



# What We Heard

## Business Improvement Area

### Street & Alley Renewal Prioritization Program

August 2021

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**Edmonton**





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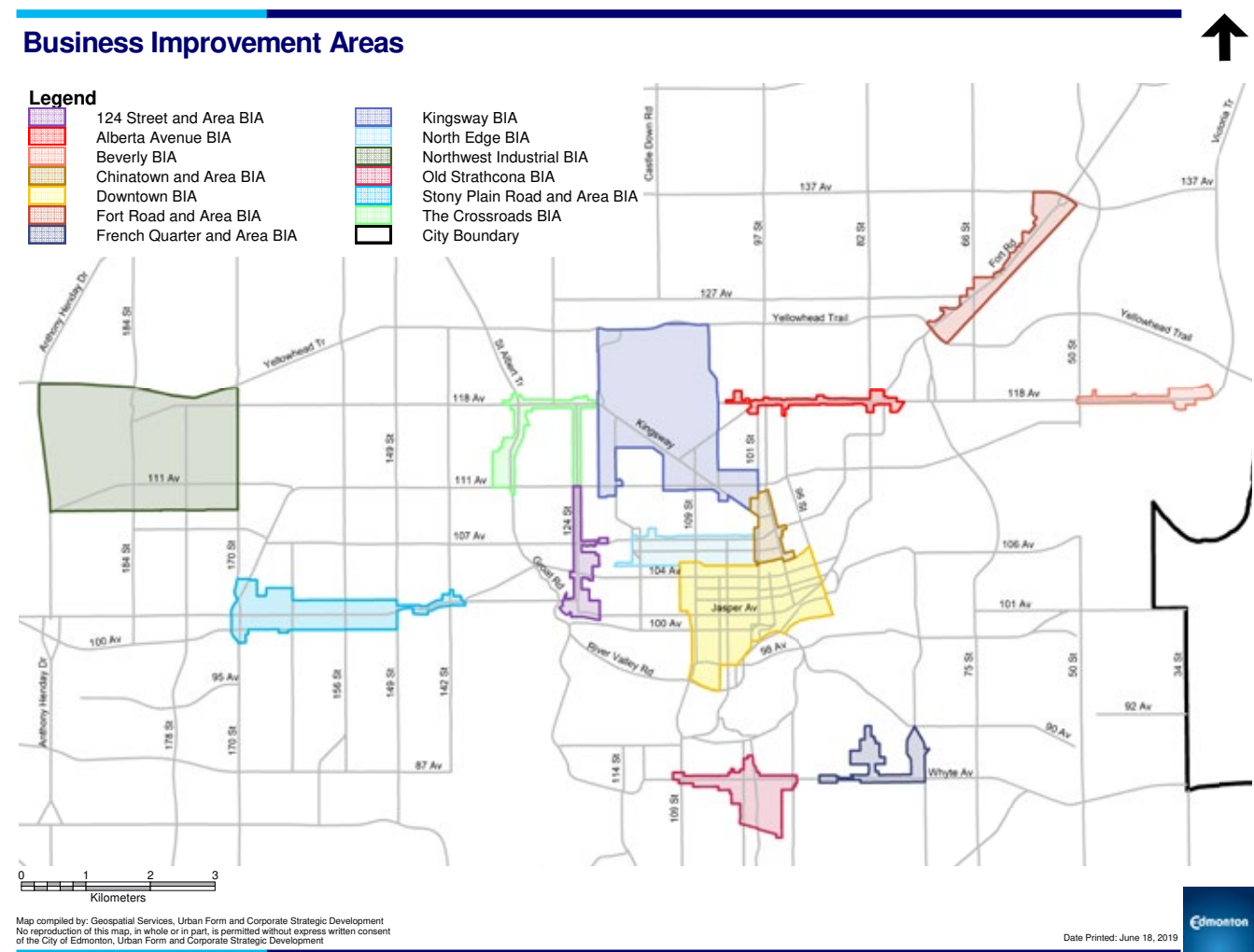
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# The Business Improvement Areas Program Prioritization Strategy

A Business Improvement Area (BIA) is a formal association in a defined geographic area of the city where businesses pool resources and work together to support and enhance their area's economic development. The 13 BIAs in Edmonton represent approximately 4,500 businesses and play a crucial role in the vibrancy, economic health and appeal of many of the city's commercial areas. Figure 1 highlights the locations of the 13 BIAs throughout the city.

