



3.0 STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

3.1. OVERVIEW

The primary source of research for this Parks Master Plan was an extensive municipal public consultation process. This integral component of the planning process gives strong credibility to the Plan which incorporated comments and recommendations from residents. There were four major phases to the stakeholder and public engagement process:

Phase 1 – Project Initiation

The first phase of public engagement was an Open House to obtain community input that helped set the tone and provide initial direction for the Master Plan.

A committee of key stakeholders was formed, comprised of City officials and community representatives committed to developing an integrated park system that contributes to the quality of life in Lethbridge. The first committee meeting involved general introductions, the project background and context presentation, and an active discussion that identified the steps required to create this Plan. The stakeholder committee developed a draft vision for the Master Plan.

Phase 2 – Interactive Site Tour

An interactive workshop was facilitated to create a vision for park use. Stakeholder committee members participated in a guided bike tour of Lethbridge parks in Lethbridge that resulted in an experiential discussion and a vision for redevelopment and revitalization of park space. Observation of and interaction with park users readily assisted in identify existing functions, potential uses, and linkages for parkland.

Phase 3 – Review Conceptual Parks Master Plan

The stakeholder committee met to review and comment on the vision, guiding principles and preliminary concepts for the Parks Master Plan. An Open House and presentation to Lethbridge City Council provided further feedback to fine-tune Master Plan concepts for the final report.

Phase 4 – Report Back

The final phase of stakeholder engagement was to report back findings from the Open House and to summarize and share the feedback received. Final concept plans incorporated feedback from the broad community to the greatest extent possible.

PARKS MASTER PLAN

3.2. OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

Two Open Houses were held to inform the public of progress on the Master Plan, elicit comments and feedback, and to identify those areas of the Plan that required more work.

3.2.1 Open House 1: May 30 - June 1, 2006

The first series of Open Houses were held in late spring of 2006. Open Houses were held in three locations, centrally located in north, south, and west Lethbridge.

The purpose of this series of open houses was to obtain feedback and comments from residents. Combined with the Bikeway and Pathway Master Plan Open House, participants were asked to provide comments about their personal use of parks in the city. Generally, participants were asked:

1. How they specifically use parks;
2. What parks currently function appropriately;
3. What specific locations could use improvements;
4. What other things they would like to see in the parks system.

The process was successful and well received. The most common responses received from informal conversations and feedback forms included:

1. Secure future parkland in the river valley, maintain its natural setting and protect wildlife;
2. Identify a specific use for those parks with special features and areas of interest in Lethbridge;
3. Increase the number of off-leash dog-friendly parks;
4. Maintain the current high level of park maintenance; and
5. Create an annual park upgrades program that includes increased park lighting, additional trees, and new facility areas.

3.2.2 Open House 2: November 1, 2006

The second Open House was held in the fall of 2006. This Open House was followed by a week long display at Lethbridge City Hall.

The purpose of this Open House, which was again combined with the Bikeway and Pathway Master Plan Open House, was to advise the public of the status of the planning process to date. Participants were asked for their feedback on:

1. The vision for Lethbridge Parks;
2. Recommendations and comments from the first Open House and

PARKS MASTER PLAN

- key stakeholder sessions;
- 3. A draft parks classification system; and
- 4. A conceptual Master Plan that identified areas for upgrades, future acquisition, and new facilities.

Participants were asked to provide their comments and feedback and to identify those elements most important to them. The following comments recurred:

1. Protection of the natural river valley areas and preserving wildlife habitat;
2. Construction of a festival or amphitheatre park to host large scale outdoor events;
3. Creation of more special use areas to facilitate specific activities such as skate parks, spray parks and BMX parks;
4. Development of a specific mountain bike park; and
5. Henderson Lake Golf Course should be used as parkland to provide additional opportunities and alleviate crowding in Henderson Park.

