

BEAUMONT WINTER CITY

Step 2: What We Heard Report



April 2022

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Prepared for the City of Beaumont by DIALOG
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Summary of Feedback

While this report gives a more detailed analysis of what we heard during this phase of engagement, this section provides a summary with the key highlights found in the feedback:

Lighting

One of the most popular ideas for brightening up Beaumont's winter was to add more lighting, to improve both winter aesthetics and safety. Additional lighting in parks, trails and sidewalks was the most popular suggestion to make open spaces more attractive and fun during the winter. There was also interest in extending the time that lights were displayed, and investing in lighting that did not contribute to light pollution, or negatively impact wildlife.

Maintenance/Accessibility

Ensuring proper maintenance of snow and ice is one of the most impactful ways to improve quality of life during the winter. More timely and frequent snow clearing, and better snow clearing enforcement were listed as areas that could be improved. Respondents also recommended increased rink and trail maintenance to encourage more residents to get outdoors.

Programming/Activities

A variety of suggestions for winter programs and activities were listed in the survey responses. Among the most popular were skating and cross-country skiing. Some respondents suggested ways to engage the whole community, such as a city-wide scavenger hunt. In addition to outdoor programming, there was interest in more organized indoor activities, events, and City-run programs.

Accessibility/Inclusivity

The survey results also listed ideas for improving the accessibility and inclusivity of winter programming. While many activities and events in Beaumont cater to families, residents without children felt there needed to be more diverse programming. Responses also highlighted a need for more free winter programming and events to overcome financial barriers to participation.

Transportation

Public Transit

The survey results indicated that many people are either not aware of public transit options in Beaumont or question the need for public transit in the City at all. The primary issues affecting Beaumont's public transit were reliability, frequency of service and lack of routes and stops. Other comments addressed concerns about buses breaking down more frequently during the winter and a need for better snow clearing around bus stops.

Active Transportation

The survey results also helped gauge people's level of comfort with different types of active transportation in the winter. Most respondents were not at all comfortable, or only a little comfortable walking in the city. This number grew significantly when people were asked about their level of comfort cycling during the winter. Responses indicated that having bike lanes with regular snow clearing would improve people's level of comfort substantially.

Marketing/Communications

The survey results suggested that people would like more communication about winter activities, events and services offered in Beaumont. For new residents to the city accessing information may be more of a challenge. Respondents suggested a variety of different media to reach newcomers and improve awareness of the supports available in the community.

To increase foot traffic to local businesses during the winter, different marketing incentives and contests were proposed. Respondents also considered ways to encourage residents to explore different parks and open space in Beaumont, such as a winter parks pass that grants access to rotating park events.

Community/Support

Getting to know your neighbours is one of the key ways to build community resilience. Some individuals who have lived in Beaumont for years admitted to only knowing their immediate neighbours. Respondents were interested in more events, such as block parties, to strengthen relationships in their community. There was also interest in more volunteer opportunities to better support neighbours who are unable to maintain their properties during the winter.

People were also eager to help new residents adjust to life in a northern city. Some suggestions included matching volunteers with newcomers and hosting events to help prepare for the coming season.



Beaumont Family Day Event, 2022

Introduction

Beaumont is preparing a Winter City Strategy that seeks to transform our relationship with winter. The goal of the strategy is to come together as a community and foster a winter environment that is more comfortable, enjoyable and safe for all residents of Beaumont. This strategy is currently under development and is expected to be complete in summer 2022.

Purpose of Engagement

Using our background research, and what we heard from our previous public and stakeholder engagement, we developed three key Focus Areas, each with some Big Ideas that our community can focus on in the short and long term. These Focus Areas and Big Ideas are as follows:

Winter Design

- Neighbourhood Scale
- Urban Design
- Individual Properties

Winter Mobility

- Roadways
- Active Transportation
- Public Transportation

Winter Communities

- Winter Equity
- Winter Programming
- Winter Wellness

We asked Beaumont what they thought about these Focus Areas and Big Ideas, as well as for any ideas for guidelines and action items that can be included in the strategy. This report summarizes what we heard and will be used to develop the draft Winter City Strategy.



Beaumont Family Day Event, 2022

What We Did

Family Day Event – February 21

The Winter City Strategy team set up a booth at Beaumont’s Family Day event at Four Seasons Park. We hosted conversations about the project, encouraged the public to check out the online survey and had a board where participants could write their ideas for the Winter City Strategy.

Online Survey – February 21 to March 7

An online survey was available to the public for two weeks. This survey took participants through the Focus Areas and Big Ideas for the Winter City Strategy and asked questions related to each of them, with the goal of generating ideas for objectives and action items. A paper survey was also available upon request. However, at the time of writing this report, no paper copies were requested or received.

Business and Cultural Committee Session – March 1

The project team held another session with the Business and Cultural Committee, which is composed of local business, event and cultural leaders in Beaumont and surrounding communities. This session was held virtually and focused on the Focus Areas and Big Ideas for the Strategy.



Beaumont Family Day Event, 2022

Results of Engagement

Family Day Event Board Results

The board results from our second public engagement event included several ideas for park activities and amenities. Responses on how Beaumont's parks could be better designed for winter included requests for improved trail maintenance, picnic shelters, fire pits and straw bales at the bottom of Beauvallon Park. There was also interest in more sledding hills and cross-country skiing trails. Other winter activity suggestions included ice walks, ice luges and soccer.

