



Staff Report for Capital Sustainability Steering Committee

Date of Meeting: May 7, 2024

Report Number: SRPBS.24.054

Department: Planning and Building Services

Division: Policy Planning

Subject: SRPBS.24.054 – Parks Plan Implementation and
10 Year Capital Forecast for Growth

Purpose:

To present a summary of the Parks Plan Implementation to date and a high level summary of the 10 Year Capital Forecast for growth-related park projects to facilitate discussion and feedback on strategies for implementation and cost mitigation.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That SRPBS.24.054 regarding the Parks Plan Implementation and 10 Year Capital Forecast for growth-related park projects be received and that all comments be referred back to staff for consideration in 2025 capital planning.

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Report Approval:

Submitted by: Gus Galanis, Acting Commissioner of Planning and Building Services

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 purpose of this report is to present a summary of the Parks Plan Implementation to date and a high level summary of the 10 Year Capital Forecast for growth-related park projects to facilitate discussion and feedback on strategies for implementation and cost mitigation. The City's Parks Plan was approved by Council on June 22, 2022 (see SRPI.022.083) to guide the planning of parkland and outdoor recreational facilities to 2031.

Parks Plan Implementation Progress

The 2022 Parks Plan establishes target service levels for the provision of parkland and outdoor recreational facilities which are implemented as part of the review and approval of *Planning Act* applications, the preparation and approval of master plans, studies and strategies, and the approval of capital budget recommendations. The target service levels are established to serve a projected population of approximately 253,000 people by 2031.

The Parks Plan directs that the acquisition and development of new parks and the redevelopment of existing parks will consider, amongst other matters, whether the land use, population density and/or demographics around the park have significantly changed. As such, the Parks Plan does not include a specific list of projects, but rather criteria for how to best implement the target service levels. The criteria is based on how the City is growing and informed by a map (Figure 6.1, the Urban Open Space System map) that helps visualize how the municipal park system, within and adjacent to the growing centres and corridors, can move towards a unified interconnected network that serves the public at large.

The Parks Plan notes that the existing (2022) City-wide parkland provision rate of 1.56 hectares per 1,000 people will decrease over the horizon of the Plan (i.e. by 2031) given the constraints imposed by the *Planning Act's* alternative dedication rate. This direction was further constrained by the Bill 23 changes to the *Planning Act* which imposed land-size based caps of 10% where the lands to be developed/redeveloped are less than 5 hectares and 15% where the lands to be developed/redeveloped are greater than 5 hectares. In the past the parkland obligation increased as density increased but, as a result of this legislative change, that is no longer the case. Instead of establishing a specific parkland provision rate, the 2022 Parks Plan directs that the City will minimize impacts to the per capita parkland provision levels. Further, given the City's on-going land constraints, the Plan directs the optimization of existing facilities. For many of the larger facilities (i.e. ball diamonds, soccer fields), for example, the Parks Plan provides direction to explore measures that would enable a greater capacity of use (i.e. adding lighting or adding artificial turf to extend the play season or allow evening play) or exploring partnerships.

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To date, the following park and outdoor recreational facilities have been and continue to be implemented through capital budget recommendations:

2022:

- 10 seasonal pop-up pickleball courts were created at Richmond Green as a result of funding extended to 2026 (refer to SRPI.23.063). Note: the extension is funded through a Section 37 Community Benefits Contribution negotiated through an adjacent North Leslie development application.
- William Duncan Park opened for public use, providing a passive park space for the growing south-east quadrant of the Yonge/16th KDA with new trails, site furnishings, and landscaping.
- RHDDO Park – continuation of Phase 2 of the woodlot restoration. This work, which commenced in 2020, took three years to complete and is being followed by two years of monitoring and maintenance (utilizing a developer contribution negotiated through the OMB settlement for the adjacent development). Detailed design also began on the Observatory Lane Pedestrian Bridge, which is partially funded through a Federal Active Transportation grant.

2023:

- A relining survey and relining work to create dual-lined courts for both tennis and pickleball play were completed based on public input received at Morgan Boyle Park and Grovewood Park.
- The Town Park Master Plan was finalized and approved on June 28, 2023.
- Minthorn Park Revitalization construction began, including an enhanced playground to meet AODA standards and incorporation of climate change adaptation features, namely a rain garden which was awarded a funding grant from the ICLEI Advancing Climate Change Adaptation Project in June, 2021.
- Raccoon Park tennis court enhancement construction began (utilizing Section 37 funding approved through an adjacent Yonge Street development).
- Sunnywood Park opened for public use, providing a new playground, outdoor fitness equipment and pathways to serve the growing Richmond Hill Centre area. This park is the City's first developer designed/built park in many years and utilizes Section 37 Community Benefits funding approved through the adjacent development.
- Bridgeview Park Revitalization public consultation took place regarding design concepts that included the City's first small off-leash dog area, and the City's first community garden in walking distance to the Yonge Street growth corridor.
- Miles Hill Linear Park public consultation took place on design concepts, which included a multi-use pathway, seating, landscaping, and playground elements to serve the growing Village area. This park is the second developer designed/built park in many years and utilizes Section 37 Community Benefits funding from adjacent developments.

