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# A Guide to Environmental Review Requirements

## In the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System

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Environmental Planning  
Corporate Planning and Policy Section  
Planning and Policy Services Branch

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**Environment**

means the components of the earth, including:

- air, land and water;
- all layers of the atmosphere;
- all organic and inorganic matter and living organisms; and
- the interacting natural systems which include the above components.

**A GUIDE TO ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW  
REQUIREMENTS IN THE NORTH  
SASKATCHEWAN RIVER VALLEY AND  
RAVINE SYSTEM**

**Legislation**

North Saskatchewan River Valley Area  
Redevelopment Plan  
(City of Edmonton Bylaw 7188)

*It is the goal of this Plan to ensure preservation of the natural character and environment of the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System.*

*It is the policy of this Plan to ensure the application of an environmental impact screening and assessment to all proposed public development and development on public land [within the River Valley and Ravines].*

The North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System is a valuable biophysical, aesthetic and recreational resource for all Edmontonians. Adopted in 1985, the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) identifies a boundary for the river valley and ravine system and a set of policies and development approval procedures for lands within this boundary.

This guide is a summary of administrative procedures designed to provide project managers and their consultants with some general guidelines for dealing with the environmental review process in the river valley and ravine system. The process may be amended from time to time.

**Environmental review**

has important implications for project budgets and time lines and should be considered early in project planning.

## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

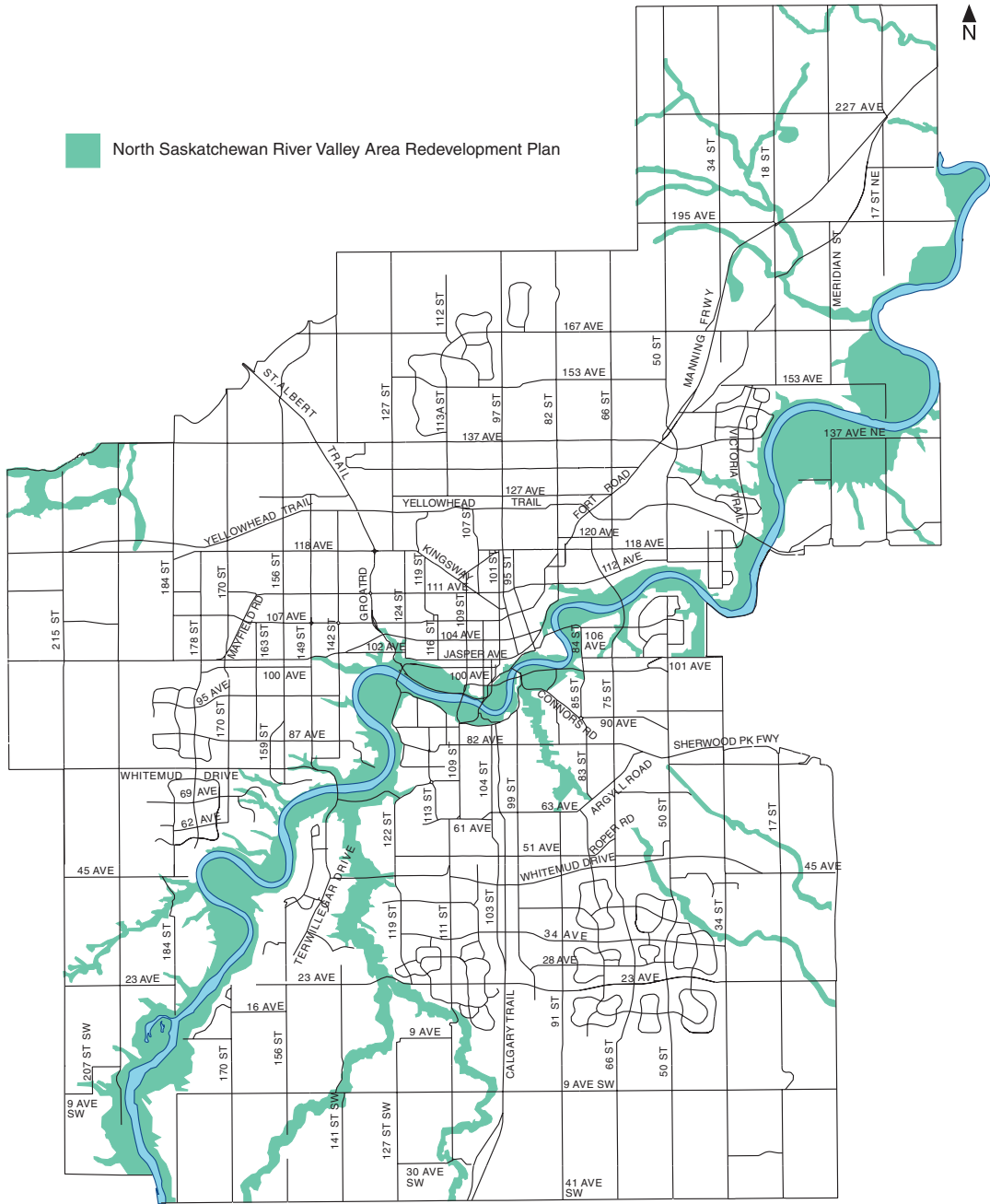
Most development activities proposed for lands within the North Saskatchewan River Valley ARP boundaries are subject to environmental review. Environmental reviews are undertaken by the proponent, reviewed through a technical circulation and approved by the Planning and Development Department and/ or City Council. There are three levels of environmental review: Initial Project Review, Environmental Screening and Environmental Impact Assessment. This three-step process provides a flexible approach for identifying and mitigating environmental impacts before irrevocable decisions are made.