We also asked residents what they wanted to see included in Beaumont's Winter City Strategy. Several people liked the idea of a Bearidge skating rink on 56A Street. There was also interest in outdoor skating rinks without boards to help those learning to skate.

Survey Results

How can we design our buildings to be more attractive in winter?

Lighting

Lighting topped the list of ways to make buildings in Beaumont more attractive. Twinkle lights, holiday lights and festive messages written in lights hanging on business exteriors were a few of the popular responses. People also suggested investing in different lighting to hang on posts and above walkways. Interest in extending the use of festive lighting beyond the winter was also expressed. Programmable LED exterior lighting that could change colour for different events and holidays was proposed as one way to achieve this.

The restaurant Chartier was frequently mentioned in the responses as a good lighting precedent for buildings, as was Edmonton's High Level Bridge and ATB Place. Some respondents moved beyond the more conventional lighting options by suggesting illuminated numbers on buildings or light installations and projections as possible ways to make structures more

Maintenance / Accessibility

Lighting

While most responses about lighting addressed how more could be added around the city, there were concerns about the increased expense, effort and maintenance this would require. Particular concerns included the amount of time and energy it would take to install, as well as ongoing maintenance to replace burnt out lights.

Snow Clearing

Survey responses also made it clear that snow and ice removal have a direct impact on residents' enjoyment of buildings during the winter. Many respondents were concerned with the time it takes for some residents to clear their sidewalks and the negative impacts this has to people with mobility issues. Improving building and sidewalk accessibility was also a priority for parents with children and strollers. One suggestion to improve sidewalk and road conditions mentioned implementing electric snow melting systems on new city properties and roadways.

Architecture

While some survey respondents felt that the buildings in Beaumont were fine the way they are, others envisioned ways to better design buildings for the winter. Some of these building improvements included adding awnings or canopies to protect pedestrians from winter weather, or adopting designs that minimize ice and snow formation around buildings, such as sloped roofs. There were also requests for underground parking, or more accessible, convenient parking closer to buildings.

The idea of adopting a theme for Beaumont's buildings was also quite popular. Suggestions for themes included strengthening Beaumont's French character through architecture, to rustic cabin resort or Swiss/European themes. To further support these themes, it was suggested that volunteers could make wreaths and garlands to decorate buildings. People also recommended brightening buildings with sculptural elements, murals and the use of bright colours.

Building interiors were also addressed in the survey responses. Vestibules with double doors, and a suitable area for taking coats and boots off at entrances were suggested. Respondents also recommended automatic doors to avoid having to touch door handles, something that many of us are now more aware of during the pandemic. The new entrance at the Ken Nichol Regional Recreation Centre was mentioned as an example of good design.

As with lighting, some respondents wanted to ensure that any changes to buildings, such as exterior finishes, would be environmentally friendly. There was also a desire to see more solar panels on buildings to demonstrate that Beaumont is a future-focused city.

Landscape/Urban Design

Suggestions for improving buildings also extended to the landscape around them. Respondents considered ways that planting could be used around buildings and entrances, such as decorative planters and evergreens. There was also interest in outdoor heated patios or heated igloos, such as the ones found at Riverside Bistro in Edmonton. Respondents also expressed a need for more inviting public spaces that had areas for activities and seating, as well as accessible public washrooms that remain open during the winter.

Programming/Activities

Opportunities to increase foot traffic to buildings and businesses during the winter were also discussed. Marketing incentives such as winter attraction passes, reduced fees and outdoor fires and ice sculptures were suggested to encourage more residents to participate. People were also interested in winter-themed decorating contests for businesses or inviting local artists to display their work in shop windows. There was also interest in offering more indoor activities to attract customers, such as cooking, woodworking or repair classes.



Beaumont Family Day Event, 2022

How can we make our parks and open spaces more attractive and fun in the winter?

Lighting

Lighting was again listed as one of the most popular ways to make Beaumont's parks and open spaces more attractive and fun during the winter. Extending the time that lights are up was a popular suggestion. People love the lights used for Brighten up Beaumont and would like to see them remain for more than just one weekend. Lighting was also mentioned as a way to extend the use of spaces during dark winters.

Improving park, trail and sidewalk lighting were common responses. Some respondents had specific roads in mind, such as RRs 241, 243 and TWP 510. Other locations for improved lighting included lighting around ice rinks. In some locations like St. Vital Park rink and the École Coloniale Estates School hill, residents are resorting to lighting outdoor rinks with their own vehicle headlights.

Decorative lighting or colored lights in parks or at the skating loop were popular suggestions. Respondents again stressed the importance of lighting that doesn't contribute to light pollution or negatively impact wildlife.

Maintenance/Accessibility

Survey participants had a lot to express when it came to winter maintenance of parks and open spaces. Snow clearing dominated the responses, followed by maintenance of rinks and trails, as well as issues around dog waste.

Snow Clearing

People were in general agreement that there needed to be higher standards for snow and ice removal in Beaumont. This includes more-timely response after it snows, increased frequency of clearing and more application of grit and de-icer. There were also many calls for better enforcement of snow clearing through bylaws and community peace officers patrolling sidewalks to ensure compliance, as well as issuing tickets to residents who failed to clear their sidewalks.

