



## Executive Summary

The North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine system winds through the City of Edmonton like a ribbon of green. It is the most dominant physical feature of the City and surrounding areas. Its high level of physical, biological and scenic variation can rarely be found in any other major city in North America. It is one of the largest and most continuous areas of urban parkland in North America, encompassing over 7400 ha of land.

In recognition of the scenic pleasure provided by the valley to Edmontonians and visitors, municipal and provincial authorities have for eighty years sought to protect the natural open space from urban development while providing a park system suitable for a metropolitan area.

The development in 1975 of the Capital City Recreation Park by the Province of Alberta through the Alberta Heritage Savings Fund and the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan Bylaw passed by City Council in 1985 have established a framework for effective management and utilization of the area. Simultaneously with these plans, in recognition of the need to develop a long term plan for the use, care and management of the area, Edmonton Parks and Recreation began to study the valley. However, due to funding priorities this management plan remained an unrealized goal.

The 1989 announcement by the Province of Alberta of a continuation of the previous urban park development program and the eligibility of the City of Edmonton to receive up to \$15 million over a ten-year period provided the impetus to fulfil the on-

going desire to have a resource management plan for the entire North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System in place.

At a meeting on June 26, 1990, City Council approved proceeding with the preparation of a Conceptual Plan for the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System to meet the requirements of the Provincial Urban Parks Program, Phase II. It was decided to prepare necessary plans in-house to meet the provincial grant requirements.

A Project Team was struck to prepare the plans and documentation and to develop a process which would involve the public in preparing the long term plan. The goal was to develop a publicly supported position statement which defines the over-riding philosophy for development, programming and maintenance activities within the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System.

On August 8, 1990, Executive Committee of City Council supported the recommended planning process and the public input process.

### 1. *Development of a Concept Plan and a Conceptual Resource Management Plan by December, 1990.*

- To be achieved by conducting three concurrent 'streams' of work: Vision Stream, Environmental Stream, and Resource Management Stream.
- Public input to be of a broad scope and of a general nature; the participation target being every citizen to the level of confirming a collective public vision.
- Study area is the total river valley system.

## 2. *Development of a Master Plan and Resource Management Plan by December 1991.*

- Refinement of the program statement; planning will concentrate on specific areas; preferred development alternatives selected; development priorities will be set.
- Geographic range of stakeholders will narrow but the level of participation and depth of involvement in planning detail will increase.
- Urban Park Boundary will be established.
- On completion of the Master Plan specific development priorities will be selected and preliminary budgets prepared. No development proposal will proceed to the site plan level until funding is secured.

## 3. *Development of Detailed Site Plans - 1992*

- Detailed site planning and design for the highest priorities could begin in 1992 for construction in 1993.
- The range of stakeholders will narrow to those specifically affected by the proposals while the level of planning detail and the depth of public participation is high.

With the goal and process confirmed the first task was to identify what aspirations the citizens of Edmonton had for the valley. This was accomplished by reviewing public input on other trail and park developments in the City, leisure studies and surveys and existing policies; synthesizing this information into a Vision Statement and Basic Principles; and taking this to the public for review, rating, and comment.

One thousand five hundred and twenty-seven (1527) citizens participated in the Vision Survey questionnaire. Between 70.4% and 82.9% of the respondents supported the Vision Statement and Basic Principles with 78.7% supporting the Vision Statement as presented.

Based on input received from the Vision Survey and existing documentation, a draft Program Statement and draft Concept Plan were developed. The Concept Plan along with a Resource Management Plan were presented to the general public at two open houses for review, input and ratification. Over two hundred citizens attended with seventy-seven completing and submitting the subsequent questionnaire. Ninety-three percent of the respondents supported in principle the Concept Plan as presented.

The Concept Plan and the Resource Management

Plan were revised as a result of the input received at the two open houses. The combined plans were presented to Edmonton City Council on November 27, 1990.

The Plan proposes tripling the present urban park to include the entire length of the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System. The plan will take approximately \$67 million to complete. It would extend the existing Capital City Recreation Park eastward to the northeasterly city boundary and westward to the southwesterly city boundary to provide a 7400 hectare park through the heart of Edmonton. The Plan identifies a land acquisition strategy and recommends a financing strategy.

The Plan emphasizes careful utilization and good management to ensure the valley's integrity is retained for the enjoyment and use of future generations. The Plan represents a balance between making the valley accessible for public use and protecting the natural landscape and wildlife habitat areas. It includes a Resource Management Plan and a general description of the kind of development proposed. It divides the park area into three land management zones: Preservation, Conservation and Extensive Use.

Five major parks are proposed for development: Big Island, Terwillegar, Twin Brooks, Buena Vista and Hermitage Parks. It is proposed to provide a continuous trail system through the valley and eventually link the trail system with adjacent municipalities. The proposed trail system will be designed to minimize environmental impact and will be linked through construction of eight river bridges. The river valley joins existing major tourist facilities which should be a key area for tourism funding assistance.

It is expected that tourism development within the valley would be consistent with the Vision and Basic Principles. Major facilities will develop within their approved boundaries. Future completion of these facilities would not rely on Urban Park Program funding.

The Urban Parks Program Phase II has provided the City of Edmonton with an opportunity to consider the river valley and ravine system as a whole and to establish publicly supported goals for the development and management of the area befitting the capital city of the Province of Alberta.