

**Priorities Committee Meeting\_Feb12\_2019**

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**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE****Residential Boulevard Maintenance****Report Purpose**

To provide an update to the Priorities Committee on the current residential boulevard maintenance practice in the absence of a policy or bylaw.

**Our Prioritized Strategic Goals**

Goal 1 - Build strong communities to support the diverse needs of residents

Goal 4 - Ensure effective stewardship of water, land, air and energy resources

Goal 5 - Foster collaboration through regional, community and governmental partnerships

**Report**

Boulevards are municipally owned lands that form a part of Strathcona County's road right-of-ways. They are typically grass areas that may include sidewalks and/or trees and are located immediately in front, to the side or to the rear of privately owned property.

In 2015, Priorities Committees was presented with an update on the maintenance of boulevards but a motion to refer the report to the next available Council meeting for formal direction was defeated.

Strathcona County's current maintenance practice is to request the property owner who has direct access to a boulevard immediately adjacent to their property to maintain the boulevard. Residents are notified by letter of the practice once a developer turns the property over to Strathcona County.

Municipalities across Alberta ask or require property owners to maintain the boulevards immediately adjacent to their property. A number of communities in recent years have passed Community Standards bylaws, Boulevard bylaws or Unsightly Premises bylaws that require property owners to maintain the boulevards adjacent to their property. Communities without a bylaw either have a Municipal Policy supported by awareness and education programs or rely solely on education and awareness.

Strathcona County currently works with residents for voluntary compliance to maintain front and side yard boulevards. Compliance rate is 98%. Residents are provided a letter the year the boulevard maintenance changes from developer maintained to resident maintained. Typically in the first year after being notified of maintenance changes, there will be an increase in calls from residents looking for clarification. In some cases, Recreation, Parks and Culture will provide a mid-season cut to assist residents getting into a mowing schedule.

If residents request assistance with boulevard maintenance, administration will consider the request based on the following criteria:

- Is the boulevard located on a collector road?
- Is the boulevard size larger than 200m<sup>2</sup>?
- Is the resident's yard xeriscaped?
- Does the resident have health or mobility challenges?

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Administration has also outlined additional options. If Council wishes to consider options #2 or #3, a request for funding would be brought forward through the annual budget process. A summary of potential options are outlined below.

### Option #1

Update the wording of "property" in a County bylaw to require residents to maintain the boulevards. The recommended change could include the following wording:

A "property" includes any lands, buildings, structures, fences or premises, or any personal property located thereupon, within the municipal boundaries of the County, and also includes that portion of the municipal right-of-way between a curb or road's edge and the adjacent front or side property line of the adjacent property, or between an alley's edge and the adjacent rear or sides property line of the adjacent property, but does not include a municipal right-of-way where an owner or occupant's direct access is blocked by a fence or other permanent structure.

The change in the definition of property to include right-of-ways or boulevards would make the owner/occupant responsible to ensure there is no nuisance or unsightly conditions on the property. Long grass and weeds could be considered unsightly conditions. A change to a bylaw would allow Strathcona County to require residents to maintain front and side yard boulevards rather than relying on voluntary compliance.

### Option #2

A combination of Strathcona County maintaining arterial and collector boulevards, while residents continue to maintain all other boulevards. This would require an annual increase in operational funding to Recreation, Parks and Culture in the amount of \$190,000 for seasonal staff and resources, plus an additional \$40,000 for the purchase of equipment to support the increased service inventory by approximately 10.43 hectares.

### Option #3

Strathcona County takes over the maintenance of all residential boulevards. This would require an annual increase in operational funding to Recreation, Parks and Culture in the amount of \$710,000 for seasonal staff and resources, plus an additional \$81,000 for the purchase of equipment to support the increased service inventory by approximately 49.5 hectares.

Recreation, Parks and Culture presented a report to the Council Priorities Committee in February 2015. The Priorities Committee put forward the motion "THAT the Priorities Committee refer the Maintenance of Boulevards to the next available Council Meeting for formal direction". The motion was defeated so there was no recorded motion and the department was instructed to continue the current practice.

## **Other Impacts**

**Policy:** n/a

**Legislative/Legal:** The Municipal Government Act authorizes Council to pass bylaws for the safety, health and welfare of people and property. The Act also provides that Council may regulate by bylaw.

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**Interdepartmental:** RCMP and Enforcement Services, Legislative and Legal Services, Recreation, Parks and Culture, Planning and Development Services, Transportation and Agricultural Services, Communications.

**Master Plan/Framework:** n/a

**Enclosures**

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| 1 | Boulevard Maintenance Practice                 |
| 2 | Regional Municipal Practices Listing           |
| 3 | Residential Boulevard Maintenance Presentation |