

East End Trails Environmental Review

Recommendation:

That Executive Committee recommend to City Council:

1. That the *City of Edmonton River Valley Access Initiative: East Trails Phase 2 Environmental Impact Assessment* and the *City of Edmonton River Valley Access Initiative: East Trails Phase 2 Site Location Study*, as outlined in Attachments 2 and 3 of the May 10, 2016, Sustainable Development report CR_1904, be approved.
2. That the river valley location of the East Trails described as the “proposed East Trails” in the *City of Edmonton River Valley Access Initiative: East Trails Phase 2 Environmental Impact Assessment*, as outlined in Attachment 2 of the May 10, 2016, Sustainable Development report CR_1904, be deemed essential and approved pursuant to Section 3.5.1 of the *North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan*, Bylaw No. 7188.

Report Summary

To advance the East Trails Project, Administration seeks City Council's approval of an Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study; and that the “proposed East Trails” as identified within the Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study be deemed essential and approved.

Report

The City of Edmonton has partnered with the River Valley Alliance to undertake construction of approximately 16 kilometres of new river valley trails in northeast Edmonton, as illustrated in Attachment 1. The East Trails project is one of five initiatives in Edmonton that form part of the River Valley Alliance’s Capital Project.

The 16 kilometres of new trails will be predominately located along the river bank on both the north and south sides of the North Saskatchewan River, and will be constructed on both public land and through private land acquired by way of easements. Administration is continuing to work with the owners of land of the remaining unsecured parcel to acquire an easement. All other private land has been secured.

On the north side of the river, a paved multi-use trail will begin at Hermitage Park and extend north and east along the top-of-bank to 17 Street NE. Once at 17 Street NE, the route may extend north to 167 Avenue in the Quarry Ridge neighbourhood via the 17 Street NE right-of-way (Alternative One). Alternatively, the multi-use trail may cross 17 Street, and continue east and north along the river bank through lands owned by a private landowner (Alternative Two). This alignment is consistent with the long term vision outlined in the Plan of Action for the Capital Region River Valley Park developed by the River Valley Alliance.

The City is currently negotiating with the landowner for an easement on its lands to accommodate Alternative Two. This additional trail segment was not originally contemplated as part of the East Trails initiative, but may be constructed as part of this project if negotiations with the landowner can be concluded within the timeframe outlined by the funding partners. The Alternative Two alignment would add approximately 4.1 kilometres of trail to the project.

If possible, construction of the trail will be completed through existing funding. The City has approached the River Valley Alliance to obtain additional funding for the acquisition and construction of the trail as necessary.

On the south side of the river, a new gravel trail will be predominately constructed along the river bank. The trail will extend both east and west of the new Northeast Anthony Henday Bridge. The long-term vision for the south side trail includes connections with future pedestrian facilities that will extend both up-river and towards Strathcona County. These options are currently being examined in conjunction with the River Valley Alliance and will be considered as part of its 2017-2022 Capital Program.

An Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study were completed for the proposed East Trails to address the requirements of Bylaw 7188 - *North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan*. The Environmental Impact Assessment outlines an extensive list of mitigation measures for potential impacts related to the following areas: geotechnical and soils, hydrology and surface water quality, air quality, vegetation, wildlife habitat connectivity, residential, recreational, and industrial land use, traffic and parking, worker and public safety, visual resources, and historic resources.

Numerous mitigation strategies are identified for each area. An example of a specific mitigation measure which will be implemented for each impact category is as follows:

- Following City of Edmonton Erosion and Sedimentation Control Guidelines.
- Ensuring spill contingency plan is in place.
- Implementing City of Edmonton Emissions Management Plan and monitoring compliance and effectiveness.
- Reclaiming temporarily disturbed areas with native seed mix.
- Replacing lost and damaged trees pursuant to the Corporate Tree Management Policy C456A.
- Marking project clearing limits with highly visible flagging.
- Limiting construction working hours as per Bylaw 14600 - Community Standards Bylaw.
- Temporary fencing where construction is located near recreation areas.
- Ensuring trail construction activities avoid the landfill boundary and monitoring well systems.
- Monitoring recreationist traffic and parking in adjacent neighbourhoods (post development).
- Installing fencing around staging areas.
- Ensuring disturbed areas are re-vegetated as soon as possible.

- Suspending work and contacting Alberta Culture and Tourism if potential historic resources are discovered.

The Environmental Impact Assessment also highlights positive impacts for the project, including:

- Provision of additional recreational amenities.
- Improved access to North Saskatchewan and river valley views.

Policy

The Way We Grow, Edmonton's Municipal Development Plan:

- 5.1.1.4: Seek opportunities to enhance civic pride and promote tourism by designing and constructing new civic buildings and spaces to feature the city's natural beauty and to meet high standards for urban design, architecture, landscape architecture and public art.

The Way We Live, Edmonton's People Plan:

- 2.2: The City of Edmonton provides for the well-being of its citizens through outstanding parks, natural, green and public spaces.

North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan - Bylaw 7188

Corporate Outcomes

- This report contributes to the corporate outcome “The City of Edmonton has sustainable and accessible infrastructure” as it outlines a trail option that provides recreational access to the River Valley to Edmontonians of varying mobility.
- This report contributes to the corporate outcome “The City of Edmonton’s operations are environmentally sustainable” as it outlines a trail alignment that minimizes operating costs.
- This report contributes to the corporate outcome “Edmontonians are connected to the city in which they live, work and play” as it outlines trail options that were developed through extensive public and stakeholder engagement.
- This report contributes to the corporate outcome “Edmontonians use facilities and services that promote healthy living” as it proposes to expand the River Valley trail system for recreational use.

Public Consultation

The project team met with both stakeholders and the general public to discuss the East Trails project. The following meetings were held:

- A meeting with community league representatives on February 13, 2013.
- Meeting with property owners along Fraser Ravine on February 6, 2014.
- A public open house on March 1, 2014.

At the meetings with community league representatives and property owners, the project team gathered input on various aspects of the project, including the number, location, and level of development for the proposed viewpoints, distance of the trail from property fence lines, as well as height and location of tree and shrub planting to ensure resident privacy.

Additional information was gathered from the public at the open house event held in March 2014. Attendees were invited to provide input by filling out comment forms. Some residents raised concerns about the potential for unlawful activity in the area, including vandalism and loitering, and requested more enforcement of City bylaws. The majority of comments were wholly positive. In general, Edmontonians support the East Trails project, and look forward to increased accessibility to the river valley and connections to the broader trail system.

Budget/Financial Implications

Council approved a capital budget of \$8.5 million for the River Valley Alliance Connective Infrastructure (Profile number 12-17-6100) to develop the East Trails. A Master Agreement with the River Valley Alliance and Building Canada Fund is in place to fund these projects.

Legal Implications

The North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (Bylaw 7188) requires City Council to approve an environmental impact assessment and a detailed site location study detailing financial, social, environmental and institutional opportunities and constraints. Further, the bylaw requires City Council to deem the location of the East Trails project essential and to approve it before this project may be constructed.

Justification of Recommendation

1. The *North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan*, Bylaw 7188, requires City Council to approve an environmental impact assessment and a detailed site location study detailing financial, social, environmental, and institutional opportunities and constraints.
2. The proposed East Trail alignment must be deemed essential and approved by City Council before this project may be constructed.

Attachments

1. Proposed East Trails Phase 2 Project Location
2. City of Edmonton River Valley Access Initiative: East Trails Phase 2 Environmental Impact Assessment
3. City of Edmonton River Valley Access Initiative: East Trails Phase 2 Site Location Study

Others Reviewing this Report

- R. Smyth, Acting General Manager, Citizen Services
- A. Laughlin, General Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services
- D. Wandzura, General Manager, City Operations
- T. Burge, Chief Financial Officer and General Manager, Financial and Corporate Services