



North Mount Pleasant Art Centre Area Improvements

Stakeholder Report Back: What we Heard
July 2021

Project Description

The project addresses the area surrounding North Mount Pleasant Arts Centre with the goal to improve the Centre site with a new outdoor programmable space with a redesigned accessible community garden. The Centre will also be equipped with a new accessible pottery wheel.

The North Mount Pleasant Arts Centre is located at 523 27 Ave NW.



Information regarding sidewalk and pathway improvements in the area were also provided to public engagement participants. These improvements included significant missing connections such as sidewalks and a pathway to increase accessibility, improve safety and create connectivity.

This project is part of the [Established Areas Growth and Change Strategy](#), a program that provides funding to support short-term (1-3 years) public realm improvement projects in established communities where growth and change are happening.

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North Mount Pleasant Arts Centre – Programable Outdoor Space

Key stakeholder meetings

Key Stakeholder Meeting #1

The design team from Dialog Design met virtually with key stakeholders twice to gain an understanding of the main themes and design elements that would enhance the project. [The Dialog Design team report of the first meeting can be found here.](#)

The key themes/ design elements identified during the first session held on May 12, 2021 included:

- Community
- Identity
- Artists
- And Safety & Comfort



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These four themes were further classified into sub-themes that the consulting firm incorporated into two design options. Those subthemes were:

Community:

Explore elements that enhanced a sense of community in the space. Such as:

- Hub of activities
- Gathering spaces
- Opportunities to host events
- Accessible gardens
- Opportunities for play
- Programmable and nonprogrammable spaces
- Equitable access
- Welcoming environment

Identity:

Explore elements that create a sense of identity for the space. Such as:

- Site Legibility (the designed features of the environment aid people in creating an effective mental image of the spatial relationships)
- Inviting atmosphere
- Local community destination
- Enhances profile and historical designation
- Welcoming Gateway/entrance to community
- Placemaking

Artists:

Explore elements that enhance creativity by provide artists the opportunity to:

- Gather
- Work
- Showcase their work
- Increase their profile
- Share
- Use/function: storage/etc.

Safety & Comfort:

Explore elements that enhance the safety and comfort of users of the space. Such as:

- Views & permeability



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- Seating
- Lighting
- Wayfinding
- Access & circulation
- 4 season use & microclimate consideration

Key Stakeholder Meeting #2

A second Key stakeholder session was then held virtually on July 14, 2021 to review and seek feedback on the two design options. [The Dialog Design team report of the second meeting can be found here.](#)

The questions asked were:

Option 1(Formal Layout)

- What do you like about option 1?
- What would you do to improve option 1?
- Do you feel that this design encompasses the for key themes/ design elements?
(Community, Identity, Artists, And Safety and Comfort)

Option 2(Organic Layout)

- What do you like about option 2?
- What would you do to improve option 2?
- Do you feel that this design encompasses the for key themes/ design elements?
(Community, Identity, Artists, And Safety and Comfort)

Main Themes

- All agreed that the Design Principles of **Community / Identity / Artists / Comfort & Safety** were indicative of the themes generated during the first Stakeholder Engagement Meeting.
- All agreed that the Concept Design Options presented were demonstrative of these Design Principles, with exceptions noted only where the scope of Conceptual Design limited the amount of detail (eg. Lighting design or detailed Community Garden layout would be considered at later stages in the design process)

Most Liked Features:

- 4th Street Treatment, including pedestrian connections into the site, increasing visibility of the facility, screening of parking, and creating interest with the gateway features
- Landforms in the softsurface open space
- Zen garden, including the art display opportunities, play opportunity, and informal seating and gathering opportunities
- Integration of informal seating steps with both the field and the multiuse area
- Increased seating options



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- Corner Seating Area with fountain feature
- Access and circulation features
- Increased visual and physical permeability to the back area of the site

Most Noted Concerns with Concept Design:

- Excessive hard surface
- Reduced open space for play in the soft surface open area

Most Noted Considerations for the Detailed Design Phase:

