

# Touch the Water and North Shore Promenades Project

## Design Progress Update

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### Recommendation

That the June 28, 2021, Integrated Infrastructure Services report IIS00590, be received for information.

### Executive Summary

This report provides an update for the Touch the Water and North Shore Promenades project, the current stage of design and corresponding next steps.

Located in central Edmonton along four kilometres of the north bank of the North Saskatchewan River, this project presents a new, innovative riverfront public space. The project will improve access, mobility and safety while connecting Edmontonians and visitors with the river through the central river valley. A concept design has been developed that provides new connections to communities and to nature, while celebrating the area's deep layered Indigenous, industrial and natural history. The project will also provide opportunities for riverfront gathering and recreation not found elsewhere in the region.

Council approved the development phases for this project in the current budget cycle, which are anticipated to be complete by the end of 2021.

### Report

The North Saskatchewan River valley is a regional destination, and a place where people have been drawn to and gathered at since time immemorial. With this understanding, Administration has advanced the development of the Touch the Water and North Shore Promenades project, which envisions four kilometres of central riverfront along the north bank of the North Saskatchewan River as a signature public outdoor space to be enjoyed by residents of all ages and all abilities.

The project stretches across two distinct but connected project areas. The Touch the Water Promenade project area is adjacent to the Rossdale neighbourhood, from 94 Avenue NW to the Walterdale Bridge. The North Shore Promenade continues upstream from the Walterdale Bridge along River Valley Road to Government House Park. Attachment 1 provides an illustration of the project areas.

Indigenous and public engagement feedback and site analysis confirmed conflicts between users walking, cycling, using other mobility modes and associated safety concerns that accompany the increased use of the area. Therefore, the project explores new ways to accommodate high volumes of diverse users through this constrained area, with a focus on safety, accessibility, connectivity and quality user experiences. It also provides new and unique opportunities for people to gather at the river, to learn about the multilayered history of the area, to connect with nature, and to restore and maintain ecological connections.

City Council approved the development of both the Touch the Water and North Shore Promenades as part of the 2019-2022 Capital Budget to Checkpoint 3 and Checkpoint 2, respectively, in alignment with the Project Development and Delivery Model (PDDM) and the Capital Governance Policy C591. Although funded separately, Administration has completed concept planning and design for the two project areas together following Urban Planning Committee's February 20, 2018 motion to align and integrate project design and engagement between the North Shore and Touch the Water areas (*Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development report CR\_3970, North Shore West of the Walterdale Bridge and the Touch the Water Promenade - Options for Improvement*).

### **Project Development and Design Update**

Administration has advanced project development through the concept phase by completing a number of engagement sessions with regional Indigenous Nations and Communities, the public and stakeholders. The concept design process incorporates the feedback and emphasizes the need to improve user safety, experience, comfort and access for people travelling to and through the central river valley. The project has also conducted technical and cultural resource studies, a review of relevant City policies and plans (including ConnectEdmonton, The City Plan and Breathe among others), and an analysis of current site conditions including recent usage data of the existing shared use pathway. In addition, the concept design considers alignment with adjacent projects such as: the Rossdale Power Plant Rehabilitation; EPCOR Rossdale Water Treatment Plant Flood Protection; Prairie Sky Gondola; River Crossing interpretive park, High Level Bridge Renewal and the potential High Level Line initiative.

A final concept design was developed based on inputs gathered through the concept phase. The concept design proposes restoring or maintaining existing ecological connections by reducing the amount of hardscaping and the proposed infrastructure footprint compared to the draft concept options. The ecological improvements proposed include creek restoration and new fish habitat, improved stormwater management and additional planting of native species. Nature-based play and natural education opportunities have also been identified to connect more people to nature. The concept design also envisions a multi-use public space with a variety of different

spaces for recreation, relaxation, heritage interpretation and gathering. Access to the Rossdale Power Plant and Pumphouses is integrated into the design to support the future redevelopment and reuse of these historic landmarks.

The concept design will act as a blueprint for future development in the project area that reflects a shared vision for the central river valley, and will serve as a long-term plan that could be implemented in phases over time.

