

Whitemud Creek Ravine Boardwalk Replacement

Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study

Recommendation:

That Executive Committee recommend to City Council:

1. That the Site Location Study and Environmental Impact Assessment, as outlined in Attachments 2 and 3 of the July 4, 2017, Integrated Infrastructure Services report CR_4728, be approved.
2. That the location of the park elements within the River Valley, as outlined in Attachment 2 of the July 4, 2017, Integrated Infrastructure Services report CR_4728, be deemed essential and approved.

Report Summary

In accordance with the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, Bylaw 7188, this report recommends that City Council approve the Environmental Impact Assessment and Site location Study for the Whitemud Creek Ravine Boardwalk Replacement; and that the location within the River Valley be deemed essential and approved.

Report

The existing boardwalk, located approximately 700 metres south of Whitemud Drive, (Attachment 1) has been substantially damaged by ice buildup and ice heave. The site currently includes a set of stairs that limits accessibility. The proposed project will remove the existing boardwalk and stairs and implement a new, slightly realigned boardwalk that eliminates the need for stairs. This will improve pedestrian accessibility in the Whitemud Creek Ravine while maintaining existing trail networks and preserving the surrounding natural environment.

As required by the *North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan*, Bylaw 7188, a Site Location Study and Environmental Impact Assessment must be approved by City Council in order for the Whitemud Creek Boardwalk project to be implemented.

Prior to commencing the proposed implementation of the boardwalk, a Site Location Study (Attachment 2) and an Environmental Impact Assessment (Attachment 3) have been completed. Additionally, a Concept Plan (Attachment 4) has also been completed. These documents address the following elements:

- Removal of existing boardwalk
- Installation of new boardwalk
- Installation of rock mulch erosion control

- Removal and re-naturalization of existing trail

The Environmental Impact Assessment contains a summary of potential impacts to the physical and biological environment resulting from the implementation of the project elements referenced in this report. The assessment provides mitigation measures to ensure the project will not result in any significant adverse effects on the environment.

The Site Location Study outlines the financial, social, institutional, and environmental constraints and opportunities of the elements to be implemented within Whitemud Creek Park. It is identified that the location of the proposed boardwalk will ensure existing trail connections are maintained, thus allowing for continued access through the Whitemud Creek Ravine. These developments are not expected to result in any significant adverse environmental effects if all mitigation measures recommended in the Environmental Impact Assessment are implemented.

Social considerations

Through maintaining existing trail connectivity, while removing the need for stairs, the proposed new boardwalk will improve pedestrian safety and accessibility, thus enhancing social opportunities within the Whitemud Creek. This will most notably be the case for pedestrians with strollers and for others whom stairs may be an obstacle. Through improved safety and pedestrian accessibility, this project will enhance the social value of Whitemud Creek for trail users.

Environmental considerations

By maintaining the connection the existing boardwalk provides, the new boardwalk will deter park users from leaving the existing pathways and walking through environmentally sensitive areas, and along slopes that may be susceptible to erosion. Although the project will result in the removal of a few trees, it will also move foot traffic away from large, mature trees that are located along the north bank of Whitemud Creek, in areas that are highly susceptible to erosion. By moving the pathway away from sensitive areas, the long-term stability of the bank, and the vegetation located on it, should be improved. As such, it is anticipated that the proposed project will have minimal short term adverse environmental impacts and will result in a positive long term effect.

Institutional constraints

The proposed boardwalk location meets the objectives of the project as they relate to the connectivity and overall functionality of the trails within Whitemud Park. The location and design of the boardwalk were affected by the need to ensure a safe, pedestrian friendly trail connection across the Whitemud Creek oxbow, while maintaining the existing trail connections and opportunities for recreational use.

Policy

The Way We Green, Edmonton's Environmental Strategic Plan

- 3.8: The City protects, preserves and improves the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System as an accessible year-round place for recreation and activity for people of all ages
- 3.11: The City expands and enhances Edmonton's inventory of parks and open spaces for the ecological, health, recreation and educational benefits they provide

The Way We Live, Edmonton's People Plan

- 2.2: The City of Edmonton provides for the well-being of its citizens through outstanding parks, natural, green, and public spaces *North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan*, Bylaw 7188
- 2.4.2: To consider environmental factors when planning for use in the River Valley
- 2.6.1: To control the expansion and construction of major facilities and minimize the adverse impacts of major facilities on the natural environment and park development
- 3.3.3 Application of Environmental Impact Assessment: It is the policy of this Plan to ensure the application of an environmental impact screening and assessment to all proposed public development and development on public land
- 3.5.1 Development of Major Facilities: It is a policy of this Plan that major public facilities shall not be constructed or expanded unless their location within the River Valley is deemed essential and approved by City Council
- 3.5.3 Site Location Study and Environmental Impact Assessment: It is a policy of this Plan that all proposals for the development of a major facility that is publicly owned or is developed on public lands shall be subject to an environmental impact screening assessment as outlined in Schedule D, and a detailed site location study detailing costs, and social, environmental and institutional constraints which make a River Valley location essential must be prepared for Council approval. These studies shall be undertaken prior to Council committing funds for capital expenditure for the development of this proposal.

