

# parks+recmh

MEDICINE HAT PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN



**March 2022**



# Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Prepared By:



Prepared For:



March 2022



# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Definitions</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>1.0 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Importance of Recreation	1
1.2 Potential of This Plan	3
1.3 Plan Scope	3
1.4 Plan Inception	4
1.5 Plan Vision	5
<b>2.0 The Plan Process</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Methodology	6
2.2 Anticipated Outcomes of the Plan	7
2.2.1 Resolving Strategic Questions	7
2.2.2 Over-Arching Questions to Resolve	8
2.2.3 Ensuring Plan Coordination	9
2.2.4 Creating A Made-in-Medicine Hat Roadmap	9
2.2.5 Translating What We've Heard into Action	10
<b>3.0 Assessing the Playfield</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 Community Profile	11
3.1.1 Location	11
3.1.2 Demographics	12
3.1.3 Geology, Climate and Environmental Influences	14



3.1.4	Social Context	17
3.1.5	Land Use	17
3.1.6	Political Support	24
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Background Study Review</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Indoor and Outdoor Recreation System: Then and Now</b>	<b>29</b>
3.3.1	A Look Back: Recreation Program Priorities for Medicine Hat in 2011	30
3.3.2	A Look Back: Indoor Recreation Priorities for Medicine Hat in 2011	30
3.3.3	A Look Back: Outdoor Recreation Priorities for Medicine Hat in 2011	30
3.3.4	Today's Perspectives: Current Recreation Priorities	31
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Service Delivery Models</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Planning Legislative Framework, Governance and Planning Initiatives</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Federal</b>	<b>36</b>
4.1.1	Federal Acts and Legislation	36
4.1.2	Parks for All (2017)	36
4.1.3	Truth and Reconciliation	36
4.1.4	A Framework for Recreation in Canada: Pathways to Wellbeing (2015)	37
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Provincial</b>	<b>38</b>
4.2.1	Provincial Bills, Acts and Regulations	38
4.2.2	Active Alberta (2011-2021)	38
4.2.3	Spirit of Alberta: Alberta's Cultural Policy (2008)	39
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Regional</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Trends and Leading Practices</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>National Trends</b>	<b>42</b>
5.1.1	Spontaneous and Unstructured Recreation	42
5.1.2	Physical Literacy	43
5.1.3	Decreased Physical Activity	44
5.1.4	Stronger Human-Nature Connection	44



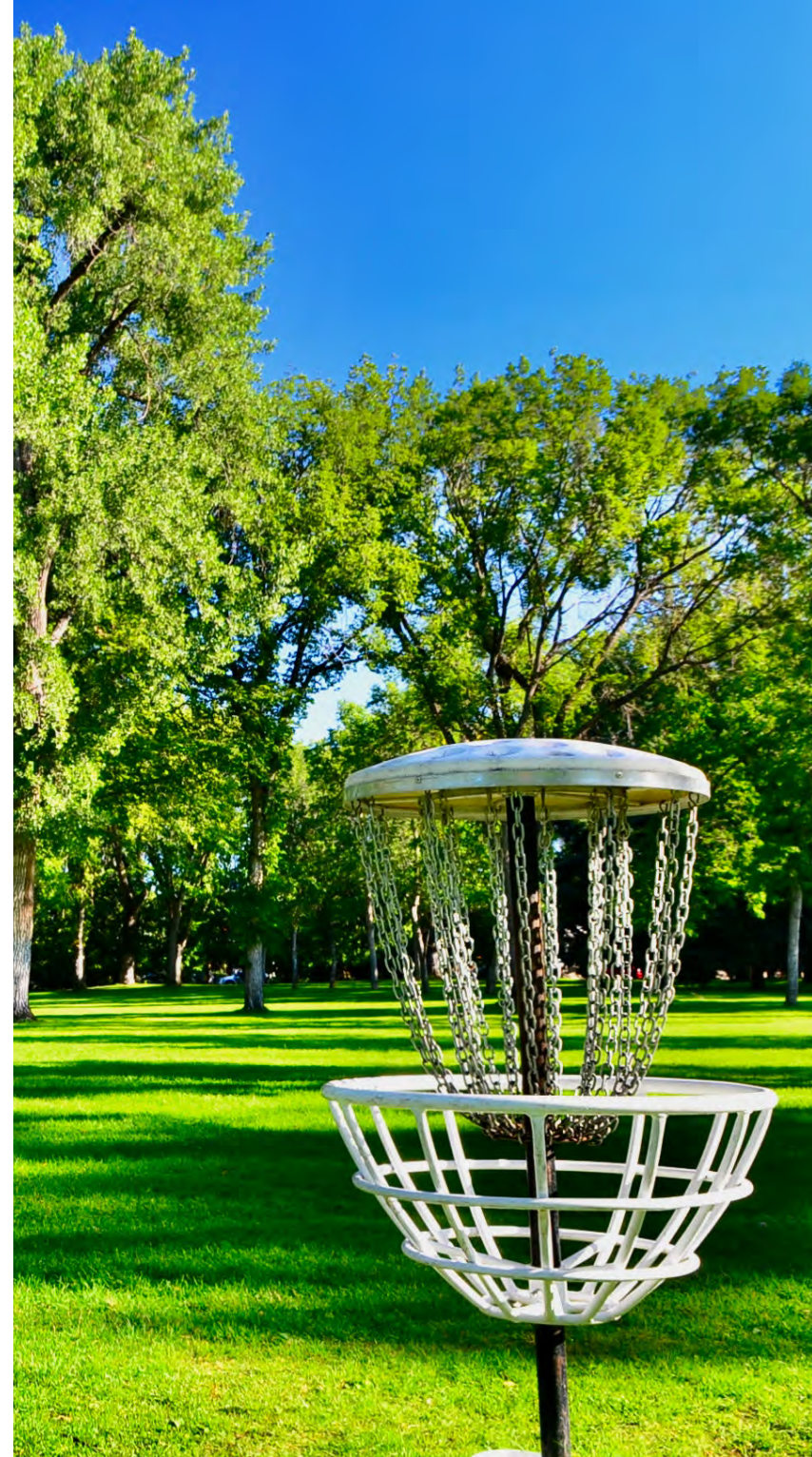


5.1.5	Youth Sport Participation	44
5.1.6	Overscheduled Children	45
5.1.7	Physical Literacy	46
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Recreation Sector Advancement</b>	<b>46</b>
5.2.1	Performance Measurement	46
5.2.2	Climate Change Resiliency	47
5.2.3	Digital Transformation and Technology	48
5.2.4	Changing Family Structures	49
5.2.5	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	49
5.2.6	Reconciliation	50
5.2.7	Wellness Through Recreation	51
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Local Trends</b>	<b>52</b>
5.3.1	Event Hosting and Tourism	52
5.3.2	Planning for Expandability	52
5.3.3	Multi-Use Spaces and Sport Trends	53
5.3.4	Sustainable Design and Facility Management	54
5.3.5	Managing Aging Infrastructure	54
5.3.6	Regional Collaborations and Partnerships	55
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Public and Stakeholder Engagement Program</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Recent Relevant Engagements</b>	<b>56</b>
6.1.1	2020 ARPA Survey	56
6.1.2	2020 Municipal Development Plan Update	57
6.1.3	2020 Arts, Culture + Heritage in Medicine Hat	58
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Engagement Summaries</b>	<b>59</b>
6.2.1	Internal Staff Engagement	59
6.2.2	Initial Key Stakeholder Engagement Session	61
6.2.3	Student Engagement Sessions	65
6.2.4	External Stakeholder Engagements	67
6.2.5	Public Engagements	75





6.2.6	Public Response to Over-Arching Questions	81
<b>6.3</b>	<b>What We Heard: Additional Actions Resulting from Engagement</b>	<b>83</b>
6.3.1	Sport Tourism	83
6.3.2	Volunteerism	84
6.3.3	Innovation Opportunities and Risk Tolerance	85
6.3.4	Recreation and Leisure Priorities	86
6.3.5	Role in Developing Healthy Communities	86
6.3.6	Park Configuration and Classification	87
6.3.7	Parks and Open Space Optimization	88
6.3.8	Amenity and Program Optimization	88
6.3.9	Active Transportation	90
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Recreational Assessment</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Current Facility and Amenity Condition</b>	<b>91</b>
7.1.1	Asset Management Strategy	91
7.1.2	Facility Assessments	93
<b>7.2</b>	<b>Programs &amp; Events</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>7.3</b>	<b>Connectivity</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>7.4</b>	<b>Inclusivity</b>	<b>94</b>
7.4.1	What We Are Doing Well	95
7.4.2	What We Need to Improve Upon	95
<b>7.5</b>	<b>Community-Wide Distribution</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>7.6</b>	<b>Benchmarking</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Our Recreational Network</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>8.1</b>	<b>Type 1: City-Wide Destination Nodes</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>8.2</b>	<b>Type 2: Neighbourhood Hubs</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>8.3</b>	<b>Type 3: Local Amenities</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>8.4</b>	<b>Type 4: Urban Experiences</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>8.5</b>	<b>Type 5: Urban Escapes</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Delivering and Operating Parks and Recreation</b>	<b>113</b>





<b>9.1 Promoting Parks and Recreation</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>9.2 Fiscal Responsibility</b>	<b>115</b>
9.2.1 Adaptable, Flexible and Resilient Infrastructure	115
9.2.2 Connected, Diverse and Multi-Functional Recreation	116
9.2.3 Understanding Economic Opportunities	116
<b>9.3 Technology &amp; Innovation</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>9.4 Partnerships</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>9.5 Volunteerism</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>9.6 Fees and Charges</b>	<b>125</b>
 <b>10.0 Plan Implementation</b>	 <b>127</b>
<b>10.1 Implementation Strategy: A Phased Approach</b>	<b>127</b>
10.1.1 Immediate-Term Actions (Within One Year)	128
10.1.2 Near-Term Actions (1-3 Years)	129
10.1.3 Medium-Term Actions (3-7 Years)	131
10.1.4 Continued Priorities	132
<b>10.2 Response to Early-On Strategic Questions</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>10.3 How Over-Arching Questions Influence This Plan</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>10.4 Future Updates to This Plan</b>	<b>138</b>
 <b>11.0 Closing Summary</b>	 <b>139</b>
 <b>Acknowledgments</b>	 <b>141</b>
<b>Appendix A: Facility Reinvestment Framework</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Appendix B: Series 1 Display Panels</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>Appendix C: Series 2 Display Panels</b>	<b>149</b>
<b>Appendix D: Project Stakeholders</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>157</b>



# List of Figures

Figure 1 -	City of Medicine Hat, in Context of Cypress County	11
Figure 2 -	Overall Civic Population, Medicine Hat and Redcliff & Study Boundaries	12
Figure 3 -	Population by Sector	13
Figure 4 -	Changing Demographics in Medicine Hat	14
Figure 5 -	Existing Land Use Classifications, Land Use Bylaw	18
Figure 6 -	Environmentally Sensitive Areas	19
Figure 7 -	Urban Transect Included in the 2020 Municipal Development Plan (Source: 2020 MDP)	20
Figure 8 -	Existing Open Space and Trails	22
Figure 9 -	Pathways to Wellbeing Framework Diagram	37
Figure 10 -	Samples of Student Engagement Mapping Activity	66
Figure 11 -	Part 1: Initial Public Survey Responses	76
Figure 12 -	Part 2: Initial Public Survey Responses	76
Figure 13 -	Inventory of Indoor Amenities, Per Sector	99
Figure 14 -	Inventory of Outdoor Amenities, Per Sector	100
Figure 15 -	Inventory of Open Space Amenities, Per Sector	101
Figure 16 -	Indoor, Outdoor and Open Space Amenities in the South Residential Sector	103
Figure 17 -	Indoor, Outdoor and Open Space Amenities in the City Centre Sector	104
Figure 18 -	Indoor, Outdoor and Open Space Amenities in the North Residential Sector	105
Figure 19 -	Benchmarking Statistics	106



# Executive Summary

**Parks** and **recreation** are essential to high quality of life, community health and well-being. **Recreation** pursuits are key to individual health and well-being, create opportunities for both personal and community growth, and are strong contributors to community identity and vibrancy. The public and stakeholder engagement program revealed that residents highly value **parks** and **recreation**. When asked what defines Medicine Hat as a community, some of the prominent attributes included natural features such as the South Saskatchewan River, surrounding coulees and natural grasslands, and built features such as the extensive trail network and abundance of recreational amenities and facilities. This master plan seeks to draw out the unique character of Medicine Hat and chart a path forward for **parks** and **recreation** that is an exact fit to the community's needs and aspirations.

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan is meant to provide clarity regarding the provision of future **recreation** in Medicine Hat. The Plan outlines strategies on how to best meet community needs with available resources and informs decision makers on broad based community priorities for **recreation** services. This plan consolidates and updates the contents of two previous reports, including the 2010 Parks System Management Plan and the 2011 Recreation Master Plan. This Plan provides 50 recommended actions, each of which have been designated as immediate-, near- or medium-term priorities. A fourth category includes "Continued Priority" items, which include those that are already being done and require added attention to align with the Plan's recommendations. Each action was informed by one, or a combination of, background research, the review of supporting

City plans such as the 2020 Municipal Development Plan, regional, provincial and national trends and leading practices of **recreation** and the engagement process.

Communities alike Medicine Hat are faced with many challenges. While **parks** and recreational services and facilities are necessary pieces of what brings people together and creates feelings of unity within a community, goals and objectives must be accomplished within strict budgets, limited human resources, public health guidelines and various influences from stakeholder groups and residents. Finding efficiencies in how **parks** and **recreation** is developed, operated and maintained is an essential output of this Plan. Engagement revealed that decisions on **parks** and **recreation** should not be solely based on financial considerations, but rather a fine balance between economic, social, environmental and political values. The City needs to find strategies and actions that balance economic and social needs with the environment such as ecologically healthy air, water, land, and wildlife.

A comprehensive public and stakeholder engagement program was conducted to fully understand local perspectives, needs and challenges. This engagement process involved numerous local stakeholder groups, offering a variety of workshop sessions, meetings and other exchanges. Outreach to the public included the use of a project website, online surveys and on-site open house sessions. Overall, residents are extremely satisfied with the provision of **parks** and recreational amenities and facilities in Medicine Hat, while there are strong feelings toward how decisions should be made as aging facilities require renovation or

replacement, and as new amenities are considered within **the City**. The most prevalent trend in **recreation** found locally, regionally, provincially and nationally is dealing with ever-increasing busy lifestyles. A primary barrier to **recreation** is available time to commit to regularly scheduled activities. An example of a mitigation strategy to counter this trend is determining opportunities for more spontaneous activities, individual pursuits and traditional recreational activities that require shorter time commitments.

The various **open spaces** in Medicine Hat were classified into one of five types, ranging from “**urban escapes**” that are natural and undeveloped environments, to city-wide destinations that are highly programmed and bring together people from all around **the City** and beyond. The engagement program concluded that there is an ideal balance of **open spaces** available and no need to focus on increasing or decreasing the provision of any single type.

Partnerships and volunteerism are essential to the delivery of **parks** and recreational programs, facilities and amenities. This Plan recognizes the value of **the City** supporting local entrepreneurs and businesses that contribute to available **recreation** in Medicine Hat. Volunteerism provides capacity, outside of the box thinking and a sense of community ownership that all make for a great recreational network. The primary barrier to volunteerism is limited time available due to busy lifestyles. To boost volunteer commitments, **the City** is encouraged to continue rewarding efforts while also offering incentives such as reduced user fees or credits toward booking public amenities such as park shelters and day use facilities.

At the onset of developing this Plan, six strategic questions were posed. Two examples include: to what extent **the City** should follow trends and leading practices; and whether or not **the City** should transition from meeting the recreational needs of its

residents and nearby neighbours to going to another level of becoming more regionally or nationally recognized as a **recreation** and events destination. The Plan concludes by resolving these strategic questions, and demonstrating how public and stakeholder engagement, background research and trends and leading practices influenced final recommendations.

This master plan update was conducted ten years after the previous plan was implemented, which is a typical timeframe between major updates. Despite national, provincial and local trends and leading practices changing over this ten year period as well as a global pandemic that had significant impacts on Medicine Hat, the primary direction from one master plan to the next did not change significantly. Major overhauls of these plans may not be necessary, rather incremental updates on a more regular basis. It is recommended that the Plan be next evaluated in approximately five years from now as an internal exercise to ensure action plans are being implemented, that the actions in the medium-term horizon are best prioritized, and if any new actions may be warranted prior to the next formal plan update. This five-year review may not necessitate a robust engagement program but should recognize public feedback being heard through other related processes.









# Definitions

**ACCESSIBLE** – Designed in a manner that allows ease of reach or ability to participate in activities or opportunities, including access to goods, services, buildings, places and spaces.

**ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION** – Any mode of transportation by which people use their own energy to power their motion including walking, rolling, running, cycling, cross-country skiing, skateboarding, snow-shoeing and use of a manual wheelchair.

**ADMINISTRATION / CITY ADMINISTRATION** – Staff employed by the City of Medicine Hat.

**AREA STRUCTURE PLAN / ASP** – A statutory plan as defined by the Municipal Government Act, that directs the future land use patterns, transportation and utility networks, and sequence of development in new communities.

**CMH / THE CITY** – Where capitalized as the “City of Medicine Hat” or the “City”, refers to the City of Medicine Hat as a municipal government, or corporation. Where written in lower case as “the city” or as “Medicine Hat”, refers to the physical area of the municipality.

**CONSERVATION RESERVE / CR** – A municipality may require land to be provided as conservation reserve if it contains features such as wildlife corridors, significant tree stands, or other environmentally significant features.

**CPTED** – Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, is a multi-disciplinary approach of crime prevention.

**DENSITY** – Population density is a measurement of population per unit area.

**ENVIRONMENTAL RESERVE / ER** – Land that is not suitable for development and contains features such as a wetlands, coulees, floodplains, or natural drainage courses. Environmental reserves are used to reserve natural features of land, prevent pollution, ensure public access, and prevent the development of land that is unstable or subject to flooding.

**GREEN SPACE** – Publicly owned open space areas designated for parks and other public use, within which may include naturally occurring or planted vegetation, natural or human-made water features and other kinds of natural features.

**HAT SMART** – A City of Medicine Hat initiative whose mandate is to educate consumers and promote energy conservation and renewable energy initiatives in the community.

**INCLUSIVE DESIGN** – The design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.

**INFRASTRUCTURE** – The physical assets developed and used to support the city’s people and activities. The City’s infrastructure inventory includes such assets as drainage, roads and right-of-way infrastructure, parks and green spaces, buildings, fleet vehicles, transit facilities, buildings, traffic control devices, recreation facilities, computer networks, library, etc.



**INTERMUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN / IDP** - A plan which provides for the coordination of planning between neighbouring municipalities. Jointly approved and administered by the affected municipalities, it is particularly focused on providing guidance for the development and regulation of lands close to the shared boundary.

**INVASIVE SPECIES** - A species of flora or fauna that is not native to a specific location, and that has a tendency to spread to a degree believed to cause damage to the environment, the economy or human health.

**LINEAR PARK** - A park in an urban or suburban setting that is substantially longer than it is wide.

**KEY STAKEHOLDERS** – local organizations that own, maintain, operate and make available to the public amenities that are often perceived to be public infrastructure, while it is not owned by the City. These groups include the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede, schools, Medicine Hat College and the YMCA.

**MDP** – The Municipal Development Plan of the City of Medicine Hat, as last updated in 2021.

**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT / MGA** - Alberta's provincial law which defines how a municipality can function, develop land, raise funds for things like services, and more. The three themes of the MGA are planning and development, governance and administration, and assessment and taxation.





**MUNICIPAL RESERVE** - Land provided, as part of a subdivision, by the developer without compensation for park and school purposes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Government Act. This includes lands dedicated as Municipal Reserve (MR), School Reserve (SR) and Municipal and School Reserve (MSR).

**MUNICIPAL SERVICING STANDARDS** - Standards which are intended to provide specific guidelines to assist municipalities and developers in the design, preparation and submission of plans and specifications for construction of municipal improvements and systems (roadways, water distribution systems, sewer systems, storm water facilities). Medicine Hat's guidelines are described in the Municipal Servicing Standards Manual (MSSM).

**NATURAL AREAS** - Parts of the natural environment, such as the river, creeks and urban forest, that contribute to the provision of engineered municipal services. (i.e.: freshwater provision, stormwater management, flood mitigation, etc.).

**OPEN SPACE** - An area of outdoor land or water that is publicly owned or publicly accessible, including municipal parks, civic spaces, provincial or federal parkland, institutional campuses, and other public spaces.

**PARK** - Any land acquired, developed or used by the City as a public park, sports field, playground, recreational area or cemetery, title to which is vested in the name of the City. Includes land acquired by the City through subdivision as Municipal Reserve or Environmental Reserve.

**RECREATION** - all those things that a person or group chooses to do to make their leisure time more interesting, more enjoyable and more personally satisfying.



**REDEVELOPMENT** - The creation of new units, uses or lots on previously developed land in existing neighbourhoods.

**RENEWABLE ENERGY** - Energy that is collected from renewable resources, which are naturally replenished on a human timescale, such as sunlight, wind, rain, watercourse, and geothermal heat.

**RIPARIAN AREA** - Areas that surround water bodies in the watershed and are composed of moist to saturated soils, water-loving plant species and their associated ecosystems.

**SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL AREA** - A natural area site that has been inventoried prior to potential development and which, because of its features or characteristics, is significant to Medicine Hat from an environmental perspective. May include, for example, areas containing rare flora, wildlife habitat, floodplains, riparian areas, wetlands, escarpments, and/or native grasslands.

**SPORT** - an activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment.

**STAKEHOLDERS** - individuals or groups of people with a vested interest in a particular topic. In the context of this project, individuals or groups that have meaningful contribution to knowledge building or that have direct or indirect interests in recreation in the City.

**STATUTORY PLAN** - a legal document that has been formally adopted by City Council and has force and effect, as defined by the Municipal Government Act, and having specific impact on a defined geographic area such as a municipality.

**STEWARDSHIP** - The job of supervising or taking care of something, such as an organization or property. In the context of this Plan,

mostly referring to care of the natural environment.

**STREETSCAPE** - All the elements that make up the physical environment of a street and define its character. This includes paving, trees and vegetation, lighting, building type and style, setback, pedestrian, cycle and transit amenities, street furniture, etc.

**SUSTAINABILITY** - An approach which focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It is composed of the three pillars of economic, environmental, and social.

**URBAN ECOSYSTEM** - Any ecological system located within a city or other densely settled area or, in a broader sense, the greater ecological system that makes up an entire metropolitan area.

**URBAN ESCAPES** - one of five categories of open space introduced by this plan, including natural areas throughout the City without active programming while still being safe, accessible and enjoyable to users. These are exclusively outdoor environments.

**URBAN FOREST** - The trees located within city limits, whether planted or naturally occurring. All trees found in a city, whether in parks, roadways, natural areas or on private property are part of the urban forest.

**URBAN TRANSECT** - A method which defines a series of distinct zones in a city, which transition from natural and sparse rural areas to the dense urban core.

**XERISCAPING** - A style of landscape design requiring little or no irrigation or other maintenance; commonly used in arid regions.





This Recreation Master Plan is meant to provide clarity regarding future recreation provision by outlining strategies on how to best meet community needs with available resources and informing decision makers on broad based community priorities for recreation services.

## 1.1 Importance of Recreation

**Recreation** is essential to high quality of life, community health and well-being. **Recreation** pursuits are key to individual health and well-being and create opportunities for both personal and community growth. **Recreation** activity inherently facilitates healthy lifestyles and has been proven to reduce anti-social and self-destructive behaviours throughout many facets of society. By definition, **recreation** is “all those things that a person or group chooses to do in order to make their leisure time more interesting, more enjoyable and more personally satisfying”.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, this quote from the Canadian National Recreation Statement dates to 1974 and over 45 years later this definition holds true. **Recreation** has been a key component of community planning for several past generations and will continue to play an essential role in personal health and well-being.

**Parks** and **recreation** are key components of community vibrancy, engagement, health and wellbeing. Communities like Medicine Hat are faced with many challenges. While **parks** and recreational services and facilities are necessary pieces of what brings people

together and creates feelings of unity within a community, goals and objectives must be accomplished within strict budgets, limited human resources, public health guidelines and various influences from stakeholder groups and residents. This report highlights various trends and leading practices relevant to Medicine Hat. Successful implementation of these trends will help meet the demands of residents, and at the same time will demonstrate how **parks** and **recreation** amenities can serve as community hubs, drivers of wellbeing, and contributors to positive change.

At one time **recreation** was considered by some to be frivolous and something to be taken lightly, and considered a value-added feature of a community by its residents and volunteer groups; it was not considered to be something that warranted the attention—and resources—of municipal government. While this attitude may still be shared by some, **recreation** is more broadly considered an integral component of the community and one that warrants the direct and indirect involvement of City Government and **Administration**.

**Recreation** can strengthen the fabric of a community. It enables people to get to know and interact with their neighbours. This togetherness and feeling of belonging is important to the well-being of individuals and collectively to our communities. People may be more likely to look out for each other and take care of the community itself. **Recreation** contributes to community cohesiveness and overall quality of life in many ways. **Recreation** opportunities afford residents the ability to be physically and





mentally active, become socially woven into society and enjoy work life balance. Residents who participate in **recreation** activities are less likely to have health problems, have improved mental and physical well-being, and are less likely to partake in self-destructive and anti-social behaviour.

**Recreation** can play a significant role in the economic well-being of a city. Through its services, facilities, and programs **recreation** can entice and invite visitors to a community. These same assets are also instrumental in attracting and retaining residents along with the businesses with which they are affiliated. **Recreation** events and programs draw visitors and provide a positive economic impact to Medicine Hat. Use of **recreation** facilities generate revenues which offset operating budgets and necessitate tourist spending at hotels and restaurants as well as other shopping activities in the local economy.

Additionally, quality **recreation** amenities in communities improve overall community image which in turn makes Medicine Hat an ideal place to live, work, play and visit - a “community of choice”. Many of the **recreation** services and events offered in **the City** accommodate both local and non-local users and undoubtedly drive local tourism.

Perhaps most importantly, **recreation** is fun. When residents are having fun, they are more connected with and proud of **the City** in which they live. When visitors are having fun, they are developing a positive image of **the City** which they will carry with them to their respective municipalities and others they visit.

#### IMMEDIATE

##### WHAT WE HEARD:

Recreation has numerous benefits to a community ranging from sense of place and pride to a range of physical and mental benefits.

#### NEAR

#### MEDIUM

#### CONTINUED

##### ACTION A1:

The City should invest in the promotion of recreational programs in the community and enhance communications efforts to portray the benefits of recreation in the community, building the case for recreation in Medicine Hat and increasing overall participation rates.

## 1.2 Potential of This Plan

**Recreation** opportunities in the City of Medicine Hat (the City) are delivered through the private, non-profit and public sectors. **The City** recognizes that it cannot deliver the necessary amenities and programs alone, and has a strong reliance on the private and non-profit sectors. **The City** plays a major role in the provision of opportunities for residents and visitors through:

- The operation of facilities, **parks, open spaces**, leisure trails and sports fields;
- Direct programs and events offered by City staff; and
- Support to community volunteer groups and partner organizations that provide **recreation** opportunities.

**The City** invests in **recreation** through staff and human resources, capital programs for **infrastructure** development and ongoing operational cost subsidization to facilities, **parks, open spaces**, leisure trails and sports fields. This Plan is important as a guide to how this investment is managed, how facilities and programs are prioritized, the partners that are essential in program delivery and what the measures of success should be over the next decade.

## 1.3 Plan Scope

The **recreation** community in **the City** includes a variety of interest groups, private and non-profit providers and, most obviously, participants in programs and users of facilities and spaces. As **the City** is publicly accountable for the types of **recreation** services it provides and the means through which they are provided, balancing community interests and public investment in the context of other public priorities is complex. This Parks and Recreation Master Plan is meant to provide some clarity regarding future **recreation** provision by outlining strategies on

how to best meet community needs with available resources and informing decision makers on broad based community priorities for **recreation** services.

Due to strategic planning already completed or underway by **the City**, the following areas are not included in the scope of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

- Leisure trail or alternate transportation systems;
- Specific or in depth analysis of any **sport** or **recreation** programs;
- Interpretive programming service delivery;
- Public or private camping services;
- Facility **infrastructure** assessment, i.e., realty asset management plan;
- Review of programs directly applicable to social development, art and heritage, school system or college programming;
- Review or revision of the joint use agreements between Medicine Hat College, Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education and Medicine Hat School District #76;
- The Veiner Centre and Strathcona Centre based seniors' services, facilities or programming; and
- A review of specific agency services.

This Plan addresses several aspects of **parks** and **recreation**, including:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • Sport tourism;                                | • Volunteerism;                                    |
| • <b>Park</b> configuration and classification; | • <b>Parks</b> and <b>open space</b> optimization; |
| • Innovation opportunities and risk tolerance;  | • Amenity and program optimization;                |
| • <b>Recreation</b> and leisure priorities      | • Environmental stewardship; and                   |
| • Role in developing healthy communities;       | • <b>Active transportation</b> .                   |



Section 10 - Plan Implementation identifies a set of 50 actions that fall under the categories listed above. Each action has been identified as being an immediate-, near-, or medium-term action, along with a fourth category for those actions already in place but reinforcing the importance to continue that initiative.

## 1.4 Plan Inception

In 2010 a Parks System Management Plan was developed for **the City** that addressed policies and principles for its overall trends and leading practices and interviews with City staff. This 2021 Parks and Recreation Master Plan update achieves three overarching goals. First, it consolidates the 2010 and 2011 plans in one

streamlined document that achieves the same goals as set out over ten years ago. Second, this updated document reflects current trends in **recreation**, updated inventories of recreational assets and programs and recognizes the financial and human resource capabilities of **the City**. Lastly, the Plan is developed shortly after a substantive process to update Medicine Hat's **Municipal Development Plan (MDP)**. The **MDP** provides the high-level policies which guide how Medicine Hat will grow and develop related to urban form, **open space**, **recreation**, social development, culture, environmental stewardship and related dimensions.

The following Master Plan includes strategic direction for future **recreation** provision by the City of Medicine Hat.

# Municipal Planning Hierarchy



## 1.5 Plan Vision

The services offered by the City of Medicine Hat are guided by the overall vision of **the City** being a “community of choice”. It is proven that **recreation** is a significant determinant of community attractiveness when potential residents and businesses contemplate relocating.

The vision for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is:

**Holding a high risk tolerance for innovative and sustainable ways of developing, delivering and maintaining recreational facilities and amenities, Medicine Hat strives to continue offering its residents and guests an exceptional network of indoor and outdoor recreational experiences for all ages and abilities for all hours of the day and all days of the year. We strive to celebrate our local history, heritage, diversity and local values through the way we play, celebrate and find relaxation in our public places.**

**Recreation** in Medicine Hat is both diverse and sustainable, is focused on healthy and safe lifestyles, and is delivered through engaged volunteers and City staff elevating **the City** as a vibrant community of choice. The following guiding principles will ultimately help **the City** achieve this vision. These principles were instrumental in guiding the process and final recommendations of this plan.

## Guiding Principles

- **Recreation facilities and programs are essential to quality of life;**
- **Recreation options are available to all residents, with opportunities catered to affordability, ability and age;**
- **Recreation opportunities are offered both in and out of doors;**
- **Recreation facilities and spaces enable both structured and unstructured activity;**
- **Recreation facilities and spaces offered by the City are complimentary to existing services provided in the City;**
- **Recreation services will be delivered through partnerships where appropriate;**
- **Volunteers, user groups, and agencies are valued recreation service partners of the City; and**
- **Greenspaces are vital to health of a city, and creating awareness and educational opportunities related to nature preservation and appreciation are essential.**



# The Plan Process



## 2.1 Methodology

The development of this master plan generally included three distinct phases.

### Phase One: Setting the Stage

- The 2010 Parks System Management Plan and the 2011 Recreation Master Plan documents were synthesized by taking pertinent sections from each plan and modernizing them;
- Meetings with City staff and **key stakeholders** were held to determine primary goals and objectives of the updated plan and to identify opportunities to address current concerns related to **parks and recreation**;
- Trends and leading practices for **parks and recreation** were updated based on available data from studies and reports relevant to communities similar to Medicine Hat;
- The Plan was aligned with current plans and recent decisions in all sections of the document; and
- **CMH** Public Services Committee discussions and meeting notes that helped to solidify positions on **park** configurations, innovation, etc. as core topics of discussion.

The result of this phase was a draft report, a series of maps and images, meeting and engagement summaries and high-level recommendations and direction for the final plan that could then be tested against **stakeholders** and the general public in the next phase.

## Phase Two: Community and Stakeholder Outreach

- A community and stakeholder engagement program provided the opportunity for approximately 170 local interest groups and organizations along with the general public to weigh in on the draft recommendations of this Plan;
- Various City staff and private operators of **parks, recreation** amenities and programs continued to provide insight on this Plan as gaps were identified; and
- This phase identified opportunities and challenges related to **parks** and **recreation**, missing **parks** and **recreation** resources and establishment of metrics and asset targets.

At the completion of this phase the preliminary recommendations were adjusted to suit the feedback from the engagement program. Community and stakeholder outreach also identified priorities that influenced which recommendations were placed in immediate-, near- and medium-term horizons.

## Phase Three: Implementation & Action Plans

- The final phase of plan development identified future **park** and **recreation** implementation strategies, funding priorities, **parks** and **recreation** management and operational recommendations; and
- Recommendations were prioritized into immediate-, near- and medium-term actions along with a fourth category for those actions already in place but reinforcing the importance to continue that initiative.

This report consolidates all the information from the planning process and is the key deliverable of the third phase.

## 2.2 Anticipated Outcomes of the Plan

Parks and recreation master plans provide high-level, strategic direction for the planning, operations, maintenance and innovation of recreational amenities and programs. These plans act as a guide to make more specific recommendations in follow-up planning initiatives. The following are the anticipated outcomes of this Plan.

### 2.2.1 Resolving Strategic Questions

The following questions had been posed at the onset of developing this Plan. Throughout the document various background research, evaluations and recommendations developed will help bring resolve to these questions and are directly addressed in the Plan Implementation section of the Plan:

1. To what extent should **the City** pursue leading and emerging trends?
2. What is the ideal delivery model for operating our facilities and offering the various programs to our citizens and guests of Medicine Hat?
3. To what extent should places and opportunities for unstructured and spontaneous recreational pursuit be 'planned' – to what degree should **the City** activate outdoor **open spaces**? Or to what degree is tranquility valued?
4. Having experienced a significant global pandemic that has had great effects on Medicine Hat, how should **recreation** planning and operations be adapted for the potential of similar future events? How might this pandemic affect demands for **recreation** in years to come? Are there





physical planning considerations that should be adapted considering lessons learned from COVID-19?

5. This Plan classifies **open space** in five categories that range in composition, scale and types of use, from City-wide destination nodes to local amenities. What is the mechanism by which we determine which category is adequately available? Is **the City** over-served in any of these areas, or in need of additional recreational amenities and programs at a specific scale?
6. Should Medicine Hat transition from meeting the recreational needs of its residents and nearby neighbours to going to another level of becoming more regionally or nationally recognized as a **recreation** and events destination?

### 2.2.2 Over-Arching Questions to Resolve

At the onset of preparing the engagement program for this project, there were six initial over-arching questions that the engagement program, at minimum, needed to resolve. These questions included:

1. What sets us apart – what is authentic to Medicine Hat, and how does this influence a parks and **recreation** master plan or any other related planning initiative?
2. There are different scales of recreational amenities – five identified in this plan, ranging from city-wide destinations to **natural areas** / **urban escapes**. Is **the City** under or over served in any of the categories identified?



3. What are the greatest impediments for people to be active – through **recreation**, volunteering or socialization?
4. How have the trends in **recreation** – generalized by the types of activities that are most prioritized – changed since the last master plan in 2011, and how do they compare regionally and nationally?
5. **Recreation** is offered to residents in many shapes, forms and scales – from someone people-watching while walking on a downtown sidewalk to an unguided and spontaneous mountain bike ride through a natural area. Are there any types of recreational experience that are over-served, or under-served? Are people of certain physical ability or age group under-accommodated? Is there an abundance or a deficiency in a certain type of recreational venue?
6. As recreational **infrastructure** ages and requires retrofitting or replacement, what should the criteria be to make these decisions? Is the traditional model of

dispersing recreational amenities throughout **the City** still appropriate, or are other models that consolidate activities and offers multi-faceted facilities more suited to our economic and social climate?

The supporting survey responses to these questions can be found in Section 6.2.5 - Public Engagements, and the resulting recommendations on how the responses can be enacted can be found in Section 6.2.6 - Public Response to Over-Arching Questions.

### 2.2.3 Ensuring Plan Coordination

This Plan identifies key components of various **statutory** and non-statutory plans of Medicine Hat. A key outcome of this Plan is to maintain consistency with these other plans, to follow similar guiding principles and to support their recommendations. Should this Plan deviate from the principles and recommendations of other plans it will be important to address these inconsistencies as the other plans are next updated. The Plan Implementation section of this Plan identifies recommended studies, standards and policies including the need to amend any existing plans to better support this Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

A key document in the planning of **the City** is the **Municipal Development Plan** (MDP) that was recently updated and adopted in 2020. From a coordination perspective, ensuring alignment between this Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the **MDP** is essential. A summary of the **MDP's** applicability to this plan can be found in Section 3.2 - Background Study Review.

### 2.2.4 Creating a Made-In-Medicine Hat Roadmap

This Plan will serve as a roadmap for **parks and recreation**





amenities, facilities and programs in Medicine Hat for the next 10 years. It will be a dynamic document that is well-used by City of Medicine Hat Parks staff, other municipal departments, the development industry, private recreational operators, consultants, local businesses and all other individuals charged with the responsibility of planning, programming, and maintaining **parks and recreation** in Medicine Hat. While national and regional trends and leading practices were evaluated, not all were a fit to Medicine Hat due to its unique character, geographic location and climate, demographics and overall affinity for types of **recreation**. This is very much a made in Medicine Hat plan.

2.2.5 Translating What We’ve Heard Into Action

Background research, a review of all pertinent City plans and other reports but most of all a robust stakeholder and public engagement program helped determine current needs for action. 50 actions have been identified through the development of the Plan, each of which have been identified as immediate-, near-, or medium-term priorities. Given the 10-year horizon of this plan, long-term recommendations in the 10+ year timeframe were not identified. Each of the recommendations are achievable within the horizon of this Plan.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

ACTION BOX:

Throughout this document, text boxes such as this one will include recommended actions that arise from background research, review of other plans and reports and stakeholder and community engagement. Actions will be assigned letters A (immediate-term, to be completed within a year), B (near-term, to be completed between 1-3 years) or C (medium-term, to be completed between 3-7 years). For example, action B7 is the seventh near-term action listed in the Plan. A fourth category of “Continued Priority” items identify those actions that the City is already pursuing and should continue to be supported. A consolidated list of actions is listed in Section 10 - Plan Implementation.

WHAT WE HEARD:

On this side, what was learned or heard that inspires an action will be listed.

ACTION A1:

On this side, the applicable action will be described that relates to the box to the left.



## SECTION THREE

# Assessing the Playfield

### 3.1 Community Profile

#### 3.1.1 Location

**The City** of Medicine Hat is located in southeast corner of the Province of Alberta, with the TransCanada Highway #1 passing through **the City** limits. Medicine Hat is centrally located inside Cypress County. Figure 1 identifies communities within Cypress County and near Medicine Hat. The 50km radius shown in this figure is estimated as a comfortable catchment area for residents to easily commute by personal passenger vehicle into **the City** for **recreation**.

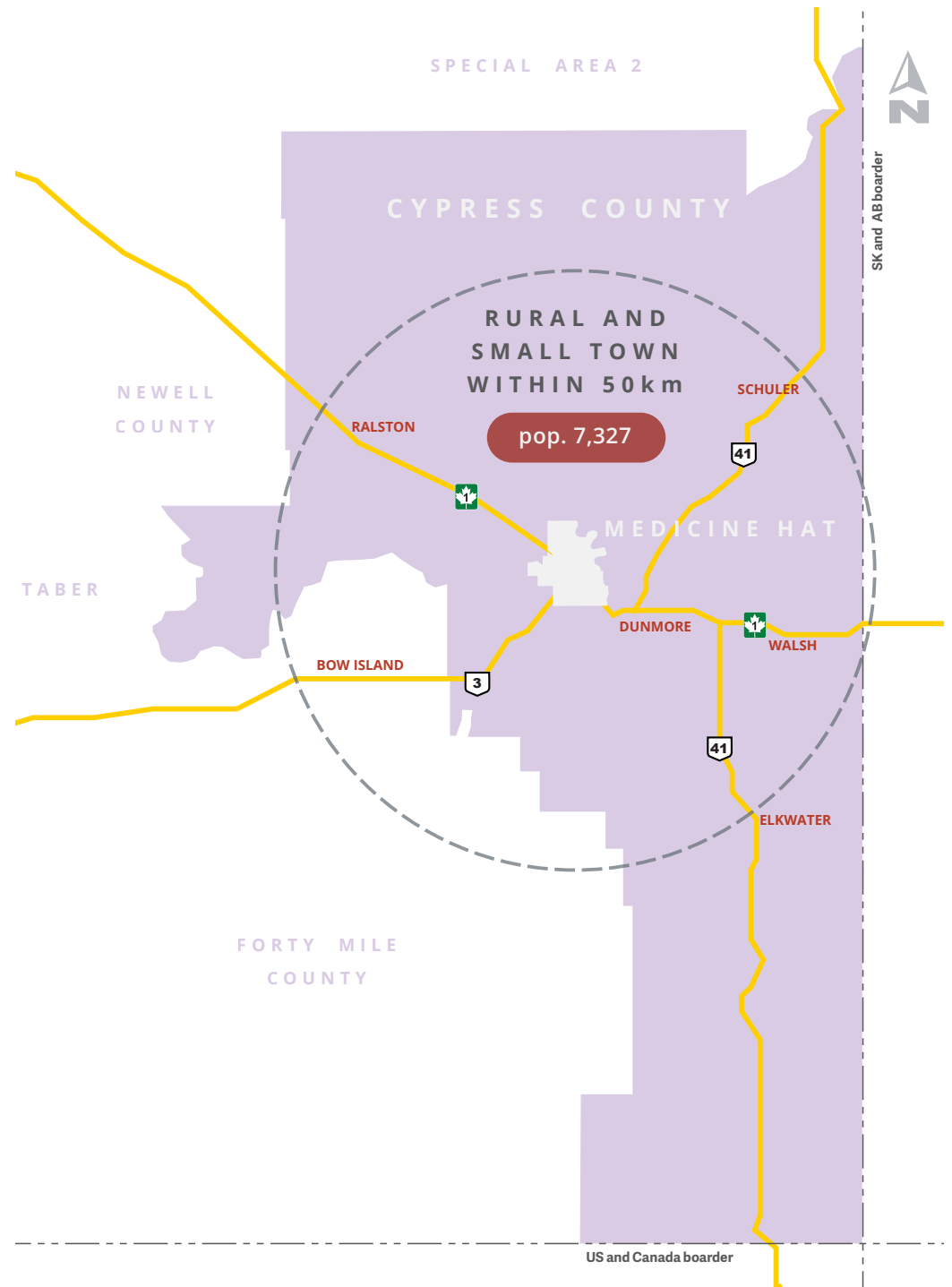


Figure 1: City of Medicine Hat, in context of Cypress County





Figure 2: Overall Civic Population, Medicine Hat and Redcliff by sector.

