Minutes – Council – December 12, 2024

Minute No. 64
Report – Standing Policy Committee on Community Services – November 28, 2024

Item No. 1 Winnipeg Parks Strategy Biennial Update - 2024

COUNCIL DECISION:

Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services and adopted the following:

1. That this report be received as information.

2. That 4.0 FTE's recommended by the Parks Strategy be referred to the 2025 Budget Working Group for consideration.

3. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Community Services – November 28, 2024

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Santos,

That the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services be adopted by consent.

Carried

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On December 4, 2024, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services and submitted the matter to Council.

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On November 28, 2024, the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service, with the following amendment:

- Add the following new Recommendation:

  "2. That 4.0 FTE's recommended by the Parks Strategy be referred to the 2025 Budget Working Group for consideration."

and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

The following persons submitted communications:

- David Grant in opposition to the matter
- David Green, Co-chair, OURS-Winnipeg, in support of the matter
- Erna Buffie, Trees Please Winnipeg, with respect to the matter

COUNCIL DECISION:

On May 26, 2022, Council adopted the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Community Services, which included the following:

6. That the Public Service be directed to provide biennial updates on the implementation of the Actions Matrix, attached as Appendix D.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Winnipeg Parks Strategy Biennial Update - 2024

Critical Path: Standing Policy Committee on Community Services

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
D. Domke	J. Berezowsky	T. Graham	S. Armbruster, Interim CAO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Winnipeg Parks Strategy was adopted on May 26, 2022. The strategy provides a critical understanding of the parks system, the services parks provide, and a framework for decision making. It also outlines an implementation plan for the completion of 90 specific actions within 25 years.

Through adoption of the strategy, the Winnipeg Public Service was directed to provide biennial status updates. This is the first in an ongoing 25-year series of status reports. It provides an overall snapshot of progress on implementation and also summarizes highlights, challenges, and next steps. The next report will be received by the Standing Policy Committee no later than December 2026.

Highlights include:

- Completion of five actions including:
    - Development Agreement Parameters
    - Park Development Guidelines and Park Design Standards
    - Winnipeg Comprehensive Urban Forest Strategy
- Progressing 34 actions are in various stages of implementation

Challenges and next steps are intrinsically linked, as many impending actions require additional funding.

The Parks Strategy was submitted alongside a 10-year investment plan. The $162 million investment plan was referred to Budget 2024 and has been partially funded in the current Multi-Year Budget. However, $126 million remains unfunded, which challenges initiating or completing many items. This includes five positions with capacity to address multiple needs associated with partnerships, agreements, knowledge management, and naturalization. Those positions remain unfunded at this time and the associated actions remain undeliverable.

Overall, 56 percent of the Action Items are outstanding while 44 percent of actions are either complete or have been actively initiated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On May 6, 2022, the Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services, and Parks directed the Winnipeg Public Service to provide biennial updates on the implementation of the Winnipeg Parks Strategy.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

As this is a status update, there are no direct implications to receiving it as information.

It is, however, important to note:

- Work to implement the Parks Strategy will continue. Some actions are underway and can be completed within the resources provided in the 2020-2023 Multi-Year Budget.

- Many outstanding short- and medium-term actions are directly associated with incremental program funding and/or capital funding; others require some form of growth in program capacity to supplement existing resources.

- These needs were recommended alongside the Winnipeg Parks Strategy and further referred through the Budget 2024 process. The 4.0 FTE's recommended by the Parks Strategy have not been funded at this time and only 22% of $162M in referred capital has been budgeted, with many capital programs remaining completely unfunded (Appendix B).

- It is also important to note that only the short and medium-term capital needs (10-year) and incremental program resources were identified in these budget referrals. The 25-year scope of the Parks Strategy includes long-term actions that will need to be scoped and brought forward in future budget referrals.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

Background

No formal plan and guidance for the City's parks system was in place prior to the development of the Parks Strategy. In Budget 2016, $300K was allocated to Community Services to develop a master plan for recreation needs and community recreation facilities. The following year, an additional $300,000 was approved for parks-specific planning, promoting a collaboration between Community Services and Public Works for developing a master plan. During the initial stages of development, and throughout the public engagement process, the two objectives were presented in unison. However, over the course of the development, the two moved forward as independent strategies: the Winnipeg Recreation Strategy and the Winnipeg Parks Strategy.

Both Strategies were adopted by Council in May of 2022 with direction to provide biennial updates on the implementation of their Actions Matrices. 2024 is the two-year mark since these strategies were adopted and therefore this report is the first of its kind in the course of this reporting structure.
In addition to its Actions Matrix, the Parks Strategy provides a detailed vision and framework with a set of principles and methodologies. These have been imbedded in the work delivered by the Public Service over past two years. The framework has become the structure for all matters related to levels of service, such as the approach to data collection, the organization of data, and the suite of terms and concepts used in every day service delivery. The Parks Service Categories, Park Classifications, and Amenities hierarchy have been fully adopted by the Public Service and are used as guidelines in the tasks that are not captured in the Actions Matrix.

Updates

Appendix A presents the Actions Matrix with some additional attributes that collectively describe each Action's status. These attributes provide context related funding and progress to support the current status:

1. **Funding Status**
    - **Not Required** – No incremental funding needs are required or anticipated.
    - **Funded** – Required operating and/or capital funding has been allocated through the Budget Referral process.
    - **Unfunded** – Required operating and/or capital funding is currently unallocated in the Multi-Year Budget.
    - **Partially Funded** – A portion of the required operating and/or capital funding has been allocated through a current or former budget, but additional funding is required to complete the action.
    - **Review** – Funding is not identified in the Parks Strategy, but the action requires further review to develop scope and determine if any resource are required.

2. **Action Status**
    - **No Action** – Resources are not currently dedicated to completing the action and therefore it has not been formally initiated. This does not indicate a disregard – there are many circumstances where the relevant activity has been brought forward for case review.
    - **Underway** – Resources are actively making progress towards completing the action.
    - **Pending** – The action cannot move forward without funding. The action may not have been initiated or it may be underway.
    - **Complete** – The action is complete.

3. **Notes**
    - Where applicable, notes have been added to support the status. Where funding is a barrier for the action, the relevant operating or capital needs have been identified. Otherwise, this section provides a concise description of the action's current status.

Highlights

Five actions have been completed and 34 remain underway in various stages of progress. This demonstrates that 44 percent of actions are either complete or have been actively initiated. Action 47 was rescinded due to an error in the original document involving redundancy with Action 17.

While Appendix A provides an overview of the status for each item, a few notable accomplishments should be highlighted in this update:

Development Agreement Parameters (Action 34) – The Development Agreement Parameters are a tool to ensure development occurs in accordance with corporate strategies and construction standards, including all related matters such as reimbursement, servicing costs recoveries, securities, warranties, park land dedication and improvements, and construction obligations. An extensive review of the existing guidelines (last updated in 2002) was facilitated by Landmark Planning & Design (the "Facilitator) and consisted of numerous meetings between the Public Service and the Urban Development Institute (UDI). Adopted by Council in May 2023, the revised Development Agreement Parameters (the "New Parameters") reflect the successful achievement of the shared goals of the working group and represent new guidelines with an updated amendment process and ongoing review.

Park Development Guidelines and Park Design Standards (Actions 52 and 84) – The City's Park Development Guidelines and Park Design Standards were developed by the City's Planning, Property & Development Department's Urban Planning and Design Division in conjunction with the Public Works Department's Parks and Open Space Division. The document was developed to guide City staff, land developers, consultants and contractors through the planning, design and construction of the City's parks and open space lands. The primary purpose of the document is to ensure that the City's parks and open spaces are located, designed and constructed in a consistent manner and to provide an understanding of expectations and requirements for the development of these spaces. The documents were completed in October of 2023 and posted on the City of Winnipeg's website.

Winnipeg Comprehensive Urban Forest Strategy – The Urban Forest Strategy was developed to provide a 20-year vision and strategic framework for the City's urban forest. It identifies key recommendations and strategic actions to help protect, preserve, and enhance Winnipeg's tree canopy towards achieving a canopy cover of 24 percent by 2065. The Urban Forest Strategy was formally adopted by Council in December of 2023 and financially supported in Budget 2024 with over $56 million allocated towards the Urban Forest Renewal Program over the next six years. In addition, a Project Manager position (1.0 FTE) was funded to oversee, guide, and monitor its execution jointly with the Winnipeg Parks Strategy.

Challenges

While some outstanding actions are simply associated with the projected timeline, many are associated with funding/resource allocations that present barriers to either initiating or completing those Actions. Approximately 34 percent of all actions are noted as either Unfunded or Partially Unfunded due to needs for capital funding, additional operating resources, or both. In addition to the known funding needs, 46 percent of the actions need to be further reviewed and may require some form of resource allocation.

