

Grandview Heights River Valley Stairs Rehabilitation

What We Heard
September 2019

ADVISE

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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** (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.

<p>Name</p> <p>Date</p> <p>Location</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>Data</p>	<p>River Valley Stairs Rehabilitation: Grandview Heights Stairs Pop-up Public Event</p> <p>September 28, 2019</p> <p>Grandview Heights Stairs (bottom)</p> <p>Approximately 60 people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What neighbourhood are you from? Of the people asked: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grandview Heights: 6 ○ Other neighbourhoods: 43 <p><i>(This contrasts the participation at the May 16, 2019 in-person public engagement at the Grandview Heights Community Centre, where only one person out of 122 people identified as not being from the Grandview Heights neighbourhood.)</i></p> ● How often do you use the stairs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Almost daily: 2 ○ Three times per week: 14 ○ One to three times per month: 1 ○ Less than once per month: 10 ○ Never (or first time): 10 ● Do you use the stairs for exercise or leisure/casual use? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exercise: 26 ○ Leisure/casual use: 15 <p>It should be noted that eight of the casual users were from a preschool forestry group including adults and children. Also, of the people who chose not to stop at the booth, the majority were exercisers who did not want their routine interrupted.</p> <p><i>(This contrasts the data acquired at the May 16, 2019 in-person public engagement at the Grandview Heights Community Centre where the vast majority of this audience stated they used the stairs mainly for walking and leisure while a small minority designated as using the stairs for fitness).</i></p> ● Do you support reconstruction of these stairs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes: 42 ○ No: 2
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are you satisfied with the design you viewed and discussed today? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes: 30 ○ No: 0 ● Did you know the stairs were being reconstructed before you stopped by today? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes: 12 ○ No: 14 <p>If yes, how were you informed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Posters: 8 ● Website: 2 ● Word-of-mouth (peers, friends, etc.): 2
Contact information	<p>Carlos Lopez, Program Manager Building Great Neighbourhoods and Open Spaces Infrastructure Delivery, Integrated Infrastructure Services, City of Edmonton Carlos.lopez@edmonton.ca</p>
Level of public engagement	
Description	<p>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.</p>
1. Executive Summary	
<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"> ● 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. <p>The new design standard for river valley stairs was discussed at the public pop-up event.</p>	

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, be wider, have a larger rise between stairs, and have consistent treads throughout.

2. Engagement Techniques

The public engagement event involved a pop-up, in-person engagement with two display boards showing the design and pictures of the existing stairs. The public engagement consultant and assistant plus a City of Edmonton project coordinator were on hand to take feedback and answer questions. People stopping by for conversation provided verbal comments that were captured by the representatives. The representatives also handed out cards informing participants of a further in-person public engagement event to take place October 24, 2019 at the Alfred H. Savage Centre.

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

- **Width**
 - Wider makes sense or support wider. (x6)
 - Wider stairs make for easier passing.
- **Rise**
 - Please make the rise between stairs consistent.
- **Tread**
 - Eliminate wider-spaced stairs at bottom. Keep consistent.
- **Landings**
 - Same number as now please.
 - Include platforms along the route for those who want a rest and/or allow people to pass by easier.
 - Consider if any cross-training stations can be built into the design.
 - More landings is good.(x2)
- **Bench**
 - Can we have a bird feeding stand beside the stairs halfway up? So people can sit and watch the birds and enjoy the view from the bench?
 - I have never seen anyone using the bench halfway.
 - Push/bump out the benches so more room.
 - Install bench on landing after toboggan hill landing.
 - More benches, enclaves on landings.
- **Platforms**
 - Make top and bottom platforms sizeable enough to do stationary exercises without impeding traffic.
- **Bike ramps**
 - I have never seen cyclists here so no bike ramps is good.
 - Include side bicycle ramps.
- **Lighting**
 - Add solar lights so I can use in winter safely.
- **Bottom and top start areas**
 - Some issues with wetness at the bottom of the stairs. Especially in winter and spring.

- o Upgrade top and bottom walkway areas so not so muddy.
- o Request cool down area at the bottom of the stairs.
- **Other**
 - o Place to put water bottles at the bottom.
 - o Include changes of direction for stairs occasionally, with rest points at junctures.
 - o I have seen people with health issues also exercising here, maybe a portion less steep for these people?
 - o These stairs as-is work fine for me.
 - o I would like the goat trail rehabbed as well. *(It should be noted that several exercisers were seen using the goat trail for exercise as well.)*
 - o Bottom part of the stairs need to be built for kids using the toboggan area in the winter. To accommodate their sleds as well.
 - o Request counting mechanism on the bottom posts as people put little rocks there to count the number of climbs. The rocks can be dangerous.
 - o Don't overbuild, do work in an environmentally friendly way. Similar footprint.

General

- City is doing a great job in the river valley ... good job! Or similar. (x3)
- Really appreciate this engagement and informing people! Or Similar. (x6)
- The space requires a sitting/gathering area for boot camp groups and others. Maybe just east of the centre so not in toboggan area?
- Maybe a boot camp area near the City art (balls) on the freeway?
- I do not support reconstruction. They are not that old. Can't the City find other ways to waste money?
- What is the altitude rise from bottom to top?

Construction

- 10 to 12 weeks for construction is fine. (x3)
- There are lots of alternate places for people to climb stairs.
- There are splinters on the rails coming down. Can you apply something to the new wood to stop this?
- Please use environmentally friendly materials and use materials that protect integrity.

Parking

- Please ask the City for more parking in this area, you can see it is really full here today.
- I come to these stairs as there is adequate parking here, unlike other river valley stairs in the city. Really appreciated.

Maintenance

- Compliments to the City for maintaining the stairs better over the last one year to eighteen months. (x2)
- I used to have to screw down the stairs myself. Much better this year.

Other trails, stairs, and parks

- The Wolf Willow stairs in Riverbend area are too steep, would like to see them rehabbed as well.
- What if there was a fire in the river valley like the Fort McMurray fire? What's the plan? Need fire hydrants in the river valley. People need to be informed of the risks with smoking, etc. More vigilance and bylaw enforcement needed.

4. What did we hear?

A. New stairs re-construction

The vast majority of people are in favour of new stairs and are appreciative of the work to be done. (42 for, 2 against)

B. 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 agree with more landings.
- **Bench(es):** For those participants discussing a bench or benches, most would like to see a bench or benches on the stairs.

C. Fitness Use vs. Leisure Use

The vast majority of the participants at this event use the stairs for exercise. This contrasts the feedback gained at a previous public engagement at the Grandview Heights Community Centre. It is important to note that this public engagement was aimed at all users while the previous engagement was aimed at Grandview Heights residents. It should be noted that people come from all across the City to use these stairs, mainly for exercise, but some use the stairs for leisure/casual as well.

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 invite people to another in-person public engagement to gain further input on the design. This public engagement will be held on Thursday, October 24, 2019 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Alfred H. Savage Centre.