

# North Strathcona County **Regional Park Master Plan**

Phase I What We Heard Report

DRAFT - April 2022

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Project Overview</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Engagement Approach</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>What We Heard</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>34</b>

# Executive Summary

## Project Background

Strathcona County is embarking on a process to develop a Master Plan for a new 290-acre Regional Park on the North Saskatchewan River. The Master Plan process is made up of six phases, including two phases of public and stakeholder engagement.

Beginning in the summer of 2021, the County hired a consulting team to lead the development of the Master Plan. Site analysis work, a policy review, and a public engagement strategy were completed in late 2021. The first phase of public and stakeholder engagement took place from February 14-28, 2022, where we asked for feedback on the following:

- + Ideas on what the new Regional Park could become for the community
- + Opportunities and challenges for the site, and
- + Potential park uses.

Feedback from this round of engagement will be used to develop a shared park vision, guiding principles, and draft park concepts. The second round of engagement is anticipated to take place in the Summer of 2022.

Prior to beginning the Master Plan process, the County engaged with First Nations and Organizations through a series of virtual workshops (December 2020) and a site visit to the park (July 2021). The goal of the County is to enhance relationship building while ensuring that the input from the Indigenous Communities and Organizations are respected and valued. Findings from both engagement sessions have been incorporated into the themes and topics presented in the public engagement material.

The following themes were used to help identify opportunities and challenges in the park for the first phase of engagement and will be used to present future park concepts.

- + Nature: Ecology and nature experiences
- + Park Uses: Activities and recreation
- + Movement: Getting to and around the park
- + Learning: History, education, and storytelling
- + Creativity: Arts and culture
- + Community: Social connections and wellbeing

## Engagement Approach

The following engagement activities took place to support the Master Plan process:

The County engaged with First Nations and Organizations in December 2020 (virtual workshops) and July 2021 (site visit). They were asked to provide:

- + Suggestions for specific features and ways to make the site more welcoming to Indigenous people
- + Ways in which the park could celebrate Indigenous Peoples
- + Stories that could be shared with park users, as well as potential amenities, priorities for recreational upgrades, and general suggestions for the park design

The County hosted a project website and online survey for public feedback from February 14-28, 2022. Under each of the six project themes, participants were asked:

- + How they want to experience the park
- + What they want to do in the park
- + What amenities and programs they would enjoy using in the park
- + Their overall vision for the park

The County hosted two virtual stakeholder workshops on February 23 and 24. Participants were asked:

- + To identify and discuss opportunities and challenges under each of the six project themes
- + To contribute words and phrases for the park vision statement

## What We Heard: Summary of Key Findings

Key themes emerged from all engagement activities. Specifically, two areas of focus for the park were identified through an analysis of all public and stakeholder feedback:

Nature, Wildlife + Sustainability

Recreation + Accessibility

Many responses and discussions prioritized the conservation and enhancement of nature in the park, balanced with the desire to have recreational and cultural amenities on site. The highest ranked experiences and amenities (selected by over 80% of participants) included: walking trails/walking, observing nature, hiking/trail running (natural trails), and picnicking. Amenities to support community-building, creativity, and learning in the park were supported by some, but comments suggest that minimal and low-impact infrastructure is preferred.

Most participants indicated that they will be driving to the park because of its relatively remote location. A high percentage also said they would bike to the park, with just under half saying that they would walk to the site. This indicates that appropriate parking and biking infrastructure needs to be incorporated into the park concepts.

Future park concepts will need to balance nature and recreation, increasing accessibility into the park while creating opportunities for visitors to experience and protect the natural state of the park through the provision of site-sensitive recreational amenities and infrastructure.

## Next Steps

The input received during this first phase of engagement will be used to develop a shared park vision, guiding principles, and draft park concepts. Comments and suggestions will be taken into consideration, along with direction from policy and site analysis, during concept development. In the next round of engagement (Summer 2022), you will be asked to provide feedback on which elements of the designs you prefer. Your feedback will be used to craft the final park concept for the Master Plan.

For all project updates and background information, visit [strathcona.ca/newregionalpark](http://strathcona.ca/newregionalpark).





# Project Overview



# Project Background

## Introduction

Strathcona County is embarking on a process to develop a Master Plan for a new 290-acre Regional Park on the North Saskatchewan River.

### What is a Master Plan?

The Master Plan will give the County direction on the type of development and activity that is desired for the park for the next 15 years. The Master Plan will respond to community needs by engaging with the public and stakeholders throughout its development. Direction for the Master Plan will also come from municipal, provincial, and federal policy and an understanding of what may be appropriate for the park based on site analysis.

### What is a Regional Park?

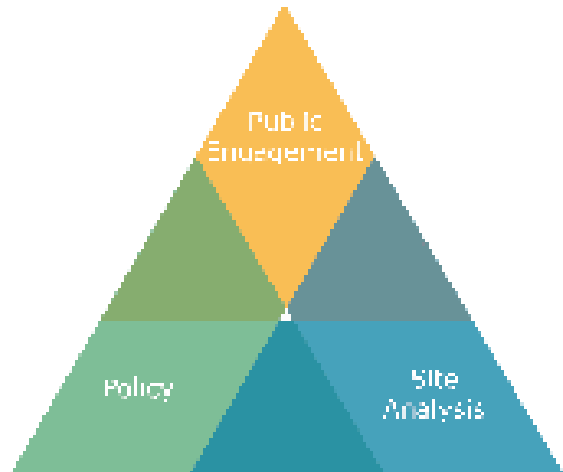
A Regional Park is part of a larger integrated and connected network of open spaces, serving a range of ecological and recreational purposes. These parks become outdoor destinations for people near and far.

Regional Parks can meet many different needs within the community with a variety of amenities in both indoor and outdoor spaces. They also have the potential to meet very specific needs (such as specialized sports facilities or targeted community gathering spaces) that draw people from a larger catchment area.

Strathcona County's new Regional Park will benefit the community through:

- + Nature: Ecology and nature experiences
- + Park Uses: Activities and recreation
- + Movement: Getting to and around the park
- + Learning: History, education, and storytelling
- + Creativity: Arts and culture
- + Community: Social connections and wellbeing

These themes will be used throughout the project to identify opportunities and challenges in the park and to present future park concepts.



