

1.0 Background

Planning for Terwillegar Park began in 2005 with the preparation of “A Vision for Terwillegar Park” (Randall Conrad & Associates), a City wide public consultation and visioning exercise. The outcome of that study was a public vision for Terwillegar Park as a “**unique natural park within the City’s river valley**”. The report also defined key values, preferred activities, and required infrastructure to meet the needs and wishes of users, stakeholders and the citizens of Edmonton. The report also recommended specific site and environmental analysis be completed and that a concept plan be prepared to define a clear path for the future development of Terwillegar Park.

The purpose of the **Terwillegar Park Concept Plan Study** is to define an overall conceptual plan, management guidelines, and an implementation strategy for Terwillegar Park for the next ten years. Using “A Vision for Terwillegar Park” as a foundation, the Terwillegar Park Concept Plan Study was undertaken to advance the planning for the Park with the completion of site and environmental analysis, program development, preparation and refinement of concept plan options, consideration of management requirements, and identification of an overall implementation plan.

Based on the public input that was gathered during the preparation of “A Vision for Terwillegar Park”, it was clear that all users placed a high value on the protection of the unique environments of the Park, however, there were polarized views related to existing and potential uses. It was also clear from ongoing concerns about the parking, entrance road, trail erosion, habitat degradation and lack of amenities, that the “do nothing” or “leave it alone” approach was not an acceptable option. With growing population and increased use, the existing infrastructure and the natural environment within the Park would deteriorate over time if a combination of infrastructure upgrades, additional amenities, environmental restoration and Park management were not planned and implemented.

Recognizing these factors, the planning team adopted an approach that would seek common ground between user groups with the objective of finding the right balance between protecting the environment, meeting the needs of current users, and providing facilities and amenities to meet the needs of a growing City. To assist in trying to achieve this balance, a citizen advisory committee comprised of community members was established, and was tasked with a central role in providing input to the consultant team during preparation of concept options and refinement into a final concept plan. As defined in this report, this approach has resulted in a concept plan that provides a clear direction for the development of Terwillegar Park as a “unique natural park”.

1.1 Study Process

To meet the objectives of the project, the City of Edmonton retained the services of a multidisciplinary consulting team (the design team) led by ISL Engineering and Land Services. The design team reported to the City’s project team which was made up of senior staff from several City departments. The design team was in turn supported by the Terwillegar Park Citizen’s Advisory Committee. Regular working meetings with the committee allowed the design team to present findings, learn historical and environmental details about the Park, discuss potential program features, and develop and refine concept options. The Terwillegar Park Citizen’s Advisory Committee proved to be a hard working, knowledgeable and well spoken group that was an invaluable resource to the design team throughout the Study.

The Terwillegar Park Concept Plan Study involved two major phases of work with subphases and a number of tasks included in each phase:

- Phase 1: Analysis & Concept Development – this phase included preparation of the public consultation and communications plan, the site and environmental analysis, and the preliminary concept development
- Phase 2: Concept Plan & Report – this phase included concept plan refinement, public consultation and preparation of the final concept plan and report.

A public consultation plan was prepared by IMI Strategics at the beginning of the Study to ensure that the concept planning process would build on the consultation completed during the preparation of “A Vision for Terwillegar Park”, while providing opportunities throughout the Study for stakeholders and the public to provide critical input into the concept designs. The public consultation process included the following components:

- Public Consultation Plan - City Corporate Public Involvement Framework
- Communications Plan – internal and external communications
- Terwillegar Park Citizen’s Advisory Committee – regular working meetings to input to the design team throughout the concept design process
- Stakeholder Consultation – workshop and meetings to gather input and technical information from stakeholders and park users
- Advertising, roadside signs and website (www.terwillegarpark.com)
- Public Open Houses – two open houses to gather input on two concept options
- Public Open House – present preferred concept plan in the spring of 2008

The initial work by the design team included background review and field analysis leading to the preparation of three technical reports (available under separate cover): a *Historical Resources Impact Assessment*, a *Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment*, and a *Biophysical Review of Sensitivities and Opportunities* (Section 1.4). All of this work provided information for the preparation of the *Opportunities and Constraints Analysis Report* which provides an overview of site conditions, features, uses and issues as a framework for concept plan preparation.

The development of the concept plan options began with the development of a preliminary program statement (Section 2.0) based on the findings of the “A Vision for Terwillegar Park”, the Opportunities and Constraints Analysis, and the design team’s discussion of the potential program elements that fit with the vision of a “*unique natural park*”. A facilitated workshop was held to allow invited stakeholders, representing a broad cross section of current and potential users, an opportunity to provide input to the design team and identify preferred program options. With consideration of this input, the design team finalized the program statement and began developing concept plan options for the future of Terwillegar Park.

