

Latimer Park Master Plan

2019 Update



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Introduction

Latimer Park is located in south east Surrey within the Campbell Heights Business Park. It was acquired by the City in 1965 prior to which it was an active gravel quarry which excavation led to the creation of Latimer Lake, a groundwater-fed lake. Since then, the park has been used by a variety of users to walk and cycle through the trails and in the early days to fish and swim. Latimer Park has seen many changes both in its use as well as in the surrounding neighbourhood since its creation.

A Park Master Plan was adopted in 2006 and proposed new features and amenities to formalize the park while the Campbell Heights Business Park was being developed. Thirteen years later, most of the recommendations in the Master Plan remain unimplemented and the City recognized that enough change had occurred to warrant a review of this Plan prior to the implementation of any future park amenities.

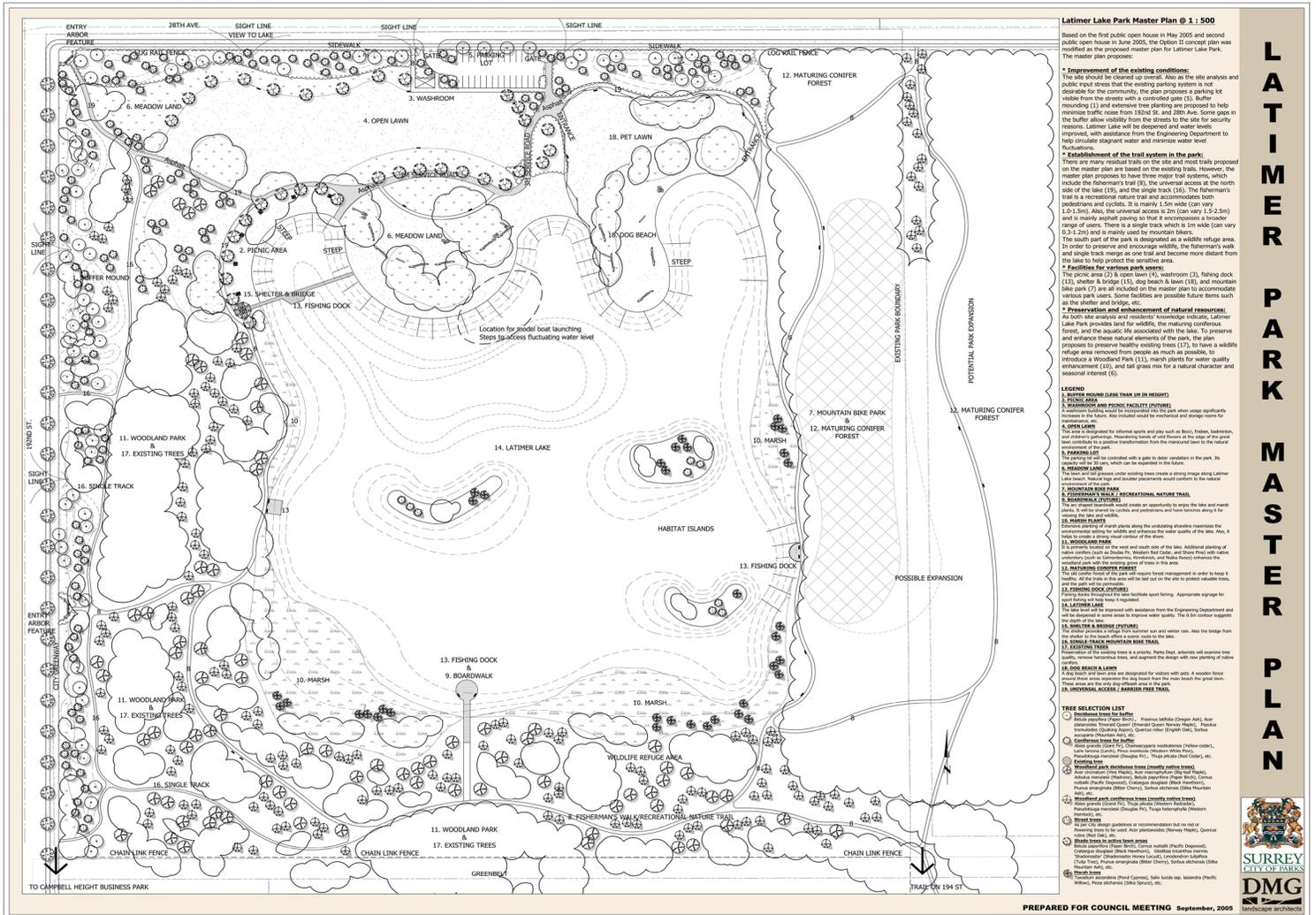
Since the adoption of the Master Plan, the surrounding Business Park has developed. As part of the development of parcels directly north of Latimer Park, a Stormwater Management Strategy was developed in 2009 that explored the feasibility of locating a stormwater detention wetland within the park. The Stormwater Management Strategy report is concurrently being updated along with the Latimer Park Master Plan by the development community. In addition, the City's Engineering Department has scheduled street improvements for 28th Avenue and 192nd Street which may impact the park's northern and western edges. City planning documents adopted after 2006, including the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and the Dogs Off Leash Area Strategy, provide new guidance for the Park Master Plan. Finally, the City wants to ensure that the Latimer Park Master Plan still represents the community's vision for the park before the Plan is implemented.

This updated Master Plan report outlines the evolution of the park over time, describes its current condition, presents the updated Master Plan and highlights key new or modified features proposed for Latimer Park.



The 2006 Master Plan

The Latimer Park Master Plan was adopted in 2006. It proposed park improvements such as a new parking lot, the establishment of formalized trails, designated use areas and the dredging of the lake to deepen the water in order to support fishing. It designated the north area of the park for active park uses including a washroom, picnic area, lawn and dog off-leash areas, the north east area as a bike park and the rest of the park to be managed as a natural area for wildlife.



The Master Plan Update Process

The Latimer Park Master Plan was updated with the input and collaboration of City of Surrey Staff from the Parks, Recreation and Culture and Engineering departments, the engineering consulting teams that are planning the 28th Avenue widening and the Campbell Heights stormwater drainage plans, several community groups as well as Surrey residents and other park users. Regular meetings were held with staff and consultants throughout this process to coordinate the Master Plan update and ensure drainage features planned in the park reflect the Plan's vision.

Visioning and Analysis

The first phase of the this planning process included the acquisition of up-to-date biophysical information on the park. An environmental assessment was conducted by Diamond Head Consulting in May and June 2019. Relevant plans and policies that were adopted by the City since 2006 were reviewed, including the Dogs Off Leash Strategy and the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

A first stakeholder workshop was held in May 2019 with several representatives from environmental stewardship and cycling groups.

