KIHCIY ASKIY SACRED EARTH
FORMAL EDC SUBMISSION
SUBMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENT PERMIT
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1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Kihciy Askiy means Sacred Earth in Cree and will be a permanent Indigenous ceremonial and cultural site within Edmonton. The project site area is approximately 2.5 hectares and is located in Whitemud Park at the former Fox Farm Site.

Kihciy Askiy will mainly provide a natural setting for different urban Indigenous groups to host spiritual ceremonies, grow medicinal herbs, practice traditional crafts and facilitate inter-generational learning. At the same time it will also be open to the general public and become a place where all Edmontonians can learn about the traditions of Indigenous people.

The development of Kihciy Askiy will proceed in phases. This first phase will focus on facilitating sweat ceremonies. It comprises the re-grading and re-naturalization of the northern part of the site to allow for the erection of sweatlodges and tipis, the construction of a gathering building with washrooms and changerooms, a multi-purpose room, as well as a storage pavilion. It includes the widening of the access road, providing sufficient parking and a fire truck/ bus turn-around as well as trail connections to the sweatlodges and tipi area.

The design and layout of Kihciy Askiy is informed by a continuous dialogue between the City of Edmonton and partner, Native Counselling Services of Alberta, as well as the Elder's Council throughout the project's pre-design and schematic design phases.

Native Counselling Services of Alberta will operate Kihciy Askiy, while the City of Edmonton will maintain the site and facilities.

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Long before becoming farmland, Kihciy Askiy was used for many centuries by the Indigenous people foraging for medicines for healing purposes. Ochre, a rare mineral, is also found close to the site and was used in spiritual and traditional ceremonies.

In 1968, Fox Farms was acquired by the City of Edmonton. Located in the river valley, on top of the western banks of Whitemud Creek, the site has been included in the planning for Whitemud Park.

In 2003 the Whitemud Integrated Area Concept Plan was developed and approved by City Council. It envisaged a re-naturalization and re-forestation programme for the former farm site. Then, in 2006, the City received a proposal from the Edmonton Indigenous Cultural Resource Counsel to create a permanent site for Indigenous cultural events and learning experiences for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In response, the Whitemud Integrated Area Concept Plan was amended to include the development of the cultural site called Kihciy Askiy (Sacred Earth) in 2009.

In February 2015, the old farm buildings, corrals, and house were demolished. The only remaining structure on site is a utility shed.

Since it’s acquisition by the City, the land has been used as pasture for the Fort Edmonton Park horses. In 2016 the horses were moved to a newly fenced pasture just northwest of the Kihciy Askiy site. The south end of the site is at present used as a temporary site for a sweat lodge.
1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

Since Kihciy Askiy was used as a farm and horse pasture, it is an open, grassed area, surrounded by the typically treed slopes of the River Valley. It is located on top of the western bank of Whitemud Creek. The northern part of the site has an open feel to it - one can see and particularly hear Whitemud Drive - whereas the southern part of the site offers a more sheltered and intimate ambiance. The areas of the site that used to be grazed are covered with tall grasses, which give the land a very natural feel, but the areas where the ground was disturbed by the buildings - have become fully overgrown with weeds. While the vast majority of the site is open grassland, there are some tree groves to the edges of the site - on the south end of the site, close to the existing sweat lodge, as well as towards the northeastern border before the land slopes down to the creek. Aspen shoots have started growing into the grassed areas, indicating that without a maintenance programme, the Kihciy Askiy site will naturally develop back into Aspen woodland.

The site is slightly higher at its entrance to the north, where the parking stalls and buildings will be located, with elevations around 626.80m at the western area of the parking stalls to around 625.50m on top of the bank at the location of the buildings. The approximately 2.5m high bank slopes to the lower main area of the site. Here the site undulates slightly and has a larger depression in the middle where water stands during spring. The site floods each spring due to water running off the slopes at the western boundary of the site. In order to avoid future flooding and to make the site usable year-round, the site will be re-graded and swales and raingardens will be constructed. The design intent to balance out all cut and fill on site.

