flourish
GROWING TO 100K

## City of St. Albert Municipal Development Plan

# Phase 1 Engagement Report

February 2019



URBAN STRATEGIES INC

ISL Engineering and Land Services

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# 1 Introduction and Purpose

The City of St. Albert has embarked on the preparation of a new Municipal Development Plan (MDP) to guide how the city grows and develops to a population of 100,000.

As the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) directs where and how growth should happen, it must reflect the values and aspirations of the community. Flourish: Growing to 100K is a four-phase planning process that will engage the community in many different ways. In each phase, there are several opportunities to provide input and feedback.

Flourish: Growing to 100K will build on the foundation created by Cultivating our Future: St. Albert's Community Vision. More than 6,000 residents participated in this process from January 2014 to February 2015, sharing over 15,000 ideas that helped the Community Sustainability Committee create St. Albert's Community Vision and Pillars of Sustainability. Flourish: Growing to 100K will apply the Vision, along with new ideas that emerge through the planning process, into the principles, goals and policies of the MDP.

In this phase of engagement the focus was on exploring growth considerations and opportunities. The project team engaged with community and business leaders and undertook technical reviews to identify growth considerations and opportunities that the new MDP needs to address. Engagement opportunities in this phase of engagement included a City Summit event, two online questionnaires and multiple pop-up events which took place at community gathering places.

In Phase 2 of the project, engagement will focus on gathering feedback on the emerging MDP Goals and Growth Scenarios. Later phases will include gathering community feeback on policies prior to plan adoption by City Council and the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board.

The key themes and a summary of feedback received from the various engagement opportunities are included in the following sections.

## 1.1 Public Engagement Plan and Communications Strategy

Engagement activities for the Flourish project are guided by a Public Participation Plan and Communications Strategy. The City of St. Albert Municipal Development Plan (MDP) Public Participation Plan and Communications Strategy sets out a comprehensive approach to informing, engaging and consulting with the public and key target audiences to support the development of a new Municipal Development Plan for the City.

This Public Participation Plan and Communications Strategy establishes a framework to guide how the City and its consultants will meaningfully engage the public and stakeholders. The community and stakeholder engagement process will ensure that the final MDP is reflective of the aspirations that St. Albert residents have for the future of their community.

The Strategy is structured around major milestones in the overall project work plan to allow for direct and timely inputs into project deliverables. Guided by the plan, a diverse range of communication tools and mechanisms are employed at various stages of the program including interviews, questionnaires, workshops, pop-up engagement, and open houses.

Engagement activities for Phase 1 of Flourish support the principles of the City of St. Albert's Public Participation Policy. Levels of engagement used in this phase are defined in Table 1.

## CULTIVATING OUR FUTURE: ST. ALBERT'S COMMUNITY VISION

From January 2014 to February 2015, St. Albert residents were asked to help develop a vision for St. Albert to guide planning and decision-making for the next 50 years. The resulting vision, Cultivating our Future, will from the foundation on which St. Albert's new MDP will be developed.

The project team is dedicated to meaningful and transparent engagement, and input from community members through this process will be used to refine this vision as it applies to the MDP. The MDP engagement process will ask residents to build on the vision established in Cultivating our Future, and apply this vision to planning how St. Albert will grow to 100,000 residents. While St. Albert's Community Vision and Pillars of Sustainability will be incorporated broadly into all applicable St. Albert policies and plans, the MDP focuses on land use and growth at a greater level of detail, applying and adapting these pillars to form a plan.

Engagement during Phase 1 confirmed and further elaborated on many aspects of St. Albert's Community Vision. Sense of community and connections with neighbours were frequently indicated as a strength of the City, and something people would like to encourage. Phase 1 feedback confirmed the community's interest in building on the downtown core and attracting new businesses to the city, recognizing and celebrating the city's history and culture, and preserving the city's natural environment.

Phase 1 engagement also provided additional insight into some of the Community Vision Pillars of Sustainability, and the challenges to be overcome in implementing the Vision. Some of the most frequently cited challenges by engagement participants included: the need for a more diverse range of housing options and a lack of affordable housing; traffic congestion and the difficulty of travelling in the city by transit; cycling or walking; the need for more local employment options; a desire to protect St. Albert's environmental features from negative impacts of development; and an interest in seeing more businesses and residents in the Downtown. Flourish, the City's new MDP, presents an opportunity to address many of these these challenges.

## 1.2 Phase 1 Engagement Purpose

The overall goals for engagement in the Flourish project are to:

- Provide opportunities for all interested stakeholders and members of the public to participate in the development of the City's Municipal Development Plan.
- Ensure that the St. Albert Municipal Development Plan (the Project) is aligned with other land use, transportation, environmental and economic objectives through consultation with City of St. Albert and other public agencies with responsibilities in the area.
- Develop an audience understanding for the purpose of the project and the role of the Municipal Development Plan document, including the MDP's relationship with the Community Vision and Pillars of Sustainability.
- Develop an audience understanding of the MDP foundation building to date, achieved through the Cultivating our Future Project.
- Begin to build public and stakeholder support for the new Municipal Development Plan.

The purpose of engagement during Phase 1 was for the City to inform and gain an understanding of public and key stakeholder perspectives on what they value most about St. Albert, issues, and opportunities.

Feedback will inform the MDP team's analysis of the existing city and the challenges it faces. It will also be a critical input to the overarching goals for the MDP.

### Table 1: Phase 1 Levels of Engagement

| | INFORM | CONSULT | INVOLVE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **PURPOSE** | To provide the public/ stakeholders with objective information and advise them of issues/ initiatives. | To educate and collect public/stakeholder opinion to improve decisions. | To stimulate public/ stakeholder debate, clarify values & broaden the information base to improve decisions. |
| **PROMISE** | We will make you aware of issues/ initiatives. | We will listen, acknowledge and report concerns and aspirations about presented alternatives, and explain to the decision-maker how public input influenced the recommendation. | We will work with public / stakeholders to ensure concerns are directly reflected in the alternatives developed, report the comments received and explain how the input contributed to recommendation(s). |

Source: City of St. Albert Public Participation Policy

## 1.3 Public Engagement to Date

Table 2, below, provides a summary of engagement activities during Phase 1 of the Flourish project.

