



Frequently Asked Questions Touch the Water Promenade Project

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SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

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PROJECT INFORMATION

Where is this project located?

The project is [located](#) along the northern bank of the North Saskatchewan River in Edmonton's central river valley, across two distinct but connected project areas:

- The **Rossdale Area** is proposed to extend from 94 Avenue NW to the Walterdale Bridge.
 - Redevelopment of the former Power Plant and Pumphouse 1 and 2 buildings are not included in this project. However, connections to these buildings are considered by this project, as envisioned by the River Crossing Business Plan.
- The **North Shore Area** will extend along the northern bank of the North Saskatchewan River from the Walterdale Bridge to Government House Park, west of Groat Road Bridge (alongside River Valley Road).

What has been funded for this project?

- The project is funded to complete Concept (high-level) design work, scheduled to be completed by Fall 2020.
- The Rossdale Area has funding to proceed to the next stage of design, to be completed by Spring 2021.
 - The North Shore Area is not currently funded to proceed past Concept Phase.
- Funding for construction is not yet approved.
- Brief descriptions of each project phase are illustrated in this [project roadmap](#).

Why is the City doing this project?

- We have heard from Edmontonians that access to the river valley system is very important, especially in the city centre.
- City Council has made improving access for all types of users (ie., pedestrians and cyclists) a high priority through a riverfront promenade and public space, due to increasing user demand over time.

- Currently, the project area is not accessible or welcoming for many types of users.
- Information gathered during previous engagement on the [Breathe Strategy](#), [Ribbon of Green Plan](#) and [River Crossing Business Plan](#), highlighted that Edmontonians are interested in exploring opportunities for a riverfront promenade.
- This project will work to improve the use and function of public spaces, while prioritizing the protection or restoration of important ecological areas.
- Although we could not have foreseen the effects of a global pandemic on public health when this project was initiated, we are now observing a significant increase in demand by citizens for access to public open space, including the river valley system, to support physical, social and mental well-being.
- The planning process for Touch the Water, including engagement, is essential to ensuring that we “get it right” and will give us a blueprint for future development that reflects a shared vision for the north shore of the river valley between Government House Park and Rosedale.

What happened with the previous Touch the Water and North Shore Promenade work?

- The North Shore Promenade project is being developed together with this Touch the Water Promenade project.
- From 2012-2017 there was some preliminary exploration of this project site, which included initial public and Indigenous engagement. The project at that time did not develop a comprehensive concept design.
- In 2018, a survey for the North Shore Promenade was completed to determine public interest in pursuing a promenade project. Results from that survey were provided to City Council, which approved project funding for Concept.
- Information and learnings have been incorporated into this project.

How much will this cost?

- Development of a high-level cost estimate (Class 4, -30%/+50% variance) for building the project will be completed for the preferred concept design, scheduled to be completed by Fall 2020.

- Given the large project area and uniqueness of the project, it is anticipated that the project could potentially be implemented by phases (eg., by area or by facility/specific components of the overall concept). Further funding for implementation will be required by a decision of the Mayor and Council.
- Once developed, the preferred design concept will serve as a long term plan that could be implemented over many years.
- Currently, \$3.1M is approved by Council in the 2019-22 Capital Budget for the planning and design of this project.

ENGAGEMENT

How are Indigenous Nations and Communities engaged?

- The City is committed to keeping First Nations and Métis communities informed and engaged on projects in the North Saskatchewan River Valley that may be of traditional cultural, historical and environmental interest.
- We know that this place is important to many Indigenous Nations and Communities, historically and culturally and it is important that these Nations and Communities are part of conversations about the past, present and future of Edmonton's river valley.
- The City invites 29 regional Indigenous Nations and Communities with historical, cultural and environmental interests. In October 2019, 21 Nations and Communities actively participated in Site Visits of core project locations. Site visits were undertaken with Elders, knowledge holders and technicians.
- Protocol was offered at the engagement sessions and the input provided has been shared back with regional Indigenous Nations and Communities for review. The feedback received throughout all Indigenous engagement sessions will be considered by the project team as the project moves forward.
- The City will be engaging Indigenous Nations and Communities to review the draft project vision and concept options and will continue to engage Nations and Communities as the project advances.
- Additionally, Indigenous peoples living within Edmonton are welcome to participate through stakeholder and public engagement activities.

