

FOR: FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
MEETING DATE: March 18, 2026
DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY SERVICES
SUBJECT: **PARTNERS IN PARKS POLICY – COU-252**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present Council with the City of Nanaimo Partners in Parks Policy for approval. |

Recommendation

That Council approve the City of Nanaimo Partners in Parks Policy COU-252

BACKGROUND

The Partners in Parks (PIP) Program was initiated by Council 1982. The purpose of the program is to empower community organizations to develop neighbourhood parks and build on the long history of collaborating with local volunteers to improve our parks and open spaces. Now, the PIP Program has grown to include projects beyond neighbourhood playground development, including improvements to destination parks, invasive plant removal, development of community gardens, and/or public art on City-owned property.

Staff have identified an opportunity to formalize and streamline the existing PIP Program through a Council Policy that formalizes the proposal intake and evaluation, as well as establish expectations for funding and donations. |

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the proposed policy is to establish a consistent framework for administering the PIP Program and managing all associated funds allocated by the City of Nanaimo or those received by donation or fundraising.

The PIP Program currently has an unallocated budget of \$100,000 annually to support projects that are brought forward throughout the year. These unallocated funds are awarded by Council to community organizations who submit a complete proposal package and have demonstrated a clear commitment to the project through community engagement, fundraising and collaboration with Staff. Project funds remain within the City's accounts and are used to pay directly for project costs.

Proposal Packages and Evaluation

Community organizations submitting a proposal package to the PIP Program are required to provide all the items outlined in the policy. Submissions will be evaluated based on completeness, project feasibility, community support, available funds, fundraising initiatives by the community organization, and Staff support. Additional consideration will be given to proposals that align with City Plan goals, Council's Strategic Framework, and/or applicable park plans.

Funding and Donations

Historically, it has been expected of the community organization to fundraise typically half of the cost of the proposed project. The proposed policy maintains this expectation, and proposals within neighbourhood parks may be awarded up to 50% of the proposed project cost, to a maximum of \$50,000. This is consistent with funding amounts allocated to individual PIP projects in the past, and allows for PIP program funds to be distributed to a variety of projects.

A proposal package submitted to the PIP Program in a Destination Park or Community Park may be awarded up to 100% of the proposed project cost, subject to available program funds. A proposal package for a Destination Park or Community Park must include in-kind labour and a long-term operational commitment, such as a user agreement for maintenance, programming, etc.

Proposed projects may be further funded by external grants, fundraising, and/or donations.

Under the proposed policy, funds awarded under the PIP Program remain allocated to the PIP project for three years from the date of award. If the awarded funds remain unspent after three years, they will be returned to the program and be reallocated to new PIP proposals, subject to demand. Similarly, any unspent donations are to be returned to the original donor.

All amenities purchased, donated, or installed under the PIP Program become the property of the City of Nanaimo for asset management purposes, including their long-term maintenance and replacement

COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

While projects under PIP Program require neighbourhood engagement, the approval of the proposed policy does not require statutory notification or include community engagement activities. |

ALIGNMENT WITH CITY PLAN

|The PIP Program and accompanying policy is aligned with the following City goals:

- A Green Nanaimo: Resilient and Regenerative Ecosystems
 - C1.2 Climate Adaptation & Hazard Mitigation
 - C1.3 Urban Tree Canopy, Natural Areas, & Greenways

- A Connected Nanaimo: Equitable Access and Mobility
 - C2.3 Recreational Trails

A Healthy Nanaimo: Community Wellbeing and Livability

- C3.1 Community Safety & Security
- C3.4 Food Security
- C3.6 Recreation, Culture, & Wellness

 An Empowered Nanaimo: Reconciliation, Representation and Inclusion

- C4.2 Equity & Inclusivity
- C4.3 Access for All
- C4.4 Political Voice & Engagement
- C4.5 Culture
- C4.7 Public Art Projects & Programs
- C4.9 Parkland & Park Amenity Management

 A Prosperous Nanaimo: Thriving and Resilient Economy

- C5.5 Place Making & Investment Attraction

ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The PIP Program and accompanying policy is aligned with the following Council Strategic Framework priorities:

- Implementing City Plan Action Plans and Key City Management Plans
- Social, Health and Public Safety Challenges
- Maintaining and Growing Current Services
- Capital Projects
- Communicating with the Community
- Governance and Corporate Excellence

NEXT STEPS

Summary of the next steps to be taken to advance the matter forward and potential future reports to Council, if applicable. If not applicable, delete this section.

OPTIONS

1. That Council approve the Partners in Parks Policy COU-252.
 - The advantages of this option: A consistent and streamlined approach to administering the PIP Program is provided, including a formalized application intake and evaluation, as well as established expectations for funding and donations. The Council Policy will assist community groups in understanding what is required to participate in the program and it will help staff administer the program in the most fair and equitable manner.
 - The disadvantages of this option: None identified.
 - Financial Implications: After three years, any unspent funds will be returned to the PIP Program and reallocated to new PIP proposals, provided there is demand. If there is no demand for the additional funds, they will be returned to the applicable reserve at year end to support other City initiatives or projects.

2. That Council not approve the Partners in Parks Policy COU-252.
 - The advantages of this option: None identified.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Application intake remains intermittent and submission documents may be inconsistent. The existing practices would continue.
 - Financial Implications: Allocated funds that are unspent may not be immediately allocated to other City projects or may be reallocated on an inconsistent basis. The existing practices would continue.

3. That Council provide alternate direction.

KEY MESSAGES

- Staff have identified an opportunity to formalize and streamline the existing PIP Program through a Council Policy.
- The purpose of the proposed policy is to establish a consistent framework for administering the PIP Program and managing all associated funds allocated by the City or those received by donation or fundraising.
- The proposed policy aligns with City Plan and Council Strategic Framework priorities. ||

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A: Partners in Parks Policy

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