



DESIGN REPORT:

MIDTOWN PARK

Prepared for: City of St. Albert
For Public Release

November 2024

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1.0

INTRODUCTION



This design report has been commissioned by the City of St. Albert in support of concept planning for Midtown Park, an open space development located in southwest St. Albert, at the corner of LeClair Way and Riel Drive, and bisected by Rondeau Drive.

As indicated in the South Riel ASP, Midtown Park will be situated in the center of Mixed Use Area C, a high-density development. To the west of Rondeau Drive, the park will be bordered by mixed commercial and residential uses, and to the east, it shares its edge with the Verve Senior Living complex. This proximity to multiple land uses and the park's central location in the neighbourhood, make Midtown Park an important focal point for South Riel, and one of the first fully developed urban squares in the City.

As defined by the Parks and Open Space Standards and Guidelines:

"Urban Squares/Plazas are flexible spaces that provide opportunity for community gathering, civic events, and social interactions. They contribute to the character, vibrancy and livability of higher density mixed use and commercial areas."

At a combined area of 0.77 hectares, the park aims to provide opportunities for gathering, for play, and for leisure. With placemaking strategies such as eye-catching public art, flexible event spaces, and ample furnishing, Midtown Park will surely support a healthy, secure, and connected community.

As part of the planning process for the park, an initial concept vision was developed in collaboration with the City, from which direction was given to ensure that park elements were suited to the goals and principles of the project. Internal feedback was taken into consideration in the refinement of this concept, which was then presented to the public. Finally, community feedback was reviewed and incorporated into the Concept Master Plan provided.

The culmination of these efforts is contained within this report, which includes the referenced plans, as well as additional background information, design exploration, and high-level costing. **This report is intended to provide conceptual direction for the park only.** Amenities, furnishings, final layout, and programming are expected to be finalized alongside detailed design and construction, as the development of the park and its surrounding areas progress.

It should be noted that no part of this concept is expected to be taken as detailed design, and that further development of the park will be undertaken by the City upon budgetary approval.



2.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Midtown Park will be a unique park in St. Albert, located within a high-density development with a future mix of housing (apartments), commercial opportunities, and the future Verve retirement living complex. It will also be among St. Albert's first urban square parks, marking a significant new effort in urban placemaking. These parks provide flexible spaces, offering opportunities for community gathering, civic events, and social interactions. They are intentionally designed to contribute to the character, vibrancy, and livability of higher density mixed-use and commercial areas.

2.1 STUDY AREA CONTEXT

Midtown Park consists of two park sections:

- A 0.29 ha connector park stretching west from Rondeau Drive to the corner of LeClair Way and Riel Drive.
- A 0.48 ha open space to the east, nestled between the neighbourhood roadway and Verve Senior Living.

Together, these spaces form a highly visible urban square as both pedestrian connector and public destination for the surrounding community. As a central gathering place, it will provide a strong focal point for Midtown neighbourhood residents and visitors alike, including employees within the South Riel and Lakeview Business Districts, and visitors to Big Lake and the surrounding area.

In addition to Midtown Park's geographic location, it is situated within the regulatory framework of the South Riel Area Structure Plan (ASP). This ASP holds several objectives which relate directly to the development of the parks:

- The creation of a safe and enjoyable pedestrian-oriented neighbourhood,
- increased community sense of place and interaction between neighbours,
- synergies between residential developments and adjacent businesses, and
- opportunities for year-round recreational activities for all ages and interests.

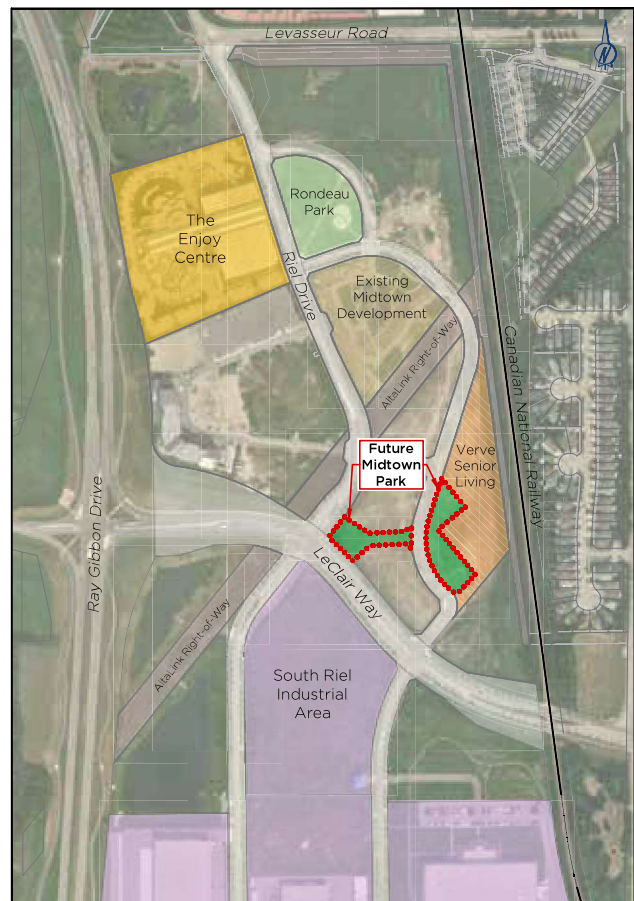


Figure 1: Midtown Park Context Map

Located between future high-density mixed-use developments to the north and south, as well as the senior living complex to the east, the thoughtful design of Midtown Park will serve the objectives the ASP well, providing a welcoming environment for the mixing of users with a diverse array of backgrounds.

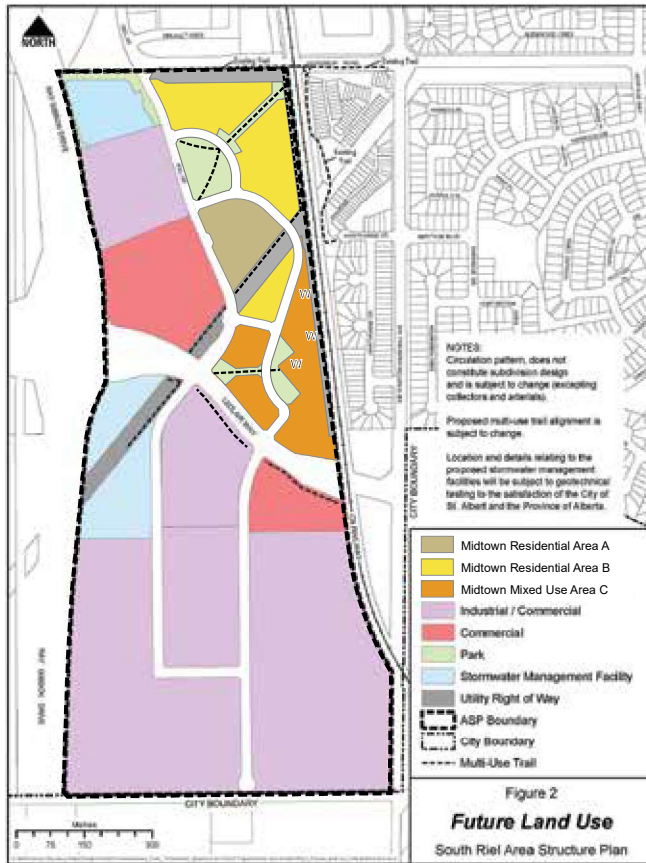


Figure 2: South Riel ASP Future Land Use

2.2 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

The creation of the Midtown Park Concept Master Plan took several documents and resources into consideration, notably relevant to the site design process and to City requirements for the development of parks and open spaces. The resources reviewed for this report include:

- City of St. Albert Parks and Open Space Standards and Guidelines
- City of St. Albert Recreation Master Plan
- South Riel Area Structure Plan
- City of St. Albert Public Art Policy

2.3 PARK PLANNING PROCESS

Planning for park development involves sequential steps, beginning with the allocation of municipal reserve (MR) lands through the ASP and continuing through concept development, design iteration, construction, and ongoing operation of each park space and onto operation, maintenance, and replacement.

