



# CREATING A VISION FOR OUR PROJECT

## WHAT WE HEARD

Prepared by Lindsay Humber Consulting for  
The Stony Plain Road Business Association

August 2023

# AT A GLANCE

*We Belong in Jasper Place* is a community driven initiative aimed at strengthening the social infrastructure of west-central Edmonton as the area transitions out of the city-led revitalization process.

The project is supported by the Stony Plain Road Business Association, who initiated community engagement in early 2023 to better understand how to make the area more connected and welcoming. This report summarizes the findings of these engagement exercises, including key themes from our community conversations about how we can create a more welcoming and connected west central Edmonton.

During our conversations, we heard that boosting the community’s sense of belonging would create a strong foundation for the community to build capacity to address broader issues. The next phase of this initiative will focus on engaging the community further to define what belonging means to those who live, work, play and visit the Jasper Place district and beyond. Those insights will be used to inform future We Belong in Jasper Place pilot projects.

More information about this initiative can be found at [www.webelonginjasperplace.ca](http://www.webelonginjasperplace.ca)

# WHAT’S INSIDE

- Land acknowledgment 3
- How it started 4
- What we’ve been doing 4
  - Working together to define the project (May - June 2023) 4
    - Possible directions to focus our work 5
  - Deciding our project’s focus (July 2023) 5
    - Key things we considered 6
- What we decided 7
  - Moving towards community belonging 7
- Get involved! 7



## HOW IT STARTED

*We Belong in Jasper Place* is entirely community-led and initiated. We're focused on exploring the many different ways we can boost our community's sense of belonging - and create a more connected and welcoming Jasper Place District and beyond. The concept of belonging brings with it many opportunities that include community inclusivity, advocacy, community connectivity and strengthened relationships between neighbours.

The initiative is being supported by the Stony Plain Road Business Association who has secured limited funding from the City of Edmonton to jumpstart our process during the next two years. This project is a transition from the City-led *Jasper Place Revitalization Project* which is wrapping up after over a decade of presence in our community. Starting in 2008, the City of Edmonton's revitalization process focused on the Jasper Place neighbourhood (including the neighbourhoods of Britannia-Youngstown, Canora, Glenwood, and West Jasper Place, intersected by Stony Plain Road from 140 Street to 170 Street). This City-led revitalization process is wrapping up in 2023.

While the City's revitalization project comes to an end this year, local community members like the Stony Plain Road Business Association see a continued opportunity to identify more initiatives and projects to improve the social infrastructure of west central Edmonton. To align with the new community boundaries defined in Edmonton's [City Plan](#), we've expanded our focus area to include the Jasper Place district and beyond.

## WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING

### Working together to define the project (May - June 2023)

We started this initiative with a simple question: *How can we make Jasper Place a more welcoming and connected community?*

Through community conversations, one-to-one meetings and an online survey we asked local other community members to share their experiences and ideas for strengthening community ties in the area. These conversations were held in May - June 2023:

- **Community League conversations:** We met with five community leagues in the area.
- **Online survey:** An online survey was shared with those on our email list and open from June 1-11, 2023. We received six completed surveys.
- **Community conversations:** We held two community conversations at the Orange Hub (June 3 and 6, 2023). 20 community members joined us to discuss how to make west-central Edmonton more welcoming and connected.

During these conversations we connected with people throughout the Jasper Place area, including businesses, residents, City of Edmonton employees, participants in the City-led revitalization project, elected officials, service providers and other community groups. We heard a wide range of ideas about what makes the Jasper Place area a vibrant place to live in. We discussed our hopes for the area and what we as a community see as critical issues for us to address.

## Possible directions to focus our work

Using the feedback shared in our initial meetings and survey, we narrowed things down to three possible directions to focus our work over the coming months. These possible directions included:

- **Enhancing Public Space:** During our initial conversations, we heard that there is a desire to enhance our public spaces, promote connectivity, and create a clean, safe, and inclusive environment for all community members. Suggestions included hosting panel discussions, creating community-based mural projects, and organizing community events in parks.
- **Building Community Capacity:** Initial conversations emphasized the importance of building community capacity, skills and resources so the community can address the issues that matter the most themselves. Participants acknowledged the presence of renewed energy and active community leagues, as well as the importance of partnering with cultural navigators, religious organizations, and social agencies to share the assets and resources within the community.
- **Increasing Belonging:** Initial conversations highlighted the desire to foster a sense of belonging and create a welcoming community to everyone including those who are houseless. Participants expressed the need to know their neighbors' names, cherish diversity, and make everyone feel welcome. There were suggestions to promote programming for kids and connect students with seniors.

