

What We Heard Report Centennial Plaza Redesign Phase 1

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Edmonton

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A. Project Overview

Centennial Plaza is located between Stanley A. Milner Library and the Westin Hotel and is a space that hosts library events, informal gatherings and public events. The City is planning to redevelop this open space downtown to create a more attractive, welcoming and accessible place.

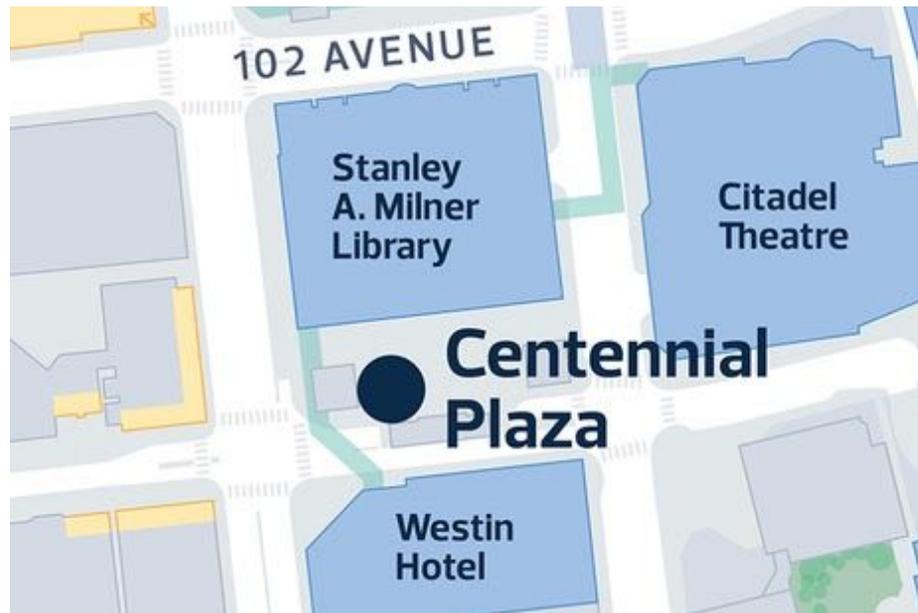


Figure 1: Location of Centennial Plaza

Re-envisioning Centennial Plaza will align with strategic direction from a few City plans, policies and directions, including:

- Breathe, Edmonton's Green Network Strategy
- Downtown Public Places Plan
- Green and Walkable Downtown Project of the Capital Plan
- Downtown Community Revitalization Levy (CRL)
- Child-Friendly Edmonton
- Winter City Strategy

The Centennial Plaza Redevelopment project area and project components include:

- Centennial Plaza itself
- Post Office Clock Tower Plaza
- Library parkade waterproofing under Centennial Plaza
- Stair and elevator pavilions on the southeast and southwest corners of the plaza
- Removal of the outdoor amphitheatre
- Milner Parkade Entrance ramp canopy and associated parkade and stair entrances
- Judy Padua Way

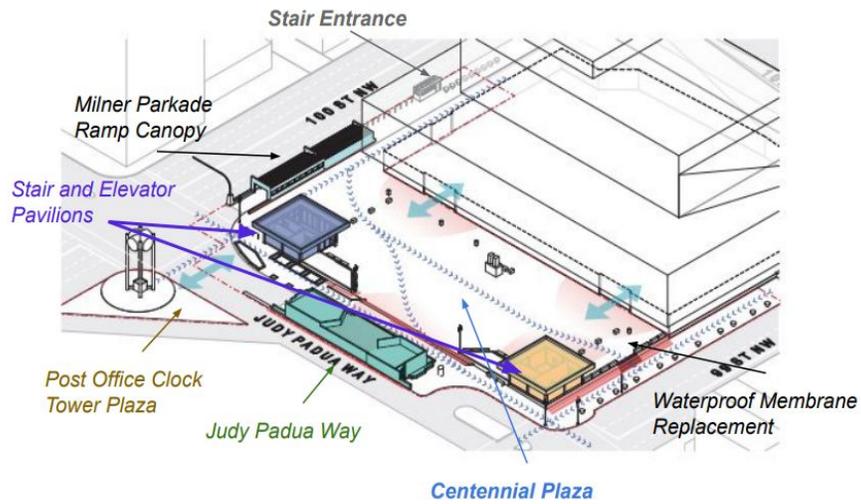


Figure 2: Centennial Plaza Redevelopment Project Components

B. Public Engagement

Public engagement for this project began in the fall of 2018, when the City considered child-friendly design options for the whole Civic Precinct (see figure below). The public feedback gathered in 2018 provided the foundation for further work on Centennial Plaza specifically.

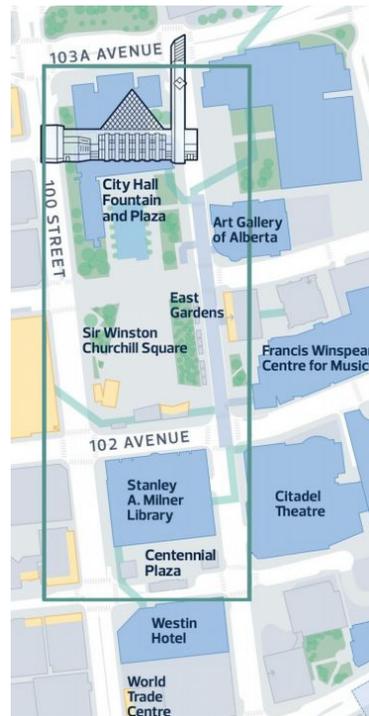


Figure 3: Civic Precinct

Based on the feedback received, as well as City policies and other limitations and opportunities of the Plaza, four project goals and three

concept options were developed through the fall of 2019 and winter of 2020.

The four project goals for the Centennial Plaza Redevelopment project include:

- **Child-friendly space** - a space that encourages child-directed play even without formal play structures.
- **Safety & security** - a space that is safe and secure with green space, good sightlines and appropriate lighting.
- **Winter City** - a space that will be used all four seasons through seasonal planting, lighting and covered areas.
- **Everyday Use** - a space that is not only for big events, but for people to gather, to sit and to walk through.

Centennial Plaza Redevelopment – Project Goals



With careful consideration of the goals, three potential design options for the Centennial Plaza space were developed for discussion, including:

- The Living Skies** - inspired by the wide-open skies of the Prairies
- The Clearing in the Wood** - inspired by the woodland landscape
- The River Bluffs** - inspired by the geology and geometry of the riverbanks



These three options were presented to stakeholders and to the public to allow feedback on the preferred elements within each option. The intent of providing the options was not to pick one option, but to best inform the final design.

C. How and Who We Engaged

Due to COVID-19 public health restrictions, we were unable to meet in person with stakeholders or the public.

Over the month of May 2020, we met virtually with our key stakeholders (Edmonton Public Library, Downtown Edmonton Community League, Downtown Business Association) to review the concept options and to ask for feedback on the elements in each option, based on their knowledge and use of the Plaza.

From June 3 to 14, 2020 we conducted an online survey through the Edmonton Insight Community that was also open to the general public and circulated through our key stakeholders. We asked for input on the three concept options, project goals, layout, seating, shade structures, planting and surfacing.

There were 919 responses from Insight Community members and 38 responses from the general public through the open link that was distributed by the stakeholders.

D. What We Asked

The content of the survey included:

- Overall thoughts on project theme and project goals
- Preference of the three presented concept options
- Preference of concept regarding its layout
- Preference of concept regarding the seating
- Preference of concept regarding its shade structure
- Preference of concept regarding the planting
- Preference of concept regarding the surfacing
- Additional thoughts on the Centennial Plaza Redevelopment

E. What We Heard

Key project stakeholder: Edmonton Public Library

Overall feedback themes included:

- moving the daycare playspace to the previous amphitheater allows for a secure location and controlled access;
- elevated daycare playspace allows for more flexibility of future programming; and
- mounds can create useful amphitheater-style seating for programming.

Key project stakeholder: Downtown Edmonton Community League and the Downtown Business Association

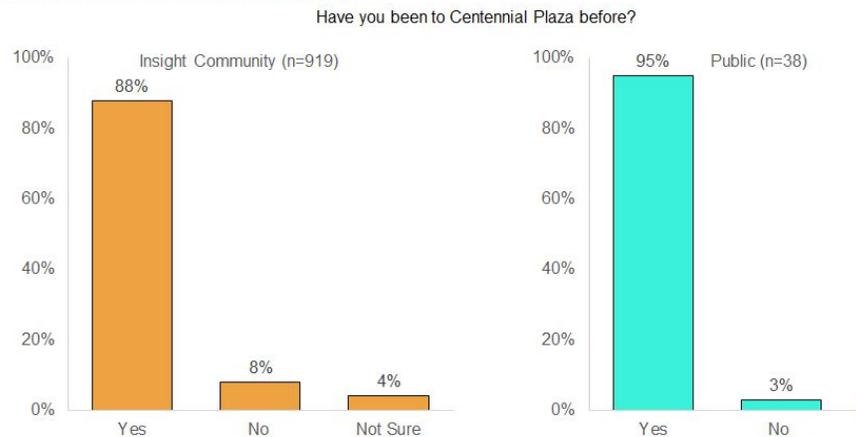
Overall feedback themes included:

- the incorporation of additional green space to that area of the downtown was seen as a valuable addition;
- the specific type of planting should be selected under the parameters of the Winter City guidelines;
- the future operations and maintenance of the designs should be prioritized; and
- the creation of smaller everyday spaces would be beneficial to that area.

Public

Our public survey gathered the following responses.

Centennial Plaza Visitation



Respondents who had an equal preference of all design concepts often stated that all options have good features/qualities and that they share similar elements.

For those that did not prefer any of the concepts, they frequently stated their concern to be about City finances and overall spending on this project and projects like it.

Layout

What we heard:

- Spacious with lots of open space
- Variety of gathering spaces and different areas
- Mix of seating, shade and landscape design
- Space is functional
- Ease of accessibility/mobility

Seating

What we heard:

- Respondents liked the built-in seating
- Good variety of different seating areas/spaces
- Gathering mound/landscape hill
- Seating growing out of wood decking
- Wooden seating/park benches/tables
- Adequate amount of seating

Shade Structures

What we heard:

- Mix of trees and shade structures
- Canopy coverage that offers plenty of shade
- Liked the amount of trees and the natural shade
- Colours/colour arrangement/colour design
- Some liked the single shade structure while others preferred multiple locations

Planting

What We Heard:

- Natural setting/green spaces
- Amount of trees and greenery
- Variety of plants/flowers/landscaped areas
- Mix of trees and landscaped areas

Surfacing

What We Heard:

- More respondents supported concrete respondents liked that it appears to be easy to clean/maintain/requires less maintenance and that it seems to be durable/long lasting/tough
- Less support - Wood decking is visually appealing and looks and feels more natural.

F. What Happens Next?

The feedback from the concept options engagement has been incorporated into the preferred design. Preliminary design engagement will use the preferred design to gather feedback to inform the final design.