

RIVER CROSSING HERITAGE INTERPRETIVE PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Photo credit: City of Edmonton Archives, EA-160-165

Edmonton

HERITAGE
INTERPRETIVE PLAN
RIVER CROSSING

THE RIVER CROSSING HERITAGE INTERPRETIVE PLAN

Executive Summary

Within Edmonton, there are few places with as long, layered and complex a heritage as the River Crossing (Rossdale) area (Figure 1 - map). This heritage stretches back hundreds and even thousands of years and includes natural and cultural heritage that is both tangible (historic buildings, artifacts, documents) and intangible (stories, values and traditions). It is this mix that makes this place important to Edmonton's history and to First Nations, Métis, Franco-Albertan, and everyone living in Edmonton and surrounding region. It is this heritage that the Heritage Interpretive Plan seeks to understand and bring to life.

WHY IS THIS PLAN NEEDED?

In 2015, Council endorsed a vision for the River Crossing project, which seeks to redevelop West Rossdale in such a way that reconnects with the area's history. There are still many questions about how and when the area will change. It is important to recognize that this change will happen over many years and that the Heritage Interpretive Plan is an opportunity to make heritage a foundation of that future change.

WHAT DOES THE PLAN DO?

The Heritage Interpretive Plan represents a new way for the City to consider heritage in the River Crossing area. The overarching aim of this plan is to integrate heritage interpretation into landscape, the built environment (e.g., architecture, art, urban design), and programming (e.g., activities, animation) in ways that are authentic, appropriate and compelling for people who will use the space. The plan was developed by building on previous work around heritage, existing research, site analysis, interpretive planning principles, as well as through engagement with the public, Indigenous communities and related organizations, and stakeholders. The Heritage Interpretive Plan:

- Helps to understand why this place is important by focusing on the history and cultural heritage of the River Crossing Area.
- Provides guidance and ideas on how to tell the story of the area on the ground as the area evolves over time.
- Lays out additional work required to support future interpretation.



FIGURE 1: River Crossing area
INSET: Central Edmonton, showing the location of the River Crossing area

