



# What We Heard Report

## Walterdale – High Level – Kinsmen Stairs Rehabilitation

Pop up information event  
July 20

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**SHAPE** OUR CITY

**Edmonton**

# River Valley Stairs Rehabilitation: Walterdale-High Level-Kinsmen Stairs Construction

## 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) and,
- **Walterdale-High Level-Kinsmen** (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 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 reconstructed. This public information session pertained to the lower set.

<b>Name</b>	<b>River Valley Stairs Rehabilitation: Walterdale-High Level-Kinsmen Stairs</b>
<b>Date</b>	July 20, 2019
<b>Location</b>	Intersection of the two sets of stairs as described above.
<b>Attendance</b>	159 people were conversed with.
<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>PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION</b>
<b>Description</b>	A public information session pop-up was held to inform citizens on the upcoming reconstruction of the stairs, including the closure of the stairs from after the August 2019 long weekend for up to six to eight weeks.

## 1. Executive Summary

The river valley stairs that connect the River Valley Park trail system to the 109 Street access point by the south end of the High Level Bridge 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.
- 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 shared-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 upcoming reconstruction for the river valley stairs was discussed at a public information session.

#### **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 who regularly use the stairs either on foot or on bicycles.
4. Commuters
5. Other Edmontonians who may use the stairs now or at some future point.

#### **Key findings**

Almost all of the participants were pleased to hear about the upcoming replacement of the stairs, making them safer with a new above-grade standard of stairs. There was only one major suggestion for a specific design improvement, mentioned by two separate citizens.

## **2. Engagement Techniques**

A public information session pop-up table with two display boards showing the design schematics and pictures of the existing stairs was held July 20, 2019. The public engagement consultants invited comment and input on the upcoming reconstruction. Citizens stopping by the pop-up provided verbal comments that were captured by the public engagement consultants.

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

#### **Which neighbourhood are you from?**

Among those who were conversed with at the pop-up event, there were more people from a neighbourhood across the river or outside the university area (74) vs. the number of people from a university-area neighbourhood (44). Several people just wanted to be casually informed about the upcoming reconstruction and did not provide any other data, including which neighbourhoods they were from (41).

#### **In the last 12 months, how often have you used the stairs?:**

Almost daily: 21  
 1-3 times per month: 34  
 Once per week: 22  
 Less than once per month: 14  
 Never: 26

#### **Do you support reconstruction of these stairs?:**

Yes: 104  
 \*No: 1 (see Design)

#### **Did you know the stairs were being reconstructed before you stopped by today?**

Yes: 7  
 No: 80

#### **If yes, how were you informed:**

Facebook: 3  
 Twitter: 1

Posters: 1  
Word-of-mouth (peers, friends, etc.): 2

*Verbatim input included:*

### **General**

“That’s great that you are letting people know.”  
“Thanks for letting me know.”  
“Much appreciated.”  
“Thanks for coming out and letting us know.”  
“That’s fantastic.”  
“Great to keep people involved – thank you.”  
“They are terrible (the stairs).”  
“Much appreciated these sessions.”  
“Thank you for doing this.”  
“Good idea.”  
“This is great. Make sure Garneau School knows as they take lots of kids through these trails.”

### **Design**

“Bike rails on new stairs are too narrow and close to rails – you can see on upper stairs that one rail has been replaced already due to scraping of pedals.” (x2)  
\*“I like the old stairs with no railing on the one side. Easy to use when taking a stroller with no rail on the one side.”

### **Maintenance**

“Keep making sure they are maintained and rebuilt. The valley is our ‘jewel.’”  
“Keep the trails and stairs up. We love them.”  
“Emily Murphy Park stairs have been closed for the winter for several years. Expect maintained all year as promised.”

### **Other**

“Trail maps are excellent.”  
“Disappointed with funicular in the river valley, not very used – very few people – too luxurious – silly waste of money.”  
“Do something about people living in the river valley.”  
“Build the gondola, it would be excellent for tourism, we don’t have enough special attractions for tourists.”

## **4. What did we hear?**

### **A. New stairs reconstruction is much appreciated**

Almost all people were all very much in favour of new stairs and appreciate all of the work being done to inform people and make the stairs safe. (Only one person preferred the old stairs.)

### **B. Maintenance**

Regular users expect that the stairs be maintained year-round.

### **C. Design suggestion**

The ramp for bikes should be set off further from the bottom railing, as bike pedals scrape up against the side railing with the current design.

### **D. Communications and promotion**

The City of Edmonton has employed various communications and promotional techniques to include and inform citizens in the rehabilitation of these stairs. The data indicates that the City needs to keep communicating and engaging with citizens as the vast majority of people participating at this session were unaware of the upcoming reconstruction.

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

Citizen participation confirmed that the sharing of information on upcoming construction projects that affect citizens has strong support. Citizen input also confirmed that they want a safe pathway system through the river valley, including stairs and other infrastructure. Any inconvenience with finding another route during construction was seen as minimal by all participants.

**6. What's next?**

The next step is to construct the new set of stairs and inform citizens when the construction is complete. Construction is anticipated to begin in August 2019 and will take approximately 6-8 weeks to complete.