### Table 2: Engagement Activity Summary

| Event/Activity | Date and Time | Location | Participants/Interviews |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Key Stakeholder Interviews** | September 17 – 20, 2018 | Various | 32 |
| **City Summit** | November 14, 2018<br>6:00 pm to 9:00 pm | The Enjoy Centre<br>101 Riel Drive | 80<br>(2,000 Facebook Live viewers) |
| **City Summit Workshops** | November 15, 2018<br>9:00 am to 12:00 pm<br>1:00 pm to 4:00 pm | St. Albert Curling Club<br>3 Tache St | 50 |
| **City Summit Open House** | November 15, 2018<br>5:30 pm to 8:00 pm | St. Albert Curling Club<br>3 Tache St | 30 |
| **Online Questionnaire #1** | October 18- November 15, 2018 | Online | 229 |
| **Online Questionnaire #2** | November 21, 2018 - January 8, 2019 | Online | 434 |
| **Pop-up #1** | November 3, 2018<br>10:30 am to 2:00 pm | Servus Place<br>400 Campbell Road | 25 |
| **Pop-up #2** | December 1, 2018<br>10:30 am to 2:30 pm | St. Albert Centre<br>375 St. Albert Trail | 25 |
| **Pop-up #3** | December 15, 2018<br>10:30 am to 2:30 pm | St. Albert Centre<br>375 St. Albert Trail | 40 |
| **Pop-up #4** | December 19, 2018<br>4:00 pm to 7:30 pm | St. Albert Centre<br>375 St. Albert Trail | 55 |

# 2 Engagement Summary

## 2.1 Key Stakeholder Interviews

### Level of Engagement: Inform and Consult

The project team members interviewed key internal and external stakeholders—individually and in small groups— in the initial phase of the project. The interviews consisted of a series of structured individual interviews.

The objective of the key stakeholder interviews are to understand opportunities and constraints of key project stakeholders that could shape the project, inform key stakeholders of the project early in the process, inform, obtain relevant background information, and learn about issues and opportunities related to the MDP, as well as to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to ask questions of the project team.

Key stakeholder interviews in Phase 1 included representatives from many City of St. Albert departments and members of Council, as well as the following external stakeholder organizations:

- Alberta Healthy Communities
- Alberta Culture & Tourism
- St. Albert Public Library
- Arts and Heritage St. Albert
- Conseil Scolaire Centre-Nord
- Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools
- North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance
- St. Albert Chamber of Commerce
- St. Albert Community Village
- St. Albert Family Resource Centre
- St. Albert Public Schools
- University of Alberta
- Urban Development Institute

## 2.2 Online Questionnaire #1

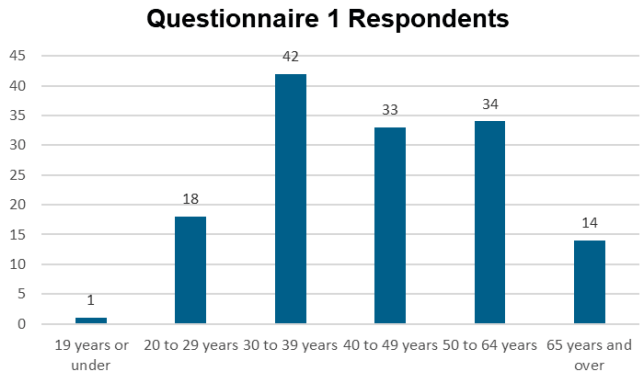
### Level of Engagement: Inform and Consult

Questionnaire #1 provided an opportunity for the general public to provide input on the MDP at an early stage, and provided an alternative means of input for those who are not able to attend in-person engagement events of the City Summit.

Questionnaire #1 invited participants to describe what they feel is great about the city, where they spend their time, and which areas need improvement.

**Age of Respondents:**

Of 230 respondents, 142 provided their age range:




## Results:

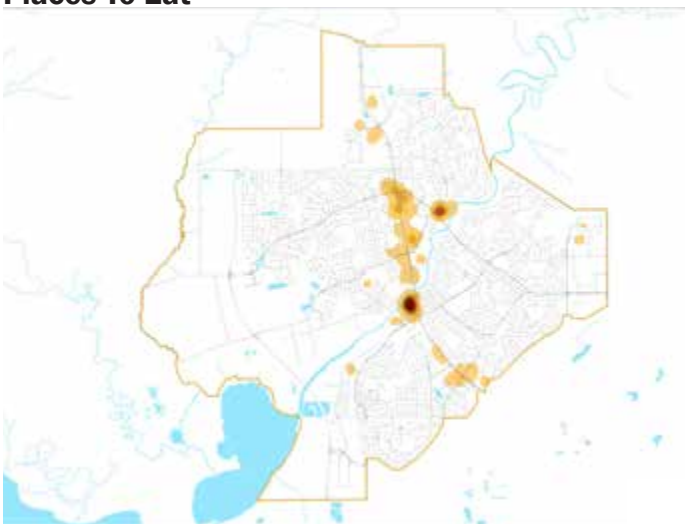
**Question 1: What do you love about St. Albert?**

- Many of the participants shared they love the natural features in St. Albert, including the trail system for walking and cycling, tree-lined streets and boulevards, natural areas, park spaces, and the river valley as they provide spaces for residents to enjoy nature and escape the city.
- The city has a small town feel with the amenities of a larger city and a sense of community where residents know their neighbours, is family friendly, and people are willing to help each other out.
- There is an abundance and variety of amenities and facilities, including the Farmers' Market, shopping, restaurants, recreation facilities, Servus Place, etc.
- Participants also indicated they loved St. Albert because they felt safe and they enjoyed the cultural aspects of the city including, festivals, events, arts and culture facilities, public art, etc.

### Question 2: Where do you go in St. Albert?

The questionnaire included a mapping tool and asked respondents to identify where they go in the city for different purposes. The heat maps below highlight popular destinations. This information will help the study team understand movement patterns by residents and identify important places or nodes to be protected or enhanced as the city grows.

