

September 20, 2024

To: City Council

From: Chris Hodgson, Branch Manager
Real Estate, FCS

Subject: **River Crossing Update & Next Steps**

This memo provides an update on the City's work to ensure Indigenous involvement in the implementation of River Crossing and is in follow-up to meetings held with members of Council between July-September 2024.

- The initiative was in response to a motion passed at the [August 15/17, 2022](#), City Council meeting (item 7.5).
- Administration provided an update at the June 23, 2023 Executive Committee, where [FCS01454](#) (item 7.2 Indigenous Memorandum of Understanding - Rosedale - Update) was received for information.
- Elevating Indigenous involvement in the implementation of River Crossing is a form of reconciliation.

A project team made up of the River Crossing Project Office in the Real Estate Branch and the Indigenous Relations Office in the Social Development Branch worked alongside pipikwan pēhtākwan - an Edmonton-based Indigenous-owned, led and majority-staffed public relations agency focused on elevating Indigenous voices, projects and issues - on this initiative. The process followed, along with a high level reflection of future actions, is reflected in Attachment 1.

Outcomes & Key Actions

Informed by engagement with the City's Memoranda partners and rights holders¹, a What We Heard Report and recommendations to be addressed was submitted to the City (private attachment 2).

In response, Administration has developed key actions that support the City's intent to elevate Indigenous voices and create a context for innovative approaches to projects in River Crossing. The overarching aim of the City's Indigenous involvement

¹ The City of Edmonton currently has a Memorandum of Cooperation and Dialogue with the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, a Memorandum of Shared Recognition and Cooperation with the Métis Nation of Alberta, and a Memorandum of Understanding with Enoch Cree Nation.

approach for River Crossing is to remove barriers, create opportunities for inclusion and enable continued growth and learning.

The key actions generally relate to four pillars that create opportunities for ongoing dialogue, perspective seeking, involvement and learning; see Attachment 3 for additional detail:

- Project Engagement, Dialogue and Elevation of Indigenous Voices
 - Key actions are based on a foundation of dialogue.
 - Robust engagement with Indigenous communities on River Crossing projects, reflection of Indigenous perspectives in reporting.
- Economic Reconciliation
 - Application of the Indigenous Procurement Framework and inclusive land sales processes.
 - In dialogue with community, explore opportunities for Indigenous communities to be directly involved in redevelopment.
- Communications
 - Tools will include a newsletter and enhancements to the River Crossing website.
 - Enhanced information sharing and communications between the City, its Indigenous Memoranda partners, and Nations and communities with connections to this land will support communities' ability to easily track work in River Crossing and have extended timelines for involvement.
- Historic reviews and monitoring
 - Archaeological investigation and Indigenous monitoring programs will be components of City projects in River Crossing.
 - Requirement for a Statement of Justification and clearance under the Historic Resources Act (HRA) continues.

These actions are in line with the City's commitments in the Indigenous Framework; and the City's Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Municipal Response Plan. Like these guiding documents, the key actions for River Crossing are intended to be adaptive, to be a next step for the City's relationships with Indigenous communities.

The River Crossing governance project has also driven reflection and consideration internal to the City from a systems perspective. City projects do not exist in isolation, and, as such, the River Crossing Project Office and project teams will work in an integrated manner across the organization with respect to the following initiatives:

- The City Plan
- District Planning

- the River Valley Planning Modernization project
- National Urban Park
- the Affordable Housing Strategy
- the District Energy Strategy

River Crossing implementation will unfold over the next 20+ years; as such, the City acknowledges that there will be continued evolution of its processes and consultation/engagement approaches as implementation progresses to ensure the City continues to meet the expectations of the community and best practice.

Next Steps

Informed by the key actions outlined, our next steps include:

- Initiating regular written updates to community
- Advance Interpretive Park design
- Initiate design of River Crossing Community Redevelopment
- Advance adaptive reuse of the Rosedale Power Plant

These steps allow for dialogue with community, building off engagement exercises advanced since the development of the Heritage Interpretive Plan (2015/16). These steps are also in alignment with Council approvals of the Plan, the Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) amendments, and funding.

