

What We Heard Report

Sidewalk Maintenance Strategy

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Edmonton

Public Engagement Summary and Results

Project Overview

The Sidewalk Maintenance Strategy aims to assess the current sidewalk maintenance strategy and update it to be more proactive based on the equitable needs and important pedestrian destinations in the City. This project is being led by the Parks and Roads Services branch in the City Operations Department.

Project Goals

- Assess current sidewalk conditions, 311 related sidewalk locations, current maintenance strategy
- Create a prioritization scoring index for every existing sidewalk comprised of both social equity needs and important pedestrian destinations
- Incorporate this prioritization scoring index to 311 requests - making a reactive system more proactive
- Develop a new sidewalk maintenance program which will be dedicated to repairing existing sidewalks that have a high prioritization scoring index but do not align with the timing of neighbourhood renewal and road reconstruction programs in the near future.

How We Engaged

- We conducted **5** one hour in-depth virtual conversations one-on-one with external stakeholders to get initial feedback on the approach to the sidewalk strategy
- These stakeholders represented community groups and organizations serving Edmonton
- We selected organizations serving different people and interests from the community
- These stakeholders were selected because they have insight and perspectives into how the condition of sidewalk impacts the members they serve
- In our discussions, we found out about many other organizations to connect with about this work, which we will do in Phase 2 and Phase 3 of this project.

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What We Asked

We asked participants the following questions:

- Thinking about your experience with sidewalks in Edmonton, what are the greatest challenges or concerns from your organization's perspective?
- If you were to think about an equitable sidewalk maintenance strategy, what might that look like?
- Now that we've provided you with an overview of the project and strategy, what are your initial thoughts about our framework/approach to the sidewalk maintenance strategy? Is anything missing from this framework or is there anything that you would change?
- What do you think is the most important consideration for us to know as we proceed?
- Are there any other organizations or initiatives connected to this work that we should be aware of?

What We Heard

We heard a number of themes throughout our conversations

- Many stakeholders remarked how thorough and impressed they were with the research and in particular the equity considerations reflected in the strategy.
- Many stakeholders stressed the importance of assessing sidewalk accessibility from a user perspective, including those who are elderly and/or using mobility aids. Transition points were flagged as the most challenging aspect of a sidewalk journey.
 - Suggestions were made to incorporate the 'missing links program' and 'curb ramp program', if possible, to create a truly accessible sidewalk network.
- Many stakeholders suggested leveraging and incorporating the City Plan nodes and corridors and the Bike Plan into analysis.
- Some stakeholders suggested adding metrics to assess the performance of existing sidewalk infrastructure to ensure it is functioning as intended. If opportunities exist to improve functionality, then consider redesigning the sidewalk (e.g. upgrade a sidewalk to a shared use path) vs. repairing/replacing.
 - Some stakeholders asked if the strategy would have the opportunity to expand its scope from a maintenance perspective to also include enhancement and upgrade additional assets like lighting, trees, and incorporate elements of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design).

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- Some stakeholders provided feedback on making improvements to the Social Vulnerability Index and Pedestrian/Sidewalk Importance Index to ensure the indicators better capture the members in the communities these organizations serve.
 - Suggestions included incorporating 'age', 'journey to work mode', and 'proportion of low income seniors living at home' into the development of the Social Vulnerability Index.
 - Suggestions also included incorporating pedestrian volumes or pedestrian density when generating the Pedestrian/Sidewalk Importance Index.
- Stakeholders were very helpful in identifying potential, additional data sources that might add value to our research.
- They also had suggestions to expand the City's education around sidewalk repairs and 311 reporting.
- Each stakeholder also provided ideas for other organizations, community groups or individuals to follow up with on the sidewalk strategy.

What We Will Do With The Information Gathered

The feedback from these conversations has helped us consider how to improve the approach for the sidewalk strategy. Here is a summary:

- Continue to work with City departments like Urban Planning and Economy and Integrated Infrastructure Services and leverage existing plans and programs, such as the City Plan, Bike Plan and the Neighbourhood Renewal Program to further define the parameters of the program (i.e. alignment with the curb ramp program and missing links).
- Consider, based on available data, incorporating additional criteria such as 'age' and 'journey to work mode' into the development of the Social Vulnerability Index.
- Incorporate pedestrian volumes or pedestrian density, where possible, when generating the Pedestrian/Sidewalk Importance Index.
- Better define senior centres/senior residences and include daycares when generating the Pedestrian/Sidewalk Importance Index.
- Continue to understand the pedestrian experience and social vulnerability by making an effort to connect with people experiencing barriers.

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What Happens Next?

- The draft Sidewalk Maintenance Strategy will be presented to the Community and Public Services Committee on April 25, 2022.
- Feedback received from stakeholder engagement will be incorporated in the strategy framework, where feasible, and help guide the next phase of engagement and the implementation of the sidewalk maintenance strategy.
- By the end of June, preliminary budget implications for the proposed strategy will be identified.
- Throughout the summer and fall of 2022, more in-depth public engagement will be conducted to refine the strategy and validate the analysis completed, particularly around the high-priority sidewalk network that is defined, and the locations that will fall into the criteria of the program.
- The final Sidewalk Maintenance Strategy will be presented to Community and Public Services Committee in January 2023.
- If you would like to stay involved with our work on this topic we will add you to our contact list for our upcoming conversations.

