

BIKE SKILLS PARK STUDY



Supplementary Information

September 10, 2024

City of Fort Saskatchewan



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Fort Saskatchewan, situated along the North Saskatchewan River, offers 34 park spaces and extensive outdoor recreational opportunities highlighted by its 118KM trail network, park spaces and diverse field and court sports amenities. Recognizing the role of recreation in community well-being, Council directed Administration to explore the development of a bike skills park through a feasibility study. This initiative emphasizes active living, inclusion, and enhancing community connections with nature.

The Bike Skills Park Feasibility Study, initiated during the 2023 budget deliberations, evaluated multiple sites, and resulting in three potential sites located at West River's Edge recreation area and Turner Park. Council referred the Bike Skills Park Feasibility study back to *Administration for continued user engagement, further site assessment, development of a site recommendation, recommended funding sources, timing, phased approaches, community partner commitment and operational impacts to be brought back in a report to council end of September 2024.*

Key findings from the additional work include a recommended site through considerations of the initial Bike Skills Feasibility Study, public & community partner engagement and site assessment.

Administration recommends Site 1 as the preferred location for a city-owned bike skills park. To support this initiative, funding for a Class 2 (-10% / +15%) design can be supported through the Annual Capital Funding and the capital build supported through Local Government Fiscal Framework (LGFF). Based on community feedback and analysis of existing bike parks, Initial plans for Phase 1 could include an asphalt pump track, dirt flow trails, and beginner wooden features, with a skill progression planned for Phase 2 within Site 1 footprint. This would be confirmed as part of the Class 2 design work. The operational impacts, including estimated maintenance costs and funding strategies, have been evaluated at a Class 5 (-30% / +50%) level. As a city funded project, it is projected to take one year from design to completion, ensuring adequate resources for ongoing maintenance by Park Services. If community partnership is required for grants, sponsorship opportunities and in-kind work, the project timeline would likely increase. This purposely built bike skills park for all ages and skill levels is expected to enhance local recreation, attract visitors, and improve community health.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Fort Saskatchewan is located along the North Saskatchewan River offering a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities year-round. The city offers 34 park spaces, including pocket parks, sports-focused parks, playground-equipped parks, special event park space and festival park spaces. An impressive 118KM of diverse trails, offering year-round exploration for both residents and visitors. These trails range from smooth, paved walking paths (80KM) to multi-use single dirt trails (38KM), catering to a variety of outdoor activities and preferences. Field sports feature 13 soccer fields, with



some being multi-programmable, 22 minor ball diamonds, one football field, and rugby field (Taurus Field is considered a facility and not an open park space amenity). Additionally, there are three outdoor rinks, which are multi programmable for beach volleyball, soccer, basketball, box lacrosse, ball hockey, and football practices. Court sports enthusiasts can access two tennis facilities, one pickleball facility and six basketball courts. A Family spray park and numerous picnic spaces and toboggan hills scattered across the city. Adjacent to Harbour Pool is a skateboard park for all ages. West River's Edge area offers an extensive outdoor experience with amenities such as a 38-acre fenced off leash dog park, seven slo-pitch diamonds, a popular playground, a fishing pond doubling as outdoor ice skating, and approximately 14km of Nordic ski trails. The above-mentioned amenities are either available for community use or have a license agreement with some community access (Appendix "A" summaries Outdoor Amenities and notes usage, agreements, and public access). The addition of a purpose-built bike skills park would complement the current outdoor activities.

The 2015 Recreation Facilities and Parks Master Plan Update identifies a mid-term project for a Family Fun Play Area and a long-term project for a Community Facility, both aligning with a bike skills park project and additional amenities to enrich this area, however, a master plan specific for the West River's Edge area is still to be established.

In 2021, the city conducted a [Recreation Priorities Survey](#), which revealed that West River's Edge (WRE) Trails were rated as the top priority project by households. However, the group survey results placed West River's Edge Trails at number seven. Additionally, the survey inquired about the importance of a West River's Edge Family Play Area (noted in the [2015 Recreation Facilities and Parks Master Plan Update](#)), with households ranking it fourth and groups ranking it sixth. These findings highlight the significant value and benefits that residents attribute to outdoor spaces in this area.

