

South Quad Open Space Planning Study

What We Heard Report

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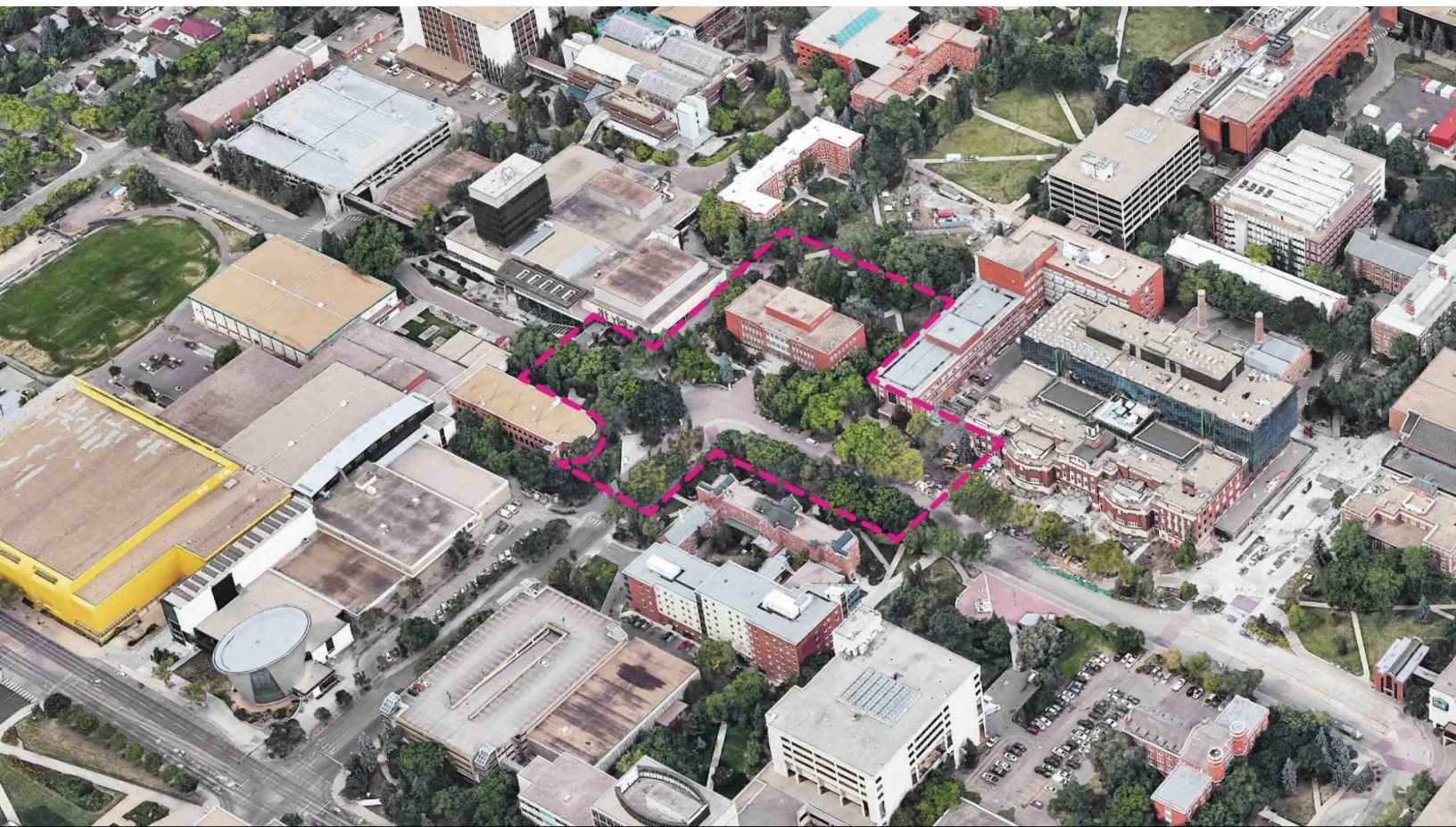


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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The South Quad Open Space Planning Study is an exciting initiative of the University of Alberta aimed at transforming a key location on North Campus into a vibrant, inclusive and dynamic outdoor space that reflects the university's diverse culture and history.

The proposed redevelopment area will incorporate the current Celebration Plaza and adjacent open spaces near the intersection of 114 Street and 89 Avenue Students' Boulevard, as well as the south end of Main Quad. The south side of Quad is currently occupied by the Administration Building, which is nearing the end of its lifespan and has been identified for removal. This planning study asks the university community to consider the future potential of the south side of Quad without the Administration Building, including its purpose, meaning and functions.



ENGAGEMENT

A two-round engagement process was designed to create opportunities for the campus community—students, faculty/staff and alumni—to learn about the project objectives and scope and provide input to inform the development of conceptual designs.

Engagement will take place in two phases:

Round 1 (January 2025) – to gather input to inform the vision for and future programming of the South Quad outdoor space

Round 2 (April 2025) – to gather input on draft conceptual options to inform a final concept

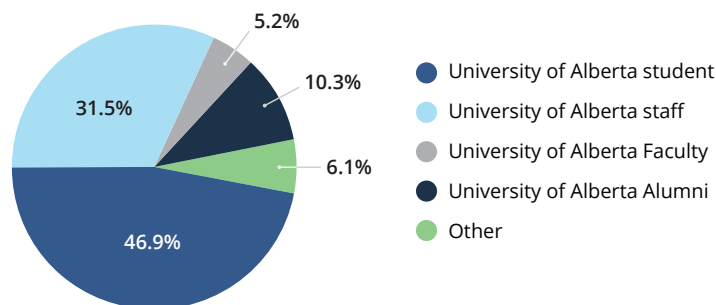
This document reports on the first round of engagement.