Figure 1



# Project Overview

In the Spring of 2019, City Council targeted an Infrastructure Renewal Program within BIAs, recognizing that quality of assets and the state of roadways maintenance within BIAs is a significant factor influencing investment attraction and business retention in these areas. As a result, on July 12, 2019, at the Executive Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

*"That Administration provide a report to Committee on options and implications for prioritizing street and alley renewal within and adjacent to Business Improvement Areas."*

The Business Improvement Areas Program Prioritization Strategy (the Project) is part of an investment in the BIA's and funded by the Neighbourhoods, and Goods Movement renewal profiles. It was launched in December 2020 with the first BIA meetings starting in January 2021.

The goal of this project was to develop an effective process and criteria to prioritize and accelerate street and alley renewal within the BIAs. This involved working collaboratively with each BIA to achieve an optimized and sustainable implementation within eight years starting from 2023.

The selected implementation plan seeks to optimize the opportunity cost of existing programs and commitments within the Alley, Neighbourhood Renewal and Goods Movement (Arterial) Renewal Programs to deliver the renewal of BIAs in a more holistic, integrated, cost-effective and transformative way. This approach aligns with the City's supporting objective of ensuring City assets are well managed and maintained for accountable service delivery. Existing programs would not be eliminated but would provide the starting point for all engagements and programming activities.





# What We Heard

Several themes emerged from the engagement. At a high level, some of the consistent themes that were identified by the BIAs were as follows:

- + Several BIAs were interested in opportunities that allowed businesses to expand interactions with customers in the alleys and were interested in exploring activation of these spaces through various programming and design elements
- + Many BIAs requested wider sidewalks to improve the pedestrian experience
- + Improving aesthetics in each BIA is important to many businesses (i.e. lighting, furniture, and planting)
- + Concerns were raised around the frequency and response to requests for general maintenance of street furniture, lighting, garbage cans, potholes, etc
- + There were several requests to improve safety through lighting in back alleys
- + Many requested electrical outlets to accommodate decorative lighting
- + The impact of COVID-19 continues to cause businesses to close and the BIAs were having different amounts of success in attracting new businesses. Flexibility such as curbside or alley pickup opportunities and aesthetics were important to the BIAs.
- + Many BIAs faced challenges with large construction projects such as LRT and Yellowhead Trail. There was concern about access to businesses, new roads being damaged, and ongoing communication with the BIAs
- + The BIAs were appreciative of the meetings and listening to their concerns. They felt they were heard and were thankful for the follow-up and commitment to be involved in decision making at the project planning stage



# What We Did

The City's project team worked to address as many issues and requests as possible. The "One City" approach encouraged effective communication across departments and programs including, but not limited to, Building Great Neighbourhoods and Open Spaces, City Planning, Complete Streets, Economic and Environmental Sustainability, Infrastructure Planning and Designs, Transit, Parks and Roads Services and Utility Partners.

Based on the conversations with the BIAs at the meetings, the Project resulted in expediting and enhancing projects:

- + Some road and alley renewals were rescheduled to occur earlier than the original budget cycle
- + Some projects have been enhanced (changes to infrastructure)
- + Some projects have been postponed for planning alignment or changes

The Project also enhanced relationships between the BIA network and the City through increased communication and dialogue.

