

Our Green Network

What We Heard Report
December 20, 2019



Engagement Summary

As Saskatoon continues to grow, new infrastructure will be needed, and aging infrastructure retrofits will be required that complement conservation of valued natural areas and living assets. By strategically weaving green infrastructure into the urban fabric, the City will be in a position to provide essential municipal services in a way that respects nature, heritage and culture.

The overarching goal of the Green Infrastructure Strategy (Strategy) is to demonstrate environmental leadership through identification and management of green infrastructure for the benefit of current and future generations.

Strategy development used a phased approach which is described in Figure 1: Project Pathway and summarized below.

- Phase 1: Seed –Our Current Situation
- Phase 2: Growth – The Green Network Vision, Actions, Initiatives and Mapping
- Phase 3: Bloom – Implementation Planning

All phases were informed by public input.

Residents, green space users, key stakeholder groups, subject matter experts and advisory group members were provided with several opportunities to inform Phase 2 (Growth) and aspects of Phase 3 (Bloom) by providing input on the following topics:

- Awareness and Understanding of the Strategy and Guiding Principles
- Options Identification and Selection
 - Development or refinement of desired state visioning and mapping
 - Establishment of baseline conditions for the existing Green Network
 - Identification and selection of preferred option to address each Key Finding or group of key findings.
 - Identify and decide which policies and projects to align with Key Principles.
 - Develop business cases and brainstorm plans for change both short term and long term.
- Priority Setting

To share how participant input was used to inform Phase 2 of the Strategy, residents, green space users, key stakeholders, advisory groups and subject matter experts were invited to the “Our Green Network” come and go event. The event took place at Meewasin Main Office on November 21, 2019 from 4pm to 7pm. A total of 52 participants signed in, however head counts suggested closer to 60 participants were in attendance.

The purpose of the event was to inform participants about what the Strategy will look like, what it will include, how their input informed it and details about the next steps for the project. This information was presented in the form of display boards and two brief presentations with question and answer periods.

While data collection was not the purpose of the event, participants did provide feedback on the Strategy. This feedback was categorized into the following topics:

- Red Flags
 - List of red flags will be compiled and analyzed for frequency of mention and level of concern. This list will be highlighted in the project team report.
- Missed Opportunities
 - List of missed opportunities will be compiled and analyzed for frequency of mention and level concern. This list will be highlighted in the project team report.
- Implementation Suggestions
 - Implementation considerations were compiled, coded to relevant actions/initiatives, and summarized for consideration during initiative-specific implementation planning.

A list of red flags, missed opportunities and implementation suggestions are provided below.

Red Flags

Red flags include suggestions with the potential to impact the success of the Strategy.

The most prevalent concern raised by participants during the question and answer period was the lack of clarity about how the Strategy would be used by the City and how much influence or authority the strategy would have in relation to other potentially conflicting policies or procedures.

Several participants expressed concern that the Strategy seemed like something that would be “optional” and not a requirement for Administration. Participants identified that if the Strategy is proposed as “implementation optional” it would likely not be successful in achieving the level of change expected by participants. To improve the outcome, participants suggested adding “teeth” or a level of requirement or authority to the Strategy so that all of Administration must comply.

Missed Opportunities

Missed opportunities are suggestions that require immediate attention to increase success of the Strategy. The following missed opportunities were identified on sticky notes:

- Connectivity between natural areas not clearly articulated. It is important to monitor both conservation of natural habitat for biodiversity, and connectivity between habitat features or natural areas. The current initiatives only mention connectivity of the Green Network to habitat in the Plan for Growth areas.
- An additional east-west connection opportunity was noted on the Ecology mapping layer which would run parallel to Circle Drive north (old 42nd Street) and would connect the Meewasin Valley “significant natural area” to the proposed “area of interest” near Avenue C.
- The Governance map layer did not identify the wetlands north of Highway 5 on the far east border of the city as “areas of interest.”
- A comment was posted on the Ecology board that asked: When will the COS review their 1972 commitment to more afforestation areas and their goal then?
- In reference to “Action 2: Inspire citizen driven transformation of the Green Network” an education initiative for citizens must be added.
- The north industrial area of the City was identified on the Ecology mapping layer as an area that requires attention as it is largely ignored currently.

- Incentive 11.5 should be updated to say “Recognize that high quality agricultural land is present and requires protection in and around the city.” The current statement does not reference protection of agricultural land.
- In response to Action 11: Protect, restore, and manage significant natural areas, the question of where wetlands fit in was posed.

