

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

Parks Master Plan



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
OF **WOOD BUFFALO**



Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
Parks Master Plan- Final Report

May 2019

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During the course of this project, RMWB facilitated community engagement through a public survey and trade show booth sessions. Thank you to those members of the public and stakeholder groups who responded to the survey and participated in these events.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The parks of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) are an important contributor to quality of life in the region, playing a role in the physical, social, economic as well as environmental health and well-being of the region's communities. It is critical to plan the parks system to capitalize on the region's natural environment, encourage recreation in all seasons, celebrate a culture of the outdoors, and ensure that a high quality of life can be experienced by the people of Wood Buffalo for generations to come.

The Municipality's current inventory of parks is highlighted by many impressive natural assets, parks, open spaces and recreational amenities that are valued by residents and visitors alike. However, a number of years of continued development and growth has resulted in uneven levels of service across the region. As the RMWB has grown, so has the need for strategic direction to provide operations and maintenance of parks facilities in a sustainable fashion. Building on a desire to "promote innovation in service delivery," (Municipal Development Plan) the Municipality is seeking to embrace technological advances, as well as best and "next" practices in the delivery of its parks services.

This Parks Master Plan is the culmination of a year and a half long effort in creating a strategic level roadmap to guide planning, development, management, and investment in the RMWB's open space system over the next ten years and beyond. The plan is grounded in an analysis of the existing parkland supply, community context and input from the public.

Key findings from the parkland supply analysis indicate that the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has a reasonable supply of overall parkland and a variety of park types. However, there are some locations where a lack of parkland accessibility or uneven provision of amenities warrants the acquisition or development of new parkland. Recommendations for parkland acquisition within this master plan focus on the following areas: along the waterfront in both urban and rural service areas to increase public riverfront and lakefront access; within neighbourhoods deficient in parkland within a 10-minute walk of all residents; and to create more opportunities for residents and visitors to access natural and cultural landscapes and nature-based recreation.

Key findings of the public and staff consultations indicate that:

- The majority of respondents (Parks Master Plan public survey 2017) are satisfied with the parks system, especially the variety of outdoor trails, and the maintenance of parks, playgrounds and trails.
- Key desired areas of improvement to the parks include: strategies to achieve more sustainable levels of maintenance, integration of best practices in park management and operations, and recommendations that reflect the unique conditions of the RMWB.

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WOOD BUFFALO

74% use the park system daily or weekly

44% take their children to a playground or water park



#1 ACTIVITY WALKING



44% want more off-leash dog parks



people are dog walkers **2/5**

48% use the parks and trails for biking



SNOWSHOEING



WILDLIFE VIEWING



DAY HIKING



other top activities include

This Parks Master Plan reflects the following guiding principles for the RMWB parks system:

1. To meet the recreational needs of all residents, every day, all year round, to support both daytime and night-time activities;
2. To understand and consider the importance of both structured and unstructured recreation experiences within the mix of opportunities for both residents and visitors;
3. To grow and develop parks and open spaces as a dynamic process;
4. To provide a program for sustainable operation and maintenance of park assets, and
5. To integrate living, playing and connectivity into our trails and open spaces.

The following actions were identified as the top priorities for parkland development in the urban service area and rural communities, as well as park operations and maintenance. The complete action plan is provided in **Appendix I**, which includes a list of all the recommended actions with the timeframe, partners, and order of magnitude cost estimates.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

No	Top Actions – Urban Service Area Parkland	Timeframe	Partners	Estimated Cost
1	Enhance the functionality of the existing Abasand OHV staging area and expand the area for other multi-modal users such as pedestrians and cyclist. Establish an interpretive trail within the Horse River Valley with access from the Abasand staging area. Develop amenities within the Horse River Valley to act as a destination for trail users.	Medium (3-10 Years)	Métis Local #1935, Alberta Culture and Tourism Heritage Division, Sno-Drifters	High > \$300,000
2	Develop a demonstration forest on a selected track of open space lands impacted by the wildfire to provide educational opportunities about boreal forest succession, diversity and wildfire ecology.	Medium (3-10 Years)	FireSmart	Medium \$100,000-300,000
3	Pursue the acquisition of lands adjacent to the Woodlawn Cemetery for the development of a regional nature park.	Long (10+ years)		High > \$300,000
4	Establish an off-leash dog park in Timberlea at the Prospect Drive Storm Pond. Create separate areas for small and large dogs.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000
5	Pursue implementation of the Waterfront Enhancements, with an emphasis on providing additional riverfront parks, community gardens and improved public access to the water.	Long (10+ years)	Métis Local #1935	High > \$300,000
6	Explore a partnership to manage Lions Park with the goal of expanding the Park's potential use, revenue generation and programming opportunities for the Fort McMurray Historical Society.	Short (0-3 years)	Fort McMurray Historical Society	Low < \$100,000
7	Establish a Trans Canada Trailhead and signage at the Snye	Short (0-3 years)	Trans Canada Trail	Low < \$100,000
8	Pursue development of Roche Island as a Dark Sky Park.	Long (10+ years)	Fort McMurray Tourism	High > \$300,000
9	Expand winter access to parks and trails by undertaking winter packing of select trail routes.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000

No	Top Actions – Rural Communities Parkland	Timeframe	Partners	Estimated Cost
1	Add community garden space and a composting program in Conklin.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000
2	Work with the McMurray Sno-Drifters to enhance the recreational use of the former CN railway track within Draper as an all season multi-use trail.	Short (0-3 years)	Fort McMurray Sno-Drifters	Medium \$100,000- 300,000
3	Explore locations for a multiuse sport court surface in Fort Chipewyan, that could accommodate outdoor sports such as a skate park and basketball hoops. The skate park amenities that are currently in storage are viable for re-use at a new location.	Medium (3-10 Years)		Medium \$100,000- 300,000
4	Upgrade and expand the interpretive signage program along the Lake Athabasca waterfront to include interpretation about themes such as medicinal and traditional plants, and the history of the community and region.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000
5	Develop cross-country ski paths in the fire breaks cleared in the wooded area east of Gregoire Lake Estates Park.	Short (0-3 years)	Willow Lake Community Association	Medium \$100,000- 300,000
6	Add amenities (i.e., benches, trash receptacle and shade trees) along the existing paved linear trail in Janvier, in line with the Engineering Servicing Standards.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000
7	Initiate a composting program at the Janvier community garden to provide education and demonstration areas, and to assist in dealing with the manure problem.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000
8	Explore opportunities for the Sapræ Creek trail system, such as installing updated trail maps and information at trailheads.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000

No	Top Actions – Operations & Maintenance	Timeframe	Partners	Estimated Cost
1	Implement the back of curb strategy to mitigate turf maintenance concerns along curbs and boulevards.	Short (0-3 years)	Engineering Dept	Low < \$100,000
2	Establish an operations hub in rural south (Anzac) for the storage of bulk materials and tools. Also establish an urban service area operations hub north of the Athabasca River.	Medium (3-10 Years)		High > \$300,000
3	Develop and maintain a rural “maintenance handbook” with illustrations and how-to guidance for common upkeep and repairs for amenities such as benches, trails, and playgrounds.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000
4	Clarify roles and responsibilities for maintenance of various non-park lands, such as road right of ways and ensure the resources required for that maintenance are properly allocated. Ensure the effort required by Parks staff related to events is accounted for.	Short (0-3 years)	RMWB Depts., Alberta Ministry of Trans.	Low < \$100,000
5	Undertake an assessment of all municipal assets that may fall on crown land and ensure proper licenses of occupation and regulatory approvals are in place for these amenities.	Medium (3-10 Years)		Low < \$100,000
6	Prepare a Playground Inspection Policy statement to be approved by Council.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000
7	Develop a parks maintenance policy for Council approval that incorporates the proposed levels of service outlined in Table 7. Review and update on a three year basis.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000
8	Develop a Festival and Event Strategy, fees and charges schedule and event hosting toolkit for the RMWB.	Short (0-3 years)	Community Services	Low < \$100,000
9	Enhance collaboration with all internal stakeholders (e.g., bi-monthly meetings, project update reports, and sharing of capital plans).	Short (0-3 years)	Community Services, Engineering Dept	Low < \$100,000
10	Establish and implement timesheets for urban and rural parks teams, to inform future tracking, priorities, and establish a baseline of costs for the primary types of maintenance.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000

1 Introduction

1.1 CONTEXT

Located in the northeast corner of Alberta, and governed from Fort McMurray, its central node, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) has an urban service area and nine rural hamlets. Covering an area over 63,000 square kilometers, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo is one of Canada's largest municipalities. Propelled by the growth of the oil sands sector, the RMWB has undergone transformative growth from a small oil town to an internationally recognized municipality with a total permanent population of 78,832 (Municipal Census, 2018).

Over a number of years of continued growth and development the Municipality has experienced uneven levels of service across the region. There are several challenges that contributed to a disparity of development in the various populated communities. One includes the physical disconnection, such as Fort Chipewyan only being accessible with winter roads or by air. A second example includes the drastic differences in population growth, with communities such as Anzac experiencing limited growth while Fort McMurray grew explosively in recent years. As the RMWB has grown, so has the need for strategic direction to provide operations and maintenance of parks facilities in a sustainable fashion across the region. Building on a desire to "promote innovation in service delivery," (Municipal Development Plan) the Municipality is seeking to embrace technological advances, as well as best and "next" practices in the delivery of its parks



The RMWB's parks and open spaces are a vital part of the region's character, spirit, and vibrancy.

services.

The Municipality's current inventory of parks is highlighted by many impressive natural assets, including scenic rivers (the Athabasca, Clearwater, Horse and Hangingstone Rivers), lakes (including Gregoire Lake, Christina Lake and Lake Athabasca), and boreal forest. Nearly 12% of the urban service area of Fort McMurray is comprised of parks and open spaces, interwoven with a network of maintained trails. The Birchwood Trails, MacDonald Island, Horse Pasture Park and Snye Point Park are several hubs of the open space system acting as key destinations and gathering places for public activities, recreation and leisure. Many of the surrounding rural areas also have key recreational gathering spaces, such as the Anzac Recreation Centre. The RMWB's parks and open spaces are a vital part of the Municipality's character, spirit and vibrancy. The Municipality's parks are an important contributor to quality of life in the region, playing a role in the physical, social, economic, as well as environmental health and well-being of the region's communities. It is critical to plan the parks system to capitalize on the region's natural environment, encourage recreation in all seasons, celebrate a culture of the outdoors, and ensure that a high quality of life can be experienced by the people of Wood Buffalo for generations to come.

1.2 THE PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This Parks Master Plan lays out a roadmap to guide planning, development, management, and investment in the RMWB's open space system over the next ten years. This Master Plan builds on other municipal plans and policy documents and input from staff and the community to understand local perspectives and goals for the parks system.

The purpose of the Parks Master Plan is to:

- Analyze funding mechanisms and opportunities
- Understand local and visitor perspectives and expectations
- Inventory and assess parks and amenities
- Compare service levels to similar communities
- Conduct a "Gap" analysis
- Analyze operations and maintenance
- Develop planning and maintenance criteria
- Establish acquisition and disposition strategy
- Create action plan for development and service delivery

RMWB PARKS AT A GLANCE

The municipal parks system includes:

- 814 ha of parkland;
- One urban service area and 9 rural communities;
- 102 playgrounds;
- 7 outdoor skating rinks, and
- 130 km of maintained trails



1.3 MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

The development of the Parks Master Plan was based on the following six phase process:



Figure 1. Project Phases and Timeline

The parks master planning process included significant engagement with RMWB staff. In addition, the RMWB led an engagement process with the general public in urban and rural areas, and key community stakeholder groups. The plan is the product of information gathered during a phased program including Project Kickoff and Background Review, Inventory and Analysis, Needs Assessment and Community Engagement, and Draft and Final Report. The following specific steps were undertaken:

1.3.1 PARKS STAFF MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

A series of meetings and workshops were held with RMWB parks staff, with over 30 individuals participating. These meetings focused on issues identification including challenges and opportunities within the parks system.

The meetings included:

- Project Steering Committee Meetings (6) –

Steering Committee meetings were held throughout the project. This included a strategic kick-off meeting and review meetings at each phase of the project.

- Toolbox Workshops with Parks Field Staff (2) –



Toolbox mapping workshop with parks field staff.

Two Toolbox Workshops were held with parks field staff and technicians. The first workshop focused on identifying issues, challenges and opportunities related to parks operations. The second workshop included a mapping exercise, where staff prioritized existing parkland and amenities according to maintenance level criteria.

For a summary of key themes from the staff input see Section 3: Engagement- What We Heard.

1.3.2 INTERDEPARTMENTAL INTERVIEWS

One-on-one “issues identification” interviews were conducted by the consulting team with the following departments and staff:

- Fort Chipewyan Hamlet Manager and Councilors;
- Director of Engineering and Senior Department Staff;
- Director of Community Services and Senior Department Staff, and
- Interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Regional Recreation Corporation of Wood Buffalo.

1.3.3 FIELD INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The consulting team conducted field visits with the Parks Department Landscape Architect and the Parks Supervisor (rural areas) to assess existing open spaces in the parks system. The focus of the visits was to identify key opportunities and constraints at rural park facilities within the study area and at representative parks within each neighbourhood of the urban service area. These visits did not include formal engagements or meetings with local individuals, however, limited informal discussions did take place while on sites.

Field visits included:

- Urban Service Area – tours of representative park facilities in Abasand, Beacon Hill, Lower Townsite, Draper, Gregoire, Parsons Creek, Thickwood, Timberlea and Waterways (May 2017).
- Rural Communities – tours of parks facilities in Anzac, Conklin, Gregoire Lake Estates, Saprae Creek, and Janvier South (May 2017).



Rural community field tours with RMWB parks staff.

1.3.4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

RMWB staff conducted a combined public engagement program to gather input and feedback on both the Parks Master Plan and the Urban Forest Strategy. The purpose of the community engagement was to learn about how the public is using RMWB parks facilities, what community expectations are for parks and to determine future priorities. Engagement activities included a project webpage, a hardcopy and online survey, and trade show information booths.

User groups were identified and invited directly by RMWB staff to participate in the public survey. We recommend that future engagement activities include follow up meetings with key user groups to gather feedback on their use, expectations and future priorities for the parks system.

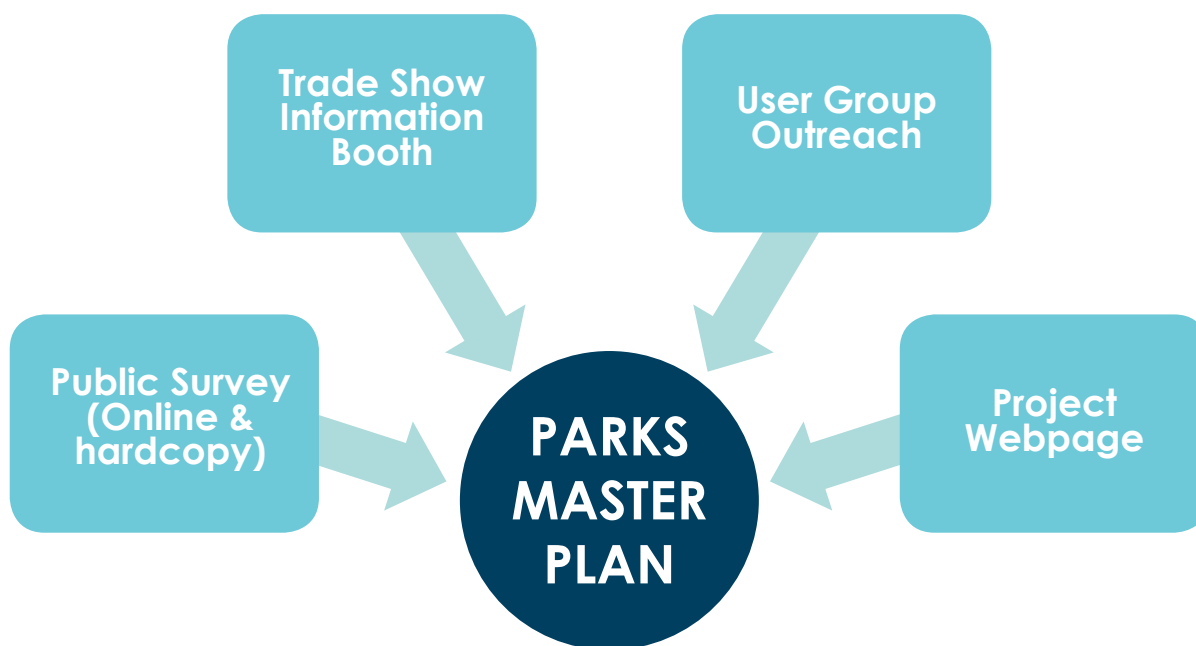


Figure 2. RMWB's public engagement methods for the Parks Master Plan.

For a summary of community engagement input to date see Section 3: Engagement – What We Heard.

1.4 RELATED PLANS AND POLICIES

1.4.1 POLICY CONTEXT

This Parks Master Plan aligns with provincial and regional level plans and policies and is meant to further those initiatives through its recommendations. The actions outlined in this plan will influence the development and/or revision of more detailed plans, policies, and strategies, such as updates to Section 10 of the Engineering Servicing Standards. The Parks Master Plan will be used in neighbourhood scale planning to identify gaps in the parks system and propose new parks and amenities. It will also support municipal-wide planning by identifying disparities between different service areas and highlight appropriate services that are needed in specific areas.

The following figure illustrates the relationship of the Parks Master Plan to other relevant plans and documents.

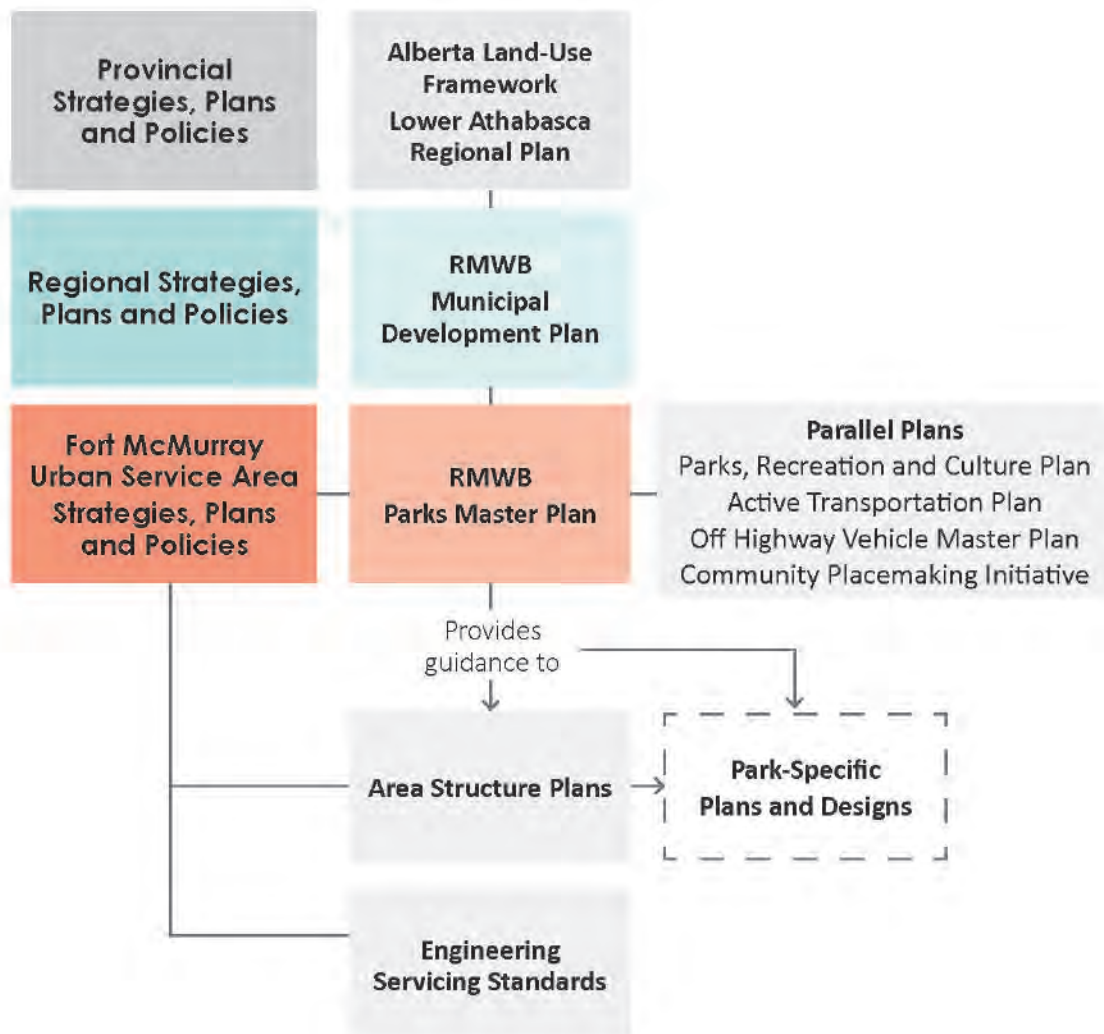


Figure 3. Planning and Policy Context for the Parks Master Plan

1.4.2 RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER PLANS

The master plan team reviewed the following related plans to ensure the Parks Master Plan is aligned with current and ongoing RMWB planning initiatives.

- Urban Forest Strategy (2018) – The Parks Master Plan has been developed alongside the Urban Forest Strategy to ensure the two documents support each other. The two plans share many core values, principles and strategies, and used a common engagement strategy to gather public feedback. The close relationship of these two plans underscores the municipality’s commitment to green spaces and vegetation within its communities.
- Engineering Servicing Standards (2016) - This document provides procedures and standards on the development of land and the construction of public infrastructure. Of particular relevance are the Landscape and Park Development Standards (Section 10) that outline general minimum requirements for the landscape development of public open space, parks, playgrounds, sports fields, greenspace corridors, trails and other open space and/or recreation facilities. Some of the recommendations in this Parks Master Plan relate to updating the Engineering Servicing Standards to improve park services and outcomes.
- Off Highway Vehicle Master Plan (2016) – This document was prepared to address off highway vehicle (OHV) use, issues and opportunities and to help develop safe, fun and sustainable facilities in the Fort McMurray region. This Plan was originally created in May 2009 and subsequently updated in 2016 by staff internal to RMWB. It explores and makes recommendations related to trail planning and design, and is a conceptual framework for trail development, education and enforcement. Recommendations in this Parks Master Plan relate to issues and opportunities for improving OHV use and management, specifically the interface of park areas with OHV trail corridors, access and staging areas, opportunities for complementary amenities, and enforcement strategies.
- Active Transportation Plan Update (2014) – This plan reviewed the existing network, identified prominent gaps, and identified 20 active transportation network upgrading projects aimed at encouraging cycling and walking and other alternative forms of transportation. The proposed projects were reviewed in terms of their relationship to existing and future parks and amenities. Recommendations in this Parks Master Plan include ways in which parks and active transportation planning relate to and enhance each other.
- Parks and Outdoor Recreation Plan (2004) – This plan addressed the parks system and identified parks and outdoor recreation amenities required to meet core “needs” over a 12 year horizon. This was the first municipal wide parks master plan after amalgamation of the municipality in 1995.

The RMWB's urban forest is a valued amenity that provides environmental, economic, social, and health benefits to its community. The RMWB recognizes the value of this community asset in its planning and day-to-day operations. This urban forest asset is sustained by the RMWB as it works towards proactive management and strives for enhanced stewardship and partnership support of its urban forest.

.....
Vision for the Urban Forest (Urban Forest Strategy)

- Live, Play, Thrive: Wood Buffalo Recreation and Culture Plan (2011) and Parks, Recreation and Culture Plan (2011) – These plans were developed to provide a roadmap for decision-making and improvement of the parks, recreation and culture facilities and services from 2011 to 2021, building on the 2004 Parks and Outdoor Recreation Plan. Various methods were used to engage the community including focus group workshops, interviews, telephone survey, public open houses and draft plan review, however these plans were never accepted by Council as guiding documents. This Parks Master Plan updates and expands on the analysis, findings and recommendations in the 2011 plans.
- Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region Sport Strategic Plan: 2016-2026 (2016) – While specific to the business of sport, including sport development and sport tourism, this plan identifies approaches for leveraging the ability of new facilities in the region to play a role in hosting future events as a driver of growth in the region.
- Community Placemaking Initiative (2007) – This document identifies issues and opportunities related to the ongoing desire to enhance the community of Fort McMurray with specific attention to the Highway 63/69 corridor, the lower townsite, and residential areas. It provides a “kit of parts,” a cohesive design vocabulary, and lays out a framework for applying these tools to future community planning and development. Recommendations in this Parks Master Plan identify ways in which the Community Placemaking Initiative relates to public parks and opportunities for future placemaking enhancement.
- Municipal Development Plan (2011) – The MDP outlines a vision and plan for managing growth and building sustainable communities. It guides short- and long-term decision making at the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo and conforms to the requirements of the Municipal Government Act of the Province of Alberta. This MDP identified anticipated explosive growth of the lower townsite and forecasted bold measures to accommodate an enormous population boom. Economic conditions in the past few years have altered the course of population growth and forecasts are no longer accurate.
- Waterfront Enhancements (2012) – The Waterfront Enhancements established a vision for development of the lower townsite’s 7.5km of waterfront parks along the Clearwater River, including the Snye. This document was unanimously supported by Council in 2012 and sets the stage for future phased development of this extensive park system. During the course of engaging the Steering Committee for this project, it was confirmed that the Waterfront Enhancements and its proposed amenities is still the current vision for the waterfront park system.
- Flood Mitigation Program (2013) – Integrated with the Waterfront Enhancements, the Flood Mitigation Program included a conceptual scheme to protect the lower townsite from 1:100 year flooding of the Clearwater and Athabasca Rivers. Flood mitigation was integrally tied to commitments from the Province of Alberta to protect Fort McMurray from future flood risk and the design was completed in conjunction with new Provincial legislation. The Flood Mitigation Program is significant to parks and open space as many of the flood prevention measures are located within parks and open space along the Clearwater River.

-
- RMWB Wildfire Recovery Plan (2016) – This plan was developed to guide the recovery of the region, coordinate rebuilding efforts using a build back better philosophy, and position the Municipality for further growth following the 2016 Horse River Wildfire.
 - Area Structure Plans – These plans provide a long-term vision for an area of land and establish policies for development and promotion of sustainable land uses. Area Structure Plans are amended from time to time and are statutory documents that conform to the requirements of the Municipal Government Act of the Province of Alberta. Recommendations in this Parks Master Plan identify ways in which to support the community visions outlined in the RMWB's Area Structure Plans. Area Structure Plans for the following communities were reviewed: Anzac, Conklin, Draper, Fort Chipewyan, Fort McKay, Janvier South, Real Martin West, Saprae Creek and Willow Lake.

1.4.3 LIMITATIONS OF OTHER PLANS

This is the first planning initiative focused solely on the municipal parks system. Previous plans have been broader in scope, addressing parks, recreation, outdoor recreation and culture topics. Other plans such as the OHV Master Plan only address specific activities and not recreation as a whole. While previous plans provided a roadmap to guide and coordinate the growth and development of parks, recreation and culture in the region, they had more limited guidance in the development and service delivery of parks specifically.

This Parks Master Plan fills a key gap in the planning context that aims to evaluate the RMWB's parks system holistically and provide the information, strategies and approaches needed to sustainably manage, develop, enhance and maintain the RMWB's current and future park services.

1.5 STUDY AREA

The study area for this Parks Master Plan includes:

- The urban service area of Fort McMurray including the urban areas of: Abasand, Beacon Hill, Thickwood, Gregoire, Timberlea, Waterways, the Lower Townsite and Parsons Creek (Figure 4).
- The rural communities of Anzac, Conklin, Draper, Fort Chipewyan, Fort McKay, Gregoire Lake Estates, Janvier South and Saprae Creek (Figure 5).
- Fort Fitzgerald is not included in the Master Plan due to its small permanent population and lack of municipal services.

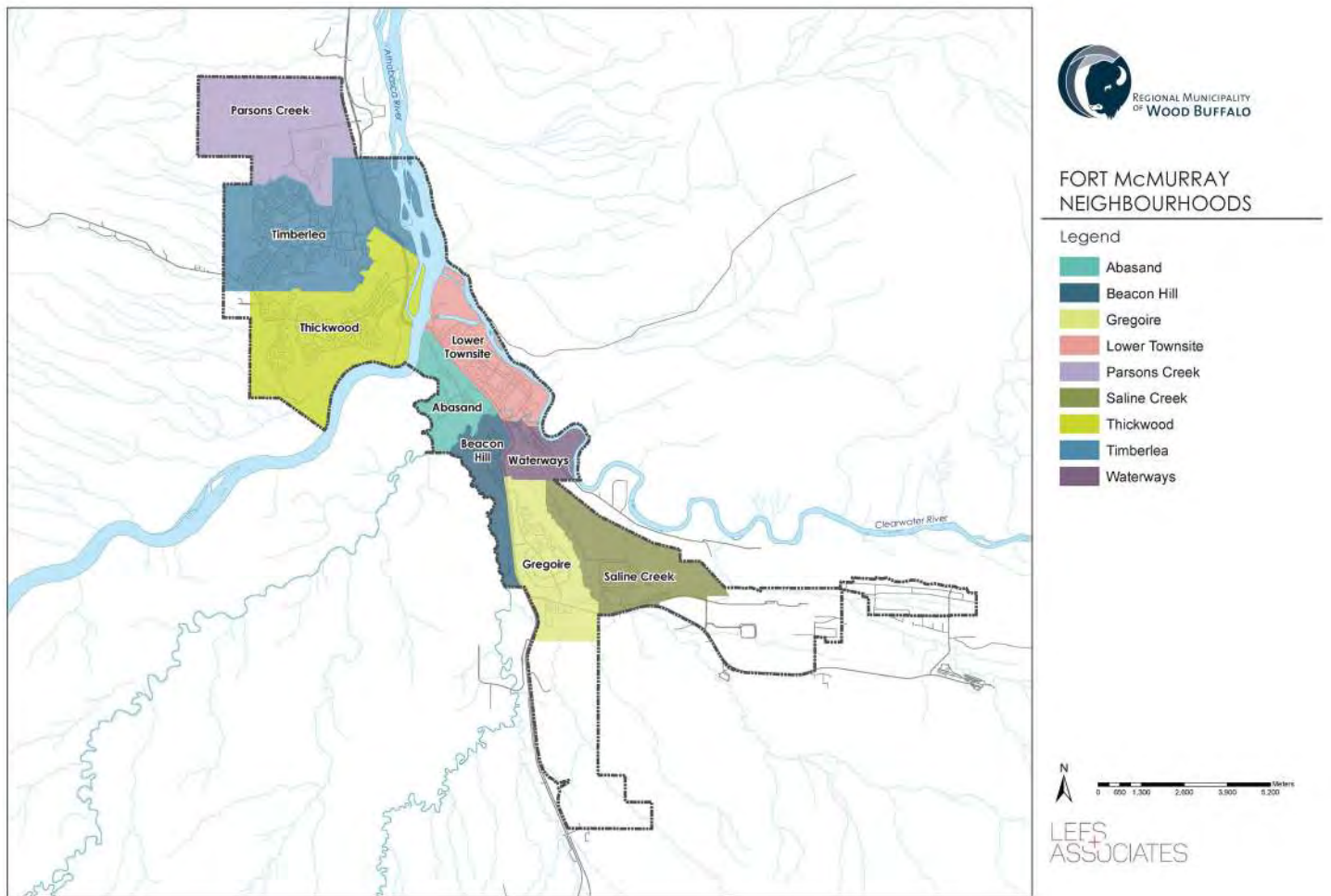


Figure 4. Study Area - Urban Service Area of Fort McMurray.
(Municipal Development Plan, 2011 & Municipal Census, 2015)

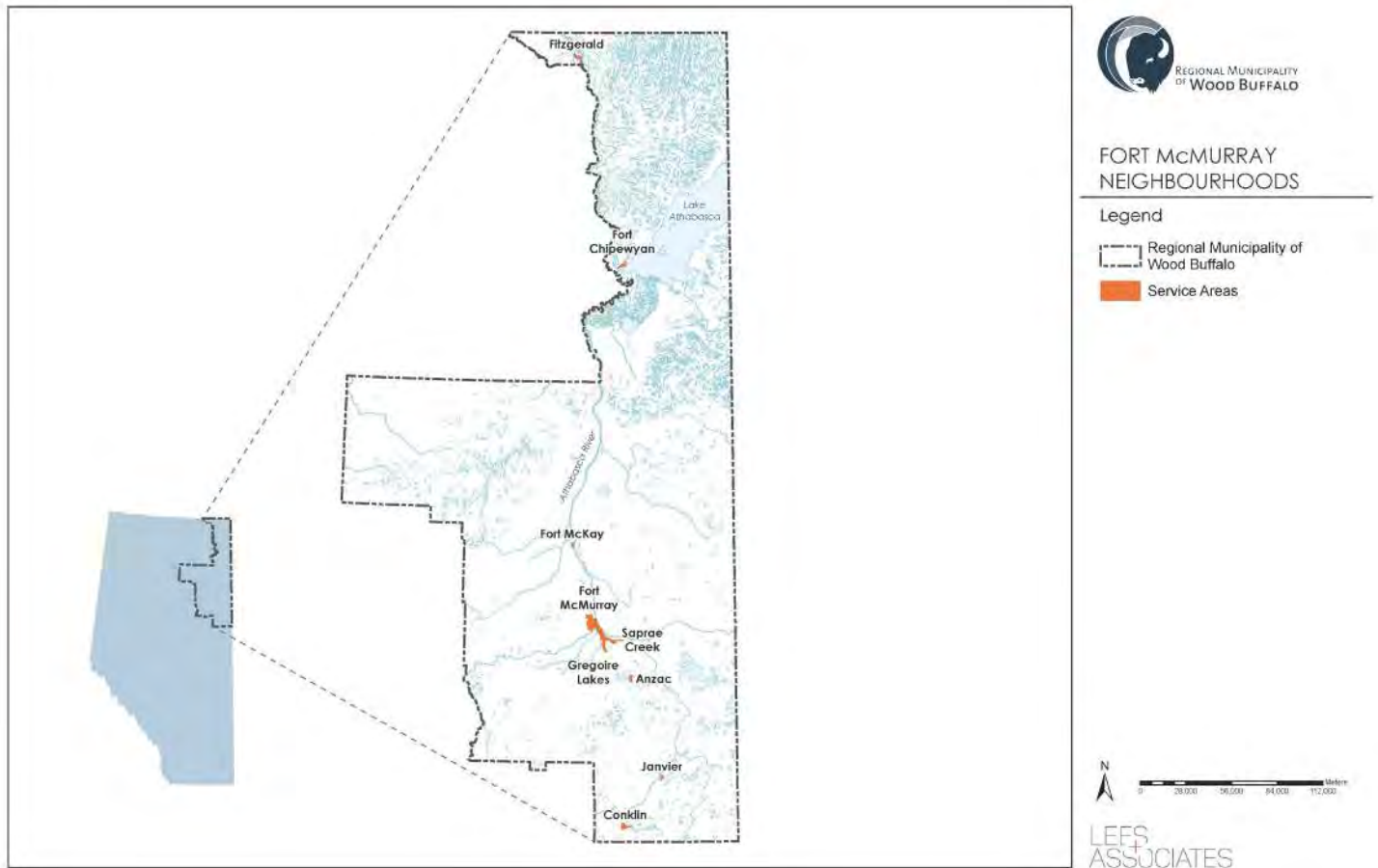


Figure 5. Study Area – Rural Service Areas.

1.6 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

1.6.1 DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The Municipal Census (2015), which was used to complete the demographic profile, reveals the following key characteristics about the population of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo:

- The RMWB has a total permanent population of 81,948 (including the urban service area of Fort McMurray and nine rural communities), and an estimated shadow populationⁱ of 43,084;
- Children and youth increased from 23% of the total population in 2012 to 24% in 2015;
- There are more males than females for most of the age cohorts; in 2015 the average gender distribution was 55% males and 45% females.
- The RMWB has a relatively young population, compared to the provincial and national average, with seniors (aged 65 years and up) representing only 2.1 percent of the total population;
- The RMWB is diverse; the region has an immigrant population of 22% with an influx of migrant workers from around the globe coming to work in the oil industry (Statistics Canada, 2016);
- First Nations and Métis comprise an important segment of the region's population, most significantly in rural communities;
- Most people live in single-detached homes. Forty-six percent of Urban Service Area residents and sixty-six percent of rural residents live in single family or single-detached dwellings;
- The Municipality has a high number of people per dwelling unit, with an average household size of three persons per dwelling;
- Sixty-nine percent of Urban Service Area residents live north of the Athabasca River, while 29 percent live south of the river; two percent live in non-residential facilities.
- Timberlea is the most populated area in the Urban Service Area with 45% of residents, followed by Thickwood Heights at 21%, and the Lower Townsite at 14%;
- Waterways has the lowest share of the Urban Service Area population at 0.8 percent, and
- The overall population of the rural communities declined by 3.5 percent from 2012 to 2015. The communities of Conklin, Draper and Anzac experienced population growth over this period, while Gregoire Lake Estates, and Janvier experienced a decrease in population.

