

5.3 NORTHWEST EXTENSION PLANNING OBJECTIVES

GOVERNMENT HILL PARK

To transform a disturbed area of low biological sensitivity at a major intersection of valley trails to an intensive use area providing amenities and facilities to support the main river valley trail system, including a staging area and picnicking.

- Redesign the park area to accommodate improved parking, amenity shelter, picnicking, viewpoint areas and re-landscaping.

MACKINNON RAVINE

To transform a heavily used and highly disturbed area to a major multi-purpose river valley access route with landscaping which creates a more natural appearance.

Redesign park to:

- Provide additional landscaping consistent with the pre-disturbance natural character.
- Address existing trail use conflicts by introducing a new pedestrian-only trail route.
- Improve neighbourhood access to trails.
- Protect fragile river edge south to McKenzie Ravine by limiting access to pedestrian-only traffic.
- Provide alternative river valley access locations to reduce dependence on MacKinnon trail.
- Identify a location for a potential future bridge between MacKinnon Ravine and to Hawrelak/Mayfair area, and evaluate need regularly in future.

MCKENZIE RAVINE

To rehabilitate a moderately sensitive area disturbed by utility construction and road crossing to a pedestrian oriented nature trail linked to the main river valley trail system.

- Develop a pedestrian-only granular trail following the existing path through the full length of the ravine.
- Restore/landscape low-lying area at mouth of ravine.

- Improve neighbourhood access to ravine trail.
- Direct bicycle traffic away from the ravine and from sensitive river edge lands between MacKinnon Ravine and McKenzie Ravine.

BUENA VISTA PARK

To conserve and rehabilitate a moderately sensitive undeveloped open space by establishing a pedestrian oriented nature park for informal recreational use and picnicking, accessible by the main trail system, with amenities for safety and comfort.

- Enhance a natural meadow for wildlife habitat by enlarging the area and reducing fragmentation.
- Consolidate low intensity recreational activities such as picnicking and children's day camp to the periphery of meadow area in areas with improved access.
- Provide multi-purpose and pedestrian-only trail connections to existing and proposed river valley trail system.
- Review potential for designating Class 2 trails to provide cycling alternative.
- Provide continuous access to main trail by developing a bridge connecting Buena Vista Park and Hawrelak Park.
- Provide washrooms, drinking water and security telephones.
- Allow several clearings in the wooded strip at river edge to naturally regenerate.
- Provide a site for rowing activities.
- Consolidate or relocate existing maintenance yards.
- Improve vehicle access while limiting road development.

LAURIER PARK

Selectively redesign a major activity area to improve the function and quality of existing facilities.

Re-design park to:

- Provide a more aesthetic and functional entrance to Laurier and Buena Vista Parks.

- Improve the quality and distribution of picnic sites and eliminate conflict between trail users and picnickers.
- Re-align access to public boat launch area.
- Identify a location for a potential future bridge between Laurier Park and Whitemud Creek and evaluate need regularly in future.
- Reduce zoo parking area and landscape appropriately.
- Identify a location which will provide an opportunity for a possible future connection between Laurier Park and the Equine Centre area.
- Align trails to connect to Quesnell Bridge in the short term.

PATRICIA RAVINE & WOLF WILLOW RAVINE

Retain an area of high biological sensitivity as a natural area, by limiting and controlling access opportunities, creating a neighbourhood trail loop system and selective restoration of disturbed areas.

- Develop a continuous neighbourhood loop trail system through a combination of unimproved trails, pedestrian-only granular trails, and multi-purpose trails through upper Patricia Ravine and the western edge of Wolf Willow Ravine, following existing paths wherever possible.
- Designate on-street routes to provide bicycle access from neighbourhoods to the main trail system.
- Provide continuous access to the main valley trail system for west end residents by developing a bridge connecting the Wolf Willow Ravine area to Fort Edmonton Park.
- Identify connections to the main trail system via bridge to Fort Edmonton Park and on-street routes to Laurier Park.

Proposals for the Northwest Extension are shown on Maps 21 and 23.

5.3.1 Recreation Activities and Amenity Proposals

The recreation activities proposed in this section are trail-based with two exceptions. 1) Buena Vista Park presents a good opportunity for selected low intensity, primarily unstructured outdoor recreation activities, based on the distinctly different experiences of the large meadow and the wooded river edge. The activities should complement the more intensive activities available at the Valley Zoo and Laurier Park area, but the area should remain separate and distinct. The recommended activities around the meadow would include walking, jogging, cycling, bird and wildlife observation, photography and group picnicking. 2) The characteristics of the river in Buena Vista and Laurier Parks provide good potential for river edge activity, such as boat launching, rowing, and river viewpoints, therefore the rowing club and boat launch location are proposed to remain.

To achieve the objective of retaining the natural character of Buena Vista Park it is proposed that the existing maintenance yard be relocated. Approximately 15-20 picnic sites are proposed in a clearing south of 81 Avenue. The exact number will be determined by the number of sites removed from Laurier Park. The Buena Vista area has traditionally accommodated a children's day camp, which would be retained but relocated to one of the clearings north of the present maintenance yards. The remaining clearings would be allowed to naturalize. An amenity building containing washrooms, drinking water, and security telephones is proposed south of 81 Avenue, and if feasible should be built in combination with the Rowing Club site. The existing washrooms at Laurier Park will serve the west end of this section of the valley. An alternative amenity building and Rowing Club location is at the "Yorath property", if it can be acquired by the City.

