

Town of Whitby

Staff Report

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Report Title: Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Report to: Council

Date of meeting: May 6, 2024

Report Number: CMS 07-24

Department(s) Responsible:
Community Services Department

Submitted by:

John Romano, Commissioner,
Community Services

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell,
Chief Administrative Officer**

For additional information, contact:

Sharon Meredith, Director, Recreation

Sean Malby, Sr. Manager, Parks, Parks
Planning & Culture

Kim Evans, Manager, 55+ Recreation
Services, Accessibility & Diversity

1. Recommendation:

1. That Council receive for information the draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan, appended to Report CMS 07-24 as Attachment 1;
2. That Staff proceed with the final phase of community consultation and feedback on the draft plan; and,
3. That following further community consultation, staff report back to Council with a final Parks and Recreation Master Plan for Council's adoption, in fall 2024.

2. Highlights:

- Once complete, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan will guide decision making related to parks and recreation services in the Town through to 2031.
- The first three (3) phases of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan have been completed including:

- A review of the Town's background material, community profile and inventory review;
 - A data review, gap analysis and review of parks and recreation sector trends and best practices;
 - Community engagement consisting of a community survey, stakeholder focus groups, virtual public consultation sessions, staff workshops and Council interviews which resulted in the Background and Community Engagement Summary Report, which was presented to Council in May 2023, engaging over 4,700 participants;
 - Facility and Service Delivery Assessments; and,
 - Development of a draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- The final phase of this project (Phase 4) will be to circulate the draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan to the community and receive feedback through:
 - The Connect Whitby project page;
 - Surveying the community;
 - Circulation/Presentation to Committees of Council;
 - Circulation to the Durham District School Board and the Durham Catholic District School Board;
 - Circulation to Equity Seeking Groups and Williams Treaties First Nations; and,
 - Circulation to Sports Groups and Recreation Community Organizations.

3. Background:

In September of 2021, Council approved the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Terms of Reference [CMS 15-21](#) to update the 2006 Culture, Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (CPROS Plan) for the Town of Whitby.

Whitby is expected to experience population growth of 25% by 2031, particularly in West Whitby, Brooklin and in established areas through intensification (Hemson Consulting, 2021). This growth will increase demand on parks and recreation amenities, programs, and services. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will provide a road map to prioritize and address community needs and guide future decisions. The plan will focus primarily on parks, open spaces, recreation programming, services, and facilities, including the Marina.

The Master Plan development is organized into the following four phases:

Phase 1 – Background Review

Phase 2 – Community Engagement, Report to Council on Phase 1 and 2 ([CMS 04-23](#))

Phase 3 – Plan Development – consultation, strategies, actions

Phase 4 – Draft Plan Review / Community Consultation

Now that Phases 1, 2 and 3 are complete, Staff are reporting back to Council on the status of the project and providing an overview of the draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan, in accordance with the work plan in the Terms of Reference.

4. Discussion:

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a critical guiding document that will be used to inform and support decisions, related to Parks and Recreation services in Whitby. The information contained in the Plan will be used to develop strategies and recommendations for the future provision of Parks and Recreation services.

Currently, the draft Plan provides 78 recommendations in relation to the following key areas:

- Parkland and Trails
 - Review Town's Official Plan, Parkland By-laws and policies to support the dedication of parkland;
 - Develop a Land Acquisition Strategy;
 - Investigate opportunities to acquire a site(s) to establish a future outdoor sports complex(es) that would provide various outdoor field types and supporting amenities;
 - Revise the Parkland Development and Open Space Policy and develop a Parks and Trails Development Manual;
 - Develop a Parkland Renewal and Re-envisioning Plan;
 - Ensure standards established for the design of parks, trails and open spaces include climate change mitigation and adaptation measures;
 - Continue to implement the Town's Active Transportation Plan.
- Marina and the Waterfront
 - Undertake a Marina Master Plan;
 - Continue to implement the Town's Waterfront Parks and Open Space Master Plan.
- Facilities
 - Undertake a facility renewal strategy for Luther Vipond Arena;
- Partnerships
 - Explore opportunities to increase the utilization of municipal facilities through partnerships and increased programming;
 - Explore opportunities to increase access agreements with non-municipal gymnasium providers;
- Heydenshore Pavilion
 - Undertake a building condition study of Heydenshore Pavilion to be used to develop a modern large flexible program and support spaces;
- 55+ Recreation Centre
 - Identify enhancement opportunities for the 55+ Recreation Centre;
- Outdoor Skating Rinks
 - Provide a refrigerated outdoor skating rink or trail at a Town or District Park and monitor its use to guide decisions about construction at additional locations;
- Outdoor Sports Facilities
 - Construct lit soccer fields, diamonds and cricket fields at a future sports field complex(es);