Corporate Tree Management, Policy C456A

- 1.8 Take necessary steps to protect and preserve City trees impacted by construction activities.

Historic Resource Management Plan, Policy 11

- The City will encourage the retention, restoration and designation of all of its own historic resources and advocate for its ad-hoc bodies, autonomous agencies and public bodies to do the same.

Corporate Outcomes

- This report contributes to the corporate outcome, "Edmontonians are connected

- to the City in which they live, work and play,” as the project provides new opportunities for citizens to enjoy passive and active recreational pursuits.
- This report contributes to the corporate outcome, “Edmonton is an environmentally sustainable and resilient city,” as the report proposes to implement park elements with mitigation measures in place to ensure the conservation and protection of the Master Plan area within the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System; as the development does not impede on the natural environment.
 - This report contributes to the corporate outcome, “Edmontonians use facilities and services that promote healthy living,” as it proposes enhanced recreational opportunities within the City of Edmonton.

Risk Assessment

Risk Element	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Current Mitigations	Potential Future Mitigations
Project Management	Project goes over budget or is delayed.	3 - Possible	3 - Major	9 - Medium	Administration has worked diligently to confirm scope and estimated budget for construction in 2017.	
Corporate Governance - Report is not approved	<p>If the report is not approved the following are risks that may arise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to implement recreational improvements • Potential delay or inability to complete implementation of proposed park elements • Potential loss of 	2- Unlikely	3 - Major	6 - Low	Studies completed to ensure developments are planned and implemented to ensure minimal project impacts.	

	funding for the project implementation					
Environmental	Potential impacts as identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment.	2 - Unlikely	1 - Minor	2 - Low	Recommendations regarding mitigation of environmental impacts in the Environmental Impact Assessment have been reviewed for completeness by Administration	Mitigation measures will be implemented by contractor at time of construction.

Public Engagement

A public information session was held on May 11, 2017, at the Brookview Community League Hall. A total of eight people attended the event, all of whom spoke favourably of the project. Additionally, a public survey, which was available at the information session and online between May 18 and May 25, 2017, was completed by 11 individuals, with 91 percent of the respondents being either very satisfied or satisfied with the project, and the remaining 9 percent being neutral. The only concerns noted during public engagement were regarding potential construction laydown areas and the possible length of time that some trails may be closed; the parking area on the South side of Rainbow Road will remain open. Both of these concerns will be further addressed once a construction contractor has been hired, and it is intended that trails will remain open as long as possible during construction.

Budget/Financial Implications

A total capital budget of \$680,000 is approved for this project through the Parks Conservation profile (CM-28-8510).

Legal Implications

The *North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan*, Bylaw 7188, requires City Council to approve an Environmental Impact Assessment and a detailed Site Location Study detailing the financial, social, environmental and institutional constraints on the location of the project elements. Further, the Bylaw requires City Council to deem the location of the Whitemud Creek Boardwalk within the River Valley essential and approve it before this project may be constructed.

Metrics, Targets and Outcomes

Metrics	Targets	Outcomes
Completion of Environmental Impact Study	100% of all proposed development on public land within the Plan area of Bylaw 7188 (see section 3.5.3) undergoes an Environmental Impact Study.	100% of all proposed developments on public land protected by Bylaw 7188 have approved Environmental Impact and Site Location Studies completed prior to the project proceeding.
Completion of Site Location Study	100% of all proposed development on public land within the Plan area of Bylaw 7188 (see section 3.5.3) undergoes a Site Location Study.	The North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System are protected as part of Edmonton's valuable open space heritage.

Justification of Recommendation:

1. Approval of the Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study is required to meet the City of Edmonton's North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, Bylaw 7188.
2. In accordance with the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, Bylaw 7188, the location of each park element must be deemed essential and approved by City Council in order to proceed with the project

Attachments

1. Project Location
2. Site Location Study
3. Environmental Impact Assessment
4. Concept Drawing

Others Reviewing this Report

- T. Burge, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- R. G. Klassen, Deputy City Manager, Sustainable Development
- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services
- C. Campbell, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- D. Jones, Deputy City Manager, City Operations