

Edmonton City Centre Airport Lands Public Involvement Project
Understanding the Issues
Stakeholder Interviews & Email Submissions
January 9-23, 2009

Issues Analysis Report

Public Involvement Project Background and Objectives

Starting in June 2008, a number of reports on the Edmonton City Centre Airport (ECCA) lands were considered by Edmonton City Council. After a non-statutory public hearing in September 2008, City staff members were directed to prepare a number of items related to the possible closure and subsequent redevelopment of the Edmonton City Centre Airport lands.

As part of these next steps, Dialogue Partners Inc., an external consulting firm, was hired to develop a public involvement program to engage the community in discussion on the possibilities and challenges of land use on the Edmonton City Centre Airport lands.

In order to develop a comprehensive Public Involvement Plan that will guide the community discussion from March to July 2009, we undertook a series of interviews. Interviews were conducted from January 9 – 23, 2009, and included a wide range of people from many different communities, perspectives and viewpoints.

The objective of the interviews and the overall public involvement project is to engage the community on the possibilities and challenges of land use on the Edmonton City Centre Airport lands.

Stakeholders

Within the timeframe, we scheduled and conducted 53 interviews with a wide variety of stakeholders and received an additional 55 email submissions, for a total of 108 respondents providing input to this report.

When we were planning the interview process, we felt it was critical that we contact a wide cross section of stakeholders to hear their views and to gain a full understanding of their interests and perspectives. This information is critical to planning a meaningful, effective public involvement process for an issue as important as this.

It should be noted that some stakeholders that we tried to contact were not available to complete the interview during the timeframe available. In order to ensure that we have not missed interests or perspectives as we develop the Public Involvement Plan, the interview questions will remain posted on the City of Edmonton website and we will continue to accept submissions until February 27, 2009. We'll prepare a supplemental report at that time.

Noted below is a list that includes the targeted stakeholder groups we identified, along with an indication of whether we conducted an interview and/or received an email submission.

Stakeholder Group	Interview Conducted?	Email Submission received?
Aviation Sector and/or Related Business	X	X
Business General	X	X
Business / Industry Associations	X	X
Nearby Residents	X	X
City Residents	X	X
Community Associations / Organizations	X	
Transportation / Transit	X	
Sports & Leisure Groups & Organizations	X	
Development / Planning / Architecture / Housing organizations / groups	X	
Social Service agencies / organizations	X	
Youth	X	X
Seniors	X	X
Ethno-cultural communities	X	
First Nations community and/or organizations	X	
Police / Safety		X
Media	X	
Education Sector (post-secondary, school board, etc)	X	
Tourism / Economic Development	X	X
Boards / Agencies / Commissions	X	
Northern and/or Other Communities	X	X
Health Care Sector	X	X
Elected Officials (municipal, provincial, federal)	X	
Boards & Agencies	X	X
Arts / Culture / Heritage / Religious groups	X	X
Other levels of government	X	
City officials and administration	X	
Other and/or unknown		X

We learned some very important things about these stakeholders that will impact the public involvement plan:

- ***There is a vast difference in history of involvement and awareness of the issues between different groups of stakeholders.*** Some stakeholders have a high amount of information and a long history with these lands, sometimes going back generations. Other stakeholders have a very short history of involvement and look at the lands, and the possibilities and challenges associated with them, through an entirely different lens. In order to effectively engage people in the next part of the public involvement process, we need to ensure that everyone has access to the same balanced and objective information.
- ***There are tensions between some of the stakeholder groups,*** and in our assessment these tensions relate to:
 - different access to, and availability of, balanced, objective information; and
 - distrust of the process to date and deeply held concerns about fairness and direct impact on quality of life – from many different viewpoints.In order to develop a public involvement process that allows for everyone to feel comfortable expressing their views, we will need to: develop some clear ground rules for participation; create opportunities to speak to everyone at once, as well as certain stakeholder groups separately; and provide multiple opportunities for involvement.
- ***There are some relationship tensions between specific individuals,*** and the subsequent process will need to ensure that all participants can participate “in dialogue rather than conflict”, as stated by one respondent.

What Is at Stake in the Discussion?

In order to analyze the issues at stake in the discussion, we created a chart with the stakeholder group down one side, and the identified “interests” down the other. In order to identify the interests, we reviewed all of the responses to the interview questions received to date, with a view to understanding what was really important to respondents.

We started with “positions” – the posture or point of view presented about the issue that can be characterized as a proposed solution that the respondent thinks will satisfy his / her interests or needs. Underlying every position is an interest. We define an interest as what someone cares about that influences the position that they take. An interest is often related to what they really want, and is the underlying desire, concern and/or fear expressed through their position.

In our view, public involvement processes that draw out and focus on positions are fraught with tension and conflict and rarely effective. Public involvement processes that engage people in productive conversations about their interests generally result in more meaningful, sustainable decisions – for everyone involved.

It is in this light that we have analyzed the interview responses received to date to identify interests, and to highlight areas of disagreement and agreement, so that we can make recommendations for the public involvement plan.

