

PARK DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATIONS' REPORT TO THE
S.P.C. ON COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES

2000 MARCH 15

CPS2000- NOSE HILL PARK UNDESIGNATED TRAILS

ISSUE:

Nose Hill Park Undesignated Trails

RECOMMENDATIONS:

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

The S.P.C. on Community and Protective Services recommend that Council:

- 1. approve the policy for use of undesignated trails in Nose Hill Park as outlined in the "Proposed Policy" section of this report (see page 4); and**
- 2. amend the *Nose Hill Park Natural Areas Management Plan* as appropriate to allow for implementation of the proposed policies (see item #8 page 7).**

INTRODUCTION:

An evaluation of the undesignated trails in Nose Hill Park began in the Fall of 1998 using existing bylaw or City of Calgary policy documents and the policies established in the *Cycling Policy on Undesignated Trails in Parkland*. The following describes the background for initiating this evaluation, the public consultation process used, and the resulting proposed policy for the undesignated trails in Nose Hill Park.

BACKGROUND:

At its meeting of 1995 June 8, Council approved the Nose **Hill Park Natural Areas Management Plan**. The goal of the park, as stated in the management plan, "is to perpetuate the natural character of the Nose Hill landscape while providing compatible, quality recreational opportunities". The management goal within the plan for mountain bike use "is to provide an area where recreational biking can occur alongside natural resource protection and the minimization of

NOSE HILL PARK UNDESIGNATED TRAILS

negative encounters with other users”.

In approving the Natural Areas Management Plan, Council also carried the following motion with respect to mountain bike use on Nose Hill:

That Calgary Parks and Recreation report back to the S. P.C. on Community and Protective Services concerning alternative sites in The City of Calgary appropriate to mountain bike use, together with management guidelines, with a view to limiting bicycle use [on Nose Hill] to perimeter pathways and emergency vehicle access routes on/y; such /imitation of bicycle use to occur only upon completion of the construction of the perimeter path ways; aft er consultation with bicycle-user groups and the affected/general public.

The result of adopting this motion was that bicycle use would be unrestricted on Nose Hill until Calgary Parks & Recreation could develop management guidelines for reviewing appropriate mountain bike use and until the perimeter pathway was constructed. To implement the above motion the following occurred:

- o Spring of 1997 - The work of developing a *Cycling Policy for Undesignated Trails in Park/and* to establish bike use management guidelines was initiated.
- o April of 1998 - The *Cycling Policy for Undesignated Trails in Park/and* was adopted by Council which highlighted early management attention for Bowmont, Edworthy and Nose Hill Parks.
- o In adopting the cycling policy, Council was informed that financing for the construction of the perimeter pathway on Nose Hill was not envisioned for many years. In order to realize the desired outcomes of the *Cycling Policy for Undesignated Trails in Park/and*, Council adopted a recommendation to reconsider that portion of the 1995 June 8 motion that made implementation effective “on/y upon completion of the perimeter pathways”; i.e.

“With respect to Nose Hill Park: Council be requested to reconsider their previous motion of 1995 June 8 with respect to bicycle use on Nose Hill, and approve the trail management principals articulated in the 7994 Nose Hill Park Natural Area Management Plan, in

NOSE HILL PARK UNDESIGNATED TRAILS

conjunction with this *policy*':

Fail of 1998 - In adopting the above recommendation, and the further recommendation to implement the process for "early management attention for Bowmont, Edworthy and Nose Hill Parks", an evaluation of the undesignated trails in Nose Hill Park began using the bike use management guidelines approved in the *Cycling Policy for Undesignated Trails in Parkland*.

INVESTIGATION:

1. Key Stakeholder Workshops

A detailed inventory of the undesignated trails in Nose Hill Park was conducted in 1998. In keeping with the 1995 motion requiring consultation with bike user groups and the affected/general public, a series of key stakeholder workshops to evaluate the undesignated trails were conducted in the winter of 1998/1999. In all 35 community associations/user groups/general public were invited to attend, and 18 agreed to participate.

Note:

During the first workshop the key stakeholders unanimously agreed on a process for reviewing the trails. This process was in keeping with the Council directive to formulate a management policy for bicycles using existing City policy documents. Existing policy included the bike use zoning established in the Nose Hill Park - Natural Areas Management Plan (NAMP); i.e. restricting bikes to formalized trails on all sloped areas to minimize erosion hazards, disturbances of wildlife and negative encounters with other park users.

