

Edmonton Research Park What We Heard Report Phase 3

engaged.edmonton.ca/erp

| **SHARE** YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Public Engagement Summary and Results	
a. Project Overview	PG 3
b. What We Heard	PG 3
c. What We Did	PG 7
2. Public Engagement Approach	
a. How We Engaged	PG 8
b. Who Was Engaged	PG 9
c. What We Asked	PG 10
3. What Happens Next?	PG 10

Public Engagement Summary and Results

Project Overview

Project Overview

On March 23, 2022, the Executive Committee of Edmonton's City Council passed a motion that directed City Administration to "engage businesses in the Edmonton Research Park (ERP) and City-funded economic development partners to provide options and actions to advance economic development opportunities including, but not limited to, life sciences, research and development in the ERP in alignment with the principles in the Economic Action Plan and return to the committee."

The objectives of this engagement are to:

- Identify options and actions the City, businesses operating in the ERP and/or economic development partners could take to advance economic and research outcomes of the ERP.
- Ensure the ERP is a diverse, inclusive and equitable place to do business.

The engagement process has been broken into three phases. In Phase Three we shared the fulsome list of options and actions (compiled from stakeholder feedback in Phase One and Phase Two) to ensure all stakeholders had the opportunity to review the list and provide feedback. We also engaged with economic and community development partners to obtain their feedback on the list. This phase enabled us to prioritize the options and actions and to make recommendations to City Council on how to advance economic development in the Edmonton Research Park.

What We Heard

The response rate to the survey shared with ERP stakeholders was 10%. For this reason we have combined feedback from the City's economic development and community partners and ERP stakeholders in the summary below:

Action	Feedback Summary
Create a communication strategy that raises the profile of the ERP locally and globally. The strategy could leverage the City's Place Brand strategy by profiling entrepreneurs and showcasing the strengths of the ERP for investment attraction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is limited public awareness of the park. • There is a need to build awareness of the ERP both locally, and globally. • Stories of success can be used to build community and inspire. • While the majority of community and economic development partners encouraged creating a communications strategy around the ERP, one organization cautioned against this strategy stating that resources should be focused downtown as additional spend would be duplicated from other investment attraction and economic development initiatives underway.

Phase Three Economic Development Organizations Consulted:

- *University of Alberta*
- *Edmonton Chamber of Commerce*
- *Edmonton Global*
- *Edmonton Health City*
- *Edmonton Unlimited*
- *AKSIS*
- *Action 4 Health Communities*
- *Alberta Women Entrepreneurs*

<p>Create a banquet or event room/space at the ERP for stakeholders to use for events and networking sessions to create a meeting place for life sciences and tech in the City.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be potential to capitalize on already existing event space within ERP buildings, specifically space within Alberta Innovates.
<p>Create events and networking opportunities for businesses within the ERP to support community development and innovation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events such as job fairs, networking nights, and educational opportunities would be beneficial in creating community within the ERP. • Suggestion that creating these events should be the role of property owners and economic development organizations rather than the City.
<p>Create opportunities for economic development organizations to have an onsite present in the ERP to provide services directly to businesses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site presence may not be required/ could be achieved through creating events and networking opportunities.
<p>Invest in outdoor amenities such as gathering spaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor amenity spaces are important, and often hard to come by. • This could increase event participation driving traffic from downtown to the ERP.
<p>Establish an equity, diversity and inclusion committee which could help to improve the understanding of equity in the ERP, receive concerns related to inclusion in the ERP and advise on the vision, strategy and program development in the ERP.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most companies will have their own EDI programs, we need to consider how they mesh together. • Opportunity to provide awareness through other City funded initiatives such as the Anti-racism committee. • The City needs to be strategic in which groups the ERP is marketed to.
<p>Increase awareness of the ERP with more diverse groups of people, specifically women, by engaging with economic development organizations or industry groups who work with entrepreneurs from equity deserving groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to have some sort of expectation on how EDI will be fostered and maintained in the ERP. • Flexibility, affordability, childcare access and grants can all contribute to equity of the park.
<p>Designate an ERP steward who expands programs and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of economic development partners consulted

<p>supports in the ERP and is guided by a multi-stakeholder advisory group. The advisory group should include members of post-secondaries, ERP stakeholders and economic development organizations.</p>	<p>expressed interest in participating in an ERP governance board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A steering committee with diverse backgrounds would be a good idea to steer the vision and its implementation in the industry.
<p>Work with landowners to create more opportunities for development on the land they own, in alignment with the ERP's vision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlock undeveloped land in the south of the ERP for development. • Review the current ERP utilization to confirm alignment with ERP's vision.
<p>Create a transit route between the University and ERP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated transit likely wouldn't grow economic development opportunities. • Could be prioritized through a larger vision. • Opportunity to utilize this through on-demand transit.
<p>Invest in physical assets of the Edmonton Research Park (ERP) such as walking paths, bike paths, roads, signage, landscaping and outdoor amenities such as gathering spaces and natural areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we look at options to support transportation between buildings? Perhaps e-scooters and bikes could be an option. • Tying any physical assets to indigenous artwork or a land acknowledgement is encouraged. • Putting money into infrastructure doesn't necessarily mean people are going to come. • Investment would be more valuable in outdoor event spaces.
<p>Re-evaluate and clearly communicate a vision for the ERP.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City of Edmonton needs to acknowledge a vision for the ERP. • Proximity to the airport and Nisku is an important selling feature of the ERP. • Tying vision into the work of other Ec Dev partners is important.
<p>Restrictive Covenant suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the restrictive covenant and create a communications plan to ensure stakeholders and prospective investors clearly understand its regulations and how they 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some stakeholders suggested that the restrictive covenant makes the park unique and without it, it would become just another business park. • Several stakeholders commented that the research requirements on the Restrictive Covenant should be increased. • Others suggested removing the restrictive covenant and ensuring

are enforced. Specifically, the City needs to clarify:

- what is meant by the 15 per cent research requirement and how it is validated,
- what happens if a company stops doing research and moves into product commercialization or manufacturing, and
- the role of the Park Authority.
- Keep the restrictive covenant and enhance the enforcement of the regulations.
- Don't take any further action and keep the restrictive covenant as is. This is essential for supporting the original vision of the area as a research park.
- Update restrictive covenant to increase the developable land within the ERP. Some key considerations include reducing the building setbacks and enabling higher-density development. These changes would support more businesses in the ERP and would provide for sufficient manufacturing space.
- Other options to update the restrictive covenant include:
 - Reducing the ambiguity of the language so it is more investment friendly. Property owners noted the current document provides too much ambiguity and this impacts their ability to attract tenants or secure financing.

that the ERP was zoned to achieve optimal land use in alignment with the vision for the ERP. This would make it easy on businesses to start up in the park while maintaining a level of control.

- It was mentioned that expanding what is allowed in the ERP may naturally pull businesses that fit the mandate well. There is a need to create smaller spaces for scaling companies.
- The confusion around how the 15% research requirement is determined and how this is verified.
- If the research requirement is taken out or restrictive covenant is retired, this would call for a name change within the ERP.
- While some stakeholders encouraged grants and financial incentives in the ERP, others argued that ERP companies should be guided to existing resources and supports.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promote unique or innovative building designs to make the ERP more of a destination. ○ Revisit the language around research so it more closely aligns with innovation. This would then capture practical research that is product or service oriented, scientific research, market research and innovative product design. ○ Increase the research requirement from 15 to 50 per cent. ● Remove the restrictive covenant and ensure the area is zoned to achieve the highest and best land use. ● Remove the restrictive covenant and replace it with incentives that attract businesses and entrepreneurs to the ERP in alignment with the ERP's vision. Incentives could include reduced property taxes, reduced rents, deferred tax payments, grants, business support programs, etc. 	
--	--

Of all of the actions identified, the majority of ERP stakeholders and economic and community development organizations noted the following resonated with them the most:

- Update the restrictive covenant - specifically to make it easier to do business in ERP, while maintaining a minimum amount of control.
- Re-evaluate and clearly communicate the vision for the ERP.
- Raise the profile of the ERP locally and globally.
- Designate an ERP steward / multi-disciplinary advisory committee.

Some other key takeaways from Phase Three engagement that do not relate directly to an action / option include:

- Regardless of the recommendation, the City needs to ensure we are making the best use of existing resources, supports and infrastructure to avoid duplicating efforts.

- The majority of economic development organizations suggest the ERP is an asset to Edmonton.

What We Did

Phase three of engagement consisted of one on one interviews with community economic development partners:

- University of Alberta
- Edmonton Chamber of Commerce
- Edmonton Global
- Edmonton Health City
- Edmonton Unlimited
- AKSIS
- Action 4 Health Communities
- Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (via email).

Interviews were conducted with the intention to gather feedback on the list of options and actions developed in phase one and two to advance economic development opportunities within the Edmonton Research Park in alignment with the City's Economic Action plan.

In addition, a survey was sent to all stakeholders who participated in phase one and two of engagement. This includes business tenants, building and land owners and biotech lease holders who reside within the Edmonton Research Park.

Stakeholders were contacted individually through email or phone and informed of the survey hosted on the Engaged Edmonton project page. Street signs were also posted within the Research Park to let all stakeholders know that this was their final opportunity to provide input on the list of options and actions before a recommendation was made to the Executive Committee.

Public Engagement Approach

How We Engaged

Virtual one on one interviews with community economic development partners were conducted throughout October and November. Interviews were conducted by the project team via Google Meets.

The level of influence for this project was at the REFINE level of the City's [Public Engagement Spectrum](#).



The phase three survey hosted on Google Forms was sent out to stakeholders who participated in the first two phases of engagement via email and phone calls.

Phase three engagement focused on:

- Gathering final input to tweak the options and actions developed from what we heard in phases one and two;
- Enable stakeholders to review and provide feedback, finalize or add missing options/actions to the fulsome list generated in phases one and two; and,
- Establish which options and actions captured would bring the most value to Edmonton Research Park stakeholders.

Who Was Engaged

Phase three of engagement consisted of one-on-one interviews with economic development partners as well as a survey delivered to previously engaged property owners, business tenants, land lease holders and stakeholders in the Edmonton Research Park.

What We Asked

The phase three survey to stakeholders who reside inside the Edmonton Research Park, including property owners, business tenants and land lease holders, included the following questions:

- Is there anything you feel was missed in the [Phase Two What We Heard Report](#)?
- What information from the [Phase Two What We Heard Report](#) resonates with you the most?
- Are there any adjustments that you would make to the suggested actions? If so, what are they?

One on one interviews with community economic development and community organizations were conducted based off the following questions:

- Does your organization have any current involvement in the ERP?
- Do you feel like anything was missing from the list of options and actions?
- What option or action resonated with you the most?
- Are there any adjustments you would make to the list? If so, what are they?

What Happens Next?

Final feedback gathered from phase three of the Edmonton Research Park engagement will be used to inform the final recommendation and council report. This report will be shared to the executive committee on March 22, 2023. For any individuals or groups interested in speaking at Council, you can [sign up here](#).

Please reach out to nolan.carter@edmonton.ca or alexandra.carson@edmonton.ca for any questions that you may have.