

BACKGROUND

Council approved the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan (POSMP) in 2017 as a strategic level roadmap to help guide the planning, management and investment for the City's parks inventory over the next 25 years.

Council approved the Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) in 2013. This plan provides guidance on the management and enhancement of urban trees throughout the city. There are 26 recommendations relating to trees on public and private lands, to be completed over the next several decades.

Council approved the Growing in the City initiative in 2016 to guide City support for community gardening and small-scale urban food production.

In May 2017, as part of the approval of the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan, Council asked staff to report back on the "progress of implementation of priority actions identified in the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan, Urban Forest Master Plan and the Growing in the City initiative." This report represents the first annual progress update.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan (POSMP) and Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP) guide not only the work of the Parks division, but also aid the detailed consultations involved in other projects such as the City's neighbourhood planning process and consideration of new development proposals that impact parks, trees or other green spaces.

There are a total of 55 actions in the POSMP and in the first year of implementation, staff commenced work on 40% of these. Some of the actions highlighted for Council include:

- Raynor Park Playground and Pathway Improvements
- Cecelia Ravine Park Improvement Plan
- Topaz Park Improvement Plan
- Public Realm Improvements Along Dallas Road/Clover Point
- Parks Condition Assessment
- Parks Signage Strategy
- Sport Court Improvements
- Reeson Park Pathway Improvements
- Young Tree Care Program
- Renewal of the Park Furnishing Dedication Program
- Collaboration with Partners on Sport Events and Hosting Proposals

The Urban Forest Master Plan outlines 26 recommendations to help achieve the vision for the city's urban forest. In 2017/2018, progress towards eight of these recommendations was made. In July, a second Tree Preservation Coordinator will join the department to provide oversight support for the tree permit review process, as well as utility and development reviews. The new position will also allow an increased focus on key actions from the Urban Forest Master Plan, including drafting tree preservation bylaw updates.

The 2017/2018 Annual Report attachment outlines a full description of our progress over the last year in realizing the goals, guiding principles and actions outlined in our strategic documents.

Balancing accessibility considerations with pollinator habitat

In November 2017, Council directed staff to work with the Accessibility Working Group and Urban Food Table and to report back, in the context of the POSMP annual update, on options for balancing accessibility considerations with pollinator habitat, including in the vicinity of playgrounds.

Staff met with the Accessibility Working Group (AWG) and Urban Food Table (UFT) in a joint meeting in March 2018. Valuable information was exchanged by both groups including reference tools that can be utilized to inform planning and maintenance work that considers potential negative impacts associated with pollinator habitat.

Representatives from AWG offered feedback regarding the potential for barriers to use for residents with allergen sensitivities and presented information on the rise of allergies and asthma rates. Resources were also offered to staff for consideration when reviewing plant species options, particularly the pollen characteristics.

The Urban Food Table discussed the importance of pollinators to plant growth in general, with a particular emphasis on those which produce seeds and fruit. The UFT representatives outlined the potential impacts to food systems with a decline in pollinators, given that approximately 70% of crops require or benefit from pollinators. The types of plants and their pollinating mechanisms (e.g. wind-borne, flowering, etc.) and the related impacts on allergies, were also reviewed.

Balancing accessibility considerations with pollinator habitat is a complicated task given the numerous variables at play in the outside environment and the relatively limited ability to control all sources of allergens. The characteristics of Victoria's natural ecosystem must be taken into account. For example, deciduous oaks such as Garry Oaks, are high on the allergy index scale and yet are a critically important part of the City's natural ecosystem. Despite some obvious challenges, there are actions that the City can take in an effort to balance these accessibility considerations with the management of the City's natural habitats.

Public Education

Representatives of both the Urban Food Table and the Accessibility Working Group have offered assistance to develop resources for the public, including information materials that can be shared through a variety of media (i.e. website, signage). This effort to raise awareness among the residents about allergen considerations and pollinator plants in the public realm will begin immediately.

Plant Selection

Staff have also identified a benefit in developing a reference list for staff that identifies low allergen plants that are sensitive to Victoria's natural ecosystem. This list will be used by Park Planning and Operations staff and shared with community groups when developing community pollinator gardens. Consideration will be made to low allergen plants in the development of park improvement projects including in the vicinity of playgrounds.

Staff will continue to engage with both AWG and UFT on this important aspect of the City's stewardship of public spaces for the enjoyment of all citizens.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Accessibility Impact Statement

The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan includes a guiding principle to increase the accessibility of the parks and open spaces system by considering a broad range of accessibility issues at the outset of all park planning and design projects.

2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan

Progress on the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan, the Urban Forest Master Plan and Growing in the City initiative, helps the City advance towards our strategic objective of enhancing and stewarding public spaces, green spaces and food systems.

Impacts to Financial Plan

There are no impacts to the 2018 Financial Plan with this report.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

This annual report in concert with our guiding documents helps us make progress on several key goals and objectives in Section 9: Parks and Recreation.

CONCLUSION

The Parks and Open Spaces 2017/2018 Annual Report provides a summary of the progress made towards the City's strategic goals and objectives. Staff will continue to incorporate information and metrics into the City's Quarterly Reports and Annual Financial Report, in addition to the POSMP annual report.

Respectfully submitted,



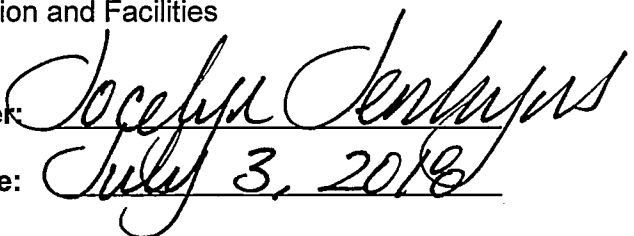
Nav Sidhu
Assistant Director,
Parks, Recreation and Facilities



Thomas Soulliere
Director,
Parks, Recreation and Facilities

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:


July 3, 2018

List of Attachments

Appendix A: Parks and Open Spaces 2017/2018 Annual Report