**Places To Eat**



**Places for Shopping**



**Places to Play**



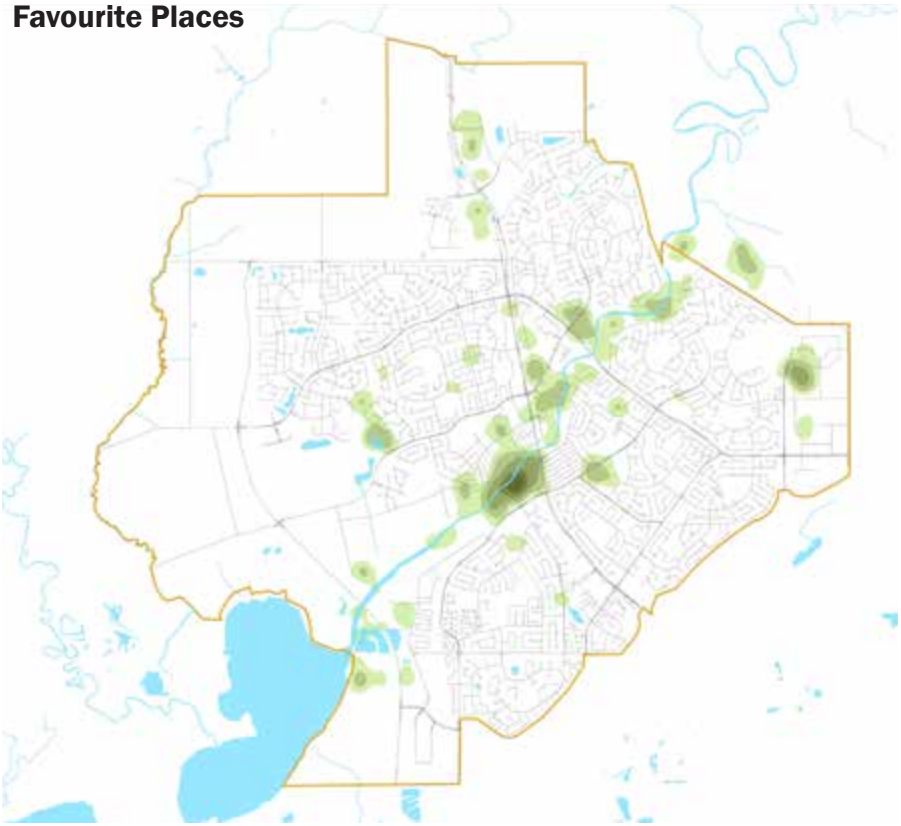
**Places to Be Entertained**



### Question 3: Where are your three favourite places in St. Albert?

- Many participants indicated that trails and park spaces, such as Red Willow Park, off-leash dog parks, and river valley trails, provide a quiet place to relax and exercise.
- St. Albert has a variety of amenities and services that residents like to visit including St. Albert Place, Servus Place, the Farmers' Market, Arden Theatre, swimming pools, community rinks, theatres, fitness and recreation classes, the library. Many of these facilities also act as community gathering spaces.
- Participants liked the variety of restaurants available in the City, the downtown area, and shopping at Boudreau and Botanica as many services are located in one area which increasing access and convenience.

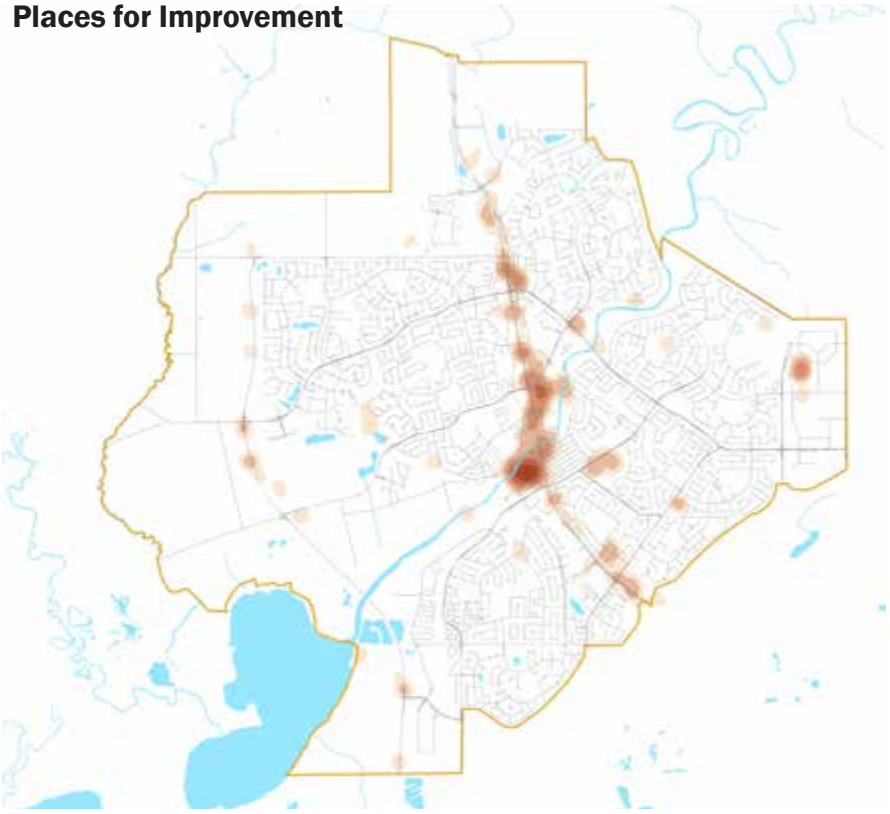
**Favourite Places**



### Question 4: What are the top three places in St. Albert that could be improved?

- Many participants indicated that traffic flow, in particular on St. Albert Trail and Ray Gibbon Drive could be improved through better synchronization of lights or removing of signal lights.
- The downtown area needs improvement, including streetscaping and landscaping, more vibrancy and an increased variety of businesses.
- There needs to be better and safer access and connectivity throughout St. Albert for people who walk and cycle.
- Some of the facilities and buildings (e.g. Fountain Park, Servus Place, Akinsdale Arena) are not aesthetically pleasing and are outdated so they no longer meet the needs of residents and visitors.

**Places for Improvement**



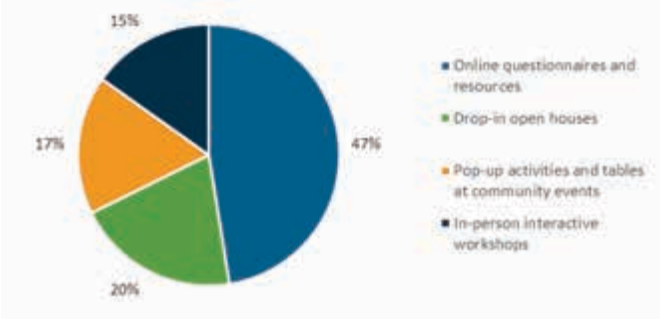
### Question 5: What are the big picture challenges St. Albert is facing?

- Improving traffic flow through improved signal timing or removal of lights on the major roadways (e.g. Ray Gibbon Drive and St. Albert Trail) to accommodate the growth in the city, while also providing alternative modes of transportation through public transit.
- The non-residential tax base needs to be expanded across commercial and industrial development so the burden is not always on residents.
- Ensuring that affordable housing, including rental, is provided for people of all needs and throughout all stages of their lives.
- Additional amenities and facilities and cultural and recreational opportunities are needed for all ages and abilities (e.g. youth and seniors) to meet the needs of the growing population.