There were also opinions on the snow clearing process. Some people mentioned that traction agents had been applied to pathways that were then plowed immediately after, scraping off all of the grit. Others noted that infrequent snow clearing was causing ice to form as the snow compacted, and again stressed the need to plow after and during every snowfall to stop the buildup of ice.

Survey results stressed the importance of making pathways and sidewalks accessible for everyone. For people who have limited mobility, or rely on mobility aids, ensuring that sidewalks and paths are clear of snow and ice is crucial for being able to enjoy the season. Parents with strollers also face challenges trying to navigate unplowed sidewalks and paths. There were also calls to remove snow from playgrounds to make them safer for children, as well as benches and picnic tables.

As weather conditions in Alberta continue to change, causing more frequent freeze-thaw cycles, improved snow clearing practices are becoming increasingly important. There were several suggestions advising Beaumont to look at other cities for different approaches to snow clearing, particularly eastern provinces that must deal with more annual snowfall.

Outdoor Ice Rinks and Ski Trails

In addition to better maintenance of roads, sidewalks and paths, there were requests for the City to improve ice rink and cross-country ski trail maintenance. Outdoor ice rinks are often too rough for skaters, and groomed cross-country trails are frequently damaged. There were also calls for the City to take over responsibility for cross-country skiing trail maintenance at the high school, which volunteers and teachers are currently responsible for.

Dog Waste

Cleaning up the dog waste on trails was frequently mentioned, as were methods of encouraging owners to pick up after their dogs, including free dog waste bags and more signage.

Connection / Circulation

The survey results showed an interest in both the creation of more paths and a more connected path system in Beaumont. Respondents also suggested creating skating, snowshoeing or cross-country skiing trail systems that were better connected to existing paths within parks and extended out to other parks and open spaces around the city. One respondent also envisioned “bus-stop type” shelters along these trails to change into gear or escape the winter wind. Like the themed buildings mentioned above, there were also creative ideas involving themed paths with a particular focus, such as holiday decorations, or lights, or the placement of attractions such as murals and art installations along trails.

One respondent suggested that the winter is an excellent time to observe paths and desire lines people create in the snow. This information can play an important role in the planning and design of new trails, or help the City better understand where paths and connections need to be strengthened.

Amenities

The most common adjective used when describing desired winter park amenities was “heated”. Heated public washrooms, change rooms, shelters and gathering spaces topped the list of amenities that could improve parks and open spaces when temperatures plummet. Having a place nearby to warm when taking part in outdoor activities is critical to encouraging higher rates of park use during the winter. For open spaces that can’t be heated, like picnic shelters, structures such as canopies were proposed to protect from the elements.

Safety

A few specific points regarding safety arose from this question. The first concerned the change rooms at Four Seasons Park, which people tend to hang out in during the winter. This can be unsettling, and there were calls for taking the changeroom down altogether. There were also concerns around safety and toboggan hills, specifically at St. Vital Catholic Church, where the hay bales intended to protect people have become dangerous as they harden with ice and snow.

Landscape/Urban Design

An important consideration when designing outdoor spaces for winter is how materials will perform when cold, icy or covered with snow. Several parents expressed concern with metal and plastic play structures that can become very slippery when children are running around in winter boots. Glenbrae Park was mentioned as an example of play structure design that takes this into consideration.

There was also a general need expressed for more garbage cans, picnic tables, benches and areas where people could sit and enjoy watching nearby activities. Parents were particularly keen to have a place to sit and visit while their children play nearby.

Survey responses identified a desire for more green spaces, native plants and trees. Evergreens were noted for their ability to provide both winter interest in the landscape and act as a windbreak against the prevailing winter wind. Other suggestions for designing in a winter climate included considering orientation, such as more south-facing open spaces to maximize sun exposure.



Beaumont Family Day Event, 2022

Programming/Activities

A diverse range of programming and activities were suggested in the survey responses, from building winter cycling infrastructure to winter orienteering courses and winter history walks. There was also a recommendation to create giant snow piles for children to play on, reminding us that it doesn't take much to have fun in the winter.

Skating

One activity that dominated the comments was skating. There was a great deal of interest in increasing the number of community outdoor rinks as well as opening the rinks earlier in the season. There were also calls to bring back the 56A Street skating rink, which was reportedly well used by the community. People enjoyed the fact that the rink was less formal than other ice rinks in Beaumont and attracted people of all ages.

Cross Country Skiing

There was a great deal of interest in cross country skiing trails and possible locations for new groomed tracks. Several people identified golf courses as areas that could support this use and referenced the golf course in Devon as a location that welcomes cross-country skiers. However, respondents acknowledged that there may be challenges implementing this at private golf courses and that there would likely be concerns about damage to turf.

Food/Drink

Food and drink are a big part of the winter season. While hot chocolate seemed to go hand in hand with just about every winter activity proposed, there were also other suggestions for food trucks, drink stands and outdoor markets in parks. The idea of a culinary festival was also suggested.

Competitions

Adding a bit of healthy competition to winter programming and activities was a popular suggestion. Ideas included snowshoe races, ice sculpture and snowman building contests and outdoor treasure hunts that would attract more visitors to Beaumont's parks.

