

Subject: Parks Plan and Parkland Dedication By-law Update Study

Staff Report No. DS-031-24

Commission: Development Services Commission

Date: June 19, 2024

Recommendation:

- 1) That Council receive Report DS-031-2024 for information.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Report is to provide Council with an update on the recently launched Parks Plan and Parkland Dedication By-law Update Study, including a summary of the Phase 1a consultation findings and next steps.

2. Executive Summary

The Town is undertaking a Parks Plan and Parkland Dedication By-law Update Study to guide the development of a well-connected network of parks, trails, and open spaces and establish requirements for developers to provide parkland and/or cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication as part of new development within the Town. The Parks Plan will also include an assessment of new park typologies and associated amenities to help meet the provision targets, in response to recent changes in provincial legislation (i.e., Bill 23).

In January 2024, the Town retained a consulting team led by O2 Planning + Design, assisted by Gladki Planning Associates, and Watson & Associates Economists Ltd to undertake the Study. To date, the consulting team has undertaken a review of background information and consulted with various stakeholders and the public, on their vision for the future provision of parkland within the Town, the findings of which are summarized in this Report.

3. Background

Our parks, trails, and open spaces are places for people to interact, develop social ties, and for recreation and exercise. As the Town continues to grow, a Parks Plan is being

developed that will guide the development of a well-connected network of parks, trails, and open spaces to support a vibrant and healthy community for all residents and visitors. A Parkland Dedication By-law Update will complement the Parks Plan by setting requirements for developers to provide parkland as part of new development within the Town.

The Parks Plan will support decision-making and prioritize the acquisition and investment in parkland across the Town, and will include a needs assessment and review of provision targets for:

- All existing parkland within the Town of Stouffville (differentiating between tableland parkland and natural heritage or hazard lands).
- Town-owned properties that currently serve other uses but could serve as potential candidates for future parkland.
- Future growth areas as identified in the Town's New Official Plan, including MTSA's (Stouffville GO and Old Elm GO Major Transit Station Areas) and other Strategic Growth Areas (Western Approach Mixed Use Area, Downtown Core Area).
- Public open spaces not owned by the Town but used by the public such as school board properties and utility corridor lands.

The Parks Plan will also include an assessment of new park typologies and associated amenities to help meet the provision targets. As a result of proposed changes to the *Planning Act*, through Bill 23, as outlined in [Report No. DS-081-22: Bill 23 – More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022, Analysis and Implications, December 21, 2022](#), the Study will provide recommendations with respect to the potential acquisition and parkland dedication credits related to Privately Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces (POPS) (i.e. parkettes, urban squares), and parks with underground infrastructure or strata parks owned by a third party (i.e. parks over storm water management systems or underground garages). At the time of writing this Report, these changes are not yet in force and effect, and are pending the enactment of implementing regulations.

In January 2024, the Town retained a consulting team led by O2 Planning + Design, assisted by Gladki Planning Associates, and Watson & Associates Economists Ltd to undertake the Study.

The project timeline generally consists of the following phases as illustrated below.

Phase 1a: Setting Priorities (Spring 2024)

- Goals, priorities, recommendations for the Parks Plan will be developed and will be informed by input from the public, Town Council and staff, and key stakeholders.

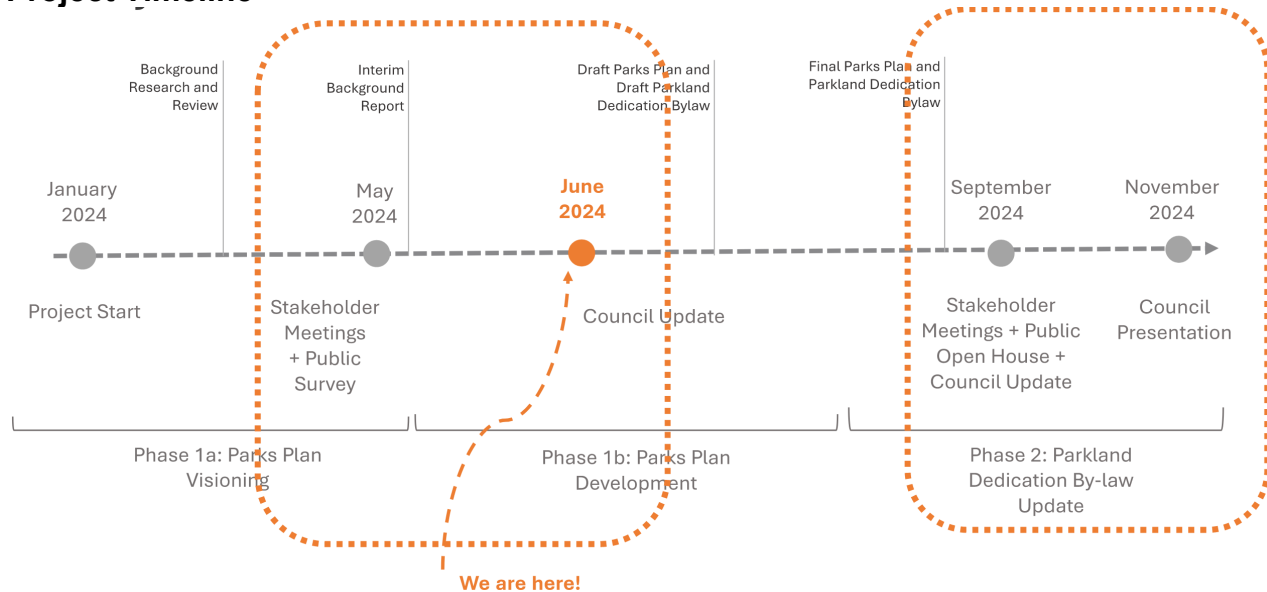
Phase 1b: Parks Plan Development (Early Summer 2024)

