

Recreation for Life

# Municipal Green Space Allocation

Practice and Protocol in Alberta Communities



ARPA is a provincial charitable not-for profit organization with a voluntary board of directors dedicated to the promotion of recreation and parks and their benefits to the quality of life of all Albertans.

Our Vision...

"A province, and communities within, that embrace and proactively use recreation and parks as essential means for enhancing individual well-being and community vitality, economic sustainability and natural resource protection and conservation."

Our mission...

ARPA strives to build healthy citizens, their communities and their environments throughout Alberta.

For more information on ARPA, our programs or services or the benefits of recreation and parks please visit our website at <http://www.arpaonline.ca>.

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### Introduction

The Alberta Recreation & Parks Association (ARPA) is dedicated to promoting individual well being, community vitality, economic sustainability and natural resource protection through parks and recreation activity. As such, the Association and all of its members have a responsibility to promote and work with all levels of government to ensure that a sufficient supply of quality parks and open space resources exist within Alberta communities.

Over the past four years the Association, while recognizing the important investment that our government and all Albertans have made to build a strong municipal recreation infrastructure, has come to the realization that new societal forces will have a great impact upon future municipal recreation infrastructure, how it is valued and how it will be used by future generations.

ARPA has already invested, and continues to invest, considerable resources into assessing and seeking solutions for meeting future indoor recreation infrastructure demands, the challenge of meeting future demands for outdoor parks and open space is now at the forefront.

In the fall of 2004, the Parks and Open Space Committee of ARPA launched a baseline survey to investigate the degree to which both provincial and local legislation and practice regarding municipal open space allocation is in keeping with recreation trends, healthy lifestyles, environmental protection and economic sustainability in Alberta communities. In addition, the Committee undertook a review of literature pertaining to the relationship between developing communities and open space and followed up with a look at outdoor recreation and societal trends.

The survey was sent to forty-six Alberta municipalities including all seventeen cities, sixteen towns and twelve MDs / Counties. The overall rate of return was 61% including fourteen Cities, eight Towns (5,000 + population) and seven Rural Municipalities.

In all cases, initial contacts were made with senior administrators or chief administrative officers with directions to involve respective parks & recreation professionals and/or municipal planning staff. Care was taken to insure that prevalent issues were covered in the survey questions and this was done through various reviews and meetings with the Parks and Open Space Committee of ARPA.

The municipalities represented in the survey analysis represent close to 2.3 million Albertans or over 70% of the Province. The results have been separated by the respondent categories of cities, towns of over 5,000 and rural jurisdictions (MDs / Counties).

From a development perspective, the survey represents growth over the three year period between 2001 and 2003 of approximately 145,000 new residents and, on average, approximately 96.6 quarter sections of new residential development (taken at 1,500 residents per quarter section).

### Growth Rates of the Municipalities Surveyed

Assumptions were made that there was a correlation between municipalities with the highest growth rates recorded over the past three years and the volume of open space planning issues that they experienced.

The following table outlines the recorded growth rates of the municipalities surveyed.

Municipality <small>*Denotes special municipality</small>	2001 rate of growth	2002 rate of growth	2003 rate of growth	Average
<b>Cities</b>				
◆ Calgary	2.3%	2.3%	2.6%	2.4%
◆ Edmonton	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
◆ Red Deer	3.97%	3.35%	2.97%	3.43%
◆ Strathcona County*	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%
◆ Lethbridge	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%

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## Section I: Introduction

Municipality <small>*Denotes special municipality</small>	2001 rate of growth	2002 rate of growth	2003 rate of growth	Average
◆ St. Albert	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%
◆ Wood Buffalo *	13%	10%	9%	10.66%
◆ Grande Prairie	2.8%	~5%	8.76%	5.52%
◆ Lloydminster	3%	3%	3%	3%
◆ Ft. Saskatchewan	-1.7%	1.8%	1.8%	.63%
◆ Spruce Grove	3%	4%	4%	3.66%
◆ Leduc	1%	2%	2%	1.66%
◆ Cold Lake	.53%	.65%	0%	.39%
◆ Wetaskiwin	1%	1%	1%	1%
Average	2.7%	3.0%	3.14%	2.94%
Alberta Average	1.72%	1.95%	1.36%	1.67%
<b>Towns</b>				
◆ Brooks	3%	3%	3%	3%
◆ Canmore	3.1%	4%	5.7%	4.3%
◆ Stony Plain	5%	5%	5%	5%
◆ Chestermere	10%	25%	25%	20%
◆ High River	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%
◆ Morinville	-	-	-	-
◆ Bonnyville	-	-	-	-
Average (Excluding Chestermere)	3.65%	3.9%	4.3%	3.95%
<b>Rural Jurisdictions</b>	Six rural jurisdictions were included in the survey, but no growth rates were recorded by respondents. It is expected that there is little, if any, growth in those rural areas located away from metro areas (e.g. Camrose, which records reduced population)			

Cities collectively recorded an average growth rate of 2.94% (1.27% higher than the Alberta Average) over the three-year period 2001 to 2003.

The Towns also recorded a higher average growth with the highest being those situated near major urban areas.

The impacts of growth on Parks & Open Space land allocation have likely peaked over the last three-year period in most municipalities. Continued growth at the levels experienced over the last three to five years is less likely and, as reported by Alberta Treasury will likely subside from the average annual Provincial growth of 2.94% in the 1998 – 99 period down to 1% annual rates by 2010. Still, Alberta municipalities are faced with the pent up demands caused by recent growth of new subdivisions, from parks and open spaces demands that have undergone change, have increased and have become more complex.

### Parks & Open Space Planning Protocol and Practice

The process of building communities in Alberta involves a combination of planners, developers, public and approving authorities which, in most municipalities, involves elected officials or subdivision authorities approved through by-law. When it comes to the municipal allocation of parks & sports fields, preservation of natural areas, designation of Environmental Reserve and placement of schools, the ultimate approval of a community wide plan or neighborhood area structure plans rests with the municipality for the most part through its Council and/or development authority. The Alberta Municipal Government Act (MGA) which provides a legislated policy framework that limits the area of land that can be taken for Municipal Reserve to a maximum of 10% of the titled area less environmental reserve.

Municipalities that have populations beyond 3,500 are required to have Municipal Development Plans in place. These plans provide a declaration as to how much municipal reserve must be provided in statutory development plans. In this way, developers can plan new growth areas based upon local community planning policies and guidelines. They can also plan to adhere to minimum standards of design and development for parks & open space where such policies or procedures exist.

It is widely accepted by all "community builders" that "smart growth" involves development that is environmentally sensitive, economically viable, community oriented and sustainable. However, the tools that we create to insure smart growth and the processes that we follow as municipalities often lie undeveloped, are not always followed and are often disregarded in times of rapid growth.

In order to measure the state of parks & open space planning protocol and practice in Alberta municipalities, a series of related questions were asked of municipalities. The questions and responses are presented as follows:

#### Parks and Open Space Master Plans

Question:	Does your municipality have / maintain a Parks & Open Space Master Plan or Strategic Plan (other than that which is contained within your Municipal Development Plan, related documents and guidelines?)
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#### Responses:

Cities: Three of thirteen Cities, responding to this question do not have a Parks & Open Space Master Plan in place. All three were planning on preparing plans in 2005.

Towns: Four out of seven Towns responding did not have such a plan in place and only one of these four were planning to put one in place.

Rural Municipalities: Four out of six rural municipalities who responded did not have a Parks & Open Space Master Plan in place and only one of the four was planning to develop one in 2005.

#### Observation:

Larger urban centers are more apt to maintain comprehensive parks and open space master plans than are towns or rural municipalities.

Note: Of interest is that the towns who recorded the highest growth rates are the towns that do not have a current Parks Open Space Master Plan in place.

#### Classification of Parklands

Question:	Does your municipality employ a system of classifying parklands when it comes to the future of Municipal Reserve?
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#### Responses:

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## Section II: Parks & Open Space Planning Protocol and Practice

Cities: Three out of thirteen cities in the survey do not maintain a parks classification system. These communities were the same ones that did not have Parks & Open Space Master Plans in place.

Towns: Only one out of seven surveyed maintained a parks classification system. Four did not and two were not sure.

Rural Municipalities: One rural municipality did classify parklands while four did not. Again, one was not sure, but did indicate that they identify environmental reserve and municipal resolve.

Note: In all but one case, those municipalities who have adopted a system of classification have done so through Council adoptions or resolutions.

### Observations:

Cities have adopted methods of classifying parklands for planning purposes while smaller communities in general have not.

### Adopted Guidelines and Standards

Question:	Does your municipality maintain development guidelines, standards and/or policies that can be followed internally, or by developers, in planning / developing parks & open space?
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### Responses:

Cities: All but one City, which is currently developing guidelines, have standard policies and guidelines in place.

Towns: Only four of seven towns responding have standard guidelines in place. One Town reported that guidelines are developed on an ad hoc basis and all of the Towns who maintain guidelines suggest that they need to be updated soon.