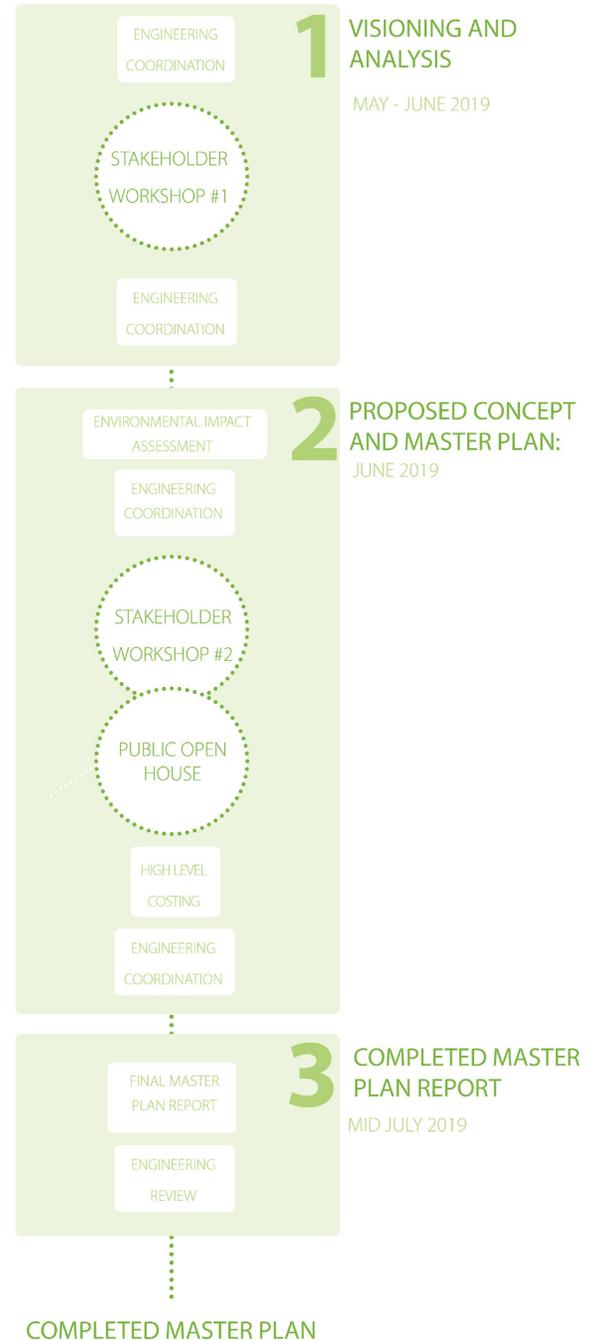
Proposed Concept and Master Plan

A draft updated Master Plan was developed following the first stakeholder workshop and presented at a public open house and a subsequent stakeholder workshop both held on June 25th, 2019. The information shared at the public open house as well as a public survey was available for members of the public to comment online from June 25th to July 8th.

Completed Master Plan

Public input was used to revise the updated Master Plan which was finalized in July 2019.

The Process



Site Overview

The Park Through Time

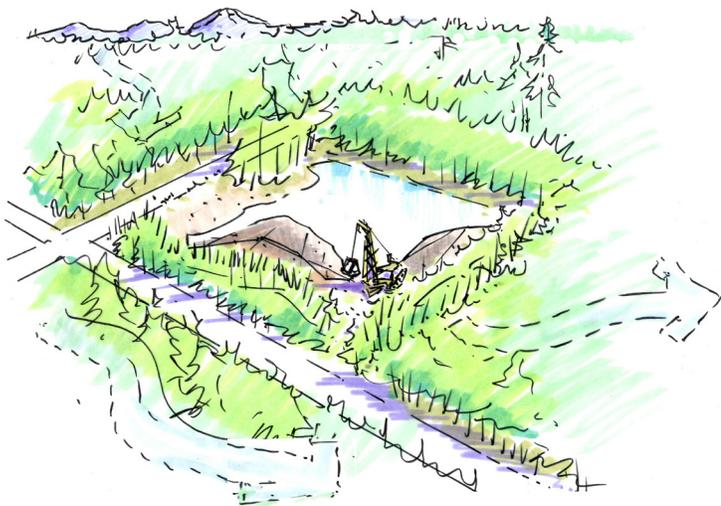
The timeline below provides a short overview of the evolution of Latimer Park until 2019.



TIME IMMEMORIAL – 1960

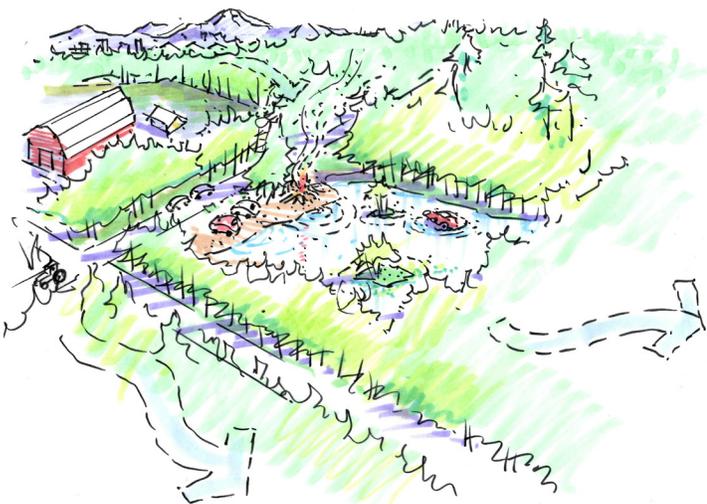
Latimer Park is located on the traditional territory of the Semiahmoo, Katzie, Kwantlen, Tsawwassen, Stó:lō and WSÁNEĆ Nations.

- The area's aquifer flows from the north to the south
- Small-scale farming and roads are introduced in the area
- There is minimal habitat disturbance



1960-1970: DEEKS MCBRIDE QUARRY

- Deeks-McBride Ltd creates a gravel pit
- The pit is over-excavated and fills with water from the aquifer
- The flooding of the excavation is the unofficial beginning of the Park: the pit is "made into a beach for youngsters"
- It remains unofficially used as swimming hole and recreational area for some time
- An agreement for the land to be acquired by the City was reached in 1960, and the transfer was completed by 1965

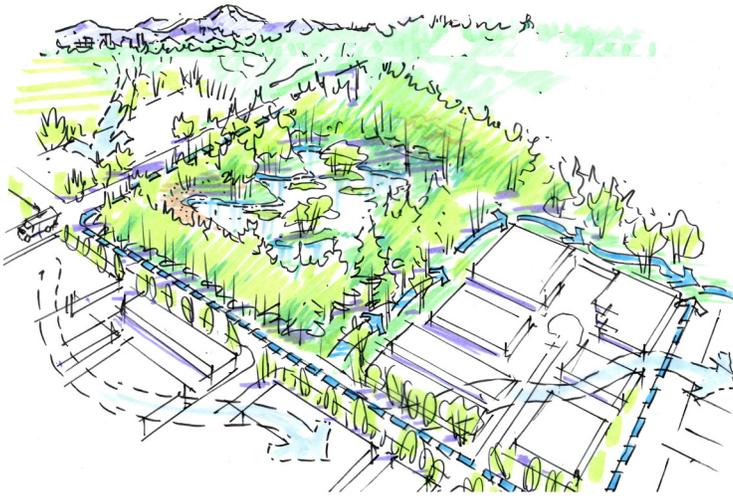


1970-2006

- The Deeks-McBride gravel pit was re-named Latimer Lake in 1970
- Langley and Surrey develop and increasingly draw from the aquifer, impacting the lake's water level
- Water quality is generally poor
- Fishing becomes popular and the lake is stocked annually with trout
- There is some motorbike use and partying on weekends and at night
- The Latimer Park Master Plan was adopted in 2006

