

What We Heard Report (January to June 2024) Mary Burlie Park Renewal

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Public engagement approach

Project Overview

This report summarizes engagement activities for the Mary Burlie Park project from January to June 2024. [The goal of the events](#) was to meaningfully gather input from community members, park users and community organizations. The intent was to learn, listen and facilitate conversations to develop guiding principles with the community to advance the design and redevelopment of Mary Burlie Park.

Mary Burlie Park was initially identified as part of the Boyle Street and McCauley Neighbourhood Renewal project. The original scope included improved connections to the alleys and rail corridor, improved park sight lines and tree planting. During the 2023-26 City budget deliberations, additional funding was allocated as part of Chinatown Infrastructure Improvements to allow for a more comprehensive renewal of Mary Burlie Park as an independent project. The goal of the renewal, in addition to repairing or replacing the existing infrastructure, is to improve safety and accessibility and increase the use of this open space.

Construction is anticipated to start in 2025 to align with McCauley Neighbourhood Renewal. Mary Burlie Park construction is anticipated to be completed in 2026.

Who is Mary Burlie?

This park honours the legacy of Mary Burlie, a community resident and one of the earliest volunteers at Boyle Street CO-OP (today known as Boyle Street Community Services). She loved and cared for this neighbourhood from the 1970s until she died in 1996. She will always be remembered for her unwavering community service and the way she cared for her neighbours, through a simple question, *"How you doing, baby?"* The re-imagining of Mary Burlie Park will be rooted in this legacy and be inclusive and welcoming to all.



Fig. 1 - Key Findings from Preliminary Engagement

Preliminary engagement

The first phase of engagement took place in the winter of 2024. The project team held three meetings with stakeholders where the project team and Mary Burlie's family introduced the park project and discussed opportunities and constraints for its renewal. A total of 17 community members participated in these meetings. In general, community groups express a collective vision for Mary Burlie Park that focuses on **safety, inclusivity, activation, community and the park's potential to inspire positive change and understanding among various communities**. There is a shared aspiration for the park to be a source of joy and inclusivity.

"Following the preliminary community group discussions, the project team hosted a public engagement event, inviting all community members to share their vision for Mary Burlie Park.

Public engagement event

The first phase of the Mary Burlie engagement process also featured two on-site public engagement sessions, on May 13 and 14. The goal of the on-site public engagement sessions were to provide a safe and welcoming space for all visitors to come and hold conversations about the future of the park. Invitations were extended to targeted community groups identified in previous community meetings and to the broader neighborhood via postcards and posters.

The project team focused on engaging community members who actively use the park but might be overlooked by virtual and/or more formal methods. Given that the park serves as a gathering place for many individuals experiencing houselessness, it was essential for the project team to be on-site and engage directly with current park users to ensure all voices were heard. Before any conversations or data was collected, the project team aimed to set a joyful and welcoming tone for the sessions, inspired by Mary Burlie herself. The temporary activation of Mary Burlie Park includes brightly coloured paint on existing elements as well as the public sidewalk leading to the park. For the sessions, the project team provided stencils with “care phrases,” a bubble machine, a basketball hoop and snacks. This setup fostered an optimistic and caring atmosphere for the engagement sessions.