### 3.1.2 Demographics

The collective population of communities inside this 50km radius and outside the corporate limits of Medicine Hat and Redcliff is approximately 7,300 people, as shown of Figure 1. **The City** has a population of approximately 65,000 people, determined by the project increase since the last Statistics Canada census population of 63,260<sup>2</sup> in 2016. The combined population of people inside this radius is approximately 73,000 people. Comparable sized communities in western Canada include Nanaimo, Kamloops, Chilliwack and Prince George in British Columbia, as well as Lethbridge, Fort McMurray (urban service area), Grande Prairie and Airdrie in Alberta. There are no comparable sized cities in Saskatchewan or Manitoba. This plan includes an inventory of the recreational amenities and facilities within **the City** of Medicine Hat and the Town of Redcliff, with a combined population of approximately 70,700 as shown on Figure 2.

Figure 3 identifies the total population of Medicine Hat and Redcliff by sector.

Medicine Hat is projected to experience population growth of approximately 0.8% per year over the short-term, with a gradual decline to 0.6% per year by 2050. While this rate is much lower than the growth rate seen in past decades, the decrease in population growth is consistent with many other regions in Canada. This change is primarily attributed to an aging population and the dynamics of the local age spectrum. However, as our total population increases, it will mitigate this decline and allow for a relatively consistent year over year growth rate of between 400 to 600 people. This equates to approximately 80,000 people in our city by the year 2050. This population growth will need to increasingly rely on a positive migration flow to Medicine Hat as our rate of natural population increase (births minus deaths) slows down considerably. It is important to note that this is a projected rate of growth based on previous census information and forecasted demographics. Medicine Hat typically has a cyclical growth pattern, whereby we generally see periods of high growth followed by low growth. Actual population growth will be highly dependent on economic conditions and could vary substantially from projections.<sup>3</sup>

From overall population demographics to changing attitudes on topics such as technological integration and environmentalism, societal and community behaviours are ever-

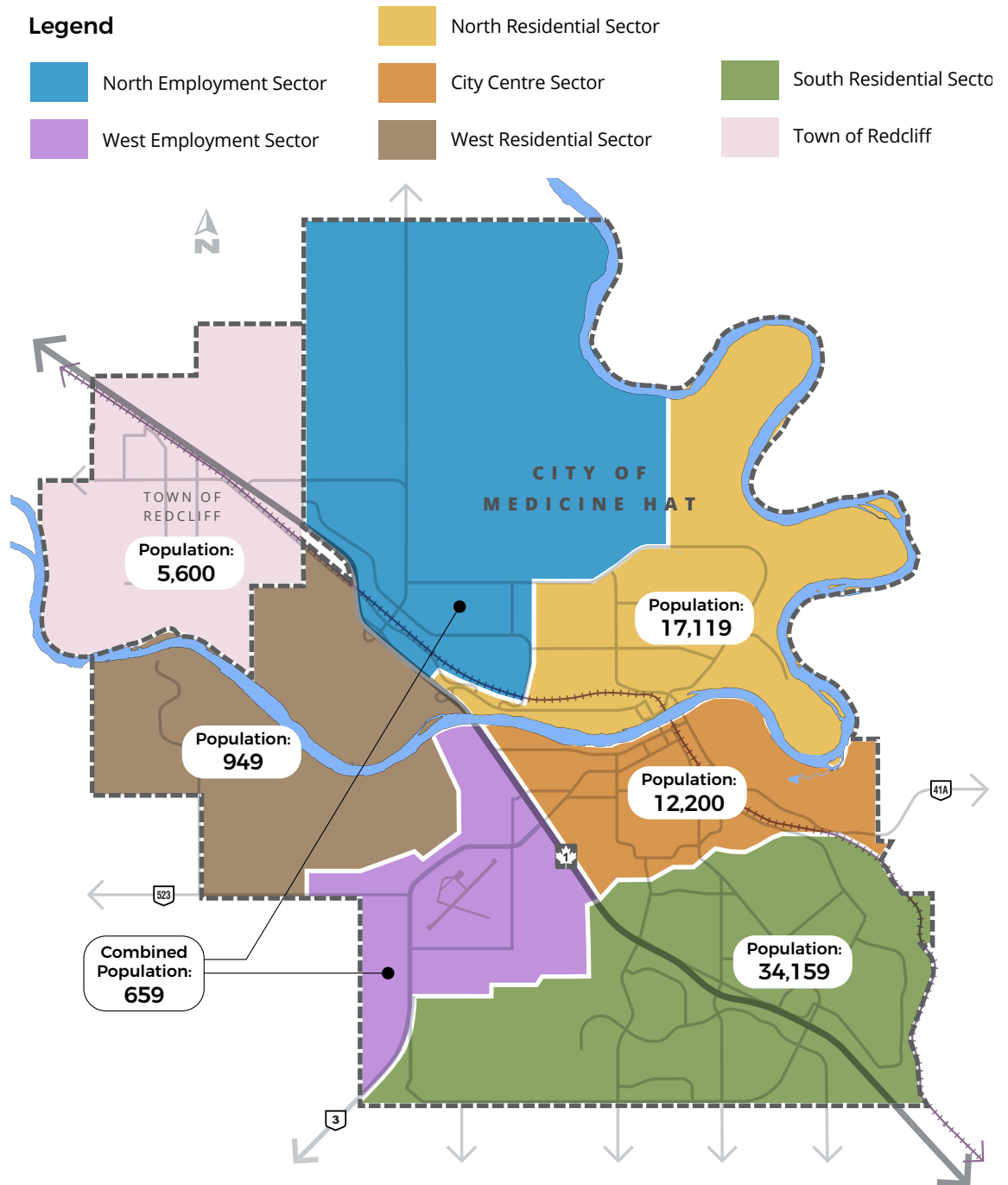


Figure 3: Population by Sector



changing. Being able to paint an accurate picture of how a population accesses public services can help decision makers plan for how to better serve their community's **parks** and recreational needs. In the next 30 years, a significant shift in population is anticipated with a much older population forecasted in the future. Figure 4 from the **MDP** identifies the forecasted shift in demographics toward an aging population. This has a significant effect on **recreation**, given the need to be mindful of providing a higher proportion of elder-friendly activities in future years. Preparing for this shift needs not be front of mind rather something to prepare for in subsequent updates to this plan.

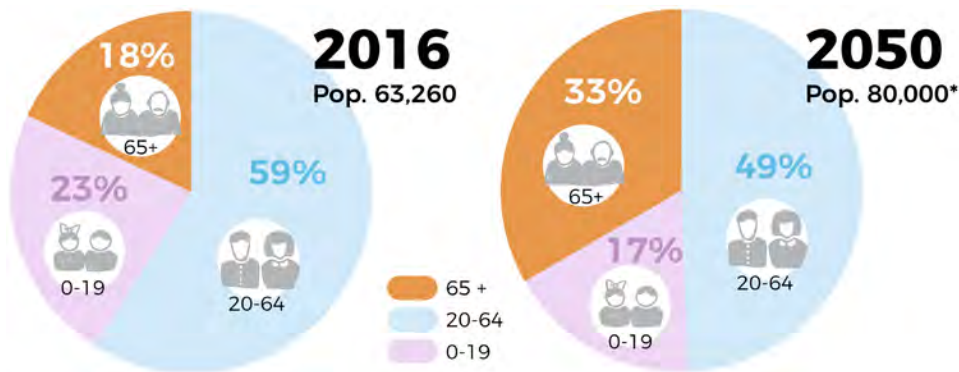


Figure 4: Changing Demographics in Medicine Hat

### 3.1.3 Geology, Climate and Environmental Influences

Medicine Hat is within a semi-desert environment whereby it experiences more mild winters and warmer summer temperatures than most other communities across Alberta. **The City** is located in the Dry Mixed Grassland Subregion which contains the most distinctive wildlife assemblage of any of the Grassland Natural Regions.<sup>4</sup> This landscape is the typical prairie landscape of rolling hills, shrublands, coulees and river valleys.



The local climate is unique amongst other communities across the country, which has direct impacts on tourism and **recreation**:

- Dry conditions that require irrigation to maintain turf fields, plant material and other vegetation; and
- Limited amount of snow in the wintertime that allows for more active **recreation** activities such as mountain biking, year-round.

A summary of potential constraints and opportunities applicable to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan are listed below.

### Constraints

- Dry Mixed Grassland Subregion: the native grasslands within **the City** provide important habitat for numerous species of fauna, many of which are classified as sensitive. Recreational use should avoid unnecessary disturbance to native grasslands. If possible, **invasive species** such as crested wheatgrass should be removed and replaced with native grassland so as to provide a greater range of habitat for these species while also improving the aesthetics of public **open space**;
- Coulee Landform: the unique and steep slopes of the coulee landforms that are present through the heart of **the City** provide it with a unique landscape that must be protected. Recreational development should avoid any unnecessary or high impact development that would alter these landforms; and
- Riparian Habitat Along South Saskatchewan River: The shoreline and riparian vegetation along the shores of the South Saskatchewan River that pass through **the City** provide habitat for many sensitive species. Recreational activity should be avoided in these sensitive areas and we should work toward creating, maintaining and restoring as natural an environment as much as possible.

### Opportunities

- South Saskatchewan River Valley: The river valley is an attractive natural feature, in part due to the native plant communities and rolling coulee landscape retained within it. Opportunity exists to enhance or improve those habitats (e.g., by restoring native vegetation in some of the manicured grass areas) and provide views from and of the unique coulee landscape;
- Past **parks** and **open space** developments: Both **infrastructure** and cleared, **open space** exists throughout **the City**. Where new **infrastructure** and facilities might be added, consider placement within these open, manicured spaces to minimize additional clearing of native vegetation;
- Historical resources: **The City** contains numerous historical sites. Some have already been somewhat developed as tourism attractions with supporting programming and established public awareness. These preserved historical features in **the City** contribute to the 'sense of place', presenting a landscape in which visitors can visualize **the City** in its historical context. Retaining native vegetation where possible or enhancing it will only add to the interpretive historical value of each historical site;
- Proximity to both nature and **the city**: The abundance of wildlife and natural spaces in **the City** is impressive. This close proximity provides excellent opportunities for visitors to get out in nature without having to travel very far. New or upgraded recreational activities in **natural areas** should explore opportunities for celestial viewing and nature interpretation; and
- Access to the South Saskatchewan River: There are numerous direct access points to the South Saskatchewan River, providing an excellent opportunity for visitors to learn about its significance and provide numerous recreational possibilities. New recreational development can explore low-impact ways to connect visitors to the river.



IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

## WHAT WE HEARD:

The most common defining characteristic of Medicine Hat is the natural environment and features such as the River and streams, coulees, grasslands, etc.

## ACTION C1:

Celebrate the local geographical features and ecology through a new trail interpretive program, focused on the landforms, flora and fauna of Medicine Hat.





### 3.1.4 Social Context

Medicine Hat is the primary service center for much of south-eastern Alberta and south-western Saskatchewan. As such, its amenities are used by individuals and groups beyond those living in Medicine Hat. Medicine Hat is experiencing steady growth, with newcomers attracted to the community by the accessibility of **recreation** opportunities, the availability of health, social, and business services, the spirit of the residents, the climate, and thus the overall quality of life afforded to residents. Medicine Hat's population increased from 59,624 in 2011 to 62,935 in 2016, equating to a 5.6% increase. This is less than half of the mean population for all of Alberta for the same five-year period which was recorded at 11.6%. While updated census data was being compiled in 2021, results were not available at the time of completing this report.

In some quarters, **the City** has a reputation as a retirement community. Medicine Hat's median age is higher than that of the Province of Alberta (40.5 vs. 36.7) and its proportion of seniors exceeds the provincial average (17.7% vs. 12.3%). While this dynamic certainly impacts the provision of services in **the City**, it does not define it. Almost one third of the City's population is under the age of 24 (29.2%).<sup>5</sup> The City's age demographics suggest that balanced **recreation** opportunities for all ages are required now and into the future.

Much of the residential growth in Medicine Hat has occurred in the new, southern portion of **the City**. As such these areas are not as well serviced geographically by **recreation** amenities as the more established areas of the community.

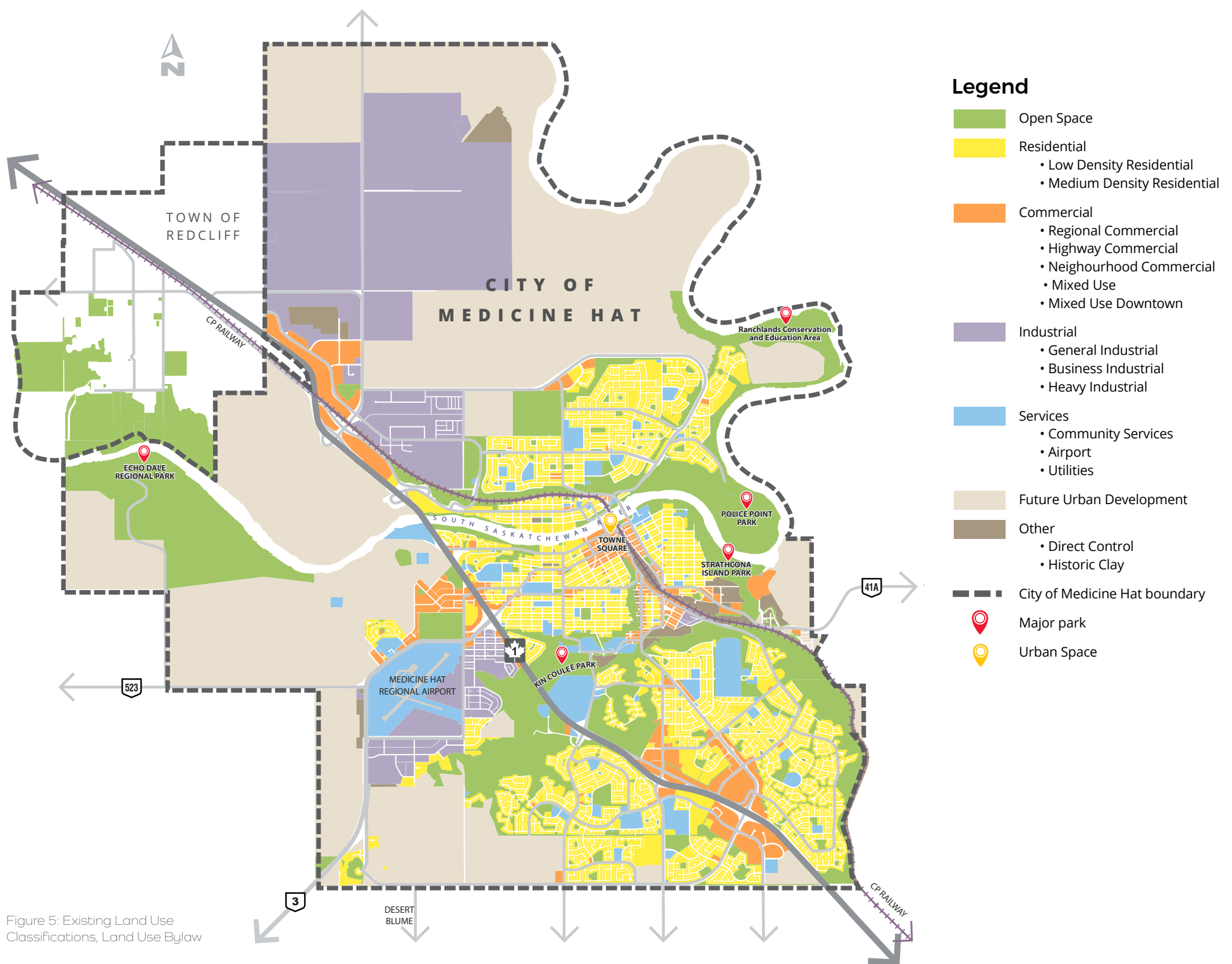
### 3.1.5 Land Use

Figure 5 identifies the general distribution of land use in Medicine Hat. There are generally six primary land uses further defined in the Land Use Bylaw, and include residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, agricultural and finally **parks and open space**. A large proportion of the **parks and open space** is found within the South Saskatchewan River valley and tributary corridors. There are four major **parks** in **the City**, including Echo Dale Regional Park, Kin Coulee Park, Strathcona Island Park and Police Point Park. **Parks and open space** under the **Municipal Government Act** and the City's Land Use Bylaw is classified as **Municipal Reserve** (MR) and has a wide variety of permissible uses and development typologies that benefit the public.

**Environmental Reserve** (ER) and Conservation Districts (CR) are also part of the **open space** network that contribute to the overall enjoyment of people and the protection of sensitive **natural areas**. The **Municipal Government Act** (MGA) defines the parameters by which Medicine Hat can designate lands as either **ER** or **CR**, identifies the type of compensation required to landowners once land is taken and lists the permitted uses in each area. Overall, development on **ER** and **CR** is more restrictive than on **MR** as environmental factors such as regulatory protection comes into play. Based on a review of recent **area structure plans** for new growth areas of **the City**, Medicine Hat is not actively pursuing the taking of **ER** and **CR** to the full extent.

There is no single growth area in **the City**, while a large proportion of new residential development is found in the south end of **the City**. There is a significant amount of **natural areas** and general **open space** as well as the highest population of people within this sector. With significant new development comes pressures on these **natural areas**. Recent development trends favour views of





rivers and ravines, access to **natural areas** such as coulees and grasslands and the use of low-lying areas such as ephemeral wetlands as candidate sites for stormwater management facilities. As such, there are a variety of direct and indirect pressures on **natural areas**. In reviewing development plans of late, there is little evidence of **natural areas** being preserved in their intact condition and integrated into new urban fabric. This may be due to limited City policy regarding environmental preservation. There is limited mapping available to inventory environmentally sensitive areas based on a scientific approach; sensitive areas mapping is primarily based on land that has the general characteristics of **Environmental Reserve** under the **MGA**. Generally, these include unstable ground, permanent water bodies, frequently flooding and other general characteristics that can be mapped using a GIS assessment of slopes and surface characteristics. Figure 6 identifies the current inventory of sensitive areas in Medicine Hat. Missing attributes in the determination of sensitive areas include wildlife habitat and corridors, rare and endangered plants, amongst others.

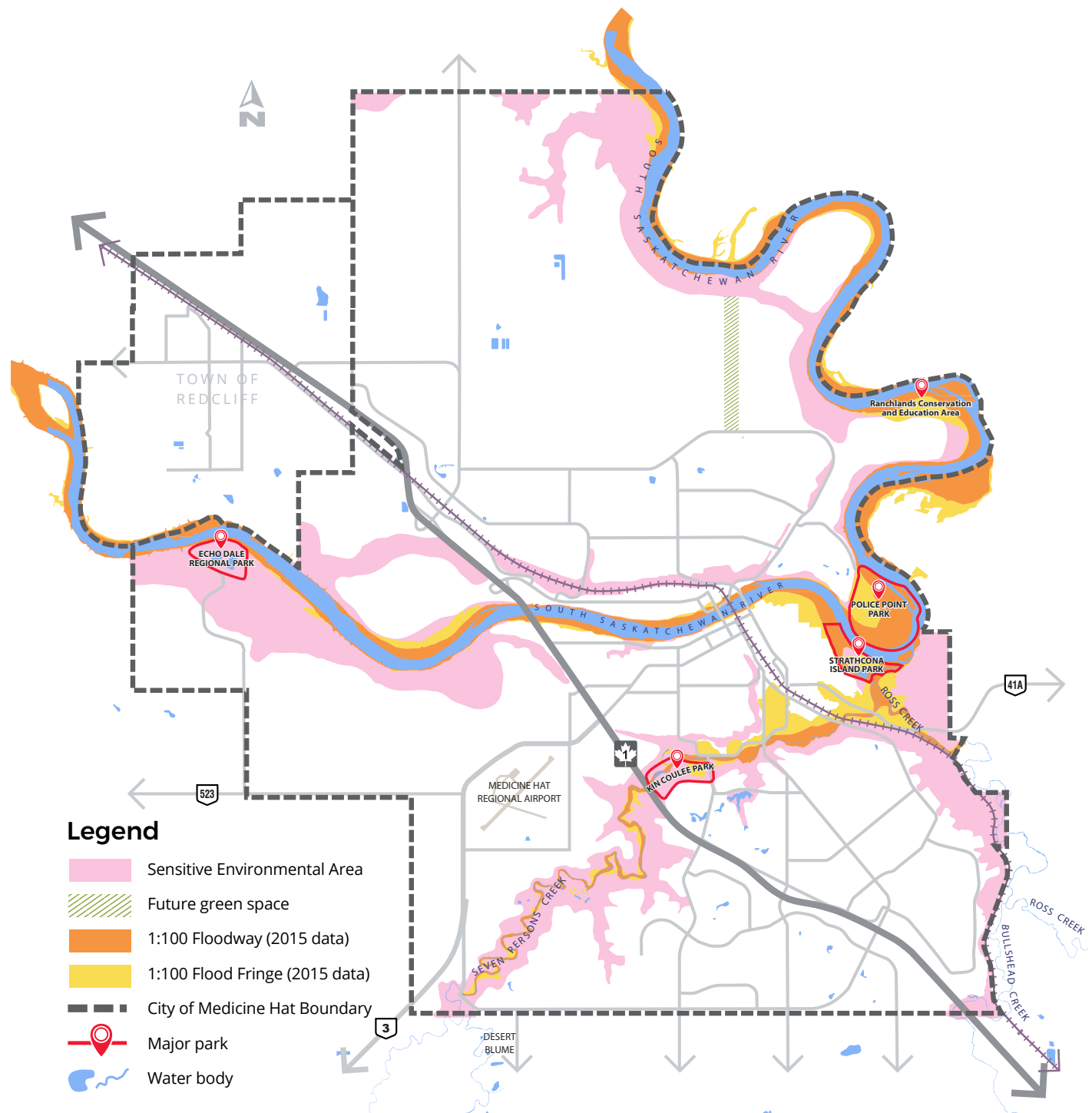


Figure 6: Environmentally Sensitive Areas



IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

**WHAT WE HEARD:**

Growth areas of the City include significant natural areas that are vulnerable to the pressures of development.

**ACTION B1:**

Use available provisions of the Alberta Municipal Government Act to take Environmental Reserve and Conservation Reserve when necessary; establish a City policy regarding environmental preservation.

The 2020 **MDP** included a very effective diagram as seen in Figure 7 that describes the range of development typologies in **the City**, from undeveloped natural and **open space** to the dense urban core. Lower service levels, less built **infrastructure**, lower densities, uniform land uses and lower tax revenues are found in future urban development and industrial areas, while the opposite is the case in urban villages and the urban core.

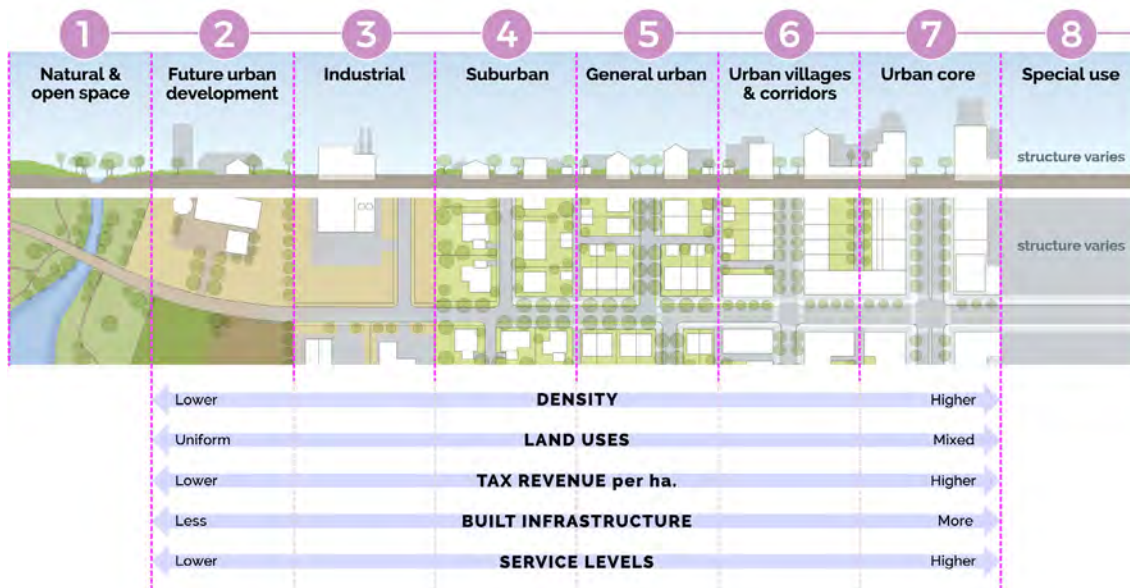


Figure 7: Urban Transect Included in the 2020 Municipal Development Plan (Source: 2020 MDP)





While there is little development in natural and **open spaces** which helps preservation efforts, there is also a growing interest in more development along the South Saskatchewan River and the various streams and tributaries. In particular, there are current initiatives that are exploring heightened waterfront development in areas such as the downtown core and more passive development concepts in other waterfront segments such as at Echo Dale Regional Park. Improving water access in a variety of contexts is currently in demand.

#### IMMEDIATE

#### NEAR

#### MEDIUM

#### CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Few opportunities to access the South Saskatchewan River and current interest in waterfront parks, shoreline development and improved water access.

#### ACTION B2:

Support waterfront development and promote better river access and water sports such as paddling; offer water safety programs and safe river use education at low to no cost.

In general, recreational facilities and amenities are found in all eight transects identified in the **MDP**, ranging from gyms and dance studios in the urban core to off-leash areas and informal trails within natural and **open space**. On the other hand, existing **open space** and trails become less prevalent in 'higher numbered' transects – those in the general urban areas and higher in **density**. Figure 8 identifies the location of existing **open space**, along with trails.

Figure 8 - Existing Open Space and Trails identifies an inventory of known and mapped trails throughout **the City**. Through the stakeholder and public engagement program it was learned that the City's most popular recreational asset is its trail system. On the other hand, it was learned that some higher **density** transects such as the downtown core lack quality trails and are not compatible with **active transportation** values such as reducing reliance on passenger vehicles to get from place to place. In reviewing the placement and



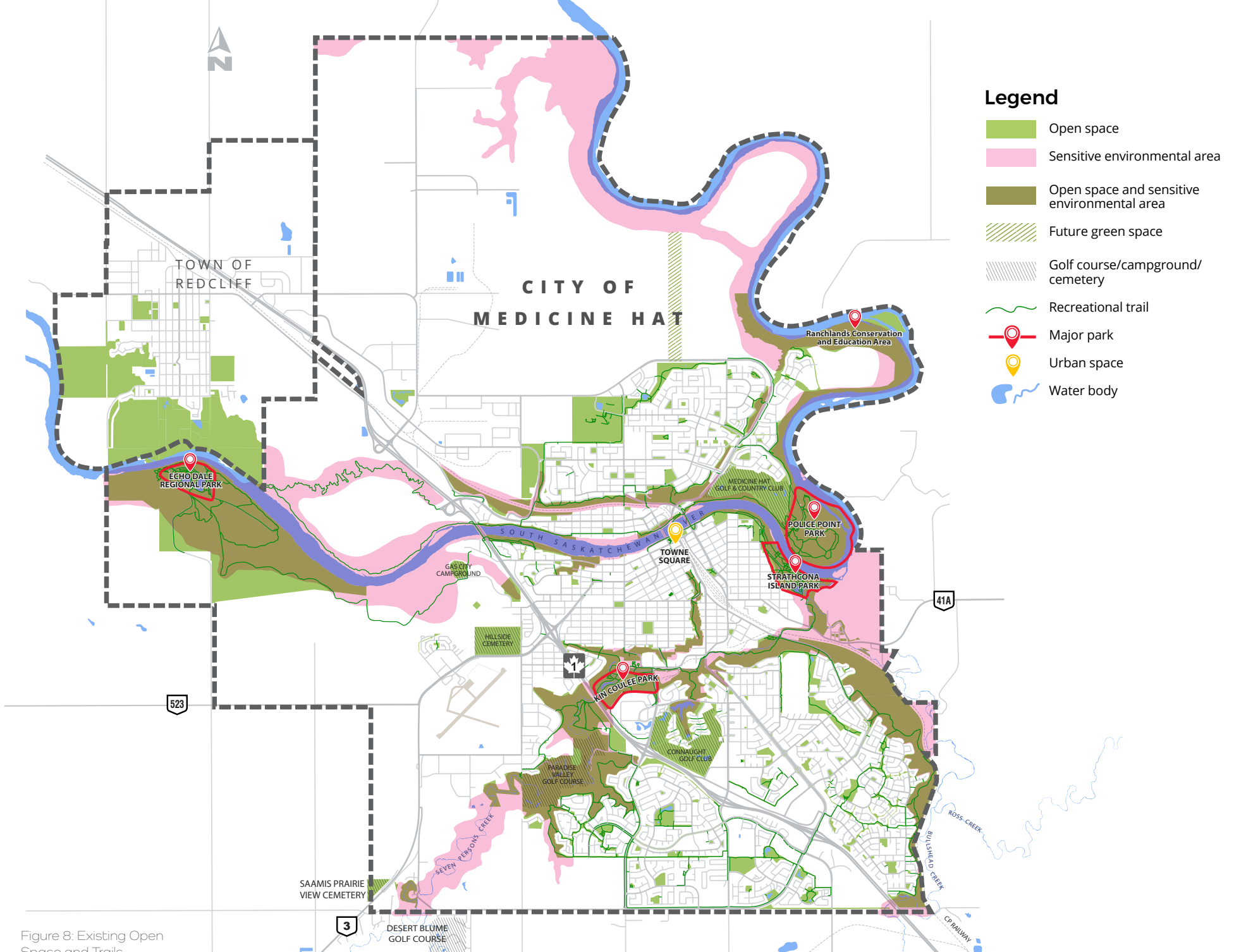


Figure 8: Existing Open Space and Trails

configuration of trails it is evident that the trail network has numerous missing linkages that would be critical for commuting by trail from residential areas to some key destinations such as the Family Leisure Centre. Further, having looped trails are preferred from an experiential perspective, and even within some key trail destination areas users are forced to make their return trip on the same trail that they first took. A more comprehensive and holistic look at the City's trail network is necessary.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

WHAT WE HEARD:

Trails are a cherished recreational amenity in Medicine Hat; while there is an impressive number of trails available in the City, there are many discontinuous segments and a lack of trail loops.

ACTION C2:

Complete a comprehensive Trails Master Plan that includes or integrates Active Transportation and inventories all existing trails and identifies necessary segments to accommodate a range of trails from multi-use to single track trail use.

Due to climatic conditions, irrigation is necessary to sustain turf in a condition that can withstand active use. In addition, many **linear parks** and other small **MR** spaces are irrigated in order to maintain a high-quality aesthetic that allows for lush grass for spontaneous play and purely aesthetic quality. Discussions with residents and **Administration** as well as site observations show that many of these areas are seldom used for activity and rather are merely for visual pleasure.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

WHAT WE HEARD:

Large expanses of park space that are irrigated, mowed and manicured to a high standard of care.

ACTION B3:

Conduct a study to identify areas that can be reconfigured to different levels of service or new aesthetics, such as naturalization, pollinator gardens, xeriscaping, etc.





### 3.1.6 Political Support

**Recreation** services in the City of Medicine Hat, as is the case in many other municipalities, are just one of many municipal services offered to residents and visitors to **the City**. As this is the case, and due to declining support for **recreation** services from senior levels of government (reduction of available grant programs for example), justification for sustained and increased funding for **recreation** provision must be compiled to further the overall agenda for **recreation** throughout Alberta. While with good intentions, it can be relatively easy to divert significant amounts of resources from municipal **recreation** budgets to other issues or concerns. On a sustained basis this can put the municipality behind resulting in increasingly more and more public pressure to catch up in meeting demands for recreational servicing and possibly ending up in an **infrastructure** deficit. This justification for resources must consider the perspectives of elected officials contemplating the needs of the general public as well as potential corporate and non-profit sector service providers that may have the ability to assist in the provision of **recreation** services in some way.

## 3.2 Background Study Review

There are numerous **statutory** and non-statutory plans, reports and other information that is influential to this Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The following documents were reviewed and applied where possible to this Plan:

- Dogs in Off-Leash Areas Report (2011);
- Strategic Urban Forest Management Plan (2013);
- Options Analysis for Ice Arenas and Outdoor Pool Facilities (2019);
- Indoor Ice Facility Optimization Analysis (2015);

- City of Medicine Hat Parks Department Playfield Manual (2017);
- South Saskatchewan River Recreation & Leisure Opportunities Assessment (2015);
- Trail Development Plan: Echo Dale to Gas City Campground (2018);
- Leisure Trails Future Development Plan (2010);
- Stepping Back from The Water (2012)
- Cycling Master Plan (2010); and
- Outdoor Recreation Facility and Amenity Optimization Strategy (2020).

In addition to the above, a key document reviewed as part of this Plan's background review was the 2020 **Municipal Development Plan** (MDP). The 2020 update to the **MDP** included a significant public and stakeholder engagement program. The **MDP** outlines high-level development priorities for **the City**, many of which are applicable to **parks** and **recreation**:

- Waterfront Development District – prioritizing **parks** and **recreation** enhancements along the South Saskatchewan River waterfront and aligning the schedule with all other development activities nearby. Waterfront development is identified as a critical success factor to provide quality urban living in the downtown, and has also been identified as critical in other plans such as the 2021 Echo Dale Regional Park Master Plan;
- Recreational facilities optimization – aligned with the City's Financially Fit initiative, the City's multipurpose facilities and sector- and city-wide approaches to planning;
- Neighbourhood **open space** design – including coulee setbacks, stormwater management policies, initiatives such as **xeriscaping**, etc.;
- Environmentally sensitive areas – mapping, identifying and designating land as **Municipal Reserve** (MR), **Conservation**

**Reserve (CR) or Environmental Reserve (ER); and**

- Outdoor **recreation** opportunities / regional tourism – continual research on opportunities for new recreational activities, and how **recreation** can help promote tourism in **the City**.

The **MDP** includes deliberate actions to implement its recommendations. At the same time, there are many challenges associated with **parks** and **recreation** that affect the **MDP**'s implementation strategy, some including:

- Critical **infrastructure** replacement will at some point hit a bubble where it will required increased dollars for large-scale replacement at the same time of decreasing grants from higher levels of government;
- There is a notable shift in climate in southeast Alberta with an increase in mean temperatures. This will have a direct impact on the health of trees, grass and other plants that will come with added pressure on the City's water system as irrigation needs will likely increase, particularly with non native trees that are less adaptive to drought;
- With increased technology and a trend of people more commonly working from home, sparse development is anticipated with people less inclined to live nearby their place of employment. Lower **density** development puts additional pressure to create **parks** and **recreation** amenities over larger geographical areas;
- Population projections have changed drastically over the past decade, which much lower growth rates (1000-1200 ppl/yr in 2012 to 400-600 ppl/yr in 2020) coupled with sharp shift in demographics (i.e., aging population) will impact everything from **recreation** demands, the importance of universal design (i.e., addressing accessibility) and development densities (i.e., more clustered senior-friendly developments); and
- The configuration of Medicine Hat leads to a strong reliance on motor vehicles to get from place to place, and this stresses the importance of a more robust network of sidewalks and trails.







IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

### WHAT WE HEARD:

The primary means to get from home to recreational amenities and facilities is by passenger vehicle due to limited urban trails.

### ACTION C3:

Improve the City's active transportation network and provide safe, comfortable and well-connected trails for walking / cycling, implementing the recommendations of a Trails Master Plan.

The **MDP** includes a number of policies that are directly related to **parks** and **recreation**. The following policies have been organized under one of five themes that were applicable to this plan, including Vibrant Downtown, Liveable Neighbourhoods, Strong Economy, Environmental Stewardship, and Where we Grow:

### Vibrant Downtown

- Policy 1.2 – Waterfront Development District will be focus of **park** and **recreation** space for both the City Centre (to support the urban living aspect) and the community at large (destination). The Waterfront will be more of an urban **park** space (i.e., more plaza, less grass). It should incorporate development into it as well, which is different than most existing **parks** in **the City**. The success of this amenity space will be critical to attracting major development opportunities to the area;
- Policy 1.4 – focusing on creating a multi-use space for daily enjoyment and events/festivals. The Waterfront should become the hub for pedestrian and cycling connections to other adjacent neighbourhoods, so it needs to be very walkable;
- Policy 2.5 – applying Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (**CPTED**) principles to the Waterfront will be essential in making it an enjoyable space and to drive future adjacent development (current issue with both Downtown **parks** at the moment); and

- Policy 2.1 and 2.3 – ensuring that the Waterfront is easily **accessible** by transit, walking, and cycling. Need to focus on creating an area that conforms to universal design to accommodate an aging population.

### Livable Neighbourhoods

- Policy 1.1 – more guidance provided in how neighbourhoods should be designed. A big component is the neighbourhood **park** as the primary focal point with additional amenities (i.e., rec, schools, community centre, etc.);
- Policy 2.1 – future street design should be based off a modified grid which will take into account the natural landscape, and there could be some opportunities to incorporate trails. (i.e., public access to coulees);
- Policy 2.3 – major streets will incorporate separated trails. These will need to tie in well to the existing trail system;
- Policy 3.1 – moving towards a system of **open space** that has a central neighbourhood **park** with lots of **linear parks** connecting different area. **Xeriscaping** will be important to apply to new **parks**, especially within the **linear parks**; and
- Policy 3.4 - We should also be considering how storm water management can take advantage of **linear parks** that are distributed through our neighbourhoods.

### Strong Economy

- Policy 1.3 - tourism will be an important element within the larger economic development strategy. Taking advantage of our unique landscape and blending in **recreation** features (i.e., Burnside trail) are excellent opportunities. Attracting recreational events will be another way to boost economy; and
- Policy 1.6 - urban digital **infrastructure** will be increasingly

incorporated into our city operations (i.e., digital trail maps, booking facilities).

### Environmental Stewardship:

- Policy 1.1 - need to map out **sensitive environmental areas**, **parks** and other **open spaces**. Properly designate them as either **MR** or **ER**;
- Policy 1.3 – need to set up a system for the use of **CR** to create better connections between our **parks** and natural systems;
- Policy 1.5 – increased flood setbacks create large parcels of land in areas such as Burnside and Ranchlands that will be protected from private development. There is potential to use those areas for some types of low intensity **recreation**;
- Policy 2.2 – considering how riparian areas can be better integrated in a sustainable way with the existing **parks** and **open space** system;
- Policy 4.1 – outlining the benefits of planting trees in our neighbourhoods; and
- Policy 4.2 – opportunity to increase our tree canopy by incentivizing planting on private land.





IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

**WHAT WE HEARD:**

There is limited information available regarding sensitive ecological areas.

**ACTION C4:**

Conduct a City-wide biophysical (ecological) assessment that identifies all sensitive ecological areas and is supported by scientific evidence to justify setbacks, locations and development limitations. Ensure MR, ER and CR is mapped.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

**WHAT WE HEARD:**

Increased development setbacks due to flood mapping create large tracts of land that may be used for low intensity recreation.

**ACTION B4:**

Conduct a conceptual level of study on integrating floodplain with the City's existing recreation network, while fully understanding ecological carrying capacity.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

**WHAT WE HEARD:**

Many parcels of parks and open space within the City are not properly designated as MR, ER, CR or other land use districts that are appropriate.

**ACTION B5:**

Inventory all parks and open spaces and properly designate the land use of all areas.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

**WHAT WE HEARD:**

Urban trees have significant benefits to the City and a more significant urban canopy should be implemented.

**ACTION C5:**

Create a program that outlines incentives for private landowners to plant more trees on private property. Have this contained within a new urban tree policy and program document.



## Where we Grow

- Policy 2.8 – have a stronger synergy between **the City** and school boards to coordinate use of **MR** and **infrastructure**;
- Policy 2.9 - school closures will have impacts on **open space**/rec facilities in established neighbourhoods;
- Policy 3.1 – as urban villages and corridors intensify a corresponding level of amenities will be needed. Long-term planning of public spaces, facilities, etc. will need to be coordinated; and
- Policy 5.1 – Area Redevelopment Plans are an important tool in the management of **parks** within established neighbourhoods.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

### WHAT WE HEARD:

There are currently joint use agreements between the City and school boards, but more can be done to coordinate the use of MR, school parks and other related infrastructure.

### ACTION D1:

Continue to place school boards and schools on key stakeholder lists to coordinate open space design, maintenance and use, and to better forecast needs of the community and students.

## 3.3 Indoor and Outdoor Recreation System: Then and Now

The 2011 Parks and Recreation Master Plan conducted a comprehensive overview of the status of **recreation** and the priorities of residents and **stakeholders** at that time. The following sections describe the priorities of 2011. In 2020, an outdoor **recreation** facility and amenity optimization was completed, which is also summarized in this section. A comparable assessment for indoor amenities and facilities has not recently been conducted.