Rentals

People were also interested in more opportunities to rent equipment such as snowshoes, skates, skis and stones for curling. The old concession building in Four Seasons Park was put forward as a possible location for equipment rentals.

Do you have any other ideas on how we can improve the winter experience in Beaumont through the design of our buildings, parks or other areas in the city?

Landscape/Urban Design

New developments in the Beaumont area were seen as opportunities to both expand and plan new trail systems. It was proposed that these trails could be potential new locations for special sporting events, attracting visitors in both the winter and summer to Beaumont.

Although larger parks tended to get more attention, some respondents wanted to express their fondness for small neighbourhood parks. One resident mentioned two small playgrounds that were much loved in their neighbourhood had been removed, leaving their family with fewer options for local outdoor play.

Connection/Circulation

The theme of connection emerged again, with one respondent encouraging people to start looking at the city as a whole and creating events that encouraged people to explore new areas. Some felt that there was too much focus on programming at Four Seasons Park and wanted to see more activities taking place in other locations. One of the ideas put forward was a winter parks play pass that would provide access to rotating events in different Beaumont parks, introducing residents to other neighbourhoods they might not otherwise explore.

Marketing/Communication

One of the more common requests captured in the survey was a need for better communication about activities and events offered in Beaumont. People were interested in more information about where to go and what to do in the winter to help with planning outings. There was also a suggestion to engage certain groups in advertising, such as the fire department.

Amenities

Seating

The importance of having places to sit and rest was raised again. In addition to providing formal seating and gathering spaces, some felt that seating didn't have to be permanent and could be as simple as hay bales placed at the top of sledding hills.

Heating

Providing heat and protection from the elements were listed as priorities again, and fire pits were a popular recommendation, specifically for St. Vital Church and the library hill. There was also a suggestion to focus the fire pits along 50 Street, both as a decorative feature and a means to stay warm between shops. In addition to more calls for heated washrooms, people also felt that there was a need for park washrooms that remain open year-round.

Programming/Activities

Celebrating Diversity

Though many survey responses refer to Christmas-related programs and activities, there was interest in offering more culturally diverse events and a desire to celebrate the City's Francophone/Métis roots. Festivals like Winter Carnival in Quebec were listed as precedents for future programming in Beaumont.

Outdoor Events

The idea of diversity also extended to different outdoor sporting activities. There is a general feeling that hockey is prioritized over other activities like cross-country skiing, fat-biking and curling. Outdoor events and activities don't need to be sports-related, either; there were a number of outdoor activities mentioned, such as bird watching or walks that are organized around historic plaques.

City-wide Activities

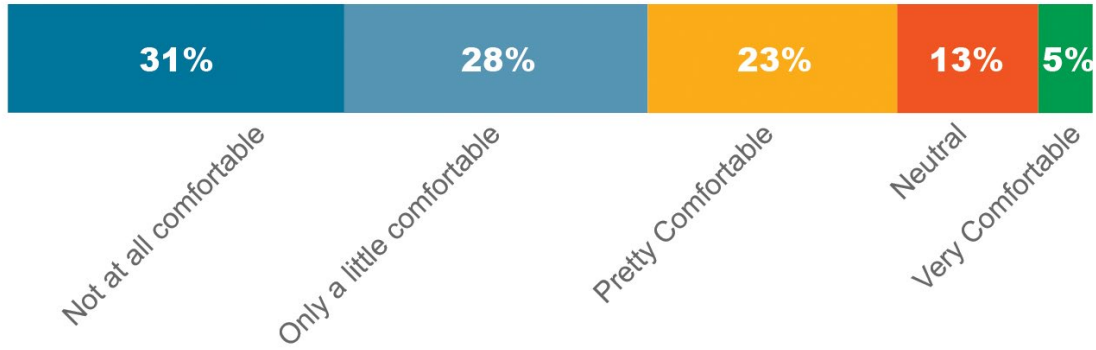
People considered opportunities for activities that involve the whole community such as a city-wide snowball fight or cardboard boxcar race day down the church hill. The idea of a city-wide scavenger hunt was popular again, with suggestions to create treasure maps that lead to ice and snow sculptures around the area. This was also a popular way of encouraging people to explore more of Beaumont.

Indoor Events

The importance of indoor winter events was also stressed, including suggestions for activities like board game tournaments, indoor markets and play places. People were generally interested in more organized indoor activities and more spots available in City-run programs, as classes fill up quickly. Some respondents recommended indoor, week-long camps for school-aged children that would offer theater, dance or art classes.

How comfortable do you feel walking in Beaumont during the winter?