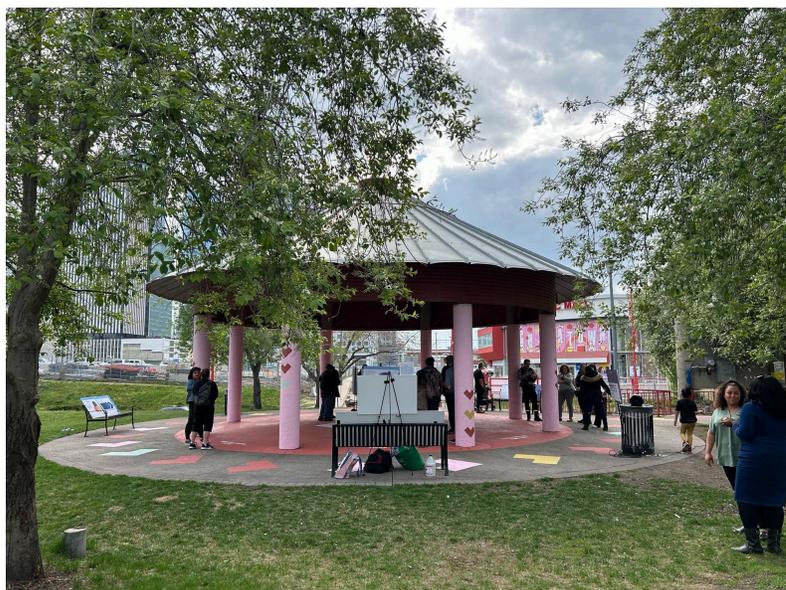


Fig. 2 - Photo of Engagement Event

Public outreach / Event marketing

To reach the broadest spectrum of individuals, the project team used both physical and virtual public outreach methods. Postcards were mailed to all addresses within the Boyle Street and McCauley neighbourhoods and posters were sent to all stakeholders to be distributed within their networks.

Virtually, an advertisement was posted to Boyle McCauley News (bmcnews.org) with the time and date of the on-site engagement.

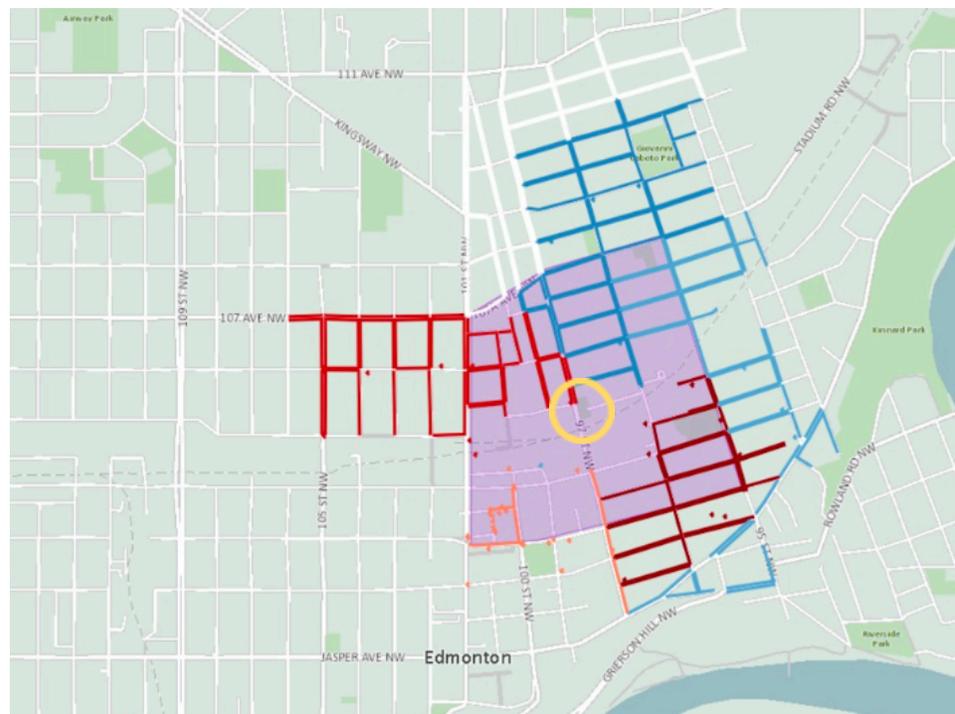


Fig. 3 - Map of distribution network who received physical postcards.

Mary Burlie Park is found in the yellow circle.

Public Engagement Event

Summary

During the two in-person public engagement sessions, attendees received a project overview and had two ways to provide feedback. They could engage in facilitated conversations with the project team or participate in a display board data registration exercise, where they responded to questions using stickers. Throughout both sessions, nearly sixty people participated in the display board exercise. Forty field interviews were recorded and many more unrecorded conversations with participants were held throughout both days. Although an official number count was not completed, the project team estimates that 150 visitors participated in the sessions in one way or another. Through discussions and display board data registrations, the project team has gained a better understanding of the park's current uses, potential opportunities and the community's vision for the park's future.

