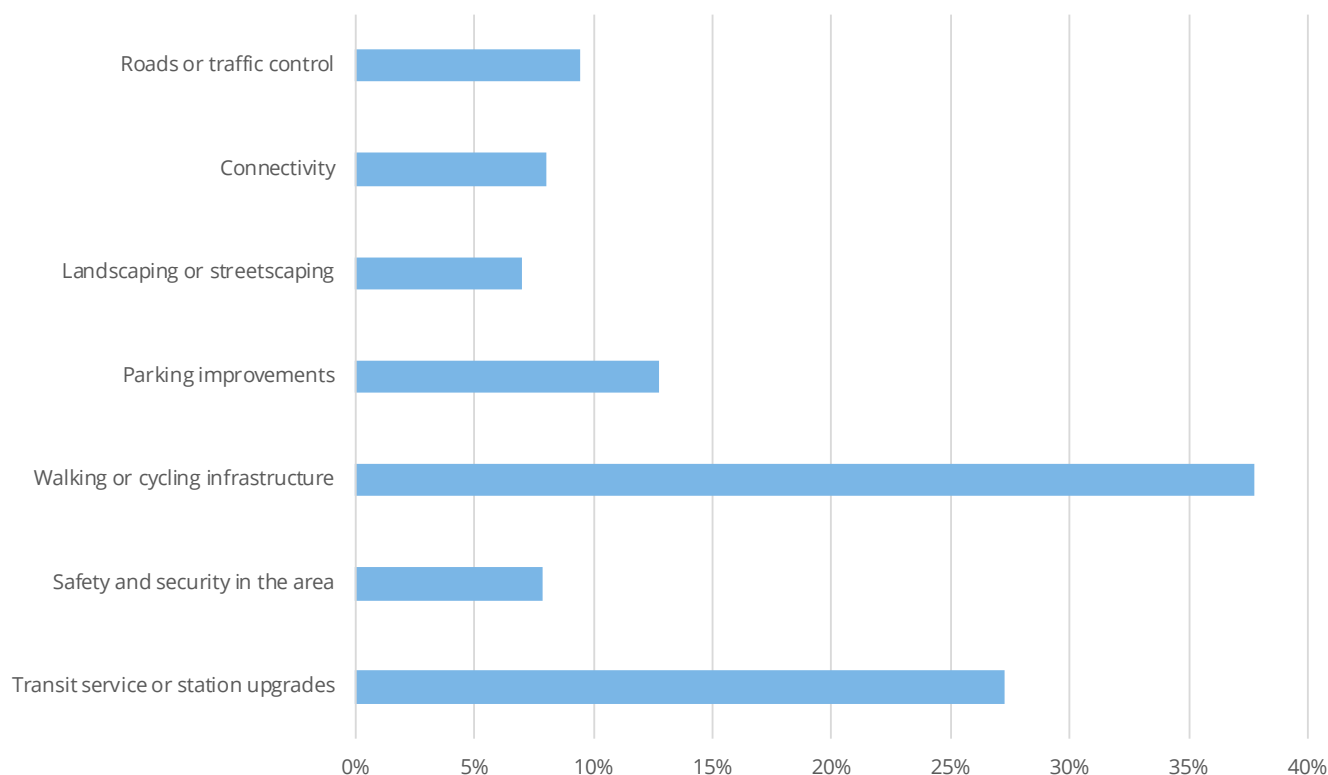
- 1. Walking or cycling infrastructure.** In addition to a strong focus on the provision of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure (e.g. bike paths, sidewalks, shared-use pathways and improvements to existing infrastructure), some respondents also expressed that redevelopment should prioritize active modes of transportation or transit before motor vehicles.
- 2. Transit upgrades.** Although the majority of comments refer to design and safety issues with the LRT station and 118 Ave bus interchange, others point to improvements in access from transit to the EXPO Centre or other facilities, or improved routes or service standards.

- 3. Parking improvements,** including more parking, lower cost, the construction of a parkade or park-n-ride facility, or other upgrades.
- 4. Roads or traffic control.** Both drivers and users of other transportation modes identified a need to improve traffic flow along Wayne Gretzky Drive (especially during events on site) and make the road network safer and easier to navigate.
- 5. Connectivity.** Although most comments relate to connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists (who are missing safe connections across 112 Ave, 118 Ave and Wayne Gretzky Drive into surrounding neighbourhoods and beyond), some respondents also express a desire to improve connectivity or extend the street grid through the study area.

