

FORMER ST. ANDREW SCHOOL FIELD SITE AND INGLEWOOD OPEN SPACE PRIORITIES

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the April 27, 2022, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01042, be received for information.
2. That Attachment 2 of the April 27, 2022, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01042 remain private pursuant to sections 16 (disclosure harmful to business interests of a third party) and 24 (advice from officials) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Report Purpose

Information only.

Executive Committee is being informed of options for the possible purchase of the former St. Andrew School field site in the Inglewood neighbourhood, as well as an overview of open space priorities for the Inglewood neighbourhood.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the January 19, 2022, Executive Committee meeting, the following motion passed:

That Administration assess and explore options for the possible purchase of the former St. Andrew School field site and report to Committee with an overview of open space priorities for the Inglewood Neighborhood and budget implications.

Executive Summary

- This report provides an open space network assessment for the neighbourhood of Inglewood, including identifying open space priorities to inform possible purchase of the former St. Andrew School field site (11315 128 Street NW).
- The assessment and options provided align with open space program process improvements underway and consider the District Planning goals articulated in The City Plan.

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- Administration's assessment considers both a purchase and non-purchase scenario for the former St. Andrew school field site.
- The former St. Andrew School field site does not have a secured budget for acquisition and, if pursued, would require reallocation of municipal reserve funds away from other identified priorities.
- Development of an equitable open space system that meets current and future needs of Edmontonians is crucial for realizing the Big City Moves identified in The City Plan.

REPORT

In July 2015, the Edmonton Catholic School District (ECSD) declared the St. Andrew School site in the Inglewood neighbourhood surplus to their needs. At that time, Administration determined that acquiring parkland at this location supported greater equity of parkland between the east and west portions of the Inglewood neighbourhood. The Muslim Association of Canada was using the school building to deliver an elementary Islamic school program and a potential City land acquisition would allow students to continue using existing fields and provide additional open space to the surrounding community. With the financial and planning context in 2015, incorporating the property into City inventory to allow for continuity of existing service levels provided a rationale for Administration to acquire the site.

Council approved funding during the 2015-2018 budget cycle to support the acquisition. Discussions with the ECSD focused on the purchase price and were ultimately hindered when the ECSD received a competing proposal, resulting in a price that exceeded Administration's offer and was considered by the City to be above fair market value. As an agreement could not be reached with the ECSD, a decision by Administration was made to discontinue negotiations and the funds were released to accommodate other corporate priorities. Subsequently, rezoning proposals brought to public hearing by the purchaser were declined on two occasions in 2020 and 2021.

Development of an equitable open space system that meets current and future needs of Edmontonians is crucial for realizing the Big City Moves identified in The City Plan. The three related Big City Moves are "Greener as We Grow" by seeking opportunities to expand the City's green network, "A Rebuildable City" by seeking opportunities to enhance existing open space to adapt to changing needs and "A Community of Communities" by seeking opportunities to achieve multiple outcomes in existing neighbourhoods including housing, recreation and climate resilience as part of the City's green network. An equitable open space system aligns with ConnectEdmonton, creating a healthy city where people feel safe, empowered, supported and connected to their community.

Inglewood Open Space Assessment

Edmonton's Breathe: Green Network Strategy provides a framework for supporting evidence-based decisions in regards to the City's open space. The Green Network Strategy incorporates a geospatial database containing an inventory of all the open spaces in the city, and

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accompanying information about function and connectivity. This database informs a comprehensive understanding of the green network and the issues confronting it, and provides Administration with a tool to make integrated, data driven, spatially explicit management decisions about the future of open spaces in Edmonton.

Determining a sufficient amount of open space involves more than a measure of land area alone. The value of the green network depends on multiple factors including the way open spaces are used, the benefits they provide such as space for active and passive play, areas for social gathering and ecological functions and the quantity and distribution available for use.

Breathe examines open space provision with these factors in mind and establishes measures of:

- Supply: the physical amount of open space.
- Diversity: the range of different open space types and functions within the landscape.
- Distribution: the arrangement of, and access to, open spaces across the landscape.
- Quality: the functionality of an open space, considering the condition of its infrastructure/amenities and the value of the functions it provides.

Within the Inglewood neighbourhood there are six existing parks totalling approximately 15 hectares of publicly accessible open space (Attachment 1). Approximately four hectares of this open space are owned by the Edmonton Public School Board on school sites that are publicly accessible but are not included in the City's parkland inventory. The amount of publicly accessible open space amounts to roughly two hectares of open space/1000 population based on the current neighbourhood population, representing about 10 per cent of the overall Gross Developable Area. These values are consistent with provision standards identified in the Urban Parks Management Plan for neighbourhoods developed after 2006. While Inglewood is considered a redeveloping area, the measures are useful as a benchmark to consider overall provision levels.

