



Kensington Plaza Open Space Project

Stakeholder Report Back: What we Heard

May 2022

Project overview

Phase 3 of the Kensington Area Improvement project brought forward proposed public space upgrades and additions to the Kensington Plaza to improve the site as a hub of community activities, enhancing the social, physical and mental well-being of residents and better supporting local businesses.

What are our goals for the design of this area?

- Create a safe and comfortable space for people to gather.
- Support the needs of local businesses.
- Bring forward features prioritized through the phase 2 public engagement process, such as enhanced shade and seating areas, and improved sidewalks. A key goal of this design is enhancing Kensington Plaza as a destination, gathering point and flexible-use community space in the neighbourhood's vibrant business district.

Engagement overview

This phase of engagement was conducted entirely online through The City's Engage Portal (<https://engage.calgary.ca/kensingtonarea>). Public feedback was accepted from April 18 – to May 6, 2022. Residents of Sunnyside, Hillhurst, West Hillhurst and Hounsfield Heights/Briar Hill were sent a postcard, notifying them of Phase 3 engagement for the project. In addition, residents and people transiting through the Riley Area were made aware of the project through sounding boards and sandwich boards as well as a social media campaign. The project team met with community association representatives from the above listed communities in advance of the Phase 3 launch. A project email address was set up to field citizen questions and concerns regarding the project and engagement opportunity.

What we asked

Phase 3 engagement for the Kensington Area Improvements project built upon previous phases of engagement as well as subsequent technical analysis and cost considerations to provide updated proposed designs for a short list of area projects, including the Kensington Plaza.

The project materials on the Engage Portal page included illustrations of prospective design elements such as lighting, benches and seating platforms, additional trees and waste reciprocals. The design presented was refined beyond the illustrations provided in Phase 2 (August 2021). Stakeholders were asked if they felt the design met the improvement goals and if they had any final suggestions or comments before the project potentially progressed to construction.



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What we heard

The plaza was consistently recognized as an important landmark in the Kensington business district with the potential to be an enhanced and formalized community gathering space. The top three participant themes regarding the proposed design and its alignment to the project goals were:

- The top theme from participant comments was general support for investment at the Plaza site and feedback indicated the area is a highly visible location with the potential to become a community destination.
- Suggestions for added seating, programming features, bike parking, greenery and landscaping were commonly raised by citizens as a way to increase the gathering and recreational potential of the space.
- Citizens brought forward ideas related to programming possibilities on the site and ways to support future performance and entertainment activities on the site.

The most common theme in public feedback was general support for investment in Kensington Plaza. Stakeholders felt the proposed changes brought forward in Phase 3 met the improvement goals. Supportive respondents encouraged The City to consider extending the pedestrian-focused benefits to Kensington Crescent. Participants also drew attention to the Kensington business community and the role the Plaza can play in promoting and integrating with commercial business. Oppositional comments related to the cost of implementation, the potential for social disorder with added seating and/or areas for people to hide, and opinions that the proposed changes did not align with the character of Kensington.

For a detailed summary of the input that was provided, please see the [Summary of Input](#) section.

For a verbatim listing of all the input that was provided, please see the [Verbatim Responses](#) section.

Next steps

The public feedback received during this phase of engagement will be used in conjunction with technical analysis and cost considerations to select which projects will be carried forward to construction. Kensington Plaza is one of seven projects brought forward in Phase 3 and all projects are dependent on funding availability and technical feasibility. The public can expect construction on prioritized projects to begin during the summer of 2022 and carry on into 2023.



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Summary of Input

| Category | Response Summary |
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| General support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most frequently cited theme for Kensington Plaza feedback provided general support for investment in this public space. Many stakeholders who provided support for the project also made suggestions for keeping the site level and accessible, ensuring there were no hidden spaces and ensuring the maximum amount of greenery and trees were installed on the site. Stakeholders indicated that the presented design met the stated goals for the Kensington Plaza. |
| Added seating, greenery and streetscaping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were supportive comments for added gathering features and natural greenery. A few comments indicated that secured or affixed street furniture was ideal for the setting. Features that supported local businesses, such as picnic areas for takeout, received positive responses. Landscaping and tree planting were referenced as aesthetically pleasing addition but required adequate maintenance. |
| Entertainment and programming considerations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A group of stakeholders recommended the integration of features that supported recreation such as ping pong tables. A few participants inquired what accommodations would be made for performers or buskers (e.g. electrical access or stage platform). |
| Public art | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants expressed enthusiasm for the installation of public art. A few comments inquired about the artist selection process for potential public art installations and indicated the art should meld with the community vibe in Kensington. |
| Bike parking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parking allocation for bikes and scooters was referenced by stakeholders as an important added amenity to the plaza and tied to observations of people biking to the Kensington commercial district. |
| Local business integration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders specified that the plaza improvements should be done in consultation with local businesses and the Kensington BIA and be designed to support the business community. |
| Kensington Crescent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments in this category recommended integrating Kensington Crescent into the plaza design. A few comments suggested the crescent area becoming a pedestrian esplanade to extend the Plaza's pedestrian zone. |
| Design unclear | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small group of participants were unable to understand the images in the concept design and requested more detail. |



