



# River Crossing **Heritage Interpretive Plan**

Edmonton

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Public Review of the Draft Heritage Interpretive Plan  
**What We Heard Report - April 2017**

# Public Review of the Draft Heritage Interpretive Plan **What We Heard Report**

This report summarizes the input we received on the draft Heritage Interpretive Plan during the public review period in March/April 2017.

Interested individuals were invited to read the full draft Heritage Interpretive Plan, executive summary and/or open house boards. Feedback was collected at an open house on April 3 as well as through an online form. In total, about 50 individuals provided feedback.

Some of the feedback we received is already reflected in the full draft, other comments provided helpful input for refining the Heritage Interpretive Plan and for thinking about River Crossing project more generally.

***The following report summarizes what we heard in terms of input on the draft.***

## Overall Impressions

Many people were pleased with the focus on the value of heritage in the River Crossing area and the positioning of heritage as a foundation for future change in the area; however, people also expressed concerns about future change. People were excited by the ideas for interpretation, the focus on creating meaningful experiences presented and were interested in their implementation. While there was positive feedback related to the objective of telling stories through art, infrastructure, spaces and choice of materials, a few participants said the plan focused too heavily on interpretation through physical works.

People appreciated that the plan aims to include different perspectives and recognizes Indigenous cultural heritage. Some told us though that it does not sufficiently represent the connection of Indigenous communities to the River Crossing area and focuses too heavily on Indigenous history, without emphasis on Indigenous people and culture today. We also heard that Francophone history should be more prominent and that use of the terms “Indigenous” and “non-Indigenous” in the plan is problematic because it does not adequately highlight different cultural identities.

Some participants said that the plan missed opportunities to highlight the natural history and value of the area.



## Interpretive Themes and Goals

We asked whether people thought the themes and goals presented in the draft plan were appropriate and many people told us they were. People liked the focus on First Nations and Métis cultures and the acknowledgement of the need for these cultures to tell their stories in their own voices. Individuals supported the goal of creating bridges to connect people across cultures.

Among those who suggested changes to the themes and goals, comments focused on:

- Ensuring the Rossdale Generating Station is not forgotten.
- The need to portray the contemporary Indigenous community in interpretation, and not limit themes to an interpretation of the historical community.
- The flats as an Indigenous gathering site.
- Elevating nature and the river as themes.
- Recognition of the connections of the Francophone community to the area and Edmonton and connections to the Métis community.

## Ideas for Interpretation

We asked for input related to other ideas for interpreting themes through programming and the built environment. People shared many ideas for ways to interpret themes and stories, such as:

- Preserving existing historical buildings and structures.
- Creating public amenities such as a public art park, stage, outdoor market, spray park, green space.
- Building something for native youth.
- Organizing an annual fair to celebrate heritage and key figures.
- Collaborating with First Nations to host powwows and celebrations.
- Organizing events to celebrate traditional games, arts, craft, transportation and tools.
- Making some interpretatin visible from roadways and at entry points to the area through the use of lighting, for example.
- Creating Indigenous cultural areas for ceremony, fires, gathering, tipi encampment.
- Renaming streets and the area using names, language, symbols and syllabics to reflect traditional meanings and Indigenous cultures.
- Recognizing historical figures important to First Nations, Métis and Francophone communities through parks, statues, events.
- Creating memorials.
- Planting edible plants and running plant tours.
- Offering tours of the Rossdale Generating Station.
- Conveying heritage information through augmented reality and mobile applications.
- Direct visitors to resources on topics.



Examples of ideas for interpreting stories and themes from the Public Open House.

## Considerations for Implementation

We invited participants to share with us any other information they felt was important. In response, we received advice on how to proceed with interpretation, including:

- Taking a minimal approach to heritage interpretation to avoid creating a heritage theme park and or putting up too many signs.
- Attempting to incorporate art into infrastructure.
- Placing less emphasis on historical interpretation through plaques.
- Carefully selecting public art that is meaningful, engaging, interactive, relatable.
- Focusing on highlighting the area's sense of place.
- Developing interpretation that inspires visitors to research history themselves.
- Valuing open areas and viewsapes.
- Creating spaces where people will want to congregate.
- Creating for native youth.
- Not telling stories on behalf of Indigenous Nations and communities, but inviting them to tell their own stories.
- Ensuring artists have a place in future interpretation.
- Allowing heritage to speak for itself.
- Considering the impacts of noise disturbance from other activities on visitor experience and interpretive goals.

## Additional Stories and Topics

We also heard stories. Several people brought up people, stories and topics that they felt should be understood further (see sidebar). Some of these topics relate directly to the River Crossing area and others are broader or relate to stories outside of the area. Participants shared resources about stories and topics they felt were important to understand or to make available to people who will be involved in developing content for interpretation. The stories and topics related to the distant and recent past and the present.

History of river valley parks. Geological history. Native fauna and flora. Indigenous use of the area. Pehonan. Gardeners and food production. Impacts to graves on the flats. Baseball. John Ducey. Marie-Anne Gaboury-Lagimodière and Louis Riel. Horse racing. History of Enoch Cree Nation. Development of Edmonton on Enoch lands. Alexis Morin. Chief Morin de Lapotac. Navy at the Ortona Armoury. Pure butter factory. Rosedale brewery. National Film Board and the arts. Differences between the Hudson's Bay and North West companies. Sun dances on the flats. Treaty 6 and the Medicine Chest. French-Canadian presence prior to Anthony Henday. Changes in demographics and immigration. Cultural and linguistic heritages of Métis communities. The Métis Nation of Alberta. Language rights. The West Rosedale Urban Design Plan and community involvement.

Additional stories and topics identified in feedback.

## Comments About Future Change

Individuals raised concerns and questions about the future of the River Crossing area and changes in the area. For example, people spoke of the importance of:

- Saving and repurposing the Rossdale Generating Station and old Walterdale Bridge, protecting the heritage character of the Ortona Armoury, and the future of Donald Ross School.
- Investing properly to create a lasting legacy based on heritage of all peoples.
- Protecting the area from redevelopment, protecting sacred sites, and focusing on ecological restoration balanced with accessibility.
- Making future development accessible and useful to Indigenous people and youth, specifically by creating ceremonial sites and providing spaces to gather and camp.
- Planning for people of all economic backgrounds in the redevelopment so that there is a mix of affordable housing options, businesses and recreation opportunities.
- Improving access to cemetery and providing places to rest and do ceremony nearby.
- Considering flood risks.
- Considering impacts of new development on existing Rossdale residents, in terms of housing values, parking and disturbance.
- Having heritage planners involved in redevelopment planning.
- Maintaining the condition of the multi-use trail.
- Considering potential impacts on local residents, such as parking.

## Feedback on Engagement

We asked people to evaluate the engagement surrounding the draft Heritage Interpretive Plan and heard a range of responses. People told us:

- They appreciated the format of the open house and the opportunity to speak directly with the project team.
- A presentation would have been helpful.
- Event should have been held in Rossdale.
- The venue of the open house presented some challenges, but wayfinding signs were clear.
- The review period seemed short.
- They were happy to be able to continue to be involved and looked forward to future involvement.
- They were disappointed not to have participated earlier.
- They wanted to know which Indigenous communities had been engaged.
- To remember to include local residents in future consultations to help mitigate negative impacts.

## Thank You

The project team wishes to thank everyone who has been involved to date and all those who contributed their feedback on the draft plan. This input will help us refine the plan.

## Next Steps

The final draft Heritage Interpretive Plan will be presented to Urban Planning Committee in the summer of 2017.