

Reporting Back

River Valley Stairs Rehabilitation: Walterdale-High Level-Kinsmen 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.

The Walterdale-High Level-Kinsmen stairs are adjacent to the High Level Bridge on 109 Street near the southwest entrance to the bridge. There are two sets of stairs in this area: an upper set and a lower set. The upper set has already been re-constructed. This engagement pertained to the lower set.

Name Date Location Attendance	River Valley Stairs Rehabilitation: Walterdale-High Level-Kinsmen Stairs April 13, 2019 Intersection of the two sets of stairs as described above. 110 people stopped by the table..
Contact information	Carlos Lopez , Program Manager Building Great Neighbourhoods and Open Spaces Infrastructure Delivery, Integrated Infrastructure Services, City of Edmonton Carlos.lopez@edmonton.ca
Level of public engagement	
Description	A public engagement pop-up was held to get feedback on the proposed design for the

re-construction of the stairs and inform people about the closure of the stairs either during the 2019 construction season or the 2020 construction season.

1. Executive Summary

The river valley stairs that connect the River Valley Park trail system to the 109th Street access point by the High Level Diner require replacement. These granular stairs currently do not meet the City of Edmonton standards. The current stairs are also difficult to maintain and do not have handrails creating a safety hazard for users.

Design and construction objectives include:

- Replace granular stairs with wooden stairs to meet the current City of Edmonton standards.
- May install benches (to be decided during concept planning).
- Improve safety for users.
- Include in the design the recommended maximum number of steps between landings, with no more than two flights without a change of direction.
- Tie into the existing multi-use asphalt trail at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Improve maintenance capabilities.
- Maintain the retention wall along the east side of the current stairs.
- Consider erosion from the west slope within proximity of the stairs and beneath the stairs in the design.

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

Audiences

1. Stairs, parks and river valley users.
2. University-area residents and residents that access this area from north of the river.
3. Exercise enthusiasts that regularly use the stairs either on foot or on bicycles.
4. Other Edmontonians who may use the stairs now or at some future point.

Key findings

All the participants were pleased to see that the existing stairs will be replaced with the new above-grade standard of stairs. There was only one major suggestion for a specific design improvement.

2. Engagement Techniques

The public engagement event involved a pop-up table with two display boards showing the design schematics and pictures of the existing stairs. The public engagement consultants invited comment and input. Those stopping by the pop-up provided verbal comments that were captured by the public engagement consultants.

3. What Was Said?

Among those who stopped by the pop-up event, the split was almost even as to the number of people from a university-area neighbourhood vs. a neighbourhood across the river or outside the university area. A total of 50 people provided a comment about the design plan. Verbatim input included:

Design request

- Need only one wide ramp for bikes, not two narrow ones.

General

- People are sensitive about their trails, so good for the COE.
- Keep up the good work! (3)
- Really happy with stairs system in the river valley. Really appreciate the stairs at Kinnard.

- I like the stairs, I use them alot.
- Fantastic trails and stairs system - we love it! (3)
- It's great! Much appreciated! (5)
- Really like the new stairs designs - very solid - use them alot. (6)
- Clear two meters on each sides of stairs for beauty.
- Oh good, not in great shape.

Maintenance

- Not enough maintenance - removing the gravel. (3)
- Better maintenance required in winter.
- Good improvement this winter with maintenance of trails.
- When you clean the stairs, clean them good. Clean them right off, not a half-effort.

Other trails, stairs, and parks

- From Kinsmen to Saskatchewan Drive there is a multi-use trail off of the LRT bridge. Too icy in winter.
- Clear the brush out way more and make it beautiful. Too much overgrowth.
- Ezio Faraone Park: more lighting required for safety, it's so busy! Need washroom and working water fountain. Used to be emergency phone there and it is gone, why? Fix path down. Count who uses what the most and fix those areas first.
- Great trail system.
- North of HUB Mall there are two sets of small stairs that lead to paths. Rough and muddy.

Safety

- I feel a bit vulnerable on the stairs.
- We saw someone fall on these very stairs. Person required EMS assistance. Glad they are being repaired. Snow and ice has nowhere to go.
- Stairs dangerous and slippery in winter. (4)
- This intersection is dimly lit, should have more light for safety.
- The river valley can be scary for women so I don't use these stairs.
- Safety issues with homeless people, around Rutherford House north.

Garbage

- More garbage cans. If there were more garbage cans, I would help pick up garbage more. (4)

Washrooms

- Require washrooms along the stretch up to Marchand Mansions.
- Need permanent washrooms. "Civilized society" would have washrooms as long stretches on the trails and especially seniors need facilities.

Other public engagements

- I live in Kinnard and the COE engagement team asked me about two proposals a few times and then never came back to tell me the results. Is it going ahead? Why not come back to my community and use the same method to communicate back to me?

Other

- What is with the smell along the trails at places? Smells like sewer.

4. What did we hear?

A. New stairs re-construction is much appreciated

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

B. Maintenance

Regular users would appreciate more maintenance of the stairs and paths, especially gravel and in winter.

C. Safety

People commented that stairs in general should be built and maintained to a safety standard considering the constant use.

D. Design suggestion

Only one wide ramp for bikes, not two narrow ones.

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

Citizen input helped confirm that the design meets expectations and had 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 when the construction will take place.