



Rocky View County
Parks and Open Space Master Plan



Prepared by:



AECOM

Acknowledgements

A big thank you from Rocky View County to you!

Rocky View County gratefully acknowledges the thoughtful comments and considerations brought forward by Rocky View County residents in the development of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan. In addition, the County sincerely appreciates the efforts demonstrated by members of the stakeholder group in rolling up their sleeves and participating in several workshops.

We sincerely thank all of you for your participation:

- Rocky View County residents who participated by attending, asking questions and filling out comment sheets at open houses held at the County Administration Building, Springbank Heritage Club, and Balzac Community Hall;
- County residents who took the time to complete the online survey;
- Stakeholders who participated in two workshops. One workshop included 25 mini-workshops as stakeholders rotated through each of the five regions that make up the Master Plan;
- Recreation District representatives that contributed to a vision statement for the Master Plan and participated in a workshop to brainstorm ideas related to the Master Plan;
- Stakeholders representing their respective interest groups and municipalities both within and adjacent to Rocky View County that agreed to telephone interviews; and
- Rocky View County staff that completed a survey and shared their perspectives.

This Parks and Open Space Master Plan was undertaken at the direction of Council. Thank you to members of Rocky View County Council for your foresight and for providing the impetus for preparing and completing this Master Plan, which will enhance the County's quality of life by ensuring future parks and open space respond to the needs of an increasing population.

Executive Summary

This plan – the Rocky View County Parks and Open Space Master Plan – adopted a visionary approach and philosophy to guide parks and open space planning in Rocky View County today and into the future. The Master Plan is a County initiative that will provide the County with guidance to develop an interconnected system of parks and open spaces for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

This Master Plan is a resource to the community to assist in planning parks and open spaces that meet the needs of the community and build a foundation for future generations of Albertans. It is an outcome of the 2006 Parks Feasibility Study, an earlier study that re-evaluated specific internal functions and service goals with respect to County lands, and was commissioned to determine the feasibility of establishing a parks service function in the County.

At the heart of this Master Plan is a vision that provides the long term guidance necessary to achieve a desired system of parks and open space.

The main elements of the Master Plan include:

1. The creation of a vision statement and principles to guide the parks and open space planning process;
2. An inclusive and engaging public participation program that was designed and is well suited to the Master Plan;
3. A review of the existing plans and policies that influence this Master Plan;
4. A review of the biophysical influences within Rocky View County;
5. A breakdown of the County into five (5) distinct regions with corresponding development concepts for each region; and
6. Recommendations, actions, and implementation tools that focus on the incremental development of a parks and open space system over time.

A vision was developed by stakeholders and modified as a result of sharing it with the public at a series of open houses.

Rocky View County designed a comprehensive public engagement program to reach most of the community to ensure the residents of Rocky View County had an opportunity to be fully engaged in the process. A campaign called "get open" was launched and was subsequently awarded the Best Public Engagement Campaign at the Alberta Municipal Communicators Conference in Edmonton in 2010.

The public engagement process included: telephone interviews with adjacent municipalities and hamlets, agencies such as Sustainable Resource Development, Western Irrigation District and many other local stakeholders; advertising and posting an online survey on Rocky View County's website; special meeting with Recreation District representatives and the proponents of Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park; stakeholder workshops; and three public open houses and project presentations to the Public Services Committee.

Existing plans and policies were reviewed as these have a direct influence on the Master Plan. Of particular note are the Intermunicipal Development Plans

between Rocky View County and a number of adjacent municipalities. These plans acknowledge the importance of working together to create an interconnected system of parks and open spaces. In the near future, Rocky View County will develop a new Municipal Development Plan. The Parks and Open Space Master Plan will have an important role in its creation.

This Master Plan recognizes that natural systems do not respect man made boundaries. Consequently, working closely and cooperatively with adjacent municipalities to ensure the continuation of open space in terms of public access, wildlife corridors, and drainage features is critical to natural area preservation and protection, especially when it comes to our most important resource – water.

By reviewing population projections and park and open space standards, conclusions were reached in terms of the areas required for neighbourhood, community and regional parks as well as the provision of open space. The current status regarding these areas was determined and park areas were projected for future time frames. Other means of acquisitions are explored herein as an alternative to cash purchase.

Within the Master Plan natural areas are ranked according to low, medium, high, and very high biophysical attributes. Areas with a higher ranking are a priority for acquisition as these areas are desired for parks and open space in terms of public access. Management mechanisms were developed to ensure significant wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors are protected and pathways/trails and generally public access and use are planned to minimize wildlife impacts.

Concepts were developed for each of the five (5) regions in the Master Plan. These regions were determined by reviewing and then defining boundaries based on a combination of topographical features and Recreation District boundaries. These five regions were provided names that reflect the County's cultural and natural history:

1. Elbow River Ranch Lands;
2. Grand Valley Foothills;
3. Nose Creek Passage;
4. Meadowlark Prairie; and
5. Bow River Plains.

Recommendations are provided for each area regarding parks and open space, pathways/ trails, cultural resources, river access, and niche markets. Finally, recommendations are included to manage the parks and open space systems to ensure that specific outcomes are addressed, such as social needs, pathway/trail design options and standards, demographic considerations, and future open space acquisitions.

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 1.1 • Master Plan Vision
- 1.2 • What is a Parks and Open Space Master Plan?
- 1.3 • The Relationship of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan to Other County Documents
- 1.4 • The Assignment
- 1.5 • Preparation Stages of the Master Plan
- 1.6 • Context of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan within Rocky View County
- 1.7 • Foundation for Action – Enhancing the Quality of Life in Alberta
- 1.8 • Major Outcomes Resulting From the Study Process

1 • Parks and Open Space Master Plan – the BIG PICTURE

This plan – the Rocky View County Parks and Open Space Master Plan – adopted a visionary approach and philosophy to guide parks and open space planning in Rocky View County today and into the future. This plan considers social planning, environmental sensitivity, public safety, access, and opportunities to develop new spaces and connectivity throughout the County and beyond. As well, this plan provides recommendations regarding quality of life elements for open spaces, social and citizen engagement, healthy environment, lifelong learning, and cultural expression through heritage, multiculturalism, arts, and creativity.

A Supplementary Background Document (Part 2) contains substantial information that was used to create this plan. This document contains a summary of public comments, an overview of current trends, extensive biophysical factors, a variety of County influences (including planning policy), the 2005 Needs Assessment¹ and provincial survey results, current recreation infrastructure, and identified future needs for each Recreation District through their Recreation Master Plans. Finally, other influences, such as provincial guidelines, intermunicipal development plans, Area Structure Plans, the Trans Canada Trail, and specific utility influences are outlined.

1.1 • Master Plan Vision

A vision for Rocky View County's Parks and Open Space Master Plan was created by stakeholder representatives and the public via a series of workshops and open houses. The vision, as described below, is the heart of the master plan and will lead the way to achieving the outcomes described in the Master Plan.

“Rocky View County's diverse network of parks and open spaces are accessible, connected, inviting and safe. They enrich our quality of life through natural area preservation, education and partnerships while offering exciting recreational opportunities. They both connect and cultivate our communities.”

The vision is based on the following vision statements:

- Rocky View County's heritage is preserved, where communities are strong and people are connected to parks and open spaces;
- A safe network of parks and open spaces connected to and including facilities throughout Rocky View County where people relate to the past via learning, growing and playing, and sharing in a sense of community;
- Rocky View County is characterized by a network of parks and open spaces that boast a unique sense of place; and
- As an integral part of the community, parks and open spaces are: meaningful; diverse; sustainable; and provide a safe place for people to play, learn, grow, and make social connections.

¹ Hargroup Management Consultants, 2005, *The Municipal District of Rocky View Community Survey*, Municipal District of Rocky View



The plan starts with the existing situation and utilizes the vision as a guide to work toward parks and open space objectives.

1.2 • What is a Parks and Open Space Master Plan?

This Master Plan was created with a vision of what future parks and open spaces would look like in the County in 20+ years. It is based on the natural landscape and it incorporates important cultural components such as community centres and historic sites. The plan starts with the existing situation and utilizes the vision as a guide to work toward parks and open space objectives. Over time appropriate lands are acquired for park and open space development, key areas are protected, linkages and facilities are created, and a comprehensive system of parks, open spaces and pathways/trails gradually develop to be enjoyed by Rocky View County residents.

The terminology used throughout the Master Plan is taken from the County's Parks and Open Space Classification System² as adopted in July 2008 and outlined below:

Natural Area – areas of land or water representing distinct elements of an area's geological, ecological, or species diversity, and includes natural landscapes or features of value for natural heritage protection.

Public Park – public land specifically designed or reserved for the general public for active or passive recreational use and includes all natural and manmade landscaping, facilities, playing fields, buildings, and other structures that are consistent with the general purpose of public park land, whether or not such recreational facilities are publicly operated or operated by other organizations as arranged with the County.

Open Space – open space in its broadest sense includes all land and water areas, either publicly owned or offering public access, that are not covered by structures. Open space includes current and potential future parks, natural areas, pathways, roadway greens, land for parks and recreation facilities, golf courses, cemeteries, and other types of alternative use open space.

Greenways – provide open space connections to and from parks, schools, and neighbourhoods, and may include wildlife corridors, pathways, and trails.

Pathways – formally constructed linear paths typically with a surface constructed of asphalt or aggregate materials and may be located within developed open space or more naturalised areas.

Trails – informal natural trails or trails surfaced with natural materials found locally including the following sub-classifications:

- **Multi-use improved trail** – formally constructed recreational trails located within environmental and municipal reserves or other County lands and provide direct and/or indirect access.
- **Multi-use rustic trail** – recreational trails also located within environmental and municipal reserves or other public lands that provide direct and/or indirect access to country residential communities. These trails originate from game trails created by wildlife.
- **Wetland boardwalk** – this classification is under development.
- **Equestrian specific** – formally constructed and maintained trails provide for safe equestrian use to minimize trail use conflicts.

An outcome of this Master Plan is to update the Parks and Open Space Classification System with more park classifications and modified definitions. Classifications will continue to evolve to respond to new and innovative ideas related to park and open space planning.

² Municipal District of Rocky View, 2008, *Municipal District of Rocky View No.44 Open Space/Trail Classification System*, Municipal District of Rocky View

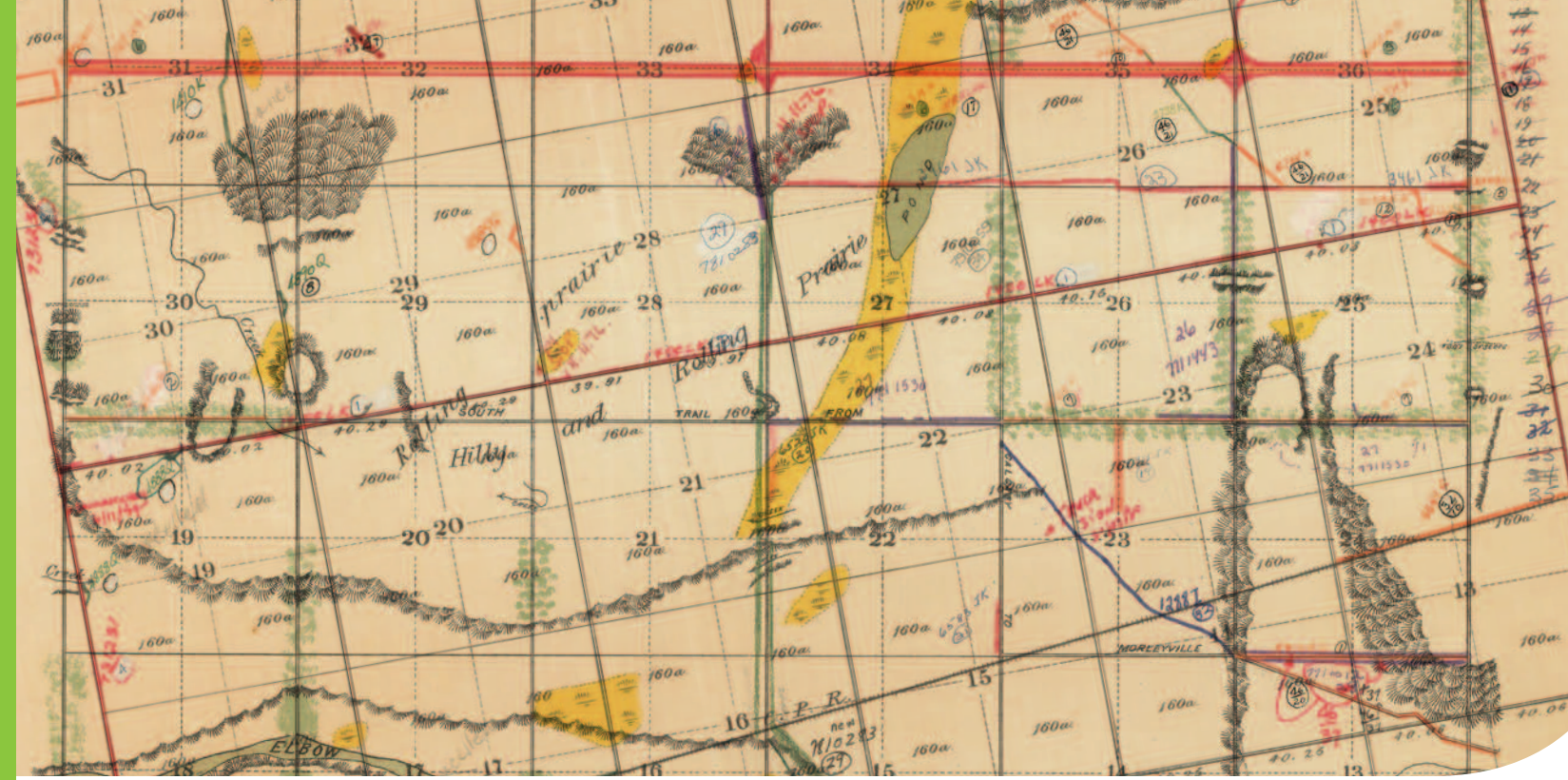


Figure 1 • Planning Process Relationship



* Adopted by Council Resolution
 ** Adopted by Bylaw

1.3 • The Relationship of the Master Plan to Other County Documents

A Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is a statutory (legally required) document that must include future land use, proposals for future development, demonstrate coordination with adjacent municipalities, and include transportation and municipal services. An MDP may include proposals for financing and programming, coordination of municipal programs, environmental matters, economic development, statements regarding development constraints, and any other matter related to the physical, social, or economic development of the municipality.

The Parks and Open Space Master Plan is a guiding plan and will inform the creation of the new MDP along with several other guiding plans. These include the Solid Waste Master Plan, Potable Water Servicing Strategy, Agricultural Master Plan, Rocky View Amenity Study: Phase 2³, and the Cemetery Master Plan⁴. Figure 1 shows the relationship of these plans to the new MDP.

These plans and emerging factors such as the provincial and regional land planning initiatives underway indicate that the preparation of a new MDP is timely.

Existing Area Structure Plans were taken into consideration in the preparation of this Master Plan. The location of new Area Structure Plans will be influenced by the findings within this Master Plan, in particular approvals related to country residential subdivisions.

³ Nichols Applied Management, Management and Economic Consultants, 2010, *Rocky View Amenity Study: Phase II*, Rocky View County

⁴ LEES+Associates Cemetery Planners et. al., 2009, *Rocky View County Cemetery Master Plan*, Rocky View County

1.4 • The Assignment

The Rocky View Parks Feasibility Study⁵ recommended the preparation of an Open Space and Trail Classification System as well as a Master Plan. The 2008 classification system has set the stage for the Master Plan.

This Master Plan identifies where parks should be located with accompanying linkages and networks and provides recommendations to guide decision making and implementation. The inclusion of key components such as management, maintenance and pathway/trail connectivity also provides long term guidance. It will take a long time to create a comprehensive system of parks, open spaces and pathway/trail linkages; however, by developing parks and open spaces over time, County residents will enjoy the benefits of being outdoors and utilizing open space in the short term (1-5 years), and can look forward to the longer term benefits (25 years).

The Project Team was directed to:

- Develop a long range Master Plan utilizing a visionary approach;
- Outline goals, policies, actions and implementation tools;
- Provide definitions for parks and open spaces;
- Develop criteria for the acceptance of Reserve Lands;
- Assist the County with the development of an extensive public participation program and assist the public in creating a unique vision;
- Address homeowner associations and their maintenance and operation of County-owned parks and open spaces;
- Provide a framework for the preparation of a Greenway Plan;
- Consider intermunicipal relationships in terms of parks and open spaces;
- Consider the County's municipally-owned land, land licensed and owned by the school district; and
- Identify development and implementation stages.

Project priorities were highlighted and included the identification of:

- Lands the County should acquire with respect to new park and open space development;
- Municipal Reserves within suggested areas for community development for more structured activities;
- Niche markets for recreation (i.e., cycling, equestrian, playing fields, etc.); and
- Gathering place areas for hosting events (business piece for recreational tourism), festivals and farmers' markets.

⁵ UMA/AECOM, 2006, *Municipal District of Rocky View No. 44 Parks Feasibility Study*, Municipal District of Rocky View

1.5 • Preparation Stages of the Master Plan

The following were undertaken in the preparation of the Master Plan:

- Development of a vision and vision statements with stakeholders and the public;
- Obtain public input via surveys and interviews with stakeholders, adjacent urban and rural municipalities, and agencies;
- Schedule three open houses to engage the public in the Master Plan process;
- Create an inventory of existing parks and recreational facilities;
- Divide the County into regions, and gather and prepare a series of map overlays;
- Hold workshops for stakeholders to include their expertise to the generation of ideas, knowledge, and concepts;
- Review and summarize the planning and biophysical park and open space influences being mindful of provincial influences such as the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park;
- Analyze the opportunities and constraints overall and for each region;
- Analyze the types and area of park and open space required;
- Develop conceptual plans for each region;
- Develop recommendations/policies and priority timing options for parks and open space development;
- Combine the information into a draft and subsequent final Master Plan; and
- Present findings at the conclusion of the study.

Input and feedback was provided via surveys, interviews, workshops and open houses from both participants and technical experts as the Master Plan developed.

This Master Plan outlines short 1–5 year plans, medium 5–10 years plans, and long term 10–25 year plans for park and open space development in the County. It will be a guiding document to assist Council, Administration, Family and Community Support Services, and Recreation Districts, etc., in planning for the future. The Master Plan will assist in the capital budgeting process for parks and open space development and in developing long range financial strategies for future funding by identifying priorities.

1.6 • Context of the Master Plan within Rocky View County

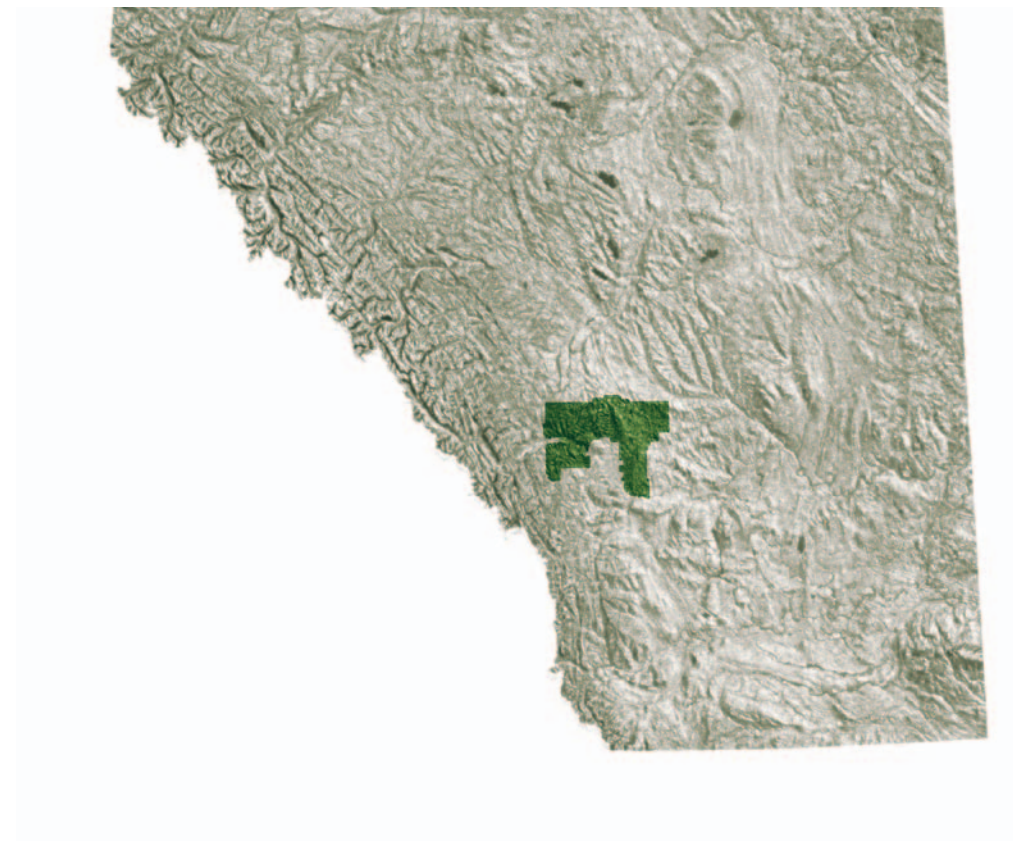
Rocky View County is located in southern Alberta and includes approximately 990,000 acres of prairie and foothills, and creeks, river valleys, wetlands, and lakes. The County includes a variety of land forms and unique geological features and is a vast region with numerous opportunities and challenges alike.

The County has a strong agricultural base with farms and ranches while featuring hamlets, acreages, commercial and industrial development, and resource extraction. A context map of the County is included as [Figure 2](#).

The County is expansive and there are challenges to administering and managing such a large area. In order to provide context, a comparison is drawn between Rocky View County and another municipality. For this exercise, the islands of Oahu and Maui in the state of Hawaii, USA were selected. As demonstrated in [Figure 3](#), the total area of Oahu at 381,888 acres and Maui at 465,408 acres is smaller than the area administered by Rocky View County.

The County interacts with 14 neighbouring municipalities, including the major economic centre of this region on three sides, the City of Calgary. The County is an economic generator in its own right and provides unique business and employment opportunities. Families are moving to the County for many reasons including financial, educational opportunities, and quality of life. The intention of this Master Plan is to enhance quality of life by increasing the availability of and experiences related to parks and open spaces.

Figure 2 • Rocky View County Context

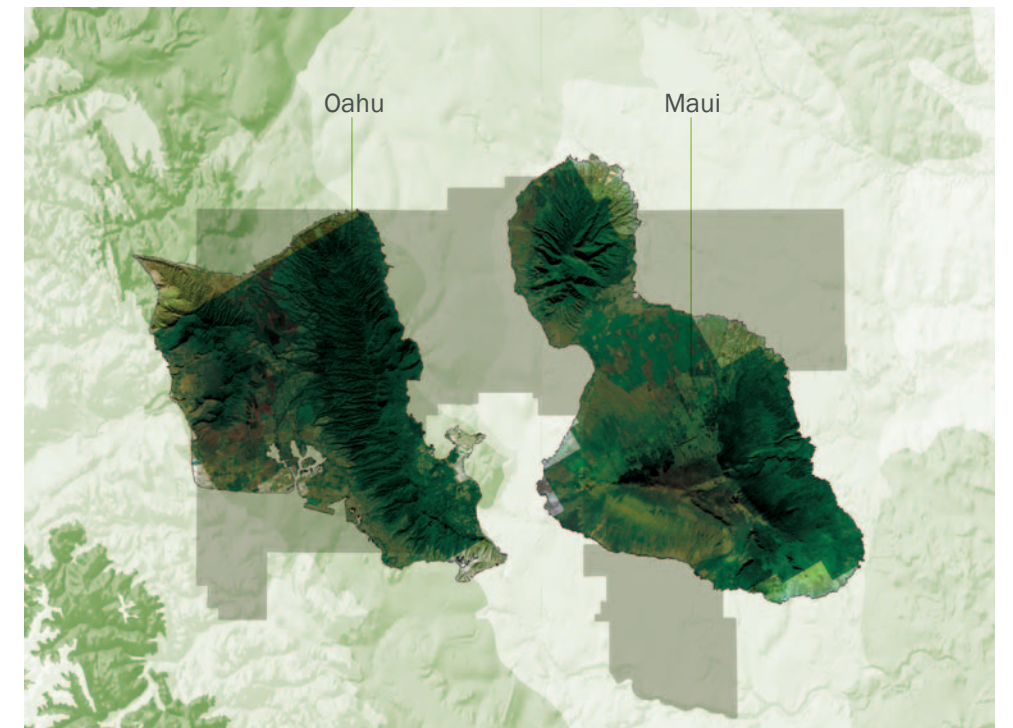


Rocky View County includes rural residential communities and hamlets. Approximately 90% of the County is agricultural. The relationship with these communities is an important component of the Master Plan, i.e., the Town of Chestermere is not within Rocky View County but the County owns the land where the Chestermere Regional Recreation Centre is located. The County's commitment over the years was recognized in 2010 by the dedication of an Olympic-sized arena named "Rocky View County Arena" within this facility. The County supports similar recreational initiatives for Genesis Place in Airdrie and the Spray Lake Sawmills Family Sport Centre in Cochrane.

County wide major parks and open spaces influences include the Bow and Elbow River valleys, several provincial parks, creeks and creek valleys, wetlands, lakes, reservoirs, and a number of conservation sites and wildlife viewing areas.

The alignment of the Trans Canada Trail, a coast-to-coast trail across Canada, is a significant influence. Once developed, this trail could facilitate lateral connections to numerous communities, parks, and open spaces throughout Rocky View County. Calgary's Greenway, a series of parks, open spaces and trail linkages associated with Stoney Trail, is another significant influence. The parks, open spaces, and pathways/trails within Cochrane, Airdrie, Crossfield, Beiseker, and Irricana provide connecting opportunities to parks and open spaces to the County.

Figure 3 • Islands of Oahu and Maui, Hawaii Area Comparison





“ARPA builds healthy citizens, their communities and their environments throughout Alberta.”

– ARPA Mission Statement

1.7 • Foundation for Action – Enhancing the Quality of Life in Alberta

The vision for the Master Plan is supported by the Alberta Recreation and Parks *Foundations for Action* and the *Recreation and Parks Vision and Plan*⁶. The Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA) is a provincial not-for-profit organization that promotes recreation, parks and their benefits to the quality of life of all Albertans.

By 2015 Alberta has a sustainable society that lives and promotes a culture of wellness, creativity, and stewardship. Alberta citizens will be benefiting from a new culture of wellness for themselves, their communities, and the environment. There will be a new, multi-lateral infusion of funds that ensure all citizens of the increasingly diverse province have access to affordable services.

Of note is the emphasis on recreation, parks and heritage, which contribute to quality of life by:

1. Positively influencing individual growth and wellness;
2. Enhancing social inclusion and community development;
3. Protecting and preserving natural environments; and
4. Enhancing economic vitality.

The Alberta Parks and Recreation Association encourages other groups and organizations to use their report to kick-off their own initiatives related to quality of life. The following guiding principles are described:

Individual growth and development – Recreation meets fundamental human need, providing opportunities for self-discovery, creativity, fair play, lifelong learning and overall quality of life.

Personal health and wellness – Recreation and parks contributes to holistic wellness, chronic disease prevention, personal identity, happiness, and life satisfaction.

⁶ Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, *Foundations for Action: Enhancing the Quality of Life in Alberta*, <http://arpaonline.ca/research/vision-2015/> (accessed on Jan 25, 2011)

Self-responsibility – Individuals are empowered to take personal responsibility for positive lifestyle choices and behaviours.

Inclusion and access – In the spirit of human rights, recreation opportunities and environments are accessible to all irrespective of gender, disability, economic status, and cultural background, within the available community resources and needs.

Community capacity – Environments and systems expand citizens’ ability to make quality lifestyle choices and access what they need.

Citizen engagement and empowerment – Citizens actively engage in decision making and civic action in a culture of community development.

Community linkages and social capital – Recreation is crucial to the mix of strong social networks, addressing community issues, and building trust. Recreation and parks plays a significant role in the creation of cohesive communities.

Volunteerism – The voluntary sector is supported and involved, thus maximizing the potential of recreation and parks.

Collaborative approaches – Organizations and agencies work together to improve environments and opportunities and to address community issues.

Environmental stewardship and sustainability – Parks, open spaces and natural areas are conserved, protected, and managed sustainably.

Economic development – Recreation and parks are important contributors to the economic sustainability.

A separate Supplementary Background Report – Part 2 includes a series of demographic, social, and economic trends, in addition to the guiding principles outlined above, that support and encourage parks and open space development in every community.



“We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”

– Aldo Leopold



1.8 • Major Findings Resulting From the Study Process

Major findings resulting from the development of this Master Plan include:

1. Conceptual routing of the Trans Canada Trail west of Calgary along the Bow River including a looping opportunity via Cochrane and back to Calgary, a connection is shown from southeast Calgary along the north side of the Bow River in an easterly direction toward Medicine Hat and the development of trail options between Irricana and Airdrie.
2. The Calgary Greenway is integrated in terms of pathway/trail connections across the greenway into Calgary. The Trans Canada Trail also interacts with the Calgary Greenway in this Master Plan.
3. The Bow River corridor is recognized as a significant recreational resource via input from the Bow Waters Canoe Club. This plan encourages improved access to the river for canoeing and kayaking, suggests formalized portages around the Ghost and Bearspaw Dams and identifies canoe/kayak segments, which are integrated with existing and proposed access points. As an outcome from comments received at the open houses, the public indicated an interest in the creation of an access to the south side of Bearspaw Reservoir via an existing Municipal Reserve in the Springbank area.
4. Areas with significant biophysical attributes are identified for protection and, potential future public access in terms of pathway/trail development although these areas would be scrutinized to ensure public access minimizes the impact to wildlife and wildlife corridors.
5. The Inglewood Bird Sanctuary serves as a template for exploring the possibility of designating critical wildlife habitat in Rocky View County for protection. This supports the idea of enhancing Rocky View's reputation as an advocate for wildlife and wildlife habitat and a recognition of the migratory flyways associated with County lands.
6. The biophysical attribute analysis also helped to identify significant natural areas throughout the County. Weed Lake is highlighted in the plan as an area for protection, environmental education and pathway/trail connections. Weed Lake would be a new regional park in the County with pathway/trail connections to Langdon. This area attracts bird watching due to the significant numbers of migratory birds. The public identified opportunities to partner with Ducks Unlimited and the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary to enhance and protect Weed Lake and its environs as significant wildlife habitat.
7. In developing this Master Plan, meetings were held with various stakeholders such as the Western Irrigation District (WID). Opportunities for pathway/trail development within canal right of ways were explored and could result in the extension of the Western Headworks Canal Pathway beyond Chestermere. Connections are also possible to Langdon and Delacour. WID also identified an opportunity to develop a kayak course where a drop structure is located south of Langdon. Discussions with the WID and utility companies identified opportunities to develop pathway/trails within WID lands and within utility right of ways, and
8. The Trans Canada Trail has been aligned through Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park, which facilitates Trans Canada Trail routing between Calgary and Cochrane along the north side of the Bow River.

2 • Public Engagement

2.1 • Public Engagement

In conjunction with this Master Plan, Rocky View County developed a comprehensive public engagement campaign called "get open" (Figure 4), which was awarded Best Public Engagement Campaign at the Alberta Municipal Communicators Conference in Edmonton in 2010.

The campaign was supported with promotional items which were handed out at open houses and workshops. The public engagement process included:

1. Telephone interviews with adjacent municipalities and hamlets, agencies such as Sustainable Resource Development, Western Irrigation District and many other stakeholders;
2. An online survey posted on the Rocky View County's website;
3. A special meeting with Recreation District representatives and an additional meeting with Recreation District representatives and the proponents of Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park;
4. Two stakeholder workshops;
5. Three public open houses supported by comment sheets completed by residents in attendance; and
6. Two presentations to the Public Services Committee.

Figure 4 • Get Open Logo and Promotional Items



CHAPTER OUTLINE

2.1 • Public Engagement

2.2 • Public Engagement Results

2.3 • Public Engagement/Education
Recommendations



“We don’t accomplish anything in this world alone... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one’s life and all the weavings of individual threads form one to another that creates something.”

– Sandra Day O’Connor



2.2 • Public Engagement Results

The input received was translated into summary statements and action items and is provided in the Supplementary Background Report (Part 2). The input was also incorporated into the recommendations for each chapter of this Master Plan and for each region in Chapter 5.

The results of the public engagement program were reviewed and grouped into theme areas such as environmental protection and restoration. Summary statements were prepared for each theme area based on the input received. Each theme area is outlined below and is accompanied by a brief summary.

Public Communication – Residents would like to be apprised of events and activities related to this Master Plan and have suggested regular updates be provided via a communication plan to ensure they are engaged and informed. The provision of educational materials related to the safe use of parks and open space, and County roads by cyclists were considered important.

Conservation – Residents proved knowledgeable regarding the protection of areas of environmental significance. Weed Lake was identified for protection and as a venue for bird watching and environmental education. Other areas were identified for conservation/protection such as the entire Bow River corridor both upstream and downstream of Calgary.

Cultural, Environmental and Educational Programming – A heritage inventory was recommended to identify significant natural and heritage resources and special places for protection as well as a signage program to interpret these resources. The public was also interested in participating in more festivals, and encouraged the development of venues for social activities and performing arts.

Environmental Protection and Restoration – Access to environmentally sensitive areas was recommended although there is awareness that public access would need to be carefully controlled to reduce environmental effects and wildlife impacts. The public demonstrated knowledge of the importance of protecting riparian areas and recommended that riparian buffers be increased. The development of brochures and other literature and improved methods of communications, i.e., the County website, were identified as a key means of informing the public about the importance of both surface and ground water resources.

Land Access, Acquisition, and Funding – Residents recognized there are costs associated with the maintenance of existing land holdings and land acquisition for parks and open space and identified a number of alternatives such as developer cost sharing, engaging community groups in fund raising activities and the investigation of other funding options. The public identified specific sites to acquire such as land adjacent to Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park.

Municipality, Agency, and Organizational Collaboration – Residents suggested collaboration and partnerships with adjacent municipalities and school divisions as well as the Western Irrigation District, Ducks Unlimited Canada and Trout Unlimited to achieve the goals of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan. They identified seamless connectivity between municipalities in terms of green space linkages, the development of sustainable funding programs for interpretive and directional signage and partnerships to support tree farms, market gardens, and wineries.

Municipal Reserves, Environmental Reserves, School Reserves, and Public Utility Lots – Residents indicated that developers should be required to align new pathways and trails in new subdivisions with proposed and existing pathway/ trail networks. They recommended that Municipal Reserves should be naturalized to reduce long term maintenance costs and that policies be developed to protect undeveloped road allowances to enhance the pathway/trail network, and to facilitate the assembly of larger parcels of land via cash in lieu opportunities. Environmental Reserves should be used to protect sensitive environmental features, but incorporated into the open space network provided to the public, where appropriate.

Niche Markets – Cycling, canoeing/kayaking, and running activities were identified as niche markets. The public encouraged the County to identify staging areas for related events and activities, and to provide access to the Bow and Elbow River and Bearspaw Reservoir for canoeing and kayaking. Safety programs for cyclists and motorists were encouraged by working with responsible agencies such as Alberta Transportation.

Open Space/Trail Classification System – There were several changes suggested to the Open Space/Trail Classification System such as identifying the Trans Canada Trail as a component of the pathway/trail hierarchy, the inclusion of water based “Blue” trails along the Bow and Elbow Rivers for canoeing and kayaking, and more classifications for park spaces within hamlets.

Parks and Open Space – The public is interested in integrating active and passive recreational facilities into parks and open spaces and in developing these spaces near where people live. They would like views identified and protected and the balanced provision of recreational facilities in centralized locations throughout the County. Several comments related to integrating parks and open space development with pathways/trails. The public would like park and open space development to keep pace with residential, commercial, and industrial development.

Program Delivery – Creation of a Parks and Recreation department was identified to manage parks and open space, develop bylaws for protection and make recommendations in terms of the acquisition of land for parks and open space. A permitting system is encouraged to control and organize events to ensure the safety of participants. This was in response to concerns related to the safety of events held on County roads. With the implementation of a comprehensive Master Plan, enforcement is seen as being very important.

River and Lake Use and Access – The public recognized the importance of the Bow and Elbow Rivers as recreational resources and there is a preference for non-motorized recreational use and the development of access points/identification of canoe segments. Controls should be exercised in terms of motorized water craft on the Bow and Elbow Rivers and on Bearspaw Reservoir with the exception of emergency/rescue boats. This would be similar to the City of Calgary’s power boat restrictions with respect to waterways within the City limits.

Greenways: Pathways and Trails – Park and pathway/trail development should be integrated within escarpments, creek valleys, canals, wetlands as there were many comments related to pathways/trail experience. Pathway/trail connectivity is highlighted by the public in terms of connections between communities, taking in points of interest, and connecting existing and proposed pathway/trail systems. The public encouraged an analysis of the potential of locating pathways within road allowances as this may be the only option to connect communities.

2.3 • Public Engagement/Education Recommendations

The following recommendations provide direction to the County in terms of engaging and educating the public throughout the implementation of the Master Plan.

1. Develop a communications plan to ensure residents are fully engaged and informed related to parks, open spaces, and pathways/trails that may affect their quality of life;
2. Publish or communicate information regularly to increase awareness of the parks, open space and pathways/trails that are available to residents, i.e., a map online showing the location of pathways/trails, a description of pathways/trails that include level of difficulty, and the location of parking to access pathways/trails;
3. Publish educational materials to promote safety regarding the use of parks, open space and pathways/trails as well as cyclist use of County roads;
4. Develop standards and informational signage for park, open space and pathway/trail use, and interpretive signage to educate/inform residents regarding the protection of ecologically significant areas. This has been completed but the public was not aware of these efforts, as such, this recommendation is provided to encourage the continued provision of information;
5. Develop communications for the general public to increase their understanding of the importance of water as a recreational and environmental resource; and
6. Develop an educational strategy to creatively explore the linkages between public pathways and elements of agriculture.



CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 3.1 • Biophysical Context
- 3.2 • Biophysical Attribute Rating
- 3.3 • Biophysical Recommendations

3 • Biophysical Factors Influencing the Master Plan

3.1 • Biophysical Context

The biophysical factors influencing this Master Plan include the County's biophysical context as outlined in the Natural Regions and Subregions of Alberta report developed by the Natural Regions Committee⁷ and the Biophysical Attributes Rating for Rocky View County prepared by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada⁸.

Rocky View County is comprised of four Natural Regions and five Natural Subregions (Natural Regions Committee 2006).

A **Natural Region** is described as follows: an extensive land mass (of the order of 20,000 km²) characterized by permanent geographic boundaries (geological, physiographic, etc.) and a certain uniformity and individuality of climatic, topographical, geomorphological and biological conditions. There are 6 Natural Regions recognized in Alberta.

A **Natural Subregion** is described as a large land mass (of the order of 10,000 km²) characterized by permanent geographic boundaries (geological, physiographic, etc.) and a certain uniformity and individuality of climatic, topographical, geomorphological and biological conditions. There are 21 Natural Subregions recognized in Alberta.

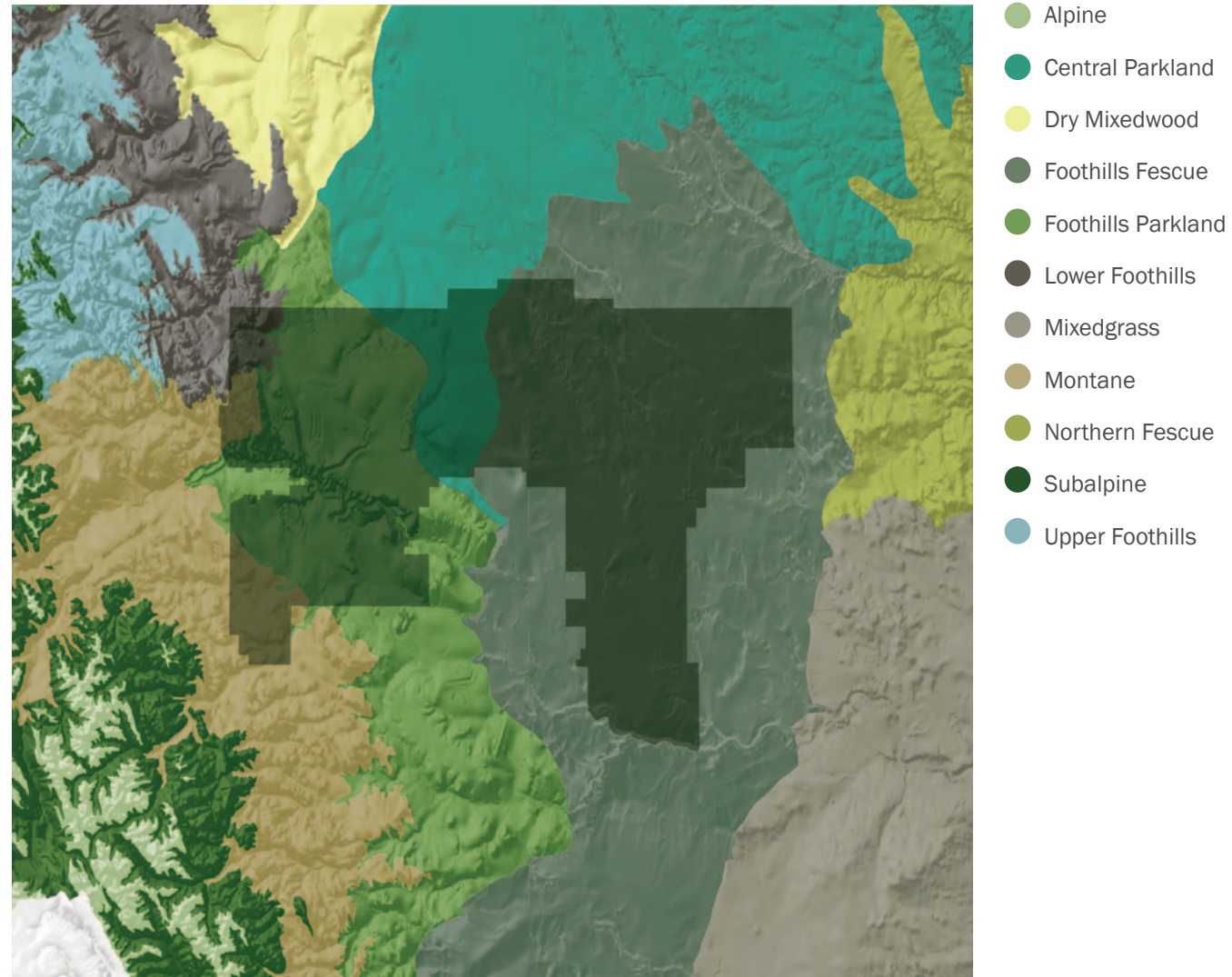
⁷ Natural Regions Committee, 2006, *Natural Regions and Subregions of Alberta*, Government of Alberta

⁸ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2003, *Biophysical Attributes Rating in the M.D of Rocky View No.44*, Government of Canada

The natural regions and subregions in Rocky View County, as shown in Figure 5, are:

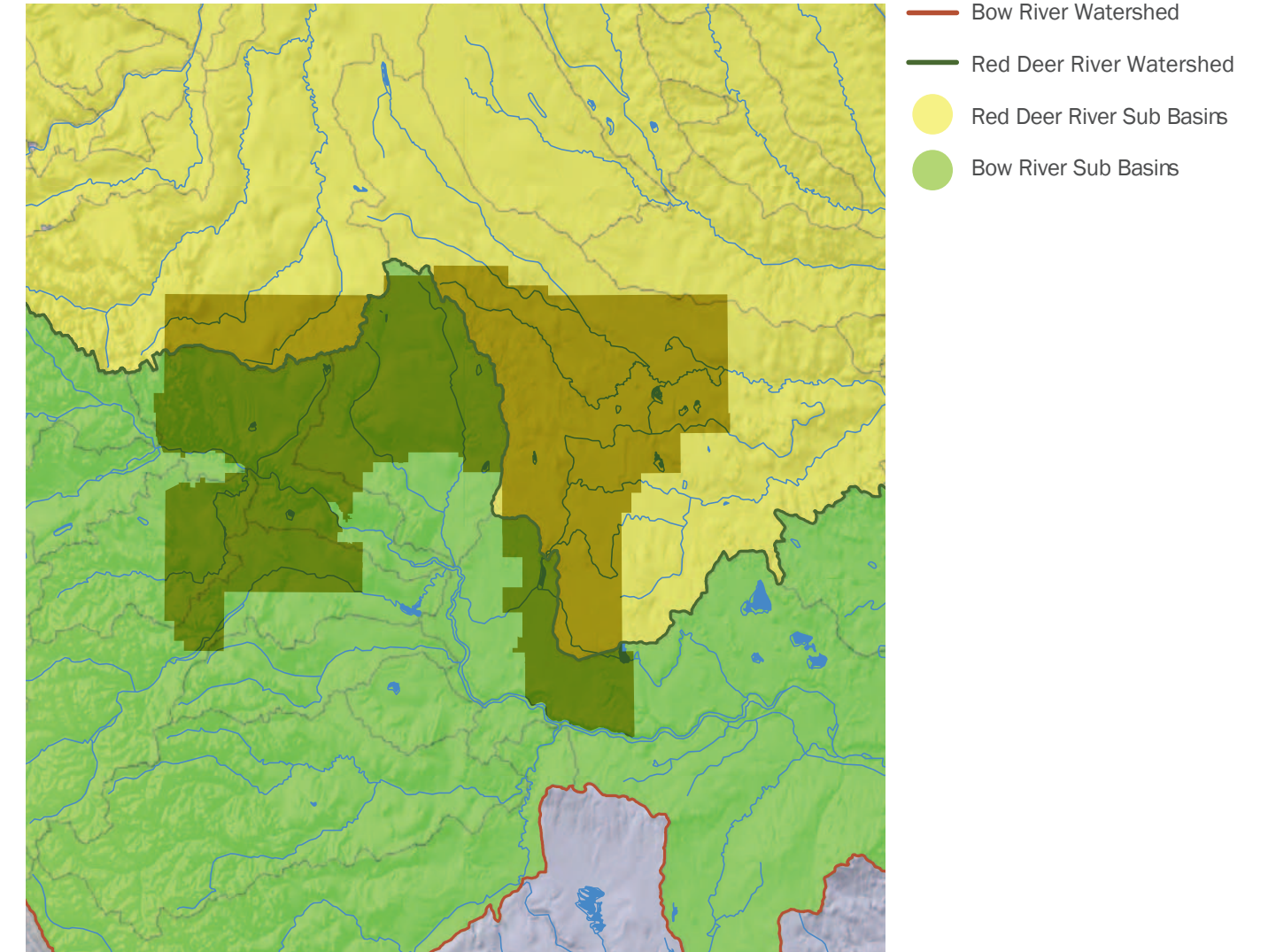
- Rocky Mountain Natural Region – Montane Subregion;
- Foothills Natural Region – Lower Foothills Subregions;
- Grassland Natural Region – Foothills Fescue Subregion; and
- Parkland Natural Region – Central Parkland and Foothills Parkland Subregion.

Figure 5 • Natural Regions of Alberta



In general, the eastern, northern, and portions of the northwest areas of the County consist of annual cropland, improved pasture, native pasture, or prairie while the western and a portion of the northwest County consist mainly of woodland, willow shrublands, and native grasslands. River basin and sub-basin boundaries are shown on Figure 6.

Figure 6 • River Basins and Sub-basins



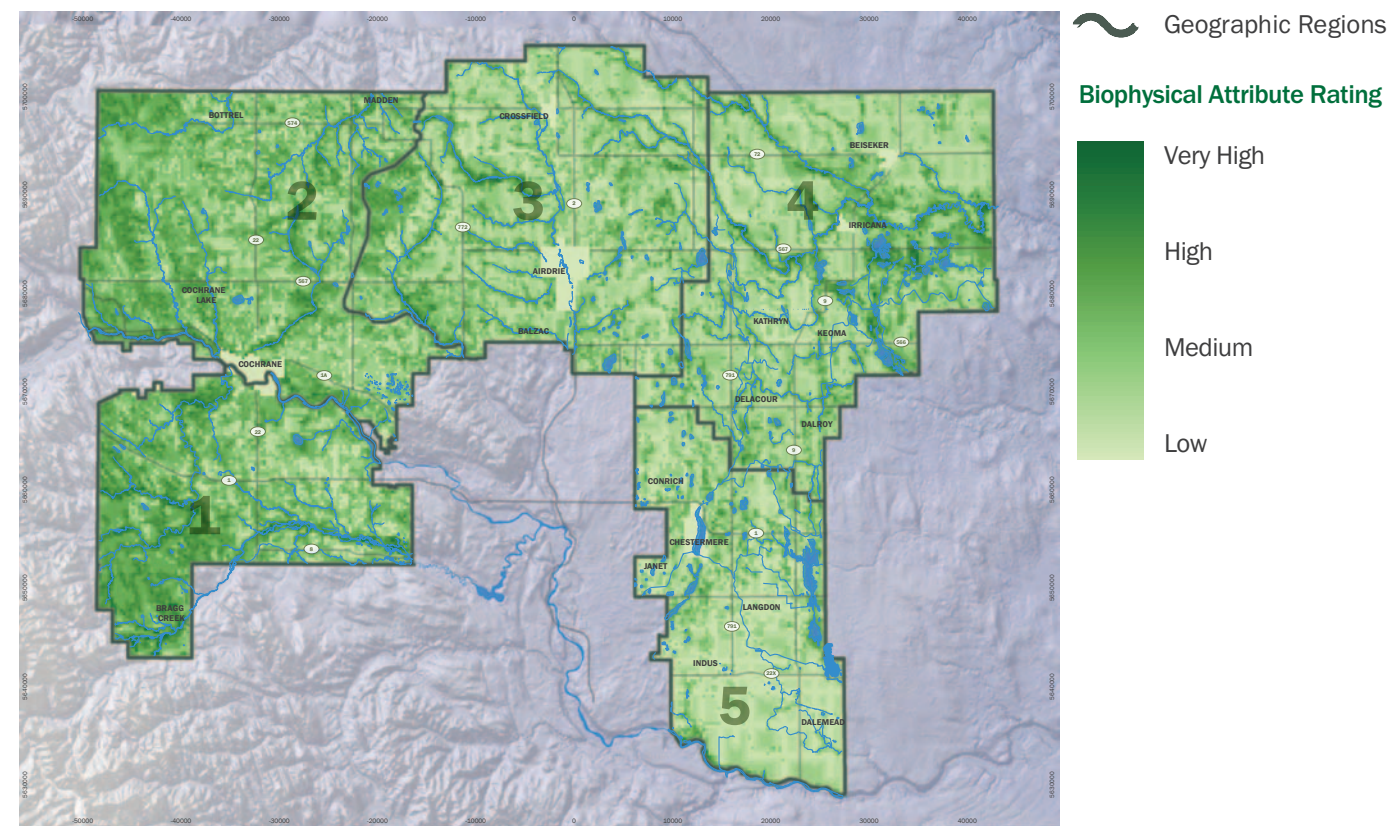
A general description of natural areas within the County is described below.

NORTHWEST AND WEST OF CALGARY

- The northwest and western regions of the County are predominantly located in the Foothills Parkland Natural Subregion. In relation to the other parkland natural subregions, this subregion contains the most native vegetated areas;
- Undulating native grassland on most south facing slopes, grazing and cultivated hay fields, aspen and willow on northern slopes, or low areas and woodlands;
- Vegetation varies greatly depending on altitude, slope and moisture. Vegetation typically includes grasses, shrubs, aspen, balsam poplar and some white spruce and Douglas fir. A very small percentage (1%) of the area is made up of water with the largest water body being the Bow River; and
- This region is primarily within the Bow River sub-basin, with portions being within the Red Deer sub-basin. (Figure 6)



Figure 7 • Biophysical Attributes



NORTH OF CALGARY

- Northern areas of the County are located within the Foothills Fescue Natural Subregion (part of the Grassland Natural Region) and the Central Parkland Natural Subregion (part of the Parkland Natural Region);
- Open water and wetlands are uncommon and natural prairie communities consist predominantly of mountain rough fescue (native plant species); and
- This region is located within the Red Deer River and Bow River sub-basins.

EAST AND NORTHEAST OF CALGARY

- Eastern and northeastern areas of the County are located within the Foothills Fescue Subregion, which is part of the Grassland Natural Region;
- The Foothills Fescue Subregion consists of the undulating to rolling Western Alberta Plains and the rolling Southern Alberta Uplands and Foothills;
- Open water and wetlands are found in this region and where natural prairie communities occur, they consist predominantly of mountain rough fescue; and
- This region is primarily within the Red Deer River sub-basin with portions being within the Bow River sub-basin.

River basins and sub-basins were used to define regional boundaries of areas with Rocky View County for conceptual analysis in Chapter 5.



The attribute analysis was conducted to provide information to evaluate and compare the relative environmental importance of lands across Rocky View County.



3.2 • Biophysical Attribute Rating

A Biophysical Attributes analysis was prepared by Agriculture Canada for Rocky View County. The biophysical analysis indicates there are highly valued and environmentally significant areas within Rocky View County. These areas could be identified for protection and/or for public open space.

The attribute analysis was conducted to provide information to evaluate and compare the relative environmental importance of lands across Rocky View County. The analysis resulted in mapping and ranking concentrations of sensitive ecological variables from groundwater, surface water and terrestrial evaluations. Ecological variables included in the analysis were:

- Aquifer vulnerability (based on the type of surficial geology);
- Riparian areas;
- Land cover;
- Roadless lands (based on distance from a road); and
- Parks and Protected Areas and Environmental Reserves.

The Biophysical Attribute Rating identifies areas of importance by assembling layers of the ecological variables noted above. It does not identify areas where an individual component, such as a riparian area, is important. The rank assigned to the data are based on literature and opinion of experts in the field. These ranks, however, may require adjustment to better reflect local site conditions, the importance of individual variables, detailed expert knowledge, and new information.

These biophysical attributes are shown on the Biophysical Attributes Map (Figure 7) to identify important natural areas that would be considered valuable in terms of public

access and conservation/protection of the natural environment. These areas are also important as they provide habitat, corridors for wildlife, and ecosystem services that benefit human health and well being.

River and creek valleys, steep slopes, wetlands, and undeveloped areas are identified as high and very high. Low and medium areas are in more developed areas of the County and in areas used for crop production.

The attribute rating system is described below:

Low environmental importance – areas far from surface water, summer fallowed, in a low groundwater risk area, high road density, and far from existing parks and/or protected areas.

Medium environmental importance – improved rating in comparison to areas of low environmental importance.

High environmental importance – areas more important than areas of low and medium environmental importance and next to areas of very high environmental importance.

Very high environmental importance – riparian areas, native vegetation, high groundwater, at risk for contamination, far from roads, in close proximity to a park or protected area.

Areas identified as significant would be a priority for purchase or acquisition by other means, which are reviewed in Chapter 4.



“The conservation of natural resources is the fundamental problem. Unless we solve that problem, it will avail us little to solve all others.”

Theodore Roosevelt



3.3 • Biophysical Recommendations

These recommendations, taken from the summary statements described in Chapter 2.0, provide direction to the County in terms of the biophysical environment and its relationship to the Master Plan:

1. Conserve and manage wetlands and wetland complexes deemed significant for nature tourism, waterfowl migration, bird watching, research, environmental education, pathway/trail development, water quality protection, and to provide for flood mitigation;
2. Designate the entire Bow River Valley as an area of environmental significance and/or conservation area;
3. Encourage and promote educational programming related to environmental impacts, i.e., urban development impacts to watersheds;
4. Develop an interpretive/educational program that provides information about ecologically sensitive areas;
5. Work with provincial and federal governments and provincial non-governmental organizations to protect, designate, and restore ecologically sensitive areas;
6. Conduct an analysis to identify Environmentally Significant Areas at the local and regional scale, suitable for public access and conservation, to be incorporated into the planning process;
7. Assess and then designate Environmentally Sensitive Areas to manage development to protect resources for the long term in an effort to strike a balance between development and conservation of natural areas;

8. Establish science based setbacks along riparian areas to protect creeks, wetlands, lakes, and other natural water bodies;
9. Continue to acknowledge recommendations, targets and thresholds for watershed health indicators as identified in all endorsed watershed management plans;
10. Conserve and manage all major river valleys, and historic drainage channels to be used as wildlife corridors, parks, open space, and for pathways/trails;
11. Develop management protocol to ensure the ecological integrity of Environmental Reserves is appropriately conserved; and
12. Develop standards, maintenance requirements, and priorities for Environmentally Significant Areas.

WELCOME

County property is intended for public access and enjoyment. All activities occurring on this land are subject to enforcement. Any unauthorized use of county property may be punishable by law.

THIS LAND IS YOURS TO ENJOY. PLEASE DO SO RESPONSIBLY!

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 4.1 • Preparation of Standards
- 4.2 • Neighbourhood, Community, and Regional Park Areas
- 4.3 • Open Space
- 4.4 • Pathways and Trails
- 4.5 • Land Acquisition
- 4.6 • Recommendations

4 • Park Standards and Access Requirements

4.1 • Preparation of Standards

A review of the existing park and open space areas determined the future requirements for parks and open space in Rocky View County according to County population projections. The results helped identify the areas required according to park type over time. This exercise is not precise as existing development standards are based on an urban context but will provide the County with direction in terms of the provision of parks and open space in the future.

Since there are no long term established standards for rural areas, it is challenging to determine parks and open space requirements. These standards are often expressed in park or open space needed per thousand population. In addition, in many public and stakeholder forums, large acreage owners and ranchers indicated they did not need additional open space over and above their own land holding. In creating the amount of parks and open space required for the purposes of this master plan, all County resident populations are included to ensure no particular sector is left out of the calculations.

The requirements outlined in this section provide a framework for the County to determine park and open space areas and plan for the targets outlined on the next page. A method of distributing parks, open spaces and pathways/trails equitably throughout the County is also required.



Figure 8 • Regional, Community, and Neighbourhood Park Relationship



4.2 • Neighbourhood, Community, and Regional Park Areas

The Parks and Open Space Classification System, as described below, includes Neighbourhood, Community, and Regional parks. The relationship between these parks is shown in Figure 8.

Neighbourhood Parks – used for passive recreation and may contain a wide range of passive and active recreational facilities such as tot lots or specialized amenity space. These parks are preferably located adjacent to community halls or school sites and are intended to satisfy the active and passive needs of the immediate neighbourhood. In addition to introducing public open space it provides for a public gathering area and is linked to the pathway/trail system, where possible. In some cases, a neighbourhood park may be built where a majority of neighbourhood open space is centralized onto one site.

Community Parks – located close to the center of multiple neighbourhoods but separated from neighbourhood parks. They may be located adjacent to arterial, hamlet residential, or country residential roads to provide access for recreational activities for use community wide. Although community parks cater more to active recreational activities and tournament play, smaller community parks will offer more passive recreational opportunities for individuals and families. Community Parks are linked to pathway/trail systems, wherever possible.

Regional Parks – serves all residents of the municipal district, regional neighbours and other municipal partners by offering a specialized service that provides recreation needs not available in all areas. The age of users varies with amenities and should be located adjacent to a school site, where possible. Regional parks may include a mixed-use of services and facilities and are linked to the pathway/trail system, where possible.

Table 1 below shows the main framework of parks and their normal related requirements based on urban park standards. These criteria are derived from the Rocky View County Amenity Study: Phase 2⁹ and the 2006 Parks Feasibility Study.

Table 1 • Park and Open Space Framework				
Type of Park	Acres per 1,000	Number of Population Served	Park Size (acres)	Catchment Area
Neighbourhood Park	4 acres	1,000 people	5–10	Approx 1 km in urban settings, hamlets
Community Parks	4.9 acres	1,000 people	40–100	Approx 3 km in urban settings. It is estimated that in rural areas, community parks have a catchment area of 8 to 15 km
Regional Parks	9.9 acres	1,000 people	500–1,000	Approx 15 km in urban settings. It is estimated that in rural areas, regional parks have a catchment area of 30 to 50 km

Table 2 provides population projections based on the Rocky View County 2006 Census, projected for 2016, 2036, and 2056 (20 year intervals). The projections are also shown based on a range of actual possible growth at that time from the base case to a high scenario. The average between the two population projections was calculated (far right hand column) and serves as a reasonable basis for growth expectations in the subsequent tables in this chapter.

Table 2 • Estimated Population Projections					
Year	Population (actual)	Projection Base Case	Projection High Scenario	Average Between Base and High	Increase (%)
2006	34,597				
2009	36,358				
2016		45,866	46,674	46,300	N/A
2036		77,501	83,450	80,500	57%
2056		124,509	130,474	127,490	63%

⁹ Rocky View County, 2009, *Rocky View County Amenity Study*, <http://www.rockyview.ca/Default.aspx?tabid=1011> (accessed on Jan 27, 2011)

Tables 3, 4, and 5 include the existing acres and needed acres of neighbourhood, community and regional park space in Rocky View County for 2016, 2036, and 2056. Table 3 describes existing neighbourhood park areas (356 acres) and future park areas needed. The existing neighbourhood park areas indicate the County is currently over dedicated but this situation changes between 2036 and 2056.

Table 4 describes existing community park areas (216 acres) and future park areas needed. The existing community park areas indicate the County is currently over dedicated at 216 acres but this situation changes before 2036.

Table 3 • Neighbourhood Park Space – Existing and Needed				
Year	Population	Neighbourhood Park Space Existing (acres)	Neighbourhood Park Space Estimated (acres)	Neighbourhood Park Space Estimated Required for each Time Frame (acres)
2006	34,597	356	N/A	N/A
2016	46,300	N/A	185	none
2036	80,500	N/A	322	none
2056	127,490	N/A	567	211

Table 4 • Community Park Space – Existing and Needed				
Year	Population	Community Park Space Existing (acres)	Community Park Space Required (acres)	Community Park Space Required for each Time Frame (acres)
2006	34,597	216	N/A	N/A
2016	46,300	N/A	226	10
2036	80,500	N/A	395	169
2056	127,490	N/A	624	229

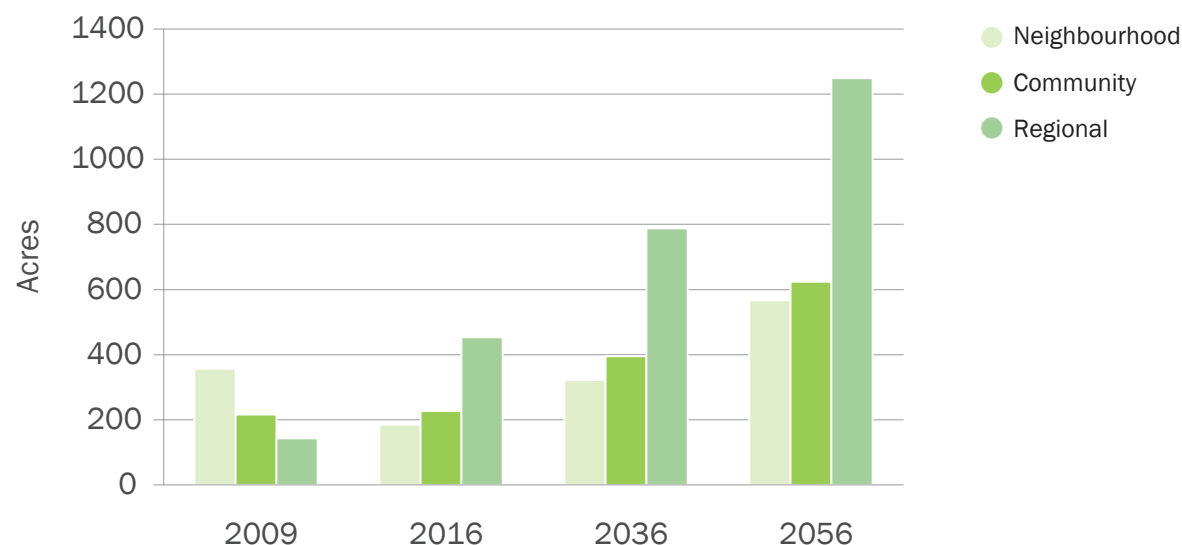
Table 5 • Regional Park Space – Existing and Needed				
Year	Population	Regional Park Space Existing (acres)	Regional Park Space Required (acres)	Regional Park Space Required for each Time Frame (acres)
2006	34,597	143	N/A	N/A
2016	46,300	N/A	453	310
2036	80,500	N/A	788	335
2056	127,490	N/A	1,249	461

Table 6 provides a summary of neighbourhood, community and regional park requirements in comparison with the current status (2009).

Year	Population	Neighbourhood (acres)	Community (acres)	Regional (acres)	Total (acres)
2009		356	216	143	715
2016	46,300	185	226	453	863
2036	80,500	322	395	788	1,504
2056	127,490	567	624	1,249	2,440

Figure 9 shows the existing condition in comparison to the numbers of acres required for neighbourhood, community and regional parks for the 2016, 2036, and 2056 time frames. Each bar in the figure represents the acres per 1,000 population for each park type multiplied by the projected population.

Figure 9 • Neighbourhood, Community and Regional Park Area Requirements



There are a total of 715 acres of park space in 2009 and in 2056, it is projected that 2,440 acres will be required. Consequently, 1,725 additional acres of neighbourhood, community and regional park space are required by the year 2056. This figure does not include the areas required for pathway/trail systems, which is approximately 10 acres for a 3 mile trail (5 km).

One of the objectives of this Master Plan is to ensure park spaces are distributed equally throughout the County. A recommendation in this report is to determine the population by region and subsequently the percentage of neighbourhood, community and regional park space required for each region.

4.3 • Open Space

Open Space contains different types of land and water including water bodies, wildlife corridors, environmentally significant lands, provincial parks, protected areas, and reserve lands compared to parks facilities, especially neighbourhood and community parks, which are targeted to human and more urban recreational activities.

Leased crown land requires the permission of the leaseholder for public access. Consequently, leased crown land is not considered open space in this analysis.

Although the definition of open space varies from municipality to municipality, the number of acres per 1,000 population is based on a review of open space achievements and standards in other communities. These include:

- 20 acres per 1,000 population – Ottawa County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan guideline¹⁰;
- 10.33 acres per 1,000 population – achieved by the City of Vancouver (not a standard)¹¹; and
- 14.8 acres of parkland/open space per 1000 population – Sports and Fitness Division of the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation standard¹².

There are few guidelines and standards available for open space. Based on the review above, a standard of 20 acres per 1,000 population is used to calculate the results in Table 7 below. This is the highest standard cited and is justified in terms of the provision of open space for human use and for wildlife habitat and open space for wildlife movement, viewsapes and buffering between land uses (Hamlets and rural).

Open space is calculated in terms of meeting the needs of the County's growing population for 2016, 2036, and 2056 and is in addition to areas estimated for neighbourhood, community, and regional parks.

Year	Rocky View Population	Open Space (acres)
2009	36,358	726
2016	46,300	926
2036	80,500	1,610
2056	127,490	2,548

¹⁰ Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission, 2006, *Ottawa County Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan*, <http://www.co.ottawa.mi.us/ParksVI/Parks/plan/cover.pdf> (accessed on Jan 25, 2011)

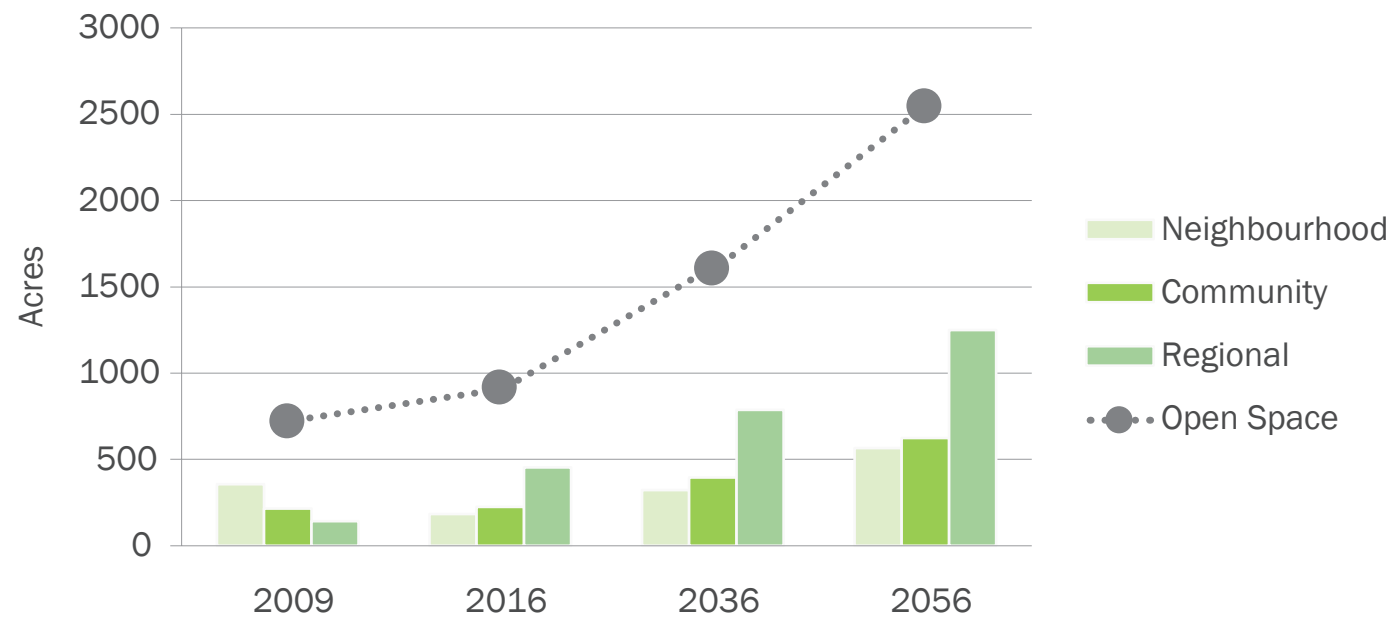
¹¹ Brightbill N. Powers E., Date Unknown, *Vancouver Canada: Lively and Diverse by Nature*, http://www.docstoc.com/docs/37929226/Vancouver_Canada (accessed on February 9, 2011)

¹² Welch R. Johnston R., Date Unknown, *Guidelines for Developing Public Recreation Facility Standards*, Ministry of Culture and Recreation, Sports and Fitness Division, <http://lin.ca/Files/1477/jk52.htm> (accessed on February 9, 2011)



Figure 10 shows the existing condition in comparison to the numbers of acres of open space required for 2016, 2036, and 2056.

Figure 10 • Neighborhood, Community, and Regional Park Area Requirements and Open Space Provided Per 1000 Population



4.4 • Pathways and Trails

Pathways and trails are described in Section 1 of this Master Plan. The current length of pathways/trails located within the County are:

- Multi-use regional pathways – 49 pathways for a total of 30.7 km;
- Multi-use improved trails – 20 pathways for a total of 10.06 km; and
- Multi-use rustic trails – 70 pathways for a total of 36.91 km.

The current pathway/trail length in the County is 78,303 m. Consequently, the total ratio of pathways in Rocky View County is $78.3 \text{ km} \div 36,358 \text{ (population)} = 2.15 \text{ m per person}$. The development of pathways/trails in the County can be measured against this ratio over time.

Equestrian trails are informally used in ranching areas by land owners. However, through the public participation program for this Master Plan, interest has been shown in creating equestrian trails (either single or combined purpose) for equestrian users.

Although standards are not being suggested for pathway/trail development, recommendations are included in this Master Plan to substantially increase the types and length of pathways/trails. The increase in the length of pathways/trails provided should be considered an achievement as opposed to meeting a standard.



“Children and youth who play outdoors after school take 2,000 more steps per day (a total of roughly two kilometers) than those who do not.”

Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute

4.5 • Land Acquisition

In order to provide a land base for parks, open space and pathways/trail facilitation and connectivity, a land acquisition strategy is required and there are many alternatives to outright purchase. A land acquisition strategy should consider:

- The areas identified for parks and open spaces;
- Lands noted in the concepts presented in Chapter 5;
- Future park, open space and pathway/trails at the time of subdivision;
- Financial commitment to balanced park, open space, and pathway/trail development;
- General policies for land development;
- Specific lands that are now recognized that should be purchased, i.e., access points, staging areas, and key linkages;
- Buffering to mitigate encroachment and enhance a recreational, educational, or interpretive function; and
- The tools for acquiring land described below.

Implementing the Master Plan will require additional tools to secure land for open space as defined by the County. As an alternative to purchasing land, there are a number of tools the County has at its disposal to acquire land or protect land for conservation purposes. They are:

- Municipal and Environmental Reserves through the subdivision process;
- Public utility lots created as a result of drainage easements, storm ponds, etc.;
- Land purchase for County facilities;
- Conservation easements; and
- Donations and land swaps.

There are more tools available to the County to serve the purposes of pathway/trail development, access for environmental education or protection of wildlife habitat. Many of these tools were identified by Western Sky Land Trust¹³ with the purpose of protecting lands for conservation purposes. They include:

Land sale – purchase of lands for conservation purposes;

Conservation purchase – a buyer purchases land at fair market value and pursues options related to donation, applying a conservation easement and reselling with the easement in place;

Discounted sale – the landowner sells a conservation easement or property at less than full market value and donates the remaining value;

Conservation agreement – a specified term whereby the grantor agrees to undertake certain activities on a property and the recipient commits some capital investment, annual payment, or annual activity that would allow the grantor to implement the terms of the agreement;

Gifts of cash, securities, real estate, or life insurance – a tax receipt would be issued for the full amount of the gift;

Including a recipient in a will; and

Life income gift – a donation without giving up an income-producing asset. Charitable Remainder Trusts and Charitable Gift Annuities are another option - may offer more income than is currently received and, in some cases, a tax receipt is issued.

The strategic use of these many tools will substantially enhance the amount of land available for parks and open space and/or natural area preservation.

¹³ Western Sky Land Trust, *The Land Conservation Toolbox*, <http://www.westernskylandtrust.ca/index.php?page=landtrust/toolbox.php> (accessed on February 02, 2011)



“I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.”

– Albert Einstein



4.6 • Recommendations

The following recommendations will enable the County to secure land and provide public access for wildlife viewing, natural area appreciation, environmental education, and cultural and heritage appreciation.

1. Encourage a financial commitment to balanced park, open space, and pathway/trail development and maintenance;
2. Investigate other non County funding options for park, open space, and pathway/trail development;
3. Investigate the development of a policy for developer cost sharing of park, open space and pathway/trail maintenance;
4. Development of new park types for hamlets;
5. Explore new ways to fund related buildings and building maintenance;
6. Prioritize and then engage community groups in each region to raise funds for parks, open space, and pathway/trail developments proposed in the Master Plan;
7. Develop a land acquisition policy to support the Master Plan;
8. Continue to collaborate with municipalities and school divisions in regard to regional open space and amenities and the preservation of natural features and corridors, i.e., the Town of Cochrane to develop pathway/trail and bridge connection to connect Cochrane to Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park and with the MD of Bighorn in developing trails in the West Jumping Pound and Highway 40 areas;

9. Collaborate with agencies such as the Western Irrigation District to develop access to irrigation canal right of ways for pathway/trail development; the Nose Creek Watershed and Trout Unlimited Canada to develop interpretive signage for Nose Creek; and the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary to promote Weed Lake and its environs as a Conservation Area;
10. Collaborate with adjacent municipalities to develop signage, share best practices and encourage the seamless connectivity of parks, open space, and pathways/trails;
11. Encourage utility companies to allow public access, via agreement with the County, on their lands where feasible and integrate parks, open space, and pathway/trail development into easements and right of ways for roads and utilities, i.e., stormwater management features and irrigation canals; and
12. Partner with First Nations and large land owners in areas mutually beneficial in terms of parks, open space, and pathway/trail development.



CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 5.1 • County Wide Constraints and Opportunities
- 5.2 • Region 1 – Elbow River Ranch Lands
- 5.3 • Region 2 – Grand Valley Foothills
- 5.4 • Region 3 – Nose Creek Passage
- 5.5 • Region 4 – Meadowlark Prairie
- 5.6 • Region 5 – Bow River Plains

5 • Rocky View County Regional Analysis

Within Rocky View County there are a range of diverse landscapes, each with its own unique character and identity as well as existing parks and open spaces, cultural centres, and natural environments.

For the purposes of this Master Plan, Rocky View County has been divided into five regions (Figure 11). Each region has been identified to reflect the local cultural landscape and natural features for that region. The boundaries of each region were created with consideration given to the recreation district boundaries and geographic realities.

The five regions are:

- Region 1 – Elbow River Ranch Lands;
- Region 2 – Grand Valley Foothills;
- Region 3 – Nose Creek Passage;
- Region 4 – Meadowlark Prairie; and
- Region 5 – Bow River Plains.

This chapter includes an overview of the County in terms of the constraints and opportunities before discussing a concept for each region in the following sections.

5.1 • County Wide Constraints and Opportunities

County wide constraints and opportunities, as outlined below, were assessed and then expanded following public input obtained at three open houses:

Constraints	Opportunities
Transportation and utility corridors as approvals and agreements are required to facilitate park and open space development and access	The Bow and Elbow Rivers for river related activities such as canoeing, kayaking and fly fishing tours
Crossing natural features such as the Bow and Elbow Rivers	The development of access across the Calgary Greenway for County resident access to Calgary
Crossing existing infrastructure such as roads, highways and railways	The development of the Trans Canada Trail and the potential for lateral connections
Biophysical resources associated with private land are not accessible to the public and public access may not be desirable in every circumstance	The identification of County cemeteries as important cultural resources
Limited access points along the Bow River for launching non motorized boats and angling access	Utility corridors, irrigation canals and abandoned railway right of ways used for pathway/trail linkages
Routing of the Trans Canada Trail is conceptual and specific routing has not been determined	Natural areas used for park, open space and pathway/trails as well as environmental education and interpretation opportunities
Not all Municipal Reserve parcels are located where they can be useful in terms of configuration, size, location, etc.	Pathways/trails that connect existing and proposed parks and open spaces
The County operates and maintains over 600 parcels of land	Creation and/or revision of existing financial models / policies to secure ongoing funding for current and future pathway and trail maintenance

COUNTY WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are County wide recommendations regarding parks and open space, pathways/trails, cultural resources, river access, and niche markets. Specific recommendations are included at the end of each of the regions. These recommendations were developed following a summary of public input.

Parks and Open Space Recommendations

1. Consider parks and open space as a transition area between urban and agricultural areas;
2. Strategically develop facilities where people live to reduce the need and reliance on vehicles;
3. Where possible, link parks and open spaces with greenways on a regional scale;

4. Include amenities in open spaces such as benches, lighting, garbage bins ;
5. Develop standards to ensure parks, open space and pathway/trail development keeps pace with residential, commercial, and industrial development;
6. Consider the security, safety and well being of the users, and the carrying capacity related to developed park, open space, and pathways/trail facilities utilizing Crime Prevention through Environmental Design's three basic strategies – natural access control, natural surveillance, and territorial reinforcement;
7. Encourage the expansion of community centres to include passive and active recreational facilities, a venue for agricultural/horticultural fairs; and social/cultural spaces for programming connected via regional pathways;
8. Encourage the use of fuel reduction strategies in areas adjacent to parks and open spaces to reduce the threat of wildfire via Sustainable Resource's FireSmart program;
9. Consider generational and cultural needs and life balance in the planning and development of parks and open space;
10. Incorporate parks, open spaces adjacent to rivers and river valleys, creeks and creek valleys, and other water bodies and escarpments; and
11. Identify and develop destination off-leash areas.

Pathways and Trails Recommendations

1. Where possible, integrate pathway/trail development with escarpments, creek valleys, river valleys, irrigation canals, lakes, wetlands and reservoirs;
2. Assess potential mechanisms for the dedication of greenways (natural areas with native plant communities preferred) for new subdivisions to ensure future pathway/trail connectivity;
3. Update current standards for pathway/trail development that include pathway/trail width, materials, construction methods, and associated pathway/trail amenities such as signage, benches, garbage bins, and bicycle leaning posts;
4. Develop pathways/trails within undeveloped road allowances and investigate a means of incorporating pathways/trails within future road right of ways in developed areas;
5. Implement a comprehensive pathway/trail system that connects existing pathways/trails, considers where pathways/trails are needed most, and monitor implementation to determine where additional facilities or amenities are required;

6. Where possible, connect regional trails to hamlets and pathway/trail networks in Calgary, Cochrane, Kathryn, Airdrie, Crossfield, Irricana, Beiseker, and the Town of Chestermere;
7. Following a biophysical analysis to ensure wildlife/wildlife corridors are not negatively impacted, develop pathways/trails within protected and connected remnants of native grassland and other natural areas;
8. Plan, prioritize, and develop pathways/trails in sequence with Community Development Strategies, i.e., connect communities; connect special places; and expand on the existing system first; and
9. Support the partnership between Calgary, Airdrie and Alberta TrailNet who are currently reviewing the construction of a functional commuter trail/Trans Canada Trail between Airdrie and Calgary.

Cultural Resource Recommendations

1. Identify significant historic resources in the County that should be protected, develop an interpretive program and signage, and incorporate these resources into parks and open space;
2. Encourage the creation of spaces for social gathering and performing arts;
3. Encourage more festivals; and
4. Develop an interpretive/educational program that provides information about ecologically sensitive areas, and water.

River Access Recommendations

1. Establish designated river access points to allow access for recreational paddlers and fisherman;
2. Establish portages around dams and other river channel structures to support non motorized recreational use of the Bow and Elbow Rivers;
3. Develop a policy to allow emergency/rescue watercraft that restricts or controls jet boats and other powered water craft use on the Elbow and Bow Rivers, and the Bearspaw Reservoir;
4. Provide marked road access to accessible river access sites;

5. Identify river segments according to access locations and encourage the provision of parking, washrooms, and an emergency telephone; and
6. Establish channel side signage identifying river access points and man-made hazards.

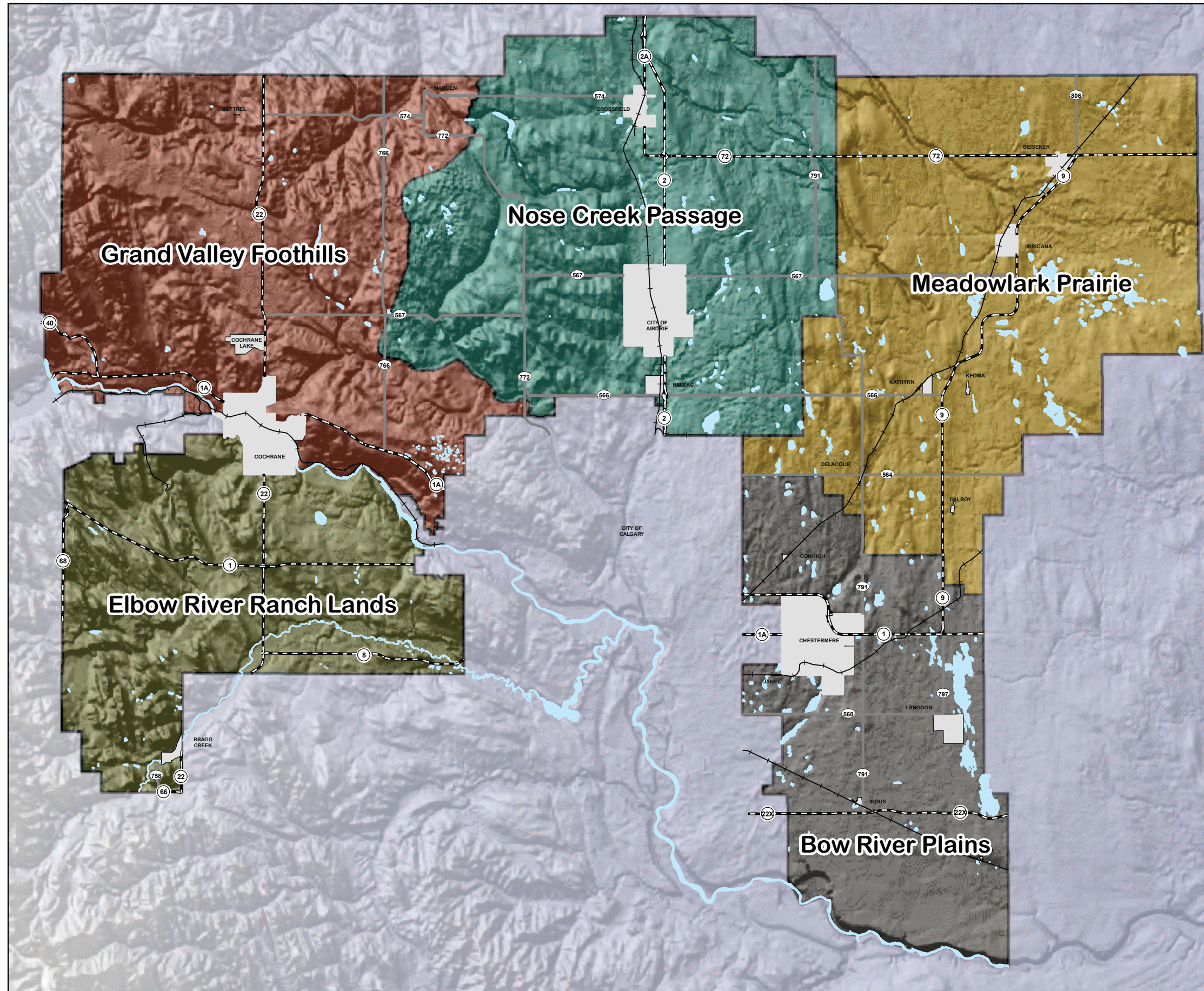
Niche Market Recommendations

1. Identify niche markets associated with Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park as an important destination for cycling, hiking, interpretive programming and river access;
2. Consider integrating niche market opportunities into the proposed Rocky View County Campus Master Site Development Plan at East Balzac;
3. Study the potential for and the feasibility of cycling lanes on County roads, and then develop cycling routes and staging areas throughout the County, i.e., Grand Valley Road and Highway 1A, and Highway 8 and 22 to Bragg Creek;
4. Promote driving routes and related points of interest, i.e., from Calgary to Drumheller along Highway 9 and Cowboy Trail; and
5. Develop a special event policy for events and a permitting system for controlling events on County Roads and use the opportunity to provide safety literature for cycling groups.

Constraints and opportunities that are specific to each region are discussed in the following sections. Proposed indoor and outdoor recreational facilities as described in the recreational district master plans are presented as are the results of the public engagement related to this Master Plan. The Amenity Study: Phase 1¹⁴ that influence the direction of this plan are included as well. Finally a concept plan that describes the parks and open space, pathways and trails, cultural sites, niche markets, and staging areas for each region is presented.

¹⁴ Nichols Applied Management, Management and Economic Consultants, 2009, *Rocky View Amenity Study: Phase I*, Rocky View County

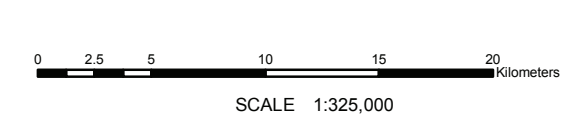
Figure 11 • Geographic Regions



- Railway Line
- Primary Highway
- Secondary Highway

Geographic Region

- Bow River Plains
- Elbow River Ranch Lands
- Grand Valley Foothills
- Meadowlark Prairie
- Nose Creek Passage



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5.2 • Region 1 – Elbow River Ranch Lands

The Elbow River Ranch Lands (Figure 12), located in the western portion of the County, includes the Hamlet of Bragg Creek and the communities of Elbow Valley and Springbank.

This region is located primarily within the Foothills Parkland Subregion and also contains fringes of the Montane subregion. The landscape is gently rolling to hilly topography and is typical with a mix of native vegetation, cultivation, and grazing land. Of the three Parkland subregions, the Foothills Parkland Natural Subregion has the highest proportional area of undisturbed natural areas due to the shorter growing season and related decreased cultivation. The grasslands of this region contain a diverse mixture of forbs and grass species and are found on drier sites while Balsam Poplar and Beaked Willow shrublands grow on the cooler northerly slopes and low-lying moist areas. Aspen is the dominant deciduous species in the upland forests. Both the Aspen and Balsam Poplar forests are characterized by an understory community of Snowberry, Prickly Rose, Chokecherry, and Saskatoon.

Rivers with outwash terraces and numerous permanent streams cut across the subregion which is part of the South Saskatchewan River system.

The characteristics of the Montane subregion contain high foothills, mountains and deep valleys. Shrub communities grow only in the most protected places. Grasslands and mixed wood forests grow at lower elevations and warmer aspects. Coniferous forests are the dominant community and contain species such as Lodgepole Pine, Limber Pine, White Spruce, and Douglas Fir. Under story plant communities contain grasses, sedges, juniper, and snowberry.

Parks and open space influences include the Bow and Elbow River corridors, Bragg Creek Provincial Park, a portion of Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park on the south side of the Bow River, Bearspaw Legacy Park, Clearwater Park on the Elbow River (owned by the City of Calgary), and Springbank Park for All Seasons. The routing of the Trans Canada Trail to Kananaskis Country, the Centennial Trail, and the Banded Peak trail within the Highway 22 right of way are significant pathway/trail influences.



“Walking is the natural recreation for a man who desires not absolutely to suppress his intellect but to turn it out to play for a season.”

– Leslie Stephen

Constraints	Opportunities
Lack of linkages across the Bow River to the north	Potential for creating public access to crown land
Lack of access to the Bow and Elbow Rivers for canoe/kayaking	The identification of staging areas and niche markets
Access to leased crown land	Looping opportunities associated with the Trans Canada Trail – from Calgary north of the Bow River to Cochrane and south to Highway 8 and then Calgary
	Incorporating Jumping Pound Hall into the parks, open space and pathway/trail system
	Possible relationship between Stoney and Tsuu T’ina lands and Master Plan
	Pathway connection from Valley Ridge to and along the south side of Bearspaw Reservoir and further connections to the west
	Access to Bearspaw Reservoir
	Integration of the Trans Canada Trail within the expanded right of way planned in association with the twinning of Highway 8

RECREATION DISTRICT AND PUBLIC INPUT

Rocky View West Recreation District Recreation Master Plan 2006–2010¹⁵

- North Springbank – future infrastructure amenities include 30 acres for a regional centre; pathways and trails; recreation and/or multipurpose centre; indoor amenities such as a theatre, banquet hall, industrial kitchen, gymnasium, wall climbing, fitness centre, meeting rooms, hockey rinks, curling rinks, and indoor soccer facilities; outdoor amenities such as sports fields, equestrian trails, and a water park and tennis facilities;
- Central Springbank – future infrastructure amenities include additional municipal reserve; pathways and trails; community hall – meeting rooms, banquet room, industrial kitchen; skateboard park; splash park;
- Highway 8 – future Infrastructure amenities include additional municipal reserves; fee simple acquisitions; environmental reserves, and pathways and trails; and
- Elbow Valley, Jumping Pound and Bragg Creek – future infrastructure amenities include additional municipal reserves, and additional pathways/trails.

Ranch Lands Recreation District Recreation Master Plan 2007–2011¹⁶

- Extension and upgrades to existing facilities.

Public Input Specific to this Region

- Develop a pathway/trail within the Springbank Creek drainage basin;
- Construct a pathway along Springbank Road from Calgary to Highway 22X for biking and hiking;
- Develop pathways between residential neighbourhoods north and south of the Springbank Community Centre;
- Develop a park across on the south side of the river across the river from Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park;
- Establish a staging area at Highway 22x and Highway 8 intersection;
- Develop a pathway from the suggested focus area for community development from the south to Springbank Park for All Seasons to and across the #1 Highway (possible pedestrian overpass) to Cochrane;
- Develop an alternative Trans Canada Trail connection from Bragg Creek in a north easterly direction across crown land, further north and then west to Kananaskis Country;

¹⁵ Rocky View West Recreation District, 2007, *Recreation Master Plan 2006–2010*, Rocky View County

¹⁶ Ranch Lands Recreation District, 2007, *Recreation Master Plan 2007–2011*, Rocky View County

- Secure leased Crown lands in this region for outdoor recreational activities;
- Linkages south from Bragg Creek to Highway 22 – one along Highway 22X – another set 1 mile west and parallel to Highway 22X;
- TCT along West Bragg Creek Road to Kananaskis Country;
- Secure lands near Bragg Creek for open space and pathways/trails; and
- Comments received about the old Wintergreen ski hill and potential partnering opportunities.

AMENITY STUDY: PHASE ONE ¹⁷

Harmony

- Stage 1 provides a recreational lake, golf course, community plaza, multiuse community facility, open air museum, amphitheatre, parks, an art and cultural building, play fields, an outdoor rink, trail network, school site, and historical/cultural interpretation facilities; and
- Future phases will require additional schools with joint use community space, churches, a library, and a recycling composting facility.

Springbank

- Most of the recommended amenity needs have been met or have been exceeded;
- Focus should be on outdoor recreational amenities, connecting trails, and creating existing spaces as gathering spaces within the community for expanded community programs and services; and
- Mid- to long-term development should consider providing amenities to service a growing population.

Bragg Creek

- Existing amenities include a K-8 school, with a gymnasium and climbing wall, a community hall and senior's centre, an outdoor skating rink, tennis courts, playfields and two stages; and
- Future growth would require a focus on outdoor recreational amenities and trail connections.

¹⁷ Nichols Applied Management, Management and Economic Consultants, 2009, *Rocky View Amenity Study: Phase I*, Rocky View County

ELBOW VALLEY RANCH LANDS CONCEPT PLAN

A description of proposed parks and open space, pathways/trails, cultural centres, and niche staging areas is provided below.

Parks and Open Space

- Harmony is identified as a suggested focus area for community development and is allocated 90 acres of park space; and
- Springbank and Bragg Creek are identified as suggested areas for community development and are allocated 45 acres of park space.

Pathways and Trails

- The Trans Canada Trail is proposed from Cochrane to the Jumping Pound Community Hall and onward to Bragg Creek. At this point the alignment may need to negotiate the terrain around the north and west boundaries of Tsuu T'ina Reserve to connect with an existing pathway/trail associated with the TransAlta pipeline right of way to Bragg Creek. The Trans Canada Trail follows West Bragg Creek Road to the Tom Snow Trail through Kananaskis Country;
- The Trans Canada Trail is proposed to create a looping opportunity west from Calgary along Highway 8 to the intersection of Highway 22 connecting to the Trans Canada Trail described above;
- A pathway is proposed from Cochrane along the south side of the Bow River to Range Road 35 and then south to Harmony; and
- A variety of cycling routes have been proposed within the Springbank area.

Significant Cultural Sites

- Existing cultural sites include Springbank Park for All Seasons, Springbank Heritage Club, and Bragg Creek Centre.

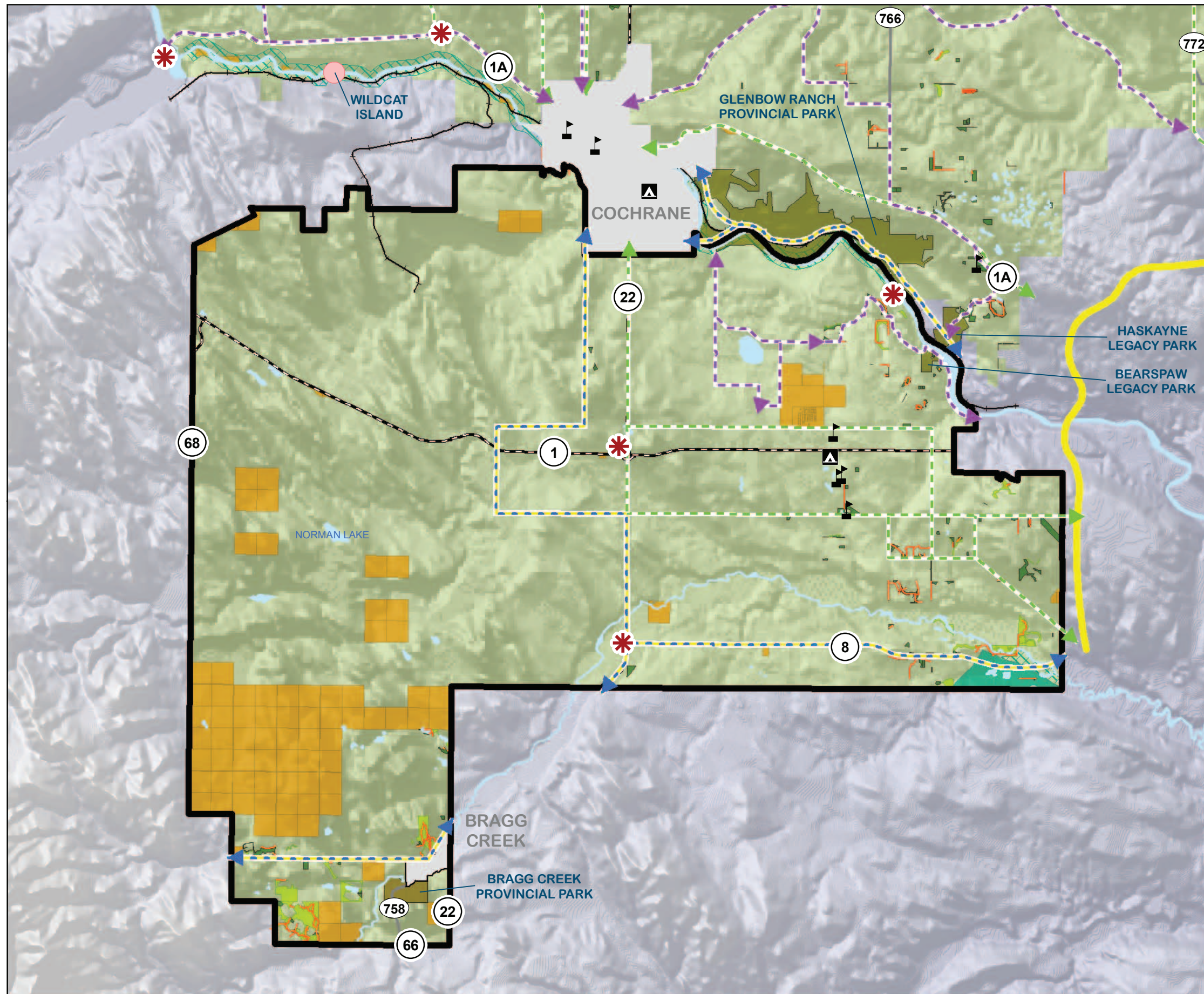
Proposed Staging Areas

- Staging areas are identified at Springbank Park for All Seasons and at the intersection of Highway 22 and Highway 8; west of Bragg Creek at Township road 232; at the intersection of Highways 1 and 22; and on Springbank Heights Road (near the Bow River).

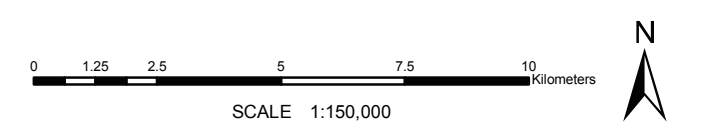
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expand on the regional plan in more detail to identify and evaluate existing and proposed parks, open spaces, and pathways/trails for Elbow River Ranch Lands;
2. Investigate land acquisition on the south side of the Bow River opposite Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park for parks and open space purposes; and
3. Identify opportunities to convert County owned land to a day use area along the Bow River to access the Bow River/Bearspaw Reservoir.

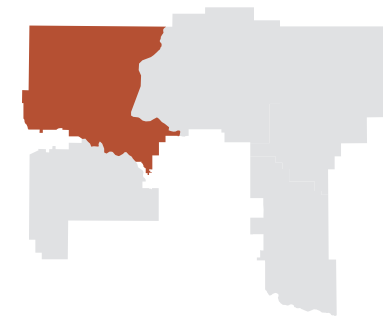
Figure 12 • Elbow River Ranchlands



- Proposed Staging Area
- Campground
- School
- Conceptual Bicycle Route
- Conceptual Pathway
- Calgary Greenway
- Proposed Trans Canada Trail
- Existing Pathway/Trail
- Primary Highway
- Secondary Highway
- Railway Line
- Geographic Region
- Provincial/Calgary Park
- Environmental Reserve
- Municipal Reserve
- Conservation Area
- Environmentally Significant Area
- Crown Land
- Provincial Natural Land
- Proposed Environmentally Significant Area



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5.3 • Region 2 – Grand Valley Foothills

The Grand Valley Foothills includes the Hamlets of Madden, Cochrane Lakes, and Bottrel, and the Town of Cochrane (Figure 13).

The Grand Valley Foothills is situated in the Lower Foothills Subregion of the Foothills Natural Region. This area is often cooler and receives more moisture than the Grasslands. Topography is variable from west to east ranging from steeper slopes and ridges to gentle, rolling hills and plateaus.

Vegetation in this area is diverse and transitions from the forested higher elevations on the western fringes to agricultural use and ranching on the lower eastern side. Coniferous forests flank the Rocky Mountains while mixed wood forests are more prevalent in the lower elevations. Plant communities are dominated by species such as Aspen, Lodgepole Pine, White Spruce, and Balsam Poplar.

Soil conditions vary across the region and vary with elevation and proximity to the mountains. In the western zones surficial materials such as boulders, gravel, sand, and clay are present as a blanket over the bedrock while in the more easterly areas, organic deposits are found in coulees and valleys.

Parks and open space influences include the Bow River Valley, significant areas of crown land (to the west), Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park, Big Hill Springs Provincial Park, Haskayne Legacy Park, and Wildcat Island Habitat Area, and Perennoud Wildlife Habitat Area, which is a unique natural area donated by George Emil Perrenoud to Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. There is also a canoe segment from a point immediately downstream of the TransAlta Hydroelectric Dam (Ghost Reservoir) to an access point in Calgary near Bears paw Dam Road.

“It is by riding a bicycle that you learn the contours of a country best, since you have to sweat up the hills and coast down them. Thus you remember them as they actually are, while in a motor car only a high hill impresses you, and you have no such accurate remembrance of country you have driven through as you gain by riding a bicycle.”

– Ernest Hemingway



RECREATION DISTRICT AND PUBLIC INPUT

Madden Recreation District Recreation Master Plan 2006–2010¹⁸

- Future needs include the maintenance of current facilities, upgrading the Community Hall’s septic field, and the construction of cycling and walking pathway/trails.

Bearspaw Glendale Recreation District Recreation Master Plan 2008–2012¹⁹

- Short-Term – connected trails; walking paths and bike paths; fitness facility upgrading and expansion of existing facilities; sports fields; social venues i.e., community halls; Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park pathway access; and
- Long-Term Input – all-season multi-use field house; indoor ice rink; swimming pool (indoor or outdoor); tennis courts; curling rink; land parcels of a size suitable for the facilities noted above or an aggregation thereof.

Ranch Lands Recreation District Recreation Master Plan 2007–2011²⁰

- Extensions and upgrades to existing facilities (completed).

Public Input Specific to this Region

- Develop a perimeter pathway/trail along the break of slope in Haskayne Legacy Park and Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park;
- Develop hiking/day use areas to the west of Cochrane;
- Develop pathways from Glenbow Crossing to Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park; from Crossfield to Madden and along Highway 22 to Cochrane, and southwest to Bearspaw from a loop west of Airdrie;
- Identify and protect Big Hill Springs Creek and the creek valley north of Big Hill Springs Provincial Park as a conservation area; and
- Secure the road allowance to Big Hill Springs Provincial Park for public access.

Constraints	Opportunities
Access across the Bow River from Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park to Cochrane	Public access to Crown land to the west
Trans Canada Trail alignment interactions with the CPR railway along the north side of the Bow River between Calgary and Cochrane	Bow River and river valley as a protected natural area Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park and Haskayne Lands provide opportunities to facilitate the Trans Canada Trail between Calgary and Cochrane
Major transportation corridors	Open space associated with Ghost and Bearspaw Reservoirs Views of the mountains – view sheds and viewpoints
Lack of access to the Bow River for canoe/kayaking between segments and limited access for portaging around the Bearspaw Dam to continue downstream	Development of cycling loops – Grand Valley and Cochrane Lake Pathway linkages emanating from Big Hill Springs to Cochrane, Bow Valley Provincial Park and West Nose Creek Valley
Integration of Perrenoud Wildlife Habitat Area and Wildcat Island – distances between sites and Wildcat Island is water access only	Expand on-road cycling routes (within a highway right of ways) as exists in the Cochrane Lake area The Cowboy Trail (Highway 22) as a significant corridor within the County Connect Bearspaw Village with Haskayne Legacy Park Dedicated bike lane identified between Cochrane Lake and Town of Cochrane along Range Road 43
Crown land leases inhibit public access as the public must first ask for permission	

¹⁸ Madden Recreation District, 2006, *Recreation Master Plan 2006–2010*, Rocky View County

¹⁹ Bearspaw Glendale Recreation District, 2008, *Recreation Master Plan 2008–2012*, Rocky View County

²⁰ Ranch Lands Recreation District, 2007, *Recreation Master Plan 2007–2011*, Rocky View County

AMENITY STUDY: PHASE 1²¹**Cochrane Lake**

- Space and facilities required for the majority of recommended amenities for suggested focus area for community development – large facilities such as arenas should be based on a regional demand and consider expansion of multi-use facilities in Cochrane.

Bearspaw

- Existing amenities includes a gymnasium, two community centres, an historic site, a stage, a K-8 school, a playfield, baseball diamonds, six playgrounds, two golf courses, and a site for recycling;
- A regional scale multi use facility is proposed – immediate development should focus on increasing outdoor amenity space, park spaces, and pathway connections to enhance community hubs; and
- Development should consider providing space for amenities to service the Bearspaw area – schools, indoor recreational facilities, permanent recycling facility for concentrated areas.

GRAND VALLEY FOOTHILLS CONCEPT PLAN

A description of proposed parks and open space, pathways/trails, cultural centres, and niche staging areas is provided below.

Pathways and Trails

- A new section of the Trans Canada Trail is proposed from Calgary along the north side of the Bow River to Haskayne Legacy Park and Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park, and then across the Bow River via a pedestrian bridge to Cochrane;
- Staging areas are identified at the intersections of Highway 1A and Grand Valley Road;
- A pathway follows Big Hill Springs Road from Range Road 34 to Highway 22;
- A pathway starts from the City of Calgary at Nose Creek Parkway and follows Nose Creek to Camden Lane (Township Road 264) and continues west to Big Hill Creek and follows Big Hill Creek to Cochrane (along an easement currently leased to others). A branch of this pathway follows Big Hill Creek to Big Hill Springs Provincial Park and continues north to Big Hill Springs Road;
- A pathway emanates from Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park and generally follows Range Road 32/Lochend Road as well as Glendale road in a northerly direction and intersects with the pathway described above;

- Pathways are proposed from Highway 1A that follow Beupre Creek Road, Wildcat Hills Road/Weedon Trail, and Range Roads 44 and 43 back to Highway 1A;
- A pathway follows Highway 1A from the Ghost River Reservoir to the town of Cochrane;
- Recognizing quiet paved roadways and beautiful vistas within this region, there are a variety of cycling routes proposed; and
- A cycling route is proposed from Cochrane along Highway 1A to the western boundary of Rocky View County, potentially connecting to Canmore.

Significant Cultural Sites

- Bottrel General Store, the Bottrel Cemetery, and Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park.

Proposed Staging Areas

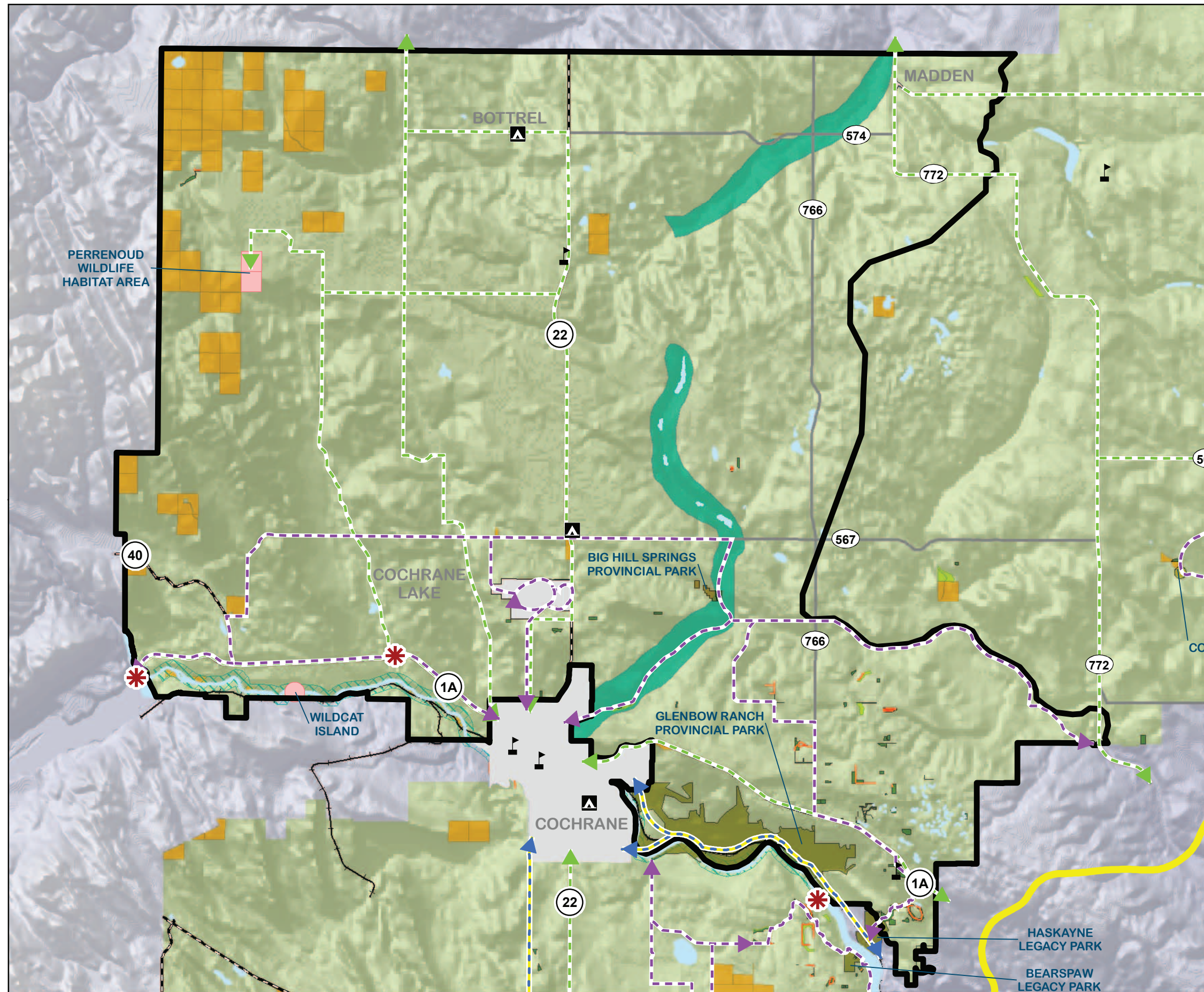
- Staging area is proposed at the intersections of Highway 1A and Grand Valley Road;
- A canoe segment is identified from the Ghost Reservoir via a portage around the Ghost Dam and continuing along the Bow River to an access point at Cochrane; and
- Another canoe segment is from the Cochrane access to Bearspaw Reservoir, where a portage is required around Bearspaw Dam to continue downstream to Calgary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

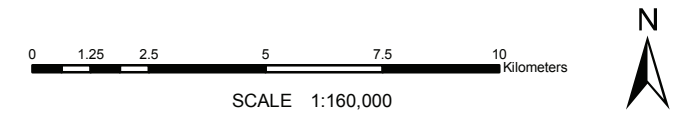
1. Expand on the regional plan in more detail to identify and evaluate existing and proposed parks, open spaces, and pathways/trails for the Grand Valley Foothills Region;
2. Develop a land use concept for land uses adjacent to Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park; and
3. Encourage the development of the Trans Canada Trail from Calgary along the north side of the Bow River to Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park and Cochrane.

²¹ Nichols Applied Management, Management and Economic Consultants, 2009, *Rocky View Amenity Study: Phase I*, Rocky View County

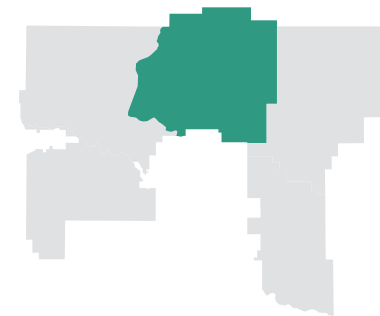
Figure 13 • Grand Valley Foothills



- Proposed Staging Area
- Campground
- School
- Conceptual Bicycle Route
- Conceptual Pathway
- Calgary Greenway
- Proposed Trans Canada Trail
- Existing Pathway/Trail
- Primary Highway
- Secondary Highway
- Railway Line
- Geographic Region
- Provincial/Calgary Park
- Environmental Reserve
- Municipal Reserve
- Conservation Area
- Provincial Natural Land
- Environmentally Significant Area
- Crown Land
- Proposed Environmentally Significant Area



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5.4 • Region 3 – Nose Creek Passage

The Nose Creek Passage Region is in the north central area of the County and includes the hamlet of Balzac, the Town of Crossfield, and the City of Airdrie (Figure 14).

The Nose Creek Passage falls within the Central Parkland and Foothills Fescue Natural Regions, generally a more extensively cultivated part of the prairies. Remnants of native vegetation remain in the valleys and coulees of these hummocky uplands and glacial till plains. Remaining native vegetation thrives in poorer soils or rough terrain that has not been cultivated.

The Central Parkland is typified by forests of Aspen and Balsam Poplar with an understory community of Snowberry, Prickly Rose, Chokecherry, and Saskatoon. Numerous permanent wetlands and lakes are found throughout and contain a diverse community of birds and amphibians.

Influences include the alignment of the Trans Canada Trail from Irricana through Airdrie and south to Calgary, Dewitt's Pond and Airdrie Pond Conservation Sites, and the Calgary Greenway. The proposed future County administrative office – Rocky View County Municipal Campus – may house a wide variety of public uses including a municipal hall and maintenance facility, an emergency services centre (currently under construction), recycling facilities, outdoor plaza, fitness trails, athletic fields, and a recreation centre. Internal and external pedestrian pathway/trail connections are also being considered. There are two conservation sites – Dewitt's Pond and Airdrie Pond Conservation Sites.



“Lack of activity destroys the good condition of every human being, while movement and methodical physical exercise save it and preserve it.”
– Plato

Constraints	Opportunities
Major transportation corridors – Highway 2 and a railway right of way present obstacles to pathways/trails following the alignment of Nose Creek	Trans Canada Trail connections through Airdrie via Airdrie’s trail system and south to Nose Creek Parkway in Calgary
Trans Canada Trail alignment options are limited to following highway right of ways (lacks a quality experience) and/or undeveloped road allowances	Potential for a pathway alignment along Big Hill Springs Road to Highway 22 and Cochrane
Lack of a defined alignment of the Trans Canada Trail between the Nose Creek Passage and Calgary’s northern corporate limits	Access for the Trans Canada Trail under Stoney Trail adjacent to Nose Creek
Linear and physical intrusions to a meandering Nose Creek and the desire to align pathways and trails along its length	Pathways/trails within AltaLink corridors
	High Plains Conceptual Scheme provides opportunities for pathway/trail connections
	The proposed Rocky View County Campus is planned to include administrative and operations headquarters and recreational facilities which would make the development an important cultural centre within the County
	Pathway connection potential from Airdrie to Crossfield and further north
	Trans Canada Trail connection from Irricana to Airdrie along Highway 567
	Dewitt’s Pond Conservation site as a destination for fishing, picnicking, pathways/trails
	The Airdrie and District Agricultural Society Agricultural Centre as a cultural centre within the County

RECREATION DISTRICT AND PUBLIC INPUT

Crossfield Recreation District Recreation Master Plan 2008–2012²²

- Outdoor pool, new ball diamond, upgrade and expand current facilities, a campground, a new curling rink, an historical archive and exhibit facility, upgrade and expand pathways, expand Murdock Park with an enhanced soccer pitch.

Rocky View Central Recreation District Recreation Master Plan 2009–2013²³

- Future needs – 20 to 30 acres of Municipal Reserve within the East Balzac area for a future multi-purpose recreation facility which may include indoor soccer, outdoor sports fields and meeting rooms; indoor hockey arena (completed);
- Regional agricultural facility; and
- Interconnected regional and local pathways; equestrian pathways; centralized community centres; gym facilities; outdoor rinks; community parks; nature reserves and/or natural open spaces.

Public Input Specific to this Region

- Locate pathways west of Airdrie where the population can support pathway/trail development;
- Construct outdoor hockey rinks in Balzac;
- Define and protect the ecological corridor and wetland east of Airdrie; and
- Build pathways/trails along drainage courses, e.g., Nose Creek.

AMENITY STUDY: PHASE 1²⁴

East Balzac

- Short-term – needs would be met with the construction of a new County Campus, which would include an emergency services centre and recommended amenities for a focus area for community development; and
- A regional approach is required for the coordination of the future development of large scale amenities.

²² Crossfield Recreation District, 2008, *Recreation Master Plan 2008–2012*, Rocky View County

²³ Rocky View Central Recreation District, 2009, *Recreation Master Plan 2009–2013*, Rocky View County

²⁴ Nichols Applied Management, Management and Economic Consultants, 2009, *Rocky View Amenity Study: Phase I*, Rocky View County

NOSE CREEK PASSAGE CONCEPT PLAN

A description of proposed parks and open space, pathways/trails, cultural centres, and niche staging areas is provided below.

Parks and Open Space

- An outdoor skating rink in the Balzac area.

Pathways and Trails

- The Trans Canada Trail is proposed along Highway 567 to Airdrie, through Airdrie and then south to Calgary;
- A proposed conceptual greenway known as the Nose Creek Greenway has been identified connecting Calgary to Airdrie and further north.
- A pathway loop west of Airdrie that follows Big Hill Springs Road to an unnamed creek valley, along the creek valley and then south across Big Hill Springs Road to Dewitt's Pond Conservation site and follows a creek valley back to Airdrie; and
- A pathway along Highway 566 to and from the new Rocky View County Municipal Campus east to the Balzac Mall, and the other developments in the east Balzac area.

Significant Cultural Sites

- There is one existing cultural site in this region – the Balzac Church (west of Highway 2);
- As a cultural centre, the proposed County Campus may include administrative headquarters as well as proposed recreational facilities, a library and a performing arts facility;
- The Airdrie and District Agricultural Society site west of Airdrie on Big Hill Springs Road; and
- Alberta's only stage coach robbery location.

Staging Areas

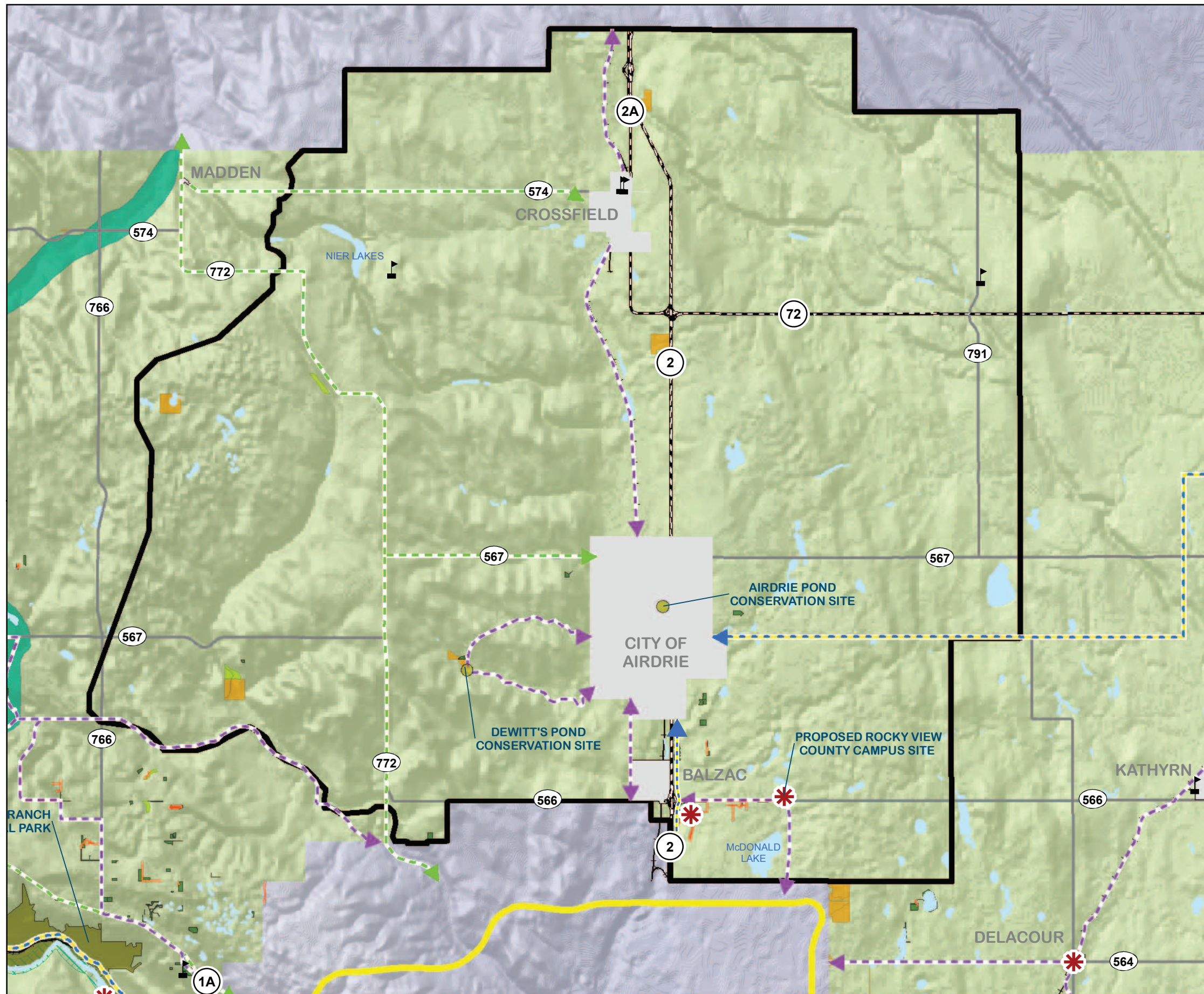
- Proposed Rocky View County Municipal Campus and CrossIron Mills.



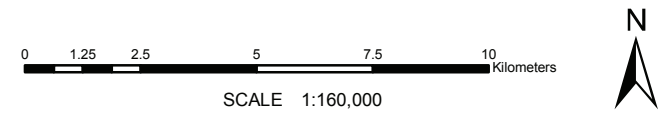
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expand on the regional plan in more detail to identify and evaluate existing and proposed parks, open spaces, and pathways/trails for the Nose Creek Passage Region;
2. Partner with the City of Airdrie to identify Yankee Valley for its historic and cultural importance;
3. Integrate niche market opportunities into the County Campus;
4. Support the partnership with the City of Calgary, the City of Airdrie, and Alberta TrailNet to develop and construct the Trans Canada Trail between Airdrie and Calgary. This section of the Trans Canada Trail would also serve as a functional/commuter pathway/trail; and
5. Assess the options and then develop a pathway/trail connection from CrossIron Mills to the Trans Canada Trail. This pathway/trail would extend further east to the proposed County Campus site.

Figure 14 • Nose Creek Passage



- Proposed Staging Area
- Campground
- School
- Conceptual Bicycle Route
- Conceptual Pathway
- Calgary Greenway
- Proposed Trans Canada Trail
- Existing Pathway/Trail
- Primary Highway
- Secondary Highway
- Railway Line
- Geographic Region
- Provincial/Calgary Park
- Environmental Reserve
- Municipal Reserve
- Conservation Area
- Environmentally Significant Area
- Crown Land
- Provincial Natural Land
- Proposed Environmentally Significant Area



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5.5 • Region 4 - Meadowlark Prairie

The Meadowlark Prairie is in the northeast area of the County and includes Dalroy, Delacour, Kathryn, Keoma, and the Towns of Irricana and Beiseker (Figure 15).

The Meadowlark Prairie Region lies within a subregion of the Grassland Natural Region called Foothills Fescue Subregion, part of the Great Plains. The landscape ranges from flat cultivated plains and gently rolling landforms to ravines and coulees. Grand and sweeping views open to the west under an expansive sky.

Mountain rough fescue grass communities can be found on remnant prairie areas. Snowberry, Wild Rose, Saskatoon, and Silverberry are found in very sheltered locations in coulees, around wetlands, and in moist sites along stream banks and north-facing slopes. Agricultural practices have left the region almost completely cultivated giving way to a fabric of organized land patterns overlaid upon the intermittent natural drainage courses and basins.

The area to the southeast of Irricana is dotted with many small wetland depressions or kettle lakes left by the melting ice sheets of glaciations. Bedrock is exposed in the form of eroded sandstone outcrops which occasionally protrude from meandering drainage courses and hillsides.

Carstairs Creek/Rosebud River and Crossfield Creek are significant tributaries. There are many wetlands/wetland complexes that could merit an Environmentally Significant Area designation as they provide for migratory bird use for nesting, moulting, staging, and resting.

