



Town of Newmarket
395 Mulock Drive P.O. Box 328,
Newmarket, Ontario, L3Y 4X7

Email: info@newmarket.ca | Website: newmarket.ca | Phone: 905-895-5193

Recreation Playbook, Public Consultation Follow Up Information Report

Report Number: 2018-07

Department(s): Recreation & Culture, Community Services

Author(s): Colin Service

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In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any member of Council may make a request to the Town Clerk that this Report be placed on an upcoming Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the feedback received at the April 19th PIC, the Newmarket Home Show and other feedback/ongoing discussions with residents. This report will serve as a companion to the Recreation Playbook, noting the Recreation Playbook identified strategies to address needs at a given point of time. As the community continues to grow and change, the strategies identified will need to be reconsidered and in some cases altered to better reflect the current needs of the community. **As a result, this report is to serve as the most current reference document intended to guide capital and operational planning associated with the Recreation Playbook.**

Background

In 2015, Council adopted the Recreation Playbook, a 10 year strategic plan that serves as the guiding document in the delivery of Recreation Services within the Town of Newmarket. Contained within the Playbook were a number of recommendations around three key areas: Facility Development; Service Delivery; and Pricing Philosophy and Affordable Access. Numerous recommendations have already been implemented, including the addition of a fitness centre, recent soft opening of the artificial turf field at Walter Denison High School and the relaunch of the C.A.R.E. (Creating Accessible Recreation for Everyone) Program.

On April 19th, 2018 a PIC was held to update the community on the Recreation Playbook including: actions taken to date; informing the community on what to expect in the short

term; and to solicit feedback around a number of the longer term recommendations. Specifically, the event, held at Town Office, was set up as a drop in format with areas of the building assigned specific topics. These topics included: general update on the Playbook; an outdoor Skateboard/Scooter Park; Spray Pad in the Southwest Quadrant; Fitness Centre; C.A.R.E. (Creating Accessible Recreation for Everyone) Program; Artificial Turf Field at Walter Denison High School; trail connections and Sports Pad in the Northwest Quadrant; recreational opportunities in the Northeast Quadrant; Intensification and Secondary Plan, Mulock Property and Hollingsworth Arena.

There were 157 members of the community in attendance at the event. They were invited to share feedback at the event and were given opportunity to take an addressed and stamped post card to then mail any feedback in post event. This is the same postcard that was distributed at the Home Show Town Booth. As well, a number of Councillors have distributed this post card as various ward meetings and other functions. Feedback continues to be collected. The actions set forth in the context of this report are reflective of the feedback at the specific event as well as all feedback that has been sent to the Town.

Discussion

Overall, the event was very well received, with excellent feedback provided by the residents. The feedback presented below is sorted around the common feedback that emerged and will outline that feedback and actions to be taken.

Outdoor Skateboard/Scooter Park:

Residents were invited to provide input on potential design considerations as well as a preferred location. Representatives from a grassroots organization formed to advocate for a skateboard/scooter park (Newmarket Skatepark Committee) were also in attendance. A follow up with this group was held on May 3rd, 2018. From a design perspective, it is imperative that the park include a broad range of elements that represent various levels of capability and appeals to a range of users from beginner to advanced. From a location perspective, it was identified that the location should be clearly visible from a busy roadway, be close to other amenities (such as a washroom), and ideally be visible from a location where staff are currently working. Based on the criteria identified, the west side of the Magna Centre, between the parking lot and Mulock Drive meets the established criteria most effectively. **Staff will proceed with a design at this site with anticipated construction in 2020. Staff will continue with to engage with interested community members throughout the design process.**

Spray Pad in Southwest Quadrant

Initially, Dr. Margaret Arkinstall Park was identified as the preferred site. Staff has since done a more detailed site review and also considered Armstrong Family Park located 1 km away from Dr. Margaret Arkinstall Park. Staff reviewed parking considerations, proximity to roadway, access to existing water systems, and proximity to trail connections. After the extensive evaluation of both sites, the sites were essentially equal with Armstrong Family Park fairing marginally better on the evaluation. Given the relative equality of both sites, feedback was sought from the community as to the preferred site. The feedback received overwhelmingly identified Dr. Margaret Arkinstall Park as the preferred site. **Staff will proceed with a detailed design at Dr. Margaret Arkinstall Park with anticipated construction in 2019.**

C.A.R.E. (Creating Accessible Recreation for Everyone) Program

As demographics change, subsidy based on ability to pay becomes a key companion policy to a service pricing policy. The Town of Newmarket has had the C.A.R.E. program in existence for a number of years. This program has been refreshed and the processes around obtaining subsidy have been modified to ensure that the dignity and confidentiality of all individuals requesting subsidy is completely respected. **Staff will be moving forward with a detailed and comprehensive marketing plan inviting community members and businesses to donate to the C.A.R.E. Program to create sustainable funding to continue providing financial subsidy to those who qualify.**

Woodland Hills Needs Assessment

Throughout the April 19th PIC a number of residents of the Woodland Hills area located in the Northwest Quadrant (off of Bathurst St.) expressed concerns about the lack of outdoor play space in that isolated area. A trail connection is being established, linking to the existing active transportation network and community parks. It was anticipated that residents of that area would then be able to gain access through walking or biking to the amenities in those existing parks. However, the numerous residents in attendance felt that this would not resolve their needs. A few residents also expressed a contrary view that they specifically have bought in that area because of the lack of outdoor amenities. What clearly emerged is that this particular subdivision has some unique challenges that were not fully considered in the context of the Recreation Playbook.

