

EXHIBITION LANDS

WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

Phase 4: Refine | June – July 2019

Edmonton

City of Edmonton O2 Planning + Design Inc.

INTRODUCTION

The Exhibition Lands offers an unprecedented city-building opportunity in Edmonton. Over a two year planning and engagement process, a new vision for the area has been developed. Public and stakeholder engagement has been an integral part of the process to create and test the building blocks of this vision.

This What We Heard Report is the fourth and final engagement summary in the Exhibition Lands Transformation Project. This report overviews the engagement activities carried out during Phase 4: Refinement, which occurred from June to July, 2019. During this phase, the Exhibition Lands project team shared the redevelopment concept and new vision for the area. Edmontonians and stakeholders were invited to provide feedback to refine this concept and vision. This report summarizes the feedback received on the preferred redevelopment concept, collected through in-person and online engagement.



PROJECT PROCESS



PHASE 3: Summer - Fall 2018

DEVELOP

In Phase 3, the Project Team created a shortlist of initial development concepts which were reviewed against market analysis and evaluation criteria. Edmontonians were then asked to provide their feedback on the four initial concepts.

PHASE 4: Winter – Spring 2019

REFINE

In Phase 4, a preferred concept was selected and refined. This concept was approved by Council in April 2019. The Project Team then refined the concept and developed policies, which were shared with stakeholders and Edmontonians.



PREFERRED CONCEPT

From the results of the engagement conducted on the four preliminary concepts, the project team developed a preferred concept for the redevelopment of the Exhibition Lands.



The foundation of Planning Framework for the Exhibition Lands is an overall concept for the site. The concept shows the key land use, mobility, and open space elements that are incorporated into the Plan. These elements help the Planning Framework achieve the City's four 2050 Goals and the Guiding Principles of the Project.

THE NEW VISION FOR THE EXHIBITION LANDS

Edmonton Exhibition Lands provides the space for a vibrant new urban community to take form, harnessing the area's history of gathering, proximity to nature, and transportation connections, creating new and exciting opportunities to live, work and play in the heart of Northeast Edmonton.

The foundation of the Exhibition Lands concept is the development of two transit villages. Transit villages are compact, mixed-use, and human scale communities. They are focused around an LRT station, open space, and a mixed use "village" node, and contain a variety of ground-oriented residential forms, such as row houses and low-mid rise apartments. Transit villages offer a healthy, sustainable lifestyle where amenities, employment and services can all be accessed without a vehicle due to a compact streets and pathways network. The concept also envisions the reconfiguration and expansion of Borden Park, a network of new open spaces, and the integration of a civic/education anchor and employment anchor in the redevelopment.



GENERAL LAND USE TYPES

- PREDOMINANTLY RESIDENTIAL
- VERTICAL MIXED USE
- HORIZONTAL MIXED USE
- **COMMERCIAL / EMPLOYMENT**
- **CIVIC / EDUCTION ANCHOR**
- **COMMERICAL / EMPLOYMENT ANCHOF** 1 **INCREMENTAL INFILL GROWTH**
- **GREEN SPACE**
- LIGHT INDUSTRY / LRT FACILITY
- /// INCREMENTAL INDUSTRIAL GROWTH



4,200 (post-constr.)

20-30 years

ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The project team met with several external and internal stakeholder groups throughout the Refinement Phase and presented the preferred concept and vision for feedback.

External Stakeholders

The concept and vision were shared at the following stakeholder meetings and events:

- + October 29 Real Estate Advisory Committee
- March 6 Accessibility Advisory Committee
- + May 2 Energy Transition Advisory Committee
- + May 3 Edmonton Economic Development Corporation
- + June 5 Industry Stakeholders
- + June 5 Community Stakeholder Committee
- + June 6 Edmonton Economic Development Corporation
- + June 10 District G
- + June 18 Canadian Native Friendship Centre
- June 27 Alberta Avenue Business Improvement Association
- + July 8 EndPoverty Edmonton Indigenous Circle
- + July 22 Real Estate Advisory Committee

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Transit Oriented Development Symposium | June 20

The project team attended the transit oriented development symposium with boards and the concept to share information about the progress of the project.

