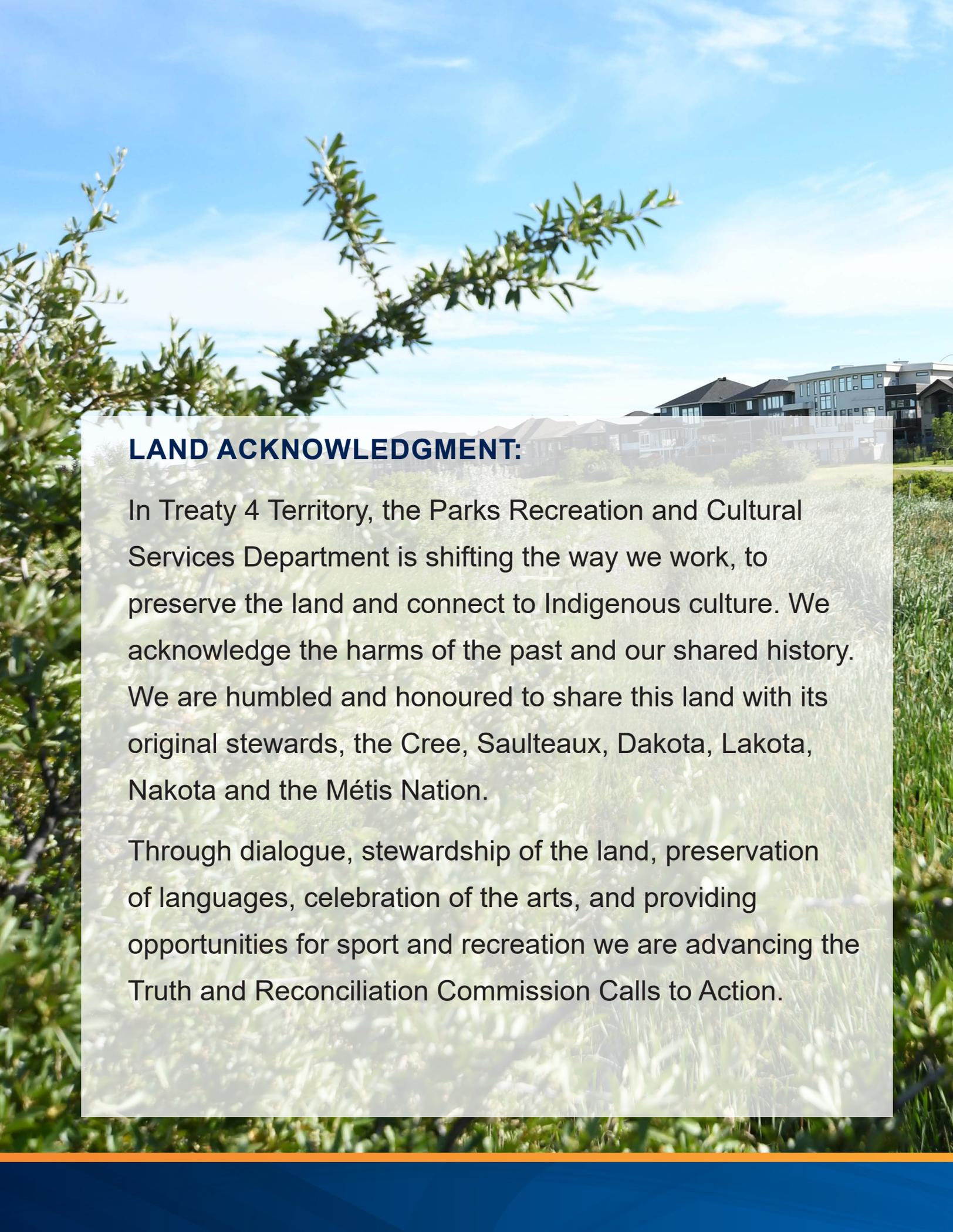


2024

City of Regina Parks Master Plan





LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

In Treaty 4 Territory, the Parks Recreation and Cultural Services Department is shifting the way we work, to preserve the land and connect to Indigenous culture. We acknowledge the harms of the past and our shared history. We are humbled and honoured to share this land with its original stewards, the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Lakota, Nakota and the Métis Nation.

Through dialogue, stewardship of the land, preservation of languages, celebration of the arts, and providing opportunities for sport and recreation we are advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

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Executive Summary

Regina's parks and open spaces are home to diverse landscapes that provide habitat for plants and animals. Parks also provide opportunities for rest and relaxation, programmed and unprogrammed activities, learning and exploration for residents and visitors to come together.

The Parks Master Plan provides a way forward to sustain, improve, and develop the City of Regina parks system over the next decade and beyond.

This Plan builds upon and reinforces existing policies and initiatives, articulates core principles and goals for Regina's parks and open spaces, and provides a clear policy framework for park development and maintenance. The targeted recommendations included in the Plan were informed by the engagement processes, policy review, a thorough understanding of the current parks system, and best practices. Developed through ongoing engagement, listening, relationship, community building and action, the Parks Master Plan is our commitment to ongoing change and stewardship. We aim to make Regina's parks sustainable, equitable, accessible, welcoming and connected to nature and place.

This comprehensive Plan addresses key challenges, including the changing needs of the community, ecological concerns, and evolving recreational trends. It outlines a set of goals and recommendations to overcome these challenges, ranging from reducing irrigation demands and

enhancing biodiversity to fostering climate resilience and promoting equitable access to parks.

The Parks Master Plan strives to shift our colonial approach to park development and management to one that is more welcoming and inclusive for all. This shift will better reflect the contributions of the original stewards of this land: the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Nakota, Lakota and Métis Nation.

We are committed to continue working with the Indigenous community to ensure that the Indigenous world view is reflected in the implementation of this Plan.

The Parks Master Plan began its development in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the requirements for lockdowns and physical distancing, robust efforts were made to engage thoroughly and meaningfully with stakeholders and the public. In recognition of the importance of the land to the Indigenous world view, specific efforts were made to engage with the Indigenous community.

Following these initial engagement efforts it was recognized that if the City is going to move meaningfully towards reconciliation that the Indigenous community not only needed to be engaged, but that their voices needed to be amplified by the outcomes of the Plan. To undertake this more in-depth engagement, the work on the overall plan was paused and

the consultant team was expanded to include Wicehtowak Limnos Consulting Services LP (WLCS), who are local to Treaty 4 Territory. WLCS, working closely with staff, lead further engagements with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Pipe Carriers, Administrators and community members throughout Treaty 4 Territory. This work to deeply engage, and its outcomes are directly linked to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Principles of Reconciliation and Calls to Action to create an equitable and inclusive community.

To ensure the effective execution of these recommendations, the Plan includes a well-structured implementation strategy, outlining timeframes, resource requirements, responsibilities, potential support mechanisms, and entities that should be informed. Ultimately, this Parks Master Plan will yield a more sustainable, easy to maintain and safer parks system, benefiting both residents and visitors to Regina.



Vision Statement

The following vision statement was drafted in response to engagement input and the City's strategic directions. It serves to guide decisions pertaining to parks over the next 10-15 years.

Regina Parks are sustainable and inclusive year-round, offering enriching experiences and connecting communities through nature and culture to improve the quality of life of residents and visitors.

Guiding Principles

The Plan's guiding principles revolve around sustainability, prioritizing community benefits, and ensuring responsible stewardship of public resources.

Principle 1: Regina's parks are sustainable

- **Goal 1.1** Mitigate and adapt to climate change
- **Goal 1.2** Reduce intensive maintenance approaches
- **Goal 1.3** Ensure stormwater infrastructure supports park uses

Principle 2: Regina's parks connect communities to nature and place

- **Goal 2.1** Increase the diversity of landscapes
- **Goal 2.2** Expand interpretation
- **Goal 2.3** Foster community connection to parks

Principle 3: Regina's parks are equitable, accessible and welcoming

- **Goal 3.1** Ensure that parks are inclusive, accessible and safe for all
- **Goal 3.2** Work toward equitable distribution of parks and park resources
- **Goal 3.3** Foster four-season park use
- **Goal 3.4** Increase edible landscapes through community partnerships

Recommendations		Time Frame Short: 1-3 yrs Med: 4-8 yrs Long: 9-15 yrs
PRINCIPLE 1: REGINA'S PARKS ARE SUSTAINABLE		
GOAL 1.1: MITIGATE AND ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE		
1.1.1	Support the City of Regina's goal of being carbon neutral by 2050.	Long-Term
1.1.2	Explore measurement of carbon sequestration of grasslands and Regina's urban forest.	Medium-Term
1.1.3	Update the Regina Urban Forest Management Strategy to include specific strategies to address tree vacancies.	Short-Term
1.1.4	Update seed specifications and develop new tree, shrub and hardy perennial lists along with new planting standards for various locations and environments.	Short-Term
1.1.5	Develop processes and procedures for naturalized areas including prairie grasslands and woodlots in Regina's parks to increase diversity of landscape types.	Medium-Term
GOAL 1.2: REDUCE INTENSIVE MAINTENANCE APPROACHES		
1.2.1	Develop guidelines and increase staff training on maintenance procedures for naturalized areas.	Medium-Term
1.2.2	Find opportunities to reduce potable water use for irrigation in parks.	Short-Term
1.2.3	Develop a tailored park maintenance plan for each park.	Medium-Term
GOAL 1.3: ENSURE STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORTS PARK USES		
1.3.1	Develop a drainage master plan that addresses the intersection between the parks and open space system and the storm drainage system including standards for planning and designing recreation amenities within storm detention areas.	Medium-Term
1.3.2	Establish a process so that the detailed design of park space and stormwater management facilities are completed together to ensure that recreation needs, including accessibility, are met.	Medium-Term
1.3.3	Improve coordination of infrastructure and initiatives that may impact parks and open spaces.	Short-Term
1.3.4	Minimize stormwater channel disturbance to prevent erosion, water quality impacts and downstream sedimentation. Where a channel is adjacent to a naturalized space, its maintenance regime should match that of the natural area.	Medium-Term
1.3.5	In collaboration with the Water, Waste and Environment Department, naturalize riparian areas from waters edge to the edge of the floodway to the greatest extent possible.	Medium-Term -Ongoing

Recommendations		Time Frame Short: 1-3 yrs Med: 4-8 yrs Long: 9-15 yrs
PRINCIPLE 2: REGINA'S PARKS CONNECT COMMUNITIES TO NATURE AND PLACE		
GOAL 2.1: INCREASE THE DIVERSITY OF LANDSCAPES		
2.1.1	Update the maintenance service level classifications and revise naming of existing maintenance classes.	Short-Term
2.1.2	Increase habitat value within parks and open spaces.	Ongoing
2.1.3	Include natural areas as an important part of the recreation amenity mix for new and existing parks.	Ongoing
2.1.4	Complete a natural areas inventory.	Short-Term
2.1.5	Create a City Naturalist position in Parks Maintenance & Cemeteries.	Short-Term
GOAL 2.2: EXPAND INTERPRETATION		
2.2.1	Identify cultural landscapes and natural features that would benefit from interpretative signage and representation.	Medium-Term
2.2.2	Update park naming policies to foster collaboration with the Indigenous community.	Short-Term
2.2.3	Include interpretive and educational elements describing maintenance / care practices in prominent naturalization areas.	Medium-Term
2.2.4	Engage and work with Indigenous groups to identify appropriate and meaningful ways to approach incorporating Indigenous medicinal and traditional plants into the park landscape.	Short -Term
GOAL 2.3: FOSTER COMMUNITY CONNECTION TO PARKS		
2.3.1	Revise the Community Investment Grant Program to expand its assessment criteria for community-led projects and initiatives to align with the vision and goals of this master plan.	Medium-Term
2.3.2	Update the <i>Parks & Open Space Bylaw No. 2004-27</i> to allow food trucks in select parks.	Medium-Term
2.3.3	Create a public-facing webpage with information on parks maintenance service levels, schedules, and snow clearing.	Short-Term -Ongoing
2.3.4	Incorporate Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing into ongoing parks planning and design initiatives.	Medium-Term -Ongoing

Recommendations		Time Frame Short: 1-3 yrs Med: 4-8 yrs Long: 9-15 yrs
PRINCIPLE 3: REGINA'S PARKS ARE EQUITABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING		
GOAL 3.1: ENSURE THAT PARKS ARE INCLUSIVE, ACCESSIBLE AND SAFE FOR ALL		
3.1.1	Assess and modify parks and open spaces using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to promote a sense of safety and a welcoming atmosphere.	Short-Term
3.1.2	Establish an inclusive and welcoming location (or locations) within the parks system dedicated to supporting Indigenous Ceremony.	Short-Term
3.1.3	Use universal design principles when designing and improving park amenities including pathways, washrooms, seating, picnic areas, access to natural spaces, and wayfinding.	Short-Term -Ongoing
3.1.4	Create a washroom strategy to provide a unified approach to provide safe, clean and accessible washroom facilities in select Regina parks to enhance the park experience for all.	Short-Term
GOAL 3.2: WORK TOWARD EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF PARKS AND PARK RESOURCES		
3.2.1	In new neighbourhoods, prioritize the full allocation of Municipal Reserve land to be set aside for parks, rather than taking cash-in-lieu.	Medium-Term
3.2.2	Consider pocket parks only after recreation and ecological needs are met.	Short-Term -Ongoing
3.2.3	Develop a Park Condition Assessment Tool.	Short-Term
3.2.4	Utilize the Park Condition Assessment Tool to identify parks most in need of park resources or renewal and develop renewal plans.	Short-Term -Ongoing
3.2.5	Create asset inventories to form a comprehensive database for use in planning, management and budgeting.	Short-Term
3.2.6	Monitor the dedication of Municipal Reserve (including amounts dedicated as park, open space, school ground, Environmental Reserve and Municipal Utility) to ensure equitable distribution of open space throughout the city.	Ongoing
3.2.7	Redefine zone parks to include high level sports amenities, naturalized areas, and neighbourhood park amenities. Use the Servicing Agreement Fee (SAF) model to budget for, acquire, and develop zone parks including the cost for land acquisition. Zone parks may be developed in addition to the required 10 per cent dedication required from developers at time of subdivision.	Medium-Term -Ongoing

	Recommendations	Time Frame Short: 1-3 yrs Med: 4-8 yrs Long: 9-15 yrs
GOAL 3.3: FOSTER FOUR-SEASON PARK USE		
3.3.1	Update the open space lighting policies and procedures to reflect changes in the use of parks including and increased focus on winter use.	Medium-Term
3.3.2	Improve coordination of winter snow clearing responsibilities between winter road maintenance and parks operations.	Short-Term
3.3.3	Develop winter design guidelines and bylaw updates for parks and open spaces. Include considerations for winter lighting, maintenance, snow clearing and permitting food trucks and temporary concession.	Medium-Term
GOAL 3.4: INCREASE EDIBLE LANDSCAPES THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS		
3.4.1	Work with community garden groups to encourage the planting of fruiting trees and shrubs adjacent to existing gardens or in stand alone locations within parks and open spaces.	Medium-Term
3.4.2	Increase the planting of fruiting shrubs and edible annual plants as part of the City's horticultural program.	Medium-Term



1. Introduction

Introduction

Regina’s parks and open spaces play a pivotal role in defining the city’s character, culture, and contributing to the health and well-being of its residents. These spaces connect neighbourhoods through an extensive network of 138 kilometers of trails, offering residents the chance for delightful adventures, kindling the competitive spirit through sports, and uniting people from diverse backgrounds to enjoy the abundance of community gardens.