Implementation Suggestions

Implementation suggestions are ideas related to future implementation of the Initiatives.

Implementation suggestions were comprised mostly of questions and comments about how specific initiatives would or should be implemented. No new ideas were suggested that hadn't already been mentioned during previous engagement activities. A full list of the implementation suggestions is located in [Table 2](#) of this What We Heard report.

Level of Support

While it was anticipated that participants would provide comments related to their level of support or rejection of the Strategy, no comments were provided that directly indicated level of support. Based on questions and comments during the question and answer period it was clear that the majority of participants who spoke supported the Strategy in principle, however many did not support the current approach to implementation that positioned the Strategy as “optional” instead of a requirement for Administration. Some participants asked what they could do to support the Strategy.

Participants did not identify any actions or initiatives that should be removed, however several comments were provided on boards and during 1:1 conversations that suggested ways to improve upon or add necessary detail to the existing actions/initiatives.

Participants and facilitators were offered an opportunity to evaluate the success of the event. The following measures of success were identified as goals for the event:

- Participant Evaluation Forms
 - 75% of participants rated the event with higher than neutral levels of satisfaction on each evaluation indicator.
- Facilitator Evaluation
 - Did participants seem to understand the content?
 - Did they ask questions?
 - Did you receive informal feedback on the engagement process?

A total of 4 individuals (8% of total participants) completed evaluation forms. While all respondents were satisfied with ease of participation and opportunity to contribute at the event, less than half were satisfied with the remainder of the indicator statements.

Participants appeared to understand the content presented on the boards. There was a clear lack of understanding demonstrated, however, regarding how the Strategy will be used by the City, what we are asking of City Council in February and what power or “teeth” the Strategy will have in comparison to conflicting City policies. Participants appeared to be under the impression that the Strategy was a policy level document instead of a strategy to help guide creation or updates to policies.

At least 1/3 of participants asked at least one question during the question and answer period or in 1:1 conversations with members of the project team.

No informal feedback was provided to facilitators during the event that was not reiterated in the formal participant evaluation forms.

Based on participant and facilitator feedback, the following opportunities for improvement will be considered for future engagement events:

- Project team will prepare more comprehensive and clear responses to frequently asked questions. We will consider ways to improve on these responses in preparation for the launch of the Strategy.
- Project team will review the marketing techniques for this event and take note of information that would have been useful to share as part of invitations.
- Facilitators will ensure that participants are aware of the opportunity to apply comments to the boards with sticky notes.
- Facilitators will aim to select venues/room and order food/coffee to accommodate a larger number of participants than expected.

Consideration of results

Red Flags are under consideration as part of internal implementation planning.

Missed opportunities will be considered as part of future initiative-specific implementation planning. Implementation suggestions were logged and will inform implementation planning for the related initiatives.

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1 Background

As Saskatoon continues to grow, new infrastructure will be needed, and aging infrastructure retrofits will be required that complement conservation of valued natural areas and living assets. By strategically weaving green infrastructure into the urban fabric, the City will be in a position to provide essential municipal services in a way that respects nature, heritage and culture.

Green Infrastructure Strategy (Strategy) development used a phased approach as illustrated in the Project Pathway graphic below. All phases were informed by public input.

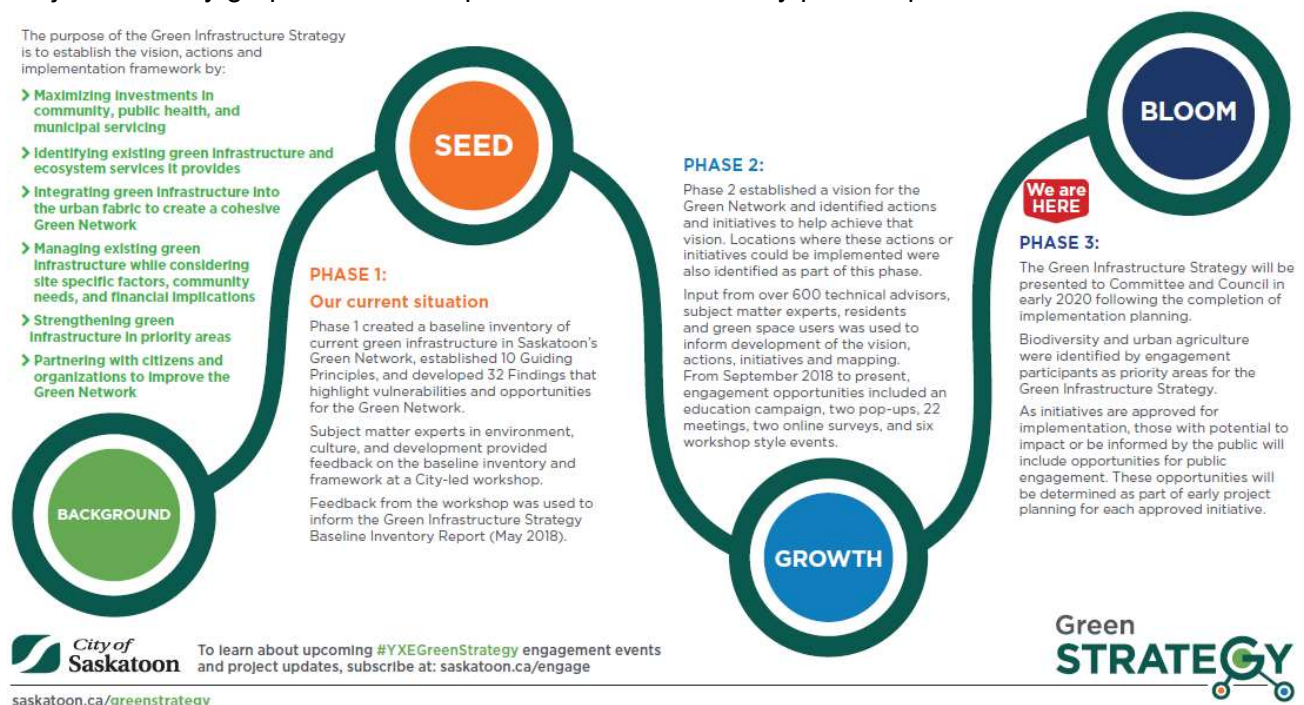


Figure 1: Project Pathway

1.1 Strategic Goals

The Strategy aims to inform several strategic goals through implementation of the Actions it will recommend. The overarching goal of the Strategy is to demonstrate environmental leadership through identification and management of green infrastructure for the benefit of current and future generations.

1.2 City Project Team

- Genevieve Russell, Special Projects Manager, Sustainability
- Kellie Grant, Senior Planner, Planning and Development
- Jessie Best, Environmental Coordinator, Sustainability
- Amy Wheeler, Environmental Coordinator, Sustainability
- Katie Suek, Public Engagement Consultant, Communications and Public Engagement
- Leighland Hrapchak, Marketing Consultant, Communications and Public Engagement

1.3 Spokesperson(s)

Jeanna South, Director of Sustainability

1.4 Summary of Engagement Strategy

Residents, green space users, key stakeholder groups, subject matter experts and advisory group members were provided with several opportunities to inform Phase 2 (Growth) and aspects of Phase 3 (Bloom) by providing input on the following topics:

- Awareness and Understanding of the Strategy and Guiding Principles
- Options Identification and Selection
 - Development or refinement of desired state visioning and mapping
 - Establishment of baseline conditions for the existing Green Network
 - Identification and selection of preferred option to address each Key Finding or group of key findings for inclusion in the Implementation and Action Plans
 - Identify and decide which policies and projects to align with Key Principles for inclusion in Implementation and Action Plans
 - Develop business cases and brainstorm plans for change both short term and long term
- Priority Setting

A summary of engagement goals, objectives and selected activities in relation to each stakeholder group are provided in the table below.

Table 1: Engagement Summary

Intended Audience	Level of Participation	Objective	Engagement Goal	Engagement Activity
Residents, Subject Matter Experts, Natural Area Users, Key Stakeholders, Advisory Groups	Inform	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	Acknowledge and Understand Strategy and Guiding Principles	Education Campaign Pop-up Events/ Presentations Community Event
Residents, Subject Matter Experts and Green Space Users	Consult	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	Options Identification and Selection Priority Setting	Online Surveys
Advisory Groups	Collaborate	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Options Identification and Selection Priority Setting	Advisory Group Meetings
Key Stakeholders, Subject Matter Experts	Involve	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Options Identification and Selection Priority Setting	Workshops 1:1 Meetings

2 Our Green Network Come and Go Event

The purpose of this come and go event was to inform participants about what the Strategy will look like, what it will include, how their input informed it and details about the next steps for the project. This information was presented in the form of display boards and two brief presentations with question and answer periods.

