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# parks & open space master plan





## City of Grande Prairie

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# executive summary

The 2012 Parks and Open Space Master Plan is intended to guide the City of Grande Prairie in the development and improvement of parks and open space facilities, and the delivery of services that will meet the needs of the community over the next seven to ten years. The Plan provides guidance for retaining and enhancing the character and quality of existing landscape elements and open spaces, for capitalizing on the distinct four-season context, and for acknowledging the evolving demands and expectations of residents and visitors.

The Plan process included extensive consultation with the public through an on-line and paper survey of needs and expectations, several focus groups involving field users and particular segments of the population, and public open houses. The process also included a detailed inventory of the natural and built aspects of Grande Prairie, with a focus on the public realm. It was evident through the development of the Plan that the residents of Grande Prairie highly value their parks and open spaces, and that the natural environment and opportunities to recreate outdoors are very important. As the population of the city continues to grow, it is even more essential to make sure that the natural resources are protected, that access parks and open spaces are available to every resident, and that Grande Prairie maintain its parks, trails and recreation infrastructure so as to continue to be a desirable place to live and visit.

Muskoseepi Park, the jewel of the city, acts as the backbone of the plan, and subsequent development should support protection of natural watercourses and wetlands and further the provision of a range of open space types for a diverse population. The Plan includes strategies at the scale of the city, the neighbourhood and the specific site, and stresses inter-connection among all scales through expansion of the trail system and through city and neighbourhood planning that encourages connectivity. Specific strategies and guidelines are proposed for the various open space types as a way of strengthening them and making construction, maintenance and operations cost-effective.

Comparative reviews of other similar cities showed that Grande Prairie currently has a strong park and open space system, however it must constantly be updated and added to in order to reflect changes in demographics and changing recreation needs. Specific recommendations that came about through the development of this Plan include identification of priority trail connections, provision of off-leash dog areas, additional tree planting to help Grande Prairie achieve a goal of greater canopy cover, and provision of, or repair to, several specific recreation facilities.

As well, the Plan recommends that continued citizen involvement be an ongoing aspect of parks operations, through involvement in the naming of parks, through participation in additional formalized public engagement processes, and through development of new park types, such as the off-leash dog areas. Parks and open spaces are some of the most distinguishing features of Grande Prairie, and help contribute to its identity, character and quality of life. It is intended that this Plan provide the tools and strategies so that the important roles that parks play in the health, quality of life and way of life of its citizens can be maintained, and so that the economic advantages provided to neighbourhoods and to the city as a whole can be maintained.



Document Structure

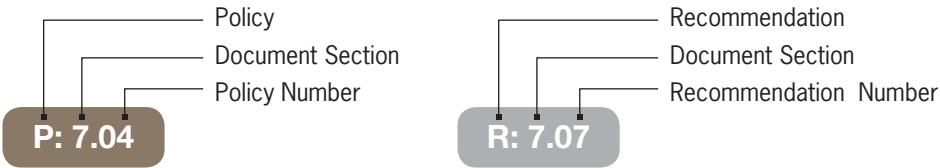
What is a policy?

A policy is a guideline or proposed course of action that should be followed for the successful implementation of the plan. Policies are within the jurisdiction of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan.

What is a recommendation?

A recommendation is a guideline or proposed course of action that is suggested to be followed for the support of the plan and the improvement of practices related to parks, open spaces and recreation in Grande Prairie. Recommendation could be outside of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan and could involve other departments within the City.

Policies and recommendations are highlighted throughout the plan in the different sections. The diagram below indicates how policies and recommendations are referenced.



Best Practices

Best practices are intertwined throughout the document and highlighted in some specific points with a section with references at the end of the document.





# introduction

The City of Grande Prairie Parks and Open Space Master Plan is intended to guide Grande Prairie in the development and improvement of parks and open space facilities, and the delivery of services that will meet the needs of the community over the next 7-10 years. This Plan attempts to provide guidance for retaining and enhancing the character and quality of existing landscape elements and open spaces, for capitalizing on the distinct four-season context, and for acknowledging the evolving demands and expectations of residents and visitors. This Parks and Open Space Master Plan focuses specifically on the City of Grande Prairie, but it also includes opportunities for linkages and synergies with the County of Grande Prairie.

This Plan is based on a philosophy regarding the value and importance of the public realm in the City of Grande Prairie, and it provides an approach and rationale for several broad and important aspects of city form and function:

- > maintaining and/or restoring the ecological integrity of natural landscapes and watersheds
- > enhancing the unique sense of place of the city
- > considering the public realm as the infrastructure for city form, function and growth
- > emphasizing the importance of the quality of the public realm and its effects on the quality of life for residents and visitors.

The philosophical base then leads to several practical, inter-related ways of continuing to develop and manage parks and open space:

- > design of a coherent spatial concept for parks and open spaces that is built on the understanding of the unique characteristics of Grande Prairie and the requirements of its population
- > development of a plan for land acquisition, management, and maintenance of parks and open spaces that, over time, will contribute to an exemplary public realm
- > proposal of capital and operational budgeting and funding mechanisms to allow for the evolution of this plan
- > adoption of an integrated, interdisciplinary, efficient and cost-effective way of managing the public realm that makes use of synergies and common interests in City units.

## 1 The role of parks and open space

Parks and open spaces can be some of the most important distinguishing features of a city. They are where we spend much of our recreation and social time, and they can help to give identity and character to a place. Cities and towns that have well developed parks and open space systems are thought to be much more highly desirable as places to live, work and do business.

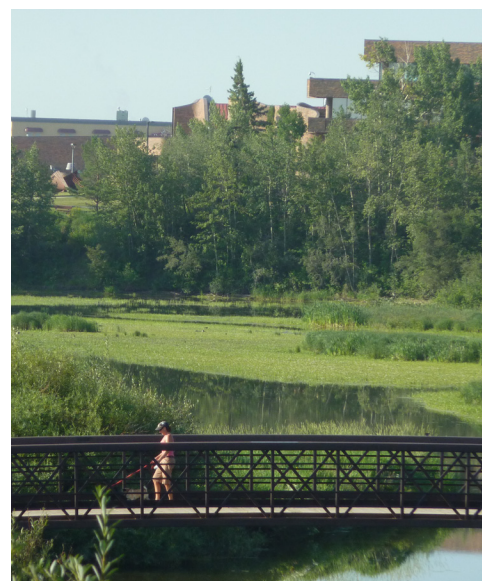
The functions and benefits of parks and open space have been described by the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, and others:

### Environmental

- > parks, open space and protected areas play an essential life-sustaining role, contributing to the critical environmental health of the city.
- > parks, open spaces and natural areas meet a strong and growing desire for natural, environmental-based recreation and nature interpretation.
- > preserving natural lands is recognized as a wise investment, and an essential part of integrated landscape management required for the long range environmental future.

### Social and community

- > parks and open spaces help to create quality communities, and their presence is an indicator of a community's quality of life.



- > parks and open spaces help to encourage community involvement, and can create leadership development opportunities that build strong communities, social capital and social cohesion.
- > parks and open spaces provide neighbourhood gathering places, and it is important that all ages have access to appropriate spaces and facilities.
- > parks and open spaces contribute greatly to community vitality, civic pride and responsibility.
- > many parks and open spaces help to create and support civic and cultural infrastructure and therefore help to enhance the sense of place, historic continuity, and civic identity.

*"Parks are one of the most effective ways to build a sense of community and improve quality of life. Parks are also one of the most effective methods available to change the character and improve the image of a community." Healthy By Nature, Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (2010)*

### Public health

- > provision of accessible parks and open spaces for recreation and sports promotes physical activity.
- > good streets, paths and trails are important in supporting walking and other forms of non-motorized transportation.
- > parks and open spaces contribute to psychological wellbeing, and provide a venue for stress release and healing.

### Economy

- > the quality of life created by parks and open spaces translates into proven economic advantages for the surrounding community. Quality of life, measured in part by urban green space and street design is a determining factor in real estate values and economic vitality.
- > an environment enhanced by parks and good streets attracts tax-paying businesses to locate, relocate and expand in a community while acting as a catalyst for tourism and its inherent spin-off benefits.
- > parks and open spaces are important in helping to shape development and avoid undesirable patterns of growth.
- > recreational facilities capable of hosting major competitions provide an opportunity for sport-based tourism, and fosters economic activity of businesses and services associated with such events.

## 2 The landscape and the public realm as civic infrastructure

The land, landscape character, and environmental aspects of Grande Prairie are the most permanent aspects of the built environment, with tremendous importance to quality of life and with the greatest potential to contribute to a sense of place. This Plan includes historic and environmental analysis as important methods in understanding the city and its evolution, and highlights several aspects of the Grande Prairie landscape that should be emphasized in parks planning as well as urban planning.

The public realm, that is, the shared city spaces made up of parks, plazas and streets, is the next most permanent part of the built environment. The network of civic spaces, recreation areas, paths and trails, and also significant streets, provides a clear framework for urban development. The establishment of the city's spatial structure, the configuration of block patterns and the designation of land uses are important in setting the stage for subsequent development that will support the continued evolution of a high quality city form, and therefore should be done collaboratively among several municipal units.

This Plan considers the public realm at various scales, from the city as a whole, to the neighbourhood, to the individual site, and emphasizes integration of all scales. It also emphasizes the consideration of streets that can meet a multitude of demands, rather than function solely as roads or vehicular corridors.

The landscape and the public realm of parks, open spaces and streets are important to the city in terms of environment, social/community, public health, and economy. This aspect of urban form and function therefore needs to be considered as one of the most important aspects in how the city is developed and managed. Parks and open spaces are not just amenities - they are vital parts of the city and should be considered as a comprehensive system involving many municipal units.



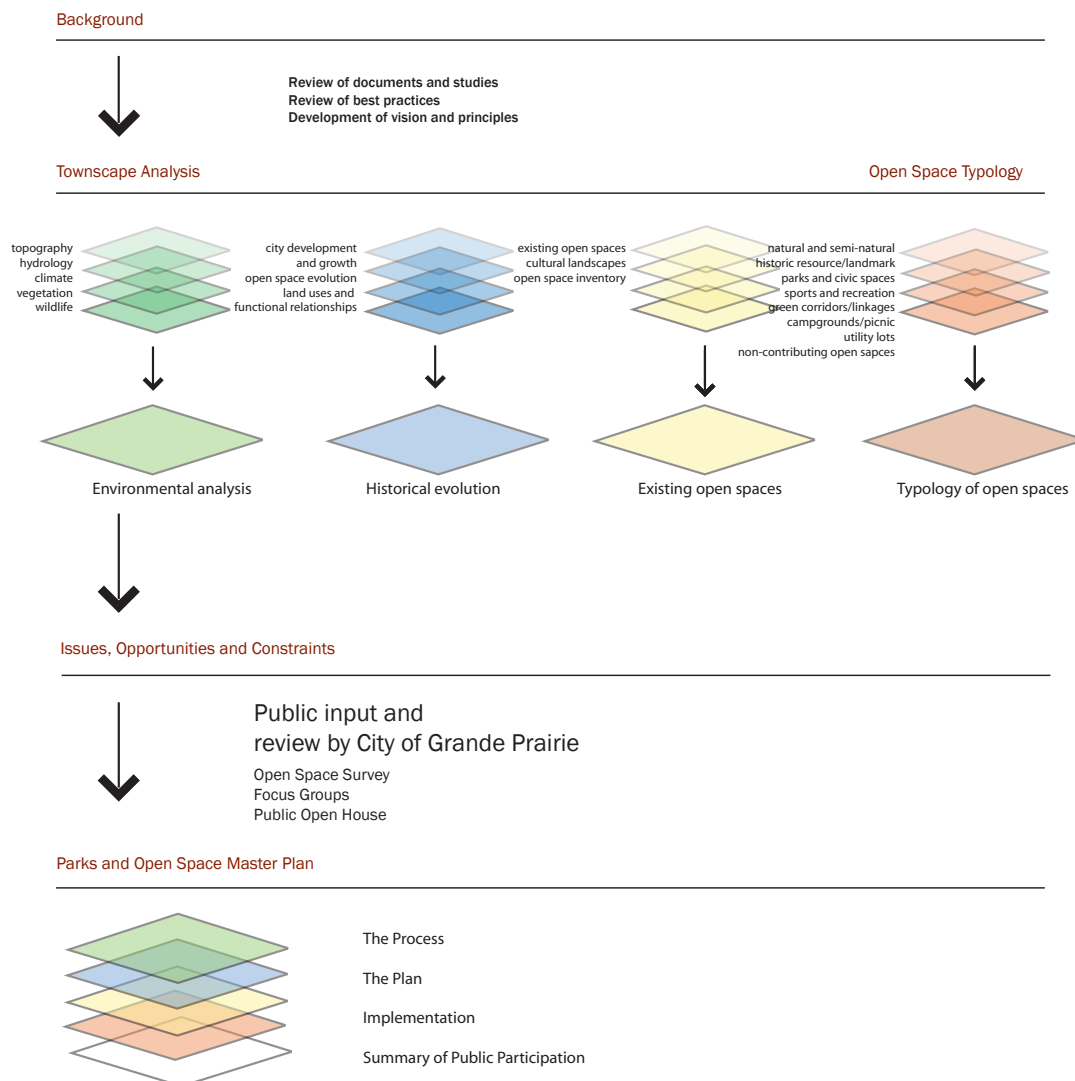


# the process

Grande Prairie is Alberta's main northwestern city, and like all western cities, has a short but dynamic history. The attractions of a diverse economy, with roots in agriculture, oil and gas, forestry, various industries, and education, make it desirable as a place to live. Its location at the edge of the aspen parkland, between the prairies and the boreal forest, give it a particular landscape character. As one of Canada's winter cities, it enjoys four distinct seasons, which provides the potential of diverse recreation opportunities.

The process employed for the development of this Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan involved understanding the city, through the Townscape Analysis process and through review and updating of the existing inventory of parks and open spaces, as well as understanding the thoughts and aspirations of residents regarding parks and open space, through several public engagement processes.

**Figure 1. Townscape Analysis Diagram - Customized process for Grande Prairie**



3 Townscape analysis

Townscape Analysis provides a methodology for understanding, in detail, Grande Prairie, its evolution and its qualities, and it provides some of the basis for the development of an open space concept.

Environmental analysis

Climate

- > High evapotranspiration rates and low precipitation make Grande Prairie a dry environment for plant growth.
- > Slopes sheltered from prevalent northwest/west winds tend to preserve moisture and are better for plant growth.
- > Temperature, daylight hours and precipitation contribute to a short growing season in Grande Prairie.

Winter city

Grande Prairie has four distinct seasons, including a long winter with enough snow to allow for many recreational activities. Winter Cities design principles are outlined in later sections of the Plan in order to improve livability in winter and throughout the year in ways that celebrate the seasons and Grande Prairie’s sense of place.



Figure 2. Temperature / Precipitation / Sunlight Hours  
source of data: National Climate Data and Information Archive

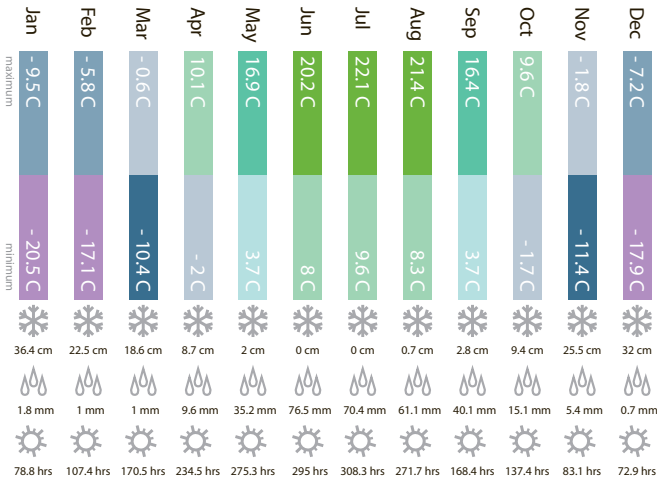
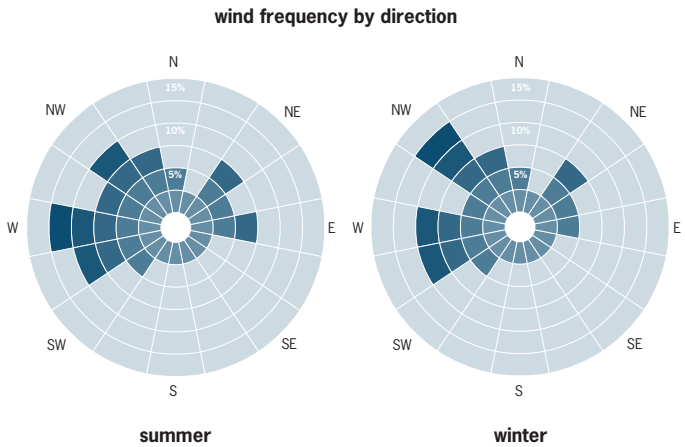


Figure 3. Wind  
source of data: Nav Canada



## Water

Climate change is predicted to impact water availability. The Alberta Water for Life Strategy includes three key goals:

- > Safe, secure drinking water
- > Healthy aquatic ecosystems
- > Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy

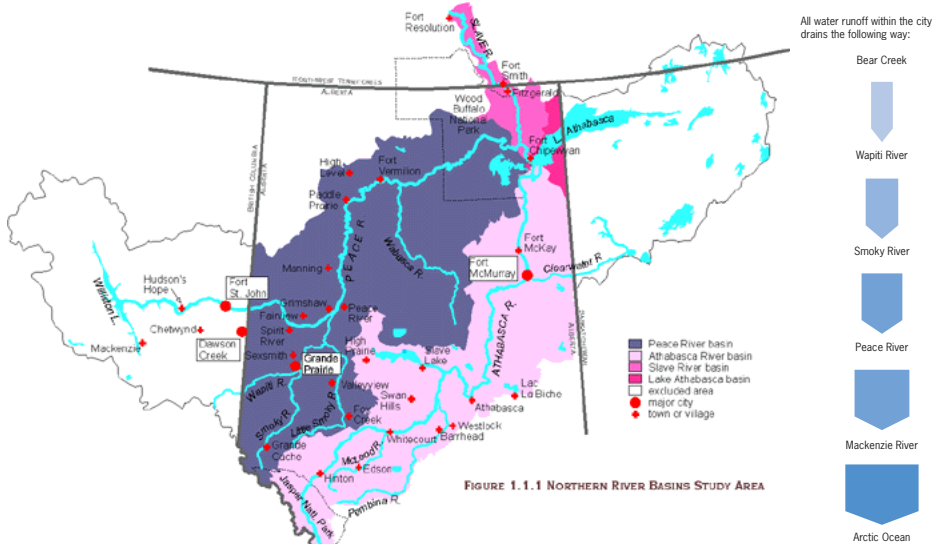
The efficient use of water as well as the protection of its sources, including riparian areas and wetlands, are an important component of this plan. The storm water management plan that is currently in place should be emphasized and supported.

## Watershed

A watershed refers to the streams, rivers and land surfaces that form a drainage basin. Grande Prairie is located within the Peace River watershed which forms part of the larger Mackenzie River Basin, ultimately draining north into the Arctic Ocean.

**Figure 4. Northern River Basins**

source of data: Northern River Basins Study

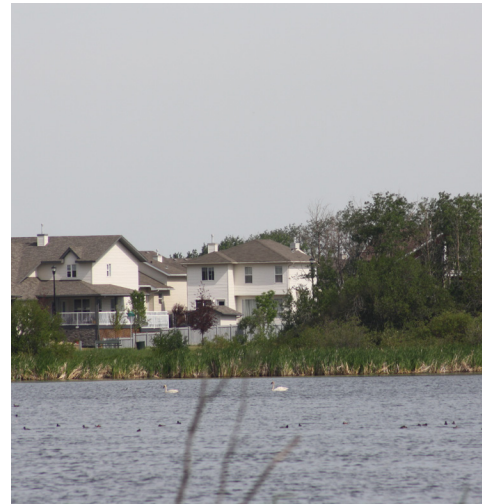


## Riparian areas

A riparian area refers to the interface between land and a river, stream or other watercourse. These areas have many important functions, including soil retention and water bio-filtration and they are often rich habitat for flora and fauna. The health of the riparian areas in the Grande Prairie area, including: Bear Creek, Wapiti River, Crystal Lake, O'Brian Lake and Woody Creek/Channel, should be a priority.

## Wetlands / Seasonal ponds

Wetlands and seasonal ponds constitute a key component to the recharge of the aquifer. In the area surrounding Grande Prairie a significant number of wetlands and seasonal ponds exist. These should be taken into consideration in any future development. Storm water management should contribute positively to the hydrologic cycle through bio-filtration and handling water run-off.





## Natural region

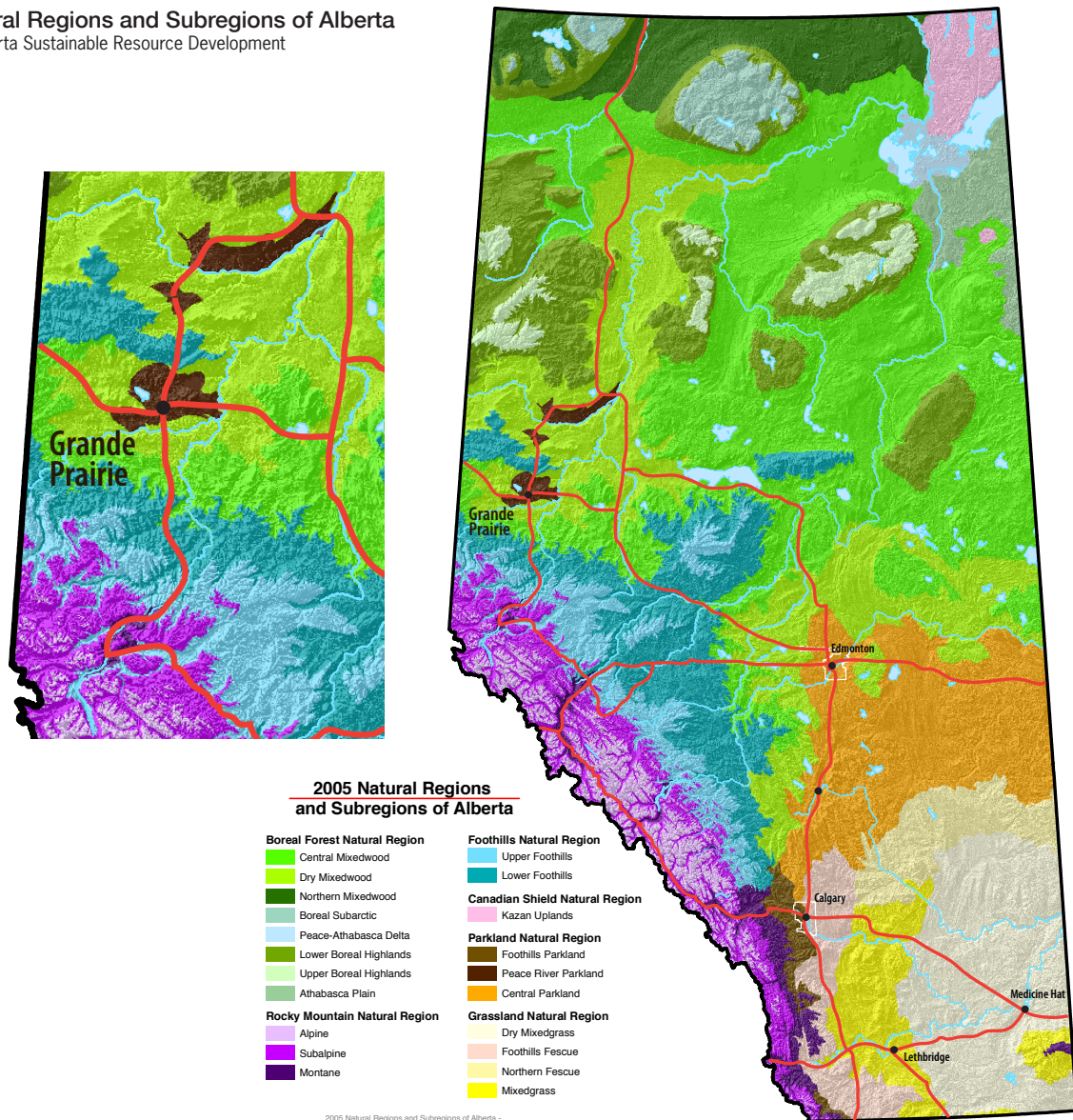
Classification of natural regions is based on physical geography, soil, vegetation and landscape patterns; the combined effects of climate, topography and geology greatly influence these patterns.

Grande Prairie is located within the Peace River Parkland Subregion and is bounded to the north by the Lower Foothills Subregion and to the south by the Dry Mixedwood Subregion.

Key features of the Peace River Parkland Subregion are:

- > Almost all uplands are cultivated
- > Black soils indicate the extent of pre-settlement perennial grasslands
- > Upland forests of aspen and white spruce; dry grasslands and aspen forests on valley slopes
- > Slightly drier and warmer than the surrounding land, contributing to its agricultural productivity.

**Figure 5. Natural Regions and Subregions of Alberta**  
source of data: Alberta Sustainable Resource Development



2005 Natural Regions and Subregions of Alberta -  
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Environment,  
Alberta Community Development and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, June 2005

## Urban forest

The urban forest includes all trees, naturally-occurring and planted, and street trees as well as park areas. American Forests recommends achieving an average tree canopy cover of at least 25%, including 35% in suburban neighbourhoods and 9% in downtowns. Challenges to this include current development practices where very little space is available for residential street tree planting. This is due to factors such as the lack of back lanes where driveways and services could be located and the dominance of multiple-car front garages and driveways. It is also affected by Engineering Standards for streets in which street trees are not provided for. Infill/redevelopment guidelines for established neighbourhoods could protect existing trees. In addition, Grande Prairie's industrial areas could also include more tree plantings for environmental, human comfort and aesthetic values.

Grande Prairie's GPS based Tree Inventory is an excellent resource. It collects items such as species, size of trunk and health. This information is important to maintain and building upon the city's tree canopy.



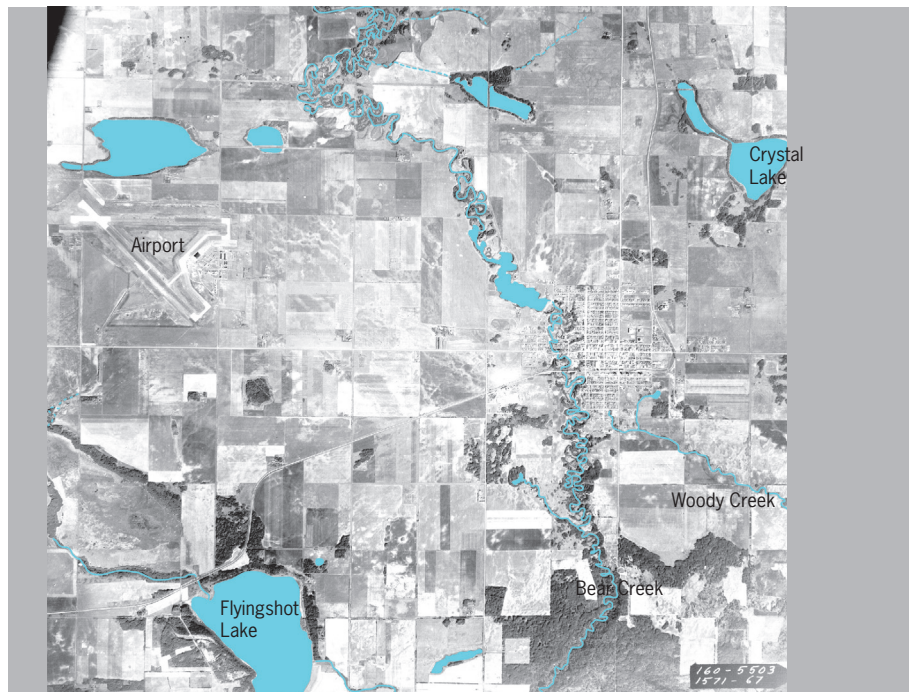


### Historic evolution of watercourses

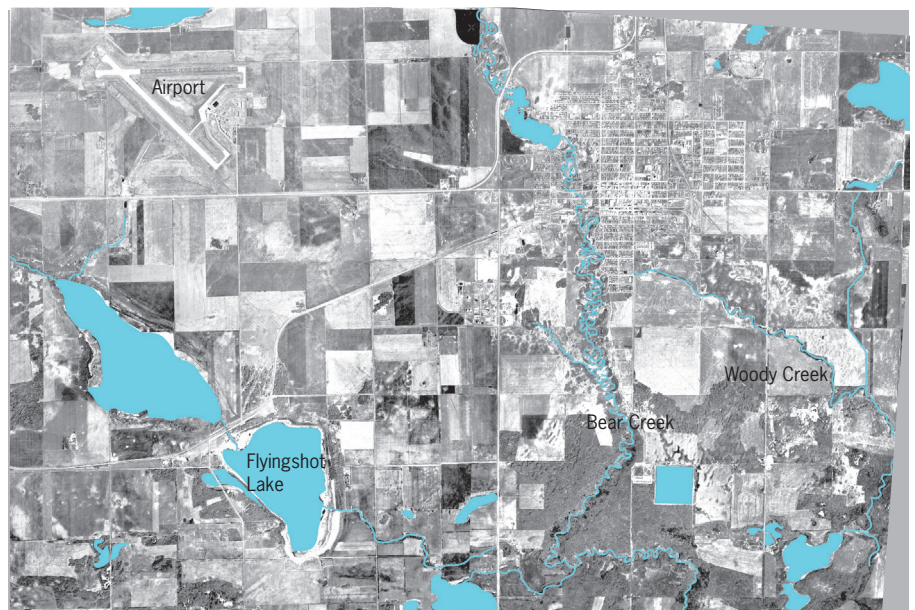
In addition to documenting the historic evolution of Grande Prairie, a separate historic evolution analysis was done to understand the effects of urbanization on the watercourses. Some existing wetlands have become incorporated into the city structure, notably Crystal Lake, Ivy Lake and O'Brien Lake. In other areas, smaller watercourses have been lost as development has progressed. Bear Creek and Woody Creek were originally present as meandering streams, draining towards the south. Bear Creek (Muskoseepi Park) is now the jewel of the Grande Prairie park system, however, in contrast over time, Woody Creek has been redeveloped in part to park area or has been channelized. There is much potential to restore Woody Creek, or portions of it, to serve as a similar focal point for the east part of the city as Muskoseepi Park is for the west part, and recommendations are included elsewhere in this Plan. The following photos illustrate how the waterbodies and watercourses in the Grande Prairie area have been transformed over time.

Note: Air photos were only available for selected dates

1950



1961



source of photos:  
University of Calgary Spatial and Numeric Data Services



1973



2010



source of photos:  
University of Calgary Spatial and Numeric Data Services



## Cultural landscape analysis

This section describes some of the major changes in Grande Prairie's urban form and historic events that mark the development of the city.

Sources: Leonard, David W. (2003) Chronology of Grande Prairie to 1951, City of Grande Prairie MDP  
[www.discoverthepeacecountry.com/htmlpages/history.html](http://www.discoverthepeacecountry.com/htmlpages/history.html)  
[www.southpeacearchives.org/city\\_gp\\_history.htm](http://www.southpeacearchives.org/city_gp_history.htm)

### Historic evolution

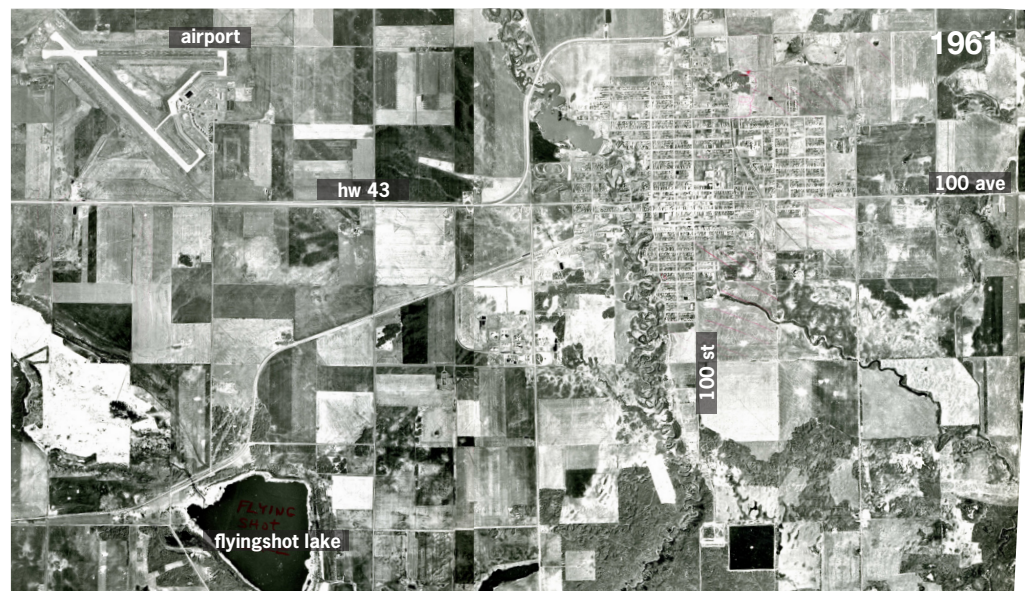
#### 1950

- > The early city of Grande Prairie was established east of Bear Creek, a dominant natural feature from the beginning.
- > Main Street developed along Highway 43 / 100 Avenue, and a civic centre emerged east of 100 Street.
- > The railway paralleled Main Street, and grain elevators and an agricultural/industrial area grew up around it.
- > Town growth took the form of grid blocks that grafted onto the early city centre.