The Calgary Mountain Bike Alliance did not agree to participate in the workshop series because the bike use zoning from the NAMP singled them out as causing more erosion, disturbances to wildlife and negative encounters with other park users. Their research and the research of the Administration verifies that the impacts of biking versus walking/hiking are of a different type and level under different conditions; i.e. in some cases hiking/walking has a different and/or greater effect, and in other cases biking has a different and/or greater effect.

NOSE HILL PARK UNDESIGNATED TRAILS

The key stakeholders, however, in wishing to achieve the goal of the NAMP of "perpetuating the natural character of the Nose Hill landscape" felt that the cumulative effect of biking over the effect of walking/hiking on the escarpment trails would cause more erosion, disturbances to wildlife and negative encounters among users. Therefore, they agreed to use the bike use zoning policy as noted in the NAMP. In keeping with this policy, the key stakeholders recommended multi-use pathways on the sloped areas that provided logical connectors to the neighbourhoods, and reasonable access to the 950 acre unrestricted bicycle use zone.

2. Public Open House

A public open house held on June 9, 1999 presented the results of the key stakeholder workshops. In total 134 people attended the open house. In general, the majority of the people who attended represented the biking community. In particular, the Calgary Mountain Bike Alliance made a point of having a strong representation at the open house due to the fact that they declined to attend the stakeholder workshops; i.e. they felt that the open house was the opportunity for them to provide their input.

3. Nose Hill Park Management Advisory Committee Review

The results of the public open house and the key stakeholder workshops were forwarded to the Nose Hill Park Management Advisory Committee for their review and recommendation to The City. The Committee's recommendations and letters of endorsement from the surrounding communities can be found in Attachment 1.

PROPOSED POLICY:

In reviewing the results of the key stakeholder workshops, the public open house, and the recommendations of the Nose Hill Park Management Advisory Committee, the Administration supports the following proposed policy for the undesignated trails in Nose Hill Park (see Attachment 2 map).

1. Implement the designation of the multi-use pathways recommended in the Nose Hill Park Natural Areas Management Plan (red lines on map) except for the trail in the north central portion of the park (dashed blue line on map). This trail currently experiences very light use and does not form a logical connection to the neighbourhood. Therefore, the management option for

NOSE HILL PARK UNDESIGNATED TRAILS

this trail should be "Pedestrian Only & Monitor".

2. Increase the number of multi-use pathways on the escarpment (purple lines on map). This increase provides logical connectors to the surrounding neighbourhoods and reasonable access to the unrestricted bicycle use zone while minimizing erosion hazards, disturbance with wildlife and negative encounters with other park users.

The recommended new multi-use pathway in the northwest portion of the park is contrary to the recommendation of the Management Advisory Committee (i.e. Pedestrian only & monitor), but it is in keeping with the recommendation from the key stakeholder workshops. The following is the justification for this recommendation:

- o The designation of this trail as multi-use pathway will result in the concentration of use on it, and therefore, decreasing user disturbance throughout the rest of this environmentally sensitive zone.
- o The elimination of this multi-use trail will provide no access for bikes to Nose Hill from the neighbourhoods on the north side of the park.
- o The multi-use pathway is located close to but out of the most environmentally sensitive ravine on the hill. As a result, it will encourage users to use its route rather than travelling up the undesignated trail in the ravine which is recommended for closure.
- o The multi-use pathway ties into the Edgemont and MacEwan Glen communities as well as the future pedestrian overpass to Edgemont, and therefore, it is a logical link across the hill.

The recommended new multi-use pathway that cuts through porcupine valley in the northeast portion of the park is contrary to the recommendation of the Management Advisory Committee and Key Stakeholder Workshops (i.e. Close to All Users). The following is the justification for this recommendation:

- o The designation of this trail as multi-use pathway will result in the concentration of use on it, and therefore, decreasing user disturbance throughout the rest of the escarpment in this area.

NOSE HILL PARK UNDESIGNATED TRAILS

The designation of this trail as multi-use pathway will provide logical access for pedestrians and bikes to the unrestricted use zone south of the northeast parking lot without having to travel to the west end of the park before reaching this zone.

3. Trail segment 5.8 (purple dashed line on map) be assigned the management option of "Designate as multi-use pathway and upgrade as needed" (Note: upgrading will not include paving). This recommendation is contrary to the bike use zoning policy of the Nose Hill Park Natural Areas Management Plan and the recommendation of the Management Advisory Committee (i.e. Pedestrian only & monitor). The rationale for this designation are:

- 0 Trail segment 5.8 is currently being unofficially used by the general public as part of the regional pathway system.

