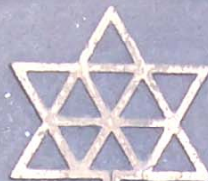




Claresholm



1867 | 1967

CENTENNIAL OF CONFEDERATION
CLARESHOLM AND DISTRICT
CENTENNIAL PARK

ERECTED IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
CENTENNIAL OF CONFEDERATION
1967

THE CONSTRUCTION OF "CENTENNIAL PARK"
WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY
THE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF
THE THREE LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

ANOTHER
ROTARY PROJECT

Centennial Park Master Plan

Prepared by

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Map 1 - Claresholm Centennial Park Master Plan

Centennial Park Master Plan

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is a Park Master Plan?

The master planning process is the first step in any park development project. It is designed to bring the technical aspects of park design together with the needs of the community or neighborhood. The master plan is a graphic representation showing how the park might appear after it's developed. Some important issues considered in the development of every master plan include general accessibility, disabilities accessibility, environmental protection and enhancement, outdoor recreation opportunities, play areas, and other amenities.

The master plan is not a blueprint. Funding constraints dictate which features from a master plan will actually be built during the first phase of construction. Some aspects of a master plan may not be built if there isn't enough funding available during construction. If desired, neighbors or special interest groups can raise money for any master plan features not funded during construction. Good master plans are flexible, and have involved the community and other stakeholders from the outset, giving the plan a legitimate base, and a better chance to come to fruition. Park planning is a continuous process, with constant adjustments; without continued attention the plan will just sit on a shelf - with all the other plans.

The key is to consider the park as a living thing that changes over time. A plan gives the park a framework by which it can grow over time towards a final vision. Without a plan you can end up with a hodge-podge of uses that may have opposing goals or incompatible uses...essentially a place that doesn't feel comfortable or functional for the user. Good parks reflect a community's sense of pride, values, hard work and stability.

1.2 Background

The process of creating the park started in 1965 when the homes situated on the land were relocated due to flood problems. Removal of the homes enlarged the overall size of the park. Centennial Park was dedicated as part of the 1967 Commemoration of the Centennial of Confederation. Park construction was made possible by financial contributions involving three levels of government. A stone erected by the Rotary Club monumentalizes this occasion with a bronze faced plaque (see Front Cover Art).

The large ball diamonds and campground were added in the late 70's. The improvements of the campground showers/bathrooms occurred in 1995. Most monuments were added between 1995 and 2002 (see Appendix A). The park oversaw major tree planting in 2002 when 40 large trees were planted.

1.3 Site Analysis

The 15.32 acre site is bounded on the west by 4th Street West, a portion of Highway 520 on the south side up to the fire station where it jogs around to 45th Avenue

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West, and is further bounded on the north and east sides by alleys whose housing lots face 47th Avenue West and 3rd Street West.

There are 2 vehicular accesses to the park. The primary access is on 4th Street West and secondary access via 45th Avenue West. Pedestrian access is not defined.

The park landscape features can be described as generally flat with the exception of 'Frog Creek'. 'Frog Creek' daylights from a culvert just west of the access driveway near the kiddy playground and returns underground to a culvert at the alley near the fire station. Drainage in the park flows generally to 'Frog Creek' with a 1% slope across the majority of the park. Tree planting generally outlines the boundary of the park and 'Frog Creek'.

The park has 3 land use district designations (See Figure 1.1). The majority of the park is designated Public (P). The 1.32 acres in the southeast corner of the park north of 45th Avenue West is designated Multiple Residential (R4). The 0.48 acres comprised of lots 5, 6 & 7 in block 19 facing 47th Avenue West are designated Residential (R1).