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- The Richmond Green Master Plan was initiated and background research is currently underway.
- RHDDO Park - Phase 3 of the ecological restoration project, which will consist of the creation of a new 1.2 hectare meadow and additional woodland restoration began. It was undertaken with the financial support that the Government of Canada provided through the Federal Department of Environment and Climate Change). The multi-use path and granite chip nature trail was also constructed in the woodlands located in the north-west area of the park.

2024:

- Relining survey to create multi-lined courts at Oak Ridges Lion's Club Park and Russel Farm Park to be completed in the Spring based on public input from the survey.
- Mill Pond Park Revitalization Master Plan was approved on April 10, 2024.
- The Civic Lands Passive Park Plan is in the procurement phase at the time of this report. The project is targeting initiation of consultation and conceptual design in the Spring. The new park features ultimately approved by Council have not been accounted for in the Capital Plan forecast.
- Bayview Hill Park Revitalization Phase 1 construction begins, which includes the following new growth facilities to serve the growing area: splash pad (summer) and ice skating rink (winter), updated playground, lit pickleball courts (4), enhanced lit tennis courts (6) and seating plaza, multi sport court, new washroom building, new pollinator garden, new pathways, benches and plantings.
- Harding Park Revitalization construction begins, which includes the following new growth facilities to serve the growing Yonge Street corridor: enhancement of the baseball diamond to meet current City standards, enhancement of playgrounds to meet AODA standards, new multi-sport court, updated parking lot, trails and site furnishings.
- Town Park Revitalization detailed design begins with Phase 1 of the project, which includes the following new-growth facilities to serve the growing Village area: new main pedestrian connection from Yonge Street to Unity Park (i.e. improvements along Lorne Avenue and at the front of Town Park/the Elgin Barrow Arena, and a new Pugsley Street Crossing), new passive recreation areas and pollinator meadow, and enhanced larger Class "A" softball diamond.
- Ozark Park Revitalization detailed design begins, which is to include the planned barrier-free playground for the north, new picnic shelter, enhanced tennis courts that are dual-lined for pickleball play, enhancement of the two softball diamonds to meet current City standards, and consideration of a small off-leash dog area given the park's proximity to the growing Yonge Street corridor.
- RHDDO Park – Pedestrian / cyclist bridge and fencing construction to commence. The fundamental goal of the bridge crossing is to provide a safe and convenient connection between the RHDDO Park and Observatory Lane on the west side of the CN rail line (project partially funded through a Federal Active Transportation grant). The design of the site servicing, panhandle drive, new

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parking lot, 16th Avenue entrance and restoration of Elvis Stojko Arena parking lot continues. In addition, the design of the Hillview Drive and eastern entrance commenced.

Parkland and/or interim urban plazas to be secured through *Planning Act* applications is on-going and implemented through the following:

- Providing comments on applications in the centres and corridors to secure the planned Community Parks, Local Parks, Parkettes, Linear Parks and Urban Squares identified in the 2022 Parks Plan;
- Providing comments on the on-going applications and registration and assumption of new Community Parks, Local Parks, and Parkettes in the North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plan areas; and
- Approval of two interim Urban Plazas (privately owned public spaces) in the Yonge/16th KDA, which will remain until such time as municipal parkland is conveyed in later phases of the redevelopment of this KDA.

In addition to the above mentioned projects, between 2022 and present, a number of park repair and replacement projects were completed that were partially funded from growth reserves (i.e. to enable enhancements to playgrounds to meet current AODA standards and/or to update tennis courts with new colour-coated surfacing).

The Current 10 Year Capital Plan forecast includes various new growth park projects and park revitalization projects to coincide with projected population growth (i.e. park projects that are predominantly focused in the growing North Leslie and West Gormley Secondary Plan areas and along or adjacent to the growing Yonge Street corridor). It should be noted that additional projects (or subsequent phases of those projects) recently identified to be prioritized have not yet been incorporated into the Capital Budget forecast including detailed design and construction of the Civic Lands Passive Park, any works related to the on-going discussions for the memorial for PS Flight 752, and design, construction and/or programming resources for pop-up recreational courts at the Gormley GO Station parking lot (pending a lease agreement with the Province).

