Executive Policy Committee Meeting Agenda – January 20, 2021

Re: Complete Communities Agenda Item 8

Presenter – Pam Lucenkiw, Co-chair, OURS-Winnipeg

Good Morning

I am speaking to park protection and development policy for the Major Open Space section of Complete Communities.

We are losing greenspace

The pandemic made it clear that our relationship with nature has a direct bearing on our well-being.

6% of Winnipeg's total area is parkland compared to an average of 9% for other Canadian cities. Winnipeg lags behind other Canadian cities in the amount of natural areas it has within its parks with 33% of natural area compared to 44% for Canadian city average. (Park People report)

Toronto, Canada's largest city with 13% of its land area as parkland has a Parkland Strategy with a long term vison to increase park space for its growing population.

In the City Planning Documents the new designation for Major Open Space is inviting and enabling to development on the largest parks and golf courses, including river corridors, natural areas and forests.

The City is losing potential green corridors, parks and forests bit by bit by not acquiring new land.

Major Open Space Policy will contribute to loss of parkland. (Golf lands are zoned PR). The ad hoc acceptance of development applications, large and small over the 25-year duration of the Plan will result in a cumulative loss of parkland.

The exemption for converting one acre parcels of park to development without limits presents an appealing option for development. It is not clear what the limit of every five years refers to. Cumulative loss of parkland over time would be significant. These spaces would require parking and access routes.

Lack of Protection for Greenspace

This plan does not offer strong protection for greenspace and natural areas. Instead it is policy for development of Major Open Spaces.

Without an overall plan, Secondary plans and small "exemption" plans would shape hoc development. Natural areas protection would be ad hoc as it would come into effect when there is a large development plan.

There are no limits or guidance as to how large or how many proposals Council will approve for conversion to development and consequently how much greenspace will be lost or protected.

The organization of the Complete Communities Draft separates Parks and Recreation, Major Open Space and Riverbanks among three sections compromising a holistic environmental perspective for protection and connectivity.

The emphasis of natural area protection in Major Open Space is worthy. It is not clear if protection includes turf grass, a large component of parks. Turf grass areas contribute to climate change adaption, health benefits and biodiversity and could contribute more if naturalized.

Due to their size and location Major Open Spaces contribute substantially to our city and are accessible to neighbourhoods where densification is planned. They improve mental and physical health, provides climate adaption services and benefit children's outdoor play .

What can be done?

MOS should receive protection because of sound park planning policies and not because they have secondary plans.

- The policies for natural area and tree preservation put forward for secondary plans in MOS should be for all secondary plans.
- Land Dedication must be increased to prevent ESNL land from being developed. River/wildlife corridors such as at the old Southwood golf course and along the Seine River require added protection beyond minimum.
- Strong policy language is used for protection in Employment Lands which "prohibit" conversion to residential uses. The Plan could set targets for greenspace like those used for intensification.

Plans that support protection and enhancement of greenspace and city planning must be completed

- Climate Adaption and Resiliency Strategy must be funded.

- Biodiversity Plan – (Appendix A) Canadian cities are moving ahead with plans to protect their natural heritage. In 2016, Calgary formally joined Local Action for Biodiversity, an international program to improve biodiversity planning and management. Montreal and Edmonton joined. Toronto's Biodiversity Strategy, "biodiversity is essential to the health and livability of cities and cities have an important role to play in protecting and enhancing biodiversity."

- Naturalization Guidelines such as Calgary has would save maintenance costs, support biodiversity and contribute to climate adaption

- Wildlife Passage Engineering Guidelines prevents animal/car collisions and protects biodiversity and guidance for construction projects

- Breathe, Edmonton's Master Plan for Greenspace (174 pages) "Breathe" has four pages (p.11-14) of policies and plans from Federal, Provincial and Municipal levels of government that provide guidance. Plans have evolved over 20 years. Pages of stakeholders, funding plans and more.
- Consider nature base solutions (Appendix B) as Calgary and Edmonton have. (Appendix C)

A quote from the World Health Organization, European Division Urban Green Spaces: A Brief for Action" – 2017 (Appendix D)

"Local authorities are responsible for protecting and maintaining existing urban greenspaces".

Appendices

Appendix A Biodiversity

- 2019 report from the United Nations highlighted the unprecedented rate of nature's decline, at a rate "never before seen before in human history". The Report also suggests that it is not too late to make a difference but we need to start now at every level from the **local** to the global.
- 2021- 2030 is the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration "Green spaces need to be placed at the heart of urban planning."

Appendix B

Nature Based Solutions https://www.naturebasedclimatesolutions.ca/ Nature-Based Climate Solutions Summit, Feb 6, 2020. The final summary reports for the Nature-Based Climate Solutions Summit are now available for download

Appendix C

Building a Climate Resilient City, Nine reports on Climate Change Adaption in Calgary and Edmonton, http://prairieclimatecentre.ca/publications "Investing in urban ecosystems and green infrastructure can provide lower-cost solutions to multiple challenges when compared to traditional infrastructure solutions."

Appendix D

World Health Organization, European Division Urban Green Spaces: A Brief for Action" – 2017

https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/urban-health/publications/2017/urban-green-spaces-a-brief-for-action-2017#:~:text=Urbanization%20results%20in%20an%20increasing,in%20urban%20settings%20by%202020.

Many urban areas face increasing pressure from expanding populations, limited resources and growing impacts of climate change. These challenges must be addressed in order for cities to provide healthy and sustainable living environments.

1. Urban greenspaces provide multiple benefits and constitute a necessary feature of healthy cities.

2. The benefits of urban greenspaces can be maximized through adequate planning, design and evaluation.

3. Local authorities are responsible for protecting and maintaining existing urban greenspaces.

Green spaces and other nature-based solutions offer innovative approaches to increase the quality of urban settings, enhance local resilience and promote sustainable lifestyles, improving both the health and the well-being of urban residents. Parks, playgrounds or vegetation in public and private places are a central component of these approaches and can help to ensure that:

urban residents have adequate opportunities for exposure to nature;

urban biodiversity is maintained and protected;

environmental hazards such as air pollution or noise are reduced;

the impacts of extreme weather events (heatwaves, extreme rainfall or flooding) are mitigated;

the quality of urban living is enhanced;

the health and well-being of residents is improved.