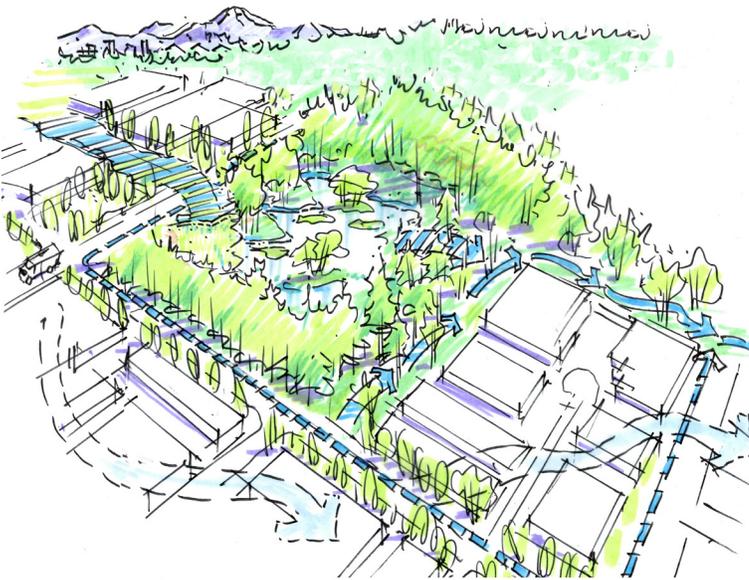


Historic photographs of Latimer Park
circa 1965-70



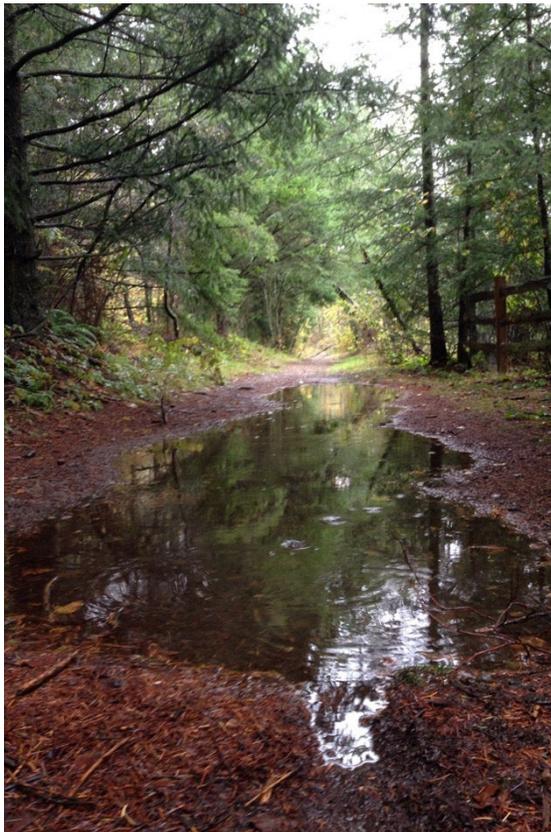
2006 – TODAY

- The Campbell Heights Business Park is developing
- The neighbourhood development requires an adaptation to manage stormwater runoff that runs south of Latimer Park
- Fish spawning is recorded in the streams south of Latimer Park
- Latimer Lake level fluctuations increase
- The City of Surrey adopts the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy – Latimer Park is designated as a habitat hub for biodiversity
- Park users increase, including walkers and dog walkers, and off-leash dog activity in and around lake increases
- The bike park in the Master Plan is formalized



LOOKING FORWARD

- Development of the Business Park proposes to introduce stormwater runoff into Latimer Lake; a constructed wetland is proposed to be introduced into the park as part of the development plan
- The implementation of the Master Plan will be funded by the Business Park development
- Sites adjacent to the park on 28th Avenue and 192nd Street are being developed
- 28th Avenue is being redesigned and will change the streetscape interface with the park's north edge
- An updated Environmental Assessment was completed in June 2019
- Forested area to the east of the current park will be protected, expanding the size of the park



Latimer Park in 2019

Existing Natural Conditions

Latimer Park is part of one the large, established and protected natural areas in South Surrey and is identified as a wildlife habitat hub within the City's Green Infrastructure Network (GIN). The park is the former site of a gravel quarry and currently supports a mix of ecosystem types including mature conifer and young deciduous forest stands, understory shrub communities, wetland and shallow water ecosystems. The diversity provided by these natural areas provide a wide range of habitat for wildlife.

Plant Communities

There are three forest types (ecotypes) in Latimer Park (see map on the next page). Ecotype 1 occupies the northwest section of the site. This area supports a young deciduous forest (~35 years old) with relatively open canopy that is fragmented by disturbed areas. Stands are dominated by black cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera* ssp. *trichocarpa*) with scattered red alder (*Alnus rubra*), Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*) and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). There are also a variety of other young trees that have established or were planted in some areas of the understory. This area has been heavily disturbed by historic land clearing, recreation and filming which has impacted soils and understory plants. There are high concentrations of non-native invasive plants in this area.

Ecotype 2 extends west and south of the lake. The forest found in this area is mixed and not uniform in structure and species composition. There has been a range of disturbances over time in this area resulting in a mix of age classes (30 to 60 years old). The stand is dominated by black cottonwood and red alder but also includes patches of significant size mature conifers, including some large size western redcedar as well as some Sitka spruce. There are also a number of mature and regenerating trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) which are not common in the Lower Mainland. Some areas in this stand are open with few mature trees and dominated by shrub communities. Understory vegetation is dense and thick in this area, averaging 90% coverage.

Ecotype 3 is found east of the lake and on the adjacent property that is to be incorporated into the park. This area is dominated by a mature coniferous forest (~75 years old) dominated by Douglas-fir and western redcedar. This stand is relatively dense and in many areas the canopy is restricting light to the understory which is limiting ground cover. There are some large diameter Douglas-fir growing in this stand. There are also some heritage stumps of significance that remain in this forest stand.



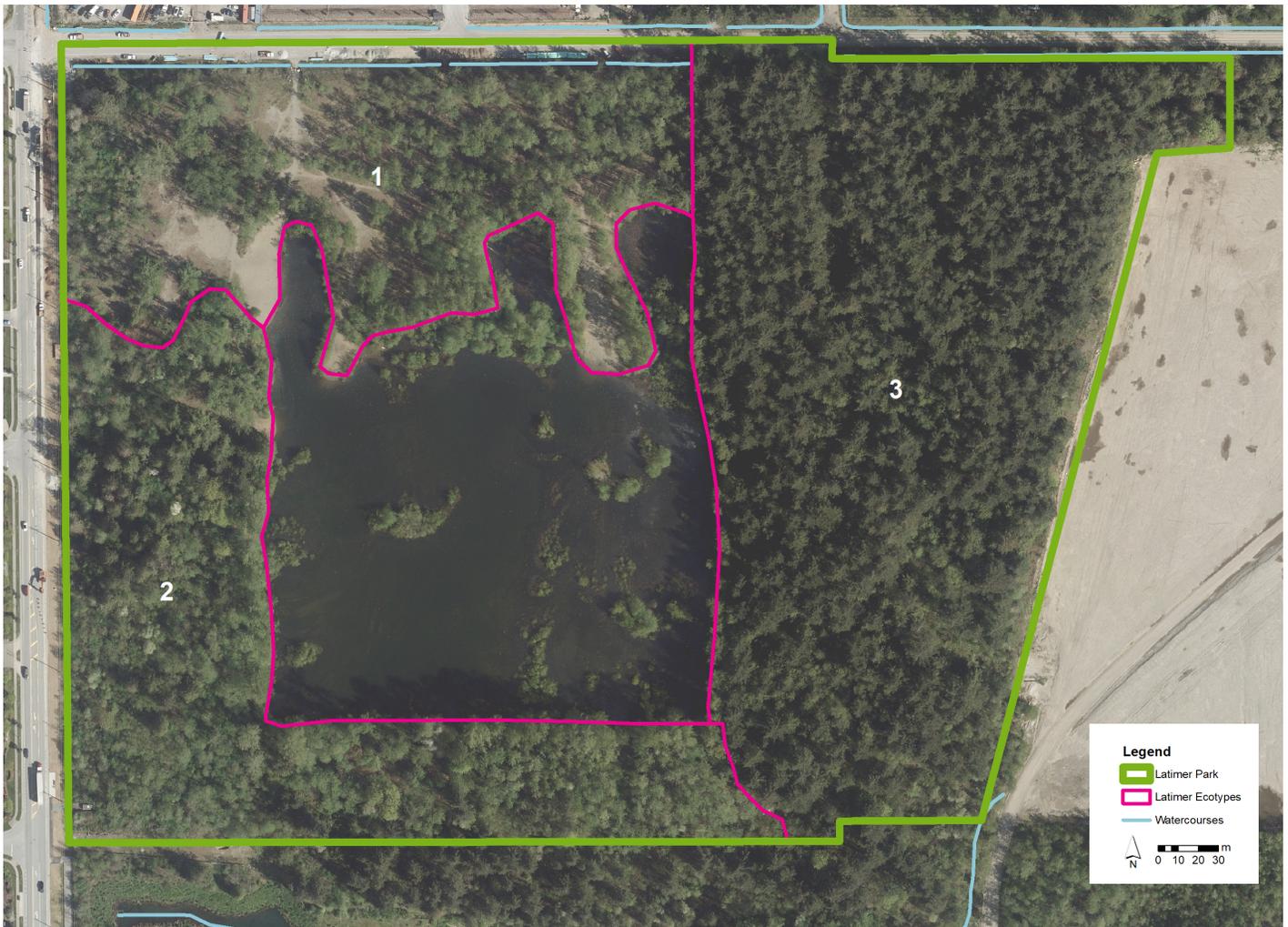
In Ecotype 1, young cottonwood forest is interspersed with areas of visible soil disturbance.



In Ecotype 2, there understory shrub community is dense and diverse.



In Ecotype 3, the dense conifer stand is in many places shading out the understory.



Forest types in Latimer Park

Aquatic communities

The project site is generally flat with the exception of the quarry excavation pit that was created in the middle of the park. This has since filled with water over time to create a shallow lake known as Latimer Lake. The depth of the lake fluctuates with ground water in the area. The western side of the lake is generally deeper than the east, which is becoming colonized by aquatic plants and water-tolerant shrubs.

Wildlife

Latimer Park provides a complex of habitat features that have the capacity to support a wide range of wildlife species. Birds that inhabit this park area are likely diverse. The combination of waterbodies, forest, shrub communities, and open fields provide habitat suitable for resident and migratory birds. There are high-value nesting areas for song birds in the variety of trees as well as the dense shrub communities. The habitat islands provide valuable nesting areas protected from dogs and humans.

It is possible that some larger mammals may travel to this area as part of their home range including coyote, black bear, cougar and black-tailed deer. A wide range of medium and small mammals likely inhabit the park, including beaver, skunk, raccoon, and weasels. There were signs of extensive beaver use on the habitat islands, including chewed wood and small trails through the vegetation.

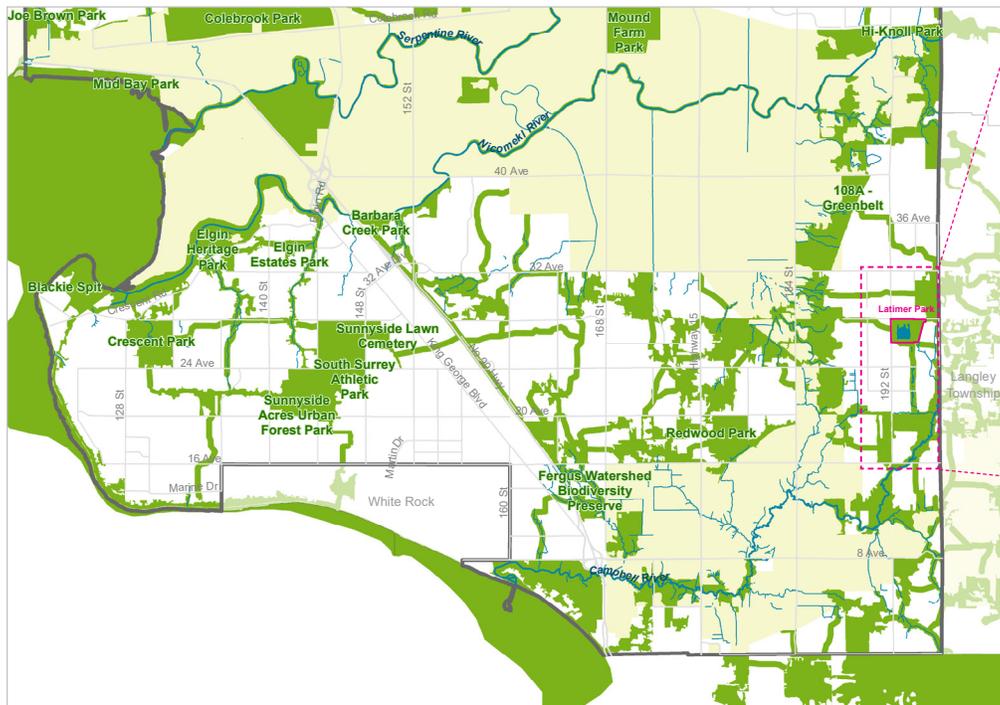
The lake provides a permanent waterbody which is suitable for breeding reptiles and amphibians (herpetofauna). Also, there are numerous natural areas adjacent to wetlands and open water that provide high value habitat for amphibians. In areas that are shallow with aquatic vegetation cover, numerous tadpoles were observed. These includes two species of frogs and at least one type of salamander. It is unclear if fish currently reside in the lake, though it has been stocked with trout in the past, and there have been reports of invasive carp, red-eared slider turtles and bullfrogs.

Latimer Pond is a contained drainage and has no outflow. In the past, the pond has been stocked with Rainbow Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). Other fish may have been introduced but current species have not been confirmed. Online fishing forums indicate that there is an abundance of non-native and invasive carp and sunfish.

Species at Risk

The park provides suitable habitat for a number of species at risk. Red-legged frog has historically been observed within the park area and is considered blue-listed in the Province. The blue-listed Great blue heron was also observed hunting in the shallows of the lake. The blue-listed plant Vancouver Island beggarticks (*Bidens amplissima*) was found in riparian areas of the park during past studies, including in 2013 where it was identified on the shoreline of Latimer Lake with the largest populations in the central finger and southeast corner of the lake.

Latimer Park is a hub within the city's Green Infrastructure Network. It provides a large diverse forest with a lake/wetland complex.



LEGEND

- Site
- River
- Creek
- Green Infrastructure Network
- Agricultural Land Reserve