5.3.2 Trail and Access Proposals

Patricia/Wolf Willow Ravine Trails

The intent for the neighbourhoods surrounding Patricia and Wolf Willow Ravines is to develop a system of granular and paved trails which will provide a variety of neighbourhood recreational loops and access to the main trail system at Laurier Park and Fort Edmonton Park. In both ravines a granular trail would follow a route just inside the tree line or along a shelf just below the top of the ravine bank.

From the end of Patricia Ravine to the existing stairs the trail is proposed as a granular trail. A granular trail would link from the existing stairs along a shelf below the bank to Country Club Road and continue along the west side of the ravine to Wolf Willow Crescent where it would follow an old top-of-bank trail and lead to the height of land between the ravines. This promontory provides a spectacular viewpoint of the surrounding valley and ravines. Although it is possible to follow Patricia Ravine further toward its mouth, a portion of the ravine is privately owned making the west bank routing preferable. Alternatively, a branch of the trail

could be developed to the river through the Jewish Community Centre site. In Wolf Willow Ravine a similar granular trail would lead along the tree line on the west bank from Wakina Road to Country Club road. No trails are proposed in the lower part of Wolf Willow Ravine since this area is virtually undisturbed. East of Patricia Ravine the trails in the old picnic grounds would be retained as a granular loop. Proposed on street bicycle routes along 76 Avenue would connect to the pedestrian bridge crossing Whitemud Drive, to connect into Laurier Park.

To complement the granular pedestrian-only trails it is proposed to use the existing walks along the Trans-Mountain pipeline as a multi-purpose trail spine through Westridge neighbourhood. Country Club Road would be developed as a multi-purpose trail, in the short term as a combination of paved and granular surface. In the long term the entire link should be paved, providing excellent connections between Patricia Heights, Rio Terrace, Westridge and Oleskiw neighbourhoods. This multi-purpose trails would connect to proposed on street bicycle routes to provide access to the main river valley trail system along 62 Avenue and at the Whitemud Drive overpass. Many combinations of these trails are possible to provide neighbourhood loops of a variety of lengths.

Laurier Park/Buena Vista Park Trails

A paved multi-purpose trail is proposed from the Quesnell Bridge and the Whitemud Drive pedestrian overpass along the perimeter of Laurier Park. It would follow the access road in Buena Vista Park and skirt the tree line east of the Great Meadow. Granular neighbourhood access points are proposed from Valleyview Crescent, 134 Street, 133 Street, and 81 Avenue. The paved trail would connect to the pedestrian bridge linking to Hawrelak Park, where the trail would continue on the south river bank.

Granular trails, which are candidates for Class 2 designation, will follow the existing granular trail alignment through Buena Vista Park at the river edge with a branch at the base of the slope providing a circuit of the Great Meadow. Unimproved neighbourhood access trails are proposed branching from Melton Road and Valleyview Drive. Granular trails are also proposed in the area between the Hawrelak pedestrian bridge and MacKinnon Ravine because the area is steep, unstable and provides high quality wildlife habitat. A granular trail is proposed through the length of McKenzie Ravine following the existing path with improved neighbourhood access created by stairs at 142 Street. A boardwalk section is proposed at the mouth of the ravine. Some restoration will be required in the low-lying area at the mouth of McKenzie Ravine.

McKenzie/MacKinnon Ravine Section

Unimproved trails only are proposed in the steep and unstable area between McKenzie and MacKinnon Ravines. This area should be a pedestrian access only area in perpetuity. Site specific restoration may be required. A variety of measures maybe introduced to minimize access including signing and fencing at both ends.

MacKinnon Ravine and Government House Park

The MacKinnon Ravine trail has proved so popular that measures must be taken to improve the comfort level for users. Very little could be done to change the grades which encourage high speeds so trails are proposed which will provide alternatives for pedestrians. Initially a trail will be marked by mowing from 142 Street to the mouth. If the trail proves effective and popular it may be gravelled and extended in future. Other operational changes, such as contra flow should be examined. Areas will be identified for naturalization and native plantings to recreate the natural character of the ravine. Pedestrian bridges affecting this section were described in 5.2.2.

5.3.3 Landscape Restoration

Landscape restoration will be required in several areas. The Great Meadow in Buena Vista will be defined by maintenance practices to ensure that the meadow is allowed to extend to 81 Avenue on the south. Cleared areas in the river edge forest will be allowed to naturalize, abandoned roads and paths will be scarified so that native plants can colonize and reduce the fragmentation.

The mouth of the McKenzie Ravine will be restored to create the most suitable vegetation for the low and consistently wet conditions. Bog or marsh species may be appropriate, but decisions will be based on further study.

The area between McKenzie and MacKinnon will have traffic significantly reduced. In localized areas the present trail width will be reduced and existing damage corrected.

MacKinnon Ravine will be subject to substantial reduction in mowed areas to allow shrub and trees to colonize. Selected areas will be planted with native species to encourage reforestation and recreate a more natural setting in this heavily disturbed area.

5.3.4 Automobile Access

Access to all of the park areas in this section is proposed to be primarily by foot and bicycle. The existing vehicular access to the Valley Zoo via Buena Vista Road will be retained, and the Valley Zoo parking area will be downsized and landscaped for improved function and appearance. The existing road servicing the Laurier Park picnic grounds will be revised to reduce the number of picnic sites, provide a higher quality picnic area and provide a route for the main trail. Provision for service and emergency vehicle access will be provided using the proposed trail, and the existing service road which would be realigned. A branch of the main access road will provide access to the existing boat launch from Buena Vista Road.