

DEFINITIONS

- Open space: includes public plazas, streetscapes, cut-throughs between houses, and other public gathering places with little or no vegetation (isolated, planters). Might even include portions of public parking lots and even school buildings. Some spaces contribute to the “feeling of open space” in the city but may or may not count them as open space. These include:
 - Undeveloped land (private or public)
 - Privately-owned plazas
 - “Streets” land (e.g., boulevards along Broadway, rights-of-way along roads, hydro lines, and railways)
 - “Water & Waste” land (major ditches or drains, some retention ponds)
- Green space: generally more green than open space but the vegetation is often functional (turf or ornamental plantings) rather than natural
 - Parks (zoned as Public Reserve or PR land): vary in size from small neighbourhood parks (PR1) with playgrounds to large regional parks (PR3). Unlike provincial parks or national parks, most urban parks (PR1 and PR2) contain little – if any – natural habitat.
 - Sports and recreation parks (often PR2): playgrounds, community centres, sports complexes, swimming pools, spray pads, tennis courts, etc. (with hard infrastructure like roads and parking lots).
 - Golf courses: These were removed from the city’s definition of parks in 2009
 - Greenways: long ribbons of green beside major roads (e.g., Bishop Grandin Greenway), active transportation trails, paths, and rivers (Seine River Greenway). Vegetation ranges from turf to naturalized landscapes, to riparian habitat
 - Retention ponds (“lakes”): May or may not be zoned as parks (PR)
 - Naturalized wetlands and prairie meadows
- Natural areas: natural wildlife habitats that conserve representative native flora and fauna, support biodiversity, or protect species-at-risk, ecologically-sensitive lands (ESNL), and flood-prone land
 - Forests, native prairie, wetlands
 - Rivers, riparian areas, floodplains (meander belt)
 - Some large, regional parks (PR3) and golf courses contain natural areas
 - Ecologically-sensitive Natural Lands (ESNL)

IDEAS FOR VISION STATEMENTS

- More _____ in my neighbourhood (in the city as a whole) or in my neighbourhood (see definitions section, be specific).
- More natural lands (forest, wetland, prairie) in my (or every) neighbourhood
- More open spaces in my neighbourhood (e.g., plazas, streetscapes)
- More city-owned green spaces in the city
- A city where green corridors connect parks, open spaces, and natural areas to form a complete network of interconnected green spaces
- A city with a network of interconnected green spaces throughout all neighbourhoods rather than small, isolated islands of natural space
- A city where everyone has easy access to natural land in their neighbourhoods (walking distance)
- A city where naturalized spaces are more abundant than manicured spaces

- A place where rivers are allowed to be rivers
- A city with public access to high quality natural lands along rivers
- A city that makes room for wildlife (create habitats that support wildlife)
- A community that embraces and treasures its natural heritage
- A city that enables the conservation of natural heritage
- A city with places for birdwatching in every neighbourhood
- A place where naturalized storm water retention ponds are available to the public for relaxation, recreation and education (boardwalks, critter dipping stations, docks, etc.)
- A city brimming with biodiversity
- A city where the sound of birds and frogs drowns out traffic noise
- A city with many places to “get away from the city” (e.g., Bois-des-Esprits, Seine River, Assiniboine Forest, etc.) without ever having to leave the city
- A city where stewardship groups play an important role in conserving and maintaining green spaces
- A city that respects and recognizes the amazing knowledge, intelligence, experience, expertise, and passion of the community and harnesses this for the betterment of the city
- A city that is a leader in the conservation of natural areas
- A city that achieves great things by committing to full collaboration with the public as equal partners