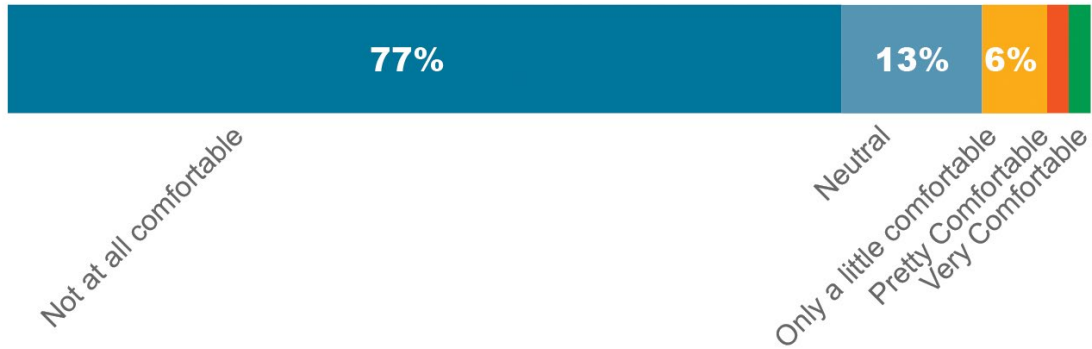
The survey responses indicated that many people are either not at all comfortable (78) or only a little comfortable (72) walking in Beaumont during the winter. The third-largest group felt pretty comfortable (59), followed by those that were neutral (33). Only a handful of people felt very comfortable (13) walking in the city during the winter. Other sections of the survey indicated that this discomfort could be alleviated through improved snow clearing practices.



Beaumont Family Day Event, 2022

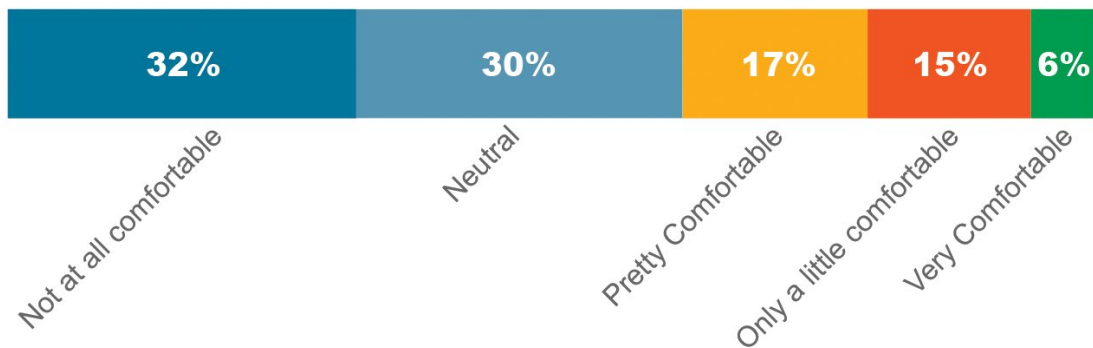
How comfortable do you feel cycling in Beaumont during the winter?

When asked how comfortable residents felt cycling in the city during the winter, it was clear that people were not at all comfortable (193). Some felt only a little comfortable (15) or neutral (34), and those that felt pretty comfortable (4) and very comfortable (4) were in the minority. As with walking during the winter, other sections of the survey showed that level of comfort could be improved with better trail conditions.



How comfortable would you feel cycling in Beaumont during the winter, if there were separated bike lanes that were regularly cleared?

When asked if separated bike lanes with snow clearing would improve comfort levels, the number of people who were not at all comfortable dropped from 193 to 80. More people reported being only a little comfortable (37) or neutral (77) than the previous question, and there was a large jump in those that would feel pretty comfortable (42) and very comfortable (15). While most residents in Beaumont drive, improvements to cycling infrastructure and maintenance could convince more residents to choose active transportation options.



Do you have ideas about how we can improve public transit in Beaumont during the winter?

Attitudes/Perceptions

One of the most common remarks that appeared in the survey results was, “We have public transit?” Although some of these comments were said in jest, others were genuinely not aware of the public transportation options available in Beaumont. Another dominant voice emerged that felt indignant about public transit, refusing to ever take it, questioning why tax dollars were wasted on providing this service. There is, however, some excitement and curiosity about what a future on-demand transit system might look like for Beaumont.

Routes/Stops

Comments about the current transit system identified reliability, frequency of service and lack of routes and stops as primary issues. People felt that one bus stop at the Ken Nichol Regional Recreation Centre was inadequate, especially during the winter when people must walk long distances through the cold to reach it.

Other ideas for improving local bus routes included adding a ring road loop that stops at various locations in the city. A shuttle from the north to south end of Beaumont was also mentioned. Requests for more frequent service to Edmonton, Leduc and Nisku, as well as shuttles to the airport and malls, were common.

A number of respondents noted issues with the limited bus schedule. More frequency and extended service hours, especially on weekends and after school, were important. It was also mentioned that increasing the frequency of buses and number of stops was particularly critical during the winter.

Maintenance/Accessibility

Difficult winter weather conditions can lead to more frequent mechanical issues with buses. Survey responses indicated that buses break down too often and service is often unreliable. Some respondents noted that heat was left off on several buses, making winter travel even more challenging. Snow clearing was also listed as a key area for improving the public transit experience, in order to connect riders to the bus stop.

Marketing/Communications

People who had recently moved to the city identified a lack of information as their reason for not making use of public transportation in Beaumont. Ways of improving awareness of transit options included providing more information in local papers or pairing public transit information with other communication pieces, such as the garbage collection schedule. Other incentives to increase ridership, such as low fares for Beaumont residents or free service for seniors, were also considered.

