Calgary

Connect:
Calgary's Parks Plan



2025

Land Acknowledgement



Calgary is located within the ancestral and traditional territory of the Blackfoot Nations of the Siksika, Piikani and Kainai First Nations; the Îethka Nakoda Wîcastabi First Nations, comprised of the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations; and the Tsuut'ina First Nation of the great Dene Nation. The City of Calgary is also homeland to the historic Northwest Métis and to the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, Métis Nation Battle River Territory.

These Nations have a rich history on these lands, and we feel very connected to that history as we work to care for the traditional lands within the park system. At The City of Calgary, we consider ourselves stewards of these spaces today, but we need to acknowledge the original stewards of this land and their lives that were inseparably tied to the landscape.

It is with great humility that we, as employees of The City of Calgary, have the distinct responsibility to uphold a high level of care for these traditional lands. And as a result, The City has the utmost respect for the elders of these nations — those from the past, the present and those that are emerging.

We also acknowledge all First Nation, Métis and Inuit people who call Calgary home, whether they are from these nations or elsewhere on the earth. Thank you to all Indigenous peoples — the elected officials, the elders and all members of these great nations for their traditional caretaking of these lands that we are all now proud to call home.



Reading Connect

Title: Connect: Calgary's Parks Plan
Author: The City of Calgary
Status: Adopted by Resolution of Council, May 2025

Connect: Calgary's Parks Plan (hereafter referred to as '*Connect*') is organized into seven chapters and one **Appendix**.

Chapter 1 provides background on the importance of the park system, the challenges it faces, and the need for *Connect*. It explains how *Connect* was developed and presents its **Vision** and 10 strategic directions, which inform the policies and operational actions outlined in **Chapters 3** through **7**.

Chapter 2 outlines the different components of the park system and includes a description of how land within the park system is obtained and managed.

These first two chapters do **not** contain specific policy. Only the **Vision**, strategic directions and park system components (**Figure 2.1**) provide direction for *Connect's* policies and operational actions in later chapters.

Chapters 3 to **6** include the policies and operational actions that are intended to guide the development and management of the park system. Each of these chapters begins with a list of intended outcomes, which are long-term goals to be achieved over the next 20 years through implementing *Connect's* policies and operational actions. The strategic directions that informed the development of each chapter's policies and actions are also identified at the start of each chapter.

Language intent for **Chapters 3** to **6**:

- *Must* means the policy applies to all situations, without exception, usually in relation to a statement of action, legislative direction or situations where a desired result is required.
- *Should* means the policy applies to all situations, unless it can be clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of The City that the policy is not reasonable, practical or feasible in a given situation.
- *May* and *Encourage* means the policy direction is optional and not required. May and Encourage statements give permission to do something rather than requiring or limiting action.
- *The City* means The City of Calgary as a municipal government or corporation.
- *Calgary* or *the city* means the place or physical area of the municipality.

Notwithstanding this language intent, the adoption of this non-statutory plan does not require The City to undertake any of the projects referred to in it.

Chapter 7 outlines the metrics that will be used to evaluate how the strategic directions are measured, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data to inform future decision-making. The chapter also details the implementation requirements for all the operational actions, based on their priority, timeframe and high level cost estimates.

Appendix A provides more detailed guidance on how The City's natural areas will be managed.

Glossary provides definitions for bolded terms found throughout the document.

The defined term **park** is not bolded within the document due to frequent usage.

Relation to Other Plans

Since its approval by City Council in 2002, the Open Space Plan has guided the planning and development of Calgary's **park system**. *Connect* is replacing the Open Space Plan, which aligns to provincial-level government policies and legislation, including the provincial *Land Use Policies, Municipal Government Act, Historic Resources Act*, and the *South Saskatchewan Regional Plan*. For matters specifically related to the planning of land acquired as **municipal reserve** and **municipal and school reserve**, *Connect* takes direction from The City's *Municipal Development Plan* and Calgary's *Joint Use Planning Agreement*.

Connect is a non-statutory plan that is intended to guide The City's decision-making for the development and management of Calgary's **park system** and inform future policies and decision-making for Local Area Plans, Area Structure Plans, Area Redevelopment Plans and development applications.

In addition, *Connect* forms the foundation for, and provides direction to, lower-level policies, plans and procedures that are specific to the Parks & Open Spaces business unit, including topic-specific strategic and business plans. It also provides direction on parks-related subject matter within similar documents in other citywide strategies and plans.

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Chapter 1
Background



1.1 Introduction

Connect has been developed to respond to the significant growth and demographic changes that have occurred in Calgary over the past two decades. 'Connection' is a common theme in the way that park spaces impact the lives of Calgarians. They connect us to each other, to our communities, to ourselves, to wellness, to our history and to the natural environment. They also connect us to the landscape that lies at the heart of what makes Calgary unique.

Much has changed in the 23 years since the implementation of the *Open Space Plan*, and the time has come to modernize Calgary's approach to parks planning. It is critical that planning, design and management of the **park system** will continue to respond to the diverse needs of Calgarians. The intent of *Connect* is to ensure the **park system** serves the social, recreational and environmental needs of Calgarians by supporting spaces that are resilient, **accessible**, and include amenities and infrastructure to support a wide variety of users.



1.2 Importance of the Park System

The Park System

The **park system** is a critical component of a thriving, attractive city that supports healthy living. The system plays an important role in mitigating extreme weather, protecting Calgarians by providing shady relief from extreme heat events and managing storm and flood waters. The system supports economic development by providing space for tourism, **events**, community gatherings and celebrations. While often overlooked as key **infrastructure**, parks are as integral as roads and utilities in providing connections between urban communities, as well as contributing to residents' well-being.

Calgary continues to grow and is projected to become a city of two million people within the next two decades. Projected population expansion and increased urban density will result in increased usage and reliance on an already much-loved **park system**. The **park system** needs to be expanded and improved in thoughtful ways, to meet the future needs of all residents, regardless of their age, ability, income, culture or background.



Spaces for People

Our city has over 2,900 parks, which provide Calgarians with a wide variety of experiences and opportunities. Parks are spaces for people of all backgrounds and abilities to meaningfully enjoy and connect with **nature**, wellness, culture and each other. They are places where Calgarians can be physically active through organized sports, learn to ride a bike, hit a game-winning home run, go for a morning walk, wheel or roll, or watch the birds, all while enjoying Calgary's beautiful landscapes. They are spaces for relaxation, celebration, play, sport, gathering and learning. They provide high-quality opportunities for children to build skills and strengths that contribute to full and rewarding lives. Access to, and time spent in parks has been shown to improve health outcomes such as reducing the symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression, and supporting physical and mental health.

Parks are also places where Calgarians can meaningfully engage with each other and the landscape. They are spaces to contemplate and learn about history and where cultures can intersect. Some are sacred spaces for **Indigenous peoples** and people that highlight an evolving relationship with the natural world and our cultural history. They are places for social and community gatherings that connect Calgarians from a variety of backgrounds, fostering a sense of pride and belonging in the city.

Spaces for Nature

Today, Calgary has over 200 **natural areas** within the **park system**, including prominent spaces such as Nose Hill, Twelve Mile Coulee, Griffith Woods, Weaselhead and Beaver Dam Flats. These areas, and others like them throughout Calgary, play a crucial role in keeping our city healthy by supporting **biodiversity**, protecting thriving natural ecosystems and contributing to a climate-resilient city. **Natural areas** have the inherent capability to efficiently capture stormwater, remove pollutants from our waterbodies, sequester carbon to reduce Calgary's greenhouse gas footprint and reduce the impacts of excessive heat, flooding and drought conditions.

It is important that we plan and manage these special places so that they remain ecologically healthy and continue to offer benefits to residents and wildlife alike. This means access to, and activities within, these areas should be carefully managed, to preserve **nature** now and for the future.

1.3 What Informed Connect

Connect has been developed using multiple inputs. Through an extensive and in-depth engagement and research program, Calgarians provided guidance to inform the development of *Connect* by identifying what they valued, what is working and what can be improved in the city's **park system**. The plan also needed to address legislative and policy changes at both the municipal and provincial levels, as well as updates to best practices in park planning, including the greater importance of a network-based approach that emphasizes interconnected, multifunctional spaces.

Engagement

In order to develop a plan that resonated with all Calgarians, a concerted effort was made to reach Calgarians of all walks of life, including those traditionally overlooked or excluded.

Equity-deserving Calgarians (including: racialized groups, **Indigenous peoples**, English language learners, persons with disabilities, seniors, the 2SLGBTQ+ community, young adults, people living with low-incomes and unhoused individuals) experience increased **barriers** to accessing the city's **park system**, yet they are often people who can benefit most from access to parks. Applying an **equity** lens to engagement required specific tactics, which focused on working with leaders from representative community groups, attending school events to specifically connect with youth, providing in-person and online opportunities through various media avenues and in-person pop-ups in parks.

Three distinct engagement phases were held in Spring 2023, Fall 2023 and Fall 2024. Engagement was specifically designed to offer a range of methods and tactics, both traditional and non-traditional, to reach as many individuals and interested groups as possible.

Public Research

Connect's development also included two statistically-representative surveys to supplement and verify the feedback received from public engagement. Six focus groups were assembled to gain insight and a candid understanding of how well *Connect's* strategic directions were received. Research confirmed that the strategic and policy directions gathered during engagement accurately reflected Calgarians' sentiments. The research showed that the engagement feedback represented the broader community, rather than just amplifying the voices of a vocal minority.

Geospatial Analysis

A new geographic information system (GIS) database was developed in tandem with *Connect*, to provide a complete and up-to-date status of the **park system** through spatial analysis. This was done to analyze quantity and access metrics city-wide and help inform policy direction and standards within *Connect*. Moving forward, this tool will allow for better informed development and management decisions regarding gaps in park planning, provision, connectivity or capital investment.

Summary of the Three Engagement Phases

The project's online engagement portal received:



over **32,400** views



19,625 visitors



1,680 contributions



45 in person events with over **4,600** attendees



11 online workshops



Consultation with **9** advisory committees



457 paper questionnaires completed



Over **2,300** promotional postcards were distributed

1.4 Vision

Connect implements the vision for the **park system** that was set out in *imagineParks*, The City's 30-year strategic plan for parks, approved by City Council in 2015. The purpose of *Connect* is to guide the planning, development and management decisions for the **park system** to achieve this vision over the next 20 years.

Vision

"Calgary's parks and open spaces are cherished places that connect us to nature, our heritage and one another."







1.5 How Connect Works

The following is a graphical representation of how *Connect* achieves the **park system** vision.

Park System Vision

"Calgary's parks and open spaces are cherished places that connect us to nature, our heritage and one another."

What informed *Connect*?

- **Engagement**
- **Research**
- **Spatial Analysis**
- **Best Practices**

Strategic Directions


Conservation and Protection of the Environment


Climate Resilience


Inclusive and Accessible


Connectivity for People and Wildlife


Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing


Support Communities


Cultural Landscapes


Safety and Security


Economic Resilience


Innovation

How is *Connect* Addressing the Challenges?

Action 1
Protect and Enhance
Address protection of the environment, biodiversity and the tree canopy.

Action 2
Connect and Grow
Address provision of larger multifunctional parks, park development opportunities in underserved areas and increase connectivity.

Action 3
Include and Support
Address supporting communities with park spaces that are multi-generational, multiuse and accessible and help foster community cohesion.

Action 4
Manage and Maintain
Address management of the park system including sustainable funding, standardized maintenance and partnerships to increase safety.

What is *Connect's* response?

Chapter 3
Connecting with the Ecological Network, Urban Forest and Cultural Landscapes

Chapter 4
Connecting Neighbourhoods to Parks

Chapter 5
Connecting People to Parks

Chapter 6
Development Connections: Utilities and Infrastructure

How will *Connect* be implemented?

Chapter 7
Implementing *Connect*

1.6 Strategic Directions

Connect presents the following ten strategic directions, which capture what Calgarians value about their **park system**. Each of these directions supports the future improvement of the **park system** to create cherished places that connect us to **nature**, our heritage and one another. These strategic directions are not listed in order of priority and do not provide any specific policy guidance. Their success will be measured through the metrics presented in Chapter 7.



Conservation and Protection of the Environment

Improve, enhance and support **nature conservation**, wildlife protection and **biodiversity** by taking a **nature-based approach**, using the best practices of **ecological network** planning to balance the environment with other social and economic factors in city building decisions.



Climate Resilience

Build a resilient city that can accommodate drought, flood, extreme heat and cold events to reduce negative impacts to property and Calgarians.



Inclusive and Accessible

Ensure that the **park system** meets the needs of all Calgarians through the provision of parks and **amenities** that address **barriers** to access and incorporate **barrier-free design**.



Connectivity for People and Wildlife

Strengthen connection to the **park system** by supporting different travel options for Calgarians. Support connectivity through **natural areas** to provide space for wildlife movement.



Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing

Develop and manage parks that support physical and mental health and active lifestyles of Calgarians through public recreation and sports **amenities**, multi-use **passive recreation** amenities and access to **nature** opportunities.



Support Communities

Support the stewardship of the **park system** and provide communal spaces to foster neighbourhood gathering, **events** and a sense of connectedness.



Cultural Landscapes

Conserve and protect **cultural landscapes** (Indigenous, recent heritage, archaeological) and continue to build relationships and work together with Indigenous peoples to incorporate traditional and ancestral knowledge, management and places for ceremony in the **park system**.



Safety and Security

Reduce user conflicts in the **park system** through design, education and regulation; and partner with community service groups to address mental health and encampment issues.



Economic Resilience

Pursue financial **sustainability** and an **equitable** distribution of resources by providing a high-quality **park system** with **multifunctional** value and operational efficiency through a standard level of service maintenance.



Innovation

Promote forward-looking practices and data-based decision making in park provision, design and management.

1.7 Key Actions

Connect's ten strategic directions define what Calgarians value in their **park system** and what they want it to achieve. To address these strategic directions and the challenges identified through internal and public engagement, research, spatial analysis, and a review of best practices, four themes of action were developed: Protect and Enhance, Connect and Grow, Include and Support, and Manage and Maintain. Chapters 3 to 7 address these challenges through policy direction and operational actions.

Action 1

Protect and Enhance

Address protection of the environment, **biodiversity** and the tree **canopy**.

Challenges

Natural Area Protection

- Development and human activity near or within **natural areas** can create challenges such as **habitat** fragmentation, **biodiversity** shifts and disruptions to wildlife movement.
- Lack of awareness on appropriate uses within **natural areas** is resulting in an imbalance between human use and **habitat** health.
- Gaps in connectivity in the **ecological network** need to be addressed. A healthy **natural system** is a priority for Calgarians. Connectivity of natural **habitats** is important to provide space for wildlife movement and is the foundation of **ecological network** planning.
- Providing greater environmental protection measures through the development process will play a key role in supporting **biodiversity**, **habitat** health and connectivity.

Climate Resilience

- The **urban forest** is an important climate tool to reduce heat, capture stormwater and filter air, but is difficult to grow and maintain in Calgary. Currently, only 30 per cent of the **canopy** is on public land, whereas 70 per cent is on private land. Investment in tree planting will be required to reach a citywide **canopy** target of 16 per cent by the end of 2060.
- Competition for space between development, roads and utility right-of-ways, parks and other needs reduces the availability of lands for tree **canopy**.
- Smaller parks have limited space to accommodate recreational needs while also supporting stormwater management.
- Supporting and investing in **naturalization** is important for operational efficiency and **climate adaptation**. Our *BiodiverCity* outlines a target of restoring 20 per cent (832 hectares) of Calgary's **open space** by 2025. To date, just over half (53 per cent) of this target has been reached.
- As climate change impacts become more frequent and intense, **natural areas** are at risk of significant damage. Shifting seasons, drought and higher average temperatures threaten the health and well-being of vegetation and some parks **programming**. Park landscaping and design needs to plan for and incorporate adaptation measures to address these challenges.

Action 2

Connect and Grow

Address provision of larger **multifunctional parks**, park development opportunities in underserved areas and increase connectivity.

Challenges

Provision and Access

- Calgary has over 2,900 parks and 96 per cent of Calgarians live within 400 metres of a park, however, some Calgarians report that they do not have sufficient access to parks and there are not enough parks in their **neighbourhoods**.
- Parks that people are nearest to are not always the ones that they need or can use. These parks often have a single function such as a playground that only serve a small percentage of people within a limited age group.
- 40 per cent of parks in the **park system** are under 0.4 hectares. This is insufficient to provide an **amenity** mix that meets the needs of a diverse population in terms of multifunctionality.

Connectivity

- Calgarians value being able to recreate by moving in and between different areas of the **park system**. Connections to and between parks are sometimes missing or inconsistent.
- There is a lack of mobility options to support access to **regional parks**.
- **Linear parks** that support stormwater and other utility infrastructure often fail to adequately accommodate pedestrian movement and comfort.

Action 3

Include and Support

Address supporting communities with park spaces that are multi-generational, multiuse, **accessible** and help foster community cohesion.

Challenges

Design

- Many common **amenities** within parks do not serve people of different ages, interests or abilities. There is not enough supporting **infrastructure** such as washrooms, drinking fountains and seating to provide comfort, dignity and places to rest.
- Some Calgarians cannot get to, or participate in parks, due to physical, economic and social **barriers**. **Universal design** and increased accessibility by different modes of travel, increased winter maintenance and **accessible amenities** are key needs to support year-round use and access.
- People want parks to support a sense of place and belonging. Calgarians expressed there are not enough gathering spaces and supporting **amenities** for them to celebrate and spend time with family and friends. Only 18 per cent of parks have picnic tables, and of the 18 per cent, 50 per cent are in **regional parks** which limits the amount of gathering spaces within **neighbourhoods**.

Cultural Landscapes

- Parks are not always planned with respect to Indigenous peoples and traditions.
- Improvements need to be made to support a more **inclusive** development process, including engagement, relationship building and collaboration to create a more **inclusive park system**.
- There is a general misunderstanding about what are considered **cultural landscapes** and their purpose.

Action 4

Manage and Maintain

Address management of the **park system**, including **sustainable** funding, standardized maintenance and partnerships to increase safety.

Challenges

Maintenance and Operation

- The amount of park land to be maintained has increased by 25 per cent, while operating budgets have only increased by 12 per cent over the last 10 years.
- A lack of desired **amenities** in **local parks** results in challenges in **regional parks**, including overcrowding, increased maintenance costs and limited access to **amenities** in those areas.
- Maintaining many small, underused **local parks** is costly and inefficient, which leads to lower standards of maintenance being provided across the system.
- Some Calgarians are experiencing a sense of inequity in park investment and management in relation to the **amenities** being provided, access to **natural areas** and tree **canopy** benefits. This is made worse by the volume of parks with aging **amenities** that cannot be prioritized for replacement due to underuse.
- Increased park use is spreading invasive species, with people as the main carriers. Invasive species have the second biggest impact to **biodiversity** after **habitat** loss. An increasing amount of time and money is required for management of regulated weeds, and other assorted pests.

Safety

- There is a lack of understanding on appropriate park usage leading to safety issues among cyclists, pedestrians and dog owners.
- **Habitat** fragmentation and increased human usage of **natural areas** increases the potential for wildlife conflict. In 2014 there were 16 reported bear encounters versus 65 in 2023. Similarly, there were 22 encounters with cougars in 2014 versus 56 in 2023.
- Social disorder and vandalism reduce usage of parks. 34 per cent of Calgarians said that they have either directly experienced or witnessed an unsafe situation in a City park according to the *2023 Pulse on Parks* survey.
- The increased presence of encampments has created a real and perceived perception that parks are unsafe. There is currently no parks-wide strategy to address the relocation of encampments for the safety of people experiencing vulnerabilities and park users.

Chapter 2
Understanding the Park System



2.1 Components of the Park System

This chapter outlines the different components of the **park system**, the role that different park types play within the system, and how parks are acquired and maintained.

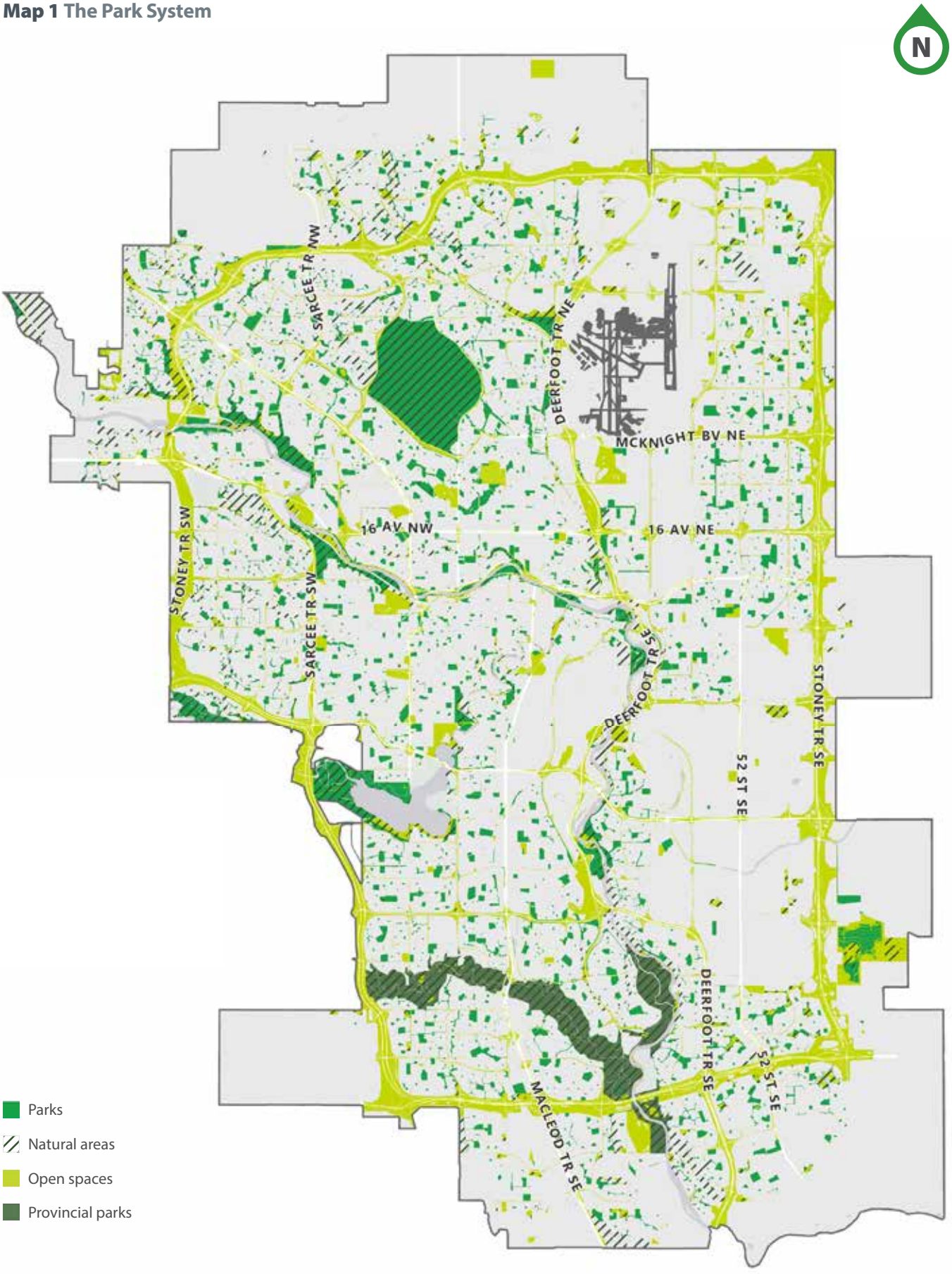
The **park system** is comprised of parks, **natural areas** and **open space**. Each component has unique functions and characteristics.

Figure 2.1 The Park System at a Glance



Figure 2.1 outlines the concept of the park system as the overarching framework which reflects all the public spaces that support Calgarians ability to recreate and to access nature and the larger public realm. Within the park system there are three categories: parks, natural areas and open space. Parks include the different park types as well as Joint Use and community association sites. Natural areas include lands with significant habitat protected with the designation natural area, environmental reserve and conservation reserve as well as lands that are naturalized. Open space are lands that have a primary utilitarian purpose but have a secondary benefit of providing recreation, sport or access to the environment. The ecological network, urban forest and cultural landscapes are identified as elements within all park system categories.

Map 1 The Park System



Parks

Parks are formalized spaces located across the city which provide active and **passive recreation** opportunities, and access to **nature** and cultural experiences. Parks are organized by the type, role and purpose they serve within the **park system**.

Land within the **park system** is acquired in several ways. Land dedication of **municipal reserve** and **municipal school reserve** occurs during the development process, in accordance with provincial legislation. Other times land may be acquired through purchase, donation or conversion of other City-owned land to park space.

Regional Parks

Regional parks are typically large or significant parks, featuring unique **amenities** or experiences, which serve multiple **neighbourhoods** or are a citywide attraction. They are designed to support longer visits by patrons, as they commonly feature specialized services or activities and provide supporting **infrastructure**, including parking and washrooms.

Regional parks are established to serve residents according to the need for **equitable** access to regional-scale **amenities**, or to protect, complement and provide access to a significant environmental features. They are typically acquired via purchase or donation but are sometimes complemented by reserve dedication.



Local Parks

Local parks within **neighbourhoods** are intended to serve local needs and should be **accessible** by walking and **wheeling**. There are several different park types within the **local park** category, each serving a different role and collectively are used to address the **amenity** and service needs of **neighbourhoods**:

- **Joint Use Sites** – accommodate schools and **playfields**.
- **Neighbourhood Parks** – the central park 'hub' of a **neighbourhood**.
- **Sub-neighbourhood Parks** – provide supporting **amenities** which may not be located within **neighbourhood parks**.
- **Linear Parks** – spaces that connect parks, schools and activity areas within **neighbourhoods**.
- **Community Association Sites** – places for organized **neighbourhood** gatherings.

Since the 1960s, **local parks** have been acquired by The City through developer **municipal reserve** obligations when new **neighbourhoods** are developed. However, donations and purchases were common methods of acquisition prior to that time and are still occasionally used today.

The Municipal Government Act entitles municipalities to require developers to provide reserve lands for public benefit. During the subdivision process, The City requires dedication of **municipal reserve** and/or **municipal school reserve** of 10 per cent of the developable land proposed in a subdivision application. Such land is typically used to provide space for local needs and **amenities** such as schools, **playfields**, **community association sites** and parks. **Municipal reserve** may also be used to support regional needs for high school sites and regional **athletic parks**. These types of reserve lands are held in trust by The City and the three local school boards (The Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Separate School District and FrancoSud), in accordance with the Joint Use and Planning Agreement. The City's *Municipal Development Plan* provides additional direction on the dedication and use of reserve land.

Plazas

Plazas are unique, typically hardscaped parks that provide space for pedestrian movement and opportunities for primarily **passive recreation** activities. **Plazas** also support civic functions and **events**, including festivals, concerts, markets and exhibitions; therefore, they require supporting **infrastructure** such as potable water and washrooms.

Natural Areas

Natural areas are lands which have either been left in a natural state, rehabilitated to a near-natural state, or naturalized. The primary role of these lands is environmental protection, which supports **biodiversity**, **habitats** and the **ecological network**. They contribute to **climate adaptation** by reducing heat and supporting stormwater management, and **climate mitigation** through pollution reduction, carbon capture and sequestration. **Natural areas** also have a lower maintenance cost than the manicured areas of the **park system**. Common examples include wetlands, forests, prairie grasslands and **riparian areas**.