What we asked

Eight prompting questions were used to encourage discussion during the site engagement events. The framing of the questions aimed to achieve two goals: how is the park currently used and what is the community's vision for the future of Mary Burlie Park? The eight questions were integrated into boards where participants were encouraged to place stickers on the most relevant answer. In some instances, it was more appropriate to record participant responses on individual notepads. The eight questions asked during the event were:

Q1: How do you currently use Mary Burlie Park?

Q2: What currently prevents you from using Mary Burlie Park?

Q3: What time of day do you use Mary Burlie Park?

Q4: Where do you enter Mary Burlie Park?

Q5: What could Mary Burlie Park become?

Q6: How do we ensure Mary Burlie Park is inclusive and welcoming to everyone in the community?

Q7: What future uses do you imagine in Mary Burlie Park?

Q8: Other thoughts (participants were provided a pen and blank display board):

What we heard

Over the two days, many people intentionally visited the park and shared their opinions, while others were simply there to catch up with other community members. The data collected has been digitized and translated into diagrams for the sake of legibility. The hundreds of conversations that took place throughout the two sessions are captured in the summary of each question, however, due to the nature of the data, not all the responses are reflected in the display board registrations. Every effort has been made to summarize key findings from the raw data. Therefore, the results do not show a total of 150 respondents and reflect the data points that were collected through the boards and surveys.

Q5: What could Mary Burle Park become?

the seating area - more of those.
kiosk - x 2

Q6: How do we ensure Mary Burle Park is inclusive and welcoming to everyone in the community?

used to be more encampments, kicking people out but how to balance that is hard?
- x 2

Q7: What future uses do you imagine in Mary Burle Park?

playground, fountain even (may not too much)
something for kids, could be kid friendly street, dog park
↳ is not a kid-friendly street

Q8: Other Thoughts:

usu. burning things in the winter - makes it detouring +
unappealing for people to go in.
when bike-circular stuff, don't come in ie. drinking.
↳ if shoe monitoring would be diff. not peace officers
because that's not welcoming either.

Fig. 4 - Example of field notes collected from Site Engagement.

Q1: How do you currently use Mary Burlie Park?