HOW WE ENGAGED

Two engagement activities were included in Round 1 engagement: an online survey and a pop-up event at SUB.

Online Survey

An online survey was available on the project webpage on the University of Alberta website from January 16 to 27, 2025. There were 216 responses to the survey.



Pop-up Engagement

A pop-up event was held at SUB on January 22, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Display panels explained the project and prompted feedback. Participants were invited to leave comments and drawings to share their vision for the future site, as well as programming ideas. Nearly 200 comments were received along with 23 drawings.

HOW WE COMMUNICATED

To create awareness for the project and the engagement opportunities, the following communication tools and tactics were used:

Project webpage

A webpage on the university's website provided a project overview and details of the engagement opportunities.

University communications

Project information and links to the project survey were shared via the following university communications tools: YouAlberta newsletter, The Quad newsletter, email digests and Events Hub page.

Project postcard

500 postcards were distributed during the pop-up engagement event encouraging participation in the online survey.

Outdoor signs

Ten A-frame signs and 10 lawn signs were placed on the project site, as well as elsewhere on campus.

WHAT WE HEARD

The following provides a summary of what we heard across both engagement opportunities.

1. What word or feeling comes to mind when you experience the South Quad open space in its current state?

Respondents provided both positive and negative feelings about the current state of South Quad.

Positive

- Historical/traditional
- Natural beauty
- Peaceful/calming
- Functional thoroughfare

Negative

- Boring/average/bland
- Underutilized
- Empty
- Uninviting
- Disjointed
- Dated
- Busy/loud/congested
- Vehicle-oriented

2. How do you want to feel when you spend time in the new South Quad open space? (e.g., relaxed, inspired, energized, connected)

Relaxation and Comfort - Respondents indicate a desire for a calm and peaceful space that promotes relaxation; a serene atmosphere where people feel at ease and sheltered from the busyness and chaos of the campus. Respondents also desire physical comfort noting the need for protection from noise and weather.

Inspiration and Energy - Also important to respondents is a dynamic, vibrant space that inspires, motivates and encourages learning, creativity and engagement.

Meaningful Connections - A sense of connection is desired; emotionally to the university's history and tradition, to traditional lands and nature, and the campus community, as well as physically to other areas on campus. The design should foster interaction and social engagement. It should be more than a walkway, rather a place to stay and experience campus life.

Welcoming - A welcoming transition to campus is desired, suggesting that South Quad should serve as an inviting entrance point.

All-season Functionality - Respondents also noted the need for a space that is practical in all seasons, as well as welcoming and usable for people of all abilities.

3. What specific elements or features would help create this feeling for you? (e.g., seating areas, green spaces)

Landscaping and Greenery - There is an overwhelming desire to preserve and enhance natural spaces. Integrating additional trees, plants and flowers, as well as rocks, ponds or other features is highly supported.

Seating and Study Spaces - There is a strong desire for more seating, including picnic areas, sheltered benches, communal and individual seating, as well as relaxed outdoor study spaces.

Aesthetics and Art - Respondents suggest enhancing the space with Indigenous and cultural elements and public art. There is a desire to preserve the university's historical elements. While modernizing the area, it should remain connected to the institution's legacy and culture.

Social Gathering and Event Spaces - Respondents suggest informal spaces that promote socialization and formal spaces to host indoor and outdoor events. Ideas include multi-purpose venues, amphitheatres and performance stages.

Campus Connectivity - Respondents would like to see improved pathways and new pedways to enhance connectivity within the campus.

4. What types of activities or events would you like to be able to experience/enjoy in the South Quad open space in each season? (e.g., socializing, fitness activities, events, food trucks, outdoor classrooms)

Respondents desire a multifunctional space, one that brings people together to create a sense of community and supports a mix of structured and casual activities in all seasons.

Most often mentioned are

- Food trucks
- Student events and activities, markets, celebrations
- Performances and concerts
- Exercise equipment/fitness activities
- Outdoor classrooms

5. Is there anything that would make the space more comfortable or inviting for you to spend time in the South Quad open space? (e.g., shade, Wi-Fi, lighting, accessibility)

The vision of respondents is for a space that is comfortable, accessible, enhanced by nature, connected and inclusive.

Suggestions to make this possible are strong desires for windbreaks and other weather protection shelters and multiple seating options including picnic tables. In addition, appropriate lighting for safety, available Wifi, enhanced greenery and art are suggested.

Respondents reiterate the need for both all-season access and accessibility for all abilities.

6. Share your thoughts on the project planning principles. Did we get them right? What's missing?

When responding to the proposed planning principles the vast majority feel that the principles are well-guided, on the right track and comprehensive.

7. Is there anything additional that you would like to share?

When asked if there is anything additional to add, responses varied, but no key themes emerged.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

January - March 2025	Compile feedback and develop conceptual options
April 2025	Engagement Round 2: Input on conceptual options
April - May 2025	Planning study report completion



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