

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Land Use

The Study Area, including the 2009 annexed lands and the remainder of the City's Growth Area, is lightly populated and the primary land use is agriculture. Population centres in the remainder of the IDP area include the hamlet of Springbrook with over 900 people and four rural residential subdivisions: Balmoral (pop. 167), Central Park (pop. 85), Linn Valley (pop. 235) and Poplar Ridge (pop. 693). Adjacent to the Study Area is Gasoline Alley, a cluster of existing and future commercial and residential activity along Highway 2.

Parks and Trails



The City of Red Deer's regional park system, Waskasoo Park, includes 994 hectares. See Appendix B for a detailed list of areas included in Waskasoo Park. In addition to Waskasoo Park, the City manages additional facilities—neighbourhood parks, recreation centres and facilities.

See Figure 4 - Existing Trails, Parks + Open Space

As a rural municipality with a smaller dispersed population, Red Deer County has a more limited need for parks and recreation facilities. To best serve its citizens, the County has intermunicipal recreation and culture agreements with adjacent municipalities, including the City of Red Deer. These agreements give county residents access to numerous indoor recreational and cultural facilities and programs in surrounding cities and towns.



An inventory for the entire County was performed as part of the OSMP. It found various types and amounts of County-owned lands: environmental reserves, municipal reserves, deferred reserves or other publicly owned lands. The study concluded that most of the current county owned open spaces were too small for parks or recreational facilities.

Natural Features



The Study Area is located in the Aspen Parkland, a natural region in Alberta that sits between the Boreal Forests to the north, the Foothills to the west and the Grasslands to the south. It is considered a transition zone between grasslands and forests and characterized by a mix of woodlands, wetlands, and grasslands. The Aspen Parkland provides valuable habitats for a wide variety of species. The majority of the Aspen Parkland region has been disturbed by agricultural use, so only remnants of native vegetation patches remain in uplands. Continuous areas of native vegetation are more likely to survive in river valleys where more moisture is available and agricultural use is more limited.

The Plan presents an opportunity to incorporate remaining natural features into the expanded park system. Natural features, especially those associated with the river and its tributaries, were identified early in the planning process. The natural features analysis relied on existing data from the City, the County and Alberta Environment.

See *Figure 5 – Natural Features*

Surface waters are the most prominent natural feature of the Study Area. There are five major permanent streams: Red Deer River, Blindman River, Waskasoo Creek, Piper Creek and Sylvan Creek. Permanent streams are those that have some base flow all year.

Extensive networks of recurrent and indefinite streams flow into the Red Deer River and its tributaries. The network is most dense in the eastern part of the Study Area. Recurrent streams are characterized by a defined bed and banks and have flows at least some of the time each year. Indefinite streams have no defined bed and banks and are easily lost if the land is disturbed. Some limited field checking by Red Deer Parks staff was used to update the stream data received and eliminate some indefinite streams that no longer exist.

The value of these smaller, non-permanent streams is often overlooked. Yet, they provide essential functions in the watershed—maintaining both the quantity and the quality of the water supply. Small creeks and streams collect surface water over very large areas and feed it to larger streams and rivers that are often sources of drinking water.

The Red Deer River becomes highly sinuous and meandering as it flows downstream just north of the city boundary. Natural processes associated with erosion and sediment deposition in this reach of the river likely will result in undercut banks and lateral migration of the river channel over time. Evidence of the formations of oxbows upstream, what is now Gaetz Lakes, supports this interpretation.

Three lakes or ponds are located within the Study Area: Hazlett Lake, Cameo Lake and an unnamed pond west of Hazlett Lake.

Land cover information (trees, wetlands) for the Study Area was drawn from the City of Red Deer's EcoSpace data. For the remainder of the Study Area land cover information (grassland, trees/shrubs) from Alberta Environment was used. One of the largest remaining patches of trees and shrubs is along the lower Red Deer River near the Canyon Ski Area.

A 1990 study for Red Deer County identified three environmentally significant areas (ESA) of regional significance within the Study Area (see list below). The County's environmentally significant study is currently underway and scheduled to be completed in the Spring 2011.

- Blindman River – Significant for its vegetation and habitat: dense coniferous, deciduous woodland, riparian willow, tamarack swamp birch wetland, deer habitat and great blue heron colony.



Indefinite or recurrent stream



Red Deer River



Hazlett Lake



Fort Normandeau



Red Deer River from Burbank Park



Red Deer Canyon

- North Red Deer Wetlands (includes Hazlett Lake) - Significant for its important waterfowl and marsh bird habitat.
- Red Deer Canyon – Significant for its steep and canyon-like valley, its vegetation and diverse bird breeding habitat and deer habitat.

Visual Analysis

The visual analysis measures the places in a landscape that may be seen from one or more viewpoints. To begin, points are marked within a 10-metre buffer along the Red Deer River corridor. A computer model then measures the total number of times a pixel (a small geographic subarea) would be visible from each individual point. Based on the total number of times each pixel is visible, an aggregate value for observation frequency is established.

This frequency is used to designate three visibility classes: Low Visibility, Medium Visibility and High Visibility. Areas of High Visibility are shown in the deepest colour, meaning the pixel is visible from a high number of points. Areas that are uncoloured are not visible from any of the points along the river.

Views affect the quality of the park experience for users. Generally, trail users consider views of nature areas enhancing to the park experience, while views of urban development detracts from the experience of those walking, bicycling or boating along the river trail.

Potential views were interpreted using topographic information provided by the City and the County. Members of the Plan Team identified additional views.

See Figure 6- Visual Analysis

Constraints

The major constraints to park-related development within the Study Area include hazard lands such as floodplains and steep slopes as well as physical barriers that hinder access to parks and trails.

See Figure 7- Constraints

Floodplain

Alberta Environment provides information on the extent of the floodplain and flood fringe, but only within areas already developed. The Provincial Land Use Framework recognizes the need to manage flood risk to protect human life, manage natural resources, and limit disaster damage faced by communities. The Province will address this policy gap by developing policy to minimize exposure of developments and settlements to flood risk.

Floodplain and flood fringe information is especially crucial for the undeveloped lands adjacent to the Red Deer River immediately to the northeast of the City of Red Deer. This reach of the river is highly sinuous and meandering. Because it is undeveloped, the provincial flood hazard information does not cover this area. The Red Deer County's 1990 study, *Environmentally Significant Areas of Red Deer County*, appears to identify part of this area as floodplain (area with dot pattern).

Other gross estimating methods could result in a much larger delineation of the floodplain. Topographic information and an estimated 100-year flood elevation could be used to delineate the floodplain (area outlined in red).

