# What We Heard Balwin and Belvedere Parks

**Phase 2: Preliminary Design** 

November 2022

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SHARE YOUR VOICE SHAPE OUR CITY

**Edmonton** 



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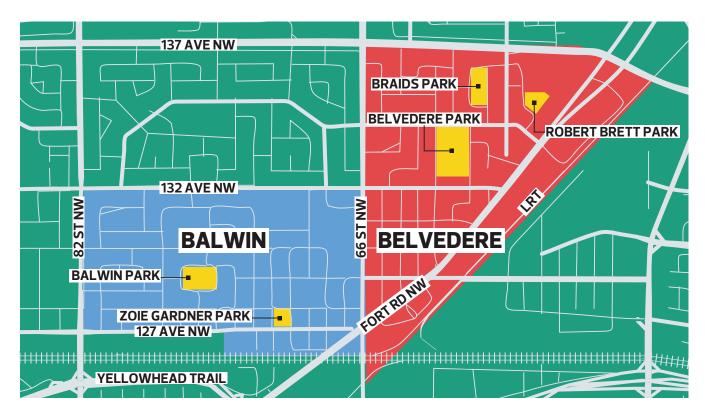
DETAILED DESIGN

# Public Engagement Summary And Results

## **Project Overview**

In June 2018, the Balwin and Belvedere neighbourhoods were approved for the City of Edmonton's Neighbourhood Revitalization Program. The goal of the Neighbourhood Revitalization Program is to improve the livability of Edmonton's mature and established neighbourhoods and mobilize community-led action.

The City has worked with Balwin and Belvedere community members through 2018 and 2019 to gather input and identify key components of the Balwin & Belvedere Revitalization Strategy. In 2020 and 2021, residents and stakeholders contributed to a Community Capital Investment Priorities report which outlined the community's priorities for Revitalization capital investments. Upgrading particular park spaces was identified as a priority in that report and described in a What We Decided report.



In May 2022, the City initiated Concept & Design planning for the Revitalization capital investments. The parks included in the scope of these investments are:

- Balwin Park (12904 74 Street NW)
- Zoie Gardner Park (12710 70 Street NW)
- + Belvedere Park (13223 60 Street NW)
- Braids Park (13415 60 Street NW)
- Robert Brett Park (13413 57 Street NW)



In June and July 2022, community members were engaged to gather input on the revitalization of the parks. Feedback from this engagement is summarized in the <u>What We Heard report</u> and informed the design concepts that were created in August 2022. Community members were then engaged again in September 2022 and given an opportunity to provide feedback on the updated proposed designs.

This report focuses on the September 2022 engagement and what we heard from community members when collecting feedback on the proposed design concepts. In total, the Project Team engaged with 272 participants.

Public engagement was conducted at the "advise" level on the City's public engagement spectrum (shown above), meaning that "the public is consulted by the City to share feedback and perspectives that are considered for policies, programs, projects, or services."

Project information was made available to the public through the City of Edmonton website and Engaged Edmonton (the City's online engagement platform). Public engagement was advertised using social media, lawn signs, road signs, postcards to residents and emails to stakeholders. Residents were engaged through an online public engagement event, in-person pop-up events, and an online survey.

## What We Heard

Engagement discussions focused on determining the level of community support for:

- The proposed upgrades included in the design concepts for each park including:
  - + Pathways, lighting, and furnishings
  - + Playground equipment and plaza areas
  - Multi-use courts
- Removing or relocating trees to build the proposed design if necessary
- Extensive tree pruning or removal to improve visibility and safety in all parks.

The Project Team explained the proposed park designs, asked if community members supported the proposed upgrades, tree removals (if applicable), and extensive pruning. Participants were asked for their ideas and suggestions to improve the park designs and whether they had any other comments on the parks revitalization project as a whole.