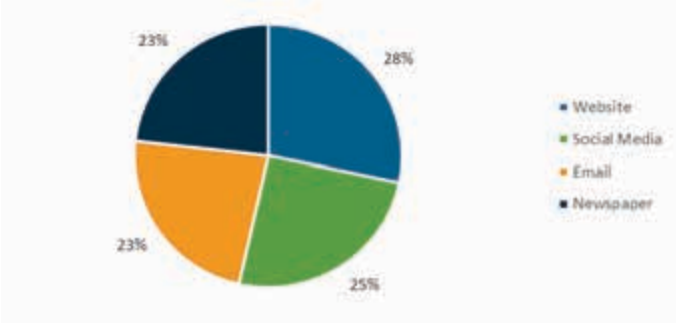
### Question 6: Additional Thoughts and Comments

- Focus on long term traffic and road planning to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion.
- Attract more businesses and industry to locate in St. Albert to provide more opportunities for people to live, work and shop in St. Albert.
- Continue to develop downtown to make it more attractive and inviting for business and customers.
- Focus on the outdoors and improvements to trails, sidewalks and parks for people to enjoy and to provide opportunities for people to walk and bike.
- Additional recreation facilities and improvements to existing facilities are needed to meet the community's needs.
- A long-term vision and big picture thinking are needed.

### Question 7: How would you like to provide input in the future?




### Question 8: What is your preferred method of communication for updates?



## 2.3 City Summit

### Level of Engagement: Inform, Consult and Involve

The project team held a City Summit event on November 14 and 15, 2018, with approximately 160 residents participating over the two days. The objective of the Summit was to build project momentum and encourage participation in the engagement process, and gain insight on key project themes from the general public. Materials included project workbooks and interactive map, which were additional means of collecting input.

A speakers panel event was held November 14, 2018 at the Enjoy Centre, which included information and interactive feedback panels presented in an open house format for participants, followed by a panel of speakers who shared their inspiring ideas for the future of St. Albert in brief presentations and a panel discussion. Four panelists provided a range of perspectives based on their experiences living and working in St. Albert, and the discussion served to inform conversation on day 2 of the summit. Event panelists were: Marc Kennedy, Gold Medal Curler, Vivian Manasc, an Edmonton-based architect with experience in St. Albert, Carter Buchanan, a local youth entrepreneur, and Susan Krecsy, Executive Director of the St. Albert Food Bank and Community Village. The panel event was shared via a Facebook Live stream which was viewed by nearly 2000 people.

Two 3 hour workshops, both with the same format, were held at the St. Albert Curling Club on November 15. These events provided an opportunity for St. Albertans to share their views on a range of topics related to the city's future development. A presentation and a Citizens Bulletin document provided background information on the project and themes. Participants discussed the opportunities and challenges facing St. Albert under a range of topics, including the economy, housing, recreation, the environment, culture and transportation.

An open house in the evening on November 15 provided an opportunity to provide feedback for those unable to attend the daytime workshops.

#### Engagement Themes:

**MOVING AROUND**

**Question asked: How can we make public transit, cycling and walking more attractive for moving around?**

Improvements to public transit routes, frequency and capacity are needed in order to provide better access to key destinations in St. Albert and Edmonton via buses and an LRT.

Improvements to trails and better connectivity between communities and throughout St. Albert are needed to provide safer and more accessible options for people to walk or bike. Participants recommended that cyclists and pedestrians be separated on trails or via bike lanes.

**HOUSING**

**Question asked: How can we ensure that new and established neighbourhoods provide housing options for everyone**.

Participants expressed a need for higher density developments that include a variety of housing forms to meet the needs of people at all stages of their lives (e.g. millennials and seniors).

Affordable housing, including affordable rental opportunities, should also be supported and encouraged.

Participants shared that education and improved communications are needed to help residents' understand the benefits and challenges of infill development and improve the planning process.



## THE ECONOMY

**Question asked: How do we plan a community where people can live and work? What types of industries and businesses should the city try to attract?**

The City should work to attract tech businesses, and improve technology infrastructure, including internet services and fibre optic lines.

Encourage high quality design standards and aesthetics for employment hubs and industrial development in order to promote a professional image.

Participants also indicated the City should continue to support a variety of local business uses in the downtown area and continue to encourage residential uses.

Post-secondary institutions should also be encouraged to locate in St. Albert.

## RECREATION

**Question asked: How do you use the parks in your neighbourhood? What types of parks and facilities do you think are missing?**

Participants shared that St. Albert currently has a great trails and park system, and the City should continue to expand the trails network and increase connectivity.

A few participants indicated that there is currently a lack of recreation facilities in the north part of the city.

Amenities such as bathrooms and fountains are important, and the parks and trails system needs to be inclusive and accessible for all ages and needs.

Providing central gathering spaces for events or families that are flexible and programmable is also important.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Question asked: How can we ensure St. Albert's ecological features and functions are protected in the future?**

Alternative energy sources and green initiatives such as Net Zero building codes, solar heating, green roofs, stormwater management, etc., should be introduced and supported in the City.

A more formal strategic plan is need to ensure the river valley lands and ecosystem are protected and not negatively impacted by future development.

Location and protection of wildlife corridors and wildlife crossings need to be considered.

Key wetlands and natural areas need to be recognized and conservation reserve should be used to explore the protection of additional lands.

## CULTURE AND HERITAGE

**Question asked: How should St. Albert build on its cultural assets and grow downtown as a cultural hub?**

Partnerships should be explored, and opportunities for local groups (e.g. churches, schools, libraries, etc.) to support culture and heritage initiatives should be encouraged.

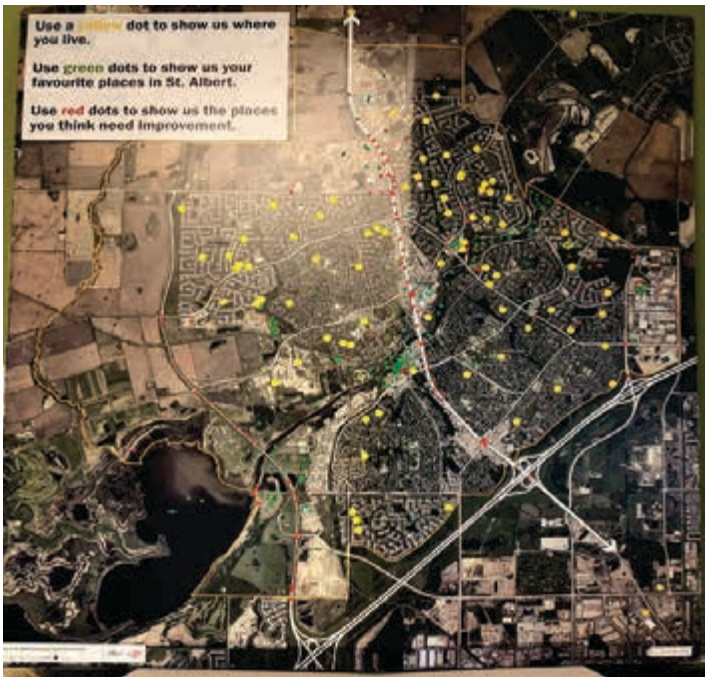
There could be an opportunity for a regional cultural centre that provides a gathering place for residents and visitors.

