



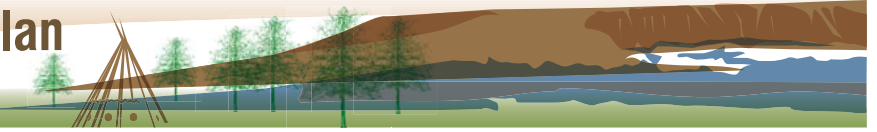
Medicine Hat Parks System Management Plan

April 2010



Medicine Hat
The Gas City

 **Stantec**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Parks System Management Plan is a two part document: (1) Parks System Plan and (2) Parks System Guidelines. The Parks System Plan is a high level plenary document that addresses policies and principles. The Parks System Guidelines component builds on the policies and principles and addresses mid level principles such as parks distribution, land requirements and development guidelines. These two components are brought together in the conclusion and recommendation section. This final section of the Plan outlines the overarching conclusions of the Plan and principles to guide future development of the Parks System.

The Medicine Hat Parks System Management Plan reflects the City's ongoing commitment of working to meet the parks and recreation needs and desires of its residents. Over the last number of years the City has developed an outstanding parks system. Centred on, and dominated by, the valley of the South Saskatchewan River and its tributary creeks - the Seven Persons and the Ross - the parks and open spaces of the City reach outward to its residential fringes to offer rest, relaxation and social interaction opportunities for its residents. The development of this Plan has relied significantly on the participatory efforts of the people of Medicine Hat. Public engagement and stakeholder participation has demonstrated that the parks exude a powerful and positive influence on the lives of residents. The creation of a vision by the stakeholders that has as its core, a focus on life quality, is a measure of that influence:

“Creating outdoor opportunities that enhance the quality of life for present and future generations through responsible stewardship”

The Parks System Management Plan

The development of the Parks System Management Plan has acknowledged the relevance of previous works that have guided park growth in the City, particularly the Open Space Guidelines (1991) and the Open Space Plan (2000). It has also recognized the importance of changing trends in demographics, of cultural and social influences, and the changing

patterns of recreation participation. Recent surveys of provincial recreation participation indicate that while Medicine Hat is generally following provincial trends, it is characterized by its own unique approach to participation. An understanding and appreciation of the impact of such trends has been an important element in ensuring that this is a “Made in Medicine Hat Plan”.

Guided by the Plan's vision, the values and principles have been developed to establish a basis for the parks system guidelines. These set out in detail the purpose, function, size, location, access and connectivity, and policies for future development. A strategy for acquiring lands and the identification of priorities has also been prepared; a strategy that acts as the framework for implementing the recommendations.

The Plan Preparation Process

The participation and engagement of the public was a key element in successfully completing the Parks System Management Plan. Interested residents and more than 60 organizations were initially invited to attend the Open Houses and stakeholder meetings. This wide ranging group included community service organizations, sporting and recreational clubs and associations, city departmental representatives, educational representatives, health service agencies and community members. Subsequently a group of 30 stakeholders committed their time and expertise to form the core of the participation program. Their involvement was instrumental in developing the vision, values and principles used to set the course for the preparation of the plan.

An important input derived from the public engagement process was the identification of a number of issues that have concerned park users. These have included conflict issues with different trail users – cyclists, walkers, pet owners and the issues relating to dog “off-leash” use, private owner encroachment on city park lands, and vandalism. The policies that were developed to address these issues recognize that resolving them will require significant public cooperation.

A land acquisition and control strategy has been included in the report. It proposes the purchase of key properties when these become available and the use of environmental easements, which offer an alternate means of control without actual purchase. Policies on acquisition ensure that the City's parks system continues to expand to meet the ongoing needs of a growing population.

Priorities and Implementation

Determining priorities included the identification of the criteria for setting the priorities. Among these were the natural and unique areas that are deemed to be underprotected or potentially at risk, the residential areas underserved by parks, and the acquisitions that create opportunities for linking parks, and finally, the parks with aging infrastructure and equipment. High priorities were assigned to: a) providing parks in newly developing communities b) parks with aging infrastructure - particularly those parks characterized by heavy use and older infrastructure and c) sites with special requirements with regards to the environment and/or flora and fauna.

The public consultation process resulted in many innovative ways in dealing with implementing the ideas for the Parks Management Plan. These include creating opportunities for members of the public to become involved with parks as volunteers, through public support and sponsorship, and through promoting greater use of parks as well as utilizing public education as a means of learning about parks, culture, history, flora and fauna, and the environment in general. Implementation ideas also demonstrated that the residents of Medicine Hat have a strong commitment to sustainability as a means to the development and protection of their parks. Many insightful and innovative implementation ideas were offered by the Open House and workshop participants, including the use of natural and native plant material in new parks, the creation of community gardens, the use of bioswales to reduce surface runoff in park areas, and the continued use of non-potable water for irrigation purposes. As in all aspects of their contributions, the public's comments on prioritizing and implementing the Plan showed thoughtfulness, ingenuity, and a strong appreciation

for the parks and open spaces of their community.

The following are a summary of the recommendations of the report:

1. Update the Parks planning guidelines in the Municipal Servicing Standards of the day (2011) and prepare detailed Parks Design Guidelines (2012).
2. The need for indoor and outdoor leisure facilities should be assessed, and land requirements reviewed to ensure adequate land allocations (2011).
3. Place increased emphasis and increase funding for redevelopment and renovation of parks with aging infrastructure, starting with the 2012 Budget cycle (2012).
4. Areas identified as 'naturally significant' and requiring preservation should remain undisturbed, and should be registered ER.
5. The criteria for off-leash dog areas - as well as the appropriate distribution of such areas - should be reviewed (2012).
6. Continue with the update or development of future planning documents that will aid in the development of a comprehensive parks system. These documents include:

Recreation Master Plan (develop) in 2010
Urban Forestry Management Plan (update) in 2011
Parks and Open Space Design Standards (develop) in 2012
Playground Management Plan (update) in 2012
Echo Dale Future Development Plan (update) in 2013
Parks Construction Specifications (comprehensive update) in 2014, along with annual updates
Natural Areas and Native Species Management Plan (develop) in 2015
Future Trail Development Master Plan (update) in 2019

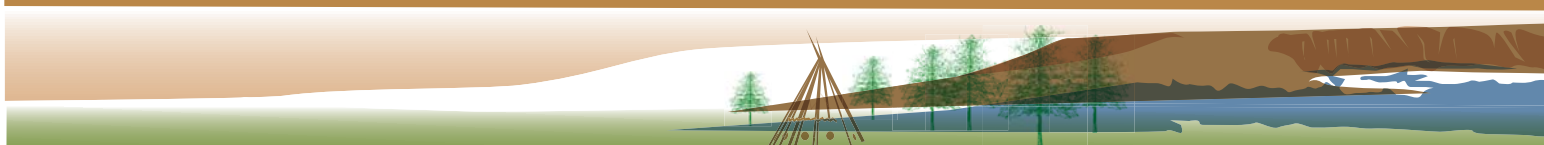
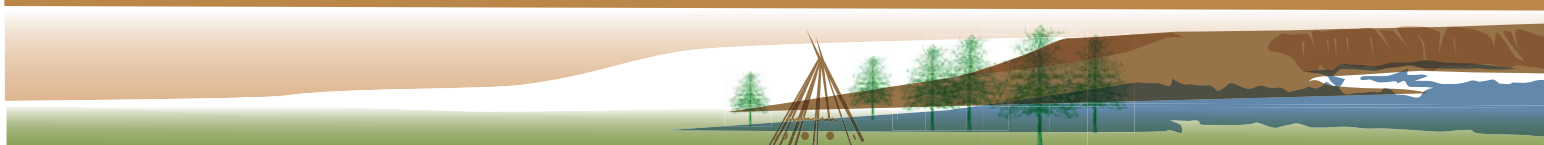


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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

The Parks System Management Plan provides a comprehensive direction for the long term development of the parks and open space system of the City of Medicine Hat. The parks system within the City is greatly valued by the community and its residents, and will continue to be as the Parks System continues to develop and evolve. Based on inputs from an encompassing public input program, an understanding of the history of the community's growth, and the recognition of its natural and man made assets, the Plan sets out guidelines and recommendations for the use and enjoyment of a quality environment for present and future residents of this prairie "oasis".

1.2 PURPOSE

The Parks System Management Plan has been prepared for the purpose of serving as a long term strategy document with a ten year planning horizon for the acquisition, preservation, and development of the parks and open space system of the City of Medicine Hat. The plan should be viewed as a living document and amended as changing conditions warrant, though a review and update should occur at least every 10 years. The adoption in principle of this plan will act to replace the present guiding document, the Open Space Plan (2000) and the Open Space Guidelines (1991).

A variety of parks within the City of Medicine Hat will offer limitless opportunities to meet the needs of this growing and vibrant community. The diverse interests of the population can and will be accommodated by the strategies and policies identified in the Plan.

1.3 A VISION AND PLAN DIRECTION

The vision for the Plan should reflect the input of the public engagement process and embrace a concept that adequately meets the needs of all age groups and interests, both now and in the future. The vision should also extend to an appreciation and respect for the historical, cultural and natural environments offered by the parks and open spaces, as well as the continued need to enable them to endure and thrive.

PLAN DIRECTION

The Plan's direction must lead to the support and creation of a quality lifestyle for the residents and visitors to Medicine Hat, and should include the following concepts:

1. Incorporating the comments of residents that have contributed to the development of the Plan, and offering opportunities for continued meaningful input.

Sustainability defined in a park system:

Park environments are maintained, protected, and preserved for present and future generations.

Equal access is available to all users.

Park and infrastructure development is fiscally sound with resources available for construction and maintenance.

2. Developing a vision that is consistent with the vision of the City and its leaders.
3. Setting the stage for the guidelines that will establish the values and principles to guide the management of the Plan.
4. Identifying the best tools to ensure the most effective means for implementing the Plan.

VISION

The Vision is the overarching concept that will influence and direct the Master Plan. It is the basis for developing the guiding principles, objectives, and concepts that are presented in this plan.

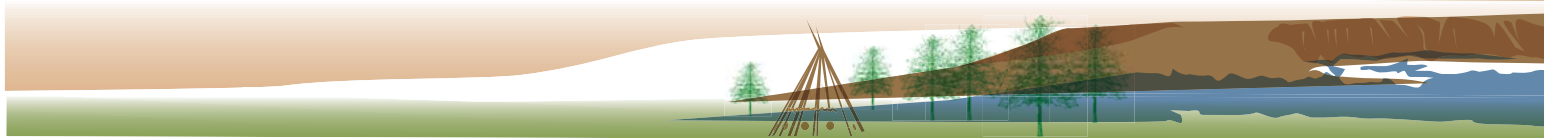
The input of participants at the World Café Stakeholder meetings and workshops was used to identify the key components of a vision concept, and to subsequently establish a vision statement for the Parks System Management Plan.

Several elements relating to the quality, heritage, sustainability, environment, accessibility of the parks system - as well as concerns about the quality of life of the park users - were seen by the stakeholder participants as important to the development of the Vision statement.

- Sustainability as a way of life was considered to be a critical component of a long term vision. It was also recognized that sustainable efforts must be a community-wide endeavour in order to be successful.
- The enjoyment of the parks and open spaces can be enhanced by greater accessibility to them. Connections to all the parks were considered to be key elements inasmuch as they increased the opportunity for a walkable, outdoor use environment; as well as potentially providing links to other important destinations of cultural, heritage and recreational interest.
- The quality of park spaces was viewed as a significant component of the vision. Improvements to facilities would enhance parks and open spaces and create a more inviting recreational environment. The increase in usage could in turn contribute significantly to the quality of life of residents.
- The preservation and protection of the environment was considered to be an important part of the municipality's parks and open space vision. The existence of unique natural features - including the river valley, the coulees, and the grasslands - requires attention and care in order for present users and future generations to be able to appreciate and enjoy such features.

These elements established the basis for the following vision statement:

“Create outdoor opportunities that enhance the quality of life for present and future generations through responsible stewardship.”



1.3.1 Goals and Objectives

The Vision Statement for this Plan underscores the importance of the parks system as a means of magnifying life quality not only for the present generation, but for future ones as well. At the same time, the achievement of an enhanced quality of life must be carried out in a responsible manner, and characterized by exemplary stewardship of the parks system. The goal of the Medicine Hat Parks System Management Plan flows from the Vision Statement's philosophy and states the following:

Goal: To create a comprehensive, long term planning and implementation guide that demonstrates an enhanced focus on the management, operation, and maintenance of the City's parks and open space system, subsequently enriching the quality of life for the residents and visitors to Medicine Hat.

The following objectives will act to achieve this goal:

- Thoroughly understand the parks-related issues, desires and needs of the community, via stakeholder participation and response.
- Develop a long range parks vision that reflects the aspirations of the community and City Council.
- Develop guidelines and policies for parks distribution and park development that meet the challenges of evolving trends, new technologies, and changing future needs.
- Evaluate and compare opportunities, and provide policy options for financing park development, park operations, maintenance, and land acquisitions.
- Endeavour to attain public support for the Parks System Management Plan.

1.4 THE PLAN HIERARCHY AND PLAN SCOPE

The Plan is a "stand alone" document that sets a course for the management of the City's parks and open spaces. At the same time, the Plan remains a component of larger growth policies and directives of the City, such as City Council priorities and the Municipal Development Plan. The scope of the Parks System Management Plan includes:

- A "backgrounder" that reviews documents and studies relevant to the preparation of the Plan
- A compilation of the existing park system
- Requirements for future parks and open spaces
- A review of the river valley and its attributes as a part of the parks system, as well as its special value and importance to that system

- A classification and standards system for pocket, neighbourhood, designated future school sites, open space linkages, and city-wide park needs
- A review of recreation trends to determine future needs
- A comparison to similar municipalities
- Community needs assessment based on trends and stakeholder/public input that is similar to the recently completed “Leisure Trails and Alternative Transportation Needs Assessment” report
- Recommendations for acquisition, preservation and development of existing and future parks
- Implementation approaches
- Policy Statements for parks management

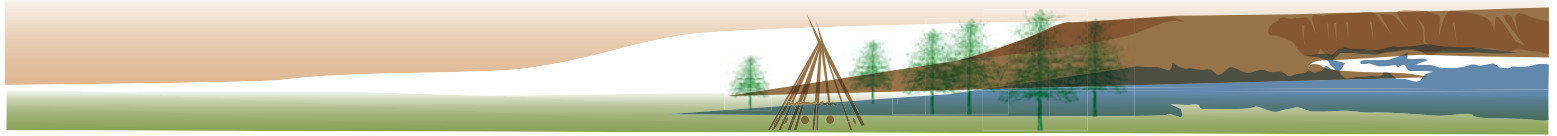
1.5 PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS

The planning process begins with a clear understanding of the issues, purpose and vision; assessing relevant policies studies and data; engaging the public and stakeholders to establish and synthesize needs and desires; and ultimately, providing clear measurable outcomes and recommendations.

1.6 DOCUMENT LIMITATIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

The Parks System Management Plan serves largely as a high level policy document offering ideas, concepts and direction that are designed to capture opportunities and consider possibilities as they unfold. This approach is based on the recognition that the Plan needs to be flexible in light of changing economic, cultural, and demographic realities.

The Plan also includes an appendix with appropriate terminology definitions in order to have a consistent understanding of terms used in the document. Please see Appendix A; Terminology and Definitions.



2.0 BACKGROUND AND PLANNING CONTEXT

Medicine Hat, located in the southeastern part of the province, is Alberta's sixth largest city and encompasses an area of 112 square kilometers. Situated at the crossroads of the Trans Canada Highway 1 and Highway 3, and located 168 km from Lethbridge, 293 km from Calgary, and 146 km from the US border, Medicine Hat has easy access to every part of the world.

The name "Medicine Hat" is the translation of 'Saamis' which is the Blackfoot word for the eagle tail feather headdress worn by medicine men. Its name origin is associated with several local Indian legends.

In 1883, when the Canadian Pacific Railway reached Medicine Hat, a townsite was established. It was incorporated as a town in 1898 and as a city in 1906. The city was instrumental in the settlement of Western Canada, as it had the first hospital past Winnipeg, it was a halfway point between Winnipeg and Vancouver, and was also a divisional CPR point.

Rich in natural resources - including natural gas, coal, clay, and prime agricultural land - the town was known in the early days as the "Pittsburgh of the West", and was a viable service centre with a well established transportation route. An economic boom between 1909 and 1914 brought the population to over 10,000. The population swelled in the mid-1940's due to the town hosting one of the largest WWII POW camps in Canada. It was not until the 1950's that the town again experienced significant commercial development. Today Medicine Hat prides itself as one of the most economical places to live in Canada as the city continues to grow and prosper.

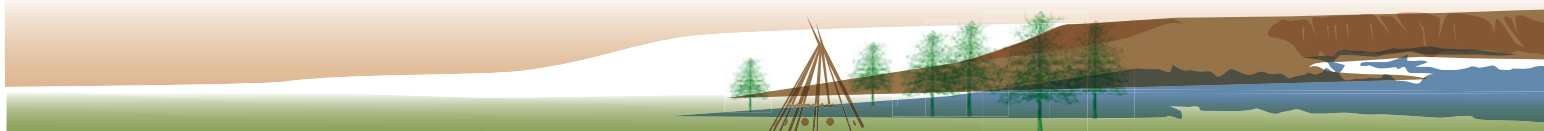


According to the City of Medicine Hat 2009 Census Final Report, the population of Medicine Hat stands at 61,097, demonstrating a growth rate of 1.1% from the previous year. There is a near equal split of male (49%) and female (51%) residents. Of this, 31% of residents are under the age of 24 and 41% are over 45 years.

The Medicine Hat landscape is dominated by the South Saskatchewan River Valley. In addition, both the Seven Persons Creek and Ross Creek empty into the South Saskatchewan River within the City limits, providing a dramatic valley landscape of cliffs and finger coulees throughout the community.

As Canada's "sunniest city", Medicine Hat has much to offer in recreation and outdoor enjoyment. Chinook winter winds, low humidity, mild winters, hot summers, and approximately 2,500 hours of sunshine per year ensure an abundance of all-season activities for residents and visitors alike. If you enjoy ice, water, or sun, there's a sport for every season.





Medicine Hat offers superior leisure outdoor opportunities which include:

- Several golf courses
- Soccer fields
- Baseball diamonds
- Tennis courts
- Skateboard park
- BMX track
- Three private and one municipal campground
- Heritage Trail System
- Man-made swimming lake and beach, boating lake, interpretive farm site, and Ajax coal mine site.

Often referred to as “the oasis on the prairies”, Medicine Hat boasts over 100 city parks covering about 255 hectares of manicured green space, as well as an extensive urban forest. The Heritage Trail System spans approximately 100 km and provides safe, easy access to many of the City’s major parks, attractions and businesses.

Medicine Hat is a strong supporter of community involvement and hosts 312 clubs, service, or activity organizations; as well as over 40 places of worship. To showcase and celebrate the spirit of the City, the Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre opened its doors as a museum, archives, art gallery, performing arts theatre, and discovery centre - all under one roof. The award-winning Medicine Hat Cultural Centre - located on the Medicine Hat College campus - houses the Conservatory of Music and Dance which provides teaching, performance, and studio space for visual arts, dance, and theatre groups that are hosted by community cultural organizations.

Maintaining historic charm with antique gas lamps and brick sidewalks, Medicine Hat’s downtown symbolizes progress and efficiency. For example, the energetic core supports over 200 business and service venues. The City Hall - home to a brick mural depicting local legendary tales - is an award-winning structure that embodies a startling architectural style, complete with a myriad of windows that welcome in the southern Alberta sunshine.

The Police Point Nature Centre, located in a natural area, offers interpretive programming that explores the natural and historic elements of the City, including the South Saskatchewan River Basin.

Medicine Hat takes advantage of its rich historic heritage and numerous man-made attractions to promote tourism in the area. While offering a unique travel experience, the City’s energetic attitude and vitality embrace and enhance key tourist elements of safety, security, and flexibility. Prized attractions include the 18 story Saamis Teepee, the Saamis Archaeological Site, and the Medicine Hat Clay Industries National Historic District.

Medicine Hat is one of the only cities in the world that owns and manages its own electric and gas utility. Built on a massive natural gas field, Medicine Hat earned its claim to fame in Rudyard Kipling's famous line "all hell for a basement", and has been providing residents and businesses of the city with natural gas since 1904. The City's ownership, management and development of this vast resource has resulted in some of the lowest utility rates and property taxes in the country. As a result of the natural gas and oilfield activity, Medicine Hat is known as "The Gas City", and continues to prosper with a self-sufficiency that is envied by many communities.

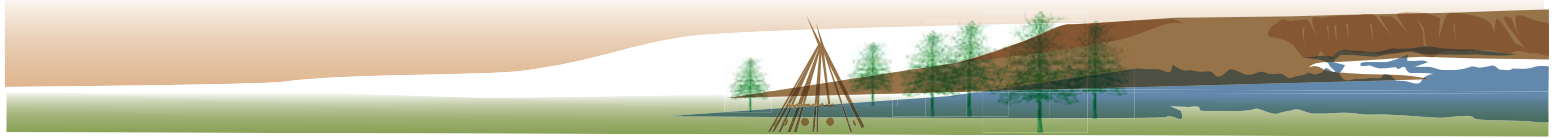
Local government strives to be a steward and a leader of responsible environmental and sustainable energy strategies. A variety of programs have been implemented to assist the community in the wise use of energy, efficient allocation of tax dollars and enhanced quality of life for its residents. These include HAT Smart Environmental Initiative, Smart Growth, Built Green, Home Energy Self Audit Tool Kit, and the Alternative Energy Review.

2.1 PARK DEVELOPMENT IN MEDICINE HAT

2.1.1 History of Medicine Hat Parks

Beautification of the urban landscape in the City has been a long standing goal for this "prairie oasis" for over 120 years. In 1887 the first trees were





planted in the CPR Gardens. Over the next 32 years, the urban forest and its accompanying nursery grew to 17,400 trees. At the same time, a 5-year program of tree planting and beautification was established.

A review of archival newspaper clippings and documents indicate that the Riverside Veterans' Memorial Park site hosted the Queen Victoria Jubilee in 1898. By 1900, picnicking became a frequent activity, and picnic tables were introduced into the area. A sparked interest in a proper sports ground led to the purchase of lands in 1905, for what is known today as Lion's Park. Eight years later, after almost 13 years of fund raising and negotiations, the Police Point Park land was purchased from the Department of the Interior for \$14,000. 1940 marked the official opening of Rotary Park.

A century after the planting of the City's first trees, Medicine Hat now boasts an urban forest of over 28,000 trees. According to recent GIS information, this forest accents 491 park spaces of varying sizes, uses, and classifications within the City's 1587 hectare park system. Provincial government grant money (Heritage Trust Fund) established the Urban Parks Program in the 1980's which paved the way for a "park growth spurt" with the development or upgrades to Echo Dale, Kin Coulee, Police Point, Strathcona Island, and Riverside Veterans Memorial Parks - as well as the development of portions of the Heritage Trail System.

In 2010 the City celebrates the 100th Anniversary of Riverside Veterans' Memorial Park. This site, dedicated in 1910, developed its regal status by a design contest that awarded a coveted \$10.00 prize. It symbolizes a 100 year journey toward beautification, natural landscape preservation, healthy living, and a respect for the diverse and unique recreational and aesthetic surroundings that Medicine Hat residents enjoy today.

2.1.2 Development of Parks

Over the past three decades, planning for parks and open spaces in Medicine Hat has been an important civic and provincial activity. In the early 1970's, an increasing concern and interest in the future use of the South Saskatchewan River valley and its tributary coulees was expressed. Discussions were centered on the preservation and development of attractive park and recreational opportunities, while also considering the best use of lands in and near the valley system in view of the constraints imposed by natural hazards. It was recognized that much data on the nature of the valley environment was not available in a single source that would ensure responsible decision making, and that comprehensive plans and policies did not exist to provide a framework for integrating specific actions. Thus, the Medicine Hat River Valley Study was initiated.

The valley, used for linear movement corridors, recreational activities, aesthetic open spaces, and resource preservation readily provided essential open space linkages in the landscape and mobility networks that knit the City together.

The intent of the River Valley Study was to shape an outstanding example of an attractive, well-conceived landscape that fully integrated natural and urban amenities, while also facilitating responsible decisions to ensure open space preservation, recreational development, and effective protection of both natural and urban resources for present and future generations to use and enjoy.

In 1981 the City recognized the need for continued future planning of the river valley. The River Valley Park System Development Plan was therefore established for the City of Medicine Hat, the Town of Redcliff and the current Cypress County. This plan dealt specifically with the river valley and its edge lands. The development of the parks under this plan was largely funded by the provincial “Urban Parks for the Future” program. The park legacy established by this program included Echo Dale Regional Park, Police Point Park, Strathcona Island Park, Kin Coulee Park, and the regional trail system.

