

# What We Heard Report

Mitigating flood risk at the **E.L. Smith  
Water Treatment Plant**

Phase Two Community Engagement

October 2022  
[epcor.com/floodprotection](https://epcor.com/floodprotection)



## BACKGROUND: PROJECT AT A GLANCE

Name	Mitigating Flood Risk at the <b>E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant</b>
Phase	Phase Two Community Engagement
Timing	October 2021- April 2022
Site	E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant (3900 E.L. Smith Rd NW, Edmonton, Alberta)
Engagement opportunity & information shared	<p>The project website (<a href="http://epcor.com/floodprotection">epcor.com/floodprotection</a>) included the following project information and input opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project newsletter</li> <li>▪ Online Survey</li> <li>▪ Self-guided walking tour information</li> <li>▪ Registration information for community workshops</li> <li>▪ Construction notice (utility locates)</li> </ul> <p>The following community and Indigenous engagement opportunities were held from September 2021 through February 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Online community workshops</li> <li>▪ Indigenous perspectives workshops</li> <li>▪ Indigenous walking tours</li> <li>▪ Archaeological monitoring</li> <li>▪ Community-led engagement opportunity</li> <li>▪ Small group meetings</li> </ul> <p>In December 2021, a newsletter was mailed to residents in the surrounding communities (Cameron Heights, Henderson Estates, Wedgewood Heights, Donsdale, Dechene, Gariepy, Oleskiw, Rhatigan Ridge and Hadow). In January 2022, a postcard was sent to residents reminding of engagement opportunities. As well, workshop opportunities were shared with local community leagues.</p> <p>In January 2022, a newsletter was emailed to all Indigenous Nation and community representatives included within the project engagement plan.</p>

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant is located on the former reserve lands of Enoch Cree Nation. We respectfully acknowledge that this is Treaty 6 territory – the traditional lands of the Blackfoot, the Cree, the Dene, the Nakota Sioux, the Saulteaux, and later the Métis. The banks of the North Saskatchewan River, where both Edmonton’s water treatment plants (E.L. Smith and Rossdale) are located, have been gathering places since time immemorial. EPCOR acknowledges this history and values the perspectives of those with traditional ties to these lands.

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## PROJECT BACKGROUND

EPCOR is taking action to protect the water supply for people in Edmonton and more than 65 surrounding communities in the event of a major flood, while also partnering with local neighbourhoods on flood resilience. We want to limit potential damage to the facilities and resume water treatment as quickly as possible. More than 1.3 million people rely on this water every day.

Both of Edmonton's water treatment plants (E.L. Smith and Rossdale<sup>1</sup>) are located in the floodplain of the North Saskatchewan River, where they bring untreated water out of the river, treat it, and then pump safe, clean drinking water to homes and businesses. As these locations present an increased chance of flooding, we have a plan to protect Edmonton's drinking water supply. By taking action now, we can manage the risk associated with a major flood and ensure

Did you know? This work is being supported by more than \$21 million in grant funding through the Alberta Community Resilience Program and the Government of Canada's Disaster Mitigation & Adaptation Fund.

that customers receive clean, safe and reliable water service as soon as possible after a flooding emergency.

We're planning for the future at the water treatment plants. Part of that

planning involves looking at changes in weather trends. Over the next 30 years, climate change modelling predicts that extreme weather will be more frequent and air temperatures will increase. For the North Saskatchewan River, this is expected to lead to higher flows in the winter and spring, with earlier or multiple spring runoff periods (caused by melting snowpack), and lower flows during the summer and fall.

Preparing the two water treatment plants for a major flood event will include three kinds of work:

1. Increasing protection to critical assets, or relocating them.
2. Preventing river water from backing up into the water treatment plants through drainage pipes that discharge to the river.
3. Developing barriers to protect critical equipment and drinking water reservoirs if the river overtops its banks.

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<sup>1</sup> While the information contained in this report is specific to E.L. Smith, we are also planning for the future at the Rossdale Water Treatment Plant. As the timing and scope of the work needed to protect the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant from the impacts of a major flood differs from what is needed at Rossdale, we have chosen to separate our summary of community engagement at each plant into their own reports moving forward.

For more information about the community engagement work done to date at the Rossdale Water Treatment Plant, please refer to the Rossdale-specific What We Heard Report (for Phase 2 and subsequent phases).

The first two categories of work will generally take place within existing buildings on both plant sites and within the existing fence lines. The third category of work (installing flood barriers) will take place on the fence line and be visible to those living, working and recreating around the Rossdale and E.L. Smith plants.

## COMMUNITY CONTEXT

### E.L. SMITH

The E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant is located along Edmonton's North Saskatchewan River, at 3900 EL Smith Road on Enoch Cree Nation's former reserve lands (Treaty 6 territory). It has been providing Edmonton and surrounding areas with drinking water since 1976.

The North Saskatchewan River curves along the north and east sides of the plant. The plant is bordered to the south by the Anthony Henday Drive and to the west by the Cameron Heights neighbourhood. Across the river is Henderson Estates community (to the east) and Terwillegar Park (to the north).