Other suggestions not listed in the graphic below include:

- Improving signage and wayfinding
- Improving access to Borden Park and the River Valley
- Addressing maintenance or cleanliness in the area

**Figure 9:** Top transportation improvements recommended for the study area (by percentage of respondents)



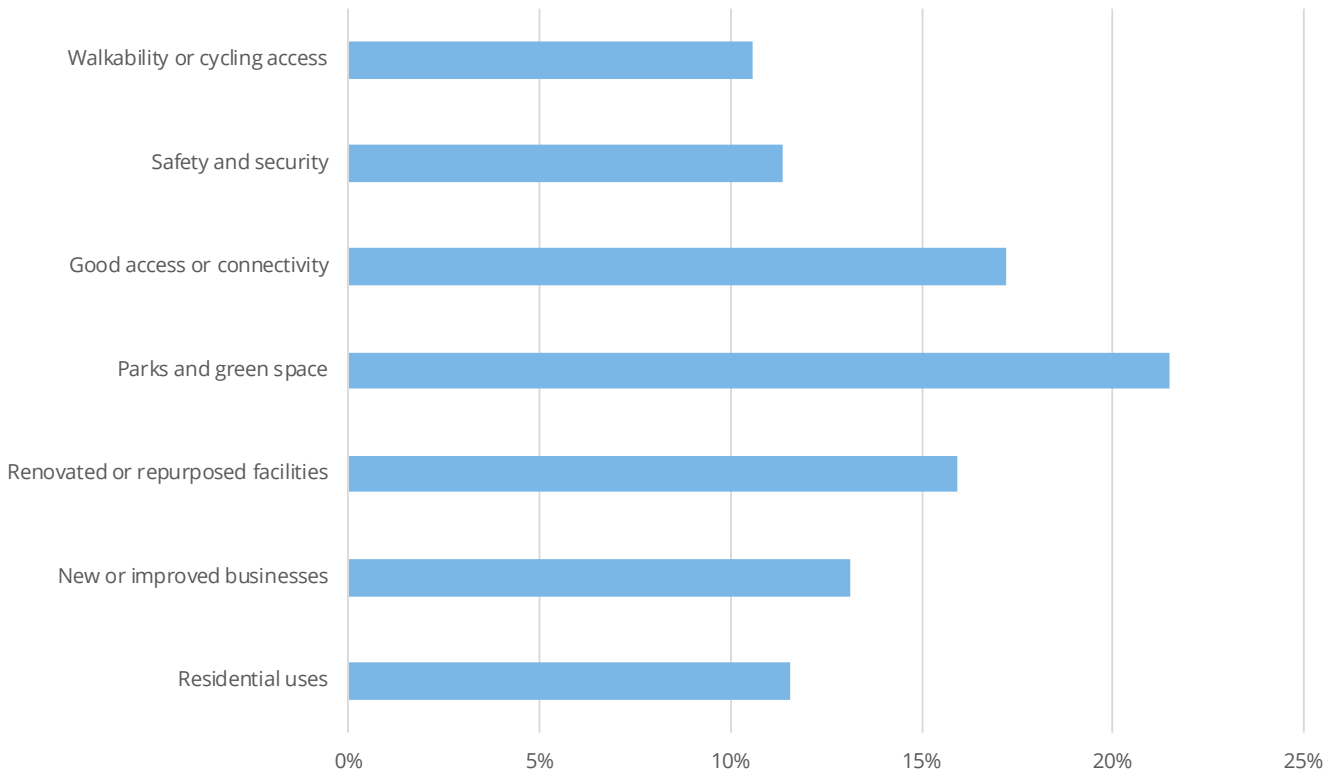
## WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS PROJECT A SUCCESS?

Survey respondents provided diverse, valuable insights about the conditions for success. While some people focused on concrete physical improvements or amenities that they perceive as critical additions to the area, others suggested broader themes relating to scale, usership, planning process or governance. Some significant themes not reflected in the graphic below include:

- › Community input and involvement
- › New amenities or facilities
- › Smart public spending and investment
- › Site activation and utilization
- › Landscaping and urban design
- › Events or attractions

Some less concrete but equally important concepts include affordability, economic viability, responsible planning, a welcoming and multigenerational character, environmental sustainability and community support.

**Figure 10:** Top factors for project success (by percentage of respondents)



# NEXT STEPS

Public input received during Phase 1 of the project will be used to draft a Redevelopment Plan that provides a new vision, objectives and design principles for the Exhibition Lands study area. Specifically, the feedback summarized in this What We Heard Report will be used to:

1

Identify redevelopment opportunities and constraints within the study area

2

Create a common vision for the future of the Exhibition Lands

3

Develop a shortlist of redevelopment concepts that reflects the vision and design criteria

## MORE INFORMATION

Sign up for the project newsletter and keep tabs on future engagement opportunities at

[edmonton.ca/projects\\_plans/northlands/  
coliseum-station-area-redevelopment-plan](https://edmonton.ca/projects_plans/northlands/coliseum-station-area-redevelopment-plan)



Prepared by  
City of Edmonton  
O2 Planning + Design Inc.