Midtown Park is in the Concept Plan phase. As such, this document provides a high level reference for detailed design to take place and should not be considered a finalized design. Detailed design will reference the contents of this document to understand design intent, direction, and the ways the proposed concept seeks to address municipal requirements.



In the course of concept development, an initial concept was provided for internal and external review, and public engagement (conducted October 2024) to incorporate feedback from multiple stakeholder groups. Initial findings from this engagement have been summarized in a What We Heard Report (Appendix A) and have been reviewed in support of master plan amendments.



3.0 PROPOSED PARK DESIGN

3.1 DESIGN INTENT

Midtown Park is divided into two distinct open spaces, and as such, it is important to create a sense of shared identity, despite the differences in their expected operation.

On the west side of Rondeau Drive, the MR is intended to be flexible enough to adapt to the future adjacent uses which have not been determined, with multiple openings to the north and south edges to encourage a high level of social porosity. An overhead canopy of trees in extended groupings will provide shade and create a unified aesthetic throughout the connector. Low shrubs and grasses will define pedestrian movement through the site as well as outline niches for various sized displays or gatherings. Paving patterns will also help in defining these spaces. An experiential art piece will anchor the most westerly entrance to the site at the corner of LeClair Way and Riel Drive, and be significant enough to draw attention at driving speeds along those perimeter roads.



Figure 3: Plaza Conceptual Example, with shade structure and planting

On the east side of Rondeau Drive, low and medium shrubs and grasses continue to define spaces for different uses, including performance, play, and leisure. A series of plazas are connected by a strolling path and small berms create interest and informal seating through elevation. A larger focus on open green space is used to provide options for different activities. Ample seating and shade structures create a strong sense of comfort.

3.2 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The design of the Midtown Park was thoughtfully guided by the key principles outlined in the City of St. Albert's Parks and Open Spaces Standards and Guidelines. These principles provided a framework for creating vibrant, accessible, and sustainable public spaces that meet the community's needs while enhancing the natural environment. These key principles include:

Quality of Life

The Midtown Park design focuses on enhancing community well-being by addressing needs and trends that support both physical and mental health. With amenities like swings, walking paths, and relaxation areas, the park promotes active lifestyles and social interaction. Its design reflects St. Albert's identity as The Botanical Arts City, integrating aesthetic and functional elements that foster community engagement, such as art, while also promoting accessibility. The park also prioritizes safety using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles within the design, encouraging natural surveillance.

Connectivity and Integration

Midtown Park will seamlessly integrate into the community through thoughtfully designed pathways that provide easy, welcoming access to its open spaces. Every resident will have unobstructed access to the park within a 400 meter radius, ensuring convenient entry. The park's trails will connect to existing trails and sidewalks, enhancing connectivity and making it easy for residents to reach the park from various points in the neighbourhood, while also using easy-to-read signage.



Figure 4: East Midtown Park Conceptual Perspective

Diversity and Inclusivity

The park's amenities have been carefully selected to prioritize accessibility and inclusivity, while also reflecting the current and anticipated demographics of the surrounding community. This means that all elements are to be physically accessible, that areas are sufficiently and comfortably lit, and that fencing is used where appropriate and with sensitivity to both a comfortable sense of partial enclosure and to open sight-lines, for pedestrian safety. These features are designed to offer a wide range of recreational opportunities and experiences, ensuring the park remains inviting and functional throughout the year, and for years to come.

Sustainability and Conservation

Midtown Park is designed for long-term sustainability, with the flexibility to adapt to the evolving needs of the community over time. The park will blend seamlessly with the surrounding landscape, incorporating low-impact development practices and ecological design principles. Its

amenities will align with the City of St. Albert's engineering standards, ensuring ease of maintenance and consistency with other City park spaces.

