



## Joint Statement: OSBA & Paths for People in Support of OSPRS

The [Old Strathcona Business Association \(OSBA\)](#) and [Paths for People](#) are urging Edmonton City Council to pass the [Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy \(OSPRS\)](#), in an effort to enhance the vibrancy, economic vitality, and productivity of one of our busiest main streets.

Passing this strategy is a crucial commitment to long-term investment in our public spaces and infrastructure and will enhance the vibrancy of Old Strathcona for our current and future residents, businesses, and visitors. In April 2021, the [OSBA conducted a public survey](#) and found that Edmontonians voted Old Strathcona as their favourite main street shopping district. It's clear that Old Strathcona is a beloved area in the City. Within this same study, 74% of respondents indicated they prefer to walk around and explore, rather than just visit one or two places. Pedestrianizing the district is vital to the health and economic vitality of Old Strathcona business district. With studies demonstrating that pedestrian friendly main streets increase economic output ([Strongtowns, 2018](#)), we urgently need to prioritize investment in this area.

The Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy advances the goals of [The City Plan](#) - if we want to achieve 50% of trips by active transportation and cycling, we need to develop the infrastructure to make that accessible to community members of all ages and abilities. Additionally, it pushes forward work outlined in [Breathe](#), [Mass Transit Planning](#), and [Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Strategy](#).

Every trip, even a car trip, begins and ends with a walk or a roll (i.e., walkers, wheelchairs, etc.), meaning high quality infrastructure for walking and rolling is critically important for all users. But right now, sidewalks on Whyte Ave are crumbling and curbs falling apart. Whyte Ave hasn't been renewed since the 1980s- over 40 years ago- and our infrastructure is rapidly deteriorating. The state of infrastructure on our main street is making the area increasingly inaccessible to community members and visitors using mobility aids or pushing strollers.

Edmontonians can't wait 10+ years for the investment and renewal of one of Edmonton's most vibrant and economically viable main streets. The Public Realm Strategy should be advanced and implemented as soon as possible.

Accelerating implementation of the Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy allows us to reach our mode shift goals as outlined within the City Plan & other City of Edmonton policies faster, while also supporting the user experience of those who frequent this area. With Old Strathcona attracting nearly 1 million visitors each year, this investment will accelerate our position as a leader in Canadian tourism, following suit of other major Canadian cities who have pedestrianized their main streets ([CBC, 2024](#)).



Paths for People and Old Strathcona Business Association are urging Edmonton City Council to consider the following within the discussion:

**1. Pass a motion to implement the Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy:**

We need to support the Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy immediately, and city council needs to direct administration to develop a comprehensive plan to execute the strategy.

**2. Alleviate Parking Anxiety:**

Much of the opposition for this project comes from community members who are concerned about the impact to parking in the area. As [demonstrated in studies](#), parking is routinely underutilized in the area, yet people don't know where parking is available. We urge the City to prioritize implementing parking wayfinding tools as soon as possible.

**3. Pedestrianize 83 Ave between 103-104 Street:**

With 83 Ave between 103-104 Street regularly closed to vehicles for festivals and events (for over 30 days a year), this is a quick, easy, and cheap win to accelerate implementation of the Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy by opening the space to pedestrians. This will enhance the area's vibrancy, and allow for more patio expansions, public gathering spaces, and support local businesses.

**4. Accelerate Implementation Speed:**

With Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy only providing the foundation of this work, we need to accelerate funding for this project. At present, this project is expected to take an additional 10+ years before we arrange the capital funding to support its completion. We need to begin design work and construction on this project immediately, and can start with quick wins like pedestrianizing 83 Ave.

**5. Allocate Capital Funding:**

Right now, this project is unfunded. We cannot let this be a plan that sits on the shelf and collects dust. With the City of Edmonton seeing massive numbers of engagement on this project, it is clear that our community wants to see this project come to life ASAP. Additionally, Whyte Ave/99th Street are identified as a [Priority Growth Area](#), therefore allocating capital funding to the Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy will prepare the area for the expected near-term growth.

For further information, please visit the [City of Edmonton website](#), and review [Old Strathcona Business Association's position statement](#).