Public Concept Review | June 27

Two public engagement sessions were hosted on June 27 at Bellevue Community League Hall — one in the afternoon and one in the evening. The draft concept, vision, and policies were presented for public feedback. The project team heard from 129 people who attended the sessions.

Online Survey | June 25 - July 9

An online survey was launched the same week as the Public Concept Review workshops. The survey provided information about the concept and vision. It asked a series of questions similar to those discussed at the public event. A total of 714 responses were received.



ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS Summer 2019 129 Public Event Attendees 10 Community Groups Engaged With 714 Survey Participants

FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Meetings with stakeholders involved a presentation from the project team about the preferred concept followed by a discussion and question period. The following presents a summary of the likes, concerns, and suggestions provided by the various stakeholder groups.

COMMUNITY

Community stakeholders include the Community Stakeholder Committee and District G.

Likes

- Overall concept and policy directions
- + Higher density, which will help with affordability
- + Improvements to LRT multi-use path

Concerns

- Traffic impacts and people shortcutting through the new neighbourhood
- Balancing flexibility for development with ensuring development meet City goals/ guiding principles
- + The future of the Bellevue Hall

Suggestions

- Communicate timing of development to the public, the plan's overlap with existing ARPs, and impacts it will have on surrounding communities
- Develop additional infill guidelines for existing neighbourhoods
- + Add policies around maker spaces
- + Conduct planning processes for new parks
- Set a carbon emissions target, net zero
- + Add more green space in north of site
- + Ensure accessibility of public spaces

INDIGENOUS

Indigenous stakeholders include the Canadian Naitve Friendship Centre and EndPoverty Edmonton Indigenous Circle.

Likes

- Walking paths
- + Borden Park remaining, the heart of the park retained
- Open space network

Concerns

- City engages and makes plans, but projects don't get built – want to see actual implementation
- + Parking at Expo Centre is too massive
- + Not a good area, will be difficult to redevelop

Suggestions

- Ensure accessible parking near Expo and for Powwows, businesses, and services; need residential parking
- + Ensure wide sidewalks, separated bike lanes
- Investigate opportunity to align with the Indigenous Cultural and Wellness Centre project.
- Provide an Indigenous-only space and residences so indigenous people feel more welcome/comfortable
- Create spaces/naming/identifiers that support Indigenous reference to create a sense of belonging/ welcoming to Indigenous people

DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS

Development industry and business stakeholders include the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, general Development Industry meeting participants, the Alberta Avenue Business Improvement Association, and the Real Estate Advisory Committee.

Likes

- + Overall concept
- + Potential for developing a hotel east of Expo
- Flexibility of the Planning Framework, which allows for private sector innovation in built form
- Assumptions of area being low to mid rise built form
- + Business employment, industrial transition areas
- Phased land sale approach

Concerns

- Degree of affordable housing versus market housing, and perceived quality of redevelopment
- + LRT is not necessarily going to spark development
- Potential for LRT stations to have high crime/safety issues
- Uncertainty of the RFP process makes it very hard and costly to participate

Suggestions

- + Consider CRL to incentivize developer investment
- Need to ensure that there is transparency on how the plan will impact the Expo Centre, particularly any reduction of parking
- Migrate LRT station closer to Expo
- Ensure adequate buffering between residential development and Expo back of house
- + Modify K Days staging
- Provide a clear picture of the servicing condition and connections before going out to RFP
- Allow development to slowly build momentum, doesn't have to be fast
- + Get capital commitment early from Council

SPECIAL INTEREST

Special interest stakeholders include the Accessibility Advisory Committee and Energy Transition Advisory Committee (ETAC).

Likes

- + Connectedness of the community and transportation choice
- Reconfigured/expanded Borden Park and additional parks and open space
- + Civic/Education Anchor
- + Urban infill/density

Suggestions

- + Provide accessible housing in proximity to transit/LRT
- Provide policy statements supporting inclusionary housing or encouragement to builders to produce a "visitable home" product (Homes For All)
- Ensure open space and mobility (trails/walkways/ streets) are designed to meet the needs of all users
- + Reference the newly created Accessibility Guidelines
- Consider building in flexibility in zoning to support towers-based development should the market evolve in the future – this would tie more directly to the TOD guidelines.
- Desire for plan to commit to carbon neutral or net zero, to be achieved via a district energy program or early adoption of net zero building code.