Transportation Alternatives

While buses dominated the responses on improvements to public transit, people were also interested in exploring other methods of transit such as e-scooters, or even small golf carts to rent. There was even a suggestion for investing in a cable car system, or more festive winter modes of transportation, such as horse-drawn carriages.

Active Transportation

Methods of active transportation, like cycling, received a surprisingly similar response to public transportation. Many people were adamant that there should be no bike lanes added to the road network, as they thought traffic was already bad enough. Others felt that because cyclists were in the minority, their needs shouldn't be prioritized in the budget.

While some people are deterred from cycling in the winter because of trail conditions and cold, there are others who admitted to never cycling, regardless of the season. Some people who considered cycling in the winter were prevented from doing so because it was perceived as too dangerous to get from their residence to a bike lane.

Do you have other ideas about how we can improve travel in Beaumont during the winter?

Lighting

Lighting and safety considerations were among the top responses for additional ways to improve travel in Beaumont. Improving lighting on trails, streets, sidewalks and crosswalks were mentioned as ways to ensure safer travel around the city during dark winter days. Survey responses indicated that better lighting would also encourage more people to get outside and participate in activities during the winter.

Maintenance/Accessibility

Once again, there was consensus that both residents and the City need to do a better job of snow and ice removal. Walking during the winter is difficult for many, and sidewalk and trail conditions are largely considered unsafe. Many respondents emphasized the need to clear right down to the bare pavement and remove snow piles and windrows that block both vehicles and pedestrians. To better assist residents with maintenance of their sidewalks, some suggested that public bins with sand or gravel would be beneficial. Pet owners also advocated for the use of safer, more animal friendly de-icing agents.

The City of Leduc was mentioned repeatedly as an example for its admirable handling of snow and ice on trails and roads. Respondents did acknowledge that winter 2021/2022 has been particularly challenging because of the increase in climate variability and rapid freeze thaw cycles. Despite the focus on issues with snow clearing practices, people were also eager to recognize the work that Beaumont does to keep roads clear, particularly on 50 Street and the main roads.

Connection/Circulation

To improve pedestrian circulation in Beaumont, there were multiple suggestions recommending widening of sidewalks. The sidewalk connecting the skate park to the Centre Chantal Bérubé Youth Centre (CBYC) was identified as a location that could benefit from widening. There was also interest in widening streets in all future development to give a more open feeling.

Providing more access points to buildings was also mentioned as a way to improve pedestrian circulation in Beaumont. Currently, people are experiencing issues traveling from the north end of the city to the Beaumont Sport and Recreation Centre. People also mentioned concerns with inadequate pedestrian pathways in large parking lots, such as the one at No Frills.

Regulations/Policy

Traffic speed was also a factor that impacted people's feeling of safety when traveling in Beaumont. Suggestions for improvements included lowering the speed limit in certain locations to 30 and adding speed bumps or signs encouraging people to drive more slowly. There were also calls to better enforce the anti-idling bylaw. Some people noted that there are vehicles left idling for hours, leading to concerns about noise and pollution from exhaust.

To ensure better snow removal, respondents also recommended better enforcement of parking bans on snow routes, as well as addressing the confusion around dates that these bans are in effect. Some survey responses also proposed that the City take responsibility for clearing residential sidewalks, particularly along main roads, to better cope with inconsistent snow clearing by residents.

How can Beaumont better support people with reduced mobility in the winter?

Attitudes/Perceptions

There were many personal accounts in the survey that spoke about people with mobility aids being forced onto the road because of improperly-cleared sidewalks, or others who were simply unable to make it through the piles of snow and ice. People frequently expressed concern for those with reduced mobility and their ability to get around in Beaumont.

Maintenance/Accessibility

To ensure that everyone in Beaumont has an opportunity to move freely and safely during the winter, people again called on the City and their fellow residents to improve snow clearing practices. Clearing ramps, trails, sidewalks and roads in a timely manner and applying extra traction in areas such as streets corners and crosswalks were all listed as actions that would improve mobility. There were also calls to improve parking lot maintenance and holding business owners accountable for keeping their lots clear. Vacant lots or lots undergoing development were also identified as areas that were often improperly cleared, if they were cleared at all.

Landscape/Urban Design

In addition to snow clearing issues, respondents also mentioned areas of uneven paving, steep pathways and large grade changes that compounded winter mobility issues. There were also mentions of areas with poor drainage that were difficult to navigate. Some respondents felt that particular attention should also be paid to creating smooth transitions between surfaces to improve accessibility.

Signage/Wayfinding

Recommendations to improve signage and wayfinding included marking handicap parking with raised signage, not simply painted lines on the ground that are often obscured by snow in the winter. Better signage to mark areas where the ground is uneven and more-clearly-marked transit stops were also suggested.

Public Transit

Improving the transit system was also mentioned as a key way to address issues faced by those with reduced mobility. Shuttle services to grocery stores and shopping centres, wheelchair buses, ride sharing and on-demand service were a few of the other suggestions listed in the survey results. More unconventional recommendations included providing people with ice grips to assist with walking on slippery surfaces or investing in special bike pedaling carts.

Programming/Activities

Inclusive and accessible programming was mentioned as a way to ensure that all Beaumont residents are able to take part in winter activities. Some recommended looking at events such as the Paralympics for ways to adapt sports for individuals with reduced mobility. Other ideas included offering discounts to the Beaumont Sport and Recreation Centre and focusing on keeping specific trails maintained to a higher standard.