1.3 PROGRAMME

1.3.1 SWEAT Lodges AND STONE HEATING DEVICE

The sweat lodge ceremonies will form the core of Kihciy Askiy’s activities, especially in its first years of operation. Four sweat lodges will be constructed around a permanent stone heating device in the center. Presently, the community has a temporary fire pit, for improvised sweats at the south end of the site. This requires them to apply for a fire permit every time they wish to hold a sweat ceremony. Not only is the stone heating device the central element at the ceremonies, it is also crucial to the operation of Kihciy Askiy that approval for a permanent fire permit for all types of woods used in the ceremonies is granted.

Sweats will be held on a rotational basis, with each sweat lodge accommodating up to 25 people. For Phase 1, sweats will operate from 9:00 am to 4:00pm, about three to four times a week. It is anticipated that approximately three sweats will occur per day. It is understood that up to two lodges may host sweats concurrently.

The site for the sweat lodges will have to be graded and compacted, but the actual sweat lodges, constructed out of willow branches with tarps draped over them, will be erected by Indigenous Community members. The tarps will be changed twice a year, in the spring and fall.

1.3.2 CHANGE ROOMS, WASHROOMS AND STORAGE PAVILIONS

In the design workshops and meetings it became apparent that a storage facility for utility vehicles, tipi poles, firewood and tipi canvas, as well as change rooms and washrooms in close proximity to the sweatlodges are required in order to run the sweats on a regular and permanent basis. A gathering room for the ceremonial meals following the sweats is part of the development.

The built facilities are to be located on top of the bank, outside the 100 year flood plain, at the northern end of the site, close to the parking stalls and access road. The storage pavillion has a sloped grass recreation space, which acts as it’s east wall. This area can be used as an amphitheatre sitting area for performances or presentations.

1.3.3 TIPIS

Tipis are required for prayer ceremonies, group workshops, or other cultural purposes. Apart from the sweats, the tipi area will be the most frequently used event space on site. Each tipi will accommodate 16-20 people, with the largest tipi measuring about 22 feet in diameter with a height of 30 feet. Following the use of the tipis, the poles will be stored in the new storage facility at the site entry.

1.3.4 PARKING

50 gravel parking stalls, as well as two gravel bus parking stalls, are proposed at the site entrance. The area will also provide a fire truck/ambulance/bus/garbage truck turn around.

While the buildings were originally intended to be used only during the summer months, project requirements were modified to accommodate the strong wish of the Elder’s Council to have a year-round facility.
2.0 ZONING ANALYSIS

ZONE: A (Whitemud Park) Metropolitan Recreation

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Plan 5975CL, Block A
Municipal Address: 14141 Fox Drive NW

SITE AREA:
LOT BOUNDARY: 144,405 m² (14.44 ha)
DEVELOPMENT AREA (PHASE 1): 20,000 m² (2.015 ha)

FLOOR AREA RATIO:
New: Gathering Centre 130 m²
New: Storage Building: 86m²
FAR: 0.007 Site Coverage

SITE COVERAGE:
Existing: 15,000 m²

PROPOSED USE OF BUILDING:
New: 130 m² General Assembly
New: 86 m² Small Building

PARKING ANALYSIS:
Required: 16 parking stalls
Proposed: 50 parking stalls

LOADING SPACE REQUIREMENT:
Required: 1 loading stall
Proposed: 1 loading stall

BICYCLE PARKING SPACE REQUIREMENTS:
Required: 1 bicycle parking stall
Proposed: 6 bicycle parking stalls

BUILDING HEIGHT:
Maximum Permitted: 10.0 m
Proposed: Storage Building - 4.5 m
Gathering Building - 4.5 m

BUILDING SETBACKS:
Required: 7.5 m for the Front, Rear and Side Setback
Proposed: Front setback - 154 m
Back setback - 32.5 m
West setback - 2.2 m
East setback - 41.7 m

