



City of Prince Albert

RPT 2025-13

TITLE: Little Red River Park Development Update

DATE: November 25, 2024

TO: Budget Committee

PUBLIC: X

INCAMERA:

RECOMMENDATION:

That the 2025 Little Red River Park Development, as outlined in RPT 2025-13, be approved as part of the 2025 Budget.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

There continues to be considerable headway made on work to bring improvements to Little Red River Park which started with the development and adoption of the Little Red River Park Masterplan in 2019 which serves as a living document that is reviewed and consulted each year.

In the spring of 2019, the City of Prince Albert engaged HTFC and Oxbow Architect to create a Comprehensive Plan for Little Red River Park with a goal to address programming and infrastructure needs within the park.

Since the adoption of the Masterplan, the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department continues to revisit the document each operating year to ensure that goals for park improvements and programming align with the plan as well as the Community Services Masterplan. This in turn allows the department to review this information, identify priorities and consult on what those future costs may be to make the necessary improvements and bring that information in report form for further consideration.

This report provides insight into accomplishments, along with updates on partnerships, development opportunities and operational improvements related to the priorities outlined in the Little Red River Park Master Plan.

BACKGROUND:

Little Red River Park is a natural urban park covering approximately 1,200 acres within the city limits of the City of Prince Albert. It is situated immediately North of the North Saskatchewan River. Prince Albert is fortunate to have such a large park near its urban core. A place of great

natural beauty, Little Red River Park is of comparable size to Winnipeg's Assiniboine Park (1,100 acres) and Vancouver's Stanley Park (1,000 acres). At the confluence of the Spruce (Little Red) and North Saskatchewan Rivers, the park is ecologically contiguous to the Nisbet Provincial Forest. It is one of the series of parks along the North Saskatchewan River known collectively as the Pêhonân Parkway.

Although Little Red River Park does not serve as large an urban population as Winnipeg or Vancouver, Saskatchewan's park tourism has traditionally drawn visitors from the whole province, and not just the nearest urban centres. Because of its generous size and natural setting, Little Red River Park can serve as an urban park while functioning similarly to a municipal or regional park, offering a broad range of potential visitor experiences. The site has offered appeal to people from across the province of Saskatchewan and Canada through the years, for a variety of activities.

In 2019, HTFC Planning, Design, and Oxbow Architecture undertook the tasks of collecting data, engaging the local community, and analyzing findings on the park to offer recommendations for moving forward through a 10-year Master Plan. The city is now entering year 5 of the Masterplan implementation. The purpose of the Master Plan is to guide future operations, development, partnerships, governance, and funding of the park to ensure that it remains a valued place in the Prince Albert region.

Through this report, Department will identify the successes to date and will provide a summary of identified priority work for 2025 for consideration based on recommendations identified in the 'Stages of Development' report provided to Council in June of 2021 and Capital investment required under each stage to help accomplish these priorities.

PROPOSED APPROACH AND RATIONALE:

2020 – 2024 priorities and improvements achieved:

1. Contractor in place to supply services to the Cosmo Lodge (Knotty Pine Bistro)
2. The Parks Department has taken responsibility for the day-to-day maintenance within the park, including not limited to: Mowing, string trimming, garbage, pruning, daily checks throughout the park, snow removal, etc.
3. Improvements to the trail systems and ski hill, working in partnership with both the Prince Albert Nordic Ski Club and the Kinsmen Ski and Snowboard Centre Operator. Additionally, there has been the development of a Bike Skills Park within Little Red River Park in partnership with the Rock 'N' Road Cycling Club.
4. Improvements to the signing of trails.
5. In House GIS support and partnership with Saskatchewan Polytechnic on development of an interactive trail map that is available on the City's website.
6. Marketing initiatives to bring more awareness to the park through the New City Website and social media sites in partnership with our Communications Team.
7. Renewal of the Kinsmen Ski and Snowboard Center Operator Agreement