Environmental reserve is dedicated to The City during the subdivision process when development lands are considered undevelopable, due to slope instability, risk of flooding, or for protection of the natural environment in alignment with the provisions of the *Municipal Government Act*. **Environmental reserve** lands are typically required to preserve natural features, prevent pollution, ensure public access to water bodies and/or prevent development of land where the natural features of the land would present a significant risk of personal injury or property damage.

Per the *Municipal Government Act*, **Environmentally Significant Areas** may be protected as **conservation reserve** through the subdivision process; however, this sort of reserve differs from the other reserve dedications in that The City must identify, delineate and purchase these such lands from the developer at fair market value.



Open Space

Open space is land that has a primarily utilitarian purpose or provides a recreational activity with managed access, but has a secondary purpose that provides recreation, sport or environmental functions. Examples include roadway greens, **public utility lots**, transportation and utility corridors, and regional **amenities** such as regional sport fields, **athletic parks**, cemeteries and **public golf courses**. **Open space** may include lands that are not owned or managed by The City. **Open space** includes:

- Utility Rights-of-Way (URW)
- **Public Utility Lots** (PUL)
- **Boulevards**
- Roadside Greens
- Roundabouts
- **Regional Amenities** (e.g., regional sports fields, **athletic parks**, cemeteries, **public golf courses**)
- Transportation and Utility Corridors (TUC)



The **ecological network**, **urban forest** and **cultural landscapes** are elements that are located across the **park system**, but also exist outside of it as well.

The Ecological Network

The **ecological network** consists of lands of ecological value primarily including **natural areas** and the river corridors, but are also supported by parks and **open space**. They exist within both developed and undeveloped areas of the city. Identification and protection of the **ecological network** forms the first layer of planning decisions when considering development. The City's *Municipal Development Plan* identifies policies for the protection and expansion of the **ecological network**, most of which are ultimately contained within the **park system**. *Connect* ensures their appropriate ongoing management. The **ecological network** is also located on private property, road rights of way, and civic sites, which play a role in supporting connectivity within the network.

Urban Forest

The **urban forest** is a critical component of healthy, beautiful and livable communities. It supports the wellness of residents, **climate resilience**, provides **habitat** for wildlife and helps to mitigate the effects of urban heat islands. The **urban forest** is made up of trees and shrubs on all public and private lands in the city. 30 per cent of the **urban forest** is located on public land, including **boulevard** trees, trees within parks and tree stands in **natural areas**. The remaining 70 per cent of the **urban forest** is on privately-owned land and relies upon landowners for its survival. The *Municipal Development Plan* calls for The City to grow the urban tree **canopy** to between 14 and 20 per cent by 2060. *Connect* supports the growth, protection and enhancement of the **urban forest** within all areas of the **park system**, and provides direction to achieve the City's target for growth and protection.

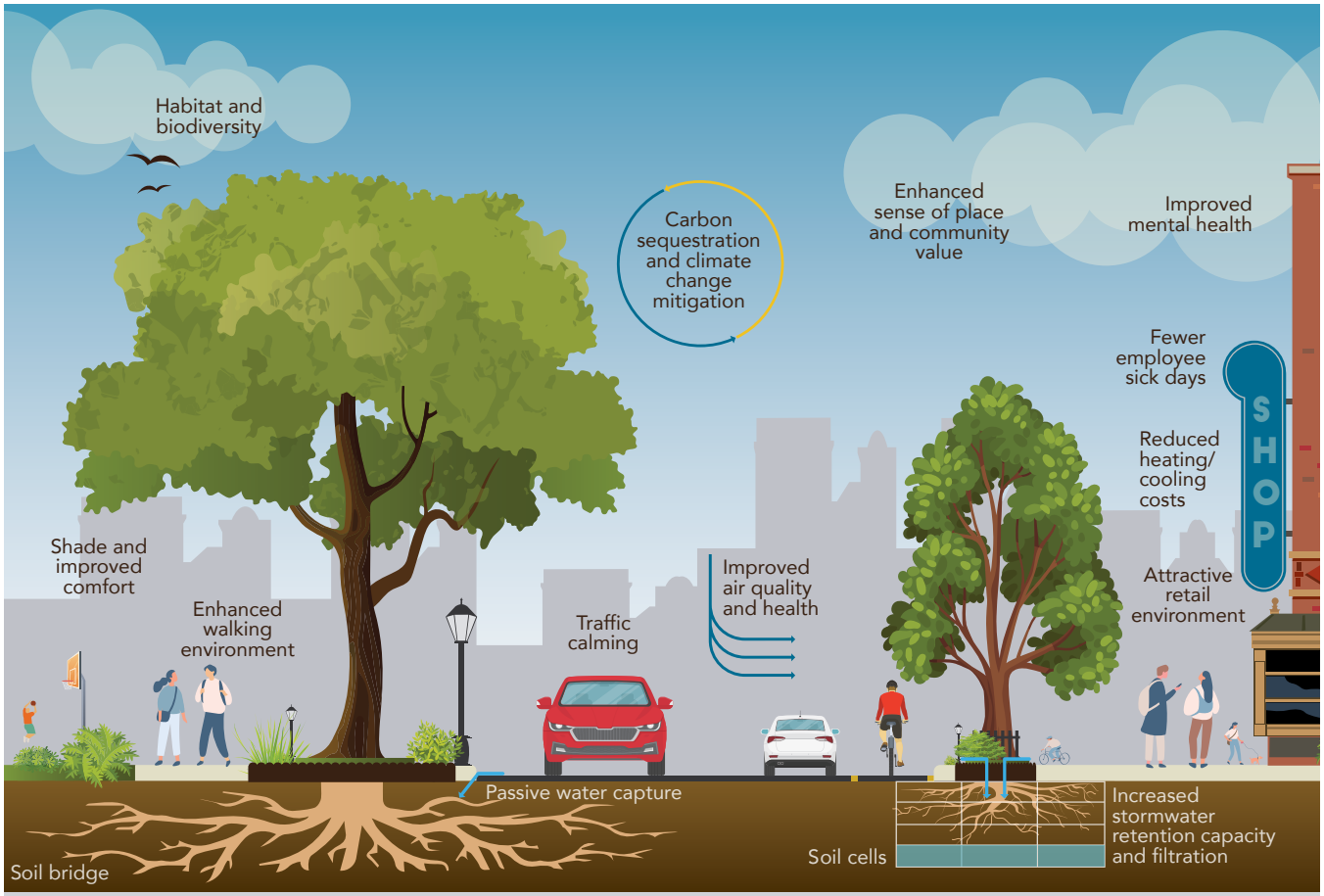
Cultural Landscapes

Cultural landscapes are culturally and historically significant lands that provide spaces to connect us to our past and a rich, multi-faceted cultural identity. The **park system** plays a key role in protecting lands significant to **Indigenous peoples** or lands that have other historical and archaeological significance. These lands are sensitive to human impacts and the pressures of development. Proactive protection and management are critical for their protection and the celebration of these places now and in the future.





Figure 2.2 The Benefits of the Urban Forest



Additional benefits include:

- Erosion control/bank stabilization
- Wind and noise buffer
- Aesthetic and beautification
- Cultural and spiritual
- Connection to nature
- Social strengthening
- Recreation
- Crime reduction
- Privacy
- Food production

2.2 Maintaining the Park System

Appropriate and **equitable** park maintenance is an important factor in ensuring the ongoing use and enjoyment of the city's **park system** for all Calgarians. Well maintained parks contribute to the sense of place, comfort, safety and ownership necessary to connect people to them.

Parks are maintained according to an established 'Customer Level of Service' tool that sets maintenance standards and expectations for each of the different park types and the **amenities** within them. Further detail is provided on the current levels of service in Chapter 7. Parks are inspected annually and given a score which indicates their current condition compared to the desired standard. Investment in maintenance and upkeep is adjusted according to areas of greatest need throughout the system and available resources. **Regional parks** are maintained to a higher standard than **local parks**, as they contain specialized **amenities** and experience greater use and visitation. **Local parks** and **playfields** are all maintained to the same standard, with investment varying, based on usage.

Natural areas require unique maintenance and investment considerations to ensure their ongoing health and viability. The **habitat** condition of **natural areas** is inspected and evaluated every five years or following major restorations that may change their condition. Depending on the condition of the **natural area**, potential considerations include restoration, reduced public access and specialized mowing and weed management.



2.3 Complementary Lands

In addition to the **park system's** parks, **natural areas** and **open space**, there are other public spaces in Calgary that support recreation, sports and environmental functions which complement the park system. They include but are not limited to recreation facilities, university campuses, residents association sites, Calgary Municipal Land Corporation urban spaces, The Calgary Zoo, Heritage Park and other **publicly accessible private open space**.







Chapter 3
Connecting with The Ecological Network, Urban Forest and Cultural Landscapes



3.1 Introduction

The **ecological network**, **urban forest**, and **cultural landscapes** are important components of the **park system** that extend past its formal boundaries. It is not the intent of this chapter to elevate these components above the **park system**, but rather clarify that they are different because they may be located on other lands. Policies in *Connect* specifically address these components in relation to the **park system** only. Protection and enhancement of the **ecological network** and **urban forest** supports environmental **conservation**, resulting in a city that is more climate resilient with healthy, well-connected **habitats**. Access to natural environments and protected **cultural landscapes** also supports community building, civic pride, and individual physical and mental health.

Outcomes

- **The health and protection of the ecological network is prioritized in planning and management decisions within the park system.**
- **Biodiversity is improved, wildlife corridors are connected and habitat health is enhanced.**
- **The park system is more resilient to environmental shocks and changes.**
- **Underutilized parks and open space are naturalized, decreasing operational costs and increasing public access to nature.**
- **The urban forest is expanded in appropriate habitats to meet The City's canopy targets.**
- **Growing conditions have been improved.**
- **The urban forest is more sustainable and healthier.**
- **Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing is incorporated into the stewardship and management of cultural landscapes based on collaboration with The City.**
- **The management of cultural landscapes meets or exceeds regulatory requirements.**
- **Increased public awareness of Calgary's cultural landscapes.**
- **Waterbodies are healthier and more resilient.**

Strategic directions this chapter aligns to:



Conservation and Protection of the Environment



Climate Resilience



Inclusive and Accessible



Connectivity for People and Wildlife



Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing



Support Communities



Cultural Landscapes



Safety and Security



Economic Resilience



Innovation

3.2 Ecological Network

The **ecological network** forms the backbone of a resilient city, supporting **biodiversity,** ecosystems and diverse species. It improves the quality of life within the city by providing access to **nature** and supporting cleaner air, land and water.

Policies

Protect

a. Ensure that the protection of the **ecological network** takes priority over other uses and activities in the **park system**.

b. Maintain the **park system** to prevent the degradation of **natural areas**.



Enhance

c. **Environmentally significant areas** should be protected throughout the development process using available tools, such as environmental and conservation reserves. Lands not meeting **Environmental Reserve** criteria may be acquired as **Conservation Reserve**, at The City's discretion and if funding allows.

d. Enhance the **park system** for ecosystem connectivity, **biodiversity**, wildlife and **habitat conservation** and **climate resilience** outcomes.

e. Prioritize the **conservation** and restoration of **natural areas** in the **ecological network**.

f. Naturalize areas of parks and **open space** adjacent to **natural areas**.

3.3 Urban Forest

The **urban forest** is an important asset for the city. In addition to supporting **climate resilience**, it serves as a public **amenity**, contributing towards the health and wellbeing of Calgarians. To meet the citywide urban tree **canopy** target, The City, development industry and Calgarians all have a role to play in maintaining, protecting and growing the **urban forest**.

Figure 3.1 The urban forest is varied in terms of species diversity and tree location



Policies

Support and Expand

a. Build a resilient and **sustainable urban forest** on City-owned land that can tolerate and continue to thrive in future climatic conditions by ensuring:

1. Suitable space above and below ground for a full lifecycle of the tree to occur;
2. Alignment of species with **growing media**, including **soil** volumes, suitable water movement, gas exchange and **soil** quality;
3. Increasing species diversity and large canopied trees to enhance resiliency and reach **canopy** targets;
4. Adaptability of species selection in response to environmental events and changing climate;
5. Support for the use of innovative engineered **soil** profiles and technologies, watering practices, or other related technologies for enhanced **sustainability**; and
6. Identification of sites for planting **micro forests** to enhance **canopy** density.

b. Ensure a no net loss of urban **canopy** on public land during the development process.

c. Support the planting and maintenance of the **urban forest** on city-owned land.

d. Focus future tree planting in the **park system** where tree species are appropriate, prioritizing areas where inequity in tree **canopy** cover has been identified, where the urban heat island effect is greater than other areas and conditions are conducive to tree growth.

Development and Redevelopment

e. Encourage the retention of existing mature **canopy** located on private lands and incorporate tree retention in the development of new communities.

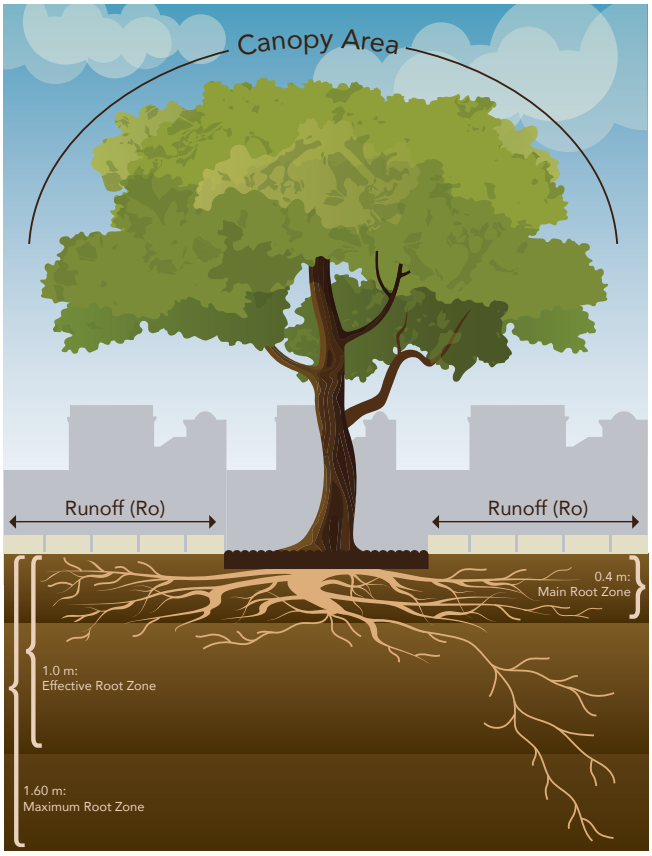
f. Protect, enhance and create **sustainable** tree growing environments throughout the development process.

g. Where existing **public trees** cannot be protected, compensation must be provided by the party responsible based on the approved monetary compensation model.

h. A Tree Protection Plan for **public trees** must be submitted and approved by The City, prior to development activity including excavation, storage of construction material or access routes for people and equipment where the activity is proposed within 6 metres of an existing **public tree** or its drip line (whichever is greater).

i. The City should encourage new planting and tree preservation on private lands, through partnerships and incentives.

Figure 3.2 Extent of a trees structure within a boulevard



3.4 Cultural Landscapes

Cultural landscapes are places with historical or cultural significance. Like other historic resources, **cultural landscapes** connect people with their past and identity. **Cultural landscape conservation** is considered a vital component of city building, as they contribute to great communities by enhancing sense of place, providing unique experiences and supporting well-being on multiple levels (e.g., mental, physical, emotional, spiritual). **Cultural landscapes** in Calgary generally fall into three categories: landscapes significant to **Indigenous peoples**, landscapes with archaeological resources (precontact and post-contact), and landscapes of recent history (post-contact). **Cultural landscapes** are managed to provide unique and authentic experiences, to celebrate the land on which Calgary sits, and to enhance the lives of Calgarians and visitors alike.

Policies

Advance Indigenous Priorities

a. The City may collaborate with **Indigenous peoples** to identify culturally significant Indigenous landscapes.

b. Culturally significant Indigenous landscapes may be managed with guidance from **Indigenous peoples**.

c. The City may collaborate with **Indigenous peoples** to advance the applicable calls to action identified in the *White Goose Flying* report.

d. Support the traditional Indigenous presence on land in the **park system** including ceremonial, recreational, sport, cultural, artistic, harvesting, healing commemorative, social and environmental activities.

Ensure Compliance

e. **Cultural landscapes** should be identified by The City via a bi-annual review of the Alberta Culture Archaeological Data.

f. The City should develop an Archaeological Framework to manage landscapes with archaeological resources.

Integrate Best Practices

g. The City should legally protect **cultural landscapes** within the **park system** as municipal historic resources as outlined in *Alberta's Historic Resources Act*.

h. The City should develop site-specific management plans to direct **cultural landscape conservation** measures and ensure the significance and integrity of **cultural landscapes** are conserved, based on Indigenous Traditional and Ancestral Knowledge, the *Alberta Historic Resource Act* and the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*.

i. **Cultural landscapes** should be integrated into all relevant site-specific management plans, where required (e.g., **Habitat Management Plans**, **regional park** management plans, standard operating procedures).

Enhance Experience

j. Encourage the development of park vistors' awareness of the **cultural landscape** through increased education opportunities.

Development and Redevelopment

k. Development and redevelopment of **cultural landscape** sites within the **park system** should comply with *White Goose Flying Report, Alberta's Historic Resources Act*, and *The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*.

l. All interventions on **cultural landscapes** in the **park system** require approval from The City.

m. Development of **cultural landscapes** within the **park system** requires collaboration with City subject matter experts on conceptual design and construction processes to ensure long-term **cultural landscape conservation**.

n. Upon submission of Historic Resource Impact Assessments ensure all documentation are reviewed by The City to assess opportunities for conservation of archaeological resources within the **park system**.

o. Where archaeological sites are partially or wholly conserved in the **park system**, an Avoidance Plan and Conservation Strategy must be developed and approved in consultation with The City for the **cultural landscape conservation** of archaeological resources.

3.5 Operational Actions

See Chapter 7 for details on timelines, financial impacts, and implementation.

Ecological Network

a. Develop and implement a strategy for **naturalization** on city-owned land within the **ecological network**.

Urban Forest

b. Establish a cross departmental committee to focus on expanding the **urban forest** and provide adequate staff to support the committee and coordinate the implementation of identified actions.

c. Increase investment and prioritize planting, in collaboration with other business units, in areas of Calgary with growing limitations to address tree inequity.

d. Deploy a public measurement to assess and report on tree **canopy** coverage and **equity**.

e. Plant 1.3 million trees on public land over the next 10 years.

Cultural Landscapes

f. Provide adequate staff to support the identification, conservation, and celebration of **cultural landscapes**. Provide operational and cross-corporate support to track and report on progress.

g. Co-create a **Park System Guiding Circle** to address and advise on the management of the **park system**.

h. Finalize an Archaeological Resources Framework.

i. Establish and utilize a **cultural landscape** dataset.

j. Develop guidelines for the education and interpretation of **cultural landscapes** for children that are aligned with the Alberta Education curriculum.





Chapter 4
Connecting Neighbourhoods to Parks



4.1 Introduction

A goal of *Connect* is to create a well-connected **park system** that provides access to recreation, sport and environment functions. The City strives to ensure that **neighbourhoods** have enough of the right type of park space; however, as the city grows and densifies, pressure on the **park system** will increase. Therefore it is important to protect and improve existing parks so that more people are able to enjoy them. Applying consistent metrics to park provision helps ensure that design, management and land stewardship decisions create an **inclusive**, **equitable** and connected **park system**. *Connect* uses best practices in park planning to outline provision measures, ensuring all Calgarians have access to an adequate quantity of parks with varied functions.

This chapter outlines a hierarchy of parks to ensure the adequate quantity and functionality of parks during planning. The park typologies will guide the development and redevelopment of parks, resulting in a well-designed, **accessible** system that meets **neighbourhood** preferences.

Outcomes

- **Access to recreation, sport and environment functions are equitably provided to Calgarians across the park system.**
- **Parks are integrated and well connected within the urban landscape and are accessible by active transportation options such as walking, wheeling and cycling.**
- **Parks are a hub of community life, providing cohesion, a sense of place and stewardship.**
- **Park development and redevelopment is driven by spatial data and best practices.**
- **Parks are multifunctional and operationally sustainable.**
- **Natural areas are protected.**
- **Biodiversity is improved, wildlife corridors are connected and habitat health is sustained and enhanced.**

Strategic directions this chapter aligns to:



Conservation and Protection of the Environment



Climate Resilience



Inclusive and Accessible



Connectivity for People and Wildlife



Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing



Support Communities



Cultural Landscapes



Safety and Security



Economic Resilience



Innovation

4.2 Local Parks

Local parks within **neighbourhoods** are intended to serve local needs and should be **accessible** by walking and **wheeling**. They are essential components of urban living that contribute to healthy communities and **climate resilience**. Parks are primarily acquired through land dedication during the development process, but they are also acquired through purchase, donation, or the conversion of other City-owned land. Acquiring land outside of the development process is difficult due to cost, availability and competing interests. As the city grows, pressure increases on the **park system** due to increased demand. The application of consistent park provision metrics informs design, management and land stewardship decisions that lead to an **inclusive**, **equitable** and connected **park system**.



4.2.1 Quantity

The City's *Municipal Development Plan* includes park provision metrics which aim for 2 hectares of **local parks** per 1,000 people in each community.

To provide consistent, city-wide comparison, park provision metrics only consider **local parks** except in **Greater Downtown**, as they are the only park type that exist in all residential communities. As **regional parks**, **natural areas** and **environmental reserve** can only be established situationally, do not appear in many communities, and attract users from a vastly larger catchment area, they are not included in provision calculations.

Beyond park provision metrics, the context of a community, including access to park space and park functionality within a reasonable proximity, should be considered when prioritizing resources to address deficiency, city-wide.

Park space is measured differently in **Greater Downtown**. The historical development of the **Greater Downtown** area as a commercial office space and tourism destination meant that its parks were developed to support more intensive regional use. As residents of downtown share these parks with other visitors, both regional and **local parks** are part of the quantity calculation.

Policies

Park quantity is measured by hectares of park space per 1,000 people by community boundary:

a. The target for **local park** provision in a community is 2 hectares per 1,000 people.

b. The target for park provision (local and regional) in the **Greater Downtown** is 1 hectare per 1,000 people.

c. Gaps or an undersupply of **local parks** within a community, where securing additional park space is not practical or feasible, should be resolved in one or more of the following ways:

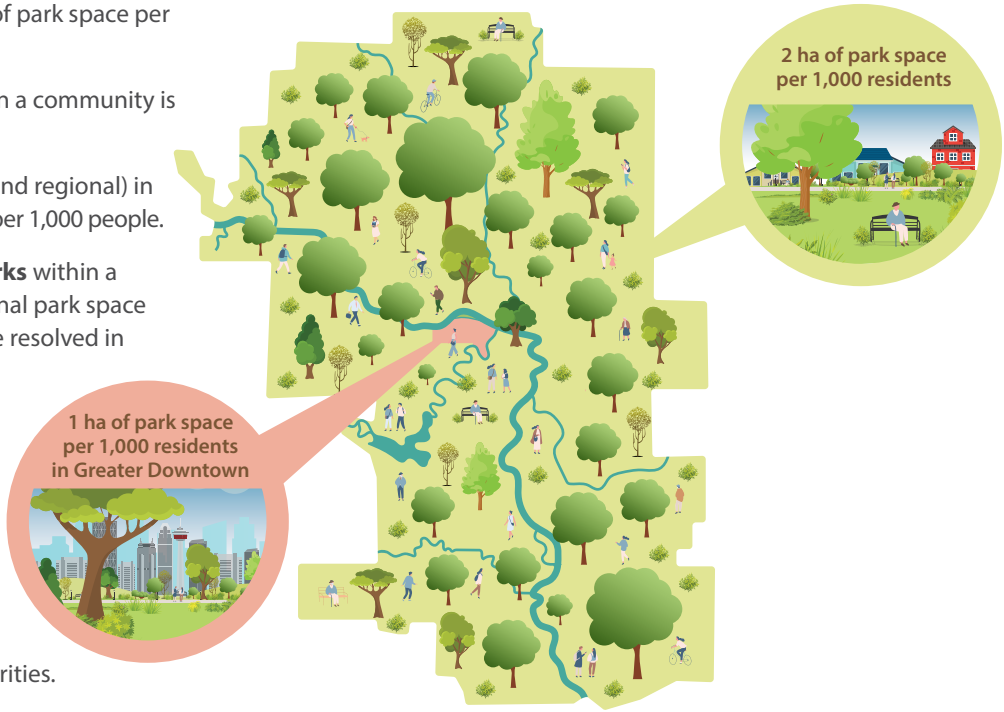
1. Enhance the functionality and quality of existing parks.
2. Improve walking and **wheeling** connections to existing parks.
3. Repurpose other city-owned land and **open space** as parks, where possible, while balancing that need against other City priorities.

d. Parks should not be disposed of, or converted to any other use, unless one or more of the following criteria are met:

1. the size, shape or location of the land renders it unusable for park use; or
2. another strategic interest is deemed a higher priority than the provision of park space by The City and there is no net loss of park functionality serving the existing catchment area.