The chart below shows what respondents in each stakeholder group identified as an interest in their responses to our questions. based on responses received to date.

Interest	Environment	Employment	Growth & Development	Tourism	Diversity	Sports, Recreation & Leisure	Noise and/or Safety	Heritage	Transportation	Financial Viability / Cost	Health Care Issues	Access to balanced information	Fair & meaningful process	Accessibility
Stakeholder Group														
Aviation Sector and/or Related Business & Associations	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Business General & Associations	X	X	X	X		X			X	X		X		X
Sports & Leisure Groups & Organizations	X	X	X	X		X				X		X		
Nearby Residents	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
City	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Interest	Environment	Employment	Growth & Development	Tourism	Diversity	Sports, Recreation & Leisure	Noise and/or Safety	Heritage	Transportation	Financial Viability / Cost	Health Care Issues	Access to balanced information	Fair & meaningful process	Accessibility
Stakeholder Group														
Residents														
Community Associations / Organizations	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Transportation / Transit	X		X	X		X			X	X		X		X
Youth	X		X		X	X			X			X	X	X
Education Sector	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Northern and/or Other Communities		X		X					X	X	X	X	X	X
Health Care Sector		X	X						X	X	X	X		X
Elected Officials	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Boards & Agencies		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

Interest	Environment	Employment	Growth & Development	Tourism	Diversity	Sports, Recreation & Leisure	Noise and/or Safety	Heritage	Transportation	Financial Viability / Cost	Health Care Issues	Access to balanced information	Fair & meaningful process	Accessibility
Stakeholder Group														
Development / Planning / Architecture / Housing	X	X	X			X			X	X		X	X	
Social Service agencies / organizations			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Seniors			X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ethno-cultural communities	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X		X	X	
First Nations community / organizations	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Media	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Tourism / Economic	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X		X	X	X

Interest	Environment	Employment	Growth & Development	Tourism	Diversity	Sports, Recreation & Leisure	Noise and/or Safety	Heritage	Transportation	Financial Viability / Cost	Health Care Issues	Access to balanced information	Fair & meaningful process	Accessibility
Stakeholder Group														
Development														
Arts / Culture. Heritage / Religious			X		X			X	X	X		X	X	

Based on our analysis of the 108 submissions / interviews, we have been able to determine a number of distinct themes that reflect both areas of disagreement, and also of agreement. As part of the public involvement planning, we will need to have conversations on the areas of agreement, so that in the end, we can determine how to address the issues of disagreement.

Areas of Disagreement

There are a number of identified interests where there is little or no agreement. These include:

- Existing air service restrictions and/or future air service provisions
- Nature and use of lands in terms of best interests for the City
- Benefit of the airport to Edmonton
- Location of air ambulance and emergency health services and support structures
- Access to, and availability of, balanced, objective, complete information

Areas of Agreement

- A viable, vibrant, sustainable City of Edmonton
- Thriving employment, business and economic development sectors
- Importance of health care and emergency services in the City
- Need for balanced, objective and complete information
- Need for fair, transparent, inclusive and collaborative process
- That the status quo is not working to fully serve anyone's interests (with very few exceptions)

Looking Forward and Recommended Public Involvement Process

Based on our analysis of the identified interests, areas of disagreement and agreement, we believe there are some specific recommendations that will need to be included in the Public Involvement Plan:

- A multi faceted and dialogue based process so that all stakeholders can engage in discussion about their own interests, while understanding and considering the interests of others.
- Multiple opportunities for engagement throughout the process, along with special techniques and/or outreach to specific groups (youth, northern communities, ethno-cultural communities, First Nations and ECCA tenants).
- A public involvement process focused on perspectives and trade-offs of proposed approaches and options so that information that is presented to City Council includes a complete picture of the perspectives of all stakeholders.
- A focus that includes a full exploration of stakeholder perspectives of both the challenges and opportunities of existing and future land use.

- Ground rules for participation that support an environment where all participants balance advocacy of their interests with inquiry into the interests of others, and where constructive participation is the rule, not the exception.
- Full transparency and reporting on all discussions and events in the public involvement process.
- Reporting of the results of the public involvement process will need to be framed to support City Council in the process of difficult decision making that comes next.
- While air service issues are outside of scope of this project, we keep hearing about them, so we will keep documenting them, as they are an important part of existing land use.

We believe this type of engagement does not result in any “one” answer, and we won’t be looking for “one” conclusion to put in front of City Council for decision making. It is very clear from the diversity and scope of responses received to these preliminary interview questions that there is not one answer to this question. In our experience, complex issues rarely have one answer, but rather, many answers that are combined to meet the best interests of the whole community.

We will be recommending a public involvement process that will provide City Council with a full understanding of stakeholder perspectives on both the possibilities and the challenges regarding existing and future land use, and will bring all stakeholders together to discuss their views with this focus. Our objective is to provide City Council with the community’s thoughtful, considered views on these issues, so that they can make the hard decisions on what happens next.