



# The 880 Neighbourhood Diagnostic

A Common Vision Project in Whitecourt, AB



with support from:



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## SECTION 1:

# Executive Summary

*“Our neighbourhoods have an important role to play in our health. How are they measuring up?”*

In the Spring of 2021, 8 80 Cities in partnership with the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA), University of Waterloo, and University of Alberta undertook a diagnostic assessment in the **downtown neighbourhood of Whitecourt, AB**, that served to contribute to the development of the Canadian Parks and Recreation Neighbourhood Toolkit.

The Toolkit, supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada, is a resource to support A Common Vision for increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary living in Canada: Let’s Get Moving - Canada’s physical activity strategy.

Using a series of tools to measure public life, community activity, and built environment conditions, in summer and winter of 2021, our team discovered:

## 10 KEY FINDINGS

### Downtown Whitecourt, AB

- 1) Many amenities exist within a 15 minute walk radius in downtown. This creates BIG opportunities for creating a healthy, active, and socially connected, neighbourhood.
- 2) The downtown neighbourhood has a lot of underused public space.
- 3) Downtown Whitecourt’s streets are overbuilt for cars and under built for walking and bicycling.
- 4) The lack of consistent public life is a sign the streets and public spaces need to be improved. There is very little that invites people to stay and linger.
- 5) Activity in downtown public space fluctuates significantly depending on time of day and time of year. There is more activity in summer and less in winter and more activity in the day than at night.
- 6) The lack of children and older adults observed in public space is a sign the public spaces are not welcoming to people of all ages.
- 7) Quality individual parks, public space, and places of interest do not invite consistent activity, community engagement, physical activity or social connection due to a lack of walkable connectivity and things to do downtown.
- 8) Transit accessibility is high but ridership and frequency is low.
- 9) Public life spikes during specific events but overall, the most observed activities in public space were sitting in, or walking to and from, personal vehicles.
- 10) Rotary Park is a main hub of social and physical activity for all ages throughout the year.

# Key Recommendations for Whitecourt, AB

From our ten key findings, the 8 80 team has developed 6 **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS** to make the downtown neighbourhood of Whitecourt, AB a healthier, and more equitable place for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds...

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- 1. Create a Connected Active Mobility Network**

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- 2. Activate Transit and Improve Rider Experience**

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- 3. Activate Underused Assets and Space Year Round**

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- 4. Re-imagine Underperforming Public Spaces For All Ages**

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- 5. Create Supportive Policies for Ageing in Place**

.....

- 6. Create Opportunities for People of All Ages to Socialize and Linger in Public Space**

# 880 diagnostic Neighbourhood Toolkit

The recommendations that have been provided within this report for the downtown center of Whitecourt, AB are based off of our findings from three spatial analysis tools that we used from our 8 80 Diagnostic Neighbourhood Toolkit. These include:

## Mobility Audits

Our mobility audits investigate transitional spaces like streets and sidewalks and make assessments based on the quality, accessibility, and barriers they create.



## 8 80 Spatial Audits

**Our Audits** analyze the physical and social structures of streets, parks, libraries, community centers and the places where community life thrives through the eyes of 8 and 80 year-olds.

## Public Space Audits

Our public space audits investigate the welcoming nature of a space and the aesthetic qualities, amenities, and levels of access the space provides.

## Travel Counts

Our travel count tool outlines the mobility patterns of pedestrians, cyclists, and mobility device users using or passing through a space.



## Public Life Studies

**Our Public Life Studies** showcase how people use streets and public spaces by collecting data on the travel patterns and forms of stationary activity that occur within the space being studied. This is showcased through our travel count and activity mapping tools.

## Activity Mapping

Our activity mapping tool showcases where popular locations of stationary activity occurs and reveal areas within a space that may be underutilized by the public.

## Mobility Surveys

Our mobility surveys decipher how people view their local sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and transit systems in relation to how safe and accessible they are.



## 8 80 Intercept Surveys

**Our Intercept Surveys** catch people on the streets to investigate how 8 80 friendly they perceive their community to be through a series of questions based on our three rights pertaining to civic participation, public space, and mobility.

## Public Space Surveys

Our public space surveys gather public insight on how people perceive their streets and public spaces based on factors of quality, accessibility, safety, and comfort.

# Table of Contents

**SECTION 1:** i  
Executive Summary

**SECTION 2:** 1  
Introduction

**SECTION 3:** 3  
An Overview of  
Downtown Whitecourt

**SECTION 4:** 24  
The 8 80 Neighbourhood  
Diagnostic Toolkit

**SECTION 5:** 28  
Methodology:  
How is the Data Collected

**SECTION 6:** 39  
Whitecourt Study Sites:  
In-Depth Findings

**SECTION 7:** 67  
Appendix





It is 8 80 Cities' mission is to improve physical activity, social connection, and civic engagement opportunities in neighbourhoods for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.



## SECTION 2:

# Introduction

## Project Overview

The 8 80 Neighbourhood Diagnostic for Whitecourt Alberta was initiated through a collaboration with the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association's Common Vision project. The goal of the Canadian Parks and Recreation's Common Vision (CPRA) project is to support and encourage physical activity and social connectedness in neighbourhoods. The project is supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada and delivered in partnership with the University of Waterloo, the University of Alberta and 8 80 Cities.

Under the broader umbrella of the Common Vision project, 8 80 Cities was able to pilot our new 8 80 Neighbourhood Diagnostic tool, in a Canadian community to evaluate:

- how accessible neighbourhood's public spaces are to people of all ages and abilities.
- how streets and public spaces are performing from an age-inclusive (8 80) lens.

The 8 80 Neighbourhood Diagnostic is intended to provide compelling data and evidence to highlight any existing spatial inequities in the public realm and to inform recommendations to improve physical activity, social connection, and civic engagement opportunities in neighbourhoods for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

The downtown region of Whitecourt, Alberta was chosen as the pilot site to analyze and assess the quality of public spaces, mobility patterns, and civic participation levels of the town and its residents. The 8 80 Cities team used a variety of tools to collect data and diagnose the target site and to understand how the neighbourhood is performing for residents of all ages.

The 8 80 Neighbourhood Diagnostic for Whitecourt, Alberta is one of several resources produced as part of the Common Vision project that is supporting more inclusive and healthy neighbourhoods across Canada.





# Project Goals

## The Goals for the 8 80 Neighbourhood Diagnostic are:

- Provide useful tools to evaluate how neighbourhood public spaces are performing for people of all ages.
- Provide data and evidence to identify existing socio-spatial inequities and barriers to physical activity, social inclusion and civic engagement.
- Provide recommendations to increase neighbourhood placemaking opportunities
- Get more people physically active and socially connected more often in their neighbourhoods.
- Build a broader movement to create healthier neighbourhoods for people to grow up in and grow old in

## Why Whitecourt?

80 Cities, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, the University of Waterloo, and the University of Alberta Housing for Health team worked in collaboration on this project in Whitecourt due to shared research interests on supporting healthy neighbourhood design in small to mid-sized communities across Canada.

In 2020, the Town of Whitecourt was selected by the University of Alberta's Housing for Health initiative as a site for testing the 8 80 Cities Diagnostic. The Housing for Health team is working with Christenson Developments and Christenson Communities to improve the building amenities, outdoor spaces, programs and activities to support the physical and mental health of residents of 'The Manor' at the Downtown South upcoming retirement living community in Whitecourt (south of Holiday Inn Express).

The Housing for Health project in Whitecourt will intentionally incorporate active design features in a planned residential development to support healthy living across the lifespan. Given the shared goals between

8 80 Cities, CPRA, and University of Alberta's Housing for Health, the project leads seized the opportunity to align activities and complement and co-produce research and planning tools that would not only support neighbourhood planning in Whitecourt, but could also be used as a case example and collaborative model for municipalities to learn from across North America.

Whitecourt, Alberta is a small resource town located on Treaties 6 and 8 on the traditional territories of the

Chipewyan, Cree, Stoney, Saulteaux, Dene Tha', Dane-zaa peoples within the central region of Alberta.<sup>1</sup> The township is home to a population of 9,721 residents and is centrally located between the larger municipalities of Grand Prairie and Edmonton, Alberta.<sup>2</sup> With mild summers and frigid winter weather, the town experiences a large variation of temperature swings throughout the year. Whitecourt's economy is largely driven by the lumber yards and pulp mills that are located along the periphery of the town. It is also strongly influenced by the oil and gas sector that employs many residents within Alberta's Oil Sands.

The strong economic influence this sector has on the town contributes to a fluctuation in Whitecourt's population throughout the year, which can impact the amount of public life within the community.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Empowering the Spirit (2017) Stepping Stones - Numbered Treaties within Alberta: Treaty 6 and 8. Retrieved from <https://empoweringthespirit.ca/starting-your-journey/>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Government of Alberta (2022) Whitecourt - Population. Retrieved from <https://regionaldashboard.alberta.ca/region/whitecourt/population/#?from=2017&to=2021>

## SECTION 3:

# An Overview of Downtown Whitecourt

## At a Glance

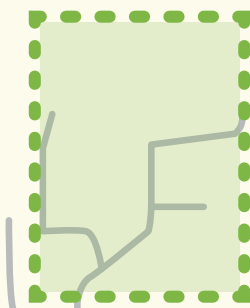
Whitecourt, Alberta is a prime example of a community that has all the right tools and assets in place to allow residents of all ages to thrive. However, the town lacks an integrated approach in the public realm to connect all the dots and does not capitalize on the full range of assets at the town's fingertips. While the town requires growth and adaptation in some areas of this study, it also has a wide range of exceptional public space assets that could be further amplified and made more accessible to children,

older adults, and mobility device users with a strong vision for interconnected walkable and bikeable streets.

Over the course of two study sessions that took place in the summer and winter of 2021, a series of spatial audits, intercept surveys, and public life studies from the 8 80 Diagnostic Toolkit were conducted upon each of the five sites of 51st Ave., 51st Street, 49th Ave., 52nd Street, and Rotary Park.

## Whitecourt Study Sites

- **51<sup>ST</sup> AVENUE** | Page 40
- **51<sup>ST</sup> STREET** | Page 45
- **49<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE** | Page 50
- **52<sup>ND</sup> AVENUE** | Page 55
- **ROTARY PARK** | Page 60



# Key/Overall Findings

The downtown neighbourhood within the Town of Whitecourt has made some successful strides when it comes to providing quality public spaces for its residents. However, there are areas within the community that have been observed as trouble points and exhibit several unfriendly and unfavorable conditions for children, older adults and people with disabilities.

## 1 A LOT OF UNDERUSED PUBLIC SPACES

Whitecourt has an overabundance of spaces that are undeveloped or underutilized by the residents of the town. While there were specific points around downtown that attract activity, many other spaces are void of life. The bounty of underutilized space, however, presents Whitecourt with a strong opportunity to activate space and revitalize the downtown. Vacant parking lots, empty road setbacks, and underutilized green spaces around the town's library and fields west of its public school are some areas with strong potential for

improvement. Gravel lots and the overabundance of streetside parking situated throughout the town also have the capability of becoming new spaces of opportunity for inviting public life through expanded active travel networks, outdoor patios, or parklets. Seasonal changes in the year have also been noted as having an impact on the way public spaces in and around Whitecourt are used. During the winter season, Rotary Park is highlighted as one area of town where public declines significantly but thrives in summer.

## 2 WHITECOURT'S STREETS ARE OVERBUILT FOR CARS & UNDERBUILT FOR WALKING & BICYCLING

Whitecourt is a community that has been heavily influenced by the automobile. This is indicated by the oversaturation of parking lots and abundance of road lanes offered for drivers throughout the town. Most of the spaces reserved for vehicles were noted to sit empty, while many of the roadways were either underutilized or over built for the needed capacity. While the town is very walkable and offers a high level of amenity within the 15-minute radius of the area

we studied, there is a relatively low level of pedestrian activity in the town. The town has a mix of very high-quality sidewalks and trails and very poor quality walking and biking paths which makes for an inconsistent experience for the user. In many cases the street design has created dangerous spaces for active mobility by prioritizing car speed over the safety and comfort for people walking or biking.

## 3 ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE DIFFERS BY AGE AND TIME OF DAY

The use of a public space by specific groups of people is heavily dependent on the age of the user, the time of day, and the season of year. Different age groups have been noted to use a wide array of spaces at different times of the day. The types of people that use any given public space can be segregated by their age and the time of day. Each site in the Whitecourt study analyzed a set of distinct public spaces and each site tended to attract or repel certain crowds of people at various times of day. Many of these sites were influenced by factors including age, demographic, surrounding environment and atmosphere, as well as the time of day or season of year. While

most activity in Rotary Park occurred within the park itself, a faction of people, specifically teenagers and young adults, were prone to gathering in its parking lots. While many children and older adults were observed in public spaces during the morning and noon periods, the number observed quickly receded in all evening studies. Older adults were also seen to be active within public spaces during the summer session yet were barely noted in the winter session. An uptick in the number of children or older adults was recorded at times but only when an activity or event occurred within the area.

## 4 MISSING CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN PLACES OF INTEREST

While Whitecourt is only a town of 9,927 people, urban sprawl has had a significant impact on the vibrancy of public spaces within the downtown center. Past planning measures over the decades have focused too narrowly on auto-centric design thereby establishing a geography of urban sprawl and a community of auto-dependency.

The move of certain commercial anchors from the downtown core coinciding with expanding commercial zones out into other areas of town, has pulled public life from the center of town to the periphery. The move of IGA from Midtown Mall to its current location on 51st Street may reveal some evidence of this shift.

The art of placemaking is about connecting people and place. Creating attractive places for people to stay and enjoy social and physical activity in public space is ultimately about creating inclusive processes that invite diverse communities to help shape and create those special places people love. While Whitecourt has all the right amenities and provisions in place to make the township thrive, the downtown neighbourhood is missing key connectivity and activities that will entice people to linger, stay, and enjoy the benefits of its beautiful public spaces.

For example, Rotary Park is a strong major attraction for residents and visitors, yet despite the close distance to the downtown there is a lack of good walking connectivity to the local retail and businesses where people may be enticed to walk into the downtown for food or shopping. The downtown Library, and Community Space that hosts Bingo night is also a fantastic amenity for people living in the downtown. New residents of the Housing for Health development could benefit from improved walking connections to these fantastic community resources.

## 5 FEW THINGS TO SEE & DO DOWNTOWN DAILY

Creating an inviting public realm and a healthy neighbourhood is not just about creating lots of events, it's about supporting the everyday quality of life for people of all ages and abilities. Neighbourhoods that support daily social interactions, physical activity and spontaneous playful interactions and opportunities support stronger social trust. Seeking out local artists and supporting grassroots community beautification efforts are ways of amplifying the many assets and can provide a lot of impact for little cost.

Creating spaces and places through placemaking practices can bring vibrancy back into the downtown area, increase lingering, and encourage more walking and cycling habits. More things to do and see on the streets will help influence people to get out on foot.

## 6 ACCESSIBLE MOBILITY REQUIRES FREQUENT TRANSIT & INTERCONNECTED ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORKS

The downtown neighbourhood in Whitecourt has a high walkability ranking, given the high level of amenities within a 15 minute walking radius. Despite a large percentage of the public space allocated to the priority use of cars, you can live downtown without a car and access basic needs and services within a 15 minute walk and connect to a public transit system that can take you all the places you may need to go. This is exceptional given the size of Whitecourt's population.

ridership observed and infrequent schedules, it has been noted that public transit may not always be worth the wait due to the length of time it may take for the bus's arrival and non-flexible pick-up options transit provides. This significantly limits the mobility of people who do not drive (including children and youth, some seniors, some people with disabilities, some people living on low income).

The public transit that Whitecourt offers its residents is a strong indication that the town is committed to providing accessible mobility for everyone in the community. With plenty of bus stops that provide shelter and seating, the town has made great strides in building an inclusive and 8 80 friendly town. However, with low

While the town's trails and pathways offer an excellent space for people to engage in active mobility the lack of an interconnected and seamless "all ages all abilities" network of on-street and off-street walking and cycling facilities limits utilitarian trips for daily needs that could easily be walked or biked due to short distances.

## 7 A DIFFERENT PLACE OVER DAY & NIGHT

Visiting Whitecourt's five sites during the day compared to visiting them in the evening can be a vastly different experience for certain types of residents and age groups. While the Town of Whitecourt has a bustling and welcoming atmosphere during the day that feels safe and inviting for residents of all ages, some of these spaces tend to quickly become uninviting as the evening sets in. Poorly lit sidewalks,

dark street corners, empty and isolated streets, distilled public life, and dimly lit businesses can all induce the feeling of uncertainty and unease. These environmental conditions can have a higher impact on certain groups of individuals, specifically older adults and women. Creating public spaces that provide a sense of safety and security at all hours of day can help create inclusive public spaces for all.

## 8 CHILDREN & OLDER ADULTS ARE MISSING WITHIN THE CITY'S STREET LIFE.

While there were a number of children and older adults that were recorded in Rotary Park, there was a large shortfall of children and older adults observed among the town's streets. These age groups

were also prevalent in the morning and noon hours, but rapidly declined in counts during evening studies.

# What Was Observed

Over the course of the summer and winter studies, 8 80 Cities set out to gather a collection of information relating to each of the five sites. In this analysis, observational methods were used to collect data using 8 80's Spatial Audits toolkit and 8 80's Public Life Studies toolkit.



## 8 80's Spatial Audits

Studies began with an observational analysis and assessment of each site using tools from the 8 80 Spatial Audits toolkit. This helped determine how “8 80 friendly” each space was. The Mobility Audit analyzed 51st Avenue, 51st Street, 49th Street, and 52nd Avenue, and focused on themes surrounding sidewalks, public transit, cycling lanes,

and crosswalks. The Public Space Audit analyzed Rotary Park and focused on themes surrounding streetscape provisions, lighting, public amenities, signage, and the general atmosphere of the space. The spatial audits conducted on each of the sites have resulted in these overall findings:



### INCONSISTENT SIDEWALKS

Sidewalks are some of the most democratic spaces in a city. They are places that should welcome everybody to enjoy a simple walk. The sidewalks in Whitecourt's downtown were generally well maintained, clear of snow, and decently connected. Most sidewalks provided ample room for two

pedestrians to use side-by-side comfortably and sidewalks were provided on both sides of the road. However, some sidewalks did display potential tripping hazards, poor maintenance, lack of accessibility for mobility users, and some ended abruptly.



### A TIDY TOWN

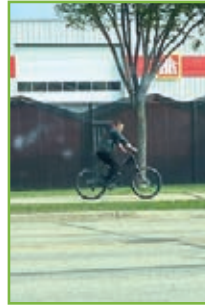
Whitecourt excelled in cleanliness. The town provided a series of garbage receptacles in all sites, litter was minimal, and a strong level of maintenance from the Town. No garbage receptacles were ever seen overflowing or not maintained. Having tidy and clean

public space is a great sign of respect for the public realm and its importance as a civic asset. The town's gardens and street furniture were well maintained. Public washrooms in Rotary Park were accessible and well maintained.



## NO BIKE LANES OR PATHS

While no on-street bike lanes were present within any of the locations, there is a lot of opportunity for future urban improvements given the ample road widths and right of ways. Where there were paved paths or trails people of all ages were often observed.



## ROTARY PARK IS AN EXCEPTIONAL PUBLIC SPACE

Whitecourt's Rotary Park provided an inviting, playful, and relaxed atmosphere all around. Washroom facilities were open year-round, paths and trails supported physical activity, and a selection of features were in place to support social interaction including BBQ pits, picnic tables and a community garden. The

park provided a comfortable environment for both children and older adults to enjoy and was an overall hub of activity for people of all ages and backgrounds. Other parks and public spaces observed in the downtown while beautifully maintained, lacked any people activity at all.

## 8 80's Public Life Studies:

Studies continued with an observational analysis and assessment of each site using tools from 8 80's Public Life Studies toolkit. The Travel Count tool analyzed the street corridors of 51st Avenue, 51st Street, 49th Street, and 52nd Avenue, and focused on counts of passing pedestrians, cyclists, and mobility aid users. The Active Mapping tool analyzed these latter sites in addition to Rotary Park and focused on recording people's activities within a space, whether stationary or active.

Excluding Rotary Park, the majority of public activity within Whitecourt's overall study boundaries took place near a specific set of establishments among certain study sites. These included the parking lots and nearby sidewalks adjacent to the big-box retail stores of IGA, Dollarama, Canadian Tire and Home Hardware. These stores are located within Study Sites #2 (51st St) and #3 (49th

Ave.), the northern sidewalk on 52nd Ave. adjacent to Whitecourt Central School in Site #5 (52nd Ave.), and the sidewalks adjacent to the Royal Canadian Legion and banks of ATB, CIBC, and Service Credit Union within Site #1. Public activity was also noted to be highest at the intersections of 51st St. & 49th Ave. and 50th St. & 51st Ave. and sidewalks adjacent to the Royal Canadian Legion. While there was a consistent source of public activity present at all times of day and week along the study sites of 51st St. and 49th Ave., activity along 51st Ave. and 52nd Ave. was shown to spike and drop during certain periods. This was due to the nature of time-based events occurring within these sites such as the Legion's weekly farmers markets and community classes, and morning and afternoon school transitions. Overall, Rotary Park held the most stationary activity compared to all sites assessed.

# The public life studies that were conducted on each of the five sites have resulted in these overall findings:



## Travel Counts:

Mobility travel counts were conducted in four out of the five sites being studied. Counts were conducted on the main street corridors of:

- **51st Avenue** (Site #1) • **49th Avenue** (Site #3)
- **51st Street** (Site #2) • **52nd Avenue** (Site #4).

Mobility counts for all sites were conducted in 15-minute segments in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings of Saturday, Aug. 21st and Monday, Aug. 23rd in the summer session and on Saturday Dec. 4th and Monday, Dec. 6th in the winter session.

Overall, a total of 190 people were recorded traversing through one of the four sites being assessed during the time of study over the summer and winter periods. The main mode of active mobility recorded from all seasons came from pedestrians at a count of 167, while mobility aid users followed suit at 12, followed by cyclists at 11.

