

**Red Lodge Parks Board**

**Strategic Plan  
2011 – 2013**

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## Introduction

This strategic plan, which was completed during the second half of 2010, is divided into three major sections.

- Current State Assessment
- Future State Design
- Implementation Plan, 2010 – 2013

The purpose of the strategic plan is to give focus to the work of the Red Lodge Parks Board over the next several years. It also identifies a number of challenges and roadblocks that limit the efficiency and effectiveness of the Parks Board efforts and develops solutions and actions to correct these problem areas.

## Current State Assessment

The Current State Assessment addresses the following aspects of today's Parks Board operations:

- Inventory and status of park property
- Review of ordinances, bylaws, and city codes
- Parks Board operational assessment
- Big picture challenges that don't get attention
- Assessment of Parks Board relationships

The Current State Assessment sets the stage for the Future State Design.

### ***Inventory and Status of Park Property***

The following chart lists all the Red Lodge parks that currently exists and identifies the status of each park. Dedicated parks have been formally dedicated by the City Council and are under the formal purview of the Parks Board. Undedicated parks are informally under the purview of the Parks Board. Developed parks have improvements such as signage, benches, fire pits, and other special purpose improvements like ball fields or skate board features.

PARKS	STATUS			
	Dedicated	Undedicated	Developed	Undeveloped
• Lions	✓		✓	
• Pride	✓		✓	
• Finn	✓		✓	
• Field School	✓		✓	
• Rotary	✓		✓	
• Spires	✓			✓
• Diamond C	✓			✓
• West Bench	✓			✓
• Double Ditch		✓	✓	
• Skate Board		✓	✓	
• Coal Miners		✓	✓	
• Rocky Fork Trail		✓	✓	

## **Review of Ordinances, Bylaws, and City Codes**

There are a number of documents that define the work of the Parks Board or otherwise influence or limit the actions of the Parks Board. Ordinances 810 and 832 establish the Parks Board and the Parks Board funding. The other relevant ordinances mainly regulate activities permitted in the parks. The Dedication Resolutions apply to dedicated parks. The planning team judged that both Ordinance 810 establishing the Parks Board and the Parks Board bylaws are in need of review and revision to enable more effective decision making and execution of actual work in the parks.

- 810 Establishes Parks Board (Review with Bylaws; potentially rewrite; relationship to city code)
- 832 Funding Level (Resort tax)
- Other relevant ordinances
  - Dogs
  - Smoking
  - Open container
  - Camping
  - Campfires
  - Littering
  - Music
- Other documents
  - Dedication resolutions
  - Bylaws (needs review and revision to distinguish from Ordinance 810 with Parks Board authority to change Bylaws)
  - MOUs with volunteer groups

## ***Parks Board Operational Assessment***

The Parks Board operation has efficiency and effectiveness issues in project execution, Board membership and turnover, and workload.

1. Parks Board identifies needs for each property, plans projects, and builds a budget
2. City Council approves the budget
3. Project execution has the following issues:
  - Unclear relationship with Public Works
  - Unclear process for contracting work
  - Unclear spending authority
  - Unclear liability issues
4. Board membership turnover, participation issues due to:
  - Unclear roles and expectations of members
  - Lack of progress
  - Member workload balance
  - Steep learning curve with no training
5. Committees (trails, recreational facilities and regulations, finance, and planning)
  - Structure good
  - Work spread across too few people
  - Inconsistent

## ***Big Picture Issues that Don't Get Attention***

There are a number of big picture issues that have not received the attention they deserve.

- Parks Board consumed by managing small but important projects
- Parks, trails, and tree plans could be our guiding documents
- Does “open space” fall within our purview
- Capital improvement plan should be fed by parks, trails, and tree plans
- City growth policy should help direct Parks Board and get input from Parks Board
- Policies and process for acquiring or divesting city property that takes parks into account

## **Assessment of Parks Board Relationships**

The Parks Board has important relationships with a relatively large number of other entities. Each of these is identified below with comments on the effectiveness of the relationship.

### **City Council**

- City Council has a non-voting member on Parks Board but not actively participating; unclear role expectations
- Unclear lines of authority between Parks Board, Council, and Council Committees
- Mayoral interventions
- Passing ordinances specific to Parks without consulting Parks Board

### **Public Works**

- Public Works has an effective representative on the Parks Board
- Unclear interface and responsibilities for executing projects
- Parks Board is highly dependent on Public Works

### **Planning Board**

- Planning Board and Parks Board are both advisory Boards
- Planning Board has invited and incorporated input from Parks Board

### **Planning Department**

- Permitting issues are forwarded to Parks Board but relationship not formalized
- Parks Board could use assistance from Planning Department for research, permitting for Parks Board actions, acquisitions of easements and property, grants, and contracts

