

Disc Golf Feasibility Study



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fort Saskatchewan, situated along the North Saskatchewan River, offers extensive outdoor recreational opportunities year-round. The city features 118 kilometers of trails catering to diverse activities, from walking paths to multi-use trails. Additionally, it hosts various field sports facilities, including soccer fields, ball diamonds, and rinks, alongside amenities like tennis courts, pickleball facilities, and skate parks. The city offers 34 park spaces, including pocket parks, sports-focused parks, playground-equipped parks, special event park space and festival park spaces.

This Council initiative proposed disc golf course aims to complement these offerings, providing an affordable and inclusive recreational option accessible to all ages. Based on internal and community partner engagement, West River's Edge Northeast emerges as the preferred location for a 9-hole course due to the space available, existing amenities, and minimal impact on other park activities.

The development of a disc golf course aligns with the city's strategic goals of enhancing community engagement and diversifying recreational opportunities. Supplied vendor estimates of approximately \$50,000 covering course design and construction with possible funding through Annual Capital Funding and estimated design and build time of 7 months.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Fort Saskatchewan is located along the North Saskatchewan River offering a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities year-round. The city boasts an impressive 118KM of diverse trails, offering year-round exploration for both residents and visitors. These trails range from smooth, paved walking paths to multi-use single dirt trails, 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 one 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, and football practices. Court sports enthusiasts can access two tennis facilities, one pickleball facility and six basketball courts. Adjacent to Harbour Pool, a skateboard park is available, along with picnic and park sites, family spray park and various toboggan hills throughout the city. Heritage Trails Park (formerly known as Fort Centre Park) is in phase 1 development with two storm ponds, gravel walking trails, picnic shelter, park benches, nature theme play area and future Nordic ski trails. 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.



Appendix “A” summarizes Outdoor Amenities and notes usage, agreements, and public access. The city offers thirty-four park spaces, including pocket parks, sports-focused parks, playground-equipped parks and programmed parks, leaving four parks eligible for consideration for a 9-hole disc golf course. The disc golf course would complement the current outdoor activities offered to residents and visitors.

Disc golf is a sport like traditional golf but played with frisbee-like discs instead of clubs and balls. Players throw discs from a tee area towards a target, typically a metal basket mounted on a pole. The objective is to complete each hole in the fewest throws possible, similar to golf, with the player completing a course of multiple holes. Course design with simplicity can make the sport accessible, inclusive to all ages and affordable, starting with just a basic frisbee. A disc golf course offers the opportunity for a formalized organization to form which can provide community engagement, lessons and league opportunity or participants can simply enjoy the park and challenge of the sport at their leisure. Courses can be designed as seasonal or year-round depending on the park site and programming.



The opportunities for Disc Golf in Alberta are expanding due to the rising interest in outdoor recreation, as well as the affordability of installation and maintenance. Alberta (as of July 2023) offers 70 known disc golf courses, with 19 in the Capital Region that includes Town of Bruderheim and three courses in Sherwood Park (both approximately 28km from Fort Saskatchewan). The following surrounding municipalities offering either a 9-hole or 18-hole course for residents and visitors:

9-Hole Course	18-Hole Cours
Town of Bruderheim	Bailey's Crossing - Spruce Grove
Four Seasons - Beaumont	Hermitage Park - Edmonton
Jubilee Park – Spruce Grove	Kingswood Park – St. Albert
Langholm Park – St. Albert	Niska Paskwahk - Edmonton
Norwester - Edmonton	Peace Hills - Wetaskiwin
Strathcona Wilderness Centre - Ardrossan	Sea Change Brewing Disc Park - Devon
The Hills - Edmonton	Rundle Park - Edmonton
Water-In-View – Leduc	The Hills - Edmonton
Montreux Park - Morinville	

On June 11, 2024, the following council resolution was unanimously approved for *Administration to assess the feasibility, location and costs associated with construction of a permanent disc golf course, including stakeholder engagement, and to be brought back to Council with a report by end of Q3 2024.*

The subsequent tasks were finalized:

1. Engagement with internal departments consisting of Culture and Recreation, Planning and Development, Public Works (Parks Services), Utilities & Sustainability, and Corporate Communications and community partner engagement including Fort Saskatchewan Disc Golf and Nordic Ski Club.
2. Site review on four different options based on engagement discussions.
3. A recommended site for a 9-hole disc golf course after discussions, site visits and a scoring matrix.
4. Costing for a 9-hole disc golf course that includes.
 - a. Course design,
 - b. Project build, and
 - c. Operational considerations.

The site recommendation is based on internal and external discussion through engagement meetings, site visits, and scoring matrix. The West River's Northeast location emerges as the preferred site location, supported by in-house operational insights, supplied vendor estimates of approximately \$50,000 and community partnership considerations.

2.0 ENGAGEMENT

Internal staff and community partner engagement are crucial for the success of a feasibility study for a disc golf course. Involving internal staff ensures that the project aligns with organizational goals and leverages the team's expertise and resources. Engaging community partners ensures the project meets the actual needs and desires of the residents and avoids limitations with other recreational activities.

2.1 Internal departments

Internal meeting held with the following departments offering their insight, Culture and Recreation Services, Planning and Development, Public Works (Parks Services), Utilities & Sustainability, and Corporate Communications. The city provides thirty-four park sites, with initial discussions on eight primarily chosen for their land size. After evaluating common criteria for disc golf sites and current usage and amenities, the selection was narrowed down to four for deeper examination: Heritage Trails Park, Turner Park, and two locations at West River's Edge. Factors such as current park activation, proximity to residential areas, limited amenities, and constraints on course design eliminated the other four locations from consideration.

Internal Discussion

Park Site	Advantage	Drawbacks
Carscadden Park	Attractive for school use, Parking available, and Possible location for 6-holes.	Potential conflict with other sport fields in park area, and Homes surrounding entire park site.
Eldon Brown / Jubilee Park	Attractive for school use.	Potential conflict with other sport fields in park area, Homes surrounding entire park site, and Limited parking.
Heritage Trails Park	Size available for 9 + holes, and Trees, hills.	Programs offered in park area, and Parking available at a distance.
Inglis Park	Homes located only on one side.	Highway adjacent, and Limited parking.
Pryce Alderson	Size of area, and Beginner course design.	Potential conflict with other sport fields in park area, Limited parking during peak sport season, Homes surrounding entire park site, Course design on perimeter of sport fields, and Limited trees impact design options.
Turner Park	Treed area, amenities.	Potential conflict with other sport fields in park area, Site size is limiting, Design would predominantly be on a hill to avoid other park programming, Course designed on a hill can be less inclusive, and Parking can be congested during spring months.
West River's Edge Northeast	Water area, Open and tree design, and Amenities and parking	Programs offered in park area.
West River's Edge Pavilion	Water area, Open and tree design, and Amenities and parking.	Programs and ski rentals offered in park area and Pavilion.

2.2 Community Partners

Community Partners are groups or organizations within the local community that promote and facilitate sports and recreational activities. Often help in organizing events, providing resources, offering services and engaging residents in programs to enhance community well-being. Working collaboratively with community partners allows us to leverage local expertise, resources and community engagement by enhancing the effectiveness and success of studies and projects.

2.2.1 Fort Saskatchewan Disc Golf

Fort Saskatchewan Disc Golf is an informal group dedicated to promoting the sport of disc golf over the past two years. As an informal group, this limits their ability to apply for grant opportunities in partnership with the city, however with a permanent course they aspire to formalize as a non-profit group in the future. They have been promoting the sport through a series of 12 events, aiming to showcase, teach and provide the experience to new and experienced disc golfers. A meeting was held to review the four selected sites for the group to discuss and evaluate through completing the scoring matrix.

2.2.2 Nordic Ski Club

The Nordic Ski Club offers programming for members and maintains extensive groomed classic and skate ski trails throughout the river valley park areas, covering approximately 14 kilometers. Established in 1985, the club has provided winter fun programming and free trail access for the public for 39 years. Three of the four sites for review are within the club's trail system and including the club in discussions is essential to ensure minimal or no impact on the groomed trails. The club also offers valuable insight on the suggested park spaces due to their knowledge of the areas.