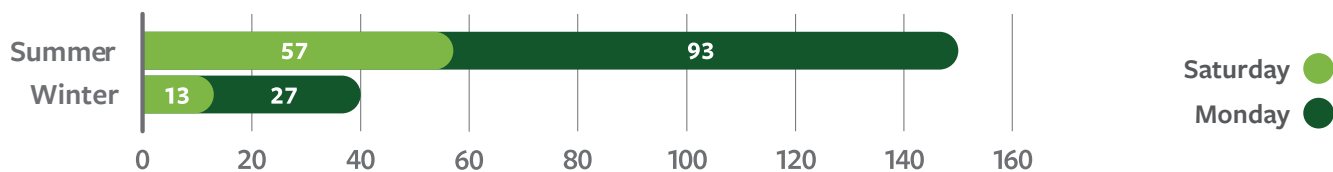
While vehicles were seen as the dominant form of mobility in Whitecourt, other modal forms were also recorded. These included pedestrians, cyclists, and mobility aid

users. 49th and 52nd Avenue had the lowest rates of active mobility overall, while 51st Avenue and 51st Street had the highest rates of active mobility. Most active mobility in the summer occurred during the morning and afternoon travel count sessions, while it dropped significantly during the evening sessions. Active mobility in the winter remained higher in the morning and evening counts. Weekends

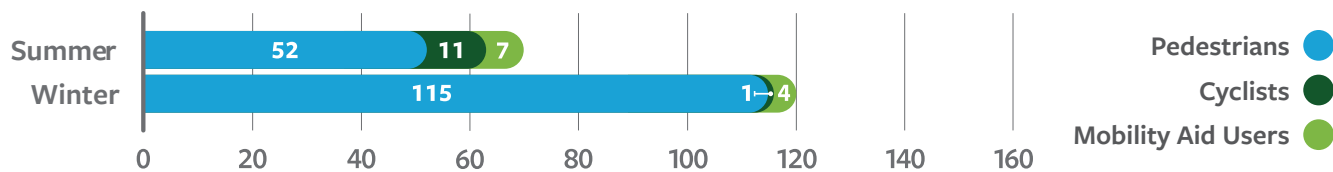
also catered to more counts of active mobility, while it decreased during the weekdays.

Age was a differentiating factor between each of the seasons. Young adults between the ages of 25-44 were most visible on 51st street during both the summer and winter season, while toddlers and children were less present. Interestingly, younger age groups were more visible on 51st Ave. in the winter as compared to the summer. This higher rate of activity may be due to the activities hosted at Whitecourt’s local Legion club. Older adults were missing from the picture during evening counts and during winter.

### Travel Counts by Season



### Travel Counts by Mode of Travel



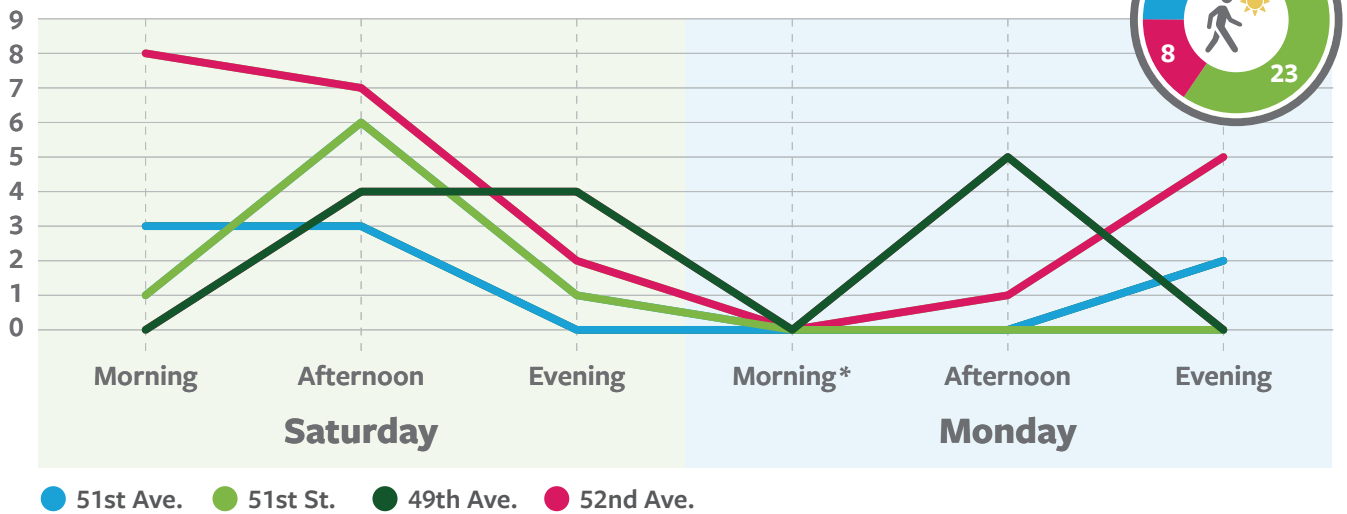


# Pedestrians

Over the course of the morning, afternoon, and evening of the Saturday and Monday travel count sessions in both summer and winter studies, a total of 167 pedestrians were recorded on the streets. In both seasons, pedestrian activity was higher on the weekend and dropped on the weekdays.

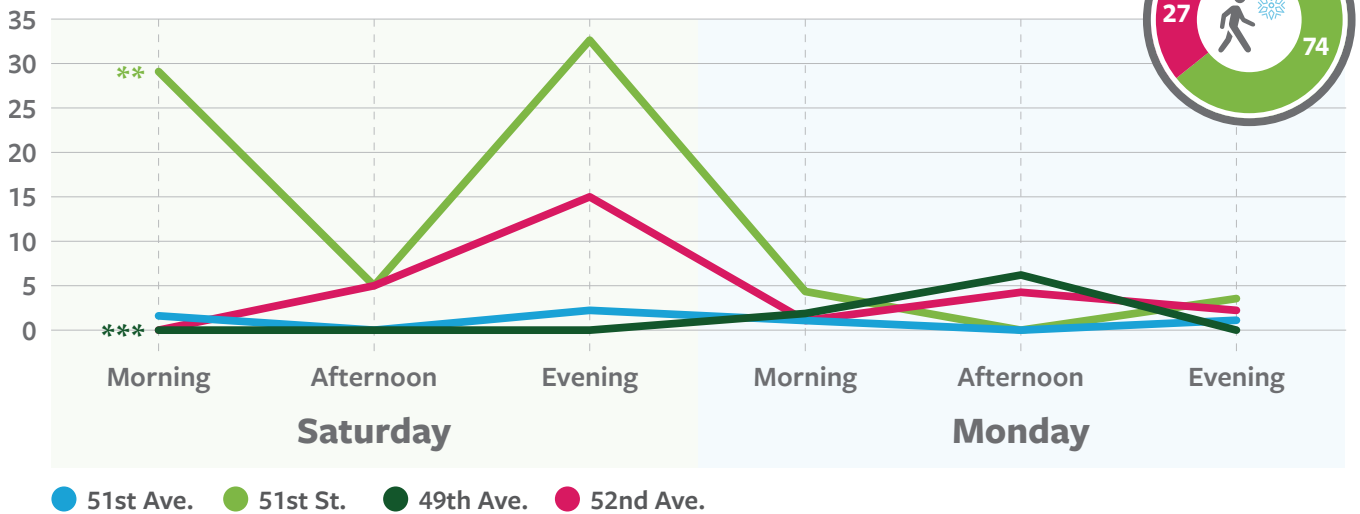
Pedestrian activity was also higher during the winter with 115 people recorded, while only 52 people were recorded in the summer. However, this spike in pedestrian activity may be the result of holiday festivities occurring on the streets during times of data collection in the winter, thereby impacting the observations.

## Pedestrian Travel Counts by Site: Summer 2021



\* No data was collected on Monday morning (Summer 2021) for all sites

## Pedestrian Travel Counts by Site: Winter 2021



\*\* Spikes of pedestrian activity on 51st Ave. attributed to the impacts of programming at Whitecourt's Royal Canadian Legion Branch #44 and Christmas Parade  
 \*\*\* Data not collected for Saturday evening on 52nd Ave. due to impact of Christmas Parade event



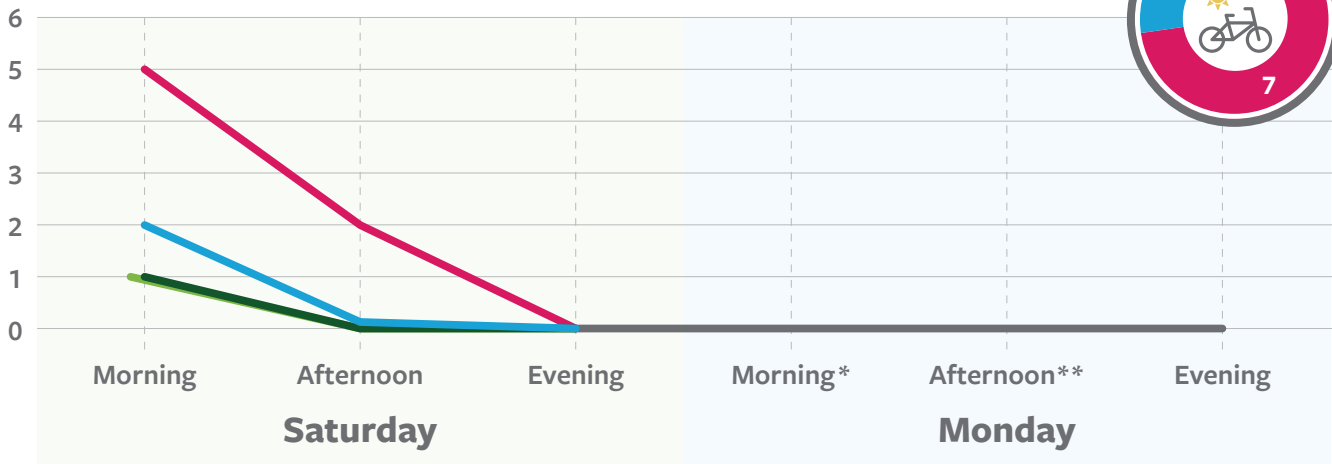
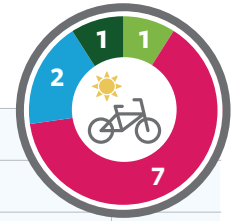


# Cyclists

Over the course of the morning, afternoon, and evening of the Saturday and Monday travel count sessions in both summer and winter studies, a total of 12 cyclists were recorded on the streets. Cyclists were more visible during the summer travel count with 11 cyclists being recorded, whereas only 1 cyclist was counted during the winter study.

The majority of cyclists were witnessed during morning hours, with a slight number of cyclists witnessed during afternoon travel counts. No cyclists were recorded in the evenings, either in the summer or winter, nor were any recorded during Monday travel counts.

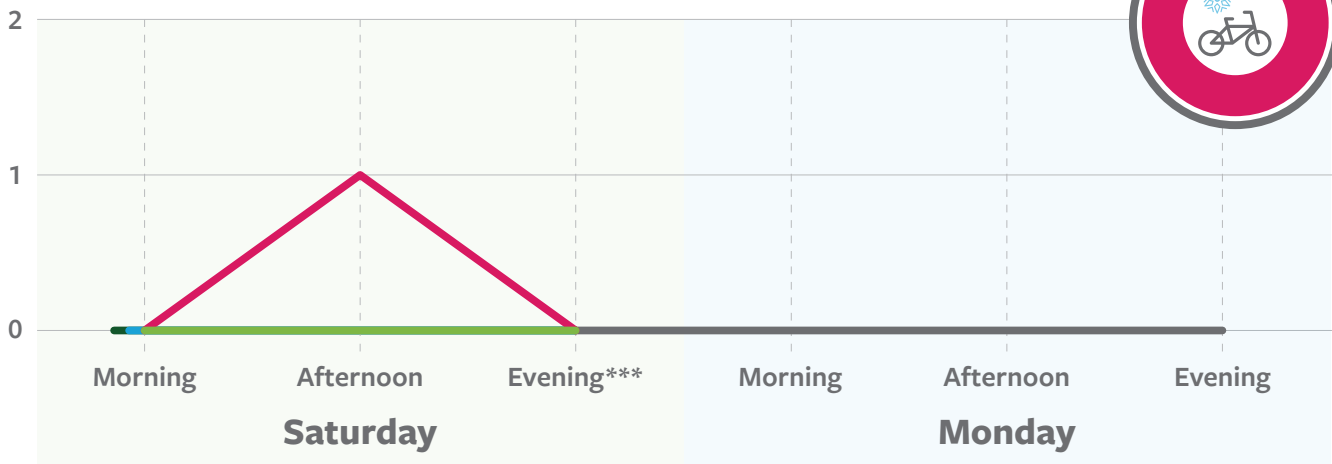
## Cyclist Travel Counts by Site: Summer 2021



● 51st Ave. ● 51st St. ● 49th Ave. ● 52nd Ave. ● All Sites

\* No data was collected on Monday morning for all sites  
 \*\* No data collected on 49th Ave. on Monday afternoon

## Cyclist Travel Counts by Site: Winter 2021



● 51st Ave. ● 51st St. ● 49th Ave. ● 52nd Ave. ● All Sites

\*\*\*No data was collected on 52nd Ave. on Saturday evening

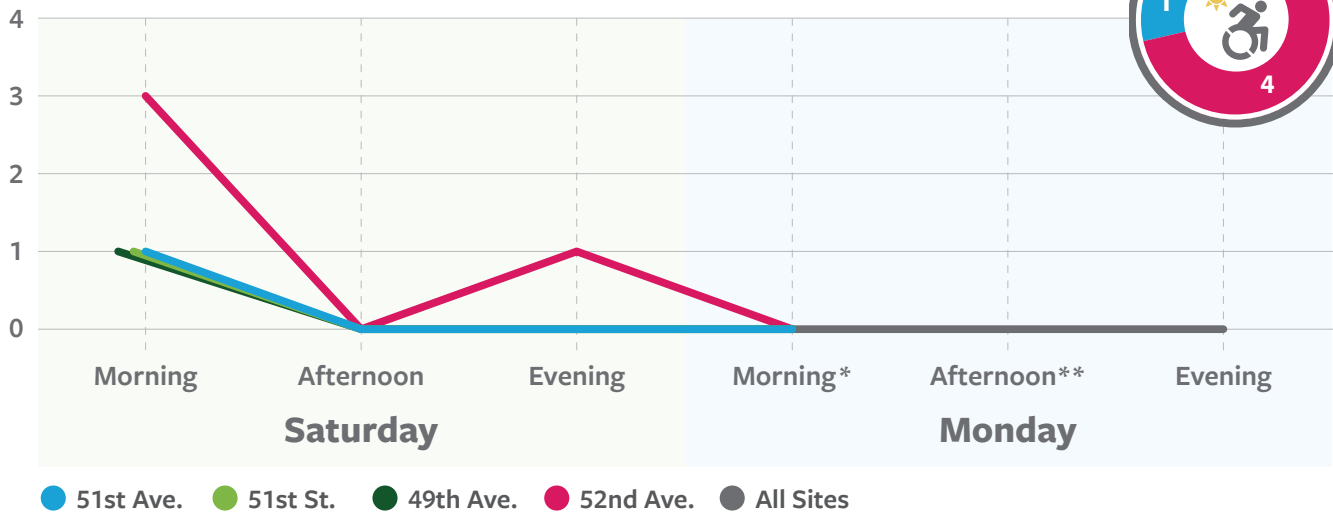
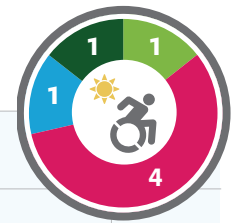


# Mobility Aid Users

Mobility aid users refer to those using wheelchairs, canes, walkers, and any other aid designed to assist the mobility of a person. Over the course of the morning, afternoon, and evening of the Saturday and Monday travel count sessions in both summer and winter studies, a total of 11 mobility aid users were recorded on the streets. Mobility aid users were most active during the summer travel count with 7

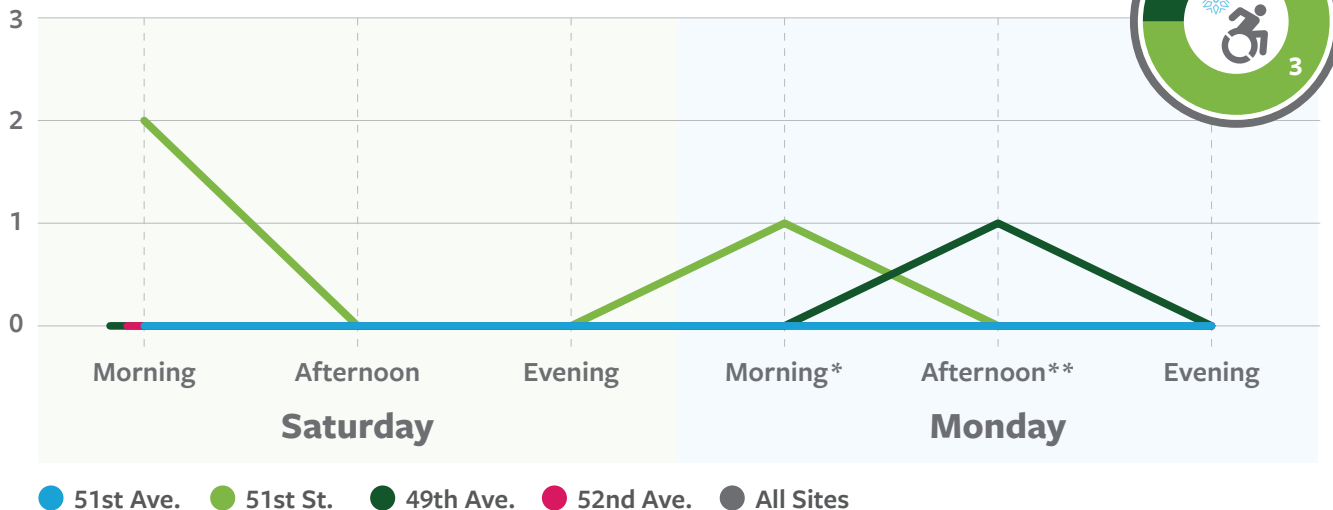
people being recorded, whereas only 4 mobility aid users were counted during the winter study. A steady number of mobility aid users were observed along street corridors throughout the morning, noon, and evening of both Saturday and Monday during the summer, mobility aid users were only reported using streets during the mornings and afternoons in winter. None were counted in the evenings.

## Mobility Aid Users Travel Counts by Site: Summer 2021



\* No data was collected on Monday morning for all sites  
 \*\* No data collected on 49th Ave. on Monday afternoon

## Mobility Aid Users Travel Counts by Site: Winter 2021



\*\*\*No data was collected on 52nd Ave. on Saturday evening

# Activity Counts:

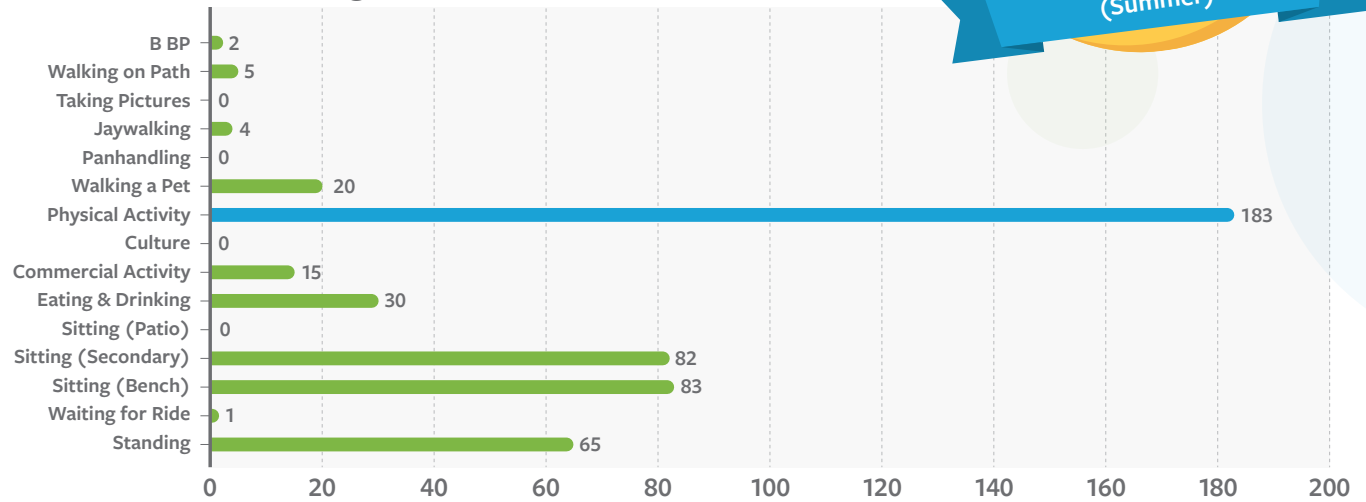
A range of activities occurred in each of Whitecourt's five study sites and a total of 618 people were recorded over a period of morning, afternoon, and evening counts taking place on the Saturday and Monday of both summer and winter study sessions. Overall, the majority of stationary activity was recorded during the summer with 490 people or 79% being counted, whereas a decrease of stationary activity occurred in the winter with a total of 128 people or 21% being counted for.

## Physical Activity ranked #1 in Summer

Out of all types of activity recorded, physical activity ranked top place as a summertime activity. 37% of summer activities consisted of people engaging in physical activity. Physical activity ranked second in winter activities with 25% of people engaging in some form of physical movement.



