



Staff Report for Committee of the Whole Meeting

Date of Meeting: March 1, 2023

Report Number: SRPI.23.008

Department: Planning and Infrastructure

Division: Policy Planning

Subject: SRPI.23.008 – Draft Town Park Master Plan

Purpose:

The purpose of this staff report is to present the Draft Town Park Master Plan and to outline the public consultation process that will be followed to obtain input on the Draft Master Plan document.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Staff Report SRPI.23.008, including the Draft Town Park Master Plan (Attachment A), be received, and that all comments be referred back to staff.

Contact Person:

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Maria Flores, Director, Policy Planning, phone number 905-771-5438

Report Approval:

Submitted by: Kelvin Kwan, Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure

Approved by: Darlene Joslin, 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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Introduction:

Town Park is Richmond Hill's first park, opened in 1885. For much of its history, Town Park was the principal outdoor site for the community's sporting, civic and agricultural events. As Richmond Hill developed, the facilities in Town Park have evolved to meet the needs of the growing community. Town Park became part of a system of community parks that serve the City and it grew in size as adjacent land became available or was acquired for park use.

Changes to Town Park have occurred incrementally, without a guiding vision. Most of the park's facilities have not been updated for many years. To address this, the City initiated the preparation of Town Park Master Plan (the "Master Plan"). The Master Plan will establish a revitalization vision and strategic direction to guide the future enhancement, management and programming of Town Park.

Background:

A four-stage process is being followed to complete the Town Park Master Plan project as follows:

Stage 1	Research Stage
Stage 2	Options & Preferred Master Plan Stage through public consultation
Stage 3	Preparation of Draft Town Park Master Plan for consultation
Stage 4	Approval of Final Town Park Master Plan & Implementation Stage

Stage 1 (Research) of the project was completed between the summer and winter of 2017 and included an online survey with over 290 respondents, stakeholder meetings (i.e. meetings with local sports clubs/associations including the adjacent Richmond Hill Lawn Bowling Club, Metrolinx, the Village of Richmond Hill BIA, etc.) and public information booths in Town Park at the farmer's market in the summer of 2017 and at Richmond Hill Blooms in the fall of 2017.

Stage 2 (Options and Preferred Master Plan) of the project included a public consultation session, which was held on November 25, 2019 (see Attachment B) to obtain input on the draft vision for the Town Park Master Plan, along with two draft design options. The session was well attended by around 50 stakeholders. The draft options included a more passive park option and a more active park option. Following the community consultation session, the draft options were posted on the City's website for comment.

Through the consultation process, a key finding was that stakeholders felt each of the draft options included elements that could help contribute towards the creation of a revitalized inter-generational, connected, and more resilient Town Park. Given the desire to combine elements from the draft options, staff and the consultants worked together to prepare an "emerging preferred option" for technical input over the winter of

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2020. Staff and the consultants met with key internal stakeholders between December 2019 and February 2020, obtaining the necessary technical input on matters such as the preferred crossing improvements, driveway re-alignment, and pathway layout to facilitate both passive and programmed areas adjacent the proposed picnic shelters.

In March, 2020, the Master Plan was placed on indefinite hold as the City determined how best to manage what came to be known as the COVID-19 pandemic. In late 2020, Council approved the 2020-2022 Council Strategic Priorities, which put the City on a path to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic while minimizing the financial impact on residents and continuing to emphasize environmental initiatives, community building and transportation. A key project intended to recognize the critical balance between economic development and environmental stewardship was the completion of the Parks Plan, Recreation Plan, and Culture Plan Review (2021-2022). The new Parks Plan was approved by Council in June, 2022 and the new combined Recreation and Culture Plan was approved by Council in December, 2022. The Town Park Master Plan project is being re-initiated in 2023 as a key project intended to aid in implementing the 2022 Parks Plan.

Draft Town Park Master Plan:

Staff and the consultants have met with internal staff and stakeholders and utilized the information obtained through these meetings to prepare the Draft Town Park Master Plan document (Attachment A) for public consultation. Following the Council Meeting, the Draft Town Park Master Plan will be placed on the City's website to facilitate a web-based public consultation period.

The Draft Town Park Master Plan is structured into five sections, including:

1. Introduction

Outlines the background, study area, and objectives of the Master Plan, including the need for future work on Unity Park to ensure this park design is integrated with that of the revitalized Town Park, along with how to use/read the Master Plan document.

2. Town Park Past and Future

Outlines the history of Town Park, which was Richmond Hill's first Park, along with the key principles informing the revitalization vision for the future. The principles express a desire to renew Town Park's identity as a central gathering space that serves as an intergenerational, all-season, park with new connectivity and resiliency enhancements given the Park's location between the Village Local Centre and Major Mackenzie GO station stop.

3. Master Plan

This section outlines the design recommendations to revitalize Town Park by enhancing a number of the existing facilities (i.e. softball diamond, playground), adding new facilities based on the changing demographics and demands of the

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area (i.e. new pickleball courts replace the existing tennis courts, new weather-dependent ice rink, picnic shelters/program areas, and pathways), and providing connectivity and resiliency elements to recognize Town Park's location as a key connecting point between the Village Local Centre and the Major Mackenzie GO station.