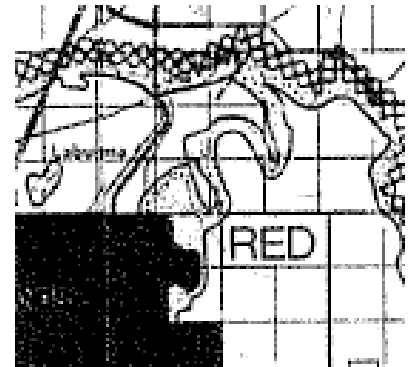
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD) method for estimating the meander belt could be applied to this area:

"The width of meander belt for watercourses that tends to meander or entire floodplain if it is highly constrained within a confined valley. The width of the meander belt is determined by multiplying the bankfull width by 20 for each reach, and is split equally on either side of the creek along axis of meander belt." (area outlined in purple)

Ultimately, delineating accurate floodplain boundaries along this highly dynamic and shifting reach of the Red Deer River requires a study by a fluvial geomorphologist, who can use information on soil texture and hydraulics to model where the river is likely to migrate in the near future.

Steep Slopes

The steep slopes interpreted from topographic information occur along the Red Deer River just north and south of the city. Steep slopes are also found at the confluence of the Red Deer River and Sylvan Creek. Red Deer County's 1990 Environmentally Sensitive Area study identified much of the escarpment in the downstream area of the Red Deer River as unstable.



Floodplains as shown in Red Deer County 1990 ESA Study



Illustration of a floodplain based on topography and estimated flood elevation.

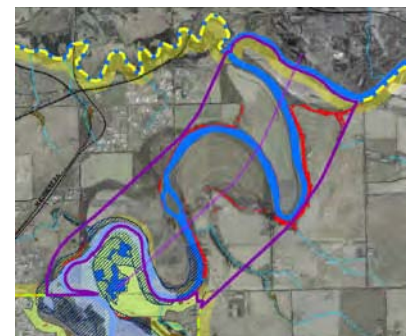


Illustration of a floodplain based on SRD delineation of a meander belt.

Wetlands

Wetlands have an intricate connection between surface and subsurface waters that is easily disturbed. There is a large cluster of wetlands within the Study Area near Hazlett Lake. Smaller scattered wetlands are located south/southeast of the city near Waskasoo Creek and Piper Creek.

Barriers to Access

The Red Deer River is a barrier for developing a connected trail system. There are few crossings beyond the city. Bridging the river is very expensive, and would occur only when traffic congestion would warrant such an investment.

The major highways, Highway 2A and the QE2 Highway, are also barriers to trail connectivity.

PARK CONCEPT

Indicators

Indicators help evaluate if the supply of parkland is adequate given the land area and population of a city. Two widely used indicators are:

- Park area as a percent of total land area
- Park area per 1,000 people

These gross indicators have limits. They cannot compare the quality of one park system to another, or determine which system has a more equitable distribution of parkland. When using comparisons, it is best to compare cities of similar size and density. Higher density cities with smaller land areas and static borders tend to have a higher percentage of their total land area in parkland, but a lower amount of parkland per capita. Lower density cities with large land areas and expanding borders tend to have higher parkland per capita, but a lower percentage of land area as parks.

Calculations can vary depending on what greenspace or open space is included or excluded in the overall total—parks, regional parks, open space, cemeteries, reserves, forests, etc.

Without additional parkland, park and open space indicators in the City of Red Deer will decline significantly.

Parks as a percentage of Total Land Area (assumes no additional parkland)

	Park/ Open Space (ha)	City Land Area (ha)	%
Current	994 ¹	7,585 ²	13.1%
Future	994 ¹	25,730 ³	3.9%
Other Cities in Alberta			
Calgary	7,500	72,650	10.3%
Edmonton	7,400	68,437	10.8%
Lethbridge	2,434	12,719	19.1%
Medicine Hat	1,458	11,201	13.0%

¹ Does not include neighbourhood parks

² Does not include Phase 1 annexation

³ Assumes entire Growth Area is annexed

**Hectares Park/ Open Space per 1,000 Residents
(assumes no additional parkland)**

	Park/ Open Space (ha)	Pop. (000)	Ha/ 1,000 Pop
Current (2008)	994 ¹	87.8	11.3
Future (projected to 2035)	994 ¹	185.0	5.4
Future (projected to 2050)	994 ¹	300.0	3.3
Red Deer Current & Goal (Rec Parks & Culture Needs Assessment)			12.7
Waskasoo Park 1982 Master Plan (Projected population for 2001)	994	91.0	10.9
Other Cities in Alberta			
Calgary	7,500	1,042.9	7.2
Edmonton	7,400	752.4	9.8
Lethbridge	2,434	84.0	28.9
Medicine Hat	1,458	60.4	24.1
Average of 24 Canadian Cities (Common Grounds, Evergreen)			9.2 average 6.1 median
National Average (Rec Parks & Culture Needs Assessment)			8.0

¹ Does not include neighbourhood parks

Applying the current indicators to future land area and population projects the City of Red Deer will need between 1,488 to 4,100 hectares of additional parks/ open space. The Park Concept presented in the RVTCP Plan identifies 3,655 hectares of additional parks / open space within the Study Area.

Projected Need for Additional Parkland

Future Land Area	25,730 ha
Desired % of Land for Parks / Open Space (Waskasoo Park only)	13.1% (current)
Projected Parks / Open Space	3,370
Additional Parks / Open Space Needed	2,374
Future Population 2050	300,000
Desired Hectares Park / Open Space per 1,000 Pop	11.3

(Waskasoo Park only)	(current)
Projected Parks / Open Space (ha)	3,390
Additional Parks / Open Space Needed (ha)	2,394
Future Population 2035	185,000
Desired Hectares Park / Open Space per 1,000 Pop (Waskasoo Park only)	11.3 (current)
Projected Parks / Open Space (ha)	2,090
Additional Parks/ Open Space Needed (ha)	1,094

Existing Park Classifications and Standards

Park classifications and standards are used to plan and manage large park systems. For Waskasoo Park, the City considers a major park node as 40 or more hectares and minor park node as less than 40 hectares. The *Recreation, Parks and Culture Community Assets Needs Assessment* proposed the following park classification standards. The RVTPC Plan would focus on park nodes of regional or citywide scale. However, some park nodes may ultimately be classed as a city or multi-neighbourhood park. There may be opportunities to create smaller neighbourhood parks in places where fingers of the regional Waskasoo Park extend along minor streams deep into future neighbourhoods.

Park Classifications

Class	Size (ha)	Definition
Regional Park	> 85	City of Red Deer or Red Deer County
City Park	25 to 85	Located entirely within the City of Red Deer boundaries
Multi-Neighbourhood Parks	6 to 25	Too large for current classification of Neighbourhood Parks and smaller than City Parks (25+ hectares)
Neighbourhood Park	2.5 to 6	Designed to serve a single neighbourhood
Linear Park/ Parkette	maximum size 2.5	Green spaces that are larger than current Parkette definitions but smaller than Neighbourhood Park definitions
Parkette	0.2 to 0.8	Designed for a tot lot, active and/or passive recreational

	hectares	components and trail systems
Downtown Vest Pocket Park		Small green spaces specifically developed within the downtown

Source: Recreation, Parks and Culture Community Assets Needs Assessment

New trail standards were adopted for Waskasoo Park and along public roads as the result of the Trail Master Plan. These standards were used in developing the RVTPC Plan for new Waskasoo Trail segments and suggestions of where additional trail connections (neighbourhood, arterial or connector) are possible. Nature trails are delineated in finer scale concepts for individual park nodes.

Trail Standards



Class	Width	Definition
Waskasoo Trail	5 m	3m asphalt + 1m clearance on each side; rest node every 1-1.5 km
Nature Trail	2 m	Wood chip or compacted gravel; rest node every 500 m
Arterial Trail	3 m	Asphalt paved
Collector Trail	2.5 m	Concrete sidewalk
Bikeway		Within vehicular travel lane
Neighbourhood Trail	4.5 m	2.5m Asphalt + 1m clearance on each side

Source: Red Deer Trails Master Plan

Principles

The mandate statement of the City of Red Deer Department of Recreation Parks and Culture is:

“Support a quality of life for all citizens of Red Deer by ensuring people have access to recreation, parks, and cultural resources”

An expanded park system will allow the department to meet this challenge. As the city grows in size, it must grow its park system to sustain the quality of life that citizens expect. The Park Concept relies on broad principles to guide the next phase of development for rivers and tributaries in the Red Deer Valley.

Follow the River. The Red Deer River Valley inspired a compelling vision for a regional park system. The river and its tributaries continue to be the defining natural and cultural feature of the region. It remains the backbone of the existing, and any future, park system. First and foremost, the park concept must take advantage of opportunities to include, protect and celebrate the Red Deer River and its tributaries.

Connect with Trails. Red Deer loves trails. Whatever the survey, poll, meeting or project, the love of the Waskasoo trail system comes through. Trails are the major connective tissue of the RVTPC Plan. Physically, elements within the park system are connected with trails. On another level, the trails connect people with nature, taking them to less accessible parts of the river, revealing inspiring views and hidden wildlife. New and old are joined—parks, neighbours and larger communities.

Respect Nature. The natural environment is highly valued by the citizens of the region, especially the rivers, wetlands, escarpments and forested areas. By including valuable ecological resources in an expanded park system, these resources can be managed, protected and preserved for future generations.

Mix It Up. A desire for urban amenity and active recreation need not conflict with the yearning for peaceful natural areas. A balanced park system can satisfy desires for lively peopled places as well as quiet, solitary respites from urban life. An expanded park can create different experiences and include areas for newer or growing activities that have been missing.

Fair Play. As the city expands in population and area, new neighbourhoods throughout the Growth Area deserve easy access to parks, trails and rivers. A regional park should provide a sufficient quantity and diversity of open spaces and recreational experiences to all residents of the expanded urban area.

Grow Smart. The City will need to house 60,000 to 100,000 more people. A forward thinking plan can support the City’s long-term growth strategy, specifically to increase residential opportunities in the north, west and east and expand job opportunities to the south.

Learn Outside. Much of the region’s cultural and natural history is tied to its rivers. A more extensive river park system expands opportunities to tell the stories of the city and the region through interpretation and hands-on experiences.



The RVTPC Plan is built around rivers and tributaries, but recognizes that each is unique, varying in physical character, environmental sensitivity and visual quality. The RVTPC Plan reflects this hierarchy of rivers and tributaries within the future park system.

Red Deer River will continue to be the main open space spine, the most important element of the park system. The Park Concept seeks to reinforce the river's importance with generous setbacks, numerous nodes and a continuous Waskasoo Trail on each sides of the river.

Tributaries (Blindman River, Waskasoo Creek, Sylvan Creek and Piper Creeks) are the second tier of the linear park system. Physically, these valleys are smaller, narrower and more intimate. A single continuous Waskasoo Trail will parallel the tributaries, crisscrossing to allow trail access from each side. Nodes are fewer in number and more natural in character.

Small Waterways are linear open spaces along the indefinite streams. The Waskasoo Trail is proposed for select segments of small waterways where the trail creates loops or links to nodes. The parkland along small waterways extends far into new residential areas, often far from the river and tributaries. Their long narrow configuration maximizes green edges and connections to the larger regional trail system.

See Figure 8 – Park Concept

Note that this Park Concept for the City of Red Deer Growth Area may include trail and park concepts that are NOT part of the Red Deer County Open Space Master Plan. Red Deer County does not intend to implement any park or trail projects that are not part of the adopted Red Deer County Open Space Master Plan. For more information about the Open Space Master Plan, visit the Red Deer County website (www.reddeercounty.ab.ca).

Land

The Park Concept includes two categories of land:

1. Proposed Parkland

Lands within the Study Area that are recommended as part of an expanded Waskasoo Park (2,889 hectares).

2. Special Study Area

Lands within the Study Area that need further study to determine how much of this area should be recommended as part of an expanded Waskasoo Park (766 hectares).

Available imagery and natural features data were interpreted to delineate a boundary for potential parklands. As a starting point, minimum buffer widths were established for riparian areas, lakes, sloughs and wetland areas.

- 100-metre buffer on each side of the Red Deer River
- 60-metre buffer on each side of other named streams (Waskasoo, Piper, Blindman, Sylvan) and unnamed streams

- 60-metre buffer from the edge of lakes, sloughs and wetlands
- 30-metre buffer on each side of indefinite or recurrent streams

The City is in the process of creating a setback policy for rivers, streams, lakes, sloughs and wetlands that may differ from the above buffer assumptions. However, for the purpose of this study, these buffers were applied. See Appendix D for a full discussion of ecological functions associated with buffers of varying widths.

Potential park boundaries were refined to include adjacent natural areas, vegetation, escarpments and the confluence of streams. Other information was used to refine this analysis— a narrated video of a flyover of the Red Deer River, additional imagery interpretation by UMA (consultants for the Joint Planning Initiative) and limited field work by O2 Planning + Design Inc. and the City of Red Deer Department of Recreation, Parks and Culture. The analysis did not use or consider parcel boundaries to define boundaries for potential parkland.

In some locations, boundaries were narrowed to respect existing rural residential acreages. Generally, it was assumed that existing rural residential developments along a river or creek would have an Environmental Reserve setback sufficiently wide to have a trail.

See Figure 8– Park Concept

Because of the emphasis on the river and its tributaries, the process of identifying potential parklands / natural areas relied heavily on natural features. In the future, the City may wish to consider additional criteria to guide future parkland acquisition opportunities. The tool could incorporate weighted criteria to reflect priorities of the City.

Note that implementation assumptions, including land acquisition, are discussed in a later section of this report.

Suggested Land Evaluation Criteria

Area of Consideration	Criteria	+ / -
Location	Within Growth Area	+
	Within IDP area	+
Proximity	Population	+
	School	+
	Transit	+
Connectivity	To existing park or trail	+
	To town centre	+
	To underserved neighbourhoods	+
	Helps connect over Red Deer River	+
	Helps connect over major highway	+
Natural Features	Waterways (rivers, creeks, streams)	+
	Floodway or flood fringe	+
	Wetlands	+
	Forests	+
	Steep slope (> 15 %)	+
	Unstable slopes	+

Area of Consideration	Criteria	+ / -
	Environmentally Significant Areas	+
	Geological outcroppings	+
	Unique or rare vegetation	+
Ecological Functions	Water quality buffer	+
	Restoration potential	+
	Wildlife habitat and corridors	+
Cultural Features	Heritage buildings	+
	Archaeological sites	+
	Palaeontology sites	+
	High visual quality of site	+
	Good views from site	+
Recreational Potential	Boat access	+
	Potential for alternative recreation	+
Educational Potential	Environmental or historical interpretation and education	+
Existing Land Use	Presence of oil / gas resources	-
	Industrial development	-
	Potential hazardous conditions	-
	Rural residential	-
	Agriculture	+
Ease of Acquisition	Current public ownership	+
	Willing seller or donor	+
	Potential Environmental Reserve	+
	Possible wetland mitigation site	+
Costs	Low maintenance requirements	+
	Low cost of acquisition/ maintenance	+
	Potential to provide eco services	+
	Potential for multiple, shared or joint use	+

Trails

Park trails are envisioned for year round use—walking, running bicycling and cross-country skiing (assuming winter maintenance). The Park Concept includes 136 km of proposed trails and trails located in the former rail line right-of-way. The trails are divided in three categories:

1. Proposed Trail

The Park Concept extends the Waskasoo Trail within the Study Area to new reaches of the Red Deer River and its tributaries. It also proposes to incorporate some existing utility rights-of-way as part of the overall trail systems.

Proposed trails along the rivers and tributaries would adhere to the existing Waskasoo Park trail standard— a 3 metre wide paved trail (5 metre right-of-way)—and would include the new signage system. The Proposed Trail is suggested as follows:

- To ensure equitable access to new river trails, continuous trails are proposed for both sides of the Red Deer River. The only new bridge crossing proposed is Northland Drive, within the existing city limits. No new river bridges are proposed for the study area as part of this Park Concept. If the concept limited trails to just one side of the river, access from new residential areas on one side of the river would be limited.
- A single continuous trail is proposed for the following tributaries: Piper Creek, Waskasoo Creek and Sylvan Creek. The trail will crisscross the tributary to provide access from each side.
- A single continuous trail is proposed for the south side of Blindman River.
- Single continuous trails are proposed for select segments of small waterways to link to nodes, create east/west connections and trail loops.

Additional trails are proposed within the ALTA Link right-of-way. These trails provide important linkages east of Red Deer where there are no major tributaries.

2. Potential Trail Connection

Potential Trails Connections show places where a trail should extend beyond the proposed parkland boundary. Potential Trail Connections could be built as part of new neighbourhoods or transportation projects. The trail connection would be constructed according to City of Red Deer trail standards for arterial trail, collector trail and bikeway or neighbourhood trail.

3. Former Rail Line Right-of-way

Trails could be located within abandoned or unused rail right-of-way. The Canadian Pacific Rail right-of-way links three river corridors and Sylvan Lake, a major destination located outside the Study Area.



CP Rail right-of-way

Other Trails

1. Trans Canada Trail

The proposed route for the Trans Canada Trail is part of the proposed trails shown on the Park Concept. The trail winds its way through the region linking to the Waskasoo Trail, Slack's Slough, Piper Creek, Waskasoo Creek, Hazlett Lake, and Blindman River. Within the Study Area, the trail continues north from Hazlett Lake along the C&E Trail over the Blindman River via Lacombe County's pedestrian bridge. Lacombe County and Blackfalds have plans to extend the trail north.

2. Nature Trails

Nature Trails are not shown on the Park Concept, but would be reflected on finer scale concepts for park nodes. In general, the plan assumes that natural areas within the Waskasoo Park will have nature trails that are designed to take walkers away from more active,

developed areas to quieter settings where nature can be enjoyed and appreciated. Bicycles and other vehicles are not permitted. Nature Trails will adhere to the standard recommended in the Trail Master Plan—2 metres wide with a woodchip or gravel surface. Nature Trails will traverse sensitive areas where wildlife and native vegetation can be viewed and interpreted- sloughs, lakes, wetlands, tamarack forests, floodplains and escarpments.

3. Water Trail

The Red Deer River itself acts as a trail for boaters. The Park Concept has identified over a dozen locations, both existing and new, for boat access to Red Deer River. Each boat launch is recommended to include parking, while a boat stop is envisioned as a mid-trip stop without parking, ramps or other facilities.

See Figure 8 – Park Concept

Nodes & Features

The Park Concept identifies a total of 13 potential nodes within the Study Area. High priority areas for node development include natural features, locations identified by stakeholders and Plan Team members, the confluence of rivers and streams, major trail intersections, proximity to pedestrian river crossings, publicly-owned lands with river access and viewpoints. Because the Red Deer River is the most important natural feature in the Park Concept over 38% of the nodes (five nodes) are suggested along this corridor.

Two types of nodes are part of the Park Concept:

1. Major Node

Major nodes are located within the Study Area and are larger than 100 acres (40 hectares). Eight major nodes are recommended including four along the Red Deer River. These nodes are part of Waskasoo Park. Two Major Nodes, Hazlett Lake and Northeast Park, include a mix of active and passive uses. The six remaining major nodes feature natural areas, passive recreation and offer a high level of visitor amenity: parking, signage, trailhead for Waskasoo Trail and more specialized park and recreation facilities.

Node	Type	Rationale
Blindman Tamarack Natural Area	Major	Protect and interpret natural features - tamarack forest; pedestrian river crossing
Maskapatoon Park Extension	Major	Extend and complement natural areas of Maskapatoon Park
Cameo Lake	Major	Protect and interpret natural feature
Northeast Park/ Special Study Area	Major	Encourage appropriate use of flood prone lands
Hazlett Lake	Major	Protect and interpret natural feature

Piper Creek Wetlands Complex	Major	Protect and interpret natural feature
Red Deer River Natural Area- East	Major	Encourage appropriate use of flood prone lands
Red Deer River Natural Area – West	Major	Protect and interpret natural feature; pedestrian river crossing

2. Minor Node

Minor nodes are located within the Study Area and are less than 100 acres (40 hectares). Five minor nodes are recommended including two along the Red Deer River. Two minor nodes feature a mix of active and passive uses. The remaining three are natural areas. These nodes are part of Waskasoo Park. Minor nodes would offer basic visitor amenities: parking, signage and trailhead for Waskasoo Trail.

Node	Type	Rationale
Balmoral	Minor	From County OSMP; serve Balmoral population centre
Burbank-Blindman River Park	Minor	Confluence of Red Deer and Blindman Rivers
East Hill Park	Minor	Serves future population centre; connection to existing Waskasoo Park
North Red Deer Wetlands	Minor	Protect and interpret natural feature
Waskasoo Creek Meanders	Minor	Protect and interpret riparian area; intersection of regional trails

See Figure 8 – Park Concept

IMPLEMENTATION

Funding

The implementation of the plan will require tapping a broad range of funding sources for both land acquisition and capital development. Park agencies are particularly challenged to provide and maintain high quality parks with limited resources. The City will need to gather resources across agencies to bring the RVTPC Plan vision to reality.



