

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In May 2000 the Town of Lacombe adopted the first document to provide for the planned future development of a trail network for the community. The Trail Committee has continued to be a subcommittee of the Lacombe and District Recreation Parks and Culture Board and provide input into the implementation of the Lacombe Trail/Sidewalk Development Plan. This conceptual plan has proven to be a useful document in providing general direction and guidelines for trails in newly developed areas as well as providing direction for upgrading in existing areas. With the growth experience by the Town and the annexation of the north and west areas it has become necessary to review the existing plan and address the changes that have occurred in the community and the impact on the trail planning.

## 2. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Committee members include representation from the Lacombe and District Recreation Parks and Culture Board, Canadian University College, community members and Parks and Recreation staff. The present committee members include:

Bill Nielsen	Recreation Board
Casey Kooyman	Recreation Board
Debra Grabo	CUC representative
Elco Vandergrift	Community Member
John Connors	Community Member

### Administrative Support

Brian Hay	Town of Lacombe Parks
Christina Lust	Recreation Community Coordinator

## 3. PLANNING GOAL

The overall planning goal established in the 2000 Trail/Sidewalk Development Plan is continues to be relevant to the long-term development of a trail network in the community. It is as follows:

*The primary goal is to develop a long-term plan that identifies a main trail loop that encircles the Town, with ancillary loops from various sections/subdivisions of the Town that will provide for multipurpose recreation and non-vehicular transportation opportunities. The trail/sidewalk plan will provide for linkage of other recreation areas as well as provide recreation, educational, historical, natural history opportunities for the residents.*

### **4. TRAIL, WALKWAY AND SIDWALK OBJECTIVES**

The 2000 plan identified a series of objectives. For this report the objectives have been revised and split into two categories: 1) general overall objectives and 2) operational objectives.

#### **4.1. General Objectives**

- 4.1.1 A high standard trail be constructed that, over the long term, will encircle the Town and provide a "main loop" to which other secondary loops and linkages would be joined.
- 4.1.2 "Secondary loop" trails be designated to include new subdivisions, green spaces and destination areas. The type of potential use and resources available will determine the type of trail construction.
- 4.1.3 Those areas around the "lakes" (Elizabeth Lake, Lake Anne, Barnet Lake and Henners Pond) be maintained, as much as possible, in their natural state and augmented with rest areas. Protection from erosion and movement through wet areas will be addressed to ensure the environmental integrity of the area.
- 4.1.4 The trail system will provide links to and/or access to other recreation and park facilities in the community.
- 4.1.5 Where feasible, off-street routing be available for bicycling. In areas where off-street routing cannot occur, that bicycle lanes on roadways be considered.
- 4.1.6 New subdivision developments are to be integrated into the overall trail network. Design and construction of shale/gravel or asphalt trails will be included as part of the subdivision plans and provide access or linkages to the main trail system. Laneways and sidewalks are to be considered as secondary alternatives.
- 4.1.7 Improve the coordination and integration of the existing trails and sidewalks so that, where there are gaps, the appropriate trail types will provide the necessary linkages.
- 4.1.8 Promotion of the educational value of the historical landmarks and natural history of the area through the development of an interpretive program with appropriate signage.
- 4.1.9 Signage will be provided to recognize historically significant landmarks in the community and the natural history (flora and fauna) of the area.

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- 4.1.10 Opportunities will be investigated to provide access to potential recreation areas outside of the Town limits (ie the Trans Canada Trail, Provincial and Federal Research Stations)
- 4.1.11 Where practical, privacy factors will be considered in the design of the trails to buffer trail use from private residences

### **4.2. Operational Objectives**

- 4.2.1 Develop promotional materials to assist in community awareness and promotion of the trails system. Material would include existing and proposed trails, and trail etiquette.
- 4.2.2 A system of signage be developed that would include directional signs and points of interest. Signage would direct users to the trails, destination areas and major recreation facilities.
- 4.2.3 Community involvement in the construction and long-term use and maintenance of the trails will be identified.
- 4.2.4 Key locations where users can access the trail system will be designated as trail heads. In some areas facilities already exist that can be incorporated into a trailhead location. Amenities at the trailheads will be determined by demand of the area, and resources available. These amenities may include signage, benches, parking, picnic areas, garbage disposal and washrooms.
- 4.2.5 Access to the trails will be for pedestrian and non-motorized transportation. Where it is deemed necessary, strategically place bollards or posts will be used to prevent motorized vehicle access. V-gates or styles will be used to allow pedestrian and/or cycling traffic access only, and restrict vehicular access. Access concerns may be addressed on a need basis. One of the roles of the Trails Committee will be to educate the public and create a climate that values the trails and the intended use of the trail.
- 4.2.6 In cases where sections of the designated trail cross private land, the Town will enter into an agreement with the landowner to address liability concerns.
- 4.2.7 Standards be established to address the various safety concerns such as trail entry to highways and roadways, methods of reducing speed of cyclists meeting highways and roadways, policing areas for the protection of adjacent landowners and users of the trails.

