

Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues'
100th Anniversary Project
Festival Producer Engagement Summary Report

Citizen Services | Community and Recreation Facilities
City of Edmonton

May 2019



The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues' 100th anniversary project is a community-led partner project with support and oversight provided by the City. The project involves a plaza, stream feature and interpretive elements to be constructed in William Hawrelak Park in celebration of the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues' 100th anniversary in 2021.

In addition to previous engagement with park users, Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues held an engagement session with festival and event organizers in January 2019. Throughout the sessions, some of the organizers expressed concerns about the impact of the proposed location and design of the project on their events.

As a result, City Council directed Administration to work with the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and the festival and event producers to explore options for mitigating these concerns.

Process

Administration used a phased engagement process to identify key issues and explore potential ways to move forward.

Phase 1 - Information Gathering

1. Survey

A survey was sent to the 48 festival and event producers who use William Hawrelak Park, asking for their feedback on the project.

Results

There were 14 responses.

- Five responded with no concern and/or positive comments about the project
- Nine responded with concerns
 - Three responded with concerns about the William Hawrelak Park Renewal Project, not the Anniversary Project.
 - One responded that their concerns had been dealt with, but they want to be kept informed of the project.
 - Five identified concerns with the project.

2. Focus Groups and Interviews

- a. All 48 festival and event producers were invited to a focus group to understand the project from their point of view.

Results

Representatives from five groups, who had identified concerns through the survey, participated in the focus groups. They were:

- Edmonton Blues Festival
- Maanaw Seva Association - Walk for Children's Future
- Freewill Shakespeare Festival
- Silver Skate Festival Society
- Edmonton Heritage Festival Association

Producers expressed overall support for the intent of the project; however, there were concerns about the location and design of the plaza and how it would impact their event(s). An underlying concern was there was no engagement on the location of the plaza within the park. Main concerns were traffic flow in the event of an emergency, disruption of events when public are using the plaza due to sound bleed, fence jumpers, parasitic listening, potential extra costs on the event to mitigate concerns, and winter maintenance plans for the plaza.

- b. An interview was held with Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues staff and board members to better understand the scope of the project and the rationale for current site selection and design.

Results

Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues' 100th anniversary is in 2021; the main goal of the plaza is to honor the work that community leagues have completed over the past 100 years. The intent of the plaza is to be an all-season space that is continuously open to the public. The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues expressed concern about delays and additional funding required if significant changes were made to the plaza. They also expressed concern if the plaza was blocked from the public too often, if the City were to implement operational strategies to mitigate concerns from festival and event producers.

- c. Meetings were held with City of Edmonton staff who:
 - i. have project history to understand City involvement to date
 - ii. may have potential future involvement in operations, booking and programming of the space, to better understand the City's roles and responsibilities to mitigate concerns.

Results

Administration will continue to work with the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and festival and event producers to establish operational strategies that are mutually beneficial and operationally feasible.

Phase 2 - Analysis and Planning

An analysis of the data collected in Phase 1 identified three options to move forward with the project:

- Option 1: Project goes forward as planned.
- Option 2: Consider alternative locations for the project within the park.
- Option 3: Project completed in location currently proposed, with operational strategies from the City to mitigate concerns

Phase 3 - Facilitated Stakeholder Meeting

A half-day facilitated stakeholder meeting was held on April 29, 2019, to explore the pros, cons, and considerations of the three options noted above. Stakeholders from the City of Edmonton, Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and the 48 festivals and events were invited to participate.

The following stakeholders attended this meeting:

- Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues
- Festival and Event Producers
 - Edmonton Blues Festival
 - Freewill Shakespeare Festival
 - Edmonton Heritage Festival Association
 - Silver Skate Festival Society
- City of Edmonton Staff
 - Citizen Services
 - Integrated Infrastructure Services

During the facilitated session, stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on the pros, cons, and considerations for each of the three options identified in Phase 2. They were also given the opportunity to add other options to the list. This provided an opportunity for stakeholders to collectively explore and assess the strengths and weaknesses of each option. The intent of this process was to see if there might be potential for a stakeholder-generated, consensus-based, preferred option for moving forward.

During the initial discussion of the options, participants agreed to combine options 1 and 3 and consider them together, as some minor redesign had already been proposed (and accepted by Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues).

The following alternatives/modifications to the original options were discussed:

- **Combine options 1 and 3:** Project goes forward as planned and completed in proposed location, with operational strategies to mitigate concerns
- **Option 2, with site-specific discussion:** Consider alternative locations within William Hawrelak Park - the group indicated interest in exploring three possible sites as separate options
 - 2a: A site south of the current location on the other side of the footbridge (south side of the creek)
 - 2b: A site near picnic site #1
 - 2c: A site near the boat launch on the North Saskatchewan River
- **New option (proposed by stakeholders):** Through the discussion, interest to explore a new option emerged in which the project be redesigned to mitigate concerns

Results

Participants at the facilitated session did not come to consensus on a preferred option. The following is a high-level summary of the pros, cons, and considerations for each option.

