



# PRESS RELEASE

## **Business and community organizations launch plan to make Downtown friendlier for walking and rolling**

*Formerly at odds on proposed 102 Ave. vehicular closure, these groups have partnered to release a joint Downtown Pedestrianization Plan and hope to receive the support of City Hall*

**November 1, 2023 (Edmonton, Alberta)** – Today, leaders from several downtown organizations gathered at an event on Rice Howard Way to officially launch a Downtown Pedestrianization Plan. The plan outlines nine actions that create a better level of accessibility and safety for all Edmontonians to “walk and roll,” whether in the form of walking, biking, driving, using mobility aids, or taking your other favourite wheeled transportation method.

Co-created by the Urban Development Institute (UDI) – Edmonton Metro and Paths for People, and endorsed by the Edmonton Downtown Business Association, Downtown Edmonton Community League and Downtown Recovery Coalition, the plan identifies shared interests and quick wins that can be implemented in collaboration with the City of Edmonton.

This plan comes in response to the debate around the future of 102 Ave., which prompted many ideas and perspectives on what pedestrianization in the downtown should and can look like. While different organizations had contrasting perspectives on whether the 102 Ave. proposal would be successful, all stakeholders agreed that Edmontonians deserve a downtown that is a fun and friendly place to walk and roll around.

In February of this year, Council decided not to move forward with a pilot to close the street to cars. The debate and discussion on the issue is what inspired UDI – Edmonton Metro and Paths for People to work together to identify solutions to create a more interesting, enjoyable, and attractive pedestrian experience downtown. Their work aims to answer the question “How do we create safe, accessible spaces that serve everyone in our core?”

Later this year, Edmonton’s Urban Planning Committee will discuss a report from City Administration on opportunities for temporary street closures downtown. Downtown organizations urge the City to consider the Downtown Pedestrianization Plan actions, as follows:

1. Implement shared and open streets downtown by targeting immediate improvements to places like Rice Howard Way and 104 Street.
2. Expand sidewalks for increased accessibility, in addition to supporting patios, benches and trees.
3. Encourage developers to integrate public and private space to increase connectivity.
4. Enforce and support heightened standards for construction detours through better communication and signage, more consistent waste cleaning, and enhanced snow and ice clearing through public-private partnerships.
5. Elevate streetscape expectations by prioritizing vibrancy and infrastructure initiatives in main corridors.
6. Enhance LRT entrances with wider stairwells, clearer sightlines, and more amenities.
7. Upgrade cycling infrastructure to reduce car/bike and pedestrian/bike conflict.

8. Utilize heightened design and operational standards upon implementation of shared streets for the safety of pedestrians.
9. Continue to shift perspectives on parking and driving while recognizing that driving and parking will continue to be an available transportation mode to reach downtown even if street access, as we know it now, changes.

*Quotes from partners:*

**Jason Syvixay, Director of Metropolitan Strategy and Advocacy, UDI – Edmonton Metro**

- “What we learned from the 102 Avenue debate is that if we focus on only a small stretch of the downtown, we lose sight of the bigger picture. Our plan presents a more holistic vision of what pedestrianization can look like, with actions that have been created by a range of organizations. Together, we have thoughtfully considered and compromised on priorities and how to move forward.”

**Stephen Raitz, Chair of Paths for People.**

- “We began this work by focusing on three big ideas to guide the plan and specific tactics. The first was a fun and friendly pedestrian experience year-round. We all want to walk and roll around a downtown that is alive and well in all seasons. The second was connectivity to places of interest with well-built and well-maintained infrastructure that lets us get where we need consistently. The final was accommodating all modes of transportation, while emphasizing pedestrian experience. We know a plan is only as good as its implementation, which is why it’s so important we have our partners taking the lead and supporting on these actions. We are all committed to working with the City to embed these ideas into operational work plans and make these actions a reality.”

**Puneeta McBryan, Executive Director, Edmonton Downtown Business Association**

- “A thriving downtown is a highly walkable, attractive, and enjoyable one. We are so excited to support this plan, and one of the actions in the plan that we are excited about exploring further is public-private partnerships to manage cleanliness improvement initiatives.”

**Alexandra Hryciw, Chair, Downtown Recovery Coalition**

- “A vibrant and welcoming downtown should be highly accessible and easy to navigate – simple table stakes that benefit everyone. When we talk about pedestrianization, it has to include the view points of all community members, including residents, business, the arts sector and so much more. That’s why this report is so unique and we’re collectively excited about it.”

**Cheryl Probert, President, Downtown Edmonton Community League**

- “Prioritizing the mobility of residents and visitors first is critical to the success of our downtown. Actions in the plan that point to urban features like expanding our tree canopy and streetscape will ensure people stay and linger longer in the core.”

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