ⁱThe shadow population is defined as "temporary residents of a municipality who are employed by an industrial or commercial establishment in the municipality for a minimum of 30 days within a municipal census year" (Municipal Census 2015). The permanent population decreased by approximately 4% (~3,000 people) between 2015 and 2018.

1.6.2 POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The RMWB has experienced high rates of population growth since the late 1990s as a result of growth in the oil sands sector. Annual population growth rates from 2000 to 2015 are summarized in the figure below. The Municipality's population compound annual growth rate during this period was 6%.

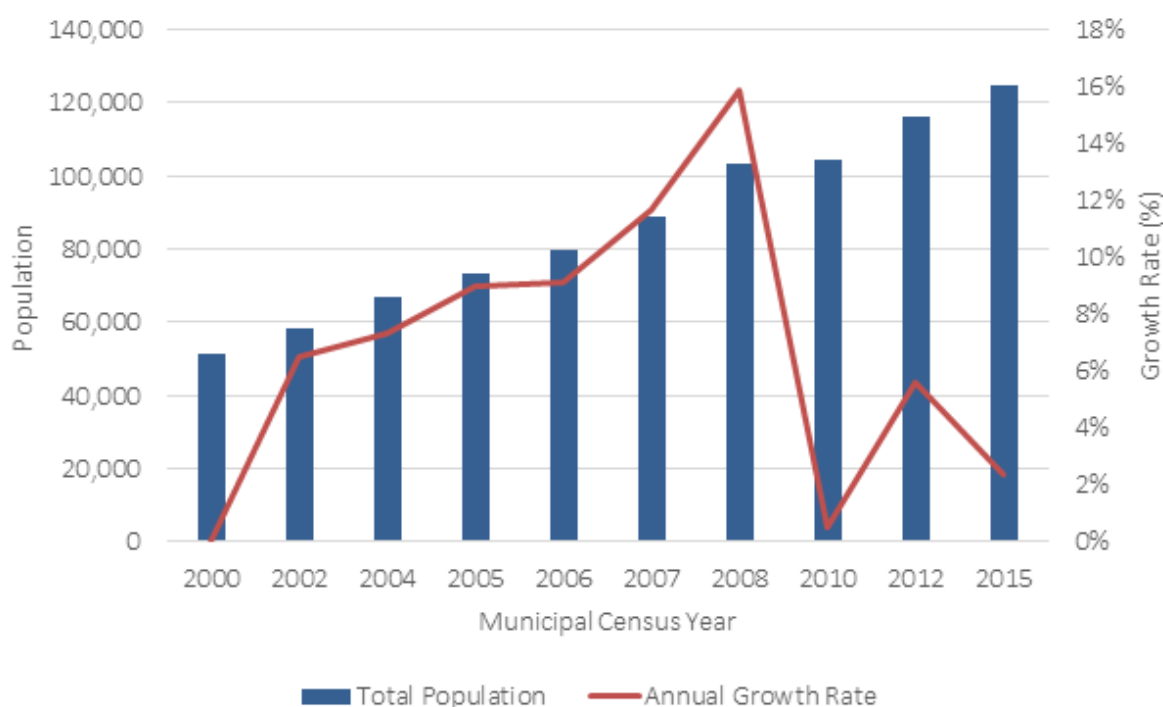


Figure 6. Population and Annual Growth Rate in the RMWB from 200 to 2015 (Municipal Census, 2015).

Since the 2015 Municipal Census, factors such as a decline in global oil prices and the 2016 Horse River Wildfire have influenced regional population trends. The RMWB population was anticipated to have decreased by 10% in 2016 and was expected to decrease a further 4% in 2017 (KPMG 2016).

While these events have had a significant impact on the region, the RMWB is moving forward with short and long-term recovery efforts with a commitment to “building back better.” Patterns of growth are expected to continue into the future as the region rebuilds with a focus on managing growth sustainably to build healthy, and sustainable communities (Municipal Development Plan 2011).

1.6.3 AGE GROUP DISTRIBUTION

The following figure illustrates the age structure of the RMWB's population for each gender. Forty-three percent of the total population is between the ages of 25 and 44, with the highest concentration (25%) between the ages of 25 to 34 years of age. This is higher than the provincial average.

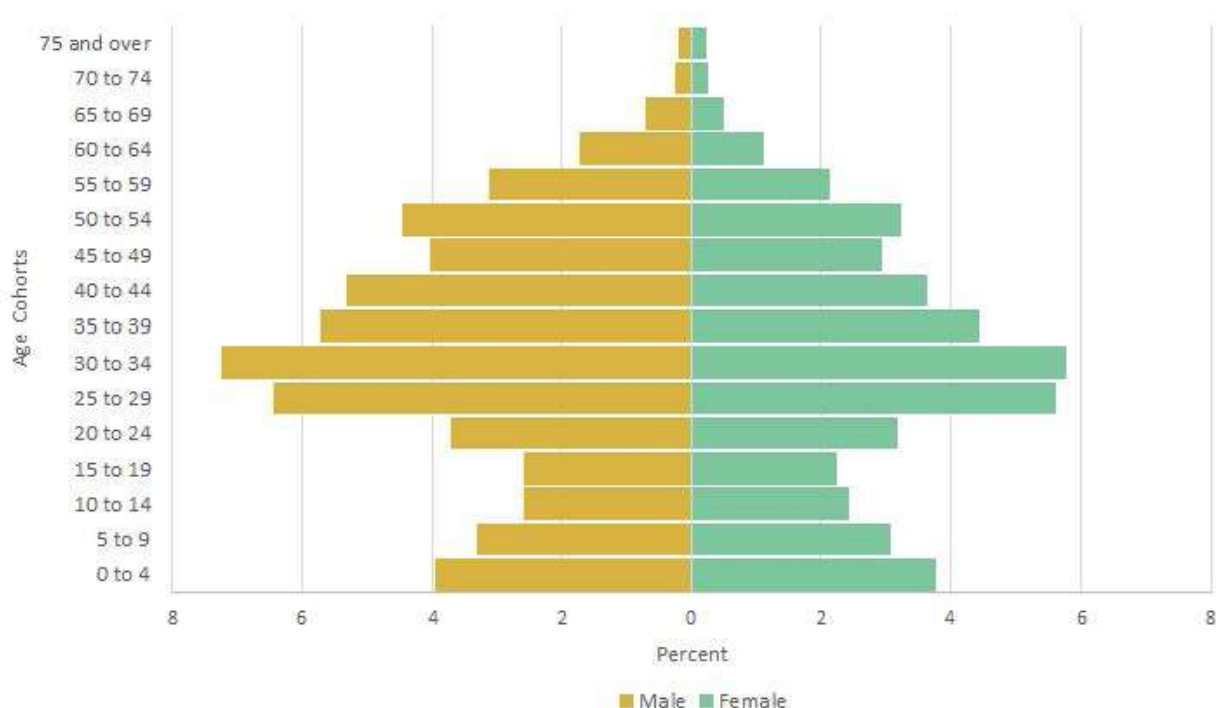


Figure 7. Age and gender population pyramid for the Municipality (Municipal Census 2015).

1.6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PARKS MASTER PLAN

The demographic profile of the region provides a useful framework for determining the future park and open space needs of RMWB residents. To match the existing parks system with a growing and changing population, the Municipality should focus on providing:

- Family-oriented parks where a mix of ages can spend time recreating together;
- Park space within walking distance (5 to 10-minute walk) for all residents;
- Recreational opportunities for people (particularly children) to interact with the natural environment in a meaningful manner, and
- Parks for a variety of users and levels of mobility, ensuring accessibility to as many residents as possible, creating a community where people can age in place, and
- Park facilities and activities that encourage interaction among residents and offer opportunities for connecting people, building community and reducing isolation.

2 Benefits and Trends

2.1 BENEFITS OF PARKS

A significant body of research shows the contribution of parks and open spaces to a community in terms of social value, individual wellbeing, community connectedness, ecological health, and economic benefits. The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, in partnership with the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, has assembled the National Benefits Hub (2016), an online resource with over 1,000 evidence-based references that detail the benefits of parks, recreation, sports, fitness, arts, and culture. This research has been summarized into eight key evidence-based benefits that indicate parks:

1. Are essential to personal health and well-being;
2. Provide the key to balanced human development;
3. Provide a foundation for quality of life;
4. Reduce self-destructive and anti-social behaviour;
5. Build strong families and healthy communities;
6. Reduce health care, social service and police/justice costs;
7. Are a significant economic generator, and
8. That green spaces are essential to environmental and ecological wellbeing, even survival.

The National Benefits Hub also details the environmental benefits provided by natural areas in parks through description of their important ecosystem services, including:

- Protecting habitat and biodiversity;
- Improving air quality;
- Supporting environmental education;
- Promoting stormwater retention, and
- Mitigating against environmental disaster.

2.2 TRENDS AFFECTING RMWB PARKS

Social trends reflect a combination of demographics, economics, environmental conditions, and personal choices made by individuals. The following section outlines current national and provincial trends that are applicable to park planning in the RMWB, followed by discussion of the implications of these trends on the Municipality's parks. Sources include the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, the BC Recreation and Parks Association, Statistics Canada and Alberta Health Services.

2.2.1 SEEKING A WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Nationally, there is a growing need for people to fit recreation into convenient time slots, due to increased commuting, a move to "two career families," growing pressures to perform in the workplace, and children having multiple extracurricular commitments. In the RMWB, rigorous shift work schedules also contribute to this trend. In the RMWB's Parks Master Plan public survey (2017), "I'm too busy" was the second most commonly cited barrier to using parks more often.

This master plan considers how parks can provide multiple and accessible outdoor recreational opportunities for residents with increasingly busy lives. Ensuring a good distribution of parks, improving connectivity and access, providing lighting, extending park hours, improving wayfinding tools, and grouping amenities for different age groups and interests can improve the convenience of parks and their integration with peoples' everyday lives.

2.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Generally, a growing awareness and concern about sustainability, adequate water supply, biological diversity, and other environmental issues is having an effect on peoples' perceptions and behavior. Although these perceptions may not be held quite so dogmatically in the RMWB as in other parts of Canada, they need to be recognized in plans such as this. In the RMWB, issues relating to access and stewardship of natural and cultural landscapes, and mitigating risks of future natural disasters, such as wildfires and floods, are sources of concern.

RMWB parks offer the opportunity for the Municipality to support a variety of environmental initiatives, including protecting and highlighting natural areas, environmental education and stewardship and low-impact operational practices. Implementation of environmentally-sensitive procedures and programs in parks will help reinforce the RMWB's commitment to building longer-term resiliency of the community. With eco-tourism and outdoor education on the rise, municipal parks offer accessible places to experience local ecosystems, and opportunities such as northern lights and wildlife viewing, particularly for school groups.

2.2.3 CONCERN FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Canadians are leading increasingly sedentary lifestyles, with an estimated 30% of youth entering adulthood meeting the criteria for overweight or obesity in Alberta (Alberta Health Services, 2017).

As the urban service area of Fort McMurray grows, the expansion of residential development away from commercial centres increases the vehicle dependence that is a key contributing factor to sedentary lifestyles

and resultant health impacts. The provision of diverse opportunities for residents to be active within their own neighbourhoods, as well as to commute locally by non-motorized means, is critical.

The Parks Master Plan survey indicates that having safe places to walk should be a priority. Walking was the number one activity among adults (80%) and trails were the most appreciated amenity. The three most popular activities – walking, biking, and dog walking- use pathways and trails.

2.2.4 CONCERN FOR PERSONAL SAFETY IN PUBLIC PLACES

The public is well-informed and sensitive to reports of crime and related incidents in outdoor environments. In many cases this is based largely on perception rather than fact, but a person's sense of safety is as important as the actual safety risk of using parks and trails. Some of the most common safety concerns within parks and open space inside the urban service area include drug trading and prostitution. The presence of homeless people gives a perception of unsafe conditions.

A person's sense of safety in a park or on a trail is affected by both actual and perceived risk. Park users may feel unsafe even where there have been no reported crimes or incidents (BCRPA, 2006). In the RMWB, concern about wildlife encounters (especially bears), also impacts the public perceived sense of safety when using parks and trails.

In the RMWB's Parks Master Plan public survey (2017), 11% of respondents cited "feeling unsafe" as the top barrier to visiting parks more often. Those respondents who cited feeling unsafe were residents from across the urban service area. Parks and open spaces in the RMWB can be designed and managed with improved lighting and sightlines, improved wayfinding, accessibility, and signage, adequate (bear-proof) waste facilities, and careful location and grouping of amenities to help address this barrier. The RMWB has adopted SafeGrowth approach to safety and crime prevention which amalgamates successful strategies in CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) as well as social and enforcement strategies (RMWB Crime Prevention & Reduction Strategy, 2011).

2.2.5 CHANGING RECREATIONAL PREFERENCES

As peoples' schedules become increasingly busy, there is often greater demand for informal and individual leisure activities such as walking or cycling, than for organized team sports with programmed schedules. Nationally, participation in organized sports has declined since the early 1990s. This trend is reflected in the 2017 Parks Master Plan public survey data from RMWB residents where eight out of the top ten activities were individual pursuits. People are also seeking out experiential programs like outdoor adventures, cultural learning opportunities, and environmental education. Many people are also interested in activities and programs with a social element, especially older adults.

The RMWB should continue to develop opportunities for people to be active on an individual, informal basis. These needs can be met by enhancing trails, walking loops and paths, and creating flexible open spaces to support these types of activities. While individual sport pursuits are gaining popularity, the RMWB has an engaged sport community and some excellent sport facilities. RMWB staff should engage with sport user group representatives during the implementation of this Master Plan to gather further information on participation in specific organized sports within the RMWB and the facilities that support their activities.

2.2.6 MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN

Children need adequate and engaging play opportunities to develop their social, cognitive and physical abilities. Further evidence indicates that providing children with access to natural areas, nature-based recreation, and natural playgrounds (which incorporate natural elements like logs, flowers and trees) can have a positive effect on health and well-being (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 2015).

As the RMWB develops, it is important to secure natural areas and create opportunities for children to interact meaningfully with nature in both formal playgrounds and informal natural areas.

CHILDREN AND NATURE

*In his book, **Last Child in the Woods**, Richard Louv coined the term “Nature Deficit Disorder”—described as a set of symptoms linked to a lack of contact with nature.*

He makes a point that the outdoors is essential to a child's health and well being, and to fostering an ethic of environmental stewardship.

The Solution

One of the solutions is to provide all children with access to nature. This requires nothing more than access to a natural space ranging from vacant lots or forest groves to larger natural open spaces. Recommendations to include nature-based parks and areas for unstructured play are prioritized in this plan.

2.2.7 CHANGING VOLUNTEER TRENDS

Nationally, there has been a significant drop-off in volunteerism, with fewer volunteers contributing a greater proportion of hours. People are increasingly opting for short, event-based volunteer opportunities rather than long-term commitments. The most common reasons for not volunteering were lack of time and inability to make a long-term commitment (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Despite these trends, the RMWB is known for high levels of volunteerism, with more than half the population actively volunteering for community organizations and causes (Wood Buffalo Region Sport Strategic Plan, 2016). For example, over 6,500 volunteers participated in the RMWB's 2017 Spring Community Cleanup, which resulted in an estimated \$1M offset in clean-up costs (Director of Community Services, personal communication, June 19, 2017). Leveraging this community spirit and interest in volunteerism could assist the RMWB in managing more effective volunteer-based partnerships within the parks system.

2.2.8 RECREATION IN ALL SEASONS

As a northern Canadian community, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has more extreme cold weather conditions than you would find in more southern communities as well as very long summer days and very short winter days.

To ensure the parks system provides appropriate response to support outdoor recreation in all seasons, the municipality should ensure that parks offer appropriate climate response for a winter city – rest points, community fire pits, warming huts, amenities to support winter recreation and comfortable protection from wind and cold winter weather. Outdoor activities appropriate to a population living in a northern Canadian community, such as amenities to support hunting, fishing, canoeing and recreational off highway vehicle use, should also be supported.

3 EXISTING PARKS & OPEN SPACES- WHERE IS RMWB TODAY?

3.1 PARKLAND CLASSIFICATION

The current classification system for maintained park space in the RMWB is outlined in the Engineering Servicing Standards (2016) and identifies seven distinct types of parkland: Neighbourhood Park, Community Park, Elementary or Junior High School Grounds, District Park, High School Grounds, Linear Park and Regional Park. The RMWB is well served with a variety of parks from small neighbourhood parks to large destination parks. Staff report that the current classification system provides an adequate hierarchy with which to plan, design and manage the RMWB open space system. Therefore, this Parks Master Plan recommends the continued use of the existing classification system.

At present, the RMWB's park classification categories are approved within the Engineering Servicing Standards (2016) however existing parks have not been classified in map format. Using Geographic Information System (GIS) data provided by the RMWB, maps showing the classification of all of the RMWB's existing parks have been compiled in **Appendix A**. These classifications will assist the RMWB now and into the future with the defining goals for park management, maintenance and levels of service.



Pond at Borealis Park.

3.1.1 MAINTAINED PARKS

The current definitions for the RMWB's parkland classifications are as follows:

Table 1. RMWB Parkland Classification (Engineering Servicing Standards, 2016).

Category	Typical Amenities	Size Guidelines	Service Area	Example Park
Neighbourhood Park	- Grassed area - Play area and equipment - Passive recreation area	Min. 0.4 ha	5-minute walk (500m radius)	Coyote Crescent Park
Community Park	- Active recreation - Play area and equipment - Additional site amenities	Min. 2.4 ha	5 to 10-minute walk (500m to 1,000m radius)	Lions Park
Elementary School Grounds	- Active recreation - Play area and equipment - Additional site amenities	Min. 2.4 ha	5 to 10-minute walk (500m to 1,000m radius)	Beacon Hill School
District Park	- Active recreation - Play area and equipment - Additional site amenities	Min. 5.5 ha	500m to 3km radius	J. Howard Pew Memorial Park
Junior/High School Grounds	- Active Recreation - Play area and equipment - Additional site amenities	Min. 5.5 ha	500m to 3km radius	Father Mercredi High School
Linear Park	- Grassed area - Passive recreation areas	Min. width 20m, min. size 0.2 ha	-	-
Regional Park	- Play area and equipment - Additional site amenities - Indoor facilities	Min. 20 ha	3km to 10km radius	The Snye Point Park

3.1.2 OTHER OPEN SPACE

In addition to RMWB-owned parks, there are other parks and protected areas including provincial parks, provincial wildlands, and federal lands which are enjoyed by residents. They offer a range of amenities including playgrounds, natural areas, trails, waterfront access, historic sites, gathering spaces and unprogrammed open space. Gregoire Lake Provincial Park is an example of a park facility that provides important benefits to municipal residents but is under the ownership, care and control of Alberta Environment and Parks.

The majority of school grounds are owned by the RMWB and maintained by the Municipality through joint-use agreements with the School Districts that facilitate public use. OHV staging areas, some of which are maintained by the Municipality, provide access to crown lands. Regional trails maintained by non-profit groups such as the Sno-Drifters, are also considered in the parks network, although the RMWB does not play a role in maintaining them.

3.2 PARKLAND INVENTORY

Using GIS area calculations, the amount of existing parkland in the urban service area was determined for each of the parkland classifications and is summarized in the table below.

Table 2. RMWB Parkland Inventory (Urban Service Area).

Parkland Classification Urban Service Area (11,137 ha)	Total Park Count	Area (ha)	% of Urban Service Area
Neighbourhood Park	53	55.90	0.44%
Community Park	18	72.90	0.57%
District Park	6	54.78	0.49%
Regional Park	4	572.86	4.93%
School Grounds	15	57.89	0.52%
TOTAL	96	814.33	7.31%

3.3 CURRENT SUPPLY – DOES INVENTORY MEET NEED?

There is not a definitive way to establish whether a community has an adequate supply of parkland; it depends on the values, wants and needs of the community. However, common metrics include assessments of the amount of parkland per capita, comparisons to other communities, and whether residents can easily walk to parks. The following sections provide an analysis and discussion of these metrics and their utility in evaluating the RMWB's parkland supply.

3.3.1 PARKLAND PER CAPITA ANALYSIS

Overall, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has approximately 814 hectares of parkland, or 9.9 hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents, based on Geographic Information System (GIS) data provided the RMWB. This includes all land classified in the RMWB urban and rural services areas as parkland, including the Birchwood Trails.



NEIGHBOURHOOD PARKS

53



COMMUNITY PARKS

18



DISTRICT PARKS

6



REGIONAL PARKS

4



SCHOOL PARKS

15



Table 3. RMWB's Parkland Per Capita (Urban Service Area).

Population ¹	Parkland ² (ha)	Ha of Parkland per 1,000 Residents
81,948	814.3	9.9

¹ Total permanent population, Municipal Census, 2015.

² Includes school grounds.

This parkland provision is higher than the Canadian standard which, in 2017, was a median of 7.6 hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents (Yardstick, 2017). However, it should be noted that many municipalities do not use these type of quantity standards because the amenities and quality of the parks play an equal, if not more important, role in meeting community needs. This metric is provided as a reference point for understanding where the RMWB's supply of parkland fares relative to the national norm.

In the Parks Master Plan public survey (2017), the majority of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the number of parks available to use (see figure below).

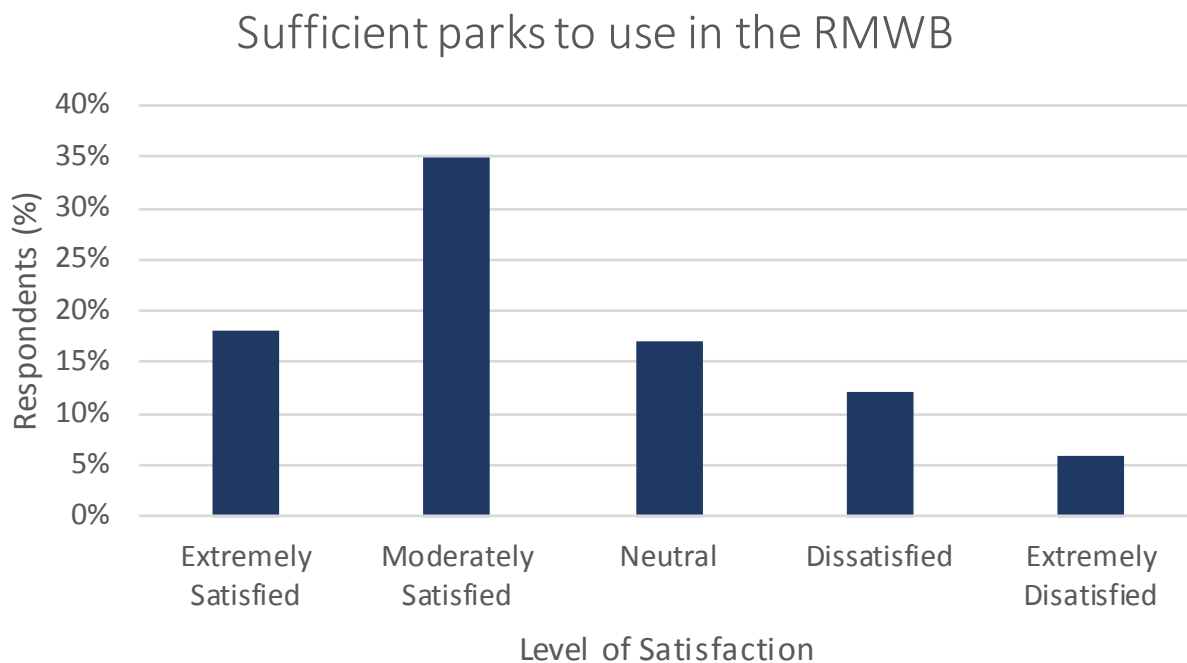


Figure 8. Community satisfaction with parkland supply (Parks Master Plan Survey, 2017).

3.3.2 PARKLAND BY NEIGHBOURHOOD ANALYSIS

The following table illustrates the RMWB's parkland supply per capita for each neighbourhood within the urban service area. This is an important consideration because parks that serve more people will be more heavily used than parks in neighbourhoods with fewer people.

Table 4. RMWB's Parkland Per Capita by Neighbourhood.

Urban Service Area Neighbourhood	Parkland (hectares)	Population†	Hectares of parkland per 1,000
Abasand	3.71	4,752	0.78
Beacon Hill	1.98	2,144	0.92
Gregoire	6.15	4,198	1.46
Lower Townsite	37.14	11,113	3.34
Parsons Creek	n/a	2,444	n/a
Thickwood	309.96	17,089	18.14
Timberlea	273.54	36,008	7.60
Waterways	84.42	634	133.15

*Demographics, Municipal Census, 2015
Neighbourhood Boundaries, Municipal Development Plan, 2011 and Figure 4*

The parkland by neighbourhood comparison shows that:

- Timberlea, the most populated neighbourhood in the urban service area, is well served with parkland, with approximately 7.6 ha per 1,000 residents.
- Abasand, Beacon Hill, Gregoire, and the Lower Townsite have less parkland than the Canadian standard. Abasand and Beacon Hill are the most underserved with less than 1.0 ha per 1,000 residents.
- Thickwood and Waterways show as significantly over-served with parkland, however this is due to the presence of the Birchwood Trails and Horse Pasture Park, which are the RMWB's largest parks and serve as regional destinations.

Parsons Creek is not included in the comparison as this is a new neighbourhood and its park facilities are still under development under the guidance of the Parsons Creek Outline Plans.

3.3.3 COMPARATIVE COMMUNITIES ANALYSIS

Every community is unique in its geography, economy, values, and opportunities. However, comparisons offer useful reference points against which the RMWB can measure its amenities and identify significant gaps. For this purpose, an inventory of the RMWB's park amenities was compared to the average provided in five similar-sized communities in Alberta (see table below). This analysis provides a "snapshot" of current park amenities by which the RMWB can evaluate current and future levels of service.

Table 5. Comparative Communities Analysis – Urban Service Area.

Park Amenities (per 1,000 population)	Comparison Communities (avg) ¹	RMWB (Urban Service Area)	RMWB's Current Level of Service
Outdoor rinks	0.36	0.09	Lower
Tennis courts	0.26	0.18	Lower
Rectangular fields ²	0.72	0.32	Lower
Ball diamonds	0.52	0.42	Lower
Community gardens	0.05	0.03	Lower
BMX / bike skills parks	0.01	0.01	On Par
Off leash dog parks	0.04	0.05	Higher
Sport courts	0.07	0.09	Higher
Skate parks	0.02	0.05	Higher
Spray parks	0.03	0.10	Higher

¹ Comparison communities include: Fort Saskatchewan, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, St. Albert, Fort St. John

² Soccer, football, etc.

While the above comparison provides an interesting "snapshot" it must be interpreted with caution due to a number of unique characteristics about the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo which set it apart from the comparison communities and have an effect the demand for park amenities.

Some of the challenges of using data from other communities include:

- Geography – some areas of the community are highly segregated by obstacles such as river crossings, plateaus or development islands that restrict accessibility of one area to another. Amenities therefore cannot be reasonably shared between two neighbourhoods as they are physically separated;
- Remote location – some service areas within the RMWB have large geographical isolation from neighbouring communities;
- Climate – extreme cold weather conditions in northern communities encourage different types of activities than you would find in more southern communities, therefore metrics may not align, and
- Daylight – daylight hours of northern communities are much different than southerly ones, with very long summer days and very short winter days, which creates both opportunities and constraints in using outdoor spaces under daylight conditions.



Appendix B – Park Amenities Analysis provides more detail regarding the Municipality’s inventory of specific amenities such as playgrounds, spray parks, sports fields and courts, dog parks, community gardens and nature-oriented recreation.

3.3.4 CURRENT PARKLAND SUPPLY – KEY FINDINGS

The parkland supply analysis indicates that:

- The RMWB has approximately 9.9 hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents which is higher than the Canadian median;
- In the Parks Master Plan public survey (2017), the majority of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the number of parks available to use.
- The urban service area neighbourhoods of Timberlea, Thickwood and Waterways are very well served with parks; Abasand, Beacon Hill, Gregoire and the Lower Townsite are underserved with parkland, and
- A comparison with five similar sized communities in Alberta shows that the RMWB has a lower than average number of rectangular fields, tennis courts and outdoor rinks, while it has a higher than average number of skate parks, spray parks, sport courts, bike skills parks and off-leash dog parks.

3.4 DISTRIBUTION OF PARKLAND – ACCESSIBILITY

As mentioned above, while population-based parkland supply and adequacy standards and comparisons are a useful tool, they alone cannot address all of the unique conditions, needs and goals of specific neighbourhoods. How well a community is served also depends on equitable distribution of parks. For example, if a community has a high amount of parkland in hectares per 1,000 population, but the parks are all located at the perimeter of the town, they may be relatively inaccessible, particularly for children. To address the impacts of Fort McMurray's ridge and valley geography as well as the transportation corridors that transect the community, a measure of "walkability," or relative accessibility of a park, provides an additional meaningful indicator of parkland adequacy.

A five to ten-minute walking distance is a common proximity standard for most primary urban activities such as shopping, transportation, schools and parks and reflects a commonly-used metric for planning and design of sustainable communities (used by Walk Score, the Trust for Public Land, National Recreation and Park Association, and the Urban Land Institute). Most people are willing to walk five to ten minutes (approximately 400 to 800 metres, "as the crow flies") to reach a minor destination such as a bus stop or a playground. The maps on the following pages illustrate walking radii for a five and ten-minute walk to parks within the urban service area of Fort McMurray. The key information gleaned from this analysis is the identification of park-deficient areas where residents are not adequately served by parks according to the walkability standard. The type and quality of park was not included in this assessment, nor was the presence of safe pedestrian or cycling routes.

3.4.1 ACCESSIBILITY - KEY FINDINGS:

As illustrated on the following map, the RMWB's urban service area is well endowed with parks, with parkland within a five to ten-minute walk of most residents. However, three neighbourhoods are deficient in parkland within a ten-minute walk: Abasand, Beacon Hill and the Lower Townsite. Parsons Creek is not included in the accessibility analysis as it is a future growth area still under development under the guidance of a phased Outline Plan. Areas in Gregoire not covered by walking radii are zoned as Business Industrial.

The walkability analysis illustrates the importance of developing additional park sites in deficient areas in order to meet parkland distribution objectives. It also highlights the importance of the Birchwood Trails as a key natural open space within the urban service area of Fort McMurray.

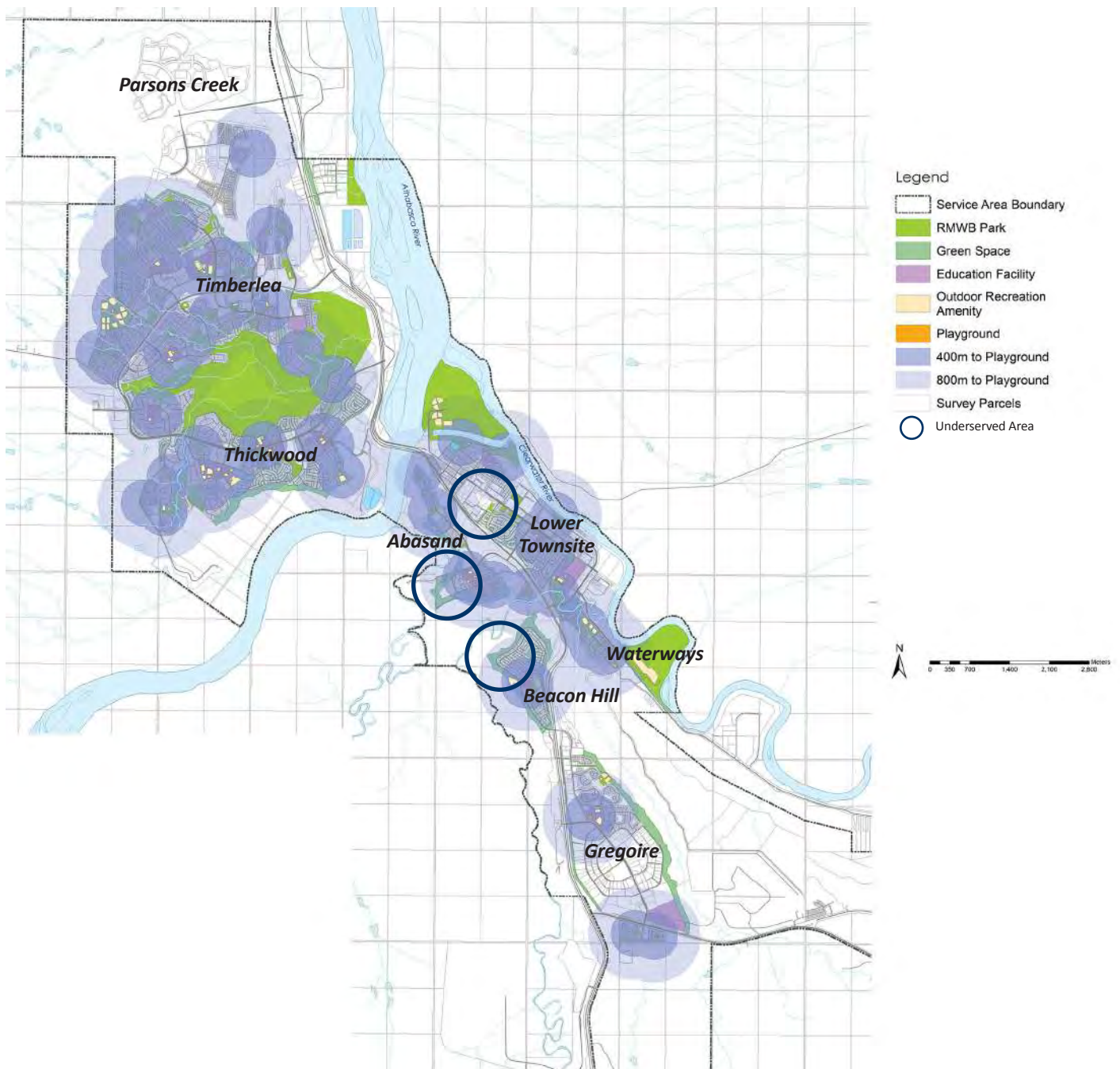


Figure 9. Walkability Analysis – 400m and 800m Radius from Municipal Parks (Urban Service Area).

4 ENGAGEMENT

WHAT WE HEARD

4.1 STAFF INPUT – KEY THEMES

During the current Parks Master Plan process a series of toolbox workshops and interviews were held with RMWB staff, with over 30 individuals participating. During the engagements RMWB staff identified several key areas that need to be considered and addressed to enable improvements in park services and outcomes.

These included:

- Find ways to improve park service delivery and outcomes by identifying priorities that will yield the greatest benefits and improve efficiency;
- Provide strategies and criteria to achieve more sustainable maintenance levels of park spaces;
- Provide strategies for improved winter maintenance;
- Address the issues and opportunities associated with off highway vehicle use;
- Provide recommendations for policies, bylaws, guidelines and programs that are needed to integrate best practices in park management and operations;
- Review and revise the Engineering Servicing Standards to achieve best practices in park design and construction unique to the conditions of the RMWB, and
- Review operational budgets to better align with the desired level of service and outcomes.

4.2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT INPUT – KEY THEMES

4.2.1 2017 PARKS MASTER PLAN PUBLIC SURVEY

In fall 2017, RMWB staff conducted a combined public survey for the Parks Master Plan and the Urban Forest Strategy. Hard copies of the survey were available for residents to fill out from September 21 to 23 at the Fall Trade Show & Market and at rmwb.ca from September 21 to November 30, 2017.

The public survey received 737 valid responses. Numerical responses were objectively assessed and are reported in **Appendix C**. The survey also provided the opportunity for residents to provide written comments in a number of areas – over 500 comments were provided.

General themes from the survey relevant to the Parks Master Plan have been summarized below. Where “public survey” is referenced in this plan, it relates to the 2017 Parks Master Plan Survey, unless stated otherwise.



Figure 10. Survey Responses and Frequency of use of the parks system.

- The majority of respondents were between 25 and 54 years of age.
- Most respondents reported using the RMWB’s parks on a weekly basis.
- Walking was reported as the preferred activity when using the parks and trails, followed by biking and dog walking.
- Feeling unsafe was cited as the greatest barrier to using the park system more frequently, followed by lack of time.
- Overall, respondents reported a high level of satisfaction with the parks system, especially the variety of outdoor trails, and the maintenance of parks, playgrounds and trails.
- Respondents were least satisfied with the availability of off-leash dog parks.

Themes for areas of improvement to the parks system include:

- A desire for more trees in parks (not enough shade);
- Expand playground behind schools in Eagle Ridge;
- Safer and expanded trails along Real Martin Drive;
- More/expanded skate parks;
- More benches, picnic tables, restrooms;
- Better fiscal management by RMWB;
- Encourage programming and activities in parks and trails;
- Address OHV/ATV issues;
- More winter use of trails;
- Increase accessibility for wheel chairs, seniors, etc.;
- Address off-leash dog issues, and
- Don't forget the rural hamlets.



Feeling unsafe is the most mentioned obstacle to visiting RMWB parks more often.



The next most mentioned barriers are **lack of time** and **inconvenient location**.

Figure 11. Barriers to using the parks system more frequently.

A detailed summary of the public survey results and a copy of the survey is included in **Appendix C**.