In terms of diversity of open spaces, Inglewood's publicly accessible open space includes two existing school and community parks, two pocket parks, a future pocket park (0.374 hectares) recently dedicated to the City through the redevelopment of the former Charles Camsell Hospital, as well as a linear greenway that runs north south along the east side of the neighbourhood. The school and community parks provide a number of active sports fields including three soccer fields and four sport diamonds. The Inglewood Community League located on the west side of the neighbourhood provides a range of amenities including a community hall, playground, community garden and supporting amenities. Existing pocket parks provide social gathering space as well as opportunities for passive recreation. The linear greenway supports active and passive recreation and includes spaces for social gathering as well as a dog off-leash area.

Overall, open space is well distributed across the neighbourhood providing residents a diversity of functions including wellness (e.g., playgrounds, off-leash areas, and pathways), celebration (community gardens, community league) and ecology (tree canopy, diversity in vegetation). The majority of residents of Inglewood are within 200 metres of a park site and all residents are within 400 metres of a park within the immediate neighbourhood which aligns with the basic

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commitment of the Approach to Community Recreation Facility Planning in Edmonton - the City's overarching plan to meet community recreation needs. Looking beyond the neighbourhood boundaries, there are an additional 18 hectares of publicly accessible open space within a 400 metre walking distance of the Inglewood neighbourhood. This includes park sites located in Westmount, Woodcroft and Prince Rupert.

A condition assessment of Inglewood's open space was conducted in 2019 to inform Neighbourhood Renewal work and align open space deficiencies with anticipated renewal work. In general, Inglewood's open spaces were determined to be in good condition with deficiencies addressed through and coordinated with Neighbourhood Renewal such as:

- Improvements to the linear greenway on the east side of the neighbourhood including renewal of the existing shared use path, lighting, additional landscaping and seating.
- Improvements to John A. Norris Park on the west side of the neighbourhood including a new pathway, lighting, seating, landscaping and shelter.
- Improvements to Inglewood School Park including new recreational nodes.
- Improvements to Winnifred Stewart Park including new walking connections.

Inglewood Open Space Priorities/Options for Purchase

Rationale in Favour of Purchase

While Inglewood has an adequate supply of open space to meet current needs (based on the planning guidelines detailed in this report), this may change as the city's population grows and additional development occurs within redeveloping areas including Inglewood. The City Plan provides direction to anticipate future population growth in the city's redeveloping areas. Inglewood is bisected by 124 Street and adjacent to 118 Avenue on the north side and 111 Avenue on the south side, all of which are designated primary corridors in The City Plan. Due to the neighbourhood's proximity to those corridors, new growth and redevelopment is expected in the area, resulting in an anticipated density increase over the medium to long term, in support of broader development objectives. Acquisition of open space must balance the need to provide infill opportunities and densification in alignment with The City Plan while preserving and enhancing the open space network for population growth. More information on Administration's long-term acquisition priorities is found in private Attachment 2.

The former St. Andrew School field site represents 0.27 hectares of land. The balance of the site (0.8 hectares) is titled to the Muslim Association of Canada, which runs a private elementary school at this location. The existing school and associated field space is not included as part of Edmonton's Joint Use Agreement and the City is not responsible for the maintenance of the site and existing soccer field. Given the private ownership, neither the former field space or existing school area are included in the calculation of publicly accessible open space within the Inglewood neighbourhood. Acquisition of the former field site would provide benefits to the existing school and allow for the reinstatement of a second soccer field, currently fenced off from the larger

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school park. The additional open space would also provide community benefits of access to parkland. Because the existing school site is privately held, and thus could be sold privately for redevelopment, there is a weaker rationale for providing additional open space to support school programming than there is for publicly accessible sites that are included in the Joint Use Agreement. Acquisition of this property would support community access to parkland, particularly as additional growth is anticipated through infill, as directed by The City Plan.

Rationale in Favour of Status Quo (Not proceeding with the purchase)

The plan in effect, West Ingle Area Redevelopment Plan, does not identify specific open space acquisitions. Inglewood meets current standards for open space supply and includes a diversity of publicly accessible open spaces distributed across the neighbourhood. Existing municipal park sites have seen recent improvements both through Neighbourhood Renewal and community-led park development initiatives.