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Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

Current 10 Year Capital Forecast

The Parks Plan directs that a number of implementation tools be used to enable the acquisition of land for park purposes and the funding of park and other recreational projects where land conveyance is not possible.

The following funding needs were established through the Parks Plan:

- \$75 million dollars to cover the cash needs of park revitalization projects, park development and outdoor recreation facility construction associated with service levels and park types that have not been part of the City's previous standards, and interim or "pop up" park projects required to respond to community demand;
- \$411 million dollars to cover the monetary value of total parkland needs (exclusive of the park lands secured through existing planning approvals and the North Leslie Master Parks Agreement) to 2031 (i.e. 29 ha of unsecured parkland need);
- The need for an updated Development Charges By-law that reflects the full funding envelope for outdoor recreational needs that the City could collect through this funding tool (i.e. the new maximum funding envelope to 2033 of \$107.8 million for outdoor recreational needs).

The primary revenue sources identified to implement the growth-related projects in the Parks Plan include the Development Charges By-law, the Parkland Dedication By-law and the Community Benefits Charges By-law, which are further discussed below. It should be noted that state of good repair projects will be discussed in a separate report.

Development Charges

Development Charges ("DCs") provide for the recovery of growth-related capital expenditures from new development. The development of parks, indoor recreation facilities, recreation vehicles and equipment are eligible asset types to be funded by the Parks and Recreation Services Development Charge Reserve Fund (the "Parks and Rec DC").

The current 10 Year Capital Forecast estimates a total of \$387 million in expenditures from the Parks and Rec DC from 2024 to 2033. Of this amount, approximately \$117.4 million in expenditures is for growth-related park projects between 2025-2033. It is expected that the total amount of Parks and Rec DCs that will be collected over the same period of time will be approximately \$208 million. However, as was noted in SRCS.24.07, there is a funding shortfall from this reserve of \$129.5 million by 2033.

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Parkland Dedication

The *Planning Act* permits a municipality to establish a by-law that enables the municipality to require parkland dedication, or payment of cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication, as a condition of development under Section 42, Section 51.1 and Section 53 (i.e. a parkland dedication by-law). The *Planning Act* also provides a municipality with the option of establishing an “Alternative Parkland Rate” for residential uses in this by-law so long as the municipality has appropriate policies in its Official Plan that speak to the need for parkland as well as an up-to-date Parks Plan. Cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication (“CIL”) payments are typically required where the conveyance of land would be too small to provide for a functioning park or the site is not in an area with a defined land need.

The City approved a new Parkland Dedication By-law No. 123-22 on September 13, 2022, which is currently under appeal before the Ontario Land Tribunal with negotiations on-going. Bill 23 will result in significant revenue reductions to growth-related funding tools (see Staff Report SRPI.23.018, Special Council Meeting of January 30, 2023). For example CIL, is expected to be reduced by over 60% (\$200 million). As was outlined in SRCFS.24.012, the projected 2025 CIL Reserve Fund balance is \$57.7 million and \$73 million in expenditures are forecast between 2025-2031. Beyond the horizon of the current Parkland Dedication By-law 123-22, the Capital Plan forecast accounts for approximately \$4.5M (2032 and 2033) from the CIL Reserve Fund. The total amount of CIL to be collected to 2033 will cover these costs and approximately \$66 million will be available to secure additional parklands.

Community Benefits Charge

The City approved a Community Benefits Charge By-law on July 6, 2022, which is currently under appeal before the Ontario Land Tribunal with negotiations on-going. As was outlined in SRCFS.22.026, the Community Benefits Charge Strategy identifies an estimated revenue of \$15.68 million over the 10 Year planning period from mid-2022 to mid-2032. This is used to compliment DCs and CIL to fund growth-related parks and parkland acquisition. Bill 23 impacts the collection of the Community Benefits Charge as well.

