Bearspaw Community Consultation on Bearspaw Lake Enhancement held March 6, 2007 at Southminster-Steinhauer United Church

Consultation Summary

Attendance: 43
Presenters: Russell Barth, Senior Engineer & Flood Prevention Project Leader for Ward 5, Drainage Services, City of Edmonton.
Bernie Amell, Environmental Consultant, Riparia.

Presentation

The consultation began with introductions and a review of the discussion held with Bearspaw residents who attended a consultation session in November 2006. At that time, two lake modifying concept designs were presented. Mr. Barth said suggestions made by residents in November influenced the final design concept now presented for the community's consideration.

The proposed design would see some changes to the outline of the lake but the surface area would remain the same. It would see a wetland added to the east end of lake along with footbridges. Other plans include construction of a surface swale in the recreation area northeast of the lake to channel more surface water to the lake.

The existing creek on the east end would be diverted to flow into the wetland. Modification to the creek will increase the water flow rate, decrease channel depth, add rocks, and add shade. This will help eliminate the growth of algae, which residents noted is a problem in the creek now.

The redeveloped lake would be 1.3 metres lower. This ensures existing drainage pipes going into the lake will no longer contain water during dry weather. The wetland provides more stormwater capacity during heavy rains. An animated video shown at the meeting demonstrated how waters would rise and fall during rainstorms. Mr. Barth noted the new design would keep surface floodwaters from reaching homes and water in underground pipes from quickly backing up into streets.

Mr. Amell said the proposed design does not include walking trails or enhanced naturalization such as bushes because residents indicated at a previous meeting that this was not desired. Similarly, grass slopes to the water's edge will remain as requested. Interpretative signage and benches, like the footbridges, are suggestions for site enhancements. Landscape features are still open for discussion and decision by the community. Overall, he said the proposed changes to the lake are expected to increase wildlife/waterfowl activity and improve the lake's general water quality.

Mr. Barth said tentative plans call for detailed design to be completed later this year with construction in 2008 or 2009.

Feedback and Input from Residents

Residents were generally in favour of the proposed concept. One person was concerned the concept was based on the input of only those residents who had attended previous meetings.

There was considerable debate regarding walking trails. While some people wanted the entire area around the lake left in grass, many favoured a flat, defined trail that would withstand pedestrian traffic and weather. Trails or walkways made of pavement, wood chips, shale or stepping stones were all suggested. Most favoured a trail – if developed - that was as natural as possible and ran along most if not all of the lakeshore. At a minimum, a trail between the bridges should be constructed said one participant.

Mr. Barth indicated that private property owners immediately north of lake would have to be consulted about any path because of the close proximity to their property lines. People at the consultation with homes next to the lake were not in favour of having a constructed trail behind their homes. Some participants mentioned they respect the decision of homeowners with properties bordering the lake not to have a defined trail behind their homes.

A concern was raised that any defined trail may attract undesirable activity, particularly at night. The same concern was raised about the wetland and planting of trees. Mr. Amill said lighting, trees with no undergrowth, cameras and other additions could minimize this risk.

Some individuals wondered about the maintenance of the trail and the footbridges. They were concerned that they may not be properly maintained by the City and become unsightly over time.

Changing the slope ratio from 5:1 (drop of one foot of height for every five vertical feet) from 7:1 concerned some individuals. This concern centred on safety. The risk of young children falling down and into the lake might increase, noted one person while another said walking might become more difficult, particularly for seniors.

There was a request that the current path of the creek east of the lake be kept as long as possible before turning into the wetland. This will allow adjacent homeowners to retain their current view of the creek

Residents favoured a quick work schedule, perhaps in the cold of winter, to keep the smell of disturbed bird feces to a minimum.

Next Steps

The concept design will be adjusted to accommodate residents' input. Detailed design is expected to be done before the end of 2007. The community will be briefed on the detailed design (includes landscape details) and adjusted based on any additional input. It will then go to tender, a contractor will be selected and construction will begin. Construction may start in 2008. Most importantly, the addition of any walking trails will be developed and finalized in consultation with residents at that time.

Any comments or questions regarding the Bearspaw Lake Enhancement or other flood prevention measures may be forwarded to Mr. Barth at 496-5552 or russell.barth@edmonton.ca

More information on the City of Edmonton's flood prevention program is available on Drainage Services' website at www.edmonton.ca/floodprevention.