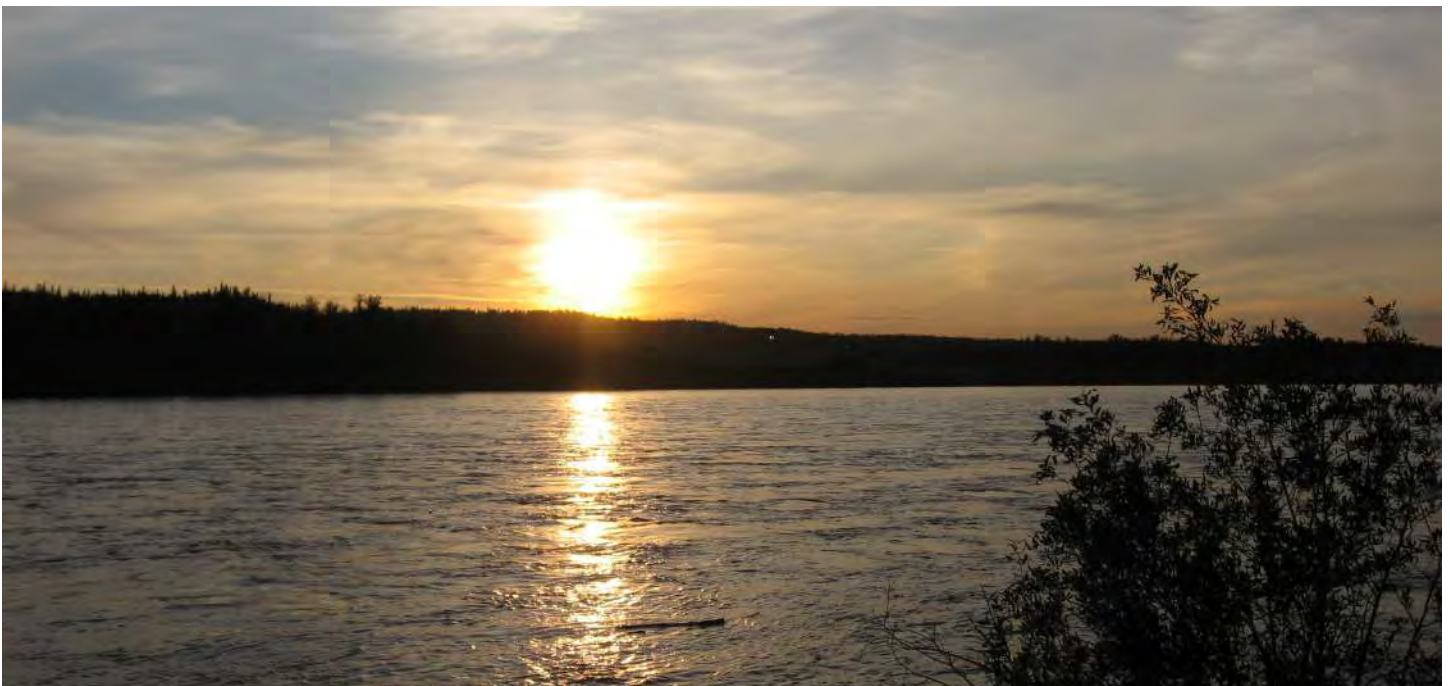


Figure 12. Frequently occurring words used in respondent comments in the RMWB's 2017 Parks Master Plan public survey.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO TOMORROW?

This section of the plan contains the municipal-wide guiding principles for parks which set the stage for realizing the RWMB's vision for the parks system. This section also describes proposed strategies and recommendations for parkland acquisition and disposition, and specific recommendations for parkland in the urban service area and rural communities. A prioritization of recommendations follows in Section 7.



Athabasca River in Fort McMurray.

5.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PARKS

This Parks Master Plan reflects the following guiding principles for the RMWB parks system:

1. To meet the recreational needs of all residents, every day, all year round, to support both daytime and night-time activities;
2. To understand and consider the importance of both structured and unstructured recreation experiences within the mix of opportunities for both residents and visitors;
3. To grow and develop parks and open spaces as a dynamic process;
4. To provide a program for sustainable operation and maintenance of park assets, and
5. To integrate living, playing and connectivity into our trails and open spaces.

These principles set the stage for the recommendations contained within this plan, by establishing a clear framework that will be the touchstone for future departmental decision-making and evaluation of progress and success as the Parks Master Plan is implemented.

5.2 PARKLAND ACQUISITION AND DISPOSITION

5.2.1 PARKLAND ACQUISITION

As discussed in Section 3, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has a reasonable supply of overall parkland and a variety of park types. However, there are some locations where a lack of parkland accessibility or uneven provision of amenities warrants the acquisition or development of new parkland. Recommendations for parkland acquisition within this master plan focus on the following areas: along the waterfront in both urban and rural service areas to increase public riverfront and lakefront access (including implementation of the Waterfront Enhancements); within neighbourhoods deficient in parkland within a 10-minute walk of all residents; and to create more opportunities for residents and visitors to access natural and cultural landscapes and nature-based recreation.

Several specific acquisitions are recommended within this plan to support the growth of the parks system as well as upgrading of some of the older parks. As the RMWB continues to grow, parkland acquisition criteria can help to ensure that new parks meet intended uses, and that appropriate parkland sites are identified through the planning process as future neighbourhoods undergo planning and development as part of future urban expansion.

5.2.2 PARKLAND DISPOSITION

In rare cases it may be appropriate to transfer, sell, or otherwise dispose of unnecessary and under-used parks for better parkland elsewhere. However, disposition of parkland can trigger a series of legal requirements that can be onerous and can risk community opposition, unless there are compelling reasons to justify the sale. Financial gains should not be the sole or driving factor in disposing of parkland.

At this time, it is recommended that all existing parks remain within the parks system in order to meet the future needs of the region. In the future, parkland disposition should be considered by the Municipality where the transfer, exchange, or sale of a property may be necessary to acquire a more contiguous parcel or generate funds for more appropriate acquisitions.

5.2.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Adopt the Parkland Acquisition and Disposition Criteria included in Appendix D when identifying future parkland for acquisition or considering disposition of unnecessary or under-used parkland.

5.3 RMWB PARKS: GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 ANALYSIS

The following is a summary of region-wide issues and key findings related to RMWB parkland, that were identified through the course of the background review, site visits, staff workshops and public engagement: There is interest from community groups to play an increased role in park stewardship. Examples include the Fort McMurray Chess Club that sponsors casual chess meet ups in Dickensfield Park, and an interest in Conklin to have summer students engaged in maintenance of the St. Vincent Cemetery.

- The RMWB has a community rink program (for small, unboarded rinks), however the program is not well subscribed. With more uptake, this initiative could help to address the region's lack of informal, family skating areas.
- Trails are celebrated in Fort McMurray; activities associated with trail use, such as walking, biking and dog walking were cited as the top three activities by respondents in the public survey. There is a desire for increased trail development especially along the waterfront and expanded winter use of trails.
- In the public survey, many community members cited a need for more shaded areas in parks to protect park users from the sun in summer months. The Urban Forestry program currently plants trees in parks and green spaces, however it takes time until they mature.
- Residents and staff cited a desire for increased winter maintenance, especially grooming and packing of trails. There is an interest in exploring opportunities for increasing winter uses in parks and increasing public access to winter recreational activities.
- Increasingly busy lives and rigorous shift work schedules make it increasingly difficult for RMWB residents to fit recreation into convenient time slots during daylight hours, especially in winter months when daylight is limited.
- Off highway vehicle conflicts are common on multiuse trails and in parks within the urban and rural service areas; there is a lack of clarity around designated OHV staging areas within and

straddling the urban service area. In some park locations, access control measures (i.e., barriers and fencing) have been ineffective in preventing OHV access. There is a desire for a continued emphasis on bylaw enforcement and education throughout the region.

- There is an interest in urban agriculture opportunities within parks, such as community gardens and orchards. Participation in community gardening was one of the top ten activities listed by respondents in the public survey. The rural communities of Anzac, Conklin, Fort Chipewyan and Janvier South already have community garden plots which are well used, especially by elders.
- Staff and community members desire further celebration of waterfront areas to create vibrant public spaces along the waterfront, and strong connections with the region's rivers and lakes.
- There is a desire to incorporate more public art into public parks spaces in order to build a visually rich environment, develop, promote and support local artistic talent and reflect the diverse cultural character and heritage of the Wood Buffalo region.
- The RMWB has a large, accessible and well used network of playgrounds, with almost all residents living within a 10-minute walk to a playground. However, in the public survey many respondents noted a lack of diversity in the play equipment available for different age groups, such as toddlers.
- While the RMWB has a reasonable supply of parkland and a variety of park types, there is a sense that passive open spaces are disappearing; staff have observed a demand for more unprogrammed open space.
- The 2016 Horse River Wildfire has led to the creation of firebreak zones behind residential lots where vegetation will be managed to minimize future wildfire threats. The RMWB is engaging in a planning process and public information sessions separate from this master plan, to consider how to optimize and manage trail restoration and public use and access in these open spaces.

5.3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to address the above issues, it is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Increase and promote opportunities for community ownership, building on initiatives such as the community rink program, and Adopt-A-Park program. Partnerships should be established with neighbourhood or community organizations rather than individuals.
2. Plan for trails with more of a network-based approach opposed to project by project to assure regional connectivity and a larger outlook on trail use patterns.
3. Prioritize tree planting to provide increased shade in existing parks, with a focus on playgrounds, spray parks, picnic areas, and seating areas.
4. Expand winter access to parks and trails by undertaking winter packing of select trail routes, such as the Little Fisheries Trail.

-
5. Support the development of a Winter City Strategy for the RMWB to encourage and promote outdoor winter life. Develop goals and actions to:
 - Make it easier to access and promote “outside play” during the winter, by promoting four season design, providing places to warm up, and supporting new winter activities and festivals,
 - Develop outdoor design strategies to manage weather conditions, such as managing and mitigating wind and optimizing sunshine exposure,
 - Develop outdoor design strategies that add visual interest in winter, such as the use of colour to enliven the city,
 - Provide infrastructure to support desired winter activities and programs,
 - Create opportunities and develop guidelines for use of fire in outdoor public spaces (i.e., community fire pits, fireplaces, bonfires and heaters); consider the risks associated with liability and CPTED when developing the guidelines;
 - Support increased lighting within selected parks, trails and amenities to encourage an outside lifestyle, create visual interest, provide a sense of safety (enhance CPTED) for residents with increasingly busy lives; promote and post signage in the parks to indicate their extended hours; consider lighting in parks where noise during extended hours would be appropriate;
 - Identify safe ice surfaces for activities such as community skating rinks, and avoid unsafe places such as stormwater management facilities;
 - Promote use of lighting to create visual interest, such as multicolour lighting on buildings, bridges, vegetation, and landmarks during the winter season;
 - Promote winter patios, winter festivals and events, and free day activities (e.g. skiing, snowshoeing, skating, including accessible equipment rentals) to allow community members to enjoy and try out winter activities, and
 - Encourage winter transportation for pedestrians and cyclists ensuring key trails, including some paved trails, are clearly marked and groomed for winter use.
 6. Incorporate public art in municipal park spaces under the Public Art Policy (PRL-160). Support the development of a public art plan.
 7. Ensure that Parks staff consider Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) in park design, improving safety as needed.

8. Support the implementation of recommendations in the RMWB Off Highway Vehicle Master Plan (2016) to: develop design standards for OHV staging areas in the Engineering Servicing Standards; formalize new sanctioned OHV staging areas north and south of Fort McMurray; resolve conflict between local bylaws prohibiting OHVs in the urban service area yet having OHV staging areas within city limits; and increase enforcement of illegitimate OHV use.
9. Reconfigure access control (i.e., fencing and barriers) at key parks impacted by OHV use.
10. Promote and pursue partnerships with the McMurray Sno-Drifters, Fort McMurray ATV Club and McMurray Dirt Riders, in the provision of OHV staging areas and support amenities.
11. Undertake development of a sport fields strategy and review that includes direct input from sport user group representatives and stakeholders, to inform demand for specific outdoor sport facilities and amenities.
12. Expand the community garden program incrementally, where there is a demonstrated demand. Where possible, locate community gardens next to other family-oriented amenities such as playgrounds. In the rural communities this should include the identification, enhancement and protection of berry picking sites within the hamlets.
13. Build on the RMWB's Adopt-A-Park program by adding guidelines and requirements for community groups wishing to establish community gardens on RMWB-owned lands. For an example see: <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/Parks/Pages/Programs/Community-gardens.aspx>
14. As existing playgrounds are upgraded, and equipment is replaced, diversify the range of play experiences available by creating adventure and nature play environments that offer a mix of traditional and natural features. Ensure playgrounds support inclusive play and a range of ages and abilities.
15. Consider lighting in key open spaces to extend park use into the evening and nighttime, especially in the winter, and to enhance perceptions of safety and security.

5.4 URBAN SERVICE AREA – PARK RECOMMENDATIONS BY NEIGHBOURHOOD

The following sections outline specific actions for park facilities in the urban service area of Fort McMurray by neighbourhood. The areas addressed include: Abasand, Beacon Hill, Thickwood, Gregoire, Timberlea, the Lower Townsite and Waterways (Municipal Development Plan, 2011). Parsons Creek is not included in the park by neighbourhood recommendations as this is a new neighbourhood and its park facilities are still under development under the guidance of the Parsons Creek Outline Plans.

5.5 ABASAND HEIGHTS

5.5.1 DESCRIPTION

Municipal park facilities in Abasand include a skate park, storm pond, cemetery, an OHV staging area, and three neighbourhood parks with playgrounds.

5.5.2 ANALYSIS

The Abasand OHV staging area is poorly configured as a turnaround for trucks and trailers. Lack of enforcement of responsible OHV use is a concern for residents. Many of the parks and facilities in Abasand were impacted by the 2016 Horse River Wildfire and are being rebuilt. As noted in Section 3.3.2, the neighbourhood of Abasand is underserved with parkland, with less than 1.0 ha of parkland land per 1,000 residents. Abasand is also deficient in parkland within a 10-minute walk of most residents. Notably, there is a lack of parkland in the southwest corner of the neighbourhood (see Section 3.4.1)

5.5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Explore opportunities to develop new neighbourhood parkland in the southwest corner of Abasand to address parkland deficiency. Due to land constraints in this area, consider creation of a new linear park or pocket park within the fire break zone.
2. Enhance the functionality of the existing Abasand OHV staging area and expand the area for other multi-modal users such as pedestrians and cyclists. Establish an interpretive trail within the Horse River Valley with access from the Abasand staging area. Develop amenities within the Horse River Valley to act as a destination for trail users.



The existing Abasand OHV staging area should be improved and expanded into a staging area for other multi-modal users to access the Horse River.



The Athabasca Avenue Storm Pond should be piloted as an off-leash dog park for the Abasand neighbourhood.

3. Establish a new interpretive trail within the Horse River Valley with access from the Abasand staging area. Develop a loop trail with interpretive signage, viewpoints, and picnic sites. Work with community partners, including the McMurray Métis (Local #1935) and the Alberta Culture and Tourism Heritage Division, to develop historical interpretation along the trail to tell the story of the Horse River, including the valley's significant natural features and the site's past industrial uses as a mill, gravel quarry, salt mine and site of early oil sands development.
4. Continue the re-establishment of trails and benches within firebreak areas.
5. Trial an off-leash area pilot project within the existing storm pond on Athabasca Avenue, and gather public input, to establish if there is demand for a permanent off-leash area within Abasand; create separate areas for small and large dogs.

5.6 BEACON HILL

5.6.1 DESCRIPTION

Municipal park facilities in Beacon Hill include a storm pond, a paved trail system, a neighbourhood park with a tennis court, an off-leash dog park, and a picnic shelter.

5.6.2 ANALYSIS

Beacon Hill is bordered by a very popular multiuse trail along its perimeter; several open spaces along the trail offer opportunities for linear parks. Staff report that the off-leash dog park has poor sightlines and would benefit from re-grading and clearing of some vegetation to improve the overall sense of safety. The existing tennis court in Frank Lacroix Park receives limited use. With its ridge top topography, the Beacon Hill neighbourhood has opportunities for scenic viewpoints and lookouts overlooking the Hangingstone River. As noted in Section 3.3.2, the Beacon Hill neighbourhood is underserved with parkland, with less than 1.0 ha of parkland land per 1,000 residents. Beacon Hill is also deficient in parkland within a 10-minute walk of most residents. Notably, there is a lack of parkland in the northern part of the neighbourhood (see Section 3.4.1).

5.6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Consult with local user groups regarding the use of the Beacon Hill tennis court to determine if it should be upgraded to accommodate alternative uses. The tennis court is located on a reservoir. As such, upgrading could include repainting for sports such as pickleball, ball hockey or a modular pump track. However, drilling into the concrete reservoir pad (i.e., basketball hoops) is not an option.
2. Re-grade the off-leash dog park and clear vegetation to improve sightlines and the overall sense of safety.

-
3. Develop two additional neighbourhood parks within Beacon Hill to address parkland deficiency and ensure access to parks within a 10-minute walk for all residents. New park facilities should include:
 - a. Designate a new neighbourhood park within the existing turfed green space along Beacon Hill Drive (west). Consider a passive open space and horseshoe pits. Pursue an alternative grass mix in this area to reduce mowing and maintenance requirements.
 - b. Establish a neighbourhood park on the east side of Beacon Hill Drive where there is an existing picnic shelter. Consider a nature play area at this location.
 4. Develop a demonstration forest on a selected track of open space lands impacted by the wildfire to provide educational opportunities about boreal forest succession, diversity and wildfire ecology. Establish an interpretive walk and with educational nodes, picnic area, lookout/bird observation tower and parking area.
 5. Create trails on existing PULs to increase trail access for all residential areas.
 6. Add additional seating areas and viewpoints along the perimeter trail.



Existing forest impacted by the Horse River wildfire offers opportunities for development of an interpretive trail about boreal forest ecology.



The Beacon Hill perimeter trail has several open spaces which could be developed as neighbourhood parks.

5.7 THICKWOOD

5.7.1 DESCRIPTION

Thickwood is the second most populated neighbourhood in the urban service area. Municipal park facilities in Thickwood include a bike park, a cemetery, several school grounds, several district, community, and neighbourhood parks, and one regional park, the Birchwood Trails.

5.7.2 ANALYSIS

The Birchwood Trails are a gem of the RMWB's park system and support a variety of outdoor recreation and nature-oriented activities. They feature an extensive trail network that is maintained through a partnership

with the Ptarmigan Nordic Ski Club (PNSC), who are active in the development and seasonal (winter) maintenance of the trails. The PNSC operates out of the Doug Barnes Cabin.

Thickwood has a popular community garden at Helen Pacholko Park, and the only off-leash dog park north of the river, located at the St. Gabriel School/Hinge Bay site. In the public survey, residents cited a desire for improved cycling facilities along Real Martin Drive towards the golf course. Thickwood is well served in parkland overall. It has the second highest ratio of parkland per capita in the urban service area, with 18 ha of parkland per 1,000 residents. This is due primarily to the presence of the Birchwood Trails system.

5.7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Continue to engage with the Ptarmigan Nordic Ski Club and local naturalist clubs to optimize the management and community use of the Birchwood Trails. Continue to update maps, wayfinding and information markers to encourage safe and enjoyable experiences for all trail users.
2. Pursue the acquisition of lands adjacent to the Woodlawn Cemetery for the development of a regional nature park. This area contains a broad mix of natural features including mixed wood forests, treed lowlands, and riparian and shrub and sage wetlands created as a result of natural features and beaver dams. Develop as a natural area with trails, boardwalks, and wildlife viewing platforms.
3. Establish a partnership with the Fort McMurray Chess Club to expand programming at Dickens Drive Park. Explore opportunities to provide additional shade for chess tables. Rename the park in consultation with community members.
4. Engage with user groups such as the Wood Buffalo Cycling Club to explore options to improve access to popular cycling areas in Thickwood (i.e., access to the Little Fisheries Trail, extension of multiuse trail along Real Martin Drive).



The Birchwood Trails system is a highlight of the RMWB parks system.



The Fort McMurray Chess Club hosts casual outdoor chess nights at Dickensfield Park. (Photo: Fort McMurray Chess Club)

5.8 GREGOIRE

5.8.1 DESCRIPTION

Municipal park facilities in Gregoire include Moberly Community Park, the Greely Road School grounds. Additionally, Gregoire has several private condo developments with playgrounds.

5.8.2 ANALYSIS

Moberly is the only community park in Gregoire. It contains a turf soccer field, a defunct ball diamond, parking area, benches, an informal lawn area, and a temporary off-leash dog park. The park has the potential for further development to improve its use and functionality. The Greely Road School grounds include ball diamonds, a soccer field, basketball court, outdoor rink and a playground. In the neighbourhood parkland analysis (Section 3.3.2), it was found that Gregoire is underserved with parkland, with only 1.5 ha of parkland land per 1,000 residents.

5.8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Undertake plans to explore the use and functionality of Moberly Park. Engage local residents for input regarding desired improvements. Consider improvements such as a natural playground, permanent off-leash dog park and improved trail connections.



As a hub of the Gregoire neighbourhood, the Moberly Community Park could be further developed to improve its use and functionality.



Moberly Community Park.

5.9 TIMBERLEA

5.9.1 DESCRIPTION

Municipal park facilities in Timberlea include many school grounds, district, community, and neighbourhood parks, and one regional park, Syncrude Athletic Park, which has tournament level fields and facilities built to host international level games.

5.9.2 ANALYSIS

The neighbourhood of Timberlea is well-served with 7.6 hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents. Highlights of the park system include access to the Birchwood Trails, the Syncrude Athletic Park, and an excellent back of lot trail system. While Timberlea is the most populated of the urban service area neighbourhoods, it does not have an off-leash dog park. In the public survey Timberlea residents cited lack of an off-leash area, and lack of playground space at the Walter and Gladys Hill Public School as priorities.

5.9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Trial an off-leash dog area at the Prospect Drive Storm Pond as a pilot project, and gather public feedback, to evaluate demand for a permanent off-leash facility at this location. This green space has sufficient area to create separate areas for small and large dogs. Consider the adjacent wooded lot for future park expansion, such as an off-leash trail.
2. Establish a second off-leash dog park at the storm pond in Parsons Creek North to provide an additional off-leash facility for residents north of the river.
3. Work with the Fort McMurray Public School District and parent groups to create an additional playground at the Walter and Gladys Hill Public School site in Eagle Ridge.



Syncrude Athletic Park in Timberlea has tournament level fields and facilities.



Aerial view of Syncrude Athletic Park.

5.10 LOWER TOWNSITE

5.10.1 DESCRIPTION

Municipal park facilities in the Lower Townsite include many neighbourhood parks, a cemetery, three school ground sites, three community parks (Lions Park, Heritage Park and Borealis Park), and two regional facilities: Snye Point Park and MacDonald Island Park. MacDonald Island Park is operated by the non-profit Regional Recreation Corporation of Wood Buffalo and is not included in the scope of this Master Plan.

5.10.2 ANALYSIS

In 2012, RMWB Council approved the Waterfront Enhancements, which outlines design principles and site programming actions to create a vibrant, safe and comfortable public open space along Fort McMurray's waterfront within the Lower Townsite and Waterways. The Snye Point Park was recently expanded and features green space, pathways, seating, beach volleyball and public water access including a public boat launch. Snye Point Park is used for community gatherings and events such as music festivals, canoe/kayak and rowing events, and the WinterPLAY Shootout on the Snye. The Athabasca River which runs through Fort McMurray is a key component of the Trans Canada Trail water route to the Arctic Ocean, which makes the Snye a logical staging point for future recreation and tourism opportunities related to the Trans Canada Trail.

The Lower Townsite has a variety of open spaces, including most of the community's public riverfront access. The Lower Townsite lacks an urban campground in proximity to the City Centre, and two of the Lower Townsite's community parks (Borealis Park and Lions Park) are in need of some upgrading. The Lower Townsite's third community park – Heritage Park – is run by the Fort McMurray Historical Society as a historic cultural site. While the Lower Townsite contains several flagship parks, the neighbourhood parkland analysis (Section 3.3.2), showed that the Lower Townsite is underserved with parkland overall, with only 3.3 ha of parkland land per 1,000 residents.

5.10.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Pursue implementation of the Waterfront Enhancements within the Lower Townsite, with an emphasis on providing additional riverfront park space that is universally accessible, community gardens and improved public access to the water. An overview of park concepts approved as part of the Waterfront Enhancements are provided in **Appendix E**.
2. Continue pursuing the acquisition of three land parcels along the waterfront, north of Franklin Avenue and east of Prairie Loop Boulevard to expand The Prairie Park proposed in the Waterfront Enhancements. Pursue the re-grading of flood prone areas within the Prairie parcel to create land suitable for development of a campground.
3. Trial a temporary seasonal public skating area at Snye Point Park in conjunction with the WinterPLAY festival to address the lack of informal, family-friendly skating areas in the urban service area. Strict monitoring of ice stability is essential prior to arranging any public access onto the ice.

4. Provide an area at Snye Point Park with surfacing suitable for heavy traffic (i.e., grass grid or geo-grid pavers) to minimize turf damage during festivals and events.
5. Establish a Trans Canada Trailhead and signage at the Snye. Apply for future funding as the Trans Canada Trail pursues development of the Athabasca River water route as a future recreation and tourism resource within northeastern Alberta.
6. Explore a partnership to manage Lions Park with the goal of expanding the Park's potential use, revenue generation and programming opportunities for the Fort McMurray Historical Society. Consider booking of facilities for activities such as group picnics, weddings or other events. Perform a condition assessment of the park's washroom, and upgrade as necessary.
7. Pursue the development of Roche Island as a Dark Sky Park. Consider seasonal access to Roche Island (i.e., seasonal ice bridge or floating bridge) to accommodate river break up and freeze up. The Dark Sky Park should include an observatory, telescopes, and viewing areas to take in the night sky. Liaise with Fort McMurray Tourism to discuss potential areas of alignment with their ongoing projects (i.e., Tourism Product Development Plan, and Northern Lights Viewing Site Investment Prospectus).



Borealis Park provides opportunities for water and nature-oriented recreation in the heart of the Lower Townsite.



Lions Park has a beautiful setting on the Hangingstone River but is underutilized as a community destination.

5.11 WATERWAYS

5.11.1 DESCRIPTION

Municipal park facilities in Waterways include one district park (J. Howard Pew Memorial Park), two neighbourhood parks and one regional park (Horse Pasture Park). Horse Pasture (Sitskaw) Park has a large parking area, two public boat launches, an off-leash dog park, and an OHV staging area.

5.11.2 ANALYSIS

Horse Pasture Park is very well used and is a regional destination due to its facilities that accommodate staging for both boating and OHV use. It has a well used off-leash dog park that may be relocated within the same general area in the near future to accommodate a new transportation corridor. Further developments within Horse Pasture Park are planned as part of the Council approved Waterfront Program. J. Howard Pew Memorial Park is very popular, especially with Waterways residents. The Class 'A' field is well maintained; however, the existing tennis court is rarely used. The outdoor hockey rink in Waterways Park is very well used. Waterways has the urban service area's highest ratio of parkland per capita, due primarily to the presence of Horse Pasture Park and a low population of residents in that community.

5.11.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Pursue implementation of the Waterfront Enhancements within Waterways, with an emphasis on pursuing development of a disc golf park and Métis-themed gathering space in Horse Pasture Park. If the disc golf park cannot be accommodated within Horse Pasture Park due to transportation corridor conflicts, consider alternative locations within Waterways.
2. Engage with local user groups regarding the use of the Waterways tennis court. Feedback to determine if the court should be upgraded or replaced with a multiuse hard court surface that can accommodate alternative uses such as basketball nets, pickleball, ball hockey and a modular pump track. If land remediation requires relocation of the tennis court from its current location, consider alternate locations, such as beside the boarded hockey rink.
3. Explore the expansion and upgrading of the outdoor hockey rink in Waterways Park in consultation with local user groups. Upgrades to be considered should include the addition of spectator seating, storage, other amenities to enhance its use.



Splash Park at J. Howard Pew Memorial Park

5.12 RURAL COMMUNITIES – PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

The following sections outline specific recommendations for parks in the south rural service areas. The communities addressed include: Anzac, Conklin, Draper, Fort Chipewyan, Gregoire Lake Estates, Janvier South, and Saprae Creek.

5.13 ANZAC

5.13.1 DESCRIPTION

Municipal park facilities in Anzac include a playground, ball diamond, placemaking node and community garden, cemetery, a paved linear trail, and a new multiuse facility called the Anzac Recreation Centre. Outdoor amenities at the recreation centre include a Class 'A' softball diamond, football field, soccer field (all fields have irrigation and lighting), a basketball court, playground, skate park, informal lawn area and multiuse loop trail.

5.13.2 ANALYSIS

Anzac's paved linear trail has bench nodes with seating and trash bins, per the Engineering Servicing Standard, however, the trail could be extended to further connect key open space and community destinations. The site of the old community hall is a paved surface with access to washrooms and lighting but is currently not programmed for a specific use. The community garden is centrally located but lacks sun exposure. The trees and shrubs at the cemetery has been well maintained, however the gravel roads need upkeep, and there is turf rutting due to grave opening and closing during the winter. The Anzac schoolyards are not maintained by the RMWB except for the planters which are used by elders. The newly built Anzac Recreation Centre is used for hosting multi-sport events, as well as informal recreation, and community events such as movie night. Community members also use the facilities at the nearby Gregoire Lake Provincial Park Day Use Area. There was a northern lights viewing station at the privately owned Camp Yogi on Gregoire Lake, however it was damaged in the 2016 Horse River Wildfire; a study is underway to determine if it should be replaced at this location.



The Anzac playground is in good condition and well-maintained.



The Anzac Recreation Centre can host multi-sport events, as well as informal recreation and community gatherings.

5.13.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Clear trees at the placemaking node community gardens to improve sun exposure for the garden plots and provide area for expansion.
2. Consider opportunities for new recreational amenities and activities in Anzac including more community gardening plots, ball hockey, pickleball, skateboarding, a community market, or other community events.
3. Develop a wayfinding signage program within the community including park identification and signage. Designate official names for unnamed parks to enhance community identity and celebrate the unique character and history of Anzac.
4. Establish a municipally owned day use site on Willow Lake, north of Gregoire Lake Provincial Park. Consider development of a community boat launch, picnic area, pedestrian trails and an OHV staging area at this location.
5. Extend the paved multiuse trail along Stony Mountain Road to the community placemaking node.
6. Work with community stakeholders to establish a trail network within existing open space lands to provide for walking and bicycle connectivity from Anzac's established neighbourhoods to Willow Lake and other recreational areas, as proposed in the Anzac Area Structure Plan Land Use Concept (2012).

5.14 CONKLIN

5.14.1 DESCRIPTION

Municipal park facilities in Conklin include a softball field, two playgrounds, two cemeteries, a boat launch, dock and placemaking viewpoint at Christina Lake, a placemaking node picnic area and community garden next to the Nakewin Centre. Adjacent to the Nakewin Centre is an outdoor covered rink that is no longer used for its intended purpose. A new multiuse recreational facility, the Conklin Multiplex, opened in mid-2018. Outdoor amenities at the multiplex will include a football/soccer field with lighting and seating, horseshoe pits, walking trails, picnic areas and a large parking lot.

5.14.2 ANALYSIS

Conklin has limited land available for new park development. Community celebrations are currently held at the school or the informal lawn area adjacent to the softball field. The old outdoor covered rink sometimes serves as a informal meeting area. The parks in Conklin generally lack signage and identification. There is a boat launch on Christina Lake Drive which accommodates non-motorized boating access to Christina Lake, however motorized boating access could be enhanced. The community garden at the Nakewin Centre is well used by the community, and popular with elders.

5.14.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Develop an all-season pedestrian trail from the Community Core to Christina Lake. This would enhance connectivity from residences to surrounding natural areas, open space amenities and Christina Lake.
2. Develop park identification and trailhead signage; work with community members to designate official names for unnamed parks to enhance community identity and celebrate the unique character and history of Conklin.
3. Extend the paved linear trail along Northland Drive from the Water Treatment Plant to Conklin Corner at Hwy 881. Add amenity nodes along the trail (with seating, trash bins, shade trees) in line with the Engineering Servicing Standards.
4. Consider opportunities for new recreational amenities and activities in Conklin including more community gardening plots, ball hockey, pickleball, skateboarding, a community market, or other community events.
5. Add community garden space and a composting program in Conklin.
6. Improve drainage at the placemaking node picnic area and firepit next to the Nakewin Centre to make the area more useable in all weather.



The placemaking node on Christina Lake Drive offers unobstructed views of Christina Lake.



Lot R2171995TR on Conklin Drive is a wooded area that could be developed as a neighbourhood pocket park.

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7. Add more trees to the St. Vincent Cemetery over time. Consider a memorial tree program within family burial areas with a focus on adding clusters of native tree species such as Jack Pine, Birch and White Spruce.
 8. Enhance the old cemetery by the lake by expanding the fencing to include recently identified graves, erecting the Métis Angel Statue, and installing a plaque and identification signage.
 9. Enhance motorized boating access to Christina Lake. Consider opportunities to develop additional amenities such as a turnaround and parking area for boat trailers, and a day use area with picnic tables, fish cleaning station with running water, community fire pit, and dock storage.
 10. Establish a new park at Lot R2171995TR on Conklin Drive. Engage residents regarding the type of new park. Consider a nature play area, or a small pump track.

5.15 DRAPER

5.15.1 DESCRIPTION

Draper is a small residential community with approximately 215 residents (Municipal Census 2015). The majority of the land in Draper is undeveloped and is comprised mostly of private or provincially owned lands. Existing development is characterized by a rural character with linear residential development on large lot acreages.

5.15.2 ANALYSIS

The Clearwater River defines the northern border of Draper; it has designation as a Canadian Heritage River and is enjoyed by residents for its scenery and recreational values. The former CN railway track which bisects Draper is used as an informal trail primarily by OHV users. There is limited park infrastructure in Draper due to its small population and limited municipally owned lands.

5.15.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Explore opportunities for the development of a public water access point to the Clearwater River.
2. Work with the McMurray Sno-Drifters to enhance the recreational use of the former CN railway track as an all season multiuse trail and establish an integrated trail system that connects Draper to other nearby communities.



The bed of the former CN rail line through Draper is now used as a multiuse trail.

3. Partner with McMurray Sno-Drifters to develop a formalized OHV rest stop in Draper along the CN railbed, with support amenities such as a community fire pit and public washroom.

5.16 FORT CHIPEWYAN

5.16.1 DESCRIPTION

Municipal park facilities in Fort Chipewyan include a community hall, baseball diamond, community garden, school field and two playgrounds. The waterfront is also an important component of municipal open space with a trail that provides connectivity near the shoreline and view over Lake Athabasca. Fort Chipewyan has two historic cemeteries, and one active cemetery which is nearing capacity. Land procurement for a new cemetery along McDermot Avenue is under development. The RMWB is planning a new toddler playground next to the community hall. Community members often use the areas known as “Lake Shore Park,” and the “Arbour,” which was created for Treaty Days in 2013. The community formerly had a skate park at the College; however, it was disassembled and for the past few years has been stored for future use elsewhere.

Informal OHV trails have been established within natural areas and along McDermot Avenue (Fort Chipewyan Area Structure Plan, 2018). In addition, Lake Athabasca and the lands surrounding Fort Chipewyan contain many sites of cultural and historical significance and offer opportunities for wilderness recreation such as fishing, dog sledding and northern lights viewing.

There is a boat launch that provides trailered boat access to the local harbour, and this harbour is a popular gathering place for people on a day-to-day basis. In past years, a placemaking initiative recommended improvements at “Fish Plant Harbour” which included a large platform for public gathering. We understand that the RMWB is currently working with the local residents to relocate and construct this platform at an alternate location, near the church. Construction of this platform is planned for 2018 and had not yet started at the time of our analysis, therefore is not part of this assessment.

5.16.2 ANALYSIS

Most parks in Fort Chipewyan are located in the eastern part of the Hamlet. The western and northeastern areas of the community are less well served with parks and playgrounds. Community members would like to see additional playgrounds and outdoor exercise areas in proximity to growth areas. Community gardening is popular; the current garden has 29 occupied plots with a waiting list. There is an interest in more opportunities for community gardening (Fort Chipewyan Area Structure Plan Engagement Summary, 2017) as well as interest in a community greenhouse. Residents desire enhancement of the lakefront, and more non-motorized walking trails to improve public access and connectivity throughout the community.

Walking was the most popular activity cited in the public survey, however, there are limited formal trail networks in the community and a lack of sidewalks to provide pedestrian access to key destinations. There is an increasing interest in outdoor education amongst school groups, the potential to utilize community trails, and an interest in more trails designated for walking, cycling and cross-country skiing. Most informal trails are used by OHVs and conflicts with pedestrians often occur. With these conflicts between OHV use along pedestrian trails and those walking, more education on the need to separate OHV use and walking is required.

Off highway vehicle use is addressed more specifically in the RMWB's OHV Master Plan.

Although not within the scope of this plan, there is an interest in expanding the trail system beyond municipal boundaries to Dog Head Reserve and the airport.

Access to the water is critical to this community, and the boat launch and marina area are very popular gathering places for residents.