8. Development of a formal Agreement with the Prince Albert Nordic Ski Club for the network of trails and equipment.
9. Development of a formal Agreement with the Rotary Club for the Rotary Adventure Park.
10. Construction and installation of three new pedestrian bridges within the park.
11. Fire Smart Management/Fuel Mitigation with the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency through a federal government cost share consisting of a 60% City share and a Federal Government share of 40%. We are currently in year four of a five-year agreement.
12. High speed Internet connection brought to the Ski Hill and Cosmo Lodge through the Star-link satellite platform.
13. Fire hydrant connection near the bottom of the East toboggan hill completed with plans of providing our own snow making services for the toboggan hill within 2-years (2025 or 2026 tentative date).
14. Construction and completion of the Rotary Adventure Park and Zip Lines.
15. Paved accessible pathway from the Cosmo Lodge down to the Rotary Adventure Park and Zip Lines.
16. Completion of parking and roadway improvements with a total of **151** designated parking stalls through out the center core of the park.
17. Construction and completion of three new 16 X 24 Warm-up Shelters, one located near the Cosmo Lodge, one at the playground and one at the toboggan hill.
18. Improvements and addition to the covered picnic shelter near the Rotary Adventure Park.
19. Improved connection to the park through Transit services.
20. Construction and installation of year-round washrooms delivered and installed by the end of November 2024 near the toboggan hill. Due to the delay in construction, we will not be making the washrooms available to the public until May/June of 2025.
21. Installation of a Land Acknowledgement sign and interpretive signage near the Cosmo Lodge.

The Little Red River Park has benefited from total investments of **\$3,187,530.00** between 2020 – 2024.

The accomplishments are a direct result of the generous support and partnership with:

- The Rotary Club of Prince Albert, Malcolm Jenkins Family Foundation, Provincial and Federal Grants, Support of Mayor and Council and In-Kind Donations from Community and Local Business.

Truth and Reconciliation Initiatives 2024

- The installation of the Land Acknowledgement signage near the Cosmo Lodge.
- The installation of Interpretative Signage near the Cosmo Lodge.
- Support for use of the Upper East Plains for Ceremonial Cultural Ground purposes.

2025 - 2026 Priorities:

1. A new Ski Lift for the Kinsmen Ski and Snowboard Center.

The current lifts are nearing the end of their useable life. We have been working with the Technical Safety Authority of Saskatchewan, the agency of the Government of Saskatchewan responsible for the inspection of safety monitoring of elevating devices such as ski lifts. We continue to repair and maintain the equipment and are nearing the end of the expectant life of the homemade lift system estimated to be forty plus years old.

The department is working in consultation with the Ski Hill Operator and a Company out of New Hampshire, New England, TowPro Lifts who specialize in Portable Rope Tow Systems that we believe would suit the needs of both hills. Estimated costs of this system are \$60,390 US Dollars per lift. The new lift system would require minimal installation and maintenance and would allow for removal of the new lift system at the end of each season and to put in storage during the off season.

The Department has successfully secured \$150,000 in principle towards this project in 2025 – 2026, contingent on securing additional funds through sponsorship/donations in partnership with local service clubs, community support, and/or City funds. Currently the focus within the department is on the partnerships that combine the strengths, resources, and expertise of different organizations, businesses, and individuals to tackle the community project.

Total investment of \$300,000 towards a basic investment or \$500,000 towards what would become a deluxe investment.

Basic – Replacement of lifts and lighting improvements

Deluxe – Replacement of lifts, lighting improvements, improvements to the upper control building and options to replacing the Snow Cat which is quickly aging.

2. Toboggan Hill Project

There is significant interest in pushing ahead with improvements to the toboggan hill near the front entrance to Little Red off highway 55. The proposed project would see the following work completed:

- Reshape and working of the toboggan hill removing significant bumps and wash boarding from the hill.
- Purchase and installation of a Super Polecat with Booster Pump for snow making purposes.

- Lighting Upgrades
- Power brought to site.
- Fire pit, picnic table and garbage bin installation.
- Signage for the hill

Total estimated investment for the toboggan hill project expected to be between \$225 - \$250,000.

The Department has successfully secured \$100,000 in principle towards this project in 2025 - 2026, contingent on securing additional funds through sponsorship/donations in partnership with local service clubs, community support, and/or City funds.

Total Capital Improvements for consideration in relation to both projects - **\$525,000 – \$750,000.**

The success of both projects in 2025 and/or 2026 will be determined on securing the required funds in relation to both projects. An update to Council on both potential projects is to be shared at an future Executive Council meeting in 2025 for consideration once information is made available.

Additional focuses within 2025

1. Continue work with Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency and Prince Albert Fire Department to continue work on a wildfire management plan for Little Red River Park. The city is in the fourth year of five-year agreement with SPSA for Fire Smart Management/Fuel Mitigation Planning at a cost of \$30,870 per year.