2.2 PARK PLANNING CONTEXT

A number of important documents - some generic, and others parks-specific - have been, and in some cases continue to be, influential in directing the development of the City’s parks and open space system. Among these are: The Open Space Guidelines of 1991, the Open Space Plan of 2000, the Municipal Development Plan of 2004, the Natural Areas and Species Inventory of City of Medicine Hat Properties, and the City Council Priorities 2008-2010.

Other factors affecting parks development and the evolution of this Plan include public engagement processes that are undertaken to provide community assessment - such as was demonstrated in the recently developed “Leisure Trails and Alternative transportation Need Assessment 2009” - as well as the ongoing influences of socio-cultural and demographic trends. This section reviews some of these influences while others are covered further in the plan.

2.2.1 The Open Space Plan 2000 – Summary and Highlights

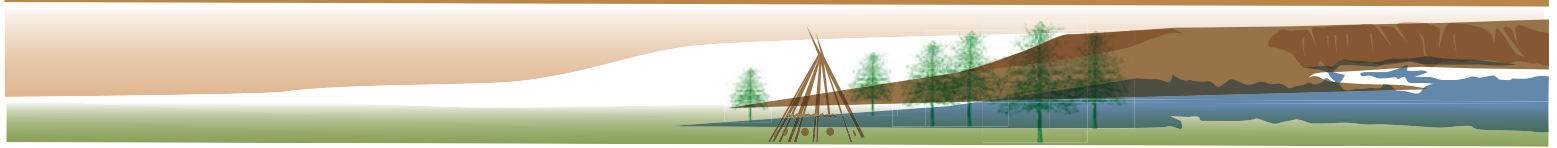
The stated goal of the Open Space Plan 2000 is...

“...to enhance the quality of life in Medicine Hat by providing and maintaining a system of safe and accessible open spaces, recreational parks, and designated areas of environmental or natural significance”.

The main components of the Plan are set out as follows:

a) Open Space Inventory

An inventory of open spaces carried out for the Plan identified both existing and proposed open spaces in the municipality. The inventory noted that the “proposed” open spaces referred to “...areas identified in adopted plans, (e.g. Area Structure Plans) but which have not been dedicated or developed”. Most of these “proposed” areas are noted as being part of the flood plain and escarpment areas.



b) Principles

The Plan sets out 7 principles which have acted as its guiding framework. These are:

- Environmental management and stewardship
- Improving the quality of life and range of amenities
- Integration of nature into the urban environment
- Preservation of natural environmental features
- Importance of open space in sustaining floral and faunal environments
- Importance of pedestrian linkages and the trail system
- Providing a cost-effective system of parks and open space

c) Policy Sections

The policy section of the Plan itemizes approaches and methods for dealing with open space acquisition, preservation, and development. The individual policy sections cover:

- **Dedication:** The types of reserves - municipal, school, and environmental - are noted, accompanied by appropriate means of acquisition.
- **Parks and Open Space:** The policies developed for the Parks and Open Space section are further segmented into 4 additional subsets: Natural Areas and Environmental Reserve, Public Parks, Trail System, and Storm Water Management.
- **Redevelopment:** Areas undergoing redevelopment should continue to have their open space areas recognized and retained, including those areas where former school sites existed.
- **Responsibilities:** The OSP notes the obligations of two City Departments to consider the policies of this document: Planning, Building, and Engineering Services; as well as Parks and Outdoor Recreation.
- **Recommendations:** The OSP includes a number of recommendations requiring “additional attention” identified as being “related to the open space system, park development, and protecting natural areas”, though “beyond the scope” of the Plan. The recommendations are listed as follows:
 - incorporate native species inventory in future amendment of this Open Space Plan
 - hire a landscape architect to assist in the development of design guidelines for park design infrastructure
 - develop boulevard standards and design guidelines



- establish a monitoring and consultation process
- maintain strong relationships with school authorities regarding future school needs, as well as use of parks and open spaces
- explore opportunities for partnerships with various public and private agencies to support the development and use of open spaces
- establish a Land Use District specifically for the protection and preservation of open spaces and natural areas
- dedicate recognized open space parcels as environmental or municipal reserve lands through the subdivision approval process

These recommendations take note of several important issues. Several of these items have been addressed through various plans already completed, such as the Natural Areas and Species Inventory of City of Medicine Hat (2006), and the Boulevard Development and Maintenance Policy (2000). Other items have been accomplished and continue to be achieved on an ongoing basis, such as monitoring programs, relationships with school boards and private organizations for future park and school spaces, and proper land registration. Further outstanding items including design guidelines will be addressed through this Parks System Management Plan.



2.2.2 Open Space Guidelines 1991 – Summary and Highlights

These Guidelines have largely acted as the policy document for open space planning in Medicine Hat from 1991 until the development of the OSP in 2000. As indicated in the purpose of the Guidelines, they are intended “to provide planning guidelines for open spaces in Medicine Hat”.

The Guidelines were developed initially by conducting an inventory of existing open space in the City to determine a minimum level of open space provision. The Guidelines then identified program components suitable for each level of open space and a minimum set of requirements for these levels. These standards became the basis for the guidelines for future parks planning.

The standards and components set out in the Guidelines identify seven types of park spaces within four levels of service: Neighbourhood, Community, City-wide, and Regional. The seven types of park spaces are: neighbourhood park school site, mini park site, community athletic park site, community passive park site, city athletic park site, city passive park site, aesthetic park sites, and regional parks.

The 1991 Guidelines overlap the OSP with respect to the park space standards for neighbourhoods and city-wide areas. Both the Open Space Plan and the Guidelines effectively define the catchment areas for neighbourhood parks and their uses in a similar way.

In summary, the principal difference between the documents lies in the detailed listing of components in the Guidelines set against the more general identification of uses in the Open Space Plan.

2.2.3 Municipal Development Plan 2004

Section 4.10 of the 2004 MDP sets out a number of objectives and policies respecting “Recreation and Open Space”. To determine if significant changes had occurred between the policies and principles of the 2000 Open Space Plan and the objectives and policies of the MDP, they were compared to one another. The comparison concluded that the majority of the policies and principles of the OSP have been carried forward into the 2004 MDP’s Objectives and Policies as set out in Sections 4.10.2 and 4.10.3 of the Plan. The MDP does, however, place additional emphasis on five areas:

- 1) the regional park system
- 2) the importance of meeting the needs of an ever changing demographic profile of the municipality
- 3) the relevance of the River Valley and its future uses
- 4) the protection and preservation of native grasslands
- 5) integration of the City’s open spaces with Cypress County’s and Redcliff’s open spaces and environmentally significant areas.

Appropriate consideration to these interest areas are incorporated into the policies of the Parks System Management Plan.

2.2.4 Natural Areas and Species Inventory of City of Medicine Hat Properties

The Natural Areas and Species Inventory of City of Medicine Hat Properties (NASI), prepared in 2006, assessed various sectors of the City of Medicine Hat for levels of significance as they related to natural areas and native species. The assessment resulted in the establishment of a classification system that identified sites as: 1) locally significant, 2) regionally significant, 3) provincially significant, and 4) nationally significant.

Although the importance of locally and regionally significant sites is clearly important, the NASI also identified several locales as having provincial and national significance. These were specifically noted as:

1. Lion's /Strathcona Island Parks – Provincial significance
2. Saamis Coulee – Provincial Significance
3. South Saskatchewan River-Medicine Hat West –Provincial Significance
4. South Saskatchewan River-Medicine Hat North – National Significance

The policies set out in the Parks System Management Plan take note of the need to establish an appropriate means of protecting the areas deemed 'significant' as well as an update of the inventory and development of a monitoring plan.

2.2.5 City Council Priorities 2008-2010

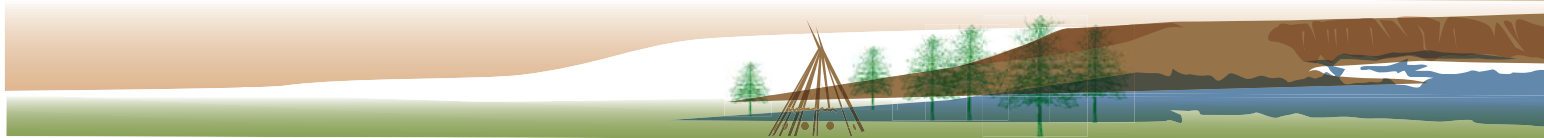
City Council identified a number of priorities following the municipal elections, some of which directly or indirectly affect this Plan:

- move forward with smart and environmentally friendly growth
- increase bike lanes
- ensure sustainable parks and trails

2.2.6 Municipal Servicing Standards

The City of Medicine Hat Municipal Servicing Landscape Requirements include planning principles to be used when developing park space. These include the following:

- Park planning should follow municipal and provincial land regulations and laws
- Incorporation of all open space lands into a well designed park network
- Highest priority given to the preservation of sensitive and natural landscapes while incorporating these lands into the park system



- Positive drainage should be ensured between private land, roads, and park space.

The review of the above noted studies concludes that several recommendations require consideration again.

2.3 SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

The combined elements of sustainability – social, economic and environmental components – ensure that issues are viewed in a comprehensive and holistic manner. These components are frequently used to measure impacts – often referred to as the “Triple Bottom Line” approach - in which assessments of issues go beyond financial considerations alone.

2.3.1 The Benefits of a Sustainable Approach to Parks Management

A “sustainable” approach to parks management views issues from a comprehensive and systemic perspective taking into account economic, social and environmental impacts. This “Triple Bottom Line” approach considers the multidimensional elements of a complex topic. Ensuring that any recommendations and decisions are based on a foundation of thoroughness. The relevance of these components is noted as follows:

Economic

- A well developed park environment is a stimulus to attract residential and other development into the community, thereby aiding and abetting the local economy.
- Meeting the needs of changing trends in recreation participation requires a re-assessment and potential infusion into the budget allocations to both facilities and infrastructure.
- The retail and service side of recreation equipment and equipment accessory purchases by the public can be an important contributor to the local economy, e.g. purchases of cycling, rollerblading, and running equipment.
- Participation in recreation activities provides health benefits to individuals and reduces overall health costs to the community.
- Recent research sponsored by the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association confirms that the Proximate Principle has applications to residential subdivisions in Alberta. The principle is based on the premise that residential properties located near such amenities as parks and open spaces will attract higher values than properties that do not have such an amenity.

Social

- An understanding of participation rates through demographic comparisons ensures that public officials can consider and provide for appropriate

and equitable distribution of activity possibilities for the diverse needs of various social, ethnic and income groups in the community.

- The proximity of parks in neighbourhoods and other community locales enhances the quality of people's lives and creates opportunities for positive social interactions and cultural and intergenerational harmony.
- A public interest in the parks planning and development process stimulates public participation and input to decision makers, and creates an appreciation for civic responsibility and the values of involvement.

Environmental

- Environmental understanding develops an appreciation for the unique, natural, and man-made features of a community and its neighbourhoods.
- The protection and wise use of natural environments is essential to the well-being of both the community and individuals that comprise it.
- Without appropriate attention and consideration, little appreciation for the natural landscapes, wildlife habitats, and other valued components of the environment will be felt by future generations of the community.

2.4 RECREATIONAL TREND ANALYSIS

2.4.1 Background and Context

Changes to lifestyle, the evolution of Canada's multi-cultural environment, a burgeoning baby boom population, and the development of new sport forms have all had an impact on trends in recreation activities. The appreciation of the breadth and impact of such changes is evident in local, as well as provincial and national trends.

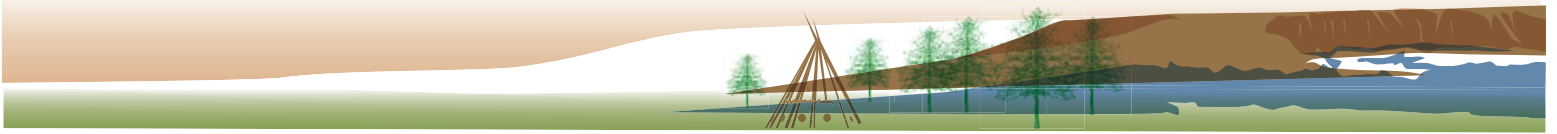
2.4.2 Current Trends

Provincial and national trends occurring in the lives of everyday people exert a major influence on how, if, and when they participate in recreation activities.

Demographic Influences

The "baby boomers" of Canada (1946-1964) fully comprise 1/3 of the entire population and consequently have a significant influence on recreation trends. As this group continues to age, a corresponding shift to less strenuous recreation activities can be anticipated. Thus, tennis and skiing are often being replaced by walking, cycling, and yoga. "Boomers" are also exhibiting a shift to educational and environmental interests, particularly where these are part of an outdoor activity. Recreation surveys clearly show a strong interest in gardening, walking, birding and learning about the natural environment.

An interest in personal health and well-being has been an important stimulus to engaging in some forms of recreation activity. This "good news/bad news" story is balanced against data that indicates that both adult and young age groups



are becoming increasingly overweight, a phenomenon largely attributable to the increased popularity of sedentary activities, such as electronic games.

For other age groups, busy schedules create barriers to leisure activity. Adults are typically in need of time that is unstructured and casual. A consequence of this phenomenon is that many organized team sports are showing some decline in comparison to individual activities and sports. Many communities have responded to the interests of different age groups, and to different time needs by building multi-use, multi-generational centres. Medicine Hat's Family Leisure Centre is a good example of this response.

Cultural / Social / Economic Influences

Aging not only redirects people's interests from more strenuous to less strenuous activities, but also to different forms of leisure activity. The baby boomer generation now shows increasing interest and participation in the visual and performing arts as a part of their quality leisure time. Culture also represents an important influence on recreation activity; a fact largely resulting from Canada's increasingly diverse population. While still engaged by only a very minor segment of the population, sports such as rugby and cricket have now become part of the overall Canadian sports spectrum. Similarly, many ethno-cultural groups may require special consideration. For example, many groups often place high value on locations for large gatherings and family events.



The economic perspective plays a role in determining recreation activity. Findings generally conclude that people with higher income levels show greater levels of participation in recreational activities than households with lower incomes. The ability to ensure that all income levels have access to recreational facilities therefore becomes increasingly important.

New Age Influences

Advances in sport gear and materials have also contributed to an awareness and interest in newer forms of recreational activities. Skateboarding is now one of the fastest growing sports, which creates a high demand for skateboard parks. Similar interest has developed for BMX/trick cycling. Even older sport forms – rollerblading and inline skating – have seen a revival as a result of more sophisticated and durable equipment permitting users to use paths, sidewalks, and streets.

2.4.3 Trends in Recreation Participation

The Government of Alberta conducts a province-wide recreation survey every four years. The most recent of these was carried out in 2008. The goal of the survey is to determine the “participation patterns of Albertans and the factors that influence their recreation activity choices”. The methodology determines:

1. respondents’ participation in a variety of recreational activities
2. three favourite activities of the respondents
3. reasons, and their importance for taking part in their favourite activities
4. which activities respondents would like to start and why they cannot start them
5. volunteer involvement
6. demographic/household income profiles



Although the sample response was based on an Alberta-wide survey, results for certain individual municipalities were also available. Although relatively small, the response sample for Medicine Hat was obtained, thus permitting a comparison to the provincial figures. Some of the facts obtained from the survey indicate:

- Golf had the greatest participation rate by Medicine Hat households. This was followed closely by walking for pleasure and gardening



(equally valued). Provincially, walking for pleasure had the highest household participation rate, followed by gardening and bicycling.

- For group activities the 3 highest number of activities in which Medicine Hat* households participated were: bowling/lawn bowling (15% participation), curling (15%) and ice hockey (12.5%). By comparison, the province wide participation rates stated the 3 highest activities as: bowling/lawn bowling (21%), soccer (17.7%) and ice hockey (14.2%)

**The respondents of the recreation survey from Medicine Hat were few and as such, these percentages may not be a very accurate representation of the actual participation of recreational activities within the City.*

- When asked to name their 3 favourite leisure or recreation activities, Medicine Hat respondents identified – in order - walking, golf, and reading. Provincially, the response was: walking, golf, and camping (reading was in fourth place).
- When asked for the reasons why Medicine Hat respondents participated in leisure activities, the top 4 responses were: for pleasure, to relax, for physical health/exercise, and to be with friends.
- Respondents were asked why they did not participate in leisure or recreational activities. The Medicine Hat survey noted two important reasons for this: too busy with other activities, and too busy with family. The Province-wide survey was in line with the Medicine Hat sentiments, identifying “too busy with family” and “too busy with other activities” as the 2 top reasons for lack of participation.

A factor in the comparison of provincial recreational activities versus those in Medicine Hat was the age profile of the respondents. In the provincial survey, 11.6 % of the respondents were in the 26-35 age group vs. 5% in Medicine Hat. In the 56 – 65 age group and the 66 – 75 age group the percentage of respondents was 19% and 12.6% respectively at the provincial level vs. 22.5% and 25% in Medicine Hat. The response by an older population in Medicine Hat may have been an important contributor to explaining the difference in leisure activity participation and preferences.

2.4.4 Medicine Hat and the Impacts of Shifting Trends

Medicine Hat recreation trends show both similarities and differences when compared to provincial and some general national trends. The limitations of the small sample of respondents to the provincial survey require conclusions to be regarded with some caution. However some trends that deserve attention and whose potential impacts may need to be managed are:

- The Medicine Hat responses demonstrate a preponderance to participate in less strenuous forms of recreation activity, a trend that is clearly consistent with the national activity agenda for “baby boomers”. In addition to putting increased emphasis on meeting the recreational needs of the aging population, a closer examination of the other age groups of the community is warranted in order to ensure appropriate consideration of

Strategy

*Occasional
Community-wide
recreation preference
surveys should be
carried out to ensure
that the needs of all
age groups are met
and suitable resources
can be allocated.*

the needs and expectations of those residents.

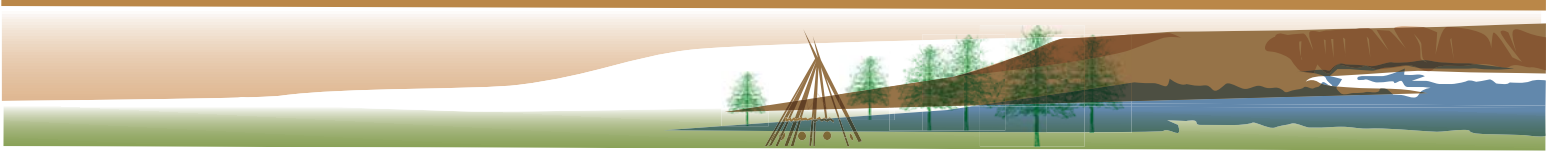
- The ability to participate in activities is frequently hampered by busy schedules. The impacts of this are most significant for organized scheduled sports as well as highly programmed activities. This may necessitate a re-assessment of the facilities, and scheduled programmes that are being contemplated or presently in use in order to allow participation in more “ad hoc” and “as time permits” lifestyle recreation activities.
- The trend changes noted above suggest a need to review budget considerations to ensure that spending is in tandem with the recreation needs and expectation of the community’s changing population profile.
- Medicine Hat residents seek to maintain a high standard of recreational facilities. The City has an aging infrastructure which must be upgraded to ensure that the expectations of the community are met. This has financial and human resource implications.

2.4.5 The Challenges of the Trends

The challenge of the Parks System Management Plan is not only in keeping pace with the changing recreation needs and desires of Medicine Hat’s residents and visitors, but more importantly, anticipating those desires and needs. The City of Medicine Hat’s census of 2009 showed a population of 61,097, and is expected to reach 95,000 within a 30 to 50 year time frame. At the same time the aging phenomenon was evident in the 2009 census report. It indicated that 37% of the population was aged more than 45 years in 1999, versus 41% of the population over 45 in 2009. While the trends of this aging population is leaning towards a more leisurely recreational lifestyle, there is also a significant proportion of younger residents whose view of recreation is far more active. Properly responding to age groups requires a suitable and appropriate balance of resource allocation. Although “pleasing all of the people all of the time” may seem like an unreachable goal, an appreciation of trends matched with the correct application of finite resources will act to create a legacy of success of the Plan.

A Parks System Management Plan faces other trend challenges as well, particularly ones relating to human and financial resources. These resources are needed to:

- facilitate and optimize community parks partnerships
- meet locally available, cost effective, professional landscape design capabilities
- match the ongoing demands of a growing community against an aging parks infrastructure
- respond and find a balance to the community’s desire for traditional parks - manicured, irrigated turf grasses verses those in the community who desire a more natural environment
- respond to policies that put increasing emphasis on environmental issues



2.5 STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The participation and engagement of the public is a key cornerstone in developing a successful Parks System Management Plan. One of the primary goals in the community involvement implementation was to provide innovative and flexible opportunities to engage key stakeholders to achieve the desired outcome of gaining meaningful community input and feedback. Using a fresh approach and encouraging an energetic atmosphere, community members engaged in dialogue to gain an understanding of the issues, explore new ideas, and identify actions to move forward.

Interested residents and more than 60 organizations throughout the City were invited to attend the Open Houses and World Café Stakeholder Meeting. Included were community service organizations, sporting and recreational clubs and associations, educational boards, health service agencies, city departmental representatives, special interest groups, joint use partners, developers, and community members. Approximately 30 “community champions” agreed to become active stakeholders. Throughout the process they committed their time and efforts in participating in Open Houses and 4 Stakeholder Workshops. A full description of the process and results are set out in Appendix B.



3.0 SETTING THE GUIDELINES

3.1 VALUES

Values are fundamental to setting the direction of the overall plan. They underscore the beliefs that determine what is important and what should be 'valued' in the Plan. Based on the input of the stakeholders and the background documents assessed for this study, the values outlined below were deemed to be essential to the Parks System Management Plan. Further, these values act to guide the development of the principles and the subsequent development of the parks system.

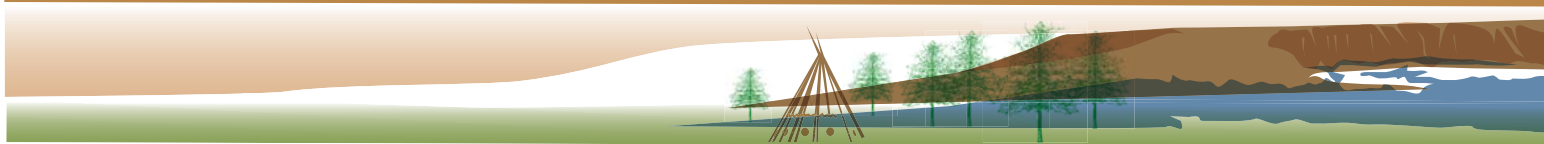
Sustainability Value

Typically viewed as a composite of three interrelated elements - economic, environmental, and social - sustainability plays a significant role in the City of Medicine Hat. There is clearly a great appreciation for the natural and unique environments that are found within the municipality, as well as an appreciation of the maintenance costs and social worth. The application of sustainable solutions with creative new approaches is a notable strength of the community.

Connectivity Value

Medicine Hat, like many communities, is assessing its methods of movement within the City, and recognizes the need to increase the connectivity and the





opportunity for different modes of travel throughout the community. This value appreciates the need for linkages within and to City parks, the needs and capabilities of residents, and the various modes of transportation needed for success.

Diversity Value

The City is a community with a variety of user groups having a broad range of needs and interests to be met. In order to respond to the changing needs of its residents, the City must provide an assortment of parks to meet these needs and interests. For example, special interest includes people requiring accessibility that come from various groups, such as those with physical disabilities, and the wheelchair dependent.

Cultural and Historic Support Value

Medicine Hat is proud of the high quality of life and the support and participation of its' residents. The City has an abundance of amenities and cultural events that are enjoyed and are successful due to the dedication of many of the members of the community.

Safety and Security Value

An important area of public involvement and support is safety and security within the park environments, as well as the community as a whole. Residents are aware of the issues of safety and security, but should be mindful of this role in the overall quality of life.

Public Education Value

Parks also have the unique ability to demonstrate and illustrate history and culture. Often there are great historic and cultural ties to parks, as well as opportunities to develop parks on historic sites to preserve their history. As such, parks provide a wonderful opportunity as a teaching tool to create spaces that educate while being enjoyed. It is also important to educate the public on park standards, maintenance standards and practices, and how parks are developed, designed, and funded. This can manage the public's expectations of parks and provide opportunities for residents and City workers to cooperatively manage and operate community parks.

3.2 PRINCIPLES

Principles were developed as an expression of the direction, vision and values established for the Plan. The following paragraphs, based largely on input from the Open Space and Guidelines Workshop of March 25, 2009, discuss some of these principles which will serve to be a guide for the development of this Plan.

Policy

Requirements for indoor and outdoor recreation facilities should be reviewed when developing Area Structure Plans to ensure that adequate land is allocated to such facilities.

3.2.1 Sustainability and Environmental Principles

The stewardship of natural areas – including the river valley, grasslands and other significant sites - within the City of Medicine Hat is very important. The preservation and protection of the flora, fauna, and natural features that exist within the city will be dependent on the continuation of appropriate stewardship principles and practices that benefit these special areas.

