

SOUTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER RECREATION & LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES ASSESSMENT

City of Medicine Hat
January 2015



Medicine Hat
The Gas City



Associated
Engineering

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE.
LOCAL FOCUS.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South Saskatchewan River through Medicine Hat is a highly underused and often feared resource for the City. The City retained Associated Engineering to complete a *South Saskatchewan River Recreation and Leisure Opportunities Assessment* in order to identify recreational and leisure opportunities within the river valley.

A series of opportunities were developed jointly with external and internal City of Medicine Hat stakeholders, and then validated with the public at the 2014 Great West Home and Leisure Show.

Through the public input process 11 top opportunities were identified. These top 11 opportunities are:

1. Trail Connectivity / Improvements
2. Access to the Water
3. Natural Preservation
4. Riverfront Promenade
5. Mountain Biking Opportunities
6. Festival Space
7. Educational Programs
8. Waterfront Commercial Opportunities
9. Non-Motorized Boat Launch
10. Motorized Boat Launch
11. Wayfinding / Interpretive Signage

Some of these opportunities were identified as not site specific, but would be applied to all opportunities developed. These combined with other principles identified during the public process formed the guiding principles for the project:

1. Educational Programs
2. Trail Connectivity / Improvements
3. Accessibility
4. Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage
5. Safety
6. Natural Preservation



Figure ES-1 view of Strathcona Island Park

Potential locations for these opportunities were identified through a site reconnaissance, map study and local knowledge. We then developed the following priorities for implementation. Please note that all costs presented are in 2015 dollars:

High Priority Projects

- allocation of a contract term position with the City of Medicine Hat;
- Echo Dale Regional Park festival space;
- development of an unserviced campground in Echo Dale Regional Park;
- Echo Dale Regional Park non-motorized boat launch and dock access;
- Phase 1 Riverfront Promenade development;
- mountain biking opportunities;
- Strathcona Island Park boat launch upgrades;
- formalization of beach area in Police Point Park;
- portable dock and non-motorized boat launch at Kiwanis River Park;
- portable dock and non-motorized boat launch at NW Riverside Trail;
- portable dock and non-motorized boat launch at Ranchlands North;
- formalization of beach area at Lions Park;
- development of a rafting event between Echo Dale Regional Park and Strathcona Island Park;
- development and installation of a wayfinding signage program; and
- encourage commercial development to coincide with the implementation of these opportunities.

Medium Priority Projects

- Phase 2 Riverfront Promenade development;
- development of a serviced campground at Echo Dale Regional Park;
- mountain biking opportunities;
- Maple Avenue boat launch;
- picnic area by Police Point Park west end;
- Parkview viewing nodes;
- portable dock and non-motorized boat launch in East Burnside;
- formalization of beach area in North-East Ranchlands; and
- encourage commercial development to coincide with the implementation of these opportunities.

Low Priority Projects

- development of a performance space in Echo Dale Regional Park;
- Echo Dale boat launch upgrades;
- Phase 3 Riverfront Promenade development;
- mountain biking opportunities;
- viewing nodes between Echo Dale Regional Park and Gas City Campground;
- viewing node at 1st Street;
- portable dock at day use area in Strathcona Island Park; and
- encourage commercial development to coincide with the implementation of these opportunities.



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1

INTRODUCTION

The City of Medicine Hat retained Associated Engineering to complete a recreational & leisure opportunities assessment for the South Saskatchewan River Valley. The *South Saskatchewan River Recreation and Leisure Opportunities Assessment* will provide a comprehensive direction for the long term development of recreational and leisure opportunities within the river valley of Medicine Hat.

Medicine Hat offers over 100 km of recreational trails connecting various locations of the City and the parks and green spaces offered within it. As found through the consultation processes of past related studies, residents of Medicine Hat cite the river valley as the number one amenity of the City. With approximately 2,500 hours of sunshine per year, residents and tourists have plenty of opportunity to get out and 'play'. Although there are existing active and passive recreational opportunities within Medicine Hat and the river valley, there is a disconnect between the river and the community; Medicine Hat's greatest asset is underutilized. This report will provide recommendations for recreation and leisure within the river valley and act as a guideline to enhance the use of and connectivity to the South Saskatchewan River.



Figure 1-1 view of Maple Ave. Bridge

1.1 Goals and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to assess the current and future need for recreational and leisure opportunities within the valley of the South Saskatchewan River and act as a guide for the City of Medicine Hat for the provision of the facilities, amenities and programs related to recreation and leisure.

In general, this study will reflect the input of a public engagement process and the vision of the stakeholders involved. It will also consider the recreational needs of all age groups and interests, and assesses immediate and future needs. This study will also review the cultural, historical and natural environments that exist within the South Saskatchewan River Valley.

The objectives of this project are to:

- create an inventory of existing park and recreation conditions and elements within the river valley;
- develop a set of guiding principles that will guide the recreation and leisure recommendations;
- develop a list of recreational and leisure opportunities based on stakeholder sessions and the public engagement process;
- identify potential locations for each recommendation based on site suitability and local input;
- develop a set of typical technical requirements and development suggestions for various recommendations and establish the priority level for each; and
- develop preliminary cost estimates.

1.3 Trends in Recreation

Trends in recreation for the Medicine Hat area have been documented through past surveys and reports. As an example, the Alberta Recreation Survey (2013) identified that the trends in Alberta have shifted toward physical activities, outdoor activities, and creative / cultural activities. People choose to participate in varying types of recreation for three main reasons: pleasure, to relax, and for physical health / exercise. A large percentage of the population in Medicine Hat is within or approaching retirement age. Popular activities within this user group include walking, cycling, yoga, gardening, and bird watching. The younger population tends to participate in more active physical activities such as mountain biking, hiking, and cross-country skiing.

It is essential to provide a mixture of recreation activities no matter the form or intensity. Organizing and providing areas for cultural activities should be of equal value to physical activities such as sporting events etc. It is beneficial to form partnerships when organizing these activities with various interest groups to successfully provide and host these types of activities / events.

While creative and cultural activities are often ignored in communities when considering recreational activities, they are becoming more popular in Alberta. These activities could include fairs and festivals; crafts and creative hobbies; photography classes; outdoor art galleries and displays; and outdoor learning.

1.4 Existing Document Review

The City of Medicine Hat has commissioned numerous reports that relate to recreation, trail assessment and future development of the community and its river valley.

Of these reports the most relevant for this document include the Parks System Management Plan (2010), Recreation Master Plan (2011), Leisure Trails Future Development Report (2010), Natural Areas and Species Inventory (2006), and the Municipal Development Plan (2012).

The Parks System Management Plan (2010) identified recreation-related opportunities including creating new criteria for off-leash dog areas; preserving natural features and natural features associated with the river valley; enhancing connectivity within the river valley; and providing interpretive and educational experiences.

The Recreation Master Plan (2011) recognized priorities for future recreation in Medicine Hat including enabling children to experience the outdoors, providing fitness and wellness or all ages, and creating areas for spontaneous participation.

The Leisure Trails Future Development Plan (2010) recommends trail enhancements for the river valley including extending the Kiwanis Trail to provide further access along the river, enhancing connectivity to Lions Park and the Devonian Trail System from residential areas, and providing a connection between Echo Dale Regional Park and the Burnside development.

The Natural Areas and Species Inventory of City of Medicine Hat Properties (2006) recognized areas within the river valley as either national, provincial, regional, or local Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA's).

The Municipal Development Plan (2012) identified key objectives related to the South Saskatchewan River Valley including protecting natural features and providing safety from flooding and natural hazards, maintaining and enhancing the riverfront as an active, accessible, and pedestrian / bike oriented amenity, and including trails within Environmental Reserves to allow pedestrians to experience natural areas.

Other documents reviewed included Medicine Hat Archaeological Sites, City of Medicine Hat Cycling Master Plan (2010), Echo Dale Regional Park Future Development Plan (1989), City of Medicine Hat Leisure Trails and Alternative Transportation Needs Assessment and Public Consultation Report (2009), Native Species Report, Alberta Recreation Survey (2013), and the Management of Natural Areas Policy 0117.