Its designation will formally complete a missing link in the regional pathway system in the north-west that connects the bow river pathway to Varsity, Dalhousie, Edgemont, Huntington Hills, Beddington Heights and the Nose Creek pathway system.

Its designation is completing a east-west commuter route that is located away from sensitive habitats and high wildlife use areas within the park. This is in keeping with the trail management guidelines for Major Natural Areas as stated in The City of Calgary Natural Areas Management Plan.

4. Trail segments on the escarpment will be closed and rehabilitated (green lines on map) due to environmental degradation and/or their location in environmentally sensitive zones. The Administration will closely monitor all trail closures. If the closure of a dominant desire line results in alternative routes becoming severely compacted and/or eroded, the Administration will review the feasibility of the closure.
5. All trails that are left open on the escarpment and not designated as multi-use (blue lines on map) shall be assigned the management option of "Pedestrian Only and Monitor" in order to minimize erosion hazards, disturbances with wildlife and negative encounters among trail users. This designation implies leaving the trails open for use by pedestrians and

NOSE HILL PARK UNDESIGNATED TRAILS

setting up a program to monitor their use over time so that appropriate action can be taken to ensure that environmental degradation does not occur.

6. It is the Administration's intent to meet the recreational needs of all cyclists with varying levels of expertise and equipment in Nose Hill Park. Therefore, the Administration will investigate, in conjunction with the biking community and the Nose Hill Park Management Advisory Committee, the establishment of an environmentally sensitive bike circuit within the unrestricted bicycle use zone that will offer a wide variety of terrain for "sport riding". Furthermore, the Administration will continue to investigate other opportunities within The City for mountain biking using the *Cycling Policy on Undesignated Trails in Parkland*.
7. Implementation of the above undesignated trail policies for Nose Hill Park will only be successful if there is an ongoing monitoring and trail rehabilitation program, and a city-wide education program whose goal would be to instill a sense of appropriate behaviour in all users of designated and undesignated trails. The philosophy is that compliance with this policy will be best achieved from a dedicated program of maintenance and education.
8. Amend the Nose Hill Park Natural Areas Management Plan bike use policies to allow for implementation of the above proposed policies. The recommended revisions are:
 - a. Mountain and street bikes will be restricted to designated multi-use trails on all sloped areas of Nose Hill Park to minimize erosion hazards, disturbances of wildlife and negative encounters with other users. Upgrading of the trails will only occur as needed to prevent environmental degradation and will not include paving.
 - b. The multi-use trails on all sloped areas of Nose Hill Park will be as per the map in Attachment 2.
 - c. The management plan is geared toward recreational trail use, however, an east-west commuter route across the hill will be established to complete an important missing link in the city-wide regional pathway system while making it safe for multi-use and ensuring it is located away from sensitive habitats and high wildlife

NOSE HILL PARK UNDESIGNATED TRAILS

use areas within the park. Note: this trail will not be considered for paving.

9. In keeping with the Cycling Policy on Undesignated Trails *in Parkland*, the Administration will continue the process for implementing early management attention to undesignated trail use in Bowmont and Edworthy Parks within the development of Natural Area Management Plans for these parks.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Implementation of the trail management policies for Nose Hill Park will require financial resources. Currently 118 trail segments are recommended for closure and rehabilitation at a total cost of \$60,000. Funding to begin this work in the year 2000 is contained within the Program 500 Parks and Natural Areas budget, however, additional funds will need to be allocated in future years.

A city-wide public education program would likely cost about \$30,000 annually, assuming some corporate sponsorship. Furthermore, an ongoing monitoring and trail rehabilitation program (i.e. regular maintenance) is estimated to cost approximately \$30,000 for a total annual cost of \$60,000. If this policy is approved, funding for the public education campaign and maintenance program will be requested through the regular budget process, beginning with the 2001 budget.

CONCLUSION:

City Council instructed the Administration to formulate a management policy that would address the issue of bicycles in Nose Hill, Edworthy and Bowmont Parks using the existing bylaw or City of Calgary policy documents and the policies established in the *Cycling Policy on Undesignated Trails in Parkland*. The first step in this process was the evaluation of undesignated trails in Nose Hill Park through public consultation. The result is a recommendation for a trail system that will:

- o minimize negative encounters among its users;
- o provide logical connections to the surrounding neighbourhoods;
- provide reasonable access by bikes to the unrestricted bike use zone; and

NOSE HILL PARK UNDESIGNATED TRAILS

- o protect the environmental character of the Nose Hill landscape.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Nose Hill Park Management Advisory Committee Recommendations and Letters of Endorsement.
2. Recommended Management Options for the Undesignated Trails in Nose Hill Park