



Staff Report for DDO Park Project Steering Committee

Date of Meeting: April 12, 2022

Report Number: SRPI.22.017

Department: Planning and Infrastructure
Division: Infrastructure and Engineering Services

Subject: Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory Park
Early Priorities Project Update

Purpose:

To provide an update on the status of the Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory Park early phase priorities.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Staff Report SRPI.22.017 be received;
- b) That the David Dunlap Observatory Project Steering Committee recommend continued support of the David Dunlap Observatory Project;
- c) That staff continue with the implementation of the early priorities projects.

Contact Person:

Bob Levesque, Director, Infrastructure Delivery, extension 2947

Paolo Masaro, Executive Director, Infrastructure and Engineering Services, extension 6540

Report Approval:

Submitted by: Kelvin Kwan, Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure

Approved by: Darlene Joslin, Interim 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:

Implementation of the Early Priorities was extended following Capital Sustainability Committee to smoothen the capital costs of construction over additional years, while maintaining the vision of the Master Plan.

A presentation on the sustainability of the Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory (RHDDO) given to the Capital Sustainability Steering Committee (CSSC) on September 24, 2019 summarized how the City intends to implement the vision outlined in the RHDDO Master Plan, as well as the cost impacts associated with this plan. Alternatives were presented to the CSSC to address concerns regarding the significant overall cost to implement the Master Plan and the financial sustainability of the reserves.

The direction following the outcome of the CSSC was to proceed with the alternative that extends the timeframe for implementation of the RHDDO Early Priorities. This sustainable approach delivers the vision of the Master Plan Early Priorities over a longer timeframe and smoothen the yearly capital budget expenditures.

The RHDDO Park Master Plan is a visionary plan that highlights the cultural heritage landscape, Observatory and Administration Building and will contribute to the City's identity. The Master Plan recommends implementation of individual components of the plan within three priority groups. Each of the three priority groups (Early Priority, Medium Priority and Late Priority) includes specific projects for implementation over the planned horizon. By extending the implementation of the early priorities, from 5 years to 8 years, it smoothen out the capital costs while focusing on the implementation of the passive elements of the Master Plan.

- Phase 1 - Early Priorities (1-8 Years)
- Phase 2 - Medium-term Projects (8-15 Years)
- Phase 3 - Long-term Projects (15+ Years)

The Staff Steering Committee undertook a review of the 'Early Priority' projects essential in establishing the RHDDO as a passive park accessible to all residents to ensure the project sequencing meets community needs.

Early Priority phase projects include development of basic infrastructure, most park entrances, driveways, and important pedestrian pathways and overpass connection, lighting, wayfinding signage and amenities. The park users desire the amenities that include the playground, a water feature element and picnic area. Individual Early Priority projects have been combined in a logical sequence referred to as "Assignments" for ease of implementation and are outlined in Table 1.

The review of the RHDDO Staff Steering Committee ranking of the Early Priorities Projects included in staff report **SRPI.21.016 David Dunlap Observatory Park Early Priorities Project Update (Attached as Appendix A)** resulted in the advancement of the washroom facility to assignment 4.

The purpose of this review was to ensure the project sequencing responds to the anticipated increase in park users, park facility needs and to continually inform the 10 year Capital Forecast

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Below is a summary of the Early Priority Projects and progress made in the implementation of the RHDDO Park and the anticipated timeframes for future projects to be carried out as detailed in the RHDDO Park Steering Committee Minutes (**Attached as Appendix B**).

Page 4**Table 1: Projects Implementation Plan**

Project/Activity	Status
Restoration of Observatory and Administration Building	Completed
Update RHDDO website and landing page	Completed
Cultural and Recreational Programming in-person and virtual	Ongoing
Administration Building - Water Supply Improvements	Design: Completed Construction: 2022
Woodlot Restoration Phase 1 and 2 (multiyear implementation)	Ongoing
Woodlot Restoration Phase 3 Restoration Plan Development	Commencing 2022
Assignment 1 Interim Trails	Completed 2021
Assignment 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic and parking study • Wayfinding and signage study • Archeological study • Perimeter fencing • Park entrance features and signage at Donald a Drive, Hills view Drive (North West corner) and David Dunlap Boulevard entrances. • Main, supporting and nature trails 	Design: Ongoing Construction: 2022 - 2023
Assignment 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site servicing • Observatory Lane pedestrian overpass • Main, supporting and nature trails 	Design: 2022 Construction: 2023-2024
Assignment 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playground • Water element / feature • Great lawn • Washroom Facility 	Design: 2023 Construction: 2025
Assignment 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconfiguration of 16th Avenue entrance including entry feature element Refurbishment of Elvis Stojko Arena parking lot 	Design: 2025 Construction: 2026
Assignment 6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picnic area and covered pavilions • Observatory parking lot 	Design: 2026 Construction: 2027
Assignment 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Operations maintenance facility 	Design: 2027 Construction: 2028

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Since the last RHDDO Park Project Steering Committee meeting held on May 25, 2021 several projects/elements of the Master Plan have been completed.

The restoration and preservation of the Observatory and Administration Building exteriors was completed spring 2021 and represents a significant improvement to bring these landmark facilities back to their former glory. This technically challenging project consisted of the refurbishment of the wood windows and doors, repairs and preservation of metal surfaces, replacement of metal roofing and flashing, masonry and concrete repair and renovation. Additional site and servicing work completed to the Administration Building included new foundation waterproofing and drainage systems, upgrades to existing municipal services and improvements to the electrical systems.