Figure 1-2 existing viewing node

1.5 Flood Mitigation Efforts

Concurrent to the production of this report, the City of Medicine Hat is completing a flood mitigation study that will affect the recommendations for recreation within the river valley. The location of berms and flood-walls to mitigate flooding will create opportunities and constraints for recreation and leisure within the river valley. The proposed flood mitigation efforts directly relate to the success of this report and the flood mitigation plans were reviewed and considered in this document.

The proposed flood protection consists of a series of berms that extend across various parts of the river valley and temporary flood walls where access roads and trails are located. Berms and flood walls have a significant impact on the connectivity and access to the river and recreational opportunities within the river valley. Measures will need to be taken to maintain connectivity between the park system along the river and the existing trail system. Also, park infrastructure and amenities located within the flood zone should be designed so that damage is minimal during flood events.

Proposed berms located at Kiwanis River Park, Lions Park and Strathcona Island Park have been designed to accommodate a leisure trail along the top of the berm. A raised trail provides excellent opportunities for viewing the South Saskatchewan River and ensures there are opportunities for access to the river and the parks and trails adjacent to the river. Accessibility and connectivity has been a re-occurring principle in many existing reports so ensuring these are not hindered by flood protection efforts is essential.



Figure 1-3 effects of flooding at Echo Dale Park boat launch

2

SITE INVENTORY

Our project team completed the following inventory of the existing parks along the South Saskatchewan River in Medicine Hat:

Figure 2-3 on page 7 depicts the location and extents of the parks within the South Saskatchewan River Valley.

1. Echo Dale Regional Park: This Park offers recreation in a variety of forms for all age groups. Two man-made lakes provide opportunities for swimming, fishing, and non-motorized boating. A boat launch allows direct access to the river for motorized and non-motorized craft. An off-leash dog area provides large open space with surrounding trails. Interpretive activities include the Historic Farm and Ajax Mine and Museum.

2. Echo Dale Regional Park to Kiwanis River Park: East of Echo Dale Regional Park the terrain becomes much more undulating with excellent views of the river. This area is within a provincially recognized Environmentally Significant Area (ESA). In the past this area has been used for informal mountain biking and off-road vehicle use. A leisure trail extends from Echo Dale Regional Park to Kiwanis River Park under the Trans-Canada Highway Bridge.

3. Burnside Lands: The area between the Town of Redcliff and the Trans-Canada Highway has been designated for future residential development. A large portion of the land is currently leased for private farming, and is also used for informal mountain bike trails.

4. Kiwanis River Park: This is one of the more natural areas within the river valley, consisting of a trail system and various informal direct river accesses along the trail. Kiwanis River Park is prone to flooding and several recent flood events have inundated many areas of the park.

5. N.W. / N.E. Riverside Trail: An existing trail along the north shore of the river extends from the Trans-Canada highway to 4th Avenue N.W. through the community of Riverside. N.E. Riverside Trail extends from Division Avenue N., along Altawana Drive, behind the subdivision of Parkview Close and connects to Police Point Park. N.W. / N.E. Riverside Trail is discontinuous between 4th Avenue N.W. and Division Avenue N. due to the riparian rights of residential properties in this area. No other leisure amenities exist along these trails, with the exception of a boardwalk under Maple Avenue Bridge.



Figure 2-1 Echo Dale Regional Park beach area

6. 1st Street S.W. Trail: The trail that connects Kiwanis River Park and Riverside Veterans Park runs along 1st Street S.W. The trail is separated from the river but provides some excellent viewing opportunities of the river valley in upland portions of the trail.

7. Riverside Veterans Memorial Park and Devonian Trail: River Road extends from 4th Street SE to Maple Avenue along the River behind City Hall. Devonian Trail follows along River Road and extends east of Maple Avenue past the YMCA, Medicine Hat arena and Athletic Field, and provides connectivity to Lions Park. Riverside Veterans Park is a well maintained park in close proximity to City Hall with various sculptures and memorials. A band shell within the park creates a small gathering area for special events or concerts. The park lacks connectivity to the river both visually and spatially, due to a grade separation and the presence of River Road. The park's proximity to both downtown and the river provides an opportunity to encourage the connection between downtown and the river.

8. Lions Park: An active recreational area that includes baseball facilities, an outdoor pool, and tennis courts. Other recreation opportunities in the area include an outdoor fitness area with equipment, playground equipment, open space, picnic areas, outdoor kitchen, and horseshoe pits. The park has no formal connection with the river and access to the river is limited.

9. Strathcona Island Park: Adjacent to Lions Park, Strathcona Island Park consists of a mixture of passive and active recreational opportunities with some interpretive elements. Some of the more significant program elements include a baseball diamond, playground, spray park, and a boat launch. Numerous picnic areas with fire pits adjacent to the river provide excellent views. Flooding and bank erosion has created some inaccessible areas and increased the need for maintenance and flood mitigation efforts.

10. Police Point Park: Located in a Nationally recognized ESA, Police Point Park supports a large diversity of breeding and migratory birds. The park itself consists of a leisure trail system, viewing nodes, and interpretive center. Cross-county ski and snow shoe trails provide winter activities. Bird watching and Geo-caching are popular activities within the park area. The interpretive center hosts a variety of educational programs and interpretive signage is present throughout the trail system. Many of the lower portions of Police Point Park are prone to flooding.

11. Ranchlands Subdivision: The area north of Police Point Park has been designated for the Ranchlands Residential Development. Much of the area next to the river is within a Nationally recognized ESA and therefore is not recommended for significant development, however the Ranchlands Area Structure Plan has identified a trail system (River Walk) be developed in this area.

Table 2-1 on page 9 summarizes constraints and opportunities within each park area.



Figure 2-2 day use area in Strathcona Island Park



Figure 2-3 park extends and locations

Existing River Park
Opportunities and Constraints

Park	Opportunities	Constraints
1. Echo Dale Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large open space provides opportunities for a variety of activities; man-made lakes are well used during summer months Opportunity to expand and upgrade existing boat launch Great viewing opportunities on the upland areas Existing features provide opportunities to create strong connections to the river 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site is surrounded by Provincial ESA Distance of the park from the City may deter some visitors Existing boat launch prone to sedimentation during flooding Height and steep slope of bank discourages direct access to the river
2. Echo Dale Regional Park to Kiwanis River Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing trail along top of bank provides excellent viewing opportunities ESA provides educational and interpretive opportunities Terrain is well suited to uses such as mountain bike trails Abandoned motocross track viable for development as a mountain bike park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site is within a Provincial ESA Terrain, bank height, and lack of access roads make river access impracticable Existing trail experiences conflicts between different user groups Off-road vehicle use is damaging to the natural environment
3. Burnside Lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Burnside Development provides opportunities to create links to the river Direct access to the river is possible in various locations including steps to the water, accessible docks, and beach areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any opportunities should be designed to coincide with future development in the area At the East end banks get steep, limiting access to the river
4. Kiwanis River Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct river access is available Flood ecology creates interpretive opportunities Existing trail system following the river provides opportunities for water access, docks, and viewing nodes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area is highly vegetated and surrounded by residential area making expansion challenging Residential areas conflict with vehicles attempting to access the river Low areas prone to flooding and proposed flood mitigation berm will limit access to trail and river
5. N.W./ N.E. Riverside Trail	<p>N.W.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open views of the river provide viewing opportunities <p>N.E.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for formal river access Excellent views of the river 	<p>N.W.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to the river is limited due to riparian rights of residents along 1st street NW Limited space to provide recreational activities due to narrow width of land available and steep natural grades Bank erosion due to flooding creates safety challenges <p>N.E.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited space for recreational programming Low areas prone to flooding, creates safety challenges
6. 1st Street S.W. Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent viewing opportunities Option to create trail heads and wayfinding to establish stronger trail connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location along a roadway creates user conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians Steep slopes, flood events, and a lack of trail access make accessing the river difficult
7. Riverside Veterans Memorial Park and Devonian Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location adjacent to downtown and the river provides excellent opportunities to bring people to the water Open space to the east provides potential expansion space Devonian trail provides excellent opportunities for access to the river Proximity to downtown makes an ideal place to host events, celebrations, concerts, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park area is highly programmed with little room for additional activities River Road creates a safety concern for pedestrians trying to cross to the river Park infrastructure is aging The River is separated from Riverside Veterans Memorial Park by River Road and a grade separation with minimal connections to adjacent parks or downtown
8. Lions Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent location in terms of proximity to downtown, Strathcona Island Park, and residential areas Potential to provide river access through docks, boat launches, and beach areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much of the park is located in a Provincial ESA Low areas prone to flooding and proposed flood mitigation berm will limit access to trail and river
9. Strathcona Island Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent location in terms of proximity to downtown, Lions Park, and residential areas Excellent opportunities for river viewing and access through docks and boat launches Proximity to downtown makes it an ideal place to host events, celebrations, concerts, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located within a Provincial ESA Flooding and erosion create safety concerns and limit the ability to develop near the river Low areas prone to flooding and proposed flood mitigation berm will limit access to trail and river
10. Police Point Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing interpretive center provides excellent opportunity to expand interpretive programs related to the river Opportunity to expand the existing trail system towards the river's edge to provide viewing opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located within a National ESA Flooding and erosion create safety concerns along sections of the trail
11. Ranchlands Subdivision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A National ESA provides excellent interpretive opportunities Excellent views of the river Ranchlands development provides opportunities to create recreation for new residents Direct access to the river is possible in various locations including steps to the water, accessible docks, and beach areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large portions of the site are located within the National ESA Limited areas for parking High river banks in many locations limit access to the river Any opportunities should be designed to coincide with future development in the area