4. Implementation

This section provides recommendations on how to phase Town Park revitalization works given the City's on-going budget constraints. It also outlines a high-level Cost Plan and Funding Sources. Opportunities for community involvement and partnerships are also provided.

5. Appendices

Four Appendices are provided to assist the reader in understanding the Master Plan process, Site Analysis, Community Consultation, and Detailed Cost Estimate information.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

The Draft Town Park Master Plan attached as Appendix A to Staff Report SRPI.23.008 has been used to inform the City's Capital Forecast. There are no immediate staffing or financial implications associated with this report.

Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:

Balancing Growth and Green

The draft Town Park Master Plan is a key project intended to aid in implementing the 2022 Parks Plan, which is identified as a major project intended to recognize the critical balance between economic development and environmental stewardship. Stewardship of green spaces such as parks and trails and longer-term sustainability planning and climate action initiatives associated with parks and the facilities within them aid the City in balancing growth and green.

Fiscal Responsibility

The draft Town Park Master Plan provides for a phased build-out to ensure the planning, design/construction, and maintenance/operational aspects of the facilities and programs outlined in the draft Master Plan account for all costs from project inception through to construction/program formulation, and operation/maintenance.

Sense of Belonging

The draft Town Park Master Plan aids in establishing a sense of belonging by revitalizing an aging park space to serve the changing demographics of this growing neighbourhood adjacent to the Yonge Street growth corridor while providing elements

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that reflect on and enhance the unique cultural history of the park and area. For example, the following elements are proposed to add to the sense of place:

- A park gateway that references the original entry feature to Town Park;
- Interpretive signage that incorporates photos from the park's past;
- Historical design features for the softball field that celebrate its history as the home of the Verne Dynes jewellers team;
- Placing the Lion's Club monument at the north-east entrance to the park to commemorate the Club's former headquarters.

Getting Around the City

The draft Town Park Master Plan directs for the creation of enhanced connections between Yonge Street, through Town Park, and across Pugsley Avenue to Unity Park. These enhanced connections include improved streetscaping in the form of new trees and seating between Yonge Street and Church Street along the north side of Lorne Avenue, the reconfiguration of Verne Dynes Way to better accommodate pedestrian/cyclist movement and provide additional trees and seating between Church Street and Pugsley Avenue, and a new crossing to Unity Park at Pugsley Avenue. These enhanced connections will allow residents and visitors who wish to access Town Park by foot or bicycle to enjoy a seamless travel experience when using park facilities.

Climate Change Considerations:

The way we plan, design and maintain parks and the facilities within them impacts the City's larger greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and how vulnerable the City is to the impacts of climate change. The 2022 Parks Plan provides direction that a climate change lens be applied to the development and redevelopment of parks, like Town Park. The draft Town Park Master Plan proposes the following elements to aid in creating a more resilient Richmond Hill by combating climate change and reducing its impacts:

- Enhanced connections between Yonge Street, through Town Park, and across Pugsley Avenue to Unity Park, allowing residents who wish to access Town Park by foot or bicycle to enjoy a seamless travel experience when using park facilities, promoting exercise and providing alternatives to getting around by car;
- Extensive tree canopy enhancements, particularly in the north-eastern corner of the park and west of the softball diamond, aiding in cooling and cleaning the air and retaining stormwater on-site;
- Pollinator meadow areas to reduce the need for park maintenance and enhance biodiversity within the park;
- Downcast/low-impact lighting, reducing light pollution;
- "Green" parking features including:
 - Pedestrian walkways,
 - Planting islands with salt-tolerant species,

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- Low-impact stormwater features such as bioswales and permeable paving to encourage the on-site treatment of stormwater management,
- Light coloured or treated asphalt paving to reduce the urban heat island effect,
- Parking space that are pre-serviced for future EV charging stations,
- Environmentally-sensitive snow storage areas, and
- Sheltered bike parking in clearly visible and illuminated locations close to building entrances and walkways.

Conclusion and Next Steps:

It is recommended that this staff report and the attached Draft Town Park Master Plan (Attachment A) be received for information and that this information be made available on the City's website for a 30-day public comment period.

Following the 30-day public comment period, staff and the consultants will prepare the final Town Park Master Plan. Staff anticipates that the final Master Plan will be brought before Council in 2023.

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.

- **Attachment A** Draft Town Park Master Plan
- **Attachment B** Notice of Public Meeting

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPI.23.008 - Draft Town Park Master Plan.docx
Attachments:	- SRPI.23.008_Attachment A_Draft Master Plan-AODA.pdf - SRPI.23.008 Attachment B_Liberal Ad - AODA.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Feb 8, 2023

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

Maria Flores - Feb 8, 2023 - 11:02 AM

Kelvin Kwan - Feb 8, 2023 - 1:58 PM

Darlene Joslin - Feb 8, 2023 - 3:40 PM