

**Rio Terrace, Quesnell Heights & Laurier Heights
Community Consultation on Flood Prevention
held November 22, 2005 at Rio Terrace Hall**

Consultation Summary

Attendance: 21

Main presenter: Douwe Vanderwel, Senior Engineer & Flood Prevention Project Leader
for Ward 1, Drainage Services, City of Edmonton

Presentation

The consultation began with introductions and an overview of 2005 flood prevention programs and educational activities. Mr. Vanderwel then reviewed drainage engineering findings for the community and presented recommended system improvements. These were:

- Build two dry ponds on parkland in Laurier Heights, one southeast of 85 Avenue and 145 Street and the other southwest of 78 Avenue and 140 Street. Excess stormwater would collect in the ponds and be held there until the underground system has the capacity to drain it away.
- Re-grade short portions of some streets in Laurier Heights to improve surface drainage to the river valley.
- Install an in-line sanitary sewer storage tank (called a super pipe) and replace the existing sanitary sewer trunk through Quesnell Heights to increase capacity and relieve pressure on the system.
- Upgrade select sanitary sewers in Rio Terrace to increase capacity and improve flow.
- Add extra catch basins near the Rio Terrace storm drainage outfall to direct water off the street and into the stormwater pipe more quickly.
- Seal sanitary manhole covers to prevent rainwater from entering the sanitary system. (*already completed*)
- Subsidize the installation of backwater valves in all homes in low lying areas. (*already in place*)

The estimated cost of implementing system improvements is \$8.96 million. The implementation plan calls for top priority projects to be done in two to three years while the remainder would be completed in three to six years. Implementation timing will depend on funding and the capacity to do the work.

Next Steps

Mr. Vanderwel emphasized that moving ahead with the recommendations and the implementation plan is contingent on receiving City Council's approval of a funding package. This package will include recommended improvements for all 43 at risk neighbourhoods and is scheduled to be presented in April, 2006. In the meantime, design work is continuing. A portion of the funding for the package may come from a provincial infrastructure grant. The remainder would come from utility rates paid for by all users, not just residents in affected neighbourhoods.

Input from Residents

Most people at the meeting were in favour of the recommended improvements. One person questioned the rationale for having two dry ponds instead of one or why roadways could not be used to channel water to the river valley, eliminating the need for dry ponds. There was a concern recreation use of the parks may be lost due to perpetually damp or soggy conditions in the dry pond.

It was explained that the dry ponds were the most cost-effective way in Laurier Heights to gather excess water and holding it without disrupting streets or risk flooding private property. Ponds would be dry most of the time and would be available for recreational use soon after a storm. Mr. Vanderwel noted that other stakeholders including schools would be consulted before final design and construction of dry ponds would take place.

One person was worried that implementation of the recommended projects may be hampered by another takeover bid by EPCOR. While City staff would not speculate on the future, it was noted that City Councillors in affected areas have been supportive to date of flood prevention measures. Residents requested they be kept informed of future developments and the date of the funding presentation to City Council.

There were a number of questions asked about the backwater value subsidy program, the protection offered by backwater valves and about lot drainage. It was explained that having a valve is recommended by the City but it is up to each homeowner to decide whether or not to install one. The risk to a homeowner of sewer backup may be increased if his or her neighbours all have valves. The current subsidy may or may not cover the cost of installation as plumber estimates vary.

It was pointed out that sump pumps are not designed to deal with sanitary waste, only stormwater. Drainage Services' staff can assist with lot drainage questions and concerns, including disputes with neighbours. Residents were invited to contact lot drainage specialists with the City at 496-5500.

Two people suggested downspouts connected to stormwater sewers may be helpful in reducing pressure on the stormwater system adjacent to homes. It was acknowledged this may be appropriate if the roof drain or downspout is inside the house and leaking. However, disconnecting a roof downspout may not make any difference and could increase the risk of flooding if the lot is not properly graded.

One resident suggested that Drainage Services work closely with Transportation and Streets when constructing or upgrading pipes so roadways can be re-graded at the same time to improve slope. Mr. Vanderwel indicated that it was premature to define what neighbourhood disruptions may occur as a result of pipeline or dry pond construction but it was normal practice to notify residents and keep them informed of road closures or barriers before work begins.

Updates

Updates to residents on the improvement plans will be provided via information bulletins and Drainage Services' website at www.edmonton.ca/floodprevention. Additional comments or questions may be forwarded to Mr. Vanderwel at 496-5553 or douwe.vanderwel@edmonton.ca