### 5. TOWN STRATEGIC AND CORPORATE PLAN

In 2003 Town Council prepared its Strategic and Corporate Plans. The section of the strategic plan that is directly applicable to trail development include the following:

75 Parks and Open Spaces

The purpose of this business function is to  
*Provide the residents of the community with large natural areas for passive recreation, sports grounds for active recreation and bicycle and pedestrian walkways that are available and accessible*

75.1 There will be prepared a Parks and Open Space Plan which will be reviewed and updated annually and which will set out the detailed development plans for all park areas and reserve parcels owned by the Town.

75.6 The continued development of walkways and trails will be undertaken as resources become available. The Town will seek to maximize the use of volunteer assistance with the development of the trails.

75.7 Developers will be responsible for trails within the subdivision area, trails that connect the subdivision area to the trail network and for shares of major network trails.

### 6. DISCUSSION AND ISSUES

Since the development of the initial Trail/Sidewalk Development Plan (2000) progress has been evident both from a trail development and planning perspective.

The conceptual plan has been an essential tool in identifying trail routes in area structure plans, development plans and subdivision plans. The intent of each of these plans has been to integrate the trails into overall plan.

Trail development over the last three years include:

- o Elizabeth Lake Trail Loop (east and west trails)
- o Cranna Lake Trail Head
- o Cranna Lake north shore trail
- o Asphalt trails along C & E Trail and College Ave.

In early 2004 Recreation Services and Planning and Development Departments undertook a Trail and Sidewalk User Survey that was circulated to the general public through the town newsletter and the schools. The purpose of the survey was to help determine the public's level of usage and satisfaction with the location and standards of the

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town's existing trails and sidewalks. At the time of writing the data collected had not been tabulated and analyzed. When completed it will provide a benchmark for future similar initiatives. It will also provide information for the identification of gaps in the trail system.

### **6.1. PLANNING**

In addition to the Town's corporate plan various other planning documents impact the trail plan. These plans include the following:

- North Area Structure Plan
- South East Area Structure Plan
- West Area Structure Plan
- Municipal Development Plan - at the time of writing this plan is under review
- Sidewalk Development Plan
- Open Space Plan
- Recreation Master Plan

The planning intent is to ensure that all plans that have implications for trail development are consistent in their final outcome.

Also an important planning consideration is ensuring the congruity of sidewalks and trails throughout the community. In a number of areas sidewalks and/or trails flip from one side of the street to the other necessitating the walking public to either walk on the road or move to the opposite side of the street. Ideally walkways should follow a consistent route along one side of the street.

The current practice for approval of development is that the developer submits the engineering plans to Public Works for review and acceptance. To ensure trails and sidewalks are consistent with the overall trail plan, an addition step would be to include the planning and recreation departments in the review process.

Trail or sidewalk sections deemed important to the overall plan need to be identified as such. These sections would then be included as having a public benefit and therefore could not be petitioned out.

When sidewalks are planned for one side of the street, a consideration would be to locate it on the north or east side to facilitate clear walkways in winter and spring months. Ideally sidewalks should be contiguous from one section to the next so that pedestrians can continue their route on the same side of the street. Other factors (such as topography, single side development) may impact the location.

Recommendation 6.1: That the review process of development engineering plans include the planning and/or recreation departments.

Recommendation 6.2: That sidewalks that are significant to the overall trail plan be designated and not be allowed to be petitioned out. Further that a policy be established that addresses what sidewalks are integral to the trail network and would not be allowed to be petitioned out as they serve the greater good of the community.

Recommendation 6.3: In the planning of trails and sidewalks that consideration be given to placement that maintains contiguous routes. Secondly, where sidewalks are planned for one side of the street that they be oriented on the north or east side of the road to facilitate clearing through melting in the winter and spring unless there are factors that prevent such an orientation.

### **6.2. LANDOWNERS**

There are areas within the Town of Lacombe that have been identified for future trail development that are held by private landowners. In some cases attempts to initiate negotiations to allow for community access has not been successful. Since in a few cases gaining access is important to the overall system, the short-term goal of the Trail Plan will be to gain access to these lands and develop natural trails prior to subdivision development.

Throughout the discussions to date liability has been the primary issue that has thwarted any further advancement in acquiring access. A strategy for the acquisition of land prior to development would be have the areas in would be deemed environmental reserve pre-designated and the trails be developed by the town at the town's expense.

In the case of accessing the natural trail on the Canadian University College lands the Town has been successful in establishing an agreement that addressed the liability issues.

Recommendation 6.4: That the Town continue to pursue public access to key trail network sections that are presently held by private landowners.

### **6.3. SIGNAGE AND PUBLIC EDUCATION**

Over the last four years directional signage have been placed along the trail system as well as a trailhead sign at Cranna Lake. Each year as the trails expand additional directional signage has been added.

Safety at intersections of the trails and roadways has been identified as a concern. Further research needs to be carried out to determine a solution.

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Now that a significant portion of the trails have been developed and the use of the trails has increased the development of a brochure that outlines the existing trail system, etiquette and safety consideration is needed.

Recommendation 6.5: That directional signage be placed as needed along the trail system to assist the walking public in its use of the trail system and provide increased awareness of the trail system.

Recommendation 6.6: That a trail brochure be developed that provides information on the trails, trail etiquette and safety considerations.

Recommendation 6.7: That further research be done on to determine safety features that could be implemented into the trail system (ie. Signage)

### **6.4. MAINTENANCE**

Spring, and summer maintenance of the trails includes the following:

- Tree removal as required
- Tarring of cracks in asphalt along trails

Winter maintenance of the trails includes the following:

- Snow clearing of selected asphalt trails and sidewalks
- In extreme circumstances (ie freezing rain) sanding of trails has occurred

In 3 – 5 years adding wood chips to the natural trails will be required and will become an ongoing maintenance expense. In the next 2 – 3 years areas on the asphalt trails and sidewalks will require spraying to inhibit encroachment of grass on the trails.

Relative to other aspects of the parks spring and summer operations the trails require a limited amount of maintenance and can usually be accommodated on days that grass cutting is not possible. Situations where safety (ie fallen trees on the natural trails) is an issue, trail maintenance be a priority. The town has been fortunate to have avid trail users in the community who on an ongoing basis keeps the trails free of garbage and clear areas of fallen trees and other debris. During Pitch-in Week community groups do a major clean up around the community including Cranna Lake.

The major resource commitment to the trails is in the winter months when snow removal is required. As the trail system expands, and if the parks complement of staffing remains at the current levels a priority system for snow removal will be required.

**7. TRAIL STANDARDS**

For the development of future trails the specifications outlined in Appendix C will serve as guidelines for future trail development.

Recommendation 7.1: That the trail standards be included in the development agreement to provide direction to developers.

**8. FUNDING SOURCES**

The trail development that has occurred since the initial trail plan in 2000 has been a combination of volunteer labour, internal resources of the Town, provincial grants and developer contributions as part of development of new subdivisions. The Town of Lacombe has committed \$50,000 per year within the parks budget for the last four years.

Recommendation 8.1: That the Town of Lacombe continue to allocate a minimum of \$50,000 per year for ongoing trail development.

**9. PRIORITIES**

Appendix A outlines in detail the development of trails and sidewalks in various sections of the community. Priorities have been identified based on the importance of various trail sections to the overall trail system.

Priority 1: The trail section is very important to the overall trail system

Priority 2: The trail section has moderate importance to overall trail system

Priority 3: The trail section is a low importance to the overall trail system

Priority is not necessarily related to sequencing of trail development. For example a section of trail may be important to providing a key connector from one section to another but circumstances (ie. Inability to access the specified land) may prevent this section from being developed but with a Priority 1 designation it would be addressed once the land was available. On the other hand a section may be less significant and rated Priority 2 or 3 but opportunity or resources may be available to facilitate the proceeding of the development sooner than later.

[Appendix B](#) outlines Trail Development Implementation including priority, and timelines.

**10. APPENDICES**

- [APPENDIX A](#): Detailed Trail Development
- [APPENDIX B](#): Trail Development Implementation
- [APPENDIX C](#): Types of Trail and Specifications
- [APPENDIX D](#): Trail Length in Kilometers

**11. MAPS**

- MAP A: Trail/Sidewalk Network – Existing
- MAP B: Trail/Sidewalk Network – Proposed
- MAP C: Proposed Blue Bird Trail Route

Municipal Development Plan Map 3  
Future Pedestrian Network & Major Destinations