

Council Innovation Fund Application – A Planning Model for Grass Roots Park Space Development in North-Central Calgary

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Priorities and Finance Committee recommend that Council:

1. Approve the Council Innovation Fund Application in the amount of \$100,000; and
2. Direct Administration to report back to the Priorities and Finance Committee on outcomes no later than Q4 2022.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The proposed Council Innovation Fund application sponsored by Councillor Gondek would provide support for Vivo for Healthier Generations (VIVO) and Parks Foundation Calgary to create a strategy model for grassroots park development planning for stakeholders in the north region of the city and an initial project list developed together with these stakeholders (the Council Innovation Fund application is included as Attachment 2).
- **What does this mean for Calgarians?** This would enable residents in the North-Central Calgary area to provide their input into the development of their Parks spaces and deliver a roadmap of proposed projects that would improve those spaces.
- **Why does it matter?** Parks spaces provide citizens a place to connect with nature, one another and themselves, and provide positive impacts to physical and mental health.
- Calgary Parks is supportive of this application recognizing there are some risks that will need to be mitigated during the engagement process.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A healthy and green city
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

North-Central Calgary has a very young, diverse, and growing population. While there are several independent efforts taking place to create new and meaningful outdoor spaces in this part of the city, there is no cohesive, strategic and evidence-based model for working with stakeholders and partners to inform long-term outdoor space infrastructure investment that provides positive environmental and educational benefits.

The funding for this pilot is designated to specifically create an alternative planning process. The City of Calgary's help is needed to fund phase 1 of creating a model with and for stakeholders to plan their community open spaces. This process would also identify a road map for stakeholders to follow to secure funding from sources beyond The City of Calgary to implement any projects identified. Any identified projects being implemented would need to follow and be constructed in accordance to City processes, standards and guidelines and The City would be the ultimate decision maker on how construction is executed and oversight provided.

If the model proves successful, the project methodology could then be applied to other regions of the city with active growth neighbouring existing communities, meaning that the City of Calgary could use this as a "plug and play" tool on a city-wide basis.

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The community planning model for outdoor spaces will include the following elements:

- methodology for identification of stakeholder types and meaningful engagement strategies
- a process and tools for co-creation and engagement with all stakeholders
- roles, responsibilities, and resources
- governance structure for the model
- summary of insights / themes and decision-making criteria for different stages of the project
- evaluation methods and tools used during the project

An initial project list defining and prioritizing specific park space additions, improvements, enhancements in north-central Calgary areas over the next 5-30 years will also be developed.

Further, Parks has a stage-gating process that will be used to steer identified projects from idea generation to implementation – to be clear, identification of a project will not guarantee its implementation.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)

- Public Engagement was undertaken
- Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- Public/Stakeholders were informed
- Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

This report was prepared in consultation with Vivo for Healthier Generations and Parks Foundation Calgary, based on the Council Innovation Fund Application (Attachment 2).

IMPLICATIONS

Social

The development of a strategy model for grassroots park development would foster a sense of community and stewardship for residents in the communities where the model is created and further to all communities where the model could potentially be deployed.

Environmental

This work has a direct impact on the development and use of Calgary's open spaces, and the function that they serve for residents and the environment.

Economic

Processes that support improved open spaces support economic development by contributing to the development of an inclusive, healthy and vibrant community that attracts and retains businesses, and encourages individuals to live, work and play in Calgary.

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Service and Financial Implications

Council Innovation Fund request: \$100,000

The current balance of the Council Innovation Fund is approximately \$2,416,000. This application is a one-time funding request of \$100,000. A detailed budget is included in Attachment 4.

It is important to note that VIVO and Parks Foundation Calgary will support communities in developing these plans and will support fundraising and grant processes with communities to implement the projects identified. Parks' consideration of financial support for upgrades in Park spaces will be entirely dependent on approved budget funding, specifically whether the Leveraged Partnership Program is reinstated for the next business cycle. Other funding opportunities may also arise over time, but no guarantees can be made that City funding will be available to support implementation for any identified projects.

RISK

Undertaking community engagement on the types of amenities that citizens desire to see in their communities and Parks spaces carries the risk that unrealistic expectations will develop with the public that the ideas they share will be implemented in a timely fashion. It is the experience of Administration that communications to community members and groups regarding the parameters of what projects are viable in Parks spaces, along with the availability and timing challenges relating to sources of funding and project delivery is very important to mitigate this risk.

Opening public engagement on community improvements to diverse and passionate residents also carries the risk of the scope of work expanding beyond the mandate intended through this innovation fund request. This project needs to be well-managed and have adequate oversight from Administration to mitigate this risk and to identify projects that are realistically achievable within the parks and open space system serving the region.

Not funding this request would be a lost opportunity to leverage the availability of two high performing City partners that have the resources and skills to bring this project to fruition, which could ultimately lead to better Parks spaces and connection to those spaces for Calgarians.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Previous Council Direction, Background
2. Application for Council Innovation Fund
3. Terms of Reference for Council Innovation Fund
4. Detailed budget
5. North Central community maps
6. Phases and Timelines

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Carla Male, CFO and General Manager	Chief Financial Officer's Department	Inform