

Parks and Open Space Delivery

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A motion arising was approved directing Administration to report back to Council reviewing options for the delivery of park space in Calgary's inner city neighbourhoods, including relevant policy. This report provides analysis on existing policy, as well as case studies that illustrate the various ways that parks are developed and redeveloped in Calgary's inner city neighbourhoods. Several models are examined, illustrating The City's ability to be flexible, creative and responsive in achieving park spaces.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the SPC on Planning and Urban Development recommends that Council receive this report for information.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, DATED 2014 JANUARY 15:

That Council receive Report PUD2013-0715 for information.

Opposition to Recommendation:

Opposed: D. Farrell

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

At the 2013 September 09 meeting of Council, it was moved by Alderman Mar and seconded by Alderman Pincott that Council receive report C2013-0649 for information, and further withhold third reading of Bylaw 68D2013, pending a parking agreement, resolution of the land exchange and adoption of the required amendment to the Beltline Area Redevelopment Plan, and return with a report to Council no later than 2014 January.

At the 2013 July 29 Meeting of Council, it was moved by Alderman Mar and seconded by Alderman Carra that Council adopt Notice of Motion (NM2013-24) directing that Council provide an exemption of Union Square Phase 2 from the application of Guidelines for Parking Structures Under Public Open Spaces.

At the 2013 July 22 Meeting of Council, a motion arising moved by Alderman Carra and seconded by Alderman Mar was approved. The motion arising states "Given the need for high quality park space in Calgary's inner city neighbourhoods, the high value and scarcity of park space, as well as the funding constrained nature of parks management, direct Administration to review current Council Policy governing park interfaces with private interests with the intent of allowing a greater range of options to deliver park space while continuing to protect park interests and mitigate risks, to return to the SPC on Planning and Urban Development, no later than the end of the year."

At the 2013 July 22 Meeting of Council, it was moved by Alderman Mar and seconded by Alderman Keating that Council adopt proposed redesignations located at 1515 8 Street SW,

Approval(s): Stanley, Rollin and Dalgleish, Stuart concur with this report. Author: Hall, Ryan and Caswell, Christy
City Clerk's: (D. Williams)

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916, 918, 920, 928, and 936 16 Avenue SW (Bylaw 68D2013) to accommodate commercial and residential development, and a city park. Third reading was withheld pending a report from Administration regarding the parking and land exchange pursuant to the site.

At the 2008 February 25 Meeting of Council, it was moved by Alderman Colley-Urquhart and seconded by Alderman Mar that Guidelines for Parking Structures Under Public Open Space (CPS2008-13) be approved.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, there has been an increase in the variety of ways parks and open spaces are developed and redeveloped, particularly in some of the established communities where existing open space is limited.

Typically, park redevelopment is achieved with capital funding approved through Council's budget process. Park improvements and/or new open space can also be delivered through negotiations with developers or other third parties on a case by case basis as part of larger redevelopment projects. Where possible, Parks capital budget priorities are aligned with development proposals. Area Redevelopment Plan policies and bonusing mechanisms related to open space enhancements are laid out for specific communities and initiatives such as the Beltline Community Investment Fund and private donations (i.e. through Parks Foundation Calgary) can assist in this regard.

Investigation into current City practices around balancing park interfaces with private interests has revealed limited Council policy providing explicit direction in this regard. Administration has demonstrated a willingness to respond to innovative development proposals, given a lack of formal policy. The following investigation identifies various case studies that illustrate how The City delivers redeveloped park spaces.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Administration has looked at several models and case studies that illustrate various ways in which parks and public realm improvements are delivered in inner city and established communities within the context of the Municipal Development Plan (MDP). These range from City-initiated capital projects to private developments adjacent to city-owned land. The Motion Arising refers to "inner city" park space. For the purposes of this report, Administration has looked at park spaces within the established community typology as defined in the Municipal Development Plan (MDP).

Models and Case Studies

Capital Project delivery, Enmax Legacy Parks Program and CPRIP

Between 2011 and 2013, over 50% of the Parks capital budget, including Enmax Legacy Parks Program funding, was allocated to projects in established communities such as South Calgary, Downtown, Beltline, Hillhurst-Sunnyside, Winston Heights, Spruce Cliff and others. These projects range from park and open space design development plans to community engagement to maintenance and lifecycle to capital construction in all sizes and classes of parks. The

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Culture, Parks and Recreation Infrastructure Investment Plan (CPRIP) process is another key mechanism through which (unfunded) capital projects in need of implementation are identified and prioritized on an annual basis. This allows The City to continually identify and re-prioritize existing and emerging projects potentially aligning them with and leveraging funding from other business units, community fundraising and private developers.