### 3.3.1 A Look Back: Recreation Program Priorities For Medicine Hat In 2011

The 2011 Parks and Recreation Master Plan identified future **recreation** opportunity areas (both structured and unstructured activity) for future planning (these areas of focus could be achieved through direct or indirect City involvement.) These areas of focus are not presented in rank order:

- Programs that enable children to experience nature and the outdoors;
- Programs that provide for children during the “Afterschool” time period of 3 p.m.–6 p.m.;
- Fitness and wellness programs for all ages (youth, middle aged and older adults), including “episodic /reality/themed experiences” and circuit training for both individuals and groups;
- Programs that focus on healthy eating and nutrition;
- Programs that consider and incorporate, where appropriate, the concepts of the Long-Term Athlete Development Plan (with specific focus on stages 1) Active Start, 2) FUNdamentals, and 7) Active For Life);
- Programs that further the community development approach to service delivery and focus on providing groups the necessary skills to create sustainable facilities and services (i.e., business planning, grant application, etc.);
- Opportunities for spontaneous participation (non-programmed);
- Opportunities for community gathering;
- Opportunities for all ages to interact with nature;
- Opportunities for **active transportation** (non-mechanized) such as biking, walking, jogging; and
- Opportunities for non-traditional sports such as cricket, rugby, pickleball, and combative sports.

### 3.3.2 A Look Back: Indoor Recreation Priorities For Medicine Hat in 2011

A broad array of indoor **recreation** facility amenities is offered in the area. It is important to note that these priorities were developed without consideration to their associated capital or operating costs. It is also important to note that although these priorities have been identified for Medicine Hat, the development of new or upgraded facilities was not assumed to be the sole responsibility of **the City**. These priorities were ranked according to frequency of response through a number of needs assessment criteria. These priorities will be further analyzed and ranked, based on more extensive considerations. The 2011 Parks and Recreation Master Plan identified the top priorities (based on frequency of response) for indoor **recreation** as follows (ranked in order with the highest priority listed first):

- Indoor field facilities;
- Fitness / wellness facilities;
- Walking / running track;
- Gymnasium type space; and
- Ice arena facilities.

### 3.3.3 A Look Back: Outdoor Recreation Priorities For Medicine Hat in 2011

A broad range of outdoor **recreation** services is offered in **the City**. The following list outlines specific outdoor facility priorities for Medicine Hat back in 2011. It is important to note that these priorities were developed without consideration to their associated capital or operating costs. Analysis of these costs is a necessary step subsequent to this needs assessment and prior to any facility development. As is the case with the indoor priorities identified, the development of new or upgraded facilities

is not assumed to be the sole responsibility of **the City**. This list of outdoor priorities should be used strategically to support initiatives of partner groups or agencies as well as initiative of City government. These priorities have been ranked according to frequency of response through a number of needs assessment criteria. The 2011 Parks and Recreation Master Plan identified the top priorities (based on frequency of response) for outdoor **recreation** as follows (ranked in order with the highest priority listed first):

- Soccer fields;
- Dog off leash areas;
- Picnic and kitchen areas;
- Water playgrounds; and
- Ball diamonds.

**3.3.4 Today’s Perspectives: Current Recreation Priorities**

Current priorities for both indoor and outdoor **recreation** were determined through a weighted aggregate score based on several factors. Each factor was given a weighting that then determined the final list of priorities. The following chart identifies each contributing factor and its assigned weighting.

CONTRIBUTING FACTOR	WEIGHTING
Priorities of the 2011 Plan	10%
Trends & Leading Practices (regional, provincial, national)	20%
2021 Stakeholder & Public Engagement Program	50%
Current Plans (other current initiatives already planned or underway.)	20%







The following chart outlines current priorities for indoor amenities and programs, as well as outdoor amenities and programs using the weighting as indicated:

INDOOR AMENITIES / PROGRAMS	PRIORITY	OUTDOOR AMENITIES / PROGRAMS
leisure swimming pools	1	trails
ice arena facilities	2	off-leash dog areas
fitness / wellness facilities	3	mountain bike parks
walking / running track	4	outdoor pools
leisure ice surfaces	5	spray parks / water playgrounds
indoor child play	6	picnic and kitchen areas
indoor field facilities	7	playgrounds
program rooms	8	outdoor fitness equipment
gymnasium type spaces	9	BMX bicycle parks
skateboard park	10	soccer sports facilities
curling rinks	11	ball diamonds
spectator seating / office at FLC	12	highboard skating rinks
community meeting rooms	13	artificial turf sport field
climbing wall	14	skateboard parks
roller derby	15	outdoor roller derby track

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

### WHAT WE HEARD:

Indoor and outdoor recreation priorities should be determined through a combination of factors, not solely one source such as public surveys.

### ACTION A2:

Use the priorities identified as a guide to future decision-making regarding investment in existing facilities and amenities as well as creating new ones.

### 3.4 Service Delivery Models

The City of Medicine Hat delivers **recreation** services through the direct provision of **infrastructure**, spaces and programs. This provision is supplemented by the efforts of a variety of **recreation** program providers, volunteer sports groups, non-profit organizations and private sector entities.

Internally the City's functions include operations and maintenance of **infrastructure**, aquatics program provision, scheduling/renting of arena spaces and community support. Operation and maintenance of **infrastructure** includes the physical upkeep and operations of both indoor and outdoor **recreation** spaces as well as the scheduling and coordination of groups and members of the general public accessing the spaces. Key functions include plant operations, sports field maintenance, customer service, janitorial services and scheduling. **The City** also provides direct programming throughout the community, typically related directly to the operations of certain facilities or spaces. For instance, **the City** oversees swimming lessons in its

indoor and outdoor aquatics venues. In other cases, programs related to specific spaces are driven by local volunteer groups. For example, youth baseball leagues rent various diamonds throughout the community from **the City** and local schools.

Those groups that offer programs and / or facilities to city residents and visitors and that need public support (non-profit) get help from **the City** in various forms. **The City** recognizes the importance of volunteer and non-profit involvement in the delivery of **recreation** opportunities for residents and the associated value these relationships have on providing quality opportunities and leveraging public funds. As such, the City's community group support services include assistance with grant writing, strategic planning, equipment and supply purchasing and overall activity promotion. It is also found that funding and grant opportunities arise that municipalities are not eligible for, rather must be pursued directly by community organizations. Unfortunately, many organizations are led by volunteers, and oftentimes do not have the knowledge or experience in preparing applications for funding.





The relationship **the City** has with local delivery agents (non-profit and / or volunteer groups) sometimes takes the form of formal partnership agreements. These agreements vary in nature and scope and make up a sophisticated and effective approach to delivering **recreation** opportunities to residents that promotes quality and leverages public funds. One truism that exists in all municipalities, and Medicine Hat is no different, is that the municipality cannot be solely responsible for the complete provision of **recreation** services in the community. As such the provision of an environment in which organizations, public institutions, and the private sector can offer **recreation** services is an important role for **the City**. In some instances, direct support from **the City**, and the formation of partnerships with **the City**, is important to ensure that needed **recreation** services are provided. Many local organizations have great ideas and strong interest in pursuing **parks** and **recreation** projects in **the City**, however do not understand exactly how to approach **the City**, what information is needed in hand and the steps required to see through a proposal and the project development. A clear framework for outside organizations to partner with **the City** would help local delivery agents in realizing proposed projects.

#### IMMEDIATE

##### WHAT WE HEARD:

Many local organizations are unaware of the type of information required, resources necessary, and the long-term commitment required to sustain proposed parks and recreation initiatives. Partnerships are a key part of delivering parks and recreation and partnership agreements and models are often vague.

#### NEAR

#### MEDIUM

#### CONTINUED

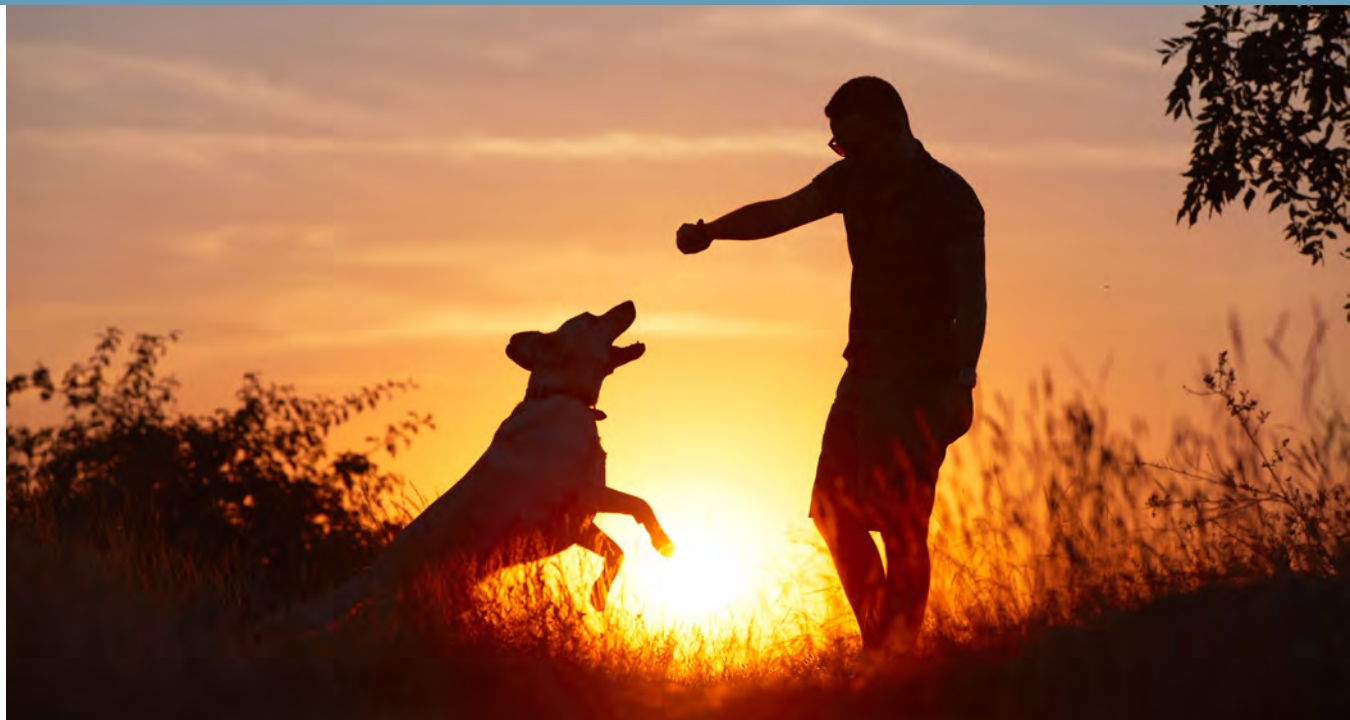
##### ACTION A3:

Create an “Engagement Framework” that clearly identifies the types of information, financial and / or labor resources that need to come along with proposed projects. Ensure partnership frameworks are explicit.



# Planning Legislative Framework, Governance and Planning Initiatives

The provision of **parks and recreation** in Alberta municipalities is predominantly led at a local level. At the same time there are influencing factors such as grant opportunities, environmental regulation and both government and non-government initiatives at higher levels of government that impact **parks and recreation**. The following is a general summary of the different levels of governance and the types of considerations that apply to **parks and recreation**.





## 4.1 Federal

### 4.1.1 Federal Acts and Legislation

While federal acts and legislation do not govern or regulate **recreation** in a municipality, it has a significant influence on the development within some **natural areas** such as waterways that contain fish or have the potential of hosting fish, and some upland **natural areas** that contain migratory birds or have the potential of hosting migratory birds. The Canadian Environmental Protection Act, Migratory Birds Act, Species at Risk Act, Environment Act, Impact Assessment Act, Canada Transport Act, amongst others are all pertinent to the planning, maintaining and operations of many recreational activities in cities alike Medicine Hat.

### 4.1.2 Parks for All (2017)

Developed in 2017 by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) and the Canadian Parks Council (CPC), Parks for All presents a vision for **parks** as well as four strategic directions.

#### Vision:

Connected Canadian parklands and waters that support healthy Nature and healthy people in harmony for generations to come, backed by an active, diverse **parks** community that cultivates shared goals, mutual respect, and collective action.

#### Strategic Directions:

##### Collaborate

- Nurturing partnerships between Indigenous organizations and the broader parks community;
- Collaborating with new and diverse sectors; and
- Strategizing beyond **park** boundaries.

##### Connect

- Raising public awareness of our **parks**;
- Facilitating experiences which connect visitors with nature; and
- Sharing stories and successes to inspire more engagement.

##### Conserve

- Expanding Canada's **park** system;
- Enhancing **parks** planning and management; and
- Enhancing ecosystem service benefits from **parks**.

##### Lead

- Setting ambitious examples that can pave the way for others, in Canada and internationally;
- Building the capability of current and future leaders; and
- Developing and maintaining systems, tools, and resources to support leaders.

This initiative provides a unified strategic direction for all **parks** across Canada. The vision is well suited to **parks** and **recreation** in Medicine Hat.

### 4.1.3 Truth and Reconciliation

Reconciliation Canada is an Indigenous-led organization that envisions a vibrant Canada where all peoples achieve their full potential and shared prosperity through meaningful relationships, values-based dialogue, leadership and action. Several “calls to action” were outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation report commissioned by Reconciliation Canada in 2016. Some of the calls to action are pertinent to the public delivery of **recreation** services.

- Call to Action 66: We call upon the federal government

- to establish multiyear funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation.
- Call to Action 67: We call upon the federal government to provide funding to the Canadian Museums Association to undertake, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, a national review of museum policies and best practices.
  - Call to Action 87: We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.
  - Call to Action 88: We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.

#### 4.1.4 Framework for Recreation in Canada: Pathways to Wellbeing (20 15)

The Framework (figure 9) provides a new vision for **recreation** and identifies common ways of thinking about the role of **recreation** in Canadian life, based on clear goals and underlying values and principles. It has been endorsed by the Government of Canada, Provincial and Territorial Ministers, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, Provincial and Territorial Parks and Recreation Associations and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

The Framework provides a renewed definition of **recreation**:

**Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.**

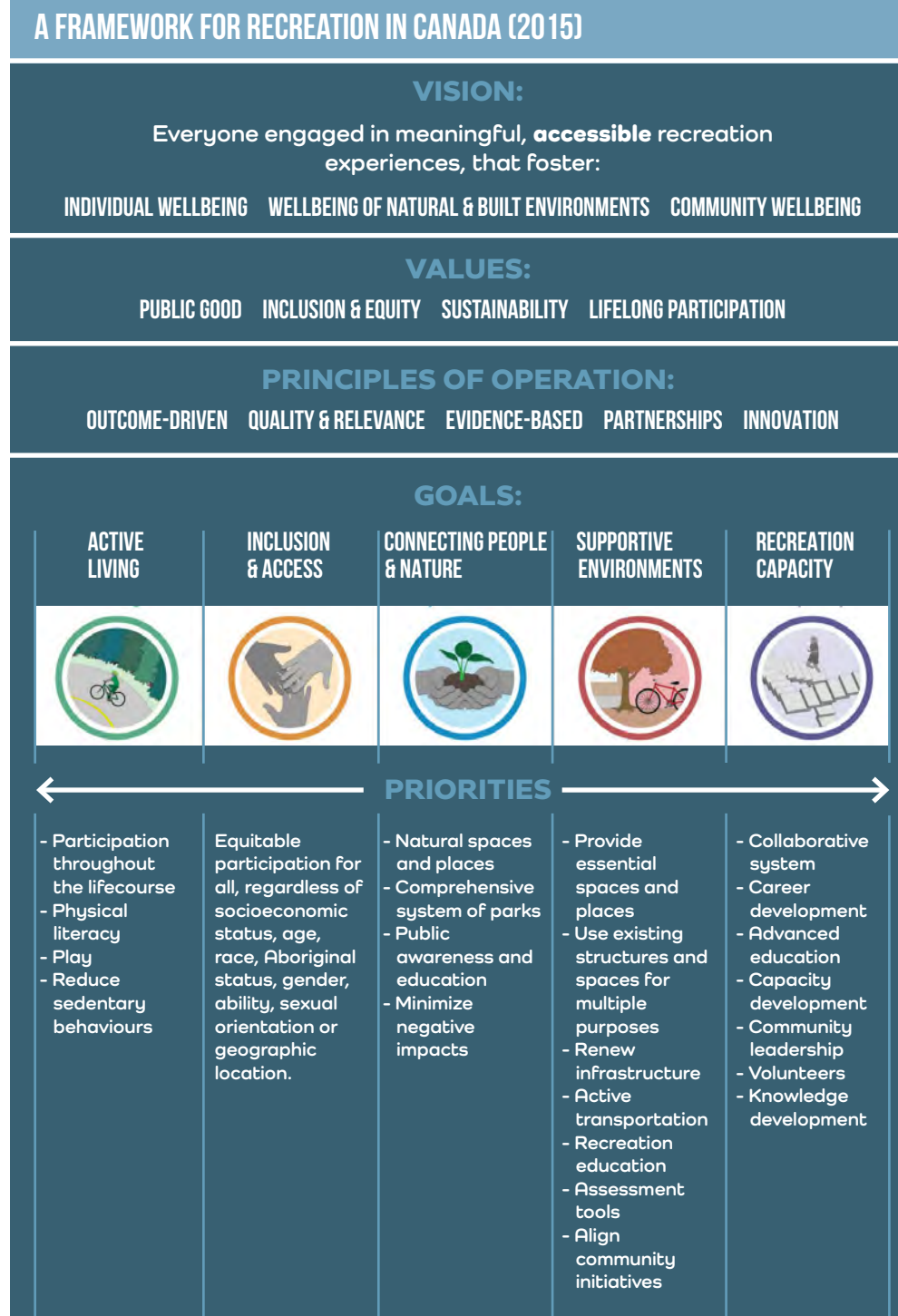


Figure 9: Pathways to Wellbeing Framework Diagram





## 4.2 Provincial

### 4.2.1 Provincial Bills, Acts and Regulations

While provincial bills, acts and regulations do not govern or regulate **recreation** in a municipality, it has a significant influence on the development within some **natural areas** such as permanent or ephemeral wetlands, bed and shore of certain waterbodies such as the South Saskatchewan River and its tributaries, **urban forests** that contain or have the potential to contain wildlife, open grasslands that contain or have the potential to contain rare plants, amongst others. Some of the pertinent Acts relevant to the planning, maintenance and active use of the environment include Public Lands Act, Historical Resources Act, Natural Resources Act, Wildlife Act, amongst others.

#### IMMEDIATE

##### WHAT WE HEARD:

Many natural areas are poorly protected from incompatible uses such as allowing off-leash dog use in sensitive natural environments.

#### NEAR

#### MEDIUM

#### CONTINUED

##### ACTION C6:

Upon completion of a City-wide biophysical assessment, conduct an impact assessment that identifies uses which suit certain natural areas, or have the potential for degradation.

### 4.2.2 Active Alberta (2011-2021)

**Recreation**, active living and **sport** are vitally important to Albertans. Research clearly points to the importance of active lifestyles to the physical, social and emotional health and well-being of individuals and their communities. This resource outlines a 10-year policy to refocus government initiatives, challenge partners, and encourage Albertans to become more active. Active Alberta sets out a vision for **recreation**, active living and sport: Albertans enjoy a high quality of life, improved health and wellness, strong communities, economic benefits and personal fulfillment, through **recreation**, active living and sport.

### 4.2.3 Spirit of Alberta: Alberta's Cultural Policy (2008)

Launched in January 2008, this policy provides a framework for decision-making related to the support, growth and development of culture. Based on extensive research and public consultation, the Spirit of Alberta policy reflects the broad view of Albertan culture, encompassing the arts, our heritage, natural landscapes and **recreation**. The policy is focused around four keystones, including access, capacity, excellence and growth of cultural industries.

**Recreation**, active living and **sport** are integral to the culture of Alberta. As the Spirit of Alberta: Alberta's Cultural Policy states, **recreation** and **sport** are included in our definition of Alberta's culture and: "...culture is the glue that connects us as individuals to our communities, fostering unity, civility and a sense of belonging, pride and caring for our fellow citizens." <sup>6</sup>

## 4.3 Regional

The **Municipal Government Act** of Alberta requires two or more municipalities that have common boundaries must, through bylaw, adopt an **intermunicipal development plan** (IDP) to include those areas of land lying within the boundaries of the municipalities as they consider necessary. The City of Medicine Hat, Town of Redcliff and Cypress County have had an **IDP** in place for many years and was last updated in March 2020. The **IDP** seeks cooperation on "regional growth and integrated land use and development decision-making to maximize collaboration, efficiency, and economic development of the region as a whole, for the mutual benefit of all parties."<sup>7</sup> The spirit of any **IDP** is to encourage growth that is mutually beneficial to all parties. **Recreation** planning recognizes that people from a larger region will benefit from **parks** and **recreation** of any community, and the

City of Medicine Hat does draw from the Town of Redcliff and residents from the surrounding Cypress County for users of the recreational system.

The **IDP** identifies large tracts of land that fall within a potential growth area. A policy statement in the **IDP** sets forth the intention to retain the agricultural use and extensive **recreation** uses of large parcels in the area, while at the same time allowing limited country residential development. The **IDP** area contains creeks, coulees and a river that serve as an important part of the **open space** network. There are several environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) that act as a conduit for trails and wildlife movement, areas for stormwater management and habitat that contains a diversity of wildlife and plants. Development within ESAs are subject not only to the principles of the **IDP**, but also Provincial and Federal Acts and Legislation. The South Saskatchewan River is the most prevalent ESA within the plan boundary, which in many areas is flanked by steep slopes and coulee terrain. River tributaries including creeks, while not considered ESAs, contain a number of wetland areas that contain a high degree of biodiversity and that fall under Provincial and possibly Federal regulatory frameworks. These areas serve as excellent **recreation** areas providing passive opportunities such as trail walking, wildlife viewing and other forms of nature appreciation.

As it relates to **recreation** the **IDP** has no detailed mention of **recreation** and how the three municipalities can best offer recreational services and amenities to area residents through collaboration. Upon updating of the **IDP** between Cypress County, Redcliff and Medicine Hat, more specific language is encouraged that expresses planning for regional **recreation** systems that benefit all three municipal jurisdictions.



IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

**WHAT WE HEARD:**

The existing IDP between Medicine Hat, Cypress County and Redcliff is silent on recreational attributes such as collaboration in planning for, and funding of, recreational amenities and services offered in Medicine Hat that benefit the region.

**ACTION C7:**

The tri-part relationship that is forged by the IDP should influence how recreation systems are encouraged to cross municipal boundaries between the three municipalities and that partnerships should be explored for regional amenities such as Echo Dale Regional Park

**4.4 Local**

Bylaw No. 2527 – The Parks and Recreational Areas Bylaw outlines the regulation of **parks** and recreational areas. The bylaw was last passed through municipal council in 1987 and with latest amendments done in 1992, 1993, 1997 and 1999. Upon review of the Bylaw, it is obvious that many aspects require updating. Specific areas to address include but is not limited to more detail on the use and protection of **natural areas**, more engaged use of the River and river valley, more in-depth details of off-leash and on-leash dog activities and designation of power of specific City staff members. Schedule A to this bylaw that identifies violations and penalties should be revisited with increased rigor through higher penalties for infractions and violations because these penalties are not consistent with those of other comparable municipalities.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

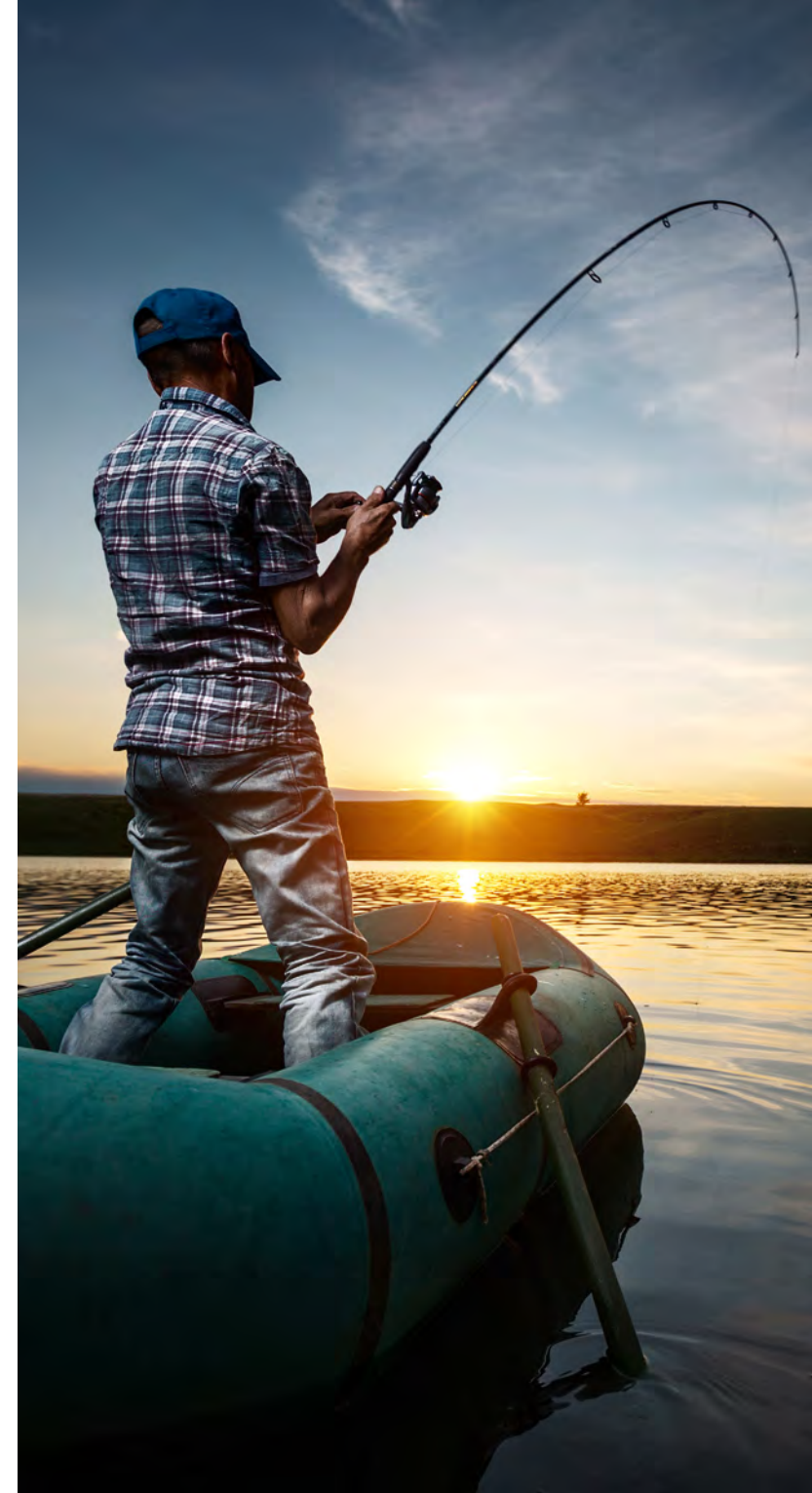
CONTINUED

**WHAT WE HEARD:**

Bylaw No. 2527 - The Parks and Recreational Areas is dated, and requires updating in order to align with contemporary needs and the unique qualities of various parks and open spaces in Medicine Hat.

**ACTION A4:**

Update Bylaw No. 2527 with a rigorous review of current needs, stakeholder engagement, consultation with Bylaw staff, etc. Requires a focus on contemporary concerns such as new waterfront development initiatives, off-leash dog use, designation of powers of City staff, amongst others.



# Trends and Leading Practices



Trends identified in this report range from those emerging across North America, within the general **recreation** sector, and at a municipal scale. Maintaining local relevance and context when implementing trends is integral to assuring their successful implementation. Ensuring that regional and national trends are aligned with the needs of a specific community is essential. The stakeholder and public engagement program of this Plan tested these trends against local perspectives. Applying trends and leading practices to a community can help:

- Facilitate and optimize partnerships. Communities cannot deliver recreational amenities, services and programs alone and are reliant on outside organizations to provide a robust network of **parks and recreation**;
- Reduce capital and operational costs of **parks and recreation** networks by prioritizing resources, exploring efficiencies and innovation used by others;
- Adapt aging **infrastructure** to meet growing and changing community needs;
- Balance natural environment and landscaped areas; and
- Increase local adoption of environmental practices and policies.



### 5.1.1 Spontaneous and Unstructured Recreation

Many institutions and establishments favour well-structured activities over free and creative time. While there are benefits associated with structured activities, establishing time for people, especially children, to let their minds and bodies roam free can help equip them for success. Structured play involves following steps to reach an established goal, helping build pattern-recognition, teamwork, and communication skills. Unstructured/free play involves improvising with no set goal, building creativity, problem-solving skills and self-expression in children. As there are benefits to both types of play, a combination of both can help children develop logical and creative thinking.<sup>8</sup>

As highly structured play is traditionally chosen for children, there is a growing impetus to encourage self-directed play that boosts children's confidence to create their own boundaries. Free play often takes place outdoors, encouraging physical activity, reducing obesity and building long-lasting physical activity habits. Fitness is associated with improved school performance; reduced stress and chronic disease prevalence; and lower rates of alcohol and drug use and smoking.<sup>9</sup> Free play also builds physical strength and motor skills among children and can help early development of social and communication skills.<sup>10</sup> Playgrounds are microcosms for real-life: these childhood interactions prepare children for the future by building social and emotional awareness.<sup>11</sup> The problem-solving skills developed during unstructured play are integral to proper development. Importantly, free play comes naturally to children, and is simply a fun way to spend time. The skills and benefits obtained in unstructured **recreation** will be lifelong. But at the time, these benefits seem pale in comparison to the mere great times spent outdoors making friends.



### 5.1.2 Physical Literacy

Early adoption of activities that promote physical literacy yields many lifelong benefits. **Recreation** agencies can improve overall health and wellbeing in the communities they serve, as well as promote proper childhood development by providing **recreation** opportunities that encourage development of physical literacy.

Physical literacy focuses on developing vital movement skills children require to participate in lifelong **recreation**.<sup>12</sup> Basic principles are to:

- Build confidence and motivation in people to enjoy day-to-day physical activity;
- Increase knowledge and understanding of basic movements required for physical literacy, and how they contribute to active and happy lives; and
- Instill desire in people to engage in regular physical activity, and make it a part of one's life, for life.<sup>13</sup>

Being physically literate means learning basic movement skills required to participate in many **sport** and **recreation** activities. Fundamental abilities include running, jumping, hopping, balancing, throwing and swimming. These equip children with the means to participate in many **sport** and **recreation** activities, increasing their likelihood of pursuing physical activity as a youth and into adulthood.<sup>14</sup>

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Physical literacy is a primary catalyst to promoting healthy lifestyles.

#### ACTION D3:

Integrate the principles of physical literacy in the development and offering of recreational programs.





### 5.1.3 Decreased Physical Activity

Due to declined physical activity, Canadians fall behind many other countries when it comes to active lifestyles. **Recreation** agencies must help promote **active transportation** along trail and road networks, create ready opportunities for physical activity, and provide areas to play outside.<sup>15</sup> Despite physical activity's integral role in lifelong human health, overall activity begins to decline in individuals as early as childhood school age.<sup>16</sup> Low physical activity is a risk factor for many chronic diseases (i.e., cardiovascular diseases, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, obesity, cancers) and low physical ability in adulthood.<sup>17</sup> Maintaining regular physical activity mitigates risk factors for many diseases, but also yields improved mental and social health benefits. Physical activity is necessary to promote healthy growth and development among young people,<sup>18</sup> and to assure healthy lifestyles are maintained long term.

As encouraging activity can be challenging, **parks** and **recreation** departments can help target the social determinants creating barriers for activity such as age, gender, and race<sup>19</sup> and create **accessible recreation** for all. Understanding why people are not active can help fill gaps between sedentary and active behaviour, meeting people at their levels and creating attainable options for **recreation**. For instance, many are inclined to participate in leisurely physical activity, are not active while at work and at home, and have no option for **active transportation**.<sup>20</sup> By creating changes in our built environments, **parks** and **recreation** agencies can help cure the epidemic of inactivity.

### 5.1.4 Stronger Human-Nature Connection

In recent years there has been a significant shift toward nature-based passive **recreation**. More than ever before, there is a great demand for access to **natural areas** within or nearby communities

to promote a strong human-nature connection. The need for humans to interact with nature is embodied within, what various professional fields now call, the biophilia hypothesis.<sup>21</sup> In essence, the biophilia hypothesis states a love for nature that is shared by all people across all cultures and economic classes. The benefits of human contact with nature are well documented,<sup>22</sup> for reasons such as maintaining biodiversity and fulfilling the inherent need we have to interact with the natural world. Nearly every culture - from the early First Nation communities to the most devoted urbanites of post-industrial Canada - has recognized that contact with nature is critical to human survival. As numerous disciplines support the validity of biophilia, they also endorse the health benefits afforded by routine contact with nature such as improved mental well-being,<sup>23</sup> restorative experiences involving the renewal of depleted psychological resources<sup>24</sup> and stress reduction.<sup>25</sup>

Contrary to the trend for more engagement with nature, children spend significant amounts of time inside, much of it on the computer and with other digital devices in hand. Society's youth, particularly those from urban areas do not understand where food comes from (other than the store) and have an increasingly difficult time linking their health with the natural world. Connecting with nature can help move people from a place of isolation to one of connection.

### 5.1.5 Youth Sport Participation

Despite the importance of **sport** in active lifestyles, over 40% of youth do not participate. Many children enrolled in sports also do not have other sources of physical activity. This is problematic for children who are not, or cannot be, enrolled in sports year-round and for children who are unable to access and be included in sports.<sup>26</sup> Low **sport** participation may be due to various social determinants creating barriers preventing participation. Lower



household income may limit participation: 45.5 % of children from households with incomes over \$ 100,000 participate in sports, while only 27.5 % participate from households earning under \$ 25,000.<sup>27</sup> The time commitment required for **sport** participation also deters many families.<sup>28</sup> This can also be confounded by income, as many parents must prioritize their work to financially support their families. In many places across North America, **sport** participation has grown elitist.<sup>29</sup>

The Government of Canada is increasing funding opportunities to promote gender equity and financial support for **sport** organizations, yielding more inclusive and affordable environments. It is also acknowledging **sport** safety by addressing concussions in **sport** as a public health issue – health risks are also a deterrent for many families. The Sport for Life framework aims to keep Canadians active for life by improving **sport** leadership,

programs and services, and organizations.<sup>30</sup> Affordable and **accessible sport** opportunities for all youth in Canada are necessary to increase participation. **Parks and recreation** agencies can increase **sport** participation by offering affordable, convenient, and safe programming and opportunities to get out and play.

### 5.1.6 Overscheduled Children

Maintaining activity-filled calendars is convenient for many busy family lifestyles. There are benefits associated with participation in organized activities like sports and music lessons, but it is also important to leave time for spontaneous **recreation** – even if this time is scheduled. Overscheduling can stem from good intentions, but in the long run may increase risk of depression and anxiety and restrict childhood development of problem-



solving and decision-making skills.<sup>31</sup> The risks associated with overscheduling may override the benefits scheduled activities are intended to create. Many children grow bored of their schedules even before they reach high school and do not know what to do with free time.<sup>32</sup> Having too stacked of a schedule leaves little time for children and youth to explore the world on their own. Overscheduling can also teach children they need to continually self-improve to succeed, which can negatively impact self-esteem.<sup>33</sup>

**Recreation** agencies can help reduce overscheduling by providing areas where children and adolescents, and their families, can spend fun and active time together. More space will also be needed for people to relax away from screen time. Designing **parks** and **recreation** spaces in ways that stimulate creativity and are **accessible** for children to engage with on their own, can help ease many parents' anxieties associated with free time. Playing together as a family is important to help build strong relationships but leaving time for kids-only unstructured play helps build creativity in other ways, encouraging children to control of their own environments.<sup>34</sup>

While scheduled activities are beneficial, it is important to remember that sometimes spending time just playing with friends or on a family bike ride yields just as many, if not more benefits than soccer drills.

### 5.1.7 Physical Activity in Older Adults

There are many benefits associated with maintaining an active lifestyle over the age of 65, including:

- Decreased risk of many cardiovascular diseases and cancers;

- Higher cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness;
- Healthier body mass and bone structures; and
- Improved functional and cognitive health.

Engaging in regular, leisurely **recreation** can help produce such benefits. **Parks** and **recreation** agencies can help older persons attain healthier lifestyles by maintaining **accessible**, enticing and affordable services and facilities. Activities that help keep older adults fit include walking and biking, household chores, games and sports, and even family and community activities. Older folks are recommended to engage in an equivalent of 150 minutes of moderate, or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity each week. If unattainable, you are encouraged to start off with 10-minute intervals and increasing as you get stronger – the benefits of physical activity increase the more active you are.<sup>35</sup>

Many people can kickstart their active lifestyles simply by finding an activity they enjoy and increasing their activity level over time; a couch-to-marathon journey doesn't take place overnight. Facilitating social activity may also encourage more people to get involved. Fostering **active transportation** and motivating people to do simple things like taking the stairs are also integral to building active lifestyles. Encouraging people to start at a level they are comfortable with and listen to their bodies is an **accessible** place to start.<sup>36</sup>

## 5.2 Recreation Sector Advancement

### 5.2.1 Performance Measurement

**Parks** and **recreation** agencies provide countless health and wellness benefits to the communities they serve, increasing overall quality of life. Outdoor **parks** and **recreation** facilities provide spaces for people to engage with nature and with each other. Ice rinks, picnic shelters, tennis courts and trail networks are

important components of active and healthy lifestyles. Indoor facilities such as swimming pools, gymnasiums, **recreation** and fitness facilities, and ice rinks also support health and wellbeing by providing opportunities for programming, **sport** and group activities.

Measuring **parks** and **recreation** service performance is integral to assure community needs are addressed and met, and help existing services and facilities remain functional and relevant to people in the community. It is important for these agencies to prioritize efficient and effective service delivery to maintain high standards and community impressions. Creating attainable and beneficial objectives, targets, and initiatives that align with strategic and performance plans can help agencies organize pathways to success, and permit performance evaluation along the way.<sup>37</sup>

Maintaining performance records can help organizations track and organize their progress via:

- Communication of organizational goals;
- Alignment of tasks and work within achievable targets;
- Prioritization of work and services that need to get done; and
- Measurement and monitoring of progress to strategic goals.<sup>38</sup>

Performance management can also initiate financial savings, engagement with **key stakeholders** and community interaction. Overall, it helps organizations remain accountable to their communities by self-evaluating policy and decisions and keeping on a track that leads to success.

Third party surveys, assessments and comparative analyses, such as Yardstick, CRPA and NRPA, should be reviewed on a regular basis and compared against Medicine Hat guidelines.

### 5.2.2 Climate Change Resiliency

As climate change impacts continue to appear in frequency and severity, **parks** and **recreation** agencies can adapt their amenities to help their communities remain resilient in the face of a changing environment. Initiatives and services must consider how climate change will impact their implementation and longevity. At this point, all decisions must acknowledge the world is changing fast, and we need to keep up.







Nature-inspired design is increasing in popularity and there is growing impetus to design public spaces in conjunction with the environment. Green spaces provide areas for nature to thrive and can help preserve pieces of native habitat, all while benefiting the surrounding community. Urban **parks** provide grounds for **urban forests** to grow, mitigating some of the greenhouse gas problem by absorbing carbon emissions. Natural outdoor spaces can also mitigate some of the impacts that will be caused by harsh outdoor conditions such as winds, hot sun and natural disasters.<sup>39</sup>

Integrating climate change resiliency with **parks** and **recreation** is an intriguing challenge. For instance, many spaces must balance climate mitigation measures with the need to foster human connection and interaction. These challenges must become key considerations in city planning. Not only are urban areas associated with areas of intense heat, dangerous to the health of many, but many cities are built in and around floodplains, and natural disasters are expected to increase.<sup>40</sup> Design strategies that address these problems are key in building climate change-resilient communities.

Climate change response is primarily an adaptation strategy for cities and communities, as it cannot be directly managed. Understanding which activities and **infrastructure** will be impacted by climate change, and which planning strategies and mitigation measures can help, is key to building sustainable and long-standing cities. As an example the City is currently working to complete an Integrated Pest Management Plan and associated Weed Control Bylaw, and this Plan supports the timely completion of both initiatives.<sup>41</sup>

### 5.2.3 Digital Transformation and Technology

As societies and their members' daily lives grow increasingly integrated with and reliant on technology, many public services must adapt to remain efficient, **accessible**, and ultimately, relevant. Seamless integrations of the real world with the technological world are important adaptations to maintain as society changes and advances.

**Parks** and **recreation** agencies can increase community engagement and

utilization of their services by creating new opportunities to engage technologically with the surrounding environment and other people. Increasing interactivity of indoor and outdoor **parks** and **recreation** facilities may entice more people to make use of them. Promoting activities via social media and integrating social media-sharing within services may also increase community awareness and encourage people to participate with their friends and families.

By making digital connections with their citizens, municipalities can improve quality of life by providing new ways to interact with their community services. New technological tools can increase user-friendliness and accessibility of some resources. As technology advances, societies are also growing accustomed to two-way communication,<sup>42</sup> quick responses and instant results. Technology can help public service agencies meet these timelines and demands while increasing efficiency in their own operations.

Utilizing technology can yield a symbiotic relationship between public service agencies and the communities they serve. Agencies can use technology to increase community engagement and provide new opportunities for interaction, while gathering user information and data to measure and analyze metrics that may help improve their services.

### 5.2.4 Changing Family Structures

Once commonplace, the nuclear family structure is declining. Many fathers are no longer primary breadwinners, and many families do not conform to the typical father-mother-children dynamic. As family demographics change, municipalities must adapt their public services to address increasingly diverse families.

Single-parent households, unmarried partners, same-sex families and childfree couples are increasingly common,<sup>43</sup> and accepted as

normal. Today, there is no longer one dominant family structure.<sup>44</sup> Marriage rates are increasing, but many are waiting longer to tie the knot,<sup>45</sup> shifting the overall age dynamic of married couples and families with children. Many couples are also waiting longer to have children and more are choosing to live child-free. Increased educational attainment and career roles among women, as well as improved and more **accessible** contraception are helping drive this population shift.<sup>46</sup> More women are primary income sources in their families, which leads many straight couples to the difficult decision between prioritizing work and income, or family life.

