REPORT

Background
At the July 24, 2017 meeting of Council, staff were requested to prepare a report related to current boulevard maintenance practices and options for increasing this Level of Service (LOS). Further to that request, staff have been asked to investigate the possibility of installing/maintaining gateway entrance features.

Discussion
In discussion with members of Council, a number of questions arose. We have attempted to discuss and answer these questions below:

How can we better enforce the LOS requirements for boulevard areas in unassumed subdivisions?
Under the terms and conditions of our current subdivision agreement, developers are responsible for the regular maintenance activities associated with boulevard areas that will ultimately be the responsibility of the Town. For example, an area of reverse frontage or along walkways where it is unreasonable for local area residents to provide regular grass cutting. Developers are obviously not in this business, so the regular maintenance activities are contracted out and they are not considered a high priority for some. As a result, areas are missed or not kept to the desired standard. There are two potential solutions to this issue:

- Establish routine weekly inspections, with written follow-up by our subdivision inspection staff. This would require staff (who normally are engaged in the inspection of municipal services), to review the condition of boulevard areas ensuring they are up to standard and follow up with developers to ensure that deficiencies are addressed. This practice has started but impacts would not be noticeable until the next growing season.
- The Town takes over the maintenance responsibilities once the landscape materials are established. The costs associated with this work would be charged
back to developers. This would require an amendment to our subdivision agreement and negotiations with the development community prior to being implemented. Costs associated with this would include the contracting of these services as well as the coordination and overseeing of the work, which would necessitate the hiring of additional municipal staff.

**Why do Regional right-of-ways in Oakville and Burlington appear to be planted at a higher standard than those in Milton?**
In reviewing this issue with other municipalities, it would appear that additional plantings along Regional roads are part of their capital program and are normally installed as part of the road reconstruction or, more recently under separate contract immediately following the road reconstruction. Maintenance activities are carried out by local municipal staff or are contracted out by the local municipality with costs being recovered from the Region under the Regional Road Maintenance Agreement.

**How can we improve the condition of boulevards constructed as part of our capital program?**
Over the years, in order to address comments received after various projects were completed, changes to our topsoil standard have been implemented. The Ontario Provincial Standard (OPS) specification for topsoil is to provide a depth of 50mm, which was our standard at one time. That was increased to 100mm, and then further increased to 150mm recently. Maintenance standards have also increased, 2017 saw the increase in the standard for cutting, over-seeding, aeration and fertilization being implemented, which reduced the number of dandelion complaints received by the department. This increase in service level will take a few years to become fully effective, however, improvements have been noted even after one year. In addition to the above, other alternatives are available including:

- Implement a separate landscape contract after the civil works are completed. This tender would be awarded to a landscape contractor, resulting in a higher degree of expertise and experience when it comes to installation and maintenance of planting materials during the establishment stages.
- Implement irrigation systems in the boulevard areas, which would be very expensive, however, it would address the issue of droughts that have created issues in the past (i.e. Louis St. Laurent, between Bronte and Tremaine)
- Artificial turf has been used in some municipalities as a replacement for sod. The cost factor for artificial turf is approximately ten times the supply and installation of conventional sod.
- Substitute shrubs and other plantings for turf.
How can we improve existing boulevard conditions?
As noted above, in 2017 the passive weed control program was reinstated and the results were notable. We would recommend continuing this program if boulevard conditions are considered a priority.

How can we create gateway features within the Town and Regional right-of-ways?
There are a number of categories of gateway features, but the most significant ones are located at the interchanges along the 400 series highways, at the major entrances to a community on interregional roads or at places of interest in a community.

- The traditional method to create a gateway feature would be to identify a location, then include the project in the capital budget for construction and in the operating budget for annual maintenance (plantings, weeding, irrigation, fertilization, etc.) The capital forecast does identify a project in 2020, however, the details of location and scope have not been addressed.
- An alternative to this method would be to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to private landscaping companies for a three to five year contract to design, construct and maintain an entrance feature at a specific location. The intent would not necessarily be to award to the lowest bidder, but to award the contract to the company that provides the best value, and the costs would have to be included in the Operating budget.

Financial Impact
There are no financial impacts associated with Report ENG-024-17, as any changes to boulevard maintenance LOS or gateway feature implementation would have to be considered as part of the 2018 budget deliberations. At the current time, the draft budget does not include LOS increases.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments
None
CAO Approval
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