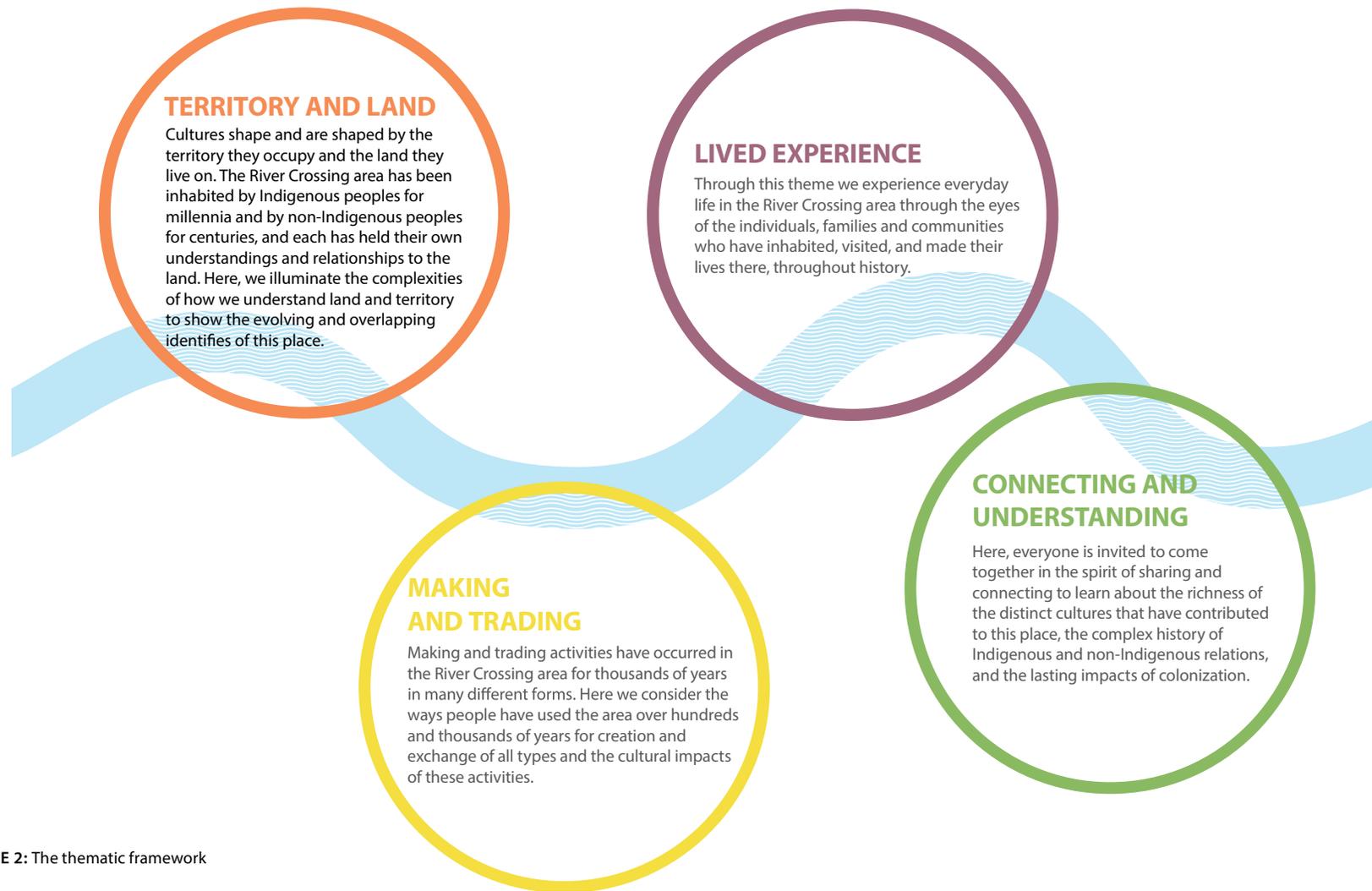


FIGURE 2: The thematic framework

THE THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

The thematic framework is the heart of the Heritage Interpretive Plan and reflects what we heard was important about this place from Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives. It offers a flexible way to organize the complex history and wide range of stories and topics about the area, while presenting them in a coherent way.

The four themes—as briefly described in Figure 2—are **Territory and Land**, **Making and Trading**, **Lived Experience**, and **Connecting and Understanding**.

In addition to the themes, the framework recognizes the importance of the North Saskatchewan River as the greatest defining physical feature of the area and an important element in many of the themes and stories about this place.

INTERPRETING THE THEMES

For each theme, the plan lays out a series of interpretive goals that describe what people who use the site in the future should understand, feel and do in regards to heritage. Each theme is an opportunity to explore a wide number of stories and topics in ways that fulfill the interpretive goals. To illustrate how the four themes should be used, Table 1 lists a key interpretive goal for each theme, possible topics to explore, possible spaces in the River Crossing area to leverage for interpretation as well as some ideas for interpreting the themes. The full version of the Heritage Interpretive Plan provides more detail.

| TABLE 1 | Territory and Land | Making and Trading | Lived Experience | Connecting & Understanding |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Key interpretive goal | Visitors are exposed to a complex narrative about territory and land as it relates to the River Crossing area and the Edmonton region. | Visitors understand the central importance of making and trading to the interactions between peoples in the area, and the influence that making and trading in Rosssdale had in shaping the city and region. | Visitors appreciate the everyday life of the people who lived in the River Crossing area and those who passed through it, and connect empathetically to past inhabitants. | Visitors recognize the contributions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures to Edmonton and reflect on a sometimes difficult past, moving towards fostering genuine connections and understanding. |
| Possible Topics to Explore (for a more complete list of sample topics, see chapter 3) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous and non-Indigenous understandings and relationships with land and territory Traditional territories, Treaty 6, Rupert's Land, proclamation of Alberta Forms of inhabitation in the area: encampments, forts, river lots, settlement Natural and human changes to the landscape of the flats | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural resources available in the area and how they were used by First peoples and others The fur trade Modes of transportation used in trade Items that were made or traded by different groups at different times, including making of art and craft Power generation and industrial activity on the flats | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lives of known historical figures, e.g., Marie-Anne Gaboury Lagimodière, chiefs Lapotac and Papaschase, Father Lacombe, Donald Ross, Sir Wilfrid Laurier Stories of other people who were here, beyond the noted historical figures Ideas of home and family life Participation in sports, horse-racing, the exhibition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The contributions to this place by First Nation, Métis, Franco-Albertan and other communities The rich, living and distinct First Nations and Métis cultures Treaty as a living document Circumstances that have led us to seek reconciliation Acknowledgement and respect for the Traditional Burial Grounds and Fort Edmonton Cemetery |
| Possible spaces/sites to leverage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public spaces/parks Streets/recreational trails/routes Entry points to the area Archaeological sites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rosssdale Generating Station Near power and water infrastructure Busier places such as pathways and commercial nodes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ortona Armoury, Ross Flats Apartments, Donald Ross School New development/public spaces Sport and recreation facilities/ trails The old river landing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plaza/small performance space Quiet park spaces/paths and connection points Vistas |
| Possible ways to interpret through landscape and built environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight view planes, landscape features and archaeological sites Signposts to signal old trails and distances to other territories, forts, communities Naming that honours original and early occupants Embed outline of Fort Edmonton in ground | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motifs that reflect historical industrial uses in infrastructure and street furniture Create garden plots and use of heirloom plant varieties Represent traditionally important resources, such as bison or sturgeon, in landscape and architecture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markers of previous dwellings and businesses Inscriptions, audio, murals or sculpture with small reminders of everyday life Mobile media that shows the area through the eyes of others Sculptural and visual elements of play for children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Message boards Spaces for informal memorials/signage Inclusion of art, language, songs, stories, poems of many cultures incorporated into the built environment Quiet spaces that encourage thought, e.g., parks, gardens, walking paths |
| Possible ways to interpret through programming | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpretive walks or canoe trips Events to mark Treaty 6 adhesion, "Fort" days, Alberta's birthday Indigenous cultural and historical talks/workshops Archaeology talks Augmented reality to show how lands have changed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markets and events related to the theme of trading and making Opportunities to learn traditional crafts, food preparation and skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storytelling, workshops, performances, celebrations, display, markets Oral history projects facilitated through live events, video booths Games and sports from other eras and different cultures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storytelling, theatre, film, arts Collecting and sharing oral histories Learning and teaching opportunities connected to the themes |