The continued integration and introduction of nature into the urban environment creates a great benefit to the City and provides opportunities for increased green space, sustainable practices, and education and recreation activities.

To achieve the goals relating to stewardship, sustainable principles and practices will need to be in the forefront when dealing with urban environmental systems. This can be achieved in a variety of ways. At the practical level, this can include examples such as being conservative with resources and finding sustainable approaches to watering and lighting of park systems, or making appropriate choices in plant materials and utilizing xeriscaping principles. Sustainability applications such as these will also lead to economic opportunities and financial savings.

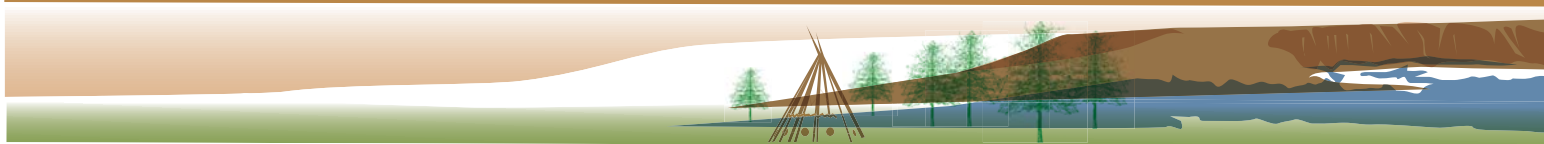
Principles

- Viewing and seeking solutions through innovation, creativity and balance
- Environmental management and stewardship*
- Preservation of natural features
- Integration of nature into urban environment*
- Protection of major regional park system as legacy*
- Sustainable practices – In new and redeveloped parks and maintenance practices - resources and economics (lighting, planting, and xeriscaping)
- Financial sustainability in providing fiscally responsible operations, and applying sustainable maintenance practices while meeting the public's parks spaces expectations
- Preservation of flora and fauna
- Preservation/protection of river valley and natural areas

*these principles, and components of them, are also identified in the 2004 MDP

3.2.2 Quality of Life Principles

The parks system should be appealing and inviting to users and add to the residents' quality of life by providing the best opportunities and amenities to residents. The amenities within the current park system should be improved and upgraded as needed. In addition to the qualitative side of the parks system, it is important that there is adequate access to such amenities including shelters, washrooms, kitchens, and seating.



Principles

- Quality of Life environment with appropriate amenities
- Year round amenities which may include features such as washrooms and shelters

3.2.3 Social/Cultural Principles

The occurrence of a variety of events, ceremonies and festivals within the community allow residents and visitors alike, to interact with their neighbours, gain a greater appreciation for their community (including its heritage and history), and strengthen their sense of community. The success of such events is often attributable to volunteer civic, ethnic, and service organizations.

Principles

- Occurrence of Events
- Participation and resident involvement in the community
- Social equity; an even distribution of parks and open spaces
- History and Heritage interpretation of the City's parks
- Educational information and celebration of the parks – landscape features, statuary, historic gardens.

3.2.4 Connectivity Principles

Access to all the City's Parks and Open Spaces is important. Walkability and similar forms of human powered movement are recognized today as an important lifestyle and need to be accommodated. Additionally it is important to accommodate residents who may be handicapped by age or disabilities.

Principles

- Connectivity of trails
- Accessibility – for those with disabilities and age restrictions
- Connectivity within parks, between parks, and between residential neighbourhoods and parks.

3.2.5 Park Diversity Principles

With a broad range of age groups, user groups, and user capabilities, there is a need to ensure that a variety of recreation opportunities can be accommodated. Park and open space development response must therefore be cognizant of the ongoing changes in needs and wants of residents.

Principles

- Protect major regional park system as a legacy

Policy

Involve the public and the police services in the design and planning of park spaces. Design charettes and public meetings with these groups will provide the input necessary to increase the safety of parks.

Strategy

Involve Corporate Communications Public Involvement initiative in orchestrating design activities.

- Variety/diversity of parks – dog walking, active/passive spaces
- Meeting places – multi-use areas
- Ensure park spaces in new areas
- Transitional parks which that include both natural and manicured landscapes, such as Strathcona Island Park
- Respond to changing demographics
- Redevelopment of existing parks
- Respond to diversity of user needs and capabilities; special interest groups, ethnic groups, minorities, and the disabled

3.2.6 Adaptability Principles

If change is a constant, then adaptability to such change must be the response. Changes in culture, recreation habits, aging patterns, and lifestyle can all have an influence on how parks are used and how they should be developed. The ability to respond to these changing components is the essence of the adaptability principles

Principles

- Adaptability for year round use
- Adapt to changing demographics – users and uses
- Redevelopment of existing parks to meet new changes

3.2.7 Safety and Security Principles

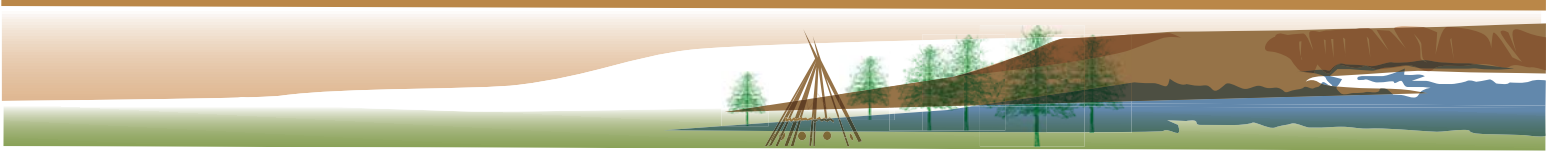
Safety and security are frequently cited as issues that concern users of parks and open spaces. From a Parks Management perspective, opportunities to deal with these matters may lie in approaches that include both education, public involvement and landscape design.

Principles

- Public education and participation
- CPTED applications, but in a balanced way
- Safety applications to parks maintenance are important with respect to safety of trails, playground equipment, and infrastructure
- View safety and security from a larger perspective, i.e. impact on life quality

3.2.8 Education Principles

Education is an important element of the overall parks system. In its broadest form it can teach the community about the history and culture of an area or an



era. A park system can also educate the community about natural systems, ecology, and the relationship between humankind and the natural environment.

Principles

- Development of a diverse park system offers different learning opportunities
- Educational worth of each park is unique
- Public information on the value and contribution of each park to the parks system and the community
- Consider the education potential of every new park that is created. Educational components within parks can be simple or elaborate, and should be appropriate to the situation.



Strategy

Resources may be required to continue with plans to review land registration of parks system parcels to appropriately register as MR or ER.

4.0 PARKS SYSTEM PLAN

The Open Space Plan comprises an inventory of the City's Open Spaces and Parks including a look at the special features within the Park System such as the river valley, environmental reserves, and sensitive areas. The Plan also provides an assessment of components of the system including open space planning, parks classifications, and special considerations such as safety, water management, intermunicipal ventures, and public utility lots.

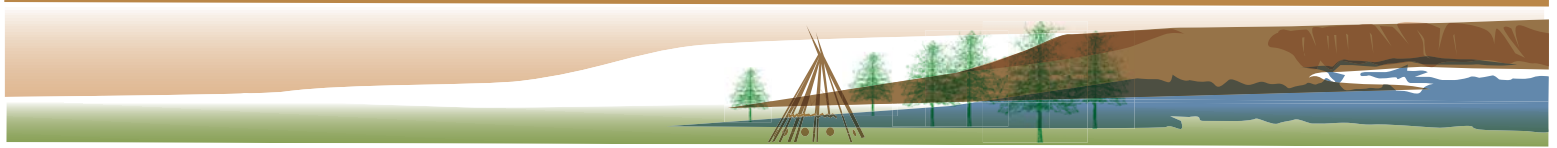
4.1 INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

4.1.1 Parks and Open Spaces

The City of Medicine Hat has a large park network and prides itself in the services and facilities available to its residents. The City is rich with unique natural park spaces in the coulees and adjacent the rivers as well as formal parks which boast numerous amenities including water spray parks, sporting facilities, formal gathering spaces, and day use facilities.

The park system in Medicine Hat is composed of Environmental Reserve (ER) and Municipal Reserve (MR) dedicated lands. The following map, **Figure 4.1 Existing Parks**, which is based upon the City of Medicine Hat GIS data and illustrates all open space areas, identifies and categorizes the parks into these reserve dedications. The map also identifies other significant green spaces such as school sites (SR), cemeteries, and golf courses. The most current inventory shows Environmental Reserve lands encompass approximately 1530 hectares (3780 acres) of park land, and includes parks such as Police Point Park, and portions of Echo Dale Regional Park, Kin Coulee Park, and Strathcona Island Park. The proper registration of Environmental Reserve lands has been a large, ongoing project for the City. Improper registration, and lands that are environmental lands but are not registered as such, are scattered through the City. The map reflects the areas that are identified as Environmental Reserve, but may not be registered as such. Municipal Reserve is comprised of manicured parks and linear green parks, totaling 255 hectares (630 acres) and includes such parks as Central Park, Lions Park, South Ridge Community Park, Riverside Veterans' Memorial Park, and Jefferies Park. The Municipal Reserve areas also include manicured areas such as cemeteries and campgrounds. The total of park space within the City is 1785 hectares (4410 acres).

School Reserve (SR) dedicated lands under the Municipal Government Act include all of the elementary, junior and senior high schools in the City. Although they offer a valuable community recreational service, they are not maintained by the City, and therefore have not been included in the park inventory. Golf courses are identified on inventory map but are not included in the park inventory.



Within these open spaces is a variety of existing infrastructure such as playgrounds, spray parks, washrooms, and picnic shelters. The City also has several sporting facilities including softball and baseball diamonds, goal posts for soccer, rugby and football, tennis courts, horse shoe pits, and volleyball courts.

The park system is connected with a network of trails and greenways which provide a cohesive and consistent park network. These amenities are distributed throughout the City providing convenient and balanced access to a variety of facilities from all communities.

4.1.2 Points of Interest

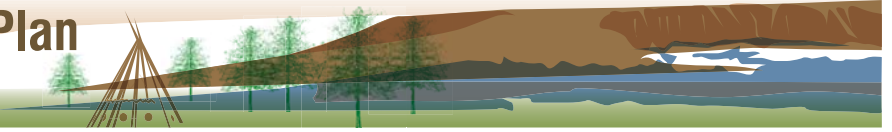
There are several unique spaces within the City of Medicine Hat. These areas are comprised of natural areas, older parks, and historical sites, as well as city landmarks and public recreation facilities. The following map, **Figure 4.2 Points of Interest**, identifies and locates these sites within the City, and illustrates their abundance. These areas serve to enhance the social, recreational, educational, cultural, historic, environmental, and interpretive needs of the community, thereby enriching the quality of life for residents.

4.1.3 Unique and Special Environments

Medicine Hat is endowed with an environment that contains a diversity of natural and man-made features and areas that have played an important role in contributing to the quality of life of its residents. The discussion below outlines these unique and special environments.

4.1.4 Flora and Fauna

The abundance of natural landscapes within the City limits showcases unique habitats and wildlife corridors as well as areas of exclusively rare plant life. **Figures 4.3 Flora, and 4.4 Wildlife**, provides an inventory of the dominant native vegetation, and identifies significant wildlife habitats found within the park and reserve lands. This information is valuable as redevelopment and future development of park and reserve land is planned, so as to ensure that plant and wildlife systems are not disturbed. There have been a number of plant and wildlife species found in the City parks that are identified as being provincially and nationally significant. It is vital that these migratory and breeding areas are identified and chronicled so that future development of parks and natural areas do not interfere with the habitats and life cycles of these species. Examples of such rare and protected species that are found within city parks and surrounding lands include the Northern Leopard Frog, the Lazuli Bunting, Sprague's Pipit, the Long-billed Curlew, and the Tiny Cryptanthus.



4.1.5 Urban Forest

Along with the abundance of natural landscapes within the City, a great effort has been made to draw in the beauty of the river valleys through an extensive urban forest. This has been done on a continual basis for many years and as such there is a large portion of the City with an aging urban forest. A consistent inventory of trees in the City must be maintained to ensure that the vast, rich urban forest is preserved.

Strategy

A program of inventorying the City's tree population should be kept current.

4.2 PARK PLANNING

4.2.1 Provisions and Use of Parks and Open Spaces

Park development is organized in such a way so as to provide for the recreational needs of a community within neighbourhoods and throughout the City; thus ensuring that the needs of user groups are met and that sufficient facilities are provided for individual and group use. Reserve dedications are central to park development as they provide the overarching guidelines and mandates to which the planning of parks will follow. A comprehensive set of design guidelines, as an extension of the existing planning guidelines set forth in the Municipal Servicing Standards, will aid in the development and cohesive appearance of the parks within the City.

4.2.1.1 Municipal Reserve

The Municipal Government Act has set a land dedication percentage of 10% of all developable land to be used as Municipal Reserve. Further to this, the City of Medicine Hat has set out, within construction and development guidelines, how open space is to be allocated as a community is being developed. These guidelines define how that Municipal Reserve is to be used, and what types of parks should be developed. As per the City's Municipal Servicing Standards, the allocation of Municipal Reserve land should be as follows:

50% Municipal Reserve and School Reserve, Active Use

25% Municipal Reserve for Pocket Parks, Local Use

12.5% Municipal Reserve for Greenways

12.5% Municipal Reserve for Other Use – such as areas adjacent to storm water facilities, gas wells, etc.

These land dedications ensure that there is sufficient land set aside for park space, and that parks are evenly and appropriately built within a community. Specific design and construction guidelines for park space can be developed through the use of the City's Municipal Servicing Standards and Construction Specifications or through the development of a set of City Design Standards.

Policy

Planning for schools should occur early in the land use planning process (i.e. at the Area Structure Plan stage) and should include school enrollment projections to determine if schools are needed. Verification of need should occur closer to the development stage.

Policy

The joint use agreement may require review to ensure it accurately reflects the current needs of the City and the School Districts.

4.2.1.2 School Reserve

School Reserves can comprise part of the 10% dedication required by land developers, and as such, it is essential that the school needs are identified early in the planning process e.g. at the Area Structure Plan stage. Discussions between the appropriate School Districts and the City's Planning Department should help determine whether enrollment projections warrant additional schools and where the most appropriate locations are. This can ensure that sites dedicated for schools are ultimately developed for those uses and that the City's park system can be developed in a way that complements the school sites.

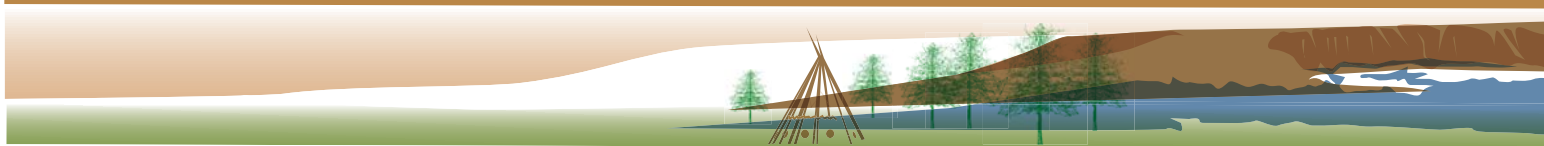
Through joint use agreements between the City and the public and catholic school boards opportunities arise for the school grounds to be shared by the community and by the school districts. In such a case, school grounds should be developed to a manicured grass standard as per the current Municipal Servicing Standards, and provide amenities for both school and community use. Opportunities may also arise for the community to get involved in the development of a school site to ensure that the site is developed to meet the needs of the immediate community. School sites may be developed jointly with the school boards and the Parks Department, but would be maintained by the school boards.

4.2.1.3 Environmental Reserves

The Municipal Government Act sets out the circumstances under which environmental reserves may be acquired through the subdivision process. Typically lands defined as swamps, coulees, natural drainage courses, unstable lands, and lands subject to flooding qualify as areas that may be dedicated as environmental reserve. The City's existing Municipal Development Plan is in accord with these principles and stipulates that land subject to flooding should be recognized as a "natural area" taken as environmental reserve. Similar categorizations and policies are recommended for natural watercourses and wetlands as well as lands that are "not considered developable due to excessive slopes (15% or greater) or instability".

While important to identify the lands that qualify as environmental reserve it is also important to note that acquiring these is dependent on subdivision activity. In considering an acquisition policy, unless a subdivision application triggers an opportunity to have such lands dedicated as environmental reserves, the only option is to acquire them.

Lands that are naturally significant or valuable, though they may not fall under an environmental reserve dedication or be registered as such (as outlined in the Municipal Development Plan) should be equally protected. These parks may be considered a Natural Park and be maintained to the same standards as Environmental Reserve sites. Lands that fall under within this category may be special habitats, wildlife corridors or native grasslands.



4.2.1.4 The River Valley

The river valley is an area of outstanding natural beauty and requires special policies and guidelines for its use and preservation. The Municipal Development Plan lists a number of recreation-related uses that could be allowed in the valley including:

- 1) leisure trails
- 2) open air recreation that does not adversely affect the natural environment, or result in land form modifications
- 3) uses that preserve, interpret, and restore elements of the natural environment
- 4) uses that promote preservation of the natural environment
- 5) uses involved in the scientific or educational study of the natural or cultural heritage characteristics of the valley.

These uses represent a list of activities that fit appropriately within the spectrum of values and principles that have been identified for this Master Plan.

4.2.1.5 Natural and “Significant” Areas

The 2006 Natural Areas and Species Inventory study (Section 2.2.4) identified and classified areas as locally, regionally, provincially, and nationally significant (the classification system is meant only to identify relative importance of the sites, and no formal federal, provincial or other ‘designation’ should be implied from this classification). While the study identifies sites that fit all four categories, there are three sites deemed to be provincially significant and one that has national significance. These significant areas should be carefully assessed as development approaches or continues near these areas, whether that be residential or commercial development, or potential park development. Identification and planning of these areas should take place at the Area Structure Plan level.

Strategy

The ‘significant’ areas - local, regional, provincial, and natural - noted by the 2006 NASI study should be reviewed to determine the nature of the policies, if any, that may be needed to protect the sites.

4.2.2 Classification of Parks and Open Spaces

The park classification system establishes eight categories used to define open space. Each category defines the purpose and use of the park space, as well as general details including size, location, and access to the site.

Pocket Parks – these spaces are small parks that are scattered throughout communities. They are intended to be a small green space, 0.4-0.8ha in size, that can be used and enjoyed by the community; especially by high density housing residents where these spaces provide an extended back yard for them.

Neighbourhood Parks – neighbourhood parks are mid-sized parks, 0.8-5ha in size, located within communities. These parks often include passive and active play opportunities, and are easily accessible from throughout the neighbourhood. Downtown urban parks would also be classified as a Neighbourhood Park with

respect to size and amenities, but may contain features and amenities beyond those of a neighbourhood park.

Community Parks – serving multiple communities, these parks host a variety of active and passive recreational activities, as well as sporting and day use facilities and range from 3-8ha in size.

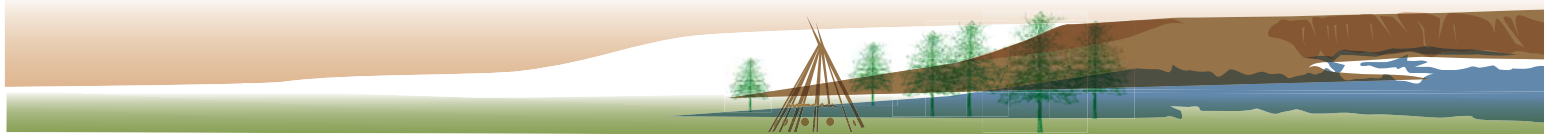
Future School Sites – these park spaces, jointly used with school boards, provide play grounds and sporting facilities for public use and for organized sporting events when not used for school functions.

City Wide Parks – these large parks serve the entire city and often provide special facilities for passive or active recreation. Many also include both sport and day use amenities. These parks are large with a minimum size of 8ha and may encompass natural landscape features such as the river valley.

Greenways – these narrow green spaces serve to connect and link parks together creating an interconnected park system within and between communities. These greenways may vary in width from 20m to 40m.

Natural Parks – these parks are unique spaces that include native landscapes





and protected land under environmental reserve registrations. They may include trails and park features allowing visitors to enjoy and appreciate the distinctive landscape as well as learn more about the land and the plant and wildlife that inhabit the area.

Special Use Areas – often times included in a parks system, these unique pieces of land have specialized uses and functions that cater to specific user groups. Examples of such sites include campgrounds, golf courses, and cemeteries.

A detailed set of policies and strategies for each of the above categories are discussed in Section 5.0

4.2.3 Public Safety

Often taken for granted, the safety of parks requires a great deal of planning and cooperation from residents, city officials, and enforcement agencies. There are several ways in which a park can be made safer through the design and development of open spaces. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) employs principles that increase safety and include sight lines and improved visibility into a space, increased signage, enhanced surveillance of parks, use of harder materials that discourage vandalism, and development of underutilized sites to bring people to the site. At the same time, a proper application of CPTED principles also requires a balance of appropriate design principles that result in an attractive and pleasing park area.

Involving the community and the police at the design stage of planning for park spaces will ensure that the residents feel pride for the park and may be more willing to observe the park and provide a local “policing” role in the safety and protection of the site. This will help to deter vandalism and problems that may exist in the park site if it is commonly known that the park is being monitored, not only by the police but also by community members.

4.2.4 Water Management

4.2.4.1 Overview

The management of water systems is important to the integrity of the City’s parks and open spaces. From control of erosion in parks areas, to the need for appropriate sourcing of water for irrigation purposes, all point to a need for active involvement in ensuring the intelligent use and management of water resources.

4.2.4.2 Water Conservation

In a climatic environment that is characterized by limited precipitation and naturally occurring sources of water, the wise use of this resource is essential. The utilization of non-potable water, for example helps to relieve the demand for more expensive treated domestic water. Irrigation Districts, e.g. the St. Mary

Policy

Proposals to the planning authority to include water bodies as part of overall residential neighbourhood plans should include provisions for adjacent appropriately sized municipal reserves as determined by the Parks & Outdoor Recreation Department.

River Irrigation District, is currently being used and may be of value as a more prominent potential sources for non-potable water in future developments. Where practical, 'grey water' systems may also create possibilities for more sustainable approaches to the wise use of water in the parks environment.

An important water conservation opportunity lies with the use of automated and centrally controlled irrigation systems. These can ensure that the quantity of water is distributed both efficiently and economically. Natural water capturing systems such as rain gardens – typically little more than depressions with vegetation – can often augment the irrigation works by retention of rainfall before its value is lost to runoff and storm collection systems. The design, feasibility, and longevity of rain gardens will require review on a site specific basis.

4.2.4.3 Appropriate Landscaping Practices

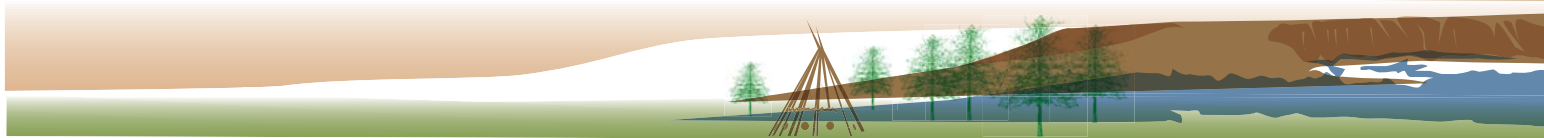
Utilizing plant material that fits the local ecosystem and incorporating landscaping practices that are appropriate to such an ecosystem are important elements of water conservation. The application of such practices is set out well in the City's environmental initiative publication "7 Steps to Xeriscaping". These 'steps' serve as an informative guide, not only to the general public, but have excellent applications to the overall management of the parks system. They include planning and design, soil improvement measures, proper selection of plant material, appropriate irrigation practices, mulching, practical turf areas, and ongoing maintenance.

4.2.4.4 Future Water Management Opportunities

The practice by the development industry of including water bodies (either for storm detention or as irrigation-sourced ponds) as part of the overall land use planning process, offers opportunities to enhance parks design and development. The presence of attractively landscaped water areas in residential neighbourhoods can prove to be an excellent amenity when integrated with other components of the overall parks system. Visually attractive and functionally useful (e.g. viewpoints, wildlife habitats, etc.), they are easily capable of serving several recreational and open space functions in addition to their utilitarian functions, such as storm water control devices.

From a parks system perspective, storm and irrigation-sourced ponds are useful when they are adjacent to, and form part of, a larger Municipal Reserve area or function within an area designated Environmental Reserve. Present practices of storm pond development with narrow reserve dedication surrounding the margins of the pond offer limited possibility for recreation use. The ability to successfully develop recreational opportunities in proximity to ponds therefore necessitates:

1. An understanding of the needs of the parks system that appropriately sized MR lands should be contiguous with pond development, if recreational needs are being considered for the area.



