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Item No. 15.1.7
Halifax Regional Council
August 23, 2022

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: August 5, 2022

SUBJECT: Park Lighting Strategy

ORIGIN

June 8, 2021 motion of Halifax Regional Council (Item Number 11.7.1)
MOVED by Councillor Austin; seconded by Councillor Mancini;

> THAT Halifax Regional Council request a staff report on developing a park lighting strategy. The strategy should consider the need for policy changes around park usage, conditions/criteria in which lighting is needed, and a capital program for park upgrades.

2022/23 Parks & Recreation Business Plan.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter
Section 7A, the purposes of the Municipality are to…

> (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; …

Section 79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if

> (a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality…

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to prepare a staff report and park lighting strategy to guide the design and implementation of walkway, facility, and decorative/placemaking lighting, pursuant to the scope of work as outlined within this report.

BACKGROUND

HRM has over 900 parks in a variety of contexts, including urban, suburban, and rural settings that are used for a variety of recreation and leisure purposes. In some circumstances, parks are also locations through which people travel between destinations. While park use may be thought as being typically during daylight hours, use occurs during night-time periods, which brings a matter of lighting into consideration. Currently, there is no formal process to evaluate when and where lighting might be installed, and which parks and facilities should be prioritized.

On June 8, 2021, Regional Council requested a staff report on the possible development of a park lighting strategy. During its deliberations, several topics were raised about ongoing requests from the public, along with overall issues and topics. These issues included residents who have described unsafe experiences after dark, anti-social behaviour discouragement, determinations about which park facilities might be considered for lighting, whether the Parks Bylaw should reflect the use of park spaces after dark and how lighting might be funded and prioritized into the future.

DISCUSSION

In considering the merits of a lighting strategy, a preliminary review of other municipalities was undertaken. Following this, overall park lighting and HRM's situation was considered, leading to a conceptualization of three categories of possible park lighting situations that may form the basis of a strategy.

Lighting Approaches in Other Jurisdictions

The primary reason for lighting in the public realm is safety and security with the intention of protecting people and assets. While lighting within parks is common-place, comprehensive guidelines for park lighting are not widespread. Examples of guiding documents from other municipalities are highlighted in Attachment A. These documents address a variety of park lighting circumstances, some as part of an overall consideration of public realm lighting, as is the case within Toronto and Vancouver, and others that have guidelines specific to the lighting of walkways. Regardless of the different approaches, these types of guiding documents become frameworks for park lighting improvements that may address the safety of park users and overall night-time experiences.

Park Lighting Categorizations

Formal direction for park lighting provides the public with a reasonable expectation of the kinds of spaces that might be lit, but also a tool for staff and Regional Council to use when addressing lighting requests. There are over 900 parks within the municipality, and it would not be feasible to consider lighting for each of them, but an overall strategy would help with prioritization. To prioritize where lighting might be considered, this report outlines three broad park lighting categories.

1. Walkways in Parks Between Destinations

   There are many situations where walkways through parks are the most direct and sometimes, the only reasonable connection to transit, shopping, school, work, and recreation. Illumination can make travel routes safer and may be essential in circumstances where there are limited alternatives in travelling between destinations. Walkways connecting streets are variable in terms of lighting and lighting may be lacking in older or established communities. However, street-to-street walkways in newer subdivisions, including those through parks, have lighting as a requirement of HRM's Municipal Design Guidelines.

   There are also multi-use pathways (MUPs) that run through parks that are part of the core active transportation network. Like other connections in parks, there are regular requests for lighting that could make MUPs safer for those walking, rolling, and cycling.

The Municipality's Public Safety Office has developed a series of tools to reduce barriers for women, gender diverse people, and other underrepresented residents, to equitably access quality of life services, including parks. Building on the best practices of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), the Public Safety Office has developed a more robust site evaluation process through *Women's Safety Assessments (WSA)*. The WSA uses a participatory method that includes trained volunteers to evaluate social, cultural, and environmental considerations of a space and community. Lighting and overall visibility (i.e., See and be Seen) is only one principle in the WSA toolkit, other principles include, Know Where You Are Going, Hear and be Heard, Being Able to Escape and Get Help, A Clean and Welcoming Environment, Working Together, and Accessibility and Inclusion. This gender-based analysis lens would help inform a lighting strategy and assessments of individual walkways.

Although the need for site safety is an important and heavily weighted factor, the following preliminary criteria have been identified and could be further developed through a lighting strategy.