### **City Clerk**

- City Clerk is our accountant and high level financial grant administrator

### **Community Service Groups**

- MOUs with specific groups (some need revision)
- Informal relationships with some groups, e.g., baseball (moving toward formalizing)

## **Assessment of Parks Board Relationships (cont.)**

### **Volunteers**

- We have no means to engage volunteers

### **The Public**

- People don't know who we are or what we do; public relations

### **Montana DNRC**

- Urban forestry program
- Forester is a valuable resource

### **Beartooth RC&D**

- Could help with grant writing

### **Other Untapped Resource Groups**

- Forest Service Resource Advisory



## Future State Design

The Future State Design contains

- Mission Statement
- Vision
- Goals
- Strategies to achieve the goals
- Strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in the context of the goals and strategies
- Future organization structure

The Future State Design is, in part, a response to the Current State Assessment and, in part, a response to the future needs of the community. It sets the stage for the Implementation Plan which identifies specific objectives and actions for each year for each of the goals.

### ***Definitions of Municipal Assets under Parks Board Jurisdiction***

#### **Parks**

Dedicated space developed for public recreational use including both multipurpose space and special use facilities.

#### **Facilities**

Park space developed for special uses such as Moose Trails playground, skateboard, and ball fields.

#### **Open Space**

Undeveloped land with basic maintenance with emphasis on maintaining the natural character of the land.

#### **Trails**

Designated improved pathways for non-motorized recreational and transport purposes.

#### **Public Trees and Plants**

Trees, shrubs, and other landscape plantings on municipally owned land including public rights of way.

## **Mission Statement**

The Mission of the Red Lodge Parks Board is to protect, enhance, and maintain parks, facilities, natural resources, open spaces, trails, trees, and plants by developing and executing a Park Plan (parks, facilities, and open spaces), Trails Plan, and Trees Plan.

## **Vision**

In the future, the City of Red Lodge will be providing a geographically distributed and well maintained portfolio of Parks, Trails, and Open Spaces that serve a wide range of interests, ages, and abilities proportional to the current and future population. Parks will draw visitors and stimulate the economy. There will be scheduled and organized events, activities, and tournaments. There will also be an expanding, connected network of trails, heavily used by the community and visitors and a diverse and healthy urban forest. There will be public awareness of the park and tree assets and their uses through active promotion. Operationally, there will be a continuity of adequate funding to support the vision and goals, a well understood methodology for executing plans, and perhaps a dedicated parks and recreational staff.

## **Goals**

Each of the following seven goals implies a future state.

1. Complete major capital projects
2. Develop a Parks Plan and review, update, and execute our three guiding plans (Parks, Trails, and Trees) on a five year cycle
3. Improve the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the Parks Board
4. Improve public awareness of parks, trails, trees, and resources
5. Promote and schedule organized uses of parks and trails and define a process for reservations
6. Develop a process for handling development and use requests for park property
7. Actively engage with other related planning activities, e.g.,
  - Zoning
  - Subdivision regulations
  - Growth policy
  - Capital improvement plan (CIP)
  - Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
  - MDT planning documents
  - Subdivision requests

## Strategies

This section identifies strategies to accomplish each of the seven goals identified in the previous section. Strategies address the “how” to achieve each of the goals.

GOALS	STRATEGIES
1. Major capital improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain funding and Parks reserve</li> <li>• Prioritize each year for three years</li> </ul>
2. Develop a Park Plan and review and update three plans on a 5 year cycle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks</li> <li>• Trails</li> <li>• Trees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Parks Board will do the review and update of these plans with outside input as needed</li> <li>• Stagger these reviews to do one plan every second year</li> <li>• Prioritize</li> <li>• The Parks Board will produce a baseline Parks Plan with some action items</li> <li>• Obtain professional help to round out the Parks Plan</li> <li>• Public review and City Council adoption process</li> </ul>
3. Improve operational effectiveness and maintain Board member vigor motivation and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarifying roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Redrafting our ordinances and bylaws</li> <li>• Developing a clear execution process for plans and objectives</li> <li>• Clarifying and strengthening relationships with City Council, Public Works, Planning Board, and volunteer groups</li> <li>• Strengthening relationships with entities outside city government to share and provide funding, education, training, and expert resources</li> <li>• Develop a list of resources</li> <li>• Develop a Parks staff (paid position)</li> <li>• Use social networking</li> <li>• Professional training</li> <li>• Orientation of new Board members               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Park inventory visits</li> <li>- Hands-on activity</li> <li>- Orientation packet</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Public visibility</li> <li>• Social interaction after Board meetings</li> </ul>

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## Strategies (cont.)