PROJECT PHASES

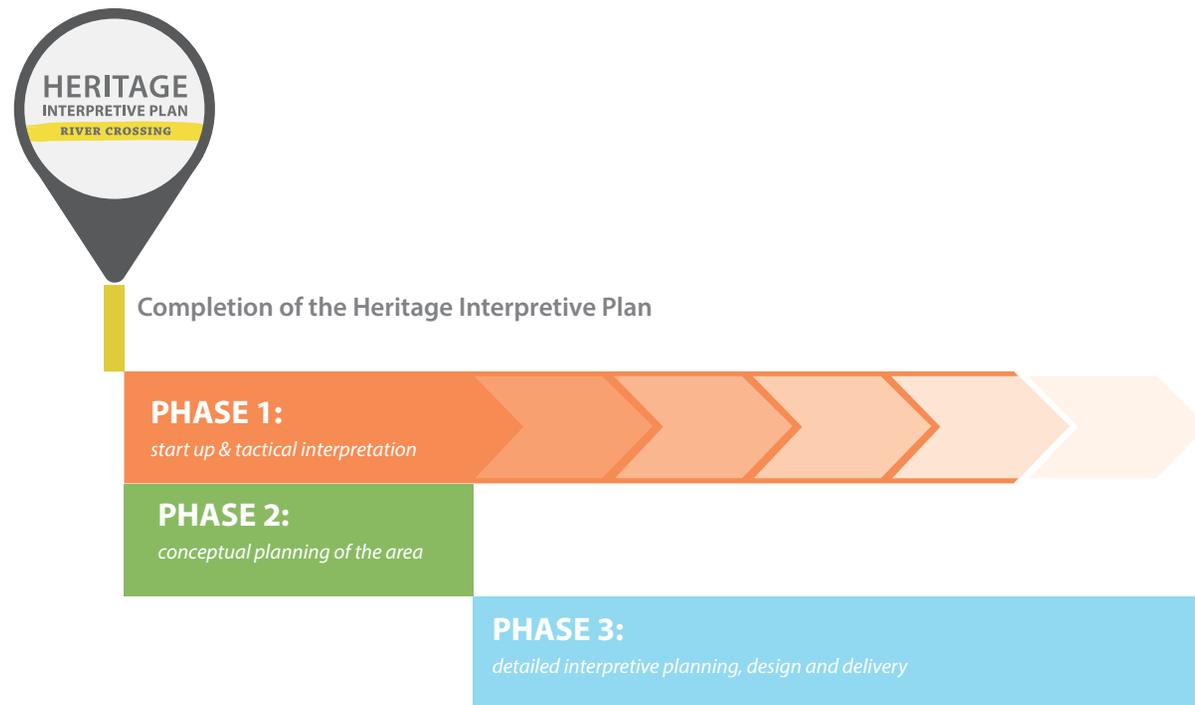


FIGURE 3: Implementation phases

MOVING FORWARD

The Heritage Interpretive Plan is a starting point for understanding the heritage of the Rosedale area in a way that includes a range of perspectives and for thinking about how we can celebrate this heritage on the ground over time. Further planning, design, research, content development and coordination to deliver interpretation will be needed for individual sites, built features, and programming. These next steps will require collaboration between the City and multiple partners and the involvement of Edmontonians, Indigenous Nations and other knowledge holders in different ways.

The Heritage Interpretive Plan provides a series of implementation principles to guide future interpretation and suggests a three-phased approach to advance this work (Figure 3). Each phase requires dedicated resources and detailed work plans, administrative structures and engagement.

Phase 1 is the start-up and exploratory phase and is intended to bring heritage to life in the River Crossing area beginning in the short-term. This phase focuses on non-

resource intensive, temporary installations, activities and media involving community participation and little infrastructure. This phase would overlap phases 2 and 3.

Phase 2 is where the Heritage Interpretive Plan informs the high-level concept for the River Crossing project that will be generated during redevelopment planning for the area.

Phase 3 builds off the preceding phases and directs detailed planning and design work and the delivery of interpretation through public spaces, infrastructure, landscape and buildings, and programming, events and mobile media. This phase coincides with the redevelopment of the River Crossing area, which is expected to take many years.

The full Heritage Interpretive Plan can be viewed at edmonton.ca/HeritageInterpretivePlan