
CITY OF KELOWNA
MEMORANDUM


Date: November 19, 2008
File No.: 0540-20
To: Council
From: Director of Strategic Initiatives and Intergovernmental Partnerships
Subject: Recreation Parks and Culture Task Force Report

The attached Recreation Parks and Culture Task Force Report contains recommendations for action.

Staff recommend Council consider the following resolution:

THAT the final report of the Recreation Parks and Culture Task Force be received;

AND THAT the report be forwarded to Community Sustainability Department and Citizen Services Department staff for consideration and report back to Council.



David Graham
Director of Strategic Initiatives and Intergovernmental Partnerships
Staff liaison to the Recreation Parks and Culture Task Force

cc: City Manager



RECREATION PARKS AND CULTURE TASK FORCE

INTRODUCTION

The Recreation, Parks, and Culture Task Force was established by Council in February of 2006. The full terms of reference are appended to this report.

The Task Force has met regularly over this period. It also met with staff from several City departments and with the consultants preparing the Parks Recreation and Culture Master Plan. Because of delays in completing the Master Plan, the Task Force asked for an extension of its timeframe. This was granted by Council.

OUR APPROACH

The Task Force has spent considerable time reviewing current City policies and programs within the areas of our mandate. We created several subcommittees to review open space, linear parks, and heritage policies and initiatives elsewhere.

We are grateful for the opportunity to have reviewed the four policy areas in our mandate. We developed an appreciation that these policy areas contribute strongly to civic life and that they are closely linked to many of the City's goals for sustainability and smart growth. They are imbedded in such guiding documents as the Regional Growth Strategy, the Official Community Plan, and the City's Strategic Plan.

We have a vision of a city that has distinct and vibrant urban centres, connected by green corridors to large natural open spaces and a distinct urban edge.

We believe that the proposals in this report will help achieve this vision. They are presented in the four policy area categories within the mandate of the Task Force. Each category may include: findings from Task Force research; policy recommendations; policies for inclusion in the OCP; action items; and budget recommendations.

1. RECREATION PARKS AND CULTURE MASTER PLAN

Task Force Role: "Recommending to Council appropriate public process, including consultation with user groups, for input into the City's current recreation, parks and culture master plan".

The Task Force has met with the project consultants to review the methodology for the Ipsos Reid survey and the process of stakeholder and public consultation. Our role was to comment on the public consultation process, not the recommendations of the consultants. Therefore we conclude that the process appeared fair, accurate and inclusive and forms a solid foundation for developing civic policy.

2. PARKS STANDARDS AND FINANCIAL TOOLS

Task Force Role: "Consideration of revisions to the existing park standards in the OCP for all types of parks and particularly including linear parks, public natural open space, and the relationship to the Regional Park system. In the context of the City's Ten Year Capital Plan, consideration of the establishment of development cost charges and other financial tools to assist in the funding of public natural area parks, linear parks, and park development."

The Task Force reviewed the existing parks standards in the OCP. The standard of 2.2 hectares per additional 1000 population included in the Financial Plan and Development Cost Charge Bylaw does not include an allocation for acquisition or development of natural open space or linear parks. The goal for natural areas is a minimum 5 percent of the city area as publicly owned natural open space. The OCP calls for a program to "increase the funding of the public park acquisition reserve to purchase and develop parks that are not funded through DCC revenues (for example linear parks and natural open spaces) considering overall civic needs. Consideration will be given to funding the reserve with funds collected from tax increases".

We note that a small allocation (\$2.5 million dollars over ten years) is included in the draft Ten Year Capital Plan. This compares to \$74 million for other forms of parks over the same period. DCC funding comprises approximately 90% of the funding for other types of parks' thereby greatly reducing the demand on General Taxation funding.

The Task Force concludes that the current 5 percent goal for publicly owned natural open space is an inadequate measure of the City's needs. We recommend an ecosystem based approach whereby sensitive ecosystems are preserved. The City has recently completed a number of sensitive ecosystem inventories including SHIM mapping and an inventory of wetlands. These should form the basis of a new natural open space policy which aims to protect all sensitive ecosystems and wetlands from alteration. We recommend a guide of 12 percent of the City as publicly owned park and open space. To achieve conservation of these areas we recommend a combination of:

- a new standard of 3 hectares per thousand for inclusion in the DCC bylaw for active parks including neighbourhood, community, recreation, and City-wide
- stating in the OCP an aspiration to achieve public ownership of 12% of the City's land area as park of all classifications
- identifying through natural open space planning major natural area parks in all quadrants of the City, and funding acquisitions accordingly
- considering diverting capital funds from current park development budgets into natural area land acquisitions, in conjunction with adding park development costs to the Park DCC
- a public referendum in 2009 to raise additional funds for the 10 year capital plan (for natural area acquisitions, waterfront park acquisition, acquisition of linear parks, and park development
- conservation zoning
- participation in the Regional Parks Legacy Program (approved by Council in 2008)
- the establishment of a revolving fund to acquire lands with overlapping open space/development potential
- partnerships with national, provincial, and local conservation groups
- lobbying of the Provincial Government to make a significant contribution to parks acquisition in the Central Okanagan as part of its climate change strategy

We note that current policies are not adequately protecting the City's biodiversity or its views from the impacts of human alteration. In particular:

- the RAR (riparian areas regulation) creates a setback of varied widths and development permit area adjacent to streams but creates the potential for alterations within that area; it also misses larger ravine ecosystems where canyon walls rise in a series of benches
- the city lacks a clear policy to identify and protect areas of outstanding natural beauty
- the Hillside Development Guidelines contain references to aesthetics but these are being "cherry picked" by developers who are undertaking extensive land forming, stripping vegetation and topsoil from sloped areas, and building on visible ridgelines
- extensive aggregate extraction is threatening habitats and creating visual scars
- human impacts are damaging habitats through:
 - erosion
 - spread of noxious weeds
 - disturbance of nesting and breeding sites
 - damage to vegetation
 - soil compaction
 - disturbance of winter habitats
- 85-95% of wetlands have been lost in Kelowna
- pine beetle infestations are leading to significant habitat alteration and fire hazards
- the OCP designates most undeveloped land as "urban reserve", creating expectations of developability; the lack of an urban containment boundary exacerbates this problem
- natural areas in the ALR are at risk through drainage, filling, contamination of water bodies from pesticides and nutrients
- most lands perceived as "open space" by the public are privately owned
- small scale conservation areas within development areas can play a positive role in protecting natural areas on a micro scale; however isolated areas are too small to protect some ecological values, and in particular, threaten biodiversity
- small natural areas are also difficult to manage and are more subject to degradation through human impacts
- Crown land has historically been viewed as accessible open space; however, current Provincial policies permit the sale of Crown land and require local governments to acquire such lands at market value, even if they are to be used for conservation purposes
- climate change is creating new hazards which will impact natural areas

- these hazards will create greater negative impacts on persons and property through fire, land slips, flooding, and erosion
- the Okanagan lake foreshore has been significantly altered, leaving very little natural vegetation at the water's edge

We recommend a number of policies to deal with these issues. These should be reviewed by staff for potential inclusion in the OCP, in departmental work programs, and in future budgets.

As part of our work we reviewed civic properties for potential additions to the open space inventory. The best candidate is the city lands located in the south Glenmore Highlands which were originally purchased as a future landfill site. The consultants that prepared the Glenmore Highlands sector plan and this Task Force recommended this property be retained as park, subject to any commitments made to meet road requirements related to adjacent development.

The Task Force also reviewed the Regional Parks Legacy Program. We note there is agreement between CORD and the City about priorities for this Program within and adjacent to City boundaries. We recommend using civic funds to enhance these acquisitions, especially in the Black Mountain area, for completion of the Mission Creek Corridor, for additions to regional parks in the City, and for a staging area in the Bellevue Creek Corridor.

The Task Force has reviewed the recently released "Green Bylaws Toolkit". This document reviews municipal policies to maintain green infrastructure(ecological components, both natural and engineered, that serve and protect ecosystems) in British Columbia. Our observations are appended to this report. We recommend that staff continue to use this document and to identify policies that could be adopted in Kelowna. In particular, we recommend consideration of conservation zoning for sensitive ecosystems and a more vigorous public monitoring and enforcement process for development permits on natural areas.

With respect to linear parks we recommend that the City persevere with its plans to develop urban and rural linear parks. The standard has been set by the Mission Creek corridor. Excellent results have been achieved in the Mill Creek, Brants Creek, and Gopher Creek corridors, despite these corridors not being completed to date. The City should consider with its policies of buying, severing and selling properties to achieve corridors in urbanized areas. The Task Force recognizes that local opposition may occur, but the City should not lose its long term goals(for example on the Rutland Bluffs Trail)but instead should work with individual property owners and neighbourhood groups to mitigate impacts.