While these parks provide tremendous value, it is essential to recognize the impact of Regina’s colonial history on the parks system and the importance of transitioning urban colonial spaces to sites of greater inclusivity. Additionally, the City must grapple with the challenge of meeting the growing public needs amidst the backdrop of climate change, financial constraints, and the many demands on Municipal Reserve lands.

To tackle these challenges, the Parks Master Plan outlines comprehensive goals and strategic initiatives needed to address the issues within Regina’s parks and open space system. This Plan serves as a guiding framework to channel

efforts and allocate resources efficiently to attain measurable results. It delineates a course for preserving and enhancing existing parks and guiding the development of new ones over the next 10-15 years.

To achieve this, the scope of this Plan includes:

- A review of community trends, challenges, and opportunities;
- A review of existing plans and policies that play a role in the delivery of parks;
- Two rounds of community engagement with broad participation from the public and stakeholders;
- A dedicated Indigenous engagement process; and
- Research on current and innovative practices.

The results of the research and analysis has demonstrated a strong foundation from which the challenges of the next 25 years can be met. It also revealed key areas that need to be addressed to improve the resilience of the City’s approach to parks to create even greater benefits for the community.



Figure 1 - Plan Timeline

Methodology

Milestone 1 and 2 – Policy Review and Research

The goal of Milestones 1 and 2 were to collect and review documents across all City departments that guide, govern, and influence Regina’s parks system; identify gaps, conflicts, or duplications relevant to the parks system; and explore how this Plan could unify and clarify park planning city-wide.

Through the policy context review, several key challenges facing the parks system emerged. These themes then guided research and analysis on leading practices from other jurisdictions including Saskatoon, Edmonton, Calgary and Winnipeg, as well as discussions around ways to improve internal policies and processes. While there are many issues affecting parks, the goal was to provide policy direction to ensure a consistent approach across departments and other master plans.

The key focus areas determined through Milestone 2 - Policy Review and Research were:

- **Sustainability and maintenance**, including climate change adaptation, naturalized areas, and maintenance level policies;
- **Approaches to stormwater infrastructure in parks; and**
- **Equitable and welcoming park spaces**, including park distribution, community safety and well-being (including discussion of public washrooms), four-season park use (winter cities), and signage and interpretation.

Milestone 3 – Policy Development and Community Engagement

The key policy gaps and research findings from Milestone 2 informed the development of key questions to explore through engagement with the community. The input of the community was essential to verifying key issues and setting the stage for the creation of draft principles and goals.

Milestone 3 included:

- **Round 1 Community Engagement** to better understand how people in Regina currently use parks, hear about successes and challenges related to the parks system, and gather feedback on opportunities for improvement;
- **Creation of Draft Principles and Goals** reflecting the findings from Milestone 2 and what we heard from the community;
- **Round 2 Community Engagement** to report back what we heard, test the draft principles and goals, and identify the highest priorities; and
- **Updated Draft Principles and Goals.**

Milestone 4 and 5 – Draft and Final Parks Master Plan

The Draft Master was reviewed by City staff and Wicehtowak Limnos Consulting Services LP (WLCS) engaged Indigenous citizens of Regina regarding making park spaces more welcoming for Indigenous community members. Engagement findings and staff comments were integrated into the final Master Plan in the fall of 2023.



2. Current State Overview

Regina has a large and diverse system of city parks and open spaces, from sports fields to community gardens to more natural spaces like Prairie Island in A.E. Wilson Park. The park inventory for 2022 encompassed 318 parks, amounting to 1,324 hectares of parkland, equivalent to over 13 square kilometres, and the parks system is continually expanding. Some parks are small pocket or neighbourhood parks designed to be used by those nearby, and some are large “zone parks” with many amenities, designed to serve the wider population.

Design Regina, The Official Community Plan, Bylaw No. 2013-48 (OCP) indicates 30 per cent of Regina’s future growth and development over the next 25 years will occur within the existing city boundaries. Population growth will come with

greater pressures on parks, and improving existing parks will be as important as expanding the parks system to ensure quality spaces for residents and visitors.

The following summary provides a snapshot of the current supply of parks, the city’s demographic profile (2021 Census data),¹ and the key successes and challenges over the past 5-10 years.

Regina is also home to Wascana Centre, a centrally located 930 hectare park featuring walking trails, landscaped gardens, and natural areas. Wascana Centre is independently managed by the Provincial Capital Commission, and therefore the park and its features have been excluded from the calculations below.

¹ Statistics Canada Government of Canada, “Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population profile Table,” Profile table, Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population - Regina, City (CY) [Census subdivision], Saskatchewan, February 1, 2023

Demographics:

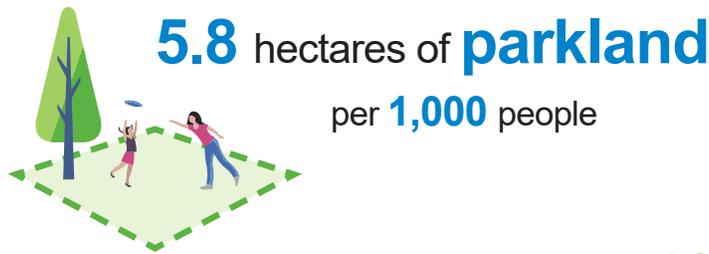
Regina had a **population** of **226,404** people in 2021



5.3% increase
since 2016

Regina is expecting an additional
73,596
people in the coming years
according to the OCP

Regina parkland by the numbers:



Since 2018, Regina has added:

+ **63 hectares** of new parks and open spaces

+ **15 hectares** of naturalized open spaces

And has a net tree gain* of:

+ **3,682 trees**

Regina has:

179,706
public trees

According to the State of the Urban Forest (2022), Regina's Urban Forest Stores **51,463** and sequesters **931** metric tons of carbon annually.

*Net Tree Change is calculated from the total new trees planted (internal City and developer combined) minus total trees removed.



3. Community Engagement

The City of Regina engaged the community for input and comments on the Parks Master Plan through two rounds of public, stakeholder, and Rights Holder engagement.

Purpose of Engagement

ROUND 1:

- Present key findings of Policy Review and Research
- Gather feedback and comments on key findings from Policy Review
- Understand how people utilize and perceive parks in Regina and what is working with the current parks system and what could be improved, from a policy perspective

ROUND 2:

- Test draft principles and goals for the Parks Master Plan
- Gather comments on highest priorities

How Engagement Influenced the Plan

Community engagement was an essential component guiding the development of this Plan. The goal was to gather meaningful input that would allow the creation of a strategic direction for the parks system that accurately reflects the community's values.



What are your **park** priorities?

Take the survey and Be Heard.

What We Did

Round 1 (Fall 2021)

Engagement activities and participation in Round 1 included:



1 Online Survey
1,941 responses received



10 Stakeholder Workshops & Interviews



2 Indigenous Engagement Sessions

Round 2 (Spring 2022 - Summer 2023)

Engagement activities and participation in Round 2 included:



1 Online Survey
521 responses received



6 Stakeholder Workshops & Interviews



3 Indigenous Engagement Sessions

Stakeholders included:

- Environmental organizations
- Heritage organizations
- Accessibility organizations
- School Board representatives
- Developers
- Landscape architects
- Tourism organizations
- Government organizations
- Recreation organizations
- Health organizations

Key Themes

The following were themes that emerged through public and stakeholder engagement. Note that engagement findings are also provided within the recommendations section.

- The significance of Regina’s parks in the lives of residents and visitors
- The importance of both programmed and unprogrammed
- The role of parks in contributing to the health and well-being of Regina residents
- A desire for incorporating more natural areas within parks
- Strong support for enhancing sustainability within parks
- The need for inclusive and welcoming parks and open spaces
- The importance of equitable distribution of parks throughout the city
- Strong support for expanding winter activities within parks
- The need for additional accessible washroom facilities
- The significance of culture and heritage in the development and maintenance of parks



Top 5 Priorities for Improving Regina Parks



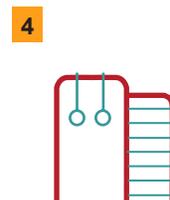
1
Ensuring connectivity to pathways



2
Keeping flexible open space



3
Accessibility improvements



4
Adding new amenities to existing parks



5
Replacing existing park amenities

Indigenous Engagement

Indigenous citizens of Regina were engaged as a part of the Parks Master Plan process. Initial engagement sessions were held in the fall of 2022 at the m̄maw̄yatit̄an centre in Regina. Engagement sessions with the Touchwood Agency Tribal Council (TATC), File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council (FHQ), and M̄tis Nation Saskatchewan (MN-S) took place in the winter of 2023.

The following were themes that emerged through Indigenous engagement. Note that engagement findings are also provided within the recommendations section.

- The importance of place names
- The need to include Indigenous stories and histories in parks
- The significance of incorporating Indigenous plants in parks
- The importance of education on traditional and medicinal plantings
- The need to improve safety and sight lines in parks



The City of Regina acknowledges that the Indigenous engagement sessions for this Plan are a starting point, and that Indigenous perspectives need to be woven into future parks planning initiatives.



Photo Credit: WLCS

4. The Future of Parks

The following chapter provides context and description of the key challenges and opportunities identified throughout the planning process and makes links to relevant policy from similar municipalities, engagement feedback, and potential policy gaps. This chapter also outlines the vision, principles, goals, and recommendations that will guide the planning and management of parks over the next decade.

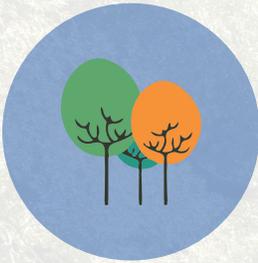
The following statement has been developed in response to the public input and the City's strategic directions.

Vision Statement

Regina Parks are sustainable and inclusive year-round, offering enriching experiences and connecting communities through nature and culture to improve the quality of life of residents and visitors.

Principles and Goals

The following principles and goals were identified through community engagement, collaborations with Regina staff, best practices, and desktop policy analysis.



Principle 1: Regina's parks are sustainable

- **Goal 1.1** Mitigate and adapt to climate change
- **Goal 1.2** Reduce intensive maintenance approaches
- **Goal 1.3** Ensure stormwater infrastructure supports park uses



Principle 2: Regina's parks connect communities to nature and place

- **Goal 2.1** Increase the diversity of landscapes
- **Goal 2.2** Expand interpretation
- **Goal 2.3** Foster community connections to parks



Principle 3: Regina's parks are equitable, accessible, and welcoming

- **Goal 3.1** Ensure that parks are inclusive, accessible and safe for all
- **Goal 3.2** Work toward equitable distribution of parks and park resources
- **Goal 3.3** Foster four season park use
- **Goal 3.4** Increase edible landscapes through community partnerships

Principle 1:

Regina's Parks are Sustainable



Goal 1.1

Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Change

Context

Climate change is affecting all communities around the globe. The specific existing and potential impacts to Regina, such as increased storm frequency and severity, sudden environmental changes, and multi-year drought cycles were a driving factor for updating the Parks Master Plan. The Climate Atlas of Canada predicts warmer winters, wetter springs and drier late summers resulting in more hot days in general.² The City must plan for resilient parks to ensure they will continue to provide multiple benefits to the community.

A sustainable park system is one where landscapes and habitats are developed and maintained in a way that is responsible to the environment, communities, and municipal budgets. Sustainability for parks also includes flexibility for change. Parks are not static sites, but living places that need to evolve over time to meet changing community needs and ecological challenges.

At present, Regina's parks are predominantly characterized by well-tended, irrigated lawns and sports fields, along with unprogrammed areas featuring various recreational facilities. Trees in these parks are generally planted individually, as opposed to a more naturalistic grouping approach. Such landscaping practices demand considerable resources, including extensive water for irrigation, frequent mowing, drainage infrastructure, and additional nutrients to sustain their upkeep. The Parks Master Plan aims to redefine Regina's parks for the current climatic and geographic context. The natural prairie landscapes that surround Regina, as well as the increasing need to address climate change, serve as an inspiration for the future of Regina's parks.

2 "Climate Atlas of Canada," *Climate Change in Canada*, <https://climateatlas.ca/>.



Photo Credit: City of Regina

Policy Conflicts and Gaps

The City's policies were reviewed and the following gaps were identified:

- Current grass seed specifications from the City of Regina Seeding Specifications Report are from 2008 and should be updated to reflect the existing climatic conditions and address potential future climate changes in Regina.
- The Open Space Management Strategy (OSMS) limits the amount of planting within and naturalization of floodways/riparian areas.
- Trees in the Regina area rely heavily on being watered because the natural rainfall is often not sufficient to support healthy trees. While enhancing and adding to the urban forest is important, tree planting is currently not prioritized for the most resilient locations as reflected in the Regina Urban Forest Management Strategy (RUFMS) and Open Space Management Strategy, i.e. low areas, stream corridors and naturally wet areas. The RUFMS also directs City park staff to fill all identified "tree vacancies". Given the multi-year drought cycles Regina faces, the irrigation and maintenance demands of keeping newly planted trees healthy may be unsustainable. There is a need to define "tree vacancies" within parks and prioritize where tree plantings should go to allow for naturalized and lower maintenance landscapes.
- The Energy and Sustainability Framework does not directly address parks and open spaces but indirectly addresses possible Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reductions from a more efficient maintenance fleet.

- In the past the zoning bylaw has included information on minimum appropriate plant material sizes for new plantings (both shrubs and trees), but this has been removed. However, the 'standards' from the past version of the bylaw remains in the minds of developers and designers. This has led to unsustainable costs for establishing new trees in parks and open spaces. It has also resulted in a continued park landscape style of standalone specimen trees planted in irrigated lawn instead of more naturalized groupings of trees and native plantings.

Policy Benchmarking

Many other Canadian municipalities are setting new goals for sustainability:

- The City of Winnipeg has created a document A Sustainable Winnipeg which clarifies the City's commitment to reducing greenhouse gases and acts as a guiding document for supporting sustainability in Winnipeg. One of the main directions of the plan is to "Develop a Parks, Places and Open Space Sustainable Management Plan, created within the overarching framework of sustainability."
- Among the City of Saskatoon's Climate Adaptation Strategies is the Green Infrastructure Strategy which promotes a green network and green infrastructure within the city, promoting ecosystem services that open spaces can offer as well as GHG reduction benefits among others.
- Climate Resilient Edmonton: Climate Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan includes parks and natural areas as one of the focus areas. It acknowledges that Edmonton's parks and open spaces today are very likely to shift

to become drier and hotter in the future and that the City must prepare for this shift. A key strategy is to incorporate “an ecosystem services-based program”, including ecological restoration, to support climate resilience when planning and developing parks and open spaces.

- Climate action plans for Saskatoon and Edmonton include naturalized grasslands in parks as a key climate mitigation and adaptation strategy in response to shifting (typically drier and warmer) climatic conditions.

What We Heard

Discussion with Indigenous groups revealed some interest in including traditional and medicinal plants and knowledge within parks; however, further engagement is required prior to moving forward.

Additionally, the community expressed interest in environmentally friendly park practices including green roofs, renewable energy, reduced water usage, tree planting and preservation, and a



Photo Credit: City of Regina

reduction in pesticide and herbicide use.

Policy Alignment

Regina City Council has set a goal of being carbon neutral by 2050. The OCP, includes goals to mitigate climate change and improve adaptation of the City including actions specific to Regina’s parks.

The Recreation Master Plan outlines goals to create sustainable outdoor facilities in Regina.

The Transportation Master Plan promotes planning for sustainable transportation methods, including creating connections between neighbourhoods and other amenities to increase sustainable transportation choices of residents and visitors to move around the city.

In 2018, Regina City Council unanimously set a target to becoming a renewable, net-zero community by 2050. Since then, the City has released an Energy and Sustainability Framework that outlines energy consumption and low carbon strategies to mitigate climate change, but the document does not directly address parks and open spaces.

In 2023, Regina City Council committed to reducing the use of pesticides in outdoor spaces by prohibiting certain pesticides from being used on public lands and promoting the use of natural methods of invasive species control (i.e. goats). This commitment also included a plan to educate the public regarding best practices for invasive species control.

Recommendation 1.1.1

Support the City of Regina’s goal of being carbon neutral by 2050.

Some ways that parks operations could move towards becoming carbon neutral include:

- Reduction in potable water use for irrigation.
- Additional tree, shrub and prairie plantings to sequester carbon and reduce turf maintenance.
- Reducing carbon intensive park maintenance practices (such as mowing).
- Shifting to electric vehicles/equipment.

Recommendation 1.1.2

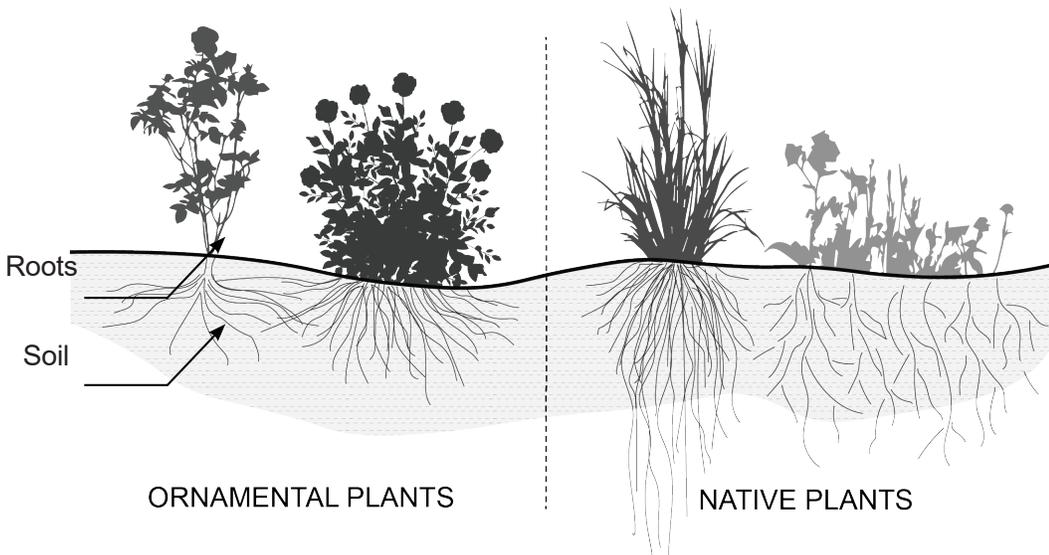
Explore measurement of carbon sequestration of grasslands and Regina’s urban forest.

Prairie landscapes, trees, and shrubs are better at sequestering carbon than manicured lawns and many ornamental plants (see Figure 2, below).

Recommendation 1.1.3

Update the Regina Urban Forest Management Strategy to include specific strategies to address tree vacancies.

- Guidance on selecting options for resilient and drought-tolerant park trees that can adapt to changing climate conditions.
- Where/when to plant appropriate, mid-story planting or ground cover plantings including prairie planting.



Grasslands sequester most of their carbon underground. In fact, soils of Western Canadian native grasslands could store up to 200 tonnes of carbon per hectare underground.³

Figure 2 - Root-depth of Native vs. Ornamental Plants. Diagram adapted from Alliance for the Bay.

3 “Grasslands, Forests & Wetlands – Nature’s Carbon Capture & Storage Solution,” Boreal Songbird Initiative, May 2, 2016, <https://www.borealbirds.org/blog/grasslands-forests-wetlands-%E2%80%93-nature%E2%80%99s-carbon-capture-storage-solution..soils,uncultivated%20grasslands%20of%20western%20Canada>

Recommendation 1.1.4

Update seed specifications and develop new tree, shrub and hardy perennial lists along with new planting standards for various locations and environments.

Updating the seed specifications will help Regina improve climate resiliency by identifying species that are drought tolerant and adaptable to a variety of growing conditions. This will increase the health and longevity of seeds planted to improve climate change resiliency, increase carbon sequestrations, and potentially reduce demand for irrigation.

Providing updated planting standards that include planting details for various locations and environments, planting details, and protocols will ensure the longevity and quality of future plantings. A wider, more climate adapted palette of plants that also brings ecological benefits will support the resiliency of Regina's parks and open spaces.

Recommendation 1.1.5

Develop processes and procedures for naturalized areas including prairie grasslands and woodlots in Regina's parks to increase diversity of landscape types.

By integrating naturalized spaces into parks, the City will reduce resource use and maintenance costs; increase the ecological benefits of floodways; increase carbon sequestration; and boost wildlife habitat. As the park system changes, Regina residents will have more opportunities to experience natural landscapes, view native wildlife, and learn about landscapes that more accurately represent Regina's historic ecology and culture.

The City should work towards creating design standards for the implementation and distribution of naturalized park spaces. This could include guidance on:

- Determining locations within the existing parks system for naturalization (short, medium, long term priority areas).
- Selecting the appropriate type of naturalized landscape (forest, grassland, riparian zone, etc) based on location, micro-climate, and other criteria.
- Implementing processes for each naturalization landscape type (including seed specifications, plant selection, and establishment process).

Goal 1.2

Reduce Intensive Maintenance Approaches

Context

The City of Regina has established maintenance service levels for parks: Class A, B, C and D. These levels establish clear park maintenance standards and guidance for mowing, litter pickup, watering and irrigation levels. Maintenance levels are currently applied to entire parks.

Incorporating native and naturalized vegetation into parks (see Goal 1.1) means that it may not always make sense to apply one maintenance service level for an entire park. While sports fields may still require high levels of maintenance, a different service level can be considered for naturalized areas because they are better adapted to the local climate and ecosystem, require fewer resources to maintain, and offer benefits to biodiversity and recreation.

Current Policies

The City's existing Irrigation Policy for Public Open Space dates back to 2005 and specifies that most parks in Regina have some level of irrigation whether permanent or temporary. It provides broad direction for permanent or temporary irrigation but does not give details about specific zones within parks that should receive permanent or temporary irrigation, nor does it prioritize irrigated areas.

The Energy and Sustainability Framework includes a goal to design infrastructure that conserves resources and minimizes impacts on the environment. There is an opportunity to extend the application of this goal beyond buildings to shape how the City develops and maintains parks and open spaces. The City prioritizes environmental sustainability in facility design by focusing on key elements such as, energy savings, water efficiency, CO² emissions reduction, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their environmental impacts.

In 2023, Regina initiated a municipal composting program to divert residential food and yard waste from the landfill. The City also made a commitment to reduce pesticide use in parks and open spaces with exceptions for provincially declared noxious weeds.



Photo Credit: City of Regina

Policy Conflicts and Gaps

Policy gaps identified include:

- Park maintenance classifications with lower maintenance levels (Class C and D) are often perceived by the public as less desirable.
- The City of Regina currently assigns each park one classification to determine maintenance levels. In some cases, certain portions of a park, such as playing fields, may require a different maintenance level than the park as a whole.
- In lieu of clear policy guidance, developers design and build parks that require a high level of maintenance. Greater clarity is needed to align the types of parks being built by developers with a fulsome vision for the variety of parks in new neighbourhoods and the City's sustainable maintenance goals.
- The City of Regina's *Community Standards Bylaw No. 2016-2*, expressly exempts natural gardens from its definitions of overgrown grass and vegetation. Section 8.2 of the bylaw however defines overgrown grass as exceeding 15cm in height which may none-the-less reinforce a stigma against naturalized landscapes, and Schedule B of the document establishes fines of up to \$200 per violation of this standard. This lack of alignment between standards for privately owned spaces and those for publicly owned spaces has the potential to create confusion and frustration with certain members of the public.
- There is a lack of public education, such as interpretive signage, to help people understand the benefits and reasons behind naturalized landscapes and different landscape maintenance practices.

Policy Benchmarking

Other municipalities have undertaken initiatives to increase the sustainability of parks maintenance and naturalization including:

- City of Saskatoon includes standards for Natural and Naturalization Areas within their Park Development Standards Draft (2022) which describe native species planting as well as appropriate groundcover and planting near water bodies. The Standards also include drought resistant planting guidance and low impact development standards for parks.
- The City of Saskatoon has partnered with the Meewasin Valley Authority to create an inventory of natural areas within the city. This has provided a baseline data for Saskatoon to assess natural areas within the city.
- The City of Winnipeg adopted an Ecologically Significant Natural Lands Strategy and policy, clearly identifying naturalization and "no-mow" zones. Winnipeg's Living Prairie Museum, a remnant prairie/prairie demonstration garden hosts continuing education, plantings, walks and events, and is open year-round. Winnipeg has an 'Organic Lawn Care' webpage explaining the benefits of organic lawn care. The webpage includes methods for organic lawn care, alternatives to traditional lawns, schedules for organic lawn care, as well as links to resources.



What We Heard

Comments from the community and stakeholders regarding parks maintenance included:

- Park development standards need to be aligned between the City and developers so that maintenance levels are aligned with the City's sustainability goals.
- The City could explore a phased turnover of parks spaces and amenities from developers. The timing of take-over of parks, especially naturalized areas, is important to the success of these areas.
- The public could be educated about naturalized areas and the benefits of improved sustainability.
- The community expressed interest in environmentally friendly park practices including green roofs, renewable energy and reduced water usage, tree planting and preservation, and a reduction in pesticide and herbicide use.

Recommendation 1.2.1

[Develop guidelines and increase staff training on maintenance procedures for naturalized areas.](#)

By setting guidelines for maintaining naturalized areas, the City can communicate the level of maintenance for different areas in the parks system to the public, including the benefits of naturalizing areas.

Guidelines that are accompanied by a set of sustainable park maintenance practices will also contribute to the City's 2050 goal of becoming carbon neutral by reducing the amount of

resources (such as fuel for mowers and imported soil), used in maintaining parks and improving plant health.

Practices could include:

- Tying in with the residential composting program to compost organic waste from parks operations.
- Reducing or modifying mowing schedules in certain areas within parks.
- Increasing use of local materials and native plants.
- Improving soil health, by using organic soil amendments and natural fertilizers; reducing soil compaction during park development and operations.
- Enforcing appropriate tree protection during park construction projects.
- Conversion of turf areas to naturalized areas.
- Incorporating integrated pest management practices to manage invasive plant species in parks.

The City could draw upon expertise and knowledge of a naturalist who can help develop guidelines, deliver staff training and who can also undertake landscape health assessments (plant community diversity/health), and help develop and direct planting, overseeding and other maintenance practices and programs for new and existing naturalized spaces.

Recommendation 1.2.2

Find opportunities to reduce potable water use for irrigation in parks.

Irrigation should focus on high priority horticultural areas, sports fields, intensively used lawn areas, and during vegetation establishment periods. Opportunities for reducing irrigation include reducing irrigation in lower visibility turf lawns through transition to drought tolerant and climate adapted options.

Areas receiving lower irrigation could simply be left as is or transitioned to more naturalized plantings including drought tolerant grass seeds to enable them to adapt to receiving less water.

There is also an opportunity to explore options for collecting and reusing rainwater for irrigation and potentially using non-potable water for irrigation in certain areas, like along Wascana Creek.

Recommendation 1.2.3

Develop a tailored park maintenance plan for each park.

Customizing maintenance plans for individual parks allows for varying levels of upkeep within a park, such as mowing designated lawn areas while preserving naturalized edges. This approach minimizes disruption to the naturalization process and enables staff to prioritize and plan maintenance efficiently.

Effective collaboration among City departments is crucial for consistent park planning and maintenance. Clear communication between departments ensures alignment on the management of naturalized areas.

Communicating maintenance efforts to the public is equally important. When updating maintenance plans, the City should inform the public about changes and what to anticipate in parks and open spaces as a result of the updates.



Photo Credit: City of Regina

Goal 1.3

Ensure Stormwater Infrastructure Supports Park Uses

Context

Where stormwater infrastructure has been included in parks and open spaces, engineering requirements have been the primary driver of the design rather than the park amenity needs. At the same time, the City is aiming to reduce irrigation demand, increase trees and diverse landscapes, and adapt the parks system to be resilient to climate change impacts. Instead of considering stormwater and parks separately, all municipal investments should aim to yield multiple benefits.

Therefore, the following principles should guide decision-making around the management of rainfall and stormwater in parks and open spaces:

- Treat rainfall and stormwater as a resource by capturing and retaining it to reduce irrigation needs and to create more diverse landscapes and water elements (e.g. artistic bioswales, rain gardens, or water features fed by natural rainfall).
- Parkland should support reduced stormwater runoff, increased groundwater recharge, and healthy streams, ponds, lakes, and riparian areas which will help reduce the need for stormwater management infrastructure.
- Stormwater management infrastructure should contribute to healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as offer recreational benefits such as trails, viewpoints, and seasonal recreational amenities.

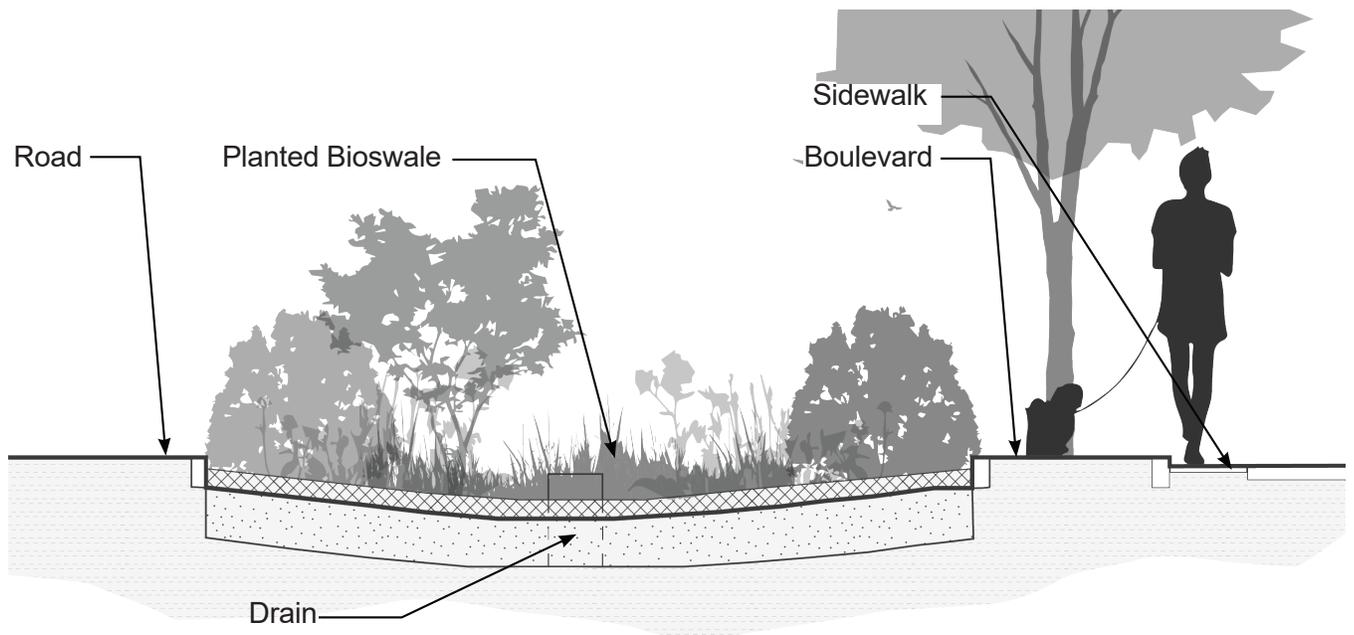


Figure 3 - Diagram of a Bioswale

- Stormwater management infrastructure located in parks should serve as an amenity that provides not only programmed sporting activities (i.e. sports fields) but also opportunities for people to experience naturalized habitats and processes in their neighbourhoods.

Policy Conflicts and Gaps

Design Regina, The Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2013-48, indicates that stormwater management should be integrated into Municipal Reserves and open space compatible with the intended function of the open space. However, the purpose of parkland and the purpose of stormwater management infrastructure do not always align. Often, stormwater facilities are planned, with the park designed around it, and stormwater amenities may not always support recreational uses.

While integrating multiple benefits into stormwater management planning and design is possible, the technical requirements of stormwater engineering often take precedence over parkland objectives. This is primarily driven by the need to ensure public safety. The current implementation of the OCP reflects the prioritization of stormwater over usable parkland for two main reasons: first, stormwater management planning occurs early in the process, while park planning is typically addressed near the end; second, stormwater management infrastructure tends to have more design constraints and technical requirements compared to the flexible and easily modifiable nature of park amenities.

However, by placing a higher emphasis on stormwater management, the City and its residents

are missing out on potential benefits and cost savings that could be realized through a parallel and coordinated design process. Additionally, the limited planting in stormwater facilities further diminishes their utility as beneficial environmental features. For instance, riparian planting areas contribute to water quality improvement by shading the water and reducing temperatures. Furthermore, they serve as a natural deterrent for nuisance species like Canada geese, as these species typically prefer lawns and mowed areas with direct access to water. In this context, riparian plantings play a crucial role in managing geese and enhancing the overall functionality of stormwater facilities.

Policy Benchmarking

Best practices for increasing green infrastructure in parks and open spaces from other municipalities include:

- The City of Edmonton, starting in summer of 2021, is naturalizing 63 per cent of its stormwater facilities, equivalent to 150 hectares of the total 238 hectares of stormwater lands. The process is expected to take several years and include reduced mowing, removal of invasive plants, and restoration with shrubs and trees. While the initial process of letting the turf grow may not be aesthetically pleasing to some residents, the result will be trees, shrubs, flowers, mature grasses, and increased wildlife (or decreased nuisance species like Canada geese). Many of Edmonton's stormwater facilities also include trails and are used for recreation.
- The City of Saskatoon completed a Green Infrastructure Strategy in 2020 that defines

actions related to improving natural areas and increasing the use of green infrastructure. The strategy also included consideration of green network corridors, community engagement, and food security.

What We Heard

The community and stakeholder engagement revealed the following key findings related to stormwater infrastructure in parks:

- There is an opportunity to use underutilized spaces for stormwater retention and increase aquatic habitat areas.
- The City should explore strategies, as alternatives to dredging, for reducing sediment and improving stormwater quality by using plants (biofiltration/ bioremediation).
- More communication and education about potential safety concerns related to aquatic spaces is needed.
- Stormwater management needs to be proactive rather than reactive.
- More clarity is needed around the roles of the City, developers, and interest groups in

stormwater management.

- The City could benefit from written policies and guidelines to help identify goals / Best Management Practices (BMPs) for stormwater management.
- Competing needs must be resolved so that operations and maintenance are not in conflict with naturalized and attractive park spaces.
- Designs should consider erosion control and how that impacts stormwater quality.
- Designs should consider long-term maintenance needs to avoid or minimize disturbances to ecosystems and habitats.

Recommendation 1.3.1

Develop a drainage master plan that addresses the intersection between the parks and open space system and the storm drainage system including standards for planning and designing recreation amenities within storm detention areas.

The master plan will establish policies that will direct the current and future development and operation of the City's storm drainage system, including storm ponds, channels and creeks.



Photo Credit: City of Regina

This plan is needed to build on the existing set of Landscape Design Standards for open spaces to produce a specific set of standards to increase diversity in landscape types and recreational benefits when a park space is co-located with a stormwater management facility.

Standards could include community plant selection, accessibility, pathways, and what types of plantings and natural environments would be appropriate.

Recommendation 1.3.2

Establish a process so that the detailed design of park space and stormwater management facilities are completed together to ensure that recreation needs, including accessibility, are met.

With a more synchronous process, there will be more opportunities for creative and various design ideas to integrate stormwater more with park uses.

Sport fields are currently the go-to for stormwater facilities in parks, but Regina needs to plan for the future and what could happen when the City fulfills the sports field requirements.

Recommendation 1.3.3

Improve coordination of infrastructure and initiatives that may impact parks and open spaces.

There is a need for internal dialogue between City departments to improve the integration of stormwater management facilities and other infrastructure in parks, as well as to improve coordination of maintenance practices to achieve the goals and targets the City has for reducing energy consumption and reducing potable water use. As an example, the area responsible for

storm channel and creeks follows specific mowing regimes that may not align with park areas that are directly adjacent.

Recommendation 1.3.4

Minimize stormwater channel disturbance to prevent erosion, water quality impacts and downstream sedimentation. Where a channel is adjacent to a naturalized space, its maintenance regime should match that of the natural area.

Presently the maintenance of parks and riparian/natural areas is the responsibility of two separate entities and there is a need to align maintenance practices between departments to ensure minimal disturbances to stream-side ecosystems.

Recommendation 1.3.5

In collaboration with the Water, Waste and Environment Department, naturalize riparian areas from waters edge to the edge of the floodway to the greatest extent possible.

Storm channels and streams in Regina are currently treated as engineered drainage channels that do not offer many ecological benefits. There is an opportunity for the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department to coordinate with the Water, Waste and Environment Department to work towards naturalizing riparian areas adjacent to storm channels and streams through natural planting. This could include:

- Creating more diverse habitat areas within the channel.
- Increasing the diversity of the cross sections to incorporate different planting zones (i.e. a low planting terrace as grassland).
- Creating robust riparian plantings with trees and shrubs at the top of the slope and blend into adjacent park spaces.

Principle 2:
Regina's
Parks Connect
Communities to
Nature and Place



Goal 2.1

Increase the Diversity of Landscapes

Context

Regina's parks currently lack diversity – most parks in Regina feature lawns, trees and some ornamental plantings. Including more natural areas in parks such as small pockets of forest, prairie, pollinator meadow landscapes and shrub plantings can bring about multiple benefits and serve a variety of parks users. Benefits include supporting habitat and food sources for birds, insects, and other animals by creating varied landscapes beyond the traditional mowed lawn. Including naturalized landscapes in parks will also support Regina's resiliency to climate change.

Recreational benefits include supporting activities such as wildlife viewing, learning opportunities and tourism destinations in parks. In the winter, snow capture as well as wind mitigation are other benefits of varied landscapes. Including a diversity of landscape types in Regina's parks will help to foster a deeper sense of understanding of the environment for residents and visitors.

Policy Alignment

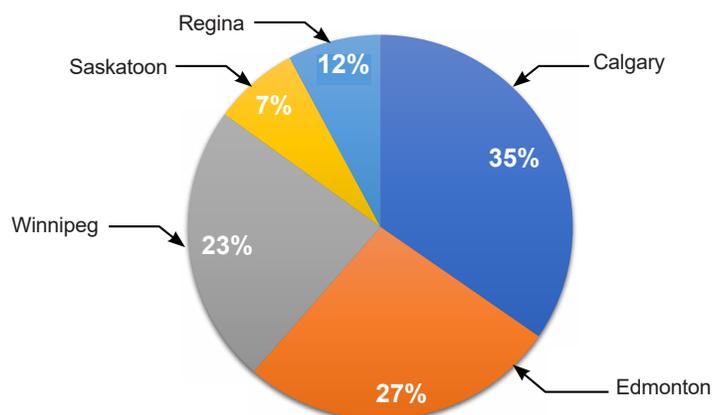
The Recreation Master Plan contains goals to increase access and understanding of natural areas, parks and opens spaces in Regina.

Policy Benchmarking

Municipalities, such as the City of Calgary, have set out guidelines that define naturalization, highlight the benefits, and outline the process and methods for implementing naturalization projects.

The City of Edmonton has been making efforts to naturalize areas for almost three decades. Current naturalization initiatives include designating sections of naturalized areas under three categories: unmowed grass, tree/shrub plantings, and natural riparian areas. The City maintains a comprehensive inventory of naturalized spaces including an interactive map. Edmonton also runs a volunteer initiative to expand the urban forest through tree, shrub and wildflower planting throughout the city.

Percentage of park spaces that is Natural Area:⁴



What We Heard

The community showed interest in more native plantings in parks, including grasses, wildflowers, riparian vegetation, and trees. There was also interest in edible landscapes with fruit trees and community gardens.

We heard from other stakeholders and the general public that wildlife and pollinators create interesting park experiences and suggested Regina increase the amount of natural areas within parks.

However, there were concerns about not having a clear process for establishing and maintaining naturalized areas within the city.

Recommendation 2.1.1

Update the maintenance service level classifications and revise naming of existing maintenance classes.

Maintenance service level classifications could be updated to:

- Allow for multiple classifications within a single park.
- Allow for “N” classification type for naturalized landscapes.

Allowing for multiple maintenance levels within one park could help the City tailor maintenance plans for the size, type, and amenities within that specific park.

The addition of a “N” classification for naturalized or prairie landscapes within parks will help parks staff recognize these landscapes and respond to their specific maintenance needs. All “N” landscapes should include signage and

interpretation in public facing areas. The “N” classification will also help the public understand and recognize these landscapes as different from other park landscape types.

The City should also revise naming of existing maintenance classes from A, B, C, D to names that are more descriptive and easier for the public and staff to understand (e.g. irrigated sports field, irrigated open space, unirrigated turf, naturalized grassland, woodlot, riparian zone, etc.)

Recommendation 2.1.2

Increase habitat value within parks and open spaces.

The benefits of supporting habitats in the city include increased recreational value of parks and providing quality experiences with nature in parks. Regina can increase habitat areas, diversify plant species, and adapt management practices to support migrating and breeding birds, pollinators (bees, butterflies, birds), insects, amphibians, and reptiles, with special efforts for species at risk.

Strategies could include:

- Identifying key focal species to help inform planning and design, including plant selection (monarch butterflies, yellow-banded bumblebees, Harris’s sparrow, and snapping turtle, for example).
- Providing habitat structures such as bird boxes, brush piles, and rock piles.
- Providing a variety of water regimes such as vernal pools, floodplains, wetlands, prairie potholes, and riparian areas.

- Providing areas for shelter and refuge through vegetation (create thickets and hedgerows, plant evergreen trees and shrubs, create habitat islands in ponds and lakes, discourage access to important habitats by people and pets, etc.).
- Providing food sources with vegetation, particularly in winter or at key times of the year (i.e. timing alignment with emergence or migrations).
- Avoiding management practices in habitat areas that could damage nests or hibernating species at key times of year (mowing, excavation, tree removal or pruning, etc.).
- Partnering with local organizations including the Provincial Capital Commission, Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative, University of Regina, and others.

Recommendation 2.1.3

Include natural areas as an important part of the recreation amenity mix for new and existing parks.



Photo Credit: City of Regina

Regina's parks system is strongly oriented toward sports fields and playgrounds. Parks and natural areas can seem unimportant where there is no formal programming. This encourages designers to fit natural areas around the edges of the more structured amenities like athletics fields. However, natural areas have significant recreation value for uses like birdwatching, cross country skiing, walking, etc. When one considers that only about one in four adults plays sports, it brings forward the idea that more unprogrammed park space is important for increasing the diversity of parks to serve a wide range of people.⁵

Recommendation 2.1.4

Complete a natural areas inventory.

As a first step to expanding naturalized areas within the city, an inventory of existing natural areas is needed. The inventory will provide Regina with a baseline of information about existing natural spaces and will help with future planning. The City should follow the guidance outlined in the Canadian Standards Association's Specifications for Asset Natural Inventories to complete this work.

⁵ "Sport Participation," Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, accessed October 4, 2023, <https://cflri.ca/sport-participation#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Institute's%20most,participating%20in%20sport%20%5B1%5D>.

Recommendation 2.1.5

Create a City Naturalist position in Parks Maintenance & Cemeteries

A City Naturalist position will be a key role in the implementation of a naturalization program for parks and open spaces. This position will develop and lead staff training, support the development of an interpretive program for naturalized spaces and work with stakeholders at the City and in the community to recommend areas for naturalization.

Goal 2.2

Expand Interpretation

Context

Signage, wayfinding, and interpretation are important tools to help the public understand where they are and find where they want to go. Signage and wayfinding contribute to people's knowledge and comfort using a park, their sense of welcome and safety, and their ability to discover new destinations and amenities.

Interpretive elements can contribute to a deeper knowledge and understanding of a place, its culture, ecology, and significance. Information on site can help people interpret what they are seeing, whether it is a space of cultural significance, a creek, a naturalization pilot project, an unusual or undervalued ecosystem, or a new maintenance regime. Interpretation is also key to the public's understanding of maintenance practices especially for areas undergoing the process of naturalization.

Policy Conflicts and Gaps

The following gaps were identified through review of The Cultural Plan and conversations with stakeholder groups:

- A lack of interpretive signage is noted in several documents, including the Irrigation Bylaw. Signage is an important part of educating the public about naturalized and low maintenance landscapes.
- There is a gap in the visibility of Indigenous history and place naming in Regina Parks. The *Cultural Plan* notes the importance of reflecting the full history of Regina.

Policy Benchmarking

The City of Calgary *Naturalization Guidelines* emphasizes the importance of signage when establishing naturalized areas within parks to help the public understand these spaces.

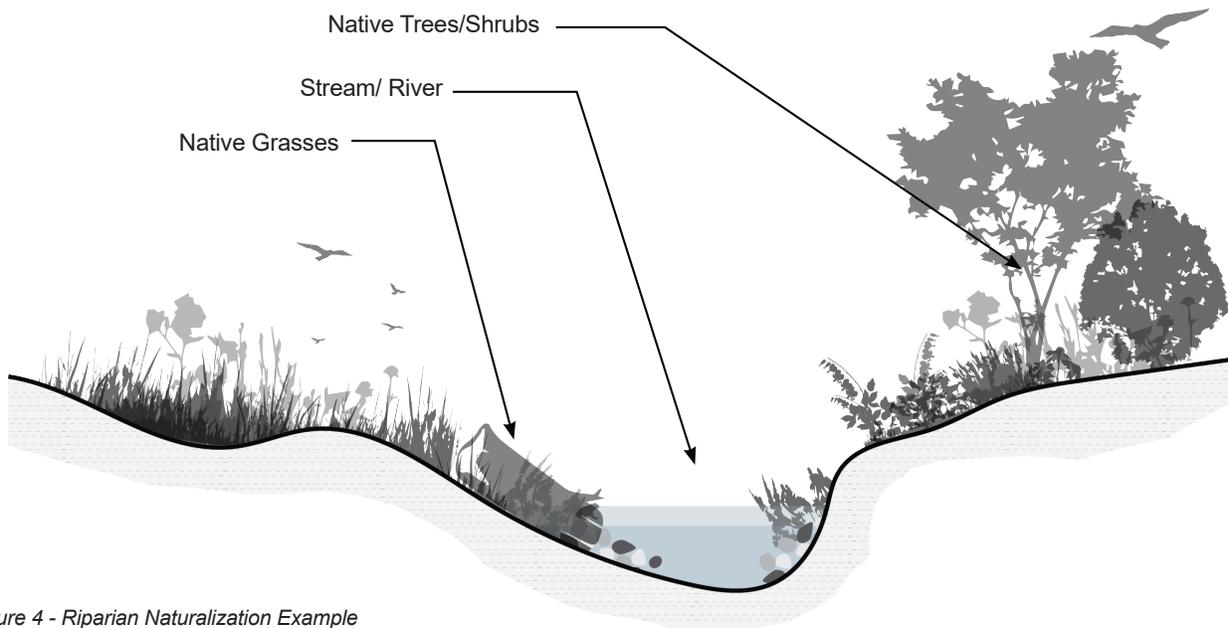


Figure 4 - Riparian Naturalization Example

What We Heard

The following highlights some of the key findings from community and stakeholder engagement related to interpretation and sharing information in parks:

- While some people understand the value and purpose of naturalized areas in parks, some can interpret these spaces as unmaintained and messy.
- During the stakeholder interviews, there was interest from community groups in partnering with the City of Regina to highlight heritage and culture within the city.
- The Indigenous groups engaged indicated that the City of Regina policies are outdated (the naming policy in particular), and are not inclusive to Indigenous groups.
- Engagement with Indigenous groups highlighted the opportunity to work together to advance Indigenous place naming in parks. It was suggested that naming be associated with storytelling to ensure names are provided with appropriate context.
- Métis citizens of Regina would like to see the introduction of Métis signage, education on Métis People and Miskihkiy (Medicine flowers) and Métis art and storytelling included in parks.
- Indigenous engagement revealed the desire for education via plaques, benches with signage, Indigenous art and QR codes that provide information about treaties, history and other Indigenous cultural information. There is an opportunity to feature multiple Indigenous languages on signs including Cree, Sauteaux, Dakota, Lakota, Nakota and Michif.

Recommendation 2.2.1

Identify cultural landscapes and natural features that would benefit from interpretative signage and representation.

There is an opportunity for Regina to work with heritage, arts and culture related community organizations to identify areas within Regina parks that could be a learning opportunity through interpretive signage.

Interpretation can be provided in a variety of creative ways either directly through park signage



Sweat Lodge Photo Credit: City of Regina

or indirectly through representation and art. These initiatives will provide a deeper connection with parks as well as support tourism and education throughout the city.

There is an opportunity to work with Indigenous groups to incorporate storytelling, art and education opportunities in parks.

Recommendation 2.2.2

[Update park naming policies to foster collaboration with the Indigenous community.](#)

The City should work with Indigenous groups to update the park naming policies to remove barriers and make it more inclusive for Indigenous groups to participate.

This initiative could promote awareness and education surrounding Indigenous language and identity as well as contribute to ongoing reconciliation work.

Recommendation 2.2.3

[Include interpretive and educational elements describing maintenance / care practices in prominent naturalization areas.](#)

Naturalized plantings tend to look different than most manicured horticultural areas. In contrast to mowed, irrigated lawns and vibrant flowers displays, naturalized areas can look untrimmed, messy and non-uniform. Interpretive elements can help residents and the public understand what wildlife and plants they might see, and the value of natural areas. Messaging on interpretive signage could include permanent or temporary signage that make it clear to the public that naturalized/ low maintenance practices are intentional and the spaces have not been abandoned. Including

interpretive signage will help build understanding and support for ongoing naturalization initiatives.

Recommendation 2.2.4

[Engage and work with Indigenous groups to identify appropriate and meaningful ways to approach incorporating Indigenous medicinal and traditional plants into the park landscape.](#)

As a first step, the City should actively engage with the Indigenous community about to possibility of incorporating traditional and medicinal plants in parks and open spaces. It is crucial for the City to gain first hand insights from the community regarding the associated benefits and challenges.

Working with Indigenous groups to include important plant species (ex. sage, sweetgrass, choke cherries) could be a meaningful step towards representing Indigenous peoples and culture within Regina parks.

Interpretive signage could be added to parks with existing medicinal and traditional plants such as the Prairie and Boreal Islands in A.E. Wilson Park.

It is important that Indigenous groups are steering decisions on location and appropriate plant species to include in parks with the support of City staff. The City should also engage with Indigenous groups to develop a process for ensuring these spaces are stewarded and protected from vandalism.

Goal 2.3

Foster Community Connections to Parks

Context

The community plays a huge role in the success of parks and open spaces. Parks are an important part of the lives of many residents and visitors to Regina. Getting people out into parks, educating them about parks, and involving the community in parks initiatives will help to deepen this connection and provide the opportunity for more people to connect with parks in Regina.

This section relates to Recommendation 3.8 from the Recreation Master Plan that refers to community connections to parks and outdoor spaces.

What We Heard

When speaking with stakeholder groups, there was a strong interest in opportunities to partner with the City on various community led projects.

Indigenous groups suggested that Regina could work to integrate Indigenous ways of knowing within future parks planning initiatives.

The community also showed interest in having more food vendors such as food trucks and hot chocolate stands in parks.



Photo Credit: Okotoks Online

Recommendation 2.3.1

Revise the Community Investment Grant Program to expand its assessment criteria for community-led projects and initiatives that align with the vision and goals of this master plan.

In alignment with the existing Community Investment Grant Program there is an opportunity for Regina to increase community partnerships to lead various non-sport related projects in parks including naturalization and interpretation projects and programs.

Recommendation 2.3.2

Update the *Parks & Open Space Bylaw No. 2004-27* to allow food trucks in select parks.

Food trucks provide a unique experience in parks and draw people in with food and drink offerings. There are currently limitations on food truck vending in parks in Regina. Food trucks can improve the visitor experience and increase visitation to parks, especially for families and children.⁶

The City of Calgary allows food trucks to operate in municipal parks with written permission from the Director of the Parks Department. The City of Edmonton allows food trucks to park within City parkland parking lots with a completed and approved permit.

Updating the parks bylaw to allow food trucks in select parks may also support tourism and local business in Regina.



Choke Cherry Berries - Photo Credit: Purdue University Northwest

6 NRPA 2018 Food Trucks: The Perfect Pairing for Parks. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2018/September/food-trucks-the-perfect-pairing-for-parks/>

Recommendation 2.3.3

Create a public-facing webpage with information on parks maintenance service levels, schedules, and snow clearing.

When the public is made aware of service levels, there is generally a better understanding when it comes to maintenance expectations in parks.

Including public facing messaging regarding parks maintenance activities, schedule and snow clearing via the City's website will give the public a general idea of what to expect, or not expect.

The City of Saskatoon includes a "what you can expect from us" on their park maintenance web page featuring mowing, irrigation, and waste collection schedules for different park types throughout the city (including sports fields). This page also includes information about weed control, general vegetation trimming, tree maintenance and snow clearing schedules for sidewalks, parks and pathways.

Recommendation 2.3.4

Incorporate Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing into ongoing parks planning and design initiatives.

There is an opportunity for Regina to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing within the parks planning and design initiatives.

Indigenous ways of knowing offers a different approach to the typical colonial view of parks in Regina. This approach could add value to the existing view of parks by relying on a set of world views that originates from the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples. Since this approach is deeply rooted in the experiences within the community, it could have great benefit when applied to parks planning initiatives in the future and could change the way Regina views parks.

Care will need to be taken to work closely with the Indigenous community to appropriately share knowledge and ways of knowing to ensure the process is inclusive and built on trust.

Principle 3:

Regina's Parks are Equitable, Accessible and Welcoming



Goal 3.1

Ensure That Parks Are Inclusive, Accessible and Safe For All

Context

All residents and visitors deserve safe and welcoming access to parks regardless of their gender identity, ethnicity, religion, race, financial status, sexual orientation, abilities, or age. Parks that feel safe are used more often, supporting individual and collective health and wellness for residents and visitors.

Ensuring parks are accessible for all is important to encouraging more residents and visitors to enjoy the benefits of parks. Considering the accessibility of pathways, play equipment, park furniture and other park features will increase park use and help everyone in the community feel welcome in parks.

Studies have shown that people exercise more when they have access to parks. Reducing barriers and increasing accessibility can decrease the health inequities that exist for vulnerable populations and benefit all ages and abilities.⁷

Access to public washrooms is an important part of making parks accessible and welcoming to more people, including parents with young children,

people with unstable housing, and people with disabilities. Washrooms in parks can increase the range of people who can use parks and encourage longer stays within parks, resulting in greater health benefits. However, washrooms are often seen as safety and maintenance concerns. According to a report commissioned by the Vancouver Board on Parks and Recreation on reducing barriers for 2SLGBTQIAP+ park users, all gender public washroom options provide a greater sense of welcome and safety, making trans and gender diverse community members more likely to use public parks.⁸

The sense of safety within parks can have a significant impact on an individual's parks experience. Appropriate maintenance levels, adequate lighting, clear wayfinding and designs that avoid dark, isolated areas and hiding spaces all contribute to the sense of safety within a park.

Conflicts and Gaps

The *Parks and Open Space Bylaw*, *Maintenance Standards*, *Open Space Management Strategy* and the *Regina Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Handbook* were reviewed and the following gaps were identified:

- Some CPTED guidelines, including the guidance to ensure clear and unobstructed views, may conflict with the creation of more ecologically diverse and functional open spaces by limiting uses of trees, shrubs and taller native prairie grasses.

7 "Healthy Built Environment Linkages Toolkit," BC Centre for Disease Control, <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/professional-resources/healthy-built-environment-linkages-toolkit>.

8 *Building a path to Parks & Recreation for all: Reducing barriers for ...*, https://parkboardmeetings.vancouver.ca/2014/140428/documents/SUMMARY_TGVI-Working-Group_report_Building-a-Path-or-All_2014-04-28.pdf.

- While the Open Space Management Strategy (2007) notes that washrooms may be included in parks, and several of Regina’s parks include washrooms, there is a lack of guidance regarding when they should be added to existing parks or included in new parks.
- There is a need to be flexible to set service levels and cleaning standards based on needs to ensure parks are safe, clean, and accessible. A primary area for consideration is applying an equity lens to ensure maintenance regimes are applied appropriately to areas with the greatest need, including areas that may have a higher likelihood of drug paraphernalia or more public washroom usage.
- Winnipeg’s washroom strategy (*Places To Go*) as well as new temporary and permanent washrooms were funded through a donation from the Canadian Medical Association Foundation to the Community Response Fund for Vulnerable Populations, indicating that outside and non-traditional funding sources may be available to support investment in this area.
- Edmonton’s Public Washroom Strategy (2019) led to a Public Washroom Pilot Program that provides a promising example to achieve public safety, washroom access, and dignity. The Whyte Street Washroom Pilot utilized a social enterprise partnership to provide an attendant and monitoring for select washrooms to create jobs, ensure cleaning, monitor washroom safety, report illicit activities, and connect people with social services as needed.

Policy Benchmarking

Other Canadian municipalities have taken steps to outline strategies and policies surrounding equity and accessibility within parks:

- Winnipeg’s forthcoming Recreation and Parks Master Plan prioritizes inclusion and equity as a key values and inclusion and access as key goals.
- The Vancouver Park Board’s Park Equity Initiative Zones provides a model of how socioeconomic indicators can be used to inform planning of park and public amenities needs at a detailed and actionable level.
- Winnipeg, Calgary, and Edmonton all have public washroom strategies outlining their visions for public washrooms, including where they should be located, service levels and cleaning standards. City websites include clear mapping, cleaning schedules, hours of operation for public washroom access.
- The City of Calgary mandates and signs single stall washrooms in public buildings as gender neutral, including in facilities in parks.
- Both Saskatoon and Edmonton have included considerations for outdoor lighting in their Winter City Strategies to improve safety and visual interest in public spaces.



City Staff and elders erecting a Sweat Lodge frame

What We Heard

Through community, stakeholder and Indigenous engagement, we gathered the following opportunities and issues surrounding inclusivity, safety and washrooms in parks:

- There were concerns with the cleanliness, safety and maintenance of public washrooms.
- More public washrooms are needed in parks.
- There is better lighting needed in parks and on multi-use trails for winter and night time use.
- There are some challenges with accessibility in terms of connectivity of parks i.e. lack of curb cuts.
- There are opportunities to provide barrier free trails (maintained in winter), connections to accessible parking near parks, accessible washrooms, and accessible park furniture and facilities to improve accessibility and enjoyment of parks.
- Discussions with Indigenous groups included topics like missing and murdered Indigenous women and human trafficking and how this relates to park safety.
- Discussion with Indigenous groups also revealed some park conditions that could make people feel unsafe including heavily wooded areas with no sightlines from main streets and traffic and dark parks in the evening.

Recommendation 3.1.1

Assess and modify parks and open spaces using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to promote a sense of safety and a welcoming atmosphere.

The City should further engage with residents, Indigenous groups and vulnerable populations to find ways beyond the basic CPTED principles to make parks feel safe and welcoming.

Some specific suggestions resulting from the Indigenous engagement included featuring an emergency contact station in select parks and ensuring all parks have clear sightlines and that lighting in parks is applied in a consistent manner. Other suggestions included providing park entrance/welcome signage/archway in multiple languages (including Indigenous languages) at park access points.

A strategy should be developed to communicate to the community that cultural practices like smudging, pipe ceremonies and feasts are welcome in Regina's parks.

Recommendation 3.1.2

Establish an inclusive and welcoming location (or locations) within the parks system dedicated to supporting Indigenous Ceremony.

The City has heard about the need for ceremonial space in parks from multiple Indigenous groups in past communications and engagements.

The planning and establishment of a space within the parks system that can host Indigenous Ceremony, is an important step towards creating parks that are welcoming and inclusive, in particular for Indigenous groups. The planning and design work for these spaces should be done in

collaboration with Indigenous groups to ensure the location, size, shape, features and elements can support and are appropriate for Indigenous Ceremony.

Recommendation 3.1.3

Use universal design principles when designing and improving park amenities including pathways, washrooms, seating, picnic areas, access to natural spaces, and wayfinding.

When parks and trails are accessible and equitably distributed across a community, they contribute to a better quality of life for everyone, but particularly those with mobility challenges.

Recommendation 3.1.4

Create a washroom strategy to provide a unified approach to provide safe, clean and accessible washroom facilities in select Regina parks to enhance the park experience for all.

Washrooms can be a significant expense, particularly for maintenance, so strategic planning is needed to identify locations and plan for maintenance and management.

Regina's Public Washroom Strategy for Regina could:

- Consider equity in the distribution of public park washrooms.
- Establish service levels for public washrooms to post on site and online.
- Include strategies to include all-gender public washrooms.
- Provide guidance to provide four-season park washrooms in priority locations.



Photo Credit: Tourism Saskatchewan

Goal 3.2

Work Toward Equitable Distribution Of Parks And Park Resources

Context

The distribution of open space types within Regina, including Zone Parks, is a critical issue with implications for people's ability to access parks in their own neighbourhoods and the sustainability of long-term maintenance obligations. Management and maintenance of parks also needs to be based on equitable distribution of resources and must shift from reactionary to proactive with clear communication of how priorities are established.

In some older neighbourhoods, acquiring new parkland may be difficult, but there are other ways of improving parks to address inequities such as building for more intensive use and creating unique and multi-functional features. There may also be opportunities to re-purpose underutilized spaces, such as undersized and low quality sports fields, to host a wider variety of activities.

Currently, the City does not always take the full allocation of Municipal Reserve (MR) land (10 per cent), accepting cash in lieu or deferrals. However, there is increasing pressure for the use of MR lands, with stormwater management and schools needing space in addition to parkland and park amenities.

Conflicts and Gaps

The following gaps were identified through the review of the Open Space Management Strategy, the OCP as well as conversations with Regina Parks Maintenance Staff:

- Distribution of open space types (Municipal, Zone, Neighbourhood, Pocket, Neighbourhood Greenways, and Outdoor Sports Complexes) is guided by neighbourhood plans, established service levels for Neighbourhood and Zone Parks, and stormwater management needs. This results in a piecemeal approach, making it hard to ensure that the parks system works as an interconnected whole, and that City residents get the types of parks and amenities they need in appropriate locations.
- Developers influence where and how parks are provided in new neighbourhoods.
- New tools are needed to ensure equity in parks to provide clear and easy-to-use data about areas of the city with park deficits. This would allow for the right type of park to be prioritized for the right place.
- While there are clear service level targets established for both Neighbourhood and Zone Parks, these service level targets need updating to account for shifting uses and expectations of parks.

What We Heard

The following issues and opportunities were identified during the community engagement:

- School use of City fields for sports practice is very successful.
- There is an opportunity to include amenities in parks that have not been included in past - i.e. cricket, pickleball.

Recommendation 3.2.1

[In new neighbourhoods, prioritize the full allocation of Municipal Reserve land to be set aside for parks, rather than taking cash-in-lieu.](#)

In recognition of the multiple functions that MR land needs to accommodate, the City should default to taking the full allocation of MR land.

Recommendation 3.2.2

[Consider pocket parks only after recreation and ecological needs are met.](#)

Pocket parks have the benefit of providing greenspace sprinkled through new neighbourhoods, but they have limited value for recreation and ecological value and have a disproportionate impact on long-term maintenance and operations. To meet goals for the park system for financial and ecological sustainability, the City needs to establish conditions and minimum sizes for pocket parks and to limit the use of pocket parks to meet parkland allocation requirements.

Pocket parks should also be placed strategically so that they provide connectivity and rest points along pathway systems.

Recommendation 3.2.3

[Develop a Park Condition Assessment Tool.](#)

Regina's resources and parks staff are limited, so a system to prioritize the use of resources and time is needed to ensure an equitable approach to park improvements. The Park Condition Assessment Tool will help City staff identify parks most in need of resources or renewal using parameters such as location within the city, general functionality/condition, and barriers to accessibility. With a growing population, there is a need to ensure Regina's parks continue to serve the community in an equitable way.

Recommendation 3.2.4

[Utilize the Park Condition Assessment Tool to identify parks most in need of park resources or renewal and develop renewal plans.](#)

Renewal plans with associated timelines and priorities could be created for those parks identified by the Parks Condition Assessment Tool, to ensure the most important improvements are completed first.

Recommendation 3.2.5

[Create asset inventories to form a comprehensive database for use in planning, management and budgeting.](#)

Asset management will help ensure a sustainable and affordable park system through long-term resource planning for park and amenity replacements.

Recommendation 3.2.6

Monitor the dedication of Municipal Reserve (including amounts dedicated as park, open space, school ground, Environmental Reserve and Municipal Utility) to ensure equitable distribution of open space throughout the city.

This will be particularly important when applied to new neighbourhoods.

Recommendation 3.2.7

Redefine Zone Parks to include high level sports amenities, naturalized areas, and neighbourhood park amenities. Use the Servicing Agreement Fee (SAF) model to budget for, acquire, and develop Zone Parks including the cost for land acquisition. Zone Parks may be developed in addition to the required 10 per cent dedication required from developers at time of subdivision.

Zone Parks are currently focused on providing high level sport amenities, as guided by service levels in the Recreation Master Plan. However, these parks are a great opportunity to incorporate more diverse uses and meet more neighbourhood and ecological functions.

Zone Parks are community destination parks that offer large open spaces and high quality park and recreation amenities. They are between 9 to 15 hectares in size and must include:

- Parking.
- Connections to Regina's active transportation system.
- High level sport amenities.

The City of Regina could consider including the following in Zone Parks:

- Naturalized areas.
- Elements of neighbourhood parks (picnic areas, play spaces, gathering areas, public art etc.).