What are the engagement opportunities?

- Three stages of public and stakeholder engagement are included during the concept and preliminary design phases of this project:
 - Stage 1 - Creating a Vision for the Project
 - Completed in Fall 2019
 - Stage 2 - Refining the Draft Project Vision, Principles, and Concept Options
 - Occurring in Fall 2020
 - Stage 3 - Revising the Preferred Design (Rosssdale Area Only)
 - Planned for mid-2021
- Additional project communication and notification will be publicly released if approval is received for the project to proceed to detailed design and construction.

How is engagement occurring during COVID-19?

- With in-person public events postponed and physical distancing a priority during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are committed to delivering project information and meaningful public engagement opportunities efficiently and safely.
- Public engagement opportunities are continuing through remote and online platforms through tools such as the Insight Community, online surveys, engaged.edmonton.ca and the [project webpage](#).
 - Indigenous and stakeholder engagement are proceeding through virtual conversations and meetings.

How are decisions made?

- The City of Edmonton values public engagement processes and activities that contribute to project decisions by providing City Council and Administration with the best possible information to support decision making. Public and Stakeholder Engagement is one factor in the decision making process (please see the diagram below). Other important factors that inform project-level recommendations include feedback received through engagement with regional Indigenous Nations and Communities, findings and

- recommendations from technical studies, direction from existing City policies and plans, budget considerations and current project area conditions.
- Key decisions regarding project funding and if the project will proceed to construction will be made by City Council.



ENVIRONMENTAL & TECHNICAL STUDIES

What type of technical studies and work are included in this project?

- This project includes a wide range of technical studies, expertise and considerations. These technical studies along with landscape architectural design and engagement data form the basis for decision making for the project.
- The technical studies and expertise include archaeology and paleontology, geotechnical and hydrological engineering, civil and structural engineering, fish and aquatic biology, environmental science and biology and cost estimating.

What environmental studies have been completed so far? What else will be completed?

- Environmental overviews have been completed by an environmental biologist and fisheries biologist subconsultants.

- The environmental overviews have completed and considered the review of existing reports, site data and previous studies.
- Detailed fisheries and aquatic habitat studies and surveys have been completed on-site, including river basin scanning and modelling.
- An existing biophysical study has been completed for the Rossdale Area and this was incorporated into the overview studies.
- On-site surveys of plant and wildlife species will be completed during the next project phase.
- Environmental Impact Assessments and Site Location Studies will be developed for Council approval, as per the [North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan](#).
- This project will adhere to all municipal, provincial and federal environmental regulations and will continually engage regulators to ensure requirements are met or exceeded.

- Environmental screening assessments have been completed for both project areas and a Risk Assessment and Preliminary Risk Management Plan were completed in 2018 for the waterfront portion of the Rossdale Area, which has been submitted to Alberta Environment and Parks for review.
 - The City is working with the Government of Alberta to ensure they are satisfied with the plan.

What are the environmental findings?

- No known rare plants or species have habitat within either project area.
 - In particular, the Rossdale Area provides little suitable wildlife or bird habitat and portions of the area are dominated by non-native vegetation.
 - The North Shore Area is home to more tree species and plant material that is native to the area, as well as higher quality riverbank vegetation.
- Existing infrastructure and development is the greatest pinch point for wildlife movement on the north side of the river in the project area.
- The river bank condition varies greatly along the project area.

- The bank is most disturbed due to historical development in Rossdale and near Groat Road Bridge.
- The bank has the highest quality habitat and density of vegetation south of Victoria Park.
- The island in the river south of Victoria Park has the highest valued vegetation and fish habitat in the project area.
- Opportunities for ecological restoration and increased native biodiversity exist in both project areas.
- Depending on the final design of the project, several potential adverse environmental impacts were preliminarily identified. This is largely because the proposed project represents the introduction of new permanent infrastructure along the 3km North Shore Area section of the river valley that is less developed compared to the Rossdale area downstream, particularly along the vegetated riverbank.

