



100 John West Way  
Aurora, Ontario  
L4G 6J1  
(905) 727-3123  
aurora.ca

Town of Aurora

## General Committee Report

No. OPS23-009

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**Subject:** Neighbourhood Park on Hartwell Way – Funding Increase

**Prepared by:** Sara Tienkamp, Manager of Parks and Fleet  
Jason Gaertner, Manager, Financial Management

**Department:** Operational Services  
Financial Services

**Date:** May 16, 2023

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### Recommendation

1. That Report No. OPS23-009 be received; and
2. That the Capital Budget authority for project No. 73299 – Non-Programmed Park in 2C be increased by \$1,220,900 to a total of \$2,720,900; and
3. That the total budget authority of \$2,720,900 be fully funded from the Cash in-lieu Parkland reserve; and
4. That staff be directed to include the design and construction of an Indigenous Garden in the neighbourhood park on Hartwell Way.

### Executive Summary

This report seeks Council approval to increase funding for Capital Project No. 73299 for the construction of a new municipal park on Hartwell Way:

- Original project budget based on traditional design criteria for a municipal park.
- Timelines for construction delayed due to challenges related to Pandemic.
- Tender bid prices approximately 7% higher than 2022 bid prices for the park construction.
- Inflation pressures due to pandemic and supply chains cause for significant increase in park construction delivery.
- Natural themed park playground and community garden are the park amenities that have the largest associated construction costs.

- Un-programmed space in park optimal for future indigenous garden, proposed as part of the Town's recognition of Truth and Reconciliation.

## **Background**

### **Original project budget based on traditional design criteria for a municipal park.**

Through the development of the 2C lands, the Town of Aurora acquired .85 hectares of parkland from Brookfield Homes and another .75 hectares from St. John's Development Corporation. Both properties make up the parklands located on Hartwell Way.

As part of the 2018 budget deliberations, Council approved Capital Project No: 73299 Non – Programmed Park 2C Lands to design, tender and construct the neighbourhood park in the amount of \$1,500,000. The original budget for the park design/construction was established based upon traditional neighbourhood park design with standard playground equipment, open greenspace to accommodate free play/small sports field and trails.

The project scope evolved due to Council/public input (Natural Playground) and Parks and Recreation Master Plan priorities (Community Garden). The natural themed design components of the park provide a service enhancement versus traditional design.

### **Timelines for construction delayed due to challenges related to Pandemic.**

On March 24, 2020, staff presented Report No. OPS20-006 - 276 and 310 Hartwell Way Non-Programmed Park Design. As a result, staff were directed to initiate the design process and report back to Council after public consultation for design approval.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) for park design was tendered and awarded in August 2020 to landscape design firm Henry Kortekass & Associates Inc. and preliminary design work was initiated, along with public consultation process.

On January 12, 2021, staff presented Report No. OPS21-001 – Hartwell Way Non-Programmed Park – Public Consultation. Council directed staff to proceed with detailed design and tender.

Request for Tender (RFT) 2021-99- OPS-P for the Construction of the Neighbourhood Park on Hartwell Way was issued and closed in February 2022. Submitted bids for the construction of the park ranged from \$2,116,462 to \$2,900,074, all exceeding the approved 1.5M budget for the project. Proponent bid price was \$2,116,462 (not including contingency), a difference of \$826,887 between cost estimate and bid price for project.

Staff prepared report OPS22-006 - Neighbourhood Park on Hartwell Way Funding Increase for the May 3, 2022, General Committee meeting. After the report had been presented the contractor advised procurement staff that they would not hold their price due to the volatility in the construction market and significant inflationary pressures on labour and materials. Due to this factor, report OPS22-006 was referred back to staff.

## **Analysis**

**Tender bid prices are approximately 7% higher than 2022 bid prices for the park construction.**

Staff considered requesting additional funding as part of the 2023 Capital budget; however, it was decided to issue a tender and to secure a firm price in early 2023. This was the best option considering inflationary pressures that still existed in fall of 2022 when budget prepared and allow for staff to request additional funding one time through Council.

As a result, Tender 2023-17- OPS-P for the Construction of the Neighbourhood Park on Hartwell Way closed March 27, 2023, and the Town received submittals from seven (7) contractors with bids ranging from \$2,271,860 to \$3,189,582.

Proponent bid price is \$2,271,860 (not including contingency) and represents 7% increase from 2022 to 2023. The consultant provided a cost estimate for the project in December 2021 for \$1,289,575 (not including contingency). The difference between the original consultant cost estimate and project bid price is \$982,285.

**Inflation pressures due to pandemic and supply chains cause for significant increase in park construction delivery.**

Inflation has been rampant over the last couple of years and its impacts have been felt in almost every sector of our economy, affecting all Canadians daily lives. Many factors are impacting the construction industry specifically:

- supply chain issues
- labour cost increases and shortages
- fuel cost increases
- increased demand and reduced material availability
- significant cost increase for various materials (concrete, wood, metal, rubber)

Finance staff estimate costs for parks construction/amenities have increased on average by 31% between January 2020 – January 2023, with inflation slowing increasing steadily since.

**Natural themed park playground and community garden are the park amenities that have the largest associated construction costs.**

The Council approved park design contains many amenities including a natural themed playground, community garden, shade shelter, parking lot, small amphitheater, and welcoming center/trail head to the David Tomlinson Nature Reserve.

When report OPS22-006 was presented to Council in May 2022, both the playground and the community garden represented a large portion of the construction costs for the park. The naturalized playground and community garden elements continue to be the largest contributors to the budget.

