

Master Plan: History, Present Status, and Future

1.0 Identifying Market Niche⁶

Since the development of the 1997 Master plan, it was identified that there is an advantage to providing a more customer focused approach to facility development.

A marketing assessment was carried out by David Hargreaves & Associates indicating that a focus on children, up to the age of young teens, would have the greatest impact on potential increase in attendance for both those children and their parents. The results of said assessment are summarized below:

The focus on educating and entertaining children is well within the mandate of the John Hanzen Nature Centre and within the capacity of the facility to provide an excelling environment.

Summary of Program Target Groups:

1. Children's Programs

- a. School initiated programs: there are characterized by groups of children arriving to the Nature Centre with a pre-prepared program, consistent with the curriculum taught at certain grade levels.
- b. Spontaneous visits: These visits are characterized by parents bringing children to the Nature Centre and are primarily focused on the exhibit areas of specific programs being offered at a particular time.

The Current availed areas used for children's programs include:

New Exhibit Area: This area was developed in 1999, with exhibits scaled for children of the age group noted previously.

Multipurpose Program Area: Utilized for class discussions and child related activities.

Outdoor Areas: Are utilized for interpretive exhibit material (compost area) and interpretive walks through the trails to the south of the Nature Centre.

2. Adults Users

The current exhibit material is of insufficient depth and technical sophistication to attract adult users into visiting the Nature Centre on their own. The vast majority of adult users arrive with their children seeking a family opportunity.

The majority of use of the Nature Centre by adults is for specific programs run in the multipurpose program area. This involves seminar, lectures, films, slide shows, ect, that are ideal for current usage.

⁶ Adapted from the John Janzen nature Centre Master Plan Update, October 4th, 2001, p. 1.
E2034768.DOC;1

2.0 The John Janzen Nature Centre Completion / Concept Plan 1996⁷

The original Mater Plan program was developed in conjunction with both staff and Board members. Through a series of workshops, a program reflecting the goals of the John Janzen Nature Centre was developed. Areas were developed for activities grouped into the following categories:

1. Exhibits
2. Education and Presentation
3. Visitor Services
4. Administration
5. Exterior Developments

This plan was intended to provide the city of Edmonton and the ENCF with sufficient information that they may commit their support to the development proposals contained within. The plan was designed to expand and revitalize the Centre so that it will continue to be a first class facilities providing a fun, family-oriented interpretive experience where adults and children can continue to learn together and develop a sense of wonder for the natural world that surrounds them. Further, the objectives of the plan were to complete the following:

1. Describe the present indoor and outdoor facilities and exhibits at the Centre;
2. Evaluate these facilities and exhibits;
3. To identify improvements and additions needed to meet visitor needs;
4. To provide a program statement and concept drawings for proposed enhancements;
5. To identify preliminary cost estimates;
6. To prepare a phrasing plan for implementation and;
7. To provide the ground work for fundraising proposals to prospective granting agencies and corporate sponsors.

⁷ Adapted from The John Janzen Nature Centre Completion / Concept Plan, August 29, 1996, p. 10.
E2034768.DOC:1

3.0 The 2001 revision to the 1997 Master Plan⁸

In order to meet the vision of the John Hanzen Nature Centre and upgrade spaces to provide for the needs currently not met, a series of workshops were held with the Project Steering Committee. At this workshop, in 2001, the following recommendation for new and renovated facilities was developed:

1. Existing Exhibit Area

This area was to be revised on an ongoing basis by program staff. The basic layout appears to be acceptable for its current, child focused, use.

2. Existing Multipurpose Facility

This area is acceptable for use by the vast majority of child and adult program use and did not need substantial revision at this point in time.

3. Reception Area Renovations

The reception and staff areas are located in a temporary position in the main corridor and are too cramped for their current function. Recommendations are made to revert the reception counter to the original Master Plan location to the west of the existing main corridor with potential expansion of the gift shop as per the original Master Plan.

4. Administrative Office Addition

There is still a need for a revision of the administrative offices to support both the reception and interpretative function and to provide area for those administrative components that remain at the Nature Centre.

5. Revision of Existing Staff Area to Classroom

The original program called for the construction of the administrative area and then the revision of their office area on the upper lives into a multipurpose classroom space allowing for greater flexibility in terms of use of the facility.