Rural Municipalities: Only two of six reported having guidelines and the rest relied upon informal project by project approvals and what direction might be contained within MDPs..

### Observations:

Not all municipalities are equipped to direct the development industry about community open space needs and/or specific standards of design for parks & open space development.

Where development guidelines exist for municipalities, some are outdated.

### Area Structure Plan Review Process

Question:	Municipalities were asked to outline whether or not they had a set protocol (beyond provincially legislated requirements) for reviewing and making recommendations about sub-division / area structure plan proposals and; who in the municipality was involved in this process (Question 4 and 4a in Appendix).
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### Responses:

Twelve of the fourteen responding Cities; five of the seven Towns and four of the six Rural Municipalities have protocol in place.

Table #2 outlines the breakdown of responses related to who is involved in the review process.

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## Section II: Parks & Open Space Planning Protocol and Practice

	Planning Authority	Council	Planning Dept	Recreation / Leisure / Community Devt Dept	Public Works / Engineering	Finance	Emergency Services	Public	Extended Consultants
City 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
City 2		✓	✓		✓		✓		
City 3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City 4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City 5									
City 6		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
City 7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
City 8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
City 9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City 10		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City 11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
City 12		✓	✓		✓				
City 13		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
City 14	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			
Town 1		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Town 2		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Town 3		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Town 4		✓	✓		✓			✓	
Town 5		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Town 6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Town 7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Rural Muni 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Rural Muni 2	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
Rural Muni 3		✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Rural Muni 4	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Rural Muni 5		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rural Muni 6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

### Observations:

While all municipalities surveyed may not have similar internal administrative structures, most have established a review process and protocol for plan proposals with the approving authorities and Councils; planning departments, public works/ engineering departments and the public most involved.

Not all jurisdictions include recreation or leisure services personnel in the review and only half involve their finance departments.

### Authority to Make Area Structure Plan Recommendations

Question:	Who, in your Administration, ultimately “makes the final call” on parks & open space allocation / dedication prior to forwarding recommendations to the Approving Authority?
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### **Responses:**

Prior to Council or Development Authority approvals, it is apparent that the “final call” or recommendations for approval is made at the senior manager level and most often through Planning / Development Departments.

In cities, it would appear that there is greater collaboration and consensus developed amongst senior managers before recommendations are made and in four of the cities surveyed, the recommendation of the manager in charge of Leisure Parks and/or Community Services takes precedent in deciding over matters of parks & open space allocation.

### **Observations:**

Planning/public works department managers most often become the recommending authority or the “last call” prior to formal council/approvals on parks & open space lands & allocation recommendations.

Such recommendations are not always followed at the Council or approving authority level.

# Municipal Green Space Allocation

## Section III: Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities

### Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities

The members of the ARPA Parks & Open Space Committee had roundtable talks about specific parks & open space planning issues that they faced within their municipalities. The common issues were recorded and served as the basis of inquiry for the municipal survey. The questions / issues and the overall responses are presented as follows:

#### Ten Percent Dedication to Municipal Reserve (MR)

Question: The Municipal Government Act allows municipalities to take up to 10% of subdivided lands for school / municipal reserve. Is 10% enough land dedication to meet the needs of today's society?

#### Responses:

City 1	Enough to meet conventional recreation & educational needs if well planned. Parks believes 10% MR is not enough to meet contemporary objective of conserving most natural areas because there is seldom reserve available after conventional recreation needs are met
City 2	May be enough to meet needs of today if dedication is developed efficiently by municipality. Developers may want to be encouraged to provide some open space above and beyond 10%. Important to ensure 10% includes provision for ER and Natural links. May be enough but planning & development is ineffective in using this dedication to fullest extent. Might want to encourage 15-20%. Developers would be upset but extra dedication would add value
City 3	10% of gross developable area + density provisions should be taken as land as well as access to other forms of public open space (storm water, boulevards, etc) Those non municipal reserve sources should be designed to accommodate recreational function as well as primary. Need for additional lands to be balanced with competing needs, priorities of community and maintenance costs if more land is acquired
City 4	Yes, particularly as school have fewer resources to build new schools
City 5	Depends on size of subdivision. Important for long range planning for open space and school sites. Often 10% if not enough for school sites plus neighborhood parks because developers are more interested in marketing issues
City 6	Does not meet our recreational goals at present
City 7	10% has been challenged as society is more recreation / leisure services minded. Incorporation of berm in MR equation causes decrease in usable areas for rec / leisure. If municipality and school have good working relationship, strategic planning can occur to allow for dual use of areas
City 8	No. Does not allow enough space to accommodate demands.
City 9	Yes provided they are planned / located in relation to other ER areas. Increasing (business / demo changes) schools require less land

## Municipal Green Space Allocation

### *Section III: Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities*

City 10	Maybe appropriate if configured to make use of land. Dedicating MR but making dedicated spaces linear parks or trail connections reduces potential types of uses that parks may have
City 11	Yes
City 12	Adequate in past. As development expands must consider issues related to ER and changing lifestyles. Increasing need for linear, passive, active parks; trail systems and conservation of natural areas. As ER cannot be dedicated to include uplands, MR is only tool for natural area conservation so 10% is inadequate
City 13	20% would be more appropriate for growing pop. 15% would more reasonable dependent on land quantities and locations. 10% divided into several pocket parks versus 10% on major sports fields
Town 1	Adequate. Town has lot of area dedicated to parks. With potential for additional subdivisions, additional reserves can be added
Town 2	Should be more flexible to deal with site-specific issues. Sometimes more than 10% is required
Town 3	Yes, but uses to which MR can be put should be broadened to give municipality more discretion
Town 4	If schools were 2 stories yes; but since they are not, needs for school land takes 70-80% of required MR with small tot lots and pathways making up remainder. It should be requirement to ask for more MR
Town 5	No. In past municipality has seen need to acquire more land as provided by 10% particularly for schools
Town 6	Enough for us at this time. We already have large piece of land that is park reserve & cannot afford to develop it
Town 7	Yes. Combined with ER & PUL lots, allocation is reasonable. Maintaining MR is major issue with most rapidly growing municipality
Rural Muni 1	Sufficient
Rural Muni 2	Yes. In many cases County doesn't require full 10% as land is underutilized, then authority defers reserves or takes cash in lieu
Rural Muni 3	May be sufficient for low-density subdivisions. More innovative design (clustered development) requires more flexible guidelines for dedication of larger interconnected green spaces. Healthy lifestyles demand broader range of leisure & rec opportunities.
Rural Muni 4	Can be increased to 12-15% so more parks can be created, not just playgrounds as aging pop will spend more time outdoors

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## *Section III: Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities*

Rural Muni 5	15% is acceptable. 10% min. Consideration needs to be given whether space is in one area of subdivision or in pathways/linkages
Rural Muni 6	Each plan on its own merits. Some areas 10% is adequate while 10% near lakes is not enough

### Observations:

Based upon the broad range of responses provided, it is clear that the benchmark of 10% school and municipal reserve is a complex matter.

While no respondents indicated that 10% allocation was excessive, some felt that it was adequate in circumstances where there was sufficient environmental reserve; where school land needs were not excessive and where design densities were not excessive.

Others suggested that, if well planned, it was sufficient to meet traditional parks & open space needs, but not enough to support new and emerging needs.

Many comments referenced the impacts of school lands, particularly those experiencing growth and the subsequent demand for retention and development of school zoned MR. Smaller sized cities experiencing school growth expressed that school board demands for larger spaces tending to erode reserve lands for other community uses.

There are indications that municipalities should be afforded greater flexibility through the MGA regarding MR uses and that such flexibility should also permit allocations beyond 10% where school demands are high, where complimentary environmental reserve is non-existent and where space to support increased community needs are prevalent.

In short, municipalities want greater flexibility when working with the development industry in planning future growth of subdivisions.

### Requirements for Beyond 10% Dedication

Question:	Does your municipality require park lands beyond the 10% MR dedication?
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### Responses:

Many municipalities have experienced demands for major parks, sports fields and major facility sites that go beyond neighborhood municipal reserves and the 10% allowable MR designation.

	<b>Yes Require parks &amp; open space lands beyond 10% MR</b>	<b>No Do not require additional parks &amp; open space lands</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
City 1	✓		
City 2		✓	
City 3	✓		
City 4	✓		
City 5			
City 6			
City 7	✓		
City 8	✓		
City 9	✓		



# Municipal Green Space Allocation

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	Yes Require parks & open space lands beyond 10% MR	No Do not require additional parks & open space lands	Not Sure
City 10	✓		
City 11	✓		
City 12		✓	
City 13	✓		
City 14		✓	
Town 1			✓
Town 2	✓		
Town 3	✓		
Town 4		✓	
Town 5	✓		
Town 6		✓	
Town 7			✓
Rural Muni 1		✓	
Rural Muni 2		✓	
Rural Muni 3	✓		
Rural Muni 4		✓	
Rural Muni 5		✓	
Rural Muni 6	✓		
Total	14	9	2

Just over half or 55% of the municipalities surveyed indicated that there was requirement for municipal parks and open space lands that go beyond the 10% reserve dedication. These expressed needs were far more prevalent in Cities with a response rate of 75% and far less prevalent in rural municipalities with a response rate of 33%.