### Environmental Review

is the planning process that identifies, predicts and interprets the potential impact of an activity or alternatives to the activity and suggests mitigation where required. There are three levels of Environmental Review; Initial Project Review, Environmental Screening and Environmental Impact Assessment.

## APPLYING ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW IN THE RIVER VALLEY AND RAVINE SYSTEM

Level of Environmental Review	Type of Project	Nature of Existing Environment	Examples
<b>No Environmental Review Required</b>	minor maintenance or upgrading projects which imply <b>no change</b> in existing use.	in previously disturbed areas such as a road right of way. Project is not foreseen to have significant environmental impacts.	minor amenity replacements; repairs to granular trails.
<b>Initial Project Review Required</b>	minor maintenance, upgrading or construction projects which imply <b>no change</b> in existing use.	in potentially sensitive areas (example: vegetative cover, wildlife corridor). Potential impacts are small and easily mitigated.	slope stabilization projects; replacement of power lines.
<b>Environmental Screening Report Required</b>	maintenance or construction which may imply a change in existing use.	in potentially sensitive areas. Environmental effects and mitigation techniques may be unknown.	expansion of an existing facility; new storm water outfalls.
<b>Environmental Impact Assessment Required</b>	largescale, capital works, excavation, new construction that implies a change in existing use.	in potentially sensitive areas. Environmental effects and mitigation techniques may be unknown.	major utility installation; footbridge across river valley.



North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan

## 1. Initial Project Review

- The initiator of the project, also called the proponent, should contact the Planning and Development Department as early in the planning process as possible to determine any environmental review requirements.
- The proponent meets with Planning and Development Department staff and staff from other affected departments, such as the Community Services and Transportation and Streets Departments, to determine the level of environmental review required.
- An initial project review can be undertaken through a meeting or it can be submitted to the Planning and Development Department in writing. A written project description will be retained on file.
- An initial project review outlines the project's rationale, the alternatives that have been investigated and describes the project with emphasis on access routes to the job site, work/ storage areas, grade changes, vegetation removal and community impacts.
- Air photos, concept drawings, and site checks may be required.
- An initial project review may result in one of three outcomes: no further study required, (with or without conditions); environmental screening report required; or environmental impact assessment required.

### Initial Project Review

An initial project review provides an overview of the proposed project and the existing environment to determine the level and extent of any further requirements for environmental review.

## **Environmental Screening Report**

An environmental screening report provides for the study of a project, including alternatives to the project, in a manner that ensures mitigation of any known or suspected environmental impacts.