The linear park network is an important part of the City's commitment to smart growth principles as it provides alternative means of transportation to the automobile and connects dense urban areas to the natural areas which are the "green lungs" of the City.

PUBLIC NATURAL OPEN SPACE AND LINEAR PARKS POLICIES FOR INCLUSION IN THE OCP

- a. Together with the Regional Parks system, the City will protect a network of open space systems within its boundaries. These will include:
 - representative ecosystems

- sensitive ecosystems (containing red and blue listed species)
 - areas of outstanding natural beauty (including areas with high visual sensitivity and high visual vulnerability, such as rocky outcrops, ridge lines, hilltops, silt slopes, canyons, and water edges)
 - large (approximately 40 ha or greater) natural areas within each sector of the City
 - conservation areas
- b. In addition to the above the City will establish as a guide, achieving a minimum of twelve percent of the City's land base as publicly owned park(excluding water bodies and ALR lands)
- c. The City will manage public access in natural areas through:
- defining and developing trails which maximize public safety while minimizing human impact on the most sensitive and vulnerable areas
 - reducing the impact of trails (eg: by reducing width, modifying surfaces, and developing boardwalks)
- d. The City will seek to protect remaining wetlands by:
- confirming a no net loss of wetland habitat policy
 - avoiding loss of wetlands through transportation and utility corridors where possible(the City or other agencies must complete an evaluation to prove other options have been considered and outline the feasibility and cost of those options)
 - conducting site specific assessments and requiring mitigation of impacts
 - where fish-bearing wetlands are lost, the City will ensure they are reconstructed to a 3 to 1 ratio, taking into consideration both area and productivity
 - the City will identify threats to the most significant wetlands, including City policies and plans
- e. The City will develop new tools for managing human impacts on natural areas, including:
- consider natural area zoning to clarify the long term intent to preserve natural areas in private developments and on public property, (subject to legal review)
- f. The City will support the acquisition of regionally significant natural areas under the Regional Parks Legacy Program
- g. The City will encourage the Province to set aside crown lands identified in the Regional Parks Master Plan either through land sale at nominal rates or through nominal long term lease
- h. The City will consider reducing the assist factor to 1% and adding park development to the development cost charge bylaw and diverting the resulting general taxation savings to open space acquisition . These measures will be determined through the next OCP update and subsequent revisions to the development cost charge bylaw
- i. The City will require developers to develop neighbourhood parks in newly created neighbourhoods, where appropriate

- j. The City will support Valley-wide initiatives to protect a network of linked open spaces which provide recreation values, protect sensitive habitats, and ensure connectivity for all species including endangered species. (The City endorsed the vision, goals and principles of the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program in 2007)
- k. The City will evaluate open space preservation as part of its commitment to making the city carbon neutral
- l. The City will evaluate natural area preservation as a tool for mitigating hazards from climate change (eg: greater setbacks from ravines and watercourses to mitigate flood and landslip hazards, use of wetlands to filter urban runoff, etc.)
- m. The City will establish a funding strategy for implementing tree cover objectives for the City and will develop short, medium and long term targets for planting trees. (The City directed staff to formulate tree canopy goals for the City in February, 2008)
- n. *The City will consider establishing a revolving fund to acquire properties from which natural areas may be severed and which can subsequently be resold*
- o. The City will consider establishing a Peace Park within its park system; the Rutland Urban Park system would be a good location for such a concept; over 400 Cities in Canada have planted groves of 12 trees as Peace Parks
- p. The City will consider establishing an urban greenbelt within the next OCP, comprising farmland and environmentally sensitive areas which are off-limits to development (based on the Ontario model).
- q. The City will support the protection of watersheds for Kelowna watercourses which are drinking water sources.
- r. The City will use visual quality analysis to identify areas of outstanding natural beauty and will take steps to preserve these areas from visual alteration.

LINEAR PARKS

The City will commit to establishing a network of integrated urban and rural linear parks. These will interconnect neighbourhoods to urban centres, parks, crown land, creek corridors, and Okanagan Lake. Where critical links are missing, there will be a reliance on public infrastructure, such as road rights of way and sidewalks.

