

Town of Canmore

**Community Services Division
Planning and Development Department**

Open Space Development Guidelines

2005

Approved by Council
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1. Introduction

The Town of Canmore's Municipal Development Plan states that along with the protection of the natural environment, Canmore residents place a high value on the continued provision of adequate recreational open space within the Town. *Adequate recreational open space* is defined for the purposes of this document as an interconnected network of open space, including public parks, school sites, natural areas, and trails, that provides the recreational, educational, and non-motorized transportation opportunities valued by the residents of Canmore.

1.1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the 2005 Open Space Development Guidelines is to ensure the efficient and coordinated use of land by providing strategic direction for the Town's acquisition of open space. This document provides guidelines for allocating municipal reserve and other lands to the community's open space system. These guidelines will:

- Outline open space types and their function
- Assist in determining the distribution of open space
- Define the site characteristics required for each class of open space
- Define open space development parameters, and
- Outline the approval process.

1.2. Definition of Terms

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) - The application of a range of design initiatives and principles to an area or site in order to minimize the potential for that site to facilitate and support criminal behavior. Streetscape, landscaping, lighting, and building design and function are some of the elements that can be modified to enhance community safety.

Environmental Reserve (ER) - Land provided by the registered owner to the municipality to be preserved in its natural state. Environmental reserve typically consists of swamps, gullies, ravines, coulees, natural drainage courses, areas subject to flooding or determined to be unstable, and access or buffer strips adjacent to water bodies.

Lot Remnant – A small parcel of land arising from lot subdivision and road layout that does not provide for recreational uses or environmental protection.

Maintained Parks - Parks that require on-going maintenance such as grass cutting, irrigation, trash removal, etc.

Municipal Reserve (MR) - Land provided by the registered owner (under the relevant provisions of the Municipal Government Act) to the municipality for public parks, trails, recreation, schools, or the separation of land uses.

Nature Trail – A trail designed for recreational use along scenic routes rather than commuting, and has a limited surface width of 0.5 to 0.6 meters. Such trails shall have minimal or no maintenance, and be left largely in a natural state. Maintenance, when conducted, would be undertaken solely to address obvious safety concerns and to minimize possible erosion or related environmental damage.

Open Space - Any parcel of land that is set aside, designated, or reserved for public use and/or protection of the natural environment, including municipal reserve, environmental reserve, wildlife corridors, conservation easements, plazas, and constructed or natural water bodies and watercourses. Open space is comprised of maintained or marginally developed parks, as well as undeveloped land preserved in its natural state and includes privately owned land that has open public access easements.

Recreation and Sports Amenities – Developments including, but not limited to, tennis courts, soccer fields, baseball diamonds, ice arenas and outdoor ice rinks.

Recreation Master Plan – The document, as approved by Council, which guides the delivery and provision of open space, sports and recreation amenities, and recreation programs for the residents of Canmore.

Super-Standard Amenities – Facilities, features or amenities that add value to the community or the open space in accordance with a specified design program, and that do not have clearly defined construction or maintenance parameters as outlined in the Construction and Landscaping Standards. Consideration of the design intent, analysis of maintenance implications as compared to standard facilities, local precedent and adherence to building and safety codes will form the basis of evaluation of super-standard facilities.

1.3. Goals of the Community Open Space System

Land allocated to the community's open space system should contribute to the following broad goals:

- Provide a variety of multi-use open spaces,
- Meet the identified recreational needs of residents and visitors,
- Provide a functional transportation network for pedestrians and cyclists,
- Protect and enhance the natural environment and historic features found within the community, and,
- Provide for the visual enhancement of the community.

1.4. Related Planning Documents

The Municipal Government Act (MGA) and Canmore's Municipal Development Plan (MDP) govern the provision of municipal and environmental reserves within Canmore. These reserves are the basis for building on the community's open space system.

According to the MGA, the owner of a parcel of land that is the subject of a proposed subdivision shall provide environmental reserve, for the purpose of protecting environmentally sensitive areas. The landowner shall also provide land for municipal reserve, or cash in lieu, which is to be used for public parks, public recreation areas, school authority purposes, or to separate adjacent land uses. Both reserves are to be provided to the community without compensation to the landowner.

Environmental reserves are to be left in their natural state or to be used as a public park. According to the MGA, the environmentally sensitive areas that are to be included within environmental reserve include:

- Swamps, gullies, ravines, coulees or natural drainage courses,
- Land that is unstable or subject to flooding, and,
- A strip of land, with a minimum width of six meters, abutting any body of water for the purposes of preventing pollution or providing public access.

The Town's Municipal Development Plan augments the MGA for the purposes of environmental protection. For example, the MDP specifies that the width of any environmental reserve strip adjacent to a watercourse may not be less than 10 meters.

Following the dedication of land to environmental reserve, the aggregate amount of land dedicated to the municipal reserve may not exceed 10% of the remaining parcel of land. However, should the density of development be thirty dwelling units or more per hectare, the Town may require up to a total of 15% for municipal reserve. Within these guidelines, the Municipal Government Act gives authority to the Town to specify the amount, type, and location of municipal reserve land that is to be provided. The Town's Municipal Development Plan specifies that in all new developments the greatest allowable area of land will be designated as municipal reserve in order to maximize the acquisition of land for recreational use in future growth areas. The Town may accept land donated by the developer in addition to the maximum municipal and environmental reserve dedications, should it be practicable for recreational uses or environmental protection. Refer to section 5.3 for information on voluntary dedications.

In order to ensure that the requirements for school sites, sports fields, recreation facilities, parks and trails are in balance with total land dedication requirements, planning for environmental and municipal reserves in future growth areas should be

addressed in conjunction with the School Board at the preliminary stages of Area Structure Plan preparation.