#### **FINDINGS**

Through this public engagement we found:

- **1.** Significant support for the proposed improvements in all parks
- 2. Support for tree removal or relocation to build the proposed design if necessary and if done in compliance with the City of Edmonton's policy to replace every removed tree with three new trees
- **3.** Some support for tree pruning to improve visibility and safety.
- \* Please note the charts below show the number of respondents for both online and in-person participants. Not all participants answered all questions, as participants self selected which parks they wanted to provide feedback on.



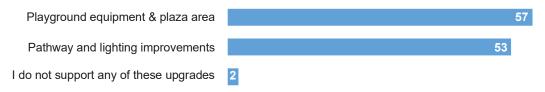
## FINDING #1: SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT FOR PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

The primary finding of the public engagement conducted on the design concepts is that there is significant support for the proposed upgrades at all five parks.

#### **BALWIN PARK**

The proposed upgrades at Balwin Park included pathway lighting improvements, playground equipment and a plaza area. The majority of participants supported all proposed upgrades, with slightly more support for the playground and plaza, than the pathway and lighting improvements.

For Balwin Park, we are planning to upgrade two parts of the park. Which of the following upgrades, if any, do you support?

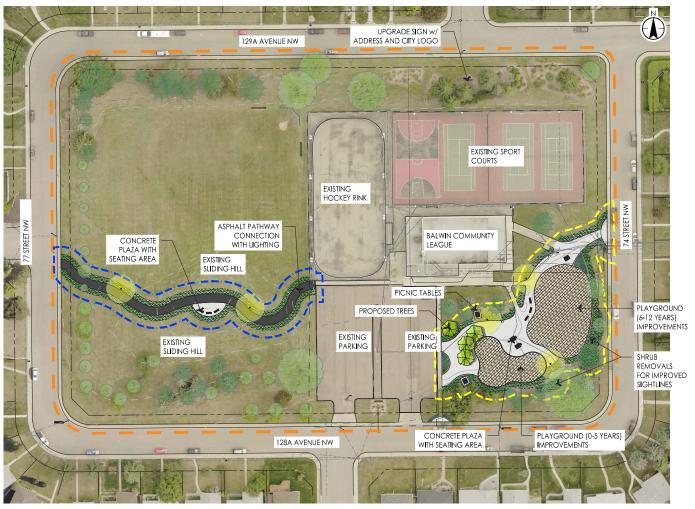


(Participants could select more than one response.)

Two participants did not support upgrades. They did not feel the proposed upgrades reflected the wishes of the community, or that the upgrades were a proper use of public resources.

There were some open-ended comments provided about these proposed upgrades. One comment expressed general support and also suggested public art at the parks. Some comments expressed concern about building pathways over green space. There were a couple specific suggestions including a caged basketball court to prevent balls leaving the court and outdoor exercise equipment. One comment also expressed concern about losing the sledding hill and light pollution. Please note the sledding hill at Balwin Park is proposed to remain.

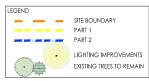
#### **Balwin Park Design Concept**











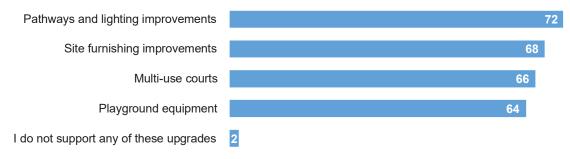
#### **ZOIE GARDNER PARK**

Proposed upgrades at Zoie Gardner Park include:

- Pathways and lighting improvements includes asphalt pathway, lighting, resodding
- + Site furnishing improvements (seating and garbage cans)
- + Playground equipment (playground equipment, playground surfacing, concrete curbing)
- + Multi-use courts (asphalt surface, acrylic coatings, basketball hoops)

All upgrades received strong support, especially pathways and lighting.

## For Zoie Gardner Park, we are planning to upgrade four parts of the park. Which of the following upgrades, if any, do you support?