#### 1961

- > Grande Prairie expanded primarily to the north, south and east to accommodate a growing population.
- > New schools and parks were developed, and the downtown was modernized.
- > A bypass now took Highway 43 around the city.
- > The airport to the west consolidates an emerging circulation corridor and light industrial area.



source of photos:  
 University of Calgary Spatial and Numeric  
 Data Services



## 1973

- > The city has expanded almost to the limits of the ring roads, and new growth has now taken the form of crescents and cul-de-sacs in place of the grid.
- > Western parts of the city have been developed as industrial uses, and the airport is further to the west.
- > Commercial/light industrial areas have developed along Highway 43 north of the city core.
- > Centennial Park and the Grande Prairie Museum are part of the emerging cultural and open space system.

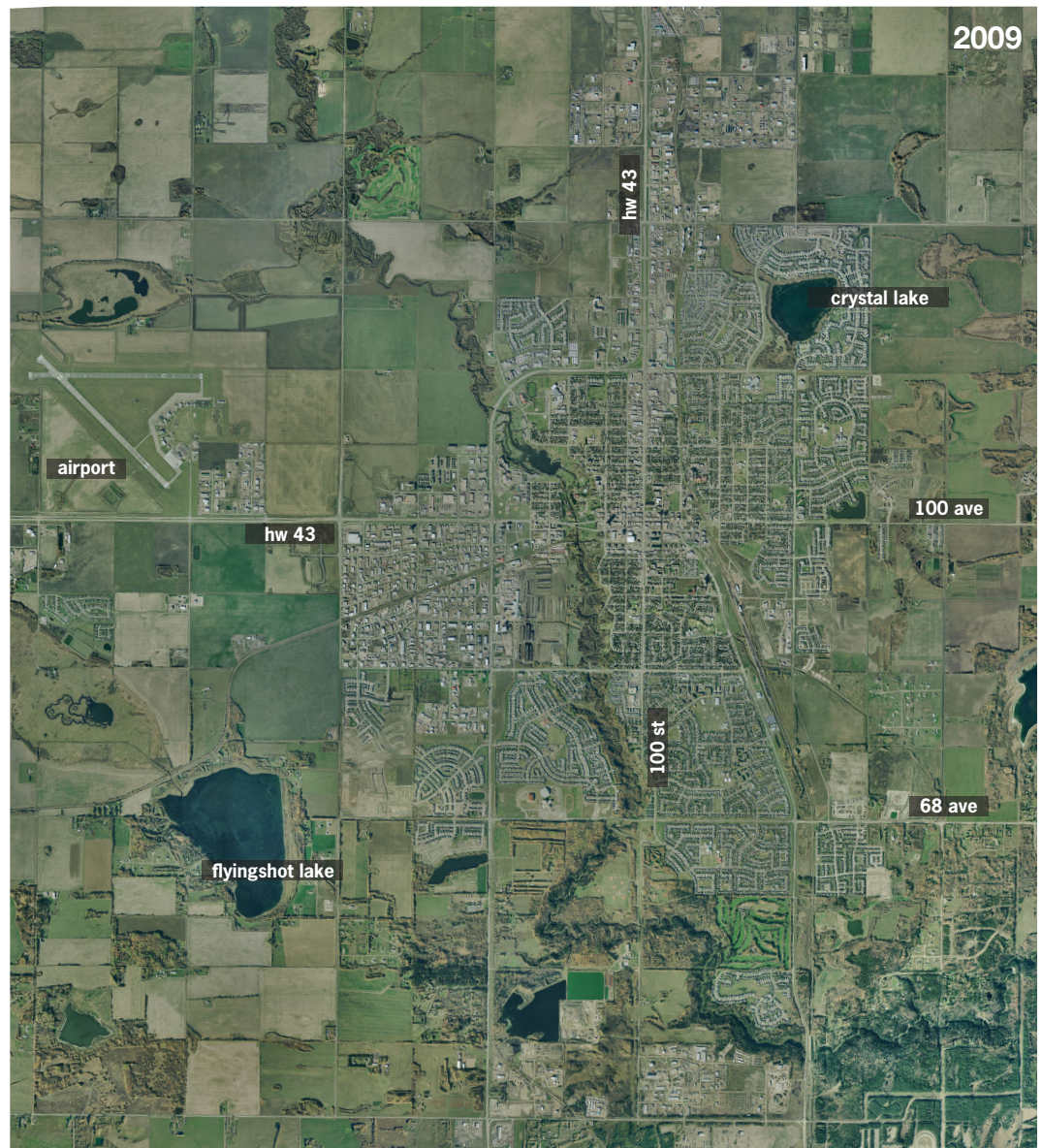


source of photos:  
University of Calgary Spatial and Numeric  
Data Services



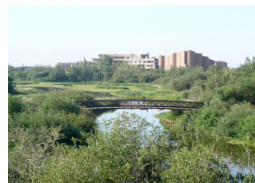
## 2009

- > The city has continued to expand outwards in all directions from the original core; block patterns are now more curvilinear, and neighbourhoods are more isolated and distinct.
- > Muskoseepi Park is the central spine of the city and the focal point for recreation and culture.
- > Crystal Lake, an important habitat for birds and other wildlife, is now surrounded by residential development, but buffered to some degree by open space.
- > Commercial and light industrial uses have developed along the highways and downtown improvements maintain a balance between suburban and centre city shopping and culture.
- > More commercial and light industrial uses extend primarily to the north and west.



source of photos:  
University of Calgary Spatial and Numeric  
Data Services

## Historic timeline



**image credits**  
Glenbow Archives  
City of Grande Prairie website  
Sandalack + Associates Inc.

### early history

- 1700s Peace River Country is occupied by people of the Beaver First Nation (Dene/Athapaskan), east bank of Bear Creek is a central gathering place
- 1805 Fur trade post opened at Dunvegan by the North West Company
- 1872 Peace Country surveyed for potential Canadian Pacific Railway routes
- 1879 Geological Survey of Canada pronounces area ideal for large-scale farming
- 1881 Hudson's Bay trading post established southeast of La Glace Lake, reconstructed 1896 (recently restored and standing near the GP Museum)
- 1890s Klondike/Yukon gold rush brings prospectors through the GP area
- 1899 Treaty 8 signed

### establishment of Grande Prairie

- 1909 17 townships are surveyed for homesteading, leading to a land rush
- 1910 Townsite of 80 acres east of Bear Creek is surveyed and subdivided by the Argonaut Company and named Grande Prairie City
- 1914 GP incorporated as a village with over 100 people
- 1916 The railway arrives and GP becomes the terminus of the Edmonton, Dunvegan & British Columbia Railway from Edmonton
- 1919 GP incorporates as a town after the population exceeds 1,000
- 1920s Recession and population decline
- 1930s Settlers arrive after the southern prairies experience drought, population reaches almost 1,500
- 1929 Richmond Hill Golf & Country Club built, moved 1965 to present location along Resources Road
- 1930 Airport opened west of town
- 1940 Military training centre constructed on the south side of GP and is a major stopover point for military aircraft during the war
- 1940s GP becomes part of the staging route for construction of the Alaska Highway - employment and businesses benefit
- 1946 Northern Planning Mills begin big lumber operation in GP
- 1947 Discovery of oil at Leduc, and discovery of oil and natural gas in the Peace leads to economic and population growth

### post-war boom and modernizing

- Growth as single-family suburbs, while population of mature neighbourhoods declines shopping patterns change from downtown to suburban centres
- 1949 Public swimming pool, new indoor curling rink and Memorial Skating Arena constructed, followed by regional high school
- 1951 Downtown modernized - new Post Office, new AGT building, York Hotel, Gaiety Theatre
- 1950s Highway improvements enhance accessibility and regional status
- 1953 Canadian Forest Products Ltd. (now Canfor) established in GP
- 1958 GP incorporated as a City with population of 7,600
- 1967 Centennial Park created to commemorate Canada's 100th birthday
- 1971 Recreation Master Plan & Standing Committee on Recreational and Educational Services (SCORES) Agreement completed for population of 12,000
- 1971 GP Museum established across from Centennial Park (now Muskoseepi Park)
- 1973 Procter and Gamble (then Weyerhaeuser Canada) kraft pulp mill opens
- 1974 Grande Prairie College facility designed by Douglas Cardinal opens

### consolidation and expansion

- 1980s Development of Elmworth gas field spurs economic and population growth
- 1980 Muskoseepi Park concept initiated
- 1981 Grande Prairie Airport terminal constructed
- 1980 Alberta Winter Games held in GP
- 1982 New fairgrounds open SE of City at Evergreen Park
- 1983 Urban Parks Master Plan completed
- 1986 Alberta Senior Games held in GP
- 1986 Muskoseepi Park opens
- 1991 Phase 2 of Grande Prairie College opens, designed by Field, Field and Field
- 1995 Canada Winter Games legacies include the arena, Wapiti Nordic Ski centre and renovations to the Johnny MacDonald Arena
- 1995 Ainsworth OSB (Oriented Strand Board) plant opened
- 1995 Crystal Lake Estates developed, Crystal Lake is primary nesting grounds of the Trumpeter Swan and recreation area
- 1999 Muskoseepi improvements include new playground equipment, climbing wall, skateboard park
- 2000 Alberta Summer Games held in GP
- 2006 New Recreation Master Plan completed for population of 47,000
- 2007 Construction of Highway 43X bypass around NW of city underway
- 2008 Construction starts on multi-phased Community Knowledge Campus
- 2009 Grande Prairie Airport terminal renovated to twice its original size
- 2010 GP Municipal Development Plan passed, January
- 2010 Arctic Winter Games in GP and Alberta Summer Games in Peace Region

### sources

Leonard, David W. (2003) Chronology of Grande Prairie to 1951, City of Grande Prairie MDP  
[www.discoverthepeacecountry.com/htmlpages/history.html](http://www.discoverthepeacecountry.com/htmlpages/history.html)  
[www.southpeacearchives.org/city\\_gp\\_history.htm](http://www.southpeacearchives.org/city_gp_history.htm)



## Land use and functional analysis

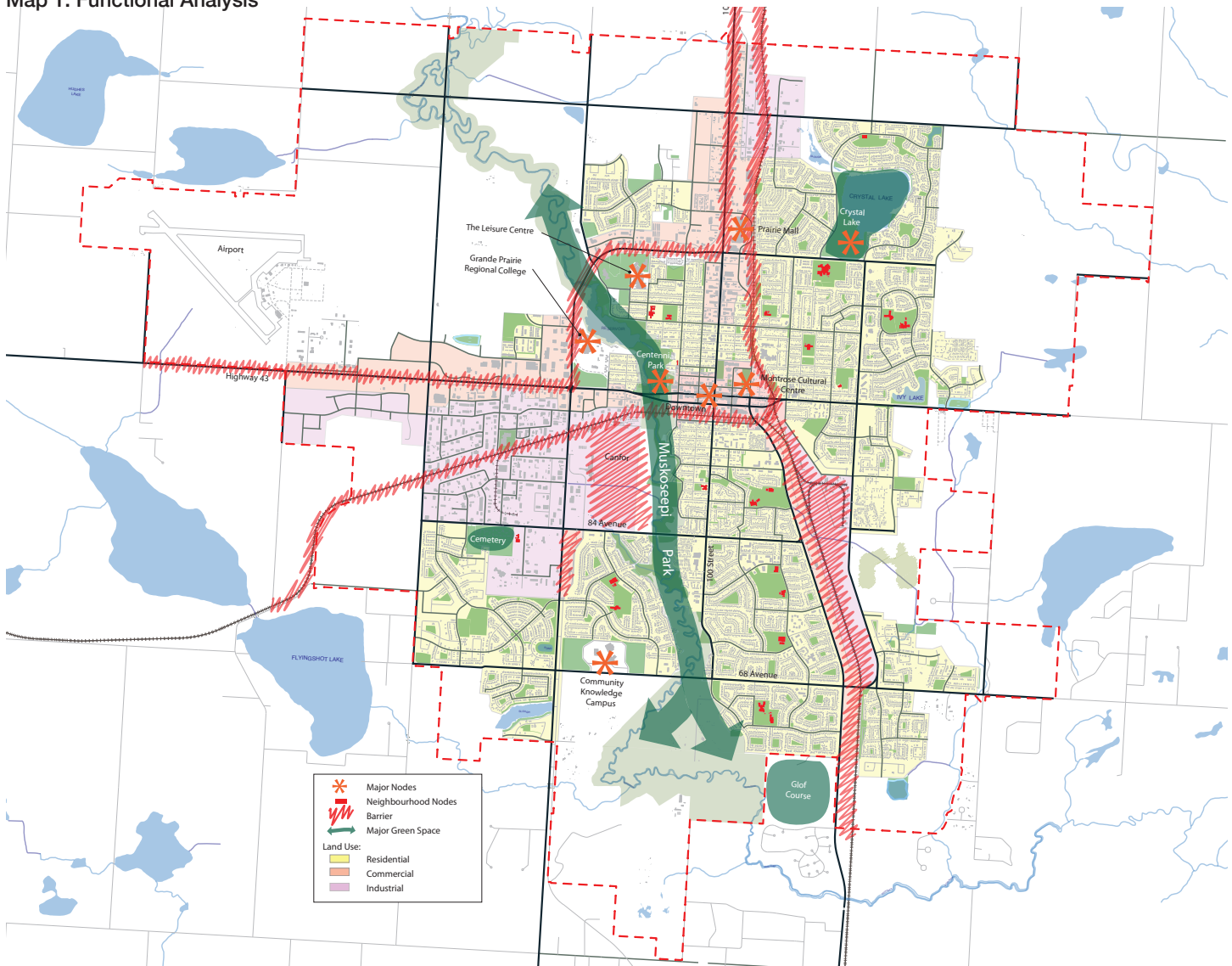
Muskoseepi Park is not only Grande Prairie's major environmental feature, but is also the central spine along which the city is organized. Other significant green areas include Crystal Lake and the cemetery (although it is not a place for active recreation, it is a large green space that has much significance and that also performs some ecological functions).

Major community nodes include Grande Prairie Regional College, the Community Knowledge Campus, the Leisure Centre, Crystal Lake, Centennial Park, Montrose Cultural Centre, Crystal Centre, and the City Hall. The Downtown, Gateway Power Centre and Prairie Mall are the major commercial areas. Schools are distributed through the city and function as neighbourhood nodes.

Industrial and commercial corridors to the west and north, and along the bypass, are also employment centres, however with much less in the way of recreation or open spaces. Some of the railway lands and Canfor, which occupies a very large area of centrally located land, also create barriers to circulation.

The evolving path system connects some of these important nodes of activity and neighbourhoods.

**Map 1. Functional Analysis**





## Demographic profile

The population of Grande Prairie, according to 2011 Census Canada, was 55,032 and it has been identified as one of Canada's most rapidly growing cities, experiencing a growth rate of 16.8% between 2006 and 2011, and placing an even greater strain on existing facilities.

The 2011 census recorded a median age somewhat lower than the rest of Canada, suggesting a continued demand for recreation facilities. In addition, there is also an aging population and the requirement for park and open spaces that are appropriate for seniors.

The 2011 Canada Census indicated the following characteristics of the population:

- > 51% male / 49% female
- > 28% of the population is between 0-19 years old
- > 31% of the population is between 20-34 years old
- > 27% of the population is between 35-54 years old
- > 14% of the population is 55 or over years old
- > 80% of the population is under 50 years old
- > average number of people per household is 2.6

The following table indicates the projected population of Grande Prairie as per The City of Grande Prairie Growth Study 2008. It is important to note that the population that was projected for 2011 in the growth study exceeded the actual 2011 population by almost 5,000. This implies that the growth rate used by the Growth Study 2008 is higher than the actual growth rate and therefore these projections should be considered carefully for future reference. Nevertheless Grande Prairie's population will continue to increase, and the demand on park and recreation facilities will also increase, therefore the park and open space system needs to be designed in order to accommodate future growth.

Year	Population
2007	50,227
2008	52,648
2009	54,992
2010	57,399
2011	59,826
2012	62,268
2013	64,628
2014	66,936
2015	69,277
2016	71,651
2017	73,955
2018	76,283
2019	78,581
2020	80,899
2021	83,181

*"A 2009 Dutch research study found greater amounts of green space within one kilometer - or 0.6 miles - of people's homes was related to reductions in the risks of health problems like disease, diabetes, chronic neck and back pain, asthma, and migraines. The strongest connection was seen with depression and anxiety." Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, United Kingdom (2009)*

*"Children living near green spaces are more active... Children at high risk of obesity who live near parks and recreation areas are apt to participate in walking activities more often", researchers recently reported at the American Heart Association's Conference on Nutrition, Physical Activity and Metabolism. Healthy By Nature, Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (2010)*



## 4 Community consultation

An important part of the plan process was community consultation which provided important insight into the needs, demands and issues perceived by the public.

442 residents responded to the survey and five focus groups (Internal City Departments, Field User Associations, Involved Citizens, Industry/Professionals, and School Children) addressed several questions and provided input. The following is a summary of the main points (full survey results are included in the appendix of this document).

### Parks and open spaces are important

- > over 90% agreed/strongly agreed that Grande Prairie public parks and open spaces are important to quality of life, a contributing factor in decision to reside here, and important in city prosperity, growth and economic development

### Strong interest in maintaining and protecting natural open space

- > include good ecological principles
- > include more environmental initiatives/nature interpretation
- > clean up Bear Creek
- > integrate stormwater management and recreation
- > create a north-south connective green space on the east side (restore Woody Creek)

### Trees

- > interest in more tree planting on streets and in new neighbourhoods was identified more than any other issue

### Winter city design

- > parks should be designed for year-round activities
- > interest in winter city design guidelines

### Park types

- > equivalent high use of regional parks, neighbourhood parks and school playgrounds, picnics, visiting with friends, sitting/reading on a park bench, and dog walking
- > equal support for development of larger regional parks as well as smaller local neighbourhood parks
- > strong interest in developing more natural area off-leash dog walking areas
- > strong interest in community gardens
- > strong interest in interpretive walks in natural areas
- > interest in providing outdoor fitness/workout equipment
- > need for more spaces for all field use groups and dedicated areas/facilities: #1 outdoor hockey rinks, #2 soccer, #3 football, #4 baseball/slo-pitch
- > desire for increased accessibility for strollers and wheel chairs
- > need increase in space and programs for teenagers
- > school kids focus groups emphasized places to meet others, excitement, and more trees

### Increase connectivity with trails and linkages

- > trails strongly supported, and increase number of paved trails (with improved lighting and security) was identified as the top priority for improvements
- > 65% use trails for access to school, park or indoor recreation facility, 20% to get to transit or school bus stops
- > 90% support paving of selected trails in public utility lots to improve links to transit, schools, or recreational activities

### Wide range of outdoor recreational activity in Grande Prairie

- > most popular:
  - walking/hiking on trails (360)
  - cycling/mountain biking (293)
  - unstructured play/sport (273)



running on trails (232)  
sliding hill (205)

### Maintenance and service levels

- > 70% are satisfied with turfgrass maintenance
- > 67% are satisfied with play structures, furnishings and maintenance
- > 67% are satisfied with sanitation (litter removal, provision of more dog waste bag dispensers desired)
- > 57% are satisfied with the levels of maintenance of the urban forest (tree protection needed)
- > 80% are satisfied with the levels of community beautification

### Park improvement programs and increase in service levels

- > the following had strong support: park improvement grant program to allow for community-initiated park development projects, municipal park foundation, community leagues and associations
- > 42.1% in favour of community fundraising combined with matching city grants
- > 33.5% in favour of 100% funding from municipal tax base
- > 15.1% in favour of neighbourhood-specific levies based on project locations
- > 9.3% in favour of user fees
- > increase in property taxes to support desired service levels: 10% would support more than \$50/year, 35% - \$10-25/year, 20% - \$25-50, 19% - less than \$10/year, 16% - no increase

For further detail refer to Appendix C at the end of this document.





The focus group sessions with school children representing grades 5-7 provided some unique insights into the overall experience and some specific elements that would improve enjoyment and use of Grande Prairie's parks and open spaces. Since the school children are the ultimate recipients of today's planning, it is important to consider their thoughts and ideas.

Notable elements that were mentioned include:

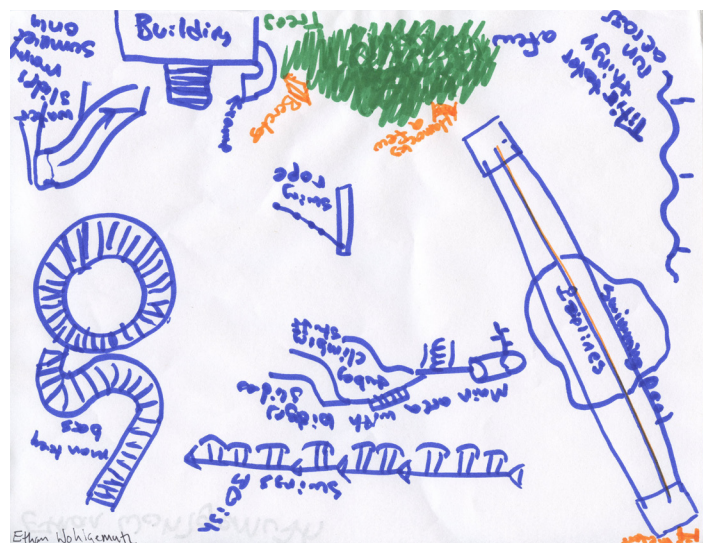
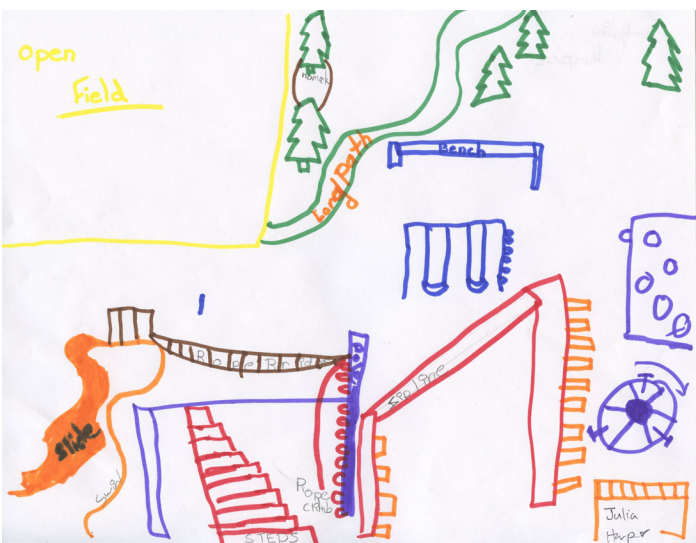
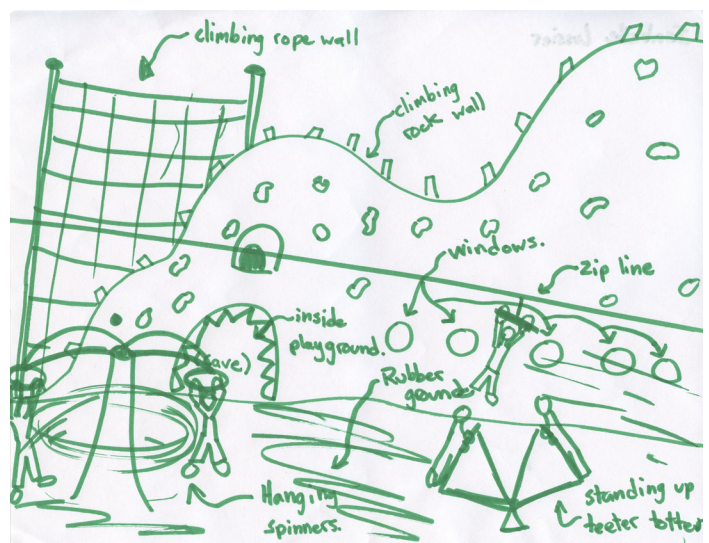
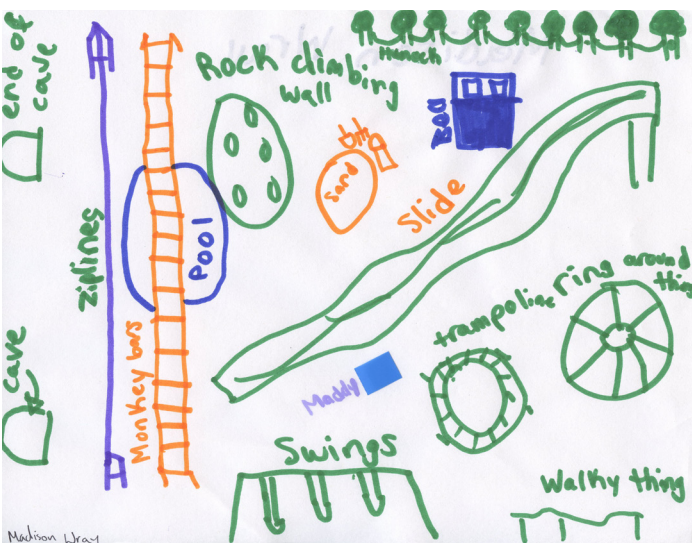
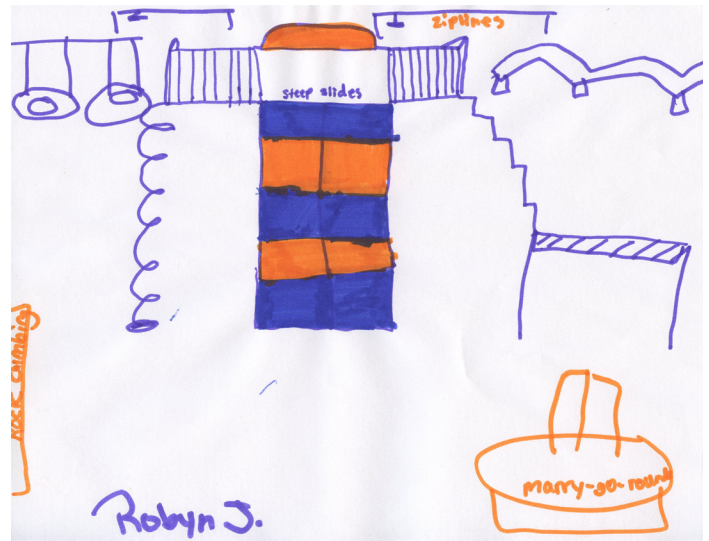
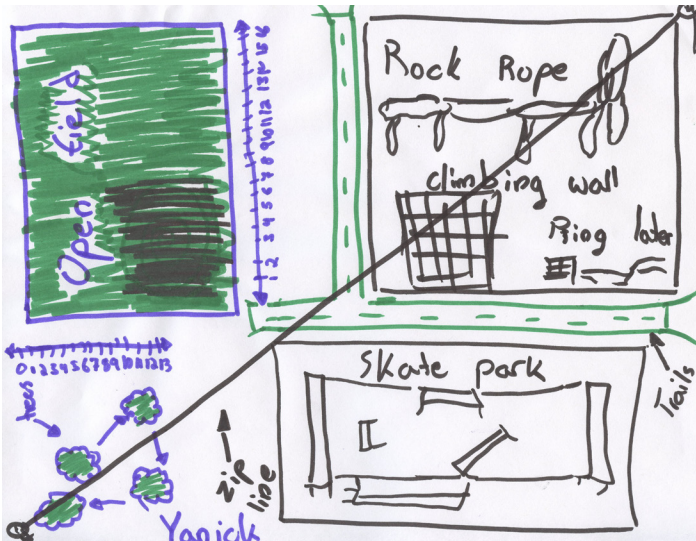
- > adding more trees to all parks and streets
- > providing places where they could meet their friends
- > including exciting elements in park design
- > adding small skate park features

Below are some playground features that provide exciting elements as well as opportunities to exercise.





School children focus group - Ideas for the "ideal park"





# the plan

## 5 Philosophical position

The Municipal Development Plan (MDP) of the City of Grande Prairie emphasizes quality of life, sustainability and innovation as ways of dealing with continued growth. Environmental conservation, neighbourhood improvement, walkability, and conservation and enhancement of heritage, cultural and other resources are all identified as important principles. In addition, the City is committed to preservation of aquatic ecosystems and riparian areas and to the continued evolution of a connected parks and open space system. These aspirations are to be achieved through smart growth principles, high quality urban design and landscaping, promotion of multi-modal connectivity and the development of 'complete streets', appropriate intensification and infill, and various means of protecting the natural environment.

This Plan recommends that in addition to the commitment to the principles of the MDP, the City declare its intentions to distinguish itself through its park, street and open space system, as the visual and experiential embodiment of the MDP principles. An example of a declaration could be:

The City of Grande Prairie will aspire to be known as a 'city of trees', emphasizing livability and green infrastructure, respecting watercourses and waterbodies and making them the core of the open space system.

The importance of the philosophical position has numerous benefits. In addition to providing a clear statement of intent and image that could attract residents, tourists and businesses, it also provides a strong rationale for many policies and practices. This includes the acknowledgement that when developing the city's green spaces, serious consideration is given to its natural capital. This builds on the successes of Muskoseepi Park and Crystal Lake Park as providing the backbone of the community, and future development should also incorporate other significant systems of waterbodies as the organizing framework of the Plan. The philosophical position could also affect other aspects of city development, such as street design and parks planning, and some aspects of municipal organization. These aspects are addressed elsewhere in the Plan.

### Building on assets

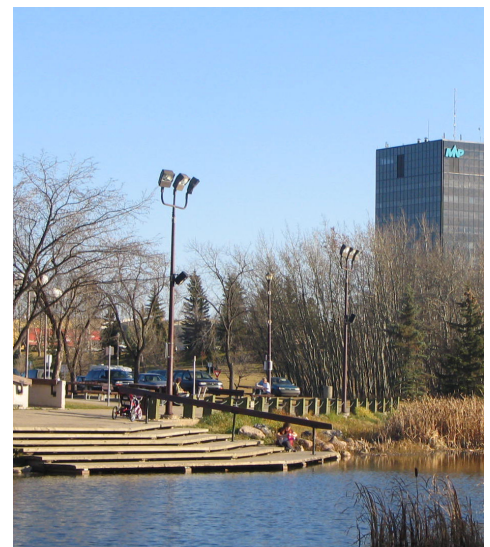
The Parks and Open Space Master Plan responds to the issues and opportunities identified in the townscape analysis and community consultations, builds on the existing inventory and attempts to improve the network of parks and linkages, addresses where possible the needs and aspirations of the residents, and sets out a physical plan and strategy for the development of an exemplary system of public open spaces.

The Plan consists of an integrated system of streets, paths, parks and other open spaces, and it attempts to build on Grande Prairie's existing special places and urban structure. The Plan addresses the provision of public spaces at several integrated scales, and sets out policies and design guidelines for several aspects of the plan. The Plan also emphasizes the role that parks, open spaces, and streets play in influencing the quality and location of growth, and in shaping new development.

Emphasizing the unique features and characteristics of Grande Prairie is important for several reasons:

- > the identity and sense of place of the city can be strengthened and enhanced
- > parks and open space, as urban infrastructure, provide the organizing framework for the city as a whole

*"We use the term 'natural capital' to highlight the value and utility of natural assets, like machinery, buildings, skilled labour and cash, natural assets such as forests, mountains, lakes, ranches, farms and urban parks yield benefits that are key to our economic prosperity and quality of life. And, like other forms of capital, natural assets require careful stewardship and investment for their value to grow and pay dividends over the long term. Just as we should not take other forms of capital for granted, we ignore the value of natural assets at our peril." Green Among the Concrete, Canada West Foundation (2004)*



- > difficult decisions regarding budget for construction, operation and maintenance can be rationalized more easily when they are based on a philosophical framework

Rather than simply try to respond to needs, which is usually unachievable, since needs always increase while resources often do not keep pace, or to satisfy standards and norms for park types, which may not reflect the unique circumstances of Grande Prairie, the approach of this plan is to identify the assets of Grande Prairie and propose a framework for future development that is suited specifically to it. The Plan also reviews parks and open space systems in several other comparable cities, as benchmarks.

The Plan also recommends an integrated approach to development of a high quality public realm. Through this approach, various City units can more effectively work together for a common purpose, rather than compete for finite budgets. In many ways, a collaborative approach to development of the public realm may result in greater efficiencies, and a more integrated city form.

The relationship with the landscape is perhaps the most powerful element contributing to Grande Prairie's unique sense of place; Muskoseepi Park already forms the heart of the city and the system, and the Plan proposes how this approach might be expanded to other areas of the city and provide an organizing structure for the overall framework of parks and open spaces.

Where possible, the natural landscape should be integrated with the city form. Parks and open spaces in new neighbourhoods should respond to natural features, and where these have been lost in earlier development, such as Woody Creek, there is an opportunity for some re-establishment.

There is also a historical relationship between the City centre, the railway, and the highway that established the first urban structure pattern, and this can also contribute much to the sense of place of Grande Prairie through urban planning. The development of local identity and culture should be derived from these historic relationships, and be interpreted in contemporary ways.

Grande Prairie's existing special places should continue to be emphasized. This includes the major open space nodes as well as many of the smaller ones. Emphasis and reinforcement of these sites and areas helps to provide greater legibility and enhance the sense of place.

The elements and characteristics of Grande Prairie that provide the framework for this Plan will be described at various scales.

*"Urban natural capital should be viewed as a diversity of outdoor areas that range on a continuum from natural to built. Urban forests, rivers and wetlands represent more natural components, although this capital will never be "purely" natural. At the other end of the spectrum, soccer fields, playgrounds and landscaped boulevards represent the more built components. Regardless of where they fall on the continuum, components of urban natural capital contribute to our health, recreation and enjoyment, economic prosperity and the ecological health of our cities. In other words, they contribute to our economic prosperity and quality of life."Healthy By Nature, Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (2010)*



## 6 Parks and open space classification

A parks and open space inventory had previously been developed by the City of Grande Prairie, and it provided an excellent base for this part of the Plan. The Parks Department inventory documented the location, features and various attributes of each park and open space, and this is a very valuable resource.

### P: 6.01

***The Parks Department Inventory should be maintained, and consulted regarding equipment replacement and other maintenance issues. The Inventory should be updated annually.***

### Existing park and open space categories

Grande Prairie currently identifies three park categories:

- > neighbourhood park
- > community/school park, and
- > regional park,

and two special park categories:

- > Muskoseepi Park, and
- > municipal open space.

Design and development standards are included in Section 10 Parks and Open Space Concept, and are also included in the current Engineering Services Construction and Design Manual (Section 17: Parks).

### R: 6.01

***It is recommended that these multiple documents be coordinated, so that commonly understood design and service standards are employed across all City units.***

### 6.1 Typology

In addition to the existing classification of parks, this Plan organized the Grande Prairie parks and open spaces in terms of a typology. This typology reflects, in many cases, the existing parks classification, and makes some recommendations for modifications, in order to reflect the circumstances of Grande Prairie. These will be discussed in the following sections.

Development of a typology of open space helps in understanding the relationship between the physical form of the open space and the functions it provides. An understanding of the typological framework of open spaces can help in providing an open space system that addresses the needs of a growing population. Each open space type implies a particular design vocabulary, vegetation, and maintenance regime, and therefore the uses that are appropriate and desirable in each space.

Consideration of Grande Prairie's parks and open spaces in terms of a typology as well as in terms of other classifications helps the city to maintain the desired range of open space types, adaptable to the population and culture as it evolves. The typology also helps in understanding the city's assets and needs.

Successful open space systems are built around the existing resources and distinguishing features of a place. The extent to which one type of open space will be found depends on local availability, needs and circumstances, and also depends on the age of a city – open space systems take time to develop, and therefore great care should be taken to the establishment of a proper framework upon which the system can evolve.

A range of open space types is required for good city form and city life. Each of Grande Prairie's development eras has been characterized by open space types that have been considered valuable, and over time, Grande Prairie has acquired many of the open space types appropriate to its population. The following section outlines the open space types that are required for a complete open space system, and that characterize good city form.





Open space types are either resource-based, or population-based. Each of the open space types can be understood as a 'system,' with the presence and distribution of open spaces a factor of the characteristics of each type. Each type is somewhat distinct from, but inter-related with, the other types.

## A. Natural and semi-natural green space or water course

Examples of Type 'A' Open Spaces:

- > Woodlands
- > Grasslands
- > Wetlands (natural and constructed)
- > Canals
- > Open and running water
- > Ecological reserve

This plan assumes that the 'natural capital' of Grande Prairie is one of its major assets. Identifying the open spaces that are based on, or associated with, natural areas or ecological features is important in establishing an ecological framework for the Plan. These sites have intrinsic ecological value, and may have greater potential for recreation or interpretation purposes. The issue of authenticity and ecological integrity is also of concern in the development of a system of open spaces. Preservation of natural systems is important in guaranteeing that open spaces of this type are present and that they maintain ecological integrity.

These spaces exist on a continuum:

Natural  Constructed / Human-made

Natural and semi-natural open spaces in Grande Prairie should be set aside for the following reasons (at a minimum):

- > Biological/ecological diversity
- > Aesthetic quality of Grande Prairie's environment
- > Wildlife corridors and fish habitat
- > Quality of life for Grande Prairie residents and visitors

Existing Natural Parks in Grande Prairie include Muskoseepi Park (Bear Creek North, Bear Creek South, and Crystal Lake).

In addition, this Plan proposes that Woody Creek and other wetlands be considered for development as natural park areas. This will be elaborated upon in other sections.

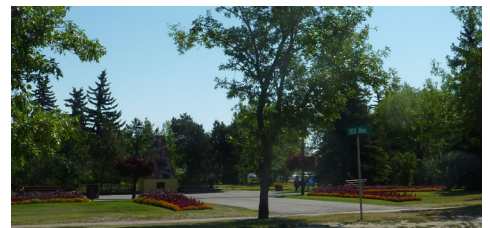
It is important to note that retention ponds are not considered to be constructed wetlands, and are therefore not included in this open space type. A constructed wetland contributes to stormwater management and it also designed to emulate the functions of natural wetlands.

## B. Historic resource or landmark

Examples of Type 'B' Open Spaces:

- > Cemeteries
- > Churchyards
- > Museum
- > Historic sites

The location of historic sites or cultural landscapes depends upon local history and the existence of physical landmarks. Their identification provides the basis for a rich layer of open space. It is not



expected that these will be evenly distributed throughout the city, however their existence provides an excellent base for place-specific plans to be developed that build upon unique resources.

Jubilee Park, the old Provincial Courthouse (now the Centre for Creative Arts), the Cemetery and Grande Prairie Museum are some of the notable historic resources/landmarks in Grande Prairie. The cemetery is currently classified as Municipal Open Space, however, its unique purpose and significance requires specific design and service standards. This is reflected in Section 14 Levels of Service specifying maintenance levels.

### C. Civic spaces and gardens

Examples of Type 'C' Open Spaces:

- > Civic spaces
- > Gardens
- > Amenity green space

Most cities and towns have one or several formal or informal parks or gardens that have civic or ceremonial purposes (such as the Remembrance Day Cenotaph in Jubilee Park) or that exist for amenity or decorative purposes. Civic spaces and gardens are population-based, and also depend upon access (by foot, bicycle and vehicle). This type of open space should be readily available to all sectors of the city and all of the population. It could be expected that a finer grain of distribution (many smaller sites) emerges relative to population concentrations.

Design and maintenance standards for civic spaces need to reflect their high profile and visual importance, and will be discussed later in this document.



### D. Outdoor recreation and sport facilities

Examples of Type 'D' Open Spaces:

- > Tot lots
- > Playgrounds
- > Sports fields
- > School and institutional playing fields
- > Tennis courts
- > Golf courses
- > Skateboard parks / BMX parks and tracks

These are spaces that are designed for active sports and recreation uses. They vary in their degree of publicness (tennis courts and golf courses often function on a fee-for service), and in degree of general-specific use. They vary in size from small neighbourhood parks to large regional destinations, and can include a range of playing fields, specialized structures or equipment. The specifics may change over time as certain activities become more or less popular, for example skateboarding.

The distribution of open spaces of this type is population-based. Playing fields have a larger catchment area than playgrounds and tot lots, and would have a somewhat coarser grain of distribution. They are still population-based, but it is expected that the population would access these spaces by vehicle as well as by foot. It is also expected that the larger space and equipment requirements would mean that this type of open space would be selectively located.

There is much opportunity for the joint use of many of these facilities (schools and community associations, other groups).

In Grande Prairie, parks of this type include the following, which are the categories outlined in many City policy documents, including the 2002 Parks Master Plan and the current Engineering





Services Construction and Design Manual (Section 17: Parks):

- > neighbourhood parks
- > community/school parks, and
- > regional parks.

The size, location and design guidelines will be discussed later in this document

## E. Green corridors and other linkages

Examples of Type 'E' Open Spaces:

- > Paths
- > Bikeways
- > Trails
- > Streets
- > Rights-of-way
- > Utility corridors

Green corridors are important as recreation pathways and access points to ecological areas and recreation fields, and many are related to existing green spaces and provide linkages. Grande Prairie has committed to the development of an integrated park and open space system, and there is strong public support for continuation of trail development. The Concept identifies gaps or where potential connections between individual open spaces, open space clusters, or population concentrations may be strengthened. This will help to allow the evolution of an infrastructure of open spaces, with the various types of open space connected by a system of paths and trails. Many of the existing streets and linear parks provide opportunities for development of this system.

In Grande Prairie, utility lots are a unique open space type. They are found in several neighbourhoods, and are not spread through the city. Some of these are already used informally as connecting pathways, and there is potential for consideration for more formalized inclusion into the park and open space network.

Ordinary streets are also part of the open space system. They vary in their degree of pedestrian-friendliness, and priorities for improvement can help to improve this.



## F. Campgrounds and day use areas

Examples of Type 'F' Open Spaces:

- > Recreational vehicle areas
- > Camping areas
- > Picnic and day-use areas

Places for camping and day use are often associated with natural areas, and are usually close to road access. They can also take advantage of views or existing places of interest. Campgrounds and day use areas should be located within access of all of the population, but are best located in association with either an ecological feature or a cultural landscape. Road access is a requirement.



## G. Stormwater retaining ponds

Retaining ponds are stormwater management elements that contribute to the control of water runoff in urban areas. There are many types of retention ponds, and for the purpose of this typology, Type G will refer only to dry and wet ponds that are not constructed wetlands. This



type of open space is usually characterized by an excavated area contained by berms. The area is usually covered in turf grass. The dual function of these ponds complicate their use as an open space, but nevertheless, they provide an opportunity for open space and recreational use.

Guidelines for potential use and design standards will be discussed later in this document.

## H. Un-designated green space

Examples of Type 'H' Open Spaces:

- > Utility strips and transformer pads
- > Grassed intersections
- > Left-over green space/open space
- > Awkward locations/sizes/shapes
- > Rights of Way (ROW)

All parks, trails and open spaces should contribute to a comprehensive plan and be developed as one of the Types A – G. Through development and construction processes, there can often be “leftover” parcels of land which are provided to a municipality as Municipal Reserve and called “park”. Many of these often isolated spaces have no real connection to the community nor do they connect with another type of open space.

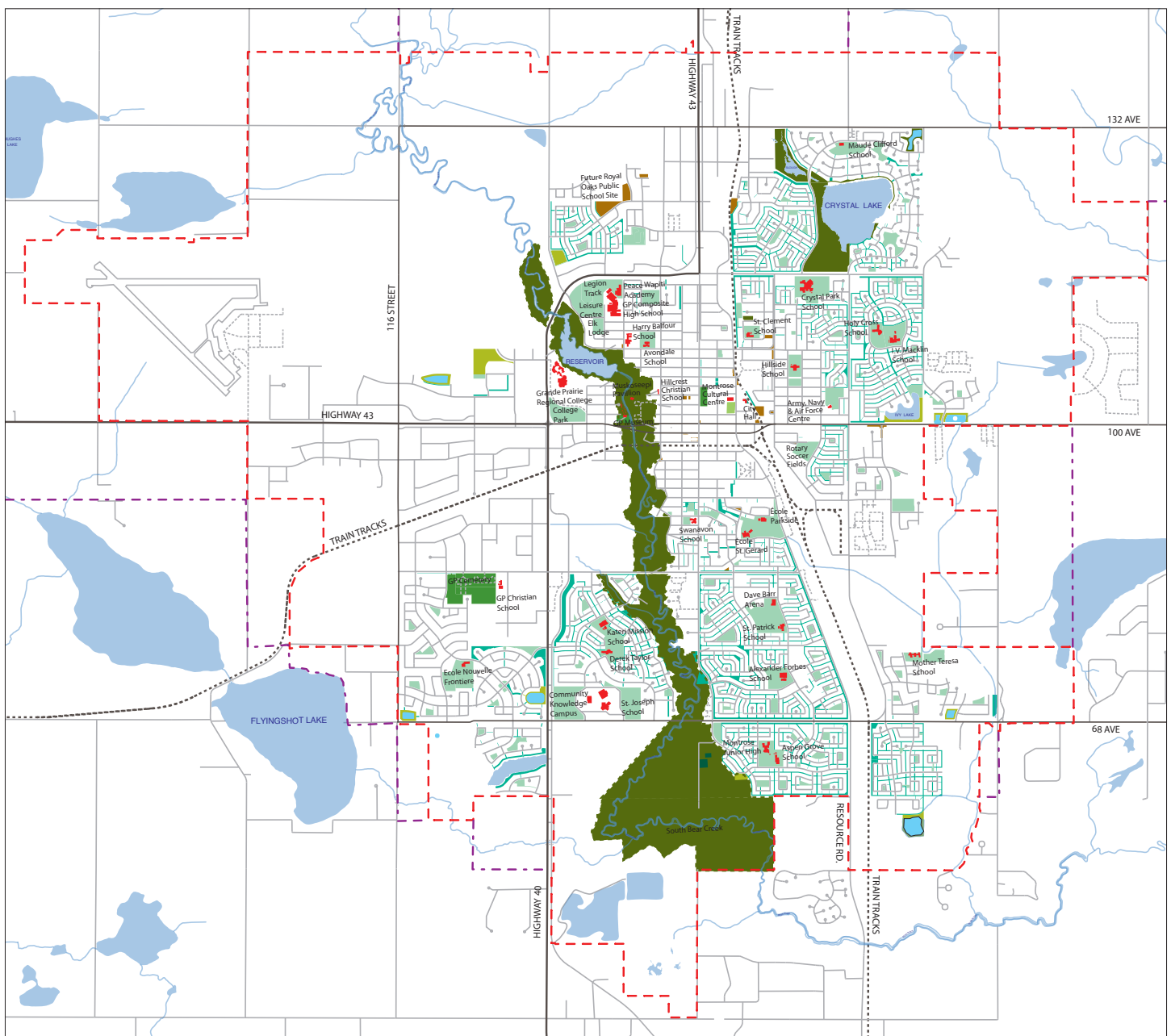
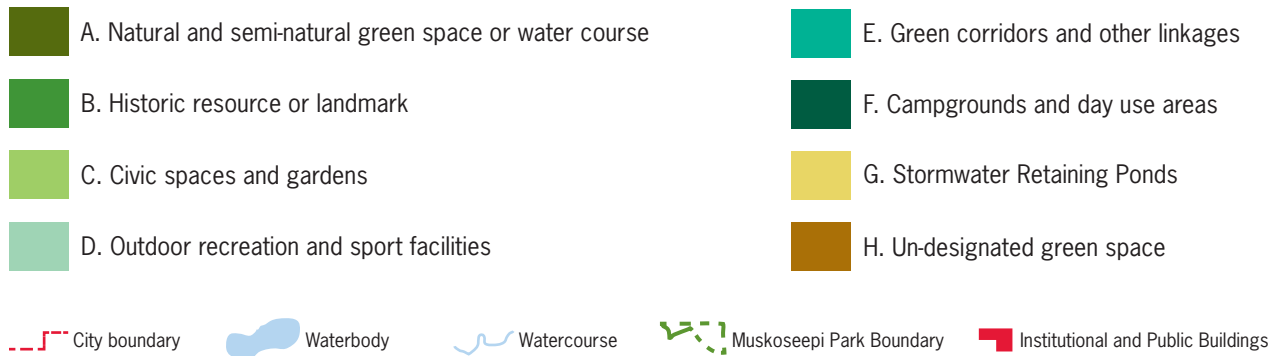
Rights-of-Way (ROW) provide space for infrastructure improvements and also act as utility easements. These spaces are often highly maintained turfgrass, and occasionally include trees and other plantings. While there are many ROW open spaces that are considered unusable as open space, others may be incorporated into the open space system. A ROW considered unusable as an open space may still offer visual relief or provide a buffer along roads or rail lines, or provide space for trails, therefore each open space should be evaluated separately.

**R: 6.02**

***It is recommended that Parks, Planning and Engineering departments coordinate efforts in order to avoid the creation of green space that does not provide a useful function or visual amenity.***



## Map 2. Existing Parks and Open Spaces - Inventory and Typology



## 6.2 Norms and Standards

Several sources (including Leung, Hok-Lin (2003) *Land Use Planning Made Plain*, University of Toronto Press, and American Planning Association (2006) *Planning and Urban Design Standards*, John Wiley and Sons) have estimated norms and standards for various park and open space types, however it is important to note that these standards are estimates only, and do not necessarily apply to all populations. The norms and standards do not always reflect current needs and economics but are based on generalities and on historic information. They also do not consider the unique environmental or cultural situation of each city, and how the balance of types varies from place to place. Norms and standards should therefore not be applied rigidly, but they can be useful in providing a general reference point.

Just as important as the provision of parks or open space is the overall urban planning and design of the area. Designation of park lands should consider the related uses or activities, and also the potential connectivity. For example, some existing regional-scale park and recreation nodes are not integrated with what could be supporting commercial infrastructure (i.e., retail and food outlets should not be separated from recreation facilities by major traffic thoroughfares, but located directly adjacent, in order to create better land use synergy and create a safer pedestrian environment).

As well, in order for Grande Prairie to provide the appropriate types and locations of specific park and open space types, it is important to have good communication with the public, including the field user groups, and to understand their needs. A needs assessment or other public consultation provides one way of gathering information, but is only specific to the time that it is administered, and does not account for changing trends or demographic shifts. Continued dialogue is important so that the parks and open space system is responsive to changing needs and circumstances.

### R: 6.03

***It is recommended that the City of Grande Prairie establish a working group with recreation user associations to constantly monitor the levels of service for parks and recreation. The working group could meet twice a year to review levels of demand for the different organized sports and assess needs for new playing fields or other venues.***

### R: 6.04

***It is recommended that every three years the City of Grande Prairie administer an open space and recreation online survey that gathers information from the general public on user satisfaction and needs. The survey used for this Plan can provide the template so that comparisons can be made.***

These two actions will provide valuable information for the successful delivery of services and will help with the planning of future capital projects and budget allocation.

The following tables are a synthesis of references (including Leung, Hok-Lin (2003) *Land Use Planning Made Plain*, University of Toronto Press, and American Planning Association (2006) *Planning and Urban Design Standards*, John Wiley and Sons).



**Type C Open Space Standards for Provision**

Subtype	Acres/ha/population	Service Area	Catchment	Desirable size
Neighbourhood parks serving a social, aesthetic, or informal recreation purpose	1/4 - 1/2 mile	Uninterrupted by major road		3 - 10 ac (1.21 - 4.05 ha)
Large Urban Park	One per several neighbourhoods Or to preserve notable landscapes and open spaces	Several neighborhoods		20 - 40 ac (8.09 - 16.19 ha)
Civic Squares	Square associated with city hall	Whole city		Small pocket parks, squares

**Type D Open Space Standards for Provision**

Sports fields/recreation facility	Standard per population
Soccer fields	1/2,500
Baseball diamonds	1/6,000
Softball diamonds	1/3,000
Tennis courts	1/2,000
Swimming pools – 25 metre	1/10,000
Swimming pools – 50 metre	1/20,000
Skating rinks (indoor)	1/30,000
Shooting range	1/50,000
Golf course	1/25,000

**Type D Open Space Standards for Provision**

Sub Type	Acres or hectares per 1000 Population	Service Catchment Area	Desirable Size
Tot Lot	0.25 - 0.5 ac 0.1 - 0.2 ha	Radius <1/4 mile	<1 ac 0.4 ha
Neighbourhood Park / Playground	1 - 2 ac 0.4 - 0.8 ha	Radius 1/2 - 1/2 mile for a population <5,000	>15 ac 10 ha
Athletic Complex	5 - 8 ac 2 - 3.2 ha	Radius 1 - 2 miles 1.6 - 3.2 ha	>25 ac 10 ha
Combined athletic complex and other athletic facilities, tournament level facilities			20 - 80 ac 8.09 - 32.37 ha

### 6.3 Review of Existing Facilities and Infrastructure

Grande Prairie currently has a large and complex open space infrastructure that includes facilities for both passive and active recreation. An inventory of these facilities was developed from existing databases and aerial photography, and is included in Appendix C of this document.

To compare how Grande Prairie's delivery of recreation services is performing, six other cities of comparable size were researched. The information for each of those municipalities was obtained from documents available on their websites. The population for each of these cities is from the Canada Census of 2011.

The following tables summarize the findings of this inventory and comparative analysis.

**Comparison Table - Number of fields/diamonds**

City	Population	Soccer Fields	Indoor Soccer	Football Fields	Rugby Fields	Ball Diamonds
<b>Grande Prairie</b>	<b>55,032</b>	32	2	7	2	44
Fort McMurray	61,374	24	3	4(a)	(a)	19
St. Albert	61,466	47	2	(b)	4	28
Medicine Hat	60,005	32	1	(b)	dna	38
Airdrie	42,564	38	2	(b)	dna	25
Lethbridge	83,517	69	2	6	3	67
Fort St. John	18,609	14	1(c)	(b)	dna	23

dna Data not available

(a) Rugby fields are included in football fields total

(b) Football fields are included in soccer fields total

(c) Under construction

**Comparison Table - Number of courts**

City	Population	Basketball Courts	Volleyball Courts	Tennis Courts	Athletic Track outdoor / indoor
<b>Grande Prairie</b>	<b>55,032</b>	10	4	10 (d)	2 / 1
Fort McMurray	61,374	11	3	6	1
St. Albert	61,466	dna	dna	24	1 / 1
Medicine Hat	60,005	dna	7	19	1
Airdrie	42,564	dna	dna	8	1 / 1
Lethbridge	83,517	38 (e)	3	24	2 (f) / 0
Fort St. John	18,609	1	1	5	3 / 1

dna Data not available

(d) 5 are in disrepair and are not used

(e) Include school gyms

(f) One track is at the University of Lethbridge

**Comparison Table - Number of rinks/pools/spray parks**

City	Population	Ice Rink outdoor / indoor	Curling Rink	Pools outdoor / indoor	Spray Parks outdoor / indoor
<b>Grande Prairie</b>	<b>55,032</b>	5 / 4	1	1 / 2	1+1(c) / 1
Fort McMurray	61,374	6 / 2	1	0 / 2	5
St. Albert	61,466	18 / 5	1	1 / 3	1 / 2
Medicine Hat	60,005	4 / 4	1	4 / 3	4
Airdrie	42,564	10 / 3	1	0 / 5	1 / 1(c)
Lethbridge	83,517	/ 5	1	2 / 5	2
Fort St. John	18,609	1 / 3	1	0 / 2	1 / 2

dna Data not available

(c) Under construction

**Comparison Table - Number of skateboard/BMX/off-leash parks/golf courses and picnic areas/campgrounds**

City	Population*	Skateboard Parks	BMX Park	Off-leash Parks	Golf Course	Picnic Areas	Campgrounds
<b>Grande Prairie</b>	<b>55,032</b>	2(l)	1	1	2(m)	dna	3
Fort McMurray	61,374	3	dna	2	3	3	4 (6)(g)
St. Albert	61,466	1	2	1(1)(h)	dna	6	1
Medicine Hat	60,005	2	1	16(i)	5	5	2
Airdrie	42,564	1	1	5	1	2	0
Lethbridge	83,517	1	2 (j)	3	5	11	2
Fort St. John	18,609	1	2 (k)	0	1	6	0

dna Data not available

(g) 4 Provincial and 6 private campgrounds

(h) 1 built and 1 under construction

(i) Most of their trail system in natural areas is off-leash

(j) One is a mountain bike track

(k) One is a motocross track

(l) 1 built and 1 under construction by June 2012

(m) Privately owned courses, one public and one private

**Infrastructure Comparative Analysis**

To benchmark Grande Prairie's existing infrastructure per capita figures from the researched cities were compared.

**Per Capita Comparison Table (People per venue)**

City	Soccer fields	Indoor Soccer	Football fields	Rugby	Ball Diamonds	Basketball Courts	Volleyball courts	Tennis courts
Standard	2,500	n/a	n/a	n/a	6,000	n/a	n/a	2,000
<b>Grande Prairie</b>	1,719	27,516	7,861	27,516	1,250	5,503	13,758	5,503
Fort McMurray	2,557	20,458	15,343	dna	3,230	5,579	20,458	10,229
St. Albert	dna	30,733	dna	15,367	2,195	dna	dna	2,561
Medicine Hat	1,875	60,005	dna	dna	1,579	dna	8,572	3,158
Airdrie	1,120	21,282	dna	dna	1,702	dna	dna	5,320
Lethbridge	1,210	41,759	13,919	27,839	1,246	dna	27,839	3,479
Fort St. John	1,329	18,609	dna	dna	809	18,609	18,609	3,721



Per Capita Comparison Table (People per venue) con't

City	Athletic Track	Ice Rink Outdoor	Ice Rink Indoor	Curling Rink	Pools Outdoor	Pools Indoor	Spray Parks
Standard	n/a	n/a	30,000	n/a	n/a	10,000	n/a
<b>Grande Prairie</b>	18,344	11,006	13,758	55,032	55,032	27,516	18,344
Fort McMurray	61,374	10,229	30,687	61,374	dna	30,687	12,274
St. Albert	30,733	3,414	12,293	61,466	61,466	20,489	20,488
Medicine Hat	60,005	15,001	15,001	60,005	15,001	20,002	15,001
Airdrie	21,282	4,256	14,188	42,564	dna	8,512	21,282
Lethbridge	41,759	dna	16,703	83,517	41,759	16,703	41,758
Fort St. John	6,203	18,609	6,203	18,609	dna	9,304	6,203

Per Capita Comparison Table (People per venue) con't

City	Skateboard Parks	BMX Parks	Off-leash areas	Golf Courses	Picnic Areas	Campgrounds
Standard				25,000		
<b>Grande Prairie</b>	27,516	55,032	55,032	27,516	dna	18,344
Fort McMurray	20,458	dna	30,687	20,458	20,458	6,137
St. Albert	61,466	30,733	30,733	dna	10,244	6,146
Medicine Hat	30,003	60,005	3,750	12,001	12,001	30,003
Airdrie	42,564	42,564	8,512	42,564	21,282	dna
Lethbridge	83,517	41,759	27,839	16,703	7,592	41,759
Fort St. John	18,609	9,305	dna	18,609	3,101	dna

It is important to note that feedback from the focus groups indicated a deficit in terms of the amount of quality playing fields for community league tournaments (football, soccer and ball diamonds). Even though the city has a sufficient amount playing fields, only a limited number of those are up to tournament standards. Keeping fields to that standard is maintenance-intensive and budget-sensitive, it is recommended that close communication with the sport associations is sustained to make sure the city provides sufficient fields for the practice of community sports.

Passive recreation usually takes place along trails, neighbourhood parks, regional and natural parks. Park area and trail system length are two indicators of open space commonly used to understand the capacity for passive recreation as well as overall access to the parks and open space system. The following table compares the Grande Prairie with the six other cities used in this study. Note: In this table, figures for Fort McMurray refer to the R.M. of Wood Buffalo, as separate figures for the City of Fort McMurray are not available.

Park Area and Trail System Length Comparison Table

City	Population	Park Area (Acre)	People per acre of park area	Trail System Length (km)	People per km of trail
<b>Grande Prairie</b>	<b>55,032</b>	1,460	38	128	430
Fort McMurray	65,565	990	66	130	504
St. Albert	61,466	dna	dna	70	878
Medicine Hat	60,005	3,280	18	90	667
Airdrie	42,564	720	59	75	568
Lethbridge	83,517	4,300	19	140	597
Fort St. John	18,609	dna	dna	10	1,861

## Summary

Overall Grande Prairie is relatively well supplied with park areas and has an extensive trail system, and a comprehensive recreation infrastructure, but like all the cities in this comparison, there are some gaps and room for improvement.

Priorities for improvement or addition are outlined below, which are based on the inventory and comparison with standards and with other cities, and on the feedback obtained through the focus groups and public survey.

LEVEL 1. Facilities that are missing and with an immediate need:

- > Additional off-leash areas
- > Additional skateboarding facilities
- > Two additional tournament quality soccer fields
- > One additional tournament quality football/rugby field

LEVEL 2. Facilities that exist, but need repairs or additions; and missing facilities with demand from niche user groups:

- > Additional BMX facility (to be located in the north of Grande Prairie)
- > Repair of 5 tennis courts near Legion Track
- > Additional picnic areas throughout the city
- > Development of a disc golf area
- > Development of a speed skating outdoor oval

LEVEL 3. Other facilities that exist, but need repairs or additions:

- > Additional volleyball courts that could be for beach volleyball (to be located in the north of Grande Prairie)

These findings will be revisited in the implementation section at the end of the document.

## 7 City scale

There are several aspects of the Plan that are considered at the scale of the city as a whole:

### The public realm as infrastructure

The public realm is made up of the parks, squares, streets, paths, and other public spaces, and forms one of the most permanent elements of the urban infrastructure. All private and public development contributes to the formation of the public realm, and every project should be considered as having a responsibility to create high quality public space.

There is a strong correlation between public health and the parks and open space system. It is important for Grande Prairie to provide access to public spaces for recreation and enjoyment, and to ensure that the city consists of a network of high quality, walkable streets.

Parks should not be considered as a separate entity, but as part of the overall network of the public realm. It is important to approach the evolution of the public realm in a collaborative way, and the joint responsibility of multiple City units.

Many parks and open space plans concentrate on sports fields and recreational space, and while these are important, this Grande Prairie Parks and Open Space Master Plan also includes principles and standards for other elements of public space such as streets, civic spaces, and specialized uses such as off-leash areas and community gardens. A range of open space types is required for a great city, and the infrastructure created by the effective layout, distribution, and linkages of these spaces contributes to a high quality public realm.

#### P: 7.01

***All site plans and landscape plans shall be completed by a landscape professional. Large scale capital projects should be prepared by a registered professional landscape architecture firm. Other projects may also be prepared by a registered Landscape Architectural Technologist.***

### Watersheds, water courses and waterbodies

The Concept Plan shows existing and proposed natural parks. These are based on the location of wetlands and waterbodies.

The historic evolution analysis emphasized how Grande Prairie has evolved within a regional context, and has affected, and is affected by, regional systems and processes. Most important to this plan are the watersheds. Creeks and wetlands are unique and valuable amenities and ecological systems and should be considered as the key organizing elements of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan. These watercourses and waterbodies are a deep layer of ecological infrastructure that is accessible to all residents and provides the basis for the path system. Overlaying the path system on this ecological infrastructure will make each more potent with more ability to contribute to the sense of place and to the accessibility of the city.

The historic evolution of waterbodies illustrated how Woody Creek has gradually been channelized and culverted, and lost ecological integrity. It is important to prevent other natural waterbodies from being degraded in the future.

#### R: 7.01

***It is recommended that the City develop an integrated process for dealing with waterbodies and watercourses that include multiple City units, so that ecological integrity and water quality be common objectives.***

#### P: 7.02

***Protection and reclamation of natural features should be a priority for Grande Prairie. To achieve this, it is necessary to have a collaborative approach at the beginning of the Area Structure Plan process that includes the Parks, Engineering and Planning departments, and is reflected in subdivision plans as well as engineering drawings.***





Of particular note is Bear Creek. The existing Muskoseepi Park Plan is providing direction for the continued evolution of the Bear Creek corridor, and this should be continued. Of concern, however, is the water quality of Bear Creek.

**R: 7.02**

***It is recommended that the City attempt to determine the causes of contamination and pollution of Bear Creek water, and address these. This may require additional cooperation between the City and the County, so as to provide integrated guidance for lands within the watershed.***

**R: 7.03**

***The City of Grande Prairie should continue to identify lands adjacent to Bear Creek for dedication as park space so that any city expansion also continues to expand this natural area.***

Crystal Lake is also an important feature of Grande Prairie's open space system. It functions somewhat differently, due in part to the land uses adjacent to it. Since it lies within a residential area, most people have to drive to it, and there are not the same range of activities possible that are offered at Muskoseepi Park. Its role as wildlife habitat, particularly the Trumpeter Swans, the symbol of Grande Prairie, is important, therefore enhancing the range of uses in the area would likely be detrimental to the ecological role. Any additional activities should therefore be considered carefully.

### Riparian areas and wetlands

As the city continues to expand, existing natural riparian areas and wetlands are in danger of being damaged or completely destroyed to accommodate future development.

**R: 7.04**

***The Inter-municipal Development Plan has identified short term annexation areas which should be carefully monitored and, if necessary, addressed should this be incompatible with or detrimental to the continued evolution of the natural areas aspect of the Plan.***

The Concept Plan incorporated the directions of the Area Structure Plans and Outline Plans that had been adopted as of the time of preparation of this Plan. It was noted that some of the ASPs and OPs did not seem to take into consideration the existing natural areas and/or wetlands.

**R: 7.05**

***Where amendments are possible, prior to construction of approved Area Structure Plans and Outline Plans, existing wetlands or watercourses should be incorporated into the ultimate plans.***

**R: 7.06**

***Riparian areas best practices should be adopted for the city as a whole, and encouraged where possible in adjacent lands. Riparian best practices are listed in Appendix B at the end of this document and provide a framework, but ultimately the development of these guidelines should be a collaborative effort of the multiple departments involved.***

**R: 7.07**

***It is recommended that City Council adopt a policy that recommends a minimum of a 30 meter setback on all sides of a designated wetland, creek or other water body in order to protect and preserve the ecological integrity of riparian habitat. Furthermore, should it be determined by way of a biodiversity assessment, Council may consider increasing the setback accordingly.***

- ***It is also recognised that this policy will not supersede those policies established under the Muskoseepi Park Master Plan (as adopted by City Council Nov. 14, 2011) with regard to those lands immediately adjacent to Bear Creek and the Hidden Valley Area Structure Plan (Bylaw C-1028 as amended by Council 9/20/2010).***
- ***Building construction shall not be permitted within the 30 meter setback, however, trails and low impact recreational uses will be considered.***



## The urban forest

As noted earlier, American Forests recommends achieving an average tree canopy cover of at least 25%, including 35% in suburban neighbourhoods and 9% in downtowns. This is an ambitious goal, but worth striving for, since tree cover improves human comfort, provides habitat, and has many aesthetic benefits. Grande Prairie's tree inventory is an excellent tool, and should be continued and the inventory regularly updated. Measurement of both the number of trees as well as the canopy cover gives objective means for evaluating progress.

### P: 7.03

***The existing tree inventory should continue to be supported and updated regularly. This represents an excellent tool to maintain and improve the urban forest.***

Although the urban forest includes trees on both public as well as private lands, public tree planting should be the focus of the City. A strategy for developing a more extensive urban forest should be developed, and budgeted for over a period of time. This Plan proposes identifying several important streets as priority areas for planting, and these should be addressed first. By concentrating efforts on a few key streets, rather than dispersing planting over too broad an area, the impact can be greater, and the overall image of the city can be improved.

Agricultural best practices can be of value in some tree planting, for example, the practice of creating shelterbelts to moderate the effects of wind and conserve moisture.

Some best practices for the development of urban forest strategies can be found from the City of Calgary Parks Urban Forest Strategy Plan and from the Canadian Urban Forest Network.

### P: 7.04

***An urban forest strategy should be developed, with the ultimate goal to develop and maintain a sustainable urban forest. The existing tree canopy should be quantified using the tree inventory and other potential uses such as infrared satellite photography. The strategy should attempt to achieve a 25% urban tree canopy as a long term goal. It should identify a series of important streets or priority areas to address first. These streets should include some of the main thoroughfares as well as the entries to the city.***

Trees in established neighbourhoods should be protected when infilling or redeveloping, and tree removal should be discouraged.

New neighbourhood design should stress street tree planting, and street standards should be adopted that include street trees and boulevards.

### P: 7.05

***A Tree Protection Bylaw should be developed to establish regulation for the protection of existing trees within public land.***

### R: 7.08

***It is recommended that design guidelines for new development, of all land uses, prioritize the inclusion of trees. Residential developments should incorporate guidelines to guarantee tree planting of at least one tree per front yards. Commercial development should incorporate guidelines to guarantee tree planting along parking lots and street frontage. Industrial development should incorporate guidelines to guarantee trees along street frontages and as screening on the perimeters of storage yards.***



## Winter cities guidelines

Grande Prairie enjoys four distinct seasons, including a long and cold winter. This is an important part of the character and identity of the city, and should continue to be embraced, for example through the practice of developing outdoor rinks, and through the pride of hosting Canada Winter Games and the subsequent enjoyment of the legacy of the new facilities.

The city under the Neighbourhood Outdoor Rink Program currently, has more than 80 neighbourhood outdoor skating rinks. These Neighbourhood Park Rinks are operated in cooperation with volunteers with Parks providing rink boards. In addition to NPRs, Parks maintains 5 full boarded hockey rinks. This is an excellent recreation resource for enjoyment of the winter season and community building. Other resources include tobogganing hills and trails used for cross country skiing. Feedback from the public indicated that more trails should be cleared of snow. This action is restricted to budget limitations, therefore should be considered strategically.

**P: 7.06**

***The Neighbourhood Outdoor Rinks Program should continue to be supported and expanded where possible.***

**P: 7.07**

***In the winter season some key trails should be identified for snow clearance as a priority and some key trails should be identified for cross country skiing. A winter trails map should be posted on the City's website, and should note cleared trails and skiing trails.***

**P: 7.08**

***Where possible additional tobogganing hills should be developed in existing neighbourhood parks, and where appropriate, included in the design of new neighbourhood parks.***

To further increase the enjoyment of the public realm during the four seasons, the adoption of winter cities design guidelines would be of great value. The development of these guidelines will likely need the collaboration of various City departments and some public participation from stakeholder groups.

**R: 7.09**

***It is recommended that winter city design guidelines be developed using best practices from other winter cities. These guidelines could include but not be limited to the following points:***

- ***locate buildings and other structures so that sunlight can penetrate into open spaces***
- ***situate paths, activity areas and park seating in sunny areas***
- ***use tree plantings and other landscape to shield from winds and provide separation between pedestrians and cars, and concentrate evergreen trees on the windward sides of parks, paths and seating areas***
- ***use shelterbelt plantings to direct the deposition of snow***
- ***include street tree planting wherever possible to provide shelter and to improve comfort for pedestrians and cyclists***
- ***include planting islands in parking lots to avoid large wind-swept areas, plant trees in groups particularly in harsher environments***
- ***all neighbourhood and community/school parks should continue to include flat areas for outdoor rinks***
- ***consider adding other winter-specific structures, such as warming huts, heated toilets, and sheltered transit stops***
- ***celebrate the seasons through special activities, celebrations and decoration***
- ***integrate snow storage areas in all site planning and design***
- ***the practice of developing outdoor rinks should be continued and expanded where possible.***

The Winter Cities Institute has many resources including design guidelines:

<http://www.wintercities.com/Resources/Living%20in%20Harmony%20with%20Winter.pdf>





## 8 Neighbourhood scale

Grande Prairie's neighbourhoods were analyzed in order to provide some insights into better development of the park and open space system. Grande Prairie's residential neighbourhoods can be described according to block pattern, walkability and presence of trails:

- > **grid pattern** - This was the dominant block pattern in the early eras of Grande Prairie's development and up to approximately the 1960s. The city grew block by block, and new development was added onto the edges. Back lanes are common, sidewalks are present on both sides of the streets, and many blocks have treed boulevards. Garages, if present, are at the rears of the lots. This block type produces neighbourhoods that are very permeable and walkable, and there is good connectivity to adjacent areas.
- > **modified grid** - This type was common during the 1970s and 1980s. Similar to Planned Neighbourhood Units elsewhere in North America during the 1950s-1980s, these neighbourhoods are organized around an elementary school, and consist almost entirely of single family housing. Garages, if present are at the sides or rears of the lots. The block pattern includes crescents and cul-de-sacs, making it somewhat less permeable and walkable, and less connected to adjacent areas. Back lanes and/or utility corridors are common.
- > **curvilinear** - This block pattern emerged in the 1990s and is still prevalent. It results in very impermeable and much less walkable neighbourhoods. There are typically very few access points to these neighbourhoods, which makes them isolated and poorly connected to adjacent areas. Sidewalks are frequently omitted on one or both sides of the streets, and the front house facades are dominated by garages. They are often oriented around a local recreation area such as a lake or pond. Back lanes and/or utility corridors are common.
- > **manufactured home parks** - The only anomalous form in Grande Prairie, these areas consist of private lands with one or two entries, and only manufactured homes. They do not include parks/open spaces within the developments.

In Grande Prairie, there is a correlation between block pattern and presence of trails:

- > grid block areas have good connectivity to parks and open spaces because of the permeable pattern and presence of sidewalks. However, the grid is not currently a popular development pattern.
- > modified grid neighbourhoods include the least amount of paths in Grande Prairie, but they have the most potential for new neighbourhood design. Most existing modified grid neighbourhoods were built prior to the establishment of the path system, although in some blocks, pedestrian paths through some mid-blocks are present. This type of neighbourhood is recommended as the desirable form for future development, reinforcing the Municipal Development Plan, however, the provision of path connections needs to be ensured in new plans.
- > curvilinear neighbourhoods frequently include purpose-built paths, but they are generally not well connected to adjacent areas, and necessitate more reliance on vehicular transportation. This neighbourhood form is not recommended, as it is difficult to provide good connectivity, and results in separate enclaves.
- > manufactured home parks do not include mid-block pedestrian paths, however their small size means that residents have easy access to the surrounding areas. This development type is not recommended, as it also results in separate enclaves, and poor general connectivity.

A challenge in Grande Prairie is to develop a more extensive path system that connects all parts of the city, and the constraints posed by the various block patterns will influence how complete the system might become.

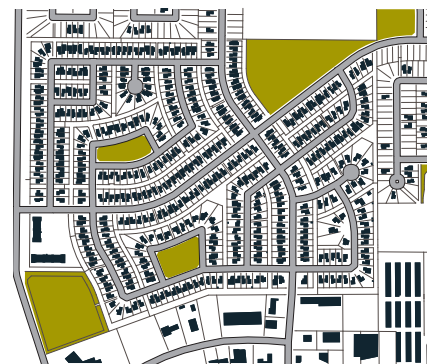
**R: 8.01**

*It is recommended to increase connectivity, walkability and decrease vehicular travel by neighbourhood design. Grid and modified grid block patterns are recommended. Multiple neighbourhood entries and connections to the surrounding areas are encouraged. Establishing guidelines to limit cul-de-sacs could also contribute. Collaboration among multiple City departments will be necessary.*

grid pattern neighbourhood



modified grid neighbourhood



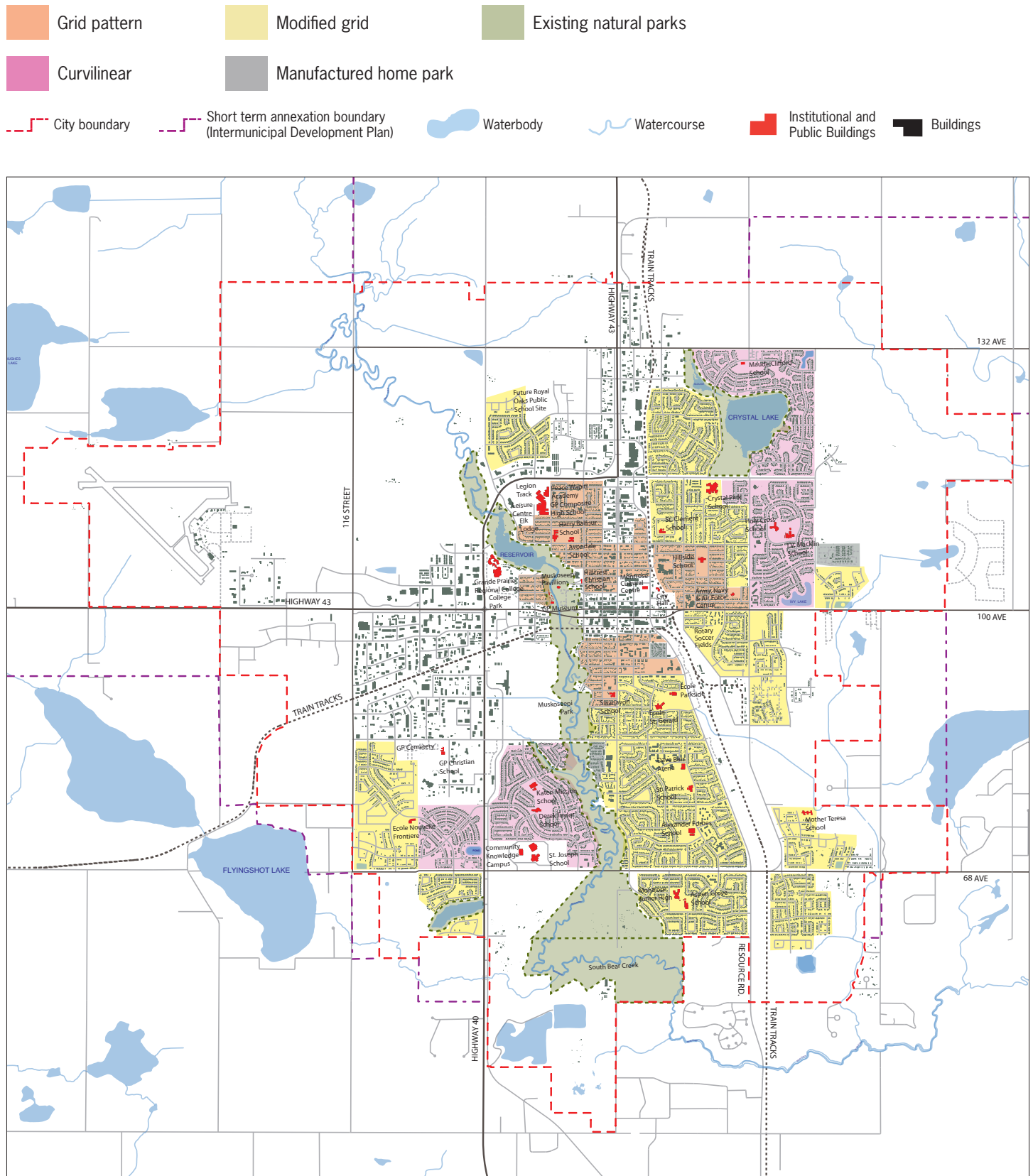
curvilinear neighbourhood



manufactured home park



Map 3. Neighbourhood types in Grande Prairie



## 9 Site scale

Site planning standards should be specific to the parks and open space type, and if not specified in this Plan shall be determined in accordance with the following reference standards, or as otherwise approved by the City of Grande Prairie:

- > Municipal Government Act, Subdivision Regulations
- > City of Grande Prairie Municipal Development Plan
- > City of Grande Prairie Land Use Bylaw
- > City of Grande Prairie Engineering Services Design Manual Landscaping: Section 16, and Parks: Section 17
- > City of Grande Prairie Construction Manual
- > Transportation Association of Canada (TAC) Geometric Design Guide for Canadian Roads (Chapter 3.3 Streetscapes and Chapter 3.4 Bikeways)
- > Industry Best Practices (e.g. Irrigation Association)
- > Canadian Nursery Landscape Association "Canadian Standards for Nursery Stock"
- > Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development "Alberta Yards and Gardens"

*"There is a clear shift away from formal, organized recreational activities. Many people seek individualized, informal pursuits that can be done alone or in small groups, at flexible times, often near or at home. The 2008 Alberta Recreation Survey, which tracks broad recreation patterns, found the highest participation rates for walking, gardening, crafts/hobbies, and attending a sport event, fair, or festival. Registered organized sport participation levels fell to 34% in 1998, from 45% in 1992. There is also a clear trend toward experiential activities that offer personal growth and meaning. Young families are seeking inexpensive, informal activities they can enjoy together. Given those trends, outdoor space for informal uses such as trails and passive parks must increase in proportion to sports fields."Healthy By Nature, Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (2010)*

In addition to those documents, the following should be noted:

### P: 9.01

***Location and planning of municipal and school reserves in residential expansion areas should be addressed at the preliminary stages of Outline Plan preparation, in accordance with the SCORES agreement, and to ensure that the requirements for municipal and school reserves are in balance with total land dedication requirements, and to ensure that wetlands and waterbodies are incorporated into the plans as natural areas.***

### P: 9.02

***Future School Sites shall be included in the Parks Design Report and include layout of required community / school sports fields. These future community sites should be reviewed in collaboration with the City (Planning, Engineering & Parks Operations), the designated School Board and the Developer. Community Park sites containing future schools will take into account a typical building footprint suitable to accommodate ultimate student /staff population, school parking and access and site servicing requirements***

The operation and maintenance of Community Park/School sites is regulated by the SCORES Agreement between the Separate and Public School Boards, the City and the College.

### R: 9.01

***It is recommended that the Area Structure Plan process include the preparation of a Conceptual Landscape Plan and a Final Landscape Plan that is reviewed by the Parks Department.***

- ***Conceptual Landscape Plan for all municipal, school and environmental reserves should include the following:***
  - ***inventory of existing wetlands, waterbodies, and drainage patterns***
  - ***inventory of existing flora and fauna***
  - ***soils report identifying any limitations on landscape development with respect to slope stability and erosion potential***
  - ***conceptual details for location of plant material, asphalt trails and site furnishings and amenities***
  - ***location for water and electrical service***
  - ***location of underground utilities***
- ***Final Landscape Plan for all municipal, school and environmental reserves is to be submitted as part of the detailed design drawings set for every development, and should include:***
  - ***site grading and drainage plan***
  - ***layout plan***
  - ***playground and playing fields layout plan***





- planting plan
- irrigation plan
- easements and utility rights-of-way

**P: 9.03**

**A minimum of 125 trees per hectare shall be provided for all Municipal Reserve lands.**

**P: 9.04**

**Tree species are to be 40% coniferous and 60% deciduous.**

**P: 9.05**

**The following tree planting standards shall apply to all properties adjacent to a Collector or Minor Collector roadways:**

- **Minimum of one (1) tree shall be planted for each single family residential lot where residential lots have direct (driveway) access to these roadways.**
- **Minimum of one (1) tree shall be planted for each 7 lineal meters of the boulevard where access to single and multi family residential lots is provided via a Laneway or, in the case of multi-family sites where off street parking is provided.**
- **Minimum of three (3) trees shall be planted on the flankage of corner lots for all single family properties adjacent to these roadways.**
- **Minimum of one (1) tree shall be planted per 6 meters of boulevard when adjacent residential properties have rear yards backing onto these roadways (access may be from a local roadway/ a.k.a. "Double Fronting Lots")**
- **Minimum of one (1) tree shall be planted per six (6) lineal meters of boulevard adjacent to all commercial and industrial properties fronting onto these roadways. This shall be excluded at or within proposed driveway crossings and where sightline issues may be impacted for vehicles entering onto public roadways.**
- **In the case of Arterial Roadways development, 1 tree shall be planted for each 6 lineal meters of roadway where no conflicts will exist with underground or overhead services including street lights/traffic signals.**

**P: 9.06**

**Commercial and Industrial areas should include 1 tree per 7 meters of street frontage. Excluding approved driveway crossing locations.**

**R: 9.02**

**It is recommended that the Section 16 of the Design Manual reflect a phasing in of additional tree planting requirements within Municipal Reserves as follows.**

**2012: 75 / Ha**  
**2013: 85 / Ha**  
**2014: 100 / Ha**  
**2015: 115 / Ha**  
**2016: 125 / Ha**

Tree and shrub species shall be as per the current City of Grande Prairie Engineering Design Manual Landscaping Section 16.



## 10 Parks and Open Space Concept

Grande Prairie's existing parks and open spaces provide the framework for the development of the plan. There is currently a good range of open space types, and most areas have access to parks and open spaces. The following sections include a description of the overall parks and open space concept and the provision of new parks and linkages.

Open spaces are either resource-based (i.e., are found where they occur naturally or where cultural or historic sites have been established), or are population-based, and provided according to accepted norms and standards, and/or according to the local demands and situation. Each open space type is distributed according to a distinct pattern, although all types are inter-related and inter-dependent.

The Concept is built upon existing and proposed natural parks and a network of neighbourhood parks, community parks/schools, and regional parks. These function together as an integrated park and open space system, connected by a series of trails and complete streets.

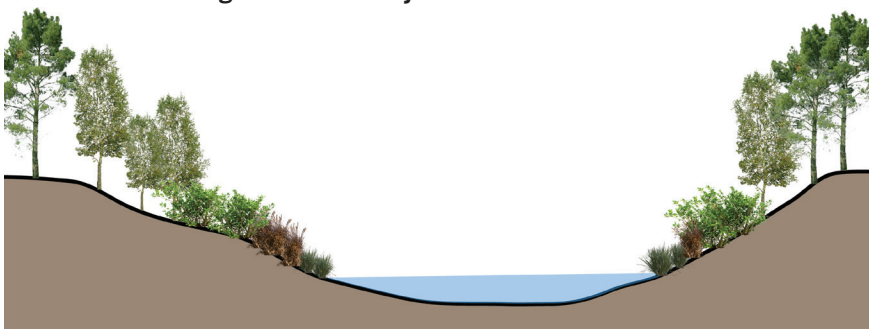
Park and Open Space Types are discussed in terms of their objectives and their design and development standards. In addition, the Levels of Service section should also be consulted.

### 10.1 Type 'A' Open Spaces - Natural areas

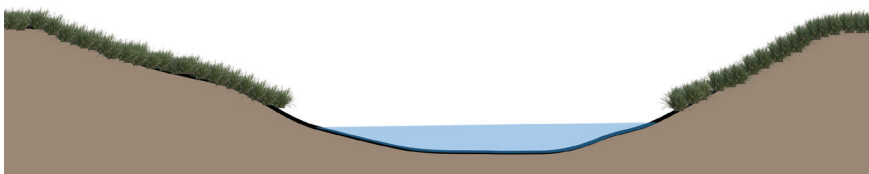
As described in a previous section (Watersheds, water courses and waterbodies), Muskoseepi Park and Crystal Lake provide the basic framework for the park plan. In addition to these two main elements, other wetlands and natural areas are identified that should be dedicated as natural open space. In addition to the natural areas, wet ponds developed as part of the stormwater management program can be considered as part of this system.

#### R: 10.01

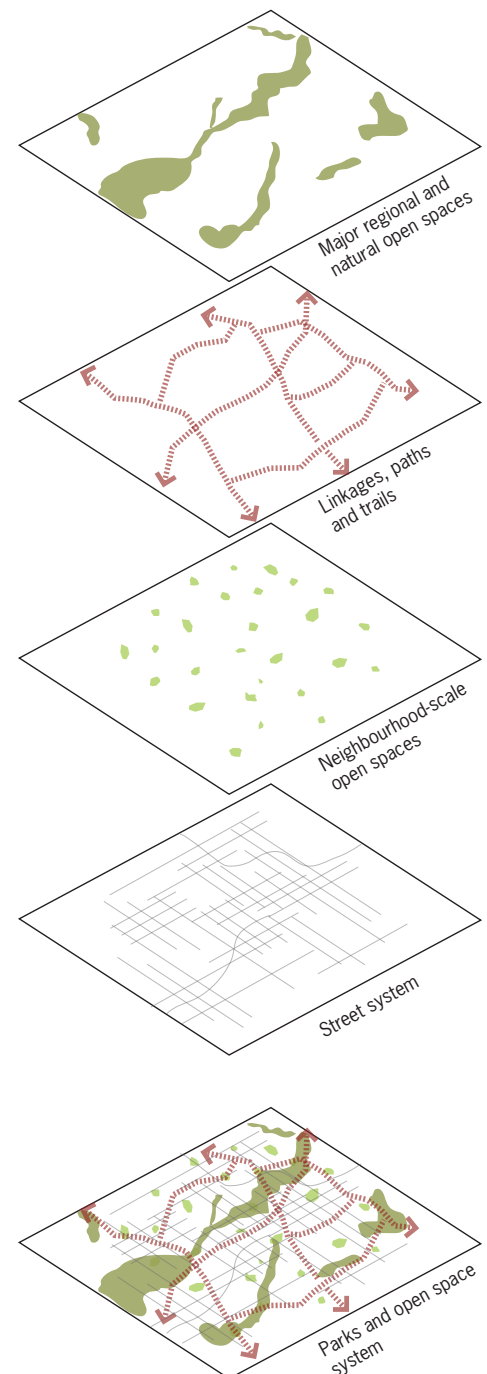
***It is recommended that wet ponds be developed as constructed wetlands, and not just for storage of stormwater. They can become year-round assets and attractions, and more viable as bird/wildlife habitat. The development of wet ponds should be based on the Alberta Guidelines for Stormwater Management. It is also recommended that the city develop and adopt standards in the City's Design/Construction Manual for planting requirements within the "riparian zone" of storm water management facilities. These standards will include the installation of 35 trees/Ha (as per current requirements) and the installation of typical riparian/emergent vegetation zone adjacent to the normal water level.***



Healthy riparian area



Unhealthy riparian area



Dry ponds should not be considered as a natural area, since they have different design and maintenance standards, but could be used for recreation purposes (see Type 'D' Open Spaces below).

Dry ponds developed as part of the stormwater management program may be used for recreation purposes. However, these areas are only suitable for passive, unorganized recreational activities, and are not suitable for competition-level sports and should not be included when developing an inventory of playing fields. Dry ponds may have usefulness as off-leash dog parks (see Special Use Areas below).

Associated with the natural areas are several potential off-leash dog areas. These are discussed in the section 'Special Use Areas' below.

## 10.2 Type 'B' Open Spaces - Historic resource or landmark

The Cemetery, Museum and Jubilee Park are the most notable park areas with historic and commemorative functions. Their design and maintenance levels should reflect the intentions of these land uses. The Cemetery was previously designated as Level B maintenance, however to reflect the importance of this area and the higher level of maintenance that is required, this Plan has designated the Cemetery as Level A maintenance (see Levels of Service section).

## 10.3 Type 'C' Open Spaces - Civic spaces

The 2004 Downtown Enhancement Plan (amended 2011) functions as the overall policy guide for the downtown area, which includes City Hall and the Montrose Cultural Centre. Consequently, this Park and Open Space Master Plan does not include proposals for the downtown area, as this is covered in more detail in the ARP. The general proposals included in the Downtown Enhancement Plan should be continued, however the proposed streetscape improvements and development of 102 Avenue as a greenway linking City Hall through Jubilee Park to Centennial Park (Muskoseepi Pavilion) are no longer possible around the new RCMP building but could be explored around the Provincial Government property.

Levels of maintenance are specified in the section Levels of Service, which are updated and included in this plan.

## 10.4 Type 'D' Open Spaces - Regional Parks

Grande Prairie has evolved to have several large multi-use park nodes:

- > Muskoseepi Park
- > South Bear Park
- > Crystal Lake
- > Leisure Centre/Legion Track/GP Composite High School
- > Community Knowledge Campus/St. Joseph High School

Additional major open space nodes are proposed in several locations (see Concept Map). By overlaying the environmental inventory, the open space inventory, and the cultural landscapes/landmarks inventory, together with proposed/anticipated new neighbourhoods, locations for new Regional Parks can be identified. The overlap of several open space systems, the presence of many public functions, or the convergence of several circulation routes creates greater potential for the development of areas in which the landscape, urban structure, functional relationships, and circulation patterns reinforce each other.

However in order for these areas to make the most positive contribution to the overall city form and function, the land uses around those large nodes need to be considered, and in some cases revised. Of note is the Leisure Centre node in Avondale. The park and open space uses are separated from the supporting commercial development to the north by Highway 43, a largely impenetrable barrier that presents many challenges to pedestrians. If this area was considered in a more integrated way, the land uses and transportation infrastructure could be more complementary. A second similar example is the Community Knowledge Campus in the





southwest, which is separated from commercial lands uses by 68th Avenue, presenting the same kinds of pedestrian problems.

#### **R: 10.02**

***It is recommended that pedestrian bridges or crossings be considered as a possible solution to resolve the issue of connectivity between high-use recreation/education nodes, and commercial and residential areas.***

#### **P: 10.01**

***All Regional Parks should be considered as transit oriented developments, and include good accessibility by public transit, good multi-modal linkages, and a mix of uses.***

As well, higher residential densities and land uses should be integrated, in order to avoid the pedestrian difficulties noted above. This requires the collaborative efforts of several City units, so that streets, transit, land uses and residential development support the evolution of a high quality public realm.

#### **P: 10.02**

***The location of Regional Parks should:***

- ***be centrally located to several neighbourhoods with access to arterial roads, public transit and trails (transit oriented developments)***
- ***be located where several open space systems overlap, or where there are multiple public functions, or where several circulation routes converge***
- ***have integrated land uses, to avoid pedestrian barriers***

#### **P: 10.03**

***The size of Regional Parks should be:***

- ***minimum size of 12.5 ha single high school, 25.0 ha for two schools***

#### **P: 10.04**

***Regional Parks should include the following:***

- ***furniture and fixtures as per the Design Manual, and to include play structures (traditional and more innovative to provide interest and excitement for kids, and designed for all ages), skateboarding elements, benches, waste receptacles, dog waste bag dispenser(s), picnic tables, bike racks, signage***
- ***sports fields: 2-senior baseball/fastball diamonds, 2-senior soccer/football fields, 1-400m running track, tennis courts, outdoor rink/multipurpose pad***
- ***flat area for seasonal outdoor rink***
- ***trees and landscape to provide shade, shelter, creation of open usable areas, and visual appeal***
- ***connections to trail and/or sidewalks, with paved walkway/trails as per the Design Manual***
- ***non-recreational areas landscaped as per the Design Manual***
- ***parking as required***



## 10.5 Type 'D' Open Spaces - Community/School Parks

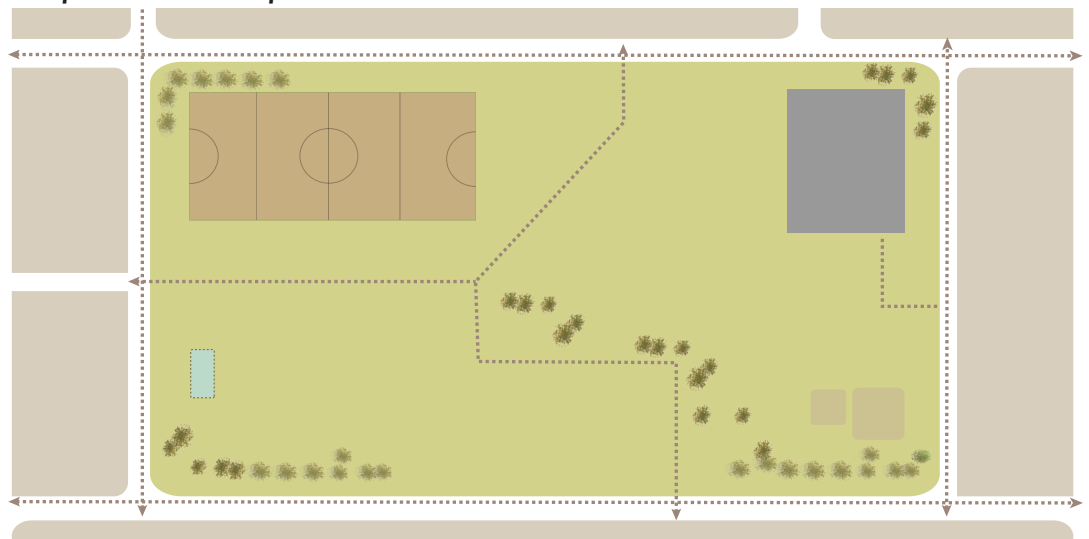
Smaller open space nodes have a finer grain of distribution, and correspond to anticipated population locations. They are typically associated with school sites, and have recreation facilities that attract users from various parts of the city. In addition to being located where they can have a large watershed catchment area, they should be easily accessed by other means of travel.

Some may be dedicated for specific sports, similar to the Rotary Soccer Fields. Where these facilities are dedicated to specific sports or activities, maintenance regimes should be adjusted accordingly.

- P: 10.05** *The location of Community/School Parks should be:*
- **centrally located between 2 or more neighbourhoods**

- P: 10.06** *The size of Community/School Parks should be:*
- **5 ha with single elementary or junior high school, 8 ha with two schools (the size may be varied with concurrence of school authorities)**

- P: 10.07** *Community/School Parks should include the following:*
- **regular geometrical configuration to maximize usable space**
  - **continuous street frontage should be provided along at least 30% of the perimeter in order to accommodate on-street parking and bus loading. A lower amount of park frontage may be considered if a Design Report demonstrates to the satisfaction of the City that the principles of safety, visibility and accessibility can be maintained**
  - **play structures (traditional and more innovative to provide interest and excitement for kids) and designed for elementary school aged children as per the Design Manual**
  - **benches, waste receptacles, dog waste bag dispenser(s), picnic tables, bike racks, signage**
  - **skateboarding elements should be included when possible**
  - **informal, level play area of a minimum size to accommodate a leveled grassed pad for a skating rink**
  - **trees and landscape to provide shade, shelter, creation of open usable areas, and visual appeal**
  - **connections to trail and/or sidewalks, with paved walkway/trails as per the Design Manual**
  - **non-recreational areas landscaped as per the Design Manual**
  - **sports fields: 1-community soccer field, 1-community ball diamond, multipurpose asphalt pad**
  - **parking area required if no school planned**



Community/school park example

## 10.6 Type 'D' Open Spaces - Neighbourhood parks

Smaller parks are the focal point of neighbourhood-based recreation and leisure activities, and are where everyday recreation and informal activities happen; they are important for creating a sense of community. Much physical activity, organized and informal, takes place here, and they are places that are easy to walk to, and do not require special transportation in order to access. They should be designed and managed so that all ages are accommodated. As neighbourhoods progress through the natural lifecycle patterns, facilities may need to be retrofitted or adjusted to account for changing demographics.

Each new neighbourhood requires provision of smaller parks, the locations should be determined as part of the overall neighbourhood planning, and sited for continuity of the path and trail network.

Special use parks should generally be avoided, since they are usually expensive to develop, and since the needs change with shifting recreation trends. It is more efficient to attempt to develop parks with multi-use potential. However, if special use parks are developed, they should be designed and developed to the highest quality, and properly address the requirements of the specific sport or activity. Any existing parks that are currently designated for a specific sport and that is not appropriate or effective should be redesignated and redesigned, or the land sold or traded for a more appropriate site.

### P: 10.08

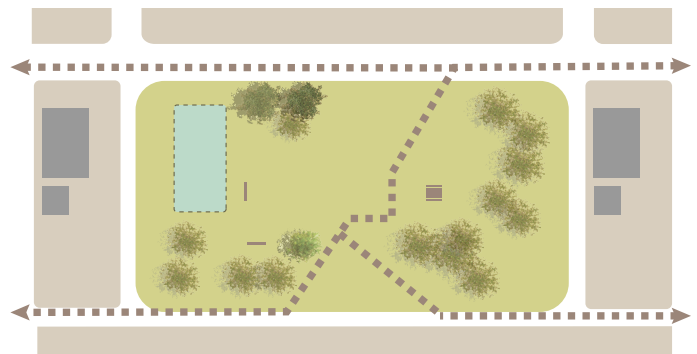
**The location of Neighbourhood Parks should address the following:**

- **every Grande Prairie resident should have at least one park within walking distance of their home, and the locations should be balanced throughout a neighbourhood as per approved Outline Plan. An acceptable walking distance according to the literature is between 400-600 meters.**

### P: 10.09

**Neighbourhood Parks should also have the following characteristics:**

- **the minimum size of neighbourhood parks is 0.5 hectare. Smaller parcels may be accepted provided overall neighbourhood demands are met. Where it can be demonstrated, MR parcels may be reduced to 0.4 Ha. May be located adjacent to PULs to augment open area. Larger park spaces may be assembled in phases through subdivision process.**
- **larger parks may be provided only if walking distances remain acceptable from all homes. (Acceptable walking distance - 400-600 meters.)**
- **traditional as well as innovative play equipment should be provided (this responds to the interests expressed by the school children in the surveys and focus groups, and also to the general evolution of parks in North America).**
- **Skateboarding elements should be incorporated when possible.**
- **every park should contribute to the evolution of a comprehensive park and open space system.**
- **park location should include linkages to the path and trail system, or be located on a complete street.**



Neighbourhood park example



**P: 10.10**

**Neighbourhood Parks should include the following:**

- **regular geometrical configuration to maximize usable space**
- **continuous street frontage should be provided along at least 20% of the perimeter. A lower amount of park frontage may be considered if the Design Report demonstrates to the satisfaction of the City that the principles of safety, visibility and accessibility can be maintained.**
- **play structures (traditional and more innovative to provide interest and excitement for kids), and furniture and fixtures including benches, waste receptacles, dog waste bag dispenser(s), picnic tables, bike racks, signage as per the Design Manual**
- **skateboarding elements should be included when possible**
- **informal, level play area of a minimum size to accommodate a temporary skating rink**
- **bbq pits could be considered on 0.6 - 1.0 Ha sites and installed with the approval of Grande Prairie Fire Department.**
- **2 pieces of outdoor exercise equipment to be included when possible**
- **trees and landscape to provide shade, shelter, creation of open usable areas, and visual appeal**
- **connections to trail and/or sidewalks, with paved walkway/trail links as per the Design Manual**
- **landscaped as per the Design Manual**

**R: 10.03**

**It is recommended that the development and retrofit of neighbourhood parks be done with the cooperation of community members and other groups.**

The ultimate purpose of neighbourhood parks is to provide day-to-day recreation spaces for all ages and to facilitate community building.

Specific neighbourhood park locations are not identified in this Plan, as this will be determined during the Area Structure Plan and Outline Plan process. Neighbourhood planning should occur as an integrated process involving multiple City units. Refer also to the Site Scale section.

## 10.7 Type 'E' Open Spaces - Trails

Grande Prairie has been developing a trail network for some time, and this has much support from residents. Continuation of the evolution of the network will help to distinguish Grande Prairie and provide recreation and circulation opportunities.

**R: 10.04**

**The existing trail network should be expanded upon to lead to a fully integrated system of parks and open spaces and easy access between all parts of the city. High and low priorities for trail connections are identified in this Plan to complete the network.**

The Plan attempts to provide good multi-modal linkages for all areas of Grande Prairie. These linkages build on natural systems, on existing path systems, and on anticipated connections between neighbourhoods. Potential connection points with Grande Prairie County are also indicated on the concept plan.

The railway is currently a limiting factor for east-west connection across the city. Existing railway crossings should be fully utilized for bike and pedestrian crossings. The downtown portion of the railway corridor has additional potential for enhancement as a bike/pedestrian corridor, and should be explored further.

**R: 10.05**

**As Grande Prairie continues to develop, acquisition of what is currently County land will occur. In preparation for that, and also as a means of developing a more comprehensive regional approach to trails, it is recommended that links between City and County trails be developed, with a view towards expanding the Parks Concept Plan.**



**R: 10.06**

***The pedestrian path system includes paths, trails and sidewalks. Design standards for all elements should be adopted for the city-wide system, so that there is a common vocabulary and continuity. Some path types are illustrated below.***

**R: 10.07**

***A bike path system should also be established to overlap with the path system. In some cases it will utilize the same surface as the path system, and in other cases separate bike surfaces should be developed. The City should investigate the potential of adding bike lanes to some streets.***

**Primary Trails:**

This trail type is the backbone of the overall trail network. It is made up of a series of designed asphalt trails connecting various recreational resources throughout the City. It provides two-way traffic for multi-purpose recreation and commuter use.

**P: 10.11**

***Primary trails should include the following:***

- ***generally separated from streets and sidewalks***
- ***width: 3.0 meters, asphalt surface***
- ***corridor width 6-15 meters***
- ***maximum grade of 8%***
- ***safety and direction signage***
- ***trail amenities (rest nodes, benches, lighting, guard rails, trash receptacles)***
- ***landscaped as per the Design Manual***

**Secondary Trails:**

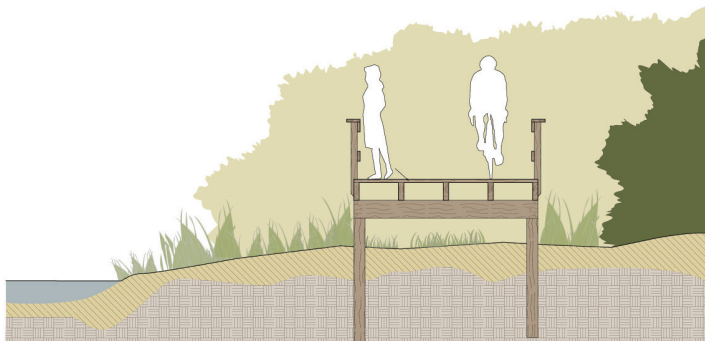
This type of trail will perform an auxiliary role to the primary trails, collecting and directing users to the primary routes. These trails generally provide mid-block connections through public utility lots or linear parks, but do not include sidewalks.

**P: 10.12**

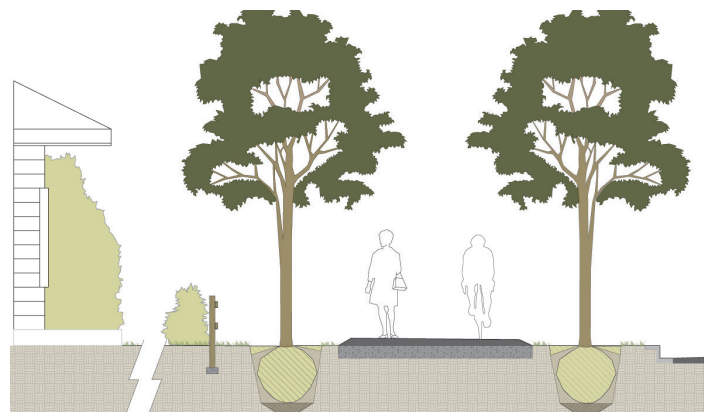
***Secondary trails should include the following***

- ***width 2.0-2.5meters, concrete walk or asphalt surface***
- ***corridor width less than 6 meters***
- ***safety and directional signage***
- ***landscaped as per the Design Manual***

Boardwalk paths provide access to natural areas.



Paths in residential areas should accommodate pedestrians and bikes.



### Tertiary Trails:

This level of overall trail network consists of streets and roads, which are shared by cyclists and motorists. The intent is to provide designated routes from significant recreational resources or public open spaces such as schools that are not accessible on primary trails. These routes may include designated bike lanes or merely identification signage for the benefit of the cyclist and for alerting the motorist.

**P: 10.13**

***Tertiary trails should include the following***

- ***line markings***
- ***directional and safety signage***

### Sidewalks:

Sidewalks are integral to the open space system and are the core of the public realm, and are therefore noted in this parks and open space plan. It is recommended that all streets include sidewalks or trails. This recommendation also applies to industrial areas and arterial roads.

**P: 10.14**

***Sidewalks should include the following***

- ***ideally separated from streets by a treed boulevard (trees planted 6 meters on centre). Monowalk is not ideal, but also acceptable.***
- ***width 1.5 meter minimum, concrete surface***

### Natural Trails:

Designated walking and/or interpretive trails through and between parks and facilities.

**P: 10.15**

***Natural trails should include the following***

- ***width: 1.5-3.0 meters***
- ***compacted shale, gravel or wood chip surface***
- ***corridor width less than 6 meters***
- ***safety and directional signage***
- ***trail amenities (rest nodes, benches, trash receptacles, view points, interpretive signage)***
- ***landscaped as per the Design Manual***

## 10.10 Type 'E' Open Spaces - Public Utility Corridors

Public Utility Lots (PULs) exist to enable rear lot servicing for underground utilities. The grassed surface ensures ease of maintenance, access and a reduced cost for opening the surface. However, the majority of the time, the PULs exist as under-utilized space, and therefore should be considered as part of the parks and open space system.

Public Utility Lots are a unique feature of Grande Prairie and have much potential for contributing to an integrated open space system, particularly as pedestrian and bike path corridors. There is wide public support for the selective inclusion of the utility lots for paths and trails, and also support for selective trail paving.

**P: 10.16**

***Additional trail connections should be considered in some PULs. Criteria for selection should include the potential to contribute to the overall path network, as well as agreement of the adjacent land owners.***

**P: 10.17**

***The practice of mowing once/month should be continued, with more frequent maintenance for those used for trail connections.***





## 10.8 Type 'E' Open Spaces - Complete streets

Grande Prairie's Municipal Development Plan has committed to the development of 'complete streets' that accommodate multiple modes of transportation (including bikes and pedestrians in addition to cars and transit), and that improve pedestrian comfort through provision of wider sidewalks, street trees and other landscaping, narrower pavements, and barrier-free design. This Park and Open Space Master Plan supports these objectives and includes design guidelines that emphasize the role that all streets play in contributing to the public realm.

Ideally, all streets should be developed as complete streets, defined by the National Complete Streets Coalition (<http://www.completestreets.org>) as streets that are designed and operated to allow all users, of all mobilities and all ages, not only drivers, to use them safely. The design elements of complete streets may include pedestrian infrastructure (sidewalks, crosswalks, sidewalk bulbouts), traffic calming measures, street trees and other plantings, bicycle accommodations (dedicated lanes or wide shoulders), and mass transit accommodations (such as special bus lanes). Complete streets policies usually do not apply to highways or other roads where non-motorized transportation is not permitted or to roads where the cost of improvements would be prohibitive or disproportionate to the anticipated level of use.

Establishing a few streets as complete streets will help to set a standard, and will allow development of budgets. Developing a few priority streets, for example 102 Street, will have more impact than dispersing improvement efforts across too broad an area. Once the initial streets are redeveloped, others can be identified as budget permits.

### R: 10.08

***A Complete Streets Policy should be developed for Grande Prairie through a collaboration between Parks, Planning and Engineering Services that will guide street improvement, and that will provide a means of integrating transportation planning and engineering together with parks and urban planning.***

### R: 10.09

***Some specific revisions to Grande Prairie's Standard Guidelines for Design and Development of Municipal Improvements (Design Manual) are recommended:***

***Section 14 - Roadway Design Standards***

- ***It is recommended that an option be provided in residential streets to include separated sidewalks.***



## 10.9 Type 'F' Open Spaces - Campgrounds and Day use areas

Grande Prairie currently has limited opportunities for camping or day use, and this was not identified as a concern through the public consultation processes.

### P: 10.18

***Should additional needs start to be expressed, the following uses could be accommodated:***

- ***day use areas could be incorporated into existing and future natural parks***
- ***campgrounds could be incorporated into future natural parks***

## 10.10 Type 'G' Open Spaces - Stormwater Retaining Ponds

There are two kinds of retention ponds, dry and wet. Wet ponds usually hold standing water year round, while dry ponds usually remain dry until a storm event when they store water for a brief period of time. Stormwater retaining ponds are public infrastructure built for the purpose of stormwater management but they also present an opportunity to contribute to the parks and open space system. An excellent precedent within Grande Prairie is Ivy Lake in the northeast. It is a wet pond with recreation trails around it and a playground near by.

Design standards for stormwater retaining ponds are defined by the Design Manual and are regulated by the Engineering department.



### R: 10.10

***It is recommended that wet ponds be designed as constructed wetlands whenever possible, with recreational trails around them and connecting to the path system.***

### R: 10.11

***It is recommended that neighbourhood parks be located adjacent to wet ponds and include playground structures as well as picnic facilities such as picnic tables, bbq pits and washrooms.***

### R: 10.12

***It is recommended that the Parks and Engineering departments explore the possibility of landscaping at least a portion of dry ponds with plants suitable for wet conditions. This will improve the visual impact and ecological functioning of dry ponds.***

### R: 10.13

***Dry ponds are not recommended for playing fields but could be used for unstructured recreation. Lot's should be designated as PUL with no MR credit***

## 10.11 Type 'H' Open Space - Un-designated green space

The amount of un-designated green space should be minimized, and where possible utilized for passive recreation or special purposes (see below).

### P: 10.19

***Grassed medians and boulevards should continue to be maintained under current standards.***

## 10.12 Special use areas

### Entries

Entries into Grande Prairie provide an opportunity to establish the image, character and qualities of Grande Prairie and they should also be developed to a high standard.

### P: 10.20

***Entries should be designed as special thoroughfares, and include significant tree planting, and where possible be designed for multi-modal circulation (i.e. vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians).***



It is not recommended that specific entry features, other than improved landscape, be included, since the entry point into the city shifts with time as the city edge expands. It is more important to create a high quality experience when entering into the city, and that can be achieved through the development of landscaped areas.

### Dog Off-Leash Areas

The need for additional dog off-leash areas was identified as a concern by the public in both the surveys and the focus groups. The existing South Bear Creek Off-leash Dog Park is heavily used and is the only facility available within the City for off-leash use.

During the public survey and focus group sessions, it was apparent that there is strong citizen support for an alternative to “Fenced Dog Parks”. Many residents expressed the desire to be able to walk with the pet off leash. Therefore, in addition to “Fenced Dog Parks”, consideration be given to establishing off-leash areas where pet owners can also enjoy the health benefits of walking within designated areas with their pets off leash. These areas could include: established natural trails and areas, un-designated linear green spaces such as PULs / Utility ROWs, and other designated areas for off leash activities. Also neighbourhood-based off-leash dog parks should be considered.



#### R: 10.14

***It is recommended the city establish a goal (3 years) to establish a minimum of one dog off-leash area in each quadrant of the city, and identify a long term goals and strategies for off-leash areas within City Limits over the next 10 years.***

#### P: 10.21

***A Dog Off-Leash Area Committee should be formed, comprised of City staff and citizens, who will be responsible for initiating the process for an Off-Leash Area Strategy. This committee will also be responsible for monitoring the use and management of the off-leash areas and providing advice.***

Several locations have potential, and these include existing under-utilized green spaces as well future development areas, so as to serve various areas of the city. In addition, there are other potential locations for off-leash areas, including utility corridors, dry ponds, and rights-of-way, that should be considered when expanding the system of off-leash areas.

#### R: 10.15

***It is recommended that guidelines for off-leash areas include the following:***

- ***the privilege of allowing dogs off leash in public areas must be balanced by the responsibility that dog-owners have to adhere to relevant bylaws and to general social standards (of people and dogs).***
- ***the safety of all park and trail users and dogs takes precedence over off-leash opportunities.***
- ***the protection of park assets, including natural habitat and wildlife, takes precedence over off-leash opportunities.***
- ***land should be within the City of Grande Prairie inventory, or be available to be leased.***
- ***the size of off-leash areas should be minimum .5 hectares.***
- ***adequate space for parking should be available.***
- ***boundaries of the off-leash area should be clearly delineated, and should be indicated by signage.***
- ***a buffer of 30 meters between off-leash areas and residential dwellings, schools, cemeteries and nature conservation areas is recommended, however, this setback could be established on a site-to-site basis. This buffer could be reduced by using fences.***
- ***the City will be responsible for provision of adequate dog waste bag dispensers and waste containers, and the pet owners will be responsible for the removal of their pet's waste.***



Some best practices for the development of off-leash areas can be found from the City of Surrey Dog Off-Leash Area Strategy, City of Edmonton Park for Paws program, City of Medicine Hat Off-Leash Parks Best Practices and Recommendations, and the City of Calgary Off-Leash Area Management Plan.

### Noise attenuation barriers

Since there are several major thoroughfares passing through Grande Prairie, noise attenuation barriers (NAB) are useful to separate high traffic and residential areas. These barriers can take the form of walls, berms or a combination of both. These barriers are located along road right-of-ways close to the adjacent parcels and set back from the roadway; this set back area is usually grassed and provides an opportunity for further landscaping to soften the visual impact of NABs.



**P: 10.22**

**Noise attenuation barriers should incorporate landscaping on both sides of the barrier; this is to minimize the visual impact of walls for the adjacent landowners and from the roadway.**

**R: 10.16**

**It is recommended that the planning and design of noise barriers be a collaborative process of Parks, Planning and Engineering departments.**

**R: 10.17**

**Due to the length of NABs, landscaping could be costly and needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is recommended that the landscaping cost be considered from the beginning of the planning stages in coordination with Parks, Planning and Engineering.**

**P: 10.23**

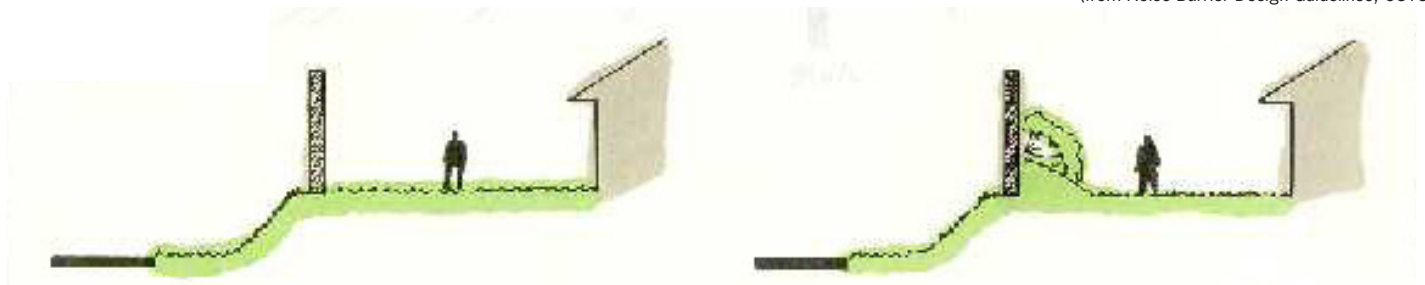
**Landscaping along noise attenuation barriers should include the following:**

- **a combination of overstory, understory and ground cover along the full length and on both sides of the barrier.**
- **tree planting in clusters of minimum 3 trees, with 10-30 meters between clusters. The distance between clusters could vary to provide visual diversity by asymmetrical planting.**
- **hedges and shrubs should be planted continuously, directly against the barrier.**
- **grass and other ground cover should be maintained to a minimum standard.**
- **intersections and neighbourhood entrances should be landscaped distinctly using a diversity of trees and shrubs.**
- **the plant selection should be based on low maintenance and using a combination of deciduous and evergreen plants.**
- **only perennial plants are recommended.**



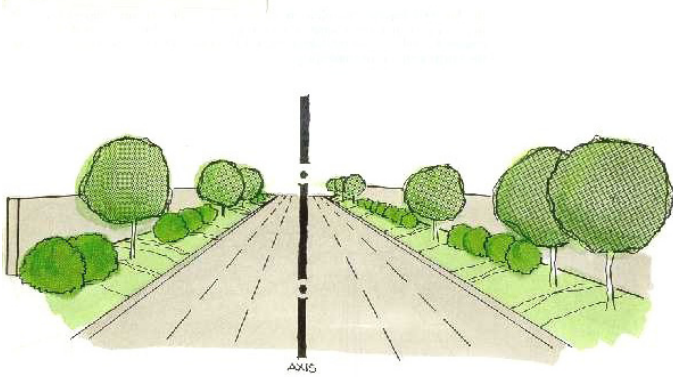
Some best practices for Noise Attenuation Barrier landscaping can be found in the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Urban Transportation Studies (CUTS) Noise Barrier Design Guidelines and the U.S. Department of Transportation Noise Barrier Design.

Example of landscaping along noise attenuation barrier  
(from Noise Barrier Design Guidelines, CUTS)



Some best practices for Noise Attenuation Barrier landscaping from Noise Barrier Design Guidelines, Centre for Urban Transportation Studies.

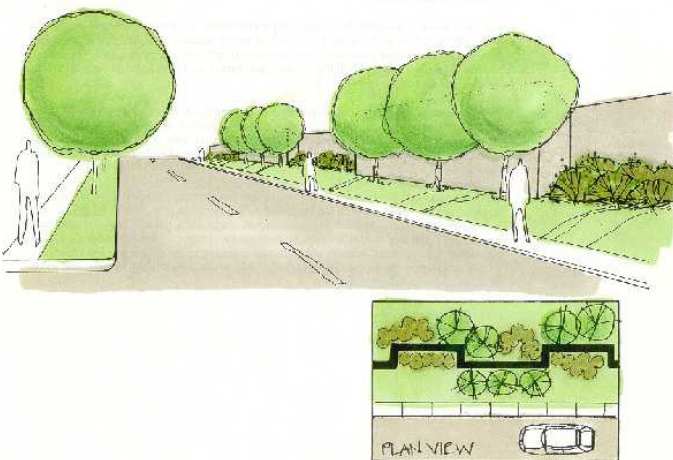
Asymmetrical planting  
(from Noise Barrier Design Guidelines, CUTS)



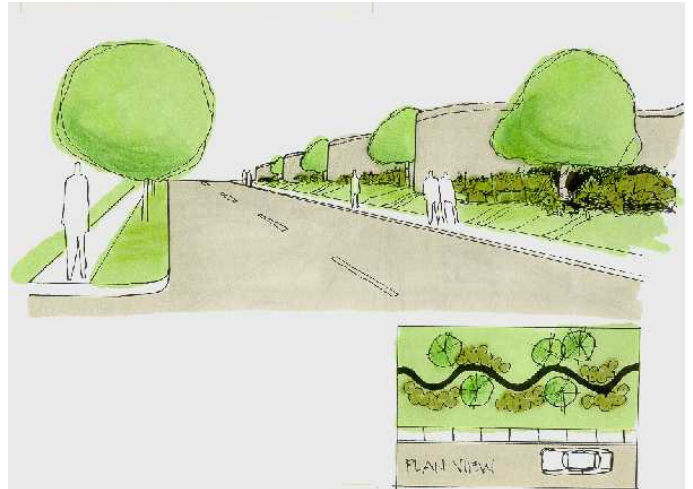
Symmetrical planting  
(from Noise Barrier Design Guidelines, CUTS)



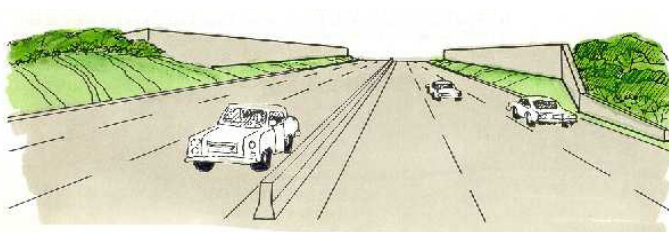
Castellated wall configuration  
(from Noise Barrier Design Guidelines, CUTS)



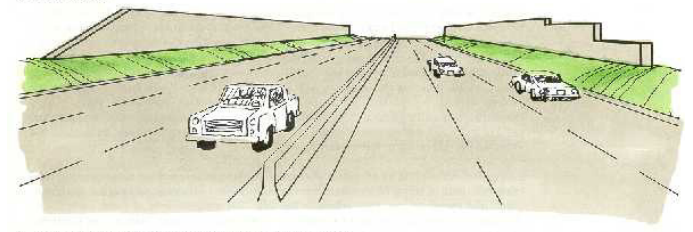
Serpentine wall configuration  
(from Noise Barrier Design Guidelines, CUTS)



Landscaped wall termination  
(from Noise Barrier Design Guidelines, CUTS)



Wall termination without landscaping  
(from Noise Barrier Design Guidelines, CUTS)



## Community gardens

There was strong interest expressed in the surveys and focus groups for the development of community gardens. This could be realized as a joint endeavour between interested citizens and the City. The success of the existing downtown community garden is good indication of the appropriateness of this use.

Example of use of railway lands for community garden (Vancouver, BC)



**P: 10.24**

**Potential locations for community gardens should be explored with interested citizens, since convenience of access will likely be a factor in their success. Some possible areas to consider include utility corridors and currently un-used or under-utilized municipal open space.**

**R: 10.18**

**After review of community garden programs in several other municipalities the following operating guidelines are suggested:**

- **the development of the community gardens is often in response to leadership from citizen(s) who show strong interest**
- **land is provided by the City or other institution with available land, and fenced**
- **the City provides initial tilling of the land and yearly spring tilling thereafter**
- **the City provides water**
- **users pay a fee (\$25/year is typical) and participate in development of rules for operation**
- **expansion occurs according to interest, as well as availability of land.**

Some best practices for community gardens can be found in City of Leduc Garden Program.

## 10.13 Future Open Space and Annexation Lands

The Inter-Municipal Development plan between the County and the City of Grande Prairie outlines the future areas that the City of Grande Prairie will annex in the short and long term.

**R: 10.19**

**The following criteria are recommended for the selection of open space in land that will be annexed in the future.**

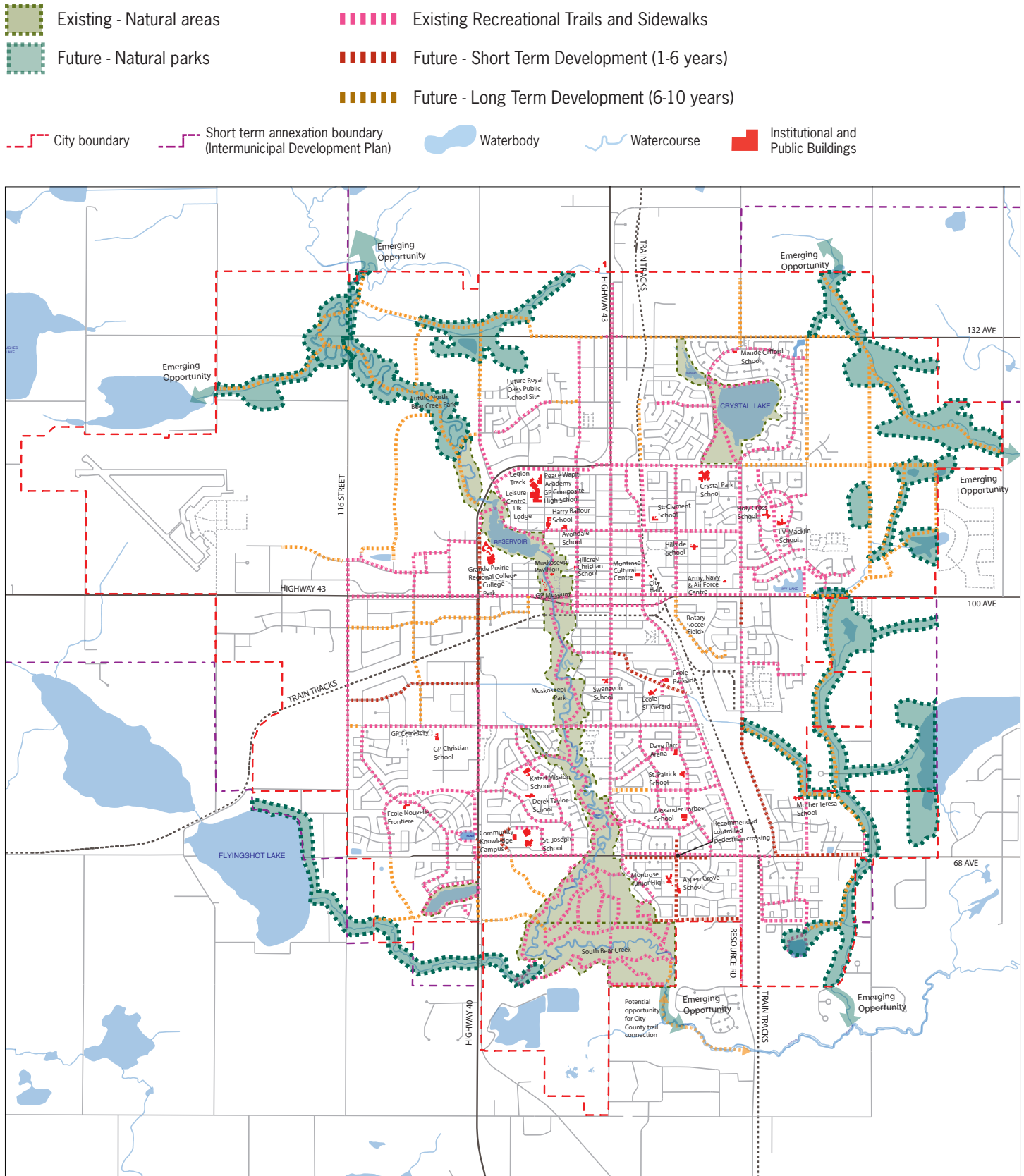
- **Maintain the environmental integrity and waterbody/watercourse connectivity**
- **Use ER as a tool to preserve these natural features**
- **Prevent the intentional drainage of natural wetlands and drainage channels**
- **Identify opportunities for Regional Parks adjacent to future ER similar to the baseball diamonds at South Bear Creek and some areas of Muskoseepi Park**

*"In the case of large, intensifying cities, many traditional planning tools may be of limited value for green space securement, largely because these tools relate to outward growth and development. In these cases, a stable capital budget becomes crucial to ensuring sufficient parkland. There is, then, a need for advocacy to ensure senior governments are investing in cities, and providing an assurance of stable, secure green space funding."Green space Acquisition and Stewardship in Canada's Urban Municipalities, Evergreen (2004)*





Map 5. Parks and open space concept - Paths and trails



# implementation

## 11 General Recommendations - Operations

In addition to the directions proposed throughout this Plan, the following specific recommendations will assist in operationalizing the Plan:

### 11.1 Philosophy-Based Approach

One of the expectations of this Parks and Open Space Master Plan was that it would provide a philosophy-based approach to parks development. The Parks and Open Space Master Plan should be acknowledged as supporting Grande Prairie's Mission and Values in the areas of community quality of life environmental sustainability.

### 11.2 Collaboration of Multiple City Departments

Several of the recommendations in this Plan require the collaboration of multiple City departments, particularly Parks, Planning and Engineering Services.

#### R: 11.01

***A first priority is the establishment of an ongoing working group comprised of representatives from those three departments, who would work towards the development of optimized communication and cooperation regarding development of new neighbourhoods and improvement of existing areas, and to facilitate the sharing of information, plans and policies. The combined resources and experience of this group could result, over time, in economic and other efficiencies, and produce higher quality environments.***

This working group should also include representation from Muskoseepi Park, so that the Parks and Open Space Master Plan, the Muskoseepi Park Plan, the aspects of the Engineering Standards that deal with parks, streets, and landscape, and various Planning processes and policies can be harmonized and avoid duplication.

#### R: 11.02

***The Area Structure Plan and Outline Plan processes should include provision of consultation with Parks in determining the location and distribution of dedication land (MR and ER), so that these lands ultimately contribute to a comprehensive park and trail system.***

#### R: 11.03

***In addition, the inventory and consideration of wetlands, watercourses and natural areas in currently non-urbanized areas should be completed so that these elements can be integrated into the evolving parks and trail network.***

#### R: 11.04

***The multi-departmental working group should also develop a Complete Streets Policy that would address the requirements of each department, and lead to the continued improvement of Grande Prairie streets as part of the public realm.***

This plan recognizes that many improvements have already been made, and encourages further collaboration.



### 11.3 Additional Parks Operations Staffing

As Grande Prairie has grown and expanded its parks and open spaces, as well as the responsibilities involved in offering high quality parks and public spaces, Parks Operations staffing has not grown in parallel. At present, the Parks Manager and the Parks Planner are also directly responsible for many of the parks operations activities and inspections, which are time-consuming and do not always allow for expansions to the planning and design duties.

#### R: 11.05

***This plan emphasizes the need for additional Parks Operations staff and recommends at least one additional position. This position could take on many of the inspections and routine operations duties, allowing the Parks Planner to focus more on addressing the ongoing evolution of the parks and trails system, as well as the recommendations for improvement.***

### 11.4 Public Education and Engagement

This Parks and Open Space Master Plan should be considered to be a dynamic document that provides overall guidance for the next 7-10 years, but that also requires continual public engagement. The public engagement process of this Plan provided valuable input and feedback, and offered opportunities for involvement by many people, through multiple methods.

#### R: 11.06

***It is recommended that a process be developed so that user groups and various segments of the population have regular opportunities for input and feedback.***

This may include periodic focus groups to review parks and open space issues, web-based surveys, or more informal lines of communication. The objectives are to ensure that the parks and trail infrastructure is appropriate for the requirements of the users, and to provide an opportunity for Parks to be able to anticipate evolving needs.

Providing opportunities for members of the community to become more involved with parks through volunteer opportunities and adoption programs can also increase the public support and commitment to other areas of park development. There are several ways in which the public can get involved in the development and maintenance of city parks. At the most basic level, issues concerning parks can be addressed in various public meetings. More proactive and interactive forms of public involvement include public information sessions and open houses, design charrettes where the public can put forth ideas for the design, or redesign, of public spaces. A variety of methods of involving the public is key to providing access and information to the largest cross section of the community. Public education also involves providing information regarding the park systems, design techniques, planting methods and practices, water management, and xeriscaping principles. City parks can create displays and models that demonstrate to residents sustainable landscaping practices that can be utilized in back yards and private property. These teaching tools can also provide additional information on native plants, and watering techniques that manage water resources. Other more specific programs could include development of an "Adopt a Neighbourhood Park" program, whereby residents can take more practical responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of their local parks as part of their duties as citizens, or donations of funding for parks lands or maintenance (which could be acknowledged through signage or other recognition).

### 11.5 New Neighbourhood Planning

#### R: 11.07

***It is recommended that all existing natural systems be integrated into new neighbourhoods and/or parkland areas. Parks, Planning and Engineering Services should collaboratively identify land for City acquisition and long-term maintenance that considers existing natural systems and that would contribute to connectivity.***

The overall objectives are that new neighbourhoods should include adequate open space (see earlier maps and text), contribute to trail linkages, and that priority be given to maintaining significant natural areas, and also be designed using a modified grid block pattern.

## 11.6 Accommodating Changing Populations

Grande Prairie's parks and open space system should be accessible to all, and provide recreation opportunities for all age groups and abilities.

As new neighbourhoods are developed, and as aging infrastructure is improved, they should incorporate accessible design practices, so that over time the entire parks system becomes barrier free.

**R: 11.08**

***It is recommended that Grande Prairie's parks and open space system be made accessible to all, using concepts of universal design and accessibility in the planning and design of parks and open spaces.***

**R: 11.09**

***Within each developing neighbourhood, a minimum of one park should be designed for accessibility.***

**R: 11.10**

***It is recommended that the City of Grande Prairie adopt and/or consider Annex H of the CSA Z614.07 "Children's playspaces and equipment that are accessible to persons with disabilities" as the standards for construction of accessible parks.***

An ongoing process of public engagement can help to monitor the changing needs and expectations of the population.

Some best practices associated with accessibility and universal design are The City of Calgary Universal Design Handbook and Alberta's Barrier-Free Design Guidelines.

## 11.7 Parks Naming Guidelines

At present, few parks, especially those at the neighbourhood level, have names. The naming of parks or facilities within parks is an important way of contributing to a sense of continuity and identity, especially where it builds on the identification of natural features, or includes references to historic events. A further source of parks naming is to consider local people who have contributed to the city or who have had notable achievements, or who have donated either funds or lands towards the parks system.

**R: 11.11**

***It is recommended that a Parks Naming Committee be formalized who would oversee the naming of parks and facilities and that a schedule of meeting be established. This committee should have representation from Council, Parks, and from the general public, and report to the Community Development Committee. The Parks Naming Committee should work to evolve a written terms of reference and naming policies.***

**R: 11.12**

***Initial criteria for naming parks should include:***

- ***avoiding duplication, confusing similarity or inappropriateness (for example, parks should not be named after development or real estate companies)***
- ***consider geographical location, historical or cultural significance, distinctive natural features, notable events or people, and the wishes of the community in which it is located***
- ***public input should be sought through various means, including contests***

Corporate sponsorship has become a reality in financing many park and recreational facilities, and is often acknowledged through the naming of the facility. When this occurs, it is important that there also be a local identifier in the name, rather than just the corporate name. (For example, Calgary's major hockey facility has been variously known as the Olympic Saddledome, the Canadian Airlines Saddledome, the Pengrowth Saddledome, and now the Scotiabank Saddledome. Although sponsorship has changed, the main identifier in the name has remained constant.)

## 11.8 Innovations in Sustainability

Concepts for innovation in sustainable practices are often characterized by simplicity and common sense. Practices such as providing recycling bins, using materials that are recyclable, harvesting rainwater from recreation buildings, and using native plant materials, are all ideas that are neither complex nor difficult to apply, and they should be considered as standard practice in Grande Prairie.

### R: 11.13

***Sustainable practices should continue to be integrated into the Parks department as well as in the planning and design of parks and open spaces. Some specific examples include:***

- ***Specify drought tolerant plants (xeriscaping applications)***
- ***Use bioswales to reduce surface runoff in park areas***
- ***Consider solar energy for heating and power in parks buildings and lighting of park areas***
- ***Continue to pursue and implement alternatives to traditional pesticide and/or herbicide use***
- ***Consider alternative grass seed mixes better suited for areas designated for naturalization and reduced mowing***
- ***Use a lifecycle approach in planning parks and facilities***



## 12 General Recommendations - Action Items

Several action items are outlined below that provide priorities for continued development of the parks and open space system:

### 12.1 Links in the Trail System

**R: 12.01** *It is recommended a recreational trail expansion strategy be developed in cooperation with the Transportation, Planning and Engineering departments for implementation in the 2014-2017 Budget Cycle.*

**R: 12.02** *Several first and second priority links in the trail system are proposed in the Concept Plan. It is recommended that first priority linkages be addressed in the short term, and the second priority links should be addressed over the longer term, but within the 7-10 year scope of this plan.*

### 12.2 Revision of Existing ASPs and OPs

**R: 12.03** *It is recommended that any existing ASPs or OPs that do not reflect the Parks and Open Space Plan principles, and specifically those that do not fully consider the watersheds and waterbodies, should be revised to reflect the objectives of this plan. This will have to be discussed with Planning and Engineering departments as well as with the developers to implement changes where possible.*

### 12.3 Dog Off-Leash Areas

**R: 12.04** *It is recommended that a Dog Off-Leash Area Committee be established consisting of City and public members to investigate and establish a process for further development of off-leash areas.*

**R: 12.05** *It is recommended that the City of Grande Prairie develop a long range Dog Off-Leash Area Strategy.*

**R: 12.06** *It is recommended that two new off-leash dog areas should be developed in the shorter term (1-3 years), one within the existing South Bear Creek Park southeast section of the natural surface trail, and another in a location to be determined in the north of the city.*

**R: 12.07** *It is recommended that the best practices from the City of Surrey Dog Off-Leash Area Strategy be adopted as a framework for a future strategy to be developed by the City.*

**R: 12.08** *As well, as a means of developing additional off-leash dog areas, the southeast corner of the Canfor site (adjacent to Muskoseepi Park) should be explored as a potential off-leash area, as it is ideally situated within easy access of many residential areas.*

**R: 12.09** *Along with the evolution of the off-leash areas, signage and/or web-based information regarding conditions of use and standards should be developed as educational tools for this new park use. Dog waste bag dispensers and other facilities (trash receptacles, benches, lighting, parking) should be developed with each new off-leash area.*

## 12.4 Tree Planting Strategy

The most recent Engineering Services Roadway Design Standards include provision of street trees and sidewalks in most street types, as well as opportunities for multiple-party trenching of shallow utilities, which are improvements that will make possible the development of more livable streets.

### R: 12.10

***It is recommended an Urban Forest Strategy be adopted to develop and maintain a sustainable urban forest. Priorities should include:***

- ***provision of boulevard trees in industrial areas along collector roads***
- ***focus on increasing tree planting on major corridors and arterial roadways***
- ***provision and inclusion of tree planting along linear and recreational trails on MRs.***
- ***increasing tree planting requirements for MRs under the Design Manual, from the current 75 trees per hectare to 125 per hectare over the next 5 years***
- ***adoption of a tree preservation and removal bylaw to protect and mitigate damage to existing City trees during private development and City initiated roadway and sidewalk programs***

## 12.5 Woody Channel / Creek Recreational Trail Corridor

### R: 12.11

***It is recommended to adhere to the long range plans adopted as Area Structure Plans and Outline Plans establishing Woody Channel / Creek as a recreational trail corridor in the southeast.***

## 13 Capital Plan and Funding

### 13.1 Introduction

The numerous benefits of parks and open space include the health and welfare of citizens and visitors, ecological functions and values, habitat for birds and wildlife, visual improvements, and economic values through tourism and special events, and are therefore vital to support. Parks and open spaces are often thought of luxuries, and landscape and parks are frequently the first aspects in a plan to be compromised if budgets are tight. This Plan stresses that parks and open spaces are part of the valuable and deep infrastructure of the public realm, and therefore should be in the top priorities of municipal operations.

Parks departments often find it challenging to provide the levels of supply and service of parks and open spaces, and funding needs to be identified for both short term projects and long term viability.

The objectives are:

- > Support and enhance the quality of the existing public realm and recreation amenities
- > Identify priorities for the improvement of the park and open space system
- > Meet future open space and recreation needs

### 13.2 Capital Plan

This section includes both operational changes and requirements, as well as capital improvements.

#### Parks staff position

As Grande Prairie has grown, the parks system has also expanded, and this Plan notes that the overall area that is maintained, including much new neighbourhood development, has greatly increased the responsibilities of the Parks Department. Responsibilities in several areas have grown, including urban forestry assets, tree management, tree replacement, tree watering, playground and park furnishing inspections. As well, with the added aspirations of this Plan, there is a need for increased staffing.

Creation of an additional permanent Parks Operations staff position, a Parks Landscape Technician FTE position be established to support the Parks Manager and Parks Planner, and assume duties related to inspections and asset management.

This position should be established as soon as possible, and be included in future budgets as an on-going cost.

Cost: \$75,000 per year

#### Public engagement process

It is recommended that a "People and Parks Public Engagement Program" be established. This will reflect the positive attitude that the citizens of Grande Prairie seem to have regarding parks and open space, and will build on the successful public engagement process of this Plan. Cost implications of this Program would include:

- > promotional material
- > assistance in the form of grants to neighbourhood initiated park improvement projects including:
  - installation of park name signage
  - park naming celebration / bbq
  - Arbour Day celebration tree planting
  - community gardens / Adopt-A-Park program

Cost: \$2,500 per year (this program should be established as a line item for the 2014-2017 budget cycle)

*"The Economic Value of Parks and Open Space:*

- Parks and open space are a net benefit to community coffers
- Parks and open space increase nearby property values
- Parks and open space are key factors in corporate location decisions
- Open space protection is "smart growth"
- Parks and open space energizes economic development and neighbourhood revitalization
- Parks and open space preservation protects the future of working lands
- Parks and open space generate spending from managing agencies
- Parks and open space can protect against natural disasters
- Parks and open space protect natural systems
- Parks and open space promote healthy lifestyles
- Parks and open space attract tourism dollars"

*Ideas for Creating More Livable and Prosperous Communities, Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania (2005)*



It is recommended that every three years the City of Grande Prairie administer a parks, open space and recreation online survey to gather information from the general public on user satisfaction and needs. The survey used for this Plan can provide the template so that comparisons can be made. Cost implications of this survey would include: advertisement, survey drafting, web-hosting and processing of data.

Cost: \$3,500 every three years

### **Parks naming process**

The process for naming parks may have minor budget implications. The Parks Naming Committee should develop priorities for each year, and develop a plan, which may include a contest involving promotion through the website and newsletter and a prize.

### **Trail links**

The development of an ongoing and inter-connected trail system requires a commitment over time. The first action is the development by Parks, Planning and Engineering Services of a set of trail links and improvements that should be addressed in the 2014-17 budget cycle. The maps in this Plan outline first and subsequent priorities for trail development, and this should be used as the basis for decisions. Included will be:

- > the capital costs related to trail design and construction
- > trail maintenance and operating staff costs
- > trail maintenance equipment as required.

Based on the Parks and Open Space Concept (Map 5) there are approximately 11.5km of short term development trails and 50km of long term development trails.

Cost: \$170,000 per km of trail  
High priority trails total \$1,955,000, low priority trials total \$ 8,500,000

### **Dog off-leash areas**

As per the recommendations of this Plan, an Dog Off-Leash Area Committee should be established, with the mandate of developing a strategy for proceeding on this issue, including a public engagement strategy, the development of a set of guidelines for dog/human behaviour (refer to the best practices cited in the Dog Off Leash Areas section of this Plan, and for developing priorities for development. This approach is recommended, rather than immediate construction of off-leash parks, as it will be important to ensure community buy-in and cooperation to a commonly accepted set of rules of behaviour.

It is recommended that one dog off leash dog area per quadrant of the city of Grande Prairie be developed during the lifespan of this Plan.

It is recommended that one new dog off-leash area be developed in the shorter term (1-3 years) within the existing South Bear Creek Park southeast section of the natural surface trail, and another in a location to be determined in the north of the city.

The financial implications will include:

- > the capital costs related to construction, including land purchase (if needed), fencing, trail connection design and construction, provision of parking, signage, lighting, benches, dog waste bag dispensers, trash receptacles and other infrastructure as required
- > costs related to a public engagement process
- > costs related to development of educational materials to inform residents of the standards of use of this type of park, delivered via the website or newsletters
- > operational costs related to the addition of the facility, including litter removal, dog waste bag dispenser servicing, etc.

Cost: \$10,000 for the South Bear Creek Park dog off-leash area  
\$35,000 per new dog off-leash area (doesn't include land acquisition)

## Tree planting

As per earlier sections in this Plan, Grande Prairie should have an ongoing process to increase its tree canopy cover. A goal of 25% canopy cover overall (including 35% in residential areas and 9% in downtowns) is recommended.

As per section 8 of this Plan, a minimum of 125 trees per hectare is recommended for all Municipal Reserve Lands, and a minimum of one tree per seven meter frontage shall be provided for all residential developments, and one tree per six meters on boulevard plantings, to be instigated as soon as possible in new developments. This will help to achieve the canopy cover goal, but also has budget implications, including:

- > capital costs related to tree planting
- > operational costs related to the additional trees to be maintained.

It is recommended that additional tree planting on existing streets be focused on one or two important streets, rather than be dispersed. Entries into Grande Prairie are a further priority for tree planting. This work implies the following:

- > collaboration among Parks, Planning and Engineering regarding selection of the existing streets to receive new planting
- > capital costs related to tree planting
- > operational costs related to the additional trees to be maintained.

Cost: \$600 per tree per year

(Additional tree planting beyond what is required for MR or subdivision development)

## Park and playground equipment renovation/replacement

As facilities and neighbourhoods age, they require updating and/or replacement of equipment, landscape and facilities. Parks staff should continue to determine the priorities on a yearly basis, according to criteria that include safety, accessibility, levels of wear, and population numbers using each park. Some equipment can be replaced without neighbourhood consultation, however, in circumstances where significant re-design is required, public engagement is required. Park renovation will include the following:

- design (if necessary)
- public engagement (if necessary)
- landscaping, park/playground furniture and lighting
- trails

In addition, at least one neighbourhood park per existing subdivision should be upgraded to become an Accessible Park (i.e. designed for all levels of ability). Costs associated with this will include installation of accessible safety surfacing and equipment as per CSA Z-614-07 "Annex H" guidelines.

Cost: To be determined, site specific

## Special projects

In addition to park and trail development, there may be special parks projects that occur from time to time, and in response to requests from the public (for example, development of a speed skating facility). Parks should request that City funds be set aside each year, in addition to their regular budget, for the purposes of being able to implement special projects.

Of particular note is that development of the CKC West Athletics Park is a high priority in terms of sports field development. As well, shutdowns for maintenance and renovation should be anticipated and built in to the operating schedule, and plans for accommodating user needs during these shutdowns be developed.

## Additional Recreation Facilities

Based on the inventory and on feedback obtained through the public participation process, the following are priorities for improvement or addition:

LEVEL 1. Facilities that are missing and with an immediate need for:

- > Additional off-leash areas
- > Additional skateboarding facilities (one skate park already under construction)
- > Two additional tournament quality soccer fields
- > One additional tournament quality football/rugby field
- > Development of the CKC West Athletic Park (athletic facilities)

Costs:

- > Two soccer fields: \$ 60,000 (upgrading existing fields)
- > Football/rugby field: \$ 30,000 (upgrading existing field)
- > CKC West Athletic Park (athletic facilities): \$ 3,500,000 to \$ 4,000,000 (This did not take into account the development of the football field at the back of the Public School site)

LEVEL 2. Facilities that exist, but need repairs or additions; and missing facilities with demand from niche user groups:

- > Additional BMX park
- > Repair of 5 tennis courts near Legion Track
- > Additional picnic areas throughout the city
- > Development of a disc golf area
- > Development of a speed skating outdoor oval

Costs:

- > Additional BMX park: To be determined, as this requires additional consultation and designation of appropriate location (to be located in the north of Grande Prairie)
- > Repair of tennis courts: \$ 60,000
- > Per picnic area: \$ 10,000 (includes signage, trash cans, tables and bbq pits)
- > Disc golf course: \$ 18,000 (includes development, signage, and disc golf baskets)
- > Outdoor speed skating oval: To be determined, as this requires additional consultation and designation of appropriate location

LEVEL 3. Other facilities that exist, but need repairs or additions:

- > Additional volleyball courts that could be for beach volleyball (to be located in the north of Grande Prairie)

Costs:

- > Two beach volleyball courts: \$ 30,000

NOTE: These costs do not include land acquisition or operating cost.

These facilities should be established as a line items for the 2014-2017 budget cycle.



### 13.3 Funding Strategies

This section provides tools to acquire land, move forward on identified projects and secure funding to achieve the open space vision. The City will determine funding and other priorities through the budgeting process each year.

#### Federal or Provincial Funding

Government grants at the provincial and federal levels are available to municipalities for the development of parks and open space. Most are specific to a certain purpose and the City will need to develop a strategy for targeting certain types of grants. Park Grants may be for:

- > Tourism
- > Health and wellness
- > Ecological management
- > Community development

Provincial funding through the Heritage Trust Fund made possible the development of Muskoseepi Park, and the involvement and support of the provincial government should be sought for additions to Muskoseepi Park and for restoration of Woody Creek. In addition to parks program funding, other Alberta government units, such as Environment and Tourism should be reviewed to determine potential funding opportunities. These might include:

- > Alberta Lottery Fund
- > Alberta Urban Parks Program
- > Alberta Transportation (for development trails)
- > Community Facilities Enhancement Program
- > Infrastructure (regarding economic stimulus initiatives)

Others examples of grants include:

- > Infrastructure Canada-Alberta Program (ICAP): Under ICAP, the federal and provincial governments provide up to two-thirds of the funding for eligible project costs. Partnering communities or private sector organizations (proponents) cover the remainder of project funding. In Alberta, ICAP is implemented by Western Economic Diversification Canada and Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation
- > Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Green Municipal Funds (GMF): Under the GMF program, municipalities may apply for grants or loans to construct green infrastructure. The grant is up to 50% of the project cost, matched by other third party contributors or the municipality
- > Adopt-a-Park: Municipal programs like Adopt-a-Park provide financial relief for municipalities in terms of capital and operations costs. User groups and other interested citizens are invited to assist in park and open space development and long term maintenance to off-set costs borne by the City which would otherwise not be possible to fund. This also makes residents “stewards” of the park and provides a sense of ownership which is valuable for a community.

#### Dedicated Municipal Funding

Long-term dedicated municipal resources from the City of Grande Prairie are required for expansion of the parks system, and for maintenance and management of the existing.

The SCORES agreement provides a good mechanism for collaboration between the City and the School Boards, and this should be maintained.

Funding options might include:

- > Capital program fund raising
- > Dedicated tax (% of property or sales tax)
- > Developer contributions
- > User fees
- > Donations

- > Revenues from marketing initiatives (e.g., naming rights, vendor contracts, advertising)
- > Revenue generating uses (cafes, restaurants, rentals, events, concessions) that could be incorporated into the more high-use areas
- > Development of Parks Foundation as a charitable foundation or Friends of Grande Prairie Parks to solicit funding and donations
- > Donation of ecologically sensitive land in exchange for tax benefits
- > Donation of lands for other purposes in exchange for tax benefits
- > Partnerships with charitable organizations with complementary objectives (e.g., Ducks Unlimited, Nature Conservancy)

### 13.4 Land Acquisition Strategies

Although the public engagement process of this Plan indicated that citizens are very satisfied with the parks, trails and existing levels of service, they also indicated how much the open space system is valued. In order for this high level of satisfaction to continue, new lands must be developed to parks and trails, and existing parks and facilities need to be periodically upgraded. This section outlines various approaches to acquiring lands within the city as well as adjacent to it with a view towards the annexation processes that will happen over time.

#### Voluntary Land Acquisition Techniques

In some cases private landowners may wish to assist in contributing to the Parks and Open Space Master Plan by voluntarily agreeing to adopt best practice management techniques. They may also wish to enter into stewardship agreements with The City to preserve their land and only engaging in specific activities on their land, such as walking, hiking, or bird watching. Typically these voluntary conservation techniques are not a guaranteed protection of the open space, however, they can add significant areas to an open space system.

#### Fee Simple

Fee simple is the purchase of the fee title in a parcel of land. Lands are usually acquired at its fair market value. In some cases, lands can be sold at a reduced price, which may qualify as a charitable donation from income taxes. However, prior to purchasing fee simple lands it is important to conduct the appropriate environmental investigation to ensure the lands are not contaminated.

The City of Grande Prairie should acquire as much municipal and environmental reserve possible in new development proposals where it is deemed appropriate. This is the simplest and least costly form of acquiring land for open space and park development. Developer levies are collected to cover the cost of building city parks.

#### Restrictive Covenants

This is an act whereby a developer voluntarily restricts the use of a portion of land, in order to provide an amenity space. One example may include common ownership area such as in a condominium development where homeowners back onto a privately held open space. This technique usually ensures that the common area will not be developed except for purposes relating to recreation or park space.

#### Donation

Land donation is a way in which private landowners can give their land to a land trust or government agency. This allows the owner to potentially relieve themselves of the responsibilities of managing the lands and can provide substantial income tax deductions and estate tax benefits.

Donations could also be made through an Adopt-a-Park or Adopt-a-Tree program (if available in Grande Prairie) or through corporation donations where physical structures or parks are named after the company.

## Land Trusts

Land Trusts are independent non-profit organizations that work with landowners interested in protecting open space. These organizations may also work collaboratively with local, provincial and federal governments. Land trusts can also accept land donations, funds to purchase additional lands, and development rights to ensure the lands are protected for open space or remain in a natural state. (Source: New York State Local Open Space Planning Guide 2004 - may have other implications in Alberta)

## Urban Forest Legacy Program

A legacy program could be established and designed specifically to identify and protect environmentally sensitive forests that are threatened by invasive species such as noxious weeds or by residential growth affecting groundwater tables and contributing to soil erosion. The Program could acquire land and conservation easements from willing sellers or those wishing to donate land. The Forest Program could receive support from a number of programs such as the Tree Canada Foundation (Green Streets Canada and Greening Canada's School Grounds).

## Land Exchange

The idea with this strategy is to exchange land for land. In an example a developer may have parcels of land that they may wish to develop, however, that land may be identified as protected open space. The City may at this point exchange the lands for surplus lands it may have in its inventory that are not significantly valuable as open space.

## Public Access Easements

Public access easements allow the general public the right to access and use a specific parcel of the property. These are commonly used to develop a pathway through a development in order to ensure access to other pathways, lakes and other water bodies, parks and open space areas.

## Regulatory Land Acquisition Techniques

Local municipalities can regulate the kinds of uses that are permitted by a number of provisions set out in the Municipal Government Act (MGA). The MGA empowers Municipalities to make their own municipal plans and supporting plans to ensure the safe development of their communities. The following techniques are examples of the types of devices that may be used to protect open spaces.

## Municipal Reserves

As stated in Section 664(1) and 671(1) of the MGA (Alberta), land may be taken as Municipal Reserve only to be used for the following purposes: a public park, a public recreation area, a school, or to separate areas of land that are used for different purposes. Triggered by an application of subdivision, the municipality may take as municipal reserve no more than 10% of the land or cash-in-lieu, after subtracting any required environmental reserve, or such lesser amount set forth in the Municipal Development Plan. Municipal reserve sites shall: be located to allow for convenient access by and a safe environment for the public; consist of lands that do not contain excessive slopes, are not susceptible to flooding, and are not legally encumbered by rights-of-way or other limitations which would reduce design options for the site; and accommodate as broad a range of activities and user groups as possible without creating unsafe conditions or high potential for conflicts among users.

## Environmental Reserves

As stated in 664(1) Subject to section 663, MGA (Alberta) a subdivision authority may take land as environmental reserve only if it consists of a swamp or a gully; is land that is subject to flooding, or in the opinion of the subdivision authority, is unstable; or is a strip of land not less than 6 meters in width abutting the bed and shore of any lake, river, stream, or other body of water to prevent water pollution or to provide public access.



### **Dedication / Density Transfers**

This mechanism allows open spaces to be dedicated to the City for density transfers on the development of a property. Known as density transfers, dwelling unit equivalents may be relocated to other portions of the same parcel or to contiguous land that is part of the common development plan.

### **Overlay Zoning**

Overlay Zoning refers to a common set of standards or controls that are applied over a large area, across many different conventional land use districts. In the case of open space, a zoning ordinance can be superimposed as an overlay to ensure areas unsuitable for development are protected or that development that occurs does not interfere with the sensitive environmental features of the area. (Source: New York State Local Open Space Planning Guide 2004, may have other implications in Alberta)

### **Development Setbacks / Buffers**

Development setbacks are another way to protect open spaces. Common examples include setbacks from a river, floodplain, landfill, escarpments and environmentally significant areas.

### **Performance Zoning**

This technique establishes zones, which are based on an allowable environmental impact to the resources of an area as opposed to a specific allowable use. This technique is a good way for a municipality to maintain control over development impacts and to ensure that development will occur only in ways in which the natural resources will not be severely damaged. For example, a community zoning ordinance might require water bodies to be protected with vegetated buffers. Thus, instead of requiring buffer zones depending on the specific use of the land, buffer zones would be established regardless of the use. Rapidly changing technology can create new industries, making it difficult in some areas for a municipality to establish effective zones based on specific uses. In these communities, the performance standard approach may be particularly helpful. (Source: New York State Local Open Space Planning Guide 2004, implications in Alberta may be different)

### **Special Use Permits**

A zoning regulation will list “as of right” uses which are allowed in a particular district without the necessity of obtaining any further review. After these uses are listed, a list of conditional uses or “special use permit” uses may be listed, as exceptions. The kinds of uses that require a special permit are those which may be desirable but which could have adverse impacts that require special review and conditioning before being approved. For example, special use permit criteria can require development proposals to provide buffer areas and best management practices for control of non-point source pollution adjacent to wetlands. They can also require that a percentage of land be left as open or green space. (Source: New York State Local Open Space Planning Guide 2004, implications may be different in Alberta)

## **13.5 Other Strategies**

**Maximize the use of Environmental Reserve to acquire lands adjacent to wetlands, creeks 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 meters 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. Six meters is not sufficient to properly protect the wetlands, creeks and other waterbodies.

### **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. The City of Grande Prairie should collaborate where possible with Grande Prairie County to identify potential lands that could be protected in this way.

### **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.

# appendix

## A Best Practices Guide

### Community Gardens

City of Leduc  
**Community Guidelines for Gardeners**

### Off-Leash Areas

City of Surrey  
**Dog Off-Leash Area Strategy 2012-2021**

City of Medicine Hat  
**Off-Leash Parks Best Practices and Recommendations**

City of Medicine Hat  
**Dogs in Off-Leash Areas Report**

City of Edmonton  
**Parks for Paws Program**

City of Calgary  
**Off-Leash Management Plan**

### Urban Forest

The City of Calgary  
**Tree Protection Bylaw**

Gogeomatics.ca  
**Tree Canopy Measurement**

International Society of Arboriculture  
**Criteria and Indicators for Strategic Urban Forest Planning and Management**

Canadian Urban Forest Network  
**Urban Forest Strategy Resources (multiple documents)**

City of Calgary  
**Urban Forest Strategy Plan**

### Noise Attenuation Barriers Landscaping

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Centre for Urban Transportation Study  
**Noise Barrier Design Guidelines**

### Winter City Design

The Winter Cities Institute (It has many resources including design guidelines)  
**Living in Harmony With Winter**

City of Fort St. Johns  
**Winter City Design Guidelines 2000**

### General Resources

Alberta Recreation and Parks Association  
**Municipal Green Space Allocation**  
(Multiple documents and resources on their website)



## B Value of Riparian Areas

### Value of Riparian Areas

Wetlands Alberta

<http://www.wetlandsalberta.ca/wetland-management/>

Riparian areas are sometimes referred to as the shoreline of a wetland. It is important to maintain the full, natural extent of the riparian area around a wetland. Examples of actions that can be taken to protect riparian areas include managing grazing to prevent overuse and trampling of the riparian area by livestock and remote watering, which moves clean water to livestock and keeps the animals out of the main supply. This also avoids manure build-up in the water and on the soil adjacent to the wetland.

A healthy riparian area is characterized by good ground cover. This reduces erosion, which helps prevent contaminants from being carried into the wetland itself.

Additional buffers can be added to a riparian area. Wider buffers and healthier riparian areas increase a wetland's ability to filter out sediment. This reduces the amount of pollution in the watershed. A wider buffer also traps more snow, increasing the amount of water capture in the local area. Buffers with trees and shrubs trap snow, hold runoff and create an upward movement of groundwater, making it available to adjacent plants and crops. They also provide important shelter for livestock and critical wildlife habitat.

