



## Staff Report for Heritage Richmond Hill Meeting

Date of Meeting: February 28, 2023

Report Number: SRPI.23.012

Department: Planning and Infrastructure

Division: Policy Planning

**Subject: SRPI.23.012 Heritage Permit – DDO Park Multi-Use Path and Nature Trail Project D12-07228**

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### Purpose:

To seek Heritage Richmond Hill's recommendation to Council to approve the implementation of a proposed Multi-Use Path and Nature Trail, as described in the *David Dunlap Observatory Park Heritage Permit Application*, attached as Appendix A to this report.

### Recommendation(s):

- a) That Heritage Richmond Hill recommends to Council
  - (i) that the heritage permit application to implement the proposed Multi-Use Path and Nature Trail as described in the *David Dunlap Observatory Park Heritage Permit Application* (attached as Appendix A), be approved.

### Contact Person:

Julia Smith, Urban Design/Heritage Planner - Phone 905-771-5529

Steven Bell, Manager of Heritage and Urban Design – Phone 905-771-9996

### 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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### Background:

The Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory (DDO) Park is a 42-hectare (110-acre) City-owned property located centrally within Richmond Hill. The park is generally bounded by Bayview Avenue to the east, the CN rail line to the west, 16th Avenue to the south, and Hillsvie Drive to the north.

### Heritage Status

On September 29, 2009, Council passed By-law 100-09 to designate the Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory (DDO) Cultural Heritage Landscape (CHL) as a "property of cultural heritage value or interest" under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The property was also designated a National Historic Site of Canada in 2019.

### Council-Approved DDO Park Master Plan

The *Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory Park Master Plan* (the "Master Plan") was approved by Council on September 26, 2016. The Master Plan is an important guide that sets out a comprehensive, phased plan for the future enhancement, management and programming of DDO Park, which will establish it as a unique destination park serving the residents of Richmond Hill and attracting visitors from across the GTA. Among other enhancements, the Master Plan contemplates the creation of a new hierarchical system of trails through the site (see Appendix B), with Main Trails designed for universal accessibility and heavy use, multi-use Supporting Trails, and Nature Trails designed to provide more challenging routes with an appropriate environmental footprint.

The implementation of the Master Plan has already commenced, with various projects completed or underway, including Woodlot Restoration, Restoration of the Observatory and Administration Buildings and the creation of several Interim Trails.

### Heritage Permit Application

This Staff Report concerns the heritage permit application to implement a new Multi-Use Path and Nature Trails within the existing woodlands located at the northwest corner of DDO Park. These proposed trails are consistent with the Council-approved DDO Park Master Plan, and will provide visitors the opportunity to experience previously inaccessible areas of the site, and to enjoy more of the park's natural beauty and landscape features during the early stages of project implementation.

As shown in Figure 1, the Multi-Use Path (MUP) will provide a generally north-south connection from Hillsvie Drive to the main existing north-south trail within DDO Park, while the Nature Trails will provide an east-west linkage through the wooded area.

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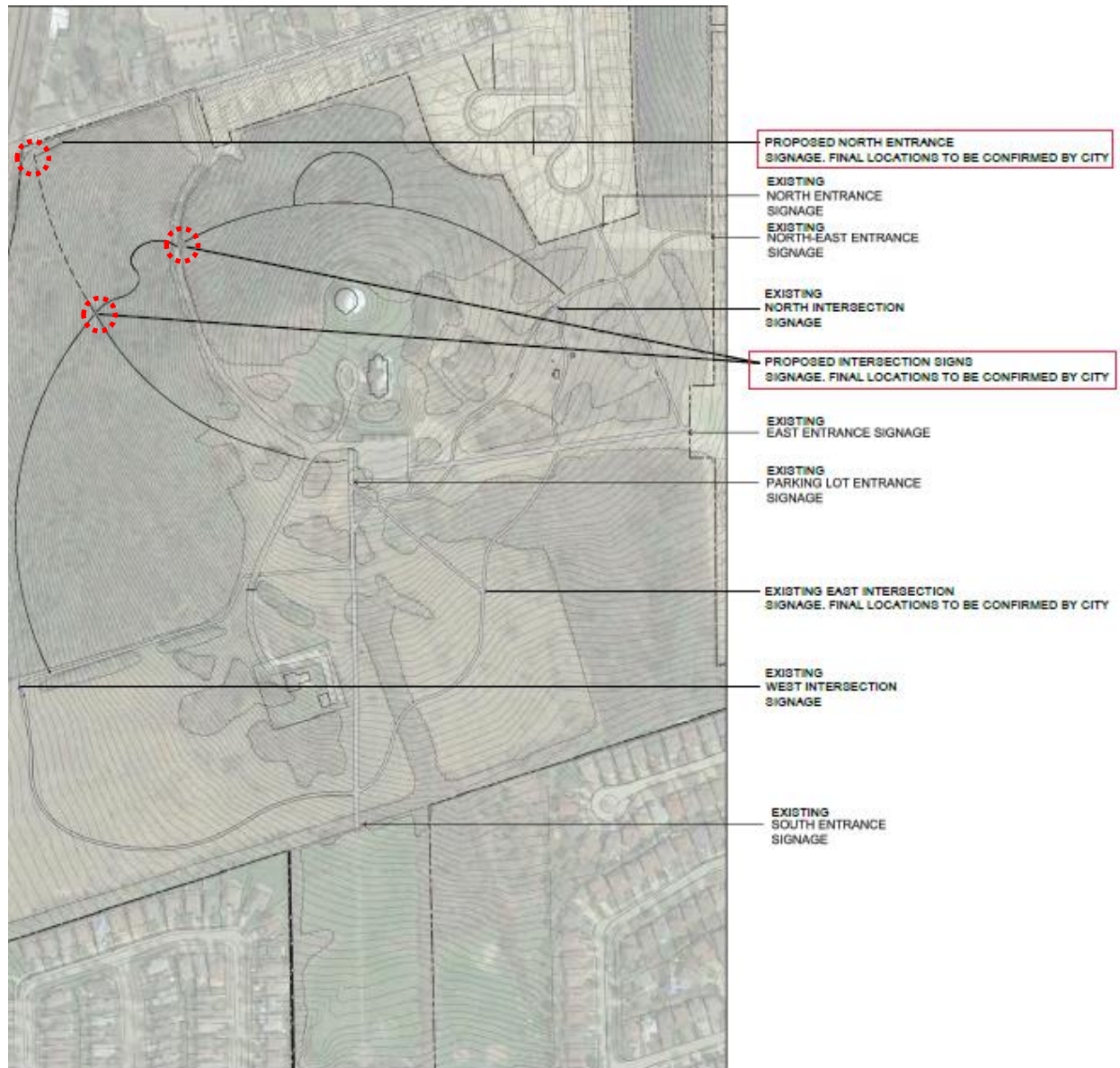
The proposed trails will range from 1.5 to 3.0 metres wide, in addition to safety buffers for trail users. The trails will also be paved in a variety of materials, determined by site conditions and anticipated uses. Please refer to Figure 1 for further information on the MUP and Nature Trails.



