

## Long Term Planning for Lois Hole Park

The following article outlines BLESS's position and suggestions regarding the long-term development of Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park (LHCPP), and the areas adjacent to Big Lake. They are predominantly based on what is specified in the Province's 2019 Park Management Plan. Map 2 (Park Zoning) in that Plan specifies three key zoning categories – Natural Landscape, Special Protection and Facility.

Special Protection Area – This zoning covers the entire north half of LHCPP, except for an 80acre parcel immediately south of the NW Facility Zone. It is also specified for the area next to the shoreline in the SW corner of St Albert. It is intended that there will no development of any new trails or other facilities in the Special Protection Zones, and that any previous disturbance of these areas (including the Sinopec Site) should be returned to its natural condition. This zoning on the north half of LHCPP essentially precludes the possibility of there being a trail system encircling the entire Lake.

Natural Landscape – This zoning covers most of the south half of LHCPP. It allows development of environmentally appropriate trails and viewing points. The public should be directed to mainly stay on the specified trails. The only “primary” trail (with a 2metre granular surface) should be the one along the south shoreline connecting the East Facility Zone (and the existing shelter) to the SW Facility Zone in Parkland.

Facility – This zoning allows “development of infrastructure to support visitor access and staging for recreation and participation in programs”. There will be three Facility Zones around Big Lake. Details of what might be developed in those three areas is listed below.

The Parks Management Plan specifies that the East Facility Zone will accommodate “a day use area, including a network of reservable and non-reservable group picnic shelters, nature trails, a nature-based playground and parking”. It can also include the proposed Environmental Learning Centre (ELC) building. There will be a “primary” 2metre wide granular trail on the west side of the Facility Zone, which will provide a connection between the existing primary trail to the north and the future trail running above the “top of bank” along the south shoreline of Big Lake to the SW Facility Zone.

Access into the East Facility Zone will come from the LeClair Way Extension, which is proposed to run on the east boundary of LHCPP. There will be a paved parking area as close as possible to this north/south roadway. The ELC should be located at either the north or south end of the parking lot. The day use facilities should also be located on the east side of the Facility Zone. The only development needed on the west side of the Facility Zone will be some minor trails connecting the day use facilities to the west side primary trail.

The City's proposed ASP specifies that there needs to be a Storm Water Management (SWM) facility in the East Facility Zone. This new SWM lake/wetland will be installed predominantly at the expense of the developer of the parcel of land on the east side of LeClair Way. It must be designed to be a positive environmental feature for the Park. The design and construction of this lake should include adjacent trails, replacement trees and other environmental improvements.

The SW Facility Zone will be a staging area for limited public access into the SW Natural Landscape zone. It will also be the termination point for the “primary” trail that will run above the top of bank line along the south shoreline of the Lake.

The NW Facility Zone is adjacent to the NW corner of the Lake and close to one of the most important areas that needs to be fully protected from public intrusion. The area on the south side of Meadowview Drive could possibly be the site for a suitably camouflaged raised public viewing platform. Other than access to that platform there should not be any public trails into this area south of Meadowview Drive.

Area in St Albert North of the River – This area is not in LHCPP. It will possibly be developed by the City of St Albert, and the layout should be coordinated with the City’s plans for the Red Willow Park West (RWPW). It will likely include Storm Water Management (SWM) lakes that will service the proposed industrial area on the north side of Meadowview Drive. However, there does not need to be any industrial lots or buildings developed on the south side of Meadowview Drive. The land uses permitted in the portion of this land that abuts the Big Lake shoreline should be similar to the land uses specified by the Special Protection Zone in LHCPP. The land uses in the portion that fronts onto Meadowview Drive should be more like the land uses permitted in the LHCPP’s Natural Landscape and Facility Zones, and will include trails, a parking lot and environmentally appropriate lakes.

Existing Ducks Unlimited Trail(s) – The existing small parking lot and Ducks Unlimited trail on the south side of Meadowview Drive is not within LHCPP. The area close to the Lake is currently used for duck hunting and suchlike. If it is acquired by the Province at some time in the future, it could then be used as an additional Natural Landscape zone, including limited development of a minor trail system leading to camouflaged viewing “blinds”, and a viewing platform near the lake shore. The existing oil and gas facilities and debris will need to be removed and the area remediated. The only access into this area would be from the existing parking area, which will need to be improved and possibly enlarged.