



**SOARING LANDS WHAT WE HEARD  
REPORT**

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Prepared for:  
University of Alberta Properties Trust

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## **1 Introduction**

The University of Alberta Properties Trust (UAPT) developed two draft concept plans that will inform the rezoning and subdivision process for the Soaring Lands. This 10-acre property, situated in Brander Gardens at 5440/5450 Whitemud Road, is the focus of this strategic planning application. The enclosed report provides a summary of the input gathered from the Second Open House as well as the responses collected via the online survey.

## **2 Methodology**

During the second phase of engagement, feedback from the public was documented through an in person open house and an online survey. The first engagement event, the Pre-Concept Open House, was held on Thursday, June 1, 2023. The event introduced UAPT and the Soaring Lands project and asked for input to support the creation of a draft vision and feedback to inform the creation of the concepts for redevelopment. The second engagement open house was held on Thursday June 20, 2024, and focused on gathering feedback on the two draft concept plans to inform the finalization of the concept plan.

### **2.1 Notification Methods**

#### **2.1.1 INVITATIONS**

1,120 Postcards were sent to adjacent landowners inviting them to the public open house in June 2024.

#### **2.1.2 WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

The Public Open House was advertised on the Soaring website on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024. An opportunity to provide feedback through the online survey was available on the Soaring website from June 20, 2024, to July 12, 2024. Additionally, the Public Open House was advertised on the Riverbend Community League Facebook and Instagram pages on June 16, 2024.

#### **2.1.3 ADVERTISEMENT**

An Advertisement sign was installed on Riverbend Road on June 7, 2024, to inform residents about the Public Open House.

### **2.2 Communication Materials**

At the Public Open House, several boards were displayed to introduce UAPT, explain the purpose of the Open House, provide a review of what we heard during the last Public Open House, process and timelines for the project, and an overview of the two proposed Concept Plans.



## **3 What We Heard**

During the Open House, residents shared valuable feedback and concerns regarding the Soaring Lands Project. Despite the concerns and challenges raised during the open house, there were also several aspects of the two Concept Plans that received positive feedback from attendees. Overall, while there were concerns raised, participants at the Open House acknowledged The Project's potential to bring positive changes and improvements to the area.

### **3.1 Public Open House**

At the Public Open House, feedback was gathered using sticky notes on boards and discussions of facilitators with community members. A summary of the key insights, recommendations, and feedback shared during the Open House is summarized in this section.

#### **3.1.1 WHAT WE HEARD IN 2023**

At the June 20, 2024, Public Open House, a summary of the feedback received during the 2023 Public Open House was presented on a display board. Residents were invited to supplement this with any further comments, ensuring no important details were overlooked. Key issues raised were:

- The need to address traffic congestion.
- Integration of public open spaces in the design.
- Importance of maintaining the existing tree line.

#### **3.1.2 DRAFT RESIDENTIAL CONCEPT PLAN**

The Draft Residential Concept Plan, showcased on one of the boards, encompasses various Low Density residential developments, including single-family homes, duplexes, and townhouses. It also features a Public Utility Lot, a Walkway, and an Environmental Reserve area. Community members were invited to share their opinions on the proposed plan, and several key themes surfaced from the feedback received.

##### **Row housing and Duplexes**

- Attendees expressed concerns about the introduction of row housing and duplexes along Whitemud Road, citing concerns that it would alter the roads feel, transform the neighbourhood's distinctive character, impose limitations on road capacity, and lead to increased traffic congestion.

##### **Single Family Homes**

- Residents were generally in support of single-family residential development.

##### **Land Value**

- Residents expressed their concerns about the deterioration of the values of properties on Whitemud Road adjacent to the eastern boundary of Soaring.

##### **Traffic/Parking**



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- Residents have expressed concerns about the potential for traffic congestion due to limited road access and a lack of sufficient parking spaces specifically with development of houses on Whitemud Road.

#### 3.1.2.1 Development Expectations

A board was displayed outlining the development expectations for the residential development including Vegetation Removal, Trucking, Onsite and Offsite Construction and residents were asked to provide their input.

- Avoid trucking through cul-de-sacs and try to use main roads.
- Minimize construction noise on the weekends.

#### 3.1.2.2 Anticipated Development Timeline

A board was displayed presenting the anticipated development timeline for the residential development including Trucking Activities, Onsite Construction, Offsite Construction, Vegetation Removal, and Planning Applications. Residents were invited to review this timeline and share any feedback or concerns they might have. The following is what was heard:

- Attendees noted that it would be better if most of the onsite construction is planned outside of the school year to minimize disruptions.
- Residents noted that trucking must be done carefully to ensure safety of cyclists and walkers.

#### 3.1.3 DRAFT ALTERNATE CONCEPT PLAN

UAPT presented an Alternate Concept Plan for the Soaring Site which includes the development of a Nordic Spa. Residents were asked to provide their thoughts and feedback on this concept and the following comments were received:

- Majority of residents expressed their support for this concept as it would help preserve more trees and keep the integrity of the property.
- Residents raised their concerns about traffic congestion and whether parking will be provided on the site.

#### 3.1.4 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The final display board offered attendees an additional chance to share their thoughts or feedback on the project. Below is a summary of the comments that were gathered:

- Between the two proposed Concept Plans, the community showed a stronger preference for the spa.
- Community members also noted that it is important to incorporate native Edmonton plant species into the landscaping.
- Additionally, there is community interest in conducting another traffic survey before any development proceeds.



## **3.2 Online Survey**

On June 20, 2024, a survey was launched on the Soaring website, which remained accessible until July 12, 2024. A total of 16 survey responses were received. Two survey responses were provided at the Public Open House. The responses to each question are provided below.

### **Question 1. Do you have any comments regarding the project timeline?**

Only four respondents provided answers to this question. The respondents believe that the timeline is limited given that there are two land uses being proposed and the zoning approvals have not yet been completed. One raised a question regarding whether or not construction process can begin if it has not been determined what will be built on the lands. Lastly one respondent noted that there has not been sufficient engagement with neighbours.

### **Question 2. Have we missed reporting on anything from that engagement session?**

- Possible recreational /park areas
- Residents who live in close proximity to Soaring Lands raised concerns about security, privacy, impact on wildlife and noted that they would require this development to address the concerns by installing a fence along the length of our property border and security cameras.
- Desire for more green space from Whitemud road to the development.
- No Medium Density Residential.
- Security, Privacy, Fence during construction, Long Term Fence (6 feet high), Security Cameras, Noise, Affect on local Wildlife, Dust and erosion during construction.

**Question 3. The above proposed concept provides an opportunity for low density residential (could include single, detached, semi-detached, and/or rowhousing) development. There is an opportunity to work with the City of Edmonton on a potential connection to the top of bank along the northern boundary of the site. (a key point from the initial phase of engagement). Please share your thoughts about the proposed concept plan.**

The community feedback on the proposed low-density residential development in Edmonton reveals a mix of concerns and suggestions. Residents are hesitant to form a definitive opinion until the number of housing units is specified. There's a desire for additional connections to the environmental reserve (from 53 Ave) and a minimum of two entrance/exit roads to prevent traffic congestion. Residents are not in support of medium density housing along Whitemud road and concerns were raised about the potential loss of trees, the natural environment along Whitemud Road, and the impact on property values and traffic flow due to increased housing density. The suitability of semi-detached and row housing in the area is questioned, with a preference for single-detached homes to maintain the existing neighbourhood character.

Residents also expressed concerns about the potential increase in security risks, privacy invasion, and traffic congestion that higher density housing might bring because the property is far from arterial roads and lacks transit access.



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There is a request for more detailed plans concerning the number and type of properties, their alignment with the existing environment, and the impact on local vegetation. Overall, the feedback underscores a need for clarity on the development's specifics and a careful consideration of the community's character and environmental integrity. Residents believe that medium density residential does not match the scenery, atmosphere and dynamics of the neighbourhood. Despite concerns about medium density residential, loss of green space, traffic congestion etc. and opposition by some residents, there is some support for the plan, with suggestions to improve access and reduce congestion by creating additional street connections and access to the site and reducing the proposed density.