- a. The linear parks network based will be included the in the next OCP
- b. The City will seek Provincial funding to establish a network of safe, marked urban trails within each urban centre; these would include distance markers to encourage urban walking; the goal of this system will be to encourage healthy physical activity, alternatives to the automobile, and connectiveness between neighbourhoods, work, and shopping
- c. The City will commit to neighbourhood consultation and mitigation of impacts when planning linear parks through established areas; mitigation may include modification of trail standards, screening, or temporary detours

- d. The City will follow a similar strategy as for natural open space to enable capital funds to be re-directed to the acquisition of linear parks (adjustments to the Park DCC)
- e. In large scale developments, the City will require developers to build linear parks at the time of subdivision
- f. The City will work with CORD and adjoining local governments and the Province to ensure continuity of linear parks. The City will work with CORD and other local governments to establish an off-road bicycle network throughout the Okanagan
- g. The City will encourage the Province to recognize trails on Crown land
- h. The City will establish an ongoing Park Advisory Committee.(Good models can be found in Vernon, Whistler, and Edmonton)
- i. The City will establish parks for mountain biking in each sector of the City, subject to the availability of land and funding to establish them
- j. The City will affirm its objective of obtaining public access along creek corridors, while recognizing that trail standards may have to be varied to meet environmental constraints
- k. The City will work with irrigation districts and other utilities to establish public rights of way along historic corridors
- l. The City will strive to become the most bicycle friendly city in Canada by developing a network of safe bicycle routes connecting all sectors of the city and promoting a cycling "ethos" amongst its citizens

3. CITY-OWNED HERITAGE RESOURCES

Task Force Role: "Development of policies and plans for the management of the City-owned heritage resources".

The City of Kelowna has completed a Heritage Strategy. The Strategy calls on the City to accept its responsibility as steward of a number of heritage buildings, two of which have been designated as heritage sites by bylaw.

- the city owns over 20 heritage buildings
- there is limited expertise within Civic Properties to manage the heritage aspects of these buildings
- there is no coordinated civic approach to the restoration, maintenance, use, or interpretation of these buildings
- no special reserves are being set aside to manage civic heritage sites
- decisions about the future of civic heritage buildings(and other civic heritage resources)are spread amongst several departments, none of which has a specific mandate or budget to manage them

- the COHS has done good work in restoring Guisachan and the Benvoulin Church but lacks the resources to take on the implementation of another major project like Brents Mill; their role appears to be evolving into one of advising and fundraising(as in the revised Guisachan agreement) and managing the work of the Heritage Foundation

We recommend:

- a. that heritage be given more focus in the City structure, perhaps through a unit that can call on the resources of planning, civic properties, parks, engineering, advisory boards, and consultants as required and that this unit be charged with the management of the city's heritage resources, including maintenance and development, and budgeting for projects
- b. that for each civic heritage building the City:
 - review for inclusion in the Heritage Register and heritage designation
 - establish priorities for assessment and budgeting including: structural integrity/safety/building code needs; scheduled maintenance program; documentation; publicity and schedules for public use
- c. that the Kelowna Museum or other agencies be asked to develop a proposal for interpreting and marketing City owned heritage resources, and that there be consultation with the Central Okanagan Heritage Society and the Okanagan Historical Society about the Museums extending this role to include Brents Mill and the Benvoulin Church
- d. that the City initiate discussion with the CORD Parks Department, the Catholic Church, and the Okanagan Historical Society on the future of the Pandosy Mission heritage site with a view to improving site management, services, and interpretation as a regional heritage asset
- e. That funding be allocated to allow the City to achieve its objectives in the heritage area

4. CULTURAL POLICIES

Task Force Role: "Updating of the City's cultural policy and strategic plans for cultural development".

The City has recently undertaken a public consultation process on culture("Culture Matters")and developed a Cultural Strategic Plan. The Task Force reviewed this process and its results and members attended some of the stakeholder meetings.

The Task Force notes that the consultation revealed a lively public interest in the concept of heritage as an expression of a sense of place in the City. This can be used to nurture the creation of neighbourhood pride and a focus on urban town centres. Streetscape improvements, public art, and gateway features can add to this definition and enrich civic life.

The Task Force is concerned that cultural policy retains a strong identity in the new City organization plan and recommend that it do so. The City has made a significant investment in the cultural district and has developed policies to enhance that area(including the holding of an important Charette on the area)and these policies should not be lost.

During our work it has come to our attention that several community halls are in need of upgrading and enhanced management. These include the East Kelowna Hall and Rutland Centennial Hall. These facilities are important cultural assets to their areas. We recommend that the City work with the community to find a means of preserving and improving the physical condition and management of these assets. The City has done this in the past with assistance to the Okanagan Mission Hall and Reid Hall at Benvoulin Heritage Church. We recommend that funds be allocated to provide some assistance in these areas.