## Project Process

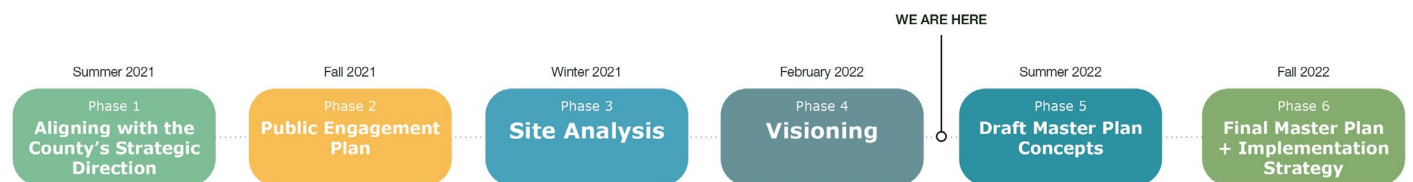
Public and stakeholder feedback is essential to ensure that the Master Plan reflects current and future community needs.

During Phase 1 of engagement (February 14-28, 2022), you were asked for ideas on what the new Regional Park could become for the community and how you would like to use it. Feedback from this round will be used to develop a shared park vision, guiding principles, and draft park concepts.

In the second round of engagement (Spring/Summer 2022), you will be presented with two or more park plans, each with its own amenities and activities that reflect the shared vision. You will be asked to provide feedback on which elements of the designs you prefer. Your feedback will be used to craft the final park concept for the Master Plan.

After a thorough internal review by the County's Technical and Steering Committees, the final Master Plan will be presented to the public and Council in the Fall of 2022. From there, Master Plan recommendations and capital projects will be carried forward into future budgets for implementation as they align with County priorities.

For all project updates and background information, visit [strathcona.ca/newregionalpark](http://strathcona.ca/newregionalpark).





# Engagement Approach





# Introduction

## Indigenous Nations + Communities

The County is committed to engaging with Indigenous Communities and Organizations when a project intersects with Indigenous interests.

### Territorial Land Acknowledgment

Strathcona County is located on Treaty Six Territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region Two and Four.

Strathcona County honours the First Peoples of this land. We recognize that we stand upon land that carries the footsteps of Cree, Métis, and Blackfoot amongst many other Nations, who have been here for thousands of years.

Therefore, Strathcona County has an inherent responsibility to foster healthier relationships with First Peoples and further the Calls to Action.

### How We Engaged

The County acknowledges that the Strathcona County Regional Park may be of interest and believes in the importance of building positive relationships. The goal of the County is to enhance relationship building while ensuring that the input from the Indigenous Communities and Organizations are respected and valued throughout the Master Plan process.

The County engaged with First Nations on two separate occasions before initiating the Master Plan process. The County hosted a virtual workshop in December 2020 and a site visit in July 2021. The results of these engagements were recorded in What We Heard Reports prepared by a third-party consultant for consideration in the development of the Master Plan.

## What We Asked

During the virtual workshop, the County asked participants general questions about their thoughts on the site and suggestions for specific features and ways to make the site more welcoming to Indigenous people. Participants were also asked how the park could honour and celebrate Indigenous Peoples, and were given the opportunity to ask questions about the site.

During the site visit, participants were asked about opportunities in specific locations within the park site and the potential cultural significance of different areas. Participants were also asked about ways that the park can be made more welcoming or accessible to Indigenous people. They were invited to share thoughts on stories that could be shared with park users, potential amenities, priorities for recreational upgrades, and general suggestions for the design of the new Regional Park.

## What We Heard

Although the specific results of the engagements will not be made publicly available due to the confidential nature of the meetings, the findings from both engagement sessions have been incorporated into the themes and topics presented in the public engagement material. Key themes that arose through the engagement included:

- + A focus on accessibility
- + Specific design suggestions
- + Preservation of natural areas and habitats
- + Suggestions for recreation and programming
- + The importance of Indigenous Awareness, Representation, and Protocol in the preparation and implementation of the Master Plan
- + Suggestions about some Indigenous knowledge and history which could be incorporated into the park

## General Public

### How We Engaged

Project information was provided to the public through an informational website platform and a downloadable backgrounder document with additional information about the site. A public survey was integrated into the website and was open for feedback from February 14-28, 2022. During the engagement period, there were 2,062 visits to the website. Local responses (based on IP address) were included in the analysis. The public was made aware of the engagement through several communication methods, including:

- + Social media posts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
- + Posters along the regional trail and in the community
- + Two billboard signs in Sherwood Park
- + Community newsletters
- + A newspaper ad
- + Digital signage in County facilities
- + A project website ([www.strathcona.ca/newregionalpark](http://www.strathcona.ca/newregionalpark))

### What We Asked

The intent of this first round of engagement was to develop a vision for the new Regional Park and to understand what the public would like to do in the park. Six themes were developed to break down the project information and to get specific feedback on various aspects of the park Master Plan. The six themes are: Nature, Park Uses, Movement, Learning, Creativity, and Community. Below are the questions that were asked in the online survey by theme:

### Nature

- + How would you want to experience nature in the park?

### Park Uses

- + What would you like to do in the park?
- + Are there any other activities you would like to do in the park?

### Movement

- + How would you want to get to the park?
- + How would you want to get around the park?

### Learning

- + What stories could be told about the site?
- + Do you have a specific educational program or event you are interested in seeing in the park?
- + What kind of educational opportunities should people learn from in the park?

### Creativity

- + How would you like to see people being creative in the park?
- + Do you have a specific arts program or event you are interested seeing in the park?

### Community

- + How can the park foster connections between people and the land?
- + Do you have a specific community program or event you are interested seeing in the park?

### Park Vision

- + What other great parks and public spaces from around the world can we learn from? Why?
- + What three words would you use to describe your vision for this park?