LANDSCAPING
Existing: Open, grassed area, surrounded by treed slopes of the river valley
Required: 70 trees per hectare = 141 trees
Proposed: 49 standard trees + 180 40mm trees (=90) + 2 existing trees = 141 trees
15% of the proposed trees are evergreen - Refer to letter of variance of all species planted to be native to Edmonton River Valley.
3.0 CONFORMITY WITH PLANNING LEGISLATION

The proposed project is consistent with the City of Edmonton’s: Ribbon of Green Master Plan (1992); the goals of the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (Bylaw 7188); The Way We Grow: Municipal Development Plan (Bylaw 15100); The Way We Live: Edmonton’s People Plan; The Way We Green: Environmental Strategic Plan: the Urban Parks Management Plan; BREATHE: City of Edmonton’s Green Network Strategy, the Whitemud Park Concept Amendment 2009 and the Edmonton Winter City Guidelines.

Due to its location in the North Saskatchewan River Valley the site has been subject to an environmental review, triggered by the North Saskatchewan River Valley Redevelopment Plan (Bylaw 7188) to protect the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System. The following assessments and reports have been prepared to meet the requirements of the environmental review, to achieve an environmentally sound design and to facilitate meeting the City’s environmental objectives during construction.

3.1 PHASE 1 ENVIRONMENTAL SITE ASSESSMENT

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment regarding hazardous materials and soils contamination has been completed by CT & Associates for the City of Edmonton in 2014. No items of environmental concern were identified, and it was found that there is no further investigation required.

3.2 PALEONTOLOGICAL HISTORIC RESOURCES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The project received Historical Resources Act Approval with the condition to provide a paleontological Historic Resources Impact Assessment. Aeon Paleontological Consulting has completed a pHRA field survey, as well as pHRA report in summer 2017. The outcome of this report is included in the EIA.

3.3 GEOTECHNICAL REPORT

A geotechnical report has been completed by Golder & Associates in May 2017 and has been submitted to Geotechnical Services of the City of Edmonton. It has been included in the EIA.

3.4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT & SITE LOCATION STUDY

An Environmental Impact Assessment based on the Terms of Reference for Environmental Review provided by the City of Edmonton has been undertaken by Spencer Environmental, as well as an accompanying Site Location Study. The EIA and SLS have been approved by Council on January 2018.

The EIA ensured that the project adheres to all federal, provincial and municipal bylaws, policies and guidelines. It identified impacts and mitigation measures for Valued Ecosystem Components such as Soils, Hydrology, Vegetation, Wildlife and Habitat Connectivity, Valued Socio-Economic Components (residential and recreational land use, parking) and Valued Historic Components.

All design-related mitigation measures suggested by the EIA have been implemented in the design and all mitigation measures relating to the construction of the project will be adhered to in moving forward into tender and construction.

The structural design for the buildings is based on the geotechnical recommendations and site grading is directing surface water away from buildings, structures and excavation as per geotechnical report. Temporary erosion and sediment control fences have been added to the cost estimate.

Pursuant to the City of Edmonton’s Enviso program, an Environmental Construction (ECO) Plan will be prepared to monitor the site preparation and construction phase of the project.
4.0 RESPONSE TO PRINCIPLES OF URBAN DESIGN

Due to the unique nature of this project, located as it is in a pastoral setting, some of the EDC principles of urban design are less easy to reconcile in this project. However, below the relevant aspects have been addressed as follows:

The site has specific historic and cultural significance for the Indigenous community. In the spirit of reconciliation this project aims to restore and re-inforce this significance. Kihciy Askiy will provide a place for Indigenous cultures as well as facilitate cross cultural awareness and provide experiential learning opportunities for the broader Edmonton/Alberta community. It will contribute to the celebration of Edmonton's cultural diversity and heritage. Consistent with the Indigenous culture of respecting the land, the project is designed to be completely synchronised with it's location in the Edmonton River Valley.

The site masterplan has established different zones to scale the large open site into pleasant spaces for the various programming and to balance the need for public areas as well as private spaces. Areas of different activities are separated by tree groves, pathways and swales to facilitate intimate spaces for sacred ceremonies or teachings that could be happening at the same time than other events or trail usage by the general public. The location of the sweat lodges and tipis has been work shopped and chosen by the Council of Elder’s in order to balance proximity to the buildings and parking's with the need to keep them out of direct (future) trail connections.