### Summer Activity Ranking



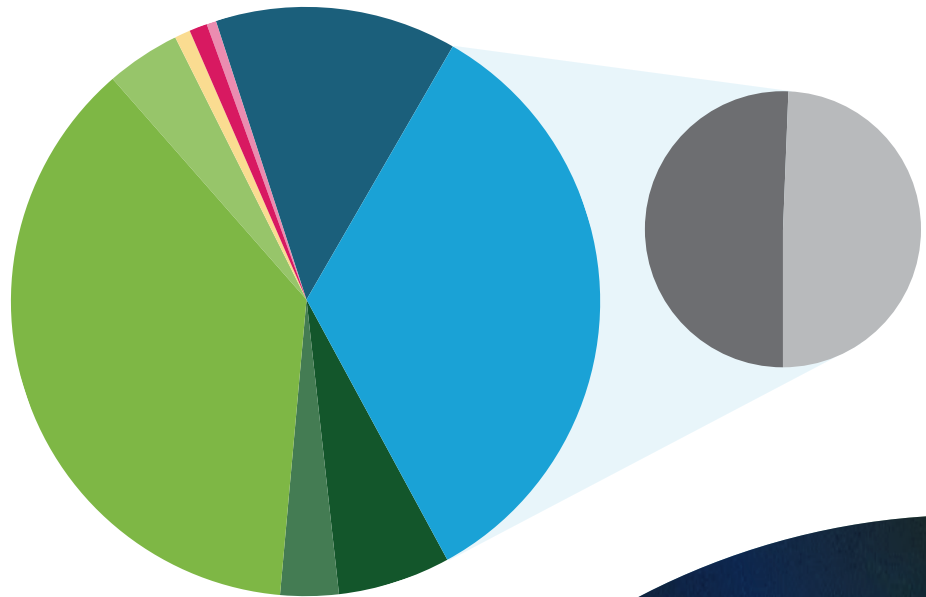
## Summer Lounging was Second Best

The second highest activity recorded in the summer was people lounging, either on a bench or on a secondary form of seating such as the ground or on ledges, spaces that are not intentionally designed for sitting. In the summer 16.9% of people were recorded sitting on benches, while 16.7% (82) were recorded sitting on some form of secondary seating.



During the winter, seating drastically decreased in activity. Only 2.3% of people were observed were sitting on benches. Nobody was observed engaged in any form of secondary sitting during the winter.

### Summer Activity Count

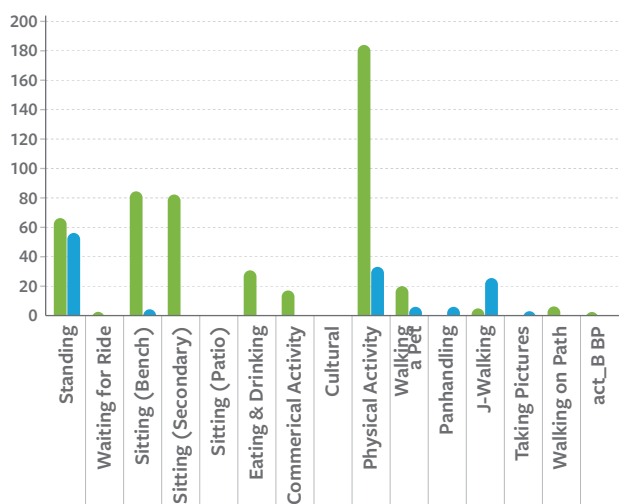


## Standing ranked #1 in Winter

Standing was the top activity recorded during the winter, representing 44% of the total activity.



### Activity Ranking by Season



# What Was Heard

The intercept surveys that were conducted for Whitecourt’s public spaces have resulted in these sentimental scores:



## 8 80’s Intercept Surveys

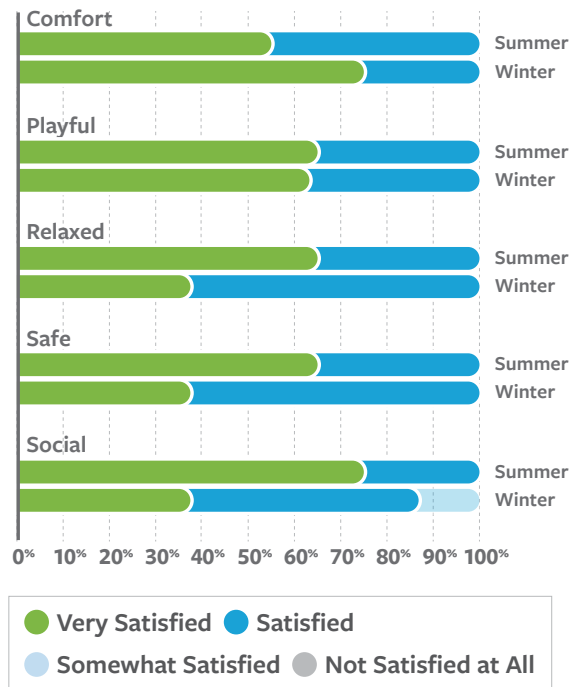
A series of intercept surveys from the Diagnostic Toolkit were conducted with Whitecourt’s residents during the summer and winter of 2021 to capture the sentiment that people had about their town’s performance. The surveys were placed into two categories with one focused on the quality of public spaces, while the other focused on mobility habits. A small and random sample size was collected for each of the two surveys released and

sentiment scores were recorded. The intercept surveys scored a range of sentiments with almost all responses being overwhelmingly positive. The sentimental views obtained from these surveys provided good insight into the mindset of the town’s residents and helped to highlight key areas within the public realm that may need to be investigated further.

### Majority of Residents are Satisfied with Public Space

The majority of residents interviewed within Rotary Park have stated they feel very comfortable and relaxed within the park.

#### Public Space Satisfaction Levels



### Cycling Safety

The mobility survey captured a mixed reaction on the topic of cycling safety within. While slightly over half of survey respondents had indicated they felt safe cycling on Whitecourt streets, the other half of respondents indicated feeling unsafe. This split reaction highlights more can be done to improve the safety of cycling infrastructure around town.

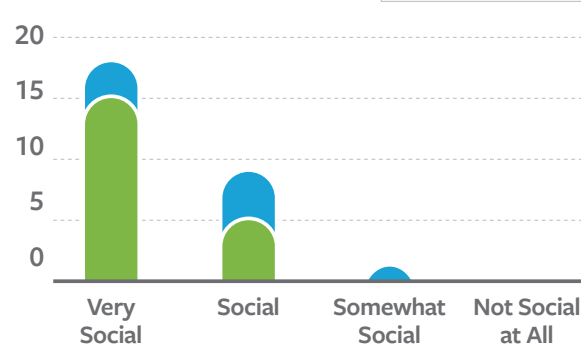
#### Perception of Cycling Safety



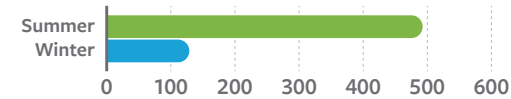
## Rotary Park is a Social Hub

8 80's assessment of Whitecourt has indicated that Rotary Park is the central hub of the town. While other sites did offer some variation of public life and social activity throughout the year, Rotary Park harnessed a great deal more. Surveys indicated that most people found Rotary Park to be very social, with few opposing this opinion. While public life did take a dive during the winter months, a select number of social activities were still prevalent during certain periods of the day to keep the area socially active. More programming during the winter season should be in place in order to have a continuous social atmosphere year-round.

Social Activity by Season



Stationary Active Mapping Counts

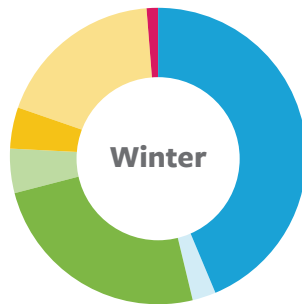
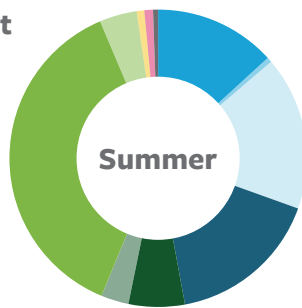


## Active Recreation was #1

Among all activities recorded throughout the town of Whitecourt, active recreation was one of the top activities people engaged in. This includes casual walks, jogging, and walking pets. With Whitecourt's large assets of recreational trails and pathway corridors already established the town is a leader in active mobility and recreation. While this is the case, more can be done throughout town to make recreation more safe, more connected, and more enjoyable for the public.

### Activity Engagement by Season

- Standing
- Waiting for Ride
- Sitting (Bench)
- Sitting (Secondary)
- Sitting (Patio)
- Eating & Drinking
- Commercial Activity
- Cultural
- Physical Activity
- Walking a Pet
- Panhandling
- J-Walking
- Taking Pictures
- Walking on Path
- Act\_B\_BP

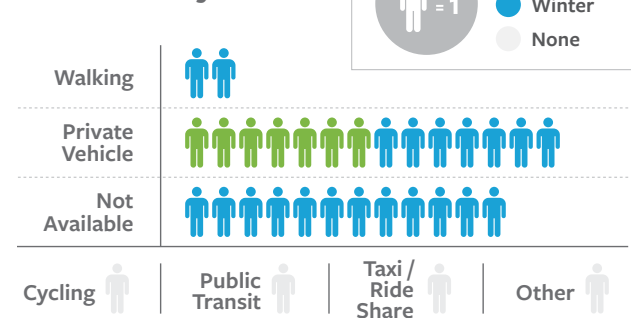


## The Majority of Park Users access Rotary Park by Private Vehicle

Rotary Park is one the busiest of all sites assessed with a number of people stating they have visited on a daily or weekly basis. While many people were recorded using the park, 8 80's Intercept Surveys revealed that the majority of people visited the park by mode of private vehicle.

The large presence of vehicles, especially during the summer season, highlights the need to encourage alternative forms of travel. This may include emphasis on cycling and walking, or an enhanced approach to provide more accessible, flexible, and frequent public transportation options.

### Mode of Travel to Access Rotary Park



Overall, residents and visitors within the Town of Whitecourt have had an overall positive experience with the town's public spaces and streets. While residents have noted some issues relating to safety or things to do, Whitecourt's spaces are rated quite high.

# Key Recommendations

One obvious fact about Whitecourt AB is that the town takes pride in its public realm and seeks to generously give back to the community in a number of ways. Namely through a selection of high-quality public spaces including Whitecourt's Public Library, Friendship Park, Centennial Park, and Rotary Park which includes its Splash Zone, concession, washroom facilities, and array of walking trails, the town is set up for success. After an extensive assessment and analysis of Whitecourt, the 8 80 Cities Diagnostic Survey has come up with a series of key recommendations that will help the town establish more friendly and livable environments and allow an improvement of public spaces for all.

## 1 Give residents a place to stay and linger

The majority of Whitecourt's streetscapes within the downtown core do not provide much draw for its residents and have little to offer when it comes to attracting pedestrian and cyclist activity into the area. Creating vibrant streetscapes requires more than the addition of a few benches and a widened sidewalk. Adding elements such as adaptable seating, vegetation, ambient lighting, and art installations can help transform a space from a place of transition into a place of destination. Residents need places to linger, sights to see, and spaces to rest and relax. Thus, anchor points need to be carefully articulated and thought

out, for each and every space in order to attract people into the area. Coffee shops, patios, outdoor markets, and other commercial amenities can also anchor in a community stronghold and produce active environments where people want to visit, stay, socialize, and play.

### Suggestions:

Provide seating, invest in art, create colour, and provide warmth. Build places over spaces & utilize placemaking practices. Create a common vision that incorporates input from all members of the community.



## 2 Reimagine streets as important public spaces that can connect existing amenities

Streets are not just for vehicles and should allow for a variety of active mobility users. Focus on creating safer streets and dedicated active mobility routes for cyclists, rollers, strollers, pedestrians, and mobility aid users alike. Integrate separated barriers for cycling routes along street corridors with larger widths of roadway. Ensure pedestrian paths and trail networks are well-connected and provide safe transitions for movement. Create safe and comfortable crossing zones for pedestrians, cyclists, and mobility users of all ages, especially in areas where high volumes of traffic and speed occur. Prioritize pedestrian-orientated planning in the mobility network, while providing a series of mobility accommodations for all mobile forms.

### Suggestions:

Establish a pedestrian-prioritized plan for the streetscape. Create safe connection points. Build a strong active mobility network. Implement an all ages all abilities cycling network of on street and off street facilities.

## 3 Urban Landscape a Sandbox of Opportunity

Downtown Whitecourt has a lot of underutilized or underdeveloped land that is a sandbox of opportunity. Empty parking lots, barren setbacks beside curb lanes, and underutilized street frontages can become reimaged to make the space more useful and pleasant. With the amount of available space to play with, Whitecourt can instill new life, colour, and greenery to its urban landscapes.

### Suggestions:

Invite and support pop-up placemaking activations in under-utilized spaces. Re-imagine and re-ignite the use of forgotten spaces by reusing and recycling their purpose and function.







## 4 Create Safe Environments for All Ages at All Hours

Certain public spaces tend to be frequented by certain groups of users during different times of the day and week. Youth are noticed to take over certain types of spaces in the late afternoons and evenings, with a specific attraction to the vast parking lot of Rotary Park as a place for gathering and socialization.

Although the town of Whitecourt seeks to create a safe and welcoming environment for all its residents, data suggests there are areas within the town that certain groups of residents feel unsafe or unwelcome. Older adults and women pointed out the lack of lighting

on some downtown streets and areas within Rotary Park as spaces in which they felt unsafe. The isolated streets and darkness during winter months create an unwelcoming environment for many

### Suggestions:

Improve human scale lighting along streets, pathways, and parks. Invest in lighting for business frontages. Establish events, activities, and businesses that are open later. Focus on creating a safer atmosphere in the evening and at night.

## 5 Creating Space to Age in Place

Whitecourt's downtown is a very walkable area that allows to access most amenities people need within a walk of 15 minutes or less. These amenities are also positioned well within a close walking distance to the new and upcoming residential neighbourhood developments targeted for senior living which includes the Christenson Development on 49th Avenue. While the area is walkable, it can be made even more walkable through a variety of improved safety features and other provisional amenities that can go on to support aging in place. These include improved street crossings, shaded resting areas, and additional benches along the streetscapes.

Urban planning should also consider alternatives in building design and placement. Concentrating development within the existing boundaries and reducing sprawl will be a key element to further support the creation of a healthy, equitable and age-friendly

place. This will contribute to the downtown revitalization efforts and increase vibrancy. By creating streets and spaces that are accessible for all, older residents will be able to age in place. For more recommendations on design, refer to the [Healthy Community Guidelines](#)\* created by the University of Alberta's Housing for Health team.

*\*For more information on these recommendations, please visit:*

<https://www.ualberta.ca/departments-of-medicine/divisions/preventive-medicine/housing-for-health/healthy-community-guidelines.html>

### Suggestions:

Focus development on amenity rich areas. New developments should increase walkability to support the right to mobility and public space for children and older adults.

## 6 Improve Transit Frequency

Frequency is freedom. Increasing transit ridership is all about increasing frequency. Piloting increased transit frequency on specific routes to test and evaluate how it may increase demand and improve ridership.

### Suggestions:

Understand community travel habits and make transit more convenient and accessible for existing users and attractive to potential new users.

## 7 Build a Safe & Connected Pedestrian Network

Whitecourt's downtown is a highly walkable environment with most key amenities being fully accessible on foot within 15 minutes or less. However, some sidewalks have been observed to be unpleasant and potentially dangerous with crossing points posing barriers and challenges to certain groups that may use them. The sidewalk crossings surpassing Highway 43 and over rail lines were also noted as challenging spaces that impose safety hazards, walkability barriers, and disconnect the community trails from the larger urban geography. In winter, most sidewalks were cleared from snow. However, there were instances of icy surfaces and snow windows building up along entry points of pedestrian crossing. Some sidewalks also provided limited space to walk due to poor snow removal practices and incriminating snowbanks.

Small improvements to the town's sidewalks and walking networks can make a world of a difference by focusing on creating safer, more accessible, and better-connected pedestrian corridors. Installing buffered zones of vegetation between roads and sidewalks can create a safer and more pleasant environment for pedestrians. With the bounty of pathways and trails that Whitecourt harnesses, the town also has the opportunity of becoming a strong community of active mobility users.

### Suggestions:

Prioritize repair of sidewalk hazards, reduce speeds on residential streets, and increase traffic calming elements on streets. Increase greenery and trees, vegetation buffers. Create stronger trail connections.



# Seasonal Findings

Seasonal temperatures and weather greatly influence how a public space is used throughout the year. While Whitecourt has a highly active summer season with Rotary Park becoming the center of attention for public life, outdoor activities within the winter are in short supply. With temperate summers and frigid winters, the outdoor spaces offered in Whitecourt may not always be a welcoming environment for certain groups of people. A series of observations have been recorded relating to downtown Whitecourt’s public spaces during the summer and winter season.

Over the course of the two study sessions held in 2021, an average temperature of 11°C was recorded during the summer while the winter average temperature was recorded at -15°C. This extreme shift into uncomfortable conditions in the winter can cause public life to come to a stand still. Conversations with locals revealed that Whitecourt experiences wide temperature fluctuations which drive people indoors to find warmth and comfort.

## Summer

**Average Temperature 11°C**

**Saturday** 15°C (Clear)  
**Sunday** 9°C (Overcast/Rainy)  
**Monday** 9C (Part Rain)



**Right to Public Space**

In the summer, outdoor public life tended to thrive in one particular place- Rotary Park. The other public spaces we observed in the summer had very little people activity at all.

## Winter

**Average Temperature -15°C**

**Saturday** -11°C (Clear)  
**Sunday** -20°C (Overcast/Rainy)  
**Monday** -15°C (Part Rain)



**Right to Mobility**

There were few people observed walking and bicycling in Whitecourt compared to rates of automobile use seen. The sidewalks close to retail were the busiest. A lot of walking activity observed was to and from people’s cars. Street corridors were wide and oriented to car mobility and traffic volumes were low. Due to the lack of road markings, cyclists were observed to be riding along sidewalks.

Many public spaces in winter lack areas for warmth and protection from elements such as wind and snow. City planners should be aware of routes in winter that may limit public use

Sidewalks, intersection crossings, and pathways tend to be disrupted by ice patches or snow windows.



**Right to Participate**

COVID-19 was a large factor in limiting participation and engagement within the community. Many residents opted in for digital participation within community consultation as opposed to in-person sessions. All community meetings were done online during the observation timeframe.

# Conclusion

Downtown Whitecourt has great public assets in place to make it one of the healthiest, most active, and socially connected neighbourhoods in Canada. By activating underused spaces and connecting existing places where community life already blooms (i.e. parks, libraries, community centres), the Town can better leverage its investments to benefit residents of all ages.

The Neighbourhood Diagnostic pilot in downtown Whitecourt, AB was developed by 80 Cities with the support from the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA), the University of Alberta's Housing for Health (H4H) team, and funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada. This case study is complementary to the ongoing work from the University of Alberta's Housing for Health team's assessments on Whitecourt's Christenson Development which is situated in the neighbourhood study area, and is a supplementary resource for the CPRA's Tactical Neighbourhood Toolkit.

This case study is an open-source tool available to Canadians interested in supporting healthy built environments and healthy neighborhoods.

Additional resources are available from our partners and can be found at:



## CPRA's Tactical Neighbourhood Toolkit

<https://cpa.ca/framework/tools-and-resources/>



Housing  
FOR  
health

## Housing for Health Healthy Community Guidelines

<https://www.ualberta.ca/department-of-medicine/divisions/preventive-medicine/housing-for-health/healthy-community-guidelines.html>



Housing  
FOR  
health

## Healthier Food and Beverage Guidelines for Public Events

<https://www.ualberta.ca/department-of-medicine/divisions/preventive-medicine/housing-for-health/healthier-food-and-beverage-guidelines-for-public-events.html>



## LOOKING FORWARD:

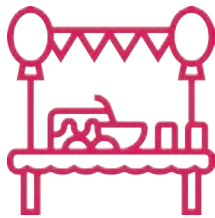
# What's Next? Pilot Ideas

By using lighter, quicker, cheaper placemaking principles, and building on the strengths already present in the community, Whitecourt can focus their investments on activating and connecting the people and places that are already there.

Some low cost, high impact pilot ideas that can generate immediate physical activity, and social and civic engagement benefits to residents of all ages in the town include:



Engage residents of Whitecourt in an **ideas festival** to build collective engagement to improve public space, social connection and physical activity in the downtown neighbourhood.



Activate underused space by building local community partnerships. Start by bringing some **indoor programming for all ages outdoors** (markets, library programs, art, fitness, bingo etc).



Trial a **pop-up AAA (all ages all abilities) active transportation network** in the downtown to build excitement for active mobility and better understand mobility needs and barriers.





... we believe that if everything we did in our cities' public spaces was great for an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old, then it would be better for everyone.

**SECTION 4:**

# The 8 80 Neighbourhood Diagnostic Toolkit

## Who is 8 80 Cities?

At 8 80 Cities, we believe that if everything we did in our cities' public spaces was great for an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old, then it would be better for everyone. We have worked in over 300 communities on 5 continents bringing people together to transform mobility and public spaces to create more resilient and healthier cities for all. Our goal has been led by one of our founding missions: to make it easier for people of all ages and backgrounds to walk, bike,

or take transit, and visit great parks and public spaces in an easily accessible way. Because ageing is a universal human experience, the 8 80 lens is always our starting point, but not our endpoint. We know the significant role social identities such as gender, race, ability, sexual orientation, gender expression, ethnic and cultural background, and economic status play in a person's experience of navigating public space.

# Diagnostic:

dai / uhg / naa / stuhk

a set of methods used to help identify a particular problem using a combination of signs and symptoms.

## What is the Toolkit?

Most studies that assess public space use forms of rankings, scores, and services that fixate on one specific metric such as the walkability of an area or the proximity to green space. While useful, these metrics don't fully capture what it's like to truly navigate the different aspects of a neighbourhood's overall public realm, and often say little about the kind of people and activities these spaces attract or detract. By combining the assessment of public spaces with additional tools focused on identifying and examining people's mobility patterns, the activities and flows of public life, and the types of civic participation within local government and community events, the 8 80 Neighbourhood Diagnostic looks at public spaces with a more integrated approach that digs deeper into the factors of what makes a neighbourhood tick.

The 8 80 Neighbourhood Diagnostic is a planning tool that gives communities a deeper understanding into how their community's public spaces are performing using the 8 80 lenses. We work with communities to translate what we have learned into recommendations and actions to improve social connection and physical activity

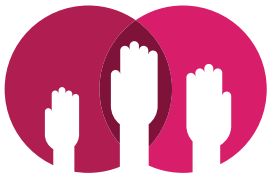
for people of all ages in public spaces. This is accomplished through three frameworks that observe areas of public space, mobility, and civic participation in the city building process.