Existing Recreation Use

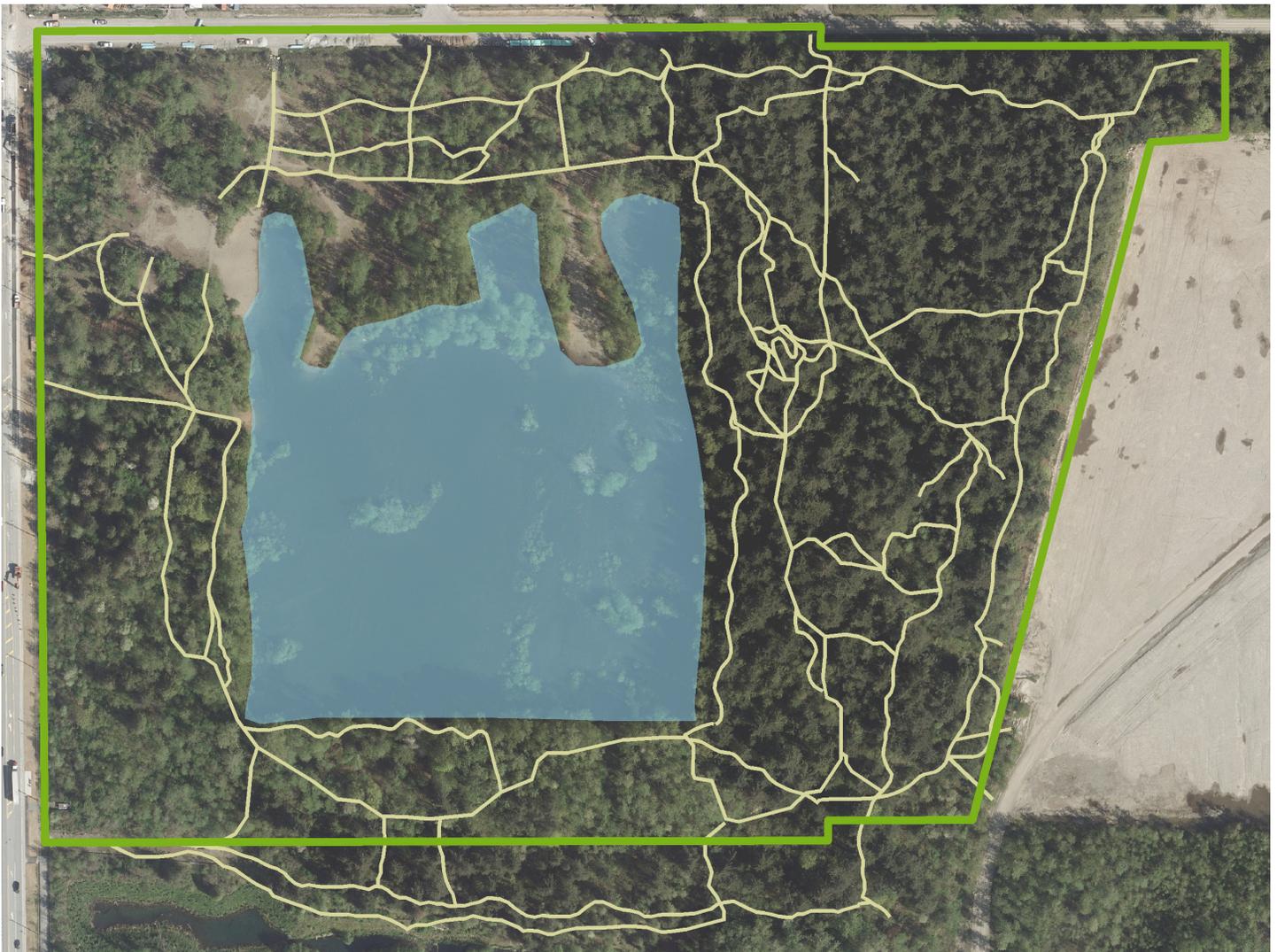
Park Users

The primary users that currently visit Latimer Park include trail walkers, cyclists, and dog owners. People regularly enjoy the trail that extends around the lake which provides access to a number of informal lake access points. Cyclists use the in-park bike trail facilities east of the lake that were developed following the 2006 Master Plan and are partially connected with a larger bike trail network in the neighbourhood. Many people frequent the park with their dogs and sometimes play fetch by the lake where it is sandy and open.

The park also gets used by filming crews, particularly in the northern section of the park near the lake. Latimer Park is currently listed on the City's Filming Locations. In addition to these groups of park users, there are also signs of occasional equestrian use and some illegal use by motorized bikes. It is also expected that an increasing number of park users will come from the growing number of businesses in the Campbell Heights Business Park.

Trails

The park contains a network of formal and informal trails. Trails surfaces are mostly soil and organics with some gravel in high use areas north of the lake. The most established trail network extends around the perimeter of the lake. The eastern forest area contains a high number of braided trails that are intermixed with the mountain bike trails that were constructed as proposed in the 2006 Master Plan.



Many formal and informal trails occur throughout the park



Public input

A survey, two stakeholder workshops, and a public open house were held in May and June of 2019 to discuss the park's condition and gather input on the existing Master Plan as well as options for proposed updates. A complete summary of the consultation process is provided in Appendix 1. The project team heard concerns about the human impact on wildlife habitat and the importance to maintain and enhance the park's connectivity to adjacent habitat hubs and wildlife corridors. Latimer Park is seen as a connector route for cyclists as well as a good park for families and kids to practice their bike skills. Users engaged at the open house and in the survey highlighted the abundant wildlife they enjoy seeing in the park, as well as the park's importance for dog walkers. Some users expressed that they would like the park to retain its current rustic and wild look and feel. Many dog walkers wanted to ensure the dog off-leash area is large enough to cater to the number of dogs that regularly visit the park.

Constraints and Opportunities

There are a few changes since the Master Plan was adopted in 2006 which create new constraints and opportunities for the park, including:

Lake water level

A significant component of the 2006 Master Plan was to enable fishing to take place in the lake again. The Master Plan proposed to dredge the lake to achieve a sufficient depth for trout to survive during the summer months, after which the lake could be stocked annually. However, dredging the lake would require extensive work and may pose risks to the lake's integrity and current flora and fauna. In addition, the success of dredging to allow a viable fish population is uncertain and would require pumping water from the aquifer to sustain it.

Green Infrastructure Network and Wildlife Habitat

Since the Master Plan was adopted, the City of Surrey developed a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy which identified important hubs and corridors for wildlife habitat and movement. Latimer Park was identified as a habitat hub that the Strategy prioritizes for protection and enhancement. The importance to protect and enhance wildlife habitat in the park was highlighted by stakeholders as well as members of the public during the consultation process. The Environmental Assessment completed in June 2019 served to identify areas with higher habitat value within the park.

The park provides habitat for a number of known species at risk including the blue-listed Vancouver Island beggarticks growing in several locations around the perimeter of the lake as well as for great blue heron and red legged frog.

Dogs Off-Leash Area

Dog walkers are an important user group in the park and their needs must be balanced with conservation objectives. Since 2006, Surrey's Dog Off Leash Strategy was adopted by Council and identifies considerations for the placement and design of off-leash areas. Participants at the open house voiced concern that the design of the park's off-leash area should respond to the needs of the dog walkers who regularly use this park. One of the valuable wildlife habitat areas identified in the Environmental Assessment, located in the north east corner of the lake, is in conflict with the dog off-leash area as recommended in the 2006 Master Plan.



Stormwater Management

An engineering study on stormwater drainage for the Campbell Heights Business Park was conducted in 2008 and proposed to introduce stormwater into the lake to manage stormwater runoff from the business park. The development occurring currently will require a stormwater management facility to be built in the park. The proposed wetland will serve as a water quality measure in addition to the stormwater infiltration and detention systems that will be located throughout the contributing upstream development areas. The wetland will be designed to overflow into the lake if required during heavy rain events. This wetland was not included in the 2006 Master Plan.

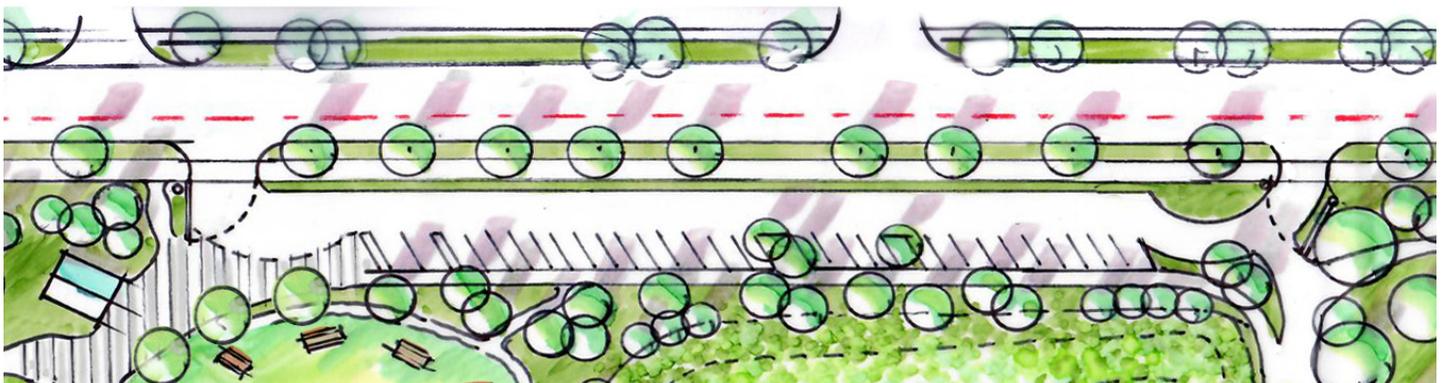
Park Expansion

Since 2006, the City has acquired forested land directly east of the park for inclusion within Latimer Park. This mature forest stand already has informal trails continuous with the existing park and will be considered part of this Master Plan update.

Road Widening

28th Avenue, which forms the north edge of the park, is being widened and improved. This offers an opportunity to rethink the parking lot design, and create a more linear layout. This layout would be less impactful to the existing trees within the Park than the one proposed in the current Master Plan, and would have improved sight lines from 28th Avenue based on recent crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) considerations. The parking lot at Green Timbers provides a precedent for a well-functioning linear parking lot with a similar layout.

Included in these street improvements is a planted boulevard and a 4m-wide multipurpose trail that will run along the south side of 28th Ave, adjacent to Latimer Park.



Proposed linear parking lot along the northern edge of the park



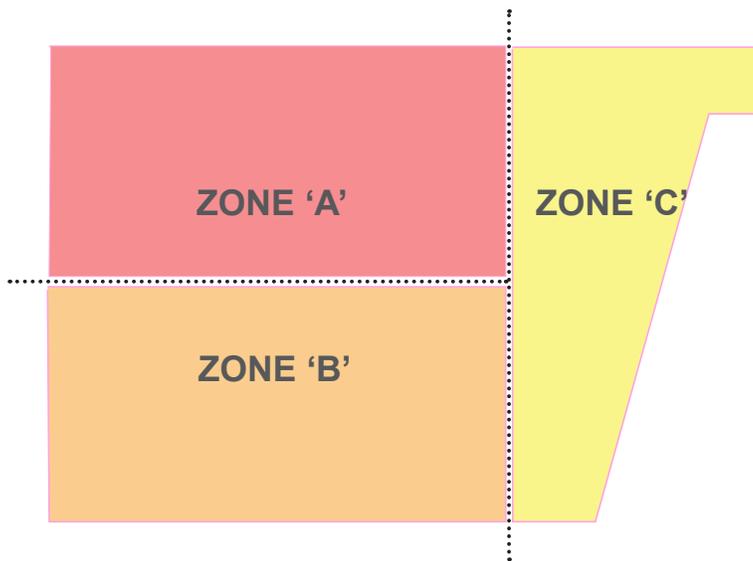
Updated Master Plan

This section introduces the updated Master Plan with its three management zones, key features and changes from the 2006 Master Plan.

Design Rationale Towards a Master Plan Framework

Based on the 2006 Master Plan, the park’s environmental condition and feedback from the stakeholder consultation process, the Park has been divided into three distinct management zones. These zones provide a framework for the design rationale and the recommended updates to the Master Plan.

Latimer Park – Management Zones



ZONE ‘A’

Patchy forest area with numerous trails and disturbed open areas. Established aquatic and riparian wildlife habitat areas along the north edge of the lake.

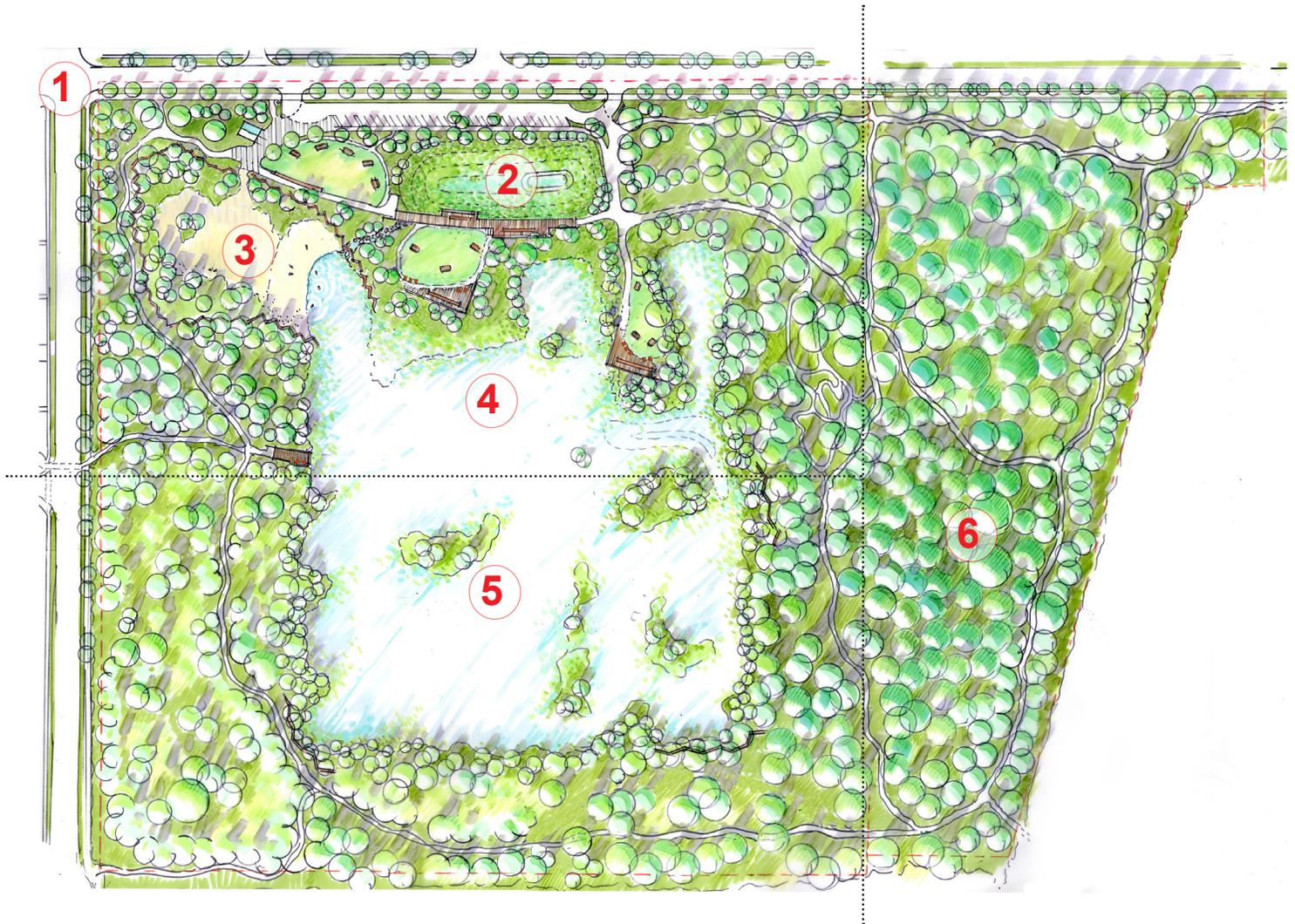
ZONE ‘B’

Re-established healthy and diverse forest with a developed understory and well established aquatic and riparian areas including habitat islands and safe wildlife refuge areas.

ZONE ‘C’

An area recently added to Latimer Park that includes a well established mature conifer forest with numerous trails.