While the River Crossing governance project has established key actions to elevate Indigenous voices and involvement in River Crossing, Administration must also begin to bring other voices back into the conversation. River Crossing is a meaningful city-building initiative for Edmonton, presenting opportunities for reconciliation, housing, arts, culture and connection with the river valley and the city's history. Success will require strong partnerships across sectors and communities.

As River Crossing advances, Administration will return to Council for approvals at the appropriate times; this will include approvals related to land development applications, partnership and land agreements and funding approvals.

If you have any questions, please contact the Real Estate Branch Manager's Office at chris.hodgson@edmonton.ca.



CH/am

c: Executive Leadership Team

Aileen Giesbrecht, City Clerk, Office of the City Clerk

Attachments:

1. [Ensuring Indigenous Involvement and Collaboration in River Crossing Implementation - Approaches and Considerations; Council Update Summer 2024](#)
2. **In-private Attachment:** [River Crossing: Indigenous Engagement Report](#)
3. [River Crossing Indigenous Involvement Approach: Key Actions](#)

An aerial photograph of a wide river flowing through a city. The sun is setting on the left side of the frame, casting a warm orange glow across the sky and reflecting on the water. A large, arched bridge spans the river in the middle ground. In the background, a dense urban skyline with various skyscrapers is visible under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The foreground shows lush green trees along the riverbanks.

Ensuring Indigenous Involvement and Collaboration in River Crossing Implementation

Approaches and Considerations

Council Update: Summer 2024

River Crossing Development Concept

Ortona Armoury
arts & community hub

Community Redevelopment

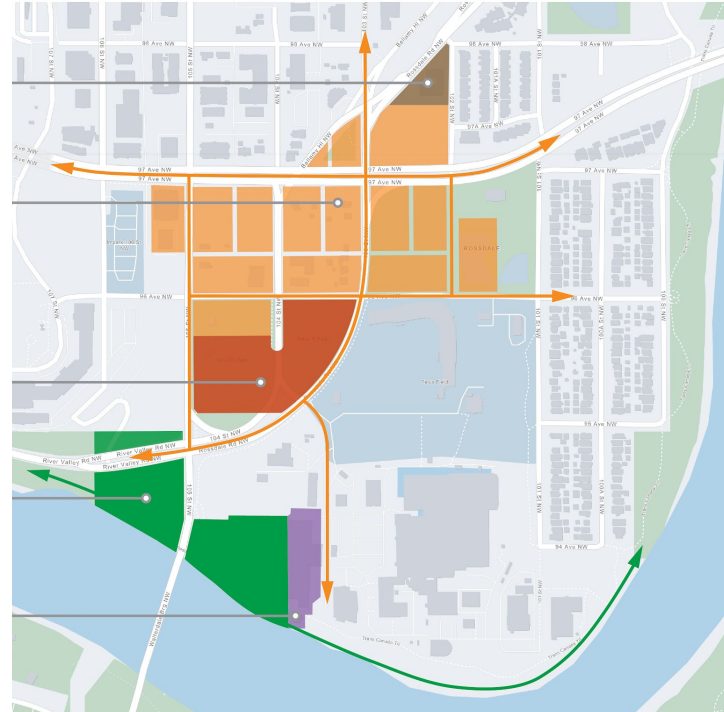
~2500 residential units (16% affordable housing),
transportation network (enables active modes and unlocks
development), right sized servicing and district energy
potential, commercial and economic opportunities

Interpretive Park

new river valley park that reflects the history of the land,
tells stories through Indigenous voices and perspectives and
provides opportunity for gathering and ceremony

Rossdale Power Plant & Touch the Water

unique public and cultural spaces that connect people to the
river valley and the history of the area; economic and
partnership opportunities and gathering spaces



