

## Stakeholder Interview Summary

To complement the review of 102 Avenue pedestrianization, Administration engaged with a sample of stakeholders along the corridor to understand potential opportunities and impacts that may be realized with a closure of the eastbound travel lane between 97 Street and 103 Street. In total, eleven stakeholders were engaged, consisting of adjacent property owners, institutions, and organizations representing area interests.

### Stakeholders Engaged

Canada Place	Don Wheaton YMCA
Winspear Theatre	Manulife Place*
Citadel Theatre	Paths for People
Edmonton Public Library	Downtown Business Association
City Centre Mall*	NAIOP Commercial Real Estate Development Association
	BOMA (Building Owners and Managers Association)

\*The team met with the General Manager of City Centre Mall and representatives of Centrecorp, the property managers for the mall as well as the property manager for Manulife Place.

### Summary of Themes

#### *Accessibility*

From the pedestrian access perspective, a few stakeholders expressed interest and optimism in a pedestrian-focused corridor somewhere in Downtown, a less formal and a more organic space for pedestrian movements and enjoyment. An idea of a “pedestrian spine” connecting public and green spaces was shared.

From the vehicle access perspective, the main concern that was expressed by stakeholders during the interviews was related to accessibility. Individuals speaking to the perspectives of Canada Place, the Citadel Theatre, Don Wheaton YMCA, Manulife Place and the Winspear Theatre all brought up potential vehicular access issues around the closure of the eastbound travel lane on 102 Avenue. The key concerns expressed include: increased traffic congestion in the surrounding roadway network and adjacent intersections, more restricted vehicular access for pick-ups, drop-offs and parkades in the area and potential reduced access by emergency vehicles.

### *Safety*

One of the other common concerns heard from stakeholders was related to safety and security in the downtown core. Individuals speaking to the perspectives of the Don Wheaton YMCA, City Centre Mall, Citadel, Winspear, Downtown BIA and the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) observed that the overall sense of safety and security in downtown has deteriorated during COVID-19. Their main question was how 102 Avenue pedestrianization may impact overall corridor safety. If the travel lane is closed but the area is not drawing a significant increase in pedestrian traffic, it could result in an overall reduction of public surveillance, “eyes on the street”.

### *Trial Approach*

Almost all of the stakeholders were comfortable with a temporary closure approach (eg. special events or periodic closures) to accommodate programmed activities on a set schedule, rather than a permanent full closure. There was also an openness to trying some form of closure or limited car access on a trial basis before a long-term permanent commitment is made. Stakeholders also expressed a desire for more dialogue if a permanent corridor wide travel lane closure is contemplated in order to better understand long term City vision for the area, design concepts and opportunities.

### *Vision vs. Reality*

Many of the stakeholders who expressed neutrality or moderate support cautioned that a travel lane closure initiative would need considerable planning and preparation before the area could be permanently pedestrianized. The comparison to Calgary’s Stephen Avenue was referenced a number of times. Stakeholders were quick to point out that the infrastructure and set-up of 102 Avenue is currently not comparable to Stephen Avenue. For example, the current buildings/businesses frontage in the corridor are not conducive to pedestrian activation opportunities such as patios/expanded storefronts. Additional planning and coordination with adjacent property owners would be required to bring 102 Avenue to life if the City envisioned a pedestrian oriented corridor in Downtown Edmonton similar to that of City of Calgary’s Stephen Avenue.

### *Change Fatigue and COVID Recovery*

While many of the stakeholders expressed optimism in a pedestrian focused corridor, some stakeholders expressed a general sense of change fatigue with the large amount of infrastructure projects in the downtown core over the past few years. There is a sentiment for a period of status quo for observations and adjustments prior to further change proposals. It was also openly shared that

## Attachment 2

the top focus of the local business community in the near future is on COVID recovery. While businesses may be supportive of the idea to activate 102 Avenue, they may not have sufficient capacity to lead or implement programming to take advantage of the closed travel lane in the near future.