Table 2-1 Opportunities and Constraints

3

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

This section addresses the variety of stakeholder and public engagement methods used, the type of information presented and an overview of the feedback received. Detailed analyses of the findings are further explored in section 4.

Purpose Statement:

To work with key stakeholders, the general public, and City Representatives to determine the most desired recreational and leisure opportunities in Medicine Hat's South Saskatchewan River Valley.

The public consultation portion consisted of three main activities: stakeholder phone interviews, two stakeholder forums, and a public open house with survey (available at the open house and online). The intensity of public engagement throughout this project allowed for the successful analysis of the public's top priorities for recreational and leisure opportunities in the river valley.

3.1 Project Stakeholders

During the initial stages of this project a list of key project stakeholders was developed jointly by the City and our project team. These key stakeholders were contacted for phone interviews and invited to stakeholder forums. The stakeholder group included representation from the Society of Grasslands Naturalists, Urban Environment and Recreation Advisory Board, Advisory Committee of Disability Issues, City Center Development Agency, Single Track Mountain Biking, Residents at large, and City of Medicine Hat Departmental Representatives.



Figure 3-1 group at the public stakeholder session

3.2 Stakeholder Phone Interviews

An introductory email was sent to all key stakeholders providing a brief explanation of the project and asking if members from the project team could contact them for a brief phone interview. Phone interviews were conducted focused on two key questions:

1. How do your or your group currently use the river and adjacent valley?
2. What changes could be made to improve your or your groups recreational experience in the river and adjacent valley?

The main trends revealed during the phone interviews were:

- improved access to the river;
- underutilization of the river;
- education and increased understanding of the river;
- improved trail connectivity; and
- universal accessibility.



Figure 3-2 river side trail by River Road

3.3 Stakeholder Forums

Two separate stakeholder forums were conducted on September 10 and 11, 2014: a public stakeholder forum and an internal City Department stakeholder forum. The stakeholder groups were engaged separately so that City Departmental Staff could react to data collected from the public stakeholder session.

The stakeholder sessions had two main objectives:

- a “round-table” brainstorming session to identify recreation opportunities desired by the public; and
- a vote to determine which of the identified recreation opportunities are the most desired.

There were 15 people in attendance at the public stakeholder forum and 10 people in attendance at the internal stakeholder forum. Both groups were asked to vote on the top opportunities list developed during the sessions. The combined results from the stakeholder forums were used to develop the top opportunities list to be presented at the public open house. The top opportunities identified were: access to the water, educational programs, festival space, motorized boat launch, mountain biking opportunities, natural preservation, non-motorized boat launch, riverfront promenade, trail improvements, waterfront commercial opportunities, and wayfinding / interpretive signage. A pedestrian bridge was brought up as a highly desired feature by the public; however this is being addressed in a separate project study.

3.4 Public Open House

Traditionally, open houses are not well attended in Medicine Hat, unless the public is particularly passionate about the topic being presented. It was decided that instead of a traditional open house venue, the results of the stakeholder forums would be presented to the public at the Medicine Hat Great West Home and Leisure Show. Several thousand people pass through the Home and Leisure Show each year. The initial list of the top 11 recreation opportunities and preliminary location maps were presented to the public at the Home and Leisure Show October 24 to October 26, 2014. Surveys were available at the show and online for the public to express their opinions on the preliminary work completed, and to assign their priority to the opportunities developed.

There were a total of 278 responses to the survey. The results from the open house surveys are summarized in the following pie chart:

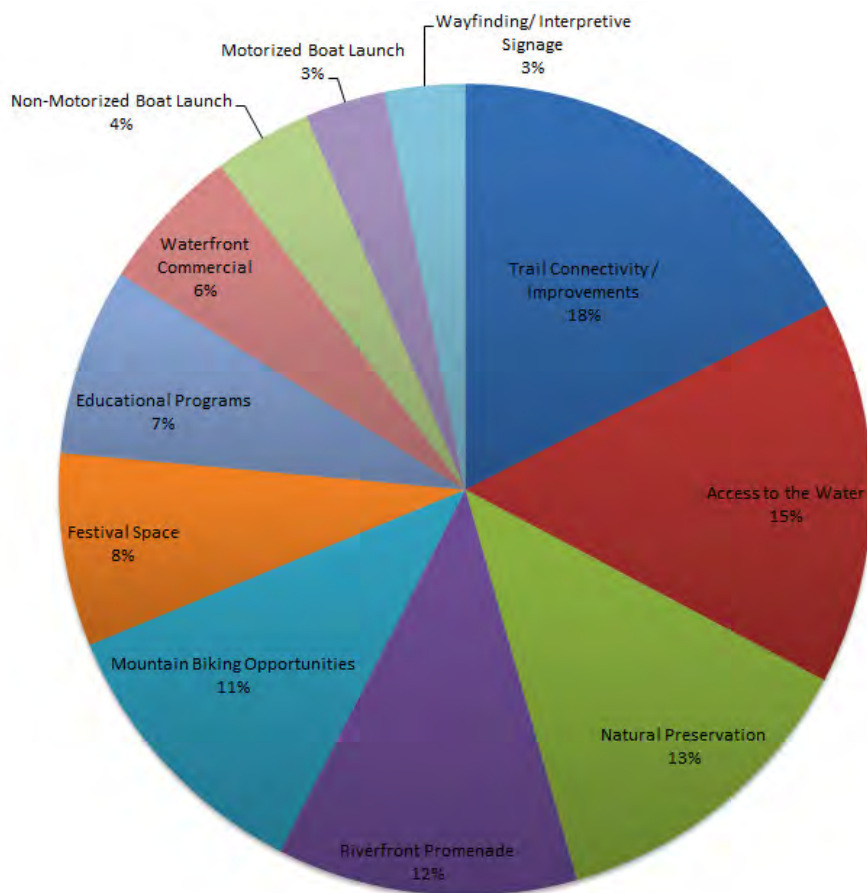


Figure 3-3 open house survey results

4

ANALYSIS

Eleven top recreation and leisure opportunities were identified through the stakeholder process and validated at the trade show:

1. Trail Connectivity / Improvements
2. Access to the Water
3. Natural Preservation
4. Riverfront Promenade
5. Mountain Biking Opportunities
6. Festival Space
7. Educational Programs
8. Waterfront Commercial Opportunities
9. Non-Motorized Boat Launches
10. Motorized Boat Launches
11. Wayfinding / Interpretive Signage



Figure 4-1 existing viewing node

These opportunities were further analyzed in terms of description, siting constraints and requirements, design principles, and budgetary costs. Please note that all costs presented are in 2015 dollars.