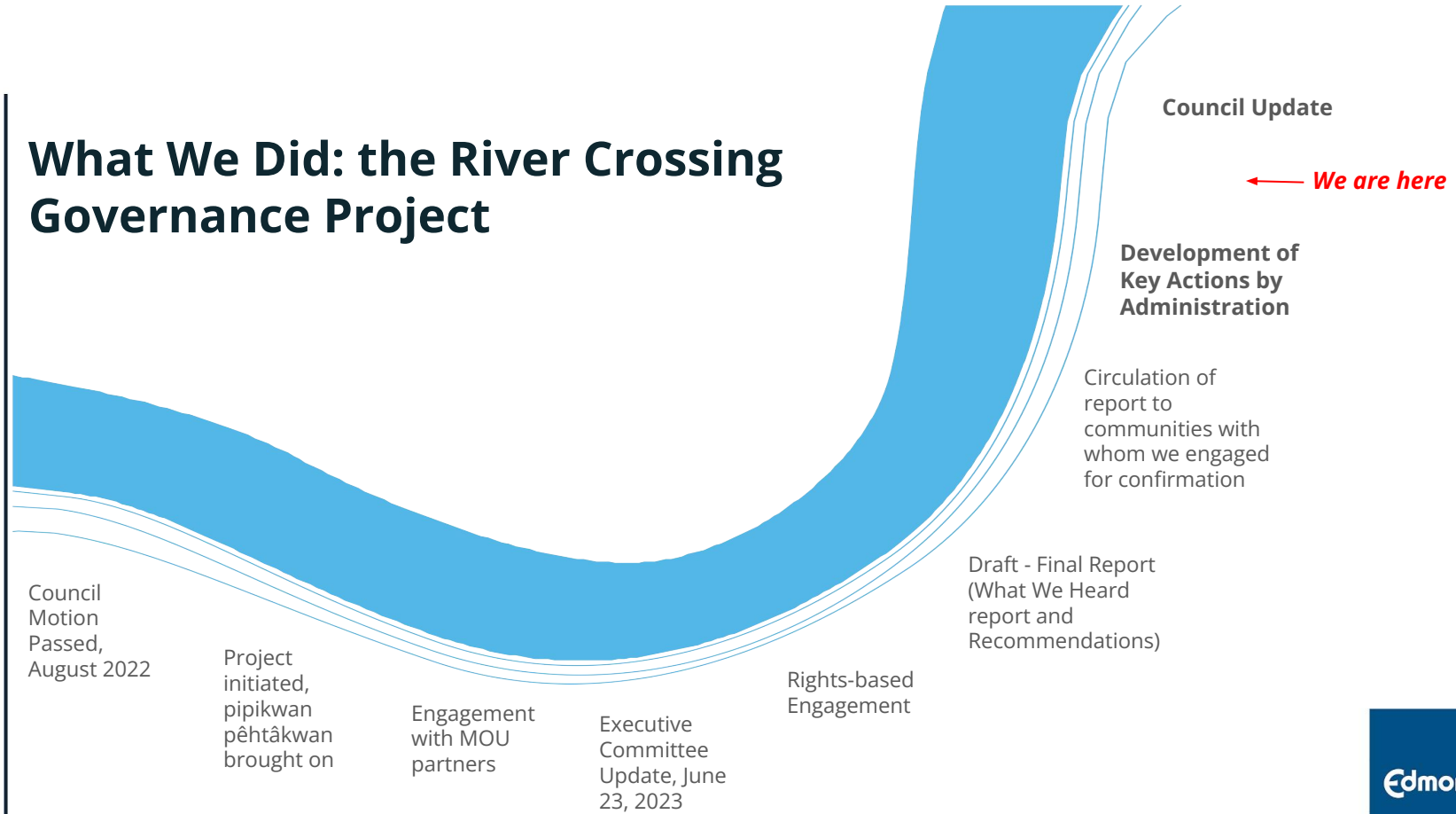
The Motion

Passed at the August 16, 2022 City Council Meeting in response to FCS01252: Prairie Sky Gondola Land Agreements

