

RIVER VALLEY PLANNING MODERNIZATION

Ribbon of Green & River Valley ARP

Phase 2 What We Heard Report
April 2022

The Edmonton logo is located in the bottom right corner of the page. It consists of the word "Edmonton" in a white, sans-serif font, centered within a dark blue square. The square has a subtle gradient, being slightly lighter at the bottom. A decorative green ribbon graphic runs vertically along the right side of the page, starting from the top right and extending towards the bottom left, partially overlapping the Edmonton logo square.

Edmonton

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Project Overview | 1 |
| PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT APPROACH | 3 |
| How We Engaged | 4 |
| Who We Engaged | 5 |
| What We Asked | 6 |
| INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | 7 |
| Indigenous Engagement | 8 |
| PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDER SUMMARY | 9 |
| Overall Summary | 10 |
| Vision & Principles | 12 |
| Land Management Classifications | 14 |
| River Valley Reaches | 16 |
| Project Assessments | 27 |
| Decision Makers | 30 |
| Other Feedback | 31 |
| Next Steps | 32 |
| APPENDICES | 33 |
| Appendix A: Stakeholder List | 34 |
| Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions | 35 |
| Appendix C: Map Comments | 37 |

Project Overview

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Edmonton's North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System ("River Valley") is a vital and highly-valued ecological, recreational and active transportation corridor; a place of incredible cultural significance and a draw for visitors throughout the region. As the residential population of Edmonton's core neighbourhoods grows, as Edmontonians increasingly seek out opportunities for natural recreation, and as a range of River Valley development projects are proposed, planned and implemented, pressure on the River Valley is increasing. With demands on the system becoming increasingly complex, there is a need for clear policy, sound planning guidance and a strong regulatory framework.

This River Valley Planning Modernization project will create an integrated planning and regulatory framework for Edmonton's River Valley to ensure that it remains a protected, vibrant and resilient open space network as the city grows.

FRAMEWORK

This project includes two streams of work that are being developed in coordination:

RIBBON OF GREEN – COMPLETION:

The Ribbon of Green provides the strategic direction: our overall vision for the future of the River Valley, our high-level plans for the connected open spaces within it, and the policy that guides our decisions about what happens in that space.

NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER VALLEY ARP – MODERNIZATION:

The North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (Bylaw 7188, also known as the River Valley Bylaw) provides the regulatory framework: the standards and rules that guide our evaluation of individual projects and development that are proposed for the River Valley.

ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The following principles will anchor our actions and thinking as we engage with the public and stakeholders.

- + Be open, timely and responsive
- + Listen and share stories to understand
- + Support informed engagement
- + Follow through on commitments

OVERALL ENGAGEMENT GOALS

While each project, and each phase, will have its own specific aims, there are several overarching goals that all public engagement processes will aim to achieve.

- + Provide opportunities throughout the project for participants to provide meaningful, appropriate and actionable input that will be used to complete the Ribbon of Green plan and update the River Valley regulatory framework
- + Implement an engagement process that is open, transparent and respectful
- + Provide opportunities for involvement that are convenient and accessible
- + Creatively engage and communicate with the general public, stakeholders, and communities, including adjacent municipalities
- + Provide opportunities to engage vulnerable populations and equity seeking groups
- + Clearly communicate the project goals, what the engagement process can and cannot influence, and how public input was used to help shape the plan

PROJECT TIMELINE

The Ribbon of Green and the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (NRSVARP) will be updated together from 2021-2023.

To learn more about the Ribbon of Green and River Valley ARP and what is included in each plan, see the [Phase 2 RVPM Discussion Guide Backgrounder](#).

1 SHARE YOUR IDEAS

Spring 2021

2 SHAPE OUR RIBBON

Winter 2021/2022

3 PLAN OUR RIBBON

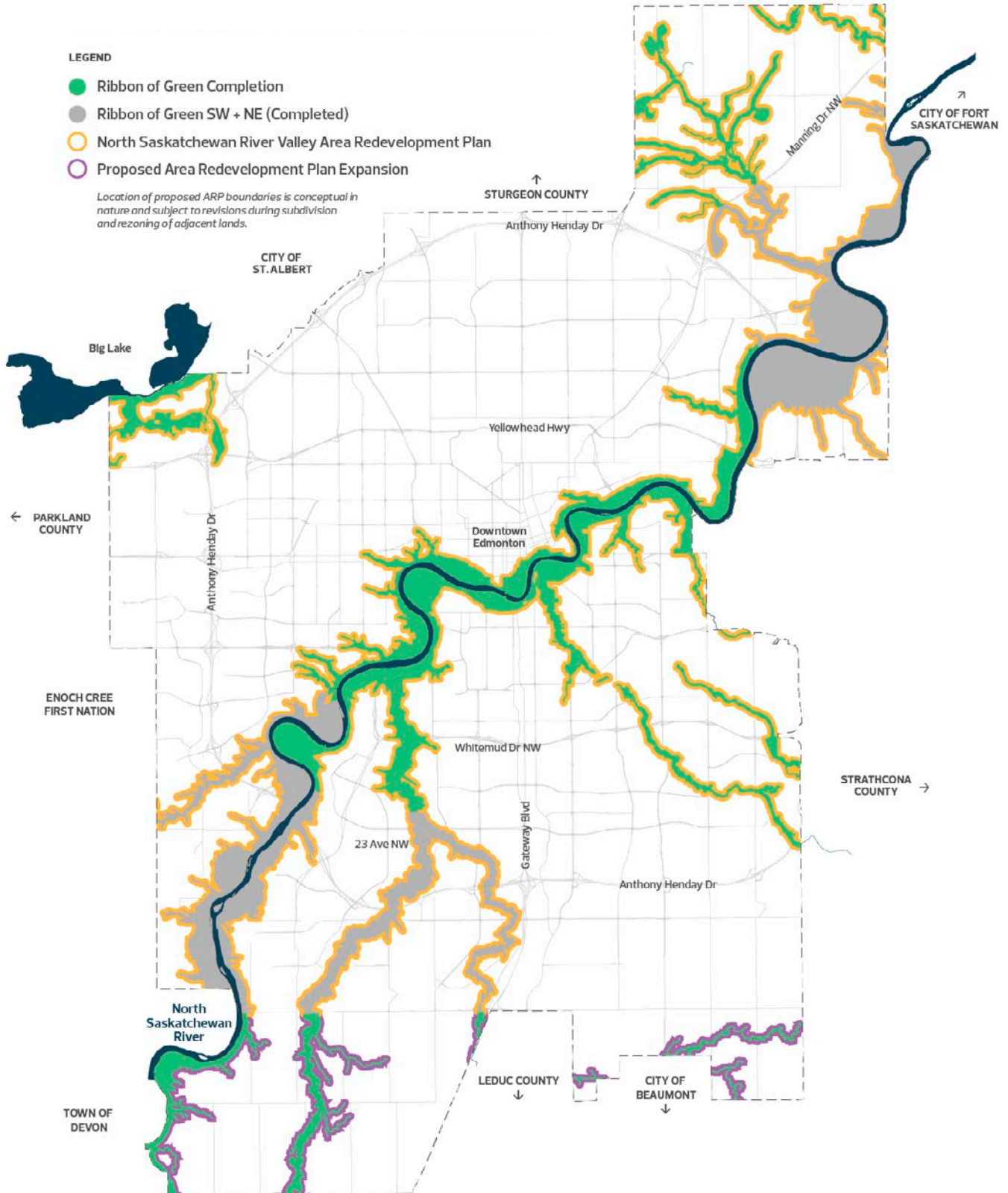
Fall 2022

4 CONFIRM OUR RIBBON

Spring 2023

PROJECT STUDY AREA BOUNDARIES













The boundary of the study area follows the boundary of the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System within the city of Edmonton. It also extends above the top-of-bank to consider the transportation network, as well as adjacent land and uses associated with the study area that may be used for ecological or human connectivity, access or parking.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

How We Engaged

Phase 2 Public Engagement was open for feedback from **January 20 to February 27, 2022**. To reach a wide range of Edmontonians and River Valley users, a variety of engagement methods and tools were used, ensuring there were multiple avenues to choose from to participate. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Phase 2 did not include any in-person engagement.

| RESOURCES | DESCRIPTION | STATS | AUDIENCE | FORMAT |
|---|--|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Inform | | | | |
|  | Project Webpage The online hub for all project information. edmonton.ca/ribbonofgreen | | Public | Online |
|  | River Valley Signage Signage was posted at high-traffic locations within the river valley to inform users about the project and promote engagement. | | Public | Print/On Site |
|  | Road Signage Signs placed along major roadways. | | Public | Print/On Site |
|  | Social Media Posts on Facebook and Twitter. | | Public | Online |
|  | Newsletters Project and community newsletters sent to subscribers. | | Public | Online |
|  | Direct Emails Direct emails to over 200 stakeholder organizations representing diverse communities and interests. | | Public | Online |
| Engage | | | | |
|  | Public Survey The online survey was the primary means to share information and collect feedback during Phase 2. Paper copies of the survey were available for those unable to access online engagement opportunities. | 4036 survey respondents | Public | Online/Print |
|  | Interactive Portal & Online Map This website included detailed information about the project and proposed updates, as well as an interactive map to collect feedback on the specific reaches. | 81 map pins | Public | Online |
|  | Public & Stakeholder Workshops Six virtual workshop sessions were held with facilitated small-group discussions. Open to anyone to register. A recording of the workshop presentation is available on the project webpage. | 222 workshop attendees 289 registrants 33 organizations | Public & Stakeholder Groups | Online/ Discussion |
|  | Stakeholder Discussion Guide PDF booklet with key project material and interactive form fields to provide feedback as an organization. | 11 guides collected | Stakeholder Groups | Online/Print |
|  | Project Email Emails sent to the project team. ribbonofgreen@edmonton.ca | 47 emails received | Public | Online |
|  | Stakeholder Meetings Meetings with stakeholder groups held upon request. | 8 meetings | Public | Online/ Discussion |

Who We Engaged

The City is committed to involving the people affected by the decisions it makes, and seeks diverse opinions, experiences and information so that a wide spectrum of perspectives are represented in the process.

The insights presented in this What We Heard Report represent the viewpoints of people and organizations who voluntarily selected to participate in public engagement for this phase. Results are not necessarily representative of the perspectives of all Edmontonians.

GENERAL PUBLIC:

Engagement opportunities were open to all Edmontonians who live, work, and play in and around the River Valley.

STAKEHOLDERS:

Groups with a vested interest in the River Valley were invited to participate, including representatives from:

- + **Stakeholder organizations** representing a variety of existing and potential users and uses, such as:
 - + ecological conservation and nature appreciation
 - + recreational activities
 - + active transportation
 - + festivals, events, and tourism
 - + cultural/historic resources
 - + residential/commercial development
 - + accessibility and inclusivity
- + **Partner facilities** that work with the City to develop, operate and program open spaces and facilities in the River Valley.
- + **Business owners** that currently operate or seek to operate commercial activity within the River Valley.
- + **Community leagues** of neighbourhoods adjacent to the River Valley.

For the full list of organizations that participated in Phase 2, see "Appendix A: Stakeholder List".

INDIGENOUS NATIONS & COMMUNITIES:

Indigenous Nations and Communities have significant historical and cultural connections to the river valley. In order to respect the unique engagement interests, cultural context and capacity of Indigenous Nations and Communities, Indigenous engagement was carried out through a separate engagement stream.

4036

Public Survey
Participants

222

Virtual Workshop
Participants

40

Organizations & Businesses
Represented

What We Asked

While each engagement tactic varied slightly due to format or audience, the questions remained consistent. Below is a summary of the types of questions asked throughout Phase 2.

Public Survey 

Interactive Portal & Online Map 

Public & Stakeholder Workshops 

Stakeholder Discussion Guide 

WHAT WE ASKED WHY WE ASKED THIS QUESTION WHERE IT WAS ASKED

RIBBON OF GREEN




VISION & PRINCIPLES

- Do you support the revised Vision and Guiding Principles? Explain.

