



HANNA RECREATIONAL LIVING STRATEGY

EIGHT ONE EIGHT STUDIO
PLANNING + DESIGN COLLABORATIVE



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January and February 2021.

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INTRODUCTION

In the Harvest Sky Region four public park and campground facilities are facing the challenge of market appropriateness and are attempting to create unique partnerships that can provide for a joint solution in the form of a collaborative approach. The Town of Hanna, Village of Youngstown and Special Areas all contain dedicated park spaces for individual, family, and group functions for seasonal use and share similar site and building characteristics – secure storage, service facilities, camping, water based activities, reception areas staff areas for example.

This project with its unique blend of a municipal and not for profit corporation partnership, (Harvest Sky Economic Development Corporation) introduces the underlying basis for public and private sector investment through partnerships that would facilitate the development and operation of the Fox Lake Park and Campground. Successful project implementation, in this particular case, would create a model for partnerships that can be applied to other project initiatives in the Harvest Sky Region.

This document is structured very similar to a business plan, albeit much more general in nature. It is intended to be used as a general guide to creating, expanding or redeveloping, a campground using Fox Lake Park and Campground outside of Hanna as a case study. The document can also be applied to any potential campground owner in the region looking to start a campground from scratch. The key distinction with the Fox Lake Campground, compared to creating a new campground within the region, is the advantages brought by the close proximity to the Town of Hanna. The Fox Lake Campground has some key opportunities that may not be available to every aspiring campground operator in the region.

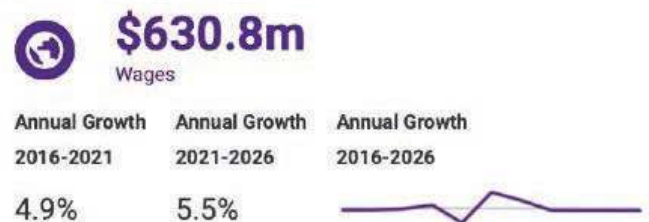
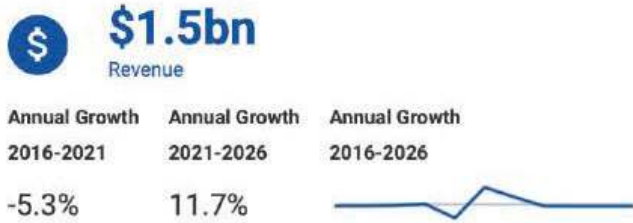
A NOTE ABOUT 2020 - 2021

In 2020 and 2021 the number of people engaging in camping activities grew dramatically. These past two years were very much an anomaly in the world of camping; with international travel restricted and in many cases prohibited, and interprovincial travel severely restricted, people's innate desire for change and variety manifested itself through a surge in camping activities. The American organization, Kampgrounds of America (KOA) undertakes an evaluation of camping in North America through their annual North American Campground Report. In 2021 they reported that Camping provides an affordable and safe way for leisure travellers to vacation and they are using those facts to their advantage. More than half (55%) of first-time campers' reasons for planning a trip in 2020 can be directly tied to concerns surrounding the pandemic.



The Town of Hanna, Fox Lake Park and Campground

INTRODUCTION



IBISWorld Campgrounds & Recreational Vehicle Parks in Canada, 2021

Tourism was among the hardest hit sectors of the economy in 2020 as a result of physical distancing measures to contain the spread of COVID-19. Tourism spending in the first quarter was stunted by the declaration of a global pandemic in mid-March and the accompanying physical distancing measures to prevent its spread. The second quarter was almost entirely subject to these restrictions. Many restrictions were eased in the third quarter in conjunction with fewer COVID-19 cases, which provided more tourism spending opportunities. The fourth quarter saw increased restrictions in many provinces during the second wave of the pandemic, limiting the availability of services generally purchased by tourists.

Consequently, the pandemic has presented a challenge related to the reporting of industry data. 2020 and 2021 threw, quite literally, a big curve into the data. Looking at the industry key statistics from IBISWorld's 2021 Campgrounds & Recreational Vehicle Parks in Canada, it is quite easy to spot the impact of the pandemic.

Pandemic situation notwithstanding, there is a general optimism relating to revenue and growth of the industry. Overall, the outlook is positive for the next five years according to the market research conducted in 2021 by IBISWorld.

...demand is anticipated to pick back up and stay positive overall over the next five years. Over the next five years, the number of baby-boomer retirees is expected to grow, which will greatly benefit industry operators since these consumers represent the industry's most important customer base. Favourable consumer conditions, such as rising levels of disposable income, are projected to bolster industry performance, since consumers with higher disposable incomes are generally more willing to spend on discretionary industry services. Overall, industry revenue is forecast to rise at an annualized rate of 11.7% to \$2.5 billion over the five years to 2026.

IBISWorld Campgrounds & Recreational Vehicle Parks in Canada, 2021

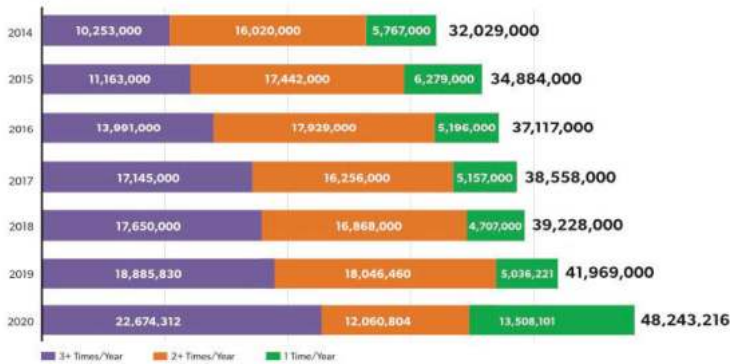
THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES OF CAMPING

In general, the economics of campgrounds have generally been positive, with the industry experiencing modest growth between 2016 and 2019 (*IBISWorld 2021*). However, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic has effectively wiped out any gains to the industry realized in these years.

However, there are a few bright points that indicate the industry is poised for growth going forward from 2021. Despite the pandemic situations throughout North America, strong sales of RV units in 2021 (primarily travel trailers and fifth wheel units), a 53.8% overall increase over 2020, an encouraging metric for campground owners.

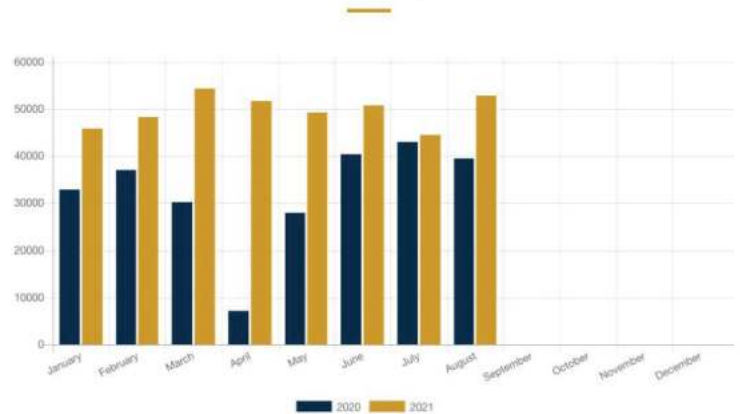
The frequency of camping in North America has increased in 2021, up over 6 million households from 2019 to 2020. This was most likely due to the fact that this was the most readily available type of vacation opportunity, however it is another encouraging metric.

FREQUENCY OF CAMPING (2014 TO 2020)



KOA 2021 North American Camping Report 2021

Total Shipments Monthly vs. Last Year



RV units shipments, 2020 vs 2021, RV Industry Association, August 2021

The aging population is another bright spot, as odd as that might seem. Older individuals represent a key demographic for campground operators, as these individuals typically benefit from relatively stable incomes and substantial time for leisure activities. In fact, *IBISWorld's 2021 Campground and Recreational Vehicle Parks in Canada report notes that "...baby boomers are projected to account for a growing share of the overall Canadian population, bolstering demand for RV parks and campgrounds. In fact, the number of individuals aged 65 and older is forecast to grow at an annualized rate of 3.5% over the five years to 2026.*

It is important to note that this demographic of consumers aged 55 and older will factor into design and servicing delivery choices as well as types of amenities provided on campgrounds.

THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES OF CAMPING

Tourism in Alberta is also a positive influence on the industry. Travel throughout North America is looking to be a challenge in 2022; Canadian tourism is highly influenced by foreign travel. Statistics Canada notes that in 2018 foreign travel accounted for \$1.0 billion in spending in the Canadian Rockies, making it the most lucrative region in the Prairies. Should the border restrictions be relaxed in 2022, it is anticipated an increase in international travel will correspond with an associated increase in spending. However there are local opportunities that can be capitalized on to help offset the lack of international visitors. Alberta Economic Development, Trade and Tourism noted that 80% of Alberta tourism comes from Albertans and that the VFR market (visiting friends and family) is the #1 reason for travel. The 2017 Asset Mapping and Opportunities Study by Urban Systems identifies that rural Alberta destinations have an opportunity to provide travellers with diverse and authentic travel experiences that are typically not available to larger urban centres. The region, and the Town of Hanna in particular, have diverse recreational and historical assets that can be drawn on to draw travellers to the area.

Specific to the Town of Hanna, and the Harvest Sky Region in general, the 2017 Asset Mapping and Opportunities Study by Urban Systems highlights some very important metrics in ensuring success for any venture in the Region.

TRAVEL MOTIVATIONS FAVOUR RURAL

Small towns excel at offering authentic experiences. Visitors can easily connect with culture, history, and a sense of place all in a walkable package in a small town. International travellers are starting to make rural regions like the Deep South their first destination in the US, skipping traditional big city visits. Instead of checking famous sights off a list in a guidebook, they're seeking out the local artists, authentic foods, and hidden gems recommended by friends and fellow travellers.

Cactus Corridor Asset Mapping and Opportunities Study, Urban Systems Ltd., 2017

Alberta is considered one of the premier provinces for skiing, hiking and camping, making the region a popular destination for RV owners and campers alike. Moreover, the province contains three national parks, which generate significant tourism activity within the region. In fact, Banff and Jasper national parks are typically visited by millions of people each year, stimulating demand for campgrounds and RV parks.

IBISWorld, Campgrounds & Recreational Vehicle Parks in Canada, 2021

A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE WILL BE BUILT AROUND A CLEAR SENSE OF DIRECTION FOCUSED ON:

- Innovation rather than replication;
- Entrepreneurial rather than public;
- Small, focused and strategic interventions rather than large scale restructuring;
- Collaborations and partnerships; and
- Adequate framework and readiness conditions.

Cactus Corridor Asset Mapping and Opportunities Study, Urban Systems Ltd., 2017



The Town of Hanna, Fox Lake Park and Campground

STARTING OUT - INVESTIGATIONS

Every expansion or development initiative must begin with research. This is a key step in the development process that should be undertaken as thoroughly as possible. There are a myriad of options and information relating to the intricacies and nuances relating to establishing a campground. It's important to recognize that these investigations will not, and should not, be exhaustive; there will always be more information to explore. The important aspect is starting; move forward and be flexible in the planning in order to adapt to any new information that adds value and can be used to a marketing or revenue advantage.

Depending on the goal, expansion vs establishment of a new campground, the investigations will generally consist of reviewing the camping market, reviewing trends, undertaking reviews of the campgrounds within proximity, and discussions with tourism agencies.

The research information gathered will form the foundation of a business case when looking for future funding and will provide insight into future development considerations. For example, if research indicates that travellers will frequent those campsites that offer laundry facilities, incorporating those facilities into development budgets and site plans is a solid decision.

There are a wealth of resources available to anyone looking to investigate campgrounds and camping in Alberta. Much information can be found online, with the Alberta government having great up to date data on tourism in the Province. (<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/6848998>)

There are several key areas that should be examined when engaging in any revenue generating venture, but the primary consideration when starting out is identifying who is buying the product or service? Who is the market?

A market is a fairly flexible term that is generally used to describe a group of customers or clients. Markets can also overlap. They can be defined based on customer demographics, client preferences, or location. A campground, for example, may have many different markets. It's important to understand which markets the business should target in order to attract customers, there may be markets that are desirable and markets that are not. Determining the markets, or group of customers that can the campground can be targeted at is important to understand early on.

What are the strategic advantages this campground would offer to the market? What would make the market buy the service? What is the attraction? Are there opportunities that can be realized within this market that a new campground could capitalize on? In a nutshell, who is buying and how can this venture provide value over the competition?

Further discussion follows.



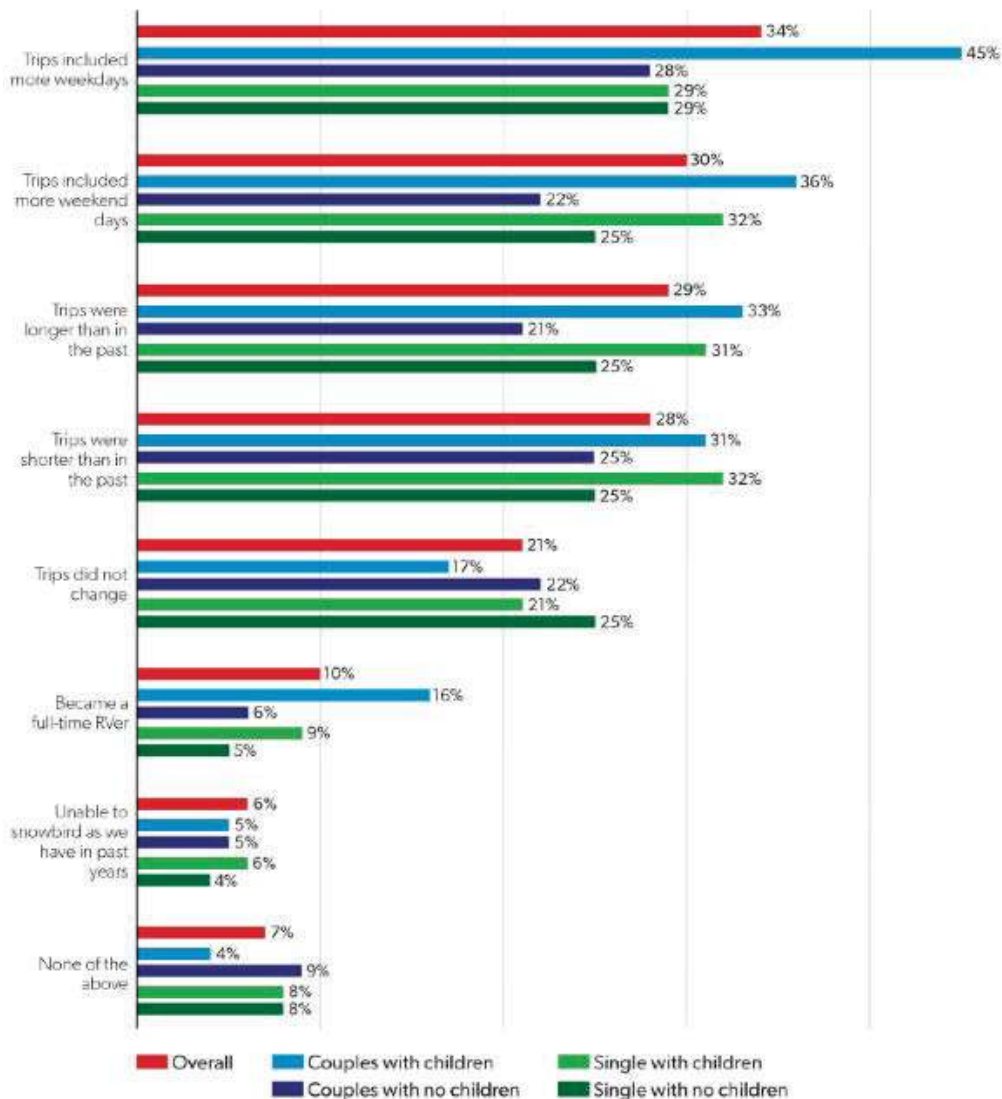
Helmer Dam and Fox Lake

MARKET

The most fundamental investigation for any business is the market. Is there a group of customers who will buy the product? The business is nothing without customers. Luckily, the market for camping in North America and Alberta is stable and is comprised of diverse market segments. Each segment has different characteristics, different needs. Identifying the needs of the market helps to shape opportunities to attract customers to the campground.

IBISWorld's 2021 study on Campgrounds and Recreational Vehicle Parks in Canada notes that the largest market segment are those clients between the ages of 35 - 54 years of age. They account for an estimated 37.8% of the industry's total revenue in 2021 (*IBISWorld 2021*). There are a number of factors to consider with this market- they are at their peak earnings potential which drives demand for RV sales (primarily travel trailers and fifth wheels in 2021), they typically have young children which means they are most likely carrying as many of the comforts of home with them resulting in the need for larger campsites to accommodate. Most importantly in the age of the curated internet accessible vacation photos, they are after experiences.

CHANGE IN CAMPING FOR 2020 BY FAMILY STATUS



KOA 2021 North American Camping Report 2021

MARKET

Following closely behind this demographic are those campers aged 55-64. They accounted for an estimated 35.4% of the total industry revenue in 2021. This segment consists typically of professionals on vacation and people with less work demands on their time. Largely due to the relatively high incomes and limited work obligations associated with consumers in this age demographic, people between the ages of 55 and 64 account for a much larger share of the campground industry's customer base than the overall Canadian population. In fact, individuals aged 55 to 64 are estimated to represent just 14.0% of the Canadian population in 2021, though this share has expanded modestly over the past five years, generating significant demand for industry services (*IBISWorld 2021*).

The people in the demographic between 35 - 54 years of age have disposable income and are seeking new experiences but are less inclined to "rough it". They are interested in cultural and heritage experiences, experiences they can undertake with their children, 'soft adventures' such as museums, local historical features, nature viewing, bicycling and hiking. They also have the ability to incorporate 'lifestyle' amenities in their travel, such as fine dining, quality entertainment; and have the means to pay for it. This is a significant consideration when it comes to identifying campground amenities targeted to this demographic, as well as any 'lifestyle' amenities that may be offered locally.

This demographic is interested in building memories, 'Experiential Tourism', especially with their children. Experiential Tourism focuses on connecting travellers to a particular place and its history and culture. It is more than sightseeing, it is immersion and participation in the culture of the place. People want experiences that are genuine, not contrived.

Incorporation of local events like festivals, rodeos, fishing derbies, winter poker derbies, outdoor hockey tournaments, can all be experiential tourism events. Interpretive experiences like the Frank Slide, Ellis Bird Farm, the Columbia Ice Fields, Metis Crossing are fabulous immersive tourism experiences. Hanna, with its rich railway history could readily capitalize on this type of tourism experience. Partnering with local experiential tourism businesses like trail rides and outfitters, fly fishing tours, and dogsledding can provide reciprocal benefits. The Canadian Badlands is the regional tourism agency for the Badlands. Their entire approach centres around experiential tourism and would be a great agency to partner with to help promote an experiential tourism venture as part of a campground.

Also in most cases both spouses are typically working and consequently customers in this age demographic have less flexibility in vacation and leisure time. They tend to shift from a two to three week extended vacation to more frequent, shorter and locally based vacations. Consequently, incorporating as many experiences, building as many memories as possible, becomes more important.

Campgrounds themselves can engage in experiential vacation opportunities right on site. Glamour camping, or 'Glamping' as it is more popularly referred to, is a camping experience that includes a greater number of services and amenities, and is also a more upscale type of camping. Glamping also involves staying in accommodations such as cabins, glamping tents, teepees, yurts, treehouses, and even covered wagons. Of first-time campers, 28% said that they started their camping experiences in some type of glamping or unique accommodation (compared to only 11% of experienced campers, and 14% of first-time campers in 2019, *KOA 2021*). Overall, it is estimated that about 4.7 million new campers had an exposure to glamping in 2020. Why? Because it makes for an excellent curated experience that can be shared online.

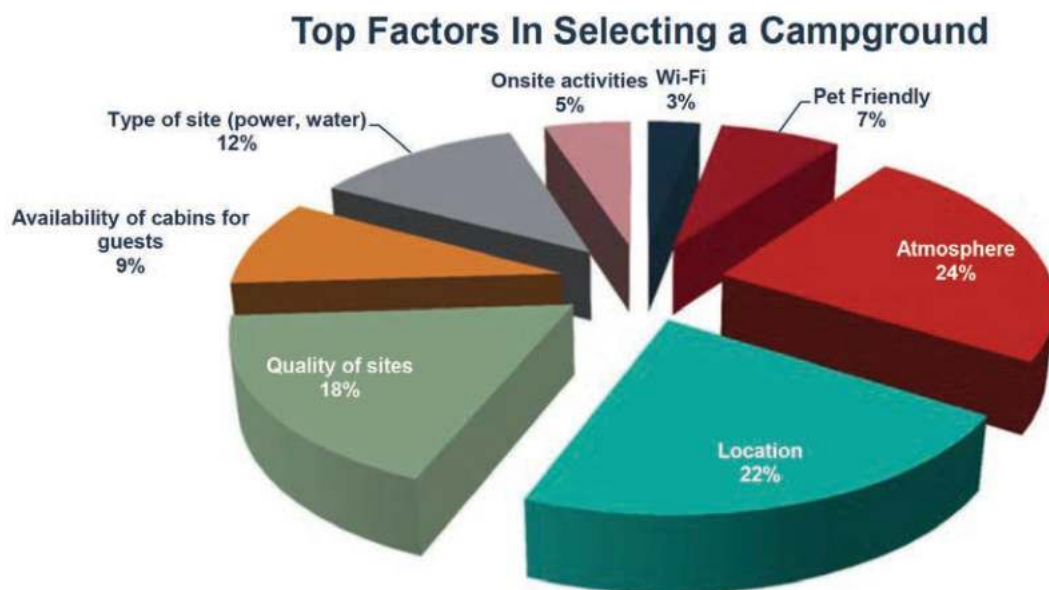
MARKET

Incorporating non camping amenities into the campsite is an opportunity to include experiential amenities into the campsite. Creating views and vistas for wedding photos, creating a 'community hall' on site that could be rented for family and corporate events, and providing a host venue for pop up markets, trade shows, or hobby clubs like classic automobiles are all great ways to build experiential amenities into a campground.

Travelling with children also requires a significant amount of support services. As noted previously, TVs, microwaves, computers, entertainment systems, freezers, even dishwashers and ice makers can form part of the entourage of amenities that campers bring along with them. As a result, they need larger and larger sites to accommodate the space for these amenities and have much higher demands for electrical power - many need 50 amp power and 30 amp is a minimum standard in many cases. Campers also seek amenities such as cable hook-ups and Internet access. Campgrounds need to ensure that services to campsites provide appropriate hookups and site sizes to accommodate these aspects.

The campers in the 55 - 64 years of age demographic have additional requirements relating to accessibility. While universal accessibility should be a standard component in any campground, it will be a key consideration for campground design and appealing to this aging client group. The 2012 Potential demand for rural vacation experiences in Alberta by residents of Alberta by Alberta Parks, Tourism, and Recreation noted that "Travel (touring) as an enjoyable way to spend leisure time was cited predominantly by Older Adults (45- 69 years of age) and discussed enthusiastically long before any questions could be asked." Clearly this is a demographic to be accommodated.

The worldwide pandemic situation has seen a rise in 'work from home', or remote working situations. In many cases, this can also be interpreted as 'work from anywhere', enabling digital workers to choose their office venue. Another market consideration is the digital nomad community. These type of location independent workers have three very important needs: sufficient electrical access, good internet access and proximity to an urban centre. This market will have an impact on campsite space requirements, layouts and servicing requirements.



source: BDC, 2020

OPPORTUNITIES

With markets identified, the next avenue of exploration are opportunities; what can the campground offer that the others in the region do not? There are most likely many opportunities that can be capitalized on, such as location advantages, service offerings, potential tourism partnerships, and in this particular case proximity to the Town of Hanna. Exploration of these opportunities will help to understand the advantages to be had for the campground and shape the unique selling proposition, the unique aspects of the campground.

Travellers today plan their trips extensively. As mentioned earlier, with limited time available for vacationing, most travellers are looking to pack as many authentic experiences into their trip as possible. This planning typically takes the form of extensive online research into campsites, tourism amenities and experience, which factor into route planning, and, of course, costs.

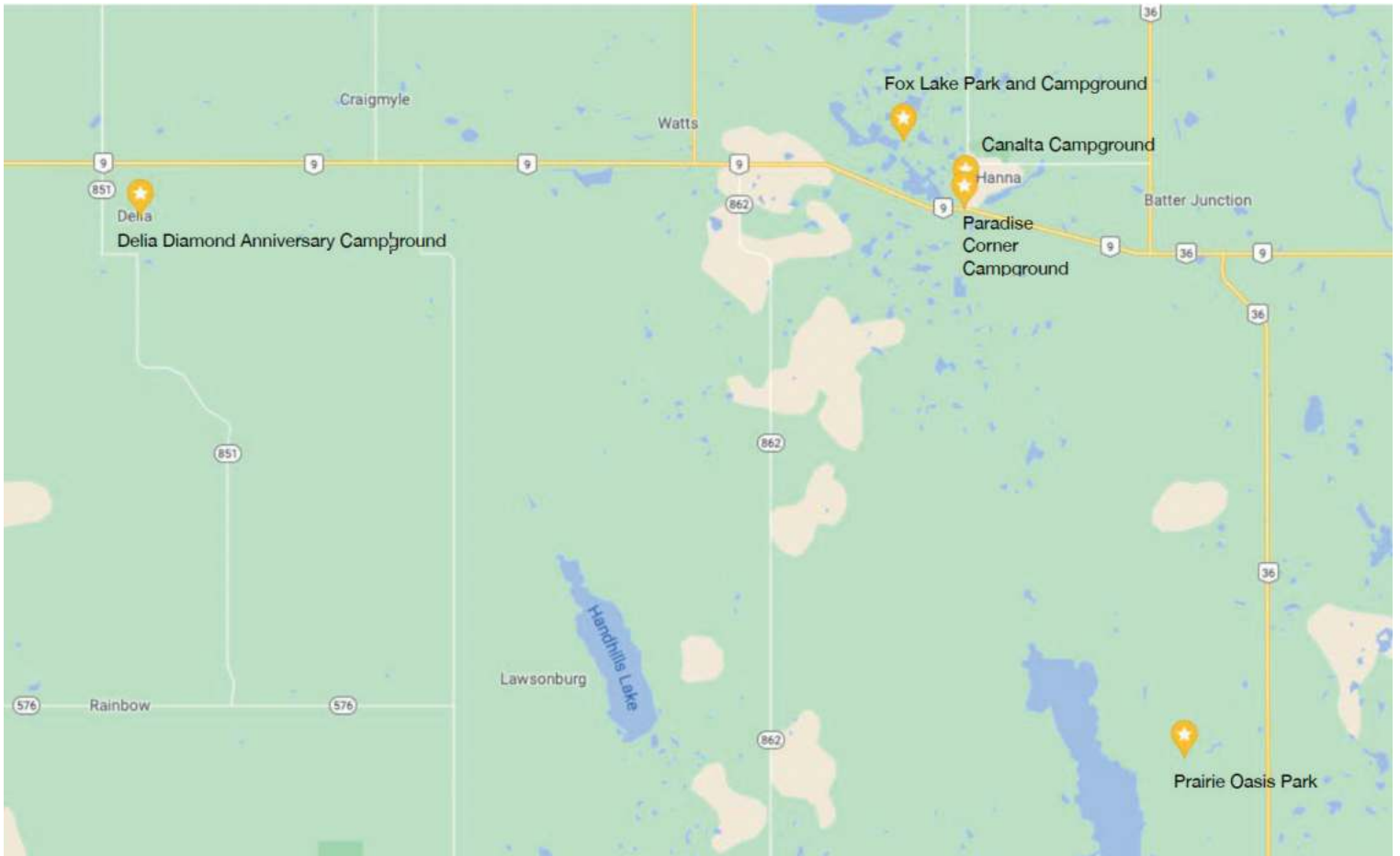
Perhaps the most straightforward method of evaluating which opportunities can be integrated into the campground is to assess the other campgrounds in the region. Exploring how the different campground layouts, what amenities they are offering, what makes them different or distinguishable is important to observe. This review helps understand what is working and what isn't so it can be avoided in any future design. Evaluating existing campgrounds also helps to measure any tacit ideas that may be under consideration; perhaps the local campgrounds have already implemented something similar; is it working for them? These investigations will start to form the basis for a vision for the campground when comparing market needs with existing services being provided.



The Town of Hanna, Fox Lake Park and Campground

LOCAL CAMPGROUND REVIEWS

The review of local campgrounds, those which will be competing for the same customers, should encompass those site within a reasonable proximity of the Town of Hanna. Essentially, these are the campgrounds that travellers will choose when looking for locations within proximity to the Town. For this study a comparison of amenities offered by Paradise Corner RV Campground (currently for sale as of the time of this writing), Fox Lake Park and Playground (the study site), Delia Diamond Anniversary Campground, Handhills High Country Hideaway, Little Fish Lake, Blood Indian Park, and Prairie Oasis Park. Of these, Prairie Oasis Park is probably the most comparable to the Fox Lake study site. First hand reviews included the Delia, Fox Lake Park, Canalta, Paradise Corner, and Prairie Oasis Campgrounds.



source: Google Maps, 2021

LOCAL CAMPGROUND REVIEWS

Reviews should be quantitative as well as qualitative. A quantitative review should evaluate how many sites are offered, is there a distinction between them (ie tenting vs RV sites vs group sites) what types of campsite amenities are offered, what types of recreational and campground amenities and services are available? These are the types of amenities that will need to be considered if the campground is to be competitive. The inclusion of these services will set the standard in the minds of the travellers; they will base their campground choice in part on how much value they put on the services offered.

A qualitative review should also be undertaken. Qualitative reviews are typically 'soft' reviews and are very subjective in nature. They deal with with intangible and inexact information; hard to quantify but the best description might be the 'vibe' that the campground gives off. Do the campers look happy? Are the recreational amenities being utilized? Is the site well maintained? Does it look like the owners are investing in the campground through upgrades and new facilities? The vibe or feeling that the campground gives off will translate into positive word of mouth. People may not remember what services were offered but they will definitely remember how the campground made them feel.

This combination of these reviews can perhaps best be summed up with a simple question - Is this campground worth the money? If not, then why not? Ultimately, campers will ask themselves this question when planning a vacation and booking a location to stay at. Its a large question and probably the most important one for any business. This will be an important consideration when designing a new campsite.

An important aspect of the feel of the campground, and an often overlooked factor, are the on site managers, or campground hosts. Some campgrounds have them, some do not depending on the management structure of the campground. Fox Lake does have on site managers, which is important to the character of the campground. On site managers are a big part of the character of a campground, they are the the main source of information and assistance to the campers, the guests. Their interactions with the campers has a direct impact on the camping experience and frequently shows up in online reviews. Retaining a campground manager or having the owner undertake the host duties should be a careful consideration.

