

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Open Space

Spruce Grove was the first community in Alberta to prepare an open space master plan in 1972, and has continued to be a leader in open space planning (The City of Spruce Grove, Parks and Open Space Master Plan, Randall Conrad & Associates, 2000). A trail system is the framework for the open space system, and as the city continues to grow, there is a need for principles and a plan to guide the evolution of the parks and open space system.

The City of Spruce Grove is a growing and vibrant community, and is experiencing a high population growth rate of 6.88% (considerably higher than the forecasted high growth rate of 2.9% for 2006). Spruce Grove's growth rate is even slightly higher than that of the Greater Edmonton Region which experienced a 5.8% growth rate. Over the past few years, the City of Spruce Grove has seen strong economic growth in residential, commercial and industrial developments, as well as an increase in the number of building permits it receives each year.

However, with fast growth come the pressures on services and municipal infrastructure. Not unlike the growing need for policing services, more roads, expansion to the regional water and wastewater distribution system, the need grows as well for open space and trails. If Spruce Grove is to remain "The Community of Choice", the Parks and Open Space Master Plan will have to keep pace with the City's growth.

1.1.1 Role of Open Space

The functions of open space include:

- permeability,
- continuity,
- protection of natural resources,
- encouragement of biodiversity,
- provision of places for recreation and sports,
- provision of neighbourhood gathering places,
- promotion of public health benefits through walking and other activity,
- creation and support of civic and cultural infrastructure,
- enhancement of sense of place and identity, and
- helping to shape patterns of development, and control unwanted growth.

Open space is organized at three scales:

- city scale,
- neighbourhood scale, and
- street scale

This Plan discusses Spruce Grove's open spaces at all scales, and proposes guidelines and policies to guide its ongoing evolution, and to serve as tools to ensure a high quality parks and open space system.



1.2 Goals and Objectives

The Spruce Grove Parks and Open Space Master Plan (POSMP, or the Plan) is a single, comprehensive source of policy on open space, and guides the City's acquisition, development, and use of open space.

The role of the Plan is to provide an overall philosophy for planning environments that contribute to the building of an exemplary city, and a comprehensive and integrated policy on open space. While the plan will still take direction from the MDP, this statutory policy document will provide city-wide policy and long range goals for an open space system that will be viewed in the same light as a long range transportation plan. That is, the recommendations for long range open and linear space development should be seen as a template for planning open spaces, parks and trails at the beginning of the land use planning process, rather than integrating them into the back end of process, with land that is left over.

The Plan identifies broad principles, policies and strategies for the acquisition and development of open space in The City of Spruce Grove. It will be implemented through the development of policies in more specific related planning and management documents. Implementation will also occur as community plans, outline plans, area redevelopment plans, and other development proposals adhere to the policies of the Plan.

The Plan will be a foundation document upon which more specific and detailed policy plans (e.g., ASPs) will be based. It provides policy, strategies, and an overall general concept for an open space network for Spruce Grove. More detailed parks and open space plans will take overall direction from the Parks and Open Space Plan as they are required. Moreover, detailed engineering plans (e.g., stormwater ponds (wet / dry)) will also take direction from the Plan to integrate these dual-role land uses (municipal engineering / open green / water space) with the overall open space network.

The Plan provides policies and strategies to:

- identify and address public needs and priorities;
- provide strategic direction to address long-term open space needs; and
- ensure the efficient, coordinated use of open space.



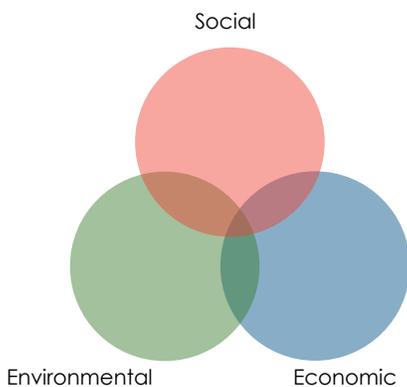
1.3 Approach and Methodology

1.3.1 Benefits of Open Space

According to the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association's (ARPA) Urban Parks program, there are proven benefits to integrating parks in urban environments. These follow triple bottom line principles as shown:

Table 1. Triple Bottom Line Benefits of Open Space

TBL Realm	Benefits (ARPA, Urban Parks Program proposal)
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks, open spaces and protected areas play an essential life sustaining role, contributing to the critical environmental health of the city. • Parks, open spaces and natural areas meet a strong and growing desire for natural, environmental based recreation and nature interpretation. • Preserving natural lands is recognized as a wise investment, an essential part of integrated landscape management required for long range environmental future.
Social & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open spaces create quality communities. These spaces are critical foundations for city building and their easy access has become a valid measure of a community's quality of life. • Participating in the development of recreation facilities through urban parks and open spaces creates leadership development opportunities that build strong communities, social capital and social cohesion. • Recreation in parks and open spaces links neighborhoods and communities, promotes ethnic and cultural harmony, and reduces alienation and loneliness. • Parks and open spaces help to encourage community involvement, and their shared development and management contributes greatly to community vitality, civic pride and responsibility.
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of life created by parks and open spaces translates into proven economic advantages for the surrounding community. Analysts confirm that quality of life, measured in part by urban green space is a determining factor in real estate values and economic vitality. • A park enhanced environment attracts tax-paying businesses to locate, relocate and expand in a community while acting as a catalyst for tourism and its inherent spin-off benefits. • Urban parks and open spaces also support one of our economy's most vigorous growth areas: outdoor recreation.



1.3.2 Methodology

The Parks and Open Space Master Plan was created through a collaborative effort between the City and their consultant, along with the invaluable contributions of the public and other stakeholders. The approach to producing the plan included the following major activities:

- gathering of background data and review of documents, in order to provide a baseline condition assessment of Spruce Grove's existing open space system and plans, as constraints to future implementation and opportunities to build on;
- consulting with the public, key stakeholders and City Staff.
- performing several aspects of townscape analysis including a historical evolution analysis in order to understand how Spruce Grove and its open spaces have developed over time, and to recognize spatial patterns and trends;
- development of a vision and guiding principles to provide a standard and ultimate goal to work towards in developing Spruce Grove's open space system.
- development of a typology of open space in order to identify the range of open space types that are required for a great city, and to utilize as a tool in assessing Spruce Grove's existing open spaces and identifying gaps and needs;
- identification of issues and opportunities regarding open space;
- development of a concept plan to address the issues and opportunities, to illustrate the vision, and to provide an overall framework for open space;
- preparation of a Parks and Open Space Master Plan, as an overall document consisting of the analysis, concept and policies.

figure 1
Plan Process

