

What We Heard

Proposed Development Requirements for Parks in Developing Areas

City of Edmonton
Urban Growth and Open Space

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Edmonton

ADVISE

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Introduction: Project Overview

Urban Growth and Open Space conducted targeted stakeholder engagement with members of the land development community in order to gather insights regarding development requirements for parks in developing areas. The feedback gathered from industry will inform a Council Report to be submitted Summer 2023 in response to a Council Motion prompting this work in Winter 2023. The Council Motion asked Administration to provide a report with options and analysis, including conducting stakeholder engagement, that explores opportunities for developer contributions to establish open space amenities, including playgrounds, in developing neighbourhoods.

Administration developed five potential options to be shared with industry in order to better understand how each potential recommendation would impact the development community. Options were scoped in accordance with a jurisdictional scan of comparable Canadian cities including Calgary, Red Deer, Winnipeg and Mississauga.

Public Engagement Approach

The City of Edmonton's public engagement spectrum defines the public's and stakeholders level of influence in engagement processes. **The role of stakeholders during this engagement was at the ADVISE level on the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum** and the land development industry was invited to share their feedback and perspectives on the proposed options. Visit edmonton.ca/publicengagement for more information on the City's public engagement process.



How We Engaged

Online engagement opportunities were made available to stakeholders in the land development industry. A targeted survey was active from April 5 - 25, 2023 and distributed amongst the development community by both The City and The Urban Development Institute-Edmonton Metro (UDI). Stakeholders were also invited to give detailed feedback during online sessions on May 2, 2023 and May 4, 2023. After both methods of primary engagement were completed, a single question summary survey, open from

May 23, 2023 to June 2, 2023, was sent out to all participants asking them to rank the potential options by preference.

The primary survey received responses from 16 industry representatives, the online sessions had a total of 21 participants and the final survey received 11 responses. The total engagement period for this phase of the project lasted from April 5, 2023 - June 2, 2023 and involved a total of 15 different industry participants.

Who We Engaged

Through the online survey, Administration gathered insights from industry representatives including:

- UDI
- Cantiro
- Brookfield Residential
- Cameron Communities
- Qualico Communities
- The Rohit Group
- Classic Landscapes
- Invisitec Consulting

Through the online stakeholder sessions, Administration provided information to and received feedback from industry representatives including:

- Cantiro
- Qualico Communities
- Cutting Edge Landscape
- Brookfield Properties
- Arcadis/IBI Group
- Al-Terra Engineering
- Select Engineering
- The Rohit Group
- Sherrick Management
- WSP
- Melcor Developments

What We Asked

Stakeholders were asked cursory questions about how they typically develop parks and to weigh in on five different options for proposed development requirements for parks in developing areas. In the survey, respondents were prompted to assess their overall level of support for each option. In the stakeholder sessions, respondents were prompted to assess the benefits and drawbacks of each option as well as raise any questions with the project team. Respondents were also asked to rank all potential options in a summary survey released after the final engagement session was complete.

What We Heard

Summary

Overall, respondents expressed the most support for the option that promoted sharing of both costs and responsibilities between The City and developers on an improved base level of park development

i.e. **Cost Sharing & Revised Base Level**. This support was tempered by uncertainty surrounding fiscal management, neighbourhood flexibility, and long-term maintenance. Many respondents also told us that maintaining the current state was important to them. When asked to rank the **Status Quo** compared to other options, the results showed a tie for first place between Cost Sharing & Revised Base Level and Status Quo.

Revised Base Level received moderate support. Respondents overwhelmingly opposed options that required them to provide funds upfront, **Amenity Fee** and **Cash-in-Lieu**, citing project financing issues and a lack of clarity surrounding how the money would be allocated for each park development. **Full Park Development** was also opposed by the majority and cannot be reasonably required through the provisions in the *Municipal Government Act* and has since been removed from consideration.