The Toolkit, otherwise known as the 8 80 Diagnostic Neighbourhood Toolkit, uses a series of observational techniques to understand how the places and activities that support community life and social connection in neighbourhoods, such as parks, streets, and other public spaces are performing using the 8 80 lens. Co-developed and implemented with community partners, the Diagnostic process is not a one-size-fits-all approach. We work together with municipal and grassroots partners to understand neighbourhood history and context, map existing assets, and identify multiple sites at the neighbourhood scale. We provide an in-depth analysis of how these public spaces are performing and identify areas for improvement.



# What does it Measure?

There are many existing rankings and services that look at mobility, public space, and civic participation from a citywide perspective, but comparatively, few that zero-in on local neighbourhood infrastructure and community policies. The 8 80 Diagnostic seeks to address that gap and focuses on the nuts-and-bolts elements that affect everyday life. There are three main pillars that the 8 80 Diagnostic Toolkit looks at to determine how a neighbourhood is performing:



## Right to **Participate**

Access to quality sustainable transportation options has a direct effect on people's economic and social opportunities. Safe, comfortable, and accessible, sidewalks, bike paths, and public transit systems are essential ingredients for creating healthier, safer, and more environmentally friendly neighbourhoods. Too often, urban transportation is planned with only a few types of users in mind. Many underserved populations live in areas with poor transit access and/or services and unsafe conditions for walking and cycling. Many children, older adults, and people with disabilities, are unable to drive and tend to rely on human-powered mobility options. Our Diagnostic audits, movements studies, and surveys analyze and evaluate mobility through the eyes of multiple types of users using multiple types of modes. Our Diagnostic process also identifies existing barriers and systemic inequities that contribute to a sense of belonging and safety (or lack thereof) on neighbourhood streets.



## Right to **Public Space**

Public spaces are where communities come alive. When well-designed and managed, they allow individuals and groups to become stewards of their local spaces, creatively programming them to fit the unique needs of the community they live in. Parks and green space are a critical means for residents to interact and connect with nature. A network of accessible and welcoming public indoor and outdoor spaces can provide mental and physical health benefits for all. Our team has experience evaluating all types of public spaces including parks, plazas, transit stations, libraries, and community centers. Our Diagnostic audits, checklists, and surveys help us evaluate a neighbourhood's strengths and areas to improve to make them more accessible to residents of all ages, abilities, social identities, and incomes



## Right to **Mobility**

Everyone has a voice and deserves to be heard. Too often, the voices of children, older adults, lower income residents, racialized residents, and residents with disabilities, are dismissed or altogether absent from civic initiatives. Neighbourhoods that have elevated levels of civic participation have higher levels of social capital and social trust. Our trained team of facilitators conducts interviews and surveys directly with neighbourhood residents and community organizations and analyzes existing policies and practices to assess the degree to which residents can (and cannot) actively participate in shaping and enjoying their community. Our Diagnostic provides insights on ways communities can address barriers to participation to create inclusive participatory systems and built environments that better reflect the diversity of the community and their needs.





## What are the Tools?

There are THREE (3) main tools within the 8 80 Toolkit that were used to understand how the three rights performed within Whitecourt, AB:

### Public Life Studies



**Our Public Life Studies** analyze the vibrancy and activity of public spaces and their provision of public life within a specified area. Two components are used to conduct these studies. The Travel Count tool analyzes components of active mobility habits throughout a determined space that displays travel patterns and modal uses, while the Stationary Active Mapping tool assesses the usage of space and types of activities people do within the specified area of study. These studies take place in consecutive intervals of the day over a series of days.\*

### Mobility & Public Space Audits



**Our Audits** consist of evidence-based and research informed set of questions and criteria that evaluate the physical and social infrastructure of streets, parks, libraries, community centers and the places where community life thrives.

### Intercept Surveys



**Our Intercept Surveys** intake local knowledge by surveying residents and gathering responses. The surveys are conducted under three lenses: participation, public space, and mobility. These responses create a bucket of rich qualitative data that can be converted into quantitative results that are able to offer new insights and findings about neighbourhood performance and activity.

\* Public life studies for the 8 80 Diagnostic have been adapted from Jan Gehl's Public Life protocol. For more information, please visit: <https://gehlpeople.com/tools/how-to-use-the-public-life-tools/>

# How does it help Communities?

## What does the Toolkit Provide?

The Diagnostic toolkit is an evolving tool that 880 Cities believes can equip communities, neighborhoods, towns, and cities with a deep understanding of how their public spaces are performing and how they can be improved.

The goals of the toolkit are to support the creation of:

- **More Sustainable communities:** by making the case to invest in walkable and bikeable communities with accessible public transit and quality parks and greenspaces that support public life and climate resilience.
- **Healthier communities:** by evaluating public spaces and their ability to encourage physical activity, social connection, joy and sense of belonging for people of all ages, backgrounds and social locations for the betterment of mental and physical health and well being.
- **More equitable communities:** by identifying existing gaps and socio-spatial inequities when it comes to mobility, public space and participation at the neighbourhood scale.

## Who is this tool for?

The 880 Diagnostic toolkit can be utilized by many different groups of people. The main purpose of this toolkit seeks to equip individuals within two areas:

### Community Action

Community members and local residents are the ultimate stakeholders. They are the eyes and ears and heart of what is happening on the ground. Whether as an individual, in a partnership or as a group, the diagnostic can allow the power of data to help make the case for better neighbourhoods where residents of all ages can thrive.

### Municipal Leadership

The 880 Diagnostic is also a toolkit to equip municipal leaders and city planners with critical neighbourhood-level data that can help allow them to make more informed decisions and build better communities. At the municipal level, the diagnostic can help identify what the needs and priorities for the community should be. It can also help in the development of a vision for future proposals or plans.





...the research teams set out to understand the social makeup and physical structures that bound the community together.



## SECTION 5:

# Methodology: How was the Data

The objective of the 8 80 Neighbourhood Diagnostic for Whitecourt was to examine the downtown and assess how friendly its public spaces were for those of 8 and 80 years of age while providing solutions on how these spaces could be made safer and more accessible to all.

Using guiding frameworks around the right to public space, mobility, and civic participation, the research teams set out to understand the social makeup and physical structures that bound the community together. This was accomplished by following a structured process that helped create the roadmap for conducting research and collecting site-specific data in Whitecourt.

These steps included:

**STEP 1:** Outlining the Methodology

**STEP 2:** Establishing Community Partnerships

**STEP 3:** Locating Key Sites through Geographical Scans

**STEP 4:** Beta-Testing the Toolkits & Collecting the Data

**STEP 5:** Assessing the Information and Aggregating Data

**STEP 6:** Showcasing Results and Providing Key Recommendations to the community



## STEP 1: Determining the Methodology

The methodology for conducting the 8 80 Neighbourhood Diagnostic was determined from the beginning of the study. This methodology provided the framework for the study. Within the preliminary stages of the diagnostic process, a series of key metrics were also established to allow for a comprehensive and thorough analysis of the town's site-specific urban spaces, then a subset of individual tools were selected for the project based on the applicability of the chosen neighbourhoods.

The diagnostic proceeded to use a mixed-method approach when researching Whitecourt's public spaces and focused on collecting a series of primary and secondary data to help form an evaluation for the town. Both primary and secondary data collection

produced a rich source of qualitative and quantitative data components that were later analyzed to produce key recommendations for the town..

The metrics that were used were kept consistent throughout the study to ensure a reliable, valid, and accurate set of results were attained across timelines.





## STEP 2: Finding Partnerships

Establishing partnerships with various actors was a key method in the process of conducting the Whitecourt Neighbourhood Diagnostic.

8 80 Cities built a strong relationship with the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) who teamed up to collaborate on testing out and bolstering an assortment of neighbourhood planning tools derived from the 8 80 Diagnostic. This joint partnership was followed by additional relationships between Dr. Troy Glover from the University of Waterloo's Recreation and Leisure Studies and the University of Alberta's Housing for Health team led by Dr. Karen Lee and Dr. Jodie Stearns.

Under the guidance of Dr. Karen Lee from the University of Alberta's Housing for Health project, Whitecourt, AB was selected as the pilot community for the 8 80 Toolkit based upon research currently being conducted in the area. A study boundary within Whitecourt was then erected based on the future location of the Housing for Health pilot development site that is currently under construction.

The established partnerships for the Common Vision Project between 8 80 Cities, the CPRA, the University of Waterloo, and the University of Alberta's Department of Health brought together a powerful team of researchers and practitioners to share insights and methodologies for supporting healthy, connected, and equitable neighbourhoods, built and social environments.



## STEP 3: Choosing the Study Area & Sites

Defining the study boundaries within the town and selecting a range of sites within the parameters of the study area were essential steps for helping determine how 8 80 friendly Whitecourt's public spaces were. This macro and micro-level method of analysis ensured that a complete and comprehensive set of data was captured for the overall space.

### Targeting the Locations

With guidance from the University of Alberta's Housing for Health team, a set of boundary lines were drawn over downtown Whitecourt to establish the overall study area for the project. This area was bound by Highway 49 to the South, 52nd Street to the East, Athabasca River to the north, and 47th Street to the west, and incorporated the areas consisting of Whitecourt's downtown core and the future location of an upcoming Housing for Health pilot development site.

Using satellite and aerial footage to assess the geographical layout of the town, the Common Vision project strategically selected and assessed **FIVE (5)** different areas using an "urban acupuncture approach" within these study boundaries that had the potential in providing researchers with a deeper understanding of how the people in the town interacted and engaged with public spaces. These sites were selected based on their location and proximity to fundamental areas of activity, in addition to the unique attributes that each site offered within their surrounding environments.



### SITE #1 51<sup>ST</sup> Avenue

Site 1 targeted an east-west stretch of 51st Avenue between 49th & 50th Street. This area incorporates part of Whitecourt's downtown business area and can be considered one of the main streets for commercial activity. This site was chosen due to its potential for harboring public life stemming from the nearby adjacent shops and businesses along the street..

### SITE #2 51<sup>ST</sup> Street

Site 2 prioritized on the location of 51st Street, a north-south corridor located between the junctions of 50th Avenue and Highway 43. This location is seen as a central mobility corridor for vehicles and pedestrians that connect the outer areas of Whitecourt to its downtown center. The area hosts several big-box commercial stores, a series of nearby walking trails, and is a connection point to Rotary Park and the main thoroughfare of Highway 43 that leads out of town.

### SITE #3 49<sup>TH</sup> Avenue

Site 3 is located south of Whitecourt's downtown center along the corridor of 49th Avenue between 51st Street to the west and 49th Street the east. This area features large plots of undeveloped land adjacent to the street and is cut off from the rest of town by a large rail line to its north and a major highway to its south. The area is located next to a few facilities including two big-box commercial stores, two hotels, and a public school, and is also the future location of one of the Housing for Health team's pilot development sites.

### SITE #4 52<sup>ND</sup> Avenue

Site 4 overviewed a short span of 52nd Avenue that stretched between 47th and 49th Street. This East-West corridor passed through a mix of zoning of residential and institutional spaces that is home to the town's library, a middle school, local services, and religious facilities. The area of assessment also incorporated a large fenced-off field of greenspace and community ice rink belonging to the school

### SITE #5 Rotary Park

Site 5 encompasses the boundary areas of Rotary Park which consists of a series of outdoor amenities including a waterpark, recreational plaza, playground, lake, and series of walking paths. Rotary Park is considered Whitecourt's most prominent outdoor feature that is geographically located near the Athabasca River, residential suburbs, and the downtown center and was understood to be a main attraction that drew in both residents and visitors alike



## Assessing Surrounding Features

The five sites selected for the study were also chosen based on their proximity to the key features and attributes located within their surrounding urban landscapes. These features included:



### Land Usage

Each of the five sites selected for the Whitecourt study had one or more of the following land use designations:

- Commercial Use
- Residential Use
- Institutional Use
- Industrial Use
- Infrastructure & Utility Use
- Greenspace/Natural Land
- Undeveloped Land Space
- Water Bodies



### Parks & Parkettes

The downtown district of Whitecourt has a strong level of access to public parks and natural environments. These geographical spaces allow opportunities for recreational activities to occur while concurrently allowing residents to enjoy and linger outdoors. The nearby park spaces and large areas of natural land are intricately woven into some of the sites that were assessed. These spaces include:

- Rotary Park
- Whitecourt Dog Park
- Friendship Park
- Central School Playground
- Centennial Park



### Plazas & Squares

Downtown Whitecourt has a couple of public plazas and gathering spaces that had potential for being nodes for community interaction. These plazas are often key spaces that can spark community connections and produce vibrant public life. The following areas were included when defining the sites for analysis:

- Rotary Park Pavillion
- Midtown Centre Square
- Intersection of 50th St. & 51st Ave.



## Public & Private Facilities

The downtown district of Whitecourt contributes to a handful of publicly and privately owned facilities within its downtown core and can all be easily accessed from each of the five sites that were analyzed. These facilities are noted as anchor points in the town that are noted for drawing people into the area. The following facilities were observed as key anchor points:

- Whitecourt Public Library
- Midtown Mall
- Rotary Park - Water Park, Playground, Concession & Washroom Facilities
- Banking Establishments
- The Royal Canadian Legion
- Big-Box Retail (including Canadian Tire, Home Hardware, and IGA)



## Trails & Recreational Pathways

Several major walking trails are noted to intersect or adjoin with some of the study sites being assessed. The numerous and well-connected trail networks surrounding these sites highlight the strong assets the Town of Whitecourt already possesses and were good indicators of places that could potentially highlight the community's active mobility users.

- Rotary Park
- Whitecourt Dog Park
- Friendship Park
- Central School Playground
- Centennial Park



## Waterfronts & Waterbodies

Natural environments and local water bodies are key features that can attract public activity and were metrics used to pinpoint the study sites in question. The Town of Whitecourt consisted of a couple of nearby water bodies that were presumed to be hotspots for public activity. These waterbodies included:

- Rotary Park Pond & Waterpark
- Athabasca River
- McLeod River







## STEP 4: Selecting the Tools

A series of examination tools were used from the 8 80 Toolkit as beta testers to study and analyze the trends of existing public life of downtown Whitecourt, Alberta. These tools were specifically curated to match up with the context of the local community and help address the goals set out by the client and the research needs sought out by external partnerships. Among the tools selected, 6 tools were prominent in the study of public life within the Town of Whitecourt:

### TOOLKIT #1 8 80's Spatial Audits

Toolkit 1 uses an audit approach to determine the strength and performance of an overall area.

#### Mobility Audit Tool

The Mobility Spatial Audit tool focuses specifically on the mobility of a space and assesses how a space performs in relation to different modes of active travel. This tool assesses the quality and maintenance of sidewalks, street lighting, transit stops, garbage receptacles, and an array of other streetscape features that may or may not enable safe and active mobility for all ages and abilities.

#### Public Space Audit Tool

The Public Space Audit Tool focuses specifically on what a public space offers to a community and how well that space is maintained. This tool gathers information on the quality of amenities found within a public space, factors pertaining to safety and accessibility, and the overall comfort and atmosphere of the space.

### TOOLKIT #2 8 80's Public Life Studies

Toolkit 2 assesses the types of public life occurring within space and the activities that take place. This toolkit uses a series of methods to gather forms of quantitative data that can then be aggregated and analyzed to produce key findings. Two tools were utilized from the toolkit to record the human activity present within Whitecourt:

#### Travel Counts

Travel Counts is one activity within Toolkit 2 that looks at the mobility patterns that occur within a specific site. The travel counts assess how many pedestrians, cyclists, and mobility aid users pass through an area within a given amount of time. Travel counts also record the age and gender of each active mobility user passing through. This activity was conducted on Sites 1-4 over three time periods of the day in 15-minute intervals over a period of a week.

#### Activity Mapping

Activity Mapping (AP) is another activity within Toolkit 2 that outlines an area of space and overviews the types of activities that people are engaging in. AP seeks to understand where activities may occur in a space and assesses what areas of space may be under-utilized. This activity was conducted only in Rotary Park (Site 5) and occurred over a span of three consecutive time periods of the day in 15-minute intervals over a series of days in the week.\*

\* 15-minute study intervals for the 8 80 Diagnostics Active Mapping (SAP) tool have been adapted from the works of Jan Gehl's Public Life studies. For more information, please visit <https://gehlpeople.com/tools/how-to-use-the-public-life-tools/>

## TOOLKIT #3 8 80's Intercept Surveys

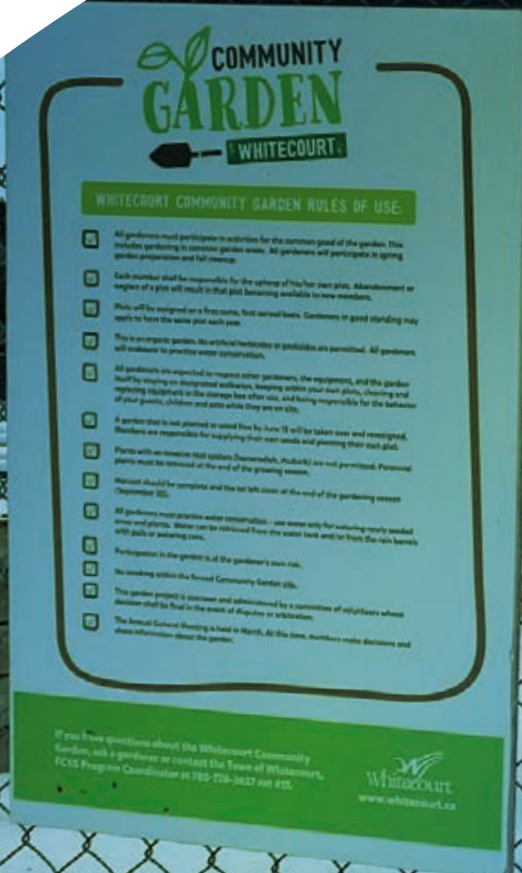
Toolkit 3 intercepts people on the streets to ask them a series of survey questions about their perception about the street or space being analyzed. The Intercept Survey tool is a primary data collection tool that captures local insights and produces a rich collection of qualitative data that can later inform researchers about the quality of a space. Two survey types were developed to gather input from residents:

### Mobility Survey

The Mobility Survey is one of the tools within Toolkit #3 that focused on capturing the sentiment and feelings people had towards their mobility on a specific street in relation to their viewpoint from a pedestrian and cyclist. The survey asked a series of questions relating to how safe or comfortable the street made residents feel, and asked residents to respond with ideas on what could make the street feel safer for them. This tool allowed researchers to assess and measure the quality of the street and how it performed based in relation to different mobility uses.

### Public Space Survey

The Public Space survey is another tool within Toolkit #3 that evaluates feelings people had towards specific public spaces. This tool gathered local insight on how people felt about a space in relation to the quality of amenities the space offered, the levels of safety and accessibility the space provided, and the overall comfort and atmosphere of the space.





## STEP 5: Conducting Time-Bound Tests

Capturing a holistic picture of people's mobility habits and assessing how public spaces truly perform can be a complicated task that requires strict scheduling of time-bound tests. The range of social activities, the types of people, and levels of vibrancy that occur within most public spaces are strongly determined by the hour of day, day of the week, and week of any given year. As these spaces typically take place within uncontrolled outdoor environments, the rate of public life can also be influenced by weather patterns, changing seasons, fluctuating temperatures, special community events, and other conditions. These factors will all need to be taken into consideration and recorded when collecting information on public life.



### TIME PERIODS

The 8 80 Toolkit took into consideration the following time segments when going out to collect data:

- The **time(s)** of day the studies would capture (I.e., Morning, Afternoon, Evening, Night, etc.)
- The **days** that each of the studies would take place (I.e., Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc.)
- The **weekdays** and **weekends** the studies would cover (I.e., Monday and Tuesday Vs. Saturday & Sunday)
- The **season(s)** that the studies would be conducted in (I.e., Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter)

The collection of public life data for Whitecourt, AB took place within a series of two sessions over the course of a year with data being collected on a closely repetitive basis at multiple points of time during the days and weeks of stay. Session one took place in the summer over a period of days between **August 20th to August 23rd of 2021**, while session two took place in the winter over a period of days between **December 6th to December 10th, 2021**. Both sessions took place over a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, with public life studies being conducted in 15-minute intervals during the mornings, afternoons, and evenings of the Saturdays, Mondays, and Tuesdays. Following this method of time-based testing and analysis allowed 8 80 Cities to capture a more holistic picture of public life in

Whitecourt and helped highlight how these spaces were used throughout the different periods of time and seasons of year.

To ensure the accuracy of our measurements, timeframes for collecting data have a consistent time-based framework between datasets. Data was collected in the exact same locations and times of day as previous studies done on each site. Having summer and winter data and consistent methods of data collection allowed us to notice trends and patterns in the activity in public spaces. Conducting year-round, multi-seasonal, and repetitive time-based studies can reveal deeper patterns on public life that may have otherwise been missed if only one data collection session was conducted.



## WEATHER & TEMPERATURE

Weather is also a key factor to consider when conducting a public life study as it can have a great impact on how people use the space and the ways in which they are travelling through it. Recording the weather, temperature, and forecast during each collection period will help you later in your study as it can articulate possible reasons as to why a space performed in a particular way.

During both Whitecourt sessions, the changes in weather had different impacts on how people interacted with outdoor spaces. While rainy overcast days had only some influence on reducing public life during the summer session, frigid extreme temperatures as low as  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  had a significant impact on public life in Whitecourt during the winter seasons. Environmental conditions such as these were recorded and integrated into the analysis of each site and informed our recommendations.



## OTHER FACTORS

There are many other factors that can lead to inconclusive data or interrupt data collection sessions. These should be expected. As public life studies observe people within an uncontrolled environment, of indoor and outdoor public spaces, certain events or situations may arise that could impact data collecting. These factors should be written down or recorded for future reference.

In the case of Whitecourt, AB, a series of events were noted to impact data findings for both summer and winter sessions. During the summer study of 2021, the Diagnostic was implemented during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is assumed to have influenced the number of people that were observed in the town's public spaces at that time.

During this timeframe, rotational work periods were also a factor impacting public life within the town, as many residents were working in Northern Alberta. These two phenomena are key factors that may have had a role in how public life in the town was portrayed during the summer study session.

The winter study was interrupted by a series of holiday events that created a significant uptick in pedestrian activity on some sidewalks, in addition to some public spaces becoming overly crowded and overused. During normal periods these spaces may not have necessarily been as active. These events had an impact on the data collected for 51st Ave., 52nd Ave, and Rotary Park on the Friday evenings public life study period.





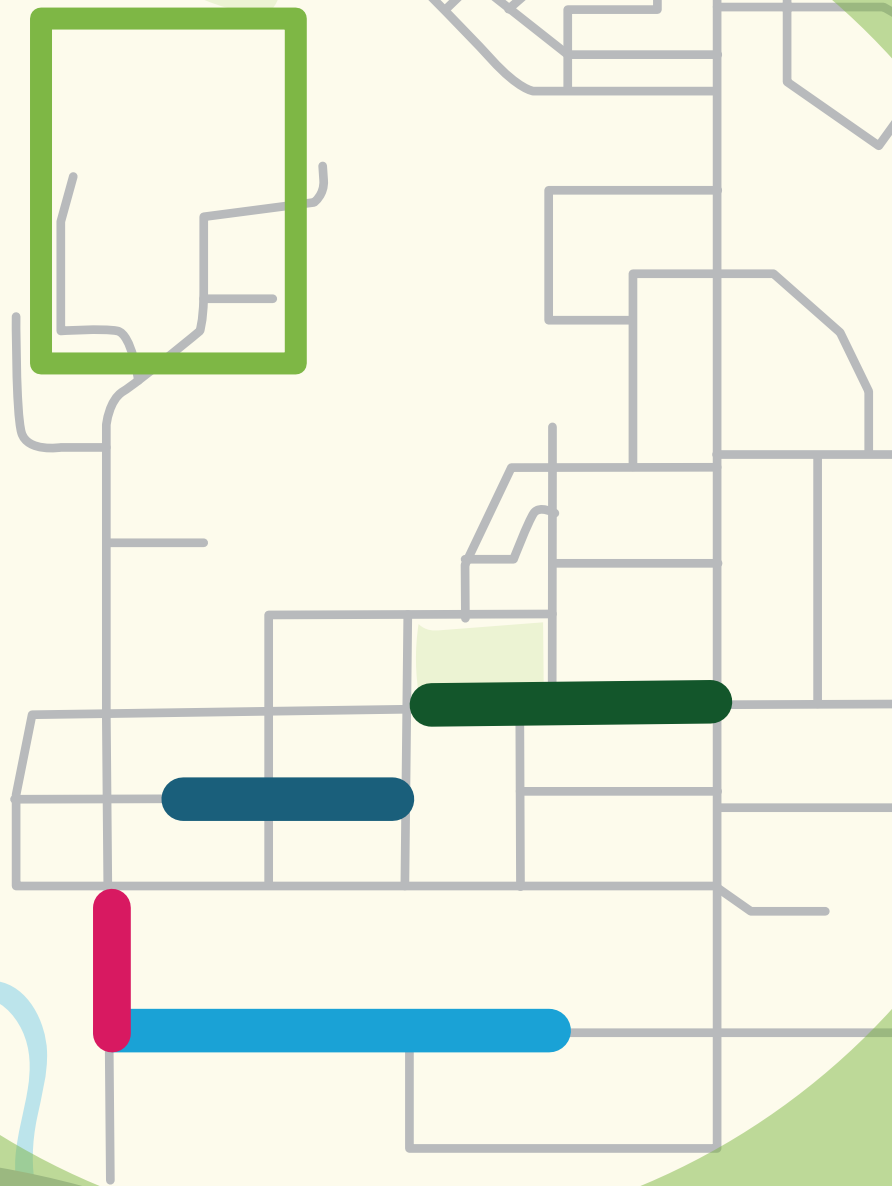
## STEP 6: Analyzing the Data & Providing Results

The project took an in-depth look at the geographical landscape of Whitecourt's five (5) target sites in addition to their surrounding areas and initiated an extensive analysis of the community culture and social activities that took place within these public spaces. This produced a rich collection of data which was used to conduct a thorough assessment of public life overall and within each of Whitecourt's five defined study areas.

Each metric sets out the parameters on who, what, when, where, and how the data was to be collected, received, and analyzed. Data from the public life studies were assessed under a qualitative framework based on the numbers generated from travel counts and active mapping sessions.

Sentiment scores were constructed based upon the intercept surveys produced, while observations were made based off the spatial audits and preliminary site scans.

The raw data for each of the tools was collected and aggregated to find and establish key indicators and trends of public life within Whitecourt. The analysis of data further allowed insight into key recommendations that Whitecourt could take to potentially improve the town's spaces and make it safer, more age-friendly, and more accessible to all.



## SECTION 6: Whitecourt Study Sites: In-Depth Findings

● **51<sup>ST</sup> AVENUE** | *Page 40*

● **51<sup>ST</sup> STREET** | *Page 45*

● **49<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE** | *Page 50*

● **52<sup>ND</sup> AVENUE** | *Page 55*

● **ROTARY PARK** | *Page 60*

# SITE 1: 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue

## Why this Street?

Site 1 spans along 51st Avenue and is bound between 49th & 50th Streets. 51st Avenue was chosen as one of the first of five sites due to its central location in downtown Whitecourt and the amenities and services the site offered. With the site exhibiting geographical features related to commercial zoning, this street was assessed as a key area to study and examine human activity.



## At a Glance

51st Avenue (Site 1) sits in the heart of Whitecourt's downtown and can be considered one of the town's "main streets." With a number of local shops, services, and amenities scattered along the street, the area is evident in having a higher degree of activity in public life compared to the other sites chosen in this study.

A series of mobility audits, mobility surveys, and public space studies were used to examine the street, gather user opinions, and assess the surrounding features the area offered.

# Overall Findings

## 1 Weekday Rush, Weekend Slump

51st Avenue is a bustle of activity on the weekday with a large concentration of it occurring at the intersection of 51st Ave. and 50th Street. The banks on either corner attract the majority of activity, while the shops along the street provide a good retail environment. The Legion is the center of activity on the weekends, with many coming and going for various events and programs held.

## 2 Atmosphere & Lighting

51st Avenue is a quaint, active, and inviting area of town that is home to many local shops and services. The street is also home to Friendship Park, a small parkette nestled within the center of town that offers a restful and relaxing environment for all ages. However, while 51st Street is a welcoming and active place during the day, it quickly transforms into a cold and uninviting place at night. With local shops closed, empty sidewalks, and dark street corners, the atmosphere makes the space feel unsafe for many, especially older adults. Adding more colour, light, and ambience to the streetscape during all hours and seasons will allow the space to feel safer and inviting for all, no matter the time.

## 3 The Need to Connect & Amplify Assets

While there are many high-quality shops, restaurants, and services within the vicinity 51st Avenue, there are very few areas of interest in the area that allow people to stay and linger outside on the streets. While the Legion provides an excellent run of services and programs that are able to attract many people to the area, a lack of other things to do means people don't stick around.

## 4 The Legion was the magnet for Winter

While public life has been witnessed to decrease over the weekends, evenings, and winter months along 51st Street, the Legion became a magnet for activity during these times. A series of events occurred at the facility throughout the week during the winter session that activated public life during quieter times. These included reoccurring Farmer's Markets held on Saturday mornings, and Karate classes being held during weekday evenings. The Legion has great potential to help activate public spaces within Whitecourt's downtown core.

# What Was Seen

## Mobility

Mobility counts were conducted in four out of the five sites being studied. Counts were conducted on the main street corridors of:

- 51st Avenue (Site #1)
- 49th Avenue (Site #3)
- 51st Street (Site #2)
- 52nd Avenue (Site #4).

Mobility counts for 51st Avenue were conducted in 15-minute segments in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings of Saturday, Aug. 21st and Monday, Aug. 23rd in the summer session and on Saturday Dec. 4th and Monday, Dec. 6th in the winter session.

Overall, a total of  
**86 people**  
were recorded in the  
mobility count for  
51<sup>ST</sup> Ave. in all periods.

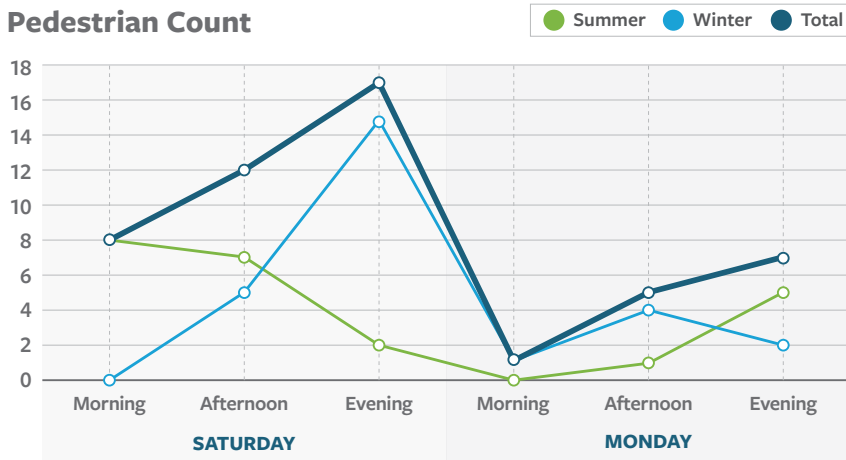


# Pedestrians

A total of 82 pedestrians were recorded on 51st Avenue and had the highest pedestrian count compared to all other sites assessed. When broken down by season, the pedestrian counts on 51st Avenue were comparable to other sites during the summer but were noted to substantially increase during the winter season. This was in part due to events taking place at the Legion Hall and winter festivities occurring during time of study.

Most of the pedestrian activity in both seasons occurred over the weekend (i.e., Saturday), and significantly dropped during the weekday (i.e., Monday). Pedestrian activity was also much more active during the morning hours and generally quiet during the evening hours, with the exception of the Saturday evening that took place in the winter.

**Pedestrian Count**

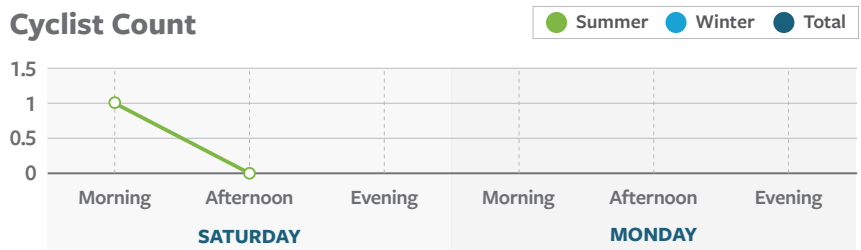


a total of **82** Pedestrians were recorded on 51<sup>ST</sup> Ave.

# Cyclists

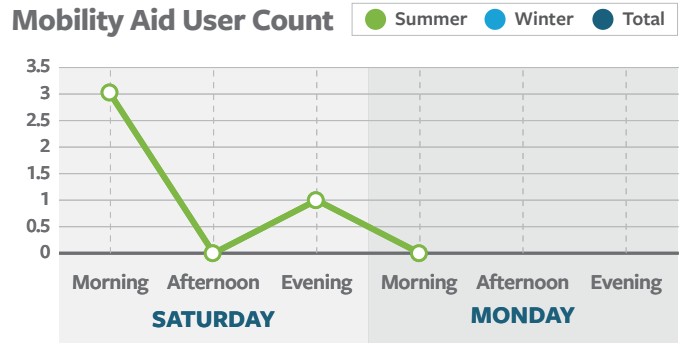
Cyclist counts were relatively low across the board. Only 1 cyclist was recorded on 51st Avenue during the whole study and was recorded during a Saturday morning in the summer.

**Cyclist Count**



# Mobility Aid Users

An overall total of 4 mobility aid users were recorded passing along 51st Avenue during the study. While only 1 person was recorded in the summer, 3 people were recorded in the winter. The morning period was the only timeframe in the study that mobility users were counted along 51st Avenue.



# Activity Mapping

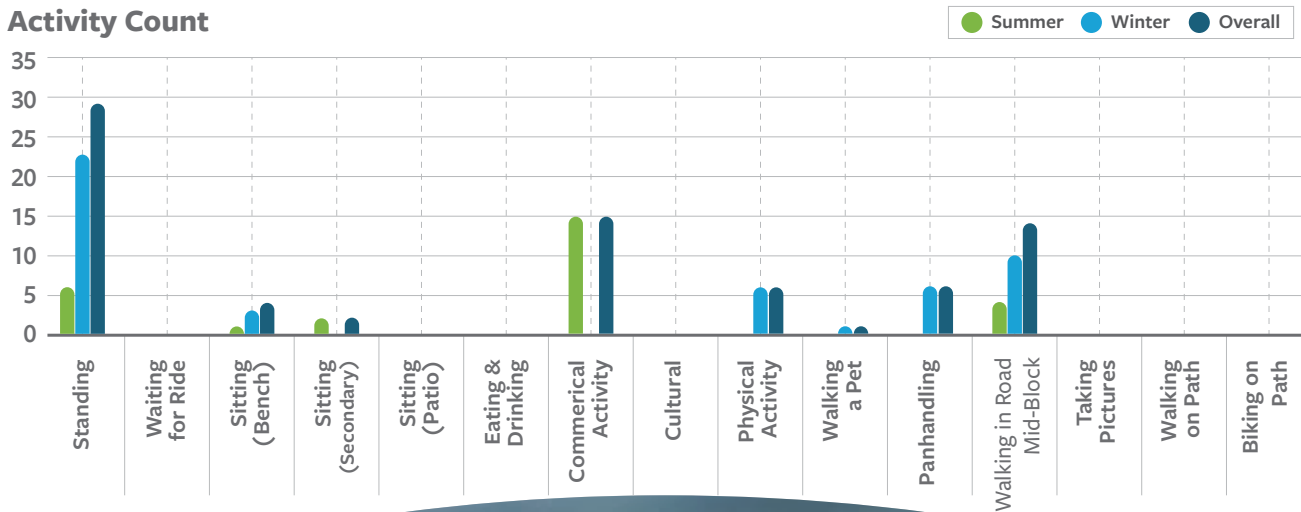
A similar amount of activity occurred between weekday and weekend periods along 51st Avenue during both the summer and winter seasons. However, a greater uptick in activity was recorded in the winter as opposed to the summer.

A total of 77 people were recorded on 51st Street doing some form of stationary activity over the course of the summer and winter study sessions with 28 and 49 counted within each season respectively. Activities were recorded on both a Saturday and Monday of each seasonal visit, with counts being conducted in the morning, afternoon, and evening of each day.

Daily activity counts were comparable in numbers within each season, however, seasonal summer counts saw 13 people on Saturday and 15 people on Monday, and winter counts saw a spike of 24 and 25 people over Saturday and Monday, respectively. While activities remained similar within a seasonal daily basis, the type of activities occurring between the summer and winter months differed drastically.

Most activity on 51st Street within the summer count pertained to commercial activity (54%), followed by standing (21%). Winter showcased standing (47%) as the main activity seen on the street, followed by crossing the road mid block (20%) and a tie between physical activity and pan-handling (6%).

Activity Count





Invest in a revitalization plan that will spark

## **vibrancy & life**

into the downtown core at all times of day, week, and season.

# Key Recommendations

## 1 Light Up the Night!

Night-time along 51st Street can be cold, dark, and uninviting. Consider investing in special year-round tree lighting that features colour, warmth, and brightness. Add attractive street light features built to human-scale and invite local shops to activate storefronts with lighting. Create an atmosphere that feels safe and welcoming at night by installing lighted art features.

## 2 Activate the storefronts

Lots of things to do and see are a key element in pulling public life into an area. Local businesses need foot traffic. We recommend working with local businesses, shops, and restaurants to create outdoor spaces that can tie in with their establishment. Invite elements such as art, benches, picnic tables, washroom facilities, and other publicly accessible features around certain businesses to elevate the area.

## 3

## Create a Destination Station

Make 51st Street a destination station. While the street currently has a vast array of local establishments, work with local businesses to establish a cohesive downtown community that works together. Establish relations with strong partners, such as the Legion to bring human activity outside of private spaces. Invest in a revitalization plan that will spark vibrancy and life into the downtown core at all times of day, week, and season. Create a welcoming streetscape that becomes a destination center rather than a transition zone. Establish commercial activity that is not only a place for on-the-go services, but a place to socialize.

# SITE 2: 51<sup>st</sup> Street

## Why this Street?

Site #2 was situated on 51st Street between 50th Ave. And Highway 43. This area acts as a main connecting corridor that links the highway and outer suburbs of Whitecourt with the downtown core and Rotary Park. The study area is a main commercial strip that is home to a local grocery store, pub, and some big-box retail stores. The study area is connected to nearby walking trails to the south, lodging to the east, and the downtown to the northeast. This study area is an important corridor to assess public life as it is a central road that provides access to amenities, the highway, and natural landscapes.

## At a Glance

51st Street is one of the main corridors in town that connects Whitecourt's outer town limits with the downtown core and Rotary Park. With direct road access from Highway 49, a rail line to the north, and a series of trail connections to the south, the area is a highly active zone for transient movement. The site is also home to a well-established commercial zone of retail and shopping establishments and provides a large surface area for vehicular parking and a sheltered bus stop for those that take part in public transit.

At first glance, 51st Street is observed to be a main hub of activity for the community. However, the primary mode of travel to access these spaces are mostly dominated by those who drive. While the area is buzzing with activity, the expanse of parking lots, heavy movement of traffic, and a busy highway to the south of the site make it a dangerous and unpleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists alike to use the space safely. Long waits at road crossings, missing sidewalks, and limited buffers between the sidewalks



and roadways also adds a challenging layer of the pedestrian environment. Overall, the space along 51st Street does not create a conducive environment for those 8 and 80 years of age for walking, biking, or strolling. Our assessment indicates that this site is not a welcoming space for pedestrians and cyclists alike due to the auto-centric planning of the area and the danger of high-volume traffic occurring in the parking lots and adjacent sidewalks alongside the nearby roadways.

However, there is an opportunity for this area to become more 8 80 friendly. The trail networks south of Highway 49 are strong assets to take into consideration when planning for the future of this area. With the corridor also being a link between Rotary and Centennial Park, there is a strong opportunity to prioritize pedestrian path networks and active mobility routes. The large setbacks observed between sidewalks and curb lanes also provide ample room for adjustments in creating a safer streetscape.

# Overall Findings

## 1 The Link into Town

51st Street is a main link into town that connects the municipalities highway system with the downtown core and Rotary Park, and the sites two intersections that it encompasses can both generate and maintain a high and constant flow of vehicular traffic throughout the day. While the area is a critical node for bringing vehicles into the downtown core, the area can be quite problematic for those engaging in other forms of transport such as walking and cycling. A stronger pedestrian-oriented focus is needed in this area to ensure safety and accessibility for all ages and road users.

## 2 A Centre of Activity

51st Avenue is a busy vehicular corridor that is only one of few access points into the downtown core of Whitecourt. The nearby vicinity of Highway 49 and the Centennial Parks trail network to the south provides a thorough connection to the town center from the outskirts. With a host of services and large retail businesses present in the area, the site also attracts a number of commuters from across town. While this area is a center of activity, it is however primarily geared towards those who have access to a vehicle while showcasing a hostile and unfriendly walking environment for pedestrian and other modes of active transit. With high vehicular speeds, a domination of parking lots, and large volumes of traffic passing through on a constant basis, there is a need to build a safer and more inviting environment for those wanting to access and linger within the space via forms of active mobility.

## 3 Unfriendly Pedestrian Environment

51st Avenue is very auto-centric and lacks the pedestrian-centered focus that is needed. The vast open spaces that exist along this corridor create an unfriendly walking environment, while very low levels of vegetation exist between the street curbs and sidewalk. The area has also been noted to be prone to icy sidewalks and slippery surfaces near intersection crossings in the winter. The site has also revealed uneven walking surfaces, long crossing distances, and missing sidewalk connections along the Highway 49 intersection. All these combined make it difficult for pedestrians and mobility aid users to traverse through space.

## 4 Disconnected Streetscape

Although 51st Street is a crucial entry point for access into town, it is also disconnected for certain groups of mobility users. While Highway 49 offers easy access by vehicle, it is a detriment to those engaging in alternative forms of mobility such as walking, cycling, and rolling. The rail tracks to the north of the site and Highway 49 to the south create a disconnected and isolated patch of land for all forms of active mobility users to access, especially those using some form of mobility aid device such as a walker or cane.



# What Was Seen

Using the Spatial Audit tool from 8 80 Cities Diagnostic service, we were able to conduct a public space audit using the 8 80 lens as our guidepost. This audit allowed our team to assess a series of metrics on 51st Street around how friendly a space was, and how accessible it was for active mobility users in both the summer and winter seasons.

## Mobility

Mobility counts were conducted in four out of the five sites being studied. Counts were conducted on the main street corridors of:

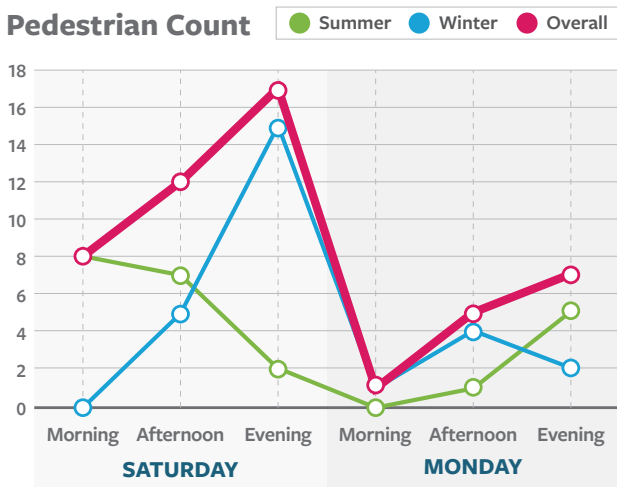
- 51st Avenue (Site #1)
- 49th Avenue (Site #3)
- 51st Street (Site #2)
- 52nd Avenue (Site #4).

Mobility counts for 51st Street were conducted in 15-minute segments in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings of Saturday, Aug. 21st and Monday, Aug. 23rd in the summer session and on Saturday Dec. 4th and Monday, Dec. 6th in the winter session.

Overall, a total of **62 people** were recorded in the mobility count for 51<sup>st</sup> St. in all periods.

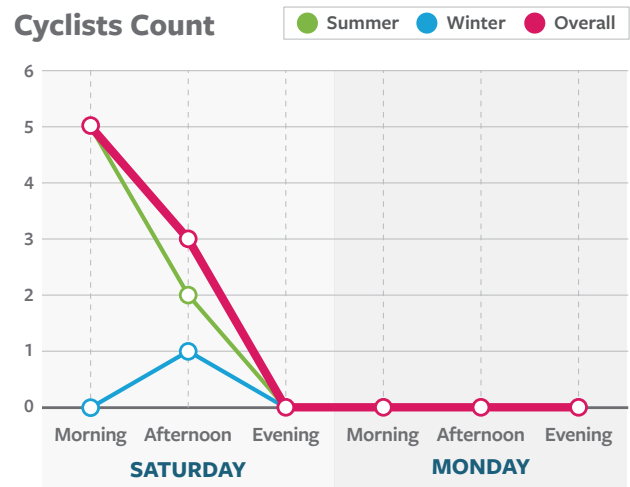
## Pedestrians

A total of 50 pedestrians were recorded using 51st Street in the overall mobility travel count study. Pedestrian counts on 51st Street were slightly higher in the summer and winter in comparison with other sites observed. Most pedestrian activity took place on the weekends (i.e. Saturdays) with summer mornings and winter evenings accounting for the most activity. Pedestrian activity significantly dropped on the weekday (i.e. Mondays).



## Cyclists

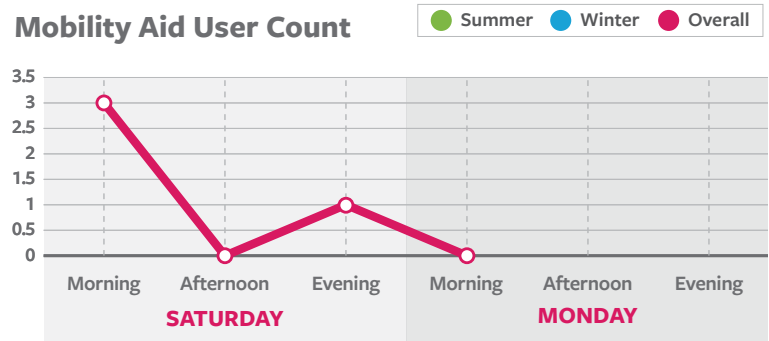
51st Street had the highest cyclist counts overall compared to all other study sites examined with a total of 8 cyclists in all. All cyclists were recorded on the weekends (i.e. Saturday), while none were recorded on the weekdays (i.e. Mondays). Most cyclist activity took place in the summer and significantly dropped in the winter. Mornings were most active for cyclists, followed by afternoons. Evenings recorded no cyclist activity for both seasons.



# Mobility Aid Users

An overall total of 4 mobility aid users were recorded passing along 51st Street during the study, with all being recorded during the summer study session. Weekend mornings were most active for those using a mobility device, while none were recorded during the weekday.

Mobility Aid User Count



# Activity Mapping

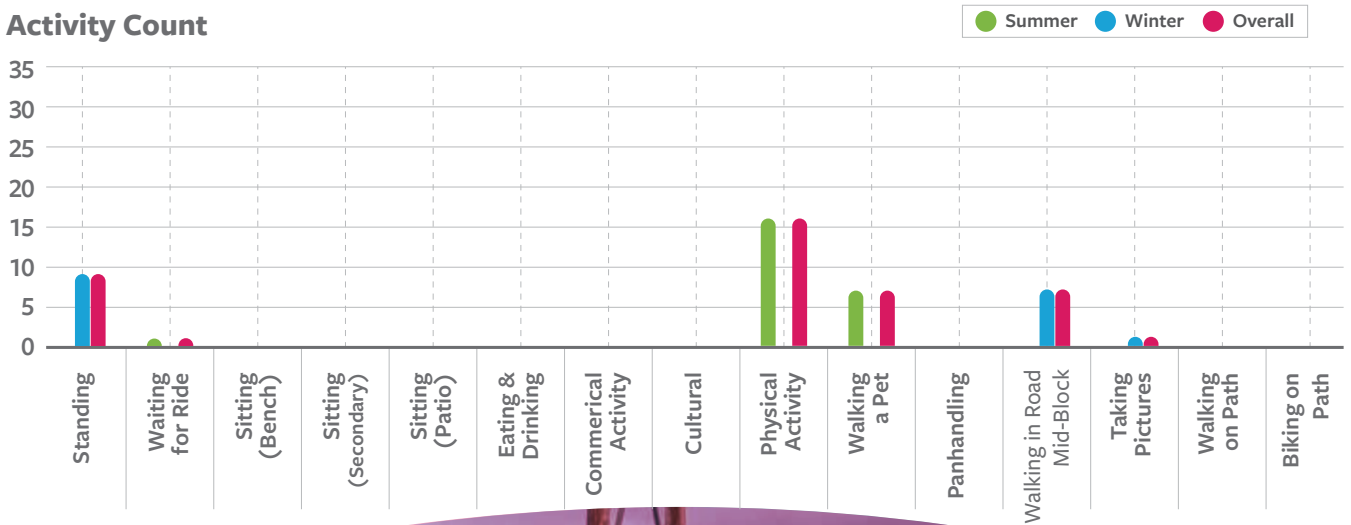
A total of 41 people were recorded on 51st Street doing some form of activity, with 24 people accounted for in the summer and 17 in the winter. Stationary activity was recorded on both a Saturday and Monday of each seasonal visit, with counts being conducted in the morning, afternoon, and evening of each day.

While summer counts saw 17 people on Saturday and 7 people on Monday, winter counts saw a decrease of activity on Saturday with a count of 9, while a similar Monday count of 8 was recorded. While stationary activities remained

similar within a seasonal daily basis, the type of stationary activities occurring between the summer and winter months changed.

The majority of activity on 51st Street in the summer count pertained to physical activity (67%), followed walking a pet (29%), while standing was the primary activity in winter (53%), followed by crossing the road mid block (41%).

Activity Count



# Key Recommendations

## 1 Building Safer, Stronger, and a Better-Connected Mobility Corridor

While 51st Avenue is a key link for vehicles transitioning between the outer and inner areas of Whitecourt and its downtown, it can become a dangerous link for pedestrians. However, it can also become a stronger and better-connected link for those engaged in active forms of transportation with the right tools in place. The area has a strong opportunity for growing its active mobility network as it already has a range of trail connections established within its vicinity that are connected to over 3500 meters of trailway. These include the Railroad and Highway 43 pathways, as well as the 1200m Sakwtamau and Memorial Point trails<sup>2</sup>. Building a stronger active mobility network with an increase in safer connection points will allow this area to be an accessible corridor for all mobility users.

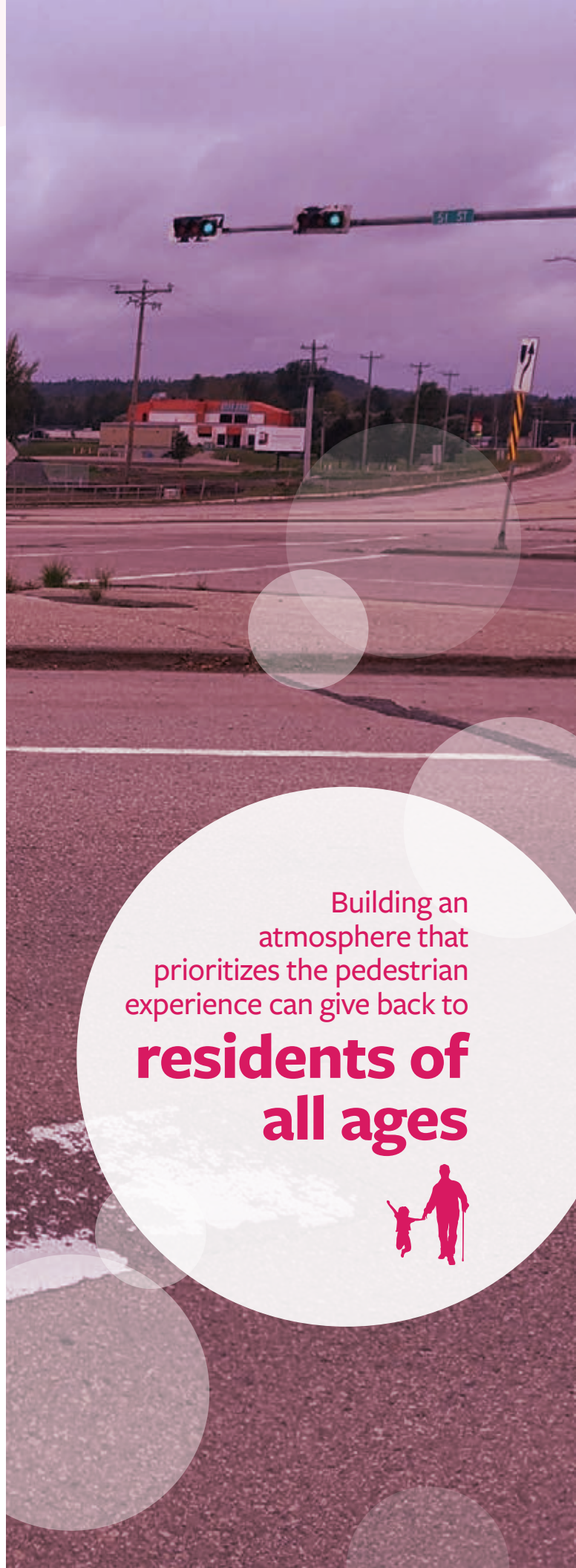
<sup>2</sup>Source: City of Whitecourt (2020) Trail System. Kiosk Map System. City of Whitecourt. Retrieved from <https://www.whitecourt.ca/Portals/4/%21WC%20New/Documents/Services/Maps/2021-TrailMap-11x17-v1.pdf>

## 2 Add Street Foliage & Vegetation

Adding street foliage, planters, and other various forms of vegetation along the street sidelines can limit the amount of street noise on roads and create a safer buffer between vehicles and pedestrians. Adding foliage to streets can further enhance the urban appeal and can help create a much more attractive and enjoyable space to walk and cycle through.

## 3 Prioritize the Pedestrian Experience

While 51st Avenue is currently a highly auto-centric area, small adjustments and additions to the landscape can help significantly transform the space for pedestrians. Reducing the overabundance of paved surfaces and parking lots, adding street foliage, and building safe connected pathways with entry points into key shopping areas can provide a more positive pedestrian experience. Building an atmosphere that prioritizes the pedestrian experience can give back to residents of all ages.



Building an atmosphere that prioritizes the pedestrian experience can give back to  
**residents of all ages**





# SITE 3: 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue

## Why this Street?

Site 3 is bound by 51st Street to the west and 49th Street to the East. While most of the area surrounding the site is undeveloped land, the area does incorporate a public school, lodging, and some big-box retail. This site is also a main auto-centric corridor that is sandwiched between a rail line to its north and an inter-city highway its south. It was strategically chosen due to its overlap with the future location of a retirement living community currently under development with University of Alberta's Housing for Health's team and its partnership with Christenson Developments.

## At a Glance

Although much of 49th Avenue is currently undeveloped, a series of plans are underway that will significantly transform the space in the near future. With a series of already established hotels and an upcoming retirement living community in the works, which includes the University of Alberta's Housing for Health team's pilot development site, 49th Avenue will eventually become an area with a high pedestrian zone.



The street itself is a large and busy vehicular corridor that connects 51st Street to Dahl Drive, but also provides wide and well-maintained sidewalks throughout the site. With more pedestrian-focused planning elements integrated into the streetscape, the site can become a prominent and well-used corridor for active recreation.



# Overall Findings Glance

## 1 Wide Open Spaces

With plenty of open space and undeveloped land still in place, there is potential opportunity for 49th Avenue to build a strong corridor for active mobility. The area has ample room for infrastructure changes and mobility improvements and is a sandbox of opportunity for providing attractive streetscape features for mobility users. The large areas of undeveloped land have potential to be strategically developed with children and older adults in mind, particularly when considering the future retirement living community underway and the nearby vicinity of Whitecourt's Northern Gateway Public School.

## 2 Pedestrian Activity is nowhere to be found

During the study, we noticed a significant lack of pedestrian activity occurring on site during both the summer and winter seasons. Only a few people were captured using this route to jog on or pass through. Vehicle ridership on the other hand was deemed high where a constant flow of automobile traffic had observed at any given time. While the 49th Avenue corridor does provide a maintained and separated walking path, with some garbage receptacles and one bench along the way, the atmosphere is still unfriendly to pedestrians given the high flows of automobile traffic. The lack of buffers between the street and sidewalk, limited pedestrian crossings, and a 4-lane vehicle thoroughfare dominating the landscape create an unwelcome environment for active mobility users of all ages. With a future seniors' complex in the works, the upcoming seniors' populations who will be residing in the area could benefit from more benches placed regularly along the street corridor on both sides in order to incorporate spaces for rest. Additionally, a pedestrian crossing light that can be activated by pedestrians to cross 49th Street at the Holiday Inn intersection leading to the Christenson housing development would further help to improve safety of the street crossing to gain access to the hotels and the residential site

## 3 Segregated from the rest of town

The area of 49th Avenue overall is isolated from the rest of town. While the corridor provides an excellent transitional zone for vehicles and is slowly growing with commercial activity that includes tourism, more needs to be done to make the space pedestrian orientated. With plenty of open space and undeveloped land still in place, there is a sandbox of opportunity to build a strong corridor for active mobility for all ages and mobilities.





# What was seen

## Mobility

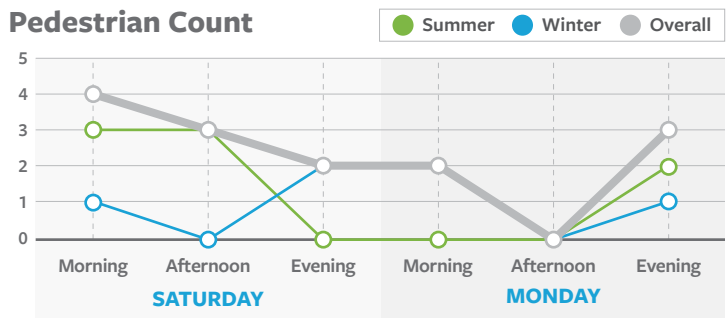
Mobility counts were conducted in four out of the five sites being studied. Counts were conducted on the main street corridors of:

- 51st Avenue (Site #1)
- 49th Avenue (Site #3)
- 51st Street (Site #2)
- 52nd Avenue (Site #4).

Mobility counts for 49th Avenue were conducted in 15-minute segments in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings of Saturday, Aug. 21st and Monday, Aug. 23rd in the summer session and on Saturday Dec. 4th and Monday, Dec. 6th in the winter session.

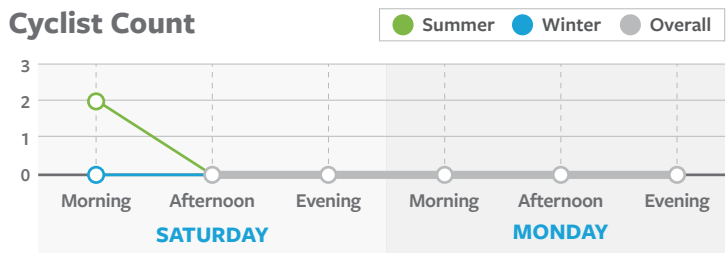
## Pedestrians

Pedestrian counts on 49th Avenue were lowest overall compared to all other sites observed with a total of 14 pedestrians being recorded passing through the area. While pedestrian activity was similar in all counting periods (seasons, days, hours), most of the pedestrian activity overall on 49th Avenue occurred in the summer.



## Cyclists

Only 2 cyclists were counted for in total along 49th Avenue over the entire study, with both cyclist counts taking place on Saturday morning in the summer.



Pedestrian counts on 49th Avenue were

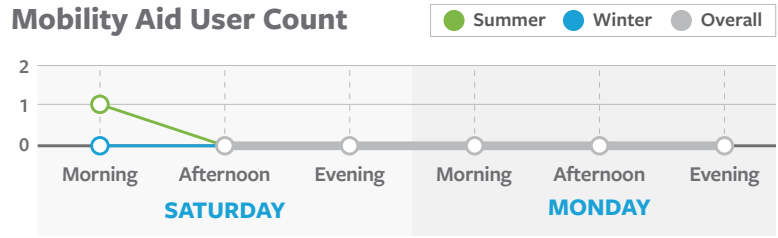
**lowest overall**

compared to all other sites observed.

# Mobility Aid Users

A total of 1 mobility aid user was recorded over the entire study using 49th Avenue, and took place on Saturday morning in the summer.

Mobility Aid User Count

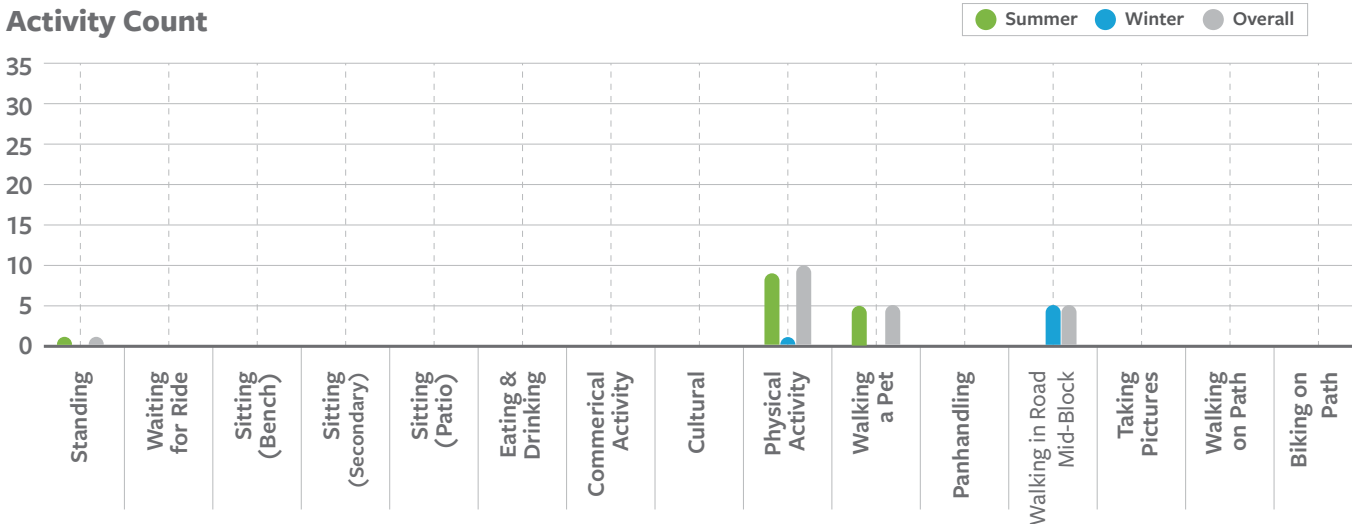


# Activity Mapping

A total of 21 people were engaged in a form of activity during the summer and winter seasons. Out of the 21, 15 people were recorded in the summer, while only 6 people were recorded in the winter. The summer had 10 people on Saturday counted while 5 people were counted on Monday, whereas only 2 and 4 people respectively, were counted on the same days during the winter season.

Activity counts had the second lowest counts overall compared to all other sites. However, it was found as a route for physical activity. 60% of all summer activity on the street was in the form of a physical activity followed by walking a pet (33%), while crossing the road mid block accounted for the highest activity in the winter (83%).

Activity Count



# Key Recommendations

## 1 An Active Mobility Corridor

Similar to 51st Street, 49th Avenue is a key east-west link for movement and transition. With the wide setbacks from the street and large amounts of undeveloped spaces still in place, the area has potential for becoming a primary mobility corridor for active mobility users in the future, especially if designed in consideration of the future development of senior's complexes in the area. This area can further connect 51st Street and its existing trail networks while linking to the corridors "Railroad Pathway, helping create a strong and well-connected multi-directional recreational network for pedestrians and cyclists alike.<sup>3</sup> To ensure proper age-based planning is created, the redesign of 49th Avenue should take into consideration the recommendations set out in the *Healthy Community Guidelines* report created by the University of Alberta's Housing for Health team.

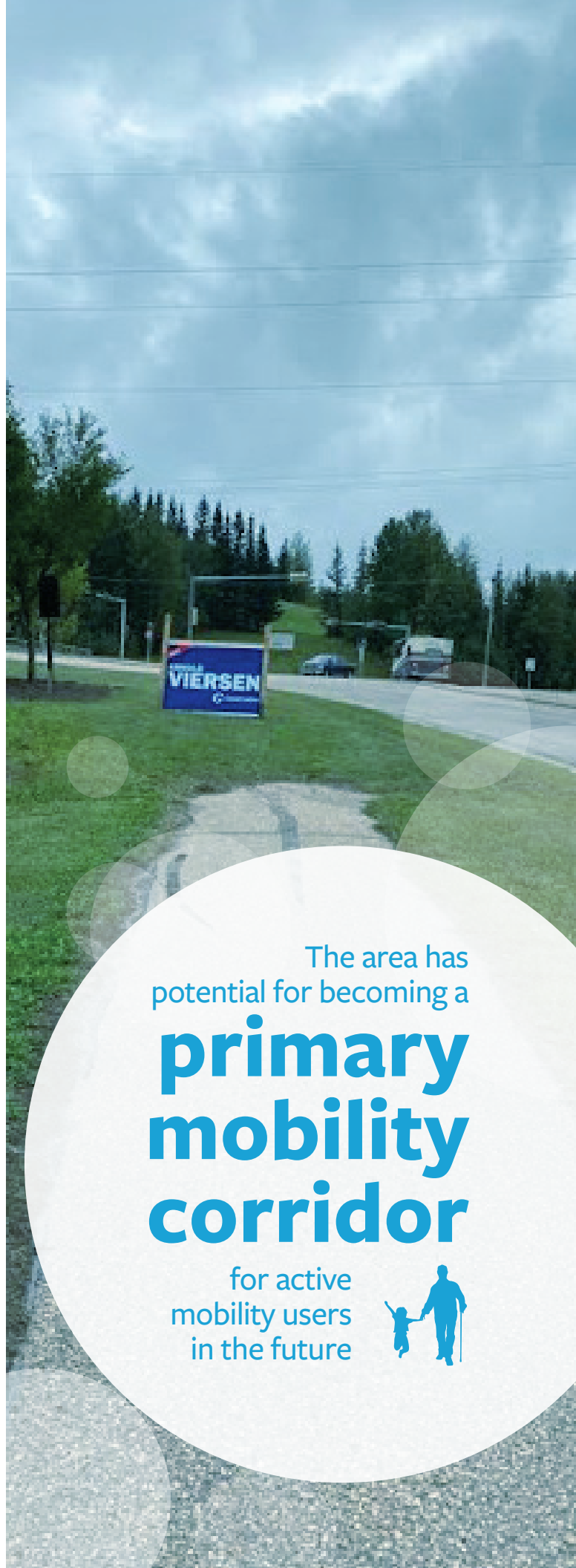
<sup>3</sup> Source: City of Whitecourt (2020) Trail System. Kiosk Map System. City of Whitecourt. Retrieved from <https://www.whitecourt.ca/Portals/4/%21WC%20New/Documents/Services/Maps/2021-TrailMap-11x17-v1.pdf>

## 2 Bridging the Gap

49th Avenue and its surrounding vicinity are somewhat disconnected from the larger urban fabric due to Highway 49 to its south and rail tracks located to its north. With the development of the upcoming retirement living community in the forecast for this area, the space will need to become a more age and pedestrian friendly area with less isolating urban scape and a stronger emphasis on connected pedestrian networks. Consider shifting planning focus to create age-friendly transition zones and bridging the gap from 49th Avenue by creating safe, accessible, and connected crossings with Whitecourt's downtown to the north and Centennial Park to the south.

## 3 Create a Buffer

While 49th Avenue is a main vehicular arterial corridor that connects the town's east and west, a stronger streetscape is needed for pedestrian usage. With the upcoming retirement living community in the works, the town should consider lower street speeds and a considerable amount of vegetation to create a buffer zone from street and sidewalk.



The area has potential for becoming a

**primary mobility corridor**

for active mobility users in the future



# SITE 4: 52<sup>nd</sup> Avenue

## Why this Street?

Site 4 is located along a stretch of 52nd Avenue that spans from 47th Street to the west and 49th Street to the east. This street corridor was chosen due to its proximity to one of Whitecourt's public schools and the town's public library and was a space that could potentially offer a glimpse into the types of mobility habits and public activity occurring within the area.



## At a Glance

52nd Avenue encompasses some key facilities and buildings that act as essential components for drawing public life onto the street. Whitecourt's Central Public School brings a range of students out during the weekday, which typically create a fleeting but busy atmosphere during the morning and afternoon school hours. Whitecourt's Public Library provides a slower stream of activity with brief moments of movement occurring throughout mid-day. Since 52nd Avenue caters to a range of amenities including a school, library, church, mall, and other services nearby, public activity is shown to occur at various times and in varying degrees, with peaks usually happening at specific scheduled times. While the surrounding area is relatively quiet, the existing assets in place and abundance of underutilized spaces are rich in placemaking potential.



## Overall Findings

### 1 School-time Bustle

While 52nd Avenue is home to a series of facilities that attract public life such as Whitecourt Public School, Midtown Mall, and the town's library, pedestrian activity is generally lower than compared to all other sites/ However, a large uptick of activity does occur during weekday mornings and afternoons during the public school's drop-off and pick-up hours. While this shift in activity is brief, there is a possible opportunity for placemaking in the area.

### 2 No place to Linger

52nd Avenue has some strong anchor points that can bring public life into the area, but the space lacks the specific types of places and activities that are needed to encourage lingering. The public school provides a large and wide field, it is an empty tract that is barricaded by fencing. The greenspace surrounding the library does offer shade and seating, it lacks the welcoming appeal and aesthetic features that draw people in. The avenue also takes away from the streetscape with its wide street widths and empty lanes.

### 3

### Segregated from the rest of town

Although 52nd Avenue provides a series of amenities nearby including a library and church within the site boundaries, and the town's municipal building and local shops down the way, evening hours and dark winters can make space look deserted and void of human activity. The low lighting along sidewalks and the dimly lit signage from the shops, services, and buildings within the area risk deflecting public attention from the street. The lack of lighting on the street and casting of long, dark shadows across the sidewalks can quickly transform 52nd Avenue into a space that feels uncomfortable and uninviting for some, while further creating the appearance that shops and services are closed when they are still open.



# What was seen

## Mobility

Mobility counts were conducted in four out of the five sites being studied. Counts were conducted on the main street corridors of:

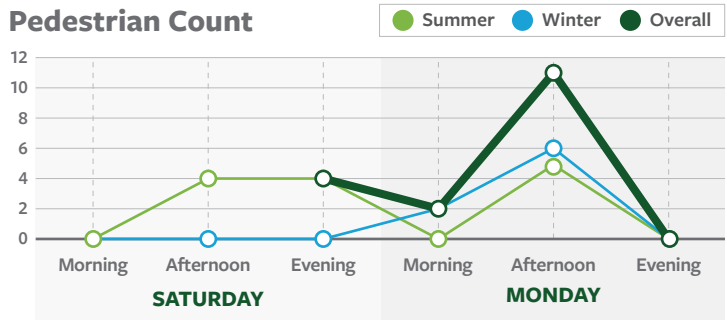
- 51st Avenue (Site #1)
- 49th Avenue (Site #3)
- 51st Street (Site #2)
- 52nd Avenue (Site #4).

Mobility counts for 49th Avenue were conducted in 15-minute segments in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings of Saturday, Aug. 21st and Monday, Aug. 23rd in the summer session and on Saturday Dec. 4th and Monday, Dec. 6th in the winter session.

## Pedestrians

A total of 21 pedestrians were recorded moving through 52nd Avenue, with most being counted during the weekday. This could be due to the proximity of the school nearby, as most counts were recorded in the afternoon period of each Monday in the summer and winter. A higher pedestrian count was also recorded in the afternoons and evenings on Saturday in the summer.

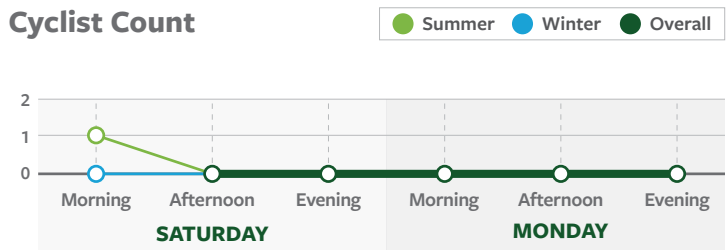
### Pedestrian Count



## Cyclists

Only 1 cyclist was counted for on 52nd Avenue and it took place on Saturday morning during the summer.

### Cyclist Count

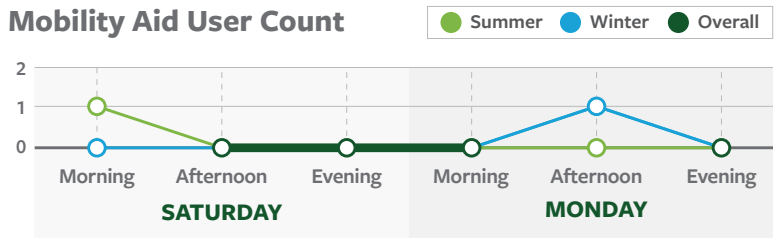




# Mobility Aid Users

A total of 2 mobility aid users were recorded using 52nd Avenue over the course of the summer and winter studies. While 1 count was recorded during Saturday morning in the summer, the other was recorded during Monday afternoon in the winter.

Mobility Aid User Count

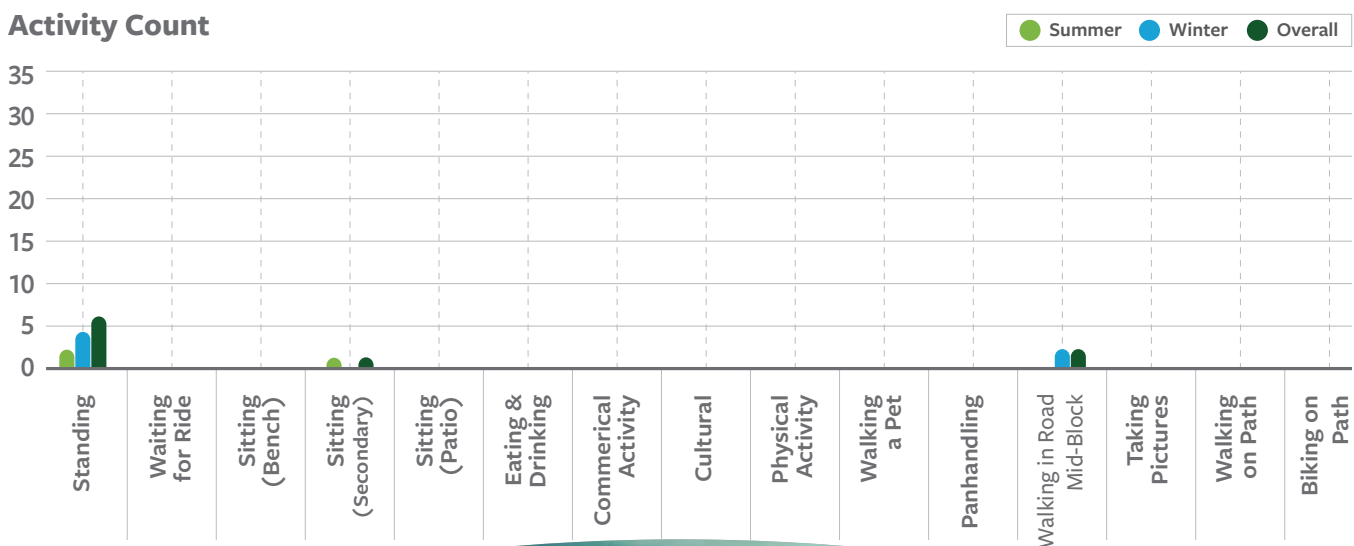


# Activity Mapping

A total of 9 people altogether were engaged in a form of activity during the summer and winter seasons. Out of these 9, 3 people were recorded in the summer, while only 6 people were recorded in the winter. The summer had 2 people on counted on Saturday while 1 only 1 person was counted on Monday, whereas only 3 people were counted each for the Saturday and Monday in winter.

52nd Ave. was the site with the lowest overall activity counts, although a public school with large field and the towns public library were in the vicinity. Standing accounted for the highest activity in summer (68%), followed by secondary sitting (sitting on the ground or ledge) (33%). Standing was also the main activity recorded on 52nd Ave. in the winter at 67%, followed by crossing the road mid block at 33%.

Activity Count



# Walking

in or across the road was the main activity noted during the winter session



# Key Recommendations

## 1 Connecting Key Public Assets

The Whitecourt Library is centrally located within the town and the area adjacent to the school offers a large space for recreation or relaxation. However, the greenspace and field around each of these facilities is noted to be greatly underutilized. While the perimeter of the library offers benches for rest, it struggles to provide an inviting and welcoming atmosphere due to the proximity of the road. A strong collaboration between the library and school should be pursued and an integration and redesign of the detached landscapes could be considered which could significantly harmonize the space. A shared and multi-use space can allow for a variety of activities and uses throughout the weeks.

## 2 Create spaces and programming for children and older adults

While there is a diversity of human activity in the area that is associated by the draw of the public school, library, and Anglican church on the site, activity tends to be transient and fleeting at most. Most of the outdoor spaces do not offer an enjoyable place to linger or stay, while there is no outdoor programming observed to instigate a place for community connection.

By building local relationships and partnerships with those within the surrounding environment, there is a unique opportunity to blend together what each of the sites has to offer while integrating the variation of users each that each of the facilities attracts. Creating integrated and multi-purpose spaces and programming for both children and older adults alike can help instill a welcoming and vibrant place for all users.

## 3 Incentive Lighting

Lighting along 52nd Avenue can pose challenges daily and seasonally for those that live, work, or traverse through the street corridor. Although Whitecourt's summers provide more hours of natural daylight, its winters can become dark relatively earlier in the day thereby requiring the need for artificial light to takeover earlier on. The dimly lit business signage and poor street lighting along 52nd Avenue generates an unsafe and unwelcoming atmosphere, while simultaneously making businesses along the street appear closed. The town should consider reducing dark patches by enhancing street lighting along the corridor while further providing incentives for local businesses to revamp and update their signage and buildings to allow for better accessibility and visibility of spaces at night.

## 4 Redesign the Street

52nd Avenue is a street corridor that offers a bountiful amount of space for vehicles. However, the wide road space that the street does offer tends to be underutilized leading to a significant amount of wasted urban space. A redesign of the street and takeover of some road space can allow the area to become a much safer, attractive, and welcoming environment for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages.



# SITE 5: Rotary Park

## Why this Street?

Site 5 was based on the town's largest attraction of Rotary Park. The site encompasses a series of features including the park's large pond and walking trails, splash park, playground, concession building, and parking lots. This area was strategically chosen to capture public life within the park and the range of stationary activities that may occur within the space.

## At a Glance

Of all the sites chosen for the study, Rotary Park was determined to be the main attraction point in town and was found to draw large crowds of people throughout the days and seasons of the year. The park provides a rich source of offerings and amenities for the town's residents to engage in and is a great example of an 8 80 friendly space. The large quantity of seating, its intricate playground and splash pad, and the provision of washroom access year-round make the park an equitable, welcome, and inviting space for all ages. However, while the summer season in Rotary Park is ripe with public activity throughout the week, there is a steep decline in usage during evening hours and within the winter season. The dark atmosphere, limited things to do, and lack of shelter from the cold and wind can make the space a barren, open, and uncomfortable place to visit. While usage is lower, various programming in the park, especially during winter, has been noted to greatly enhance the space when drops in public activity typically occur.





Rotary Park is the  
**Central  
Hub**  
of the town

## Overall Findings

### 1 The Hub of the Community

Rotary Park is the central hub of the town. While other sites did offer some variation of public life throughout the year, Rotary Park harnessed a great deal of activity in all age groups. While public life did take a dive during the winter months, activities were still prevalent at certain times.

### 2 Parking Lots were a Social Hangout

While most people that came to Rotary Park were observed using the parks intended socialization spaces including the playground, plaza, waterpark, and walking trails, there was a small group of people that utilized other spaces not intentionally made for socialization. Rotary Parks large parking lots provided a hangout spot for those with vehicles and were found to attract a certain subset of age groups, specifically teenagers and young adults. Those that were captured using the lots as a social space were engaged in group gatherings, tailgating, or were simply parked or idling in their car and conversing inside.

### 3 Lack of Winter Activity

While Rotary Park provided a consistent activities during the summer season, activities offered in the winter season were minimal. However, when programming in winter was present such as one of its local hockey tournaments, the plaza became a strong focal point for public use, with pop-up music, food stations and fire-pits provided to the town's residents. This indicates that there is latent demand for winter activities. Given that the park already has good winter maintenance of pathways in winter and accessible washrooms there is plenty of opportunity for more winter fun!

### 4 Disconnected to downtown

Whitecourt's prized possession or Rotary Park attracts people from kilometers away. This grandiose spot provides excellent space for community connections and socialization. The park is accessible for vehicle users and transit riders, and provides a seasonal transit stop for park access in the summer. However, it is slightly disconnected from the downtown core via other active mobile forms. Sidewalks leading into the park from 51st Street can be tight and narrow at times with poor snow clearance in the winter. Additionally sidewalks were end abruptly in some areas and lack lighting and benches.

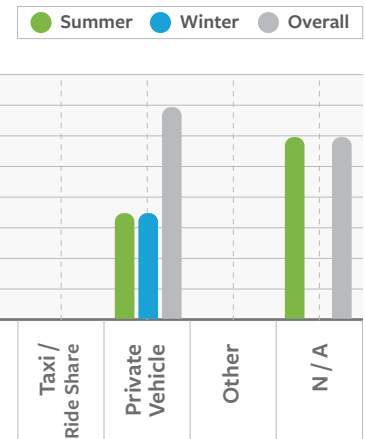


## What Was Seen

### Mobility

As noted by Rotary Parks intercept surveys, the majority of people surveyed (61%) stated they access the park via private vehicle. This may suggest active mobility is lacking in the area. Although specific travel counts were not conducted for Rotary Park, future studies may be needed to provide a better overall understanding of how people access park space and transition through the different zones under different mobile forms.

Mobility Count

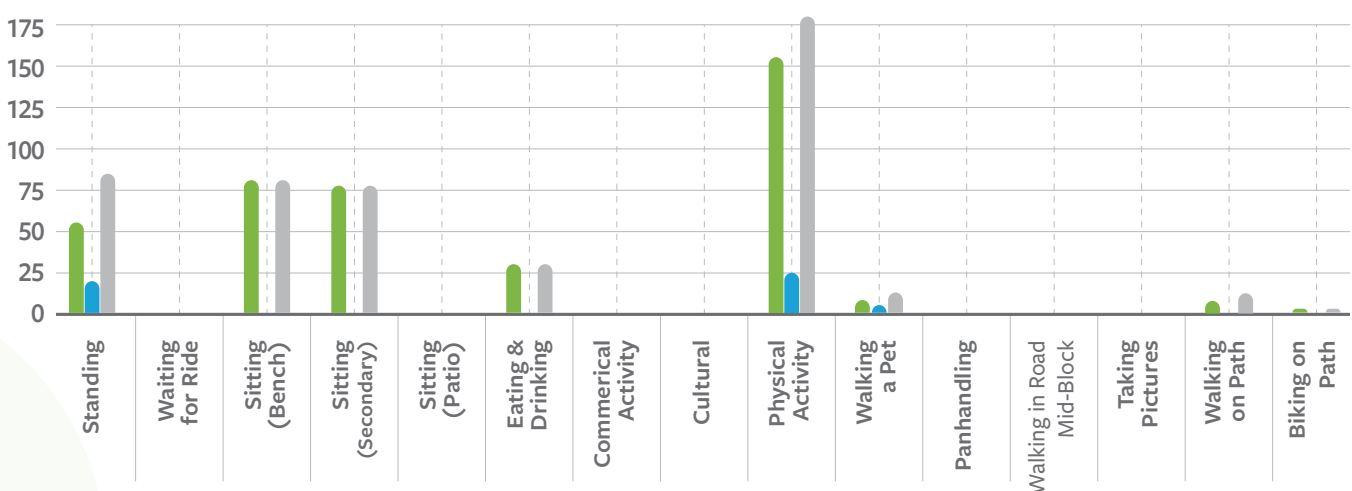


## Activity Mapping

Rotary Park was observed to have the highest number of activity counts among all study sites which is understandable due to the area's vast spaces for physical activity, park features, and various programs held throughout the seasons. Overall, a count of 470 people were recorded using the site in both the summer and winter study sessions, 420 people in summer and 50 in winter. While stationary activity surged on both Saturday's of the summer and winter season (401 and 46 people, respectively), stationary activity dropped substantially during periods of the weekday for the summer and winter (19 and 4 people,

respectively). Physical activity was overwhelmingly the top activity occurring in Rotary Park compared to other activities. Physical activity in the summer stood at 38%), followed by forms of sitting (20% bench; 19% secondary), and standing in place (13%). During the winter, physical activity was the top stationary activity as well (50%), followed by standing in place (40%), and walking pets (10%). While Rotary Park is an active hub of activity in both summer and winter seasons, activity is shown to drop substantially during the winter months.

Activity Counts



# What Was Heard

The intercept survey was a key tool for assessing the public's perception of Rotary Park and the usage of the space by the public. By combining a series of general and site-specific survey questions to ask passersby, the intercept surveys allowed for a wide range of sentiments related to the park and its use, to be captured. These sentiments were then able to be synthesized and transferred over into data findings.

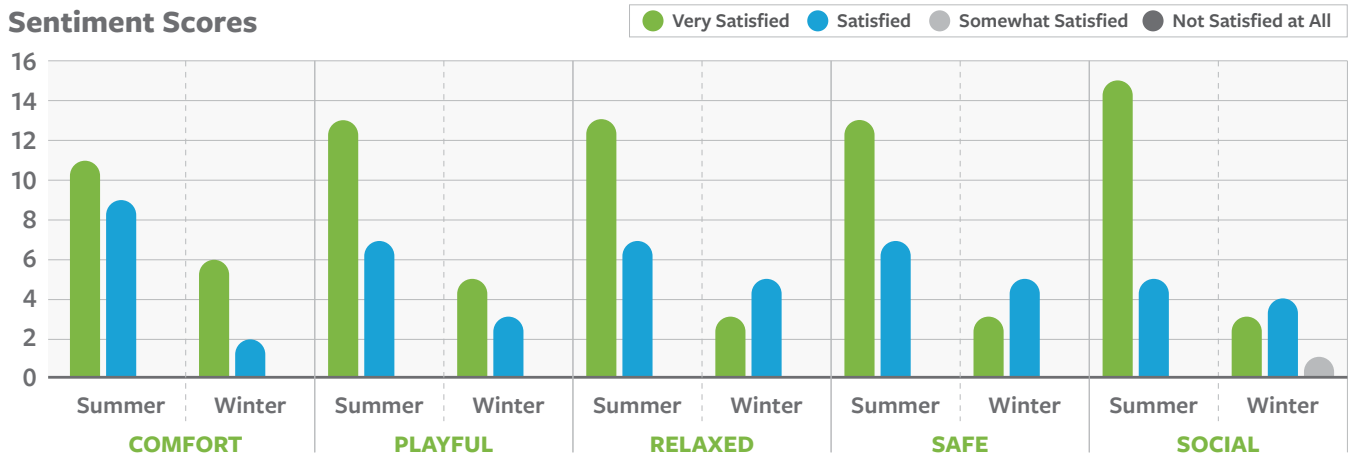
The surveys collected from residents were collected in both summer and winter periods and strongly showcase how Rotary Park is the central location for activity in Whitecourt, Alberta and is the top location for physical exercise and other forms of stationary activities. While Rotary Park is seen as a space to congregate and play, the community has raised some concerns over safety and general use. Below are some insights from the survey:

## Majority of Residents are Satisfied with Public Space

The majority of residents interviewed within Rotary Park have stated they feel very comfortable and relaxed within the park.

The satisfaction of Rotary Park spaces were assessed by public opinion based on the levels of comfort, playfulness, safety, and relaxing social atmosphere they gave off.

