

# COUNTY OF ST. PAUL NO. 19

*Our Mission - To create desirable rural experiences*



## DEV-4 Reserve Lands Management Policy

Department: Planning and Development

### POLICY OBJECTIVE:

The County of St. Paul No. 19 recognizes that there is a need to carefully manage the County's reserve lands to provide benefits for the general public and to protect the natural environment. This policy provides direction for administration regarding the management of reserve lands, the removal or licensing of existing encroachments on reserves, the potential disposal of existing reserve lands and the acquisition of reserve lands in new subdivisions.

### POLICY CONTEXT:

The County of St. Paul No. 19 uses reserve lands, as defined by the Municipal Government Act (MGA), to provide lands for schools, parks, recreation purposes or preserving natural areas. These lands are dedicated to the municipality through the subdivision process. Reserve lands are designated on title as either environmental reserve (ER), municipal reserve (MR), school reserve (SR), municipal and school reserve (MSR), or community service reserve (CSR), conservation reserve (CR). The municipality acquires reserve lands at the time of subdivision.

### Environmental Reserve (ER)

A developer may be required to provide the following as environmental reserve:

- a. land that is a swamp, gully, ravine, coulee, or natural drainage course;
- b. land that is subject to flooding; or
- c. a strip of land not less than 6 meters in width adjacent to a body of water.

Environmental reserve must be left in its natural state or used as a park. Although the County may pass a bylaw allowing environmental reserve to be used for some other purpose or lease the land for a term not exceeding three years.

Development on or in proximity to hazardous areas may be considered only if recommended in a geotechnical study prepared by a qualified professional.

## Municipal Reserve (MR), School Reserve (SR), or Municipal and School Reserve (MSR)

A developer may be required to provide the following as MR, SR or MSR:

- a. Up to 10 percent of the land that is the subject of the application, less environmental reserve, for park, school, and recreation purposes.

Lands with these designations can only be used for park, recreation, or school authority purposes.

## Community Service Reserve (CSR)

If a school board no longer requires a site that has been designated school reserve or municipal and school reserve, it must request approval of that designation from the Minister of Education to declare the site surplus. If declared surplus, the school board may transfer the land to the municipality. The municipality may dispose of the land or designate the school building portion of the site as community service reserve, which may be used for a/an: ambulance services facility, affordable housing, fire station, municipal facility providing direct service to the public, public library, police station, non-profit day care facility, a non-profit senior citizen facility, a non-profit special needs facility.

## Conservation Reserve (CR)

The MGA allows the County to require a developer to provide land for conservation purposes if the taking of the reserve is consistent with any of the County's statutory plans and the municipality compensates the landowner at the market value of the land. The County must not sell, lease, or otherwise dispose of conservation reserve, and the land must remain in its natural state.

## **POLICY STATEMENTS:**

### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 Under the Municipal Government Act, the County may request a landowner who is subdividing land to set aside a portion of their property as municipal and/or environmental reserve. Municipal reserves are lands that are acquired by the municipality for parks and recreation purposes. Environmental reserves are intended to remain in their natural state.
- 1.2 The County will request the dedication of lands as environmental reserve to prevent environmental damage that can result from development and to guard against the development occurring on potential hazardous lands that may damage persons or property. Environmental reserves are also important in providing for public access to water bodies and watercourses. All reserve lands are owned and managed by the municipality.

