

What We Heard Report

Executive Summary

City of Edmonton
Public and Stakeholder Engagement
on the Edmonton Galleria Project

Prepared by RC Strategies

Introduction

The Edmonton Galleria Project, conceived in 2011, is an initiative intended to support the needs of the arts community. The Edmonton Downtown Academic and Cultural Centre Foundation (the Foundation), a public, charitable, not-for-profit organization with a Board comprised of prominent Edmontonians, is the proponent.

The proposed Edmonton Galleria Project comprises of a number of rehearsal and performance spaces in downtown Edmonton and includes the relocation of the University of Alberta’s Departments of Art & Design and Music. The selected site is on land north of 103A Avenue between 97 Street and 101 Street.

The Foundation has been communicating and working with the City of Edmonton as it furthers the Galleria Project. The Foundation has looked to the City for support and for capital contributions. While the Foundation has been working to build community support for the project and sharing information, the City of Edmonton undertook engagement with the community regarding this proposed project.

The intent of the City’s engagement was to:

- Provide information to stakeholders about the proposed Galleria Project – including its components and phasing, governance model, and funding models;
- Outline the City’s role in the Galleria Project;
- Gauge public and stakeholder awareness and understanding about the proposed project;
- Identify the current level of support for the Galleria project;
- Test the level of agreement with proposed benefits of the project;
- Gather the perspectives of the public and stakeholders regarding the proposed project, including opportunities and challenges; and
- Identify recommendations that will better inform project proponents about issues to address, information to share, and proactive measures to take.

Engagement

Four primary mechanisms were utilized as part of the City’s engagement process. A total of 2,197 participants and respondents were consulted with and completed a survey. The following table identifies the different consultation mechanisms, the level of involvement, and their related timing.

<i>Consultative Mechanisms</i>	<i>Statistics</i>	<i>Timelines</i>
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		December 2014	January 2015	February 2015
Stakeholder Discussion Sessions - Stakeholder Online Survey	- 8 sessions; 83 participants (242 invitations sent) - 24 responses to the survey			
Public Online Survey	- 867 completed responses			
Insight Online Survey	- 1,021 responses			
Open Houses - Questionnaire	- 2 open houses (~135 total attendees) - 67 questionnaires completed			

Results

A broad array of feedback was gathered using the different consultative mechanisms noted above. Five themes emerged, and the results under each theme contain input provided through all the engagement methodologies.

Awareness and Knowledge

There is some **general awareness** of the Galleria Project; however, the depth of knowledge is relatively limited. While some respondents indicated they are reasonably well-versed in the various elements of the Project, including components, governance, and funding, most respondents have limited knowledge. In fact, a number of the people who participated in the engagement opportunities were under the impression that the City of Edmonton is a major driver behind the Galleria Project. The respondents' awareness of the roles of the Edmonton Downtown Academic Cultural Centre Foundation and the Edmonton Cultural Trust Foundation is low.

Of the participants who participated in the discussion sessions, the representatives from the business community and those from the major arts organizations appeared to be the most knowledgeable about the Galleria Project and its details. The information available at the discussion sessions, the open houses, and online appeared to help people better understand the project.

There is a **desire to learn more** about the Galleria Project. Participants and respondents expressed interest in gaining a better understanding of the need for the performance facility elements of the project, as well as the business and financial modeling completed by the Foundation.

Level of Support

The four consultation mechanisms indicate that the majority of participants and respondents are in support of the Galleria Project. Results from **Open House Feedback Form** suggest that **75%** of respondents are **supportive**. The **Stakeholder Group Survey** yielded an **84%** rating while the **Insight Survey** and the **Public Web Survey** indicated **59%** and **54%** of respondents, respectively, are **supportive**.

	Very Supportive	Somewhat Supportive	Neither	Somewhat Unsupportive	Not Supportive At All	Don't Know / Unsure
Open House Feedback Form	52%	23%	8%	5%	9%	5%
Stakeholder Group Survey*	42%	42%	4%	8%	-	4%
Insight Survey	25%	34%	17%	9%	10%	6%
Public Web Survey	36%	18%	7%	10%	28%	

*NOTE: Percentage has been rounded.