### Sentiment Scores



# Rotary Park is a Social Hub

## Very Social



Summer: 15 Winter: 3

## Social



Summer: 5 Winter: 4

Person icon = 1 ● Summer ● Winter ○ None

## Somewhat Social



Summer: 0 Winter: 1

## Not Social at All



Summer / Winter: 0

## People come to visit Rotary Park on a weekly basis

### Daily



### Several Times a Week



### Several Times a Month



### Once a Year



### Less than Once a Year



**Data Not Available: 12**

(Incomplete survey data for some respondents)

Person icon = 1 ● Summer ● Winter ○ None

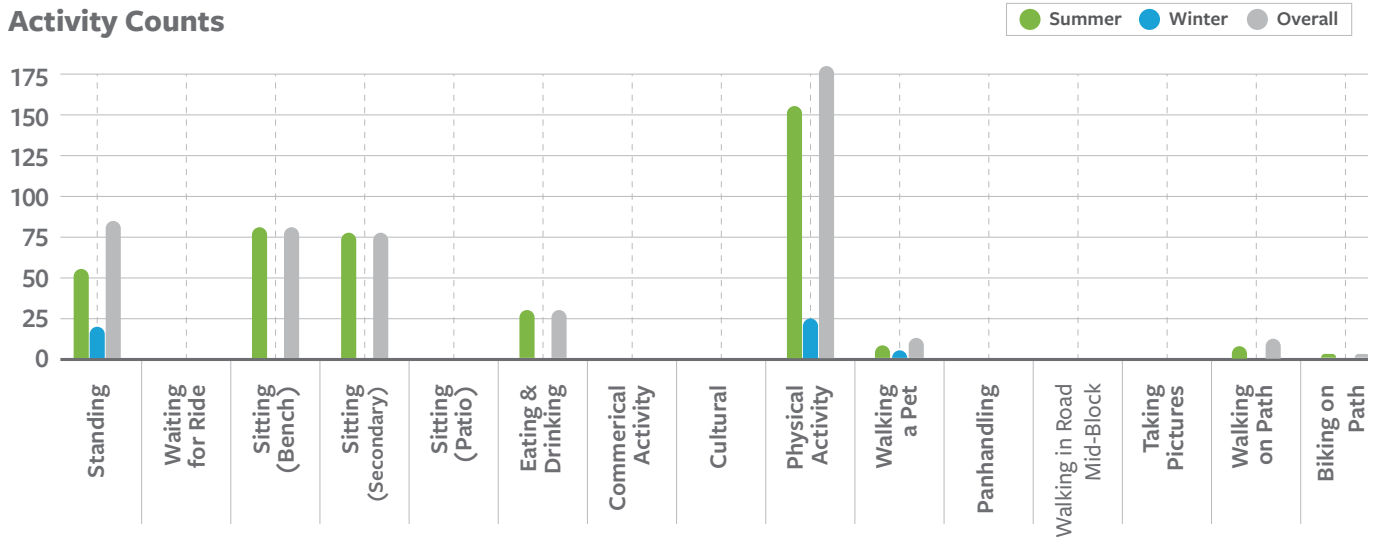


# Active Recreation was #1

Among all activities recorded throughout the town of Whitecourt, active recreation was one of the top activities people voiced that they engaged in. This includes casual walks, jogging, and walking pets. With Whitecourt's large

assets of recreational trails and pathway corridors already established the town is in a very strong position to become a leader in active mobility and recreation.

## Activity Counts

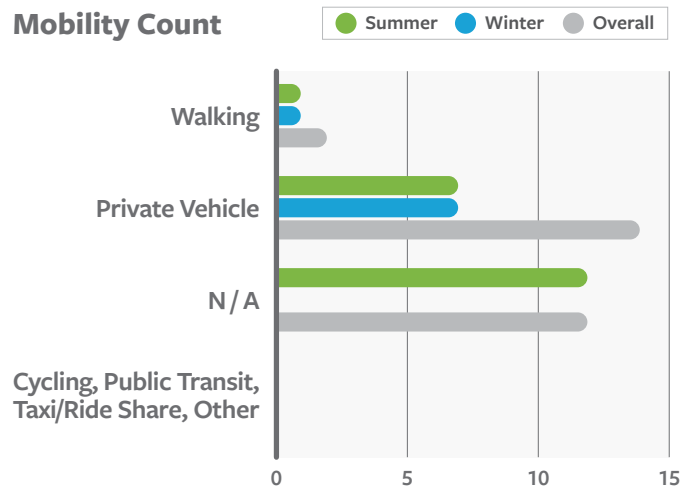


# The Majority of Park Users access Rotary Park by Private Vehicle

Rotary Park is one the busiest of all sites assessed with a number of people stating they visited on a daily or weekly basis. While many people were noted to use the park, 8 80's Intercept Surveys on public spaces revealed that the majority of people visited the park by mode of private vehicle.

The large presence of vehicles, especially during the summer season, showcases a stronger need to encourage alternative forms of travel. This may include emphasis on cycling and walking, or an enhanced approach to provide more accessible, flexible, and frequent public transportation options.

## Mobility Count







# Key Recommendations

## 1 Establish Multi-Seasonal Space

The town should consider building more multi-functional and multi-seasonal spaces in Rotary Park that can be adapted for each season. Multi-functional spaces are key tools that allow for physical activity, fun, and lingering to occur in both summer and winter and will help instill a vibrant and active range of public life year-round. Building a sitting hill for summer movie nights can allow for a toboggan hill in the winter, while an ice rink or trail in the winter can provide for a skate park in the summer. While the park's washroom facilities do provide year-round access, the concession is closed to the public, becoming an underutilized space during the winter.

Consider using the concession building as a lending library during off-seasons to rent out ice skates and other equipment for the winter. Consider installing ice skating

trails or pop-up rinks in the winter which can provide places for physical activity and community connection, while providing warming stations and places to shield from the cold and wind can ensure the space is enjoyed comfortably for all ages.

## 2 Activate the Edges

Activating the edges and entrances with playful, colourful and inviting spaces can help draw more visitors in my foot and bicycle. Improving simple wayfinding and active transportation connectivity to the downtown could be key in attracting and driving more local economic activity into the downtown by using an existing beloved asset.

## 3 Establish Activities and provide programming year-round

While Rotary Park provides its residents with an excellent range of activities to engage in during the summer, it lacks activities for people to do during the winter season. Winter already tends to have a negative impact on public spaces and is noted to significantly impact older adults as well. More programming should be considered in the winter months that occur at various times of the day during both the weekday and weekend periods. These activities and recreational amenities should further be provided year-round and be inclusive for all age groups.

# Data Appendix

## SECTION 7

## SECTION 6: APPENDIX

# 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue

### Overall Mobility Counts by Age

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Winter 2021 (Saturday)		
Age Cat.	Count	%	Age Cat.	Count	%
0-4:	0	0%	0-4:	1	1.4%
5-14:	1	10%	5-14:	12	17.4%
15-24:	3	30%	15-24:	3	4.3%
25-44:	2	20%	25-44:	16	23.2%
45-64:	4	40%	45-64:	19	27.5%
65+:	0	0%	65+:	18	26.1%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>29</b>	

### Mobility Counts by Mode of Travel

Summer 2021 (Saturday)						
Age Cat.	Pedestrian Count	%	Cyclist Count	%	MD User Count	%
0-4:	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
5-14:	1	12.5%	0	0%	0	0%
15-24:	2	25%	1	100%	0	0%
25-44:	2	25%	0	0%	0	0%
45-64:	3	37.5%	0	0%	1	100%
65+:	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	

Winter 2021 (Saturday)				
Age Cat.	Pedestrian Count	%	Cyclist Count	%
0-4:	1	1.5%	0	0%
5-14:	12	17.9%	0	0%
15-24:	3	4.5%	0	0%
25-44:	16	23.9%	0	0%
45-64:	19	28.4%	0	0%
65+:	16	23.9%	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>67</b>		<b>0</b>	

### Stationary Activity – Summer Session

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Summer 2021 (Saturday)		
Activity type	Count	%	Activity type	Count	%
Standing:	4	30.8%	Standing:	2	13.3%
Waiting for Ride:	0	0%	Waiting for Ride:	0	0%
Bench Sitting:	1	7.7%	Bench Sitting:	0	0%
Secondary Sitting:	1	7.7%	Secondary Sitting:	1	6.7%
Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%	Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%
Eating & Drinking:	0	0%	Eating & Drinking:	0	0%
Commercial Activity:	3	23.1%	Commercial Activity:	12	80%
Cultural Activity:	0	0%	Cultural Activity:	0	0%
Physical Activity:	0	0%	Physical Activity:	0	0%
Walking a Pet:	0	0%	Walking a Pet:	0	0%
Pan-Handling:	0	0%	Pan-Handling:	0	0%
Walking in Road:	4	30.8%	Walking in Road:	0	0%
Taking a Photo:	0	0%	Taking a Photo:	0	0%
Walking on Path:	0	0%	Walking on Path:	0	0%
Biking:	0	0%	Biking:	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>15</b>	

### Stationary Activity – Winter Session

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Summer 2021 (Saturday)		
Activity type	Count	%	Activity type	Count	%
Standing:	15	62.5%	Standing:	8	32%
Waiting for Ride:	0	0%	Waiting for Ride:	0	0%
Bench Sitting:	3	12.5%	Bench Sitting:	0	0%
Secondary Sitting:	0	0%	Secondary Sitting:	0	0%
Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%	Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%
Eating & Drinking:	0	0%	Eating & Drinking:	0	0%
Commercial Activity:	0	0%	Commercial Activity:	0	0%
Cultural Activity:	0	0%	Cultural Activity:	0	0%
Physical Activity:	6	25%	Physical Activity:	0	0%
Walking a Pet:	0	0%	Walking a Pet:	0	4%
Pan-Handling:	0	0%	Pan-Handling:	1	24%
Walking in Road:	0	0%	Walking in Road:	6	40%
Taking a Photo:	0	0%	Taking a Photo:	10	0%
Walking on Path:	0	0%	Walking on Path:	0	0%
Biking:	0	0%	Biking:	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>24</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>25</b>	

# 51<sup>st</sup> Street

## Overall Mobility Counts by Age

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Winter 2021 (Saturday)		
Age Cat.	Count	%	Age Cat.	Count	%
0-4:	0	0%	0-4:	5	25%
5-14:	0	0%	5-14:	4	20%
15-24:	2	11.8%	15-24:	0	0%
25-44:	11	64.7%	25-44:	8	40%
45-64:	3	17.6%	45-64:	2	10%
65+:	1	5.9%	65+:	1	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>20</b>	

## Mobility Counts by Mode of Travel

Summer 2021 (Saturday)						
Age Cat.	Pedestrian Count	%	Cyclist Count	%	MD User Count	%
0-4:	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
5-14:	0	0%	2	28.6%	0	0%
15-24:	2	11.8%	2	28.6%	0	0%
25-44:	11	64.7%	2	28.6%	0	0%
45-64:	3	17.6%	1	14.3%	0	0%
65+:	1	5.9%	0	0%	4	100%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>7</b>		<b>4</b>	

Winter 2021 (Saturday)				
Age Cat.	Pedestrian Count	%	Cyclist Count	%
0-4:	5	25%	0	0%
5-14:	4	20%	0	0%
15-24:	0	0%	1	100%
25-44:	8	40%	0	0%
45-64:	2	10%	0	0%
65+:	1	5%	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>20</b>		<b>1</b>	

## Stationary Activity – Summer Session

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Summer 2021 (Saturday)		
Activity type	Count	%	Activity type	Count	%
Standing:	4	30.8%	Standing:	2	13.3%
Waiting for Ride:	0	0%	Waiting for Ride:	0	0%
Bench Sitting:	1	7.7%	Bench Sitting:	0	0%
Secondary Sitting:	1	7.7%	Secondary Sitting:	1	6.7%
Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%	Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%
Eating & Drinking:	0	0%	Eating & Drinking:	0	0%
Commercial Activity:	3	23.1%	Commercial Activity:	12	80%
Cultural Activity:	0	0%	Cultural Activity:	0	0%
Physical Activity:	0	0%	Physical Activity:	0	0%
Walking a Pet:	0	0%	Walking a Pet:	0	0%
Pan-Handling:	0	0%	Pan-Handling:	0	0%
Walking in Road:	4	30.8%	Walking in Road:	0	0%
Taking a Photo:	0	0%	Taking a Photo:	0	0%
Walking on Path:	0	0%	Walking on Path:	0	0%
Biking:	0	0%	Biking:	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>15</b>	

## Stationary Activity – Winter Session

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Summer 2021 (Saturday)		
Activity type	Count	%	Activity type	Count	%
Standing:	0	0%	Standing:	0	0%
Waiting for Ride:	0	0%	Waiting for Ride:	1	14.3%
Bench Sitting:	0	0%	Bench Sitting:	0	0%
Secondary Sitting:	0	0%	Secondary Sitting:	0	0%
Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%	Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%
Eating & Drinking:	0	0%	Eating & Drinking:	0	0%
Commercial Activity:	0	0%	Commercial Activity:	0	0%
Cultural Activity:	0	0%	Cultural Activity:	0	0%
Physical Activity:	12	70.6%	Physical Activity:	4	57.1%
Walking a Pet:	5	29.4%	Walking a Pet:	2	28.6%
Pan-Handling:	0	0%	Pan-Handling:	0	0%
Walking in Road:	0	0%	Walking in Road:	0	0%
Taking a Photo:	0	0%	Taking a Photo:	0	0%
Walking on Path:	0	0%	Walking on Path:	0	0%
Biking:	0	0%	Biking:	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>7</b>	

# 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue

## Overall Mobility Counts by Age

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Winter 2021 (Saturday)		
Age Cat.	Count	%	Age Cat.	Count	%
0-4:	1	11.1%	0-4:	0	0%
5-14:	0	0%	5-14:	0	0%
15-24:	2	22.2%	15-24:	0	0%
25-44:	4	44.4%	25-44:	3	100%
45-64:	1	11.1%	45-64:	0	0%
65+:	1	11.1%	65+:	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>3</b>	

## Mobility Counts by Mode of Travel

Summer 2021 (Saturday)						
Age Cat.	Pedestrian Count	%	Cyclist Count	%	MD User Count	%
0-4:	1	16.7%	0	0%	0	0%
5-14:	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
15-24:	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%
25-44:	4	66.7%	0	0%	0	0%
45-64:	1	16.7%	0	0%	0	0%
65+:	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>1</b>	

Winter 2021 (Saturday)				
Age Cat.	Pedestrian Count	%	Cyclist Count	%
0-4:	0	0%	0	0%
5-14:	0	0%	0	0%
15-24:	0	0%	0	0%
25-44:	3	100%	0	0%
45-64:	0	0%	0	0%
65+:	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>0</b>	

## Stationary Activity – Summer Session

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Summer 2021 (Saturday)		
Activity type	Count	%	Activity type	Count	%
Standing:	1	10%	Standing:	0	0%
Waiting for Ride:	0	0%	Waiting for Ride:	0	0%
Bench Sitting:	0	0%	Bench Sitting:	0	0%
Secondary Sitting:	0	0%	Secondary Sitting:	0	0%
Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%	Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%
Eating & Drinking:	0	0%	Eating & Drinking:	0	0%
Commercial Activity:	0	0%	Commercial Activity:	0	0%
Cultural Activity:	0	0%	Cultural Activity:	0	0%
Physical Activity:	7	70%	Physical Activity:	2	40%
Walking a Pet:	2	20%	Walking a Pet:	3	60%
Pan-Handling:	0	0%	Pan-Handling:	0	0%
Walking in Road:	0	0%	Walking in Road:	0	0%
Taking a Photo:	0	0%	Taking a Photo:	0	0%
Walking on Path:	0	0%	Walking on Path:	0	0%
Biking:	0	0%	Biking:	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>5</b>	

## Stationary Activity – Winter Session

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Summer 2021 (Saturday)		
Activity type	Count	%	Activity type	Count	%
Standing:	0	0%	Standing:	0	0%
Waiting for Ride:	0	0%	Waiting for Ride:	0	0%
Bench Sitting:	0	0%	Bench Sitting:	0	0%
Secondary Sitting:	0	0%	Secondary Sitting:	0	0%
Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%	Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%
Eating & Drinking:	0	0%	Eating & Drinking:	0	0%
Commercial Activity:	0	0%	Commercial Activity:	0	0%
Cultural Activity:	0	0%	Cultural Activity:	0	0%
Physical Activity:	0	0%	Physical Activity:	1	25%
Walking a Pet:	0	0%	Walking a Pet:	0	0%
Pan-Handling:	0	0%	Pan-Handling:	0	0%
Walking in Road:	2	100%	Walking in Road:	3	75%
Taking a Photo:	0	0%	Taking a Photo:	0	0%
Walking on Path:	0	0%	Walking on Path:	0	0%
Biking:	0	0%	Biking:	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>4</b>	

# 52<sup>nd</sup> Avenue

## Overall Mobility Counts by Age

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Winter 2021 (Saturday)		
Age Cat.	Count	%	Age Cat.	Count	%
0-4:	0	0%	0-4:	0	0%
5-14:	0	0%	5-14:	0	0%
15-24:	6	60%	15-24:	0	0%
25-44:	3	30%	25-44:	0	0%
45-64:	1	10%	45-64:	0	0%
65+:	0	0%	65+:	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>0</b>	

## Mobility Counts by Mode of Travel

Summer 2021 (Saturday)						
Age Cat.	Pedestrian Count	%	Cyclist Count	%	MD User Count	%
0-4:	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
5-14:	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
15-24:	6	75%	0	0%	0	0%
25-44:	2	25%	1	100%	0	0%
45-64:	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%
65+:	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	

Winter 2021 (Saturday)				
Age Cat.	Pedestrian Count	%	Cyclist Count	%
0-4:	0	0%	0	0%
5-14:	0	0%	0	0%
15-24:	0	0%	0	0%
25-44:	0	0%	0	0%
45-64:	0	0%	0	0%
65+:	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>0</b>	

## Stationary Activity – Summer Session

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Summer 2021 (Saturday)		
Activity type	Count	%	Activity type	Count	%
Standing:	2	100%	Standing:	0	0%
Waiting for Ride:	0	0%	Waiting for Ride:	0	0%
Bench Sitting:	0	0%	Bench Sitting:	0	0%
Secondary Sitting:	0	0%	Secondary Sitting:	1	100%
Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%	Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%
Eating & Drinking:	0	0%	Eating & Drinking:	0	0%
Commercial Activity:	0	0%	Commercial Activity:	0	0%
Cultural Activity:	0	0%	Cultural Activity:	0	0%
Physical Activity:	0	0%	Physical Activity:	0	0%
Walking a Pet:	0	0%	Walking a Pet:	0	0%
Pan-Handling:	0	0%	Pan-Handling:	0	0%
Walking in Road:	0	0%	Walking in Road:	0	0%
Taking a Photo:	0	0%	Taking a Photo:	0	0%
Walking on Path:	0	0%	Walking on Path:	0	0%
Biking:	0	0%	Biking:	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>1</b>	

## Stationary Activity – Winter Session

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Summer 2021 (Saturday)		
Activity type	Count	%	Activity type	Count	%
Standing:	2	66.7%	Standing:	2	66.7%
Waiting for Ride:	0	0%	Waiting for Ride:	0	0%
Bench Sitting:	0	0%	Bench Sitting:	0	0%
Secondary Sitting:	0	0%	Secondary Sitting:	0	0%
Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%	Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%
Eating & Drinking:	0	0%	Eating & Drinking:	0	0%
Commercial Activity:	0	0%	Commercial Activity:	0	0%
Cultural Activity:	0	0%	Cultural Activity:	0	0%
Physical Activity:	0	0%	Physical Activity:	0	0%
Walking a Pet:	0	0%	Walking a Pet:	0	0%
Pan-Handling:	0	0%	Pan-Handling:	0	0%
Walking in Road:	1	33.3%	Walking in Road:	1	33.3%
Taking a Photo:	0	0%	Taking a Photo:	0	0%
Walking on Path:	0	0%	Walking on Path:	0	0%
Biking:	0	0%	Biking:	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>3</b>	

# Rotary Park

## Stationary Activity – Summer Session

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Summer 2021 (Saturday)		
Activity type	Count	%	Activity type	Count	%
Standing:	56	14%	Standing:	0	0%
Waiting for Ride:	0	0%	Waiting for Ride:	0	0%
Bench Sitting:	82	20.4%	Bench Sitting:	0	0%
Secondary Sitting:	79	19.7%	Secondary Sitting:	0	0%
Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%	Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%
Eating & Drinking:	30	7.5%	Eating & Drinking:	0	0%
Commercial Activity:	0	0%	Commercial Activity:	0	0%
Cultural Activity:	0	0%	Cultural Activity:	0	0%
Physical Activity:	141	35.2%	Physical Activity:	17	89.5%
Walking a Pet:	6	1.5%	Walking a Pet:	2	10.5%
Pan-Handling:	0	0%	Pan-Handling:	0	0%
Walking in Road:	0	0%	Walking in Road:	0	0%
Taking a Photo:	0	0%	Taking a Photo:	0	0%
Walking on Path:	5	1.2%	Walking on Path:	0	0%
Biking:	2	0.5%	Biking:	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>401</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>19</b>	

## Stationary Activity – Winter Session

Summer 2021 (Saturday)			Summer 2021 (Saturday)		
Activity type	Count	%	Activity type	Count	%
Standing:	20	43.5%	Standing:	0	0%
Waiting for Ride:	0	0%	Waiting for Ride:	0	0%
Bench Sitting:	0	0%	Bench Sitting:	0	0%
Secondary Sitting:	0	0%	Secondary Sitting:	00	0%
Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%	Café Patio Sitting:	0	0%
Eating & Drinking:	0	0%	Eating & Drinking:	0	0%
Commercial Activity:	0	0%	Commercial Activity:	0	0%
Cultural Activity:	0	0%	Cultural Activity:	0	0%
Physical Activity:	24	52.2%	Physical Activity:	1	25%
Walking a Pet:	2	4.3%	Walking a Pet:	3	75%
Pan-Handling:	0	0%	Pan-Handling:	0	0%
Walking in Road:	0	0%	Walking in Road:	0	0%
Taking a Photo:	0	0%	Taking a Photo:	0	0%
Walking on Path:	0	0%	Walking on Path:	0	0%
Biking:	0	0%	Biking:	0	0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>46</b>		<b>Total:</b>	<b>4</b>	