5.16.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Explore the feasibility of a connected walking trail along the lake front to connect key destinations such as Monument Hill, the Fish Plant, sun dial and the new cemetery.
2. Use a combination of increased enforcement and local education to reduce damage and disturbance that OHVs have on park areas and local trails.
3. Upgrade and expand the interpretive signage program along the Lake Athabasca waterfront to include interpretation about themes such as medicinal and traditional plants, and the history of the community and region. This would be an asset for locals, tourists and school groups.
4. Trial the use of barriers such as boulders at key non-motorized trailheads to discourage OHV use and promote the best possible pedestrian experience.
5. Support the expansion of community gardening opportunities in the hamlet, based on resident demand.
6. Explore locations for a multiuse sport court surface, that could accommodate outdoor sports such as a skate park and basketball hoops. The skate park amenities that are currently in storage are viable for re-use at a new location.
7. Consider the establishment of any new parks or playgrounds within the western and northeastern (Muskeg) areas of the community to provide better distribution of parks within close proximity to all residents.
8. Consider new placemaking initiatives near the boat launch given its importance to residents for physical and visual access to the Lake, and for day-to-day gathering.



Monument Hill, Fort Chipewyan.



Lake Athabasca, Fort Chipewyan.

5.17 FORT MCKAY

5.17.1 DESCRIPTION

Fort McKay is a predominantly Métis community with a population of 51 (Municipal Census 2015) located at the confluence of the McKay and Athabasca Rivers. Park facilities available include: a baseball diamond, soccer field, and two playgrounds located on school grounds, a cemetery and a festival ground.

5.17.2 ANALYSIS

There is a lack of significant public land available in Fort McKay for the development of further parkland at this time. Additional public lands would need to be acquired to develop more park amenities for the community. The community has expressed an interest in developing additional walking trails and opportunities for natural environment related activities, such as canoeing (Fort McKay Area Structure Plan, 2017).

5.17.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Conduct a site suitability study in concert with land owners to identify sites for municipal reserve that can developed and maintained as future parks, trails and open spaces.

5.18 GREGOIRE LAKE ESTATES

5.18.1 DESCRIPTION

Municipal park facilities in Gregoire Lake Estates include a neighbourhood park which provides a variety of amenities including a playground, basketball court, arbour with picnic tables, community fire pit, parking area and lighting. There is also a placemaking node with mailboxes, picnic tables and a community fire pit.

5.18.2 ANALYSIS

Gregoire Lake Estates has a recently developed neighbourhood park that offers a wide range of amenities. There is limited land available in the community for the development of new parks. Residents of Gregoire Lake Estates often use community facilities in Anzac and Gregoire Lake Provincial Park. There is currently no formalized public access point within the neighbourhood to Gregoire (Willow) Lake. The RMWB is developing a pocket park with a horseshoe pitch in the cul de sac on Poplar Crescent

5.18.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Provide gravel trail access at all PULs.
2. Consider establishment of a trail, boardwalk or viewpoint to Gregoire (Willow) Lake.
3. Develop cross-country ski paths in the fire breaks in the wooded area east of Gregoire Lake Estates Park.



Gregoire Lake Estates Park has a variety of amenities including a playground, basketball court, arbour and community fire pit.



The RMWB is developing a pocket park with a horseshoe pitch in the cul de sac on Poplar Crescent.

5.19 JANVIER SOUTH

5.19.1 DESCRIPTION

Municipal parks facilities in Janvier South include a school with a playground, a sports field / baseball diamond, outdoor rink (with a seasonal skateboard park), a paved multiuse trail, and a Community Hall placemaking node which includes a community garden, playground, picnic area, celebration plaza, and boardwalk.

5.19.2 KEY FINDINGS

Janvier's outdoor ice rink appears to be well used, however it has surface issues including heaving asphalt, drainage issues in the parking area, and a lack of support amenities for users and spectators. The placemaking node at the Community Hall was recently completed and provides new amenities to the community's open space system. The use of off highway vehicles on public land, and the presence of horse manure throughout the community are ongoing issues.

5.19.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Upgrade the existing outdoor ice rink and parking area, including:
 - Reconfigure the parking area by formalizing two separated vehicular entry and egress driveways with reconfigured culverts below the driveways, and making improvements to the parking lot drainage;
 - Re-pave the asphalt rink surface with a thickened slab or piles at the edges to address heaving;
 - Add amenities for rink users and spectators including provision of a washroom, additional lighting, and bleacher seating.
 - Expand alternative uses of the rink available in the summer months, i.e., bike skills.
2. Add shade trees and benches at the Janvier School playground. Consider additional amenities for winter time use, i.e., toboggan hill.
3. Rehabilitate the sports field at the Janvier School.

4. Add amenities (i.e., benches, trash receptacle and shade trees) along the existing paved linear trail in line with the Engineering Servicing Standards. Expand the trail system to link together community amenities, natural and protected areas.
5. Expand the community garden program at the Community Hall based on resident demand. Initiate a composting program at the community garden to provide education and demonstration areas, and to assist in dealing with the manure problem.



Janvier Community Garden



The outdoor ice rink in Janvier lacks user and spectator amenities

5.20 SAPRAE CREEK

5.20.1 DESCRIPTION

Park facilities in Saprae Creek include a community park with a boarded outdoor rink, basketball hoop, long jump pit, two playgrounds, picnic area, turf soccer field, ball diamond and portable washrooms. There is also a placemaking node with a community bulletin board and mailboxes, and a neighbourhood park next to the recycling depot with a playground. Vista Ridge is an all-season recreation site located in Saprae Creek offering skiing, snowboarding, and tubing as well as an outdoor covered rink, skate park, aerial adventure park and mini putt. Saprae Creek is comprised of large residential acreage lots, and most residents are employed in Fort McMurray which is located 25 km to the east.

5.20.2 KEY FINDINGS

The community park next to the Saprae Creek Community Centre accommodates a range of formal and informal activities but has several amenities which appear to be under-used or not used for their intended purpose. For example, the outdoor boarded rink is no longer being used, and has been adapted for use by the Fire Department for emergency rescue training. Some of the facilities in the park require upgrading or have dated equipment. A need for increased enforcement of OHV use was cited by residents in the public survey.

5.20.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Upgrade the community park at the Sapræ Creek Community Centre based on community input and priorities to expand its functionality and use. Improvements to be considered should include:
 - Upgrade the playground equipment;
 - Install a permanent public washroom;
 - Consider upgrades to the ball diamond based on community input;
 - Consider development of a trail loop within the wooded area north of the park, and
 - Retain the old boarded rink for Fire Department training and use.
2. Enhance the Sapræ Creek placemaking node with amenities such as shade trees and seating areas to promote pedestrian use and create an improved sense of arrival to the neighbourhood.
3. Establish a composting program at Community Lane Park program in partnership with the recycling depot. Replace the playground destroyed in the wildfire.
4. Support the Sapræ Creek Residents Society to secure funding for a trail network along the road to connect to the Highway.
5. Explore opportunities for the Sapræ Creek trail system, such as installing updated trail maps and information at trailheads.
6. Explore the establishment of a new designated OHV trailhead to include a warm up area, community fire pit, and trail connection to the old rail line (in consultation with McMurray Sno-Drifters Snowmobile Association, Fort McMurray ATV Club, and Fort McMurray Dirt Riders Association).



The playground at the Community Park is well maintained but the equipment is dated.



The Sapræ Creek placemaking node should be enhanced for pedestrian use with shade trees and seating areas.

6 OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

Park operations and maintenance underpin the success of any parks system. Regular, and preventative maintenance practices can result in lower operational costs and reduce environmental impacts. Well-maintained facilities also increase community use, and ultimately strengthen community support for the parks and open spaces that contribute to quality of life. The RMWB's municipal park facilities are managed by the Parks Services team within the Department of Public Works. This section of the report describes current operational and maintenance issues, presents key findings, and makes recommendations to move towards increased sustainability and integration of best and “next” practices into park operations and maintenance.



Pond and boardwalk at Borealis Park.

6.1 OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE BENCHMARKING

A benchmarking exercise was undertaken to help provide context for the evaluation of operations and maintenance. Benchmarking is often done as a way to see how a municipality measures up compared to other communities with the goal of identifying areas of success and areas that need improvement. On the face of it, this method makes sense if for no other reason than to simply compare one community against one or more others. However, it is increasingly difficult to ensure the comparisons are truly “apples to apples.” This is especially true in the RMWB where geography, climate and socio-economic factors are in many cases unique. It is within this context that the following benchmarking findings are presented.

It is crucial to emphasize and for readers to understand that the following analyses must be considered within the RMWB’s context. As mentioned above, climate is one consideration, but other mitigating circumstances include higher than average labor rates and higher shipping costs for equipment and materials. As well, the Parks Operations Budget presently includes maintenance of lands and services that are not part of what is typically “core services” for most parks departments. Maintenance of road verges, ditches and rights-of-way and the set ups/tear downs for special events are two examples that skew the budget and staffing averages included in the benchmarking results.

The RMWB should consider these **high level** benchmark analyses as the first in a series of ongoing management initiatives to further refine the metrics, desired outcomes and commensurate budget adjustments. This chapter includes specific recommendations for improving sustainability in terms of the operations and maintenance level of service.

The communities chosen included Fort St. John, Fort Saskatchewan, Whitehorse, Grand Prairie, St. Albert, Prince George, and Red Deer. The RMWB was generally in the middle of this group of communities in terms of population, climate, and geographic isolation. The main differences between the RMWB and other communities was the overall population density, where the RMWB was the least dense at 1.1 people per square km. In contrast, the Fort McMurray Urban Service Area had a higher density of development than most of the other communities. Additional details about the comparison communities and the influencing factors of climate, population, and level of isolation is provided in Appendix J.

The factors that were compared are summarized below and in the tables on the following pages.

- **Proportion of the *municipal* operations budget allocated to parks**- RMWB is higher than average with 4.3% of the total municipal operations budget devoted to parks compared to an average of 3.6% for the comparison communities.
- **Total Parks Operations Budget** - RMWB is higher than average with an annual budget of \$18.6 million compared to \$5.1 million average for the comparison communities.
- **Operating cost per hectare** - RMWB is higher than average with \$22,850 per hectare compared to \$10,800 per hectare average for the comparison communities.
- **Parks spending per 1,000 residents** - RMWB is higher than average with \$256,777 per 1,000 residents compared to \$103,751 per 1,000 residents average for the comparison communities.
- **Staffing levels per 1,000 residents** - RMWB is higher than average with 1.1 full time equivalent (FTE) parks division staff per 1,000 residents compared to 0.41 FTE for the comparison communities.

- **Playground inspection schedule**- RMWB has a monthly inspection schedule which is equivalent or less than comparison communities.
- **Use of contractors**- Three out of five comparison communities do not use contractors for operations work. RMWB uses a relatively small number of contractors for quite a narrow range of tasks.
- **Level of volunteer participation**- The RMWB appeared to be roughly equivalent in terms of its use of volunteers, although the exact details and numbers of volunteers were not readily available for comparison. Common volunteer activities were clean-ups or maintenance of sports facilities (e.g. team organizations helping with field maintenance, tree plantings).

Table 6. Comparison of Parks Budget Share

Parks Operations Budget Share of Total Operating Budget	Comparison Communities (avg)	RMWB	RMWB's Current Level of Service
Annual Budget	3.6%	4.3%	Higher

Table 7. Comparison of Total Parks Operating Budget

Total Parks Operating Budget	Comparison Communities (avg)	RMWB	RMWB's Current Level of Service
Annual Budget	\$5.1 million	\$18.6 million	Higher

Table 8. Comparison of Parkland Operating Costs

Average Parkland Operating Cost	MBN Canada ¹	RMWB ²	RMWB's Current Level of Service
Per Hectare	\$10,800	\$22,850.00	Higher
Per Resident	\$69.82	\$259.82	Higher

1. 2016 MBN Canada Performance Measurement Report

2. Based on the RMWB Annual Operations Budget of 18.6 M(2017)

Table 9. Comparison of Park Operations Budgets Per 1,000 Residents

	Comparison Communities (avg)	RMWB	RMWB's Current Level of Service
Parks Operations Budget per 1,000 residents	\$103,751	\$259,777	Higher

Table 10. Comparison of Park Staffing Levels

Parks Division Staffing per 1,000 residents	Comparison Communities (avg) ¹	RMWB	RMWB's Current Level of Service
Full Time Equivalent	0.41	1.10	Higher

Table 11. Comparison of Playground Inspection Schedule

	Comparison Communities (avg)	RMWB	RMWB's Current Level of Service
Summer Inspections	Two inspections per month	Monthly maintenance-level inspections	Equal
Winter Inspections	One inspection per month	Annual comprehensive inspections	

Table 12. Comparison of Use of Contractors

Parks Operations Budget Share of Total Operating Budget	Comparison Communities (avg)	RMWB	RMWB's Current Level of Service
Share of Work Performed by Contractors	Sixty percent of comparison communities do not use contract work for operations. Among those that do, use is limited. Contracted tasks include grass cutting, turf management, and invasive species management.	Use of contractors is limited. Contracted tasks include grass cutting, snow clearing, and sports field maintenance.	Higher or Equal to

Table 13. Comparison of Level of Volunteer Participation

	Comparison Communities (avg)	RMWB	RMWB's Current Level of Service
Level of Volunteer Participation	All comparison communities have some degree of ad hoc or event-based volunteer participation in parks maintenance, such as litter pick up, tree planting, or maintenance of outdoor sports facilities.	Outdoor rink maintenance and spring clean-up.	Equal

6.2 URBAN SERVICE AREA

6.2.1 ANALYSIS

Parkland operations and maintenance within the urban service area is led by a Parks team based out of the South Operations Centre. The following issues and key findings related to operations and maintenance were identified through the course of the background review, site visits, staff workshops and public engagement.

- RMWB Parks Services has a strong leadership team, and parks field staff take great pride in their work; they are known to provide excellent customer service and are responsive to public requests.
- In the past, some newly built park sites have been handed over at final acceptance (FAC) with drainage problems, poor or compromised soil conditions and other issues which can be costly to fix and lead to increased maintenance for RMWB parks staff. Final inspection reports for the various disciplines (playgrounds, turf, horticulture, irrigation and urban forestry) are usually submitted individually rather than formalized into one inspection report. At present, an FAC inspection checklist exists for playgrounds but not yet for all disciplines.
- Parks Services operates out of the southern end of the urban service area in the South Operations Building in Gregoire. Given nearly 70% of urban service area residents live in neighbourhoods north of the Athabasca River, this leads to significant time and travel inefficiencies for operations staff. The parks team would benefit from an established operations hub north of the bridge.
- Some unprogrammed open spaces within the urban service area (such as roadside green spaces and stormwater ponds) have large lawn areas that require frequent mowing; there is an interest by the Parks Services team to explore less intensive maintenance or naturalization options.
- RMWB staff apply a high degree of professionalism and care to operating and maintaining the region's cemeteries; standard operating procedures (SOPs) are in place to ensure consistent implementation of cemetery operations. These SOPs need to be expanded to include procedures for new types of interment and memorialization now offered at the cemeteries.
- Boulevard areas and curbside turf experience significant winter kill from annual road sand and salt products or snow storage. We understand that the Municipality had explored alternative treatments which should be reconsidered and implemented to reduce annual maintenance.
- The use of green spaces and parks as lay down areas during construction of adjacent infrastructure or facilities is a challenge; damage to trees often occurs and trees are replaced with less mature trees. Improved use of procedures to guide approval of lay down areas, and increased oversight during construction and restoration are required to ensure trees are not damaged, and if so, they are replaced with trees of equal value.

- Horticultural displays are celebrated within the RMWB but are also very expensive to maintain. There is an interest in ensuring an appropriate balance of aesthetic benefit versus cost – especially given all the other parks and open space maintenance issues that need resources.
- The Parks and Recreation Bylaw requires updating to better reflect current issues related to off-leash dogs, use of fire pits, and regulations for open spaces.
- Dog walking and off-leash dog parks are extremely popular throughout the urban service area. In popular parks, trash bins sometimes fill up daily with dog waste. This puts a strain on waste management schedules which are typically once a week. Improved facilities and standards for dog waste are needed.
- Some services are contracted out (i.e., some grass cutting, snow clearing and sports field maintenance) although this remains relatively limited.
- Equipment available to staff for maintenance is generally sufficient for required tasks. Some minor adjustments to the mix of equipment could be beneficial, such as acquiring smaller equipment for more effective clearing of narrow sidewalks in winter.

6.2.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the above issues, it is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Develop CCC and FAC inspection checklists for turf, horticulture, irrigation and urban forestry, to be used by parks staff during construction completion and final acceptance inspections. Ensure checklists include procedures for verification of grades, sub and surface soil conditions, proper drainage and suitable plant materials that meet or exceed approved landscape plans. Institute the requirement that inspection reports from all disciplines be combined into one report.



Improving FAC inspection procedures and recourse on latent defects would help to reduce maintenance by identifying deficiencies such as these drainage issues at the newly built Anzac Recreation Centre parking lot.

-
2. Establish an operations hub for the Parks Services team north of the Athabasca River bridge.
 3. Implement the back of curb strategy that was done as part of an internal standards review in approximately 2013 to mitigate turf maintenance concerns along curbs and boulevards. Integrate this strategy and guidelines for its use into the Engineering Servicing Standards, allowing for alternative surfaces to be used other than grass.
 4. Test and implement less intensive maintenance strategies for large turfed open spaces (i.e., roadside green spaces, storm ponds and unprogrammed open spaces). Pursue an alternative grass mix that requires less mowing to minimize maintenance requirements, is attractive and enhances habitat.
 5. Update and enhance the Community Placemaking Initiative document; update the “kit-of-parts” designs to ensure the components meet the unique challenges and opportunities of the RMWB’s remote, northern location and environment (i.e., unique growing conditions, higher freight costs, winter conditions and availability of parts for repair and replacement).
 6. Ensure parks representatives are involved in the mandatory sign-off on lay down applications by all departments. Set up protocols for the internal review and approval of lay down applications, and the establishment of Letter of Credit values. Ensure that lay down areas are reviewed as a part of CCC and FAC inspections, and any damage to parks or landscaping is rectified.
 7. Expand the standard operating procedures for RMWB cemeteries to include procedures for new types of interment and memorialization now offered at the cemeteries such as in-ground cremation, scattering, family vessels, memorial wall plaques, and natural burial.
 8. Establish priority planting areas for seasonal floral displays. Reduce seasonal floral displays such as median planters and hanging basket projects to priority areas within urban and rural community areas focusing on community cores, and entrances to service areas and neighbourhoods. Refocus beautification efforts on enhancing and managing an expanded community garden program and urban agriculture.
 9. Continue to modernize the fleet and hand tools as part of internal service reviews. Adjust the mix of equipment to ensure there is an appropriate match between departmental needs, and current or anticipated skill sets.
 10. Consider the use of external contractors for provision of specialized services such as the maintenance of specialized park facilities, or support for large special events.
 11. Update the Parks and Recreation Bylaw 99/028 to better reflect current issues such as off-leash dogs, fire pits and regulations governing open spaces.
 12. Add separate bins for dog waste in off-leash dog parks and in popular dog walking areas to reduce the burden on waste management schedules.

6.3 RURAL COMMUNITIES

6.3.1 ANALYSIS

Park maintenance in the southern rural communities is led by a Parks Supervisor, and a dedicated field team. The following issues and key findings were identified through the site visits, staff workshops and public engagement:

- The parks maintenance crew handling rural south communities has five full time employees (FTEs), including four labourers and one light equipment operator. The rural team is doing a good job in maintaining facilities but are spread thin over a large geographic area.
- There are currently many different types of playground equipment and construction details used in rural parks which makes remote repairs challenging.
- Large new multiuse recreational facilities are coming on-line in the communities of Anzac and Conklin. The Regional Recreation Corporation (RRC) of Wood Buffalo is responsible for managing all indoor recreation facilities at these locations, while the outdoor facilities continue to be maintained by Parks.
- The rural parks team does not use timesheets or worksheets to monitor and track time and maintenance priorities in rural areas. Community residents have not been formally engaged in the establishment of maintenance priorities.
- Large geographic distances between rural communities and park sites means significant travel time is required to transport bulk materials and tools. This can lead to a perception of inefficiency.

6.3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

To move park maintenance and operations in the rural communities towards sustainability, it is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Minimize travel time by establishing an operations hub in rural south for the storage of bulk materials (e.g., mulch, gravel and other materials) and tools. Consider using a portion of the old covered rink structure in Conklin for this purpose, or the old Fire Hall in Anzac.



Janvier Landscape



Borealis Park

-
2. Develop and maintain a rural “maintenance handbook” with illustrations and how-to guidance for common upkeep and repairs for amenities such as benches, trails and playgrounds. This will enhance knowledge transfer and increase the ability for some tasks to be delegated to temporary or student labourers and contractors.
 3. Engage rural community members around park maintenance priorities and use their input to prioritize maintenance activities within each community. An annual meeting of parks users could be an effective device to institute.
 4. Create a maintenance worksheet/service call for the rural team leader to track maintenance needs and repairs.
 5. Expand and develop expertise within the rural operations team through training opportunities. Areas of training should include: playground inspection certification, turf and horticulture maintenance, and irrigation installation, repairs and maintenance.
 6. Standardize the types of playground equipment and construction details used within rural parks to simplify future on-site repairs at remote sites. This should be done in conjunction with an update of RMWB Community Placemaking Initiative document and Section 10 of the Engineering Servicing Standards.
 7. Establish maintenance requirements for outdoor recreation facilities at the new multiuse Anzac Recreation Centre and Conklin Multiplex. Consider the use of external contractors to maintain the playing fields at these locations.
 8. Explore partnership opportunities to assist with the maintenance of rural cemeteries, such as engaging summer students to do regular fence maintenance, staining and sweeping.
 9. Given the limited engagement in Fort Chipewyan for this plan, it is recommended that the recommendations shown above for the other rural communities be generally applied in Fort Chipewyan and that an engagement strategy specific to that community occur with the intent of tailoring these recommendations.



Multiuse Recreation Facility in Anzac

6.4 MAINTENANCE OF PARKLAND OWNED BY OTHERS

6.4.1 ANALYSIS

The RMWB currently maintains some parks facilities on land owned by others such as the maintenance of parks on school grounds, and amenities that are within bed and shore of provincial waters, and boat launches into rivers.

With few exceptions, school sites are owned by the RMWB and subject to a Joint Use Agreement with the Fort McMurray Public and Catholic School Districts. The agreement was established in 1990 and is now outdated. Renewal of the agreement is currently underway. The school districts are generally highly supportive of the community use of school grounds, however as student populations are growing in certain areas, some schools are expanding onto green spaces without compensation. Future amendments making joint use agreements mandatory between local governments and school boards are anticipated in future updates to the Alberta Municipal Government Act. This may require the establishment of additional Joint Use Agreements in the rural areas.

There are also numerous other publicly owned green spaces and that are not parks, but are maintained by parks, such as boulevards, road verges, and roadside ditches. Parks staff efforts are also used for preparation and clean-up for events. The RMWB also often handles clean up and mowing of green spaces within highway rights of way, for example, along Highway 63 in the urban service area.

6.4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Undertake an assessment of all municipal assets that may fall on crown land and ensure proper licenses of occupation and regulatory approvals are in place for these amenities.
2. Pursue the modernization of the Joint Use Agreement between the RMWB and Fort McMurray school districts. Ensure the agreement defines roles and responsibilities, quantifies maintenance obligations and limits of liability, and outlines parameters for the protection of green space on school grounds. Review the terms of cost sharing for capital expenditures and maintenance.
3. Clarify roles and responsibilities for maintenance of various non-park lands, such as road right of ways and ensure the resources required for that maintenance are properly allocated. Ensure the effort required by Parks staff related to events is accounted for.

6.5 PLAYGROUND INSPECTIONS

6.5.1 ANALYSIS

Implementing a more sustainable program of inspections is a priority for the RMWB, especially for playgrounds. This section focuses on an analysis and recommendations to improve the RMWB's standard operating procedures for the inspection and maintenance of playgrounds. Through the course of the background review, site visits and staff workshops, the following issues and key findings were identified:

- The RMWB currently has an inventory of 102 playgrounds. This includes 84 playgrounds in the urban service area and 18 playgrounds in the rural communities.
- The RMWB has two full-time Playground Technicians, certified as playground inspectors through the Canadian Playground Safety Institute (CPSI). Ten additional staff were certified as playground inspectors this year.
- The current playground inspection schedule includes monthly (maintenance level) inspections and annual (comprehensive) inspections at each playground, however it is challenging to keep up with the current inspection schedule within current budgets.
- The playground inspection schedule is not tailored to season or user load.
- Due to a lack of resources, the maintenance and upkeep of playgrounds is typically reactive to requests for repairs, rather than focused on regular, preventative maintenance.



Singer Road Playground in Anzac

6.5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

To bring the RMWB's playground inspection procedures in line with best and "next" practices, it is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Use a tiered approach to classify existing playgrounds by use: i.e., High Use (30%), Moderate Use (50%) and Low Use (20%). Consider factors such as population using the playground, size, and wear and tear. Playgrounds on school grounds are likely to have the highest use rating, while playgrounds in neighbourhood parks may see lower use. Communicate with community groups to get their input and inform them of the change.
2. Develop a playground inspection schedule, which tailors the frequency of inspections based on the High, Moderate and Low Use classifications (see example inspection schedule in Table 6). This will ensure a focus of resources on the highest use playgrounds.
3. Prepare a Playground Inspection Policy statement to be approved by Council. Utilize the sample "Policy Self Evaluation Tool" in **Appendix H** to assess current approach and resources. The policy should outline the responsibilities of the RMWB including training and qualifications of inspectors, the type of inspections that are carried out, and frequency. The policy should be tailored to be attainable with current resources.
4. Utilize CityReporter software to track inspections. Ensure systems are in place to track completed inspection checklists and prioritize service order requests arising from playground inspections or calls from the public. Ensure completed service orders are closed and copies retained at a central location, (i.e., scan or email a photo of completed forms).
5. Order bulk replacement parts, where possible, for common playground repairs.
6. Train a member of the rural parks team to carry out inspections at playgrounds in the rural communities. Consider training local staff to assist with routine visual inspections. See **Appendix G** for a sample checklist for daily/weekly visual inspections.
7. Ensure signage is installed in all playgrounds with a contact phone number for any concerns. Encourage users, especially in remote or rural communities to provide informal observations supporting routine maintenance needs.
8. Audit all playgrounds with the goal of identifying and addressing "Access for All" issues.
9. Reassess the RMWB's lowest use playgrounds. Consider phasing some out or supplementing over time with passive play and nature play areas.

6.6 PARK MAINTENANCE PRIORITIES

6.6.1 ANALYSIS



Playground at Saprae Community Park

The RMWB maintains approximately 230 park amenities within the Regional Municipality’s urban and rural service areas. While some park service standards have been developed to guide maintenance activities, these have not been categorized or implemented across all park types and amenities.

Developing and assigning service levels to parks helps prioritize and schedule parks maintenance activities in a cost-effective manner, while keeping in mind safety, budgets, personnel and environmental concerns.



Playground in Conklin

RMWB parks field staff were engaged in a workshop in May 2017 to classify existing park amenities based on their current maintenance requirements. The maintenance priorities arising from this workshop are summarized in Table 7. These levels of service provide a framework to facilitate the greatest benefit to the public with available budget and resources.

Maintenance and inspection of playgrounds is discussed separately in Section 6.3.

6.6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

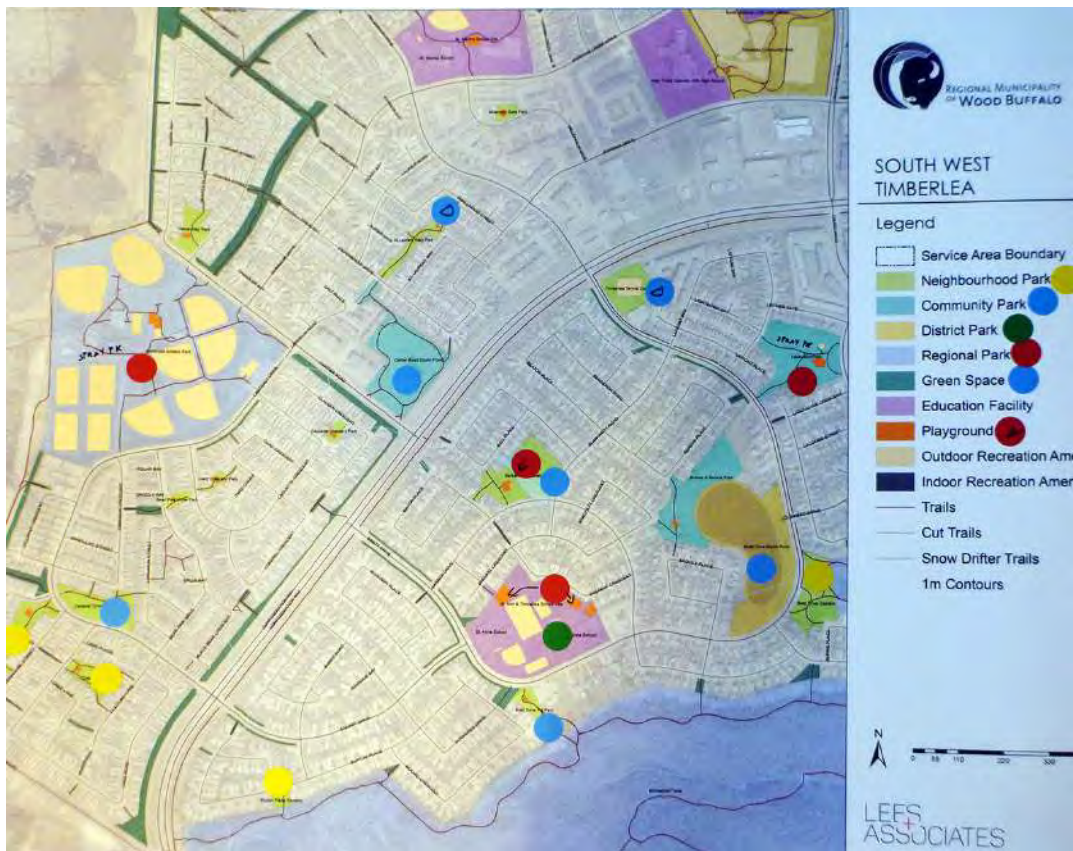
It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Develop a parks maintenance policy for Council approval that incorporates the proposed levels of service and park maintenance priorities outlined in Table 7. Review and update the priorities on a three year basis.
2. Assign appropriate maintenance activity frequencies for each service level related to parks services: e.g., waste management, turf management, turf maintenance, irrigation and horticulture. Refer to the recommended maintenance activities and frequency worksheet in **Appendix F**.

Table 6. Sample playground inspection schedule, tailored to season and user load.

Playground Classification	Type	Number of Playgrounds	Target Full Compliance Inspections	Target Routine Maintenance Inspections	Target for Visual Inspections
High Use	i.e., School Playgrounds	35	Annual	Monthly	Daily/ Weekly
Medium Use	i.e., Community & Neighbourhood Playgrounds	49	Annual	Monthly (May 1 -Oct 31) Bi-Monthly (Nov 1-Apr 30)	-
Low Use	i.e., Rural Playgrounds	18	Annual	Semi-Annual, complete by May 30 and Oct 31	-

*Accessible ramp in Lions Park.**Singer Road Playground in Anzac.*



Maintenance mapping workshop with RMWB parks staff, May 2017.

Table 7. Proposed levels of service and maintenance objectives for RMWB parks.

Level of Service	Maintenance Objectives	Criteria	Priority Park Types / Amenities
"A" High Level Maintenance	▪ Maintain a neat, orderly, groomed appearance; ▪ Plants and lawns and healthy and vigorous; ▪ Mow and trim lawns to a uniform appearance; ▪ Remove weeds and debris as they accumulate, and ▪ Keep seasonal plantings lush during blooming season.	Specialized park facilities, premium athletic fields, parks with high intensity of use	❖ Regional Parks ❖ Spray Parks ❖ Off-Leash Dog Parks ❖ Outdoor Rinks ❖ Cemeteries ❖ Public Washrooms ❖ Plazas
"B" Enhanced Maintenance	▪ Maintain a neat, orderly, groomed appearance; ▪ Mow and trim lawns to a uniform appearance; ▪ Remove weeds and debris as they accumulate, and ▪ Keep seasonal plantings attractive during blooming season.	Parks that are readily visible to the public, parks with frequent levels of use	❖ Community Parks ❖ District Parks ❖ School Grounds
"C" Moderate Level Maintenance	▪ Maintain a neat and orderly appearance; ▪ Mow and trim lawns regularly; ▪ Keep weeds and debris to acceptable levels within limits of regular visits, ▪ No seasonal plantings.	Parks in low traffic areas, parks that receive moderate levels of use	❖ Neighbourhood Parks
"D" Low Maintenance	▪ Preserve naturalized conditions; ▪ Maintain plants to a normal, healthy appearance; ▪ Mow only as necessary; ▪ Remove weeds and debris only as necessary, and ▪ Encourage native vegetation or naturalized plantings.	Passive recreation areas, naturalized open spaces, parks with low intensity of use	❖ Storm Ponds ❖ Passive Green Spaces

6.7 SPECIAL EVENTS IN PARKS

6.7.1 ANALYSIS

The RMWB's parks and open spaces are ideal settings for special events that animate the region for both residents and visitors. However, low special event permit fees, a lack of protocol for special events within parks, and an unclear mandate regarding event supports are areas of concern. Concerts and large for-profit events held within parks represent a significant amount of work for parks staff, for a nominal fee, which puts a strain on departmental resources.

The Municipality requires a Special Event Permit for any event hosted within a municipal park or on any public land. The application fee is \$25 for non-profit groups and \$100 for profit-making organizations. Damage deposits are not always requested and are even less frequently used. The RMWB has some bylaws which relate to activities and use of parks and open spaces. However, there is a lack of regulations to guide special events, and an inadequate fee structure to support cost recovery.

6.7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Work with partners to develop a Festival and Event Strategy for the RMWB. The strategy should identify a mandate and priorities for RMWB's support of special events in parks. The plan should also clarify management structure/roles, and infrastructure requirements to support events and cost recovery targets.
2. Establish a fees and charges schedule for special events, taking into account the type of event (i.e., non-profit community-based event, athletic tournament, or commercial event), number of guests, impact it will have on the facility, access and parking, and support required for the event.

The establishment of fees and charges should include a comparative analysis from other communities, and a review of average departmental costs for special event support. The fee schedule should include a mandatory deposit and establish charges for any additional services that may be required from the RMWB, such as road closures, or waste removal. Ensure that Parks Services receives funding from fees and charges when special events are held in parks.

3. Update the "Hosting an Event Guide" with additional information to facilitate the hosting of events within parks. These guidelines should clearly describe the permitting process and outline available resources to help ensure successful events.
4. Develop an event hosting toolkit to communicate with and support event producers. The toolkit should provide information on how to host an event, municipal protocols, marketing recommendations, event production tools, safety, applications, event contacts, templates, etc. See <http://events.whistler.com> for an example.
5. Complete event evaluations at the conclusion of events hosted in parks. Identify operational successes and opportunities for improvement.

6.8 PARKS AND TOURISM

6.8.1 ANALYSIS

Link between Community Assets and Tourism Development

Great community open spaces are often places where tourists like to visit. For example, parks provide a space for visitors to enjoy natural landscapes, get active in outdoor environments and view wildlife. This link allows for synergies between community park development and tourism development. However, conflict can exist between the two if their goals are not properly aligned. Thoughtful planning and collaboration with local tourism partners can ensure that community park assets and tourism development strengthen each other.

Importance of Visiting Friends and Relatives

Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) is a key tourism market in Alberta and an important opportunity for Wood Buffalo's tourism sector. Research on the VFR market in Alberta indicates that residents use their personal experience to determine what to do when friends and family visit from out of town. Planning is typically a joint effort between the hosting resident and their guests. While most hosts are involved in trip planning (80%), very few hosts plan activities in advance of their guests' arrival (15%). More often plans are made once guests arrive (23%) or both before and after guests arrive (41%) (TNS Canada, Visiting Friends and Relatives in Alberta Study, 2016).



Community parks and open spaces are often places where tourists like to visit.

Given that planning happens in the destination and is relatively spontaneous, **resident hosts rely on personal experience** to inform decisions on where to go and what to do with guests. This means that parks will need to engage with residents first in order to attract more visitors. Given the significant amount of VFR travel to the Wood Buffalo region, this is an important finding.

How Parks in the RMWB Can Support Tourism

The RMWB's parks and open spaces have an opportunity to play a role in attracting visitors and extending their stays in the region by catering to the needs of residents, while also encouraging them to bring their visiting friends and relatives. Attractive and welcoming park spaces add value to the visitor experience and can keep visitors in the region longer. Another way to support tourism would be to connect with the tourism product development arm of the new Wood Buffalo Economic Development Corporation (currently under development). Opening communication lines with the new organization at the beginning of its operations will allow Parks to ensure its priorities and goals align with future tourism development activities.

6.8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Connect with the tourism product development arm of the Wood Buffalo Economic Development Corporation when it begins operations. Ensure the priorities and goals of both parties support each other. Opportunities to work together should also be identified.
2. Develop a formal mechanism to continue communication between the Parks Services team and the tourism product development arm of the Wood Buffalo Economic Development Corporation (e.g., quarterly meetings, project update reports). Fort McMurray Tourism should also be included and invited to participate.
3. Ensure parks are outfitted with high quality visitor amenities to encourage visitation and longer stays (e.g., tables, fire pits, garbage bins, etc.). Consider longer term plans to provide washrooms at high visitation parks, where appropriate.
4. Create a branding, signage and wayfinding strategy for the parks and open space system.
5. Conduct a Visitor Friendly Assessment of park areas to determine areas for improvement. This assessment can be completed in-house or by a third-party firm. See the program details at Alberta Culture and Tourism's website: <https://www.culturetourism.alberta.ca/tourism/programs-and-services/visitor-friendly-alberta/>.

6.9 INTERDEPARTMENTAL COLLABORATION

6.9.1 ANALYSIS

The Parks Services team has a history of working closely with both the Engineering Department and the Recreation and Culture Branch. The Parks team was previously within the Recreation and Culture Branch until 2009, when it became part of the Department of Public Works. Parks Services maintains a close relationship with the Recreation and Culture Branch, who oversee the delivery of recreation, culture, and beautification related programs and services. Parks staff have worked alongside the Engineering Department on initiatives such as the Engineering Servicing Standards and Construction Specifications. The Engineering Department is often involved in the delivery of capital projects within the parks system.

Communication between the departments tends to occur on a project specific or as-needed basis; apart from regular Departmental Director's meetings, there are no formal mechanisms in place or regular meetings or updates between the departments. Staff expressed that improved coordination could enhance the outcome of capital projects and delivery of services.

6.9.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the RMWB:

1. Enhance collaboration with all internal stakeholders (e.g., bi-monthly meetings, project update reports). Opportunities to work together and challenges should be discussed in order to be proactive before problems arise.
2. Conduct an interdepartmental review of the opening and closing of park facilities to identify opportunities for improvement and more efficient processes.
3. Ensure up-to-date capital plans are shared between departments. A formal reminder to request up-to-date capital plans should be included in recommendation #1 above.
4. Ensure Engineering Department project design reviews and sign off are being completed at the thirty (30%), sixty (60%) and ninety (90%) percent stages.

6.10 STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

6.10.1 ANALYSIS

Through the course of background reviews, site visits and staff workshops, the following issues related to staffing requirements were identified:

- Concerns emerged with respect to staffing levels sufficient to maintain the current park system at the existing levels of service. Potentially complicating factors of more parks and increased expectations would further exacerbate resource issues within Parks Services.
- The RMWB's system of parks has grown organically as the urban service area's population and settlement areas have grown. There has not, to date, been a deliberate program of staffing, equipment, training and contractors set in motion to meet the need to establish, maintain and in some cases refurbish the parks now in the system.
- The institution of codified maintenance standards, Standard Operating Procedures, and adopted playground policies should improve efficiencies, but cannot be relied upon to address current resourcing shortfalls let alone added demands for more and better quality parks experiences.
- It is challenging enough to meet the operational needs within the workday. Adding to that is the expectation that other responsibilities be upheld such as safety, team meetings, planning, etc.
- The majority of maintenance activities are carried out by Parks Services staff as this has yielded the best results from a financial and quality perspective; some services such as grass cutting and snow plowing at some parking lots are contracted out but this remains relatively limited.
- Public input on service levels and maintenance priorities has been limited; this means responses may be based on receiving complaints from residents.

6.10.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

A systems approach to determining appropriate staffing requirements for parks operations is warranted, especially given the rapid manner in which the Parks Services branch has evolved over the last 10 years. The current situation warrants an analysis of not only “what” is being done, but also “how” it is being done and then by “whom” is it accomplished.

Preceding sections have recommended further clarity on “what” is being done (maintenance on parkland owned by others, maintenance standards, policy, inspections, etc.). Additional work is required as to “how” parks in the RMWB are maintained and operations work led, planned, managed and executed. This section does not provide an explicit analysis of full time equivalent staffing needs, (nor was that part of the project scope) however the following strategies provide a means by which to establish a baseline of current operations, assess their value or effectiveness, and create a culture of continuous improvement.

It is recommended that the following approach be implemented:

1. Engage in a facilitated, focused discussion with key senior staff of the Parks Services branch relating to sustainability of operations.
2. Develop clear service level standards, performance measures and a mechanism for evaluation (that includes public input on a regular basis).
3. Determine internal and external resources required to deliver on services level standards. Review the current distribution and dissemination of field resources with the goal of identifying inefficiencies and potential alternative organizational approaches (figure 13) to better meet service level standards.

Engage in a “process mapping” exercise to identify areas of responsibility and lines of communication between staff; use the results of that process to determine the most appropriate delegation of responsibilities, and opportunities to make improvements to the current structure. This could include, but would not be limited to:

- The merits of establishing community or neighbourhood leads, or consolidated teams that do all parks work within a given neighbourhood or sector of the community (geography/territory based management structure);
- An approach where most services are done by a team with specialized services (irrigation for example) roving as need be (function based organizational structure);
- A hybrid of the above approaches;

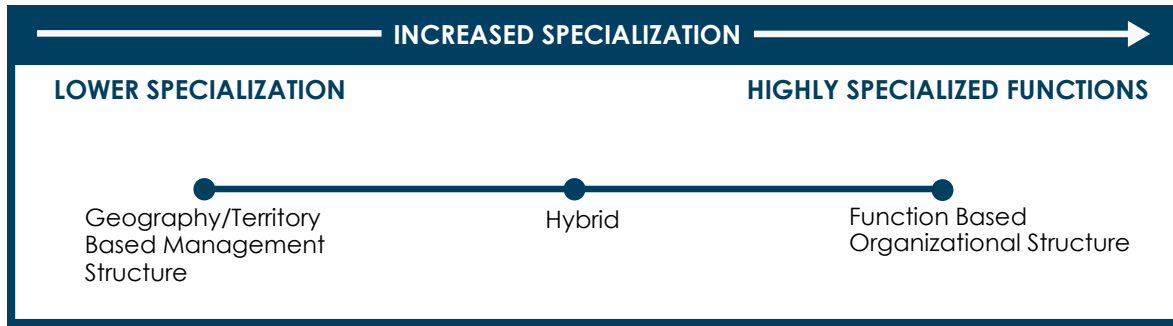


Figure 13. Continuum of Organizational Approaches

4. Within the above approaches consider the following:
 - a. Dedicated personnel that handle only service requests, and
 - b. A Special Projects Manager, to liaise as needed with other Departments, staff and the public to facilitate more efficient, less impactful special events in parks.
5. Establish and implement timesheets for the urban and rural parks teams. This will inform future tracking and priorities and establish a baseline of costs for the primary types of maintenance undertaken.
6. Complete a division wide review of the service operating model as soon as practical in the implementation stages of this Master Plan. This should include benchmarking of staffing in comparable communities. Regularly undertake a review of each of the primary service sectors (management, parkland development, turf operations, horticultural operations, waste management, playgrounds, etc.).

In the years that follow the division-wide review, monitor the changes and focus on one or two operational areas with the goal of increased efficiency and a spirit of continuous improvement. This system of internal evaluations is not meant to penalize anyone, rather the goal should be to “catch people doing things right” and build upon those practices and habits. Staff should undertake the divisional review with a modicum of outside training and assistance. The goal being to build internal capacity and refinement of this format to meet the RMWB’s unique organizational and geographic conditions and not be dependent on consultants.

7. Incorporate quarterly all-team meetings in to the Parks Services operation. The purpose of these meetings would be to identify inefficiencies, fine tune recent changes and flag current and upcoming pinch points in the operation of the parks system. The agenda and leadership of these meetings should be undertaken by a small committee representative of no less than four layers of

authority within the Parks Services branch, i.e., this is the forum in which those at or close to the front lines can freely advise senior management. One of the primary purposes of the quarterly all-team meetings would be to identify resource gaps in a timely manner. This would include, but not be limited to things such as:

- Availability of appropriate and sufficient rolling stock, self-powered equipment and other “tools of the trade;”
 - Availability and performance of contractors;
 - Sufficient and timely supply of temporary and seasonal labour;
 - Sufficiency of permanent full time equivalent human resources, and
 - Availability and performance of services from other RMWB departments.
8. Build release time (paid) to attend the meetings and address associated matters into job descriptions.
 9. Complete an annual report that lists the resource gaps and identifies solutions by the quarterly meeting prior to the start of the RMWB’s Capital and Operating Budget Planning cycle.



Forest within the RMWB

7 IMPLEMENTATION

“HOW DO WE GET THERE?”

7.1 ACTION PLAN

The top recommendations in this Parks Master Plan for parkland development in the urban and rural areas as well as park maintenance/operations are summarized in the tables below. These lists were developed to ensure the highest priority projects are implemented on the basis of priority, impact and other benefits. Further consultation with the community to refine the top priorities should be undertaken prior to implementation.

A full list of recommendations for each neighbourhood and rural community can be found in **Appendix I**.

Table 8. Top Priority Recommendations – Urban Service Area Parkland.

No	Top Actions – Urban Service Area Parkland	Timeframe	Partners	Estimated Cost
1	Enhance the functionality of the existing Abasand OHV staging area and expand the area for other multi-modal users such as pedestrians and cyclist. Establish an interpretive trail within the Horse River Valley with access from the Abasand staging area. Develop amenities within the Horse River Valley to act as a destination for trail users.	Medium (3-10 Years)	Métis Local #1935, Alberta Culture and Tourism Heritage Division, Sno-Drifters	High > \$300,000
2	Develop a demonstration forest on a selected track of open space lands impacted by the wildfire to provide educational opportunities about boreal forest succession, diversity and wildfire ecology.	Medium (3-10 Years)	FireSmart	Medium \$100,000-300,000
3	Pursue the acquisition of lands adjacent to the Woodlawn Cemetery for the development of a regional nature park.	Long (10+ years)		High > \$300,000
4	Establish an off-leash dog park in Timberlea at the Prospect Drive Storm Pond. Create separate areas for small and large dogs.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000

5	Pursue implementation of the Waterfront Enhancements, with an emphasis on providing additional riverfront parks, community gardens and improved public access to the water.	Long (10+ years)	Métis Local #1935	High > \$300,000
6	Explore a partnership to manage Lions Park with the goal of expanding the Park's potential use, revenue generation and programming opportunities for the Fort McMurray Historical Society.	Short (0-3 years)	Fort McMurray Historical Society	Low < \$100,000
7	Establish a Trans Canada Trailhead and signage at the Snye	Short (0-3 years)	Trans Canada Trail	Low < \$100,000
8	Pursue development of Roche Island as a Dark Sky Park.	Long (10+ years)	Fort McMurray Tourism	High > \$300,000
9	Expand winter access to parks and trails by undertaking winter packing of select trail routes.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000

Table 9. Top Priority Recommendations - Rural Communities Parkland.

No	Top Actions – Rural Communities Parkland	Timeframe	Partners	Estimated Cost
1	Add community garden space and a composting program in Conklin.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000
2	Work with the McMurray Sno-Drifters to enhance the recreational use of the former CN railway track within Draper as an all season multi-use trail.	Short (0-3 years)	Fort McMurray Sno-Drifters	Medium \$100,000-300,000
3	Explore locations for a multiuse sport court surface in Fort Chipewyan, that could accommodate outdoor sports such as a skate park and basketball hoops. The skate park amenities that are currently in storage are viable for re-use at a new location.	Medium (3-10 Years)		Medium \$100,000-300,000
4	Upgrade and expand the interpretive signage program along the Lake Athabasca waterfront to include interpretation about themes such as medicinal and traditional plants, and the history of the community and region.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000
5	Develop cross-country ski paths in the fire breaks in the wooded area east of Gregoire Lake Estates Park.	Short (0-3 years)	Willow Lake Community Association	Medium \$100,000-300,000

6	Add amenities (i.e., benches, trash receptacle and shade trees) along the existing paved linear trail in Janvier, in line with the Engineering Servicing Standards.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000
7	Initiate a composting program at the Janvier community garden to provide education and demonstration areas, and to assist in dealing with the manure problem.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000
8	Explore opportunities for the Saprae Creek trail system, such as installing updated trail maps and information at trailheads.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000

Table 10. Top Priority Recommendations – Park Maintenance and Operations.

No	Top Actions – Operations and Maintenance	Timeframe	Partners	Estimated Cost
1	Implement the back of curb strategy to mitigate turf maintenance concerns along curbs and boulevards.	Short (0-3 years)	Engineering Dept	Low < \$100,000
2	Establish an operations hub in rural south (Anzac) for the storage of bulk materials and tools. Also establish an urban service area operations hub north of the Athabasca River.	Medium (3-10 Years)		High > \$300,000
3	Develop and maintain a rural “maintenance handbook” with illustrations and how-to guidance for common upkeep and repairs for amenities such as benches, trails, and playgrounds.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000
4	Clarify roles and responsibilities for maintenance of various non-park lands, such as road right of ways and ensure the resources required for that maintenance are properly allocated. Ensure the effort required by Parks staff related to events is accounted for.	Short (0-3 years)	RMWB Depts., Alberta Ministry of Trans.	Low < \$100,000
5	Undertake an assessment of all municipal assets that may fall on crown land and ensure proper licenses of occupation and regulatory approvals are in place for these amenities.	Medium (3-10 Years)		Low < \$100,000
6	Prepare a Playground Inspection Policy statement to be approved by Council.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000

7	Develop a parks maintenance policy for Council approval that incorporates the proposed levels of service outlined in Table 7. Review and update on a three year basis.	Short (0-3 years)		Low \$100,000	<
8	Develop a Festival and Event Strategy, fees and charges schedule and event hosting toolkit for the RMWB.	Short (0-3 years)	Recreation and Culture	Low < \$100,000	
9	Enhance collaboration with all internal stakeholders (e.g., bi-monthly meetings, project update reports, and sharing of capital plans).	Short (0-3 years)	Recreation and Culture, Engineering Dept	Low < \$100,000	
10	Establish and implement timesheets for urban and rural parks teams, to inform future tracking, priorities, and establish a baseline of costs for the primary types of maintenance.	Short (0-3 years)		Low < \$100,000	

7.2 FUNDING STRATEGIES

The capital, operating and planning/policy investment recommended in this Parks Master Plan will require a range of different funding strategies. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, as with all other municipalities in Alberta, will have to use a combination of conventional and non-conventional methods to address its parks renewal challenges and to meet the needs of its population. The funding strategies outlined below will be key components to realizing this Master Plan. It is expected that the RMWB will determine what combination of funding strategies will be used to implement the plan.

Strategic funding will require commitment from staff, Council and the community. It should be recognized that RMWB staff will require dedicated time to build partnerships and resource development in the area of parks and open spaces. Many of the funding avenues described here will require ongoing attention to identify opportunities and to establish and maintain productive partnerships.

7.2.1 MANAGING PARK SYSTEM GROWTH

New park development should always include consideration of ongoing operating costs with those of the initial capital outlay. When designing an open space or amenity, adding multifunctional features, and considering future expansion options can achieve efficiencies that repay the original cost several times over the life of the infrastructure.

In relationship to parkland and park amenities achieved through the Municipal Government Act, the RMWB should be careful to only accept land which is desirable for park purposes to a high standard to avoid an ongoing burden of maintenance responsibility with little benefit to the community. Parkland acquisition criteria are discussed in more detail in Section 5.2.

7.2.2 CORE FUNDING

Conventionally, the funds to create, sustain and renew civic assets are drawn from the local property tax base, either through the RMWB's annual business plans, or for larger ticket items, through capital plans. The RMWB has numerous budget priorities that must be balanced; therefore, it will be important for the municipality to seek innovative ways to supplement municipal funds so that the parks system can be maintained and improved.

7.2.3 GRANTS

Plans should be developed in advance so that they are on hand when grant opportunities arise. Some external funding can be realized through such sources as senior government infrastructure renewal and economic stimulus programs, although such provision is intermittent and can rarely be anticipated.

7.2.4 COORDINATION WITH INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

Infrastructure projects such as roadway rehabilitation, utility and infrastructure upgrades often overlap with trail connections and park projects. Opportunities may exist to achieve recommendations for open space and trail development contained within this Master Plan when other infrastructure capital projects are undertaken. For example, upcoming rural road rehabilitation projects in Conklin, Sapræ Creek, and Gregoire Lake Estates may offer opportunities for multiuse trail development. Through regular sharing of capital plans and enhanced interdepartmental collaboration these potential projects can be identified early enough in the planning stage to realize mutually beneficial outcomes. In addition, external funding (e.g., grants) often reward projects that can demonstrate combined investment and multiple benefits for the community.

7.2.5 DONATIONS IN PARKS

The public may wish to contribute to RMWB parks through the donation of park amenities, such as park benches, picnic tables, picnic shelters, fountains, public art or trees. Such programs need to be carefully planned so that they do not become a problem for the Municipality through proliferation (every bench becomes a monument), long-term liability issues (expectations from the donor for "perpetual care") or negative aesthetic impacts (undesirable items donated for placement on public parkland).

The RMWB has a Memorial/Recognition Program which covers the donation of benches and trees. The Municipality's guidelines for this program deal with the limits of "ownership" of the donated item, donor recognition, the terms of installation, and responsibility for maintenance and replacement. These guidelines should be expanded to include a policy about donor plaque wording that encourages up-beat language, as well as the terms for de-accession of a donated item. Other strategies for donated items (and materials) should also be explored, particularly in terms of recognizing individuals, groups or businesses who donate to support RMWB-initiated events or projects. These strategies should be incorporated into a single policy.

7.2.6 PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with corporate sponsors, utility companies, industry, regional and provincial governments, community groups and non-profit agencies can be very effective for planning and fundraising for new parks. For example, sport clubs and leagues who have an interest or passion for a specific initiative may wish to contribute to the development of sport amenities, outdoor recreation groups to improved trail connections, and those with a stake in the tourism industry to interpretive site improvements or waterfront access. Partnering can mean sharing the financial burden, leveraging knowledge and expertise, connecting with community volunteers across a range of interests, and building broad-based support to help secure grant funding. One advantage of working through partnerships is that non-profit agencies and community groups are often able to access funding which municipalities are ineligible for, or unlikely to receive. These include lottery funds, foundation grants and some private sector donations.

7.2.7 USER FEES AND CHARGES

User fees may provide funding to assist with the costs of operating and maintaining parks. As the primary goal of municipal parks is to provide public use, full cost recovery pricing is rarely used. While user fees are rarely enough to offset costs, they can help to cover operating expenses. User fee opportunities within RMWB parks may include:

- Athletic field rentals;
- Limited commercial activities in parks (i.e., mobile vendors, food trucks, concessions, markets);
- Recreational equipment rentals;
- Commercial boat launching at public launches;
- Special events on public lands, and
- Picnic shelter or area rentals.

8 CONCLUSION

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has rich natural surroundings, and a diverse resident base that places a high value on its parks and open space system.

This Parks Master Plan brings forward recommended actions that respond to current and anticipated trends and demographics as well as input received from staff, and the public during community engagements. The plan provides strategic direction and a roadmap for future decision-making regarding the development, delivery and operations of the RMWB's parks services.

As the region continues to grow, opportunities to improve the parks system need to be leveraged to enhance the range of outdoor recreation opportunities that future generations will need. The creation of a robust and meaningful parks system takes many years to develop. With determination, cooperation and vision the Municipality can strategically invest in parks to provide a range of social, ecological, and economic benefits that will contribute to the quality of life and well-being of all residents.

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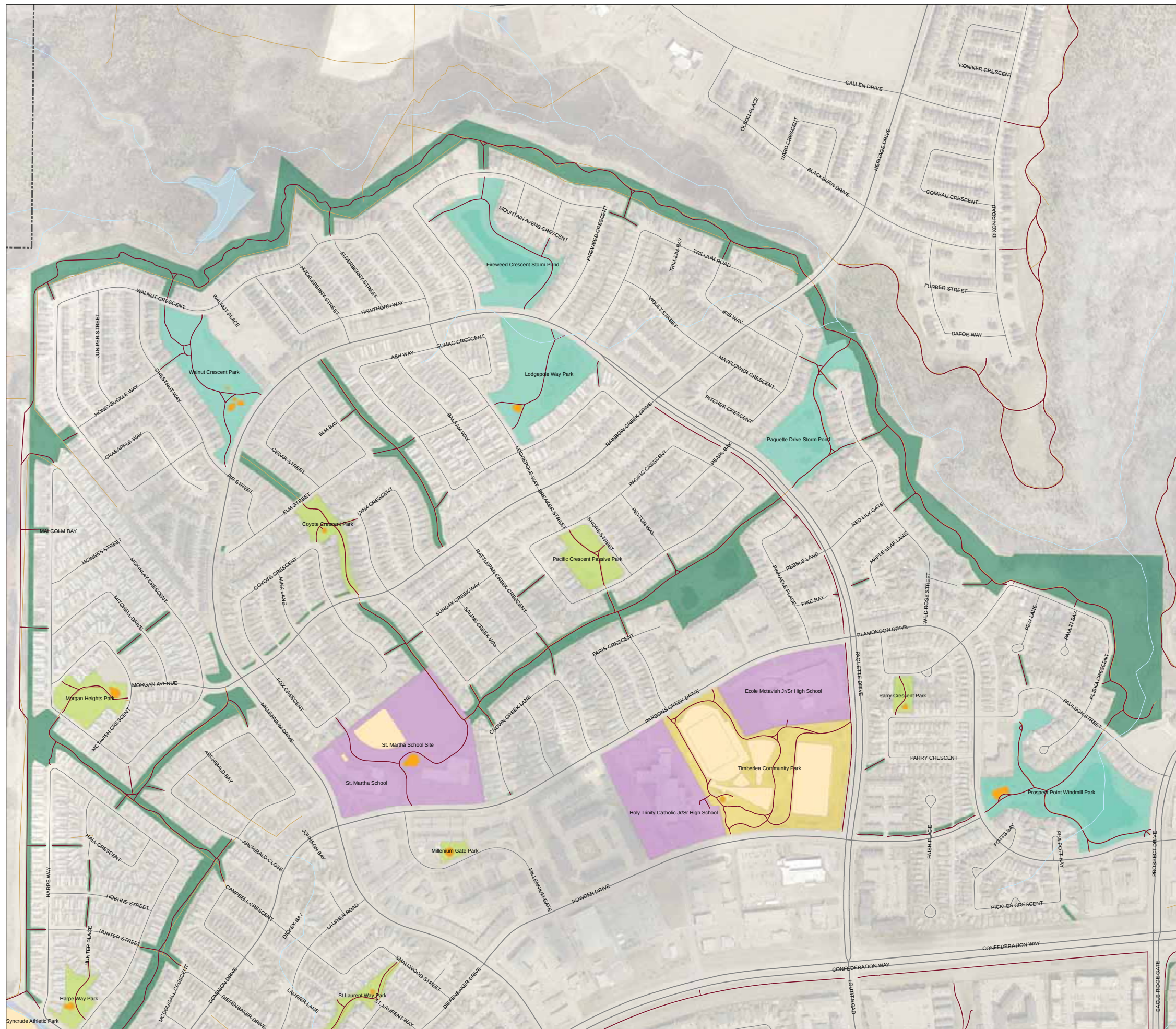
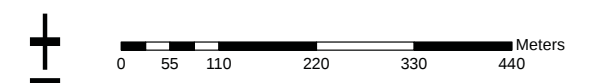
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APPENDIX A: MAPS

NORTH WEST TIMBERLEA

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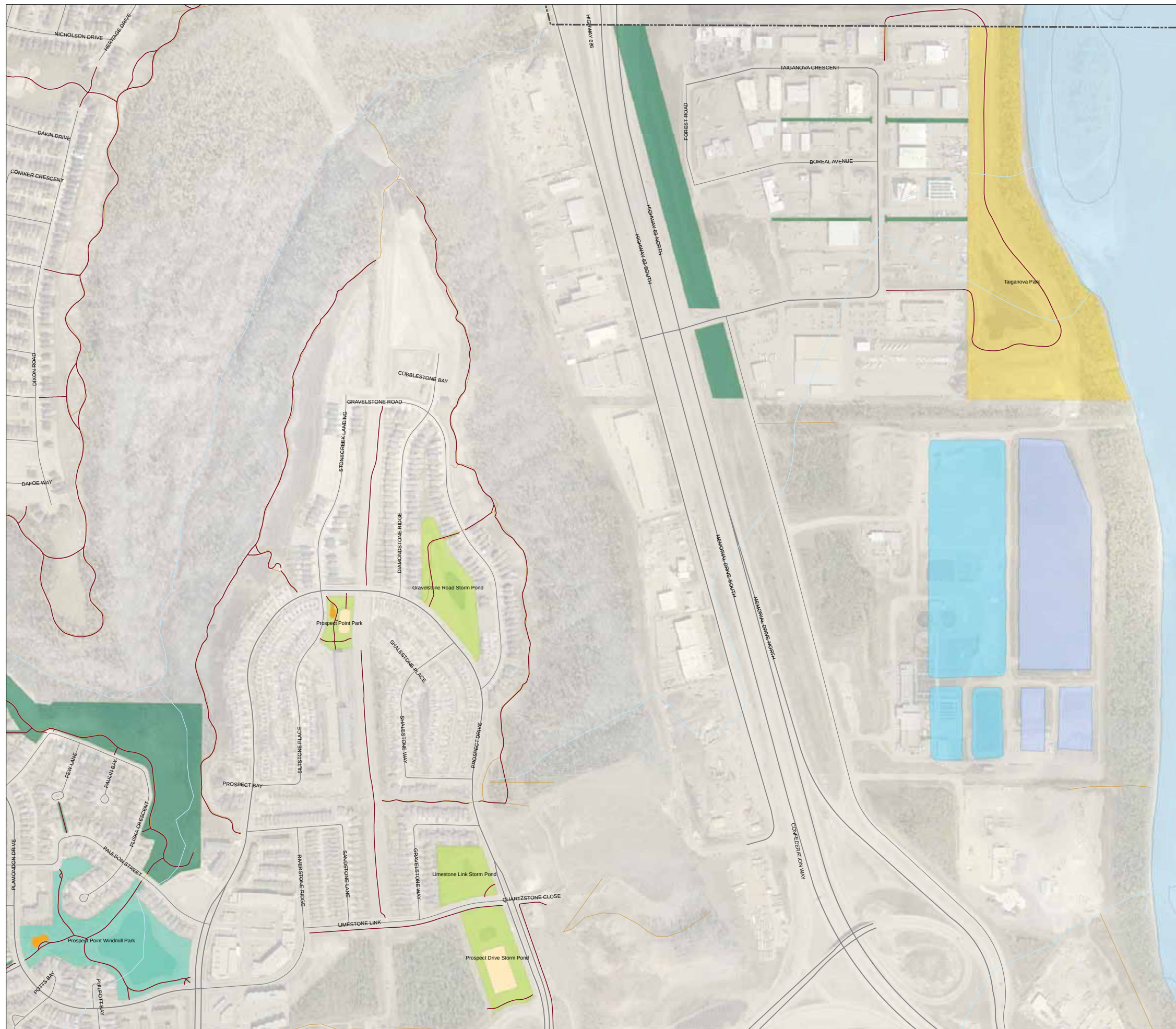
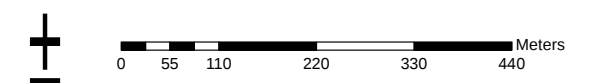
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-  Sno Drifter Trails
-  Watercourse



NORTH EAST TIMBERLEA

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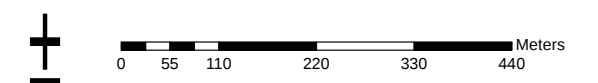
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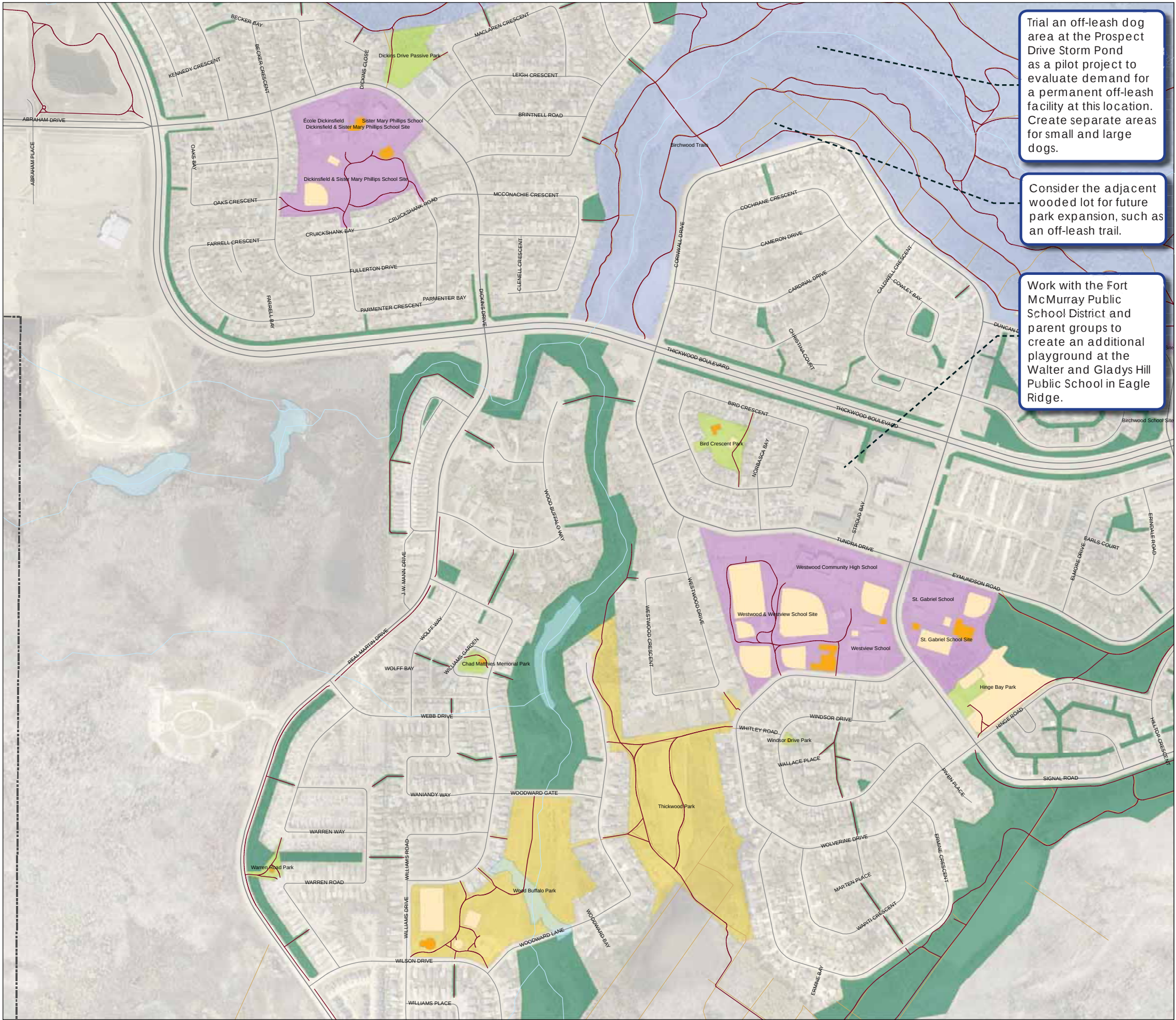


SOUTH WEST TIMBERLEA

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-  District Park
-  Regional Park
-  Green Space
-  Education Facility
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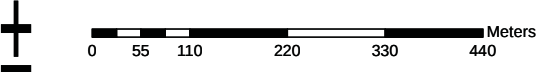




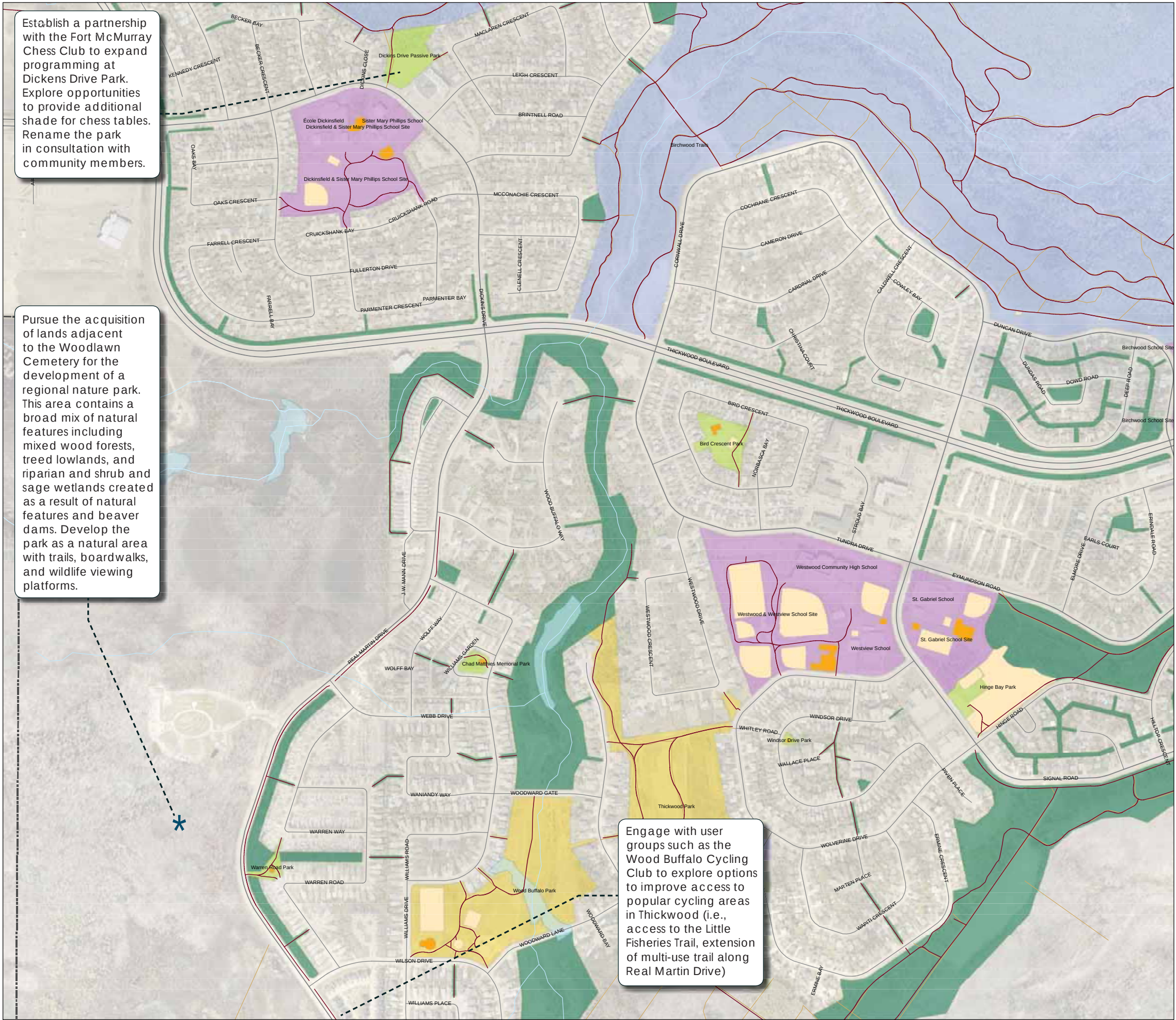
SOUTH EAST TIMBERLEA

Legend

- Service Area Boundary
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- Watercourse



LEFS
ASSOCIATES



Establish a partnership with the Fort McMurray Chess Club to expand programming at Dickens Drive Park. Explore opportunities to provide additional shade for chess tables. Rename the park in consultation with community members.

Pursue the acquisition of lands adjacent to the Woodlawn Cemetery for the development of a regional nature park. This area contains a broad mix of natural features including mixed wood forests, treed lowlands, and riparian and shrub and sage wetlands created as a result of natural features and beaver dams. Develop the park as a natural area with trails, boardwalks, and wildlife viewing platforms.