Options were presented as part of report OPS22-006 to potentially reduce the scope of the project, redesign or utilize a phased approach to the construction to offset costs. Council, however, indicated the design and construction should proceed as originally approved as the park would provide unique amenities and opportunities to the residents. In addition, a phased approach to the construction would cause increased disturbance to residents over the long term. As such, staff are recommending the project funding be increased and park be constructed as designed. It is important that this neighborhood park be developed as the subdivision is nearing completion and residential homes bordering the park have been completed and occupied for a few years.

**Un-programmed space in park optimal for future indigenous garden, proposed as part of the Town's recognition of Truth and Reconciliation.**

Through ongoing discussions with the staff Indigenous Relations Committee Working Group, it has been identified that the concept of creating an Indigenous Garden would be a welcomed space within the community.

The inclusion of an indigenous garden supports the Town's efforts and commitment to moving forward with taking steps towards meaningful Truth and Reconciliation. An Indigenous Garden would provide space for healing, wellness, culture and educational opportunities. The garden will also provide space to serve for reflection for all impacted by the residential school system.

Staff feel the new park on Hartwell Way would make an ideal location for this project as the park design is rooted in nature and community inclusiveness. Also, there is ample

opportunity to incorporate the garden easily in the un-programmed space. The amphitheatre, interpretive signage (part of current park design) and two (2) future schools across the road would provide for excellent educational opportunities.

Should the location be agreed upon, staff would work in consultation with the Indigenous community to receive guidance during the planning stages and design.

### **Advisory Committee Review**

Staff presented the park design to both the Community Advisory Committee and the Accessibility Committee. Comments received from both groups were taken into consideration and staff were able to incorporate numerous suggestions into the park design. Some of the incorporated suggestions include, additional seating/shade opportunities, utilization of berm to incorporate playground amenities to enhance the natural play theme and a variety of garden plot sizes/heights for accessibility.

### **Legal Considerations**

The procurement process, with respect to this project, yielded bids that were all above the approved budget. Consequently, Council approval is required to increase the project budget for staff to be able to award the project to a compliant bidder.

If Council does not increase the capital budget amount, the tender will be cancelled, and the contract will not be awarded to any of the bidders. It is in Council's discretion to not award the contract where there are insufficient funds available.

### **Financial Implications**

Staff recommend that Council proceed with the full proposed project scope. It is recommended that total capital budget authority of \$2,720,940 be approved for this project, representing an increase of \$1,220,900.

Table 1 presents a summary of the estimated total requirements to construct the proposed new park on Harwell Way as designed and recommended by staff:

**Table 1**  
**Non - Programmed Park in 2C (Project # 73299)**

Description	Total Budget
Consultant	\$60,100
Park Construction	\$2,271,860
Contingencies	\$339,960
Non-Recoverable HST (1.76%)	\$48,980
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$2,720,900</b>
Less: Previously Approved Budget	\$1,500,000
<b>Variance</b>	<b>\$1,220,900</b>

Staff recommend that the full proposed capital budget authority of \$2,720,900 be fully funded from the Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland Reserve as there are sufficient funds available in this reserve to accommodate this requirement. Should Council approve the proposed funding for this project, this reserve's balance is projected to remain healthy over the next ten (10) years concluding the period at \$30,000,000.

By fully funding this project from this alternative funding source, it will help to alleviate pressure on an already strained Parks & Recreation Development Charge reserve. If this project continues to be funded from this funding source, the Parks & Recreation DC reserve balance is projected to reach a deficit of \$14,641,200 by the end of the current ten (10)-year planning period. Of note, this projection also assumes the construction of a new recreation facility. Should the alternative funding source for this project be approved, the balance of the Parks & Recreation DC reserve at the end of ten (10) years would improve slightly to a deficit of \$13,408,600.

Table 2 outlines the proposed funding source changes to Capital Project # 73299.

**Table 2**  
**Non-Programmed Park in 2C (Project # 73299)**

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Approved</b>	<b>Proposed Change</b>	<b>Proposed Total</b>
Parks & Recreation DC	\$1,350,000	-\$1,350,000	\$0
Growth & New	\$150,000	-\$150,000	\$0
Cash in Lieu Parkland	\$0	\$2,720,900	\$2,720,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,500,000</b>	<b>\$1,220,900</b>	<b>\$2,720,900</b>

## Communications Considerations

The Town of Aurora will inform the public of any construction and closures because of the capital project through regular communications channels, including appropriate signage at the site.

## Climate Change Considerations

The park design has an overall natural theme, utilizing natural products and incorporating extensive landscape plantings that all play an important roll mitigating the impacts of a changing climate. Recommendations from this report do not immediately impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation; however, if design of components change there could be some minimal impact.

## Link to Strategic Plan

The Non-Programmed Park Design supports the Strategic Plan Goal of Investing in sustainable infrastructure by maintaining infrastructure to support forecasted population growth through technology, waste management, roads, emergency services and accessibility.

## Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council could choose to defer construction of the playground and/or the community garden to a future year.
2. Council provide further direction.

## **Conclusions**

Staff recommend that this project move forward as per the original approved scope as designed, for the construction of a new neighborhood park on Hartwell Way.

Consequently, it is recommended that the total capital budget authority for Capital Project No. 73299 be increased to \$2,720,940 and that this full spending authority be funded from the Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland Reserve.

## **Attachments**

Attachment # 1 – Proposed Park Design

## **Previous Reports**

OPS20-006 Non-Programmed Park Design, March 24, 2020.

OPS21-001 Hartwell Way Non-Programmed Park - Public Consultation, January 12, 2021.

OPS22-006 Neighbourhood Park on Hartwell Way – Funding Increase, May 3, 2022

## **Pre-submission Review**

Agenda Management Team review on April 27, 2023

## **Approvals**

Approved by Luigi Colangelo, Acting Director, Operational Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer