

What We Heard Report Centennial Plaza Redesign Phase 2

openspaceplanninganddesign@edmonton.ca

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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 has been working on redeveloping this downtown open space to create a more attractive, welcoming and accessible place.



Figure 1: Location of Centennial Plaza

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
- Facades for parkade exits, ramps and stair entrances including the Milner Parkade Entrance
- Judy Padua Way

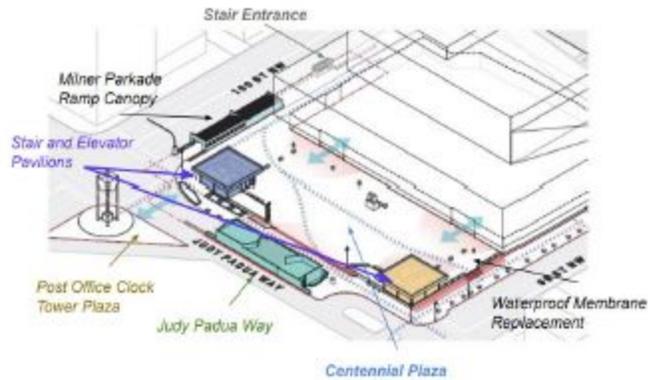


Figure 2: Centennial Plaza Redevelopment Project Components

The theme for this project is “Sensory Garden”. The proposed preliminary design aims to create a space that inspires the senses (sight, sound, touch, smell) to create multiple experiences as people move through the Plaza.

The design aligns with the four project goals established during Phase 1:

- + **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 with the addition of 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



Child-Friendly Space - accessible and facilitates child-directed play to create an inclusive and vibrant place



Safety + Security - cultivates a sense of community and shared ownership through a variety of animated spaces



Winter City - vibrant and remains vibrant through all seasons



The Everplay - supports the everyday life of visitors with a range of ways to engage and gather



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. In the spring of 2020, members of the public were invited to provide feedback on three concept options for Centennial Plaza during Phase 1 of the public engagement for the project.

With the feedback received during Phase 1 about the preferred elements of the concept options, a preliminary design was developed and presented in October 2020 during Phase 2 of the engagement. Members of the public were invited to provide feedback by sharing what they liked about the preliminary design and what could be improved to help inform development of the final design.

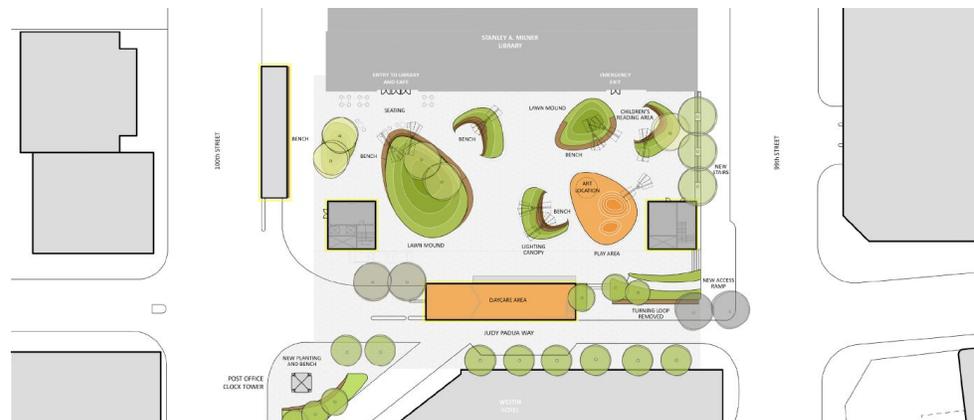


Figure 3: Preliminary Design

C. How and who we engaged

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

Over the month of October 2020, we invited feedback about the preliminary design using the Engaged Edmonton online platform. There were 36 responses from the public received through the Engaged Edmonton site.

D. What we asked

The Engaged Edmonton project page included an image of the preliminary design and an information package that included:

- the project theme and goals;
- what informed the preliminary design; and
- information about next steps in the project.

A project timeline and the What We Heard Report from Phase 1 of the redevelopment project was also included on the project page.

Members of the public used the comment area on the project page to share what they liked about the preliminary design and what could be improved.

E. What we heard

Layout

What we heard

Participants indicated they liked:

- the openness of the space;
- its connection to library programming;
- the dedicated daycare space;
- the variety of children's amenities; and
- opportunities for art and music to take place in the space.

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Participants also offered suggestions on how the layout could be improved.

These ideas involved:

- increasing the visual and pedestrian connections between the Plaza, Shoctor Alley and Rice Howard Way;
- decreasing the visual and pedestrian barriers of the Library parkade entrance on 100 Street;
- enhancing the east-west connection between Canada Place and 101 Street;
- increasing the connection with other spaces in the areas such as Churchill Square and City Hall;
- enhancing inclusivity with accessible play and activity areas including enough space for strollers, walkers and wheelchairs;
- providing alternatives to east and south stair access to promote accessibility;
- enhancing alignment along 101A Avenue to improve through traffic in either direction;
- adding elements that share the history of the site;
- enhance the existing historical interpretation of the Post Office Clock Tower area;
- locating the daycare space closer to the Library building to increase safety and enhance the openness of the Plaza;
- using glass as the fencing material for the daycare area to promote openness of the space and prevent visual barriers;
- adding heating (e.g., fire pits, heaters) and weather protection elements to encourage winter use;
- including more playground space and/or make it bigger;
- adding bike parking;
- including space for food trucks and other commercial activities such as outdoor markets;
- having a clearly defined space for artists and musicians to perform that includes electrical outlets;
- creating a more central area for programming;
- adding color into the space through seasonal plants such as flowers and fruit trees and, in the concrete;
- adding more lighting, including accent lighting on benches, for safety and to promote evening use of space; and

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- including lighting that considers the migration patterns and night-time flying of birds.

Seating

What we heard

Participants liked the mix of seating and suggested that, to accommodate people with mobility challenges, a mix of benches at various heights and with armrests would be beneficial. They also suggested that the design could be improved by adding more circle seating where artists might perform and using seating to define the edges of the space.

Canopy

What we heard

Participants advised that when considering integration of the canopies into the space it would be important to use material that doesn't create visual barriers and to not make them too big so that the sun can still be accessed.

Planting

What we heard

Participants liked that there was plenty of greenery and that the design incorporated different types of landscaping. They suggested that the design could be improved by adding a water feature such as rainwater gardens and a variety of trees and seasonal flowers.

Surfacing

What we heard

Participants suggested that the surfaces within the space could be improved by:

- limiting the height of the mounds to improve sightlines;
- using material for the mounds that prevents icing of the surface in the winter and mud during other seasons;
- using upcycled or recycled materials throughout the space; and
- using real grass.

F. What happens next?

The preliminary design phase was the final public engagement for the Centennial Plaza redevelopment project. The feedback we received, along with City policies and programs and technical requirements, is being used to refine the design. Because of the feedback we received, we are considering adding features such as:

- bike racks;
- more circle seating;
- extra lighting;
- limited power for small events and performances; and
- art and historical interpretations.

These possible additions will depend on funding and technical considerations. The final design will be presented to City Council in early 2021 for their consideration and possible funding for the project.