



December 3, 2024

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners
FROM : Director, Park Operations
SUBJECT : **Decorative Lighting in Trees – Board Briefing Memo**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on work underway to update the decorative lighting process, feedback received from community partners, and efforts underway to further improve and streamline the process.

Background

Decorative lighting in the public realm animates our streets, creates more welcoming spaces, and supports community and cultural expression. Decorative lighting is typically provided by community partners such as Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) and can take a variety of forms from string lights to LED banners to more complex installations.

For many years, the approval process for decorative lighting in the City has been unclear resulting in hidden costs, delayed timelines, and inconsistent installation and maintenance practices. This has caused frustration for community partners, resulted in some lighting installations that have harmed trees, and raised some public safety concerns.

To help improve this process, staff in Engineering and Park Board's Urban Forestry staff worked together to review and consolidate existing processes and requirements for all project types with the support of a technical consultant into one document. The internal process between teams and departments was also streamlined and a dedicated position with electrical expertise was created in Engineering to be a single point of contact for community partners to help guide and support them through the approval process.

Recently, staff brought this consolidated information to community partners and asked for feedback on how to further improve the process. Staff heard concerns from BIAs with the process overall, as well as with some specific requirements and associated costs. In general, BIAs noted that the process was overwhelming and asked that the City determine ways to better support community partners to do this work.

Next Steps

In response to this feedback and the need to further streamline the process, staff will be working with the BIAs' Streetscape Committee to identify improvements. This group will explore further changes to the process such as:

- Extending the length of the simplified application for winter-seasonal installations
- Developing a simplified approach for standard installations, including guides for products and installation methods that are compatible with our infrastructure
- Developing a clear process for “non-standard or complex” installations



VANCOUVER
BOARD OF
PARKS AND
RECREATION

Page | 2

Staff will also explore alternative City funding sources for electrical and structural investigations for BIAs from Uplifting Communities Fund using City's pre-qualified consultants.

Please contact me directly if you have any questions.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amit Gandha". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Amit Gandha
Director, Park Operations - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

jm/ag/vt

Copy to: PB Senior Leadership Team
PB Communications