



A full understanding of the context, state, use, and potential of the river valley is needed to develop comprehensive plans for the future. The State of the Valley report is intended to serve as a background document that will inform the development of the River Valley Parks Master Plan (RVPMP) and the River Valley Sustainability Plan (RVSP) (operational plan). Accordingly, the report presents an overview and analysis of the following elements and influences on the river valley:

EXISTING PLANS AND POLICIES

Directions and implications of each policy document is summarized, and adopted plans adjacent to the river valley are considered to provide an understanding of the anticipated interface of development with the river valley.

HISTORICAL AND HERITAGE CONTEXT

The history of the river valley is summarized and an overview of the historical and heritage resources in the river valley is provided.

BIOPHYSICAL AND LANDSCAPE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Climate, geology, landforms and soils, dominant flora and fauna, as well as water resources that characterize the area are summarized. An analysis of wildlife connectivity highlights the relative usage of the entire area by wildlife and identifies areas likely to experience human-wildlife conflicts.

VISUAL QUALITY AND VISIBILITY

Visibility was analyzed from three vantage points: major transportation corridors, pathways and trails, and the river. Areas with a higher visibility, which are more sensitive to development, were identified, as well as setbacks that would be required to minimize the impact of new development on the plateau.

EXISTING CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL USES

Facilities and amenities that support cultural and recreational uses were identified, as well as current uses and programs. Public feedback on any potential issues associated with uses within the river valley was incorporated.

EXISTING PATHWAYS AND TRAILS

Existing informal trails were digitized. Combined with existing pathways, a pathway and trail density and a connectivity analysis were performed. The connectivity analysis identified key links—both formal and informal—that contribute to a more connected pathway and trail network.

CONFLICT AREAS

Areas where existing uses conflict, or have the potential to conflict, were identified. The assessment considered the interaction of developed infrastructure, visibility, slopes, trail density, areas of significant wildlife habitat and connectivity, as well as important ecological processes such as flooding.

GAP ANALYSIS

The gap analysis identified gaps in recreational service provisions related to trends, public values and concerns, and population growth.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES

The report concluded with a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC) analysis which provides a complete picture of the current state of the river valley from the perspective of four analysis themes:

- Pathways and trails
- Recreation and tourism features
- Natural features and environmental quality
- Maintenance, safety and governance

The contents of this report has evolved largely based on insights from stakeholder and public feedback on what is valued, how the river valley is currently used, and what could be improved upon in the future. The State of the Valley Report is therefore a product of thoughtful input from the public, combined with rigorous analysis of all facets of the river valley landscape. It provides a robust analytical foundation for the development of the RVPMP and the RVSP as a first step in guiding sustainable use and enjoyment of the Lethbridge river valley into the future.

