

EDMONTON SKI CLUB REPLACEMENT SKI LODGE

Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study

Recommendation

That Urban Planning Committee recommend to City Council:

1. That the Edmonton Ski Club Replacement Ski Lodge - Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study, as outlined in Attachments 1 and 2 of the May 2, 2024 Integrated Infrastructure Services report IIS02236, be approved.
2. That the location of the Replacement Ski Lodge, as outlined in Attachment 2 of the May 2, 2024 Integrated Infrastructure Services Report IIS02236, be deemed essential, pursuant to the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, Bylaw 7188.

Requested Action	Committee decision		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Climate Resilience		
City Plan Values	BELONG		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	n/a	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Climate Action & Energy Transition
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bylaw 7188 - The North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan • Edmonton Ski Club Replacement Ski Lodge 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 29, 2022, Integrated Infrastructure Services report IIS01406, Edmonton Ski Club Temporary Modular Building Addition - Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study 		

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Executive Summary

- The Edmonton Ski Club Replacement Ski Lodge project falls within the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan and is subject to Bylaw 7188 - The North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.
- Bylaw 7188 requires that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Site Location Study (SLS) be completed for the project and approved by Council. Bylaw 7188 also requires that the location of the project be deemed essential by Council.
- The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Site Location Study (SLS) show that the project is expected to have a minimal effect on environmental resources and result in a net neutral impact on vegetation and wildlife components.
- Approval of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Site Location Study (SLS) demonstrates the City's commitment to environmental project reviews, permitting and environmentally sound design. This work ensures that the City's environmental stewardship outcome is met during the construction of this project.

REPORT

Edmonton Ski Club has managed a ski centre in central Edmonton since 1911. Their original lodge was built in the 1940s at 9613-96 Avenue NW at the base of Gallagher Park Hill. Due to safety concerns and the building reaching the end of its life, the original lodge was demolished in fall 2022 with operations continuing out of modular trailers. A new ski lodge is planned to replace the temporary trailers and provide a year-round facility for the operation of the Edmonton Ski Club. The replacement ski lodge will include a main facility as well as parking and access upgrades.

The project is being led by the Edmonton Ski Club, supported by funding from the City of Edmonton. As part of the 2023-2026 Operating Budget, City Council approved providing the Edmonton Ski Club with up to \$4 million to support the development of the new lodge.

The Federal Green and Inclusive Community Buildings (GICB) program provided up to \$6.7 to support the construction of the ski lodge. Preliminary design was completed in Q4 2023. Detailed design is underway, and construction is anticipated to begin in Q2 2024.

In accordance with section 3.5.3 of Bylaw 7188, the project is subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study that outlines current conditions in the project area, evaluates potential risks and identifies adverse impacts that must be eliminated, minimized or mitigated through design, landscaping and construction measures. This report is being presented by Integrated Infrastructure Services as the project is on City land and the City is providing oversight as per the Community Group Led Construction Process.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Environmental Impact Assessment has shown that with appropriate mitigation measures and required environmental permitting completed, potential negative residual impacts will be negligible.

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As identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment, potential impacts and mitigation strategies include:

- Surface Water Drainage and Accidental Releases
 - The project will result in upgrades to the existing surface water management, including bioswale installation to allow for surface water infiltration and decrease off-site drainage.
 - To mitigate the accidental release of sediments or harmful substances into the storm sewer system, temporary erosion and sedimentation controls, spill prevention practices, and emergency response planning will be put in place.
- Ground Water Disturbance
 - An addendum to the Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment completed for the project indicated that groundwater impacts are unlikely to affect surface receptors at the site. Additionally, groundwater contaminants of concern at Gallagher Park are not present in the project area. The City's Contaminated Site Management Program manages contamination at Gallagher Park.
- Soil Disturbance and Contamination
 - Temporary erosion and sedimentation controls will be implemented and aligned with the City of Edmonton Erosion and Sedimentation Guidelines and associated Field Manual (City of Edmonton 2005a, b).
 - A project-specific soil management plan will be developed to manage any contaminated soils if encountered; however, studies have not shown that contaminated soils are present within the project area. The City's Contaminated Site Management Program manages contamination at Gallagher Park.
- Vegetation
 - Maintained grassed areas impacted by construction will be re-sodded or reseeded.
 - The project will comply with the City of Edmonton Corporate Tree Management Policy.
 - New treed areas will be established within the project footprint.
 - Large caliper trees will be planted.
 - Naturalization, reclamation and tree protection plans will be developed during detailed design to be reviewed and approved by the City of Edmonton.
- Wildlife Habitat or Disturbance to Protected Wildlife
 - Most construction works will occur in areas with little or no wildlife habitat value.
 - Construction timing and phasing will minimize impacts on wildlife passage.
 - The recommended Environment Canada Guidelines for reducing impacts on migratory birds will be followed.
 - Post-reclamation will include planting large calliper trees, shrubs and other plant species to restore the structure and function of mature tree areas.
- Archaeological or Cultural/Historical Resources
 - A Historic Resource Act screening will be completed before project construction to evaluate the potential for impacts on historic resources and outline any further assessments and approvals required.
 - If unanticipated resources are uncovered, the notification/stop work process will be applied, and Alberta Culture and Tourism will be notified.

