

1977  
MARCH

SUBMISSION TO THE CITY OF EDMONTON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

REGARDING PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN REVIEW

from

THE EDMONTON SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL

The Edmonton Social Planning Council welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Parks Master Plan. We feel that effective input from community organizations and citizens at large will be beneficial in the sense of fostering parks and recreation development based on citizens' preferences and values. In this way, citizens can influence an important policy which affects significantly the environment in which they live.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The present process being utilized to obtain citizen input to Parks Review emphasizes written submissions to be incorporated in a tentative plan which will then be presented to citizens for review. The period of time to review policy, research alternatives and write submissions following notice of Parks Review was inadequate. Review, research and organization of participants is a time consuming process which requires at least a six month period. Similarly, the public review period of a tentative plan should extend over a six to eight month period for most effective coverage. This period involves dissemination of information, review and analysis, organization and writing of submissions. Some attempt might be made to work through existing community organizations, as opposed to general public meetings. We emphasize once again at least a six month review period to allow interested citizens to organize, assign tasks, research and compile ideas and information.

Publicity regarding invitation of submissions to Parks and Recreation was inadequate. Detailed, extensive and long-term publicity is a major factor in fostering awareness of Parks policy public participation program. Use of newspapers is one avenue, however, it is recommended that prime space be used. In addition, the advertisement could be made more noticeable and appealing to readers. Future public participation programs would benefit from more generous utilization of the different forms of media, including television, smaller publications, such as community newspapers, posters and brochures. The idea of sending out invitations for submissions to all potentially interested groups might be considered for future public participation programs.

## PARKS STANDARDS

Combined park space in Edmonton totals 14.75 acres per 1,000 population. This standard is misleading however since Master Plan definition of parkland includes parkside drive areas, buffer zones and roadway margins, traffic islands and interchanges. Buffer zones and traffic islands may very well be green space, but are not particularly desirable as parkland play areas for children, or as quiet resting places.

In addition a rigid park standard of 14.75 acres per 1,000 population is not necessarily desirable in the sense of being appropriate to population characteristics such as age, sex, ethnicity and density. More flexible standards are recommended, standards which will be appropriate to density and demographic characteristics, behavioral data and importantly, preferences expressed by residents.

## SURVEY - CITIZEN PREFERENCES

Information on what citizens prefer in terms of park standards, kinds of parks and kinds of recreation should be emphasized in formulation of parks policy. Basic information regarding recreational needs can be gained in this manner, and will help make a parks and recreation program more relevant to citizen needs. This includes a behavioral analysis of the kinds of leisure activities which are developing and to what degree. An inventory of needs, wants, motivations and habits of Edmontonians is emphasized as a means of determining the best possible way to utilize natural resources to meet recreational needs of citizens.

## EXPROPRIATION

A clearer policy on expropriation of housing might be emphasized in the Parks Master Plan. At this time, the Plan indicates that housing be expropriated as a last resort in order to obtain parkland. Other possible sources of neighbourhood parkland might be emphasized, including road closures, demolition of delapidated commercial or industrial buildings and clearing of car lots. In addition, the issue of integration of housing with parkland should be considered. Mingling of housing with parkland may be advantageous in the sense of creating a more defensible space. Nearby housing might encourage parks usage by making people feel more secure in a park area. In addition, nearby housing may allow for visual surveillance of children's activities, thereby encouraging parental willingness to allow children to use parks.

## ACCESSIBILITY

Neighbourhood parks are not equally accessible to neighbourhood residents. This is particularly the case for older people and children where mobility might be limited and the park is located in a non-central position, or across from a major thoroughfare. Neighbourhood parkland may be more accessible if it were spread out, using smaller parks and emphasizing a variety of mini-parks with usable park apparatus. These could include Adventure Playgrounds, Pocket Parks and Ornamental Small Parks. By these means, the likelihood of accessibility and variety, appropriate to the population being served, is increased. In this vein, quality and not quantity of parkland is emphasized.

## REDEVELOPMENT LEVY

An amendment to the Municipal Government Act in 1973 states that a developer in areas designated as redevelopment areas can be made to pay up to \$500.00 a unit, or 50 cents a square foot of each new building for the purpose of providing new or expanded park facilities. The Redevelopment Levy is supported as a means of giving the City power to have developers contribute to public parkland. It is suggested, however, that funds from the Redevelopment Levy be used to build or improve parkland in the redevelopment community, instead of going into a general pool. Given that this Levy may be passed on to future tenants in their rents, it seems reasonable that they should benefit.

## RIVER VALLEY

The Edmonton Social Planning Council emphasizes preservation of areas the River Valley as parkland. In addition to this, it is recommended that pedestrian accessibility from the top of the bank be increased by public transit service to the River Valley. At this time, accessibility to the River Valley (and Fort Edmonton) is restricted to auto traffic.

## SUMMARY

The Edmonton Social Planning Council has welcomed the opportunity to have input to Parks Master Plan Review. This brief has emphasized:

- (a) Accessibility of Parkland
- (b) Integration of Housing
- (c) Variety
- (d) Citizen Participation
- (e) Standards
- (f) Developers Responsibility
- (g) River Valley.