

# Estimate of the Operating Costs of Vacant City Properties

## Recommendation:

That the April 12, 2016, Sustainable Development report CR\_3485, be received for information.

## Report Summary

**This report provides a high-level estimate of the operating costs associated with vacant City-owned properties.**

## Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 26, 2015, Special Executive Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide the high level estimate of the operation costs of the vacant 9,300 City owned properties and this information be included in the other Sustainable Development report returning to the April 12, 2016, Executive Committee meeting on the Municipal Development Corporation - super light model.

## Report

### Summary of vacant land inventory (e.g. number, size, location)

To determine the number of vacant City-owned holdings, Administration accessed data from taxation assessment systems. Of the approximate 9,300 City-owned properties, 1,015 are categorized as vacant or undeveloped. Approximately half of these vacant holdings are held for various City programs (e.g. parks, drainage or waste). These properties have not been included because they are used for service delivery and are not considered vacant. The total land area for the 464 remaining vacant properties is approximately 335 acres.

These vacant properties are located primarily in residential areas (75 percent), but some holdings are located in commercial (17 percent) and industrial (8 percent) areas. The vast majority (90 percent) of the vacant City-owned properties are under one acre in size. The remaining vacant properties range between one and three acres (4 percent) and over three acres (six percent).

### Level of Service

City Operations is responsible for general maintenance of City land and delivers services such as mowing, weed control, and garbage control. The level of service provided varies with each site and includes several categories, with vacant lands being

## Estimate of the Operating Costs of Vacant City Properties

maintained at a "C-level", which includes turf maintenance and minor garbage removal. The actual cost of operations varies due to unique attributes such as ease of access, amount of garbage, and the presence of noxious weeds that may require spraying.

This level of service costs the City approximately \$84 per hectare (\$34 per acre) for every service event. C-level service is provided five times per year for a total annual cost of approximately \$420 per hectare (\$170 per acre).

### Costs to maintain

Based on the total area of vacant properties (335 acres) and the cost to service (\$170 per acre per year) noted above, the cost to maintain vacant City land is approximately \$56,950 annually. However, it should be noted that this is an estimated cost only. Actual maintenance costs may vary due to:

- the number of complaints received for each site
- the priority provided to residential areas
- the differing costs associated with sites in residential, commercial or industrial areas.

### **Policy**

*The Way We Grow*, Edmonton's Municipal Development Plan:

- acquire land necessary for City services and operations
- support redevelopment and residential infill that contributes to the livability and adaptability of established neighbourhoods
- optimize the use of existing infrastructure in established neighbourhoods
- provide a broad and varied housing choice, incorporating housing for various demographic and income groups in all neighbourhoods.

### **Attachments**

1. Summary of City-owned vacant land

### **Others Reviewing this Report**

- D. Wandzura, General Manager, City Operations
- R. Smyth, Acting General Manager, Citizen Services
- T. Burge, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer, and General Manager, Financial and Corporate Services