How can Beaumont better support and educate those who aren't used to winter (people new to northern climates, etc.)?

Attitudes/ Perceptions

For those of us who grew up in northern climates, it's easy to forget how much there is to learn about winter. Although some people felt that it wasn't Beaumont's responsibility to support residents experiencing winter for the first time, others were quick to point out that many of the actions that could be taken to help newcomers adjust to the season would also benefit longtime residents.

Marketing and Communication:

One of the biggest challenges for new residents is how to access information and services. While education and supports are available, accessing these services may not be easy. Survey results suggested using websites, social media posts and online education to increase awareness of supports available in the community. People also acknowledge that it is equally important to offer this information offline, through radio ads and print media, such as brochures, newsletters, public signs and bulletins.

Timing marketing campaigns and information sessions so that they occur prior to winter or before the first snowfall was suggested as a way to better prepare new residents for the coming season.

- Respondents had a number of suggestions on the types of information that would be useful to educate new residents, including:
- Winter weather conditions
- Maps showing the location/times of activities
- Videos or classes on winter driving
- Ways to keep winter energy costs down
- Check lists and tips to prepare your home for the winter
- Winter safety and dressing for winter
- How to safely walk on snow and ice

Community

Many suggestions from respondents recommended programs that matched volunteers in the community with new residents to help them acclimatize to life in a northern city. One program from B.C. that was mentioned organized monthly gatherings for new residents to introduce them to services and events in the community. There was also a desire to acknowledge the work of volunteers and Good Samaritans who go the extra mile to help neighbours during the winter.

Programming/Activities

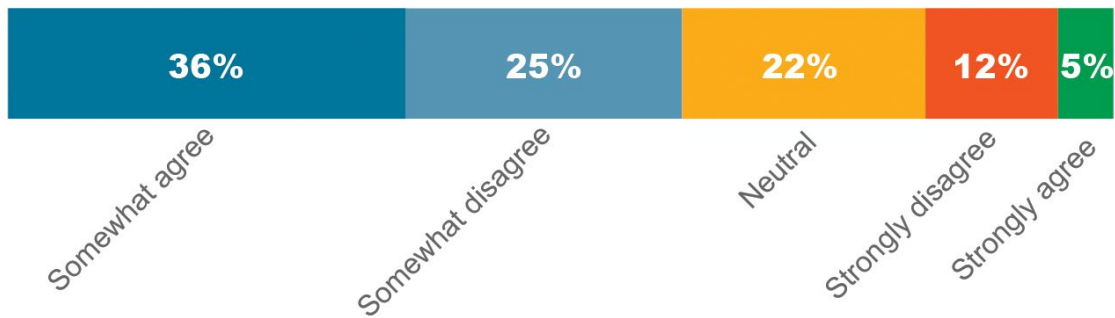
The survey results offered a number of ideas for ways that programming and activities could be used to educate new residents about winter. For many, dressing for winter is a whole new skill to master. To help new residents better adjust to the climate, respondents proposed holding clothing drives and offering sessions on dressing for the cold to protect from frostbite and hypothermia.

The library was frequently mentioned as a place where information sessions could be held. There was also interest in first offering newcomers a range of different indoor activities, gradually easing people into participating in more outdoor programming.

The cost of participating in winter sports and purchasing equipment was acknowledged as a potential challenge for new residents. Offering free equipment or rentals would allow people to try more winter sports and activities without a large startup cost.

Beaumont has many activities and opportunities available for residents of all ages, abilities and incomes in the winter.

The largest number of respondents to this question somewhat agree (87) that activities and opportunities in Beaumont are inclusive of all ages, abilities and income during the winter. Those that strongly agreed (13) were in the minority, followed by people who strongly disagree (28), somewhat disagree (6) or are neutral (52). Although the survey results have tended to focus on family or child-friendly activities, the following section does address a need for more activities that appeal to adults.



Do you have any other ideas for winter activities, programs or events that can help Beaumont residents enjoy winter more?

Maintenance/Accessibility

It's clear through the survey responses that winter maintenance must be a top priority in Beaumont. Respondents again stressed that without proper maintenance, it's difficult to enjoy any new winter activities the City may offer. Giving people more tools to maintain their sidewalks, such as public grit/ sand bins and enforcing timely clearing of sidewalks were stressed again.

Community/Support

Several people were also interested in more opportunities to get to know their neighbours. Some individuals who have lived in Beaumont for years admitted to only knowing their immediate neighbours and wanted more events, such as block parties, to develop and strengthen relationships in their community. There was also interest in more volunteer opportunities to better support neighbours who are unable to maintain their properties during the winter.

Programming/Activities

Appeal to all ages

Although there was a focus on providing activities for children in the survey responses, there were many residents without children who felt excluded from family programming. Some respondents noted that most of the activities on offer were targeted to children and seniors, with little available for the 20-40 age group. To find more-suitable activities, these residents found it necessary to go outside of Beaumont. Future winter programming should be inclusive of this demographic.

