

## 9.0 EDUCATION, RECREATION, PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND CULTURE



**Goal:** *To maintain and develop a city-wide integrated system of schools; parks; open space; culture, recreation and library facilities which enhances the quality of life for all residents and helps preserve the natural environment.*

A guiding principle states that “*St. Albert's parks and trails system is important and should be conserved and protected for future generations*”. The central focus of the parks system is Red Willow Park, which parallels the Sturgeon River for the full width of the City of St. Albert and connects to many neighbourhoods by way of approximately 70 km (43 miles) of walking trails.

For the past 25 years, housing developers have been required to dedicate park sites within neighbourhoods. These are typically located adjacent to schools. When new neighbourhoods are built they are given campus sites for schools and athletic/play areas, plus additional open spaces and linkages as prescribed by the Area Structure Plan, Parks Master Plan and the City of St. Albert Open Space Standards and Guidelines (1994).

While in the short term, school populations may be increasing, over the next 10-20 years shifts in the demographics of St. Albert are expected to take place. These shifts will alter the demand for parks, open space and recreation facilities in the future. Some of the expected changes include:

- static demand for schools and youth-oriented programs, services, and facilities
- greater demand for senior citizen-related facilities and activities, including more "passive" types of opportunities such as bird watching and more "active" types of opportunities such as walking or other recreational activities
- the need to consider whether new facilities are developed to meet changing recreation demands or whether existing facilities may be converted to other types of uses.

An environmental measure that could be incorporated into existing school grounds is "school ground naturalization". This would see the traditional play structures augmented by gardens, trees, flowers, and other natural features. These gardens have been shown to teach children about their environment and how to protect and care for it, as well as providing a quiet and safe place to read and play. In St. Albert, Grandin EcoPark provides an example of naturalization; school ground naturalization has been implemented at the Wild Rose Learning Garden.

### **Objectives**

The parks, recreation, open space, and schools objectives established in CityPlan 2007 are to:

- ensure that the provision of parks, open space, and recreation facilities is responsive to demographic, cultural and leisure trends
- work in conjunction with the local School Districts to provide the educational infrastructure to accommodate growth, cultural and demographic trends
- provide residents with neighbourhood parks, open space, and recreation facilities within convenient walking distance

- develop neighbourhood parks and open space in each new Area Structure Plan, in a pattern which provides trail connections to the city-wide trail system
- maintain and develop the parks and open space system in an environmentally sensitive and sustainable manner
- preserve sustainable locally significant natural areas, where possible, when developing parks and open space
- investigate opportunities to integrate passive recreational uses in locally significant areas as a form of site conservation
- ensure that development in the flood risk area complies with the Canada-Alberta Agreement Respecting Flood Damage Reduction and Flood Risk Mapping and encourage Alberta Environment to impose appropriate limits on filling and development in the floodway and flood fringe
- respond to the need for additional recreational facilities and opportunities as outlined in the City of St. Albert Recreation Master Plan (**BL11/2012**)
- explore intermunicipal options and public/private partnerships for the delivery of recreational services and the development of recreational facilities

## **Policies**

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| <b>9.1</b> | <b>Park Development Standards</b>            | For the purpose of establishing a desirable standard for parks and open space within St. Albert, a target ratio of 2.4 hectares per 1,000 persons shall be considered adequate and reasonable. In making this calculation, lands taken as municipal and environmental reserve and other public parks and open space available for public recreation and enjoyment will be counted. |
| <b>9.2</b> | <b>Park Linkages</b>                         | Parks, natural areas, school sites, and recreation facilities should be developed in a pattern which provides connections to a continuous city-wide trail system to form greenways as represented on <b>Map 3 – Parks, Recreation, and Open Space</b> .  |
| <b>9.3</b> | <b>Integration of Parks and School Sites</b> | All school sites shall have an adjoining park, which must be provided at the time of subdivision of the school site and consistent with the Parks and Open Space classification system.  |
| <b>9.4</b> | <b>Trail Development</b>                     | The trail system, wherever possible, should be developed on dedicated rights of way, not on City of St. Albert roadways.   |
| <b>9.5</b> | <b>Parks Planning and Development</b>        | The City of St. Albert should implement a systematic approach to parks planning through a Parks and Open Space Master Plan and public consultation with user groups, and implementation of the City of St. Albert Open Space Standards and Guidelines in consultation with prospective park users. ( <b>BL11/2012</b> )  |
| <b>9.6</b> | <b>Treatment of Public Open Spaces</b>       | The City of St. Albert shall maintain high standards for the treatment of public open spaces, as identified in the <i>Engineering Landscape Standards</i> .  |