Capital – Appendix B highlights the capital requirements associated with the Parks Strategy presented alongside adopted and forecast capital budgets from the 2023 and 2024 Adopted Capital Budgets. This shows a comparison between the items that were referred to Budget 2024 and the items that were approved and funded. The associated $126M shortfall aligns with the Unfunded and Partially Unfunded Actions that contain capital requirements.
Operating – Various challenges are attributed to capacity and the ability for programs to initiate or complete Actions. The Parks Strategy recognizes needs in common areas with multiple Actions associated with partnerships/agreements, knowledge management, and naturalization. As such, three positions were recommended alongside the Parks Strategy and noted as critical resources for implementing the Actions Matrix. These three positions referred to Budget 2024 are still pending approval and funding:

1. Park Agreements Coordinator position (1.0 FTE; WAPSO 3) to focus on the review and management of existing partnerships and agreements and guide the future development of partnerships to ensure clear benefits and accountabilities.
2. Habitat Restoration Technician (1.0 FTE, Technician 3) to help achieve natural feature target levels of service by implementing enhanced habitat naturalization and restoration initiatives across the parks system.
3. Asset Management Technologist position (1.0 FTE; Technologist 2) to optimize value for all Winnipeggers by implementing asset management best practices to ensure the right investment is being made to the right asset at the right time.

A fourth position was recommended alongside the Parks Strategy – a Project Manager position (1.0 FTE) to oversee, guide, and monitor its execution. While this position is also pending approval, the Parks and Open Space Division proceeded to add those duties to the Project Manager position approved and funded by the Winnipeg Comprehensive Urban Forest Strategy. As a result, no additional funding is required for the Parks Strategy position.

Regional Parks Investment Strategy (RPIS) – The RPIS is not included among the Parks Strategy's Actions Matrix, but it forms part of the original vision and associated approval for a strategic plan. In addition to the approvals for recreation and parks master plans, Budgets 2016 and 2017 allocated $300,000 to develop a Regional Parks Investment Strategy to supplement the Parks Strategy and provide a detailed 10-year investment plan for regional parks. The RPIS will provide a framework for recognizing the character of each regional park and using those attributes to define its level of service and associated infrastructure needs. The RPIS will refine the current 10-year Regional Parks Program cost estimate which will supersede the $47.5 million program currently identified in the Parks Strategy (see Appendix B).

Next Steps

The Public Service will continue to work on short and medium-term actions where funding barriers are not reported. This includes all items where an increase in capacity is not required, and any partially funded items where current and budgeted capital facilitates progress. All items with a Funding Status of "Review" will continue to be assessed for requirements – any identified funding needs will be referred through the budget process. Ongoing unfunded and partially unfunded items will continue to be communicated through the budget process, identifying risks to service levels where required. Overall, the Public Service will continue to plan and deliver services, and develop policy, following the direction and guidance of the Parks Strategy.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement Date: October 17, 2024

Project Name:

Winnipeg Parks Strategy Biennial Update - 2024

COMMENTS:

As this report is for information purposes, the are no financial implications.

A. Fischer CPA,CA

for J. Ruby, CPA, CA
Manager of Finance and Administration

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

- Property, Planning, and Development's Urban Design Division

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

09 Continue to Respect and Value our Natural and Built Environment (A Sustainable Winnipeg)

- Direction 2: Recognize and preserve Winnipeg's parks, greenspaces and riverbanks as green oases in our urban setting.
- Direction 6: Enable the protection of ecologically significant lands.
- Direction 7: Promote the use of rivers and riverbanks.
- Direction 8: Support waterway management.
- Direction 9: Protect and enhance the urban forest.

01-5 Recreation (A City that Works)

- Direction 1: Promote and enable opportunities for all age groups to be active as part of their daily lives.
- Direction 2: Work with community partners to provide services that are responsive to the community's recreation and leisure needs.
- Direction 6: Plan for sustainable and connected recreation and leisure infrastructure.

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

Strategic Opportunity #7: Community Climate Resiliency

- 7.3 Preserve and Manage Parks and Natural Areas to Support Climate Change Mitigation *(Primary Responsibility: Public Works Department).*

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

Goal 1: Equity and a Culture of Caring are Demonstrated through Strategy Implementation and Systems Change

- Equity and a Culture of Caring are factored into all service planning and budget decisions, resulting in City-wide systems change.

Goal 6: All City Services are Equitable, Inclusive, and Accessible

- Residents have equitable access to City services, in particular demographic groups who experience marginalization.
- Community development models and collaborative approaches are enhanced or initiated for service planning and delivery in areas of higher poverty.
- Use of City's tools and resources are maximized to reduce systemic inequities.

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Public Works
Division: Parks and Open Space
Prepared by: David A. Domke
Date: October 17, 2024

Attachments:
Appendix A – Actions Matrix Updates

Appendix B – Capital Referral Review