

# Grandview Heights River Valley Stairs Rehabilitation

What We Heard  
October 2019

ADVISE

SHARE YOUR VOICE  
SHAPE OUR CITY



# 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** (116 Street and Saskatchewan Drive)
- **Highlands** (Ada Boulevard and 52 Street)
- **Grandview Heights** (131 Street and Grandview Drive)
- **Jackson Heights/Minchau** (42 Avenue and 46 Street)
- **Walterdale-High Level-Kinsmen Stairs** (109 Street and 90 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.

<b>Name</b> <b>Date</b> <b>Location</b> <b>Attendance</b>	<b>River Valley Stairs Rehabilitation: Grandview Heights Stairs Public Event</b> October 24, 2019 Alfred H. Savage Centre Approximately 35 people
<b>Contact information</b>	<b>Carlos Lopez</b> , Program Manager Building Great Neighbourhoods and Open Spaces Infrastructure Delivery, Integrated Infrastructure Services, City of Edmonton <a href="mailto:carlos.lopez@edmonton.ca">carlos.lopez@edmonton.ca</a>
<b>Level of public engagement</b>	
<b>Description</b>	A public engagement in-person event was held to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● gain feedback on two concept designs for the reconstruction of the stairs and,</li> <li>● inform participants about the closure of the stairs during the 2020 construction season.</li> </ul>
<b>1. Executive Summary</b>	
<p>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 H. 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.</p> <p>Design and construction objectives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Replace stairs to meet current City of Edmonton standards.</li> </ul>	

- 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 in to 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 event. Participants were asked to provide feedback on two concept designs that were on display. .

#### **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, be wider, have a larger/consistent rise between stairs, and have consistent treads throughout. There were two divergent views on design, based on whether the participant uses the stairs for exercise and fitness or casual and leisure use. The feedback from this engagement indicated that the majority of participants preferred the concept design with fewer landings.

## **2. Engagement Techniques**

The public engagement event involved a public in-person engagement communicating What Has Already Been Decided and asking for feedback on What Has Yet To Be Decided. Two concept designs were presented for participants to learn about and consider. City of Edmonton project leaders, design consultant representatives, and the public engagement consultant team were on hand to take feedback verbally, answer questions, receive written feedback, and ask people to place a star on their preferred design.

## **3. What Was Said?**

#### **Design preference**

- Most participants preferred Concept Design B (fewer landings) vs. Concept Design A (more landings), based on informal measurement at this event (via placement of a “star” by participants on their chosen option).
- More than 20 stars were placed on Concept Design B, while approximately 5 were placed on Concept Design A. Some people did not place a star or state a preference. (Some participants also used one or more stars informally, e.g., to add emphasis to their written feedback or highlight a phrase.)
- It should be noted that strict controls were not in place to control the use of stars as indicators at this event.

#### **Design feedback and requests**

- **General**
  - There were many appreciate comments on staging the engagement and inviting/engaging participants.
  - Prefer Option B over A, but the existing stairs are perfect; rebuild as is.(x2)
  - Keep them the same number of flights, steps and grade.
  - Please keep as close to the original stairs as possible.
  - Like Option A because it blends into the hillside more and is less obvious.
  - Like the pitch, etc. of existing stairs.
  - Prefer the same pitch and grade,

- **Landings**
  - More landings is more social; and good for walking with kids.
  - The landings are important for more senior walkers as rest areas. It is an access, not just a training area.
  - Polygon landing; rather than rectangular ... to accommodate turnarounds.
  - Like the current number of landings. Prefer fewer changes.
  - Prefer same number of landings.
  - For both options, can you sit on the landings? Is there a bench?
  - I would like to have landings (platforms) with benches, so when you sit down, your feet don't stick out into the central (walking) path.
  - I would like to see at least three platforms with benches; given the area demographics/aging population.
  
- **Width**
  - Wider would be great so more room for people.
  - Like the idea of wider stairs; makes it easier and safer for passing.
  - Wider steps like at Glenora.
  - Make stairs wider.
  
- **Rise**
  - Height of the rise should be less than that of Wolf Willow stairs.
  - Keep the rise at 6 inches; 7 is getting too steep
  - Rise of 6 – 7 inches.
  