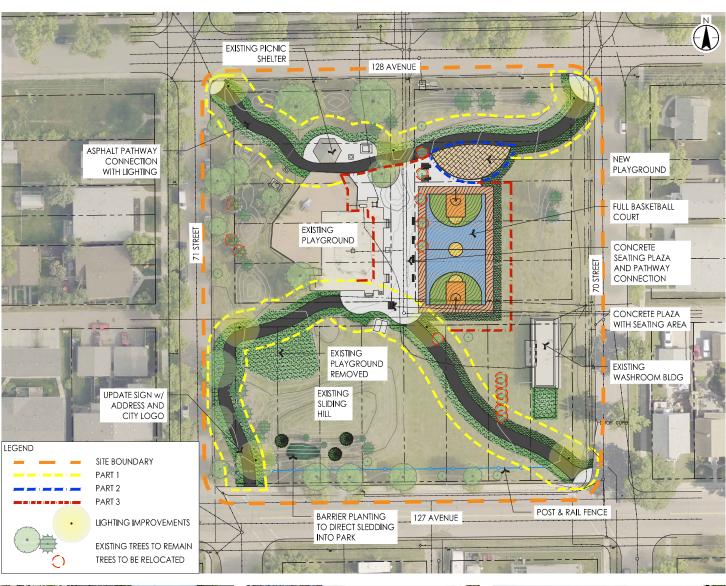


(Participants could select more than one response.)

Two participants did not support upgrades. They did not feel the proposed upgrades reflected the wishes of the community, or that the upgrades were a proper use of public resources.

Additional suggestions about the proposed upgrades were provided by some participants. Many reiterated general support for the proposed upgrades. Suggestions for improvement were focused on providing activities and equipment for older children. These suggestions included expanding the spray park, playground equipment for older children (7-12 year olds), maintaining open space, and building an ice rink. There was also a suggestion for a fenced dog park. One participant recommended moving the multi-use court further away from the spray park to provide space between young children and teenagers. Two responses expressed concern about safety and suggested security cameras and increased police presence.

#### **Zoie Gardner Park Design Concept**





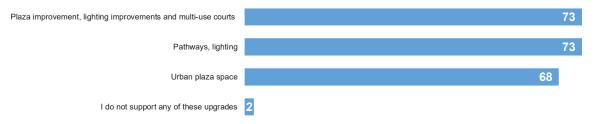




#### **BELVEDERE PARK**

Responses received for Belvedere Park indicated strong support for improvements to the existing plaza space around the playground, multi-use courts, pathways and lighting. There was slightly less, yet still strong, support for the proposed urban plaza space on the southeast corner.

For Belvedere Park, we are planning to upgrade three parts of the park. Which of the following upgrades, if any, do you support?



(Participants could select more than one response.)

Two participants said they do not support any of the upgrades. They did not feel the proposed upgrades reflected the wishes of the community, or that the upgrades were a proper use of public resources.

There were a number of additional suggestions about the proposed upgrades. Many comments expressed general support for the proposed upgrades. Some comments were focused on safety and improving visibility and sightlines by removing more trees, planting shrubs instead of spruce trees, and removing entrances from the alleyway. There were a few comments expressing opposition to the proposed skatepark due to the additional concrete. One comment suggested additional police presence at the park. Other suggestions included adding a spray park, fire pits, and improved wheelchair accessibility.

#### **Belvedere Park Design Concept**





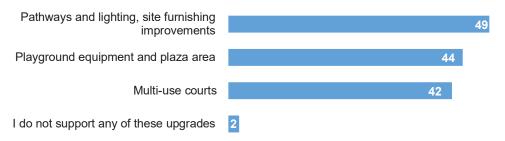




#### **ROBERT BRETT PARK**

Robert Brett Park received fewer overall responses compared to the other parks. However, responses received demonstrated good support for the proposed upgrades. Upgrades for pathways and lighting received the most support, followed closely by playground equipment, plaza area, and multi-use courts.

For Robert Brett Park, we are planning to upgrade three parts of the park. Which of the following upgrades, if any, do you support?



(Participants could select more than one response.)

Two participants said they do not support any of the upgrades. They did not feel the proposed upgrades reflected the wishes of the community, or that the upgrades were a proper use of public resources.