Four of the opportunities identified were not site specific, but as guiding principles that would apply to all opportunities identified. These four are trail connectivity / improvements, natural preservation, educational programs, and wayfinding / interpretive signage. The exception is educational programs, which serves as both a guiding principle and an opportunity.

4.1 Guiding Principles

During stakeholder engagements a number of principles were consistently brought up by the stakeholders that relate to the leisure and recreational development. These principles will be used to guide future development in the South Saskatchewan River Valley area:

4.1.1 Educational Programs

There is a current misconception throughout the City of Medicine Hat that taints the South Saskatchewan River as “dangerous” and causes many residents to avoid it. This is strengthened by the media coverage of floods and signage along the river warning people to stay away. Educational Programming will help to change people’s opinions of the river, to teach them about the area, and to inform on different ways to enjoy the river valley. More information on Educational Programs is discussed in section 4.2.5 Educational Programs.

4.1.2 Trail Connectivity / Improvements

Trail Connectivity and Improvements received overwhelming support from both stakeholders and the public, reaffirming how important trails and trail connectivity are to Medicine Hat residents. Detailed studies into the trail systems were completed in 2010. The trails in the river valley should be updated based on the recommendations in these studies, taking into account proposed flood mitigation infrastructure. As well, connectivity to the existing trail and road network should be considered when developing the opportunities in this report.

4.1.3 Accessibility

Due to the high banks and steep slopes along several sections of the South Saskatchewan River in Medicine Hat, it is difficult to access to the shore for people of all levels of mobility. Accessibility principles need to be considered in all forms of riverfront development, including access to the water. Those with limited mobility use the river for boating, fishing, and to enjoy being near the water. While it is understood that the natural features in many of the areas will not allow for universal accessibility, efforts must be made to accommodate universal accessibility wherever possible.

Access to the riverfront area itself is also a challenge. Providing new parking areas, expanding existing parking areas, and allowing on street parking in some areas will increase river use by allowing easy access to the river and its amenities. Proposed parking locations should be carefully considered so as not to disturb recreational riverfront uses or impede on the river valley.

4.1.4 Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage Programs

Wayfinding and interpretive signage aid in enhancing the user experience of the river valley. This would include multiple levels of signage: directional signage on the shore will point to key locations including parks, downtown locations, key public buildings, and washroom facilities. Signage along the river banks such as mile markers would aid in locating people in an emergency, and provide directional signage for floaters and river users. Interpretive signage would be closely linked with educational programming and would include information on the sites history, ecology, and any other information that is deemed important along this site.

4.1.5 Safety

There is always a concern with open space developments around safety including access to an open body of water, lack of light, limited visibility in some areas, and user conflicts. To limit safety concerns all new development should incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles. The City should also develop educational programs that promote safe use of the river and surrounding areas, reduce hazards along the river, and provide safety staff for higher risk use areas such as public beaches.

4.1.6 Natural Preservation

The South Saskatchewan River and its surrounding areas are host to a number of unique habitats and ecosystems which have been identified in the Natural Areas and Species Inventory of City of Medicine Hat Properties (2006). The public expressed a desire to see many of these key environmental areas preserved for ecological reasons and public enjoyment. While these areas can still support minor development such as viewing areas, docks, and trails; intensive development should be avoided. Given the environmental sensitivities of the river valley, environmental overviews should be completed for all proposed opportunities.



Figure 4-2 wildlife in Strathcona Island Park

4.2 Opportunities Analysis

4.2.1 Access to the Water

Lack of areas where people can access the river, including those with limited mobility, was a major concern of the public during all phases of our public engagement. Access could include a variety of different opportunities and could be incorporated in other key amenities such as festival spaces or a riverfront promenade. A key goal of water access is to improve the safety and feasibility of access to the river. The current shoreline is steep and eroded in many places, making it dangerous to scale the bank to access the river. In many locations signage exists to warn users away from the edge of the bank. Improved water access would provide safe ways to access the water for a variety of use types including boat loading, viewing, fishing, non-motorized boat mooring, and water play. There are four main types of water access that are recommended: docks, beach areas, steps to the water, and viewing nodes / picnic areas.

4.2.1.1 Docks

Description

A successful method of allowing people easy access to the water is through the provision of docks. Docks are flat platforms that extend over the water. They can be used for mooring motorized and non-motorized craft, swimming, fishing, or simply enjoying proximity to the water. They can be permanent (fixed in place) or removable (floating). Depending on the adjacent grades some docks may be universally accessible to allow access for people with limited mobility.

Potential Locations

Prime locations for accessible docks include:

- alongside motorized boat launches to assist with boat loading and easy access into and out of boats;
- alongside non-motorized launches to aid in docking structures and to provide a place to moor during short stops; and
- areas with existing easy water access to improve pedestrian access to the water.

Potential locations were determined through a combination of geographic suitability, local knowledge and our public engagement process. The ideal location for an accessible dock would consist of grades less than 12:1. A dock could be constructed in an area with grades greater than 12:1, although it would not be universally accessible. Potential locations for docks are shown in Figure 4-4.



Figure 4-3 existing warning sign

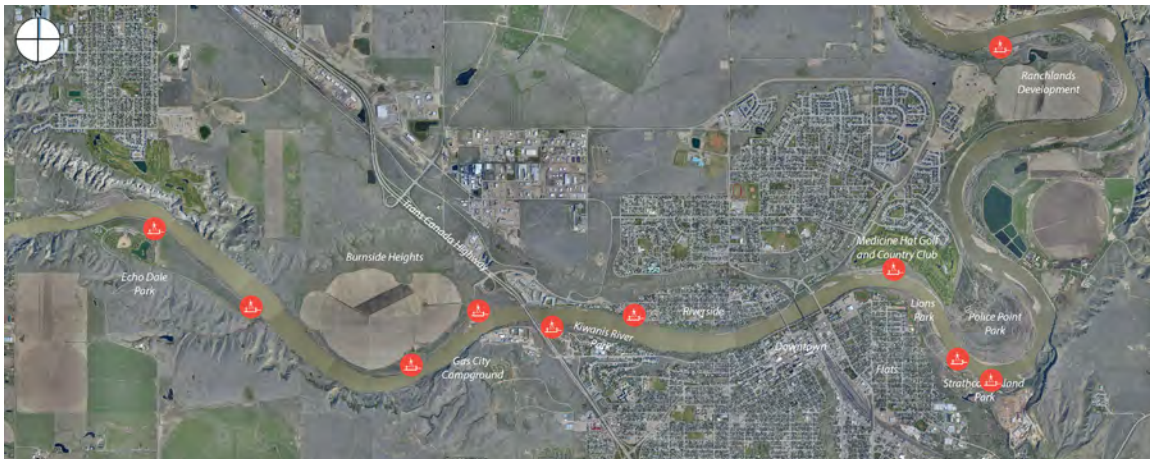


Figure 4-4 potential dock locations

Technical Considerations

Given the fluctuation in water levels, proposed docks should be seasonal, and capable of being removed during winter months. The structure could have a wooden or grated steel platform with built in flotation such as polystyrene blocks or empty drums, and have built-in grommets for securing watercraft. A gangway would allow access at varying water levels. The structure should be rot and algae resistant and be of a size and weight to allow removal and transportation to a designated storage location by a picker truck (2.4m x 5m maximum sections).

Site improvements could range from simply improving trail access to a formal trail and the inclusion of power, lighting, rest room facilities and a parking lot. Consideration should be made for equipment access in order to place and remove the dock.

4.2.1.2 Beach Areas

Description

Beach areas will take advantage of existing gravel bars to provide places to safely access and enter the water. Due to the fluctuating nature of the river there would be minimal formal development to these areas. Instead the focus would be on developing access to the gravel bar which could include nearby parking, trail access, steps or ramps to the beach area, and amenities such as picnic tables, waste / recycle receptacles, and washroom / change facilities on the shore. These amenities should be either flood resilient, placed above the high water mark or seasonal and be removed prior to anticipated flood events. These beach areas would also need to be closed during high water levels for the safety of the public.

Potential Locations

Potential locations for beach areas were selected mainly by identifying existing gravel bars that are currently used to informally access the water. Other considerations included reviewing the trail access to these sites and identifying the existence or potential for nearby parking. These locations include a gravel bar at the north east side of Police Point Park, a gravel bar in Lions Park, and a gravel bar on the east tip of the future Ranchlands Development, and are shown in Figure 4-5.



Figure 4-5 potential beach locations

Development Suggestions

Suggestions for the development of each beach area are outlined below, complete with budgetary cost ranges:

Police Point Park Beach Area: We recommend a small picnic area with tables, waste and recycle receptacles on the adjacent shore for this beach and improved trail access. The beach area is currently serviced by the Park's upper parking lot.

Lions Park Beach Area: There is existing potential parking and nearby washroom facilities at the baseball diamond that can be used by beach users. We recommend a small picnic area with picnic tables, waste and recycle receptacles on the adjacent shore as well as improved trail access.

Ranchlands Beach Area: Development of the Ranchlands beach area should be tied to the development of the Ranchlands residential subdivision. It is recommended that a provision for a new parking lot be considered, as well as space for shoreline amenities such as a picnic area with tables, waste and recycle receptacles, a washroom / change room facility, and improved trail access.

4.2.1.3 Steps to the Water

Description

In some areas the grade of the bank is too steep to develop dock access to the water. In these cases steps could be formed on the bank to provide a place for people to sit and view the river, or if they desire sit on lower steps and soak their feet. These features would have a more formal appearance and are recommended for locations adjacent to more formal development such as key commercial opportunities, a riverfront promenade / downtown, or festival spaces. These spaces could be multi-use by also serving as mooring locations for non-motorized craft.



Figure 4-6 potential steps to the water locations

Potential Locations

As a more formal type of development, locations for steps to the water were mostly determined based on other existing or potential opportunities in the area. These are areas where more formal development is proposed and where the steps will fit in to the over-arching character of the area. Riverbank grades were less of a concern for locating this feature. Locations were also selected where trails will be adjacent to the bank for easy connections to the steps. Potential locations for steps to the water are shown in Figure 4-6. Additional locations may be determined as other opportunities are developed.

Technical Considerations

Steps to the water would be permanent in nature and would need to be resistant to river current and flood events. As such, flood resistant materials such as reinforced concrete and piled foundations should be considered, as well as blending the structure into the adjacent shoreline to minimize erosion and scour. Size and dimensions would vary depending on site geometry, however steps, short platforms, or universally accessible ramps would be incorporated into the structure to access the water at varying river elevations. Cleats or grommets in key locations within the steps would aid in mooring water craft. Other considerations would be trail connectivity, handrails, and the addition of a viewing node, site furniture and power / lighting.



Figure 4-7 vision for steps to the water and a Riverfront Promenade

4.2.1.4 Viewing Nodes / Picnic Areas

Description

Due to high and steep grades along much of the riverfront finding a way to access the water will be nearly impossible in many locations. In these cases we recommend to connect people visually to the river through viewing nodes. These formal stopping areas with prime views of the river will provide the public with a way to “connect” to the South Saskatchewan River without being able to touch it. These nodes could include pedestrian seating, waste and recycle receptacles, interpretive and wayfinding signage, and in some cases formal overhead structures to provide shade and shelter.

Potential Locations

Potential locations for viewing nodes were selected based on local knowledge, with the main selection criteria being views of the river and surrounding valley, and favorable access to the existing leisure trail system. There are four main areas where potential viewing nodes are focused: between Echo Dale Regional Park and Gas City Campground; the existing small parking lot along 1st Street near 2nd Ave. S.W.; Police Point Park west end; and by the Parkview subdivision. Other viewing nodes may be determined in the future based on locations of future trails, opportunities presented by the flood berm, and other changes to the development along the river valley.

Potential locations for viewing nodes are shown in Figure 4-8.



Figure 4-8 potential viewing node locations

Development Suggestions

Echo Dale Regional Park to Gas City - along this area there is little vehicular access, which limits those using the viewing nodes to mostly recreational trail users. As such it can be assumed that these nodes will not be used by large groups at one time. Smaller viewing nodes with seating, waste and recycle receptacles, and perhaps interpretive signage are recommended for this area.

1st Street S.W. at 2nd Ave. S.W. - this existing parking lot has a prime view of the river valley in an area with very limited river access. The trail follows the road in this area and due to residential properties and steep banks, and physical access to the river is nearly impossible. Providing a large viewing node incorporating pedestrian seating, waste and recycle receptacles, an interpretive kiosk, and potentially an overhead structure could make this a riverfront destination point along this otherwise inaccessible part of the river valley.

Police Point Park west end - this is an area near an existing washroom facility that would be ideal for a number of recreation opportunities if access is provided. It is recommended to develop small viewing nodes in the area, as well as a formal day use picnic site that will encourage use of the area for a number of purposes.

Parkview Subdivision - this portion of the river valley has some of the best views in Medicine Hat. Existing trails make the area easily accessible, but steep banks make physical access to the water impractical. Having a larger viewing node with pedestrian seating, waste and recycle receptacles, and interpretive signage will make these destination points for trail users, local residents, and visitors to the area. It is recommended one viewing node along this stretch be larger and include an overhead structure and interpretive kiosk.

4.2.2 Riverfront Promenade

Description

A location with high potential for increased interaction with the River is along Devonian Trail and River Road to downtown Medicine Hat. It is proposed that this location be developed into a Riverfront Promenade area. This would provide a number of opportunities, including:

- improved access to the water by including combined steps to the water / non-motorized boat tie up, and improved viewing nodes;
- a comfortable, wide pedestrian promenade to allow for easy access along the river as well as improved pedestrian crossings of River Road;
- development of a festival space that could include an amphitheatre and floating stage to hold organized events such as a "River Festival" with street performers, fireworks and street vendors (see section 4.2.4 Festival Space for more information);
- market areas where vendors could set up temporary food and retail stalls; and
- trail connectivity and wayfinding signage to connect the promenade to key downtown locations.

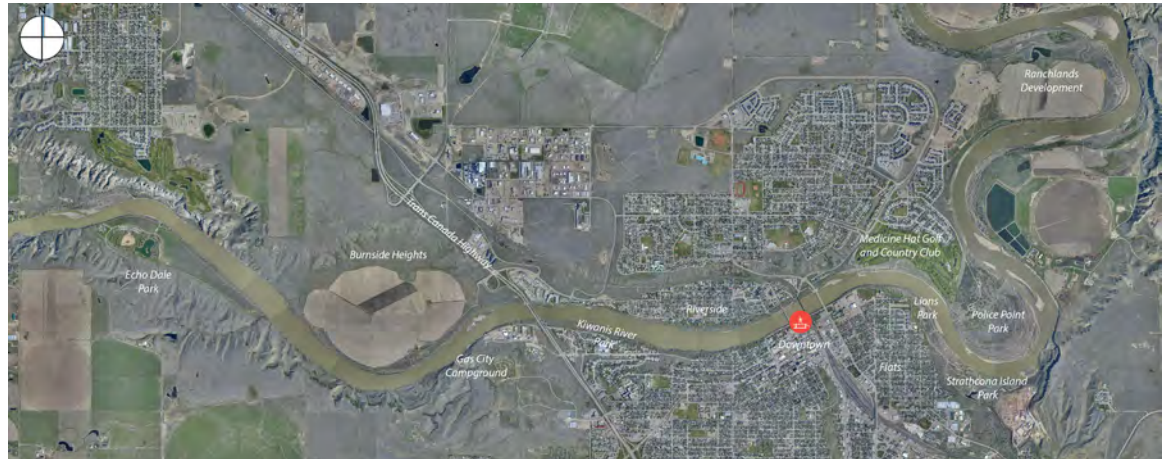


Figure 4-9 potential Riverfront Promenade location

Potential Locations

The Riverfront Promenade would extend from City Hall to the Maple Avenue Bridge. This will allow City Hall to remain unaffected during temporary closures for festivals etc. The location for a Riverfront Promenade are shown in Figure 4-9.

