

All-Season Adventure/Activity Park Concept Plan

Recommendation

That the August 25, 2021, Citizen Services report CR_7837rev be received for information.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the December 2, 2020, Community and Public Services Committee meeting the following motion was passed:

That the December 2, 2020, Citizen Services Report CR_7837 be referred back to Administration to conduct some preliminary engagement as part of the previous Committee direction, specifically with the paddle associations, and return with a high level update about possible next steps prior to the Fall 2021 Supplemental Capital Budget Adjustment.

Executive Summary

In March 2021, Administration conducted stakeholder engagement sessions with specific paddle association representatives and vendors. The goal of the engagement was to understand the paddle community's long-term vision for river-based programs and how the concept of an all-season adventure/activity centre would support the vision. Several themes were identified on how to support successful paddling programs including storage opportunities, transport options for equipment and users, and access to diverse water sources. Feedback regarding the development and operation of an all-season adventure/activity centre was not consistent. Stakeholders provided feedback on the benefits and challenges of such a facility, but there did not appear to be resounding support or desire from the paddle community for an adventure/activity centre.

Future work on an adventure/activity centre concept would require substantial resources and funding. It would also require alignment with the City's identified priorities and plans such as the River Valley Planning Modernization Project which is currently underway. At this time, no partners with the financial capacity and resources have come forward to advance the idea to concept. Administration will continue to support the paddle community if they choose to move the idea forward utilizing the Community Led Construction Project process.

Report

Currently there are 11 river access points throughout Edmonton which consist of either a hand launch, dock and or vehicular launch to provide access to the river for the general public, non-profit organizations, commercial operators, and emergency responders.

In 2019, a community group proposed the concept of an all-season adventure/activity centre, originating from the desire to increase public accessibility to paddling/rowing activities by developing a site that could support year-round outdoor recreation, focusing on on-river paddling opportunities. The group envisioned this site to be located at Rafter's Landing in Henrietta Muir Edwards Park to align with the new LRT station near Muttart Conservatory.

Another driver of the proponent's idea of an all-season adventure/activity centre was the reduction of paddling storage facilities that have increased within the river valley in recent years. In 2020, the City and the Edmonton Paddling Centres Association identified options for the expansion of existing storage at Buena Vista Park and Rundle Park to meet the paddle community's storage requirements. Both locations now have new storage units to support programming needs and were operational as of June 2021.

Administration continues to support community and commercial paddling groups who are interested in developing new programs and offerings for their members and the public.

Stakeholder Engagement

Administration conducted engagement with paddling stakeholders through facilitated workshops in March 2021 to gauge support and identify a program for an adventure/activity centre (Attachment 1). Ten non-profit paddling organizations and six commercial paddling operators were invited to participate and, of those, eight non-profit organizations and three commercial operators participated in the workshops.

To help understand the current state of paddling in Edmonton and the need for an adventure/activity centre, Administration asked stakeholders to share information on current programs including successes and challenges and what additional support might be required to grow and sustain these programs. They were also invited to provide feedback specifically on the idea of an all-season adventure/activity centre.

Several themes were heard on how to support successful paddling programs including storage opportunities, transport options for equipment and users, and access to diverse water sources. Stakeholders also emphasized the need to increase communications to members and the public to promote programming and training opportunities as well as water education and safety.

Feedback regarding the development and operation of an all-season adventure/activity centre was varied. Stakeholders identified that some members would support such a facility; however, stakeholders could not reach consensus on the need for a stand-alone facility. Stakeholders discussed a variety of paddling needs, including alternatives to a stand-alone facility that included smaller, seasonal nodes in a variety of activity-appropriate locations, expanding existing storage facilities, investigating shuttle opportunities, identifying new or modifying current water sources, and increasing access to existing facilities/amenities.

Policy and Strategic Alignment

Several City of Edmonton policies and plans provide guidance to recreational uses and activities including:

- Breathe: Edmonton's Green Network Strategy (2017)
- Ribbon of Green SW & NE (2020)
- Ribbon of Green Concept Plan (1990) and Master Plan (1992)
- North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (1985)
- The City Plan (2020)
- Approach to Community and Recreation Facility Planning Strategy (2018)

Administration is currently developing the River Valley Planning Modernization Project to provide further guidance to appropriate recreational uses and development within Edmonton's river valley. This work includes renewed strategic planning for the river valley and the processes and tools for evaluating and regulating proposed development. It includes two work streams:

- completion of the Ribbon of Green plan, which will provide long-term planning and policy guidance for the river valley and ravine system to ensure it is protected, accessible and celebrated
- renewal of the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, which provides a governance, regulatory, and decision-making framework for the river valley and ravine system

At this time, the proposed all-season adventure/activity centre is not strongly aligned with the City's current policies and plans. A future business case for such a facility, if the proponent chooses to proceed, should include connection to the City's identified priorities and alignment with the City plans.

Budget/Financial Implications

Currently there are no City resources or budget allocated to advance this idea. If the proponent proceeds with development of a business case for the adventure/activity centre concept, Administration would support the group through the Community Led Construction Projects process. Significant work remains to be completed and possible next steps that would inform a business case include:

- Engagement with other all-season, outdoor recreation stakeholders on interest and alignment with programming that a centre would support.

- Public engagement to find the level of support from the general public.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome: Edmontonians use facilities and services that promote healthy living.			
Outcomes	Measures	Results	Targets
Boat launch, dock and storage facilities are accessible and appropriate for community needs	Overall facility customer satisfaction (according to facility customer satisfaction survey)	2020: 85 percent	Ongoing: 90 percent
Facilities are designed consistent with City priorities for accessibility and sustainability	Recreation facility and attractions attendance	2020: 3,226,075 2019: 9,169,310	Ongoing: 9,000,000

Attachments

1. What We Heard Report - Paddle Association Stakeholder Engagement

Others Reviewing this Report

- A. Laughlin, Deputy City Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services
- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- G. Cebryk, Deputy City Manager, City Operations
- D. Croft, Acting Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- K. Fallis-Howell, Acting City Solicitor