Detailed Findings

Has your company elected to develop Park Spaces above base level in the last five years?		
Yes: 88%	No: 13%	
<p>The most common amenities above base level are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playgrounds • Seating Areas • Waste Receptacles • Landscape Features (shrubs, trees and flower gardens) • Shade Structures <p>Respondents indicated that their motivations for adding amenities beyond base level were mostly related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing livability of new developments • Marketing/sales benefits tied to amenities 		
Has your company previously used a cost share program, such as the Shared Park Development Program, when developing park sites?		
Yes: 69%	I Don't Recall: 25%	No: 6%

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for each option, as well as note any questions or concerns. Themes and comments were gathered through the online survey as well as engagement sessions.

Full Park Development
<p>The minimum base level requirements for new Municipal Parks will be revised, and developers will be required to fund and develop all required items. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade-level-seed • Trees and shrubs • Trails and lighting • Site furniture

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playground equipment • Sportsfields • Other amenities that will be further defined in the upcoming Urban Parks Management Plan (UPMP) update 		
<p>City Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing detailed provisioning requirements to help identify required amenities for each park site. • No requirement on the City for funding of park development. • Long term maintenance of any required items 	<p>Developer Responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financially responsible for all development costs associated with meeting minimum requirements • Required to fund maintenance until FAC • Responsible for maintenance agreements/maintenance costs for any above minimum required items as determined by the City 	
<p>Survey Results</p>		
<p>Support (Strongly/Somewhat)</p> <p>25%</p>	<p>Neutral</p> <p>6%</p>	<p>Oppose (Strongly/Somewhat)</p> <p>69%</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities benefit from full amenities earlier 		
<p>Drawbacks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns surrounding maintenance of full amenities • Cost burden for developers - consequential impact on housing prices • Park programming less reflective of community-specific needs 		
<p>Additional Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents shared that while there is still ambiguity around what exactly Full Park Development would entail, they are hesitant to support it. • Some respondents felt that this option could lead to inequities amongst developers if one company pays the full cost for amenities that multiple communities use, and therefore multiple developers, benefit from. 		

<p>Revised Base Level</p> <p>The minimum base level requirement for new Municipal Parks will be revised, and developers will be required to fund and develop some items. This revised developer-required minimum could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade-level-seed • Trees and shrubs • Trails and lighting • Site furniture
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Features such as playgrounds, sportsfields, overhead structures, or other amenities would continue to be at the discretion of the developer and may require maintenance agreements.

City Responsibilities

- Fund and develop above minimum required amenities as community needs dictate
- Long term maintenance of the site (excluding items with maintenance agreements)

Developer Responsibilities

- Financially responsible for development costs for minimum requirements
- Option to fund and develop enhanced amenities
- Required to fund maintenance until FAC, may require maintenance agreements for enhanced amenities

Survey Results

Support
(Strongly/Somewhat)

50%

Neutral

13%

Oppose
(Strongly/Somewhat)

38%

Benefits:

- Raises development standard base level while still allowing for developer discretion and neighbourhood flexibility

Drawbacks:

- Concerns regarding the City's capacity to maintain sites at a higher base level
- Raising base level may result in fewer future options for park development
- Higher standard costs could impact housing affordability

Additional Comments:

- There is uncertainty surrounding best practices for future school sites where developed parks may end up being reconstructed once school footprint is finalized. Some comments called for separate rules for school sites to mitigate this issue.

Cost Sharing and Revised Base Level

The City has used the Shared Park Development Program to incentivize park development and could use a similar model in this option. The minimum base level requirement for new Municipal Parks will be revised, and developers will be required to fund and develop some items. This revised developer-required minimum could include:

- Grade-level-seed
- Trees and shrubs
- Trails and lighting
- Site furniture

Features such as playgrounds, sportsfields, overhead structures, or other amenities would continue to be at the discretion of the developer and may require maintenance agreements. If the developer opts to develop items above the required minimum, they can apply to the Shared Park Development (or similar) Program and cost share the development of the park site with the City. This option will allow sites that go above the required minimum to receive benefits such as cost sharing, increased City assistance with approvals, and no Final Acceptance Certificate (FAC) requirement.

City Responsibilities

- Provide funding for and manage a cost sharing program such as the Shared Park Development Program
- Long term maintenance of the site (excluding items with maintenance agreements)

Developer Responsibilities

- Financially responsible for development costs for minimum requirements
- Option to enter into a cost sharing program to fund and develop a site that includes enhanced amenities.
- Required to fund maintenance until CCC, may require maintenance agreements for enhanced amenities.