PUBLIC CONCEPT REVIEW

On June 27, 2019, 129 people attended a drop-in workshop at Bellevue Community Hall to review the concept and vision for the Exhibition Lands site.

Two public sessions were hosted in Bellevue Community League Hall on June 27, 2019 – an afternoon session from 1-3 pm and an evening session from 5-8 pm. Attendees were invited to view a series of introductory panels describing the project and process to date.

At both sessions, the project team presented each hour for 15 minutes. The presentation provided an overview of the project process, what we heard from previous phases of engagement, and an introduction to the new vision for the site.

Participants were then invited to view visualizations of the concept and vision for the site. These were presented on panels and could also be viewed using virtual reality headsets, which offered participants the ability to fully immerse themselves in 3D images of aspects of the vision.

At the next stations, participants were asked to provide their feedback on the three main policy areas of the plan: Land Use, Mobility, and Open Space. Participants could discuss the draft policies with the project team, and provide comments on their likes and concerns using sticky notes. In total, the team received 223 comments.

A final station was setup explaining the next steps in the project and preliminary information on implementation of the Plan. Here, participants could also leave final comments on whether or not they supported the overall concept and vision.





Attendees

129 223 Comments

PUBLIC CONCEPT REVIEW RESULTS:

LAND USE, MOBILITY, AND OPEN SPACE

The project team received constructive feedback and suggestions from participants at both the afternoon and evening sessions. Participants were asked at each of the Land Use, Mobility, and Open Space stations to comment on their likes and concerns about the concept. Out of the 193 comments, 129 were concerns or suggestions for refinement and 64 were likes.

What do you like about the concept?





The project team received 64 comments about what participants liked about the concept. The most popular aspect of the concept was the increased connectivity, walkability, and compactness proposed in the concept.

Do you have any concerns about the concept?



The project team received 129 comments about concerns and suggestions participants had for the refinement of the concept. People most frequently commented that they felt there should be even more connectivity in the concept, particularly to existing neighbourhoods.

The remainder of the concerns were distributed amongst several different topics, which are addressed in the overall summary themes from this phase of engagement.

PUBLIC CONCEPT REVIEW RESULTS:

OVERALL CONCEPT

At the end of the stations, participants were asked to comment on whether they supported the concept overall. Generally, people expressed positivity around the concept in conversation with the project team. Many of these individuals also expressed ideas for further refinement. These comments have been analyzed in conjunction with the comments at the three stations.

Likes

Over 10% of attendees expressed that they liked the multi-model and compact nature of the concept and its focus on walkability. The second most appreciated element of the concept was the integrated network of open space and amenities proposed. Greenway links and the expansion of Borden Park were specifically noted as things people liked about the concept, as was the emphasis on transit oriented development.

Concerns

Just over 10% of participants requested additional connections. Several comments indicated a need for a bike lane or multi-use pathway on 112 Ave, as well as better pedestrian linkages across Wayne Gretzky Drive to existing communities.

There were conflicting opinions on whether there was too much or too little density proposed on the site. A few comments suggested that the south transit village should allow for additional height to take advantage of River Valley views. Others wanted to see less housing and more open space, or Borden Park expanded even more.

Several people wanted to see even more open space on the site and Borden Park expanded further. Others expressed disappointment in the lack of urban agriculture specified in the redevelopment.







ONLINE SURVEY

From June 24 to July 9, 714 people responded to the City's online survey on the Exhibition Lands Redevelopment Concept.

The online survey provided an opportunity for people who could not attend the public event on June 27 to review the new vision and concept for the Exhibition Lands. Participants were provided with an overall concept map, a labelled diagram of the 3D rendering of future development, and renderings of individual aspects of the project with accompanying narratives. Participants were asked to provide comments on their likes, dislikes, and concerns about the concept.

OVERALL RESULTS

The topics raised in the survey were relatively consistent with the topics from the public event. In general, more participants of the survey told us about things they liked than things they disliked or had concerns about the concept.



What do you like about the concept?

Note: Percentages are based on the number of responses that indicated each theme out of the 714 responses received. These do not add up to 100% as comments often contained several themes.

