

GARIEPY NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL

Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study

Recommendation

That the Urban Planning Committee recommend to City Council:

1. That the Gariepy Neighbourhood Renewal - Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study, as outlined in Attachments 1 and 2 of the February 11, 2025, Integrated Infrastructure Services report IIS02806, be approved pursuant to the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, Bylaw 7188.
2. That the locations of the missing active transportation connections as outlined in Attachment 2 of the February 11, 2025, Integrated Infrastructure Services report IIS02806 be deemed essential, pursuant to the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, Bylaw 7188.

Requested Action	Decision required		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Healthy City Urban Places Climate Resilience		
City Plan Values	BELONG. LIVE. THRIVE. ACCESS.		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	A Community of Communities A Rebuildable City Inclusive and Compassionate	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Mobility Network Community safety and well-being 15-minute districts
Corporate Business Plan	Managing the Corporation		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bylaw 7188 - North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan • C595A - Neighbourhood Renewal Program • C573A - Complete Streets Policy • C602 - Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy • C544 - Active Transportation Policy 		
Related Council	N/A		

Executive Summary

- The 23-40-9040 Gariepy Neighbourhood and Alley Reconstruction profile was approved for delivery during the 2023 Fall Supplemental Capital Budget with a budget of \$30.9 million.
- There are two existing informal ravine crossings of the Gariepy Ravine that do not support universal accessibility for users. The Gariepy Neighbourhood Renewal project proposes the construction of missing active transportation links, including new formalized accessible ravine crossings with associated connections, naturalized landscape plantings, and a new top-of-bank shared pathway to improve universal accessibility and circulation for residents within the neighbourhood.
- The North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, Bylaw 7188, requires City Council approval of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Attachment 1) and Site Location Study (Attachment 2) for the proposed improvements before construction can commence. It also requires the location of the proposed accessible ravine crossings and top-of-bank shared pathway within the River Valley be deemed essential.
- The Environmental Impact Assessment (Attachment 1) supports the project scope and location. Impacts to the existing open space natural areas and ravines are minimal, as the locations are currently used for similar activities. It also identifies that the proposed project scope and design does not require additional modifications to proceed responsibly.
- The Site Location Study (Attachment 2) confirms the proposed locations for the new accessible ravine crossings and top-of-bank shared pathway will not cause significant environmental impacts.

REPORT

The renewal of the Gariepy Neighbourhood was identified in the 2023-2026 Capital Budget, and will start the final year of construction in 2025. Some of the proposed infrastructure within Gariepy will be constructed within the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan boundary area and, therefore, require City Council approval to proceed in the 2025 construction year.

Accessible Ravine Crossings

There are two existing informal ravine crossings located in the upper reaches of Gariepy Ravine that do not support universal accessibility for users. These crossing locations are incomplete with existing sidewalks stopping at the ravine boundary with unmaintained natural trail conditions existing between the sidewalk connections. The existing surfaces in the ravine area are not universally accessible, leaving those with limited mobility considerations with lengthy detours to travel across the neighbourhood to connect to other active transportation networks in the area. The existing area is also currently manicured turf, and this project proposes to reduce this area with naturalized landscape plantings. The proposed ravine crossings, renewed connections into the ravine area and naturalized landscape plantings will provide universally accessible access for

GARIEPY NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL - ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND SITE LOCATION STUDY

people and safer connections for all users in the community, as well as natural restoration of the area.

Top-of-Bank Shared Pathway

The project also includes construction of a new top-of-bank shared pathway and accessibility upgrades to the existing viewpoints and benches along the top-of-bank park, located south of 53 Avenue/Lessard Drive, east of 174 Street. The road next to the top-of-bank park previously had a sidewalk that was removed as part of the renewal of the road in 2024. The new top-of-bank shared pathway has been proposed to provide access to the top-of-bank park and will complete a continuous connection along the south side of 53 Avenue/Lessard Drive. This link also connects into the broader active transportation network, providing access to Bike Plan district connectors and the nearby neighbourhoods of Donsdale and Wolf Willow.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (Attachment 1) and Site Location Study (Attachment 2) have been prepared to meet the requirements of the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) (Attachment 1) contains a summary of the findings in and around the proposed project construction area for the new accessible ravine crossings and the top-of-bank shared pathway. It summarizes the existing condition of soil, surface water and ground water, fish and fish habitat, vegetation, historic resources and environmental sensitivity ratings of the project site with the following key highlights:

- There is no fish habitat within the proposed accessible ravine crossings and top-of-bank park area.
- There is no surface water for the majority of the year and no rare plant or rare ecological communities were observed in the area.
- Native plants, noxious weeds and wildlife are identified and commonly occur within urban environments. No observed wildlife species are designated at risk as per provincial or federal wildlife protection legislation.
- No known archaeological or registered heritage sites are located within the project area.

The report identifies the potential physical, environmental and community impacts resulting from the construction of the accessible ravine crossings and top-of-bank shared pathway. The assessment identifies site-specific mitigation measures, which will be incorporated into the project to ensure the project will not have residual impacts on the environment.

The design of the accessible ravine crossings will allow for wildlife passage at adjacent ravine areas, and will minimize disturbance of the natural topography, ravine vegetation and degradation of wildlife habitat due to people moving through this sensitive area.

New naturalized landscape planting will be established to enhance ecological conditions through natural regeneration of the area. The naturalization process will be implemented following the City's Landscaping Standards, including all warranty and acceptance procedures.

GARIEPY NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL - ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND SITE LOCATION STUDY

Post-construction monitoring is not recommended considering the project is on previously disturbed land.

Proposed enhancements to the existing top-of-bank park will direct existing walking, rolling and wheeling activity onto a designated shared pathway and away from natural areas.

Site Location Study

The Site Location Study (SLS) (Attachment 2) shows the locations proposed for the accessible ravine crossings and top-of-bank shared pathway will not cause significant environmental impacts, as the alignment is already being used informally by the public. The SLS provides justifications for the River Valley location deemed essential based on constraints analysis considering institutional, socio-economic and environmental factors.

Budget/Financial Implications

The 23-40-9040 Gariepy Neighbourhood and Alley Reconstruction profile was approved for delivery during the 2023 Fall Supplemental Capital Budget with a budget of \$30.9 million.

Legal Implications

The North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan, Bylaw 7188, requires City Council to approve the EIA and SLS before the proposed development can proceed. Further, Bylaw 7188 requires the accessible ravine crossings and shared pathway be deemed essential by City Council prior to construction.

Community Insight

During public engagement for the Gariepy Neighbourhood Renewal, the community indicated support for both improving the ravine crossings and access to the existing top-of-bank park.

Accessible Ravine Crossings

Participants indicated support for completing the accessible ravine crossing, as it is a well used direct connection for the community to access the top-of-bank park and surrounding active transportation networks in the area.

Top-of-Bank Shared Pathway

Feedback obtained through public engagement supported completing the active transportation link along the south side of 53 Avenue/Lessard Drive. Overall, residents supported the new top-of-bank shared pathway, as it will complete the connection and provide access to localized seating areas for residents to rest at the existing top-of-bank park.

GBA+

Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is integrated into the planning, design and construction phases of Neighbourhood Renewal projects to ensure project communication, public engagement and design outcomes are equitable for people of diverse backgrounds, ages and abilities. The planning and design process for the Gariepy Neighbourhood Renewal project identified a diverse range of participants, including area residents, roadway users, community

GARIEPY NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL - ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND SITE LOCATION STUDY

organizations and interested parties potentially impacted by the project. This work included providing a range of communication tactics and public engagement strategies to mitigate or remove barriers to equity and to support equality of outcomes during the engagement process. Opportunities included online events and surveys, both virtual and in-person meetings and open houses, direct contact with the project team and a drop-in pre-construction event. This allowed the project team to gather feedback from different perspectives to identify additional design considerations to mitigate or remove barriers to equity and support equality of outcomes such as connection points for active transportation.

GBA+ considerations have also played an important role in enhancing universal accessibility and promoting inclusive design principles. Specifically, for the accessible ravine crossings and top-of-bank shared pathway in Gariepy, this includes the creation of accessible and barrier-free walking and biking infrastructure, to create a more inclusive and accessible neighbourhood.

Environment and Climate Review

The EIA report (Attachment 1) identifies pre-construction environmental conditions for the valued ecosystem and social components and outlines mitigation measures to provide protection to environmentally sensitive lands. These measures will be implemented during the detailed design stage in advance of any construction activities.

The following EIA findings are of note, with specific regulatory considerations, where applicable:

- The design of the accessible ravine crossings will enable wildlife movement. Both crossing structures will allow for small mammal passage, as well as at-grade medium and large mammal movement.
- The EIA states there is a high likelihood of habitat for the least flycatcher within the project area and a low likelihood of habitat for the pileated woodpecker, barred owl, sora and western toad, all of which are provincially sensitive species. Although no species of management concern were directly observed during site visits, the presence of potential habitat suggests that pre-disturbance wildlife surveys may uncover new information, potentially impacting project timelines and costs. For instance, nests or cavities of Schedule 1 *Migratory Birds Convention Act* species, including pileated woodpecker cavities (which are protected regardless of nesting activity), are protected year round and may require special consideration.
- Although there are no known archaeological or palaeontological resources, if discovered, an archaeological assessment and mitigation measures would be required to protect any discovered resources.
- No *Species At Risk Act*, *Fisheries Act*, *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*, or *Water Act* permits or approvals are anticipated, but *Migratory Birds Convention Act*, *Weed Control Act*, *Soil Conservation Act* and *Wildlife Act* provisions will apply in addition to decontamination of equipment used near water under the provincial *Fisheries Act*.
- With the construction of new pedestrian walkways and pathway connections, increased pedestrian activity is anticipated in the area to support an active transportation “mode shift” with more equitable accessibility for potential users.

GARIEPY NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL - ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND SITE LOCATION STUDY

- The removal of public trees is proposed as part of the project. An inventory of affected trees will be determined through detailed design, in consultation with the City's Urban Forester and Natural Area Operations team. The community's tree canopy is an asset that is carefully and respectfully stewarded. Tree removals are guided by City Policy C456C - Corporate Tree Management Policy and Bylaw 18825 - Public Tree Bylaw and includes:
 - Completion of tree removal inventory at end of design.
 - Completion of Tree Preservation Plan, along with a restoration and landscaping plan. A Public Tree Permit may also be required.
 - Communication with interested parties and the public on tree removals when tree preservation and restoration plans are finalized.

Attachments

1. Environmental Impact Assessment - Gariepy Neighbourhood
2. Site Location Study - Gariepy Neighbourhood Renewal Design