Figure 1.1 Centennial Park Land Use Designations

SECTION 2 – PLAN DATA SYNOPSIS

2.1 Guiding Principles

- Accommodate community based activities to meet the diverse needs of entire community, now and long-term.
- Accommodate neighbourhood-based activities to meet the needs of those citizens within a ¼ mile radius (walking distance).
- To consider the five dimensions of sustainability –social, cultural, economic, environment and governance – when making decisions that affect future growth and development in the context of the necessity for open space and park planning.
- Provide opportunities for all ages to spend leisure and recreation time in park.
- Provide a balance of passive and active park uses.
- Address pedestrian access and trail system, child safety and adjacent uses.
- Preserve and enhance natural resources; Incorporate sustainability principles.
- Develop a plan that is financially responsible and viable for the long-term.
- Establish visual interest throughout the park: open areas, treed areas, accentuate monuments and define appropriate location for future monuments

2.2 Park Features

Existing

- T-ball fields (2)
- Minor baseball fields (2)
- RV campground stalls with water & electrical hook-ups (19)
- Tenting Area
- 'Frog Creek'
- Horseshoe Pits (5)
- Monuments and Memorials (7)
- Campground Washroom and Covered Picnic Area
- Garbage Cans (4)
- Picnic Tables (4 metal in concrete near playground and approx. 20 wood in RV area)
- Playground Equipment and Swing set
- Pedestrian Bridge over 'Frog Creek'
- Trees
- Mackin Hall access
- Car show and Beer Garden Event during Fair Days
- Proximity to The Bridges Golf Course and Claresholm Aquatic Centre

Proposed

- Spray Park and washroom/change facilities
- Parking area for child play area 6-10 stalls
- Barrier fence from alley near childrens play equipment
- *Children at Play – Slow Down* Signs
- Expanded RV campground stalls (15 additional with hook-ups)
- Walking Trails
- More permanent garbage cans
- Dog Waste stations
- Expanded and enhanced 'Frog Creek'
- Entrance Gateways
- Additional Pedestrian Bridges over 'Frog Creek'
- Landscape plan

2.3 Issues and Goals

Over the past few years there have been several issues with Centennial Park with its use and development. A few that will be addressed in the plan are the following:

1. With the development of ball diamonds on the north side of town the existing diamonds have had a drop in usage. This has alleviated neighborhood-parking issues during ball season, but has also tied 2.86 acres of park to a use that sees 70 minor ball users (and an adult beer league whose numbers vary from year to year) during 12 weeks of the year. The T-ball diamonds pose less of a concern as no permanent fencing exists and the placement is to the extreme eastside against the alley.
2. The horseshoe pits were developed with a single person acting as the organizer. When this person discontinued being the driving force behind active use of the horseshoe pits, the pits became relegated to a seldom-used amenity of the RV and campground patrons. Current trends see bocce ball sets for sale at Wal-Mart and new emerging games such as Frisbee golf with needs for play space.
3. In 2004, positive experience of parents and their children in other communities at spray parks lead to the organization and fund raising by the Claresholm Parks Society. The spray park has received a grant (finalized in April 2007) and raised funds for the installation of a spray park. All that is needed is a location. Initially Amundsen Park was the preferred location, but the focus has now turned to Centennial Park. To accommodate community orientation of a spray park-parking stalls near the chosen site will have to be designated.
4. Campground success has recently moved council to approve year round RV access to the park. The change coupled with the success has raised call for more RV sites within the park. An expansion of an intensive active use should be balanced with passive use space.
5. The proximity of both alleys to the children's playground equipment has raised concern for child safety. With a proposed expansion of the area with a spray park, the east west alley and its volume of local traffic, garbage collection and utility servicing should be a concern of any parent.
6. The town has desire for a trail network throughout the town with linkages to the parks. Centennial Park currently has no defined pedestrian access, street side sidewalks or pedestrian trail system. Residents of the retirement home and visitors with disabilities will have a tough time navigating this park.
7. Mackin Hall is in close proximity to the Centennial Park site and sees very little use.
8. Connecting Mackin Hall to the park are 3 lots zoned residential but owned by the Town. These lots have the major drainage course running across them through a culvert. The culvert is part of the drainage system more commonly known as 'Frog Creek'. Functionally the lots are an extension of the parks passive space but there is nothing to indicate to a visitor that the lots are not in private hands.

