



Riley Park – Fitness Area

Stakeholder Report Back: What we Heard

May 2022

Project overview

Phase 3 of the Kensington Area Improvement project brought forward a proposed fitness area to be positioned alongside the Riley Park playground. A fitness park concept was identified in previous rounds of community engagement as an open space priority. Phase 2 public feedback identified citizen priorities were specified climbing and calisthenic equipment, as well as designated seating areas.

What are our goals for the Riley Park Fitness Area?

- A central goal for the fitness area is to ensure the equipment is convenient, versatile, low maintenance and fun for a variety of users.
- Equipment is a complementary and fun amenity in this well-used park.

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 Riley Parks Fitness Area.

The project materials on the Engage Portal page included an aerial layout design of the fitness park and a legend of the proposed equipment pieces (e.g. cargo net, calisthenic rack, push-up bars, etc). 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 Riley Park Fitness Area received a range of comments and opinions from citizens who supported the amenity addition to stakeholders who questioned the need for a fitness area in Riley Park and if the equipment accommodated a wide range of users. The top three participant impression themes regarding the proposed design and its alignment to the project goals were:

- The top theme was general support with stakeholders stating that the equipment illustrated would create a unique park destination. Respondents specified enthusiasm for the climbing net and the parkour feeling emanating from the design.
- The second most frequent comment category focused on equipment accessibility and universality. A group of stakeholders did not feel there were enough low-impact or age-friendly elements in the proposed design and equipment pieces.
- Another predominant theme focused on the necessity of the fitness area. A few stakeholders submitted observations that they had rarely seen other Calgary-based fitness parks well-used and inquired how a need assessment had been conducted.

Overall, the Riley Park Fitness Area received a broad range of public input for Phase 3 engagement. A group of respondents were enthusiastic about the proposal and its unique fitness features that might appeal to a younger demographic. While others provided feedback that the proposed equipment only catered to people of a high fitness level, left out seniors and was not in an appropriate location. Some participants felt the site should be used to host picnic tables and seating to support families visiting the playground space. Feedback was mixed, but the most common theme was general support for the project and indicated the project design met the improvement goals.

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. The Riley Park Fitness Area is one of seven projects brought forward in Phase 3. 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.

Summary of Input

Category	Response Summary
General support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most common theme in public feedback was general support for the project. Stakeholders liked the design and felt it met the improvement goals. A group of participants indicated the fitness area is an amenity that would likely benefit parents and families who are visiting the playground area. Some respondents in support of the project provided suggestions for features such as water fountains, rubber surfacing, slackline set-up, climbing boulders, and a few kids-focused fitness features.
Equipment not accessible for mobility-limited or seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants expressed concern that the Phase 3 designs did not meet the needs of people with limited mobility. Respondents communicated that the equipment looked designed for acrobats or elite athletes. Stakeholders expressed a need for the fitness area to contain low-impact equipment with visible instructions and usage guidelines.
Climbing and parkour features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several comments focused on the climbing net and indicated this feature would be well utilized by fitness enthusiasts young and old. A group of respondents expressed enthusiasm for the parkour concept they felt was provided through the presented design. Positive comments were received regarding these features creating a unique element in Riley Park.
Usage concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders in this category observed other fitness parks in Calgary not being well utilized and questioned the need for this type of amenity in Riley Park.
Location concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants in this category expressed displeasure with the proposed location indicating it was too close to the playground and nearby apartment buildings. There was perceived potential for user conflicts or adults feeling awkward displacing children who might be climbing or playing on the fitness equipment. A few stakeholders indicated the proposed area should be a picnic and/or seating area for parents and caregivers with children at the playground.
Not supportive and/or oppositional comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders who provided critical comments connected their concerns to location selection, the equipment not presenting as versatile to all age groups, and questions regarding the need and projected usage.



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Positive amenity for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants connected the fitness area as an addition that might appeal to a youth demographic. A few comments made suggestions for other youth-focused amenities such as a skateboard skills park.
Add benches, picnic tables or washrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A set of comments made requests for added site features to either replace or complement the fitness area which included benches, shaded picnic tables and a public washroom close to the playground area.