The site is intended to be kept as natural as possible. The core of the sweatlodge and tipi zones will be mowed while on the perimeter the grasses will be left standing high and only mowed toward the end of summer for maintenance and to control the site's otheriwse natural succession into aspen woodland. Selected areas will be left to their natural succession.

We promote the use of renewable wood as the material for the structure of the building, both in the wall framing and roof structure. The only water use to be found in this project will be the washrooms and a minimum amount needed to wash dishes in the future Gathering Room, as well as an outside hose bib. We would specify low water use WCs. Waste water will be stored in a tank and removed from site.

To create a healthy indoor environment we will employ only natural, non-off gassing, as locally available as possible materials, such as wood and linoleum. The exterior cladding will be epoxy coated wood panels, the roof asphalt shingles.

The project is designed to be usable in the winter and will be over to Phase 2 of the development. Indigenous artists will be engaged and it is envisaged to be integrated into the landscape. The colours (grey and wood tone) have been chosen to be deliberately muted, because of the natural setting. It is intended that the two buildings settle lightly in the landscape. The same deliberate intent of "shyness" and not wishing to dominate the surroundings, is found in the simple form of the two buildings.

Sustainability also means that we consider the cost of each choice made and the effective longevity of the products and materials that we recommend.

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Good environmental design for buildings also means careful consideration of materials used, minimizing water use and creating healthy indoor environments.

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With the storage pavilion's east wall/root being a grassed amenity space, the pavilion is directly integrated into the landscape, and it's visual impact innovatively minimized.

Due to the limited budget of the project, funding for public art will be held over to Phase 2 of the development. Indigenous artists will be engaged and it is envisaged to be integrated into the landscape.

The buildings have been designed to be usable in the winter and will be illuminated when in use. However the full extent of the use of Kihciy Askiy during winter will be largely dependent upon the demand for winter sweats and upon the frequency and consistency of maintenance - such as snow clearing.
5.0 URBAN CONTEXT & TRAIL CONNECTION PLAN

KIHCY ASKIY SACRED EARTH
6.0 SITE PLAN

6.1 SITE CONTEXT PLAN (SCALE 1:2500)

KIHCY ASKIY SACRED EARTH
6.0 SITE PLAN

6.2 SITE & LANDSCAPE PLAN (SCALE 1:1000)
7.0 SUN SHADOW IMPACT STUDY
8.0 FLOOR PLANS

8.1 FIRE ACCESS PLAN (SCALE 1:200)

Occuancy Load = 97 people

Occuancy Load = 64 people
8.0 FLOOR PLANS

8.2 MAIN FLOOR PLAN (SCALE 1:200)
**9.0 BUILDING ELEVATIONS**

**9.1 GATHERING CENTRE (SCALE 1:200)**
8.0 BUILDING ELEVATIONS

8.2 STORAGE BUILDING (SCALE 1:200)
11.0 FINISHES & ACCESSORIES

11.1 SITE LIGHTING PLAN (SCALE 1:1000)
11.0 FINISHES & ACCESSORIES

11.2 EXTERIOR FINISHES

LEGEND:
1. Metal diagonal siding
2. Copper sheet siding
3. Gutter and downspout
4. Render of Sweat Lodge Area
5. Render of Earth Bank with concrete retaining wall
6. Painted metal exterior doors
7. Glass
8. Concrete retaining wall
9. Render of Earth Bank
10. Black shingles on Roof
11. Render of Gathering Centre
1.0 FINISHES & ACCESSORIES

11.3 SIGNAGE PLAN
11.0 FINISHES & ACCESSORIES

11.4 SIGNAGE DESIGN PLAN

NOTE: ALL SIGNAGE TO COMPLY WITH THE EDMONTON RIVER VALLEY PARKS SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING GUIDELINES & STANDARD.
view from parking

view from east

view from sweatlodges

12.0 RENDERS

KIHCIY ASKIY SACRED EARTH