

## Engagement with Homeowners' Association as City-Building Partners

### Additional Information

#### RECOMMENDATION

That the March 8, 2022, Community Services report CS00619rev, be received for information.

#### Report Purpose

##### Information only

Urban Planning Committee is being informed of Administration's engagement with homeowner's associations around care of parkland, establishing maintenance agreements, and increasing public awareness of City and Homeowner Association service areas.

#### Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 10, 2021, Executive Committee meeting, the following motion passed:

That the Citizen Services report CS00619 be referred back to Administration to provide an update on the ongoing engagement with Homeowners' Associations and progress on enhancing collaborative opportunities, including on issues of naturalization and drainage facilities.

#### Executive Summary

- The City supports homeowners' associations through a number of ways including grant information, enhanced levels of services (at a cost to the homeowners' association), and support of park and facility development projects that service the whole neighbourhood. The parkland use and permits webpage is being updated to make information easier to find on park use and permitting requirements.
- Homeowners' associations are able to contract out for enhanced landscape services on city parkland through a maintenance agreement with the City.
- Types of maintenance agreements vary depending on the enhanced level of service and the location. Around drainage ponds, maintenance agreements can be established for items such as mechanical weeding, pruning, and planting. While homeowners' associations have expressed interest in mowing of naturalized areas, it is currently not permitted in alignment with the City's environmental goals and landscape standards. The

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upcoming naturalization planning project will explore naturalization further and involve future engagement and education for residents.

- In addition, the launch of a communications plan to support the care of parkland will provide education resources, messaging, and contact methods related to parkland management initiatives and operational programs.

## **REPORT**

Homeowners' associations are typically established by developers as 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 for a specific area.

### **City Support to Homeowners' Associations**

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 continually reassesses the way 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.

Residents within communities are sometimes unsure whether to contact the City, homeowners' associations, developers or community leagues regarding questions about structure maintenance and services. The City can provide information on the status of the neighbourhood, including if the land is developer-owned, has come into the City's inventory, or if there is a homeowners' association. Some homeowners' associations provide a map to residents of the areas they maintain. Additionally, the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues provides a community league facility map for the neighbourhoods they represent.

The City's neighbourhood resource coordinators support homeowners' associations by providing the following:

- connection between community leagues and homeowners' associations
- support for parkland-related initiatives that come forward through the park and facility development process and connection to external park and facility development workshops
- promote new grant opportunities as they come available

Since November 2021, Administration has reviewed the process for maintenance agreements and is updating the parkland use and permits webpage to make information and requirements easier to find. Homeowners' associations and other organizations will be able to find information and intake forms on maintenance agreements, parkland licensing, permits and other activities on parkland through the updated webpage.

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### **Recoverable Services on Parkland**

Under a maintenance agreement with the City, homeowners' associations can complete enhanced landscape maintenance on parkland using their own employees, volunteers or contractors. Homeowners' associations and other organizations may choose to enter into an agreement with the City of Edmonton to have City staff provide enhanced landscape services paid for by the external organization. The agreement sets out the hourly rate for the work requested and outlines what work will be done and at what frequency. In some cases, homeowners' associations have used this option prior to putting their own contractor in place for the following season, as it gives the homeowners' associations time to hire a contractor and for the City and homeowners' associations to enter into a maintenance agreement.

### **Maintenance Agreements Related to Areas around Drainage Ponds**

At times, homeowners' associations have expressed a desire to establish a maintenance agreement to maintain naturalized areas around stormwater management facilities, including mowing. Currently, homeowners' associations and other organizations can enter into an agreement with the City to maintain ornamental areas around stormwater ponds, as well as complete mechanical weeding, pruning, and planting in naturalized areas. Mowing naturalized areas is currently not permitted to align with the City's environmental goals and landscape standards. Although naturalization can be associated with budget reduction, there are also a number of environmental benefits that naturalization brings to building a climate resilient city.

Administration is developing a plan that will provide direction for naturalization, restoration and reclamation over the next ten years. This plan will align with the various City plans and initiatives, including the Greener As We Grow priority of The City Plan, the Urban Forest Asset Management Plan, and the Urban Parks Management Plan. Additionally, the plan will align and integrate with the capital planning for the Greener As We Grow project which will identify park, boulevard, natural area, and naturalization tree planting opportunities city-wide to help meet The City Plan and Urban Forest Asset Management Plan tree planting goals.

As this planning project moves forward in 2022, Administration will engage with interested stakeholders and the public to gather feedback on the overall support for naturalization, restoration and reclamation in Edmonton and the City's approach to these initiatives. Understanding of naturalization, restoration, and reclamation will also be assessed from prior naturalization education campaign data, in addition to new survey information. Administration will provide updates and inform the public on ways that residents and organizations, such as homeowners' associations, can get involved in providing feedback on how and where naturalization will occur.

### **General Parkland Care Communications Plan**

Since 2020, Administration has provided information to Edmontonians about how the City cares for parkland and related service levels. Following a 2020 campaign focused on parkland care, the 2021 campaign focused on naturalization and service levels for operations such as turf mowing, horticulture, and weed control. In 2021, Edmontonians received information and support through

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a variety of channels, including traditional media, social media, edmonton.ca, blogs, 311, signage and direct contact with frontline employees.

With a focus on naturalization around stormwater management facilities, the 2022 campaign is currently being developed and is expected to be launched in the spring. It will include education around which lands are under the responsibility of the City and which belong to the respective homeowners' associations.

### **Budget/Financial Implications**

Financial impacts are not anticipated unless the number of queries and work required to provide support to the associations increase significantly.

## **COMMUNITY INSIGHT**

At the November 10, 2021, Executive Committee meeting, Committee and Administration heard that residents were unsure of what parks and open spaces are being maintained by the City, the homeowners' associations, area developers or community leagues. Speakers also indicated that homeowner's associations need a centralized location to find out about the process for maintenance agreements.

At this time, there have been no specific surveys or feedback data that has been collected from homeowners' associations on this topic other than feedback received by Administration. Administration is exploring the feasibility of creating a map of homeowners' association areas and an inventory of homeowner association maintenance agreements to provide easily accessible information and continue to expand the information provided on edmonton.ca.

### **GBA+**

The diversity within Edmonton communities suggests the needs and interests of neighbourhoods could vary significantly from the focus of a homeowners' association. Programming and amenities need to consider equitable and accessible activities for the neighbourhood as a whole.

As naturalization expands, the City continues to focus on equitable maintenance across the city. Neighbourhoods without a homeowners' association may not have the option to pay for enhanced services and enter into a maintenance agreement. When offered as an option, only certain neighbourhoods would have higher mowing services around stormwater management facilities, while others with no homeowners' associations may not have that opportunity. This can impact mature neighbourhoods where there may be no homeowner association available.

Administration provides support and guidance to community groups seeking to build amenities on public parkland. Inequities can occur in neighbourhoods where Edmontonians are challenged to meet basic household needs and do not have the time or capacity to participate on a community league or homeowners' association, fundraise and go through the park and facility development process. Administration will be participating in a learning and

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discovering session to discuss GBA+ and ways to support diverse community groups through the park and facility strategy process in 2022.