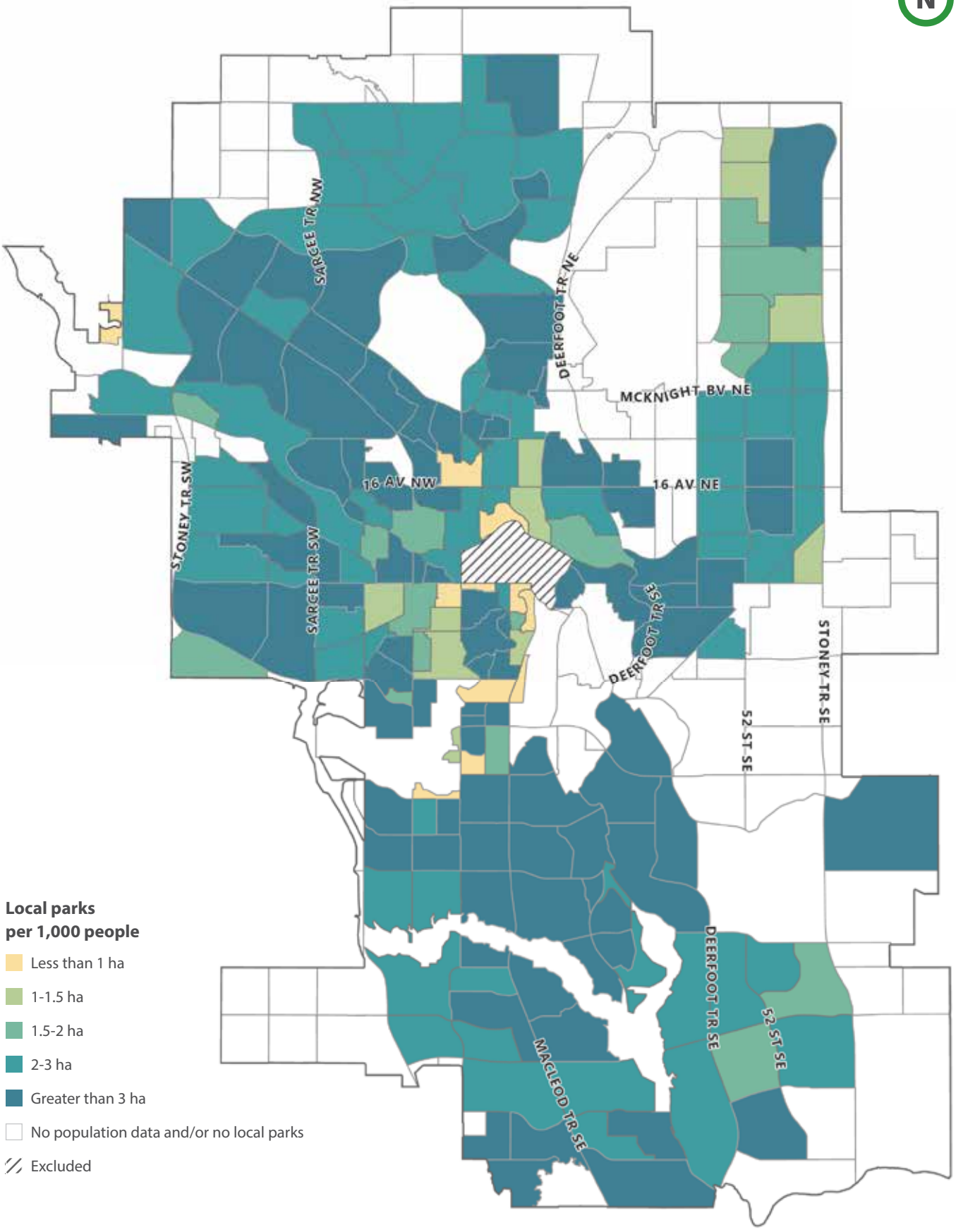
e. **Natural areas** should not be disposed of or converted to any other use.

Figure 4.1 Parks provision per 1,000 people



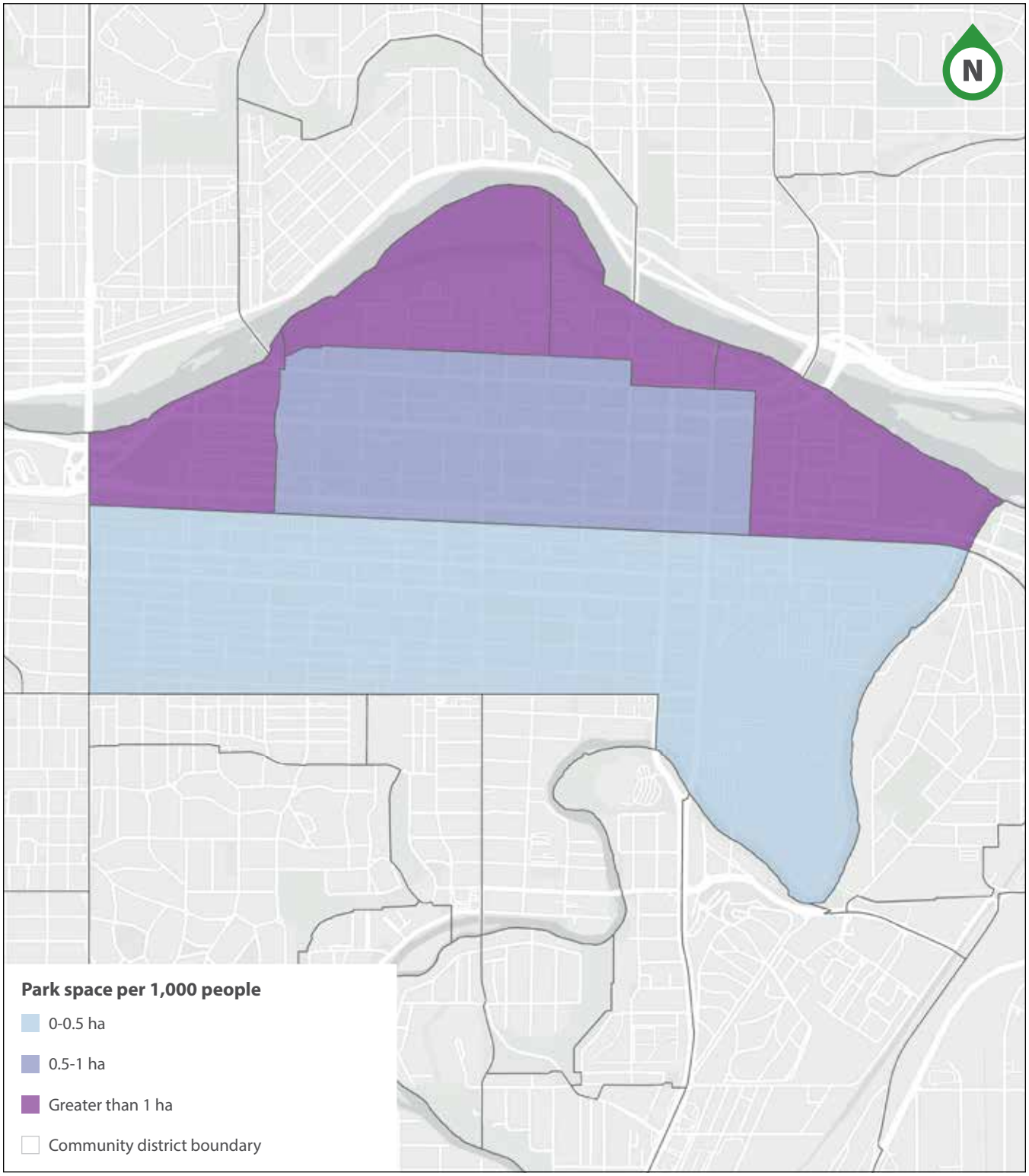
Map 2 Local Park Provision

(hectares/1,000 people)



Map 3 Park Provision in Greater Downtown

(hectares/1,000 people)



4.2.2 Access and Quality

Inclusive parks are those which meet the needs of various user groups and ages. Creating parks which have different functions will help to build an **inclusive** system which caters to different ages, abilities and interests. One of *Connect's* goals is to create **multifunctional parks** that are within 400 metres of residences. Access is measured from all park types including **regional parks** which are multifunctional. These three functions broadly represent the main uses within the **park system**:

1. Recreation function is provided through spaces and **amenities** that support a variety of informal activities which offer opportunities to enjoy passive play, areas to gather and rest, areas to walk, wheel or skate.
2. Sports function is provided through **amenities** that allow for organized sport, which are usually facilitated through a sport surface such as basketball courts, soccer fields and disc golf courses but may also include skate parks and pump tracks.
3. Environment function is provided through spaces that offer a more natural setting; these are not manicured but allow for access to the wild within the city. They can include wetlands, **micro forests** and unmanicured naturalized spaces.

The following is a list of components that make up each park function. This list is not exhaustive, but provides a reference for the type of **amenities** provided under the different functions.

Figure 4.3 The Three Park Functions



Policies

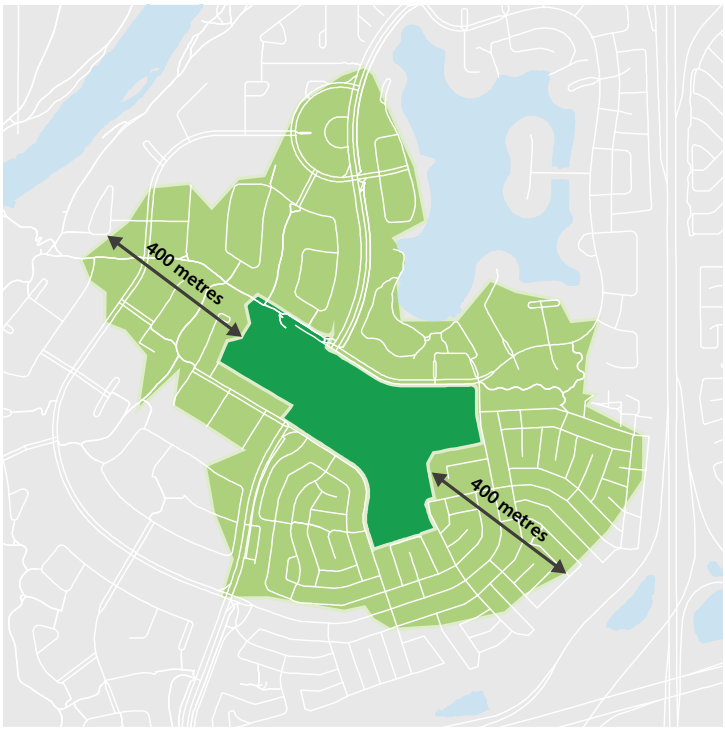
a. A park is considered multifunctional when it supports at least two of the three functions: environment, sports and recreation.

b. A balance of functions should be delivered throughout the park, notwithstanding policy 4.4.e and except for existing or newly identified **natural areas**.

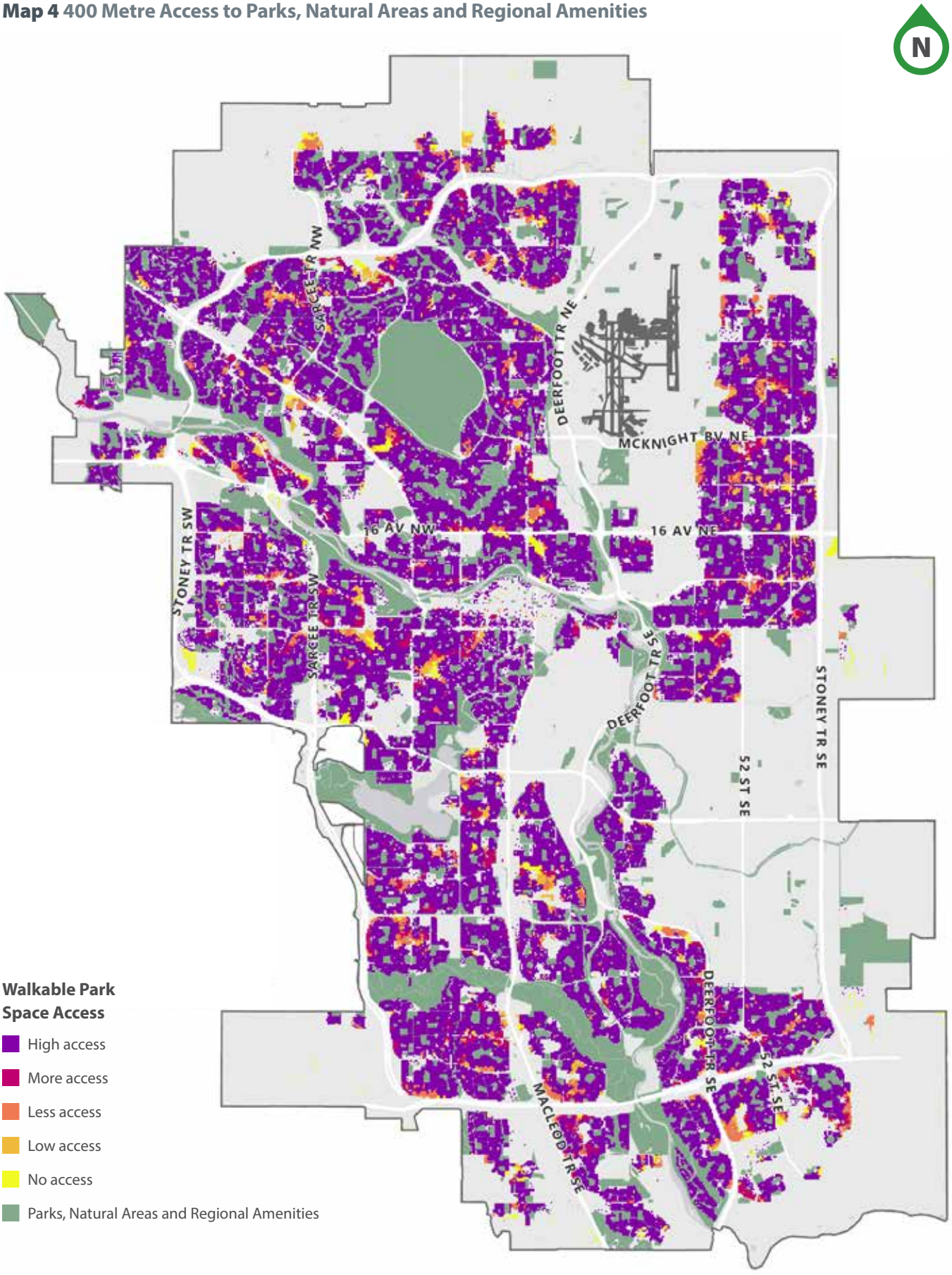
c. Residences should be within a 400 metre pedestrian trip of a **multifunctional park**.

d. Reduce gaps in access to **multifunctional parks** through capital projects and community design.

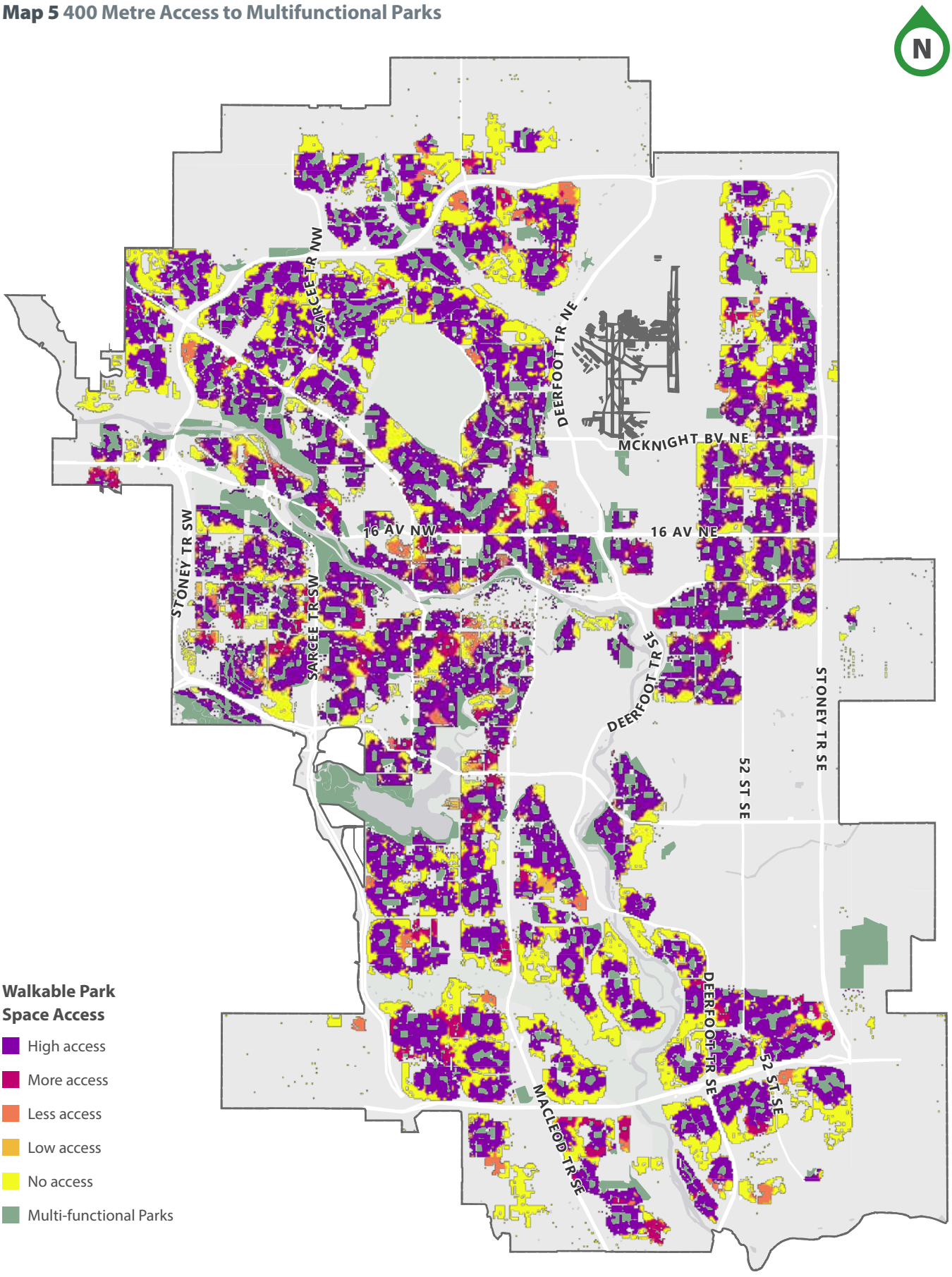
Figure 4.2 400 m Pedestrian Access to a Park



Map 4 400 Metre Access to Parks, Natural Areas and Regional Amenities



Map 5 400 Metre Access to Multifunctional Parks



4.3 Park Provision in New Development Areas

In greenfield areas **local parks** are primarily provided through **municipal reserve** and **municipal school reserve** dedication. Prioritizing **neighbourhood** needs, such as parks and schools, is crucial. **Joint use sites** typically occupy a significant portion of the reserve dedication, leaving the rest for **local parks**. To utilize reserve land effectively, a priority list of park types ensures a well-connected, multifunctional **park system** is provided. Multifunctional **neighbourhood parks** are given top priority, followed by linear and **sub-neighbourhood parks** to improve functionality and accessibility within **neighbourhoods**.

Policies

a. Prioritize connectivity within the **park system** when planning and developing new communities.

Joint Use Sites

b. **Joint use sites** should be provided in alignment with an approved Area Structure Plan or Local Area Plan and in accordance with the *Joint Use Planning Agreement*.

Community Association Sites

c. **Community association sites** should be provided as a component of **municipal reserve** dedication, in alignment with the approved Area Structure Plan or Local Area Plan.

Local Parks

d. **Local parks** should be allocated based on the following priorities:

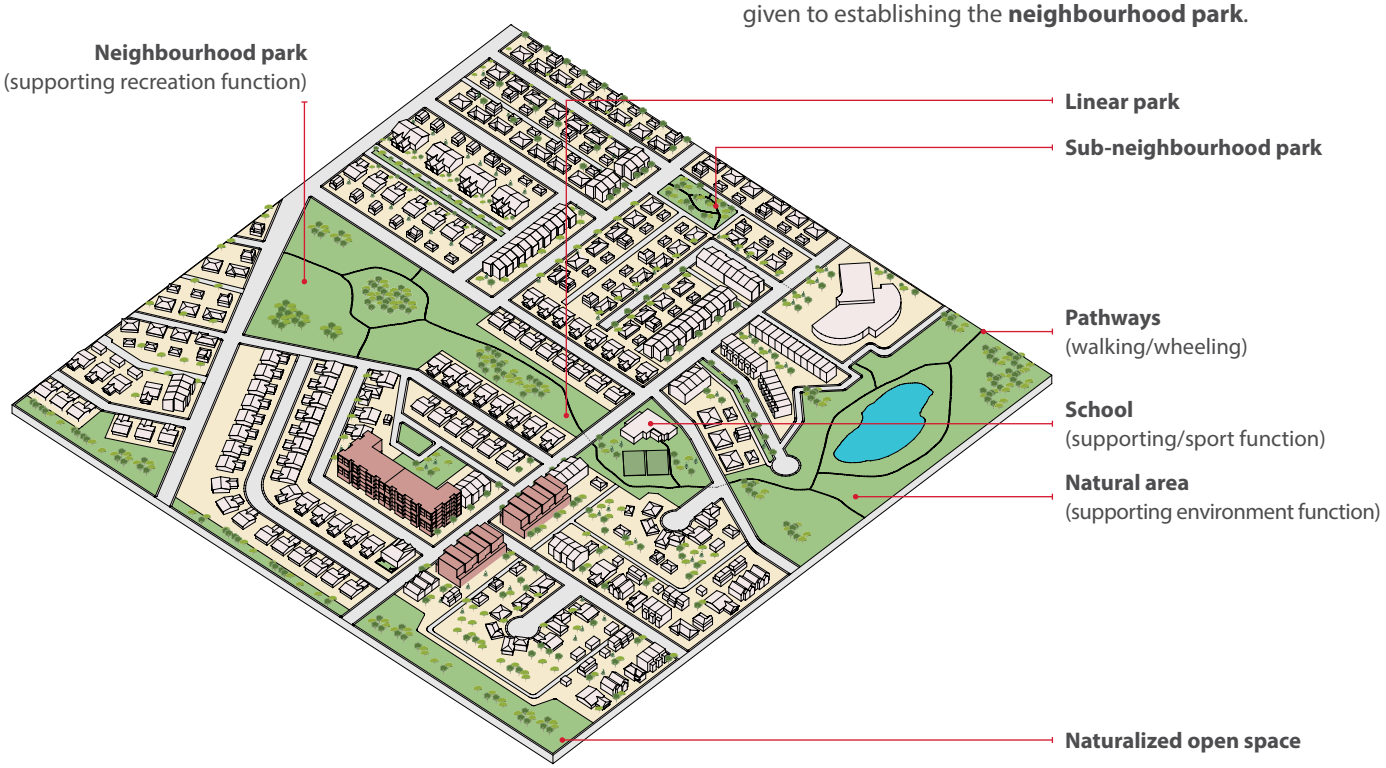
1. the provision of a **multifunctional neighbourhood park** should be prioritized in the **neighbourhood**.
2. use **linear parks** to connect parks, **natural areas**, **open space** and other community destinations.
3. supplement the **park system** in a **neighbourhood** with **sub-neighbourhood parks** to achieve access targets and provide a mix of functions.

e. **Plazas** are an exception to the priority list in policy 4.3.d and may be provided in context specific locations based on the policies in 4.5.5.

f. Provide an **equitable** distribution of **amenities** under each of the park functions.

g. Where meeting the 400-metre access requirement conflicts with providing a **neighbourhood park**, priority should be given to establishing the **neighbourhood park**.

4.4 Example of Park Types Within a Neighbourhood



4.4 Park Provision in Existing Neighbourhoods

In Calgary **neighbourhoods** established before 1968, parks were developed without modern planning regulations, leading to inconsistencies in park availability and **amenities**. As it is challenging to acquire land in existing **neighbourhoods** for new or expanded parks, identifying gaps in park provision during the planning phase is crucial to meet growing demand and demographic changes. Identification of gaps is not intended to limit growth, but ensure that parks are enhanced where provision targets cannot be met. These gaps can be filled through various methods including converting public land, establishing temporary uses (such as temporary road closures) or improving **amenities** in existing parks.

Policies

Planning Parks

a. Desired park functions should be determined based on local need, current and future demographics and **neighbourhood** engagement.

b. Identify capital investment options to address the impact of **intensification** on the capacity of existing parks.

Enhancing Parks

c. Identify existing parks to be enhanced, or provide new parks in areas where residences are deficient in one or more of the three functions.

d. The City should address gaps identified in the provision of **multifunctional parks** by:

1. providing additional functions on existing single function parks, where accessibility gaps exist; or
2. enhancing the walking and **wheeling** connections to provide access to existing **multifunctional parks**.

e. If access gaps exist in areas where there are several small parks that are not suitable for multifunctionality and no larger park space exists, a group of parks within proximity to each other should be comprehensively enhanced to provide different functions.

Figure 4.4 Adding Functionality to Parks



f. Create new park opportunities and enhance the existing **park system** by:

1. targeting acquisition of land, where feasible, in underserved **neighbourhoods** where provision objectives are not being met;
2. converting under-utilized publicly-owned parcels into parks;
3. converting strategically-selected streets to parks or **play streets**;
4. seasonally closing streets and alleys;
5. supporting innovation in the design of **boulevards** and converted **multimodal** linkages to support unstructured play;
6. developing new parks near higher density areas; and
7. utilizing unconventional and innovative space.

g. Where the provision of additional park space as per policy 4.4.f is not feasible, the quality of park space should be enhanced by providing additional **amenities** and **programming** to support more intense usage and multifunctionality.

h. The (re)development and use of parks should incorporate:

1. public engagement input;
2. **accessible**, adaptable and resilient design;
3. the **Calgary Equity Index**;
4. projected climate change impacts;
5. the nature of adjacent **amenities** and parks; and
6. **amenity** provision that meets the needs of residents by being **inclusive**, and reflective of their current and future demographics and culture.

Greater Downtown

Calgary's **Greater Downtown** includes the **neighbourhoods** of Downtown West, Eau Claire, Chinatown, East Village, Downtown Core and the Beltline. This area already has some of the highest residential densities in Calgary, which will increase through further densification and population growth. The quantity of land for parks in **Greater Downtown** is limited, and existing parks are well-used and valued by residents and visitors. The lack of private outdoor space means that parks in these **neighbourhoods** frequently double as people's backyards, providing much-needed spaces for access to environment, sports, recreation and leisure. High-quality **infrastructure** and public **amenities** in **Greater Downtown** parks are needed to keep pace with population growth, support quality of life and foster vibrant urban environments. In addition to the policies below, the policies in Section 4.4 also apply to the **Greater Downtown**.

i. Support the development of parks and **amenities** in non-traditional locations while ensuring public access and safety, such as rooftops, parking lots and **plazas**.

j. Expand existing parks by acquiring adjacent lands, or supporting **play streets**, **programming** and added function by utilizing street space beyond park boundaries.

k. Design parks and their **amenities** to support higher carrying capacities, and provide destination spaces for cultural activities, festivals and unique experiences.

l. Create refuge spaces in parks for residents and workers that provide comfort and respite from urban noise and offset the lack of private outdoor space.

m. Improve connections to new and existing park spaces along the Bow and Elbow Rivers.





4.5 Local Park Typologies

Local park typologies are intended to address the needs of **neighbourhoods** by providing varying levels of **amenities** at different scales. These different types are intended to serve a distinct purpose, while contributing to a comprehensive system of parks within a **neighbourhood**. The **neighbourhood park** and **joint use site(s)** will serve as focal points in the **neighbourhood** with **linear parks** providing connectivity. **Sub-neighbourhood parks** should supplement the **neighbourhood** and **linear parks** by enhancing access and providing more localized **amenities**.

4.5.1 Joint Use Sites

Joint use sites should be provided in accordance with the *Joint Use Planning Agreement*. These sites serve both school and park needs. They provide a sports function, sometimes a recreation function and may complement an adjacent **neighbourhood park's amenities**.



Policies

a. Provide sports **amenities** on **joint use sites** that meet demographic and school **programming** needs.

b. **Joint use sites** should be located where they:

1. complement park multifunctionality;
2. contribute to the park access in the **neighbourhood**; and
3. enhance **activity centres** and support recreation facilities, where appropriate.

c. Promote the incorporation of tree planting, **naturalization** and urban agriculture projects within **joint use sites**, where feasible.

d. Prior to Outline Plan approval, all school site designs require approval from the Site Planning Team.

e. Support innovative school site layout, design and **amenity** provision where appropriate in consultation with the Joint Use Coordinating Committee and Site Planning Team.

f. The City should explore the acquisition of **joint use sites**, not located on reserve land that are wholly owned and declared surplus by the respective school boards.

4.5.2 Neighbourhood Parks

To support community building, **neighbourhood parks** are the focus of park provision. **Neighbourhood parks** are the primary multifunctional gathering space and hub of activity in a community. They are large enough in scale to provide multifunctionality and a variety of **amenities**.

Policies

a. A **neighbourhood** should have a multifunctional **neighbourhood park** as the focal point for park activity and **programming**.

b. **Joint use sites** and **community association sites** are not considered **neighbourhood parks** for the purpose of policy (4.5.2.a).

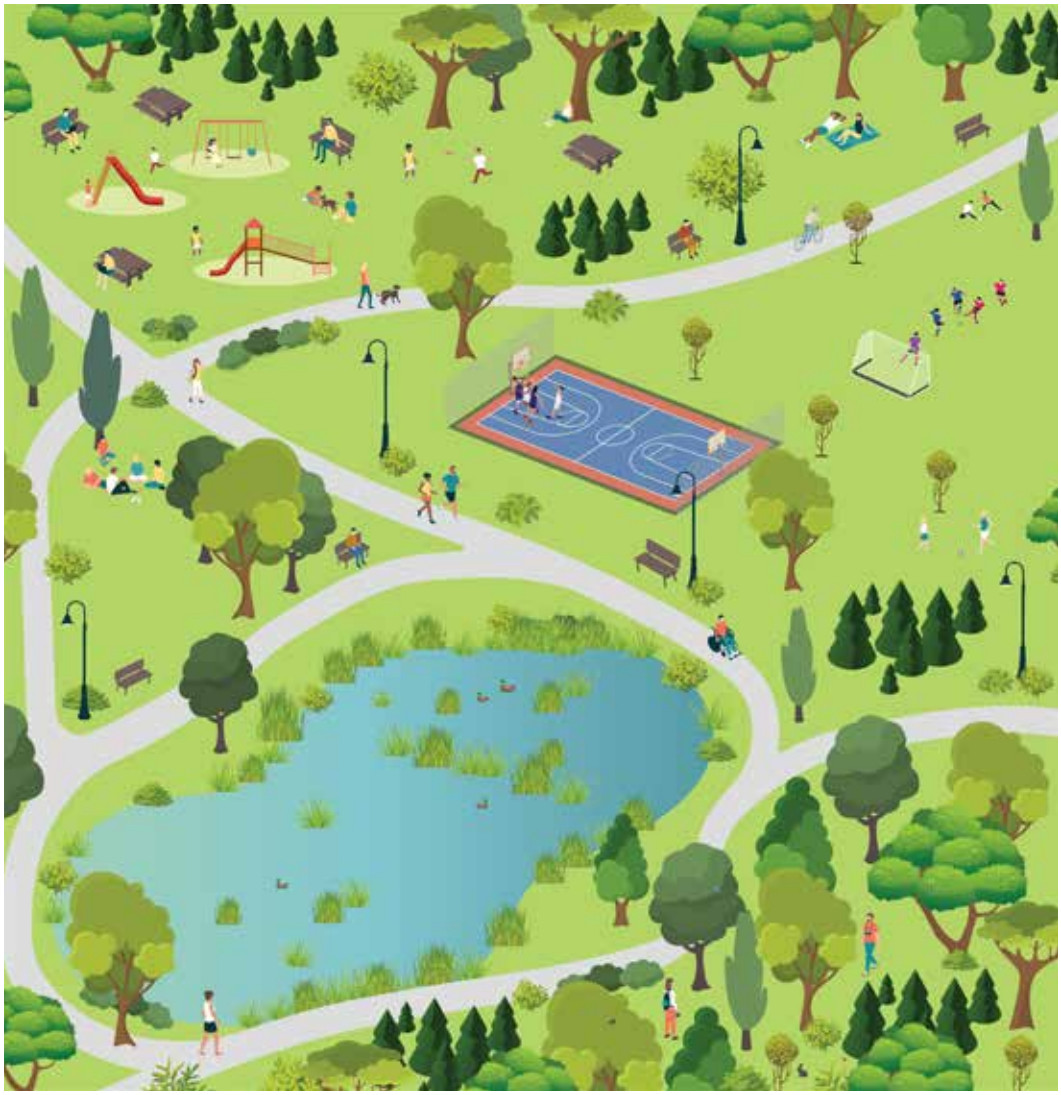
c. **Neighbourhood parks** should be no smaller than 1 hectare and no larger than 4.85 hectares in size.

d. **Neighbourhood parks** should be located:

1. centrally in areas that maximize 400 metre access, on or near a collector road and be supported by adjacent transit stops; or
2. adjacent to a significant **water body** or landform, where deemed appropriate.

e. **Neighbourhood parks** should have a minimum 33 per cent (one third) of the parks' perimeter with street frontage to maximize visibility within the **neighbourhood**.

Figure 4.5 Potential Components of a Multifunctional Park



4.5.3 Linear Parks

Linear parks are linkages within the **park system** that provide space for interesting and safe mobility connections to other parks and community destinations. They support active lifestyles and enable people to access parks and their **amenities** more easily.

Policies

a. Provide an attractive environment for the purpose of walking, **wheeling** and other passive forms of recreation.

b. Connect new and existing parks and **open space**, **habitat** corridors, commercial areas, institutional uses and community destinations.

c. **Linear parks** should not be provided where they are isolated from the rest of the **park system** in a **neighbourhood**.

d. **Linear parks** should not replace **boulevard infrastructure** such as multi-use pathways, sidewalks, utility and tree line assignments.

e. Pathways and sidewalks should complement **linear parks** to create an interconnected system of walking and cycling loops.

f. **Linear parks** should:

1. be a minimum of 13 metres and a maximum of 20 metres wide;
2. be designed to minimize the number of intersection pedestrian crossings;
3. incorporate surface treatments at intersections that allow for safe and accessible pedestrian crossings.
4. provide access and egress at regular intervals, with sidewalks, pathways or walkways;
5. accommodate appropriate **amenities** where suitable;
6. include naturalized space; and
7. provide seating and shaded areas.

g. The width may be reduced when a **linear park** is provided adjacent to an **environmental reserve** or **natural area**.

Figure 4.7 Linear Park Example with Pathway and Landscaping



4.5.4 Sub-neighbourhood Parks

Sub-neighbourhood parks are intended to provide a variety of **amenities** that differ from the **neighbourhood park(s)** and support accessibility of the **park system** for residents. They should be well connected within the **neighbourhood** through the pedestrian network or **linear parks**.





Policies

a. **Sub-neighbourhood parks** should be between 0.4 hectares and 1 hectare in size.

b. Parks under 0.4 hectares in size should not be considered as part of credit reserve dedication in new development, except where:

1. the **municipal reserve** dedication would be under 0.4 hectares;
2. the park will be located within a high activity area; or
3. the park will function as a **plaza** as per policies 4.5.5.

c. Existing parks under 0.4 hectares in size should be considered **sub-neighbourhood parks**.

d. **Sub-neighbourhood parks** should:

1. supplement **neighbourhood park** and **linear park amenities**;
2. be provided where reserve dedication is less than 1 hectare, after **joint use sites** have been allocated;
3. be programmed for multifunctionality;
4. avoid duplication of **amenities** within the **neighbourhood** catchment area to serve the needs of various demographics, cultures, interests and abilities; and
5. be located to enhance visibility and access for walking and **wheeling**.

e. Redevelopment of existing parks under 0.4 hectares, that cannot meet the requirements of policy 4.5.4 (a) due to parcel size or shape, should be designed with a specific function that supports the multifunctionality of the combined parks that are in close proximity.

4.5.5 Plazas

Plazas are a distinct park type in the urban landscape. Their design should be guided by their intended function and connection to their surroundings with a focus on creating a strong visual identity, fostering a sense of place and supporting community interaction. **Plazas** provide attractive, **inclusive**, **accessible** and flexible gathering spaces for Calgarians to socialize, play and celebrate. They support climate-adaptive, comfortable year-round use, arts and cultural events and civic activities.

Policies

a. Locate **plazas** in activity areas, parks and areas that are **accessible** by the Primary Transit Network and the **wheeling** network.

b. Support standalone **plazas** in **Greater Downtown** and activity centres only.

c. Connect **plazas** with surrounding uses and developments to allow for spilling of activities to foster vibrancy and activation.

d. Support interim uses in **plazas**, including **events**, film production, markets, retail kiosks, exhibitions, etc.

e. Prioritize pedestrian movement in and around **plazas** and incorporate design and interventions that minimize conflicts between cars, cyclists and pedestrians.

f. Design **plazas** to be vibrant, welcoming, **accessible** and playful by:

1. using permeable hardscaped surfacing;
2. integrating trees, soft landscaping and permanent structures in a way that supports the **plaza** function;
3. including supporting **infrastructure**, such as lighting, waste receptacles, potable water, electrical outlets and micromobility charging stations;
4. including permanent and movable furniture that complies with Access Design Standards that may support a variety of activities; and
5. incorporating directional tactile walking indicator surfaces.

g. Celebrate our history or the accomplishment of Calgarians by displaying permanent structures, public art or interpretative signage.

i. Provide infrastructure and permanent shaded areas to enable comfortable winter and summer use.

j. Design **plazas** adjacent to transit stations that, in addition to the provisions above, will:

1. support high volume of pedestrian activity, especially near station entranceways and bus stops;
2. support year round **vendors**, subject to any use restrictions on reserve land;
3. provide clear connections to and from surrounding pedestrian and **wheeling** infrastructure;
4. include parking for **wheeling** devices; and
5. consider shared-mobility device parking areas in or nearby the **plaza** space.

k. Provide infrastructure and permanent shaded areas to enable comfortable winter and summer use.



4.5.6 Community Association Sites

Community association sites provide space for community association facilities and **amenities**, and are important for building community stewardship and cohesion. The City supports community associations in several ways including the provision of land.

Policies

a. Land for community association sites should be provided in accordance with the *Site Planning Team Design Guidelines*.

b. Encourage the location of **community association sites** adjacent to **neighbourhood parks**.

c. **Amenities** constructed on **community association sites**, prior to the establishment of the community association, should comply with the *Parks & Open Spaces Design Guidelines Standards and Specifications – Landscape Construction*.

d. Enhanced or non-standard **amenities** may be considered, prior to the establishment of the community association, if the developer(s) enters into a satisfactory agreement with The City.



4.6 Regional Parks

Regional parks are designed to accommodate a range of activities, serve multiple **neighbourhoods**, support longer durations of stay, include specialized **amenities** such as water features, multi-sport surfaces, **cultural landscapes** and can accommodate large event spaces. As such, **regional parks** are not included in **local park** quantity measurement metrics (e.g., 2 hectares of **local parks** per 1,000 people) except in **Greater Downtown**.

Policies

a. All residences should have regional park access within five kilometres driving distance.

b. Existing **regional parks** should be upgraded and improved to meet demand.

c. Future **regional parks** should be developed to address:

1. gaps in the five kilometre provision standard; or
2. a specific regional **amenity** need.

d. Identify and acquire additional land to enhance regional park provision, where required.

e. **Regional parks** may be located to protect significant or unique natural environment features (water bodies, geological anomalies, etc.), the **ecological network** or **cultural landscapes**.

f. Recreational and sports functions in **regional parks** should deliver **equitable** opportunities by providing:

1. design for all ages and abilities;
2. design for multigenerational usage;
3. all-season **programming** and activities;
4. adaptability and inclusiveness;
5. both passive and active **amenities**;
6. design that is **accessible** based on **universal design**; and
7. regional-level **programming** (i.e., outdoor aquatics, athletics, culturally specific amenities).

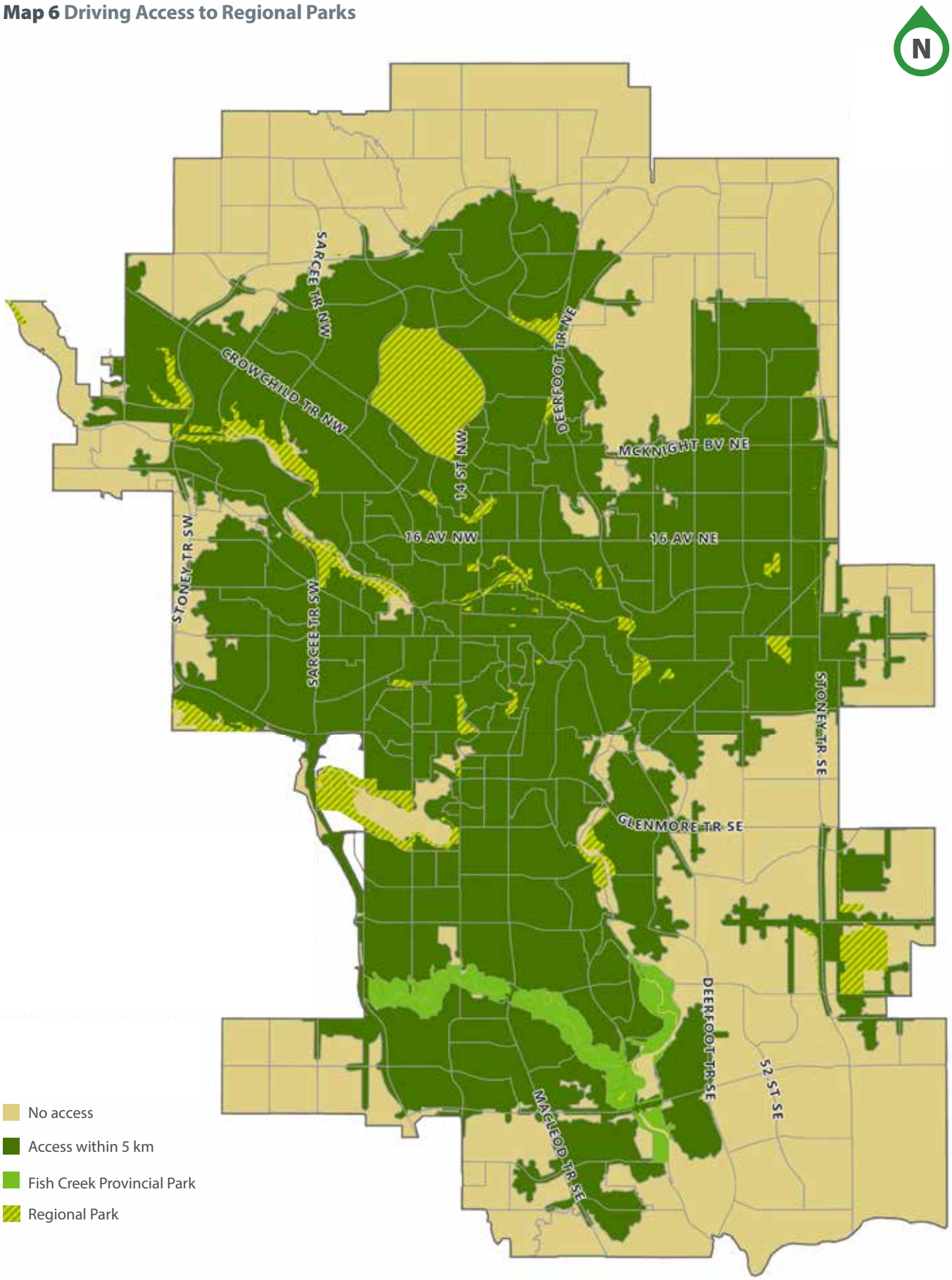
g. **Regional parks** should include **infrastructure** to support longer durations of stay, including washrooms, covered seating areas, shade structures and cooling stations.

h. **Regional parks**, excluding **natural areas**, should provide a designated event site and be developed to include elements such as utility and electrical connections, access to potable water, staging areas, etc.





Map 6 Driving Access to Regional Parks



4.7 Natural Areas

The primary role of **natural areas** is to protect undisturbed land with characteristics of a **native** plant community. These spaces support **biodiversity**, watershed health, and provide access to **nature** for residents. The protection, management and use of **natural areas** differs from other park typologies due to their sensitivity to degradation. Appendix A outlines detailed management for the different **natural area** types.

Policies

Development and Redevelopment

a. An ecological inventory should be submitted and approved prior to approval of an Area Structure Plan.

b. A **Biophysical Impact Assessment** may be required to be approved as determined by The City prior to the approval of an outline plan.

c. A **Biophysical Impact Assessment** should be submitted and approved prior to the approval of a Development Permit on land without an approved Area Structure Plan or Outline Plan where the subject land contains suspected **environmentally significant areas**.



General Restrictions

d. Damage or disturbance of lands to be dedicated as **environmental reserve** prior to subdivision is not permitted. If damage or disturbance does occur, the developer is responsible for restoration.

e. Back sloping or other modifications should not be allowed on **environmental reserve**.

f. Activities and uses that conflict with the protection of the natural environment or cause environmental degradation are not permitted in **natural areas**.

g. **Natural areas** that have been modified or disturbed as result of development will require restoration of the area, as per an approved Habitat Restoration Plan. Where modification or disturbance results in a loss of a **natural area** compensation must be provided to The City.

Management

h. A **Habitat Management Plan** should be required for new **natural areas** as part of the development approval process.

i. Where there is an approved **Habitat Management Plan**, all uses and activities must comply with the plan.

j. Where there is no approved **Habitat Management Plan** in place for a **natural area**, it should be managed in accordance with Appendix A.

k. Encourage the use of alternative land management practices, such as prescriptive burning and animal grazing, where appropriate.

l. New **natural areas** should be designated in accordance with Appendix A.

m. Structures located in **natural areas** should be designed and managed to avoid and minimize negative impacts to **habitat** structure and function, and ecological systems and services.

n. Restoration and management of **natural areas** should align with The City's *Stormwater Management Strategy*.



4.8 Open Space

Open space has a primary purpose separate from parks, but may offer secondary benefits that support the **park system**. They include utility right-of-ways, **public utility lots**, **boulevards**, roadside greens, **public golf courses**, regional sport fields, **athletic parks** and **cemeteries**. These spaces provide different levels of park **amenities**; because of this, they have varying policy direction in *Connect*, both in this section and throughout the document. Lands that are **open space** typically support the **park system** by providing a unique **amenity**, naturalized areas, **urban forest**, or connecting parks and **natural areas**.

4.8.1 Sport Fields and Athletic Parks (Regional)

Regional sport fields supplement City **athletic parks** by providing additional space for sport and recreation opportunities. They are intended to provide greater access to fields, particularly in areas that may not have **athletic parks** nearby. They are built to a lower operational standard than City **athletic park** fields.

Policies

a. Regional sports fields should be provided through partnership negotiation, donation or direct purchase.

b. **Municipal reserve** land in commercial or industrial areas may be considered suitable for the development of regional sports fields.

c. Regional sports fields should:

1. be designed to take advantage of year-round, multi-use and recreational opportunities;
2. be designed to provide shade and cooling **amenities**;
3. be designed using new technologies to reduce water consumption;
4. address regional need and prioritize **equitable** access addressing **systemic barriers** to participation; and
5. align with The City's *Sport Field Strategy, Sport for Life Policy*, and *GamePLAN*.

d. Regional sports fields should not use synthetic turf unless accompanied by permanent or operable shading for the play surface and adjacent heat management measures, including drinking water, air-conditioned indoor areas and stormwater management features.

4.8.2 Public Golf Courses

Public golf courses offer various programs and services to the public; prioritizing golf opportunities while also supporting other **equitable**, **accessible**, year-round uses.

Policies

a. Provide **equitable** access to golf.

b. New partnership opportunities should be considered to support provision of programs and services provided.

c. Year-round multi-use should be encouraged through a mix of design, supporting **amenities** and **programming**.

d. Contribute to, and support the **sustainable** operations of **public golf courses** by following the *Canadian Golf Superintendents Association's Best Management Practices Manual*.

e. Use operational practices that protect ecological connection in support of **biodiversity** and wildlife movement.

f. Incorporate new technologies to reduce water consumption.

g. Tree **canopy** should be retained and expanded to the extent that it maintains the integrity and function of golf course assets.



4.8.3 Cemeteries

The City's **cemetery** services provide safe and dignified spaces for the respectful **interment** and memorialization by families and their loved ones, while also contributing to the overall **park system**.

Policies

a. Any new **cemetery** lands should be designed to accommodate appropriate uses, such as pathway connections to the edge of the site and internal walking trails.

b. Support **naturalization**, **climate adaptation** and enhancement of the urban tree **canopy**, with no net loss of **canopy**.

c. Development, maintenance and operations should incorporate best practices such as:

1. new technology to reduce water consumption;
2. increased naturalized areas to enhance **biodiversity**;
3. climate resilient design such as green stormwater and low impact development (LID) infrastructure; and
4. cultural and historical **conservation** and education.

d. Provide **equitable** access to different religious and cultural **interment** options.

e. New **cemetery** development should consider **green burial options**.

4.8.4 Privately-Owned Public Spaces

Private open space that is publicly accessible can contribute to the **park system** in areas with low supply of public land, but The City has limited control over their design or development. The following policies are only applicable in instances where a public access easement is voluntarily entered into by a developer and should not be deemed required.

Policies

a. Privately-owned, publicly accessible park spaces are encouraged to complement and connect to the **park system**.

b. On private land encourage the:

1. retention of mature trees and planting of new trees;
2. conversion of impervious surfaces to vegetated solutions like permeable pavement and plantings to support **biodiversity** and stormwater management; and
3. design of publicly accessible private park space to align with the policies set out in *Connect*.



4.8.5 Boulevards, Roadside Greens and Roundabouts

Boulevards, roadside greens and roundabouts provide space for trees and landscaping. They improve the street's appearance, create a sense of identity, provide **habitat**, and play a role in stormwater management. Given the quantity of these spaces, they can contribute to biodiversity and climate adaptation. Through **naturalization**, **boulevards** and roadway greens can better support **biodiversity** and waterway health, and result in reduced maintenance costs.

Policies

a. **Boulevards** should be developed to incorporate seating and resting spaces, where appropriate.

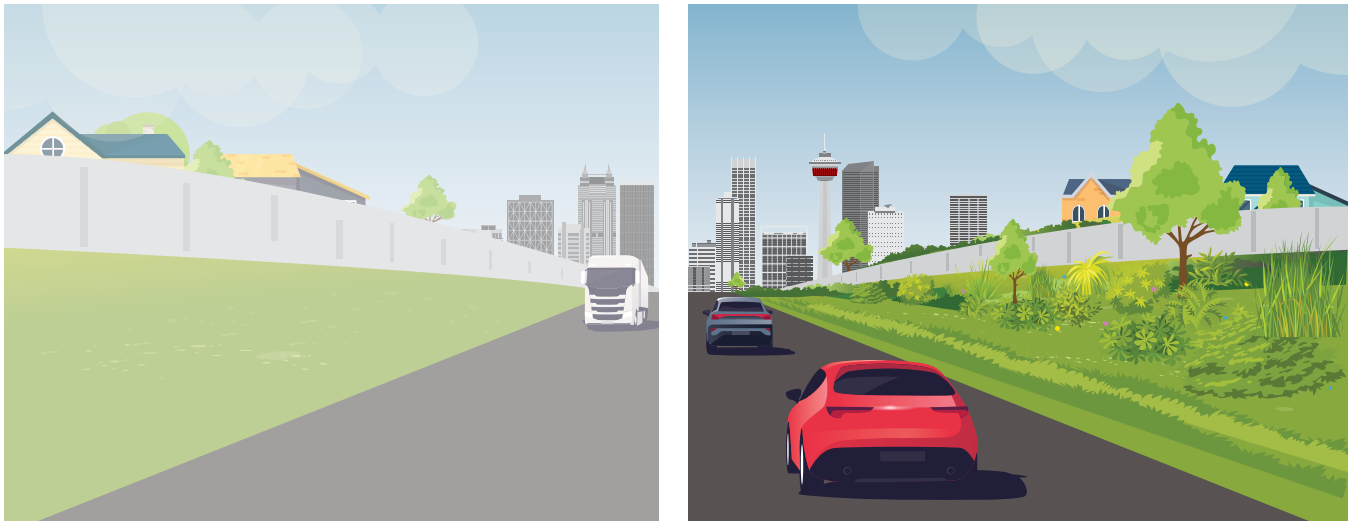
b. **Boulevards**, roadside greens and roundabouts should be naturalized unless otherwise approved by The City.

c. Roadside greens adjacent to **Environmental Significant Areas**, **environmental reserve** or within the **ecological network** should be prioritized for **naturalization**.

Figure 4.8 Naturalization Along a Boulevard



Figure 4.9 Naturalization Along a Roadway



4.9 Regional Partnerships

Intermunicipal partnerships promote connected **park systems** and the protection of **natural areas** and water quality. Municipalities understand that the needs of rural and urban residents vary, and conflicts are best resolved through ongoing information-sharing and negotiation on emerging issues to address their residents' needs.

Policy

a. The City will work with adjacent municipalities, **Indigenous peoples** and the Province to support and facilitate connectivity of ecological connections, parks and pathways that cross municipal boundaries.

4.10 Operational Actions

See Chapter 7 for details on timelines, financial impacts, and implementation.

Park Provision

a. Develop a master plan to identify capital investment and address gaps and development needs.

b. Include community engagement, where appropriate, at all stages of park development and management including planning, designing, **programming** and operating to ensure parks are reflective of demographic and cultural needs.

c. Develop a strategy to identify locations for fenced off-leash **dog areas**.

Local and Regional Park and Regional Amenity Management

d. Utilize the Customer Level of Service tool to assess that 100 per cent of park types meet the defined standard level of service by 2035.

e. Complete an annual report and assessment of Customer Level of Service metrics to address deviations in the targets set by *imagineParks*.

f. Provide administrative and educational support to City staff responsible for park maintenance annually to carry out the Customer Level of Service Tool review of park types in their zones.

g. Update the Customer Level of Service tool every five years to ensure all categories are relevant.

h. Use data and innovative practices to evaluate mowing and improve operational efficiency.

i. Ensure all City staff and contractors responsible for park maintenance have completed the required safety training and protocols.

j. Collaborate with other City business units to develop an investment prioritization tool for park redevelopment based on maintenance levels, asset condition ratings, significance, usership and **equity**.

k. Develop an **equity** framework, in partnership with other City business units, to evaluate a citywide level of service as an additional layer to the Customer Level of Service tool.

l. Establish accreditation as a member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for **public golf courses**.

m. Establish an **equity** fund to provide additional maintenance, capital investment and servicing to **equity deserving communities**.

n. Investigate how community food assets such as community gardens, farmstands and markets could be integrated into the **park system**.

Playfield Management

o. Complete an allocation and permitting process review to reduce blanket bookings by user groups and develop a transparent and **equitable** allocation system which can be processed in a timely manner.

p. Develop and implement standardized maintenance practices for **playfields** based on the class of field to set clear maintenance expectations among user groups.

q. Collaborate with public school boards to support increased maintenance on Class E fields to expand their standard to a Class D.

r. Collaborate with public school boards to add high school fields not currently in the booking system to increase availability.

s. Increase standard of maintenance to Class D fields to create a Class D+ fields to better support a greater range of use for different skill levels.

t. Increase capacity to process field permits and address 311 inquiries quickly and efficiently.

u. Pilot emerging sports on existing sport surfaces, and design future sport surfaces to support multiple sports.

Natural Areas Management

v. Assess and update the cost of maintenance to preserve the value of **natural areas**.

w. Develop and implement a compensation model for damage to **natural areas**.

x. Develop 10-year, operational **Habitat Management Plans** for all **natural areas**.

y. Allow litter control with guidance, in **natural areas** to be included in enhanced landscape maintenance requirements.

Funding Parks

z. Establish a **sustainable** funding source for park development, redevelopment and management in established areas.

aa. Explore alternative management models such as land trusts, conservancies and Indigenous partnerships.

bb. Develop a process to utilize funding such as, but not limited to, the Established Areas Investment Fund, Legacy Fund, Equity in Service Delivery Fund to address provision gaps prioritizing **equity deserving communities**, areas of high utilization and parks with poor asset condition ratings.

cc. Continue to leverage provincial and federal funding to support gaps in park provision.

dd. Continue to support partnerships that can address provision gaps with prioritization of projects such as addressing **barriers** for **equity** deserving groups.

Supporting Neighbourhood Stewardship and Volunteerism

ee. Create and implement a volunteer and partnership assessment tool in alignment with *imagineParks Strategic Plan and Calgary Climate Strategy* to ensure effectiveness and value for Calgarians.

ff. Create a framework of standards and a training program for volunteers.

gg. Work with Enhanced Landscape Maintenance communities to promote environmentally resilient practices such as drought resistant seeding, planting **native** species, reduced irrigation and **xeriscaping**.

hh. Increase community-based efforts to engage youth and **equity** deserving groups in volunteer initiatives which address their needs and **barriers** to participation.

ii. Develop a strategy and standardized process to evaluate requests for enhanced or non-standard **amenities** which considers **equity** and long-term financial **sustainability** for The City.

jj. Establish and sustain a citywide community volunteer group that can enhance levels of service in **equity deserving communities**.

kk. Build capacity in **equity deserving communities** using the citywide volunteer group to mentor and support those communities.

ll. Expand volunteer programs, such as Adopt-a-Park and Green Initiatives, and ensure programs meet City and community needs.

mm. Advance Calgary becoming a National Park City.

Chapter 5
Connecting People to Parks



5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on providing and accessing parks with a range of functions for **neighbourhoods**. While access and quantity are important, the quality of parks is a key driver of usage and enjoyment. Quality is addressed through park design, **amenities** and **programming**. These components are what create **inclusive**, safe, well used and desirable parks.

Outcomes

- **Parks are vibrant spaces that provide a wide range of opportunities for celebration, community gathering, activities and relaxation.**
- **Parks are safe spaces where users feel comfortable.**
- **People of all ages and abilities have opportunities to enjoy and access parks.**
- **Parks are easy to locate and information about them is easily accessible.**
- **Innovative park design addresses the complexities of user and environmental needs.**

Strategic directions this chapter aligns to:



Conservation and Protection of the Environment



Climate Resilience



Inclusive and Accessible



Connectivity for People and Wildlife



Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing



Support Communities



Cultural Landscapes



Safety and Security



Economic Resilience



Innovation

5.2 Park Design



Good park design helps to build places and spaces that facilitate healthy, happy and prosperous **neighbourhoods**. To achieve this, design components need to consider park user needs and wants through an **equity** lens. Development adjacent to parks also affects park vitality, therefore careful design consideration is paramount.

Policies

a. Parks, where appropriate for the park type, should be designed to:

1. be **inclusive** and incorporate universal and **barrier-free design**;
2. serve the needs of various demographics, cultures, interests and abilities;
3. connect to the public realm;
4. provide intergenerational, shared, recreational spaces;
5. provide **infrastructure** to support gatherings such as adequate garbage and recycling, washing and drinking stations, electrical outlets, potable water, picnic tables, barbeques and gathering spaces.
6. minimize light pollution;
7. provide all-season **amenities**;
8. foster social interaction and active living environments;
9. support connection with **nature** that promotes mental well-being and refuge from the negative impacts from urban living; and
10. mitigate weather extremes for user comfort year-round (e.g., shade areas or wind shelters, water fountains for drinking).

Figure 5.1 All Season Use of a Park



b. The planning and design of parks, **open spaces** and surrounding land uses should prioritize opportunities to protect, create, frame and enhance important vistas and views.

c. Protect unique landforms and features (e.g., glacial scour, erratics).

d. Development and recreational activities on or near waterbodies must balance activation with environmental **preservation**, prioritize the protection of drinking water, and align with The City's *Stormwater Management Strategy*.

e. Where feasible and appropriate, based on engineering design and site preparation requirements, reduce stripping and grading in areas designated for future parks to minimize **soil** compaction and retain nutrients.

f. Parks within a **neighbourhood** should incorporate walking loops of different scales both within and between parks.

g. Surface treatments and signage in parks and **open space** should support inclusivity, safety, accessibility and connectivity to the **neighbourhood**.

h. Seasonal **vendor commercial structures** may be provided, where feasible, when they support the recreational function of the park.

i. Community gardens and orchards are permitted on **community association sites**, and may be considered on other lands within the park system where public access and park provision is not negatively impacted.

j. Support the establishment of innovative park provision such as rooftop gardens, parking lot conversion and **indoor parks**, particularly in areas of reduced park provision.

Adjacent Development

k. Support the co-location of recreation facilities and community facilities, such as libraries and fire stations, with parks when those facilities complement the park function(s).

l. Development on private property should not negatively impact the environmental health or recreational functionality of adjacent parks and **open space**. Examples of negative impacts may include grading impacts, shadowing, encroachments and utility alignments.

m. Development adjacent to parks and **open space** should incorporate **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design** principles.

n. The interface between parks and development should be of high quality by considering active use, visual connections, landscaping and access.



5.3 Landscaping

Landscaping in parks creates a welcoming and visually-appealing atmosphere; however, manicured grass and annual plantings are water-intensive and costly to maintain. A balance needs to be reached between where **naturalization** should occur and highly-manicured park space. **Naturalization** plays a central role in building **climate resilience**, providing access to **nature** for Calgarians and reducing the operational costs of maintaining parks.

Policies

a. All planting should comply with the *City of Calgary Seed Mixes and Plant Lists and Parks Development Guidelines and Standard Specifications for Landscape Constructions*, unless otherwise approved by The City.

b. Planting design within parks and **open space** should prioritize **native** grasses, **native** wildflowers, meadow-type plantings and other climate resilient and drought and flood tolerant species.

c. Support **naturalization** in all parks and **open space** where it does not interfere with the provision of **amenities** or the primary purpose of the space.

Figure 5.2 Naturalization Within a Park



5.4 Safety and Security

Ensuring personal safety in parks is a key challenge identified in *Connect*. Addressing park safety involves a multifaceted strategy, as different parks and programs may require varied responses. **Inclusive amenities** and strategic partnerships are needed to create safer, more inviting parks and to tackle broader societal challenges.

Policies

a. Education should be used over enforcement of *Parks and Pathways Bylaw 11M2019*.

b. Encourage community participation and enhanced **programming** to address safety issues and activate **local parks**.

c. Increase management or provide **amenity** improvements in parks known to have a high number of safety concerns or user conflicts.

d. Park design should adhere to **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design** principles, except where the principles conflict with environmental **preservation**, which takes priority.

e. Lighting in parks and on pathways should provide accessibility and security, while minimizing light pollution through the application of **Dark Sky Principles**.

f. In **natural areas**, environmental protection will take precedence over lighting which should be avoided unless necessary. If lighting is permitted, it should be wildlife-friendly and comply with Appendix A.

g. Development adjacent to parks should incorporate **Fire Smart** principles and ensure there is an adequate interface between development and potential fire-hazard **natural areas** (e.g., manicured buffer).

h. Management of parks and **open space** that pose a wildfire risk should use environmentally sensitive management practices such as prescribed burns, grazing, haying and forest thinning.

5.5 Signage

Signage is important for **wayfinding**, appropriate park use and education and awareness of natural and cultural elements. The placement of signage requires careful consideration to avoid negative visual impacts.

Policies

a. **Wayfinding** signage should be provided to direct people to the **park system**.

b. Parks should have welcoming, celebratory and informative entrance and exit signage.

c. Installation of signage should be limited to essential **wayfinding** and educational signage only and leverage the use of digital aids such as QR codes.

d. Signage should have **inclusive** and **accessible** language and content.

e. **Wayfinding** and signage should be applied consistently throughout the **park system**.

f. All signage should be installed and located to eliminate or minimize negative impacts to the surrounding natural environment.

g. The content of all signage must be approved by The City.

5.6 Public Art

Public art offers opportunities to engage citizens, celebrate the unique places in our city, tell Indigenous and other cultural stories and promote education. Art plays a crucial role in the development of a modern, vibrant city and brings awareness of the spaces we move through. It can enhance landscapes and adds texture and interest.

Policies

a. All public art installations, whether permanent or temporary, must:

  1. be approved by The City, prior to installation; and

  2. comply with The City's *Public Art Policy*.

b. Public art in parks should reflect and celebrate at least one of the following:

  1. the natural features and ecology of the landscape;

  2. unique and interesting stewardship practices;

  3. the sustained presence of **Indigenous peoples** on the land; or

  4. the diversity, history and culture of Calgary's communities.

c. Public art in parks should:

  1. enhance place-making and **wayfinding**;

  2. consider year-round enjoyment, night design and durability;

  3. encourage play through physical interaction with art;

  4. engage people and activate the parks with interactive elements where appropriate; and

  5. be self-powered.



5.7 Temporary Activities

Temporary activities provide value by supporting the city's economy and offering different types of social and cultural experiences in parks. Parks support these activities, but this support must be balanced with the health of the park and access by all users. Any **events** or **programming** being hosted within parks spaces must comply with The City's policies.

Policies

Events

a. Public **events** should be **inclusive**.

b. No **events**, except for appropriate **level 5 events** that balance the needs of environmental protection, are permitted in or near lands that have been classified as a **natural area**.

c. **Level 5 events** are permitted in **parks**, **neighbourhood parks**, **sub-neighbourhood**, **linear parks** or **plazas**.

d. **Level 2 to 4 events** may be considered in **parks**, **neighbourhood parks**, **sub-neighbourhood**, **linear parks** and **plazas** if event organizers can prove compliance with the following:

1. minimal negative impacts to the park, the environment; and
2. the scale and type are appropriate for the **neighbourhood** and supporting **infrastructure**.

e. **Level 2 to 5 events** are permitted in **regional parks** when it is determined that the:

1. event balances the needs of event participants, parks users, and surrounding **neighbourhood**; and
2. park has the **infrastructure** capabilities to host the event.

More information on Level 1-5 events can be found in the glossary.

Professional Film and Television Production

f. The use of parks and **open space** as a location for **professional film and television production** is supported, provided that:

1. the use is balanced with public access to parks and privacy;
2. protection of the natural environment is prioritized and the activity does not cause environmental degradation; and
3. negative impacts are minimized.

g. The **professional film and television production** is responsible for repair and remediation of all damage within/to the **park system**.

Vendors and Programming

h. **Vendors** and **programming** in parks are encouraged on non-reserve land when they support recreation and sport functions and do not negatively impact environment function.

i. Any damage caused within the **park system** as a result of these activities is the responsibility of the proponent.



5.8 Access and Connectivity



Equitable access to parks is crucial for ensuring that all residents can enjoy their benefits. The primary way in which people access and move around parks is using The City's extensive pathway and trail system. Accessibility needs to be considered under different contexts as universal access to all parks is not feasible and context-specific based on the park type and function, for example **natural areas**.

Policies

a. Pathway connections should be made in areas to facilitate 400 metre access to the different park functions and should be **accessible** by different travel options.

Pathways and Trails in Natural Areas

b. Encourage innovative design elements to allow for people who experience **barriers** to enjoy elements of **natural areas**.

c. Pathways and trails should be located and designed to mitigate negative environmental impacts and capture desire lines to reduce informal trails.

d. Pathways and boardwalks may be considered within **environmental reserve** to provide public access where it is determined there will be minimal negative impacts, as per an approved **Biophysical impact assessment**.

e. Pathway and trail design should prioritize environmental and cultural resource protection over user experience.

f. Pathways and trails are not allowed on surfaces that are deemed unstable.

g. Pathways and trails may be located within the floodway if they are designed to be **hydrologically invisible** on the landscape.



Pathways and Trails in Parks

h. Pathways should be designed to:

1. incorporate barrier-free, **universal design**;
2. reduce conflict between users traveling at different speeds and in areas of high use;
3. create a contiguous network to avoid gaps which require frequent on-street **infrastructure** links;
4. consider level of user comfort;
5. link pathways to streets and public transit;
6. create walking loops;
7. avoid creating obstacles such as sight line and visibility issues;
8. include signage and **wayfinding**;
9. include bicycle parking at entrance points and areas of interest; and
10. include seating areas.

k. Where location and design considerations prevent both transportation and recreation functions from being accommodated together, the recreation function should be given a higher priority on pathways.

Connectivity and Access for Regional Parks and Amenities

l. Improve connections to **regional parks** and **amenities** by addressing missing walking and **wheeling** links.

m. Major entrances to **regional parks** and **amenities** should be **accessible** by transit.

n. Provide adequate and safe bicycle and car parking to support access, while managing capacity to ensure park **amenities** do not become overcrowded. Where appropriate, electric vehicle charging and electric micromobility charging should be available in parking facilities.

5.9 Operational Actions

See Chapter 7 for details on timelines, financial impacts, and implementation.

Park Carrying Capacity

a. Develop and implement **Visitor Management Plans** for parks that are experiencing **carrying capacity** challenges.

b. Advance methods and technologies to monitor park usage to understand historical, current and future trends to inform management plans.

c. Complement data analysis with public insights to inform park planning and development that reflect Calgarians behaviours and preferences.

d. Implement data management strategies, in partnership with other City business units, to improve transparency and accountability and minimize risks when creating plans.

Infrastructure Provision Standards

e. Develop an Infrastructure Strategic Plan.

f. Revise and improve provision standards that are aligned with user and operational needs in parks and along pathways for **infrastructure**, such as, but not limited to, washrooms, benches, water fountains and garbage cans.

g. Review vehicle and bicycle parking provision to assess access and coordinate solutions in partnership with other City business units.

Landscaping

h. Where appropriate, reduce the use of water intensive, non-native annual bedding plants and hanging baskets and make **native** and drought resistant species the plantings of choice.

i. Develop an incentive program for residents and private landowners to naturalize and xeriscape yards and **boulevards** with drought resilient species.

j. Encourage new sod methods, seed mixes and grass/cover species which are more resilient.

k. Update *The City of Calgary Seed Mixes Guidelines* to support experimentation and **resilience** and legibility for the public and development industry.

l. Work with enhanced landscape maintenance communities to promote environmentally-resilient practices such as drought resistant seeding, planting **native** species, reduced irrigation and **xeriscaping**.

m. Review Development Agreement parameters to incentivize leaving land in a **sustainable** natural state on future public lands.

Naturalization and Restoration

n. Provide adequate staff to support the identification and prioritization of land opportunities for **naturalization**.

o. Revise the restoration target for the **park system** in consultation with other City business units and in alignment with federal and global targets.

p. Naturalize underutilized manicured areas within the **park system**.

q. Existing manicured utility right-of-ways should be targeted for **naturalization** where feasible and in collaboration with the utility owner.

r. Develop design standards for **naturalization** and improve restoration standards.

s. Improve data tracking and identification to support management of **natural areas** and naturalized space.

Safety and Security

t. Collaborate with other City business units along with social outreach partners, Calgary Police Service, and other agencies to develop a strategy to address safety for park users with a focus on helping people experiencing vulnerabilities and addressing encampment issues within parks.

u. Explore adding dedicated bylaw officers for parks.

Communication and Education

v. Develop a communications strategy for Parks & Open Spaces ensuring information is **accessible**, multilingual, transparent, accountable and customer-oriented for the various media platforms.

w. Enhance education programs on:

1. the importance of **biodiversity**, urban conservation, urban forestry and the benefits of the **park system** to **climate adaptation** and **climate mitigation**;
2. wildlife safety;
3. the cultural and/or historical significance of the park, where appropriate;
4. park locations, **amenities** and programs;
5. appropriate park usage and safety; and
6. park **programming** and events.

x. Maintain and enhance relationships with park users and the community to encourage advocacy and stewardship of the park system.

y. Develop an ongoing feedback loop of public engagement, research and community outreach that helps to inform decision making on development and management of the **park system**.

z. Develop citizen science programs for The City in partnership with other City business units, and support existing programs that promote **biodiversity** and urban ecology goals through the generation of information and engagement of the public on urban ecological issues.

aa. Provide effective booking systems that are fast, reliable, informative, flexible and customer-focused.

Chapter 6
Development Connections: Utilities and Infrastructure



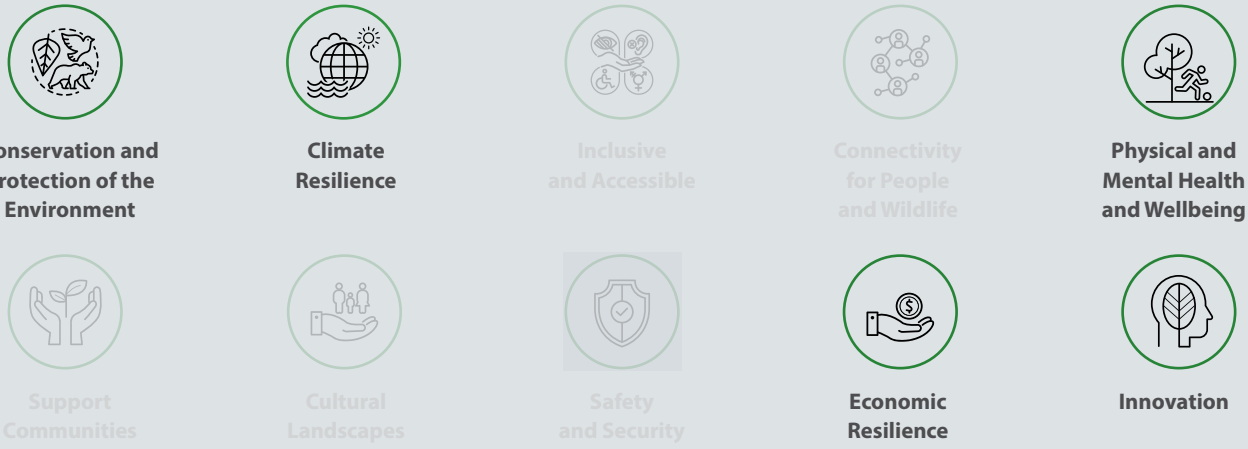
6.1 Introduction

The **park system** is primarily made up of unencumbered land and is, therefore, a desirable location for different types of **infrastructure** and utilities. These are important components that support Calgarians needs; for example, irrigation systems are important for park maintenance and can be used to support stormwater management. Underground utilities can also have a negative impact on the functioning of the **park system**, from limiting tree growth and space for planting to recreational activities. It is therefore important that there is clear direction on when and where utilities and **infrastructure** can be located in the **park system**.

Outcomes

- **The park system supports stormwater management to reduce the impacts of flooding and improve watershed health.**
- **The recreation, environment and sport functions of parks are not negatively impacted by the accommodation of utilities and infrastructure.**
- **Changes in irrigation requirements for parks have resulted in reduced costs and water usage supporting both economic and climate resilience.**

Strategic directions this chapter aligns to:



6.2 Infrastructure, Utilities and Irrigation



Infrastructure and utilities are necessary elements to support city growth. Often these elements, while required, can encumber and limit available space for planting in parks, roadside greens and boulevards. These impacts should be minimized whenever possible. The location and type of infrastructure and utilities dictates where and when they may be allowable.

Policies

Stormwater Management

a. Support **green stormwater infrastructure** as the preferred option in parks.

b. In **natural areas** only natural infrastructure or **green stormwater infrastructure** should be permitted.

c. **Stormwater infrastructure** within a park should not interfere or negatively impact park **amenities** and function.

d. Support the integration of innovative **stormwater infrastructure** that enhance environmental, recreational, and community benefits beyond traditional stormwater management.

e. Support innovation that incorporates new technologies to enhance permeability of hard surfaces.

f. **Dry ponds** proposed within **municipal reserve** or municipal and school reserve lands may be considered, but are required to demonstrate the public benefit beyond the singular purpose of a utility.

g. Stormwater **dry ponds** must be no more than 33 per cent of the total municipal and **municipal school reserve** dedication of a community. Any additional land required for **dry ponds** should be designated as a **public utility lot**.

h. A stormwater **dry pond** may receive 100 per cent reserve credit where located on reserve lands, provided that the reserve lands meet all City planning criteria for location,size and purpose and the reserve purpose is not prejudiced.

i. The design and development of reserve lands containing **dry ponds** should be in accordance with the most current edition of the *Development Guidelines and Standard Specifications—Landscape Construction*.

j. **Naturalization** within **public utility lots** should be prioritized.

k. Stormwater ponds should incorporate a planting design applicable to an aquatic landscape and its abutting uplands.

l. Paved pathways should be provided around the perimeter of all stormwater ponds in retrofit scenarios and are encouraged in new development to provide a public **amenity**.

m. Paved access that is required for the functioning of a stormwater management facility should not be located on **municipal reserve**.

n. Overland drainage may be permitted into parks and **open space**, except when it:

1. crosses a pathway;
2. enters an ecologically sensitive area, unless it is required for the sustainment of that area;
3. enters a **cultural landscape**;
4. negatively impacts the **amenities** and use of a park; or
5. causes erosion or slope instability.

o. Overland drainage should be designated as an overland drainage right-of-way.

p. Point source drainage is not permitted into the **park system**.

Other Utilities

q. **Deep utilities** should not be permitted in parks, except when water or sanitary services are required for park **amenities**.

r. **Shallow utilities** may be considered in parks if there is no other alternative location and there is no negative impact to park **amenities** and landscaping.

s. Utility infrastructure in **natural areas** should be avoided, with the exception of natural infrastructure or green stormwater infrastructure.

t. Cellular towers or wind energy conversion systems should not be located on or adjacent to **natural areas**.

u. Renewable energy infrastructure may be incorporated on permitted structures, such as parking lot shade structures, in the **park system** for the public benefit and where it does not impact the recreational function or environmental protection.

Irrigation

v. Support the use of alternative water sources for irrigation, where feasible, to reduce potable water use.

w. Irrigation systems are only permitted in parks that are 0.4 hectares or larger.

x. Irrigation designs that are sourced by potable water do not require full park coverage except for **playfields**.

y. Where no irrigation is provided **xeriscaping** or naturalized landscaping is encouraged.

z. Temporary irrigation systems for establishment of parks may be permitted.

aa. **Neighbourhood parks** and **sub-neighbourhood parks** do not require full irrigation coverage on turf areas unless it is a **playfield** or necessary to meet stormwater targets for grey water.

bb. Decommission irrigation systems in existing parks less than 0.4 hectares when economically feasible, or during redevelopment where usage statistics support decommissioning.

cc. When installing new irrigation in parks, or during lifecycle upgrades, priority should be given to areas of high wear, high plant stress and high drought sensitivity; as per the following hierarchy:

1. **playfields** and high wear areas (e.g., concert and **events** areas);
2. trees and shrub beds; and
3. annual planting beds, dependent on park type.

dd. Plant material not listed in the hierarchy under policy 6.2cc should not be irrigated.

6.3 Operational Actions

See Chapter 7 for details on timelines, financial impacts, and implementation.

Irrigation

a. Establish standards and requirements for water re-use and non-potable water use.

b. Review and update the *Water Management Strategic Plan*.

c. Set new targets and develop standards in the *Water Management Strategic Plan*, in partnership with other City business units, to reduce irrigation and the use of potable water.

d. Remove the requirement for irrigation in parks that do not require it for long term use.

e. Remove redundant irrigation **infrastructure** in parks being redeveloped.

Chapter 7
Implementing Connect



7.1 Implementation

Connect recognizes the value and importance of Calgary's **park system** as a vital asset that significantly contributes to the quality of life, environmental health and social cohesion of the city. Implementing *Connect* is a crucial step toward building and enhancing this system, ensuring that it aligns with the *imagineParks Strategic Plan* vision — that Calgary's parks and **open space** are cherished places that connect us to **nature**, our heritage and one another. This chapter highlights *Connect's* key metrics to measure policy success and implementation measures for its operational actions, which will guide Calgary's parks planning and decision-making.

Expanding and enhancing the **park system** to serve both current and future populations is an essential task that will require collaboration and coordination. While Parks & Open Spaces will lead these efforts, implementing the operational actions will also require input and expertise from various City business units.

The development industry also has a significant role in implementing *Connect*. By working alongside The City, developers and other private sector partners can help build a **park system** that not only complements new and existing **neighbourhoods**, but also contributes to the overall **sustainability** and **resilience** of **neighbourhoods**. This collaboration will be pivotal in delivering a **park system** that is both robust and adaptable, capable of serving the community's evolving needs for generations to come.

7.2 Plan Review and Monitoring

Regular reviews of *Connect* will allow The City to evaluate changes impacting the **park system** and adjust policies and operational actions if necessary. This will ensure that *Connect* remains relevant over time. *Connect* should be reviewed and amended every three years to incorporate administrative updates, emerging trends, implementation progress and policy gaps.

To assess the effectiveness of *Connect* and its ongoing implementation, metrics have been identified to monitor progress. These metrics will be tied to reviews of *Connect* and included in progress reporting. Figure 7.1 outlines metrics that have been grouped based on *Connect's* ten strategic directions and will guide its monitoring and review process. The metrics are subject to change over time with improved data, changing environments, and other factors.

Figure 7.1 Metrics to Measure Success

Principle	Metric	Current	Target
***Climate Resiliency**			
Any metrics with an asterisk also apply to **Climate Resilience**.			
Conservation and Protection of the Environment	Total area of land restored in the **park system**.*	441 hectares (2024)	1,000 hectares by 2035
	The number of **natural areas** with a Habitat Condition Rating (HCR) of natural GOOD or EXCELLENT.*	68 (2024)	Maintain or increase
	Number of **natural areas** with Habitat Management Plans.	15 in progress/ complete (2024)	65 in progress/ complete by 2035
	Number of trees planted annually on public land.*	84,447 (2024)	1.3 million total trees planted by 2035
	Per cent of public land covered by tree **canopy**.*	12.26% (2024)	15% by 2035
Inclusivity and Accessibility	Per cent of communities that have 2 ha of **local parks** per 1,000 people.	69% (2024)	Maintain or increase
	Per cent of communities that have 1 ha (local and regional park space) in the **Greater Downtown** per 1,000 people.	67% (2024)	Maintain or increase
	Number of inclusive playgrounds.	21 (2024)	35 by 2035
Connectivity for People and Wildlife	Per cent of households that are within 400 metres of a park.	96% (2024)	Maintain or increase
	Per cent of households that are within a 400 metre pedestrian trip to a **multifunctional park**.	64% (2024)	69% by 2035
	Per cent of households that have access to **regional parks** within 5 km.	78% (2024)	83% by 2035
	Number of projects initiated with the target of enhancing connectivity for wildlife.	4 (2024)	10 by 2035
Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing	Per cent of Calgarians who have spent 20 minutes or more in a park without snow.	93% (2024)	Maintain or Increase
	Per cent of Calgarians who have spent 20 minutes or more in a park with snow.	83% (2024)	85% by 2035
	Per cent of households within 400 metres of an environmental function.	31% (2024)	36% by 2035
	Per cent of households within 400 metres of a sports function.	61% (2024)	66% by 2035
	Per cent of households within 400 metres of a recreation function.	76% (2023)	81% by 2035
Support Communities	Per cent of **regional parks** that have a Customer Level of Service (CLOS) rating of at least 2.0, and a rating of at least 3.0 for **local parks**.	61% (2024) (regional parks) 94% (2024) (**local parks**)	100% by 2035 (regional parks) 95% by 2035 (**local parks**)
Cultural Landscapes	Number of completed, Nation authored and Nation specific, Traditional Land Use studies for Calgary's park land.	2 (2024)	4 by 2030
	Per cent of archaeological resources conserved within the **park system** in new community development.	Unknown	>10% by 2035
	Per cent of known **cultural landscapes** legally protected.	<30% (2024)	Increase 5% annually by 2035
	Number of public tours given annually to provide education on **cultural landscapes**.	3 (2024)	10 by 2035

Principle	Metric	Current	Target
Safety and Security	Per cent of people that strongly agree they feel safe visiting parks regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, income, gender identity or sexuality.	56% (2024)	60% by 2035
Economic Resiliency	Area of manicured turf naturalized.* (sub-target of land restored)	2 hectares (2024)	200 by 2035
	Percent of parks with removed or decommissioned irrigation systems under 0.4 hectares.	5% (2024)	100% by 2035
Innovation	Innovation is challenging to quantifiably measure as innovation is included into everyday operational practices and planning. Additionally some innovative focused projects can take years come to fruition while others can be completed in a shorter timeframe. Therefore, a qualitative update of innovative projects and practices will be provided to Council as part of the three year reviews of *Connect*.		

