

Fort Edmonton Footbridge and Trails Design and Construction Project

Stakeholder and Public Consultation Process

Phase Two – Second of Two Open Houses

January 2008

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1. Introduction and Background

This report focuses primarily on the results of the second part of Phase Three, the second of the two open house events, and is intended to complement the information contained in the two previous Interim Reports. More detailed information on the first two phases and the first open house event of Phase Three are included in Interim Report #1 dated October 13, 2006 and Interim Report #2 dated June 1, 2007, respectively.

Gray Scott Consulting Group Inc. was retained by the Parks Planning Branch, City of Edmonton to provide public and individual stakeholder consultation services relating to the proposed footbridge across the North Saskatchewan River at Fort Edmonton Park, approximately two kilometers west of the Quesnell Bridge.

The objectives of the public involvement process for this project were:

- To identify and engage representatives of the key stakeholder individuals and groups in the areas that will be directly impacted by the footbridge and the extension of the river valley trails system.
- To identify key issues that the individuals and communities wish to see addressed in the design study.
- To communicate to the public the results of the study to date through a series of public meetings.

The consultation process was comprised of three phases:

Phase One

- A series of interviews with key stakeholder individuals and representatives of stakeholder groups

Phase Two

- Development and distribution of an informational brochure/flyer that includes a survey form for mail-out, for the City website and for distribution at stakeholder meetings

Phase Three

- Two well-advertised public meetings, one that introduced the initial draft of the proposed design and routing options and an additional meeting that presented final plans for the project.

2. Part 2-Phase 3: Second of Two Open House Events

The second of two planned open houses was held on November 21, 2007, again at the Westridge-Wolf Willow–Country Club Community League Hall. The purpose of this second open house was to update participants on the progress of the study and to present the recommended plan for the design and construction of the footbridge and paths.

The first of the two planned open houses was held on April 4, 2007 at the Westridge-Wolf Willow–Country Club Community League Hall. Details of the results of this event are contained in Interim Report #2.

Promotion of the second open house was undertaken in several ways.

Letters of invitation were distributed to all those people who had completed the contact information section of survey form that accompanied the brochure that was mailed to a selected list of households in the study area in Spring 2007. In addition the letter of invitation was mailed to all those that provided contact information at the April 2007 Open House.

Newspaper advertisements, community newsletter advertisements where possible, and six portable signs (three on the north side of the river and three on the south side) throughout the project area also promoted the event.

Newspaper advertisements were displayed in The Edmonton Sun, Edmonton Journal, and The Edmonton Examiner at least one week prior to the event.

The same advertisement was provided to community groups where possible such as the West Edmonton Community Council, Terwillegar Riverbend Advisory Council (TRAC) and the Riverbend Community League through their chairs, who were asked to or offered to e-mail the advertisement to their contact lists.

The following project team staff was at the open house to answer questions and provide information to participants:

Name	Representing
Gabriele Barry	City of Edmonton
Jim Black	City of Edmonton
Adam Laughlin	City of Edmonton
Carole Cej	City of Edmonton
Gary Kriviak	CH2M Hill
Nolan Domenico	CH2M Hill
Jennifer Chandler	CH2M Hill
Darryl Drover	CH2M Hill
Ted Muller	EDA Collaborative
Alan Parsons	Gray Scott Consulting Group Inc.
Lorna Stephen	Gray Scott Consulting Group Inc.

A series of project display boards, included as Appendix A to this report, was developed by CH2M Hill and displayed at the open house. As open house participants arrived, they were encouraged by the hosts to view the displays.

Resource people representing all project team member groups were available to provide clarification and answer questions at the displays. All project team members were identified with a nametag.

Formal presentations, using essentially the same material as contained on the display boards (in a PowerPoint format projected on a large screen), were given jointly at 5:00 PM and 7:00 PM by Gabriele Barry of Asset Management and Public Works Parks Planning, and Adam Laughlin, project manager for Transportation – Roadways Design

The twenty-minute presentation was followed by a facilitated and recorded question and answer session. A verbatim transcript of the question and answer session is available from the City of Edmonton upon request. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is included as Appendix B.

Participants were given an opportunity to record their comments on the Participant Survey Form that was handed out to all participants as they arrived at the open house (see Appendix C).

133 people attended the Open House and of those, 55 participants handed in survey forms. 10 comments were received by email after the Open House and are included under Question 7 or 8 in Appendix C.

A verbatim record of the responses from all 65 participant survey forms or comments received, arranged by topic, is included as Appendix D.

Common themes, in descending order of frequency arising from the open house were:

1. Bridge design comments that were predominantly supportive.
2. General comments expressing support for the project and congratulating the City of Edmonton and the project team for a job well done.
3. Encouragement to get the project underway and completed as soon as possible.
4. Parking issues, primarily from residents and users from the adjacent north side of the river who are concerned that the opening of the footbridge and trails will result in many footbridge and trail users and river valley users generally parking in their neighbourhoods.
5. Stairs and accessibility to the river valley. This theme was quite common in that many participants were concerned that the most convenient and effective way to access and egress the river valley and the Fort Edmonton Footbridge would be by stairs and not a trail with slopes or switchbacks. Other related comments suggest that participants are concerned about access but also concerned about the impact of trails as opposed to stairs due to environmental impacts and loss of natural areas.

During the Question and Answer portions of the Open House, which followed the project team presentations at 5:00 PM and 7:00 PM, the overwhelmingly common topics were parking issues for the residents of Wolf Willow and other neighbourhoods immediately adjacent to the access/egress points to the footbridge and the “the stairs versus the trails” issues.

The project spokespersons, Gabriele Barry and Adam Laughlin explained that there was no action plan at the current time to address perceived parking issues but if the problem did arise and become common for more than the first few months after the footbridge and trails opened, remedial action would be taken.

Regarding the issues related to the use of stairs rather than paths, the project team stated that they were standing by their recommendation due to the much higher costs of constructing paved or granular trails and the greater negative impact on the natural areas in the vicinity of the trails and bridge.

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