

Report to Council



Date: June 23, 2025
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Lower Mill Creek Linear Strategic Plan
Department: Parks Planning and Design

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from the Parks Planning and Design Department, dated June 23, 2025, regarding the draft Lower Mill Creek Linear Park Strategic Plan;

AND THAT Council endorses the draft Lower Mill Creek Linear Park Strategic Plan;

AND FURTHER THAT Council directs staff to proceed with the next phases of Mill Creek planning (Upper Mill Creek Linear Park -Strategic Plan) from Parkinson Recreation Center to Kelowna International Airport.

Purpose:

To endorse the Lower Mill Creek Linear Park Strategic Plan and to provide updated direction to staff on the management and development of the linear park.

Council Priority Alignment:

Climate & Environment

Background:

In June 2001, a plan for Mill Creek's development and management was presented to Council, detailing strategies for vision, activity programming, land acquisition, and responsible stewardship.

Since its endorsement, several high-level policy documents (Mill Creek Masterplan (2001), Linear Parks Master Plan (2009), City of Kelowna Park Acquisition Guidelines (2011), 2040 Official Community Plan (2022), Parks Master Plan - Phase 1 (2022), Transportation Master Plan (2022), Mill Creek Stormwater Planning) have continually supported the plan's various initiatives.

Urban trends since the 2001 report along the corridor include flood mitigation improvements, urban densification through rezoning from single dwelling to multi-dwelling residences, which impacts green spaces along Lower Mill Creek. Lower Mill Creek Linear Park - Strategic Plan responds to these trends and outlines a plan for the council's consideration.

Discussion:

To respectfully and positively our relationship with Mill Creek is the vision outlined in the strategic plan with several core values that reflect public and stakeholder priorities as part of the City's long-term planning objectives.

Design Strategies

- Safety and Accessibility: Enhance Trail Accessibility, Enhance Public Safety, Increase Public Awareness of Mill Creek
- Ecology and Identity Strategies: Create Opportunities to Celebrate Mill Creek, Improve Mill Creek's Ecology: Improve the Resilience of Mill Creek.
- Connection and Recreation Strategies: Enhance Neighborhood Connectivity to Mill Creek, Create Unity Along the Mill Creek Corridor, Increase Recreational Opportunities

Linear Trail Components

As part of the strategic plan, several components will be implemented along the corridor to provide points of connection to unify the various stretches of Mill Creek. These include Trails, Gateways, Nodes & Critical Intersections, Community Access Points, and Pedestrian Creek Crossings.

Trail Standards

The approach to standardizing trails along Mill Creek will take into consideration the width of the corridor available, alignment with the creek, and existing guidelines within the Linear Parks Masterplan (2009) and Bylaw 7900.

Transitions

Urban to natural area transitions will also provide a distinctive approach to trail identification with less reliance on upright signage and more on tactile experience to tie in community access points with trail intersections.

Shared Streets

Shared streets are an alternative approach to residential street design in low-traffic volume areas. Shared streets consider improvements to pedestrian comfort with traffic calming, meandering drive aisle, and gateway treatments to indicate traffic flow change. Proposed shared streets are focused along Marshall Street and Brookside Avenue. Staff notes that the shared street approach is currently being implemented along Burne Avenue where design work is underway to create additional public space with opportunity for additional canopy cover and amenity space.

Amenities and Wayfinding

A suite of amenities and wayfinding will be implemented along the trail with recognizable branding to aid in the identification of the linear corridor and highlight unique experiences and conditions along Mill Creek. The inclusion of public art at opportune locations along the creek may also form part of the character which distinguishes the creek as it weaves through the urban landscape.

Planting

The planting scheme along Mill Creek is proposed to include three types:

Riparian Planting (within 15m setback)

Urban to Natural Area Transition (rain gardens, bioswales, sediment interceptors, permeable paving) to soften hardscape areas in the urban context

Non-Riparian Planting, drought-tolerant plantings to avoid continual irrigation beyond establishment period.

Trail Routing Plan

The 'Lower Mill Creek Linear Park – Strategic Plan, 2025' provides mapping showing the trail alignment as it weaves through urban areas. Each map section outlines priority routes for the trail on both sides of Mill Creek including the various trail types used in each section to circumvent areas with available parkland. Trail gateways, nodes, community access points (wayfinding), and the location of existing pedestrian creek crossings are shown, and where possible used to avoid the construction of any additional bridges along the route.