During the 2023 budget deliberations, Council had directed Administration to explore the feasibility of developing a bike skills park as a new recreational amenity in the city. Consultant EDS Group Inc. was retained to complete a final report which included defining different scope / program options, options for supporting amenities, potential locations, Class 5 estimate capital cost and operating impacts and exploring options for grant funding.

The [Bike Skills Park Feasibility Study](#) was presented to council on October 10, 2023, and recommended three potential sites (West River's Edge north of the Dow Ball Fields, Turner Park area, and West River's Edge South) for consideration along with high level conceptual plans, Class 5 cost estimate capital cost and annual operations and a variety of funding avenues to be considered for implementation and maintaining the park. A council resolution to send the study back to Administration for continued engagement, further site assessment, development of a site recommendation, recommended funding sources, timing, phased approaches, community partner commitment, and operational impacts, to be brought back to Council by September 30, 2024.

The subsequent items were finalized:

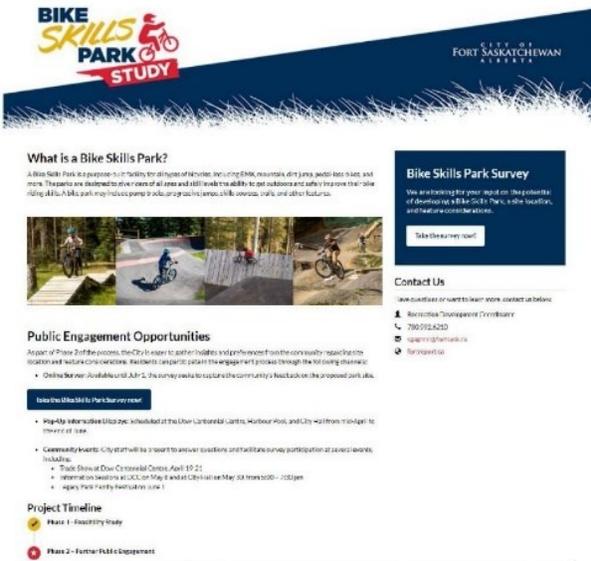
1. Visual branding developed including a [website landing page](#) containing easy to read material, Feasibility Study, FAQ, and access to a survey. Posters, postcards, and education stations were displayed in various city facilities.
2. Engagement
 - a. Community Partners continued engagement to further discuss the top three sites scored in the feasibility study by the evaluation matrix and their interest of partnership.
 - b. Public consultation within the community included:
 - i. A survey designed with seven questions focused on different bike skills park features, evaluating whether this amenity enhance recreation opportunities, preferred site location, supporting amenities, residency status, frequency of biking, and an open-ended question for general feedback.
 - ii. Fort Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce Trade Show with estimated engagement of 300 people with 421 surveys completed.
 - iii. Separate information evenings at the Dow Centennial Centre and City Hall with estimated engagement of 45 people with 27 surveys completed.
 - iv. Legacy Park Family Festival with estimated engagement of 116 people with 19 surveys completed.
3. Site Assessment and recommendation including drainage, grading review, environmental impact, and supporting amenities followed by a site recommendation.
4. A recommended potential phased approach, with advantages outlined.
5. Operational Impacts - Operating impact for Park Services.
6. Recommended Funding Sources.
7. Community Partnership Commitment.
8. Timing of Project.

The site recommendation is based on evaluation from the initial Bike Skills Park Feasibility Study, additional community partner engagement sessions, survey results and onsite assessment. Site 1

emerges as the preferred location, supported by a proposed potential phased timeline, operational insights, and community partnership considerations.

