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**TO:** INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

**SUBJECT:** PARKS, HORTICULTURE AND FORESTRY OPERATIONS BRANCH SERVICE LEVEL REVIEW

**WARD:** ALL

**PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT:** K. RANKIN, MANAGER OF PARKS AND FORESTRY OPERATIONS, EXT. 4754

**SUBMITTED BY:** D. FRIARY, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

**GENERAL MANAGER / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR APPROVAL:** B. ARANIYASUNDARAN, GENERAL MANAGER OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

**CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL:** M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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**RECOMMENDED MOTION**

1. That the Parks, Horticulture and Forestry Operation Branch Service Level Review attached as Appendix “A” to the Report of the Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee dated October 2, 2024 be received for the following purposes:
  - a) To assist City Council with options for prioritization and/or rationalization of services provided by the Branch;
  - b) To allow for staff to develop budgets commensurate with Council’s priorities and desired service levels;
  - c) To estimate operational costs for new park assets and allow staff to plan and budget for anticipated growth or expansion of parks, trails, sport fields and courts.

**PURPOSE & BACKGROUND**

Report Overview

2. On November 29, 2023, City Council adopted motion 23-G-281 of Section “E” of General Committee Report regarding the 2024 Business Plan and Budget – City Operations and Infrastructure Investment Funding be amended to add the following to paragraph 1 (c) as follows:

“That staff in the Operations Department undertake a review of the service levels, staffing and resource requirements for the Parks and Forestry operations branch in order to:

  - i. To assist City Council with the prioritization of services offered in relation to the Branch;
  - ii. Allow for staff to develop budgets commensurate with the desired service levels; and
  - iii. Prepare for anticipated growth or expansion of parks, trails, sport fields and courts. and report back to General Committee.”
3. The Parks and Forestry Operations Branch is separated into four sections, Parks Maintenance, Waterfront Operations, Horticulture Operations and Urban Forestry and Natural Areas Stewardship. The Branch is responsible for operations and maintenance of 693 acres of parks and

open spaces, 2,387 acres of natural heritage areas, 77 acres of boulevards and right of ways; and 36 acres of grounds maintenance around recreation centres and city facilities. The Branch staff complete 163 work activities on over 500 locations across the city.

**ANALYSIS**

4. An analysis of service provision was completed using 2024 as a baseline year. Using current service levels, each “activity” was categorized into service frequency (e.g. monthly, weekly), the seasonal period of services (e.g. May to end of Aug), and the average annual number of services completed for each activity. Staff recorded the actual time to complete activities in each location, including staff (positions), equipment and materials used.
5. A general overview of the annual operating cost per location (grouped into property land types) is as follows:

<b>Location Type</b>	<b>Total \$/Yr</b>	<b>Area (Acres)</b>	<b>\$/Acre</b>
Boulevards & Right-of-Ways	\$1,902,786	77.2	\$24,647
Facilities	\$189,498	25.1	\$7,550
Recreation Centres	\$74,205	11.3	\$6,567
Parks & Open Space	\$3,818,095	693.5	\$5,506
Parking Lots	\$6,044	1.6	\$3,777
Unopened Right-of-ways	\$16,146	26.8	\$602
City-Wide Activities	\$1,690,379	3,222.5	\$525
Natural Heritage Areas	\$413,785	2,387.0	\$173
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,110,938</b>	<b>3,222.5</b>	<b>\$2,517</b>

6. Appendix ‘A’, Parks, Horticulture and Forestry Operations Service Level Review Report, further details the parkland inventory, service levels by activity and location, and service level analysis results.
7. The following examples are options for operational cost savings to be explored through creation of a Parks Strategic Plan and associated public consultation which would be included in a future Business Plan:
  - i. Reduction in utility expenses through:
    - o Remove the cost and long-term risk associated with unused water services in parks by disconnecting the water for all meters with zero consumption for the past 3 years;
    - o Only install water services in new parks that meet a minimum criterion (e.g. includes a splash pad or a community garden);
    - o Replacement of the Heritage Park Splash Pad with a more efficient water utilization; and
    - o Conversion of all remaining (non-LED) park lighting to LED.
  - ii. Implementation of an ecological park management strategy that increases naturalization and pollinator areas (no mow and reduced mowing) in passive areas of parks, reducing the long-term maintenance cost of maintained turf (i.e. convert passive use turf areas to forest or pollinator areas).
  - iii. Replacement of gas-powered tools, equipment and vehicles over time (as units fail) with electric and/or electric automated units, based on availability and budgets.

- iv. Favour low-maintenance designs in parks and open space areas over maintained turf and floral displays (i.e. increased naturalized areas in newly built parks and reconstructed parks).
- v. Other Council direction related to changing priorities on operational maintenance practices and programs.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT MATTERS**

8. There are no environmental and/or climate change impact matters related to the recommendation.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

9. The following alternative is available for consideration by General Committee:

**Alternative #1** General Committee could reject the Service Level Analysis.

This alternative is not recommended as the Service Level Analysis provides real costing associated with activities and assets and will improve budget and resources planning for future Business Plans and operational activities.

### **FINANCIAL**

10. There are no financial implications for the Corporation resulting from the proposed recommendation to receive the report. However, the contents of the report would be useful in assessing the financial impact of altering service levels.

### **LINKAGE TO 2022-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN**

11. The recommendation included in this Staff Report support the following goal identified in the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan:
  - Responsible Governance
12. The Parks, Horticulture and Forestry Operations Branch Service Level Review provides a detailed analysis of the service levels and associated costs of providing operational services. This supports transparent and responsible governance by assisting Council and the public with understanding the relative cost and resources required to provide these services and to assist with prioritizing services and service level decisions going forward.



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APPENDIX "A"

Parks, Horticulture and Forestry Operations Service Level Review Report (Attached)