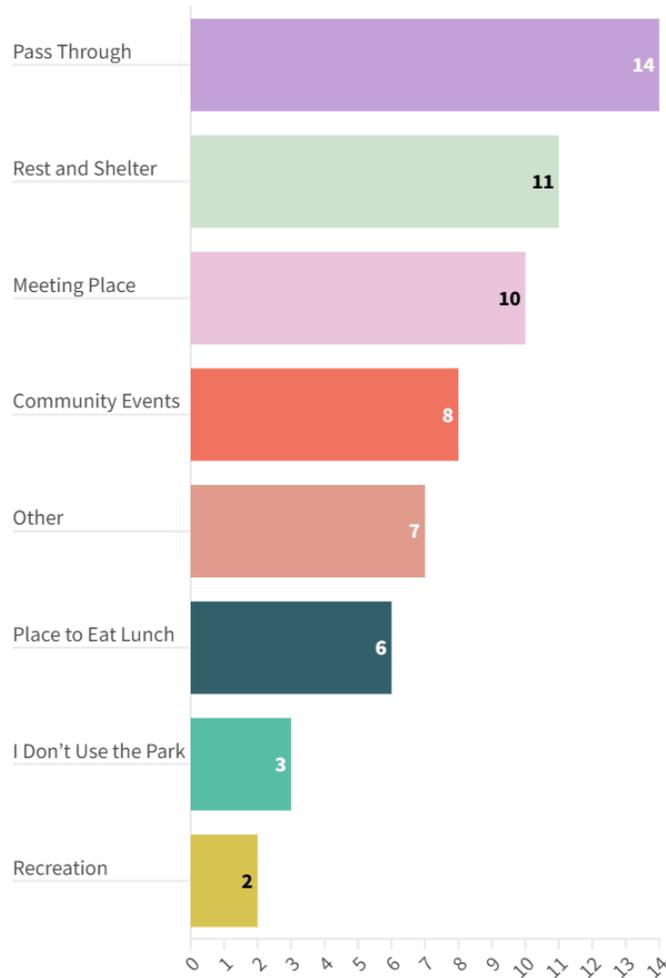


Fig. 5 - Display Board registration

Summary: In this question the project team received a total of 61 responses. Recorded conversations with participants and data from the sticker exercise show many people pass through the park, stop in for a quick visit or rest and move on. This is consistent with what the project team observed while on-site.

Under trees, on the sloped grass and at the canopy shelter are the primary locations where people stop and rest. Shelter and comfort are important

components of the park. Many people on 97 Street walk past the park and do not enter.

Q2: What currently prevents you from using Mary Burlie Park?

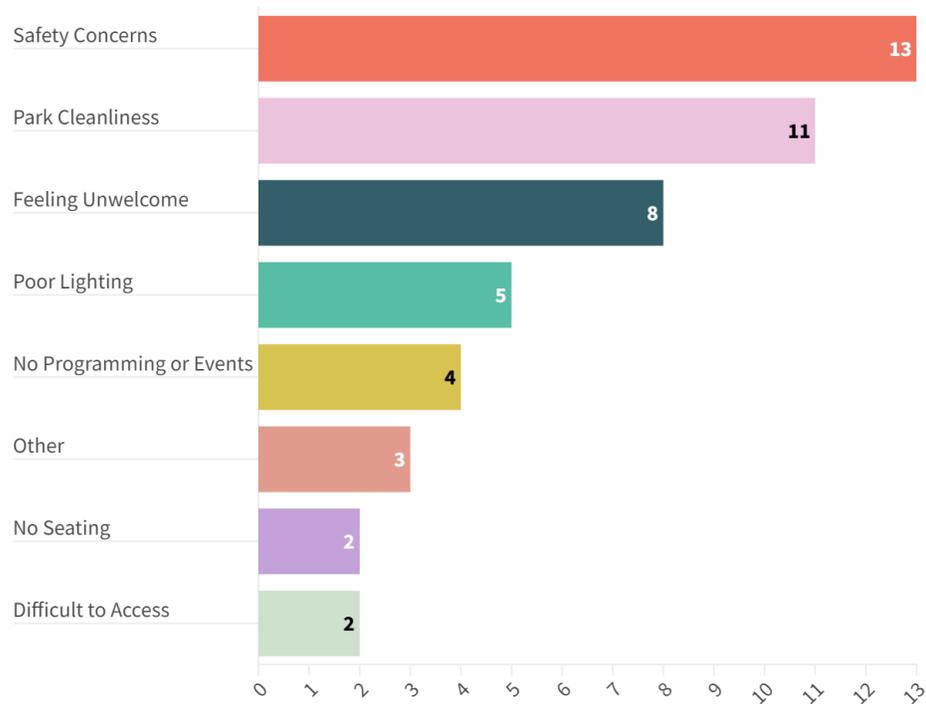


Fig. 6 - Display Board registration

Summary: Based on the 48 responses received, the data revealed that many people do not use the park because of perceived levels of safety. The perception of the park is that it is used primarily by people experiencing houselessness and other residents do not feel comfortable sharing the park space. There is a challenge with littering, dirt, vandalism and debris from drug use in and around the site.

Additionally, the site has many physical and accessible barriers. This was also observed by the project team during the sessions. The steep embankment to 97 Street on the east boundary is not inviting and the current ramp does not meet accessibility guidelines and could be perceived as unsafe and uninviting. There is a desire to cross 97 Street at the 105 Street Intersection. Right now,

vehicular traffic rises from the bridge underpass so visibility is low and pedestrian crossing is dangerous.

Q3: What time of day do you use Mary Burlie Park?

