



10.0 PARKS AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Strategy Direction

Embrace the North Saskatchewan River Valley and sensitive ecosystems, and provide a linked network of formal and informal parks and open spaces.

Context

Fort Saskatchewan enjoys a large, integrated park system. With over 160 hectares of land dedicated to parks and open space, the City's parks system is a highly valued amenity. There are three main purposes for the parks and open space system: to protect and enhance the natural environment, to provide recreation opportunities and to promote alternative transportation options. The City's pathway network enables residents to use the system for both recreational and commuting purposes. While the City has many parks overall, the commercial and industrial areas have limited access to existing parks.

In 2008, the City finalized the Recreation, Culture and Parks Master Plan. This plan provides recommendations for future facilities, parks and open spaces. The Plan also outlines planning guidelines, management tools and a classification system to assist in the ongoing planning efforts for these community amenities.

As mentioned earlier, the North Saskatchewan River is of tremendous value to the City. As such, much of the existing open space and trail system is adjacent to the river valley providing access opportunities for recreation and habitat for wildlife. The City has been involved in a variety of planning initiatives to promote the river valley open space system including:

- City of Fort Saskatchewan River Valley Recreational Study: Development Master Plan Report (1997)
- River's Edge Recreation Area Development Master Plan Update (2006)
- West River's Edge Recreation Area Access and Servicing Study Final Report (2007)
- A Plan of Action for the Capital Region River Valley Park (2007)
- Recreation, Culture and Parks Master Plan (2008)

10.1 General Policies

- 10.1.1 Provide all neighbourhoods with access to passive and active recreational opportunities.
- 10.1.2 Review the Recreation, Culture and Parks Master Plan to ensure it is in keeping with the Community Sustainability Plan and the MDP, and then implement the plan's goals.
- 10.1.3 Provide a full range of appropriate major recreational facilities to meet the needs of the community.
- 10.1.4 Explore the feasibility of relocating the Dow Centennial Ball Fields.
- 10.1.5 Promote public space programming to encourage residents to use the open space that is available within the City and to encourage civic pride.
- 10.1.6 Investigate opportunities to utilize conservation tools (i.e., transfer of development credits, conservation easements, and land trusts) made available through the Provincial Land Use Strategy and other provincial policies to develop and enhance the open space and trails network.
- 10.1.7 Create a natural areas policy to promote open space opportunities focused on protecting ecologically significant areas and wildlife habitat.
- 10.1.8 Establish and provide resources for the Natural Environment taskforce to implement the goals of the Community Sustainability Plan. The taskforce is intended to be comprised of members of Council, staff and the public.
- 10.1.9 The unplanned lands are intended for future development. The manner of development must ensure the extension of services is timely and rational, and prevent the premature fragmentation of agricultural lands. The following steps are needed to prepare the lands for development that is efficient and makes best use of the lands:
 - a) Reclassification of the subject lands within the Municipal Development Plan;
 - b) Development of land use concept plans and impact assessments that ensure alignment with local and regional planning frameworks, such as the Municipal Development Plan, Transportation Master Plan, and the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Growth Plan;
 - c) Development and approval of servicing and phasing plan; and
 - d) If necessary, development and application of a levy bylaw.

10.2 Municipal, School and Environmental Reserves

- 10.2.1 Require municipal and school reserves dedication equal to 10% of the land remaining after any environmental reserve has been dedicated as part of a new subdivision process as per Sections 666-670 of the MGA, as amended. Reserve lands should be the primary option with cash-in lieu taken only when land would not integrate with the Recreation, Culture and Parks Master Plan's Pathway and Parks Network Plan.
- 10.2.2 Require environmental reserve dedication as per Section 664 of the MGA, as amended. Environmental reserve lands shall remain as natural areas or may be used for trails as long as a trail will not unduly impact the natural environment.



- 10.2.3 Require that environmental reserve, municipal and school reserves be identified through the ASP and ARP processes, to the satisfaction of the Municipality.
- 10.2.4 Ensure that industrial ASP and ARP processes consider preservation of land for parkland, and that municipal reserves are established for this purpose.
- 10.2.5 Collaboration with the school authorities should occur to identify the necessary requirements and locations for parks and school grounds.
- 10.2.6 Encourage joint use of municipal reserve lands for recreational, park and school purposes.

10.3 Waterbodies

- 10.3.1 No development shall occur within the 1:100 year flood fringe area of the North Saskatchewan River, Ross Creek or other waterbodies or natural features, with the exception of permitted and discretionary uses listed in the PR – Parks and Recreation Land Use District, in accordance with the Land Use Bylaw, as amended.
- 10.3.2 Preserve the river valley as open space, recreation areas, and wildlife habitat for the enjoyment of the whole community. Only development for the purposes of conservation, recreation and utility servicing shall be allowed within the river valley. Native vegetation along the river and creek lands should be preserved.
- 10.3.3 The City should continue to participate in the North Saskatchewan River Valley Alliance.
- 10.3.4 Work to implement the direction set in the City of Fort Saskatchewan River Valley Recreational Study Development Master Plan Report (1997); the River's Edge Recreation Area Development Master Plan Update (2006); the West River's Edge Recreation Area Access and Servicing Study Final Report (2007); and, the Plan of Action for the Capital Region River Valley Park (2007).
- 10.3.5 Explore and implement additional opportunities for public access to the North Saskatchewan River.
- 10.3.6 New development near steep slopes shall be setback from the Top of Bank in accordance with the Land Use Bylaw, as amended.
- 10.3.7 Design of subdivisions shall incorporate natural water courses and waterbodies as community amenities and critical elements of the ecosystem function.

10.4 Pathways and Trails

- 10.4.1 Facilitate the continued development of community and regional trail systems that provide connectivity for both leisure and commuting purposes.
- 10.4.2 In support to the Recreation, Culture and Parks Master Plan, develop a Trails Master Plan to ensure continued trail system connectivity through-out the City.

10.5 Maintenance

- 10.5.1 Commit to high standards of maintenance for the park system to ensure that residents feel safe using the parks.
- 10.5.2 Consider naturalization and xeriscaping for parks, where possible, to reduce water, energy and labour requirements.
- 10.5.3 Promote the development of an urban forest by establishing a tree management policy that will address tree cutting, retention and replacement for public and private lands.