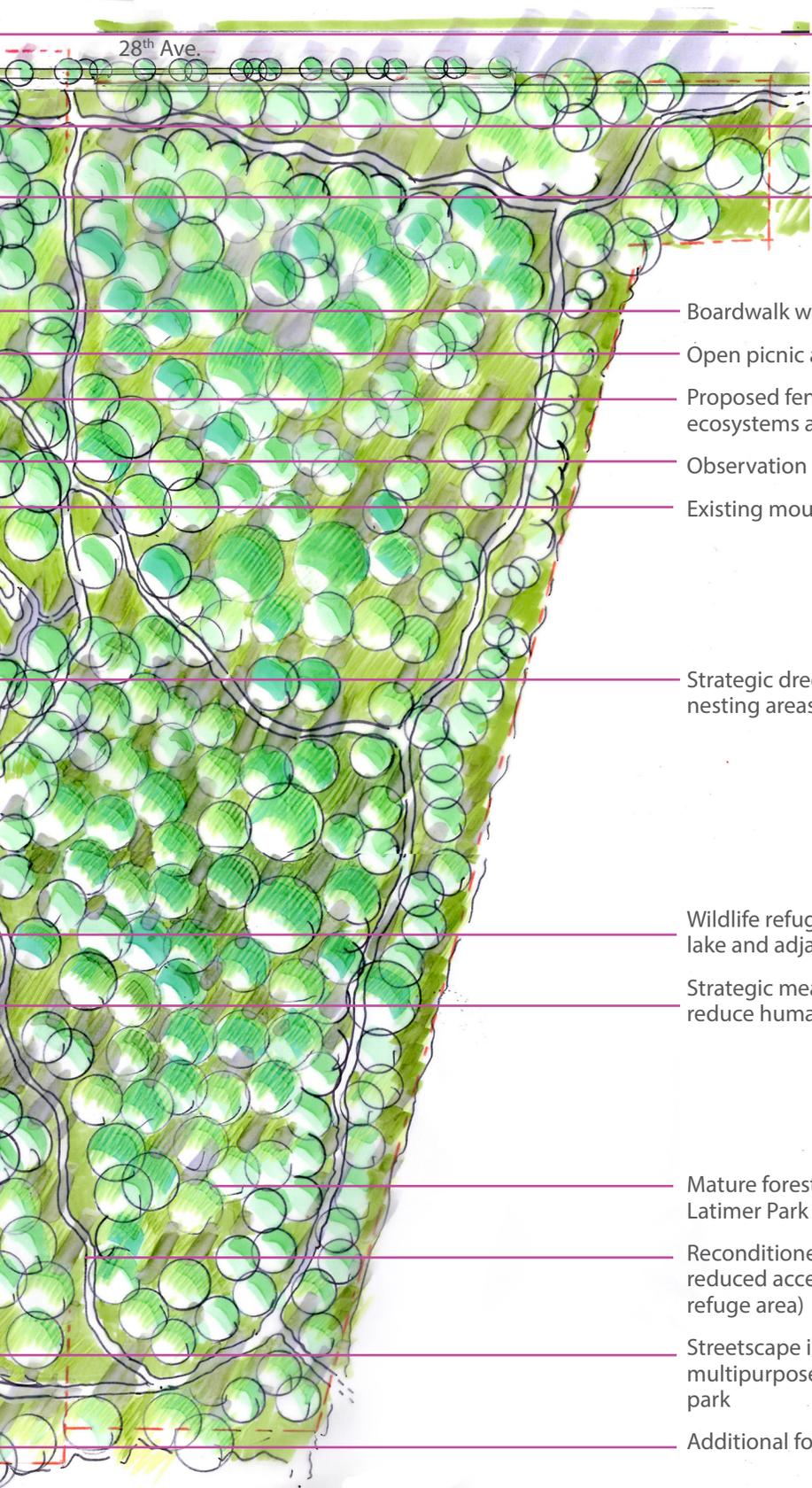
Updated Master Plan



- 1 Streetscape improvements along 28th Avenue and 192nd Street with enhanced multi-purpose walking and cycle pathways and on-site parking along northern edge of park
- 2 Proposed stormwater detention wetland to serve as an overflow for on-site infiltration facilities of the Business Park catchment area located to the north of Latimer Lake
- 3 Proposed fenced dog off-leash area, to be located away from sensitive ecosystems and with limited/controlled access to lake water
- 4 Improved public recreational amenities with picnic areas, washroom, boardwalk and observation decks
- 5 Latimer Lake wildlife refuge area to be established within southern portion of Latimer Park with trails relocated away from lake's southern foreshore and with protection fencing in key locations
- 6 Mature forested land directly east of the park to be added to Latimer Park with formalized loop trails

Updated Master Plan





- Streetscape improvements along 28th Avenue with enhanced multi-purpose walking and cycle pathways along northern edge of park
- Public washroom, drop off area and on-site parking area
- Proposed stormwater detention wetland
- Boardwalk with interpretive signage and seating areas
- Open picnic area with picnic benches
- Proposed fenced dog off-leash area, located away from sensitive ecosystems and with controlled access to lake water
- Observation decks with seating
- Existing mountain bike area
- Strategic dredging to diminish land bridge access to sensitive nesting areas on the habitat islands
- Wildlife refuge area to be established within southern portion of lake and adjacent riparian and forest areas
- Strategic measures, such as fencing and boardwalk structures to reduce human and dog access into ecologically sensitive areas
- Mature forested land directly east of the park to become part of Latimer Park
- Reconditioned trail network with improved uniform surface and reduced access to southern edge of lake shore (along the wildlife refuge area)
- Streetscape improvements along 192nd Street with enhanced multipurpose walking and cycle pathways along westerly edge of park
- Additional formalized park entrances aligned with adjacent streets

Park Entry

As envisioned in the 2006 Master Plan, public washrooms will be located as part of the park entry sequence and drop-off area. The parking configuration now runs adjacent to the park frontage on 28th Avenue, and will be located to incorporate and preserve as many of the existing trees as possible. Permeable concrete paving could enable surface drainage to infiltrate into the groundwater system. Clear site lines from the arrival area to the picnic and dog-run areas should be maintained where possible. A small drop-off area at the west end will be incorporated next to the proposed washroom building, as well as maintenance access routes for park service vehicles.



Fenced Off-Leash Dog Area

As with the 2006 Master Plan, a fenced off-leash dog area is envisioned as part of the Latimer Park amenities. The 2019 Environmental Assessment of this area has identified species at risk and valuable wildlife habitats and nesting areas within and along the edges of the lake. Given these observations, the updated Master Plan locates the fenced off-leash dog area in this north western corner of the lake. This location is currently a disturbed sand beach that is frequently used by dog walkers. It will provide similar amenities for dog walkers as the area proposed in the 2006 Master Plan, and currently provides lower habitat value compared the other parts of the lake. Ongoing reviews of water quality may be required.



Stormwater Detention Wetland

One of the main adaptations to the 2006 Master Plan is the introduction of a wetland area that is designed to capture and clean stormwater overflow from the catchment area of an industrial development site to the north of Latimer Park. This is expected to have little to no long term effect on the hydrological or ecological conditions of Latimer lake, and will be designed to integrate with and contribute to the habitat value of the Park. An elevated walkway would allow park users continued access to the Lake trail system and observe the evolving wetland habitat.



Lake Access

As envisioned in the 2006 Master Plan, there will be a series of constructed boardwalks and docks to enable universal and safe access to the edge of Latimer Lake. One key change from the 2006 Master Plan comes from the recognition that fishing is increasingly unfeasible with recent low seasonal water levels. There are potential impacts upon the ecological and hydrological conditions of the lake if it was dredged and from required pumping of water from the aquifer to sustain fish in the lake. As a result of these findings, dredging is not recommended and fishing will not be a supported activity. Docks with seating are still proposed to allow people to view and enjoy the lake from its north and west sides while protecting the lake's riparian areas.