### Observation:

The need for increased parks & open space beyond 10% of Municipal Reserve dedication is more prominent in cities than in towns and rural municipalities.

### Funding of Additional Open Space

Question: How does your municipality fund the acquisition of parklands beyond that, which is dedicated through the subdivision approval process?

### Responses:

Municipalities acquire additional lands through:

- Direct purchase from public reserve funds;
- Direct purchase through cash-in-lieu funds from industrial subdivisions;
- Land swaps between developers;
- Donated lands

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## Section III: Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities

- Acquisition through agreements where dedicated MR is expanded from 10% to 15% in higher density subdivisions as per Section 668 of MGA wherein municipalities are allowed to acquire up to 5% additional MR where densities are beyond 30 units per hectare.

### Observations:

In most cases municipalities maintain budget reserves in anticipation of the need to fund the acquisitions of additional lands. These reserve funds are acquired through a number of means that range from acceptance of cash-in-lieu of reserve dedications, levies and municipal taxes.

Some rural municipalities acquire funding through cash-in-lieu of reserve dedication in higher density lake front developments.

### Balancing MR Between Parks and School Requirements

Question: How does your municipality allocate MR between school and community land uses?

### Responses:

The split or allocation of school lands in the rural municipalities surveyed (6) was a non-issue as none had developing school needs and typically, schools are built in adjacent urban centers and students are bussed.

In Cities and Towns surveyed, almost all indicated that existing or evolving joint agreements between school boards and the municipality were in place and that MR planning matters were discussed jointly. In most cases, the municipalities accept title to the MR and lease the required school land back to the respective school board.

Larger municipalities have adopted spatial guidelines along with School Boards that apply to both elementary and senior high developments.

A common problem that exists between both entities is the inability to forecast school growth requirements and the subsequent need to plan ahead in protecting MR lands for potential school needs. This issue pertains to developing areas usually in city suburbs. The neighborhood life cycle in older developed neighborhoods has prompted the closure of schools and thus facility surpluses. Prominent questions about which authority should maintain associated MR lands that were once school grounds is an issue of ongoing debate in major municipalities.

Last, but not least, the ability of School Boards to plan for new schools is highly dependant upon acquisition of capital funds from the Province. In this regard, Provincial funding policies and priorities to fund schools are not always clearly laid out and thus, the planning of MR lands in newly developing subdivisions is often compromised.

A number of responding municipalities have suggested that planning legislation for municipal reserve should provide clear distinction between community recreation needs versus community school needs.

### Observation:

Municipalities found that the joint planning of municipal reserve for both school and park purposes is often difficult because school boards are limited in their ability to commit to development at the same time that municipalities are formalizing area structure plans and park site design.

### Changes in School Land Requirements

Question: In your community, have you experienced any changes in school requirements for land area (buildings and fields) since the MGA was developed in 1994?

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### Responses:

Six of the seven towns surveyed indicated that school requirements had not changed. One town, experiencing high growth, indicated that site requirements had increased as a means to accommodate parking and bussing requirements.

Cities represented in the survey had a mixed reaction to this question with smaller centers experiencing no change to requirements, while larger centers experienced dramatic change. The most prevalent change was in the need for larger land based requirements to consolidate bussing and parking. Some communities are seeing larger high schools and, in some cases, joint sites for separate school systems.

In older areas, Boards are reducing their inventory of school space (e.g. inner city) and municipalities are challenged to find funds to purchase closed sites as a means to maintain community field components.

### Observation:

Cities are experiencing the need for larger school sites in developing areas, thus the community portion of municipal reserve space is compromised.

### Environmental Reserve

Question: How does your municipality address sensitive/special land areas valued as Environmental Reserve (ER)?

### Responses:

The definition of ER, as described in the MGA, is adhered to by all municipalities when negotiating development agreements with developers. However, some municipalities are finding that the definition is limited and does not allow for the preservation of natural areas including, but not limited to, tree stands and wildlife habitat. Developers are under no obligation to save natural features beyond the ER definition.

In smaller municipalities there is an indication that ER designation is dealt with on a case by case basis with the municipality sometimes relying on external experts (consultants or Alberta Environment personnel), trade offs taking place, and/or ER parcels (as defined in the MGA) being classified as MR (berms / buffers, etc.) thus minimizing lands for parks purposes.

### Observation:

There is an indication by municipalities that the definition of environmental reserve in the MGA limits their ability to retain needed/wanted natural areas that would benefit neighborhood design.

### Open Space Value Statement

Question: Does your municipality maintain a set of principles or tenets that describe the value of parks, open space and natural areas in relation to the environment (land, water, air)?

### Responses:

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Cities	8	5	1
Towns	1	3	3
Rural Municipalities	1	4	1
Totals	10	12	5

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## Section III: Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities

### Observations:

The environmental values of parks, open space and natural areas in municipalities are seldom documented as a basis for development design or planning.

This is more prevalent in towns and rural municipalities than in cities.

### Neighborhood Parks Development Priority

a) Question: In your community who pays for the full cost of neighborhood park development?

### Responses:

	Residents who choose to live in the area as part of the lot purchase price	The Municipality	Combination of the Two
Cities	8	1	5
Towns	1	1	5
Rural Municipalities	1	2	3
Total	10	4	13

### Observations:

The cost of new neighborhood parks development in cities is more likely to be paid by the developer (through lot purchases by new residents) than in towns or rural municipalities.

Most see the costs of neighborhood park development being a shared responsibility of new residents (lot purchases) and the municipality (resident taxes).

b) Question: Any comments as to who should pay for neighborhood park development?

### Responses:

Comments received were unanimous from all surveyed in suggesting that the cost of neighborhood park development in new neighborhoods should be paid for by the developer through lot sales or the lot purchases.

### Observation:

Municipalities believe that the cost of new neighborhood parks should be paid by the developer through proceeds from lot sales. In other words, new residents in neighborhoods should pay for the cost to develop new neighborhood parks through the lot purchase.

c) Question: What is your belief regarding the application / expenditure of off site levies, voluntary contributions and/or municipal development fees for school grounds development?

### Responses:

Many respondents recognize that the MGA does not provide municipalities with the option of imposing off site levies / lot levies for municipal park or, for that matter, school development.



# Municipal Green Space Allocation

## Section III: Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities

A majority suggest that school grounds (not school buildings) should be treated much the same as contributions for adjacent municipal park reserve wherein the developer (through the lot purchaser) should fund school ground development.

Five of the municipalities surveyed suggested that the province should have the full responsibility of funding school grounds development.

### Observations:

Most municipalities surveyed agree that the cost of school grounds development should, in part or in whole, be funded by the developer through lot purchasers.

Few suggest that it is the responsibility of the municipality and some suggest that the province/Alberta infrastructure should pay the full cost.

### Storm Ponds, Detention Ponds, and P. U. L.'s

a) Question: Public utility lots / storm ponds / retention and detention ponds are often considered as part of MR dedication in municipalities. How are they dealt with in your municipality?

### Responses:

The designation / allocation of MR in the municipalities surveyed almost never includes public utility lots, wet stormwater detention ponds and seldom includes dry stormwater ponds.

Larger municipalities have adopted policies that clearly outline how detention / retention ponds relate to MR and , in some cases, a portion of MR dedication is allowable when, and if, the pond feature provides a recreation function.

Smaller municipalities are more lenient in crediting dry ponds as MR than are cities or larger municipalities and some smaller communities (towns) report that some MR dedication is included as wet pond facilities

### Observation:

For the most part, municipalities do not provide municipal reserve credit for PUL's, wet ponds or dry ponds. Exceptions do however exist in some circumstances.

b) Question: Has the amount of developable/useable parkland been impacted (increased or decreased) in any way through the introduction of dry / wet storm ponds, buffers, utility easements in your community?

### Responses:

Commentary from survey respondents would suggest that the amount of useable parkland resulting from wet/dry pond installations, buffers and utility easements varies amongst municipalities.

Some see an erosion of useable park space, as in the case of: narrow buffers being designated as MR, utility easements compromising abilities to provide adequate landscaping, underground infrastructure (e.g. irrigation lines) and buffer slopes limiting proper design.

At least two major municipalities reported that use of utility easements for recreation purposes was discouraged due to liability issues.

### Observation:

The existence/development of storm ponds, buffers and utility easements and their use as parkland resources varies amongst municipalities. Some see them as beneficial in increasing parkland space and some see them as detriments. Each application is unique.

# Municipal Green Space Allocation

## Section III: Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities

### Pathway Development

Question: Other than urban sidewalks, does your municipality include trails / multi purpose pathways as part of MR designation when approving subdivision plans?

#### Responses:

	Yes	No	In Some Cases
Cities	6	5	3
Towns	5	1	1
Rural Municipalities	4	1	1
Totals	15	7	5

Trails and pathways are in most cases considered as part of Municipal Reserve, but only in cases where they are considered as part of an MR system that links parks & open spaces.

Most cities maintain policies regarding the width of the corridor for such trail ways and also for their placement. Few regard trails along major arterials as MR unless they are contained within a corridor of sufficient width.

At least one municipality is considering making active transportation corridors as an exclusion to MR. See Appendix #1 for a breakdown of trails provided by survey respondents.

#### Observation:

The practice of municipalities for dedicating trails and multi use pathways as MR is most often supported as long as they meet corridor design guidelines and if they are integral in connecting parks & open space resources.

### Subdivision Entry Features

Question: Most developers who have built neighborhood subdivisions over the last twenty years have incorporated subdivision entry features to enhance the sale of properties. These features, while enhancing neighborhood aesthetics, are often costly to maintain.

a) Who currently pays for ongoing maintenance of these features?

#### Responses:

In most cases, the municipality, through either the Transportation, Public Works or the Parks Department; depending on whether or not the feature is on MR or on public roadway right-of-ways. In most cases, respondents indicated that these features are developed on road right-of-ways, seldom on MR (only two cases).

In larger centers, the developer maintains during the first two to three year warranty period; then the municipality takes over. Where local neighborhood associations exist, they sometimes assist in maintaining these sites.

b) Who should pay?

# Municipal Green Space Allocation

## Section III: Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities

### Responses:

Most agree that the costs to maintain these features should be a shared responsibility between the developer, the residents and the municipality.

In some cases, the approach taken is for the developer to pay through a trust fund that is initiated at the time of development.

c) What is the planning protocol for reviewing, accepting gateway designs?

### Responses:

These features are part of the typical review process for subdivisions and, in most cases, the planning department, public works and, in some cases, transportation department are involved in the review process.

### Observation:

Gateway/entry features in subdivisions, while they do not encroach upon useable municipal reserve, they add to municipal maintenance costs and some questions the cost for the benefit received. Not all have established policies regarding their inclusion and ongoing maintenance responsibility.

### Direction to Developers

Question: Do you feel that your municipality provide sufficient assistance, standards and direction to all developers to facilitate well planned and constructed open space in subdivisions? Please check ✓ the appropriate box.

	Yes to a high degree	To some degree	Not sure	Not at all
<b>Cities</b>				
◆ In the case of the amount and a placement of Parks & Open Space dedication	10	1	0	1
◆ In the case of neighborhood playground & amenity standards	7	3	0	2
◆ In the case of non-motorized pathways and corridors	9	2	0	1
◆ In the case of grading and seeding	10	1	0	1
◆ In the case of tree planting & specifications	9	2	0	1
◆ In the case of minimum construction standards	8	3	0	1
◆ In the case of defining & designating ER	6	4	2	0
◆ In the development and use of PULs, storm ponds (detention & retention) & utility easements	7	5	0	0
◆ In the timing of development when subdivisions are phased	4	6	1	1
◆ In the case of entry or entrance features	2	8	0	2
<b>Towns</b>				

# Municipal Green Space Allocation

## Section III: Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities

	Yes to a high degree	To some degree	Not sure	Not at all
◆ In the case of the amount and a placement of Parks & Open Space dedication	3	2	1	1
◆ In the case of neighborhood playground & amenity standards	3	2	2	0
◆ In the case of non-motorized pathways and corridors	2	3	2	0
◆ In the case of grading and seeding	4	1	1	1
◆ In the case of tree planting & specifications	2	4	1	0
◆ In the case of minimum construction standards	2	3	2	0
◆ In the case of defining & designating ER	2	2	2	1
◆ In the development and use of PULs, storm ponds (detention & retention) & utility easements	3	1	2	1
◆ In the timing of development when subdivisions are phased	1	2	4	0
◆ In the case of entry or entrance features	1	2	1	3
<b>Rural Municipalities</b>				
◆ In the case of the amount and a placement of Parks & Open Space dedication	2	4	0	0
◆ In the case of neighborhood playground & amenity standards	1	3	1	1
◆ In the case of non-motorized pathways and corridors	2	4	0	0
◆ In the case of grading and seeding	1	3	0	2
◆ In the case of tree planting & specifications	1	4	0	1
◆ In the case of minimum construction standards	3	2	1	0
◆ In the case of defining & designating ER	1	5	0	0
◆ In the development and use of PULs, storm ponds (detention & retention) & utility easements	4	2	0	0
◆ In the timing of development when subdivisions are phased	0	2	3	1
◆ In the case of entry or entrance features	0	4	1	1

### Responses:

- Cities are for the most part well positioned to provide clear direction to developers in facilitating well-planned and constructed open space.

Areas that require improvement are:

- defining and designating ER;



# Municipal Green Space Allocation

## Section III: Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities

- development and use of PULs, storm ponds and utility easements;
- timing and phasing of developments; and,
- guidance / standards with respect to entry features.
- Smaller municipalities and rural jurisdictions do not appear to be as well positioned to work with the Development Industry as many respond that their ability to guide and direct is limited in some areas.

### Observation:

Larger municipalities would appear to be better equipped to direct and guide open space planning than would towns and rural municipalities.

### Status of the Municipal Government Act (MGA)

Question:	Should there be any changes made to the MGA that would improve upon the way we plan for parks, open space and healthy lifestyles in our Communities?
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### Responses:

City 1	<p>Definition of ER should be broadened to include areas of valuable natural vegetation and wildlife habitat, preserving more natural areas from destruction by urban development.</p> <p>Definition of MR should be refined by removal of 4th listed purpose (to separate areas of land used for different purposes),</p> <p>Buffering is low priority use of MR but can be difficult to object to given this clause in MGA</p> <p>50% limit should be put on proportion of MR that could be allotted to school sites</p>
City 2	<p>Should be min requirement for natural reserve to support healthy and sustainable living. Would be amenity or natural trail to encourage alternate forms of mobility. Natural areas should be linked to open space thru trails.</p> <p>Should be detailed requirements for park space to function as place of recreation, leisure, etc. Needs to be requirements for areas within new subdivision to have higher densities to provide more natural lands. More responsibility placed on developer</p>
City 3	<p>Changed to allow for infrastructure costs to be charged to developers. Changed to better protect natural areas. Changed to allow for additional open space dedication beyond MGA where local community places greater priority on open space</p>
City 4	<p>ER should be more broadly defined to include sufficient buffers to sustain ER ecosystems and maintain clean air &amp; environ</p>
City 5	<p>Yes if ER makes up substantial portion (15 acres of 1/4 sec) 1 acre for park insufficient. Suggest 10% park space allocation in addition to ER lands should be specified in MGA. Too much emphasis on marketing</p>
City 6	<p>Park Development should correspond with society's growing need for affordable, accessible recreation and health concerns. ER description should be broadened to include other environments beyond water or drainage</p>
City 7	<p>With storm water and schools taking more of 10% there needs to be some recognition and adjustment in MGA</p>
City 8	<p>Return to 10% for parks and 10% for schools</p>

## Municipal Green Space Allocation

### *Section III: Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities*

City 9	<p>As in Sec C #1, reasons to support increase of MR dedication by developer. School Board / Province should be responsible for acquisition of school site, and removed from MR equation</p> <p>Establishment of more clear and useable def of ER to provide Municipality more empowerment when dealing with preservation issues, removing preservation sites from MR</p> <p>Developing useable, sustainable models that support demand for increase of current 10% MR</p>
City 10	If City continues process of using full 10% for park development we should be all right. Would definitely run into problems if we had to use 10% for PUL, pathways or to protect ER
City 11	No
City 12	<p>Municipality should be in position to take on role as co-developer. Municipality must be able to consider MR dedication for passive parks and natural areas thru MGA. May require adjustments to amt of dedicated to ensure features are conserved</p> <p>School sites should be separate from MR requirements and 10% used for MR as community needs only</p>
City 13	MR dedication of 10% should be increased to 15% for large facilities (ball diamonds, sports fields, etc.). How do we improve for increased population? - increased lot numbers with less yard space required additional park spaces or greenbelts
Town 1	More defined guidelines re allocation for reserves may be of some assistance to municipality
Town 2	None
Town 3	<p>Criteria for ER should be opened up to allow for conservation of habitat/landscapes, not just limited range current in MGA.</p> <p>Criteria for use of MR should also be opened to allow for municipality to make greater range of uses possible on MRs</p> <p>AB Infrastructure should start properly funding landscaping and site development of MR and MSR sites with schools. These sites need recreation facilities for school to function, so why are these not included in school budgets</p>
Town 4	Also about time Alberta got with program and protected invaluable wetlands, especially in light of increasing storm water requirements
Town 5	Infrastructure required for subdivision such as storm ponds, etc. should not be included in 10% land dedication
Town 6	No. Legislation is adequate
Rural Muni 1	MGA provides opportunity for municipality to obtain I and to be used by Comm. Should be community responsibility to provide best use of these areas at local level, not provincial level
Rural Muni 2	Changes to MGA for Park development are unnecessary
Rural Muni 3	<p>MGA provides municipality with lots of tools to provide for rec needs of communities. Whether existing provisions are adequate is difficult to say</p> <p>County could make it easier if more planning was done to identify community needs and develop long-term strategy for park and open space, including linkages between areas.</p> <p>Current approach is not as effective because that vision is lacking. Instead tendency to focus</p>

# Municipal Green Space Allocation

## *Section III: Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities*

	on merits of individual development projects unaware of larger context of community needs
Rural Muni 4	Opinion that only real changes to MGA would be 10% of lands for MRs could be increased to 12% or max 15%. Any other changes would be internal and our own responsibility
Rural Muni 5	10% is adequate.
Rural Muni 6	MGA gives rural municipalities direction and leniency when required.

