2024 Report on CCRA Initiatives Regarding Parks and Pathway Maintenance in Cooper's Crossing

As we look back on 2024, there are several key factors impacting the maintenance of parks and pathways in Cooper's Crossing that should be highlighted for our community:

1. CCRA Board of Volunteers: The Cooper's Crossing Residents' Association (CCRA) is made up of dedicated, unpaid volunteers who work tirelessly for the betterment of our neighbourhood.

2. Maintenance Responsibility: While the CCRA advocates for enhanced maintenance, the responsibility for the upkeep of parks and pathways lies with the City of Airdrie Parks Department. Our role is primarily suggestive, although in some cases we provide financial support for improvements.

3. City Policies on Weed Management: The City has policies for managing weeds like dandelions, including a minimum infestation rate before action is taken, as well as a bee-friendly policy. Some members of the community question the effectiveness of these policies.

4. Outstanding Fees: Unfortunately, approximately 300 homeowners had not paid their fees by the end of 2023, contributing to an outstanding balance of over $25,000. These unpaid fees limited the Association's ability to fund park enhancements.

5. Focus on Tree Health: In 2024, the CCRA prioritized the health of trees and shrubs with input from arborists. This initiative was presented and endorsed at the annual community meeting.

6. Limited City Resources: The City's budget for parks allocates one maintenance person per 15 acres, including houses and streets. Cooper's Crossing shares maintenance staff with Southpointe and Morningside, creating challenges for a neighbourhood with a higher percentage of parkland.

7. Water Restrictions: The water restrictions of 2024 impacted the health of vegetation in parks and pathways, including the annuals planted in boulevard pots and flower beds.

What Has the CCRA Done in 2024?

A. May Meeting with Parks Team & Arborist In May, CCRA board members met with the Parks Department and a local arborist to assess the condition of trees in the Cooper's "Forest" and explore options for planting wildflowers between Discovery Park and Cooper's Promenade. We also identified trees needing removal or enhanced care, and the City provided information on their broadleaf weed policy and elm scale infestations.

B. June Walkthrough & Recommendations In June, the board and City parks team conducted a thorough walkthrough of Coopers Crossing's parks and pathways. This 2.5-hour assessment

resulted in a list of priority areas needing attention. The City committed to addressing high-traffic and high-visibility areas first, and as of August, several of these areas are in progress.

C. Weed Management Advocacy The CCRA raised concerns about the high number of dandelions and broadleaf weeds in June. We challenged the City's belief that bees rely on these weeds for pollen in early spring, presenting evidence that tree pollen is a more likely food source. We successfully lobbied for earlier and more aggressive weed spraying, which has already been implemented in many areas of Cooper's Crossing.

D. Tree and Shrub Maintenance Plan The Association developed a comprehensive tree and shrub maintenance plan for 2024-2025, focusing on areas the City lacks funding for. The plan includes deep root watering, pruning, treating elm scale, and protecting vulnerable trees in boulevards and parks. We've allocated $15,000-$20,000 this year, with further investments planned for 2025.

E. Juniper Bushes & Ground Cover Concerns were raised about the difficulty of managing juniper bushes and overgrown grass and weeds in certain areas. Based on recommendations from the Parks Department, we are considering replacing junipers in these hard-to-maintain zones with perennial flowers such as daylilies.

We look forward to continuing our efforts to enhance the natural beauty of Cooper's Crossing in collaboration with the City and local experts. Thank you to all residents who have supported these initiatives through timely payment of fees and ongoing community engagement.