Many families today are blended (i.e., composed of step-parents, step-siblings and half-siblings) or composed of re-marriages, cohabiting parents and single parents. Of single-parent households, single-mothers are more common than males and many families live below the poverty line. For many, it is difficult to balance financial stability with caregiving. Instability in local income demographics can help indicate whether children are likely to grow up poor; **parks** and **recreation** services will need to change to address income gaps and remain **accessible** to all.<sup>47</sup>

### 5.2.5 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

For many organizations, and in particular public service agencies, maintaining a workforce strong in diversity, equity and inclusion improves leadership within organizations and quality of services provided to communities. Diverse workforces are not only good for representation in the workplace, increasing accessibility and inclusivity for the general public, but are also critical components of critical thinking and problem solving.

Workplace diversity helps create learning and adaptable environments. By hiring a diverse team and training staff to focus on diversity, equity and inclusion, workplaces will be more representative of the communities they serve. Unconscious bias



can be minimized by maintaining staff with various perspectives and experiences. Cultural representation is important but building a multigenerational workplace will help integrate more perspectives. Supporting gender identity and inclusion is also integral to maintaining representation of the public.<sup>48</sup>

As society evolves, employers will need to remain adaptable with changing societal attitudes. It is expected more people will be inclined to work at home as technology advances and as COVID-19 is a prevalent public health issue. Employers and employees will need to change expectations of each other as more people directly and/or indirectly suffer from COVID-19. Vaccination may pose interesting challenges for at-work environments, as well as feelings of safety.<sup>49</sup>

Overall, workplaces must adapt with society's current needs for more diverse representation, but also be accustomed to adapting as the world has capacity to change drastically in short periods. Whether COVID-19 or another matter, workplaces must be ready to adapt on a moment's notice.

### 5.2.6 Reconciliation

As diversity, equity and inclusion increase in popularity and necessity, organizations must consider reconciliation efforts to restore friendly relations with those who have been historically marginalized either by the organization itself, or the surrounding community. Reconciliation improves symbiosis between organizations and the people they serve by improving relationships and increasing diversity and representation of services. Learning from the people who benefit from their services, organizations can improve their relationships with the community and provide more representative and equitable benefits. Reconciliation in North America is required for many cultural minorities, but particularly for Indigenous people. In Canada,

Indigenous people have been systematically disadvantaged and harmed at the hands of the government; recently, there have been shifts towards repairing the relationship between Indigenous people and the rest of the country. While this relationship is complex and will require years of positive action, action is being taken to address and acknowledge past injustices and create new paths forward.

In Canada, the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 2008 to provide those impacted by Canada's residential school an opportunity to share their stories and experiences. While the TRC released a report outlining suggestions to promote Indigenous healing, actions go beyond this report, and Indigenous representation should be considered whenever possible in governmental policy and decision making.<sup>50</sup>

Intentions to shift cultural norms across the nation are increasing in support and awareness. **Parks** and **recreation** departments are integral components of reconciliation as:

- Land stewards and custodians;
- Distributors of public funds able to preserve Indigenous and historical sites and cultural artifacts; and
- Interpreters of Indigenous sites, and decision-makers regarding public lands.

**Parks** and **recreation** agencies have a role to play in reconciliation efforts, acknowledging that we live and work on treaty territory. Indigenous input in management of public lands will improve the communities they serve as well as our relationships to the land.

### 5.2.7 Wellness Through Recreation

**Parks** and **recreation** agencies are key contributors to the health and wellbeing of the people they serve, thus they should mandate

a focus on increasing quality of life. By enhancing built physical environments, **parks** and **recreation** departments oversee decisions directly impacting access to healthy lifestyles and social cohesive mechanisms that increase public satisfaction. **Parks** and **recreation** facilities encourage wellness habits and increase community livability.<sup>51</sup>

**Parks** departments can reduce risks of many chronic diseases such as obesity by encouraging physically active lifestyles, ergo reducing costs the health care system bears by promoting healthy behaviours. They can equally reduce harmful activities by banning them (i.e., smoking bans do not allow people to use tobacco in public **parks**). In many locations, public **parks** are important food sources for youth, helping combat malnutrition and hunger for low-income families. Social programs like after school care and summer camps are not only fun and safe places for children to recreate but can provide **accessible** sources of health information and nutrition for many low-income families.<sup>52</sup>

Living in proximity of **parks** and **recreation** facilities is linked to increased physical activity in youth and adults and lower rates of obesity. **Parks** also provide stress-relieving connections with nature, improve interpersonal relations and have positive impacts on mental health. By providing facilities, outdoor areas and services that support the health of people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, **parks** and **recreation** departments are integral to community health.<sup>53</sup>

**Parks** are especially important during the current public health situation, as they are some of the only places people can gather safely and legally, allowing people to attain all the already-established benefits of **parks**, but also to satisfy social wellbeing. Design standards and programming considerations should look to current best practice for creating inclusive spaces that can serve all members of the community.





## 5.3 Local Trends

### 5.3.1 Event Hosting and Tourism

Many communities struggle to become more than just stops along a highway. To promote tourism and draw people to a community, **parks** and **recreation** agencies must provide services and facilities attractive to newcomers. Many people are growing increasingly attracted to nature-based **recreation** and traveling to areas based on activities they offer. Plainly put, people are drawn to attractive things –enticing, dynamic and engaging spaces will draw new people, and more people to engage in local sightseeing and **recreation**.

**Parks** and **recreation** facilities are becoming key drivers in the tourism industry and should be seen as amenities that contribute to the economy by enticing people to visit and spend time in communities other than their own. Two factors influencing peoples' likelihoods of visiting new places are ease of planning and of course the type of amenities offered.

To fit in with modern-day schedules, many individuals and families prefer an option to pre-plan activities and book things ahead of time. Being able to plan ahead can also lead people to discover new activities, promoting more tourism. Technological tools like event websites and apps are valuable investments promoting local services.<sup>54</sup> People may also be more likely to participate in an activity if they have committed ahead of time, especially if there is a payment required.

When traveling, more people are attracted by and inclined to make eco-friendly decisions and engage in environmentally conscious **recreation**. Sustainable preferences should be more prevalent when choosing accommodations, transportation and travel destinations. Highlighting sustainable decisions may

encourage people to make them. Many want to but need starting places to make more environmentally friendly choices. Making these choices clear to tourists may promote them. Frequently, sustainable choices can benefit the communities themselves, as they may be less costly to offer, benefiting all.<sup>55</sup>

### 5.3.2 Planning for Expandability

**Parks** and **recreation** departments' expanding roles in community engagement and development will require their planning frameworks and implementation strategies to adapt. While many have long associated these agencies with simple things like green grass and public basketball courts, **parks** and **recreation** facilities are integral components of public service, just as important as traffic controls or water service.<sup>56</sup>

It is anticipated that public service planning will become more community-oriented and will necessitate internal and external collaborations and partnerships. Improved coordination in planning will help meet more community needs, leading to the most benefit possible. Decision making frameworks and service delivery models will help avoid costly mistakes and provide guiding principles that reflect community values.<sup>57</sup>

Initiating and maintaining liaison with **key stakeholders** – whether a **parks** user or funding source – is also integral to improved planning. Defining local context and needs should be employed early on in planning stages and should be adaptable with changing community needs. Community needs assessments can be useful tools for developing local profiles, determining what the public desires. Decisions made by public agencies should reflect both economic development and community needs – investing in bike-share **infrastructure** and trail connectors may be more utilized than a new **recreation** centre, but the only way to find out is to do the research.<sup>58</sup>

### 5.3.3 Multi-Use Spaces and Sport Trends

To maintain participation in sports and fitness facilities, it is important **parks** and **recreation** agencies keep up with new trends influencing the industries themselves. Not only do these factors drive local tourism, bringing more people to the community, but they provide ways to engage with the community and bring people together who are already there. Retro-fitting **sport** facilities from single-use facilities is expected to increase as demand for more options increases and people want more ways to interact with each other. To identify community desires and meet community needs, relationships between **sport** organizations and **parks** and **recreation** are necessary.<sup>59</sup>

Future **sport** trends will be influenced by societal change and development. Partially due to the COVID-19 pandemic and partially due to technological advancement, virtual **recreation** and e-sports are expected to take off at local levels. Not only are they

driving participation but are key opportunities for local agencies to profit financially. Sports and event gambling is similarly increasing in popularity. While **parks** and **recreation** agencies may not participate in betting directly, it is important to acknowledge the monetization, and thus potential for profit, of many sports, viewing them as industries and not only pastimes.<sup>60</sup>

Female representation and opportunity must also increase, as evidenced by the popularity of certain events like the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup. Many companies and organizations are investing in women's sports and initiatives to increase participation. While there are many challenges still facing women in sport, increased support, awareness and even viewership are driving a momentum that will positively impact female athletes and those working in **sport** organizations.<sup>61</sup>





### 5.3.4 Sustainable Design and Facility Management

As the benefits are evident, sustainable design is becoming popular. Investing in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) certified **infrastructure** and hiring LEED® certified professionals are of growing importance as built environments are no longer just buildings, but climate change mitigations, and energy and money savers.<sup>62</sup>

Despite certain attitudes, many **recreation** agencies are finding LEED® certification is neither too cumbersome nor expensive. Many hurdles regarding **sustainability** originate from community leaders neglecting the topic, possibly considering it too expensive or revolutionary. However, many communities building LEED® certified **infrastructure** find there is no pushback from communities, instead support and positive reception.<sup>63</sup>

Resource conservation, energy efficiency and improved indoor environments are some of the many benefits associated with **sustainability** upgrades. They inevitably cost money, but doing something right the first time yields long-term cost-savings. Taking on small upgrades over a long period and practicing good design in planning stages are less expensive and efficient options.<sup>64</sup>

Green upgrades can just as easily be taken outdoors. Increasing native greenery and trees, and **xeriscaping** are associated with improved social ties, higher test scores in children and lower crime rates.<sup>65</sup> Resulting environmental benefits include reduced flooding, erosion and air pollution, air cooling, and improved biodiversity.<sup>66</sup> Overall, the education component of **sustainability** is a first step. Changing public and leader attitudes is key. It is important to emphasize that **sustainability** is not revolutionary or too expensive – it is simply smart and efficient.

### 5.3.5 Managing Aging Infrastructure

With any aging asset, a point is reached where it must be determined if the asset should be repaired or replaced. All **infrastructure** ages naturally, but this process may be accelerated by previous maintenance and repair neglect due to financial reasons and/or labour limitations, and an increased or decreased demand of the asset's use. Aging and deterioration of **infrastructure** cannot be stopped entirely, but the process can be slowed by proper asset management along the way.<sup>67</sup>

Asset management is an integral component of proper function in public service agencies. It is a long-term process that takes place at all stages of the **infrastructure** lifecycle, from procurement to disposal. Asset management includes: making strategic and proactive decisions; long-term considerations of performance and cost; clear, visible, and transparent approaches to management; and smart and planned investment choices.<sup>68</sup> While there may be short-term financial and labour benefits, decreased **infrastructure** service may lead to quality issues, or even health and safety hazards down the road. Service levels must always be maintained to prevent **infrastructure** damage which is frequently more expensive long-term.<sup>69</sup>

With aging **infrastructure**, deciding between minor or major maintenance, and rehabilitation or replacement depends on the cost association as well as condition of the **infrastructure**. Proper asset management involves the following steps:

- Inventory asset: what/where?
- Consider cost and replacement: worth?
- Condition and capability: condition and remaining life?
- Planning service and operations: expected level of service, and how will this be attained?<sup>70</sup>

### 5.3.6 Regional Collaborations and Partnerships

There are many benefits to collaborations between **parks** and **recreation** agencies and various stakeholders, community organizations and other institutions. Partnerships like these help reinforce **parks** and **recreation** agencies' community importance, and foster symbiotic relationships beneficial to all. A growing focus and reliance is being placed on partnerships in development which involves the public, private and non-profit sectors. These partnership arrangements have obvious benefits in capital and operational cost savings; they also enable increased service provision to a wide range of users.

Activities demanded will not only include traditional sports such as hockey, curling, baseball and soccer but also trail based activities, low impact physical activity such as walking, spectating and therapeutic pursuits.

Working together with educational institutions leads to many results, benefiting both organizations. Many educational institutions require or recommend their students participate in field placements to gain professional knowledge before entering the working world. **Parks** and **recreation** agencies can benefit from these placements from the labour and work completed by students, and by information obtained from participating in a high-level education program.<sup>71</sup>

Collaboration between other **stakeholders** in planning will increase collaboration and conversation within local communities, and lead to more sustainable **recreation**.<sup>72</sup> Many organizations are using “collaborative action” and “consensus building” to approach decision making, which can help improve service delivery.

The importance of collaboration is emphasized in the COVID-19 pandemic. Coordinated response between related organizations will help with consistent messaging, limiting contradictory information which can be confusing. Consistent messaging during the pandemic may be a matter of public safety,<sup>73</sup> and may help improve peoples' trust in and attitudes towards public agencies.





# Public and Stakeholder Engagement Program

## 6.1 Recent Relevant Engagements

While this study process included a significant engagement program, the feedback of other related studies is important to consider. The following are three of the most recent completed initiatives that provided excellent qualitative and statistical data to support the findings of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

### 6.1.1 2020 ARPA Survey

In 2020, the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA) conducted a survey to evaluate the 'value of **recreation**'. This survey was administered Province-wide; however a large data set was made available specific to respondents from Medicine Hat. A total of 625 responses were received, with highlights of the results pertaining specifically to Medicine Hat as follows:

- Over 75% of respondents took part in public **recreation** services at least once per week, with 31% doing so daily;
- 95% agreed that municipal investments in **recreation** services makes Medicine Hat a desirable place to live;
- 85% indicated that they go to a **park** at least once per week, with 36% doing so daily;
- 93% of respondents agreed that **the City** provides good quality **parks**, 98% agreed that **parks** contribute to better quality of life and 97% agreed that **parks** are essential to have in Medicine Hat;

- Only 4% of respondents felt that **the City** should spend less on **parks**; and
- To pay for **recreation**, of six options provided, respondents felt that **the City** should keep operating costs low (31%), funding should come from a combination of fees and taxes (21%) and other services should be reduced to maintain **recreation** and **parks** (18%).

Relevant to this Plan, the survey demonstrated very strong support to maintain or increase the provision of **parks** and **recreation** in Medicine Hat, and an appreciation that **parks** and **recreation** are key to quality of life and is what makes Medicine Hat a choice community to live in.

At a broader scale, the ARPA survey did evaluate questions based on a Province-wide outlook. Results indicate that many communities have seen an increase of up to 40% in outdoor **open space** usage. The question becomes whether this significant increase of use will persevere long beyond the 2020/2021 pandemic or if usage will return to pre-pandemic statistics.

### 6.1.2 2020 Municipal Development Plan Update

**The City** completed a complete update to its **MDP** in 2020, which was developed through a robust community engagement program. Some of the most prominent themes of feedback received applicable to this Parks and Recreation Master Plan include:

- A demand for a transition from suburban residential development to more dense residential development in the City centre;
- Developing a premier destination riverfront **park** and plaza;
- A more strategic and disciplined approach to staging new

- growth areas, ensuring that any “leapfrog” development have financial consequences to the developer;
- Implementing new fiscally sustainable and publicly accepted levels of service for lower **density** developments, ensuring that operation and maintenance costs are considered when approving new amenities such as **parks** and **open space**;
- Mitigating for increasing risks posed by our watershed and environmentally sensitive areas: with increased risk of flooding and drought, adapting the way we develop **parks** and **open space** and alternative measures such as greywater use, water conservation, **xeriscaping**, etc. or direct development parameters such as increased floodplain and escarpment setbacks;
- The waterfront is an under-utilized asset and is an advantage to develop, particularly in the downtown;
- People enjoy the **natural areas** of Medicine Hat, particularly when they can explore them on trails;
- Protection of the local wildlife was a key concern of many people;
- Improve the protection of **natural areas**;
- People want to see more opportunities for healthy and active forms of transportation such as walking and cycling;
- More indoor recreational opportunities that offer year-round activities;
- Continued expansion of the leisure trail network, with increased connectivity of green spaces and other destinations; and
- More efforts to conserve water, and to use more native and drought tolerant vegetation in **parks**.

Many of the themes listed above have been integrated in the actions of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan.





### 6.1.3 2020 Arts, Culture + Heritage in Medicine Hat

In 2020 a City-wide engagement program was conducted that targeted arts, culture and heritage in Medicine Hat. 59 **stakeholders** involved in the culture community, ranging from artists, musicians, business owners, art patrons, City frontline and administrative employees, archivists, historians, arts and heritage facility or organization administrators, executives, and volunteers were engaged. The premise of the project was to reflect upon the cultural diversity of Medicine Hat including newcomers, First Nations, seniors and youth. The goal of the project was to explore why culture matters to the community, what makes it unique and the challenges and opportunities facing arts and culture in Medicine Hat. Some of the key findings included:

- There is exceptional **infrastructure** and potential, but it falls short in connecting the community. The cultural community seems to operate within a tight-knit circle that has limited outreach to the broader community;
- The legacy of the “Medicine Hat advantage” is embedded in community culture and decision-making. There is an expectation for arts and culture to be alive and well but there is limited willingness to pay;

- The cultural community is uncelebrated and is perceived to have limited political support or community recognition. A strong sports culture seems to over-shadow arts and culture and competes with the work of the culture community;
- The arts community falls short on provisions for newcomers, youth, First Nations and economically vulnerable people of **the City**;
- There is a lack of cohesion between the various individuals and facilities that offer art and cultural activities as they work in silos and do not have a collective effort to promote arts and culture; and
- There is a perception of low City and political will to support arts and culture and a lack of a long-term vision.

Several findings of the engagement program focused on the importance of better communication between various groups to have a more concerted effort in planning and delivering art and cultural programs and events. As it relates to this **parks and recreation** master plan, a key finding of this engagement program was how the strong sports culture in Medicine Hat has had greater priority and focus than other aspects such as art, music and heritage.

## 6.2 Engagement Summaries

At the onset of developing this plan, an engagement strategy was developed that set the course for involving various **stakeholders** and the general public. The following summarizes the engagement program for this master plan:

1. **Background Review** – taking advantage of recent engagement programs completed that directly relate to **parks** and **recreation**, such as the 2020 **MDP** update conducted by **the City** and the 2020 ARPA survey that was administered by the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association. Pertinent results were used as a baseline to determine early-on guidance for this plan;
2. **Internal Staff Engagement** – a workshop was held with several internal City staff members. A series of questions were posed to encourage dialogue that developed the framework for this Plan. Follow-up meetings and conversations with City staff allowed for refinement of recommendations, seeking out missing information and filling in any gaps of the Plan;
3. **Initial Key Stakeholder Engagement Session** – a workshop with **key stakeholders** was held to address early-on information that would help form the foundation of this Plan. **Key stakeholders** were identified as non-City entities that own indoor and outdoor recreational facilities and amenities that are available to the general public through either joint use agreements with **the City** or on a user fee basis;
4. **External Stakeholder Engagements** – a series of online-based workshops brought together approximately 170 invitees to help gather key information for this Plan. The workshops included brief technical presentations followed by a series of questions that facilitated open discussion on

a number of subjects;

5. **Public Engagements** – the Shape Your City Medicine Hat online engagement forum was an important tool used for engaging with the general public. This site included a summary of the Plan and its status, links to related reports and studies, dates of upcoming events and ways of staying engaged and links to public surveys. Eight pop-up tent sessions were held, four as the Plan was being developed and four near completion of the Plan to reach out to the general public at large events and gatherings scheduled in public places; and
6. **Targeted Engagements** – meetings and surveys targeted at specific groups or individuals.

### 6.2.1 Internal Staff Engagement

On Wednesday May 19th a virtual workshop session was held with key City staff members. The intent of this workshop was to provide a general overview of the Project Charter document which highlighted the overarching goals and objectives of the plan, discuss the project timeline and highlight how City staff would be involved throughout, respond to four sets of probing questions regarding general themes of the plan, facilitate an open discussion and identify next steps of the process to keep City staff informed and engaged.

Following group introductions, an overview of the project charter and discussion of the project timeline and phasing, the group was asked a number of questions related to the plan pertaining to the overarching themes of authenticity, untapped opportunities, innovation and an improved environmental ethic.

It was essential this plan be grounded by the defining characteristics of Medicine Hat. While leading trends and practices can be applied to many comparable communities, it





was crucial to ensure this plan was authentic, and an exact fit to Medicine Hat and the spirit of its residents. When City staff were asked what makes Medicine Hat unique and to list defining words or phrases that capture Medicine Hat's authentic character it became clear that it was the landscape of Medicine Hat that City staff feel sets it apart. The unique landforms such as the coulees and river running through **the City**, combined with the array of habitats and landscapes that come along with them are what allows Medicine Hat stand out from other communities and makes it authentic.

Limitations such as staff resources, financial means and regulatory restrictions can limit one's ability to take full advantage of a robust recreational network. Thus, City staff were asked about untapped recreational opportunities in Medicine Hat and what exists that could be better leveraged to increase usership, tourism and visitation. The river was seen as the most widely noted underutilized physical asset as it related to **parks** and **recreation**. However, a number of staff also identified the culture and history of Medicine Hat, and specifically the waterfront, as an untapped resource that could increase usership and tourism. Developing more robust partnerships with Tourism was seen as a key initiative in order to increase usership, tourism and visitation. Many City staff thought Medicine Hat could do a much better job advertising the year-round potential of **the City** because they experience a much less severe winter. The group was also asked to explore what strategies they thought could be used to encourage volunteering and stewardship to begin to tap into some of these opportunities. Some important suggestions included providing local groups with funding in lieu of paying contractors to complete works such as trail maintenance and construction, assisting not-for-profits with applying for grants that **the City** is not eligible for, asking volunteers what they would be more interested in helping with, and most importantly, creating a more coordinated volunteer database that helps identify

suitable volunteers for different opportunities and creates a greater sense of awareness of what volunteer opportunities exist in **the City**.

Innovation is essential to the growth and development of any community. Medicine Hat needs to be at the forefront, not just to set trends, but to help optimize service delivery and provide its residents with state of the art **recreation** system that meets the current and future needs of residents and visitors. City staff were asked how they have seen other communities innovate as it related to **parks** and **recreation** as well as what key opportunities there are for Medicine Hat to be more innovative. Attendees noted movable and shareable **parks infrastructure** as an example of innovation seen elsewhere. They explained the idea that there could be shared play elements that would be rotated throughout the **parks** system to create an increased level of interest in a **park** – because the amenities are changing regularly. When looking specifically at the potential for innovation in Medicine Hat, City staff had several ideas that looked both inward and outward. They recognized the need for **the City** to approve innovative projects more efficiently so that they could be realized while they are still considered innovative. On the other hand, they also emphasized that this need for innovation could be tasked to developers in **the City** as a component of their approvals. Low-risk and -commitment piloting projects were also seen as a great way to test out innovative ideas such as new planting methods or closing bridges for pedestrianized community events.

Numerous internal and external pressures all demand us to improve our environmental ethic. City staff were asked what Medicine Hat is currently doing that can be celebrated, how can current practices be improved, and what new opportunities exist in Medicine Hat as it pertains to their environmental ethic. Current practices that have improved the City's environmental ethic included the creation of a specialized department within

Parks & Recreation that focuses on innovation, improved cultural practices, a strengthened relationship with the Grassland Naturalists, current GIS mapping projects and increased embracing of the waterfront while understanding it's unique ecology. When discussing what Medicine Hat could improve upon regarding its environmental ethic, attendees noted efficiency, clearer environmental policies, a greater understanding of what green **infrastructure** means and dedicating **MR** land to environmental protection as opposed to only manicured greenspaces. It was also highlighted that Parks & Recreation needs to do a better job at telling their stories of environmental stewardship in order to better explain the benefits and receive more buy-in from other departments.

### 6.2.2 Initial Key Stakeholder Engagement Session

On Wednesday May 26th a virtual workshop session was held with **key stakeholders**. **Key stakeholders** were identified as those who own / operate / maintain facilities that are available for public use and often perceived to be part of the City's **open space** network. Much like the internal staff engagement, the intent of this workshop was to provide a general overview of the Project Charter document which highlighted the overarching goals and objectives of the plan, discuss the project timeline and highlight how **key stakeholders** would be involved throughout, respond to several probing questions regarding general themes of the plan, facilitate an open discussion, and identify next steps of the process to keep **key stakeholders** informed and engaged.

Following group introductions, an overview of the project charter and discussion of the project timeline and phasing, the group was asked a number of questions related to the plan pertaining to the overarching themes of authenticity, untapped opportunities, innovation and an improved environmental ethic.



### Question 1: Current Assets in Place

It was important to understand what facilities, play spaces and other amenities currently exist in these spaces that may be perceived as public. The purpose of this plan was not to dictate how **key stakeholders** go about programming and operating their own spaces, rather to appreciate what is available locally to meet the needs of the public. These quasi-public space amenities included trails, fitness centres, **sport** fields, **sport** courts and running tracks. When attendees were asked to describe their current relationship between their organization and **the City**, most had formal joint use agreements in place that allowed for public use of the facilities. Others has an implied memorandum of understanding or other informal agreement in place.

### Question 2: Innovation

Innovation is essential to the growth and development of any community. Medicine Hat needs to be a leader, not just to be cool, but to help optimize service delivery and provide its residents with an exceptional network of indoor and outdoor **recreation** that meets tomorrow's needs of residents and visitors. When asked what innovative methods and techniques attendees had experienced in other communities, they noted the YMCA holding nation-wide meetings with all YMCAs to discuss how each operates and how they can become more efficient. Next, attendees were asked what their current barriers to innovation were. Nearly all **stakeholders** noted a lack of coordination and collaboration as their biggest barrier. They noted the difficulties of prioritizing certain groups, maintaining facility bookings outside of primetime hours and competing with facilities that duplicate offerings.

### Question 3: Untapped Opportunities

Limitations such as staff resources, financial means and regulatory restrictions can limit one's ability to take full advantage of a robust recreational network. The number one







challenge the **stakeholders** noted regarding trying to leverage existing amenities to increase usership, tourism and volunteerism was scheduling. They expressed that they often experience difficulties when trying to deal with multiple groups that are often volunteer-run and difficult to correspond with in a timely manner. This has made it very challenging to coordinate events such as ball tournaments when trying to ensure field times work with multiple existing bookings.

#### Question 4: An Improved Environmental Ethic

Social demand, the regime of Provincial and Federal Acts and Legislation and increasing pressures of urbanization on the natural world all demand us to improve our environmental ethic. When attendees were asked what they are currently doing to improve their environmental ethic they listed off physical modifications such as the installation of solar panels on buildings, upgrading to LED lighting systems and researching how they can operate more efficiently. However, when asked about their organizations' environmental ethic they had nothing formal in place and felt that **the City** should take the lead on these types of initiatives.

#### Question 5: Operational and Programming Challenges

Constructing, owning, operating and maintaining recreational **infrastructure** comes with challenges. Attendees were asked what challenges they face in operating and programming recreational amenities within their facilities. One of the most notable challenges was balancing expectations and realities. Individuals and groups wanting to use facilities expect a high caliber facility at a very low cost. However, the realities of rising operational costs to maintain high caliber facilities must come with a higher rental fee in order to be sustainable. Another obstacle highlighted that was previously mentioned is in regard to scheduling. Nearly all users are looking to rent facilities during peak hours (weekdays 1800-2100h) which leads to challenges when trying to accommodate groups and underutilized facilities on weekends. Groups were



then asked if they can foresee **the City** playing a role to help boost their success. Some suggestions included having a City spokesperson who helps manage user expectations and educate on contentious subjects such as the use of herbicides on sports fields as well as accepting and addressing user complaints regarding the facilities. Lastly, attendees were asked to describe any challenges of tomorrow that they anticipate. Aging **infrastructure**, managing user expectations and an increased demand for **recreation** following the pandemic are all readily anticipated challenges.

#### Question 6: Planned Changes

Attendees were then asked what plans their organization has in place for improvements, additions, reductions or closures to their facilities and amenities. Attendees did not note any changes that were to be implemented in the near-term. However, when looking at long-term plans, there was some discussion on constructing a new grandstand at the Stampede grounds as well as school renovations. However, all planned improvements are dependent on funding. Attendees were then asked if **the City** was considered a necessary partner to see these plans through. It was clear that all of the groups value City support for their initiatives and advocacy for funding.

#### Question 7: Volunteerism

Volunteers are often a necessity to keep programs and activities alive. Attendees were asked how reliant their organization is on volunteers. Responses received made it very clear that volunteers are essential to the planning, organization, execution and maintenance of their facilities and programs. When asked what strategies their organizations use to seek out, retain and reward their volunteers, attendees noted professional development opportunities where volunteers are subsidized for free training and certifications as well as providing them with free memberships for accessing facilities or providing free tickets to events held at the facility. There was only one barrier shared that discourages volunteering and that was WCB and ensuring these non-employees are covered.



### 6.2.3 Student Engagement Sessions

Two student engagement sessions were held with three individual classes (grade 5 & 6) from Southview Community School and École Connaught School on June 17th and June 21st. The purpose of these engagement sessions was to provide students with a glimpse of the **park** design process and to learn from their perspectives what makes great **parks**.

Each session started off with approximately 45 minutes of discussion related to the various types of professionals that are involved in **park** design and maintenance. A presentation slide deck was used to introduce students to the different professionals and stresses the importance of collaborating with a larger group of people. This presentation allowed students to think about the type of career they would be interested in regarding community planning, design and upkeep.

Next, students were asked a series of questions pertaining to **parks** in Medicine Hat. First, they were asked what their favourite **park** in the **City** was and why. Kin Coulee was the resounding favourite for its **natural areas**, pathways, cliffs for climbing and toboggan hill. Echo Dale was a close second for its water **sport** activities, beach and playground.

When students were asked what makes them feel safe at their favourite **park**, responses included:

- LOTS OF PEOPLE IN THE PARK;
- LIFEGUARDS;
- GOOD LIGHTING;
- TREES AND THE SHADE THEY PROVIDE;
- PROXIMITY TO THEIR OWN HOUSE; AND
- THAT THEY HAD NEVER HEARD OF ANYTHING BAD HAPPENING AT THE PARK.

Students were then asked what were some fun activities for kids to do that they would add to their favourite **park**. Responses included (in no particular order):

- POOL FOR SWIMMING;
- WATER PARK;
- BASKETBALL;
- ROCK COLLECTING;
- CHALLENGING PLAYGROUND;
- TALL SLIDES;
- BIKE PATHS;
- GAMES;
- SWINGS;
- SKATE PARK;
- MONKEY BARS;
- CLIMBING;
- WATER TRAMPOLINE;
- ZIPLINES;
- MORE TREES;
- MORE TRAILS; AND
- ACTIVITY RENTALS.

Students were then asked what were some fun activities for grown-ups to do that they would add to their favourite **park**. Responses included (in no particular order):

- A BAR;
- ADULT PLAYGROUND;
- MAN CAVE;
- SHOPPING;
- FIRE PITS;
- PICNIC AREAS;
- BOARD GAME TABLES;
- BENCHES;
- BEACH;
- CAMPING;
- HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION;
- HOT TUB;
- AREA TO PLAY CATCH;
- FISHING;
- OUTDOOR EXERCISE EQUIPMENT;
- LIVE MUSIC;
- FRISBEE GOLF;
- TENNIS; AND
- DOG AREA.



Lastly, students were asked if they could design a new **park**, what kinds of things would they put in it (they were also encouraged to think about wintertime uses). Responses included (in no particular order):

- SKATE PARK;
- BMX PARK;
- PLAYGROUND;
- ICE RINK;
- MINI GOLF;
- DOG PARK;
- WALKING TRAILS;
- SLEDDING;
- HOT CHOCOLATE STANDS;
- GARDENS;
- WATER PARK;
- BENCHES;
- FOUNTAINS;
- SNOWMAN BUILDING CONTESTS;
- PLAYGROUND;
- BUTTERFLY HOUSE;
- POOL;
- WINTER FESTIVAL;
- SNACK SHOP;
- POND;
- FOOD TRUCKS;
- CAMPFIRES;
- ICE CREAM STAND;
- GONDOLA / CHAIR LIFT RIDE UP THE CLIFFS;
- CLIMBING WALLS;
- CURLING;
- NATURALIZED AREAS;
- FISHING;
- BBQS; AND
- CHANGE ROOM.

Following these questions, students were asked to complete a mapping activity. Each student was provided with a map that showed a neighbourhood **park**, forest, schoolyard, grassland and river. They were asked to draw features and activities that they would like to see in each **open space**. With mapping being a part of the grade 5 curriculum, the activity included a north arrow, legend and scale. Figure 10 (right) shows a few examples of the completed mapping activity:

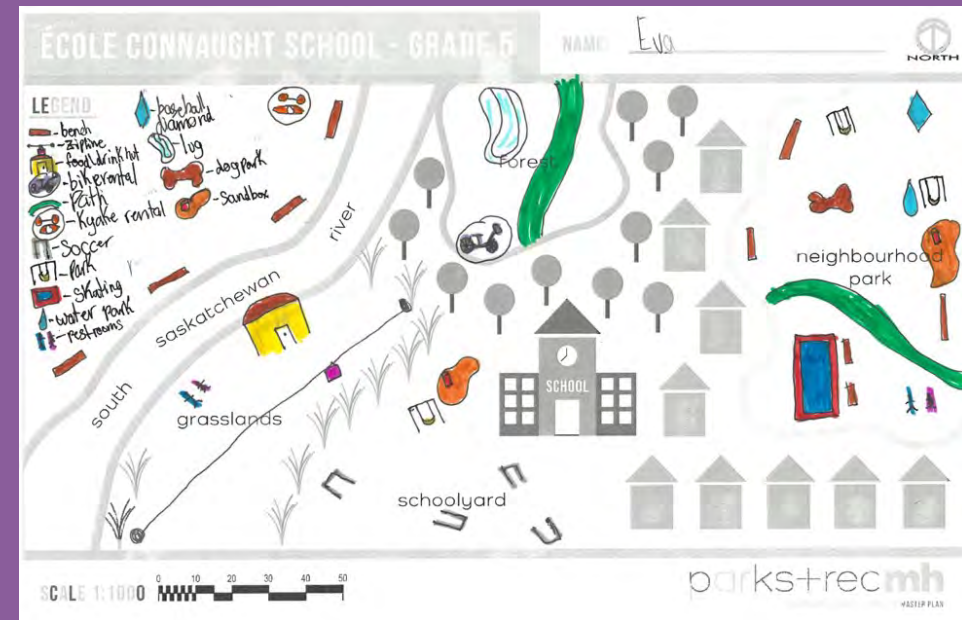
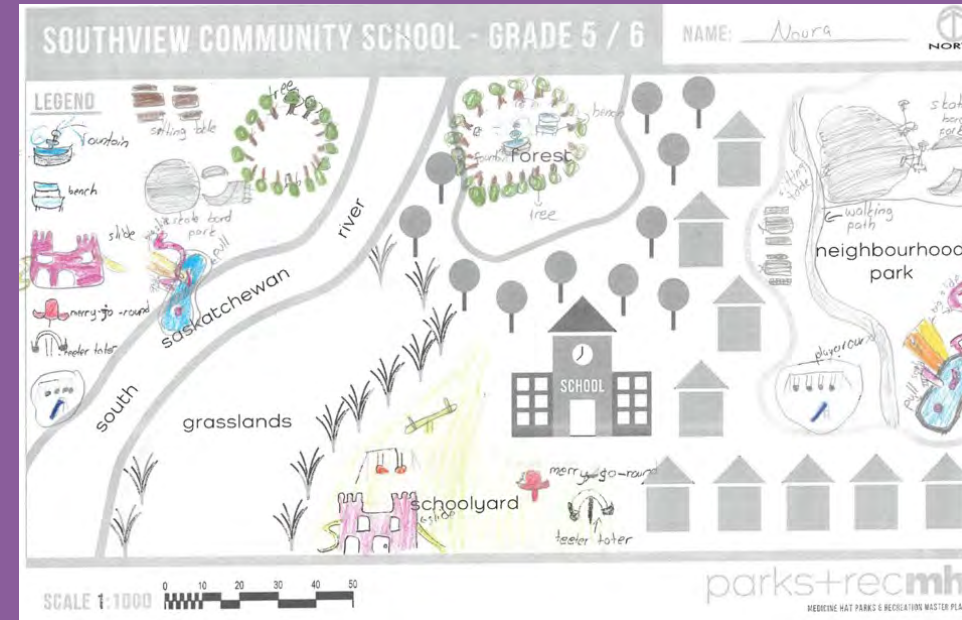


Figure 10: Samples of Student Engagement Mapping Activity

## 6.2.4 External Stakeholder Engagements

A series of online-based workshops brought together several representatives from local organizations. Approximately 170 local groups were invited to participate in one of five workshop sessions, held from Tuesday July 20th to Thursday July 22nd. The sessions included brief technical presentations followed by discussion on a series of questions on a variety of topics. While each question was discussed with participants, all invitees were provided with a workbook document for them to record and submit their responses. The following identifies each question that was discussed and provides an overview of primary feedback received:

### 1. To what extent should the City pursue national and provincial leading and emerging trends? The following are primary themes heard:

- Only important if it benefits current residents of Medicine Hat;
- **The City** should prioritize the pursuit of national and provincial leading and emerging trends;
- Important to follow the trends, then determine through research which are feasible for Medicine Hat;
- Medicine Hat is a community that prides itself on hosting provincial and national events, and need both expertise and the facilities to match in order to be a host city;
- Need to consider that Medicine Hat has a unique demographic (much older mean population); and
- Developing physical literacy is important.







3. Identify your top 8 priorities by indicating the numbers 1 through 8 for indoor and outdoor amenities. The following identifies the ranking by aggregating results from all surveys received, showing the top 15 results for both indoor and outdoor amenities:

INDOOR AMENITIES	PRIORITY	OUTDOOR AMENITIES
leisure swimming pools	1	off-leash dog areas
ice arena facilities	2	water playgrounds
fitness / wellness facilities	3	pool
walking / running track	4	mountain bike parks
leisure ice surfaces	5	skateboard parks
curling rinks	6	ball diamonds
indoor field facilities	7	picnic and kitchen areas
indoor child play	8	outdoor fitness equipment
gymnasium type spaces	9	BMX bicycle parks
skateboard park	10	soccer sports facilities
program rooms	11	trails
spectator seating / office at FLC	12	highboard skating rinks
community meeting rooms	13	artificial turf sport field
climbing wall	14	neighbourhood pools
roller derby	15	outdoor roller derby track





**4. After identifying what organization you represent, describe how your organization partners with the City, and identify any challenges or opportunities with this relationship. The following are primary themes heard:**

- Efforts have been made to create a new disc golf course at Strathcona Island, but **the City** has been unwilling to participate in the process;
- There is a perceived lack of transparency from **the City** on decisions related to facility closures;
- Challenges with a lack of continuity of City staff, and groups having to deal with different people over time; and
- Insurance requirements for organizations can be a challenge to many groups.

**5. As it relates to your relationship with the City, what is the ideal model that you envision for your organization to thrive? The following are a sample of the responses:**

- A more horizontal structure that has boards and members deal with current issues in **the City** regarding entertainment, outdoor **recreation** and education;
- Collaboration is essential, working together opposed to one taking the lead;
- Need more than a single City staff member to be responsible for facility scheduling, and sufficient City staff to allow resources to work with organizations;
- Collaboration with **the City** allows user groups to be taken more seriously when applying for grants;
- Equal opportunity for funding – it is a challenge for many groups to compete with others for limited available funding;



- **The City**, Province and Country have recognized but not fully embraced Indigenous heritage and culture. There needs to be space and support to develop tourism and visitor immersion and education;
- Substantial increase in contract funding would allow us to focus on programming rather than finding funding for our high quality interpretation; and
- Perhaps **the City** can access blanket insurance for all staff, contract staff and volunteers.



**6. Describe the importance of volunteers in delivering recreation-related services. What is currently working well? How can we encourage more effective volunteerism? The following are key themes received:**

- Volunteerism is what brings community together – it's essential;
- Need better communication to identify when organizations are seeking volunteers;
- A community volunteer contact list would be beneficial allowing groups to access this list for recruitment; and
- Can encourage more volunteerism with reduced user fees for volunteers. Even small little gifts are meaningful.

**7. To what extent should places and opportunities for unstructured and spontaneous recreational pursuit be 'planned' – to what degree should the City activate outdoor open spaces? Or to what degree is tranquility valued? Highlights are as follows:**

- The downtown needs vibrancy, whereas areas beyond downtown need a balance between places for energetic physical activity and tranquility;
- There needs to be a balance, providing both types of experience – untouched as well as planned;
- Low-impact options such as bike trails need to be expanded;
- Keeping outdoor spaces well maintained and having a vision for area development for future areas is essential;
- Far too many off-leash dog areas – it seems that no matter where you go for walks, other than **parks**, it is an off-leash area;
- Peace and tranquility are of utmost importance and value; and
- Unprogrammed things like disc golf could be expanded – not with more courses, but with a couple baskets in other **parks**. Beginner players can casually try it out without tackling the courses.



**8. Many amenities are available to individuals or groups through reservations or rental agreements. If applicable to your group, what is your satisfaction with the availability and the process to secure these amenities? Responses can be summarized as follows:**

- The system in place is archaic and out of date;
- **The City** requires more staff resources to support reservations and rentals; and
- The insurance requirements for joint use facilities is a challenge, particularly for smaller groups.

**9. What are the locations for spontaneous / unstructured recreation that we know about? What are some of the unknown areas or those that have great potential? The following lists some of the places identified:**

- **The City** maintains great locations such as Echo Dale, Police Point, Strathcona Island, amongst others;
- More could be considered for neighbourhood areas such as in school yards, adding in high-board rinks, etc.;
- The waterfront is a critical area with great potential – the River is very under-utilized;
- A pedestrian bridge between Police Point Park and Strathcona Island Park;
- With thoughtful policy in place, encourage more residential development that backs on to the River; and
- Over the years there has been unauthorized encroachment along the River, such as tree clearing. Maintaining a wilderness type of environment is very important and enforcement is needed.

**10. Post-pandemic, what is your optimism on the return of your membership / users for your organization? Responses included:**

- Overall optimism for outdoor activities such as disc golf and trails with anticipated numbers staying the same or increasing;
- Dog ownership increased dramatically during the pandemic, so the dog community is much more substantial post-pandemic; and
- Some skepticism on the return of members and users for indoor activities, while the majority seemed optimistic that numbers will remain the same.