- 1.3 Reserve lands are not intended for private use by adjacent landowners. The County is responsible for ensuring that reserve lands remain safe and available for public enjoyment.
- 1.4 The County will not provide maintenance and upkeep of reserve lands unless a significant public safety hazard is present.
- 2.0 **Municipal Reserves (MR)**
- 2.1 The management of MR lands is intended to provide a suitable land base for the provision of recreation facilities for the use and enjoyment of County residents and the general public.
- 2.2 Municipal reserves may provide important access links to other lands, including water access, and can also offer undeveloped green spaces that act as buffers between different land uses.
- 2.3 The County of St. Paul may allow public recreation facilities on MR lands where there is enough interest and demand, as determined by the County. Typical facilities to be considered for municipal reserves include but are not limited to sports fields, picnic sites, swimming beaches, community fire pits, skating rinks, trails, pathways and associated facilities such as parking lots, toilets, or washrooms.
- 2.4 The County may require subdivision developers to provide recreational facilities in new subdivisions.
- 2.5 The County encourages local communities to work with the municipality to develop recreational facilities. The County may work with residents, groups, or community associations to address ongoing maintenance requirements such as litter picking, sign and fence repairs, and weed control.
- 2.6 Motorized vehicles will not be permitted on reserve lands unless the County designates a parking lot within the MR lands.
  - 2.6.1 “Motorized Vehicle” means a motor vehicle as defined in the Traffic Safety Act, RSA 2000, as amended.
- 2.7 The County may, however, allow the use of off-highway vehicles on reserve lands in the following manner:
  - 2.7.1 “Off-highway Vehicle” means an off-highway vehicle as defined in the Traffic Safety Act, RSA 2000, as amended.
  - 2.7.2 The County may allow off-highway vehicles to park on Reserve Lands on County designated parking areas.
  - 2.7.3 The County will allow off-highway vehicles to cross Reserve Lands only on County designated paths or trails that are capable of allowing the safe transit of off-highway vehicles.
  - 2.7.4 County designated paths or trails shall be public paths and trails open for the use of the public.
  - 2.7.5 Residents may request the County to designate an existing path or trail that is

not already designated.

2.7.6 Prior to designating a path or trail, the County shall inform and consult with the local community as to the best/most feasible route for a proposed designated path or trail.

2.7.7 Factors the County shall consider in determining a designated path or trail for the use of off-highway vehicles include, but are not limited to:

- a) Public safety;
- b) impact on the Reserve lands;
- c) impact on local residents;
- d) traffic generation;
- e) use conflicts;
- f) minimizing the number of paths and trails;
- g) maintenance impacts;
- h) environmental impact; and
- i) to provide public access to lakefront.

2.7.8 The County may approve or deny any requests to designate a path or trail for the use of off-highway vehicles.

2.7.9 Off-highway vehicles found on reserve lands outside of designated paths, trails, or parking areas shall be liable to prosecution.

**2.8** Commercial facilities and services will not be permitted on reserve lands.

**2.9** In MR locations that are in their natural state without developed recreation facilities, the removal of vegetation will generally not be permitted. However, vegetation removal may be considered where there is a public safety hazard or for agricultural purposes as determined by the County. Mowing will only occur to control weeds and reduce fire hazards. Removal of vegetation and mowing will be undertaken by the County unless otherwise authorized. Placement of fill material and other yard waste (grass clippings, tree prunings, etc.) or the removal of any material will not be allowed.

**2.10** Landings, pathways, walkways, stairs, retaining walls or similar private structures may be accommodated on MR lands if, in the opinion of the County, the structures do not pose a hazard to public safety, impede year-round public access, or unduly interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighbouring properties. To accommodate the structure the County requires landowners to apply for an Encroachment Agreement or Encroachment License, as directed by the County's DEV-7 Encroachment Agreements/Licenses Policy.

**2.11** The winter storage of docks or boats hoists may be permitted on MR lands providing the landowner has a Temporary Field Authorization from the Province authorizing the

location of the structure. All docks must be clearly marked making them visible during the winter months.

**2.12** MR lands will not be leased under any circumstances.

**2.13** The County is not required to provide recreational facilities on MR lands. Residents interested in creating pathways, stairs, or other facilities may do so by obtaining a permit as per Section 3.3 of the County Land Use Bylaw.

### **3.0 Environmental Reserves (ER) and Conservation Reserves (CR)**

**3.1** The management of ER and CR lands is intended to protect the natural environment of the reserve lands and surrounding area. They will also be managed to protect human life and property from hazardous environmental conditions (flooding, unstable slopes, etc.) and provide access to lakes and rivers.

**3.2** ER and CR lands will be left in their natural condition as much as possible. The removal of vegetation from ER or CR lands will not be permitted, except where there is a public safety hazard as determined by the County and/or Alberta Environment. Mowing will only occur to control weeds and reduce fire hazards. Removal of vegetation and weed control will be undertaken by the County. Placement of fill material or other yard wastes (grass clippings, tree prunings, etc.) or the removal of any material will not be allowed.

**3.3** Public trails or other uses may be developed on ER and CR lands, at the discretion of the County through a bylaw process and/or Alberta Environment.