2. Policies by the municipal planning authority to ensure that neighbourhood plans that contemplate municipal reserves near ponds are designed with the needs of the parks system in mind.

Regarding design and ownership of stormwater facilities, it is the responsibility of the Municipal Works Department to design and maintain stormwater sites. These sites would be registered as a Public Utility Lots, regardless of where they are located. MR credit may be granted to the parcel if the ponds are aesthetically designed and sufficient amenity is provided within the site, as per the Municipal Reserve Credit Policy.

4.2.4.5 Storage Facilities for Irrigation

The costs associated with irrigating park areas with traditional municipally treated water have created an interest in exploring other potential sources of water. Use of stormwater as an alternate irrigation source by means of on-site rainwater tanks and community storage facilities may offer a way to offset watering costs and fits well with the philosophy of employing sustainable and practical approaches to parks maintenance.

4.2.5 Regional and Intermunicipal Considerations

The City of Medicine Hat, the Town of Redcliff and County of Cypress have agreed jointly to carry out work on a Tri Area Intermunicipal Development Plan (IMDP). Among the reasons given for undertaking such a Plan are:

- “Coordination among adjacent municipalities in dealing with development, servicing and transportation matters in the rural-urban fringe”
- “Establish an intermunicipal transition area within which planning and development decisions are coordinated to ensure that land use compatibility and long term planning objectives are protected”.

Work on the IMDP to-date, suggests that some reference to coordination between the Parks System Management Plan and the plans for the adjacent municipalities may be warranted. Reference to expansion of a future regional trail indicates that at this time “....a comprehensive trail system in special locations is limited to connecting the two major population centres of Redcliff and Medicine Hat.” Additionally the study notes the identification by the Province of several Environmentally Significant Areas in the County including the valley of the South Saskatchewan River area west of Redcliff.

These potential trail connections and the Environmentally Significant Areas serve as a part of the overall regional recreational capacity available to the residents of Medicine Hat. Future discussions with the other member municipalities of the Tri Area IMDP should be explored for ways to cooperatively enhance and expand an already excellent parks system.

Policy

Opportunities to develop the City’s park system in a complementary and cooperative way with the adjacent municipalities should be explored.

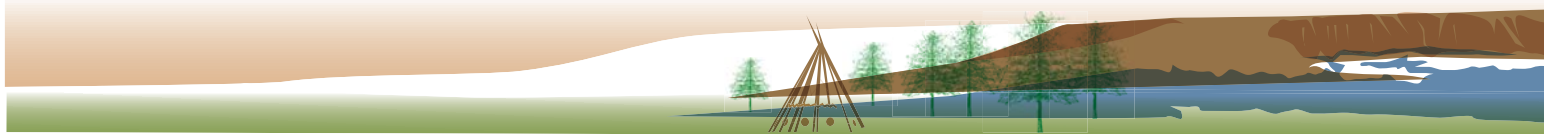
Policy

Certain lands are used by the public and erroneously perceived as City recreation areas. Where jurisdiction over such lands lies with different municipal authorities suitable maintenance responsibilities should also be allocated to those authorities.

4.2.6 Other Public Lots and Rights of Way

Lands not dedicated as MR are often utilized by the general public for recreational pursuits such as walking, cycling, and park use. These lands may include utility corridors, natural gas well buffer areas, road rights of way, public utility lots, and boulevards. As non-dedicated MR lands are not part of the parks system, maintenance and development decisions of these areas defers to the primary owner, typically a utility department or road authority such as the Municipal Works Department.

These primary owners assume responsibility for landscaping to a low maintenance coarse grass standard where irrigation and planting is minimized or xeriscaping principles are utilized.



5.0 PARKS SYSTEM GUIDELINES

The park system has been organized into classifications to help manage the growth and development of future park systems, as well as the redevelopment of existing parks. These classifications provide general development guidelines, characteristics, and policies that help to ensure an extensive and comprehensive park system throughout the City. Strategy statements aid in carrying out guidelines and policies established for parks system.

General Policies

- Design and construction guidelines will aid in creating a consistent park system that provides recognizable amenities and a uniform look and feel to the park system as a whole. These guidelines should be updated and based upon the current Municipal Servicing Standards of the day. This will make upgrades and improvements to the system manageable.
- Park development should follow a consistent program of land development and acquisition where land is allocated and utilized in an efficient and effective manner.
- Natural areas should be identified in Area Structure Plans for acquisition as future Environmental Reserve land.
- The need for indoor and outdoor leisure facilities should be assessed and land requirements should be reviewed to ensure adequate land allocations.
- Acquisition for major parks and recreation facilities should be secured several years in advance of subdivision development as part of the Area Structure Plan process.
- Park and playground facilities must respond to changing recreation trends and population demographics as to provide appropriate and usable facilities to the majority of park users.
- Aging infrastructure within parks should be inventoried and replaced or renovated as deemed appropriate to the facility.
- Long term maintenance of amenities developed beyond the Municipal Servicing Standards is the responsibility of the developer, a community association, or group who developed the structure based upon an amenity agreement.
- Parks developed within the City should be continuous and linked through a system of greenways and trails.
- Opportunities to develop the City's park system in a complementary and cooperative way with the adjacent municipalities should be explored.
- Proposals to the planning authority to include water bodies as part of overall residential neighbourhood plans should include provisions for adjacent appropriately sized municipal reserve.
- Lands that are used by the public and erroneously perceived as City

recreation areas, such as public utility lots, should be developed and maintained by the appropriate municipal authority.

- Encroachment issues on City Park areas should be addressed by following a systematic approach of problem delineation, engaging the offenders through discussion and proceeding to enforce the abuse. Each encroachment should be assessed on its own merit.
- Policies for confronting vandalism should be reviewed in consultation with the Police Services. At the same time a public education strategy to develop a cooperative public attitude to combating vandalism should be investigated.
- Where normal reserve dedications is not possible or likely, purchasing of strategic park land may be considered.
- Currently, all Environmental Reserve land is designated as off-leash dog areas. The number of off-leash park areas should be reviewed to determine whether there should be separate dog off-leash areas or to maintain the current off-leash parks. Parks should then be clearly defined, appropriately signed and marked on site, and publicized to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings. The availability and proximity of dog waste receptacles and doggie waste bags should be reviewed to ensure needs are met.

General Strategies

- Refer to Municipal Servicing Standards for current Municipal and Environmental Reserve park development standards.
- A set of specific park design standards should be developed to provide guidelines for the design and construction of parks within the City.
- A Recreation Master Plan should be developed and updated every 10 years to gage the parks system against the current needs of the community, providing suitable activities for all age groups, and to allocate needed resources.
- Allocate needed resources to continue with plans to review land registration of parks system parcels to appropriate registrations as MR or ER.
- A program of inventorying the City's tree population should be kept current. Adequate resources will be required for such an undertaking including financial and personnel.
- The needs of leisure trail users should be assessed and met through the development of a Leisure Trails System Master Plan.
- An inclusive recreation needs assessment program should be developed through a Recreation Master Plan. Assessments should include both regular sport and recreation facilities as well as 'special use' and 'special environments'.
- A public education program and specific design considerations may reduce some park conflicts, including users with pets.

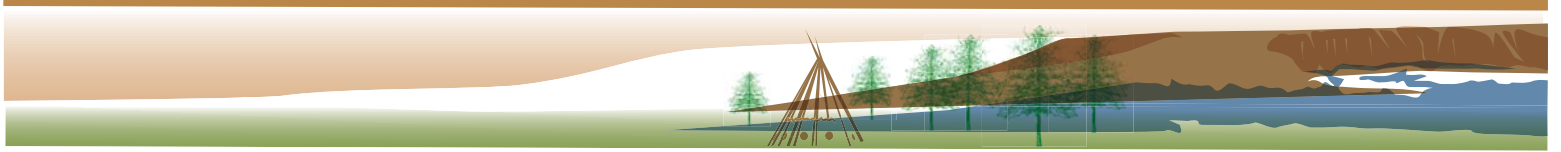


Figure 5.1 Community Plan

5.1 POCKET PARKS

- Purpose:
- Maximize 400m park distribution between playgrounds and pocket parks
- Function:
- Passive Recreation
 - Playgrounds for smaller children 1 to 5 years old
 - Provide creative and open play areas for all user groups
- Size:
- 0.4ha - 0.8ha
 - Max 2/community
- Location:
- Spaced out throughout community
 - In close proximity to seniors and high density housing complexes
 - On collector and local roads
 - Provide sufficient street frontage to recognize and access the park
- Access & Connectivity:
- Accessible by walking and cycling
 - Access uninterrupted by arterial roads or physical barriers
 - Linked to neighbourhood sidewalks and trails
 - Maintain sightlines into interior of site for sufficient visible street frontage, but protected from vehicle traffic

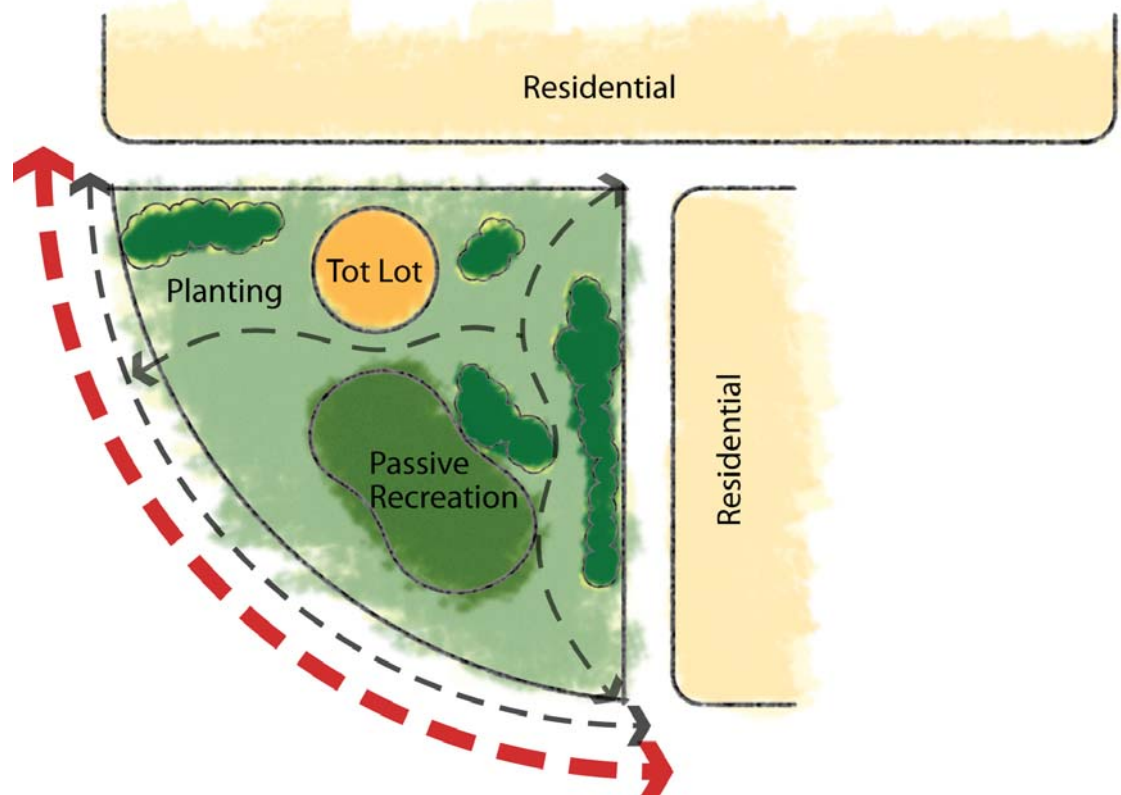
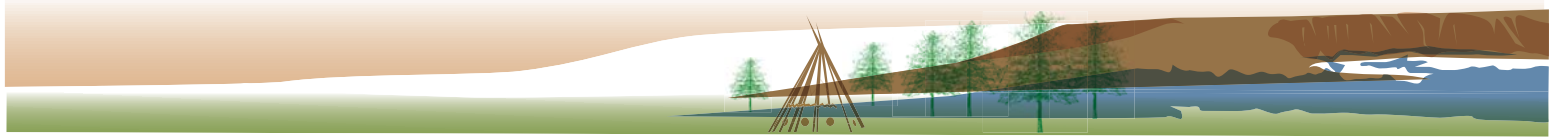


Figure 5.2 Pocket Park



- | | |
|------------|--|
| Policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parks should be developed in order that they may be restructured in response to needs of community over time• Parks should be developed to an Municipal Reserve Standard• Parks should have sufficient street frontage to provide sightlines into the park for safety• Pocket parks may be part of the 10% reserve dedication• Pocket parks should be developed in smaller neighbourhoods as seen fit• Pocket parks may be developed on awkwardly shaped land parcels or areas separated by barriers, either physical or constructed• Parks may be developed adjacent to multi-family areas as seen fit• Pocket parks may not be incorporated into a community if reserve dedications are monopolized by school sites and neighbourhood parks |
| Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Playground Management Plan will aid in the allocation of playgrounds to pocket parks |



5.2 NEIGHBOURHOOD PARKS

- Purpose:
- Maximize 600m park distribution for all neighbourhood parks
 - Developed as a social and recreational focus of the neighbourhood
- Function:
- Provide active and passive recreation for all ages groups
 - Play facilities for children 5 to 12 years old
 - Can incorporate natural and low maintenance areas
- Size:
- 0.8ha - 5ha
 - Max 2/neighbourhood

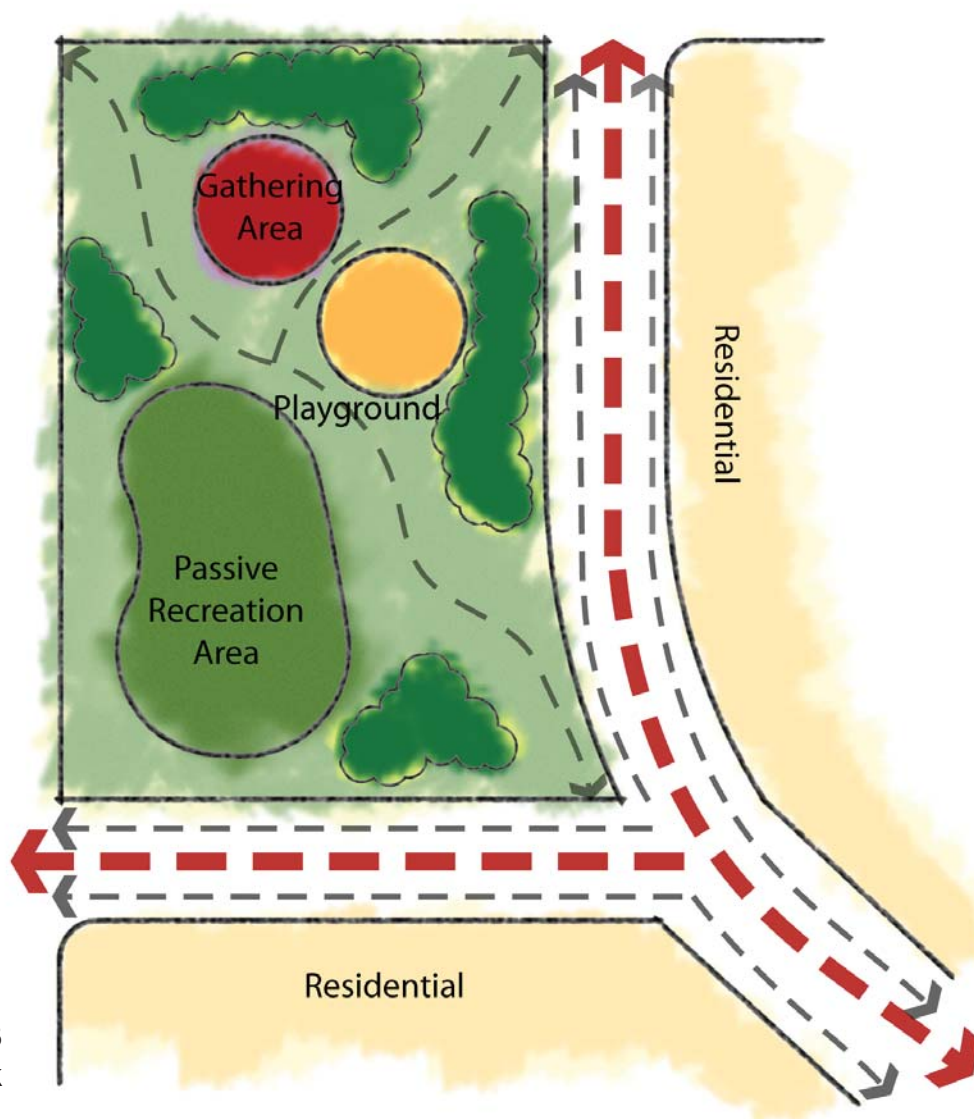


Figure 5.3
Neighbourhood Park



Location:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centrally located in neighbourhood• Close to schools• 600m from residents• Provide sufficient street frontage to recognize and access the park
Access & Connectivity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessible by walking and cycling• Access uninterrupted by arterial roads or physical barriers• Linked to neighbourhood sidewalks and trails, adjacent parks and other activity nodes• Maintain sightlines into interior of site for sufficient visible street frontage
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parks should be developed in order that they may be restructured in response to needs of community over time• Developed to Municipal Reserve standards• Parks should have sufficient street frontage to provide site lines into park.• Facilities should be appropriate to the level of open space – location, size, accessibility, maintenance levels• Utility rights-of-way should not interfere with the recreational and functional design of the parks• Neighbourhood parks may be part of the 10% reserve dedication• Neighbourhood parks take priority over Pocket Parks when allocating the 10% land dedication within a community
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parks should be considered when planning communities to ensure that open space needs are met• Involve stakeholders and other city departments when planning parks to ensure that all the needs of the community are met• Development of a Playground Management Plan will aid in the allocation of playgrounds to neighbourhood parks• A Recreation Master Plan and Infrastructure Management Plan will aid in allocating facilities to neighbourhood

5.3 COMMUNITY PARKS

- Purpose:
- Meet active and passive recreational needs of several neighbourhoods
 - Can be a place for community gathering for smaller events
- Function:
- Provide expanded play areas for neighbourhood schools
 - Provide recreational opportunities for a variety of ages and user groups
 - Provide facilities for active recreation not suitable in neighbourhood parks (such as tennis courts)
 - May include stormwater management facilities in ER areas or as part of a separately registered Public Utility Lot
 - Provide programming and facilities for informal or formal league active recreation
 - To serve multiple communities
 - May provide facilities and services for the community such as kitchens, rental facilities, and leisure centers
- Size:
- 3-8ha

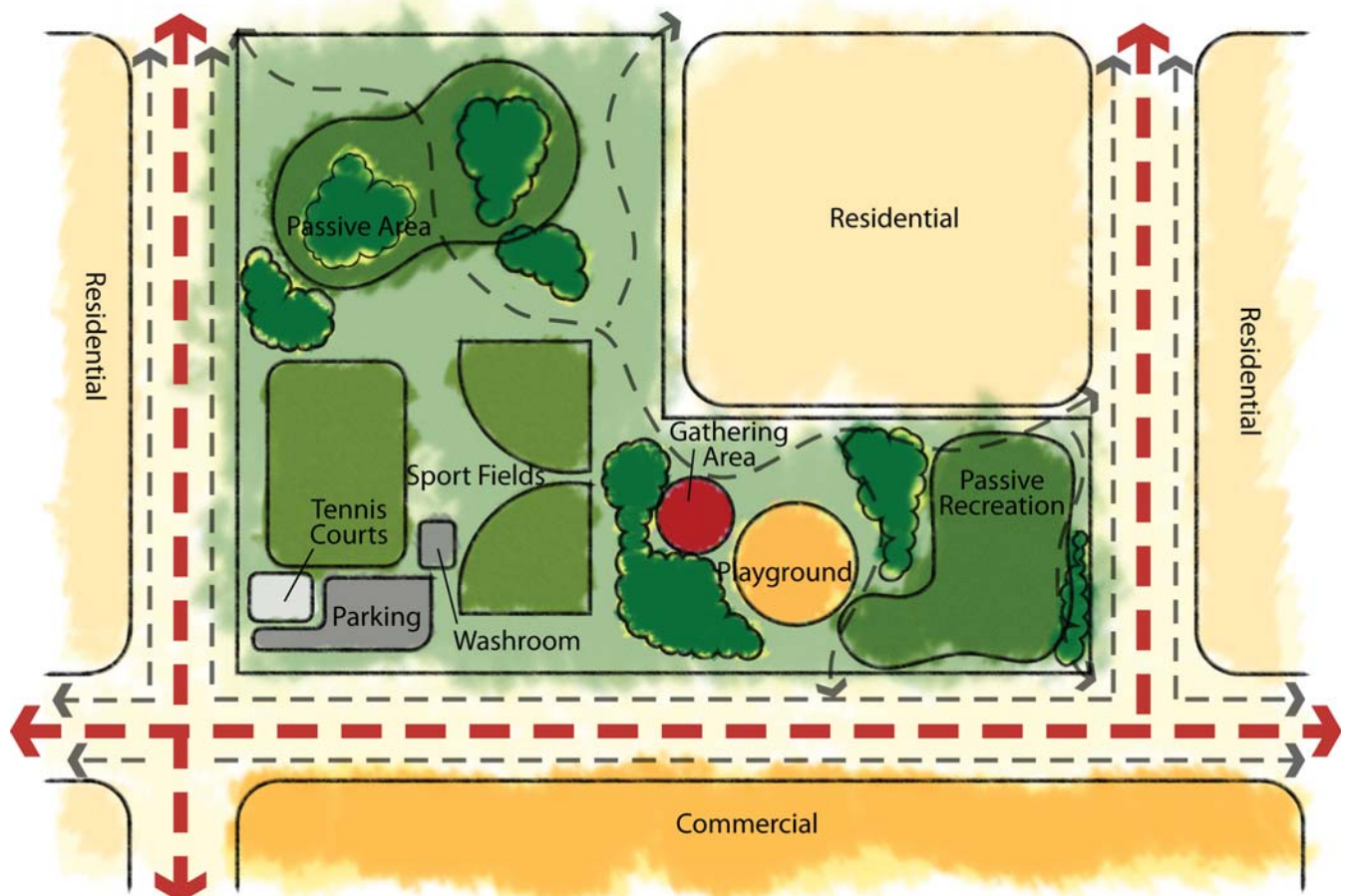


Figure 5.4 Community Park



- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Location: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• On collector or arterial roads to facilitate vehicular access• Centrally located between neighbourhoods• Can be combined with school grounds• Special Use Areas and Natural Areas may be a component of Community Parks |
| Access & Connectivity: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessible by walking and cycling• Located near safe street crossings• Linked to other parks by sidewalks and trails• Adequate parking lot required for sites with sports facilities• Maintain sightlines into interior of site for sufficient visible street frontage |
| Policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parks should provide accessible opportunities to residents with disabilities, especially accessible playground equipment• Parks should be developed in order that they may be restructured in response to needs of community over time• Parks should have sufficient street frontage to provide site lines into park• Facilities should be appropriate to the level of open space – location, size, accessibility, maintenance levels• Utility rights-of-way should not interfere with the recreational and functional design of the parks• Community Parks may be part of the 10% reserve dedication• Developers may develop a Community Park to the Neighbourhood Park level with respect to amenities and facilities. The City would then add additional facilities to meet the Community Park needs |
| Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parks should be considered when planning communities to ensure that open space needs are met• Involve stakeholders and other city departments when planning parks to ensure that all the needs of the community are met• Involve user groups when planning for regional parks to ensure that all group sporting needs are met.• Development of a Playground Management Plan will aid in the allocation of playgrounds to community parks• A Recreation Master Plan will aid in allocating facilities to community parks |

5.4 FUTURE SCHOOL SITES

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Purpose: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the active and passive recreation needs of school aged children and neighbourhood residents • Allows for expansion of recreational opportunities for user groups |
| Function: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide recreational opportunities for a variety of ages and user groups • General active and passive recreation • Provide programming and facilities for informal or formal league active recreation • May serve multiple communities • Future School Sites fall within the Municipal Reserve Dedication until they are developed by the school boards, at which time they become the responsibility of the school boards to maintain |
| Size: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies |
| Location: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centrally located in community to serve neighbourhoods as most appropriate. • Can be a component of Community Parks • Located on arterial or collector streets and close to City Transit services |
| Access & Connectivity: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible by walking or cycling with access to collector streets • Located near safe street crossings • May be linked to other parks by sidewalk and trail network • Maintain sightlines into interior of site for sufficient visible street frontage, but protected from vehicle traffic • Parking provided according to school programming |
| Policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School grounds should be developed at time of subdivision development and should be developed to a manicured grass standards, as per the current Municipal Servicing Standards • School Grounds may be acquired as part of the 10% reserve dedication • Planning for schools should occur early in the land use planning process (i.e. at the Area Structure Plan stage) and should include school enrollment projections to determine if schools are needed. Verification of need space should occur closer to the development stage. • Ongoing consultation should be maintained with the school authorities including recommended school parcel size |