7.3 Operational Actions

The following tables outline details for implementing *Connect's* operational actions, including their timeline, progress and financial impacts. These actions align with and support *Connect's* policies, aiming to incorporate economic, social and environmental **resilience** into the **park system's** maintenance and operations to ensure consistent levels of service and value for citizens.

Each operational action has been assigned the following descriptors:

- **Timeframe** – short-term (1-10 years), medium-term (10-20 years), long-term (20-30 years) or ongoing;
- **Current Status** – not started, in development, in progress or complete;
- **Budget** – low (under $1M), moderate ($1-10M), or high (over $10M); capital or operational cost; and
- **Priority** – low, medium, high.

Capital and operating budget estimates are provided as a guide to better understand the approximate scale of investment. Further work to refine the estimates is required as each action is implemented based on Council approval over the lifetime of *Connect*. Council approval of actions and budget are discretionary and not tied to the approval of this plan. The adoption of this non-statutory plan does not require The City to undertake any of the projects referred to in it.

7.3.1 Connecting with The Ecological Network, Urban Forest and Cultural Landscapes Citywide

Ecological Network

Protection and enhancement of the **ecological network** supports environmental **conservation**, resulting in a city that is climate resilient with healthy, well-connected **habitats**. Through the reintroduction of **native** plant species, naturalized spaces provide benefits including a greater ability to respond to extreme weather and climate change events, potential for lower maintenance costs, the creation of **habitat** for urban wildlife and creating new spaces for people to connect with **nature**.

Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
3.5				
a. Develop and implement a strategy for **naturalization** on City-owned land within the **ecological network**.	Long Term Not Started	High (Capital)	Parks & Open Spaces; Climate & Environment	High

Urban Forest

Calgary's **urban forest** is a critical element in supporting healthy, beautiful and livable communities. It enhances residents' well-being, supports **climate resilience**, provides **habitat** for wildlife and helps mitigate the effects of urban heat islands. By expanding, protecting and enhancing the **urban forest**, these benefits are further amplified.

Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
3.5				
b. Establish a cross departmental committee to focus expanding the **urban forest** and provide adequate staff to support the committee and coordinate the implementationof identified actions.	Ongoing In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Urban Forestry	High
c. Increase investment and prioritize planting, in collaboration with other business units, in areas of Calgary with growing limitations to address tree inequity.	Ongoing In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Urban Forestry	High
d. Deploy a public measurement tool to assess and report on tree **canopy** coverage and **equity**.	Ongoing In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Urban Forestry	Medium
e. Plant 1.3 million trees on public land over the next ten years.	Short Term In Development	High (Capital)	Parks & Open Spaces Urban Forestry	Medium

Cultural Landscapes

Calgary's **cultural landscapes** are lands of cultural and historical significance that offer spaces to connect with our past and celebrate a rich and diverse cultural identity. The **park system** plays a crucial role in protecting lands significant to Indigenous peoples, as well as those with historical or archaeological importance. These areas are sensitive to human impact and development, requiring protection and management to ensure that these places are preserved and honoured.

Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
3.5				
f. Provide adequate staff to support the identification, conservation and celebration of **cultural landscapes**. Provide operational and cross-corporate support to track and report on progress.	Ongoing In Progress	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Cultural Landscapes	High
g. Co-create a **Park System Guiding Circle** to address and advise on the management of the **park system**.	Ongoing In Progress	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Cultural Landscapes	Medium
h. Finalize an Archaeological Resources Framework.	Ongoing In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Cultural Landscapes	Medium
i. Establish and utilize a **cultural landscape** dataset.	Medium Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Cultural Landscapes	Low
j. Develop guidelines for the education and interpretation of **cultural landscapes** for children that are aligned with the Alberta Education curriculum.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Cultural Landscapes	Low

7.3.2 Connecting Neighbourhoods to Parks

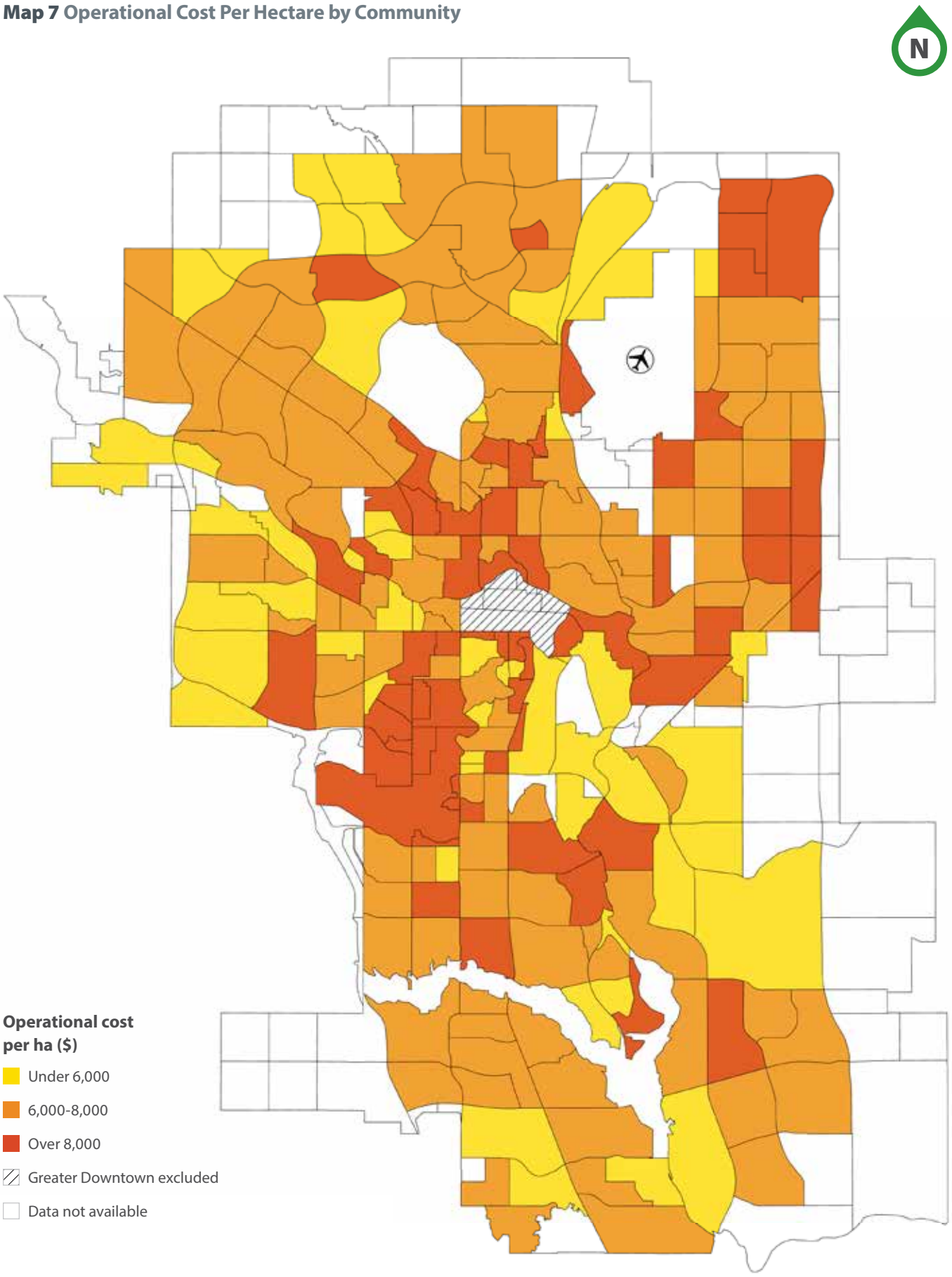
Park Provision

Balancing maintenance needs with investment is essential for effectively managing and growing the **park system**. Data plays a crucial role in assessing maintenance and investment costs across the city. While existing data is extensive in scope, its current structure makes it difficult to analyze, complicating efforts to determine whether management practices and capital investments are being equitably distributed across communities.

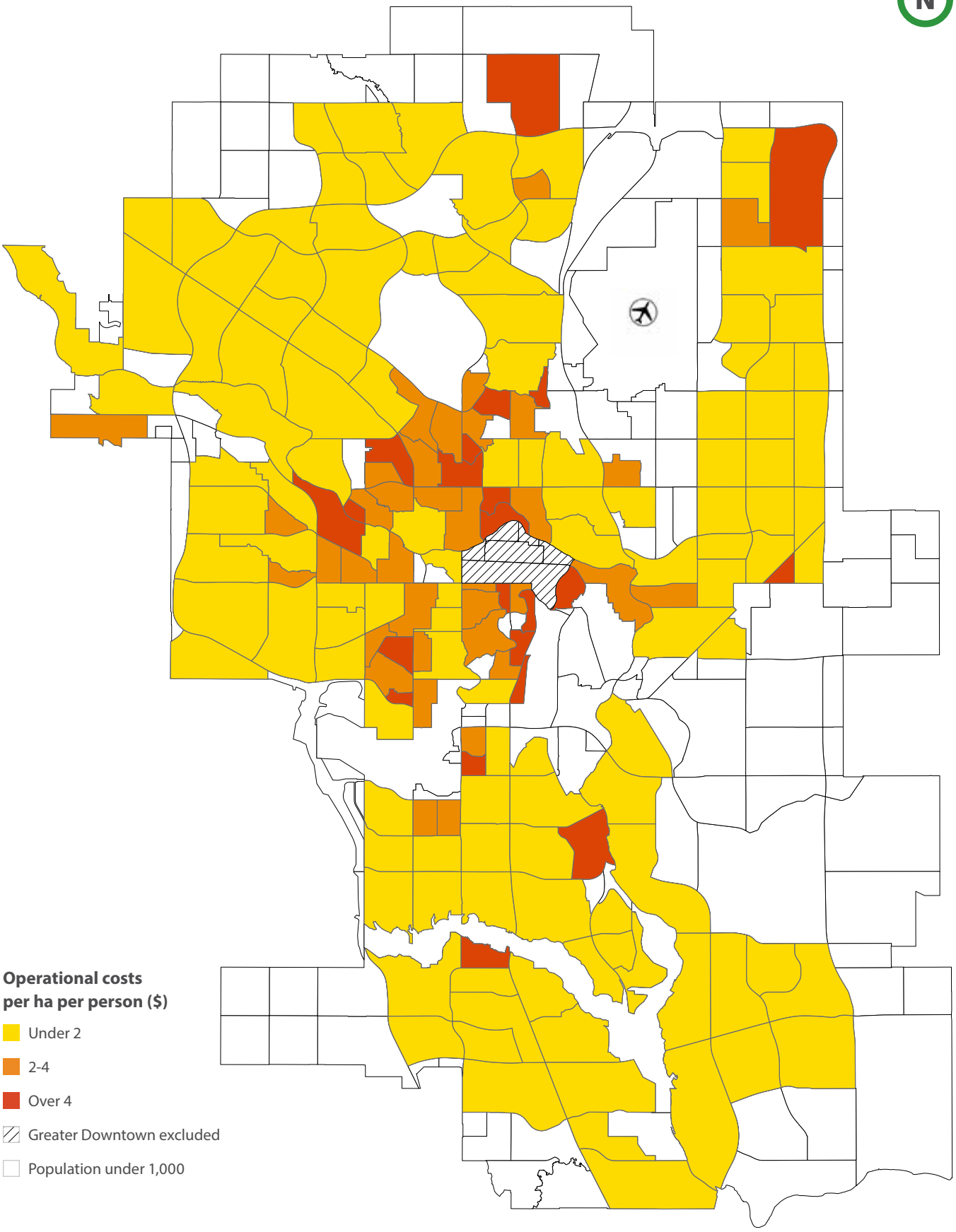
Maps 7 and 8 illustrate the average estimated spending across communities over the past ten years. Due to the unique requirements of **Greater Downtown**, it stands as a significant outlier in spending per hectare and should not be averaged with the rest of the city. Areas shown in yellow are currently receiving below the benchmark, light orange areas are at the benchmark and dark orange areas are above the benchmark. This provides a snapshot of where additional investment is needed.

To ensure a truly **equitable** approach, it is vital to include engagement with the public. Their insights and perspectives are invaluable in guiding decisions that reflect the needs and values of all community members. Collaborative efforts will help ensure that the **park system** is managed in a way that honors cultural heritage, respects diverse voices and meets the needs of current and future generations.

Map 7 Operational Cost Per Hectare by Community



Map 8 Operational Cost Per Person by Community



Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
4.10				
a. Develop a master plan to identify capital investment and address gaps and development needs.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Policy Planning; Infrastructure Services Public Spaces Delivery	High
b. Include community engagement, where appropriate, at all stages of park development and management from planning, designing, **programming** and operating to ensure parks are reflective of demographic and cultural needs.	Ongoing In Development	Moderate (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces	High
c. Develop a strategy to identify locations for fenced off-leash **dog areas**.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Policy Planning	Medium

Land and Regional Park and Amenity Management

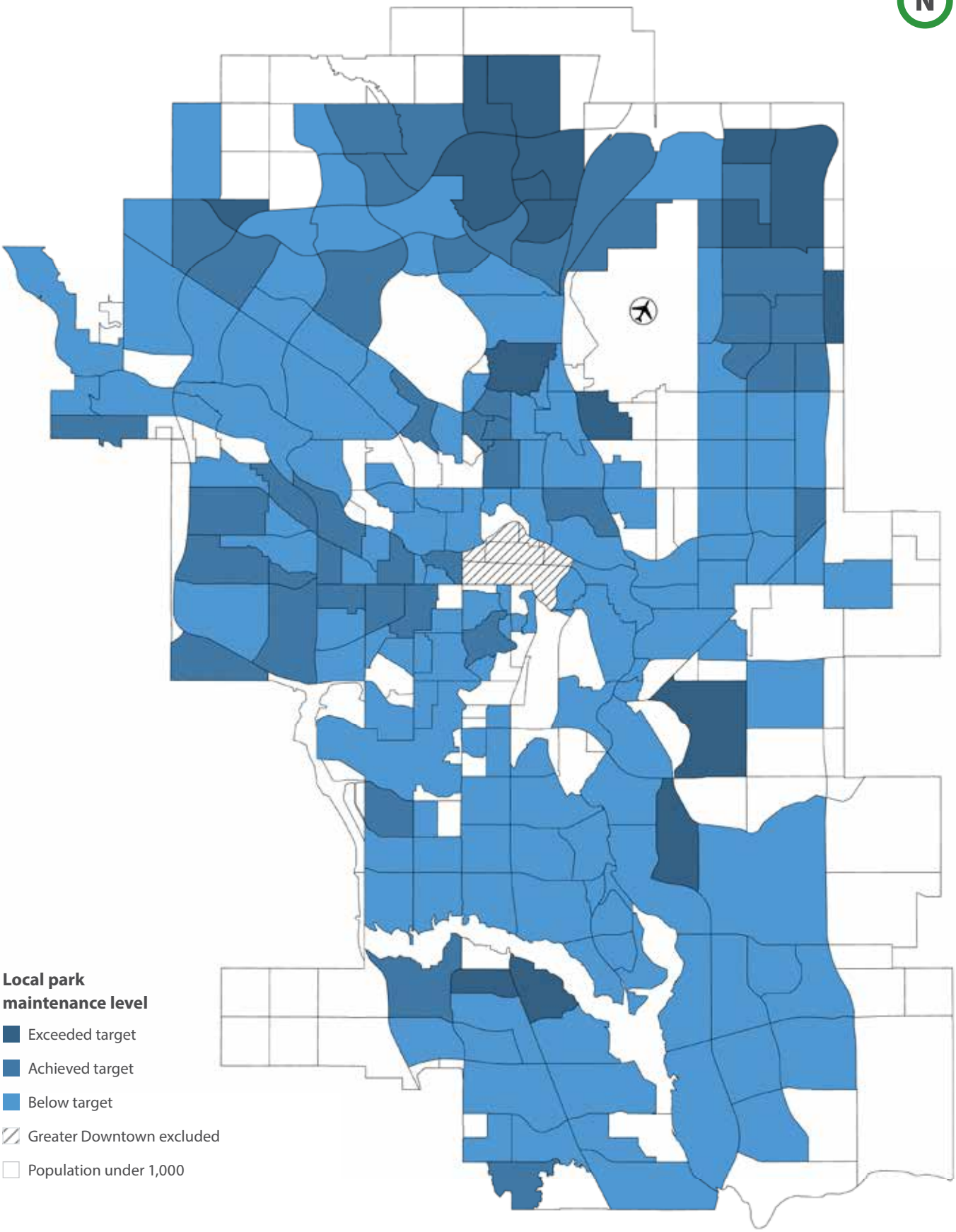
The management of the **park system** can be evaluated using the Customer Level of Service (CLOS) tool. Originally developed in 2010, this tool establishes specific criteria for assessing park management from a customer perspective. The framework was reviewed and updated in 2021 to align with the *imagineParks Strategic Plan*, setting a standard level of service that ensures equal service delivery across the city. The tool allows communities to measure and understand a standard level of service.

Managing parks is a complex task, often influenced by political and community pressures, which can lead to inconsistencies in management and maintenance. Currently, not all parks meet their Customer Level of Service targets as shown in Map 9. However, more effective monitoring and reporting will enable the City to better direct resources and investments for **equitable** maintenance.

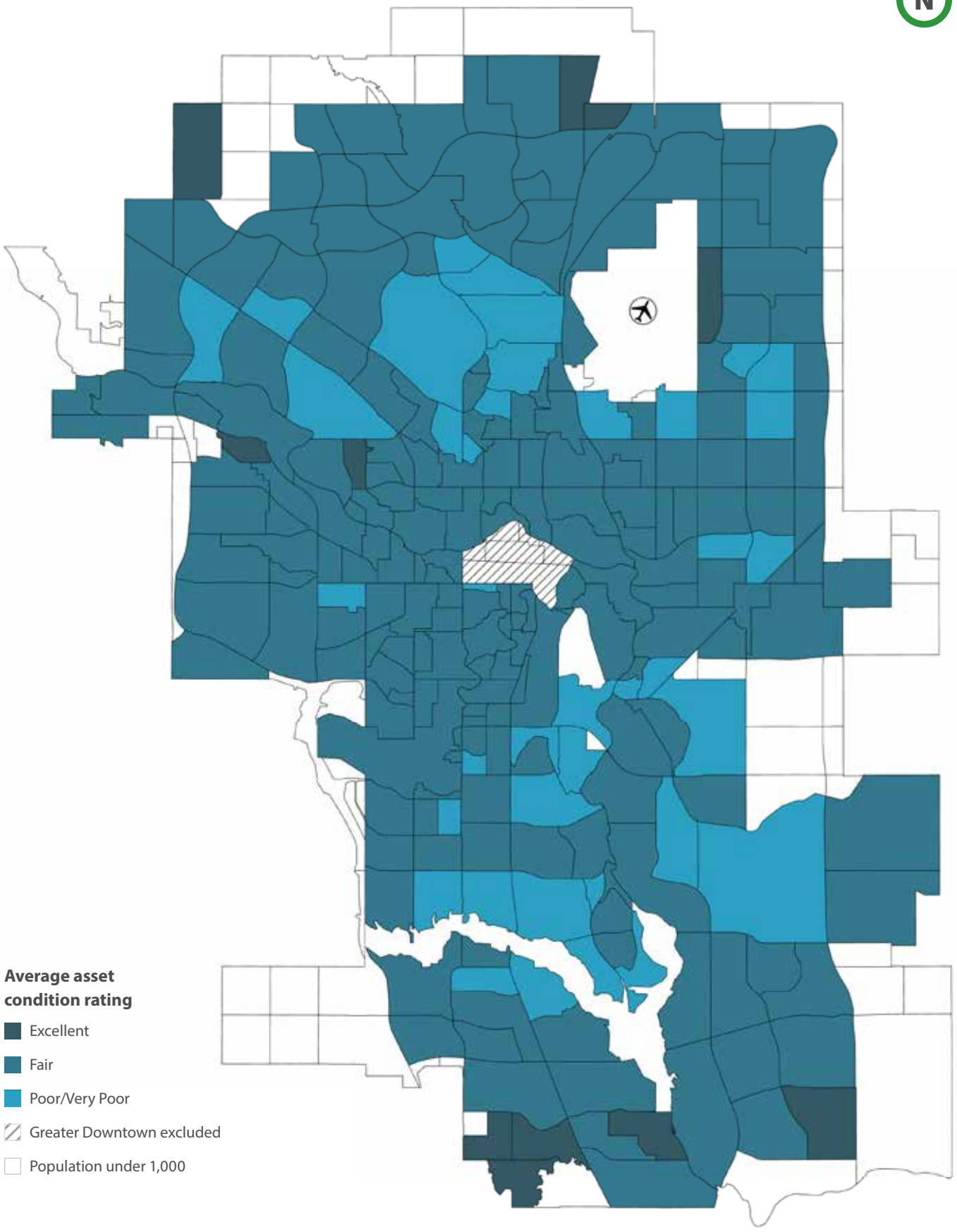
An additional layer of analysis is provided by assessing the condition of park assets, as shown in Map 10. As parks **infrastructure** ages, maintenance costs increase, which contributes to lower CLOS scores. The **infrastructure** funding gap identified in the *2022 Corporate Asset Management Plan* for parks, pathways, trails and other parks infrastructure is currently $793 million. Currently there is insufficient funding to address this gap.

A combined analysis of Customer Level of Service scores, community maintenance costs per hectare and asset condition ratings will enable The City to better prioritize future investments. In the past, decisions on the development and redevelopment of parks have been based on requests made by the public, donation or partnerships. To ensure **equitable** investment, future decision-making needs to be guided by accurate data and rigorous analysis.

Map 9 Average Maintenance Level for Local Parks by Community



Map 10 Asset Condition Rating by Community



Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
4.10				
d. Utilize the Customer Level of Service tool to assess that 100 per cent of park types meet a defined standard level of service by 2035.	Ongoing In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Asset Strategies	High
e. Complete an annual report and assessment of Customer Level of Service metrics to address deviations in the targets set by *imagineParks Strategic Plan*.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Asset Strategies	Medium
f. Provide administrative and educational support to City staff responsible for park maintenance annually to carry out the Customer Level of Service tool review of park types in their zones.	Ongoing In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Asset Strategies	High
g. Update the Customer Level of Service tool every five years to ensure all categories are relevant.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Asset Strategies	Medium
h. Use data and innovative practices to evaluate mowing and improve operational efficiency.	Short Term In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Asset Strategies	Medium
i. Ensure all City staff and contractors responsible for park maintenance have completed the required safety training and protocols.	Ongoing In Progress	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces	High
j. Collaborate with other City business units to develop an investment prioritization tool for park redevelopment based on maintenance levels, asset condition ratings, significance, usership and **equity**.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces	Medium
k. Develop an **equity** framework, in partnership with other City business units, to evaluate a citywide level of service as an additional layer to the Customer Level of Service tool.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces	Medium
l. Establish accreditation as a member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for **public golf courses**.	Medium Term Not Started	Moderate (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Golf Course Operations	Low
m. Establish an **equity** fund to provide additional maintenance, capital investment and servicing to **equity deserving communities**.	Short Term Not Started	High (Capital)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Policy Planning	Medium
n. Investigate how community food assets such as community gardens, farm stands and markets could be integrated into the **park system**.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Policy Planning; Climate & Environment	Medium

Playfield Management

Parks & Open Spaces is responsible for maintaining Class D sports fields (**playfields**), cricket fields, tennis courts and other sports surfaces. These **amenities** provide affordable access to recreation and sport that contributes to the health and well-being of Calgarians. Although **playfields** and surfaces make up only 20 per cent of park types, they require significant operational costs to maintain. The City is committed to keeping these **amenities** affordable and **accessible** to all residents.

There is, however, an increasing gap between the revenue generated from fees and rising maintenance costs. Expanding budgets to cover this shortfall without compromising service levels is not feasible. While full cost recovery is not the goal, it is essential to adjust fees in line with inflation and expected service levels. The issue is further complicated by the practice of field over-bookings, where sports groups reserve more time than needed to maintain historical rights or account for potential weather disruptions. This leads to inaccurate data for resource allocation and restricts access for emerging or growing sports organizations.

The City's Customer Level of Service review highlights inequities, with some sports fields being maintained at higher standards than others. To ensure fair access, The City aims to match the right user groups with the right fields at the right times, thereby improving accessibility and **equity** in sports opportunities.

As recreational trends evolve, there is an opportunity to support new and emerging sports, ensuring fair and **equitable** access. This approach should be guided by data analysis and community engagement to understand the impacts and potential displacement of existing user groups.

Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
4.10				
o. Complete an allocations and permitting process review to reduce blanket bookings by user groups and develop a fair and **equitable** allocation system which can be processed in a timely manner.	Ongoing In Progress	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Community Parks Initiatives	High
p. Develop and implement standardized maintenance practices for **playfields** based on the class of field to set clear maintenance expectations among user groups.	Ongoing In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Community Parks Initiatives	High
q. Collaborate with public school boards to support increased maintenance on Class E fields to expand their standard to a Class D.	Med Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Community Parks Initiatives	Medium
r. Collaborate with public school boards to add high school fields not currently in the booking system to increase public availability.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Community Parks Initiatives	Medium
s. Increase standard of maintenance to Class D fields to create a Class D+ fields to better support a greater range of use for different skill levels.	Med Term Not Started	Moderate (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Community Parks Initiatives	Low
t. Increase capacity to process field permits and address 311 inquiries quickly and efficiently.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Customer Service & Communications	High
u. Pilot emerging sports on existing sport surfaces, and design future sport surfaces to support multiple sports.	Ongoing In Progress	Moderate (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Community Parks Initiatives	Medium

Natural Areas Management

Natural areas require different management practices compared to manicured parks and **playfields**. These areas provide significant benefits in **climate resilience**, urban health and public well-being, making it crucial to invest in their enhancement and maintenance. The current operational costs of **natural areas** requires review, as does capital investment in restoration and **conservation** practices to ensure the continued health of these parks and the sustainment of the **ecological network**. With guidance from recently developed national tools for natural asset inventory and management planning, The City is working to capture and report natural infrastructure funding needs and resources.

Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
4.10				
v. Assess and update the cost of maintenance to preserve the value of **natural areas**.	Short Term In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Urban Conservation	High
w. Develop and implement a compensation model for damage or loss of **natural areas**.	Short Term In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Urban Conservation	High
x. Develop 10-year, operational **Habitat Management Plans** for all **natural areas**.	Med Term In Progress	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Urban Conservation	Medium
y. Allow litter control with guidance, in **natural areas** to be included in Enhanced Landscape Maintenance requirements.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Urban Conservation, Community Parks Initiatives	Medium

Funding Parks

The City's *Municipal Development Plan* identifies targets to direct growth within established areas. However, there is currently no consistent funding mechanism for acquiring, developing and redeveloping parks in these areas, apart from partnerships and one-time funding programs. Additionally, data shows that maintenance costs per hectare significantly increase with higher population densities. Parks, **natural areas**, and **open space** are essential to community well-being but currently lack a dedicated, consistent funding source for upgrades and maintenance within the City of Calgary's existing operating budget. To support growing communities and maintain quality of life, it is crucial to establish a reliable funding approach for these spaces, ensuring they continue to serve residents effectively over time.

Action		Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
4.10					
z.	Establish a **sustainable** funding source for park development, redevelopment and management in established areas.	Med Term Not Started	Low (Capital)	Parks & Open Spaces	Medium
aa.	Explore alternative management models such as land trust, conservancies and Indigenous partnerships.	Med Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces	Low
bb.	Develop a process to utilize funding such as, but not limited to, the Established Areas Investment Fund, Legacy Fund, Equity in Service Delivery Fund to address provision gaps prioritizing **equity deserving communities**, areas of high utilization and parks with poor asset condition ratings.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces	Medium
cc.	Continue to leverage provincial and federal funding to support gaps in park provision.	Ongoing In Progress	Moderate (Capital)	Parks & Open Spaces	High
dd.	Continue to support partnerships that can address provision gaps with prioritization of projects such as addressing **barriers** for **equity** deserving groups.	Ongoing In Progress	Moderate (Capital)	Parks & Open Spaces Activations & Education	High

Supporting Neighbourhood Stewardship and Volunteerism

Supporting community members to take stewardship of their parks and **open space** fosters a sense of ownership and pride while allowing City staff to focus on **neighbourhoods** with lower volunteer levels. This approach aims to support stewardship and community-driven **programming**, leading to more **equitable** maintenance and management, especially where resources are limited. Civic participation also increases government transparency and builds community trust.

The City values these collaborations and, through the *imagineParks Strategic Plan*, recognizes the significant contributions made by residents, organizations and businesses. To acknowledge and measure these efforts, *imagineParks Strategic Plan* has set a target dedicated to highlighting the work of these collaborators.

Parks & Open Spaces currently supports stewardship through several initiatives, including the Enhanced Landscape Maintenance Program (ELM), Adopt-a-Park, Branching Out Program, Pathway River Cleanup and Green Initiatives. While these programs offer significant benefits, they also come with risks that need to be managed, such as:

- Work may not align with The City's standard level of service.
- Results may be inconsistent.
- Resident expectations for service levels may increase.
- Inequity may arise due to varying abilities of Calgarians to participate.
- A lack of expertise may hinder environmental goals, such as water conservation or avoiding invasive species.
- Increased staffing costs for administration and monitoring may be needed, especially with program expansion.

Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
4.10				
ee. Create and implement a volunteer and partnership assessment tool in alignment with *imagineParks Strategic Plan* to ensure effectiveness and value for Calgarians.	Ongoing In Progress	Moderate (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Activations & Education	High
ff. Create a framework of standards and a training program for volunteers.	Short Term In Progress	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Activations & Education	Medium
gg. Work with Enhanced Landscape Maintenance communities to promote environmentally resilient practices such as drought resistant seeding, planting **native** species, reduced irrigation and **xeriscaping**.	Ongoing In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Community Parks Initiatives	Medium
hh. Increase community-based efforts to engage youth and **equity** deserving groups in volunteer initiatives which address their needs and **barriers** to participation.	Ongoing In Development	Moderate (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Activations & Education	High
ii. Develop a strategy and standardized process to evaluate requests for enhanced or non-standard **amenities** which considers **equity** and long-term financial **sustainability** for The City.	Short Term In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Policy Planning	High
jj. Establish and sustain a city-wide community volunteer group that can enhance levels of service in **equity deserving communities**.	Ongoing Not Started	Moderate (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Activations & Education	Medium
kk. Build capacity in **equity deserving communities** using the citywide volunteer group to mentor and support those communities.	Ongoing Not started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Activations & Education	High
ll. Expand volunteer programs, such as Adopt-a-Park and Green Initiatives, and ensure programs meet City and community needs.	Ongoing In Progress	High (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Activations & Education	Medium
mm. Advance Calgary becoming a National Park City.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business and Policy Planning	Medium

Park Carrying Capacity

Park carrying capacity refers to the maximum level of activity that can be reasonably or sustainably managed within a given space. For the **park system**, this concept can apply to ecological **carrying capacity**, visitor capacity or facility capacity. Determining a park's **carrying capacity** is essential for managing spaces that are overused, leading to a diminished visitor experience and increased maintenance needs.

Currently, issues of overuse or misuse are often addressed by raising operational budgets, which may offer short-term relief but fail to address the underlying problems. To better manage these challenges, a **Visitor Management Plan** can be developed using a management-by-objective framework. These plans use a combination **park carrying capacity** and park utilization data to identify and address site-specific issues in a more strategic and tailored manner, rather than relying on blanket spending increases. The resulting management framework helps pinpoint specific actions and capacities for the park based on environmental, social and economic factors.

Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
5.9				
a. Develop and implement **Visitor Management Plans** for parks that are experiencing **carrying capacity** challenges.	Med Term Not Started	High (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Policy Planning	Medium
b. Advance methods and technologies to monitor park usage to understand historical, current and future trends to inform management plans.	Short Term In Development	Moderate (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Policy Planning	High
c. Complement data analysis with public insights to inform park planning and development that reflect Calgarians behaviours and preferences.	Ongoing In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Policy Planning	High
d. Implement data management strategies, in partnership with other City Business Units, to improve transparency and accountability and minimize risks when creating plans.	Ongoing In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Policy Planning	Medium

7.3.3 Connecting People to Parks

Infrastructure Provision Standards

Park **infrastructure** is crucial for the comfort and enjoyment of park users, offering **amenities** such as seating for rest, washrooms and water fountains for physical comfort. The current **infrastructure** in parks needs to be reviewed and updated to ensure user needs are met, longer visits are encouraged and accessibility is improved.

Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
5.9				
e. Develop an Infrastructure Strategic Plan	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces; Infrastructure Services Public Spaces Delivery	High
f. Revise and improve provision standards that are aligned with user and operational needs in parks and along pathways for **infrastructure**, such as but not limited to, washrooms, benches, water fountains and garbage cans.	Short Term In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Policy Planning; Infrastructure Services Public Spaces Delivery	High
g. Review vehicle and bicycle parking provision to assess access and coordinate solutions in partnership with other City business units.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Space Business & Policy Planning; Infrastructure Services Public Spaces Delivery	Medium

Landscaping

Landscaping in parks, **boulevards** and other **open space** creates visually appealing and welcoming spaces. However, manicured grass and annual plantings are water-intensive and costly to maintain. To address these challenges, it's important to strike a balance between areas that should be naturalized and those that require highly manicured spaces.

Naturalization not only reduces operational costs but also plays a key role in building **climate resilience** and providing Calgarians with greater access to **nature**. Incorporating resilient seed mixes, **xeriscaping** techniques and innovative sod methods can further enhance this approach. These strategies reduce water usage, lower maintenance costs and contribute to the overall **sustainability** of the **park system** while still offering attractive and functional park spaces.

Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
5.9				
h. Where appropriate, reduce the use of water intensive, non-**native** annual bedding plants and hanging baskets and make **native** and drought resistant species the plantings of choice.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces; Infrastructure Services Public Spaces Delivery	High
i. Develop an incentive program for residents and private landowners to naturalize and **xeriscape** yards and **boulevards** with drought resilient species.	Med Term Not Started	Moderate (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Policy Planning; Infrastructure Services Public Spaces Delivery	Low
j. Encourage new sod methods, seed mixes and grass/cover species which are more resilient.	Short Term Not Started	Moderate (Operational)	Infrastructure Services Public Spaces Delivery	Medium
k. Update The City of Calgary Seed Mixes Guidelines to support experimentation and **resilience** and legibility for the public and development industry.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Infrastructure Services Public Spaces Delivery	High
l. Work with Enhanced Landscape Maintenance communities to promote environmentally resilient practices such as drought resistant seeding, planting **native** species, reduced irrigation and **xeriscaping**.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Community Parks Initiatives	Medium
m. Review Development Agreement parameters to incentivize leaving land in a **sustainable** natural state on future public lands.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Infrastructure Services Public Spaces Delivery	Medium

Naturalization and Restoration

The current model of developing large areas of manicured, non-native parks and **open space** is unsustainable. Increasing the amount of naturalized space in the city improves operational **sustainability** and ensures the economic **resilience** of the **park system**. Figure 7.2 compares the current cost of operating **natural areas** to that of managing other park types, illustrating that the cost of maintaining **natural areas** is significantly lower.

The *Our BiodiverCity* plan sets a target to restore 20 per cent of Calgary's **open space** by 2025, recognizing the public, environmental, and economic benefits of natural parkland. However, only about half (53 per cent) of this target has been achieved so far, primarily due to a lack of dedicated funding for **naturalization**. To meet this target, significant investment is needed in **preservation**, restoration, **naturalization** and environmental education initiatives. Achieving this will require collaboration with other City business units and private landowners.

Establishing a standard level of **naturalization** and changing landscaping standards for parks and **open space** can yield a return on investment in ten years or less, primarily due to reduced maintenance costs, particularly in watering and mowing. Figure 7.3 illustrates the return on investment when comparing the maintenance costs of naturalized spaces to those of manicured turf.

Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
5.9				
n. Provide adequate staff to support the identification and prioritization of land opportunities for **naturalization**.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces; Infrastructure Services Public Spaces Delivery	High
o. Revise the restoration target for the **park system** in consultation with other City business units and in alignment with federal and global targets.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces	Medium
p. Naturalize underutilized manicured areas within the **park system**.	Ongoing In Development	High (Capital)	Parks & Open Spaces Urban Conservation; Infrastructure Services Public Spaces Delivery	High
q. Existing manicured utility right-of-ways should be targeted for **naturalization** where feasible and in collaboration with the utility owner.	Med Term Not Started	Moderate (Capital)	Parks & Open Spaces Urban Conservation	Medium
r. Develop design standards for **naturalization** and improve restoration standards.	Ongoing In Progress	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Urban Conservation	High
s. Improve data tracking and identification to support management of **natural areas** and naturalized space.	Short Term In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business & Asset Strategies	High

Figure 7.2 Operational Costs of Maintaining Parks

(million dollars)

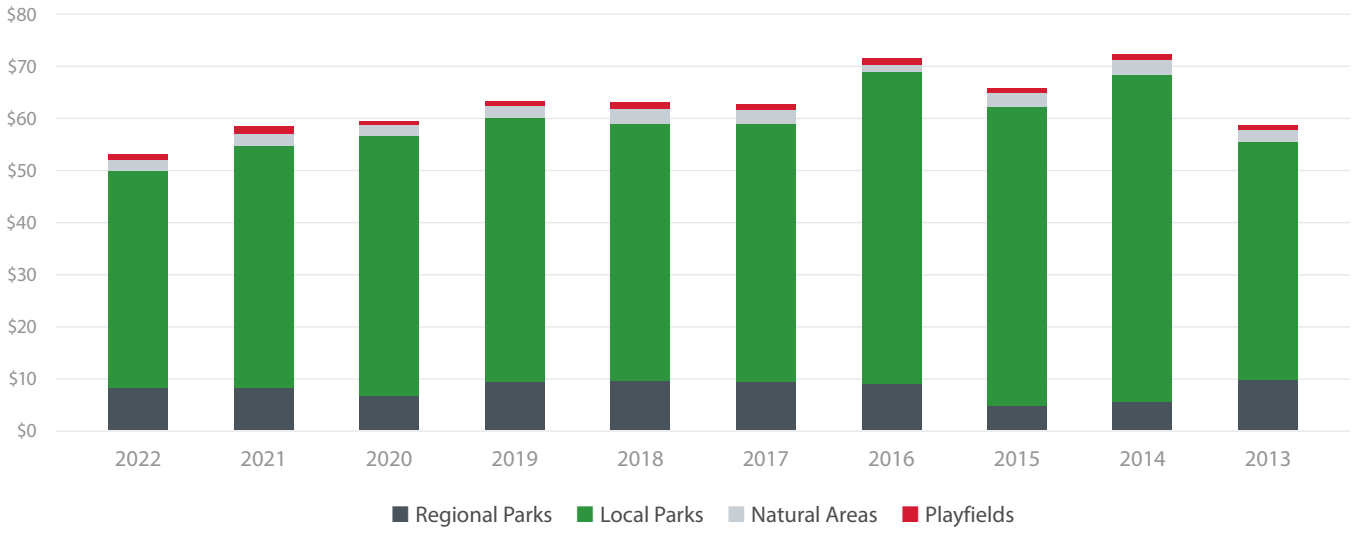
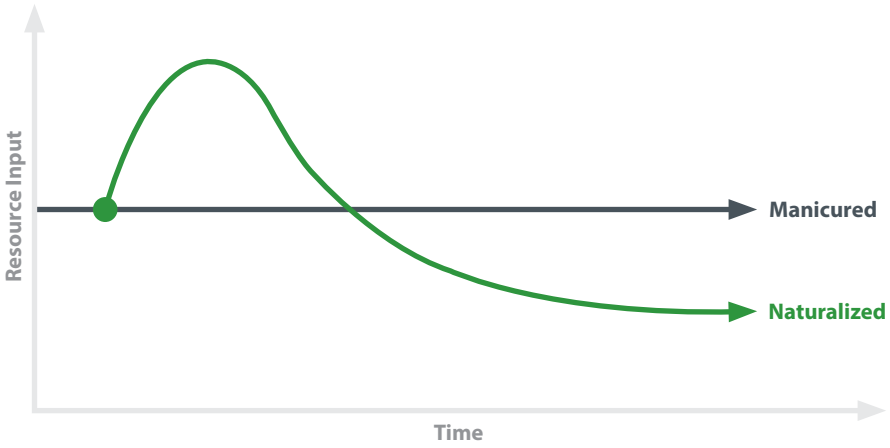


Figure 7.3 Managed Parks & Open Spaces

This conceptual diagram illustrates how resource inputs generally change over time for parks and open spaces that are manicured versus naturalized.



This diagram is for general illustrative purposes only; actual changes in resource input over time will vary depending on site conditions and details of the specific project.

Although a large initial resource input may be required to create a naturalized space, the resource inputs are generally reduced over time as the landscape becomes more established. The initial resource input typically occurs in the first two years. Resource inputs include the financial cost and energy necessary to facilitate actions like reseeding, planting, weed control, site maintenance and monitoring.

Safety and Security

The design and activation of parks is an important component of addressing park safety. Other components require collaboration both inside and outside the organization to address wider societal issues such as drug use, anti-social behaviour or the management of encampments.

Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
5.9				
t. Collaborate with other City business units along with social outreach partners, Calgary Police Service and other agencies to develop a strategy to address safety for park users with a focus on helping people experiencing vulnerabilities and addressing encampment issues within parks.	Long Term In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces	High
u. Explore adding dedicated bylaw officers for parks.	Med Term Not Started	High (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces; Emergency Management & Community Safety	Medium

Communication and Education

Effective communication is essential for ensuring that Calgarians have access to information about Calgary's parks and the **amenities** they offer. It helps people better understand the experiences, events and history associated with parks, as well as the rules for their use. Additionally, good communication fosters stewardship and raises awareness of **natural areas** and their importance to the city's **resilience**.

Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
5.9				
v. Develop a communications strategy for Parks and Open Spaces ensuring information is **accessible**, multilingual, transparent, accountable and customer-oriented for the various media platforms.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	People Innovation and Collaborative Services Customer Service and Communication	High
w. Enhance education programs on: **1.** the importance of **biodiversity**, urban conservation, urban forestry and the benefits of the **park system** to **climate adaptation** and **climate mitigation**; **2.** wildlife safety; **3.** the cultural and/or historical significance of the park where appropriate; **4.** park locations, **amenities** and programs; **5.** appropriate park usage and safety; and **6.** park **programming** and **events**.	Ongoing In Progress	Moderate (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Activations & Education	Medium
x. Maintain and enhance relationships with park users and the community to encourage advocacy and stewardship of the **park system**.	Ongoing In Progress	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Activations & Education	Medium
y. Develop an ongoing feedback loop of public engagement, research and community outreach that helps to inform decision making on development and management of the **park system**.	Ongoing In Progress	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Business and Policy Planning	High
z. Develop citizen science programs for The City in partnership with other City business units, and support existing programs that promote **biodiversity** and urban ecology goals through the generation of information and engagement of the public on urban ecological issues.	Ongoing In Development	Moderate (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Activations & Education	Medium
aa. Provide effective booking systems that are fast, reliable, informative, flexible and customer focused.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Activations & Education	Medium

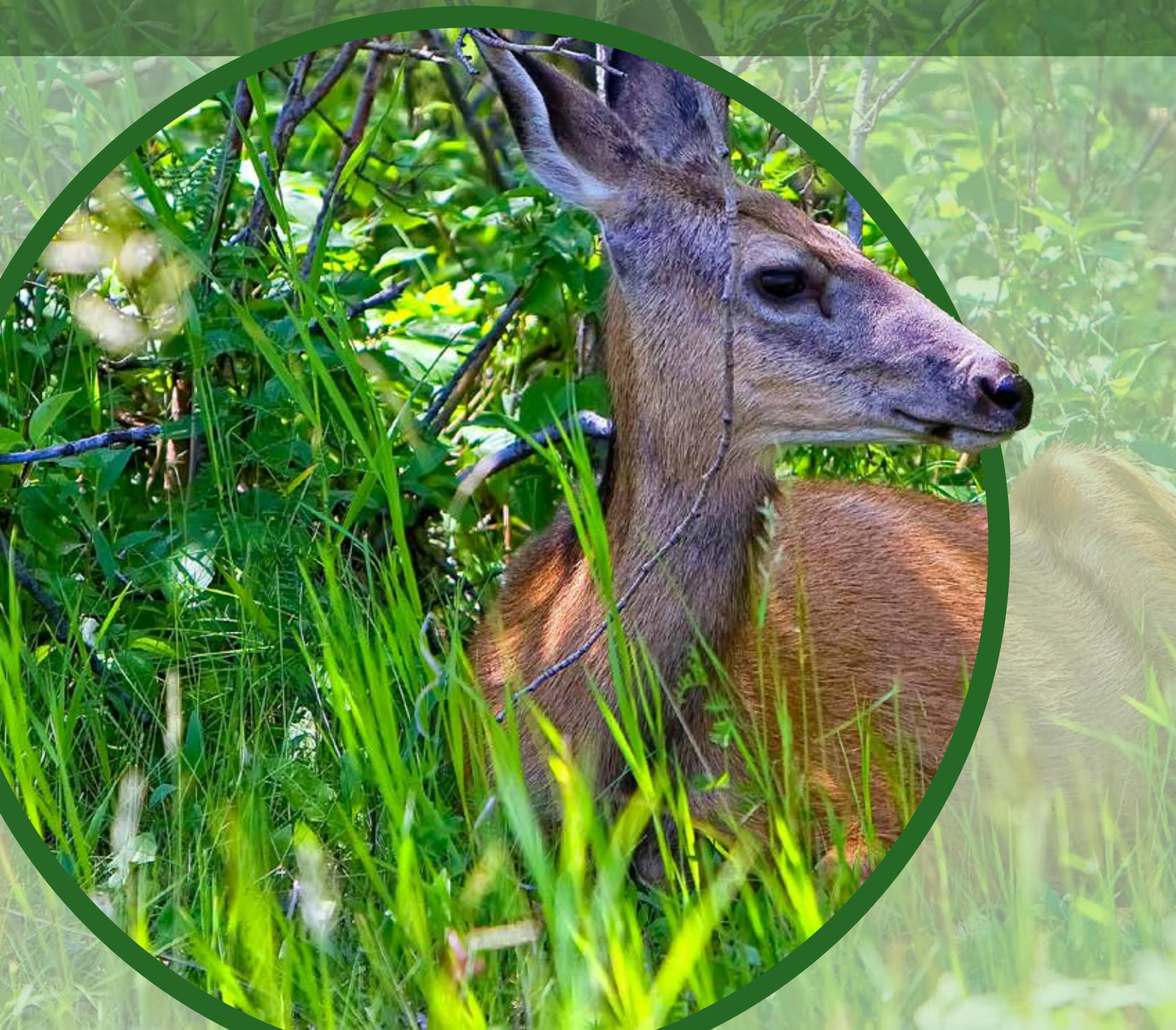
7.3.4 Utilities and Infrastructure

Irrigation helps keep parks beautiful and healthy, but irrigating all parks is unsustainable. Previous policies required irrigation systems in all parks; however, longer and more frequent drought conditions, combined with limited operational budgets, have made this approach both impractical and environmentally irresponsible.

Strategic management of irrigation systems is crucial for the long-term **conservation** of potable water resources. By targeting irrigation to the most heavily used park spaces, these spaces can remain healthy and support recreation and sports while reducing the overall need for irrigation across the city.

Action	Timeline and Progress	Financial Impacts	Implementation Lead	Priority Level
6.3				
a. Establish standards and requirements for water re-use and non-potable water use.	Short Term In Progress	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Water Management	High
b. Review and update the *Water Management Strategic Plan*.	Short Term In Development	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Water Management, Business & Policy Planning	High
c. Set new targets and develop standards in the *Water Management Strategic Plan*, in partnership with other City business units, to reduce irrigation and the use of potable water.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Water Management, Business & Policy Planning	High
d. Remove the requirement for irrigation in parks that do not require it for long term use.	Short Term Not Started	Low (Operational)	Parks & Open Spaces Water Management	High
e. Remove redundant or decommission irrigation **infrastructure** in parks being redeveloped.	Med Term Not Started	High (Capital)	Parks & Open Spaces Water Management	Medium

Appendix A
Natural Area Park Types, Management and Use Guidelines



Introduction

This appendix provides a classification with functional categories that guide the **conservation**, management and use of **natural areas** (formerly known as natural environment parks). Calgary's natural ecosystems are also categorized by their **habitat** type (grassland, forest, wetland) and by how they contribute to the overall **natural system** (i.e., the **ecological network** as shown in The City's *Municipal Development Plan*). At the individual park level, **natural areas** are categorized to provide guidance for management practices and permitted usage according to **habitat** sensitivity and **conservation** needs.

Categories

The following criteria are guidelines for classifying parks containing natural environments into one of four categories:

Natural Area Categories

1. Special Protection
2. Major
3. Supporting

Other

4. Other parks with natural environments and areas that have been naturalized.

Table 1 Categories and Descriptions of Natural Areas

	Special protection natural area	Major natural area	Supporting natural area	Other parks with natural environments and naturalized area
Environmental Significance	Provincial/Regional	City/Regional	Local and/or Supportive	Variable
Wildlife Resources	Provides temporary or permanent resources for breeding, feeding, shelter and movement for various species.	Provides temporary or permanent resources for breeding, feeding, shelter and movement for various species.	Provides temporary shelter and foraging opportunities, enables animals to move through the landscape to more productive **habitat**.	Variable
Primary Management Zones	**Habitat Preservation**	**Habitat Preservation** Wildlife **Habitat** Natural Parkland	Variable	Not Applicable
Percentage of Natural Environment	>75 per cent	>50 per cent	Not defined	Not defined

Table 1 Categories and Descriptions of Natural Areas

	Special protection natural area	Major natural area	Supporting natural area	Other parks with natural environments and naturalized area
Fragmentation	Maximize natural environment parcels. Minimize trail, pathway, road, and structure densities. Discourage and rehabilitate human desire line trails.	Maximize natural environment parcels. Strategically design trails, pathways, roads and structures to minimize densities. Discourage and rehabilitate human desire line trails.	Minimize fragmentation due to trails.	Not defined
Buffers	Maximize transitional zones (aka buffers) to separate areas of incompatible use. Buffers occur between incompatible management zones and **natural areas** and the urban interface.	Plan and introduce buffers to separate areas of incompatible use and at boundaries.	Develop transitional zones where possible in existing **natural areas** to minimize interface between areas of incompatible use.	May serve as buffers to **natural areas**.

Appendix Definitions

Environmental Significance

The scale at which the **natural area** is considered to have environmental significance, according to existing data sources such as provincial **Environmentally Significant Areas**, regional environmentally sensitive areas, city **Environmentally Significant Areas**.

Wildlife Resources

Informed by biophysical assessment information, describes the suitability and extent to which the natural **habitat** provides for local fauna.

Management Zones

Outlines the management priorities for that area along with activities that are allowed or restricted, which aids in ensuring management plan objectives are met.

- **Preservation** – Protection zones for areas of high environmental sensitivity (e.g., areas containing or supporting unique, threatened, or endangered natural or cultural features). Management and use should be informed by guidelines for special protection **natural areas** and the **habitat preservation** zone description within Parks & Open Spaces' *Habitat Management Plan Framework* (2022).
- **Wildlife Habitat Features** – Protection zone for specific wildlife species' **habitat** occurring outside preservation zones. These may be included in habitat preservation zones, but also include areas with unique or critical **habitats** (e.g., hibernacula, dens, long-term nesting sites) and areas that may be closed to public access to protect sensitive species.
- **Natural Parkland** – Areas managed primarily as natural environments that consist of **habitats** with less overall sensitivity to human disturbance. A larger variety of **passive recreational** and low-impact uses may be integrated into natural parkland to balance **biodiversity conservation** and **nature**-based park user experience, with the former taking precedence when competing uses are identified.
- **Other (disturbed/manicured)** – Includes existing manicured turf parks, human-disturbed areas, and semi-developed areas where active and **passive recreation** occurs. This zone may include park **amenities**, buildings, recreational equipment and parking, requiring regular site maintenance.

Acceptable Uses and Guidelines

The following guidelines address several **natural area** management issues. Usage pressures on **natural areas** threaten **biodiversity** and ecosystem health, requiring a customized management response. For **natural areas** without a site-specific **Habitat Management Plan**, the category will guide management actions in accordance with Table 2.

Table 2 Acceptable uses and guidelines for Natural Area categories

	Special protection natural area	Major natural area	Supporting natural area	Other parks with natural environments and naturalized area
Management Priority	Highest level of protection to ensure **conservation** of the integrity and diversity of biological resources and ecological functions. Minimal human impacts and activities to protect the park.	Parks have high **biodiversity** value, unique **habitats** and ecological function. Minimize human impacts & activities to protect the integrity and diversity of biological resources and functions offered by these **habitat** cores and stepping stones. **Sustainable** recreational activities may be considered.	Varies. Where supporting **natural areas** are large with habitat complexity and function as cores in the **ecological network**, follow major **natural area** guidelines. Others are to be managed as stepping stone **habitats** of five hectares or greater by providing natural spaces for wildlife movement and aim for **conservation** of diverse flora and fauna. Balance **conservation** with human use and recreation.	Should be managed to support **biodiversity** and provide connection to **nature** for the public.
Designated Pathways and Trails	Plan the location and distribution of trails and pathways to prioritize **conservation** and reduce fragmentation. Trail surface must balance **habitat** requirement, user safety and public interests. **Habitat conservation** should be prioritized. Minimal trail width where safety allows. Close desire line trails via barriers, restoration, education and signage. Seasonal closure of trails may be considered for wildlife needs. Lighting should not be permitted. Refer to *Parks and Pathways Lighting Plan* for specific requirements. Various trail surfaces may be used for major **natural areas only**.		Plan the location and distribution of trails and pathways to prioritize **conservation** and reduce fragmentation. Various trail surfaces may be used. Mobility and pathway accessibility where it is deemed environmentally sound. Regional pathways connections. Rare/occasional pathway or trail closure for wildlife protection. Lighting should be avoided or minimal for safety reasons only. Refer to *Parks and Pathways Lighting Plan* for specific requirements.	Encourage user access via various trail and pathway surfaces on designated trails. Mobility and pathway accessibility prioritized. Regional pathway connections. Lighting should be provided for safe public access reasons. Refer to *Parks and Pathways Lighting Plan* for specific requirements.

	Special protection natural area / Major natural area	Supporting natural area	Other parks with natural environments and naturalized area
Recreation/ Activity Types	**Active recreation** activities prohibited. Only **passive recreation** with minimal damage footprint will be permitted under review by area ecologists and granting of a Parks Permit.	Some **active recreation** activities may be considered by Parks & Open Spaces under Parks Permit depending on management zones in park. Planned prevention/ mitigations for environmental damage must be approved by area ecologists.	A mix of active and **passive recreation** activities may be considered with planned mitigations for environmental damage.
Events	**Level 5 events** would be low-impact passive events such as a guided **nature** walk or a walk/run on a pathway, or a bioblitz. Duration can be no longer than one day and one location and require minimal event **infrastructure** (e.g., a small pop-up tent, table, etc.) All proposed events must be approved by the area ecologist.		Allowable based on the capacity of the park.
Planting and Restoration	Only **native** species to be used in planting and restoration activities. Plantings to support **biodiversity**, be restorative, provide barrier and/or slope stability.		**Native**, **drought tolerant** and climate-adaptive species should be used in planting. Plantings to support **biodiversity**.
Invasive Species Management	Proactive weed inventory and removal prioritized to prevent **habitat** loss and prevent spread into adjacent manicured and residential areas. Follow an integrated pest management approach. Invasive plant removal actions to minimize damage to non-target and **native** species. Identified invasive invertebrates, disease, and pest/conflict species to be similarly managed. Implement selective wildlife damage mitigation strategies where warranted.		
Natural and Artificial Habitat Structures	Retain **habitat**, slope and vegetation diversity. Create or maintain natural **habitat** niches (e.g., rock piles, snags, downed trees, stumps). Avoid the introduction of artificial **habitat** structures unless under direction of a species at risk recovery plan or The City deems that they contribute to regulated species **conservation** goals and scientific research standards. Parks Permit must be obtained.	Retain or create natural **habitat** niches. Avoid the introduction of artificial **habitat** structures except when enhancements for species at risk are required and/ or have scientifically demonstrated success. Non-City artificial **habitat** structures are to be discouraged unless research and/or education value can be demonstrated and Parks Permit is obtained.	Artificial **habitat** structures may be permitted for research and/or education value or support **biodiversity**. Parks Permit must be obtained.

	Special protection natural area	Major natural area	Supporting natural area	Other parks with natural environments and naturalized area
Amenities	**Amenity** placement to be sensitive to park ecology and aesthetics (e.g., garbage cans, benches). Limit **amenity** placement that requires off-pathway maintenance and or poses risks to highly sensitive **habitats** (e.g., maintenance vehicle access along riverbanks, through grasslands). City standard operating procedures (SOP) should minimize vehicular traffic off-pathway and encourage cleaning/sanitation of vehicles and equipment between wetlands, grasslands and **habitats** to prevent disease and pest transmission.			**Amenity** placement as per the *Development Guidelines, Standards and Specifications for Landscape Construction*.
Dogs	Dogs prohibited except in designated areas. Where dogs are permitted, they must be leashed and stay on designated pathways. Dog-free zones should be designated in sensitive wildlife and human-wildlife conflict areas. Off-leash **dog areas** not permitted.	Dogs prohibited except on designated trails and pathways and must be leashed. Dog-free zones may be designated in known wildlife **habitat** zones. Off-leash **dog areas** not permitted in new major **natural areas**. Closure of existing off leash **dog areas** should be considered.	Dogs prohibited except on designated trails and pathways and must be leashed. Off-leash **dog areas** may be considered for new parks where ecological impacts are determined to be minimal through **habitat** assessment and/or off-leash areas is to be contained (i.e., fenced).	Off-leash **dog areas** may be considered. Preference for limiting and containing off-leash areas in these parks.
Utility Corridors	Alternative location should be considered as a priority. If there is no other alternative location a **Biophysical Impact Assessment**, Habitat Restoration Plan and public consultation is required. **Habitat** monitoring to ensure ongoing health is required during and post construction particularly for longer term projects. Restoration of disturbed area utility projects is required. During construction and maintenance environmental impact to be minimized. Above ground infrastructure should minimize aesthetic impact.			
Construction and Disturbance	Construction and disturbance is prohibited except where public and wildlife safety is a concern or maintenance is required. Construction and disturbance must require a **Biophysical Impact Assessment** and Habitat Restoration Plan. Any project proposed must comply with all city policies and regulations is required.		Construction and disturbance must require a **Biophysical Impact Assessment** and Habitat Restoration Plan. Environmental and aesthetic impacts should be minimized.	Construction and disturbance may require a **Biophysical Impact Assessment** and Habitat Restoration Plan determined on a site-by-site basis. Environmental and aesthetic impacts should be minimized.

Glossary of Terms



Note: The definitions contained in this glossary takes precedence over definitions in other Parks & Open Spaces policies, plans and regulations.

Accessible	Is the opportunity to easily access the park system and programs.
Active Recreation	Structured activities, often involving instruction or equipment, and requiring dedicated spaces/ amenities available through drop-in or bookings.
Activity Centre	All areas defined as Major Activity Centres, Community Activity Centres or Neighbourhood Activity Centres in The City's *Municipal Development Plan*, and as shown on the Urban Structure Maps.
Amenity/Amenities	A feature, service or program that provides comfort, convenience, or enjoyment and enables users to recreate in a park.
Athletic Park	Recreation & Social Programs operates 13 athletic parks located across the city. Athletic parks comprise of groupings of outdoor recreation and sport amenities for organized single or multi-sport play, leagues, tournaments, and special events. Although not their primary use, athletic parks may also accommodate drop in or unstructured play. Athletic parks may include a range of field amenities such as natural grass or artificial turf fields, baseball and/or softball diamonds, cricket pitches, field hockey and multi-sport fields, all available for booking.
Barriers	Environmental, structural, systemic, social, and personal realities that prevent participation in sport or make such participation difficult to achieve (e.g., building design, transportation, attitudes, etc.). Barriers may be socio-economic (e.g., poverty, poor health) or may be characteristics of the sport system that prevent or limit the sport participation (e.g., lack of awareness programs, lack of specialized coaching or adapted equipment, etc.).
Barrier-Free Design	The incorporation and utilization of design principles to construct an environment that is functional, safe and convenient for all users, including those with any type of disability.
Biophysical Impact Assessment	An inventory and analysis of all living and non-living natural resources in a defined area with analysis of impacts based on proposed development.
Biodiversity	The variability among living organisms — animals, plants, their habitats and their genes — from all sources including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part. This includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.
Boulevard	The unpaved portion of the road's shoulder from the back of the concrete curb up to the common property line. This boulevard area is usually sodded and includes a concrete sidewalk or paved pathway and street trees.
Calgary Equity Index	The Equity Index is a geographically-based planning and decision-making tool that provides information about equity in Calgary. It's based on the social determinants of health, which are social and economic conditions that influence people's wellbeing. Based on census data collected from Statistics Canada, the index consists of 20 indicators across five policy categories: economic opportunities, governance and civic engagement, physical environment and infrastructure, population health and social and human development.
Canopy	The top layer of vegetation in a forest, that which controls light levels in the understory.
Cemetery	Land that is set apart or used as a place for the burial of dead human bodies or other human remains or in which dead human bodies or other human remains are buried.
Climate Adaptation	The actions, policies, programs, tools and strategies intended to reduce the negative impacts of climate change on municipal infrastructure, natural assets, economy and people.
Climate Mitigation	The actions intended to reduce and prevent greenhouse gas emissions from going into the atmosphere, or those activities that remove these greenhouse gases from the atmosphere through natural or technological means.
Climate Resilience	The ability of social, economic and environmental systems to cope with a climate-driven hazardous event, trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation and transformation.
Commercial Structure	Permanent or non-permanent structures within parks and open space that can be utilized for supporting services.
Community Association Sites	Sites that are operated by, or on behalf of, an organization whose membership is voluntary and generally serves the residents of a specific neighbourhood with the purpose of: providing programs, public facilities, or services; providing non-profit sporting, educational, social, recreational or other activities; or where members of the facility and the public participate in recreation and leisure activities.

Conservation	Conservation refers to the in-situ maintenance of ecosystems and natural and seminatural habitats and of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings and, in the case of domesticated or cultivated species in the surroundings where they have developed their distinctive properties.
Conservation Reserve	A tool under the *Municipal Government Act* for subdivision authorities to acquire environmentally significant features during subdivision in order to protect and conserve the land.
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)	The design and effective use of the built environment, which may lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime and an improvement in quality of life.
Cultural Landscape	Cultural landscapes represent the combined works of nature and of humankind and are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal. Cultural landscapes in Calgary generally fall into three categories; culturally significant indigenous landscapes; landscapes with archaeological resources (precontact and post-contact); and landscapes with cultural significance associated with recent history (post-contact).
Cultural Landscape Conservation	Site management practices that retain the cultural and/or historic significance and integrity of the landscapes; this significance can be defined by Knowledge Keepers, regulatory boards, and/or appointed experts. Conservation can include the ongoing use of landscapes for traditional practices, the retention of archaeological resources within development, or strategies for the maintenance of "character defining elements" within a landscape.
Dark Sky Principles	Internationally accepted principles with the intent to minimize the amount, direction, time, and type of artificial lighting that is emitted.
Deep Utilities	Deep utilities are typically owned by The City and buried more than 2.0 m below the surface. Examples include storm, water, and sanitary lines.
Dog Areas	A fully fenced and gated space, designed specifically for owners to allow their dogs off-leash. **On-leash areas:** In parks that permit dogs on-leash, dogs are to be kept on the sidewalk or trails. Owners must always be in control of their dogs and are expected to pick up after their pets immediately. **Off-leash areas:** A multi-use park, or portion of a multi-use park, designated by the Director of Parks as an area where dogs are allowed off-leash under full control of the owner. These sites may be unfenced, partially fenced, or fully fenced.
Dry Pond	A stormwater pond used to temporarily store stormwater runoff to restrict downstream discharge to predetermined rates and to reduce downstream flooding and erosion potential. Most dry ponds have no permanent pool of water.
Ecological Network	A network of ecological components (natural habitats, corridors and buffer zones) which provides the physical conditions necessary for ecosystems and species populations to survive in a human-dominated landscape.
Environmental Reserve	Land that is not suitable for development and contains features such as swamps, gullies, ravines, coulees, floodplains or is adjacent to a body of water designated as environmental reserve as defined under the *Municipal Government Act* or previous planning legislation.
Environmentally Significant Areas	Natural areas recognized by The City as providing essential ecosystem functions and services within urban or adjacent landscapes and include one or more of the following: • Regional environmentally sensitive areas, as defined in the Calgary Metropolitan Region Growth Plan. • Areas with wetlands, non-permanent streams, surface water, floodplains, riparian areas, source watershed and the meander width of a watercourse. • Rare, intact or biologically diverse areas with native vegetation communities, soil function, unique landscape features, pollinators, rare plants or historical and cultural resources. • Habitat for native species of interest which with habitat connectivity, patches, fish habitats, species at risk, terrestrial species present, habitat sensitivity and slope characteristics.
Equitable/Equity	Means conditions are adjusted to meet people's diverse needs, strengths and social realities. It requires recognition that different barriers (often systemic) exist for diverse individuals or groups. The result of equity is all people have the opportunity to benefit equally from City services.

Equity Deserving Communities	Equity deserving groups are communities that experience significant collective barriers in participating in society. This could include attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation, transgender status, etc. Other commonly used phrases include "equity seeking groups" and "equity denied groups".
Events	**Level 5 Events** Low impact Community Program (e.g., Block Party, Picnic, BBQ, Wedding, walks/runs on pathways). Contributing factors generally include: **1.** Up to 1,000 attendance; **2.** One day only (includes set up and take down); **3.** One location (may combine park and pathway as one location); **4.** Only one permit required; **5.** One business unit services required; and **6.** Safety/Security coordination support: • Business as usual, • Normal operations, • Operationally ready, • Heightened awareness **7.** Individual assessments of events are required to ensure appropriate services and coordination. If there is a significant impact on public property, public facilities and/or public safety, it may trigger a review by the Interdepartmental Event Team. Note: New Organizer or significant issues identified from previous edition may trigger event level to increase to a level 4 for inaugural year or until issues are resolved after the current season **Level 4 Events** Medium Impact Community Event, sport/recreation activities, festivals, and parades, e.g., multiple permits, larger attendance, pyrotechnics, fireworks. Contributing factors generally include: **1.** Attendance between 1000-10,000; **2.** Up to a three-day event (including set up and take down); **3.** Three or less locations; **4.** Two or more permits; **5.** Two or more city business unit services required; and **6.** Safety/Security coordination support: • Incident Command Post at Site or suitable location, at the discretion of the City of Calgary • Lead Agency as Incident Commander or Unified Command Note: New Organizer, significant issues identified from previous edition or events occurring past 8 p.m. may trigger event level to increase to a level 3 Note: Event organizers would be contacted by the City of Calgary public safety agencies during the planning stages of the event and be made aware if an Incident Command Post were to be established.

Events (continued from p. 99)	**Level 3 Events** High Impact Events include: sport/recreational activities, parades, festivals, community events (e.g., Globalfest, Lilac fest). Contributing factors generally include: **1.** Attendance between 10,000 to 100,000; **2.** May be a multi-day event (including set up and take down); **3.** May include multiple locations; **4.** Two or more permits; **5.** Two or more city business unit services required; and **6.** Safety/Security coordination support: • EOC (Emergency Operations Centre) Activation, at the discretion of the City of Calgary • Dept/agency tactical operations centers may be activated at the discretion of the dept/agency, depending upon risks identified in the ERP Note: New Organizer, significant issues identified from previous edition or events occurring past 8 p.m. may trigger event level to increase to a level 2
	Level 2 Event Local/Regional and National level events with significant impact and complexities, multiple partners. Sport/recreational activities, parades, festivals, community events (e.g., Grey Cup host, Canada Day). Contributing factors generally include: **1.** Attendance exceeds 100,000; **2.** May include multiple days; **3.** May include multiple locations; and **4.** Safety/Security coordination support: • EOC Activation • Dept/agency tactical operations centers may be activated at the discretion of the dept/agency • Coordination with Provincial Operations Centre may be required
	Level 1 Event International level event with significant impact and complexities involving greater city and partners (e.g., Commonwealth Games): **1.** Safety/Security coordination support; **2.** EOC Activation; **3.** Dept/agency tactical operations centers may be activated at the discretion of the dept/agency; and **4.** Coordination with Provincial Operations Centre may be required.
Fire Smart	The implementation of both prevention and mitigation measures to reduce wildfire threat to homes and communities while balancing the benefits of wildfire on the landscape.
Greater Downtown	The communities of Downtown Core, Downtown West, Eau Claire, Chinatown, East Village, Beltline and a portion of Sunalta, north of the rail line.
Green Burial Options	Burials that are designed to reduce environmental impacts and ensure a legacy of protecting the land where those who passed are laid to rest. They emphasize sustainability and simplicity, and offer individuals and families the chance to continue caring for the environment as part of one's last wishes.
Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI)	Nature-based solutions that incorporate natural features and processes into stormwater management. Examples include infiltration, evapotranspiration, harvesting, filtration, and retention, which help reduce stormwater rates and volumes and remove contaminants at or near the source of runoff. Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) aims to mimic the natural water cycle while providing multiple ecosystem and community benefits.
Growing Media	A soil type of purposeful characteristics that optimizes conditions for plant growth by balancing texture (minerals), organic content, biological activity, chemical properties, water movement, atmospheric gas exchange, and bulk density.
Habitat	The environment in which a population or individual lives; includes the place where a species is found and the characteristics of the place (e.g., climate or the availability of suitable food and shelter) that make it especially well-suited to meet the life cycle needs of that species.

Habitat Management Plan	10-year operational plans focused on how we manage natural areas. Their overarching purpose is to outline a clear strategy and timeline for management activities and projects that help maintain or improve the ecological health and function of a park.
Hydrologically Invisible	A natural drainage approach where water flows in the same way after a trail has been built as it did before.
Inclusive	Environments in which any individual or group is respected and valued. The result of social inclusion is that people feel they belong and can fully participate in society. Providing equitable access to parks and open space for all ages and abilities, cultures and minority groups.
Indigenous Peoples	A collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants (including, but not limited to Aboriginal peoples of Canada that includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples under Section 35 of the Constitution Act 1982). These are distinct peoples each with their own set of unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.
Indoor Park	A park in a fully enclosed space with no size requirement that provides one or more park functions. Indoor parks will generally have limited public access compared to outdoor parks..
Infrastructure	This definition refers to infrastructure for the Park system only. Physical elements and equipment installed below or above grade that serve a specific purpose within a park to support park amenities. These include but are not limited to playground equipment, benches, garbage receptacles, signs as well as elements like stormwater ponds, irrigation systems, utility conduits.
Intensification	The development of a property, site or area at a higher density than currently exists. Intensification can be achieved through redevelopment, development of vacant/underutilized lots, the conversion of existing buildings, or through infill development in previously developed areas.
Interment	The burial of a corpse in a grave or tomb, typically with funeral rites.
Joint Use Site	Lands set aside for, or including, a school building, a location for a school building or a school playing field and community playing fields with facilities and grounds which are accessible to both school and non-school users. In the case of joint use sites these are co-owned by The City and the school board(s).
Linear Park	A connector park within the park system that provides space for interesting and safe mobility connections to other parks and community destinations, while supporting active lifestyles and regular park usage. They should be a minimum of 13 metres and a maximum of 20 metres in width.
Local Park	Parks that are provided for community use including sub-neighbourhood parks, neighbourhood parks, linear parks, joint-use sites and community associations sites but excluding environmental reserve, regional parks and open space.
Micro Forest	A small-scale forestation project, that despite its limited size, aims to create a dense, diverse, and rapidly growing forest ecosystem larger than 5 metres across at any width, and typically between 25 metres squared and 1,000 metres squared.
Multifunctional Park	A park is considered multifunctional when it has two of the three functions. The three functions of parks include: environment, outdoor sports and recreation.
Multimodal	Infrastructure facilitating more than one way of moving from one place to another, for example walking, wheeling, rolling and driving.
Municipal Reserve/ Municipal School Reserve	Land designated as municipal reserve or municipal and school reserve under the *Municipal Government Act* or previous planning legislation.
Native	Species of animals or plants that occur naturally in an area and have not been introduced by people or their direct activities.
Natural Area	A City-owned park or portion of a park or open space where the primary role is the protection of an undisturbed or relatively undisturbed parcel or parcels of land with characteristics of a natural/native plant community.
Naturalization	Activities that are intended to improve and enhance the natural environment including habitat restoration through the deliberate reintroduction of species that are native to a given area or are well adapted to the climate circumstance.
Naturalized Asset	A site that has been enhanced or restored through the deliberate reintroduction of native or climate-adapted species to increase ecosystem function and biodiversity. A naturalized asset is typically converted from turf or created through landscape construction. Once established, a naturalized asset provides valuable ecosystem services and requires lower levels of maintenance compared to traditional maintenance practices.

Natural System	An interconnected network of physical and biological components. In an urban setting, natural systems are often a blend of human altered nature and buildings, mobility and utility networks, including natural, enhanced and engineered elements.
Nature	The phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, micro-organisms, the landscape and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations (Oxford Dictionaries).
Nature-based Approach	Actions to address the protection, sustainable management and restoration of ecosystems.
Neighbourhood	A neighbourhood is a distinct part of a larger community, containing up to 5,000 people. A neighbourhood is typically considered to be a primarily residential area within walking distance of a local commercial area, school, park, transit station, etc. A Neighbourhood should range between 40 and 75 hectares (99 and 185 acres) in size.
Neighbourhood Park	A park that is the primary gathering space and hub of activity within a community. They are large enough in scale to provide multifunctionality and a variety of amenities. Neighbourhood parks must be no smaller than 1 hectare and no larger than 4.85 hectares (2.5 acres to 12 acres) in size.
Open Space	Land that has a primary purpose that is utilitarian or to provide a recreational activity with managed access, but has a secondary purpose that provides park system functions. Examples include roadway boulevards, public utility lots, transportation and utility corridors and regional amenities such as regional sport fields, athletic parks, cemeteries and public golf courses.
Parks	Publicly accessed land set aside for human enjoyment, recreation, education, cultural or aesthetic use without restricted access.
Park Carrying Capacity	Park carrying capacity for parks refers to the maximum use that can be accommodated by a park without causing excessive damage to the physical environment or affecting the visitor experience.
Park System	The public spaces made up of parks, natural areas and open space that provide opportunities for recreation, active mobility and access to nature.
Park System Guiding Circle	The Guiding Circle has eight Elders in total, each representing one of the Treaty 7 Nations and the Métis Nation, Battle River Territory. The goal of the Circle is to advance the Truth and Reconciliation's Commission's Calls to Action and to start integrating an Indigenous perspective, directly from the original land stewards, into the management and use of Calgary's park land.
Passive Recreation	Recreational use or activities which require no special or formal infrastructure or amenities.
Playfield	Developed park space providing educational and recreational opportunities for specialized sports activities such as baseball, softball, soccer, rugby, lawn bowling, cricket, field hockey, etc.
Play Street	Part of a street that is closed to provide a local space for recreation.
Plaza	Public spaces, generally with hard landscaping, that are part of the park system. They are strategically located across the city especially in high activity areas. Plazas are multi-functional and flexible to enable permanent, seasonal or impromptu passive recreation, cultural, civic and commercial activities and programing. As year-round destinations, plazas support pedestrian movement, with amenities inviting people to stay and participate in a variety of social activities including gathering, interacting, playing, participating in cultural or civic events, local shopping and relaxing.
Preservation	Designed to provide protection and maintenance of currently undisturbed natural areas and enhancement of existing natural features. Human access to these areas would be limited.
Professional Film and Television Production	The process or activity of producing films or television shows. **Major** – means all commercial filming that is not considered a minor shoot. **Minor** – includes minor film or television shoot that requires filming to take place on one day at one location with no disturbance to park users or natural resources. The following criteria are also used to determine what is considered a minor shoot: • Limited number of vehicles (three or less) • No sets or major equipment • No alteration to park facilities, furniture, signs, etc. • Ten or less persons • Only use of handheld photographic equipment (includes a tripod) • Minimal or no monitoring required by Park and Open Spaces staff. • Any filming occurring in a natural area becomes major.
Programming	A theme, design element or activity that is provided within a park.

Public Golf Courses	Public golf courses owned and operated by The City offering welcoming and inclusive experiences for players of all ages and skill levels to have fun, improve their skills and enhance overall well-being. These courses focus on providing accessible and equitable opportunities for all, especially those facing barriers to participation.
Public Tree	Any tree on City-owned land.
Public Utility Lot	Titled lots intended to provide for infrastructure and utility facilities, maintenance facilities, and public transportation uses. They can be operated (individually or jointly) by the Federal, Provincial and Municipal levels of government.
Publicly Accessible Private Open Space	Outdoor open space located on a development parcel that is made available to the public through a registered public access easement agreement acceptable to the Development Authority, and is in a location, form, configuration and constructed in a manner acceptable to the Development Authority.
Regional Parks	Parks that provide a special purpose or attraction which benefits users beyond an immediate community. They are designed to support longer durations of stay, accommodate a range of activities, serve multiple communities and include specialized amenities which would not be typically found in community parks, such as water features, multi-sport surfaces, arts and culture spaces or accommodation for large multi-use festival and event spaces.
Resilience	Ability to adapt to change in social, technological, economic and climatic conditions.
Riparian Areas	The areas of land where the plants and soils are strongly influenced by the presence of water. They are transitional lands between aquatic ecosystems (wetlands, rivers, streams or lakes) and terrestrial ecosystems.
Shallow Utilities	Shallow utilities are typically third-party utilities such as gas, power, and telecommunications, which are buried up to 2.0 m below the surface.
Soil	Composed of minerals, living organisms, organic matter, gas and water. Not all soils are suitable for plant growth and may have other purposes to an urban environment such as the movement of water, gas or providing support for structure and loading. (see Growing Media)
Sub-neighbourhood Park	Sub-neighbourhood parks provide supporting amenities to the neighbourhood park and increase accessibility of the Park system. They are between 0.4 hectares to 1 hectare in size.
Sustainable/ Sustainability	Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It includes environmental, economic and social sustainability.
Systemic Barriers	Barriers are obvious or subtle obstacles that prevents or restrict members of society from accessing, using, or doing something that others can readily access, use or do. They can be physical, economic, financial, informational, and/or organizational policies/ practices. Systemic barriers are policies, practices, or behaviours in society that exclude marginalized groups.
Universal Design	An approach that incorporates products as well as building features which, to the greatest extent possible can be used by everyone. It is the integration of both usability and accessibility methods that enable customer interaction with resources and services.
Urban Forest	All the trees and associated vegetative understory in the city, including trees and shrubs intentionally planted, naturally occurring or accidentally seeded within the city limits.
Vendor	A business the sells food and other retail goods which can be mobile or permanent.
Visitor Management Plan	A plan that provides development and management tools and tactics to accommodate park visitors while ensuring park resources are protected and resilient over the long-term.
Wheeling	A person travelling by bicycle, skateboard, in-line skates, kick-scooter, e-scooter, or other mobility device.
Water Body	Any location where water flows or is present, whether or not the flow or the presence of water is continuous, intermittent or occurs only during a flood, and includes but is not limited to wetlands and aquifers.
Wayfinding	The process of navigating from one place to another with the aid of reference points such as signage, maps, landmarks, lighting, public art, etc.
Xeriscaping	The process of landscaping that reduces or eliminates the need for irrigation.



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