2.2.3 Youth Council

The Youth Council is a committee established by City Council and its purpose is to educate and empower youth to provide information and recommendations in relation to issues that impact or involve the youth. A meeting was held and their feedback in the following key points:

- **Youth Interest:** The Youth Council believes that the disc golf course would attract interest from young people. They noted if friends enjoy the course, others would be likely to continue using it. They also noted that people might travel to different courses, similar to skateboard parks.
- **Accessibility:** They like the idea of an activity that could be enjoyed by a simple frisbee to start, making it a low-cost accessible activity.

2.2.4 Community Partner Site Review

Park Site	Advantage	Drawbacks
Heritage Trails Park	Site size is good, Offers variety of terrain, Course would have a view attracting visitors, and Room to work with Nordic Trails.	Preference to start course by parking lot, Course layout might be challenging due to current programs, and Amenities are on top of hill close to parking.
Turner Park	Amenities available, and Mature tree area.	Intermediate – advance course due to trees, Short holes,

		Additional grass maintenance due to natural area, and Could not expand to 18-hole course.
West River's Edge Northeast	Site size is excellent, Amenities available, Offers variety of terrain, Area offers future expansion, and Room to work with Nordic Trails.	Work with established Nordic Trails, and other programs, and Possible seasonal course.
West River's Edge Pavilion	Site size is good, Amenities available, and Area offers future expansion.	Seasonal course, due to Nordic programming.

3.0 SITE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION

For a successful course design accommodating various skill levels, blending seamlessly with the park's existing functions, and collaborating effectively with other recreational activities, the following criteria are suggested for a 9-hole disc golf course of 6+ acres of land,

- i. Landscape with trees, rolling hills, water features,
- ii. Existing Park uses,
- iii. Amenities: parking, washrooms, benches, picnic,
- iv. Compatible adjacent land use (recreation, commercial, residential),
- v. Environmental sensitivities, and
- vi. Safety for recreation enthusiasts not using the disc golf course.

An internal site visit meeting was held with various departments with the above criteria as a guideline upon viewing.

3.1 WEST RIVER'S EDGE (Pavilion Area – Pond - 43 acres)

- i. Landscape with trees, rolling hills, water features,
 - This area offers flat space, growing forest area, water challenges from the pond and some rolling hills.
- ii. Existing Park uses,
 - The park is all seasonal recreation area the offers in the warmer months a pond for fishing, paved bike trails, multi-use single river valley trails, boat launch area for river access. In the winter months this area houses the Nordic Ski Club in the lower level of the Pavilion. The Club offers programming to members and grooms trails through the West River's Edge area for club members and free access for the public. The pond is cleared for free public skating, snowshoeing is enjoyed on the



multi-use single trails, along with fat bikes. People rent out the Pavilion year-round for private functions ranging from meetings to intimate gatherings or weddings.

- No existing sport field is at this location.
- iii. Amenities: parking, washrooms, benches, picnic,
 - This location offers parking in three locations. Beside the Pavilion offers 30 parking spots, across the road is an overflow parking offering 50 spots and down the road is the boat launch parking area offering approximately 40 spots. The Pavilion offers public washrooms, picnic tables and rentable facility.
- iv. Compatible adjacent land use (recreation, commercial, residential),
 - This area is very well recreated year-round and would be well suited to offer another amenity for individuals or groups to enjoy at all ages and skill level.
 - Disc Golf Course could be a seasonal amenity to avoid conflict with winter enthusiasts.
- v. Environmental sensitivities,
 - Young trees and other vegetation may be vulnerable to discs thrown in error; thus, basket placement consideration would be necessary. The area is mowed thus walking from basket to basket will not disturb the ground.
- vi. Safety,
 - Course design would include signage and baskets will be positioned away from paved trails to ensure no throw crossover onto the trails.

3.2 HERITAGE TRAILS PARK (47 acres)

- i. Landscape with trees, rolling hills, water features,
 - This vast area offers both young and established trees with open area. Two storm ponds and some rolling hills.
- ii. Existing Park uses,
 - New developing park offering passive trails (gravel) and board walks around the storm ponds. Paved trails along the border of the park with a passive teaching area within the park area. In the winter Nordic Ski trails will be throughout the park thus possibly having a seasonal disc golf course. The sheep program utilizes some of this area that draws residents and visitors to interact with the sheep.
 - No existing sport field is at this location.
- iii. Amenities: parking, washrooms, benches, picnic,
 - Parking available at a distance in the Heritage Precinct with 30 parking spots. Additional parking can be found across the street at Legacy Park with 26 parking spots. Washroom facility is located on the Heritage Precinct area. A playground area and



future picnic sites are planned within the Heritage Trails Park area, along with a road and washroom facility (in phase 2).