To update the planning policy, Zone Parks should be prioritized in locations within new and developing neighbourhoods (that are not currently served by an existing Zone Park) with consideration to:

- Geographic opportunities such as creeks, remnant prairie patches or other natural areas.
- Location between secondary schools.
- Need for higher level sports amenities.
- Adjacencies to public facilities.

Planning and acquiring Zone Parks requires a well defined process to avoid lost opportunities. Zone Parks are difficult to implement through the standard Municipal Reserve system because of the size and location guidelines. The SAF model is set up to accommodate the process of Zone Park acquisition so that equitable distribution of these significant parks can be achieved.



Goal 3.3

Foster Four-Season Park Use

Context

Many municipalities in colder climates are aiming to improve health and well-being of residents by encouraging people to venture outdoors on chilly days, and the parks system needs to be improved to accommodate four-season use. The City of Regina's Winter City Strategy (2021) supports Council's vision to make Regina a "Winter City". Among the three key themes highlighted in the Winter City Strategy is to "Embrace Winter Design" with goals to increase the ability of residents to participate in winter activities and interests. Adding places to warm up, providing lighting to extend hours of use, and creating micro-climates are just some of the possible improvements in parks. The parks system has potential to support the goals of the Winter City Strategy, as well as meet overall goals for welcoming and equitable parks.

Lighting can play a significant role in increasing park use, especially during the winter. By revisiting the Opens Space Lighting Policies and Procedures, Regina could strategically plan for improved lighting at key locations within select parks.

Conflicts and Gaps

There are a few key policy gaps and conflicts that need to be addressed to create a vibrant winter parks system including:

- Clarity, alignment and consistency regarding maintenance roles, responsibilities, and priorities for snow clearing and other winter maintenance operations between Parks Maintenance staff and Winter Road Maintenance staff could be improved.
- The Winter Maintenance Policy identifies that Parks Maintenance staff are responsible for park pathways, but there are many areas of intersection between these pathways and roadways and sidewalks where maintenance practices do not always align. Snow clearing on roads can impact the usability of park pathways by creating barriers at entrances and transition areas.
- There is a lack of guidelines for planning and design of parks and open spaces for year-round use.

Successes

- A recent success was Regina's launch of the Winter Activities Grant Program. To improve residents' well-being during COVID-19, Regina launched a new \$50,000 annual winter micro-grant program to support community groups to host activities to get people outdoors in the colder weather.

Policy Benchmarking

Saskatoon and Edmonton have both developed winter design policies or strategies that provide guidance on enlivening spaces in the winter.

The Edmonton Winter Design Guidelines calls for updating all bylaws, plans, procedures, policies, directives, standards to include a robust winter lens.⁹ It is intended to provide flexible guidance and inspiration for winter city design. Implications for parks and open spaces include lighting strategies, wind reduction/protection, use of colour, programming and infrastructure such as warming shelters.

The Saskatoon Winter City Strategy outlines the importance of activation of outdoor spaces, programming and events. It outlines a Grant Program offering \$25,000 to organizations, groups, and businesses to support the winter city goals. The Strategy also includes a lighting study involving conversations with the community to explore opportunities for temporary and permanent lighting.

What We Heard

Dialogue with the community regarding winter city design included:

- Increasing the use of parks year-round has many benefits including community building and opportunities for fitness and health.
- Events bring people into parks. Regina needs to find creative ways to get people to engage with the parks system.
- Lighting and washrooms are needed to encourage year-round use of parks.
- There is a desire for opportunities to participate in casual winter activities like skating, cross country skiing, and tobogganing.
- Connectivity and accessibility are important - particularly with snow clearing.
- Trees and shrubs could be strategically used to protect against prevailing northwest winter winds.



Photo Credit: City of Regina

⁹ "Winter Design Guidelines and Policy," City of Edmonton, https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/initiatives_innovation/winter-design-guidelines.

Recommendation 3.3.1

Revisit the Open Space Lighting Policies and Procedures and identify potential lighting improvements.

Parks located near winter recreation hubs, key active transportation pathways and parks with dark spaces are some examples of locations that could benefit from improved lighting.

Recommendation 3.3.2

Improve coordination of winter snow clearing responsibilities between winter road maintenance and parks operations.

A coordinated approach will ensure that park trails, sidewalks, and roadsides have consistent snow clearing for pedestrians and cyclists. Priority locations for snow clearing should include park entrances, beginning and end of park path and trails, road crossings, and roadways that form important non-vehicular connections to parks.

Recommendation 3.3.3

Develop winter design guidelines and bylaw updates for parks and open spaces. Include considerations for winter lighting, maintenance, snow clearing and permitting food trucks and temporary concession.

The Recreation Master Plan only establishes amenity thresholds for skating. There is an opportunity to provide additional thresholds for other winter activities, such as cross country skiing, snowshoeing and tobogganing, so that they can be added to the design guidelines as potential amenities for new parks.

These guidelines would focus on improving the design of parks and open spaces that will be transferred to the City through the development process such that winter activities are included and winter maintenance is simplified. The guidelines would be used to communicate expectations to developers, planners, designers, engineers, and their consultants, as well as City staff reviewing development applications. They would also be used by the City when designing parks and open space improvements.





Goal 3.4

Increase Edible Landscapes Through Community Partnerships

Context

The City of Regina has a community gardens policy allowing gardens that meet established location criteria to operate in parks and open spaces. There are currently 10 community gardens located across the city operated by community associations, zone boards and Grow Regina.

What We Heard

We heard there is an interest in more opportunities to learn about growing food. There was also interest in having more edible landscapes, such as food forests, in city parks.

We heard from Indigenous communities about the importance of including culturally significant plant species in parks. This could also include edible and medicinal plantings, but this requires further collaboration and conversation to ensure it is done in an appropriate manner that respects culture.

Recommendation 3.4.1

Work with community garden groups to encourage the planting of fruiting trees and shrubs adjacent to existing gardens or in stand alone locations within parks and open spaces.

Partnership with community garden groups will be key to ensuring the fruit trees are maintained and cared for. Strategic location should be carefully considered to prevent vandalism and ensure it pairs with existing park uses.

Recommendation 3.4.2

Increase the planting of fruiting shrubs and edible annual plants as part of the City's horticultural program.

Fruiting trees and shrubs can increase food security opportunities, as well as providing food and habitat for birds, pollinators, and other wildlife. Food plants in parks can also help attract people to parks, create a sense of place, and encourage social connections.





5. Implementation Plan

This Parks Master Plan outlines a vision for the future of Regina's parks system over the next 10 - 15 years with tangible recommendations to be achieved over time. The adoption of this Plan by the City of Regina Council represents agreement in principle to the overarching vision for the community, but does not represent a commitment to spend. This section provides information to support decision making by Council and should remain flexible to accommodate new opportunities and changing conditions.

The table (starting on page 58) provides an overall structure for implementing this Plan. The table summarizes the recommendations and identifies a time frame, required resources, responsibility, and support for each.

Implementation of each recommendation is subject to approval through partnerships, legal agreements and annual budget processes. The recommendations and associated timelines should be reviewed regularly to track progress, respond to changes, ensure integration with new City of Regina plans, policies and initiatives, and take advantage of potential funding and partnership opportunities.

Targets:

Targets have also been outlined for select recommendations. Targets can help the City measure progress toward implementation of some recommendations. Targets set out specific and measurable deliverables or outcomes that indicate successful implementation of the recommendation.

There are multiple ways of approaching targets, but it is important that the City establish a baseline in order to accurately measure progress towards the target. Once a baseline of the current condition has been established, the City can establish a phased approach to achieving targets over time. Using the baseline information, measuring and reporting could be made each year to give the City a sense of progress towards the target over time. The table (on page 56) consists of a series of targets the City has set out as of 2023 along with associated recommendations. This list will remain flexible and has the potential to grow as the City identifies additional measureable targets they would like to strive for.

Short-Term Targets, and Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

	KPI	Target	Target Date
1	Number of Indigenous ceremonies hosted by the City of Regina annually.	Eight ceremonies or sweat lodge ceremonies held.	Annually 2024 - onwards
2	Total number of fruiting trees and shrubs within parks and open space system maintained by partners.	25 fruiting trees and 50 fruiting shrubs planted by the City, maintained by partners in open space annually.	Annually 2025 - onwards
3	Per cent of staff trained in the 'Identification of Native Plants' course.	25 per cent of permanent parks employees trained.	Quarter 4 2026
4	Total volume of potable water used to irrigate the parks and open space system.	Reduce potable water use in parks 5 per cent below average annual levels by 2025 and 10 per cent by 2027.	Quarter 4 2027
5	Number of tree vacancies within the parks and open space system.	Reduce 2023 vacancy count by 1000 trees.	Quarter 4 2028
6	Total area of woodlots within the system.	Increase diverse woodlot inventory by 4 hectares.	Quarter 4 2028
7	Total area of naturalized lands within the system.	25 per cent of parks and open spaces will be naturalized.	Quarter 4 2028

Implementation Table:

The table (starting on page 58) includes the following information for each recommendation.

Time Frame:

Described as:

- Short-term (1 - 3 years)
- Medium-term (4 - 8 years)
- Long-term (9 - 15 years)

Longer-term actions may end up being completed before short-term actions due to funding opportunities, partnerships or other factors. The order in which actions are completed will be determined through annual work plans by the City of Regina. The timeline for implementation will need to remain flexible to respond to funding availability and the changing needs of the community.

Capital Resources Required:

Capital resources include the cost required to initiate a recommendation or action. These costs are high level estimates and not based on detailed costing. Note that ongoing or operational costs are not included and will need to be assessed as part of each individual project.

- N/C = No change in existing capital requirements
- \$ = <\$100,000
- \$\$ = \$100,000 - \$500,000
- \$\$\$ = \$500,000 - \$1M
- \$\$\$\$ = \$1M+

Responsibility:

Each recommendation requires a champion to lead the initiative and to be accountable for progress.

The table includes a suggestion of a main entity or City department that will be responsible for leading the implementation.

Support:

Many of the recommendations rely on collaboration with others to support implementation. The table includes potential City departments and external organizations that could support or contribute.

For some of the recommendations, there will be a need for continuing dialog and engagement with others.

	Recommendations	Time Frame	Resources Required	Responsibility	Support
PRINCIPLE 1: REGINA'S PARKS ARE SUSTAINABLE					
GOAL 1.1: MITIGATE AND ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE					
1.1.1	Support the City of Regina's goal of being carbon neutral by 2050.	Long-Term	\$\$	All departments	
1.1.2	Explore measurement of carbon sequestration of grasslands and Regina's urban forest.	Long-Term	\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Sustainable Infrastructure Planning and Development Services Water, Waste and Environment
1.1.3	Update the Regina Urban Forest Management Strategy to include specific strategies to address tree vacancies.	Medium-Term	\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Planning and Development Services
1.1.4	Update seed specifications and develop new tree, shrub and hardy perennial lists along with new planting standards for various locations and environments.	Short-Term	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	
1.1.5	Develop processes and procedures for naturalized areas including prairie grasslands and woodlots in Regina's parks to increase diversity of landscape types.	Medium-Term	\$ - \$\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Planning and Development Services
GOAL 1.2: REDUCE INTENSIVE MAINTENANCE APPROACHES					
1.2.1	Develop guidelines and increase staff training on maintenance procedures for naturalized areas.	Medium-Term	\$\$-\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Water, Waste and Environment
1.2.2	Find opportunities to reduce potable water use for irrigation in parks.	Short-Term	\$\$-\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Indigenous Community Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange

	Recommendations	Time Frame	Resources Required	Responsibility	Support
1.2.3	Develop a tailored park maintenance plan for each park.	Medium-Term	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Water, Waste and Environment Planning and Development Services
GOAL 1.3: ENSURE STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORTS PARK USES					
1.3.1	Develop a drainage master plan that addresses the intersection between the parks and open space system and the storm drainage system including standards for planning and designing recreation amenities within storm detention areas.	Medium-Term	\$\$-\$	Water, Waste and Environment	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Planning and Development Services Sustainable Infrastructure
1.3.2	Establish a process so that the detailed design of park space and stormwater management facilities are completed together to ensure that recreation needs, including accessibility, are met.	Medium-Term	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Water, Waste and Environment Planning and Development Services Sustainable Infrastructure
1.3.3	Improve coordination of infrastructure and initiatives that may impact parks and open spaces.	Short-Term	N/C	Communications and Engagement	All departments
1.3.4	Minimize stormwater channel disturbance to prevent erosion, water quality impacts and downstream sedimentation. Where a channel is adjacent to a naturalized space, its maintenance regime should match that of the natural area.	Medium-Term	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Water, Waste and Environment Planning and Development Services Sustainable Infrastructure
1.3.5	In collaboration with the Water, Waste and Environment Department, naturalize riparian areas from waters edge to the edge of the floodway to the greatest extent possible.	Medium-Term-Ongoing	\$\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Water, Waste and Environment	Water Security Agency

	Recommendations	Time Frame	Resources Required	Responsibility	Support
PRINCIPLE 2: REGINA'S PARKS CONNECT COMMUNITIES TO NATURE AND PLACE					
GOAL 2.1: INCREASE THE DIVERSITY OF LANDSCAPES					
2.1.1	Update the maintenance service level classifications and revise naming of existing maintenance classes.	Short-Term	\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	
2.1.2	Increase habitat value within parks and open spaces.	Ongoing	\$\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Water, Waste and Environment
2.1.3	Include natural areas as a part of the recreation amenity mix for new and existing parks.	Ongoing	\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Planning and Development Services
2.1.4	Complete a natural areas inventory.	Short-Term	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Water, Waste and Environment
2.1.5	Create a City Naturalist position in Parks Maintenance & Cemeteries.	Short-Term	N/C - \$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	
GOAL 2.2: EXPAND INTERPRETATION					
2.2.1	Identify cultural landscapes and natural features that would benefit from interpretative signage and representation.	Medium-Term	\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Heritage/arts advisory committee
2.2.2	Update park naming policies to foster collaboration with the Indigenous community.	Short-Term	N/C	City Clerk	Communications and Engagement; Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services
2.2.3	Include interpretive and educational elements describing maintenance / care practices in prominent naturalization areas.	Medium-Term	\$\$-\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Communications and Engagement

	Recommendations	Time Frame	Resources Required	Responsibility	Support
2.2.4	Engage and work with Indigenous groups to identify appropriate and meaningful ways to approach incorporating medicinal and traditional plants into the parks landscape.	Short-Term	\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Communications and Engagement
GOAL 2.3: FOSTER COMMUNITY CONNECTION TO PARKS					
2.3.1	Revise the Community Investment Grant Program to expand its assessment criteria for community-led projects and initiatives to align with the vision and goals of this master plan.	Medium-Term	\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	
2.3.2	Update the <i>Parks & Open Space Bylaw No. 2004-27</i> to allow food trucks in select parks.	Medium-Term	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Planning and Development Services
2.3.3	Create a public-facing webpage with information on parks maintenance service levels, schedules, and snow clearing.	Medium-Term	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Communications and Engagement
2.3.4	Incorporate Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing into ongoing parks planning and design initiatives.	Medium-Term-Ongoing	\$\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Communications and Engagement
PRINCIPLE 3: REGINA'S PARKS ARE EQUITABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING					
GOAL 3.1: ENSURE THAT PARKS ARE INCLUSIVE, ACCESSIBLE AND SAFE FOR ALL					
3.1.1	Assess and modify parks and open spaces using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to promote a sense of safety and welcoming atmosphere.	Ongoing	\$\$-\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Communications and Engagement
3.1.2	Establish an inclusive and welcoming location (or locations) within the parks system dedicated to supporting Indigenous Ceremony.	Short-Term	\$\$\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Communications and Engagement

	Recommendations	Time Frame	Resources Required	Responsibility	Support
3.1.3	Use universal design principles when designing and improving park amenities including pathways, washrooms, seating, picnic areas, access to natural spaces, and wayfinding.	Short-Term -Ongoing	\$\$\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	
3.1.4	Create a washroom strategy to provide a unified approach to provide safe, clean and accessible washroom facilities in select Regina parks to enhance the park experience for all.	Short-Term	\$\$\$\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	
GOAL 3.2: WORK TOWARD EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF PARKS AND PARK RESOURCES					
3.2.1	In new neighbourhoods, prioritize the full allocation of Municipal Reserve land to be set aside for parks, rather than taking cash-in-lieu.	Medium-Term	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Planning and Development Services
3.2.2	Consider pocket parks only after recreation and ecological needs are met.	Short-Term-Ongoing	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Planning and Development Services
3.2.3	Develop a Park Condition Assessment Tool.	Short-Term-Ongoing	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Planning and Development Services
3.2.4	Utilize the Park Condition Assessment Tool to identify parks most in need of park resources or renewal and develop renewal plans.	Short-Term	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Planning and Development Services
3.2.5	Create asset inventories to form a comprehensive database for use in planning, management and budgeting.	Short-Term	\$\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Planning and Development Services
3.2.6	Monitor the dedication of Municipal Reserve (including amounts dedicated as park, open space, school ground, Environmental Reserve and Municipal Utility) to ensure equitable distribution of open space throughout the city.	Ongoing	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Planning and Development Services

	Recommendations	Time Frame	Resources Required	Responsibility	Support
3.2.7	Redefine zone parks to include high level sports amenities, naturalized areas, and neighbourhood park amenities. Use the Servicing Agreement Fee (SAF) model to budget for, acquire, and develop Zone Parks including the cost for land acquisition. Zone Parks shall be developed in addition to the required 10 per cent dedication required from developers at time of subdivision.	Medium-Term-Ongoing	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services; Planning and Development Services
GOAL 3.3: FOSTER FOUR-SEASON PARK USE					
3.3.1	Update the open space lighting policies and procedures to reflect changes in the use of parks including and increased focus on winter use.	Medium-Term	\$\$\$\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Roadways and Transportation
3.3.2	Improve coordination of winter snow clearing responsibilities between winter road maintenance and parks operations.	Short-Term	N/C	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Roadways and Transportation
3.3.3	Develop winter design guidelines and bylaw updates for parks and open spaces. Include considerations for winter lighting, maintenance, snow clearing and permitting food trucks and temporary concession.	Medium-Term	\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Communications and Engagement Planning and Development Services
GOAL 3.4: INCREASE EDIBLE LANDSCAPES THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS					
3.4.1	Work with community garden groups to encourage the planting of fruiting trees and shrubs adjacent to existing gardens or in stand alone locations within parks and open spaces.	Medium-Term	\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Communications and Engagement Planning and Development Services
3.4.2	Increase the planting of fruiting shrubs and edible annual plants as part of the City's horticultural program.	Medium-Term	\$	Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services	Communications and Engagement Planning and Development Services

Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

Access/Accessible/Accessibility

A general term used to describe the degree to which an activity, service, or physical environment is available to as many people as possible, regardless of their physical abilities or socio-economic background. Improving accessibility involves removing economic, physical, cultural, and transportation barriers to participation in programs, projects and facilities.

Community Garden

A single piece of land gardened collectively by a group of people for fruits, vegetables, or flowers.

Creek

See Stream.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a set of design principles that reduce opportunities for crime and nuisance activity.¹⁰

Culture

The whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterizes a society or social group. It includes creative expression (e.g. oral history, language, artistic disciplines and crafts), community practices (e.g. traditional healing methods, traditional natural resource management, celebrations and patterns of social interaction that contribute to group and individual welfare and identity), and material or built forms such as sites, buildings, historic city centres, landscapes, art and objects.

Cultural Development

The policy, planning and capacity-building support for conserving and developing cultural resources to the benefit of community (social, cultural, environmental, and economic).

Cultural Heritage

The intangible practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills of a community or an individual in addition to associated material instruments, public art, artifacts, objects, historic places and cultural spaces. The full list of cultural heritage resources is found in the City of Regina *Cultural Plan*.

Cultural Landscape

A geographical area that has been modified, influenced or given special cultural meaning. A cultural landscape is often dynamic, a living entity that continually changes because of natural and human-influenced social, economic, and cultural processes.

Cultural Resource(s)

Any cultural activity or asset that contributes to culture, which includes cultural occupations (e.g. artist, graphic designers, cultural managers), cultural enterprises (e.g. museums, libraries, galleries), festivals and events (e.g. fairs, street festivals, music festivals), natural heritage (e.g. community gardens, significant parks), intangible cultural heritage (e.g. customs, traditions, ceremonies), cultural heritage (e.g. public art, plaques and monuments, built heritage properties), cultural spaces and facilities (e.g. cinemas, religious institutions, urban spaces) and community cultural organizations (e.g. arts groups,

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"Design Regina, the Official Community Plan, Bylaw No. 2013-48 " City of Regina, <https://www.regina.ca/Design-Regina-the-Official-Community-Plan>.

heritage groups). The full list of cultural resources is found in the City of Regina *Cultural Plan*.

Flood Plains

A low-lying area adjacent to streams and rivers that is inundated during major floods and has the following two main components: the floodway and the flood fringe. The Province of Saskatchewan has adopted a 1-in-500 (1:500) year flood event as the standard to define floodplains.¹¹

Food Security

All residents have access to safe, culturally appropriate and nutritious food through an economically and environmentally sustainable food system that promotes self-reliance and social justice.

Habitat Areas

The area or environment where an organism or ecological community naturally occurs or lives.

Higher Level Sport Amenities

In the context of this report, higher level sport amenities refers to playing fields and courts designed to accommodate competitive and high-performance sports.

Inclusion/Inclusive

A description of the community where all people have access to high-quality community necessities and amenities; the same opportunities, regardless of any difference to take part in all aspects of community life; and have a sense of belonging and respect in the community.

Natural Areas

Lands containing environmentally sensitive or ecologically significant natural prairie or naturalized areas, features and elements including wetlands, waterbodies, floodplains, habitat areas, riparian areas, streams, and other core areas within the city of Regina and region.

Natural Corridors

Lands comprising a linear network of private and public open space along Wascana Creek and Boggy Creek within one kilometre of the creek boundary inclusive of riverbank, floodplain, hillslope, upland interior, upland edge habitat as well as top-of-bank agricultural lands that provide habitat requirements to facilitate movement for a wide range of species.

Natural Infrastructure

Natural infrastructure is the use of preserved, restored, or enhanced ecosystem features and materials (e.g. water, vegetation, sand and stone, wetlands, forests) to deliver targeted community services and infrastructure outcomes such as: climate resilience, environmental quality, access to nature, enhanced biodiversity, and climate change mitigation. It may also incorporate engineered materials of grey infrastructure to enhance or support natural infrastructure and the use of ecosystem processes (e.g. green roofs, bioswales, rain gardens) in order to provide infrastructure services, or to adapt infrastructure to the impacts of climate change and climate-related mitigation (e.g. increased precipitation, storms, tides, extreme heat, permafrost degradation).¹²

¹¹ Flood plain definition and meaning | Collins english dictionary, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/flood-plain>.

¹² Statistics Canada Government of Canada, "Canada's Core Public Infrastructure Survey (CCPI)," Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/survey/business/5173>.

Natural System

Lands containing core natural areas, natural corridors and linkages between them comprised of naturalized corridors, which together form an integrated system of protected areas.

Naturalized Stormwater Ponds

Naturalized stormwater ponds are constructed stormwater pond that is designed to mimic the appearance and function of a natural wetland through the incorporation of native plant species and natural design principles.

Open Space System

The outdoor environment which incorporates or includes natural physical or man-made elements to provide for passive and active recreation activities or serve a utilitarian function. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Neighbourhood, zone or municipal parks;
- Open space associated with recreation facilities;
- Outdoor sports complexes;
- Municipal outdoor facilities such as golf course and cemeteries;
- Natural areas;
- Greenways such as bikeways and pedestrian links and corridors that connect open space elements into a cohesive system;
- Special use areas such as buffer strips,

registered walkways, traffic islands, roadway medians and boulevards, utility parcels, floodplains, stormwater lakes and dry pond and storm channels;

- Wascana Centre;
- Plazas.

Over-dedication and Mis-dedication of Park Types

In the context of this report, over dedication of park types refers to a scenario in which a certain type of park (such as a city, neighbourhood, or natural park) is planned for an area that has several similar park typologies within a close proximity. Mis-dedication of park types describes a situation in which the park type for a particular area does not match the needs of the community.

Park

An area of land that is largely natural, but includes physical or manmade elements, for recreation and enjoyment by the public as well as for conservation of natural and historic resources.

Pathway

An off-street facility that is typically shared by active transportation modes (e.g. a type of bikeway).

Placemaking

A holistic and community-based planning approach that capitalizes on unique assets and potential to promote personal well-being, community character

Prairie Potholes

As the glaciers of the previous ice age withdrew, wetlands formed in shallow indentations, termed prairie potholes. These potholes are filled with flora and aquatic creatures, fostering internationally important communities of nesting waterfowl.¹³

Public Realm

Places and spaces that are shared by the public. This includes all public places, open spaces, and streetscapes. High-quality public realm may include opportunities for places to gather, places to walk to, beautiful spaces, pedestrian-oriented design etc.

Riparian Areas

Riparian areas link water to land. They border streams, lakes, and wetlands. The blend of streambed, water, trees, shrubs and grasses in a riparian area provides fish habitat, and directly influences it.¹⁴

Storm Channel

A permanent waterway, designed to convey stormwater runoff.

Stream

Surface water flowing year round or seasonally in a defined channel or watercourse, which are to remain in or returned to a natural state.

Urban Forest

The collection of all trees found within the city.

Vernal Pools

Vernal pools, also known as seasonal pools, represent a distinctive category of wetland. They are generally compact, shallow bodies of water that are transient in nature, lacking a consistent inflow or outflow like ponds or lakes. Spring rains and snowmelt replenish them annually, only to recede and evaporate during the summer months. It is these defining characteristics of vernal pools that set them apart from other wetlands. Notably, they play host to various animal species that depend on such impermanent aquatic habitats for their survival.¹⁵

Wascana Centre

An area governed by the Provincial Capital Commission that includes one of the largest urban parks in North America, the Legislative Building, various government buildings, cultural facilities and educational and other institutions.

Waterbodies

Any significant accumulation of water which is to be retained within the natural system.

Wayfinding

A system that assists travelers in orienting, navigating and moving through an environment through the use of visual or other measures, including signage.

13 "Prairie Pothole Region," Ducks Unlimited, <https://www.ducks.org/conservation/where-ducks-unlimited-works/prairie-pothole-region>.

14 Ministry of Forests, "Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR)," Province of British Columbia, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/fish/aquatic-habitat-management/riparian-areas-regulation>

Wetlands

A fixed area with adjacent upland area with characteristic wetland soils and hydrophytic (“water-loving”) vegetation where the open water areas can vary considerably between seasons and years.

Zone Parks

Zone parks are intended to be community destination parks that offer large open spaces and high quality park and recreation amenities. They are between 8 to 15 hectares in size and must include:

- Parking.
- Connections to Regina’s active transportation system.
- They are specifically focused on providing high level sport amenities, as guided by service levels in the Recreation Master Plan. However, these parks are a great opportunity to incorporate more diverse uses and meet more neighbourhood and ecological functions.

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