**Figure 1** Proposed Multi-Use Path (red) and Nature Trails (yellow and purple)

Temporary trail signs will also be installed following construction of the new MUP and Nature Trails, and will include information on trail surfacing, slope, distance, and skill level, location of facilities, and regulatory information. Temporary signs have been designed in accordance with the City's *Park Signage Standards*. Please refer to Figure 2 for proposed temporary trail signage locations.

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**Figure 2** Proposed temporary trail signage locations (outlined in red)

Construction of the proposed MUP and Nature Trails within the woodlands at the northeast of the park will require the removal of approximately 525 trees, as well as re-grading along the extent of the trails. However, different options for tree removal and re-grading were explored during project design to minimize impact on this natural area. Please see the 'Discussion' section below for a more detailed description of these mitigation measures.

## Discussion

While the proposed MUP and Nature Trails have already been approved in principle by Council through the DDO Park Master Plan, a heritage permit is required for this scope

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of work, as it has the potential to impact the following heritage attributes identified in Designation By-law 100-09 (emphasis added):

- The complex overall land pattern within the identified area. Comprised of the original survey grid field pattern overlain with the formal geometry of the Beaux Arts observatory core and the curvilinear road network, containing all fields, lawns and plantings.

The mature tree plantings at the northeast of DDO Park form a wooded backdrop for the David Dunlap Observatory when viewed from the south, and contribute to the land pattern and cultural heritage value of DDO Park more broadly. While the proposed MUP and Nature Trails will require regrading, and the removal of approximately 525 trees within this wooded area, the trails will run through the interior of the woodland, and will not impact the Observatory's wooded backdrop, or the overall composition of the DDO cultural heritage landscape.

Further, one of the goals in designing the trail layout and grading plan was to minimize required tree removals within the woodland, while also providing the network of trails outlined in the Council-approved DDO Park Master Plan. Mitigation measures incorporated into the design of the MUP and Nature Trails include:

- Reducing the extent of required re-grading and tree removal by increasing the slope in portions of the trail;
- Reducing the width of the MUP and the smaller Nature Trail;
- Reducing the width of the 'clear zone' on both sides of the larger Nature Trail; and
- Redesigning the segment of the larger Nature Trail between the proposed MUP and Donalda Drive to minimize the extent of re-grading and tree removal required in this area.

In light of the above-mentioned mitigation measures, and since the proposed MUP and Nature Trails will enhance the accessibility of DDO Park, and allow a wide variety of visitors to appreciate the property's heritage attributes and cultural heritage value, Staff are supportive of the heritage permit application for the implementation of these trails.

### Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

Capital costs associated with the implementation of the DDO Park MUP and Nature Trails (which are part of Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory Park – Assignment 2) were previously approved by Council through the 2022 Capital Budget process.

### Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:

Careful consideration of alterations to this Cultural Heritage Landscape supports Council's priority to foster a ***Strong Sense of Belonging***, through "placemaking" and a "commitment to community building in places like...the Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory." Further, through stewarding and enhancing the network of trails in DDO

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Park, and making them accessible to a variety of users, the project also fulfills the priorities of ***Balancing Growth and Green***, and ***Getting Around the City***.

### Conclusion:

The heritage permit process is designed to ensure that heritage attributes, as described in a heritage designation by-law, are not obscured, damaged or destroyed unnecessarily by alterations and other forms of intervention.

While a new MUP and Nature Trails are proposed within the forested area at the northwest of DDO Park, these trails will run through the interior of the woodland, and will not impact the Observatory's wooded backdrop, or the overall composition of the DDO cultural heritage landscape more broadly. Furthermore, the implementation of these trails is consistent with the Council-approved DDO Park Master Plan, and will allow a wide variety of visitors to explore and appreciate the property's heritage attributes and cultural heritage value. As such, Staff are supportive of this heritage permit application.

### Attachments:

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendices, 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**  
Heritage Permit Application – Richmond Hill DDO Park Multi Use Path and Nature Trail
- **Appendix B**  
Figure 30 from the David Dunlap Observatory Master Plan

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### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPI.23.012 Heritage Permit - DDO Park Multi-Use Path and Nature Trail.docx
Attachments:	- Appendices - DDO Trails Heritage Permit - AODA 3.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 - 11:16 AM**

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

**Darlene Joslin - Feb 8, 2023 - 3:32 PM**