4.2.3 Mountain Biking Opportunities

Description

The local mountain biking club expressed a strong desire for more formalized mountain biking areas including designated mountain biking trails and potentially a mountain bike park. Some of the areas noted by the club included connectivity through the Burnside Lands and connectivity between Gas City Campground and Echo Dale Regional Park. The club also noted that the old Moto-Cross Park west of Gas City Campground could be re-designated and developed into a mountain bike facility. Having formalized mountain bike trails and parks will not only provide locations for this popular recreational opportunity, but will also limit informal trail development in areas such as natural preserves where this type of use is undesirable.

The local club have planned, organized, and completed fund raising for the development of formal trails in the Cypress Hills. We recommend that the City partner with the local mountain bike community in order to further develop mountain bike opportunities along the river in Medicine Hat.

Potential Locations

Potential locations for mountain biking opportunities are shown in Figure 4-10. These locations were determined based on available rough terrain that is ideal for mountain biking, areas the club currently utilizes, and locations where the disturbance to residents or surrounding uses would be minimal. The existing Moto-Cross site is located behind the City's main reservoir so liaison with the City's Environmental Utilities Department will be required prior to any development.



Figure 4-10 potential mountain biking opportunity locations

4.2.4 Festival Space

Description

Festival spaces would incorporate key locations for large events located on or near the river. These locations could include large open fields, amphitheaters, or floating stages. While serving more typical festivals like music concerts, these locations can also serve as kick-off locations for river based events such as floating parades.

Before a festival space can be successfully designed, thought needs to go into what type of events the City would support in each area. Events could include concerts, markets, street festivals, parades, and floating races.

These festival spaces will serve as key destination points on the waterfront and should be designed in a way that they can host large groups of people during festivals but also be usable spaces during non-event times.

Potential Locations

Potential locations for festival spaces were determined based on two key factors: geographical features that could support potentially large event spaces and accessibility for the public. Based on this two main areas were highlighted as potential festival spaces: the east-end day use area of Echo Dale Regional Park, and River Road (See section 4.2.2 Riverfront Promenade). There is the potential for an informal festival space to develop in the Strathcona Island Park boat launch parking lot as this is the likely finishing place for any water based festivals. As well, a smaller festival space could be implemented in the future planning for Ranchlands and the Burnside Lands. Potential festival space locations are shown in Figure 4-11.

Development Suggestions

Echo Dale Regional Park Festival Area (East End)

This festival space will be ideal for larger scale events such as concerts or community festivals. Due to its existing boat launch, Echo Dale is also an ideal staging area for river based events and festivals. Some recommended festival types for the Echo Dale Regional Park Festival Area could be:

- large music festivals similar to the Big Valley Jamboree in Camrose. The east end day use area with its open field would be ideal for this type of event. The site could be currently used for a temporary festival (portable stage, portable lavatories, mobile vendors, and a unserviced campground) with the site being further developed with permanent infrastructure such as an amphitheatre or stage and serviced campground as the event gains popularity; and
- river based events, similar to the Sourdough Raft Race in Edmonton. Echo Dale could be used as a staging / launching area for a wide variety of river based events including raft races, floating parades, and community floats. The open areas could provide festival space in support of the river based events.

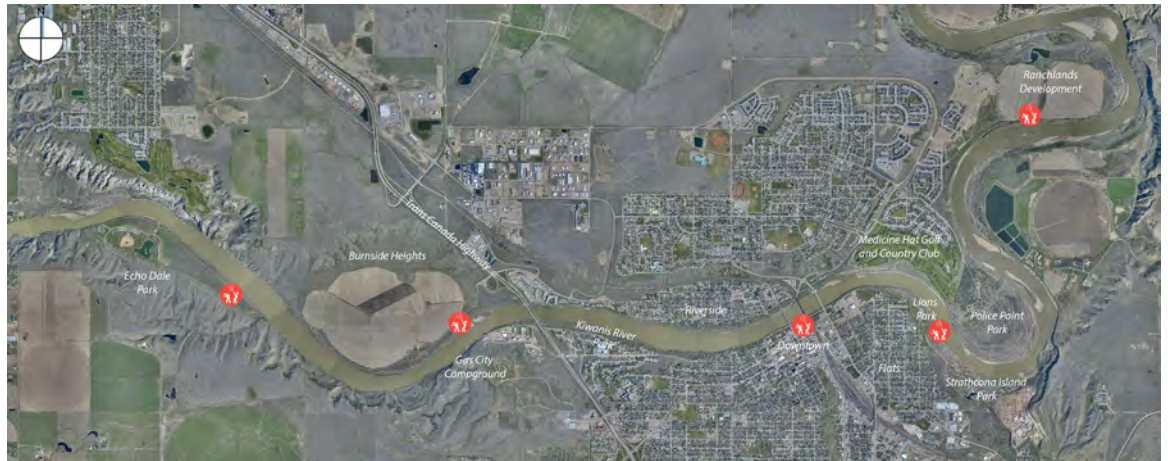


Figure 4-11 potential festival space locations

Downtown Festival Area

A festival area for downtown should be developed in conjunction with a Riverfront Promenade (see section 4.2.2) to ensure that both features work seamlessly together:

- with Spectrum relocating to the east side of the CP Rail tracks this would be ideal timing to implement a river festival along River Road. Complimentary to the development of the Riverfront Promenade, a festival celebrating the River in July could see River Road closed from City Hall to Maple Avenue and have street vendors, entertainment, and children's events set up for a weekend festival. As the event gains popularity implementation of an amphitheatre as shown in Figure 4-12, and consideration of a floating stage between the Finlay and CPR bridges for music and fireworks could be made.



Figure 4-12 concept for amphitheater along Riverfront Promenade. Image from Thinking Hat

4.2.5 Educational Programs

Description

There is a feeling amongst Hatters that the river is underutilized and is to be feared and avoided, rather than embraced and celebrated. This sentiment was validated through the stakeholder and public engagement process. In order to facilitate change to this perception we recommend developing education programs to replace common myths with facts and encourage interaction and use of the river.

Educational programs could include:

- published water quality reports and river information such as water levels, flows, and temperature;
- encourage the public to use existing river amenities through advertisement and education;
- information on river safety and when to best use the river; and
- interpretive programs on river history, morphology, and ecology.

The Interpretive Center in Police Point Park has a wealth of information on the River and would be an ideal group to partner with to facilitate educational programs. Social media could play a significant role in any education program, as well as implementing QR codes on benches and signs to provide information from wayfinding and current river conditions to river history via mobile devices. Provision of wi-fi would provide real time access to river information and potentially improve safety.

4.2.6 Waterfront Commercial Opportunities

Description

Commercial opportunities along the waterfront will create destination points for people including those that may not normally recreate in the river valley. Locations in high traffic areas where people can easily reach them would be ideal locations for commercial opportunities. Opportunities could include food services such as pubs, cafés, and restaurants; and retail and rental opportunities. They could be seasonal or permanent. Potential locations for commercial opportunities are shown in Figure 4-13.

Although these opportunities would be developed by a private entrepreneur, the City's Business Support Office could encourage local businesses through advertising and encouraging their development by facilitating the provision of utility servicing and zoning.