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9. Frog Creek where exposed is a great amenity to the park. It brings an element of nature to the park and allows for ducks to nest or children to search out frogs. Its shallow nature doesn't hold any real danger yet it is a drainage course and has exposed open culverts.
10. Website searches for Centennial Park give insight to the perception of the park in the context of the traveling public and tourism. It is easy to summarize that the park is listed on websites for two things: The Harvard Memorial and the RV hookups. Does this reflect what the community is about? Or is there something more to be said?
11. Event programming for the park consists of a one day car show with beer gardens during Fair Days, and organized minor baseball / t-ball.
12. Permanent garbage cans are few and far between within the park. Two are focused on the children play area where 4 picnic tables exist, one on the Harvard Memorial, and one on a tree northeast of the fire hall. These garbage cans are in various states of disrepair.
13. On-leash dog walking is allowed within the park and it is the responsibility of the dog owner to clean up after their pet. Availability of garbage cans makes this difficult to uphold when the owner is left holding the bag...literally.

Discussions with council members, city staff and the Claresholm Parks Society have revealed the following park goals:

1. That a trails system be developed throughout the park with connection nodes at natural gathering points;
2. That a spray park be built with change/washroom facilities;
3. That a safe park plan for the children be endorsed with the Municipal Development Plan for the community;
4. That the RV and campground facilities be expanded;
5. That 'Frog Creek' be accentuated as a natural park element;
6. That the available park furniture be enhanced with the plan;
7. That the yearly community events and park programming be expanded with an exploration of what events and programs would work in the winter months;
8. That the balance between active and passive uses in the park be maintained;
9. That the Municipal Development Plan include a comprehensive parks and trails master plan that ties into the Centennial Park Master Plan.

SECTION 3 – PARK MASTER PLAN

3.1 The Plan

As described in the introduction this plan is not meant to be a blueprint for construction. It is a flexible guide by which choices can be made based on the needs of the community, the budget of the town and the changes that come with time. The associated plan map (MAP 1 of the appendix) is intentionally artistic in nature to emphasize that this is a discussion piece.

Strong park planning analyzes the balance between active and passive uses. Active uses can be defined as those uses which are organized or programmed and often have dedicated or constructed space. Active spaces in Centennial Park include baseball diamonds, T-ball diamonds, Campground/RV facilities, playground equipment use and horseshoe pits. Passive use can be defined as uses associated with less structured leisure or play activity where little infrastructure is required. Some passive uses include walking, sun bathing, reading, Frisbee, bocce ball, cycling, bird watching, picnicking, tobogganing and sight seeing.

Currently, the approximate break down of passive and active use within the park by acreage is 7.43 acres of active and 7.41 acres of passive. This is a healthy balance of land use, but by analyzing by calendar use the scale tips toward an excess of passive space. Where did the excess come from?

Simply put the excess came from age and time. As things changed in the community through time certain intense active uses fell by the wayside. New ball diamonds were constructed on the north side of town lowering the necessity for the diamonds in Centennial Park. The horseshoe pits as an organized leisure activity has also diminished. Not because the game is any less fun, but because of a generational shift in sense of fun and the organizational catalyst is no longer in place. The current horseshoe league utilizes facilities at the Canadian Legion.

This diminishment of active use can be equivalent to passive use. That is, if the land stands idle from its designated use it may for observers become less than fully utilized. If the acreage of the large diamonds and horseshoe pits is added onto the passive side, the balance reveals 10.37 acres as passive and 4.47 acres as active. What does this mean for the community?

It may mean nothing if the 4.47 acres of active use creates intensity that requires an abundance of passive space. Communities that have community event programming for parks often need large acreage of passive space to pull off an event.

It may also be an indicator of a park in decline. The master planning process in this case need only draw attention to the park for corrective measures to be taken and dollars to be refocused.

The proposed features listed above will constitute a beginning in a process that will reshape Centennial Park. Each will be discussed in the context of their issues and the cited goals. Each will be assigned 'actions' that the council may consider for implementation by phase, across multiple years. This document should be reviewed before each budget cycle by the CAO and town staff. This will ensure funding is earmarked to progressively move the park forward.