LOCAL CAMPGROUND REVIEWS

CAMPGROUND		Paradise Corner RV Campground	Fox Lake Park and Playground	Delta Diamond Anniversary Campground	Hand Hills High Country Hideaway	Little Fish Lake	Blood Inban Park	Prairie Oasis Park	
GENERAL INFORMATION	PRIVATE/ PROVINCIAL	private	town	town	private	provincial	private	regional?	
	DISTANCE FROM HANNA	in town	5 km W	35 km W	50 km SW	50 km S	86 km SE	30 km SE	
	NUMBER OF SITES	68	46	22	95	10	300		
	ON-LINE BOOKING	NO	NO	YES	NO	FCFS	NO	NO	
RECREATIONAL AMENITIES	BEACH	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	
	SWIMMING	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	
	PLAYGROUND	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	
	HORSESHOE PIT	-	-	-	✗	✗	✓	✓	
	MINI GOLF	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗		
	BOATING	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	BOAT LAUNCH	✗		✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	
	HIKING TRAILS	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	
	FISHING	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	BIRDING	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	DAY USE AREA	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	
CAMPSITE AMENITIES	NO SERVICES	-	OVERFLOW	OVERFLOW	-	✓(10)	✓	✗	
	POWER ONLY	✓(3)	✓(29)	✗	-	✗	✓	✗	
	WATER/ POWER	✓(22)		✓(16)	✓(84)	✗	✓	✓	
	WATER/ POWER/ SEWER	✓(43)	✓(17)	✗	-	✗	✓	✗	
	TENT SITES	✓	✓	✓(6)	✓(9)	✗	-	✓	
	GROUP	-	✓	-	✓(2 lrg)	✗	✓	✓	
	DUMP STATION	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	
	WIFI	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	
CAMPGROUND AMENITIES	SHOWERS	✓(coin)	✓(coin)		✓	✗	✓	✓(coin)	
	LAUNDRY	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓(coin)	
	CONCESSION/ STORE	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	
	FIREWOOD	✓ (for sale)	✓ (for sale)	✓ (offsite)	✓	✗	✓ (for sale)	✓ (for sale)	
FEES	NO SERVICES	-	\$25.00	\$15.00	\$30.00	\$20.00	\$15.00	✗	
	POWER	-	\$30.00	✗	-	✗	\$25.00	✗	
	WATER/POWER	-	-	\$25.00	\$35.00	✗	\$25.00	\$35.00	
	WATER/ POWER/ SEWER	\$37.00	\$36.00	✗	-	✗	\$25.00	✗	
	TENT	-	\$20.00	\$15.00	\$25.00	✗	\$15.00	\$25.00	
	SECOND UNIT	-	-	\$25.00	-	✗	✓	\$30.00	
	GROUP - SMALL	-	-	-	-	✗	✓	\$35/unit	
	GROUP - LARGE	-	\$325.00 7 units	-	✓	✗	✓	\$350-\$420	
LONG TERM RATES	\$200 weekly	-	\$600 monthly	✓	✗	-	-		

Quantitative comparison of amenities and services offered by campgrounds in proximity, or local, to Fox Lake Park and Campground

LOCAL CAMPGROUND REVIEWS

A thorough investigation of local campgrounds, an evaluation of what amenities they offer, which are successful and which are not, will save time and expenses later in the development process; services or amenities which appear unsuccessful on local campgrounds can be excluded from any development decisions, the successful ones can be considered for integration into the campground design. The opportunity to learn and evaluate the efforts undertaken by the competition is a money saver when it comes to designing and renovating a campground.

A qualitative review of local campgrounds was undertaken by our team in June of 2021. This was at the beginning of the 'fourth wave' of COVID cases in Alberta, and consequently the campgrounds were not extensively populated. There was still uncertainty around rules and regulations related to tourism in general and camping specifically. Additionally, the weather conditions that weekend were marginal; cloudy, windy with some intermittent rainshowers. However, it did make for a good evaluation of those campgrounds which leveraged their amenities to attract travellers.

Paradise Corner and the Canalta Hotel RV campground had minimal visitors. With minimal amenities and a site aesthetic that could best be described as basic (extensive sodded areas with sparsely located trees), It could be assumed that visitors to these campgrounds were looking for low cost sites to park their trailers and use them as a home base to further explore the region. These campgrounds offer basic amenities that primarily cater to RV and trailer campers - campsite area, water and power hookups, separate washrooms, and were consequently quite sparsely populated. There were no campground hosts evident.



Standard campsites at the Fox Lake Park and Campground

LOCAL CAMPGROUND REVIEWS

The vibe of these campsites was almost non-existent. Paradise Corner felt like camping in someone's backyard, and was quite unkempt and the sparse playground equipment on the site was at least 40 years old. At the time of the review, Paradise Corner was for sale so it is assumed that any expenditure on maintenance or capital improvements was being kept to a minimum. Additionally, it is assumed that the primary focus for the Canalta site is the recently renovated hotel; the campground might be considered a non primary focus for the business. Given the spartan amenities provided by each of these campgrounds, it could be assumed that the primary clientele consisted of temporary workers. Workers on a jobsite for a limited amount of time, several weeks for example, who only require an inexpensive location to park their travel trailer for a limited amount of time. This type of campground use was not considered for this study.



Paradise Corner Campground, June 2021



Paradise Corner Campground, June 2021

LOCAL CAMPGROUND REVIEWS

Fox Lake Park and Campground is Fox Lake Campground has 46 campsites in use, with a mix of tenters, travel trailers, and RVs. Visitors to the campground were utilizing the small playground as well as the kayaking on the small Helmer reservoir. Fox Lake offers recreational boating and sailing as well as fishing adjacent to the campground. Amenities of this type are rare in southwest Alberta. Fox Lake Park also has modern washrooms with coin-operated handicapaccessible showers. Potable water is available on site. A Sewage dump station is on site located near the campground entry. There are two playgrounds that cater to various age ranges of children, with sand toys available as well. The campground is also notable for being an active bird watching venue, most likely due to the proximity to water. Two hours of Wi-Fi is available for free, with additional time available for a fee.

In contrast to Canalta and Paradise Corner, Fox Lake has a mix of trees populating the campground. While not quite enough to provide visual privacy between the campsites, there are enough to provide a reasonable amount of shade for campers.



Fox Lake Park and Campground, source: Travel Alberta



Beach area Fox Lake Park and Campground, June 2021



Waterskiing at Fox Lake source: Travel Alberta

LOCAL CAMPGROUND REVIEWS



Playground Fox Lake Park and Campground, June 2021



Boat launch at the Helmer Reservoir June 2021



Typical campsite Fox Lake Park and Campground, June 2021



Bluebird Close campsite loop, Fox Lake Park and Campground, June 2021

LOCAL CAMPGROUND REVIEWS

Prairie Oasis Park, about half an hour southwest of Hanna off of highway 36, is a surprising campground. Administered by the Special Areas Board, Prairie Oasis Park capitalized on the creation of a large cooling pond for the Sheerness Generation Station and offers both sailing and powerboating on the pond. The campground has a marina (20 slip) with a fuelling station, a rarity on the prairies, as well as a manicured beach adjacent to a greened picnic area. Notably, some larger campsites (with multiple trailers) were water adjacent enabling campers to moor fishing boats at the finger docs in front of the campsites.

Funded The vision for the campground is quite clear - offering family oriented amenities and experiences. A relatively remote campground, Prairie Oasis amenities are well programmed for a destination site and designed to encourage campers to stay at the campground as long as possible. There are group recreational activities such as beach volleyball and basketball. There is a modern playground located adjacent to the beach area and camp store with snack bar, with washrooms and change rooms nearby. The campground also has coin operated showers and laundry facilities; great amenities for a campground in a more remote location. There is free wifi throughout the site and notably there are also accommodations for visitor parking.

The campground was quite heavily used during the site review, with the exception of the group campground areas. It was notable that campers created more compact 'group sites' by including 3 or 4 units arranged on a larger site.

Like Fox Lake, Prairie Oasis has a seasonal manager, or host. The host's campsite is located adjacent to the entry to the campground, making it easy to remember and find. The host site for Fox Lake is located more centrally, making is a bit more difficult to locate, however it is positioned for relatively equal access from all corners of the campground.



Prairie Oasis Park entry signage



Campsite boat docks on the Sheerness Reservoir, Prairie Oasis Park, June 2021

LOCAL CAMPGROUND REVIEWS



Prairie Oasis Park washroom facilities adjacent to the marina, June 2021



Prairie Oasis Park, day use area, playground, manicured beach, June 2021



Prairie Oasis Park marina, June 2021

LOCAL CAMPGROUND REVIEWS

With the review of what the more local campgrounds offer, the next step would be to evaluate what opportunities a campground in proximity to the town of Hanna might offer. Proximity to a more populated centre provides opportunities that can be leveraged to promote a successful campground and attract customers.

PROXIMITY TO WATER

The review of Fox Lake Campground and Prairie Oasis Campground have shown that proximity to a recreational water body is a key advantage. Recreational waterbodies in southern Alberta are relatively rare and most came about as a secondary consideration as a result of the creation of irrigation reservoirs or industrial uses. Consequently, campgrounds and RV resorts have taken advantage of this rare amenity and incorporated it into their distinguishing attraction.

Bucars RV, a popular source for information related to camping, campgrounds, and the RV lifestyle, listed the top 50 campgrounds in Alberta for 2020. Thirty eight of the fifty promoted some form of water access like fishing, canoeing, boat launches, and swimming. KOA reports in their 2021 North American Camping Report that fishing is by far the most popular recreation activity for campers coming in a 52% preference among campers. Clearly, proximity to a waterbody has is a key advantage for a campground.

AVAILABILITY OF HEALTH SERVICES

Given the growing RV market segment of campers between the ages of 55 and 56, proximity to a health care facility is a significant advantage. Additionally, those campers in the 35 - 55 age demographics are very likely to have children; having access to health care facilities would be reassuring to those campers.

Capitalizing the nearby proximity of the the Hanna Health Centre would set any campground close to the Town of Hanna ahead of campgrounds in a more remote location. It is notable that neither Paradise Corner nor the Canalta campground do this.

HEALTH CARE: full range of medical services/ practitioners, Hanna Health, Hanna Continuing Care, The Acute Care Facility, registered nurses, Hanna Health Services Lab & Diagnostics, Outpatient Department, and Hanna Dental Clinic.

RECREATION: Hanna Agri-Sports Complex, Prairie Oasis Campground, baseball diamonds, Centennial Place, Blood Indian Park, Little Fish Lake Provincial Park, Fox Lake, The Hanna Golf & Country Club, Hanna Swimming Pool & Waterslide.

POLITICAL: Government of Alberta (GoA) willingness to assist, inter-municipal cooperation, economic development partnerships, and elected leaders.

FINANCIAL: Government of Alberta (GoA) willingness to assist, local government, local residents, local financial institutions.

BUILT: fibre optics, transportation infrastructure, transmission line, water supply, airport, industrial land.
Cactus Corridor Asset Mapping and Opportunities Study, Urban Systems Ltd., 2017

LOCAL CAMPGROUND REVIEWS

LOCAL RECREATION AVAILABILITY

The availability of a variety of local recreation opportunities, especially the Hanna golf course, is a huge advantage for a local campground. Understanding that many campers use their campsite as a home base, having recreational opportunities close by is an advantage that can be leveraged for success.

EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM

The availability of historical tourism is another great opportunity that can be capitalized on. The railway history of the Town of Hanna is a huge advantage. The Prairies are steeped in railway history; the expansion of the railway network into western Canada created communities along the lines, towns spaced 10 km apart to service and water the locomotives. The Canadian Badlands Tourism (CBT) organization a not-for-profit Alberta Corporation provides destination-based tourism opportunities in South-Eastern Alberta through self guided travel tours capitalizing on the history of the region.

Hanna, notably, was a divisional point along the railway; a key junction point where several rail lines converged. In the early 1900s, Hanna was a the third largest divisional point in Alberta, behind only Calgary and Edmonton. Roundhouses, repair and maintenance facilities for locomotives, were constructed at these divisional points, and Hanna's roundhouse is one of a dozen in Canada that are still in existence. This rich history can be capitalized on for tourism draw opportunities.

Additionally, there are holiday packages built around the trend of historical 'trainspotting' where vacationers plan their adventures to specifically target historical railway towns and active railway line locations. The roundhouse in Hanna is also popular with train enthusiasts and a quick online search regarding railway history in Hanna brings up a wealth of images regarding the local railway history and the impact on the community. The non-profit Hanna Roundhouse Society is currently fundraising to restore the historic building. They purchased the site and are actively pursuing grant funding to restore the structure.

<http://www.hannaroundhouse2013.com>



Hanna Roundhouse, source: Hanna Roundhouse Society



Hanna Roundhouse, source: Hanna Roundhouse Society

LOCAL CAMPGROUND REVIEWS

EQUIPMENT SERVICING AND REPAIRS

As noted previously, RV campers bring along a number of comforts with them, electronic gadgets, kitchen equipment, and recreational 'toys'. Some larger RVs have compartments dedicated to the storage of some of these toys like dirtbikes and quads and have come to be known as 'toy haulers'. Maintenance of this equipment, in addition to the RV itself, is a consideration, especially for those travellers embarking on longer length journeys. There are a number of local shops in Hanna that can service this equipment, and promotion of these services would be a large advantage to any campground close to the Town. An RV dealership within the Town would potentially be a boon to travellers. Proximity to a recreational water body offers opportunity for marine mechanics and sailboat equipment providers within town. Offering space for a pop-up style opportunity for these businesses is a great partnership opportunity.

INTERNET AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Tourists are heavy users of internet communication, campers are well connected and communicate frequently through online reviews and community websites. Additionally, the rise of remote working has made internet communication a vital amenity in campgrounds. Coupled with limited vacation time the availability of internet connections in campgrounds is becoming as important as water and power connections. Additionally, having an internet connection on a campground facilitates the important digital word of mouth communication; enabling campers to effectively market the campground through social media. Partnering with a telecommunications / internet company to promote those services would be a definite value added service for campers.

"2015 Economic Impact and Trend Analysis of the Canadian Camping Industry" commissioned by the Canadian Camping and RV Council, 60.0% of campers rely on the internet to plan and purchase their RV vacations. Furthermore, this figure is probably higher now given recent consumer online research and buying trends. As a result, operators in the industry have been encouraged to improve their online presence to easily connect with current and potential campers and disseminate information about camping events, discounts on lodging and other offers and services.
IBISWorld Campgrounds & Recreational Vehicle Parks in Canada, 2021

LOCAL CAMPGROUND REVIEWS

SEASONAL CAMPING

Seasonal camping is targeted at campers that work full-time in an urban area and come to the campground on weekends to get away. A great option since it removes much of the logistical requirements associated with camping like campsite reservations, packing the RV, campsite check in, setup and unpacking, then reverse the order when leaving on Sunday / Monday. If the RV or trailer can't be stored at home, it needs to be picked up and dropped off at a storage facility; an additional trip on a short weekend. For many working families, the logistical requirements can be challenging for a weekend getaway. With seasonal camping, a one setup event at the beginning of the season is all that's required. It can be a time saver, maximize enjoyment, minimize frustrations. Especially appealing to families with children who tend to have incredibly busy schedules in the summer months.

With some people being forced to work from home as a result of the COVID restrictions, a reliable internet connection is all that is required to be successful and work from anywhere. Working remotely means the office could be a seasonal campsite. Additionally, there are more and more people engaging in the 'gig economy', providing freelance services to larger businesses. These types of freelancers are sometimes referred to as Digital Nomads, can work from anywhere and most often do.

Retired people who have the time and disposable income to travel extensively during the summer months are another segment worth considering. Some may have reached the point where towing a large 5th wheel trailer is too daunting or perhaps they are just generally tired of towing their summer home around.

Seasonal camping within proximity to the Town, in addition to the advantages already listed, would position a campground as an inexpensive cabin alternative. Surprisingly, only two campgrounds in the area offer a seasonal camping alternative; Paradise Corner has a weekly rate and the Delia Diamond Campground has a monthly rate.