- The Rossdale Risk Assessment and Preliminary Risk Management Plan recommends that existing site contaminants be left in place and will be managed as required to protect the public and the river. The contaminants do not pose a risk to the public or workers in their current undisturbed state. This approach is considered the most environmentally sound solution since it minimizes potential disturbance to surrounding areas, including the river. The Risk Management Plan also stipulates remediation of one contaminated area to be retained by EPCOR which is outside the project area for Touch the Water. Administration will continue working with EPCOR to address remediation of the area identified.
 - A construction risk management plan will be developed and reviewed by Alberta Environment and Parks before any construction is approved for the Touch the Water Promenade project.

What geotechnical work has been completed to date?

- Preliminary geotechnical engineering assessments have been completed for both project areas, based on a review of existing and historical geotechnical and groundwater investigations and reports and current site conditions.

- On-site geotechnical drilling investigation and evaluation will be completed for the Rosedale Area in the next phase of the project, once a preferred proposed design has been determined.
- Based on the review of data and findings presented in the preliminary assessments, the proposed promenade development is considered geotechnically feasible provided that the geotechnical constraints and concerns are appropriately addressed throughout additional project design and construction phases.
 - These geotechnical constraints and concerns include bank slope stability and long-term lateral river erosion impacts and foundation engineering for existing and proposed structures. Other factors that require further geotechnical investigation include deep seated valley slope instability and existing fills and other unexpected obstructions arising from past land use activities.

HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Are historical and cultural resources being considered?

- Yes, historic and cultural resource management is included in this project, through archaeological and paleontological assessments of the project area.
- Historic and cultural resources are carefully protected and requests for specific site reports or information must be requested from the [Archaeological Survey of Alberta Culture, Multiculturalism, and Status of Women](#).
- The interpretation and celebration of historical and cultural resources through the project will be guided by the [River Crossing Heritage Interpretive Plan](#).
- Many cultural resource sites have been recorded within the North Saskatchewan River Valley in proximity to the project.
 - Five of these are located within the project area.
- There is potential for additional archaeological and palaeontological sites to be found in the project area, in addition to those known and previously recorded.

- However, the risk of impacting such sites is mixed throughout the project area as many portions of the area have been developed or altered over time. For example, the North Shore Area beneath the Alberta Legislature Grounds has been modified by in-filling for the previously proposed and unrealized extension of River Valley Road.
- Statements of Justification for archaeology and palaeontology were prepared by project consultants. These statements were submitted to Alberta Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. Historic Resources Act (HRA) clearance responses with conditions were issued in early 2020.
 - The conditions are based on the consultant's recommendations, which are informed by the Listing of Historical Resource Sites, the anticipated excavation work required and disturbance history of the project area, in combination with the results of previous cultural resource management work.
- A Historical Resources Impact Assessment (HRIA) is required for both the Rosedale Area and the North Shore Area.
 - This will include a combination of pre-construction assessment and monitoring during construction, to occur only if the project is approved and funded to proceed to this phase of work.
- Once design plans have been developed in detail, an additional clearance submission will be made in tandem with a permit application defining the locations of cultural resource assessment and monitoring.
- Approval from Alberta Culture will be required in order for this project to proceed.
- Access to additional archaeological information, including specific cultural resource site reports must be requested through the Historic Resource Management Branch at Alberta Culture.

What if human remains are found?

- There is the potential for human remains to be found through the completion of historic resource impact assessment work in advance of construction work. In this instance, the City's approved procedures regarding discovery of human remains shall be followed.