2.0 VISUAL BRANDING

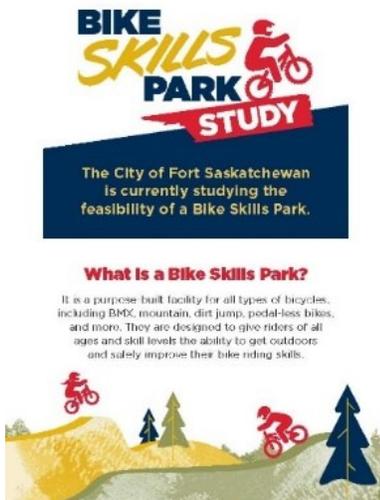
Visual branding was developed to ensure consistent project recognition within the community and provide a clear pathway for accessing information and completing a survey on the website's landing page containing easy to read material, Feasibility Study, FAQ, and access to a survey. Posters, postcards, and education stations were displayed in various city facilities.



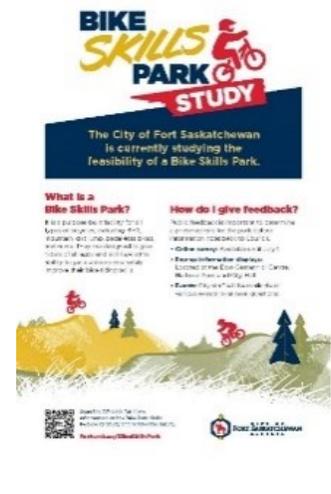
Website view



Education Station



Postcard



Poster

3.0 ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Community Partners:

The Bike Skills Park Feasibility Study engagement consisted of the Naturalist Society, Fort Saskatchewan Trail Alliance, and Indigenous Society of Fort Saskatchewan. Continued discussions were held between January 15 – 18, 2024 with the above organizations (excluding Naturalist Society and Fort Prairie who both did not respond to the invitation) and including additional organizations of Andy Polanski Charitable Foundation, Nordic Ski Club, Fort Saskatchewan Mixed Slo-Pitch Association (FSMSPA) and Youth Council who may be interested in collaborating depending on site selection. The following offers a summary of discussions with the community partners on their preferred site.

Community partners through interviews provided general comments on the proposed sites, highlighting the strengths and drawbacks of each. Feedback from the Youth Council meeting raised the following key points:

- **Community Impact:** The Youth Council sees the bike skills park as a valuable asset for the community, offering another outdoor recreation opportunity for youth.
- **Inclusivity:** They emphasized the importance of the park design for all skill levels and ages. This will allow people of different abilities to test and develop their bike skills.
- **Youth Engagement:** The Youth Council believes that the park will actively engage the youth and provide them with a positive activity.

Site 1 WRE-North, recognized for its convenient amenities, including nearby parking, portable / and facility washrooms, and paved trails. Partners are pleased that the Interpretive Forest is fenced off and noted that the berry-bearing bushes in the area are a community favorite. The terrain features appealing hills, and there is potential for future expansion of the site. However, signage will be necessary to direct bikers from the West River's Edge parking lot. Additionally, there are opportunities for synergies with FSMSPA. The site would be beneficial for slo-pitch tournament participants, enhancing the overall experience at West River's Edge outdoor park space. Parking would be congested at the slo-pitch area due to the current volume from slo-pitch and playground use.

Site 2 Turner Park is recognized for offering the best elevation and forest coverage, which provides excellent protection for trails. It has great access from the campground, promoting tourism and helping to spread out amenities in the city, as West River's Edge is already programmed. Parking usage significantly increases during the spring sports season, leading to increased volume of people within the park area.

Conversely,

Site 3 WRE-South offers the greatest size but was deemed too far from existing amenities such as washrooms and parking, and it lacks hills and trees, making it less favorable. If either Site 1 or Site 3 is selected, it is desired to include Nordic club in the design for possible trails.

3.2 Public Consultation

Public engagement is essential for projects to provide the community with options to share feedback and perspectives.