### Observations:

Municipalities would like changes made to the MGA. In particular, they require greater flexibility related to:

- the amount of open space dedication with specific provision for natural area designation;
- allocation, or separation of neighborhood park versus school uses;
- expanded definition of environmental reserve to include natural areas of significance, not just sensitive areas.

### Other Comments

Question:	Any further comments?
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### Responses:

City 1	Important initiative by ARPA. Thank you for doing. One need be careful how this info is released. If a lot of places have accommodating standards, this could compromise the 10% province wide
City 2	Look forward to seeing results and how they may drive some additional changes within renewed urban parks system
City 3	More planned approach should be taken by Muni to provide evidence to request to increase MR. If we are to demand more MR there must be a clear approach to identify benefits to all players as developers are not about to relinquish developable land Reps from variety of sized municipality should converge into discuss/planning forum where collective ideas can be developed into effective strategies and planning models. Essential these strategies and models are developed & accepted by Development industry
City 4	With increase in demand for various land uses, MR and ER should not be considered as expendable to accommodate more infrastructure for higher densities. Development of park space provides quality of life values to comm.
City 5	Demand for and willingness to pay increases as distance to green amenities decreases. Active sports fields do not always Sit well with nearby residents with complaints about noise. Sports groups demanding a higher quality of fields in one large area
Town 1	We have sufficient amounts of land dedicated to recreation use. Area is lacking in ability to provide variety within open space
Town 2	Not necessary to ask for additional land dedicated to MR, schools / community groups need to be forced to build more efficiently rather than current allowance for sprawling complexes
Town 3	Most successful means of achieving viable open space / parks is to work cooperatively with Development Industry and their respective consulting Team. Greatest challenge for municipality is to be able to maintain MR / PUL / and other space areas
Rural Muni 1	Disappointing that developers still put so little emphasis and importance on green spaces. Reserve dedications appear as afterthought, thus negotiations with developers is frustrating.

## Municipal Green Space Allocation

### *Section III: Attitudes & Practice Regarding Specific Areas of Parks & Open Space Planning in Municipalities*

	Trail development in more rural areas still not largely favored by Councilors, Abandoned railway right of ways have not been viewed as rec corridors. Instead Council opted to sell lands back to adjacent landowners
Rural Muni 2	Design of green spaces that is important to make best use of dedication required by MGA

Note: Further analysis to be developed after internal review by the Parks and Open Space Committee.

### Some Overarching Trends in Green Space Provision

The study team, working with the ARPA Parks and Open Space Committee, undertook literature research and revealed interesting trends and thoughts of others (in jurisdictions outside of Alberta) on the state of green space provision in urban municipalities.

#### **More and better urban space is needed**

A nation-wide study prepared by “Evergreen” in 2005 revealed that municipalities across Canada require stronger tools and better support to ensure that community green space needs are met. Even those with standards and strategies in place fall short of addressing the complexities of green space sufficiency in growing and diverse cities.

#### **Mid-sized cities have an opportunity for substantial growth**

Fringe growth and densification in urban suburbs provides growing municipalities with an opportunity to apply farsighted “smart growth” principles.

#### **There is a need for communication and information sharing**

Some municipalities employ innovative and proven strategies to optimize green space while others lack the know how. Expertise that could be captured and communicated could be facilitated by organizations such as Evergreen, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Institute of Planners, Go for Green and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. The Alberta Parks and Recreation Association has an opportunity to advocate and facilitate such exchanges.

#### **There is a positive economic case to be made surrounding urban green space**

John Crompton in his report; The Impact of Parks and Open Space on Property Values and the Property Tax Base writes:

*“A review of over 60 fiscal impact studies clearly indicated that preserving open space is likely to be a less expensive alternative for communities than residential development. On average, for every \$1 million received in revenues from residential developments, the communities had to expend \$1.15 million servicing them. This suggests that if the area of land on which a development generating \$1 million in revenues was used as a park instead, and if the park’s operation and maintenance costs did not exceed \$150,000, the community would financially benefit.”*

#### **We must begin to use full cost accounting to reflect the value of parks and open space “natural capital”**

The Canada West Foundation in 2003 and 2004 published a series of reports (“Western Canada’s National Capital”; “Breaking New Ground” and “Green Among the Concrete”). These reports and their findings while collectively comprehensive, draw attention to the Societal need to evaluate the benefits of open space, not only to accommodate the outdoor recreation activity needs of people but to realize the social, economic, psychological, personal health and environmental benefits of building natural capital within our communities in both an urban and rural context.

#### **“Wellness planning” is emerging as the context by which physical land use planning, economic and social planning will evolve.**

The highest priority needs and those which drive Provincial policies of late are health and education. Environmental issues and related policy are not far off and will, no doubt, reach the top of the political agenda in years to come.

The relationship between building communities on the basis of strong health, education, environment and sustainable economies lies in building an infrastructure that supports exercise, physical and emotional development, open socialization and environmentally sound green space become increasingly vital to building healthy communities.

“Wellness Planning” takes area structure planning to a new level. It harmonizes the goals of the community service agencies, Family and Community Support Services, Recreation and Parks, Economic Development and essential services departments with municipal planners. It brings “soft service professionals” to the table with “hard service professionals” and expands traditional design criteria to include and provide greater focus to environmental impact, healthy living, social integration and well-being.

In the future, Municipal Development Plans, Parks and Open Space Plans and the standards of design will be driven by wellness goals, natural capital and economic and environmental sustainability. More effort will be placed on designing and approving area structure plans through a full community development approach where time will be invested to undertake “smart planning” where the relationship between the social, environmental and wellness needs of communities will be better communicated in the development process.



### Societal Trends That Impact Upon Green Space Provision

#### Leisure Time and Its Importance

Research has shown that the leisure time of Canadians has been constantly increasing in importance in the past decade. Over half of the nations' population view leisure time as equal to, or more important than, work time. Leisure time is becoming increasingly important in the personal development and quality of life for most Canadians. This increasing importance of leisure time has been countered by longer workdays, shift work regimes, and changing work environments. Working Canadians<sup>1</sup> average 7.8 hours per day of work and only 5.8 hours of free time. Of this free time, one hour is dedicated to active leisure. The scarcity of free active leisure time for Canadians equates to a demand for more value-added activities. Value-added can come from the ability to recreate at any time throughout the day (i.e. accommodates shift workers) or the availability to have simultaneous recreation opportunities for the entire family (i.e. incorporating family time with active leisure). These two value-added concepts are achieved by offering a variety of simultaneous, spontaneous recreation opportunities. Value-added also comes from the quality of the opportunity provided. As leisure time is becoming increasingly important, so too has the expectation for quality of leisure outlets. Better maintained outdoor resources, newer, cleaner facilities with more diverse component spaces, and expanded programming opportunities become aspects which communities can differentiate themselves with. The main reasons why people participate in recreation activities are determined to be for pleasure, physical health/exercise, relaxation, to spend time with friends, to enjoy nature, and for a challenge.

Leisure participation and activity choices change depending upon age of the participant. As we age, the appreciation for physical well-being increases. The baby boomers (currently aged 36-55) represent a large age demographic in Alberta and have unique recreation needs. The demand for exercise oriented, low-impact activities such as aquatics, fitness classes/weight training, golf, etc... will be prevalent as well as co-ed activities directed at couples and activities that can be enjoyed spontaneously (i.e. without major preparation, coordination, or waiting time).

The Leisure mall concept incorporates a variety of different recreation and leisure services and opportunities into a facility. Although this concept primarily deals with indoor facilities, the premise can be applied to outdoor facilities as well. The idea promotes the concept of families recreating together at a common location, provides broader choice for participants, promotes participation in many activities (through exposure to a variety of activities), increases opportunities for socialization and spectator activity and, last but not least, it creates a concentrated market (critical mass) that opens the door for greater profitability in sponsorship food, beverage, and retail sales. Ideas such as retail lease space, sponsorship, and programming are possibilities in an outdoor leisure mall model and, where developed, are proving to reduce the operational costs for such publicly funded resources.

Another trend, applicable in the programming area of recreation facilities, is the concept of providing spontaneous recreation opportunities as opposed to programmed/structured opportunities such as scheduled programs, or public skating times. Unstructured recreation opportunities fit into today's busy lifestyles and require little commitment or planning in order to participate. Thus they are becoming more sought after by all recreation participants and are becoming a major feature of today's successful recreation facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Overview of the time use of Canadians in 1998, Statistics Canada

### Health Care is a Major Priority

While health services and spending are popular topics of political discussion, the focus on bettering the general health of Canadians has never been so prevalent. Combining the stresses of economic policy with the ageing baby boomer generation, the market for preventative health and therapeutic services is attractive.