To confirm and refine the Vision & Guiding Principles 

LAND MANAGEMENT CLASSIFICATIONS, AMENITY NODES & TRAILHEADS



- Land Management Classification Approach:* Do you have any feedback to refine the approach to defining the LMC boundaries?
- Site Specific Refinements to Land Management:* What types of information should be considered when making site-specific refinements to the Land Management boundaries?
- Amenity Nodes & Trailheads Approach:* Are there any other considerations that should be included in the amenity nodes and trailheads approach?
- Map Pins & Comments:*
 - I think the strategy could be improved by...
 - I think an important connection is missing here...
 - I have a concern about...

To confirm the approach used to define the Land Management Classification mapping and locations of amenity nodes and trailheads   

RIVER VALLEY REACHES

For each reach:




- Do you think the vision (and priorities) are appropriate for this reach area? Explain.

To refine the draft vision statements and priorities that guide the direction for each reach  

RIVER VALLEY ARP




ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- Do you agree with adding the following considerations to Environmental Impact Assessments for projects in the River Valley? Explain.
- Are there any other environmental considerations that should be added to the Environmental Impact Assessment?

To guide the initial revisions to the existing Area Redevelopment Plan   




STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

- What other impacts and benefits should the City consider when deciding on a proposed project? Explain.
- Are there any other considerations that should be added to project assessments?

To guide the initial revisions to the existing Area Redevelopment Plan   

DECISION MAKERS

- What types of River Valley decisions do you think should require Council approval?
- What else do we need to think about when we decide what should or should not go to City Council for approval?
- If a decision about a small scale project (e.g. trail maintenance, new washroom facilities, new picnic shelters) was made by City staff without the involvement of City Council, what would you need to be confident in that decision?

To guide the initial revisions to the existing Area Redevelopment Plan   

INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Indigenous Engagement

The City of Edmonton is committed to keeping Indigenous Nations and Communities informed and engaged when projects intersect with Indigenous interests and concerns. The project team will look for opportunities to collaborate and understand how issues and concerns can be addressed, and seek to incorporate input into a clear set of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations.

As part of Phase 2 engagement, the City reached out to Indigenous Nations and Communities in January, February and March 2022. The City has identified the following themes based on the input gathered. Communities have been invited to review these topics for feedback and identify if additional topics should be considered.

| THEME | STATEMENTS |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Acknowledgment | Promote reconciliation by acknowledging that the River Valley is on the traditional land on which Indigenous peoples' footsteps have marked for centuries and continue to be their home. |
| Decision-making | Develop a collaborative and adaptable decision-making process that prioritizes the preservation and proper use of the River Valley while honouring the principles of equality and sharing. |
| Educational Opportunities | Incorporate educational opportunities to raise awareness about the stories regarding the River Valley, including its historical importance and current issues. |
| Engagement (Preferences) | Recognize and implement different engagement preferences when collaborating with Indigenous communities. |
| Environment | Preserve the environment by nurturing native plants, protecting watersheds, reclaiming contaminated areas, and providing continuous environmental monitoring. |
| Homelessness | Incorporate equitable programs that address homelessness to promote the River Valley as a safe place to heal historical trauma. |
| Indigenous Advisory Group | Establish an advisory group consisting of Indigenous community members from diverse backgrounds and knowledge. |
| Indigenous Awareness | Promote awareness by including Indigenous peoples' perspectives and recognizing their past, present, and future contributions throughout the River Valley. |
| Indigenous Practices | Support Indigenous peoples' access to land for traditional activities and cultural gatherings. |
| Phrasing | Participants shared suggestions to improve phrasing by using plain language and culturally inclusive terms. |
| Safety | Promote safety through amenities and signage. |
| Financial Support | Provide financial resources to incorporate Indigenous perspectives through different types of Indigenous involvement. |

PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDER SUMMARY

Overall Summary

Across all feedback collected in Phase 2 from over 4000 participants, several common themes emerged from both stakeholders and the public. These themes, and the anticipated next steps in Phase 3 of the project, are summarized below. Draft plans developed in Phase 3 will be further refined and finalized in Phase 4 of the project, before being presented to City Council for consideration.

ACCOMMODATING BOTH ECOLOGY AND ENJOYMENT

Throughout Phase 2 engagement, we heard again that Edmontonians love and cherish the River Valley and Ravine System and want to ensure that it is protected for enjoyment and use by future generations. Many participants shared the perspective that the City must carefully manage and steward the area to retain both its ecological integrity and the natural experiences and recreational opportunities that it provides for residents and visitors. The environmental health of the River Valley is directly tied to people's enjoyment of it.

Next Steps: Phase 3

- + We will refine the Land Management Classification maps, which provide direction for ecological protection and distribution of access and uses in different parts of the River Valley.
- + We will develop Program Guidance and Ecological Guidance for each reach in the study area (for examples of this mapping and what will be included, see Section 4 of the [Ribbon of Green SW+NE](#)).
- + We will share the revised Land Management Classification maps and draft Program and Ecological Guidance for input through Phase 3 Indigenous and public engagement.

NEED FOR A CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT DECISION MAKING PROCESS

On the subject of decision-making, there was a desire expressed by many participants to see increased reporting, data, and clear rationale shared for River Valley decisions. Some find it difficult to understand the City's process and how all of the planning documents are applied and relate to each other, and would like to see more explanation provided in this regard. There is also interest in a clear engagement process for River Valley project proposals, and a desire for greater ongoing engagement with different River Valley interest/user groups.

Next Steps: Phase 3

- + We will develop a draft framework for River Valley decision-making, including recommendations about what information is needed to support decisions, who will make decisions, how the public and stakeholders can be involved in the process and how decision-making will align with direction in the Ribbon of Green and other City plans.
- + We will share the draft decision-making framework for input through Phase 3 Indigenous and public engagement.

UNCERTAINTY ON THE FUTURE OF INFORMAL (SINGLE-TRACK) TRAILS

Significant concern was raised about the future of single-track trails in the River Valley and Ravine System. The key concern raised was the exclusion of biking as a compatible use within the Preservation Land Management Classification in the Ribbon of Green, and the extent of Preservation areas identified in the River Valley. In general, many participants felt there was not enough information provided about the difference in level of impact of activities to justify the decision. Although the City has committed to request funding from City Council to complete a trail strategy for the River Valley, which would involve a process to reclassify some trail corridors to Conservation in order to accommodate more recreational use, some participants expressed concern that the City may not follow through on further trail planning and that access to trails they enjoy may be lost.

Other participants expressed concern about the potential impacts of single-track trails, including ecological/environmental impacts in environmentally sensitive areas, as well as growing user conflict and risks to public safety. Some expressed concern about the cumulative impact these trails may be having, including fragmentation of natural areas and impacts to wildlife movement and behaviour.

Finally, many participants indicated they would like to see the single-track network formalized and maintained by the City, as well as more direct engagement with trail user groups and stakeholders on an ongoing basis.

For more information on this topic, see “Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions”.

Next Steps: Phase 3

- + We will share more information about the proposed River Valley Trail Strategy and how the Ribbon of Green will inform that work.
- + We will complete a scan of how other, similar municipalities approach trail planning to meet ecological, recreational and other community goals.
- + We will draft criteria for trail planning and decision-making in the different Land Management Classifications and share them for input through Phase 3 Indigenous and public engagement.

CULTURAL RECOGNITION AND CELEBRATION

Many participants identified the importance of Indigenous knowledge and stewardship in the Ribbon of Green and its implementation and wanted to ensure that the City follows through with meaningful partnerships and its commitments to reconciliation. There was a desire to see Indigenous history and culture acknowledged and shared, to see creation of Indigenous cultural gathering places, and to see special protection afforded to sites and natural features that are central to Indigenous teachings and cultural practices.

Some participants also highlighted the importance of ensuring the River Valley is a place that celebrates and welcomes all cultures represented in our community.

Next Steps: Phase 3

- + We will continue to engage with Indigenous Nations and Communities to understand their priorities for River Valley planning, and how they would like to be involved in decision-making and stewardship.
- + We will include opportunities to protect culturally significant places, create cultural gathering places and share important histories through Program and Ecological Guidance.
- + We will share draft Program and Ecological Guidance for input through Phase 3 Indigenous and public engagement.

RIBBON OF GREEN:

Vision & Principles

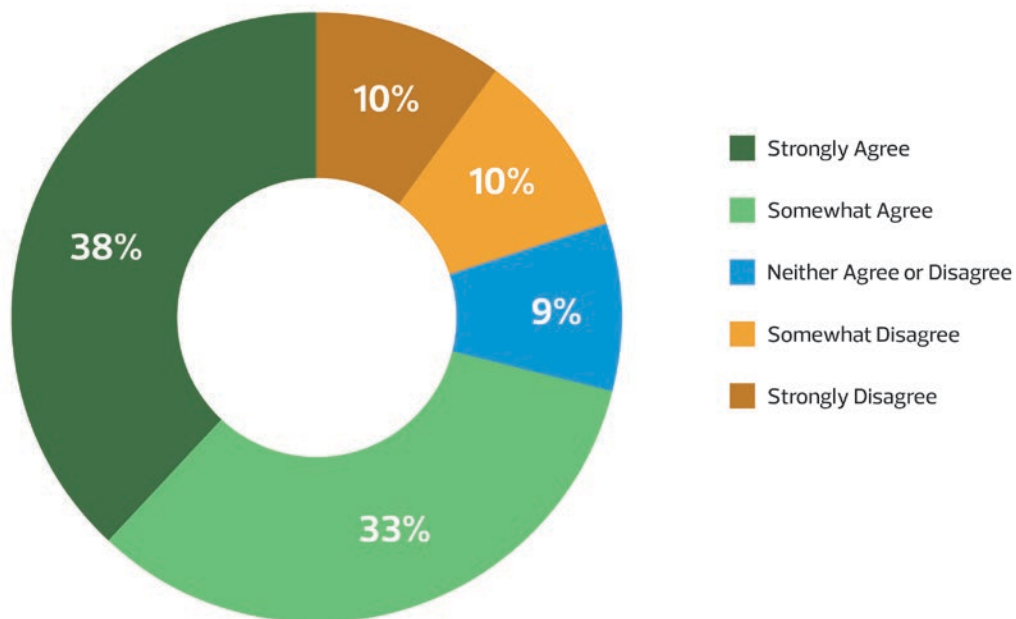
Over half of participants indicated that they somewhat agreed (33%) or strongly agreed (38%) with the Vision and Principles as amended. Of these responses, many participants commented that they appreciated the balance in the principles between the protection of ecological integrity and the continued use and enjoyment by Edmontonians and visitors. The River Valley is a highly valued asset to city residents, for the beauty and tranquility of its natural landscapes, contribution to human mental and physical health, and connected trail networks for both recreation and travel. Participants felt it is important to preserve the landscape for future generations to use and enjoy. Many comments also reflected agreement with the further acknowledgment of heritage and Indigenous stewardship in this revision.

People that disagreed (strongly or somewhat) with the Vision and Principles represented 20% of survey participants. Of those who disagreed, some wanted to see greater ecological protection and lower use and development. On the other hand, many expressed the desire to see less focus or priority given to the protection of ecological integrity and more weight given to the development of amenities and creation of additional access. Many participants also expressed fear around the future of the single-track trail network and mistrust of City decision making.

A common theme across all responses, even those who agreed, was a lack of confidence in the City's ability to successfully implement the vision and principles. There were concerns about the definitions and potential misinterpretation of the language. Two terms that generated the most concern were 'low-impact amenities' and 'essential urban services'.

Do you support the revised Vision and Guiding Principles?

(4033 responses)



Low-Impact Amenities

There were several concerns about how low-impact amenities will be defined by the City. Some participants felt like this would be interpreted to exclude certain uses, such as mountain biking or events. Other participants shared that they wanted to see some potentially higher impact amenities and commercial development, namely food services and equipment rentals, in the more urban areas of the River Valley. There were also participants opposed to any additional development, including commercial or recreation amenities. A common exception was public washrooms and seating, which had a general level of agreement that they are needed in the River Valley.