The event took place at Meewasin Main Office on November 21, 2019 from 4pm to 7pm. A total of 52 participants signed in, however head counts suggested closer to 60 participants were in attendance.

2.1 Intended Audience

- External and internal stakeholders and key technical experts who were invited and/or have participated in past Strategy engagement events.
- Residents and green space users interested in learning more about the Strategy

2.2 Marketing Techniques

This method used a combination of marketing techniques to help garner participation. These techniques and their outcomes are detailed below.

Social Media

The following social media posts were published to promote the Our Green Network Event:

Facebook Posts

November 12, 2019



Figure 2: November 12, 2019 Facebook Post

November 15, 2019



Figure 3: November 15, 2019 Facebook Post

November 21, 2019



Figure 4: November 21, 2019 Facebook Post

Twitter Posts

November 13, 2019



Figure 5: November 13, 2019 Tweet

November 16, 2019



Figure 6: November 16, 2019 Tweet

November 21, 2019



Figure 7: November 21, 2019 Tweet

Instagram Posts

November 12, 2019



Figure 8: November 12, 2019 Instagram Post

November 15, 2019



Figure 9: November 15, 2019 Instagram Post

November 21, 2019



Figure 10: November 21, 2019 Instagram Post

Email Invite

A total of 125 mailing list subscribers were invited to attend the event and were provided with the invitation pictured below. Project team members also sent the invitation to key stakeholders who had expressed interest in the event and to members of the Indigenous Technical Advisory Group.

Two of the four participants who completed evaluation forms identified how they heard about the event. One participant selected Facebook/Twitter and the other selected Email from the City.



Figure 11: Email Invite

2.3 Analysis

While data collection was not the purpose of the event, participants did provide feedback on the Strategy. This feedback was categorized into the following topics:

- Red Flags
 - List of red flags will be compiled and analyzed for frequency of mention and level of concern. This list will be highlighted in the project team report.
- Missed Opportunities
 - List of missed opportunities will be compiled and analyzed for frequency of mention and level concern. This list will be highlighted in the project team report.
- Implementation Suggestions
 - Implementation considerations were compiled, coded to relevant actions/initiatives, and summarized for consideration during initiative-specific implementation planning.

2.4 Data limitations

While participants were informed that the project team would welcome comments and questions, they were not informed that sticky notes were available for their use. Opportunities to receive comments may have been missed due to this oversight.

Questions asked during the question and answer period following the presentation were not recorded. Questions listed in this What We Heard report were recalled from memory by the facilitator and may not be representative of all questions posed.

Categorization of the comments received on sticky notes was completed by the author based on professional judgement and ability for comments to influence current and future decisions and may not align with how the commenter may have categorized their response.

2.5 What We Heard

Several comments were provided using sticky notes applied to the content boards. These comments have been categorized into “red flags”, missed opportunities, missing actions for future consideration, implementation suggestions, level of support and “other.”

2.5.1 Red Flags

Red flags include suggestions with the potential to impact the success of the Strategy.

The most prevalent concern raised by participants during the question and answer period was the lack of clarity about how the Strategy would be used by the City and how much influence or authority the strategy would have in relation to other potentially conflicting policies or procedures.

Several participants expressed concern that the Strategy seemed like something that would be “optional” and not a requirement for Administration. Participants identified that if the Strategy is proposed as “implementation optional” it would likely not be successful in achieving the level of change expected by participants. To improve the outcome, participants suggested adding “teeth” or a level of requirement or authority to the Strategy so that all of Administration must comply.

2.5.2 Missed Opportunities

Missed opportunities are suggestions that require immediate attention to increase success of the Strategy. The following missed opportunities were identified on sticky notes:

- Connectivity between natural areas not clearly articulated. It is important to monitor both conservation of natural habitat for biodiversity, and connectivity between habitat features or natural areas. The current initiatives only mention connectivity of the Green Network to habitat in the Plan for Growth areas.
- An additional east-west connection opportunity was noted on the Ecology mapping layer which would run parallel to Circle Drive north (old 42nd Street) and would connect the Meewasin Valley “significant natural area” to the proposed “area of interest” near Avenue C.
- The Governance map layer did not identify the wetlands north of Highway 5 on the far east border of the city as “areas of interest.”
- A comment was posted on the Ecology board that asked: When will the COS review their 1972 commitment to more afforestation areas and their goal then?
- In reference to “Action 2: Inspire citizen driven transformation of the Green Network” an education initiative for citizens must be added.
- The north industrial area of the City was identified on the Ecology mapping layer as an area that requires attention as it is largely ignored currently.
- Incentive 11.5 should be updated to say “Recognize that high quality agricultural land is present and requires protection in and around the city.” The current statement does not reference protection of agricultural land.
- In response to Action 11: Protect, restore, and manage significant natural areas, the question of where wetlands fit in was posed.

