

2. VISION AND PRINCIPLES

2.1 Vision

By 2026, Spruce Grove's Open Space & Parks System will be a model of environmental stewardship and a highly valued community asset. Strong forward planning over the coming years will provide Spruce Grove with a comprehensive, contiguous and innovative parks, open space and trail system. Residents will recreate and commute to work through a network of trails, pathways and streetscapes while stopping to enjoy the many park space amenities available. Sustainable solutions to growth will provide the means for implementing this Plan. All of this will contribute to Spruce Grove being the Community of Choice.

2.2 Qualities of Good City Form

Qualities of good city form include:

- Protection of natural resources and biodiversity;
- High quality public realm – civic, cultural and recreational infrastructure;
- Permeability;
- Continuity;
- Walkability and public health benefits;
- Sense of place; and
- Sustainability.

This plan proposes that the landscape and the public realm be considered as the underlying framework for the city form. This implies a shift in priorities, but would result in a more livable, walkable, and coherent city. The diagram at left and notes provide a discussion of this theoretical framework.

The built environment is composed of several inter-related 'layers.' Each layer represents a degree of permanence.

Layer 1 - The Land

The land and landscape character is the most permanent aspect of the built environment, with the greatest potential to contribute to a sense of place. Urban planning and design can be some of the best ways to express good conservation practices, and to create places that have a relationship to the landscape. At the scale of the neighbourhood, careful attention to the topography, the natural features, the view and the connections can help to create memorable places with a strong foundation in the landscape. Good urbanism is good environmentalism. This can be expressed through the built landscape.

Layer 2 - The Public Realm

Most of our everyday urban experience occurs within the shared city space made up of the streets, sidewalks, parks, squares and plazas. Collectively this is known as the public realm; the city space where all citizens can be by right. It constitutes the next most permanent component of the built landscape. The open space system and network of pedestrian-

friendly streets can provide a strong framework for neighborhood and city development. All public open spaces and neighborhood streets should be places of quality, and deliberately-designed parts of the public realm.

Layer 3 - Built Form

Buildings are the most visible part of the urban environment, and they sit within the infrastructure of the public realm. Several generations of built form will come and go within the life cycle of the urban structure, however if the frame of the public realm is intact, then the built form has a sense of continuity and meaning over time. The outside of the building forms the inside wall of the public realm, and all buildings have this responsibility to help shape space. Making a good street, park or square is difficult when the edge conditions are not supportive.

Layer 4 - Program

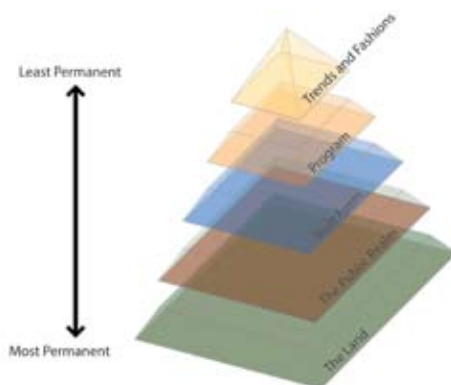
Each individual open space or public building, if it has a resiliency of form, may be used for various activities or programs over its lifetime. The robustness of built form contributes further to the establishment of a sense of place through continuity of form, rather than continually rebuilding in the name of newness.

Layer 5 - Trends and Fashions

The least permanent aspects of the built environment, and of design activity, are the transient and ephemeral trends and fashions. While these frequently add the qualities of delight and contemporariness to the built environment, there is normally a built-in obsolescence to them, and they should be understood as the least permanent, although not necessarily the least important, aspects of urban design.

This framework can lead to the creation of a city that is firmly rooted in its landscape context and that has an open space system that is connected to that landscape and that provides a strong public realm infrastructure.

Open space can also be understood as a broad system made up smaller systems of various open space types. All types are required for good city form and function, and they work together and inter-relate.



2.3 Open Space Principles

The Parks and Open Space Plan provides a strategy for developing a high quality open space system and is intended to satisfy the following general principles, which address environmental, social and economic concerns:

- reflect the environmental context of Spruce Grove through the respect of natural features and views, and the use of plants and other materials that are appropriate to the climate and context, and that protect and enhance biodiversity;

(Concept by B. Sandalack (2000), re-drawn by Francisco Alaniz Uribe 2005.)

- provide a variety of places for recreation, physical activity, and enjoyment of the outdoors, for a diverse population by ensuring that there is a complete range of open space types appropriate for Spruce Grove;
- reflect and respect Spruce Grove's history and culture;
- recognize Spruce Grove's existing special places, create new ones, and provide good linkages through paths, good streets and linear parks;
- ensure a walkable and accessible city, neighbourhoods, and streets;
- promote public health objectives through the provision of open space;
- ensure that a range of open spaces are within the appropriate proximity of every citizen;
- ensure that all open spaces are safe for use, and that the urban design of surrounding areas supports the concept of 'eyes on the street/path/park'; and
- raise the profile of parks, open space and trail systems within The City of Spruce Grove's Administration to ensure that it is a priority in future planning and development.



Photo at top: residential street conceived and designed when ideas of the street as public space informed typology, and where the buildings supported the street.

Photo above: more recent residential street, designed according to a transportation model rather than typology, and where the public role of the street has been neglected, and is unsupported by the building edge.