Essential Urban Services

The majority of participants who expressed concerns about the definition of essential urban services noted that past decisions undermined their confidence in the City's commitment to environmental protection generally. Several participants expressed that they did not want to see any major developments in the River Valley, such as gondolas, commercial/industrial development, and servicing or transportation corridors. Many also expressed concerns about the approved Solar Farm and other past decisions that they disagreed with or felt did not align with the proposed Vision and Guiding Principles.

COMMENT SUMMARY:

Support for:

- + Heritage
- + Indigenous stewardship
- + Trails and access
- + Use and enjoyment of the River Valley
- + Inclusivity
- + Ecological integrity

Missing components:

- + Tourism / economic development / showcasing the River Valley
- + Equity lens (e.g. universal accessibility, GBA+)
- + Watershed and water quality
- + Address vacant buildings (remove, program, etc.) to increase vibrancy
- + More emphasis on mental and physical health, active living
- + Water access and recreation
- + Environmental education
- + Evidence based / cumulative impact assessment
- + Addressing homelessness

Concerns about:

- + Lack of confidence in City's ability to implement the Vision & Principles
- + Unclear definition and application of "low impact amenities" and "essential urban services"
- + Mistrust in City decision making and concerns about bias towards or against certain stakeholders
- + Concern about future of the single-track trail network, trail users being excluded, and existing single track trails being removed or paved over
- + Concerns about flood risk to any development

Tensions:

- + Having a separate Indigenous Principle (some agree, some want to see it within the collaboration principle or removed)
- + Weighting of principles in the event of a conflict (some think human use / connectivity should outweigh ecology and vice versa)
- + Different opinions on commercial uses in the River Valley and Ravine System (some want to see restaurants and rentals while others do not want to lose the nature experience and ecological integrity)

Land Management Classifications

LAND MANAGEMENT CLASSIFICATION APPROACH AND SITE SPECIFIC REFINEMENTS

As part of the stakeholder and public workshops, participants were asked to provide feedback on refining the Land Management Classifications (LMC) approach. Many participants voiced support for the approach, particularly the attention given to retaining ecological integrity. People noted the importance of prioritizing ecological protection, as it can be difficult to revert to a natural state once intrusion has occurred. They felt the current approach is proactive in protecting the natural environment and ensures the River Valley is not overwhelmed by increased use by locating more intense uses in appropriate locations. Participants also supported the attention given to protecting riparian areas, the emphasis on stewardship, and the inclusion of reconciliation.

However, many participants voiced concerns that the classifications, particularly the Preservation classification, were too broad and needed to be more focused. Many participants noted that they supported the Preservation classification in principle, but felt that the current classification was too restrictive given how much of the River Valley area is designated by it. Reducing restrictions (such as allowing maintenance of single-track trails) or designating less of the River Valley would address some concerns. Others suggested creating a separate category for restoration or protection to reduce the amount and restrictiveness of Preservation areas in the River Valley while more accurately capturing the diversity of the River Valley and Ravine System.

Another frequent concern raised by participants was what they perceived as a lack of clarity and transparency surrounding the Land Management Classifications. Many participants wanted more details on the rationale behind the classification boundaries and permitted uses, including what information was used during the desktop analysis and how the analysis was conducted. Many participants voiced

concerns that trails would not be addressed until the end of the project or that future trail planning would not happen at all, permanently removing trails without any opportunity for input and collaboration to a solution. (Note: The City has stated that trails will not be closed in advance of more detailed planning.) Some felt groups had been excluded from the conversation and many felt that it was unreasonable that activities like mountain biking were being restricted while others uses (like golf courses) were permitted in some parts of the River Valley.

AMENITY NODES & TRAILHEADS APPROACH

Participants had a number of suggestions and concerns regarding the Amenity Nodes & Trailheads Approach. Participants were concerned that shutting down trails would create connectivity issues and increase user conflicts on trails. There were also concerns regarding trail maintenance and the process for maintenance. Participants highlighted the need for consistency in single-track trail mapping and clarity on formal and informal trails, as well as more signage to separate users and avoid conflicts. Some participants wanted more information on the timing of future trail studies and commitment to the upcoming Trail Strategy (and its relationship to the Ribbon of Green). Participants also expressed a desire for more access to the water through designated amenity hubs. Participants also indicated they wanted to see more connected trails from primary to local trailheads.

COMMENT SUMMARY:

General comments:

- + More clarity required around LMC approach, criteria, and mapping
- + "Preservation" and "Conservation" terms are not distinct enough
- + Areas should be designated as Conservation first, with the potential to be redesignated in future stages
- + Large number of existing informal trails in Preservation areas that would require reclassification to permit biking could result in confusion over trail management
- + Concerns over solar farms and industrial uses in the river valley
- + Losing trails in Preservation areas will lead to a loss of connectivity and accessibility
- + Support for protecting riparian areas
- + Desire for increased access to the water
- + Better trail maintenance required in the winter
- + Look to other municipalities across Alberta and how they are balancing protection and use
- + Desire for increased walkability and more diverse trail experiences

Additional considerations to refine approach:

- + Current use and maintenance
- + Existing infrastructure and trail density (extensive trail mapping)
- + Future maintenance requirements (particularly for trails)
- + Emerging activities and recreation trends
- + Clear connections between the effect of particular activities on particular species
- + Analysis of City's Natural Areas, Urban Land and Primary Vegetation Inventory, tableland sites, vegetation cover analyses, and wetland inventories
- + Alignment with other City policies
- + Ongoing public engagement for single-track network
- + Walkable communities (15-minute neighbourhood)

RIBBON OF GREEN:

River Valley Reaches

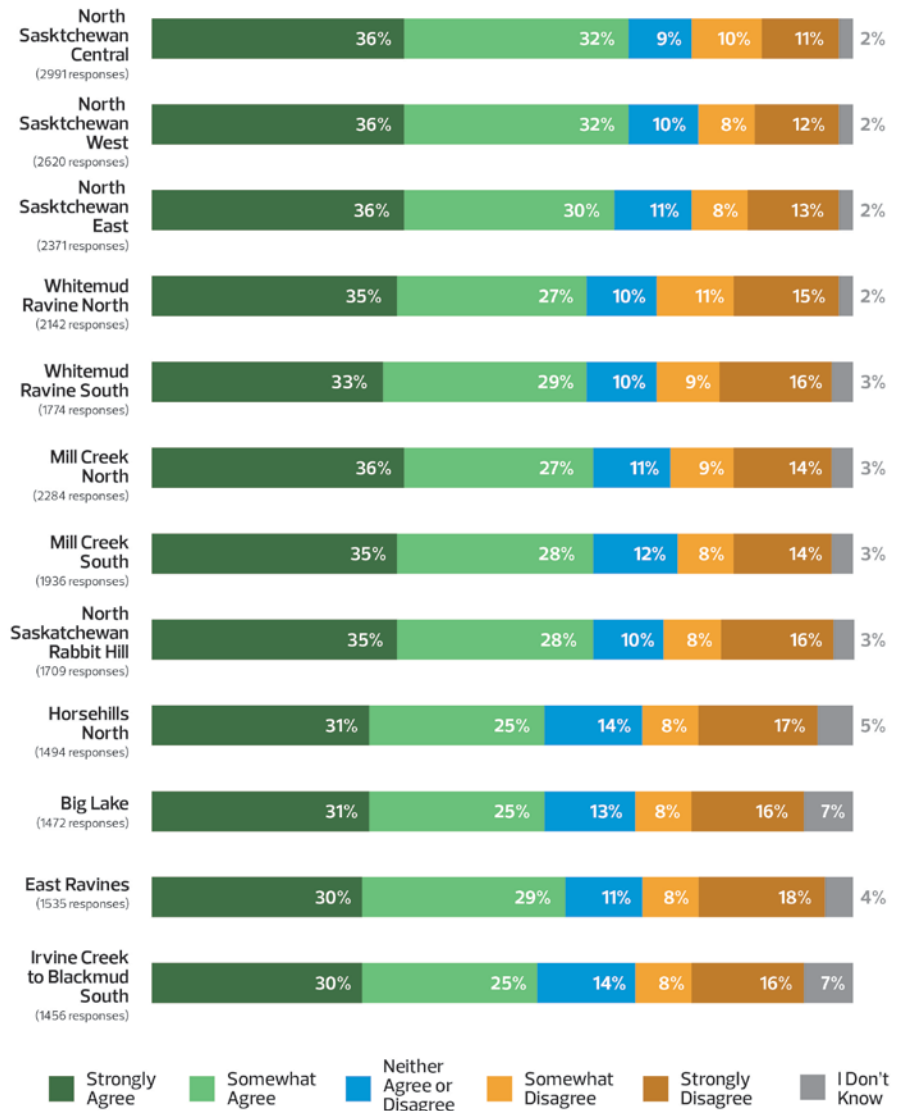
Zooming into a location-specific scale, the majority of participants agreed (strongly or somewhat) with the reach vision statements as proposed.

There were over 10,000 comments regarding the reach visions. Many of the topics expressed were similar across all or many of the reaches and consistent with what was heard on the overall vision for the Ribbon of Green. The main tensions were between ecological protection and recreation/access. Many participants liked or wanted to see greater ecological protection, such as buffers or stronger language in all of the reaches. On the other hand, many participants wanted to see recreation and access prioritized more, with more access to the water (rather than just access into the river valley from the top of bank), more formalized trails, and more amenities to support recreation and use.

Some of the main concerns raised throughout were the off-site impacts of development (runoff, erosion, slumping, pollution, noise, etc). There were many concerns about the future of single-track trails in the reaches and whether these would continue to be accessible for use. Another concern that was consistent throughout all of the reaches was the lack of mention of Indigenous considerations. Some participants noted that this seemed inconsistent with the overall vision and principles for the Ribbon of Green.

Finally, some participants had concerns with how the vision statements were worded or presented in the survey.

Do you think this vision is appropriate for this reach area?



Some found it difficult to identify where the reaches were located without a key map for each question. There were also several terms that were difficult to understand for a non-technical audience, including: daylighting, top of bank, riparian, greenway, commuter access, hydrologic function, and active transportation. In future, definitions or an alternate plain language version should be used.

In general, some participants did not agree with having a different vision for each area and felt that the overall vision Ribbon of Green was sufficient. Other participants felt that the vision statements were not clear / distinct enough to provide meaningful direction.

The following pages include a summary of findings for each reach.

North Saskatchewan Central

“The North Saskatchewan Central Reach is a vibrant recreational destination and gathering place for the city, providing a diverse range of experiences from large event spaces to natural spaces. Valued cultural spaces are honoured and appropriately interpreted. A well-connected network of sustainable trail connections promotes active travel and recreation while protecting the River Valley’s natural features. Restoration efforts and designated preservation areas improve ecological connectivity to and through the reach and provide habitat for the City’s biodiversity, while protecting unique landscapes within existing parkland.”