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.

Do you feel this design meets the improvement goals? Do you have any suggestions or final comments before we progress to construction?

- This seems too close to the regular playground. Kids will just want to play on this area too making it awkward for adults. Or maybe this is for parents to use with young kids?
- Fitness is great idea. Just keep the music down.
- Great idea. The exercise area by the Edworthy Park bridge (north side, east of bridge) gets a fair amount of use. Please ensure that the equipment is of sufficient quality that it can be used by people with legitimate interest in challenging exercises.
- Bad location. The condos already overshadow this area & block any winter afternoon sun. Both existing playground & this idea should be moved further North. Add a beginner skatepark for younger kids (hopefully mitigates the wade pool being used in winter)
- Nope! It looks like it's only geared towards 18-24 year olds. I'm older and really don't see anything for me to use. Very disappointing.
- Cargo net will be good for climbing and for increasing physical literacy among young Calgarians.
- Looks good
- Neat concept, I'm not sure I ever seen these being very well used but good idea to place it right by the kid playground. Might end up being a hangout for older kids in the neighborhood too
- This option really only caters to general fitness. The idea of having a thoughtful rock climbing 'bouldering' feature allows flexibility (updates the routes as time progresses) across all skill groups and represents our connection to the rocky mountains.

- Seems to have a lot of bars for weight bearing exercise that would be quite advanced. I've seen other outdoor fitness areas with the pec machine. I would think that could replace one of the many bars
- No. I don't think this equipment is versatile to all age groups. I've been to fitness parks in Canmore, Alberta that have better equipment and more user friendly for me
- Great
- Maybe. The fitness area should be targeted to children (or at least all-ages). Otherwise this will only be used by a few people and become a source of resentment for those who cannot use it.
- I would very likely make use of a fitness area in Riley Park, though I would prefer it be placed just South of 8 Ave NW (51.05930668747067, -114.09100722971783). Doing so would put it closer to the Health Resource Centre and allow expansion later.
- I don't like the idea of placing this so close to the playground at all! More space should be reserved for tables and parents to hang out while being able to keep an eye on little kids
- Yes. Low maintenance (as specified) is important.
- I like that this will be kept just beside the playground. Keeping it as an "adult play space" rather than fully fitness focused would be great. Adults like to play too! A big climbing structure would be fun.
- It should be separate from the playground and away from the tall window-filled condo building to allow for more privacy and thus less self-conscious users which will limit the number of people comfortable using it.
- Do we have data that these outdoor facilities are used. I always see them empty because Calgary doesn't have a good climate for this type of facility. I would rather see covered picnic sites and fire pits at Riley park to promote year round uses.
- Absolutely fantastic idea. Great location for parents next to playground, and for community interactions. Calgary is a fitness city and should be encouraging use of its outdoor spaces like this.
- This project will likely go underutilized much like the fitness area in briar hill near north hill mall which almost never sees use.
- As long as the outdoor fitness area addresses the "type" of people who use Riley Park. Not outdoor ellipticals or bench presses like seen near Angels Cafe- this is not Riley vibe. Think more parkour, slack lining, circus acts even!
- Love this. I feel like it will become an extension to the playground for a lot of the kids but that's not a bad thing
- Should be located away from the playground or it will be full of kids all the time, and adults will feel awkward displacing the kids to use it. Also I wouldn't want to be on display for the apartment building south of this.
- Love the simple design and looking forwards to this. Would like to see adult (taller) water fountains nearby.
- Slack line set ups so people stop using the trees?
- Yes this is fantastic and it would be great to see this built as soon as possible. We anticipate great community use of this space. our only concern will be the parking situation along 12 St NW (north of 5 Ave). There will be a lot of people visiting