The E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant is located in the river floodplain where it brings untreated water out of the North Saskatchewan River, treats it, and pumps safe, clean drinking water to homes and businesses in Edmonton and surrounding communities. As this river valley location presents an increased chance of flooding, we have a long-term plan in place to protect the drinking water supply to nearly one-third of the population of Alberta, over 65 communities in total.

The area around the project area includes a mixture of single-family homes, apartment buildings, commercial businesses, parks and public facilities.



## INDIGENOUS NATIONS & COMMUNITIES

We recognize that the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant is located on the former reserve lands of Enoch Cree Nation. As such, it was important to EPCOR that we seek out, hear, and include the perspectives of Indigenous Nations and communities with an interest in these lands.

In addition to our discussions with those who live near and recreate around the water plants, we have engaged 32<sup>2</sup> Indigenous Nations and communities with an interest in these lands and will continue these conversations throughout this project.

EPCOR is aligning with the principles of OCAP®<sup>3</sup> (Ownership, Control, Access, Possession) for this work, and continues to work with participating Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous Nations and communities to ensure protocols are in place for appropriate management of the Indigenous knowledge that is shared.

We are committed to respecting and protecting archaeological resources throughout our project design and construction processes. All ground disturbance work at the plant will undergo review and approval by Alberta Culture and Status of Women. We are committed to ensuring that Indigenous Nations and communities are involved in monitoring any archaeological work required during this project, and that opportunities are equitable, safe and effective. Furthermore, our monitoring principles were developed in conversation with Indigenous Nations

The E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant is situated along a bend in the North Saskatchewan River located upstream from the historic placement of the settlement of Edmonton.

This is within Treaty #6 territory, the signing of which established a reserve (Tommy Lapotac Indian Reserve) whose boundaries included the water treatment plant area. The reserve was gradually made smaller through "surrenders" in 1902 and 1908, culminating in the current area of Enoch Cree Nation, to the west outside the modern city limits.

Historically, these areas were traditional transportation ways, communication networks and encampment spots. The ongoing discovery of archeological evidence demonstrates the longstanding use of the river valley by Indigenous peoples and connects EPCOR's river valley operations to present-day Indigenous rights-holders.

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<sup>2</sup> At project commencement there were 31 Indigenous Nations and communities included. In January 2022 another community was added to those EPCOR has engaged.

<sup>3</sup> OCAP® is a registered trademark of the First Nations Information Governance Centre. Learn more at <https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/>.

and communities, and reflect our desire to learn from these groups about their preferences for engaging through Indigenous monitors.

## DECISION-MAKING

EPCOR makes project decisions by considering a number of factors, including technical requirements, environmental impacts, costs to water ratepayers, and community input. Community input will be used alongside these other considerations for the project to select designs that are aligned with community values, are suitable for the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant site, and are mindful of costs to water ratepayers.

This public and Indigenous engagement process to-date was done to the **refine** level in our public engagement framework, which means that **we sought community and Indigenous input to help us improve the quality of the project design.**

EPCOR believes in the importance of working with local and Indigenous communities around our facilities. Community and Indigenous input and involvement is a key component of our decision making as EPCOR plans for the future at our water treatment plants.

We will ensure that community and Indigenous feedback is directly reflected in the project design and share how participant input influenced the final design through these What We Did & What We Heard reports.

## TIMELINE

As shown in the table below, community and Indigenous engagement is ongoing and will continue throughout this project. At this time, we anticipate construction to begin in 2024. While we will engage with the community and Indigenous Nations and communities to ask for specific input at the stages noted on the timeline, we are committed to working with community members throughout the planning and construction of these necessary flood barriers.

Preliminary Design		
Phase One	May – September 2021	Community and Indigenous engagement about <b>early concepts</b> to understand what should be considered in the design process for the flood barriers.
Phase Two	October 2021 – April 2022	Community and Indigenous engagement about <b>refined options</b> for the flood barriers, including further conversations about potential community amenities to include in the flood barrier area.
Phase Three	Planned for fall 2022	Community and Indigenous engagement about the <b>selected designs.</b>

<b>Detailed Design</b>		
Phase Four	2023	Community and Indigenous engagement on the <b>detailed design</b> of the flood barriers. This will include discussions about the specific barrier treatments, landscaping plans and any potential amenities.
<b>Construction</b>		
Phase Five	2024-2027	Ongoing communication with the community and ongoing communication and engagement with Indigenous Nations and communities about <b>construction plans</b> , impacts and timing.
Complete!	2027	Community event to celebrate completion of the water treatment plant flood barriers.

## HOW WE COMMUNICATED, ENGAGED & WHO PARTICIPATED

The following section provides an overview of the community and Indigenous engagement process, how it was supported with communications and who choose to participate.

### ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

In April 2022, we wrapped up our second phase of community engagement for this project. We heard from participants through a variety of formats, including collaborative online workshops, surveys, emails, and one-on-one conversations.

Indigenous engagement activities for this project take a holistic approach and offer multiple pathways for Indigenous Nations and communities to participate. For these reasons, it is difficult to assign engagement activities to discrete phases. We have heard from Indigenous participants in many ways, including online workshops, in-person tours and meetings, emails, monitoring activities and telephone surveys.