6. New trailhead Orientation and Exhibit Pavilion

The function of this standalone facility remains the same as the original master plan, providing the focal area for both interpretation and group meetings for trails system users.

7. New Children's Indoors Interpretive Play "Discovery Gallery" Area

This is the major change from the originally envisioned "Traveling Exhibit Pavilion" noted in the 1997 Master Plan.

⁸ Adapted from the John Janzen nature Centre Master Plan Update, October 4th, 2001, p. 5-7.
E2034768.DOC;1

The market research has indicated that the development of a child oriented “hands on” play area that also carries elements of natural interpretation would provide an additional benefit to the students and families visiting the facility.

8. New Outdoor Interpretive Playground

A Children’s Playground was originally envisioned in the 1997 Master Plan, however, with the development of the Indoor “discovery gallery” an opportunity exists for both seasonal use of the outdoor playground and a tie-in between indoor and outdoor areas in the shoulder seasons.

9. Food Services Addition

There is currently no venue for visitors to the Nature Centre to enjoy refreshments of food in the facility. As the intent of the Centre is to provide a longer, more enjoyable stay for patrons increasing their satisfaction level in the facility and hence their return rate, this is a necessity.

10. Outdoor Exhibit Developments

Two areas of concern noted in the focus groups and from stakeholders include:

- The exhibits are same year after year and do not require a return visit.
- The physical layout of the facility, with the storage facility as the central focus blocking the view of the exhibits, is problematic.

Suggestions for further development:

- Relocating the storage area to a more subsidiary component and allowing more public walking area through the outdoor exhibits.
- Upgrading some of the exhibits to include the backyard growing scenario for apartments, condos, small houses, and larger homes, allowing new seasonally oriented exhibits to be developed.

11. Special Events Room

The inclusion of the John Janzen Nature Centre into the Attraction Portfolio, allowed for development of spaces for use by both John Janzen users as well as users from the boarder based at Fort Edmonton Park. The program allows for a multi-use area for approximately 250 persons. This could be available for John Janzen Nature Center programs and exhibits. It would also be available for group bookings for programs and events, similar to use of space at Fort Edmonton Park. There is currently no bookable space for a group of this size at Fort Edmonton Park and would therefore provide a valuable resource.

12. Pond and Trail Development

There is currently an upgrade plan for the pond and its natural exhibits along with the connections to the trailhead.

4.0 Concept Development: The Four Phases⁹

The Master Plan outlined four phases of development as follows:

Phase One: New Children's Exhibit Expansion

The entry to the John Janzen Nature Centre was modified to expand the entry area further to the north, eliminating the stair access into the facility and utilizing upgrades to the approach walkways in order to provide full handicap access into the facility at main floor level.

The main entry is also extended to allow access directly back out to the outdoor exhibit area.

Directly to the right of the main entry will be an orientation area allowing for a preview of services and exhibits at the John Janzen Nature Centre.

Directly to the south of the Information/Reception counter will be an expanded gift shop and storage area.

On the east side of the main entry will be located a Visitor Lounge for approximately 20 persons with full vending machine capacity.

The intent of this area is to ensure that the balance between the Exhibit Hall and the Discovery Gallery allows the target market, up to 12 years old, to have a longer and more enjoyable education experience at the nature centre.

Phase Two: New Visitor Services and Administration

The second phase of development was a two story component directly to the west of the proposed new gift shop and reception area. The second story component will be for additional program staff office space.

This will be developed over a main level Special Events Room with capacity for 250 persons. This area can be used for classroom and educational functions of the John Janzen Nature centre, and also can be booked for corporate events, parties, banquets, weddings, ect.

The development of this type of space would assist in incorporating the John Janzen Nature Centre as a major node within the Fort Edmonton environment, which has very successfully incorporated the historical motif with bookable spaces.

Phase Three: Trailhead Exhibit Area / Group Gathering / Classrooms

Phase three incorporated the development of a Trailhead Orientation and Exhibit Pavilion on the east side of the facility. This will provide excellent access to the trail system from both the interior of the facility and as a direct outdoor access point.

⁹ Adapted from the John Janzen nature Centre Master Plan Update, October 4th, 2001, p. 8-12.
E2034768.DOC;1