## Stakeholders

### How We Engaged

Representatives from various community groups, organizations, and committees were given the opportunity to sign up for stakeholder workshops through an email newsletter accessed through the project website ([strathcona.ca/newregionalpark](http://strathcona.ca/newregionalpark)). All stakeholders were invited to contribute to the public online survey and/or complete a detailed discussion guide to provide additional detailed comments.

Two virtual workshops were hosted on February 23rd and February 24th, 2022 through Zoom. At each workshop, the County and project consultant team gave a brief presentation outlining key project information and introduced the purpose of the workshop. Participants were then invited to join an interactive discussion using an online tool called Mural, which allows participants to write comments on a shared digital screen that can be viewed by all. Comments from the discussion guide received were added to the comments from both stakeholder workshops for analysis.

### Stakeholder representatives – February 23, 2022 6-8pm

- + Edmonton Radio Control Society (ERCS) (x3)
- + Sherwood Park Minor Softball
- + Senior Advisory Committee
- + Sherwood Park & District Chamber of Commerce

### Stakeholder representatives – February 24, 2022 2-4pm

- + Beaver Hills Biosphere
- + Arts and Cultural Society of Strathcona County
- + River Valley Alliance
- + Strathcona County Cycling Action Group (x2)
- + Senior Advisory Committee
- + Sherwood Park Minor Softball Association
- + Accessibility Council Committee
- + Economic Development and Tourism Committee

### Discussion Guides returned to the County

- + Sherwood Park Disk Golf Association

### What We Asked

During the stakeholder workshops, participants were invited to identify and write down opportunities and challenges under each of the six themes: Nature, Park Uses, Movement, Learning, Creativity, and Community. Using a round-table discussion format, each participant was asked to expand on one specific opportunity and one challenge, and others were given the opportunity to respond and provide feedback. Stakeholders were also asked to contribute words and phrases for the park vision statement. The group worked together to identify which words and phrases were the highest priority for the park through an open discussion.



A scenic photograph of a body of water, likely a lake or a wide river. In the background, a steep, forested hill rises from the water's edge. The hill is covered in dense green trees and shrubs. The water in the foreground is a deep blue-green color with gentle ripples. In the immediate foreground, there are tall, green grasses and some brown, dried vegetation. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The text "What We Heard" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font on the left side of the image.

# What We Heard



## Summary of Key Findings

Key themes emerged from all engagement activities. Specifically, two areas of focus for the park were identified through an analysis of all public and stakeholder feedback:

Nature, Wildlife + Sustainability

Recreation + Accessibility

Many responses and discussions prioritized the conservation and enhancement of nature in the park, balanced with the desire to have recreational and cultural amenities on site. The highest ranked experiences and amenities (selected by over 80% of participants) included: walking trails/walking, observing nature, hiking/trail running (natural trails), and picnicking. Amenities to support community-building, creativity, and learning in the park were supported by some, but comments suggest that minimal and low-impact infrastructure is preferred.

Most participants indicated that they will be driving to the park because of its relatively remote location. A high percentage also said they would bike to the park, with just under half saying that they would walk to the site. This indicates that appropriate parking and biking infrastructure needs to be incorporated into the park concepts.

Future park concepts will need to balance nature and recreation, increasing accessibility into the park while creating opportunities for visitors to experience and protect the natural state of the park through the provision of site-sensitive recreational amenities and infrastructure. Comments and suggestions will be taken into consideration, along with direction from policy and site analysis, during concept development.

# Findings from Public Engagement

## Nature

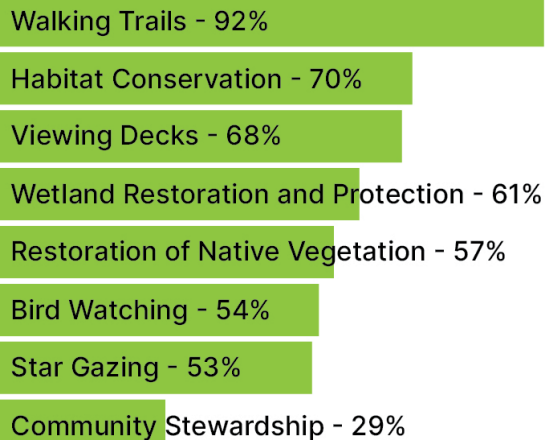
A Regional Park can be a place to connect with nature and foster the ecological health of the region. We connect to nature when we can observe, appreciate, and find meaning in the wonders of the river valley and the plants and animals that call this place home. The Master Plan has an opportunity to conserve, restore, and connect natural areas in the park including forests, shrublands, and wetlands.

We asked the question:

*How would you like to experience nature in the park?*

### Select all that apply

Respondents were asked to answer this question in a select all that apply format. The results highlighted below indicate that a balance between low infrastructure, passive recreation activities and protecting the natural state of the park is most important to respondents.



## Other responses

The same question was asked in an open response format allowing respondents to answer in their own words. Overall, the sentiment heard was that respondents wanted to experience nature through recreational activities but in a way that is respectful to the wildlife, waterways and vegetation in the park.

The four themes that emerged were:

### Experiencing nature through recreation

- + Activities like walking and biking
- + Expressed trails and pathways would be the best way to experience nature in the park
- + Disc golf, off leash dog parks, fishing, horseback riding, skiing and water activities like paddleboarding and kayaking

### Prioritizing wildlife and the natural feel of the park

- + Wildlife was mentioned with a few recreation responses and wanted wildlife to be a priority when offering programming in the park

### Gather and connect with community

- + Inclusive activities for a range of age demographics
- + Gathering spaces
- + Accessible and universal design

### Nature based educational programming

- + Interpretive signage
- + Nature based educational programs with topics exploring Indigenous land use, geology and river histories



*“4 season use, skiing trails, on leash, If the ponds are not connected to other natural water bodies they could be stocked with fish?”*

*“single track mountain bike trails”*

*“Cycling, canoeing/boating and cross country skiing, only if they did not disturb the wildlife and vegetation”*

*“Showcase of Indigenous and settler history, history of land use, geology of the river and river valley”*

*“Numerous benches and picnic tables”*

*“Programming geared towards children”*

*“Bee / Butterfly Habitat, Bat Boxes, Bird Houses”*



## Movement

A Regional Park is a place to get active and explore the outdoors through an accessible and connected trail and pathway system. The communities of Sherwood Park, Fort Saskatchewan, and North Edmonton will be able to access the new Regional Park using the County's Regional Trail system along the river. Different types of trails and pathways will offer a variety of experiences for visitors while remaining sensitive to environmental conditions throughout the park.

