



## Position Statement: Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy

May 28, 2024

The Old Strathcona Business Association (OSBA) fully supports the draft Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy (OSPRS). This strategy represents a long-term investment in our public spaces and infrastructure and will enhance the vibrancy of Old Strathcona for both current and future businesses and patrons. The OSBA board voted to "enthusiastically support" the draft strategy because it closely aligns with the strategic goals and mandate of the Business Improvement Area (BIA), which aims to improve our commercial district through strategies such as beautification, placemaking, and marketing.\* An expenditure of this magnitude, likely in the hundreds of millions of dollars, to enhance the infrastructure and visitor experience of the Old Strathcona BIA is long overdue. The last time a public fund investment of this size occurred was in the 1980s, and our aging infrastructure is in dire need of a major revitalization.

The OSBA has been advocating for the public realm strategy since the finalization of Plan Whyte in 2018. The strategy presents an opportunity to reimagine Whyte Ave and Old Strathcona, enhancing the human scale experience and opportunity to attract private investment and residential development to support the economic vibrancy of the district.

The market research gathered by the City of Edmonton aligns with research conducted by the OSBA. In 2020 and 2021, the OSBA tested an expanded sidewalks project, which repurposed the curb lane as pedestrian space and expanded patio space. This pilot project was extremely popular, with 69% of surveyed respondents expressing support for increased permanent infrastructure along Whyte Avenue. Over the years, visitors have expressed a growing desire for more human-scale infrastructure such as wider sidewalks, improved transit experiences, reduced traffic noise, and more green space.

The Business Association believes that this strategy positions the BIA for the future and demonstrates how the market is evolving. The OSPRS enables Old Strathcona to adapt to changing consumer habits and demands, ensuring that Old Strathcona remains a relevant and lively hub in Edmonton. This project will further establish Old Strathcona as a destination, attracting new customers and future generations to the district for many years to come.

\*results of a carried motion by the OSBA Board of Directors on March 28, 2024