There were a number of additional comments about the proposed upgrades. A few responses again expressed support for the light improvements and tree removal. A dog park was suggested by a few participants. Some participants suggested that the multi-use court be angled to the northeast corner to mitigate the possibility of disturbing the seniors who live at Emmanuel Home, a seniors living facility adjacent to the park. It was also suggested the fence between that facility and the park be raised so people do not jump over the fence and balls do not come into the outdoor space of Emmanuel Home. One participant also suggested removing the willow tree at the 57 Street entrance as branches fall off when there is strong wind. Many participants suggested additional police presence, pickleball, and public bathrooms. There was also a request to not change the existing sledding hill.

Emmanuel Home residents expressed general support for all proposed improvements. While it was previously agreed the multi-use court could be reoriented to mitigate disturbance to residents, they expressed concern the multi-use court was still too close to the facility. There was also support for extensive tree pruning to improve visibility and safety in the park.

#### **Robert Brett Park Design Concept**





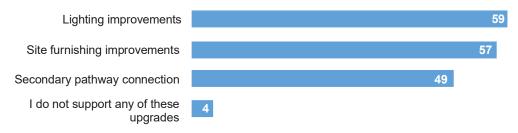




#### **BRAIDS PARK**

Lighting improvements received the most support at Braids Park. Site furnishing improvements such as picnic tables, concrete pad, and resodding, also received strong support. Good support was received for the secondary pathway connection.

For Braids Park, we are planning to upgrade three parts of the park. Which of the following upgrades, if any, do you support?

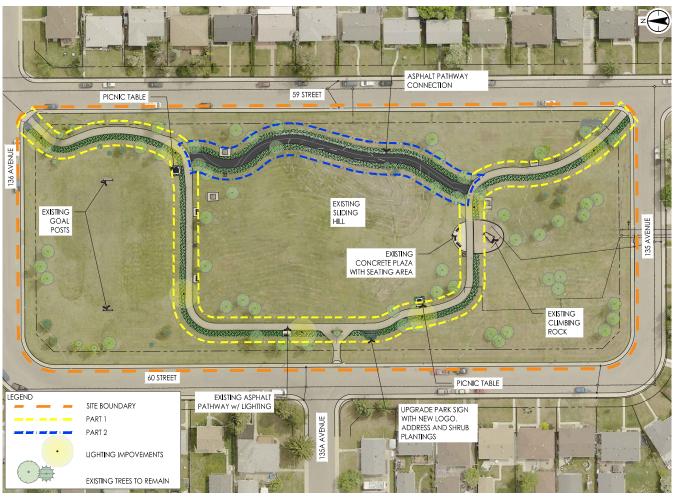


(Participants could select more than one response.)

Four participants said they do not support any of the upgrades. One did not feel the proposed upgrades reflected the wishes of the community, although did not specify why, and another did not feel the upgrades were a proper use of public resources. Two participants expressed frustration over the loss of green space.

There were some additional comments provided which expressed both support and opposition for the upgrades. There were a few comments expressing opposition to the asphalt pathways. There were also requests for bathrooms, garbage cans, picnic tables and additional police presence. Another comment expressed concern about losing the sledding hill (it may not have been made clear to some participants that the sledding hills will remain).

#### **Braids Park Design Concept**









#### FINDING #2: SUPPORT FOR TREE REMOVAL

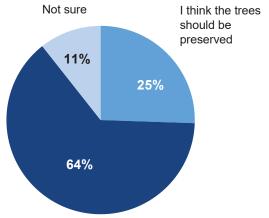
The proposed designs at the Robert Brett Park and Belvedere Park would require removing trees to build the proposed design. The design at Zoie Gardner Park proposes to relocate trees within the park. During engagement activities, the project indicated proposed trees to be removed or relocated, and participants were asked for their thoughts on tree removals and relocations. At in– person activities, the project team shared the City's Tree Policy and explained that for every tree that is removed, three trees need to be replaced.

Responses from both in–person and online participants indicate support for removing indicated trees if necessary in Robert Brett Park and Belvedere Park.