Open Survey

An open survey, recognizing that the project is still in the study phase was designed with seven questions focused on different bike skills park features, evaluating whether this amenity enhance recreation opportunities, preferred site location, supporting amenities, residency status, frequency of biking, and an open-ended question for general feedback. The benefit of an open survey is to provide a broad overview of opinions and insights into general attitudes and preferences without restrictions on age. The challenges are the number of surveys a person can submit causing a lack of validity due to potential biases and lack of response controls, so it is not a statistically representative result. An open survey is still considered a valuable tool for gathering data and was accessible for completion on all devices or in hard copy format distributed at all recreation facilities. At the closure of the survey on July 1, 2024, Administration received 1,119 submissions

Questions:

1. If these features were to be phased into the bike park over time, what order would you want to see them built? Final ranking:
 - 1) Dirt Flow Trails
 - 2) Dirt Jumps
 - 3) Constructed Wooden Features
 - 4) Asphalt Pump Track
2. I see an amenity like a bike park enhancing the City's recreation opportunities.
 - Strongly Agree 76.76%
 - Agree 12.78%
 - Unsure 3.49%
 - Disagree 2.41%
 - Strongly Disagree 4.56%
3. Viewing the locations of the proposed three sites for a bike skills park, what is your preferred location?
 - Site 1 43.34%
 - Site 2 18.95%
 - Site 3 32.44%
 - None 5.27%
4. List the supporting amenities in order of importance, ranging from the most crucial (#1) to the least essential (#4), to ensure the success of the community bike skills park.
Final ranking:
 - 1) Bike repair station.
 - 2) Shaded seating area
 - 3) Parking nearby
 - 4) Porta Potty
5. Are you a resident of Fort Saskatchewan?
 - Local 86.95%
 - Non-Local 13.05%
6. How often do you or your family members engage in biking activities?

- 1-3 times per week 65.15%
 - 3-5 times per month 21.00%
 - A few times a year 10.28%
 - Not at all 3.57%
7. Provide any additional comments, suggestions, or feedback on site selection for the Bike Skills Park Study you would like to share.
- 393 comments (35.1%) were broken into the following high-level categories:
 - i. **Location** - some favored Turner Park due to the forested area, while others note WRE due to its proximity to the growing neighborhood and existing amenities.
 - ii. **Inclusion and Accessibility** - highlight the need for the park to be inclusive for all ages and abilities.
 - iii. **Environmental Considerations** - comments express a desire for the park to remain eco-friendly.
 - iv. **Community Benefits** - comments emphasize the benefits of providing a healthy activity for teens, attracting enthusiasts from outside the city, and adding another recreation opportunity.

Trade Show

Administration actively participated in the Fort Saskatchewan Trade Show, engaging an estimated 300 people, resulting in 421 surveys completed. Most interactions were positive, with only a few indicating a disinterest in the project. The completion of this event saw the highest surge in completed surveys.

Information Sessions

Two evening information sessions were held, one at the Dow Centennial Centre (May 8) and the other at City Hall (May 30) having Administration available to engage in conversation, offer information and encourage individuals to complete the survey. Participation during these two events saw minimal connectivity with approximately 25 people at Dow Centennial Centre and 18 submitted surveys and 20 people at City Hall with 9 submitted surveys.

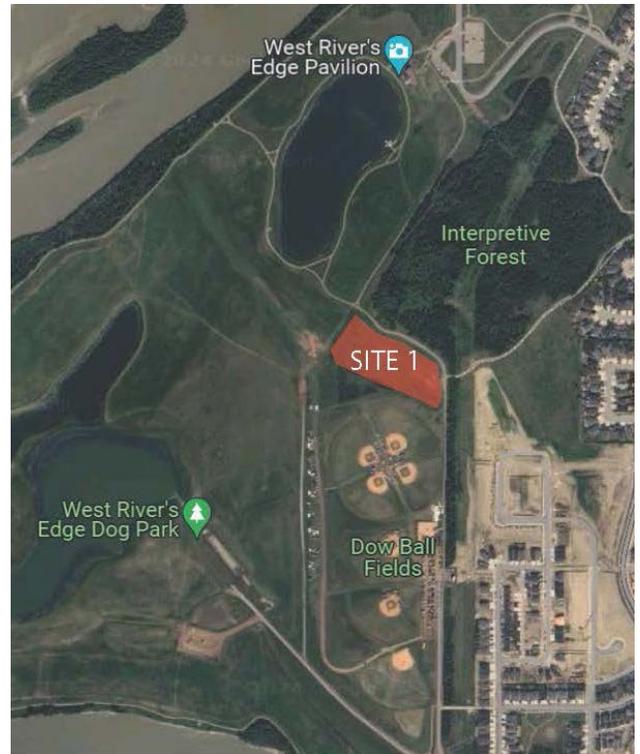
Legacy Park Family Festival

The Legacy Park Family Festival is one of the city's most attended special events, drawing in over 2,000 people. Administration set up near the city tent with an education station and postcards, engaging an estimated 116 people, resulting in 19 surveys completed.