3.2 Entrances

In any park where you wish to engage pedestrians, the visual details become important. Centennial Park does little to announce its presence as an amenity to the town. The lone sign on Highway 520 stands as a highway guide rather than providing a sense of arrival. There are 4 primary pedestrian access points to the park and two vehicular entrances. The vehicular entrances have no guide signs on Highway 520 indicating where to turn to gain access to the campground.

There are four identifiable major pedestrian accesses generally described (see Map 1) as follows:

- A. The southwest corner near intersection of Highway 520 and 4th Street West,
- B. The northwest corner near 4th Street West and 46th Avenue,
- C. The empty lots facing Mackin Hall on 47th Avenue West, and
- D. The pedestrian bridge area at the end of 45th Avenue West.

Two minor access points also exist they are described as follows:

- E. The alley off 3rd Street West in the Northeast corner of the park. This is a minor access because it is a vehicular and utility corridor.
- F. The intersection of Highway 520 at Westlynn Drive on the west side of the Fire Station. This is considered a minor access as it is a mid block crossing at a T-intersection on a secondary Alberta Highway with a nearby emergency services driveway.

Action 3.2-1: Design and construct entrances at the access points noted above.

Action 3.2-2: Add signage where necessary to guide RV travelers to the park and to the primary entrance on 4th Street West.

3.3 The Trail System

Currently, the only defined path or trail leads from the curb on 4th Street West to the Harvard Memorial. The traveling public can see a large expanse of open space but there is little to coax them in to the park to explore and stay. Locals have defined a few short cuts through the park. One goes from the Harvard Memorial along the outfield fence of the ball diamonds to the bridge across Frog Creek. This is a natural starting place for trail definition. This internal park system should tie into the citywide system that generally will occur at street access/intersection points. Trails along streets and alleys shall have distinct separation from vehicular traffic. Trails should have a loop system in layout and should be designed with the concept of visual edges, gateways, and anchors in mind (see figure 3.3-1, 2, 3).

Figure 3.3-1 Trails Design Concept

Edges - Interaction of natural edge mimicked by trail edge for visual emphasis of position in landscape





Figure 3.3-2 Trails Design Concept

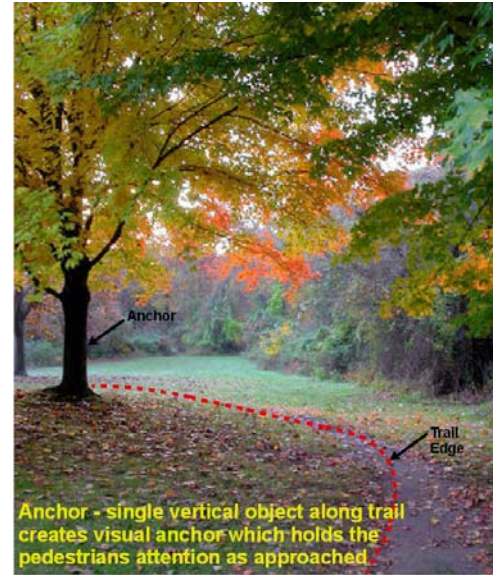


Figure 3.3-3 Trails Design Concept

Action 3.3-1: Work with Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation to ensure crosswalks across Highway 520 are well defined and maintained.

Action 3.3-2: Ensure this park and its trails tie into Town wide parks and trails network as defined in the Municipal Development Plan.

Action 3.3-3: Construct 10' decomposed granite or aggregate surface trails as an initial implementation strategy. Phase in 10' asphalt or concrete trails as part of yearly budget consideration.

Action 3.3-4: Install barrier free sidewalk ramps at park entrances that tie into existing crosswalks for individuals with disability, child strollers, senior citizens and bicycle access.

3.4 The Spray Park

The Claresholm Parks Society has worked since the summer of 2004 with the vision of creating a spray park. Grant funding has been approved and it is now time to implement the concept. Consideration for the location of the spray park within Centennial Park came down to several factors.

Firstly, the location should be near the existing playground equipment to create a centralized gathering point for children separate from the adult uses in the park. Secondly, the spray park should be at some distance from the neighboring houses to lower the impact of sound in the neighborhood. Thirdly, the spray park would be community oriented and therefore would require space for parents to park their cars.