Engage with user groups such as the Wood Buffalo Cycling Club to explore options to improve access to popular cycling areas in Thickwood (i.e., access to the Little Fisheries Trail, extension of multi-use trail along Real Martin Drive)

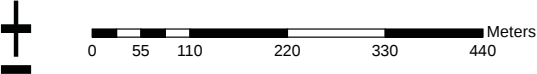


THICKWOOD WEST

Legend

- Service Area Boundary
- Neighbourhood Park
- Community Park
- District Park
- Regional Park
- Green Space
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- Outdoor Recreation Amenity
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- Watercourse

Recommendation

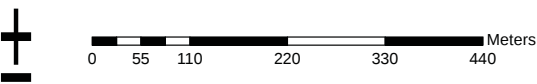


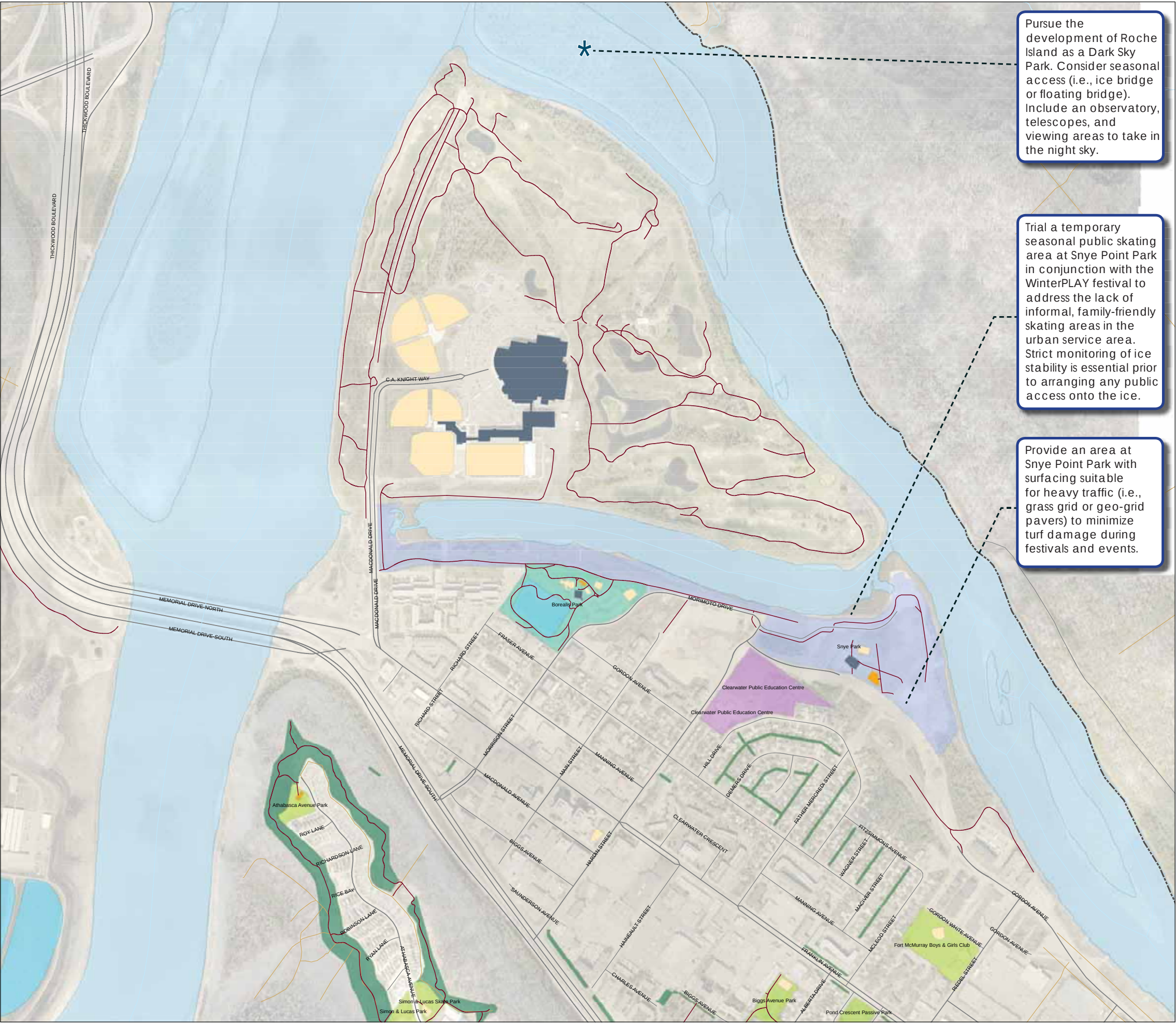
Continue to engage with the Ptarmigan Nordic Ski Club and local naturalist clubs to optimize the management and community use of the Birchwood Trails. Continue to update maps, wayfinding and information markers to encourage safe and enjoyable experiences for all trail users.

THICKWOOD EAST

Legend

-  Service Area Boundary
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-  District Park
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-  Trails
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-  Sno Drifter Trails
-  Watercourse
-  Recommendation





Pursue the development of Roche Island as a Dark Sky Park. Consider seasonal access (i.e., ice bridge or floating bridge). Include an observatory, telescopes, and viewing areas to take in the night sky.

Trial a temporary seasonal public skating area at Snye Point Park in conjunction with the WinterPLAY festival to address the lack of informal, family-friendly skating areas in the urban service area. Strict monitoring of ice stability is essential prior to arranging any public access onto the ice.

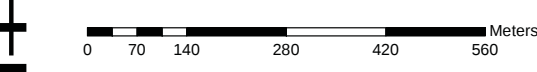
Provide an area at Snye Point Park with surfacing suitable for heavy traffic (i.e., grass grid or geo-grid pavers) to minimize turf damage during festivals and events.



NORTH LOWER TOWNSITE

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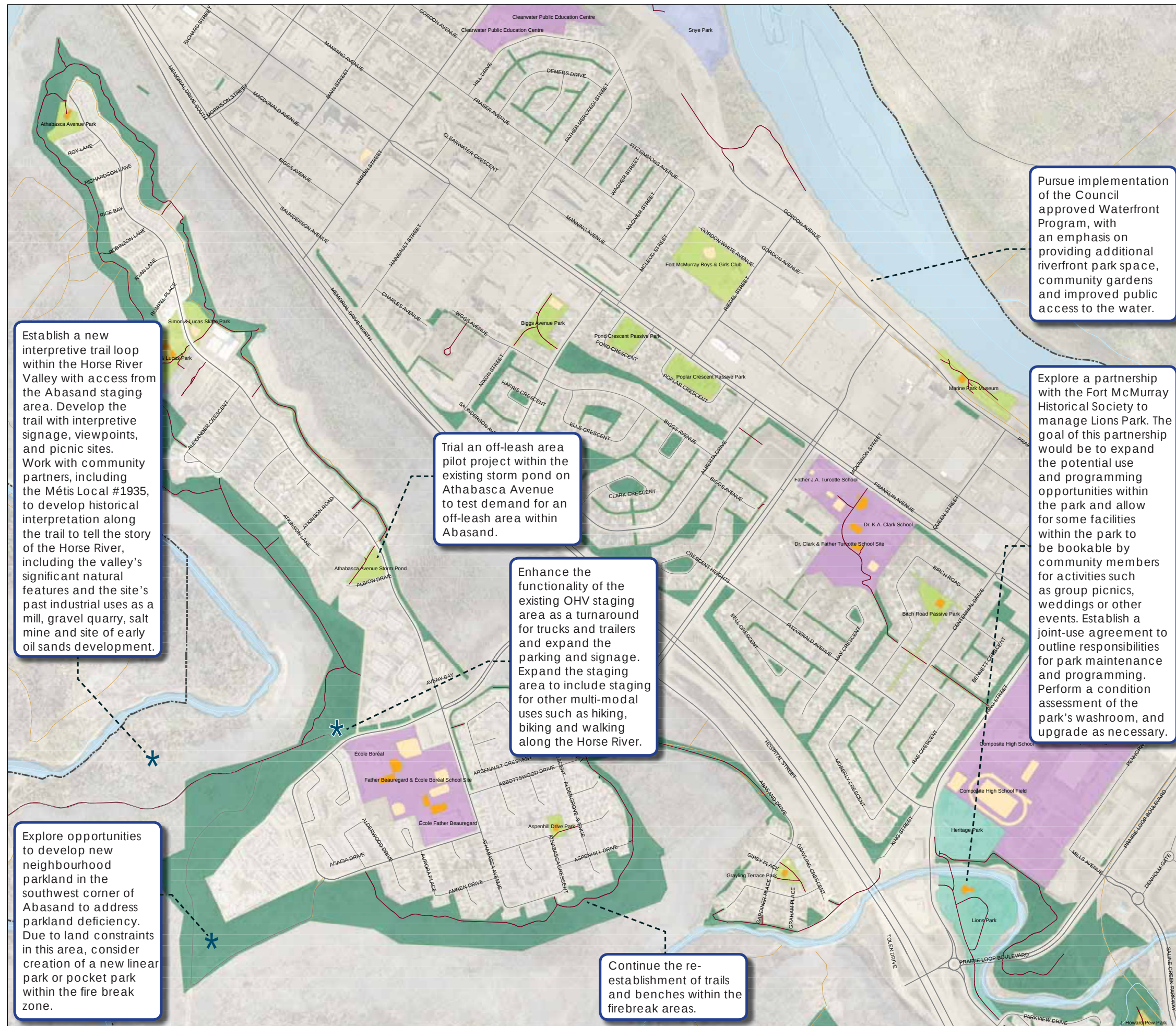
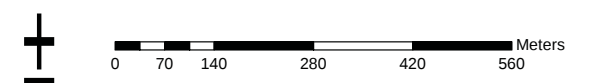
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- Cut Trails
- Sno Drifter Trails
- Watercourse
- Proposed New Park Amenity
- Recommendation



ABASAND AND LOWER TOWNSITE

Legend

-  Service Area Boundary
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-  Recommendation

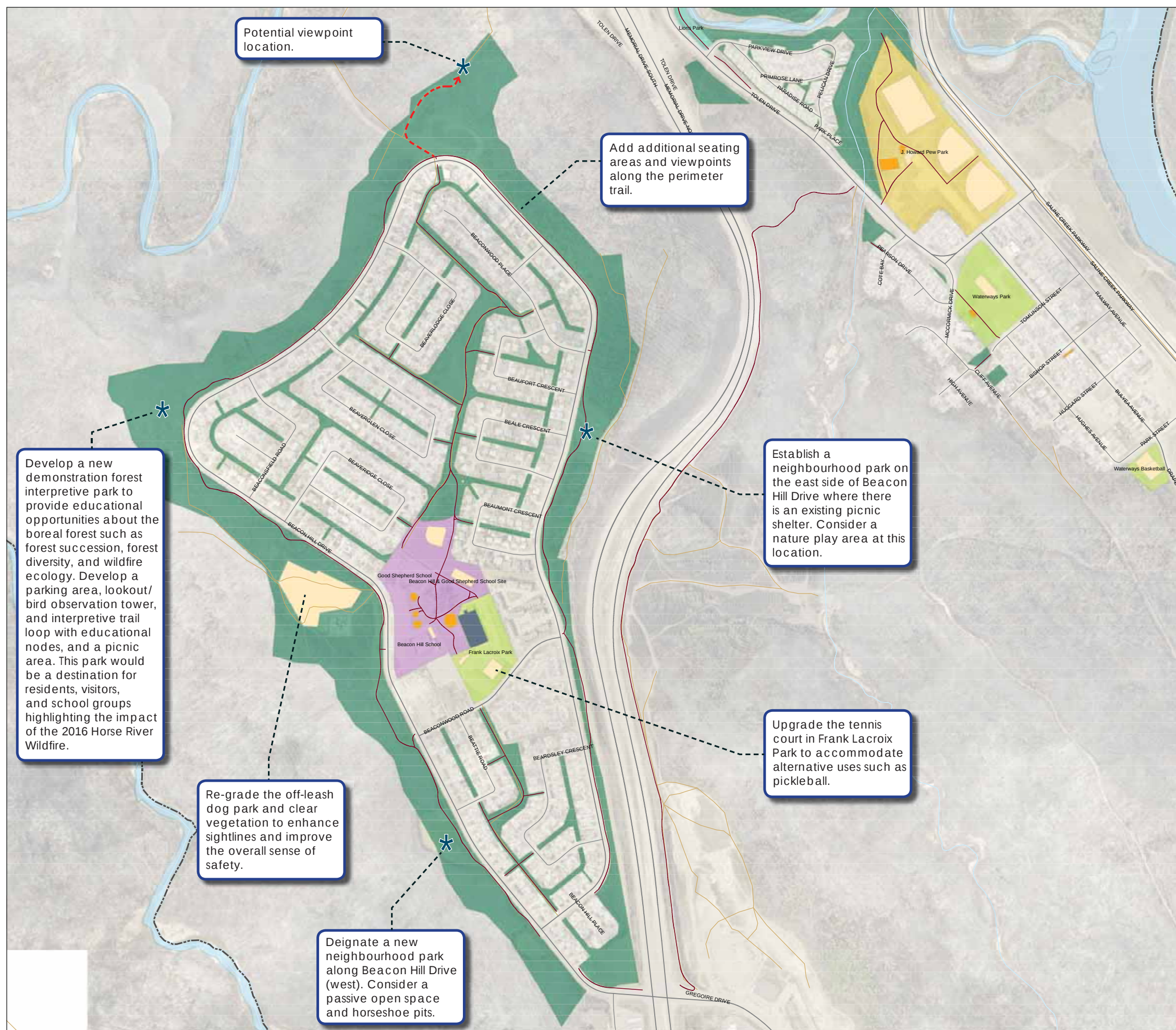




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- Watercourse

-----> Proposed New Trail

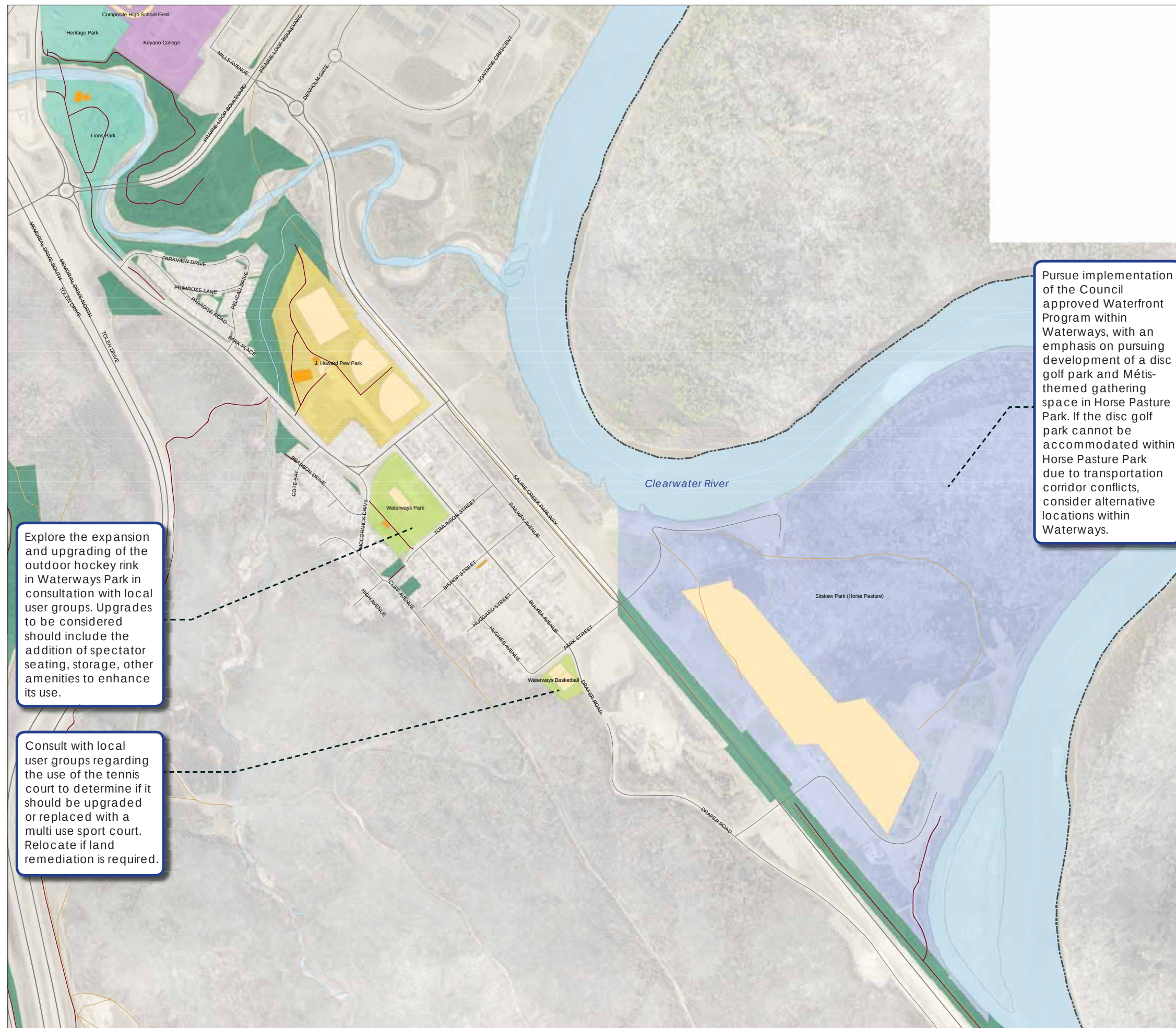
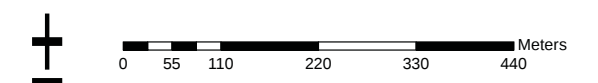
 Recommendation

LEFS
ASSOCIATES

WATERWAYS

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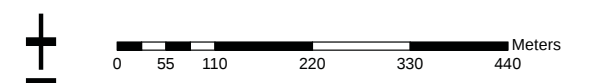
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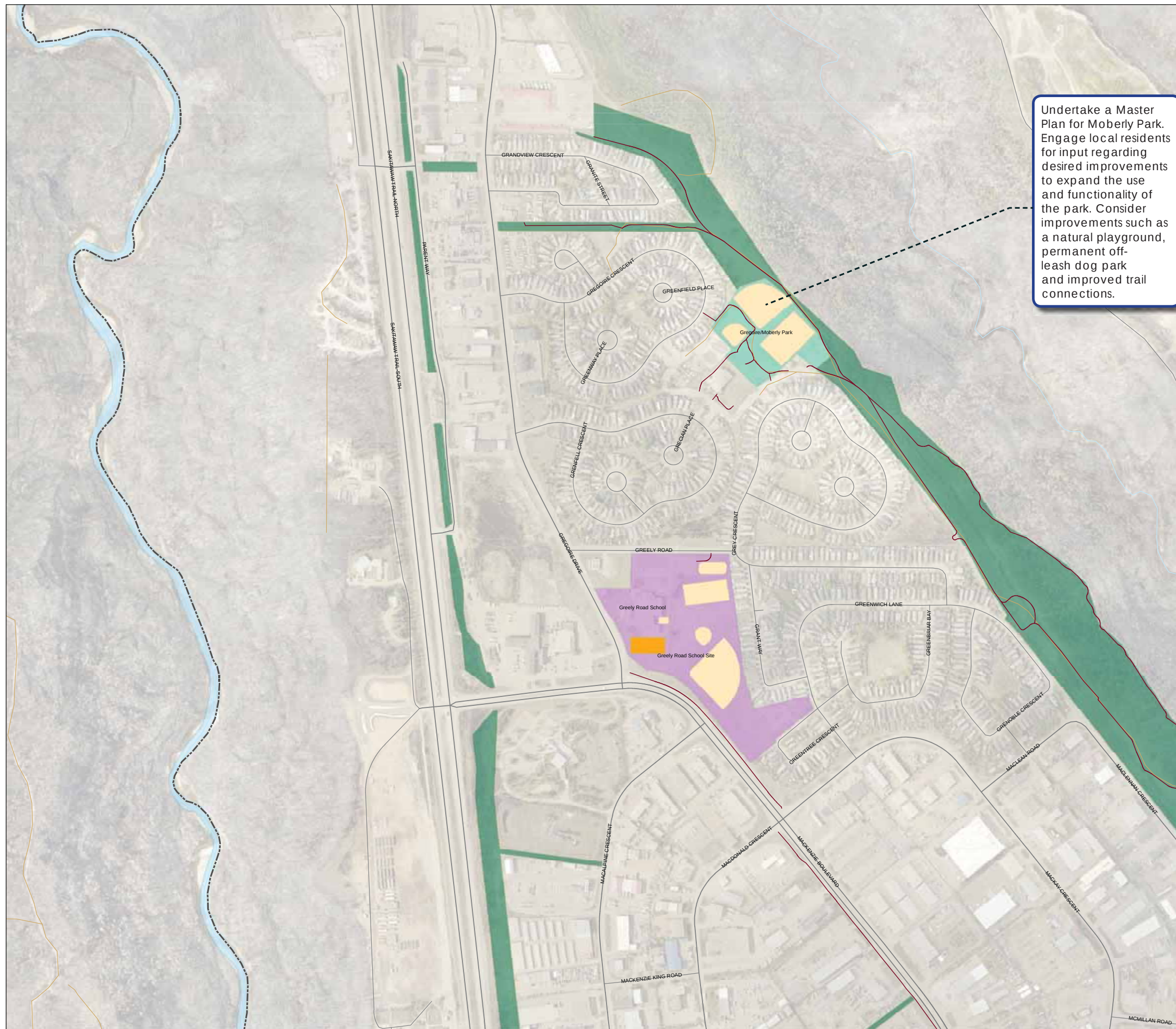
GREGOIRE NORTH

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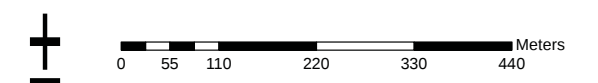
Undertake a Master Plan for Moberly Park. Engage local residents for input regarding desired improvements to expand the use and functionality of the park. Consider improvements such as a natural playground, permanent off-leash dog park and improved trail connections.



GREGOIRE SOUTH

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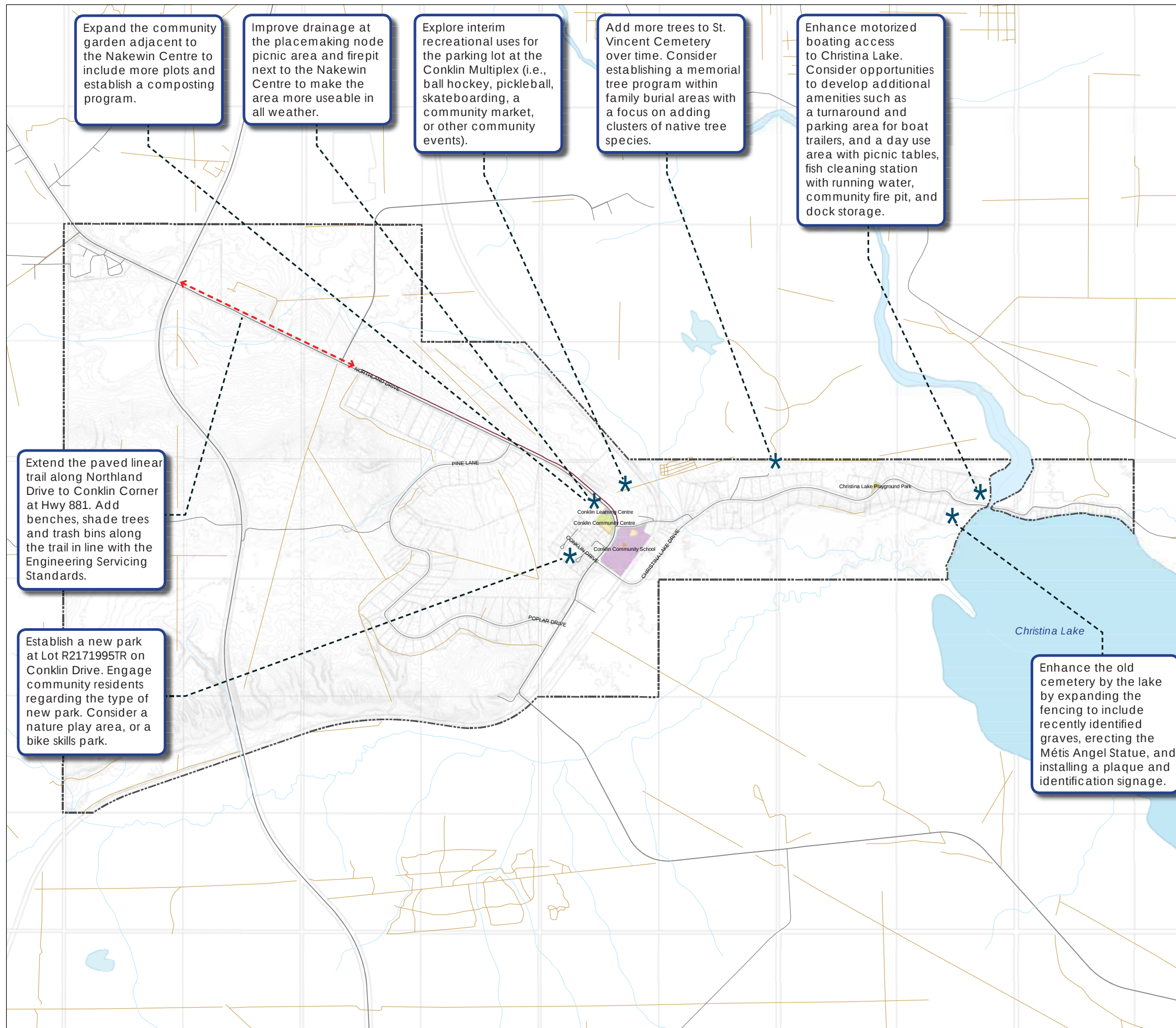
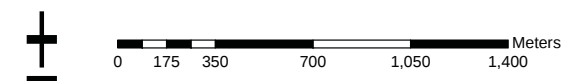
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CONKLIN

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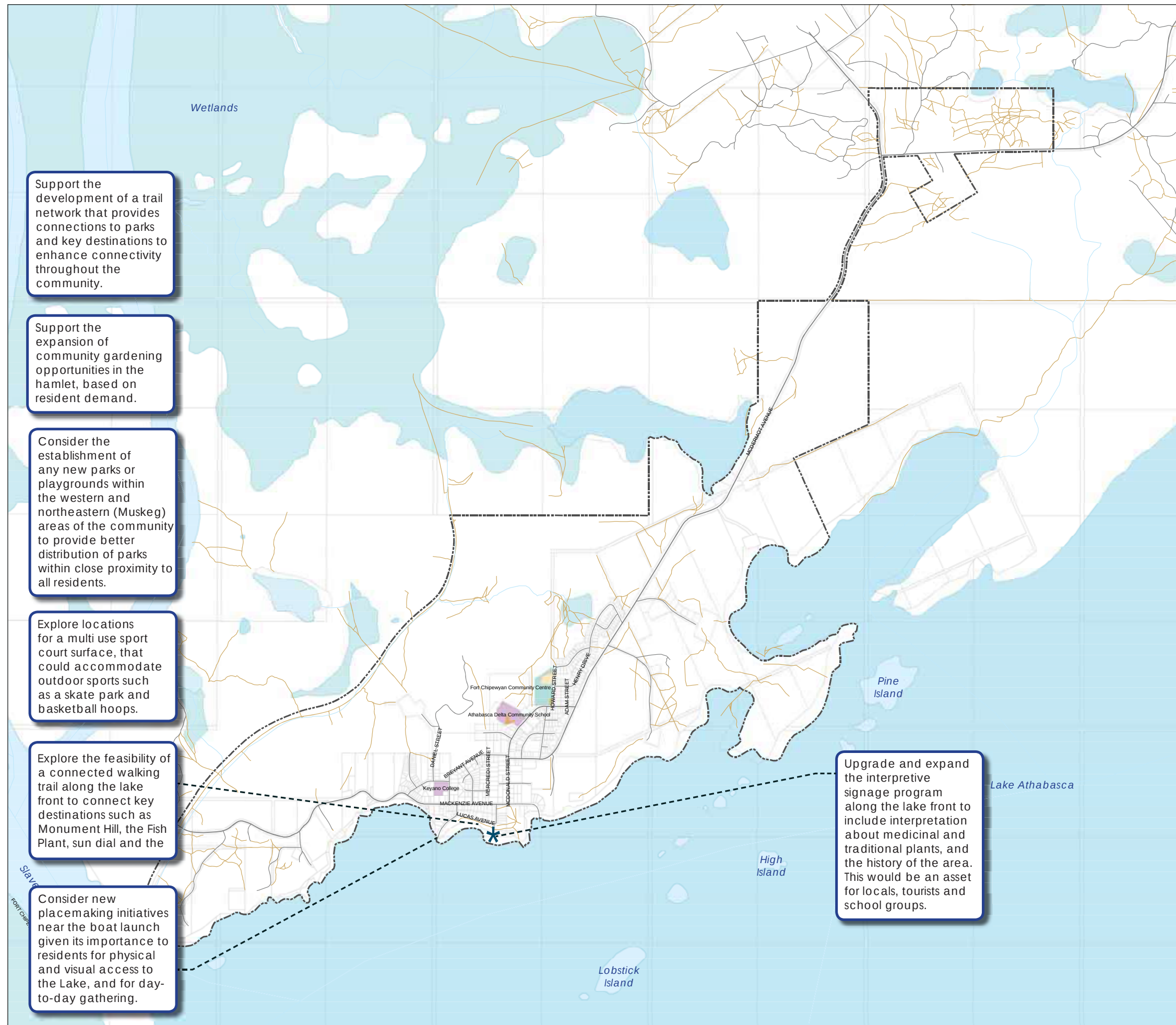
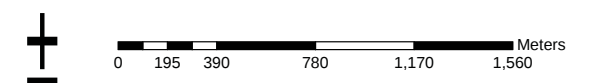
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-  Recommendation



FORT CHIPEWYAN

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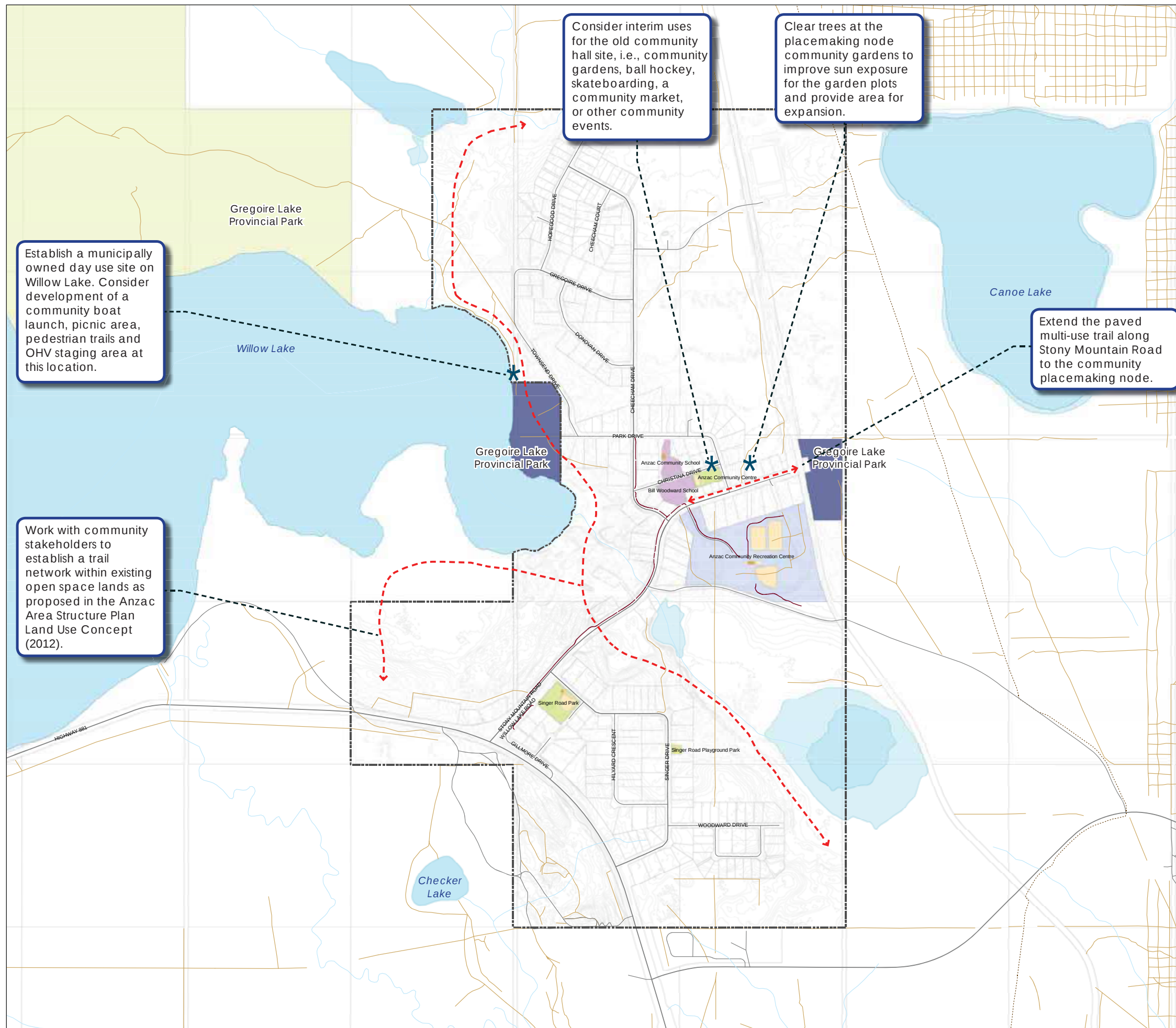
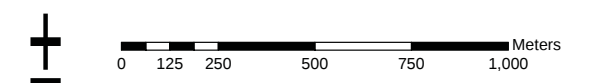
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-  Recommendation



ANZAC

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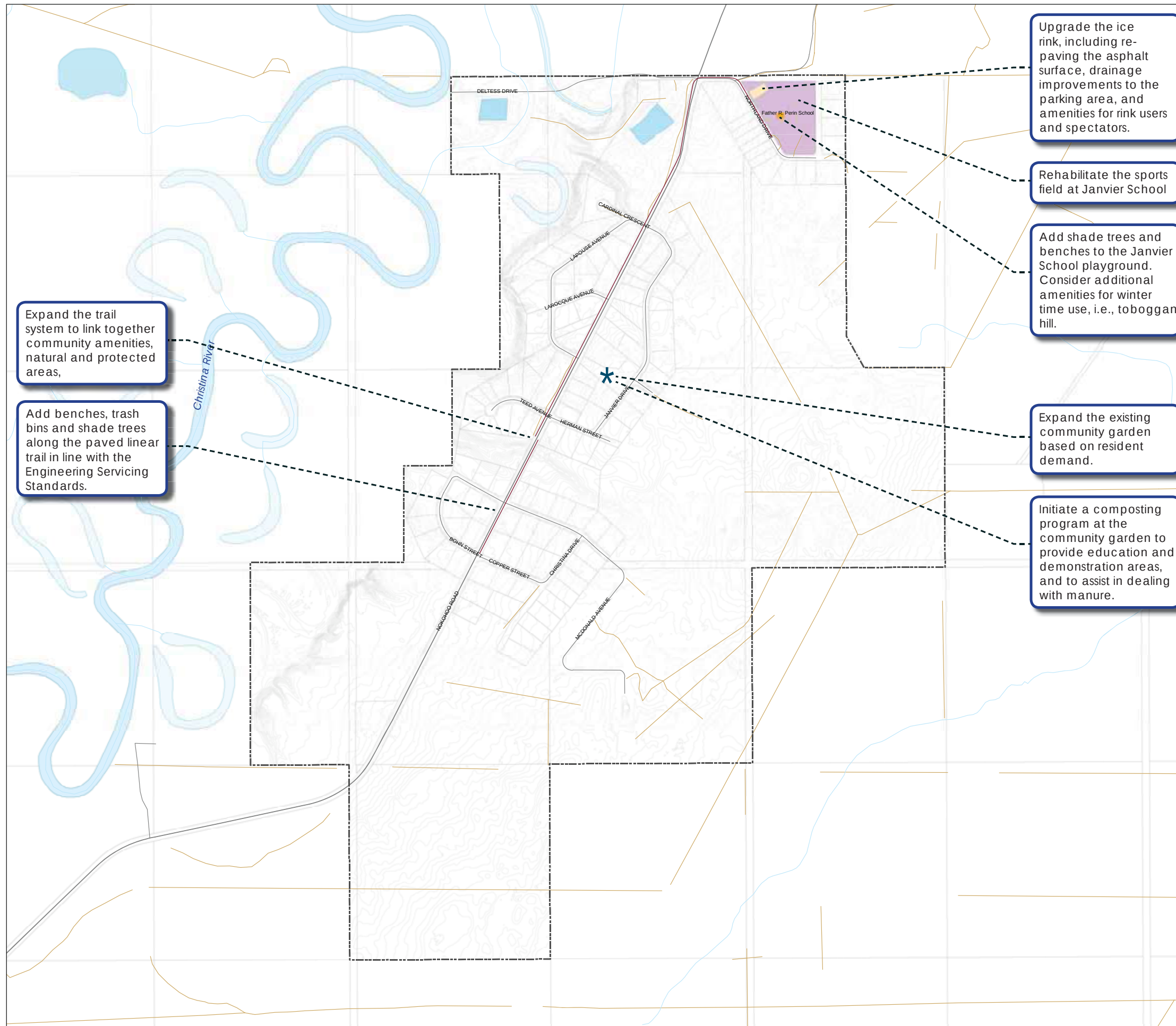
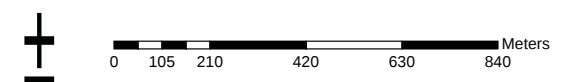
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-  Watercourse
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-  Proposed New Trail
-  Recommendation



JANVIER SOUTH

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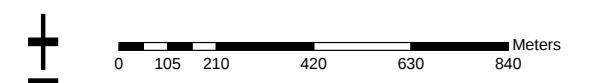
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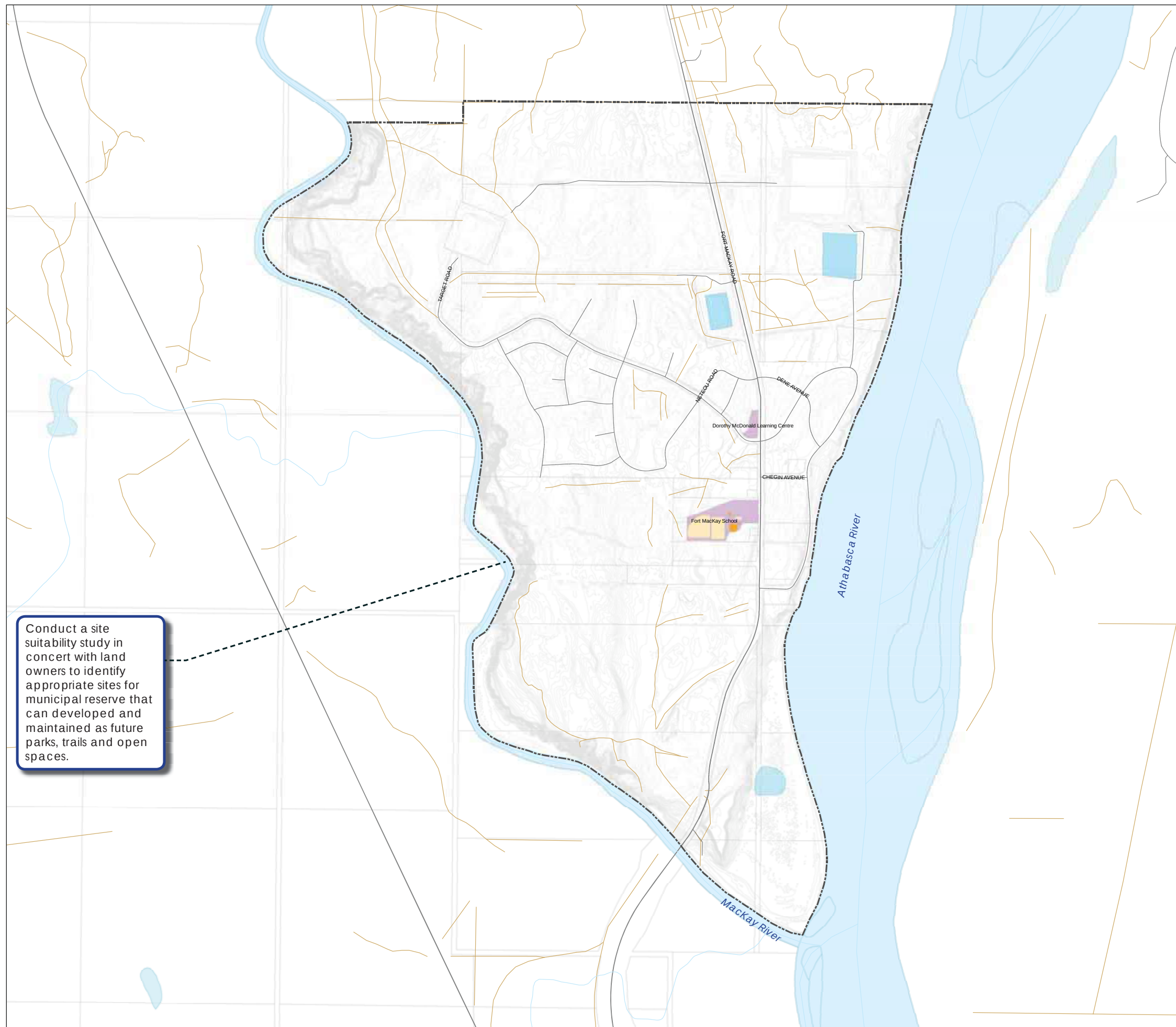
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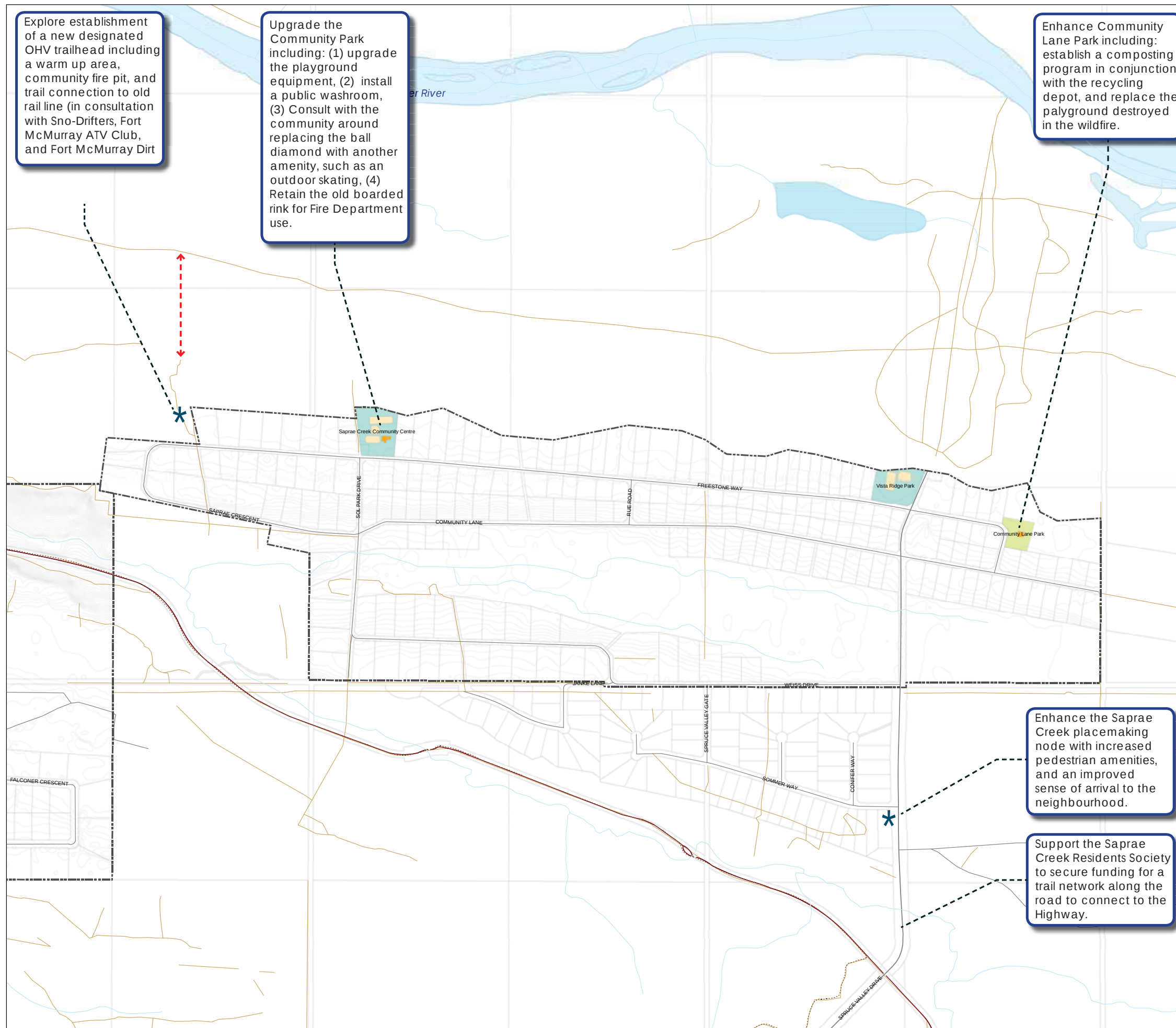
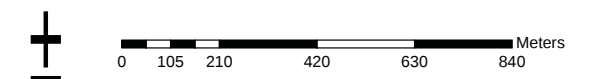
Conduct a site suitability study in concert with land owners to identify appropriate sites for municipal reserve that can developed and maintained as future parks, trails and open spaces.



SAPRAE CREEK ESTATES

Legend

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GREGOIRE LAKE ESTATES

Legend

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APPENDIX B: PARK AMENITIES ANALYSIS

The RMWBs park system has a wide range of park amenities that provide year round opportunities for passive and active recreation, events, sport activities, education, celebrations and relaxation. The subsections below provide more detail regarding the Municipality's inventory of playgrounds, spray parks, sports fields and courts, dog parks, community gardens and nature-oriented recreation amenities.

1.1 PLAYGROUNDS



The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has 102 playgrounds in the municipal parks system. This includes the urban and rural service areas, as well as playgrounds on school grounds which are maintained by the RMWB through a joint use agreement. In the following figures, the accessibility to playgrounds within the urban service area is evaluated using service area radii of 400 and 800 metres which represent walking distances of five and ten minutes. While these radii are straight line distances, the actual service area for each playground may vary based on factors such as the quality and connectedness of the pedestrian route network and whether barriers exist. People may be willing to travel further for specific features, higher quality or larger playgrounds. The service area radii do not take into account the intended age range of equipment within individual playgrounds.

Key Findings:

- The urban service area is well served with playgrounds, with residents in almost all neighbourhoods within a 5 to 10-minute walking distance of a playground.
- The RMWB has a relatively young population with lots of families. Playgrounds are popular, with 44 percent of public survey respondents reporting taking their children to a playground.
- The majority of respondents indicated they are satisfied with the availability of playgrounds to use, however, many respondents noted a lack of diversity in the play equipment available for different age groups, such as toddlers.
- In the Lower Townsite some areas are not within walking distance of a playground, however these are primarily in the mixed use district of the downtown core. Note the playground located at the Lower Townsite's Heritage Shipyard is included on the map, although it is only accessible by admission during opening hours.
- Gregoire north shows only one municipal playground, however there are several private condo developments in this area which have playgrounds accessible to residents.
- The Municipality is generally meeting the community's needs in the provision of play equipment, however, there are opportunities to provide more creative and diverse offerings and play experiences more closely aligned with the children and youth within the catchment around the park.

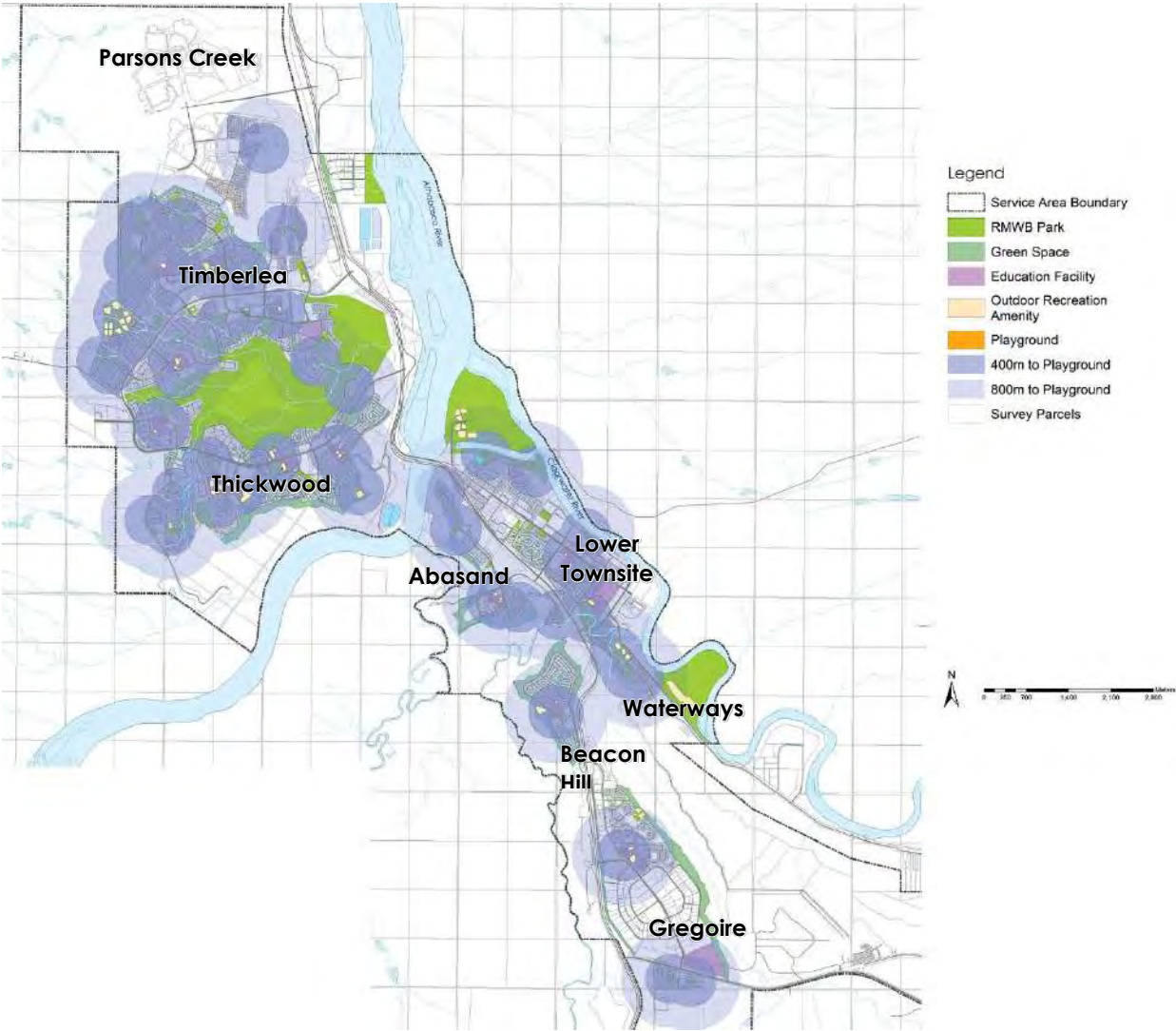


Table 1. Walkability Analysis – Service Area Radii from Municipal Playgrounds (Urban Service Area)

1.2 SPRAY PARKS



There are currently seven operational spray parks within the urban service area. A comparison of the RMWBs supply of spray parks to the average provided in five similar-sized communities in Alberta is summarized in the table below.

Community	Spray Parks	Spray Parks per 1,000 Residents
Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (Urban Service Area)	7	0.09
Fort Saskatchewan	1	0.04
Grande Prairie	2	0.03
Red Deer	3	0.03
St. Albert	1	0.02
Fort St. John	1	0.05
	Average	0.03

Table 2. Spray Park supply in Comparative Communities

Key Findings:

- The RMWB is well above average in the number of spray parks per 1,000 residents compared with similar-sized communities.
- In the public survey, the majority of respondents reported they were satisfied or neutral with the availability of spray parks in the community.
- Spray parks are popular among residents with “taking children to a spray park” listed as the fourth most popular activity by public survey respondents when using the parks system.

1.3 SPORTS FIELDS AND COURTS



The following table summarizes the supply of sports amenities in the RMWB, including sports fields and courts, compared to five similar sized communities. These metrics do not include an analysis of the size or quality of the amenities, or the interest in various sports.

Amenity/Facility	Average supply in comparison communities ²	Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (Urban Service Area)
Outdoor (Boarded) Rinks	20	7
Tennis Courts	13	14
Rectangular Fields ¹	39	25
Ball Diamonds	35	33
BMX/Bike Skills Parks	1	1
Sport Courts	10	7
Skate Parks	2	4

Table 3. Comparison of the supply of sports amenities to similar sized communities

¹ Soccer, football, etc.

² Comparison communities include: Fort Saskatchewan, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, St. Albert, Fort St. John

Key Findings:

- Compared to communities of a similar size, the RMWB is above average or on par with regard to the supply of BMX/bike skills parks, skate parks and tennis courts. By comparison the RMWB is below average in the supply of outdoor rinks, rectangular fields, ball diamonds and sport courts.
- The RMWB has a community rink program in which the Municipality supports the establishment of small (unboarded) outdoor rinks where neighbourhood volunteers come forward to maintain them; this program is seasonal and not accounted for in the table above. Staff noted a lack of informal family skating areas as most outdoor rinks are boarded for more formal use.
- The comparison shows the Municipality is above average in the supply of tennis courts, and RMWB staff report that tennis courts in several neighbourhoods are unused. There needs to be additional engagement with the community to determine whether this is actually due to lack of interest or quality of the facilities. This will inform whether courts in some areas should be upgraded or converted to other uses, and/or if new hard-court surfaces that can also accommodate basketball and pickleball are warranted.
- The comparison show the Municipality is below average in the supply of rectangular fields and ball diamonds. However, staff report that many sports fields are underutilized (i.e., Father Mercredi, Howard Pew and school ball diamonds).
- It is recommended that RMWB staff engage with sport user group representatives prior to implementation of this report's recommendations to gather feedback and confirm demand for specific facilities and amenities related to rectangular fields, ball diamonds and courts.

1.4 DOG PARKS



There are currently three off-leash dog parks in the RMWB urban service area, which are all located in the southern portion of the urban service area. All off-leash areas include signage, however not all dog parks are equipped with separate bins for dog waste. The following table summarizes the supply of dog parks in the RMWB, compared to five similar sized communities.

Community	Dog Parks	Dog Parks per 1,000 Residents
RMWB	3	0.05
Fort Saskatchewan	1	0.04
Grande Prairie	4	0.06
Red Deer	2	0.02
St. Albert	2	0.03
Fort St. John	2	0.09
	Average	0.04

Table 4. Dog Park Supply in Comparative Communities

Key Findings:

- The RMWB is above average in the supply off-leash dog areas compared with similar communities.
- In the Parks Master Plan public survey dog walking was listed by respondents as the third most popular activity in RMWB parks.
- Public demand for additional off-leash dog parks was expressed through the public survey. Dealing with off-leash dog issues was also a theme within respondent comments.
- There are not any well-established metrics to guide the provision of dog parks. Municipalities must evaluate the demand for off-leash dog areas within the context of other demands for park amenities.
- Most of the existing dog parks are located in the southern portion of the urban service area. There is currently no dog park in Timberlea which is the most populated neighbourhood in the urban service area.

1.5 COMMUNITY GARDENS



There are currently two community gardens within the Municipal parks system in the urban service area. One is located at Helen Pacholko Park in Thickwood Heights: this garden has 28 plots and has already been expanded due to high demand. The garden is maintained by the Wood Buffalo Garden Society. The second is the Waterways Community Garden, a new garden that staff report is not highly used.

Community gardens have also been established in the rural communities of Anzac, Conklin, Fort Chipewyan and Janvier South. These have been well received, especially by elders. Community gardens exist on some school grounds as part of school programs, although these are not available for public use. The following table summarizes the supply of community gardens in the RMWB, compared to similar sized communities.

Community	Community Gardens	Community Gardens per 1,000 Residents
RMWB (Urban Service Area)	2	0.02
Grande Prairie	1	0.02
Red Deer	8	0.08
Fort St. John	1	0.05
	Average	0.05

Table 5. Community Gardens in Comparative Communities

Key Findings:

- The RMWB urban service area has a lower than average number of community gardens per 1,000 residents.
- Four rural communities (Anzac, Conklin, Fort Chipewyan and Janvier South) have a Municipal community garden – they are well used, especially with elders.
- In the public survey, 7 percent of respondents reported an interest in community gardening within the parks system.
- An additional community garden to be developed in the Lower Townsite is included in the Council approved Waterfront Program.
- The Municipality does not have a formal community garden program in place to manage partnerships with non-profit organizations maintaining community gardens, however the Municipality does run an Adopt-A-Park program.
- It is recognized that residents in neighbourhoods with large estate residential lots and in rural service areas may have more room and opportunity to pursue gardens in their own yards.

1.6 NATURE ORIENTED RECREATION



The Regional Municipality is located within Canada's rich and complex boreal plains eco zone. The Birchwood Trails are a highlight of the RMWB's parks system supporting significant natural tree cover and a variety of outdoor, nature-oriented activities such as walking, hiking, bicycling, cross-country skiing and wildlife viewing. The RMWB also has four designated off-highway vehicle staging areas within the urban service area (Abasand, Horse Pasture Park, Snye Point Park and Tower Road), and three boat launches to access the Clearwater River (Two at Horse Pasture Park, and one at Snye Point Park).

For many years, the Snye hosted a legal aerodrome for floatplane access. This aerodrome was used as a place for people to access float planes to then travel to various other areas, such as fishing lodges, work camps and other communities. The use of the Snye for floatplane access has become recreational and no chartered flights are known to have occurred in the past few years.

Despite the outstanding natural setting both within and around the municipality, opportunities for nature and outdoor oriented recreation remain limited. Notably, there is a lack of amenities such as piers, access points, regional trails and staging areas to support outdoor activities such as camping, hunting and fishing in the urban and rural service areas. Staff note that many of the Provincial Parks and local camping areas have been closed to camping.

Key Findings:

- Additional docks, fishing piers and swimming areas along the Clearwater River are planned as part of the Council approved Waterfront Program.
- The public survey showed an interest by respondents in nature-oriented recreation activities such as snowshoeing, photography, day hiking and wildlife watching.
- The majority public survey respondents reported they were satisfied with the variety of outdoor trails, and multi-use possibility of outdoor trails. However, residents expressed that they would like to see more regional trail networks, the development of off-leash trails, and better interconnection of trails and loops especially along the riverfront.
- The RMWB currently lacks areas for camping and fishing within the boundaries of the urban service area.
- Opportunities exist to create enhanced access to land outside the urban areas.

Nature oriented recreation could be linked with tourism and associated economic spinoffs.

APPENDIX C: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

2017 PARKS MASTER PLAN SURVEY RESULTS

METHODOLOGY

In fall 2017, RMWB staff conducted a combined public survey for the Parks Master Plan and the Urban Forest Strategy. Hard copies of the survey were available for residents to fill out from September 21 to 23 at the Fall Trade Show & Market and at rmwb.ca from September 21 to November 30.

Initially, there were 803 total responses for the survey, however 80 identical responses were submitted online within a period of roughly 20 minutes. Seventy-nine of these responses have been deleted from the data. Furthermore, near the beginning of February 2018, an additional 14 surveys were provided from residents in Fort Chipewyan, resulting in a total of 737 responses being analyzed. It is important to note that some questions allowed more than one response to be entered so total responses for a particular question may be greater than 737.

Numerical responses have been objectively assessed and reported below. All percentages are reported on as total responses to the survey, as opposed to total responses to the individual question.

The survey also provided the opportunity for residents to provide comments in a number of areas – over 500 comments were provided. General themes for these comments have been reported below.

(1) Age

(1) Age	Total	%
Under 18	24	3
19-24	23	3
25-34	215	29
35-44	220	30
45-54	147	20
55-64	55	7
65+	11	1
No response	42	6

Table 6. Age of respondents

(2) Where do you live?

(2) ID where you live	Total	%
Abasand	26	4
Anzac	8	1
Beacon Hill	18	2
Conklin	3	<1
Dickinsfield	37	5
Downtown	44	6
Eagle Ridge	115	16
Fort Chipewyan	14	2
Grayling Terrace	4	1
Gregoire	7	1
Gregoire Lake Estates	1	<1
Parsons Creek	39	5
Prairie Creek	8	1
Saprae Creek	9	1
Thickwood	93	13
Timberlea	222	30
Waterways	4	1
Wood Buffalo	63	9
Other	11	1
No response	11	1

Table 7. Where respondents live in the RMWB

(3) How frequently do you use our parks and trail system?

(3) Frequency of use	Total	%
Daily	197	27
Weekly	347	47
Monthly	82	11
Once every few months	64	9
Once a year	18	2
I'm not a user	17	2
No response	12	2

Table 8. Frequency of use

(4) What activities do you participate in when using our parks and trail system?

(4) Activities	Total	%
Walking	578	80
Running	237	33
Biking	353	49
Skiing	116	16
Organized sports	102	14
Dog Walking	329	46
Off leash dog activities	159	22
Community gardening	53	7
Picnicking or family gatherings	198	27
Children to playground or waterpark	319	44
Other	37	5

Table 9. Activities when using the parks and trail system

“Other” themes include:

- Snowshoeing
- Photography
- Rollerblading
- Chess
- Skate park/skateboarding
- Day hiking
- Wildlife watching

(5) What prevents you from using our parks and trail system more often?

(5) Prevents from using more often	Total	%
No time, I'm too busy	51	7
The location is inconvenient	46	6
I don't feel safe in the park/on the trail	82	11
I don't feel the equipment is safe to use	21	3
Other	260	35

Table 10. Barriers to using parks and trail system more often

“Other” themes include:

- Un-repaired following wildfire
- Safety due to wildlife
- Poor maintenance
- Off-leash dogs/aggressive dogs
- Nothing
- Inadequate # of parks (especially Eagle Ridge)
- Lack of wheelchair accessible structures
- Lack of shade
- Poor connectivity
- ATVs/OHVs

(6) Please rate your level of satisfaction with our parks and trail system in the following areas

(6) Level of satisfaction (1 = Extremely Satisfied, 5 = Extremely Dissatisfied)		Total	%		Total	%		Total	%		Total	%		Total	%
Sufficient parks to use	1	129	18	2	258	35	3	124	17	4	89	12	5	46	6
Sufficient playgrounds to use	1	123	17	2	198	27	3	178	24	4	95	13	5	82	11
Variety of playground equipment	1	85	12	2	164	22	3	185	25	4	105	14	5	64	9
Availability of spray parks	1	99	13	2	156	21	3	227	31	4	116	16	5	70	9
Availability of off-leash dog parks	1	96	13	2	99	13	3	250	34	4	104	14	5	71	10
Maintenance of parks and playgrounds	1	114	15	2	246	33	3	146	20	4	109	15	5	65	9
Variety of outdoor trails	1	137	19	2	213	29	3	114	15	4	102	14	5	41	6
Multi-use possibilities of outdoor trails	1	143	19	2	241	33	3	144	20	4	106	14	5	46	6
Maintenance of trails	1	108	15	2	123	17	3	18	25	4	94	13	5	66	9
Proximity to where I live	1	208	28	2	200	27	3	15	17	4	89	12	5	70	9

Table 11. Level of satisfaction with the parks and trail system

(7) How can our parks and trail system be improved to better serve your needs?

Themes include:

- Sidewalk/safer trails at top of golf course hill
- Bigger playground behind schools in Eagle Ridge
- Address OHV/ATV issues
- Increase accessibility for wheel chairs, seniors, etc.
- Increase shade
- Address off-leash dog issues
- Better maintenance
- Complete wildfire clean-up
- Don't forget the rural hamlets

(13) Do you have any final comments related to our Parks Master Plan and Urban Forest Strategy that you would like to share?

Themes include:

- More shade
- Playground in Eagle Ridge behind the schools
- Safer and expanded trails along Real Martin/golf course
- More/expanded skate parks
- Replacement of pre-fire conditions
- More benches, picnic tables, restrooms (not porta potties)
- Better fiscal management by RMWB
- Encourage programming and activities in parks and trails
- Remove dangerous wildlife
- Poor maintenance in rural hamlets
- Positive comments towards RMWB efforts
- Ensure parks are usable by a diverse group of people (old, varied ages of youth, disabled)
- Support the building of the Memorial Park in Beacon Hill
- Waterfront development
- RMWB should have landscape architects and arborists on staff

Parks Master Plan & Urban Forest Strategy

Have your say on the development of our Parks Master Plan & Urban Forest Strategy. Take a few minutes to complete this survey to help us better serve you. All questions are optional.

1 Please identify your age

- ☐ Under 18 ☐ 19-24 ☐ 25-34
☐ 35-54 ☐ 55-64 ☐ 65+

2 Please identify the area where you live in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Abasand | ☐ Gregoire |
| ☐ Anzac | ☐ Gregoire Lake Estates |
| ☐ Beacon Hill | ☐ Janvier |
| ☐ Conklin | ☐ Parsons Creek |
| ☐ Dickinsfield | ☐ Saprae Creek |
| ☐ Downtown | ☐ Thickwood |
| ☐ Draper | ☐ Timberlea |
| ☐ Eagle Ridge | ☐ Waterways |
| ☐ Fort Chipewyan | ☐ Wood Buffalo |
| ☐ Fort McKay | ☐ Other: _____ |

3 How frequently do you use our parks and trail system?

- ☐ Weekly
☐ Monthly
☐ Once every few months
☐ Once a year
☐ I'm not a user.

4 What activities do you participate in when using our parks and trail system? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Walking
☐ Running
☐ Biking
☐ Skiing
☐ Organized sports (eg. soccer, baseball, cricket, etc.)
☐ Dog walking
☐ Off leash dog activities.
☐ Community gardening.
☐ Picnicking or family gatherings.
☐ Taking my children to a playground or waterpark.
☐ Other: _____

5 What prevents you from using our parks and trail system more often? Check all that apply.

- ☐ No time, I'm too busy.
☐ The location is inconvenient.
☐ I don't feel safe in the park/on the trail.
☐ I don't feel the equipment is safe to use.
☐ Other: _____

6 Please rate your level of satisfaction with our parks and trail system in the following areas:

- [1 = Extremely satisfied]
 [2 = Moderately satisfied]
 [3 = Neutral]
 [4 = Slightly dissatisfied]
 [5 = Extremely dissatisfied]

Sufficient parks to use.

1 2 3 4 5

Sufficient playgrounds to use.

1 2 3 4 5

Variety of playground equipment.

1 2 3 4 5

Availability of spray parks.

1 2 3 4 5

Availability of off-leash dog parks.

1 2 3 4 5

Maintenance of parks and playgrounds.

1 2 3 4 5

Variety of outdoor trails.

1 2 3 4 5

Multi-use possibilities on outdoor trails (eg. walking, biking, etc.).

1 2 3 4 5

Maintenance of trails.

1 2 3 4 5

Proximity to where I live.

1 2 3 4 5

7 How can our parks and trail system be improved to better serve your needs?

8 Also part of the Parks Master Plan development is the Urban Forest Strategy. The next series of questions applies to the strategy.

Please note: the term "urban" in this context means the forest area the Municipality manages, not the natural forest or forest protection area that the Province manages. This means even though it is called an Urban Forest Strategy, it can still apply to rural hamlets.

Where do you feel the Municipality should concentrate its efforts for tree development in Fort McMurray?

- ☐ In parks/greenspaces.
☐ Along residential streets.
☐ Along major corridors.
☐ I don't have an opinion.
☐ Other: _____

9 What would you expect from an Urban Forest Strategy (check all that apply):

- ☐ Outlining a variety of different trees for use.
☐ Outlining a variety of different shrubs for use.
☐ More consistent and regular care of trees (eg. pruning).
☐ Mandatory inclusion and guidelines of FireSmart principles.
☐ Protection and maintenance of already established natural spaces.
☐ Development of new treed greenspaces for recreation and leisure.
☐ Increased canopy cover overall.
☐ Guidelines to improve community beautification through trees and shrubs.
☐ Other: _____

10 What kind of Municipal tree services are important to you?

- ☐ FireSmart
☐ Hazardous Tree Removal
☐ Home tree assessments to deal with tree health, tree insects and diseases.
☐ Other: _____

11 Should the Municipality establish a Tree Protection Bylaw to provide guidance on the maintenance and growth of trees on public property? An example of what would be in a Tree Bylaw: any contractor doing work on the public property needs to protect or replace any removed trees. At this time, that is not enforceable.

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

12 Would you support a Tree Protection Bylaw that applies also to private property? This would relate specifically to insect and disease control or tree removal and not general tree maintenance.

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

13 Do you have any final comments related to our Parks Master Plan and Urban Forest Strategy that you would like to share?

Thank you for participating in our survey.



rmwb.ca/engage

APPENDIX D: PARKLAND ACQUISITION/ DISPOSITION GUIDELINES

PARKLAND ACQUISITION GUIDELINES

1. Topography and natural features suited to the intended uses

- Where feasible, a desirable park gradient will be in the range of 0-5 percent for the majority of the site. Lands up to a 10 percent slope may be considered only if they can be graded to 5 percent to accommodate park uses. Consideration must be made on a park by park basis of natural geographic features (such as small hills, knolls, valleys) which may act as features of a park, but the majority of a park should be capable of accommodating a range of recreational activities.
- Parkland should be considered where it protects ecosystems not otherwise represented in the system.
- Parkland should be considered where significant natural features or viewpoints are located.

2. Be convenient to the population it serves

- Every resident should not be farther than a ten minute walk from a park.
- Publicly accessible sites near natural areas should be identified early in the planning and development process. Such sites should be earmarked as park/greenway sites, particularly those with the potential to enhance the exposure of children and youth to natural systems.

3. Be compatible with adjoining land uses

- Situate parks adjacent to larger natural features or linear green connectors. Examples of this are locating neighbourhood parks adjacent to linear greenways (e.g. Pedestrian friendly streets).
- Create parks, where possible, adjacent to school sites.
- The location of proposed athletic fields or events sites should take into consideration the effect of lighting, parking and circulation on adjacent land uses and circulation patterns.

4. Be safe and accessible

- Parks should be located close to public streets, transit, bicycle paths and pedestrian routes.
- Parks should have as much frontage on streets as possible.
- Universal accessibility should be provided to and in parks where reasonably feasible and where doing so will not damage cultural or environmental integrity.
- District Parks and Community Parks should be properly lit to discourage vandalism and where doing so will not adversely affect adjacent residences. It is not expected that natural/environmental areas be lit.

5. Provide varied programming

- Sites should be as flexible as possible in their programming, incorporating opportunities for a variety of activities such as active structured play, un-programmed lawn areas, pathways, trails, lookouts and quiet areas.
- Sites should incorporate desired park facilities for the specific neighbourhood requirements and demographics. Since this will change over time, it is critical that the space be of a size, shape and contour that park elements can change over time.
- In general, a park smaller than 0.4ha should not be accepted in new developments. Smaller site (minimum 0.2 ha) should be considered where access to significant natural features cannot otherwise be secured, or to meet parkland objectives in infill or urbanized areas.

6. Be sensitive to the environment

- Parks should conserve, enhance and restore the natural physical character of the site and its immediate context, including views.

7. Limited non-park infrastructure

- Stormwater detention ponds that preclude public use are not recommended as park space.
- Large constructed wetlands with multiple habitat and recreation benefits should be considered and should be designed through integration of both parks and engineering criteria.

8. Consider opportunities for optimal parkland as they arise

- Where school sites are closed, existing playfields and amenities such as playgrounds should be considered for acquisition as parkland.
- Initiate parkland identification and boundary determination at, or prior to, road layouts and preceding any lot layouts in new development areas. In some cases, due to the workload involved, this work will need to be carried out by consultants reporting to Parks Services.

9. Create connections

- Parkland is preferred where it contributes directly to the community-wide system of trails, but also where indirect benefits can be provided such as access points and trailheads with amenities.

