

GOLD BAR WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY STAIRCASE

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Gold Bar Wastewater Treatment Plant South Access Stairway - Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study, as outlined in Attachments 2 and 3 of the October 17, 2022, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01398, be approved.
2. That the location of the stairway within the River Valley as outlined in Attachment 3 of the October 17, 2022, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01398 be deemed essential, pursuant to the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, Bylaw 7188.

Requested Council Action	Decision Required		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Urban Places		
City Plan Values	ACCESS PRESERVE		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	A Rebuildable City	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Mobility Network
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan (Bylaw 7188) 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 		

Executive Summary

- The Gold Bar Wastewater Treatment Facility is owned and operated by EPCOR and falls within the boundaries of the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, Bylaw 7188.

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The proposal to upgrade the pedestrian access along the south boundary of the site has been initiated by EPCOR.

- The North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, Bylaw 7188, requires City Council approval of the Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study for the proposed project. It also requires the location of the proposed stairs within the River Valley be deemed essential.
- An Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study have been received by Administration. The report was circulated, reviewed and accepted by Administration's ecological planners. Based on the results of the Environmental Impact Assessment, it is not anticipated that the project will result in significant adverse effects to the environment.
- The proposed construction includes replacing the existing dirt path with a wooden stairway following the same route. This would improve visitor safety and reduce the degradation of the environment by providing a more official context for entering the site.

REPORT

Current Condition of the Site

The Gold Bar Wastewater Treatment Plant (GBWWTP) is located east of 50 Street NW and north of Gold Bar Park Road, and vehicular access to the site is through gates along 50 Street.

A pedestrian gate is located along the south fence line near the plant's midpoint at the approximate location shown in Attachment 1. While a number of access points exist to the site, the pedestrian gate is the principal entrance used by visitors arriving to the site including community tour groups and students participating in the RiverWatch program. Pedestrians access the gate from the shared use path located to the south of the GBWWTP by using a dirt path to the south. This dirt path is poorly suited to four-season use as it becomes very slippery when wet or when ice develops in the winter months, and there is a large grade change that is difficult to navigate, particularly for persons with reduced or limited mobility.

Stairway Proposal

EPCOR is proposing to replace the dirt path with a wooden stairway along the same alignment, connecting the stairway to the existing shared use path with a gravel pad, and allowing access to the gate with a concrete walkway.

The proposed upgrades to the pedestrian access are within the plan boundaries of the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, Bylaw 7188, which requires that the location of the stairway within the plan area to be deemed essential, and the corresponding Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study be approved by City Council. The Environmental Impact Assessment (Attachment 2) recommends mitigation measures and discusses the impact of this development.

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The Site Location Study (Attachment 3) outlines the social, environmental, and institutional constraints and opportunities for the south access stairway project.

Through the review of these studies, Administration determined that the proposal was reasonable and that negative impacts to the River Valley would be limited. Additionally, the applicant will be required to adhere to key mitigation strategies as provided in the City's Tree Management Policy and the Historical Resources Act, to follow an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan, and to conduct environmental monitoring with the intent to reduce the impact on vegetation (limiting disturbance and replacing disturbed vegetation), wildlife (limiting impact on animals, and allowing them to move freely after construction), and the general environment.

With an anticipated construction date of spring 2023, the proposed stairway will provide a safer, more formal access to the GBWWTP site than currently exists, thereby limiting further impact to the River Valley by providing designated wayfinding.

Financial Implications

EPCOR will fully fund the construction of the stairway and access, and the City will not provide financial support for capital construction.

Legal Implications

The North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, Bylaw 7188, as amended, requires City Council to approve the Environmental Impact Assessment and the Site Location Study, and to deem the location of the development within the River Valley essential before the proposed development can be undertaken.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

EPCOR's engagement included a virtual open house (September 21-23, 2020), discussion at the Gold Bar Community Liaison Committee meeting in early 2021, and in EPCOR's Gold Bar Wastewater Treatment Plant Community Update newsletter in June 2021. Additional public consultation was not undertaken as the access exists. This proposal is an overall improvement upon the existing condition of the site in terms of safety and limiting the impact to the River Valley.

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Through the planning of the project, EPCOR investigated the feasibility of adding a ramp to create more equitable access for people with mobility challenges. As part of this investigation, EPCOR determined that due to the grade of the slope, adding a ramp would have required switch-backs, increasing the impact on the River Valley's natural environment including additional vegetation removal. The proposed stairway is more accessible than the existing path which is comparatively steep and unsafe. Additionally, the 50 Street vehicle access points allow for accessible access to the site.

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ATTACHMENTS

1. Aerial Map of the Gold Bar Wastewater Treatment Plant and Stairway Area
2. Gold Bar Waste Water Treatment Plant South Access Stairway - Environmental Impact Assessment Pursuant to Bylaw 7188 - Final Report
3. Gold Bar Waste Water Treatment Plant South Access Stairway - Site Location Study Pursuant to Bylaw 7188 - Final Report