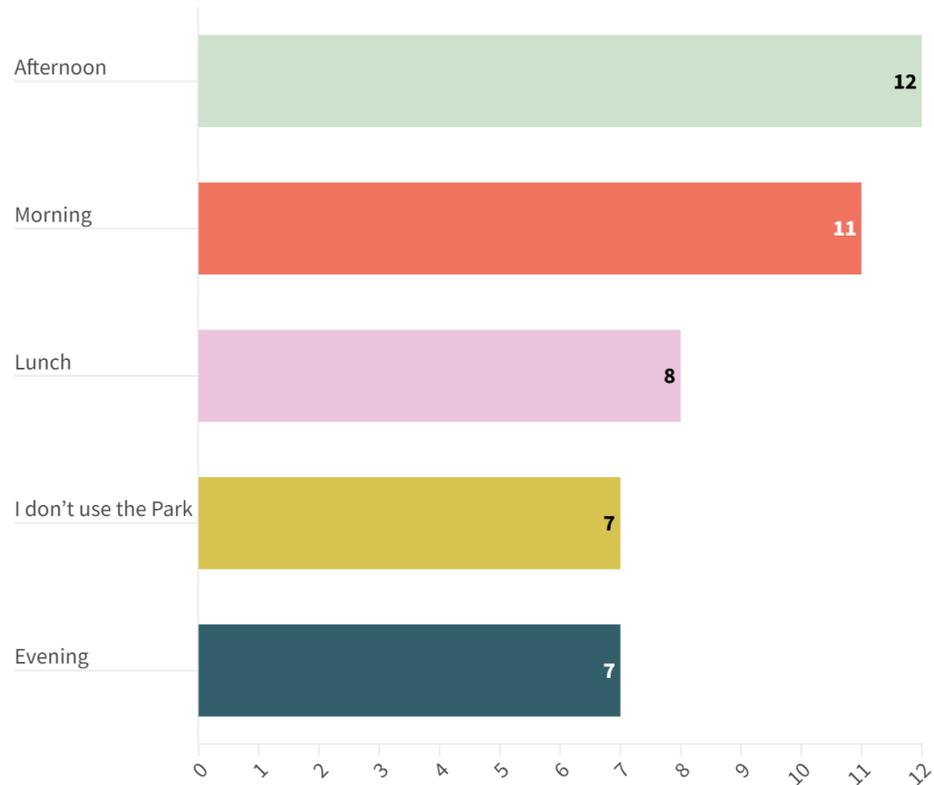


Fig. 7 - Display Board registration

Summary: Based on the 45 number of responses, there does not appear to be a more popular time to use the park. Important to note that the park is frequently used in the evening/overnight and engagement during that time was not undertaken.

Q4: How do you enter Mary Burlie Park?