In the first phase of engagement for this project, we showed the community early concepts of the flood barriers, and asked what we should consider in the design process for the flood barriers. The goal for that phase of engagement was to hear from participants about how they experience the areas where flood barriers are needed to protect the two water treatment plants, and how EPCOR can improve these experiences through project design, while being mindful of costs and environmental footprint.

In this second phase of engagement, we shared designs for the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant that were

refined based on the feedback received during Phase 1<sup>4</sup>. The goals for this phase of engagement were to:

- Confirm what was heard during Phase 1 engagement from participants about how they want the barriers to look and feel (design considerations).
- Identify community interests, perspectives, experiences, issues, and key considerations relating to the flood barriers.
- Brainstorm additional considerations for the project team to evaluate while designing the flood barriers.

During these conversations, we asked participants **how they use and value the areas** where permanent flood barriers are needed and **what EPCOR should consider** as we select designs for the flood barriers needed to protect the E.L. Smith in a flood event.

## COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

We employed a number of tactics to communicate information about the project to community members, Indigenous rights holders and other parties interested in the area around the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant. This included posting project information and input opportunities

Community engagement for this project has been ongoing since May 2021. This report highlights the second phase of community engagement for this project, which took place from **September 2021 through February 2022**.

For readers interested in learning more about our community engagement efforts prior to September 2021, a summary of the first phase of community engagement is available on our project webpage at [epcor.com/floodprotection](http://epcor.com/floodprotection).

Over the upcoming years, EPCOR will continue to work with those connected to the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant to understand how we can best integrate these flood barriers into the community and existing landscape.

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<sup>4</sup> For more information about what we heard from participants in Phase 1 (Early Design Concepts) and how we used that input, please refer to the *Phase 1 What We Did & What We Heard Report* located on the project webpage at [epcor.com/floodprotection](http://epcor.com/floodprotection)

on our project webpage at [epcor.com/floodprotection](http://epcor.com/floodprotection) (also accessed through the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant website at [epcor.com/elsmith](http://epcor.com/elsmith)), including:

- Project need and scope
- Phase 1 (early design concepts) What We Did & What We Heard Report
- Map showing location of planned flood barriers
- Types of flood barriers
- Flood barrier design considerations
- Current engagement activities
- Community newsletters

The project webpage also included descriptions and links to the following engagement activities for Phase 2 (refined design concepts):

- Self-guided walking tour documents (including a map)
- Online community survey
- Registration information for the online workshops

In addition to posting information online, EPCOR mailed a project newsletter by unaddressed mail to addresses in the communities surrounding the water treatment plant, including:

- Cameron Heights
- Wedgewood Heights
- Donsdale
- Dechene
- Gariepy
- Oleskiw
- Rhatigan Ridge
- Henderson Estates
- Falconer Heights
- Haddow
- Windermere

This newsletter was mailed to 10,255 people and included information about the following:

- An overview of the flood protection project
- EPCOR's role in flood protection
- What we heard during conversations in Phase One (March - September 2021) of our engagement
- How that feedback was used to inform project details
- Refined flood barrier design options for around the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant
- How you can work with us to improve the project design
- Next steps for the project

Details about each of the communication activities are noted in the table below.

Communication Activity	Interaction
Project webpage (EL Smith-specific content at <a href="https://www.epcor.com/elsmith/protecting-the-el-smith-water-treatment-plant-from-flooding">Protecting the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant from Flooding (epcor.com)</a> )	33 visits
Project Newsletter and follow-up postcard	<p>Mailed to participants located near the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant and those who opted into our mailing list (online at <a href="https://www.epcor.com/elsmith">epcor.com/elsmith</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unaddressed mail: More than 10,000 each (newsletter and postcard)</li> </ul> <p>Emailed to Indigenous Nation and community representatives included in EPCOR's project engagement plan. Newsletter content was adapted for this audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consultation office representatives from 32 Indigenous Nations and communities</li> </ul>
Community-Led Engagement Graphic Assets	<p>Emailed artwork (jpgs) for Indigenous Nations and communities to post on their social media platforms, inviting their representatives to provide feedback (via the survey)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consultation office representatives from 32 Indigenous Nations and communities</li> </ul>
Archaeologist Summary Video (1)	Recorded presentation by Stantec archaeologist summarizing activities related to monitoring program to share during virtual community update sessions, and other scheduled viewing sessions. (Refer to engagement activity table for distribution.)
Construction Notice (utility locates)	Mailed to participants located near the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant and those who opted into our mailing list (online at <a href="https://www.epcor.com/elsmith">epcor.com/elsmith</a> ). <i>Mailing stats are not available for this notice.</i>
Direct emails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emails sent to consultation office representatives from 32 different Indigenous Nations and communities. Email was the main form of communication to notify of opportunities to engage.</li> <li>▪ A small number of direct emails to special interest groups</li> </ul>

Communication Activity	Interaction
Direct phone calls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Over 50 follow up calls to Indigenous Nation and community representatives</li> <li>▪ A small number of follow up calls to individuals who reached out to EPCOR</li> </ul>

## ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

This section is broken into public engagement activities and Indigenous engagement activities.