Recommendation 1 – Develop More Detailed Plans and Costs for Phase 1 Annexation Lands

More detailed plans for Phase I Annexation Lands, annexed as of September 1, 2009, are critical. Phase I Annexation adds lands to the north and east of the city. The park must be ready to grow before development occurs. Early land acquisition planning and thorough site analysis prior to drafting a Major Area Structure Plan (MASP) may help minimize land acquisition costs and maximize environmental reserve dedication.

This early (pre-MASP) planning should delineate the extent of the floodplain associated with the Red Deer River, as discussed previously. This analysis will influence land acquisition costs and provide clarity on environmental reserve dedication. Land documented to be located within the floodplain will have significantly lower value. If a parcel containing flood prone lands is subdivided, those lands could be acquired at no cost by the City as environmental reserve.

RVTPC Plan Park nodes within the Phase 1 annexation area include Hazlett Lake, Red Deer River Natural Area and East Hill Park. Conceptual design of these nodes would inform MASP and more detailed neighbourhood plans.

Recommendation 2 – Aggressively Pursue Provincial and Federal Funding

Provincial funding was a key component of the development of the original Waskasoo Park—the Province provided \$22 million of the \$26 million estimated cost. The involvement and support of provincial and federal governments will be critical for the next generation of Waskasoo Park's growth. Federal funds were not mentioned as a factor in original plan's implementation, but should be pursued for this project. The City should consider programs beyond traditional parks funding and seek funding opportunities with Transportation, Environment, Tourism, etc. Government programs that could potentially support the RVTPC Plan include:

- Alberta Lottery Fund
- Alberta Urban Parks Program
- Alberta Transportation (trails)

- Community Facilities Enhancement Program
- Infrastructure (economic stimulus initiatives)
- Canadian Wildlife Service

Spotlight

River Valley Alliance, Action Plan for the Capital Region North Saskatchewan River Valley

The initial concept of creating an integrated park along the river valley began 20 years ago. The River Valley Alliance (RVA) was formed in 1996 as a group of volunteers representing five Capital Region municipalities. They shared a vision of transforming an 88 km stretch of river valley into a world-class metropolitan river front integrated park.

Other municipalities joined and RVA was formally incorporated in March 2003. Its founding shareholders include the seven municipalities holding lands in the Capital Region North Saskatchewan River Valley – the Town of Devon, Parkland County, Leduc County, City of Edmonton, Strathcona County, Sturgeon County and City of Fort Saskatchewan. The RVA partners share a common goal - to protect, preserve and enhance the Capital Region's river valley park system for year-round accessibility, and enjoyment of its citizens and visitors. Each of the seven municipal shareholders appoint members of their respective Council and public members to serve on The RVA Board of Directors.

The RVA attracted \$1.5 million in Provincial funding to develop a Draft Action Plan for the river valley that was adopted in 2007. In 2008, the Province awarded \$50 million to support implementation of the plan. The RVA has also prepared and submitted a nomination to have this reach of North Saskatchewan River be designated as a Canadian Heritage River.

Recommendation 3 – Identify Dedicated Municipal Funding

The City of Red Deer will need to commit substantial municipal resources. Dedicated long-term funding is required. Leveraging outside public or private funding may require City matching funds. Even if a match is not required, funders will want the City to demonstrate a commitment with dedicated funds. Some of the municipal funds or funding mechanisms that should be considered include:

- General fund revenue
- Capital program funds
- Water revenues / fees (to fund stormwater management services of new parks)
- Dedicated tax (% of property or sales tax)
- Developer contributions
- Funds received in-lieu of municipal reserve lands
- User fees
- Voluntary fees (many users willing to pay a suggested donation)
- Special purpose bonds (user fees create revenues stream to repay part or all of bonds)
- Transportation program funds (for trails and trail connections)
- Mitigation funds (to mitigate the effects of major infrastructure projects)
- Revenues from “strategic marketing initiatives” (naming rights, vendors contracts, advertising)
- Revenue generating uses (cafes, restaurants, rentals, events, concessions)

Recommendation 4 – Explore Partnerships and Joint Development Projects

The City has previously cooperated with school boards and adjacent municipalities in developing park and recreation facilities as well as joint developments (sites that house multiple, but complimentary facilities such as a school, library and recreation centre).

Potential partnership ideas contained within the RVTPC Plan that could be pursued by the City of Red Deer include:

- Trail development with ALTA Link

- Trails along Waskasoo Creek and Piper Creek in partnership with Red Deer County and Gasoline Alley business community
- Park and trail development along the Blindman River with Lacombe and Red Deer Counties
- Development of Maskapatoon Park Extension with Aboriginal and Métis communities

The City has prior experience with joint developments—libraries/recreation centres developments and shared parking. The development of the future park system is an opportunity to advance local partnerships that can jointly fund or manage sites or facilities. Potential partners include:

- School Boards
- Red Deer County and Lacombe County
- Red Deer College (expansion to serve larger population, educational opportunities in environment)
- Non-profits
- Businesses

Recommendation 5 – Expand the Role of the Friends of Waskasoo Park Fund to Leverage Private Funding

The Friends of Waskasoo Park Fund is administered the Red Deer & District Community Foundation. A private donor established this “designated fund” specifically to benefit the Waskasoo Park with an endowment. Each year the interest generated by the endowment is used to support the operations of Waskasoo Park. In 2008, the endowment generated about \$900. The fund could accept contributions from the community to increase the fund endowment or support current programs. However, the Red Deer & District Community Foundation does not solicit such donations.

However, park funds elsewhere proactively leverage funds for capital projects, manage capital campaigns and promote individual giving. An expanded role for Friends of Waskasoo Park Fund could help to support and promote the RVTPC Plan. The City will be celebrating its centennial in 2013—an attractive theme for a multi-year fundraising effort. Some of the charitable or corporate funding sources include:

- Charitable foundations (TD Friends of Environmental Foundation)
- Alberta Fish and Game Association
- Corporate sponsorships
- Individuals contributions

- Ecogifts (donations of ecologically sensitive land in exchange for tax benefits)
- Donation of conservation easements
- Park Trust (non-profit partner to raise funds, run a capital campaign, hold easements, etc.)
- Partnerships with charitable organizations (Ducks Unlimited, Nature Conservancy)

Land Acquisition Strategies

Lands for the initial Waskasoo Park system were assembled over a relatively short period of time—within years of the 1979 “River Valley Concept.” About 42% of the land included in the 1982 Waskasoo Park Master Plan was already in public ownership—City, Public School Board or the Province.

Land acquisition and capital improvements to make the RVTPC Plan a reality are likely to occur incrementally over a 30-50 year time frame as the Study Area is planned and developed. A broader range of implementation strategies will be required for both land acquisition and capital improvements.

Recommendation 6 – Maximize the use of Environmental Reserve to acquire lands adjacent to rivers, tributaries, lakes, sloughs, escarpments and other environmentally sensitive lands.

The Municipal Government Act describes requirements for environmental reserve during subdivision. Environmental Reserve is dedicated primarily to avoid environmental hazards, including “a swamp, gully, ravine, coulee or natural drainage course” and “land that is subject to flooding or is unstable.” Environmental Reserve can also be dedicated to provide buffer zones around water bodies to protect them from pollution and/or provide public access. Although the Municipal Government Act refers to a minimum setback of six metres for these purposes, a municipality is free to specify larger setback distances as required. An alternative to Environmental Reserve is environmental reserve easements, where the land title remains private but a caveat is registered against the lands subject to the easement.

The Park Concept aims for a minimum 100-metre buffer on each side of the Red Deer River, a 60-metre buffer surrounding permanent streams, lakes, sloughs and wetlands; and a 30-metre buffer on each side of indefinite or recurrent streams. See Appendix D for a full discussion of ecological functions associated with buffers and why 60 to 100-metres buffers are recommended. Because so much of the proposed park lies within areas that may be subject to dedication as Environmental Reserve, the City’s new policy regarding setbacks and buffers will be critical. The use of Environmental Reserve is the most powerful tool the City can use to acquire parklands designated in the RVTPC Plan. By justifying more than the minimum setback of six metres, the City can more effectively protect environmental resources from pollution and degradation, and ensure public access. Note that

undeveloped parcels that are not subdivided would not be subject to Environmental Reserve.

Currently, the City of Red Deer's Subdivision Authority establishes the width of the required Environmental Reserve dedication along streams and other features. The City is in the process of creating a new setback policy for rivers, streams, lakes, sloughs and wetlands that may differ from the buffer assumptions used in the Park Concept. However, for the purpose of this study, the buffers previously noted were applied.

Red Deer County's land Use Bylaw states that a minimum building setback of 30-metres is required from the high water mark of a water body or from the highest valley break of any named watercourse. This setback is subject to the sole discretion of Council/Development Authority. Sustainable Resource Development guidelines for Environmental Reserve suggest more generous environmental reserve setbacks could be justified.

Once the City has adopted its new setback policy, environmental inventories should be updated to ensure maximum lands along rivers, lakes, wetlands and escarpments can be acquired as Environmental Reserves. Such a policy would consider the important ecological services provided by riparian areas— stormwater management, water quality improvement, wildlife and fish habitat and flood protection.

Recommendation 7 – Use Municipal Reserve and/or Land Purchase to Establish Buffers Along Indefinite or Recurrent Streams.

The Park Concept includes a 30-metre buffer along each side of recurrent and indefinite streams. In practice, many recurrent streams and most indefinite streams are not protected as Environmental Reserve and their ecological value is often overlooked.

Dedication of Municipal Reserve and/or School Reserve is also required during subdivision development. According to Section 666(2) of the Municipal Government Act, the amount of land dedicated as Municipal Reserve may not exceed 10% of the parcel of land less the land required to be provided as Environmental Reserve and land made subject to an Environmental Reserve easement.

These small streams provide important water management functions— they slow and retain runoff, reduce peak flow during flood events and maintain baseflow in receiving streams. Retaining this “green infrastructure” for stormwater management lessens the needs for pipes and storm sewers that send high velocity storm flows to receiving streams causing undercutting and erosion.

These small streams and swales extend deep into neighbourhoods, and can help retain direct stormwater to the larger streams, and provide linear open space for local trails that connect to the regional park and trail system. These areas are likely to be part of future residential subdivision schemes. As more detailed Concept Plans are developed, the City should give priority to these linear connected greenspaces over other forms of passive neighbourhood open space.

Recommendation 8 – Develop a Tool to Evaluate Municipal Reserve Dedications

The City should establish criteria for Municipal Reserve dedications and develop a tool to evaluate parcels offered by developers. If the offered parcels “score” poorly, and better parcels cannot be negotiated, the City should choose cash-in-lieu funds and use those funds to acquire lands that are part of the RVTPC Plan.

The tool would reduce the number of Municipal Reserve parcels that are simply “left-over” land. This system would direct resources to acquire more valuable connected open spaces that are part of the regional open space system. This approach echoes the finding of the Needs Assessment that encourages the City to assemble “larger parcels of contiguous park space, rather than smaller disconnected spaces.”

Recommendation 9 – Reflect RVTPC Plan in Future Statutory Plans for the Growth Area

As the City develops statutory plans for the Growth Area, parkland, trail, and node concepts contained in the RVTPC Plan should be reflected.

Recommendation 10 – Make Elements of the RVTPC Plan a Condition of Subdivision Approval to the Greatest Extent Possible

Section 655 of the Municipal Government Act allows municipalities to impose conditions on a subdivision approval, such as the construction of pathways that serve a subdivision or connect adjacent subdivisions. The City should use this strategy where capital improvements associated with the RVTPC Plan are within a proposed subdivision.

Recommendation 11 – Identify Parcels for Land Purchase and Begin Working with Landowners

Some major and minor nodes identified in the plan may require the purchase of entire parcels. Municipal and Environmental Reserve will not apply in areas where the realization of the RVTPC Plan negates subdivision. The City is encouraged to begin a dialogue with landowners of these parcels as early as possible.

This recommendation is consistent with Strategy 2.3.2 of the Needs Assessment to focus on “the development of larger parks with a mix of leisure amenities.”

Recommendation 12 – Consider Alternatives to Fee Simple Land Purchases

In some cases, there may be a lower cost alternative to a fee simple purchase of land. Depending on the site, the motivations of the seller or other factors, some parcels might be acquired through alternative means.

The Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ALSA) describes several conservation tools that will be used in Alberta to conserve land.

Conservation Easements – Conservation easements are legally binding agreements that limit certain types of uses and development from taking place in order to protect the environment, natural scenic or aesthetic values and agricultural land. Conservation easement legislation was introduced in Alberta in 1996. In 2009, agricultural lands was added as an easement purpose. ALSA specifies the acceptable uses for properties with conservation easements (i.e. recreation, open space, environment education and research and scientific studies of natural ecosystems). Easements are voluntarily donated or sold by the landowner to a non-government organization or a government agency. Easements are typically in place for perpetuity and run with the land (i.e. apply to future land owners). When sold, the value of an easement is the difference between a property's estimated current fair market value and the estimated value of the property subject to the restrictions of the easement. If donated, property owners may receive tax benefits.

Conservation Offsets – Conservation offsets are a new tool in Alberta designed to counterbalance the impacts of an activity on public and private lands. For example, a company could offset heavy industrial activity in one area by restoring an environmentally significant area elsewhere. In effect, the offsets work as an exchange. ALSA specifies that offsets can be used for restoration, mitigation or conservation.