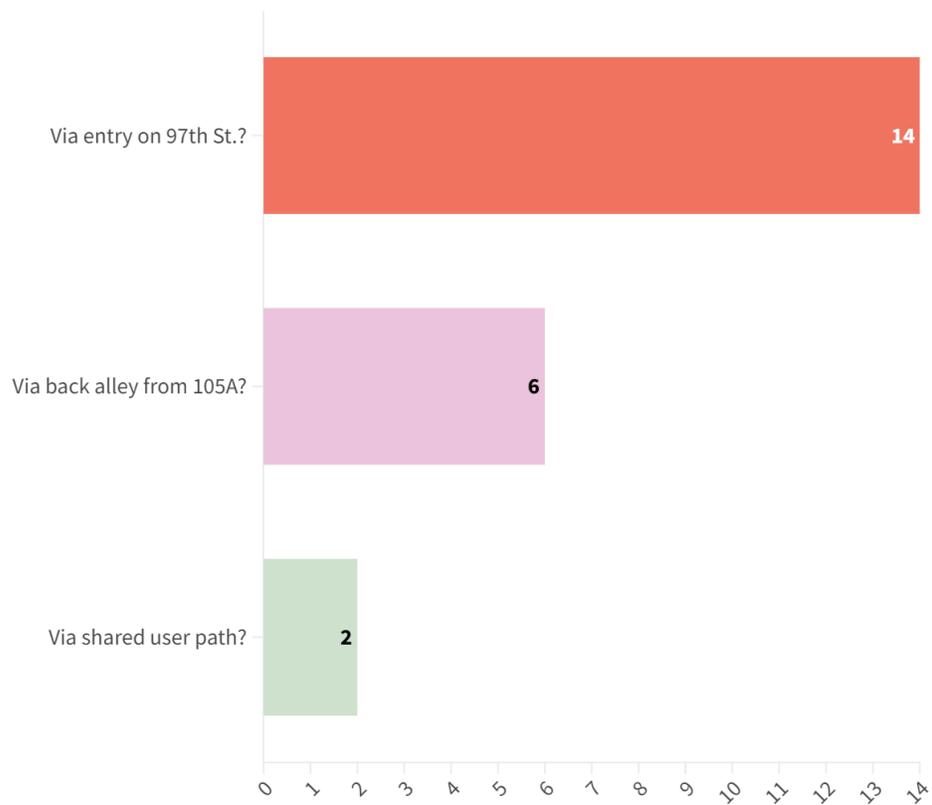


Fig. 8 - Display Board registration

Summary: Based on the 22 number of responses, as well as site observations, people enter the park from 97 Street (not necessarily on the ramp – some enter directly across from 105 Street and up the hill through the shrub bed), and from the back alley. The Remand Centre demolition being undertaken by the Province of Alberta is in the early stages and has resulted in a fenced-off southern portion of the park so the data is skewed against this entry.

Q5: What could Mary Burlie Park become?

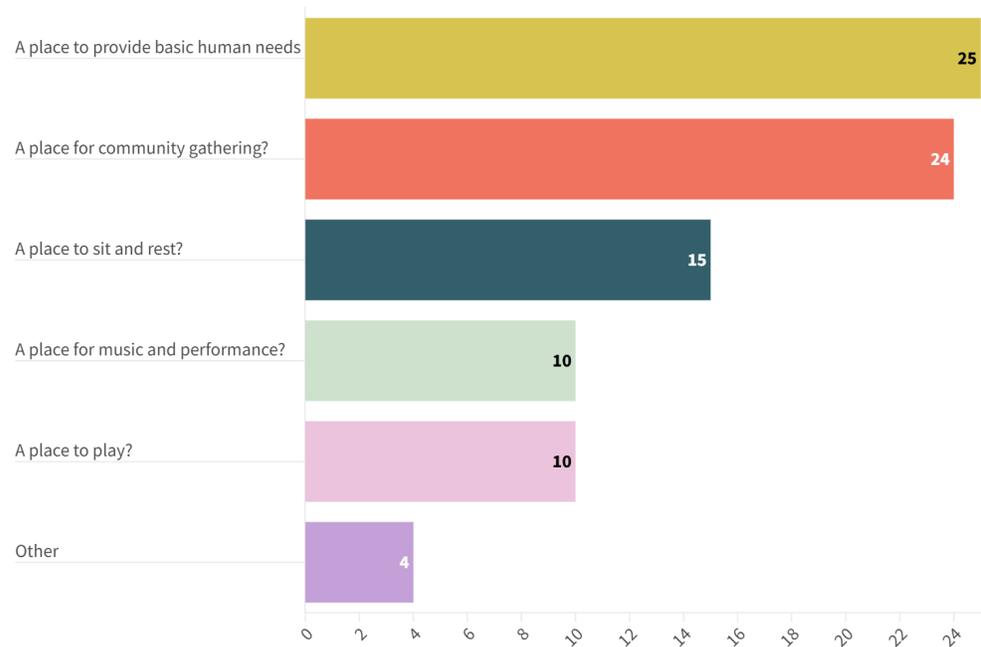


Fig. 9 -Display Board registration

Summary: Overall, feedback from the 88 number of responses indicated that the park should serve as a gathering place for the community while also providing a safe environment that supports basic human needs, such as amenities for people experiencing homelessness. Priorities include shade, shelter, water, and seating.

Q6: How do we ensure Mary Burlie Park is inclusive and welcoming to everyone in the community?

