



September 11, 2019

Memo To: Capital Sustainability Steering Committee

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Subject: Follow-up Recommendations for Parks and Trails

On June 19, 2019, the Capital Sustainability Steering Committee made the following general recommendations in relation to Parks and Trails:

- 1) That the review of the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Plans be advanced to 2020, utilizing an integrated lifecycle planning approach;
- 2) That the review of the Parks Plan include consideration of:
 - a. Understanding the park and recreation needs of residents in higher density developments;
 - b. Investigating the use of linear parks in high density developments to direct residents to established parks; and
 - c. Designing and building more cost effective parks.
- 3) That a target of \$3 million annual tax supported capital funding for the revitalization and repair/replacement of parks be endorsed; and
- 4) That staff explore and report back on opportunities to optimize the use of cash-in-lieu of parkland funds for both park acquisition and the revitalization and repair/replacement of parks.

The following sections of this memo outline background information related to these 4 recommendations:

1. 2020 Parks, Recreation, and Culture Plan Review - utilizing an integrated lifecycle planning approach

The Capital Plan currently contemplates a review of the Parks Plan in 2020, a review of the Recreation Plan in 2023, and a review of the Culture Plan in 2021. The background



and analysis components for the 2013 Parks Plan and Recreation Plan were completed at the same time by a consultant retained by the City. This allowed a single Key Directions Report to be prepared that was then used to draft the Parks Plan and the Recreation Plan. To further the efficiencies and synergies gained in the original Parks Plan and Recreation Plan, the Culture Plan will also be included in the 2020 review.

Since the time the Parks Plan, Recreation Plan, and Culture Plan were created, asset management planning has evolved across Ontario bringing with it the need for municipalities to take an integrated lifecycle planning approach to all assets (i.e. planning for the need, along with how the City funds the design/construction of the asset and the operation/maintenance/repair of the asset). To support Richmond Hill's Strategic Plan goal of wisely managing resources over the long-term, the review of the Parks Plan, Recreation Plan, and Culture Plan will incorporate the planning, design, and maintenance/operational needs of these assets in their vision and planning frameworks. This approach will ensure the planning, design/ construction, and maintenance/operational aspects of the facilities and programs outlined in the Plans account for all costs from project inception through to construction/program formulation, and operation/maintenance. Developing Plans, in this fashion, can inform the City's Capital and Operating Budget Planning processes, allowing for a more practical, implementable vision.

2. Considerations for Parks Plan Review

The Committee recommended that three specific matters be included in the review of the Parks Plan, namely:

- 1) Understanding the park and recreation needs of residents in higher density developments
- 2) Investigating the use of linear parks in high density developments to direct residents to established parks
- 3) Designing and building more cost effective parks

As the City has and will continue to urbanize, the focus of the 2020 Parks Plan review will be on the provision of parkland to meet the needs of the higher density residential developments in Richmond Hill's Centres and Corridors. The objective will be to provide the right amount of parkland for the needs of residents living in multi-unit dwellings. Staff will investigate those needs as part of the background work.

As part of the 2020 Parks Plan review, staff will investigate how linear parks can be used to connect new developments to existing parks. In addition to linear parks, staff



will investigate enhancing existing public right-of-ways (streets) between new developments and existing parks.

Staff will also investigate the ability to design and build more cost effective parks. This can include standardizing the design of elements and facilities to simplify maintenance/operational requirements, including creating updated City standards, investigating the use of more resilient soft and hardscaping materials to extend the lifecycle of a park or naturalizing areas within parks to decrease maintenance costs, and providing passive park spaces where desired by the community.

3. \$3 Million Dollar Tax Supported Capital Funding for Park Revitalization and R&R in 2020

As part of the Capital Planning process, staff in the three Departments responsible for parks and trail planning, design, and operations/maintenance will work together to put forward a draft 2020 Capital Budget request that is within the proposed \$3 million dollar tax-supported funding limit recommended by the Committee for 2020.

4. Using Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland funds for Park Revitalization and R&R

Staff will carefully monitor the needs to purchase new parkland against the needs to revitalize existing parks and to repair and replace facilities within existing parks. Cash-in-lieu of parkland can be used for both parkland acquisition and park improvements. Diligent monitoring of parkland acquisition needs as well as park revitalization and repair and replacement needs against the existing and projected levels of cash-in-lieu of parkland in the City's Reserve Fund can lead to an optimization of the use of these funds. The passage of final regulations supporting Bill 108, *More Homes, More Choice Act 2019* will provide staff with a greater sense of the opportunities and constraints in this regard.