In order to manage limited funds, not all work requested by BIAs will be accelerated. Examples of work that will not be accelerated includes:

- + Where there was significant construction planned in the near future due to LRT, or Yellowhead Trail, road, alley renewals and some infrastructure were not accelerated to maximize efficiency
- + If roads or sidewalks had recently been renewed, no additional upgrades were proposed for the near future to avoid waste
- + Major changes to transportation design
- + Being able to address issues associated with crime, drugs and homelessness beyond providing additional lighting in alleys

Although not all requested repairs and projects could be fulfilled at this time, the City committed to continuing to work with the BIAs and encouraged them to continue to report maintenance issues such as potholes through the 311 app

The transportation renewal projects were programmed to optimize and allow for planning opportunities for enhancements beyond the renewal programs. However, all growth enhancements and streetscaping are subject to Council's approval on growth funding allocations.

# How We Engaged



Two rounds of meetings took place with each BIA to introduce the Project, introduce the Project team, listen to the priorities and constraints of each BIA, present options and manage expectations, and validate the final outcome. On the City of Edmonton Public Engagement Spectrum, these meetings were ADVISE; with their input influencing and in many cases changing the outcomes of the originally planned renewal efforts for streets and alleys in the BIAs. As these meetings were held during the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings were held virtually through Google Meets.

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## STEP 1 – LISTENING

A meeting was held with the City and each BIA Executive Director individually. The City listened to the BIAs explain their priorities and constraints in the first round of meetings in January 2021. The City presented the original timeline for street and alley renewal in each BIA. The Executive Director of each BIA highlighted priorities and concerns with roads, crosswalks, alleys and infrastructure (i.e. lighting, seating, potholes, drainage, safety).

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## STEP 2 – MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

A second meeting was held with the City and each BIA Executive Director individually. In the second meeting the City reiterated what they heard in Meeting 1 from the BIA with respect to priorities and constraints and presented the revised program with an explanation as to why programs were or were not changing. The BIAs commented on all elements of the revised program, which generated a productive exchange of information between the City and each BIA.

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## STEP 3 – VALIDATION

Subsequent to the successes recorded at the first two meetings, the City presented the revised program as a physical brochure to each Executive Director for record keeping. The BIA Executive Directors also received an electronic copy of the brochure to share with BIA members and/or for posting on their BIA website. The brochures are also available at [edmonton.ca/businessimprovementareas](https://edmonton.ca/businessimprovementareas).



## Who Was Engaged?

The Executive Director from each of the 13 BIAs participated in each of the three meetings. In a few cases, other members or staff from the BIA attended.

- + 124 Street and Area BIA
- + Alberta Avenue BIA
- + Beverly BIA
- + Chinatown and Area BIA and CTCYEG
- + Downtown BIA
- + Fort Road and Area BIA
- + French Quarter and Area BIA
- + Kingsway BIA
- + North Edge BIA
- + Northwest Industrial BIA
- + Old Strathcona BIA
- + Stony Plain Road and Area BIA
- + The Crossroads BIA

## What We Asked

The conversations changed in each meeting. In the first meeting, the City presented its program for street and alley renewal and then asked:

- + What are the biggest challenges faced by the members in your BIA?
- + What are your BIA's priorities?
- + How has COVID-19 changed how your members conduct their business? Does this affect streets and alleys such as curbside pickup?

The City took the information from the first meeting and worked with other departments to review and revise, if possible, the program for street and alley renewal in each BIA. The revised scope and schedule were presented at the second meeting and the City sought feedback from the BIA on each aspect of the revised program.

The final results of the Project were presented to each BIA in a final scope and schedule.

## What Happens Next?

Between 2023 and 2030, the alleys and streets will be renewed and repaired in each BIA as per the revised plans discussed with and presented to each BIA.



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Edmonton International  
FILM FESTIVAL

FILM FESTIVAL

DOMINION  
HOTEL BUILDING

BEAR

PUB &

TELEPHONE

Open 'Till  
Midnight

Mickey's  
BARBER  
SHOP  
OPEN