Potential Walkway Lighting Criteria

- *Walkway use*: The walkway is a high-traffic pedestrian or active transportation corridor. Park user data may be required to support this.
- *Accessibility*: The walkway grade and surfacing are accessible or can be corrected to be accessible.
- *Park Access:* The entire length of walkway can be lighted between access points.
- *Maintenance*: The walkway is currently winter maintained or can be winter maintained.
- *Security risk*: The walkway has a documented history of security issues or requests citing safety concerns.
- *Walkway safety:* The walkway is visible and has defined entrances and exists.
- *Neighbouring Use*: Adjacent neighbours will not be negatively impacted by walkway lighting, or measures can be put in place to mitigate impacts to neighbours.
- *Environmental considerations*: Lighting will not interrupt flora and fauna in sensitive natural areas.
- *Feasibility*: The investment into park lighting is reasonable given the access to power, location, and amount of lighting needed.
- *Park Planning:* There is park planning or capital work happening in the park and potential opportunities to coordinate park lighting into the project.

A further consideration is how nighttime walkway use within parks may be impacted by *Parks By-law P-600*, which defines the open hours of parks of most parks to be from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Possible changes to the by-law respecting walkways would also be assessed.

2. Park Facilities

The use of municipal parks and facilities could be enhanced with lighting during the summer months until a park's closed hours, and in shoulder and winter seasons in the morning and into the evening. A lighting strategy could address and formalize approaches for the lighting of many park facilities such as sport courts to extend their use. Structures that support park use, such as pavilions, gazebos, washrooms, are also included in this category and will have lighting requirements to be visible after dark. The following preliminary criteria have been identified and could be further developed through a formal lighting strategy.

Potential Park Facility Lighting Criteria

- *Facility use:* The facility considered for lighting is well-used. Park user data may be required to support this.
- *Nearby Facilities:* There are no parks nearby offering the same lighted facilities.
- *Multi-season use*: The facility can be used year-round or most of the year.
- *Facility layout:* The facility is collocated with other facilities that also require lighting, or the lighting can enhance other park uses at nighttime.
- *Parking*: There is a parking lot to access the facility that will be used after dark.

- *Accessibility*: The walkway grade and surfacing leading up to the facility are accessible or can be corrected to be accessible.
- *Park Access:* The entire length of walkway leading to the facility is or can be illuminated.
- *Neighbouring Use*: Adjacent neighbours will not be negatively impacted by facility lighting, or measures can be put in place to mitigate impacts to neighbours.
- *Environmental considerations*: Lighting will not interrupt flora and fauna in sensitive natural areas.
- *Feasibility*: The investment into park lighting is reasonable given the access to power, location, and amount of lighting needed.
- *Park Planning:* There is park planning or capital work happening in the park and potential opportunities to coordinate park lighting into the project.

3. Decorative/placemaking

In addition to the safe illumination of pedestrian travel routes, decorative illumination can operate as ambient and supplemental lighting to make park spaces more comfortable after dark. Decorative lighting also creates a sense of place and improves outdoor experiences for features such as fountain lighting, tree lighting, monument lighting, public art illumination, overhead string lighting, and plaza lighting. Inspiration can be drawn from private and public projects in our region for how lighting can make for a safe and unique nighttime environment even when few conventional light fixtures are present with examples including public art and architectural lighting at Queen's Marque, seating wall lighting in Peace and Friendship Park, and multi-coloured lighting of the Fort Needham Park Bell monument.

The following preliminary criteria have been identified and could be developed further through a formal lighting strategy.

Potential Decorative/Placemaking Lighting Criteria

- *Park designation*: The park being considered for lighting falls within a Community, District, or Regional park.
- *Feasibility*: The investment into park lighting is reasonable given the access to power, location, and amount of lighting needed.
- *Community involvement*: there is a not-for-profit, association, or adjacent business in place to contribute or assume costs, for a lighting plan, labour, and maintenance.
- *Park use*: the proposed ambient lighting will contribute to useability and visibility in the park.
- *Cultural experience*: The lighting is considered central in highlighting a significant cultural artifact, art, landscape feature, or the lighting itself will create a special place.
- *Neighbouring Use*: Adjacent neighbours will not be negatively impacted by decorative lighting, or measures can be put in place to mitigate impacts to neighbours.
- *Plant life*: The proposed lighting and installation practices are planned in a way that reduces the impact on trees or other vegetation (e.g., limits long-term wraps on trunks, fixtures mounted onto trees).
- *Park Planning:* There is park planning or capital work happening in the park and potential opportunities to coordinate park lighting into the project.

Design Considerations

While park lighting within each of the three broad categories is important, there are also design considerations that will be addressed within the lighting strategy. Two such considerations include,

- *Light pollution*; the ineffective misuse of light resulting in over illumination, glare, light trespass, and sky glow. Flood lighting, excessive lighting levels, and fixtures without light shields are common causes of light pollution.
- *Lighting Equipment and Design;* site-specific lighting plans would direct the kind and number of fixtures required (e.g., historic or modern light standard, bollard, mounted sconce, string lights, undermounted lighting, among others), lighting levels required, lighting control measures (e.g., timers, light shields, dimmers), light colour, energy source, and energy efficiency (e.g., LED and solar technology).