Indicators of Success

Participants identified several outcomes that will need to be achieved for the Galleria Project to be deemed a success.

- **Provision of accessible and affordable rehearsal and performance space.** A sufficient amount of space will need to be available at an affordable rate to support access for the arts community. Lease and rental rates are only one consideration when determining cost of space.
- **A Cultural Trust will need to support, to a significant degree, the arts organizations, programs and facilities in Edmonton.** The Cultural Trust model identifies funding support worth \$250M to \$300M over the first 30 years of the project. This will have a tremendous impact on the arts community.
- **Contribution to the revitalization of downtown.** Rather than simply providing space, the project will need to further the goals of the City of Edmonton and its many proponents to reinvigorate and revitalize the downtown, while benefiting the existing community.
- **Neighborhood enhancement.** The project will need to enhance the neighborhood and quality of life of those that live and work in the area, and result in growth and attraction of the business community and patrons of the Galleria project.
- **Project design reflects the culture, heritage and history of the community within which it resides.** The buildings and open space will need to reflect the

importance and integration of the surrounding neighbourhood and the vision of the project.

- **Inclusive, authentic and ongoing engagement.** Communication and engagement that involves all stakeholders and the public will need to be continuous and result in significant support for the project.
- **Financially sustainable.** The capital and operational funding models will need to be viable and not rely on public funding for long-term sustainability.

Benefits and Opportunities

Selected benefits and opportunities were identified through the different consultation mechanisms. Proposed benefits resulting from the stakeholder discussion sessions were tested in surveys to gauge level of agreement or disagreement. The open-ended survey questions also gathered information on perceived benefits and opportunities. The following list provides a summary of the more salient benefits and opportunities.

- **Enhanced visitation** to downtown from residents and from visitors to Edmonton. This visitation would help elevate the vibrancy of downtown and Edmonton.
- Members of the **artistic community** have opportunities to **share their talents** – the Galleria Project provides a venue to do this through available rehearsal and performance space. Many organizations that are currently having difficulty finding appropriate and affordable space will find success by accessing the space offered as part of the Galleria Project. The spaces and accompanying performances would help grow the audience for the arts.
- Available space, especially in this particular neighbourhood, will allow the **cultures in the community**, including the Aboriginal culture, the opportunity to showcase their skills. This would be achieved through artists in the cultural communities showcasing their art; it may also be achieved through design of the space.
- The space becomes a **gathering place** where people congregate to partake in activities or “take in” the activities of others. The role of the space would enhance safety (also through additional traffic throughout the day) and the quality of life of those in the area.
- The extra people drawn to the area would support the existing businesses in the area. This extra traffic (from the presence of the University and the patrons/participants in arts and cultural pursuits) will encourage **business to grow** and more businesses to **develop**. Social enterprise can emerge from the Galleria Project as artists and those in the community start and operate their own businesses.
- The Galleria Project would provide a promotion and **awareness** generating **opportunity** for **organizations and agencies** in the area (beyond the arts organizations). This place would serve as a hub for the community, offering

information and perhaps access to organizations and agencies servicing the resident population.

- Through the **Cultural Trust**, organizations, initiatives, and spaces would be supported (particularly through financial means) to help achieve their own success.
- The **University of Alberta would enhance its profile** with this downtown location. Synergies would be further developed between the Departments of Art, Design and Music and the broader arts community through proximity to the arts district.

Challenges and Mitigation Possibilities

Participants identified many challenges associated with the Galleria Project, and were asked to consider possible ways to mitigate the challenges going forward. The most prominent challenges focused on financial, social, and infrastructure concerns. The following list presents a summary of the most salient challenges; within the presentation of each challenge are participant and respondent suggestions for future mitigation efforts.