Parks

In addition to trail sections, several new and existing parks intersect with the trail along Mill Creek. These parks provide smaller gestures of public park space including amenities to complement the planned trail infrastructure such as interpretive elements, open lawn areas, play equipment, picnic areas, and gathering nodes.

Implementation

With the goal of creating a continuous accessible pedestrian network along Mill Creek, the implementation of strategies for land acquisition, park improvements, and programming will occur over the next 20 years in the Lower Mill Creek Linear Park section.

Short-term (1-5 years), Medium-term (5-10 years), and Long-term (10-20 years) goals are outlined in various sections with different levels of effort from connecting communities in a safe accessible manner to full corridor buildout including surface treatment and visual identification.

To provide additional clarity, cost schedules for trail improvements along the Lower Mill Creek Linear Park are broken out into twenty-five (25) segments and will be used in budgeting and forecasting costs in the 10-year capital plan for a phased improvement approach.

Conclusion:

If direction is received to adopt the 'Lower Mill Creek Linear Park - Strategic Plan, 2025' as presented, staff will continue to implement the appropriate management techniques, design strategies and improvements to create a uniform, identifiable and user-friendly linear path in the lower reaches of the creek.

As outlined in the resolution, staff will also begin similar treatment and techniques to the upper reaches of Mill Creek 'Upper Mill Creek Linear Strategic Plan', along with planned capital linear park improvements as outlined in the 10-year parks capital plan.

Internal Circulation:

Partnerships and Investments
 Utility Planning
 Long Range Policy Planning
 Transportation Engineering
 Parks Services
 Climate Action & Environmental Stewardship
 Risk Management

Existing Policy:

1. 2040 OCP – Objective 10.2 Ensure parks and public spaces are connected to each other and accessible for all citizens; including all relevant policies therein (Policy 10.2.1 through 10.2.10)
2. Climate Resilient Kelowna Strategy, 2024
3. Sustainable Urban Forest Strategy, 2024

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

Estimated Cost for all segment work (25 segments) to be completed between Okanagan Lake and Parkinson Recreation Center over the next 20 years:

Short Term (1-5 years)	\$7,084,110
Medium Term (5-10 years)	\$4,705,145
Long Term (10-20 years)	\$10,574,059
Total Cost	\$22,363,314

Consultation and Engagement:

Feedback was solicited from various stakeholder groups, including neighbouring residents near the creek, the broader community, internal city staff, Okanagan Nation Alliance staff, and regulatory stakeholders.

Multiple collaboration points were identified within this urbanized creek context. Engagement methods involved coordinated efforts by Parks Planning, Infrastructure Planning, Development Planning, and Protective Services, facilitating comprehensive discussions during engagement activities. The outcomes were as follows:

Walkshops: Residents participated in brief walking tours through the neighborhood to express concerns and ideas, with 102 attendees.

Get Involved Project Page: Provided detailed information and updates to residents regarding project details, garnering 2,000 views.

Information Session: Attracted 150 attendees.

Relevant topics discussed with residents during the workshops included:

Flood Mitigation: Support for flood mitigation initiatives and trail implementation.

Community Safety: Concerns regarding safety along the corridor and issues related to outdoor sheltering.

Ecological Restoration: Emphasis on restoring natural areas.

Property Concerns: Impacts on property values due to the trail and loss of land to riparian areas.

Privacy: Potential loss of privacy because of the linear pathway adjacent to private properties.

Park Features: Advocacy for walking paths and slower speeds, rather than routes designed for high-speed cyclists.

Submitted by:

K. Pinkoski, Senior Project Landscape Architect

Approved for inclusion: M. Steppuhn, Parks Planning and Design Manager
D. Edstrom, Divisional Director – Partnerships and Investments

Attachments: Schedule A: Lower Mill Creek Linear Park – Strategic Plan 2025, Okanagan Lake to Parkinson Recreation Center including the 'What We Heard' Report

cc:

D. Edstrom, Director – Partnerships and Investments

R. Mclean, Utility Planning Manager – Utility Planning

R. Miles, Long Range Planning Manager – Long Range Policy Planning

G. Foy, Transportation Engineering Manager – Transportation Engineering

B. Stewart, Parks Services Manager – Parks Services

C. Ray, Climate Action and Environmental Manager – Climate Action & Environmental Stewardship

A. Budde, Security and Business Continuity Manager – Risk Management