We asked the question:

## *How would you want to get to the park?*

### Select all that apply

Respondents were asked to answer this question in a select all that apply format. The results below show that the majority of respondents want to either drive or cycle to get to the park.

Driving - 86%

Biking - 72%

Walking - 41%

Bus/Shuttle - 18%

## Other responses

The same question was asked in an open response format allowing respondents to answer in their own words. Overall, it was expressed that respondents wanted to see multi-use trails appropriate for a variety of modes to get to the park.

The four themes that emerged were:

### Multi-use trails

- + Walking and running
- + Cycling, longboarding and rollerblading
- + Although horseback riding is not currently a supported trail use in the County, a few participants identified this activity as a potential use

### River transportation

- + Paddle boarding
- + Canoeing
- + Kayaking
- + Bridge across the river

### Driving/EVs

- + Driving was a popular response but we also heard concerns about parking taking over the site
- + Driving is necessary but people want to encourage active transportation

### Accessible community connections

- + Senior and wheelchair friendly



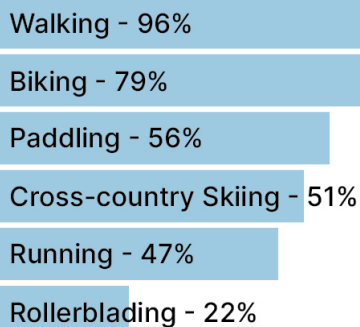
We also asked the question:

## How would you want to get around the park?

### Select all that apply

Overwhelmingly, respondents shared that they would like to walk or cycle to get around the park.

### Other responses



The same question was asked in an open response format allowing respondents to answer in their own words. Again, multi-use trails were a popular response, with other responses requesting winter and water activities.

The themes that emerged included:

### Multi-use trails (both natural and paved)

- + Walking / Running
- + Biking / Mountain biking
- + Longboarding / Scootering
- + Using a stroller or wheelchair

### Winter Activities

- + Snow shoeing
- + Dog sledding

### Water Activities

- + Paddle boarding



*"Wheelchair or scooter"*

*"Mountain bike, cycling, long board"*

*"Paved trails allow easier access for those who are in wheelchairs etc."*

*"Stand-up paddle boarding, snowshoe, dogsled experiences in winter"*



## Community

A Regional Park connects people, offering appealing places to relax, spend time with family and friends, play sports, attend community events, and more. In the coming years, Strathcona County and its surrounding communities will experience significant population growth and greater diversity. The new Regional Park should become a place where all residents can connect and feel welcome.

We asked the question:

*How can the park foster connections between people and the land?*

### Select all that apply

Respondents were asked to answer this question in a select all that apply format. The results are highlighted below showing small community-led events and facility bookings being the most popular.

Small Community-led Events - 78%

Facility Bookings (e.g. Picnic Sites) - 66%

Environmental Stewardship Programs - 59%

Partnerships with Community Organizations - 50%

Large Cultural Events - 36%

Sporting Events - 32%

## Other responses

The same question was asked in an open response format allowing respondents to answer in their own words. Responses highlighted the desire to connect with others through recreational programming but that prioritizing nature was equally important.

The themes that emerged were:

### Connecting with others through recreation

- + Dog parks, disc golf, and fishing
- + Trail events for mountain biking, walking and races
- + Camping
- + Community gardens and growing food

### Prioritization of nature and keeping infrastructure to a minimum

- + Expressed concern that large gatherings and events could disturb nature and migration of animals through the area

### Learn and connect with community through art, culture and history

- + Heritage and natural history
- + Nature centre / science building
- + Organized educational events for schools and seniors
- + Agricultural events
- + Outdoor theatre



We also asked the question:

## *Do you have a specific community program or event you are interested in seeing in the park?*

Respondents were asked to answer this question in an open format. The themes of nature based and recreational activities showed up the most in responses.

The themes that emerged were:

### **Nature based community programs**

- + Nature and wildlife/birding walks
- + Organized programs that allow visitors to plant native plants, learn about plants through interpretive information and learn to gather, garden and identify plants
- + Quiet activities that don't disturb wildlife
- + Creation of a nature reserve and conservation programs and classes
- + Star gazing programs

### **Recreational activities**

- + Amenities like fire pits and BBQs, camping, equipment rentals, spaces for off leash dogs
- + Winter recreational lessons and events like cross-country skiing, sleigh rides, tobogganing, skating and snow shoeing
- + Lessons for popular water activities like swimming, kayaking, canoeing and paddleboarding
- + Court and field sports like pickleball, disc golf, baseball
- + Outdoor fitness classes and events like yoga and meditation, Tai Chi, obstacle courses and cycling and marathon races

### **Family friendly programming**

- + Family gathering places
- + School partnerships and kids day camps
- + Family/kid friendly amenities like natural play playgrounds, spray parks, and organized programming for scavenger hunts, geocaching and orienteering
- + Services like Rotary
- + Senior friendly programming

### **Cultural and educational programming**

- + Music, art, kite and food festivals
- + Arts and craft markets and programs
- + Theatre performances
- + Indigenous teachings
- + Historical education of the site

*"I would love to see connections with Indigenous communities."*

*"Activities for kids like offering sports classes in the summer- soccer, football Yoga classes for mom and child Ski classes in the winter"*

*"Perhaps something like a "nature centre" or "science building" that shows the various species of wildlife and foliage of the area..."*

*"An outdoor venue for musical events. An amphitheater or some type of outdoor stage would be really neat."*

*"Parks and Rec programs - like snowshoeing, cross country skiing, guided nature walks"*

# Park Uses

A Regional Park meets outdoor recreation needs for people of all ages and abilities with a wide range of park amenities and recreational facilities This Master Plan will give us the opportunity to transform a site, marked by its agricultural and industrial past, into a unique destination for recreation, events, gatherings, and ceremonies.