Conservation Directives – (ALSA tool) Conservation directives are a new tool in Alberta that can be used to permanently protect, conserve, manage, and enhance environmental, natural scenic, aesthetic, or agricultural values expressly declared in a regional plan. The Alberta Government will compensate property owners for any decrease in market value brought about by the directive.

Transfer of Development Credits – (ALSA tool) Transfer of development credits (TDC) programs are typically set up to compensate landowners for the protection of ecologically sensitive areas, agricultural land, scenic and historical areas. These programs are commonly administered by creating zoning overlay districts where specific districts are designated as 'sending' or 'receiving' areas. Sending areas are those where development credits will be transferred away from because they are slated for protection. Receiving areas are those areas identified for accommodating growth. Regional, sub-regional or municipal land-use plans may allow the use of TDCs and may designate the areas to be conserved and the areas to be developed.

Notably, the ALSA states that conservation easements and transfer of development credits programs must provide for any or all of the following uses; recreation, open space, environmental education, research and scientific study as long as land use is consistent with environmental, scenic, aesthetic and agricultural protection.

In addition to these tools, the Province may adopt additional programs and tools. ALSA includes provisions for research and development of:

- Market-based instruments;
- Programs and measures to support regional plans; and
- Funding to support conservation, environmental and agricultural values.

In addition to conservation tools described in ALSA, the City may use other strategies to acquire land for parks and trails.

Land Swaps – A City-owned parcel (surplus lands, less valuable municipal reserve, etc.) is swapped for desired parklands.

Ecological Gifts Program - A program of the Canadian Wildlife Service that enables owners of property with sensitive natural features to donate their land (fee simple or easement) and receive tax benefits – no capital gains on disposition, tax credit or deduction for value of land.

Trail Easements – A trail easement may be possible in some locations.

Recommendation 13 – Integrate the RVTPC Plan into a Green Infrastructure Plan for the Study Area

The City’s MDP calls for the use of “Green Infrastructure” whereby the City “should incorporate significant natural features as part of the overall infrastructure systems. This should include using existing wetlands as storm water management facilities and planting and preserving shrubs and trees to improve air quality.”

The RVTPC Plan is a perfect opportunity to demonstrate how this can be achieved in the Study Area. As the future land use pattern becomes clearer, the City should evaluate how the parklands identified in the RVTPC Plan can become part of this infrastructure, and how public or private infrastructure funding can support the implementation of the plan.

Recommendation 14 – Negotiate the Use of Non-Environmental Buffers and Setbacks for Parklands, Trails, and Trail Connections

The City requires setbacks and/or buffers for industrial uses, landfills, solid waste disposal sites, abandoned wells, transportation, railways and other utilities. In some cases these setbacks and/or buffers could be used for trails. The Alta Link Trail and the CP Rail are examples. The City should look for additional opportunities as they plan infrastructure and utilities to support future growth.

Additional Studies

To move forward with planning and implementation of the RVTPC Plan, the following additional studies are recommended.

Recommendation 15 - Update the Waskasoo Park Master Plan

Many changes have occurred since the 1982 Master Plan was completed. Since that time, the City has completed complementary studies such as *Waskasoo Park Special Gathering Place Study*, *Red Deer Trails Master Plan*, and *Recreation, Parks and Culture Community Assets Needs Assessment*. The City has adopted many statutory plans that include park and trail elements. Major landowners adjacent to Waskasoo Park, such as The Westerner and Red Deer College are developing plans that may impact the park. An update of the master plan can reflect changing needs, redevelopment, new development, and to tie together the recommendations of related studies. The updated Master Plan could also address in finer detail the potential interface between the existing park and the RVTPC Plan.

Recommendation 16 – Reflect Red Deer County’s Environmentally Significant Areas Study in Future Planning

Red Deer County is currently undertaking a study of Environmentally Significant Areas. Much growth has occurred since their last study was conducted in 1990. A new study will provide important information that will help the City of Red Deer to identify and preserve natural areas throughout the Growth Area. The study is expected to be completed in spring 2010.

Recommendation 17 – Undertake a Floodplain Study for the Study Area

The Park Concept includes a Special Study Area for the extreme meandering reach of the Red Deer River. Bends in the river have formed over time as moving river water has eroded the outer banks and deposited sediment on the inner banks. This natural process affects the extent of the floodplain and makes floodplain delineation more challenging. Alberta Environment performs Flood Hazard studies for urban areas— those already developed. Yet, the best time to undertake a floodplain study is before development occurs. Keeping development out of floodplains is the most cost effective way to reduce or avoid property damage. Property values of flood prone areas are significantly lower than other lands. Having the best information about the extent of the floodplain will allow the City to justify Environmental Reserve dedications and minimize land costs. The study would also provide information about the extent of the floodplain in the “Special Study Area.”

This is also an area of provincial interest. The Land Use Framework identifies “managing flood risk” as a policy gap and commits to developing policy to “minimize exposure of developments and settlements to flood risk.”

Recommendation 18 – Explore a Canadian Heritage River Designation for Red Deer River

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) is Canada's national river conservation program. It promotes, protects and enhances Canada's river heritage, and ensures that Canada's leading rivers are managed in a sustainable manner.

The implications of such a designation should be investigated to determine the costs and benefits associated with such designation. Typically, the local community benefits from the partnerships formed through the heightened awareness of the river heritage, and the enhanced management and monitoring of the river by cooperating governments. Designation can translate into economic benefits—residents and businesses can be attracted to a region with a heritage river. Government programs may give priority to heritage rivers because of their special status.

Currently there are three Canadian Heritage Rivers in Alberta and several applications pending. Although two of the designated river reaches in Alberta are within National Parks, there are many river reaches in urbanized areas of other provinces that have been designated. One pending nomination is for the Capital Region North Saskatchewan River Valley, a reach that passes through many urban communities.

There is currently a moratorium on accepting new nominations while a nationwide system assessment of the program is underway. It is likely the criteria for designation may change to encourage nominations to “fill gaps” in the system. However, CHRS staff believes the collaborative work evidenced by the RVTPC Plan is the type of partnership that CHRP will continue to encourage and support.

Alberta Environment and the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance completed a “State of the Watershed” in 2009. The Alliance is now working on the Integrated Watershed Management Plan for the Red Deer River. These activities lay important groundwork for a future application.

Recommendation 19 – Initiate Peer Exchange with the River Valley Alliance

Peer exchange is a method of sharing information and best practices among professionals. The vision created by the River Valley Alliance for the North Saskatchewan River Valley is very similar to the RVTPC Plan. Because their planning process is more advanced, the City of Red Deer, Red Deer County and other members of the Plan Team have an opportunity to learn from their experience— formalize a partnership, secure funding for planning and implementation, etc. (Contact Billie Mulholland, RVA 780-496-5577)

Recommendation 20 – Document the Benefits of the RVTPC Plan

The high price tag of an expanded park system can be off-putting for elected officials, especially in uncertain economic times. A study that documents the multiple benefits of the new parks system can be an effective tool to attract resources, justify funding requests and move the vision forward. Some of the benefits that can be measured using current research methods include increased property values, lower stormwater management costs, pollution removal (including greenhouse gases), recreation expenditures and lower health costs through more active living.