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| Oppositional comments | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oppositional comments referenced drawn-out timelines to see changes, potential for social disorder and inquiries regarding the project budget. |
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Verbatim Comments

Verbatim comments presented here include all feedback, suggestions, comments and messages that were collected online and in-person through the engagement described in this report. All input has been reviewed and provided to Project Teams to be considered in decision making for the project.

Any personal identifying information has been removed from the verbatim comments presented here. Comments or portions of comments that contain profanity, or that are not in compliance with the [City's Respectful Workplace Policy](#) or [Online Tool Moderation Practice](#), have also been removed from participant submissions.

Wherever possible the remainder of the submissions remains. No other edits to the feedback have been made, and the verbatim comments are as received. As a result, some of the content in this verbatim record may still be considered offensive or distasteful to some readers.

What do you like about the space, or what would you suggest to make this more of a local landmark or a better community gathering space?

- This is a missed opportunity to close down Kensington Crescent completely and make it a pedestrian-only zone. People would love coming here without the street decorated with cars.
- Consider doing more to narrow the entrance/exit to Kensington Crescent NW and make the texture such that the street feels like part of this space and is able to expand the space for events.
- Consider adding some community historical information & indigenous content
- Looks good. How about some south-facing bench seating across from the current proposed bench seating to allow people to enjoy the sun?
- More vehicle parking
- This is community hub and I'd love to see it used in a way that will promote and encourage usage at local Kensington Road/10 Street businesses. They are they heart of the community.
- Plans look great! ALL sidewalks in the 10th street Kensington road need redoing!!
- Electrical outlets should be available for buskers (only when amplification is allowed by the busking rules!) and for any community events.
- looks really neat. Would love this to be a highlight of a visit to kensington
- I hope the community art feature will integrate some whimsical lighting.
- Looks good. I am not sure if it's in the budget, but it would be nice to see a water fountain added for both people and dogs. One that can also fill bottles.
- Microprint and tiny photo.... hmm, colors will date quickly
- Awesome!



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- Yes. Prioritize durable improvements that are low-maintenance and less prone to graffiti.
- This looks great! Love the scooter/bike parking and the emphasis on community art/events.
- Yes, but I would like for seating to also be placed across from other seating, to enable communication and create a visual impression of a plaza/square (enclosed from more than one side)
- Yes
- I like the idea of improving Kensington Plaza, but the design images are terrible and don't fit the space at all. I think it's important to keep the "homey" vibe. Not turn it into some art-deco space age area. Cozy and artsy is the way to go in this space
- It looks fine but will it be maintained if in condition for use. The city has a habit of installing plantings and letting them go wild and die.
- I support this design and think it meets the improvement goals.
- I support the changes
- This area is becoming super foot-traffic busy which is GREAT for spirit and shops. Like #5 giving some buffer to road & traffic calming as well. This area has lots of potential, it's worth the investment to improve it like this & beyond; it'll be worth it
- Instead of static art, can we install something that allows the community and visitors to interact with it and co-create art? The rock at the U of C that is repainted over and over - something like that, but more deliberate?
- Kind of hard to see what this design is for Kensington Plaza.
- Trees should be on street side to help provide a barrier between plaza seating and street
- I wish the community art area was a bit larger. In addition, I'd like to see the poster area unchanged. Having open access for community members to put up event posters is important.
- How is the community art going to be commissioned and decided upon?
- Yes
- Looks great! Maybe think about incorporating community social handles throughout this new area so the community can share and engage.
- I have no issue with this design. It beautifies the area and doesn't affect traffic. Only issue is there's little to no parking available in this area already
- I really like the Christmas tree idea
- I like it, thank you. It might be nice to have some 3-dimensionality to the paved surface... It could also be nice to have small tables and chairs for lunch, like a square in Spain (or most of western Europe for that matter)
- Yes I like the improvements.
- Looks fine but it would be nice to have a few trees to the north acting as a buffer with Kensington road
- This looks great.
- I support this design.
- Cool lights at night