2025– Sixty percent City funding \$30,780

40% Federal \$20,250

2. Work to review operational requirements to help assist in delivery of services within the park. Parks, Recreation and Culture recognizes that as we continue work to build out the core essentials of the park there will be a need for additional staffing support as the park sees a healthy increase in visitors each year. Over the past 3-years City Park space, specifically Little Red River Park continue to see large increases in usage. The increase is partial due to ongoing capital improvements and the connection for people to improve upon their mental health and quality of life. We are as well seeing a substantial increase in land-based learning opportunities by the Public and Separate School systems bringing educational learning opportunities into the park. As a result, this continues to highlight the importance of maintaining those spaces to ensure that we meet standards of service delivery levels.
3. Securing a new contract for the operation of the Cosmo Lodge noting that the current contract expires end of April 2025.
4. Continue work in consultation with the Public Works team in bringing improved water service through the park connecting strategic points to a closed water system that will eventually make its way out to the Airport. This closed water system will allow for potable water in the central core of the park and provide additional snow making opportunities.

5. Develop a Resource Management and Emergency Preparedness Plan that encompasses the entire park, Kinsmen Ski Hill, Cosmo Lodge, user groups operating within the park during the four operating seasons. Consultation to take place with emergency services and user groups.
6. Develop a plan and costs involved for improving road access to the upper east plains. This would also include improvements to security gates, parking, lighting, and emergency services access.
7. In the spirit of inclusivity and Reconciliation, there is opportunity to continue collaboration with Wahpeton and other local First Nations and Metis communities to support the gathering space (upper east plain) for cultural events that bring together youth and Elders from Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

2026 projecting forward:

- Stump Post replacement through the center core of the Little Red River Park, posts are rotting, falling over, or missing – we will be gathering pricing and a replacement strategy to bring to the 2025 Budget Committee for consideration.
- Security of Park through fencing initiatives, gates deterring vehicular entry – Security of the park has long been a concern with unwanted vehicular traffic and the challenges that come with securing a 1200+ Acre Park. The department will continue to investigate options available to continue to build upon the security through out the park.

CONSULTATIONS:

There was extensive consultation in the establishment of the development of the Little Red River Park Master Plan.

Efforts to continue a consultative approach with park visitors, user groups, other key organizations as outlined in the Little Red River Park will be key to ensuring continued success moving forward.

COMMUNICATION AND/OR ANNOUNCEMENT PLAN:

Administration continues to communicate internally with departments involved in development or providing services and the communications department to ensure timely updates are provided to the public, user groups, and Mayor and Council when required.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Department continues to engage and work towards sponsorship in partnership with local service clubs, community, grant programs and/city funds which currently are not being requested. The focus within the department is to focus on these partnerships that combine the strengths, resources, and expertise of different organizations, businesses, and individuals to tackle the projects highlighted in this report for 2025. Any requirement for financial support from the City in relation to any of these projects would come in the form of a report to Executive to further discuss any needs over and above funds acquired.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS:

There are no policy, financial, privacy implications or other considerations.

OPTIONS TO RECOMMENDATION:

There are no options to the Recommendation.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

The proposed project(s) align with the Strategic Goal(s) within the City's 2023-2025 Strategic Plan as follows:

Investing in Infrastructure through 'Nature Area Planning' with continued prioritization and support of recommendations identified through the annual reporting of the State of the Parks & Playgrounds Improvement Plan, Little Red River Park Master Plan, and the Urban Forestry Management Plan.

And,

Delivery Professional Governance through 'Engaged Government' by 'Identifying' sensitive issues in advance and implement thorough quality communication as well as 'Strengthen' relationships with external organizations to share information and collaborate on project and services.

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN:

This report supports the Community Services Master Plan initiatives and addresses the goal of contributing to infrastructure and sustainability efforts through proper planning which can help preserve and maintain natural and built environments. Our connection to the natural world is important and must be considered in the delivery of community services.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Public Notice pursuant to the Public Notice Bylaw No. 24 of 2015 is not required.

ATTACHMENTS:

Due to the size of the document, we would refer members of Council to the Little Red River Masterplan located on the City Website for reference.

<https://www.citypa.ca/en/city-hall/reports-and-plans.aspx#Little-Red-River-Park-Master-Plan>

Written by: Timothy Yeaman, Parks, and Open Spaces Manager

Approved by: Director of Parks, Recreation & Culture and City Manager