A complicating factor in this particular situation is that there are protected woodlands, legacy agreements and land ownership issues that make resolutions a bit more difficult and time consuming. **Staff will proceed with convening a full meeting with area residents to gain a better understanding of the needs and wishes of all residents of the subdivision as well as educating residents on the varying complexities of the area. Staff will then report back to Council on the feedback with recommendations moving forward in 2019.**

Tennis Court Relocation

In the Recreation Playbook and subsequent reports, it was identified that the tennis courts currently located on the Community Centre Lands would be relocated to Art Ferguson Park on Bayview. This would facilitate growth for tennis as additional courts could be constructed on this site. It would also free up the Community Centre Lands to be used for other purposes. The catalyst for movement of the courts was originally to be determined as a new use for the Community Centre Lands emerged through the Community Centre Lands Task Force. However, there was considerable feedback around the need for additional tennis courts. As well, the Newmarket Tennis Club has expressed a desire to move to accommodate additional growth of the Club. **Staff will meet with representatives of the Newmarket Tennis Club to determine growth plans and needs and then will report back to Council in 2019 with proposed timing and financial implications of a move to Art Ferguson Park.**

Artificial Ice Rink at Mulock Property

In the Recreation Playbook, it was recommended that the Town construct and operate a full size (NHL size) outdoor, artificial ice rink. As part of the purchase of the Mulock Property, a vision including an outdoor ice rink on the property, has been shared with and completely embraced by the Community. **Staff will proceed with plans for the outdoor ice rink to be located on the Mulock Property. A future report outlining a complete vision of the property will be forthcoming during the next term of Council.**

Northeast Quadrant & Hollingsworth Arena

The Recreation Playbook was developed through the culmination an extensive public consultation process. Through this process, it became very clear that while this quadrant boasts the majority of soccer pitches (George Richardson Park) and a large portion of the Tom Taylor Trail, the Northeast Quadrant could benefit from more neighbourhood park/play amenities within established and emerging neighbourhoods.

Any potential sale of the Hollingsworth property would present an opportunity to achieve additional diversity in housing stock, enable additional economic growth through job creation and to create additional, new park space for the established neighbourhood. In doing so, it would remain important to retain recognition of the Hollingsworth name and legacy. In addition, an opportunity exists to create an amenity that also represents a new style of urban park that welcomes the community through the creation of new community events, music, art and associated shopping/retail similar to the positive impact that Riverwalk Commons has had on community vitality. **Subject to Council direction, approval and public consultation, staff will continue discussions with a potential developer interested in purchasing the Hollingsworth Property on the basis that any development involving the Hollingsworth site include the creation of two distinct parks as part of the development: a more traditional green park as well as an urban park.**

Closure of Hollingsworth Arena

With the potential sale of Hollingsworth Arena, user groups have expressed concern about the potential loss of an arena. **Staff will work with user groups to determine current needs, anticipated growth of groups, trend analysis and will report back to Council next year with a strategy to accommodate needs of user groups.**

Conclusion

The Recreation Playbook was intended to be a living document that set forth guiding principles in the delivery of Recreation Services. It was never intended to be a prescriptive document. Staff will always continually monitor community need, impacts, trends and community expectations to develop sustainable solutions that create a vibrant and healthy community. From time to time, that may mean altering the direction set forth in the Recreation Playbook. When that occurs it will be done through extensive consultation with the community and through communication with and direction from Council.

Staff intends to include a detailed 'report card' review of the Recreation Playbook in terms of accomplishments to date, a review of projects in the planning/construction stage and future considerations as part of the new Council orientation process.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

Well-balanced

- Striving for cultural harmony and ethnic diversity
- Events that help shape identity and contribute to community spirit

Well-equipped & managed

- Small town feel with city amenities
- Clear vision of the future and aligned corporate/business plans

Well-respected

- Being well thought of and valued for our judgment and insight
- Discovering innovative and creative solutions for future well-being
- Being a champion for co-operation and collaboration
- Being tradition-based and forward-looking

Consultation

The consultation with community is outlined in the discussion section of the report.

Human Resource Considerations

No additional human resource considerations.

Budget Impact

No impacts outside of what has been identified through the budget process.

Attachments

None

Contact

For more information on this report contact Colin Service, cservice@newmarket.ca or extension 2601.

Colin Service

Colin Service
Director, Recreation & Culture
Community Services

Ian McDougall

Ian McDougall
Commissioner, Community Services