1.5. Open Space Approval Process

1. Conceptual open space / municipal reserve landscaping drawings are to be submitted upon request, prior to a decision being made on a subdivision application, where such information is required to determine that the open space / municipal reserve can be developed as proposed for the purposes intended. On larger applications, the Town may request a written summary from the developer that outlines how the proposed open space / municipal reserve complies with these Guidelines.
2. Conceptual landscaping drawings need only demonstrate the location of any parks or solid waste furniture or improvements to the site, show proposed trail and pedestrian connections, any proposed parking areas, any proposed planting areas, and shall be suitably scaled and demonstrate any necessary site grading required to achieve the proposed development. Furniture specification, species identification and species numbers and other detailed installation specifications will not be required on conceptual open space or municipal reserve drawings.
3. No less than three (3) copies of the conceptual open space or municipal reserve drawings shall be provided to the Planning and Development Department (P&D). P&D shall circulate the drawings to the Parks Department and any other affected department (such as Solid Waste Services), and review the drawings with those circulated to obtain comments and recommendations on the drawings.
4. P&D will review the drawings based on the criteria established in the Open Space Development Guidelines, and accept or reject the drawings based on these criteria. Written comments or a decision on the submitted preliminary drawings shall be submitted to the applicant within 30 days following the date of submission of the drawings to P&D.
5. When the submitted conceptual drawings indicate or propose “super-standard” features, the applicant shall submit a concise report on the “super-standard” features, identifying the added operational maintenance costs and a life cycling cost schedule with a fixed replacement cost. This information will be required to assist Council in making a decision on if the Town should assume the additional cost of the proposed amenities prior to the submission of construction drawings. In cases where “super-standard features are proposed, a recommendation will be made by P&D to Council regarding the suitability of the proposed development with respect to the criteria established in the Open Space Development Guidelines, and any necessary

maintenance agreements with the developer or a homeowners association, that may be required to look after the improvements in the future. Council shall make all decisions regarding the acceptability of “super-standard” facilities, unless such decisions are delegated by Council. Consideration of the design intent, analysis of maintenance implications as compared to standard facilities, local precedent and adherence to building and safety codes will form the basis of evaluation of super-standard facilities.

6. Following the approval of a subdivision application, and the acceptance of the conceptual drawings and any “super-standard” features, the applicant shall be required to submit one (1) complete package detailed site development drawings for each separate development site. These drawings are to be in accordance with the specifications contained in the Engineering Design Guidelines, and Construction and Landscaping Standards. These drawings shall be submitted to the Planning and Development Department to verify compliance with the accepted conceptual drawings and any subdivision approval granted by Council. P&D will review these drawings within fourteen (14) days of submission by the applicant and either accept the detailed drawings or provide written comments to the applicant indicating why the detailed drawings do not comply with the approved preliminary drawings. Once the detailed drawings have been reviewed and accepted by P&D, they will be forward to the Parks Department for review for compliance with the Town’s Engineering Design Guidelines, and Construction and Landscaping Standards. The Parks Department shall provide approval of the detailed drawings or written comments indicating why the detailed drawings cannot be approved, to the applicant within thirty (30) days of submission to the Town.
7. If revisions are required to the detailed drawings, the applicant shall revise the drawings accordingly and resubmit to the Parks Department. The Parks Department shall provide approval or further written comments on the revised plans to the applicant within fourteen (14) days of the submission of the revised drawings.
8. Once the detailed drawings have been approved by the Parks Department, then the applicant can proceed with construction of the improvements to the municipal reserve / open space, in accordance with the CCC and FAC provisions of the subdivision servicing agreement.

2. Open Space Classification

In order to meet the diverse open space needs found within the community, the open space system shall allow for a range of uses. The classification scheme outlined in this section reflects the function, character, and special attributes required from the community's open space system. The functions specified below provide the basis for determining the suitability of a parcel of land proposed for open space, as discussed in section 4.

2.1. Sub-Neighbourhood Parks

The primary function of sub-neighbourhood parks is to provide a small, safe, and attractive open space for those living in close proximity to the site. The main activities include relaxing, socializing, and unstructured play. Sub-neighbourhood parks designed exclusively for a particular age group, such as tot lots for preschool children, may limit the range of users and have a relatively short life span in terms of meeting neighbourhood needs. Multi-use parks capable of accommodating a wide variety of users are preferable to single-use parks.

2.2. Neighbourhood & Community Parks

The primary function of neighbourhood and community parks is to provide open space for the immediate community. The main activities include relaxing, socializing, unstructured play, and potentially structured sports. This class of open space may provide for local sports amenities, such as tennis courts or a sub-regulation size baseball field, opportunities for neighbourhood events, the protection of environmentally sensitive areas, or community-specific developments such as community gardens and picnic shelters. Neighbourhood and community parks are for local community use and should provide a flexible site design that will adapt as the neighbourhood changes over time. Adjacent school grounds may provide some of the typical neighbourhood park components, such as sport fields.

Neighbourhood and community parks designed exclusively for a particular age group may limit the range of users and have a relatively short life span in terms of meeting community needs. Multi-use parks capable of accommodating a wide variety of users are preferable to single-use parks.

2.3. Regional Parks

The primary function of regional parks is to meet the recreational needs of a larger section of the community. They allow for large group activities, community events, and offer recreation opportunities not feasible or desirable at the neighbourhood level. Regional parks should accommodate structured activities such as sports fields

and amenities, tournaments, festivals, and cultural activities, as well as unstructured activities, such as picnicking. They may provide a balance of natural and developed areas. Adjacent school grounds may provide some of the typical regional park components such as sports fields.

Regional parks designed exclusively for a particular age group may limit the range of users and have a relatively short life span in terms of meeting community needs. Multi-use parks capable of accommodating a wide variety of users are preferable to single-use parks.

2.4. Trails

The primary functions of the trail network are to ensure connectivity within the community's open space system, provide a pedestrian and bicycle circulation system, and enhance the appreciation of the Town's natural setting. Trails should be developed as a continuous network that connects individuals to community parks and recreational facilities, natural amenities, commercial and employment centres, transit nodes, and other prominent public destinations. The trail system includes a hierarchy of regional, local and nature trails, and a range of amenities such as benches, garbage bins, signage and parking lots, as specified by the Town's Engineering Design Guidelines.

2.5. Natural Areas

The primary function of natural areas is to augment environmental reserve lands in:

- Preserving environmentally significant areas that provide natural habitat for wildlife, maintain natural processes, and support biodiversity;
- Maintaining the aesthetics of the community by retaining natural features, and mature and diverse landscapes;
- Protecting air, soil and water quality through erosion control, watershed and groundwater protection, noise abatement and carbon dioxide sequestering; and,
- Contributing to the physical, emotional and spiritual well being of residents and visitors by providing areas of respite from the built environment.

Activities in natural areas may include nature oriented outdoor recreation such as viewing and studying nature, bird watching, fishing, swimming, hiking and other trail uses.

2.6. Off Leash Areas

The primary function of off leash areas is to allow dogs to move freely and interact without constraint, and without being in contravention of municipal by-laws. Off-leash areas enable dogs to legally and safely run off-leash, thereby providing a tool for realistic enforcement of dog control laws and preventing off-leash dogs from infringing on the rights of other park users. They should provide a space for proper socialization, exercise and activity, which promotes safe, well-behaved dogs and responsible pet ownership.

2.7. Buffers

The primary function of buffers is to provide visual screening and noise attenuation between conflicting land uses. Buffers are typically used to separate residential areas from busy roadways or commercial areas, screen large parking areas, or separate pedestrian oriented areas from busy thoroughfares. Buffers may also be used to provide an additional safeguard between developed areas and wildlife corridors or environmental reserve by providing for the separation of land uses.

2.8. Urban Plazas

The primary function of urban plazas is to act as a social focal point. It provides a venue for engaging in social interaction, relaxation, and public events such as festivals, art shows, exhibits, concerts, street entertainment, rallies, and street markets. Urban plazas contribute to a greater sense of community, functioning as a “backyard” for those who live in higher density or mixed-use areas. They should also contribute to employee satisfaction in nearby buildings, add prestige or marketability to an area, and attract customers to nearby retail services.

3. Under What Circumstances Do We Acquire New Open Space?

To ensure equitable distribution throughout the community, the following factors shall be considered when allocating municipal reserve or other lands to the open space system:

1. The preliminary requirements for open space planning,
2. Needs assessment surveys indicating public demand,
3. The scale of the development, and
4. Distribution standards based on land area and population.

Each factor shall be considered in conjunction with the others in determining when and where to acquire new open space.

3.1. Preliminary Requirements for Open Space Planning

Section 1.4 provides an introduction to the relevant sections of the Municipal Government Act and the Town's Municipal Development Plan, which direct the dedication of municipal reserve in Canmore. The Town's Land Use Bylaw and individual area structure plans also provide basic criteria for allocating land to the community's open space system. From these documents, the following list is a summary of the preliminary requirements to be considered in the initial stages of open space planning:

- Following the dedication of land to environmental reserve, the aggregate amount of land dedicated to the municipal reserve may not exceed 10% of the remaining parcel of land.
- Should the density of development be thirty dwelling units or more per hectare, the Town may require municipal reserve of up to 15%.
- Where possible, municipal reserve shall be provided as land:
 - In residential areas, all efforts shall be made to accommodate open space without taking cash in lieu.
 - In commercial areas cash in lieu and/or deferred reserve is usually taken, unless a need for open space is established. (Refer to section 5.1 for guidelines on accepting cash in lieu.)
 - Where land for municipal reserve is not provided, the deferral of the land requirement by legal caveat is preferable over taking cash in lieu. Where cash in lieu of open space is accepted, the Town shall use these funds to acquire or improve public open space in appropriate locations.
- A high priority is placed on developing an integrated open space system, including maintained parkland and natural areas, that are conveniently and safely connected via the Town-wide trail network.
- Land dedicated as municipal reserve shall be functional and fulfill the intended uses. Small lot remnants that do not fulfill the functions specified for a given class of open space will not be accepted as municipal reserve. Partial credit may be allocated to lands that fulfill a portion of the criteria required for a designated class of open space. Refer to section 5.2 for guidelines on allocating partial credit to land dedicated as municipal reserve.
- The municipal reserve may be used to protect environmentally sensitive natural areas through the separation of land uses.
- Consistency with the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)

3.2. Public Demand and Needs Assessment Surveys

The public demand for particular classes of open space is a primary determinant in allocating municipal reserve to the open space system. Considering what facilities are over or underused and identifying shortcomings in the system is the first step in deciding which classes of open space need to be incorporated into new communities.

Planning for sub-neighbourhood or small neighbourhood parks may rely more on the land area distribution standards and population distribution standards discussed in the section 3.4. However, planning for large open spaces or sports amenities should be conducted in conjunction with an assessment of the current and future community needs, and public satisfaction with the current open system. In this way, community-specific preferences can be met and shortcomings within the system may be corrected.

Detailed information on public demand for open space or needs assessment surveys completed within the community may be found in the Town's Recreation Master Plan. Where the public demand for open space is greater than the land that is available through the municipal reserve dedications or other avenues of acquiring public land, the Recreation Master Plan should be used to ascertain the priorities of the community.

3.3. Scale of the Development

The magnitude of a new development determines, in part, which classes of open space will be required. A wider range of open space types will be required for a larger development, and a more limited range will satisfy the requirements for a smaller development. For example, a small housing development on several acres of land may necessitate a sub-neighbourhood park to meet the needs of the residents, and a local trail to connect the neighbourhood to the larger community open space system. A large development, including a commercial centre, tourist accommodation, and a large residential neighbourhood for example, may generate sufficient demand to justify a new regional park, an urban plaza, and several new sections of regional trail. The scale of a new development should be used as an indicator of future demand for open space.

3.4. Distribution Guidelines Based on Land Area and Population

Distribution guidelines may be used to promote the equal allocation of open space within the community. Two types of distribution guidelines are considered here: Land Area Distribution Guidelines and Population Distribution Guidelines. These guidelines vary in their applicability to the range of open space classes, and shall be used in conjunction with other information, such as the scale of the development and the Recreation Master Plan.

Recreational trends and the age structure of the population is an important indicator for determining current and future community needs, including demands on the open space system and recreational facilities. Related to the aging population, there is an increased interest in passive leisure pursuits, outdoor-oriented activities, and more individualistic, self-directed activities. Also, the demand for organized sports for youth is generally decreasing. Emerging and alternative recreation and leisure activities

should be considered in the evaluation of recreation opportunities and amenities. In order to prevent under or overuse of parks, these factors should be considered alongside the distribution guidelines when expanding the open space system.

In communities with a significant proportion of young children, play areas should be accommodated locally, and be well distributed throughout the community. In neighbourhoods with a predominately independent adult population, it may not be necessary to provide open space for all recreational activities locally, such as playground apparatus and sports fields. Where neighbourhoods exhibit a mix of these characteristics or have a high percentage of absent homeowners, a balanced approach to satisfying open space needs should be adopted. Information on how neighbourhood demographic should influence the provision of open space in Canmore may be found in the Recreation Master Plan.

In applying the distribution standards it should also be noted that existing open space influences the allocation of land to new open space. The Town of Canmore specifies that the full 10% of the gross developable area of land to be subdivided will be dedicated as municipal reserve in order to maximize the acquisition of land for recreational use in future growth areas. However, municipal reserve should not be allocated to particular types of open space where it will duplicate the function of existing open space within a given catchment area. For example, if a regional park incorporates playground apparatus and quiet seating areas, an additional sub-neighbourhood park with similar amenities may be not required, despite the distribution guidelines.

The land area and population distribution guidelines generally apply to mixed-use developments in the same way that they apply to residential developments. Residents of mixed-use areas should have the same level of access to the community's open space system as those in other types of neighbourhoods.

3.4.1. Land Area Distribution Standards

The optimal distribution for several classes of open space may be defined as a maximum or optimal distance from the population to be served:

Sub-Neighbourhood Parks

- Maximum distance from population to be served: 400 to 500 meters
- Optimal distance from population to be served: 3 to 5 minute barrier-free walking distance, or 250 meters

Neighbourhood & Community Parks

- Maximum distance from population to be served: 800 meters to 1.5 kilometers
- Optimal distance from population to be served: 5 to 10 minutes barrier-free walking distance, or 500 meters

Regional Parks

- Maximum distance from population to be served: 5 to 6 kilometers
- Optimal distance from population to be served: 1.5 to 2 kilometers

Trails

- Where topography permits, is recommended that local trails should be located within 400 meters of the population to be served and not blocked by collector or arterial streets, and that regional trails should be located within 1.6 kilometers of all residences.

The distribution of natural areas, off-leash areas, buffers, and urban plazas is best determined by public demand, land availability and site characteristics.

Other factors to consider:

- School sites may fulfill the distribution requirements for several classes of parks.
- Neighbourhoods with a high number of children or seniors should strive for optimal distances rather than maximum distances.
- New parks should not be constructed where they will duplicate the function of existing open space.

3.4.2. Population Distribution Standards

The distribution for several classes of open space may also be determined in part by a catchment area population size:

Sub-Neighbourhood Parks

- Population in catchment area: up 500

Neighbourhood & Community Parks

- Population in catchment area: up 1300
- Dependent on size of park and facilities

Regional Parks

- Population in catchment area: up to 5000
- Dependent on size of park and facilities

The distribution of trails, natural areas, off-leash areas, buffers, and urban plazas is best determined by public demand, land availability, and site characteristics.

Other factors to consider:

- Housing density within a neighbourhood determines whether or not the distribution standards for land area and population correspond. Because housing density varies, these guidelines shall be used as a general reference rather than a strict course of action.

- These guidelines shall not be applied without consideration for other factors, such as demographics, in order to prevent under or overuse of parks
- New parks should not be constructed where they will duplicate the function of existing open space.

4. Characteristics Determining the Suitability of Land for Open Space

The suitability of a parcel of land proposed for open space shall be determined by the following set of general characteristics:

Appropriate landform:

- Suitable topography, grade, and shape of parcel
- Sufficient land area

Connectivity:

- Promotes connectivity within the open space system, to schools, shopping, public transit, or other activity nodes.
- Ease of access for pedestrians or cyclists
- Ease of vehicle access where appropriate

Compatibility with adjacent uses:

- Proximity to multifamily housing, seniors complex, or schools where appropriate
- Potential for multi-use
- Impacts on/from adjacent land uses
- Ability to buffer sensitive land uses

Protection and enhancement of the environment:

- Protection of natural features, such as escarpments, wetlands, unique vegetation, and wildlife habitat
- Exposure of the public to unique features, such as views, wetlands, unique geographical features, historical sites
- Potential for reducing community fire hazard
- Provision of shade or protection from the elements

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design:

- Consistency with the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Aesthetics:

- Visual enhancement of the community

These general characteristics apply differently to each class of open space. Land may only be designated as open space and credited as municipal reserve if the site satisfies the public demand for a particular class of open space, as discussed in section 3, and

the applicable site characteristics are present. The points outlined below indicate how the general site characteristics should be applied in order to determine the suitability of a parcel of land proposed for a specific class of open space.

In order for a parcel of land to be given 100% credit toward the required municipal reserve dedications, all or most of the characteristics for a given class of open space shall be present. Where a parcel of land exhibits only a portion of the required characteristics, and more suitable locations for open space are not available, partial credit may be given. Refer to section 5.2 for guidelines on allocating partial credit to lands accepted as municipal reserve that do not meet all the requirements for a given class of open space.

4.1. Sub-Neighbourhood Parks

Appropriate Landform:

- Land requirement: 0.2 ha minimum.
 - Open space given credit for municipal reserve shall provide for the specified functions; small lot remnants that do not fulfill these functions will not be given credit for municipal reserve.
 - In most cases islands and boulevards within the road right-of-way shall not receive credit toward the required municipal reserve dedications. In low-traffic, residential cul-de-sacs where a large island has been designed to function similarly to a sub-neighbourhood park, the island may receive credit toward the required municipal reserve dedications.
- Should incorporate an open, unobstructed area where required to accommodate playground amenities, as specified by the Town's Engineering and Design Guidelines, and be sufficiently level to create a safe play area.
- Ensure a mix of sunny and shaded areas to accommodate year round usage.

Connectivity:

- Shall be easily accessible by walking and cycling for the neighbourhood residents, access should be uninterrupted by arterial roads or other physical barriers and be located near safe and practical street crossings.
- Should be linked by trails or sidewalks to residential areas, adjacent open space and other activity nodes.
- Provided with sufficient street frontage to be visible to the public but protected from vehicle traffic.

Compatibility with adjacent uses:

- Located primarily in residential areas in a way that maximizes their neighbourhood catchment area.
- Should be close to higher density housing and/or senior citizen housing where appropriate.
- May be combined with a neighbourhood park or elementary school.
- Location and design should encourage multi-use.

Protection and enhancement of the environment:

- Environmentally sensitive areas should be avoided where the primary purpose is accommodating children's play facilities.
- Where possible site location should contribute to reducing the community fire hazard. Refer to section 5.6 for guidelines on locating and designing open space to reduce community fire hazard.
- Location, programming and design should be consistent with CPTED principles

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design:

- Location, programming and design should be consistent with CPTED principles.

Aesthetics:

- Location and design should provide for visual enhancement of the community.

4.2. Neighbourhood & Community Parks

Appropriate Landform:

- Land requirement: Land availability and recreation demand are the primary determinants of a neighbourhood park's size. General guidelines are 0.4 hectares minimum for neighbourhood parks without sports amenities, and 2 hectares minimum for those intended to accommodate sports amenities.
 - Parcels of land less than 0.4 hectares in size may be accepted as neighbourhood parks where they link viewpoints or areas of environmental and/or municipal reserve. Such parcels may not receive 100% municipal reserve credit. Refer to section 5.2 for guidelines on allocating partial credit to lands accepted as municipal reserve that do not meet all the requirements for a given class of open space.
- Should incorporate an open, unobstructed area to accommodate play or sports amenities and be sufficiently level to create a safe play area.
- Site should be relatively flat with an allowable overall gradient of 2-5%.
- Ensure a mix of sunny and shaded areas to accommodate year round usage.

Connectivity:

- Should be located on local or collector street and provided with sufficient street frontage to be visible to the public but protected from vehicle traffic.
- Shall be easily accessible by walking and bicycling to the neighbourhood population, and be located near safe and practical street crossings.
- Should be linked by trails or sidewalks to residential areas, adjacent open space and other activity nodes.

- A small parking lot for 7 to 10 vehicles is required where sports fields are on site and other parking is not available.

Compatibility with adjacent uses:

- Located primarily in residential areas in a way that maximizes their neighbourhood catchment area.
- Elementary schools may provide some of the typical neighbourhood park components such as sub-regulation size ball fields and playground equipment.
- Location and design should encourage multi-use.

Protection and enhancement of the environment:

- Environmentally sensitive areas should be avoided where the primary purpose is accommodating children's play facilities or sports fields
- May provide opportunities for community stormwater management. Refer to section 5.5 for guidelines on incorporating stormwater management into the open space system.
- Where possible site location should contribute to reducing the community fire hazard. Refer to section 5.6 for guidelines on locating and designing open space to reduce community fire hazard.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design:

- Location, programming and design should be consistent with CPTED principles.

Aesthetics:

- Location and design should provide for visual enhancement of the community.

4.3. Regional Parks

Appropriate Landform:

- Land requirement: Land availability, recreational demand, natural features and the joint use of school grounds are the primary determinants of a regional park's size, however, a minimum size of 10 hectares is recommended.
- The site shall provide sufficient area to encourage multi-use.
- The primary role for the open space system in the provision of sports fields and amenities.
- Shall incorporate an open, unobstructed area with minimal topographic variation to accommodate facilities and sport fields.
- Ensure a mix of sunny and shaded areas to accommodate year round usage.

Connectivity:

- Shall be easily accessible by walking and bicycling from throughout the service area by way of interconnected trails and shall be located near safe and practical street crossings.
- Site should be located on a collector street and provided with sufficient street frontage to be visible to the public yet protected from vehicle traffic.
- Parking lots should be sized on a case-by-case basis to meet the parking demand generated by each site.
- Location of future public transportation should be taken into account in site selection.

Compatibility with adjacent uses:

- Compatibility with adjacent land uses is a strong determinant in locating and developing regional parks. Noise levels, traffic, and lighting associated with sports or festival suggest that regional parks may be better located adjacent to commercial, light industrial or institutional areas, rather than residential areas.
- Location and design shall encourage multi-use.
- Site should be geographically centered where possible.
- Locations can be significantly impacted by other types of parks such as school sites and natural areas, each of which may provide some of the same recreational opportunities provided by regional parks.
- Where feasible, sites should be adjacent to existing natural areas or other open spaces.
- Should have adequate buffering between active and passive use areas, as well as adjacent neighbourhoods.

Protection and enhancement of the environment:

- Soils should be suitable for development of selected facilities
- Environmentally sensitive areas should be avoided where the primary purpose is accommodating large number of people, children's play facilities or sports fields
- May provide opportunities for community stormwater management. Refer to section 5.5 for guidelines on incorporating stormwater management into the open space system.
- Where possible site location should contribute to reducing the community fire hazard. Refer to section 5.6 for guidelines on locating and designing open space to reduce community fire hazard.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design:

- Location, programming and design should be consistent with CPTED principles.

Aesthetics:

- Location and design should provide for visual enhancement of the community.

4.4. Trails

Appropriate Landform:

- Land requirement: Sufficient land should be set aside to provide for an interconnected network of trails, consisting of a hierarchy of trail types: regional trails, local trails, and nature trails.
- Regional trails are used to connect and service high use areas such as the downtown area, schools, business areas, and prominent natural and recreational amenities. They are intended to allow for the efficient movement of commuters, as well as recreational pedestrians and cyclists. The surface width for regional trails is a minimum of 2.5 meters.
- Local trails provide for circulation within communities requiring low volume linkages. The surface width for local trails is a minimum of 1.5 meters.
- Nature trails are designed for recreational use along scenic routes rather than commuting, and have a limited surface width of 0.5 to 0.6 meters. Such trails shall have minimal or no maintenance, and be left largely in a natural state. Maintenance, when conducted, would be undertaken solely to address obvious safety concerns and to minimize possible erosion or related environmental damage. Such trails would be used at the users risk, and be signed as such, indicating that the trail is not maintained. If these trails are not used, they would be allowed to grow back in naturally, and reclamation work would only be undertaken if necessary for environmental reasons.
- Municipal reserve implications:
 - Developers are required by the Town to construct and pay for a pedestrian trail system, and the associated amenities as specified by the Town's Engineering Design Guidelines, to serve the given subdivision and connect with adjacent subdivisions. Regional and local trails shall be constructed for these purposes without receiving credit toward the required municipal reserve dedications. Refer to Section 3.3 for a discussion of how the scale of development influences the range of open space types required.
 - Where demand for regional and local trails, in addition to those required for access within and among subdivisions, has been established by the Recreation Master Plan or other means, supplementary regional and local trails may be constructed by the developer and receive credit toward the required municipal reserve dedications.
 - Where nature trails are part of the Town's larger multi-purpose network, and where no other method of securing the land is acceptable, these trails shall receive credit toward the required municipal reserve dedications.
- Local and regional trails should be located to ensure a safe and functional transportation system; considering gradients, corners and intersections on a case by case basis

- Trails may be located through environmental reserve, building or environmental setbacks, utility easements, utility right-of-ways, road right-of-ways, and boulevards where approved. However, where possible trails should be constructed outside of the road right-of-way.

Connectivity:

- The trail network shall have a high level of connectivity, designed to connect residential areas with the open space system and other activity centres such as the downtown area, schools, business areas, and prominent natural and recreational amenities.
- Where possible municipal reserve and environmental reserve shall be integrated via the Town-wide trail system.
- Due to topographical constraints a high level of connectivity or multiple trail linkages may not be feasible in some locations. Excessive disruption to the natural terrain should be avoided.

Compatibility with adjacent uses:

- It is recommended that local trails should be located within 400 meters of all residences and not blocked by collector or arterial streets, and regional trails should be within 1.6 kilometers of residences.
- Conflicts between vehicular and pedestrian traffic should be minimized.
- All local and regional trails should be barrier free (handicapped accessible) where possible, however, excessive disruption to the natural terrain should be avoided.

Protection and enhancement of the environment:

- Trails developed in natural areas should be designed and sited to minimize disturbance to landform or vegetation.
- In order to reduce the demand for access to critical wildlife areas, four-season trails should be located in less sensitive areas
- Crossing of wildlife corridors should be as close to perpendicular as possible

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design:

- Location and design should be consistent with CPTED principles.

Aesthetics:

- Location and design should provide for visual enhancement of the community.

4.5. Natural Areas

Appropriate Landform:

- Land requirement: Land set aside for environmental reserve may allow for sufficient public access to natural areas and provide for the range of functions discussed in section 2.5. However, where additional natural areas are

needed, a parcel of land may receive credit toward the required municipal reserve dedications where it allows for the appropriate functions and compliments other components of the open space system.

- Where lands do not fulfill the criteria to be designated as environmental reserve or a designated class of open space, such as stable slopes considered too steep for development or recreation, or areas of unique vegetation, they may receive partial credit as municipal reserve or be donated to the Town for the purposes of environmental protection. Refer to section 5.2 for guidelines on allocating partial municipal reserve credit to land that exhibits only a portion of the required characteristics; refer to Section 5.3 for information on voluntary dedications.

Connectivity:

- Site should contribute to the connectivity of the open space system.

Compatibility with adjacent uses:

- Locating natural areas adjacent to regional parks is optimal where a large multi-use site is required.

Protection and enhancement of the environment:

- Regionally significant sites, those that exhibit unique natural resources or remnant landscapes, that are considered developable and therefore not designated as environmental reserve are a priority for site selection.
- Incorporate water bodies, major escarpments, and unique topography wherever possible in order to protect sensitive environments and provide public access.
- Optimally, sites should have at least 50% of their land base composed of high condition natural environment that is of ecological significance and contains wildlife habitat of varying productivity.
- Protection and management of the natural or cultural environment is the primary concern and recreational use is a secondary objective. Ensure that any recreational development within the site will not negatively impact the environment.
- Man-made elements such as paths, boardwalks, and benches should be non-intrusive so that the physical and visual integrity of the resource is protected.
- May provide opportunities for community stormwater management. Refer to section 5.5 for guidelines on incorporating stormwater management into the open space system.

Aesthetics:

- Location and design should provide for visual enhancement of the community.

4.6. Off-Leash Areas

Appropriate Landform:

- Land requirements: Local interests should determine what land area best suits the needs of a local off-leash area, however a minimum of 0.8 hectares is recommended for fenced off leash areas.
 - Unfenced sites are generally multi use areas where residents may exercise their dogs off-leash.
 - Fenced facilities provide residents with the opportunity to exercise their dogs off-leash within a controlled environment and are generally more limited in their use.
- Where possible, maximizing space shall be a priority in establishing off-leash areas.
- Both types of off leash areas may be designated sites within existing open space.
- Ensure a mix of sunny and shaded areas to accommodate year round usage.
- Undeveloped land, free from natural or man-made hazards is optimal.

Connectivity:

- Site should be conveniently connected to the community by both roadways and trails.
- Adequate parking space shall be available.

Compatibility with adjacent uses:

- Site shall provide a safe environment away from traffic, and not be located near collector roads, sport fields, or residential areas without a sufficient buffer.

Protection and enhancement of the environment:

- Location and design should limit interaction between dogs and wildlife.
- Sites shall not be located in environmentally sensitive areas or on sites with limited land-use due to previous activities.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design:

- Location, programming and design should be consistent with CPTED principles.

Aesthetics:

- Location and design should provide for visual enhancement of the community.

4.7. Buffers

Appropriate Landform:

- Land requirement: Land set aside for environmental reserve, natural area, or other components of the open space system may provide for the range of functions required of buffers as discussed in section 2.7. For additional buffers to be credited as municipal reserve the need for a buffer shall be adequately established and the site shall fulfill the specified functions. Buffers given credit for municipal reserve shall provide adequate visual screening, noise attenuation, or the separation of uses. Small lot remnants that do not fulfill these functions will not be given credit for municipal reserve.
- Where possible, sites should incorporate existing vegetation or topography in order to fulfill the intended functions.

Protection and enhancement of the environment:

- Buffers for wildlife habitat and corridor protection should be located where developed areas or recreation sites are in close proximity to wildlife corridors so that they may minimize human/wildlife conflicts. Municipal reserve should only be designated for wildlife habitat and corridor protection where environmental reserve, natural areas, or other open space are inadequate.
- Buffers for wildlife habitat and corridor protection should be left in a natural state where possible

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design:

- Location and design should be consistent with CPTED principles.

Aesthetics:

- Location and design should provide for visual enhancement of the community.

4.8. Urban Plazas

Appropriate Landform:

- Land Requirements: Local interests and the intended use of the plaza should determine what land area is appropriate. An intimate space for enjoying lunch may require only 300 square metres, whereas as a public focal point for markets or festivals may be 0.4 hectares or larger.
- All microclimatic conditions, including seasonal variations in sun and shade, and the need for wind-sheltered areas, should be considered in relation to the intended uses of the plaza.



Connectivity:

- Should provide good connections to the surrounding land uses for pedestrians and cyclists through linkages to the trail network.
- Consideration should be given to the location of future transit stops.
- Site should have no more than two sides bounded by roads of a collector standard or higher.

Compatibility with adjacent uses:

- Urban plazas should be promoted for development in the downtown area, commercial districts, or employment centers.
- Site should provide a publicly accessible focal point and be located in places that generate relatively high levels of pedestrian activity.
- The effect of adjacent businesses on public accessibility shall be considered.
- Location and design should encourage multi-use.
- Where economically viable, a percentage of the plaza's total frontage should be allocated to retail or service establishments, rather than office buildings, in order to attract people into the plaza.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design:

- Location, programming and design should be consistent with CPTED principles.

Aesthetics:

- Location and design should provide for visual enhancement of the community and consider views of the natural and built environments.

5. Additional Guidelines

This section includes:

1. Guidelines for Accepting Cash in Lieu of Municipal Reserve
2. Policy on Super-Standard Amenities
3. Guidelines for Allocating Partial Credit for Municipal Reserve
4. Voluntary Dedications
5. Guidelines for Incorporating Stormwater Management into the Open Space System
6. Guidelines for Using Open Space to Reduce Community Fire Hazard

5.1. Guidelines for Accepting Cash in Lieu of Municipal Reserve

According to the community's Municipal Development Plan, the Town requires that, where practical, municipal reserve be provided as land. Particularly in residential areas, all efforts shall be made to accommodate open space without taking cash in lieu.

Where it is not possible to provide land for municipal reserve, the deferral of the land requirement by legal caveat is acceptable. Where money in lieu of open space is accepted, the Town will use these funds to acquire or improve public open space in appropriate locations.

The Town's priority for open space development is to have open space where people live, as opposed to where they work. As discussed in section 3.4, residents of mixed-use areas should also have the same level of access to the community's open space system as residents in other types of neighbourhoods. However, in strictly commercial areas cash in lieu and/or deferred reserve is usually taken, unless a need for open space is established or where environmentally significant areas exist outside of the environmental reserve and have potential to be protected under municipal reserve. The Town encourages the private sector to provide and maintain open space in commercial and industrial areas through its own on-site landscaping.

Public open space incorporated into a commercial district may be appropriate where general pedestrian traffic is being encouraged, or where passive recreational functions are inadequate for local employees. In selecting the site, the effect of adjacent businesses on public accessibility shall be considered. Creditable municipal reserve within commercial areas or employment centres should meet the following criteria:

- Provide publicly accessible focal points within the commercial area or employment centre,
- Provide pedestrian connections to the surrounding land uses,
- Be located in areas that generate relatively high levels of pedestrian activity,
- Have no more than two sides bounded by roads of a collector standard or higher, and
- Achieve an acceptable interface with adjacent land uses.

Refer to information on urban plazas in Section 2.8 and 4.8.

5.2. Guidelines for Allocating Partial Credit for Municipal Reserve

The majority of the characteristics required for a given class of open space shall be present for a parcel of land to be given 100% credit as municipal reserve. Where the demand for a particular class of open space has been established, and optimal sites are not available, partial credit may be allocated to a parcel of land that exhibits a portion of the required characteristics. The allocation of partial credits shall be determined on a site-specific basis considering the functionality of the site as described in section 2, as well as the proportion of the required characteristics that are present, with some consideration provided to the topographical constraints of the area within which the site is located.

Providing cash-in-lieu is preferable to allocating partial credit to sites that are not functional. Where sufficient characteristics are present to provide for the basic functions of the open space type, 50% municipal reserve credit shall be given. Credit in addition to 50% shall be determined by the total proportion of the required characteristics present, giving consideration to the topographical constraints of the development area.

5.3. Voluntary Dedications

Protection of the natural environment is a high priority for the Town. Objectives stated in the MDP are to identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas that contribute to the maintenance of natural processes, biodiversity and the quality of urban living. For the purposes of protecting environmentally sensitive areas that do not fulfill the criteria to be designated as environmental reserve or municipal reserve, such as stable slopes considered too steep for development or recreation, or areas of unique vegetation, these sites may receive partial credit as municipal reserve according to the guidelines given in section 5.2, or may be accepted as donations in addition to the municipal reserve requirements. Donating land benefits the developer or landowner by reducing their tax burden and benefits the community by allowing for the protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

The Town shall not accept donated lands that will incur excessive liability or maintenance costs.

5.4. Policy on Super-Standard Amenities

Amenities provided by the developer that exceed the standard open space amenity requirements outlined by the Town's Engineering and Design Guidelines are considered to be super-standard amenities. Super-standard amenities are prohibited unless accepted by Council as part of the subdivision approval process discussed in section 1.5. The intent of regulating super-standard amenities is to prevent excessive maintenance costs from being incurred by the Town.