#### **Question 4: Do you have any thoughts or concerns regarding these development expectations?**

Residents have expressed a variety of concerns and questions regarding the development expectations. A common theme is the preservation of the neighbourhood's character, with many hoping that the existing greenery, particularly the trees and the brick fence, will remain untouched to maintain the aesthetic and ecological integrity of the area. Traffic congestion is a worry for some, given the single road access to the site and the proposed developments on Whitemud Road. The installation of a sewage pump station has raised questions about the adequacy of the current infrastructure to support higher density development and the potential for noise and visual disruption. Additionally, there is concern about the impact of construction on the natural views currently enjoyed by the residents, with some strongly opposing any removal of trees.

#### **5. Do you have any thoughts or concerns specifically regarding trucking activities?**

The survey responses reveal a significant concern among residents regarding the impact of trucking activities. Key issues include the potential for increased noise, air pollution, and traffic, which are particularly troubling during the summer months when families spend more time outdoors. Safety is a major worry, with speeding trucks in neighbourhoods with children and the risk of road damage due to heavy vehicles. Residents are also troubled by the environmental disruption, such as dust, construction mess, and the loss of enjoyment of their homes and views. Suggestions to mitigate these concerns include limiting trucking hours to avoid school times and preventing trucks from parking on local roads outside of active working hours. One resident suggested that trucks and vehicles accessing the site must access the property from the north via 56 Avenue to avoid dangerous left turns on 51 Avenue. A resident also raised the question on why trucking activities are beginning before studies are complete. Overall, there is a strong call for thoughtful planning and execution of trucking operations to minimize the negative impact on the community's quality of life.

#### **Question 6. Do you have any comments on development expectations and anticipated timeline?**

There was a total of seven responses to this survey question which highlights the residents concern about development expectations and timeline. There is skepticism about the proposed timeline, with concerns about trucking activities beginning prior to finalization of plans and obtaining necessary approvals. Residents living near the proposed site are particularly worried about the potential increase in noise, air pollution, and traffic, especially during the summer months. The long-term impact of the development on the community's quality of life is also a point of contention, with fears that ongoing construction could disrupt the area for years. Additionally, one resident noted their concerns about the



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fairness of the development to long-term residents of Brander Gardens, with potential devaluation of property due to increased congestion, noise, and safety concerns. Lastly, another resident noted that there is a need for more consultation and that earthworks should not begin until the development plans are finalized and sales are underway. Overall, most respondents' express unease about the development's anticipated timeline and its implications for the community.

**Another proposed development concept is the development of a spa on the Soaring lands.**

#### **Question 7. Do you have any thoughts on the possible alternative spa concept?**

The proposal to develop a spa on the Soaring lands has been met with mixed reactions. Many see it as a positive addition enhancing the city's appeal, boosting revenue, and providing health benefits without exacerbating traffic congestion while others believe that a commercial development is not suitable for this property due to the lack of access to arterial roads. The spa is seen by some as a way to honor the land's donors and preserve its natural beauty while another resident thinks the landowners would be appalled to see a spa developed on their lands. Amongst respondents, there is a call for more detailed information regarding the spa's viability, impact on local infrastructure, and potential disruption to the community. Concerns about the project's scale, construction timeline, traffic congestion, and parking were raised. While the concept of a spa is generally welcomed, a few residents believe it is not viable.

#### **Question 8. Is there anything else you would like to comment on?**

Residents have expressed a variety of concerns and suggestions regarding the Soaring development. A common theme is the need for sufficient on-site parking and limiting street parking to residential homes to avoid congestion. Traffic safety is a significant concern, with many advocating for measures like speed bumps to protect the neighbourhood's children and cyclists. Some residents see the addition of a spa as a positive fit for the neighbourhood and oppose further housing development. The preservation of the area's natural beauty and character is also a priority, with hopes that any development will maintain a buffer of green space to minimize noise and retain views of nature. One resident expressed concern that the proposed developments will destroy one of the last remaining access points to the river valley and suggested a land swap with the City of Edmonton to create public park on the property.

## 4 Next Steps

Stantec and UAPT will analyze the information and feedback generated from the survey and the Public Open House to finalize a Concept Plan for Soaring Lands. Please visit the project website [www.soaring.site](http://www.soaring.site) for project updates or to contact the project team at [feedback@soaring.site](mailto:feedback@soaring.site) for more information.

