



WHY PROTECT ASSINIBOINE FOREST AS A NATIONAL URBAN PARK

THE OPPORTUNITY

- Assiniboine Forest is one of the largest urban natural spaces in North America.
- Winnipeg signed an agreement with the Government of Canada in August 2021 to explore establishing a National Urban Park in the city. The location has not yet been announced.
- Winnipeg needs to protect and expand its green spaces. Just 6% of Winnipeg's total city area is public parkland, compared to the average of Canadian cities at 9%.

WHY WE NEED PERMANENT PROTECTION

A simple 2/3 vote of city council is all it would take for the forest's nearly 300 hectares to be opened up to developers.

We've seen what happens to treasured city parks that lack permanent protection. Just 16 kilometres from Ottawa's Parliament Building, the once pristine Gatineau Park has been carved up by housing development, shopping centres, and the creation of new roads.

A National Urban Park designation would ensure this beloved space is permanently protected from unnatural developments.

WHAT MAKES ASSINIBOINE FOREST SPECIAL

Assiniboine Forest is one of the largest urban natural spaces in North America with 288 hectares of aspen and oak forest, restored tall-grass prairie and wetlands. It is home to white-tailed deer, coyote, songbirds, nesting waterfowl, and 256 species of plants.

The forest is largely undeveloped, aside from a 18 kilometres of multi-use trails designed to help residents explore and appreciate its beauty.

RECONCILIATION

Indigenous peoples have stewarded this territory for thousands of generations. National Urban Parks must be designed, established, and managed in the spirit of reconciliation. At minimum, this entails Indigenous leadership and knowledge being actively and equitably involved in all stages of park development and administration.

ASSINIBOINE FOREST AS A NATIONAL URBAN PARK - THE BENEFITS

FEDERAL INVESTMENT

A National Urban Park would bring significant federal investment to:

- Reduce the resources required from the city's budget to manage the area.
- Better manage the area, improve accessibility, and advance reconciliation.
- Create new jobs, including management and interpretive programs.
- Expand Winnipeg's tourist attractions and gain promotional support from Parks Canada.

POTENTIAL EXPANSION

The forest could be expanded by using federal funds to acquire neighboring undeveloped lands, adding much-needed natural space to our city.

An exciting possibility would be to explore opportunities to expand the new park by protecting the lands along the [Trans Canada Trail](#) that connect the Forest to FortWhyte Alive.

This would align with the city's existing priorities. [OurWinnipeg 2045](#) includes "a commitment to increasing the public reserve land within the City of Winnipeg by taking steps to add another 1,000 acres of public park space in addition to the already existing public reserve lands" to ensure that greenspace is preserved and enhanced for future generations.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLEAN AIR

Trees and parks help lower temperatures and combat the heat-island effect of asphalt and buildings which trap and radiate heat while blocking potentially cooling winds.

Green spaces don't only combat the heat impacts of climate change. They also help to clean the air of toxic pollutants, reduce the impact of flooding from increasingly intense storms, and to absorb and store carbon dioxide.

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

There is a wide array of evidence that shows spending time in nature improves mental and physical health, boosts immunity and reduces risk of disease. Parks also help to build community and provide free spaces for families to gather.

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