A diversity of amenities have been included in the concept design that consider the interests of projected user demographics, and are sited and sized in a way that is appropriate for the scale of each park section. Detailed design will consider the application of these principles by ensuring spaces and amenities are universally accessible and offer comfortable recreational opportunities throughout all four seasons. Connectivity to existing and future trail connections will be maintained to keep the parks vital and energized. Low Impact Development (LID) and sustainable materials and construction methods will be incorporated where suitable. Final selection of park amenities are to further align with the City of St. Albert's Municipal Engineering Standards.

3.3 DESIGN EXPLORATION

Midtown Park will be among the first urban square parks in St. Albert. Urban squares are flexible spaces that provide opportunity for community gathering, civic events, and social interactions, thereby contributing to the character, vibrancy and livability of higher density mixed use, and commercial areas.

The concept currently proposes a number of design elements including:

- A large space with elevated platform for performances, celebrations, and day-to-day community use,
- walkways and hardscaping connecting Midtown Park to Rondeau Drive, LeClair Way, and Riel Drive,
- passive connections to the adjacent senior living site with seating and greenspace,
- flexible gathering spaces for community building opportunities like market stalls, outdoor gatherings, and casual seating,
- integrated, functional public art, including feature pieces at key nodes and infrastructure-as-art (ex. bike racks, walkways)
- a strategically located play space, and
- an impactful entrance at Riel Drive and LeClair Way, with wayfinding, accent planting and lighting.



These design elements respond to needs of the projected neighbourhood population and reflect contemporary trends and research in open space design. Along with programming, flexible gathering spaces and increased connection between adjacent mixed uses support physical and mental wellbeing and enable social interaction. The increase chances for cross-pollination between users is key in delivering natural surveillance, organically supporting the goals of CPTED. In addition to responding to the on-site safety considerations, it is noted that a clear road crossing between the east and west portions of the site will further ensure public safety and the continuity of the park.





3.4 CONCEPT MASTER PLAN



* master plan render and all photos are conceptual, and intended for reference only; detailed design to be undertaken to determine ultimate urban square layout, furnishings, and details.



4.0 IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 CAPITAL COSTS

As part of the master planning of Midtown Park, capital costing was undertaken to provide a high level estimate for the design if implemented as provided in this report. The estimate is based on 2024 pricing on a per unit rate basis and is not considered exhaustive, nor does it include any applicable taxes.

It should be noted that the costs associated with this project reflect a design provision above the minimum standard. This is representative of the high visibility and increased level of expected function associated with Midtown Park over a conventional community municipal reserve, as it is designated an urban square. These costs do not include potential funding streams which may reduce development cost, such as grants or partnerships. Any required City funds will require municipal approval.

A summary of the costs is provided below.

Section	Estimate of Cost
Midtown Park West	\$ 1,018,805.50
Midtown Park East	\$ 1,446,930.50
Total:	\$ 2,465,736.00

**total with 25% contingency: \$ 3,082,170.00*



APPENDIX A



What We Heard Report

Midtown Park Concept Plan
Public Engagement

October 2024

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OVERVIEW

Midtown Park will be a unique urban square park in St. Albert, located within a high-density development featuring a future mix of housing (apartments), commercial opportunities, and the Verve Senior Living retirement complex. This park is designed to be a focal point for the Midtown neighbourhood and will be among the first urban square parks in St. Albert. The park is planned to offer space for play, casual gatherings, community events, and will contribute to the character, vibrancy, and livability of the area.

Future Park Overview

Location: Corner of LeClair Way and Riel Drive, split by Rondeau Drive into two distinct areas

Total size: 0.77 hectares.

Proposed Park Design:

- Performance Space: A large, elevated platform for performances, celebrations, markets, and community use with open views to streetscapes and surrounding developments.
- Walkways: Connecting Midtown Park to Rondeau Drive, LeClair Way, and Riel Drive for improved access.
- Market & Casual Gathering Areas: Gathering spaces across in different areas of the park to accommodate markets and casual gatherings.
- Play Space: A strategically located play area.
- Park Entrance: An impactful entrance at Riel Drive and LeClair Way with eye-catching public art, flowering trees, and lighting.