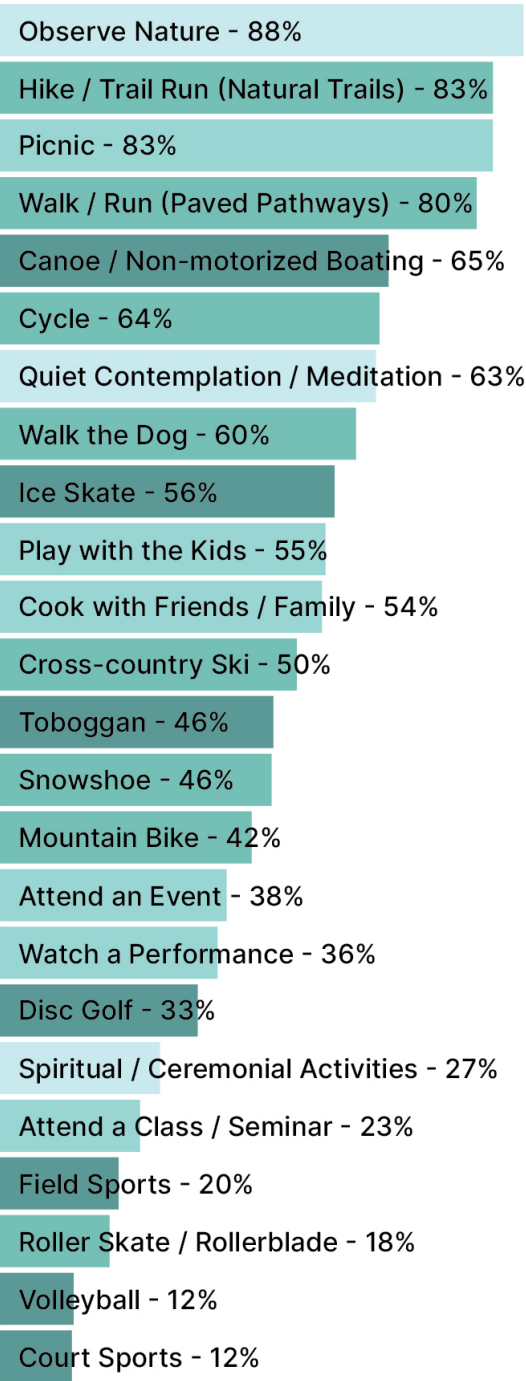
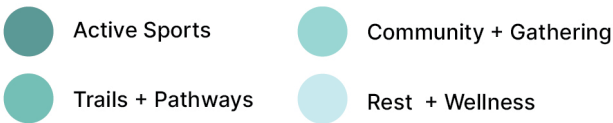
We asked the question:

*What would you like to do in the park?*



## Select all that apply

Respondents were asked to answer this question in a select all that apply format. The results are highlighted below with the legend showing which category (active or passive recreation) each activity falls into.





## Other responses

The same question was asked in an open response format allowing respondents to answer in their own words. Again, recreational activities were popular answers but respondents requested this programming be respectful of the natural state of the park.

The themes that emerged were:

### Recreational activities

- + Off leash dog areas, disc golf, trails, sports, yoga, horseback riding, camping, water sports like canoeing, swimming and fishing

### Protect and experience nature

- + Often expressed finding a balance between providing programming keeping the site more natural
- + Concerns were raised about large gatherings, events and sport tournaments
- + Desire for natural surface trails for a variety of uses.

### Gather and connect with community

- + Enjoying the park with family, friends and kids
- + Programming like fire pits and gathering spaces with picnic tables and benches
- + Many responders wanted gatherings to be kept smaller as to not interfere with wildlife and the noise levels in the park

### Learn about and experience art, culture and history

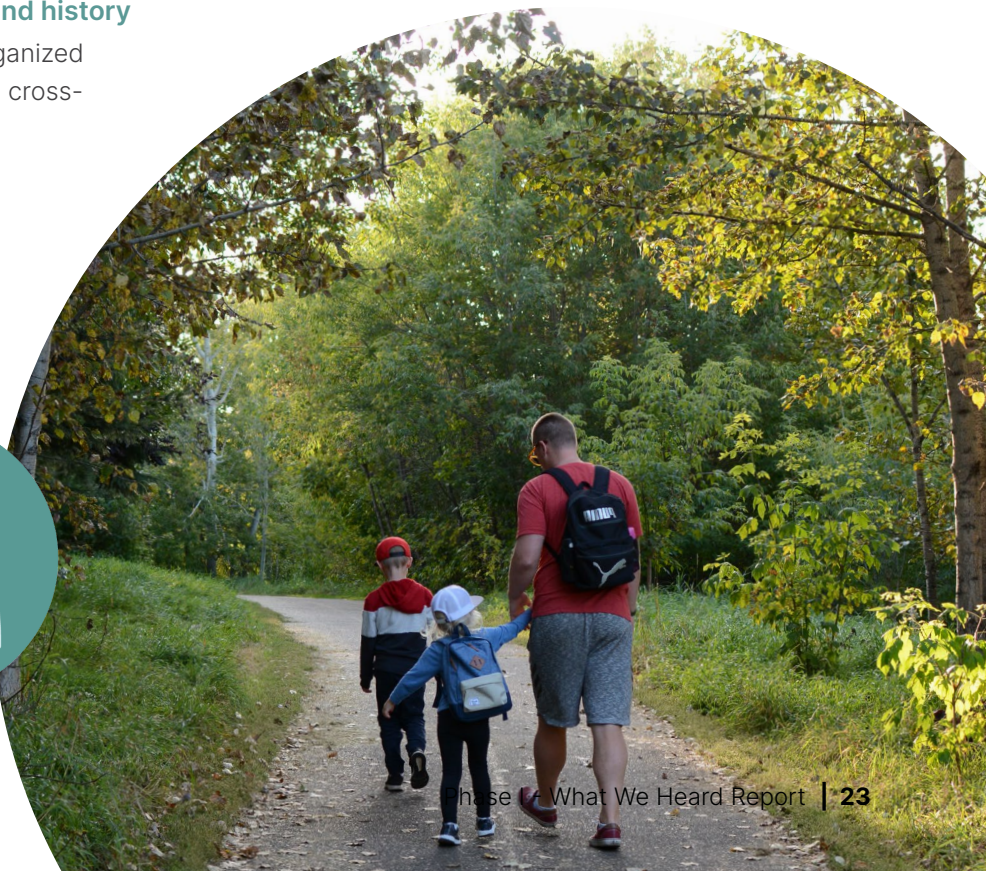
- + Indigenous story telling and histories, organized nature walks, family friendly learning and cross-country ski lessons

