

# WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

## Nordic Spa near Fort Edmonton, River Valley (LDA19-0283)

**PROJECT ADDRESS:** 7000-143 Street NW

- PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** This is a proposal for a Nordic Spa near Fort Edmonton, in the River Valley area.
- Two plan amendments to the Fort Edmonton Park Master Plan and Whitemud Park Integrated Area Concept Plan
  - Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study (with public engagement components)
  - Text Amendment to Appendix 1 of the (AN) River Valley Activity Node Zone, located at 7000-143 Street NW.
- The amendment proposes to:
1. Add Personal Service Shops
  2. Allow increased opportunities for and limited exemptions to Restaurants and Speciality Food Services Uses;

TYPE OF ENGAGEMENT	DATE	RESPONSES/ # OF ATTENDEES
Notification	Mailed August 1, 2019	Mailed to 61 recipients 1 email response received
Engagement Event	September 4, 2019	54 attended Next days 1 phone call and 2 emails

### ABOUT THIS REPORT

The information in this report includes responses to the application notification and feedback gathered during and after the September 4, 2019 engagement event. This report is shared with everyone who has emailed the file planner directly, and all attendees who provided their email address during the event on September 4, 2019. This summary will also be shared with the applicant and the Ward Councillor. It will also be included in the report provided to City Council if/when the proposed text amendment advances to a Public Hearing.

**Project Website:** [edmonton.ca/nordicspazoning](http://edmonton.ca/nordicspazoning)

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## MEETING FORMAT

The meeting format was a station-based event where attendees were able to browse the room at their leisure, view display boards with project information, and ask questions of City Staff, Fort Edmonton Management Company Staff, the applicant, and the architects. Comments were provided primarily by written submission and 13 written responses were received.

Participants were also invited to share their feedback on a “Graffiti wall” poster board by posting sticky notes on the board; seven sticky notes were posted.

The comments & questions we received are summarized by general themes below.

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## FEEDBACK SUMMARY

There were a mix of comments, both in support of, and against various aspects of the spa. Some expressed support for a spa, but not in the river valley. Other common concerns were with regard to:

- A need to preserve nature; and
  - concerns about parking, and a perceived lack thereof, both in the present and future.
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## WHAT WE HEARD

### Environmental impacts and nature preservation:

- Concerned about wind and sun shadow study and the impact of the development on adjacent properties;
- Strong concern that allowing this development would set a precedent that would lead to more development in the river valley, and make it easier for future development;
- Expressed desire to protect the land for nature preservation instead of development, and strong opposition expressed to the current location;
- Concern that the project is not appropriate in a ‘climate emergency’, especially regarding the amount of water required, and a desire to see renaturalization of the area in a flood plain;
- Concern that water may spill into the river in the event of a flood;
- Desire for Spa in river valley but at the same time “without destroying nature to add more parking lots;”
- Desire to see spa in a different location not in the river valley; and
- Concern that the river valley natural system should remain intact for generations to enjoy.

### **Building Construction, Layout and Design:**

- General praise for the design, favourable comparison to Agha Khan's Devonian Gardens
- Concern about the orientation of the pools toward the sun to maximize sunlight, especially in winter.
- Concern about building aesthetics. Felt that the design should be more rustic or be aligned with the historical design of Fort Edmonton.

### **Socio-economic Considerations**

- Concern the spa will not be accessible to the average citizen; that a spa is elitist;
- Concern customers will need a car to access spa, which will also contribute towards making the development accessible only to 'wealthy' people;
- Desire to ensure the city is not funding the development in any way (ie. developer funded);
- Concern the development is profit driven and not "ethical;"
- Fear that the city will be responsible for the site if the venture fails, as with the colosseum; concern that the private company assumes all risk if the venture fails;
- Concern that public land is being used for private benefit of 'exclusive group;'
- Perceived as inaccessible for seniors and young people (ie. price point); and
- Concern that spa would serve as competition for Fort Edmonton's customers

### **Process**

- Whitemud Park Integrated Concept Plan was amended to include Kihciy Askiy in 2009. Display boards should reflect that design/site plan;
- Dismay that the city would allow a spa to be deemed 'essential' under the NSRV Bylaw; and
- Request for refreshments for engagement events.