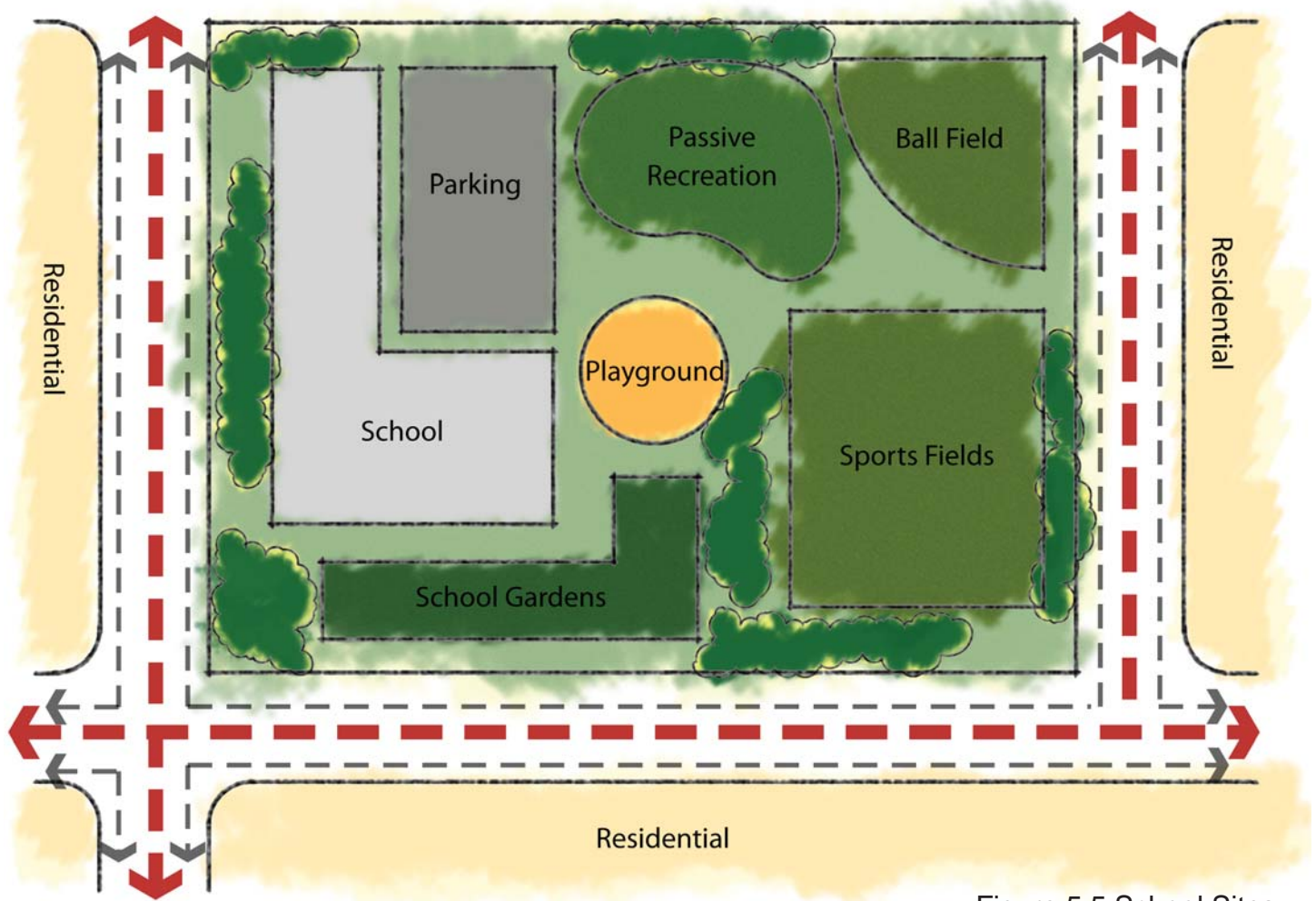
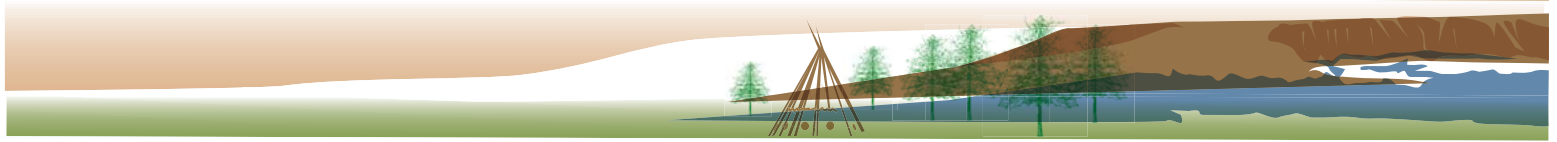


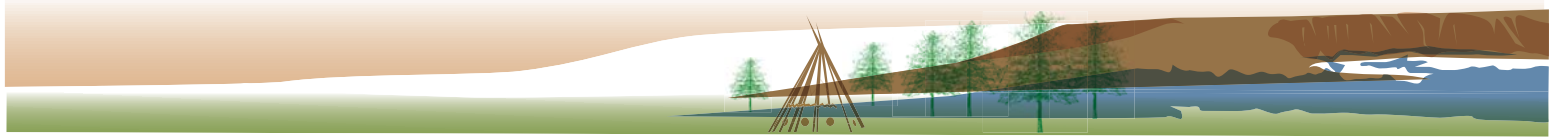
Figure 5.5 School Sites

Strategies

- Joint Use Agreements will assist in providing standards for shared use of the site between school use and community use
- Joint Use Agreements should be reviewed to ensure that they accurately reflects the current needs of the City and School Districts
- Refer to Municipal Servicing Standards for Park development standards
- A Recreation Master Plan will aid in the development and redevelopment of appropriate sporting facilities within community core parks

5.5 CITY WIDE PARKS

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Purpose: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a destination space for residents to gather, socialize and be active• A place for general community use and location for special events or functions to be hosted• Can meet the active recreational needs of adults and youth and large groups• To serve entire City, and if appropriate, residents of the surrounding municipalities |
| Function: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May provide structured sport facilities for adults and youth for competitions• Can include interpretive play features• Provide opportunities for festivals and large civic gatherings• Support part-day and full-day recreational uses and activities• Can include specific programming for residents• Can include natural and environmentally sensitive areas as well as low maintenance areas• Amenities and programming should respond to the recreational needs of the community |
| Size: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Min 8ha |
| Location: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop in close proximity to commercial nodes and to ensure low disturbance to residents |
| Access & Connectivity: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessible linkages for walking or cycling with access to collector or arterial streets• Located near safe street crossings, along collector or arterial roads• Provide linkages to other parks by sidewalk and trail network• Maintain sightlines into interior of site for sufficient visible street frontage• Parking provided according to programming• Should have good connections to alternative transportation and bus routes |



Policies

- Parks should provide accessible opportunities to residents with disabilities and accessible playgrounds within each quadrant of the city
- Parks should be developed in order that amenities and programming may be restructured in response to needs of community over time
- Parks should be developed to meet Municipal Reserve standards
- Parks should have sufficient street frontage to provide site lines into park
- Facilities should be appropriate to the level of open space – location, size, accessibility, maintenance levels
- Utility rights-of-way should not interfere with the recreational and functional design of the parks
- City Wide Parks may include sites that are solely used for athletic purposes, e.g. ball diamonds, soccer fields, rugby and football fields
- City Wide parks may be in excess to the 10% MR land dedication. These parks would be developed and designed by the City and would not be the responsibility of developers.

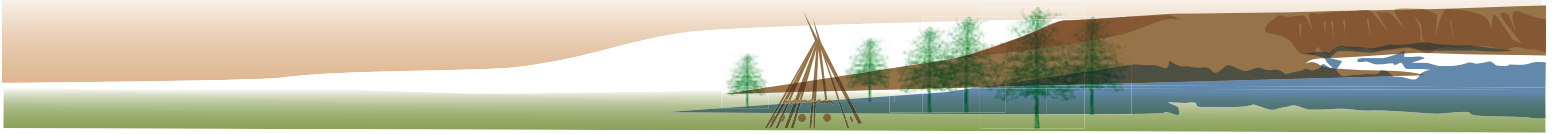


Strategies

- City Wide parks should be identified through the Municipal Development Plan and Area Structure Plans during the development and design process of communities.
- Parks should be considered when planning communities to ensure that open space needs are met
- Involve stakeholders and other city departments when planning parks to ensure that all the needs of the community are met
- Involve user groups when planning for regional parks to ensure that all group sporting needs are met
- Development of a Playground Management Plan will aid in the allocation of playgrounds to neighbourhood parks
- Where appropriate, review regional parks integration possibilities with Cypress County, Redcliff, and Dunmore
- A Recreation Master Plan will aid in allocating facilities to neighbourhood



Figure 5.6 City Wide Parks



5.6 GREENWAYS

- Purpose:
- Provide pedestrian and cyclist connections throughout the City to community wide destinations
 - Where reasonable and appropriate, provide connections and integration with features beyond the City limits
 - Offer linkages to open spaces within the park system
 - Create safe and efficient corridors separate from vehicular circulation
- Function:
- Serve as linear greenbelts which safeguard open space
 - Provide active and passive movement throughout parks system
 - Uphold and protect natural and environmentally sensitive areas
 - Enhance opportunities to experience natural features
 - Provide separation between residential and commercial areas

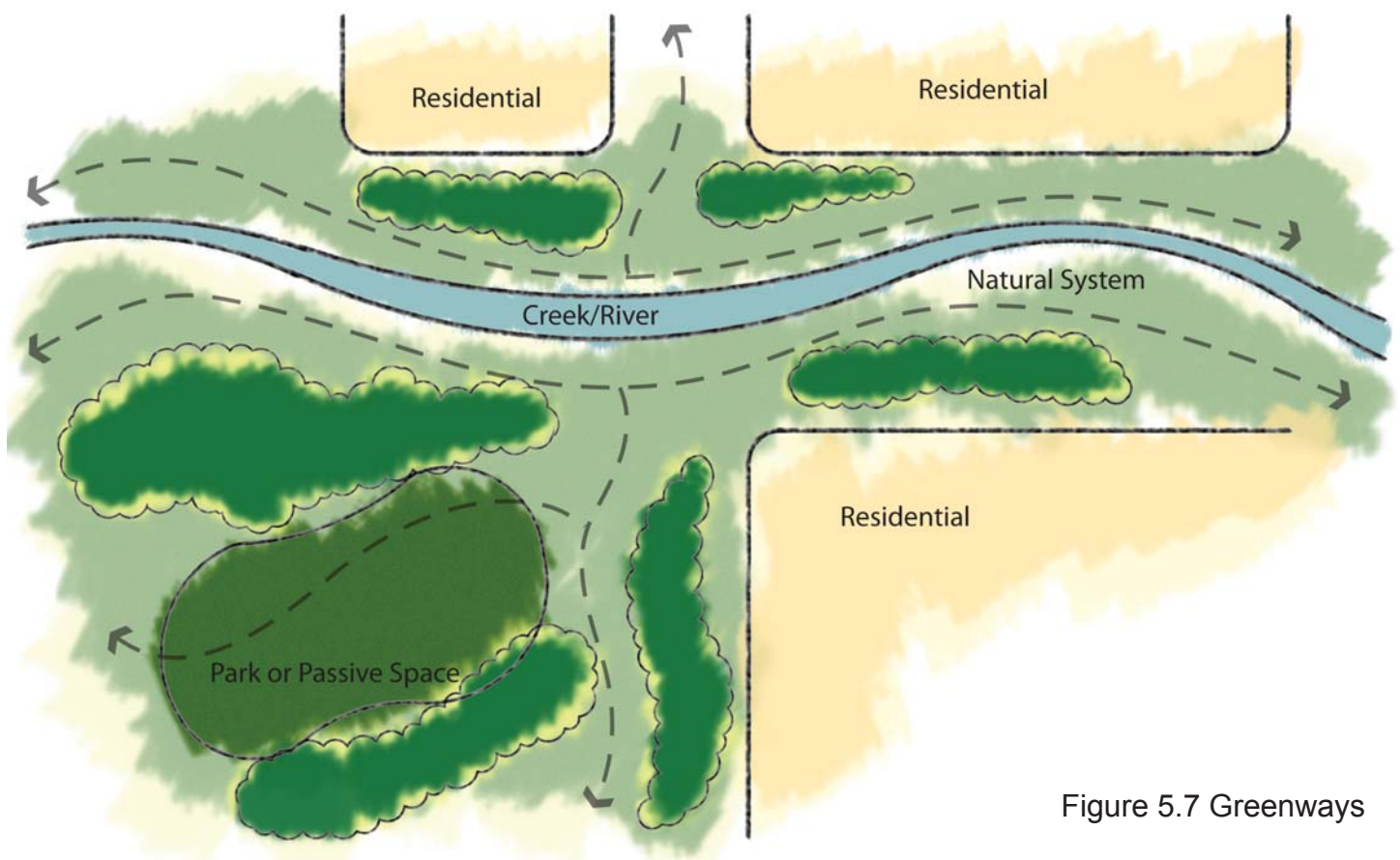
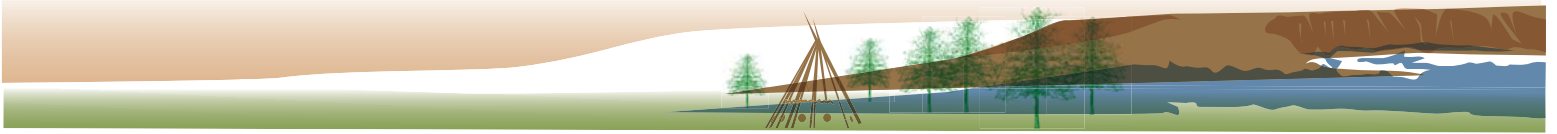


Figure 5.7 Greenways

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Size: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Width varies, typical greenways are approximately 20m and 40m wide• Lengths vary |
| Location: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place in order to establish missing or key linkages within park system• May be located along waterways• May be located near key natural and historic features |
| Access & Connectivity: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May be linked to or within parks• Access points with a minimum width of 20m• Lighting should be considered where greenways serve as non-vehicular commuter route |
| Policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greenways may be used as drainage facilities, but careful consideration to design should be given to ensure that these greenways drain into a catchment system so that there is no water collecting within the site |
| Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refer to Municipal Servicing Standards for Park development standards• Involve stakeholders and other city departments when planning parks to ensure that all the needs of the community are met |



5.7 NATURAL PARKS

- Purpose:
- Preserve and protect natural and cultural resources
 - Encourage sustainability and biodiversity in open spaces
 - Protecting and preserve native vegetation and wildlife corridors and habitat
 - Provide low impact recreational opportunities to enhance nature appreciation and education
 - May provide protection to natural/heritage features
 - Protect air, soil, and water quality
- Function:
- Protect key natural and cultural resources that are valuable to the community
 - Preserve and maintain the existing natural landscapes
 - Provide interpretive and educational opportunities featuring the unique characteristics of the land
 - Includes areas of environmental significance
- Size:
- Varies - site specific

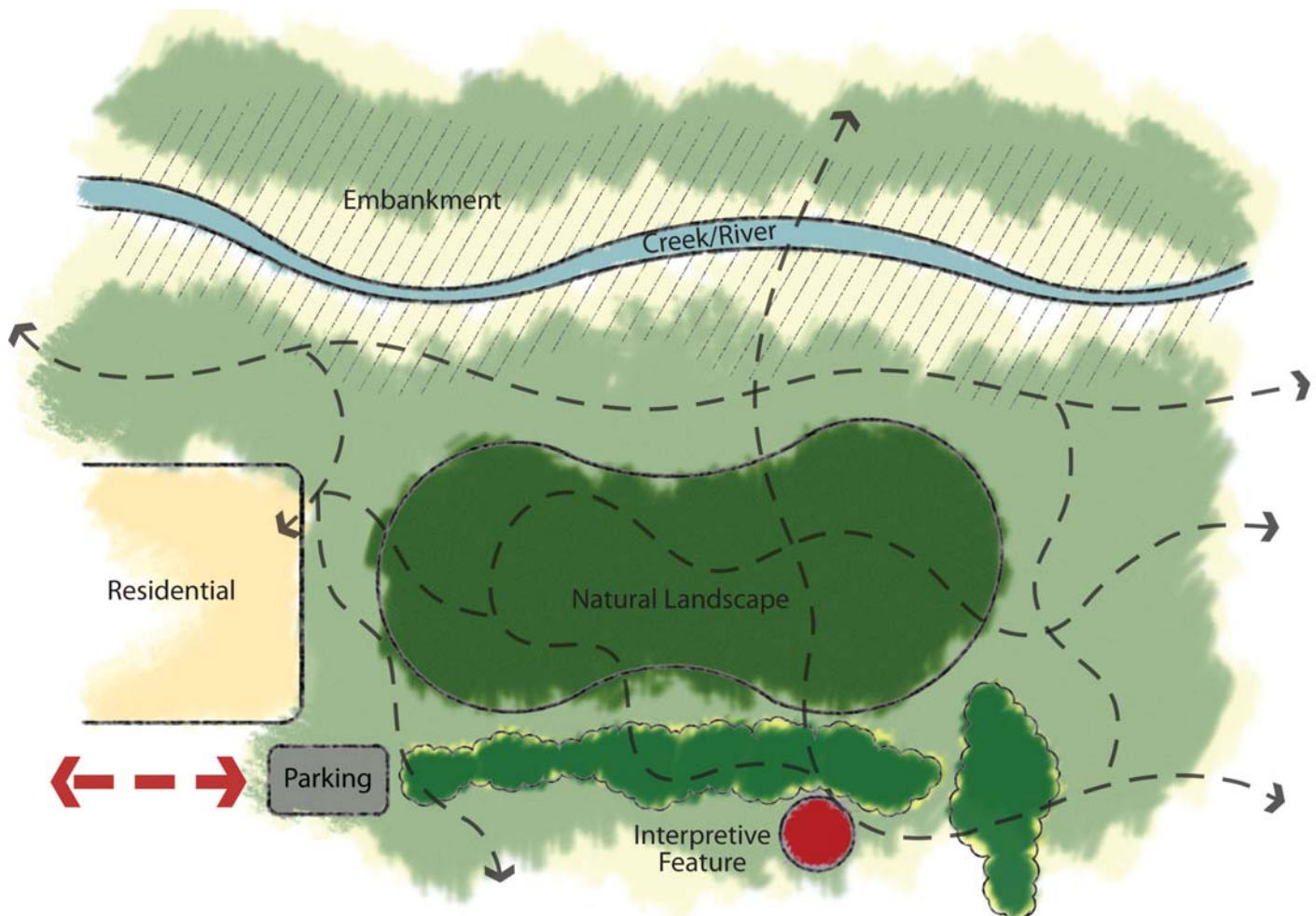


Figure 5.8 Natural Parks

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Location: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies - site and resource specific • Adjacent to natural and preservation areas typically part of the river valley |
| Access & Connectivity: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connected to community by leisure trails • May be connected to or incorporated into park and open space system • Natural areas may be connected to preservation areas • Where appropriate establish low impact pedestrian connections through preservation areas |
| Policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high commitment should be given to the protection of natural landscapes • The preparation of any land planning documents, i.e. Areas Structure Plans, Area Redevelopment Plans, etc. should identify all naturally significant areas and include recommendations for their preservation relevant to the overall parks system • Areas identified as naturally significant during the Area Structure Plan process should remain undisturbed during subsequent subdivision design and construction processes, and should be registered as ER • Natural areas identified as requiring preservation should be registered as Environmental Reserve land, and limited development would occur within these areas • Significant natural areas should be carefully addressed as development approaches or continues near these areas • Proper management of these areas should take place once significant plant and wildlife habitats and environments are identified • Areas that are considered undevelopable due to naturally existing land features should be dedicated as Environmental Reserve lands at the time of subdivision • Utility rights-of-way should not interfere with the natural or environmental park spaces • The use of environmental reserve easements should be reviewed with the City's Planning Department • A current Native Species Inventory along with subsequent Wildlife Management and Native Species Management Plans will aid in the protection and management of native flora and fauna within natural areas. Use of these plans when planning future development will help to minimize the impact of development on natural areas, native species, and wildlife habitats |



- Strategies
- Long term planning should take place to ensure the longevity and protection of environmentally significant areas
 - Regionally and provincially significant areas such as habitats and nesting areas should be reviewed and planned to ensure their protection
 - A Natural Areas Management Plan along with a Wildlife Management Plan will aid in carefully planning for natural and environmentally sensitive areas
 - Where natural areas cannot be acquired via normal dedication as Environmental Reserve, other means of acquisition should be explored
 - Where appropriate “Environmental Reserve Easements” may offer an alternative when environmental reserve dedication is not possible
 - Environmental groups and stakeholders should be consulted as natural parks are developed and redesigned
 - The ‘significant’ areas - local, regional, provincial, and natural - noted by the 2006 NASI study should be reviewed to determine the nature of the policies, if any, that may be needed to protect the sites

5.8 SPECIAL USE AREAS

- Purpose:
- Specialized programming depending on use of site
 - Establish neighbourhood and community wide resources, which will respond to unique user and programming requirements
- Function:
- Provide focused and specific recreational activities for user groups
 - Examples of such areas include cemeteries, golf courses, historic sites, campgrounds, BMX and off-road biking parks, skateboarding parks, water playgrounds, large sporting event centers, and multi-use sport complexes
- Size:
- Varies
- Location:
- Varies
- Access & Connectivity:
- Linked to parks through appropriate trail and sidewalk system
- Policies
- Special Use sites are unique sites that are leased or owned and operated by the City and as such do not typically fall under land dedications
- Strategies
- Development of a long term strategy based on need for specific uses will be an important tool for future land use allocations

5.9 FUTURE PARK CONSIDERATIONS

Future park development is based upon several defining factors: 1) establishing standards for defining the quantity of park space needed and the appropriate facilities to be included therein, 2) identifying improvements to existing parks, 3) identifying underutilized land to be retrofitted and developed to provide needed green space in existing developed areas. Future development is also based upon the guiding principles that were developed for the plan, as well as the comments of stakeholders and user groups. Future park sites must also consider current park distribution and population growth and demographics, and ensure that future park developments meet the needs of the community and of user groups.

5.9.1 Existing Park Upgrades

Park and playground upgrades are typical in the continual maintenance and lifecycle of parks. When upgrades are required for a site, consultation with stakeholders and user groups along with other city departments is crucial to the development of a site that will function well and meet the growing needs of the community.

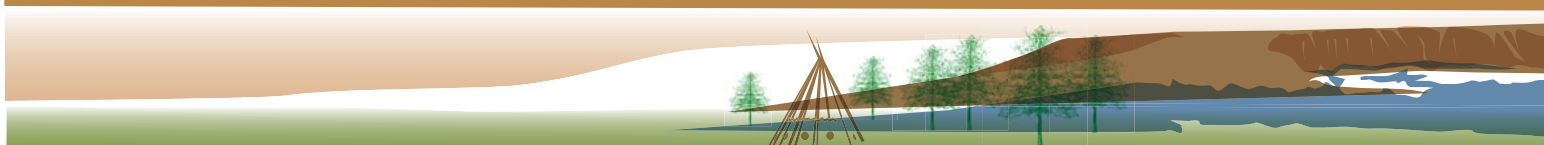
Park upgrades may range from playground replacements and trail upgrades, to extensive improvements including renovations to lighting, washroom facilities, site amenities, etc. More elaborate upgrades to a site may include installation of play, sport and recreation facilities that will intensify the use of the site. Upgrades to parks also provide opportunities to improve underutilized land and improve the continuity and connectivity of the urban park system.

The current parks system within the City contains a great deal of aging infrastructure which will require replacement or renovation within the next few years. Along with improvements to the existing facilities, a long term infrastructure plan should be put in place to plan for the future of all facilities and allocate appropriate resources to their improvement.

5.9.2 Special Use Areas/Unique and Special Environments

Special Use parks provide opportunities for the city to incorporate specific activities into their park system, meeting the recreational preferences of a variety of user groups. Such parks can include campgrounds, cemeteries, golf courses, large sporting event centers, multi-use sport complexes, and historic sites. Areas such as specified off-leash dog parks, community gardens, display, and specialty gardens are also included as special use sites. A Recreation Master Plan will help to plan for the future recreational needs of the community.

With changing trends in recreational activities, predicting and investing in special use parks can be very challenging. The City of Medicine Hat has a great deal of retired couples and seniors, who generally tend to use more passive forms of recreation. As a result, the park spaces utilized by these groups are typically easily produced and maintained, eg. trails and green areas. Golf



courses and other similar sports are already in abundance within the city, and continue to increase to meet demand. However, it is important to balance the obvious needs of the community with the less pronounced needs. Regular updates to a Recreation Master Plan will help to respond to changes in trends and activities within the community.