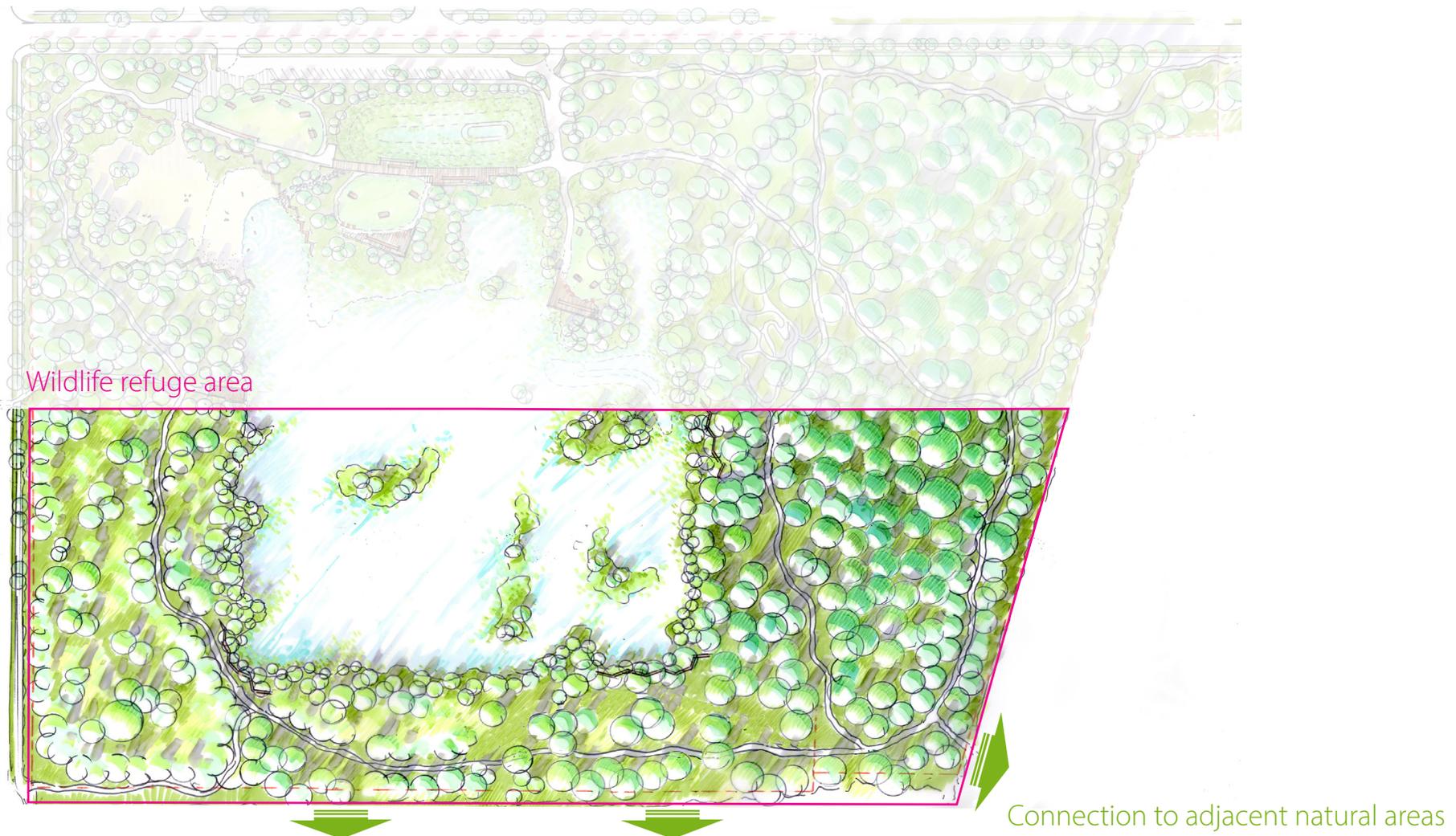
Finally, it is proposed that interpretive signage be introduced to further inform park users about the wildlife that lives within the Park and the increasingly important role Latimer Park plays as a large habitat hub within the City's Green Infrastructure Network.



Wildlife refuge

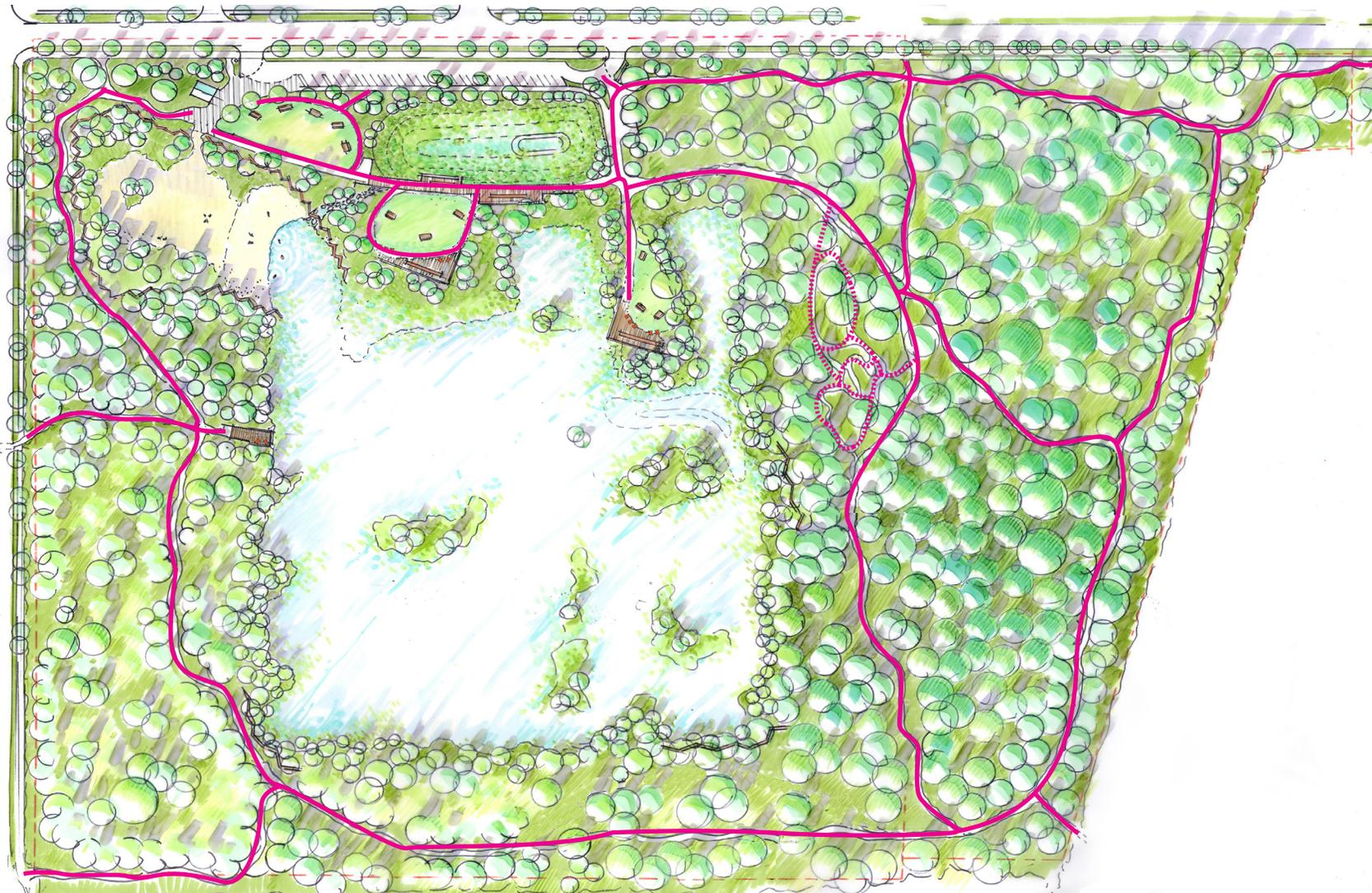
The 2006 Master Plan designated the south part of the park as a wildlife refuge area. The updated Master Plan maintains that designation recognizing the high habitat value in this area as well as its importance as a connecting corridor to other natural areas to the south. Trails through this section will aim to minimize human impact on the adjacent forest and lake riparian areas and to minimize habitat fragmentation.

The islands provide high value refuge areas and nesting grounds for birds. Minor dredging is proposed to restrict access to the northernmost habitat islands which can currently be accessed through a land bridge when water levels are low.



Trails

The proposed trail network seeks to provide the amenities requested by park users while balancing the conservation needs of the park. The updated Master Plan maintains a loop trail around Latimer Lake as well as the bike skills area as proposed in the original Master Plan. The lake trail is however kept further away from the lake with well defined access points to protect sensitive habitat. New loop trails are proposed in management zone 'C', the newest section of the park. These trails makes use of the most established and well-used trails that currently exist. A limited trail network is proposed in the southern part of the park to reduce impacts to the wildlife refuge area. The numerous informal trails that exist in management zone 'C' are proposed to be decommissioned.



Conclusion and Next Steps

This update to the Latimer Park Master Plan provides a current assessment of the park's biophysical condition and use as a recreational area. The implementation of the updated Master Plan will require additional technical studies, environmental monitoring, funding and education resources.

There will be more detailed design to effectively incorporate the proposed stormwater infrastructure as well as more detailed civil engineering and landscape architecture design to develop the proposed site features and amenities, such as the parking area, washrooms and lake observation decks.

Ongoing environmental monitoring and review of the detailed designs will also be required to mitigate impacts to wildlife habitat and identified species at risk. The high-level costing appended to this report will inform implementation decisions. Finally, continued initiatives to engage park users, encourage stewardship and share information through interpretive signage will help ensure the protection of the park's environmentally sensitive habitat.



