

137 AVENUE AND 199 STREET

*Public Meeting: Construction Project Status
July 24, 2014*

About the Project

On July 24, 2014, City of Edmonton held a public meeting at the Glendale Golf and Country Club to respond to questions and concerns from 120 residents in the Trumpeter and Starling neighbourhoods. Concerns and frustrations have been expressed about ongoing road closures on these roadways, which bring concerns about safety and emergency response times; mileage, wear and tear to vehicles; amount and frequency of communications about the project; and an overall desire to see the projects completed.

Representatives from the City of Edmonton's Transportation Services and Sustainable Development departments, along with representatives from the development community (Rohit Communities and United Communities) made a presentation and responded to community questions. Councillor Andrew Knack also attended the meeting.

Key themes

Road closures on these streets have been ongoing over the past four years, as new development has unfolded in these neighbourhoods. These closures require residents and members of the Glendale Golf Club to use an alternate route that requires longer travel times. As a result, many of the attendees suggested some type of compensation should be made available for either mileage, or for the extra wear and tear on the vehicles.

Concerns were also expressed about Emergency Response times, as some participants noted there was an incident within the community that was impacted by the road closures, and they had concerns about what would happen in the future if this continued.

Generally, participants expressed frustration about the length of time the construction has been ongoing. They suggested a number of changes that could be considered such as bringing on more crews, working longer hours, administering penalties to the developers, or awarding fewer contracts. In the longer term, there are suggestions that roadways should be built before housing development proceeds.

Some suggested more frequent and detailed communication about the construction projects could alleviate some of the fear and concern residents face.

There were also comments made about the meeting itself. A small number of participants completed meeting evaluation forms (4). It is difficult to quantify some of the responses to questions about the meeting with such a small number of forms; however written comments and anecdotal evidence indicate that many of the attendees felt the meeting was useful and provided good information. There were some who did not find the information they were looking for and were not happy with the meetings. As well as some who noted concerns about the meeting facilitation, problems with the AV system, and concerns the meeting was too short.

Response

Information was provided to give people more information about their areas of concern. For example, to address concerns that emergency vehicles are not able to access the neighbourhood via the existing rural road, it was noted that there were fire crews that came out on a regular basis to assess and review the response route.

While acknowledging that repeated road closures were frustrating, it was noted that part of the difficulty was that there were three new communities at different stages of construction along those roads, and development of the adjacent roads has occurred in stages as each community is built out.

The City is not able to provide compensation for mileage or wear and tear on vehicles. The *Municipal Government Act* has a clause that exempts municipalities from providing compensation related to construction that is considered to be for the public good. This exemption is important from a financial perspective, as there is construction ongoing in many parts of the City.

The City does follow bylaws and regulations when it comes to working with the developers to see construction projects through to completion. Servicing agreements are made with the developer that include deadlines for construction. The developer must provide a deposit that can be paid to the City that can be retained in the event of missed deadlines. In this case, however, delays have been caused by unforeseen circumstances that the developers could not avoid. If the City was to take over the project, it would entail bringing in contractors to complete the work, which would cause further delays.

In the spring, the three developers sent out a communication to the area residents and businesses in Hawksridge, Trumpeter, and Starling to provide information on planned construction activities and timelines. Construction schedules can shift through the construction season for various reasons such as weather, contractor availability, etc. In this case, the communication noted the roads would be completed by July; however the schedule is now August. The developers are providing the most-up-to-date construction updates on Facebook, and on their websites at:

- Hawksridge.ca
- Trumpeterbiglake.ca
- Starlingatbiglake.com

Wrap up

At the request of the audience, Councillor Andrew Knack concluded the meeting with an overview of what he heard as the key concerns, and the suggestion that a Community League structure may help identify and address these issues in the future. He offered to work with volunteers to help establish a league for the area.