- **Tread**
  - Eliminate wider-spaced stairs at bottom. Keep consistent.
  - Try to stay as close as you can with tread/run.
  
- **Bench**
  - Like to have benches along stairs.
  
- **Platforms**
  - I would like to see larger platforms at top and bottom, so there's room to do crossfit stretching/activities.
  - Longer benches at the top of the stairs.
  
- **Bikes and bike ramps**
  - It would be very nice to have a bike ramp (on the stairs) to connect east and west bike routes around Grandview as I have to frequently sling my bike over my shoulder, which is a hazard.
  - We need a bike ramp on the stairs to access our neighbourhood (Grandview) when we are going to/coming from the west end. There are no access routes for cyclists to get to the river valley bike paths or bike routes to Brookview or Whitemud Bridge.
  - Bike ramp needed to commute onto bike trails.
  - Need more signage where bikes are not allowed.
  
- **Lighting**
  - Lighting – Top, Bottom and Middle (x2) ... or every Landing.
  - Lights on side (solar) (x2)
  - Lighting along the stairs for the winter when it's dark after 4pm (x3)
  - Lights at the top and bottom
  - Solar lighting (x5)
  - Better lighting at the bottom.
  - Better lighting at the top.

- **Bottom and top start areas**

- Can you “shave down” the roots near top of stairs (tripping hazard) (x2)
- Need to keep the path at the top of the stairs maintained – it also gets icy and muddy.
- Top lookout area, for more users.
- Path from the bottom of the stairs to parking lot is an icy mess; seems to be an underground spring. A real hazard!
- Repair access at bottom; in winter it is a skating rink.
- Remove or cover white PVC pipe that is apparent at the bottom of the stairs.

- **Other**

- Need railing at bottom for stretching.
- Spread out the number of steps (not all sets of 15, then sets of 30). A variety of sets is suggested.
- Reflective strip on header.
- Many people use the stairs for a workout. Is it possible to keep the same or even higher incline, on at least part of the flight?
- Stair boards should have roughness to them, so they’re not too slippery.
- White line in middle.
- I like the idea of direction changes, so it’s not just a straight line up and down.
- Include a number on every tenth step. (This would be helpful when advising the City of maintenance required.)
- Number the stairs.

**Construction**

- Please use enviro-friendly materials for the stairs; no creosote wood preservative.

**Other trails, stairs, and parks**

- Don’t get rid of the “goat trail” on the west side of the stairs (running up beside the stairs on the other side of the toboggan run)
- Keep hiking trail on right side of stairs (x2)

**4. What did we hear?**

**A. New stairs re-construction**

No participants stated they were against re-construction of the stairs. The vast majority of participants shared their appreciation and/or passion for having the stairs available for them to use.

**B. Exercise and Fitness Use and. Casual Leisure Use Opposing Views**

The participants provided specific comments mainly relating to whether they used the stairs for exercise and fitness, or whether they used the stairs for casual and leisure use. The views are distinctly divergent as the two distinct groups have differing viewpoints on how the stairs should be designed based on the way they use the stairs. The exercise and fitness users prefer a set of stairs with a “higher “degree of difficulty”, fewer landings and steps, longer flights, and a specific rise between steps to accommodate the best possible workout. The casual and leisure users prefer a set of stairs that is easier to get up and down, more landings and stops, shorter flights, and a moderate rise (easy for most people to step up or down, including children and seniors).

**C. Design**

- **Width:** All citizens commenting supported wider stairs.
- **Rise:** All citizens that discussed rise agreed with a consistent rise.
- **Tread:** All citizens that discussed tread agreed with a consistent tread.
- **Landings:** Most participants in this engagement agree with less landings. (This data differs from previous engagements.)

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

Participant input confirmed that a compromise in a design that meets the needs of both the exercise/fitness user and the casual/leisure user must be accomplished to create a satisfactory result for both groups. This engagement 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 gather more participant input at a City of Edmonton Building Great Neighbourhoods in-person event on November 14, 2019 at the Grandview Heights Community Centre. This last input session will lead to the creation of a final design. The final design will be shared online and presented at a final in-person communication event before construction starts in 2020.