Financial

- There is concern that the funds allocated to this project through philanthropic and government support will **negatively impact funding access for other organizations**, initiatives, facilities and events within the city.
- The need for increased security resources to support public safety was identified as a financial challenge.
- The ability to ensure the **financial sustainability** of the project was also identified as a concern, as is the potential to require further public funds.
- Participants and respondents also indicated that Galleria patron and arts community use of the facilities would be impacted if it were not affordable to attend performances or lease/rent space.
- The role and level of support from current and potential partners and access to details on the business case and funding model were also identified as areas requiring **further information**.

*Mitigating possibility: It was suggested that **business case and funding model information** would help achieve clarity regarding the rationale of the proposed facilities and open spaces, long-term sustainability of the project, and assist in determining whether challenges could be overcome.*

Social

- Input suggests that the location of the development **might negatively impact the present community** through increased congestion and lack of consideration for the social issues that exist in the area.

- Participants and respondents suggest that the proposed **facilities** and open spaces might be **underutilized** if the project does not accurately and appropriately meet the needs of the arts and culture community or is deemed inaccessible due to lack of affordable leasing and programming options.
- Participants and respondents sought clarity on how the project will be **integrated into the existing community and aligned with other downtown development** and revitalization projects.
- There is concern that there would not be future consultation opportunities and that input would not be considered.

*Mitigating possibility: It was suggested that **appropriate and meaningful engagement** should be emphasized as the project unfolds. Agencies and people that will be impacted or have a stake in the project should be invited to be a part of the initiative, and effective and meaningful engagement will help address concerns and questions, generate understanding, and ultimately engender support and champions for the project.*

- There is concern about ensuring **enhanced representation with the Galleria Project governance structure** from the arts community, Aboriginal community and the area surrounding the development. The project location holds historical significance within the Aboriginal community and the adjacent neighbourhood is home to a sizable Aboriginal population.

*Mitigating possibility: **Representation from the arts community, Aboriginal community and those inhabiting the surrounding area** was identified as means to help overcome perceived challenges and ensure the project accurately reflects and supports the arts and the Aboriginal community in Edmonton. It was noted that appropriate involvement could serve as a model for other initiatives in the City, provincially, nationally and globally.*

Infrastructure

- There was also concern about a need for further information and clarity about the **design of the project**.

*Mitigation possibility: It was suggested that the design of the facilities and open spaces should be **welcoming, reflect the vision of the initiative and the surrounding community**. Physical accessibility was also identified as an important design factor, suggesting that **openness and access for all physical abilities** should be considered.*

- Participants and respondents shared concerns regarding the **relocation of the University of Alberta School of Art and Design to downtown**. While the idea of having young, energetic people attending school and possibility living in the areas was deemed a possible benefit, there were some concerns expressed about the potential impact on students (e.g. feeling disconnected from the main campus and issues of scheduling classes between two campuses). Participants and respondents also noted that MacEwan University is bringing an arts program to their downtown campus.

*Mitigating possibility: It was suggested that there should be **dialogue** with the **University of Alberta and MacEwan University** to determine possible synergies.*

Recommendations

The consultation results indicate that most **people are generally in favour** of the Galleria Project. Those in support of the project see the benefits while those with concerns are seeking more details on the involvement of stakeholders, confirmation that the benefits will accrue to the community and stakeholders, and affirmation of the financial model, including the City's involvement.

The public engagement initiative helped to inform the public and stakeholders about the proposed Galleria project, generate awareness, test the concept, and identify the level of support. The process also allowed for input on possible challenges and identification of ways to mitigate perceived barriers. Participants and respondents suggested that success and support for the project, and the ability to achieve benefits and overcome perceived challenges would best be realized through a **transparent, inclusive, collaborative, and representative approach** to the project going forward.

Results of the stakeholder discussion sessions and surveys suggest that participants and respondents are seeking **ongoing and transparent communication**, and ongoing consultation and meaningful involvement in the project. The project proponents should consider this during project planning and implementation as a way to foster collaboration and inclusiveness.

If the City chooses to support the project, the City should communicate more information about its funding contribution as it relates to the business model, and recommend the Foundation to communicate more information about the project, the business model and the proposed benefits to stakeholders and the public. This will help maintain and/or increase the current level of support.