	GDP / Capita	Health Spending as a %age of GDP 1997	Life Expectancy 1999 (M/f)
Canada	\$16,400	9.3%	76.2 / 81.9
Alberta	\$18,745	7.8%	76.8 / 81.8
USA	\$18,000	13.6%	73.8 / 79.7

Source: Premier's Advisory Council on Health, 2001

Leisure Time Spent	% Active (20 minutes of intense activity at least 4 times / week)	% Moderately Active (At least 60 minutes of flight activity daily)	% Inactive
Canada	21%	23%	57%
Alberta	26%	24%	50%

Source: Healthy Alberta Baseline Survey. Oct 2002

There are a number of statistics to support the fact that Alberta is a relatively healthy province. Albertans generally feel that they are in good health, as 66% of those asked rated their health as excellent or very good<sup>2</sup>.

A larger proportion of Albertans are active or moderately more active than national averages and; more Albertans realize and / or plan to take action to improve their state of health as compared to National Averages.

Recent health issues in the Province, such as an increase in Type II diabetes and childhood obesity are at the forefront of public concern and are the basis for a number of government, non-profit, and private sector initiatives. Concerns relate to treatment of these "mini-epidemics" but

also to the prevention of future problems. Exercise and physical stimulation are seen as a strong deterrent of a number of health issues and municipal activity programs (Healthy U, Active Edmonton, etc...) in the province, accompanied by workplace health programs, changing educational policies (mandatory physical education classes) are all signs of the intent of the Province to take action against health issues.

The need to provide the opportunity for the residents of Alberta to take initiatives to improve personal health and well being rests in the hands of governments and health and wellness market participants. This includes the private, non-profit, volunteer and municipal sectors that have a shared responsibility to provide the medium for attaining a healthier Province. The benefits of recreation span from general life skills such as team building, communication, camaraderie, and logic to preventative physical health measures that extend to bettering public health and decreasing the strain on our current health care system. As communities, government, and business continue to realize the magnitude of these benefits, recreation will become more of a priority in public and private decision-making and as such will become even more integrated in municipal development priority.

Undertaking Lifestyle Changes to Benefit Health	% Took Action to Improve Health	% Feel Some Action is Needed	% Intend to Take Needed Action
Canada	47%	54%	69%
Alberta	48%	61%	70%

Source: Healthy Alberta Baseline Survey. Oct 2002

### The Province of Alberta and Spending

Alberta has a population of over 3.2 million people and covers 661,1903 sq km (6.6% of the Canada). Although the Province thrives on the Oil and Gas industry, (the world's 9th largest oil producer and the worlds 3rd largest natural gas producer), it also has strong agriculture and forestry industries. The nature of Alberta geography and industrial base has a number of implications for the development of outdoor parks and open spaces.

<sup>2</sup> Premier's Advisory Council on Health, Dec 2001

<sup>3</sup> Highlights of the Alberta Economy, Winter 2004

With industrial success in the Province comes a more affluent population (second highest average household income in Canada) and encourages increased development in both the residential (38,750 housing starts in 2002) and commercial sectors. Not only does this growth in development bring new people into the Province, it also adds to the responsibilities of municipalities to control and manage infrastructure growth in an efficient and effective manner.

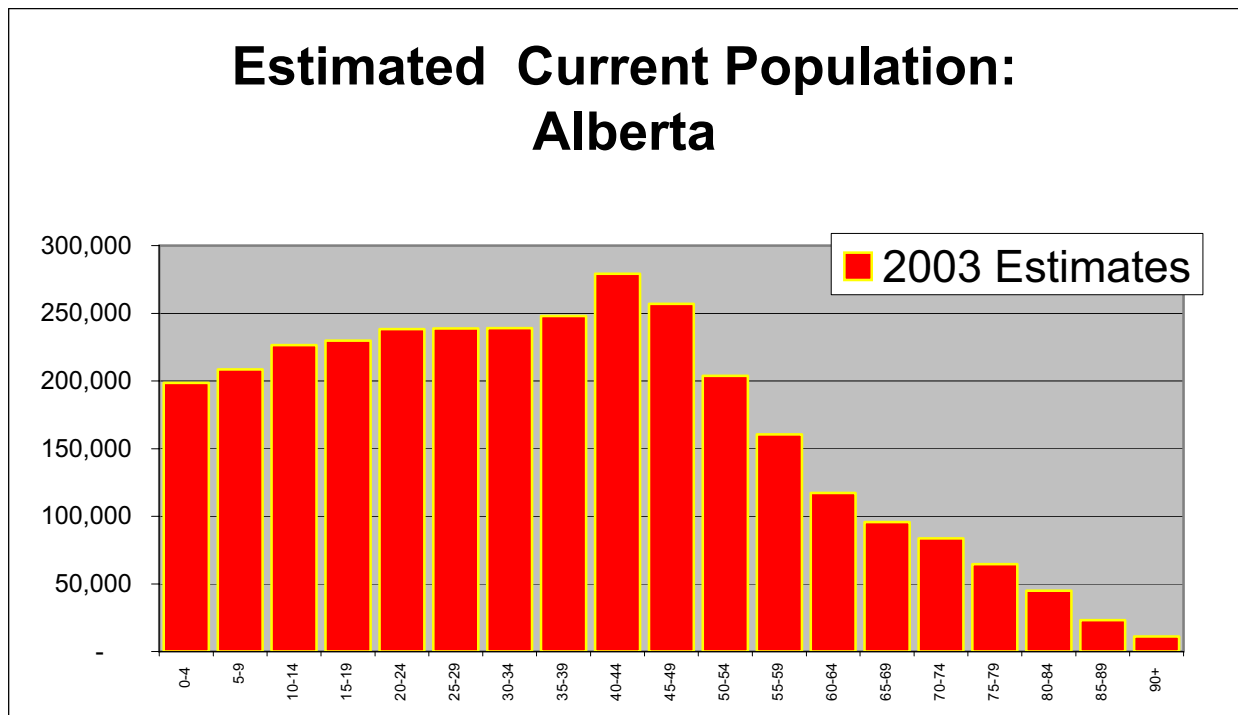
The demand for unstructured outdoor pursuits, that can accommodate the busy lifestyles associated with the oil and gas and agriculture industries, is growing. These activities, such as trail based activities (motorized and non-motorized), outdoor sports and adventure tourism, are being provided predominantly by the municipal sector in a variety of different scopes and ranges.

Recreation is a major part of Albertan life. Albertans spend an average of \$1,5864 per household on sports, arts and culture and entertainment (highest in Canada). The Province has over 530 parks and protected areas which see over 8 million visitors per year. The Province boasts 600 lakes, 245 rivers, and over 2,300 hours of sunshine per year positioning it as an all season outdoor playground. There are over 275 golf courses, six ski mountains, and 66 regional ski hills offered throughout the Province.

The geographical location and features of the province, along with the vast amount of recreation and leisure opportunities held therein, make Alberta a great place to visit. As mentioned, the Province sees over 8 million tourists per year. The tourism industry in the Province spawns over 120,000 jobs and adds approximately \$5.4 billion to annual revenues in the province. Of this \$5.4 billion, \$2.6 billion is invested by non-local visitors to the Province.

### Population Analysis

The current population in the Province is estimated at 3.2 million<sup>5</sup> and the demographic age breakdown can be described as follows:



<sup>4</sup> Survey on Household Spending, Statscan, 2001

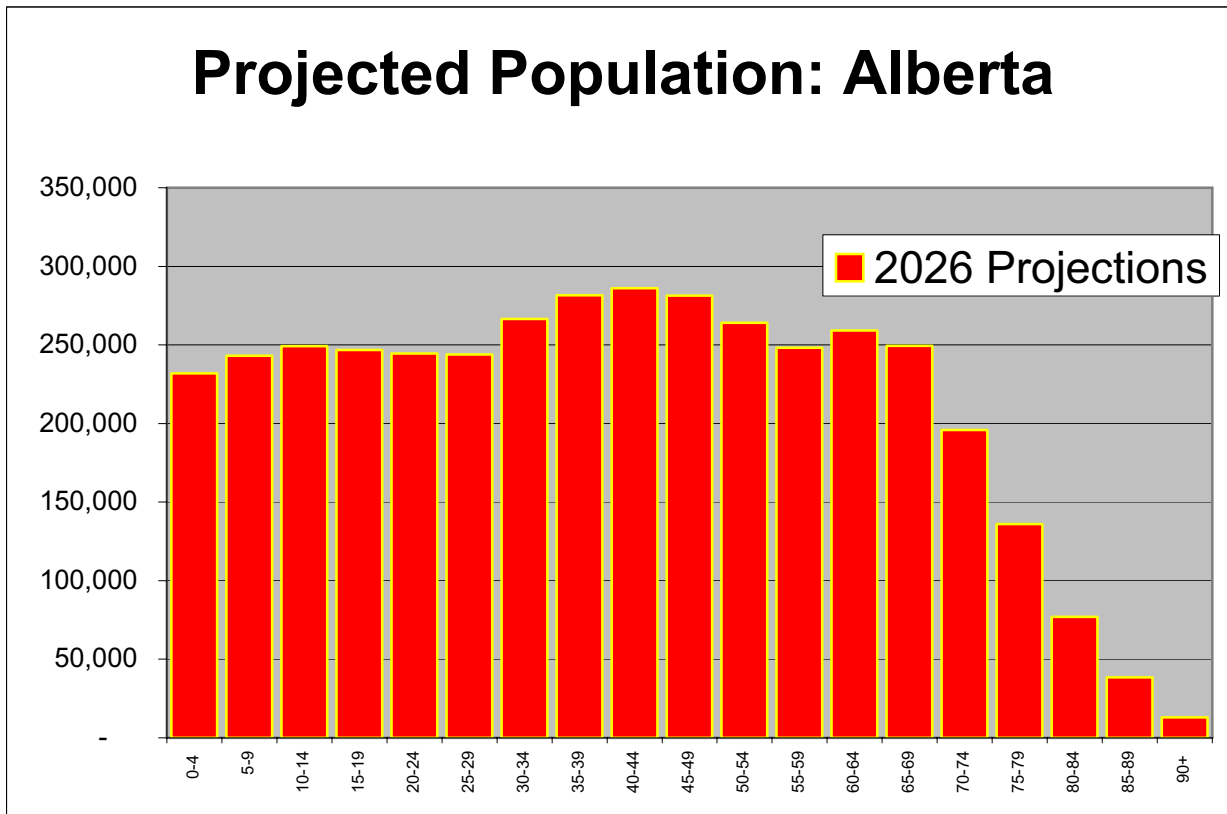
<sup>5</sup> Highlights of the Alberta Economy, Winter 2004

# Municipal Green Space Allocation

## Section V: Societal Trends That Impact Upon Green Space Provision

These estimates, provided by Alberta Finance, show that the age composition of the provincial population is dominated by Albertans 50 years old and under. Over 81% of the population is under 50 which is something that private business, municipal government, and other public sector agencies have to realize in offering products and services to the Alberta population.

The population of the province is expected to increase in the future due to strong economic growth. This increase has been estimated by Alberta Finance 2004 to be ~28% in the next 20 years (Alberta Finance, Population projections, Medium Growth). In 2026, the Province of Alberta is expected to have ~4.1 million residents. Due to the apparent age “bubbles” in today’s society, this will have a major effect on markets for various products and services. The age breakdown of Albertans in 2026 is estimated as follows:



As a percentage of population, those residents aged 50 and younger will go from a current 81% of the total to 69.5% percent of the total. The following chart explains where age demographics are expected to go in the next 10 and 20-year periods:

Percentage of Alberta Population			
	2004	2014	2024
Children (ages 0-9)	12.8%	12.6%	11.9%
Teenagers (ages 10-19)	14.4%	12.1%	12.2%
Young Adults (ages 20-39)	30.4%	28.5%	25.9%
Middle Aged Adults (ages 40-59)	28.4%	28.9%	26.7%
Seniors (ages 60+)	13.9%	17.8%	23.2%

This will cause a major shift in the types of products, services, and activities that Albertans will want to buy and take part in. Programming and marketing towards an older population will be necessary in ensuring that all resident needs are being met.

### Leisure Activities / Trends for Different Age Groups

As municipalities grow, especially in a society as culturally diverse as Alberta, they are required to provide more service and infrastructure to their residents. These services include hard and soft functions and are the forefront of value-added for taxpayer dollars.

General trends in leisure based physical activities include a shift away from team sports into a more social-passive recreation context. The decrease of structure in terms of leagues and dedicated time slots has been due to a number of factors including busy lifestyles, workforce characteristics (shift workers, etc...) and a more diverse numbers of activities which leisure time is increasingly spread out across.

Exercise oriented activities (~35% of households participating<sup>6</sup>) remain more popular than creative-cultural activities (~10% of households participating). The “first favorite” outdoor pursuits for Albertans (as defined by A Look at Leisure #46, Alberta Community Development) include:

<b>First Favorite Outdoor Activities</b>				
	<b>% of households</b>	<b>Gender/Age</b>	<b>Household Type / Income</b>	<b>Regional Variation</b>
Walking for pleasure	35%	Females more likely to mention Favored by all age groups	All household types favored walking for pleasure	
Camping	16%	Males more likely to mention Favored by 18-25 year olds Favored by 26-34 year olds Favored by 35-44 year olds Favored by 45-64 year olds Favored by 64+ age group	Popular among all income groups	Remainder of Province (not including Edmonton or Calgary) reported highest participation.
Other <sup>7</sup>	11%	Males more likely to mention		Remainder of Province (not inc. Edm or Cal) reported highest participation
Bicycling	9%	Males more likely to mention Favored by 18-25 year olds Favored by 26-34 year olds Favored by 35-44 year olds Favored by 45-64 year olds	Single people more likely to participate Popular among all income groups	Highest participation by Calgarians
Gardening	6%	Females more likely to mention Favored by 35-44 year olds Favored by 45-64 year olds Favored by 64+ age group		Highest participation by Edmontonians
Hiking / backpacking	5%	Favored by 26-34 year olds Favored by 35-44 year olds Favored by 64+ age group		Highest participation by Calgarians
Fishing	5%	Males more likely to mention Favored by 35-44 year olds Favored by 45-64 year olds Favored by 64+ age group	Participation highest among \$50,001-\$90,000 household income range	Remainder of Province (not including Edmonton or Calgary) reported highest participation.
Running / jogging	5%	Favored by 45-64 year olds	Favored by households with incomes higher than \$70,000	
Softball	3%	Males more likely to mention Favored by 18-25 year olds Favored by 26-34 year olds	One of top five favorite activities for single persons, households of two or more unrelated or related adults.	
Soccer	3%	Females more likely to mention Favored by 18-25 year olds Favored by 26-34 year olds	One of top five favorite activities for single persons, households of two or more unrelated or related adults.	
In-line skating	2%	Females more likely to mention		

<sup>6</sup> A Look at Leisure #44, Alberta Community Development

<sup>7</sup> Other activities include: boating, mountain biking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, tennis, watersports, canoeing/kayaking/row/rafting, picnicking, ATV off-road, motorized biking, football, rugby, triathlon, archery, BMX racing, track and field, and tobogganing/sledding.

### Activity Demographic Profiles

#### Walking for Pleasure

Favored by females, ages 45-64, highest among \$30,001-\$50,000 and \$90,001+ income categories, main reason to be alone, for physical health/exercise, to relax, and to enjoy nature

#### Camping

Slightly favored by males, ages 18-25 and 35-64, highest among \$30,001- \$90,001+ income categories, highest among rural respondents, main reason to be with family and friends, to meet people, to relax, something different from work, and to enjoy nature

#### Gardening

Favored by females, ages 35-65, highest among \$70,001- \$90,000, highest among respondents in Edmonton, main reason to be creative, enjoy nature, to relax, and for pleasure

#### Bicycling

Favored by males, ages 44 and under, consistently favored across all age and socio economic groups, main reason to be alone, for physical health/exercise, to be with family and to enjoy nature

#### Hiking/Backpacking

Participation by both genders, ages 26-34, favored by all income groups over \$10,000, favored by Calgarians, main reason for physical exercise, to be with family and friends, for pleasure, and to enjoy nature

#### Running/Jogging

Participation by both genders, ages 26-34 and 45-64, participation increases as income increases, main reason to compete with others, for excitement, for the challenge, to be alone, and to be away from family

#### Soccer

Participation by both genders, ages 18-34 and decreases as age increases, favored by all income groups over \$10,000, favored by Calgarians, main reason compete with others, to improve skills, to learn new skills, for a challenge, for excitement, for physical health, to do something different form work, to be with friends, and to be away from family.

Applying these profiles to expected age demographics in the Province concludes:

Percentage of Alberta Population	Favorite Outdoor Activities			
	2004	2014	2024	(Alberta Recreation Survey, 2000)
Children (ages 0-9)	12.8%	12.6%	11.9%	bicycling
Teenagers (ages 10-19)	14.4%	12.1%	12.2%	bicycling
Young Adults (ages 20-39)	30.4%	28.5%	25.9%	camping, hiking/back packing, running/jogging, bicycling, soccer
Middle Aged Adults (ages 40-59)	28.4%	28.9%	26.7%	walking for pleasure, gardening, camping, running/jogging
Seniors (ages 60+)	13.9%	17.8%	23.2%	gardening, running/jogging

As mentioned earlier, people are demanded more convenient, unstructured activities to accommodate busier lifestyles. This is apparent when we look at the historical Alberta Recreation Survey information (From 1981-2000). As the survey has been collected every four years over the past 20 years, the results for activity participation are as follows.