It is important to consult the community when developing these special use areas to ensure that a variety of voices are heard and that the sites developed will effectively meet the needs of the community.

There are several types of special use sites that are typically developed by the City but are not used extensively as park space. Areas such as cemeteries and seasonally used campgrounds are included in this group. The future development and maintenance considerations for these types of sites are dependent on the need for such facilities, and can be addressed at such time as deemed necessary.

5.9.3 Future Park Amenities

The following is a guide for amenities appropriate to new and existing parks. Amenities are determined based upon the needs of the community with the assistance of a Playground Management Plan and a Recreation Master Plan. To provide consistency as well as variety to each community, some amenities may be required or necessary within specific parks, while other may be optional, or distributed throughout the City in different parks.

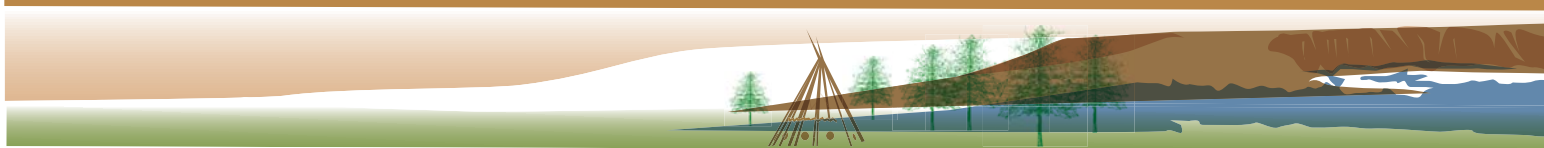
Park Type	Necessary Amenities	Potential Amenities
Pocket Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leisure Trails• Benches• Garbage Receptacle	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small Playgrounds
Neighbourhood Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leisure Trails• Small to mid-sized Playground• Trails• Benches• Garbage Receptacle	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Picnic Shelters• Gazebo or gathering area• Plazas (Especially in Downtown Areas)

Strategy

An inclusive park upgrade needs assessment should be done with regular updates as part of a Recreation Master Plan. Assessments should include both regular sport and recreation facilities as well as 'special use' and 'special environments'.

Needs Assessments can lend themselves to the development and implementation of a long term recreation master plan.

Park Type	Necessary Amenities	Potential Amenities
Community Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leisure Trails Playground Sports Fields Gathering Area Benches Picnic Tables Garbage Receptacle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional Sports Facilities such as Tennis Courts and Hockey Rinks Plazas (Especially in Downtown Areas) Water Playground Washrooms Parking (may be on street or within the park depending on need)
School Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playgrounds Sports Fields Garbage Receptacle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gardens Educational Landscaping
City Wide Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leisure Trails Playgrounds Picnic and Gathering Areas Sports Fields Benches Picnic Tables Garbage Receptacle Parking Washrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional Sport Facilities as required Water Playground Interpretive Areas and Signage
Greenways		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leisure Trails
Natural Parks		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leisure Trails Benches Trash Interpretive Features/Signage Off-Leash Area Signage Parking as seen necessary
Specific Use Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site will dictate appropriate amenities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leisure Trails as seen necessary Interpretive Signage appropriate to the site Parking



5.10 FUTURE TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

The City of Medicine Hat has an extensive trail network of 100 km that works in conjunction with the linear or finger parks that act as connections within communities. Of those 100 km of trails, approximately 90% are leisure trails and 10% are asphalt sidewalks used for alternative transportation. Opportunities are abundant for a more cohesive trail network. To develop such a network it is important that a Leisure Trail System Master Plan be developed to steer the planning of future trails and connections. As these areas are planned, a public education program should be instituted to educate the community regarding leisure trail and cycling opportunities as well as safety issues. The further development of safe and logical connections within the trail system and ensuring that there are sufficient opportunities for cyclists within the community is important as trails are built and maintained in the future.

The research results of The Medicine Hat Leisure Trails and Alternative Transportation Public Needs Assessment may provide valuable assistance to the City in addressing the future development and public involvement of the leisure trails and alternative transportation system.

5.11 LAND ACQUISITIONS

5.11.1 Overview

As the City of Medicine Hat continues to grow, responding to the parks needs of the community will be an ongoing challenge. The acquisition of additional land will offer opportunities to increase the overall park system area as needed, provide linkages within that system, offer increased space for specialized user groups, and improve the extensive natural (environmental lands) park areas that exist within the City. Acquisitions for major parks and facilities should be secured several years in advance of development, and should be identified during the Area Structure Plan process.

Acquisitions can also consider underutilized and derelict lands to improve both the quantity and quality of the parks system. The range of such acquisitions could include:

- Downtown or central areas where plazas and gardens can be developed
- Previously developed lands adjacent to natural areas where reclamation opportunities can be pursued
- Historic and interpretive sites that can increase education opportunities within the parks system

A variety of methods are available to the municipality to acquire and control land as well as develop it for park purposes. These include:

1. Dedication of reserves for municipal, school and environmental purposes as a result of the subdivision process

Strategy

The needs of leisure trail users should be assessed and met through the development of a Leisure Trails System Master Plan.

Policy

A policy for purchasing strategic park land should be developed in circumstances where normal reserve dedications is not possible or likely.

Policy

Developing a policy for using environmental reserve easements should be reviewed with the City's Planning Department.

2. The outright purchase of land
3. The utilization of environmental reserve easements

Reserve dedications offer the best means for acquiring land for the City. The dedication is made by the developer ("subdivider") of the property and presents no immediate cost to the municipality.

In some circumstances money or a combination of land and money may be considered in place of dedicated reserve. For example:

1. in those areas where there is already deemed to be adequate land to serve the needs of the neighbourhood/community.
2. the land uses may not justify the need for open space/park/school sites e.g. an industrial park subdivision.

5.11.2 Acquisitions

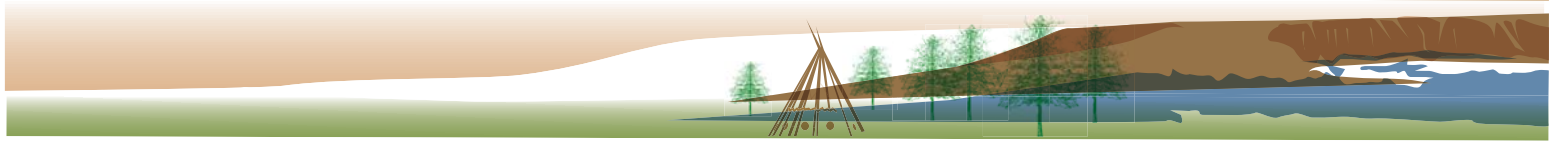
Although sites may be identified as potential parks or schools in this document, or in future ASP's, the opportunity to acquire them via the subdivision process may not occur. In those situations, other options may need to be considered. One such option is to purchase these sites. Financial sources for purchasing priority sites could include any monies that the City may have in its park reserve fund.

Because the possibility of subdivision applications in the area is low, the sites most likely to require purchasing are those in the river valley. A strategy for purchasing – e.g. when the land becomes available, or if it is offered to the city – should form a part of the overall acquisition and development approach.

5.11.3 Environmental Reserve Easements

The Municipal Government Act offers an alternate to the dedication of environmental reserve, known as the environmental reserve easement. Circumstances may occur where privately held land may contain potential environmental reserve, but where the owner has no immediate plans for subdivision and hence, leaves no potential for ER dedication. The City and the owner may therefore consider entering into an agreement to have an easement registered against the land. The easement effectively offers the same protection as the dedicated environmental reserve including a) the requirement that the land stay in its natural state as if it were owned by the municipality, b) the ongoing retention of the easement notwithstanding a change in ownership of the land.

This legislative tool offers another option with which to obtain and control environmentally sensitive properties.



5.12 PARK PRIORITIES

Setting priorities for the development and implementation of parks allows the City to establish capital budgets and plan for development that will meet the needs of the community. The City currently focuses priority efforts towards the redevelopment and aging infrastructure of older parks. Additional proposed priorities may be based upon the current park distribution, the establishment of future park spaces, and ongoing discussions with relevant groups and agencies.

Criteria for determining park priorities could include:

- Parks with aging infrastructure
- Residential areas that are deemed to be underserved with park areas
- Sites and parks that have received prior commitments by City Council through budget deliberations and where opportunities have arisen for acquisition through non-city derived funding
- Natural and unique areas and habitats that are deemed to be under protected and potentially at risk to development or mismanagement
- Areas that offer opportunities to link parks or expand them where deemed appropriate
- Parks that offer unique opportunities for enhanced cultural, social, historical, educational and economic growth

Priorities are set up in short, medium, and long term time frames based upon future recommendations and the needs of the community. The Master Plan should be used as a guideline when developing and redeveloping parks to ensure that the minimum standards for the site are met.

5.12.1 New Park Development Priorities

Park space in new community developments should be considered a high priority as construction is underway in these communities. It is important to provide green space to residents of new developments and to ensure that allocated park land is not left undeveloped for any extended period of time. Since the construction of park space in new developments is typically the responsibility of the developer, it is reasonable to expect these park spaces to be developed in a timely manner and will not impact the construction and upgrades to other projects the City may be working on.

Land acquisitions for new park development will be at a minimum within the City of Medicine Hat, as the City is well served by its parks. There are a few areas within the city that are underserved by park space and could benefit from additional park space, including:

- northern parts of Northeast Crescent Heights
- the Southwest Hill

- areas within the downtown and Southeast Hill
- central areas within the North Flats and the South Flats
- southern areas within Crestwood
- central areas of Ross Glen
- the outer areas of Ranchlands, South Ridge, and Saamas Heights where development is ongoing

Land acquisitions in these developed areas may be difficult to accomplish, especially in residential areas, but as land occasionally becomes available for sale opportunities to introduce new park space may appear. This is especially true in the Flats area and in developments near the river valley.

As new park acquisition and development in older, established neighbourhoods is difficult to accomplish, it is set as a low priority for park development, and should be addressed on a specific site basis.

5.12.2 Existing Community Park Development and Upgrading Priorities

Development and upgrades to existing parks is an ongoing process, where the park system throughout the city as a whole is evaluated. Priorities should be based upon the age and condition of existing infrastructure and facilities, as well as the use of the site. Heavily used parks with older play equipment and facilities should be considered as a more pressing priority for redevelopment than newer facilities. The adjacent land uses and demographics of the area should also be considered when proceeding with redevelopment to ensure new facilities are age appropriate and will be used accordingly.

The park space within the City of Medicine Hat is generally of a similar age and many parks are beyond their lifecycle. As such, the amount of park space that requires upgrades is relatively high. The process in which upgrades are done should be based upon inventories of park equipment and amenities, including playgrounds, irrigation, and infrastructure. Parks





with poor facilities and equipment should be rated and upgrades based upon priorities derived from inventories. Upgrades to existing park spaces will be an ongoing process with priorities ranging from high to low.

5.12.3 Unique and Natural Environments Priorities

As there is fairly limited development within unique and natural environments, such as the river valleys and coulees, the implementation of amenities into these areas is considered a low priority. Natural areas provide opportunities to develop trail networks and interpretive programs that benefit the community, and as such when resources become available it is important to provide such amenities within these areas. The first priority when providing amenities within natural environments is to assess lands that are within the city where safe and logical connections can be made within these natural landscapes. Where possible, connections within these unique environments should be made that will support an open space and trail network.

Protected environments within the city that are compromised or where there are concerns regarding the health of the environment, or flora and fauna within that environment, should be considered a high priority.

5.12.4 Special Use Areas Priorities

Special Use Areas should be assessed on an individual bases and should be provided as needed by the community and as resources are available. These areas are an excellent amenity to a community and should not be overlooked due to lack of public demand for such a project. Often times the value of such sites are made apparent once they are in place. Priority should also be given to existing park and special use sites that require upgrades as they are needed and when appropriate to the site.

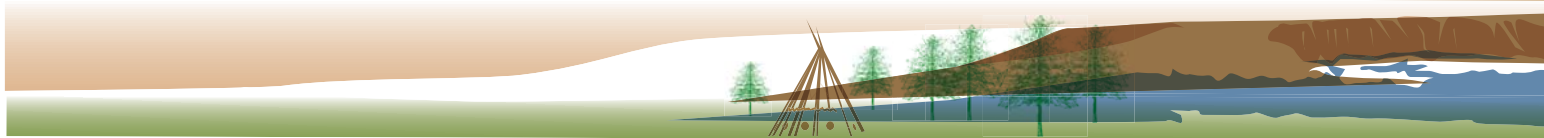
* At the time of preparation of the Parks System Management Plan, work on the Downtown Redevelopment Plan was also underway. Recommendations relating to downtown parks may also be forthcoming from that document.

5.13 FUTURE PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Master Plans are over-arching conceptual documents providing high level planning ideas that are enhanced by flexible implementations and encourage innovative and creative solutions. The Parks System Management Plan will become an important management tool for the City of Medicine Hat and will form the foundation for detailed resolutions and more specific plans, policies and procedures. Throughout the Master Plan process, a need to develop and implement a number of these specific and detailed documents has been demonstrated. The following table lists future development plans, the year that the plan should be completed, and the frequency in which these plans should be updated.

Plan	Year	Type of Plan	Updates
Recreation Master Plan	2010	Develop New	10 year updates
Urban Forestry Management Plan	2011	Update existing	5 year updates
Parks and Open Space Design Standards	2012	Develop New	Annual Updates
Playground Management Plan	2012	Update existing	Annual Updates
Echo Dale Future Development Plan	2013	Update existing	5 year updates
Parks Construction Specifications	2014	Comprehensive Update (with annual upgrades)	10 year updates
Natural Areas and Native Species Management Plan	2015	Develop New	5 year updates
Future Trail Development Master Plan	2019	Update existing	10 year updates





6.0 PARKS MANAGEMENT

This section identifies the means to successfully manage the Parks System through innovation and sustainable practices. It also addresses issues related to multiple users and some of the concerns that arise with the management of the parks.

6.1 INNOVATION

6.1.1 Public Education

As part of the implementation program of the master plan an ongoing public consultation and education program is crucial. Providing opportunities for members of the community to become more involved with parks through volunteer opportunities and adoption programs can also increase the public support and commitment to other areas of park development. There are several ways in which the public can get involved in the development and maintenance of city parks. At the most basic level, issues concerning parks that are addressed in public meetings are available for public information and comment. More proactive and interactive forms of public involvement include public information sessions and open houses, design charettes where the public can put forth ideas for the design, or redesign of public spaces. A variety of methods of involving the public is key to providing access and information to the largest cross section of the community.

Public education also involves providing information regarding the park systems, design techniques, planting methods and practices, water management, and xeriscaping principles. City parks can create displays and models that demonstrate to residents sustainable landscaping practices that can be utilized in back yards and private property. These teaching tools can also provide additional information on native plants, plant and watering techniques that manage water resources.

Valuable input has been received to date from community members who attended the Open Houses for this project. Many comments include innovative and exciting ways to promote awareness of the exceptional park system Medicine Hat has to offer. Among these:

- Initiate a self-stamped or self-directed Parks Passport
- Promote “Adopt a Neighbourhood Park” program
- Encourage a weekly or monthly article in the newspaper to “Celebrate a Park”
- Create park brochures, e.g. Park History, Sustainable Park Practices, Park Etiquette
- Create information boards for posting in parks to promote interpretive education
- Encourage exercise groups to utilize the parks

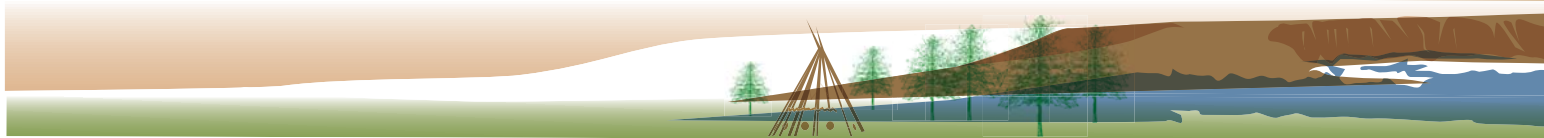
- Encourage neighbourhood park “block parties”
- Promote “Music in the Park every Sunday” during the summer months
- Emphasize and recognize local culture through their art in park facilities
- Encourage more resident’s input, i.e. “What are your favorite outdoor activities?”
- Promote community gardens
- Consider the Heritage Pavilion as a summer restaurant/café

While these should be viewed as excellent suggestions, follow through on them will require additional review and assessment by the City. The cost implications, feasibility, and the relationship of the suggestions to the overall list of priorities set by City Council will need to be considered before an implementation program can proceed.

6.1.2 Sustainable Practices

The public consultation process as well as interviews with the municipal administration confirmed that the City’s residents have a strong interest in the concept of sustainability and its application to the parks management system. Ideally, sustainability applications within a parks management environment should ensure that: wildlife habitats are safeguarded and improved, natural resources are protected for future generations, and the well-being of humans is enhanced. Sustainability applications to parks maintenance practice should





result in improving the overall environment and at the same time reducing costs and saving money.

Concepts for innovation in sustainable practices are often characterized by simplicity and common sense, characteristics that are generally the hallmarks of success. Practices such as providing recycling bins, using materials that are recyclable, harvesting rainwater from recreation buildings, and using native plant materials, are all ideas that are neither complex nor difficult to apply. Yet they remain practical ideas whose time has come.

The contributions made by the participants in the Open Houses and Workshops, produced many insightful ideas for applying sustainable applications to manage the City's future parks and open spaces:

- Use of non potable water for irrigation purposes
- Use of natural and native plant material in new parks
- Design social gathering places
- Specify drought tolerant plants (xeriscaping applications)
- Use bioswales to reduce surface runoff in park areas
- Create community gardens for the urban community
- Specify benches, park fences, etc to be made of recyclable materials
- Avoid invasive species
- Consider solar energy for heating and power in parks buildings and lighting of park areas
- Discontinue the use of pesticides and/or herbicides where possible
- Consider lawn substitutes to reduce mowing
- Reduce water use through improved conservation and efficient irrigation practices
- Use lifecycle approach in planning parks and facilities

6.1.3 Implementing Innovative & Sustainable Practices

As the City continues to introduce sustainable practices, e.g. use of non-potable water for irrigation, it is important that it continue to monitor the practical and economic side of such a policy. The impacts of implementing such practices can affect both human and financial resources. Even such basic policies as utilizing volunteers or establishing native planting practices will require coordination efforts from City departments and suitable budget allocations.

6.2 MANAGING ISSUES RELATING TO PARKS MANAGEMENT

The public engagement process yielded commentary on a number of issues related to the management of the Parks system. These included: the interaction/ conflict issues of multiple users of parks and trails – walkers, cyclists, dog

Policy

A strategy for reducing conflict among users of the parks and trails should be developed. This should include an education program and design related considerations.

Policy

The off-leash dog areas should be reviewed to determine criteria for off-leash dog areas and the appropriate distribution of these areas.

Policy

The availability and proximity of dog waste receptacles and doggie waste bags should be reviewed to ensure needs are met.

users; by-law enforcement; encroachment on city parkland by private property owners; vandalism and property damage; and the importance of education. These issues are described in more detail in the paragraphs that follow.

6.2.1 Multiple Users

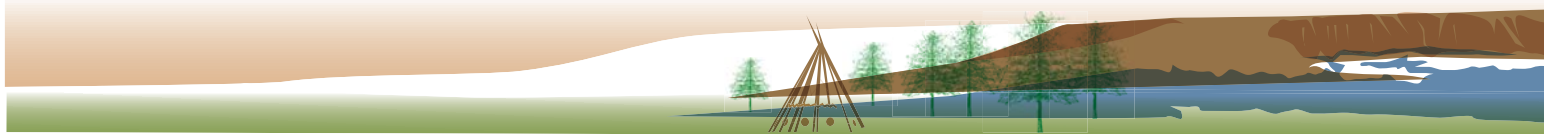
The City's parks and trail system is utilized by a variety of users, at times creating conflict. Concerns that arose from residents during public consultation included feelings of threat from dogs without leashes and cyclists passing walkers from behind without warning. Similar conflicts occurred with other recreation users using the same space, including cyclists, joggers, roller bladers, skateboarders, wheelchair users and more recently, motorized bicyclists.

The potential resolution of these conflicts may lie with using a two front approach: a) an education program that encourages specialized users to appreciate the worth of other users and to follow certain rules of etiquette when engaging them, and b) incorporating physical changes into the parks system e.g. signage, design features (i.e. line paintings on trails to delineate what areas can be used by different users) and materials (e.g. hard surface vs. gravel, etc.).

6.2.2 By-Law Enforcement

Concerns about by-law enforcement have focused largely on the Dog By-law particularly as it relates to dogs in off-leash areas. The City's Dog By-law (By-law 3183) has been in effect since March 2000 and limits off-leash activity to specific sites in the City – most of these sites are designated as "environmental reserves". The concerns raised by the public suggest that there is inadequate enforcement of the off-leash section of the By-law i.e. dogs are still allowed by their owners to run off-leash in non-designated areas of the City. In the off-leash areas themselves the sharing of space between off-leash dogs and other recreation users occasionally creates encounters that are negative. Still another frequently cited problem is dog waste, a problem resulting from some owners who fail to comply with the clean-up requirements of the By-law.

A contrarian position is, understandably, taken by dog owners who view the presence of off-leash parks as highly desirable. Indeed, these pet owners consider that one site is insufficient and suggest that more should be created. (These comments suggest that there may be an erroneous perception by dog owners i.e. that there is only one off-leash site. Current city maps show a number of off-leash locations, e.g. Saamis area, Echo Dale Regional Park, lands adjacent to Seven Persons Creek, Ross Creek Natural Park, lands adjacent to the River Valley – north of Police Point Park.) The dog waste issue can be properly handled, according to the dog owners, by introducing "dog waste baggies" into parks as well as additional garbage cans for the disposal



of dog waste. Additional amenities for off-leash should be carefully distributed so as to not overwhelm parks with signage and appropriately utilize available resources.

The potential for solving the “dog issue” will be challenging. The provision of “doggie waste bags” and garbage cans will certainly be helpful in solving some of the problems. Similarly, a more determined effort by the City’s By-law enforcement team will contribute to achieving a positive outcome. Ultimately, however, an education program aimed at creating more civic-minded and responsible dog owners may be the most important element in ensuring that these issues have a reasonable chance of being resolved.

6.2.3 Encroachment on City Parkland by Private Property Owners

Residential development adjacent to park areas and undeveloped city lands has created occasional conflicts. It has been noted that some homeowners, whose properties abut park areas, are extending the use of their properties on to these parks and using them for private purposes. The resolution of this issue may require an approach that a) determines the nature and extent of these occurrences, b) delineates by legal survey, the private and the public property boundaries, c) determines if there are any justifiable circumstances under which the property owner should be allowed to extend the use of the property, d) proceed to enforce the encroachment abuses.

6.2.4 Vandalism and Property Damage

Vandalism and property damage have been identified as an issue within parts of the parks system. While this is a phenomenon that is commonplace in many municipalities, the most effective anti-vandalism efforts have typically involved the police services and an informed and cooperative public. Meeting with and inaugurating steps to develop a program with the City’s Police Services would be an important first step in beginning an anti-vandalism campaign.

6.2.5 Education

Public comments have stressed that education can play an important role as an integrative element in managing parks. The issues noted above – multiple use conflicts, by-law enforcement (dog off-leash), encroachment on City parkland, and vandalism and property damage – can all potentially be remedied through an education process; a process that can instill important values with the public e.g. the worth of City’s parks system as wildlife habitats, as providers of recreation, as important components of the ecosystem and as places for revitalizing the human spirit.

Policy

Encroachment issues on City Park areas should be addressed by following a systematic approach of problem delineation, engaging the offenders through discussion and proceeding to enforce the abuse. Each encroachment should be assessed on its own merit.

Policy

A policy for confronting vandalism should be reviewed in conjunction with sound environmental design principles and include a public education strategy.

7.0 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Parks System Management Plan offers a road map for City Council, its administration, interest groups, clubs and associations and the residents of Medicine Hat to guide future development, design, implementation and management of its parks system. The enthusiastic participation of the administration, the stakeholders and the general public during the preparation of this Plan demonstrated the commitment, care and respect that the residents of Medicine Hat have for their parks.

This Parks System Management Plan should be viewed as a living document subject to changing conditions within the community and should be reviewed and updated as required. The overarching conclusions for the plan are summarized below:

- Preserve and protect the City's natural and unique environments
- Base decision making on the priorities set out under the plan
- Guide the management and planning of parks where other jurisdictions may be involved e.g. Area Structure Plan preparation
- Incorporate innovative concepts to parks management
- Expand utilization of the park system through education and communication with the public.

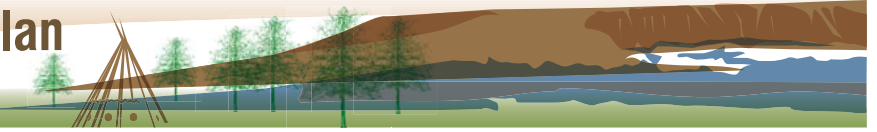
The Parks System Management Plan provides the basis to develop and manage a park system that will grow in tandem with a thriving, robust community and meet the needs of people of all ages, abilities, and economic levels.