Initially four concept plan options (Section 3.1) were prepared by the design team and then reviewed with the City Project Team and the Terwillegar Park Citizen’s Advisory Committee. Based on input and ideas provided by these groups, the design team revised and refined the four concepts into two concept plan options (Section 3.2) which were then presented to the public at two open house events in March 2008 (Section 3.3). Based on the input received at the open houses and then discussions with the Terwillegar Park Citizen’s Advisory Committee, the design team prepared a draft of the Final Concept Plan (Section 4.0).

In support of the Final Concept Plan, management guidelines and an implementation strategy were prepared as a guide for the long term development and operations of

Terwillegar Park. All of this information was presented to the public for feedback at an open house in May 2008. Based on input from the public, the City Project Team and the Terwillegar Park Citizen's Advisory Committee, the design team made refinements and prepared this report to document the process, findings and recommendations of the Terwillegar Park Concept Plan Study.

1.2 Acknowledgments

ISL Engineering and Land Services would like to acknowledge the following individuals and firms for their involvement in the Study and their commitment to the process and results:

Terwillegar Park Citizen's Advisory Committee

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|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ➤ Greg Falkenstein | Community at Large |
| ➤ Tom Greenwood-Madsen | Terwillegar/Riverbend Area Council |
| ➤ Bruce Laverty | Outdoor Recreation Interests |
| ➤ Mark Lund | Academic Community |
| ➤ Scott Osinchuk | Cycling |
| ➤ Laura Shanner | Off-Leash Dog Walkers |
| ➤ Flo Slomp | Community at Large |
| ➤ Stephen Wills | Environmental Interests |
| ➤ Gordon Murrie | Water-based, Paddling Interests |

The City of Edmonton Project Planning Team

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The ISL Design Team

- ISL Engineering and Land Services
- IMI Strategics
- Spencer Environmental Management Services
- EDS Group
- Thurber Engineering
- The Archaeology Group

1.3 Context

Terwillegar Park is 174 hectares (430 acre) of parkland surrounded by the North Saskatchewan River on three sides (Figure 1.0). The Park is accessible by vehicle from the west end of Rabbit Hill Road and on foot or by bike along approximately five informal trails. Development within the park is limited to a parking lot and many informal trails. Terwillegar Park is well situated in the growing southwest part of Edmonton. Existing residential communities line the road leading into the Park while newly established, growing and emerging residential communities are located to the southwest and west. Adjacent land to the north includes the Edmonton Golf and Country Club while the E.L. Smith Water Treatment Facility is located to the southwest. Terwillegar Park is identified as a key “river valley attraction” as part of the River Valley Alliance’s Capital Region River Valley Park.



1.4 A Vision for Terwillegar Park

“A Vision for Terwillegar Park” was a needs assessment and visioning project approved by City Council, which was the first step in the planning process for the long term development and management of Terwillegar Park. “A Vision for Terwillegar Park”, prepared through an extensive community consultation process, defines key values, preferred activities, and required infrastructure to meet the needs and wishes of users, stakeholders and the citizens of Edmonton. The approved vision for Terwillegar Park is: **“A Unique Natural Park within the City of Edmonton’s River Valley Park System”**.

“A Vision for Terwillegar Park” defined Terwillegar Park as a place where all people can:

- find solace from the pressures of urban lifestyles;
- Appreciate and learn about nature and how to preserve it;
- Participate, including all levels of ability or disability, in both passive and active leisure pursuits in a safe natural setting, thereby contributing to their mental, physical and social well being;
- Discover new things in nature, new friends and new pursuits; and
- Enjoy nature and recreate in harmony with mutual respect for each other’s needs.

Key values identified in “A Vision for Terwillegar Park” included keeping Terwillegar Park as:

- A natural park – preservation, escape, diversity of experience in a natural setting;
- A shared resource – respect for others, access for all, trust and accountability;
- An outdoor classroom – educate visitors on the value of nature;
- A connected resource – connections to the river valley, to nature and to people.

Preferred activities and infrastructure identified in the Vision Plan included:

- All current activities to continue but for the future to be designed and managed to ensure that all City-wide residents can access the Park
- Opportunities to learn about the natural attributes of the Parks environment
- Basic services such as washrooms, paved road and parking
- A continuous link of the river valley trail through the Park with careful consideration of trail alignment

Throughout the Concept Plan process, the design team, Terwillegar Park Citizen’s Advisory Committee, stakeholders and the public have referenced “A Vision for Terwillegar Park” as the foundation for considering, selecting and evaluating whether potential program elements and concept design decisions fit within the vision of a *“unique natural park”*.

1.5 Supporting Documents

A number of supporting documents were prepared as part of this Study to provide a comprehensive foundation for the preparation of the Concept Plan. All of the assessment work was undertaken based on recommendations of “A Vision for Terwillegar Park”. The overall objective of the analysis phase was to establish a clear and common understanding of the opportunities and constraints for developing new features and amenities within Terwillegar Park, while at the same time improving existing uses and protecting and enhancing the unique environmental resources of the Park.

The site and environmental analysis was completed throughout the summer of 2007 as background review, field inventories, assessments and mapping provided information for the preparation of the Opportunities and Constraints Analysis Report (Appendix A). This report provides an overview of site conditions, features, uses and issues as a framework for concept plan preparation. The technical reports that were prepared in support of the Opportunities and Constraints Analysis Report included a *Historical Resources Impact Assessment*, a *Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment*, and a *Biophysical Review of Sensitivities and Opportunities*, all of which are available under separate cover. An *Access and Servicing Review* (Appendix B) was also prepared to define the site infrastructure and access issues and options. The final supporting document is the *Public Consultation Summary Report* (Appendix E) which provides an overview of the public consultation activities and feedback that were such an important part of this Study.

1.5.1 Historical Resources Impact Assessment

The *Historical Resources Impact Assessment* was prepared by The Archaeology Group and included historical air photo analysis and field analysis. The study revealed no evidence of a previous settlement on the site and no archeological or historic sites of significance. The report was approved by the Province and no further exploration is required.

1.5.2 Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment

The *Phase One Environmental Site Assessment* of Terwillegar Park completed by Thurber Engineering revealed that there was no historical or visual evidence of contamination found on the site. The assessment confirmed evidence of the presence of non-native fill material, which was consistent with the waste material (e.g. cement blocks, tires, a car body and other refuse) uncovered during site restoration work related to the dry-docking of the Edmonton River Queen in 2007. A more detailed sampling and testing program would be required to determine the location and extent of the materials and the potential impacts on the environment and on construction requirements, scheduling and costs.

1.5.3 Biophysical Review of Sensitivities and Opportunities

The *Biophysical Review of Sensitivities and Opportunities* was prepared by Spencer Environmental Management Services Ltd. This study included extensive field research on the biophysical features and conditions in Terwillegar Park related to topography and drainage, vegetation and wildlife. From a drainage perspective, the study defined the 100-year and 25 year flood lines within the park which illustrated that flooding of the park would impact the potential location of structures, the integrity of the pond areas and the long-term maintenance of trails and other amenities.

The vegetation assessment revealed:

- Agricultural use and gravel extraction resulted in removal of native vegetation,
- poor reclamation practices following gravel operations resulted in a lack of topsoil in the open space areas,
- noxious and nuisance weeds dominate much of the site,
- three rare plant species were identified, and
- High species richness (number of different species) of songbirds

This study also confirmed that as part of the North Saskatchewan River regional ecosystem, and being somewhat disconnected from urban development, Terwillegar Park supports a great diversity of wildlife, none of which are of protected status. The study also confirmed that although highly disturbed, this Park displays high species richness (number of species) of songbirds. There were also three fish species found in open ponds which demonstrated that there was sufficient depth for over-wintering. There is also the presence of frogs, salamander, and reptiles, none of protected status.

One of the key opportunities that was established based on the report findings, was that despite species richness and significant ecological features, the park does not support any environmental features or species that are sensitive to the point that all development should be avoided.

1.5.4 Opportunities and Constraints Analysis

This report, prepared by EDS Group, provides an overview of site conditions, features, uses and issues as a framework for concept plan preparation. It uses the findings and recommendations of “A Vision for Terwillegar Park” and the above noted technical reports, as well as observations of the design team, to identify opportunities and constraints to recreational development within Terwillegar Park. A total of 23 opportunities and 18 constraints were identified and have been used as a framework for developing the program and the concept plan options. The complete report is provided in Appendix A.

1.5.5 Access and Servicing Review

This report was prepared by ISL Engineering and Land Services and provides a review and recommendations related to improving site access and provision of utility services to support the proposed development program. The report builds on a previous geotechnical report and provides an assessment and recommendations for upgrading and paving of the access road into the park, and for expansion and paving of the parking lot. The report also provides an overview of the servicing options for providing water, sanitary, power and natural gas services for the development of support buildings such as washrooms on the site. Part of the serving review includes consideration of sustainable approaches to servicing any buildings that are proposed. The complete report is provided in Appendix B.

1.5.6 Public Consultation Summary Report

This report was prepared by ISL and IMI Strategics and includes an overview of the public consultation plan, a description of the various public consultation activities, a summary of the feedback, comments and ideas provided by stakeholders and the public, and an overview of the interpretation of the feedback and the resulting impacts on the preparation of the concept plan. The report also summarizes the important role played by the Terwillegar Park Citizen’s Advisory Committee during the Study. The complete summary report is provided in Appendix E. The detailed breakdown of the results of the various public consultation activities is not included, but was provided to and utilized by the design team, the City project team and the Terwillegar Park Citizen’s Advisory Committee throughout the Study.

