



Staff Report for Heritage Richmond Hill Meeting

Date of Meeting: December 8, 2020

Report Number: SPRI 20.039

Department: Planning and Infrastructure

Division: Policy Planning

Subject: **SRPI.20.039 Heritage Permit Application for the
Phase 2 David Dunlap Observatory Park
Woodland Restoration - Project D12-07228**

Purpose:

To seek Heritage Richmond Hill's recommendation to Council to approve the Heritage Permit application to permit the proposed woodland restoration works as described in the *David Dunlap Observatory Park Phase 2 South-West Detailed Woodland Restoration and Implementation Plan*, attached as Appendix A to this report.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Heritage Richmond Hill recommends to Council the Heritage Permit Application to implement the proposed woodland restoration plan as described in the *David Dunlap Observatory Park Phase 2 South-West Detailed Woodland Restoration and Implementation Plan* (attached as Appendix A), be approved.

Contact Person:

Joanne Leung, Manager of Heritage and Urban Design, 905-771-5498

Report Approval:

Submitted by: Kelvin Kwan, Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure

Approved by: Mary-Anne Dempster, City Manager

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

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Background:

On April 12, 2012, City Council approved an Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) mediated settlement for the residential development application associated with the DDO Park site. The value and scope of compensation was determined based on several policy documents and plans including the Provincial Policy Statement, the *David Dunlap Observatory Master Environmental Servicing Plan* (MESP), and the *David Dunlap Observatory Lands Conservation Management Plan* (DDO CMP).

As part of this settlement, Richmond Hill would receive compensation from the developer to create 8.41 hectares of new self-sustaining native forest communities and to manage and enhance 24.46 hectares of existing woodlands within the retained DDO Park. The money is to compensate for the removal of woodlands within the settlement area and to address negative impacts to existing woodlands arising from the approved development.

The existing forested and treed areas in the DDO Park are generally in a state of degradation primarily due to the colonization of invasive species and general lack of forest management activities. In addition to creation of new woodland communities and wetland restoration, the reduction and prevention of spread were considered priorities when developing the restoration plan to achieve successful invasive species management.

The DDO lands are designated as a Cultural Heritage Landscape under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Accordingly, any changes that would impact identified attributes under the designating by-law should have a supporting Heritage Alteration Permit approved.

David Dunlap Observatory Park Natural Feature Restoration

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and the City of Richmond Hill established a partnership to develop a baseline analysis and a restoration plan for the park. Informed by the Council approved DDO Master Plan and guided by the DDO CMP, the *David Dunlap Observatory Study Area Natural Feature Baseline Assessment and Prioritization Report* submitted by the TRCA in September 2017 identifies a series of projects and phases to achieve the following objectives:

- wetland restoration;
- invasive species removal/management;
- creation of new woodland communities;
- improvement of hydrologic function;
- creation of new habitat features.

The restoration proposed in the Baseline Study and the Phase 1 & 2 plans are in alignment with what is approved in the DDO Master Plan. Phase 1 woodlot restorations address the southeast boundary of the property (3.49 hectares) containing the wetland feature and the wildlife corridor. From 2017 to present, activities completed in the area

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include hazard tree removals, treatment and removal of invasive trees and plants, as well as tree planting.

Phase 2 South-West Detailed Woodland Restoration and Implementation Plan

The *David Dunlap Observatory Park Phase 2 South-West Detailed Woodland Restoration and Implementation Plan* (attached as Appendix A) details a woodland creation strategy for 2.5 hectares of land and a restoration strategy for 1.5 hectares of lands designated as culturally significant in the David Dunlap Observatory Lands. The Phase 2 area plan lays out a plan for the completion of that work over 5 years (2020-2024) providing detailed descriptions of the work, timelines, and budgets.

This staff report concerns the woodland creation and restoration projects in the Phase 2 areas where a number of designated attributes are located. It seeks Council's consideration to permit the implementation of the restoration activities within the designated area.

Discussion:

The TRCA, in consultation with City staff, identifies the following objectives for the Phase 2 works:

- The creation of 2.5 hectares of new woodland by reforesting portions of the previously farmed land;
- The restoration of 1.5 hectares of land, primarily through invasive species management and monitoring;
- The creation of wildlife habitat features;
- Hydrologic improvements on 0.6 hectares of land to restore natural conditions;
- An overall increase in native species composition, resulting in increased forest cover, improved forest health, and overall ecosystem resilience to climate change effects.

A budget and a detailed plan to be implemented between 2020 and 2025 are provided in the *DDO Phase 2 South-West Detailed Woodland Restoration and Implementation Plan*. These enhancement activities include:

- Forest enhancement and management;
 - Hazard tree removals;
 - Invasive species management;
 - Naturalization plantings;
 - Hydrologic improvements;
- Habitat feature installations, such as nest boxes, bat boxes and woody debris shelters.