A variety of cultural events and festivals should be used to promote cultural diversity to help integrate and welcome newcomers, and celebrate cultural diversity.

Different means to celebrate and promote culture and heritage should be encouraged, such as through public art and food festivals.



## Interactive Dotmography Map




The interactive dotmography map was an opportunity for participants to identify popular areas of use and perceived areas for improvement. The activity visually represented opinion and was an opportunity to share opinion with other participants. The map was available to the public at the City Summit Event, as well as pop-up engagement events.

Yellow dots represented where participants live.

Green Dots represented favourite places.

Red dots represented areas of needed improvement.

As represented above common areas of favorite use include:

- Downtown
- Big Lake area
- The Enjoy Centre and Riel Recreation Park area
- Dog parks

Common areas for improvement include:

- St. Albert Trail
- Coal Mine Road
- Ray Gibbon Drive



## 2.4 Online Questionnaire #2

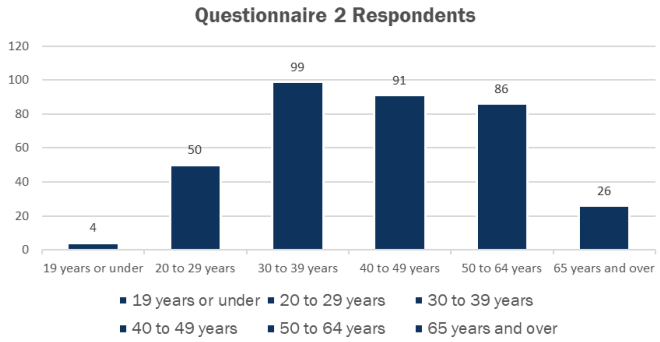
### Level of Engagement: Inform and Consult

Questionnaire 2 included a series of statements related to the six city-building themes used to structure discussion at the City Summit. For each statement, respondents were asked to "Please rank how important you think the following challenges and opportunities are to planning the future of St. Albert."

There were a total of 434 responses to questionnaire #2.

#### Age of Respondents

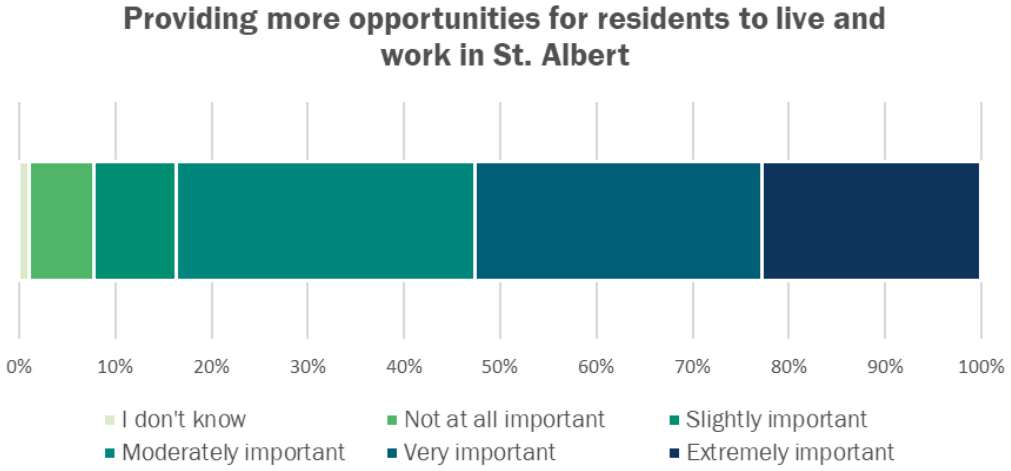
356 respondents provided their age range:



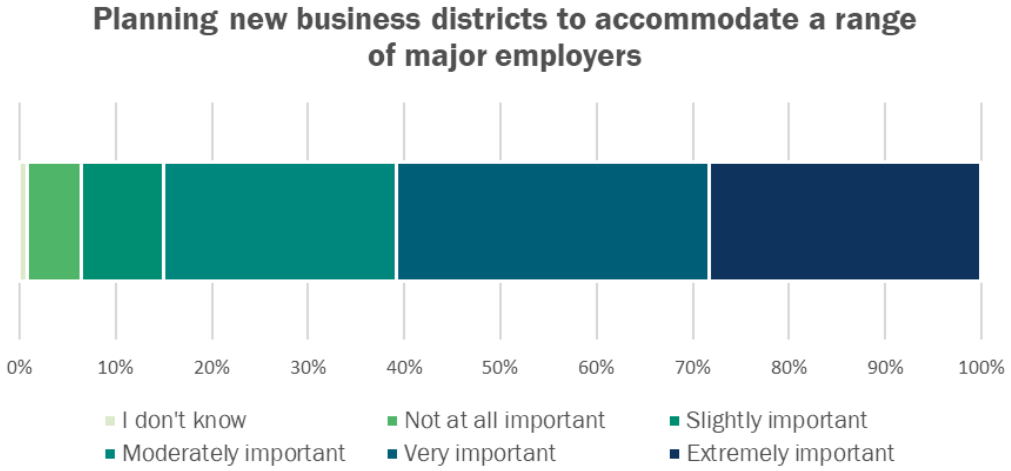
### Theme 1: The Economy

St. Albert has a diverse economy dominated by retail and other service industries. Based on the 2016 Federal Census, nearly 65% of working St. Albert residents travel outside of the city for work.

- 53% of respondents indicated that providing more opportunities for residents to live and work in St. Albert is very important or extremely important.



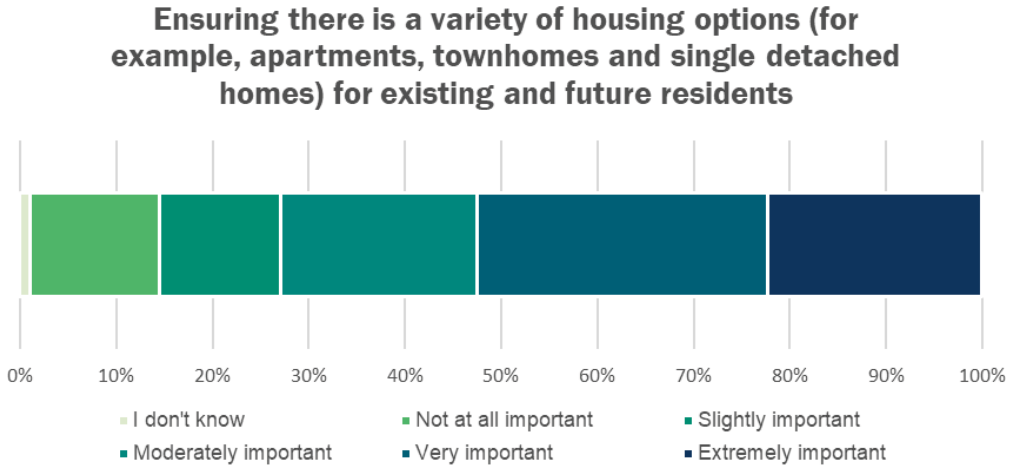

- 61% of respondents indicated that planning new business districts to accommodate a range of major employers is very important or extremely important.



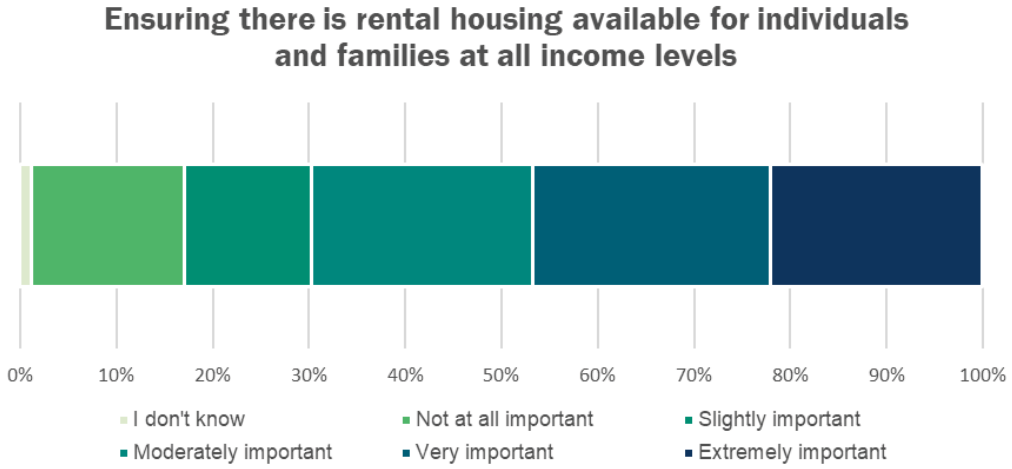
### Theme 2: Housing

Almost three-quarters of the homes in St. Albert are single-detached houses. The supply of rental housing has been increasing over the years, but rent is generally higher than other Alberta cities relative to the cost of owning a home.

- 53% of respondents indicated that ensuring there is a variety of housing options for existing and future residents is very important or extremely important.



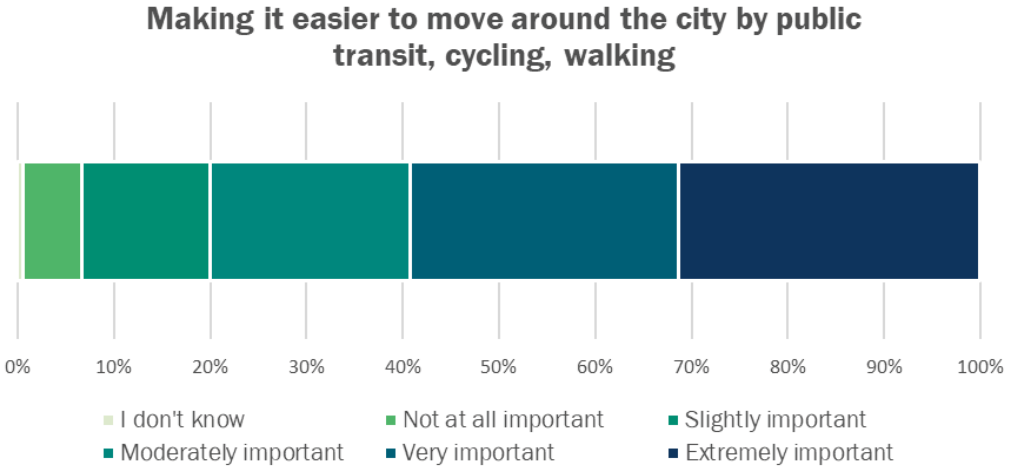

- 47% of respondents indicated that ensuring there is rental housing available for individuals and families at all income levels is very important to extremely important.



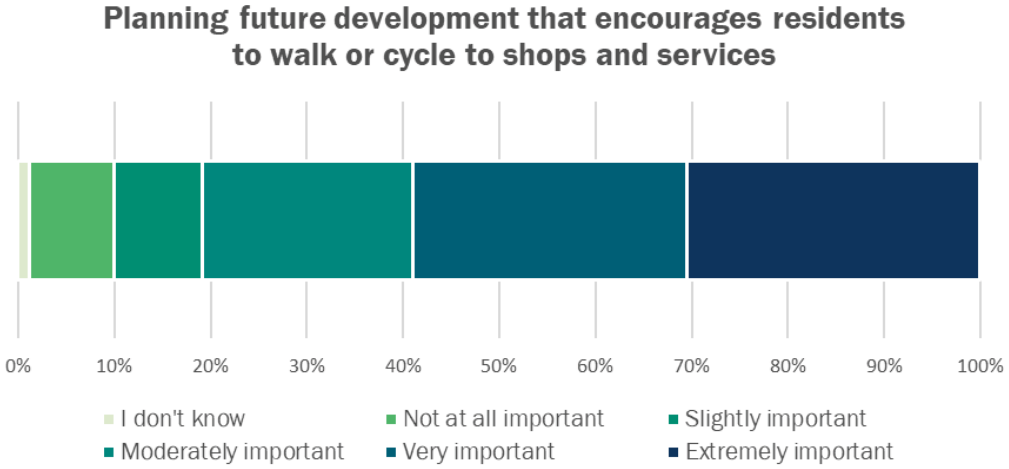
### Theme 3: Moving Around

Many St. Albert residents rely on private vehicles to get around. One of the reasons for this being that shops and services are not within walking or cycling distance of where most people live.

- 60% of respondents indicated that making it easier to move around the city by public transit, cycling and walking was very important or extremely important.