Developers may seek approval for super-standard amenities by providing a comparative written evaluation report as part of the subdivision application process. The additional maintenance costs, replacement costs, and operational considerations of the proposed super-standard amenities shall be compared to those of the standard amenities. The benefits derived from the super-standard amenities shall be weighed against any additional costs incurred (including life cycle costs) by the Town to determine whether they are acceptable or not.

Where the demand for a super-standard amenity has been established by the Recreation Master Plan and the Public Art Policy, and the Town requires/requests its construction, the comparative evaluation shall be prepared by the Town.

Super-standard amenities can be proposed within the following classifications:

- Landscaping
- Playground apparatus
- Gazebos
- Fire pits
- Camping facilities
- Picnic shelters
- Community gardens
- Picnic shelters
- Benches
- Garbage bins
- Signage
- Sports amenities
- Lighting
- Entrance features
- Public art installations

Other amenities not listed here may also be considered super-standard.

5.5. Stormwater Management into the Open Space System

Naturalized stormwater treatment wetlands and dry ponds may be given credit for municipal reserve as discussed in the following sections:

5.5.1. Stormwater Treatment Wetlands

Land used to accommodate the standard stormwater management facilities outlined in the Town's Engineering Guidelines shall not be credited as municipal reserve. However, crediting naturalized stormwater treatment wetlands as municipal reserve shall be considered where the facility improves the community's environmental, recreational, and aesthetic integrity. The primary purpose of allowing stormwater treatment wetlands to be credited as municipal reserve is to encourage the construction of facilities that maximize pollutant removal, thereby providing a higher level of treatment for stormwater.

Stormwater facilities may receive up to 100% credit as municipal reserve provided that other open space functions are not compromised and the facilities meet the following criteria:

- Facilities shall provide:
 - Maximized pollutant removal through wetland uptake, retention and settling,
 - A mechanism for habitat enhancement,
 - A visually pleasing neighbourhood amenity,
 - Public access, such as trails and view points,
 - Opportunities for passive recreation such as bird watching or relaxing, and,
 - Signage as required by the Town's Engineering Design Guidelines.
- Environmental, recreational, and aesthetic integrity of the land may not be compromised.
- Facilities shall not be located in an environmental reserve.

- Facilities shall not be located within areas designed to accommodate playground equipment or sports amenities.
- Any one parcel of land designated as open space should not be more than one-third encumbered by a stormwater management facility. Should stormwater management in a community require additional land, the balance may not be credited for municipal reserve on the same site.
- Disturbed natural environments should be given first consideration for stormwater facilities within the open space system.
- Water quality and/or flow levels shall not jeopardize the integrity of the stormwater facility or public safety.
- Where site conditions allow, naturalized drainage systems should be used instead of artificial stormwater management systems.
- Existing wetlands may have limited suitability for dual use in stormwater management; however, such sites shall be managed for habitat protection and long-term sustainability, and are subject to provincial regulations.
- All recreational amenity development, such as paths and benches, shall be located above the maximum level of inundation.

Developers should work closely with the Town's Engineering Department to determine the specific site conditions and design criteria for the approval of the facilities. The Town's Stormwater Management Master Plan refers to the City of Calgary's Stormwater Management and Design Manual for stormwater treatment wetland design specifications.

5.5.2. *Dry Ponds and Sports Fields*

Overland drainage routes and dry ponds designed for flood management may be constructed within the open space system provided that other open space functions are not compromised.

Dry ponds may be used for sports fields. Where possible, sports fields should be located outside of the inundation area. Where sports fields are to be located within the inundation area, turf play surfaces are preferable; the shale associated with baseball diamonds tends to create maintenance problems. Playgrounds are not permitted within the inundation area of a dry pond. Appropriate signage is required for all stormwater management facilities located within the open space system.

Any proposed use of dry ponds for sports fields must address and deal with the issue of sedimentation, and minimizing damage to field surfaces by excessive sedimentation.

5.6. Using Open Space to Reduce Community Fire Hazard

Many neighbourhoods in Canmore are built adjacent to forested areas considered to have high or extreme fire hazard. The Town of Canmore Wildland/Urban Interface Plan recommends that developers, planners, and fire officials work together to identify hazardous sites prior to planning new developments. Where possible, these sites should be given priority for locating maintained parks, as they may be designed to act as firebreaks and reduce the community fire hazard.

Open spaces designed to act as firebreaks in the community should be a minimum of 30 meters in width, irrigated, and incorporate areas of low grass cover, hard surfaces, or other fire resistant vegetation. When selecting sites for new open spaces, the following factors should be considered in order for the parks to act as effective fire breaks:

- Will the open space break up large blocks of highly flammable, forested areas?
- Will the open space provide a buffer between residential or commercial areas and forested areas?
- Will the open space be situated across-slope or up and down the slope? Across slope firebreaks are most effective.
- Will the park compliment existing natural barriers to wildfires, such as rock escarpments, wetlands, open lands, roads, or streams, thereby increasing the effective width of the firebreak?

5.7. References

City of Anchorage (2004) Parks Natural Resource and Recreation Facility Plan.
 City of Boulder (2004) Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
 City of Calgary (2003) Open Space Plan.
 City of Calgary (2000) Stormwater Management and Design Manual.
 City of Guelph (1999) Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Plan for the City of Guelph.
 City of Hamilton (2004) Parks and Open Space Discussion Paper.
 City of Hamilton (2003) Leash Free Parks Program Policy.
 City of North Vancouver (2002) Parks and Greenways Strategic Plan.
 Dog Off-Leash Area Task Force (April 2001) Boise, Idaho.
 Government of Alberta. Municipal Government Act.
 Louisville/Jefferson County (2004) Dog Park Master Plan.
 NH Rural Fire Resource Quick Guide.
 Three Sisters Mountain Village (2004) Resort Centre Area Structure Plan.
 Town of Canmore (2002) Wildland/Urban Interface Plan.
 Town of Canmore (2000) Open Space Development Guidelines.
 Town of Canmore (1998) Municipal Development Plan.
 Town of Okotoks (1998) Municipal Development Plan