26% of online survey respondents expressed that they liked the amount of open space provided in the concept. This was closely followed by 25% of respondents that liked the additional LRT station and focus on transit-oriented development. Another 20% of participants liked the connectivity, walkability, and compactness of the concept.

16% of respondents did not identify any specific things they liked, but said that they were overall satisfied with the concept.





What do you dislike about the concept?

22% of participants left the dislike box blank, with another 13% stating explicitly that they did not dislike anything about the concept.

The most common cited dislike was how the grade and pedestrian connectivity at 118 Avenue was not being changed as part of the redevelopment.

Approximately 16% of participants expressed concerns about the safety of at-grade LRT, the cost of an additional station, and the efficiency of adding another stop to the LRT line.



Do you have any concerns?

The number one most identified concern at 27% of responses was the cost to taxpayers and ability of the City to implement the vision expressed in the concept. This was common even amongst those who expressed satisfaction with the concept.

Following this, the next most common responses were blank and "no concerns", which made up a combined 34%.

SUMMARY

Public and stakeholder engagement in Phase 4 yielded several themes. The following section explores these themes, specifically those that received strong support, strong opposition, or a clear divergence of views. A sample of direct quotes are also provided from the online survey and public event (these do not include all of the comments received).

Open Space

The most frequently submitted likes about the concept were about the open space network. Participants indicated support for:

- the overall open space network, with greenway links, amenity nodes, and expansion of Borden Park which ensures that the redevelopment has a strong "community focus"
- + the connectivity of the open space network
- having greenway links serve as the main pedestrian routes connecting housing to other parts of the plan area and the North Saskatchewan River Valley
- + the expansion and reconfiguration of Borden Park
- the incorporation of the heritage elements of Klondike Park into Borden Park
- retaining the main elements of the existing Borden Park were being retained.

A few people wanted to see even more open space and vegetation in the concept. Others suggested that there needed to be more consideration in the concept for winter design, safety, and regular maintenance of open space. Several participants suggested specific amenities that should be provided, particularly in Borden Park. I like the way greenways connect people to the park and river valley. I am also glad to see little pockets of space where people can interact...little playground areas, meeting areas, recreation areas.

I like the openness of the concept of the transit village as well as the inclusion of green spaces. Too many new areas are very sterile with the excessive use of concrete and lack any green space at all...

I like all the open spaces that give it a strong community focus.

I like the planned expansion of Borden park to include elements of the Klondike history that are located near it.

l like the expansion of Borden Park and the link to the Expo Centre.

I like the emphasis on keeping and expanding Borden Park. It is definitely a key focal point for this section of the city. I remember visiting it as a child and I am now only a few months away from official senior status.

Greenway links are a really good idea

...I LOVE the green links and the focus that was put on walkability - - I believe this is key. I live just a few blocks east of the site on 118th and I can see myself spending a lot of time in the new space, as well as commuting through. It will make the walk from my house to Borden Park much more enjoyable...

looks very well thought out. love the greenways to link parks together

Overall concept looks too much like a ghetto. Don't forget the high crime rate in the area also. I foresee gangs taking over the open spaces...

The urban plaza and greenway link I am worried about being empty and deserted.

Too little expansion of Borden Park. A missed opportunity for more green space in the city.

Transit Orientation and Connectivity

Generally, more people liked the transit oriented nature and walkability of the development than those who disliked it. Many participants indicated support for:

- having two LRT stations, particularly one in the south to provide additional access to the area
- the "neighbourhood scale" of the proposed LRT stations
- the concept of transit villages, with the focus on walkability and a mix of uses near transit stations
- the idea of a "complete community", where people had access to all of their daily needs via active transportation modes

Those who disliked this aspect of the concept were primarily concerned with the cost of an additional LRT station. Some participants disliked:

- moving the Coliseum LRT station, and would rather see it upgraded
- adding an LRT station to the network, as they felt it would decrease the overall efficiency of the LRT system
- the location of the LRT, because they felt it was too far from employment uses on the site and the Expo Centre

Some participants expressed concern that they felt the concept went too far in discouraging vehicle traffic. They felt that the narrow streets and reduced parking requirements could cause negative traffic impacts and limit who would be able to live in the new communities. Others felt that the traffic and parking issues would impact existing residential neighbourhoods adjacent to the plan area.