**3.4** Motorized vehicles will not be permitted on ER or CR lands unless the County approves a parking lot within the ER or CR lands.

**3.5** In subdivisions along lakeshores and rivers, a limited number of public access facilities, like pathways and stairs, may be permitted to allow safe access across ER lands to the water's edge. The number and location of access facilities will be determined by the County. The access facilities must be built and maintained in a safe and environmentally responsible manner. Stairs and staircases shall meet building code requirements or be certified by a professional engineer.

**3.6** Landings, pathways, walkways, stairs, retaining walls or similar private structures may be accommodated on ER or CR lands if, in the opinion of the County, the structures do not pose a hazard to public safety, impede year-round public access, unduly interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighboring properties, or diminish or threaten the sustainability of the resource. To accommodate the structure the County requires landowners to apply for an Encroachment Agreement or Encroachment License, as directed by the County's DEV-7 Encroachment Agreements/Licenses Policy and/or receive approvals from Alberta Environment.

**3.7** No private access facilities will be permitted on ER or CR lands.

**3.8** Commercial facilities and services will not be permitted on ER or CR lands.

**3.9** The winter storage of docks or boats hoists may be permitted on ER or CR lands, providing the landowner has a Temporary Field Authorization from the Province authorizing the location of the structure. The docks must be clearly marked making

them visible during the winter months. The environmental integrity of ER or CR lands shall not be compromised to accommodate temporary storage locations.

**3.10** ER and CR lands will not be leased under any circumstances.

#### **4.0 Encroachments and Unauthorized Structures on Municipal Reserve Lands**

**4.1** Refer to the County's DEV-7 Encroachment Agreements/Licenses Policy for instances of the unauthorized installation of private facilities and structures such as sheds, fences, gardens, material storage, driveways, and buildings on MR lands.

#### **5.0 Encroachments and Unauthorized Structures on Environmental Reserve Land or Conservation Reserve Lands**

**5.1** Refer to the County's DEV-7 Encroachment Agreements/Licenses Policy for instances of the unauthorized installation of private facilities and structures such as sheds, fences, gardens, material storage, driveways, and buildings on ER and CR lands.

#### **6.0 Undesignated Reserves**

**6.1** Reserve lands in older subdivisions may be known to be community reserve, park, or simply reserve. These designations refer to language that was used in previous legislation prior to 1980.

**6.2** The County can choose how to manage these undesignated reserves with regards to the current definitions of MR and ER.

**6.3** The County of St. Paul will manage and use undesignated reserve lands on an assessment of the reserve parcel relative to the criteria outlined in the Municipal Government Act, as amended from time to time.

**6.4** An undesignated reserve, or portion of a reserve, that encompasses a swamp, ravine, or natural drainage course, or is subject to flooding, or may be unstable will be managed by the County and used as if it is ER. Undesignated reserves adjacent to lakes, rivers, streams, or other bodies of water will also be considered as ER.

**6.5** Undesignated reserve land, or portion of a reserve that is suitable for recreation activities or serve as a buffer between different land uses, or provide an access link, shall be managed by the County as if they are MR.

#### **7.0 Disposal of Reserves**

**7.1** The County values the future potential of reserve lands and may not sell or lease municipal reserve or environmental reserve land except by Bylaw, which will provide the Public an opportunity to comment on the proposed sale or lease.

#### **8.0 New Municipal Reserves**

**8.1** As new subdivisions are proposed, the County can acquire new reserve lands, money in lieu of land dedication, or a combination of land and money. The following policies will guide the County's actions with regards to reserve requirements.

**8.2** In new industrial and commercial subdivisions near towns and summer villages, the

County may require MR land dedication to set aside lands for community and regional recreational facilities. In other industrial and commercial subdivisions, the County may take cash in lieu rather than the dedication of land for MR.