- Based on recent project experience, the City has developed procedures regarding the discovery of any human remains, including potential reinterment at the Traditional Burial Grounds/Fort Edmonton Cemetery in Rossdale (if established that remains and/or grave goods were originally buried in the identified area prior to circa 1890).
 - The procedures have been reviewed and approved by the Government of Alberta (Cemeteries - Service Alberta and Alberta Culture), Municipal Cemeteries - City of Edmonton, Edmonton Police Service and the City's Indigenous Relations Office.
 - This procedure is designed with the greatest respect for cultural, spiritual and personal safety in mind.
- The City intends to fully comply with all directions from the appropriate authorities to ensure that any human remains or historic resources discovered as part of this project are protected and preserved in an appropriate and meaningful way. All reasonable efforts will be made to preserve areas where human remains or historic resources are discovered, and all discoveries will be treated with respect.
- Disturbance and/or removal, including potential reburial, of the human remains or historic resource, once discovered, will only occur after these procedures have been followed and all directions from the appropriate authorities have been followed.
- Indigenous Nations and Communities will be notified and engaged should there be any discoveries.
- The City of Edmonton remains committed to meaningful and respectful engagement with Indigenous Nations and Communities and Edmontonians at large.

RELATED PROJECTS & CONSIDERATIONS

What is happening with the former Rossdale Power Plant and Pumphouses?

- Although not included in the scope of this project, the Touch the Water Promenade design will accommodate and consider the future re-purposing

- and re-use of the Rossdale Power Plant and Pumpouses, as envisioned in the [River Crossing Business Plan](#).
- The Rossdale Power Plant and Pumpouse #1 are designated Provincial Historic Resources and are legally protected from demolition or inappropriate alterations. These buildings are also listed on the Inventory of Historic Resources in Edmonton. Pumpouse #2 is not provincially designated, but is listed on the City's Inventory.
 - The [River Crossing Business Plan](#) includes recommendations for adaptive reuse of the Rossdale Power Plant, which is identified as a signature element for the neighbourhood and a regionally significant activity node within the central river valley. As part of the 2019 - 2022 capital budget, a Rossdale Power Plant Building Condition Assessment and Heritage Conservation Plan has been initiated. This project will prioritize and construct limited, strategic renovations necessary to conserve the heritage buildings and allow initial public uses to occur in the power plant.
 - The City will operate the power plant in a limited fashion until the facility can be leased to another entity, likely a non-profit corporation, for long-term reuse.

Does this project include renewing or changing River Valley Road?

- The renewal or reconstruction of River Valley Road is not included in the scope of this project.
 - This project focuses on the existing shared-use path south of River Valley Road and adjacent public space.
- River Valley Road has been identified by the City through infrastructure planning and assessment as requiring re-paving (grind and overlay) in the short term.
 - Transportation elements such as new or reconfigured pedestrian crossings, signalization, road shoulders and parking would be considered through future reconstruction work in the long term.

What is the Gondola Proposal?

- The idea of building a gondola across the river valley won the privately-initiated Edmonton Project in 2019 and now a privately-financed group called Prairie Sky Gondola is pursuing the gondola idea.
- Their concept is to build a gondola from Old Strathcona to Downtown with stops in Rosedale.
- Prairie Sky Gondola presented a Simplified Preliminary Economic and Technical Assessment (PETA) to the Urban Planning Committee in early 2020.
- City Council voted in favour of allowing Prairie Sky Gondola to complete additional work and bring a more thorough assessment to Council. This report is currently in-progress.
- Impacts or alignment with this project are still to be determined.

Is This Project Within the Flood Zone?

- Given the proximity to the River, this project is within the North Saskatchewan River's Flood Zone.
- Ice impacts, river erosion and flood resilience will be an important part of the design for this project.
- Flood mitigation measures and best practices will be incorporated into the infrastructure design and construction, where possible. The City will also continue to work closely with EPCOR to ensure that flood mitigation measures are appropriate.
- The Alberta Government is currently undertaking an updated analysis of flood risk. This project is going ahead with the best information available at this time.

What is the Commonwealth Walkway?

- Commonwealth Walkway is a project that was initiated by the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Lois Mitchell and a non for profit group from the UK called the Outdoor Trust. The mandate of the Outdoor Trust is to promote mental and physical health by creating walking and connection to the outdoor opportunities.

- Installation of medallions in the existing pathway, signage and an audio app., have been completed and became active in 2019.
- More information can be found [here](#).
- The Commonwealth Walkway medallions and signage will remain if this project receives funding and approval to proceed to construction in the future.