Heritage Permit Application

The Forest Compartment Management map contained in the 2017 *David Dunlap Observatory Study Area Natural Feature Baseline Assessment and Prioritization Report*

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(attached as Appendix B) shows an overlay of the cultural heritage landscape (drawn in white) over the extent of all the proposed restoration opportunities within the park.

Within the DDO cultural heritage landscape, three identified heritage attributes fall within or near the Phase 2 area (see Figure 9 below):

- 1) larch tree line along original laneway from Yonge Street;
- 2) fence rows; and
- 3) specimen plantings (see map below).



Figure 9. From the DDO Park Phase 2 South-West Detailed Woodland Restoration and Implementation Plan

Specifically, the restoration and maintenance activities for Areas 2 and 3 include:

- Hazard tree removals;
- Invasive species management;
- Hydrologic improvements;
- Site preparation (mowing);
- Deer fencing to protect newly planted trees;
- Planting;

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- Assessments and monitoring; and
- Adaptive management.

All the activities outlined in the Phase 2 plan retain and/or enhance the identified features and are in line with the desired interventions for each attributes as outlined in table 2.4.1 of the DDO CMP. Table 2.4.1 (attached as Appendix C) outlines the proposed restoration activities for the landscape attributes with the far-right column of the table indicating permit requirements for the activities.

In September 2014, Council approved SRPRS.14.145 (attached as Appendix D) which further clarified the heritage permit requirements with regards to the maintenance and restoration activities in the DDO cultural heritage landscape. The *DDO Heritage Resource Management Chart* from SRPRS.14.145 indicates that Council approval is required to remove invasive vegetation, pruning of the trees, and add new vegetation for the Specimen Plantings; approval is also required for adding new vegetation to the Fence Rows.

Council's approval of the Heritage Permit will enable the much needed restoration works impacting the heritage attributes in Phase 2 to be implemented.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

The DDO Park woodland restoration and implementation activities will be funded by compensation funds through the OMB settlement and contributions from the TRCA. There is no additional financial or other resource implication.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan:

A careful consideration of the alteration of a designated property aligns with the direction to “steward Richmond Hill’s heritage resources”, and implements Outcome 2 of Goal 3 which is the promotion of a sense of identity and place through “the celebration, promotion and enhancement of the City’s unique places”. Approving the *DDO Phase 2 South-West Detailed Woodland Restoration and Implementation Plan* is consistent with Goal Four of the Strategic Plan: Wise Management of Resources. The implementation will also be consistent with the goal to facilitate Stronger Connections in Richmond Hill that will connect residents to the cultural history of the site and will provide residents “Better Choice” through a wider variety of recreational and leisure experiences in the City.

Conclusion:

Using the available compensation funds agreed to through the OMB settlement, the implementation of this plan would provide ecological enhancements that address environmental stressors/impairments such as hazard trees and invasive species, with an aim to improve long-term forest health and biodiversity at the site.

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The Heritage Permit to allow the removal of invasive vegetation, pruning of the trees, and add new vegetation for the heritage features directly addresses these impairments in an effort to restore the Phase 2 area to a healthier and more resilient self-sustaining forest community, as intended for the use of the compensation funds.

Attachments:

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendixes, maps and photographs. If you require an alternative format please call the contact person listed in this document.

- Appendix A David Dunlap Observatory Park - Phase 2 South-West Detailed Woodland Restoration and Implementation Plan, Toronto & Region Conservation Authority (July 17, 2020)
- Appendix B Figures 30 & 31 from the David Dunlap Observatory Study Area Natural Feature Baseline Assessment and Prioritization Report (2017)
- Appendix C Table 2.4.1 from the David Dunlap Observatory Lands Conservation Management Plan
- Appendix D SRPRS.14.145 Staff Report submitted to September 9, 2014 Meeting of Heritage Richmond Hill Committee (Maintenance and Repair: Heritage Permit Process for the property located at the David Dunlap Observatory Lands – 123 Hillview Drive)

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPI.20.039 Heritage Permit Application for the Phase 2 David Dunlap Observatory Park Woodland Restoration Project.docx
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- SRPI.20.039 Appendix A - DDO Park Phase 2 Restoration and Implementation Plan 17Jul2020.pdf- SRPI.20.039 Appendix B - CHL Overlay w Restoration Fig 30 and 31.pdf- SRPI.20.039 Appendix C - Table 2.4.1 of the DDO CMP.pdf- SRPI.20.039 Appendix D - Staff Report SRPRS 14.145 Sept 2014.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Nov 24, 2020

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Patrick Lee - Nov 23, 2020 - 5:07 PM

Kelvin Kwan - Nov 24, 2020 - 8:35 AM

David Dexter - Nov 24, 2020 - 8:45 AM

MaryAnne Dempster - Nov 24, 2020 - 12:16 PM