That Administration provide a report to Committee:

- 1. Outlining a potential governance structure that empowers Indigenous Memorandum of Understanding partners and communities with historical and cultural connections to Rossdale to provide direct input on the implementation of the River Crossing Business plan, Touch the Water and future developments on the Rossdale flats location.*
- 2. Summarizing the City of Edmonton's current approach to private development and land use on locations of special cultural, spiritual or historical significance.*

What We Did: the River Crossing Governance Project

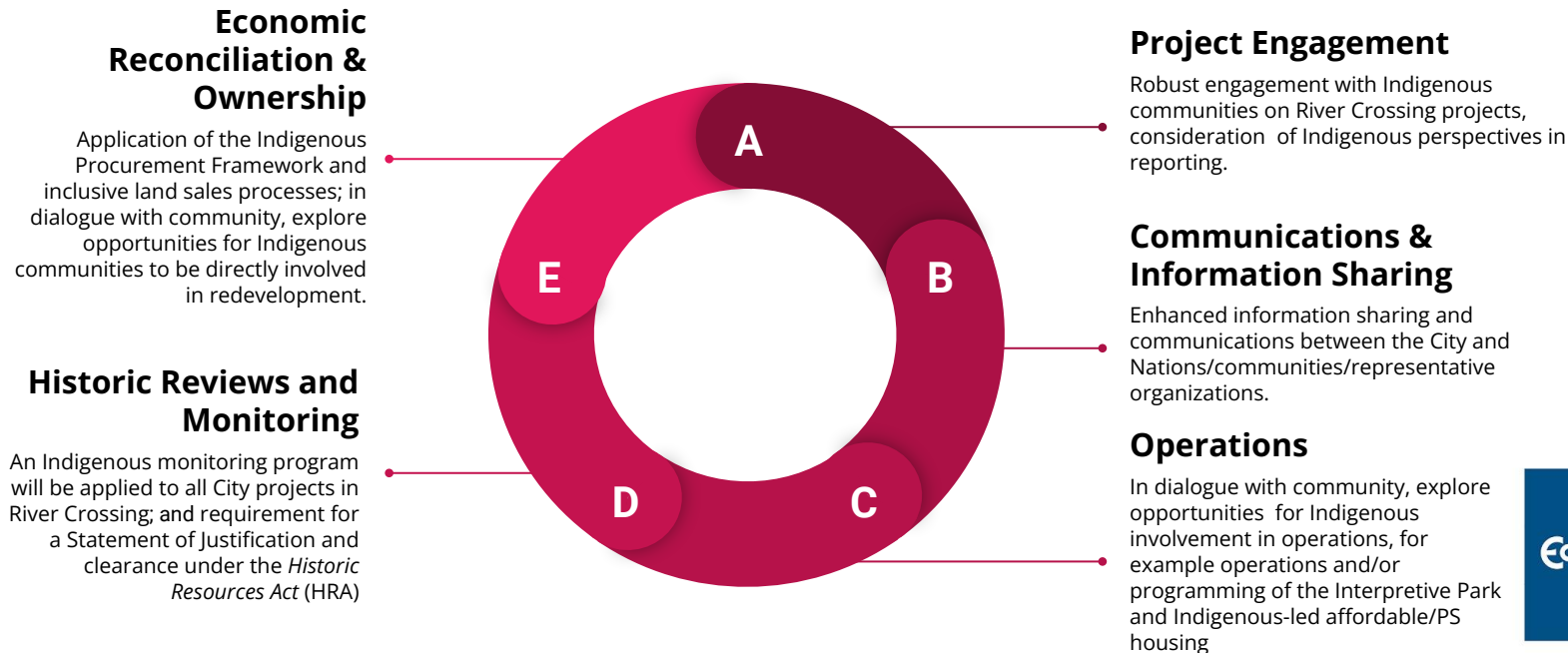


Some of What we Heard

- Communities feel disconnected from project work; more transparency and clarity of steps is needed.
- Interest in being involved in the implementation from an economic perspective.
 - Nations and communities shared differing priorities, approaches and levels of interest in economic involvement.
- Interest in being involved in the implementation of River Crossing, including:
 - providing input in the use of the land; and
 - creating opportunities for history and storytelling, ceremony and gathering on the land.
- The City needs to reduce displacement of people from the land.