Site 1

Located within West River's Edge recreational area, Site 1 is legally described as Part of S.E. ¼, SEC 23-54-23-W4 behind the Dow Ball Fields with a **proposed site size of 2.47ac**. A buffer of established trees separates it from the Dow Ball diamonds creating two distinct park areas. The Dow Ball diamonds are 335 meters from site 1 and offers concession services (when tournaments are active) and a city parking lot. Andy's Playground, located beside the Dow Ball Fields, offering porta-potty and receptacle bins, is a popular local playground and destination for visitors. A new subdivision, East of site 1, Windsor Pointe Neighbourhood started to be developed in 2020 being separated with paved multi-use trail, established tree line and road. West River's Edge Pavilion is 724 meters from site 1 and offers city parking, washroom facility and picnic tables. The thirty-eight-acre fenced off-leash dog park is 1.31 km from site 1 and offers city parking. Paved multi-use trails are available throughout the West River's Edge recreational area and lead past site 1 allowing for accessible access.



The Interpretive Forest lies to the north of site 1, separated by a wooden fence along the multi-use trail, and is designated for non-recreational purposes, particularly not for biking. Multi-use single dirt trails are located west of site 712 metres that run into the forest and contain wooden features for bike enthusiasts.

Site 1 slopes to the west and north with an approximate elevation change of 5 meters from the east to the west. There is no existing storm infrastructure in the area of site 1 so it is anticipated that drainage would occur on the surface to natural drainage courses in the area. The soil condition consists of silty sands and clay, well -suited for constructing a bike skills park.

The bike skills park will be thoughtfully constructed with various skills features to minimize environmental impact. The goal is to maintain the natural terrain by integrating juvenile trees from Site 1 into the park design rather than removing them. Additionally, signage will be installed on the Interpretive Forest fenced-off area to discourage unauthorized access, while the nearby paved trails beside Site 1 will guide visitors to the correct entrance of the skills park. These measures, along with our commitment to minimizing environmental impact, will help ensure the project's sustainability. Site 1 lends well to the development of a bike skills park to accommodate all skill levels and complement the current trail system and recreation park area.

5.0 POTENTIAL PHASED APPROACH

Projects designed at a Class 2 level utilizing a phased approach, have an advantage for securing grant funding and sponsorship opportunities. Phasing also allows the ability to adjust a design based on user feedback and changing needs as the park evolves.

Other municipalities that have used a phased approach when constructing their bike skills park are [Jasper](#) with phase 1 for novice level riders and phase 2 to develop advanced skills. [Edson](#) with phase 1 of skills zone, flow track, pump track and phase 2 of advanced jumps. [Whitecourt](#) with Phase 1 includes a return ramp with beginner to advanced, wood drops, entry jumps and berms with progressive jumps, wooden features, and phase 2 with expert BMX style jumps line, wall ride, phase 3 with flow jump trail in the forested area. [Cold Lake](#) with phase 1 of beginner to advanced riding trails with phase 2 of junior and senior Pump Tracks, Jump Line stacks, Wood-Rock Skills, and Expert Jumps.

The Bike Skills Park Feasibility Study outlines a high-level conceptual design that includes a jump area, wall ride area, wood skills / drop area, pump track area, and flow skills trail within the 2.47-acre space, along with amenities such as a picnic and rest area.