Another consideration is the amount of publicly accessible open space in the neighbourhood that is not City-owned. Future acquisition opportunities will be considered in the event the Edmonton Public School Board declares existing holdings surplus to their needs. Administration will consider exercising options for purchase of school sites in accordance with the Land section of the Joint Use Agreement should the opportunity arise in the future. Should the Muslim Association of Canada seek to sell their current site in Inglewood, Administration would evaluate options to purchase the larger school property in a similar manner. Additionally, redevelopment opportunities may support further park development in Inglewood. The West Ingle Area Redevelopment Plan provides direction should the existing Baywood Park apartment complex, adjacent to Groat Road at 114 Avenue, be redeveloped, including consideration for a new park area. Administration would further pursue opportunities to collect municipal reserves owing (either as land or cash in lieu of land) as part of any redevelopment.

The land area of the former St. Andrew field site is similar in size to the municipal reserve property acquired through the redevelopment of the Charles Camsell Hospital site. The two sites are within a block of each other and would support similar functions consistent with pocket park development such as unstructured passive and active uses and community gathering. This acquisition, while providing benefits to the Muslim Association of Canada Islamic School, may not significantly enhance resident access to open space nor add to open space diversity within this area of the neighbourhood.

Acquisition of the former school field site may limit the ability to support strategic open space acquisitions in other neighbourhoods where the assessed need for open space is higher and where there is an existing statutory Plan or policy direction to support acquisitions. Neighbourhoods where both conditions apply and where acquisitions are prioritized include Downtown (McKay Avenue), Strathcona (West Ritchie sub-area), Queen Mary Park/Central McDougall (Queen Mary Park, North Edge) and West Jasper Place.

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Budget/Financial Implications

Administration has not secured funding for the acquisition of the former St. Andrew school field site, and would need to secure funds through the City's municipal reserve accounts at current market values. Parkland acquisitions not assembled through land dedication are funded through municipal reserves, namely the Parkland Purchase Reserve and the Funds in Lieu Reserve - Residential. Properties are identified as part of the four year capital budget cycle with adjustments being made during the Supplemental Capital Budget Adjustment process. The balance of the Parkland Purchase Reserve is projected to be \$5.9 million by the end of 2022 and the balance of the Funds-in-Lieu Reserve - Residential is projected to be \$15.9 million by the end of 2022. Projections include estimated land acquisition commitments to be completed during 2022, which may change as opportunity purchases arise. Additional capital and operating funds are required to build and maintain parks following acquisition.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Public engagement efforts consistently demonstrate community interest in preserving and enhancing neighbourhood open space regardless of ownership or statutory plan direction. As such, Administration's default position when evaluating a property used for open space is potential acquisition. Since Administration is frequently bound by acquisition timelines, budget constraints, and competing priorities, community commitment to a particular property cannot always be evaluated with formal public engagement as an input for decision making.

GBA+

A detailed GBA+ process was not undertaken as part of this evaluation. Administration did consider an equity lens as part of the overall assessment of open space in the Inglewood neighbourhood. This review contributes to Administration's understanding of wellness and celebration functions in open spaces, provides a broader perspective on how the needs of specific communities are or are not being addressed, and aligns decision-making with the City's diversity and inclusion goals. This evaluation aligns with the proposed approach presented to Council in January 2022 to include greater consideration of qualitative aspects identified through Breathe to assist with informing open space decision making. Administration will work to incorporate the GBA+ process on upcoming open space acquisitions and to assist in prioritising future acquisition opportunities.

Equity considerations and outcomes included:

- Undertaking an analysis to consider how different elements in the green network contribute to wellness, ecology, and celebration in a neighbourhood. Inglewood's open space network includes a variety of multifunctional park sites contributing to wellness (soccer fields, baseball diamonds, connective pathways); celebration (community league space, community gathering spaces, passive open space supporting community events); and ecology (mature trees, community gardens).

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- Integrating social equity into network analysis to consider open space goals that extend beyond the traditional “parkland adequacy” approach to include diversity, functionality and quality of existing open space. Inglewood’s open spaces provide a diversity of functions and amenities. These include school and community parks that provide space for active recreation and community gathering, smaller pocket parks that provide space for social gathering and passive recreation and a linear greenway that is connected to an active mobility corridor and includes an off-leash area, playground and space for passive recreation. Within each of these spaces, mature trees and diversity in landscape support ecological functions helping to mitigate the urban heat island effect. Existing open spaces have benefited from recent Neighbourhood Renewal work which has contributed to investment in new play structures, pathways, lighting and park amenities (benches, shelters, picnic tables).
- Considering accessibility to existing open space and assessing overall distribution of open spaces both within the neighbourhood and within a 400 metre distance of the neighbourhood. The majority of residents within Inglewood have access to a park site within 200 metres. All residents have access to a park site within 400 metres. Existing park sites are well connected through the neighbourhood and have benefited through recent Neighbourhood Renewal investments.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Inglewood Open Space Network Map
2. Land Acquisition Information (Private)