Spotlight

There are several existing studies that document the benefits of municipal parks in Canadian cities.

Green Among the Concrete: The Benefits of Urban Natural Capital.
Canada West Foundation, April 2004

Healthy Parks, Healthy People, Healthy Communities: Assessing the Proximate Value of Parks and Open Space to Residential Properties in Alberta. Alberta Real Estate Foundation, June 2007.

Recommendation 21 – Explore Designating the Red Deer River a Municipal Park

In addition to the Canadian Heritage River designation, another way to recognize and protect the Red Deer River may be to designate the river itself a park. Suggested designations include naming the Red Deer River a Water Trail, Water Park, Wildlife Corridor. Creating this park would not require any land acquisition. Because the Province has ownership and management responsibility over the natural resources within their territory, a legal opinion regarding this type of designation is required.

REVIEW OF WASKASOO PARK MASTER PLAN

"The new Waskasoo Park has an urban square on the riverbank overlooking the Bower Ponds. I imagine sitting drinking espresso by an outdoor cafe and watching the crowds drift by – watching kids play in a large fountain." - a vision from stakeholder

As part of the RVTPC Plan process, O2 Planning + Design Inc. was asked to include a brief overview of the 1982 Waskasoo Master Plan (see Figure 2). This review includes:

- comparison of the 1982 plan to the existing park
- identify development gaps (areas not yet developed or preserved) and recommend actions to encourage development or preservation

Comparison of Master Plan to Existing Park

As is expected, there are a number of differences between the 1982 Master Plan and what Waskasoo Park is today. The table below summarizes these changes and what should be reflected in an updated Master Plan. Only changes within the 994-hectare Master Plan area are listed.

✓	Keep in Plan (Not yet developed, but still planned)
✗	Delete from Plan (Not developed, not planned)
+	Add to Plan (not in original plan, but is developed or planned)
	Railway Realignment / Park Development in SE 19 ✗
	Bower Ponds - playground +
	Great Chief Park - Pitch & Putt Golf Course +
	Gaetz Park - Parking ✗
	Gaetz Park - Warming Hut & Picnic Facilities +
	Gaetz Park - Playground ✗
	Pines Escarpment - Parking ✓
	Trail- from Three Mile Bend to 77 th St ✗
	Trail - along Riverside Drive to Northlands Drive ✓
	Riverside Athletic Park ✗
	Three Mile Bend - Model Airplane Strip, Shotgun Range, Archery Range ✗

Three Mile Bend - Washroom/Warming Hut, Off Leash Dog Area, Radio Car Track, Ski Jump (redevelopment)	+
River Escarpment/McKenzie Ponds - Canoe Launch	+
Spruce Woods (name from original Master Plan; is superceded by the East Hill MASP)	✓
River Bend - Bike Trail, Fishing Pond, Skating Pond (redevelopment)	×
Barrett Park – Skateboard Park, Community Garden	+
Kin Canyon - Partcipark	×
Waskasoo Creek Park – Parking, Picnic, Washroom	×
Fort Normandeau – Trail to Heritage Ranch	✓
Fort Normandeau - Playground, Equestrian trail	×
Fort Normandeau – Interpretive Centre	+

Development Gaps & Recommendations

Spruce Woods

The 1982 Master Plan included an area called Spruce Woods that was envisioned as a conservation area. The plan proposed a hiking trail (nature trail) in the interior and a bicycle/ pedestrian trail (Waskasoo Trail) along the ridge of that connected to River Bend and River Escarpment (what is now McKenzie Ponds). This area was never developed and is now shown as a “proposed natural area” as part of the East Hill Major Area Structure Plan and is in the vicinity of the Northland Drive bypass project.

Recommendation

The conservation use is still appropriate for parts of the site. The site has large stands of mature, mostly spruce forest and is within the floodplain of the Red Deer River. Since 1982, gravel operations have disturbed a portion of the site. Large ponds remain and the site is revegetating. Additional restoration would be needed to return it to a conservation area. The Waskasoo Park Master Plan Update (Recommendation 15) should evaluate how the disturbed area of the site might best enhance the overall park system and the new East Hill community.

Plan Team and Stakeholder Suggestions

Plan Team and Stakeholders offered a number of suggestions about the existing Waskasoo Park during the RVTPC Plan process. While some ideas are unlikely to go forward, planning for other improvements are underway. The responses of the City administration to these suggestions are summarized in the table below.

Suggested Action	Response/ Recommendation
Improvements to existing parks & amenities	Gathering Places Study recommendations to redevelop River Bend and Three Mile Bend moving forward Plan & Studies underway for Barrett Park, Bower Ponds, Recreation Park, and Heritage Ranch
Address missing trail links	Trails Master Plan will be updated 2010
Improved access to river	New parking lot at Fort Normandeau New river access in Spruce Woods/ East Hill Park
Expand interpretation	Waskasoo Park Interpretation Master Plan is slated for 2010
Dog Park near Piper Creek, 40th Ave & 19th Street	Will be developed in summer 2010
Protect Natural Areas from parking and quad vehicles	Effort to address is ongoing, especially in Maskapatoon Park
Confluence of Piper and Waskasoo Creek in downtown area	Greater Downtown Action Plan provides recommendations
Pedestrian link from Heritage Range to Fort Normandeau	Still in plans, but requires land acquisition
River Shuttle and Tram access	Potential idea for future planning

Recommendations from Other Plans

In addition to the statutory plans and park-related plans, a number of other plans include suggestions for changes or improvements to Waskasoo Park. Recommendations contained in the following plans should be considered as part of the Waskasoo Park Master Plan Update (Recommendation 15).

<p>Greater Downtown Action Plan</p>	<p>Prepare a park / open space plan for the river's edge pathway system and City land holdings in the area</p> <p>Construct a pedestrian bridge connecting the Downtown to Bower Ponds as an extension to the 48 Street Promenade</p> <p>Urban open spaces as part of the Riverlands redevelopment—a hard-edged riverfront plaza development with access to the river's edge, a pedestrian bridge to Bower Ponds, a major all-season public market and water features</p>
<p>Westerner Park Strategic Development Plan</p>	<p>Improved pedestrian connections to Piper Creek walking trails</p>
<p>Riverlands Area Redevelopment Plan</p>	<p>A new major riverside park and trail system</p>
<p>Recreation, Parks and Culture Community Assets Needs Assessment</p>	<p>Improved interface between the parks and the downtown</p> <p>Develop a major (50 to 60 acre) athletic park that includes alternative recreation: camping, skate park, a BMX track and mountain bikes</p> <p>Explore options for new festival site—within existing park system, as part of the Westerner redevelopment or part of the redevelopment of Bower Ponds and Great Chief Park</p>
<p>Heritage Management Plan</p>	<p>Expand Municipal Heritage Inventory to include cultural landscapes and natural features</p>