The bike skills survey results from question one indicates a desired phased-in approach as:

1. Dirt Flow Trails
2. Dirt Jumps
3. Constructed Wooden Features
4. Asphalt Pump Track

Based on survey results, community partner engagement, and municipal comparators, Administration recommends a potential phased approach to serve the community by gradually developing a high-level skill park and supporting amenities. Completion of Class 2 concept drawings will enable this approach, facilitating effective management of costs, timelines, and community engagement to ensure the park meets expectations. Initial discussion with the designer for a potential phase could consist of:

- Phase 1: Asphalt Pump Track and Dirt Flow Trails and beginner wooden features with seated rest area,
- Phase 2: Add within the existing site, dirt Jumps and advanced Wooden Features, additional seated rest areas, bike repair station, and
- Future Phase: Community facility located in an area that benefits multiple recreation activities (not factored in the Class 5 Site 1 costing for this project).

6.0 OPERATIONAL IMPACTS AND LIABILITY

A Bike Skills Park is anticipated to bring additional people to the West River's Edge recreational area which could lead to increased traffic on the paved trails, increase washroom use and garbage in area. Receptacle cans would be part of the design in the resting areas to give people an opportunity to properly dispose of waste. Parks Services would inspect weekly (same standards for playgrounds, skatepark) between May 1 – August 31 and then move to a month inspection for the remainder of the months and over the winter ([GEN-039-A](#)). Garbage at this site would remain on a constant rotational schedule for pickup along with other areas nearby (West River's Edge Pond, Andy's Playground, trail system). Further detailed amenity services would come from damage, vandalism, vegetation control and landscape repair. The Bike Skills Feasibility Study indicates a Class 5 operational cost of \$62,500 annually.

According to the position statement "[Healthy childhood development through outdoor risky play](#)," risky and free play is crucial for children's overall development, including their physical, mental, and social well-being. A bike skills park serves as an environment where individuals can enhance their biking skills, decision-making abilities, and confidence, similar to playgrounds or skateboard parks.

To mitigate hazards associated with risky play, the bike skills park will adhere to established safety standards. This includes implementing proper signage, guidelines, clear markings, and appropriate features designed to minimize risks. User education will be provided on the importance of wearing helmets and adhering to park etiquette to enhance safety.

Regular maintenance and inspections conducted by Park Services will be essential to ensure the park remains safe and functional. This includes monitoring for erosion, and promptly repairing or replacing any damaged features. The bike skills park will be covered by the same insurance policy as the current skateboard park, providing adequate coverage for liability and ensuring protection for park users.

7.0 RECOMMENDED FUNDING SOURCES

A Class 2 conceptual design will help guide a phased approach, cost analysis and grant or sponsorship opportunities in partnership with community partners. Funding of \$62,500 for Class 2 conceptual design through the Annual Capital Funding and the capital build, Class 5 estimate at \$625,000 can be sourced from LGFF or annual capital funding, or debt with grant or sponsorship opportunities.

Non-Profit Organizations grant opportunities are available for projects that are approved, and shovel ready. The Provincial [Active Communities Initiative](#) is funding capital projects that generate sport and recreation opportunities for Albertans. Applications open in spring with expression of interest with approved submission application form due by early fall. [Community Facility Enhancement Program](#) (large) is financial assistance up to \$1M to upgrade, expand, purchase, or build public-use community facilities, with application deadline late spring. [Co-Op Community Spaces Funding Program](#) funding area of recreation with a timeline application by February 1 each year. [Active Communities Initiative](#) aims to fund capital projects that generate sport and recreation opportunities for Albertans with an expression of interest deadline end of June. Alberta Blue Cross offers [Built Together](#) for projects that foster active living and application deadline of September. Federal grant opportunities include [Active Transportation Fund](#) with an application deadline in June.

Projects funded by grants or sponsorship typically take longer to complete by following grant timelines and community partners' support capacity. Sponsorship opportunities require projects to align with the company's sponsorship initiatives and their budget cycles, while City-funded projects usually lead to faster completion timelines.

8.0 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP COMMITMENT

The Bike Skills Park is a Council directed project aimed at enhancing recreational opportunities within the community. With no current bike amenity or formal bike organization, currently local and non-local individuals ride the multi-use paved trails and multi-use single trails along the river valley for their biking experience.