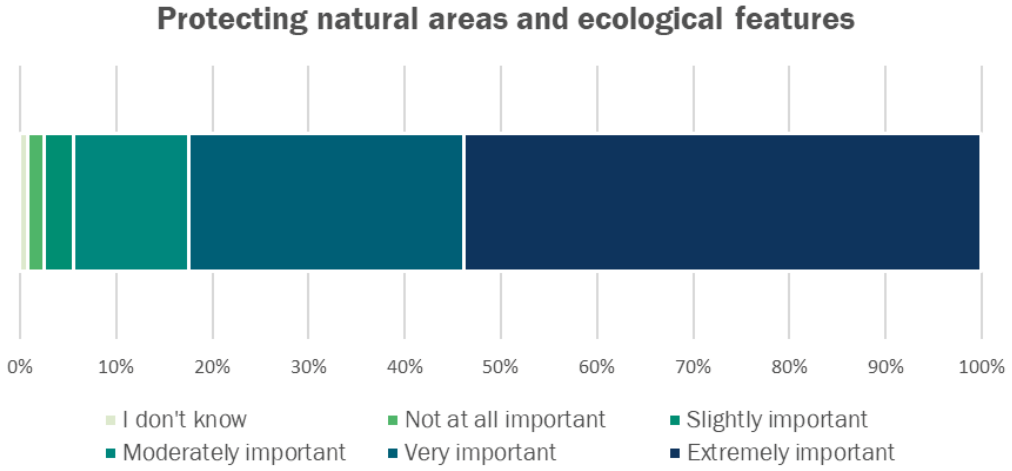

- 60% of respondents indicated that planning future development that encourages residents to walk or cycle to shops and services is very important or extremely important.



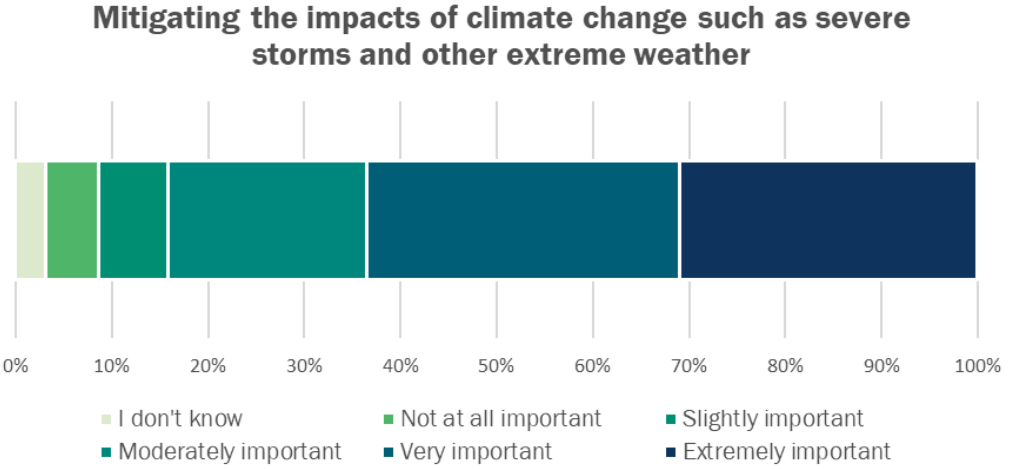
### Theme 4: The Environment

St. Albert enjoys a healthy natural environment, and the Sturgeon River corridor is highly valued. As the city grows and further develops, natural features may be affected and the impacts of climate change are expected to be more severe in the future.

- 83% of respondents indicated that protecting natural areas and ecological features was very important or extremely important.



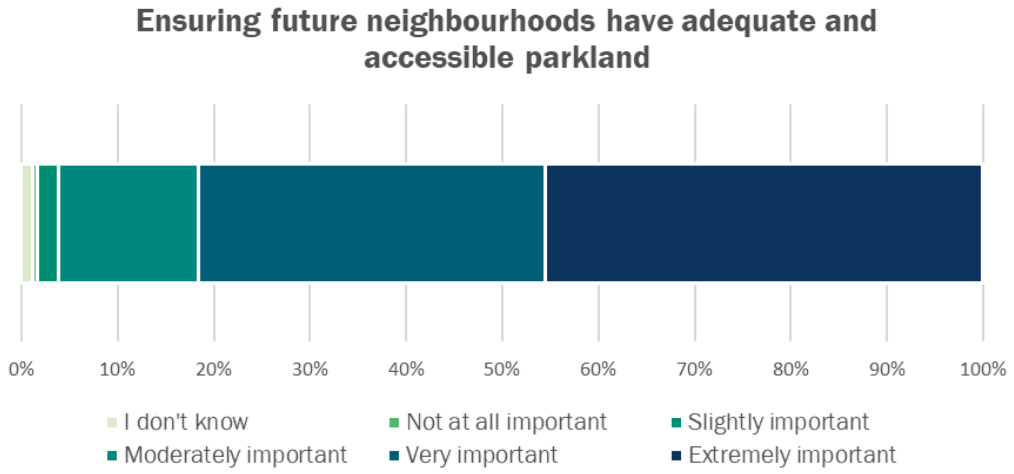

- 66% of participants indicated that mitigating impacts of climate change such as severe storms and other extreme weather was very important or extremely important.



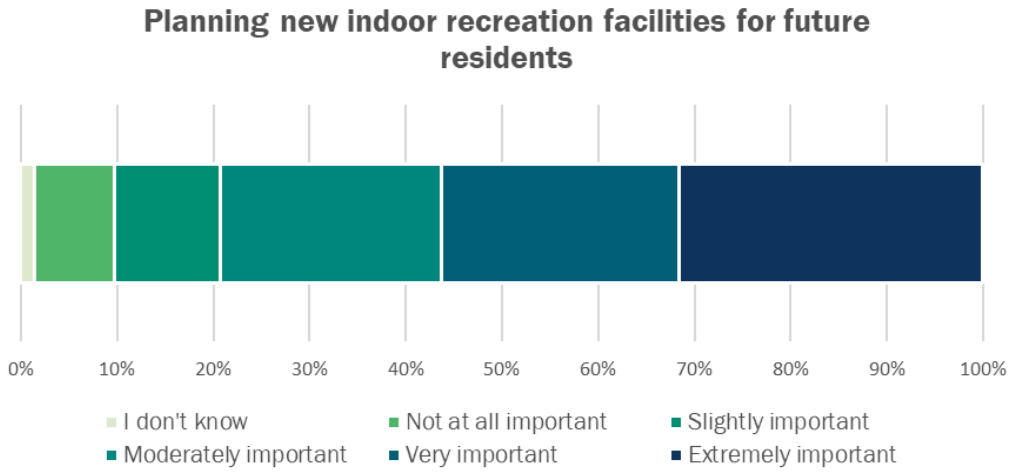
### Theme 5: Recreation

St. Albert has many parks, recreational facilities, and trails which provide the community a variety of recreational opportunities.

- 82% of participants indicated that ensuring neighbourhoods have adequate and accessible parkland is very important or extremely important.