Further to the key recommendations stated above, this plan has presented the following recommendations to guide the future development of the Parks System in Medicine Hat.

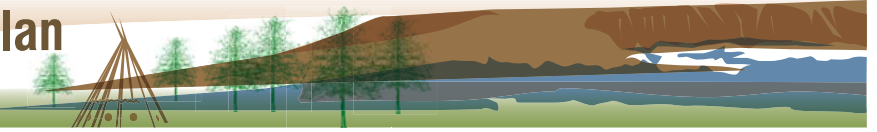
PRINCIPLES	PRIORITY	SECTION
Land acquisition for major parks and recreation facilities should be secured several years in advance of subdivision development as part of the Area Structure Plan provisions.	Short-Term	5.0
Proposals to include storm water facilities as part of subdivision development plans should ensure that the adjacent municipal reserve lands are appropriately sized.	Mid-Term	4.2.4.4
School grounds should be developed at time of subdivision development to a MR standard.	Mid-Term	5.4



PRINCIPLES	PRIORITY	SECTION
Regionally and provincially significant areas should be reviewed and planned to ensure their preservation and protection.	Mid-Term	5.7
The Parks System Management Plan should be reviewed and updated every 10 years.	Long Term	1.2
Continue with plan to review land registration of parks system parcels to appropriately register as MR or ER.	Ongoing	4.1.1
Stormwater sites shall be considered Public Utility Lots where they are incorporated into reserve areas and be the responsibility of the Municipal Works department. MR credit may be granted to the parcel if the ponds are suitably designed.	Ongoing	4.2.4.4
Non-recreation lands that are used by the public, i.e. public utility lots, should be developed and maintained by the appropriate municipal authority.	Ongoing	5.0
All neighbourhood and community based parks should be developed to a Municipal Reserve Standard.	Ongoing	5.2, 5.3
Utility rights-of-way should not interfere with the recreational and functional design of parks.	Ongoing	5.1-5.8
Where appropriate, parks should provide accessible opportunities to residents with disabilities and accessible playgrounds within each quadrant of the city.	Ongoing	5.5
Long term maintenance of amenities exceeding the Municipal Serving Standards is the responsibility of the developer.	Ongoing	5.5
Greenways used as drainage facilities must incorporate design features to ensure that water issues are minimized.	Ongoing	5.6
Environmental Reserve Easements should be only considered when environmental reserve dedication is not possible.	Ongoing	5.7
The preparation of any land planning documents should identify naturally significant areas and include recommendations for preservation.	Ongoing	5.7, 5.13



PRINCIPLES	PRIORITY	SECTION
Design and construction guidelines should be updated and based upon Municipal Serving Standards of the day.	Short Term	5.0
The need for indoor and outdoor leisure facilities should be assessed and land requirements should be reviewed to ensure adequate land allocation.	Short-Term	5.0
The off-leash dog areas should be reviewed to determine criteria for off-leash dog areas and the appropriate distribution of these areas.	Short-Term	6.2.2
Aging infrastructure within parks should be inventoried and replaced or renovated as needed.	Ongoing	5.1-5.3, 5.5
Joint Use Agreements should be reviewed to ensure that standards for shared use are provided and should reflect the current needs of the City and School Districts.	Ongoing	5.4
Areas identified as naturally significant during the Area Structure Plan process should remain undisturbed, and should be registered as ER.	Ongoing	5.7
<p>Future Planning Documents that will aid in the development of a whole and cohesive park system include:</p> <p>Recreation Master Plan (develop) in 2010</p> <p>Urban Forestry Management Plan (update) in 2011</p> <p>Parks and Open Space Design Standards (develop) in 2012</p> <p>Playground Management Plan (update) in 2012</p> <p>Echo Dale Future Development Plan (update) in 2013</p> <p>Parks Construction Specifications (comprehensive update) in 2014, along with annual updates</p> <p>Natural Areas and Native Species Management Plan (develop) in 2015</p> <p>Future Trail Development Master Plan (update) in 2019</p>	Ongoing	5.13



APPENDIX A - TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

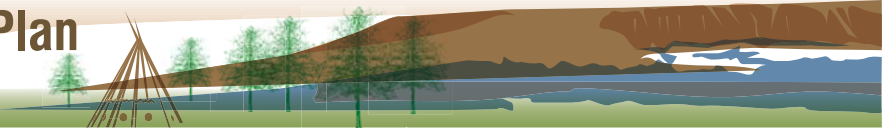
Barrier Free Access: Means that all components of the parks system will be free of any impediments and obstacles that hinder or prevent a person or persons, handicapped physically or mentally, from easily attaining access to, and enjoying the amenities offered by, the parks system.

Environmental Reserve Easement: A legal instrument registered against a property to ensure that the said property stays in its natural state, notwithstanding any future change in ownership.

Joint-Use Agreement: Means an agreement between the municipality and the school authorities with respect to matters related to SR and MR lands. A Joint Use Agreement may typically have a provision for the school playgrounds to be maintained by the municipality's parks crews, and the costs shared. At the same time, the agreement may provide for the use of the school grounds or the school buildings by the public during "after school" hours. The authority for such agreements is legislated in The Municipal Government Act which allows ".....the municipality and one or more school authorities...(to)...enter into any agreement they consider necessary with respect to a use referred to in subsection (671) (2) or for any matter related to the use".

Parks System: Means the combined sum of all the recreational spaces, both active and passive, that are owned, operated and maintained by the City of Medicine Hat. The size range of the spaces can extend from small amenity sites to large city-wide and regional ones, as well as the connections (e.g. the trails) that link them. The Parks System is comprised of municipal reserves, environmental reserves and sites that may have been purchased by, or donated to the municipality. It also includes recreational spaces that are used by the public and jointly maintained with the school authorities under joint use agreements.

Reserve: Lands as described under Section 8 of the Municipal Government Act, RSA 2000, Chapter M-26 attained through land dedication resulting from the subdivision process. Descriptions of reserve classifications referenced in the MGA include:



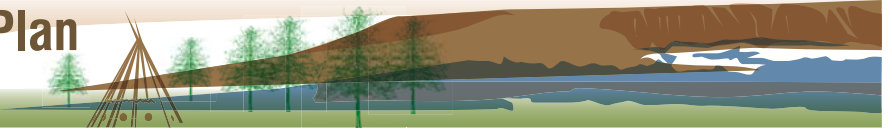
ER – Environmental Reserve: These lands are typically characterized by such features as swamps, gullies, ravines, coulees or natural drainage courses. ER also includes lands that are subject to flooding or deemed to be unstable as well as land that abuts water bodies.

MR – Municipal Reserve: Uses of MR lands are limited to public parks, public recreation areas and to separate areas of land that are used for different purposes. MR lands can be leased or sold following a public hearing by the local municipal Council. However the proceeds from such a sale or lease may only be utilized for purposes related to the above-noted uses.

SR – School Reserve: Total land dedication of MR and/or SR in subdivision is limited to 10% of the site. SR dedicated land is typically used by school authorities for school site acquisition.

Sustainability: In its broadest sense, this term is usually defined as the philosophy and practice of meeting the needs of present generations without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations. It is frequently presented as the intersection of three principles: environmental stewardship, social justice and economic health. For purposes of this Plan, our Sustainability definition incorporates these general principles and applies them to the parks management system. Sustainability therefore, from the point of view of the Parks System Management Plan, ensures that:

- a) the park environments are maintained, protected and saved for both present and future generations,
- b) equal access to parks is available to all users, and
- c) the infrastructure of the parks system is fiscally sound and properly maintained.



APPENDIX B - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OPEN HOUSES, INTERVIEWS AND WORLD CAFÉ SUMMARY

Key Issues Identification

Early in the development process, substantial background research was initiated to define the direction and scope of the Plan. Key issues encountered through the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Department were identified and referenced. These issues assisted in creating discussion questions for use in both City department interviews and Open House surveys.

City Department Interviews: November 4, 2008

An important initial step in the plan development was to meet with City of Medicine Hat Departments that would be affected or could provide insight into the Parks System Management Plan. The interviews were preceded by a general session to introduce and define the project scope, team members, key deliverables and milestones, community and stakeholder engagement opportunities and enhance awareness of departmental roles. Separate interviews were then held with each department with discussion of issues specific to their particular focus. Departments participating included:

- Corporate Asset Management
- Planning Services
- Municipal Works
- Community Development
- Environment Department
- Parks and Outdoor Recreation
- Police Services

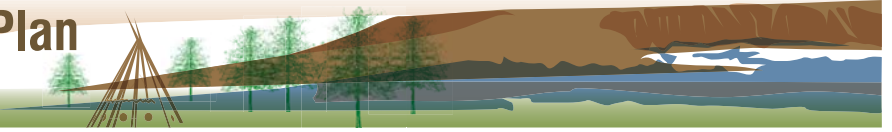
Open Houses: November 18-20 and November 24-28, 2008

A total of four Open Houses were held at a variety of locations throughout the City to encourage as many community members as possible to become involved in the Parks System Management Plan process. The following three Open Houses were facilitated by City department staff and Stantec Consultant Ltd. representatives to provide assistance and interaction with the public. These community engagement opportunities were held at the following venues:

November 18th, Medicine Hat College, Main Centennial Hall Foyer

November 19th, Family Leisure Centre, Boardroom

November 20th, Victory Lutheran Church, Fellowship Room



Residents viewed a variety of informational display boards that presented an overview and scope for the project as well as locational maps that assisted participants in referencing specific areas of concern with the facilitators. An exit survey was also available for residents to provide input as to their frequency and purpose in using the City Parks System and indicate strengths and weaknesses they recognize in the existing system.

An unmanned Open House was held at City Hall throughout the week of November 24th through the 28th where residents viewed the previously mentioned displays and were also given opportunity to complete the surveys. It is estimated that over 100 residents attended the Open Houses and 76 surveys were completed.

Results from the surveys indicate that approximately 85% of respondents use the parks and trails at least weekly for walking or exercise and 37% expressed appreciation for excellence in the parks system. Elements most enjoyed included: the trails, natural areas, trees, wildlife and the quiet, peaceful serenity experienced. The most frequently mentioned element missing from the parks system was attention to dog issues.

A copy of the survey, tabulation of responses, and comments follow this section.

PARKS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Comment Form

November 18-28, 2008

Thank you for attending the Parks Management Plan Open House. We invite you to view the display boards and share your vision for Medicine Hat's Parks.

By completing this form you will help us understand opportunities and constraints with the parks from your perspective.

1. Please indicate the effectiveness of this Open House in the following areas.

	Excellent	Good	Neutral	Fair	Poor
The information and graphics on display	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The objectives of the project are clearly defined	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. How often do you use the Parks in Medicine Hat and for what purpose?

	2-5/week	1/week	1-3/mth	<1/mth	Never
Walking/Exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organized/Group Sports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual Sports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using Playgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Passive Activities (i.e. Reading)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Which neighborhood or area of town do you live in? (i.e. Ross Glen, Downtown, Crescent Heights, etc.)

4. What elements of the existing Parks system do you enjoy?

5. What elements do you feel are missing from the Parks system in Medicine Hat?

(See Reverse)

6. What can the City do to encourage you to use the Parks system more often?

7. Would you like to participate as a member of our stakeholder group? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes: Please provide contact information (Name, email address or phone number)

8. Is there anything else you would like us to know about the parks in Medicine Hat?

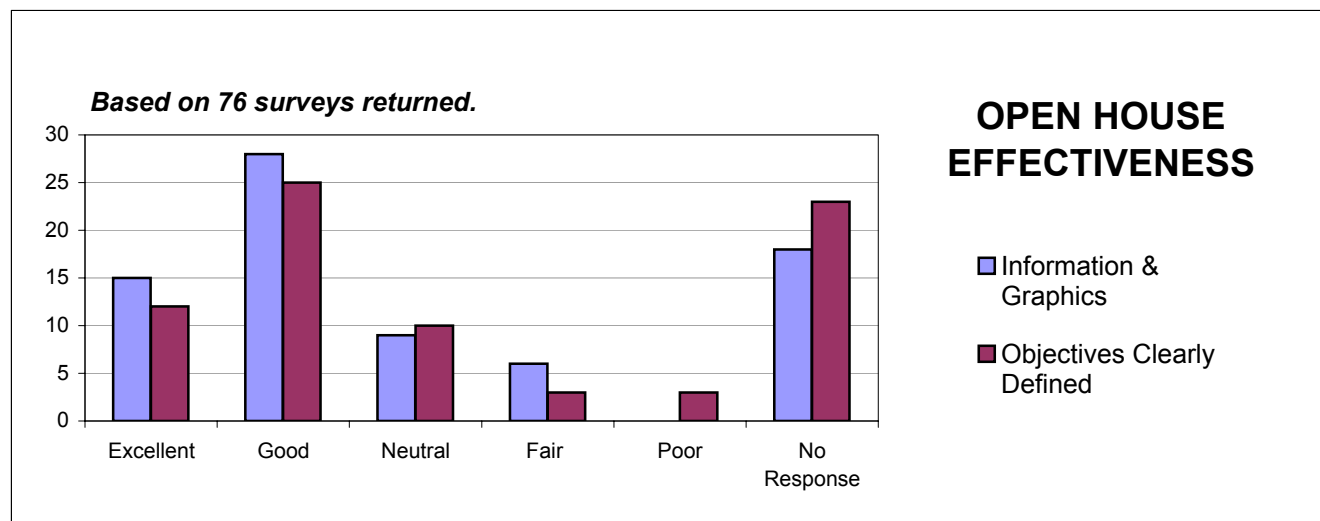
The personal information on this comment form is collected under the authority of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Section 32 and is used solely for the purpose of providing information on the Parks Management Plan.

If you are unable to return the comment sheet at this open house, please send the form to:

Email:	devin.huber@stantec.com	or	maumud@medicinehat.ca
Fax:	403-328-0664		403-527-4798
In Person:	City Hall Open House Display 580 First Street SE	or	Parks and Outdoor Recreation 88 Kipling Street S.E.

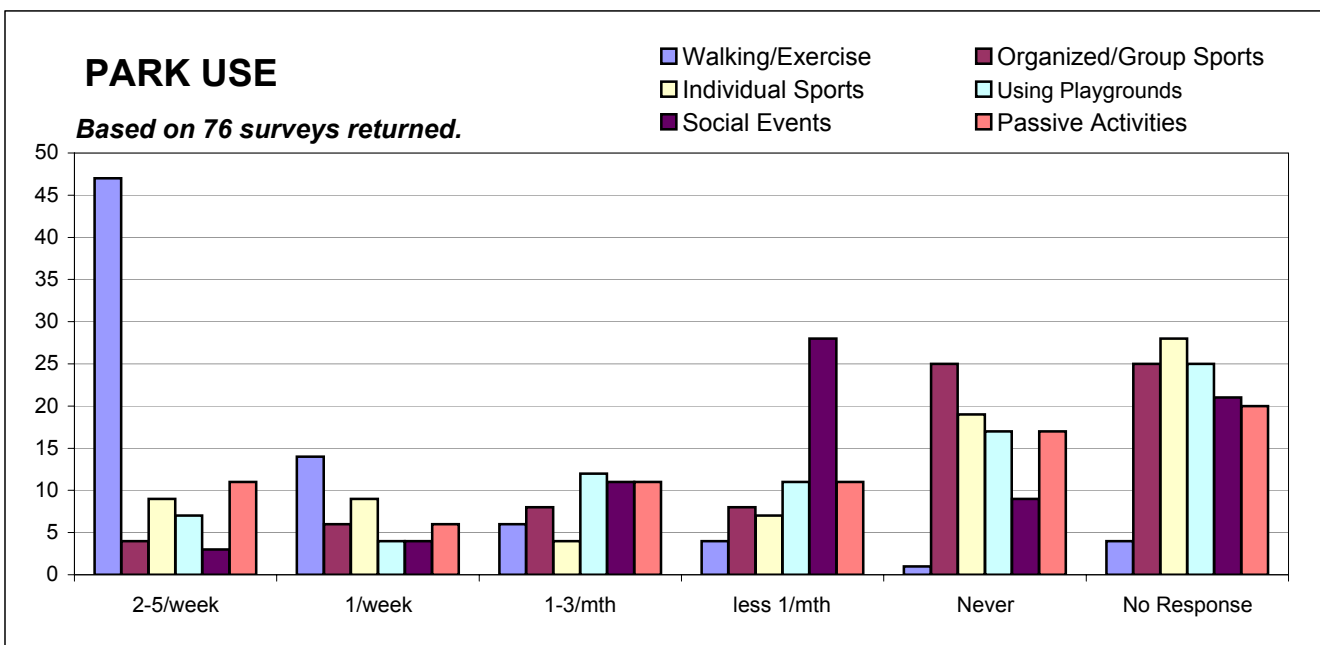
Please indicate the effectiveness of this Open House in the following areas:

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>No Response</u>
Information & Graphics	15	28	9	6	0	18
Objectives Clearly Defined	12	25	10	3	3	23



How often do you use the Parks in Medicine Hat and for what purpose?

	<u>2-5/week</u>	<u>1/week</u>	<u>1-3/mth</u>	<u>less 1/mth</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>No Response</u>
Walking/Exercise	47	14	6	4	1	4
Organized/Group Sports	4	6	8	8	25	25
Individual Sports	9	9	4	7	19	28
Using Playgrounds	7	4	12	11	17	25
Social Events	3	4	11	28	9	21
Passive Activities	11	6	11	11	17	20



Open House Survey Most Frequent Responses (from 76 completed surveys)

1. What elements of the existing Parks system do you enjoy?

Responses	Elements Enjoyed
43	Pathways/Trails
19	Natural Areas
15	Police Point Park
13	Trees
10	Quiet Peaceful Serenity
10	Wildlife
9	Well maintained
9	Bike paths
9	Playgrounds
	(Other responses contained less than 5 mentions)

2. What elements do you feel are missing from the Parks system in Medicine Hat?

Responses	Elements Missing
12	Attention to dog issues / off-leash areas
6	Education / Awareness
6	Protection of Natural Areas
5	More Trees (especially in new areas)
5	Additional Natural Areas
5	Connectivity
5	Nothing is missing
	(Other responses contained less than 5 mentions)

3. What can the City do to encourage you to use the Parks system more often?

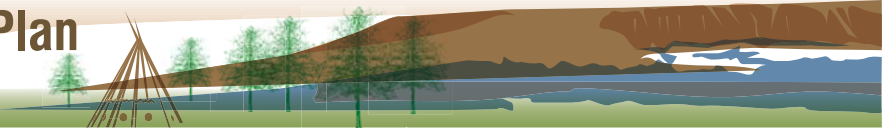
Responses	Elements Enjoyed
9	Improved Maintenance
9	Awareness / Education
8	Dog Control
7	More events held in the parks
7	No encouragement needed
6	Improved lighting
	(Other responses contained less than 5 mentions)

4. Is there anything else you would like us to know about the parks in Medicine Hat?

Responses	Comment
23	Appreciative of excellent park system
8	Maintenance issues
6	Need for awareness and publicity
4	Dog control issues
3	Pesticide concerns
	(Other responses contained less than 3 mentions)

A number of suggestions were given to increase awareness of the exceptional Park system Medicine Hat has to offer.

- Initiate a self stamped or self directed Parks Passport
- Promote Adopt a Neighborhood Park program
- Establish “Celebrate a Park” article – weekly or monthly in the Medicine Hat News
- Create park brochures
- Create park information boards for posting in parks
- Encourage exercise groups to utilize the parks
- Encourage neighborhood park “block parties”
- Promote Music in the Park every Sunday during the summer months
- Emphasize recognize of local culture through art in park facilities
- Encourage resident’s input – “What are your favorite outdoor activities?”
- Promote community gardens
- Consider the Heritage Pavilion as a summer restaurant



World Café Stakeholder Meeting: January 13, 2009

Approximately 26 individuals attended the Work Café Stakeholder Meeting held at the Medicine Hat College in an inviting and casually structured atmosphere to mingle, interact and express their views. Attendees were invited to participate in round table and group discussions pertaining to questions that would lend direction in the development of the Parks System Management Plan. These included participant's opinion of the strengths and weaknesses of the parks system and sustainable initiatives that would be beneficial to include. Results from each table's discussions were posted for review by the entire group. A dot democracy activity then allowed interested individuals the opportunity to "vote" for findings they considered to be priority elements.

Strengths of the parks system - focused positively on variety, diversity and abundance of open space, trails and natural features

Sustainable initiatives - included partnerships, walkability, water management, natural vegetation and open spaces for meeting and congregating.

Weaknesses of the parks system - addressed connectivity/linkages, signage and bathroom facilities.

As a follow-up to this Stakeholder Meeting, an information package was also sent to significant parks system user groups to obtain their input and priority elements as perceived by the group they represent. Comments were received from:

- Rugby
- Skateboarders Association
- Coed Slowpitch
- Little League Baseball (5-14 years)
- Soccer Association
- Big League Baseball (15-19 years)

Details of the World Café discussions and sports user group comments follow this section.

WORLD CAFÉ STAKEHOLDER MEETING Round Table Discussions Results

1. What are the strengths of the parks system?

Priority	Response
4	Good variety of parks; lots of open space
4	Trails; diverse use; view points
3	Natural features: e.g river, coulees
2	Year round amenities - tobogganing hills; skating
2	Community events held in park - Canada Day
2	Large dog off-leash area (but only one)

2. What sustainable initiatives should be included in the Parks Management Plan

Priority	Response
7	Sustainability should be a partnership and collaboration - not pass the buck
6	Plan walkable communities with a mix of housing, shopping, cultural, recreational opportunities with walking/biking within distance of each other
5	Use of non potable water irrigation systems
4	Use more natural and native species in new parks
4	Opportunities for congregating or meeting places
4	Solar lighting
3	Bridge from Strathcona to Police Point
2	Funding growth
2	Increase use of low maintenance infrastructure
2	More multi-use opportunities (design)
2	Themes or character for each park

3. What are the weaknesses of the parks system?

Priority	Response
6	Link the Parks to Heritage of the area
4	Lack of interpretive signage for history and natural aspects
4	Lack of connectivity/linkages between parks - not having to drive to parks
3	Bathroom open season too short
3	More bathroom facilities
3	Lions Park plays second fiddle to Echo Dale
2	More curb-cuts; barrier free
2	Some parks have deteriorated quite substantially - Strathcona paddle boats, water, concessions
2	City not staging enough public or private events in parks
2	Lions Park not used for families and picnics

Shows all responses ranked as a priority by more than one person.