Activities with decreases in household participation:

1. Tennis: from 31% to 13%\*
2. Curling: from 26% to 15%\*
3. Bowling: from 43% to 23%\*
4. Baseball / softball: from 42% to 22%\*
5. Hunting: 28% to 9%
6. Fishing: 55% to 32%
7. Football: 24% to 9%\*
8. Cross-country skiing: from 31% to 17%
9. Ice-skating: from 58% to 34%
10. Ice Hockey: from 28% to 18%\*
11. Racquetball: from 28% to 5%\*

\*Denotes structured activities

Activities with increases in household participation:

1. Golf: from 41% to 47%
2. Attending Educational Courses: from 41% to 47%
3. Day Hiking: from 31% to 38%\*
4. Aerobics: from 30% to 36%
5. Weight Training: from 27% to 33%\*
6. Soccer: from 15% to 23%

\*Denotes unstructured activities

### Extreme Sports

There are a number of factors that have led to the increased popularity of new / extreme activities in the Province. Media exposure, the internet, and continued acceptance of multi-culturalism have exposed Albertans to a plethora of new and exciting activities. The acceptance of these activities, such as mountain biking, skateboarding, inline activities, and BMX racing have created a situation where access to walking trails (asphalt, non-asphalt, motorized, non-motorized) is compromised for some users. Competition for these resources and unintended usage of resources (i.e. in line skaters and BMX users using skateboard parks) has been, and will continue to be, a source of conflict between population groups. The development of specialized areas for each type of user is a possible solution, but municipal resources typically do not allow this approach. Therefore, finding a way to allocate resources and ensure access across groups is an issue for outdoor recreation resource providers.

### The Financial Picture in the Province is Promising

Alberta has the highest Real GDP, Investment per capita in Canada<sup>8</sup>. Since 1998 it has averaged over 11% higher than second place Ontario<sup>9</sup>. Albertans enjoy the highest income per capita and have the highest disposable income in the nation. Albertans spend more than any other province on retail goods (highest retail sales per capita). Overall average income in Canada has increased 14%<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> The Alberta Advantage, 2003

<sup>9</sup> The Alberta Advantage, 2003

<sup>10</sup> Statscan 1996-2001 increase in Average Earning of Population over the age of 15 (Highest level of schooling: University Degree)

### Priorities of Albertans

According to the Canada West Foundation: Looking West 2003 survey, the priorities of Albertans are as follows (listed as "High Priorities"):

1. Improving the Health Care System – 74.0%
2. Retaining Young People – 67.0%
3. Protecting the Environment – 64.1%
4. Supporting Rural Industries – 61.9%
5. Improving the K-12 Education System – 59.5%
6. Improving the Post-Secondary Education System – 57.1%
7. Diversifying the Provincial Economy – 54.5%
8. Ensuring Livable Cities – 52.1%
9. Investing in Transportation Infrastructure – 45.6%
10. Lowering Taxes – 41.3%
11. Increasing Aboriginal Employment Levels – 35.0%
12. Increasing Funding to Social Services – 31.2%
13. Attracting More Immigrants – 13.0%

\*Source: Canada West Foundation: Looking West Survey, 2003

The priorities of Albertans clearly indicate a propensity to protect the environment. As Albertans realize the need to protect the environment, emphasis on creating policies and standards governing environment practices becomes the responsibility of all levels of government and of the private and non-profit sectors. This appreciation for the environment not only requires environmental protection issues but it also increases the importance of providing outlets, parks and open spaces, through which residents can enjoy the environment.

### Conclusions And Recommendations

Based on a review of this report and its findings, members of ARPA's Parks and Open Space Committee met to determine some conclusions and recommendations for presentation to the ARPA Board of Directors. The following represents the outputs from the Parks and Open space Committee deliberations.

#### Summary of Key Report Findings

The following statements from the report reflect the main points of report findings:

- Larger urban centers are more apt to maintain comprehensive parks and open space master plans than are towns or rural municipalities.
- Cities have adopted methods of classifying parklands for planning purposes while smaller communities general have not.
- Not all municipalities are equipped to direct the development industry about community open space needs and/or specific standards of design for parks and open space development.
- Where development guidelines exist for municipalities, some are outdated. While all municipalities surveyed may not have similar internal administrative structures, most have established a review process and protocol for plan proposals with the approving authorities and councils. Not all jurisdictions include recreation personnel in the review.
- Planning/Public Works Departments most often become the recommending authority or the prior to formal council approvals on land allocation recommendation. Such recommendations are not always followed at the Council level.
- 10% Dedication – Municipalities want greater flexibility when working with the development industry in planning future growth of subdivisions. The need for increased parks spaces beyond 10% is more prominent in cities.
- In most cases municipalities maintain budget reserves in anticipation of the need to fund acquisitions of additional lands. These reserve funds are acquired through cash-in-lieu of reserve dedications, levies and taxes.
- Municipalities find that the joint planning of municipal reserve for both schools and park purposes is often difficult because school boards are limited in their ability to commit to development at the same time that municipalities are formalizing area structure plans and park site design. Schools are requiring additional space for larger school sites.
- There is an indication by municipalities that the definition of environmental reserve in the Municipal Government Act limits their ability to retain needed/wanted natural areas that would benefit neighborhood designs. Environmental values are seldom documented as a basis for development design or planning.
- The cost of new neighborhood parks in cities is more likely paid for by developers in cities than in towns. Development is primarily shared between new residents (lot purchases) and municipalities however municipalities believe residents should pay the full cost.
- Most municipalities agree that the cost of school grounds should be funded by the developer through lot purchases.
- Storm ponds, buffers and utility easements vary amongst municipalities.
- Trails as Municipal Reserve is most often supported as long as they meet corridor design guidelines.
- Entry features add to municipal maintenance costs and some question the benefit received.
- Larger municipalities are better equipped to direct and guide open space planning than towns and rural municipalities.
- Municipalities would like changes made to the Municipal Government Act. In particular, they require greater flexibility related to: the amount of open space dedication with specific provision for natural area designation, allocation, or separation of neighborhood park versus school uses; expanded definition of environmental reserve to include natural areas of significance, not just sensitive areas.

### Conclusions

In consideration of the summary report findings, the ARPA Parks and Open Space Committee offers the following as major conclusions that will require follow-up action on a provincial level:

- The Municipal Government Act needs to develop an expansion of the definition of 'environmental reserve' to include: tree stands, preservation of natural areas and significant ecological features.
- There is a need to provide greater support for parks and open space initiatives, especially for smaller rural municipalities.
- Schools require greater land bases for bussing and parking areas.
- There is a need for improved regional land based planning.
- The current 10% dedication of development for Municipal Reserve should be retained, however, the school requirement for this land should be reviewed. The amount of land required for the school footprint has been increasing. **NOTE:** Developers are putting increasing pressure on reducing parkland designation.

### Recommendations

In providing advice and counsel to the ARPA Board of Directors, the Parks and Open space Committee suggest that the following Board action take place:

- The ARPA Board accept as information the "Municipal Green space Allocation Practice and Protocol in Alberta Communities" report and to have the full report available through the ARPA website.
- The ARPA Board continue to support a focus group to develop for the action plans derived from the report findings.
- Resolutions be developed for ARPA general membership review and ratification regarding the 10% 'municipal reserve' dedication; 'environmental reserve' dedication, and related planning initiatives. Any ratified member resolutions should be forwarded to AUMA and AAMD&C's towards advocating for changes to the Municipal Government Act.
- ARPA develop educational programs to meet the parks and open space planning needs of municipal employees.

# Municipal Green Space Allocation

## Appendix 1: Trails Inventory of Respondents

### Appendix #1: Trails Inventory Of Respondents

	Hard Surface KM	Urban Multi-Use KM	Rural KM	Total Trail KM	Population	Total Km / Person	Total People / Km
<b>RURAL MUNICIPALITIES</b>							
Bonnyville	0	0	67	67	8,399		
Lacombe	3.2	0	2	5.2	10,651		
Parkland	0	17	0	17	27,252		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>89.2</b>	<b>46,302</b>	<b>.0019</b>	<b>519</b>
<b>TOWNS</b>							
Canmore	8	0	?	8	11,458		
Lacombe	19	3	0	22	10,159		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21,617</b>	<b>.0013</b>	<b>720</b>
<b>CITIES</b>							
Calgary	202	0	0	202	942,000		
Camrose	13	13	17.4	43.4	14,854		
Ft. Saskatchewan	30	23	0	53	13,824		
Grande Prairie	10	6.8	0	16.8	40,226		
Medicine Hat	80	10	0	90	51,249		
Red Deer	80	60	40	180	75,923		
Spruce Grove	25	5	0	30	16,500		
Wetaskiwin	12.8	6.5	6	25.3	11,154		
Wood Buffalo	20	35	15	70	56,000		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>472.8</b>	<b>159.3</b>	<b>78.4</b>	<b>710.5</b>	<b>1,221,730</b>	<b>.00058</b>	<b>1,719</b>