*"I'm picturing more of a naturalized park. One with walking trails, picnic sites, benches, cross country skiing paths. I'd love to see the site with minimal development aside from washrooms, trails and picnic sites. A place for residents to escape the city life."*

*"Disc golf would be awesome!"*

*"A pine grove planted as a meditation place for quiet reflection. Could included a small lodge for small groups to book for this purpose."*

*"star gazing, indigenous story telling"*



## Creativity

A Regional Park welcomes individual and community participation and fosters stewardship of the land in creative ways. The new Regional Park can support arts programming and community partnerships, making space for people to learn, create, and celebrate together while helping to establish an identity for the park.

We asked the question:

*How would you like to see people being creative in the park?*

### Select all that apply

Respondents were asked to answer this question in a select all that apply format. The results are highlighted below showing that public art, youth programming, music and live performances were most popular.

Public Art - 56%

Youth Programming - 52%

Music - 50%

Live Performances - 49%

Art Workshops / Classes - 43%

Artist in Residence - 18%

## Other responses

The same question was asked in an open response format allowing respondents to answer in their own words. Passive forms of creativity were mentioned most frequently and learning and being immersed in nature was also important to respondents.

Themes that emerged were:

### Create and experience art

- + Photography
- + Writing
- + Painting
- + Local and Indigenous art and artists

### Connect with and learn about nature

- + Birding courses
- + Seating along the river

### Learning and experiencing recreational activities

- + Outdoor fitness classes
- + Canoe ballet
- + Obstacle course or adult playground
- + Musical rides

It is also important to note that 1/3 of responses for this question showed concern about the noise, overcrowding and disturbance of wildlife that could come with the introduction of an over-programmed space.





We also asked the question:

## *Do you have a specific arts program or event that you are interested in seeing in the park?*

This question was asked in an open response format allowing respondents to answer in their own words. Again, nature was of high priority to respondents and cultural and art gatherings were also mentioned often.

Themes that emerged were:

### **Programming that prioritizes nature**

- + Nature classes, wildlife viewing and bird watching
- + Botanical garden
- + Quiet and low impact programs that don't disturb wildlife and vegetation
- + Conservation and stewardship opportunities

### **Gatherings for art and cultural programs**

- + Public art and land art
- + Art walks that support local and Indigenous artists
- + Seasonal based gatherings and events like snowman or igloo building contests in the winter and painting classes in the summer
- + Watching live music and other performances like canoe ballet or Shakespeare in the park
- + Heritage festivals, science in the park and storytelling events
- + Agricultural events
- + Painting workshops/classes

### **Gathering spaces and recreational amenities for all ages**

- + Gathering spaces like spray parks, off leash dog areas and food stands
- + Senior friendly gathering spaces and trails away from faster moving trail users



*"Opportunities for people to bring their own supplies and create art. For example, viewing platforms along the trail where an artist can set up their easel and paint"*

*"nature classes, bird-watching activities"*

*"writing, photography classes"*

*"This is a beautiful natural area. Don't overprogram it."*

*"Local artists featured? Perhaps an Artwalk featuring up and coming artists."*

*"Indigenous and Metis performances and art to acknowledge the Metis settlement in this area"*

## Learning

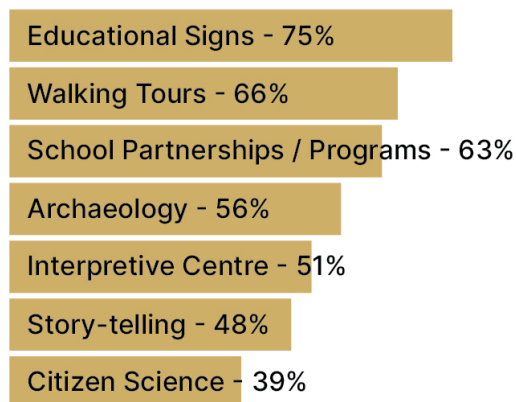
A Regional Park provides opportunities for people to learn about, appreciate, and participate in the stories of the place. The landscape of the new Regional Park has many stories to tell. From the natural history of the river valley to the stories of the peoples and individuals who have called this land home over the centuries, the history of the park spans the scales of time and geography.

We asked the question:

*What kind of educational opportunities should people learn from in the park?*

### Select all that apply

Respondents were asked to answer this question in a select all that apply format. The results show that low infrastructure amenities and programs are important to the respondents.



## Other responses

This question was also asked in an open response format allowing respondents to answer in their own words. Nature based learning was by far the most frequently mentioned in responses. Science and history experiences were also mentioned.

Themes that emerged were:

### Nature based learning

- + Bring in experts to talk about biology, paleontology
- + Animal sanctuary for all age demographics to learn about their impact on the environment and how to care for wildlife
- + Gardening and herbology
- + Interpretive signage about animals and vegetation
- + Site reclamation and tree planting
- + Agricultural programs

### Science and history

- + Science centre
- + Indigenous history
- + Meteorology

### Recreational learning

- + Off leash dog park
- + Disc golf
- + Watercraft lessons
- + Active outdoor lessons

### Low infrastructure

- + Concern with over-crowding
- + Would prefer small gatherings to keep the noise to a minimum

*"site reclamation incl. tree/shrub planting"*

*"Learning to maneuver yourself in or in your [water] craft..."*

*"Educational signs about the vegetation and wildlife."*

We also asked the question:

## *What stories could be told and shared about the site?*

This question was asked in an open response format allowing respondents to answer in their own words. Overwhelmingly, respondents identified learning about the site's Indigenous history was most important to them. Learning about nature through storytelling was also a popular sentiment shared.