- iv. Compatible adjacent land use (recreation, commercial, residential),
 - This is a recreational land with a historical site above. Anticipated to be a well visited
- v. Environmental sensitivities,
 - High foot traffic in some areas may prevent vegetation growth.
 - Excessive walking over established vegetated areas, particularly around the storm ponds, may result in minor erosion. This risk will be mitigated by signage and basket placement.
- vi. Safety,
 - Course design would include signage and baskets will be positioned away from paved trails to ensure no throwcrossover onto the trails and away from the current programs.

3.3 TURNER PARK (6.5 acres)

- i. Landscape with trees, rolling hills.
 - This area offers vast number of established trees on a hillside.
- ii. Existing Park uses,
 - Sport field amenities are established and heavily utilized during the spring sport leagues.
 - Picnic shelter is a popular rental for families and organizations BBQ.
 - Campground is beside park area and recently expanded.
 - Paved walking trails through the park and multi-use single trails located in the forest area.
- iii. Amenities: parking, washrooms, benches, picnic,
 - Parking is well used during spring sport leagues/ with approximately 17 parking spots and street parking. On the southwest side of the park offers another parking lot with approximately 20 parking spots.
- iv. Compatible adjacent land use (recreation, commercial, residential),
 - Recreation use is throughout this park space and beside with a road leading only to the park area.
- v. Environmental sensitivities
 - Higher traffic in treed areas may influence the migration of birds in this area.
 - Excessive walking around trees may prevent growth of some vegetation.
 - Archaeological Historic Resource Impact Assessment being conducted in adjacent campground.
- vi. Safety,



- Course design would include signage, factor in other programs occurring in park and baskets will be positioned away from paved trails and picnic sites to ensure no throw crossover in area.

3.4 WEST RIVER'S EDGE – NORTHEAST (of Pavilion) – (31 acres)

- i. Landscape with trees, rolling hills, water features,
 - This area offers flat space, growing and mature forest area, water challenge, and hills.
- ii. Existing Park uses,
 - The park is all seasonal recreation offering paved and gravel trails and in winter months a toboggan hill and Nordic ski trails in the area.
 - No existing sport field is at this location.
- iii. Amenities: parking, washrooms, benches, picnic,
 - This location offers parking in three locations. An overflow parking offering 50 spots, across the road beside the Pavilion offers 30 parking spots, and down the road is the boat launch parking area offering approximately 40 spots. The Pavilion offers public washrooms, picnic tables and rentable facility.
- iv. Compatible adjacent land use (recreation, commercial, residential),
 - This area is well recreated year-round and would be well suited to offer another amenity for individuals or groups to enjoy at all ages and skill level.
 - Disc Golf Course could be a seasonal amenity to avoid conflict with winter enthusiasts.
- v. Environmental sensitivities,
 - Young trees, shrubs, and other plants may be vulnerable to discs thrown in error; thus, basket placement consideration would be necessary. The area is mowed thus walking from basket to basket will not disturb the ground.
 - Excessive walking over established vegetated areas, particularly around the storm ponds, may result in minor erosion. An increase in foot traffic may encourage some wildlife to retreat into less populated areas of the park. This risk will be mitigated by signage and basket placement.
- vi. Safety,
 - Course design would include signage and baskets will be positioned away from paved trails to ensure no throw crossover onto the trails. Design would factor in the location of toboggan hill, Nordic ski trails and walking trails for enhanced safety.



3.5 Scoring Matrix

The scoring matrix is a tool used to help evaluate the sites based on the following criteria,

1. Site Access, parking
2. Site Size, 6+ acres for 9-hole
3. Environmental Protection, impacts on natural areas
4. Site Opportunities, site terrain
5. Public Risk, site location
6. Supporting Amenities, washrooms, benches
7. Land use Compatibility, surrounding activities

The following table includes the combined (average) scores from matrix completed by staff and community partners with the four-sites ranked 1 – 4.