#### **ROBERT BRETT PARK**

For the preliminary design plans for Robert Brett Park, the proposed design is removing one tree near the playground to allow a new pathway in the park.

For the preliminary design plans for Robert Brett Park, the proposed design is removing one tree near the playground to allow a new pathway in the park. The project team acknowledges the City has a policy to protect public trees and not prune higher than six feet. The policy acknowledges trees are one of the City's greatest assets and make our parks and green spaces more enjoyable. As we work to find a solution, we would like to know your opinion on which need is greater for Robert Brett Park:

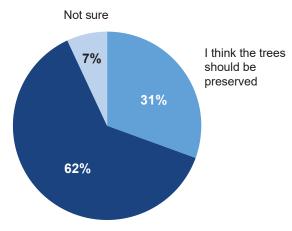


I think the trees should be removed to allow the new pathway in the park

#### **BELVEDERE PARK**

For the preliminary design plans for Belvedere Park, the proposed design is removing five trees on the south side of the park to allow for lighting and pathways.

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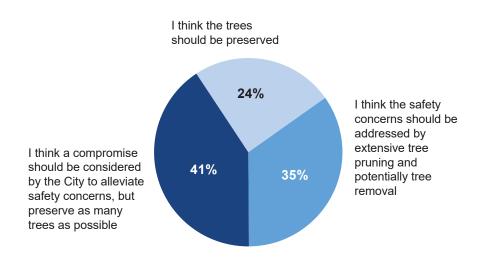
I think the trees should be removed to allow the new pathway and lighting in the park

#### FINDING #3: SUPPORT FOR ADDITIONAL TREE REMOVALS AND PRUNING

During previous engagement sessions conducted in June and July 2022, the Project Team received requests for tree removal and additional tree pruning to improve visibility and public safety. This community request conflicts with the City's Tree Protection Policy. To better understand the scale to which the community would support tree pruning, the project team sought community opinions to advise the park design.

Nearly one quarter of respondents indicated the trees should be preserved. The majority of respondents would like to see a compromise between preservation and addressing safety concerns, followed closely by the opinion that safety concerns are the top priority.

During the previous engagement sessions, we heard people share concerns about trees blocking their sightlines into the playgrounds and parks and about encampments and drug use under large trees. The City has a policy to protect trees and not prune higher than six feet. The policy acknowledges trees are one of the City's greatest assets and make our parks and green spaces more enjoyable. As we work to find a solution, we would like to know your opinion on which need is greater for your neighbourhood parks:



#### **FINAL OPEN QUESTION**

The survey included a question that gave participants an opportunity to provide general commentary about the Balwin and Belvedere Revitalization project.

There were a total of 86 responses. Responses can be summarized into eight general topics:

- Support for upgrades
- + Opposition to upgrades
- Improved public facilities
- Desire for activities
- + Parks are unsafe and underused
- Additional seating
- Bike infrastructure
- Connections to nature and the river valley

Some participants used the question as an opportunity to state support for the upgrades. This included general support for the revitalization or specific support for lighting and tree pruning. Support for lighting and tree pruning was often due to the perception it will improve public safety, although one participant disagreed that it would improve safety. A number of participants said they felt the parks are unsafe, isolated, inaccessible, or underused in general.

A few participants used the question as an opportunity to reiterate their opposition to all of the proposed upgrades. A few of these participants said they felt the upgrades were not a prudent use of public funds, and another said they do not feel public feedback is listened to.

A number of participants expressed a desire to see additional or improved public facilities at the parks. This included public bathrooms, water fountains, garbage cans, concessions, needle disposal, and improved park maintenance. A desire for more amenities at the park was expressed by a number of participants, suggesting improving the ice rinks, pickleball and tennis courts, expanding the green shack program, building a parkour park (Langley, B.C. was provided as an example), and more opportunity for sport in general. Two participants also said that additional bike infrastructure was needed.

There were some participants who suggested additional seating, with a few specifically suggesting covered seating to protect from summer heat. Seating that is not concrete and seating located at the top of the hills at Zoie Gardner Park and Robert Brett Park was also suggested.