START DOING

- Work in collaboration with Winnipeg’s land conservation community to create a Greenspaces Plan that includes a lofty vision, meaningful standards/criteria, key measures, clear targets, short timelines, and detailed action plan/work plan
- Establish a tight timeline for the completion of a Greenspaces plan that addresses parks, open spaces, natural areas, and other green spaces (corridors, etc.) so that it is ready for implementation when OurWinnipeg is adopted
- Integrate biodiversity into conservation planning – adopt a Biodiversity Plan (similar to Calgary)
- Proactively acquire key parcels of land (through purchase, conservation easements, or expropriation) to address neighbourhood deficits, expand the parks and conservation land network, and create corridors connecting these spaces
- Create a network of protected natural spaces within Winnipeg
- Develop and adopt a Wetland Conservation Plan
- Collaborate with Winnipeg’s land conservation groups to develop benchmarks, targets, and meaningful measures: percentages, acres of land conserved, money spent on tax incentives, land acquisition, counts (number of items), biodiversity measures, acres of ESNL lost to development, number of conservation easements negotiated, signed, number of acres converted from sod to native species
- Hire additional Parks Planners and dedicate some Parks Planners specifically to the creation of new plans while others implement the plans by reviewing development plans and agreements
- Strengthen OurWinnipeg with regard to the policy statements around parks, greenspaces, natural areas, and ESNL (eliminate vague and wishy-washy wording that appears in these sections)
- Give teeth to designating conservation areas (lots of teeth for implementing transformative areas)
- Conform to the Provincial Planning Regulation regarding riparian area protection and setbacks

- Protect river corridors by mapping the meander belt for each river, creek, stream, and second order drain in Winnipeg, mapping a buffer zone (that meets provincial and federal standards), and designating those areas for areas for low-intensity uses only
- Include a map in Our Winnipeg that clearly shows the meander belt and buffer areas along the Seine River and all Winnipeg waterways (including major drains)
- Prevent development within the meander belt of Winnipeg's rivers, creeks, streams, waterways by including this requirement in the OurWinnipeg bylaw or creating a separate bylaw
- Recognize the true value of green spaces (intrinsic and monetary)
- Give tax incentives to people to conserve ESNL, floodplains and other natural lands (conservation easements) – protect biodiversity
- Hire at least one person in the planning/real estate department who has extensive experience negotiating easements for conservation purposes
- Make naturalized spaces (including retention ponds) accessible to the public
- Build trails, boardwalks and other facilities at retention ponds for public education, interpretation, passive use, and recreation
- Make all waterfronts (rivers and constructed retention ponds) accessible to the public
- Increase public access to rivers by creating trail easements and parking agreements with existing and future landowners with property adjacent to the rivers
- Put long-term agreements in writing for trail easements and designated public parking so that verbal agreements cannot be reneged upon by buyers and residents once the builder leaves
- Give tax incentives to private landowners to make natural lands along waterways (rivers, creeks, retention ponds, etc.) accessible to the public
- Identify neighbourhoods with greenspace deficits and look for every opportunity to create new greenspaces in these neighbourhoods (e.g., derelict properties)
- Use annual budget to strategically address greenspace deficits in specific neighbourhoods and areas
- Add new green spaces in existing neighbourhoods as population density increases
- Integrate natural retention ponds and wetlands into existing developments wherever possible – not just new developments
- Add boardwalks to naturalized retention ponds for critter dipping, relaxation, and education
- Complete a detailed inventory of Winnipeg's parks and park assets, natural areas, greenspaces, corridors, open spaces, etc.
- Track the use of recreational spaces (soccer fields, baseball diamonds, etc.) and naturalize underutilized recreational spaces (convert turf to prairie or forest) to reduce maintenance costs, enhance biodiversity, and provide habitat for wildlife
- At the time of re-zoning, install property markings (bollards or fences) to clearly mark the boundary between private land and PR land to prevent encroachment during the development of the adjacent land
- Install bollards between existing PR land and private properties to discourage encroachment onto public land and reduce trespassing on private land
- Establish standards for ESNL and natural spaces to protect biodiversity and representative flora and fauna – not just rare or endangered species
- Develop a standard for ESNL for an urban environment. The ESNL quality standard is being applied using federal and provincial standards based on the presence of rare and endangered species and the absence of

weedy species (“A” quality only). Like a historic building, the quality of natural spaces may deteriorate over time simply through neglect but this can be restored

- Control the presence and spread of invasive species on city-owned land
- Increase the budget for maintaining parks so that these needs do not take away from the LDRF
- Create more places to launch a canoe on Winnipeg’s rivers and creeks
- Create a canoe launch on the Seine River that is accessible to people with disabilities
- Improve public access to the Seine River for winter activities like skating , cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing (it is much more sheltered than the Assiniboine and Red)