Survey Results

Support (Strongly/Somewhat)	Neutral	Oppose (Strongly/Somewhat)
63%	13%	26%

Benefits:

- Balances incentives for advanced development with raised base level
- Cost sharing with the City could incentivize further private investment

Drawbacks:

- Recommendations from the 2022 Shared Park Program review report must be implemented to alleviate concerns regarding how the Program was managed in the past such as time delays related to milestone inspections and inspection requirements

Additional Comments:

- There is widespread support for a cost-sharing program that implements recommendations from the 2022 Shared Park Program engagement

Amenity Fee

The City implements a development fee collected in a fund used to support park development including amenities such as playgrounds, sportsfields, etc. The City would use these funds to develop required amenities within the neighbourhood. This will be in addition to the revised developer-required minimum (i.e., Revised Base Level):

- Grade-level-seed
- Trees and shrubs
- Trails and lighting

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site furniture <p>Required amenities will be identified in the revised park provisioning standards (upcoming) and the corresponding statutory plans.</p>		
City Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up and manage the amenity fee fund Construct required enhanced amenities in the neighbourhood Long term maintenance of the site 	Developer Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financially responsible for development costs for minimum requirements Required to fund maintenance until FAC Pay into the amenity fee fund 	
Survey Results		
Support (Strongly/Somewhat) 13%	Neutral 6%	Oppose (Strongly/Somewhat) 82%
Benefits: <i>Respondents did not communicate any benefits for this option.</i>		
Drawbacks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative burden for all parties in relation to financial tracking as well as implementation Inefficiencies in City-led development compared to industry-led development 		
Additional Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some respondents wondered if development above base-level would result in receiving a credit towards the proposed amenity fee Uncertainty regarding the fee structure and how it would impact different kinds of park development is leading to hesitancy for this option 		

Cash-in-Lieu	
<p>The City implements a requirement for developers to pay cash-in-lieu as a fixed portion of their required Municipal Reserve (Example X% in land and Y% in cash-in-lieu totalling 10%). Cash-in-lieu would fund the acquisition and improvement of park sites. This will be in addition to the revised developer-required minimum listed in (i.e., Revised Base Level):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade-level-seed Trees and shrubs Trails and lighting Site furniture 	
City Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and manage a process for handling cash-in-lieu 	Developer Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financially responsible for development costs for minimum requirements

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund and develop enhanced amenities for neighbourhoods • Long term maintenance of the site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required to fund maintenance until FAC • Provide a % of required Municipal Reserve as cash-in-lieu 	
Survey Results		
Support (Strongly/Somewhat)	Neutral	Oppose (Strongly/Somewhat)
19%	19%	63%
Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents supported the idea if there is full transparency and potentially third party fund management 		
Drawbacks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to variance in construction costs in the short term, there is concern that funds collected may not fully cover developed amenities • Upfront contributions, as opposed periodic, can impact project financing and viability 		
Additional Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many respondents noted concern about transparency in relation to ensuring funds and land are used in alignment with the stated purpose • Developers noted that this approach may lead to less overall parkland, although what does exist may be of a higher quality 		

Options Rankings

Through the engagement sessions, The City heard from industry that continuing the status quo should be considered as part of the potential slate of options. Full Park Development was strongly opposed by industry and cannot be reasonably required through the provisions in the *Municipal Government Act* and was removed from consideration. In response, the project team sent out a final survey from May 23, 2023 - June 2, 2023 asking all participants from the engagement process to rank a revised slate of potential options:

- Revised Base Level
- Cost Sharing & Revised Base Level
- Amenity Fee
- Cash-in-Lieu
- Status Quo

After analysis, the average rank for each option was:

1. Cost Sharing & Revised Base Level and Status Quo (tied for first place)
2. Revised Base Level
3. Amenity Fee
4. Cash-in-Lieu

What Happens Next

This engagement report, as well as identified options will be presented to Council for information at the August 29, 2023 committee date. Administration is working to advance implementation work associated with Breathe that includes consideration for park development requirements. Additional industry engagement will occur through planned implementation work scheduled in 2024 and 2025.