More opportunities for nature–based play and additional connections from the parks to the river valley were suggested by some participants. Another participant suggested incorporating Indigenous culture into the parks to provide Indigenous community members an opportunity to connect with their culture.

Other suggestions included: playground surfacing other than sand, playground surfacing other than engineered woodfibre, pathway surfacing other than asphalt, additional opportunities for community-oriented activities, minimizing light pollution, public art, innovative park features (adult swings were the example provided), ensuring preserve of the existing features people enjoy, and re-orienting the multiuse court at Robert Brett to mitigate impact on Emmanuel Home.

## What We Did

The project team considered the feedback received for each park, and will be making adjustments to the final designs including:

#### In Robert Brett Park:

- Additional site furnishings (benches, with middle arm rests, waste receptacles, picnic tables, bike racks)
- Adult fitness equipment around the pathway loop, similar to North Edmonton Senior Association Centre
- Include the sliding hill landing zone on the plans, adjust pathway to accommodate
- Adult activities, jumbo chess set or similar games
- Review the placement of the pathway and plaza areas in relationship to sliding hill areas
- Reducing the proposed full size multi-use court to a half court.

#### In Balwin Park:

- Review the placement of the pathway and plaza areas in relationship to sliding hill areas
- Add a waste receptacle by the seating area on the top of the hill.

#### In Zoie Gardner Park:

- Review location of the multi-use court and increase greater separation between playground, splash pad and multi-use court
- Potential modification to layout of the multi-use court to a half court.
- Review potential use of the fencing around the multi-use court

#### In Belvedere Park:

- Review visibility triangles between outdoor shelter and play area to reduce blind spots.
   This could include additional tree removals and tree pruning.
- Multi-use court focus on basketball, pickleball, ball hockey
- Adult activities, jumbo chess set or similar games
- Review potential seating area within proposed preliminary to reflect busier areas within the park
- Modification four entrances into the park to allow greater access individuals of all abilities
- Review the placement of the pathway in relationship to sliding hill areas

## **Public Engagement Approach**

## **How We Engaged**

The project team explained the concept designs and collected feedback through four engagement methods: pop-up events, stakeholder presentations, a public online meeting, and an online survey. Details of the methods are explained in the table and following section below. Communication strategies were employed to promote the engagement activities and increase public knowledge of the project.



#### Communications included:

- City of Edmonton website: Shared project information, advertised the public engagement events and directed people to the online survey.
- Postcards: 5,600 postcards were printed and delivered to residents surrounding each of the five parks, schools, seniors homes, and other community organizations.
- Signs: Lawn signs advertising the online public engagement events and project website were placed in the parks and along roadways from September 15 to October 11, 2022.
- Emails to Stakeholder Groups: Emails were sent to stakeholder groups in early September to make them aware the project was underway and invite them to participate in upcoming engagement events.
- Social Media: Messages to promote the public events and survey were shared from September 19 to October 10, 2022.

#### **Snapshot of Engagement Activities**

METHOD	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	DATES	LOCATION
	46 participants	September 17, 2022 12:00pm – 2:30pm	Belvedere Community Hall 13223 62 St NW
3 Pop-up Engagement Events	5 participants	September 23, 2022 9:00am – 11:00am	Mosaic Centre 6504 132 Ave NW
	17 participants	September 28, 2022 10:00am – 12:00pm	Mosaic Centre 6504 132 Ave NW
Online Public Meetings	3 participants	September 20, 2022 7:00 – 8:30pm	Online using Zoom
Stakeholder Engagement Events	22 participants	September 29, 2022 9:00am – 10:00am	Online Balwin Belvedere Partnership Meeting (Interagency Meeting)
	100 participants	September 29, 2022 9:30 – 10:30am	Emmanuel Home 13429 – 57 Street NW
Online Survey	79 participants	September 17 – October 10, 2022	edmonton.ca/ balwinbelvedererevitalization

#### POP-UP ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

During pop-up events, facilitators explained the design concepts, asked if the participants supported the proposed upgrades, or if they had suggestions for improving the design. Participants were asked which park(s) they use, and given the option of only providing input on those parks to shortlist the questions. This allowed participants to focus on the parks they wished to provide input on. If applicable to the park(s), participants were also asked what they thought about removing some trees to allow for the proposed upgrades. All participants were asked if they felt additional tree pruning would improve visibility and safety. There was also an open-ended question that allowed participants to share other comments about the project. Responses were documented by engagement staff on feedback sheets.