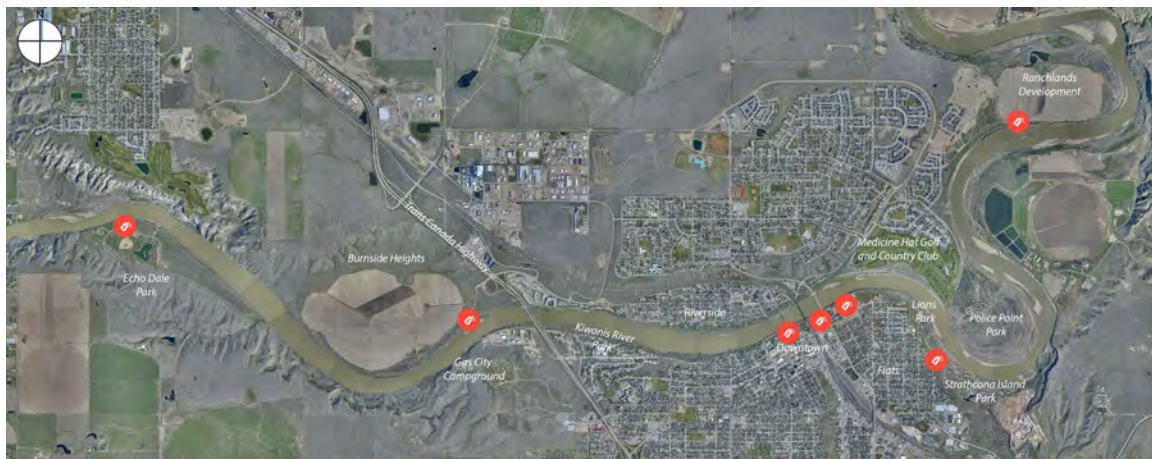


Figure 4-13 potential commercial opportunity locations

Development Suggestions

- Echo Dale Regional Park - a combination of a concession stand that could serve the visitors to the park and a boat rental facility. The concession opportunity could also see higher levels of business during festivals if the festival space located at the east end of Echo Dale is implemented. A rental facility that offers canoes, kayaks, and inflatable rafts would encourage users who do not own the equipment to utilize the river without incurring a high cost. This opportunity could pair with a similar one at Strathcona Island to provide a launch and pull out point for the same rental business;
- Burnside Heights - development of a restaurant or cafe at this location could serve both the future surrounding development, nearby communities, and trail users. With dynamic views of the river valley from this location this restaurant could become a destination point for people from all over Medicine Hat and Redcliff. A location near the Trans-Canada Highway could also draw travellers off the highway to this destination;
- Downtown / Riverfront Promenade - food and retail vendors would encourage the use of the Riverfront Promenade especially during festival events.
- Strathcona Island - a small concession or cafe at this location could serve a variety of users in the area including the existing boat launch and the spray park. Having a concession right on the water will make this a popular stopping point for people floating down the river to stop. This opportunity could also host a boat rental facility that would pair with the one at Echo Dale Regional Park described above; and
- Ranchlands Development - it is recommended to develop a restaurant or cafe at this location that could serve both the future surrounding development, nearby communities, and trail users. With dynamic views of the river valley from this high location this restaurant could become a destination point for people from all over Medicine Hat.

4.2.7 Non-Motorized Boat Launches

Description

Floating down the South Saskatchewan River was expressed as a favorite pass-time by many of the project stakeholders and the public. Some individuals preferred more formal activities like canoeing and kayaking, while others (particularly the younger population) enjoy floating down the river on an inflatable raft of some kind. The main deterrent to this activity is the lack of places to launch non-motorized craft. Echo Dale Regional Park's boat launch is an ideal location to launch, but depending on the time of year and current it can either be too short or too long of a float to the Strathcona Island boat launch, the only other easy access point. The Strathcona Island launch is also difficult to steer non-motorized craft into due to its awkward angle into the river. The development of multiple non-motorized boat launches will provide better access points for current users, and encourage more people to utilize the river for floating.

Non-motorized boat launches will include areas with easy access in and out of the river for a person carrying a non-motorized craft such as a kayak or canoe. These launches will not always have vehicular access right to the water, but will incorporate nearby parking for pick-ups and drop-offs. Some of these areas may also include picnic sites, washroom facilities, and power outlets for pumping up rafts.

Potential Locations

Non-motorized boat launches require accessible grades and a relatively flat landing area where people can comfortably load and unload their craft. Being in a location of slower current would also be beneficial for those trying to maneuver craft into and out of the water. Another key location factor was having launches spaced out in a way that users could select a long or short float and have ample opportunities to leave the river when needed. The locations shown below (Figure 4-14) were selected using the input of the stakeholders and public and validating the areas through geographic analysis and local site reviews.

It should be noted that the south shore under the Trans-Canada Highway Bridge was identified as a prime location for a non-motorized launch. This location is within the highway right of way, and is not within the City's jurisdiction. Liaison with and permission from the province of Alberta would be required prior to initiating any opportunity within the Trans-Canada Highway right of way.

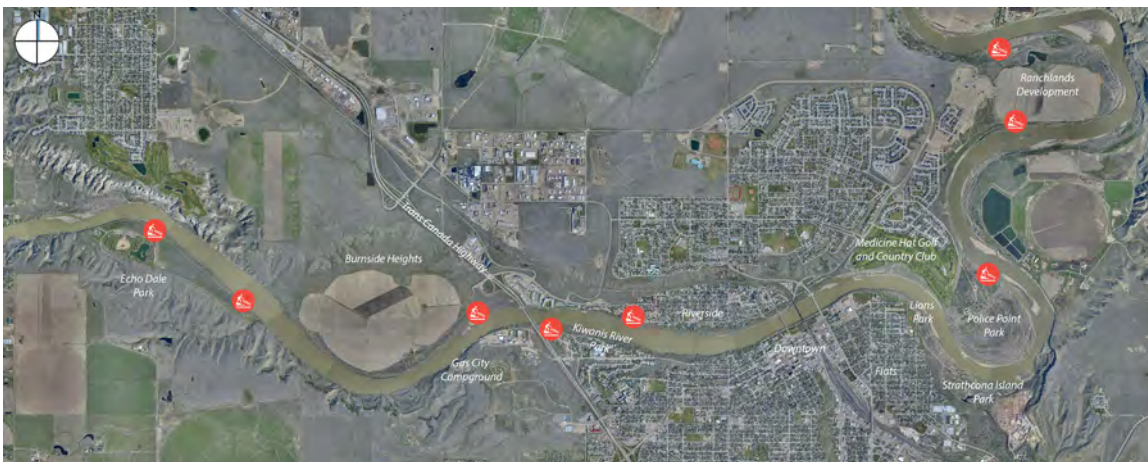


Figure 4-14 potential non-motorized boat launch locations

Technical Considerations

The preferred location for a non-motorized launch would have a shallow river bed with gentle grades on the adjacent shoreline, and an adjoining trail network with vehicle access nearby. Further site development could include improved trail and vehicular access and the provision of a seasonal dock, power for inflating craft, lighting, washroom facilities, site furniture and parking. If the launch is co-located with a seasonal dock, a site with a shallow river bed and gentle shoreline grades is not as critical.

4.2.8 Motorized Boat Launches

Description

There is motorized boat use on the South Saskatchewan River by residents, the Fire Department, and some river tour operators; as such there is a demand to maintain the existing motorized boat launches. Improvements to the existing boat launches at Echo Dale Regional Park and Strathcona Island Park to include universally accessible docks, breakwaters, improved ramp grades, and the provision of lighting, power, washroom facilities and site furniture would assist increasing their popularity. It is also recommended to develop one new motorized boat launch (of similar configuration to the existing launches) on the north shore of the river to serve residents and at the request of the Fire Department for emergency services. Improvements to the existing boat launches to maintain access, particularly during and after flood events, will be a major success factor for this opportunity.



Figure 4-15 existing strathcona island boat launch

Potential Locations

The new boat launch location is recommended to be on the north shore of the river near Maple Avenue. Boat launch locations are shown in Figure 4-16.