'OUTSIDE THE BOX' OPPORTUNITIES

Consideration should also be given to those opportunities that might be considered as 'non standard'. Campgrounds, and the camping experience in general, is becoming more and more akin to the hotel experience. Guests are looking for those amenities that are more than provision of a plot of land in a natural environment. Research has indicated that water recreation, hiking, biking, and birdwatching are all desirable amenities. Building on this idea of a more curated hotel like experience, considerations include the ever popular glamping experience, providing space and accommodations for weddings (especially photos) or corporate retreats are amenities that may be rarely found in other campgrounds.

Capitalizing on a seasonal camping opportunity, an enterprising campground owner could partner with a local eatery and provide ready to heat meals for those seasonal campers that show up after work on a Friday. A fantastic service for those campers already drained from the work week and a great amenity to set the campsite apart from the competition.

The local visitor information service should go to where the visitors are. Providing a space for local visitor information as well as an opportunity to have a representative on site once a week during peak visitor season would be.

FEASIBILITY STUDY / REVIEW

With the background research in hand, an understanding of the market and the particular opportunities that a campground within proximity to the town has, the next critical step is a feasibility study.

A feasibility study is a relatively quick exercise, designed to provide an economic insight into a campground expansion or establishment project. The feasibility study is a critical component, it will help determine if the venture is 'worth it', will the investment pay off? The investment of time, energy and capital can be staggering when running any business, moreso when it's a business that focuses on experience. Understanding the economics and the potential for economic success early on is a critical and a critical decision point in the process.

A feasibility study for a business of this nature will consist of three very important components - a vision for the campground (branding), a high level site design, and financials. There are multiple steps within each of these components that need to be explored, but each one influences the other.

The vision will establish the unique identity and attraction to the campground, it will be a metric for decision making and planning. The vision is the guiding principle, it will help determine what sort of land parcel should be acquired and will strongly influence the character and form of the campground. The site design will determine more practical aspects of the campground - how many sites to contain, what sort of studies will be required (engineering, environmental, etc), and which services need to be included. The site design will provide the basis for the capital costing. Finally, the financials will help determine if the campground development should be phased, what type of campsites should be offered (short term or long term), what the mix of sites should consist of (tenters, RVs, travel trailers, glampers, etc) and what type of revenue generating amenities can be included (marina, camp store, community hall, etc). Each of these three key areas will influence the other and there will be a 'push-pull' relationship between them at the early stages until an agreeable balance between all three is achieved.

The goal is to balance design, branding, and financials as best as possible in alignment with the vision. It isn't a fait accompli, there are always opportunities to refine and adjust over time. Balancing these three factors as best as possible at the beginning will ensure any revisions or tweaks later on are that much easier.

MUNICIPAL REVIEWS

A key step in the feasibility study process is discussions with municipal authorities. It could be argued that this step should be the very first, however without any background research and an idea of what the campground could offer customers this step is better undertaken once a decision has been made to explore the requirements behind developing a campground. Municipal approvals for development of a campground, whether expansion or new development, will be a mandatory step in the process. Early discussions with municipal authorities will be a vital step in establishing a relationship, building advocacy, and gaining assistance in navigating the development or expansion process of any campground.

It is important to note that the municipal approving authority for the land areas outside of the hamlets and urban municipalities in the region is the Special Areas Board. Established in 1938 by the Provincial Government at the time, the Special Areas Board is divided into three areas, with the area around the Town of Hanna known as Special Area Number 2.

FEASIBILITY STUDY / REVIEW

Reviews of information for any development always start at the general, or high level, and work down to the specific requirements as discussions with municipal authorities progress. In this particular case, the first reviews should consist of examinations of the Special Areas Board Municipal Development Plan (MDP). An MDP, very simply, is a planning document that informs and guides long range planning and development within a municipality.

There are also Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDP), which guide planning and development between neighbouring municipalities, essentially along their borders. There is a push-pull relationship between IDPs and MDPs, where IDPs are technically the highest level statutory plan in a municipality (in accordance with the Municipal Government Act), an MDP is the highest level statutory plan that covers the largest geographic area of a municipality and is subsequently acts as the primary visioning and policy document for that municipality.

Most, if not all, MDPs are focused on promoting and guiding sustainable economic and physical growth within a municipality. The Rural Development Plan within the Special Areas Board MDP identifies growth priorities and maps out these priority areas within the municipality. Encouragingly, Highway 9 is identified as a growth corridor with what is estimated to be the Fox Lake Campground identified as an area of growth opportunity. Additionally, Recreation and Tourism Development in general has been identified as Growth Priority number 3 in the MDP.

The Special Areas Board MDP identifies several priorities related to campground development in the area, notably item 6.3 3: Focus on Recreation and Tourism Development. This focus is identified as an economic driver for the area. Two other economic development drivers encourage investment into recreation and tourism:

7.1.1 special Areas Board should prioritize infrastructure and economic investment within the Growth Corridors and Growth Focus Areas item 7.1.5 Special Areas Board will Support Recreation and Tourism Areas as both amenities for residents and as economic drivers.

Should the decision be made to proceed with campground development, a formal application for development will be required in order to acquire municipal approvals and provide direction on the applicable rules and regulations that will need to be followed. This is especially important since the development approval will identify certain land uses that are permitted outright, others are conditional upon approval, and some are prohibited.

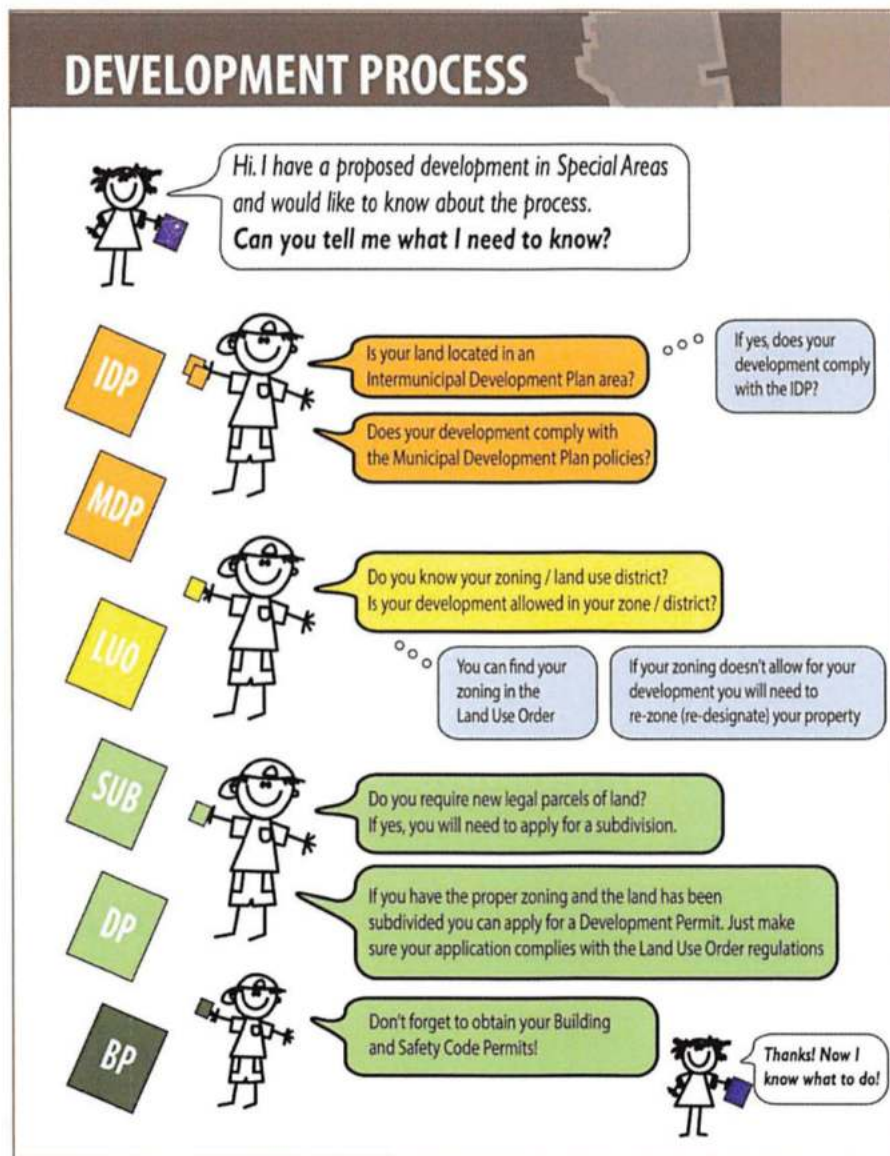


*Rural Development Plan Special Areas
Municipal Development Plan*

FEASIBILITY STUDY / REVIEW

Many municipalities will provide a general outline or description of the development process; discussions with municipal officials can help to navigate this process and ensure time and expenses are kept as efficient as possible.

Special Areas has developed a Land Use Order, essentially land use bylaws, for the region which “regulate and control the use and development of land and buildings within the municipality to facilitate the orderly and economic development of Special Areas 2, 3 and 4.” These land use orders identify the rules required for campground development, and it is especially important to note that land uses for campgrounds in the Special Areas are identified as discretionary. This means campgrounds are a land use for which a development permit may be issued at the discretion of the Municipal Planning Commission. Consequently, discussions with municipal authorities are important to illustrate the development advantages behind any proposed campground development.



Special Areas 2,3, and 4 Municipal Development Plan development guide

VISION

Creating the vision for the campground is perhaps the most fun and definitely the most liberating. There are no constraints at this point, the sky is the limit. The other two components, design and cost estimating, will include limits that will shape the vision.

Reviewing the research done on the market as well as the local campgrounds, and the opportunities around the Town of Hanna, a vision for a new campground, or campground expansion can be crafted.

It's important to distinguish that a vision is different from a theme. While the two are closely related, and at times a vision can manifest into a theme, they are different ideas. A vision might entail an expression of the history of the area, but if the campground is located close to Drumheller, for example, this might be expressed in a dinosaur theme. A vision might be to serve the best food in the region derived from local sources, the theme might evolve into a restaurant or cafe. A vision is aspirational, a theme is a manifestation.

A vision serves as a guiding principle, a guide for decision making and a focus for marketing and branding. It is a powerful tool and helps cultivate the vibe and character of the campground and gives direction to any physical upgrades or programming. For example, if a campground's vision was along the lines of 'back to nature, off the grid', then including wifi as an amenity for this campground would not be a consideration. A campground with a vision of 'a destination for all families' should provide those amenities that are family focused activities. Having a clear vision for a campground, for any business in fact, will ensure the messaging, branding, and decision making are all kept on point.

Campgrounds, especially seasonal campgrounds, are communities. Creating a campground means creating a community with an identity and character. This is especially true with campgrounds that focus on long term site rentals. Campers who opt for this type of camping experience are using their trailers and RVs as inexpensive cottages and are capitalizing on the time saving aspects related to staying in one spot for a longer period of time. At a basic level the vision should capture the essence of the campground, - what kind of community do you want to create? What do you want it to be known for? Why would people choose your campground?

For an existing campground like Fox Lake, the focus isn't so much on establishing the vision but rather cultivating the character that already exists and accentuating it through the inclusion of services and amenities that address market needs and accentuate the qualitative energy that campers are already experiencing.



'Duck Factory' historical marker at Fox Lake Campground



"This Duck Factory Built During 1944-45 By Ducks Unlimited With Funds Provided By Sportsmen and Conservators of St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A With Canadian Cooperation"

VISION

The Town of Hanna's website (<https://hanna.ca/parks-playgrounds/#fox-lake-park>) lists the services available in the park. Google lists 71 reviews of the campground, which provides some insight into the more qualitative aspects that campers appreciate about the location. Generally, the reviews of the Fox Lake campground focus on the cleanliness of the area, the proximity to nature, especially birdwatching, the sunsets, the playgrounds, and the friendliness of the on site managers. There was one comment from this summer that had a very negative interaction with the current management. This was an outlier however. It was the only comment out of 71 that was 1 star review.

The screenshot displays the Google Reviews interface for Fox Lake Campground. At the top, it shows 'All reviews' with a 4.5 star rating based on 70 reviews. Below this, there are several individual reviews:

- Review 1 (9 months ago):** 5 stars. Text: "The place to see yellowhead blackbirds. Must be a hundred of them here today. Interesting that there was duck factory here. Great visit and hike." Includes a photo of a stone wall with a sign that reads "ALBERTA - ST. LOUIS DUCK FACTORY No. 139".
- Review 2 (7 months ago):** 5 stars. Text: "We have been camping at Fox Lake campground for 10 years. It has nice big sites, your choice of services, and is reasonably priced. There is a main washroom and coin operated shower. The town of Hanna is a 5 minute drive, should you need gas, groceries, or a double-double. We love Fox Lake campground as our home base when we take day trips to explore the nearby area where my Dad grew up." Includes a photo of a sunset over water.
- Review 3 (4 years ago):** 5 stars. Text: "Hanna, AB you have a first class park & rv park in Alberta, you need to get it out there. Great managers!! Put up signage, link to other sites to let everyone know you are here. We travel across Canada & believe us you are in the top of the class, thank you." Includes a photo of a sunset over water.
- Review 4 (4 years ago):** 5 stars. Text: "We have been here for 3 weeks and its Beautiful. Kids love park . We love the sunsets" Includes a photo of a sunset over water.

Based on site reviews, it appears that Fox Lake Campground is already moving towards a vision for the site.

The campsite loops are named after birds, there is an historical marker identifying the Alberta-St. Louis 'Duck Factory' (built by Ducks Unlimited in 1944 with funds from the sportsmen of St. Louis, Missouri) on the site, and the online reviews speak strongly to the presence of diverse bird species in, and migrating through, the area. Working with a vision that encompasses birdwatching, and the diversity of bird species in the area, the campground could capitalize on this and develop a marketing approach and visual impact program on the site.

For example, the colour palette of the campground amenities could be based on bird colours, any site architecture elements like lights, signage, outbuildings, could be tailored to incorporate bird influences.

This doesn't entail sticking bird based signs or pageantry type elements onto existing infrastructure, it means re-thinking and considering the visual palette so that the incorporation of these bird elements are integral, not an after thought, not something 'added on'.

Additionally, enhancing this vision could mean creation of birdwatching trails through the area, in partnership with local outfitters there could be structured birdwatching events, installation of bird blinds or viewing platforms, and creation of marketing materials that highlight annual migration periods of bird species in the area. This may be especially effective if avid birders know that a certain species is only in the area for a short time. Scarcity will promote action. Bird themed outdoor furniture would most likely need to be bespoke, created specifically for the campground. here, an opportunity exists to partner with local artisans to create custom pieces like benches, birdhouses, and picnic tables.

Source: Google Reviews, 2021

VISION

This isn't to say that the focusing on a bird-centric vision for the campground would exclude any other types of travellers. Indeed, it should be open to all types of travellers with the understanding that the vision or theme won't resonate with every camper out there. What it will do, however, is create an experience which is key for a tourism based business.



Building on the bird centric concepts that Fox Lake Campground already has, inspiration elements could include site furniture with bird based themes and creative birdhouse installations.

NEED FOR DESIGN

The design of the campground is an important step in the development process. At this stage, programming helps to determine best use of the site area; ensure that finite resource (land) is utilized efficiently and effectively. The design process can also reveal hidden opportunities such as key views, opportunity for water access, etc. The opportunities to explore and determine costing elements is orders of magnitude cheaper than attempting to determine the site programming at the construction stage. It has happened.

Design, in the context of campground development, is a catch all term that includes a number of influences. Factors such as marketing, branding, physical constraints of the site (the terrain), municipal land use bylaw requirements, engineering limitations and services delivery (power, sewer, water, geotechnical), and of course financial will all exert influence on the design and act towards shaping the final product. Design, in this case, is really an exploration of balancing the potential amenities available with costs and marketing opportunities.

The site design, for purposes of the feasibility study, is a planning exercise that establishes the structure of the campground. It's an opportunity to explore programming for the site to establish the mix of amenities and campsites and establish a base consideration for campsite servicing. At this stage, the design doesn't need to be detailed; just a very basic design to establish a base for the costing. As the project progresses, subsequent design refinement will involve a refinement of this overall site structure due to the influences these other factors will exert on the concept design.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REQUIREMENTS AND INFLUENCES THAT WILL NEED TO BE EXPLORED AS PART OF THE DESIGN PROCESS:

- The location and associated physical constraints of the site,
- the bylawed land use and associated requirements
- servicing needs, options, and existing capacities (if available).

All of these are balanced out with costing and marketing considerations.

LOCATION AND PHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS

Campgrounds are quite space consumptive. In addition to providing space for campsites, there are considerations for camp stores, open amenity areas for campers, trails, shower facilities, and of course vehicle circulation and parking. It's important to establish the land available since this will impact financial considerations.

The location of the site and the associated physical constraints are a paramount component. Location is one of the key factors that campers explore when researching campgrounds along their projected travel routes. A lot will depend on what the particular camper is looking for in terms of a campsite location, however wherever the site is located, it is important to highlight the advantages to any potential camper.

NEED FOR DESIGN

The physical constraints, of the site can factor in to the character and layout of the campground. Generally, flatter sites will be easier to work with, whereas sites with a lot of terrain changes and slopes, while perhaps more interesting and attractive, will be harder to work with since the terrain will need to be levelled out to accommodate flat campsite locations and vehicle circulation. Roadways through a campground will have maximum slope constraints as well as turning radius requirements to prevent trucks and trailers from bottoming out at and jackknifing around corners. If the site is narrow, there may not be enough room for a complete turn around for a truck and trailer or emergency vehicles. Providing enough room for campers to pull their rigs through or back into sites is an important spatial consideration. Some campers may not be skilled at backing up a truck and trailer combination, a pull through layout might be a simpler solution, although more space consumptive.

Existing trees on a campground are another physical constraint to consider. Southern Alberta is primarily a shortgrass prairie ecotype; trees are relatively rare. Sites with existing trees have the advantage of an instant landscape with character and atmosphere built in. Character and atmosphere of a campground is one of the key selection criteria according to the 2021 North American Camping Report (*KOA 2021*). However, the challenge with incorporating a campground into a stand of existing trees is their community structure and rooting conditions. In a forest situation, the trees around the perimeter act as wind buffers for the trees further in. These perimeter trees have deeper and stronger anchor roots as a result of the wind conditions. Removing these trees to create campsites opens the interior trees to the impacts of wind gusts, making them prone to toppling. In conversation with one campground owner who did create campsites within a forest situation, he indicated that removal of toppled trees was nearly constant for the first two years of campground operation. Additionally, some trees took out trailers when they came down. Sub optimal for any campground operator. Generally, a site that can accommodate new tree planting to allow the trees to acclimate to the local environmental conditions is a less riskier proportion at the cost of some character and atmosphere.

One of the largest (pun intended) constraints that has to be considered is, of course, RV and trailer sizes. RVs typically fall into classes, and it is important to note that trailers are not part of this class distinction, only RVs and motorhomes are classified in this manner. They fall into 3 classes: A, B, and C. A Class motorhomes are typically the largest, ranging in size from 6.4 to 12.2 meters long (21-40 feet) and the most well equipped. They can be conventionally described as a 'home on wheels' and handle like one. They can be challenging to maneuver due to their size and consequently require ample area within the campground. Class A motorhomes are best suited to pull through style campsites as some vacationers will commonly tow an extra vehicle along for commuting about the destination area once the Class A is parked at the campsite.



Class A RVs are not small

NEED FOR DESIGN

Class B motorhomes are smaller, 4.9 - 6.4 meters long (16 - 21 feet) and contain basic amenities due to their size. They can sometimes be referred to as 'camper vans', and are substantially easier to maneuver. They require less space to navigate within a campground, and can easily accommodate pull through or back in campsites. Some vacationers may attach trailers to them to haul their associated recreational 'toys' like quads, bikes, or side by sides; the whole train can be somewhat challenging to maneuver. They typically do not need to haul an extra vehicle with them due to their smaller size and easy maneuverability.



Mercedes Benz Sprinter Vans are popular Class B RVs



Class C RVs offer larger living space and relatively decent maneuverability compared to Class A RVs

Class C motorhomes, surprisingly, are larger than the Class B motorhomes; ranging from 6.4 - 10.7 meters long (21-35 feet). They are a cross between the Class A and Class B motorhomes, being easier to maneuver and having a reasonable amount of interior space. The challenge with these types of motorhomes is that due to their wider size, vacationers will generally haul along an additional vehicle to allow for commuting at their destination area. While these types of motorhomes are capable of utilizing back in campsites, they are better able to navigate the pull through style when hauling an additional vehicle.

NEED FOR DESIGN

Travel Trailers are more diverse and come in many different varieties. Sometimes called a 'Towable RV', or a 'Conventional Travel Trailer', they do not have classes like the RVs do, they have descriptions based on their particular styling. Generally, there are five common types (www.gorving.com/explore-rvs/towable-rvs): Travel Trailers, 5th Wheel Trailers (which gets its name from an extension on the front of the trailer that extends over the tow vehicle ending with a plate that looks like another wheel. This wheel attaches to the cab of a full-sized pickup truck that tows it.), Folding (or Popup) Campers, Teardrop or Mini Trailers, and Truck Mounted Campers. Travel Trailers and 5th Wheel trailers are the largest of the bunch, ranging from 3.6 meters (12 feet) to 12.2 meters (40 feet), with Travel Trailers having the largest range of size differences. Fifth Wheels, being the most well equipped, trend towards the larger lengths to accommodate the amenities. Each of these models typically have 'slides' or 'slide out' spaces from the long side of the trailer that increase the living space for campers. Teardrop Trailers and Folding Campers are slightly smaller in length ranging from 4.6 - 7.0 meters (15-23 feet). Folding Campers, as their name implies can fold out to enable larger living quarters once established on a campsite. Different from slides, Folding Campers can increase height as well as living space. Teardrop trailers, again as the name implies, are hard shelled teardrop shaped allowing for better aerodynamics however at a sacrifice of space. Some Teardrop style trailers come in sizes so small they are basically beds on wheels, with the amenities (kitchen, shower) facilitated from the exterior of the trailer.



Fifth Wheel Trailers have a modified hitch that attaches to the flatbed of a pickup truck



An American classic, the Airstream Travel Trailer has remained stylistically the same since the 1950s

NEED FOR DESIGN

There is a sixth category of trailer that is gaining popularity among avid weekend RV participants. Sometimes called 'Sport Utility RV Trailers', they are more popularly known as Toy Haulers. They combine the features of an RV style trailer with those of a utility trailer. Outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy off road motorsports especially appreciate these types of trailers; they are basically portable garages. They can range in length from 5.8 meters (19 feet) to 11.9 meters (39 feet), however half, or more, of that length is given over to storage of offroad vehicles like dirt bikes, quads, and side by sides. They offer basic amenities for campers, with the understanding that the camper who purchases this type of trailer is going to be using it primarily to sleep and will be gone all day riding.

The rise of seasonal camping or long term campsite rentals has resulted in the creation of two trailer types that meet this requirement better than the others previously mentioned. Park Model Trailers offer more space than any other RV type. Designed for occasional relocation only, the Park Model provides all the comforts and conveniences of a home.

They typically have full sized kitchens, living rooms, full sized bathrooms with a tub and shower, as well as complete, private bedrooms. Go RVing Canada provides a virtual tour of this type of RV (<https://gorving.ca/rv/park-model/>); the example has a master bedroom with a walk in closet. They are one step short of the traditional 'mobile home'. Due to their large size, these units require a special tow vehicle with professional movers and oversized highway permits. These models of RV provide an excellent alternative to the traditional cabin or cottage. Due to their size and the abundant amenities contained within, these models require full hookups on a campsite.



Toy Haulers offer the added convenience of vehicle storage



Yes, it is classified as a trailer. The Park Model can be quite elaborate. (<https://gorving.ca/park-models/>)

NEED FOR DESIGN

One step down from a Park Model and one step up from a Travel Trailer is a Destination Trailer. Similar to a large conventional Travel Trailer the Destination Travel Trailer is constructed for seasonal use only. They can be moved occasionally, unlike a Park Model, using a heavy duty tow vehicle and do not require a special highway permit since they do not exceed the provincially allowed maximum width of 2.6 meters (8.5 feet). Like a Travel Trailer or Fifth Wheel, they typically have slides to increase the internal living space. Like Park Models, they do offer cabin like convenience and do require full hookups on a campsite.

The RV Industry Association (RIVA) has identified seven distinct clusters of RV Owners: Happy Campers, Casual Campers, Adventure Seekers, Avid RVers, Escapists, Full Timers, and Family Campers. Casual Campers and Family Campers make up the largest portions of these segments at 39% and 33% respectively. The majority of these constituents prefer travel trailers over any other type. Additionally, reviewing 2020 and 2021 RV sales by type (motorhomes and towables) Travel Trailers and Fifth Wheels experienced the most demand at a 60,322 and 21,368 unit growth respectively.

RV preferences will have an impact on numerous design considerations. Size and manoeuvrability of the units will be a factor in determining the type and number of campsites within the campground. Popularity of the trailer types will also factor in; should the campground layout cater to only Travel Trailers, the most popular selection and ignore the other types or should the campground design for the 'worst case scenario' and have all the campsites and vehicle circulation designed to accommodate Class A RVs? This is a significant consideration since the campsite rental is the heart of the business, it's how the majority of the revenue is derived. There really is no one correct answer; there's no definite solution. In every case, with every campground, a balance needs to be struck between available capital, vision, and the physical constraints of the site.



Destination Trailers can be a desirable option for seasonal campers
(<https://gorving.ca/park-models/>)

NEED FOR DESIGN

BYLAWED LAND USE AND ASSOCIATED REQUIREMENTS

Municipal land use bylaw requirements will also impact campground design and layout. Some municipalities will require offsets or buffer zones from the property lines which will consume some land area. While these areas could be used for amenities like trails, these offset areas are unavailable to campsite development. There will also be circulation requirements such as roadway widths and curve radii which will be especially important for emergency vehicle access and garbage pickup. If there is a waterbody on the site, there will most likely be an offset requirement from this feature, and from a practical point of view developing too close to water should not be a consideration because of the saturated soil conditions and potential slope instabilities. Additionally, water bodies bring in another level of government responsibility; For the most part, waters that lie solely within a province's boundaries fall within the constitutional authority of that province. Alberta Environment and Parks in Alberta has jurisdiction over the water resources in the province and have their own layer of development permitting and approvals. Waterbodies provide a great attraction for campgrounds, and are one of the key attractors of campers in southern Alberta, ensuring any development requirements and approvals are in place is paramount for any campground development.

Amendments to LUBs may be required if a proposed subdivision or development for an areas does not meet the existing regulations of the LUB. [Land Use Bylaw] An amendment may include changing the text of the LUB to allow for a specific land use or development to occur, to change development standards or to change the land use district designation that applies to a particular parcel of land (also known as rezoning).

<https://www.palliserservices.ca/planning/land-use-bylaw-amendment-application-form>

NEED FOR DESIGN

When it comes to designing and laying out the campground and associated campsites, utilizing established Provincial or Federal campground and campsite design standards is a good starting point. They will provide an idea of spatial requirements for different configuration of campsites, such as group, one party or two party sites.

Access and turning clearances for emergency vehicles will be a primary concern, especially in consideration of the age range of the primary camping demographic, and information on vehicle sweeps and turning radii can be acquired from most urban municipalities. Ensuring that fire trucks, ambulances, and garbage trucks can navigate the campground without any issues should be a key focus for the campground layout. At a finer grain, reviewing Provincial or Federal campsite layouts will help establish campsite spacing including width, length, angle relative to the main access road as well as typical construction requirements. These construction details will be important for capital costing.

SEMI-SERVICED *Camping Manual*

SEMI-SERVICED

Typical Campground Layout



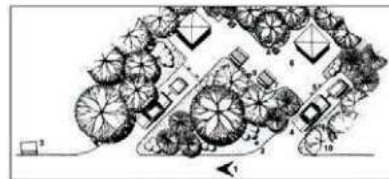
- 1. Access Road
- 2. Perimeter Road
- 3. Internal Road
- 4. Registration Building
- 5. Kitchen Shelter
- 6. Service Building (includes showers, flush toilets)
- 7. Service Trail
- 8. Pedestrian Trail
- 9. One Party Campsite
- 10. One or Two Party Campsite
- 11. One, Two or Large Party Campsite
- 12. Secondary Service Area
- 13. Play Area
- 14. Buffer
- 15. Area Feature
- 16. Interpretation Facility
- 17. Disabled Person Campsite

SEMI-SERVICED *Camping Manual*

SEMI-SERVICED

Typical Campsite Layout

Two Party Campsite



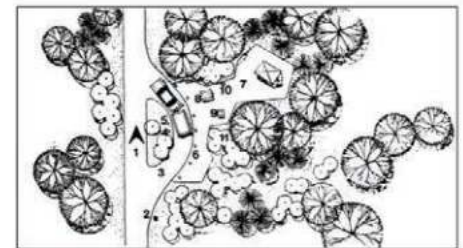
- 1. Internal Road (one way)
- 2. Site Marker
- 3. Garbage Container
- 4. Back-in Parking Spur
- 5. Barrier
- 6. Campsite Surface (stabilized)
- 7. Table
- 8. Fire Grill
- 9. Waste Water Drain
- 10. Buffer (under and overstory)

FULLY SERVICED *Camping Manual*

FULLY SERVICED

Typical Campsite Layout

One or Two Party Campsite



- 1. Internal Road (one way)
- 2. Site Marker
- 3. Parallel Parking Spur
- 4. Water Hook-Up
- 5. Electrical Hook-Up
- 6. Barrier
- 7. Campsite Surface (stabilized)
- 8. Table
- 9. Fire Grill
- 10. Waste Water Drain
- 11. Buffer (under and overstory)

Note: Some levels of service may be discretionary.

Parks Canada has a helpful campground design manual with many illustrated campsite layout options

NEED FOR DESIGN

SERVICING NEEDS AND OPTIONS

Servicing the campground is an important design consideration, since most services are buried underground. Ideally, service line locations should not run under roadways or campsites if possible, since any repairs would mean closing off the roadway or the campsite. Consequently, there is a 'push-pull' relationship between service line locations and campsite layout which will need to be considered. Inevitably, this examination will encompass the question of which types of services should be included on the campground.

In conversation with private campground owners, most bring up two primary considerations when undertaking campground design - managing people and managing waste. Managing people is an aspect of the visitor experience, as discussed earlier. Being able to manage many personality types on a campground is a key skill for any campground manager and one that should not be underestimated. Providing a clear cut set of rules and regulations to each camper will make this task much easier. Some municipalities, like Mountainview County in central Alberta, require the rules and regulations to be posted right at the entry to the campground to remove any ambiguity and ensure neighbours will not be knocking at the campground manager's door at two am complaining about the noise.

Managing waste is another very important consideration and will have an impact on camper experience, campground layout, and initial cost estimating. There are many ways to accommodate waste management, each with a tradeoff relating to cost and experience. Some campgrounds provide sanitary hook ups at each campsite, with waste collected at a central holding tank and pumped out on a regular basis.

Other campgrounds provide a common dump site and put the responsibility on to each camper to dump their waste at the dumpsite, typically located at the exit point of the campground. Still others do not provide any service at all, other than that which is bylaw mandated under a the particular land use zoning. Red Deer County, for example mandates that there must be one latrine structure for every 5 campsites under the Campground-Minor land use zoning.

Sanitary hook ups are the most expensive capital cost, with central holding tanks ranging in the \$30 - \$50,000 range. This, however, provides campers with the comforts of home and not having to worry about their camper's tank capacity. A common dump site is slightly less expensive, in the \$10,000 - \$20,000 range, however the onus is on campers to either move their RVs to the site for dumping, or haul their 'blue boys', portable septic tanks, to the dump site for dumping and cleaning. Obviously, the cheapest option is to provide the bylawed minimum to each camper, but this will come at the cost of a the overall experience. Once campground operator in Red Deer County recruited the services of a local RV septic tank pumping operation to visit his campground once per week to service the campers septic tanks. The cost was minimal, however the campers had to be present in order to have their tanks sucked. If they missed the window, their weekend could be compromised.



Prairie Oasis Campground provides a robust common dump station with water services to wash the septic tanks after dumping.



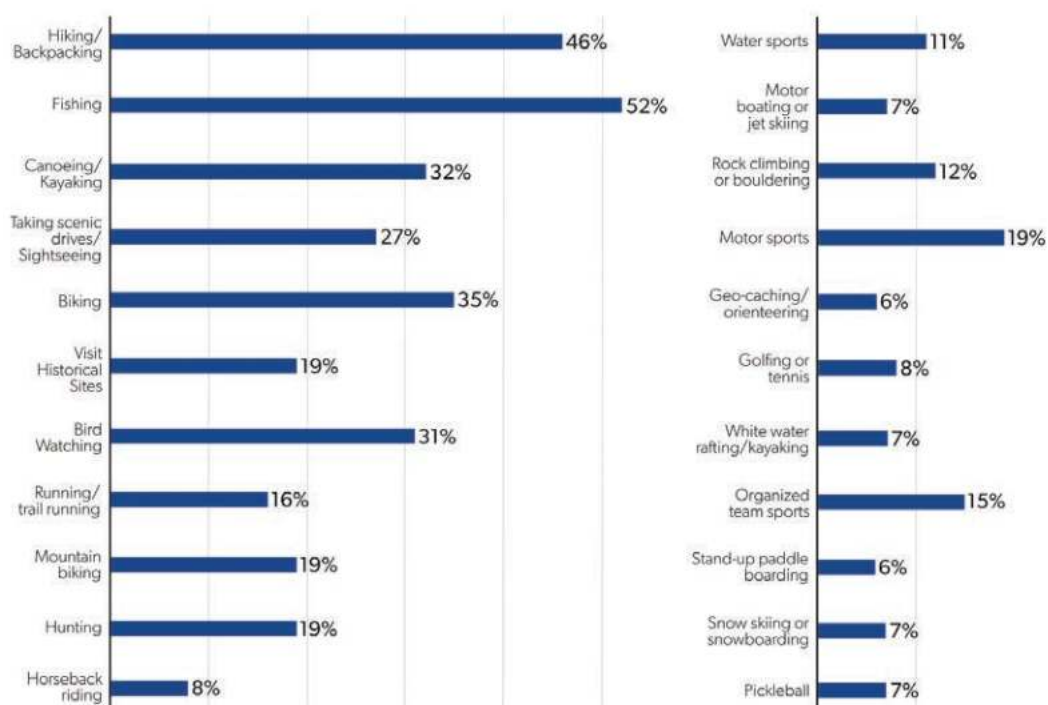
Fox Lake Campground provides a very basic common dumping station for RVs and trailers.

NEED FOR DESIGN

Similarly, the inclusion of basic services like water and power should be a consideration. Inclusion of these services is a great way to entice campers to the campground, and of course there are tradeoffs to consider. However, for many campers water and power hookups are considered as basic amenities, especially RV campers. Tenting or trailer campers may be fine without these services, however their camping goals may be different. If catering to seasonal campers is a consideration, water and power hookups should be incorporated into the site design. There will be engineering considerations such as drilling a well, installing water and power lines to the campsites, and related permit charges related to these services when the concept design for the campground is refined to a more detailed level.

In discussions with campground operators, there is a common trend related to campers and consumption of services. Basically, If the services are included as a flat rate and incorporated into the campsite costs, campers will be liberal with their use; they will try to 'get their money's worth' from the service costs since there is no upper limit. Conversely, if the services are monitored on a site by site basis and included as a cost on top of the campground rates, the use of the services tends to be less. The tradeoff in this scenario is the additional management required to facilitate these metered costs for each campsite, however it does save on maintenance costs such as tank pumping. When initially designing the campgrounds, consider camping amenities that will be complementary to each other and address the market needs that have been previously identified. If there a demand for mini-golf by campers (hint: there isn't), it may be worth considering the cost versus value proposition to install a mini putt. Additionally, it's important to consider the amenities that are being offered by the other campgrounds in the region, as identified earlier (page 11) during the on site review of other campgrounds. Duplication of these amenities may be warranted depending on the added value they bring to the campground. For example, every campground has firewood available and the inclusion of this type of amenity is expected by campers.

PARTICIPATION IN RECREATION WHILE CAMPING (2020)



The 2021 North America Camping Report, KOA

NEED FOR DESIGN

When initially designing the campgrounds, consider camping amenities that will be complementary to each other and address the market needs that have been previously identified. If there is a demand for mini-golf by campers (hint: there isn't), it may be worth considering the cost versus value proposition to install a mini putt. Additionally, it's important to consider the amenities that are being offered by the other campgrounds in the region, as identified earlier (page 11) during the on site review of other campgrounds. Duplication of these amenities may be warranted depending on the added value they bring to the campground. For example, every campground has firewood available and the inclusion of this type of amenity is expected by campers.

Rather than specialize and serve a particular market, it would be beneficial to cast the net wide and incorporate amenities that respond to many market needs. A review of popular activities campers engage in will help to tailor the provision of amenities for the campground. The majority of campers use the campsite as a 'home base' and engage in other activities that are available in the area. KOA in 2021 engaged campers at their campgrounds and identified which activities campers most enjoy. They noted that the most popular activities among campers, virtually unchanged since 2014, were hiking/ backpacking and fishing. Additionally, other popular activities like biking (35%) and birdwatching (31%) can be facilitated with simple trail construction. Simple and cost effective amenities to include in a campground.

There is one amenity in particular that has to be singled out as a 'must have' for every campsite. The humble picnic table should be included with every campsite, primarily due to its utility and diversity of uses. It comes in many different styles and can be used as a dining table, a buffet table, a gaming table, a wetbar, a place to organize fishing gear, a place to clean the fish afterwards, a repair table when a tire has to be changed on the bike. The utility of a picnic table cannot be understated; and for an investment of approximately \$500 will pay dividends in camper satisfaction which is a key metric for any campground.



Picnic tables come in a variety of styles and are a vital amenity for all campsites

NEED FOR DESIGN

Another campsite amenity that is incredibly popular but is becoming somewhat controversial is the wood burning fire pit. They are a part of the romance of camping, however they have come under scrutiny lately due to the preponderance of wildfires in both BC and Alberta. The past few years have seen an increase in wildfire activity, and consequently insurance claims for rebuilding. This is the crux of the issue - wildfires are costing an incredible amount of money: Fort McMurray's wildfire in 2016 was a \$10 billion disaster, in America in 2018 the cost of fighting wildfires broke \$3 billion (*Thomson Reuters Foundation, "Burned by wildfire losses, insurance industry rethinks risks" January 2020*). In a rural Alberta venue, the incorporation of fire pits in a campground needs to come with stringent rules and preventative measures to ensure the safety of the campers is especially important.



Fire pits are a welcome amenity, but should be used with care and caution

ALOT OF MOVING PARTS

Design of a campground involves a multitude of skillsets and a diverse understanding of the nuances and particulars that accompany a design and construction undertaking. Most owners do not have the skills to undertake a campground design on their own. Sourcing and investing in a design team is an excellent use of capital funds to ensure that the project and final product responds to the vision and addresses the needs of future campers. The owner's role, in this situation, is to ensure the vision for the campground is followed and the design is constructed in an effective and efficient manner. Ultimately, the layout and design of the campground needs to be a collaborative exercise between the owner and a skilled design team.

THE TEAM SHOULD CONSIST OF:

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT - site design, project coordination, capital costing, development approvals (the landscape architect will be the point person for the team and help convey the owner's vision and requirements)

GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER - identify slope stability issues, recommend foundation structures for campground, roadway, and any buildings

BIOLOGIST - undertake an environmental impact assessment / biophysical assessment (if the campground is planned for a destination or more remote location where the likelihood of encountering wildlife is high)

TRAFFIC ENGINEER - evaluate the impacts of increased traffic flows around campground (if the campground is in an area that has some residential capacity; it's important to let the public know of any potential impacts to future traffic patterns)

ELECTRICAL ENGINEER - all campground electrical requirements including site lighting

MECHANICAL ENGINEER - water servicing and campground pumphouse design

Most municipalities will ask for some form of site assessment information, studies, and site design information from these professionals as part of a development approvals package. Identifying which studies are required when in discussions with municipal authorities at the early stages will help identify the composition of the team. Additionally, this will factor into the financials since professional fees will be required.

FINANCIALS

Please note that this document is not an attempt to create a thorough financial plan for establishing or expanding a campground, but to review the key requirements to ensure the financial fundamentals are established and understood. Detailed financial planning should be done accomplished by a financial professional, in alignment with the parameters of the business case.

This section will review two key factors regarding campground finances - capital costing and revenue. At a fundamental level all businesses focus on these two metrics - money in and money out.

As discussed previously, the financial component will be influenced by, and have influence on, the vision / branding and design components. For example, if the vision is to appeal to families with children and the design has included a splash pad and swimming pool as programming elements, but the financials reveal this component would be out of reach cost wise, a re-evaluation is required to bring all three aspects into alignment in order to achieve the vision. This sort of push-pull dynamic will be ongoing throughout the life of the business, but is especially pronounced at the beginning.

If the land for the campground hasn't been purchased, this will be the biggest capital cost and should be the biggest focus. As discussed earlier, location is a primary factor in campground choice for travellers. A real estate agent can help with the coordination of the land purchase, and discussions with a financial institution will, of course, be mandatory. The relationship with the financial institution and the manager assigned to assist will be important; they will most likely be on board for the entire project. Take time in researching and selecting the financial institution.

Construction cost estimates should be based on the conceptual site design, with the understanding that it will be a high level cost reflective of the conceptual nature of the design. Having a measure of understanding of the quantities of materials and site servicing involved will also inform the construction methods required, which again provides a measure of certainty regarding the costing. When approaching any lenders for capital, they will want as much certainty in the costing and financial estimating as possible.

Capital Requirements Worksheet	
Capital Assets	Dollar Value
Land Purchase	
Land Improvements (sewer, water, campsites)	
Building Construction/Renovation	
Recreational Facilities (pool, playground)	
Equipment (maintenance, office)	
Other (signage, etc.)	
Subtotal C	\$ -
Pre-Opening Soft Costs	Dollar Value
Salaries	
Staff Training Wages & Costs	
Pre-Opening Marketing, Website Design	
Interest During Construction	
Design & Consulting Costs	
Other Professional Fees	
Incorporation/Registration/Licensing Costs	
Other	
Subtotal D	\$ -
Working Capital	Dollar Value
Inventory	
Prepaid Expenses	
Other Current Assets	
Cash Reserve	
Subtotal A	\$ -
Bank Loan	
Subtotal B	\$ -
Net Working Capital Required (A minus B)	Subtotal E \$ -
Total Capital Asset Requirements	Subtotal C \$ -
Total Soft Costs	Subtotal D \$ -
Working Capital Requirements	Subtotal E \$ -
Contingency	
TOTAL FINANCING REQUIRED	\$ -

FINANCIALS

Estimating capital costs for construction is a bit of an art and a bit of science. It's artful since it can have influence over construction detailing. Good construction estimators can suggest construction detail alternatives that will provide economic and sometimes time saving value to clients.

For private campgrounds, estimating construction costs can be done by a trusted contractor, a landscape architect, or by a costing firm specializing in such work. Each uses historical and regional costing data to prepare construction estimates and each requires a measurement of the materials quantities involved, which is why the conceptual design is important, to gauge the labour, time, and costs involved. It is suggested that a combination of the two professions be engaged in the construction costing, one verifying the estimate of the other. If a trusted contractor

The construction cost estimate itself is relatively straightforward. A measure of the quantities of the site services and associated construction materials (units) multiplied by the cost of that particular unit. Again, having a basic understanding of construction methods helps to provide more accurate costs. For example, a road isn't just one cost, it's comprised of stripping the existing soil, grading, or sloping the road, compacting the subgrade to ensure a firm base, installing a gravel sub base for the road and compacting it, then installing the surface or wear course either gravel or asphalt. Understanding this process provides for a more accurate estimate of the level of efforts and associated costs involved. Also, the decisions made as part of the design phase will have an influence - the type of septic services, the electrical servicing, decisions on whether or not to have a concession or store, a playground, etc will all factor in to the costing. Depending on how the costing exercise unfolds, some design elements may need to be revisited or rethought. For example, perhaps the playground area isn't initially as large as desired, perhaps some of the construction needs to be phased over time.

While discussions focus on construction costing, which is the largest capital outlay after land purchase, it is important to ensure operational elements are also included in the costing estimate. Operational elements would include items such as site maintenance equipment like lawnmowers, any equipment needed to run an office or an on site concession, like a computer system, and even business incorporation and registration costs if this hasn't been done already. Lawyers don't come cheap.

Note that there should also be contingency allowances and 'soft costs' included in the cost estimate. Contingencies cover those unexpected issues that arise during any land development project, and soft costs cover the expenditures for construction permitting, consultant fees, marketing campaign, and even to cover staff salaries prior to any revenues being realized.

One important realization that private campground owners must come to grips with sooner rather than later are the scale of these costs. Private campground owners seldom have a frame of reference for large scale commercial development projects and can sometimes compare the costs involved with that of a residential project. Commercial development projects have different construction requirements and consequently different costing impacts. Constructing a roadway through a campground that could see hundreds of travellers in a season is miles different from building a driveway at a private residence for example. Scale of use impacts the costs; commercial construction has to be robust to stand up to use and consequently will cost more than residential scale projects.

The design work done in the previous phase should have been done with an eye towards the construction costs. In the example of the roadway above, the designer should account for the slope of the existing terrain and ensure that the layout of the roadways involve as minimal site grading as possible, essentially working with the slope of the land. These types of planning and design considerations will make the subsequent construction easier and costing more efficient.

With the capital construction costs established its time to explore potential revenues. Revenue estimating is a bit more nebulous than construction costing since it involves estimating camper behaviours.

FINANCIALS

Time scale is another important consideration, perhaps one of the most important. Campgrounds are seasonally operated, essentially they can potentially operate eight months out of the year in Alberta, depending on the weather. Revenue for the owner needs to be generated in this period, unless there are year round opportunities to generate revenues for the campground, such as a restaurant or rentable community hall.

The first question to be answered with respect to potential revenue, is the obvious: how many potential visitors are out there? A general estimate can be determined through a relatively straightforward calculation and a bit of research into the competition, which was done in the first section. Determining the total sites available in the area and multiplied by the average number of operating days (the season each campground is open for) will yield an average of available campsites in a season. This number multiplied by the average occupancy rate in the area will yield the total occupancy of the campgrounds in the area. It is, very generally, the market expectation. The average occupancy rate is a number that needs to be determined locally, which will mean discussions with the campground operators in the area to determine these numbers.

With an idea of the market size in hand, an estimate of the potential share of this market is needed. At a high level this is an estimate of how many campers the campground could potentially expect to visit. A similar calculation to the market expectation, this calculation involves identifying the total number of campsites in the area and adding the number of campsites to be included in the project. The calculation should also factor in any new campsites that the competition is planning to develop since this will be a part of the available share in the area. Dividing the proposed project sites to be developed by the total number of campsites available (including the project sites) will result in a potential market share number. Multiply by 100 to get the percentage.

This market share number will be influenced by the campground design and the amenities offered. For example, if the campground development has water access and half of the observed campgrounds in the area do not, it is not unreasonable to expect that the market share for the project site could be a bit higher than average since water is a huge attractor in Southern Alberta. This would be a competitive advantage that could potentially increase the market demand for the campground. However, this can be a somewhat nebulous factor, more of a 'gut feel' than a verifiable number that would impact market share.

Calculation of Equal Market Share	
Total Number of Campsites in Your Market Area	100
Number of Campsites You Are Planning To Add	19
Number of Campsites Others Are Planning To Add	0
Subtotal	119
EQUAL MARKET SHARE	16%

Consequently, demand for industry services is highly seasonal, and many industry operators generate significant portions of their annual revenue during peak periods of tourism and travel activity. However, weather conditions and natural disasters, such as forest fires and hurricanes, can deter consumers from travelling to major tourist locations during these time periods, severely limiting total industry revenue. Industry operators must be mindful of weather conditions in planning excursions and events. Health scares also negatively influence demand for travel. Recently, the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic led to significant negative effects for almost all tourism related industries. While campgrounds experienced a spike in visitors in the second half of 2020 as many first-timers viewed camping as a safe, socially-distant way to travel, especially as travel restrictions were imposed, many hunting, fishing and recreational camps experienced significant declines in revenue over 2020.

IBISWorld Campgrounds & Recreational Vehicle Parks in Canada, 2021

FINANCIALS

With a base determination of the potential campers that could visit the site, an estimate of potential revenues can be created. There are a number of factors to consider when calculating potential revenues; pricing of services for revenue estimating should be considered as a strategic exercise.

There are two methods that should be considered when estimating campsite pricing. The most straightforward is a cost base price model where capital and operating costs are calculated and a profit percentage is factored in. A time factor has to be applied since part of the profit will go towards paying back any lenders that were involved in the development. The other method is a competitive pricing model. Examining what the competition in the area is charging and setting similar rates for the campground. While it is important to be competitive with the pricing, this approach does not consider the specific cost structure of the campground. Rates for other campgrounds aren't based on the same situation as the project site; are these campgrounds making money? Did they have the same capital construction challenges? Do they offer the same amenities? These are all questions that need to be weighted into the campground pricing. This 'follow the leader' competitive pricing model tends to be a race to the bottom, and has too many unknowns factored in. In essence, the competition is controlling the business and not the other way around.

A less risky and more grounded approach is to utilize the cost base model to calculate the base site rental rate and measure this against what the competition is charging. Then ask the question of competitiveness in the rate. In many cases, a higher site rental rate can be justified if the services being provided are greater than what the competition is offering. For example, if none of the sites in the area offer sanitary hookups for campsites a higher rate could be justified if the project site does offer these services.

Calculation of Projected Occupancy Rates	
Total Number of Sites Available at Your Campground For the Period	69
Number of Days in the Month or Season	153
Total Available Site Nights	10557
Total Projected Site Nights Occupied	8500
PROJECTED OCCUPANCY RATE	81%

Pricing considerations should also account for short term and long term campers. Short term campers are those that stay for a few days or a couple of weeks. The maximum stay in Alberta Parks campgrounds is 16 days, and in National Parks it's 14 days. The turnover for these types of campsites involve more maintenance, since the sites will need to be cleaned and groomed after each camper.

Seasonal camping comprises stays at campsites for longer than this two week period. Typically structured on a monthly or flat seasonal rate these long term stays are offered by private campgrounds. Long term seasonal campers are less maintenance for the basic reason that they don't move around as much, they require less maintenance. In some cases, seasonal campers that come back year after year can actually be self policing; a mutual understanding of expectations and behaviour will develop between campers if the camper turnover is minimal. One campground operator interviewed for this study indicated that the seasonal campers in his campsite are quite collaborative and helpful to each other, resulting in less maintenance and management on his part. One camper even cuts the grass at the campground owner's house! Seasonal campers consequently will typically expect a lower site rental than short term campers. This type of operational approach needs to account for cash flow; a reduced rental rate is typically the tradeoff for a guaranteed cash flow over a long period of time. If seasonal campsites are included in the campground design, the pricing structure should be flexible enough to facilitate these types of long term campers without adversely impacting revenues.

Some RV resorts are structured entirely on seasonal rentals, and some have adopted a bareland condominium structure where each site is deeded to an owner and an elected board manages the operation of the condominium corporation. A good structure to distribute costs and management risks, however there is a larger management component involved in a condominium structure. This type of seasonal campground model is relatively rare.

FINANCIALS

AN EXAMPLE OF A VERY SIMPLE REVENUE PROJECTION CALCULATION LOOKS LIKE THIS:

Projection of Revenue			
	YEAR		
	1	2	3
SITE RENTAL REVENUE			
Available Site Nights	153	153	153
Projected Occupancy Percentage	81%	85%	85%
Projected Occupied Site Nights	123.93	130.05	130.05
Weighted Average Site Rental Rate	\$ 40.00	\$ 40.00	\$ 40.00
seasonal camping sites revenue	\$ 102,000.00	\$ 112,200.00	\$ 123,420.00
Total Projected Site Revenue	\$ 106,957.20	\$ 117,402.00	\$ 128,622.00
OTHER REVENUE			
Concession Revenue Spending Per Site Night Total	\$ 100.00	\$ 125.00	\$ 150.00
Other Revenues Spending Per Site Night Total	\$ 100.00	\$ 125.00	\$ 150.00
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 131,743.20	\$ 149,914.50	\$ 167,637.00

Understanding that campsites are the number one revenue generator for a campground, careful consideration should be taken between the balancing of amenities and campsites. When reviewing potential revenues, the temptation to cram in as many campsites as possible is strong. This is where the vision or guiding principle comes in. If the vision is to pack in as many campers as possible, privacy for campers will not be a consideration, which may be less desirable for many campers. If the vision is to enable campers to experience nature consideration should be given to providing some buffer space between sites. This is a push-pull relationship between incorporating revenue generating campsites and potential construction costs. In many cases, established campsite design standards, Parks Canada or Alberta Parks, can be a guide in this decision making process.

As part of the pricing strategy, and as additional revenue streams, campground owners need to consider what value added amenities should be included in the campground. Value added amenities are an important consideration for campground owners looking to enhance campers experience on site. Incorporation of amenities will also have been explored in the design stage, since some amenities require a physical footprint, which entails balancing the inclusion of these amenities against revenue generating campsites.

Some amenities that could be thought of as value added should be considered as standard amenities. For example, trees on the campsite should be a standard amenity. WiFi is fast becoming standard on all campsites, as noted previously. Value added amenities should be those that aren't expected on a campground. A campground store that provides basic goods like soap, milk, bread, propane and locally made artisan goods would be a value added amenity. Campground showers and laundry facilities would be a value added amenity. If the campground is close to a waterbody, a marina with a fueling station would be a great value added amenity. Prairie Oasis Park stands out because of this value added amenity While value added amenities do require capital costs, they can be solidly justified when it comes to providing value to campers and can be recouped in the campsite rental pricing. The marketing potential for these amenities is large and will help campgrounds stand out from the competition.

FINANCIALS

When exploring campground amenities it's important to consider proximity to locally available services. In the case of Fox Lake, being so close to the Town of Hanna, certain types of campground amenities might not be viable. For example, a campground store might not be a consideration since the Town is a short distance away. Conversely, Prairie Oasis Park being some distance from the nearest urban centre benefits from having a campground store on site. Amenities should be included in a campground if they don't cannibalize any services that are offered by businesses close by.

In many cases, the price for campsites will be subject to the standard customer judgement of worth; are the services being offered worth the price? This is a question that should always be front of mind for an experienced based business, however it is important to understand that this question of worth is highly fluid in customer's minds. There will be some customers who have the attitude that anything more than 'free' is too much. An exaggeration to be sure, but the takeaway is that some customers will base their campsite choices based entirely on price. These types of customers have a particular mindset that may not appeal to every campground operator, and that's okay.

In every pricing situation, a solid understanding of the capital investment costs (costs to construct the campground, equipment costs, interest payments) and operating costs (wages, costs for services delivery, marketing, maintenance, taxes) should be tracked and factored into campsite rental rates. At the beginning a quarterly review of these costs is encouraged. As the campground gets established and an understanding of the impacts and fluctuations of these costs are better understood, these reviews could become less frequent.

Consider also that it will take time for the campground to be come established, to become a known quantity with a reputation and online reviews that support this reputation. This takes time to develop, and revenue estimates as well as pricing strategies should consider this time period. It's a natural evolution for any business.

The other important aspect to consider is the 'money out' scenario. Essentially, this is the operating expenses side of the campground business. At a very simple level, this is a cost accounting exercise. When initially creating a projection of operating expenses, it is important to identify as many day to day operating costs as reasonably possible, based on the vision for the campsite and the anticipated supporting services required to achieve that vision.

PROJECTION OF OPERATING EXPENSES (EXAMPLE)

	YEAR		
	1	2	3
COST OF SALES:			
Concession Product Costs	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 2,000.00
Subtotal	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 2,000.00
DIRECT OPERATING EXPENSES: SITE RENTALS			
Supplies	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,100.00	\$ 2,205.00
Subtotal	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,100.00	\$ 2,205.00
OVERHEAD EXPENSES:			
Management Salaries (campground host)	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00
Site Maintenance	\$ 12,500.00	\$ 12,500.00	\$ 12,500.00
Marketing	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
Repairs & Maintenance	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Utilities and Water	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00
Admin (office supplies, phone, etc.)	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Equipment Leases	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,500.00	\$ 6,050.00
Insurance	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Property & Business Taxes	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
Bank Charges	\$ 500.00	\$ 325.00	\$ 325.00
Professional Services	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
Miscellaneous	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Subtotal	\$ 121,000.00	\$ 120,325.00	\$ 120,875.00
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 124,200.00	\$ 123,925.00	\$ 125,080.00

MARKETING

A solid, well thought out marketing approach for a tourism based business is essential. Any business that relies of selling an experience will be heavily impacted by word of mouth. Insight and advice from trusted sources is still the best way to uncover information on any particular business. Travel planning relies heavily on marketing information of this type, and it's incumbent on campgrounds to put significant efforts into this area.

Marketing a tourism based business, a business that is experienced based, there is only one key rule to bear in mind: keep the customer first. Focus on their needs, on their requirements, and ensure their experience is great. Again, campers are a community that communicates extensively; word of mouth is vital to the success of the campground and having a focus on the customer is the best way to promote success.

Understanding the market segments and the demographics of the clients that comprise it helps to shape a marketing approach for the campground and will have influence on the design of the campground. Understanding the needs of these particular market segments, as identified earlier, will ensure that any promotion of the campground is targeted appropriately and the design of the site is well tailored to ensure an economy of programmed amenities and services. The more interesting and appealing the campground is to different market segments, the higher the quality of experience for customers, the more customers will be attracted.

Satisfying customer needs will engender customer loyalty, and with that comes repeat business, word of mouth referrals, and a willingness to pay the price for the service. Referrals, for a tourism based business, are invaluable.

Online reviews are a rich source of qualitative information, and a primary resource for travellers planning their limited time vacations. There are many travel and tourism sites that provide reviews of campgrounds, Google, Bucars RV, Travel Alberta, and the Parks and Campgrounds Owners' Association of Alberta are but a select few. Recognizing that travellers plan their trips from their desktops these reviews can strongly influence vacation planning and consequently travel expenditures. Again, for a tourism based business focused on cultivating experiences, these types of reviews are vital. They are, essentially digital 'word of mouth'.

Surprisingly, there is very little online presence regarding campgrounds around Hanna. Google Maps appears to have the most reviews (71); convenient for travellers who are route planning. TripAdvisor does not have Fox Lake Park listed at all. Instagram has Fox Lake Park but it's a specific search, you have to know the park is in Alberta otherwise the results are populated with images of Fox Lake Park in Florida. Google has perhaps the most comprehensive listing of campsite reviews, 71 in total. Generally, they are all positive and speak to the natural scenery, park playgrounds, birdwatching, and the very relaxed atmosphere of the area.

MARKETING

Marketing any business can be exhaustive. It's no longer good enough to put out basic information with the general message "come and see our campground, it's great!". There has to be a solid aspect of engagement with customers. Potential visitors to the campground will have questions and they expect answers. Active engagement with the customer is becoming more and more popular and is a great way to promote the campground. Again, word of mouth is vital for an experienced based tourism business.

Photos

All Exterior Food & drink

[Add a photo](#)

Review summary

5 4 3 2 1

4.5
★★★★★
71 reviews

D "A nice place to relax and bring the family"

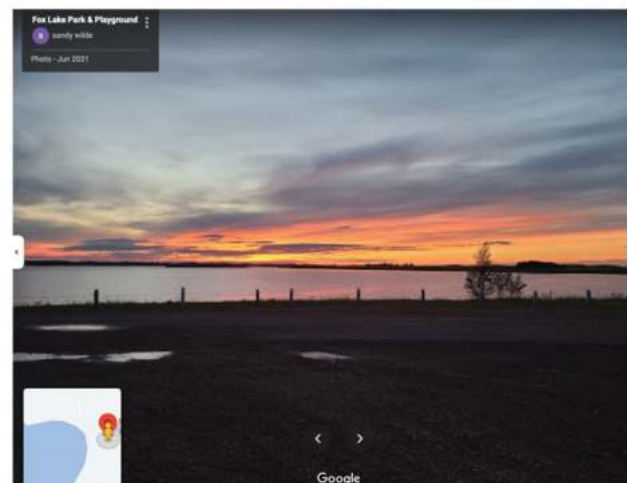
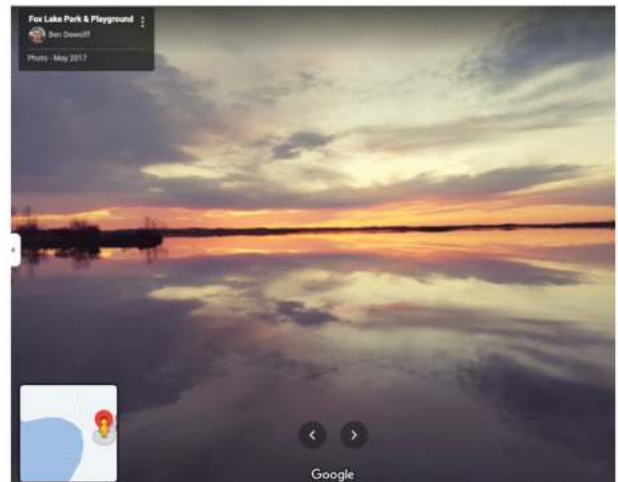
C "It has nice big sites, your choice of services, and is reasonably priced."

"Brook the campground manager has top notch service."

[Write a review](#)

Reviews [Search](#) [Sort](#)

All managers 4 beautiful 3





FOX LAKE PARK & CAMPGROUND CONCEPT PLAN

Fox Lake Park and Campground Potential Renovation

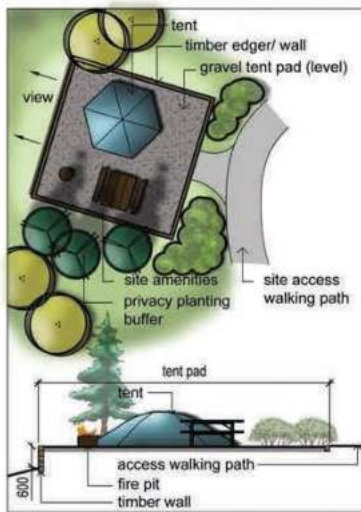
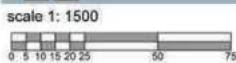


FOX LAKE PARK & CAMPGROUND CONCEPT PLAN



FOX LAKE PARK & CAMPGROUND CONCEPT PLAN

Fox Lake Park & Campground



typical walk-in tenting site
scale n.t.s.



