

Subject: Planting of 4m wide Wildflower Buffer at River Estates Park

Recommendation:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report #2023-0068 Planting of 4m wide Wildflower Buffer at River Estates Park, for information;

AND THAT Council approve the planting of a 4m wide wildflower buffer between River Estates Park and the Stormwater Management Pond.

Background:

At its regular meeting of September 6, 2022, Council directed staff to install a temporary snow fence to protect and safeguard children who play at River Estate Park out of an abundance of caution against theoretical hazards posed by the stormwater management pond, and further to provide a report to Council which detailed options to ensure the safety of residents and children at the park including fencing.

On October 3, 2022, through report #2022-0230 Staff provided Council with four options to enhance public safety at River Estates Park including:

1. Providing permanent fencing around the portion of the pond which borders the park,
2. Providing permanent fencing around the entire pond,
3. Increasing plantings around the pond and letting them mature before removing the snow fence, and
4. Allow the existing vegetation to mature and increase the naturalized buffer area, prior to removing the snow fence.

Council endorsed the following amended motion:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report #2022-0230 for information;

AND THAT Council direct staff to include Option #4 as capital budget project in 2023, to allow the existing vegetation to mature and increase the naturalized buffer area, before removing the temporary snow fence;

AND THAT Options 1, 2 and 3 be stricken.

This report seeks Council approval to improve the visual appearance of the naturalized buffer area by planting a 4m wide wildflower buffer along the border of the stormwater management pond and River Estates Park.

Analysis:

The existing vegetation within the buffer area between the stormwater management pond and River Estates Park is mainly turf grass. While it may eventually mature without human intervention to include native meadow species and wildflowers that provide habitat for native birds, animals, and pollinating insects such as butterflies, the transition will take many years, if it happens at all.

Staff recommend the removal of a 4m strip of turf grass along the border of the stormwater management pond and River Estates Park and sowing the area with a native wildflower seed mix. The 650m² buffer will be created in the general area of the existing temporary snow fence as shown in Appendix A, attached to this report.

Native wildflower mixes are reliable, visually appealing, and provide numerous benefits to the ecosystem including the support of pollinating insects and birds. Seeds may be sowed between May 15th and June 15th but most will not bloom until the second year of growth. Once established the wildflower buffer area will require little very little maintenance.

Financial Considerations:

The cost of purchasing native wildflower seed mix to sow 650m² ranges between \$175 to \$220 depending on the mix of flowers. This can easily be absorbed in the Public Works Beautification Operating budget. Works required to prepare the soil and sow the seed can be completed by Beautification staff.

Alternatives Reviewed:

Council may direct staff to let the existing vegetation in the buffer area mature on its own.

Strategic Plan Relationship: Build Strong Communities and Cultural Assets

The planting off a wildflower buffer area between River Estates Park and the stormwater management pond will improve the aesthetic appearance of the pond and provide benefits to the local ecosystem.

Consultation:

The Supervisor of Beautification was consulted during the preparation of this report.

Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:

Public Works Report #2022-0230

Appendix A – General location of proposed wildflower buffer area

Prepared and Recommended by:

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