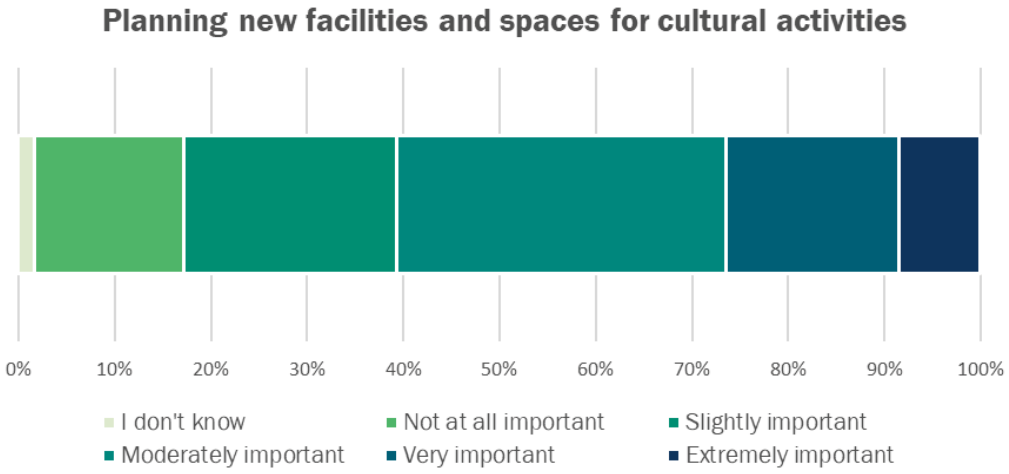

- 57% of participants indicated that planning new indoor recreation facilities for future residents was very important or extremely important.



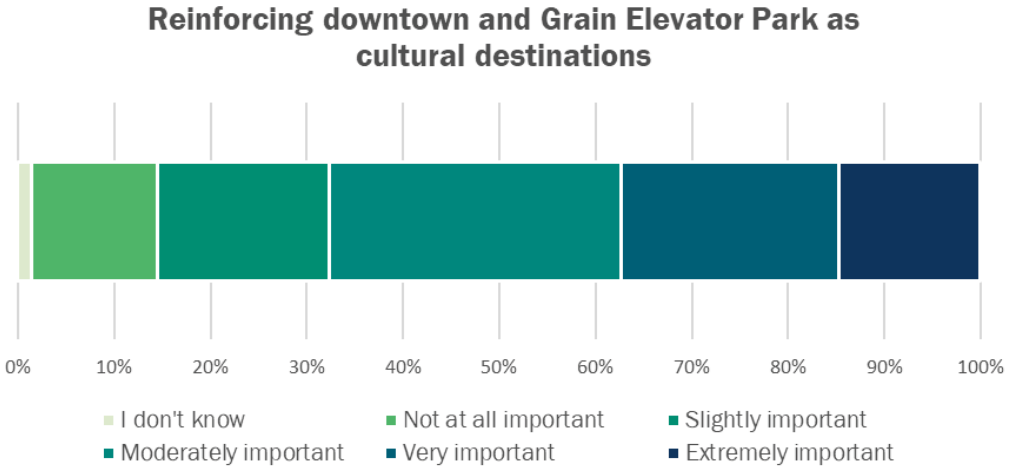
### Theme 6: Culture and Heritage

St. Albert's heritage and its cultural facilities, events and programs are great assets for the community.

- 27% of respondents indicated that planning new facilities and spaces for cultural activities was very important or extremely important.




- 38% of respondents indicated that reinforcing downtown and Grain Elevator Park as cultural destinations were very important or extremely important.



## 2.5 Pop-up Engagement

### Level of Engagement: Inform and Consult

Pop-up engagement occurred at key community gathering places with interactive panels and handouts to raise awareness for the project and gather high-level feedback from a range of people. City staff were on hand to provide information, address questions, and engage residents one-on-one. The focus of pop-up engagement was on informing and promoting the MDP project and other engagement activities, although some input was recieved via one-on-one conversations.

Four pop-up events took place during this phase of engagement. Participants at the pop-up events were asked to provide their feedback on issues and ideas regarding key topics for the MDP. They were also encouraged to provide feedback via the online questionnaire. A mapping activity was used to provide participants with an opportunity to indicate areas where they live, their favourite places and areas of needed improvement using different coloured dots (see image on page 11).

#### Engagement Themes:

##### MOVING AROUND

- Traffic is an issue in St. Albert specifically on St. Albert Trail.
- Sidewalks need to be better designed, maintained and cleared of snow to make it more accessible, inviting and safe for people to walk.
- Transit service, connectivity and frequency needs to be improved in order to encourage more people to take transit.

##### HOUSING

- Housing costs and property taxes are high in St. Albert- more affordable housing options are needed for youth, seniors and those with lower incomes.
- Higher density housing options are needed and should be located in locations where there is a need and near transit and amenities.

##### THE ECONOMY

- St. Albert needs to attract commercial and industrial businesses to locate to St. Albert to offset taxes and provide more options for people in St. Albert to access services, shop and work in St. Albert.

##### THE ENVIRONMENT

- The river valley and natural resources should be protected.

##### RECREATION, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

- St. Albert is a great place to live and for families and people of all ages.

City of St. Albert
Cultivate Life

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GROWING TO 100K

City of St. Albert Municipal Development Plan

# Phase 1 Engagement Report

## Appendix A: Community Engagement Advertising and Promotional Materials

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# CITY SUMMIT
# NOVEMBER 14 - 15

## HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF ST. ALBERT!

We need your input to create a new Municipal Development Plan that will shape how our city grows and develops to a population of 100,000.

## FREE EVENTS

**Kick-Off Event, Nov 14, 6 - 9 p.m., Enjoy Centre**
Hear Gold Medalist Marc Kennedy and other community builders share their inspiring ideas for St. Albert. Free child-minding activities.

**Workshops, Nov 15, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. or 1 - 4 p.m., St. Albert Curling Club**
Discuss how St. Albert can become an even better place to live, work and play.

**Open House, Nov 15, 5:30 - 8 p.m., St. Albert Curling Club**
Share your ideas for enhancing the city.



For details and to **register**, visit:
**stalbert.ca/mdp**

stalbert.ca

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Cultivate Life

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GROWING TO 100K



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## FREE EVENTS

**Kick-Off Event featuring Gold-Medal Curler Marc Kennedy,**
Nov 14, 6 - 9 p.m., Enjoy Centre

**Planning Workshops,**
Nov 15, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. and 1 - 4 p.m.,
St. Albert Curling Club

**Open House with free pizza,**
Nov 15, 5:30 - 8 p.m.,
St. Albert Curling Club

## For details and to register, visit:
## stalbert.ca/mdp

# MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



## HELP US PLAN HOW WE GROW TO 100,000 PEOPLE

City of St. Albert
Celebrate Life

SAVE THE DATE

## MDP WEBSITE LAUNCH

October 18, 2018

Stay up-to-date with MDP updates and activities!

**STALBERT.CA/MDP**



## MDP SUMMIT

November 14, 2018

Location: Glasshouse Bistro, The Enjoy Centre

## WORKSHOPS AND OPEN HOUSE

November 15, 2018

Location: St. Albert Curling Club