The Concept: River Crossing Indigenous Involvement Approach

Inclusion of Indigenous peoples in every aspect of River Crossing is a priority for the City, which requires a holistic approach that drives adjustments over time. Reflected here are key areas of focus.



Where We Will Go Next: River Crossing Implementation





The heart of our city, connecting our city's history with its future, River Crossing will be a hub of culture and ceremony, living, recreation and learning.

River Crossing Indigenous Involvement Approach: Key Actions

Actions taken in River Crossing will be guided by the City’s Indigenous Framework and the City’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission Municipal Response Plan.

Theme	Key Action	Externalities & Dependencies
Ceremony	• The City will enable opportunities for ceremony in the Ross Flats as appropriate and as guided by our partners and community members. Indigenous community members will take the lead; the City will learn directly from Indigenous community members. • Support may include scheduling and coordination activities.	
Engagement & Dialogue	Going forward, River Crossing will include interconnected and mutually supportive streams of dialogue with Indigenous communities (also see the communication section below). Project Based Engagement: • Project based engagement will include: ◦ Public engagement guided by the Public Engagement Framework ◦ Rights-based and urban Indigenous engagement guided by the Indigenous Framework and the Indigenous Relations Office • Enhanced connection between engagement streams will be established internally to enable elevation of Indigenous voices in engagement processes, and respect for community capacity. • Corporate initiative underway to refine reporting approaches to better reflect how engagement informed outcomes will also be reflected in River Crossing reporting. Regulatory Engagement: • Projects in River Crossing will continue to advance through the City’s typical regulatory processes as required, including the following processes. These processes include opportunities for public involvement including notification and public hearing: ◦ Rezonings ◦ Subdivisions	Other streams of dialogue and learnings that River Crossing will be included in and inform: River Valley Planning Modernization; National Urban Park Partners Table (as appropriate) River Crossing will align with the Indigenous evaluation system (currently under development) as appropriate.

	○ Road Closures ○ Consideration of the River Valley Bylaw	
Funding to Support Involvement and Participation	● The City provides honorariums to enable participation of community members' ability in engagement (in person, virtual and in-community). This will continue. ● The City, led by the Indigenous Relations Office, is supporting capacity building in community through the Municipal Liaison Program.	
Acknowledge and Support Houselessness & Affordable Housing	● River Crossing will be a diverse and inclusive community, guided by Policy C601: Affordable Housing Investment Guidelines and a target of 16% affordable housing in the community. ● The City will work toward a diverse and inclusive community, including through the following actions as/where appropriate: ○ River Crossing includes a dedicated affordable housing development site; ○ The River Crossing Project Office works alongside Affordable Housing to seek to ensure opportunities to incorporate a variety of housing types across the district as it is built out. This will continue as development progresses, including through leveraging the Affordable Housing Investment Program; ○ River Crossing will align with the Affordable Housing Strategy and Indigenous Housing Strategy including in relation to consideration of affordable and culturally appropriate housing options as a part of the community; and ○ River Crossing will take guidance from other internal approaches to affordable housing development, including initiatives undertaken by the Affordable Housing Task Force. ● In addition, approaches to reflect historical uses of this land into the future will be considered as work in River Crossing moves forward, with an openness to exploring creative and innovative ways of connecting communities with the land.	
Ensure Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and	● Seek guidance from the City's Indigenous Framework Elder's Committee as appropriate on components of River Crossing.	