### **Next Steps**

The Touch the Water Promenade (Rossdale area) is scheduled for completion to Checkpoint 3 by the end of 2021. This will include the next stage of Indigenous and public engagement to help shape the next phase of design through the summer. After the feedback is received and reviewed, the Project Team will proceed with the preliminary design. The North Shore Promenade project concluded at the concept design (Checkpoint 2) phase.

Administration has developed the project with the premise that it could be delivered through multiple phases over many years as funding and project prioritization allows. Through the preliminary design stage of development, the staging and prioritization of the scope for Touch the Water Promenade will be further refined.

### **Budget/Financial**

Council has approved \$3.1 million in funding for project development across two standalone profiles in the 2015-2018 Capital Budget. This budget includes funding for the North Shore Promenade project area to advance design through the concept phase to Checkpoint 2. The Touch the Water Promenade project area is funded to complete the next phase of design to Checkpoint 3 within the current budget cycle. The next phases in the project will be evaluated for potential inclusion in the 2023-2026 Capital Budget.

### **Public Engagement**

Administration has completed Indigenous, public and stakeholder engagement over two stages in 2019 and 2020. Stage one engagement occurred in October and November 2019, with the goal of understanding users' priorities and creating a vision and design principles to guide the development of concept design options. Stage two engagement was held in November 2020 to review the draft project vision and concept options in order to refine the concept design. Elders, Community members, Knowledge Keepers and Technicians from 24 Indigenous Nations and Communities participated over two stages. Approximately 5,465 Edmontonians have participated through the project's public engagement process, and over 40 stakeholders from 35 organizations have been engaged. What We Heard Reports summarizing engagement feedback received are available at [edmonton.ca/touchthewater](https://edmonton.ca/touchthewater).

### GBA+ Principles and Outcomes

The principles and intent of Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) have been applied to the concept design of the Touch the Water and North Shore Promenades project. Incorporating diverse perspectives from varied lived experiences and intersectional identities, through both the project team and engagement, has been integral to project planning and design. The relevant input received focused on improving accessibility both to the water and to the river valley overall for many different abilities and types of people (e.g. people with strollers and young children, persons with disabilities, Elders), ensuring safety is prioritized, and creating culturally respectful and welcoming, comfortable spaces.

### Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

| <b>Corporate Outcome: The City of Edmonton has sustainable and accessible infrastructure.</b>   |  |               |                             |
|---|--|---------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Outcome</b>  | <b>Measure</b>   | <b>Result</b> | <b>Target</b>               |
| The City of Edmonton has sustainable and accessible infrastructure.                             | Edmontonians' Assessment: Access to Amenities and Services that Improve Quality of Life (% of survey respondents who agree/strongly agree) | 68% (2017)    | 70% (2018)                  |
| <b>Corporate Outcome: Edmontonians use facilities and services that promote healthy living.</b> |  |               |                             |
| <b>Outcome</b>  | <b>Measure</b>   | <b>Result</b> | <b>Target</b>               |
| Edmontonians use facilities and services that promote healthy living.                           | City Park Usage (percent of survey respondents who report using a City park in the past 12 months)   | 89% (2017)    | 83% (2018)                  |
| <b>Corporate Outcome: Edmonton is an environmentally sustainable and resilient city.</b>        |  |               |                             |
| <b>Outcome</b>  | <b>Measure</b>   | <b>Result</b> | <b>Target</b>               |
| Edmonton is an environmentally sustainable and resilient city.                                  | Ecological Footprint (Resource consumption with land area [hectares] divided by population)  | 7.76 (2017)   | Maintain or decrease (2018) |
| <b>Corporate Outcome: Edmonton is attractive and compact.</b>                                   |  |               |                             |
| <b>Outcome</b>  | <b>Measure</b>   | <b>Result</b> | <b>Target</b>               |
| Edmonton is attractive and compact.   | Edmontonians' Assessment: Well-Designed Attractive City (percent of survey respondents who agree/strongly agree)                           | 53% (2017)    | 55% (2018)                  |

### **Attachments**

1. Project Location Diagram
2. Final Concept Design Overview

### **Others Reviewing this Report**

- G. Cebryk, Deputy City Manager, City Operations
- M. Persson, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- S. McCabe, Deputy City Manager, Urban Planning and Economy
- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services
- K. Fallis-Howell, Acting City Solicitor