STOP DOING

- Stop approving developments on the floodplains of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers (e.g. River Ridge)
- Stop approving developments within the meander belts of Winnipeg’s smaller rivers and creeks (e.g. John Bruce Road, east side)
- Stop targeting golf courses for easy development to generate tax revenue. Convert them to parks
- Stop looking at undeveloped land as vacant (and therefore of no value)
- Stop underestimating the monetary value of natural spaces (forests, wetlands, prairie) which provide a host of ecological and public services (flood protection, greenhouse gas removal, cooling, air quality improvement, noise attenuation, nutrient removal, water quality protection, habitat for biodiversity, etc.)
- Stop adding to the riverbank stabilization and erosion-control “deficit” by building within the active floodplain
- Stop sacrificing the conservation of ESNL and natural areas to create under-utilized recreational spaces or aesthetically-pleasing open spaces that are dominated by sod
- Stop allowing private landowners to encroach onto city-owned PR land
- Stop putting private landowner “wants” ahead of public needs
- Stop treating the public as a third-class citizen in the planning process
- Stop discounting valid public concerns as “NIMBY” or anti-development thinking
- Stop simply informing the public about things that affect them (not even listening, just telling)
- Stop merely consulting with the public (listening, recording comments, counting attendance) – without any commitment address the concerns, make changes, or collaboratively find solutions
- Stop the governance practices that limit public involvement in planning and decision-making
- Stop undermining public trust by making decisions that require significant amendments to OurWinnipeg and other planning documents
- Stop putting the generation of tax revenue ahead of all other community values
- Stop approving projects that are not reviewed and vetted by all departments
- Stop using a governance model that gives information and power to EPC councillors over others
- Stop the secrecy around land transactions by making agreements open to public scrutiny

DO DIFFERENTLY

- Be transparent regarding ESNL; report on the acres of ESNL lost since 2000 (Policy Plate D)

- Secrecy around ESNL has directly led to the loss of valuable ESNL since the year 2000. Work in collaboration the landowners and the public to protect ESNL sites. Do not hide key information from the public based on private land “confidentiality”
- Make the locations of ESNL from 2000 (Policy Plate D) available to the public as a data set to allow the transparent tracking of acres saved and acres lost to development
- Provide public access to original data that is used to report on targets (e.g., acres of ESNL)
- Require that ESNL be protected from damage or destruction as soon as it is identified
- Develop a nomination system for “listing” ESNL land and potential new parks that can be initiated by the landowners, the city, and/or the public
- Tighten up the interpretation and application of the Zoning Bylaw to prevent “vegetation clearing” (defined as development in the Charter and the Zoning Bylaw) without a plan or a permit
- Put ESNL and natural lands at the top of the priority list for a change when negotiating the location of the land dedication – don’t allow developers to contribute “leftover” scraps of land in awkward locations as land dedication
- Use tax incentives to protect natural heritage in the same way that they protect heritage buildings
- Winnipeg used to have a population-based minimum “open space guideline” (3.86 acres/1000 people). Integrate population density back into the minimum standards for land dedication to ensure that dense developments have an appropriate amount of green space.
- Apply a population-based standard for open space to newer high-density developments and existing neighbourhoods where infill is increasing population density
- Develop minimum standards based on distance (accessibility) and population density
- Consider the types of parks (natural spaces, recreation parks, playgrounds, etc.), sizes of parks (e.g., “pocket parks” less than 1 acre, less than 5 acres, 5+acres to 50+acres), and quality of parks when setting the standards
- In collaboration with Winnipeg’s land conservation community, establish standards for access to natural spaces. Review the current distance standard (everyone lives within 400 metres of a “park” and make adjustments if needed
- Require the full minimum 10% land dedication in every situation; eliminate negotiations to reduce the 10% land dedication to 8%
- Require land dedication for the development of all new streets (even city-initiated projects like transit corridors) – do not exclude streets and transit corridors from “developable land area” – these spaces must be considered as development too
- Require a higher percentage for land dedication in some situations to protect ESNL and ensure that there is adequate green space to serve medium and high-density (high density developments require additional green space)
- Use the Land Dedication Reserve Fund (LDRF) to purchase land for public purposes (to acquire ESNL, representative natural areas, additional land in higher density developments, etc.)
- Set up a new dedicated fund for the purchase of land for public purposes since the Land Dedication Reserve Fund (LDRF) is no longer being used to purchase land for public purposes as specified in the Charter
- Adopt a new philosophy that Winnipeg’s rivers and other highly-desirable natural or naturalized landscapes (retention ponds, parks, etc.) belong to everyone. Use landscape designs that maximize public access to these spaces rather than blocking access with private properties

