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SUMMARY

Accidental Beach first surfaced in 2017 and was created by low water levels, the construction of the Edmonton Valley Line LRT and the water diversion from footings placed in the North Saskatchewan river. The beach formed on the south shore of the river, adjacent to the Cloverdale community in Central Edmonton. It became a popular destination for citizens specifically in late August and early September.

During this time, the City added temporary amenities to alleviate the conditions brought to the neighbourhood due to the sudden increase of citizens visiting the area. This included the addition of garbage cans, porta-potties, bike racks and more. As a proactive measure, the City decided to add temporary measures in 2018 in case the beach re-emerged. Due to high water levels throughout most of the summer months the beach did not form to the extent it did in 2017 and it was accessed a fewer number of days. Regardless, during the fall of 2018 the City decided to engage with citizens and stakeholders and find out what worked and what didn't work during the first two beach seasons to better prepare for the 2019 and 2020 seasons. Engagement consisted of the following:

- **Stakeholder session** – in person at the Muttart Conservatory, October 15, 2018
 - Presentation to the audience on the Accidental Beach context and session objectives
 - Discussion with stakeholders regarding positive actions, restrictions, and opportunities for both the beach and for the changes to the surrounding neighbourhood included the traffic calming measures taken on 98 Avenue
 - Feedback opportunities included graffiti boards and comment sheets
- **Public meeting** – in person at the Muttart Conservatory, October 22, 2018
 - Display boards provided information about Accidental Beach focusing on enforcement, traffic and parking safety, public education and amenities
 - City of Edmonton staff well-versed in different topics related to beach were present to respond
 - Feedback opportunities through graffiti boards and staff discussion
 - Discussion with the public on what drew them to the beach, as well as their potential desires for a beach in Edmonton
- **Public online survey** – open from October 15 - November 2, 2018
 - Questions measured beach goers' behaviour, awareness of safety and etiquette messaging, and satisfaction with amenities
 - Questions measured commuters' experiences along 98 Avenue
 - Questions related to issues faced by Cloverdale residents and residents' satisfaction with measures taken

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WHAT WE DID

Public engagement took place to advise the City on issues and opportunities around Accidental Beach. It included and encouraged participation from neighbourhood, stakeholders but also Edmontonians in general by providing multiple channels to provide feedback including:

- **Stakeholder session** by direct invitation to each stakeholder group impacted by the beach. Sixteen stakeholders were invited and six attended.
- **Public session** to discuss impacts and opportunities associated with Accidental Beach. Advertising for the public session included road signs, social media and post card drop to Cloverdale residents. Over 40 Edmontonians were in attendance.
- **Public online survey** was open for 16 days. A total of 819 responses were collected, including 342 people who have visited the beach, 681 people who regularly commute along 98 Avenue near the beach, and 54 people who live or operate a business in Cloverdale.

WHAT WE HEARD

Participants saw an overall improvement in the City's response to Accidental Beach in 2018, when compared to 2017 and were satisfied with the mitigation measures that were in place. Some strong themes are listed below:

- **Parking and Traffic:** There was positive feedback from the stakeholders on the parking program changes from 2017 to 2018. Some improvement areas include revisiting the time restrictions on 98 A Avenue, better coordination with parking lots in the area, earlier permit distribution and more information sharing between residents and the City regarding the parking program (when, where, etc.). Engagement participants from the public session were less supportive of the parking changes in 2018 since the program limited the number of available parking spaces for beachgoers. Suggestions for improvements from the participants included better communication (maps) of where parking is allowed. The majority of the participants supported the speed reduction changes that were implemented on 98 Avenue.
- **Amenities:** The general consensus was that the amenities provided were sufficient. Continuous monitoring is still suggested and addition of more amenities if need be.
- **Enforcement:** Stakeholders were generally satisfied with enforcement. Suggestions for improvement were around consistency and collaboration between enforcement bodies and the community. Through the survey results, residents of the Cloverdale community reported lower levels of satisfaction with enforcement than the general public as they were most impacted by the beach.
- **Safety concerns:** Some citizens brought up concerns around speed, force and unpredictability of the river. Others mentioned a lack of knowledge and caution by some beachgoers. In some cases, this included not following the bylaw that outlined beach hours and rules including picking up after pets, etc.
- **General thoughts on public beaches:** The engagement results showed that the participants generally support and enjoy public beaches and would like to see further development of areas like this in the form

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of food and beverage services (i.e. bars and restaurants) and recreational programming (i.e. standup paddle boarding and beachside yoga).

- A variety of factors appear to have drawn people to the Accidental Beach in Cloverdale including:
 - Being near the water (particularly as these experiences are limited in Edmonton)
 - The central location of the beach was attractive - other locations can be somewhat difficult to access and are not within walking distance of central areas such as downtown and Old Strathcona. Proximity was key in making Accidental Beach desirable.
 - Media coverage of the beach, the novelty of it, alongside curiosity, was also motivators for beach visits.
 - The most popular activities were walking, relaxing and wading in the water.
- **Relationship between trail users and beachgoers:** There were some complaints from trail users who have been using the area prior to the formation of the beach. Complaints about beach users by these users were common, but complaints in the other direction (from beach users about cyclists/pedestrians) did not occur.

WHAT'S NEXT

The City will continue to closely monitor Accidental Beach going into the spring and summer of 2019 and 2020 and will be ready to implement mitigation measures if it re-emerges.

The direction the City received from City Council back in the summer of 2018 was to conduct public engagement in the fall to hear from citizens with the clear understanding that no programming or further major infrastructure was going to be added to the beach as it stands due to the uncertainty of it in the long-term. No formal recreational programming, construction of stairs, resurfacing of the beach sand, or other similar changes will be made. Minor changes may be considered if appropriate triggers and thresholds are reached. These may include the following:

- Additional amenities such as trash cans and porta-potties may be adjusted if the current supply exceeds or does not meet the demand
- Signage may be added or changed if deemed necessary by changes in rules and regulations, or to achieve higher levels of compliance to rules among beachgoers
- Parking programming and strategy may be changed based on feedback and changing demands in the neighbourhood
- Enforcement strategy and frequency may change as changing demands are evaluated and as resources allow

Citizens can continue to access information about Accidental Beach by visiting: edmonton.ca/accidentalbeach

For more information on City of Edmonton public engagement, please visit www.edmonton.ca/publicengagement