- Investigate possibility of adding lights to existing fields to increase playing capacity;
- Review existing fields, diamonds, basketball courts and identify improvements to facilitate an enhanced playing experience;
- Construct lit tennis courts at identified parks; and
- Investigate opportunities to provide pickleball courts on the east side of Whitby, with consideration given to enhanced setback distances and noise abatement measures;
- Splash Pads and Skate Parks
 - Construct new splash pads at future District Parks;
 - Update existing splash pads with spray features, themes, fountains, public art;
 - Explore potential to incorporate small scale “skate spots” at neighbourhood parks;
- Playgrounds
 - Develop playgrounds to ensure diverse elements and creative designs are barrier free and inclusive;
 - Evaluate opportunities to incorporate natural play structures and features that promote imaginative play;
- Programs and Services
 - Review the Community Connection service delivery model with an aim to increasing participation in neighbourhood programs;
 - Employ physical literacy in existing programs and day camps with the goal of increasing individuals’ activity levels;
 - Refresh Whitby’s Youth Strategy;
 - Review 55+ participation rates and project programs, staffing and volunteers required to serve increase older adult population;
 - Develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework for Community Services;
 - Develop a Volunteer Strategy; and,
 - Develop a fair-minded Pricing Policy and Performance Metrics.

Next Steps:

Phase 4 will commence on May 21, and will include further community consultation, including:

- Sharing project information and the draft plan on Connect Whitby;
- Surveying the Community to gauge community agreement with the plans draft recommendations;
- Consultation with the Indigenous community and local First Nations;
- Consultation with the school boards;
- Consultation with Committees of Councils including (but not limited to) Accessibility, Diversity, Sustainability, Youth, Seniors; and,
- Consultation with community organizations and recreation users.

After consultation activities are complete, any edits and amendments will be made, and the final Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be presented to Council in fall of 2024.

5. Financial Considerations:

The budget for the update of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan was approved as a part of the 2021 Community Services Capital Budget. The project is currently tracking on budget with anticipated completion in Q4 2024.

Once the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is complete and approved, recommendations from the Plan will be incorporated into the Town's long-term financial strategies, studies, and plans including the next Development Charges Background Study and the Town's 10-Year Capital Forecast.

6. Communication and Public Engagement:

A staff steering committee was formed for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan development which included representatives from many departments including Parks Planning, Recreation, Accessibility, Sustainability, Communications, Facilities, Park Operations, Policy and Heritage Planning, and Finance.

Further public engagement will commence May 21 – June 21, 2024, and will include:

- Project update on Connect Whitby;
- Brief Community Survey to see if public's agreement with the plan;
- Consultation with the Indigenous community;
- Consultation with school boards;
- Consultation with Committees of Councils including (but not limited to) Accessibility, Diversity, Sustainability, Youth, Seniors; and
- Consultation with community organizations and recreation users.

7. Strategic Priorities:

Community Strategic Plan:

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan includes a review of current practices within the Town of Whitby in relation to parks, recreation, and facilities. This review will compare current services and processes to industry standards and best practices along with community feedback and priorities to make recommendations. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan, when complete, will provide a foundation for the Community Services Department which will identify future department priorities for service delivery and facility development. The Plan connects to the following pillars found in the Community Strategic Plan:

- Pillar 1 - Whitby's Neighbourhoods: Safe, Healthy & Inclusive
- Pillar 2 - Whitby's Natural & Built Environment: Connected & Resilient

- Pillar 4 – Whitby’s Government: Accountable & Responsive

Accessibility:

Accessibility has been taken into consideration in each phase of the project., Accessibility and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion staff have been consulted throughout the development of the plan and both the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee will be consulted directly for feedback in this final phase.

Sustainability:

The main purpose of the Corporate Sustainability Plan to share a vision of success for the Corporation and the Town that works towards integrating sustainability principles and practices into the delivery of services. Sustainability staff have been consulted throughout the development of this plan and the Sustainability Advisory Committee will be consulted directly for feedback in this final phase.

8. Attachments:

Attachment 1 – DRAFT Whitby Parks and Recreation Master Plan