Themes that emerged were:

### **Indigenous histories**

- + Indigenous histories, cultures and traditions
- + Pow wow and story telling events
- + Hunting and trapping
- + Settlement/colonization
- + Reconciliation

### **Environmental learning**

- + Native plants and animals
- + Wildlife and wildlife migration
- + Bird watching
- + Animal tracking
- + Dark sky
- + Plant identification
- + Botany
- + Invasive species
- + River, watershed and wetlands
- + Stars and planets
- + Environmental stewardship
- + Importance of and "how to" protect and preserve habitats
- + Pollution and reclamation

### **Land use and history**

- + Industrial history
- + Farming
- + Homestead
- + Gravel extraction and mining

### **Evolution of the landscape**

- + Geology
- + Ice age
- + Archeology

### **School and family-based programs**

- + School and community group field trips
- + Family events
- + Interpretive signage and walks

*"Indigenous learning, reconciliation. Environmental stewardship"*

*"Native species - plants and animals, river and other wetland areas..."*

*"The history of the environment there (geographical/geological, plants and animals) and what must be done to preserve it..."*





We also asked the question:

## *Do you have a specific educational program or event you are interested in seeing in the park?*

This question was asked in an open response format allowing respondents to answer in their own words. Learning both about and in nature was frequently mentioned in responses and respondents indicated art, culture and history based programs were of importance to them.

Themes that emerged were:

### **Learning about and in nature**

- + Small and quiet programming that prioritizes nature
- + Plant, animal, bird and insect informational tours and identification workshops including information on invasive species and conservation strategies
- + River, wetland and waterway education and conservation
- + Human impact on the environment and environmental stewardship
- + Geology and archaeology
- + Community gardening workshops
- + Self guided nature walks, wildlife tracking and birding with interpretive signage
- + Wilderness survival skills

### **Arts, culture and history**

- + Star gazing, celestial events and northern lights
- + Art walks and programs like wood carving and painting

- + Indigenous land uses, tool making, ceremonies and history
- + Lecture series presented by experts
- + Agricultural programs like tractor pulls and harvesting events

### **Recreational lessons and educational programming for all ages**

- + Paddling programs that promote water safety education and life jackets usage
- + Low cost kids camps in the summer for activities like soccer, karate, football, kite flying, orienteering and biking
- + Winter programs like cross-country skiing and snow shoe classes
- + Dog friendly events
- + Events like disc golf tournaments and mountain bike races
- + School and daycare field trips like outdoor education, augmented reality and science experiments like miniature rocket launching

*“Indigenous land uses and history”*

*“Astronomy, plant identification/foraging, fun science like miniature rocket launching, kite flying...”*





## Park Vision

To understand respondents' vision for what the park could be, we asked respondents to provide three words that described their vision for the park and other successful parks that we could learn from (following page).

## What three words would you use to describe your vision for this park?

The six key themes that emerged were:

- Recreation + Accessibility
- Nature, Wildlife + Sustainability
- Inclusivity + Community
- Quiet, Peaceful + Low Infrastructure
- Art, Culture + History
- Health + Wellness

- + 30% of the submitted words mentioned some kind of recreational activity, accessible infrastructure or universal design consideration or year round program.
- + 27% of the responses mentioned words like nature, wildlife and conservation.
- + 17% of comments mentioned words like inclusivity, community, connection and gathering.
- + 14% of responses mentioned some form of quiet activity like meditation and or words like quiet, tranquil and peaceful. Responses mentioning minimal infrastructure were also categorized here.
- + 7% of responses mentioned art, culture, history, education and respecting and working with Indigenous communities and histories.
- + 5% of the submitted words mentioned health and wellness.

Below is a visual representation of the words and themes that emerged from this question:



We also asked the question:

## *What other great parks and public spaces from around the world can we learn from?*

Frequently mentioned parks included:

- + Elk Island National Park, AB
- + Stanley Park, Vancouver, BC
- + Rundle Park, Edmonton, AB
- + Central Park, NY
- + Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area, AB
- + Hawrelak Park, Edmonton, AB
- + Banff National Park, AB
- + Edmonton River Valley Parks, AB
- + South Bear Creek Park, Grande Prairie, AB
- + Strathcona Wilderness Center, AB
- + South Bank Parklands, Brisbane, AU
- + Fish Creek Provincial Park, Calgary, AB
- + Deer Mound Dog Off Leash Park, Strathcona County, AB

## *Why?*

When it came to answering the “why”, responses frequently mentioned variety - variety of path types, program options and activities for a variety of demographics. Protection of nature was also mentioned often.

The themes that emerged were:

### **A variety of recreational programming**

- + Mixed-use trails for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking with a variety of surfaces and places to rest and a good distance from vehicle traffic
- + Recreational activities like disc golf, field sports, Frisbee, baseball, tennis, beach volleyball, and BMX
- + Water access and activities like paddle boats, swimming, fishing, canoeing and kayaking
- + Winter activities like skating
- + Amenities like outdoor BBQs, picnic tables, splash parks, natural play playgrounds, covered playgrounds for all-weather use, drinking fountains and accessible washrooms
- + Outdoor exercise weight equipment for adults and teenagers
- + Off leash dog areas
- + Camp sites
- + Community gardens
- + Equipment rentals

**Low infrastructure programming that prioritizes the protection of, and connection with, nature in the park**

- + Minimal infrastructure that is only used to enhance accessibility
- + Parking is minimized and kept to one or two concentrated areas
- + Intentional gathering spaces
- + Parks that balance nature, culture and active recreation
- + Quiet, simple and peaceful spaces to escape and reconnect with nature
- + Private feeling trails away from noise and gatherings
- + A mix of tree lined paths and beautiful, open views
- + Native trees, plantings and pollinator habitats
- + Wetland and waterway interpretation
- + Tie in with surrounding context and park systems
- + Natural programming like boulders and logs for seating and playing
- + Conservation is prioritized