Festivals and Special Events

Music, art and film festivals were some of the ideas for programming listed in the survey. Interest was also expressed in having events that lasted for longer periods of time, rather than individual festivals, which some people felt dominated winter programming. People were also interested in events that gave the community and Beaumont City Council a chance to come together and celebrate the season. To further this goal, there were suggestions to involve city councillors and the mayor in friendly competitions with community teams.

Fees

Concerns were raised again about the cost of participating in winter programming. Some residents are finding it challenging to cover the increased cost of heating and utilities during the winter, which often leaves them with no disposable income for activities. One respondent summarized the issue by stating, “How can anyone afford to enjoy the winter when we can’t even pay our bills?” Given the growing cost of heating our homes in the winter, creating more-inclusive activities will require considering these financial barriers and offering more free programming.

Business and Cultural Committee Working Session

The Winter City Strategy project team met virtually with members of the Business and Cultural Collaborative Committee on March 1, 2022. The discussion centred around the proposed Focus Areas and Big Ideas of the Winter City Strategy, and ideas from the strategy that involved business and cultural organizations. The following summarizes this discussion:

Winter Design

Colour, Lighting and Microclimates

The biggest urban design opportunities for the strategy are to incorporate colour, lighting and microclimate designs. Adding colour through planting, art and building design adds visual interest to the typical greys, whites and browns of winter. Lighting, both decorative and functional, makes places feel inviting and safe at all hours of the day. Microclimate design involves maximizing sun exposure and minimizing wind to create outdoor spaces that feel warmer, making them more enjoyable and likely to attract visitors in the winter months.

Adding Discovery to Beaumont’s Experience

There was a discussion on the value of smaller, uniquely-designed pocket parks that are embedded in a network of pathways for pedestrians and cyclists. These areas add to a sense of discovery for people using the trail system and become highlights of their experience in the community. These places could be integrated along Beaumont’s existing pathways and designed to maximize winter enjoyment.

New Neighbourhood Design

There was a discussion about how new neighbourhoods could create microclimates within individual properties through maximizing south-facing exposure and planting trees to maximize sun and minimize wind. Techniques to encourage microclimates at individual properties would make people’s yards more enjoyable in the winter months and reduce energy consumption in the winter.

Winterscape Contests

The City of Edmonton’s Winterscapes contest was mentioned as an opportunity for Beaumont to explore. This contest rewards and recognizes people who use snow, art, lighting and planting to create interesting and attractive front yards and balconies in the winter. Ideas to make this a team event, where neighbors collaborate on one winterscape, were also discussed.

Winter Mobility

Coordination of Services

There was a discussion on the importance of coordinating other services, such as forestry, utilities, and waste, with snow clearing. Having these services conflict after a snowfall risks one or more of the services being missed or not performing up to standard.

Transitioning from Snow to Ice Management

There was a general acknowledgment that with the recent increase in freeze/thaw cycles, new approaches to manage ice build-up, especially on pathways and sidewalks, are needed. While most techniques have their own set of benefits and drawbacks, there was a consensus that new machines and techniques should be explored.

Education

The committee discussed how the increase in freeze/thaw cycles and therefore icy pathways have increased the need for the City to educate the public on the importance of dressing for the weather. Equipment such as proper winter boots, crampons and warm clothing can make winter walking accessible and enjoyable, even before snow and ice management crews are deployed.

Bike Infrastructure

It was also recognized that having bike infrastructure in place year-round, including dedicated bike paths, bike racks and tool stations, is an important first step to encouraging winter biking as an enjoyable and feasible means of transportation.

Winter Communities

Importance of Diverse Programming

The committee brought up the inconsistency of Alberta winter: sometimes it's primarily cold and very snowy, other times temperatures often go above zero with next to no snow. While activities that use snow and rely on cold temperatures are great, they should never be solely relied on for the success of an event. Events should have a diverse offering of programming to safeguard against the possibility of warm weather and no snow.

Fostering Winter Events

The committee discussed their experience with starting winter events. They stated that rather than investing lots of money into a City-led event, finding smaller, community-led events and slowly investing in them produces more sustainable and successful results. The City should identify community champions that can lead these events and support them in growing over time.

Winter Events as Communication Channels

The committee also recognized the opportunity of using winter events in Beaumont to communicate good winter practices, such as dressing appropriately, what recreation opportunities are available year round, and even how to make your home more energy efficient.

Agricultural Society Land

Representatives from the Beaumont Agricultural Society spoke about recent work and desire to make their land a winter destination for Beaumont. The space is well suited for a variety of winter activities, including fires and cross-country skiing, and the barn could potentially become an excellent place to warm up and host indoor activities.

Programming for Older Adults

Committee members also talked about seniors and older adults, and the importance of having winter programming geared toward them. The last two years have been particularly isolating for this demographic, and having safe and fun activities to get them out in their communities is essential to their wellbeing. Suggestions included designating local businesses as meet-up points for community walks, or walks led by physiotherapists to help instruct older people on how to walk safely in the winter.

Next Steps

The input received during this round of engagement will inform the creation of the actions and policies in the emerging Winter City Strategy. As the project enters the Strategy drafting phase, emerging content will be reviewed and revised by different departments in the City to encourage policies that are well suited and practicable for Beaumont. The Strategy is anticipated to be presented to Council in Summer 2022.



Beaumont Family Day Event, 2022