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- + Desire to make Central Reach a vibrant destination, with restaurant, patios, cafes, and other places to grab a snack
- + This reach should be the most developed because it is the closest to downtown – should be a hub and gathering space
- + Lack of pristine nature (compared to other reaches) makes this reach the ideal location for more commercial spaces and amenities rather than Preservation
- + Participants generally do not want to see golf courses in the River Valley

EVENT & CULTURAL SPACES

- + Concerns with noise and litter from event spaces
- + Event spaces should remain in existing parks
- + Indigenous history and culture should be celebrated
- + This reach is the most appropriate location for cultural celebration

CONNECTIVITY AND TRAILS

- + Need to have strong trail connections to surrounding neighbourhoods and to downtown – access to this area is particularly important
- + Concerns about ensuring accessibility on trails – everyone should be able to access the river valley
- + Trails are a place of community for mountain bikers, hikers, runners, and other recreational users of the river valley
- + Concerns about restrictions on single track trails in Preservation areas
- + Desire for a consistent and sustainable single track trail network that is properly maintained. New trails should not be allowed without proper design and process
- + More signs and information on trails
- + Work more closely with EMBA
- + Believe that single track trails fit the Vision’s active transportation and recreation goals
- + Existing trails should be retained even if new trails are not built

AMENITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- + Many people want to be able to access the water (boardwalks, recreational use, etc.) but a number of participants are critical of “Touch the Water” concept
- + Where possible, existing infrastructure should be used
- + Bike infrastructure needs to be maintained – regular maintenance will ensure these trails remain sustainable and have minimal impact
- + Differing opinions on whether this reach should have a gondola – some participants think it will help create a vibrant hub while others believe it will be too harmful to the natural environment
- + Concerns over too much privatization of the waterfront
- + Need more wayfinding and signage to help prevent user conflicts and erosion
- + Need more washrooms and seating areas

ENVIRONMENT

- + Opportunities to educate about important ecology in the river valley
- + This reach needs the most restoration and shouldn’t be developed further
- + Concerns about erosion in MacKinnon Ravine
- + Concerns about bird habitats near Hawrelak Park

VISION LANGUAGE AND IMPLEMENTATION

- + Language in the vision is too broad and vague – there should be more clarity on the specific actions that will come from the Plan
- + Concerns over how the Plan will be implemented
- + Concerns about maintenance of trails and amenities
- + How will ecological protection be balanced with recreation

SAFETY

- + Concerns over homeless encampments – make users feel unsafe and leave garbage in the river valley

North Saskatchewan West

“The North Saskatchewan West reach is an important destination for diverse recreational experiences, while also providing important wildlife connectivity corridors along both sides of the river. Unique attractions such as the Valley Zoo, John Janzen Nature Centre and Fort Edmonton Park provide valuable opportunities to gather and learn about River Valley history, cultural value, natural systems, and are managed to minimize their impact to natural systems. Improved trail connections provide important recreational and active transportation eastwards into the Central reach, and westwards as the Southwest reach is further developed.”

TRAILS AND CONNECTIVITY

- + Definitions of “sustainable trails” and “improved connections” are not clear
- + Prefer single track trails to paved trails
- + User groups should maintain trails
- + All users should be restricted from trails during wet or hazardous conditions (rather than just certain user groups)
- + Concerns about managing user conflicts on trails
- + Want connections to Devon Botanical Garden and Bunchberry Meadows
- + Need better winter maintenance of trails
- + Need more trail connections to the west and southwest areas
- + Concerns that lower-income communities will be marginalized and discluded from the river valley due to a lack of transit access or parking
- + Private owners (like country clubs) impede connectivity
- + Need another pedestrian bridge between Whitemud Bridge and Groat Road Bridge

RECREATION

- + What does “diverse recreational experience” mean
- + Desire for boating and other river-based recreation
- + Mountain biking should be retained
- + More winter recreational use
- + Motorized uses (including e-bikes) should not be allowed in the river valley

ENVIRONMENT

- + Appreciate that the Vision recognizes the importance of ecology
- + This area should be more wild than the central area
- + Preservation of trees – especially those in Laurier Park
- + Need to consider flooding
- + Not enough focus on protecting the environment – need to protect ecosystems and ensure they are not being chipped away
- + Concerns that off-leash dogs are hurting native plants and animals

AMENITIES

- + Concerns about the zoo – prefer protection of native wildlife species
- + No solar farm in the river valley
- + No further development needed in this reach – any other development should be low impact
- + Generally less support for restaurants than the central reach but a number of participants voiced a desire for small cafes, food trucks, or places to grab snacks
- + Need more washrooms and garbages

IMPLEMENTATION

- + Concerns about wasting taxpayer dollars
- + Concerns that vision will allow for development of the River Valley
- + Vision is very broad – how will it be implemented
- + Need more transparency, responsibility, and accountability

North Saskatchewan East

"The North Saskatchewan East reach provides a well-connected trail network and amenities that support diverse recreation and gathering opportunities for residents of surrounding neighbourhoods and users from across the city. Pathway connections provide excellent access through the River Valley and eastwards into Strathcona County. Wildlife connectivity is strengthened through restoration efforts along the riparian edge of the river and the valley slopes."

POLLUTING USES

- + City should work with Strathcona County and the Province to reduce the effects of petrochemical pollution in the area
- + Need to consider facilities like the wastewater plant and their impact
- + Concerns about Strathcona County oil barrels
- + Industrial uses should be removed

ENVIRONMENT

- + Agree with repairing riparian areas and wildlife habitats – could use stronger language in the Vision
- + Some education about restoration efforts and riparian areas would be helpful
- + Conflict between restoration efforts and projects like the solar farm
- + Limit addition of hard surfaces in this area
- + Flooding and erosion concerns for trails built close to the water
- + Terms like "riparian" can be confusing
- + Canyon features should be preserved as ecologically important
- + General support for restoration – as long as it doesn't negatively affect trails
- + Support proper wildlife education
- + Concerns about clearcutting near Strathcona Science Centre

MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

- + This reach often neglected and unmaintained
- + The vision has nothing about managing user conflict
- + Maintenance needed on Capilano Bridge

CONNECTIVITY

- + The City should work with Strathcona County and other neighbouring counties to create connections with these areas
- + Accessible and well-connected trails are a priority
- + Single track trails should remain
- + Need connections across the river not just along the river
- + The trail below Forest Heights needs to be fixed
- + More connections needed west of Manning Drive
- + Need new bridge at Queen of Quarry
- + Access limited due to wastewater treatment plant
- + Missing connections to neighbourhoods and Fort Saskatchewan

AMENITIES

- + Need amenities like food trucks, cafes, restaurants
- + Need more washrooms and garbage bins
- + Have dark sky and wildlife friendly lighting
- + No commercial developments
- + Eastern reaches should have lower impact amenities compared to the west – these reaches are more natural

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

- + River valley should be more accessible via transit or active transit modes – should be less car focused

Whitemud Ravine North

“The sensitive lands of the Whitemud North Reach form a well-protected natural area, while providing Edmontonians with a space for relaxation and learning. Preservation remains the overriding priority for the area, ensuring that the creek remains healthy, that surrounding irreplaceable native habitats and unique geological features are protected, and that the area remains a high-functioning wildlife corridor. The creation of Indigenous cultural spaces and interpretive opportunities provides people with the chance to learn and celebrate the long history of these lands, and foster a continued tradition of stewardship.”

ENVIRONMENT

- + Ecological preservation should be a much higher priority in this area as there are many sensitive plants and animals in this area
- + Health of the creek should be more important than recreation in this particular reach
- + Mountain biking in this area can be disruptive – keeping bikes and off-leash dogs out is key to preservation in this area
- + Reach should be pedestrian only – alternative should be made for cyclists such as existing paths at the top of the valley
- + Unsanctioned trails are harming wildlife habitats
- + Riparian areas should be protected from trails
- + Need regular monitoring to ensure there is minimal ecological damage and how well preservation efforts are going
- + Concerns about impacts to beavers
- + This area is a great space for bird watching

EROSION AND WATER QUALITY

- + Street runoff from Whitemud Freeway and Fox Drive have negative impacts on ecology in this area
- + This reach has a lot of erosion that needs restoration
- + Water needs to be protected at all costs
- + A lot of negative impacts in the area have come from efforts to maintain gravel trails (with large equipment) – this has caused runoff and drainage issues along Whitemud and Blackmud Creeks
- + Need work to avoid flooding and bank erosion
- + Area shouldn't have special treatment – runoff has already ruined ravine

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SPACES

- + Creating Indigenous cultural spaces is a good idea and will help with reconciliation
- + The Ochre in this area needs special attention as it is significant to Indigenous teachings
- + Also some opposition to celebrating Indigenous cultures – all cultures should be celebrated equally rather than just one
- + Worried cultural spaces will take away from naturalness of area – other better locations for these spaces

TRAILS AND CONNECTIVITY

- + Overuse of trails in this area – how will level of use affect this reach
- + This is an important part of the trail system – if you want to protect this reach, this should be made more clear so paths can be built properly around sensitive areas
- + Need trails for active transportation
- + Need better connection between Whitemud North and South
- + Should have signage at trailheads – this should be only development in the area
- + Hiking trails need maintenance in this area

RECREATION AND AMENITIES

- + Commercial development does not belong in this reach
- + Seems unfair that ski hills are allowed but not mountain biking
- + Mountain biking should be restricted in this reach but not across the whole river valley (this is an important reach with unique needs)

Whitemud Ravine South

“The lands surrounding Whitemud Far South Reach will see development in the coming decades. As industrial development occurs to the east and residential development to the west, effective setbacks and restoration of native riparian vegetation will be prioritized to ensure that this significant natural area continues to function without disturbance. This important natural corridor is the source of much of the native biodiversity found throughout the River Valley and Ravine system, and care must be taken to ensure developments in surrounding lands do not impact the watercourse. A well-designed, connected pathway system will provide low-impact access to these lands from surrounding neighbourhoods, and into the rest of the River Valley and ravines system.”

INDUSTRIAL USES

- + Vision should provide more detail on how contamination from industrial uses will be prevented
- + No industrial development in the river valley
- + Concerns about transmission towers

ENVIRONMENT

- + Protecting natural biodiversity should be a priority – if people are not intruding now, it should be left that way
- + Banks of the creek should be protected – need a well vegetated riparian corridor
- + Need stricter setbacks along the ravine to protect against development
- + Need to make sure there is no runoff from roads into the ravine
- + Protect water – hard to restore once it has been impacted
- + Protection of creek’s headwaters needed
- + This is a natural corridor – there should not even be walking trails
- + Restoration not as good as protection – difficult to replace mature natural areas
- + Educational materials about biodiversity would be helpful
- + Need more trees

TRAILS AND CONNECTIVITY

- + Trails should remain in this area – they should be gravel or dirt rather than paved
- + Some gaps in the trail system around Ellerslie Road
- + Need better connections to Rabbit Hill
- + Need better connection to other Whitemud trails – connection to Whitemud North trails from 23 Avenue to 34th Avenue should be a priority
- + Need more bridges
- + Need pathways suitable for older people as well

OVERDEVELOPMENT

- + This area should not be overdeveloped
- + City needs to hold developers accountable for developing too close to the ravine or harming the ecological integrity of the river valley
- + Need to protect this area from urban sprawl

MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

- + Better enforcement of no biking areas needed
- + Concerns over user safety

Mill Creek North

“Mill Creek North is a vibrant connection from south Edmonton to the downtown core, supporting wildlife connectivity, active transportation, recreation and unique events. Potential daylighting of the creek provides exceptional opportunities to re-establish native habitat, foster learning and enable the community to connect with nature.”

DAYLIGHTING

- + Don't know what “daylighting” means
- + Lots of agreement with daylighting Mill Creek
- + Some disagreement with daylighting Mill Creek due to extensive disruption to existing use and cost
- + Disagreement with “potential” daylighting and think language should be stronger in favour
- + Daylight Rat Creek too

RECREATION & ECOLOGY

- + Tension on whether recreation or restoration / ecology should be prioritized over the other
- + Area already feeling overused
- + Like supporting wildlife connectivity and re-establishing habitat
- + Concern that any re-establishment of habitat would be in vain
- + Tension between keeping the area natural and opinion that it will never be “natural” due to high volume of adjacent traffic and LRT
- + Dog impacts on wildlife / habitat
- + Lots of illegal dumping and litter
- + Like fostering learning
- + Like and want to see existing dog park retained
- + Add continued access to accidental beach
- + Need public washrooms
- + Need new water recreation opportunities

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

- + Like idea of a safer active transportation connection in the area
- + Fix the low level and James McDonald bridge interchanges
- + Bring back wooden stairs up the hill to Hotel Macdonald

WATER QUALITY & DRAINAGE

- + Should clean the creek before spending money on daylighting
- + Concerns about sewage smell
- + Concerns about drainage into creek and erosion / pollution impacts

DEVELOPMENT

- + Stop / remove / regulate residential and commercial development adjacent to ravines
- + Development should be set back further from the ravine
- + Need more enforcement on vegetation removal on public property

SAFETY

- + Concerns about many experiencing homelessness in the area (from perspective of their safety / comfort and other user safety)
- + Too many coyotes

CULTURE & HISTORY

- + Want to see area for Indigenous people who choose to live in a traditional way
- + Want to see more acknowledgment and interpretation of history
- + Should acknowledge Flying Canoe festival

INDIGENOUS

- + Missing Indigenous / land back considerations

SINGLE TRACK TRAILS

- + Do not want existing single-track trails removed
- + Formalize trail network and provide signage
- + Need more enforcement to stop illegal trail building

Mill Creek South

“Mill Creek South reach is a valued recreational destination for residents of surrounding neighbourhoods. Restoration of riparian vegetation along the creek banks will help mitigate impacts of use, while strengthening wildlife connectivity. As the city continues to develop, important wetlands will be maintained, and natural connections out of the city will be improved. Strong connections with Jackie Parker Park provide an important staging area for use of the ravine, and for larger community events.”