### **Mitigation**

is the application of design, construction and operating principles and accepted engineering techniques to minimize or eliminate potential adverse environmental effects and, where possible, to preserve and enhance features of the site.

## **2. Environmental Screening Report**

- The need for an environmental screening report may be determined through the initial project review, OR the proponent may determine, based on past experience with the Planning and Development Department, that this type of project will require an environmental screening report.
  - The environmental screening report is prepared by the proponent. Additional external expertise may be required.
  - The environmental screening report will: outline the rationale for the project; explore the alternatives that have been investigated; describe the existing environment including the biophysical and socio-economic elements; describe both short-term and long-term environmental impacts and mitigation measures; discuss the nature and extent of public consultation; and should conclude with recommendations for mitigation and monitoring of mitigation techniques.
  - Where a project could lead to adverse environmental effects, an environmental screening should include a public participation process to obtain input from affected landowners, residents and interest groups.
  - The environmental screening report is submitted to the Planning and Development Department where it is reviewed and circulated to the appropriate civic departments and/or advisory bodies. Circulation and review takes approximately two to four weeks.
  - After reviewing the report the Planning and Development Department may: determine that no further environmental review is necessary, (with or without conditions); advise the proponent to forward the report to Council for approval; or alternatively advise the proponent that an Environmental Impact Assessment is required.
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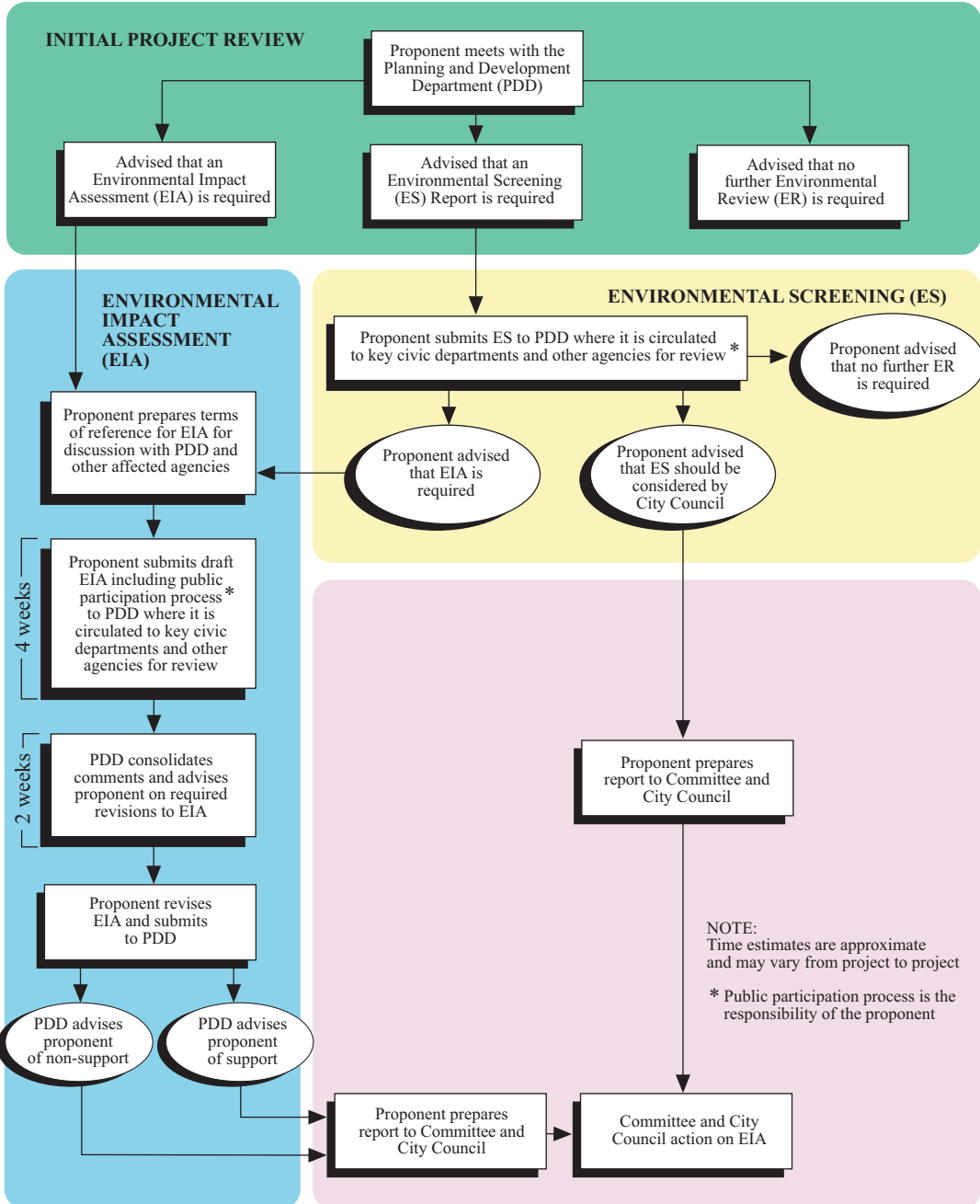
### 3. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

