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Town of Aurora

## Committee of the Whole Report

No. OPS24-014

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**Subject:** Town Park Accessible Playground Update and Funding Increase

**Prepared by:** Matthew Volpintesta, Manager of Parks & Fleet

**Department:** Operational Services

**Date:** June 4, 2024

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### Recommendation

1. That Report No. OPS24-014 be received; and
2. That the total budget authority for Project No. AM0356 – Playground Replacement (Fully Accessible) – Town Park be increased to \$532,000 representing an increase of \$132,000 to be funded from the Parks AM Reserve be approved; and
3. That the total budget authority for Project No. AM0357 – Splash Pad Surface Upgrade – Town Park be increased to \$90,700 representing an increase of \$15,700 to be funded from the Parks AM Reserve be approved.

### Executive Summary

Approved as part of the Town of Aurora's 2024 Capital Plan and as recommended in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP), staff have finalized the design of the accessible playground at Town Park and are preparing to award the tender for manufacturing and delivery. Through public engagement activities collected online and in person, some key considerations were identified. The final design incorporates feedback received which would best enhance the playground space and incorporate accessibility needs of child users and caregivers alike.

- The 2024 Capital Budget Authority includes \$400,000 for the replacement of the playground and \$75,000 to repair and enhance the accompanying splashpad.

- Feedback on accessibility components, concepts and considerations were collected through online and in-person engagement activities and incorporated into the final design.
- Staff are requesting an additional \$147,700 in capital budget authority to incorporate the necessary enhancements and include design considerations brought forward to complete the project.
- The Town has applied to Ontario's "Inclusive Community Grant Program" seeking \$60,000 in funding, to lessen the financial impact of the additional design considerations.

## Background

**The 2024 Capital Budget Authority includes \$400,000 for the replacement of the playground and \$75,000 to repair and enhance the accompanying splashpad.**

Identified in the 2024 Capital Budget, as part of recommendations from Town's PRMP, improvements to the playground and splashpad at Town Park are slated to be completed later this year. The goal of this improvement project is to create a new and fully accessible playground space, with features that provide opportunities for both junior and senior children aged eighteen months to twelve years of age to play within an intentionally designed space that incorporates both users and caregivers' accessibility needs. Guided by the PRMP, this upgraded playground will serve as one of four accessible playgrounds, as recommended in each quadrant of the Town.

With the approval of the 2024 Capital Budget Authority, staff have worked to incorporate industry best practices in the design of an accessible and more inclusive playground at Town Park. The Capital budget includes \$400,000 for the replacement of the playground and \$75,000 to repair and enhance the accompanying splashpad.

**Feedback on accessibility components, concepts and considerations were collected through online and in-person engagement activities and incorporated into the final design.**

To avoid making any assumptions and ensuring all design components were considered, the Town conducted in-person engagement opportunities by hosting a Public Information Session, and circulated an online questionnaire through Engage Aurora, including a static display at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Centre (SARC). Through this engagement process, staff also held in-person discussions with

passionate community members, some of whom spoke firsthand about personal accessibility challenges. Staff also consulted several industry leading resources which provided impactful feedback in considering the final project design. After collecting feedback from the engagement opportunities described above, the following features are planned to be included in the final design provided additional budget is approved by Council.

Key components:

- A junior and senior child combination play structure with included accessible ramps for users and child supervisors.
- A full swing set including junior and senior child options with accessible swing seat.
- Two double side-by-side slides for junior and senior children accompanied by a child supervisor.
- Interactive play board feature (touch and turn features).
- Two spinning wheel features, one flush grade for wheelchairs and another with accessible components.
- Accessible roller slider.
- Barrier free flush rubber surfacing with direct connection from asphalt pathway to junior and senior combination play structure.

## Analysis

**Staff are requesting an additional \$147,700 in capital budget authority to incorporate the necessary enhancements and include design considerations brought forward to complete the project.**

The expected total cost for the playground replacement and associated enhancements to the splash pad are expected to be \$651,000, which includes a 10 per cent contingency amount. The expected total cost for the playground replacement and associated enhancements to the splash pad are expected to be \$622,700, which includes a 10 per cent contingency amount.

Based on valuable feedback received, in consult with industry standard design guidelines, staff agreed that a more extensive ramping system should be incorporated on at least one of the two structures being erected. This additional ramping allows for wheelchair users or users with other mobility devices, including caregivers, to traverse the entire span of the play structure, and ranges in recommended use of children

between eighteen months of age to twelve years of age. To seamlessly incorporate the ramping system, it was essential to configure the park pathway connection in a manner that removed any grade barriers. As such a raised cost was realized to configure the ramping and ensure barrier free connectivity, as well as added design and manufacturing costs.

