

Kihciy Askiy Sacred Earth Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study

Recommendation

That Executive Committee recommend to City Council:

1. That the Kihciy Askiy Environmental Impact Assessment and the Kihciy Askiy Site Location Study, as outlined in Attachments 1 and 2 of the January 29, 2018, Integrated Infrastructure Services report CR_5342, be approved.
2. That the location of Kihciy Askiy within the North Saskatchewan River Valley, as outlined in Attachment 1 of the January 29, 2018, Integrated Infrastructure Services report CR_5342, be deemed essential and approved.

Executive Summary

To advance the Kihciy Askiy Sacred Earth Project, Administration seeks City Council's approval of an Environmental Impact Assessment and a Site Location Study in accordance with the requirements of the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan Bylaw No. 7188, and that City Council deem essential the location of the Kihciy Askiy project as identified within the Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study.

Report

The Kihciy Askiy Sacred Earth (Fox Farms) project began in 2008 with a proposal submitted to the City from the Indigenous Elders Cultural Resource Circle Society, which has since merged with Native Counselling Services of Alberta, for a project at the farm site within Whitemud Park. This resulted in an amendment to the *Whitemud Park Integrated Plan* in 2009 to include the development of a cultural site at the old Fox Farms site for Indigenous cultural activities. The project continued into the strategy phase until 2014 at which point the project was highlighted as one of the Mayor's commitments to the Year of Reconciliation after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Alberta national event was hosted in Edmonton.

The Kihciy Askiy project is divided into three phases. Council has approved funding for phase one which includes the design and construction of a storage building, washrooms, change rooms, permanent fire pit, sweat lodge area and renaturalization of the site. Phases two and three comprising of a herbal garden, trail connections,

signage and the Earth Lodge are unfunded. Funding for phase one was approved in the 2015-2018 Capital Budget for \$2 million (profile 15-21-3400).

In 2016, the functional program was refined with input from an Elders Council formed by the Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA). Members of the Council are Elders from various surrounding Treaty 6 First Nations. A Spring Supplemental Capital Budget adjustment request to increase the project budget by an additional \$550,000 was approved by City Council. This additional funding is dedicated for road upgrades required for first responder vehicle access to the site.

In 2017, phase one of preliminary design was completed along with a Traffic Impact Assessment, Historical Resources Impact Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, and Site Location Study. Validation of the phase one schematic design was completed by an external cost consultant and in the Fall Supplemental Capital Budget Adjustment the shortfall of \$1.26 million was approved, bringing the total project budget up to \$3.81 million. Native Counselling Services of Alberta approached City Council during fall 2017 budget deliberations and requested an additional \$700,000 for phase one enhancements. These enhancements included the addition of a gathering space within the washroom/change room building. This request was conditionally approved pending a report back on the potential of partner funding in spring 2018. Including this conditionally approved request, the project budget is now \$4.51 million.

The Environmental Impact Assessment examined impacts to the valued ecosystem components in the vicinity of the proposed cultural site. The report outlines an extensive list of mitigation measures for potential impacts related to the following areas: geotechnical and soils, hydrology and surface water quality, vegetation, wildlife, habitat connectivity, residential and recreational land use, traffic and parking, and historic resources. There are numerous mitigation strategies identified for each area. Examples of specific mitigation measures that will be implemented for each impact category include:

- Following City of Edmonton Erosion and Sedimentation Control Guidelines;
- Development of an ECO Plan and implementing best environmental construction practices;
- Reclaiming temporarily disturbed areas with native seed mix;
- Replacing lost and damaged trees pursuant to the Corporate Tree Management Policy;
- Marking project clearing limits with highly visible flagging;
- Limiting construction working hours as per Bylaw 14600 (Community Standards Bylaw);
- Temporary fencing where construction is located near recreation areas;
- Paleontological monitoring program for open-cut excavations; and

- Suspending work and contacting Alberta Culture and Tourism if historic resources are discovered.

The Environmental Impact Assessment also highlights the following positive impacts from the Kihciy Askiy Sacred Earth project:

- Provision of a cultural/ceremonial site for Indigenous Peoples;
- Provision of new cultural experiences for the general public.

Public Engagement

Several forms of public engagement for Kihciy Askiy Sacred Earth have taken place as outlined in the following documents:

- Whitemud Integrated Area Concept Plan
- Whitemud Park Concept Plan Amendment (September 2009)
- Grand Council Elders Gathering hosted by Native Counselling Services of Alberta with support from the City of Edmonton (May 2015)

The majority of the public would like the site remain as natural and sustainable as possible, supported the need for the Indigenous Cultural site at Kihciy Askiy and saw it as a cross-cultural learning opportunity. The project received support from Indigenous Communities, and through the Grand Council Elders Gathering, the program and vision of the site were further defined.

Those who opposed the project cited concerns about noise, hours of use, future expansion, and environmental impacts. The specific environmental concerns focused primarily on potential impacts to wildlife and the environment. An operational manual for the site will be in place prior to construction to assist in addressing these concerns. Environmental impact mitigation strategies are addressed in the Environmental Impact Assessment.

A public information session will be held prior to the start of construction.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): The City of Edmonton's operations are environmentally sustainable			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Sustainable infrastructure is delivered that meets environmental standards and optimizes life cycle of deliverables	Environmental Impact Assessment is conducted for each proposed development on public land	100%	100% of all proposed development on public land within the Plan area of Bylaw 7188 (see section 3.5.3) undergoes an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Risk Assessment

Risk Element	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Current Mitigations	Potential Future Mitigations
Corporate Governance	If the recommendations are not approved, the project will not be able to obtain a development permit and the project will be cancelled.	2 Unlikely	4 Severe	8 Medium	Studies and reports have been completed and reviewed with Administration to ensure compliance with the River Valley Bylaw.	
Public Perception	Risk of being perceived unsupportive by the Indigenous Communities and public if the location is not approved and deemed essential.	3 Possible	2 Moderate	6 Low	Approval of the location will demonstrate the City's commitment to reconciliation and meet the public's expectations	Additional public communication efforts would be required to explain any delays or cancellation of this project if the location were not deemed essential.
Environmental	Potential impacts as identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment.	2 Unlikely	2 Moderate	4 Low	Recommendations regarding mitigation of environmental impacts in the Environmental Impact Assessment have been reviewed by Administration to ensure completeness	Mitigation measures detailed in the Environmental Impact Assessment will be incorporated into the contract documents and will be implemented by the contractor during construction of the project.

Attachments

1. [Kihciy Askiy \(Sacred Earth\) in Whitemud Park Environmental Impact Assessment](#)
2. [Kihciy Askiy \(Sacred Earth\) in Whitemud Park Site Location Study](#)

Others Reviewing this Report

- C. Campbell, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- L. McCarthy, Deputy City Manager, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development
- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services