Opportunities for Funding and Cost Mitigation

It is recommended that the following strategies be further investigated to mitigate growth-related parks costs in the 10 Year Capital Forecast:

- Recognize that the City will not likely meet its total parkland target of approximately 29 hectares to be secured to 2031 as outlined in the 2022 Parks Plan given the project needs identified in the Capital Forecast, the Bill 23 funding gap, and the on-going lack of available land to purchase and consider:

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- Acquiring, through *Planning Act* applications, as much of the unsecured parkland that is needed to 2031;
 - Parkland acquisitions outside of *Planning Act* applications only when adequate Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland or Community Benefits Charge funds are available;
 - Utilizing a portion of the projected CIL Reserve funding towards the gap created in the Parks and Rec DC to 2033 for growth-related parks projects.
- Given the constraints on securing parkland to 2031, use existing parklands more efficiently by prioritizing the planning and timing of new growth parks, linear park connections and park revitalization projects to optimize the delivery of the outdoor recreation service level needs for the growing community.
- Defer the last phase of each Park Revitalization Master Plan to beyond 2031. For example:
 - Considering deferring Town Park Revitalization Phase 3 (parking lot greening enhancements, Verne Dynes re-alignment) from 2030 to beyond 2031.
 - Considering deferring Mill Pond Park Revitalization Phase 3 (creation of new park centre south of Mill Street) from 2031 to beyond 2031.
 - Considering deferring Bayview Hill Park Revitalization Phase 2 (renovation of existing soccer field and softball diamond) from 2030 to beyond 2031.
 - Consider extending the RHDDO Park Early Priorities from 8 years to 10 years and conducting a review of the park implementation and phasing plan to explore opportunities for cost savings to ensure a cost-effective buildout of the park. In addition, the consider deferring the Late Term Projects to beyond the 10 Year Capital Plan, with exploration of their implementation in the future.
- Defer the timing of the construction of the North Leslie Community Centre to the latter years of the Capital Plan forecast to better coincide with the population growth in the area and allow additional forecasted DC revenue collections for this planned asset.
- Continue to investigate partnerships with other public agencies to provide publicly accessible interim or pilot park or outdoor recreation projects on lands not owned by the City to implement the parkland and outdoor recreation service level targets outlined in the Parks Plan. Avoid consideration of partnerships that propose utilities, private low impact development elements or any other element not directly related to the planned purpose of the park, given the limited potential for the City to secure additional parkland to 2031.

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- Maximize the innovative use of revenue sources by continuing to investigate and apply for relevant grants (i.e. Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund, Active Transportation grants, Habitat Stewardship Program grants, Inclusivity grants, etc.)

Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:

Balancing Growth and Green

The Parks Plan 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 direction in the Parks Plan provides for an integrated lifecycle planning approach to ensure the planning, design/construction, and maintenance/operational aspects of the facilities and programs outlined in the Plan account for all costs from project inception through to construction/program formulation, and operation/maintenance.

Sense of Belonging

The Parks Plan aids in establishing a sense of belonging by providing equitable access to parks and outdoor recreation facilities and by directing that these facilities be located within close proximity to residential units or in prominent locations in the community to ensure parks, recreation and cultural experiences build a sense of place within the community.

Getting Around the City

The Parks Plan directs for the creation of improved connections to the parks system through enhanced streetscapes, bridge crossings, and trail connections. These enhancements will allow residents to access parks by foot or bicycle, providing ease of access for those using park facilities.

Conclusion:

The Parks Plan was approved by Council on June 22, 2022 to guide the planning of parkland and outdoor recreational facilities to 2031. The Parks Plan establishes target service levels for the provision of parkland and outdoor recreational facilities which are implemented as part of the review and approval of *Planning Act* applications, the preparation and approval of master plans, studies and strategies, and the approval of capital budget recommendations. The target service levels are established to serve a projected population of approximately 253,000 people by 2031.

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Growth-related park projects are captured in the 10 Year Capital Forecast and funded through a combination of Reserves, specifically the Parks and Rec DC, the Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland Reserve, and the Community Benefits Charge Reserve. Given the pressure to fund growth-related project needs in the Capital Forecast from these Reserves, the Bill 23 funding gap, and the on-going lack of available land to purchase, it is recognized that the City will not likely meet the total parkland to be secured to 2031 that is outlined in the 2022 Parks Plan (i.e. approximately 29 hectares).

As such, this report provides a list of measures to mitigate the predicted funding gap for parkland acquisition, while ensuring new or revitalized outdoor recreational facilities continue to be provided to serve the growing population by continuing to advance the new park and park revitalization projects in the 10 year Capital Plan where they coincide with growth. Comments received from the Capital Sustainability Steering Committee will be used as input for the 2025 Budget Strategy.

Attachments:

No attachments

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPBS.24.054 Parks Plan Implementation and 10 year capital forecast.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Apr 26, 2024

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

Maria Flores - Apr 26, 2024 - 4:16 PM

Gigi Li - Apr 26, 2024 - 4:20 PM

Gus Galanis - Apr 26, 2024 - 4:29 PM

Darlene Joslin - Apr 26, 2024 - 4:48 PM