**Gathering spaces and amenities that promote inclusion and community connection**

- + A variety of programmed and unprogrammed options for visitors of all age demographics to choose from
- + Safe feeling with good lighting and safe footing
- + Free parking

- + Accessible play areas and trails
- + Family oriented
- + Multiple access points with ample parking, shelters, washrooms and picnic areas
- + Year round spaces and programming
- + Public transit options

**Art and cultural programming that support community, Indigenous histories and education**

- + Historical and interpretive signage and walks
- + Indigenous teachings and story telling
- + Educational opportunities and spaces that contribute to reconciliation
- + Public art and art walks
- + Cultural events like festivals, concerts and lectures with a covered stage
- + Archaeological interaction
- + Reclamation sites with previous land uses converted into natural, community parks

## Findings from Stakeholder Workshops

Theme	Challenges	Opportunities
<b>Nature</b>	Concerns were raised about the compatibility of existing park use (Edmonton Radio Control Society) and potential future uses. Stakeholders also mentioned the degraded state of the vegetation and wildlife in the park. The floodplain was listed as a concern and the possibility for conflict between different park users and demographics was brought up as well.	Partnership and funding opportunities were discussed, as well as the potential to create a four season tourist attraction with wetlands, wildlife viewing and accessible sport facilities. The site's current landscape features could be used for recreational amenities with enough space to buffer between activities. The site's industrial history and current water bodies were also mentioned as potential inspirations.
<b>Movement</b>	Challenges identified included providing practical commuting options to park visitors and balancing the need for adequate parking while protecting the natural feel of the park. Accessible trails, activities, and nature programming for people of all ages and abilities were also mentioned. Concerns were also raised about the evolution of the park and how the surrounding developments and visitor intensification will impact the park.	The opportunities identified included the ability for the park to have pedestrian and cycling trails connecting to a regional trail network and supporting wayfinding that promotes commuting, public transit services, and boardwalks to encourage safe and sustainable connection to the water in the park. Comments also included bringing in programming like art shows and farmers markets to bring more visitors to the site.
<b>Community</b>	The challenge highlighted in this category was the uncertainty around how future development in the area might impact the park.	Opportunities identified included programming like an education/science/nature centre that could boost tourism to the area. Music festivals and gardening programming were also mentioned.
<b>Park Uses</b>	Concerns were raised about the need to increase accessibility for seniors and to maintain the natural feel of the park with the anticipated increased use. Balancing different user groups and activity types was also raised as a challenge. In particular, the Edmonton Radio Control Society identified that their current use of the site may be incompatible with planned park uses, and expressed a desire for direction from the County. Environmental challenges like flooding, lack of trees to create microclimates, and poor health of water bodies were also mentioned.	Opportunities included seasonal uses, walking tours, event and gathering possibilities with financial accessibility considered and variety of programming appropriate for specific environmentally sensitive areas in the park. Partnership opportunities with amenities across the river were also highlighted as an opportunity.
<b>Creativity</b>	No challenges were identified in this category.	The opportunities discussed included Indigenous engagement, the introduction of an amphitheatre, partnership opportunities and regionally specific programming and site features.
<b>Learning</b>	No challenges were identified in this category.	The opportunities discussed included educational opportunities through the Edmonton Radio Control Society, as well as Indigenous partnerships and educational site elements and programs.



## Discussion Guide Feedback

The Sherwood Park Disk Golf Association submitted a Discussion Guide highlighting the following opportunities for disc golf in the park:

- + Disc golf is a relatively low impact program that works well with the park's natural state and could be easily incorporated into the park trail system
- + Partnerships with local schools could bring more community members to the park to play the sport
- + Disc golf is an inclusive activity appropriate for all demographics
- + There is an opportunity to pair disc golf and interpretive signage to enhance learning in the park

## Park Vision

Through a collaborative discussion, stakeholders identified their top priority vision words listed below:

**STEWARDSHIP**  
**NATURAL**  
**OUTDOOR ENJOYMENT**  
**PLAY**  
**RECREATION**  
**ACCESSIBILITY**  
**ALL AGES**  
**OUTREACH**  
**COMRADERY**  
**EVENTS**  
**EVOLVING**  
**EDUCATION**  
**CONNECTION**

Other words mentioned were:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| + community development                 | + calm                                 |
| + collaboration                         | + peaceful yet vibrant                 |
| + participation                         | + diversity                            |
| + celebration                           | + engaging                             |
| + trails                                | + restful                              |
| + bird watching                         | + quiet                                |
| + active                                | + event host                           |
| + trails                                | + inclusive                            |
| + classes                               | + multi-generational                   |
| + history                               | + timely                               |
| + common space                          | + flexible (future use considerations) |
| + beauty of the area (natural features) | + sport                                |
|   | + environment                          |



# Next Steps

## Next steps

The input received during this first phase of engagement will be used to develop a shared park vision, guiding principles, and draft park concepts.

### Park Vision

A vision statement for the park will be crafted using the words and phrases shared by the public and stakeholders. The vision statement denotes the collective values for the future identity of the park and will guide decisions around the park's identity and future activities and programs. Results of Indigenous engagement and other engagement questions will also be considered in the development of the park vision to ensure that it reflects key themes that have been identified as priorities for all participants.

### Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles will be developed under each of the six themes (Nature, Park Uses, Movement, Learning, Creativity, and Community) using feedback collected during this first phase of engagement as well as guidance from policy and site analysis. Guiding Principles are actionable statements that will direct future design and programming decisions, making sure that they are in alignment with the over-arching park vision.

## Concept Development

Over the next few months, the County and the consulting team will develop two different concept options for the park, both of which reflect the shared vision. Each concept option will have different amenities, programs, circulation, and natural elements. In the next round of engagement (Spring/Summer 2022), you will be asked to provide feedback on which elements of the designs you prefer. Your feedback will be used to craft the final park concept for the Master Plan.

After a thorough internal review by the County's Technical and Steering Committees, the final Master Plan will be presented to the public and Council in the Fall of 2022. From there, Master Plan recommendations and capital projects will be carried forward into future budgets for implementation as they align with County priorities.

For all project updates and background information, visit [strathcona.ca/newregionalpark](http://strathcona.ca/newregionalpark).