#### ONLINE PUBLIC MEETING

The Project Team presented the design concepts and how the upgrades were informed by previous public engagement feedback. Facilitated discussion focused on the participants' level of support for the proposed park designs, and thoughts on tree removals and pruning. Feedback was collected interactively and marked up using a Google Jamboard. The meetings closed with the City sharing the next steps for the project.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

As a response to the project team's email outreach to stakeholders, the project team was invited to present at two events. The first event was the Balwin and Belvedere Partnership Meeting (Interagency Meeting), which was attended by representatives of 20 neighbourhood organizations, social services agencies, and schools. The second event saw the project team present to the residents of Emmanuel Home, which is adjacent to Robert Brett Park. The presentation included an overview on each park design, requested open feedback, and invited people to share the project information through their communication channels and participate in our online survey.

#### **ONLINE SURVEY**

Similar to how in-person surveys were structured, the online survey contained images of the concept design for each park along with a legend of the proposed changes. The survey was divided into five different sections to collect feedback specific to each park design. Respondents only provided feedback on the parks they selected 'yes' to being a user or visitor of.

## Who Was Engaged

We engaged residents of the Balwin and Belvedere communities, users of the parks, vulnerable Edmontonians in the area and stakeholders such as the community league, social services agencies, seniors homes, and schools.

We held one online public meeting, which was open to the general public. The meeting was attended by community members and stakeholders such as Community League board members and school staff.

The Engaged Edmonton online survey similarly provided an opportunity for the public and community members with interest in the project to provide input.

The pop-up engagement event at the Belvedere Community League was held in conjunction with other local events, which enabled us to engage a range of people who live in the community, including those who still may not have been aware of the project or do not regularly participate in engagement events. Two pop-up events were held at the Mosaic Centre (The Mustard Seed) to hear the perspectives of vulnerable Edmontonians. This was critical as Balwin and Belvedere have a higher than city-average of marginalized individuals including single parents, low-income residents and a large population who identify as Indigenous.

## What We Asked

We sought the input of residents and park users on the concept design proposed for each park. The project team shared the type of upgrades being considered and the different design concepts, and the participants were asked if they supported the upgrades and, where applicable, were asked if they supported tree removal if necessary to proceed with the proposed design concept. Participants were also asked if they felt extensive tree pruning would improve visibility and safety in the park by reducing camping and drug use in the park. Conversations concluded by providing participants an opportunity to give open-ended, general feedback about the revitalization of the parks in Balwin and Belvedere.

The specific questions asked are provided below.

#### 1. ROBERT BRETT PARK

- 1.1 For Robert Brett Park, we are planning to upgrade three parts of the park. Which of the following upgrades, if any, do you support? (Please select the upgrades you support from the list below)
  - Pathways and lighting, site furnishing improvements (seating and garbage cans) (Yellow Outline)
  - Playground equipment and plaza area (playground, playground surfacing, plaza area, site furnishings) (Red Outline)
  - Multi-use courts (multi-use court, resodding, basketball hoops, plaza area with seating) (Blue Outline)
  - + I do not support any of these upgrades

- 1.2 [If respondents do not select all upgrades or select "I do not support any of the upgrades"] Do you have any suggestions to improve the upgrades that you do not support?
- Park, the preliminary design plans for Robert Brett Park, the proposed design is removing one tree near the playground to allow a new pathway in the park. The project team acknowledges the City has a policy to protect public trees and not prune higher than six feet. The policy acknowledges trees are one of the City's greatest assets and make our parks and green spaces more enjoyable. As we work to find a solution, we would like to know your opinion on which need is greater for Robert Brett Park:
  - + I think trees should be preserved
  - I think the tree should be removed to allow the new pathway in the park
  - Not sure