**11. How can we better plan facilities and amenities to be more resilient should a similar pandemic ever happen again? Some of the responses included:**

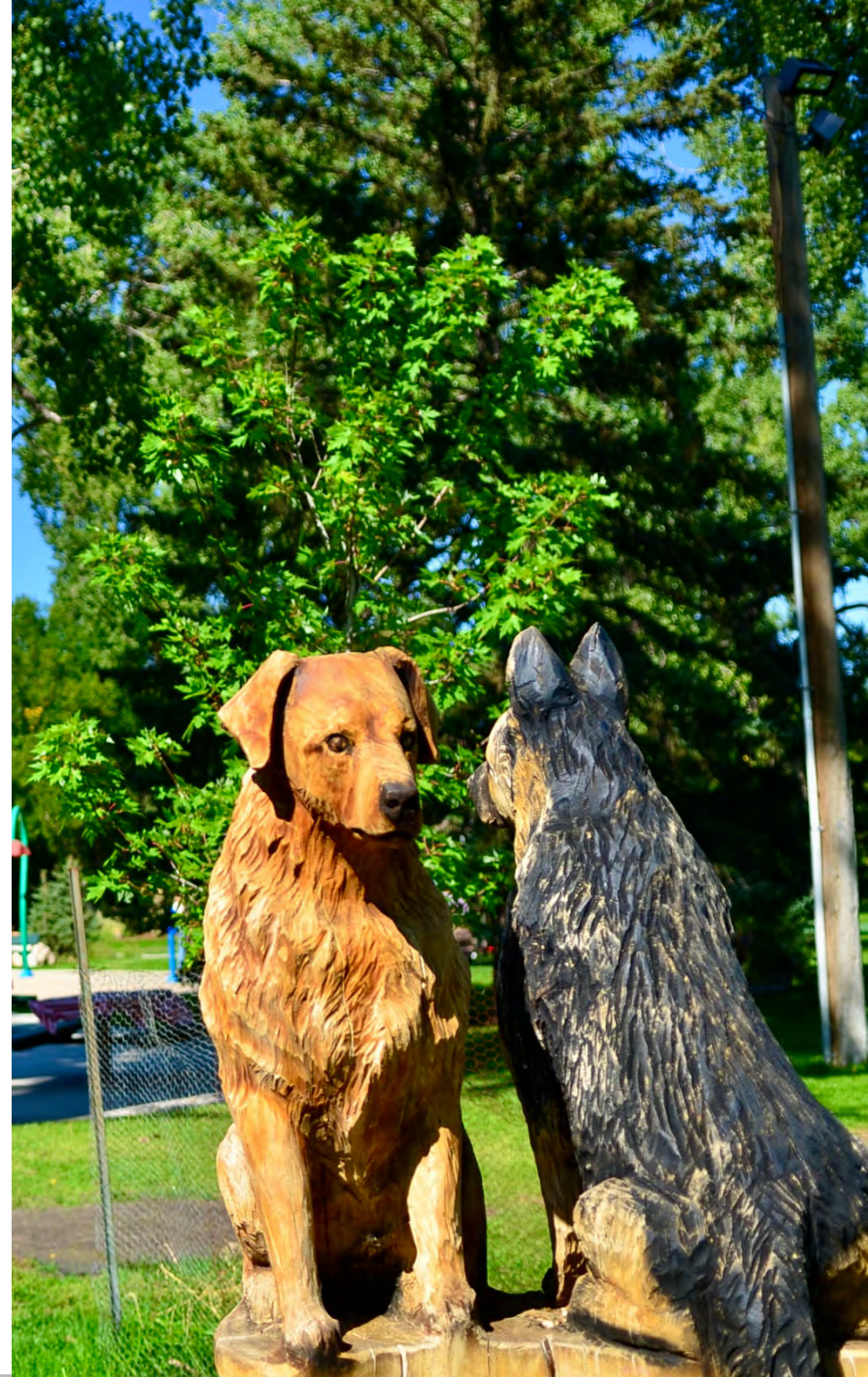
- Use of technology to reduce touch-points and physical interaction, such as ticketless entry and online registration;
- Build larger change rooms and washroom facilities that allow for more distancing;
- Continue on with higher levels of hygiene with handwashing, signage, cleaning protocols, etc.; and
- Prioritize continuation of services through fluid changes in delivery. Give coordinators the authority to make decisions and strive to mitigate risk rather than eliminate the risk by not offering any programming.

12. Of the five classifications of open space presented (city-wide destinations, neighbourhood hubs, local amenities, urban experiences, urban escapes) is the City over-served in any of these areas, or in need of additional recreational amenities and programs at a specific scale? Feedback can be summarized with the following points:

- Sufficient city-wide destinations such as the FLC and Police Point Park;
- Need more vibrancy in the downtown; and
- The River should be better developed for recreation.

13. What criteria / values should be considered when deciding upon developing large sites with many activities in one place, versus singular use sites dispersed all around the City? Responses can be summarized with:

- Availability of transportation – new amenities require good access through public transit and **active transportation** means;
- Potential for business development that is created around the new amenity;
- Multi-plex developments cause a sacrifice to convenient neighbourhood locations and come with higher user fees, both of which create a barrier to some people;
- Standalone, singular sites are important for community vibrancy and there's a fear that large multi-plex facilities cause other areas to be under-served;
- Shared sites and buildings help reduce operating and capital costs, which is very important. These sites also can host large events, and logistics (parking, washrooms, concessions, etc.) can be shared; and
- Contributors to climate change, such as promoting the need to drive to multi-use facilities opposed to nearby neighbourhood hubs should be an important factor.







**14. What type of recreational amenities should be accessible by walking or biking opposed to needing to take a vehicle? Some of the responses included:**

- All of them!
- Public washrooms;
- Community pools;
- Playgrounds; and
- Those that don't require a lot of equipment such as swimming, soccer, frisbee, outdoor gym, etc.

**15. What is the most defining characteristic of Medicine Hat, and what opportunities for recreation does this provide? Feedback can be summarized with:**

- The natural environment, natural features such as the River and trails were by far the most common response, providing opportunities to engage with the outdoors and enjoy Medicine Hat's unique natural environment.

**16. Should Medicine Hat transition from meeting the recreational needs of its residents and nearby neighbours to going to another level of becoming more regionally or nationally recognized as a recreation and events destination? Some of the responses can be summarized as follows:**

- There needs to be a balance – without the local community to support events, you will not be able to attract or host more regional or national events – in short, you need both; and
- Yes, we should pursue regionally or nationally recognized events, but should do so strategically – all communities say to come for general enjoyment, MH needs to say “come here to experience ‘this specific thing’.”

## 6.2.5 Public Engagements

The Shape Your City Medicine Hat online engagement forum was an important tool used for engaging with the general public. This site included a summary of the Plan and its status, links to related reports and studies, dates of upcoming events and ways of staying engaged and links to public surveys. Eight pop-up tent sessions were held, four as the Plan was being developed and four near completion of the Plan to reach out to the public at large events and gatherings scheduled in public places.

### Outdoor Pop-Up Tent Sessions 1 through 4:

On July 31st and August 1st four sessions were held at various **parks** and events. Each event was approximately four hours long, located in highly **accessible** public spaces, including Strathcona Island Park, Echo Dale Regional Park, the Exhibition and Stampede Grounds and Kin Coulee Park. The intent was to promote the public survey available at the time, and to gather public feedback on the preliminary recommendations of this plan. Facilitators at each of the events provided highlights of the master plan process, encouraged involvement of participants through the survey and discussed any public concerns related to **parks** and **recreation** in Medicine Hat. Some of the key highlights of face-to-face discussions during the four public sessions include:

- Facilitators had approximately 100 meaningful conversations with guests. Participants found the smart-phone friendly, online survey interface easy to access and were generally familiar with the City's online Shape Your City Medicine Hat online engagement tool;
- People are very satisfied with the types, quality and upkeep of recreational amenities in **the City**;
- Specific recreational amenities that stand out to people include mountain bike trails, as well as the extensive

network of walking and cycling trails found throughout **the City**;

- The greatest inhibition for adults spending more time recreating is available time due to busy work schedules. Children are generally over-programmed and are already involved in the types of **recreation** activities that they can manage; and
- The greatest concern of those spoken to (approximately 15 of 100 guests) was the closure of facilities in **the City** and interest in what **the City** will do to replace facilities that have already closed and those that will require major renovations in coming years.

Images of the display panels posted for this pop-up tent series can be found in Appendix B: Series 1 Display Panels.

### Initial Public Survey:

A public survey was posted on Shape Your City from July 22nd to August 5th, 2021. Approximately 400 survey responses were received. The purpose of this survey was to gather public feedback on the preliminary recommendations of this plan. In general, some of the high-level motivations of the survey, the resulting feedback and plan recommendations can be found on Figures 11 and 12, on the following page.

### Targeted Workshop:

On August 25, 2021 a workshop was held with 12 members of the Medicine Hat Community Vibrancy Advisory Board. At this workshop, the findings to date were presented, outlining the project objectives and reactions received from the public and stakeholder engagement feedback to date. A presentation made by the consulting team included the project objectives, key questions sought to be answered, principles of placemaking and community vibrancy, and strategies to help create dynamic indoor





and outdoor recreational spaces. Attendees were provided with a workbook-style feedback form that allowed for written responses on two primary questions from all individuals. The questions asked, and an overview of the responses received were as follows:

### 1. As it relates to “vibrant places”, where does Medicine Hat do a great job?

- Trail system, trail system, trail system – nearly all participants identified the trail system as a great amenity and a vibrant place;
- Central Park – such a magical place seeing so many activities happening at the same time, all hours of the day and year-round. This is deemed the best example of a successful outdoor space in Medicine Hat;
- The river-side path near the downtown YMCA – it always has a great range of different users and offers great access to the water;
- Off-leash dog area near Gas City Campground; and
- Strathcona Island Park – a great combination of manicured and formalized areas, great trails both paved and in **natural areas** makes it appealing to all ages and abilities.

### 2. Of the various facilities and amenities in Medicine Hat, which ones don’t address the following twelve principles well – what strategies can we use to do better address vibrancy? Principles include destinations, inclusive, sociable, flexible, collaborative, dynamic, community-driven, trans-disciplinary, transformative, adaptable, “form follows function”, visionary and context.

- The river valley – much more can be done here;
- Outdoor swimming pools – as much as they are popular they do not address most of these 12 principles and are extremely expensive to operate for the value they provide;
- Many public **parks** lack shelters, picnic tables and other simple amenities that would increase use significantly.

More support amenities like these along with fire pits and other features to make spaces more comfortable in winter months would be great;

- Echo Dale Regional Park is lacking winter-time activities, and is also a challenge to access given its far distance from **the City** and lack of public transit options;
- Small neighbourhood **parks** should be invested in rather than the large, centralized amenities so that residents have great **parks** within walking distance of home;
- Amenities that are seasonal, such as outdoor pools, need to be repurposed so that they are more useful at all times of the year;
- Small things matter – much attention goes to the large destination **parks** and facilities, but we need to also pay attention to local **park** spaces, benches, picnic areas, etc.;
- Amenities such as the Family Leisure Centre are poorly located as they are located at the edge of **the City** and are not neighbourhood-focused. We should look at existing neighbourhood amenities and **park** spaces and find ways of enhancing these existing spaces with additional activities so that there are many uses and potential programming in a single location; and
- The planning of facilities and amenities lack the incorporation and inclusion of indigenous culture and tend to miss the mark on inclusion and equity foundational principles.

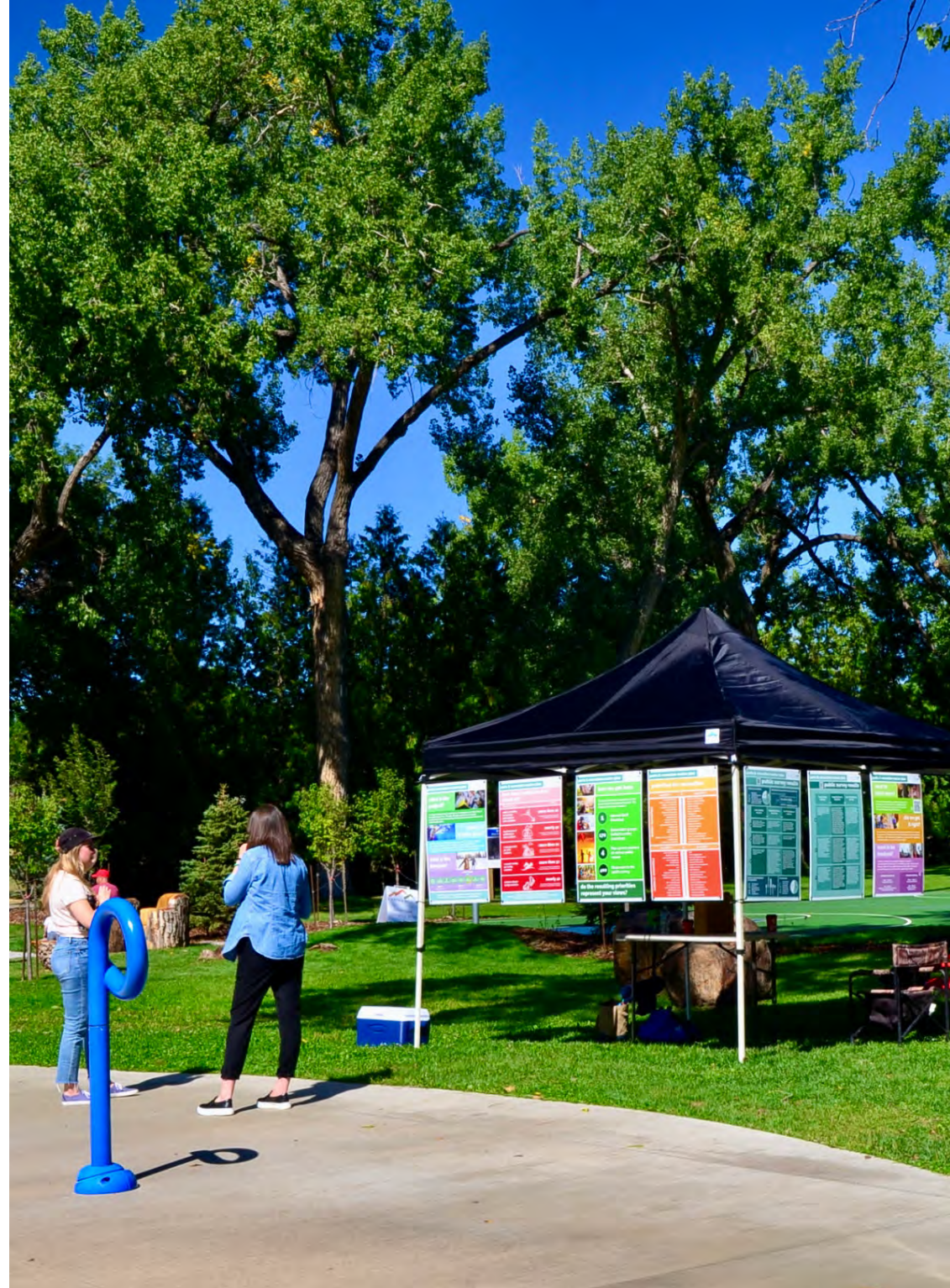
### Outdoor Pop-Up Tent Sessions 5 through 7:

On August 28th and 29th, 2021 three sessions were held as a second round of public information and to gather input. Each event was approximately three hours long, with venues including the Family Leisure Center lobby, Echo Dale Regional Park and Central Park. The sessions can be summarized as follows:



- Facilitators had meaningful conversations with approximately 140 guests between the three outdoor sessions. Participants found the smart-phone friendly, online survey interface easy to access and were generally familiar with the City's online Shape Your City Medicine Hat online engagement tool;
- Residents are very satisfied with the **parks** and recreational facilities and amenities available to them. One particular amenity that many guests spoke highly of is the City's **natural areas** and amount of trails;
- The three most prominent concerns raised include the fate of facilities that were currently closed, how several trails are discontinuous and missing linkages to access key amenities, and thirdly concerns with off-leash dogs creating conflicts with walkers, bikers and other passive users of public **open space**;
- Several people identified the importance of hosting large-scale tournaments and ensuring facilities are of sufficient quality to attract national-level activities. One area of concern was ice rinks, and how a multi-sheet facility with ample spectator seating would be a great attraction for both daily use by local sports clubs but also for tournaments; and
- Facilities such as Echo Dale Regional Park have limited times of day and limited days of the year that they are opened. Numerous people were eager to learn more on the rationale for these hours and limitations along with other aspects of the Parks Bylaw.

Images of the display panels posted for this pop-up tent series can be found in Appendix C: Series 2 Display Panels.



### Secondary Public Survey:

This survey was open from August 21st to September 2nd. Its purpose was to build on the findings of the first survey and focus on the details of implementing the plan. 52 survey responses were received. The majority of respondents were aged 25-44 (61.6%), reside in Medicine Hat (94.2%) and use City **recreation** facilities at least once a week (96.1%).

Respondents were asked what **the City** should focus on as it relates to **recreation** facilities over the next ten years. Only 17.3% of respondents felt **the City** should build new facilities and amenities to accommodate the priorities identified and close outdated facilities. On the other hand, 28.8% of survey respondents think **the City** should focus on renovating aging facilities in their current location regardless of what the costs are. However, majority of respondents (53.8%) think **the City** should use a cost analysis to determine whether aging facilities should be closed and replaced with new ones versus pursuing major renovations to improve aging facilities.

As it relates to **recreation** programs, respondents were asked what **the City** should focus on over the next ten years. The second most popular option was that Medicine Hat should focus on improving existing programs as opposed to creating new ones (35.3%). On the other hand, the most common response was that **the City** should focus on creating new programs that are based on the priorities identified. There was, however, no support for simply offering the same programs **the City** currently offers (2.0%).

Lastly, respondents were asked how **the City** could improve on communications and promoting the amenities, programs and events available in **the City**. The top three supported means of communication are: continuing to use the leisure guide but expanding it and allowing for free advertising for businesses and non-profits to promote their **recreation** (28.0%); a new website run by **the City** but focused solely on **parks** and **recreation** (46.0%); and social media (78.0%).

# 53.8%

OF RESPONDENTS THINK THE CITY SHOULD  
USE A COST ANALYSIS TO DETERMINE  
WHETHER AGING FACILITIES SHOULD BE  
CLOSED AND REPLACED WITH NEW ONES  
VERSUS PURSUING MAJOR RENOVATIONS TO  
IMPROVE AGING FACILITIES

# Top 3

SUPPORTED MEANS OF COMMUNICATION ARE:

1. CONTINUING TO USE THE LEISURE GUIDE BUT EXPANDING IT AND ALLOWING FOR FREE ADVERTISING FOR BUSINESSES AND NON-PROFITS TO PROMOTE THEIR RECREATION (28.0%)
2. A NEW WEBSITE RUN BY THE CITY BUT FOCUSED SOLELY ON PARKS AND RECREATION (46.0%)
3. SOCIAL MEDIA (78.0%)



# Top 2

REASONS FOR NOT USING OR SELDOM USING THE RECREATION FACILITIES OR AMENITIES IN MEDICINE HAT ARE:

1. THEY PREFER NOT TO SAY (27.8%)
2. THEY HAVE OTHER ACTIVITIES THAT KEEP THEM OCCUPIED (27.8%)

# 57.1%

OF RESPONDENTS STATED THAT THERE WERE NO SPECIFIC GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS THAT THEY WERE AWARE OF THAT FACE BARRIERS WHEN ACCESSING RECREATION FACILITIES AND AMENITIES IN MEDICINE HAT.

## Focused Survey - Inclusivity:

While the second public survey was open, we also released a specialized survey focused on inclusion in **the City**. During the engagement process, it was identified that more was to be learned about inclusion, with respect to access to **recreation** by people with disabilities, those with limited mobility, cultural differences, language barriers or other physical, mental or cognitive challenges. **The City** partnered with the Medicine Hat Housing Society to develop a survey that specifically asked questions on inclusion. This survey was open from August 27th to September 2nd. The following describes the results of the survey, for which 42 responses were received.

Firstly, let's look at the demographic make-up of the respondents. The age of respondents was very well distributed with approximately 14-25% of respondents in each age category (25-44, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64 and 65+). It is also important to note that 40.5% of respondents live alone and primarily care for themselves while 52.3% of respondents live with and care for others besides themselves. Most respondents (78.6%) have lived in Medicine Hat for more than 10 years.

Respondents were asked if they personally, or any members of their household, actively use the **recreation** facilities or amenities in Medicine Hat. Majority of respondents use facilities at least once per week (57.2%). However, on the other hand, 21.4% of respondents do not use the **recreation** facilities or amenities in **the City** at all.

Next, they were asked what the main reason for not using or seldom using the **recreation** facilities/amenities in **the City**. The top four responses were: that they prefer not to say (27.8%), that they have other activities that keep them occupied (27.8%), that **recreation** in **the City** is not affordable (22.2%), and that they are too busy and are unable to make time (22.2%).

When respondents were asked if anyone in their household had a disability, 21.4% said yes, 40.5% said no and 38.1% preferred not to say. Lastly, respondents were asked if they felt that any particular groups or individuals had barriers to accessing **recreation** in Medicine Hat. Majority of respondents (57.1%) stated that there were no specific groups or individuals that they were aware of that face barriers.



### 6.2.6 Public Response to Over-Arching Questions

Many of the questions identified in Section 2.2.2 - Over-Arching Questions to Resolve were directly asked as survey questions in stakeholder workshops and meetings, as well as in public surveys. Results of other related questions were also combined to provide more robust responses to each question. The following provides a summary of how engagement responded to each of the over-arching questions:



OVER-ARCHING QUESTION	SUPPORTING SURVEY RESPONSES
A. What sets us apart - what is authentic to Medicine Hat, and how does this influence a parks and recreation master plan or any other related planning initiative?	The most common themes identified include the diversity of natural landscapes, warm and sunny weather, trails, and opportunities to connect with nature.
B. There are different scales of recreational amenities - five identified in this plan, ranging from city-wide destinations to natural areas / urban escapes. Is the City under- or over-served in any of the categories identified?	For all five categories, 50% or more respondents are satisfied with availability. None were identified as being over-provided, while the ones found most under-provided included 'urban escapes' (26%) and 'neighbourhood hubs' (24%).
C. What are the greatest impediments for people to be active - through recreation, volunteering or socialization?	People are busy! 49% of respondents lack available time due to other commitments, and 41% have other interests already filling their available time. The types of volunteering and organizations identified were very diverse. 45% would volunteer more if they had more time, and 39% would like volunteer opportunities better advertised. For those who rent facilities, only 5% are dissatisfied with the program in place for booking. Post-pandemic, only 11% of respondents feel less compelled to participate in recreational activities, showing that COVID-19 will not be a lasting impediment.
D. How have trends in recreation - generalized by the types of activities that are most prioritized - changed since the last master plan in 2011, and how do they compare regionally and nationally?	Indoor and outdoor swimming, water parks are at the top of the list, followed by outdoor activities like picnic areas, off-leash dog parks, mountain biking and outdoor fitness equipment, and indoor activities such as fitness and wellness facilities, walking / running tracks, indoor child play, leisure ice, and climbing walls. Lowest indoor activities include spectator seating, pickleball and curling. Lowest outdoor activities include cricket, football, artificial turf sports and ATV / dirt bike parks. When asked if Medicine Hat should focus on local needs versus a shift to be more regionally or nationally recognized destination for recreation, 41% felt that Medicine Hat should shift toward or more regional or national status.
E. Recreation is offered to residents in many shapes, forms and scales - from someone people-watching while walking on a downtown sidewalk to an unguided and spontaneous mountain bike ride through a natural area. Are there any types of recreational experiences that are over-served, or under-served? Are people of certain physical ability or age group under-accommodated? Is there an abundance or a deficiency in a certain type of recreational venue?	Half of all respondents feel that there are groups under-served. While dozens of groups were identified, the most common groups were low-income, those who rely on public transit, people with disabilities, and young families. There was very little mention of a lack of senior-friendly activities, however, only 9% of respondents were above the age of 65. When asked how to distribute funding amongst manicured (formal) or naturalized open space, generally a balanced approach was preferred, supporting all equally. When asked for great places for structured and unstructured play, numerous locations were identified with no common themes or prominent places provided.
F. As recreational infrastructure ages and requires retrofitting or replacement, what should the criteria be to make those decisions? Is the traditional model of dispersing recreational amenities throughout the City still appropriate, or are there other models that consolidates activities and offers multi-faceted facilities more suited to our economic and social climate?	The three most common responses were quality of facilities (63%), proximity to each resident (54%) and offering amenities currently not in the City (45%); the three least common responses included quantity of facilities (26%), convenience of many activities in one place (40%) and best value for taxpayers (42%). The top three indoor activities preferred to be within walking distance of home included leisure swimming pools, fitness / wellness facilities and indoor child play; top three outdoor activities included water playgrounds, pools and off-leash dog areas.

## 6.3 What We Heard: Additional Actions Resulting From Engagement

Through the various workshops and meetings with **City Administration**, stakeholder and public engagement and research on trends and leading practices, several common themes were heard. The following includes several actions based solely on what we heard during the engagement process, which have been categorized under one of ten categories, including:

- Sport tourism;
- Volunteerism;
- Innovation opportunities;
- **Recreation** and leisure priorities;
- Developing healthy communities;
- **Park** configuration and classification;
- **Parks** and **open space** optimization;
- Amenity and program optimization;
- Environmental stewardship; and
- **Active transportation**.

### 6.3.1 Sport Tourism

#### IMMEDIATE

#### NEAR

#### MEDIUM

#### CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Frustration with accommodating tournaments with existing facility bookings in place.

#### ACTION D4:

Continue to work with user groups to adjust schedules to accommodate tournaments, support additional staffing for bookings.

#### IMMEDIATE

#### NEAR

#### MEDIUM

#### CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Focus on the needs of local user groups and residents before shifting focus to attracting tourism and meeting the needs of others.

#### ACTION A5:

Prioritize bookings for local residents and user groups, ensuring their needs are met before canceling bookings for new events managed by outside interest groups.

#### IMMEDIATE

#### NEAR

#### MEDIUM

#### CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

There are significant economic benefits to hosting events in Medicine Hat such as tournaments for youth sports as well as semi-professional and professional sporting events, and the City has a wealth of excellent facilities for certain sports.

#### ACTION B6:

Conduct a tourism and economic opportunities study to determine the economic and social benefits of sport tourism, and particular sports that Medicine Hat is best suited to host.

#### IMMEDIATE

#### NEAR

#### MEDIUM

#### CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

The City has many fantastic facilities for large-scale tourism, but lacking in ice sport facilities with several sheets under one roof.

#### ACTION C8:

Consider an indoor ice facility with more than one (up to four) sheets of ice in a single facility, ensuring spectator viewing areas are sufficient.





### 6.3.2 Volunteerism

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Large volunteer base in the City of Medicine Hat with a reputation of strong support of making events happen.

#### ACTION B7:

Ensure incentives for volunteers are available such as subsidized memberships, appreciation gifts, etc.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Some groups don't have effective mechanisms in place to attract volunteers, while others have an abundance.

#### ACTION B8:

Establish a community-wide volunteer system as an accessible database of volunteers that align skills with opportunities. Use existing programs in the City (Just Serve and Volunteer Connector) as a starting point.



### 6.3.3 Innovation Opportunities and Risk Tolerance

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Limited ideas offered regarding innovation in recreation facilities and amenities.

#### ACTION D5:

Continual research in innovation to explore what others are utilizing and available technologies. Remain risk tolerant to try new ideas, products, and methodologies.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Due to current and future pandemics there is a need for improving sanitary conditions, accommodating social distancing.

#### ACTION A6:

Design of new facilities and renovation of existing ones should provide larger change rooms, improved sanitation and washing, air filtration systems and inclusive washrooms.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Development in Medicine Hat happens at a slow pace . . . by the time an innovative idea is realized, it has taken years to implement and is no longer “cutting edge.”

#### ACTION A7:

Challenge the development industry to bring innovative concepts to the table and provide incentives such as use of public land for innovative technology such as district energy, water re-use and recycling, wind and solar power.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Municipality does not actively promote and strive for innovation.

#### ACTION A8:

Increase our tolerance for risks associated with trying new technologies and ways of delivering services.







### 6.3.4 Recreation and Leisure Priorities

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Move toward more spontaneous activities and away from organized team sports that require regularly scheduled commitment; consistent with provincial and national trends.

#### ACTION B9:

Better promotion of spontaneous recreation and a priority to develop passive activities; establish programs that require smaller time commitments which may include new activities, or reconfiguration of existing ones.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Strong affinity for water-based activities, both indoors and outdoors.

#### ACTION D6:

Continue to offer water-based recreation such as pools and spray parks. Explore opportunities to better engage and promote the South Saskatchewan River and its tributaries for recreational use.

### 6.3.5 Role in Developing Healthy Communities

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

The main impediment to people participating in recreation is busy lifestyles.

#### ACTION B10:

Identify existing opportunities and promote new programs for short duration activities for all ages, using printed literature (leisure guide) as well as social media for promoting.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Existing facilities tend to have poor food options available in concessions, vending machines.

#### ACTION B11:

Offer healthier food options in concessions; work with local food truck industry to provide access to healthy food options for public events / parks spaces during peak use.



### 6.3.6 Park Configuration and Classification

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Overall content with the availability of City-wide destinations, neighbourhood hubs and local amenities; aging infrastructure necessitates updates of some amenities such as Echo Dale Regional Park and Police Point Park.

#### ACTION D7:

Continue to support existing City-wide destinations and pursue the upgrading of aging infrastructure and open space amenities in these park areas. Invest in these destinations to promote tourism, local usage.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Very few quality urban experiences, and those that exist are not perceived as safe, comfortable or well-programmed.

#### ACTION C9:

Better promotion and use of streetscapes such as neighbourhood block events, downtown street festivals, programming events in the downtown as opposed to suburban areas.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Urban escapes that exist are not well promoted and we do little to celebrate them.

#### ACTION C10:

Improved trail mapping needed (possibly done in conjunction with a trails master plan) along with a historic / ecological interpretive program.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Significant conflict identified between passive space users and off-leash dogs, with the current policy of allowing off-leash dog activities in most passive open spaces.

#### ACTION B12:

Conduct a study to identify optimal locations, sizes and configuration of designated off-leash areas; change policy to only offer off-leash opportunities in specified areas.



### 6.3.7 Parks and Open Space Optimization

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Singular use sites such as artificial turf sports fields have low use and limited “vibrancy”; not a lot to do for a larger audience.

#### ACTION C11:

Consider new activities in peripheral spaces of parks to increase available activities for extended hours of the day and year-round use.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Resident and stakeholder engagement is essential and involving users in park planning leads to a more successful end product (i.e., Central Park).

#### ACTION D8:

Ensure all park development and retrofit projects include robust stakeholder engagement programs that encourage involvement from start to finish.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

More can be done to address inclusivity: accessibility for those with limited mobility, low-income individuals, new Canadians, people of various cultures and religious belief, and all individuals with other barriers to participating in recreation.

#### ACTION A9:

Promote low- to no-cost recreational options, focus on physical literacy, engage the Medicine Hat Community Vibrancy Board to continually advise on inclusivity, offer subsidized transit, and create inclusivity guidelines for public amenities.

### 6.3.8 Amenity and Program Optimization

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Cost of building and maintaining several small facilities is significantly higher than developing larger, multi-use facilities.

#### ACTION D9:

Conduct economic feasibility studies and business cases as a part of determining the size, configuration and location of new amenities.



### 6.3.8 Amenity and Program Optimization (Continued)

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

With children having busy schedules of activities, guardians have much less available time for recreation.

#### ACTION B13:

Align the time and location of youth activities with spontaneous, drop-in activities for adults to pursue while already in the facility.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Many recreational programs are offered by non-City organizations that either use private amenities, or lease / rent City-owned facilities. There is a perception that the City is in competition with these businesses and inhibit the success of private enterprise.

#### ACTION D10:

As new programs and amenities are developed in the City-owned facilities, conduct a current assessment of all privately-owned and operated recreational activities. Continue to encourage private enterprises to collaborate with the City.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

The City does a poor job of promoting events and programs available to residents. Non-City owned recreation program and amenity providers have limited resources and funds available to promote their offerings.

#### ACTION A10:

Increase promotion of City-run programs using social media, leisure guide, website. Allow non-City owned proprietors to advertise in a printed Recreation Leisure Guide at low- to no-cost to help support their programming.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Competing interests for 'prime time' booking and prioritization for various user groups.

#### ACTION A11:

Create an allocation policy for bookings and social sector cross-over opportunities.







### 6.3.9 Active Transportation

#### IMMEDIATE

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Medicine Hat has a very organized mountain bike community with high potential for trails compatible with mountain bikes and potential to become a nationally-recognized destination for mountain biking.

#### NEAR

#### MEDIUM

#### CONTINUED

#### ACTION D11:

Continue to support the mountain bike community with opportunities for bike trail development in appropriate locations; promote the region as a nationally-recognized mountain bike destination.

#### IMMEDIATE

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

There is common conflict between various trail users and open space participants such as cyclists intimidating walkers, off-leash dogs approaching pedestrians with the perception of aggression, etc.

#### NEAR

#### MEDIUM

#### CONTINUED

#### ACTION B14:

Implement a trails etiquette education program and make necessary changes / upgrades to trails such as signage, increasing width, line painting, etc.; pursue an off-leash dog policy to delineate appropriate and more coordinated off-leash areas.

# Recreational Assessment

## 7.1 Current Facility and Amenity Condition

### 7.1.1 Asset Management Strategy

Corporate Asset Management, Facilities Management Section manages a Realty Asset Management Program (RAMP), promoting the use of asset management principles in all City facilities. Asset Management is defined as, “the combination of management, financial, economic, engineering, and other practices applied to physical assets, with the objective of providing the required level of service in the most cost-effective manner and is concerned with decision making and actions throughout the life cycle of physical assets.”

This plan is designed to meet or exceed regulatory requirements, and Medicine Hat City Council Strategic Priorities. Specifically, the RAMP is targeted to meet the Medicine Hat City Council Strategic Priorities:

- **Infrastructure** Renewal: We will focus on managing aging assets to ensure quality and sustainable **infrastructure**;
- Fiscal Responsibility: We will be fiscally responsible in

our decision making to support short and long-term **sustainability of the City**; and

- City Government: **The City** increasingly stands out as a well-governed and well-organized municipal corporation with a positive corporate culture.

The RAMP allows Facilities Management to optimize processes for the creation, operation, maintenance and disposal of facility related assets. The program promotes the provision of Levels of Service that balance customer expectations with cost and business risk.

The RAMP provides guidance and commitment to asset management, linking facility asset and **infrastructure** investment decisions to Levels of Service (LOS) outcomes. This is to deliver services at approved LOS, while balancing risks and minimizing asset lifecycle costs.

Several tools are engaged to track maintenance and condition of facility assets. The Cityworks Asset Management system allows ongoing operational tracking of maintenance performed on components and systems. The Facility Condition Assessment



(FCA) collates this historical data, provides a visual inspection, and assigns a score to the facility and its various components. The FCA's allow Facilities Management to quantify needs, costs, and risks of facility assets as they age. This populates the RAMP, with schedule and budget for lifecycle replacement. Cityworks, the FCA's, and subsequent RAMP, also support strategic planning, such as the ongoing Recreation Master Plan, and related decisions to levels of service, community need, and operating budget.

Facilities Management uses a combination of processes in performing FCA's. These include internal Facilities Management visual FCA performed using a developed tool, external visual 3rd party FCA's by engineering firms and detailed engineering assessment if facility component failure is recognized as potentially high risk. A Facilities Management staff team completes the internal FCA's, including various certified trades staff such as electricians, facility operators, and HVAC technicians.

The FCA's are translated into an overall percentage score for the facility, with individual facility components scored to indicate expected remaining lifecycle and risk of failure. Higher risk components are then given a projected cost of repair/replacement, and added to the work schedule. This cost and schedule, based on risk, then support the 4 year current, and 10 year long-term budget planning process.

CONDITION				FACILITY	ASSESSOR
5	New	New or like new condition: no issues to report; no expected failures; replacement 20 + years	Evaluation Considerations		
4	Good	Good condition: no reported issues, replacement 10-20 years	Age of Component		
3	Fair	Average wear for building age: not new but no issues to report, replacement 4-10 years	Expected Service Life		
2	Poor	Worn from use-end of expected life cycle; replacement 1-4 years	Maintenance Records		
1	Critical	Extremely worn / damaged; replacement within 1 year	Visual Inspection Condition		

Facilities Management targets to maintain City of Medicine Hats' facility assets at a minimum of "Fair" condition (60% +), with 4-10 years of expected remaining life of the asset. Using "Fair" condition as target for maintenance and planning, FM then replaces the asset in "Poor" condition with 1-4 years of expected remaining life of the asset. These targets are used for several reasons:

- It balances risk with cost, stretching the life cycle of asset components while maintaining safe operation and continued level of service desired by users;

- It allows mid-term and current budget planning, with the 10 year capital plan, and 4 year capital replacement budget target, mirroring current capital budget process;
- Aligning with the budget process, it allows work to be completed in “Poor” condition, alleviating risk of catastrophic failure of “Critical”; and
- It demonstrates a communicable plan for what work is being identified as necessary, based on risk and current levels of service.

Facilities FCA's are planned to be completed on a 4-year cycle to match the current budget cycle. Currently 17 of the identified sites for FCA have been completed, with the remainder to be completed in time for the 2023 – 2026 budget creation.

The FCAs do not include reflection of changing strategic plans, such as user expectations and community needs. Examples include increased amenities desired within **recreation** facilities, or changes to levels of service such as increased **administration** space. It plans replacement of facility components and updates to applicable codes as they reach end of life. The FCAs support strategic planning in benefit analysis of costs and services. Expansion of facilities, and changes of levels of service are reflected in strategic planning.

### 7.1.2 Facility Assessments

Several facility and amenity assessments have been conducted in recent years to establish priorities for capital investment in aging **infrastructure**. It is difficult to compare facilities to one another based on these assessments. This is due to the fact that they all have entirely different objectives, whereby some assessments were limited to only looking at mechanical and electrical systems, other assessments were more robust. Facilities should continue to be assessed on an as-needed basis. Refer to Appendix A: Facility Reinvestment Framework for a sample of what to consider when reviewing your facility condition assessment.







## 7.2 Programs and Events

Master plans such as this often include a detailed summation of existing programs, events and other City-run activities, and evaluates opportunities to refine these offerings. At the time of completing this study, our world is in the second year of a global pandemic that has led to drastic measures that have affected facility openings, the availability of group gatherings and all programmed activities and events. In light of these events, an analysis of current programs and events would be fruitless when considering the ten-year horizon that this Plan strives for.

## 7.3 Connectivity

**The City** is geographically segregated by the South Saskatchewan River, creeks and ravines, coulee formations and other physical impediments. Alike many other established cities, Medicine Hat's transportation network is reliant on passenger vehicles as the primary means of getting place to place. While many roadways accommodate **active transportation** routes for cyclists and a network of sidewalks exist within road right-of-way, there are limited pedestrian-oriented trail segments that provide safe, comfortable and more user-friendly experiences for **active transportation**. This master plan does not address **active transportation** networks, but recognizes the challenges faced by **recreation** planners in finding means of connecting residents with **parks** and **recreation** amenities throughout **the City**.

## 7.4 Inclusivity

An ideal network of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities and amenities allows for easy participation of all people, regardless of age, ability or income. Results from resident surveys, engagement with **stakeholders** and meetings with other key interest groups

identified that more can be done to make **parks** and **recreation** more inclusive and **accessible** to all residents regardless of physical ability, level of income, cultural values, religion or any other differences.

A targeted survey that focused on inclusion was administered and is described in more detail in Section 8.2.5 – Public Engagements. Building on the results of that survey, several community organizations were contacted by email that represent underrepresented groups. This exchange posed the following questions:

1. What is **Parks** and **Recreation** currently doing to create an inclusive and **accessible recreation** environment in Medicine Hat?
2. Where is **Parks** and **Recreation** falling short in creating an inclusive and **accessible recreation** environment in Medicine Hat?
3. What barriers, perceived or actual, are preventing people from participating in public **recreation**?
4. How can **Parks** and **Recreation** help address the needs of your organization/group in particular? Please, if you feel comfortable, name the organization or group you are representing.
5. Is there anything else you want to add to help inform and improve public **parks** and **recreation** services?

The following provides a summation of the positive attributes of the existing recreational network that addresses inclusivity, along with a series of concerns.

#### 7.4.1 What We Are Doing Well

- **Accessible** picnic areas;

- Making facilities physically **accessible**, and keeping up with regular and consistent progress;
- Trying to understand who we are leaving out when considering people with physical disabilities; and
- Many people at FLC and Crestwood would know people who need help with physical accessibility – staff are frequently advocates to help these people out.

#### 7.4.2 What We Need to Improve Upon

- **General considerations:**
  - Overall preference for smaller, neighbourhood-based **recreation** facilities to improve quality and walkability of neighbourhoods through decentralized, local and **accessible** services;
  - Increasing comfortable and safe outdoor gathering spaces. Ideas include heated spaces for winter, shaded places for summer and smaller areas where alcohol may be consumed (locally, a large portion of COVID transmission is within young, unvaccinated people, and this may encourage them to gather outdoors where transmission is lower); and
  - Increase natural beauty of **parks** to draw more users and decrease maintenance costs.
- **Closure of facilities that provide exclusive services:**
  - Alternative uses for facilities could be considered rather than closures, such as specialized programming at other locations;
  - Privacy at Crestwood Pool is not found elsewhere; closing the facility limits areas where many women and queer people feel comfortable recreating. Anecdotal evidence suggests many people who feel uncomfortable or self-conscious in highly public swimming pools will simply not use them. Community



recommendation is to offer more private swims to cater to groups who may be excluded from public swims;

- Heights Pool offers services to two nearby high schools. If operated within June and into September, students would be able to have affordable, fun and safe **recreation** experiences there;
  - Closing the beforementioned facilities as well as Heald Pool (already closed) and the Moose Recreation Centre impact low-income areas where transportation access to and ability to pay high costs associated with FLC are limited. Many people living in neighbourhoods with smaller **recreation** facilities do not have access to transportation or expendable income to support high user fees;
  - Distances to travel within smaller facilities increase accessibility for those who are not as physically able; and
  - Many playgrounds are removed and not replaced. This removes accessibility for families who cannot get to other playgrounds.
- **Public Safety Concerns:**
    - Install public telephones that link to emergency services and increasing supervision in areas where crime is higher;
    - Increasing public education on fire safety;
    - Work on a solution for the area along Saratoga Trail that becomes covered in ice over winter as it is not safely passable, even for those who are able-bodied;
    - More PSAs and improved public communication to help make people feel safer and more inclined to use facilities. One recommendation is to inform the public that we regularly care for **park** facilities and remove garbage to make them safer;



- All gender washrooms and change rooms with individual stalls and open sinks will increase feelings of safety and accessibility for many; maintain some gendered washrooms for those who feel more comfortable, possibly for cultural reasons; and
- In short, provide more options for all people.
- **Community Outreach:**
  - Ask more questions as many people will not provide information unless asked;
  - Publicly available information on playgrounds and other facility information in correlation with public transportation is lacking – there should be a directory online;
  - Improve information on facility directories (i.e., how can a person find a lit outdoor facility open for use at night, or a **park accessible** by wheelchair?);
  - Difficulty registering for high-demand programs, such as swimming lessons. Consider setting up an automated waiting list;
  - Improved social media and public communications;
  - Improved application and communication processes to work with and receive proposals from community organizations;
  - More ownership and liability placed on user groups and **stakeholders** may fuel more collaborations and partnerships with community organizations;
  - Trust-building and outreach needs improvement. Collaborating with Community Development can greatly help **the City** establish connections within the community;
  - Additional community engagement to highlight specific areas where the City's Parks team falls short in meeting community needs. The inclusion world is continually changing, and public services need to be adaptable;
- There is little personal/targeted information encouraging participation. Consider inviting individual groups, which would speak to many new immigrants and people from other cultures. More effective outreach to specific groups; marketing is culturally specific, so we should consider adapting; and
- Consider gifting shared office space to any non-profit **recreation**/sport society in **the city** as most agencies do not need full-time office use, and this will reduce overhead cost allowing them to grow their front-line services.
- **Planning:**
  - Orientation of upper management and City Council may not consider those who with accessibility concerns – we need further advocating and communication from PKRC employees; and
  - Services primarily cater to those already participating in **recreation** and do not do enough to encourage those with perceived and actual barriers to participate.
- **Financial Accessibility:**
  - Financial accessibility is poorly considered. The existing \$100 subsidy is not realistic and decreases services. Consider what is affordable on a fixed income; and
  - Sliding scale fee schedules and fees for using specific parts of a facility in multiplexes; day passes should be an option too – just more options on how to pay to encourage increased usage.
- **Cultural Accessibility:**
  - Increase invites, partnerships, options overall.
- **Physical Accessibility:**
  - Access to and understanding of adapted programs for

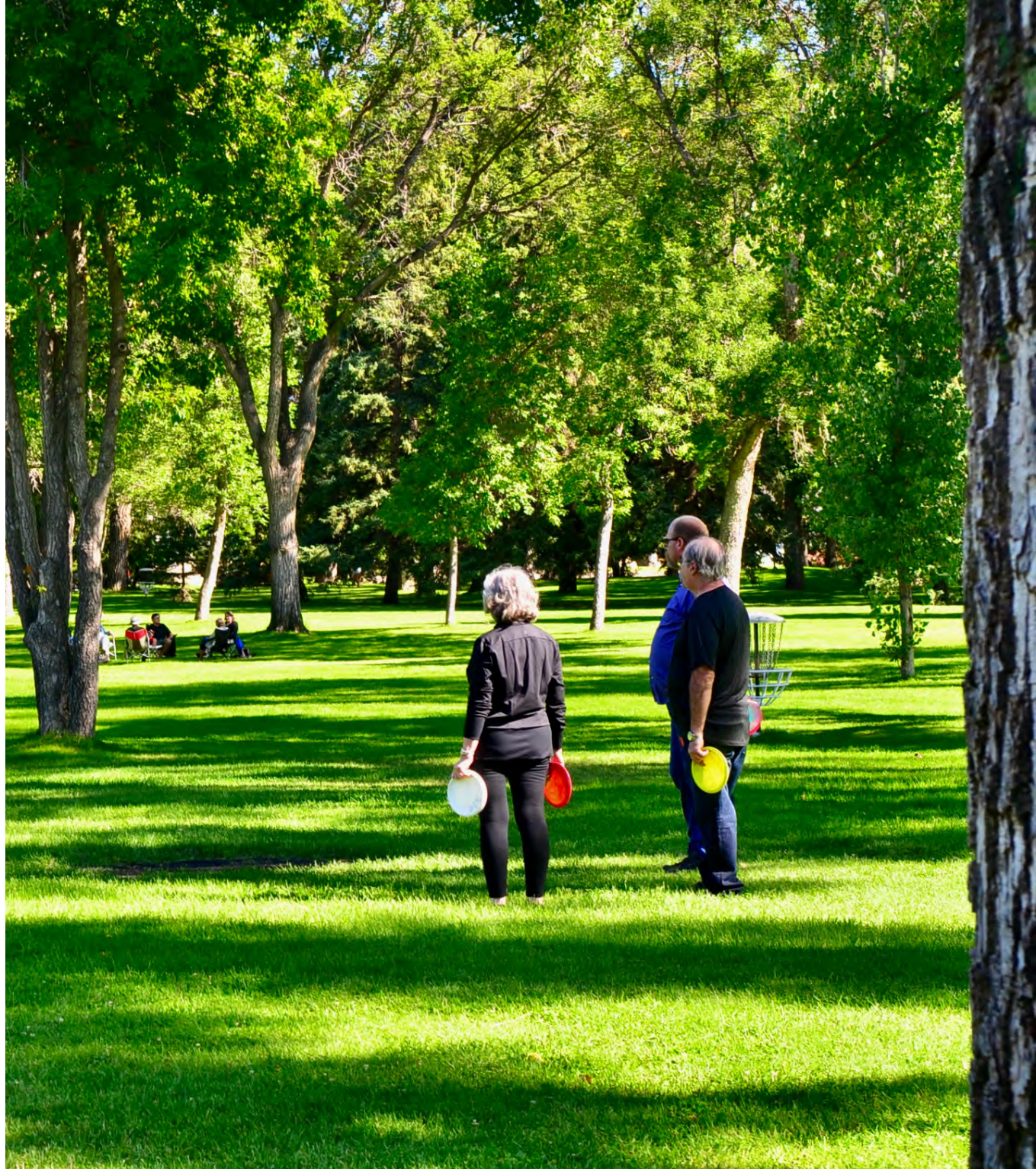


people with disabilities; possible collaboration with AHS' Healthy Living Program to transition people from supervised exercise (i.e., people recovering from stroke) to municipal programming;

- Consider making Kin Coulee road one-way to make half the road non-motorized access only; and
- Looped and wider walking paths with handrails, bright benches, smooth walking surfaces, lighting for people with medical conditions like dementia.

## 7.5 Community-Wide Distribution

Figure 13 (Inventory of Indoor Amenities, Per Sector) identifies the overall dispersal of indoor recreational amenities throughout **the City**, and Figure 14 (Inventory of Outdoor Amenities, Per Sector) demonstrates outdoor amenities. Lastly, Figure 15 (Inventory of Open Space Amenities, Per Sector) identifies the **open space** network of greenspaces as they are dispersed around **the City**.





## Inventory of Indoor Amenities, Per Sector

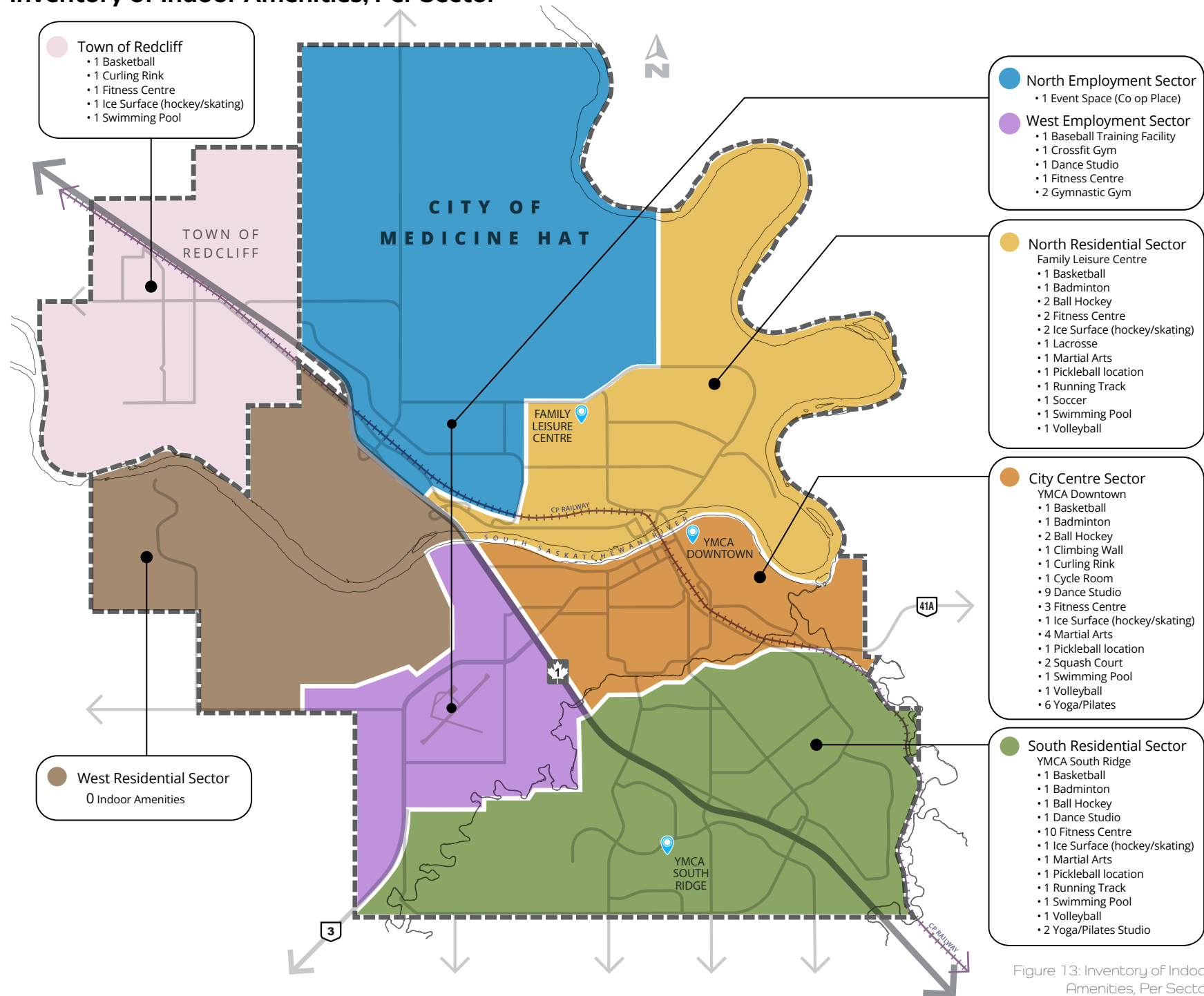


Figure 13: Inventory of Indoor Amenities, Per Sector



# Inventory of Outdoor Amenities, Per Sector

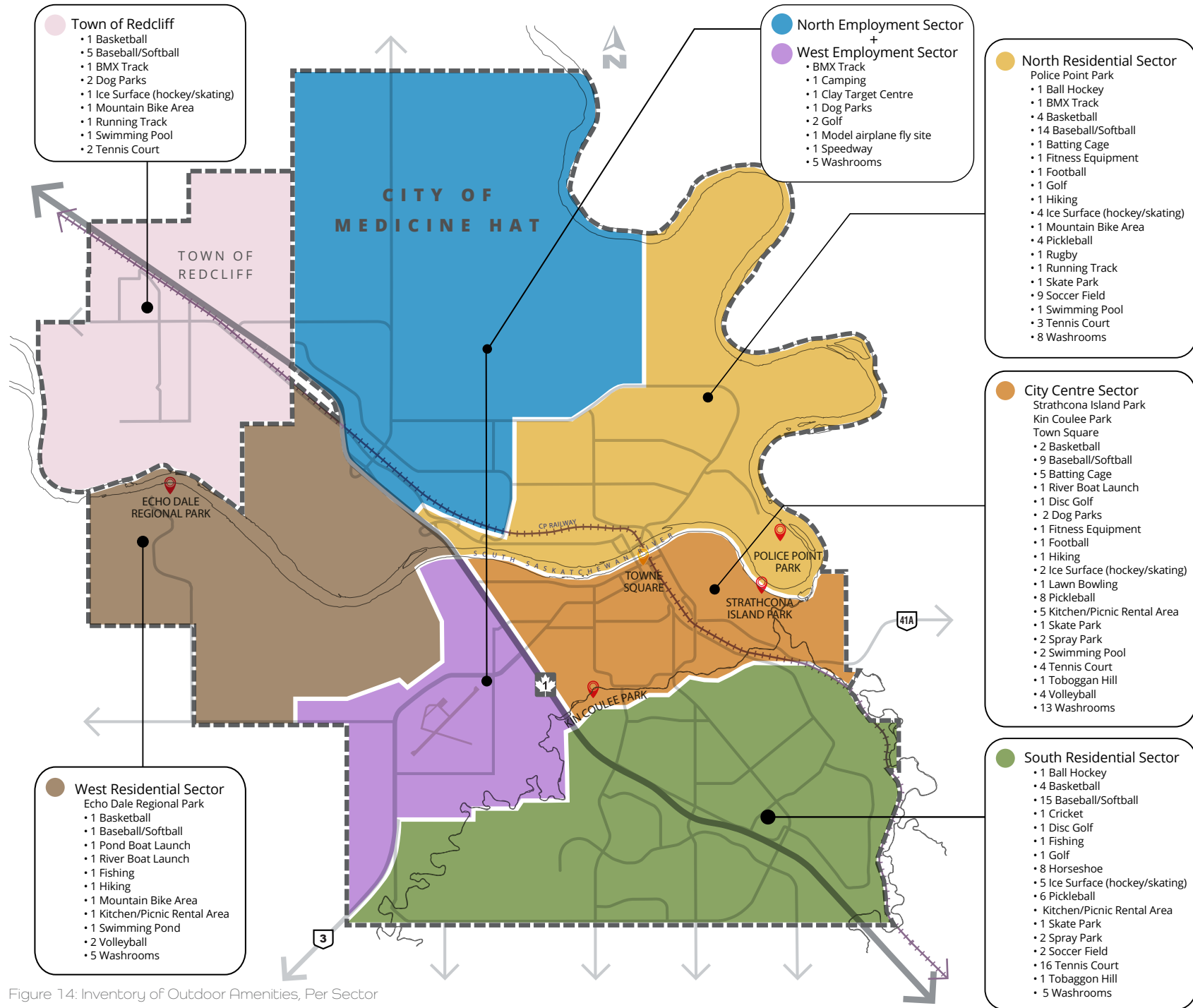


Figure 14: Inventory of Outdoor Amenities, Per Sector

# Inventory of Open Space Amenities, Per Sector

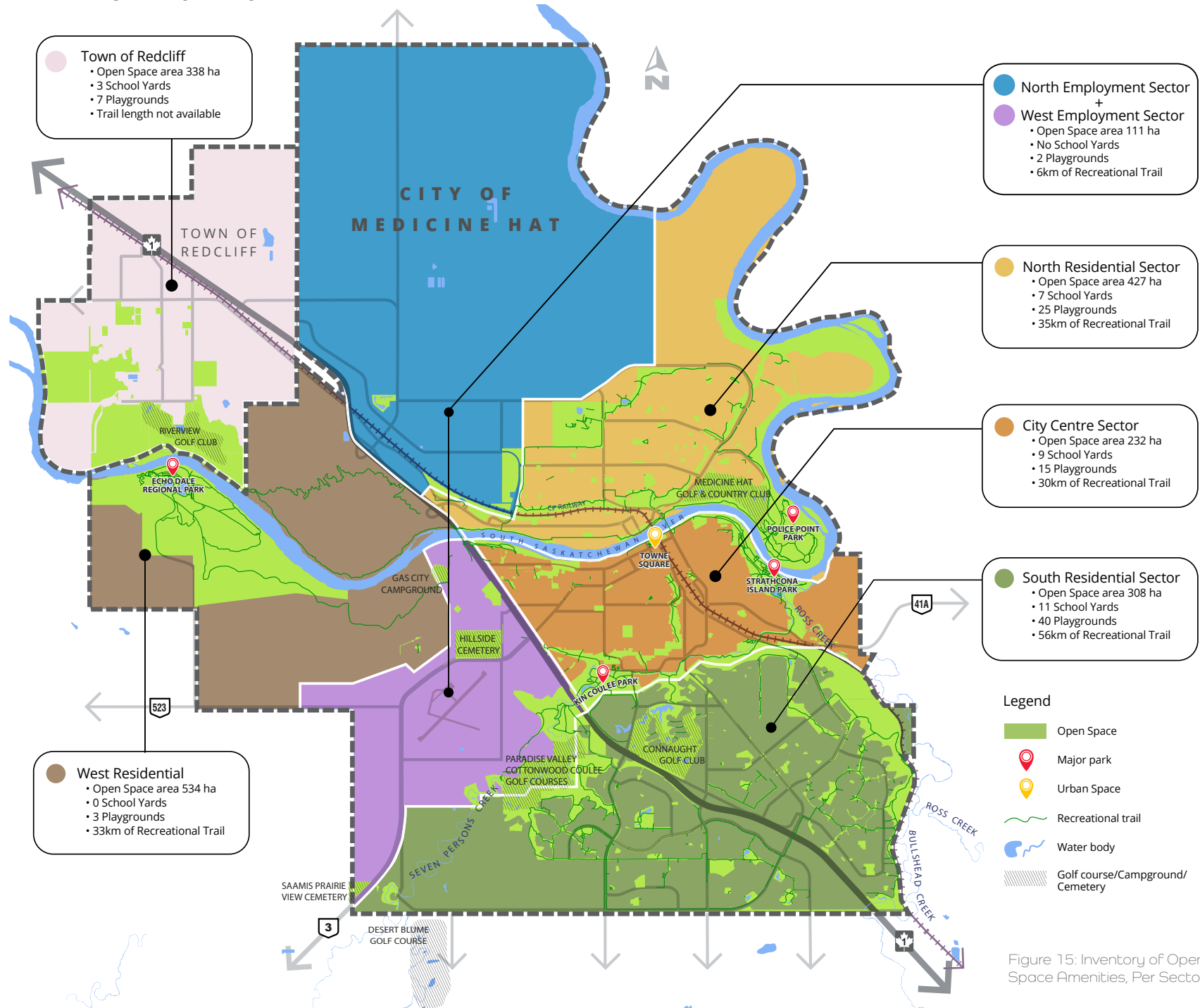


Figure 15: Inventory of Open Space Amenities, Per Sector





The overall city-wide dispersal of recreational amenities can be described as follows:

- Recreational amenities and facilities are generally dispersed proportional to residential population of each sector;
- Some major destinations such as the Family Leisure Centre and Echo Dale Regional Park are located at the far outskirts of the developed areas of Medicine Hat, while comparable destinations such as Strathcona Island Park and the downtown YMCA are in the heart of the City's urban fabric. Major attractions are well dispersed and available both in **the City** core as well as its periphery; and
- Unprogrammed and undeveloped **open space** is most prevalent within the floodplain of the South Saskatchewan River and its tributaries where development constraints such as coulee features, potential flooding and regulatory restrictions exist.

The South Residential Sector of **the City** has the largest population, and the highest abundance of outdoor and indoor amenities. Figure 16 demonstrates the location of both indoor amenities, outdoor amenities as well as **open space** amenities. Many of the indoor amenities are privately owned and operated, which have been shown in orange on this figure.



## South Residential Sector

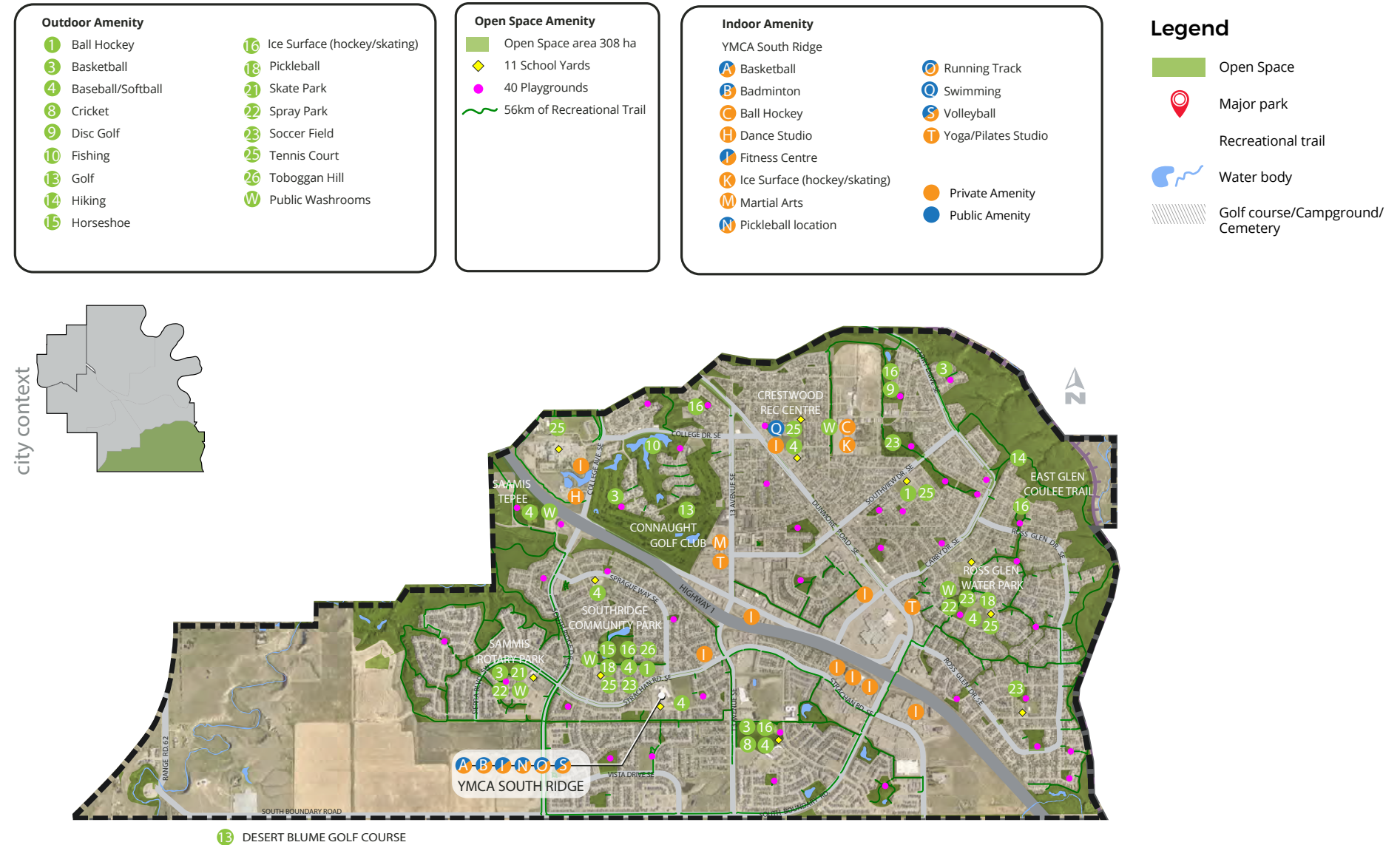


Figure 16: Indoor, Outdoor and Open Space Amenities in the South Residential Sector



# City Centre Sector



Figure 17: Indoor, Outdoor and Open Space Amenities in the City Centre Sector

# North Residential Sector





## 7.6 Benchmarking

Benchmarking is an exercise undertaken that allows people to compare the provision of **recreation** amenities with other comparable communities. Airdrie, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Lloydminster, Red Deer, Strathcona County (Sherwood Park), St. Albert, and the Tri-Municipal Region (Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, Parkland County) were each identified as a “comparable” community to Medicine Hat. Their provision of **recreation** facilities and their levels of expenditure on **recreation** were examined. Some overall observations are as follows:

- In terms of quality of provision, Medicine Hat compares favorably to the others. In fact, it is in a relatively strong position in terms of its supply of amphitheatres / band shells, ball diamonds, a dedicated football field, grass / sand volleyball courts, fitness / wellness facilities, lawn bowling greens, outdoor pools and spray decks, picnic shelters, playgrounds, dog off-leash areas and outdoor tennis courts;
- Medicine Hat is in a relatively weaker position in terms of its supply of community meeting rooms, indoor child play space, dedicated leisure ice, indoor program rooms and outdoor rinks (climate is a factor in providing outdoor ice rinks in Medicine Hat); and
- When compared to the average provision of **open space** amenities and facilities in comparable communities, Medicine Hat stacks up above this average in several categories. Figure 19 portrays an example of five statistics regarding benchmarking Medicine Hat against comparable communities. The cities noted were those included in a third-party evaluation report.



Figure 19: Benchmarking Statistics (Yardstick, 2021)

# Our Recreational Network

An easy to use and transparent **recreation** resource classification system helps all community **recreation stakeholders** understand indoor and outdoor **recreation** facility provision from a broad perspective. The following system can be applied to both indoor and outdoor resources and includes location considerations for each. This system can be utilized in managing existing resources and will also help guide the development of potential new resources in **the City**.

Unlike the allocation of **municipal reserve** (MR) or public utility lots (PULs) which are a statutory requirement built into the **Municipal Government Act**, the provision / development of major indoor and outdoor public leisure facilities is not a legislated requirement of any municipality. Rather the provision / development of facilities is a choice. The City of Medicine Hat has chosen to provide facilities to meet public leisure needs by financing, building and operating certain types of facilities and assisting others who service community needs through facilities of their own.

**Recreation infrastructure** provided in **the city** (either directly or indirectly by the City of Medicine Hat) includes: ice arenas, a curling rink, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, program and meeting rooms, indoor field facilities, ball diamonds, rectangular fields, a skateboard park, and a variety of other important **recreation** amenities. **Infrastructure in the City** is currently

provided through a mix of standalone and “multiplex” sites geographically dispersed across **the city**.

The primary multiplex sites in Medicine Hat are the Family Leisure Centre and the South Ridge Recreation and Wellness Centre. The approach to combining a variety of needed **recreation** venues at one site is indeed an efficient, effective and equitable way to invest public capital.

The following facility types have been developed as recommended approaches to manage existing facilities and to undertake future **infrastructure** plans which ensure for sustainable development and operations.

- Type 1: City-Wide Destination Nodes;
- Type 2: Neighbourhood Hubs;
- Type 3: Local Amenities;
- Type 4: Urban Experiences; and
- Type 5: **Urban Escapes**.

## 8.1 Type 1: City-Wide Destination Nodes

Facilities or facility clusters that serve a City wide, or regional market and are key leisure destinations for indoor and/or outdoor activities, community services, institutional services and commerce.





#### Example Indoor Elements:

- Fitness / wellness centres (including indoor walking / jogging tracks);
- Multi-use / gymnasium / court sports;
- Ice arenas / pads (regulation and leisure);
- Indoor field facilities;
- Aquatics (program tanks and leisure);
- Social facilities (banquet, dance);
- Community resource center (operations for groups and associations);
- Retail;
- Meeting / multi-use programs; and
- Curling rinks.

#### Example Outdoor Elements:

- Class "A" Ball diamonds;
- Golf courses;
- Class "A" Rectangular fields;
- Skateboard parks (large);
- Artificial turf field;
- Water spray parks (large);
- Major playgrounds;
- BMX / off road bicycling areas; and
- Tennis courts.

#### Land Requirements:

- Between 5 and 30 hectares depending upon spatial requirements of included facilities and / or spaces

Location planning for Type 1 facilities should consider overall land parcel size, future community growth areas and desired use of adjacent lands. These types of facilities can spur adjacent commercial and residential development and have, in some cases, been proven to increase adjacent land values. Ideally, due to the levels of traffic associated with these types of facilities, hours of operation and required land massing, locating City-wide facilities is most appropriate away from dense residential

areas or with sufficient buffering between the facility and residences. As these nodes offer a variety of activity options, it is beneficial to include both indoor and outdoor amenities on the site. The nature of these facilities as potential joint facilities with health services providers and/or school boards also provide opportunity in leveraging community services investment into other complimentary areas.

Geographic balance is less important for City-wide destination nodes as these sites are typically “drive-to.” This being the case it is still very important to ensure that residents are able to travel to City-wide facilities through alternative means of transportation such as mass transit and **active transportation**. It is also important that these types of facilities are easily accessed by visitors to **the City**.

## 8.2 Type 2: Neighbourhood Hubs

These are facilities that serve neighbourhood populations with more localized access to social venues and multi-use program space. Elements should include outdoor **parks** areas but are ideally located adjacent to neighbourhood **parks** and schools. These facilities function primarily for social programming but often accommodate programs of interest for residents.

### Example Indoor Elements:

- Multi-use program / gathering space;
- Games room / neighbourhood drop-in;
- Warm up shelters;
- Change rooms; and
- Community kitchens.

### Example Outdoor Elements:

- Recreational play fields and ball diamonds;
- Picnic areas;
- Playgrounds (minor);
- Barbecues;
- Outdoor rinks;
- Toboggan hills;
- Community gardens;
- Water spray parks (small); and
- Outdoor fitness equipment.

### Land Requirements:

- 1 to 5 hectares

Neighborhood hubs provide a base level of **recreation infrastructure** adjacent or near many residences. These facilities often comprise an expected level of service for taxpayers. Although not provided in a completely equitable balanced fashion in **the City**, neighbourhood amenities are typically “walk-to”, and thus geographically balanced provision is much more important than is the case with City-Wide **infrastructure**. great example of a neighbourhood hub is Central Park, which is known to have a great sense of place, great charisma and a strong feeling of community ownership. This **park** has a number of programmed activities while also having ample room for spontaneous play.

The development of neighbourhood hub **infrastructure**, in some cases, can also pre-empt City-Wide Destination Node development where planned accordingly. This is typically being the case where expected residential growth nodes are initiated. For example, a **park** site with enough size to accommodate City-Wide Destination node facilities and / or spaces could initially be offered with neighbourhood hub amenities with the intention of further enhancing the site once surrounding growth occurs.





### 8.3 Type 3: Local Amenities

The smallest of things are often overlooked when evaluating a network of recreational amenities. Oftentimes a picnic table, a cluster of benches, an informal gathering area within a natural setting or a back alley can become very meaningful to residents as a place to relax, socialize and to play. This plan does not inventory these special places, while through the engagement program numerous mentions of these types of places were accounted. During face-to-face engagement sessions, guests were encouraged to identify some cherished local amenities, and the following serve as a small sample of narratives of these local amenities:

- Single track or goat trails leading from downtown to the water's edge of the South Saskatchewan River these **urban escapes** provide rare opportunity to touch and feel the water without rules, regulation or someone watching;
- **Linear parks** such as the one near 3 Ave. and 12 St. that offer no formal program or amenities, only a small collection of benches that allow for intimate group gatherings, individual relaxation, safe access from homes for young children and a great “local’s only” place to gather without the pressure of large crowds of people; and
- Planners have a tendency to want to program everything – each and every space with a set list of activities and overcoming every square inch of a **park**. Sometimes it’s okay to “let a **park** breathe” and not be prescriptive. Plain **open space** is fine, too.

#### Land Requirements:

- Less than 1 hectares

## 8.4 Type 4: Urban Experiences

**Parks and open space** networks are often associated with “green”, as in they are assumed to be places with grass and vegetation. Communities alike Medicine Hat have very significant networks of urban areas such as **streetscapes**, urban plazas, riverbank overlooks, privately owned restaurant and coffee shop patios, and other places for people to gather. Several significant urban experiences exist in Medicine Hat and offer passive **recreation** for activities such as social gathering, walking, running, cycling, people watching, nature appreciation or even reading a book. These locations are located within the most densely developed areas of **the City** – referring to Figure 7 - Urban Transect Included in the 2020 Municipal Development Plan – and within transects 6 (Urban Villages & Corridors) and 7 (Urban Core).

Land Requirements:

- No size minimum or maximum

## 8.5 Type 5: Urban Escapes

For many people, the hustle and bustle of daily life can be complimented by tranquil environments such as the variety of grasslands, forested areas, coulees and other locally-defining geographic and ecological areas.

**Urban escapes** are classified as **natural**







**areas** throughout **the City** without active programming while still being safe, **accessible** and enjoyable to users. These are exclusively outdoor environments. Human-nature contact has well documented benefits to human health and wellness. Not all **open space** requires programming and providing natural area experiences for people to enjoy in a safe and comfortable manner. Active **recreation** in **natural areas** and sensitive ecosystems has the potential of adverse ecological effects on **natural areas**. Environmental degradation not only has direct effects on wildlife, but it also detracts from the authentic natural area experience that many people enjoy. These areas often do not have formal names and can adopt local nicknames and 'locals only' knowledge of how to best access them.

#### Example Outdoor Elements:

- South Saskatchewan River valley and coulee areas;
- Seven"Persons", Ross and Bullshead Creek areas; and
- **Natural areas** within named **parks** such as Echo Dale Regional Park and Police Point Park that are "off the trails".

#### Land Requirements:

- No size minimum or maximum

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

Human-nature contact has significant benefits to mental health and wellness.

#### ACTION C12:

Promote local 'urban escapes' for spontaneous recreational opportunities.

# Delivering and Operating Parks and Recreation

## 9.1 Promoting Parks and Recreation

**Recreation** services are provided and facilitated by **the City** of Medicine because these services enhance the quality of life and contribute to the “Community of Choice” vision. The many benefits of **recreation** are apparent to all who participate, are proven and well documented, but may not be commonly shared by the entire community. As such, the promotion of **recreation** and justification for public support must be proven on an ongoing basis and shared with all **stakeholders** so that a common awareness of the importance of **recreation** is understood. Although **the City** does promote **recreation** opportunities to some degree, enhanced promotion of, and justification for, **recreation** opportunities in **the City** will generate higher levels of participation and strengthen the case for community support. This support can be related to increased volunteerism or funding for sustaining and enhancing **recreation** services.

First and foremost, **recreation** promotion will increase participation by residents and visitors alike. It is not uncommon

for a community’s residents to be unaware of the complete portfolio of **recreation** opportunities available to them. Higher levels of participation will help **the City** and its residents realize even more of the many benefits **recreation** activity has to offer. Increased participation will also lead to more sustainable user fee-based **recreation** facilities and programs.

The first step in promoting **recreation** in **the City** is to “tell the stories” of existing participants and outline the benefits they have realized from the **recreation** activity. These stories, and related measurable benefits, will form the key messages with the goal of increased participation and further public, non-profit and private support. Inherent in these stories is the identification of the **recreation** opportunities available in Medicine Hat.

Key information that will build the case for both participation and support could be local, provincial or national (depending on availability) and could include:

- Overall public support and participation demonstrated through statistically reliable public engagement activities





such as telephone or mail out surveys;

- Participation numbers from local programs, facility memberships and usage statistics, etc. which could equate to annually measured indices (% of population participating) or special community participation challenges;
- **Recreation** focused research from within the province and beyond from sources such as the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, Alberta Centre for Active Living, and the Lifestyle Information Network;
- Estimates of the positive economic impact of **recreation** in the community including non-local spending and estimated reduction of health and crime prevention costs (reduction of anti-social and self-destructive behaviours); and
- Support information/messaging from external, but related, sectors such as health services, crime prevention, education and social services.

Collecting this information will require collaboration from local user groups (annual reporting of participation numbers), **stakeholders** from other sectors such as health care, education, crime prevention and social services, and investment in generating and collecting public sentiment on **recreation** in the community. Once the key messages are developed, delivering them to pertinent **stakeholders** (residents, potential funding agencies, etc.) should be outlined in a detailed **recreation** marketing and communications plan. The plan would provide an overview of message delivery media, key message development and reassessment, annual budget allotments, and an assessment tool to measure the effectiveness of promotional efforts.

Although the development of a **recreation** marketing and communications plan would outline details on potential media to utilize, some ideas would be local newspaper and television media, the City's website as well as websites of affiliate organizations and surrounding municipalities.



## 9.2 Fiscal Responsibility

**Recreation** facilities need to be “right-sized” based on what the community is willing to pay and through responsible allocation of funding. With financial challenges, setting priorities for service delivery is essential. Considering efficient delivery systems, operating models, and long-term **sustainability** of spending is critical.

Differentiation is needed between what is based on community needs and what is an investment intended to bring economic benefits through tourism and assessment values. There is also the challenge of the level of detail possible at a **recreation** strategy level versus more detailed facility feasibility and operating model analyses. There needs to be a strong foundation of understanding around the financial aspects of providing **recreation** services. If this is in place, along with an understanding of community needs, then the capital **infrastructure** plan will fall into place.

Financial feasibility and the implications of spending on taxpayers and the long-term financial **sustainability** of the City must be at the forefront in any part of this Plan. Rather than analysis of specific facilities, the **recreation** strategy should provide the overall financial implications of distributed versus consolidated **recreation** facilities, explore all partnership options, and thoroughly consider the full range of service delivery options. Capital planning should be done based on the service level goals, not vice versa.

### 9.2.1 Adaptable, Flexible and Resilient Infrastructure

As existing recreational amenities are programmed and as new ones are developed, ensuring adaptability, flexibility and resiliency is essential:





- Adaptability – the days of developing ball diamonds that only get used for championship games for a specific age category are long gone. Medicine Hat needs to ensure that recreational spaces are as dynamic as possible can be adapted to a multitude of uses;
- Flexibility – working in conjunction with adaptability, recreational spaces and programs need to remain flexible to change course as new trends and leading practices emerge, as new demands for **recreation** arise and partnerships are either lost or new ones are formed; and
- Resiliency – **parks** and **recreation infrastructure**, programs and planning processes require the capacity to recover quickly from changing times. As we have learned from the recent global pandemic and the drastic changes needed to deal with Provincial and Federal orders, plans should be in place to deal with the imminent need to change programs, facility openings, permitted uses of public **open space** and other amenities.

### 9.2.2 Connected, Diverse and Multi-Functional Recreation

Activating both indoor and outdoor recreational spaces can be achieved through a variety of approaches from policy changes (indirect), direct programming, (sport programs, interpretative programs, play guides, and camps) to **infrastructure** design and installation that encourages use (skate parks, tennis courts, disc golf, playgrounds, community gardens, picnic tables and fire pits) and promotion of third-party groups to program and activate. There is a range of options with differing operating and capital cost implications. While activating space implies that as many activities are promoted as possible in the same location, there are implications related to preserving enjoyment of use. Careful consideration is necessary to ensure that competing uses are not created.

Operational impacts that can be anticipated with higher use would be transportation, parking, site and facility cleanliness, availability of support facilities such as storage and washrooms, activity monitoring, dispute resolution and enforcement.

### 9.2.3 Understanding Economic Opportunities

The primary source of funding for **recreation** services in **the City** of Medicine Hat is through public funding. The limited funds that are allocated to **recreation** services through municipal operating and capital budgets needs to balance affordability, diverse needs, and the unique interest of specific groups will the overall intent of realizing as much benefit in the community from **recreation** activity. Achieving balance requires a philosophical foundation insofar as **the City** supports activities that are **accessible** to the general public and which do not afford exclusive use to any person or group. As opportunities become more specialized and offer exclusive use to persons or groups, a sliding scale of public support is warranted based on public accessibility, majority needs met and secondary community benefits such as economic impact and community attractiveness / branding.

The opportunities afforded by recreational amenities such as larger multipurpose facilities, high-performance fields and exceptional programs and events need to be fully considered in terms of the economic benefits (higher user fees, increased assessment value, promoting tourism / visitation), the investment needed (land acquisition, staff, insurance, maintenance costs), willingness to pay, and opportunities for partnerships. The regional context is important to understand the broader market and potential partnerships with surrounding jurisdictions. Is Medicine Hat likely to be a hub that draws people from the region and beyond?

## 9.3 Technology and Innovation

Three overarching principles of optimization and innovation were realized throughout this process:

1. **Early** – get in the innovation in the earlier stages, of course depends on the risks (financial, reputation, environmental, etc.);
2. **Involved** – get others involved in the set-up, experiments (i.e., neighborhood associations, tell people what we are trying and why – don't have to worry about coming to Council for smaller things, but good to know about the 'bigger things'; and
3. **Often** – many things do not cost a lot – try many things often and evaluate outcomes, implement when opportunities exist and move on to the next.

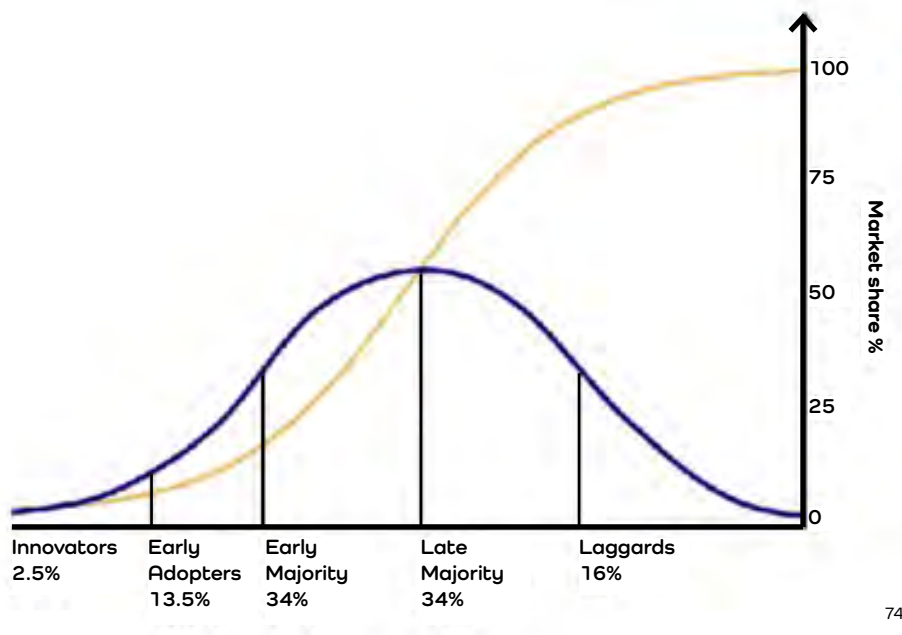
The use of technology in establishing, maintaining and delivering **parks** and **recreation** services help reduce operational costs and creates heightened user experience. Innovations in the realm of **parks** and **recreation** help communities offer a higher level of service in a more efficient manner. There are generally four overarching categories of innovation relevant to this Plan:

1. **Incremental Innovation** – ongoing improvements in what you are doing today. Employees are empowered to bring these forward, small iterations can offer big enough differentiator to move the needle;
2. **Breakthrough Innovation (product, service, technology)** – Innovation isn't always about application of technology, but every once in a while something disrupts the marketplace and leaves traditional players scrambling (Uber, Door Dash etc.). There is risk with this one but also the potential for lots of reward;
3. **Business Model Innovation** – this is where structure, processes, and operations can be a critical source of differentiation. Where can you eliminate 'waste' in your process (productivity, materials, time, etc.); and





**4. New Venture Innovation** – new set of skills or perspectives or identity to stay competitive or relevant. Usually this requires an altogether different **infrastructure** and what are seemingly unrelated market segments (Bic pens to ‘disposable product’ company).