Several community partners have expressed interest to be involved in the class 2 conceptual design concept. With an approved Class 2 project with costing and conceptual drawings, community partners will consider their involvement in collaborating with the city for grant opportunities and potentially engaging local businesses for sponsorship. Furthermore, a specialized service group skilled at constructing wooden features in alignment with the [Whistler Trail Standards](#) would consider partnership with the city, utilizing city-provided supplies to build beginner to intermediate wooden features once they have a better understanding of Class 2 conceptual design. Indigenous residents expressed interest in hosting a blessing ceremony upon breaking ground, which could involve such activities as prayers, song, and dance to honour the land, and ask for ancestors' blessings for the project and its future.

9.0 TIMING OF PROJECT

To secure a consultant for design and build, the process would take approximately 6 months, with the site build adding another 6 months all to be confirmed after a Class 2 design is completed assuming the project is entirely city funded.

If community partnership is required for grants, sponsorship opportunities and in-kind work, the project timeline would increase.

10.0 ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION

Administration recommends Site 1 as the preferred location for a city-owned and operated bike skills park. Funding source for a Class 2 design supported through the Annual Capital Funding to determine a phased in build and strategy for capital funding options. An estimated timeline from design to completion is one year with city funding, ensuring sufficient resources are allocated for Park Services to maintain the park and features. If grants and sponsorship are required in collaboration with community partners, the timeline for project will be lengthened.

Outdoor Amenities

Asset	Organization Use (no agreement)	Access Public / School
Carscadden Park Tennis Courts	Fee to book for tournaments,	Yes – FREE
Eldon Brown Football Field	Minor Football lines the field (at their cost), Free booking (local and non-local clients),	Yes - FREE
James Mowat Outdoor Rink	Minor Football, Minor Soccer program spring, Free Booking (local and non-local clients),	Yes – FREE
Jubilee Ruby Field	High School lines the field (at their cost), Free booking (local and non-local clients),	Yes – FREE
Lesley Mac Millian Park Outdoor Rink		Yes – FREE
Playgrounds (34)		Yes – FREE
Pryce Alderson Spray Park		Yes – FREE
RCMP Park Beach Volleyball Courts	Fee to book for tournaments,	Yes – FREE
RCMP Park Outdoor Rink		Yes – FREE
Skatepark		Yes – FREE
Soccer Fields	Minor Soccer lines the fields (at their cost), Free booking (local and non-local clients),	Yes – FREE
West Rivers Edge Dog Park		Yes – FREE
West Rivers Edge Fishing Pond		Yes – FREE
West Rivers Edge Ice Skating Pond		Yes – FREE

Asset	Lease / License / Agreement	Access Public / School
Carscadden Park Pickleball Courts	LICENSE AGREEMENT WITH FEE, Fort Saskatchewan Pickleball Association, Receive dedicated days / times for league.	Yes – FREE
Dow Diamonds	LEASE AGREEMENT WITH FEE Fort Sask Mixed Slo-Pitch Association, Maintain and program entire lease site.	Yes – FREE
Fort Saskatchewan Golf Course	LEASE AGREEMENT WITH FEE Fort Sask Golf and Curling Club, Maintain and program entire lease site.	Yes – COST
Turner Park Tennis Facility	LICENSE AGREEMENT WITH FEE, Fort Saskatchewan Tennis Club, Receive dedicated days / times for league.	Yes – FREE

Asset	Service Agreement	Access Public / School
Ball Diamonds	SERVICE AGREEMENT: FUNDING AWARDED, Minor Baseball leads maintenance for 12/22 diamonds, FREE booking (local and non-local clients).	Yes – FREE
Multi-Use Single Trails	SERVICE AGREEMENT: FUNDING AWARDED, Fort Sask Trail Alliance, Assist in maintaining multi-use single trails.	Yes - FREE
Nordic Ski Trails	SERVICE AGREEMENT: FUNDING AWARDED, Nordic Ski Club, Maintains Nordic ski trails.	Yes – FREE