#### 2. BRAIDS PARK

- 2.1 For Braids Park, we are planning to upgrade three parts of the park. Which of the following upgrades, if any, do you support? (Please select the upgrades you support from the list below)
  - Lighting improvements (pathway lighting, resodding) (Yellow Outline)
  - Secondary pathway connection (asphalt pathway, sodding) (Blue Outline)
  - Site furnishing improvements (picnic tables, concrete pad, resodding) (Labeled on plan)
  - + I do not support any of these upgrades
- **2.2** [If respondents do not select all upgrades or select "I do not support any of the upgrades"] Do you have any suggestions to improve the upgrades that you do not support?

#### 3. BELVEDERE PARK

- **3.1** For Belvedere Park, we are planning to upgrade three parts of the park. Which of the following upgrades, if any, do you support? (Please select the upgrades you support from the list below)
- **3.2** [If respondents do not select all upgrades or select "I do not support any of the upgrades"] Do you have any suggestions to improve the upgrades that you do not support?
- Park, the preliminary design plans for Belvedere Park, the proposed design is removing five trees on the south side of the park to allow for lighting and pathways. The project team acknowledges the City has a policy to protect public trees and not prune higher than six feet. The policy acknowledges trees are one of the City's greatest assets and make our parks and green spaces more enjoyable. As we work to find a solution, we would like to know your opinion on which need is greater for Belvedere Park:

#### **4. BALWIN PARK**

- **4.1** For Balwin Park, we are planning to upgrade two parts of the park. Which of the following upgrades, if any, do you support? (Please select the upgrades you support from the list below)
  - Pathway and lighting improvements (west side) (Blue Outline)
  - Playground equipment & plaza area (playground equipment, playground surfacing, plaza area, site furnishings, plantings) (Yellow Outline)
  - + I do not support any of these upgrades
- **4.2** [If respondents do not select all upgrades or select "I do not support any of the upgrades"] Do you have any suggestions to improve the upgrades that you do not support?

#### **5. ZOIE GARDNER PARK**

- 5.1 For Zoie Gardner Park, we are planning to upgrade four parts of the park. Which of the following upgrades, if any, do you support? (Please select the upgrades you support from the list below)
- Pathways and lighting improvements includes asphalt pathway, lighting, resodding (Yellow Outline)
- Site furnishing improvements (seating and garbage cans) (Red Outline)
- Playground equipment (playground equipment, playground surfacing, concrete curbing) (Blue Outline)
- Multi-use courts (asphalt surface, acrylic coatings, basketball hoops) (Red Outline)
- I do not support any of these upgrades
- **5.2** [If respondents do not select all upgrades or select "I do not support any of the upgrades"] Do you have any suggestions to improve the upgrades that you do not support?

#### TREES AND SIGHTLINES

- 6. During the previous engagement sessions, we heard people share concerns about trees blocking their sightlines into the playgrounds and parks and about encampments and drug use under large trees. The City has a policy to protect trees and not prune higher than six feet. The policy acknowledges trees are one of the City's greatest assets and make our parks and green spaces more enjoyable. As we work to find a solution, we would like to know your opinion on which need is greater for your neighbourhood parks:
  - I think the safety concerns should be addressed by extensive tree pruning and potentially tree removal
  - + I think the trees should be preserved
  - I think a compromise should be considered by the City to alleviate safety concerns, but preserve as many trees as possible
  - Not Sure

#### **FINAL OPEN**

Do you have anything else you would like to share with us about the Balwin / Belvedere Revitalization project? [Open, optional]

# **What Happens Next?**

Feedback will be used to finalize the design plans, which are anticipated for completion between November – December 2022.

The final designs will be put forward to City Council and a budget request will be made for construction. If approved, the Build phase of the project may occur in the 2023 – 2026 budget cycle.



**Belvedere Park Google Jamboard** 