Specific to the splashpad surface repair, during preliminary investigation of the existing splashpad, staff noted that some of the ground sprayer features needed repair, along with the main bucket feature. To address these issues, including upgrading and replacing dated equipment, further surface work would be necessary and as such, it was deemed appropriate to complete the replacements. These underground infrastructure upgrade costs have been incorporated into the expected budget.

**The Town has applied to Ontario's "Inclusive Community Grant Program" seeking \$60,000 in funding, to lessen the financial impact of the additional design considerations.**

In an effort to offset the requested additional budget requirement, staff have applied for a funding grant in support of this project's accessible design work with the support of Finance. The "Inclusive Community Grant Program" is offered by the Province of Ontario, and if successful, may award up to \$60,000 in additional funding which would allow the Town to recoup a portion of the additional funding required for this project completion. The province will notify successful grant applicants by end of June.

## **Advisory Committee Review**

Accessibility Advisory Committee – May 8, 2024

The playground design update was well received by the committee who collectively were pleased to see the additions of ramping, and double wide sliding. Additional considerations were discussed and deliberated, including signage which offers explanation of accessibility components.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee – May 16, 2024

The playground design update was well received, with questions around the surface permeability, lighting, and general playground footprint. The group was satisfied with the responses from staff and supportive of the project design.

## 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 is insufficient funds available.

## Financial Implications

Total budget authority of \$400,000 and \$75,000 was approved as part of the 2024 capital budget for Project No. AM0356 – Playground Replacement (Fully Accessible) – Town Park and Project No. AM0357 – Splash Pad Surface Upgrade – Town Park, respectively. Upon completion of consultation and design, this project's total estimated cost for the upgraded playground equipment replacement is estimated to be \$532,000 and \$90,700 for the splash surface replacement and enhancement, respectively including a 10 per cent contingency amount as outlined under Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Total Estimated Cost**

Item	Estimated Cost		
	Previous	Current	Change
Playground Replacement	400,000	532,000	132,000
Splashpad Enhancements	75,000	90,700	15,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>475,000</b>	<b>622,700</b>	<b>147,700</b>

Staff recommend that the total budget authority for Project No. AM056 and No. AM057 be increased to \$532,000 and \$90,700, representing increases of \$132,000 and \$15,700, respectively. Further, it is recommended that both these project's capital budget authority increases be funded from the Parks Asset Management reserve.

Should the Town be successful in its grant application, any acquired grant funds will replace an equivalent value of the proposed Park Asset Management reserve funding.

## **Communications Considerations**

Communications assisted with engaging members of the public during the public consultation period via the Engage Aurora platform. Communications will continue to inform members of the public regarding the final park details and as construction progresses via the Engage Aurora site and owned communication channels.

## **Climate Change Considerations**

As climate change continues to impact the daily lives of Aurorans, whether you work, live, or play in our Town, outdoor recreation opportunities play a key role. As the Town continues to invest in resilient solutions to address climate change, outdoor amenities, parks, and playgrounds serve as space to enjoy nature in a manner that promotes eco-conscious design and use.

## **Link to Strategic Plan**

Town Park Accessible playground supports the Strategic Plan Goal of Supporting an Exceptional Quality of Life for All, by encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle.

Develop a long-term needs assessment for recreation programs, services, and operations to match the evolving needs of the growing and changing population.

## **Alternative(s) to the Recommendation**

1. Enter alternative option.
2. Enter further alternative options as required.

## **Conclusions**

If approved, staff will proceed with the project as described and execute the tender with work to begin in fall 2024. It is the opinion of staff that the proposed improvements and recommended upgrades are essential to creating and improving accessibility and barrier free access to play spaces and parks in the Town of Aurora.

## **Attachments**

Attachment 1 – 2024 Town Park Renovation-L4 Concept Illustration-Overhead

Attachment 2 – 2024 Town Park Renovation-L5 Concept Illustration-Sketch Elevation

## **Previous Reports**

PR13-037, Queen's Jubilee Park Accessible Playground Design, August 13, 2013

## **Pre-submission Review**

Agenda Management Team review on May 16, 2024.

## **Approvals**

Approved by Sara Tienkamp, Director, Operational Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer