

Principles

The draft plan is based on the following principles. These guiding principles are informed by City policies, and the input of the planning team, stakeholders and general public through both phases of public engagement (2009 and 2011).

Protect and respect the river.

The river valley system in Calgary is treasured for its beauty and environmental value—it protects and transports Calgary’s drinking water from the mountains to the city. The Elbow River is part of this linear connected green space and provides value and function that extends far beyond the limits of the study area. Without a healthy river system, Calgary could not survive. What happens in the park affects this resource, and impacts to this valuable green infrastructure must be acknowledged and minimized.

Keep everyone safe.

Dangerous conditions such as eroding slopes, steep pathways, and user conflicts between speeding cyclists, uncontrolled dogs and fears of remote areas, diminish the visitor experience. Design and management interventions can make the park safer for all visitors, including people and dogs.

Sustain and improve the natural character and minimize built elements.

Users acknowledge that the park’s natural features have declined and are in need of restoration. All users of the park agree that natural character is paramount, and any park improvements should enhance this character.

Strike a balance among diverse uses and users.

Park users have differing views on the amount of land that should be designated for major uses, especially off-leash use. The plan must find the right balance that leaves sufficient land for off-leash use, but reduces conflict within this regional multi-use park.

Repair and restore the park to sustain existing uses.

The park hosts a wide variety of uses, particularly in summer. While more users in other seasons could be accommodated, the addition of new attractions or amenities in this highly used regional park may create additional environmental or community impacts.

Create space for both shared and solitary moments.

Parks provide a setting for socializing as well as reflection. Sometimes visitors view parks as an escape from the hectic pace of urban life - a place to reflect and enjoy nature. Parks are also important places for people to gather and socialize, helping to build strong ties - a sense of place and community.

Inspire visitors to become stewards.

Volunteers already play an important role in the life of the park. Clean-ups and restoration projects give park users a sense of ownership. This hands-on involvement helps to build an informed constituency that has a deeper understanding of the park, both its natural and man-made landscapes.

Be a good neighbour.

Proximity to parks and open space tends to increase property values. However, heavy use of River Park has impacted the quality of life for its closest neighbours. Better design and management can reduce community impacts.

Establish a strong identity - green & sustainable, modern & memorable.

The design and management of the park should build on its strongest and unique attributes. The plan must also reflect the City’s goals and aspirations to be more sustainable. The park does not have a clear identity, and this lack of identity contributes to some user conflicts. A strong cohesive identity for the park will reconfirm that it is a single, multi-use regional park offering a variety of user experiences.