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- Can the Christmas tree spot double as a fountain in the summer?
- Please incorporate more native plants and pollinator-friendly plants into the landscaping. Also please include a bee-hotel or apiary.
- I don't know if this is part of the planning for this, but closing Kensington Cres. off to cars in the summer months and put more patio space for the restaurants. Turn the road further down into a two-way so that cars can access the parkade
- Love public spaces and public art. Please refrain from so much light pollution in infrastructure.
- I really like this design
- Almost. But no public space is complete without public washrooms. If you want people to gather and enjoy public areas, you must figure out public toilets. This is an equity issue that will only grow.
- Uplifting colourful tasteful Art murals essential from the Art students. More, more for Hillhurst area. Not politically motivated ones.
- From Pages team: Looks great, can't wait! Love trees & seating. Extra waste receptable would be great. Not sure about pavers - they look a bit hyper-modern, which diverges from the old-timey feeling of the neighbourhood, with all of its brick. Thank you!
- Can we totally close the area off to cars!
- You are just missing a "safe consumption site"! The mimes and buskers you expect will just be bag ladies like the rest of Calgary's inner city. I bet you win a big planning award!
- Yes! adding greenery to these areas and making it a gathering-spot will be a great addition.
- Could be a great vibrant place if done well
- Looks good!
- Excellent! A safe place to park bicycles is a great inclusion. This space could potentially use a public washroom? I know that is challenging, but the more we have the less trouble any individual public washroom would cause!
- Nowhere for bike parking?
- Yes, this meets the goals. This will be awesome!
- Yes
- Planters instead of trees would be nicer. I also think that public art within the pavers would be a good idea.
- Yes
- Yes!
- Looks okay. Please ensure that bike parking is high quality and good for all types of bikes including cargo bikes.
- Love the bike parking. Could you put a ping pong table where the religious tree is supposed to go please
- Yes! Love the opportunity for art.
- Will it be unusable space for 3 years like all your other dragged out incompetent parks & public space improvement projects too? Leave it all alone...these spaces do not need "improvements" that render them unusable for years. Finish Bow to Bluff first.



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- I think it could be really helpful to have some tables in the area. There's a lot of takeout in the area so it could be great to have it be a somewhat significant picnic destination on nice days
- I feel it meets the goals, there can never be enough trees and green space.
- Yes. Bike parking requires great bike racks for locking bikes though. Project must ensure that proper racks are used.
- Yes, this meets the stated goals
- No. Too limited, and does little to address the over abundance of roadway in this section relative to the pedestrian traffic.
- Please try to maximize/incorporate as much natural greenery (like Tomkins Park on 17th Ave) and any furniture to be fixed in place vs. free standing. Please have ample garbage bins that are maintained.
- Sadly, I'm disappointed by this design. It feels flat, uninviting and uninspired. Kensington is a creative, active and quirky community and this plaza should better represent that/better connect with the community's character.
- ok
- Please add more trash and recycling receptacles. And make them visible, please! I work in the neighborhood and we are constantly finding cups in our store and being asked for use of our trash because people don't know where the garbage is.
- Seating and trees looks like a useful improvement
- Gladstone Road NW has been asking for traffic control measures for 10 years. Residents are still waiting but money is being spend on this? The City of Calgary turned Gladstone Road into a dangerous drag strip and instead we are getting scooterbike parking
- Yes, love it!
- There is no need a reason to make the scooter parking so prominent, we want to create a walking neighbourhood not a scooter neighbourhood. Great the scooter parking in poppy Plaza let people walk through the neighbourhood.
- This design meets partially the improvement goals -Kensington Rd needs to be redesigned as well in this area (reduce car speed, add bike lanes) so that pedestrians can fully appropriate the space.
- Looks good, simple is good.
- Yes, like the colorful art, lights art for evenings, should be some seating area as a meeting spot and more greenery
- Looking forward to more families & neighbors gathering here & accessing the services in Kensington.
- This is a lovely plan. Please ensure there are no hidden/enclosed spaces that would attract those who loiter or homeless as has been a problem with recent enhancements
- Yes, love it!
- I would like to see Kensington crescent closed to vehicles and then have the plaza expand out on to kensington crescent.
- This would be good. This is an important hub area for the community. This additional bike parking would encourage other modes of transport to the area.



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- Please keep ongoing maintenance and operating costs top of mind in the design.
- Looks good, like the simplicity
- Keep it level!
- Why not put scooter bike parking on the crescent and keep the barrier free parking where it is as long as no Parklet comes back the plan looks okay
- I appreciate the dedicated bike/scooter parking area in the plaza. Please make sure the racks can accommodate adaptive bicycles and cargo bikes.
- No get rid of the cars. Make this a pedestrian realm.
- If you feel a project like this is necessary, this seems fine. The area is already well used as is. Curious what you hope to spend and the positive you think it'll bring.
- Lighting is the key element needed for this project to make visitors feel safe during the evening hours
- Looks good! But, it would be better to have some trees along the Kensington Rd curb. This would improve the sense of enclosure.