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Site Location Study

The scope of a site location study includes an assessment of financial, social, environmental and institutional constraints and opportunities to justify and rationale for any projects undertaken in the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.

The Edmonton Ski Club Replacement Ski Lodge site location study recommended that the Concept Plan design proceed as planned. The design is planned to occur primarily within areas of existing disturbance from the historical infrastructure or within the maintained grass vegetation community. Site regrading and bioswale construction will improve overall site drainage and mitigate long-term drainage issues on the site. The project is expected to have localized and short-term impacts on the natural environment during construction, including vegetation and soil disturbance. However, these will be generally limited to the construction and restoration periods. The project is expected to have a minimal effect on environmental resources. It is expected to result in a net positive impact on both vegetation and wildlife components through the expanded landscaped areas in the bioswale and a new landscaped area.

Legal Implications

Section 3.5.3 of Bylaw 7188 requires City Council to approve the Edmonton Ski Club Replacement Ski Lodge Environmental Impact Assessment (Attachment 1) before the construction of the replacement ski lodge can proceed.

In addition, Section 3.5.3 of Bylaw 7188 requires City Council to approve the attached Site Location Study (Attachment 2) for the replacement ski lodge and Section 3.5.1 requires that the location of the replacement ski lodge be deemed essential by City Council.

Community Insight

The Edmonton Ski Club has a long history of providing skiing in central Edmonton. The Edmonton Ski Club has developed a long-term vision for the site that includes the development of a new ski lodge facility, which aligns with the Gallagher Park Master Plan. The City of Edmonton community led construction process requires the Edmonton Ski Club to engage the site partners, stakeholders and general public at different stages in implementing the vision.

The Edmonton Ski Club is engaged in ongoing communications with the Edmonton Folk Music Festival Association and Cloverdale Community League to ensure that planning and project information is shared and transparent. Project information is shared on their website and through site signage. Public open houses and mail drops ensure the community is aware of the site's short- and long-term plans.

The communications explain that the existing temporary modular structures that directly support the Edmonton Ski Club and the Edmonton Folk Music Festival Association will be replaced with a new facility that will allow both community groups to provide affordable, inclusive and accessible arts and outdoor recreation opportunities for Edmontonians and visitors. The communications also note the areas where and when construction is planned and the extent of the construction, including a redeveloped gravel parking lot, geothermal field, and limited tree removal to allow for the construction of a bioswale to address site drainage challenges.

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The Edmonton Folk Music Festival Association, Cloverdale Community League and other stakeholders have provided letters of support for the construction of a new lodge and site improvements, understanding the interim plan and site impacts required to support the long-term vision.

The Indigenous engagement process facilitated by pipikwan pêtâkwan, an Indigenous-led public relations firm based in Edmonton, involved diverse participants from various age groups, agencies and roles. Key recommendations emerged, aiming to involve Indigenous people in the project's entirety. These recommendations include:

1. Economic Inclusion
2. Curved Design
3. Smudging Spaces
4. Transformational Spaces
5. Play and Learning Spaces
6. Land Respect
7. Continuous Engagement
8. Warm Design Elements
9. Knowledge of Four
10. Highlight Indigenous Languages

Engagement opportunities have been extended to environmental advocacy organizations with input received from the Edmonton River Valley Conservation Coalition.

GBA+

The Edmonton Ski Club provides programming opportunities for diverse community members to access and be included in skiing and associated winter activities in the heart of the city.

Edmonton Ski Club considerations for this project have been informed by historical use of facilities and programs, and stakeholder and public engagement as outlined under Community Insights.

A GBA+ analysis highlighted the following equity measure recommendations:

- Accessibility to the new facility
 - Design the site and new building to meet or exceed barrier-free design guidelines, including accommodating mobility and other accessibility needs, regardless of the season. While there is a cost associated with these modifications, this will improve access to services for all residents. This recommendation aligns with the City of Edmonton's Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy.
- Maintain inclusive and accessible programming
 - The new facility will allow continued Edmonton Ski Club operations, services and programs. These programs and services aim to be inclusive and meet the needs of equity-deserving groups, including the popular learn to ski for schools, newcomers ski night, ski lessons for first timers and low cost subsidized skiing fees.

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- Stakeholder communications
 - The Edmonton Ski Club will continue to deliver information in various ways as the project develops.
- Indigenous Engagement
 - With an emphasis on genuine intent and accountability, early and meaningful involvement by Indigenous peoples to seek Indigenous consent and appropriate consultation with Elders, with the aim to involve Indigenous people in the project's entirety.

Risk Assessment

Risk Category	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score (with current mitigations)	Current Mitigations	Potential Future Mitigations
If the recommendation is not approved						
Infrastructure and Assets	Without EIA and SLS approval, the project cannot proceed. It will result in project cancellation.	4 - likely	5 - severe	20 - high	Follow established review and approval processes related to Environmental Impact Assessments and Site Location Studies.	Review successful past submissions to ensure completeness.

Attachments

1. Edmonton Ski Club River Valley Outdoor Activity Center - Environmental Impact Assessment
2. Edmonton Ski Club River Valley Outdoor Activity Center - Site Location Study