ECOLOGY, CREEK, AND WETLANDS

- + Would like to see connection between Mill Creek South and North and daylighting
- + Tension between ecology or recreation being first priority
- + Like wetland and riparian restoration
- + Have identified over 100 bird species here, vision will hopefully encourage more
- + Need to preserve more than just important wetlands
- + Concerns about former landfill site contamination of the creek
- + Should acknowledge river keepers water monitoring efforts
- + Concerned about creek bank erosion
- + Concern about impact of LRT line

CONNECTIONS

- + Want to see more than just top of bank trails
- + Like existing trails
- + Strengthen link with pipeline corridors
- + Need pedestrian and bike crossings at 50 St and 34 St
- + Natural tread trails should be continuous not just short loops back to a paved path
- + Tension between wanting more parking / access for non residents (staging area) and not wanting a staging area

JACKIE PARKER PARK

- + Like stronger connection to the park
- + Like use of park for festivals and events

DEVELOPMENT

- + Need to manage industrial and commercial activities and overland drainage
- + Need larger buffer between ravine and development
- + No development / keep it natural

INDIGENOUS

- + Missing Indigenous / land back considerations

RECREATION & AMENITIES

- + Don't want to see large events here
- + Tension between desire for none / more development of recreation amenities
- + Need to mention water access and water based recreation
- + Keep / expand single track trails / mountain biking
- + Like existing dog park and want to see it retained
- + Need more seating, signage, washrooms
- + Need more enforcement about littering, vandalism, cutting trees / vegetation
- + Concerns about dog and wildlife / trail user conflicts
- + Need to incorporate Indigenous History
- + Need more surveillance / safety consideration, concerns about loitering

North Saskatchewan Rabbit Hill

“The North Saskatchewan Rabbit Hill reach will serve as an increasingly popular recreation destination for the city as a whole, and an important regional connection. As the surrounding lands are developed, the important natural areas along the valley slopes will be preserved, providing significant wildlife connectivity to support the biodiversity of the River Valley. The existing recreational amenities will be supported through a top-of-bank trail that will connect the city with the municipality of Devon. Development will be appropriately set back to provide a buffer for the river, while supporting wildlife and pathway connections.”

INDIGENOUS

- + Should rename to Wapos Hill (rabbit in Cree)
- + Missing Indigenous / land back considerations

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION & TRAILS

- + Many like proposed connection to Devon but some do not
- + Like proposed trail updates and pathway connections
- + Should have trails lower down not just top of bank
- + Need to prevent illegal trail building
- + Want to see more upland connections to Whitemud far south
- + Don't want ATVs allowed
- + Desire for walking and cycling to be separated
- + Want to see mountain bikers and single track included
- + Don't want area to become a drive-to destination
- + Would like to see more pedestrian bridges

WILDLIFE & BIODIVERSITY

- + Like protection of wildlife & biodiversity
- + Like river buffer
- + Need to take care of Whitemud Creek tributary

DEVELOPMENT

- + Setbacks are not enough to support wildlife / river connectivity and prevent slumping / erosion
- + Tension between no more development in the area and desire for small commercial popups / more recreation
- + Concerns about adjacent development impacts
- + Concerns about political challenges with decision making / development approval

RECREATION

- + Like public access
- + Tension about whether wildlife or recreation takes priority
- + Love skiing and canoeing here
- + Bring back summer bike park at Rabbit Hill
- + Should get rid of golf courses / make public
- + Want to see boat access added
- + Like existing dog park
- + Desire for walk-in camping
- + Should include gondola and Touch the Water projects
- + Concerns about litter / garbage

Horsehills North

“The development of the lands surrounding the Horsehills North reach provide an opportunity to restore riparian vegetation along the creek banks currently dominated by agriculture. The tributary system provides water protection to the overall Horsehills Creek area, and the River Valley downstream. As adjacent development takes place, care will be taken to ensure that the hydrologic function continues to support the creek and surrounding wetlands. A top-of-bank trail system supported by small footprint access nodes will provide nearby residents with access to the natural creek system, while connecting to the city's pathway network.”

ECOLOGICAL PROTECTION

- + Like restoration and protection
- + Preservation language not strong enough
- + Like removal of agriculture close to the river
- + Like focus on hydrological function and wetland protection
- + Ensure wildlife connectivity
- + Concerns about erosion

RECREATION & TRAILS

- + Like proposed addition of trails
- + Should have lower trail system too
- + Concerns about illegal trail building
- + Include single track trails / mountain biking
- + Would like to see some fishing opportunities
- + The area should be connected better to the rest of Edmonton

DEVELOPMENT

- + Concerns about residential and commercial development / urban sprawl
- + Leave it natural / no development
- + Concerns about loss of agricultural land
- + Remove golf courses

INDIGENOUS

- + Missing Indigenous / land back considerations

Big Lake

“This reach borders on the highly important Big Lake natural area, a regionally important ecosystem. This creates an important recreational draw that must be supported by pathway infrastructure to ensure sustainable use of the area. Increasing demand for access resulting from ongoing residential development to the south will be managed to protect the natural functioning of this landscape.”

ECOLOGICAL PROTECTION

- + Should prioritize ecology over access / language on protection needs to be stronger
- + Big Lake should be an internationally protected area or Provincial Park as it has significant habitat
- + Do not want additional pathway infrastructure here
- + Concerns about stormwater impacts / flooding and pollution from residential development / sprawl
- + Keep it natural / minimal development
- + Need large buffer between development and natural areas
- + Protect wetlands

RECREATION

- + Like recreation improvements
- + Like to see expansion on Lois Hole amenities
- + Don't want to see this become a drive to recreation area
- + Connect to the rest of the City with pathways
- + Too many dogs
- + Should recognize paddling / water recreation
- + Work with St. Albert on recreation development
- + Tension about whether to include some commercial development or not
- + Should include single track trails
- + Need washrooms facilities

INDIGENOUS

- + Missing Indigenous / land back considerations

East Ravines

“Fulton and Gold Bar Ravines will see improved riparian vegetation along existing watercourses, providing better water filtration of overland runoff into the creeks. A well-connected greenway pathway system will provide commuter access, and amenity development will support better recreational access to the surrounding lands.”

ECOLOGICAL PROTECTION

- + Like re-establishment of waterways and fish habitat / naturalization of Fulton Creek
- + Like restoration and addressing runoff
- + Need stronger environmental protection / concerns about increasing access
- + Petrochemical pollution needs to be resolved at the source
- + Keep it natural / no development / no commuter access or new trails
- + No EPCOR sewage treatment expansion
- + Need to mitigate noise and odour from existing development
- + Connect Fulton Ravine to the North Saskatchewan River

INCLUSIVITY

- + Need to include Indigenous perspectives / land back
- + Need to consider those experiencing homelessness

RECREATION

- + Want to see recreation amenities expanded
- + Like existing cross country skiing opportunities
- + Want to see cycle camping opportunities
- + Need washrooms
- + Remove golf courses
- + Want to see all season bike park

CONNECTIVITY / TRAILS

- + Like existing trail improvements / think area needs to be upgraded more
- + Like commuter access
- + Want single-track trails retained / expanded
- + Concerns about illegal trail building
- + Strengthen links to surrounding areas
- + Want to see paved path around Fulton Marsh
- + Esso hill path needs to be paved
- + Connect to Sunridge
- + Need better wayfinding

INDIGENOUS

- + Missing Indigenous / land back considerations

PROPOSED REACH VISION

Irvine Creek to Blackmud South

This locally important natural area will see increased importance as the lands around it are developed. Restoration of riparian areas lost due to agricultural activities will improve the water quality of the creek, while providing an important natural amenity to surrounding communities. A natural connection with Cawes Lake will help establish a more natural system in this area. Connectivity corridors will help connect these lands to important natural areas to the south and east. Development of a top-of-bank pathway network will promote this reach as a recreational destination.

COMMENT SUMMARY

ECOLOGY & RESTORATION

- + Like restoration of riparian areas, water protection, protection of natural habitat
- + Need more water protection / buffers
- + Like natural connection to Cawes Lake
- + Keep as natural as possible / no development / no commercial / no additional trails
- + Tension between aims of restoration and increasing access
- + Concerns about offsite impacts of new development / should be no development within 300m of top of bank
- + Problems with illegal dumping in the area

CONNECTIONS

- + Tension between liking top of bank trail and wanting to see trails by the water
- + Should be connected to rest of the River Valley and Ravine System via active transportation routes
- + Should connect Blackmud to Whitemud
- + Want single-track trails retained / expanded
- + Need greater accessibility
- + Great connection to have between Edmonton and Devon

RECREATION

- + Need washrooms
- + Concerned about existing shooting range / impacts
- + Will be a great amenity for future residents

INDIGENOUS

- + Missing Indigenous / land back considerations

Project Assessments

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

In general, participants agreed that all of the additional categories proposed for the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) process are important to include. The addition of **Wildlife Corridors** was well supported (82%) with participants noting the importance of protecting this valuable habitat. Others stated that they see the River Valley as a habitat that is already disturbed and not fully functioning as a wildlife corridor currently.

Most participants (77%) agreed with including **Ecosystem Services**, pointing to the need to focus on ecological valuation, as well as intangible ecosystem services like human health and wellbeing. Others felt the term "ecosystem services" was too vague and confusing.

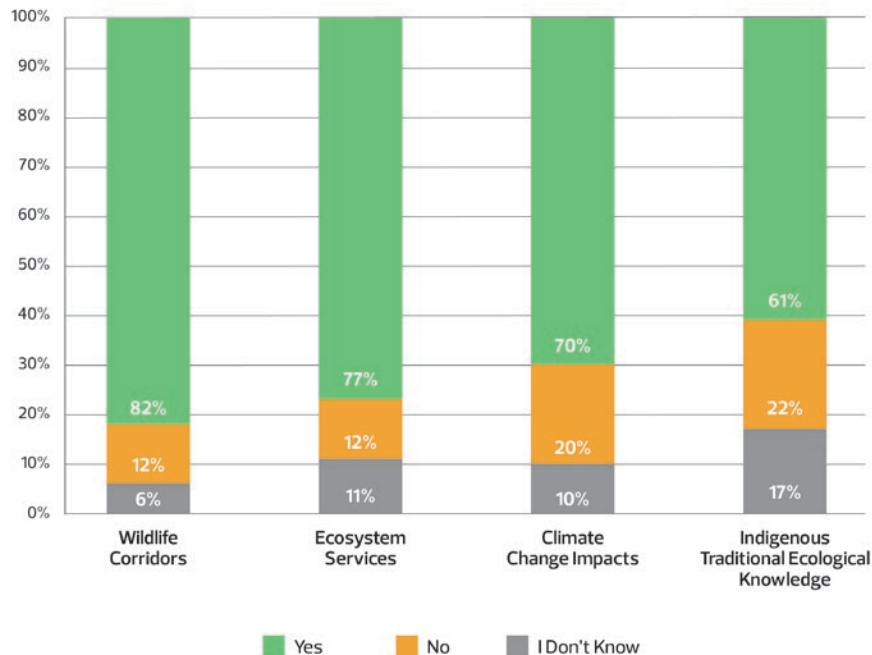
Adding **Climate Change Impacts** to EIAs was also generally well supported (70%). Participants pointed to the effects of climate change, including increased flood hazards as rationale. However, some participants voiced concerns that the category was too broad and that including climate change in the EIA would allow for more energy projects, such as the solar farm project, in the River Valley.

Support for including **Indigenous Traditional and Ecological Knowledge** (61%) shared the importance of including Indigenous traditional knowledge in all aspects of the EIA, noting the importance that Indigenous communities place on the natural environment. However, not all participants were supportive of including Indigenous knowledge in an environmental assessment.