As it relates to innovation, Medicine Hat’s **administration** feels that it is important to be an early adopter and early majority but avoid the late majority and laggard. “Innovation first” is a key objective and we should embrace the opportunity to try something new. City staff have been challenged to be more active in the ‘early adopter’ realm of innovation.

The following chart demonstrates think-tank discussions from internal City staff on tactics and opportunities for innovation within the four over-arching categories of innovation:

INCREMENTAL INNOVATION	BREAKTHROUGH INNOVATION	BUSINESS MODEL INNOVATION	NEW VENTURE INNOVATION
Lifeguard loaner station	Kiosks / self-service check-in	Retention strategy	e-sports
Active transportation & bike parking	Big data decisions (trails)	Goats	Outdoor classrooms
Fleet optimization	Over-seeding program (new seed establishment)	Adopt-A-Park, flower, trails, etc.	Recreation centres as service centres (social community)
Integrated pest management (City-wide)	Autonomous mowers	Google trails	Community gardens
AHS integration with fitness	Irrigation systems	Parks configuration	Urban orchards
Garbage can sponsorships / advertising	Biometric check-in (facial recognition)	Green infrastructure (trees, grass, storm water, etc.)	Natural playgrounds
		Multi-use trails (MTB trails)	
		Food trucks replacing concessions	

## 9.4 Partnerships

As recognized in the previous master plan and seen in nearly all comparable plans of other communities, the involvement of organizations, community groups and volunteers is essential. The potential for partnerships in building and operating public **recreation infrastructure** is significant. Through partnerships **the City** can lever public funds while still providing quality, diverse **infrastructure**. **The City** already partners with many delivery groups some of which are responsible for maintaining City owned facilities, have contributed to the capital costs of **infrastructure** upgrades and, in a few cases, actually operate completely independent from **the City** while still providing a publicly **accessible** program or activity.

**The City** can participate in operating and/or capital partnership arrangements, with **the City** as the primary stakeholder developing or operating the resource and seeking assistance or through non- profit or private sector partners leading a project and asking **the City** for assistance as a secondary stakeholder. Partnerships can include non-profit groups, school boards, post-secondary institutes, service providers (such as minor **sport** organizations, the local YMCA, the Medicine Hat Stampede & Exhibition Company, etc.), and the private sector. Potential partnership approaches currently employed in Medicine Hat or observed in other similar communities are explained as follows:

**Capital partnerships** could include **the City** owning a facility and receiving support for **recreation** resource development through up-front capital injection. In many cases, especially where private sector sponsorship or regional municipal project contributions are made, ownership still resides solely with **the City** and funding partners are afforded naming rights or cost recognition in some form. An example of this type of partnership





is employed at the Family Leisure Centre. In the case where significant capital investment is made from a variety of different partners, joint resource ownership models can be structured. Joint ownership of **recreation** facilities currently exists at the South Ridge Recreation and Wellness Centre and at the Cypress Centre Fieldhouse. In some scenarios, ownership may not reside with **the City**, however, because of the nature of the project, **the City** may support an independently owned **recreation** resource because of the service it provides to the community. For example, if a facility is owned by a non-profit group that cannot afford necessary capital improvement, **the City** may offer capital support to sustain the program in the community.

**Operating Partnerships** - If **the City** is responsible for operating a facility, potential partnerships can again include private sector sponsorship for facility spaces and regional municipal operating cost sharing. Partnership for facility usage can also be struck with stakeholder groups that can guarantee use, and related revenues, of facility spaces in a season. In some cases, **the City** may choose to lease out the operations of a City owned facility. These arrangements can be successful but also entail less operational control by **City administration**. In the event that facilities are not owned by **the City**, it may still provide operational support to non-profit or even private operators if the facility or space justifies public investment and meets partnership criteria.

**Partnership Framework** - Regardless of the ownership or operating nature of the partnership, **the City's** involvement in partnerships should meet the following broad criteria:

	CITY PRIMARY (CITY LED PROJECTS)	CITY SECONDARY (PROJECTS PROPOSED TO THE CITY)
<b>In line with City mandate</b>	The project must be in line with the City's core recreation service mandate	The project should be in line with the City's core recreation service mandate
<b>Level of investment</b>	The level of investment by other partners must be significant (see threshold considerations below).	If the City invests public funding in projects where it is not the primary owners / operator, specific interests should be granted to the City based on the level of investment made (see threshold considerations below).
<b>Standards / safety compliance</b>	The project must achieve City standards for safety and code compliance.	The project should achieve City standards for safety and code compliance.
<b>Business planning</b>	The project must have a formal business plan developed that outlines information regarding capital and operating costs, market information and risk assessment (a business plan template is outlined in the study appendix).	
<b>Public access</b>	The project must allow public access (to some degree). Funding will follow "funding framework" philosophy.	
<b>Sustainable</b>	The project must be sustainable in terms of operating revenues, expenses and required subsidy (if applicable).	

Realizing that these criteria are being met, and will be met to varying levels, **the City** can get involved in the planning, development and operations of **recreation** facilities and spaces in a variety of ways driven by the leveraging of public funds in **recreation** service provision. The different levels that **the City** can get involved in **recreation** resource development and operations include:

- Level One** - **The City** owns, operates and is directly responsible for **recreation** resources. An example would be the Family Leisure Centre;
- Level Two** - **The City** is a major ownership and operating partner in **recreation** resource development. The partnership model is based on **the City** having a significant and/or equal stake in ownership and operating responsibility with other partners;
- Level Three** - Although **the City** does not directly control or have an equal stake in ownership and operations of **recreation** resources, City administrative representatives are involved in **recreation** resource delivery during the needs assessment, feasibility, business planning, design and operating stages. Level three includes facilities and sites that are owned by **the City** and operated, through lease agreements, by delivery agencies. This also assumes the inclusion of City residents in public consultation programs and engagement strategies (and associated need is demonstrated from a City resident perspective); and
- Level Four** - **The City** may provide funding for capital and / or operations of **recreation** resources with delivery agencies with no City administrative representation in **recreation** resource delivery during the needs assessment, feasibility, business planning, design nor operating stages. Although there is no involvement by **City administration**

representatives, a pre-requisite to collaboration at this level is that Medicine Hat residents are included in public consultation programs and engagement strategies (and associated need is demonstrated from a City resident perspective).

In order to further understand how these different levels of partnership collaboration are determined, the following funding thresholds / criteria are proposed to help guide **the City** in partnering to provide **recreation** opportunities for residents. The amounts included in the threshold explanations are indicative of the amount of public (City) investment in any given project.

	OPERATING CONTRIBUTION	CAPITAL CONTRIBUTION
LEVEL ONE	n/a (100%)	n/a (100%)
LEVEL TWO	\$250k + per year	Over \$5M
LEVEL THREE	\$75k - \$200k per year	Between \$1M - \$5M
LEVEL FOUR	Up to \$75k per year	Up to \$1M



These thresholds and associated levels of involvement have been identified to help **City administration** manage the varying degrees of collaboration they are currently involved in as well as new initiatives that may arise. These levels are meant to act as guidelines and although some exception may occur, this framework will ensure that public funds will be dispersed in a suitable and diligent fashion with appropriate consideration to the needs of City residents.

Accessing government grants, be they provincial or federal, is encouraged and should be explored once formal commitments to move forward with major capital projects are made. Although significant government grants are rarely **accessible** to contribute to operating costs, provincial and, in some cases, federal monies may be available for major **recreation infrastructure** projects. As the source and scope of grants allocated specifically to **recreation** projects change, continual exploration of available grants should be conducted by **administration**. Application and reporting procedures for government grants are resource intensive. In some cases, grants formally offered to municipalities are now only **accessible** to non-profit groups, thus necessitating public non-profit partnerships in **recreation** resource development.

#### IMMEDIATE

#### NEAR

#### MEDIUM

#### CONTINUED

### WHAT WE HEARD:

Many local organizations are unaware of the type of information required, resources necessary, and the long-term commitment required to sustain proposed parks and recreation initiatives. Partnerships are a key part of delivering parks and recreation and partnership agreements and models are often vague.

### ACTION A3:

Create an “Engagement Framework” that clearly identifies the types of information, financial and / or labor resources that need to come along with proposed projects. Ensure partnership frameworks are explicit.

## 9.5 Volunteerism

Volunteers are key to the **sustainability** of non-profit groups and associated events. Unfortunately, volunteerism is on the decline and the nature of volunteer opportunities is evolving. Roles are increasingly requiring more specialized skills.



The opportunities themselves typically include a defined period of commitment. **The City** can play a role in attracting, retaining and rewarding volunteers but it requires a philosophy that would suggest that volunteers are a valued extension of municipal service provision. This philosophy is already inherent within the City of Medicine Hat but needs to be formally articulated. Engaged volunteers are more connected in a community and exhibit community pride and cohesiveness. A City with strong volunteerism is a City where people want to live.

The following initiatives will ultimately afford enhanced public support to city volunteers and volunteer-run organizations. The merits of these ideas, although only presented in a **recreation** context, could be implemented on a wider basis throughout **the City** wherever non-profit partner groups and associated volunteers are engaged.

The decline of overall volunteerism is well documented. This trend, accompanied by the changing nature of the volunteer has forced municipalities and other organizations that rely on volunteers to shift traditional thinking. Support

#### IMMEDIATE

##### WHAT WE HEARD:

People are far too busy to provide their time for volunteering.

#### NEAR

#### MEDIUM

#### CONTINUED

##### ACTION B15:

Develop a volunteer database that is available to the public which allows residents to choose volunteer activities that best align with their skills, time availability and interests - including short duration volunteer activities with minimal commitment. Allow all local community groups to post needed volunteer roles in this location for a one-stop location to promote volunteerism. Coordinate with Action B8.

for volunteer-based organizations in today's society must include volunteer attraction and retention capacity building, pooled resources and the leveraging of public resources to improve the volunteer experience.







City **recreation** administrators could assist in the maintenance of a roster of city residents willing to volunteer for **recreation** opportunities (indicating their availability and interest) accompanied by a **recreation** volunteer opportunity roster (indicating groups seeking volunteers and the nature of the opportunity) which would provide groups access to the existing volunteer community. The culmination of these rosters would occur in a volunteer database that is hosted by **the City** which outlines opportunities and volunteers. It is also important to measure volunteer involvement and overall community impacts of volunteering which could form part of key messaging for broader communications. In engaging more residents to volunteer, key messaging in communications and formal volunteer recognition programs can promote the merits and impacts of volunteering. **The City** could even employ discounted access to **recreation** programs and facilities in exchange for volunteer involvement which could be measured through the volunteer relationship database.

Broad based volunteer engagement, through group affiliation or not, is best conducted through a volunteer information sharing, recognition and capacity building event. Such an event could be coordinated by the City of Medicine Hat with content and participation provided by a combination of all volunteer-related stakeholders. A volunteer conference or symposium could be a great forum to connect volunteers to organizations (i.e., trade show of groups seeking volunteers), for groups to share information and best practices, for **the City** to share opportunities for support, and for the collecting of information related to the benefits catalogue.



In order for **the City** to provide added support for the volunteer community, investment will be required.

IMMEDIATE

NEAR

MEDIUM

CONTINUED

### WHAT WE HEARD:

Reward our volunteers.

### ACTION B16:

Create an incentive program for volunteers that create credits for use of public facilities such as pools, community kitchens, picnic sites, etc. Coordinate with Action B7.

## 9.6 Fees and Charges

Traditionally, public funding for **recreation** resources is levered through the implementation of user fees. As is the case in many Alberta municipalities, current user fees charged for facility or program access by **the City** do not recover all of the operating costs associated with facility operations. They do however generally cover portions of the direct costs of program delivery. For this reason, municipalities and non-profit organizations tend to deliver affordable **recreation** opportunities through subsidization in the form of annual public **recreation infrastructure** budget contributions and volunteer involvement.

User fees for facility or program access can be formulated based on expected operational cost recovery rates, traditionally “what the market will bear,” supply and demand or through comparatives with other local or non-local service providers. In order to achieve appropriate user fee levels, consideration must be given to affordability, intangible benefits associated with increased **recreation** participation, the ability of the market to pay and numerous other factors. However, in scenarios where user fee increases are appropriate, it is not recommended that fees should increase more than 10% annually to avoid significant impacts to existing participation levels and delivery group cost structures. As well, facility user fees should increase annually based on estimated cost inflation to ensure that services are sustainable.







Getting an understanding of resident's acceptance of user fees can be determined simply by asking. A comprehensive community profile and a statistically valid, community-wide survey to gather information on needs, barriers, priorities, satisfaction and willingness to pay is critical to future decision-making. Results would inform all the subsequent components of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The survey will provide a baseline that **the City** can use to measure change over time by repeating the same survey at regular intervals (annual or biannual). The **recreation** strategy must consider both economic and social return on investment. Considering the full range of benefits to the community (such as improved physical and mental health, reduced social isolation). Focusing solely on the direct revenue generation will set a specific and narrow course for **the City** that may miss other opportunities to support community resilience.

#### IMMEDIATE

##### WHAT WE HEARD:

In order to achieve appropriate user fee levels, consideration must be given to affordability, intangible benefits associated with increased recreation participation, the ability of the market to pay and numerous other factors.

#### NEAR

#### MEDIUM

#### CONTINUED

##### ACTION B17:

Create a comprehensive fees and charges framework that considers several factors beyond traditional cost recovery rates.



# Plan Implementation

## 10.1 Implementation Strategy: A Phased Approach

This Plan identifies several recommendations that we have allocated into immediate-term (within one year), near-term (1-3 years) and medium-term (3-7 years) horizons. It also identifies items as “Continued Priority”, which are actions already in place that the Plan encourages to keep momentum on.





### 10.1.1 Immediate-Term Actions (Within One Year)

A	IMMEDIATE-TERM	SECTION
1	The City should invest in the promotion of recreational programs in the community and enhance communications efforts to portray the benefits of recreation in the community, building the case for recreation in Medicine Hat and increasing overall participation rates.	1.1
2	Use the priorities identified as a guide to future decision-making regarding investment in existing facilities and amenities as well as creating new ones	3.3
3	Create an “Engagement Framework” that clearly identifies the types of information, financial and / or labor resources that need to come along with proposed projects. Ensure partnership frameworks are explicit.	3.4 & 9.4
4	Update Bylaw No. 2527 with a rigorous review of current needs, stakeholder engagement, consultation with Bylaw staff, etc. Requires a focus on contemporary concerns such as new waterfront development initiatives, off-leash dog use, designation of powers of City staff	4.4
5	Prioritize bookings for local residents and user groups, ensuring their needs are met before canceling bookings for new events being managed by outside interest groups	6.3.1
6	Design of new facilities and renovation of existing ones should provide larger change rooms, improved sanitation and washing, air filtration systems and inclusive washrooms.	6.3.3
7	Challenge the development industry to bring innovative concepts to the table and provide incentives such as user of public land for innovative technology such as district energy, water re-use and recycling, wind and solar power	6.3.3
8	Increase our tolerance for risks associated with trying new technologies and new ways of delivering services	6.3.3
9	Promote low- to no-cost recreational options, focus on physical literacy, engage the Medicine Hat Community Vibrancy Board to continually advise on inclusivity, offer subsidized transit and create inclusivity guidelines for public amenities	6.3.7
10	Increase promotion of City-run programs using social media, leisure guide, website. Allow non-City-owned proprietors to advertise in a printed Recreation Leisure Guide at low to no cost to help support their programming	6.3.8
11	Create an allocation policy for bookings and social sector cross-over opportunities	6.3.8

### 10.1.2 Near-Term Actions (1-3 Years)

B	NEAR-TERM	SECTION
1	Use available provisions of the Alberta Municipal Government Act to take Environmental Reserve and Conservation reserve when necessary; establish a City policy regarding environmental preservation	3.1.5
2	Support waterfront development and promote better river access and water sports such as paddling; offer water safety programs and safe river use education at low to no cost	3.1.5
3	Conduct a study to identify areas that can be reconfigured to different levels of service or new aesthetics, such as naturalization, pollinator gardens, xeriscaping, etc.	3.1.5
4	Conduct a conceptual level study on integrating floodplain within the City's existing recreation network, while fully understanding ecological carrying capacity	3.2
5	Inventory all parks and open spaces and properly designate the land use of all areas	3.2
6	Conduct a tourism and economic opportunities study to determine the economic and social benefits of sports tourism, and particular sports that Medicine Hat is best suited for	6.3.1
7	Ensure incentives for volunteers are available such as subsidized memberships, appreciation gifts, etc.	6.3.2
8	Establish a community-wide volunteer system as an accessible database of volunteers that align skills with opportunities. Use existing programs in the City (Just Serve and Volunteer Connector) as a starting point.	6.3.2
9	Better promotion of spontaneous recreation and a priority to develop passive activities; establish programs that require smaller time commitments which may include new activities, or reconfiguration of existing ones	6.3.4
10	Identify existing opportunities and promote new programs for short duration activities for all ages, using printed literature (leisure guide) as well as social media for promoting	6.3.5
11	Offer healthier food options in concessions; work with local food truck industry to provide access to healthy food options for public events / park spaces during peak use	6.3.5
12	Conduct a study to identify optimal locations, sizes and configuration of designated off-leash areas; change policy to only offer off-leash opportunities in specified areas	6.3.6



### 10.1.2 Near-Term Actions (1-3 Years) - Continued

B	NEAR-TERM	SECTION
13	Align the time and location of youth activities with spontaneous, drop-in activities for adults to pursue while already in the facility	6.3.8
14	Implement a trails etiquette education program and make necessary changes / upgrades to trails such as signage, increasing width, line painting, etc.; pursue an off-leash dog policy to delineate appropriate and more coordinated off-leash areas	6.3.9
15	Develop a volunteer database that is available to the public which allows residents to choose volunteer activities that best align with their skills, time availability and interests - including short duration volunteer activities with minimal commitment. Allow all local community groups to post needed volunteer roles in this location for a one-stop location to promote volunteerism. Coordinate with Action B8.	9.5
16	Create an incentive program for volunteers that create credits for use of public facilities such as pools, community kitchens, picnic sites, etc. Coordinate with Action B7	9.5
17	Create a comprehensive fees and charges framework that considers several factors beyond traditional cost recovery rates.	9.5



### 10.1.3 Medium-Term Actions (3-7 Years)

C	MEDIUM-TERM	SECTION
1	Celebrate the local geological features and ecology through a new interpretive trail program, focused on landform, flora and fauna of Medicine Hat	3.1.3
2	Complete a comprehensive Trails Master Plan that includes or integrates Active Transportation and inventories all existing trails and identifies necessary segments to accommodate a range of trails from multi-use to single track trail use.	3.1.5
3	Improve the City's active transportation network and provide safe, comfortable and well-connected trails for walking / cycling, implementing the recommendations of a Trails Master Plan	3.2
4	Conduct a City-wide biophysical assessment that identifies all sensitive ecological areas and is supported by scientific evidence to justify setbacks, locations and development limitations. Ensure MR, ER and CR is mapped	3.2
5	Create a program that outlines incentives for private landowners to plant more trees on private property. Have this contained within a new urban tree policy and program document	3.2
6	Upon completion of a City-wide biophysical assessment, conduct an impact assessment that identifies uses which suit certain natural areas, or have the potential for degradation	4.2.1
7	The tri-part relationship that is forged by the IDP should influence how recreation systems are encouraged to cross municipal boundaries between the three municipalities and that partnerships should be explored for regional amenities such as Echo Dale Regional Park.	4.3
8	Consider an indoor ice facility with more than one (up to four) sheets of ice in a single facility, ensuring spectator viewing areas are sufficient	6.3.1
9	Better promotion and use of streetscapes such as neighbourhood block events, downtown street festivals, programming events in the downtown opposed to suburban areas	6.3.6
10	Improved trail mapping needed (possibly done in conjunction with a trails master plan) along with a historic / ecological interpretive program	6.3.6
11	Consider new activities in peripheral spaces of parks to increase available activities for extended hours of the day and year-round use	6.3.7
12	Promote local "urban escapes" for spontaneous recreational opportunities, commencing once Action B4 (floodplain conceptual study) is completed	8.5



#### 10.1.4 Continued Priorities

D	CONTINUED-PRIORITY	SECTION
1	Continue to place school boards and schools on key stakeholder lists to coordinate open space design, maintenance and use, and to better forecast needs of the community and students	3.2
2	Continue to support local organizations by advising these groups of known grants and funding sources, and assist with writing complex applications.	3.4
3	Integrate the principles of physical literacy in the development and offering of recreational programs	5.1.2
4	Continue to work with user groups to adjust schedules to accommodate tournaments, support additional staffing for bookings	6.3.1
5	Continual research in innovation to explore what others are utilizing and available technologies. Remain risk tolerant to try new ideas, products and methodologies	6.3.4
6	Continue to offer water-based recreation such as pools, spray parks. Explore opportunities to better engage and promote the South Saskatchewan River and its tributaries for recreational use	6.3.4
7	Continue to support existing City-wide destinations and pursue the upgrading of aging infrastructure and open space amenities in these park areas. Invest in these destinations to promote tourism, local usage	6.3.6
8	Ensure all park development and retrofit projects include robust public and stakeholder engagement programs that encourage involvement from start to finish	6.3.7
9	Conduct economic feasibility studies and business cases as a part of determining the size, configuration and location of new amenities	6.3.8
10	As new programs and amenities are developed in the City-owned facilities, conduct a current assessment of all privately-owned and operated recreational activities. Continue to encourage private enterprises to collaborate with the City	6.3.8
11	Continue to support the mountain bike community with opportunities for bike trail development in appropriate locations; promote the region as a nationally-recognized mountain bike destination	6.3.9

## 10.2 Response to Early-On Strategic Questions

Through the planning process a variety of supporting evidence from research and feedback from **stakeholders** and others engaged during this study, each of the initial strategic questions have been addressed as follows:

### 1. To what extent should the City pursue leading and emerging trends?

Public feedback determined that there should be an equal balance between using leading and emerging trends and using local priorities for **recreation**. Overall, **the City** should ensure the needs of local clubs and user groups are met prior to a shift toward allocating facilities and amenities to activities catering to outside groups such as tournaments. Developing an allocation policy will help reinforce this. At the same time, **the City** should conduct more research that evaluates the economic benefits of sports tourism and how this may affect the allocation of facilities and amenities, and the potential need to revisit the need for additional or upgraded amenities. Mountain biking was identified as the most logical **sport** to promote as a defining activity to ‘put Medicine Hat on the map’ at a national scale.

### 2. What is the ideal delivery model for operating our facilities and offering the various programs to our citizens and guest of Medicine Hat?

Public and stakeholder engagement has demonstrated that **the City** is currently doing a great job of delivering **parks** and **recreation** services to its residents. Part of this model is allowing non-City organizations, local businesses, and complimentary service providers (i.e., schools, YMCA, College, etc.) to actively offer services and ensuring all parties co-exist. Minimizing





competition between **the City** and outside parties is essential. Continued dialogue is important to ensure that the needs of residents and guest of **the City** are met and are resilient to change as do the needs of users.

**3. To what extent should places and opportunities for unstructured and spontaneous recreational pursuit be ‘planned’ – to what degree should the City activate outdoor open spaces? Or to what degree is tranquility valued?**

All **open spaces**, regardless of how wild and natural they may be, must address both actual and perceived safety. Local residents have a strong attachment to natural landscapes and a large proportion of people feel that natural area attributes are a large part of what defines Medicine Hat. Ensuring ecosystems remain intact and that any development within these **natural areas** are not adversely affected by human use is essential. Planning of tranquil, **natural areas** should have a strong focus on understanding the ecological carrying capacity – the ability of a landscape to withstand disturbance – and allowing appropriate and intensity of uses that fit within this capacity.

**4. Having experienced a significant global pandemic that has had great effects on Medicine Hat, how should recreation planning and operations be adapted for the potential of similar future events? How might this pandemic affect demands for recreation in years to come? Are there physical planning considerations that should be adapted considering lessons learned from COVID-19?**

The recent pandemic has led to a surge in individual recreational pursuits and a shift away from team sports and large public







gatherings. While it is unknown at this time how long the effects of the current pandemic will last, moving forward it is essential that facilities and amenities are planned and managed with a higher focus on personal sanitation, increased personal space and ensuring opportunities for individual recreational activities be available.

**5. This Plan classifies open space in five categories that range in composition, scale and types of use, from City-wide destination nodes to local amenities. What is the mechanism by which we determine which category is adequately available?**

The public and stakeholder engagement program completed as part of this Plan identified sufficient availability of the five types of **open space**, while there is a need to better manage **open space** typologies at “either end of the spectrum” – there needs to be more effort made to enhancing experiences and outdoor amenities in the downtown, and significant planning is needed to better protect natural ecosystems and provide more enhanced human-nature connections. The mechanism to gauge availability and access to all types of recreational experiences is through continual engagement – user satisfaction surveys and continued dialogue with residents as future projects are conceived, planned and implemented.

**6. Should Medicine Hat transition from meeting the recreational needs of its residents and nearby neighbours to going to another level of becoming more regionally or nationally recognized as a recreation and events destination?**

This study finds that local needs need to be met before ambitious efforts are made to attract regional or national-scale events. At the same time, it is important to be forward thinking and explore how **recreation** can increase tourism, generate additional revenue for **the City** and local business and establish a strong local identity that celebrates its impressive **parks** and recreational network.



## 10.3 How Over-Arching Questions Influence This Plan

OVER-ARCHING QUESTION	SUPPORTING SURVEY RESPONSES	HOW THIS INFLUENCES THE PLAN
A. What sets us apart - what is authentic to Medicine Hat, and how does this influence a parks and recreation master plan or any other related planning initiative?	The most common themes identified include the diversity of natural landscapes, warm and sunny weather, trails, and opportunities to connect with nature.	Need to preserve natural area experiences and take advantage of warmer weather by encouraging outdoor activities. Natural area experiences should be promoted to leverage on this significant local attribute.
B. There are different scales of recreational amenities - five identified in this plan, ranging from city-wide destinations to natural areas / urban escapes. Is the City under- or over-served in any of the categories identified?	For all five categories, 50% or more respondents are satisfied with availability. None were identified as being over-provided, while the ones found most under-provided included 'urban escapes' (26%) and 'neighbourhood hubs' (24%).	There is no need to focus on increasing or decreasing the availability of any of the five categories identified.
C. What are the greatest impediments for people to be active - through recreation, volunteering or socialization?	People are busy! 49% of respondents lack available time due to other commitments, and 41% have other interests already filling their available time. The types of volunteering and organizations identified were very diverse. 45% would volunteer more if they had more time, and 39% would like volunteer opportunities better advertised. For those who rent facilities, only 5% are dissatisfied with the program in place for booking. Post-pandemic, only 11% of respondents feel less compelled to participate in recreational activities, showing that COVID-19 will not be a lasting impediment.	Need to provide opportunities for unstructured, spontaneous recreation that does not require regular schedule. More individual activities, less focus on programmed team activities. Volunteer commitments may need to be short duration to aid those with less available time, and a better means of promoting available volunteer opportunities is needed. No need to change the way in which facility bookings are being done, however should keep a pulse on more innovative systems.

OVER-ARCHING QUESTION	SUPPORTING SURVEY RESPONSES	HOW THIS INFLUENCES THE PLAN
<p>D. How have trends in recreation - generalized by the types of activities that are most prioritized - changed since the last master plan in 2011, and how do they compare regionally and nationally?</p>	<p>Indoor and outdoor swimming, water parks are at the top of the list, followed by outdoor activities like picnic areas, off-leash dog parks, mountain biking and outdoor fitness equipment, and indoor activities such as fitness and wellness facilities, walking / running tracks, indoor child play, leisure ice, and climbing walls. Lowest indoor activities include spectator seating, pickleball and curling. Lowest outdoor activities include cricket, football, artificial turf sports and ATV / dirt bike parks. When asked if Medicine Hat should focus on local needs versus a shift to be more regionally or nationally recognized destination for recreation, 41% felt that Medicine Hat should shift toward or more regional or national status.</p>	<p>There is a strong affinity for water, both for exercise and play. Both indoor and outdoor pools are trending. The highest priority activities are generally individual pursuits that do not require teams or scheduled times. This is very consistent with regional and national trends. There should be more of an emphasis on accommodating local recreational needs versus efforts to make Medicine Hat more regionally or nationally known for recreational events.</p>
<p>E. Recreation is offered to residents in many shapes, forms and scales - from someone people-watching while walking on a downtown sidewalk to an unguided and spontaneous mountain bike ride through a natural area. Are there any types of recreational experiences that are over-served, or under-served? Are people of certain physical ability or age group under-accommodated? Is there an abundance or a deficiency in a certain type of recreational venue?</p>	<p>Half of all respondents feel that there are groups under-served. While dozens of groups were identified, the most common groups were low-income, those who rely on public transit, people with disabilities, and young families. There was very little mention of a lack of senior-friendly activities, however, only 9% of respondents were above the age of 65. When asked how to distribute funding amongst manicured (formal) or naturalized open space, generally a balanced approach was preferred, supporting all equally. When asked for great places for structured and unstructured play, numerous locations were identified with no common themes or prominent places provided.</p>	<p>Need to improve on programs and activities for those with limited mobility and make certain programs and amenities more accessible to low-income individuals. The City should establish and promote low- to no-cost options for recreation, not just the activity itself, but also supporting the ability for people to get to their destination. Subsidized transportation to certain recreational amenities should be considered. As for availability of different types of recreational experiences, none are over- or under-served and there is overwhelming evidence of satisfaction.</p>
<p>F. As recreational infrastructure ages and requires retrofitting or replacement, what should the criteria be to make those decisions? Is the traditional model of dispersing recreational amenities throughout the City still appropriate, or are there other models that consolidates activities and offers multi-faceted facilities more suited to our economic and social climate?</p>	<p>The three most common responses were quality of facilities (63%), proximity to each resident (54%) and offering amenities currently not in the City (45%); the three least common responses included quantity of facilities (26%), convenience of many activities in one place (40%) and best value for taxpayers (42%). The top three indoor activities preferred to be within walking distance of home included leisure swimming pools, fitness / wellness facilities and indoor child play; top three outdoor activities included water playgrounds, pools and off-leash dog areas.</p>	<p>Respondents prefer that their most desired amenities be close to their home. The ones most preferred to be within walking distance are also the highest rated activities, meaning people prefer not to spend time driving to the activities they prefer most. Respondents prefer higher quality amenities than quantity available - so long as they are close to their homes. High-quality public spaces should be located within the most densely populated areas where possible.</p>



## 10.4 Future Updates to This Plan

This master plan update was conducted ten years after the previous plan was implemented, which is a typical timeframe between major updates. Despite national, provincial and local trends and leading practices changing over this ten year period as well as a global pandemic that had significant impacts on Medicine Hat, the primary direction from one master plan to the next did not change significantly. Major overhauls of these plans may not be necessary, rather incremental updates on a more regular basis. It is recommended that the Plan be next evaluated in approximately five years from now as an internal exercise to ensure action plans are being implemented, that the actions in the medium-term horizon are best prioritized, and if any new actions may be warranted prior to the next formal plan update. This five-year review may not necessitate a robust engagement program but should recognize public feedback being heard through other related processes.

This update, and future ones should recognize **parks** and recreation as a strong economic driver that makes Medicine Hat a city of choice to live in, visit and invest in. **Parks** and recreation are strong contributors to help increase tax assessment, attract business and encourage investment in **the City**. Residents and other **stakeholders** during the engagement program made it explicitly clear that **parks** and **recreation** is a key factor of making Medicine Hat a community of choice and a primary service that **the City** should continue to provide at a high level of service.



# Closing Summary



The intent of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to provide an accurate depiction of the present and future needs for **recreation infrastructure** and services in Medicine Hat and outline strategies as to how to meet identified needs in the future. This Plan has been developed based on broad public engagement, due diligence and compilation of varying levels of internal and external qualitative and quantitative information. Needs identified and planning guidelines and management tools contained herein are built upon the inputs of many different **stakeholders** and represent a balanced approach to meeting needs with available public resources.

Throughout the document the guiding principles outlined in section 1.5 were instrumental in guiding the process and final recommendations of this Plan. As an example, the principle that “recreation facilities and programs are essential to quality of life” first resonated in the Recreation Master Plan ten years ago, but was verified through community engagement, meetings with stakeholders and internal staff workshops during the creation of this Plan.

Although the content and recommendations contained herein are not binding once adopted by City Council, the Plan will become a key reference point in future decision-making regarding **recreation infrastructure** and programs. The underlying theme in this Plan and its various recommendations and guidelines is that the delivery of **recreation infrastructure** and services is dependent upon a collaborative effort. Furthermore, stronger communication is needed between **the City** and partners in delivering **recreation**. Although **the City** has overseen this Plan and many of the recommendations are most pertinent for the City **administration** and staff, the fact remains that these services and facilities are a product of the dedication and perseverance of all stakeholders, including the volunteer and non-profit sector, the education sector, other levels of government and the private sector.

With respect to how Medicine Hat stacks up in meeting emerging trends and leading practices, it is found that **the City** is well positioned with respect to having the necessary facilities and amenities to support a wide array of activities, and to



accommodate local needs as well as large scale, national level events and tournaments. Existing **parks** and **open space** can accommodate additional programmed uses and amenities having expanses of less used space. As it relates to available **parks** and **recreation** amenities and facilities, Medicine Hat scores very high amongst comparable communities in western Canada.

This document is meant to aid **the City** in making the right decisions for future **recreation infrastructure** and programs. The planning guidelines and management tools provided will ensure that **the City** is able to deal with other delivery **stakeholders** in an efficient, fair and equitable fashion. As well, the **infrastructure** and programming recommendations provide a strategic approach to sustaining existing service levels while providing exciting, unique and necessary **recreation** facilities and programs to enrich the quality of life of regional residents and visitors alike. The metrics provided will allow City staff to regularly assess progress in achieving the recommended goals and ensure that we keep our eye on the ball. At the same time, new priorities may emerge between now and the next time the Plan is updated. It is recommended that a review of this Plan be conducted in approximately five years; the review is not meant to be a fulsome update, rather an opportunity to review the progress made on the recommended actions, and a re-calibration of timing to achieve any outstanding actions yet to be resolved.

A series of 50 actions may appear to be ambitious, however through collaboration with residents, **stakeholders** and other local organizations the City of Medicine Hat has proven its ability to achieve much more aspiring plans.



# Acknowledgments

The most successful plans that direct the way we plan, operate, celebrate and enjoy our communities are those that involve a cast of individuals with a wide variety of perspectives, knowledge and experience. This master plan process had the great pleasure of involving numerous local stakeholders, staff from the City of Medicine Hat, a team of consulting professionals and the residents of the greater Medicine Hat area. Our sincere thanks go to each person that was involved in public open house sessions, stakeholder workshops, contributing information and helping to formulate the final recommendations. This study identified over 170 local organizations and interest groups with direct interest in the way **parks** and **recreation** is managed in Medicine Hat.

Our gratitude is extended to all individuals and organizations for contributing their time to help develop this plan, from the Project Steering Committee:

- Scott Richter, - Project Manager and Manager of Business & Innovation, City of Medicine Hat
- James Will – Director of Parks and Recreation, City of Medicine Hat
- Stan Schwartzberger – Strategic Analysis Executive, City of Medicine Hat
- Brian Mastel – Project Sponsor and Public Services Managing Director, City of Medicine Hat
- Keziah Lesko-Gosselin – Project Support, Parks and Recreation Technician, City of Medicine Hat

and the Consulting Team:

- Anne McKinnon, EDS Group Inc.
- Cassandra Dell'Aquila, EDS Group Inc.
- Krista Brunelle, EDS Group Inc.
- John Buchko, EDS Group Inc.

The City of Medicine Hat acknowledges that we live and work on treaty territory. The City pays respect to all Indigenous Peoples and honours their past, present and future. We recognize and respect their cultural heritages and relationships to the land.

Photo Credits: where not credited to the City of Medicine Hat, photos were supplied by EDS Group Inc.

March 2022



# Facility Reinvestment Framework



The City's Realty Asset Management Plan outlines a process whereby existing City facilities (including recreation facilities) are assessed a facility condition index. The index is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Facility Condition Index} = \frac{\text{Deferred Maintenance (required upgrade costs)}}{\text{Replacement Value}}$$

### Replacement Value

Those recreation facilities whose FCI is approaching 50% or greater should be considered to be decommissioned and replaced (if warranted, as discussed) as opposed to repairing the aging infrastructure in question. Note that Hill and Heights Pools were at 31% and 32% FCI as of 2004.

As recreation infrastructure ages, continual reinvestment should occur to sustain the original intent of the facility and protect initial investments. In the event that this continual reinvestment does not occur, infrastructure reach a point where the FCI analysis recommends that the facility be decommissioned or replaced. In order to decide whether or not a facility should be decommissioned, replaced or potentially repurposed, the following must be considered:

1. **Facility usage**
2. **Adaptability**
3. **Community priorities**

Facility usage includes an assessment of how much actual usage a facility is observing or how much use is expected in the future. For instance, if a rental based facility is only rented 50% of prime time capacity or less, its operation may not be warranted especially if operational cost recovery on the facility is low. The approach would also be applicable to underutilized spontaneous use facilities, although capacity versus utilization for these facilities is harder to define.

Adaptability refers to the potential repurposing of existing facilities to accommodate new activities. For example, in large indoor open space areas repurposing can be easy as these types of gymnasium spaces can accommodate a variety of activities. For more unique facilities, such as swimming pools, repurposing options are much more limited and may not be financially feasible.

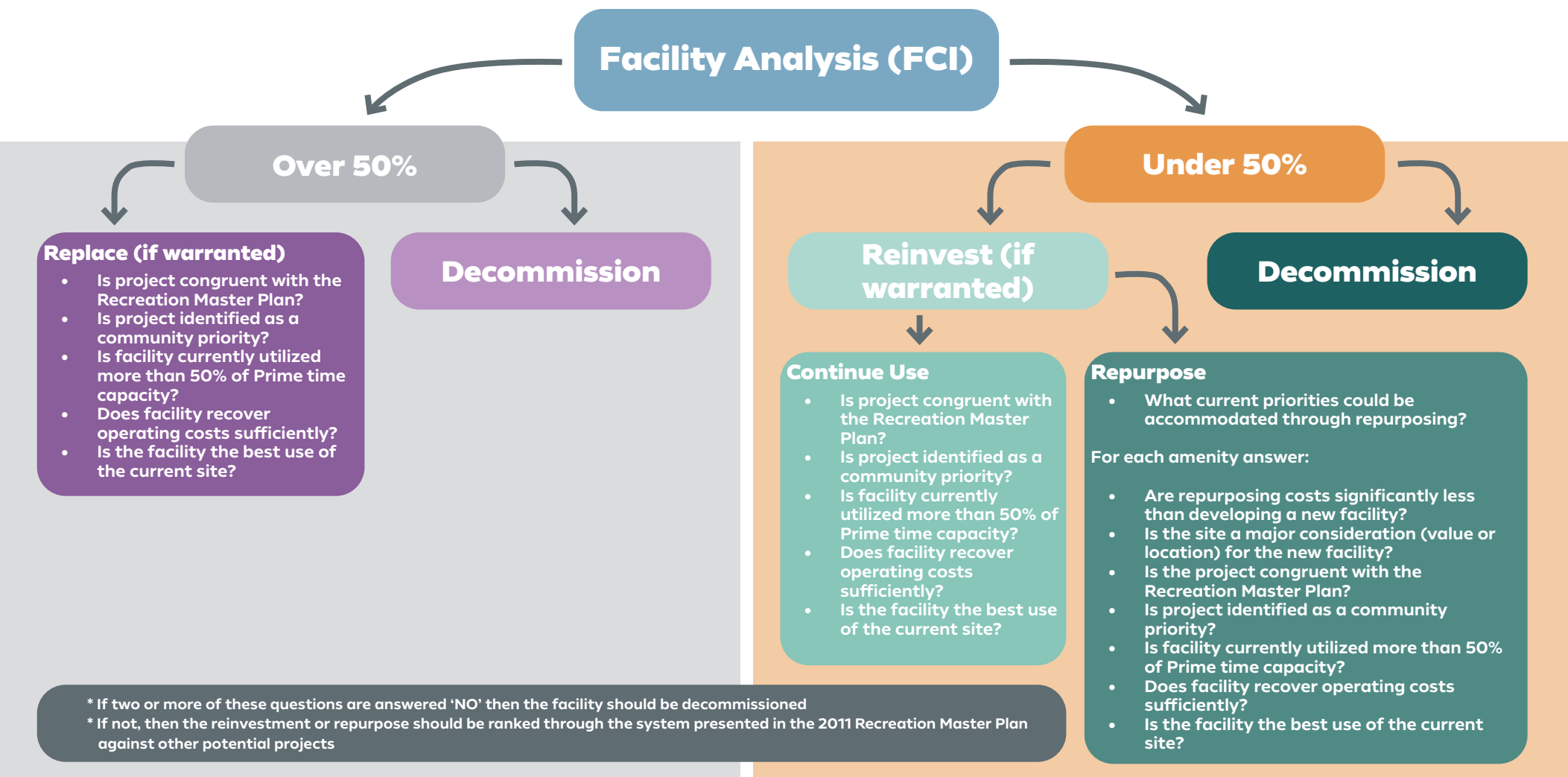
The last, and perhaps most important consideration is that of community priorities. The intent of the City is to use public funds to provide recreation facilities that meet majority demands in the City. If underutilized facilities are being funded at the expense of the City being able to provide infrastructure of higher community priority, repurposing or decommissioning may be warranted in order to reallocate existing allocated funds. Conversely if underutilized facilities are indicated as high community priorities the City may opt to continue to support them regardless of the fact that utilization is low.

