

**Infrastructure Services Report to  
Infrastructure and Planning Committee  
2024 June 12  
Legacy Parks Program Update**

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**ISC: UNRESTRICTED  
IP2024-0317**

**PURPOSE**

This report provides an update to Council on the Legacy Parks Program, including historical, current, and potential future projects.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION**

All further discussion and direction on the Legacy Parks Program be directed to the Infrastructure and Planning Committee (Attachment 1).

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Infrastructure and Planning Committee recommend to Council:  
1. That they received this report for the corporate record.

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING COMMITTEE,  
2024 JUNE 12:**

That Council receive this report for the Corporate Record.

**CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS**

General Manager of Infrastructure Services, Michael Thompson supports the recommendations in this report.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Created in 2003, the Legacy Parks Program has been instrumental in helping Calgary build a legacy of treasured parks.
- Since 2003 approximately \$177.5 million in Legacy Parks Funds have been invested in Parks, equating to 43% of the capital budget for destination parks.
- Funding from the Legacy Parks Program has contributed to improved destination park access for over 30% of households in Calgary.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, unprecedented park use was seen throughout The City as residents turned to parks to maintain their physical and mental health. The ongoing need to invest in parks and open spaces is essential for Calgary's future.

**DISCUSSION**

Council created the Legacy Parks Program in 2003 and since its inception it has been instrumental in helping Calgary build a legacy of treasured parks. The program helps to create new park spaces and redevelop existing ones for the benefit of Calgarians, now and into the future. During the COVID-19 global pandemic, unprecedented park use was seen throughout The City as residents turned to parks to maintain their physical and mental health. The ongoing need to invest in parks and open spaces is essential for Calgary's future.

Since 2003 approximately \$177.5 million has been invested in destination parks through the Legacy Parks Program, equating to 43% of the capital budget for destination parks. The Legacy

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Parks Program has enabled the development of seven new parks (four of which are being completed in this business cycle), 12 park upgrades and enabled the purchase of land for five parks. A map of the projects and acquisitions funded by the Legacy Parks Program is provided as Attachment 2. The Legacy Parks Program has contributed to improved destination park access for 175,000 households, or over 30% of households in Calgary.

Destination parks typically have many amenities, are multi-functional, and people will spend at least 20 minutes or more there. Research has shown that spending 20 minutes in nature provides health benefits from the additional physical activity but also in improving overall well-being.

Administration has several level of service targets that aim to ensure Calgarians have access to parks and open spaces:

- Provide all Calgarians with access to a destination park within 5 km or a 10-minute drive. A proximity analysis of destination parks is displayed in Attachment 3 showing which communities have this level of service. The projects that are currently in flight will allow Administration to meet this target, however, as the City expands and builds out the approved communities, more destination parks will be required.
- Provide 10 percent of open space per community, in alignment with the Municipal Development Plan.
- Provide two hectares of park space per 1000 people in most of the City. Downtown and the Beltline have a target of one Ha/1000 people.
- The infrastructure within a destination park requires replacement or upgrading after its useful lifecycle. Existing parks may also require total redevelopment based on growth or changing needs of the population. For these reasons, we aim to lifecycle destination parks every 25 years, and complete a major renewal every 50 years to meet changing citizen demands.

To achieve the targets identified, Administration foresees a continued required investment in destination park programming beyond 2025. A portfolio of projects which Administration will be seeking future funding requests for are identified in Attachment 3.

## **EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public engagement was undertaken        | <input type="checkbox"/> Dialogue with interested parties was undertaken                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public/interested parties were informed | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public communication or engagement was not required |

The level of communication and interested party engagement is assessed for each project within the program and completed as needed.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Social**

Access to multi-functional parks and open spaces that provide spaces for socializing along with active and passive recreational activities contributes to the overall health and well-being of

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Calgarians. The Legacy Parks Program uses equity, accessibility and inclusion as one of the eligibility criteria which creates a sense of belonging to local community and supports Council Guiding Principles to build strong communities and deliver the right services. This program also supports improvements that are used for education and that have cultural significance. Spending time outdoors reduces stress and anxiety, increases social interactions and boosts mood, all contributing to improvements in the mental health of Calgarians.

### **Environmental**

Healthy and connected natural areas support biodiversity and environmental resiliency. The Legacy Parks Program can support the acquisition of natural areas as part of destination park provision to bolster the ecological network and increase access to natural areas for Calgarians. Tree stands, prairie grasslands and wetlands are significant elements of these areas which will contribute towards The City's tree canopy and naturalization targets in the Municipal Development Plan and Our BiodiverCity strategy.

### **Economic**

Parks and open spaces add to the vitality of our neighbourhoods and the downtown core, are a catalyst for external investment and provide opportunities for events and other commercial activities.

### **Service and Financial Implications**

#### **Existing capital funding - base**

- 2023-2026 Parks and Open Spaces Capital Budget is \$96.4 million, additional funding of \$18 million approved in November 2023 for the Park and Playgrounds Amenities Program (to be used to provide local park upgrades and amenities)
- 2023-2025 Legacy Parks Program approved funding \$68.13 million. A portion of this funding is being used to complete the projects identified in Attachment 3.

### **RISK**

Although capital projects for parks and open spaces may be completed through other programs, the Legacy Parks Program has been instrumental in the expansion, protection and enhancement of Calgary's world class parks and open space system. Discontinuing the program may result in a decrease in high-quality, equitable parks and open spaces that Calgarians value, which may have an impact on the mental health of Calgarians.

### **ATTACHMENT(S)**

1. Attach 1 – Previous Council Direction IP2024-0317
2. Attach 2 – Legacy Parks – Past Projects 2003-2023 – IP2024-0317
3. Attach 3 – Legacy Parks – Current and Future Projects – IP2024-0317

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4. Attach 4 – Presentation – IP2024-0317

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Michael Thompson	Infrastructure Services	Approve
Doug Morgan	Operational Services	Inform
Kyle Ripley	Operational Services	Approve
Kerensa Fromherz	Infrastructure Services	Approve
Francois Bouchart	Infrastructure Services	Approve
Les Tochor	Corp. Planning & Financial Services	Consult

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