Option 1 & 3 - Current site, use operational strategies to mitigate festival and event concerns

- The current site was chosen in part for its proximity to the lake and creek and the ability to offer year round access to the proposed amenities. Extensive financial and other resources have been invested in the project at the current site, and this would be lost if the location were to be changed.
- It was noted that the original design was created seven years ago and the context for how the amphitheatre is used has changed during this time. Increases in amphitheatre use necessitate more operational mitigation strategies.
- Administration has suggested operational strategies such as: booking the plaza as part of the amphitheatre space, booking (or closing) the plaza to the public when public use could potentially disrupt amphitheatre events and providing additional enforcement support. However, many festival and event producers were skeptical this support would adequately address their needs.

Option 2 - Relocation within Hawrelak Park

- The various sites proposed had pros and cons including visibility within the park, connection to the lake and creek, access to parking and shelter, availability of public washrooms, and access to utilities.
- Relocating from the current site would incur significant financial costs and would add further delays (e.g., redoing geotechnical work, new permitting process, new design approvals, need for public and stakeholder consultation).

Option 4 - Current site, use redesign to mitigate festival and event concerns

- The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues are to consider redesign within the same location with ongoing consultation with festival and event producers; however, some caveats / concerns were noted (the need for additional funding being the most significant).
- The extent of the redesign will require further discussion. From the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues' perspective, some redesign elements are more feasible than others. From the perspective of festival and event producers, each festival has its own unique operational concerns that will need to be reviewed as redesign is considered.

Conclusion

There was no consensus-based agreement reached among all stakeholders.

Those attending the facilitated stakeholder meeting indicated interest in exploring the possibilities of mitigation through project redesign and supplementing this with additional operational strategies to mitigate the expressed concerns.

- Extent of the redesign will require further discussion.
- Redesign would require additional funding, which the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues would need to secure.
- Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues has to ensure it continues to reach out to its stakeholders and funders regarding its vision for the space if design changes are made.
- Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues expressed some willingness to accept a redesign, and ongoing consultation with festival and event producers, with some caveats / concerns noted.

Some festival and event producer's preferred option was relocation but also understood that this option is likely not viable however wanted this preferred option noted.

- Moving the plaza is highly unlikely due to the major setbacks financially and to the timeline.
- Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues does not have the financial or resource capacity to lead this project if the plaza is relocated.

APPENDIX

Notes from Participants

Option 1 & 3:

Project goes forward as currently planned, with operational strategies to mitigate concerns.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Looking to accentuate the current amphitheatre → Highlight EFCL's good work → Timelines/costs [impacts would be the least of all options] → Proximity to lake/creek → Links to amenities → Year round facility → Revitalize the creek 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Event space behind an existing one → Context has shifted since original proposal - use of park → 7 years ago, this space wasn't being used by most festival producers → Loss of monetization for festivals → Blocks view → Impacts park maintenance, especially in the winter → Security of space is a concern → Piece of park could be closed off for extended periods of time, optics / public opinion → Currently programmed space for some festivals - can be mitigated - loss of money → Some festivals would be forced to move → If fenced or other forms of remediation, would block off access to the pavilion and may mean it's never used over the summer months → Pavilion would mean this "green room" could be accessed / seen by spectators, thereby impacting the privacy of performers → Noise issue → Safety / security → Roof blocks site lines from Amphitheatre → Additional expense for winter events → Closing space and optics of the public → Current smoking area → Non-paying people enjoying events
Considerations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Look at what opportunities this space presents → Roof is 11.5 ft high, which would be hard to access from a safety and access perspective → Pedestrian access is being shifted through design by EFCL- widen access points to alleviate concerns of north, south access → Full time COE staff person on site, during festival / event hours [to ensure citizens using the plaza would not disturb Amphitheatre event] → Could pavilion be elevated as a VIP space for festivals and events? Could work for others with some modifications (if it could be secured) → Emergency evacuation is of paramount concern for EHFA → Landscaping options will provide some mitigations, plus other design solutions including adjusting the height of the fence around the Amphitheatre, plus new gate at back → Booking process will help - who gets access, when, how, etc. 	