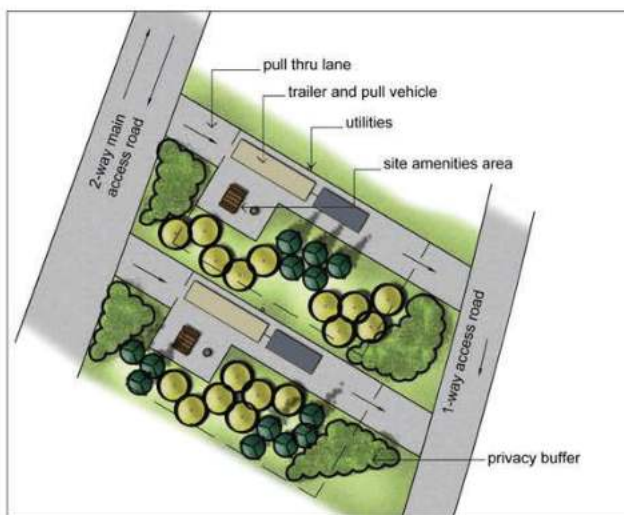
walk-in tenting
scale n.t.s.



rehabilitated waterfront
scale n.t.s.

FOX LAKE PARK & CAMPGROUND CONCEPT PLAN

Fox Lake Park & Campground



typical pull-thru site

scale 1:750



marina

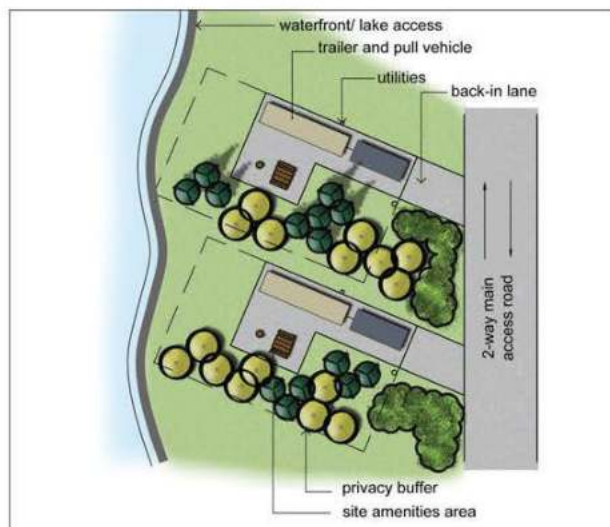
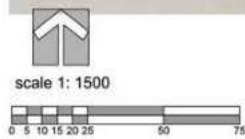
scale n.t.s.

FOX LAKE PARK & CAMPGROUND CONCEPT PLAN

Fox Lake Park & Campground

south quiet area

november 30 2021



typical back-in site



slope reinforcement and

FOX LAKE PARK & CAMPGROUND CONCEPT PLAN

Fox lake Park + Campground

estimate of potential capital costs

landscape works

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	DETAIL	UNIT	QTY	UNIT COST	TOTAL
1	Infrastructure Upgrades					
.1	earth work	including demolition, site grading, contouring	Each	1	<u>\$4,500,000</u>	<u>\$4,500,000</u>
.2	upgrades to sani-dump station	upgrade existing infrastructure to accommodate proposed upgrades	Each	1	<u>\$100,000</u>	<u>\$100,000</u>
.3	entry signage	upgrades to campground entry signage	Each	1	<u>\$250,000</u>	<u>\$250,000</u>
.4	electrical services	electrical services to campsites, including trenching and underground conduit and electrical transformer	Each	33	<u>\$8,000</u>	<u>\$264,000</u>
.5	site lighting	including fixtures, concrete base and piles	Each	45	<u>\$7,000</u>	<u>\$315,000</u>
.6	water service	water services to campsites, cistern and booster pump station	LM	1500	<u>\$250</u>	<u>\$375,000</u>
.7	cistern and booster pump	to accommodate showers and laundry facilities	Each	1	<u>\$70,000</u>	<u>\$70,000</u>
.8	internet connection	wireless connectivity throughout campground	Each	1	<u>\$6,000</u>	<u>\$6,000</u>
					sub total	<u>\$5,880,000</u>

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	DETAIL	UNIT	QTY	UNIT COST	TOTAL
2	North Area					
.1	marina	including concrete boat launch, 3 metal finger docks, pedestrian seating areas, boardwalks, lighting	Each	1	<u>\$730,000</u>	<u>\$730,000</u>
.2	parking lot	compacted gravel complete with concrete parking stoppers	m2	1830	<u>\$200</u>	<u>\$366,000</u>
.3	amenity building	amenity building complete with concession, showers and washrooms	Each	1	<u>\$110,000</u>	<u>\$110,000</u>
.4	multi sport court	including basketball, tennis, badminton, volleyball, pickle ball courts	Each	1	<u>\$150,000</u>	<u>\$150,000</u>
.5	long term camp sites	including compacted gravel, picnic tables and fire pits	Each	10	<u>\$16,000</u>	<u>\$160,000</u>
					sub total	<u>\$1,516,000</u>

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	DETAIL	UNIT	QTY	UNIT COST	TOTAL
3	Central Area					
.1	community hall	including stick frame, metal roof, concrete foundation, heated, shower and laundry facilities and site manager office	Each	1	<u>\$1,500,000</u>	<u>\$1,500,000</u>
.2	play area upgrades	expansion and modernization of existing playground areas	Each	1	<u>\$250,000</u>	<u>\$250,000</u>
.3	walk in tenting sites	including picnic tables and fire pits and tent plots.	Each	14	<u>\$9,000</u>	<u>\$126,000</u>
.4	tent parking	compacted gravel complete with concrete parking stoppers	m2	800	<u>\$200</u>	<u>\$160,000</u>

FOX LAKE PARK & CAMPGROUND CONCEPT PLAN

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	DETAIL	UNIT	QTY	UNIT COST	TOTAL
.5	shoreline restoration	bioengineered shoreline stabilization including pole planting, live staking and/ or wattle fencing.	Lm	420	\$500	\$210,000
.6	group camp site	including picnic tables and fire pits and compacted gravel	Each	1	\$35,000	\$35,000
.7	visitor parking	compacted gravel complete with concrete parking stoppers	m2	400	\$200	\$80,000
sub total						\$2,281,000

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	DETAIL	UNIT	QTY	UNIT COST	TOTAL
4	South Area					
.1	shoreline restoration	addition of compacted fill materials to create campsites, bioengineered shoreline stabilization including pole planting, live staking and/ or wattle fencing.	m2	2000	\$900	\$1,800,000
.2	road realignment	create new access gravel road to new campsites	m2	3500	\$250	\$875,000
.3	visitor parking	compacted gravel complete with concrete parking stoppers	m2	150	\$200	\$30,000
.4	long term camp sites	including compacted gravel, picnic tables and fire pits	Each	9	\$16,000	\$144,000
sub total						\$2,849,000
10% soft costs (topographical survey, development and construction permitting, etc)						\$1,267,350
10% professional fees (legal fees, planning, biologist, engineering, landscape architecture)						\$1,267,350
grand total						\$15,060,700

lease note:
 these costs should be considered preliminary and should only be used for discussion purposes.
 the costing does not account for purchase of any additional lands.

CONCLUSION

RV campers are a highly organized mobile community. They have cultural norms, social practices, and are highly active on social media. The community is generally comprised of older travellers (65 years +) who have discretionary disposable income and time. They are firmly in the driver's seat (pun intended) when it comes to selecting and endorsing RV Parks.

The proliferation of campground rating websites offering reviews, photos, and notably the description of the experiences to be had are strong influencers of travellers choice. Also, the rise of 'glamping' has evolved the activity of camping into a curated, staged event that further elevates RV park and campsite expectations of travellers and nomads. When combined with a limited amount of vacation time, most RV vacations are planned meticulously to maximize the experience. These factors are pushing RV park operators to provide more and diverse amenities to attract travellers, both for short and long terms, to their venues.

There are many RV campsites within proximity to the Town of Hanna, most located between the Town and the Town of Drumheller. All have varying service offerings, the most common include levelled pad sites, playgrounds, fire pits, electrical and water hookups and sani dump stations. They also offer a range of campsite arrangements, including tenting sites, group camping and multi unit sites. Very few offer long termstay (weekly, monthly) campsite rental options.

The proximity to water at Fox Lake Park make it relatively unique compared to the other RV parks within the region. Comparable RV parks in the area would include Prairie Oasis Park (approximately 30 km south of the Town) and Blood Indian Park (approximately 80 km southeast of the Town). Both Parks are owned and operated by the Special Areas Board. Both parks are outside of any urban service areas; the nearest service amenity to Prairie Oasis Park is the Cactus Corner Truck stop about 20 kilometres away. The Blood Indian Trading post is less than a kilometre away from Blood Indian Park, however this seasonal facility offers convenience foods and basic fishing supplies. Any servicing required above the basic would have to be deferred to Youngstown, 30 kilometres to the north. Fox Lake Park and Campground has a definite competitive servicing and tourism advantage due to the proximity to the Town of Hanna.

The value of the RV industry, from manufacturing to end user, is significant; \$6.2 billion in 2019. The 2020 Economic Impact of the Canadian Recreation Vehicle Industry provided by the Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association of Canada & Canadian Recreational Vehicle Association identifies that the economic impacts of RV travellers throughout Canada delivered \$4.8 billion in added economic value to the Canadian economy from this initial expenditure of \$6.2billion. In Alberta, the report identifies this expenditure was a bit more than \$480 million. There is significant opportunity in the Town of Hanna to participate in this economy through an upgrade investment in Fox Lake Park and Campground.



source: 2020 Economic Impact of the Canadian Recreation Vehicle Industry

CONCLUSION

The implementation of long term or seasonal camping opportunities at Fox Lake Park would be a catalyst to entice an RV dealership with associated maintenance and equipment sales into the area. With established tourism traffic into the area an RV servicing facility could draw on resident and tourist needs from the entire region, establishing the Town as a landmark for cross country travellers requiring servicing and equipment resupply. Additionally, since Fox Lake has the capacity for boating, establishing a marine service and repair facility in the Town would be a beacon for local boaters and cross country travellers. Currently these facilities do not exist in any definite capacity within the Town.

Tent camping is by far the preferred camping accommodation; the 2021 North American Camping Report by KOA identified that more than 60% of campers in 2020 chose to tent. Tenting could be considered the 'gateway experience' to camping, with enthusiastic travellers graduating eventually to RVs. This provides the Town of Hanna with an opportunity to establish outfitters and camping supply businesses similar to Mountain Equipment CoOp or Camper's Village. Relatively rare facilities outside of larger urban areas.

The proximity of Fox Lake Park to the Town of Hanna offers similar economic opportunities for tourism. RV owners across Canada spent in excess of 3 billion dollars on tourism related activities in 2019. These include expenditures such as campground fees, other accommodations, vehicle operation (including gas and repairs while on the road), food and beverage, and tourism related activities.

The Town of Hanna has a rich railway history. Some RV tourists are birders, interested in seeing something beautiful, spectacular, or unusual. Some are into photography, others into life lists. As it is with birding, there are many varieties of rail fans, or trainspotters. Hanna, with its railway history would be a strong draw for trainspotting nomads. Seasonal RV sites at Fox Lake, combined with a variety of amenities would provide a welcome distraction for the partners of these trainspotting tourists, one would assume.

Additionally, proximity to recreational sporting venues like the local golf course is an advantage that Fox Lake Park has over other RV Parks in the area, creating great added value to any capital investment for upgrades. Building on this momentum, attraction to the upgraded RV park would naturally lead to an increase in traffic for local retail and restaurants within the town, as well as a potential evolution whereby destination RV and boat shows become a regular occurrence within the Town.

The potential for seasonal camping at Fox Lake Park and Campground is high; it can definitely be incorporated into the existing campground with some site renovations. Seasonal campsites are rare in the region and Fox Lake Park and Campground is well positioned to attract full time RV enthusiasts with long term stay sites as well as weekenders and tourists looking for a short term stay. Additionally, an investment in infrastructure and amenity upgrades would also spur economic spin off opportunities in the Town of Hanna.

This project with its unique blend of a municipal and not for profit corporation partnership, (Harvest Sky Economic Development Corporation) introduces the underlying basis for public and private sector investment through partnerships in the development and operation of the Fox Lake Park and Campground. Successful project implementation creates a model for partnerships that can be applied to other project initiatives in the Harvest Sky Region.



source: 2020 Economic Impact of the Canadian Recreation Vehicle Industry

RECOMMENDATIONS + NEXT STEPS

This study is a high level examination into the feasibility of renovating and expanding the campground at Fox Lake Park. The research and analysis presented reveals that there is opportunity to move forward with a seasonal camping strategy. There is significant opportunity to be realized through the development of seasonal campsites at Fox Lake Park and Campground. The improvements, in combination with the development concept provided in this strategy, are positioned respond to key market conditions identified in this document. This study can accommodate the needs of the Harvest Sky Region and beyond over a broad spectrum of requirements.

There are three short term strategies that can be undertaken to move the development forward. They are relatively straightforward.

1. Approve the Hanna Recreational Living Strategy; Fox Lake Concept Plan as the basis for final preliminary design for the park and campground.
2. Develop a more refined Business Case that reflects the findings and recommendations contained in the strategy. This will provide for more accurate costing of the project resulting in a more specific public / private investment strategy. This would be a stand-alone document that could be provided to potential investors; it is from this business case that partnerships, (public/private) can develop their unique business plan to move the process to detailed development. The business case would evolve this Hanna Recreational Living Strategy to a final design, with a more detailed budget, based on the financial strategy put forward by a private investor. The next step is the business plan that outlines the strategy for development, including capitalization and financing.
3. Determine the ownership and operations structures for a joint approach to development. The challenge here for Harvest Sky Economic Development Corporation is to identify the parameters they will consider for ownership structure and operating pro forma.

The requirements for upgraded and expanded infrastructure to accommodate additional campsites is a significant capital investment. The strategy put forward in this document presents the Harvest Sky Economic Development Corporation with three distinct avenues to move forward:

1. Undertake the renovation, expansion and operation of the campground, using an operational model similar to the Special Areas Board's operation of Blood Indian Campground and Prairie Oasis Campground. This would involve some for of capital investment by Harvest Sky and the Town of Hanna under a partnership arrangement.
2. Explore a joint venture or public / private partnership with an investor who can assist with strategy, finance and coordinate the capital improvement program and act as the operator of the campground in return for a percentage of the revenues. The capital costs will be positively impacted by a joint approach with each partner sharing part of the risk.
3. Sell the campground to a private investor. Valuation of the campground would need to be undertaken by a third party to establish a fair market value.

RECOMMENDATIONS + NEXT STEPS

Given the potential for a seasonal campground to act as a catalyst for additional private investment in the region, it is anticipated that selling campground is not a desirable course of action.

The recommended concept plan creates a unique opportunity to explore new partnership models and create long-term cost efficiencies for all stakeholders. The cost benefits to a collaborative approach are significant, both in the short and long-term. In the short-term there are obvious cost benefits to a collaborative site development and construction; the sharing of the capitalization requirements will result in a more cost effective delivery of services to customers. The investment into seasonal camping opportunities at Fox Lake ensures long-term return on investment in the region.

There are no significant risks identified with the Fox Lake Park and Campground Concept Plan that would jeopardize the project from achieving its anticipated benefit. The project goals and outcomes are consistent with the strategy priorities and the business and economic impacts are all high priority. As a matter of fact the business model presented provides for private sector investment and offers extended return on investment in land development and facility operation. In the current local economy significant factors such as stable construction costs, competitive tendering and access to a supply of skilled labour to complete a construction project are all low risk. There is in fact a need to initiate projects that keeps Harvest Sky Region vibrant and trades people employed.

The Fox Lake Concept Plan has the full support of the Study team and is seen as a pragmatic, cost and energy efficient option to address the concept identified in this strategy. The Harvest Sky Economic Development Corporation is well positioned and has the experience and expertise to manage the process through to project completion.