Site	Aggregate Score	Total Sum Score	Final Ranking
WRE – Northeast	45	454	1
WRE - Pavilion	42	424	2
Heritage Trails Park	31	313	3
Turner Park	27	269	4

The WRE area presents several opportunities for future development and growth. Land available at the WRE-Northeast site, could have a design for future expansion of 9-holes to complete an 18-hole course. Additionally, another possibility within the WRE area is a future seasonal 9-hole course at WRE-Pavilion to complete an 18-hole course. Heritage Trails Park has enough land for a permanent 9-hole course and could expand to a future 18-hole course. In contrast, Turner Park can only support a single 9-hole course without room for expansion.

Should a disc golf course proceed, the recommendation for a 9-hole disc golf course location is West River's Edge Northeast, based on internal discussions, community partners feedback, site assessment and scoring matrix. This location would be an all-season permanent course, however if Nordic ski trails experience damage (walked on) the course could be switched to a seasonal with baskets being removed and installed seasonally.

4.0 DISC GOLF FEATURES

A disc golf course typically requires several key features to provide an enjoyable and challenging experience for players. These include designated tee-pads from which players start each hole, well-designed baskets, which are metal cages with hanging chains that catch discs when successfully thrown into them, marking the completion of each hole. Clear signage and navigation aids are also important to guide players through the course layout and ensure an enjoyable flow of play.



Photo credit: Steward Pond Disc Golf

4.1 Tee-Pads

Disc golf tee-pads are the designated areas from which players throw their first shot (disc) on each hole. Tee-pads are crucial for providing a consistent and fair surface for players to execute their throws. Different types of tee-pads are natural, artificial turf, and concrete.

	Positive	Constraints	Maintenance
Natural tee pad	Lower cost, blend well with natural environment.	Turn into mud, erosion and to restore surface is costly.	Costly and timely when restoring surface.
Artificial turf tee pad	Good surface under most weather conditions, easier to move, if necessary, and aesthetically pleasing.	Cost is similar to concrete and won't last as long.	Requires periodic cleaning and occasional brushing to maintain appearance and functionality.
Concrete tee pad (5X12)	Long lifespan, excellent traction and stability.	Difficult to move once set. Limits to possible tee locations.	Require minimal maintenance.



Photo credit and Tee-pad information from [UDisc](#)

4.2 Baskets

Permanent disc golf baskets of high quality are recommended for a permanent disc golf course anticipating high volume of use and various weather conditions. A permanent basket in the ground allows flexibility to leave the basket locked up year-round or remove basket and capped if required to be a seasonal course.

5.0 OPERATIONAL IMPACT AND COURSE MAINTENANCE

Course maintenance depends on whether the holes are primarily in open areas or wooded regions. Clearing wooded holes involves staff time, however, maintenance is generally minimal, limited to occasional trimming of new growth and possibly spreading wood chips on the fairways every few years. In contrast, open holes necessitate regular grass mowing, though mowing every 2-3 weeks might be sufficient. The recommended site location is in a current park space that meet our standard service level for mowing and a course design would flush out if additional mowing is required. Basket maintenance requires annually review by parks staff and if required to be removed and installed each season (to avoid conflict with Nordic ski trails). Cement tee-pads is recommended as this is the preferred surface and lowest



requirement for maintenance. Operational impact for a disc golf course is deemed minimal for this type of community activity at an estimated \$2,120 annually.

6.0 RECOMMENDED FUNDING SOURCES

Administration has contacted three different businesses and one municipality to obtain estimates for constructing a 9-hole disc golf course. Estimates range from \$24,000 to \$48,625 varying due to differences in course design fee, Tee-Pads, and company travel expenses. This project is eligible through the Annual Capital Funding for conceptual design and build.

9-hole	Supplied vendor estimate (-30% to +50%)
Course design	\$6,500
Course build	\$43,500
TOTAL	\$50,000

Other funding options include seeking grants or sponsorship opportunities that could involve a partnership with a local non-profit or service organization.

Future Opportunity: Engagement interview included the disc golf group who aspire to become formalized as a non-profit organization. At that time, the city will work with them in partnership if they desire to expand the 9-hole course to an 18-hole course by applying through the Community Initiative Project process.

7.0 ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Administration proposes WRE - Northeast as the preferred site location for a city owned and operated 9-hole disc golf course, with \$50,000 capital and estimated \$2,120 for annual operations.

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