

Summary of Public, Stakeholder, and Indigenous Engagement

Stakeholder and Public Engagement Process

The development of conceptual options as part of the technical feasibility study evolved over the course of the project and considered input from a technical working group, community stakeholders, subject matter experts, students, and the general public.

More than 20 community stakeholder groups were identified and invited to participate in a stakeholder workshop in the early stages of the technical feasibility study.

Stakeholders included representatives of local communities leagues and members of community-based organizations representing diverse recreational, environmental, and social perspectives. A total of 12 stakeholder groups attended a workshop on October 25, 2016.

The first public open house, held on November 16, 2016, was attended by approximately 60 to 80 individuals and focused on local knowledge and understanding the public's vision for the area. Members of the public were also invited to learn more about the project online and provide feedback to the project team outside of open house events, either directly or via an online comment form.

Feedback from the stakeholder workshop and first public open house contributed towards identifying opportunities and constraints, testing ideas, and helping to inform the vision and guiding principles for the project.

The second public open house event, held on December 13, 2016 provided participants with an opportunity to review emerging conceptual options for daylighting Mill Creek. A total of 40 to 50 members of the public attended this event, and 25 participants submitted written feedback on the project and the three conceptual options presented. Feedback from this event was used to further refine the conceptual options. An additional 16 responses were received following the open house event by individuals who could not attend the open house but who learned about the project through media coverage or the project web page.

All public open houses were advertised on a city-wide basis through print media, social media, the City of Edmonton web page, and on road signs targeting major commuter routes in the area. However, given the early stage of the project and associated budgetary restrictions, public open house events were held in neighbourhoods near the study area (Cloverdale and Hazeldean) only. As a result, public open house attendance was higher for local community members compared to Edmontonians residing further from the project area. In order to obtain feedback from a greater diversity of Edmontonians, an online survey, accessible on a city-wide basis, was also made available (below).

In addition to open house events and visioning workshops, four student engagement sessions were held during the first and second weeks of December 2016 at Rutherford, Donnan, and Delwood elementary schools. A total of 150 students participated and

expressed their vision for Mill Creek restoration through written comments and hand-drawn illustrations.

Following completion of the technical feasibility study, an online survey was conducted to obtain feedback on the project and the three conceptual daylighting concepts developed as part of the technical feasibility study. The survey was available from March 30 to April 9, 2017. The survey was advertised through the Edmonton Insight Community, a public service announcement, the City of Edmonton's social media accounts, and the City of Edmonton's project website. Eight hundred and twenty three (823) responses were received from the online survey.

Public and Stakeholder Feedback

Feedback received from stakeholders and the public reflected general support for the project. The majority of open house attendees (96 percent) and online comment form respondents (92 percent) expressed full or partial support for one or more of the conceptual designs presented. Approximately 12 percent of attendees and respondents, however, expressed some lack of support for the project as a whole due to uncertainties around potential costs and traffic impacts.

Results of the online survey, conducted following completion of the three conceptual restoration options, were similar to those received through open house and online comment forms. The majority (83 percent) of participants thought that daylighting the downstream reach of Mill Creek should be a priority for the City. Eighty seven percent (87 percent) of respondents were somewhat or very supportive of the Ecology Focus concept, while 5 percent were somewhat or very opposed; 65 percent were somewhat or very supportive of the Trail Connectivity Focus concept, while 20 percent were somewhat or very opposed; and, 42 percent were somewhat or very supportive of the Destination Park Focus option, while 44 percent were somewhat or very opposed.

Edmontonians expressed strong support for re-establishing a natural ravine and creek, with emphasis on naturalized vegetation, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, and ecological connectivity. Many also expressed a desire for a well-connected trail system that would improve accessibility into the River Valley System, enhance recreational opportunities for cyclists and pedestrians, and connect the project area to nearby destinations and existing trails. Feedback also reflected support for inclusion of basic amenities such as public washrooms, and for well-planned integration with or connection to the future Valley Line LRT Muttart Stop. In general, there was less support for extensive commercial opportunities or built amenities such as a public plaza or festival space; large commercial spaces; manicured lawn or ornamental gardens; and, duplication of recreational programming or festival spaces perceived to be readily available in other parks.

Feedback received at student engagement events mirrored what was heard at public open houses and through online comment forms or survey, with students favouring a natural creek and opportunities to interact with fish and animals.

Indigenous Engagement Process and Feedback

Recognizing the shared interests of the City of Edmonton and Indigenous communities, as well as the City of Edmonton's commitment to respectful engagements, ongoing dialogue, and cooperative efforts around shared interests and issues, Administration engaged directly with First Nations and Métis communities during development of the technical feasibility study. Early engagement was undertaken to inform Indigenous communities of the project, understand traditional and current Indigenous connections to or uses in the Mill Creek area, collect feedback on the daylighting project and vision, and develop an approach to further Indigenous engagement and consultation should the project proceed beyond the feasibility stage.

A number of themes emerged through early discussions about the project with Indigenous communities, including:

- Water quality, wildlife habitat, and ecological integrity in Mill Creek and the North Saskatchewan River must be protected and preserved for current and future generations.
- Indigenous history and heritage are important, and should be preserved and shared. The North Saskatchewan River plays a central role for Indigenous people. It was used as an important travel route, especially during the time of the fur trade, and provided food, water, and traditional medicines for Indigenous people.
- Mill Creek and the North Saskatchewan River must be recognized as sensitive areas, and environmental impacts of the project must be carefully considered at all project stages.
- Traditional knowledge regarding land use and the ecology of the area should be sought out and incorporated into project planning should the project proceed beyond the feasibility stage. Environmental and archaeological site monitors should be present should any further work be undertaken to ensure that impacts to traditional plants, wildlife, or archaeological sites are avoided or mitigated.
- Opportunities for employment, procurement, and partnerships should be explored at future project stages.

Indigenous communities expressed a strong interest in continuing to be informed and engaged throughout the project. Communities expressed a need for site visits with Indigenous decision makers and knowledge holders, particularly Elders, before more detailed input on daylighting conceptual options and restoration approaches could be provided. Future engagement and consultation efforts, including those that may be required to meet federal and provincial regulatory requirements, should occur throughout planning, design, and construction stages, and should build on the outcomes of engagement work completed to date. Resources required to facilitate continued engagement and consultation with Indigenous communities, including those Nations or organizations that were not able to participate directly in early engagement, should be taken into consideration as part of further planning and design work.