Parks and open space influences within this region include the proposed routing of the Trans Canada Trail, the Calgary Greenway and Environmentally Significant Areas. Conservation sites include Fresno-Boyak Uplands and Kent Conservation Sites. The proposed alignment of the Trans Canada Trail is from Linden to Beiseker and Irricana further south and then west to Airdrie. Routing for the Trans Canada Trail between Irricana and Beiseker is currently being developed by Alberta TrailNet.



“True enjoyment comes from activity of the mind and exercise of the body; the two are united.”
 – Alexander von Humboldt



Constraints	Opportunities
Lack of park, open space and pathway/trail options	Numerous irrigation canals, creeks and creek valleys offer good potential for routing pathways/trails and providing a positive user experience
No easy way to make the Trans Canada Trail connection from Irricana to Airdrie	There are opportunities to designate environmentally sensitive areas associated with wetland complexes and creek valleys as Environmentally Significant Areas
Lack of pathway connectivity between hamlets and villages, and lack of a land base for developing pathways/trails	Park development associated with the two suggested focus areas for community development in this region – Delacour and Kathryn
Comments from the Western Irrigation District relate to irrigation canal right of ways being utilized for party sites and snowmobiling on canals and wetlands associated with canals	Trans Canada Trail development could lead to lateral connections and enhanced pathway options
The Western Irrigation District’s irrigation canals for pathway/trail development is possible but immediately south of Delacour, the alignment is within a golf course and an alternate route would be required	The Trans Canada Trail would provide a viable connection to Kneehill County
The general prevailing negative attitude to pathway/trail development in rural areas, which is particularly true of the Trans Canada Trail	Highway 566 corridor could be considered for Trans Canada Trail development

RECREATION DISTRICT AND PUBLIC INPUT

Beiseker and District Recreation Board Recreation Master Plan 2006–2010²⁵

- Extension and upgrades to the existing trail system; upgrades and expansion to existing facilities; upgrades to the running track; an indoor lacrosse and soccer facility; an outdoor skating rink; a man-made lake; and a BMX track, water park, community wading pool, lawn bowling court, and beach volleyball court.

Rocky View East Regional Recreation Board Recreation Master Plan 2007–2011²⁶

- An outdoor amphitheatre in Kathryn;
- Upgrades to the Keoma baseball and playground facilities;
- Maintaining and expanding existing community halls and upgrades to Delacour Hall;
- A storage facility and fencing for the Delacour Pony Club and equipment purchases for the Delacour 4H Club; and
- A multi-use joint facility in the district, land acquisition of neighbouring lands around Dalroy, and facilitation of a community hall through purchasing or MR dedication to allow for future expansion.

Public Input Specific to this Region

- Develop more connectivity to the Trans Canada Trail corridor between Irricana and Beiseker, and
- Investigate the potential for developing pathway/trail connections through conservation easements, i.e., Crossfield Creek.

²⁵ Beiseker and District Recreation District, 2006, *Recreation Master Plan 2006–2010*, Rocky View County

²⁶ Rocky View East Regional Recreation Board, 2007, *Recreation Master Plan 2007–2011*, Rocky View County

“Few actions can do more to make urban areas safer, healthier, prettier, and more environmentally balanced than setting aside corridors or trails for walking, biking, wildlife watching, and just plain breaking up the monotony of cars and concrete.”

– James Snyder

AMENITY STUDY: PHASE 1 ²⁷

Kathryn and Delacour

- Largely undeveloped with minimal existing amenities – requires almost all of the amenities on the recommended list and one elementary school and a community hall in each focus area for community development.

MEADOWLARK PRAIRIE REGION CONCEPT PLAN

A description of proposed parks and open space, pathways/trails, cultural centres, and niche staging areas is provided below.

Parks and Open Space

- Delacour and Kathryn, identified a secondary focus area for community development with a projected population of 4,500, are allocated 45 acres of parks space with the recommended facilities and amenities;
- A wetland complex southeast of Irricana is proposed as an environmentally sensitive area;
- Carstairs Creek, Rosebud River, and Crossfield Creek should be identified as Environmentally Significant Areas; and
- The expansion of the land base to support the habitats associated with Fresno-Boyack Uplands and Kent Conservation site is proposed.

Pathways/Trails

- The Trans Canada Trail from Kneehill County to Beiseker to Irricana and eventually westward to Airdrie. There may be alternatives to the Trans Canada

²⁷ Nichols Applied Management, Management and Economic Consultants, 2009, *Rocky View Amenity Study: Phase I*, Rocky View County

Trail being within the Highway 567 right-of-way by routing it through a series of developed and undeveloped road allowances to Airdrie;

- A pathway from Delacour to the City of Calgary, following Highway 564. A pathway from Chestermere to Delacour and then to Kathryn; and
- A pathway from Kathryn northward to Township Road 274 in Irricana to intersect with the Trans Canada Trail in Irricana.

Significant Cultural Sites

- Pioneer Acres near Irricana is an existing cultural centre in this region.

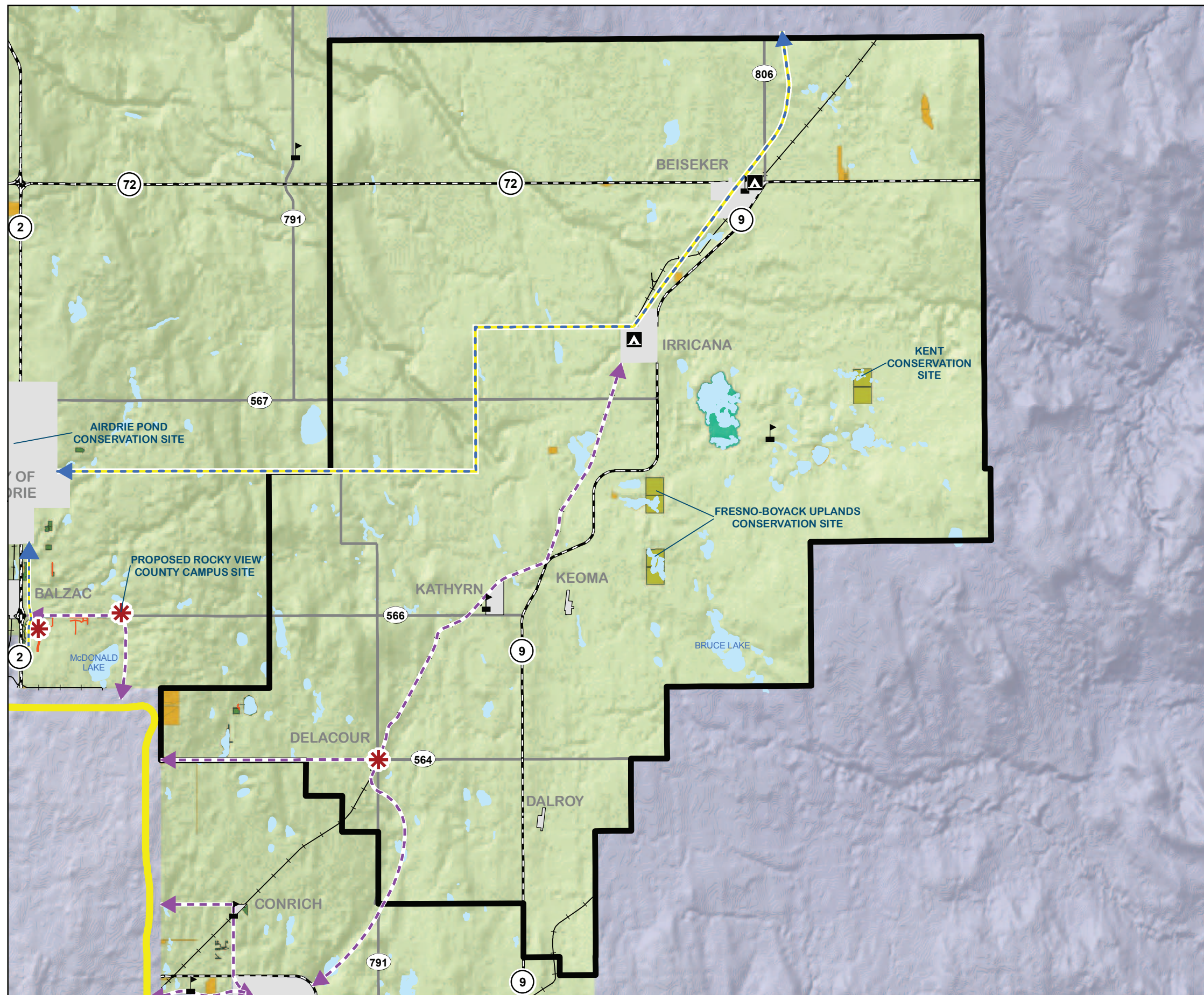
Proposed Staging Areas

- A staging area in Delacour is identified to facilitate cycling trips; and
- There are also staging areas proposed in Irricana and Beiseker.

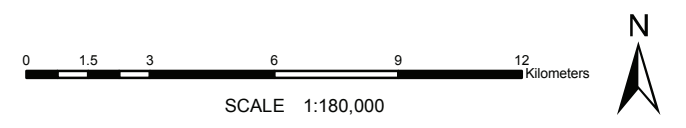
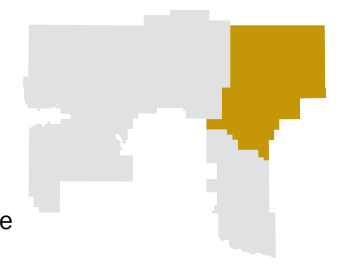
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expand on the regional plan in more detail to identify and evaluate existing and proposed parks, open spaces, and pathways/trails for the Meadowlark Prairie Region;
2. Investigate the establishment of a conservation area that includes the wetlands southeast of Irricana;
3. Study remnants of irrigation canals west of Irricana for the purposes of developing interpretive opportunities; and
4. Work with Alberta TrailNet to confirm routing of the Trans Canada Trail between Irricana and Airdrie. Trans Canada Trail routing along developed/undeveloped road allowances is preferred to following a highway alignment.

Figure 15 • Meadowlark Prairie



- Proposed Staging Area
- Campground
- School
- Conceptual Bicycle Route
- Conceptual Pathway
- Calgary Greenway
- Proposed Trans Canada Trail
- Existing Pathway/Trail
- Primary Highway
- Secondary Highway
- Railway Line
- Geographic Region
- Provincial/Calgary Park
- Environmental Reserve
- Municipal Reserve
- Conservation Area
- Environmentally Significant Area
- Crown Land
- Provincial Natural Land
- Proposed Environmentally Significant Area



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5.6 • Region 5 – Bow River Plains

The Bow River Plains, in the southeast area of the County, includes the Hamlets of Langdon, Indus, Dalemead, and Janet, and the Town of Chestermere. This region is shown on [Figure 16](#).

The Bow River Plains region lies within a subregion of the Grassland Natural Region called Foothills Fescue Subregion. The landscape in this region varies from rolling to hummocky uplands in the southern and western portions to flat undulating cultivated plains in the north and east.

Mountain rough fescue and Bluebunch fescue grass communities can be found on remnant prairie areas or lightly grazed land. Snowberry, Wild Rose, Saskatoon, and Silverberry are found in very sheltered locations in coulees, around wetlands and in moist sites along stream banks and north-facing slopes.

Agricultural practices have left the region about fifty percent cultivated however remaining native vegetation can be found in ravines and coulees and along natural drainage courses and basins.

The Foothills Fescue Subregion occurs largely on moraines and outwash deposits along the lower flanks of the Foothills. Numerous wetland depressions or kettle lakes left by the melting ice sheets of glaciations are more common at lower elevations. Eroded Sandstone outcrops are exposed along meandering coulees and hillsides.

Parks and open space influences include the Calgary Greenway, the Western Headworks Canal, Ralph Klein Legacy Park, the Shepard Stormwater Diversion, and Environmentally Significant Areas identified by Alberta Environment such as Weed Lake and McKinnon Flats Conservation Sites. McKinnon Flats is also a Wildlife Viewing Area. The Bow River Valley is identified as an Environmentally Significant Area, and Weed Lake Reservoir and the Shepard wetland complexes provide important migratory bird nesting habitat. The Trans Canada Trail alignment is proposed from southeast Calgary along the north side of the Bow River to Medicine Hat.

Irrigation canals owned and operated by the Western Irrigation District are extensive and provide potential opportunities for pathway/trail linkages. The Western Irrigation District partnered with Pheasants Forever in the development of a demonstration project adjacent to a canal west of Langdon near Glenmore Trail.

Constraints	Opportunities
Access across the Bow River to the Municipal District of Foothills	Potential continuation of Western Headworks Canal Pathway beyond the Town of Chestermere
Pathways/trails associated with Western Irrigation District canals and railway right of ways may require elevated pedestrian crossings and this could be cost prohibitive	The identification of Weed Lake as an Environmentally Significant Area and migratory bird sanctuary, which would facilitate environmental education
Lack of sufficient space for pathways/trails beside irrigation canals or creeks, under highways, which would require pedestrian crossings across the highway surface. This is also true of the Shepard Stormwater Diversion at Highway 22X	McKinnon Flats is one of the few sites along the Bow River that provides public access and is used for boat launching, fishing and guided fly fishing, and nature appreciation. McKinnon Flats would be appropriate to interpret the natural and cultural history of the area
Irrigation canals may also be influenced by surface water storage and the potential for pathway/trail routing is impacted	The Shepard Stormwater Diversion presents an opportunity to incorporate a pathway/trail to the Bow River
Approval and access agreements are required between utility companies and the Western Irrigation District, and Rocky View County to facilitate development and public access	There is potential to create an interim pathway/trail linkage from the Shepard Stormwater Diversion to McKinnon Flats following undeveloped road allowances until a future Trans Canada Trail alignment is determined
Residents of communities in this region must travel significant distances to access parks and open space and are also limited in terms of the provision of regional pathway/trail options	The use of irrigation canals and an abandoned railway right of way for the extension of a pathway/trail from the Town of Chestermere to Langdon
	An opportunity for a pathway/trail from Langdon to Weed Lake on lands owned by the Rocky View County, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Government of Alberta and the Western Irrigation District, and looping back to Langdon

RECREATION DISTRICT AND PUBLIC INPUT

Bow North Recreation District Recreation District Master Plan 2009–2014²⁸

- A multi-use facility in collaboration with the Rocky View Schools; Indus Ice Arena expansion; day use picnic area and park and upgrading and expansion of existing trails.

Chestermere-Conrich Recreation District Recreation Master Plan 2007–2011²⁹

- Expansion of the Chestermere Community Centre parking lot; indoor soccer dome; outdoor swimming pool; multi-use facility in collaboration with the Rocky View Schools; and
- A community hall/centre in Conrich; two additional community halls/centres in the recreation district; additional baseball diamonds and upgrades, and expansion of existing facilities.

Public Input Specific to this Region

- Improve Langdon Park by increasing the size of the pond and water supply, and by planting more trees;
- Define the boundary of Weed Lake to distinguish public land from private land and develop for walking pathways/trails and nature viewing; and
- Develop a pathway/trail between Conrich and Delacour.

AMENITY STUDY: PHASE 1³⁰

Langdon

- Planning for an elementary school and a joint use high school with a range of indoor amenities underway – includes a fitness centre, an indoor field house/gymnasium, climbing wall, indoor running track, community spaces, health services, and children’s play area; and
- Future phases could include a library and aquatic facility. Also more outdoor recreational amenities, spaces for seniors and youth, a theatre, additional elementary schools, another middle school, and churches.

Conrich

- Currently not developed, however, suggested as a focus area for community development, a regional approach is needed for large scale amenities – an indoor ice arena, aquatic centres, indoor curling rinks – a joint-use facility should be considered and a pedestrian friendly system of streets and paths, and a path that connects Conrich to Chestermere.

²⁸ Bow North Recreation District, 2007, *Recreation Master Plan 2007–2011*, Rocky View County

²⁹ Chestermere-Conrich Recreation District, 2007, *Recreation Master Plan 2007–2011*, Rocky View County

³⁰ Nichols Applied Management, Management and Economic Consultants, 2009, *Rocky View Amenity Study: Phase I*, Rocky View County

“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”

– John Muir

BOW RIVER PLAINS CONCEPT PLAN

A description of proposed parks and open space, pathways/trails, cultural centres, and niche staging areas is provided below.

Parks and Open Space

- Langdon is identified as a suggested focus area for community development and allocated 90 acres of park space. Indoor and outdoor facilities and amenities are recommended;
- Weed Lake is identified as an Environmentally Significant Area that supports migratory bird habitat. Public access would be managed and controlled to avoid impacts to areas critical for wildlife use;
- The Shepard wetland complex is identified as an environmentally sensitive area;
- Weed Lake and Shepard wetland complexes are recommended for an Environmentally Significant Area designation similar to the Bow River Valley downstream from Calgary; and
- Land owned by Rocky View County, Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Province of Alberta, and the Western Irrigation District adjacent to Weed Lake could provide a land base for environmental education, nature appreciation, boardwalks, interpretive signage, and other facilities to enhance this area's reputation for bird watching.

Pathways and Trails

- A pathway is proposed as an extension of the Western Headworks Canal Trail from Chestermere Lake, along a combination of the Western Irrigation District canal and Township Road 233 towards Langdon. (Note, this pathway will need to cross an existing railway right of way immediately southeast of the Town of Chestermere);
- A branch of the pathway described above follows the Western Irrigation District canal to a drop structure and then follows the canal to the south end of the Weed Lake Reservoir and loops back to Langdon;
- A pathway along the Shepard Diversion from Ralph Klein Legacy Park to the Bow River. It would follow a maintenance access on one side of the diversion and would negotiate associated structures and includes a pedestrian access across Highway 22X;
- A proposed Trans Canada Trail connection from Calgary intersects the Shepard Diversion at the Bow River and then follows the north side of the Bow River to Medicine Hat. Interim pathway routing is proposed along road allowances and undeveloped road allowances to provide access to McKinnon Flats;
- A pathway is proposed from the terminus of the Western Headworks Canal Pathway along the west side of Chestermere Lake crossing Highway 1 and following a Western Irrigation District canal to Delacour. Additional land access may be required to negotiate McElroy Slough;
- A pathway is proposed from the Calgary Greenway along Highway 1 to intersect with the pathway from Chestermere to Delacour;
- A bicycle route is proposed from Langdon to the Bow River, following Highways 797 and 22X as well as Range Road 274; and
- A pathway is proposed from the Calgary Greenway at McKnight Boulevard to Conrich which then heads south on Range Road 284 to Chestermere.



Cultural Sites

- Existing cultural sites include cemeteries at Dalemead, Langdon and Conrich, and the Rocky View County Garden of Peace Cemetery;
- There is potential for an environmental education centre at Weed Lake to interpret the natural history of the area; and
- McKinnon Flats, as a conservation site and wildlife viewing area, is also known for its archaeological resources, river access for canoeing, and a destination for fishing and fly fishing tours. McKinnon Flats is also a proposed cultural centre.

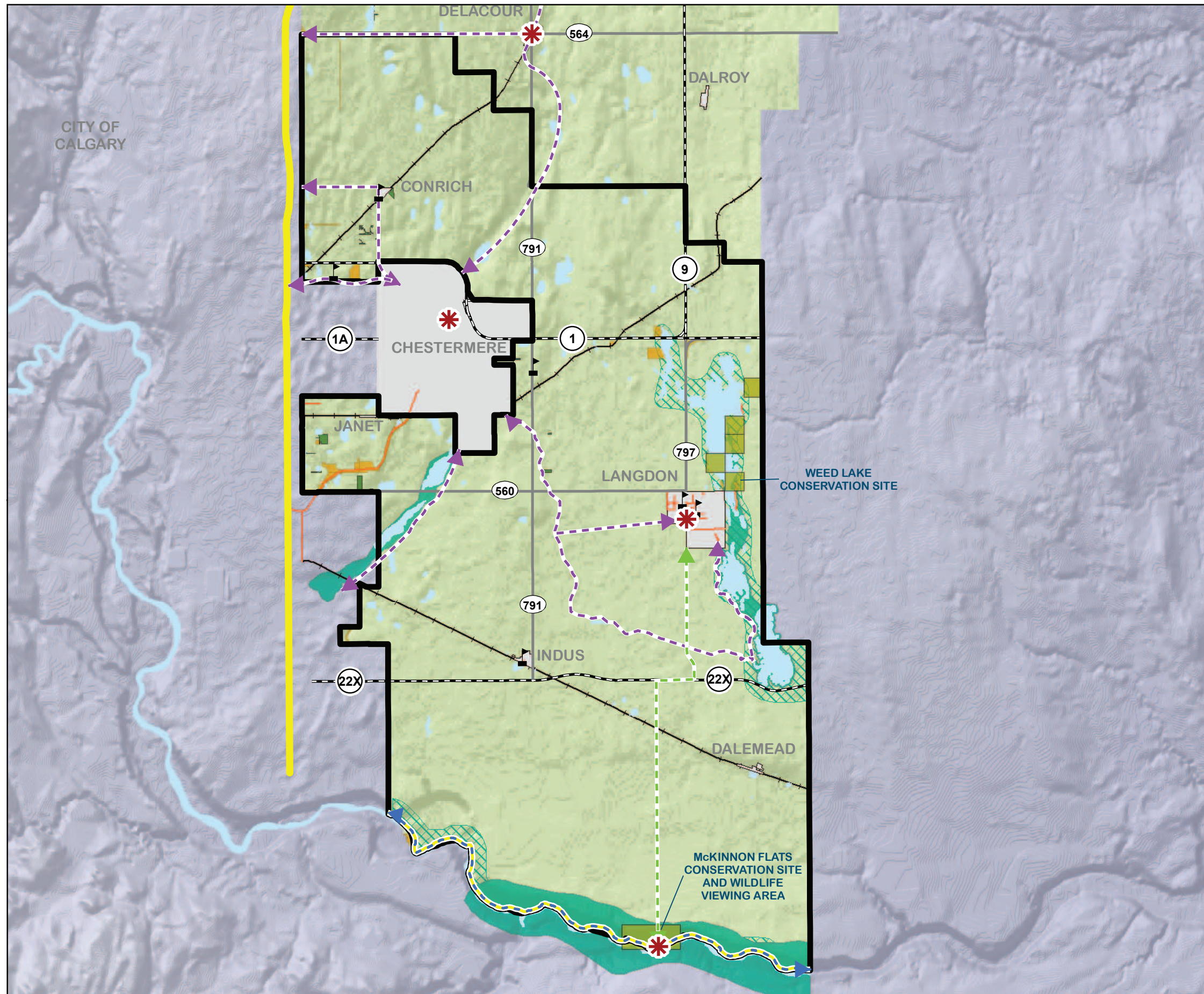
Niche Market and Staging Areas

- Staging areas are identified in Langdon: at McKinnon Flats along the Bow River; and in Chestermere.;
- McKinnon Flats is at the end of a canoeing/kayaking segment and the starting point for a segment that ends at Wyndham-Carsland Provincial Park;
- The Western Irrigation District indicated there is potential for the development of a kayaking course at the location of a drop structure on a main irrigation canal south of Langdon; and
- That part of Weed Lake furthest to the south and immediately north of Highway 22X is popular for canoeing and could be identified for that purpose to encourage designated use.

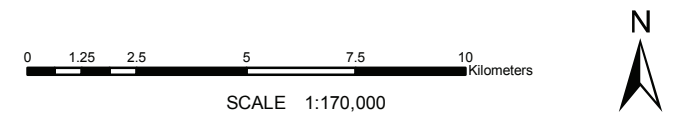
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expand on the regional plan in more detail to identify and evaluate existing and proposed parks, open spaces, and pathways/trails for the Bow River Plains Region;
2. Protect/restore the Shepard and Weed Lake wetland complexes as conservation areas by partnering with Ducks Unlimited (DU), natural history groups and landowners (underway);
3. Encourage winter activities such as ice skating and ice fishing at Weed Lake and canoeing on the Shepard wetland complex;
4. Encourage the development of an interpretive centre with environmental and educational programming at Weed Lake, and promote Weed Lake as a bird watching site with the development of viewing blinds and boardwalks, hiking pathways/trails, and external pathway connections; and
5. Encourage the development of McKinnon Flats as a cultural centre for historical and environmental programming related to the ranching and farming history of the area and interpreting the natural and cultural heritage resources of the Bow River Valley.

Figure 16 • Bow River Plains



- Proposed Staging Area
- Campground
- School
- Conceptual Bicycle Route
- Conceptual Pathway
- Calgary Greenway
- Proposed Trans Canada Trail
- Primary Highway
- Secondary Highway
- Existing Pathway/Trail
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CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 6.1 • Implementation Challenges
- 6.2 • Management Recommendations
- 6.3 • Parks and Open Space Master Plan Priorities
- 6.4 • Master Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Recommendations
- 6.5 • Envisioning the Future

6 • Master Plan Challenges and Recommendations

In the previous chapter, the concept plans and recommendations were described for each region. This chapter reviews the challenges inherent in implementing the Master Plan, and a series of recommendations that are provided to assist the County with managing the Master Plan.

6.1 • Implementation Challenges

As the Master Plan is gradually implemented, challenges will continue to evolve and require consideration. Some of the challenges are grouped according to system and management challenges. System challenges are at a higher level and include financial, public perception, competing interest, and communication related to implementing the Master Plan.

Management challenges are challenges related to achieving specific objectives of the Master Plan, e.g., identifying key lands for purchase/acquisition for open space and pathway/trail development.

SYSTEM CHALLENGES

System challenges include:

1. Financial challenges with limited resources and residents (almost 1,000,000 acres and a relatively small population) to support the many initiatives suggested. Conversely, a comprehensive system of parks and open spaces would attract residents, tourism, and potentially businesses to the County, improving the quality of life as well as the economy;
2. Public perception of the perceived issues with having publically accessible open space near private land holdings;
3. Creating a balance across the County for parks, open spaces, and pathways/trails;
4. Balancing competing interests for land, e.g., agriculture is a clear priority for the County;
5. Ensuring the amount of parks, open space and pathways/trails is appropriate relative to the needs and desires of the current population;
6. Collaboration within and beyond County borders; and
7. Communicating development of this plan to the public and ensuring it highlights improvements upon environmental stewardship, fitness, fun, and health.



“I like to walk about amidst
the beautiful things that adorn
the world”

– George Santayana

MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

Management challenges include:

1. Providing a diversity of facilities, parks (variety of sizes and types), open space and pathways/trails (i.e., pedestrian, bicycle, horse) to suit a variety of uses and purposes;
2. Identifying additional tools or resources/agencies to help acquire more land and facilities, as there are challenges to providing sufficient open space and pathways/trails in such a large area with a limited population and tax support;
3. Creating continuity across the County and with adjacent municipalities for parks, open spaces, and pathways/trails;
4. Council’s support of the initiatives outlined in the Master Plan;
5. Access issue – public access in rural areas;
6. Using land development as the impetus for pathways/trails. Spatial or temporal gaps between developments can prevent connectivity and critical linkages. As this is a moving target, regular evaluations are required with a budget for short term or creative solutions for the provision of pathways/trails;
7. Identification and conservation of key lands with significant biophysical attributes or are deemed Environmentally Significant Areas;
8. Balancing the need for conservation of sensitive natural features with recreational opportunities;
9. Enforcement of infractions occurring within parks and open space; and
10. Currently there is no dedicated County department which serves to develop and manage parks and open spaces.

6.2 • Management Recommendations

MASTER PLAN MANAGEMENT MECHANISMS

1. Adopting this Master Plan as a guiding policy document in its entirety and the background document for supplementary supporting information;
2. Creating a Parks Service that includes two roles: Parks Planning and Development and Parks Maintenance and Operations, that resides in the Department of Community Services or Infrastructure and Operations or an entirely new department that brings together existing and new groups appropriate for collaboration e.g., Municipal Lands, Agricultural Services, Ecology;
3. Empowering a Parks department to manage open space and municipal lands, develop bylaws for protection and make recommendations to Council respecting revenue for the acquisition of land for open space and for maintenance;
4. Creating a foundation with a mission and vision to protect the natural environment, support recreation and assist in creating parks and open spaces and secure funding for long-term maintenance and improvements;
5. Encouraging a financial commitment to develop and maintain parks and open spaces;
6. Creating a Parks and Open Space Steering Committee to make recommendations regarding land access tools, land purchase, funding support and to identify and work with stakeholders and the public to achieve the vision described in this Master Plan;
7. Coordinating this Master Plan with new Municipal Development Plan directions;
8. Conducting an analysis to ensure County goals are being met and that this Master Plan is sustainable;
9. Reviewing enforcement requirements in respect of the phased development of this Master Plan, i.e., additional bylaw staff is in place to enforce the rules;
10. Updating the County’s Parks and Open Space Classification System;
11. Explore the potential of incorporating pathway development within transportation off site levies (or otherwise) to provide for construction and long term maintenance, e.g., Municipal Infrastructure Management System (MIMS);
12. Collaborating with adjacent municipalities and school divisions within Rocky View County to ensure connectivity of parks and open spaces, e.g., the Town of Cochrane and Alberta Trail Net to develop the Trans Canada Trail (including a bridge) to connect Cochrane to Calgary through Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park; and
13. Partnering with Sustainable Resource Development to increase public access to leased crown land.

BIOPHYSICAL MANAGEMENT MECHANISMS

1. Conduct a County wide Environmentally Significant Areas assessment and inventory of local and regional features;
2. Incorporate Environmentally Significant Areas and other sensitive biophysical features into the planning process to ensure appropriate features are conserved and developments compliment adjacent natural areas;
3. Require Biophysical Impact Assessments for developments where appropriate to ensure sensitive or significant features are conserved or managed appropriately;
4. Ensure pathways/trails, facilities, and other developments are constructed outside of the critical breeding, migratory or other sensitive periods for wildlife;
5. Ensure activities are managed on or adjacent to water bodies and wetlands – small, low impact trails and passive recreational opportunities should be placed appropriately to minimize environmental impacts and to discourage the public from venturing into sensitive areas;
6. Locate bridges and boardwalks in appropriate locations to minimize environmental impacts (clear span bridges and pathways/ trails skirting wetlands and water bodies are preferred);
7. Minimize tree cutting as trees provide habitat and cover for a variety of migratory bird and mammal species by creating a made in Rocky View County bylaw similar to the City of Calgary Tree Protection Bylaw;
8. Minimize impacts to native grassland as it provides habitat for a variety of native plants, migratory birds, and wildlife;
9. Implement best management practices to minimize the introduction and spread of invasive plants;
10. Implement sediment and erosion control when areas are disturbed for facilities and pathways/trails;
11. Strategically place park and open space facilities to avoid impacting sensitive habitat, species at risk, and other sensitive species to lessen the chances of human/wildlife conflicts;
12. Fence sensitive habitats to discourage access – the extent or severity of fencing would depend on the situation, species and habitat;
13. Place visible, restricted area signs adjacent to sensitive habitat;
14. Install educational signage to educate the public and explain why habitats need protection;

15. Discourage unwanted visits from larger wildlife by installing designated wildlife proof garbage containers to minimize wildlife encounters;
16. Prohibit motorized vehicles in sensitive areas including wetlands, riparian areas, sensitive vegetation communities, and sensitive wildlife habitat;
17. Maximize the use of existing trailhead accesses where possible and limit or restrict access to sensitive areas;
18. Implement low speed limits on access roads approaching sensitive habitat or areas with high wildlife usage to reduce wildlife collisions;
19. Long-term monitoring to ensure that sensitive areas remain undisturbed; and
20. Create a geological map of the County to show the location of springs, glacial deposits, and rock outcroppings as identifying these areas is the first step to avoid them.

OPEN SPACE AND TRAIL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Integrate agricultural business, community gardens, and related facilities;
2. Include maintenance requirements for greenway pathways/trails;
3. Expand to include more classifications for park spaces in Hamlets such as public plazas, tot lots, and off leash areas;
4. Incorporate recreational facilities;
5. Expand to include water based (blue ways) routes to augment the greenway pathway/trail hierarchy;
6. Identify the Trans Canada Trail as a multi-use regional pathway;
7. Implement a hierarchy of pathway/trail types with appropriate surfaces as described in the classification system; and
8. Identify greenways as areas seeded to native grass and being maintained as natural areas.

MUNICIPAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESERVE DEDICATION

1. Require developers to align new pathways/trails in new subdivisions to proposed and developed pathway/trail networks, i.e., write into conceptual schemes;
2. Consider Municipal Reserve dedication for natural areas or require developers to naturalize areas using approved vegetation in order to reduce long term maintenance requirements and cost;

3. Ensure Municipal Reserve development and maintenance is fiscally viable based on population and carrying capacity;
4. Require the connectivity of Environmental Reserve and Municipal Reserve for habitat protection and pathway/trail development in new subdivisions;
5. Ensure County recreational priorities and goals are met in terms of Municipal Reserve allocation and proposed parks, open space, and pathway/trail development;
6. Consider cash in lieu in support of large parcel park, open space, and pathway/trail development;
7. Protect undeveloped road allowances, Municipal Reserve, Environmental Reserve, and Public Utility Lots to contribute to the protection and preservation of the land base in the County;
8. Require dedication of greenways (natural areas with native plant communities preferred) within new subdivisions for future pathway/trail connectivity; and
9. Require Environmental Reserve dedication for conservation of riparian areas and wetlands, as appropriate.

DISPOSAL OF LAND (SALE, LICENSING AND LEASING)

- Rocky View County developed a policy titled *Disposal of Reserve Land, Former Reserve Land, and Fee Simple Land by Sale*. The purpose of this policy is to administer a fair and consistent process to dispose of land.
- Rocky View County developed a policy titled *License of Occupation for County Lands*. The purpose of the policy is to administer a formal process for the County to grant licenses of occupation for County lands located within Rocky View County.

GUIDELINES AND STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Create made in Rocky View County specific guidelines and standard specifications for development. In the meantime, the County could utilize the City of Calgary's Development Guidelines, Standard Specifications, and Landscape Construction Guide for the current year.

GUIDELINES AND STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS FOR MAINTENANCE

- Preliminary maintenance guidelines were described in the Rocky View County Parks Feasibility Study and should form the basis for the preparation of made in Rocky View County guidelines and standard specifications. The City of Calgary Development Guidelines and Standard Specifications are an excellent source of information.



6.3 • Master Plan Priorities

Plan priorities are divided into the following time frames:

- Short-term – 1 to 5 years
- Medium-term – 5 to 10 years
- Long-term – 10 to 25 years

In [Table 8](#), the priorities are described in the left hand column. The next column includes a performance measurement applied to each priority. In the last three columns, a time frame is identified for that priority.

6.4 • Master Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reviewing annually the condition of existing County owned parks and open space and related facilities, and develop a capital program for upgrades and maintenance utilizing the Municipal Infrastructure Management System (MIMS).
2. Balancing park and open space development so that each region, according to population, benefits equally over time.
3. Developing and implementing best practices in terms of park and open space development and packaging this information for distribution to staff, the public and the development community.
4. Utilizing the biophysical attributes to determine significant natural areas and use this information as a target for natural area protection.
5. Reviewing and updating of the Master Plan every 5 years.
6. Developing indicators for monitoring ecosystem and landscape components in terms of land use practices and land use changes.

Achievement levels could be developed for parks and open space utilizing the following objectives:

1. Baseline – parks and open space is provided as per the existing condition;
2. Good – a comprehensive parks and open space system is developed;
3. Better – natural and historic awareness is an outcome of the Master Plan; and
4. Best – the ecological landscape provides diverse social and economic value, nature is accessible, sensitive areas are protected and ecosystem services are maximized in park and open space functions.

The County is currently at the baseline. This Master Plan is the first step in moving to objective number two. Once a park and open space system is developed the next level receives more attention, which is the development and implementation of cultural and historic awareness of the environment. The achievement of objective number four would see County residents living sustainably in a culture of wellness, creativity and environmental stewardship.

6.5 • Envisioning the Future

The Master Plan is a long term proposition. It will take time to bring the vision of this plan to life and enhance parks and open space within the County. By developing in short, medium and long term phases, today's residents will be able to enjoy benefits of being outdoors and look forward to the longer term benefits envisioned within this Master Plan.

What will the County look and feel like 25 years from now?

The Master Plan has played a critical role in working towards sustainability by providing direction for the development of an interconnected system of parks and open space.

Wildlife corridors and habitat are better protected and public access is designed to reduce impacts to natural areas. Interpretive and educational programming is carried out at Weed Lake Regional Park. The County's cultural history is recognized and interpreted, which has led to a greater appreciation and understanding by residents. The Trans Canada Trail has been constructed and communities throughout the County are connected by regional pathways that are integrated with Calgary's Greenway.

The entire Bow River Valley is identified as an Environmentally Significant Area and access points are identified for non-motorized use. These same access points are strategically located to take advantage of river segments and are equipped with washrooms and parking. Portages provide access around the Ghost and Bearspaw Dams. Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park is open year round and provides interpretive facilities, and pathways/trails for winter and summer use. The Trans Canada Trail is within the park boundaries.

Community centres in each region provide recreational facilities and venues for cultural events and activities, and parks and open spaces meet the needs of a growing and evolving population.

The accomplishment of the objectives of this Master Plan set the stage for continued park and open space development beyond 2035.

This Master Plan enhanced the County as a place to live and provides the impetus for continued economic growth and development.

Rocky View County has a reputation as a leader in park and open space development and other municipalities benefit from the County's knowledge and experience. More importantly, the residents of the County benefit from the County's parks and open spaces in terms of health and well being.

Table 8 • Plan Priorities

Plan Priorities	Performance Measurement	Performance Measurement					
		0	5	10	15	20	25
Create a parks function within Rocky View County	RVC establishes a parks and recreation administrative group (dept. or sub-dept.)	○	●				
Create a Parks and Open Space Steering Committee	A Parks and Open Space Steering Committee is appointed	○	●				
Create a maintenance function within Rocky View County	RVC establishes a maintenance administrative group as a sub group within the parks and recreation administrative group (dept. or sub-dept.)	○	●				
Review and modify other municipal park guidelines and standards in developing Rocky View County guidelines	Based on the experience of the parks and recreation administrative group coupled with maintenance group feedback, an adopted RVC park guidelines and standards is established	○	●				
Ensure regional pathway access points are linked, e.g., Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park	Plans adjacent to regional pathways include specific linkages to identified access points within the RVC parks and open space plan. In adjacent areas that are not being redeveloped, access linkage requirements are recorded on title	○	●				
Renegotiate the lease for the local road allowance between Cochrane and Big Hill Springs Provincial Park to allow public access	The lease for the local road allowance between Cochrane and Big Hill Springs Provincial Park permits public access	○	●				
Public access to Emerald Bay Marina (lease)	The marina lease is modified to contain a provision for public access to Bearspaw Reservoir	○	●				
Prepare detailed plans for each region	More detailed plans are adopted for each region including specific land acquisition recommendations in accordance with the objectives set out in the annual parks and open space report	○		●			
Identify key pieces of land recommendation for acquisition by other organizations	Identify in the annual parks and open space report, the actions taken to assist other organizations to obtain or manage parks and open space, key linkages, important buffer areas, and staging areas. Ensure mapping tracks the acquisition of lands by other organizations along with potential linkages	○					●
Create a annual parks and open space report including monitoring and evaluation of the specific recommendations to be addressed that year and to create the specific goals for the following year	An annual parks and open space report is prepared and adopted each year prior to budget review including a review of the past year's successes (after year one) and with selected go forward goals based on the prioritized recommendations of the Master Plan for the following year. For example, for year one this could contain key acquisition areas, key staging areas, the planning for an identified region and an interpretive/educational program providing information about ecologically sensitive areas, etc.	○					●
Identify pieces of land for acquisition and disposal by RVC (parks and open space, key linkages, important buffer areas, staging areas)	The annual parks and open space report includes the number of key pieces of land acquired or disposed of in relation to this plan. Mapping tracks the acquisition of lands and potential linkages	○					●
Prepare more detailed plans to identify key pieces of land required	More detailed plans are adopted for specific lands acquired in accordance with the objectives set out in the annual parks and open space report (see below)	○					●
River access points are planned with emphasis on the Bow River and Elbow River as well as the Bearspaw Reservoir	River access points including parking and signage and outlining direct linkage points to rivers have approved plans and are complete according to the annual parks and open space report goals	○					●
Expand on the regional plan in more detail to identify and evaluate key staging areas including linkages to serve key open spaces, pathway/trails, niche markets, and the Trans Canada Trail	Key staging area plans, which outline parking and signage and linkage to the recreation/open space resource according to the annual parks and open space report goals are approved	○					●
Residents are provided the opportunity to comment on the County's website about parks, open space, and pathways/trail	Information such as updates on what is being achieved; educational pieces; events such as a hike/bike ride; opportunities for adopt a park and clean up, is posted on the RVC website and has a schedule for timely updates	○					●
Ensure a review function is incorporated into the short term priorities for assessment of what is complete and what remains to be achieved each year	A review function is included into each annual strategic parks and open space report, noting the status of each recommendation, i.e., completed or not, identifying the progress made in multi-year projects, etc.	○					●
Complete a parks, open space, and pathways/trails strategy associated with the proposed Municipal Campus in conjunction with each phase of development	Parks, open spaces, and pathways/trails are complete and open to the public		○	●			
Plan for and assemble (and as opportunities present themselves) lands for a regional park on the east side of the County	Regional park lands are in either in the ownership of RVC or under the management of other organizations with similar objectives for the area.		○	●			
Review the Parks and Open Space Master Plan	A review and update of the Parks and Open Space Master Plan is complete and approved as required, typically every five years		○				●
Develop key water access points to rivers and reservoirs	Key access points are complete with the provision of parking and signage according to the annual Parks and Open Space Master Plan goals		○				●
A regional park is developed in the vicinity of and including Weed Lake	Weed Lake Regional Park is open to the public			○			●

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parks spaces trails