

Good afternoon Urban Planning Committee
My name is Eric Gormley
re: item 7.4 Queen Elizabeth Park
June 17, 2025

You are being asked to consider approving the Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study for a proposed bike skills and trails facility in Queen E. Park.

You are also being asked to consider whether or not a river valley location for this project is “essential.”

The bike facility if constructed would occupy about 10 acres of central river valley land. The bike skills area is roughly 1.5 acres — some of which is to have an asphalt surface. The remaining 8 acres is for an adjacent, tightly packed, intestine-like series of banked trails running through forest. Even though trees and some understory will be left, one expects the total space to be devoted to bike activity, twelve months of the year.

To give some perspective, the bike facility would be one and a third times the size of the Royal Glenora Club, more than two times larger than RE/MAX field in Rossdale, and roughly the same size as the Kinsmen Fieldhouse and pool complex, including the parking lot. The bike facility would consume about half the size of the Epcor lands in Rossdale.

Glenora Club came to the valley in 1961, moving down from 124th Street; the Kinsmen complex was built in the late 1960s; the ball diamond has been in Rossdale since the early 1900s, and so has the Epcor plant.

Knowing what we know about the appeal of the river valley as a peaceful escape from big city life, knowing that it's a finite resource, and that there is now greater awareness of the valley's role in supporting a regional wildlife system, it's unlikely any of these facilities — or a new golf course — would be built on public land in the river valley today.

We know too much about the value of natural space.

A sense that the river valley has limits shows up in the 1985 bylaw and 1990 Ribbon of Green document.

The river valley bylaw says any new major public facility must require a river valley location.

The bylaw also says in section 3.2.4 “It is the policy of this plan that river edge lands will be used for low intensity outdoor recreational use.”

— low intensity being described as “a minimum level of recreational development with the possible existence of a minor amenity structure,” An example is a trail.

A large bike skills facility that comes within 25 metres of the river’s edge, would not conform to this directive. Moreover, the average person would likely agree a bike facility can be built almost anywhere. It doesn’t need a river valley location.

Finally, the 1990 Ribbon of Green offers sage advice to a city coming to grips with its finite resources: it says

“Human pressure has challenged the custodians of the river valley with the problem of balancing the need to preserve the environmental integrity with the need to provide citizens with meaningful recreation. It’s clear the valley cannot be all things to all people,” it says.

So, thirty five years ago Edmontonians recognized if our aim is to preserve its integrity, there are limits to what we can build in the river valley,

Mountain biking, as other speakers have said, already has a significant toehold in the river valley. Adding this bike facility would simply take up too much space in a sensitive area already crowded with projects from other eras.