

Reporting Back


River Valley Stairs Rehabilitation: Emily Murphy Park Stairs

Project/Initiative Background

The River Valley Stairs Project involves the rehabilitation/construction of stairs at:

- **Emily Murphy Park** (116th Street and Saskatchewan Drive),
- **Highlands** (Ada Boulevard and 52nd Street),
- **Grandview Heights** (131st Street and Grandview Drive),
- **Jackson Heights/Minchau** (42nd Avenue and 46th Street) and,
- **Walterdale/Kinsmen Park/High Level Diner** (109th Street and 90th Avenue).

These locations are a component of a larger effort to rehabilitate river valley stairs and embankment paths at various locations throughout the City of Edmonton. In order to rehabilitate existing stairs, or build stairs where only paths exist in a manner that reflects the needs and desires of Edmontonians, the City is conducting public engagement and communication activities that inform Edmontonians, and, where appropriate, gather input and feedback about the intended projects.

<p>Name: Date: Location: Attendance:</p>	<p>River Valley Stairs Rehabilitation: Emily Murphy Park Stairs April 13, 2019. Pop-up table at top of the stairs at 116 Street and Saskatchewan Drive. A total of 79 people stopped by the table. 66% (52 people) were University area community residents. Slightly more than half (51%) have never used the stairs but many indicated they would if they were more usable. Twenty-two per cent used them 1-3 times per month, 10% once per week, 9% less than once per month and 8% almost daily.</p>
<p>Contact information</p>	<p>Carlos Lopez, Program Manager Building Great Neighbourhoods and Open Spaces Infrastructure Delivery, Integrated Infrastructure Services, City of Edmonton Carlos.lopez@edmonton.ca</p>
<p>Level of public engagement</p>	
<p>Description</p>	<p>A pop-up public engagement event was held to advise and educate local residents and stairs users about the pending construction of stairs to replace existing embankment trails and stairs that connect the top of the embankment at 116 Street & Saskatchewan Drive with the river valley trail at Emily Murphy Park.</p>

1. Executive Summary

The Emily Murphy Park trail system includes a series of stairs that facilitates the connection from Emily Murphy Park to Saskatchewan Drive. The current stairs do not meet City of Edmonton standards. There is noticeable ground erosion and a high drop off to the ground. The flights of stairs are not stable and can be easily shifted, while the granular paths connecting each flight of stairs need rehabilitation to improve safety for users. The lower stair connection does not link to an established trail but to a goat path (a path created as a consequence of erosion caused by human or animal traffic). This project is at the construction phase. A pop-up event was held April 13, 2019 to inform audiences of the stairs/trail design and construction plan.

Audiences

1. Stairs, parks and river valley users.
2. University area community residents.
3. Other Edmontonians who may use the stairs now or at some future point.

Key findings

The vast majority of participants (96%) were supportive of the Emily Murphy Park Stairs project as presented. Most of the comments and questions centred on construction details. There was good awareness that the existing stairs/trail needed to be redone and many commented that they may use the trail more (or for the first time) if it was in suitable condition for longer periods of time (i.e. not wet and muddy or snowbound/icy).

2. Engagement Techniques

A pop-up table was set up at the top of the stairs at at top of the stairs at 116 Street and Saskatchewan Drive from 10 am to 4 pm. Those who stopped at the table were briefed on the work to be done using a display board as a visual aid. Questions were answered or comments were noted. Their level of support for the project was also assessed.

3. What Was Said?

In addition to an indication of their support for the project, a total of 47 people provided a comment about the design plan or construction. Verbatim input included:

- Anything that improves access would be good.(15)
- The engineering is fine but people feel it is rickety.
- When will construction start? What will construction impacts be? (10 people)
- Good to think about mountain bikers when looking at rebuilding these stairs. At Granville for example there is signage saying no bikes on the trails along the Whitemud but I don't understand why. Was this City authorized?
- Rebuild it but keep it as it is with natural trails in between (4).
- Good project. I would probably use it more if it was in better condition (6)
- Don't ruin the mountain biking trails by leveling and gravelling.
- On Scona Road the sidewalk trail by the Oldtimer's Cabin is blocked because of heaving but bikes are going around it anyways. This should be looked at.
- Add lighting to make the trail safer.
- Add garbage cans to the trail heads.
- Take the opportunity during construction to clean up the brush in the river valley.
- The trails should be left natural. (2)
- Emily Murphy Park parking lot – don't change the rules. Let people park their and use the stairs to get to school or work.
- Make sure that maintenance is done regularly to keep the trail open all year round.
- Good idea! Now, can you 'brush-out' the area to decrease the fire risk at the same time? (very positive synergy here). The U of Alberta prof doing fire awareness is Colleen Cassidy St. Claire. Do contact her to coordinate. Thank you. P.S. consider lighting to the sides and top of the stairs and add panic boxes (emergency call boxes – 1 midway and one at the bottom) as you know women tend not to use this trail alone. Let's increase the opportunities.

4. What did we hear?

A. Stairs usage

The Emily Murphy Park Stairs will probably see more use after the project is complete. Many people commented that the current stairs and trail are not well-used because of safety concerns and often less than desirable trail conditions.

B. Construction details

There is a need to provide more information regarding stairs construction. Many of those who participated in the pop-up had questions about when the project would start and end, and how stairs and Emily Murphy Park users and neighbourhood residents would be impacted by construction.

C. Naturalization of trail connecting stairs

There is a desire among a few people to see the connecting trail between stairs remain as natural as possible, as a means to retain the natural beauty of the river valley.

5. How did citizen input affect the project/initiative with this engagement?

Input helped determine that the Emily Murphy Park Stairs construction plan was supported by the vast majority of people and affirmed that usage would likely increase after the project was completed. It also emphasized the need to provide more information to residents and stairs users about how construction will impact them.

6. What's next?

There will be no further engagement regarding this project. However, communications about construction timing and impacts will continue on an as needed basis until completion.