Engagement Opportunity

An online survey was conducted from August 22 to September 8, 2024, through the City's Cultivate the Conversation website. The survey gathered input to help determine the design features, amenities and supports that were most important to residents. An open house held on August 27, 2024 provided opportunity for participants to ask questions and provide their feedback directly to the project team. Lastly, the landowner adjacent to the park, site of the Verve Senior Living complex was engaged directly to provide their perspective.

Residents were notified of the public engagement opportunities by direct mail to residences within 100m of the future park site, along with social media and City website

advertising. From the social media campaign, 12,500 users were reached, with 373 users engaging with the post or clicking the associated link to the project webpage.

We thank everyone who participated and provided their feedback on the Midtown Park

How your input will help make decisions

The public input gathered on the survey and the open house will help refine the concept for Midtown Park. Design decisions consider a number of factors, as shown in Figure 1.

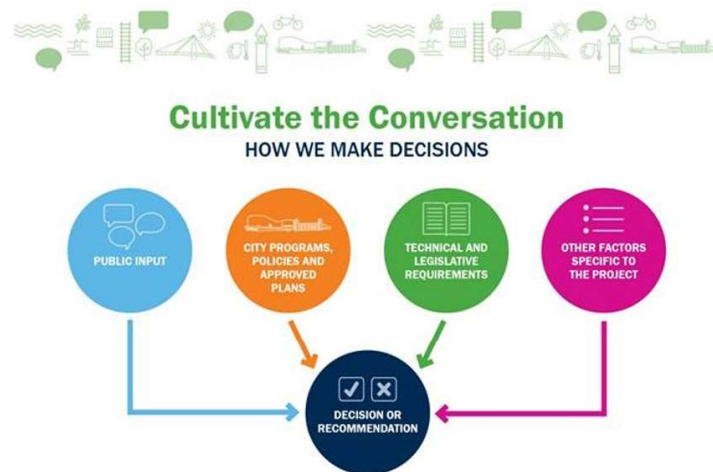


Figure 1 - How We Make Decisions

Engagement Demographics

Through the City's Cultivate the Conversation platform, a total of 389 visitors were aware of the project. 27 residents completed the survey and four residents attended the open house.

Survey respondents lived in neighbourhoods across St. Albert, with four respondents reporting living in South Riel/Midtown. The majority of survey respondents were female (n=16). All survey age classes except under 18 were represented in survey responses, with the highest number of respondents being aged 35-44 (n=8), followed by respondents aged 65 and over (n=7).