Action 3.4-1: Construct a spray park with the budget dollars provided by the Claresholm Parks Society.

Action 3.4-2: Construct a washroom and change facility in partnership with the Town of Claresholm.

Action 3.4-3: Construct 6 – 10 parking stalls along the access road southwest of the child playground. Monitor parking needs. If in the future more parking is needed consider lots 5, 6 & 7 in block 19 facing 47th Avenue West, which could accommodate approximately 40 parking stalls.

Action 3.4-4: Install a 2'-3' safety barrier fence along both alleys adjacent to the play area and spray park.

Action 3.4-5: Install caution signs in the alley off 3rd Street West and 4th Street West warning motorists of Children at Play.

Action 3.4-6: Plant more trees where necessary to create a sound barrier between the nearby houses.

3.5 Park Furniture, Memorials, Monuments and Art

Park furniture is necessary for user comfort and to extend the stay of a park user. To give the park a coordinated aesthetic and generalize purchasing and maintenance a color theme and style should be chosen for all park furniture. Park furniture includes garbage cans, benches, picnic tables, trail lighting, etc.

The park setting is a place for mind, body and spirit. It is a place to play & recreate, a place to reflect and remember, a place to socialize and a place be inspired about community and culture. Therefore, it is one place ideal for the placement of monuments, memorials and art. A place where all can come and appreciate those items chosen to engage the mind.

Action 3.5-1: Purchase park furniture and place throughout the park at key gathering points for both active and passive uses.

Action 3.5-2: Assign the Claresholm Parks Society the task of defining a park furniture style that can be purchased and implemented within the next 5 years. The group should review benches, garbage receptacles, picnic tables, lighting fixtures, bollards, and any other items deemed necessary.

Action 3.5-3: Purchase and install dog waste stations

Action 3.5-4: Promote the continued placement of monuments, memorials and art within the park. Placement is key and should be done by the guidance of the Claresholm Parks Society and Town Council (suggested locations are indicated on the plan with a 'O' on the symbol).

3.6 RV Expansion

The existing RV campground is a popular amenity to the Town of Claresholm. One need only review tourism websites to understand that Centennial Park is on the radar of the traveling public. The regional significance has led to a call for approximately 15 additional spaces to the 19 existing. Each site (except site 16) has power and water service.

Expansion of the RV area should be approached with some caution. The park has a general usage by the community that will be expanded with the installation of a spray park. The RV amenity should be developed so as not to divide the park into out-of-town users and local users. Both groups should be encouraged to use the entire park site. The trail system is one unifying common feature that will traverse through the RV area to the children's play area and the Harvard Memorial Area.

Consideration should be given to the removal of the large ball diamonds to accommodate an RV expansion. RV is an intensive active use and the acreage dedicated to it should be balanced with a dedication of passive space. The only area where both can expand is the ball diamond area.

Action 3.6-1: Remove ball diamond south of RV campground and landscape area for both RV campground and passive use.

Action 3.6-2: Construct 15 additional RV spaces with power and water hook ups.

Action 3.6-3: Design RV expansion as a loop tied into existing RV campground and discourage RV traffic beyond 'Frog Creek' and on 45th Avenue West.

Action 3.6-4: Plant tree stands for future shading of RV sites and irrigate for rapid growth.

Action 3.6-5: Hook up power and water service for RV site 16.

Action 3.6-6: Permanently close the alley access at RV site 16 reestablishing the grass.

3.7 'Frog Creek' Expansion

'Frog Creek' is the one unique identifying landscape feature of Centennial Park. Although it is a natural drainage course it has over the years been urbanized. One portion has been hidden in a culvert. Although its existence has left 3 residential lots undeveloped it provides a wonderful neighborhood access to the park and links the park to Mackin Hall. The exposed portion of 'Frog Creek' runs relatively straight which allows it to efficiently carry storm water out of the area. To soften the impact of the creek a row of trees defines each side of the watercourse. A wooden bridge enhances pedestrian access across the creek.