### **Parking and Traffic:**

- There is insufficient shared parking for Fort Edmonton, Nature Centre and Spa and the development will result in the removal of a public parking lot currently used by volunteers and for special events. (One citizen wrote on special event days there is already illegal parking occurring stretching up the hill); and
- Concern for increased traffic and speed.

### **General Comments**

- Expression that the project would "serve a need and fit in with the environment."

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## Graffiti Posterboard Summary (Sticky Notes)

This sticky wall summary contains all comments received verbatim. No personally identifiable information is included; minor edits may have made to attempt to reflect unclear handwriting. Otherwise, Comments are recorded as provided.

- The Nordic Spa sounds great in Edmonton! Especially that it will be open 365 days a year! A great idea to help Edmonton embrace it's winter. Looking forward to attending the spa.
- Nice concept, appreciate attention to parking and overall development in beautiful river valley. Positive aspect for tomorrow and life in a winter city.
- Dear nordic spa people/ Take sunset/angles of sunshine into consideration when orienting the buildings and the pools. Nice!
- We should host events to "parade" the River City!
- Why not offer a legacy of parkland? No river valley development in the parkland.
- Strongly oppose the development in the river valley.
- Who are preferred? Rich or poor (Access is universal)

## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

*Questions were taken from written submissions; may be edited for clarity.*

Where can I find a copy of the ESA (Level 1)?

- Answer If a member of the public would like access to a report from the library they can contact our office at 780-496-6770 or [GeoEnvInfo@edmonton.ca](mailto:GeoEnvInfo@edmonton.ca) for more information about the process. Alternatively they can complete the [Geo-Environmental Report Search Request Form](#) and submit it to [GeoEnvInfo@edmonton.ca](mailto:GeoEnvInfo@edmonton.ca) to access the report.

It is \$75 per cadastral block to search plus associated copy fees (Digital Copy \$25.00; Photocopy, 8.5x11 double sided \$1.00; Photocopy, 11x17 double sided \$1.50). I believe all payments need to be made in person or over the phone with Mastercard, VISA, American Express, and Debit as cash and cheques are not accepted. If they are looking for a specific report please include it in the comments portion of the form.

What is the status of the Parking Traffic Analysis? The project team for Kihciy Askiy should be consulted for impacts to Fox Drive, Whitemud Drive, Belgravia and Kihciy Askiy.

- There are a list of Administrative amendments that need to be consolidated which IIS is working on. In the essence of time, the amendments will be specifically for the application in front of council at this time so as not to complicate the application.

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Concerned about sound impacts on contemplative area adjacent to ETS transit stop and FEP parking lots- mitigation strategies?

- This question is answered by the Applicant as it relates the development permit stage (the next step. Please see the attachment).

How does the design incorporate the COE Design Accessibility Guide and new Accessibility Parking that goes before council this year?

- This level of design detail would be addressed at the Development Permit stage. Please see the attachment.

What precedent does this set for the River Valley? And more development on parkland?

- Development of a Nordic Spa at this location will not likely set a precedent that would allow more development on parkland. The subject site is one of four locations in the river valley that is already zoned as an “activity node” to allow development of this nature.

What is the 200,000/annual attendance based on?

- This question is best answered by the Proponent/Applicant.

Concerns about safety and vandalism with the design of the wall that wraps around the pools? Can people climb up on that?

- This level of detail will be addressed at the Building Permit stage (following the DP stage, if approved. See attachment).

Please explain the committed to Indigenous Ceremony -will it take place here?

- This question is best answered by the Proponent/Applicant (see attachment).

Will this be a LEED project?

- This question is best answered by the Proponent/Applicant (see attachment).

Designated parking requires parking lot management - has this been factored in?

- This is an operational question that would be addressed at the Development Permit stage.

Are the pools being designed to AHS standards for hot pools etc?

- Pools will be required to meet AHS standards. This level of detailed design will be addressed at the Development Permit and/or Building Permit stage.

Is it customary for this rather advanced degree of project to be proposed on speculation of getting the zoning approval? It feels like a 'done deal'.

- It is not unusual for large developers to have a concept design in mind when applying for the zoning stage approval. This is partly to help ensure they have chosen the right zone to allow the development they envision at a later stage. If this application does receive zoning approval the applicant would still need to obtain a Development Permit prior to proceeding with development.