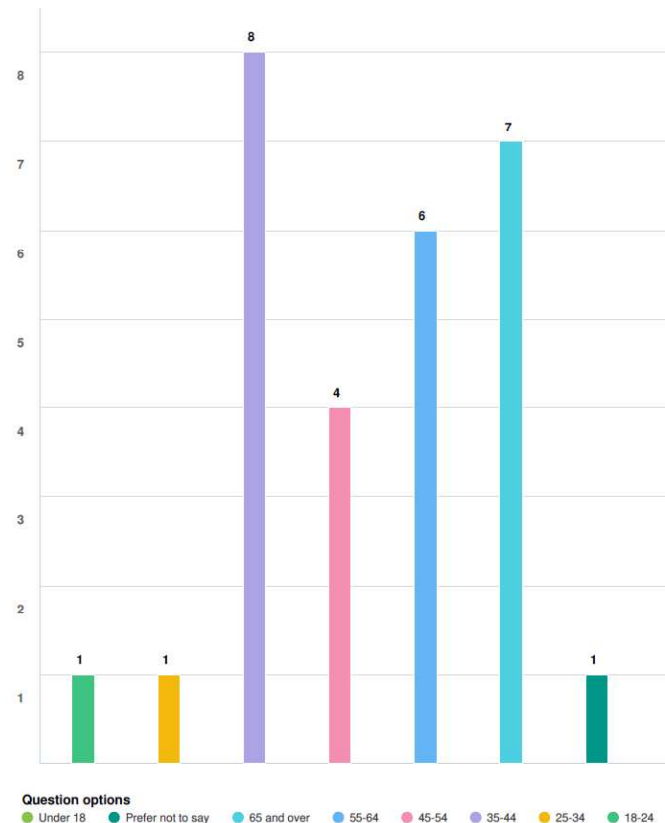


Figure 2 – Age Demographics

ENGAGEMENT FEEDBACK

Survey Results

Park Design

Residents were asked to provide their input on the amenities, supportive infrastructure and landscaping that would most support the creation of a vibrant, active space for the Midtown neighbourhood. Respondents were also asked to provide their thoughts on the amenities, features and/or opportunities were most essential for Midtown Park, and what changes or adjustments should be considered. Comments were varied but major themes included:

- Accessibility, including seating for individuals with mobility challenges.
- Ensuring the space is usable for all including youth and seniors.
- Landscaping, including suggestions for edible plantings, low maintenance plantings, pollinator plantings, shade trees and ensuring tree plantings ensuring positive sightlines into the park.
- Keeping site design simple, maintainable and cost-effective.

- Consideration of parking.
- Other amenities, including pickleball and water play.

Ranking the major amenities, respondents prioritized seating and gathering areas, shade and play. The least important features to survey respondents were the provision of performance space and interactive/experiential art.

Amenity	Average Rank 1-highest priority, 6-lowest priority
Seating and gathering areas	1.85
Shade shelter(s)	2.65
Play area	3.31
Market space	4.15
Performance space	4.38
Interactive/experiential art	4.65

Figure 3 – Major Amenity Prioritization

Supportive elements are those things that support the main functions of the site. Respondents were asked to rank what was most important for success of the park. Key takeaways included the importance of strong landscaping (n=21) and lighting (n=19). The least important factor was access to drinking water (n=5). Other supportive amenity suggestions included accessibility, bike racks/locks, pickleball courts, spray parks, and ensuring a destination space with good seating, water features and a “pulse of activity.”

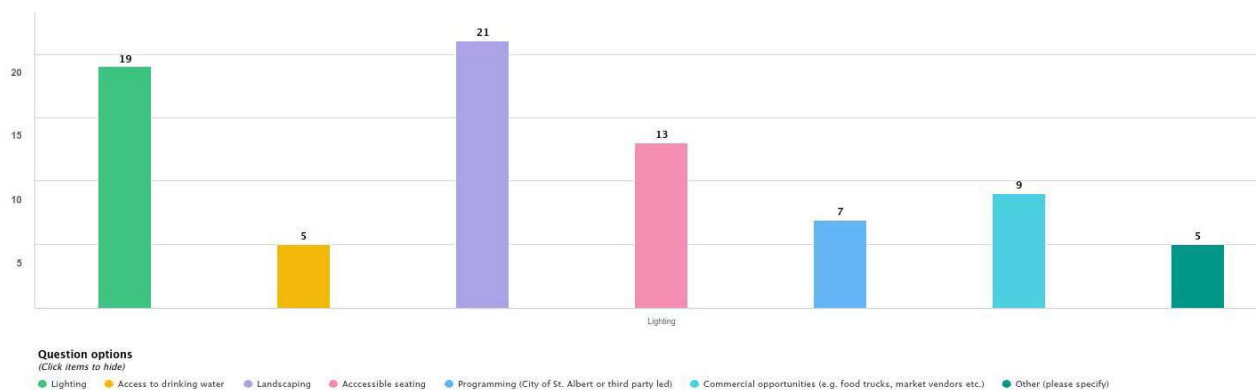


Figure 4 – Support Amenity Prioritization

Accessibility and Safety

Ensuring parks are safe and accessible for all users is important in creating vibrant and inclusive spaces. Respondents shared the following general themes to consider when designing Midtown Park:

- Good lighting
- Fencing
- Adequate waste receptacles
- Ramps for strollers and mobility aides
- Signage with braille
- Strong sightlines and open trails for movement of people

Public Art

Public art is considered as a potentially important feature of Midtown Park. Respondents were asked to rate their level of support for inclusion of different elements of public art within the park. Most respondents either completely supported or somewhat supported including public art (n=22, 81%).