- The draft and final Parks Plan will be developed and will be informed and refined by continuous input from the public, Town Council and staff, and key stakeholders.

Phase 2: Parkland Dedication By-law Update (Fall 2024)

- The Parkland Dedication By-law will be prepared and presented to Council for adoption.

Project Timeline



The project webpage provides further details and background information related to the Study: www.townofws.ca/parksplan

4. Analysis and Options:

4.1 Phase 1 Consultation Summary

To date the Town has completed the Phase 1a background research, visioning and consultation activities which sought to understand:

- the size and location of existing parkland and potential for enhancement or expansion to support population growth and intensification;
- the role of new and existing parkland as multifunctional spaces to meet a wide range of recreational interests and demands; and
- the pedestrian link between parks to create a comprehensive and connected park and open space system.

The public and stakeholder consultations have included the following:

- Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) Meeting (April 25, 2024), comprised of representatives from agencies and organizations that work closely with the Town;
- Town Steering Committee Meeting (April 26, 2024);
- Stakeholder Meetings (April 30, and May 2, 2024), comprised of representatives from organizations and groups involved in the implementation, and programming of parks in Town;

- BILD Meeting (May 22, 2024); and
- An on-line public survey from mid- April to mid-May to receive feedback on shaping the future of parks in Stouffville (www.townofws.ca/parksplan). The Town received 95 responses to the survey.

The following provides a summary of the key findings that we heard through these consultations:

- New park typologies are seen as an opportunity requiring further assessment of location, size, configuration, condition, function and maintenance requirements (i.e., there is a significant number of smaller parkettes in the existing park inventory, whereas, larger neighbourhood parks are needed).
- Concerns about fragmentation and connectivity. There is a need to build trail connections in infill areas.
- New land acquisition (existing neighbourhoods) and budget constraints are some of the larger challenges the Town may face.
- Tourism is a significant opportunity – building connections to other regional greenspaces that draw people into the Town.
- Joint use with school sites is an opportunity, but needs clear and appropriate shared use agreements, operation considerations, and managing expectations for after-hours use.
- Important key elements to consider:
 - continued community engagement
 - supporting health and well-being
 - equitable access to public space and amenities
 - connectivity for human and natural systems
 - supporting youth and older adults
- New development places pressure on existing amenities and sports fields. These amenities are useful assets for boosting economy, attracting new residents and generating revenue.
- Connectivity is important. The Town would benefit from more trails and paths for biking and walking.
- Concerned that increased construction costs (plus development charges not keeping pace) and project timelines can slow down progress on improving access and connectivity in the park system.

4.2 Next Steps

An Interim Report is currently being prepared, outlining the relevant background information, policy and legislative requirements, and a summary of the Phase 1a consultations.

Over the course of the summer, the Town and consulting team will be preparing the Draft Parks Plan and Parkland Dedication By-law for consultation, which will include meetings with the public, Town Steering Committee, Stakeholder Advisory Committee, and Stakeholders (including BILD), in early Fall 2024. The Draft Parks Plan and Parkland Dedication By-law will also be presented to Council in September 2024. The final Draft

Parkland Dedication By-law is anticipated to be brought forward for Council adoption in October-November 2024.

5. Financial Implications

None.

6. Alignment with Strategic Plan

The recommendations of this Report support the following pillars of the 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan:

- A Town that Grows
- A Town that Moves
- A Healthy and Greener Town
- An Engaging Town
- A Safe Town
- Organizational Effectiveness
- Good Governance

7. Attachments

None.

8. Related Reports

[Report No. DS-081-22: Bill 23 – More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022, Analysis and Implications, December 21, 2022](#)

[Report No. LCS-010-22: Leisure & Community Services Master Plan Update, September 21, 2022](#)

[Report No. DS-048-22: Parkland Dedication By-law Update, September 7, 2022](#)

Author: Randall Roth, Senior Policy Planner
Meaghan Craven, Manager Policy Planning

For further information on this report, please contact the Commissioner of Development Services: Dwayne Tapp, at 905-640-1900 or 1-855-642-8697 ext. 2431 or via email at dwayne.tapp@townofws.ca