3.3. STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

Key stakeholders often provide a perspective representative of the broader demographic. Those stakeholders who participated in the Stakeholder Workshop included:

- Dave Ellis, Parks Manager, City of Lethbridge
- Tom Hopkins, Manager of Recreation, Parks and Culture, City of Lethbridge
- Dave Mitchell, Parks Development Manager, City of Lethbridge
- Kevin Jensen, Public Operations Coordinator, City of Lethbridge
- Susan Dakin, Environmental Services Manager, City of Lethbridge
- Darwin Juell, Transportation Manager, City of Lethbridge
- Bob Harri, Planner, City of Lethbridge
- Allan Covey, Senior Project Administrator, City of Lethbridge
- Coreen Putman, Nature Interpretation Coordinator, Helen Schuler
- Coulee Centre, City of Lethbridge
- Jessica Deacon-Rogers, Nature Interpretation Technician, Helen Schuler
- Coulee Centre, City of Lethbridge
- John King, Transit Manager, City of Lethbridge
- Wade Coombs, Transit Planning and Scheduling Manager, City of Lethbridge
- Keith Sumner, Senior Investigator, Consumer Services Division, Service Alberta
- Roy Pollmuller, Headwinds Cycling Club
- Ron Bain, Runners Soul / Moonlight Run / Ladies Fest

PARKS MASTER PLAN

- Cole Iwassa, Runners Soul / Moonlight Run / Ladies Fest
- Terry Schwengler, Ultra Marathon
- Louise Arsenault, Walk 'n Talk Walking Club
- Lori Chaki Farrington, Healthy Communities
- Monica Stewart, Nordbridge Senior Centre
- Diane Schebel, Lethbridge Senior Citizens Organization (LSCO)
- Karen English Many Fingers, Aboriginal Council of Lethbridge
- Jeff Blinco, Boys and Girls Club
- Nancy Stroeve, Boys and Girls Club
- Richard Quinlan, Species at Risk Biologist, Sustainable Resource Development
- Lina Neufeld, YWCA
- Tammy Reum, Y Fun Run
- Alf Heggedal, Past President, Urban Development Institute (UDI)
- Maureen Calder, Chair, Lethbridge School Board
- Bob Short, Arthritis Society
- Bob Pike, Instructor, Criminal Justice Program, LCC
- Ray Dorosz, Lethbridge Track and Field
- Bertil Johannsen, LCC Track Club / Cross Country / 10-4 Race Organizer

3.3.1 Stakeholder Workshop 1: July 12, 2006

Stakeholders were presented with comments and recommendations from the first Open House. Comments were reviewed and additional priorities were identified. Some of the key findings included:

- Access and Connectivity: there is a lack of parking and signage; seniors and youth groups have difficulties accessing parks; granular roads leading to parks are not accessible by all users;
- Reduced User Conflict: multiple users; environmentally sensitive areas are being impacted; special areas for dogs and motorized ATV are required;
- Specialized Facilities: included the need for washrooms, water fountains, picnic shelters, skate parks, spray parks, boat launches, multifunctional sports based amenities and an amphitheatre to serve as a city festival venue;
- Culture and Natural Heritage: integrate natural features into open space; provide buffers between special use and sensitive areas; opportunities for cultural events and festivals should be considered;
- Regional Parks:
 - Henderson Park: park maturity is good; concerns with life cycle; good parking; good range of amenities; good demonstration of an urban forest; size allows it to be used for hosting large events.;

PARKS MASTER PLAN

- o Nicholas Sheran Park: poor parking access; good trail networks; poor overall programming for the open space within the park;
- o North Regional Park: needs further investigation; population growth will necessitate a park in North Lethbridge and land acquisition should proceed.

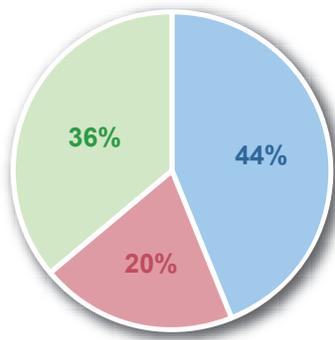
3.3.2 Stakeholder Workshop 2: October 25, 2006

Following the Stakeholder Workshop, the project team reviewed and analyzed the input received. A second Stakeholder Workshop finalized their Vision Statement and developed a set of Principles that would guide their work in order to achieve their vision. A workplan and framework for completing the Plan was also developed.

3.4. COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A Community Needs Assessment provides an opportunity to gather citizen opinions and attitudes regarding a defined issue. The information gathered provides valuable insight about how citizens rank issues, problems and opportunities about those things that matter to them.

As part of the public engagement process, Lethbridge residents provided input on the existing park system. Captured data was synthesized in stakeholder workshops sessions resulting in a list of community needs and wants. A total of 140 residents participated at the two Open House Sessions held in North, South and West Lethbridge, with 76 written responses received. Responses by area are as follows:



- North Lethbridge 20%
- South Lethbridge 36%
- West Lethbridge 44%

The demographics illustrate current multiple use activities in Lethbridge parks including:

- Exercise/ Fitness
- Recreation
- Dog Walking
- Walking
- Hiking
- Running
- Rollerblading
- Baseball
- Soccer
- Football

PARKS MASTER PLAN

- Rugby
- Frisbee Golf
- Fishing
- Boating/ Canoeing
- Mountain Biking
- Horse Back Riding
- Nature/ Wildlife Appreciation
- Picnics
- Winter Sledding
- Senior's Leisure Activities
- Community Events

Response commonalities included access, safety and promotion, cultural and natural heritage, and specialized facilities. The following list represents the general desires recorded:

- Access:
 - Larger parks to host bigger events
 - Develop a major park in North Lethbridge
 - Increase dog-friendly areas
 - Increase vehicle parking
- Safety and Promotion:
 - More park lighting
 - Playgrounds should be kept up to updated
 - Do not over develop, keep parks in good repair
 - Introduce better park signage.
 - Neighbourhood parks should be green
- Cultural and Natural Heritage:
 - River valley parks should be kept in a natural state
 - Acquire future river valley parkland
 - Ensure the long term designation of Popson Park
 - Create transition areas between natural parks and urban development
- Specialized Facilities:
 - Dedicated mountain bike park
 - West Lethbridge skate park
 - Increase spray parks
 - Increase boat launches in the river valley

Throughout roundtable discussions, the Stakeholder Committee synthesized public feedback and prioritized a list of quick improvements that would create an immediate impact to the parks system. It was determined that park upgrades and improved access would increase

PARKS MASTER PLAN

public use. The following were considered priorities:

- North Lethbridge:
 - o Initiate North Regional Park Development
 - o Upgrade Dave Elton Park to improve access and increase multi-use activities such as the skate park and BMX track.
 - o Address the North undeveloped area in Peenaquim Park
 - o Acquisition of the existing gravel pit for park development

- South Lethbridge:
 - o Address the undeveloped floodplain lands in Botterill Bottom Park
 - o Upgrade Lakeview Park facilities
 - o Introduce a spray park

- West Lethbridge:
 - o Initiate upgrades to Nicholas Sheran Park as per the 1998 Master Plan
 - o Develop multi-use dedicated facilities to include mountain bikes, trick bikes, BMX and skateboards.
 - o Create transition areas between urban development and the natural river valley

3.5. DIRECTIONS AND OUTCOMES

The public participation process and stakeholder consultations were an integral part of the Master Plan process, with outcomes and recommendations from that process considered and integrated into the Plan to the maximum extent possible. These included:

- A need for a large venue setting to host city-wide events;
- The vision for Lethbridge parks was crafted based on public input and consultation, reflective of community values;
- A range of new uses and activities must be accommodated in Lethbridge parks;
- Planning guidelines and framework were validated by the public and key stakeholders;
- The priorities outlined in Section 9.1 were identified through the public engagement process.