2.5.3 Implementation Suggestions

Implementation suggestions are ideas related to future implementation of the Initiatives. Comments related to future Initiative-specific implementation are provided below in raw form:

Table 2: Implementation Suggestions

Strategy Theme/Action/Initiative		Comment
2.2	Seek opportunities to incentivize green infrastructure in private and commercial areas	As Jane's Walks and Nature City are all good, what about WinterCity YXE tours and green strategy?
	Governance Vision: The Green Network is governed with an emphasis on collaboration and triple bottom line solutions.	What provincial legislation have you identified to support maintenance and protection of natural areas in the green network? Differentiate between "Green" space, "naturalized: space and "natural" space.
5.2	Work with Wanuskewin to establish and conserve their viewshed.	Saskatoon Freeway will not facilitate this.
5.4	Connect the City's Green Network to the Regional P4G Green Network at every opportunity.	Encourage the p4G Green Areas to remain or expand – not to diminish is size/scope.
6	Redefine the partnership with Meewasin to achieve collective goals related to the conservation, education, and development in the Green Network.	What happens on bridges and connectivity to MVA trails and 1 meter passing for bikes? Where is 1m on bridges?
7.2	Increase coordination within the City, and with the community, to encourage open space renewal	How? Through Incentives? City purchasing land?
10.4	Design sustainable tree planting sites ensuring adequate soil volume, quality, and space for trees	With shrinking city boulevard size and utilities going underground, how to maintain the city as a "garden city" and green space in new areas?
12.2	Purchase or acquire land in strategic areas to enhance biodiversity outcomes and increase connectivity	Strategic areas are all swales in the city. Please purchase.
13	Improve ecosystem health throughout the Green Network.	Native biodiversity at a provincial level or prairie ecoregion level? Native pollinators?
13.2	Develop and integrate wildlife-friendly standards into development, including bird-friendly standards in highly built areas.	The RBC Wealth Management Building across the street is an example of not implementing policies that have been approved with respect to bird-friendly designed windows.
	Storm Water Vision: More rain is managed where it falls. Storm water is recognized as an important resource.	How will Highway 7 not flood with the West Swale being raised for development? Does not increased uplands create higher wetland water levels?
15.4	Implement low impact development retrofits, prioritizing high-pedestrian areas such as BRT corridors and the downtown.	Old train tracks should be naturalized and made into trails.
15.5	Update bylaws and regulations to be more flexible in allowing more permeable surfaces	Specifically zoning bylaws.

2.5.4 Level of Support for Strategy

No comments provided directly suggested support or rejection of the Strategy. Based on questions and comments during the question and answer period it was clear that the majority of participants who spoke supported the Strategy in principle, however many did not support the current approach to implementation that positioned the Strategy as "optional" instead of a requirement for Administration. Some participants asked what they could do to support the Strategy.

Participants did not identify any actions or initiatives that should be removed, however several comments were provided on boards and during 1:1 conversations that suggested ways to improve upon or add necessary detail to the existing actions/initiatives.

3 Evaluation

The following measures of success were identified to evaluate the engagement event:

- Participant Evaluation Forms
 - 75% of participants rated the event with higher than neutral levels of satisfaction on each evaluation indicator.
- Facilitator Evaluation
 - Did participants seem to understand the content?
 - Did they ask questions?
 - Did you receive informal feedback on the engagement process?

Evaluation results are described in this section.

3.1 Participant Evaluation

Four participants (8% of total participants) submitted evaluation forms. Respondents selected from a scale of emoticons reflecting very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neutral, some-what unsatisfied and very unsatisfied faces in response to the statements shown below to describe their engagement experience. The percentage of participants who responded somewhat satisfied or very satisfied is provided.

