

**Rio Terrace, Quesnell Heights and Laurier Heights
Communities Consultation on Flood Prevention
Held April 6, 2005 at Rio Terrace Hall**

Consultation Summary

Attendance: 70

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

Presentation

Following introductions, Mr. Vanderwel reviewed the drainage engineering findings for the three communities and discussed options for reducing the risk of flooding in the future. He noted that the findings show better flood prevention requires action on the part of both the City and homeowners. System improvements for Rio Terrace, Quesnell Heights and Laurier Heights under consideration by Drainage Services include:

- Building as many as nine dry ponds in Quesnell and Laurier Heights and diverting surface stormwater to the ponds. The water would be held there until the underground system has the capacity to drain it away.
- Building a new sanitary sewer line to increase capacity and relieve system pressure in the neighbourhoods.
- Building a new storm sewer line or new outfall to the North Saskatchewan River to increase capacity and divert more water to the Quesnell Storm Trunk.
- Re-grading selected streets to improve surface drainage and direct water more quickly to dry ponds or to the North Saskatchewan River valley.

The estimated cost of implementing these options is \$8.5 million. In addition, Drainage Services would like to twin the Quesnell Storm Trunk to remove a bottleneck and increase capacity. This would cost \$5.8 million. Homeowners were asked to improve their own on-site drainage as much as possible. Options include:

- Better lot grading to ensure surface water gets away from the house.
- Repairing and maintaining good eavestroughs and downspouts.
- Having downspout extensions that channel water at least six feet away from the house. If an extension is not possible, to drain onto a splash pad.
- Installing and/or maintaining a backwater prevention valve.
- Installing, if appropriate for the situation, a sump pump.

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Input from Residents

There was general support for the options but there were a number of questions about the look and safety of dry ponds. Residents indicated they wanted input into the development of the ponds. People were also curious about how the improvements will be funded and whether the work qualified for federal infrastructure dollars. One person said they would be prepared to pay more taxes if it prevented future flooding.

A few individuals questioned the adequacy of the system, suggesting system design may be undersized particularly with the addition in past years of many new buildings onto the system. There was hope expressed that the new pipes will significantly increase capacity.

There was a concern that improvements would not be done before summer rainstorms. It was suggested that the City look at plugging vents in manhole covers to prevent water from “shooting up” through the holes. One person questioned why there was no improvement options identified west of 149 Street

Homeowner Options

Meeting participants were looking for advice and direction regarding home flood prevention initiatives. Several questions were asked about the installation, operation, cost and reimbursement of backwater valves. There was a concern that people without backwater valves may get water overflow from homes that had a valve in place. One individual mentioned they had a backwater valve and did not get sanitary sewer backup. He suggested the City use the money allocated for dry ponds to fund backwater valve subsidies for families.

Residents wanted more information about City bylaws and regulations regarding lot grading and the running of sump pumps. Residents indicated they would like support in dealing with drainage issues, particularly where there is disagreement between neighbours. A proposed flood prevention education program for homeowners was supported.

One person felt the City should do more to enforce policies or bylaws that require homeowners to meet minimal drainage standards. A couple of individuals wanted to know if downspouts going into underground sanitary sewer pipes should be disconnected.

A few people mentioned they would have difficulty doing proper lot grading because of their properties' existing grade or the grade of an adjacent property. For example, in one case, a utility right of way at the back of the property is higher than the house.

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Next Steps

Input from communities and other stakeholders regarding system options will be incorporated into a more detailed implementation plan. This plan will be discussed with local communities before being presented to City Council in the fall. Mr. Vanderwel noted a number of funding options were being considered, including federal and provincial support. Implementation plan timing will depend on funding and the capacity to do the work. Community residents will be notified of the next consultation. Additional comments or questions may be forwarded to Mr. Vanderwel at 496-5553 or douwe.vanderwel@edmonton.ca

Other Key Contacts

Call 496-5539 to be added to the flood prevention program mailing list or to receive future updates and notices by e-mail. Call the 24-hour drainage hotline at 496-1717 if there is a drainage or sewer problem on your property or on your street.

More information about drainage services and the flood prevention program is available at www.edmonton.ca/floodprevention