

Engagement with Homeowners' Associations as City-Building Partners

(S. Hamilton)

RECOMMENDATION

That the November 10, 2021, Citizen Services report CS00619, be received for information.

Report Purpose

Information only

The Community and Public Services Committee is being provided with information on the ways in which homeowners' associations are engaged in city practices related to parkland projects, enhanced parkland maintenance, and building neighbourly connections.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the April 26, 2021, Executive Committee meeting the following Councillor Inquiry was made:

Can Administration please provide a brief report to Committee, outlining how, and to what extent, the City engages with homeowners' associations as city-building partners?

Executive Summary

- The City of Edmonton partners with and provides an array of services for homeowners' associations, including supporting the establishment of the association, developing parkland infrastructure, enhancing maintenance, beautifying park spaces, and providing licensing and funding for community events and initiatives.
- As the number of homeowners' associations increases, Administration is continually reassessing the way in which it partners with these associations to enhance and maintain parkland and amenities, increase opportunities for animating public spaces, and build stronger relationships with the broader community.

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REPORT

Homeowners' associations provide developers and/or residents within a development a way to maintain or exceed certain architectural standards and/or develop and maintain amenities and services on public land that are above the City's base level development for an area. Several City supports are available to homeowners' associations and can be accessed by contacting the City's neighbourhood resource coordinator assigned to the area or by calling 311 to connect with the appropriate City staff.

Administration enters into temporary agreements with a developer to maintain amenities until the agreement is transferred from the developer to the homeowners' association.

Enhancing Parkland Maintenance

If a homeowners' association is interested in providing services or amenities above the City's base level and beyond those originally created by the developer, it can enter into an enhanced maintenance agreement with the appropriate City department. An enhanced maintenance agreement outlines City service levels and provides guidelines on which services and amenities homeowners' associations can provide on City property (Attachment 1). These agreements are typically for increased mowing, horticultural enhancements, or more frequent garbage collection and are at the cost of the homeowners association. These options provide extra levels of service that are not within the City's operational budget.

Administration continues to increase awareness and efficiency of enhanced maintenance agreement processes. Content for the City's website and improved 311 scripts are in development and will provide developers and residents with greater clarity and faster, more direct connection to the appropriate City staff to create and execute agreements.

Developing Parkland Amenities

The City has two processes for developing parkland and facilities above base-level development, the Community Led Construction Projects process, and the Neighbourhood Park Development Program (Attachment 2). As non-profit organizations, homeowners' associations can access these programs in the same manner as community leagues and other community groups. Playgrounds, spray parks, community gardens, garbage receptacles and dog bag dispensers in on-leash areas are examples of the kinds of amenities created.

The City's neighbourhood resource coordinators support homeowners' associations through the strategy phase of infrastructure development, from the initial contact through developing and obtaining City approval of a business case. Upon the City's approval of the strategy, homeowners' associations are connected to a City project manager who supports them through the concept, design and delivery of the project. If the project is on City land, this includes a requirement to enter into a municipal improvement agreement and parkland maintenance agreement, whereby the homeowners' association is responsible to construct and maintain the amenity. Both the Community Led Construction Projects process and Neighbourhood Park Development Program

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have recently been reviewed and revised, reflecting community input to simplify and streamline processes.

Using and Animating Parkland

Administration supports homeowners' associations with planning and licensing community events on parkland such as fireworks, concerts, and other social and recreational functions. Administration also helps groups obtain City permission for block parties and Play Streets on roadways and create temporary snowbank rinks on parkland, as well as provide licences for roadway events such as food truck festivals.

Building Neighbourly Connections, Inclusion and Informal Care

Administration offers leadership and support for people to connect with one another and establish helping and supportive relationships, activities and networks that enhance neighbourhood liveability and engage effectively with the City. The City also provides funding programs (Community Incentive and Neighbourhood Engagement Funds) that homeowners' associations can apply to for seed funding for community social/recreational events and developing informal care networks. Administration also supports homeowners' associations to establish and sustain the Abundant Community Edmonton program. In addition, homeowners' associations can apply for WinterCity funding that can go towards creating temporary snowbank rinks, freezeways, and winter festivals.

Potential Opportunities

Administration has considered how, within current resources, collaboration with homeowners' associations could be further leveraged. Improving homeowners' associations' awareness of opportunities to collaborate with the City to enhance locally built and social infrastructure is a key component of this strategy. Tools and strategies, including a web page on edmonton.ca, have been initiated.

Potential Concerns

The public may assume that some neighbourhoods are getting a higher level of service over those with base-level service through tax levy funding; however, these enhanced services come at an additional cost to the homeowners' associations. Having an understanding of how a homeowners' association plays a role in a neighbourhood is important and where the association can provide additional value. Neighbourhood residents, with the support of Administration can balance the wants and needs of their communities through a variety of community groups, which may include homeowners' associations, community leagues and school parent associations.

Homeowners' associations have the opportunity to become engaged in neighbourhoods beyond what was initially established through the developer. Activities such as developing parkland amenities for the whole of the neighbourhood, animating parkland, and being involved in enhanced maintenance all contribute to building community and partnerships.

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COMMUNITY INSIGHT

This report incorporates insights from various areas of the City organization that connect with homeowners' associations as it relates to establishing parkland maintenance agreements, support with parkland projects and community funding.

GBA+

Homeowners' associations represent a specific area within a neighbourhood. Many neighbourhoods, particularly mature ones, do not have homeowners' associations. Having a homeowners' association in one area may result in inequity of services to the remainder of the neighbourhood that does not have a homeowners' association. Due to the structure of homeowners' associations and who they serve, a barrier to recreation access may be created.

At this time, there is no standard for who is on the homeowners' association and whether the representation is reflective of the neighbourhood demographics.

Homeowners' associations have the opportunity to apply for community funding. The funding is to benefit the neighbourhood as a whole rather than a select population and encourage community connection as events occur in public open spaces.

The City provides support to all non-profit community groups that are looking to build amenities on public parkland. Inequity may occur where community groups are faced with providing basic needs within the neighbourhood and do not have the time or capacity to go through the park and facility development process.

Enhanced beautification projects such as additional grass cutting and enhanced floral displays, tend to heighten classism and can highlight perceived income inequalities.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Sample Homeowners Enhanced Maintenance Guidelines and Responsibilities Schedule C
2. Overview of Community Led Construction Projects and Neighbourhood Park Development Programs