GOALS	STRATEGIES
4. Improve public awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct public social events in the parks</li> <li>• Marketing materials; trails, parks, and plants</li> <li>• Regular Board meeting agenda item</li> <li>• Feature park articles</li> <li>• City website</li> <li>• Motel front desk</li> <li>• Bookstore</li> </ul>
5. Promote and schedule organized use of parks and trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard process for permitting and scheduling</li> <li>• Promoting use links to public awareness</li> <li>• Plan organized activities and events (long-term)</li> </ul>
6. Process for handling development request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop our vision for each park (Parks Plan)</li> <li>• When a request comes in, use existing process in the context of Park Vision</li> </ul>
7. Engage with other related planning activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactively review City Council and Public Works agendas</li> <li>• Close liaison with City Planner and Planning Chair</li> <li>• Request collaborating organizations (Lions, Red Lodge Ice, Rotary, Main Street, BRTA, baseball, soccer) to provide budget requests, plans, and accomplishments</li> <li>• Connect with planning processes with MDOT and Forest Service</li> <li>• Stay on top of grant cycles               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DNRC</li> <li>- Arbor Day</li> <li>- FWP</li> </ul> </li> <li>and other grants that come up from time-to-time</li> </ul>
8. Maintain existing assets to provide a safe and acceptable diversified recreational experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual inventory of assets to assess conditions</li> <li>• Develop annual maintenance plan and budget</li> <li>• Allocate funds and schedule the work</li> <li>• Part time summer help</li> </ul>

## Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities

In the context of the above goals and strategies, the Parks Board, at present, exhibits the following set of strengths and weaknesses which also suggest opportunities to build on strength and mitigate weakness.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a variety of resources and partnerships</li> <li>• Council support</li> <li>• Public support</li> <li>• Steady stream of funding</li> <li>• Good recent track record of making things happen on the ground</li> <li>• Strong, active Board</li> <li>• Mayor support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow through on good ideas</li> <li>• Not using our resources well</li> <li>• Limited time availability of Board members</li> <li>• Short season for executing projects</li> <li>• City budget cycle splits our execution season</li> <li>• No equipment infrastructure to rely on</li> <li>• Low end of Public Works priority list for executing projects</li> <li>• Weak involvement of City Council representative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff person to follow through</li> <li>• Long season for planning</li> <li>• Buy some equipment</li> </ul>

## Organization Structure

The future organization structure shown below is essentially the same as today's structure with the addition of the Contracting Officer which will serve to mitigate a serious present weakness in implementing plans.



## Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan identifies specific objectives for each of the seven goals identified in the Future State Design for each year through 2013. It also identifies actions required to accomplish each of the objectives. The objectives are steps toward achieving the broader strategic goals.

<b>Goal 1: Major capital improvements</b>			
<i>Strategies:</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain funding and Parks reserve</li> <li>• Prioritize each year for three years</li> </ul>			
YEAR	OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY	ACTION ITEMS
2010	1. Complete Field School Park playground		1. Coordinate city personnel and private contractor
	2. Complete Coal Miners Park playground		<i>Complete</i>
	3. Resurface tennis court	1	1. Get bids 2. Hire contractor
	4. Skateboard park plan completed	4	1. Obtain expert assessment 2. Form design and planning team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design ideas</li> <li>• Work with designer</li> </ul> 3. Develop plan and budget
2011	1. Implement Urban Forestry Grant to clear sidewalk and boulevard vegetation (contingent upon grant award)	2	1. Hire a summer employee
	2. Pride Park mural replaced	3	1. Secure funding 2. Define a suitable replacement 3. Get bids 4. Hire contractor(s)
	3. Install disc golf course in Coal Miner's Park	2	1. Coordinate volunteers
2012	1. Install permanent restroom at Rock Creek Park		1. Secure funding 2. Get bids 3. Hire contractor(s)
	2. Build the new skate park		1. Secure funding 2. Get bids 3. Hire contractor(s)

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<b>Goal 1: Major capital improvements (cont.)</b>			
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>PRIORITY</b>	<b>ACTION ITEMS</b>
2012 (cont.)	3. Trail system additions		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Plan</li> <li>2. Secure funding</li> <li>3. Build</li> </ol>
	4. Build a permanent soccer facility		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinate with Youth Soccer Group</li> <li>2. Secure funding</li> <li>3. Secure site</li> <li>4. Get bids</li> <li>5. Hire contractor(s)</li> </ol>
2013	1. Develop a plan for a recreation center		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Activate a planning team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the need</li> <li>• Examine feasibility and estimate cost/benefit</li> <li>• Look at other cities' models</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