Shared and Strata Park Sites

Haultain Park: In 2006, land use amendment and development permit applications were approved for Union Square Phase 1 which created a private parkade below an existing public park. In doing so, The City was challenged to contemplate park redesign, park maintenance, implications to long term park flexibility, ecological capacity, infrastructure encumbrances, legal agreements including city liability, sale of land, strata subdivision and impact on land value. Though Haultain Park was revitalized through this project, the application highlighted the risks associated with approving privately owned parkade structures below public open space and will serve as a longer term pilot project. Moreover, Council directed Administration to investigate the functionality, sustainability, business opportunities and options for underground parkades in City parks. In 2008, report CPS2008-13 was approved by Council directing Administration to apply the Guidelines for Parking Structures Under Public Open Space. New applications proposing private parking below public open space must meet the guidelines summarized in the Council Policy or require a notice of motion by Council exempting them. A Notice of Motion (NM2013-24), was supported by Council allowing Phase 2 of Union Square (LOC2013-0060) to proceed with phase 2 of the private parkade structure below Haultain Park. Parks will continue to monitor Haultain Park for long term sustainability and develop expertise on this type of park.

Enoch Park and James Short Park: One of the other mechanisms through which The City delivers park space in urban areas within established communities is through partnerships with other business units. Enoch Park is a new park plaza located above the LRT Right of Way (ROW) in the Beltline, offering residents and businesses a park in an area that is deficient. Similarly, James Short Park is a plaza park constructed over a parkade owned and operated by the Calgary Parking Authority in the Downtown. It is worth noting that these latter examples represent parks on non-park sites (the LRT and parkade are the primary function of the land) whereas Haultain was historically a park that was redeveloped to accommodate a development project.

CBE Family of Man: The CBE Family of Man site was and continues to be privately owned. In 2009, a Direct Control (DC) land use was approved by Council allowing for greater density on the site in exchange for the preservation of the open space and the existing statue art. The DC district includes a number of design criteria for the open space in order to ensure the area is a transparent, safe, accessible space for public users. As part of the overall redevelopment of the site, the privately owned publicly accessible open space will be redeveloped to a high design standard. The intent is that the site function as a highly decorative show piece park with numerous horticultural and landscape features.

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ARP Model

Blakiston Park, Brentwood: Blakiston Park was constructed in 1960, and has functioned mainly as a passive park. Development interest surrounding the LRT station spurred the Brentwood Station Area Redevelopment Plan to provide planning and urban design policies for the redevelopment of the lands, including Blakiston Park. The Brentwood Plan provides urban design policies to create suitable interfaces between future development and the park. Similar to the Beltline ARP, the Brentwood Plan provides density bonusing mechanisms designed to create better public spaces. Density bonusing is provided for both privately owned but publicly accessible open space as well as for monetary contributions to a Community Enhancement Fund. Funds collected can be used to pay for capital improvements to parks and a variety of other local improvements. Decisions around the allocation of the fund are made by a committee with representation from the community, the developer and The City. Through negotiations in the development process, the developer also voluntarily dedicated Municipal Reserve in a location that additionally benefited the existing park.

Bow to Bluff Corridor, Hillhurst-Sunnyside: A series of small triangle parks were created from residual land when the LRT was built through the existing neighbourhood in 1980s. In 2011, a citizen-initiated engagement process identified that these parks were underutilized. As a result, an urban design framework was developed to guide public realm improvements. The Hillhurst-Sunnyside ARP was amended to recognize the *Bow to Bluff* parks among bonus items that qualify for a Park Improvement Fund. Development contributes to the fund in exchange for bonus floor area above the base level density. This project shared the resourcing of public realm improvements between a significant volunteer effort, hired consultants and City staff.