Virtually all of it! I was initially opposed to the idea of a second LRT station but it really makes a lot of sense, and I like that both new stations will be "neighbourhood scale"---less imposing than the giant concrete Coliseum station as it is now...

I like the two new LRT stations, especially the one close to 115 Avenue, and the opening up of that street. I would hope this LRT station would be one of the first projects for the Exhibition Lands timeline.

Transit Village's an awesome idea. It will rejuvenate a community in dire need of something to be proud of and protect the ppl using transit systems as well as the rest of the community.

The transit component. If you build it, we will use it!

I like the idea of a transit – focused village where people have access to transportation and walking access to parks and shops.

Transit Village's an awesome idea. It will rejuvenate a community in dire need of something to be proud of and protect the ppl using transit systems as well as the rest of the community.

I am concerned that a large area of residential development is designed for transit users with no vehicles. This concept has not caught on elsewhere in the city so it will likely not work here either.

why the need for 2 LRT stations so close to each other? this will increase commute times and possibly push people to drive instead of take transit.

I strongly dislike having 2 LRT stations so close together. This will make the train system even less efficient. It's also a huge waste of money. The existing station should be renovated but left in place...

Not sure about the access to the Expo Centre from the LRT stations. I was surprised to find that I liked the whole concept a lot! This an area where I would like to live. It appears to have everything I would want. A rec. center, shopping, transit, a park and accessibility to other areas of the city.

I like the concept of people in a liveable community with access to stores, leisure, dog parks etc. I like the 2 new transit areas and yes we need mixed level housing close to LRT.

It's a good combination of uses. Love the expansion of Borden Park. Our young family lives nearby on 112 South Ave and it would be so nice to see the area marketed to young professional families who want to keep their commute to work short in hopes of spending more time with their families. Family-friendly restaurants and cafes would be a welcome addition to the neighbourhood.

I like the balance of 'development' be it housing, business/retail opportunities with the considerable green space that exists at Borden Park.

The entire concept: it offers a full complement of live, work and learn. The improvements to Wayne Gretzky drive will really improve the streetscape of the corridor. The low to mid rise transit villages will complement the surrounding communities. The new Irt stations make sense to accommodate this new community. The improvements to Borden park will also serve the community well. I'm very pleased with the concept.

I like how it will be developed almost as a village within the city of Edmonton. People could basically, live, work and shop and have recreation in the park mostly in this "village" and not have to do too much travel outside of the area.

I like that the concept is a complete community, with housing, employment and recreation opportunities near each other, walkable and linked Density may be too ambitious. Is there enough recreation space for the population? Security for an problematic vicinity?

I am concerned about the addition of all the homes, small streets, walk space etc. because of the following: the Coliseum LRT station is known for high crime and I am concerned this crime will spill into these new areas. As well I am concerned this new setup will encourage more homeless to come into this area potentially impacting the safety of residents, visitors as well as potential increase for crime, drugs, alcohol, etc.

Waste of money to try and put lipstick on a pig. This is a very unsafe part of the city to build a community like you propose.

More density would be great

I like the overall ideas put forth. But it doesn't take much to turn a good idea that involves high density into a slum/'projects' area. Infill has already ignited some of these issues. Cramming people too close together is not a good idea.

Mix of Uses

Many participants expressed their support for the diversity of uses contained in the redevelopment concept. Several liked:

- the type of lifestyle that the redevelopment would provide, and how it could reduce commute times for families and allow them to have a higher quality of life due to the proximity of services and recreation facilities.
- having employment opportunities in the site so that you could work, live, and play in one area of the City
- having a civic/education anchor in the south edge of the site that would also provide publicly accessible recreation facilities.

Some concerns were expressed about how jobs would be ensured in the redevelopment. A few participants felt that the anchors were too vague and were concerned about how the City could ensure these are actually built.

Density and Housing Mix

Generally, there was support for the types of housing proposed in the concept; however, there were some discrepancies between what people felt about affordability versus quality of housing proposed. There were also contradictory comments about density.

There was a perception among some participants that compact, grade-oriented housing meant low quality housing. Some went so far as to say that they felt the area would only be for low income residents with no vehicles, and that this would create an unsafe and undesirable community. Several commented on the area's existing reputation for crime, and how they felt that introducing more transit access and providing additional open spaces would make the area more unsafe.