- Typically any new, largescale, capital development on public land automatically requires an Environmental Impact Assessment. An EIA can also be required on the basis of an initial project review or an environmental screening report.
- An EIA occurs at a point in the planning process where options are being investigated.
- A Terms of Reference for an EIA is prepared by the proponent and approved by the Planning and Development Department and other affected agencies.
- It is the responsibility of the proponent to engage the appropriate professional expertise to prepare the EIA.
- An EIA should include public participation as appropriate to the scope and scale of the project. Concerns of affected groups should be taken into account.
- An EIA should have a clear method that will lead to specific recommendations. Examples include a matrix evaluation, checklist evaluation, ecological land classifications, valued ecosystem components, etc.
- Draft reports are submitted to the Planning and Development Department for review and technical circulation. An EIA is finalized based on this review and the proponent submits the report to City Council for final consideration.

#### **Environmental Impact Assessment**

An Environmental Impact Assessment provides a detailed study and review of a project including alternatives to the project. It predicts, interprets and evaluates impacts and it identifies mitigation measures to reduce, eliminate or compensate for these impacts.

**• RIVER VALLEY AND RAVINE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS •**





## **GUIDELINES FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

**An Environmental Impact Assessment must:**

- **describe the proposed activity and provide rationale, including alternatives considered;**
- **describe the existing environment;**
- **include public participation;**
- **predict and analyze the possible effects of the activity on the environment;**
- **recommend mitigation measures that would reduce, eliminate or compensate for the environmental impacts of the activity; and**
- **describe how mitigation measures will be monitored over time to ensure effectiveness.**

All Environmental Impact Assessments are project specific and will vary in the issues to be addressed. The following composite sample from recent Environmental Impact Assessments provides a guideline only.

## SAMPLE TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### I. INTRODUCTION

- purpose of report
- purpose of the project, including rationale
- study area and context
- Environmental Impact Assessment study process and method

#### II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- project setting/site description (location, surrounding land use, etc.)
- scope of work (design considerations, extent of alteration/construction, duration of work)
- alternatives considered (concept/design alternatives and location)
- public participation

#### III. EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

- general description
- geology/ geomorphology; soils; slope stability; vegetation; wildlife, etc.
- hydrology; water quality; aquatic habitat; noise, odour and visual impacts
- community, socio-economic environment; land use and ownership; public utilities; parks and trail development; aesthetics; traffic and parking issues; urban design; archaeological and historic resources

#### IV. CONSTRUCTION AND ENGINEERING

- general description (including methods of construction, duration)
- options and alternatives
- construction components and techniques (including site preparation, access, lighting)
- scheduling (including timing, phasing)

#### V. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

- assessment methods (i.e. - field survey, review of existing environmental information, professional knowledge of area, analysis criteria, matrix evaluation etc.)
- should include same categories as in III. (Existing Environment) and should indicate how they will be affected by the proposal, and how these effects will be eliminated, reduced or compensated.
- short term impacts
- long term impacts
- public participation component
- operation and maintenance issues and environmental impact monitoring program

#### VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- summary of significant environmental impacts and recommended mitigation measures
- summary of outstanding issues and concerns

#### APPENDIX:

- A. Summary of Public Participation
- B. Technical Data (ie. fish sampling data)
- C. Photographs, Maps, Illustrations
- D. Historical Resources Impact Assessment

## **GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Public participation procedures ensure that the affected community has input into any new proposals that may impact the local environment. In general, any proposal subject to an environmental impact assessment should provide for public participation in accordance with the scope and scale of the proposal. Proposals subject to environmental screening reports may also require a public participation component depending on the nature and extent of environmental impacts.

Public participation for the purposes of environmental review may be tied in to existing project consultation procedures. Early consultation is recommended in order to expedite environmental review by identifying issues important to the community as soon as possible in the planning process.

### **Some Methods of Public Participation**

1. Letters of notification - to affected landowners and interest groups to solicit input;
2. Surveys of public opinion - can provide development options early in the process;
3. Newspaper advertisements - can provide project information to a large audience;
4. Open House - concept drawings are presented for public review and comment;
5. Public Meeting - concept drawings are presented for public review and comment, presentation by consultant, question and answer period.

The Community Services Department and/or the Planning and Development Department can provide advice on the level of public participation required on a project by project basis.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The following clarifies the roles and responsibilities of individuals and agencies for environmental review in the river valley and ravine system.

### **1 Project Manager / (Proponent)**

- Initial contact with Planning and Development Department
- Develops Terms of Reference for EIA, if required
- Hires consultant, if required
- Liaison between participating civic departments and consultant

### **2 Consultant / (or Project Manager)**

- Scoping of issues - refines Terms of Reference for EIA
- Identifies environmental impacts
- Analyzes and predicts impacts
- Recommends appropriate measures to reduce, eliminate or compensate for impacts
- Conducts public consultation process, as required

### **3 Community Services Department**

- Owner and manager of most of the land within the river valley
- Advises on all aspects of environmental reviews

### **4 Planning and Development Department**

- Manages and interprets Bylaw 7188
  - Sets standards for conduct of environmental reviews
  - Manages review and technical circulation process
  - Considers initial project reviews and some environmental screening reports
  - Liaises with Alberta Environment, Capital Health Authority and others as appropriate.
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## **5 Technical Reviewers**

- Assesses completeness and accuracy of environmental review
- Provides comments on how proposal may affect operations

## **6 City Council**

- Considers environmental impact assessments and selected environmental screening reports.

## **TECHNICAL CIRCULATION AND APPROVALS**

Environmental screening reports and environmental impact assessments are subject to technical circulation upon submission to the Planning and Development Department. Technical circulation ensures the completeness and accuracy of the environmental review and ensures that affected agencies are aware of proposals that may affect their operations.

### **Typically, reports are circulated to:**

1. City departments that may be affected, such as the Community Services Department, Asset Management and Public Works Department, and the Transportation and Streets Department; and
2. Agencies having technical expertise in environmental science or other relevant areas, such as the Capital Health Authority, Alberta Environment and Alberta Community Development.

**Environmental Reviews are usually considered for approval as follows:**

Initial Project Reviews	Approved by memorandum from the Planning and Development Department.
Environmental Screening Report	Approved by memorandum from the Planning and Development Department OR the proponent may be advised that the report be forwarded to City Council for consideration depending on the scale of project and the nature and extent of impacts.
Environmental Impact Assessment	Considered by City Council.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION....**

**Contact Environmental Planning at the Planning and Development Department. We are located on the 7th Floor, 10250-101 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3P4. Tel. (780) 496-6039 or 496-6209 Fax (780) 496-8450. Visit the Planning and Development Department's Web page: <http://www.gov.edmonton.ab.ca/planning>**

For further information on environmental review in the river valley and ravine system, please see Bylaw 7188, the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.

For further information on parks and recreation development of the river valley, please see the Community Service's Master Plan, "Ribbon of Green."

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