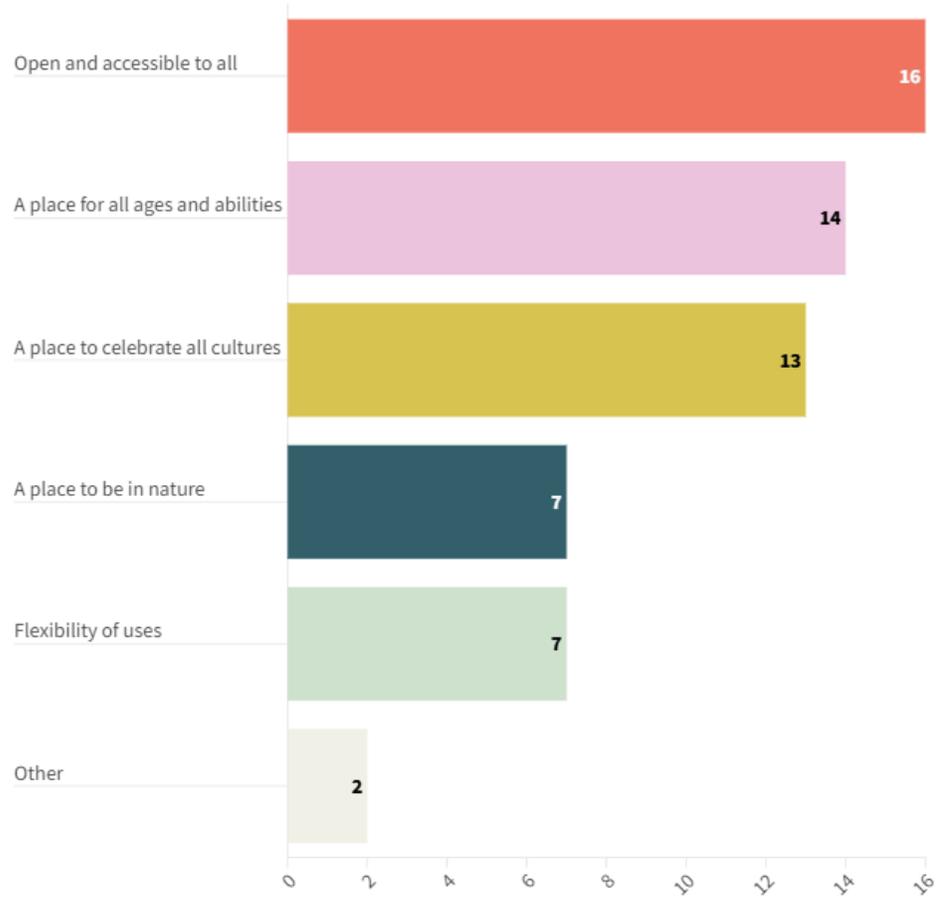


Fig. 10 - Display Board registration

Summary: With the 65 number of responses we heard the Mary Burlie Park redesign needs to create a space where all people feel welcome and invited. This means different things to different people. For some it is increasing

security and lighting, for others, it is deterring negative drug activities and for others, it means providing for basic human needs like washrooms and water.

Feedback emphasized that Mary Burlie Park should celebrate all cultures, be accessible to people of all ages and abilities, and be inclusive. This aligns fundamentally with Mary Burlie's values and our overall project approach.

Q7: What future uses do you imagine in Mary Burlie Park?