Chinook Centre, Meadowlark Park: The Chinook Station Area Plan was amended in July 2013 due to an owner-initiated land use redesignation to accommodate additional residential and commercial development on the Chinook Shopping Centre site. No City-owned park space currently exists in this location. Therefore, policy was created which required a minimum amount of open space on the shopping centre site. The open space created in this scenario would be privately owned and maintained, but accessible to the public. In addition, urban design policies were also created to ensure a suitable interface between the existing shopping centre, new buildings, and new public spaces. The Chinook Plan, and several land uses within the station area also contain bonusing options identical to those of the Beltline and Brentwood.

Stadium Shopping Centre, University Heights: The Stadium Shopping Centre Area Redevelopment Plan includes open space policies that address park and open space in a variety of ways ranging from requirements for the protection of existing open space adjacent to the development, requirements for the provision of privately owned but publicly accessible open space as part of the overall site's design as well as more flexible policy direction around interface treatments and building form in relation to public realm and open space.

JUCC

The Joint Use Coordinating Committee (JUCC) is a tri-party committee with representation from The City, The Calgary Board of Education and The Catholic Separate School Board. It oversees most aspects relating to the planning and dedication of land designated as Municipal Reserve

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(MR), including school sites, in accordance with the Municipal Government Act. One of its many responsibilities is to allocate funds from the Joint Use Reserve Fund, which consists of monies collected in lieu of MR land, for the purpose of open space and park acquisition. Priorities are determined by the Committee and have included sites in established communities deficient in open space.

Other Tools and Models

SPUR, Kingsland: Through an Innovation Fund grant, The Supporting Partnerships for Urban Reinvestment (SPUR) pilot project was completed in Kingsland in 2013 and helped fund a variety of small scale infrastructure improvements, including the improvement of park spaces. Funding for these improvements was a combination of SPUR funds, in-kind donations from other business units, and 'sweat equity' from volunteers. In communities where modest improvements can realize significant resident support, this type of program can be very successful.

Business Revitalization Zones (BRZs): Commercial districts with BRZs offer Calgarians an opportunity to experience an enhanced public realm. Costs for upgraded park maintenance and services are shared by Business Revitalization Zones (BRZs) and The City (Parks) through agreements. For example, the flower baskets along Stephen Avenue are provided seasonally and cost shared with the Downtown BRZ. This is an example of how an urban space can be improved through an alternate funding source. While Stephen Avenue is not technically a "park space", this model could be used with existing or new BRZs for park space improvements.

Not-For-Profit Organizations, Parks Foundation Calgary: Communities interested in building a new playground or redeveloping an existing one can work through the Parks Foundation Calgary, which assists in funding such projects. Parks Foundation Calgary grants have contributed to improvements within parks such as new playground equipment, benches and pathways. Typically, the Parks Foundation Calgary works with its project funding donors (including The City), often acting as the project manager.

Conclusion

Parks are redeveloped and improved in a variety of ways in Calgary's established communities. Typically, park redevelopment is achieved with capital funding approved through Council's budget process. Alternatively, park redevelopment can be achieved through negotiated arrangements with developers or other third parties on a case by case basis. There is a challenge in identifying real estate opportunities for park purchases and being able to act in a timely fashion. Where possible, Parks' capital budget priorities and redevelopment opportunities are aligned with development proposals to facilitate park and open space improvements in areas of greatest need. Area Redevelopment Plan policies and bonusing mechanisms, as well as initiatives such as SPUR and the Parks Foundation Calgary also assist in this regard. Approaching each park redevelopment scenario as a unique design exercise allows us to be more responsive to specific community and developer needs while recognizing The City's need to be fiscally responsible. This approach has been successful and will continue to be used in the future as new scenarios present themselves.

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Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

A review of internal policies and practices was undertaken by Land Use Planning and Policy and Parks.

Strategic Alignment

This report aligns with Council's Fiscal Plan for Calgary 2012-2014:
"Investing in great communities and a vibrant urban fabric".

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Social

Parks enhance spaces for people to gather as well as define the character and history of the established communities.

Environmental

Parks green spaces add to the environmental quality of the city through urban canopy, wildlife and bird habitat.

Economic (External)

Providing parks and open spaces contributes to vibrant communities that attract and retain residents, visitors and businesses.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

None.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

None.

Risk Assessment

Not applicable.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

Council requested an overview of current policy and practice pertaining to the delivery of park space in inner-city neighbourhoods.

ATTACHMENT(S)

None