Action 3.7-1: Expose and landscape the portion of 'Frog Creek' from 47th Avenue to the alley and again from the alley to the access road in the park. Alternatively, this site may be considered for parking see Action 3.4-3.

Action 3.7-2: Provide a safety grate on all exposed culvert openings.

Action 3.7-3: Develop the residential lots facing 47th Avenue as a passive park area with park defined entrance, benches, and walking trail.

Action 3.7-4: Construct additional bridge crossings at from the tenting area to the spray park, within residential lots area and on the existing exposed portion of 'Frog Creek' just south of the access road.

Action 3.7-5: Designate the three town owned undeveloped residential lots 5, 6 & 7 in block 19 on 47th Avenue to Public (P). Designate area adjacent to 'Frog Creek' and the T-ball diamonds area to Public (P) from Multiple Residential (R4).

3.8 Centennial Park Programming

Currently, Centennial Park's role as a community park can be summarized as a few weeks of minor ball and T-ball, a one-day car show and shine with beer gardens during fair days. Its neighbourhood uses include a dog run area and a kid's playground. Its regional and national use is as a RV campground and tourist stopping point to look at the Harvard Memorial. Few towns can boast that they have 15 acres of contiguous park space in the center of their community.

Once the surrounding residential area is fully developed there will be approximately 600 dwelling units or 1350 people within a ¼ mile walking distance. This user base if encouraged could invigorate Centennial Park into a focal point for the community. The question is how to get them to enjoy the space. As with any community, park programming is a hit or miss adventure. The construction of the spray park may work as a catalyst of rediscovery for the community.

Action 3.8-1: Review all calendar community events in regard to success, growth and space. If an event such as the pancake breakfast has outgrown its space consider moving it to Centennial Park.

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Action 3.8-2: Approach the 6 churches within walking distance and encourage them to have Sunday in the park. Some communities have worked out joint worship services for multi-denominational gatherings.

Action 3.8-3: Approach business leadership for ideas on how to promote Centennial Park as something more than an RV Campground and Harvard Memorial tourist site.

Action 3.8-4: Review and develop winter programming events to maintain park use throughout the year.

Action 3.8-5: Promote Mackin Hall as an amenity to the park for park use.

Action 3.8-6: Engage Claresholm Garden Club for park beautification projects which includes soliciting volunteers for labor and as landscaping advisors

SECTION 4 – CONCLUSION

4.1 Beginning of a Master Plan Process

While the interest is peaking in the 'spray park' the opportunity will present itself to engage the public and review their desires for the park. This is a process that should continue through the life of the Master Plan and the Park itself. This document should be updated yearly and it should be reviewed yearly prior to the setting of the yearly budget. In that light, this plan should be thought of as the beginning of a process that never ends but is built upon over time.

Appendix A

List of Monuments and Memorials

1. Harvard Memorial

Located in the southwest corner of Centennial Park, this memorial is a tribute to the pilots of #15 Service Flight Training School, part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Program, which was based in Claresholm for many years.

2. Rancher's Memorial

Located on the south side of Centennial Park, this memorial is a tribute to the generation of ranchers in southern Alberta from 1900 to 2000.

3. Jori Dubois Memorial

Located on the south side of Centennial Park along Highway 520, this memorial captures the spirit of an athlete in its simple thought "Play, smile, think of me....".

4. Time Capsule 2000

Located just north of the Harvard Memorial on 4th Street West, this capsule is to be opened on Canada Day 2050. It contains essays, commemorative coins, a bronze buffalo for the mayor, and bronze arrowheads for council. It was buried in 1999.

5. Sun Dial

Located on the west side of the park, the sundial is an interactive simple clock. Simply stand on the horseshoes corresponding to the month of the year and let your shadow tell you the time. The Sun Dial was added in 2001.

6. Claresholm and District Park Centennial Commemoration Marker

Located on the north side of the vehicular entrance on 4th Street West, this stone marker with bronze inlaid rotary club plaque notes the three levels of government who provided funding for the park in 1967.

7. Playground Dedication

Located on the southwest corner of the playground, this post-mounted plaque was erected as a dedication of the playground equipment. The children's playground began in 1999 and was completed in 2002.