Indicator Statements	% of Respondents Satisfied
This was a valuable use of my time and energy.	50%
It was easy for me to participate in the process	100%
The information was clear and understandable	33%
I understood what was expected of me as a participant.	50%
The facilitator kept us engaged and focused	50%
All participants were given the opportunity to contribute	100%
I believe that my voice mattered in this conversation	25%
I understand how my input will be used.	25%
I will likely accept the outcome of this process, regardless of what decision is made.	0%

While all respondents were satisfied with ease of participation and opportunity to contribute, less than half were satisfied with remainder of the indicator statements.

3.1.1 What Went Well?

Participants appreciated the open forum and opportunity to for discussion with likeminded people.

3.1.2 What Did Not Work?

Participants provided the following comments.

- Obvious that staff was knowledgeable, but hard to follow answers at times. Answers were vague and non-committal.
- Project encases a very large scope. A better introduction or information on Facebook would have been helpful to give context to this event.
- No mention of participants using post it notes in the boards.
- Notice for this event was not on the City website, if it was, it was hard to find.
- Small room for how many people attended.
- Arrived at 4:07 and missed the entire presentation.

3.2 Facilitator Evaluation

3.2.1 Did participants seem to understand the content?

Participants appeared to understand the content presented on the boards. There is a clear lack of understanding however regarding how the Strategy will be used by the City, what we are asking of City Council in February and what power or “teeth” the Strategy will have in comparison to conflicting City policies. Participants appeared to be under the impression that the Strategy was a policy level document instead of a strategy to help guide creation or updates to policies.

Some participants also expressed confusion and frustration about the Strategy’s lack of action in regards to protesting the Saskatoon Freeway route through the swales. While this was not part of the content of the event, it was clear that participants had hoped to see this concern addressed directly through the Strategy.

3.2.2 Did they ask questions?

Approximately one third of participants asked questions of the project team during the question and answer period, and several more asked the project team questions in 1:1 conversations.

Some questions asked by participants included:

- How will the Strategy be used to guide decisions at the City?
- Will the Strategy trump any other conflicting policies or procedures?
- How will the Strategy protect the swales from the proposed Saskatoon Freeway?
- Why hasn’t the Strategy or City of Saskatoon done anything to support community groups who are advocating for the Saskatoon Freeway to change the route?
- What is the future of the riverbank corridor where privately owned land is involved?
- Is Meewasin supportive of the Strategy?
- How will the Strategy ensure that there is space for trees in boulevards?
- How does the Strategy relate to businesses and organics composting and composting in public spaces?
- Will the Strategy address theft from Community Gardens?
- What will be included in the Urban Agriculture plan?
- How can the public support the Strategy?
- How will the Strategy relate to P4G developments?
- How will protection and planting of native species be incorporated into the Strategy?
- Will the Strategy address use of chemical pesticides?
- Will the Strategy be applied retroactively?
- What kind of direction are you asking City Council to give you in early 2020?
- Will the Strategy position Saskatoon as a destination that people will want to move/visit because of its high quality green network?
- How will the Strategy aim to educate residents about the topics within each initiative (not just the initiative itself)?
- How can participants express support for the Strategy to City Council?
- What is the status of the Natural Capital Asset Valuation?
- What will the biodiversity action plan and urban agriculture plan entail?

3.2.3 Other

The number of participants who attended the event surpassed project team expectations. While the event was set up to accommodate a come and go format supportive of roughly 30 people at a time, the majority of attendees (approximately 50) arrived between 3:30pm and 4:30pm which made movement around the room somewhat challenging for facilitators and participants. Participants who arrived between 5:30 and 7:00pm had a more relaxed experience and increased chance for 1:1 discussion with participants.

3.3 Opportunities for Improvement

Based on participant and facilitator feedback, the following opportunities for improvement will be considered for future engagement events:

- Project team will prepare more comprehensive and clear responses to frequently asked questions. We will consider ways to improve on these responses in preparation for the launch of the Strategy.
- Project team will review the marketing techniques for this event and take note of information that would have been useful to share as part of invitations.
- Facilitators will ensure that participants are aware of the opportunity to apply comments to the boards with sticky notes.
- Facilitators will aim to select venues/room and order food/coffee to accommodate a larger number of participants than expected.

4 Next Steps

Engagement opportunities to inform development of the Strategy have closed. Strategy Initiatives with the potential to impact or be informed by the public will be open for future engagement as part of Initiative-specific implementation planning. Participants who have subscribed to the Strategy mailing list will be informed directly of future engagement opportunities.

The Project Team is currently in the final stages of developing the internal implementation plan to guide how Administration will use document. The Strategy will be presented to City Council in early 2020.