

River Park/ Sandy Beach/ Britannia Slopes

FAQs #3: Combined Park Management and Design Development Plan

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What is Parks' definition of vegetation sustainability?

The City of Calgary Parks does not have an all-encompassing definition of vegetation sustainability for the 5,345 parcels of public open space that Parks looks after. These thousands of parcels are diverse and range from highly manicured parks (regularly watered and mowed) to natural area parks (limited maintenance).

Most of the regional park's escarpments and river banks are maintained as a Natural Environment Park. Natural parks differ from manicured parks in that priority is given to the protection of plants and wildlife over human activity when the two conflict. Maintenance of the vegetation in natural areas is done with the goal of protecting or enhancing natural vegetation and wildlife habitat. Generally, maintenance in

natural areas is more focussed on management of habitat, weeds and trails, with priority on areas considered environmentally sensitive.

Almost all of River Park, the south section of Sandy Beach and the top of Britannia Slopes are landscaped and considered manicured park sites. These sites are mowed up to 20 times per year and have partial irrigation systems (the far north section of River Park does not have an irrigation system). Due to the heavy use of River Park and the resulting soil compaction, maintaining healthy turf at River Park presents a challenge for Parks operational staff.

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What are the 3-1-1 statistics on bylaw and park user complaints?

In 2010, The City of Calgary Parks received 46 service requests via 3-1-1 for River Park, Sandy Beach and Britannia Slopes: water fountain concerns (14); washrooms/port-a-potty (8); litter/ground maintenance (6); tree concerns (5); parking lot issues (4); lost and found (2); and various issues (6): garbage can, fencing, off-leash damage to park, graffiti, lighting, weeds, pathway paving request for Britannia Slopes.

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Will there be a re-bid or new RFP for the consultant on this project?

The City of Calgary Parks will not re-tender the contract for the River Park, Sandy Beach, Britannia Slopes Management and Design Development Plan. The City of Calgary is confident in expertise and performance to date provided by O2 Planning + Design. Parks and its consultants will continue to work towards meeting the Council-directed timeline of providing a draft plan to the Community & Protective Services committee on June 29, 2011. A draft plan will be available on the project web site in May 2011 for public review.

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Will there be another parking study? Why was only one study done in 2009 over a six-hour period?

The City of Calgary Parks is not undertaking a new traffic and parking study for the regional park. A Parking and Traffic Review took place in 2009, conducted by D.A. Watt Consulting, a civil and transport engineering firm.

The survey was in response to concerns from residents living adjacent to the park on several issues including: parking congestion, illegal parking, park users taking residential parking spots and more. The

study looked at the park over a six-hour period during a peak usage period (sunny, summer Saturdays) to identify where parking, traffic and safety issues exist.

Among the findings, the survey documented the chaotic parking situation on summer weekends, namely on the west side of the Elbow River. Parking lots exceeded their capacity and many cars parked illegally along the Sandy Beach access road or near River Park.

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What is the maximum density the park can sustain?

There is no data on the maximum user density thresholds or carrying capacity for River Park, Sandy Beach, Britannia Slopes or other public parks. Calgary's public parks are for all members of the public to enjoy. Implementing a system allowing only a certain number of park users at one time would be extremely difficult to regulate and enforce.

The City of Calgary Parks will limit access to a certain areas of a park if there is a public safety risk, major maintenance requirement or environmentally sensitive area. To address issues of overuse, park management strategies are employed. What the potential strategies could be employed in certain areas at River Park, Sandy Beach and Britannia Slopes will be influenced by the public input on issues and solutions gathered over the coming months.

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What will be the plan's impact on the natural area in the park?

At this stage, there is no draft plan for the regional park. A first draft of the plan will be posted on the project web site in May 2011 for public review. The draft plan will be influenced by stakeholder and public engagement conducted in 2009 and 2011, technical data and existing City of Calgary planning and policy documents.

These documents include the Natural Area Management Plan, created in 1994 to identify and preserve natural areas and environmental reserves within Calgary. A majority of the regional park is classified as a natural environment park (excluding the extensively landscaped areas including most of River Park and the very top of Britannia Slopes along Britannia Drive SW).

To learn more about the natural areas in the park, various City planning documents and their relationship to the park, please view the [Park Description](#).

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The park is already loved to death, why do you want to improve the park if is already overused?

The City of Calgary's objective with the combined management and design development plan for River Park, Sandy Beach and Britannia Slopes is to ensure the park is healthy, enjoyable and sustainable for current users and future generations.

The proposed plan will likely include park management strategies to address current issues identified by citizens, such as balancing current use, population growth in Calgary and the sustainability of the regional park.

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Why was Phase 1 rejected? Is it still on the table?

In 2009, The City engaged a key stakeholders group (represented by 18 external community, recreation and partner organizations and six internal City of Calgary business units). In addition to two stakeholder workshops, an open house and online survey (completed by 596 citizens) were also used to gather public input.

Before a draft management and design development plan was presented to Council in 2010, The City of Calgary received numerous requests from citizens for more public participation opportunities. As a result, Parks was directed by Council to take a step back and gather additional input from a broader range of the general public. As a result, the draft plan from 2010 no longer exists and an additional public consultation process now underway.

Once The City of Calgary Parks gathers this additional public input, a new draft plan will be created and shared with the public in May 2011. This draft plan will be based on public input from 2011, public and stakeholder input from 2009, existing City planning policies and technical data.

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Is there a current management plan for the park?

There is currently no management plan for this regional park. The park is managed by The City of Calgary based on existing citywide planning and policy documents, including the Open Space Plan, Urban Park Master Plan and Natural Areas Management Plan. To understand how these plans relate to River Park, Sandy Beach and Britannia Slopes, please view this [summary document](#), located on the project's [Background Information](#) web page.

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How do we know our input will be considered in the plan? If the public input is split on an issue, how will a decision be made?

Public input provides The City of Calgary Parks with a firm direction in our planning. However, the reality is not every suggestion or issue proposed by stakeholders or the public will be reflected in the draft plan.

The draft plan that will be shared with the public in May 2011 will represent some choices due to the complexity of some of the issues and the differences of opinion among citizens on various issues. As a result, this public consultation process has been designed to identify key issues in the park as well as identifying middle ground amongst park users.

Parks has also committed to making this a transparent process by reporting back to stakeholders at each stage of this public consultation process. This includes releasing the draft plan for public review in May 2011 before it is presented to Council's community & protective services committee on June 29, 2011.

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Who is responsible for the stewardship of the Elbow River?

Stewardship is a shared responsibility, with several City departments, NGOs, and provincial and federal regulators, as well as communities, businesses and ultimately individual Calgarians involved. The City of Calgary's Water Resources and Water Services roles are to encourage watershed management and river valley stewardship, primarily through:

- Developing and applying stormwater management policy and practice,
- Developing and applying riparian and flood protection offset policy,
- Funding and regulating river bank protection,
- Working with watershed stewardship groups to understand and address issues and implement their recommendations (water licensing, water quality protection, public education etc.)

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