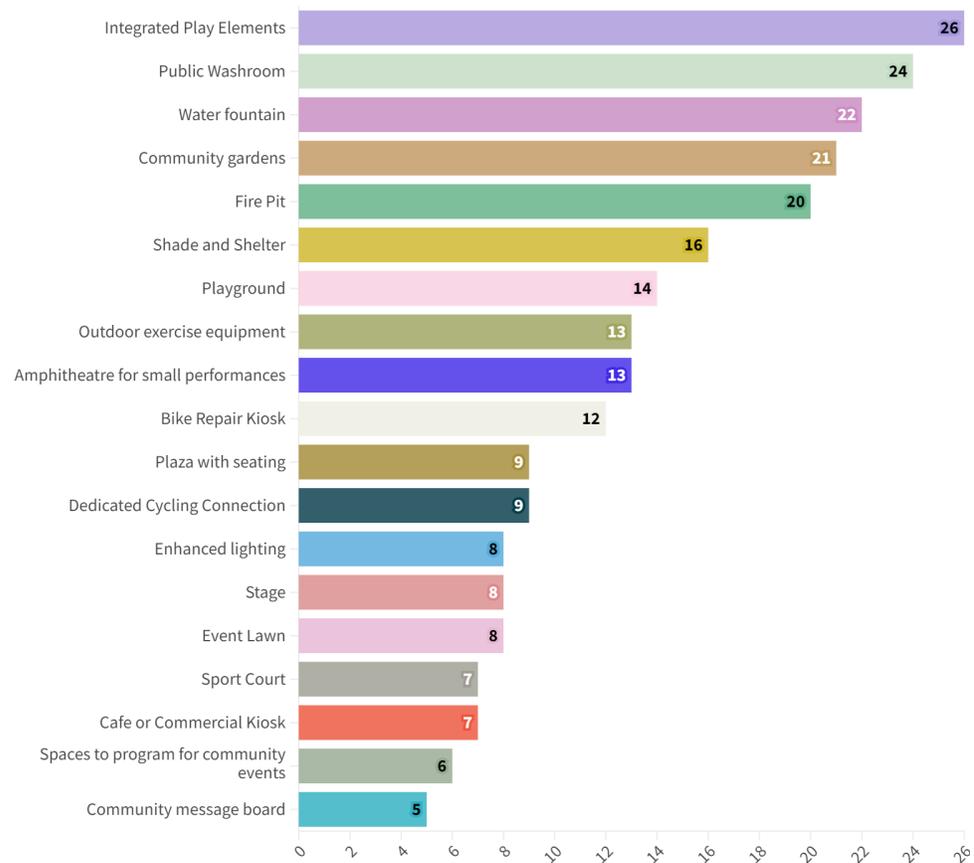


Fig. 11 - Display Board registration

Summary: From the 248 comments recorded, the primary desired amenities for the park are access to water, public washrooms, seating and shelter, integrated play elements, community gardens and a fire pit. Generally, a balance between providing basic services (washroom, water, shelter, fire pits, phone charging, and seating) with offering more elements to activate the site

(play, community gardens, bike repair facilities, exercise equipment or sports courts) will need to be determined by the project team.

The data from surveys, boards and informal conversations indicates that the desire for a performance space or larger community gathering area did not align with the preferences of participants. This observation may be attributed to the composition of event attendees, as initial interest in performance and larger community spaces primarily stemmed from Chinatown stakeholders during our earlier events.

Q8: Your Vision for Mary Burlie Park?

Written responses included:

"Increased Indigenous representation and community safety."

"Safety and security."

"More signs."

"We need a welcoming space for all our brothers and sisters regardless of race, creed or religion. Safety and security for all."

"Feeling safe"

"Activate the site, more community engagement events. Bring together people from the community and support agencies: BBQs, movie night, New Year, Chinese New Years."

"More lighting"

"Activities like bingo."

"A place to sleep."

"More seating."

"A safe place for families to enjoy."

"Leave as is. Shelter good for shade"

"A place for people to relax and enjoy."

"A place for people to come and share their stories and say hello to one another."

"A safe place for all of the people in Chinatown to share."

What happens next?

Mary Burlie Day

July 13 is Mary Burlie Day in Edmonton! In previous years the park was host to a community gathering and celebration of Mary Burlie's life and positive impact on the neighborhood. In addition, this year, Mary Burlie Day will also include the third phase of Mary Burlie Park Public Engagement where the project team will share preliminary concept options of the park, the work to date and gather additional input from the community.

Following Mary Burlie Day, public engagement will be concluded and a final What We Heard report will be released in the fall of 2024.

For more information on this project, please visit the [City's website](#).



Fig. 13 - Engagement between site activation and community members