Of equally significant importance was advancing passive use of the park with trails consistent with the outcomes of the CSSC. The 2.25 km interim trails constructed of crushed granular were completed in the fall of 2021. This system of trails provides connectivity to the surrounding community and greater use of the park for residents in the early stages of the park implementation.

Parks Canada is planning an official Plaque Unveiling Ceremony recognizing the Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory as a National Historic Site of Canada.

The National Historical Site of Canada Plaque unveiling ceremony is a media event lead by Parks Canada. The event, tentatively scheduled for the week of June 12, for a formal plaque unveiling. The City will continue to facilitate with Parks Canada and promote it through city communication channels as appropriate.

To date over 5300 native trees and shrubs have been planted while ecological restoration of the RHDDO Park continues.

Phase 1 activities includes invasive species management and is ongoing. Phase 2 activities completed in the spring 2021 includes the removal of dead, hazard and invasive species, the planting of over 5300 native trees and shrubs and the installation of deer fencing which was added to protect deciduous trees and shrubs from deer herbivory. Phase 3 activities include the development of a restoration plan that will include removal of dead/hazard trees, invasive species and management, woodlot creation, savannah restoration and meadow restoration. Phase 3 is planned for implementation to begin in 2023 and completed by 2027.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

Extending the timeframe for implementation of the Early Priorities smoothens the capital costs of construction over a longer duration while maintaining the vision of the Master Plan.

The majority of capital costs are eligible for funding from Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland Reserve Fund (92%) and the Outdoor Recreation Development Charges Reserve Fund (8%) reserves. Implementation of the Early Priorities and future phases of RHDDO may have an impact on the sustainability of these reserves. The approach to implement the Early Priorities over a longer period results in the spreading out of the yearly capital budget expenditures into more manageable amounts.

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Alternative sources of Funding.

There are other potential sources of funding available including revenue from the federal Gas Tax Fund for municipal infrastructure, grants or loans from senior governments or agencies, private sponsorships or partnerships and community fund-raising. Given the magnitude of the project and the number of elements allocated for the Park, financing will be challenging. Staff have and will continue to explore alternative sources of funding as implementation progresses.

Most recently, staff have requested council endorsement of the City's submission of an application to the Federal Ministry of Infrastructure and Communities Active Transportation Fund for the David Dunlap Observatory Park Pedestrian/Cyclist Bridge and Recreation Trails as part of [SRCM.22.02](#).

Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:

Implementation of the Early Priorities is consistent with the Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022 – **Fiscal Responsibility** given that the extension to the timeframe for implementation of the Early Priorities follows the direction of the Capital Sustainability Steering Committee to smoothen the capital budget expenditures over additional years to help maintain a strong financial position for the City.

The Early Priorities includes the implementation of the CN rail overpass, a system of gateways and trails that facilitates **Getting around the City** and builds a **Strong Sense of Belonging** with the surrounding community. In addition, the Early Priorities includes a playground, water play element, great lawn and picnic area to promote a wide variety of recreational, educational and leisure experiences for the residents of Richmond Hill.

The ongoing woodlot restoration project **Balances Growth and Green** by preserving and enhancing natural areas within RHDDO Park. This multi-phased long-term plan to restore and create healthy woodlands throughout the park includes enhancing the woodlands by removing hazardous trees, removing and applying herbicide treatments to invasive species, native tree and shrub planting and monitoring. The enhancement and expansion of the RHDDO woodlands create beautiful, accessible and diverse natural spaces for future generations.

Conclusion:

The commencement of the Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory (RHDDO) Park implementation is the beginning of the realization of the Master Plan Vision Statement where visitors can come to see Canada's historic observatory, celebrate the stars and enjoy acres of natural parkland.

The Early Priority Projects planned for the next number of years are a major component of the overall Master Plan and include advancement of nature trails, CN rail pedestrian overpass, park entrances and features, playground, water play element, picnic facilities, great lawn, washroom facility, Operations Maintenance Facility, and additional parking. These projects will further highlight the sites significant cultural heritage landscape and contribute to the identity of Richmond Hill.

As the identified Early Priorities are implemented, the program is continually reviewed to ensure the roll out is delivered in a fiscally responsible manner consistent with the

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objectives of the Master Plan. Staff recommends continuing with the Capital Sustainability Steering Committee's direction to proceed with the implementation of the Early Priorities with the extended timeframe of 8 years to smoothen the capital expenditure.

Attachments:

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

- Appendix A - [SRPI.21.061](#) David Dunlap Observatory Park Early Priorities Project Update
- Appendix B – RHDDO Park Steering Committee Minutes 2021-12-14

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPI.22.017 Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory Park Early Priorities Project Update.docx
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- SRPI.22.017- Appendix A- SRPI.21.061 Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory Park Early Priorities Project Update.pdf- SRPI.22.017-Appendix B-14 Dec 2021 RHDDO Staff Steering Committee Meeting Minutes- Accessible Document.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Mar 22, 2022

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

Bob Levesque - Mar 21, 2022 - 4:38 PM

Paolo Masaro - Mar 22, 2022 - 10:18 AM

Kelvin Kwan - Mar 22, 2022 - 11:46 AM

Darlene Joslin - Mar 22, 2022 - 1:15 PM