- Community Garden layout and integration
- Maintenance (snow removal)
- Lighting and safety
- Advancement of barrier-free details and wayfinding
- Parking area drainage
- Permeable paving

Preferred from Option 1:

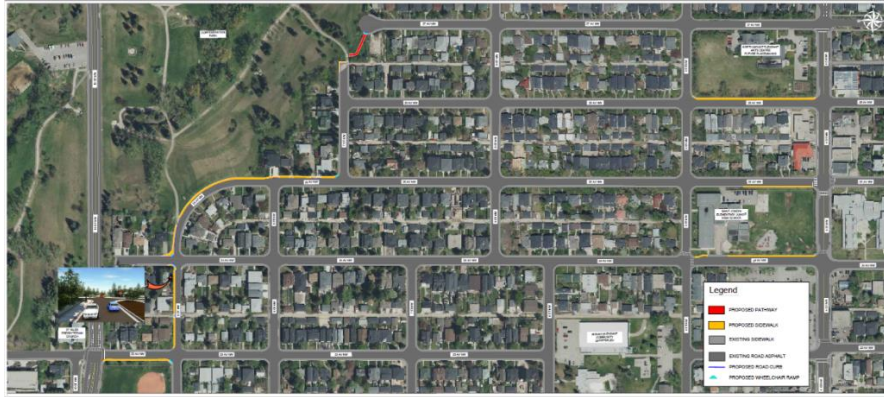
- Many felt there appeared to be more open play area East-West within the soft surface
- Many felt there appeared to be less hard surface
- Linear paths could be easier for wayfinding for visually impaired, although this could be mitigated with detailed design
- Some felt the linear paths could make snow removal easier, though this would be dependent on specific maintenance practices
- Some felt it could be easier to set up programmed events in the more predictably shaped spaces
- Some prefer the consolidated Zen Garden

Preferred from Option 2:

- Landform provides interest, dimension and seating/performance opportunities
- Some liked the organic elements and natural flow better than the linear organization
- Many felt the elements were more integrated overall
- Some felt it to be more integrated with the Community Garden
- Some felt it to be more integrated with the soft surface
- Some felt there were more opportunities for unprogrammed gathering
- Some prefer the unconsolidated Zen Garden

Sidewalk and pathway improvements

Additionally, information regarding Sidewalk and pathway improvements in the area were provided to public engagement participants. These improvements included significant missing connections such as sidewalks and a pathway to increase accessibility, improve safety and create connectivity.



New sidewalks and pathway missing links:

- 25th Ave. between Seventh & Ninth St. N.W.
- 24th Ave. & 25th Ave. between Fourth & Fifth St. N.W.
- Sidewalk and pathway connecting Seventh St. to 27th Ave. N.W.
- 26th Ave. between Fourth & Fifth St. N.W. (south side of Arts Centre)
- 23rd Ave. between Ninth & 10th St. N.W.
- Ninth St. from 24th Ave. to 23rd Ave

Online public engagement overview

Given physical distancing considerations due to COVID-19, engagement was completed online. All responses can be found in the verbatim section. The online public engagement can be found here (<https://engage.calgary.ca/NMPAC>) and was open from July 18 to July 9, 2021.

What we asked

Respondents were asked to [review the two design options](#) (Formal Layout / Organic Layout) and then answer two questions for each option.

Those questions were:

- What do you like about the formal layout?
- What would you do to improve the formal layout?
and
- What do you like about the organic layout?
- What would you do to improve the organic layout?



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What we heard

The themes outlined in this section represent those that were mentioned by respondents. All written comments have been reviewed by the project team and have been included in the Verbatim Comments section of this report.

The engagement was active from June 18th, 2021 to July 9th, 2021 and collected 69 contributions from 67 respondents. Most respondents favored **Option 2 - Organic layout**, noting the greater artistic flair of the design and a greater sense of flow.

Summary of Input

Option 1 – Formal Design

What do you like about the formal layout?

Theme	Example responses
Design structure/ flow	<p>Respondents commented that there were appealing features in this option.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I really like this option. It uses the space very well and visually is very pleasing.” • “I like the seating options and several Distinct areas that serve diverse purposes.” • “It’s inclusive and age friendly.”
Fountain / Water feature	<p>Respondents described a preference for the fountain / water feature.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “LOVE the water/fountain feature” • “I appreciate the inclusion of a fountain.” • “I like the fountain”
Shade structure	<p>Respondents appreciated the larger shaded seating described in this option.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The shade area is much larger than in the organic layout.” • “Shade structure appears more robust” • “the benefits of shade and areas for rest and creativity.”



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Seating areas	<p>Respondents commented on seating areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Shaded areas with the square bench seating” • “Lots of picnic/seating areas.”
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What would you do to improve the formal layout? Please tell us why.

Theme	Example responses
Too square / structured	<p>Respondents suggested that this option appeared to be too formal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Too square and looks less usable than the organic layout” • “It is maybe a bit too structured and doesn't promote flow throughout the space.” • “It looks rigid. The organic layout brings more flow.”
Amenities	<p>Respondents suggested several amenities that would enhance the user experience. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coffee, • farmer’s market, • concerts/ performance space, • community pantry, • public art, • and rentable outdoor play kits

What do you like about the organic layout?

Theme	Example responses
Design structure/ flow	<p>Most respondents found the organic layout more appealing and like the flow of the site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It fits with the spirit of the arts centre - non-conforming, flowing - more “creativity inspiring”



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “More interesting, less imposing, feels more in-keeping with the arts focus. Allows users to wander and find new views around each turn.” • “It evokes a sense of creativity and looks like a fun place where kids any play, be imaginative, and explore while fueling the creativity of adults to “colour outside the lines.” • “The flow of the design fits with the natural zen garden and general aura of creativity that an art centre should have. The raised fluid land forms in the green space are a lovely addition.”
Shade Structure	<p>Respondents commented that they preferred the size of the shade structure in the formal layout, preferring a larger structure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I love everything about this layout except for the very narrow shade structure. This needs to be wider to provide a much larger shaded area.” • “I think a shade structure is very important to have. I could see a lot of people having picnics in this area”
Less hard surface	<p>Respondents commented on the size of the hard surface areas, preferring that they be reduced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Green space, more natural and organic layout. More beautiful than the other option.”

What would you do to improve the organic layout? Please tell us why.

Theme	Example responses
Water feature / fountain	<p>Respondents indicated that they would like to see a water feature / fountain incorporated into the organic design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Could there also be a fountain with the organic layout? A water feature would add so much to the space!” • “adding a fountain or a rain garden. If you go organic, make it reflective of our environment.” • “A water feature would be nice.”



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<p>More shade / seating</p>	<p>Respondents shared that they would like to see more seating/shade areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Broaden the shade structure so that it provides better coverage. Include some seating with backs, instead of just benches. Older people, people with back problems, and nursing mum’s will be appreciative.” • “Consider layout and amount of available seating/tables (increase)” • “A couple of bench/tables for eating? If they can be shaded it would be great”
<p>Greater integration of the community garden</p>	<p>Respondents would like to see greater integration of the community garden in the design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “like a more integrated design layout where the community garden becomes part of the open space.” • “anything to increase the size of or improve layout of the garden would be a great thing to see.” • “Add fruit trees around the garden (apple, pear, cherry, etc.)”
<p>Amenities / activities</p>	<p>Respondents also offered several suggestions regarding additional amenities and activities. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coffee, • farmer’s market, • concerts/ performance space, • community pantry, • public art, • and rentable outdoor play kits

Appendix 1 - Verbatim Comments

[The verbatim comments from Phase 1 can be found here \(PDF\).](#)

Appendix 2 – Concept Renderings

[The concept renderings of the two options can be found here \(PDF\).](#)



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Next steps

The input provided in this phase of the engagement has been shared with the project team and will be used to inform the final design concept. Dialog Design will hold a third key stakeholder session to ensure the theme areas raised in previous key stakeholder meetings and have been into addressed in the final design and will be posted to <https://engage.calgary.ca/NMPAC> for review once complete.