Additional considerations shared by participants are noted on the following pages.

Do you agree with adding the following considerations to Environmental Impact Assessments for projects in the River Valley?

(4033 responses)



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Amongst other impacts to consider in project assessments, **Recreation** had the most support from participants (81%). Many participants highlighted that recreation is a key part of the River Valley and stressed that low-impact recreation, such as hiking and cycling, could be sensitively incorporated while maintaining ecological integrity. Others mentioned that recreation and connectivity should be prioritized over environmental concerns.

Assessing **Environmental Benefits** was another important consideration indicated by 77% of participants. Some participants noted that protecting and restoring the natural environment should have the highest priority, noting the importance of maintaining the River Valley as an irreplaceable natural retreat. Some noted that climate change and habitat restoration should be considered separately, as they have different focuses and goals within the River Valley.

Both **Culture & Heritage** and **Alignment with Vision and Principles** received similar support (64%). A number of participants mentioned that, unless it concerned Indigenous cultures, heritage and cultural opportunities would be better

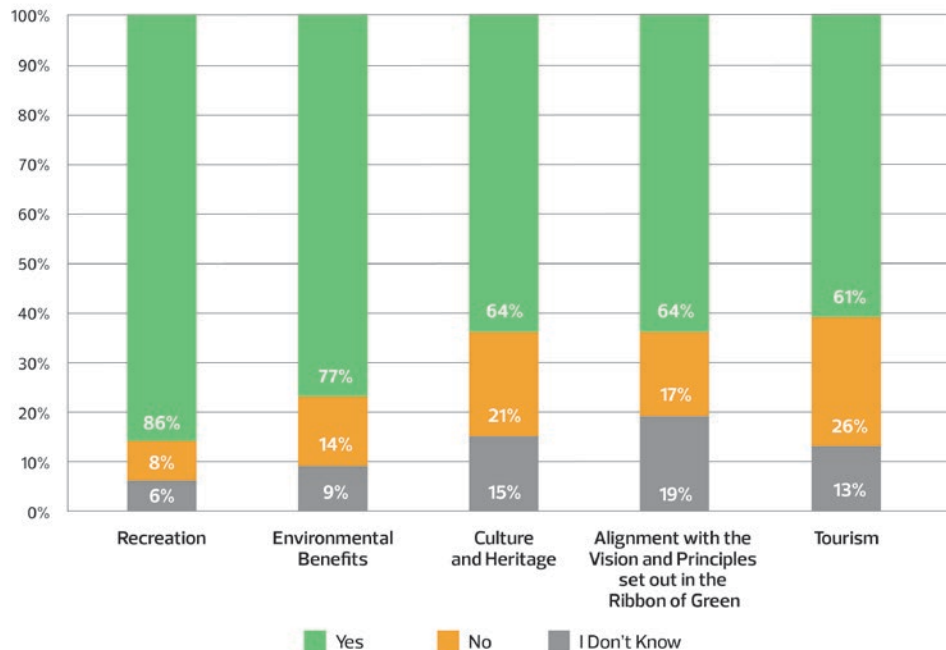
served elsewhere. Others felt that it should be thoughtfully incorporated to improve educational opportunities. Many participants voiced concerns that the Guiding Principles were vague and felt that a more formal framework to assess alignment to the Ribbon of Green is needed. There were differing opinions on the importance of a long term vision as opposed to sticking with smaller, more realistic projects.

Though support is high, **Tourism** received the least amount of support (61%) in relation to the others. Many voiced concerns that including tourism in project assessments would lead to the commercialization of the River Valley to the detriment of the natural environment. Others notes that the naturalness of the River Valley would be enough of a draw for visitors. Others felt that recreation and tourism are synonymous and essential to diversify the City's economy.

Additional considerations shared by participants are noted on the following pages.

What other impacts and benefits should the City consider when deciding on a proposed project?

(4033 responses)



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS & STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT COMMENT SUMMARY:

Understanding Impacts:

- + Balance between protection and use
- + Encourage low-impact amenities where possible

EIA Requirement:

- + Concerns about EIA being used to block recreation or smaller projects
- + Suggestion to simplify criteria for smaller projects
- + Suggestion that natural and single track trails should not need an EIA

Assessment Process:

- + More details on Indigenous engagement should be provided by the City
- + Desire for ongoing consultation with the public
- + EIA should be data focused
- + Establish a clear set of priorities and weightings for different criteria (e.g. natural environment priority over tourism)
- + City needs to be accountable to the EIA and City policies

Language & Clarity:

- + Clarity required around terms and definitions (e.g. active transportation, recreation, ecosystem services)
- + Direction provided by the Ribbon of Green Vision & Principles are not clear or direct enough to provide sufficient project guidance/accountability
- + Require clarity on how EIAs are currently conducted
- + Climate change and habitat restoration should not be categorized together

Additional Considerations:

- + Project size and scale
- + Biodiversity and wildlife impacts (including aquatic invertebrates, fisheries, existing habitats, and wildlife corridors)
- + Surface water hydrology, wetland assessments, watersheds and riparian areas, groundwater, and runoff
- + Floodplain mapping, flood resiliency, and bank stabilization
- + Soil contamination and invasive species
- + Wastewater and stormwater management
- + Erosion and slope stability
- + Carbon footprint
- + Increased pollution (light, noise, air, etc.)
- + Cumulative impacts from multiple projects over time
- + Cost-benefits
- + Impacts to recreational use, human health, safety, connectivity, accessibility, and socio-economic impacts
- + Potential user conflicts
- + Traffic impact assessments
- + Impact to adjacent land uses
- + Wildfire risks
- + Maintenance and operations costs (including maintenance of trails, garbages, etc.)
- + Alternative locations (does the project need to be in the river valley)

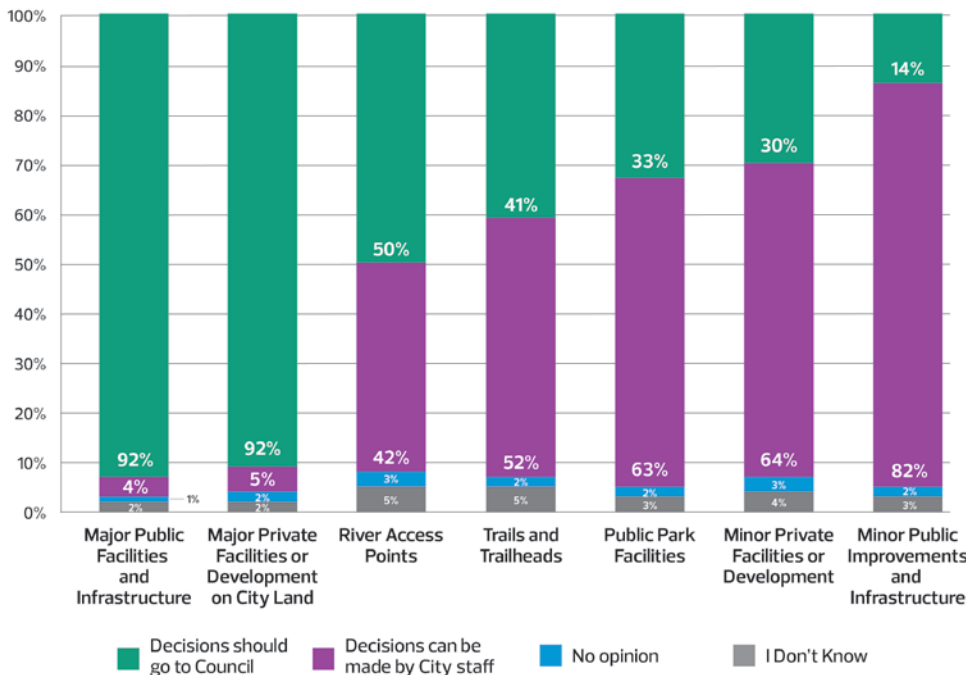
RIVER VALLEY ARP:

Decision Makers

When asked about who should be making decisions about the Ribbon of Green, 92% of survey participants told us that they wanted to see all **major** public and private facilities, infrastructure, and development on public lands go to Council for approval. Generally, participants felt that decisions about **minor** public improvements and infrastructure, minor private facilities and development, and public park facilities could be made by City staff. There was a fairly even split between participants who thought that decisions about trails and trailheads and river access points should go to Council and those who felt they should go to City staff. Overall, participants felt that the magnitude of the decision, its impact, and its permanence were important factors in determining what level of decision making is required. Some felt that there were benefits to having additional oversight from elected officials and public awareness with going to Council. Others felt that allowing City staff to make some decisions would speed up the implementation process and ensure decisions are aligned with existing plans and policies.

There were many comments focused on the transparency of City decision making. When asked what would help instill confidence in a decision made by staff, participants told us they wanted to see more publicly available data and reports, a way to challenge a decision, and clear identification of impacts. Just over half wanted to see technical review by an expert and just under half wished to see a formal engagement process as part of the decision. Many participants conveyed mistrust of both Council and Administration, often due to past decisions in the River Valley that they felt were not appropriate.

What types of River Valley decisions do you think should require Council approval?
(4033 responses)



COMMENT SUMMARY:

Factors for Determining Decision Maker

- + Scope, scale, and budget
- + Public costs and impact
- + Level of impact and permanence
- + Changes to public use of areas
- + Number of people/residents affected

Benefits of Council Decisions

- + They are elected representatives of the public
- + Greater public awareness and influence on decisions
- + Public hearings

Benefits of Staff Decisions

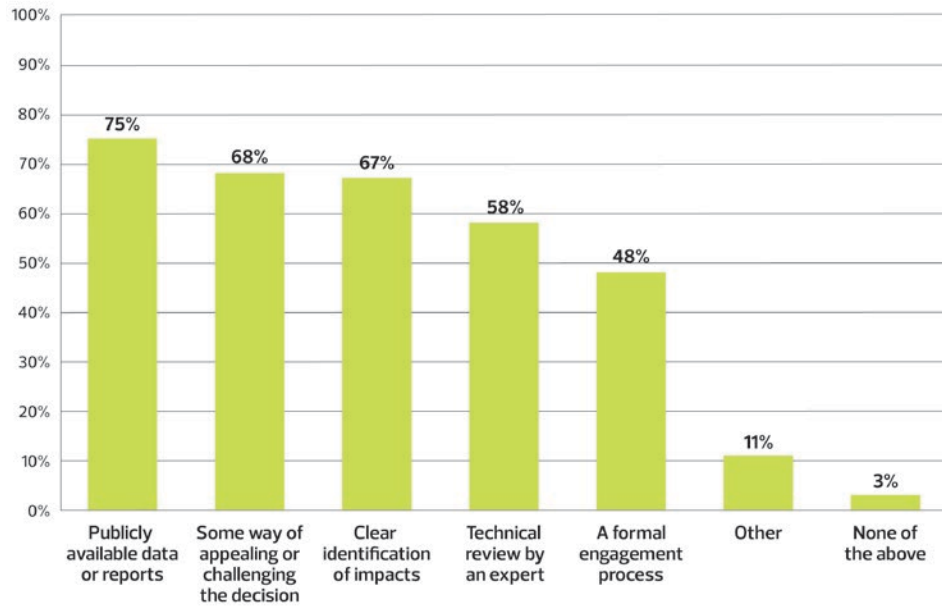
- + Involves experts who know subject area and plans/policies
- + Faster process / less red tape
- + Better for maintenance and creation of amenities that support existing plans
- + Staff see more long term than Council (only 4 year term)

Confidence / Transparency

- + Low confidence/trust in the City (Administration and Council) to make sound River Valley project decisions
- + Desire for more transparency and accountability in decisions
- + Concerns that loudest voices influence decisions
- + Desire for a way to appeal decisions
- + Desire for greater ongoing engagement with user groups
- + Desire for risk assessments, environmental impact assessments, and accessibility assessments to support decision making
- + Need to consider financial implications and impacts on taxpayers
- + Desire to see more information shared about project approvals

If a decision about a small scale project (e.g. trail maintenance, new washroom facilities, new picnic shelters) was made by City staff without the involvement of City Council, what would you need to be confident in that decision?