Is it envisioned that if the rezoning is approved that City council would extend FEMco's jurisdiction over FEP to include the proposed development area, and that FEMco would then lease the land to the developer ?

- With regard to your question about the tenancy of the land, please find below a link to the June 10 Minutes of Executive Committee, where this matter was considered (Item 6.5):

<http://sirepub.edmonton.ca/sirepub/mtgviewer.aspx?meetid=2352&doctype=MINUTES>

About the over-flow parking area on which the Nordic Spa is to be built...is the intention to permanently abandon overflow parking at the site ? Or is there a background process to create overflow parking somewhere else ?

- The application is being reviewed by the City's Transportation Engineers and their input will inform the recommendation and will be included in the report to City Council.

My understanding is that the NSRVARP specifies that proposed developments be deemed "essential". I am curious about the formal mechanism to proceed with approval.

Does City council simply deem a given project "essential" ?

- With regard to your question about the NSRV ARP, it is correct that there is a process described by the Plan. The Plan requires the submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study for review and approval by City Council. It is our intention to send this report to the same City Council meeting as the report addressing the rezoning application. These reports are being prepared for council and are being tentatively targeted for the October 21 council date, pending the completion of our administrative review.

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If you have questions about this application please contact:

Kerry Girvan, Planner

780-496-6025

[kerry.girvan@edmonton.ca](mailto:kerry.girvan@edmonton.ca)

(Attachment- answers from applicant)

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**MEMORANDUM**

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**To:** Kerry Girvan, Planner, City of Edmonton

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**From:** Brian Murray, RPP, MCIP, Associate & Edmonton Lead

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**Date:** September 12, 2019

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**Subject:** Edmonton Nordic Spa Questions from Citizens for WWHR

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In response to your email dated Thursday, September 12, 2019 which outlined a number of questions regarding feedback from the Edmonton Nordic Spa Open House, please see below. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Question 1:**

Concerned about sound impacts on the contemplative area adjacent to ETS transit stop and FEP parking lots-mitigations strategies?

**Response 1:**

Sound generated outside of the spa will generally be mitigated by walls/structures that buffer the parking and ETS areas from inside of the facility and will be further reduced by the sound of running water generated through small water falls within the pools. Other opportunities exist such as generating white noise.

**Question 2:**

How does the design incorporate the COE Design Accessibility Guide and New Accessible Parking that goes before council this year?

**Answer 2:**

The development will conform to all City of Edmonton standards and Alberta Building Code requirements as outlined in approved plans and legislation. Should the City advance changes, the development will be required to meet those standards.

**Question 3:**

What is the 200,000/annual attendance based on?

**Answer 3:**

The Edmonton Nordic Spa is being developed by the same group who developed the Kananaskis Nordic Spa. The projection is based on actual attendance numbers on experience in Kananaskis, as well as, a study completed by Edmonton Tourism.

**Question 4:**

Concerns about safety and vandalism with the design of the wall that wraps around the pools?  
Can people climb up on that?

**Answer 4:**

All structures are designed to meet the requirements of the City of Edmonton and Alberta Building Code. While the wall structures and fencing are not intended to be climbable for safety reasons, not all possibilities can be accounted for. All development is subject to the review and approval by the City of Edmonton Safety Code Inspectors. Vandalism is always a concern, however with the spa operating 16 hours a day, 365 days a year, security within the area will be greatly improved.

**Question 5:**

Explain the commitment to Indigenous Ceremony – will it take place here?

**Answer 5:**

Working with the City of Edmonton's and Fort Edmonton Management Company's Indigenous Relations Offices the Edmonton Nordic Spa Development Team prepared and undertook a comprehensive community and Indigenous engagement program. That program included one-on-one meetings with the Confederacy of Treaty 6 and Metis Nation of Alberta, as well as several First Nation communities. As part of our engagement program, a variety of ceremonies are being offered, by request, which relate to each community's unique customs. Each ceremony will take place on the subject site and will take place prior to construction start. In addition to ceremony, site monitoring is being offered while excavation takes place to ensure artifacts are appropriately identified and managed, if found.

**Question 6:**

Will this be LEED project?

**Answer 6:**

While this project does not qualify for LEED, the project will meet the new national energy code, as well as, incorporate a series of technologies within the design and operations that will enable optimal energy usage, reduce consumption of resources and maximize the sustainability potential of the facility.

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