- Ensure that there is sufficient space for public access (trails) between any type of private residences and parks, retention ponds, rivers, and other city-owned open spaces
- Increase the amount of land that is restored as natural space by converting land from high-maintenance traditional grass to low-maintenance native species (prairie, forest, and wetland) – especially in unused areas like road rights-of-way
- Reduce maintenance costs by reducing mowing in parks and naturalizing underutilized park spaces
- Create designated trails for pedestrians only to minimize conflicts with cyclists
- Follow best practices to ensure that all city-operated and contractors clean their equipment between job sites to prevent the spread of weeds
- Properly restore sites after any projects that disturb the land (construction projects, trail installation, etc.) rather than simply “letting nature take its course”
- Invite the public to the table as an equal partner in the planning process to collaboratively find solutions
- Work in collaboration with the conservation community to develop meaningful targets and key measures for ESNL, parks, greenspaces, etc. and report on progress toward these targets on an annual basis. If there is no progress, state that there has been no progress in this area
- Riparian areas with buffer zones are important for many reasons (protecting water quality, wildlife corridors, provision of low-intensity recreational uses, protecting fish habitat, etc.). Strengthen the implementation of the Waterways Permit for the Seine River and other Winnipeg waterways to take into consideration these factors in addition to riverbank stability and erosion
- Build resiliency and long-term financial stability by leaving enough “Room for the River”
- Acquire “at risk” private properties at a fair market value as they enter the market to gradually convert flood-prone land to low intensity uses
- Review the way in which natural land is valued and taxed
- Use conservation easements as a way to protect land that is currently privately owned – not as a way to avoid accepting new land dedication for public purposes
- Compare the cost of each bank stabilization project with the cost of alternatives (e.g., expropriation of private properties that are at risk)
- Increase the city’s long-term financial sustainability by using buffer strips to reduce the need for expensive riverbank stabilization (establish appropriate buffers)
- Convert traditional retention ponds to naturalized wetlands to improve water quality entering rivers

KEEP DOING

- Naturalize, naturalize, naturalize
- Keep providing free public access to data sets and shapefiles related to parks, green spaces
- Keep adding to the city’s open data portal by encouraging or requiring every department to add the data sets that it actively maintains (shapefiles, data sets, etc.) to the open data portal
- Routinely post information that has been requested by anyone (either casually or through FIPPA) so that it is also available to other interested parties and you don’t waste time replying to multiple requests for the same data
- Add the current versions of the GIS data sets related to greenspaces (parks, open spaces, natural areas, ESNL, etc.) and add them to Winnipeg’s open data portal
- Post the most current census information for the planning units that are used by the city – not census tracts

- Use neighbourhood boundaries as these will withstand future changes to ward boundaries

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE (RELATED MAINLY TO LAND CONSERVATION)