(4033 responses)



Other Feedback

Email Summary

In addition to the formal engagement tools, the City project team also received several emails with feedback and questions about the project. The subjects discussed were generally consistent with the rest of the engagement feedback and have been incorporated into the overall engagement summary as well as the relevant topic areas.

Engagement Design Feedback

Through the comments and other feedback, we received feedback about the design of the online survey and other engagement tools. Some felt that the Land Management Classification mapping was difficult to navigate and use. Many participants also felt that there was not enough information provided to answer some of the questions asked in the survey.

In future, additional definition or interpretation should be provided for the following terms:

- + Ecosystem services
- + Active transportation
- + Climate change impacts
- + Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Finally, some participants also felt that the online survey was too long and cumbersome to complete and would like to see the content more streamlined in the future.

Thank you for your participation!

Your input is essential to this process and will help guide the next stages of work in the development of the Ribbon of Green and River Valley ARP.

Please stay tuned for project next steps and ongoing opportunities to participate and stay involved.

To receive project updates, please sign-up at
edmonton.ca/ribbonofgreen

To contact the project team,
email **ribbonofgreen@edmonton.ca**

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Stakeholder List

A total of 40 stakeholder organizations attended the stakeholder workshops and/or submitted discussion guides to the project team. The number of participants from each group varied greatly.

- + Alberta Bicycle Association
- + Alberta Health Services
- + Bellevue Community League
- + Bike Edmonton Society
- + Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society
- + Edmonton and Area Land Trust (EALT)
- + Edmonton Dragon Boat Racing Club
- + Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL)
- + Edmonton Fire Bikers
- + Edmonton Heritage Council
- + Edmonton Mountain Bike Alliance
- + Edmonton Native Plant Society
- + Edmonton Nature Club (ENC)
- + Edmonton River Valley Conservation Coalition
- + Edmonton Riverboat
- + Edmonton Road and Track Club
- + Edmonton Ski Club
- + Edmonton Stragglers
- + Energy Transition Leadership Network
- + Energy Transition Climate Resilience Committee
- + Environmental Advisory Committee
- + EPCOR Water Services Inc.
- + Explore Edmonton Corporation
- + Gottspeed Machines
- + Hardcore Bikes
- + Hardcore Cycling Club (Edmonton)
- + Marfra Holdings Ltd.
- + Mud Sweat and Gears
- + North Saskatchewan River Valley Conservation Society
- + Oak Hills Community League
- + Paths for People
- + Prairie Sky Gondola
- + Revolution Cycle
- + Riverdale Community League
- + Rubberside.ca cycling skills
- + Sierra Club Canada Foundation
- + Smoky Lake County & Heritage River Initiative
- + Tangents Treats
- + Vixen Racing
- + Voice of Albertans with Disabilities

Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions

To help bring clarity to the information shared about single-track trails in this phase of engagement, below are answers to common questions received by the project team.

| QUESTION | CITY RESPONSE |
|---|--|
| <p>Is the City banning mountain biking or closing trails?</p> | <p>No, the City is not banning or prohibiting mountain biking in the River Valley, and no trails are being closed at this time. That doesn't mean that, at some time in the future, if a trail is found to be causing too much disturbance in a natural area it won't be closed or re-routed, but for the foreseeable future, no trails are being closed.</p> <p>We understand and appreciate how important mountain biking and other forms of recreation are for users of the River Valley. The City will continue to work with user groups to ensure they have access to places where they can engage in their favourite activities, while also protecting the most sensitive areas. It may be that most of the current trails will be allowed to stay open, or it may be that several have to close or be realigned, but we will make those decisions in discussion with stakeholders based on research and on-the-ground assessment.</p> <p><i>Note: Trail construction in the River Valley without authorization from the City is not permitted. The City's Parkland Bylaw prohibits the cutting and removal of vegetation, and the removal of soil, on City parkland except where a permit to do so has been obtained.</i></p> |
| <p>Your map shows that a lot of the river valley is Preservation land. The Land Management Classification tables say that only foot-based traffic is a compatible use within Preservation areas. Does that mean that mountain biking will be banned?</p> | <p>While it is correct that only foot-based travel is permitted in Preservation areas, existing single-track trails currently falling within Preservation areas may be reclassified to Conservation (which includes biking as a compatible use) once additional planning work has been completed.</p> <p>There is no plan to close/remove trails in advance of further work. In the meantime, the City will continue to work with EMBA, members of the mountain biking community and other stakeholders to identify ways to allow for sustainable use of single track trails in Preservation areas. We have a lot of feedback from the engagement done so far, and will consider and incorporate changes where it makes sense.</p> <p>A detailed recreational trail plan is needed and is a finer level of detail than will be undertaken in the Ribbon of Green. We will look for an opportunity to create a trails master plan after the policy work done for this project is complete.</p> |
| <p>What does the Preservation designation mean?</p> | <p>Preservation areas represent the most ecologically sensitive areas in the River Valley. Designating an area for Preservation means we need to take extra care in the decisions we make about what activities are permitted there. Policy will be drafted to provide guidance for this decision-making, and will be shared for discussion in Phase 3 of the project. That policy will be informed by all of the feedback gathered in Phase 2 of engagement.</p> <p>In addition to being a beloved area for recreation, the River Valley is Edmonton's most important biodiversity area and wildlife corridor. Growing demand for recreation and other uses, together with the increasing impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss, creates real pressure on these natural systems. The City is committed to working with stakeholders, including EMBA, conservation organizations and Indigenous Nations and Communities, to identify an appropriate approach - one that addresses the most significant concerns about impacts to the unique ecology of our river valley while also providing opportunities to meet demand for recreational trail use.</p> |
| <p>Doesn't research show that biking and hiking have similar environmental impacts?</p> | <p>Our initial review of recent, peer-reviewed research indicates that there are a number of variables that influence the impact of mountain biking or single-track trails, including riding style, trail design, trail density, and trail management and maintenance practices. We need to do more research. Under some conditions, mountain biking has similar impacts to hiking, but in some situations, it can have greater impacts. Such impacts can include habitat fragmentation, stress on wildlife, and soil erosion.</p> <p>Given these different variables, and a lack of assessments specific to the geography of our river valley, it is too early to make firm conclusions about what kinds of impacts the existing user-generated single-track trail network in Edmonton's River Valley is having or which management and maintenance practices are best. Further research and on-the-ground assessments are needed to help us understand which trails should become part of the City's permanent trails inventory, and what kind of maintenance and management practices should be undertaken (including by the mountain biking community) to make sure that ecological impacts of those trails are minimized.</p> |

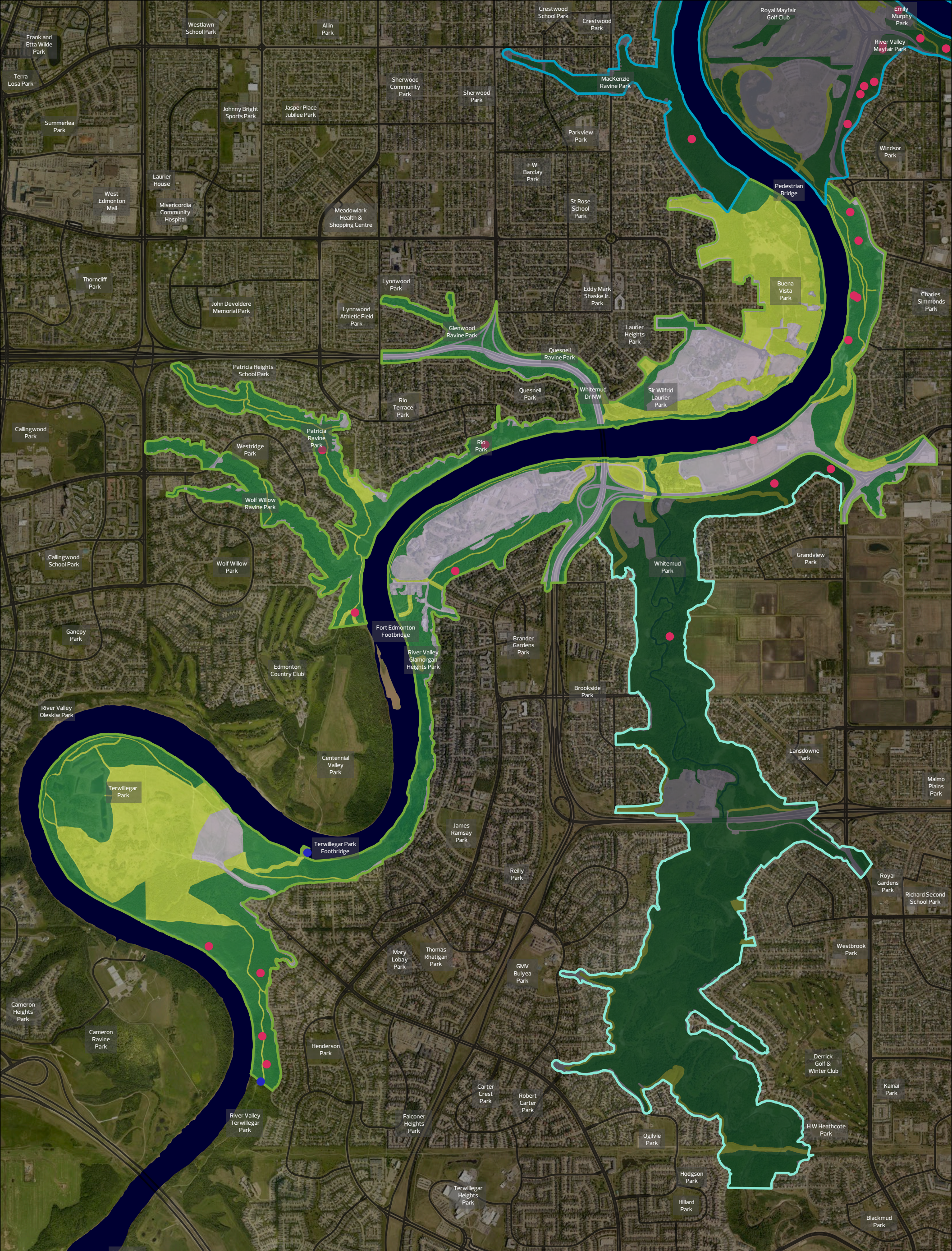
| QUESTION | CITY RESPONSE |
|---|--|
| <p>What trails are currently shown in the Land Management Classification mapping?</p> | <p>The Land Management Classification mapping reflects the high-level, City-built and maintained network of trails (these are primarily paved and gravel trails), which provide access from adjacent neighbourhoods, and connectivity through the River Valley and ravines.</p> <p>It does not reflect the detailed network of recreational trails (either existing single-track trails or future trails), which will be mapped in the future.</p> |
| <p>When will a recreational trail strategy be ready?</p> | <p>Detailed planning of recreational trails (including those for mountain biking and other recreational uses) would take place in future work after the Ribbon of Green is complete.</p> <p>City Administration will advance this item for consideration by City Council in the fall of 2022 as part of deliberations for the next budget cycle.</p> |
| <p>Why doesn't the City just include all single-track trails in the plan?</p> | <p>Most of the single-track trail network was built by trail users and the City has not had oversight of the construction of these trails, some of which are found in sensitive areas, so we don't know the ecological impact they have had.</p> <p>We need time to do studies and on-the-ground assessment that take into account our local context and environment, and to understand the risk implications associated with some of the trails and structures within the network. The City of Edmonton has a responsibility to steward the environment and ensure we limit negative impacts, whether from cycling, hiking, horseback riding or other activities.</p> <p>A detailed trail strategy is needed to allow for further site-specific assessment and review of existing trails, so that we can move towards a trail system that meets recreational demand without compromising ecological function.</p> |
| <p>Where do we go from here?</p> | <p>The Ribbon of Green will lay the foundation for a sustainable trail network that can be used and enjoyed by many recreational and active transportation users. While it will not include a detailed recreational trail network, it will guide the City and its partners in decisions about what types of trails are appropriate and where.</p> <p>We are in Phase 2 of the River Valley Planning Modernization project, which includes four phases. Decisions have not been finalized. We are providing opportunities for stakeholders and the public to share their input, and that input, along with technical assessments and guiding City policies, will inform our decisions and shape the policy that is forthcoming in Phase 3 and 4 of the project.</p> <p>We are also engaging with Indigenous Nations and Communities. We have heard and listened to the mountain biking community, conservation organizations and other River Valley users. Our decisions will be made after listening to all groups and they will be made in a way that respects the demand for different recreation activities and the need to preserve the River Valley.</p> <p>We are grateful for the input we have received, and continue to receive, on this project. There is incredible knowledge and passion within our community, and we are committed to working together to get this right.</p> |
| <p>What were the criteria used to define the Land Management Classification areas?</p> | <p>The Preservation classification was defined by ecological considerations including major landslide areas, riparian areas (important habitat along the river and creek banks), flood hazard areas and sensitive and significant natural areas.</p> <p>Conservation areas include the network of formal, City-maintained (mostly paved and gravel) trails, as well as open areas for informal gathering and recreation. At more detailed stages of planning, additional trails for recreational use may also be converted to Conservation. Such a change would be based on field assessment.</p> <p>To determine areas within the Active Working Landscapes Classification, the "developed" classified areas within the City's Urban Primary Land and Vegetation Inventory were used. This highlighted most of the concentrations of recreation amenities and development as well as areas that were considered heavily disturbed and not appropriate for the Preservation or Conservation classes.</p> |
| <p>What user groups and organizations have been engaged to date?</p> | <p>Close to 200 community organizations, businesses and other relevant stakeholders were identified and invited by the City to participate in both phases of engagement. These stakeholder groups have been selected to capture a breadth and depth of experience and knowledge about the River Valley.</p> <p>See "Appendix A: Stakeholder List" for a list of stakeholders organization that participated in Phase 2.</p> <p>See the Phase 1 What We Heard Report (available on the project website) for information about Phase 1.</p> |