- 8.3** Linear corridors may be taken as MR in industrial and commercial subdivisions to provide connections to adjoining subdivisions, lands or other reserves where a demand for trails or pathways is anticipated.
- 8.4** The County may consider the dedication of MR in a rural residential subdivision where such dedication would serve one or more of the following purposes:
- a) Responds to demand for recreation facilities and services that will benefit the future residents of the subdivision and any surrounding developments;
  - b) Provides land that is suitable and attractive for development of recreation facilities or opportunities;
  - c) Creates interconnected open space that provide trail links to adjoining subdivisions and other lands;
  - d) Protects natural features that cannot be protected by ER such as treed areas;
  - e) Achieves ecological connections for vegetation continuity or wildlife corridors;
- 8.5** Where a residential subdivision is proposed on or near a lakeshore or along a river, the County will require dedication of MR for one or more of the following purposes:
- a) To provide land that is suitable and attractive for development of recreation facilities and opportunities;
  - b) To provide water access;
  - c) To create interconnected open spaces that provide trail links to nearby shorelines, within a subdivision, or to adjoining subdivisions and other lands;
  - d) To protect natural features that cannot be protected by ER; or
  - e) To achieve ecological connections for vegetation continuity or wildlife corridors.
- 8.6** In new subdivisions where MR dedications are being taken, the subdivision developers will be required to build appropriate recreational facilities, as determined by the County such as picnic areas, playgrounds, and trails.
- 9.0 New Environmental Reserves**
- 9.1** The County shall require the dedication of ER in new subdivisions to protect natural features such as shorelines, steep slopes, drainage courses, wetlands, or other water bodies, areas susceptible to flooding, groundwater recharge areas, natural vegetation, and fish and wildlife habitat.
- 9.2** Dedication of ER may also provide public access to lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water and watercourses.
- 9.3** Where possible, the County will ensure that the dedication of new ER is contiguous with existing and potentially new ER lands in order to provide an interconnected



system of open spaces.

- 9.4** The County may require developers to reclaim or remediate lands proposed to be dedicated as ER if the proposed reserve lands are in poor environmental or unsafe condition as determined by the County. The reclamation or remediation work required by the County must be completed before the County accepts the reserve dedication.

## **10.0 Environmental Reserve Easements**

- 10.1** Environmental reserve easements (ERE) are another tool that the County can use for the protection of the environment in new subdivisions. The natural features to be protected are the same as ER (drainage courses, wetlands, etc.). Lands subject to such an easement must remain in their natural condition. However, the lands are retained in private ownership and are not owned by the County as in the case of ER. Easements do not provide public access.
- 10.2** The County will not accept the registration of ERE in new subdivisions or in areas along lakes and rivers where public access to or along the shoreline may be required.
- 10.3** An ERE may be considered to protect environmental features where public access is not required or the environmental sensitivity of the site makes it unsuitable for public use (eg: wetlands). A clear statement on how the site will be controlled and used will be included in the ERE agreement.
- 11.0** Public trails may be developed on MR lands, at the discretion of the County based on the following:
- a) No tress or vegetation can be cleared within 6.0 meters (20 feet) of the edge of a water feature, except to provide pedestrian access up to the edge of the water feature and only to a maximum of 2.0 meters (6.5 feet) of the frontage.
  - b) No removal or destruction of trees or vegetation, or disturbance of soil, is allowed to occur on a Municipal Reserve unless written approval is provided by the Bylaw Enforcement Officer, through the Application for Direct Access Walking Trails on Municipal Reserve.
  - c) The access will only be cleared to a maximum of 2.0 meters (6.5) in width and only for pedestrian access from the edge of the lot of the upland landowner to a water feature. No motorized equipment or machinery can be used to create this 2.0 meter pedestrian access except a chainsaw, which can be used while hand clearing this access.
  - d) The County will perform a pre-inspection of the property where the trees or vegetation will be removed and a post inspection of the property after the work has been performed by the landowner.
  - e) The landowner will be charged a fee as per the Fee Schedule Bylaw, to cover the cost of the pre and post inspection of the reserve lands.

## **12.0 Implementation**



- 12.1 The County will periodically conduct a base line inventory of all reserve lands that identifies the condition of each reserve and any requirements for management actions.
- 12.2 Developments that occur after adoption of this policy will be expected to adhere to this new policy, thereby avoiding new encroachments and unauthorized structures on reserve lands.

Council Approval: July 16, 2013  
Amended: August 12, 2014  
Amended: June 9, 2015  
Amended: November 13, 2018  
Amended: October 12, 2021  
Amended: September 12, 2023  
Amended: June 10, 2025