Parks Management Plan

SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

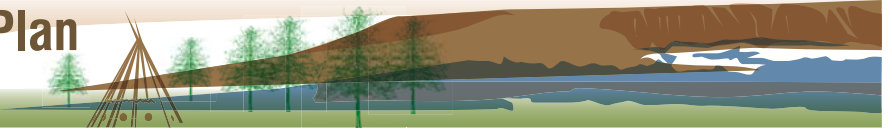
Contact	Sports Organization
Paul Howe	Rugby
Richard Pomreinke	Coed Slowpitch
Lovell McDonnell	Little League Baseball (5-14 years)
Lovell McDonnell	Big League Baseball (15-19 years)
Kim Elliot	Soccer Association
John Crisp / Levi Switzer	Skateboarders Association

	What are the strengths of the parks system?	What sustainable initiatives should be included in the Parks Management Plan?	What are the weaknesses of the parks system?
RUGBY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of parks, reasonably positioned throughout the City Parks feature usable items, i.e. Police Point has many good trails along the river where people can walk If one counts the trails system in the Hat as part of the Park system then we are well served. The paths are generally cleared in winter so they remain open year round for people who like to walk/run on them. Ross Glen has a nice wading pool and the outdoor large pools are reasonably well position. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link up the trails so that one can circumnavigate the City on a continuous trail bike ride. We are exploring turf for the rugby, football, soccer but the cost is slowing this down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not perceive many weaknesses Continuous bike trail as mentioned Southridge needs an outdoor pool

	What are the strengths of the parks system?	What sustainable initiatives should be included in the Parks Management Plan?	What are the weaknesses of the parks system?
COED SLOWPITCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grass areas outside diamonds are well maintained Bathroom facilities are available Adequate parking space for vehicles Fields on average are better than other cities, we have less but better quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance be carried out more frequently to address safety concerns Continue to try and work with leagues to improve facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poorly maintained fencing at Moose Ball Complex (MBC) and Family Leisure Centre (FLC) poses safety concerns for spectators and players Outfields at MBC extremely hazardous due to gopher holes Infields at MBC require resurfacing of shale Poor maintenance of infields, especially around homeplate at FLC Lack of covered dugouts at FLC Lack of playground for children at FLC fields Building at FLC lacks size, space to hold large events Procrastination of City to install lights on all fields has limited diamond space and playing times. Cost of renting fields is detrimental to holding tournaments Failure of parks and rec staff to spearhead projects instead of organizations Poor irrigation of fields at MBC and FLC Dog problems at MBC and FLC

	What are the strengths of the parks system?	What sustainable initiatives should be included in the Parks Management Plan?	What are the weaknesses of the parks system?
LITTLE/BIG LEAGUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks have a wide variety of services for individuals and user groups • Parks Department has good leadership/management that address all concerns and requests as best as they can with budgeted dollars. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure adequate space for facility – open space around – room for expansion • Develop washrooms in high use areas • Design good road access and parking • Pre-determine a maintenance plan for facilities, i.e. at site – buildings/storage/equipment • Look at parks and schools being next to each other or sharing possibilities – play grounds, sports fields, washrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The older parks areas that have athletic fields are cramped by roads, alleys and residential and make for difficult situations in accessibility, parking and infringing on private property. • The City and Parks system has grown considerably in recent years putting a strain on the Parks Management and staff to keep up with demands of maintaining the entire city with a limited budget. Need to increase funding in proportion to grow. • Washrooms are appreciated and a service that people would like to see in the busy areas.
SOCCER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of current soccer field/green spaces that are usable. This allows us flexibility in our scheduling (at least for now). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing for growth and development of youth sport in MH by creating field surfaces that are sized correctly to allow multiple types of games to be played (i.e. a full size field that could be lined for smaller sided games playing across it.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance – some fields are dry and hard packed, grass is too long • Rising usage fees <p>Note: We will as an organization, overtake the number of usable fields in MH with the next 5-10 years. We have begun to create a very good working relationship with the City, via Maureen, that is now allowing us to see what is coming in terms of developable field/green space. We are also beginning to project out for the next 5-10 years to see how many fields/how much green space will be required to keep up with the growth of our organization.</p>

	What are the strengths of the parks system?	What sustainable initiatives should be included in the Parks Management Plan?	What are the weaknesses of the parks system?
SKATEBOARDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City chose Kin Coulee Park for the Skateboard Park. It is central to the many users, and their respective parents, as many are teens without their own transportation. Many kids walk to the Park. • The surrounding Park caters to many users, and provides parking. • The central area creates comradery among the skaters and builds a community that would not otherwise be there. • It is the ability of Parks to partner with dreams of the youth and the needs in the City that makes things happen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is our opinion that an enlarged skateboard parks would provide many benefits: • Meet the needs of the growing skateboarding community, there are wait queues at the moment on some obstacles • Enable better and larger competitions, both locally and nationally • Add to the City's tourist attractions as it would be unique in SE Alberta • Encourage City youth to get off the streets and down to a large Park. Teens like company and this would be a great magnet to them • It is sustainable in that most of the structure is hard landscape requiring only intermittent maintenance such as crack filling and patching with concrete. The users are very good at keeping debris off the obstacles • The new design would also stabilize the creek banks and therefore improve the long term sustainability of the creek against further erosion • The new design will also bring some new scenery, not including the amazing concrete work, but with Newline Skate-parks as our builder they incorporate a lot of green space and make it a part of the park and now just a concrete slab. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The previous weakness was that not all user groups, such as the MH Skateboard Association were invited to participate. We thank the City for inviting our input. • The City has now recognized that skateboarding is a long term outdoor recreation and sport, and is now including it in the Plan, thereby addresses one of its weaknesses.



Draft Open Space Plan and Guidelines Workshop: March 25, 2009

Attended by approximately 16 stakeholders and additional City and consulting staff, this workshop focused on principles, guidelines and strategies that evolved as a result of previous stakeholder input. Community values, guiding principles, goals and objectives were discussed in detail and resulting refinements to these elements are further explored in Section 3.

Table discussions allowed the opportunity for participants to brainstorm “words” or “phrases” they felt should be included in a vision statement that would inspire and challenge achievements in the Parks System Management Plan. All responses were presented and reviewed, and draft statements were created. These “drafts” provided a foundation in developing an achievable vision, identified in the sidebar, that would be consistent with community values and unique to Medicine Hat’s future.

“Creating outdoor opportunities that enhance the quality of life for present and future generations through responsible stewardship.”

Draft Open Space Stakeholder Workshop: June 18, 2009

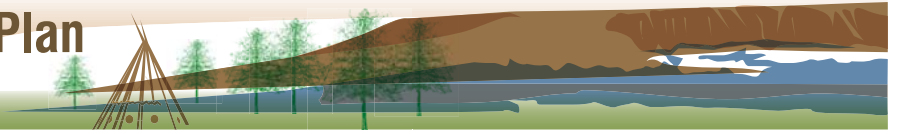
This interactive stakeholder workshop, attended by 17 residents and facilitators, was held at the Family Leisure Centre. A significant portion of the draft report including: inventory, analysis, classifications, water management and unique environments was presented to the group, followed by a “hands on” Future Park Charette.

Participants were divided into two groups where they cooperatively identified preferred proposed future park locations. A base plan of the City layered with tracing paper, encouraged group members to locate their preferences with markers. Many included comments as well, to help define the park proposals.

Most stakeholders displayed a concerned interest in protecting and enhancing environmental reserves and/or expanding and extending areas for this use. Other identified park needs included: bridges; repairs, upgrading and maintenance issues; need for new, non-environmentally related park areas.

Future park priorities from the stakeholders are illustrated in the following working map.





Draft Management Plan Report Workshop: November 25, 2009

The Draft Parks System Management Plan was presented to 10 stakeholders who attended the Draft Report Workshop held at the Family Leisure Centre. A power point presentation guided the participants through the life of the project and addressed the key park classifications, policies and implementation strategies acknowledged in the process journey. The final document will be presented to Council for their approval early in 2010.

APPENDIX C - COSTING

Estimated construction costs are summarized in the following sections. These unit costs are based upon 2009 construction rates in Southern Alberta and follow the recommended park sizes and facilities as outlined in the Park Classifications in Section 4. Future costing is based upon a 10% increase in construction rates per year.

NEW PARK CONSTRUCTION

Costs for new park development are shown as unit costing per square meter. The price includes:

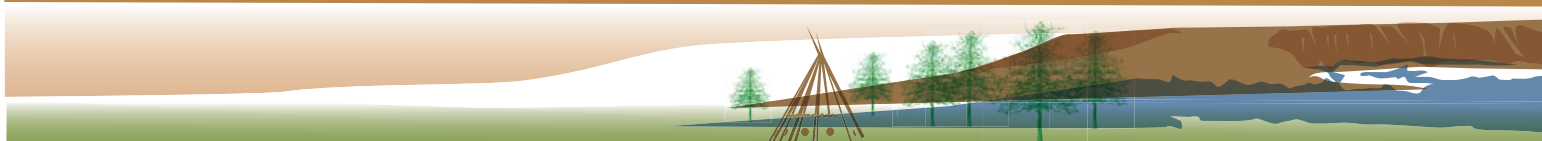
- Rough Grading, loaming, and seeding or sodding
- Planting, including trees, shrubs, and mulch
- Irrigation
- Fencing (post and chain)

Item	2009	2010	2011
Rough Grading	\$13/cm	\$14/cm	\$15/cm
Fine Grading	\$8/sm	\$9/sm	\$10/sm
Seeding	\$4/sm	\$4.50/sm	\$5/sm
Sodding	\$8/sm	\$9/sm	\$10/sm
Planting	\$17/sm	\$19/sm	\$21/sm
Irrigation	\$17/sm	\$19/sm	\$21/sm
Fencing	\$45/lm	\$50/lm	\$55/lm

Additional allowances are required for trails, structures, retaining walls, and additional furnishings and features. Examples of pricing of such items are found below.

A trail installation matrix itemizing costs for various trail surfaces is provided later in this section.

Item	2009	2010	2011
Benches	\$2000	\$2200	\$2420
Picnic Tables	\$2500	\$2750	\$3025
Bollards	\$645	\$710	\$780
Garbage Receptacles	\$2000	\$2200	\$2420
Small Playground Equipment	\$30,000	\$33,000	\$36,300
Medium Playground Equipment	\$70,000	\$77,000	\$84,700
Large Playground Equipment	\$200,000	\$220,000	\$242,000
Small Spray Park	\$125,000	\$137,500	\$151,250
Large Spray Park	\$300,000	\$330,000	\$360,000



Item	2009	2010	2011
Gazebo/Shelter	\$50,000	\$55,000	\$60,500
Timber Retaining Walls	\$350/fsm	\$400/fsm	\$460/fsm
Split & Stack Retaining Walls	\$550/fsm	\$630/fsm	\$725/fsm
Boulder Retaining Walls	\$500/lm	\$550/lm	\$600/lm
Fencing - Chain Link	\$85/lm	\$94/lm	\$103/lm
Fencing - Silt Fence	\$25/lm	\$28/lm	\$31/lm

Item	2009	2010	2011
Soccer/Football Posts	\$5000	\$5500	\$6050

UPGRADES TO EXISTING PARKS

Costs for existing parks are shown in unit costing per square meter. The price includes:

- Stripping of existing plant and soil material on site
- Rough Grading, loaming, and seeding or sodding
- Planting, including the addition of new trees, shrubs and mulch, while working around existing plant material
- Irrigation
- Fencing (Post and Chain)

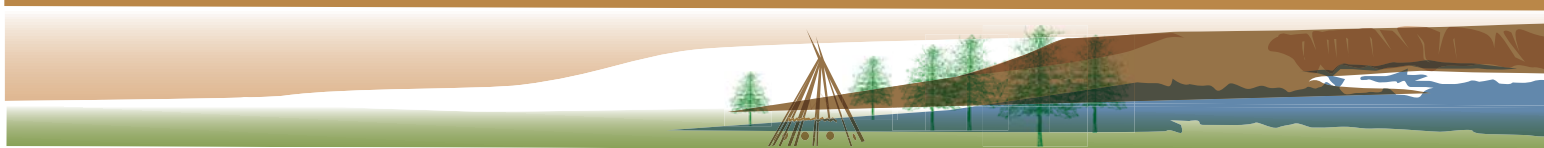
Item	2009	2010	2011
Site Stripping	\$7.50/sm	\$8/sm	\$9/sm
Rough Grading	\$15/cm	\$17/cm	\$19/cm
Fine Grading	\$8/sm	\$9/sm	\$10/sm
Seeding	\$4/sm	\$4.50/sm	\$5/sm
Sodding	\$8/sm	\$9/sm	\$10/sm
Planting	\$17/sm	\$19/sm	\$21/sm
Irrigation	\$17/sm	\$19/sm	\$21/sm
Fencing	\$45/lm	\$50/lm	\$55/lm

For additional items included in existing parks, please refer to the New Park Construction, Section 5.3.1. Provisions should be made for the removal of any existing infrastructure that may be located on an existing site. Prices for the removal of such items will depend on the nature of the site and of the infrastructure.

TRAILS

As trails are often incorporated into park spaces, and are typically paid for through the park budgets, a matrix illustrating various trail surfaces and installation rates has been prepared. The items below are based upon current construction rates and include base preparation and materials.

Material	2009	2010	2011
Asphalt			
2.0m Width	\$115/lm	\$125/lm	\$138/lm
2.4m Width	\$120/lm	\$132/lm	\$145/lm
3.0m Width	\$150/lm	\$165/lm	\$182/lm
Paving Stone	\$150/sm	\$165/sm	\$182/sm
Concrete – Broom Finished	\$225/sm	\$250/sm	\$275/sm
Concrete – Sand Blasted	\$275/sm	\$300/sm	\$330/sm
Concrete – Stamped & Coloured	\$300/sm	\$330/sm	\$360/sm



APPENDIX D - RESOURCES

A substantial amount of background research accompanied this project. Many documents, plan, studies and reports that have been reviewed are cited in this report, and many more are contained in the project's resource files. For future reference, a complete listing of those documents is below.

- City of Medicine Hat 2009 Census Final Report, August 17, 2009
- Open Space Plan, March 2000
- Leisure Trails and Alternative Transportation Needs Assessment and Public Consultation Report
- City of Medicine Hat Community Services Division, Open Space Guidelines, May 1991
- Parks and Outdoor Recreation, 2006-2008 Business Plan
- Parks and Outdoor Recreation, 2006-2010 Operating Plan
- City of Medicine Hat Municipal Servicing Standards, Landscape Requirements
- Maintenance Standards, Parks
- Encroachment Policy - Adopted May 2, 2005
- Municipal Reserve Credit Policy, March 2004
- Boulevard Development and Maintenance Policy, June 19 2000
- Urban Forest Management Plan
- Joint Use Agreement, School - College - City Facilities, November 24, 2000
- Natural Areas and Species Inventory of Medicine Hat Properties with Analysis and ESA Report, 2006

APPENDIX E - FUNDING

FUNDING STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS

It is unlikely that any single source of funds can reasonably support the scope and breadth of recommendations in the Parks System Management Plan. As stewards of public money, municipalities today are faced with significant challenges when investing in infrastructure and services related to growth. Today's reality requires Councils to develop fiscally responsible business plans together with sound project management policies when delivering programs and services to taxpayers.

Implementation of these plans and policies ensure that all projects and their funding requirements are evaluated by City Administration and Council prior to financial distribution. Grants and similar funding received by a city department may be utilized by various specific projects within their mandate, and absolute clarity relating to funding allocation is essential.

Municipalities are exploring innovative means to finance necessary growth-related infrastructure by leveraging limited public dollars with the private sector, developing community partnerships, and implementing user fees and levies, among others, to limit the financial burden on the taxpayer.

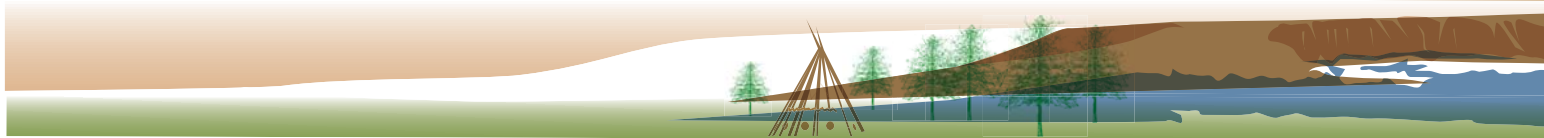
Medicine Hat is unique among Alberta municipalities in that it is able to tap significant revenues from its natural gas and petroleum operations as well as its municipal land development operations. Although decisions respecting use of such revenues are based on Council budgetary priorities, there remains the option of exploring funding from this source, e.g. the City's Community Capital Projects Reserve.

Complementary to implementing the Parks System Management Plan would be an integrated marketing strategy with an action plan to identify an appropriate source and mix of funding to complete short and long term, small and large-price tag priorities and that brands the Park System program. It is recommended that the services of a marketing consultant with expertise in strategic funding plan development, together with intimate knowledge of funding sources be retained. These consulting services often include soliciting targeted funders and application submission.

The following is a preliminary list of funding alternatives utilized by some municipalities that can be considered and further explored:

Corporate Sponsorships – invites corporations to invest in the development or enhancement of new or existing facilities in park system. Sponsorships are also often used for programs and events.

Partnerships – are joint funding sources between two or more separate entities and could include two levels of government, the City and a not-for-profit agency (i.e., service clubs), or the City and private business, or a combination



of all. Partners jointly develop facilities and may share risks, operational costs, responsibilities, and asset management based on the strength and weakness of each partner.

Foundation / Gifts – establishing a charitable foundation that can benefit from private donations, endowments and bequests directed to specific causes and activities. Fundraisers on various scales are also an option that can be directed to smaller price-tag amenities. These programs can be marketed as “packaged donations” in pre-set denominations (i.e., a \$100 donation will buy “X”; a \$500 donation will buy “Y”), together with a recognition program.

Grants – are available through both Provincial and Federal government and various Foundations. Eligibility and terms vary.

Naming Rights – establishing (if not currently in place) a policy to “sell” the naming rights for new and existing parks, and associated amenity spaces.

Concession Management / Equipment Rentals – is a form of retail sales or rental of goods or consumable items that can be contracted to the private sector and that could generate a revenue stream (i.e., sidewalk vendors, patios, food/drink dispensing machines, farmer’s markets, etc.).

Advertising Sales - carefully managed and sensitive park signage and/or advertising space in program guides, venues as well as other visible forms of promotion that expose the advertiser to a large audience.

Volunteerism – individuals and communities donate time to assist in the maintenance of a small park or amenity (i.e., Adopt-a-Park).

Special Fundraisers – annual large-scale fundraisers that target specific programs and capital projects.

Resource Funding Programs – partnerships with corporations or residents directed to planting a tree for new births, deaths, etc. (BP Birthplace Forest; McInnis & Holloway’s Memorial Forests). This can be extended to purchasing memorial park benches and other amenities.

Private Leases – space is leased from City-owned land by private business to provide needed amenities including driving ranges, pro-shops, restaurants, sports facilities, etc.

Friends Associations – are groups formed to raise money for a single focus purpose that could include a park facility for overall community benefit (i.e., Friends of Heritage Park)

Provincial Government Grants

Alberta Infrastructure & Transportation [www.infratrans.gov.ab.ca/]

Alberta Municipal Infrastructure Program – may fund capital projects including cultural and recreational facilities, community environmental and energy systems and facilities and other municipal physical infrastructure.

New Deal for Cities & Communities – financial assistance for Sustainable Capital Municipal Infrastructure in support of the desired outcomes of cleaner air, cleaner water, and the reduction of green house gases.

Alberta Municipal Affairs

Regional Partnership Initiative – assists municipalities in exploring and developing sustainable partnerships that benefit their operations and residents, business and industry with coordination that promotes innovation, sustainability and cost savings. [www.gov.ab.ca/ma/ms/RegParShip]

Alberta Gaming

Alberta Lottery Fund

Community Facility Enhancement Program (CFEP) – provides support to the expansion and upgrading of community-use facilities [www.albertalotteryfund.ca]

Community Initiatives Program (CIP) – supports project-based initiatives including community services, seniors' services, libraries, arts and culture, sports, education, health and recreation. [www.albertalotteryfund.ca]

Alberta Sport, Recreation Parks & Wildlife Foundation (ASRPWF) – supports sport, recreation, parks and wildlife activities [www.cd.gov.ab.ca/asrpwf/]

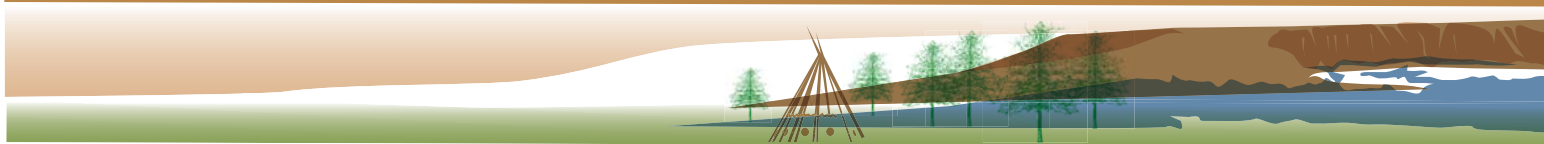
Alberta Historical Resources Foundation (AHRF) – supports community-based heritage initiatives [www.cd.gov.ab.ca/preserving/heritage/ahrf]

Wild Rose Foundation (WRF) – supports the volunteer sector by providing skill development and training, etc., to build capacity and achieve self-reliance. [www.cd.gov.ab.ca/wrf]

Federal Government Grants

Environment Canada

EcoAction Community Funding Program – supports community group for projects that have measurable, positive impacts on the environment and encourages projects that protect, rehabilitate or enhance the natural environment and builds the capacity of communities to sustain these activities into the future. [www.ec.gc.ca/fund_e.html]



FOUNDATIONS

Tree Canada Foundation

Green Streets Canada – encourages the adoption of innovative best management practices and policies in municipal forest management on as wide a regional basis as possible. [www.treecanada.ca/programs/greenstreets/]

Evergreen

Common Grounds Program – provides a variety of grants to community groups doing environmental stewardship work across Canada. [www.evergreen.ca]

The Home Depot Foundation [www.homedepotfoundation.org/communityaffairs/content/en_CA/CAApply.html]

Playspaces – Home Depot partners with KaBOOM! to build and rebuild community play areas.

Community Trees – supports community programs that incorporate trees and landscape as part of infrastructure.

Alberta Ecotrust Foundation

Major Projects & Community Projects – supports community based and/or comprehensive projects resulting in sustainable environmental benefit. [www.albertaecotrust.com]

Other Grants

Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Green Municipal Fund – supports the implementation of innovative environmental projects with low interest loans and grants. [www.fcm.ca]

Resources

A Guide to Alberta Programs, Grants and Organizations Relevant to Natural Diversity, Wetlands, Watershed, Wildlife & Habitat [www.landstewardship.org/aguidetoalbertaprogramsgrantsandorg.doc]



APPENDIX F - INFORMAL POLICIES

The following is a list of informal policies developed for the Parks System Management Plan.

POLICY	PRIORITY	SECTION
Planning for schools should occur early in the land use planning process.	Short-Term	5.4
Opportunities to develop the City's park system in a complementary and cooperative way with the adjacent municipalities should be explored.	Mid-Term	5.0
Public education and sustainable practices should be regularly reviewed to determine what can be implemented practically and economically.	Mid-Term	6.1.1
Policies for confronting vandalism should be reviewed in conjunction with sound environmental design principles.	Mid-Term	6.2.4
Park and playground facilities should respond to changing recreation trends and population demographics.	Ongoing	2.4.4
Stakeholders and other city departments should continue to be involved in planning parks.	Ongoing	3.1, 3.2.3, 3.2.8
A consistent and current inventory of trees in the City must be maintained to ensure that the urban forest is preserved.	Ongoing	4.1.5
Park development should follow a consistent program of land development and acquisition.	Ongoing	5.0
Park planning should continue to be initiated during the preparation of land use documents, i.e. the Municipal Development Plan and Area Structure Plans.	Ongoing	5.0
Park developed within the City should be continuous and linked.	Ongoing	5.0
Where normal reserve dedications are not possible or likely, purchasing of strategic park land may be considered.	Ongoing	5.0
Land for Specific Use Areas should be assessed on an individual bases and should be provided as needed.	Ongoing	5.0
Parks should be developed in such a way that they respond to changing public needs.	Ongoing	5.1-5.8

POLICY	PRIORITY	SECTION
Parks should have sufficient street frontage to provide sightlines into the park for safety.	Ongoing	5.1-5.5
Upgrades should be based upon inventories of park equipment and amenities. Parks should be rated and upgraded based upon priorities.	Ongoing	5.1-5.3, 5.5
Pocket Parks should be developed in smaller neighbourhoods as deemed appropriate.	Ongoing	5.1
Pocket Parks and smaller Neighbourhood Parks may be developed on awkwardly shaped parcels.	Ongoing	5.1
Neighbourhood parks may take priority over Pocket Parks when MR is dedicated.	Ongoing	5.2
Developers may develop a Community Park to the Neighbourhood Park level and the City may add amenities to meet Community Park needs, as per the Municipal Servicing Standards.	Ongoing	5.3
Ongoing consultation should be maintained with the school authorities.	Ongoing	5.4
Future school grounds should be developed to a manicured grass standard as per the current Municipal Servicing Standards.	Ongoing	5.4
City Wide Parks may include sites that are solely used for athletic purposes.	Ongoing	5.5
City Wide parks will be the responsibility of the City and may exceed 10% MR requirement.	Ongoing	5.5
Encroachment issues on City Park areas should be addressed by following a systematic approach to resolve problems, and each encroachment assessed on its own merit.	Ongoing	5.7
A high commitment should be given to the protection of natural landscapes.	Ongoing	5.7
Areas considered undevelopable should be dedicated as Environmental Reserve lands at the time of subdivision.	Ongoing	5.7
Significant natural areas should be carefully assessed as development approaches or continues near these areas.	Ongoing	5.7
Long term planning should ensure the longevity and protection of environmentally significant areas.	Ongoing	5.7
Where natural areas cannot be acquired via normal dedication other means of acquisition should be explored.	Ongoing	5.7



POLICY	PRIORITY	SECTION
The 'significant' areas -in the 2006 NASI study should be reviewed to determine appropriate policies.	Ongoing	5.7
Management of these areas should take place once significant environments are identified.	Ongoing	5.7
Migratory and breeding areas should be identified so that impact of future park development is minimal.	Ongoing	5.7
Facilities should be appropriate to the level of open space in which they are located.	Ongoing	5.9
<p>Park development and redevelopment priorities may be based upon the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks with aging equipment and infrastructure • Residential areas that are deemed to be underserved with park areas • Sites and parks that have received prior commitments by City Council through budget deliberations and where opportunities have arisen for acquisition through non-city derived funding • Natural and unique areas and habitats that are deemed to be under protected and potentially at risk to development or mismanagement • Areas that offer opportunities to link parks or expand them where deemed appropriate • Parks that offer unique opportunities for enhanced cultural, social, historical, educational and economic growth. 	Ongoing	5.12