On the other side of this theme, there were several participants who wanted to see an even stronger commitment from the city to ensure that housing remains affordable on the site. Several wanted to see a requirement for family size dwelling units, student housing, accessible seniors' units, and affordable housing.

On density, some people wanted to see even more intense development on the site, while others felt the concept was

too dense. Those that wanted more density felt that there was a missed opportunity by not having towers in the south transit village, both for views of the river valley and to capitalize on proximity to the LRT.

K Days and Other Events

One of the concerns that some people expressed was where K Days would be accommodated once the plan is fully realized. Some suggested that the format of the event should change and be able to fit partly in the Expo Centre and partly in the new section of Borden Park. Others wanted ensure a new home found for the event, so that it could continue but would not impact new and existing residents of the area.

There were some participants who expressed their overall displeasure with the area being redeveloped at all. These participants felt that the area should have been retained for city events, and that the existing Northlands facilities and the Coliseum should have been retained.

K–Days (if it stays) has to adjust to a changing neighbourhood.

Rethink the layout of k-days + integrate it into green spaces.

Keep it as it is. K-Days & other peopleoriented events. History for 130 years.

Last meeting, there was STRONG opposition to LARGE "festival" events ALL year! This is a community, NOT a place for LARGE festivals. Why not use the stadium for large outdoor festivals??? Constant disruption + noise NOT wanted!

Where will K-Days end up going?

Where will large visiting events like K-days or Circus's go instead?

Suggestion: Sufficient outdoor open space for events such as K-Days, large displays, Christmas displays, farmers markets, and night markets.





garden Expansion it burden Park 1 like green way links

proposed up.



great apportuni to neight start a with no cars all parking lots; - one for cars - me for lifergeles

Have we lost the unbow s such a the REED. IT CHULD & EXPANOED. COULD EVEN PROUDE IF MARCE AND THEREFORE JUSS. (IN THE LOBAN FROM)



Seems similar to Quarters and Blanchford. If those aren't taking off, will this?

Timeline is far too long (Edmonton needs this now, and knowing the CoE, this will take 20% longer than quoted), and there is still too much built-in reliance on cars.

The headache of transit and construction.

Nice vision but can't see it getting off the ground all the way to completion. Too many pet projects/dreams by mayor and council. Will get maybe half way done and then left to turn into a ghetto or just plain old stall...like your brilliant idea for Station Pointe

lt won't get built.

how long it will take, and the chance that developers will not follow it.

The time frame for completion is ridiculous. 20-30 years??

It is ambitious and will likely take decades to build so there will be years of it being incomplete and under construction.

the overall cost will definitely increase city taxes .. as usual

Too many road blocks to final completion.

This area will be a construction site for the next 30 years

Love the concept, question the reality of it happening.

It will never get built and we will be exactly where we are on Blatchford with the City fussing around and nothing going forward. The City should not be in the land development business as they aren't good at it!

Seems to hinge on the education and employment anchors materializing, and those are well out of planners control

Implementation

The most frequent concern in this phase of engagement was implementation of the plan. Both those who liked the concept and those who did like it expressed concerns around how long it will take to develop, costs to taxpayers, and disruptions caused by construction.

Several expressed distrust in the City's ability to see the project to completion, particularly with the amount of other redevelopment projects planned in Edmonton. They felt that the City had too many things on its plate and that this could be detrimental to this project and the others by spreading resources too thin.

Some participants expressed fear that the length of the project timelines would make the City unable to deliver the redevelopment as planned. They felt that the long timeline would water down the plan and its principles over time and be subject to changing political interests and the interests of individual developers.

NEXT STEPS

The next step in the project process is to refine the draft Planning Framework. The feedback gained from this final phase of public and stakeholder engagement will be considered in this final refinement process.

Once the draft Planning Framework is complete, it will undergo an internal review process by the City of Edmonton. After this, the Planning Framework will be presented to City Council. This presentation and the Public Hearing are anticipated to take place year end, 2019.



We would like to thank everyone who has participated in the engagement for this project and welcome you to join us for the Public Hearing in fall/winter 2019!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Sign up for the project newsletter and learn about future engagement opportunities at **edmonton.ca/exhibitionlands**