Youth Can Participate	• Regular review of community organizations and groups to ensure that the City is reaching and empowering as many individuals as possible in information sharing and engagement opportunities, this includes Indigenous students and youth, and women.	
Economic Reconciliation	• Indigenous and inclusive procurement approaches will be applied to River Crossing projects (Indigenous Procurement Framework). This will include application of an Indigenous set aside process for all applicable projects in River Crossing. • Application of inclusive approaches in land sales processes and agreements. • Explore potential for Community Benefit Agreements or similar for development within River Crossing. • Enhance opportunities for economic involvement in River Crossing through information sharing and notification of upcoming projects and events, the intention being to create a context of opportunity, openness and collaboration.	
Make Transformative Change Within the City of Edmonton	• The key actions reflected in this document will support continued growth and evolution in the way the City works with Indigenous partners. Building off and in alignment with the Indigenous Framework, the City's Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Municipal Response Plan, and the City's Memoranda partnerships, this approach seeks to create a context where we can create stronger partnerships and advance work together. • Administration's intention with these actions is to reflect the City's commitment to deliberately and considerately take steps forward with Indigenous partners alongside us. • The River Crossing Project Office and project teams working within River Crossing will work in an integrated manner with other teams across the organization including but not limited to the following initiatives: the River Valley Planning Modernization project, National Urban Park, the Affordable Housing Strategy, and District Planning. • The City's work in River Crossing will be informed by broader efforts related to Truth and Reconciliation and the 94 Calls to Action including but not limited to: the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Indigenous Framework.	
Review Existing Work for River	• As is referenced below in the context of the archaeological record, the City acknowledges gaps in its understanding, and that steps forward need to be informed by Indigenous voices. Key actions included here seek to create opportunities for learning and elevation of Indigenous voices.	

Crossing to Date	● It is essential that as projects advance, they are reflective of the perspectives of communities with connections to this land. Efforts will be made to ensure that stories that are told are through the voices of community, as guided by community. ● The City will provide additional detail on past project planning exercises and how perspectives shared are reflected in documentation. ● Next steps are an opportunity to continue our learning, continue to evolve our practices to ensure the City is following or exceeding best practice in Indigenous involvement and engagement.	
Communication	● Enhanced communication tools will be deployed to support ongoing awareness building and transparent information sharing. This will better support communities' ability to easily track work in River Crossing, and have extended timelines for involvement. This will include: ○ River Crossing newsletter providing updates on ongoing work/projects and notification of upcoming work will be initiated. This will be shared with Nations, communities, and representative organizations with connections to the Ross Flats. This will be ramped up to a quarterly newsletter if/as required as work in the district progresses. ○ River Crossing webpage that better supports information sharing, transparency, and provides opportunities for collaboration and self-identification. ○ Note the connection to key actions for engagement and dialogue above.	
Land Stewardship, Monitoring, and Ecological Preservation	● The City acknowledges that the archaeological record for River Crossing/the Ross Flats is not complete, and may be reflective of colonial worldviews. The City will ensure Nations have access to the archaeological record as it exists today, and as it evolves over the coming years. ● It is understood that going forward, work needs to be well informed. To support this, the City will ensure inclusion of an archaeologist on City projects advancing in River Crossing, both to advise on appropriate pre-construction investigation and to be on site as construction advances. ○ This will enable continued evolution of our shared understanding of the archaeological landscape in the district. ○ River Crossing projects will require a Statement of Justification and clearance under the <i>Historic Resources Act</i> (HRA) (HRA clearance under the provincial Online Permitting and Clearance (OPaC) is required). ■ The City acknowledges that community has communicated concerns regarding the HRA.	Regulatory Impacts: the River Valley Planning Modernization project (underway) will inform the regulatory expectations as it relates to processes for advancement of projects within the River Valley Should there be an opportunity to explore amendments to the

	○ Note the connection to key actions for economic reconciliation above. ● The City will ensure appropriate resources are available for Indigenous monitors for all City projects in River Crossing. ● These steps will support the establishment of trust and, coupled with an appropriate monitoring program, can contribute to confidence that any land disturbance in this area will be culturally and respectfully approached.	<i>Historic Resources Act</i> with Alberta Arts, Culture and Status of Women and community, the City would participate.
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