

Grandview Heights River Valley Stairs Rehabilitation

What We Heard

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River Valley Stairs Rehabilitation: Grandview Heights Stairs Design Plan

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.

Name Date Location Attendance	River Valley Stairs Rehabilitation: Grandview Heights Stairs May 16, 2019 Grandview Heights Community Centre (in collaboration with a Building Great Neighbourhoods event). 122 people attended the event. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Of the people asked what neighbourhood they were from, only one person designated as not being from the Grandview Heights neighbourhood. ● Of the people asked how often they use the stairs, only one person designated as never using the stairs. The use of the stairs is varied from daily to once per month. In general, the vast majority of this audience uses the stairs mainly for walking and leisure while a small minority designated as using the stairs for fitness. ● 100% of the people asked supported the reconstruction of the stairs.
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Level of public engagement	
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Description	A public engagement in-person event was held to get feedback on the concept design for the reconstruction of the stairs and inform people about the closure of the stairs during the 2020 construction season.
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1. Executive Summary

The established stairs between Whitemud Park and Grandview Heights have exceeded their lifecycle and do not meet the current City of Edmonton standards. The stairs are heavily used with a total of 254 stairs from top to bottom. This set of stairs is a very popular place for stair climbers and others who use them to access the River Valley Trail system and the Alfred

Savage Centre. The new stair design will need to accommodate this type of usage and accommodate the existing set of side stairs leading to the east towards the toboggan hill.

Design and construction objectives include:

- Replace stairs to meet current City of Edmonton standards.
- Improve safety for users.
- Design stairs with the recommended maximum number of steps between landings, with no more than two flights without a change of direction.
- Achieve a stair alignment that considers water runoff and erosion within the proximity of the stairs as well as beneath the stairs.
- Keeping a similar stair alignment.
- Tie into the existing granular trail at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Provide a defined granular pathway to connect the bottom of the staircase to the parking lot.

The new design standard for river valley stairs was discussed at the public engagement event.

Audiences

1. Stairs, parks and river valley users.
2. Grandview Heights neighbourhood citizens.
3. Exercise enthusiasts that regularly use the stairs.
4. Other Edmontonians who may use the stairs now or at some future point.

Key findings

The vast majority of participants were pleased to see that the existing stairs will be replaced and include more landings and wider stairs. There was one comment that did not agree with the increased number of landings incorporated into the new design.

2. Engagement Techniques

The public engagement event involved an in-person engagement with three display boards showing the design schematics and pictures of the existing stairs. The public engagement consultant, City of Edmonton project manager, and design consultant project manager invited to comment and input. Those stopping by for conversation provided verbal comments that were captured by the representatives.

3. What Was Said?

In addition to indicating their support for the project, there were more than 50 people who provided specific comments. Comments provided pertained to items within the scope of this project and some items that are not a part of this project.

Design feedback and requests

- Add more sitting areas if possible.
- The long flights of stairs currently are hard to manage and it is hard to get out of the way of bypassers.
- Wider landings would be great to get out of the way of bypassers.
- Can rails on the side be lower for safety reasons? Kids can slip through as they are now designed.
- Consider spacing of rail and provision of bottom rail (safety for children)
- Increase the size of lookout point (x2) (Currently out of project scope)
- The bottom of the stairs gets icy, a better run-off is required. (x2)
- Appreciate the stairs will be slightly wider due to the amount of traffic on the stairs and the need to get out of the way of bypassers.
- More mulch and gravel is appreciated.
- Agree with the grade staying the same.

- Check the grade of stairs.
- One citizen showed vehement disagreement with an increased number of landings. The citizen uses the stairs several times daily for fitness groups and does not agree with more landings as they will interrupt fitness regimens.

General

- Think it's great! (x3)
- More stairs in other locations in the neighbourhood would be great.
- Ask for a possible fee for fitness groups
- Need control of fitness groups as they are using the stairs for business and making money. Hours should be posted for fitness use (also to stop people parking at the top at 5:30 am and disturbing residents).
- Make sure there is no metal on the stairs.
- Can you push the construction to Sept-Oct so we can use the stairs in the summer? The fall sees less users. (x2)
- Traffic on the stairs is an issue due to fitness people.
- Install signage at the bottom and top asking fitness users to have courtesy for regular walkers.
- Consider the provision of additional signage around stairs etiquette. Concerns with conflict of users exercising and walking noted by many.
- Ask for an emergency communications mechanism at the top like at the bottom.
- Should be more visibility for safety purposes.
- Consider the provision of waste receptacles.
- OK with not providing bike access and bike ramps based on this part of the River Valley not permitting cyclists (x5).
- Toboggan hill once extended to the top of the hill and the area east and west of the stair was clear of trees.
- Comments on the informal trail/ goat track west of the stair, supportive of removing and restoring.

Parking

- People should be encouraged to park at the bottom, instead of the top.
- Parking at the top is a problem. Many comments wanting no parking at the top of the stairs (x2)

Maintenance

- Compliments to the City for placing sand on the stairs in winter (x2).
- Dead trees are taking out live trees in the forest close by. Ask for more tree clearing

Other trails, stairs, and parks

- The trail is in poor condition (out of project area).

4. What did we hear?

A. New stairs re-construction

People were all very much in favour of new stairs and appreciative of the work to be done.

B. Design

- Landings: The vast majority of citizens support the addition of more landings, consistent rise and runs, and more consistent flights.
- Wider stairs: The vast majority of citizens support wider stairs.
- Railings: Parents asked if the railings could be lower to increase safety for small children using the stairs.
- Bicycle access: A few people noted they were fine with not providing bike ramps on the stairs as bicycle access was not permitted down the hill.

C. Parking

Several citizens would like the City to address parking at the top for people accessing the stairs. They would like solutions put in place to encourage people to park at the bottom of the stairs.

D. Fitness Use vs. Leisure Use

The vast majority of the citizens use the stairs for leisure use. They expressed general concern about the traffic on the stairs due to the number of fitness users and appreciated the move to wider stairs and more landings. In general, citizens accept that the stairs are used regularly for fitness but want to feel safe and respected as leisure users.

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

Citizen input helped confirm that the design meets expectations and has strong support. It also provided an opportunity to educate participants about City design standards for River Valley stairs and inform participants about an upcoming stair closure.

6. What's next?

The next step is to inform stakeholders about the final design and when the construction is scheduled to take place.