<b>Goal 2: Develop a Parks Plan and review, update, and execute our three guiding plans (Parks, Trails, and Trees) on a five year cycle</b>			
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>PRIORITY</b>	<b>ACTION ITEMS</b>
2010/2011	1. Complete in-house Parks Plan – define a baseline vision	1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finalize data collection on individual parks</li> <li>2. Obtain preliminary Council buy-in</li> </ol>
	2. Develop long range Parks Plan		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review sample plans from other cities</li> <li>2. Revise the Trails Plan with professional help (if necessary)</li> </ol>
2012	1. Revise Trails Plan		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Obtain public input</li> <li>2. Get bids</li> <li>3. Hire contractor(s)x</li> </ol>
	<i>Note: Updated Trees Plan not due until 2013</i>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pursue DNRC planning projects (2011, 2013)</li> </ol>



<b>Goal 3: Improve the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the Parks Board</b>			
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>PRIORITY</b>	<b>ACTION ITEMS</b>
2011	1. Revise bylaws and ordinances	3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Draft new/replacement bylaws</li> <li>2. Obtain Council approval</li> <li>3. Evaluate existing ordinances for parks and create any new needed ordinances/rules</li> <li>4. Follow public process and obtain Council approval</li> </ol>
	2. Develop Park staff paid position	6c	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop position description</li> <li>2. Plan salary and budget</li> <li>3. Evaluate city employee vs. contractor status</li> <li>4. Obtain Council approval</li> <li>5. Recruit and select</li> </ol>
	3. Develop a clear execution process for plans and objectives	2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define execution roles and responsibilities (across organizational entities)</li> <li>2. Develop a process flowchart and project planning and project management templates</li> </ol>
	4. Facilitate transition of new Board members	4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create an orientation packet</li> <li>2. Create orientation process                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Packet</li> <li>• Tour of the Parks/Trails</li> <li>• Walk through plans                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic</li> <li>- Parks</li> <li>- Trails</li> <li>- Trees</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ol>
2012	1. Maintain MOUs with specific groups		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meet with various groups and discuss effectiveness and efficiency</li> </ol>

<b>Goal 4: Improve public awareness of parks, trails, trees, and resources</b>			
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>PRIORITY</b>	<b>ACTION ITEMS</b>
2011	1. Compile a master set of information about our parks, trails, and trees that can be used to create marketing materials	6d	1. Complete parks inventories with pictures 2. Get all of our materials into electronic format with an index
	2. Create a Parks page for city website		1. Work on the process with the city
	3. Six news articles	6a	1. Assign at Board meetings
	4. Create a Trees brochure		1. Assign/recruit a writer 2. Obtain funding
2012	1. Create a Parks brochure		1. Assign/recruit a writer 2. Obtain funding
2013	1. Maintain and update website; expand to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reservations</li> <li>• Review of planning documents</li> <li>• Calendar of Park/Trail events</li> <li>• Project summaries with pictures</li> </ul>		
	2. Electronic newspaper		

<b>Goal 5: Promote and schedule organized uses of parks and trails and define a process for reservations</b>			
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>PRIORITY</b>	<b>ACTION ITEMS</b>
2012	1. Compile or develop reservation and scheduling process for the various parks (add to website)		1. Inventory and assess the current processes and identify points of contact 2. Standardize for all parks 3. Determine/evaluate fee structure 4. Determine roles and responsibilities
2013	1. Implement reservation and scheduling system		
	2. Evaluate underutilized facilities and explore having the city promote usage and events		

**Goal 6: Develop a process for handling development and use requests for park property**

YEAR	OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY	ACTION ITEMS
2011	1. Develop a standard process tied to the city planning and budgeting cycle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public inputs/requests</li> <li>• Other planning inputs</li> </ul>	6e	1. Review existing process and forms 2. Develop standard process
2012	1. Implement the standard process		

**Goal 7: Actively engage with other related planning activities**

YEAR	OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY	ACTION ITEMS
2011	1. Get our representation in City Council, Public Works Committee, Planning Committee, and Land Use Committee resolved	1	1. Understand/evaluate the current process 2. Identify and evaluate our options 3. Clarify Parks Board spending authority
	2. Improve collaboration with other cooperation groups (e.g., Lions, Rotary, etc.) <i>(See objectives for Goal 3: Improve the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the Parks Board)</i>	6d	1. List points of contact
	3. Maintain points-of-contact and liaison relationship with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MDOT</li> <li>• FWP</li> <li>• DNRC</li> <li>• USDA</li> <li>• County Commissioners</li> </ul>	5	1. Develop a grant cycle calendar 2. List points of contact

**Goal 8: Maintain existing assets to provide a safe and acceptable diversified recreational experience**

YEAR	OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY	ACTION ITEMS
		1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual inventory of assets to assess conditions</li> <li>• Develop annual maintenance plan and budget</li> <li>• Allocate funds and schedule the work</li> <li>• Part time summer help</li> </ul>