- Adopt a collaborative approach to planning (right now the city is locked in the “inform” and “consult” mode rather than the “involve” and “collaborate” and “empower” modes).
- Ensure that all city bylaws (planning, zoning, riparian area setbacks, etc.) are consistent with provincial and federal laws
- Modify the Zoning Bylaw or develop planning overlays to protect land (zones) that are identified for potential future conservation
- Revise the Zoning Bylaw to provide for better protection of forests and wetlands in all zoning designations
- Return golf courses to the jurisdiction of the Parks Bylaw (undo the 2009 change)
- Give the ESNL Strategy (a non-regulatory “Council Policy”) more teeth to protect flora and fauna, and flood-prone areas or create a separate bylaw that effectively protects natural features (natural forests, wetlands, prairie, creeks) on private land
- Create an Urban Forest or Tree Bylaw to protect the city’s urban forest – including on private land
- Create a city-supported committee, board, or commission to address natural heritage conservation (transparent, accountable)
- Provide leadership and integrity with regard to conservation (follow through on promises)
- There is more to life than roads. Make greenspaces a higher priority in both planning and delivery
- Restore public trust by working with the conservation community to address current issues and obstacles
- Create a supportive environment for natural heritage conservation
- Ensure supportive and non-conflicting legislation, bylaws, and policy (City of Winnipeg Charter, secondary plans, zoning bylaw)
- Improve accountability of the city administration
- Accurately capture council decisions and results of city negotiations in legal agreements
- Make all legal agreements related to land accessible to the public (without going through FIPPA)
- Allocate more resources (human resources and financial resources) toward parks planning and management
- Discourage negative behaviour (such as vegetation clearing, soil removal, draining natural wetlands, destroying ESNL, etc.) through a combination and heavier penalties and incentives for ethical behaviour
- Reward developers who support conservation by reducing development fees for developers that protect ESNL and natural lands
- Make the development of a Conservation Lands Plan, Green Spaces Plan and/or Parks Plan a top priority to balance the many existing development plans and policies (Employment Lands Plan, Residential and Infill Strategy, Transit-oriented development plan, Transportation Plan, Housing Policy, etc.)
- Develop an interim process to protect natural lands until an appropriate plan is completed
- Identify the obstacles to land conservation that result from Winnipeg’s governance model and identify ways to remove these obstacles
- Identify negative attitudes within city council and the administration that block progress in conservation (e.g., conservation of natural land is an obstacle to development, riverfront land should be only for the wealthy elite rather than the public, public trails will increase vandalism of private property) and work toward changing these attitudes through education and policy

- Dispel the belief that Winnipeg landowners have the “right” to clear vegetation, drain or fill wetlands, cut down trees, or bulldoze a forest within the city without submitting a plan or obtaining a permit
- Adopt a governance model that gives all councillors an equal right to information and equal voting power
- Stop routinely allowing walk-on agenda items that have less than the required 96 hours of notification
- Increase the minimum amount of time to make the background materials available to the public. 96 hours is not enough time for people (councillors or the public) to read through hundreds of pages of documents related to a single agenda item (engineering reports, ecological surveys, studies, administration reports, etc.). Post these materials on the city Web site for the public to review as soon as they are available to the administration and/or the developer.
- Strengthen the rules around declaring city-owned land as surplus (public notification requirements, rationale for disposal, amount of time before decision is made, process for acquiring the parcel, etc.) and post this information for the public
- Review the use of in camera sessions to assess whether the motivation for privacy is tied to the need for confidentiality (tied to good governance) or secrecy (undermines good governance)
- Eliminate the use of camera sessions to keep important information from the public
- Provide a general description of the purpose of going in camera (e.g., to discuss potential real estate transactions) and ensure that decisions are either made in the public session or recorded in the minutes (e.g., to bring the committee’s recommendation regarding a land transaction with XYZ to the next EPC meeting)
- Increase public access to the city’s biological survey data that is either collected by the city or by consultants on behalf of the city (i.e., paid for by the city)
- Be open and transparent with all advice from risk managers (regarding toboggan hills, riffles, boardwalks in retention ponds, trails, etc.) so that risk managers do not set city policy without input from council or the larger community

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Create new parks in parts of the city to provide social equity
- Identify neighbourhoods with deficits in various types of parks (playgrounds, recreation facilities, natural areas, etc.)
- Identify opportunities to address the deficits
- Create small “mini-parks” on single residential properties in neighbourhoods with greenspace deficits and provide tiny homes for park caretakers (as part of a homelessness strategy)

GETTING AROUND IN THE CITY

- Identify opportunities to connect parks, green spaces, and communities with active transportation trails and green corridors
- Create corridors for wildlife and people to safely move around the city

HOW WE GROW

- Add more ideas here

QUALITY OF LIFE

- Add more ideas here