It has to be recognized that all facilities in the City may not have the critical market mass or resources necessary to be sustainable in the future. That being said, the role of the City in determining the feasibility of recreation infrastructure operations and levels of support required by the City has to be conducted in a transparent equitable and diligent manner. As the City has limited resources in operating facilities it must do so in a way that leverages public funding while meeting as much community need as possible. For instance, it may not be feasible to operate a facility that services 1,000 residents.

The following approach outlines the steps associated with determining if a facility should be decommissioned, repurposed or upgraded for sustained use.

Content taken from the 2011 Recreation Master Plan, RC Strategies





In order to implement the approach and analyze projects, the questions posed need to be answered by either administration, community members or a combination thereof. In order to do so, it is recommended that an ad hoc task force be convened every time the future decommissioning or repurposing of a major recreation resource (replacement value of \$1M or beyond) is being contemplated.

This task force would have a holistic perspective of broad community need and, if it included members of the public, could include impacted residents or groups as well as those groups or residents that may not have had their needs met if major reinvestment in an existing facility is to occur.

Content taken from the 2011 Recreation Master Plan, RC Strategies



# Series 1 Display Panels





# what is the project?



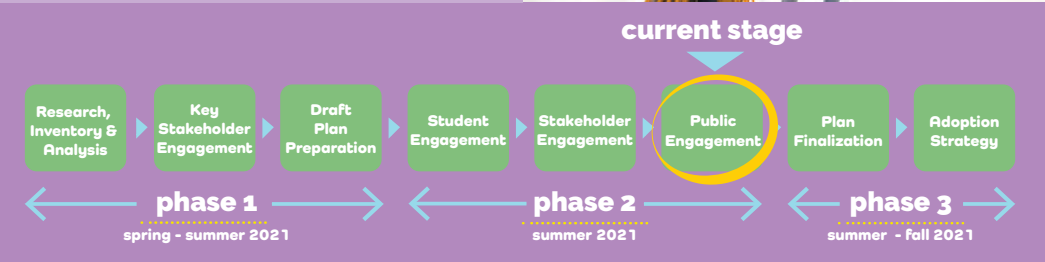
The City of Medicine Hat is embarking on developing an up-to-date Parks & Recreation Master Plan. This plan will guide operational and capital programming decisions for providing facilities and programs to Medicine Hat residents and visitors.



# what is a master plan?

A master plan is a long-term planning document that provides a guide to future growth and development. Master plans require updates as a community and its needs change. Medicine Hat is currently updating its Parks and Recreation Master Plan as it was last updated over ten years ago.

# what is the timeline?



If you have any questions regarding the project please contact Scott Richter at [scoric@medicinehat.ca](mailto:scoric@medicinehat.ca), or 403.502.8065

# want to learn more?



The current project status, updates and opportunities for engagement can all be found on ShapeYourCity! Scan the QR code below or visit [www.shapeyourcity.medicinehat.ca](http://www.shapeyourcity.medicinehat.ca) to learn more about the project.



# complete the survey!

As part of this up-to-date Parks & Recreation Master Plan, we are looking for your input. Scan the QR code or head to [www.shapeyourcity.medicinehat.ca](http://www.shapeyourcity.medicinehat.ca) to complete the survey and provide your feedback on the proposed changes and priorities. All information collected will directly shape the final plan!



# want to be involved?



In order to collect even more public feedback on the preliminary recommendations of the plan, we are holding a number of pop-up tent displays. Come talk to us about the plan!

SAT JULY 31:	SUN AUG 1:	SAT AUG 28:	SUN AUG 29:
8am - 12pm @ STRATHCONA ISLAND PARK	8am - 12pm @ ECHO DALE REGIONAL PARK	8am - 12pm @ KIN COULEE PARK	8am - 12pm @ KIWANIS CENTRAL PARK
1pm - 5pm @ MEDICINE HAT EXHIBITION & STAMPEDE	1pm - 5pm @ KIN COULEE PARK	1pm - 5pm @ MEDICINE HAT RECREATION EXPERIENCE (ECHO DALE)	1pm - 5pm @ MEDICINE HAT RIBFEST (MURRAY CHEVY)

indoor facilities



outdoor facilities





# how does medicine hat stack up?

Medicine Hat has...

2.0km of walking and cycling pathways per 1000 residents



more than 2x

the median of compared communities (0.92km per 1000 residents)

25.4 hectares of parkland per 1000 residents



nearly 4x

the median of compared communities (6.9 hectares per 1000 residents)

7.3 playgrounds per 1000 residents



more than 2x

the median of compared communities (3.3 playgrounds per 1000 residents)

1 aquatic facility per 10,833 residents



more than 3x

the median of compared communities (1 aquatic facility per 38,500 residents)

1 indoor rink per 10,833 residents



nearly 4x

the median of compared communities (1 indoor ice rink per 40,000 residents)

Statistics courtesy of Yardstick Global & Municipality websites.

Comparison communities utilized are: City of Red Deer, City of Edmonton, City of Calgary, City of Coquitlam, City of Richmond, City of Kitchener and City of Surrey.



## public survey

### start here:

What age range best describes you?

- A - Under 18
- B - 18-34
- C - 35-44
- D - 45-54
- E - 55-64
- F - 65+
- G - Prefer not to say

Which of the following statements best describes you?

- A - I am a resident of Medicine Hat
- B - I am a resident of a neighbouring community in Cypress County (i.e., Red Deer, etc.)
- C - I am not a resident of Medicine Hat or Cypress County

Have you been involved in any local organizations or clubs? Examples include Boy Scouts of Canada, Kinsmen Club of Medicine Hat, Medicine Hat Hockey Hounds, Medicine Hat Photography Club, Youth Advisory Board, or any other organized group or club in the City of Medicine Hat.

- A - Yes
- B - No

IF YES,

What clubs or organizations have you been involved in?

- A - Financial (it is too expensive to be involved)
- B - lack of available time due to other commitments
- C - I have other interests that I fill my free time with
- D - the clubs and organizations currently offered do not interest me
- E - other (please specify)

Providing a system of recreational amenities and programs for people of all ages, abilities and perspectives is essential. Do you feel that any certain group is under-accommodated in Medicine Hat?

- A - Yes
- B - No

IF YES,

What group is currently under-accommodated? What can be done to improve on the inclusion of all people?

Have you actively volunteered in the City of Medicine Hat within the last three (3) years?

- A - Yes
- B - No

IF YES,

What was your role as a volunteer?

What would encourage you to volunteer or volunteer more often?

- A - Advertising of volunteer opportunities
- C - Exclusive perks for volunteers
- D - Clearer explanation on the role / expectation of volunteers
- E - Quicker / easier volunteer application process
- F - More free time in my schedule
- G - Nothing, I'm happy with how it is
- H - Other (please specify)

The previous parks and recreation master plan completed in 2011 identified the following top 18 recreation priorities for indoor recreational activities. What would your top 8 priorities be from this list?

Rank	Recreation Priority
1	Indoor swimming pool
2	Indoor cycling
3	Indoor basketball
4	Indoor soccer
5	Indoor tennis
6	Indoor hockey
7	Indoor climbing
8	Indoor skating
9	Indoor golf
10	Indoor badminton
11	Indoor table tennis
12	Indoor volleyball
13	Indoor martial arts
14	Indoor archery
15	Indoor shooting
16	Indoor fishing
17	Indoor horseback riding
18	Indoor skiing

The previous parks and recreation master plan completed in 2011 identified the following top 18 recreation priorities for outdoor recreational activities. What would your top 8 priorities be from this list?

Rank	Recreation Priority
1	Walking and cycling paths
2	Parkland
3	Playgrounds
4	Sports fields
5	Trails
6	Swimming
7	Hiking
8	Fishing
9	Archery
10	Shooting
11	Table tennis
12	Badminton
13	Volleyball
14	Baseball/softball
15	Golf
16	Ice skating
17	Winter sports
18	Other

Are there any indoor or outdoor recreation amenities / programs that are not listed above that you think should be a priority in Medicine Hat?

This Plan classifies open space in five categories that range in composition, scale and types of use, including:

- City-wide destinations, such as Police Point Park or multiplex facilities (like the FLC);
- Neighbourhood hubs, such as sports fields;
- Local amenities, such as small parks with playgrounds;
- Urban experiences, such as the 2nd Street streetscape in Medicine Hat, known as "The Entertainment District"; and
- Urban escapes, such as undeveloped areas of the South Saskatchewan River's valley.

Please rank each type of open space from 1 to 10 to score the level of service.

- 1 = Under-served and in need of amenities and programs at this scale
- 5 = No changes needed, this scale is well-served, but not over-served
- 10 = Over-served, there are too many amenities and programs at this scale.

When developing recreational sites there are two schools of thought: single large, or several small. Single large typically represents multi-use recreation sites which service a larger area, have several amenities and offer best value to the community in which they serve. While on the other hand, several small typically represents single-use site which serve a smaller area and only offer one amenity per site.

Which of the following considerations do you value when deciding upon developing large sites with many amenities in one place, versus singular use sites dispersed all around the City?

- A - Proximity to each resident
- B - Best value for taxpayers
- C - Convenience (can access many amenities in one place)
- D - Offering amenities currently not found in Medicine Hat
- E - Quantity of facilities
- F - Quality of facilities
- G - Other (please specify)

Which of the following indoor recreational amenities do you believe MUST be accessible by walking or biking (within a 10-minute walk) opposed to needing to take a vehicle? (Select all that apply).

Indoor Recreational Amenities	Must be accessible by walking or biking
Indoor swimming pool	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor cycling	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor basketball	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor soccer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor tennis	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor hockey	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor climbing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor skating	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor golf	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor badminton	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor table tennis	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor volleyball	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor martial arts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor archery	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor shooting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor fishing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor horseback riding	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor skiing	<input type="checkbox"/>

Which of the following outdoor recreational amenities do you believe MUST be accessible by walking or biking (within a 10-minute walk) opposed to needing to take a vehicle? (Select all that apply).

Outdoor Recreational Amenities	Must be accessible by walking or biking
Walking and cycling paths	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parkland	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports fields	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trails	<input type="checkbox"/>
Swimming	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hiking	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fishing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Archery	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shooting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Table tennis	<input type="checkbox"/>
Badminton	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volleyball	<input type="checkbox"/>
Baseball/softball	<input type="checkbox"/>
Golf	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ice skating	<input type="checkbox"/>
Winter sports	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

A leading recreational trend is the increased popularity of unstructured, or spontaneous, recreation.

Below are four types of open space, programmed + manicured, unprogrammed + manicured, semi-naturalized and naturalized. If you only had \$100 to spend developing and maintaining all four of these types of open space, how would you allocate your funding?

- A - Programmed + Manicured (sports fields, ball diamonds, playgrounds, etc.)
- B - Unprogrammed + Manicured (open lawn spaces for flying kites, gathering, etc.)
- C - Semi-Naturalized (walking trails through a forest or grassland, etc.)
- D - Naturalized (untouched natural areas to experience or look as B learn about)

An important part of recreation is the inclusion of unprogrammed places for spontaneous play. What are some great places in the City for spontaneous play?

An important part of recreation is the inclusion of programmed places for structured play. What are some great places in the City for structured play?

Have you ever rented a facility or space for the purpose of recreation in Medicine Hat?

- A - Yes
- B - No

IF YES,

What is your level of satisfaction with the rental program? (i.e., was the rental process easy and user-friendly, was there facility availability to accommodate your rental request, etc.)

- A - Very satisfied
- B - Satisfied
- C - Somewhat satisfied
- D - Dissatisfied
- E - Very dissatisfied

IF YES,

How could your facility rental experience have been improved?

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which of the following statements best describes your intent to participate in recreational groups or organizations following the pandemic?

- A - I am going to participate less than I did prior to the pandemic
- B - I am going to participate the same as I did prior to the pandemic
- C - I am going to participate more than I did prior to the pandemic

How can we better plan facilities and amenities to be more resilient should a similar pandemic ever happen again?

Finish this statement, in the context of parks and recreation in Medicine Hat. You can do this once, or as many times with different words and / or phrases as you like.

The most defining characteristic of Medicine Hat is \_\_\_\_\_ which provides an excellent opportunity to \_\_\_\_\_

Should Medicine Hat transition from meeting the recreational needs of its residents and nearby neighbours to going to another level of becoming more regionally or nationally recognized as a recreation and events destination?

- A - Yes
- B - No

IF YES,

What could Medicine Hat be a regionally or nationally recognized destination for?

thank you!



# Series 2 Display Panels





# what is the project?



The City of Medicine Hat is embarking on developing an up-to-date Parks & Recreation Master Plan. This plan will guide operational and capital programming decisions for providing facilities and programs to Medicine Hat residents and visitors.

# want to learn more?



The current project status, updates and opportunities for engagement can all be found on ShapeYourCity! To learn more about the project scan the QR code or visit [www.shapeyourcity.medicinehat.ca](http://www.shapeyourcity.medicinehat.ca).



# what is a master plan?



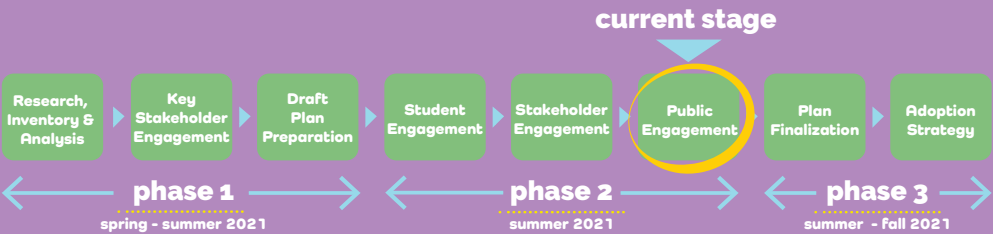
A master plan is a long-term planning document that provides a guide to future growth and development. Master plans require updates as a community and its needs change. Medicine Hat is currently updating its Parks and Recreation Master Plan as it was last updated over ten years ago.

# did we get it right?



As part of this up-to-date Parks & Recreation Master Plan, we are looking for your input. All feedback received will help shape the recommendations of the plan. In the coming days the public survey results will be highlighted on ShapeYourCity. Let us know if we got it right!

# what is the timeline?



If you have any questions regarding the project please contact Scott Richter at [scoric@medicinehat.ca](mailto:scoric@medicinehat.ca), or 403.502.8065

# want to be involved?



In order to collect even more public feedback to shape the recommendations of the plan, we are holding a number of pop-up tent displays. Come talk to us about the plan and see the results of the public survey! Have your say - do the results represent your views?

SATURDAY AUGUST 28:

9am - 12pm @  
KIWANIS CENTRAL PARK

1pm - 4pm @  
MEDICINE HAT RECREATION EXPERIENCE  
(ECHO DALE REGIONAL PARK)

SUNDAY AUGUST 29:

10am - 12pm @  
FAMILY LEISURE CENTRE

1pm - 4pm @  
MEDICINE HAT RIBFEST  
(MURRAY CHEVY)



## how we got here

The listed priorities for recreation are the direct result all engagement to-date. This engagement program included:

- 1** Internal Staff Workshop
- 170** Stakeholder groups invited to online workshops
- 4** Pop-up tent sessions at various public venues
- 400** Responses to the public survey

do the resulting priorities represent your views?

## priorities for recreation

	then (2011)	vs	now (2021)
indoor amenities	indoor field facilities	1	leisure swimming pools
	fitness / wellness facilities	2	fitness / wellness facilities
	walking / running track	3	walking / running track
	gymnasium type spaces	4	indoor child play
	ice arena facilities	5	leisure ice surfaces
	leisure swimming pools	6	indoor ice facilities
	20m swimming tank	7	climbing wall
	skateboard park	8	indoor field facilities
	racquet sport court	9	gymnasium type spaces
	leisure ice surfaces	10	skateboard park
	community meeting rooms	11	racquet sport court
	climbing wall	12	20m swimming tank
	program rooms	13	program rooms
	indoor child play	14	curling rinks
	curling rinks	15	community meeting rooms
	spectator seating & offices at FLC	16	social / banquet facilities
	pickleball areas	17	spectator seating & offices at FLC
	social / banquet facilities	18	pickleball arenas

	then (2011)	vs	now (2021)
outdoor amenities	soccer sports facilities	1	pool
	dog off-leash areas	2	water playgrounds
	picnic and kitchen areas	3	picnic and kitchen areas
	water playgrounds	4	dog off-leash areas
	ball diamonds	5	mountain bike parks
	mountain bike parks	6	outdoor fitness equipment
	pool	7	skateboard park
	skateboard park	8	ball diamonds
	highboard skating rinks	9	soccer sports facilities
	outdoor fitness equipment	10	BMX bicycle parks
	artificial turf sports field	11	highboard skating rinks
	tennis courts	12	tennis courts
	ATV / dirt bike parks	13	beach volleyball courts
	track & field spaces	14	track & field spaces
	beach volleyball courts	15	ATV / dirt bike parks
	BMX bicycle parks	16	artificial turf sports field
	football sports fields	17	cricket sports field
	cricket sports fields	18	football sports field

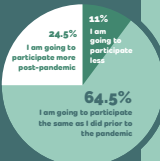




# public survey results

## return to recreation:

**89%** Majority of respondents plan to participate in recreation the same or more than they did before the pandemic.



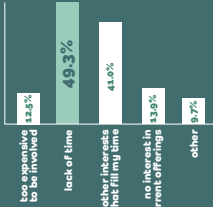
## best places for spontaneous play in the city:



Over-Arching Question	Supporting Survey Responses	How This Influences the Plan
<b>A</b> What sets us apart - what is authentic to Medicine Hat, and how does this influence a parks and recreation master plan or any other related planning initiative?	The most common themes identified include the diversity of natural landscapes, warm and sunny weather, trails and opportunities to connect with nature.	Need to preserve natural area experiences and take advantage of warmer weather by encouraging outdoor activities. Natural area experiences should be promoted to leverage on this significant local attribute.
<b>B</b> There are different scales of recreational amenities - five identified in this plan, ranging from city-wide destinations to natural areas / urban escapes. Is the City under or over served in any of the categories identified?	For all five categories, 50% or more respondents are satisfied with availability. None were identified as being over-provided, while the ones found most under-provided included 'urban escapes' (26%) and 'neighbourhood hubs' (24%).	There is no need to focus on increasing or decreasing the availability of any of the five categories identified.
<b>C</b> What are the greatest impediments for people to be active - through recreation, volunteering or socialization?	People are busy! 49% of respondents lack available time due to other commitments, and 41% have other interests already filling their available time. The types of volunteering and organizations identified were very diverse. 45% would volunteer more if they had more time, and 39% would like volunteer opportunities better advertised. For those who rent facilities, only 5% are dissatisfied with the program in place for booking. Post-pandemic, only 11% of respondents feel less compelled to participate in recreational activities, showing that COVID-19 will not be a lasting impediment.	Need to provide opportunities for unstructured, spontaneous recreation that does not require regular schedule. More individual activities, less focus on programmed team activities. Volunteer commitments may need to be short duration to aid those with less available time, and a better means of promoting available volunteer opportunities is needed. No need to change the way in which facility bookings are being done, however should keep a pulse on more innovative systems.

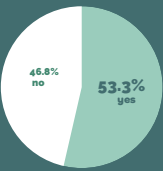
## barriers to participation in recreation:

**49.3%** The greatest barrier to participation is lack of time due to other commitments.



## volunteering:

**53.3%** More than half of the survey respondents have actively volunteered in the City in the past 3 years.



# public survey results

Over-Arching Question	Supporting Survey Responses	How This Influences the Plan
<b>D</b> How have the trends in recreation - generalized by the types of activities that are most prioritized - changed since the last master plan in 2011, and how do they compare regionally and nationally?	Indoor and outdoor swimming, water parks are at the top of the list, followed by outdoor activities like picnic areas, off-leash dog parks, mountain biking and outdoor fitness equipment and indoor activities such as fitness and wellness facilities, walking / running tracks, indoor child play, leisure ice and climbing walls. Lowest indoor activities include spectator seating, pickleball and curling, and lowest outdoor activities include cricket, football, artificial turf sports and ATV / dirt bike parks. When asked if Medicine Hat should focus on local needs versus a shift to be a more regionally or nationally recognized destination for recreation, 41% felt that Medicine Hat should shift toward a more regional and national status.	There is a strong affinity for water, both for exercise and play. Both indoor and outdoor pools are trending. The highest priority activities are generally individual pursuits that do not require teams or scheduled times. This is very consistent with regional and national trends. There should be more of an emphasis on accommodating local recreational needs versus efforts to make Medicine Hat more regionally or nationally known for recreational events.
<b>E</b> Recreation is offered to residents in many shapes, forms and scales - from someone people-watching while walking on a downtown sidewalk to an unguided and spontaneous mountain bike ride through a natural area. Are there any types of recreational experience that are over-served, or under-served? Are people of certain physical ability or age group that are under-accommodated? Is there an abundance or a deficiency in a certain type of recreational venue?	Half of all respondents feel there are groups under-served. While dozens of groups were identified, the most common groups were low-income, those who rely on public transit, people with disabilities and young families. Very little mention of a lack of senior-friendly activities, however only 9% of respondents were above the age of 65. When asked how to distribute funding amongst manicured (formal) or naturalized open space, generally a balanced approach was preferred, supporting all equally. When asked for great places for structured and for unstructured play, numerous locations were identified with no common themes or prominent places provided.	Need to improve on programs and activities for those with limited mobility and make certain programs and amenities more accessible to low-income individuals. The City should establish and promote low- to no-cost options for recreation, not just the activity itself but also supporting the ability for people to get to their destination. Subsidized transportation to certain recreational amenities should be considered. As for availability of different types of recreational experiences, none are over- or under-served and there is overwhelming evidence of satisfaction.
<b>F</b> As recreational infrastructure ages and requires retrofitting or replacement, what should the criteria be to make these decisions? Is the traditional model of dispersing recreational amenities throughout the City still appropriate, or are other models that consolidates activities and offers multi-faceted facilities more suited to our economic and social climate?	The three most common responses were quality of facilities (63%), proximity to each resident (54%) and offering amenities currently not in the City (45%); the three least common responses included quantity of facilities (26%), convenience of many activities in one place (40%) and best value for taxpayers (42%). The top three indoor activities preferred to be within walking distance of home included leisure swimming pools, fitness / wellness facilities and indoor child play; top three outdoor activities included water playgrounds, pools and off-leash dog areas.	Respondents prefer that their most desired amenities be close to their home. The ones most preferred to be within walking distance are also the highest rated activities, meaning people prefer to not spend time driving to the activities they prefer most. Respondents prefer higher quality amenities than quantity available - so long as they are close to their homes. High-quality public spaces should be located within the most densely populated areas where possible.

# Project Stakeholders





## Project Stakeholders:

5th Avenue United Church

### **670 Mountain Bike Collective**

Adult Basketball

Advisory Committee on Disability Issues

Alberta Environment and Parks

Alberta Health Services (Public Health)

### **Alberta Health Services (Injury Prevention)**

Alberta Health Services (Nutrition)

Alberta Health Services (Geriatrics, Bariatrics, Cardiac Rehab,  
Cancer, Diabetes, Health promotion)

AMAC

### **Alberta Pound & Rescue (APARC)**

Arnold Baron Hockey Team

Average Joe's Mens Hockey League

Beach Volleyball League

Big Brothers/Big Sisters

BMX

Boy Scouts of Canada Riverside #8

Canadian Fertilizers Hockey Team

Canalta Centre

Catholic Mini-Volleyball League

City Centre Development Agency

Church Slowpitch League

Communities in Bloom

Community Pop-up Garden

Community View Lions Club

Connaught Golf and Country Club

CORE

Cows and Fish - Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society

Crescent Heights High School

Cross Country

Cypress County

Cypress School of Skating

Cypress View Foundation

Dragon Boating Association

DSCL Farm (Echo Dale Farm Interpretive Program)

Ewart Duggan House

Gas City Ball Hockey League

Gas City Ball Hockey League

### **Gas City Canine Cruisers**

Gas City Mixed Slowpitch Association

Girl Guides

Golf (Advantage Academy)

Good Samaritan Society South Ridge Village

### **Habitat for Humanity**

Historical Society OF Medicine Hat and District

Heritage Resources Committee

High School Football - Rangeland

Horseshoe Club

Jr. High Football

Kevin Sureman Hockey Team

Kinsmen Club of Medicine Hat

Lions Club

Madd Hatters Running Club

**Bolded Text** = Stakeholder Group Attended Workshop

Meadowlands Retirement Residence

Medicine Hat Sport & Social Club - Dodge Ball

Medicine Hat Accommodation Association

**Medicine Hat Adaptive Sports and Recreation**

Medicine Hat Badminton Club

Medicine Hat Ballroom Dance Club

Medicine Hat Big League Baseball

Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education

Medicine Hat Christian School

Medicine Hat College

Medicine Hat College Athletics

Medicine Hat College Science Department

Medicine Hat Community Housing

Medicine Hat Cricket Club

**Medicine Hat Curling Club**

Medicine Hat Destination Marking Organization (DMO)

**Medicine Hat Sport and Event Council (MHSEC)**

Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede Company

Medicine Hat Family Services Medicine Hat Female Hockey Association

Medicine Hat Fish and Game

Medicine Hat Food Bank

Medicine Hat Golf Club

**Medicine Hat Hockey Hounds**

**Medicine Hat Interpretive Program**

Medicine Hat Junior-B Cubs

Medicine Hat Kiwanis Club

Medicine Hat Lacrosse Association

Medicine Hat Lacrosse - Jr. Sun Devils

Medicine Hat Lawn Bowling Club

Medicine Hat Little League Association

Medicine Hat Masters Hockey League

Medicine Hat Mavericks

Medicine Hat Mens Ball Hockey League

Medicine Hat Men's Hockey Association

Medicine Hat Minor Hockey

**Medicine Hat Minor Softball Association**

Medicine Hat Oldtimer's 35+ League

Medicine Hat Photography Club

Medicine Hat Paddling Club

**Medicine Hat Paralympic Sports Association**

Medicine Hat Pickle Ball Association

Medicine Hat Ringette Association

Medicine Hat Rotary Club

Medicine Hat Rugby - Ogres (Adult)

Medicine Hat Rugby Development Association

Medicine Hat Running Club

Medicine Hat School District # 76

Medicine Hat Senior Men's Slowpitch

Medicine Hat Senior Mens Soccer League

**Medicine Hat Skateboard Association**

Medicine Hat Skating Club

Medicine Hat Soccer Association

Medicine Hat South East Athletic Club

Medicine Hat SPCA

Medicine Hat Speed Skating

**Medicine Hat Squash Association**

Medicine Hat Table Tennis Club

**Bolded Text** = Stakeholder Group Attended Workshop



Medicine Hat Tackle Football

Medicine Hat Tennis Club

Medicine Hat Tigers

**Medicine Hat Tourism**

Medicine Hat Track Association

**Medicine Hat Ultimate Disc Sport Association**

Medicine Hat Volleyball Association

Medicine Hat Water Polo

Medicine Hat Women's Shelter

Mid Life Sr. Mens Slowpitch

**Miywasin Friendship Centre**

Mother Puckers Hockey Team

Notre Dame Hockey Academy

Notre Dame School

Palliser Airshed

Rangeland Football

Rangers Basketball Club

Recreational Slowpitch League

REDI Enterprises

Ringette - SMASH

Saamis Immigration Services Association

Saamis Rotary Club

Salvation Army

Senior Ladies Soccer League

Sledge Hockey

**Society of Grasslands Naturalists**

**South Alberta Pop-Up Parks Association**

South Country Village

South East Alberta Volleyball Club

**South East Alberta Watershed Alliance (SEAWA)**

**South East Hill Neighbourhood Association**

South Ridge Recreation and Wellness Centre (South Ridge YMCA)

Southview Manor

St Josephs/Hospice Society

The Kinette Club of Medicine Hat

TigerSharks

Tiny Tot Soccer

Town of Redcliff

Waves

Woolfrey Family (Woolfrey House at Echo Dale)

Wellington Retirement Residences

YMCA

Youth Action Committee

Medicine Hat Squash Association

Primary Care Network

Medicine Hat Public Library Board

McMan Youth Family and Community Services Association (South Region)

Dunmore Equestrian Centre

Bird Watching Group

Working Group for Accessibility and Inclusion

**Community Vibrancy Advisory Board**

Combative Sports Commission

Chamber of Commerce

Senior Citizens Advisory Committee

**Bike Medicine Hat**

Roller Derby

**Bolded Text** = Stakeholder Group Attended Workshop

# Endnotes

- 1 Fitness Canada. National Recreation Statement, September 1987. Current July 2021, sourced from <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/departments/thc-tpc/pdf/sportrecreation-sportloisirs/nationalrecreationstatement.pdf>
- 2 Sourced on July 2, 2021 from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensem-ent/2016>
- 3 City of Medicine Hat 2020 Municipal Development Plan, 7.
- 4 Natural Regions Committee 2006. Natural Regions and Subregions of Alberta. Compiled by D.J. Downing and W.W. Pettapiece. Government of Alberta. Pub. No. T/852. 9accessed 17 July 2020].
- 5 Statistics Canada data, current to 2016. Sourced from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016>
- 6 Source: Government of Alberta. The Spirit of Alberta. Alberta's Cultural Policy. Released August 1, 2009. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/ac5d84b2-53dd-48aa-b6db-5949ac895bce/resource/d8a26cd3-d72d-479b-b3c0-54c7228afb71/download/4184331-culture-alberta-cultural-policy-reprinted-august-2009.pdf>
- 7 Tri-Area Intermunicipal Development Plan. Prepared by Cypress County, Town of Redcliff, City of Medicine Hat. 2004.
- 8 Playground Centre. (2021). Unstructured Vs Structured Play. <https://www.playgroundcentre.com/unstructured-vs-structured-play/?region=au>
- 9 Ahrens, L. (2020, January 14). Why Kids Need Unstructured Play to Thrive. Park Place Recreation Designs. <https://www.miracleparkplace.com/blog/why-kids-need-unstructured-play-to-thrive/>
- 10 Ahrens, L. (2020, January 14). Why Kids Need Unstructured Play to Thrive. Park Place Recreation Designs. <https://www.miracleparkplace.com/blog/why-kids-need-unstructured-play-to-thrive/>







- 11 Hennig, C. (2017, July 21). The lost art of play: No resilience without risk, says researcher. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/lost-art-of-play-risk-and-resilience-1.4215306>
- 12 City of Calgary. (n.d.). Physical Literacy: What is physical literacy?. <https://www.calgary.ca/csps/recreation/physical-literacy.html>
- 13 City of Medicine Hat. (n.d.). Physical Literacy. <https://www.medicinehat.ca/government/departments/parks-and-recreation/family-leisure-centre-flc/physical-literacy>
- 14 Alberta Recreation and Parks Association. (~n.d.). Programs: Physical Literacy and You (PLAY): About Physical Literacy. <https://arpaonline.ca/program/play/physical-literacy/>
- 15 Johnson, L. (2016, November 16). Canadian kids among least active in the world, report card finds. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/canadian-kids-among-least-active-in-world-1.3853347>
- 16 University of Jyväskylä. (2019, April 8). Decline in physical activity of ten starts as early as age 7. ScienceDaily. [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/04/190408113959.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/04/190408113959.htm)
- 17 John Hopkins Medicine. (n.d.). Risks of Physical Activity. <https://www.hopkins-medicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/risks-of-physical-inactivity>
- 18 World Health Organization. (2020, November 26). Physical Activity. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>
- 19 John Hopkins Medicine. (n.d.). Risks of Physical Activity. <https://www.hopkins-medicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/risks-of-physical-inactivity>
- 20 Brownson, R. C., Boehmer, T. K., & Luke, D. A. (2005). Declining rates of physical activity in the United States: what are the contributors?. Annual review of public health, 26, 421–443. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.publhealth.26.021304.144437>
- 21 Kellert, S. R., & Wilson, E. O. (Eds.). (1993). The biophilia hypothesis. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- 22 Berto, R. (2005). Exposure to restorative environments helps restore attentional capacity. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 25, 249–259.

23 Kaplan, R. (2001). The nature of the view from home: Psychological benefits. *Environmental and Behavior*, 33, 507-542.

24 Hartig, T., Kaiser, F.G., & Bowler, P.A. (2001). Psychological restoration in nature as a positive motivation for ecological behavior. *Environment and Behavior*, 33(4), 590-607.

25 Orsega-Smith, E., Mowen, A., Payne, L., Godbey, G. (2004) The interaction of stress and park use on psycho-physiological health in older adults. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 36(2), 232-256.

26 Swanson, B. (n.d.). Youth Sports Participation By the Numbers. Active Network, LLC. <https://www.activekids.com/football/articles/youth-sports-participation-by-the-numbers>

27 Swanson, B. (n.d.). Youth Sports Participation By the Numbers. Active Network, LLC. <https://www.activekids.com/football/articles/youth-sports-participation-by-the-numbers>

28 Swanson, B. (n.d.). Youth Sports Participation By the Numbers. Active Network, LLC. <https://www.activekids.com/football/articles/youth-sports-participation-by-the-numbers>

29 Swanson, B. (n.d.). Youth Sports Participation By the Numbers. Active Network, LLC. <https://www.activekids.com/football/articles/youth-sports-participation-by-the-numbers>

30 Government of Canada. (2021, January 7). Sport Participation. Government of Canada.

31 Kirchheimer, S. (n.d.), Overscheduled Child May Lead to a Bored Teen. Grow by WebMD. <https://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/overscheduled-child-may-lead-to-bored-teen>

32 Kirchheimer, S. (n.d.), Overscheduled Child May Lead to a Bored Teen. Grow by WebMD. <https://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/overscheduled-child-may-lead-to-bored-teen>

33 Kirchheimer, S. (n.d.), Overscheduled Child May Lead to a Bored Teen. Grow by WebMD. <https://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/overscheduled-child-may-lead-to-bored-teen>







- 34 Hennig, C. (2017, July 18). The lost art of play: how overscheduling makes children anxious. CBC News.
- 35 World Health Organization. (2011). Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health. <https://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/global-pa-recs-2010.pdf>
- 36 Government of Canada (2019, November 7). Physical activity tips for older adults (65 years and older). <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/physical-activity-tips-older-adults-65-years-older.html>
- 37 Rainey, J. & Jones, D.L. (2017). A Performance Scorecard for Parks and Recreation. The Leading Edge Newsletter(Summer 2017). GreenPlay LLC. <https://rrs.cnr.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/performance-scorecard-article-v2.pdf>
- 38 Rainey, J. & Jones, D.L. (2017). A Performance Scorecard for Parks and Recreation. The Leading Edge Newsletter(Summer 2017). GreenPlay LLC. <https://rrs.cnr.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/performance-scorecard-article-v2.pdf>
- 39 Green, J. (2018, November 10). Parks Are a Critical Solution to Climate Change. The Dirt. <https://dirt.asla.org/2018/10/11/parks-are-a-critical-solution-to-climate-change/>
- 40 Gibbens, S. (2019, May 21). As the climate crisis worsens, cities turn to parks. National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/climate-crisis-cities-turn-to-parks>
- 41 Askew, A. E., Bowker, J. M. (2018). Impacts of Climate Change on Outdoor Recreation Participation: Outlook to 2060. The Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, 36(2). <https://doi.org/10.18666/JPra-2018-V36-I2-8316>
- 42 Stapleton, B. (2019, February 6). The Digital Transformation of Parks and Rec. National Recreation and Park Association. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/february/the-digital-transformation-of-parks-and-rec/>
- 43 Lumen. (n.d.). Recent Changes in Family Structure. Lumen Candela. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-sociology/chapter/recent-changes-in-family-structure/>
- 44 Pew Research Center. (2015, December 17). Parenting in America: 1. The American Family Today. Pew Research Center Social & Demographic Trends. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/12/17/1-the-american-family-today/>

45 Lumen. (n.d.). Recent Changes in Family Structure. Lumen Candela. <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-sociology/chapter/recent-changes-in-family-structure/>

46 Pew Research Center. (2015, December 17). Parenting in America: 1. The American Family Today. Pew Research Center Social & Demographic Trends. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/12/17/1-the-american-family-to-day/>

47 Pew Research Center. (2015, December 17). Parenting in America: 1. The American Family Today. Pew Research Center Social & Demographic Trends. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/12/17/1-the-american-family-to-day/>

48 Bridges, J. (n.d.). Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Trends for 2021. Everfi. <https://everfi.com/blog/workplace-training/5-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-trends/>

49 Ricci, S. (2020, December 23). 3 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Trends in Store for 2021. Ideal. <https://ideal.com/diversity-equity-inclusion-trends/>

50 Government of Canada. (2020, December 15). Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525>

51 National Recreation and Parks Association. (n.d.). Role of Parks and Recreation on Health and Wellness. <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/three-pillars/role-of-parks-and-recreation-on-health-and-wellness/>

52 National Recreation and Parks Association. (n.d.). Role of Parks and Recreation on Health and Wellness. <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/three-pillars/role-of-parks-and-recreation-on-health-and-wellness/>

53 National Recreation and Parks Association. (n.d.). Role of Parks and Recreation on Health and Wellness. <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/three-pillars/role-of-parks-and-recreation-on-health-and-wellness/>

54 Domber, R. (2019, November 27). Trends in Travel and Tourism 2020. DCI. <https://aboutdci.com/2019/11/trends-in-travel-and-tourism-2020/>

55 Domber, R. (2019, November 27). Trends in Travel and Tourism 2020. DCI. <https://aboutdci.com/2019/11/trends-in-travel-and-tourism-2020/>







- 56 Barth, D. (2020, October 29). A New Approach to Parks and Recreation System Planning. Parks & Recreation: NRPA's monthly magazine. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/november/a-new-approach-to-parks-and-recreation-system-planning/>
- 57 Barth, D. (2020, October 29). A New Approach to Parks and Recreation System Planning. Parks & Recreation: NRPA's monthly magazine. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/november/a-new-approach-to-parks-and-recreation-system-planning/>
- 58 Barth, D. (2020, October 29). A New Approach to Parks and Recreation System Planning. Parks & Recreation: NRPA's monthly magazine. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/november/a-new-approach-to-parks-and-recreation-system-planning/>
- 59 Schmieder, J. (n.d.) 11 Sports Industry Trends for 2020. Sports Planning Guide. <https://sportsplanningguide.com/11-sports-industry-trends-for-2020/>
- 60 Hopkins, O. (n.d.). 2020 Sports Industry Trends. Stats Perform. <https://www.statsperform.com/resource/2020-sport-industry-trends/>
- 61 Hopkins, O. (n.d.). 2020 Sports Industry Trends. Stats Perform. <https://www.statsperform.com/resource/2020-sport-industry-trends/>
- 62 Bynum, M. (2007, August). Sustainability Moves into the Mainstream of Recreation Facility Design. Athletic Business. <https://www.athleticbusiness.com/rec-center/sustainability-moves-into-the-mainstream-of-recreation-facility-design.html>
- 63 Bynum, M. (2007, August). Sustainability Moves into the Mainstream of Recreation Facility Design. Athletic Business. <https://www.athleticbusiness.com/rec-center/sustainability-moves-into-the-mainstream-of-recreation-facility-design.html>
- 64 Bynum, M. (2007, August). Sustainability Moves into the Mainstream of Recreation Facility Design. Athletic Business. <https://www.athleticbusiness.com/rec-center/sustainability-moves-into-the-mainstream-of-recreation-facility-design.html>
- 65 Yeich, L. & Gilchrist, A. (n.d.). Creating Sustainable Community Parks. We Conserve PA. <https://conservationtools.org/guides/93-creating-sustainable-community-parks>



- 66 Yeich, L. & Gilchrist, A. (n.d.). Creating Sustainable Community Parks. We Conserve PA. <https://conservationtools.org/guides/93-creating-sustainable-community-parks>
- 67 Felio, G. (2018). Managing Aging Infrastructure [PowerPoint Slides]. Dillon Consulting, 2008 Clean and Safe Drinking Water Workshop. <https://www.gov.nl.ca/eccm/files/waterres-training-adww-smalltown-06-guy-felio-drinking-water-workshop-nl-march-2008.pdf>
- 68 Felio, G. (2018). Managing Aging Infrastructure [PowerPoint Slides]. Dillon Consulting, 2008 Clean and Safe Drinking Water Workshop. <https://www.gov.nl.ca/eccm/files/waterres-training-adww-smalltown-06-guy-felio-drinking-water-workshop-nl-march-2008.pdf>
- 69 Felio, G. (2018). Managing Aging Infrastructure [PowerPoint Slides]. Dillon Consulting, 2008 Clean and Safe Drinking Water Workshop. <https://www.gov.nl.ca/eccm/files/waterres-training-adww-smalltown-06-guy-felio-drinking-water-workshop-nl-march-2008.pdf>
- 70 Felio, G. (2018). Managing Aging Infrastructure [PowerPoint Slides]. Dillon Consulting, 2008 Clean and Safe Drinking Water Workshop. <https://www.gov.nl.ca/eccm/files/waterres-training-adww-smalltown-06-guy-felio-drinking-water-workshop-nl-march-2008.pdf>
- 71 Barcelona, B., Bocarro, J. (2004). The Nature and Extent of Collaboration Between Park and Recreation Agencies and Higher Education Institutions. *The Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 22(4). <https://js.sagamorepub.com/jpra/article/view/1449>
- 72 Gani, A.A., Khairil, W.A. (2013). Promoting Collaboration between Local Community and Park Management towards Sustainable Outdoor Recreation. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 91(2013), 57-65. 10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.08.401
- 73 Gilbert, P. (2020, April 23). Collaboration in the Time of Pandemic. *Parks & Recreation: NRPA's monthly magazine*. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/may/collaboration-in-the-time-of-pandemic/>
- 74 On Digital Marketing website, current to 2021. Sourced from <https://ondigitalmarketing.com/learn/odm/foundations/5-customer-segments-technology-adoption>







parks+rec**mh**

MEDICINE HAT PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN