



Staff Report for DDO Park Project Steering Committee

Date of Meeting: December 10, 2024

Report Number: SRIES.24.017

Department: Infrastructure and Engineering Services

Division: Infrastructure Delivery

Subject: SRIES.24.017 – Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory Park Update

Purpose:

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

Recommendation(s):

- a) That staff presentation and staff report SRIES.24.017 regarding Richmond Hill David Dunlap Observatory Park Project update be received.

Contact Person(s):

- Bob Levesque, Director, Infrastructure Delivery, extension 2947
- Mohammad Kashani, Manager of Design and Construction, Infrastructure Delivery, extension 5479

Report Approval:

Submitted by: Paolo Masaro, Commissioner Infrastructure and Engineering 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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Key Messages:

- RHDDO Pedestrian and Cyclist Bridge construction has commenced and expected completion by Q4 2025. The cost of the bridge is partially funded by the Government of Canada's Active Transportation Fund.
- The design of the works in the southern area referred to as panhandle that includes site servicing, park entrances improvements, multi-use path, new parking lot, and Elvis Stojko Arena parking lot rehabilitation is scheduled to be completed by Q4 2025.
- Ecological restoration, woodland restoration, and meadow creation work continues. The meadow creation is partially funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada for Monarch butterfly habitat.
- Observatory roof panel and terrazzo flooring replacement are underway and will be completed early 2025. This project is funded 50% by Parks Canada's National Cost-Sharing Program for Heritage Places.
- The Capital Sustainability Steering Committee approved the strategies to extend the timeframe for implementation of the remaining projects to smoothen the capital budget and the deferring of the late phase projects beyond 2031.

Background:

The implementation of the RHDDO Park Master Plan is a visionary plan that highlights the culture landscape, Observatory and Administration building and contributes to the City's Identity.

This report provides an update on the progress made in implementing the RHDDO Park Master Plan and subsequent approved recommendations since the last committee meeting, as well as an outline of ongoing and upcoming initiatives, to facilitate discussion and gather feedback from the RHDDO Project Steering Committee.

Discussion:

The implementation of the "Early Priorities" continues with the commencement of the construction of the pedestrian/cyclist bridge, with anticipated completion by the end of 2025.

In October 2024, the contract was awarded for the construction of the pedestrian/cyclist bridge with the goal of completing the bridge by Q4 2025. The bridge design aligns with CN Railway's requirements, ensuring adequate height, width, and span to accommodate potential track expansion and electrification.

The pedestrian/cyclist bridge will provide a safe active transportation connection between RHDDO Park on the east side of the CN Rail corridor to Observatory Lane and Yonge Street on the west side. The intensification and key development area at Yonge Street and Carrville Road/16th Avenue is a major node of retail and commercial

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development on the Yonge Street Regional Rapid Transit corridor that will benefit from and to this pedestrian oriented connection to RHDDO Park.

The Government of Canada is contributing \$3.18 million to this project through the Active Transportation Fund (ATF), which supports safer, more accessible active transportation in line with Canada's National Active Transportation Strategy.

The panhandle works have advanced from a medium-priority to an early-priority project and includes the implementation of the site servicing required for future park facilities and amenities.

The remaining panhandle works were consolidated into one coordinated assignment that includes a multi-use path, new parking lot, 16th Avenue entrance feature and the Elvis Stojko Arena parking lot rehabilitation. Consolidating the panhandle works allows for streamlining the design and more efficient construction delivery with less disruptions to park and arena users. The improvements to the panhandle lands includes an open space that can accommodate potential future sports courts. This area can be used in the interim for passive and active recreation.

Staff explored alternatives for the primary access to the site would benefit the park by shifting the alignment along the western property boundary and moving the 16th Avenue entrance to the west as shown in Figure 1 below. This alignment maintains the existing fire route, improved vehicular and pedestrian circulation, increased parking spaces and integrates with the site grading more cohesively. Traffic calming measure will be provide for the access drive adjacent to the arena.

The revised design includes converting the 16th Avenue entrance to a right in / right out entrance and small entry plaza space. Improvement to the arena operations included increased snow storage garbage collection space.

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Figure 1: 'Early Priority' Progress



The ecological restoration anticipated to be completed in 2027 will create 1.8 hectares of woodlot and restore 1.22 hectares of meadow

The Toronto & Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) working on behalf of the City is undertaking Phase 3 of the ecological restoration project consisting of woodland restoration and meadow creation.

The restoration activities will create 1.8 hectares of woodlot to the east and west of Elms Lea farmhouse and includes hazard tree removals, invasive plant management, tree planting and installation of fencing and tree shelters this November to protect newly planted trees from damage by browsing deer and wildlife.

The meadow creation activities will restore 1.22 hectares of meadow to the west of the woodland restoration project. In the spring of 2024, the second round of site preparation was completed, and the final round was completed in November. The work includes mowing, tilling, and oat seeding, wildlife habitat features installations, invasive plant management followed by seeding with native grasses and pollinator wildflower species. Ongoing management will occur over a number of years and includes maintenance mowing and invasive plant management. The meadow component of the Phase 3 work received \$56,000 in funding from Environment and Climate Change Canada in support of Monarch butterfly habitat.

In 2025, the City and the Toronto & Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) will begin designing Phase 4 of the ecological restoration project at RHDDO Park, focusing on managing 14 hectares of existing woodland in the park's northwest corner. Implementation of this phase is scheduled to start in 2026 and conclude by 2030.

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This multi-phased strategy includes four additional phases (phase 5 to 8) to restore, create, and manage woodlands and other natural features at RHDDO Park. These phases are planned to commence in 2028 with the entire ecological restoration project anticipated for completion by 2042.

Replacement of the observatory dome panels will preserve the asset value and usability

In 2023, a condition assessment was undertaken of the interior of the Observatory Building which identified that the interior of the dome to be warped, damaged and have become detached from the underlying frame in addition to cracked flooring along the exterior wall due to seasonal floor movement.

As a result of the building condition, a project was advanced through the capital budget process to undertake the restoration which has since commenced. The city successfully received Parks Canada's 2024 National Cost-Sharing Program for Heritage Places grant, which covers 50% of the repair costs.

Radio Shack and Pump House Buildings status

Radio Shack: As a heritage attribute with cultural significance, the Radio Shack building is planned for decommissioning under Assignment 7, as recommended in the David Dunlap Observatory Building Conditional Assessment report. Assignment 7 design planned for 2027 also includes the design of site features and antennas to commemorate the building's astrological importance.

Pump House: Although not a heritage attribute, a review of the pump house is planned under Assignment 6 (starting in 2025, pending budget approval) to assess its potential for restoration and repurposing as a mechanical and/or electrical facility. Staff will report back with the findings following further evaluation and consultant studies at a future meeting.

Progress on the delivery of the RHDDO Park Project continues, along with the ongoing implementation of the long-term plan to fully bring the RHDDO Park master plan vision to life.

Table 1 below summaries the status of each project to date in the implementation of the RHDDO Park.

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Table 1: ‘Early Priority’ Progress

Project/Activity	Status
Update RHDDO website and landing page	Completed
Restoration of Observatory and Administration Building	Completed
Administration Building - Water Supply Improvements	Completed
Assignment 1 - Interim Trails	Completed
Assignment 2 – Multi-use Path and Nature Trails	Completed
Woodlot Restoration Phase 1 (multiyear implementation)	Completed
Assignment 3 – Observatory Lane Pedestrian Rail Overpass	Ongoing
Cultural and Recreational Programming in-person and virtual	Ongoing
Woodlot Restoration Phase 2 (multiyear implementation)	Ongoing
Woodlot Restoration Phase 3 Restoration Plan Development	Ongoing
Observatory Interior Dome Panel Replacement	Ongoing
Assignment 4/5 – Site servicing, panhandle lands, new parking lot, Elvis Stojko Arena parking lot and park entrances	Ongoing

A review of the sequencing and costing of the ‘Early and Medium Priority’ projects was conducted to inform the Capital Sustainability Steering Committee and the 10-year capital forecast.

RHDDO Park implementation requires a considerable financial commitment that will impact the Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland Reserve Fund and the Outdoor Recreation Development Charges Reserve Fund. To align this long-term investment with community expectations and fiscal responsibility, staff annually review project assignments, timelines, cost estimates, and opportunities for economies of scale and cost mitigation.

In May of this year, the RHDDO Park was included in the Planning and Building Services presentation to the Capital Sustainability Steering Committee (CSSC) on 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 approved recommendations were brought to the CSSC committee at CSSC#04-24 on May 7, 2024 and included in SRPBS.24.054 Parks Plan Implementation and 10 Year Capital Forecast for Growth:











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- Extend timeframe of Master Plan implementation further across the Capital Plan Forecast
- Defer late phases of the Master Plan to beyond 2031

By extending the timeframe for the delivery of Early Priority projects, capital expenditures can be more evenly distributed while focusing on the park’s passive features.

Table 2 below summarizes the updated project assignment groupings and anticipated timeframe for the implementation of early priority assignments.

Table 2: Anticipated timeframe for current and ‘Early Priority’ implementation

Projects	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
RHDDO Consultant Services Miscellaneous works and PM services						
RHDDO Assignment 3 Observatory Lane Pedestrian Rail Overpass 63 Observatory Lane and Trail						
RHDDO Assignment 4/5 Site Servicing Panhandle Drive Panhandle Drive Parking Lot Multi-use Path 16th Ave. Entrance including entry element Elvis Stojko Arena Parking Lot Restoration Hillsview Drive Entrance Eastern Entrance / Parkette						
RHDDO Assignment 6 Washroom Facility Playground and Water Feature Element Great Lawn Pump House						
RHDDO Assignment 7 Picnic Area and Covered Pavilions Observatory Parking Lot Radio Shack and Antennas						
RHDDO Assignment 8 Park Operations Maintenance Facility						

Legend



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A review of the ‘Medium Priority’ projects to further establish RHDDO Park as regional destination was undertaken.

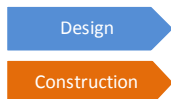
The timeframe for implementation of the ‘Medium Term’ projects within the 10-year capital plan have also been extended by a year. In addition, following the direction from Council to pause the delivery of a community Pickleball hub as per staff report SRPI.23.063 has allow for a reassessment of the timeline to deliver the sports court and clubhouse within the Panhandle Lands. Staff will monitor the impact of the outdoor pickleball facility improvements being made to ensure that the future sports court hub moved to the end (2032-2034) of the medium priority projects implementation will adequately meet community needs and align with the broader vision for RHDDO Park.

Table 3 below summaries the updated project assignment groupings and anticipated timeframe for the implementation of ‘Medium Priority’ assignments. Late Term Project have been deferred beyond the 10 Year Capital Plan as per the CSSC recommendations.

Table 3: Anticipated timeframe for current and ‘Medium Priority’ implementation

Projects	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
RHDDO Assignment 9 Restoration / Improvements to Donalda Drive Central Plaza incl. fountain feature Star Illuminating Path	Design		Construction			
RHDDO Assignment 10 Formal Garden around Observatory Amphitheatre		Design		Construction		
RHDDO Assignment 11 Wetlands incl. boardwalks/lookouts			Design		Construction	
RHDDO Assignment 12 Sports Courts and Clubhouse				Design		Construction

Legend



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Financial Implications:

The implementation of the future phases of RHDDO Park will have an impact on the City's Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland Reserve Fund and the Outdoor Recreation Development Charges Reserve Fund.

The approach of extending the project timeline was incorporated in the 2025 10-year Capital Budget submission to ensure responsible and sustainable implementation. Staff will continually reassess the phasing and funding strategy for RHDDO Park to align with fiscal sustainability and community needs.

Alternative sources of funding.

Staff are exploring various funding sources, including senior government grants or loans, private sponsorships, partnerships, and community fundraising. Due to the project's scale, securing adequate financing remains challenging. Currently, three ongoing projects at RHDDO Park benefit from external funding:

- The Pedestrian and Cyclist Bridge is partially funded by the Government of Canada's Active Transportation Fund.
- Meadow Creation is supported by Environment and Climate Change Canada for Monarch butterfly habitat.
- Observatory Building repairs are 50% funded through Parks Canada's 2024 National Cost-Sharing Program for Heritage Places.

Relationship to Strategic Plan 2024-2027:

The RHDDO Park initiatives align with the City's Strategic Plan, supporting the following pillars:

- **Pillar 1: Growing a Livable, Sustainable Community**
 - The woodlot restoration and meadow creation enhance and protect natural assets, offering diverse, accessible green spaces for future generations.
 - The CN pedestrian/cyclist bridge and trail improve transportation infrastructure, mobility, and safety while promoting active, sustainable travel.
- **Pillar 3: Strengthening Our Foundations**
 - Extending the Early Priority project timeline follows the Capital Sustainability Steering Committee's guidance to distribute capital expenditures across additional years, supporting long-term financial, social, environmental, and economic sustainability.

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Report Approval Details

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Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Nov 26, 2024

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

Bob Levesque - Nov 25, 2024 - 1:19 PM

Gigi Li - Nov 25, 2024 - 4:09 PM

Paolo Masaro - Nov 26, 2024 - 8:41 AM

Darlene Joslin - Nov 26, 2024 - 10:31 AM