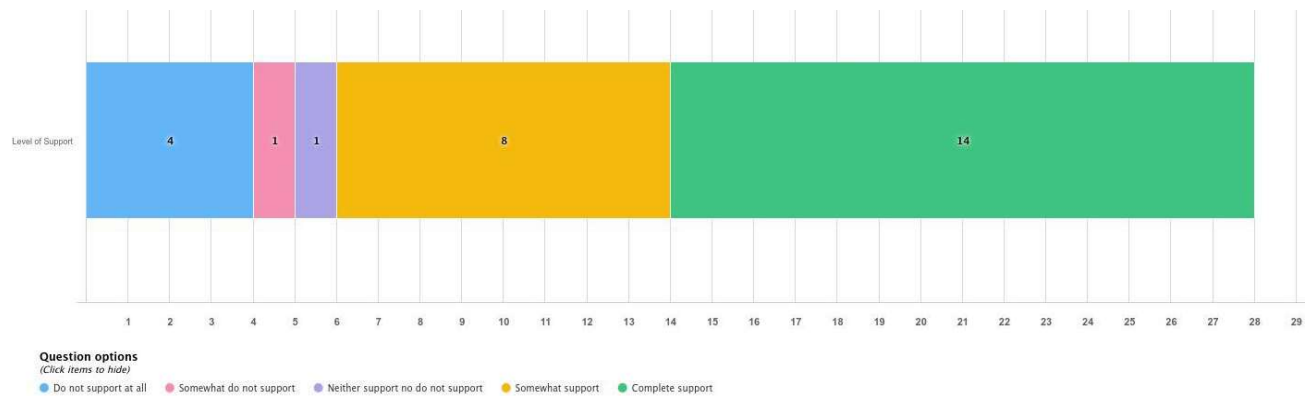


Figure 5 – Support for Public Art

Other Feedback

An area that cannot be addressed is the desire for pickleball and water play options. Given the limited space on the site, these amenities are not able to be accommodated within Midtown Park. This feedback has been noted and will inform future decisions about these amenities in other, more suitable, sites.

Open House

Findings from the open house were in line with the themes identified through the online survey.

Participants prioritized seating areas, shade shelters and play features.

Art was also generally supported, with some preference for interactive play features, pathways as art and interactive art.

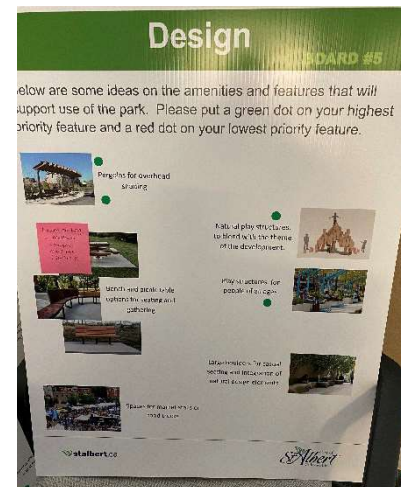


Figure 6 – Supportive Amenities Prioritization

Final Concept Design

The feedback provided through the online survey and open house will assist in updating and refining the final concept design for the park. Future opportunities for public input are expected during the detailed design phase of the project to ensure that Midtown Park continues to support the needs of the community as it grows.

The updated concept plan will be shared online through the City's Cultivate the Conversation platform.

Next Steps:

Park development occurs across a number of steps and timing is coordinated with the development of the surrounding community, as shown below. Timing for the next step is dependent on the continued build out of the Midtown neighbourhood and will be determined in coordination with the area developer.



For more information, please visit conversation.stalbert.ca/Midtown-Park

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact Manda Wilde, Supervisor, Park Planning and Stewardship at mwilde@stalbert.ca