PARKLAND DISPOSITION GUIDELINES

Disposition of parkland should not be considered unless the subject area:

- Is not contiguous to a core parkland parcel
- Is compromised to the point that restoration within the next generation is unlikely
- Is part of a land exchange or enables purchase of suitable parkland that results in a net positive gain by the RMWB

APPENDIX E: WATERFRONT ENHANCEMENTS CONCEPT PLANS

Horse Pasture Park



- **East and West Boat Launches:** two boat launch areas with large parking lots to accommodate trucks and trailers. The west launch includes a small picnic area, public washroom, a gazebo and additional vehicle parking for other park features. The east launch features an Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) staging area connection to the OHV trail that leads toward Draper, including a loading and off-loading ramp



- **Off-leash Dog Park:** a fenced off-leash dog park including an gazebo and water fountains for both people and their pets. A gate at the far east end of the dog park will allow immediate access to the Clearwater River

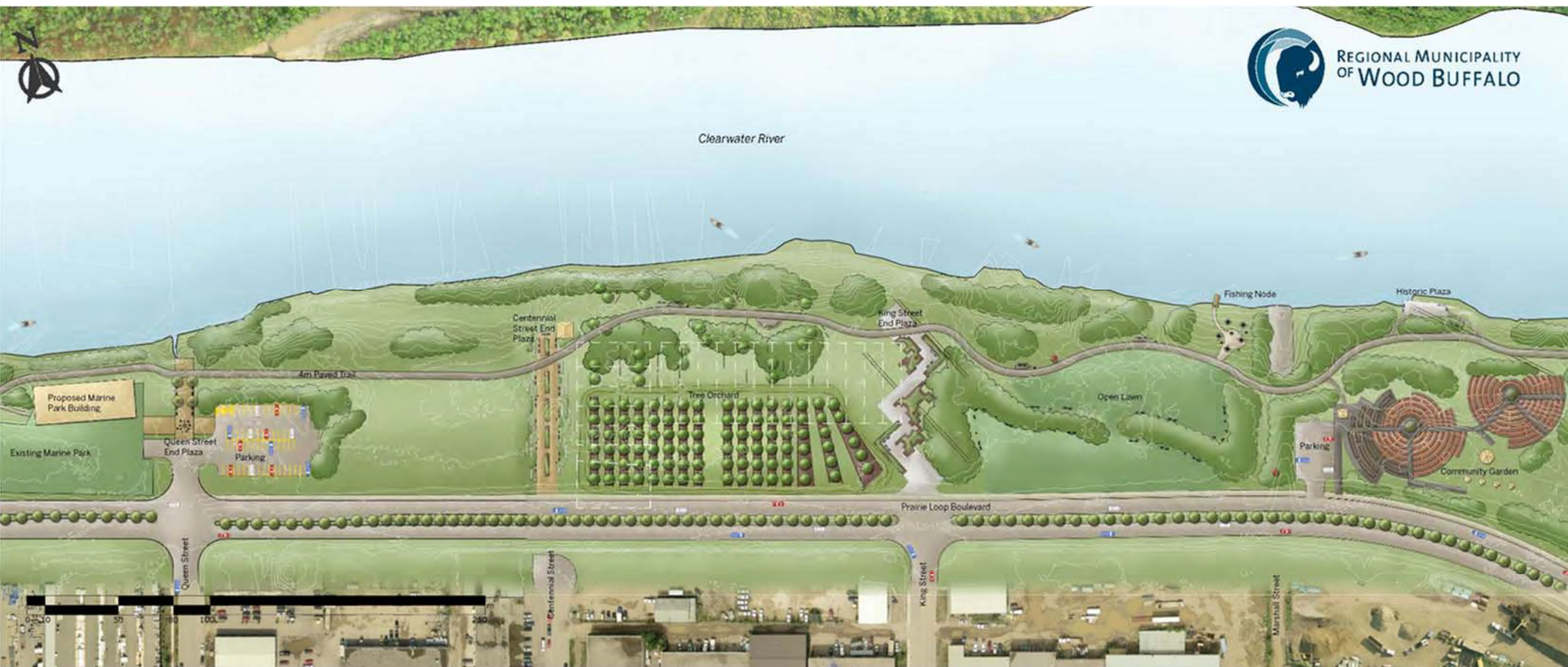


- **Multi-use Trails:** a combination of 4m wide year-round accessible asphalt trails and seasonal wood mulch trails will be constructed through the existing forest. These trails will accommodate a variety of users including joggers, cyclists, and cross country skiers



- **Celebration Pavilion:** a partially open-air structure that will be available to be rented to the public for group gatherings of all sizes. Consistent with the Waterfront Program, building architecture and area's interpretive program will be inspired by Aboriginal heritage





The Gardens



- **Queen Street End Plaza:** a commemorative plaza adjacent to a proposed parking lot for existing Marine Park. The Plaza will include a river overlook, pedestrian seating and artistic features that commemorates the founding families of Fort McMurray



- **Centennial Street End Plaza:** a pedestrian plaza with a bio swale running down the center. This plaza will incorporate pedestrian seating and a historic tower to provide great perspective over the Clearwater River and valley



- **King Street End Plaza:** historic plaza with elements to celebrate the historic rail line that once occupied this area. The plaza will include pedestrian seating, a formal viewing garden, and public art features



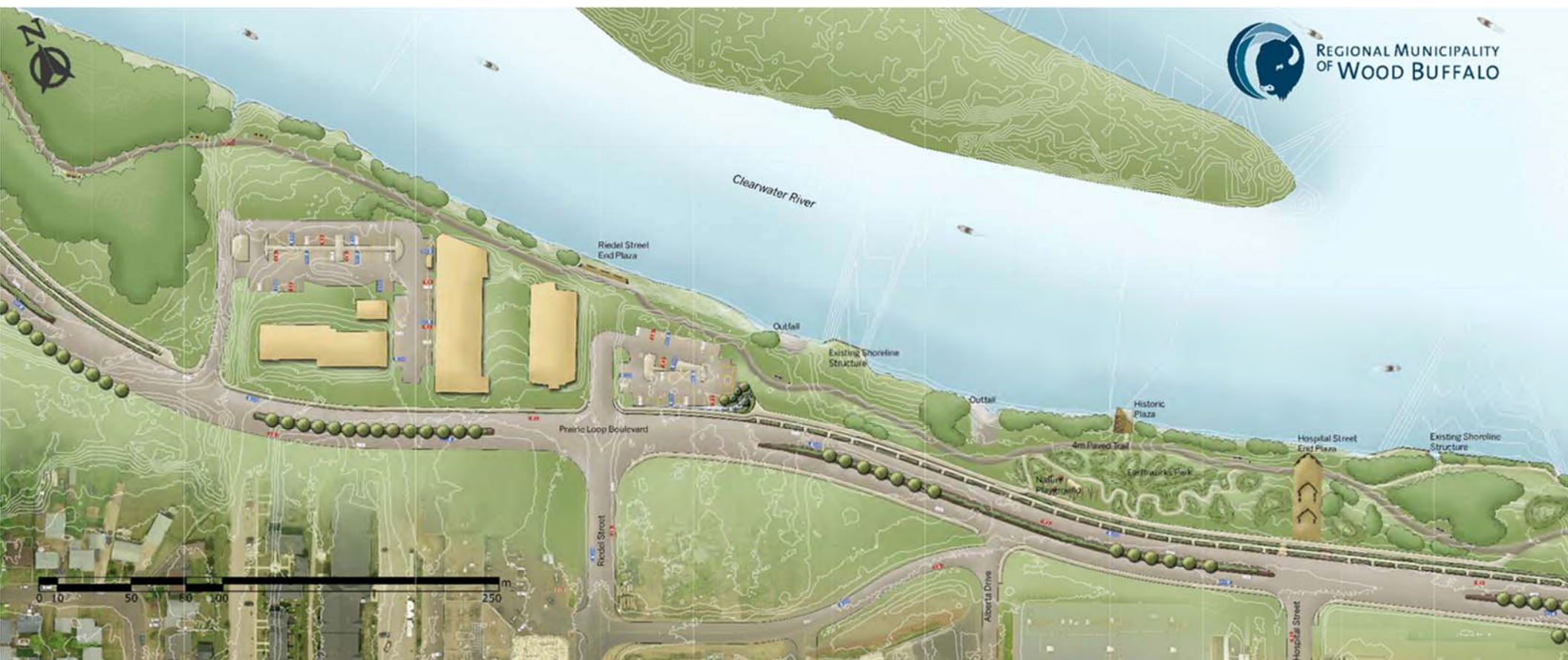
- **Fishing Node:** Located near the intersection of Marshall Street and Prairie Loop Boulevard, this fishing area will include a seasonal dock, picnic tables, and a central fire pit



- **Historic Plaza** small plaza that compliments an existing historic dock structure. The plaza will incorporate pedestrian seating and interpretive signage to tell the stories of this historic working waterfront



- **Community Garden:** a community garden designed for phased construction that will incorporate rentable garden plots, with accessibility in mind. The area will also include a public washroom facility, a source of water, central communal seating areas, a pavilion structure, and sheds for tool storage



Clearwater Promenade



- **Nature Trails:** 4m wide continuous paved trail through an existing forested area. Pedestrian level lighting will be provided along all trails



- **Riedel Street End Plaza:** wooden plaza with interpretive signage and seating with scenic viewpoints that overlook the Clearwater River



- **Hospital Street End Plaza:** wooden plaza connecting Prairie Loop Boulevard and the 4m continuous waterfront paved trail. The plaza will incorporate historic references to barges that once dominated this landscape, using interpretive signage and other historical references



- **Historic Plaza:** small plaza that compliments an existing historic wharf structure. The plaza will include a lightweight overhead structure, pedestrian seating, and interpretive signage



- **Earthworks Park & Nature Playground:** constructed landforms that mimic the terrain of our natural landscape that surrounds Fort McMurray. It includes a nature playground that allows opportunities for creative play - for all ages!



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
OF WOOD BUFFALO



Snye

Snyeside Development/ Snye Park

- Civic Precinct plaza
- Enhanced Parking
- Marina and boat launches
- Restored natural areas

Waterfront Park System



Clearwater River

Prairie Loop Boulevard

Quest St

Franklin Ave

Hangingstone

Clearwater Promenade

- Street end plazas: historic themes
- Earthworks and natural play
- Nature trails
- Preservation of historic docks

The Gardens

- Street end plazas: historic themes
- Community garden
- Open play space
- Preservation of historic docks

The Prairies

- Fishing plaza
- Nature trails and boardwalks
- Hangingstone Beach area
- Restored natural areas



Waterways Park

- All Seasons Skate Loop
- Celebrate railway history
- Nature playground
- Day use picnic sites

Horse Pasture Park

- Two boat launches
- Off-leash dog park
- Multi-use nature trails
- OHV Staging Area

APPENDIX F: MAINTENANCE WORKSHEET

Table 11. Recommended parks maintenance procedures and frequency targets worksheet

Service	Key Activities	Frequency Targets			
		Service Level 'A'	Service Level 'B'	Service Level 'C'	Service Level 'D'
Waste Management	Pick up litter				
	Pick up dog waste				
Turf Maintenance	Mow				
	Trim				
	Weed control				
Turf Management	Aerate, de-thatch				
	Edge				
	Fertilize				
	Inspect				
	Compost/topdress				
	Reseed/overseed				
	Weed control				
Irrigation	Inspect				
	Startup system				
	Shut down				
	Upgrade/field repair				
	Reset timer				
	Adjust sprinkler				
	Turn-off water				
Horticulture	Inspect orders				
	Till and amend soils				
	Install hanging baskets				
	Plant annual beds				
	Install seasonal displays				
	Plant spring bulbs				
	Water plantings				
	Weed control				
	Complete clean up				

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE DAILY/WEEKLY PLAYGROUND INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Date: _____

Person inspecting playground: _____

What to look for...

- Protective Surfacing: check for uneven coverage of surface under swings, at the bottom of slides and sliding poles. Rake or shovel
- SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL: Grab equipment and shake to look for loose bolts
- Closely examine swings, chains, fasteners, seats
- Sharp edges, wood, plastic, metal, ropes, chains
- Garbage and sharps (beer bottles, needles, broken glass)
- Bio hazards (blood, chemicals, bodily fluids, condoms)
- Remove ropes or chains etc. hanging from playground structures or nearby trees
- Fire damage
- Frost heave
- Vegetation, hanging or broken trees, encroachment of shrubs
- Drainage, standing water, plugged drains, washouts
- Walkway areas and trash cans
- Exposed cement foundations
- Sand areas – animal excrement, levels topped up
- Metal, wood, plastic structures: cracks, rust, peeling paint, rot
- Drinking fountains, taps
- Park furniture, benches, tables
- Exposed wiring from lighting or electrical boxes
- Moving components, spinning, sliding, rotating
- Graffiti

Notes:

Submit report to:

APPENDIX H: PLAYGROUND SELF EVALUATION TOOL

- Good Policy can be a bridge connecting 'Good Intentions' to 'Best Practices'.
- Nothing in 'common law' tells an owner/operator exactly when to schedule inspection.
- Each jurisdiction must allocate resources to inspect according to its needs and resources and within the means of your organization (otherwise benchmarks of CSA Z614 will be used).
- The important message is that organizations must document policy and record inspection practices to show due diligence.

WHAT IS YOUR PLAYGROUND INSPECTION POLICY, BASED ON YOUR RECORDS?

NOT SO GOOD	CIRCLE THE NUMBER THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR SITUATION	BETTER
We inspect at various intervals, depending when we can get to it	1 2 3 4 5	We inspect on a written schedule and have the records to show it
We do our maintenance when we can, but some things never really get taken care of	1 2 3 4 5	Our records show that our maintenance is taken care of in a timely way; the time from inspection to completion of maintenance is documented
When we get busy with capital project, our inspection program suffers	1 2 3 4 5	We budget for inspection on a schedule and it is not 'bumped' as a priority
Donna, a lady on 'light duty' really liked doing inspections so she did them frequently and kept good records	1 2 3 4 5	Our schedule for inspections is supported by trained staff with adequate time and resources
Although we have a written policy and inspection schedule, staff holidays and projects can interfere with the schedule from time to time	1 2 3 4 5	Our foreman plans for needs and supports training for workers so that we can always perform inspections as required with trained personnel

APPENDIX I: LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 12. List of Recommendations

5.2 Parkland Standards - Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Adopt the Parkland Acquisition and Disposition Criteria included in Appendix D .	Operational		1	Low <\$100,000

5.4 RMWB Parks – General Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Increase opportunities for community ownership, building on initiatives such as the community rink program, and Adopt-A-Park.	Operational		3	Low <\$100,000
2	Plan for trails with a network-based approach opposed to assure regional connectivity.	Operational		1	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000
3	Prioritize tree planting to provide increased shade in existing parks, with a focus on playgrounds, spray parks, and picnic areas.	Operational		1	Low <\$100,000
4	Expand winter access to parks and trails by undertaking winter packing of select trail routes, such as the Little Fisheries Trail.	Operational		1	Low <\$100,000
5	Support the development of a Winter City Strategy for the RMWB to encourage and promote outdoor winter life.	Medium (3-10 years)		2	Low <\$100,000
6	Incorporate public art in municipal park spaces under the Public Art Policy (PRL-160). Support the development of a public art plan.	Operational		2	Low <\$100,000
7	Consider Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) in park design, improving safety as needed.	Operational		2	Low <\$100,000

8	Support the implementation of recommendations in the RMWB Off Highway Vehicle Master Plan (2016)	Operational		1	Low <\$100,000
9	Reconfigure access control (i.e., fencing and barriers) at key parks impacted by OHV use.	Operational		1	Low <\$100,000
10	Promote and pursue partnerships in the provision of OHV staging areas and support amenities.	Operational	McMurray Sno-Drifters ATV Club, Dirt Riders	1	Low <\$100,000
11	Undertake a sport fields strategy that includes direct input from sport user groups and stakeholders, to inform demand for specific outdoor facilities.	Medium (3-10 years)	Sport User Groups	2	Low <\$100,000
12	Expand the community garden program, based on demonstrated demand. Add guidelines to the Adopt-A-Park program for community gardens on RMWB-owned lands.	Operational		2	Low <\$100,000
13	As existing playgrounds are upgraded, diversify the range of play experiences by creating adventure and nature play areas.	Operational		3	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000
14	Consider lighting in select open spaces to extend park use, especially in the winter, and enhance perceptions of safety.	Long (10+ Years)		2	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000

5.5 Abasand Heights – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Explore opportunities to develop new linear park or pocket in the southwest corner of Abasand to address parkland deficiency.	Medium (3-10 years)		2	Low <\$100,000
2	Enhance the functionality of the existing Abasand OHV staging area and expand the area for other multi-modal users.	Medium (3-10 years)	Sno-Drifters	1	High > \$300,000
3	Establish an interpretive trail within the Horse River Valley with access from the Abasand staging area. Develop amenities to act as a destination for trail users, such as a loop trail with interpretive signage, viewpoints, and picnic sites.	Medium (3-10 years)	Métis Local #1935, Alberta Culture and Tourism	1	High > \$300,000
4	Continue the re-establishment of trails and benches within firebreak areas.	Operational		1	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000
5	Trial an off-leash area within the storm pond on Athabasca Ave. Gather public input to establish demand for a permanent facility.	Short (0-3 years)		1	Low <\$100,000

5.6 Beacon Hill – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Consult with local user groups regarding potential alternative uses for the tennis court, such as repainting for pickleball, ball hockey or a modular pump track.	Short (0-3 years)	Local user groups	2	Low <\$100,000
2	Re-grade the off-leash dog park and clear vegetation to improve sightlines and the overall sense of safety.	Short (0-3 years)		2	Low <\$100,000
3	Develop additional neighbourhood parks within Beacon Hill to address parkland deficiency. Consider a pocket park with horseshoes, and a nature play area.	Medium (3-10 years)		2	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000

4	Develop a demonstration forest on a selected track of open space lands impacted by the wildfire to provide educational opportunities about boreal forest succession, diversity and wildfire ecology.	Medium (3-10 years)	FireSmart	1	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000
5	Create trails on existing PULs to increase trail access for all residential areas.	Medium (3-10 years)		3	Low <\$100,000
6	Add additional seating areas and viewpoints along the perimeter trail.	Medium (3-10 years)		2	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000

5.7 Thickwood – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Continue to optimize the management and use of the Birchwood Trails for all trail users. Update maps, wayfinding and information markers.	Operational	Ptarmigan Nordic Ski Club, local naturalist clubs	2	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000
2	Pursue the acquisition of lands adjacent to the Woodlawn Cemetery for the development of a regional nature park.	Long (10+ years)		1	High > \$300,000
3	Establish a partnership to expand programming at Dickens Drive Park. Explore opportunities to provide additional shade.	Operational	Fort McMurray Chess Club	2	Low <\$100,000
4	Engage with user groups to explore options to improve access to popular cycling areas in (i.e., access to the Little Fisheries Trail, Real Martin Drive).	Medium (3-10 years)	Wood Buffalo Cycling Club	2	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000 to High >\$300,000

5.8 Gregoire – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Undertake a Master Plan for the redevelopment of Moberly Park to expand the use and functionality of the park.	Short (0-3 years)	Local residents	1	Low <\$100,000

5.9 Timberlea – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Trial an off-leash dog area at the Prospect Drive Storm Pond. Gather public feedback to evaluate demand for a permanent facility.	Short (0-3 years)		1	Low <\$100,000
2	Establish an off-leash dog park at the storm pond in Parsons Creek North.	Short (0-3 years)		2	Low <\$100,000
3	Work with stakeholders to create an additional playground at the Walter and Gladys Hill Public School site in Eagle Ridge.	Operational	School District, parent groups	2	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000

5.10 Lower Townsite – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Pursue implementation of the Council approved Waterfront Program, with an emphasis on providing additional riverfront park space.	Long (10+ years)		1	High > \$300,000
2	Continue pursuing the acquisition of three land parcels along the waterfront, north of Franklin Ave and east of Prairie Loop Blvd.	Long (10+ years)		3	-
3	Trial a temporary seasonal public skating area at Snye Point Park in conjunction with the WinterPLAY festival.	Short (0-3 years)		2	Low <\$100,000

4	Provide an area at Snye Point Park with surfacing for heavy traffic (i.e., grass grid or geo-grid pavers) for festivals and events.	Short (0-3 years)		2	Low <\$100,000
5	Establish a Trans Canada Trailhead and signage at the Snye.	Short (0-3 years)	Trans Canada Trail	1	Low <\$100,000
6	Explore a partnership to manage Lions Park with the goal of expanding the Park's potential use, revenue generation and programming opportunities.	Short (0-3 years)	Fort McMurray Historical Society	1	Low <\$100,000
7	Pursue the development of Roche Island as a Dark Sky Park.	Long (10+ years)	Fort McMurray Tourism	1	High >\$300,000

5.11 Waterways – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Pursue implementation of the Council approved Waterfront Program, with an emphasis on pursuing disc golf and a Métis-themed gathering space in Sitskaw Park.	Medium (3-10 years)	Métis Local #1935	1	High >\$300,000
2	Engage with local user groups regarding the use of the Waterways tennis court to determine if it should be upgraded or replaced with a multi-use surface.	Medium (3-10 years)	Local user groups	2	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000
3	Explore the expansion and upgrading of the outdoor hockey rink in Waterways Park in consultation with local user groups.	Medium (3-10 years)	Local user groups	2	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000

Rural Communities - Parkland Recommendations

5.13 Anzac – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Clear trees at the placemaking node community gardens to improve sun exposure for the garden plots.	Operational		2	Low <\$100,000
2	Consider interim uses for the old community hall site, i.e., community garden beds, ball hockey, pickleball, skateboarding, community market, or other events.	Operational		1	Low <\$100,000
3	Develop a wayfinding signage program within the community including park identification and signage.	Short (0-3 years)		2	Low <\$100,000
4	Establish a municipally owned day use site on Willow Lake, north of Gregoire Lake Provincial Park.	Long (10+ Years)		3	High > \$300,000
5	Extend the paved multi-use trail along Stony Mountain Road to the placemaking node.	Medium (3-10 years)		2	Medium \$100,000- \$300,000
6	Establish a trail network to provide for walking and bicycle connectivity, as proposed in the Anzac Area Structure Plan Land Use Concept (2012).	Long (10+ Years)		3	High > \$300,000

5.14 Conklin – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Develop an all-season pedestrian trail from the Community Core to Christina Lake.	Long (10+ Years)		3	High > \$300,000
2	Develop park identification and trailhead signage to enhance community identity.	Operational		2	Low <\$100,000

3	Extend the paved linear trail along Northland Drive to Conklin Corner at Hwy 881. Add amenity nodes in line with the ESS.	Medium (3-10 years)		3	High > \$300,000
4	Explore interim uses for the parking lot at the Conklin Multiplex (i.e., ball hockey, pickleball, skateboarding, community market, or other events).	Operational		2	Low <\$100,000
5	Expand the community garden adjacent to the Nakewin Centre based on resident demand and establish a compost program.	Short (0-3 years)		1	Low <\$100,000
6	Improve drainage at the placemaking node picnic area next to the Nakewin Centre to make the area more useable in all weather.	Operational		2	Low <\$100,000
7	Add more trees to the St. Vincent Cemetery over time. Consider a memorial tree program within family burial areas.	Operational		2	Low <\$100,000
8	Enhance the old cemetery by the lake by expanding the fencing, erecting the Métis Angel Statue, and installing a plaque and identification signage.	Medium (3-10 years)		2	Low <\$100,000
9	Enhance motorized boating access to Christina Lake. Consider opportunities to develop additional amenities.	Medium (3-10 years)		3	High > \$300,000
10	Establish a new park at Lot R2171995TR on Conklin Drive. Consider a nature play area, or a small pump track.	Medium (3-10 years)		2	Low <\$100,000

5.15 Draper – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Explore opportunities for the development of a public water access point to the Clearwater River.	Long (10+ Years)		3	High > \$300,000
2	Work with the partners to enhance the recreational use of the former CN railway track as an all season multi-use trail.	Short (0-3 years)	Fort McMurray Sno-Drifters	1	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000
3	Support partners to develop a formalized OHV rest stop in Draper along the CN railbed, with support amenities.	Medium (3-10 years)	Fort McMurray Sno-Drifters	2	Medium to High

5.16 Fort Chipewyan – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Explore the feasibility of a connected walking trail along the lake front to key destinations such as Monument Hill, the Fish Plant, sun dial and the new cemetery.	Long (10+ years)		2	High > \$300,000
2	Use a combination of increased enforcement and education to reduce disturbance of OHVs on park and local trails.	Operational		2	Low <\$100,000
3	Upgrade and expand the interpretive signage program along the Lake Athabasca waterfront.	Short (0-3 years)		1	Low <\$100,000
4	Trial the use of barriers such as boulders at non-motorized trailheads to discourage OHV use and enhance the pedestrian experience.	Short (0-3 years)		2	Low <\$100,000
5	Support the expansion of community gardening opportunities in the hamlet, based on resident demand.	Operational		2	Low <\$100,000

6	Explore locations for a multi use sport court surface, to accommodate activities such as a skate park and basketball hoops.	Medium (3-10 years)		1	Medium \$100,000- \$300,000
7	Establish any new parks or playgrounds within the western and northeastern (Muskeg) areas of the community to provide better distribution of parks.	Long (10+ years)		3	Medium \$100,000- \$300,000
8	Consider new placemaking initiatives near the boat launch for day-to-day gathering.	Medium (3-10 years)		3	Medium \$100,000- \$300,000

5.17 Fort McKay – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Conduct a site suitability study in concert with land owners to identify sites for municipal reserve that can developed as future parks and open spaces.	Long (10+ years)	Land owners in Fort McKay	2	Medium \$100,000- \$300,000

5.18 Gregoire Lake Estates – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Provide gravel trail access at all PULs.	Operational		2	Low <\$100,000
2	Consider establishment of a trail, boardwalk or viewpoint to Gregoire (Willow) Lake.	Medium (3-10 years)		3	Medium \$100,000- \$300,000
3	Develop cross-country ski paths in the FireSmart area east of Gregoire Lake Estates Park.	Short (0-3 years)		1	Medium \$100,000- \$300,000

5.19 Janvier South – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Upgrade the existing outdoor ice rink and parking area.	Medium (3-10 years)		2	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000
2	Add shade trees and benches at the Janvier School playground. Consider amenities for winter time use, i.e., toboggan hill.	Short (0-3 years)		2	Low <\$100,000
3	Rehabilitate the sports field at the Janvier School.	Medium (3-10 years)		2	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000
4	Add amenities (i.e., benches, trash bins and shade trees) along the existing paved linear trail in line with the ESS.	Medium (3-10 years)		2	Low <\$100,000
5	Expand the community garden program based on resident demand. Initiate a composting program to assist in dealing with the manure problem.	Short (0-3 years)		1	Low <\$100,000

5.20 Sapræe Creek – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Upgrade the community park at the Community Centre based on community input to expand its functionality and use.	Medium (3-10 years)		2	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000
2	Enhance the Sapræe Creek placemaking node with shade trees and seating areas to promote pedestrian use.	Short (0-3 years)		2	Low <\$100,000
3	Establish a composting program at Community Lane Park program in partnership with the recycling depot.	Short (0-3 years)		2	Low <\$100,000
4	Support the Sapræe Creek Residents Society to secure funding for a trail network along the road to connect to the Highway.	Operational		2	Low <\$100,000

5	Enhance the Saprae Creek trail system by installing updated trail maps and information at trailheads.	Short (0-3 years)		1	Low <\$100,000
6	Explore the establishment of a new designated OHV trailhead to include a warm up area, community fire pit, and trail connection to the old rail line in consultation with partners.	Long (10+ years)	McMurray Sno-Drifters ATV Club, Dirt Riders Association	3	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000

Park Operations and Maintenance - Recommendations

6.1 Urban Service Area Park Operations and Maintenance – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Develop CCC and FAC inspection checklists for turf, hort, irrigation and urban forestry.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
2	Establish a satellite operations hub for Parks Services north of the Athabasca River bridge.	Medium (3-10 years)		1	High > \$300,000
3	Implement the back of curb strategy to mitigate turf maintenance concerns along curbs and boulevards.	Short (0-3 years)	Engineering Dept	1	Low < \$100,000
4	Test and implement less intensive maintenance strategies for large turfed open spaces, such as alternative grass mixes.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
5	Update and enhance the Community Placemaking Initiative document, and “kit-of-parts.”	Medium (3-10 years)		2	Low < \$100,000
6	Ensure parks representatives are involved in the mandatory sign-off on lay down applications by all departments.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
7	Expand the standard operating procedures for cemeteries to include procedures for new types of interment & memorialization.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
8	Establish priority planting areas for seasonal floral displays. Reduce median planters and	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000

	hanging basket projects to priority areas within urban and rural community areas.				
9	Continue to modernize the fleet and hand tools as part of internal service reviews.	Operational		3	Low < \$100,000 to Medium
10	Consider the use of external contractors for maintenance of specialized park facilities, or support for large special events.	Operational		3	-
11	Update the Parks and Recreation Bylaw 99/028 to better reflect issues such as off-leash dogs, fire pits and regulations governing open spaces.	Operational	Bylaw	2	Low < \$100,000
12	Add separate bins for dog waste in off-leash dog parks and in popular dog walking areas to reduce waste management burdens.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000

6.2 Rural Communities Park Operations and Maintenance – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Establish an operations hub in rural south for the storage of bulk materials and tools.	Medium (3-10 years)		1	High > \$300,000
2	Develop a rural “maintenance handbook” with illustrations and how-to guidance for common upkeep and repairs for amenities such as benches, trails and playgrounds.	Short (0-3 years)		1	Low < \$100,000
3	Engage rural community members around park maintenance priorities and use their input to prioritize maintenance activities within each community.	Operational		3	Low < \$100,000
4	Create a maintenance worksheet/service call for the rural team leader to track maintenance needs and repairs.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
5	Expand and develop expertise within the rural operations team through training opportunities.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000

6	Standardize types of playground equipment and construction details used in rural parks to simplify future on-site repairs at remote sites.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
7	Establish maintenance requirements for outdoor recreation facilities at the new multi-use Anzac Recreation Centre and Conklin Multiplex.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
8	Explore partnership opportunities to assist with the maintenance of rural cemeteries, such as engaging summer students to do fence maintenance, staining and sweeping.	Operational		3	Low < \$100,000

6.3 Maintenance of Parkland Owned by Others – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Undertake an assessment of all municipal assets that may fall on crown land and ensure proper licences of occupation and regulatory approvals are in place.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
2	Continue pursuing the modernization of the Joint Use Agreement between the RMWB and Fort McMurray school districts.	Short (0-3 years)	McMurray School Districts	1	Low < \$100,000
3	Establish an agreement for the Gregoire Lake Provincial Park Day Use Area to clarify ownership of assets, maintenance, and public liability.	Short (0-3 years)	Alberta Parks	1	Low < \$100,000
4	Pursue a joint use agreement with the Alberta Ministry of Transportation to clarify responsibility of green space maintenance within provincial highway rights of way.	Short (0-3 years)	Alberta Ministry of Trans.	1	Low < \$100,000

6.4 Playground Inspections – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Use a tiered approach to classify existing playgrounds by use: i.e., High Use (30%), Moderate Use (50%) and Low Use (20%).	Operational		1	Low < \$100,000
2	Develop a playground inspection schedule, which tailors the frequency of inspections based on the High, Moderate and Low Use classifications (see example in Table 6).	Operational		1	Low < \$100,000
3	Prepare a Playground Inspection Policy statement to be approved by Council. Utilize the sample “Policy Self Evaluation Tool” in Appendix H to assess the current approach.	Operational		1	Low < \$100,000
4	Utilize CityReporter software to track playground inspections and prioritize service order requests.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
5	Order bulk replacement parts, where possible, for common playground repairs.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
6	Train a member of the rural parks team to carry out inspections at playgrounds in the rural communities. See Appendix G sample checklist for daily/weekly visual inspections.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
7	Ensure signage is installed in all playgrounds with contact information for any concerns.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
8	Audit playgrounds to identify and address “Access for All” issues.	Operational		3	Low < \$100,000
9	Reassess the RMWB’s lowest use playgrounds. Consider phasing some out or supplementing with nature play areas.	Operational		3	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000

6.5 Park Maintenance Priorities – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Develop a parks maintenance policy for Council approval that incorporates the proposed levels of service and park maintenance priorities outlined in Table 7.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
2	Assign appropriate maintenance activity frequencies for each service level. Refer to the worksheet in Appendix F .	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000

6.6 Special Events in Parks – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Work with partners to develop a Festival and Event Strategy for the RMWB.	Short (0-3 years)		2	Low < \$100,000
2	Establish a fees and charges schedule for special events.	Short (0-3 years)		2	Low < \$100,000

6.7 Parks and Tourism – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Connect with the tourism product development arm of the Wood Buffalo Economic Development Corporation when it begins operations. Identify priorities and opportunities to work together.	Operational	Wood Buffalo Economic Develop. Corporation	2	Low < \$100,000
2	Develop a formal communication mechanism between the Parks Services team, the tourism product development arm of the Wood Buffalo Economic Development Corporation, and Fort McMurray Tourism (e.g., quarterly meetings, project update reports).	Operational	Fort McMurray Tourism, Wood Buffalo Economic Develop. Corporation	2	Low < \$100,000

3	Ensure parks are outfitted with high quality visitor amenities to encourage visitation and longer stays. Consider longer term plans to provide washrooms at high visitation parks, where appropriate.	Medium (3-10 years) to Long		3	High > \$300,000
4	Create a branding, signage and wayfinding strategy for the parks and open space system.	Medium (3-10 years)		2	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000
5	Conduct a Visitor Friendly Assessment of park areas to determine areas for improvement.	Medium (3-10 years) to Long	Alberta Culture and Tourism	3	Medium \$100,000-\$300,000

6.8 Interdepartmental Collaboration – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Develop a formal communication mechanism with Engineering / Community Strategies Branch to improve enhance collaboration (e.g., bi-monthly meetings, project update reports).	Operational	Community Services, Engineering	1	Low < \$100,000
2	Conduct an interdepartmental review of the opening and closing of park facilities to identify opportunities for improvement and more efficient processes.	Operational	Community Services	2	Low < \$100,000
3	Ensure up-to-date capital plans are shared between departments.	Operational	Community Services, Engineering	2	Low < \$100,000
4	Ensure Engineering Department project design reviews and sign off are being completed at the 30%, 60% and 90% stage.	Operational	Engineering Department	2	Low < \$100,000

6.9 Staffing Requirements – Recommendations		Timeframe	Partners	Priority	Estimated Cost
1	Engage in a facilitated, focussed discussion with key senior staff of Parks Services branch relating to sustainability of operations.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
2	Develop clear service level standards, performance measures and a mechanism for evaluation (that includes public input on a regular basis).	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
3	Engage in a “process mapping” exercise to identify areas of responsibility and lines of communication between staff. Use the results to identify potential alternative organizational approaches (figure 13) to better meet service level standards.	Operational		2	Low < \$100,000
4	Establish and implement timesheets for the urban and rural parks teams.	Operational		1	Low < \$100,000
5	Complete a division wide review of the service operating model, including benchmarking of staffing in comparable communities.	Operational		1	Low < \$100,000

APPENDIX J

SELECTION OF BENCHMARK COMMUNITIES

Elements that bring an extra level of challenge to the RMWB include its climate, level of isolation, and the geographic distribution of its population. To provide some perspective on how the benchmark communities were similar or dissimilar from the RMWB, those factors were compared.

Population and Geographic Distribution

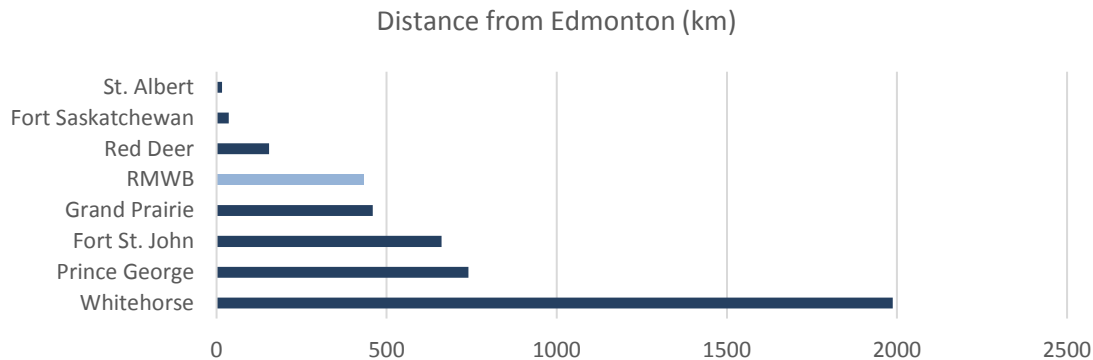
Comparison communities were chosen for a number of different reasons, one of which was population. While a few of the communities are less than half the population, these communities had characteristics related to climate that justified their inclusion. Overall, the RMWB and the Fort McMurray Urban Service Area both have slightly higher populations than the average of the comparison communities.

The RMWB has a higher population, over three times the geographic area (km²), and the lowest density of development. The Fort McMurray Urban Service Area has a higher population in a smaller than average geographic area, which means there is a more dense form of development compared to the other communities.

Comparison Communities	City/Urban Population	City/Urban Area (km ²)	Density of Development (people/km ²)	Regional/Metro Area Population	Regional Area (km ²)	Density of Development (people/km ²)
Fort St. John	20,155	23	820	28,396	621	42.5
Fort Saskatchewan	24,149	48	501	-		
Whitehorse	25,085	417	60	28,225	8489	3.3
Grand Prairie	63,166	133	476	-		
St. Albert	65,589	48	1,354	-		
Prince George	74,003	318	226	86,622	17687	4.8
Red Deer	100,418	105	959	99,718	63	1585
RMWB/Fort McMurray	66,573	60	1,025	71,589	61778	1.1
Average	54,892	144	678	60,740	17727	327

Level of Isolation

The following chart summarizes the distance of comparative communities within Alberta and Northern BC from Edmonton. Edmonton was chosen as it is the most likely location where supplies, equipment, or other specialized services are likely to be sourced. It is also the closest major metropolitan centre to all the communities.



Climate

The climate of the RMWB is Subarctic, and the only comparison community with the same classification is Whitehorse. All the other communities are classified as Humid continental by the Koppen Climate Classification.

Plant Hardiness Zone

The plant hardiness zone, as defined by Natural Resources Canada, varies among the comparison communities but the majority are in Zone 3 or lower. The plant hardiness zone affects what plant species are likely to survive the climate and is a consideration when determining what to plant and estimating expected mortality rates. The hardiness zones have been revised from previous iterations based on updated climate information from 1981-2010. The plant hardiness zones will likely continue to change over time due to the effects of climate change.

Temperature, Rainfall, and Snowfall Comparison

The following charts highlight the following similarities and differences regarding the key climate factors of temperature, rainfall, and snowfall between the comparison communities.

The daily mean temperature across all the comparison communities is very consistent between April and October. However, from November to March, there is a greater spread in the daily mean temperature, with

Community	Plant Hardiness Zone (1981-2010)
Whitehorse	1b
Fort McMurray	3a
Fort St. John	3a
Fort Saskatchewan	3b
Grand Prairie	3b
Red Deer	4b
St. Albert	4b
Prince George	5a

Fort McMurray, Whitehorse, and Grand Prairie being the coldest and Prince George and Fort Saskatchewan being the warmest. The biggest difference is in January with approximately 10 degree difference between Prince George and Fort McMurray. The fact that Fort McMurray has the coldest winter conditions was also confirmed by comparing the average low temperature, where Fort McMurray is a maximum of 4.3 degrees Celsius colder than the average of the comparison communities in January.

Fort McMurray was consistent with other communities in terms of the amount of precipitation it receives. The greatest difference between the benchmark communities was in the summer where Whitehorse has much lower rainfall. Fort McMurray was also consistent with other communities in terms of the amount of snowfall, although there are slightly more “snowy days” recorded.

This climate analysis reveals that the main climatic difference between Fort McMurray and the other communities is a lower average daily mean temperature in the winter. Fort McMurray also received between 7 and 10 mm more precipitation in the summer months than the average for comparison communities.