## Deciding our project's focus (July 2023)

In July 2023, we hosted another meeting with community members to share back what we had heard during our first round of conversations and discuss how best to focus our efforts over the coming months in order to make the biggest impact we can. As a group, we explored the benefits, drawbacks and key considerations related to focusing our efforts in each of the directions identified above.

- **Community conversations:** 14 community members participated in our July 6, 2023 community conversation at the Orange Hub to explore possible directions to focus this work.

## Key things we considered

During our conversation, we heard that all three possible directions are important and would move us towards a more welcoming and connected west-central Edmonton. Our key takeaways related to each possible direction for this project are summarized below:

- **Enhancing Public Space:** We heard that there are lots of opportunities to boost public safety and beautify the public spaces we share. Activating public spaces could however be difficult in the winter time as the cold and snow create barriers for activities - making this focus for our work seasonally dependent. People shared that key considerations related to enhancing public spaces included using already existing infrastructure and addressing accessibility issues.
- **Building Community Capacity:** During our conversations about potentially focusing our efforts on building local skills and capacity, we heard about the ripple effects increased access to resources may have in the community. Sustainability of volunteer programs and initiatives was highlighted as a drawback in discussions as community burnout is an issue. People shared that key considerations related to building community capacity included ensuring multigenerational and multicultural community members have access to capacity building to make sure there are diverse knowledge keepers in the community.
- **Increasing Belonging:** During our conversations about exploring the issue of strengthening a sense of belonging in west-central Edmonton, we heard that the more people belong, the more they become more invested in respecting and giving back to their community. We also heard that when people feel a sense of belonging, community safety increases along with care for public spaces. Drawbacks highlighted by participants included possibly alienating some groups while trying to be more inclusive of others. People shared that key considerations included balancing the diverse definitions of what belonging means to different community members.

Overall, we heard that it is challenging to choose one direction over the others, as all three directions are intimately connected and influence one another. We heard that belonging is a pathway to the other themes—if you feel a sense of belonging, you are more likely to care about our shared public spaces and have increased capacity to contribute at a community level. When you feel that you belong, your sense of access and community safety is enhanced.

We also heard a lot about trust. People shared experiences with broken trust with us, as well as ideas about how to increase trust within the area. We heard from those who expressed concern with mental health, connection, safety and construction. We heard

that this area is facing a lot of change, which is complicated to address at a social and economic level.

People shared that this work needs to be about engaging a wide-variety of people at a community level—to build connections between those who live, work, play, volunteer and visit the communities that feed into Stony Plain Road so that we all have a capacity for resilience and a sense of ownership over our neighbourhood.

## WHAT WE DECIDED

### Moving towards community belonging

The current funding we have is limited and we know that we can't do everything. We're eager to focus our efforts in the direction that has the most potential for both individual and community-level impact, while rippling out in a way that inspires continued involvement from community members across west-central Edmonton even once the City-funding is complete.

After careful consideration, this project will move forward with using belonging as the lens to look at how we can improve our community, whether in our shared spaces or how we gather. The concept of belonging brings with it many opportunities that include community inclusivity, advocacy, community connectivity and strengthened relationships between neighbours.

Our hope is that we will build capacity for people in the area to come together, support one another, and contribute to a healthy, connected and resilient west-central Edmonton. We also hope that through this work, we will find others in the community who will take some of the other ideas shared with us (see above!) and explore them further.

## GET INVOLVED!

The We Belong in Jasper Place project is community driven and community-led. That means we need the help of community minded folks like you and your neighbours to move the work forward!

There are many ways to get involved, please visit us at [www.weloinjasperplace.ca](http://www.weloinjasperplace.ca) to see what we are up to and sign up for our email newsletter. We're excited to share the different ideas we collect and support as this project grows!