Appendix C: Map Comments

A total of 78 map comments were received, the vast majority of which focus on the identification of valued mountain bike trails within the study area. Areas with a higher density of these comments include the southern portion of Terwillegar Park, areas to the south and east of Hawrelak Park, Nellie McClung Park, Forest Heights Park, Capilano Park, Gold Bar Park, and Goldstick Park. Many of the ravines also were identified for trail use.

Other comments flagged important connections out of the study area, including the connections into Oleskiw Park, into the Northeast Ribbon of Green area north of Hermitage Park, and into the Strathcona Science Provincial Park.

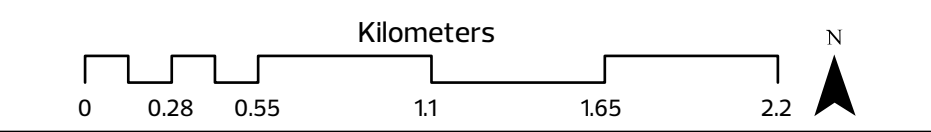
Finally, a single map comment flagged Victoria Golf Course as an area which could be improved and repurposed as a more equitably accessible and more natural open space.

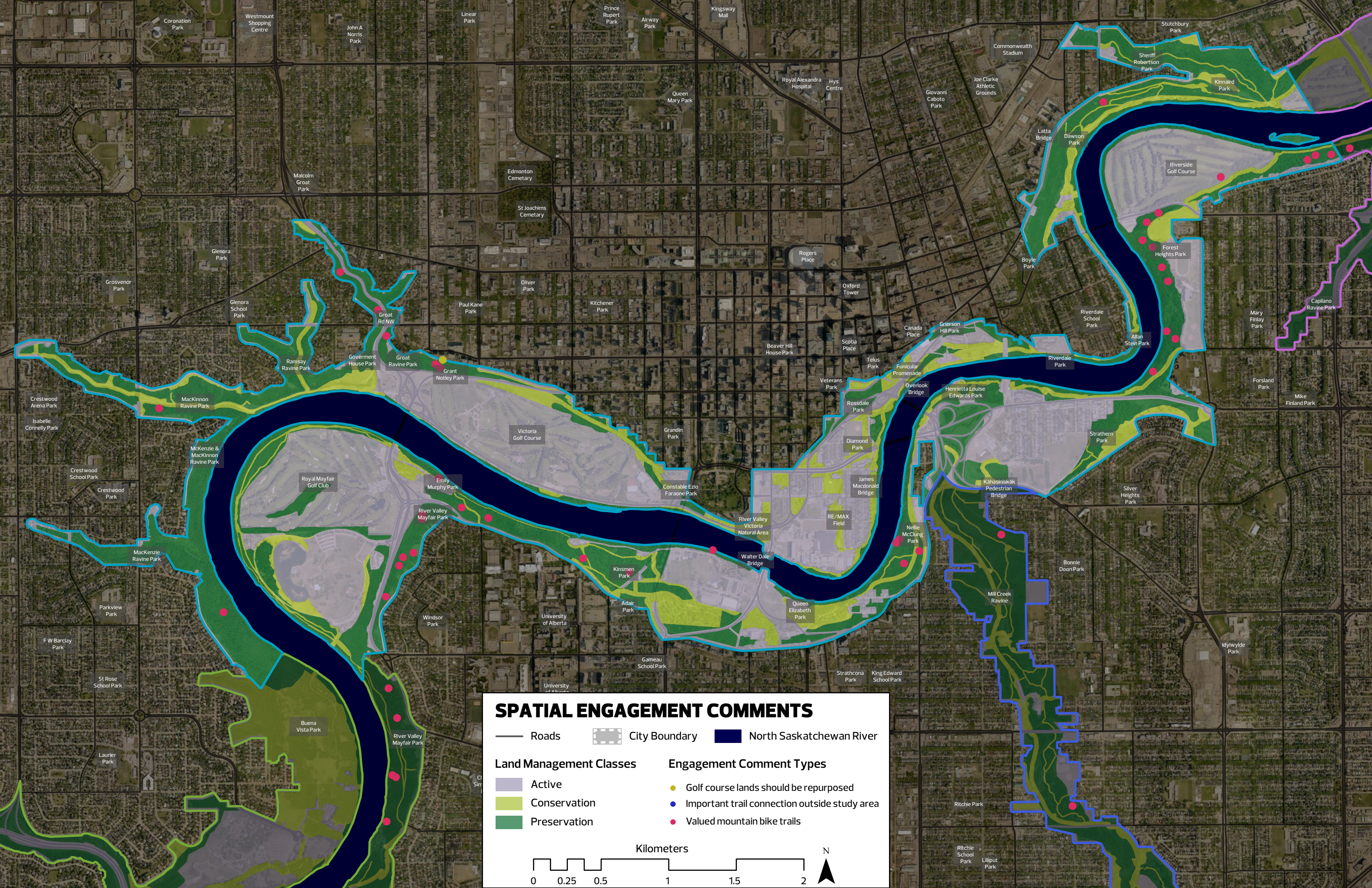


SPATIAL ENGAGEMENT COMMENTS

Roads
 City Boundary
 North Saskatchewan River

| Land Management Classes | Engagement Comment Types |
|---|---|
| Active Conservation Preservation | Golf course lands should be repurposed Important trail connection outside study area Valued mountain bike trails |





SPATIAL ENGAGEMENT COMMENTS

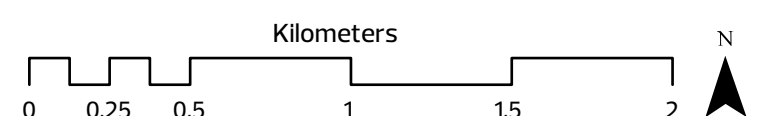
Roads
 City Boundary
 North Saskatchewan River

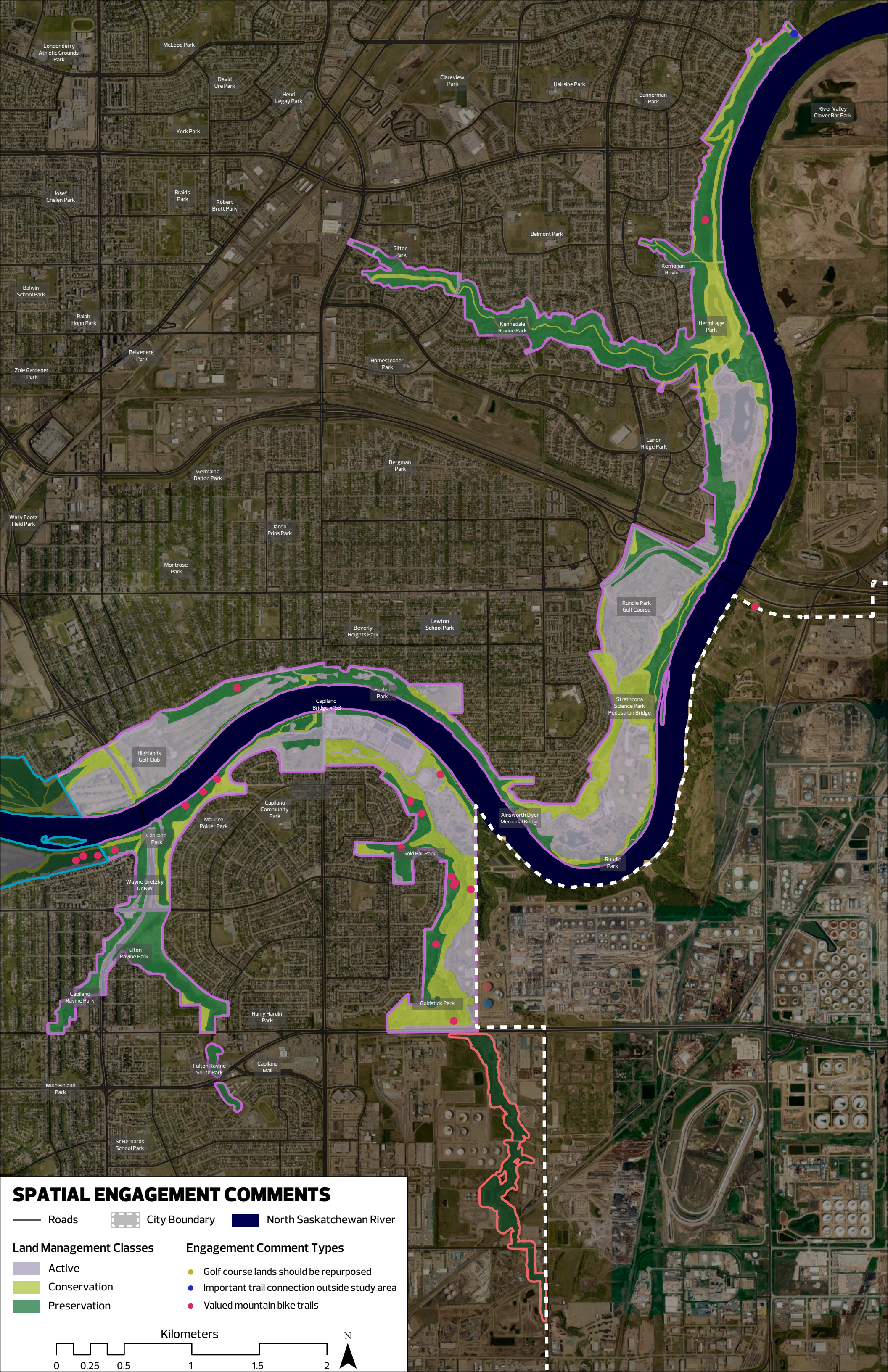
Land Management Classes

- Active
- Conservation
- Preservation

Engagement Comment Types

- Golf course lands should be repurposed
- Important trail connection outside study area
- Valued mountain bike trails





SPATIAL ENGAGEMENT COMMENTS

- Roads
 - ▤ City Boundary
 - North Saskatchewan River
- | Land Management Classes | Engagement Comment Types |
|-------------------------|---|
| ■ Active | ● Golf course lands should be repurposed |
| ■ Conservation | ● Important trail connection outside study area |
| ■ Preservation | ● Valued mountain bike trails |