- Mitigation measures will be different for each group - but would that work? Concerns re: memory, and would this approach be remembered years out?
- Park rangers are run thin and they're done at 10:00 p.m. - cannot count on them providing security support (resourcing issue)
- Length of time it will be fenced off/closed off

Mitigation Strategies Suggested:

- Fencing (around plaza; either temporary or a permanent retractable fence)
- Turning off power to site on demand
- Signage
- Security
- Change roof design
- Be clear on "what concerns you are trying to mitigate" before coming up with solutions
- Landscaping / design - adjust height of amphitheatre fence - provide additional gate access to the back of existing amphitheatre (VIP area)
- Noise disruption - how will this be addressed
 - Via booking process
 - Who should address this - booking or licensing
- Improved fence around Amphitheatre
- Design - is there a way to close it without using a fence?
- Different strategy for different events?
- Steering committee to guide booking management etc. of the site go beyond CoE oversight
- Late night mitigation strategy - CoE site managers are not available after 10:00 pm

Option #2: Consider alternative locations within Hawrelak Park

[unique locations were proposed by attendees]

- 2a: South side of the stream
- 2b: Picnic Site #1 (NW Corner of the Park)
- 2c: Boat Launch (across the road to the west of the park near the river)

2a: South side of the stream

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Beautiful design → Some aspects could be incorporated: creek, path, plus original concept would be much the same → Has unknown environmental impacts → Keeps us in the same area, which is what EFCL wanted → 2a - gives it better visibility - better access - more impact - better sight-lines → Better access to parking, easier access for persons with disabilities → More potential for public routing through the space → Animates year-round, revitalizes the creek, can still see how it all will function and build out; continues to honour the volunteer time that has gone into it → City identified desire to upgrade creek / setting of the creek 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Noise considerations remain → Increased cost for geo-tech, redesign - not budgeted, and EFCL is still seeking even more dollars → Time delays would be incurred - goal to complete by 2021 → Concerns re: redoing approval processes, including perhaps Edm Design Committee → Commitments to funders and partners, especially grants - not clear if everyone would be ok with changes to location / site → Unknown site considerations - new location could unveil site challenges that come as a surprise → Moving means significant loss of time and money → Personal toll, since 2011 - 300 meetings to date on this file → Construction access and laydown area could have negative impacts on open spaces (turf) during construction → Increased servicing costs for facility, based on power, drainage needs, etc. → May not mitigate all the issues from Option #1
Considerations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Cost considerations have to go to Council for decision → Winter lens - will impact ski trails, but mildly → Winter lens - not sure how it will impact the ice (skating surface) → Winter lens - current location is used for snow removal off the pond → Would mess with snowmelt drainage → Funding concerns would need to be addressed by Council, as would the work plan → Could be a wait-and-see approach if situated here re: noise (build it and adjust later approach) → Construction laydown area would have less impact on festivals 	

2b: Picnic Site #1 (NW Corner of the park)

Pros	Cons

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Would never have to close the facility during festivals → More access and visibility that are using the park network → Great parking and sight lines → Adding an amenity in the park that is lacking one → Ultimately would mean it is more fully utilized 24/7/365 → Closer access to bathrooms and picnic shelter → Mitigates sound / sight line concerns → Mitigates all the concerns of the festival / event producers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Currently this space is in a conservation area → Impacts the interaction between the plaza, lake, and the stream - would change the programming → Always the risk of unknowns (unknown issues that could surface in a new location) → This area is already highly booked - one of the favourite spaces of the Park → Everything would need to start over again - brand new project approach would be required - would require more public consultation → Increased costs to update the servicing (gas, power, drainage, etc.) → Eliminates connection to lake and year-round access which is what EFCL wanted → Unknowns re: environmental impact
Considerations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → EFCL wanted a year-round event space (including skating) → Rehab of the park may impact this location → No creek amenity → Design could support other activities in the theatre → HR / financial / other costs 	

2c: Boat Launch Location (across the road to the west of the park near the river)

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Pros from 2b apply to this one as well → Ties in to network of river valley and connection to river usage (dock) → Increases traffic to pavilion as these areas (2b, 2c) are already heavily utilized by park users → Less operational impact during construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Cons from 2b apply here as well → Heavy utilities in the area so concerns with location → Not close bathrooms, but same issue for Option #1 → Creek amenity wouldn't stay / wouldn't happen → Concerns re: crossing the road to get to the pavilion (safety) → There is no parking nearby
Considerations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Already examples of people crossing the road safely → Council makes decision re: human resources, funding, etc. 	

Option #4: Current location, with redesign

Pros	Cons

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Could enhance the amphitheatre → Site already approved → Aesthetically pleasing, permanent fencing that runs from amphitheatre to pavilion - operational controls → All the geo-tech, environmental studies have been done and paid for; site has been approved → Stakeholder feedback - way to incorporate all that's been heard here today and address it → Opportunity to incorporate some operational concerns - retractable fencing - some of the infrastructure and operational mitigations can be built-in here → Allows for flexibility depending on event - we can prototype and learn → Have flexibility as it's in design stage - don't want to retrofit later, which is too expensive → Only need to mitigate during the day - redesign allows everyone to use it during the day, closed off at night → As it now stands, it has to be redesigned - poses a dangerous risk (public safety in the event of a need to evacuate the park quickly) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Money for design change → Still have unknowns → Caution about turning this into a semi-private space too often for festivals / events → Time for approval process by Edm Design Committee (RISK)
<p>Considerations</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → New design requires more consultation of some nature - prototyping opportunity → Not currently safe - no first aide access → Regardless, each festival may have its own unique operational concerns that will need to be addressed as redesign is considered 	