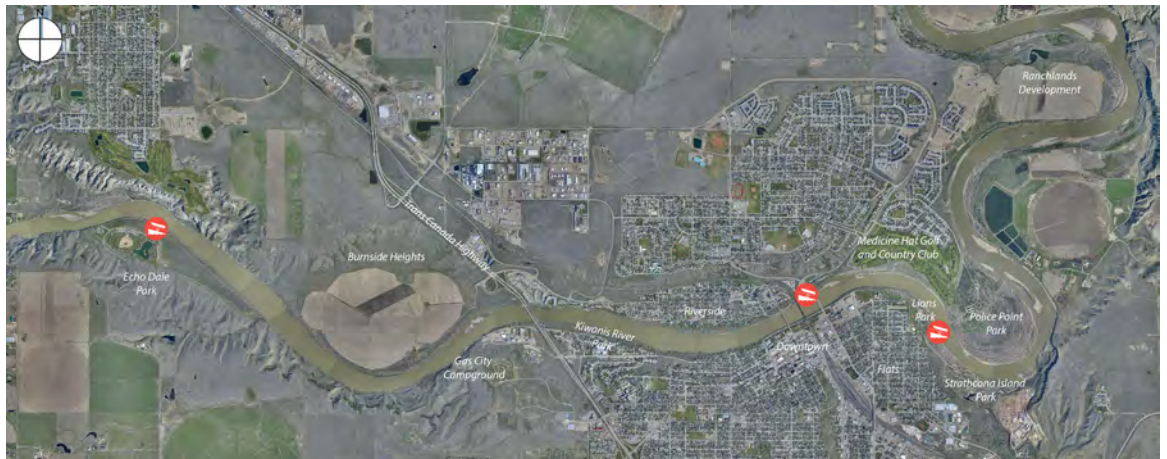


Figure 4-16 existing and potential motorized boat launch locations

5

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the various public engagements including stakeholder phone interviews, stakeholder forums, and the public open house process a list of top recreational opportunities was determined. From the original top opportunities, wayfinding and interpretive signage, natural preservation, and trail connectivity / improvements were selected to act as guiding principles that should be applied to all proposed projects. The remaining top priorities were:

1. Access to the Water (docks, beach areas, steps to the water, viewing nodes)
2. Riverfront Promenade
3. Mountain Biking Opportunities
4. Festival Space
5. Educational Programs
6. Waterfront Commercial Opportunities
7. Non-Motorized Boat Launches
8. Motorized Boat Launches

This list was used to generate a series of specific projects in locations identified through a combination of the site inventory, local knowledge, and locations identified by the public during the stakeholder process. Where feasible, multiple recreational opportunities were combined to form “projects”, for example a non-motorized boat launch, dock access, and a picnic site co-located. A recommended priority list follows. Many of the recommendations are multi-phased, with further development contingent on popularity and public demand:

5.1 High Priority Projects

Allocation of a contract term position with the City of Medicine Hat

- guide development of the recommendations in this report;
- partner with groups such as the Interpretive Center to facilitate education programs;
- facilitate planning and development of festivals and organized events;
- partner with local user groups such as the 670 Collective Mountain Bike Club to develop appropriate opportunities;
- as development occurs, review public opinion of completed projects to guide future development;
- work with the Business Support Office to encourage commercial development to coincide with these opportunities; and
- partnering with a marketing firm to work with the City of Medicine Hat. This could aid in the creation of informational brochures, posters, and advertising. A marketing firm could also assist in developing an image of Medicine Hat’s River Valley from a tourism perspective.

Phase 1 Echo Dale Regional Park Development

Echo Dale Regional Park Festival Space

- develop initial stages of a music festival in the east end day use area of Echo Dale Regional Park including a portable stage and mobile vendors; and
- initiate design development of future stages such as a permanent stage or amphitheatre, serviced campground, and provision of utilities for commercial development.

Development of an Unserved Campground

- development of an unserved campground in the east end day use area for tenting including marking / subdividing of sites, access roads, picnic tables, fire pits, and signage.

Echo Dale Regional Park Non-Motorized Boat Launch and Dock Access

- to be located by the existing day use area at the east end of Echo Dale Regional Park;
- development of a non-motorized boat launch that could encourage future camping in the area by people traveling down the river; and
- development of an accessible dock to allow day use area users to access the water and to tie non-motorized craft to when loading and unloading.

Phase 1 Riverfront Promenade Development

- develop initial stages of a River Festival along River Road; and
- initiate design development of future stages such as an amphitheatre, steps to the water, and a floating stage as festival gains popularity.

Mountain Biking Opportunities

- mountain biking opportunities in rougher terrain areas developed in partnership with the local biking community.

Strathcona Island Boat Launch Upgrades

- upgrades to the existing boat launch including paving the parking lot, design of a breakwater, and a universally accessible dock.

Formalization of Beach Area in Police Point Park

- development of the beach area including improved trail access, picnic tables, waste and recycle receptacles, and wayfinding signage.

Portable Dock and Non-Motorized Boat Launch at Kiwanis River Park

Portable Dock and Non-Motorized Boat Launch at NW Riverside Trail

Portable Dock and Non-Motorized Boat Launch at Ranchlands North

Formalization of Beach Area at Lions Park

- development of the beach area including improved trail access, picnic tables, waste and recycle receptacles, and wayfinding signage

Development of a Rafting Event Between Echo Dale Regional Park and Strathcona Island Park

Development and Installation of a Wayfinding Signage Program

- provision of wayfinding signage on the water for use by floaters, boaters, and other river users; and
- signage for river access locations such as beaches, docks, and boat launches.

Encourage Commercial Development to Coincide with the Implementation of These Opportunities

5.2 Medium Priority Projects

Phase 2 Riverfront Promenade Development

- development of a performance space such as an amphitheatre, improvements to the pedestrian corridor, plantings as required, viewing nodes, and an improved pedestrian crossing of River Road.

Phase 2 Echo Dale Regional Park Development

Development of a Serviced Campground

- development of a serviced campground in the east end day use area for trailers and recreational vehicles including subdividing of sites, parking pads, site furniture, and the provision of potable water and power.

Mountain Biking Opportunities

- mountain biking opportunities in rougher terrain areas developed in partnership with the local biking community.

Maple Avenue Boat Launch

- development of a new motorized boat launch on the North shore by the Maple Avenue Bridge;
- to include a breakwater, accessible dock, and new parking area; and
- could be used for Emergency Response Services.

Picnic Area by Police Point Park west end

- addition of site furniture and fire pits;
- development of one or two viewing nodes;
- provision of parking; and
- opening the existing maintenance road to allow access.

Parkview Viewing Nodes

- development of one or two viewing nodes connected to existing trails east of the Parkview Community.

Portable Dock and Non-Motorized Boat Launch in East Burnside

Formalization of Beach Area in North-East Ranchlands

- development of the beach area including a new parking area, improved trail access, picnic tables, waste and recycle receptacles, wayfinding signage, and a washroom / change room facility if utilities available

Encourage Commercial Development to Coincide with the Implementation of These Opportunities

5.3 Low Priority Projects

Phase 3 Echo Dale Regional Park Development

Development of a Performance Space such as an Amphitheater or Stage

Echo Dale Boat Launch Upgrades:

- upgrades to the existing Echo Dale Boat Launch including improved grades, a breakwater, an accessible dock, and upgraded parking.

Phase 3 Riverfront Promenade Development

- development of one or two steps to the water or other river access point

Mountain Biking Opportunities

- mountain biking opportunities in rougher terrain areas developed in partnership with the local biking community.

Viewing Nodes Between Echo Dale Regional Park and Gas City Campground

- install one to four small viewing nodes located on the South shore along the existing trail between Gas City Campground and Echo Dale Regional Park. Proposed location for the nodes is shown on Figure 4-8 in section 4.2.1.4.

Viewing Node at 1st Street

- development of a large viewing node in the existing parking lot on 1st Street near 2nd Avenue SW;

Portable Dock at Day Use Area in Strathcona Island Park

- development of an accessible dock adjacent to the existing day use area.

Encourage Commercial Development to Coincide with the Implementation of These Opportunities



Figure 5-1 viewing node along River Road

6

CONCLUSION

A carefully thought out plan for development along the South Saskatchewan River will aid in the river becoming a focal point for the community and a highly regarded commodity for the public. It will encourage connectivity and fluidity along the river, forming a comprehensive system instead of a series of disjointed segments. The often repeated public opinion that the river is severely underutilized suggests that this project will resonate with the community, and future development resulting from this study will be a well-used commodity for the City.

The guiding principles of education, connectivity, accessibility, wayfinding, safety, and natural preservation will set a direction for future development. The recommendations for individual projects flow from these principles and the desires of the public. Future implementation of the recommendations in this plan will allow future river valley users to find a variety of activities available complemented with the appropriate amenities to make the river enjoyable, convenient, and unique to the nature of Medicine Hat. Experiences along the South Saskatchewan River will not only meet the needs of the public, but exceed their expectations.



Figure 6-1 view of the river from Parkview