### Public Engagement Activities

We held two online workshops to discuss the early design concepts for E.L. Smith in February 2022 followed by an online survey that provided respondents with opportunity to share feedback on design considerations for both E.L. Smith as well as the Rossdale Water Treatment Plant. We also connected with individual community members through email and phone. These conversations provided participants with opportunities to learn about why this work is needed and provide feedback about what EPCOR should consider as we select designs for the flood barriers needed to protect the E.L. Smith in a situation where the North Saskatchewan River overtops its banks.

During the community workshops and online survey, EPCOR shared information about:

- What we heard in phase 1 engagement.
- Where the water treatment plant flood barriers will be located.
- Possible types of flood barriers around the water treatment plants and how these different types of barriers impact the location.

During these activities, participants were asked to provide responses to key discussion questions, focussed on understanding:

- Additional feedback to build on what we heard in phase one about how the community uses and values the area where the flood barriers will be built.
- Which design considerations are important for EPCOR to consider while building flood barriers in select locations around the water treatment plant?
- What type of amenities would you like to see incorporated into the design of the flood barrier at this location?

The feedback shared by participants in these sessions was used to confirm what was heard during the first phase of engagement and help EPCOR further understand how the community uses and values the areas where the flood barriers will be built. It also helped EPCOR understand community preferences for design considerations in the areas where flood barriers will be constructed and the reasons for these preferences.

Participation and interest in these online engagement opportunities was low, with 10 participants attending in total. It is worth noting that these online events took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, which we expect contributed to this low engagement. We experienced higher levels of participation from members of the public through our online survey. This indicates to us that online surveys are a tool that works for community members and, as such, will continue to be used on this project.

What we heard in response to the questions we asked throughout our engagement activities is included in the following section. Participation numbers for each of the engagement activities are noted in the table below.

Engagement Activity	Participation
E.L. Smith Online Workshops (2)	10 participants
Cameron Heights Community League Meeting (1)	11 participants
Community Online Survey (1)	76 respondents
Self-Guided Walking Tour Survey (1)	1 participant
Edmonton Water Community Advisory Panel Meeting (1)	8 participants
Online Event Follow up Surveys (E.L. Smith) (2)	3 respondents
1:1 Conversations (email and phone)	7

## Indigenous Engagement Activities

Indigenous engagement activities during the phase two time period included:

- Narrative – Indigenous Perspectives Workshops (creation of narrative from these conversations based on what we heard and used to support the engagement outcomes for the walking tours.
- Walking Tours
- Virtual Community Update Sessions – November 2022 and March 2022 (recording of archaeologist summary for information sharing purposes).
- Engaging through Indigenous Monitors: Test Pit and Utility Locate Program
- Support for Community-Led Engagement
- One-on-one Meetings
- Include What We Heard (refer to newsletter distributed in January)

- Key themes from engagement activities – pull quotes
- Indigenous engagement-specific table

Indigenous Engagement Activity	Participation
Indigenous Perspectives Online Workshops (2) (Content was gathered under the principles of OCAP® to support Walking Tour outcomes. For this reason, input gathered through this activity is excluded from the feedback section of this report.)	8 Knowledge Keepers and Elders, and 3 helpers representing 4 different Indigenous Nations or communities whose traditional territories EPCOR operates within.
Indigenous Walking Tours (3)	30 people representing 15 different Indigenous Nations or communities whose traditional territories EPCOR operates within.
Virtual Community Update Sessions (4) (March sessions included viewing of archaeologist summary video from Utility Locate monitoring.)	28 people representing 12 different Indigenous Nations or communities (November 2021). 31 people representing 11 different Indigenous Nations or communities (March 2022).
Online Survey (community-led engagement) (1)	0 respondents
One on one meetings with EPCOR	Requested by 4 Indigenous Nations and communities.
Engaging through Indigenous Monitors (2)	7 representatives from 6 Indigenous Nations participated as monitors for 2- or 3-day shifts (Test Pit Monitoring, November 2021)  7 representatives from 7 Indigenous Nations or communities participated as monitors for 2-day shifts (Utility Locate Monitoring, February 2022)

## PARTICIPANTS

During the engagement activities detailed above, we talked to a number of community members about how the necessary flood barriers around the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plants will look

and be experienced by those who live, work and recreate in the areas around the facility, as well as rights-holders and Indigenous Nations and communities with an interest in the areas around the facility. We heard from a number of community members who shared their perspectives on which design considerations are important for EPCOR to consider while building flood barriers around E.L. Smith. We heard from:

- Property owners
- Residents
- Indigenous Nations and communities
- Members of the public
- Community Leagues
- Elected Officials
- Government Agencies
- EPCOR employees
- Other interested parties

We have also been coordinating our planning and design efforts with other projects underway in the area, including the City of Edmonton's Ribbon of Green project team.

## WHAT WE ASKED & HEARD

We have compiled and assessed all the perspectives, suggestions, and comments we have received from residents, members of the public, organizations, other interested parties and Indigenous Nations and communities. As described earlier in the report, we began by asking participants to describe how they use and value the area around the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant in the initial phase of engagement on this project. In this second phase, we wanted to understand and appreciate **the perspectives of community members** along with **what considerations were important for EPCOR to include in our selection process** for flood barriers to protect the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant.

Generally speaking, the majority of respondents told us that they are attracted to the area for various recreational uses including biking, walking, running, and/or enjoying the natural state of the area. Indigenous participants also indicated that harvesting is an important activity in the area. As it relates to the design considerations for the wall itself, respondents also prioritized the importance of the natural area and the need to preserve and enhance the ecology of the area.

EPCOR took the opportunity in this phase to ask about specific design considerations including incorporating art, education and other amenities. Respondents provided a variety of input on these topics, though it should be noted that the majority of participants in this engagement phase emphasized that designs and plans for the E.L. Smith site should prioritize the natural environment and preserve the "natural" feel of the area. Indigenous participants indicated that art should be from Indigenous artists and that it is important that First Nations Peoples and histories are honoured.

A summary of what we heard from residents, members of the public and other interested parties in response to each of the key questions that we asked during the second phase of engagement (refined design concepts) is included below. A summary of the feedback received during engagement with Indigenous Nations and communities connected to the plant site follows in a subsequent section.

## **PUBLIC FEEDBACK**

The following responses were gathered from residents, members of the public and other parties interested in the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant, during community workshops, small group meetings, one on one conversations and the online surveys.

We have also included anonymous participant quotes pulled from the online survey. Due to the nature of the virtual workshop and use of note-takers, there are limited direct quotes from the virtual workshops. Those that are included are taken directly from the digital whiteboard that was used to capture participant input during discussion.

EPCOR has aimed to reflect themes and summarize participant input from the community engagement activities in a manner that captures the essence of what was shared. Any errors or omissions made in this summary report are based solely on our interpretation and analysis of that input.

### **Understanding Area Use & Value**

[What is your connection to the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant?](#)

The majority of those who participated in our various engagement activities for E.L. Smith indicated that they recreate in the area around the water treatment plant or live in the area. Some participants also represented a number of special interest groups including the Cameron Heights Community League, the Edmonton River Valley Conservation Coalition, the Sierra Club of Canada and the Edmonton Mountain Bike Alliance.

[How do you currently use and experience the areas where flood barriers are needed to protect the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant in a major flood event? What activities are you engaged in around the plant?](#)

In response to this question, community members confirmed what EPCOR heard during the first phase of engagement on this project, sharing that they value the area most for recreation and general enjoyment of nature.

EPCOR shared that in earlier engagement we heard that community members use and value the area around the water treatment plants for recreational purposes (such as walking/ running, cycling, dog walking and watersports on the North Saskatchewan River) along with general enjoyment of nature (including viewing the river and green space), and asked if there was

anything else participants would add to this list. We heard that, in addition to the Phase 1 engagement outcomes, some participants:

- Would like the area to be preserved for ecological, archaeological and cultural purposes
- Enjoy the way the area currently is without further development
- Are opposed to recreation in this area

It is worth noting that participants who use the area for recreation value the remoteness of the area and lack of development — their preference would be that the area stays as it is and is not further developed to support more recreational traffic. This point of view is reflective of a small and specific set of participants, while the other participants indicated that they are in favour of enhanced recreational access to benefit more people and activities while preserving the natural beauty and importance of the area.

*“Can ride freely. Not afraid to go fast”*

*“Relatively untouched. Untrafficked.”<sup>5</sup>*

Some participants also expressed that the area should not undergo further development due to the ecological, archaeological and cultural significance of the area.

## **Design Considerations for the Flood Barriers**

There are three key locations around the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant that need permanent flood barriers. Grass-covered embankments and flood walls will be built around E.L. Smith to meet technical requirements, reduce the impacts to vegetation and minimize the cost to rate payers.

During our first phase of engagement, we heard from participants that there are a number of considerations that we should include when designing how these necessary flood barriers will look and be experienced by those using the areas around the two water treatment plants. During this phase of engagement, we presented three potential design considerations to participants for feedback and asked participants to share their perspectives and preferences about these considerations. These design considerations included:

1. Maintaining the natural area:
  - The natural state of the area is important.
  - The loss of vegetation should be mitigated.
2. Education and history:

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<sup>5</sup> *Anonymous participant feedback from one of the Community Workshops, captured on digital whiteboard.*

- Educational features: improve signage or add interactive features outside the existing fence line to educate people about the services the water treatment plant provides.
  - Historical features: add features that draw inspiration from local history. Options could include working with a local historic group, or highlighting the history at this site.
  - Indigenous connections: honour Indigenous perspectives and the connections that many Nations and communities have to this site since time immemorial.
3. Artistic features:
- Adorn the area with local or Indigenous art, murals or sculptures. The public art could be interactive in nature or highlight the community's character. EPCOR would further engage with the local and Indigenous community regarding art selection.

The questions we asked specific to each design consideration along with the responses we received are summarized below.

### Maintaining the natural area

Participants in our first phase of community engagement mentioned that the natural state of the area is important, and the loss of vegetation should be mitigated. During this second phase of engagement, EPCOR shared with participants that maintaining the natural state of the area around the water treatment plants is important to EPCOR as well as to community members.

During the community workshops, participants were asked to review the environmental design considerations and share their feedback on *anything else* they would like EPCOR to consider as part of maintaining the natural area around the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant. Only eight total responses were collected to this question. Generally, respondents agreed with the need to preserve and enhance the natural landscape and limit the impact of the planned flood barriers during construction as well as in the long-term.

However, it's important to note discussion around the "connectivity" mentioned in EPCOR's original statements. Feedback EPCOR received indicated that the wording is vague: It could refer to the ability for wildlife to move from one area to another, or the ability for humans to access the natural area. With regard to wildlife connectivity, it was felt that EPCOR was not in a position to achieve gains in this area.

With this feedback in mind, EPCOR clarifies its commitment to vegetation management (see "Our Commitment to Vegetation Management" on p. 27).

The remaining questions (see below) related to design considerations asked participants to comment specifically on education, art and other amenities as they relate to the necessary flood infrastructure and the overall E.L. Smith area. It should be noted that, when asked which of the remaining design considerations (education/ history and art) participants felt was most important for EPCOR to consider while designing the flood barrier in this area, the majority of people shared that EPCOR should prioritize maintaining and enhancing the natural aspects of the area

and integrating the walls into the natural landscape of the area over introducing art, educational features or other manufactured components.

### Education and history

During the online survey and online workshops, participants were asked to share their perspectives on adding educational or historical features to the area and honoring Indigenous connections to the E.L. Smith site. Participants were asked about their preferences for this design consideration in comparison to artistic features and what they would add to this consideration when thinking about the specific locations where flood barriers are needed at E.L. Smith.

Generally, participants to this question were in favour of incorporating educational features in the area. History of the area, information about the river, and Indigenous involvement were noted most significantly as potential educational content.

*“We need to be reminded of the Indigenous peoples who owned this land and their history so we can respect it that much more.”*

*“To respect the indigenous history of the area and to participate in reconciliation”<sup>6</sup>*

*“Explain the history of the river.”<sup>7</sup>*

Several comments noted that education and Indigenous representation should be prioritized over art. Community members also commented that honouring Indigenous history in this area, along with collaboration with those communities is important.

*“More function with being educational than just looking good.”<sup>8</sup>*

Some participants advised that they are opposed to both art and additional education features, preferring the area to remain natural.

*“River’s beauty is its own art, murals are for downtown”<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> Anonymous participant feedback from the online survey.

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous participant feedback from one of the Community Workshops, captured on digital whiteboard.

<sup>8</sup> Anonymous participant feedback from the online survey.

<sup>9</sup> Anonymous participant feedback from the online survey.

## Artistic features

During the online survey and online workshops, participants were asked to share their perspectives on adorning the area with local or Indigenous art, murals or sculptures. Participants were asked about their preferences for this design consideration in comparison to educational or historic features and what they would add to this consideration when thinking about the specific locations where flood barriers are needed at E.L. Smith.

Most participants indicated that they were generally in favour of art without providing additional detail. Those who provided more detail often noted the importance of Indigenous representation and consultation. We also heard that any art developed for the wall should be created so it can be seen and appreciated from the other side of the river. Those who indicated that they were in favour of artistic features shared that the art should be attractive and visible to those who access the area. We also heard from some participants that the wall should be integrated with the nature around it through landscaping or other features.

*“My art would be to make the wall blend into the terrain.”*

*“So it can be seen and appreciated from afar even across the river.”<sup>10</sup>*

When asked about art in the area, participants also shared that Indigenous representation is important and that Indigenous groups should be consulted on this topic.

*“Thoughtful art installation can incorporate history (education) and honour Indigenous influence.”<sup>11</sup>*

As with other questions in this phase of engagement, cost effectiveness and functionality of the flood infrastructure was noted as important for some respondents.

*“I do not consider art to be an important consideration. Cost is most important – we have too much city debt already. Our children and grandchildren will already be paying too much for our overspending.”<sup>12</sup>*

Is there anything else you think we should consider in our design process? Anything we should add?

When asked if there was anything else that EPCOR should consider while designing the necessary flood barriers for the E.L. Smith site, the majority of respondents expressed that the

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<sup>10</sup> Anonymous participant feedback from the online community survey.

<sup>11</sup> Anonymous participant feedback from the online community survey.

<sup>12</sup> Anonymous participant feedback from the online community survey.

flood infrastructure should be developed with sensitivity to and integration with the natural environment around it. These comments included specific mentions that the wall's design should incorporate "living" components (e.g. plant materials), and that the wildlife corridor should be protected and enhanced.

*"Make it disappear into the landscape. Make it as unobtrusive as possible."*

*"Impact on wildlife. Is there a way to make a 'living wall' or to build bath or bird houses or bird baths into the design."*

*"Minimal tree removal for the flood wall, if any. Retain trees when installing natural flood barrier. Trees absorb water and their roots stabilize soil. The area has already lost significant tree cover as a result of the solar panel installation."<sup>13</sup>*

Some participants also expressed that cost and integrity/function of the flood infrastructure should be the primary concern in planning and development. Participants also voiced concern about protecting the infrastructure from graffiti and ensuring that the build is aesthetically pleasing (e.g. through artwork or landscaping).

*"Don't just build a wall - just attracts a spray paint can."<sup>14</sup>*

We also heard that many community members would like to see additional access for recreation in the area, noting specific opportunities to improve access to the trail system around the water treatment plant.

*"Make the ground level and easy to walk on for those who may be challenged."*

*"There should be consideration given to ensuring all non-vehicular traffic can traverse the space between the river and the barrier."<sup>15</sup>*

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<sup>13</sup> Anonymous participant feedback from the online community survey.

<sup>14</sup> Anonymous participant feedback from the online community survey.

<sup>15</sup> Anonymous participant feedback from the online community survey.

## Brainstorming Amenities

What type of amenities would you like to see incorporated into the design of the flood barriers at E.L. Smith?

During the online workshops and the online survey, participants were asked to share ideas for amenities that they would like to see incorporated into the design of the flood barriers in specific locations around the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant site.

Many participants expressed a deep interest in spending more leisure time in the area. These community members noted several amenities to support that use including seating, waste bins, washrooms, amenities for dogs (e.g. waste bags), access to drinking water, improved trail access and parking<sup>16</sup>.

*“While not connected to the project per se it would be nice (and used a lot!) to have seating area perhaps small tables for people to have lunch and enjoy the views, including the indigenous art you are planning!”<sup>17</sup>*

We also heard that art and interpretive signage would help people better understand and appreciate the area. Participants reiterated comments that the area should integrate Indigenous culture and participation.

Some participants emphasized that EPCOR should focus on keeping the area natural, limiting development in the area. These community members identified maintaining and enhancing the natural landscape as a major priority.

*“While some barriers that are impenetrable to wildlife are appropriate to protect infrastructure, these barriers should be kept to a minimum. The proposed plan with a combination of natural flood buffers and the flood wall appears to incorporate this.”*

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<sup>16</sup> When we brainstormed with participants about specific amenities that they would like to see incorporated into the project design, we received a wide range of ideas and suggestions. Not all of these suggestions will be possible within the project scope and budget. While we appreciate all the suggestions that we received, only those that fit within the project design, scope and budget will be considered by the project team as we move into the detailed design phase for the project. We will continue conversations with community members about the selected amenities during subsequent engagement on this project during Phase 3 engagement (selected designs).

<sup>17</sup> Anonymous participant feedback from the online community survey.

*“Keep it as natural as possible - for appreciation of the river valley and cost mitigation.”*

*“Make it functional, disrupting the natural beauty of the river valley as little as possible.”<sup>18</sup>*

## INDIGENOUS FEEDBACK

As discussed previously, Indigenous engagement takes a holistic approach, adapting engagement activities based on ongoing feedback. With multiple pathways for participation, not every engagement activity seeks to answer specific engagement questions. For instance, monitoring activities are a way for EPCOR to engage with community members but these activities do not include specific questions for participants to respond to.

Feedback and responses were gathered from Indigenous Nation and community representatives interested in the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant, during in-person walking tours, virtual information sharing workshops, monitoring activities and one on one conversations.

Direct quotes included in the table below come from virtual information sharing workshops and in-person walking tours. However, similar themes were observed in one on one conversations and monitoring activity feedback. Because some themes emerged across more than one question, we have grouped responses by theme, rather than question, shown in the table below.

For reference, the engagement questions that have been asked so far, include:

1. What do the proposed flood barriers look and feel like?
2. How can we minimize impact to the land?
3. What are the most important things for EPCOR to think about as the proposed flood barriers are designed?
4. How can we honour the ways that you, your community, your Nation and ancestors connect or connected with the land and water around the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant?
5. How can we increase understanding of and celebrate the traditional and historical significance of these areas for EPCOR and the public?
6. Envision the project being complete. How are you, your Nation, your community and non-Indigenous peoples interacting with the spaces around the proposed flood barriers?

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<sup>18</sup> Anonymous participant feedback from the online community survey.

Themes and participant quotes from Indigenous engagement activities that took place from September 2021 through April 2022 are included in the table below.

Theme	Quote or supporting participant evidence
<b>Understanding area use and value</b>	
Allow for interaction with the land	
Harvesting opportunities	<p>“Would like to harvest before everything is cut down.”</p> <p>Community members harvest berries and medicines.</p>
<p>Concerns over tree removal</p> <p>Replanting should occur</p> <p>Uses for trees that are removed</p>	<p>“We would like to be consulted on the types of trees/shrubs that are replanted.”</p> <p>“I know people who would like to use these trees and would benefit from those trees for sweat lodge and sun dance. These trees are perfect for that. For many Papaschase living in the city we don't have materials like this available to us (without the territory that some other Nations have).”</p> <p>“Trees that are removed should be mulched.”</p> <p>“We might be interested in wood from any trees that are removed.”</p>
<p>Consideration for Environment</p> <p>Importance of Water</p>	<p>“What bird species are here?”</p> <p>“Check with the water tables to make sure there are no issues (due to the piles). Water tables are so delicate.”</p> <p>“The water should be very important to all of us. Feeds everything that we eat...The water is sacred.”</p> <p>Flooding - "Is EPCOR prepared to mitigate against flooding that could happen before construction in two years?"</p>
Many histories and stories of the areas	<p>"Include information about land history around the plant."</p> <p>“We want to be the people sharing the story.”</p> <p>“How our world views look at the land. Invite everyone. Have time to share. Oral history - in person sharing. Work with Enoch and have them involved. This site is rich in history.”</p>
Importance of Treaty	"Historical sites are to be protected by the Nations under Treaties."
<b>Design considerations and preferences</b>	

Theme	Quote or supporting participant evidence
Diverse preferences	<p>A mix of preference for walls, berms and materials.</p> <p>“Brick”</p> <p>“Stone with artwork.”</p> <p>“Berms are more natural.”</p>
Indigenous artwork	<p>“Artwork would be a waste of time in some areas, where it won’t be seen.”</p> <p>“Artwork should be by Treaty Six artists.”</p> <p>Artwork should represent stories and histories of the area.</p>
Acknowledge Indigenous perspectives	<p>"Interpretive centre needed. Videos of Elders. We need opportunities for learning and sharing."</p> <p>"Lots of artifacts here. Would be good to put symbol on site. Markers. Sign of metal that is long term at the location where an artifact was found. Tipi style metals, 7 metals, two peace pipes (crossed, male and female, to represent our ancestors that were here)."</p> <p>"Two people can't speak for the whole Nation. We need to bring this to our Elders" (other community representatives).</p>
<b>Opportunities for Indigenous inclusion</b>	
Ceremony and protocol at various times	<p>"Pipe ceremony before shovels are in the ground."</p> <p>"Sites here should have monitoring and protocol."</p>
Participate in monitoring throughout the project	<p>"Monitors on site at all times. Notify in advance."</p> <p>"Want archaeological monitors during ground disturbance and are looking for opportunities."</p> <p>"Sites here should have monitoring and protocol."</p> <p>Glad the Nations are being included in this work. Glad for EPCOR to create these opportunities to work with Nations....Grateful and thankful to partner with EPCOR."</p>

Theme	Quote or supporting participant evidence
Employment opportunities	Construction employment  “Bid - vendors list and how to get on it. May be some Nations with experience.” <sup>19</sup>
<b>Technical interest in the project</b>	
	Pile depth, erosion, facilities, impact on groundwater, access to analysis reports comparing berms and walls.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

EPCOR is committed to stewarding the environment at our water and wastewater treatment plants. That means minimizing the impact of our activity on vegetation and wildlife, and replanting, restoring or replenishing habitat to its previous state, or greater, within our fenceline.

To do this, we have begun to develop a vegetation management plan to improve overall ecological structure and function and restore habitat on our sites. We are mapping current vegetation at each site and outlining a long-term plan to increase natural areas. This could include wildflower/pollinator gardens, developing a diverse undergrowth and forest succession strategy around already treed areas, and planting more trees to support city-wide goals toward improving the urban forest.

In addition to developing vegetation management plans for our sites, we will be looking for opportunities to work collaboratively with the City of Edmonton and align with the Urban Forest Management Plan on vegetation and habitat management outside our fencelines.

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<sup>19</sup> All quotations in this table come from coded summaries for the Walking Tours and Virtual Community Update Sessions in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022.

For the flood barrier project, we will restore vegetation that is lost due to the construction of these barriers so that we achieve an overall net gain in ecosystem structure and function in the area. This includes expanding natural areas within our fenceline if we are unable to restore them outside.

## HOW WE USED THIS INPUT

We compiled and assessed all of the perspectives, suggestions, and comments received during the first phase of community engagement on this project.

We combined this information with the technical requirements of protecting Edmonton's water treatment plants in a situation where the North Saskatchewan River overtops its banks to refine our early design concepts and develop refined options for consideration during the second phase of engagement.

Thank you to everyone who has provided feedback about this project to date!

This is a collaborative effort and we appreciate your insight and input. The feedback you've provided to date has helped us understand what we should consider as we select designs for the E.L. Smith site.

For E.L. Smith, design considerations we will take forward to detailed design include:

- *Prioritize maintaining and enhancing existing environment.*
- *Support existing recreational use through minimal amenities.*
- *Include educational features that include Indigenous representation.*
- *Align with City, EPCOR, and Community priorities.*

We are looking forward to continuing these conversations over the coming months as we work together to further improve our plans to protect the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant in a major flood event.

## WHAT'S NEXT

Over the coming months, we will continue to work with the communities around the Rosedale and E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plants confirm the feedback we have received and improve the quality of the project design.

We are committed to working with participants to develop designs that meet the needs of your community while being mindful of costs. We will ensure that the feedback received is reflected in the project design and share how community input influenced the final design.

In the next phase of engagement (Phase Three: Selected Designs), we plan to share the barrier locations selected for construction at the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant and confirm what we heard in terms of design considerations. In future phases of engagement, we will work with community members on the proposed designs and amenities.

Phase three engagement will be initiated in fall 2022, with formal engagement opportunities to be scheduled.

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**  
**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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