- 9.7 Red Willow Park Corridor** The Red Willow Park Corridor shall form the major open space amenity for St. Albert such that:
- (1) land for the Corridor may be provided through the dedication of environmental and municipal reserves;
  - (2) land for the Corridor may be acquired by municipal purchase;
  - (3) development of the flood risk area in the Corridor shall conform to the Canada-Alberta Agreement Respecting Flood Damage Reduction and Flood Risk Mapping and the Land Use Bylaw;
  - (4) the Land Use Bylaw shall protect and enhance the Red Willow Park Corridor;
  - (5) geological, historical, and archaeological sites of educational and/or interpretive value should be protected;
  - (6) all new Area Structure Plans and new Area Redevelopment Plans adjacent to the Red Willow Park Corridor, as outlined in the Red Willow Urban Park Master Plan, shall include a means of delineating a clear boundary between the corridor lands and the adjacent lands; and
  - (7) private development may occur in the Red Willow Park Corridor consistent with the Red Willow Urban Park Master Plan and the Land Use Bylaw.
- 9.8 Carrot Creek Greenway** The Carrot Creek Greenway shall be considered an extension of the Red Willow Park and subject to all considerations in Section 9.7. Lot boundaries must maintain a minimum 50 m setback from the top of the bank of Carrot Creek.
- 9.9 Leisure Facilities** The development of municipal leisure facilities should be based on consultation with users and appropriate market studies.
- 9.10 Municipal Reserves** The City of St. Albert shall require municipal reserves necessary to meet the challenge of achieving its open space goals and objectives for neighbourhood, community open space, parks and playground requirements.
- 9.11 Municipal Reserve Credits** The City of St. Albert may consider providing up to 50% municipal reserve credit for that area located between the 1:100 year flood line level and the 1:25 year flood line level of stormwater dry and wet pond facilities provided that:
- (1) neighbourhood community and district level service requirements elsewhere in the neighbourhood are not compromised;
  - (2) the proposed municipal reserve credit is required to be a usable and functional public space;

- (3) the developer agrees to provide trail surfacing, landscaping, other structures or amenities to the City; and
- (4) there is an identified need in the community for this type of recreation.

**9.12 Transfer of Municipal Reserve to School Authority**

In accordance with the Municipal Government Act, the following criteria shall be used by the City of St. Albert to evaluate when municipal reserves may be transferred to a school authority:

- (1) a school needs assessment report that defines demographic and student enrollment trends and school facilities needs;
- (2) the location and amount of reserve requested;
- (3) the schools’ anticipated student population;
- (4) provincial funding policies;
- (5) a demonstrated provincial funding commitment; and
- (6) subject to Provincial Government specifications, submission of building plans that demonstrate an efficient use of reserve land by building multi-storey schools, unless a single storey school is more suitable.

Where a municipal reserve parcel has been transferred to a school authority, and subsequently these lands are deemed unnecessary for school needs, that parcel shall be transferred in title back to the City of St. Albert for park purposes.

**9.13 Designation of School Sites**

The City of St. Albert, in consultation with the local school boards (Public, Roman Catholic, and Francophone school authorities) and pursuant to the *School Site Allocation Agreement 2015* (as amended from time to time), shall monitor growth rate and demographic changes in order to facilitate the provision of anticipated school site locations in new Area Structure Plans.

- (1) In Area Structure Plans where a school site(s) is to be provided, the school site(s) shall be subdivided and serviced with utilities to the property line prior to subdivision of 30% of the gross residential land in the Area Structure Plan, but will be reviewed on an Area Structure Plan basis for appropriate and orderly planning and servicing, and could be varied if the City agrees that a later subdivision stage would be more suitable.

**9.14 Playground/Open Space Requirements Area Structure Plan/Area Redevelopment Plan Technical Report**

Further to the general requirements of Policy 17.5 (5) and 17.6 (1), the City of St. Albert shall require that the Area Structure Plan Technical Report address such matters as, but not be limited to:

- (1) the role playground/open space is to play in regards to the composition of the neighbourhood;
- (2) the rationale for playground/open space treatment and purpose;
- (3) the integration of playground/open space into the City of St. Albert parks system;
- (4) the amount of reserves;
- (5) the location of proposed reserves;
- (6) the operational costs for maintenance of playground/open space; and
- (7) the school authorities' proposed capital construction plans.

**9.15 Municipal Reserve Dedication Required**

To maximize the amount of open space made available to the community through the subdivision process and to meet The City of St. Albert's open space and natural areas preservation objectives, the Subdivision Authority shall take as municipal reserve 10% of the area of the land to be subdivided less that portion which is environmental reserve. The Subdivision Authority may require that any combination of land, cash in lieu, or deferred reserves be dedicated. In addition, the City of St. Albert may require additional municipal reserve allocations to meet its objectives as outlined in the Municipal Government Act.

**9.16 School Ground Naturalization**

The City of St. Albert should encourage the school boards to undertake school ground naturalization in locations they deem appropriate to help teach children about the environment and how to protect and care for it.

**9.17 Refurbishment of Playground Equipment**

The City of St. Albert, as resources allow, should refurbish playground equipment to Canadian Standards Association standards.

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MAP 3 – PARKS & OPEN SPACE

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