Next Steps
There is merit in developing a park lighting strategy to more fully address the matters identified in this report. This strategy would be undertaken with a variety of interdepartmental stakeholders, with determinations to be made about consultation with external groups.

In addition to expanding upon the criteria outlined in this report, examples or inventories of park situations and possible lighting recommendations would be considered along with analysis of key planning documents and strategies as approved by Regional Council. This analysis will help guide the framework for a future park lighting strategy. The development of the strategy and an associated staff report would be considered in a future year's business plan for the purpose of being completed and presented to Regional Council.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The development of an anticipated strategy can continue to be accommodated by staff within the current year's business plan and be reaffirmed through a future year's business plan.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendation in this report. The risks considered rate low.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was not undertaken in the preparation of this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific environmental implications that have been identified with the content of this report.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Halifax Regional Council could direct changes to the park lighting strategy scope of work that is outlined in this report. This may require additional review and a separate staff report.

2. Halifax Regional Council could choose to not proceed with a park lighting strategy as outlined in this report.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment A – Examples of Guiding Documents from other Municipalities

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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ATTACHMENT A

Jurisdictional Scan of Canadian Municipal Lighting Programs

Jurisdiction	Functional Plan	Goal/Rationale	Additional direction
City of Toronto	Best Practices Effective Lighting, 2017	Lighting is an important component of urban life. Properly designed lighting provides safety and security so the city may be navigated and used at night. Well-designed lighting both uses energy efficiently and minimizes the negative effects on human and nocturnal animal life. Effective lighting improves the quality of urban life for everyone.	The plan is not specific to parks but has a general overview of lighting, lighting risks, and lighting opportunities.
	Toronto Multi-use Trail Guidelines, 2015	Professionally designed lighting is recommended for multi-use trails, except where lighting would impact sensitive wildlife activities, invite trail users into dangerous situations, or where lighting would conflict with special requirements (e.g., hydro corridors).	The plan is not specific to trail lighting but considers lighting as a component of trail design. Lighting design considerations for trails are detailed.
City of Calgary	Calgary Parks Lighting Plan, 2017	The goals of the lighting plan are: (1) To help Calgary Parks make consistent, informed, and sustainable decisions regarding the installation and management of parks and pathway lighting. (2) To preserve the environment and wildlife connectivity, and inherent beauty that dark spaces can provide. (3) To increase the use, enjoyment, safety and sustainability of parks and pathways in Calgary	The plan is specific to park and contains a series of criteria and evaluation sheets to determine lighting suitability.
City of Vancouver	Street and Public Realm Lighting and Design Guidelines, 2019	The primary purpose of the City outdoor lighting network is to ensure our streets and public spaces are safe and accessible at night. The lighting can also contribute to making spaces feel more welcoming and inviting for residents. The City aims to make streets safer and more accessible for those who walk, bike, roll, drive, or take transit to get around. The City recognizes that light can also play a role in making spaces special and recognizable. The Outdoor Lighting Strategy has five goals, (1) Improve public safety. (2) Enable accessible and inviting spaces. (3) Reduce light pollution. (4) Reduce energy use. (5) Avoiding ecological and human health impacts.	The guidelines document applies to the entire public realm, including parks. Lighting design and public space typologies are provided to give scenario specific lighting guidance.
City of Ottawa	Park Pathway Lighting Policy 2003	It is the policy of the City of Ottawa to light park pathway systems where community and program needs require pathway usage in the evening and pathway users can be assured of a reasonable expectation of safety. There are two policy goals: (1) establish criteria for the approval of new requests for pathway lighting in existing parks.	The park pathway lighting policy applies to the entire city. Lighting design standards and lighting criteria are defined.

Jurisdiction	Functional Plan	Goal/Rationale	Additional direction
		(2) define an implementation approach for new projects that includes characteristics of park lighting and a description of the assignment of project implementation priorities.	
Town of Banff	Policy Trails Lighting, Policy C7002, 2021	The Town of Banff will provide trail lighting where it will enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety, encourage increased use of trails, and enhance the resident and visitor experience, while respecting the environmental, social, and economic objectives of the Banff Community Plan. Trail lighting is designed to provide users with a visible means of navigating trails and public environments. It is understood that trail lighting can promote increased public use and enjoyment of trails, and reduce the risks associated with nighttime use of trails. Trail lighting is not intended to replace other nighttime routes such as local roads and sidewalks. It is the intention that Town trail lighting remain noticeably different than street and road rights-of-way lighting The goals of this document are the following: (1) establish a framework for trail lighting projects. (2) identify trail lighting options that enhance resident and visitor safety, promote trail use, are energy efficient; and minimize the impact of lighting on the nighttime environment.	This trail lighting policy is a companion document to the Street Lighting Policy. Trail lighting criteria and lighting design considerations are included.