### Riparian Buffer Strips - How Much is Enough?

Alberta Fish and Game Association

- > the width of the buffer depends on the function and structure of the riparian area
- > 30 meters is considered adequate for nutrient, metal and chemical removal
- > while 100 meters is ideal for other functions like wildlife corridors and water/snow infiltration, 200 meters might be ideal for sediment removal and erosion control (depending on the slope)

## C Recreation Infrastructure Inventory

### E Inventory of Recreation Infrastructure

An inventory of recreation infrastructure based on existing databases and aerial photography showed the following:

#### Soccer Fields

Location	Fields
Community Knowledge Campus	1
Derek Taylor School	1
D-Company Armory	1
Avondale School	1
Legion Track	1
Leisure Centre	5
Crystal Park Jr. High School	3
Holy Cross School	1
I.V. Macklin School	1
Hillside School	3
Rotary Soccer Fields	4
Parkside School	2
St. Gerard School	1
St. Patrick School	2
Alexandre Forbes School	2
Montrose Jr. High School	2
Aspen Grove School	1
TOTAL	32

#### Indoor Soccer

Location	Fields
Leisure Centre	1
Grande Prairie Indoor Soccer Centre	1
TOTAL	2

#### Football Fields

Location	Fields
Community Knowledge Campus	1
Derek Taylor School	1
Grande Prairie Christian School	1
Legion Track	1
Holy Cross School	1
Alexandre Forbes School	2
TOTAL	7

## Rugby Fields

Location	Fields
Army, Navy, Air Force Community Centre	2
TOTAL	2

## Basketball Courts (Outdoor)

Location	Courts
D-Company Armory	1
Muskoseepi Park (Downtown)	1
Avondale School	1
Holy Cross School	2
I.V. Macklin School	1
Hillside School	2
Parkside School	2
TOTAL	10

## Ball Diamonds

Location	Diamonds
Community Knowledge Campus	2
South Bear Creek Ball Diamonds	9
Derek Taylor School	2
D-Company Armory	1
College Park	5
Avondale School	2
Leisure Centre	2
Crystal Park Jr. High School	2
Holy Cross School	1
I.V. Macklin School	2
St. Clement School	1
Hillside School	2
Parkside School	2
St. Gerard School	2
Dave Barr Park	5
St. Patrick School	2
Montrose Jr. High School	2
TOTAL	46

## Tennis Courts

Location	Courts
Community Knowledge Campus	4
D-Company Armory	3
Leisure Centre	5*
Crystal Park Jr. High School	3
TOTAL	10

\* In disrepair

## Volleyball Courts

Location	Tracks
South Bear Creek Beach Volleyball	4
TOTAL	4

## Athletic Tracks

Location	Tracks
Community Knowledge Campus	2
Legion Track	1
TOTAL	3

\* One is an indoor track

## Outdoor Ice Rinks

Location	Rinks
Swanavon School	1
Crystal Park Jr. High School	1
Hillside School	1
Alexandre Forbes	1
Montrose Jr. High School	1
TOTAL	5

## Indoor Ice Rinks

Location	Rinks
Community Knowledge Campus	2
David Barr Community Centre	1
Crystal Centre	1
TOTAL	4

## Curling Rink

Location	Rinks
Grande Prairie Curling Club	1
TOTAL	1

## Pools

Location	Pools
Muskoseepi Park (Downtown)	1 *
Aquatics and Wellness Centre	1
Leisure Centre	1
TOTAL	3

\* Outdoor pool, only summer months



## Water/Spray Parks

Location	Parks
Lions Park	1 *
Aquatics and Wellness Centre	1
Muskoseepi Park (Downtown)	1 **
TOTAL	3

\* Outdoor spray park, only summer months

\*\* Outdoor spray park to be under construction

## Skateboard Parks

Location	Parks
Muskoseepi Park	1
Community Knowledge Campus	1 *
TOTAL	2

\* Under construction

## BMX Track

Location	Tracks
South Bear Creek Park	1
TOTAL	1

## Off-Leash Parks

Location	Parks
South Bear Creek Park	1
TOTAL	1

## Golf Courses

Location	Courses
Grande Prairie Golf and Country Club	1 *
Bear Creek Golf Course	1 **
TOTAL	2

\* Within County of Grande Prairie corporate limits (private ownership)

\*\* Within City of Grande Prairie corporate limits (private ownership)

## Campground

Location	Camps
Rotary RV Park	1
South Bear Creek Park	2
TOTAL	3

## D Open Space Survey Results

An important part of the plan process was community consultation which provided important insight into the needs, demands and issues perceived by the public, user groups and other stakeholders.

A survey of the public was conducted between February 15 and May 1, 2010 regarding their patterns and levels of use of parks and open space, their wants and needs regarding future park and trail development, and their thoughts on potential funding mechanisms. The survey was posted on-line on the City of Grande Prairie website, and paper copies were also available to complete. A total of 442 residents responded to the survey; the results are compiled below.

### Question 1: Respondent's gender

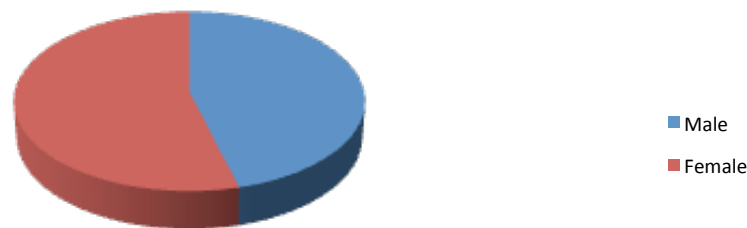
#### Answer Options

Male  
Female

#### Response Percent

#### Response Count

45.9%	202
54.1%	238
<b><i>answered question</i></b>	<b>440</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>	<b>2</b>



### Question 2: Respondent's age

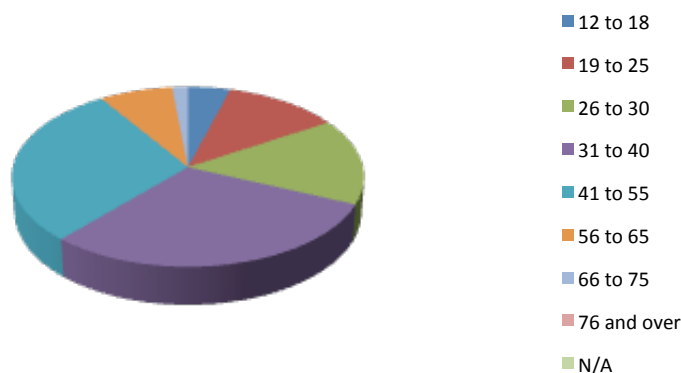
#### Answer Options

12 to 18  
19 to 25  
26 to 30  
31 to 40  
41 to 55  
56 to 65  
66 to 75  
76 and over  
N/A

#### Response Percent

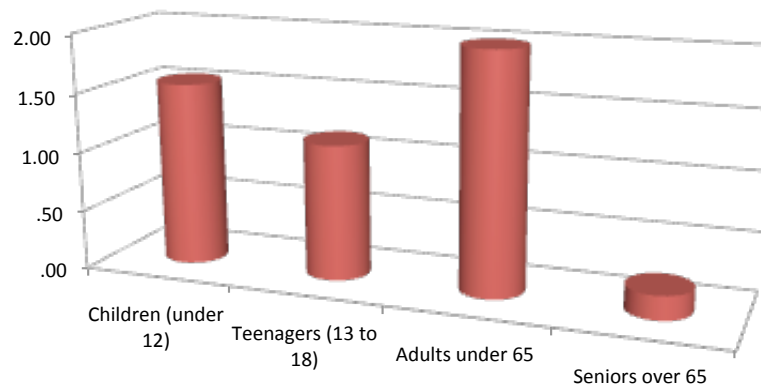
#### Response Count

4.3%	19
11.8%	52
15.5%	68
30.0%	132
29.3%	129
7.5%	33
1.6%	7
0.0%	0
0.0%	0
<b><i>answered question</i></b>	<b>440</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>	<b>2</b>



**Question 3: Including yourself, how many people live in your household?**

Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Children (under 12)	1.55	331	214
Teenagers (13 to 18)	1.14	169	148
Adults under 65	2.00	807	403
Seniors over 65	.20	12	59
		<b>answered question</b>	<b>426</b>
		<b>skipped question</b>	<b>16</b>

**Question 4: Which school(s) do children in your household attend?**

Answer Options	Response Count
	283
<b>answered question</b>	<b>283</b>
<b>skipped question</b>	<b>159</b>

School	Responses	School	Responses
Alexander Forbes	5	Kateri Mission	8
Aspen Grove	7	Maude Clifford	10
Avondale	4	Montrose Junior High	4
Beaverlodge Regional High School	2	Mother Teresa	5
College	2	N/A	81
Composite High School	31	Parkside	14
Crystal Park	10	Peace Wapiti Academy	2
Dave Barr Kid's Place	1	PWA	3
Derek Taylor	8	Robert W. Zahara	1
Ecole Nouvelle Frontiere	2	S. P. Christian	1
Grande Prairie Christian	1	Saint Joseph Catholic High School	24
Harry Balfour	8	Sexsmith Elementary / Swanavon	2
Hill Side	2	St Gerard	29
Hillcrest Christian	3	Swanavon	8
Holy Cross	7		
Home schooled	1		
I.V. Macklin	9		

**Question 5: Which neighbourhood in Grande Prairie do you live in?****Answer Options****Response Count**

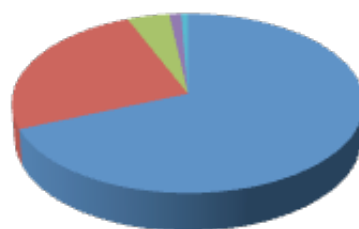
answered question 417  
skipped question 25

Neighbourhood	Responses	Neighbourhood	Responses	Neighbourhood	Responses
Avalon	1	Forbes / Southside	1	Riverstone	1
Avondale	21	Highland Park	12	Royal Oaks	18
Carriage Lane	1	Hillside	7	Scenic Ridge	6
Central Business District	5	Inversness	1	Sexsmith	2
Coachman Village	1	Ivy Lake	7	Signature Falls	5
Cobblestone	4	Lakeland	9	Silver Pointe	2
College Park	4	Mission Estates	9	Smith	4
Cornerstone	3	Mission Heights	16	South Paterson	27
Country Club	32	Mission Park	8	Summerside	1
Country Side	13	Montrose	1	Summit	3
County	13	Mountain view	14	Swanavon	19
Creekside	1	N/A	20	Trumpeter Village	1
Crystal Heights	19	Northridge	3	VLA	3
Crystal Lake	29	NPP	1	Wedgewood	1
Crystal Landing	4	O'Brien	9	Wembley	1
Crystal Park/ Lakeland	1	Parkside	2	West Pointe	10
Crystal Ridge	8	Patterson	13	Whispering Ridge	1
Crystal View	1	Pinebrooke States	1	Willowood Estates	1
Eastside Kitchen	1	Pinnacle	18		

**Question 6: I feel that public parks and open spaces within the City of Grande Prairie are of significant importance to my quality of life and a contributing factor to me residing within the City of Grande Prairie****Answer Options****Response Percent****Response Count**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

68.8% 291  
25.1% 106  
4.3% 18  
1.2% 5  
0.7% 3  
answered question 423  
skipped question 19



Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree



**Question 7: I feel that Public Parks and Open spaces within the City of Grande Prairie contribute to prosperity, growth and overall economic development within our community**

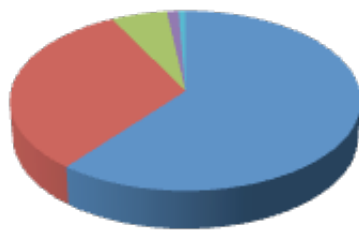
**Answer Options**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

**Response  
Percent**

**Response Count**

60.8% 257  
31.7% 134  
5.7% 24  
1.2% 5  
0.7% 3  
***answered question*** **423**  
***skipped question*** **19**



■ Strongly agree  
■ Agree  
■ Neither agree nor disagree  
■ Disagree  
■ Strongly disagree

**Question 8: Within some residential neighbourhoods, the city's public utility lots (grassed easements) play an important part in the path/trail system. Where feasible, future trail expansion could utilize these grassed areas as part of the paved trail network. Would you support the paving of asphalt trails in neighbourhoods with public utility lots if they provide the community with better links to transit, schools, or recreational activities?**

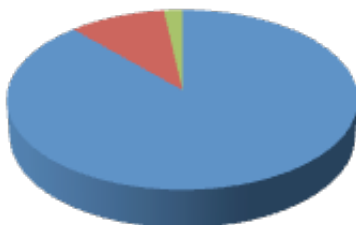
**Answer Options**

Yes, I would support the development of more asphalt trails  
No, I would not want a paved trail in public utility lots near my  
I don't care and I do not use the trail network for any

**Response  
Percent**

**Response Count**

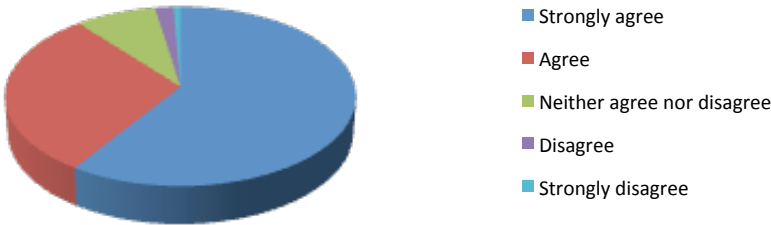
88.2% 373  
9.9% 42  
1.9% 8  
***answered question*** **423**  
***skipped question*** **19**



■ Yes, I would support the development of more asphalt trails utilizing public utility lots  
■ No, I would not want a paved trail in public utility lots near my home  
■ I don't care and I do not use the trail network for any recreational activity or access to transit

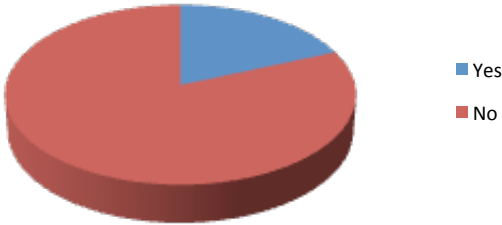
**Question 9:** Safe and easy access (off street, out of traffic and within 400 m) by foot or bicycle from my residence to the city’s trail network is very important to me

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	59.3%	251
Agree	29.8%	126
Neither agree nor disagree	8.3%	35
Disagree	1.9%	8
Strongly disagree	0.7%	3
	<b>answered question</b>	<b>423</b>
	<b>skipped question</b>	<b>19</b>



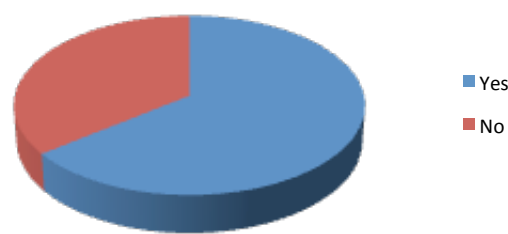
**Question 10:** Do you, and/or your family, walk on city-maintained trails/easements to gain access to public transit stops and/or school bus stops?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	18.7%	79
No	81.3%	344
If so, please provide a specific transit stop # or school bus stop location:		46
	<b>answered question</b>	<b>423</b>
	<b>skipped question</b>	<b>19</b>



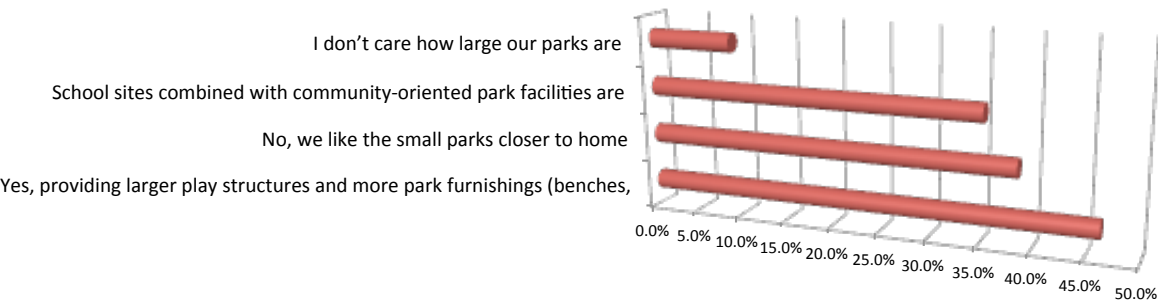
Question 11: Do you, and/or your family, walk on city-maintained trails/easements to gain access to a school, park or indoor recreation facility?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	64.5%	273
No	35.5%	150
If you do, please list any/all schools, parks and facilities:		220
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>423</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>19</b>



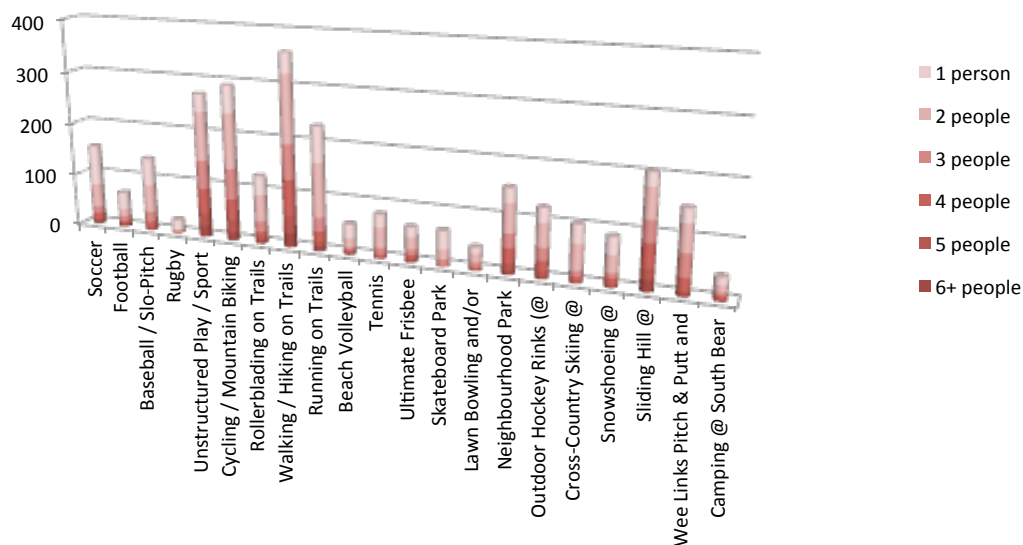
Question 12: Would you support changing city park standards to create larger “community-oriented” parks vs. fewer “pocket” parks? For example, the City of Grande Prairie could require that land developers combine four smaller (0.75 ac) parks to create one large (3 ac) park. (check all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, providing larger play structures and more park	46.3%	196
No, we like the small parks closer to home	38.5%	163
School sites combined with community-oriented park	35.2%	149
I don't care how large our parks are	9.0%	38
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>423</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>19</b>



**Question 13: For future planning purposes, we would like to know about your preferred types of outdoor recreational activity. Please indicate below the number of people in your family that have utilized the following recreational activities located within a neighbourhood, community or regional park within the City of Grande Prairie in the past 12 months (Sports)**

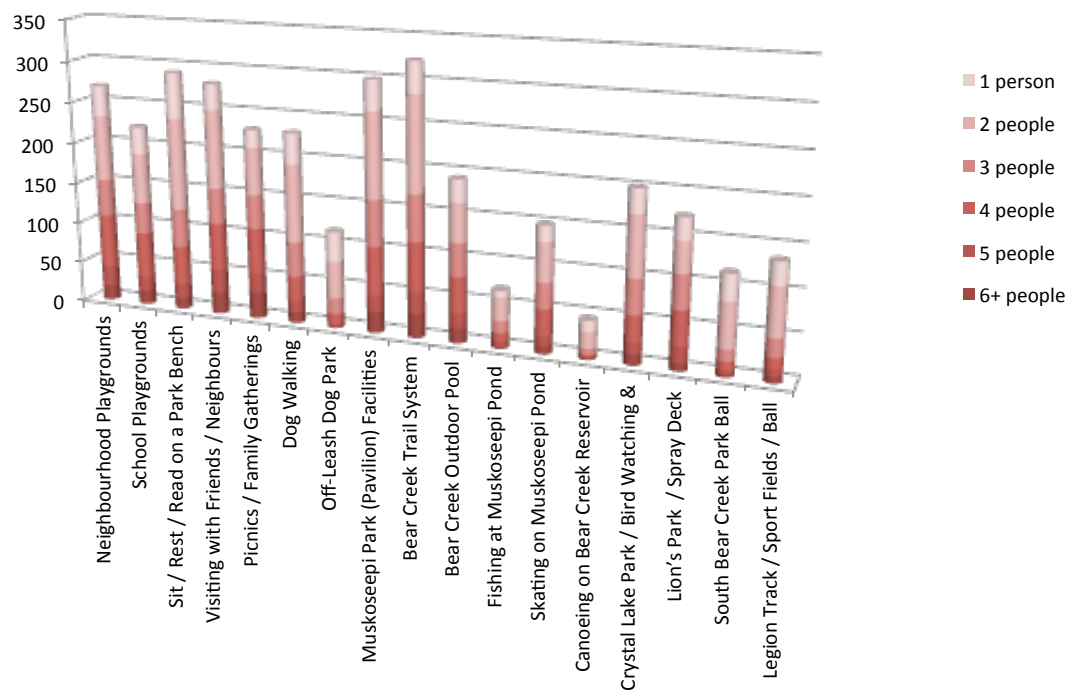
Answer Options	1 person	2 people	3 people	4 people	5 people	6+ people	Response Count
Soccer	75	45	13	12	3	6	154
Football	32	14	10	4	1	6	67
Baseball / Slo-Pitch	52	52	20	10	4	2	140
Rugby	19	2	2	3	0	0	26
Unstructured Play / Sport	33	93	54	48	24	21	273
Cycling / Mountain Biking	51	105	58	40	24	15	293
Rollerblading on Trails	36	50	20	9	7	7	129
Walking / Hiking on Trails	38	128	66	68	33	27	360
Running on Trails	67	102	26	19	9	9	232
Beach Volleyball	26	17	5	1	5	3	57
Tennis	24	38	12	7	0	1	82
Ultimate Frisbee	18	23	10	6	4	4	65
Skateboard Park	34	18	11	2	0	0	65
Lawn Bowling and/or Horseshoes	11	16	9	3	2	1	42
Neighbourhood Park Skating Rinks	27	54	26	28	13	7	155
Outdoor Hockey Rinks (@ School Sites)	26	44	23	19	10	4	126
Cross-Country Skiing @	34	48	10	8	1	3	104
Snowshoeing @	31	32	9	10	5	2	89
Sliding Hill @	24	56	40	44	19	22	205
Wee Links Pitch & Putt and Driving Range	25	51	42	23	5	5	151
Camping @ South Bear Creek / Rotary	14	12	6	5	4	1	42
Other (please specify)							38
							<b>answered question</b>
							<b>394</b>
							<b>skipped question</b>
							<b>48</b>





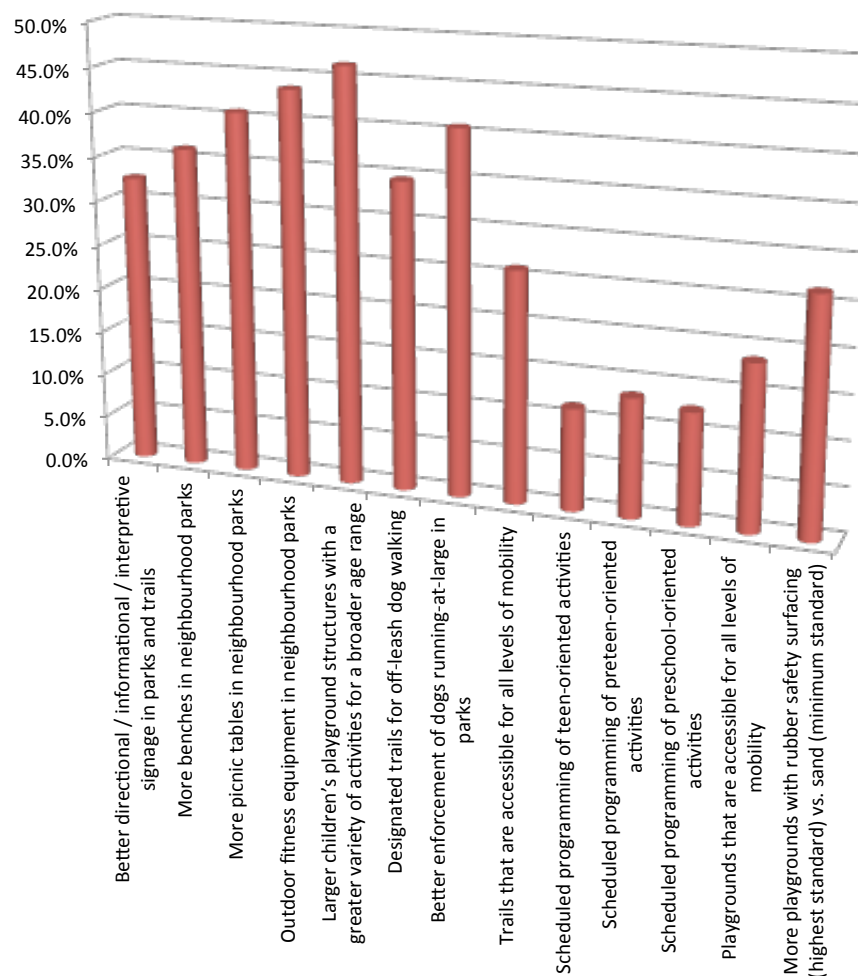
**Question 14:** For future planning purposes, we would like to know about your preferred types of outdoor recreational activity. Please indicate below the number of people in your family that have utilized the following recreational activities located within a neighbourhood, community or regional park within the City of Grande Prairie in the past 12 months (Other activities)

Answer Options	1 person	2 people	3 people	4 people	5 people	6+ people	Response Count
Neighbourhood Playgrounds	37	79	45	65	25	18	269
School Playgrounds	33	61	38	55	18	17	222
Sit / Rest / Read on a Park Bench	55	111	47	47	18	13	291
Visiting with Friends / Neighbours	31	95	43	57	29	26	281
Picnics / Family Gatherings	21	57	41	55	24	32	230
Dog Walking	37	94	42	30	14	13	230
Off-Leash Dog Park	36	45	19	12	3	2	117
Muskoseepi Park (Pavilion) Facilities	36	103	56	59	20	25	299
Bear Creek Trail System	37	115	56	60	26	29	323
Bear Creek Outdoor Pool	27	47	40	43	18	18	193
Fishing at Muskoseepi Pond	8	28	14	10	7	2	69
Skating on Muskoseepi Pond	19	47	31	32	11	10	150
Canoeing on Bear Creek Reservoir	13	20	7	2	2	2	46
Crystal Lake Park / Bird Watching & Trails	29	72	42	32	13	13	201
Lion's Park / Spray Deck	26	37	41	41	19	10	174
South Bear Creek Park Ball Diamonds	31	54	14	10	5	3	117
Legion Track / Sport Fields / Ball Diamonds	27	58	22	13	8	8	136
Other (please specify)							16
							<b>answered question 398</b>
							<b>skipped question 44</b>



**Question 15: Which of the following items may increase the likelihood of you using neighbourhood parks, trails and other open spaces? (check all that apply)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Better directional / informational / interpretive signage in parks and trails	32.5%	124
More benches in neighbourhood parks	36.2%	138
More picnic tables in neighbourhood parks	40.7%	155
Outdoor fitness equipment in neighbourhood parks	43.6%	166
Larger children's playground structures with a greater variety	46.5%	177
Designated trails for off-leash dog walking	34.6%	132
Better enforcement of dogs running-at-large in parks	40.7%	155
Trails that are accessible for all levels of mobility	26.0%	99
Scheduled programming of teen-oriented activities	11.5%	44
Scheduled programming of preteen-oriented activities	13.4%	51
Scheduled programming of preschool-oriented activities	12.6%	48
Playgrounds that are accessible for all levels of mobility	18.6%	71
More playgrounds with rubber safety surfacing (highest standard) vs. sand (minimum standard)	26.5%	101
Other (please specify)		96
<b>answered question</b>		<b>381</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>61</b>



**Question 16:** I support City Council's 2008 decision for Parks Operations to discontinue the use of pesticides for cosmetic control of broadleaf weeds (including dandelions) on city-maintained properties (parks, boulevards, public utility lots, etc.). (Note: This decision did not exclude / preclude chemical control of noxious weeds as identified by the Weed Control Act of Alberta)

**Answer Options**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

**Response Percent****Response Count**

Strongly agree	34.6%	143
Agree	27.6%	114
Neither agree nor disagree	16.2%	67
Disagree	14.3%	59
Strongly disagree	7.3%	30
<b>answered question</b>		<b>413</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>29</b>



■ Strongly agree  
■ Agree  
■ Neither agree nor disagree  
■ Disagree  
■ Strongly disagree

**Question 17:** I am satisfied with Parks Operations' service levels for turfgrass maintenance in parks, open spaces and city-maintained properties. Act of Alberta)

**Answer Options**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

**Response Percent****Response Count**

Strongly agree	20.1%	83
Agree	48.4%	200
Neither agree nor disagree	15.5%	64
Disagree	12.8%	53
Strongly disagree	3.1%	13
<b>answered question</b>		<b>413</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>29</b>



■ Strongly agree  
■ Agree  
■ Neither agree nor disagree  
■ Disagree  
■ Strongly disagree

**Question 18: I am satisfied with Parks Operations' service levels for park infrastructure, including: play structures; park furnishings; and maintenance within parks, open spaces and city-maintained properties**

**Answer Options**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

**Response  
Percent**

**Response Count**

Strongly agree	13.3%	55
Agree	53.3%	220
Neither agree nor disagree	19.1%	79
Disagree	12.8%	53
Strongly disagree	1.5%	6
<b>answered question</b>		<b>413</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>29</b>



■ Strongly agree  
■ Agree  
■ Neither agree nor disagree  
■ Disagree  
■ Strongly disagree

**Question 19: I am satisfied with Parks Operations' service levels for sanitation, including: park & roadside litter removal and provision of dog waste bag dispensers within our parks, trails, open spaces and city-maintained properties**

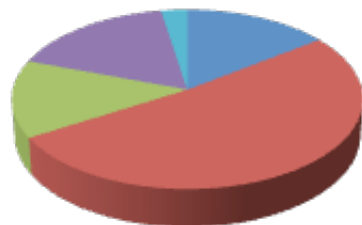
**Answer Options**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

**Response  
Percent**

**Response Count**

Strongly agree	14.8%	61
Agree	51.6%	213
Neither agree nor disagree	14.0%	58
Disagree	16.9%	70
Strongly disagree	2.7%	11
<b>answered question</b>		<b>413</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>29</b>



■ Strongly agree  
■ Agree  
■ Neither agree nor disagree  
■ Disagree  
■ Strongly disagree



**Question 20: I am satisfied with Parks Operations' service levels for community beautification, including: Christmas decorations (downtown core); Canada flag hangings; and floral displays in designated parks/open spaces**

**Answer Options**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

**Response  
Percent**

**Response Count**

31.0% 128  
49.9% 206  
11.9% 49  
6.1% 25  
1.2% 5  
**answered question 413**  
**skipped question 29**



Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

**Question 21: I am satisfied with Parks Operations' service levels for maintenance of our urban forest, including: the number of trees within boulevards and parks; the boulevard tree replacement program; forest pest management; and dead tree removal/pruning**

**Answer Options**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

**Response  
Percent**

**Response Count**

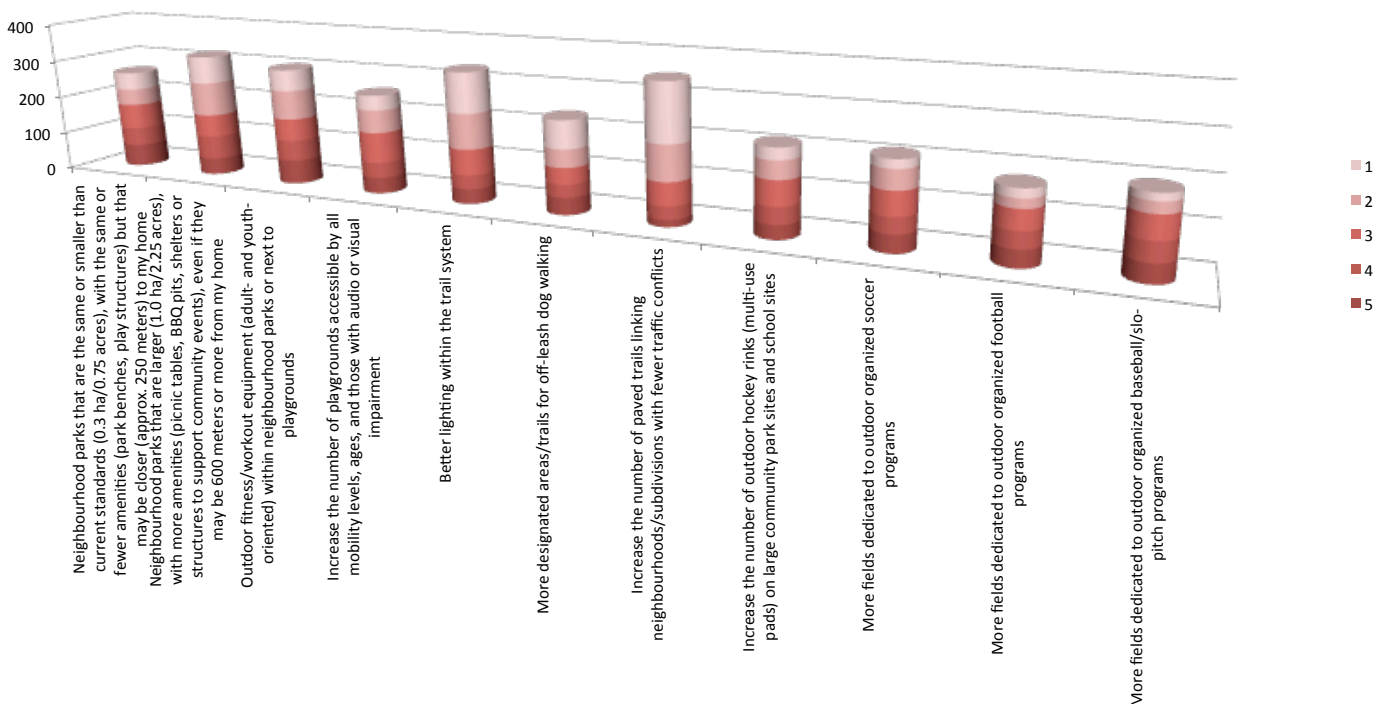
13.3% 55  
43.6% 180  
16.0% 66  
20.8% 86  
6.3% 26  
**answered question 413**  
**skipped question 29**



Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

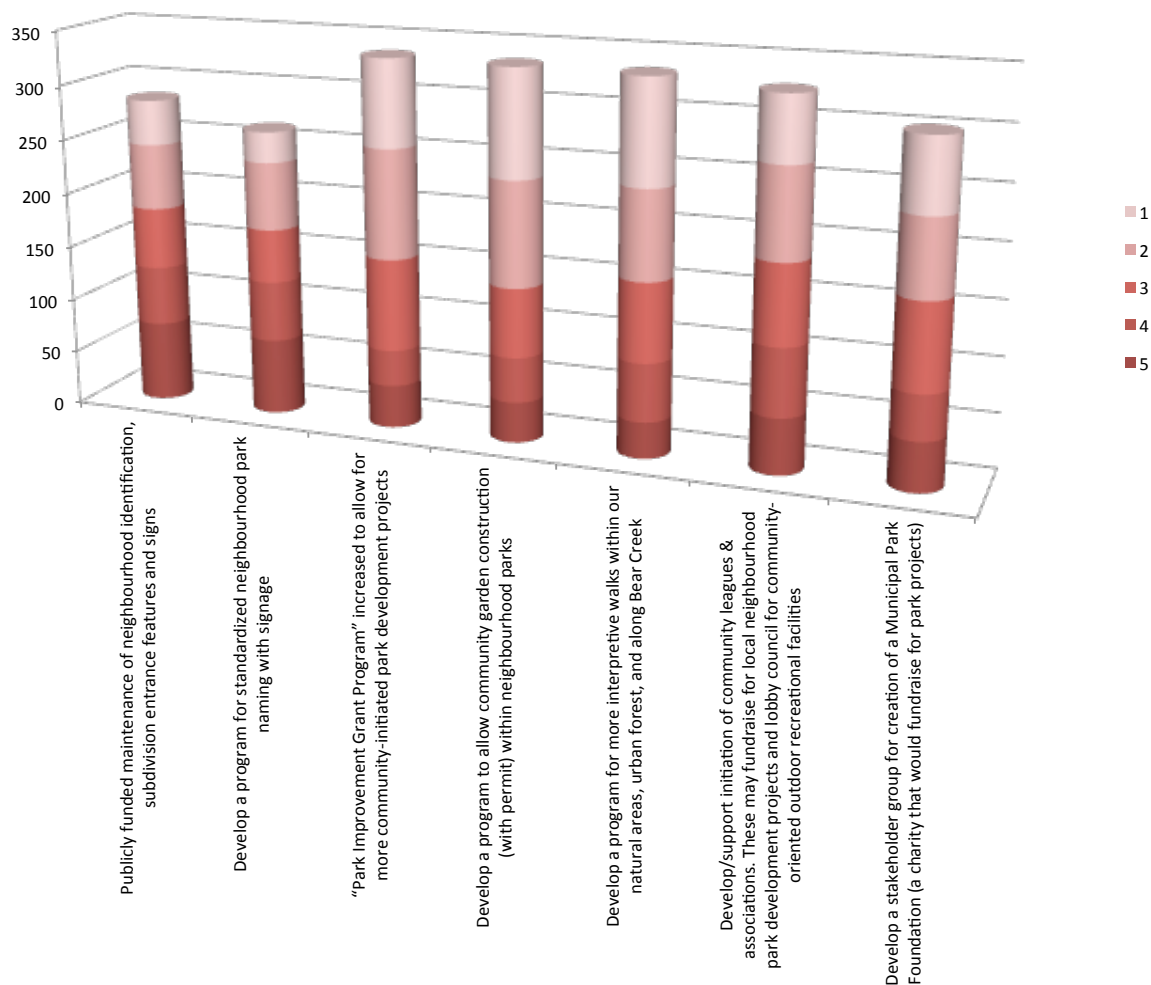
**Question 22: Please identify what your Top 5 priorities are for spatial improvements for existing/future parks and open spaces development within the City of Grande Prairie. Rank from #1 (highest) to #5 (lowest) priorities from the list**

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	Response Count
Neighbourhood parks that are the same or smaller than current standards (0.3 ha/0.75 acres), with the same or fewer amenities (park benches, play structures) but that may be closer (approx. 250 meters) to my home	46	43	67	48	58	262
Neighbourhood parks that are larger (1.0 ha/2.25 acres), with more amenities (picnic tables, BBQ pits, shelters or structures to support community events), even if they may be 600 meters or more from my home	71	88	59	62	43	323
Outdoor fitness/workout equipment (adult- and youth-oriented) within neighbourhood parks or next to playgrounds	55	76	58	54	62	305
Increase the number of playgrounds accessible by all mobility levels, ages, and those with audio or visual impairment	38	59	79	40	41	257
Better lighting within the trail system	104	91	66	36	38	335
More designated areas/trails for off-leash dog walking	72	46	42	33	44	237
Increase the number of paved trails linking neighbourhoods/subdivisions with fewer traffic conflicts	149	91	59	33	18	350
Increase the number of outdoor hockey rinks (multi-use pads) on large community park sites and school sites	30	46	63	43	36	218
More fields dedicated to outdoor organized soccer programs	22	49	60	40	45	216
More fields dedicated to outdoor organized football programs	22	23	49	41	43	178
More fields dedicated to outdoor organized baseball/slo-pitch programs	18	27	57	48	46	196
Other (please specify)						65
<b>answered question</b>						<b>398</b>
<b>skipped question</b>						<b>44</b>



**Question 23: Please identify what your Top 5 priorities are for functional improvements for existing/future parks and open spaces development within the City of Grande Prairie. Rank from #1 (highest) to #5 (lowest) priorities from the list**

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	Response Count
Publicly funded maintenance of neighbourhood identification, subdivision entrance features and signs	41	60	56	54	73	284
Develop a program for standardized neighbourhood park naming with signage	28	62	49	55	69	263
"Park Improvement Grant Program" increased to allow for more community-initiated park development projects	80	100	84	33	39	336
Develop a program to allow community garden construction (with permit) within neighbourhood parks	98	96	63	41	37	335
Develop a program for more interpretive walks within our natural areas, urban forest, and along Bear Creek	95	81	72	53	33	334
Develop/support initiation of community leagues & associations. These may fundraise for local neighbourhood park development projects and lobby council for community-oriented outdoor recreational facilities	59	82	73	62	51	327
Develop a stakeholder group for creation of a Municipal Park Foundation (a charity that would fundraise for park projects)	66	70	79	41	45	301
Other (please specify)						29
						<b>answered question</b> <b>394</b>
						<b>skipped question</b> <b>48</b>



**Question 24:** Should the City decide to increase service levels to accommodate your Parks wish list, what form of financial support would best be implemented to provide necessary funding/ budgetary increase: (check the best answer)

**Answer Options**

100% funding from municipal tax base  
 Neighbourhood-specific levies based on project locations  
 Community fundraising combined with matching city grants  
 Park /venue user fees (e.g. increase sports field rental rates)

**Response Percent****Response Count**

33.5%  
 15.1%  
 42.1%  
 9.3%

133  
 60  
 167  
 37

**answered question**  
**skipped question**

**397**  
**45**



- 100% funding from municipal tax base
- Neighbourhood-specific levies based on project locations
- Community fundraising combined with matching city grants
- Park /venue user fees (e.g. increase sports field rental rates)

**Question 25:** What dollar value would you be willing to increase your property taxes to meet desired service levels?

**Answer Options**

\$0.00 per year  
 Less than \$10.00 per year  
 \$10.00 to \$25.00 per year  
 \$25.00 to \$50.00 per year  
 More than \$50.00 per year

**Response Percent****Response Count**

16.0%  
 19.0%  
 34.8%  
 20.3%  
 10.0%

64  
 76  
 139  
 81  
 40

**answered question**  
**skipped question**

**400**  
**42**



- \$0.00 per year
- Less than \$10.00 per year
- \$10.00 to \$25.00 per year
- \$25.00 to \$50.00 per year
- More than \$50.00 per year



## Comments and concerns from the online survey

### MORE TREES NEEDED ACROSS THE CITY

Like to see way more tree on boulevards  
 Ditches like 102 Street, renovate trees  
 Plant more trees  
 Plant more trees and community gardens  
 More trees the better  
 New subdivisions are minimally treed  
 I'd like to to see more trees  
 More trees would be better  
 Need more maintenance / tree removal (dead) along trails  
 Dead trees need to be removed and replace  
 Need more trees  
 Many trees/shrubs dying because lack of watering  
 More trees  
 More trees  
 We need more trees everywhere

### DECORATIONS

Christmas we need more decorations  
 Love the flowers and christmas decorations

### IMPROVE PLOWING

Improve plowing of Parkside Community parking lot  
 Improve winter plowing of trail system

### MORE AND BETTER TRAILS

For asphalt trails, I would like to see the asphalt maintained when cracked/heaving/etc.  
 More walking/biking trails  
 Clean up trails, trip hazard from mowing  
 Walking trails need serious attention While the winter festival was going on last spring, a brilliant opportunity to promote our trail system. Snow removal  
 Walkways in Ulots  
 South Bear Creek trails

### IMPROVE AND CLEAN UP DOG PARK

Dog park needs a clean up  
 Improvement of the dog park on the south east side  
 Improve the dog park on the south east side

BETTER WASTE MANAGEMENT, (more receptacles, more dog bag dispensers, better bylaw enforcement)  
 More garbages (bins) around city

More garbage cans  
 Recycling bins and ash tramps are needed  
 Garbage cans are often overflowing  
 Give a fine for littering  
 In the ball diamonds trails there is a lot of litter  
 More doggie bag dispensers  
 Dog feces is a problem in this city everywhere  
 But people need to use the dog-poop-bags  
 Enforce dog dropping pick up

### LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

Needs the weeds cleaned up  
 Less turf grass more wild meadows  
 Improve the level of maintenance on the swamp along 84 Ave  
 Sand maintenance needs to be better in playgrounds (weeds)  
 Watering of baskets every day seems excessive  
 Smoother fields

### MORE RINKS

More full size rinks at catholic schools

### MORE BENCHES

More seating

### SPLASH PARK

Another splash park or two  
 Another spray park or park -large- on the shout side  
 Make the water at Lion's park warmer

### GENERAL COMMENTS

More toilets  
 I would like a mixture and more places to go  
 Money management / saving important  
 Need more preventive main in out lying areas  
 Improve Country Club

## E Focus Groups

Five focus groups (Internal City Departments, Field User Associations, Involved Citizens, Industry/Professionals, and School Children) addressed several questions and provided input. The comments from the focus groups are summarized below.

### Focus Group 1 - Internal Department

#### QUALITIES OF A GREAT OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

TABLE 1

- > Minimize ecological footprint with opportunity to enjoy nature
- > Safe place to do year round outdoor recreation
- > Connectivity throughout city

TABLE 2

- > More connectivity between trails
- > More neighbourhood participation in determining changes or uses of green spaces in their area- demographics
- > Thinking outside of the box for usage, not just the same old. Inclusion of infrastructure for tidiness, more waste containers, recycling bins, lighting, defined users, maintenance

TABLE 3

- > Ensure connectivity amongst parks, open spaces, schools etc
- > Respect use of public land
- > Create a North-South connective green space on east side of town- Woody Channel

#### Individual Top 3 Qualities of a Great Open Space System

- > Recognize Woody channel opp on East side as Muski issue opportunity
- > Construction methods or options to get better results ie size and life of green stuff
- > Create connectivity between schools, parks, storm ponds
- > Trail systems and parks connect- neighbourhoods
- > More adequate number of sport fields for all user groups- football, rugby, soccer- leisure centre area
- > Green space must be safe "bumping" areas
- > Demographics in neighborhoods need to be considered/ neighborhoods involvement
- > There is a need for adequate space
- > Designed areas for activities such as- fireworks
- > Better access to different areas of trails/parks- parking lots spread out across the city
- > Growth controlled near residential to prevent wild fires – fire smart program
- > Vibrant and active o/s
- > Safe movement to thru p/open spaces for ped's and cyclists etc.
- > Useable playgrounds/parks with activities for all ages- barriers and access
- > Respect use of public land
- > Address barriers to access or use
- > Improved connectivity b/w neighborhoods and trail systems

- > Encourage respect of applicable bylaws and acceptable uses
- > Snowmobile and atv corridors/horse trails
- > Increase overall amount of park and open spaces within city limits
- > Ensure walkability connectivity amongst parks and open spaces
- > Maintain and protect riparian areas
- > Respect uses of public land
- > Fitness based circuits
- > Minimal development- small footprint in big natural area
- > Winter use of reservoir and Bear Creek
- > Bike path connectivity
- > Parks for children to play at within walking distance of their home
- > Natural wetlands for birds and other animals
- > Accessibility
- > Watershed / landscape based
- > Social values- health and fitness
- > Environmental goods and services
- > Place to experience and appreciate nature
- > Safe place to do outdoor recreation year round
- > Water preservation balanced with water recreation

#### GAPS AND ISSUES IN THE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE

##### More Opportunities for Open Spaces and Recreation

- > Community gardens
- > Very few places to have a picnic with campfire
- > More areas for water fun
- > Teens using parks to party or congregate can be intimidating for younger children

##### More Spaces for All Field User Groups

- > Lack of sports fields
- > Not enough sports fields throughout city- not in one location
- > High end fields- low end fields
- > Not enough sports fields

##### Increase Connectivity and Walkability, Paths and Trails

- > Connectivity/walkability
- > Safety of trail systems
- > Too many driveway crossings on some trail links
- > Connectivity of sidewalks and trail network is missing or weak between and within neighbourhoods
- > Connectivity
- > North end Bear Creek corridor under-utilized
- > Elevations of paths- stay possible for in-line skaters, skate boards and wheelchair to use safely marked
- > Connections lacking
- > No connectivity

##### More Spaces for Dog Owners

- > Off leash areas for dogs

- > Off leash dog parks need to be at a neighborhood level- too many people drive across the city to access our only one
- > Off leash dog areas- NIMBY
- > Off leash dogs in neighborhood parks- no respect for health of park users
- > Dogs/horses
- > Number of dog parks increased along trails
- > Too many people for the services offered- dog park

#### **Develop Multi-Use Areas**

- > Multi-use recreation areas
- > Providing areas for a variety of age groups/options for are groups/at risk
- > Appropriate activities for all ages
- > Not all age groups are being considered

#### **Diversify and Improve Design**

- > Cookie cutter playgrounds
- > Too many people for the services offered, playground at Muskoseepi
- > No fences around water spray parks
- > Combining nature and art

#### **Increase Spaces and Programs for Teens**

- > Missing teen activities/plan/programs
- > Teens activities to do for this age- skateboarding

#### **Integrate Stormwater Management and Recreation**

- > Integration of storm drainage facilities with recreation

#### **Better Service Facilities**

- > Washroom facilities/rest areas few and far between
- > Parking lots being under-used due to being locked, increasing on street parking

#### **Winter City Design**

- > Many spaces come to halt during winter months

#### **Improve Snow Removal**

- > Limited snow removal/low priority on park trails
- > Need snow clearing for year round access links between recreation and commuter trails and sidewalks
- > Snow removal based mentality – damage to trees/barriers

#### **Vandalism, Safety and Perception of Safety**

- > How to keep crime out/or cleaned up afterwards
- > Safety- homeless and crime in parks
- > Fencing to control undesirable access needs to be practically everywhere
- > Destruction of public property- graffiti and vandalism
- > Lack of public respect

#### **Implementation Issues**

- > Funding/ability to get land
- > Watering all the trees- resource heavy
- > Not enough neighborhood involvement
- > Develop neighbourhoods around parks/fields/dog parks- not the other way around

#### **General Comments**

- > Develop the recreation area first, then neighborhoods
- > Develop adequate neighbourhood parks first then the residential
- > Encroachment- education and stewardship vs. physical occupation- ex adopt a space vs. private fence on public property
- > Enforcement/ encouragement for landscaping on private property
- > Ambient noise levels

## Focus Group 2 - Field User Associations

### QUALITIES OF A GREAT OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

TABLE 1

- > Well maintained (season app) feasible park maintenance (artificial turf, snow clearing and zero charge for water).
- > Multipurpose- large and diverse enough to support various activities (summer + winter)
- > Accessibility- stroller, wheel chair to the parks (no curb cut outs, snow needs to be cleared to get to ice or park)

TABLE 2

- > Accessibility to facilities- community based?
- > Improve existing/balanced areas
- > Variety/ year round activities

TABLE 3

- > Accessible to all at some point/time, depending on what the facility/space has been designed for
- > Maintenance of current/future open spaces/parks/green zones needs to be budgeted and huge priority. Safety, eye appeal. Longevity
- > North side still needs to be developed not forgotten

TABLE 4

- > Be able to access the field 10-12 months of the year
- > The field only used for football and same like sports
- > Durable field to handle multiple games of various uses

#### Individual Top 3 Qualities of a Great Open Space System

- > To maintain and improve current parks and rec areas. Let's not leave behind the current facilities to impress with new age ideas
- > Balanced leisure and multi-use facilities and spaces
- > Environmentally safe and practical. Low maintenance facilities utilizing spaces for extra uses. Low cost
- > Year round activities- for all age groups
- > Community based areas
- > Improve existing areas
- > More lobbying of provincial government to have a greater vision on parks land use availability
- > Improve existing
- > Balanced user/multiuse facilities
- > Environmentally friendly safe
- > Easy access
- > User friendly
- > Washrooms
- > Safe trails- well maintained
- > Variety of options
- > Accessibility
- > Year round activities
- > Community based facilities- areas- North side of city
- > Wide variety of recreation options
- > Recreation opportunities which are accessible to all demographics- different abilities, physical abilities and economic status
- > Finding an use for under utilized areas

- > Safety for users
- > Well-maintained trail system
- > Variety of options for use
- > Easy access
- > User friendly-space to store equipment
- > Washrooms
- > Accessibility for all
- > Joint/multiuse
- > Community based
- > 4 seasons
- > Relationships- co-clubs- sister clubs to promote activity and growth of clubs
- > Embrace our northern region- winter/outside)
- > Park system that offers 4 season use- maintained appropriately
- > Appropriate accessibility for all- wheelchair access, stroller access, parking nearby
- > Fields and open spaces that are within walking distance – playgrounds- and within 10min drive for sport specific- soccer and football
- > Usage rate- applicable to region?
- > Feasible maintenance
- > Multipurpose
- > More fields- watered by city
- > Fields that will suit the sport – size
- > Soccer specific – or football specific

### GAPS AND ISSUES IN THE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE

#### More Spaces for All Field User Groups

- > There is no real disc golf course- hard to generate public interest
- > Accessibility to enclosed spaces during extremes in weather
- > Practice areas for after school activities high demand
- > Areas for PE are limited particularly in spring
- > Outdoor speed skating oval- level surface, 200m x 100 m
- > Full sized fields are over used- supply not meeting demand
- > Lack of space to put people
- > Field use only for football and like sports

#### Increase Connectivity and Walkability, Paths and Trails

- > Connecting trail system from all neighborhoods- sidewalks that allow wheelchairs and strollers
- > Trail system connecting the circumference of the city. Easy access to trails from anywhere in the city

#### More 'Classroom' Spaces for Associations

- > Trouble finding places that are both appropriate and safe for make-shift courses
- > Crystal lake parking area- expand for better use for groups to meet there- making a staging area

#### Winter City Design

- > Embracing the winter
- > Not conducive to our region- too short of season

#### Improve Snow Removal

- > Improved maintenance year round on trail system- snow clearing
- > Accessibility to current parks- especially in winter- zero path cleared to playgrounds



### **Vandalism, Safety and Perception of Safety**

- > Community policing to ensure safety for all users or other security options
- > Security to trail system

### **Increase City-Groups and Between Groups Communication**

- > Need to be more in communication between groups

### **Maintenance Issues**

- > Maintenance of existing facilities- track, tennis courts
- > Costs of maintenance- water etc
- > What is available is in disrepair
- > Field maintenance
- > Maintenance
- > Charge to use fields

### **Implementation Issues**

- > Easier system for volunteers in the community to maintain their own facilities
- > Support from city- either financially in form of grant money for maintenance and upgrades. Financially in form of paying utility bills. Support in form of full-time employee overlooking day-to-day operations of SPBA. We have volunteers who have full-time jobs overlooking operations from irrigation to maintenance to food and alcohol facilities- it is hard to keep up an acceptable condition of the park. Last year, there was a small grant, that was not issued this year. We are afraid as a group that these diamonds and general area will be left behind and become beyond repair. They are widely used.

### **General Comments**

- > Takes away from competition
- > Club identity awareness- community awareness of clubs- family health
- > Frustrated users

## Focus Group 3 - Involved Citizens

### QUALITIES OF A GREAT OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

Table 1

- > More connection and integration of pathways, sidewalks and green spaces.
- > Sense of community “bumping space.”
- > Multiuse for diverse populations and multi-faceted activities year round.

Table 2

- > Safety/ lighting
- > Diversity of year round activities
- > Interconnectivity and accessible to all
- > Ecological principles- mosaic of developed vs undeveloped land

Table 3

- > Interconnecting paths
- > Local green space in every community
- > Maintain and protect current natural green spaces while developing new areas.

Table 4

- > Safe/Protected- fencing, natural surveillance, neighborhood associations, regular upkeep, more visits (city staff visits)
- > Connectivity- better links between parks, accessible to all, better path system
- > More variety/year round activities- bbq's secured, more water parks, more activities for all ages

#### Individual Top 3 Qualities of a Great Open Space System

- > Safe/ protected- fencing, natural surveillance
- > Clean, welcoming- regular upkeep/ partner with schools
- > Seasonal uses- have the hockey rinks, what other uses? – crime prevention had kids plan park, had farmer donate bales of hay
- > Parking/washrooms/more landscaping (flowers)/ off leash areas
- > Fully handicapped accessibility
- > Lots of flowers/shrubs/trees
- > Water spray decks
- > Lots of picnic tables/ seating
- > Pathways through each park (gravel or paved)
- > Connectivity of trails, sidewalks and neighborhoods
- > Protection of eco systems
- > More off leash areas for dogs and families
- > Areas from/proximity to major residential areas
- > Off street parking where necessary
- > Clean and safe (garbage cans emptied regularly, no needles, no broken glass, equipment in good condition)
- > Washrooms
- > Close to home, walk out the front door
- > Green space, for play and exercise
- > Wild life, deer, fox, birds
- > Accessibility for all
- > Year round/ multiuse
- > Not just localized- access at various spots and continues- interconnections/linkages- trail system from one end to the

- other- safety, multiuse
- > Many local amenities- local green space close to home
- > Natural looking landscape- not pristine lawns
- > Functional things not just architectural objects
- > Natural- addressing ecological issues- interconnected
- > Safe
- > Accessible for all
- > Access to public- everyone able to use
- > Entertainment value- playground/sand for kids/sliding hills (winter)/ bike paths
- > Safety- well lit, free of garbage, gravel on bike/rollerblade paths- free from threatening people
- > Usage over all 4 seasons- especially winter
- > Safe to use (well lit)
- > Accessible to public- across city- trails
- > Ecological perspective- mosaic – of cut grass for sports fields/ uncut grass for nature
- > Interconnected lots- accessible to all
- > Environmentally sound- maintain wetlands, reduced chemicals, not all groomed/mowed, natural playgrounds
- > Interconnected spaces- trails/green spaces
- > Multiuse as a part of most spaces- 4 season trails/sports
- > Lots of neighborhood parks
- > Multi-faceted to meet demands- a cross section of uses- children/families
- > Accessibility for all citizens
- > Connected by trails/pathways- more connections
- > Area around Muskoseepi pavilion is great (walker friendly, pond use and kids park)
- > Scenic trail runs through city
- > Creates a bumping ground for community members

### GAPS AND ISSUES IN THE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE

#### More Opportunities for Open Spaces and Recreation

- > Cross country trails
- > More or bring back x-country ski trial making down the Muskos corridor. They used to do this, but stopped a few years ago
- > Protection of present green spaces- South Bear Creek Area
- > Community gardens
- > Murals
- > More innovative parks-spray parks for babies to seniors
- > Outdoor chess boards
- > Fitness equipment
- > More picnic tables/seating
- > Paddle boat rentals
- > Needs for community buildings- ex- Maude Clifford

#### More Spaces for All Field User Groups

- > Not enough access to sports fields- city owned but leased by someone else
- > Wind buffer zones in between fields

#### Protect and Promote Natural Open Spaces

- > Blend of “natural” vs “groomed spaces
- > Disconnect between natural and groomed
- > Loss of natural space in new developments-no buffers around lakes and wetlands/keep wetlands for storm water
- > Not enough natural spaces to encourage play and exploration- could be used by schools too

**Increase Connectivity and Walkability, Paths and Trails**

- > Interconnecting paths from school to school, playground to school, to Musk. Trails
- > Lack of connectivity- great start with trails- need more
- > Lack of country and city connections
- > Breaks in connectivity- between newer neighborhoods and Musk. Core
- > Connectivity to areas in country/wapiti corridor/Nordic trails
- > Unsafe alternatives forcing pedestrians to the streets- lack of connecting for uses
- > Limited amount of paths
- > Connect neighborhood parks to trails
- > Bike paths marked on roads and trails
- > Easier access to Muskoseepi from neighborhoods
- > Connecting area to rest of city more effectively

**More Spaces for Dog Owners**

- > Dogs running loose or not properly managed

**Better Service Facilities and Signage**

- > Washrooms/water (drinking fountains)
- > Not enough garbage/waste recycling receptacles available in parks and on trails
- > Lack of washroom facilities- but thrill hill port-a-potty great!
- > Lack of signage-overall maps, km markers- Muskoseepi
- > Need more facilities- washrooms, picnic spaces, multi-use buildings
- > Signs reminding people to smile and say hi
- > More garbage cans and dog waste removal bags
- > Hard to find info on website about who to call for information or report problems

**Winter City Design**

- > More sliding hills in the winter
- > Accessibility for winter activities
- > Multi-use in all seasons- snow removal

**Improve Snow Removal**

- > When clearing sidewalks, trails, commuter corridors snow isn't moved far enough away creating rinks during freeze thaw cycle and ponds in the spring
- > Snow removal in winter
- > Not enough attention to details- clearing paths, but not realizing that low points will retain water
- > Keep trails open (free of snow) in winter and free of sand/gravel in summer for rollerblade skateboards and bikes

**Vandalism, Safety and Perception of Safety**

- > Litter
- > Vandalism
- > Improved security
- > Improved lighting
- > Safer/cleaner
- > Improved lighting
- > Safe crossing and marking of roads to cross to the interconnecting trails/paths
- > Lighting for above crossings or reflective paint for night time
- > Well marked crosswalks joining trail sections- Crystal Lake Drive between 90th and 91st

- > Perceptions of lack of safety reduces use
- > Easy crossing of busy roadway- bypass RD- pedway over it?

**Increase City-Groups and Between Groups Communication**

- > Improved community participation

**Maintenance Issues**

- > Better (more frequent) refuse removal
- > Consistent, proper maintenance of trails
- > Lack of maintenance- winter snow clearing
- > Shutdowns due to lack of maintenance. Particularly detrimental to more vulnerable groups (seniors, physically challenged)- financially disadvantaged
- > Not knowing if paths are cleared or not- mowing of certain areas for sport
- > Timeliness of trail maintenance- when swept/when plowed/when holes fixed
- > Timely mowing of green spaces for activities- access to dept who cares for green spaces- posted phone numbers

**General Comments**

- > More community sponsored events- winter/summer
- > More city funding available for non-profit orgs- to help make events happen
- > Address accessibility for all
- > More use of green spaces at schools- after hours
- > Use of plants needs to be expanded from trees and annuals. Could include colorful shrubs to create color year round
- > Not all the pathways need to be asphalt. Asphalt is very unnatural!!
- > We could use well packed pea gravel on trails and leave some of our clay based soil to compact on other paths. Mix it up a bit for nature's sake and for the bottom line
- > Protecting the open area- is there a way to insure that the area can be protected from future development
- > Is there a requirement for developers to set aside a % of area for green space, and what do they provide- trees, ice rink area, playground equipment?
- > Each neighborhood have its own vibe or theme

## Focus Group 4 - Industry / Professionals

### QUALITIES OF A GREAT OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

Table 1

- > Trails- paving, maintenance, security, lighting
- > Environmental initiatives- bat houses, bird houses, goats, solar wind, clean up Bear Creek
- > Recycling containers in every park
- > Bonus: preservation of current park space

Table 2

- > Parks! – Open spaces are integrated and destinations that people want to gather for community activities
- > Reclamation/ life cycling of our urban forest and natural areas
- > GP parks is know for our “Best Practices”

### Individual Top 3 Qualities of a Great Open Space System

- > Make better use of natural water features- bear creek- cleaner/ dried up
- > Understory plantings in existing natural urban forest sites
- > Diversify our successional tree species
- > Sports fields-0 field user groups- refurbished
- > Shrub Bed installation- Parks cut back on shrub beds
- > Work with community groups operatorting city sports fields to ensure maintenance guidelines- review lease agreements
- > Downtown Beautification
- > City entrance features
- > GP Parks lead by example of “Best Practices” for parks in NW Alberta
- > Parks and playgrounds are destinations that people want to gather for community activities
- > People respect our open spaces- no vandalism
- > Customers should be considered when lighting trails- more attention to clearing snow
- > Trail patrol
- > Go green solar/ wind for lighting etc
- > Increase tree canopy for- heat reduction/ beautification/carbon sequestering
- > More drought resistant species- increase diversity
- > More attention to wildlife- bird houses, bat houses for mosquito control
- > Clean water areas- garbage and natural
- > Paved trails for all to use
- > Clean up noxious weeds throughout the trails
- > Paved trail system throughout entire city
- > More trees- both type and number
- > Better enforcement of Dog Leash laws
- > Need to address homeless/transient pop- problem in Musk. Park
- > Future park usage- accessibility for all abilities
- > Preservation of current park space
- > Big enough parks in each area to house enough play equipment/ sports fields
- > Current park space is not allotted for needed buildings- Dave Barr site
- > Closed litter receptacles at all locations

### GAPS AND ISSUES IN THE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE

#### More Opportunities for Open Spaces and Recreation

- > Playground
- > Accessible play spaces- cost/support for may be “tough sell”- at council level- but is possible

#### More Spaces for All Field User Groups

- > Sports fields- refurbished- funding money

#### Protect and Promote Natural Open Spaces

- > Available land for environment- dirt/chips-mulch/tree nursery/ peat
- > Reclaim park space as naturalized areas with re-introduced native plant species

#### Increase Connectivity and Walkability, Paths and Trails

- > Accessible pathways and park systems to accommodate a modern/ active lifestyle- rollerblading/bike lanes

#### Diversify and Improve Design

- > Outdoor fitness
- > Tree species for zone 2B is somewhat limited but diversifying/ pushing the envelope and some TLC may work

#### Winter City Design

- > Equipment- weather/seasons
- > Winter sliding hills
- > Warming stations
- > Fire pits

#### Vandalism, Safety and Perception of Safety

- > Vandalism

#### Maintenance Issues

- > Drip irrigation
- > Staff
- > Maintenance cost
- > Equipment/resources
- > Funding staff levels

#### Implementation Issues

- > Budget
- > Man power
- > Money
- > Shareholders- buy in- departments, council, developers
- > Staffing people- money
- > Change in council
- > Cost analysis for equipment- multitask- equipment/ summer/ winter months
- > Tree planting trials
- > Having say in future development- suggestions for parks
- > Have departments work together- common goal/ repercussions- money for trees destroyed
- > Staffing
- > Equipment
- > Buy in
- > Money
- > People with the knowledge
- > Staff



- > Getting developers on board
- > Budget
- > Manpower
- > Money/political climate
- > Resources
- > Old thinking/lack of new ideas/apathy
- > Need someone designated to champion the cause and be passionate about it- do the research. Prepare reports and sell the idea with conviction

#### **General Comments**

- > Lack of common thinking- belief and importance priorities among users- too much old school thinking
- > Funding!
- > Research/education needed for modern and sustainable practices
- > Review native and hardly plant species
- > Wide spread distribution of high profile ornamental parks- flowerbeds, herb garden, lighting, benches
- > Pour in place
- > Engineering frame of mind vs “practical” frame of mind- who wins in the end- blvd trees corridor