- City needs to be careful. Judge Riley provided this park for people/families to enjoy not to reduce park area or limit who can be in the park. No supporting this
- I would like to see 1 or 2 large boulders for climbing please. It would look great and open the space up for the climbing community to enjoy
- Like the fact that it includes climbing net and monkey bars for adults as opposed to traditional adult fitness equipment
- I'm not sure this will be fun for a "Variety" of people. Your photo makes it look like it is built for acrobats!
- This is a great idea. I would also like to see some upgrades for the existing playground with additional swings.
- This is a great idea to enhance the facilities in Riley park. I support the use of rubber surfacing. Please don't use gravel or wood chips
- The callisthenic equipment seems to be just for tall people (not very inclusive); I hope what gets installed has a variety of heights.
- I like this idea, well done.
- Yes, it looks good. I'd really like to see more picnic tables and benches around the playground in general (especially north side)
- Great idea. However, no public space is complete without public washrooms. If you want to activate public spaces and hope people will extend their stay in the area, you must figure out public toilets. This is an equity issue that will only grow.
- Would rather see equipment like the North Hill library fitness park or Canmore fitness park: swinging walkers / x-country skiing. The proposed equipment is very limited.
- A new place for junkies to hang out! See Briar Hill if you think I'm joking. (you know I'm not!)
- Will this have machines like the park behind Northill Fire Station. These are underused in this area but would be great in Riley Park.
- I think that this will be a good inclusion. Some dip bars might be nice to have too!
- Looks like fun
- Yes, this meets the goals. Excited to see these improvements come to life.
- about Riley Park, in general. Paved pathway all around is great for wheelchair users, but we can't get around the gate at the west end of the parking area By the wading pool. There's a step! Make a space here for wheelchair users!
- Yes
- Yea
- This is good, would be nice to add some stuff geared for seniors too. Seating with a back would be good.
- No. Workout equipment seems adequate for children and fitter people. Equipment like the one at Edworthy Park and by the Briar Hill CA seem better suited for users of most abilities.
- The pictures of adults flying they the air are completely unrealistic. My experience of using fitness areas is that the equipment does not allow for heavy enough workout (eg pull-ups)

- How about hiring competent contractors AND sticking to very short construction timeframes? Your bike lane project in Capitol Hill took 2 years to complete and was absolutely horrible to live through...you are doing the same incompetent job on Bow to Bluff
- A dip station would be a good addition to the calisthenic rack. Check out r/bodyweightfitness On reddit for the best guidance
- Yes, as long as the equipment is tall enough for adults. A chin up bar that's too low is worse than no chin up bar at all.
- This meets the goals
- I don't feel that the proposed equipment will be well suited for the use of adults. It seems to me that this would just be an extension of play equipment for the playground.
- Great idea
- This is great. Gladstone Road NW has been asking for traffic control measures for 10 years. Resident can exercise and then get killed on Gladstone Rd, because the City of Calgary turned Gladstone Rd into a dangerous drag strip.
- Yes! Love it!
- I think there should have been more of an all ages including adults and older youth outdoor fitness equipment not just bars and stools
- A great draw for the park!
- Looks good. Another great reason to go to Riley Park. I am a West Hillhurst resident but frequently use Riley Park
- I like it
- Please keep ongoing maintenance and operating costs top of mind in the design.
- This is the one part of the park that is consistently shady. This would be better located literally anywhere else in the park.
- Yes- but there should be a crosswalk across 10 street from Riley park to Bluff rainbow c train underpass
- Also, the calisthenics rack should be designed like wide adult monkey bars.
- The Parallel Bars are not what is indicated in the photo 4. (4 looks the same as the calisthenics rack) They ought be gymnastics style. (For dips!) The calisthenics rack ought be higher than in the photo as well. For pull up/muscle up type exercises.
- Body weight training essentials: Swingset style Rings. Dips bars. Short benches (7) should be box jumps of different heights on solid ground (not gravel, mulch, etc.) Hopefully on recycled rubber surface for impact absorption.
- Looks good
- When the Riley Park pathway was put in a year ago, two picnic tables and benches were lost to the west of the playground. Would love to see some picnic benches restored with this upgrade.
- Parents need seating around the playground area. I hope any that is removed is replaced with two others near by.
- I don't have a problem with the proposal other than to question the need. Most of these types of facilities i see in other locations sit unused at best and vandalized at worst.



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- Nice project, but would prefer greater investment in safer streets instead.